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Three *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* Fragments from Tabo: Observations on a West Tibetan Manuscript Tradition*

The three fragments of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (Rk, 12) examined in this paper belong to the large collection of canonical Buddhist texts, later incorporated into the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* compendia, kept in the monastic library of Tabo (Spiti). During the past five years, a number of important studies dealing with the Tabo collection have been produced, covering such diverse aspects as history, palaeography, codicology, philology, text-criticism and art-history. Because a great deal was said already about the general state of the collection, mainly by Paul Harrison, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, Ernst Steinkellner and Deborah Klimburg-Salter, I shall not recapitulate here what is adequately covered elsewhere, but limit my observations to issues that pertain to the three fragments themselves.

The first *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* fragment was discovered by Paul Harrison during his stay at Tabo in 1993. Two more fragments came to light in 1995 while we were sifting through the *dKon brtsegs* bundle which had been compiled during previous years. Both of them are significantly shorter and show distinct characteristics, such as physical format and orthographic style, that set them apart from the first discovery. It is possible that some of the 106 *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* folios found at Tabo could, one day, reveal themselves to belong to a fourth, as yet unrecognised, manuscript. This is particularly true for the folios that make up Chapters Ten and Eleven, since they exhibit a number of paleographic peculiarities that are not shared by others. However, erring on the side of caution, positive identification of them as a separate unit must wait

* The present study was made possible through the generous financial support of the British Academy (London), which in 1995 provided me with a travel grant covering all expenses incurred during my stay in Tabo. I would also like to express my gratitude to Paul Harrison and Helmut Eimer who kindly read through an early draft of this paper, pointing out errors, inspiring improvements of analysis and guiding me through the intricate web of *bKa' 'gyur* genealogy. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for all remaining mistakes that escaped detection.

until we know more about the factors that influenced the production of Tibetan manuscripts.

The Physical Evidence

Let us turn first to the physical description of the manuscripts. Following the order of their discovery and respective lengths, I have labelled them Bdp I (Tabo 9), Bdp II (Tabo 252) and Bdp III (Tabo 299).¹

Bdp I (Tabo 9), the longest of the three manuscripts, is comprised of 84 folios, all of which are marked by the volume signature *Ga*. Most of its folios are non-consecutive, distributed over a range of 207 pages. The beginning and end of the text are missing, but several chapter headings have been preserved in the main body of the text. The physical support of Bdp I is hemp paper of a yellowish-brown complexion which, although a little coarse, provides a fine writing surface. The folios themselves (measuring 62cm x 19cm) accommodate ten lines of text, each consisting of approximately fifty syllables, broken in the centre by two binding-circles. Because of the large size of the letters, generous spacing and a clear *dbu can* calligraphy, the text is very legible and contains little orthographic ambiguity.

A number of scholars have already commented upon the orthographic archaisms of the Tabo collection.² Since the calligraphy of Bdp I conforms largely to orthographic patterns observed elsewhere, it shall suffice here to give a brief summary of some of the main features of the 'Tabo Style'. Bdp I, like many other Tabo documents, displays palatalisation of *ma* before *e* and *i* using a subscribed *ya* (*ya btags*). Moreover, we meet with the extensive use of the *da drag* after many syllables ending in *r*, *n* and *l*; the pleonastic, non-classical use of the 'a-chun'; horizontal ligatures for *s-pa*, *s-ta* and *s-tsa*; the form *la stsogs* for *la sogs* as well as a number of other unusual spellings, often involving the radical (*miñ gzi*) letter *ña*.

Prior to recent advances in Tibetan paleography, the presence of such archaisms was valued as firm evidence for the antiquity of a manuscript. Today, most scholars working in the field accept that this correlation can

1. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & P. HARRISON, *Inventory of the Tibetan Manuscript Collection kept in the Tabo 'Du khañ*, forthcoming. Note that the references Tabo 9, Tabo 252 and Tabo 299 are to the running numbers of the manuscripts, not to their identification numbers in the catalogue.
2. E. STEINKELLNER 1994; H. TAUSCHER 1994; P. HARRISON, forthcoming; C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming a; T. TOMABECHI, forthcoming.

no longer be upheld, since orthographic archaisms may simply be the result of faithful copying of ancient manuscripts or stem from deliberate imitation of older writing styles³. Although this is an important consideration, sensitising us towards style-imitation, I have found no evidence that this phenomenon – typically involving the exaggerated application of the *da drag* or the frequent use of the pleonastic ‘*a-chun*’ – affected the production of Bdp I.⁴ In other words, I believe that the archaisms found in Bdp I are genuine and reflect orthographic conventions current at the time of its production.

There is reason to assume that great care was devoted to the production of Bdp I. First, it features three beautifully drawn colour illuminations that depict seated buddha-figures. As we shall discuss below, it is very rare for Tabo manuscripts to display illuminations. Second, its calligraphy is of high quality betraying the steady hand of gifted and experienced scribes. The ligatures are well-proportioned, drawn in a flowing, elegant handwriting style; the syllables are regularly distributed over evenly spaced lines; the margin delineators are rarely breached (and then only in the last line of the folios, recto and verso); there are no contractions (*bsdus yig*) or abbreviation (*skun yig*); we find only one serious omission (rectified by a different hand at a later stage (f. 32.10)) and hardly any auto-corrections. Third, the quality of the paper is very high, even for Tabo standards. The folios are well-crafted and fairly thick, consisting of finely-sieved, dense hemp-pulp that is practically free from the distorting fibre-lumps found in cheaper productions. The oblong shape into which the paper has been cut is very regular and displays only minute discrepancies in format. These factors, taken together, leave no doubt that the team that manufactured the Bdp I manuscript was well-funded, equipped with the proper tools and mate-

3. See, for example, H. EIMER: Review of Manfred Taube, *Die Tibetica der Berliner Turfansammlung*, Berlin, 1980, *Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients*, Berliner Turfantexte, X, in *OLZ*, 78.5 (1983), coll. 514-518.

4. T. TOMABECHI, forthcoming.

rials, and included craftsmen of considerable skill.⁵ Except for burn marks at the edges of a handful of folios, even today the manuscript is in excellent condition. The script is clear and the folios are generally very well preserved.

Slight variations in the handwriting style, differences in the shape of the *mgo yig* drawn at the beginning of each recto side and inconsistent positioning of the binding-circles and margin references suggest that more than one scribe contributed to the production process. Such differences are particularly pronounced on folios 181 to 210 and could, in fact, indicate that these belong to a fourth manuscript. However, because in all other respects their physical and orthographic features match the other pages, without access to the originals, I am hesitant to separate them from the rest of Bdp I. And even if they constitute a different manuscript, because of their strong resemblance to the remaining folios of Bdp I, they must have been produced in approximately the same period, using similar resources.

Bdp II (Tabo 252) is the second longest fragment of our three manuscripts. It consists of thirteen folios all belonging to volume *Ga* (spread over a range of 159 pages), each measuring 63cm x 19cm. Here too, the text is divided into ten lines, containing fifty syllables each. However, in Bdp II the core lines are not interrupted by binding-circles. As with Bdp I, the first and last pages of the manuscript are missing. Because the thirteen folios of Bdp II stand on their own, there is no indication that they were ever part of a larger *Ratnakūṭa* manuscript. Indeed, as I shall demonstrate below, they were prepared specifically to fill in gaps caused by folio loss in Bdp I. The orthography of Bdp II differs substantially from Bdp I since it does not feature any of its archaisms. Instead, its calligraphy and spelling are very close to classical conventions, showing neither *da drags*, *ya btags* or inverted *i* vowels. The script itself is *dbu can*, but noticeably more angular, with the vertical strokes often shortened. The overall production quality of Bdp II is significantly lower than that of Bdp I. It teems with calligraphic slips and contains a

5. Even so, the production is not without entirely flaws. For example, the sides of folio 74 have been copied in the reverse order. That is to say, folio 74r should be 74v and 74v should appear as 74r. The scribe must have failed to notice that in the master volume folio 74v was facing up and 74r down. Either he was absent-minded, or perhaps, the original did not give any page/volume reference in the margin. Nevertheless, he should have noticed the disorder, since verso sides lack the *mgo yig*.

fair number of omissions, auto-corrections and inconsistent contractions. Also from an aesthetic point of view, it is clearly an inferior manuscript. The margin lines are repeatedly breached, syllables are spaced irregularly, ligatures are ill-proportioned and the horizontal alignment of the text-lines is not always observed. The paper, also made of hemp, is darker and softer, almost parchment-like, and shows signs of maltreatment (e.g., fs. 9, 108). Its surface is scarred by protruding fibre-particles and pulp-elevations that notoriously mar low-grade manuscript productions in Tibet. Compared to the paper used for Bdp I, it is much weaker but, and this is important, it does not show any charring at the edges. There are no illuminations in this manuscript.

The third manuscript, Bdp III, consists of eight folios. Similarities with other fragments suggests that these are part of a larger manuscript that originally included several other *Ratnakūta* texts. So far, it has been possible to identify only two of them, the *Simhapariṣṛcchā* (*Rk*, 37) and *Upāyakauśalyaparivarta* (*Rk*, 38). Compared to Bdp I and Bdp II, the folios of Bdp III are similar in length but significantly smaller in height, measuring 64cm x 11.5cm. As a result, this manuscript accommodates only seven lines per folio. Its calligraphy and orthography are very close to Bdp I, featuring many of its spelling archaisms (e.g., *da drag*, *ya btags*, etc.), but of a more rounded, albeit somewhat smaller, easy-flowing script style. The paper, badly burnt at the short edges on four folios, is yellowish-brown, less coarse and polished with rice powder. Its right and left hand margins, like those of Bdp I and Bdp II, are marked by two red vertical parallel strokes. The margins themselves do not contain any volume signatures. The text is continuous, uninterrupted by either binding-circles or illuminations. On balance, it is probably fair to say that this manuscript does not match the high production-quality of Bdp I either. Although Bdp III displays fewer orthographic errors, omissions and auto-corrections than Bdp II, its overall visual appearance is marred by inconsistent line-spacing, margin violations and a somewhat cramped writing style.

The Case of Bdp III(62)

There is one more *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* fragment that has not yet been mentioned. I shall refer to it as Bdp III(62). The roman number points to its potential affiliation with Bdp III. The numeral 62 refers to its folio number and, since it is lacking a volume signature, serves as the principal means of identification. Bdp III(62) is a single-folio fragment whose

manuscript affiliation is unresolved. Its external characteristics are very similar to those of Bdp III. The dimensions are practically identical, the spacing of the individual ligatures and text-lines is alike, its orthographic and calligraphic styles approximate those of Bdp III and even the degree of charring at the short sides of the folios corresponds. In fact, were it not for the following three minor differences, we would have no reason to distinguish it from the other seven Bdp III folios.

First, the *mgo yig* that appears in the upper left-hand corner of the text area on the recto side has a different shape. Quite clearly, it was drawn by another hand. SCHERRER-SCHAUB has shown that the forms of these *mgo yig* become important clues for assembling loose folios into manuscripts, since their designs, almost like a signature, help us to identify the scribes that worked on the manuscripts.⁶ Hence, even minor variants are significant and should be recorded. On its own, calligraphic variation in the *mgo yig* does not entail that the folios it adorns necessarily belong to a different manuscript, since multi-volume compendia such as the *Ratnakūṣa* routinely involved more than one scribe.

Second, while the handwriting of Bdp III(62) is broadly similar, it does not match exactly the writing-style of the other folios. It is of a more flowing and slanted kind that differs from the rather rectangular and stocky calligraphy of Bdp III. Again, by itself, this does not tell us anything about the manuscript affiliation of Bdp III(62), since it might simply reflect multi-scribal project participation. Other, better-documented manuscript production enterprises report that the copying work was routinely shared out among groups of calligraphers. The preparation of the London Manuscript *bKa' 'gyur*, for example, involved no less than ten calligraphers.⁷

Third, the page number that is allocated to Bdp III(62) has already been used up by another folio in Bdp III, even though the content of the two folios is completely different. Folio 62 of Bdp III corresponds to sTog fs 17v5-19r2 and falls into Chapter One, while folio 62 of Bdp III(62) matches sTog fs 302r2-303r6 and belongs to Chapter Eleven. Since Tabo 299 does not feature volume signatures, it is conceivable that Bdp III(62) is a remnant of the continuation volume of Bdp III.

6. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming a; C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & G. BONANI, forthcoming.

7. P. SKILLING and J. SAMTEN, in: U. PAGEL & S. GAFFNEY 1996, p. 9; See also: K. SCHAEFFER, *Buddhas, Books and Barley: Printing Buddhist Canons in Tibet*, unpublished paper.

Contextual grounds support this hypothesis, because its content is part of the penultimate chapter. Let us recall that the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is an extremely long text which, in the *bKa'* 'gyurs of the Tshal pa line, spans more than one volume.

Whatever its manuscript affiliation, the most important feature of Bdp III(62) is not related to its provenance but is found in its content. It is the only folio of Bdp II and Bdp III that contains a substantial overlap with Bdp I. Its overlay enables us to carry out an internal comparison of the readings of two Tabo manuscripts and to examine whether they belong to a related textual tradition. In other words, Bdp III(62) affords us a glimpse of the recensional composition of the Tabo collection, which in turn may shed light on the history of its compilation.

Folio Distribution

The distribution of the 106 folios over the eleven chapters of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is remarkably proportional and gives us a much more balanced text-profile than what has been noted for other Tabo fragments.⁸ Of all the chapters found in the canonical editions, only one chapter is not included at all. Chapter One is represented by twelve folios (Bdp I, fs. 20, 21; Bdp II, fs. 9, 11, 14-5, 17-9; Bdp III, fs. 53, 55, 62), Chapter Two by seven folios (Bdp I, fs. 22-5, 27; Bdp III, fs. 75-6), Chapter Three by three folios (Bdp I, fs. 28, 32-3), Chapter Four by twenty-six folios (Bdp I, fs. 34, 38-40, 44, 50-1, 53-6, 58-9, 62-3, 67-9, 72-6, 78; Bdp III, fs. 89-90, 97), Chapter Five by three folios (Bdp I, fs. 96, 99; Bdp II, f. 98), Chapter Six by five folios (Bdp I, fs. 101, 103-105; Bdp II, f. 100), Chapter Seven by seventeen folios (Bdp I, fs. 107, 110, 112, 116-120, 122-25, 127, 131, 152; Bdp II, fs. 108-9), Chapter Nine by twelve folios (Bdp I, fs. 152, 154-5, 159, 162, 164-7, 178, 181; Bdp II, f. 168), Chapter Ten by nine folios (Bdp I, fs. 182, 185, 187-93) and Chapter Eleven by twelve folios (Bdp I, fs. 193-5, 197-8, 200, 201-2, 204-5, 208, 210; Bdp III, f. 62). Chapter Eight is completely missing. Chapter Four, which is by far the longest chapter of the text, enjoys the strongest representation, while Chapters Two, Three, Five and Six – the shortest chapters – are represented by less than a handful of folios each. With a survival rate of 54%, Chapter One is best preserved proportionate to its original length.

8. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

The Bodhisattvapiṭaka in the dKon brtsegs Collection

In Chinese and Tibetan canonical compendia the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is part of the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. However, its inclusion in this collection cannot be taken for granted *a priori*, since the Phug brag *bKa'* 'gyur contains a second version of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* that is listed as a separate text outside the *dKon brtsegs* section. What is the status of our three manuscripts? Are they independent or are they included in a *Ratnakūṭa* collection? Because no other folios belonging to the Bdp I manuscript have survived, we are forced to rely, in part, on circumstantial evidence. The case of Bdp III is somewhat stronger, since we possess other folios of this manuscript. Due to its close association with Bdp I, Bdp II is excluded from the present investigation.

First, there is the argument of volume association. The volume numbering of Bdp I, starting with *Ga* and ending with *Ga/Ma*, suggests that our manuscript folios are part of a volume that was preceded by at least two other volumes, bearing the volume signatures *Ka* and *Kha*. We do not know anything about the content of these hypothetical volumes, though it is possible that they contained other *Ratnakūṭa* texts. In all known *bKa'* 'gyur editions, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is the twelfth text of the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. In the Them spañs ma versions (London, Tokyo and sTog), as well as in the Phug brag *bKa'* 'gyur, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is the first text of volume *Ga*, taking up approximately three quarters of its folios. In the Tshal pa versions, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* spans two volumes, beginning towards the end of the third quarter of volume *Kha* and ending in the middle of volume *Ga*. In our Tabo manuscript, the first surviving folio of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* belongs to Chapter One and bears the page number 20 (*Ga ñi śu*). Folios 1 (**Ga gcig*) to 19 (**Ga bcu dgu*) are missing. Correlation of the content/folio ratio of these nineteen folios, as it is preserved in the other *bKa'* 'gyur editions, with the content/folio ratio in Bdp I suggests that it is probable that the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* text of Bdp I began on the first folio of volume *Ga* of our Tabo manuscript. In other words, the content/volume allocation of Bdp I parallels that in the Them spañs ma *bKa'* 'gyurs, where, as we have seen, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* starts at the beginning of the third volume of the *dKon brtsegs* section.

Next, there is the argument of text association. This argument is essentially derived from Bdp III (Tabo 299). It has therefore less force than the first, but should not be overlooked entirely. In Bdp III, the

surviving *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* fragments do not occur in isolation, but are accompanied by other folios that share their codicologic characteristics. These contain two *Ratnakūta* texts, the *Siṃhapariṣcchā* located on folio 10 (*bcu tham pa*) to folio 15 (*bco lña*), and the *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* on folio 15 (*bco lña*) to folio 50 (*lña bcu tham pa*). Like Bdp I, these texts are only partially preserved. The whereabouts of the twenty-four intervening *Ratnakūta* texts that are usually included between the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (*Rk*, 12) and *Siṃhapariṣcchā* (*Rk*, 37), as well as the eleven texts that follow after the *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* (*Rk*, 38), is not known.⁹

Because of these omissions, we are unable to establish the original scope of Tabo 299. It may have contained a scaled-down version of the *Ratnakūta* collection or, alternatively, it could have belonged to a multi-volume *Ratnakūta* production. As it does not supply volume signatures in the margin, it is not even possible to establish the relative position of the *Siṃhapariṣcchā* and *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* against the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*. In other words, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* folios may originally have followed after the *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* or have come before the *Siṃhapariṣcchā*. Since the *Siṃhapariṣcchā* and *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* are consecutive and share a colophon/incipit folio, we know that it cannot have been located between the two texts.

Our investigation is further complicated by the presence of several stray folios with similar codicologic characteristics (e.g., folio 100), but whose text affiliation has not yet been ascertained. In theory, it is well possible that they belong to another, as yet unidentified, (*Ratnakūta*) text embedded in Tabo 299. If these orphaned folios also turn out to contain *Ratnakūta sūtras*, the case for a *Ratnakūta* connection of Bdp III would be strengthened. But even if they are revealed to contain other works, the presence of two *Ratnakūta* texts in the same manuscript as Bdp III establishes a degree of association between the collection and our text. Thus, on the strength of Tabo 299, we may surmise that at least some monks in the Tabo region knew the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* to belong to the *Ratnakūta* collection. On the other hand, since we do not know if the monks who worked on Tabo 299 contributed also to the production of

9. In Them spañs ma editions, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is included in volume *Ga*. In Tshal pa versions, it is included in volumes *Kha* and *Ga*. Since the *Siṃhapariṣcchā* and *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta* are included in volume *Cha* in both traditions, three volumes would have separated the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* from the *Siṃhapariṣcchā* and *Upāyakaśalyaparivarta*.

Tabo 9, we cannot infer that Bdp I itself was part of a larger *dKon brtsegs* copying project.

Finally, there is the inclusion of several internal references which link Bdp I quite explicitly to the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. After every *bam po*, we find in Bdp I the following phrase: *dkon mchog rtsegs pa chen po'i mdo'*. Neither the Phug brag *bKa' 'gyur* nor any of the other editions for that matter, give this reference. I think there can be no doubt that this phrase associates Bdp I with the *Ratnakūṭa*. However, it does not tell us anything about the organisation of the collection which Bdp I was a part of. That is to say, we do not know whether the *Ratnakūṭa* collection(s) of Tabo was/were organised in the same way as the *dKon brtsegs* found in 'modern' editions of the *bKa' 'gyur*. The evidence is conflicting. On the one hand, the numbering of the *Siṃhapariṣṭhā* and *Upāyakaśalyasūtra* as *Ratnakūṭa sūtras* nos. 37 and 38 in Tabo 299 agrees with the usual organisation of the collection, introduced by Bodhiruci in 713AD. This would suggest that Tabo 299 was aware of Bodhiruci's arrangement and accepted it at least in part. On the other hand, in another Tabo manuscript I have found a colophon/incipit context in which two, usually non-consecutive *Ratnakūṭa sūtras* (*Raśmi-samantamuktanirdeśa* (*Rk*, 11) and *Varmavyūhanirdeśa* (*Rk*, 7)) appear next to each other.¹⁰ While these texts cannot have been listed in that sequence originally (the *Raśmisamantamuktanirdeśa* which is given first ends on *bam po* 5, whereas the *Varmavyūhanirdeśa* which is given second begins on *bam po* 1), the fact that they occur back to back in a single manuscript suggests that the order of the forty-nine texts was perhaps less rigid than commonly assumed.¹¹

At present, we cannot say if this variant represents a local tradition preserved only in Tabo or attests the existence of an earlier order predating Bodhiruci's organisation. Much depends on the evidence in the other *dKon brtsegs* texts of Tabo. If the juxtapositioning of *Rk* 11 and *Rk* 7 is not found elsewhere, we have to regard it as an aberration, perhaps reflecting the preference of a single scribe or sponsor. If, on the other hand, sequential variants of this type are also found in other Tabo manu-

10. This manuscript was formerly known as Tabo 252. Codicologic evidence has led to me to believe that we need to distinguish it from Bdp II Tabo 252. The incipits/colophons are found on folio 66r8-10. Until this manuscript has received a separate number, I shall refer to it as "Tabo 252 (non Bdp)".

11. For a survey of what is known about the history of the *Ratnakūṭa* collection, see: U. PAGEL 1994, pp. 53-78.

scripts, we may need to revise current thinking about the history of the *Ratnakūṭa* and, in particular, re-assess the influence of the *lDan dkar ma* catalogue where the *Ratnakūṭa* is listed in its 'modern' organisation. For many years, this catalogue has been regarded as an early predecessor of later proto-canonical compilations.¹² Perhaps, it is no more than a record of the opinion of one school of thought and limited in circulation to Central Tibet.¹³

12. M. LALOU 1927, pp. 313-317; P. SKILLING, 1997, pp. 91-93.

13. Since the *Ratnakūṭa* reference is not found in any other version, printed or manuscript and because we do not possess the Sanskrit of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, it is not possible to tell whether this heading had a counterpart in an Indian original. (According to Christian LINDTNER, a Sanskrit version of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* has recently surfaced in China. Regrettably, he is unable to give any further details (1998, p. 229)). If it was present, we must conclude that the translation of Bdp I was based on a Sanskrit original that is not only different from the Indian original of Bdp III, but also different from the Sanskrit of all other *bKa' 'gyur* editions. In other words, it would represent a unique tradition that survived only in Bdp I. If, on the other hand, it was added in the translation process, either to underline the fascicle or volume breaks already signalled by the *bam po* references, or to remind the reader of the name of the collection in which the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is included, it would constitute a deliberate editorial intervention.

Confirmation of either hypothesis is difficult. Previous attempts to explain the origin and function of the *bam po* division in Tibetan translations of Indian texts have only scratched the surface of the problem. The best studies to date are by SCHERRER-SCHAUB (1992: 218-20) and EIMER (1988). We still do not know why and exactly at what stage these divisions were incorporated. Until we have a better picture of their purpose, there is very little to support the assumption that it served to emphasise the *bam po* division. It is also conceivable that the heading accompanied the *bam po* reference at the beginning of the fascicle in order to mark its affiliation with the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. Verification of this explanation depends, in part, on the inclusion of similar headings in the other *Ratnakūṭa* texts preserved at Tabo. So far, in the five *Ratnakūṭa* texts included in Tabo 252 (non Bdp) and 299 I have found one other identical *dKon brtsegs* reference. It occurs at the end of Chapter Two of the *Akṣobhyatathāgatasavyūha* (*Rk*, 6) (Tabo 252 (non Bdp), *Kha*, 28r1). While this is not a very promising beginning, let us recall that our sample is rather small and not necessarily representative (44 out of a total of approximately 1000 *dKon brtsegs* folios). If the heading is found elsewhere – we clearly need more than one example as evidence – it might have important ramifications for our understanding of the history of the *Ratnakūṭa*. For example, it could confirm the existence of an Indian prototype and corroborate the recensional isolation of the West Tibetan manuscript tradition.

The absence of these references in Tabo 299 would seem to suggest that, at one time, several versions of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* were in circulation: one included in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection and the other(s) transmitted independently.

Quite independent of this investigation, I think we have sufficient grounds to associate our Tabo manuscripts with the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. First, there is the *Ratnakūṭa* affiliation of Tabo 299 which contains Bdp III; second, the *Ratnakūṭa*'s volume allocation in Tabo 9/252 and third, again in Tabo 9/252, the inclusion of six unambiguous references to the *Ratnakūṭa* collection in the text itself. In short, we may infer that both Tabo 9 and Tabo 252 must have been part of a larger *dKon brtsegs* Section of which Bdp I is probably the only surviving text.

The Three Miniatures

In my description of the Bdp I fragment, I mentioned three manuscript illuminations. These are located in the centre of folios 21v (*Ga ñer cig*), 27r (*Ga ñer bdun*) and 33v (*Ga so gsum*) and consist of three very similar buddha images, painted blue and red, all seated in the earth-touching posture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*). The painting style of the three miniatures is very similar to buddhas that adorn the walls of the Tabo 'Du-khañ and to illustrations found in the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript from Poo.¹⁴ They all share a number of distinct features, such as the tall top-knot (*uṣṇīṣa*), the round hair-style with an outline of small curls, a serene facial expression accentuated by high eyebrows and a small circular nose and mouth, and, perhaps above all, their very vivid colours. Like their counterparts in the Poo Manuscript, they are set in a small squarish picture field, measuring 5cm x 8cm, placed roughly in the middle of the page. The range of background colours includes greens, blues, yellows as well as bright reds. While the figures themselves have not yet been positively identified – they depict probably Śākyamuni Buddha – there can be no doubt that their presence on these specific pages is not coincidental.

On all three pages, the miniatures appear at the end of chapters (chpt. 1, 2 and 3 respectively) where they serve as visual breaks. Unfortunately, folios 21, 27 and 33 are the only surviving pages that belong unambiguously to Bdp I and contain text-internal chapter titles. One

We find a precedent for this in the Phug brag manuscript which has two differing recensions of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, one included in the *dKon brtsegs* section (*Ga*, fs. 1a1-356a6) and the other in the mDo section (*La*, fs. 1a1-325a5)). Either way, the inclusion of the *Ratnakūṭa* reference marks an important departure from the other editions and indicates, at the very least, that Bdp I and Bdp III are not derived from the same source.

14. D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994b, pp. 56-60.

such title, occurring on folio 100r (*Ga brgya*) and marking the end of Chapter Five, is part of Bdp II which is altogether without illuminations. Two more chapter titles occur on folios 181v (*Ga/Na gya gcig*) and 193v (*Ga/Na go gsum*), signalling the end of Chapters Nine and Ten respectively. Here too, we lack miniatures. Because the manuscript affiliation of these two folios is not fully established, they cannot serve as basis for deductions about the remaining chapter markers of Bdp I. In other words, they do not allow us to conclude that only the endings of the first three chapters of Bdp I were artistically adorned. In fact, because Bdp II and Bdp III are much plainer and do not feature any decorative elements, it is probable that they were conceived without illuminations.

In a recent publication, Paul HARRISON draws attention to the almost complete lack of illuminations in the Tabo collection.¹⁵ Against the background of the wealth of finely illuminated manuscripts found elsewhere in western Tibet¹⁶, he argues, this comes as a surprise. I am not sure, however, if we can assume, *a priori*, that the Tabo collection is wholly West Tibetan in origin. It is true, text-critical examination of a handful of texts has produced a fairly consistent recensional pattern, but recensional uniformity is hardly proof of regional sourcing. HARRISON has calculated that the present content of the library, stored in 60 volumes, amounts to little more than 20% of its original size. This means that the full collection must have consisted of more than 300 large bundles of manuscripts. Clearly, we need to ask ourselves where the remaining portion was stored, since the 'Du khan does not have the capacity to house a collection of that size. It is also conceivable that there never existed such a large collection at any one time, and that what we have today represents a haphazard and incomplete cross-section of centuries of acquisitions, losses and restoration projects. In other words, we may misrepresent history if we think of the Tabo collection as a stable and ever-increasing holding of Buddhist scripture, that apart from periodic foreign assaults, continued to grow around the ten sets of texts reputedly deposited there by Rin chen bzañ po.

The piecemeal nature of the surviving texts suggests much greater fluidity and transitoriness. The library's current holdings are probably little more than a snapshot of the countless manuscripts, small and large,

15. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

16. D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994a, 1994b.

that circulated at one point or another in West Tibet. Some may have been incomplete to begin with, others fell victim to external aggression or, while in the library, simply suffered curatorial neglect. Still others may have been discarded or relocated in order to make room for new manuscripts. We do not know when this process of expansion and contraction came to a halt, though in view of the Library's striking high degree of fragmentation it must have persisted for a long time. Because the collection contains very little that postdates the 17th century, it is unlikely that significant additions were made during the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁷

I very much doubt that a repository of such fluidity would have been single-sourced. It is well known from other contexts that manuscripts travelled with their owners. Perhaps only a minority of manuscripts was locally produced, with the rest coming from other temples and households in the region.¹⁸ In one of her first publications on the collection, KLIMBURG-SALTER, distinguishes three different provenances for the canonical collections in the monasteries and temples of Guge/Purang.¹⁹

First, there are the texts brought to West Tibet by monks and their aristocratic sponsors who fled the central areas following the disintegration of the political order after the breakup of the kingdom. Since these manuscripts would have been produced in Central Tibet, she argues, one would not expect them to show traits of the West Tibetan manuscript tradition. Although we do not possess any Central Tibetan manuscripts from that period, judging by the appearance of the Gilgit materials, they were probably rather plain and lacked illuminations. After a while, these texts were copied out and circulated to other monasteries in the Guge/Purang area, producing a new class of manuscripts. The production and distribution of these copies was sponsored by the rulers of the emerging West Tibetan dynasty, their art-work representing local styles popular at the end of the 10th century. The third category of manuscripts, prepared during the 11th and 12th century, became exposed to artistic currents prevailing in Kashmir and spreading gradually eastwards towards Guge and Purang. For the art-historian, these are the most interesting manuscripts since their illustrations bear witnesses to the fusion of two or

17. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & G. BONANI, forthcoming.

18. E. STEINKELLNER 1994, p. 131-132.

19. D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994a, p. 445.

more artistic styles.²⁰ If KLIMBURG-SALTER's analysis is correct, and the early books imported from Central Tibet were indeed without illuminations, it is conceivable that the proportion of illustrated manuscripts at Tabo was much lower than previously assumed. For not only would the first generation lack miniatures, but cultural conservatism would probably also have prevented the sponsors of the immediate copies from introducing novel artistic components. In short, the library of Tabo may have included fewer illuminated manuscripts in its various states of growth, change and contraction than is typical of other slightly younger West Tibetan holdings.

Nevertheless, even if we are to accept the logic behind this argument, it would scarcely account for the almost complete absence of illustrated folios in the collection today. In total, among the 35,700 folios, no more than 60 miniatures have survived, concentrated on only ten text units, with roughly half of them belonging to a single *Pañcaviṃśati Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript. Particularly noteworthy, in this context, is the total lack of frontis folios, the very place where illuminations were traditionally painted. Perplexed by this improbable ratio, Paul HARRISON concluded that the collection must have been thoroughly picked over.²¹ We have no idea when this occurred, though it is likely to pre-date the 20th century. Neither FRANKE nor TUCCI, in the published accounts of their visits to Tabo in 1909 and 1933²², make any reference to illuminations in the manuscripts. Given the art-historical interest of both visitors, it is highly unlikely that they would have neglected mentioning them had they spotted any miniatures.

The reason why our three *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* miniatures escaped the ransacking eyes of those who plundered the collection is of course not known. The miniatures themselves are rather small and, in two instances, located on verso sides. In addition, there is the great length of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*. Originally, it must have consisted of no less than 220 folios. It may well be that they were simply overlooked in a hasty search or left behind as too insignificant.

20. D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994b, pp. 58-60.

21. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

22. A.H. FRANKE 1914, pp. 37-43; G. TUCCI 1935, pp. 86-89.

Restoration Efforts

We have seen that the current survival rate of the Tabo collection has been calculated at approximately 20%.²³ That is to say, on average no more than one fifth of the original size of any one manuscript is extant. The highest survival rate of a single manuscript so far encountered is 62%.²⁴ The survival rate of texts is somewhat higher, since the collection includes some very short works that are preserved in toto. Even if we take this into account, the ratio of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* is well above average. In total, the combined 106 folios of its three Tabo manuscripts represent 48% of the text as it is known to us from the *dKon brtsegs* sections of currently available *bKa' 'gyur* editions. Of the Bdp I, the largest of our three fragments, approximately 38% is extant. This is almost twice the survival rate for the manuscripts included in the collection as a whole. While we cannot interpret this high figure as an indicator of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*'s popularity in West Tibet, the fact that Tabo kept multiple copies suggests that it might have been more popular than others. We have seen that this holds true above all for the Śer phyin material, but applies also to some mDo mañ texts, such as the *Samādhirājasūtra* of which no less than eight copies have come to light.²⁵ On the other hand, one must not be misled by these statistics, since they do not tell us the whole story.

As I have noted in my description of the physical condition of the manuscripts, the majority of folios (87 units or 82%) belongs to Bdp I. Thirteen folios (almost 12%) belong to Bdp II and only eight (6%) to Bdp III.²⁶ Neither Bdp I, Bdp II nor Bdp III contain any information about the circumstances and dates of their compilation. Our knowledge of their mutual relationships is entirely derived from their physical appearance and content. Textual observations have proven particularly helpful in unraveling the developments that link Bdp I with Bdp II. The relationship between Bdp I and Bdp III is more complex and will be discussed in a different section.

23. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

24. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

25. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

26. For a detailed listing of the folios and their counterparts in the sTog Palace *bKa' 'gyur*, see the Chart in the Appendix.

I was first alerted to the close textual affinity of Bdp I and Bdp II when I began to collate their folios with the text in the sTog Palace edition. Very soon, it became apparent that there was no overlap between the two manuscripts and that all 13 folios of Bdp II fitted exactly into the gaps where Bdp I was incomplete. After a series of cross-checks against other editions, I have now come to conclude that Bdp II is a later production which was prepared to substitute missing folios of Bdp I that had been lost as a result of vandalism or curatorial neglect. Its folios pick up on the text exactly there where Bdp I ends, down to the word, syllable and yes, occasionally even to the letter. Bdp II folios abruptly end where the text of Bdp I resumes. In other words, Bdp II is a restoration manuscript that was produced in order to supplement an earlier but incomplete version of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*. It probably never had an identity, being conceived, as it were, merely as a filler and not as a complete manuscript on its own.

How do we know that Bdp II, and not Bdp I, is the restoration manuscript? There is one compelling reason. Most verso sides of Bdp II folios develop on the last three to four lines very irregular sentence and syllable intervals, where the spacing is adjusted (usually widened) in order to run the text to the bottom of the folio. In other words, where the volume of the substituting text is insufficient to cover the whole page, it is artificially stretched to connect with the first syllable on the recto side of the following folio. This became necessary because the scribe of Bdp II, probably fearful that he might run out of space elsewhere, reduced the intervals between syllables beyond the prevailing ratio of Bdp I, thereby creating surplus space towards the end. Since he did not want to let the substituting text end in the middle of the page, he extended it calligraphically to the bottom line. Because Bdp I does not show any signs of scribal manipulation where the two manuscripts meet, it must have been the original to which Bdp II adjusted, not *vice versa*.²⁷

27. Theoretically, the uneven syllable-distribution could also be the result of a division of labour between several persons working on the same manuscript. It is well known that larger manuscript productions were routinely prepared by more than one scribe. In those cases, the folios of the original copy are shared out among the copying team, with each scribe being allocated a certain number of pages. In order to achieve a seamless joint, scribes would often need to adjust their writing to connect to the folios copied by their colleagues. Hence, it is not inconceivable that the distribution irregularities observed in Bdp II might represent the points of transition where the contributions of two scribes meet. However, the following points speak against this interpretation. First, the paper-

In addition, there are a number of codicologic and paleographic characteristics, discussed below, which establish Bdp I as the older manuscript of the two.

We do not know whether the 13 Bdp II folios represent only a fraction of the original restoration effort or whether they approximate the total of replacement folios made. The original size of Bdp I must have been close to 220 folios. If we subtract the 97 surviving folios of Bdp I and Bdp II, we are left with well over one hundred folios unaccounted for. If the existing proportions (Bdp I: 84 folios; Bdp II: 13 folios) are anything to go by, only 20 to 30 folios may have been needed. Moreover, it will have been noticed that seven of the 13 restored folios belong to Chapter One. The beginning of a text is arguably the most vulnerable part of a manuscript and suffers most acutely from the effects of poor storage, hasty scanning and intentional maltreatment. In other words, once the loss in Chapter One was addressed and the occasional gaps in the remainder of the text filled, Bdp I might have been returned to the shelves in good condition. If we accept this course of events, the 13 folios of Bdp II would be nearly all that was produced during the substitution project, with the other lacunae resulting from subsequent pillaging and neglect. On the other hand, we cannot be certain that the restoration was a complete one. If the copy used for restoration itself had been damaged in the course of time, some of the current lacunae might pre-date the restoration effort.

In two places one gains the impression that the restoration project was never completed. First, at the end of Chapter Five (f. 100r9-10), there is a large gap where in the parallel passage in all other versions of the text (LSTJQNDF1F2) we meet with the chapter title *byams pa dan | sñiñ rje dan | dga' ba dan | btañ sñoms kyi le'u ste lña ba'o* ll. Since the space where this reference appears elsewhere is left blank, it is possible that the scribe intended to fill it in at a later stage, but never got around to it.

quality of Bdp I and Bdp II does not match. It is unlikely that disparate types of paper would be utilised in one and the same manuscript production. Second, all folios of Bdp II display similar paleographic traits and were probably written by the same hand. Third, the folio distribution is very uneven. For example, folio 96 belongs to Bdp I, folio 98 to Bdp II, folio 99 to Bdp I and folio 100 to Bdp II. I doubt that scribes would be allocated pages on such a piecemeal basis. In those cases where scribal collaboration on a single manuscript is recorded, the copying allocations tend to be more substantial. See H. EIMER: "Zwanzig Blätter des Urga-Kanjur in Stuttgart", ZAS 18 (1985): 208-221.

The gap itself spans almost two thirds of a line and provides sufficient room for a later insertion. The actual length of the blank might have been the result of a rough estimate or the outcome of a careful calculation, possibly from a count of the syllables in the original. In any event, because the scribe inserted two *ñis śad* in the centre of the lacuna, as if to separate two discrete spaces – one of which is traditionally left blank at chapter-endings – it is unlikely that we are dealing here with an oversight. On the contrary, the provision of the second gap to the left is probably the upshot of some, as yet unknown, design, traces of which have been detected in at least one other Tabo manuscript.²⁸ Second, on folio 162v8 we meet with a large lacuna to the right and left of a *bam po* reference. Empty space to the right of the *bam po* reference is to be expected, serving as a visual section-break. The lacuna to the left, however, is unusual. Elsewhere in Bdp II, in this space we find the heading *dkon mchog rtsegs pa chen po'i mdo'*.

What were the reasons behind these omissions? Let us recall that the scribe who worked on the Bdp II was engaged in restoration – not in composition – and had therefore very little freedom in the execution of his task. If the original source did contain the chapter and heading references, why should he decide to leave them out? Or, if they were not included in the original, how did he know where to position the lacunae and decide on their lengths? Perhaps he had intermittent access to a second copy against which he periodically cross-checked his text. He might have had doubt about the readings of the original, left two empty spaces, intending to return to them later. In the meantime, the project was aborted and the gaps forgotten.

It is also possible that the copyist had an exemplar before him which contained the gaps just as they appear in Bdp II today. In other words, he simply followed the original line by line, neither adding nor subtracting anything. This would accord with the conservatism that prevailed in the scribal tradition, even though we know that our scribe took elsewhere liberty with syllable-spacing for text to reach the bottom of verso sides. Perhaps, it is significant that the lacuna at the end of Chapter Five occurs on a recto side, the part of the folio that is usually free from tampering. While I am inclined to adopt this as the most likely explana-

28. P. Harrison, personal communication, January 1999.

tion, it is not fully satisfactorily, since it does not address the reason for its presence in the original.²⁹

The lacuna itself has important bearing on the recensional history of our manuscripts. If the gap existed already in the copy used for the restoration, this manuscript cannot have been the master-copy (*ma dpe*), since we know from other versions that this was complete. More likely, it would have been a sister or possibly a daughter copy of Bdp I. Just how close it was to the original master is not possible to ascertain, since neither has survived.

Do we have any idea when the restoration took place? Paleographic and codicologic evidence led SCHERRER-SCHAUB to place Bdp I among the oldest Tabo manuscripts, written in the 11th century.³⁰ This is confirmed by the design of the three miniatures, which is similar to styles current in West Tibet during the early centuries of the first millennium AD.³¹ We have no information about the circumstances in which the missing folios disappeared. Nor do we know for how long Bdp I was left incomplete. Orthographic conventions suggest that Bdp II was prepared in a period when archaisms had fallen out of use and classical spelling had become the norm. This would make Bdp II a post-13th century production, since most archaisms had disappeared in West Tibetan manuscripts by the middle of the 14th century.³²

Two dates, both rather late, spring to mind. First, there is the devastation of the temple at the hands of the soldiers of the Dogra general Zorawar Singh who invaded Spiti in 1839 during a campaign against Zaṅs dkar. Alternatively, the restoration could have taken place after the Dogra expedition against Tibet of 1849 when both the temple and the library were badly damaged. Because we have no evidence that would link Bdp II with either of these events, it is virtually impossible to favour one date over the other. Moreover, there may have been other

29. In this context, it is worth noting that long gaps towards the end of chapters or at the beginning of *bam po* divisions are not uncommon in West Tibetan manuscripts. In some cases, these lacunae span over 70% of the last line of a chapter or *bam po* section. However, my point here is that we have not only a very large physical gap, but also an omission of text which is present in all other known versions of the *Bodhisattvapitaka*.

30. C. Scherrer-Schaub, personal communication, August 1998.

31. D. Klimburg-Salter, personal communication, October 1998.

32. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming a.

attempts to destroy the collection of which we have no record.³³ The wall inscriptions at Tabo contain one explicit reference to a renovation project, where we learn that 46 years after its construction in 1042 Byañ chub 'od, who was the grandnephew of the founder Ye śes 'od, restored parts of the monastery.³⁴ The inscription does not say whether the renovation was prompted by exposure to violent aggression nor whether it involved manuscripts. Also the precise extent of the restoration is not noted. Art-historical research has revealed that the building activities were accompanied by an ambitious painting project in the cella, ambulatory and assembly hall.³⁵ This could be interpreted that the renovation of 1042 was part of a larger, possibly cyclical, maintenance programme.

The project itself could have been triggered by similar work that was carried out at Tholing a few years earlier. Here, as reported in the *mNa' ris rgyal rabs*, a major renovation effort was completed during the earth-dragon year (1026).³⁶ We have no knowledge about the events that led to the upgrading of the Tholing temple complex. Given the prosperity of the region and the Buddhist fervour of its rulers, it is conceivable that it represented the first phase of a larger, possibly centrally directed, pan-West Tibetan renovation initiative that was later extended to include also Tabo.³⁷ The Tabo collection itself might have been affected by the structural deterioration that prompted the restoration (a number of folios show clear water damage), though there is no evidence that the restoration involved work on the manuscripts.

The scorch marks found on some of the surviving Bdp I folios suggests that Bdp II was produced after parts of Bdp I had been consumed by fire. Two folios, in particular, bear traces of charring (fs. 34, 155). Bdp II does not show any sign of fire-damage. The cause of the fire that singed Bdp I is not known. It could have been started accidentally while the manuscripts were kept in the temple, or it could have been intentionally lit in order to destroy the collection. Since there is no

33. L. PETECH 1988, pp. 369-394.

34. E. STEINKELLNER & Ch. LUCZANITS, p. 258, in: KLIMBURG-SALTER 1997b. Alternative dates, proposed by L. PETECH, are 1008 and 1054.

35. E. STEINKELLNER 1997, p. 258; KLIMBURG-SALTER 1997b, p. 46.

36. R. VITALI 1997, p. 58.8-10.

37. For more detail about the renovation of Tholing, see: R. VITALI 1996, pp. 255-257.

obvious fire-damage to the buildings of the monastery³⁸, it is unlikely that the fire started in the temple itself. Steinkellner proposed that the burning took place away from the main structures, perhaps in the courtyard, and was part of a deliberate attempt to annihilate the manuscripts.³⁹ We have no information where, when or by whom this was done. Since also Bdp II shows some margin-damage, we know that it was produced prior to the last assault on the library. Because its damage does not match that of Bdp I, it must have been inflicted at a time when the collection was already in disorder. Tabo's geographic location, sandwiched between hostile Moslem rulers to the South and East for centuries, means that it could have been caught up in any number of campaigns, beginning with the raids of the Qarakhanid's in the eleventh century⁴⁰, the conquest by the Ladakhi general bKra śis rnam rgyal in the 16th century⁴¹, and stretching up to the events of the 19th century. Since we have no record of whether and how these military campaigns affected Tabo, it is not even possible to pinpoint the century, let alone the event that led to the partial destruction of our manuscripts. On orthographic grounds, Bdp II must have been produced after the 13th century; and on historical grounds, before the middle of the 19th century.

Finally, we should bear in mind that the restoration could have been prompted by ordinary wear and tear rather than cultural vandalism. Bdp I itself shows many traces of routine curatorial intervention, such as the (faulty) renumbering of folios (*Ga, gya bži* for *don bži*, *gya lña* for *don lña*, *gya drug* for *don drug* and *gya brgyad* for *don brgyad*), the insertion of decimal indicators in the margins ('+', 'l') and sporadic editorial emendation of the text (e.g., folio 205r10). While this suggests that at least portions of the library received occasional conservatorial maintenance, we do not know when or by whom it was carried out.⁴² Originally, none of the 106 *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* folios incorporated decimal indi-

38. E. STEINKELLNER 1994, p. 132; G. TUCCI 1935, pp. 21-121; A.H. FRANKE 1914, pp. 37-43; D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994a, pp. 21-38, 1997b, pp. 65-202.

39. E. STEINKELLNER 1994, p. 131-2.

40. L. PETECH 1977, p. 143.

41. L. PETECH 1977, p. 30.

42. Cf. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

cators other than the lettering *Ga*, *Ga/Na* and *Ga/Ma*.⁴³ Today, 41 folios, all belonging to Bdp I, include numerals in their margins. Because most of them are crudely drawn in a different ink and not proportionate in size to the other margin information, it is probable that they were added in the more recent history of the collection. Whatever the origin of these emendations, it is clear that the manuscripts were consulted for study and received at least sporadic curatorial care.⁴⁴

The Relationships between the Three Manuscripts

The restoration of Bdp I raises a number of interesting issues other than the date when it was carried out. For example, there is the textual relationship between Bdp I and Bdp II. In order to resolve their stemmatic affiliation, we need to learn more about the source(s) from which they were copied. Were both texts prepared from the same original? If they are derived from different manuscripts, what was the recensional relationship between their respective source texts? If they go back to the same text, where was this restoration copy kept? How was it identified after all those years that separate Bdp I and Bdp II, and by whom?

43. For details on the pagination system, see: E. STEINKELLNER 1994, p. 125-128 and C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & G. BONANI, forthcoming.

44. If we accept that Bdp II is the outcome of conservatorial care aimed at restoring the complete text of Bdp I, we need to examine whether this project was an isolated case, or whether restoration was also attempted with other Tabo manuscripts. Strictly speaking, this cannot be resolved without a comprehensive study of the material in question and lies therefore outside the current investigation.

There is, however, a short-cut that will give us some idea about the extent of similar restoration efforts at Tabo. I have noted earlier that irregular and implausibly wide spacing on the last three/four lines on a verso side signals restoration activity. Thus, spacing inconsistencies at the bottom of verso folios become a rough indicator of text restoration in the collection. With this in mind, I scanned the remaining *dKon brisegs* folios of Tabo 299 and Tabo 252 (non Bdp) available to me. The result was disappointing; I found only one case (Tabo 252, *Ka*, f. 90v) that displays unambiguous spacing irregularities towards the bottom of the folio. Moreover, without locating first the content of this folio in the sTog Palace manuscript, we cannot even be certain that they are the result of a restoration. Let us bear in mind, however, that my sample was small (44 out of 35,700 folios) and that even those few folios might contain restoration efforts that escaped detection, because they were prepared by scribes of greater skill, who managed to distribute the text material more evenly. The issue of restoration is clearly important, since it sheds light on the evolution of the collection and will need to be addressed more systematically in future work.

First, I wish to examine the evidence itself. Recensional similarities between Bdp I and Bdp II suggest that both were copied, if not from the same manuscript, so at least from two copies belonging to the same recensional tradition. How can we be so sure of this? Let us recall that there is no textual overlay between the two manuscripts. First, both manuscripts exhibit a similar recensional pattern *vis-à-vis* Them spans ma and Tshal pa. In the majority of cases, Bdp I and Bdp II run very close to Them spans ma, while in others they either agree with Tshal pa or introduce their own readings. Although such concurrence cannot be conclusive on its own (there may have been other traditions in West Tibet sharing this recensional pattern), it allows us to rule out the later post-15th century editions (both Them spans ma and Tshal pa) as the source of Bdp II. Second, both manuscripts exhibit a number of recensional peculiarities that have no parallels in other editions. The most important example is the inclusion of the heading *dkon mchog rtsegs pa chen po'i mdo'* co-marking the beginning of six distinct sections (Bdp I, fs. 27r9, 40v3, 118r3, 187r6, 198r8-9; Bdp II, f. 14v5).⁴⁵

In all probability, we are looking here at a remnant of an earlier tradition that failed to gain acceptance in the later editions of the *bKa' 'gyur*. By the time Bdp II was copied from the original, the whole phrase had become fossilised and was taken over in its entirety. This is indicated by the inclusion of the non-classical *'a-chuñ* after the word *mdo* at the end of the heading and the archaic spelling of *rtsegs* for *brtsegs*. The retention of the postscripted *'a-chuñ* is particularly significant, since it directs us to a potential clue about the date when the restoration was carried out. As discussed above, Bdp II is consistently written in classical orthography virtually free from archaisms. The only exception is the enclitic *'a-chuñ* which is affixed to a handful of syllables, including *g.yo* and *dge*. Since the postscripted *'a-chuñ* is also found in Bdp I, it indicates that the restoration was carried out at a time when it was still a feature of Tibetan orthography. Had it been executed after all archaisms fell out of use, it is very likely that the spelling of the heading (as well as of the other syllables where the *'a-chuñ* is found) would have been standardised to conform to classical orthography, just like the rest of the text. In

45. Cf. folio 162v where we have a *bam po* reference, but no *dKon brtsegs* heading. Here, in the place where the other folios give the heading to the left of the *bam po* reference, we find blank space.

other words, Bdp II was copied in the period of transition that bridged pre-classical and classical orthographic conventions.

If both copies are derived from the same source, we need to ask ourselves where this original was kept in the intervening years that separated the production of Bdp I and Bdp II. Assuming that the restoration project post-dated the manufacture of Bdp I by more than a century which, on orthographic grounds, seems likely, for reasons of retrieval, the restoration-original would have been included in a relatively well-organised and stable repository. Moreover, somebody at Tabo must have retained a record of the location of the original. In view of the geographic isolation of West Tibet from the central districts, it is probable that the restoration-original was kept at a temple or monastery in Guge/Purang.⁴⁶

46. A plausible candidate for such a repository would be Tholing monastery, near Tsaparang, the capital of the kings of western Tibet. Tabo, like Tholing, was a royal monastery that counted among its inmates and patrons members of the monarchy. Inscriptional evidence discovered by TUCCI bears testimony to the intimate links that existed between these two sites (TUCCI 1935, pp. 112-3). Tholing itself must have ranked among the most important centres of Buddhist learning of the day. For many years, it was the residence of Rin chen bzañ po who played an pivotal role in the distribution of Buddhist texts to adjacent temples (SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming b). In 1026, the whole complex underwent extensive remodelling which was fully funded by the royal family. Atiśa himself is recorded to have stayed at Tholing on his way to Central Tibet in 1038 (FRANKE 1926, p. 170). Tibetan histories of the region report that his visit was not an isolated case but that Tholing was populated from early on with learned monks from India and Tibet who engaged in the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist texts. In 1076, the rulers of Guge (rTse lde (1060-1080) and his uncle Źi ba 'od) invited Indian, Kashmiri and Tibetan savants to attend what became known as the Council (*chos 'khor*) of Tholing. This council, which, according to some sources, lasted for three years (VITALI 1996, pp. 319-21), brought together the élite of Indo-Tibetan scholasticism and represented the high point of a century of artistic, religious and literary achievement in West Tibet. In particular, it provided a powerful intellectual and artistic impulse to Buddhist activities in Guge and contributed to the continued engagement of the local monks in projects of the region. Because most of the early activity centered around the translation of Indian Buddhist texts, it is likely that the production and distribution of manuscripts remained a focal concern for quite some time. Thus, while we have no information about the actual content of Tholing library, it is probable that it housed one of the largest collections of Buddhist literature in West Tibet.

Tholing's centrality to Buddhist activity Guge and its close ties with Tabo would render it the ideal repository for our restoration-original. Although we have no evidence that confirms this hypothesis (in principle, the original could

Now that we have ascertained the connection between Bdp I and Bdp II, I propose to turn our attention to Bdp III and analyse its relationship *vis-à-vis* Bdp I and Bdp II. In total, only nine folios of Bdp III have survived. Five of them show textual overlap with either Bdp I or Bdp II. The extent to which the content of the folios overlies varies from a few lines (Bdp II, f. 11r8-11v10 and Bdp III, f. 62r1-62v2) to several pages (Bdp I, fs. 23v3-25v2, 44r1-44v2, 198r2-198v10 and Bdp III, 75r1-76v7, 97r6-97v7, 62r1-62v6). By comparing the passages that are common to Bdp I, Bdp II and Bdp III, and checking them against the readings found in JLQS⁴⁷ and T, I reached the following conclusions. Apart from a few transmissional variants and diverging orthographic styles, the text of Bdp II and Bdp III is virtually identical. I noted not a single variant that would allow us to posit a different recensional affiliation for Bdp II and Bdp III. I found also no case where either of them preserves an independent reading that is not attested in Them spañs ma and Tshal pa. However, in view of the limitations of my evidence (the overlay consists of only 12 and 9 lines respectively), neither of these observations should be given too much weight.

Comparison between Bdp I and Bdp III turned out to be more rewarding and revealed a number of interesting differences. For example, in Chapter Two (Bdp I, f. 24v4) we meet with the following sentence: *lam der myi gañ tsam du me tog gis chald par bkram mo*. This reading is also found in J, L and Q. In Bdp III (76r1), the same sentence reads: *lam der myi gañ tsam du me tog gi chald par bkañ no*. This version is supported

have been kept in any number of places adjacent to Tabo), it is difficult to think of a place similarly equipped as Tholing. For centuries the focal point of scholarly activity in Western Tibet and in receipt of steady financial support from the royal family, there would have been few institutions rivalling its library in contents and resources.

Such a centrality of Tholing to West Tibetan manuscript manufacture echoes an hypothesis developed by KLIMBURG-SALTER in connection with research on manuscript illuminations. Commenting on the uniformly high quality of the calligraphy of the manuscripts discovered in West Tibet, she concludes that the writing and copying workshops of western Tibet must have been under some form of central control (KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994b, p. 441).

47. The *sigla* used for the printed editions and manuscripts consulted in this study are those proposed by Paul HARRISON and Helmut EIMER in "Kanjur and Tanjur Sigla: A Proposal for Standardisation", in *Tibetan Studies*, Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995, vol. 1, ed. by Helmut Krasser *et al*, Wien 1997, pp. xvii-xx.

by S, F1 and F2. The Sanskrit for *me tog gis chald par bkram pa* was probably *puṣpābhikīrṇa* (Mvy 6059), meaning “bestrewn with flowers”. The form *me tog gi chald par bkañ pa*, best rendered as “evenly filled with flowers” (where *me tog gi* is an error for *me tog gis* as is attested in N (Ga, f. 41v1)), and possibly representing Skt. *puṣpābhipūrṇa*, is not recorded in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*. From a text-critical point of view, *bkañ no* may very well constitute a graphically related inner-tibetan *lectio faciliior* for *kbram mo*. Since *me tog gis chald par bkram pa* became apparently the translation for *puṣpābhikīrṇa* prescribed after the Great Revision, it is to be preferred here.

If this is the case, the passages preserved in Bdp III must represent an unrevised translation that was either prepared before the standardisation of the 8th/9th century or was carried out in an area that remained unaffected by its prescriptions. Significantly, this is not an isolated case. In a verse in Chapter Eleven we meet with another instance where Bdp III appears to contain a pre-revision reading. Here, Bdp I (f. 198v5-6) reads *thos nas gnod sems spoñ bar 'gyur* against Bdp III (62v3) *thos nas gnod pa spoñ bar 'gyur*. Once again, the *Mahāvvyutpatti* confirms the interpretation that is found in Bdp I, supplying *vyāpādāt prativiratih* for *gnod sems spoñ ba* (Mvy 1697), but does not list a Sanskrit equivalent for Bdp III *gnod pa spoñ ba*. At first sight, it is tempting to conclude that Bdp I contains also here the revised (and preferred) rendering. However, in this case the situation is more ambiguous, since Bdp I is the only version that gives *gnod sems spoñ ba* and it is not inconceivable that we are looking at a simple copying mistake where a common word (*gnod sems*) is substituted for a less common word (*gnod pa*).

The last significant discrepancy between Bdp I and Bdp III revolves around the *Ratnakūṭa* references cited above. The sixth occurrence (f. 198r8-9) is located in a passage that has a counterpart in Bdp III. Here, however, the reference is not given (f. 62r5). As far as I can see, this can have only one reason. In Bdp I the heading *dkon mchog rtsegs pa chen po'i mdo'* is supplied every time a *bam po* comes to an end. In fact, it occurs invariably in conjunction with *bam po* references. In the relevant passage in Bdp III, the *bam po* reference that divides the text of Bdp I (*bam po bcu bdun pa*) is not found. There is no indication why the *bam po* reference is missing here, though it is also left out in the Qianlong, Lithang, Derge and Phug brag *bKa' 'gyurs*. Since the heading does not occur on its own, perhaps the omission of the *bam po* reference in Bdp III precluded the inclusion of the *dKon brtsegs* heading. In any event, it

demonstrates that Bdp III was based on an altogether different recension that did not feature either the *bam po* reference or the *dKon brtsegs* heading in the first place. Let us recall that it is not found in any version (with or without *bam po* reference) other than Bdp I and its cognate restoration folios of Bdp II. This turns the presence/absence of the heading into a major recensional characteristic which corroborates our observations in the previous section where we proposed the independence of Bdp I. By implication, it also associates the inclusion of *bam po* references with the 8th/9th-century revision activity, since they are not found in the unrevised Bdp III.

Historical Considerations

This discourse leads us to another area of enquiry, namely, the history of our *Bodhisattvapitaka* manuscripts. The exact dates of their production are not known. Nor do we possess any information about the circumstances in which they were prepared. We move to more secure grounds when we turn to their relative chronology. Since Bdp II is the outcome of a restoration effort aimed at re-constituting Bdp I, it must have been completed after Bdp I. We have seen that this is confirmed by paleographic and codicologic research. While it is not possible to link either of the manuscripts to any one century, orthographic differences suggest that their productions were separated by at least three centuries. This calculation is based on the assumption that Bdp I is a 11th/12th century manuscript, and that most of its orthographic conventions did not persist beyond the 14th century.

The chronological relationship between Bdp I and Bdp III is more complex. Since Bdp I displays traces of terminologic revision and contains structural additions that are not found in Bdp III, but is otherwise identical, it would seem that Bdp I postdates Bdp III. It may have descended from the same archetype, but was later checked against another version, leading to the inclusion of the *bam po* and *dKon brtsegs* markers, or it represents a revised copy of Bdp III. Either way, Bdp I and Bdp III are independent from the other major *bKa' 'gyur* editions. Because they share many orthographic features, it is tempting to date them to roughly the same period, but we have seen that orthography is no reliable guide to the age of a text. Differences in paper quality, format and margin signature suggest that they belonged to different projects and were probably not prepared in the same location.

Several of its codicologic features link Bdp I with artistic and paleographic currents that prevailed in West Tibet during the 11th and 12th centuries. Beyond this, the manuscript reveals very little about its origin. Our best hope lies in historical data that is available from other sources. Inscriptional evidence suggests that the temple of Tabo was founded in 996 and renovated in 1042. Assuming that the Tabo manuscripts were actually created at the temple, or nearby on behalf of the temple authorities, the late tenth century becomes our *terminus post quem*. Since Bdp I contains illuminations that betray the artistic style characteristic of the Guge/Purang school, it is certain to be a local production. Tradition reports that Rin chen bzañ po furnished the temple with its first set of manuscripts. It is improbable that our manuscripts belonged to this initial supply of books since his donations consisted only of Śer Phyin and mDo mañ materials. Multi-volume *dKon brtsegs* manuscripts are not mentioned in any of our sources, though they may have been presented afterwards. Political upheaval in West Tibet during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries depleted the resources of the population and led to a number of violent raids on the monastery and its library, some apparently aimed at the destruction of the manuscripts themselves. In short, I doubt that significant amounts of books were added to the collection after the 17th/18th century, when the fortunes of the region were clearly on the decline.⁴⁸

SCHERRER-SCHAUB's codicologic investigations into the origin and affiliation of the Tabo documents confirm these chronological parameters.⁴⁹ Folio format, paper quality, orthography and ornamental miscellanea prompted her to date the Bdp I fragment to the 11th/12th century.⁵⁰ This is corroborated by KLIMBURG-SALTER's art-historical analysis of the miniatures.⁵¹ It would also account for the generally high production standard which modern writers have often associated with manuscripts of that period.⁵²

The thirteen folios that belong to Bdp II were part of a restoration project aimed at reconstituting the full text of Bdp I. Until further evi-

48. L. PETECH 1988, pp. 361-368; L. PETECH 1977, pp. 57-152, esp. 138-152; E. STEINKELLNER 1994, pp. 132-133.

49. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming a.

50. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & G. BONANI, forthcoming.

51. D. Klimburg-Salter, personal communication, October 1998.

52. E.g., D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994b, pp. 54-6.

dence has come to light, I propose to place Bdp II into the 14th to 16th centuries. Our examination of the restoration project has demonstrated that it cannot have been prepared much later. First, paleographic research has indicated that the vast majority of Tabo texts are pre-16th century productions. Second, it would seem unlikely that Bdp II was produced after the conquest of Guge by the King of Ladakh in 1630, since the economic and political reverberations of this defeat must have curtailed large-scale religious sponsorship for many years to come.⁵³ Third, since the manuscript itself is not in pristine condition, it must have been included in the collection before the last great devastation(s) of the library in the 19th century. For how long we do not know. The rather sloppy production of Bdp II suggests that the restoration was either executed in a hurry or, perhaps more likely, that it was part of an insufficiently-funded project that had to make do with inferior materials and ill-trained scribes. Thus, its production would have taken place after the Golden Age of West Tibet when the region had grown into a prosperous principality and before the 17th century. This would narrow down the period of origin to the 14th/15th centuries.

The dates of Bdp III are less certain. Paper quality, format and margin content suggest that the production of this manuscript was part of a separate project. Judging by its external appearance, it could belong to the first phase of West Tibetan manuscript production.⁵⁴ Art-historical and codicologic studies have come to associate small folio sizes, low numbers of text-lines and single *mgo yig* with the 11th/12th centuries.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Bdp III lacks several characteristics that are normally included in folios of this period, such as horizontal ligatures, ornamental symbols, colour miniatures and binding-holes. At the same time, it contains a number of orthographic features that have been observed in older materials and belong to the pre-classical period. Since I have found no signs of excessive or overzealous application these would appear to be genuine.⁵⁶ While the absence of such misapplication cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for the antiquity of a manuscript (the imitation

53. For a magistral account of the history of West Tibet and the events leading up to the downfall of Guge in the 17th century, see: L. PETECH 1988, pp. 369-394, cf. also L. PETECH 1997.

54. J. PANGLUNG 1994, pp. 162-3; SCHERRER-SCHAUB, forthcoming a.

55. C. SCHERRER-SCHAUB & G. BONANI, forthcoming; D. KLIMBURG-SALTER 1994a, pp. 41-53; 1994b, pp. 62-3.

56. Cf. H. TAUSCHER 1994, p. 176; T. TOMABECHI, forthcoming.

might have been carried out by a more skilful scribe), at least it does not rule it out. We have seen that genuine archaisms ceased to be employed by the end of the 13th century when the large-scale production of manuscripts, which for practical reasons required greater orthographic standardisation, began. To sum up, if its orthography reflects spelling conventions that prevailed when the manuscript was prepared, we can conclude that Bdp III was produced before the 14th century.

This, however, does not tell us anything about the historical context in which it was prepared. It is well known that classical and pre-classical styles coexisted for several centuries in the oasis towns of Central Asia. The Tunhuang documents are a good example where we find specimens of both styles side by side. The majority of the Tunhuang Tibetica is thought to date to the 9th and 10th centuries. The caves themselves were sealed around 1032/3. In other words, the end of the Tunhuang era coincides with the beginning of the first wave of manuscript productions in West Tibet. SCHERRER-SCHAUB has shown that the manuscripts from Tabo share many codicologic features with their counterparts in Tunhuang, and could therefore represent the continuation of an ancient manuscript tradition. As a result, we cannot rule out that pre-classical and classical styles coexisted also at Tabo. This means that orthographic archaisms cease to be a reliable indicator for dating manuscripts that were written before the 14th century.

These deliberations allow us now deduce the following for our Bdp III fragment: If we accept its archaisms to be genuine, we may assume that it is a pre-14th century production. Some of its codicologic features, supported by the use of pre-revision terminology, suggest that it was written well before the 14th century and may go back to the 11th century. Other characteristics rule out such an early date, most notably the absence of binding-circles and lack of horizontal ligatures. Philological analysis has revealed that its text preserves readings that predate terms found in Bdp I. Thus, it might have been produced before Bdp I, but it could equally well constitute a later copy of an old recensional tradition.

There are many reasons why the dating of a manuscript is significant: it affects our understanding of the historical setting in which it was created, it defines the geographic context of production and stratifies the doctrinal developments enshrined in its propositions. And yet, we must guard ourselves from overrating the importance of the physical age of a document. For there are many areas of research which are not directly influenced by chronological issues. From the text-critical point of view,

for one, the actual date of production is far less relevant than the recensional traits embedded in its text and their stemmatic link to other surviving witnesses. We noted already the usefulness of text-criticism in establishing the internal connections between our manuscripts. In the coming section, I shall resort again to text-critical methodology in order to unravel their relationship with the main recensions of the *bKa' 'gyur*.

Text-Critical Observations

From the very outset (and, in particular, since the IATS Fagernes conference in 1992), the Tabo Manuscript Preservation Project included scholars with a strong interest in the history of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*. Because of the predominantly canonical content of the collection, and the great promises its manuscripts held for *bKa' 'gyur* research, teams of philologists soon made their way to the remote valley in Spiti where Tabo is located. TAUSCHER, TOMABECHI, SCHERRER-SCHAUB and, in particular, HARRISON, all made important contributions by mapping out the stemmata of selected Tabo manuscripts and by defining the historical context of their production.

In a nutshell, their findings can be summed up as follows: All investigations have come to the conclusion that the Tabo material represents a line of transmission that is independent of the major canonical recensions (both for the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*) and reflects versions of the texts certain to predate the proto-canonical compilations of the 14th century.⁵⁷ Its manuscripts proffer many readings of their own that are preferable to the shared readings of all other exemplars. These may derive from versions that had been re-checked against Sanskrit manuscripts or from Tibetan predecessors chronologically close to the original translations.⁵⁸ While it was relatively straightforward to disentangle the stemma of the *bsTan 'gyur* material, unraveling of the *bKa' 'gyur* threads turned out to be more complicated, mainly due to the complexity of its lines of transmission. The picture that emerges shows that the Tabo material is very close to the Them *spaṅs ma* line, but not itself a Them *spaṅs ma* derivative, since it follows on many occasions Tshal *pa* readings against transmissional errors contained in Them *spaṅs ma* witnesses.

57. H. TAUSCHER 1994, p. 181.

58. P. HARRISON, forthcoming.

Thus far, practically all new studies have confirmed this bidirectional pattern of reference to the principal *bKa' 'gyur* lines. Corroborated by orthographic archaisms and a number of peculiar readings that remain unattested elsewhere, we can be confident to have found in the Tabo texts descendants from an independent and older tradition that predates all known proto-canonical and canonical compilations. However, until more is known about the history of Tabo monastery and its collection, the foundations for our conclusions remain thin since they are always text-specific. In total, only about one dozen works have been studied, and while they all point in the same direction, one cannot rule out that future investigations may call for a qualification of current thinking.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I shall now develop my stemmatic examination of the three *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* fragments. For the time being, this analysis has to be limited to the content of Chapter Eleven. I have selected Chapter Eleven as the starting point for my investigation, since it is here that my text-critical work has progressed furthest, including the readings of nine canonical versions: London (L), sTog (S), Tokyo (T), Lithang (J), Qianlong (Q), Derge (D), Narthang (N), Phug brag (F1, F2) and one Tunhuang fragment (TH). In total, 35% of Chapter 11 is preserved, spread over three manuscripts (Bdp I, Bdp II and Bdp III). In proportion to the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka's* overall survival rate (48%), it is therefore under-represented by approximately one quarter. Nevertheless, because the surviving passages of Chapter Eleven contain a number of key variants, it is quite legitimate to make it the basis for our analysis.

Comparison of the Tabo readings (A) with the edited versions of the canonical compilations reveals a fairly complicated picture of multiple relations. In order to bring clarity into this web of interconnections, I have developed my examination around a number of key issues that were brought out in previous text-critical work on the collection.

The underlying currents are best encapsulated in a set of questions. How close are L, S and T to A? Are there many readings where A does not agree with L, S and T, corroborating A's independence from Them spans ma? Does A contain unique variants (*lectio singularis*) unattested in other edited witnesses? Are there instances where A agrees either with L, S or T against the other two? Does A share indicative errors with either L, S or T? To what degree does A lack the transmissional corruptions found in LST and carry in their stead either independent readings

or variants found in the Tshal pa witnesses (JQN)? Can we detect any major recensional differences between A and F1 or F2?

Even the most cursory of inspections reveals immediately that A is very close to the Them spañs ma versions. With a few exceptions where A either improves on corrupted readings found in LST, or proposes alternative independents, A, L, S and T run virtually parallel. And yet, since we find in a number of passages evidence of recensional variation A cannot be an immediate descendent from the Them spañs ma prototype. All in all, the surviving folios of Chapter Eleven contain seven instances that show significant disagreement between A and S, with A's reading usually supported by one or more representatives of the Tshal pa line. In addition, I have noticed about two dozen transmissional variants shared by Bdp I and Bdp III. While these do not affect the reading of the text substantially, they point to a degree of recensional communality. Typically, they include trivial spelling variants (mainly affecting prescripts, superscripts and postscripts), omissions of case particles, numerals and items in enumerations as well as the insertion of additional, but non-essential syllables (e.g., *ni*, *de*, *zes*, *dañ*).⁵⁹ In the majority of cases, the Tshal pa readings shared by A are superior to those found in LST, and are probably the outcome of inadvertent copying/editing slips during the Them spañs ma production, or indeed corruptions introduced into later copies.

To begin with, I propose to look at those cases where A agrees with either Them spañs ma or Tshal pa. In order to eliminate inconsequential unique readings, we need to look at those cases where the Tabo manuscripts differ from L, S or T against the other editions.

First, we have a number of discrepancies involving homophones. An interesting case is found in A on folio 201v5 where we read *rtsod pa'i rñog pa* (in agreement with TJDNF1) against S which has *rtson pa'i rñog pa* (F2 reads *dus pa'i rñog* shadowing Q that gives *dus nan pa'i rñog pa*). While *rtsod pa* is clearly an improvement over *rtson pa, rñog*

59. It is also worth drawing attention to the distribution-ratio of the variant readings, since they are not equally spread over the eleven folios. The vast majority of transmissional differences are found on folio 210 (*Ga/Ma ++ bcu*), recto and verso. This folio teems with readings that are plainly wrong and absurd. On the previous folios, most of the variants are recensional in nature, that is to say, they are usually substantial and attested in one or more of the other editions. While this may not be of great importance, other than indicating the scribe's increasing slackness as he copied out the manuscript, it does remind us of the human factor involved in the production of manuscripts.

editions, where texts with different histories lie side by side representing strands of transmission that often have little in common.⁶³

Then, we have several cases where A either omits syllables that are included in the other versions of the text or where it adds material that is not found elsewhere. By their very nature, omissions and additions are difficult to evaluate, though I believe that I have found three cases where the situation is relatively clear.

First, in the context of the analytic knowledge of designations (*dharmapratīsamvid*), S includes, in a list of inclinations arising in sentient beings, against most other editions (JQNDLF1F2, but not T), the following phrase: *nañ dañ phyi rol tu 'dod chags med pa dañ*. Since this phrase occurs also in T, it is safe to assume that we are looking here at a genuine Them spañs ma reading. The Tabo manuscript (Bdp I, f. 205r7), because it does not agree with S and T, but follows the Tshal pa version of this sentence, must be independent of Them spañs ma at this point. Once again we note that L reads against S and T but with the Tshal pa editions. Since the insertion of *nañ dañ phyi rol tu 'dod chags med pa dañ* complements an argument that is otherwise defective, it is safe to adapt it here as the preferred reading.

The second example concerns the phrase *stod pa'i tshig śes* which is found in STND, but which is not included in either A (Bdp I, f. 205v6) or in LJQF1F2. Because S and T share this variant, we may infer that the inclusion of *stod pa'i tshig śes* constitutes a Them spañs ma reading. For a third time, L differs and follows Tshal pa. Again, context suggests that Them spañs ma has the correct version, since *stod pa'i tshig śes* complements *smad pa'i tshig śes* and integrates it into the polarised structure that dominates the rest of the paragraph: | *bsdus ba'i tshig śes* | *rgyas pa'i tshig śes* | *smad pa'i tshig śes* | ***stod pa'i tshig śes*** | *'das pa'i tshig śes* | *ma 'oñs ba'i tshig śes* | *da ltar byuñ ba'i tshig śes* |. Because Tabo (A) follows here Tshal pa (JQ) against Them spañs ma (ST), it cannot be a direct descendant of either of them.

My last example touches on a recensional omission/addition that has already been discussed. It is the *bam po bcu bdun pa* reference that is given in A on folio 198r9 of Bdp I. We have seen that in the *Bodhi-sattvapiṭaka* the *bam po* indicators occur only in the Them spañs ma versions. Thus, their inclusion in A aligns our Tabo manuscripts with

63. For more detail on the pre-history of the *bKa' 'gyur*, see: P. SKILLING 1997, in particular, pp. 102-104.

the Them spañs ma readings of LST. We know that this is not true for other texts. In the *Drumakinnaraparipṛcchā* and *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthisamādhisūtra*, for example, the insertion of *bam po* markers is the work of the Tshal pa.⁶⁴

What have we learned from these examples? First, it has become clear, I think, that A must be independent of both Them spañs ma and Tshal pa. To begin with, we had two cases where A reads with Tshal pa against Them spañs ma. Next, we had a reading where A appeared intimately associated with Them spañs ma. This connection is further underlined by the numerous other (minor) cases found throughout the text where A closely shadows LST. Because A agrees sometimes with Tshal pa and sometimes with Them spañs ma, it cannot be derived from either version. Second, we noted a number of unique readings in sTog which sensitised us to the various factors – oral and scriptural – that affected the transmission process. Third, on two occasions when A agreed with Tshal pa, L shared the readings of the Tabo manuscript.

The discrepancy within the Them spañs ma lineage could have been brought about by the spatial and temporal distance that separates both S and T from the original Them spañs ma manuscript(s). S migrated from Gyantse via Bhutan to Ladakh and T was prepared relatively late in the 19th century (1858-1878). If we accept that such factors influenced the course of *bKa' 'gyur* formation, we would have in L a witness that is significantly closer to the Them spañs ma original than the other two descendents. In other words, L agrees here with A against ST because it was produced in the same West Tibetan text-milieu as the Tabo material and, left behind in isolation, escaped contamination through later sources.

Next, I propose to turn our attention to those readings that are only found in A. This will tell us whether A's independence is exclusively defined through its relationship *vis-à-vis* Them spañs ma and Tshal pa, or whether A contains variants that set it apart from all other editions. In order to assess the status of these readings, we need to examine their origin, in particular if they are testimony of recensional improvement, possibly achieved through reference to another source. Again, leaving orthographic variants and trivial omissions aside, I have noticed three discrepancies that are worthy of our attention. The first case, involving substitution of the phrase *gnod pa spon ba* for *gnod sems spon ba* has

64. P. HARRISON 1992, p. xliv, n71.

already been referred to. *Gnod sems spon̄ ba* is cited in the *Mahāvvyutpatti* as *vyāpādāt prativiratih̄*, but no equivalent is given for *gnod pa spon̄ ba*. Although it is tempting to see in *gnod sems spon̄ ba* an improvement over *gnod pa spon̄ ba*, we have to be careful. First, *gnod sems spon̄ ba* is a *lectio singularis*, and therefore does not carry much weight on its own. Second, because it is a common term in Buddhist literature, *gnod sems* could simply be a *lectio facilior* for the original and correct *gnod pa*.

Another unique reading is found on folio 201v5-10 where A inserts the terminative particle *du* after the syllables *tshul bzin*. For example, in line 9 we read *tshul bzin du 'jug pa 'di dan̄ | tshul bzin du mthoñ ba 'di dan̄ | ji lta ba bzin du mthoñ ba'i rgyu mthuñ pa 'di* against *tshul bzin du 'jug pa 'di dan̄ | tshul bzin mthoñ ba 'di dan̄ | ji lta ba bzin du mthoñ ba'i rgyu mthuñ pa 'di* found in all other versions. The insertion of *du* renders the sentence structures perfectly parallel and picks up on matching phrases in the preceding sections. Nevertheless, because the principle *praestat lectio difficilior* would favour *tshul bzin mthoñ ba* over *tshul bzin du mthoñ ba*, it is possible that this too could be a mechanical error.

Finally, there is the *Ratnakūṭa* reference *dkon mchog rtsegs pa chen po'i mdo'* which is only found in A. The size, nature and positioning of the reference allow us to rule out a transmissional blunder. Since it is not included in any other version of the text, it is our best piece of evidence yet for A's independence from both Them spañs ma and Tshal pa.

If we now take a step back from our data and examine how the Tabo versions fit in the overall stemma of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur*, it will be helpful to return to the questions that we raised earlier. We asked ourselves whether there is sufficient evidence to determine the position of A *vis-à-vis* Them spañs ma and Tshal pa. We also enquired into the relationship between A, L, S and T, and sought to establish if there is a connection with the two Phug brag versions and the Tunhuang documents.

In view of the close concurrence of ALST, it seems certain that all four versions originated in a shared textual milieu, possibly stemming from a common West Tibetan ancestor. S features a number of unique readings, most of which, upon examination, turned out to be transmissional variants. In three cases, L deviated from S and T, following A and the Tshal pa witnesses instead. This would seem to suggest that, for reasons cited above, A is recensionally somewhat closer to L than to the other two Them spañs ma versions. On the other hand, we know that A cannot be derived from Them spañs ma itself, since it agrees in a

number of cases with the Tshal pa lineage. We looked at three examples featuring substantial omissions/ additions. In two cases, A read with Tshal pa, in one case with Them spañs ma. Next, we had three instances where A gives independent readings. While two of these were not conclusive on their own, the third, consisting of repeated *Ratnakūṭa* references clearly was.

Just where its readings come from is unclear. The complexity of the situation is exemplified by the variant-spellings found in the phrase *rtson pa'i rñog pa* (S), *rtsod pa'i rñog pa* (ATJQNDF1F2) and *rtsod pa'i sñog pa* (L). On the one hand, because A does not agree with either S or L (even though S and L differ themselves), but with Tshal pa and Phug brag, A cannot be directly descended from the Them spañs ma manuscript(s). On the other hand, because in most other readings it is very close to both S, T and in particular to L, it cannot belong to the Tshal pa lineage either. The most likely scenario remains that it was derived from an earlier recension of a translation which was related to the predecessor of the Them spañs ma manuscript(s). The exact recensional position of this hyparchetype is not known. Evidence from Pelliot 977, which deviates substantially from all manuscripts and editions, indicates that it is unrelated to the version from Tunhuang.⁶⁵ Bdp III is the oldest surviving descendant. Once copied from the hyparchetype during the 11th/12th-century cultural revival of West Tibet, it was left behind at Tabo which by then had become a major hub of religious activity in the region. Here it remained isolated and forgotten. Bdp I belongs to the same lineage, but, showing traces of revision, is somewhat later. Bdp II is a restoration manuscript, probably based on a sister or daughter copy of Bdp I, that was produced between the 14th and 16th century.

What then is the relationship between the other editions consulted for this paper? D and S agree in most cases, as we have come to expect from

65. Note, however, that the overlap between Pelliot 997 and A is very small. In fact, it amounts to no more than one folio in both A (f. 210r1-210v10) and Pelliot (fs. 4r4-5r4). Throughout this folio, there is not a single line where both versions agree completely. Pelliot 977 substitutes words, rephrases entire clauses and introduces new material. In my view, it is almost certain that Pelliot 977 represents an entirely different translation, probably drafted from another Sanskrit manuscript. But this is another story.

other text-critical studies.⁶⁶ Apart from one omission/addition, and a number of *lectiones singulares* in S, both versions run virtually parallel. F1 and F2 are very similar to each other, sometimes agreeing with Tshal pa, sometimes with Them spañs ma. Because I have not found any indicative errors in the sections examined, we cannot assume that they are copies of the same manuscript. This, however, was never a real possibility, since both versions vary in size (the mDo sde version is by 29 folios shorter than the *dKon brtsegs* version). We noted two cases where N agrees with Them spañs ma (ST) against Tshal pa, which points to a degree of textual conflation in N. Finally, we had two readings where L agreed with the Tshal pa variants (JQ) against Them spañs ma. This would seem to indicate that at some stage L was exposed to a branch of the Tshal pa line.

It is important to bear in mind that all of the above is text-specific and applies only to the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*. Most scholars working in the field will agree that it is very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to make generally valid claims about the recensitional history of even a small group of affiliated texts, let alone about a collection as large and diverse as that of Tabo. Progress will be pointstakingly slow and it could be years before we can say anything definite about the collection's origins and the pattern of transmission that shaped its composition. In the end, the final picture could well be so labyrinthine that the stemmatic complexity might rival the physical disorder encountered when we first set foot in Tabo.

66. H. EIMER: "Zur Beurteilung der Textqualität der Kanjurhandschrift aus dem Palast in Tog/Ladakh," in *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Prof. J.W. de Jong on his Sixieth Birthday*, ed. LA Hercus, et al., Canberra 1982, pp. 121-136, esp. pp. 127, 129

Appendix
Tabo/sTog Palace Mss Folio Concordance

<u>Tabo mss 9 & 252 folio</u>	<u>sTog 11.12 folio</u>	<u>Chapter</u>
9 (Ga dgu)	14r2-15v5	Chapter 1
11 (Ga bcu gcig)	17r4-18v4	
14-15 (Ga bcu gzi, bcvo lña)	21v5-24v7	
17-19 (Ga bcu bdun to bcu dgu)	26r3-30r7	
20-21 (Ga ni su tham pa, ñer cig)	30r7-33r2	
22-25 (Ga ñer gñis to ñya ña)	33r2-38r3	Chapter 2
27 (Ga ñer bdun)	40r1-41r5	
28 (Ga ñer brgyad)	41r5-42v4	Chapter 3
32-33 (Ga so ñis, so gsum)	46v7-49v2	
34 (Ga so bzi)	49v2-50v7	Chapter 4
38-40 (Ga so brgyad to bzi bcu tham pa)	55r3-59r5	
44 (Ga zi bzi)	62v7-64r4	
50-51 (Ga lña bcu tham pa, ña gcig)	70r6-72v6	
53-56 (Ga ña gsum to ña drug)	74r2-79r4	
58-59 (Ga ña brgyad, ña dgu)	80r7-83r1	
62-63 (Ga ro gñis, ro gsum)	85v2-88r7	
67-69 (Ga ro bdun to ro dgu)	92v5-97r7	
72-73 (Ga don gñis, don gsum)	100r6-101v5	
74v (Ga don bzi <i>recto</i> , emended to Ga gya bzi)	102v1-103r5	
74r (Ga don bzi <i>verso</i> , emended to Ga gya bzi)	103r5-104r2	
78 (Ga don brgyad, emended to Ga gya brgyad)	109r7-110v7	
75 (Ga don lña, emended to Ga gya lña)	119v7-121v1	
76 (Ga don drug, emended to Ga gya drug)	121v1-123r1	
96 (Ga go drug)	135v7-137r6	Chapter 5
98 (Ga go brgyad)	138v6-140r7	
99 (Ga go dgu)	140r7-142r1	
100 (Ga brgya tham pa)	142r1-143v2	
101 (Ga/Na + gcig)	143v2-145r3	Chapter 6
103-105 (Ga/Na + gsum to lña)	146v3-151r3	
107 (Ga/Na + bdun)	152v3-154r2	Chapter 7
108-109 (Ga/Na + rgyad, dgu)	154r2-157r3	

110 (Ga/Na + bcu tham pa)	157r3-158v4	
112 (Ga/Na + bcu gñis)	160r5-161v6	
116-120 (Ga/Na l bcu drug to ñi šu tham pa)	166r7-174r5	
122-125 (Ga/Na l ñer ñis to ñer lña)	175v5-182r7	
127 (Ga/Na l ñer bdun)	184r3-185v5	
131 (Ga/Na l so gcig)	190v5-192r7	
152 (Ga/Na l ña gñis)	224v2-226r5	Chapter 9
154-155 (Ga/Na l ña bži, ña lña)	227v7-231r4	
158 (Ga/Na ña rgyad)	234v3-236r5	
159 (Ga/Na l ña dgu)	236r5-238r1	
162 (Ga/Na l ro gñis)	241r7-243r2	
164-167 (Ga/Na l ro bži to ro bdun)	244v4-253r6	
168 (Ga/Na ro rgyad)	253r6-255r3	
178 (Ga/Na l don brgyad)	269v7-271r6	
181-182 (Ga/Na l gya gcig, gya gñis)	274v3-277r2	Chapter 10
185 (Ga/Na l gya lña)	281r4-282v7	
187-195 (Ga/Na l gya bdun to go lña)	284v2-298v7	Chapter 11
197-198 (Ga/Na l go bdun, go brgyad)	300r7-303r5	
200 (Ga/Na l gñi brgya)	304v5-306r5	
201-202 (Ga/Ma + + gcig, gñis)	306r5-310v6	
204-205 (Ga/Ma + + bži, lña)	312r6-315v1	
208 (Ga/Ma + + brgyad)	318r7-320r1	
210 (Ga/Ma + + bcu)	321v1-323r1	
<u>Tabo ms 299</u>	<u>sTog 11.12 folio</u>	<u>Chapter</u>
53 (ña gsum)	5r3-6v1	Chapter 1
55 (ña lña)	7v5-9r4	
62 (ro gñis)	17v5-19r2	
75-76 (don lña, don drug)	35v1-38r2	Chapter 2
89-90 (gya dgu, go tham pa)	51v3-53r1	Chapter 4
97 (go bdun)	62r7-63v4	
62 (ro gñis)	302r2-303r6	Chapter 11

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Page numbers in plain text refer to Bdp I

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