Tibet after Empire
Tibet after Empire
Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000

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INTRODUCTION

When the subject of this conference was first mooted, one of the invitees expressed the concern that such an enterprise was hardly possible: not enough was known about the period to enable a viable seminar. By the time the conference had ended, even this doubter was converted, and was happy to admit that the period was indeed a worthwhile topic of study, and the conference a success. The inescapable reality is that even if our evidence is still at this stage somewhat fragmented, localised, or even hazy, the tectonic changes this period undoubtedly witnessed make it so significant that we simply cannot ignore it. Besides, hazy or fragmented evidence is not the same as no evidence, and we do indeed have plenty of such evidence to mull over. But there are no grounds for complacency, and there is no doubt that tremendous uncertainties still persist. The areas of uncertainty are legion. Some are methodological: How do we date the various Dunhuang texts and other finds? How reliable are the various rock inscriptions? How should we interpret the various Chinese sources? Other questions are substantive: What exactly caused the Tibetan Empire to fall? What economic changes marked the period? Which ethnic identities and political subgroupings were significant? What impacts might there have been from global forces outside of Tibet? A particular sub-set of questions concern religion and culture: What relation did the burial tumulus tradition have with the later Bon? Exactly how and when did Tantric Buddhism become so popular? How did intellectual systems like Tibetan medicine and astrology develop in this period? Finally there are interpretive questions: should we envisage a cataclysmic change, or should we envisage change as process, with differential rates within different sub-systems of society? To such questions, numerous others could be added, and none of them have so far been conclusively answered.

Because the evidence is so imprecise and so open to interpretation, completely contradictory views presently prevail, even amongst scholars who might otherwise think alike. In such circumstances of general disagreement, the convenors thought it best to put very few conceptual constraints on the participants, other than that their contributions should bring something useful to the table. It seemed still too early in the debate on this most important of historical periods to be too prescriptive regarding frameworks or themes. Hence one of the convenors’ original ideas, of focussing more narrowly on the very distinctive propagation of Buddhism in this period (nowadays nick-named the *bar-dar*), proved unsuitable at such an early stage.

Yet this creative chaos has born fruit, and out of the conference discussions, a number of promising threads were seen to emerge, including two that have the definite potential to break the impasse currently existing in our understandings by presenting entirely new data for analysis. Both of these might develop, over the next
few years, into important Tibetological sub-disciplines with a considerable duration ahead of them, and both depend, one way or another, upon China. First is the opening up of Tibet to serious scientific archaeology, which, despite current constraints and obstacles, will hopefully flourish eventually. Second is the growing awareness of a much greater quantity than was previously realised of contemporaneous or near contemporaneous Chinese sources on post-Imperial Tibet.

While three of the conference papers directly addressed these promising new avenues (Hazod, Heller, Horleman) others showed that there is still a very great deal that can be fruitfully gained by a finer analysis of more traditional sources. A few previously unknown or unread documents are still appearing (Karmay, Vitali), new views can still be taken and new conclusions drawn from already known documents (Blezer, Cantwell & Mayer, Dotson, Hill, Martin, Mathes, Schuh, Tanzin, Walter), and fresh contextualising perspectives can be explored (Iuchi, Meinert, Schuh, Szanto).

Henk Blezer offers a very valuable overview of some of the salient findings of his Three Pillars of Bon research program at Leiden, which is amongst the largest and most significant research projects so far ever conducted into Bon. One of the most important of his findings emerges from his following up the initial clue offered by Anne-Marie Blondeau into the importance of the rMa clan. Blezer showed with repeated examples that Bon lore and literature developed or were formatted in the post-Imperial period, but now he also presents strong indications that a remarkable proportion of this took shape under the specific influence of the rMa clan, who were highly conversant with Buddhism. Nevertheless, later Bon tradition erases this fact from their histories, in the cause of disguising its diachronic transformations.

Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer’s paper is one of two that analyse myth in early indigenous literature, and the manner in which its traditional patterns of usage continued to impact on Buddhist era texts. Their focus is the Dunhuang textual sources for Padmasambhava. Extending a theme begun in their contribution to Samten Karmay’s festschrift, they point out that all three proven Dunhuang sources for Padmasambhava—PT44, IOLTibJ321 and PT307—are self-evidently ritual texts, and that their narrative passages are in the cases of PT44 and PT307 Buddhist appropriations of the traditional ritual device of smrang or rabs, or in the case of IOLTibJ321, ritual verses of praise later appropriated by Nyang ral nyi ma’i ‘od zer for his Zangs gling ma hagiography. Once such ritual contexts are systematically analysed, the texts yield historical conclusions often diametrically opposed to prevailing suppositions about them. Likewise, they show that the dyadic narrative

myths of Padmasambhava’s ‘womb’ and ‘miraculous’ births take on an altogether different significance, once their embeddedness in tantric ritual is understood and analysed.

Brandon Dotson’s contribution is the second paper looking at myths in early literature. It is an exploratory attempt to analyse and classify different genres and types within such myths. They occur very widely within early indigenous Tibetan literature, yet they function far beyond their mere narrative content, in addition providing complex internal conceptual and ritual structuring that is no longer very easy to understand. Looking at three different sources, the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the apocryphal Buddhist text the “History of the Cycle of Birth and Death” (*Skye shi’i lo rgyus*), and a document appended to the *Dba’ bzshed* narrating a debate between advocates of Buddhist and Bon burial rites called the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*, all of which make structural use of myth, Dotson makes a distinction between what he terms the ‘ritual antecedent tales’ and the ‘catalogue of ritual antecedents’, and also between ‘antecedent tales’ and ‘charter myths’. He raises the question of the relationship between such old indigenous forms and later literature, with especial focus on their transformations.

Guntram Hazod’s article is one of two that addresses the exciting new field of Tibetan archaeology, and builds on his pioneering expertise in the Tibetan tumulus tradition, the elaborate but still little-understood burial cult that prevailed between the 4th and 10th centuries. Its terminus came with the plundering of the venerated royal tombs in the civil strife of the 9th and 10th centuries, a trauma interpreted by Tibetans as emblematic of the lawlessness and decline of their times. Hazod presents the account of the plundering from the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*, analysing it within the context of other sources of knowledge, to address questions of the local historical milieu in the period concerned, the identities of the clans who did the plundering, some characteristics of the Imperial funeral tradition, and questions of chronology.

Amy Heller’s presentation is the other of the two addressing the new archaeology. She brings us many illustrations from the tumuli excavated at Dulan in Amdo, notably the painted coffin panels, and a discussion of current theories about these still mysterious artefacts. These extraordinarily important discoveries are still in the process of publication by Chinese and Tibetan archaeologists who have authorized Heller to consult their data. She is able for example to confirm a Sogdian cultural influence in several of the artefacts and details of the painting, and highlight repeated themes that are found in different coffin panels, as well as evidence of animal sacrifice. Her illustrations bring home to us the remarkably high level of craftsmanship and artistic expertise found even in these comparatively modest tumuli.
Nathan Hill offers a meticulous and exhaustive analysis of the terms ‘come as lord’ (rjer gshegs) and ‘the black headed’ (mgo nag). These are both components of a larger mythic formula ‘he came from among the gods of heaven to the narrow earth to be ruler of men (the black headed) and owner of yaks (the bent)’. The term mgo nag, ‘black-headed,’ is often found in Old Tibetan (and later) texts, to describe the Tibetan human population. Hill shows how in every known occurrence, this brief term refers synecdochically to the myth of the descent of the Tibetan Emperor from the heavens to take loving charge of the ‘black-headed’ Tibetan peoples. A classificatory differentiation between the god-like Emperor, his ‘black-headed’ human subjects, and the ‘bent and maned’ yaks and animals is in all cases being expressed, so that the term ‘black-headed’ cannot be taken simply as a synonym for myi (‘man’), but must also be understood to refer in addition to humans qua subjects of the emperor. Nor is such a usage unique to Tibet: ‘black-headed’ (salmāt qaqqadi) for example occurs in the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary as ‘a poetic term for mankind as a totality, created by the gods and kept in safe pastures by the kings.’ Similar usages are found in Tangut and Chinese sources.

Bianca Horleman’s contribution opens the doors to a much greater quantity of contemporaneous Chinese sources than has so far been widely known about or utilised. She offers us a comprehensive and analytic bibliographic essay on the surprisingly substantial quantities of T’ang dynasty sources on Tibet, including internet-based research tools, which have now become available. In addition, she presents a select bibliography of contemporary Chinese scholarship on the Tibetan empire, as well as many items of Western scholarship that deal with the T’ang in a manner potentially useful to the study of early Tibet. Her bibliography is highly analytic, enabling the reader to see at a glance what topics each item deals with, and she also offers English translations for the Chinese titles.

Maho Iuchi opens up a very promising new approach to understanding the post-Imperial period by focusing on a specific location and its local histories. This location is ’Dan ma or ’Dan khog in Khams, which was where Atiśa’s three main disciples, Khu ston Brtson ’grus g-yung drung (1011-1075), Rngog Legs pa’i shes rab, and ’Brom ston pa Rgyal ba’i ’byung gnas (1005-1064), gained most of their education prior to Atiśa’s arrival in Tibet. ’Dan ma was thus very influential in the establishment of the Bka’ gدامs school. For example ’Brom ston, its most important founder, spent a full twenty years there, studying mainly under Se btsun Dbang phyug gzhon nu and secondarily under the Indian Smṛtiḥānakārti. Se btsun himself was famous for his visit to India, and ’Brom ston learned Madhyamaka, the Old Tantras, and other teachings from him. Se btsun was a monk, who had received the smad ’dul vinaya ordination from Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan, who in turn had been ordained directly by Dgongs pa rab gsal himself.
Samten Karmay presents a previously unknown rnam thar of Lha Bla ma Ye shes ’od recently discovered at the gNas bcu lha khang in Drepung Monastery, simply entitled Lha bla ma ye shes ’od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa. Although the text seems to be cobbled together from assorted fragments, its author clearly did have access to some important old documents. Karmay presents a summary of its contents, which include chronology, Lha bla ma’s encounters with ‘bad’ teachers, his two wives and three children, his royal genealogy, how the Bon religion once prevailed in Zhang zhung, his ordination as a monk in later life, and some descriptions of Rin chen bzang po. This rnam thar also cites, without acknowledgement, from Ye shes ’od’s already well-known Decrees. The founding of mTho gling temple in 996 is described, as well as Ri Cho ’phrul rmad byung temple, and its decoration by Kashmiri artists. The passing of various laws is also described. The colophon mentions one Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, a resident of mTho gling, but the text itself also references much later figures such as Sapan (1182-1251) and ’Gro mgon Chos rgyal ’phags pa (1235-1280).

Dan Martin strives to illuminate the little-known and comparatively short-lived Highland Vinaya lineage (Stod ’Dul), by reconstructing from its two surviving fragments a complete 12th century text by Zhing mo che ba Byang chub seng ge, a champion of the Stod ’Dul. There seems little doubt that monastic ordinations occurred in Western Tibet before the return of the ordained men of Central Tibet from their ordinations in Amdo, Rin chen bzang po himself being a prime example. Varying uses of the term Stod ’Dul are disambiguated however, and Rin chen bzang po’s ordination did not count as Stod ’Dul by a strict definition, which should include only those lineages descending directly from Dharmapāla, whose lineage came between 997 and 1024, a bit later than the Lowland Vinaya (sMad ’Dul). While clearly championing his own Stod ’Dul over all others, Zhing mo che ba was not so much concerned about vinaya ordination lineages per se, but rather in their traditions of explicating the major vinaya texts. Thus it is clear that vinaya studies were already in his day sufficiently developed to create complex differences of interpretation, with all their resultant debates.

Klaus-Dieter Mathes revisits the issue of Sa skya Paṇḍita’s critique of bKa’ brgyud Mahāmudrā, already the subject of debate in the 1980’s between David Jackson and Michael Broido, but which Mathes can now approach with a quantity of decisive new evidence from Indian texts. Sa skya Paṇḍita feared that during the bar dar, influences from Chinese Ch’an had got mixed with genuine Indian Mahāmudrā, leading to what he saw as a mistaken belief that Mahāmudrā could be achieved simply through guru devotion and the suspension of discursive thought, but without the full gamut of prior Tantric practices and empowerments. While it is true that the earlier rNying ma master Vimalamitra had held such views, and he might have been open to Chinese influences, Mathes can now show that a range of Sanskrit texts by respected scholarly authors also supported this position, and they cannot have been Chinese-influenced.
Carmen Meinert opens an extremely interesting new perspective through a comparative study of the reception of Indian *abhicāraka* rituals in China and Tibet, that is, tantric rites using violent imagery. She makes special reference to the *Guhyasamājatantra*, which occurs both in Chinese and Tibetan, including a Tibetan witness from Dunhuang. She shows how the Chinese translation of the *Guhyasamājatantra* by Dānapāla under the auspices of the Northern Song was censored: it was intended for the Imperial use of Buddhism for diplomatic purposes, so that translators like Dānapāla were compelled to produce texts ‘tactful’ for diplomatic purposes, with scant regard for the soteriological needs of China’s Buddhists. Thus the soteriological symbolism of *abhicāra* was never realised in China, and instead it was eventually taken up as a purely worldly black magic. By contrast, Tibetan translation, especially during the *bar dar* and at remote locations like Dunhuang, was free of such constraints, and *abhicāra* became fully integrated into soteriological practice, notwithstanding occasional abuse.

Dieter Schuh contributes a study of great significance for our understanding of the origin of divination practices in Tibet as well as the nature of religious belief in early Tibet. The study begins with an overview of the eventual Dge-lugs-pa recognition of these methods as acceptable to Buddhism. He then analyzes illustrations in Dunhuang manuscripts that demonstrate their relationship with the later, established teachings on *nag rtsis*. We thus gain for the first time a diachronic view of popular methods by which Tibetans have long dealt with uncertainty. The material from Dunhuang extends this tradition to a period likely immediately after the Btsan-pos. Schuh’s thorough knowledge of these subjects and the literature around them allows him to go even further, however. By presenting extensive lists of texts asserted to have been composed both during and after the Empire, Schuh provides the background for answering an important question most others have not even thought to ask: *Why* have these methods for dealing with troublesome spirits, etc., been so popular among the Tibetan peoples for so long? The answer lies in part in a mass of texts mentioned in standard Tibetan Buddhist sources. The very presence of these lists is a basis for the acceptance of their practices as ‘Buddhist’ by, in particular, the 5th Dalai Lama and Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. If only some of these titles existed at such an early time as the 9th-10th centuries, the universal acceptance of their practices in Tibet is easily explained. Just as significantly, Schuh concludes that these texts may be evidence of a cultural alternative to Buddhism which arose after the fall of the Imperium. The author has provided us with both a vision and a challenge that we must take up if we are to understand Tibetan culture and religion in the *bar dar*.

Péter-Dániel Szántó likewise opens up new vistas with extremely interesting contextualising and comparative observations. He points out firstly that the Pāla Empire, Nepal and Kashmir were themselves experiencing a ‘Dark Age’ of political collapse that co-incided almost perfectly with the Tibetan ‘Time of Fragments’, and
with many of the same symptoms, notably the cutting off of state patronage to
Buddhism, and a dearth of surviving historical sources. Just as in Tibet this period
saw the dramatic proliferation of tantric literature, so did it also in India and the Pāla
Empire. Not only that, but the modes of composition of such tantras in India and
Tibet could be strikingly similar: in both cases, fresh composition of ostensibly
scriptural tantras could take a predominantly anthological mode, creating new sacred
scriptures by weaving together passages from a range of existing texts, both
anonymous (scriptural), and authored (commentarial). In Bengal, for example, the
_Samputatantra_ was anthologised using fragments from a range of existing texts,
which are listed in considerable detail.

Lopon P. Ogyan **Tanzin** is one of the leading _sngags pa_ students of the late Dudjom
Rinpoche. Here he presents the six greatnesses of the Early Translations (_snga-’gyur_)
as formulated by the great scholar Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (11th century).
These are: the greatness of the patrons; the greatness of the scholars; the greatness
of the translators; the greatness of the places where the translations were made; the
greatness of the doctrines translated; and, the greatness of the offerings made as a
support for requesting the doctrine. While Rong zom Mahāpaṇḍita properly belonged
to the later period of Buddhism’s diffusion in Tibet (_phyi-dar_), and hence formulated
these six greatnesses after the period concerned as a means to distinguish the Early
from the New Translations (_gsar-’gyur_), they have remained an important element in
the self-presentation of the _rNying-ma-pas_ to this day. Nevertheless, despite various
reports to the contrary, their actual provenance is in fact unclear, since they cannot be
found amongst Rong zom’s extant works, not even in his _dKon-mchog ’grel_, as
claimed for example by Dorje and Kapstein (1991). It seems more likely then that
they simply circulated amongst rNying ma lamas, from at least as early as Longchenpa’s
time, in the form of a list linked by oral tradition to Rong zom.

Roberto **Vitali** focuses very fruitfully on post-Imperial Khams, and like Maho
Iuchi, finds strong evidence for the unbroken continuation of religious culture in that
region throughout the period. He looks first at the political transformations concomitant
with the fall of Empire in the Khams regions, and then at the consequences of this for
religion. His hitherto untapped sources include materials preserved in the writings of
Rig ’dzin Tshe dbang norbu and Karma Chags med, as well as Dunhuang materials
such as PT 849. He presents rare evidence for the emergence of the four Eastern
regional kingdoms known as the _ka bzhi_, and their relation to the territories previously
coming under Yum brtan or ’Od srung. As well as elucidating the political changes,
he is able to show that despite stereotypical claims to the contrary, religious life in fact
continued effectively enough in the Eastern regions after the fall of empire to provide
a basis for later revival, and that evidence even exists for some debate between
competing interpretations of Buddhism, and for the study of sophisticated topics such
as Abhidharma (cf. Dan Martin’s paper on vinaya disputes in far-off West Tibet).
Michael Walter presents the first part of a detailed analysis of PT016/IO751, the ‘De ga G.yu Tshal document’. While this first part focuses on its language and culture, the next part will present a translation with commentary. The only significant political document often believed to date from the reign of Ral pa can (r. 815-836), Walter subjects PT016 to detailed paleographic analysis, followed by analysis of its nominal/adjectival vocabulary, verbal constructions, postpositional terms, and adverbials. Walter’s meticulously detailed stylistic analysis then identifies PT016 as a pastiche, redacted from separate pieces written at different times. He concludes it did not after all achieve its finished form during the reign of Ral pa can, nor is the work as we have it a simple transcription of Imperial-period documents. Rather, it seems to have been created to give models to Sanghas when offering confession rites at courts and to important officials in a post-Imperial world. Thus we obtain a picture of this pastiche as an early ‘bar dar’ document, the product of an independent Sangha preparing for service to rulers whose legitimacy was based on the aura of the last long-reigning btsan po.
THE PLUNDERING OF THE TIBETAN ROYAL TOMBS
an Analysis of the Event in the Context of the Uprisings in Central Tibet of the 9th/10th Century

GUNTRAM HAZOD

Introduction

The plundering of the tombs of the Tibetan emperors in 'Phyong-rgyas (southern Central Tibet) by a number of aristocratic clans in the early 10th century CE marked an epochal boundary in Tibet’s history. It signified not only the definitive end of the imperial era, but also the end of the Tibetan tumulus tradition. This meant the end of the practice going far back into the pre-historic period of burying the dead in barrows—associated with a specific conception of the afterlife as part of the pre-Buddhist religious system, which likewise has ceased to exist. The tradition reportedly started with the legendary Yar-lung rgyal po Dri-gum btsan-po and from the beginning of the emperor era in the early 7th century it underwent a greater architectural change. It was a change (after central Asian models) to rectangular (or trapezoidal-shaped) catacomb tombs for the btsan po, the queens and also for aristocratic families and war heroes, and to burying treasures, which in the case of the emperors was also evidently connected with a new dimension of funeral ceremony. Scattered in the sources there is some information on what kind of treasures and objects these were, but we have actually never seen them. So far there have been no archaeological excavations in 'Phyong-rgyas to give us a more precise idea about the royal tombs’ inner history.

Tibetan historiography comments on the grave plundering, consequently, as one of the sad highpoints in the phase of the general political and social decline of the post Glang Dar-ma time. “There was no differentiation between lords and subjects (...) and even the graves were divided and most of them were dug out”, it says in a well-known passage in dPa’-bo gTsug-lag-'phreng-ba’s mKhas pa’i dga’ ston (KG, below chap. 1.1). Similarly, Nyang-ral Nyi-ma ’od-zer, who in addition notes that the deterioration of Tibet’s good fortune had actually already begun with the killing of Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan, the monk minister under btsan po Khri gTsug-lde-btsan (r. c. 815-41), (NC 446.17-19). This assessment may have been widely shared among

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1 The work for this contribution has been contacted in the framework of a project financed by the Austrian Science Fund (ASF, P 18711). I would like to thank Tsering Gyalpo and Lobsang Tenpa for their helpful comments on various aspects of the present topic, and Dungkar Penpa and Thassilo Hazod for their assistance during the fieldwork carried out in Sept./Oct. 2010.
the early post-dynastic historians, in rNying-ma-pa circles, Atiśa’s students and early bKa’-gdams-pa, and explains why in the historical reflections of this time the minister appears as a kind of vengeful spirit who calls for anarchy (namely in the well-known description of the Lo rgyus chen mo by the student of Atiśa, Khu-ston brTson-’grus g.yung-drung, 1011-75).

Today’s research sees the key events of Tibet’s fragmentation period (bod sil bu’i dus) in a somewhat more nuanced way. One refers to the background of the almost simultaneous collapses of the neighbouring empires of Tang China and the Uighur, and to the factor of something like a transnational Inner Asian crisis at that time, which also may have influenced the critical situation in Tibet around the death of emperor U’i Dum-btlan (alias Glang dar-ma; d. 842) (cf. Davidson 2004: 72; van Schaik 2011: 48). At the same time one recognises the creative potential of the Bod sil-bu, where the phase of decline gave birth to a sustainable political reorientation. The popular uprisings in Central Tibet ultimately led to the establishment of a new (regionalist) order long before the “Ten Men of dBus gTsang” returned from the east to re-establish the Vinaya tradition in the core areas of the former Empire. And the sources inform us about enormous religious activity in the framework of tantric, non-monastic forms of Buddhism that developed during the same time, which, regardless of their negative assessment in the later Buddhist tradition, represented a significant phase in the history of the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism (Dalton 2011: 5f.). This paper will examine what relevance can be assigned to the grave plundering in this twilight phase of anarchy and new political orientation. Its basis is a closer look at the much-quoted grave plundering account and its textual context in dPa’-bo’s KG. Various issues will thereby be discussed to concretise this report in more detail—questions about the local historical milieu of Yar-lung/’Phyong po in the period concerned; the identification and localisation of the “grave robber lineages”; of some characteristics of the btsan po funeral tradition; and not least, the question of the chronological assignment of the grave plundering in this phase of the “dark period”.

1. The account in the mKhas pa’i dga’ ston

Apart from KG, which mentions nine clans involved in the grave looting, the most detailed account of the event is in ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s gTam gyi tshogs, given at the end of chapter 37 entitled bKra shis srong btsan bang so’i gtam / lo rgyus gyi mdzod khang (TT 278-303). It non-specifically speaks of “several old history books” as his sources, but actually appears as a somewhat defective copy of the account in KG (or a copy of the original report(s), which both texts quote from). In other chronicles the

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2 So in the edition of KG-b, see fn. 20.
3 The only source mentioned by name in this chapter (and again referred to in chap. 38, a portrayal of the Bang-so dMar-po temple; fn. 41) is the (lost) Chos blon chen po mgar gyis mdzad pa’i dkar chag, where the author quotes a description of the Yar-lung kings and their graves, from the Khri-bdun to Srong-btsan sgam-po. See for details Panglung 1988: 352.
event appears merely as a short summary when dealing with the post-Glang Dar-ma period. The original source is not known, and it remains speculative whether it is a quotation from Khu-ston’s *Lo rgyus chen mo*, which dPa’-bo draws on extensively in the previous paragraph.\(^4\) One can at least state that the report is very likely from the local milieu, and from a time when knowledge of the identity of the *btsan po* graves, mentioned here mainly by their (once widely used?) nicknames, was still apparently vivid.

In dPa’-bo’s presentation, the grave plundering account is embedded in the narratives of the popular uprisings (*kheng log*) in Tibet of the 9th and 10th centuries. It can be divided into three sections, which – as we shall see – in this sequence are not necessarily to be read chronologically:

i. (KG-a, 431.9-433.4): The uprisings in Tibet, starting in the *sa mo glang* year (“like the flight of a single bird in the sky”): It briefly notes the rebellions in the wake of the activities of the rebels from the dBa’s clan in mDo-Khams and dBu-ru,\(^5\) and then offers the *kheng log* of g.Yo-ru with the two accounts, namely

I.1 (431.18-431.20): The account of the ‘Be-bza’ ‘A-mo sKyid-btsun
I.2 (431.23-433.4): The story of the establishment of the *rje dpon tshan* after the appearance of the *gno sbyin* Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan. It ends with the words: “Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan reconciled the lords and subjects after incarnating as sNyi-ba bSam-po. So it appears from the *Lo rgyus chen mo.*”

ii. (433.4-8): The report on the grave plundering, beginning with the dating “In the *me bya* year, the ninth year after the revolt (...).”

iii. (433.9-10): The death of dPal’-khor-btsan. It says: “dPal’-khor-btsan, the son of mnga’ bdag ‘Od-srung, established a number of temples\(^6\) and was then killed by sTag-rtse gNyags”. It continues with a summary of the spreading of dPal’-khor-btsan’s lineage (433.10-15),\(^7\) followed by the chapter dealing with the *rje phran* established by descendants of Yum-brtan and ‘Od-srung (433.16ff.).

\(^4\) In the chronicle of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the mention of the grave plundering refers to Khu-ston. It says (GD 78.13-15), “as stated by Khu-ston in his treatise, it was in the course of the rebellions that even most of the (royal) *bang so* were plundered and destroyed.”

\(^5\) I.e., the activities of the warlord dBa’s Kho-bzher legs-steng (d. 866) and of dBa’s Lo-po Lo-chung, the latter event also referred to as the ‘Bro sBSas (dBa’s) *’khruR pas* in dBu-ru. In addition, the lDe’u chronicles mention for gTsang the uprising in connection with the *lag dpon* ‘Go’-om Khu-dol Nya-phrug (‘Og-’am Khu-dol gsum-’brug). lDe’u-l 144; lDe’u-2 372.

\(^6\) Elsewhere it says (KG 434: 10-11): “he built sMan-lung etc., eight temples in all.” Cf. also GBY 215.2; *Yar lung chos ’byung* (YC 69.8).

\(^7\) It says, “his sons, the two brothers, went to sTod where they ruled mNga’-ris skor-gsum. There is the saying that the royal law in sTod was like a hat. Some descendants of [dBa’-khor-btsan’s] lineage went to sMad where they ruled the great land of mDo-smad Tsong-kha. Hence the saying that the royal law in sMad was like boots. In Bar, dBus-gtsang Ru-bzhis became fragmented.” For a similar description with the three regions compared to the (king’s) body and garments, see Sørensen 1994: 367.
The event of the grave looting is dated to the *me bya* year. It is questionable, however, whether this (re-)calculation (after the sexagenary cycle) was already given in the original account, or whether dPa’-bo took over the dating that was widespread in the Tibetan historiography long before him. In the chronology of the KG it corresponds to the year 877, and 937 according to the “long chronology” as Petech has called the calculation in the tradition of the early Sa-skya-pa historians (Petech 1994: 653). In between is the chronology of the two lDe’u chronicles (expressed in the twelve-year cycle), which do not mention the grave plundering event, but whose details on the dates of gNam-lde ’Od-srung and his son and successor point to an intermediate date for the grave plundering. The statement “in the ninth year after the outbreak of the *kheng log*” relates to the *sa mo glang* year, which in dPa’-bo’s “short chronology” corresponds to the year 869, and to 929 in the Sa-skya tradition. From this time, when the “two *btsan po*” (’Od-srung and Yum-brtan) were 23 years old, the rebellions broke out one after the other, dPa’-bo states, and he mentions in this context the separatist activities of the ringleaders in mDo-khams and Central Tibet (fn. 5), followed by the mention of the g.Yo-ru *kheng log*—an anachronism, since the events in eastern Tibet (of the war lord Kho-bzher legs-steng) are to be set much earlier, and ended in 866 (Petech 1994: 652). The descriptions of the events in g.Yo ru related in dPa’-bo (and in the lDe’u chronicles) end with the account of the establishment of several clan-based regional principalities (*rje’i dpon tshan*). It ultimately brought to an end the uprisings, and the account is reasonably to be placed chronologically at the end of the *kheng log* story. In Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s *Bod kyi rgyal rabs* and other chronicles the *sa mo glang* year evidently refers to the beginning of the uprising in Central Tibet, and the sources usually locate the latter in the time of the sons of ’Od-srung und Yum-brtan or to the time of the ’Od srung’s son dPal-’khor-btsan. Vitali—as well as Petech (1994), the author to whom we owe the most extensive studies on this section of the dark period (1996: 541ff.; 2004)—comes to the years 904 and 905 for the last two of the reportedly three *kheng log* of Central Tibet (1996: 547). This is based on a reconstruction of the dates of gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes (b. 844; Dalton 2011: 49f.) and the details of the dates of ’Od-srung and his son in lDe’u-1—the latter in Vitali’s perspective being the most reliable chronology. But even this calculation is not certain, because it assumes a rather unusually long life for ’Od-srung (55 years, 840-93), which as far as we know cannot be confirmed by other sources (lDe’u-2 370.4-5 speaks of 45 years, other sources have 39 years). In any case, we can follow Vitali’s conclusion that evidently both the short and the long chronology are untenable. The *sa mo glang* year (869), which dPa’-bo refers to, appears to be a miscalculation, and only a later *glang* year, at the time of dPal-’khor-btsan, comes into question here. The *bya* year of the grave looting thus refers to one of the three bird years between 889 and 913. Vitali comes to the year (lcags) *bya* 901 (2004: 113). He assumes that dPal-’khor btsan was still alive at that time. This leads us to the question of the
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relative chronology. Was the grave looting in fact before the killing of dPal-’khor-btsan as it appears in dPa’-bo (a representation also to be found by a majority of the research)?\(^8\) And how to assess the chronological context of those events that led to the establishment of the regionalist rje tshan order? In dPa’-bo itself it is not uniform. Earlier (KG 425.1f), the author brings prospectively an abstract of the kheng log, where he first mentions the division into the two mnga’ ris of dBu-ru and g.Yo-ru, and then continues (KG 425.7-12):

By the power of Bran-ka dPal-yon the subjects rebelled against the ruler. ’Od-srung’s mound tomb lies behind that of ’Phrul-rgyal. Its name is said to be sKye’u lha-rtan (Map 1). From then on, the [tradition of] building bang so ended. There was no difference between ruler and subjects, Tibet fell apart into pieces. Even the bang so were divided and most were robbed. Before the face of the mgur lha of the lords [i.e. the territorial gods of the ancient rje lineages of the country; see below] originated nine principalities (rje tshan), ten with the smaller rule (i.e. bSam-yas, see below).

As we see, in contrast to the above quotation, the rje tshan establishment is named here after the grave plundering. And the appearance of Bran-ka is the overarching connection within which many things happen, including the plundering of the royal tombs. We will come back to this question of chronology later.

2. The sections preceding the grave plundering in the representation of KG

Following the description of the division of the throne into the two warring factions of the Yum-brtan and ’Od-srung cliques–geographically a division between dBu-ru and g.Yo-ru–and the mention of the beginning of the uprisings in the sa mo glang year (see above), the text brings the details of the kheng log of g.Yo-ru. It is the portrayal of two events, which appear combined by the figure of gnod sbyin Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan, the spirit of the murdered monk minister of btsan po Khri gTsug-lde-btsan (Khri Ral-pa-can).\(^9\)

2.1 The first event concerns the story about the revolt against the ruler called Zhang-rje gSas-sne-btsan. In the lDe’u chronicles, where the account is offered in more detail

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\(^9\) The powerful chos blon, who directed the treaty ceremony of 822 in sBra-stod-tshal (in sNon/rGya–ma), was reportedly killed by dBa’s rGyal-to-re and lCog-ro Legs-sgra (Sørensen 1994: 426), at a place given as ’Phan-yul g.Yung-thang (NC 428.5). It corresponds to the ancient Bran-ka territory of Yung-pa of Lower ’Phan-po, where Bran-ka hailed from (more precisely from “Bänka” (= Bran-ka), today an abandoned village next to Zing-ba). Legend has it that the dPal-yon spirit was later tamed by Atila at Khri-kha (in or close to Lan-pa opposite Bran-ka). See Dotson, forthcoming; Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 284-285.
(lDe’u-1 144.11-145.7; lDe’u-2 372.18-373.15), he is variously given as Zhang-chen gSas-ne, Sad-ne-btsan or also as gSas-ne ’Bre-sna or rKong-yul ’Bre-sna-btsan, the latter form evidently referring to a ruler related to rKong-po (or the house of the rKong dkar-po dynasty). The trigger of the story was apparently an affinal conflict, according to which Sad-ne-btsan killed his nephew dbon g.Yu-sne, and—as the context suggests—took over the latter’s seat in mChims-yul. The spirited second wife of g.Yu-sne’ s two consorts, called ’Be-bza’ A-mo skYid-btsun (’Be-za Wa-mo),10 was very angry about this incident and incited a revolt. It says that when the Zhang-rje ordered his subjects (’bangs) to cut off a mountain and to build irrigation channels, the ’Be-bza’ took revenge by saying: “It is easier to cut the neck of a man than it is to cut off the neck of a mountain” (ri mgul las mi mgul gcod pa sla). As noted elsewhere, one finds this constrastive formula (the command to decapitate a mountain and the response to cut off his power) widespread in the oral traditions of Central Tibet, where one can observe that these places largely relate to the old core areas of central Tibet (such as g.Ye, mChims and also places in the northern parts of dBu-ru).11 They are often associated with sites of ancient ruins (such as those of the “Bya-khyung ’bab-sa” type), and in some cases a larger grave field is to be found in the immediate vicinity (Hazod, op. cit.). There are variants of “ri-gcod-pa” accounts also known from western Tibet,12 from eastern Bhutan and even from the Tamang Thakali,13 and the story’s origin was probably not the revolt epoch but rather is to be seen as part of a much older stock of orally transmitted narratives widespread in the Highlands, which was then used posthumously to explain the anarchic events of the period in question.

The rebellion incited by the ’Be-bza’ led to the organisation of six ringleaders, specified as the “six men of mChims Kong” (mchims kong mi drug).14 During a

10 ’Be-bza’ is the lady of ’Be, a lesser-known lineage of g.Yo-ru, which is registered for the gZhung and Dol area (west of Yar-lung) in the 11th/ 12th century. See Blue Annals (Roerich 1995 [1949]: 269, 300) where it also says that the Zi-tsha (i.e. Zi/ gZi lineage) formed one of ’Be’s sub-divisions. In Nor-brang O-rgyan 1991: 143, the lady is rendered as ’Bo-bza’ A-mo skYid (’Bo-bza’ Wa-mo).
12 Namely, ancient ruins in the Gu-ge district of mDongs-po, south-west of Khyung-lung. It is locally also described as “Mon castle” (mon mkhar), a classification which in this area appears to relate to a pre-Gu-ge kingdom history. (Tsering Gyalbo, personal communication.)
13 Michael Vinding (personal communication). For Bhutan, see the references in Hazod 2006.
14 KG 431.21. lDe’u-1 144.17 gives the corrupt form of phying gon mi drug, lDe’u-2 373.3-4: phyis mgon mi drug. The core area of mChims, the ancient territory of the mChims-rgyal dynasty, corresponds to present-day sKyems-stong, the district at the border between Dvags-po and traditional (Lower) Kong-po, and according to this location it is variously given in the sources as Dvags mChims or Kong mChims. The six men, probably ministers or local chiefs related to mChims-rgyal, are listed as the ringleaders (lag dpon) (1) sKye-tshe, (2) Tshe-brtan (var. Tshes-stan), (3) sLe’u lHa-la-brten, (4) sNye-ba bSam-gtan (var. sNyi-ba sTan-nam), (5) Mon-phrug Thong-chung (var. Mol-drug mThong-chung), (6) g.Yu-sne Myang. The spelling of some of the names is evidently corrupt, but the clan part of the names can largely be descerned: Kyi (skye = skyi), Tshes (= Tshes-pong), sLe (gLe-bo), rNyi-ba, Myang.
meeting at the valley floor of mChims (mchims yul gting), under the omen of “walnut flowers blooming at dusk”, they discussed how to attract the ruler (to come down from his castle) in order to eliminate him. And after the proposal by one of the six men to deceive him through dance performance, gSas-sne Bre-sna finally arrived.15

2.2 The 'Be-bza’ story is followed by the quotation from the Lo rgyus chen mo about the appearance of Bran-ka dPal kyi yon-tan, the “phvyā mkhan of the kheng log”,16 and the establishment of the regional principalities. Of the nine plus a minor tenth seven are mentioned by name: one in Grom-pa of gTsang, one in sNye-mo (at the dBu-ru / g.Yas-ru border), one in ’Phan-yul, three in g.Yo-ru (in gTam-shul, in upper Yar-lung and in Lower ’Phyong-po), and the minor rule refers to bSam-yas.17 Apparently more than one version was once in circulation. Thus, in its brief portrayal of the revolt period, the lHo brag grub chen rnam thar (647.5-648.2) mentions two rje tshan that are not listed in KG or in the parallel description of the lDe’u chronicles. These refer to dominions in Yar-lung-thil (the central area of lower Yar) and in ’U-yug (of g.Yas-ru), although no lineage names related to these establishments are given. Dotson has analysed the account as presented in KG and the lDe’u chronicles in a convincing manner. The résumé is brief: the relevant clans decided to end the chaos and to create order again by drawing on the old territorial principles embodied in the territorial gods, who were traditionally assigned to the protection of social and political order and who in the story appear as agents.18 The rje’i dpon tshan, for which two clans each were allocated, in this sense were not a new invention, but it rather meant a return to older territorial connections. This order also convinced the

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15 In sKyems-stong, one of the “ri gcod pa places”, the local tradition speaks of a “crazy ruler” of old who has led the country in ruin in the course of a warring conflict between mChims and the neighbouring Kong-po. He resided at “Bangye”, an elevated plain above the valley floor, opposite the famous grave fields of sLeb in lower sKyems-stong, with ancient ruins of a castle called the palace of the “Bangye rgyal po”. It was here where he ordered to cut down the mountain being opposite, which then was followed by the above-mentioned anarchic formula (Hazod 2006: 182). This is evidently the local version of the present written account of the Zhang-rje Sad-na-btsan.

16 The term phvyā mkhan (soothsayer; lDe’u-2 reads ‘cha’ mkhan, planner, architect) probably relates here to the fact that the spirit (described as a Mahākāla-like figure riding an iron wolf and beating the ground with an iron staff; KG 432.4-5; lDe’u-2 373.17-18) operated and gave its prophecies and rebellious orders through a medium. See here the parallels of a much later, no less spectacular kheng log story, namely the sNye-mo incident of the late 1960s. It is reported that the leading figure of the rebellion, the nun ‘Phrin-las chos-sgron, used to be possessed by the deity Gong-ma’i rgyal-mo, who was believed to have chosen her as its human vehicle. See Goldstein et al. 2011: 99, et passim.

17 See most recently Dotson, forthcoming.

18 The respective council for this decision was held at a place called mNa’-tho ’Ug-pa-thang, “plain of the owl with the oath-swearing stone” (KG 432.3; lDe’u-1: gNam-’tho). The place is not identified; perhaps it refers to the ’Ug-pa in Nyang of eastern Central Tibet, not far from the site of the famous Shog-pa towers.
spirit of the monk minister, who at the end of the story appears in the role of a mediator in the dispute between lord and subjects, and this in the manifestation of a certain sNyi-ba gSam-po.19 He may be identical with the sNye-ba (read: sNyi-ba) bSam-gtan in the aforementioned group of the mChims Kong *mi drug* (fn. 14). If so, he represents the actual historical link between the two narratives, and the fact that Bran-ka was embodied in him (or perhaps more accurately, that the sNyi-ba acted as the medium of the monk spirit? cf. fn. 16) indicates a leading role of this figure in the g.Yo-ru kheng log – in the latter’s two faces of turmoil and searching for a new order. His lineage, sNyi-ba (rNyi-ba), is known as the leading line in the region of gNyal (present-day lHun-rtse County in lHo-kha), but apparently was also integrated as subject lineages to mChims-rgyal, and as several other lines it belonged to the group of the rje dpon tshan clans as well as to those who decided to open the royal tombs.

3. The plundering of the tombs

Immediately after this passage the text continues with the citation of the grave plundering account:

In the *me bya* year, the ninth year after the revolt, Shud-pu sTag-rtse etc., the four held a consultation whereupon they divided the tombs. Most of them were dug out.

The gNyags dug out the grave of Lower Don-mkhar. The Tshe-spong Zhang dug out the grave of rGyal-chen.20 The Shud-pu dug out the grave of Seng-ge-can. The ’Greng, ’Phyos and Khu dug out the grave of ’Phrul-rgyal. The sNyi-ba having obtained the sNgo-bzher left it without completing the excavation. The ’Bro and [l]Cog[-ro], the two, having obtained [the grave of] Srong-btsan [sgam-po] left it [unexcavated]. So it appears [from older sources].

3.1 The identification of the plundered tombs

The identification of the tombs in the necropolis of ’Phyong-rgyas21 is still not entirely solved.22 As to the present list, Panglung (1988: 366) thinks the *don mkhar mda’ yi*

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19 lDe’u-1 146.3 has the evidently corrupt form of sNying-ba gTsang-po.
20 This line is missing in the KG-a; see KG-b 430.6-431.1, and TT 299.4-10.
21 I.e., the two fields of Don-mkhar-mda’ and ’Phyong-rgyas-mda’, the latter also known as [d]Mu-ra/ Mu-ra-ba/ Mu-ra-thang including (the western slopes of the) Mu-ra-ri (Map 1). The fields represent two of the more than a dozen burial sites in the Yar-lung and ’Phyong-po area (Map 2).
22 The most detailed investigation in this respect is still Panglung’s 1988 study, which today can be supplemented by some new data. The entries on Map 1 are based on *in situ* surveys by the author, in connection with modern satellite imagery and in coordination with the details given in the gSang ba yang chung (SYC, of the Can in ga text group, in lDe’u-2 376.15-380.11; Karmay 1998: 307f.). The latter text was not available at the time of Panglung’s study and represents the most complete account concerning the burial sites of the Yar-lung dynasty. With
bang so may refer to the mausoleum of Khri lDe gtsug-brtan (Khri Ral-pa-can, r. 815-41),23 which is said to be situated at the left of the entrance to the Don-mkhar valley (lDe’u-2 318.16-17) and described in one source (GRS) as being filled with treasures. But it can in principle also refer to one or more of the btsan po (and rgyal po) graves situated in the Don-mkhar valley and the entry on Map 1 (no. XV) is accordingly given with question mark.24 The rGyal-chen bang so most likely refers to the mausoleum of Khri lDe-srong-btsan (Sad-na-legs) (Map 1, no. XIV), whose name is usually given as ’Phrul-chen-bzher (SYC 378.12) or rGyal-chen ’Phrul-rgyal (’phrul ri/ bzhi (read: bzher)).25 The name of the tomb of ’Dus-srong mang-po-che is

23 For the dating of the Tibetan btsan po, see Dotson 2009: 143. In some sourcesRal-pa-can as well as Mu-ne btsan-po (r. e. 797-98) are attributed in this context as klu chen (great paternal uncle?). Cf. e.g. YC 63.16, 66.12. It apparently corresponds to what in the grave account of SYC (lDe’u-2 380.7-8) is classified as klu chen bang so gnyis, in contrast to the gdung rgyud zin pa’i bang so bco brgyad (“18 burial mounds of the lineage-holder”).

24 Chab-spel 1989: 468 thinks the passage refers to all of the tombs registered in the sources as being located in Don-mkhar-mda’, which is rather unlikely.

25 The tomb is described as being filled with a wealth of precious objects, and it says, “it is situated at an elevated site, because the queen mother feared it could be filled with [flood] water [from the nearby ’Phyong-rgyas river]” (TT 292.20: yum gyi chab gang dgongs pas gnas kyis mthong (read: mtho); in GRS and GBY the line appears to be corrupt; see Panglung 1988: 344-
known as Seng-ge brtsegs-pa (SYC 378. 6-7), but is here apparently the grave of 'Phrul-rgyal, the latter known as an epithet of 'Dus-srong (no. VIII). This also means that the name Seng-ge-can (“(tomb) with the lion”) most likely refers to the grave of Khri Srong-lde-btsan (no. XI), which is otherwise known by the name of 'Phrul-ri gtsug-nam (SYC 378.10-11). Seng-ge may refer here to the two stone lions in front of the tomb. Finally, sNgo-bzher is short for sNgo-bzher hral-po, the name of Mang-srong mang-btsan’s grave (no. VII).

47; Sørensen 1994: 410). The famous turtle-borne inscription pillar is situated behind the grave, the only tomb stele of the 'Phyong-rgyas necropolis which is still preserved, whereas the other pillars registered in the sources (the rdo rings for the graves of Khri Ral-pa-can (without inscription), Khri Srong-lde-btsan (with inscription, fn. 27), and Srong btsan sgam-po; KT 152) are no more extant or no longer in their original place. In addition, there were originally pillars as boundary markers around certain tombs (corresponding to the description in RGY, KT 146.10) of which two were still extant during the author’s first visit in 1993 and which have disappeared in the meantime.

A later tradition says that the btsan po was killed by Hor people, and that the Seng-ge brtsegs-pa was raised by people from Hor (Sørensen 1994: 350). A somewhat obscure version has it that only a part of the btsan po’s corpse was brought back from 'Jang by (the two corpse servants) Cog-ro Kong-khri and Cang-dkar (lDe’u-1 119.14-16). Nel-pa paṇḍita (Uebach 1987: 78) only says that Cak-kru and Khong-khri (sic) acted as the btsan po’s corpse servant (spur gnyer).

The tomb is said to be filled with all sorts of treasures, and it is known as the “tomb with the outside decoration”. An inscription pillar dedicated to Khri Srong-lde-btsan was originally in front of the mausoleum, which was later brought to the 'Phyong-rgyas bridge and now is supposedly somewhere in the township of 'Phyong-rgyas. For the inscription, see Richardson 1985: 36f. For the funeral of the emperor (contacted by bon po from 'Phan-yul), see dBa’ bzhed (in P. Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 62).

Without any further comment, Chab-spel (op. cit.) identifies the Seng-ge-can as the grave of Khri IDe-gtsug-btsan. So also Nor-brang O-rgyan 1991: 149.

It is reportedly filled with a wealth of precious objects (Panglung 1988: 336f.). The square structure represents the largest tomb in 'Phyong-rgyas (135m), followed by the (square) tomb of Srong-btsan sgam-po (124m) and the grave of Khri Srong-lde-btsan (124m). Cf. also Wang Renxiang et al 2005: 231, who attribute the latter bang so (no. XI of Map 1) to Khri lDe’gtsug-btsan. The mGar dkar chag (TT 288.18-19; 305.20-306.1) describes the size of the Srong-btsan sgam-po mausoleum (known as sMug-ri smug-po) as being of the dimension (perimeter) as far as the shooting of an arrow, and with a width as far as the stone’s throw by the (athletic/warrior?) Nyang (che chung tshad ni dpag chen mda’ rgyang gang // zheng gi tshad ni nyang gi rdo rgyang gang\). (Nyang refers to the Nyang lineage, an old lHo-kha lineage with branch settlements also in Yar-lung/ 'Phyong-po, in 'Phyos and 'Phyong-po Kha-ru, at least from the 12th C. The latter is known as the home of the rNyung-ma Nyang-ston-pa lineage, where Nyang sMan-lung-pa Śākya’od (fl. 13th C.), the founder of the Srong-btsan sgam-po bang so chapel (aka Bang-so dMar-po lha-khang; fn. 41), hailed from. Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 100, 263, 289; TT 306; GK 296.8f.)
3.2 Analysis

The account raises a number of questions: Is the report with its mention of six bang so complete? Why, for example, is the grave of Khri lDe gtsug-btsan (Mes Agtshoms) not listed? For his grave, there is no mention of any treasure in the chronicles. The same applies to the grave of 'Dus-srong; but the latter was robbed, which suggests that the information on the grave contents is not necessarily reliable. On the other hand, there are graves that are not listed even though they are explicitly described as being filled with treasures, such as that of lJang tsha lHa-dbon (i.e. the later name of lHas-bon of the Annals, the son of Khri lDe-gtsug-btsan, who was buried in Mu-ra in the same year as Kong-co; see notes on Map 1, no. x.a). On the other hand, the mention that the majority of the bang so had been robbed indicates that the author of the original source knew what he was talking about (that is: not all, but nearly all were looted), and in this sense the account appears indeed to be complete.

The grave of Srong-btsan sgam-po (no. V), the “tomb with the inner decoration” (bang so nang rgyan can) as it is described in the sources,\(^{30}\) represents a special case. There is the interpretation (by Petech and others) that it was left untouched by the two (throne-loyal) clans, the 'Bro and lCog-ro, out of respect for the glorious founder king, or out of respect for the grave’s attributed Buddhist history.\(^{31}\) This explanation appears to me somewhat shaky. At least we can assume that from the very beginning the two clans were involved in the grave-plundering decision; in other words, the grave was already defined as loot, and the interpretation would mean that the clans had renounced opening their share of the loot. It should be noted that the same text says, in a different context, that (in the post-Glang Dar-ma period) when Ra-sa, bSam-yas etc. had fallen into disrepair, the Srong-btsan bang so and the five chapels inside (below fn. 41) were opened, as also the gter khang of the Khra-'brug temple (KG 455.10-13). The passage seems not to be related to the present incident, but it indicates that there was no reluctance to open the ancestral tomb and to make use of its contents. It cannot be excluded that the last line is a corrupt rendering of the original, according to which the final verb actually has to be read as in the line before, that is as 'bru 'phror lus, meaning that as in the case of the sNgo-bzher the tomb has been “partly excavated.”\(^{32}\) But what does “partly excavated” mean? There was obviously something left. Why? Or was there fighting onsite that interrupted the action and thus prevented more complete plundering?\(^{33}\) Finally, what was the purpose of the looting in any case? And are there any clues from the sources that would explain the specific division of the tombs among the clans in question?

\(^{30}\) Cf. e.g TT 288.20-21; see also below fn. 41. For the burial of Srong-btsan sgam-po, see KG 259, 288-291.


\(^{32}\) So also Panglung 1989: 366, who renders the passage as “teilweise ausgegraben”.

\(^{33}\) So for example suspected by Samten Karmay (personal communication, Lumbini, March 2011).
First, we can say that all the graves of the two fields as we see them today represent historically opened structures. This also applies to the countless grave fields outside of Yar-lung/ ’Phyong-po. Today, about 190 smaller or larger necropolises in the areas of Central Tibet (i.e. in the provinces of dBus, gTsang) are known to us, with empire-era structures sometimes being of enormous size (up to 70m). We have been able to visit about 50 fields in the last five years, the other ones we know from modern high-resolution satellite imagery. These fields are located in the territories of the old aristocratic lineages whose higher members (ministers, war heroes) were buried in tumuli. With a few exceptions, all the graves we know of show traces of an historical opening; in a number of cases they have been almost completely destroyed, with the destruction continuing today when locals take the stones for house building, etc. We can assume that the report of the looting of the ’Phyong-rgyas tombs only represents a window into a much larger history where in the wake of that event people also began to break open other grave sites in the territories of Central Tibet. But the royal tombs no doubt here have a distinctive quality – in terms of their economic value and certainly also in terms of the symbolic capital represented by the funerary goods. At the centre of the grave furnishings (as detailed in the rGyal po ’i bka’ thang) were the personal treasures and valuables of the deceased (rgyal po ’i dkon nor), and according to the well-known description of the Srong-btsan sgam-po bang so the graves were opened regularly – for offerings, food and drinks and also for the replenishment of personal objects.

In an earlier paper (Hazod 2000b) it has been suggested that the rgyal po ’i dkon nor should be seen as being related to the categories of items that are described in the chronicles as the 18 heirlooms of the paternal and maternal ancestors, among them nine specially decorated objects summarised as the rje ’i can dgu. These were personal items of the ruler (weapons, statues, various utensils, jewels), which were bequeathed from the father and mother’s side and by the brothers and sisters. It is said that the rje ’i can dgu were confiscated by the Yum-brtan clique in the wake of their takeover

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34 For a first survey (state 2008), see Hazod 2009. At the same time, the Cultural Relics Office in Lhasa is currently working on a systematic survey of the burial sites in the AR Tibet; some larger archaeological campaigns are reportedly in preparation.

35 Cf. IDe’u-2 268.10-11, 268.19-269.3. For references in Chinese sources, see Haarh 1969: 341-348; Tong 2008.

36 The main access to the interior of the graves was from the top, and the indentations on the tops of the mounds, which appear typical for the present appearance of the (less demaged) structures, appear to be evidence of older openings. Some of the destroyed burial mounds give an insight into the (usually cruciform) catacomb structure, with several side chambers that were apparently also accessible from the outside (probably in connection with the aftercare of the deceased; see Hazod 2009: 186). For a detailed comparative survey of the bang so architectures both from sites in Eastern and Central Tibet, see most recently Tong 2008.

37 See the details in rGyal po bka’ thang’s chapter “How to sacrifice at the tomb of Srong-btsan sgam po” (KT 145–147).
of power in dBu-ru, which until then was formally under the regency of Tshe-spong bza’, the mother of ‘Od-srung (lDe’u-1 141.17-142.1; lDe’u-2 370.1-3). The residence of 'On-can-do (in Lower sKyi of dBu-ru) and the old stronghold of Phying-ba s'Tag-rtse (opposite the bang so fields in 'Phyong-rgyas) are mentioned as their (new) storage, before they appear again, from the mid-11th century, as insignia of rulers in the course of the establishment of certain rje phran (minor principalities) represented by descendants of the Yum-brtan and 'Od-srung lineages (Hazod 2000b).

We can establish another route of the personal belongings of the royal family in that they are recorded as part of the gter ma (hidden treasures) of stûpas and temples, or appear in the stories of later findings by certain gter ston pa.38 As we know, the gter ma were always kept for future generations, and in the bKa’ thang literature there are detailed descriptions of how the gter ma sites were later to be opened and what was to be left behind as a relevant substitute. It is believed that this type of gter ma tradition started in the 8th or early 9th century. One of the most spectacular establishments was the “treasure tomb” (nor gyi bang so) at the Yum-bu bla-sgang hill, which reportedly goes back to prehistoric times and which is said to have been re-established as a gter ma site under Mu-tig btsan-po,39 among others with the “13 precious treasures of the former Yar-lung rgyal po” as one of the objects buried in this “tomb” (KT 153). It is interesting that the grave goods of the royal bang so are described in the same way (namely that of the 'Bro gNyan-Ide-ru bang so) – as gter ma that were hidden for future royal generations (KT 155.11). Special gter stung (different from the dur stung, guardians of the tomb) are mentioned as having been responsible for them, and the graves as a whole were (similar to the Ru-gnon mTha’-’dul temples) under the supervision of the nang blon (minister of the interior).40

It appears as if several of the mausoleums were re-established as gter ma sites in the snga’ dar period of the 8th/9th century, connected with openings and the aftercare of the grave chambers. The Buddhist accoutrement of the interior of the Srong-btsan sgam-po bang so as related in various sources may go back to that time.41 Moreover,
it is conceivable that the details of the grave contents in the Tibetan chronicles are in fact based on the information of such later gter ma related openings of the graves. And the apparent incompleteness of these reports, where details of the contents are recorded only for some tombs, may simply reflect the situation that the inventories only recorded the “gter ma graves”. This, of course, is not to say that the grave plundering is to be seen in the context of (or as a parallel to) the gter ma history. However, there was a previous history of the opening, and thus knowledge, of the contents of the tombs, and their value was also in circulation. We also have to consider that the removal of the objects was not mere enrichment, but was rather proposed politically as the removal of a symbolic capital for future use.

3.3. The nine lineages

The entrance passage suggests the situation of a conventional form of decision making, as expressed in the “meeting of four”, here reflecting the sgo bzhi/sde bzhi pattern that is often found in connection with accounts of society-forming and political decisions. Similarly, “nine” is often used as an abstract narrative element, so that the numbers mentioned in this story (four/nine clans) possibly represent a larger group.

The gNyags and Tshe-spong formed an old regional tandem (at least since the imperial period); the stong sde of Yar-lung and ’Phyong-po were under their
leadership (Hazod 2009: 204). When setting up the above-mentioned rje dpon tshan, the gNyags together with the Khu were allocated the local principality of ’Phyos (in Lower ’Phyong po; Map 2); another version lists the Tshe-spong and the gNyags as the leaders of the stronghold of ’Phyos. The name of the Tshe-spong valley in Upper Yar-lung (Map 2) is evidently named after the old heir-producing lineage of the Zhang Tshe-spong, from which the mother of the last btsan po (i.e., ’Od-srung) also hailed. In the same valley, known as the site of an ancient goldmine,42 was the stronghold of the rje dpon tshan of sNa-mo (subdivided into Upper and Lower Cliff, Yar rtse / Mar rtse), which in the various versions is allocated to the lineages of mChims and gNyags or Khu and gNyags.

As to the Shud-phu (pu/bu), we can find important information in the above-mentioned lHo brag grub chen rnam thar, a biography of the Tsong-ka-pa teacher Shud-phu Nam-mkha’ rgyal-mtshan (1326–1402). The text offers the genealogical sequence from the renowned chos blon Shud-pu dPal gyi seng-ge of the late 8th century43 down to Nam-mkha’ rgyal-mtshan, with its description of the earlier generations, which also provide significant evidence for the religious activities in the “dark period” (represented by rnying ma tantra adherents of the Ma mo, gShin rje, Phur bu circles). It says that the lineage was originally from Yar-’brog, before it appeared in the 9th century in the areas of Grva, Dol and gZhung (west of Yar-lung), where the Shud-pu acted as rje dpon or local ruler. The text says that the outbreak of the (g.Yo-ru) revolt took place under the lineage descendant Shud-phu Zla-ba seng-ge (fourth generation after dPal gyi seng-ge), after which, in the course of the establishment of the lHo-brag gTam-shul rje dpon tshan, Zla-ba seng-ge was invited by the territorial god gTam-lha Pho-dgu (LBG 648; cf. also GK 337). Whether this clan’s presence there draws on earlier territorial links remains unclear; in any case it corroborates the account of the Lo rgyus chen mo, according to which the Shud-pu (in tandem with the neighbouring sNyi-ba) were responsible for this regional principality. In this text there is no mention of the Shud-pu sTag-rtse, the spokesman of the grave-robbber clique. But neither are other important Shud-pu mentioned, such as the early phyi dar master Shud-phu gZhon-nu grags, co-founder of Thang-po-che (see below) and founder of several temples in Yar-lung/’Phyong-po (Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 321). This reflects a characteristic of Tibetan lineage accounts, where such records are usually very selective and restricted to genealogical connections (or certain religious transmissions) considered to be relevant to the local historical milieu.

The ’Greng, ’Phyos and Khu are all from ’Phyong-po, where ’Greng and ’Phyos are possibly not to be read as clan names but as the people of ’Phyos (the western side

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42 The ser kha (goldmine), hotly contested in the early 14th century (Gyalbo et al. 2000: 198-202), is situated in the upper part of the valley and surrounded by the impressive ruins of ancient towers.

43 For biographical references on this figure, see Sørensen 1994: 387; Gu bkra chos ’byung (GK 172, 323, 332, 337, 376, et passim).
valley of Lower 'Phyong-po) and the people of 'Greng, respectively. The latter toponym refers to the district of Grang-mo (-che and -chung) in Upper 'Phyong-po, an area that is identified as the closer home of the Yar-lung dynasty (Hazod 2007; Map 2). In Grang-mo, Dri-gum and the Btsan-Lnga are said to have been buried before under Khri sNya-zung-btsan (Khri gNyan zung-btsan) and the residence moved to Pying-ba (Phying-ba), where also the new necropolis was then created, in Don-mkhar and later in the adjacent field of Mu-ra. The Khu is one of the oldest lineages of Yar-lung 'Phyong-po (Hazod 2007). Their home was the area around Thang-po-che where the village of Khu-smad (Lower Khu) is still to be found today (Map 2). The Atiśa disciple Khu-ston Brtson-'grus g.yung-drung (1011-1075) came from this line, and much of his (lost) Lo rgyus chen mo arguably came from the local memory retained within this important 'Phyong-po lineage. He was abbot in Thang-po-che and among other things founded a temple in 'Greng/Grang-mo (Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 321).

According to the rNyi ba lo rgyus chen mo 4.3-4 (Sørensen 2007: 45, 84), the sNyi-ba lineage had been resident in gNyal (due south east of Yar-lung) since ancient times. Later, in the imperial period, they constituted a leading lineage of the gNyal stong sde. Apart from Yar-lung, gNyal had traditionally close ties with mChims-yul (to the north east), and with IHo-brag and gTam-shul in the west where, as mentioned, together with the Shud-pu they were responsible for the regional rje dpon tshan. In this group of grave-robber lineages, the 'Bro and ICog-ro fall somehow out of line, less because of their alleged loyalty to the throne than in terms of the historical geography of these lines, whose settlements or branch territories in contrast to the other lineages in this group are not usually associated with g.Yo-ru. Within Central Tibet, the 'Bro and ICog-ro had several territorial links in dBu-ru and in gTsang (in

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44 As said (fn. 21), in Don-mkhar it actually appears to be a continuation of an older cemetery where the bTsan-lnega queens used to have been buried. The grave of Khri sNa-zung-btsan’s son and successor, ‘Bro mNyen-lde-ru (‘Bro gNyan/snyn lde’u), is the famous exception here; the burial mound known as gSon-mchad zlum-po (“round sepulchre of the living”) was raised outside the two fields, at the place of present-day Zhang-mdá’ village (Wang Renxiang et al. 2005: 232 list it among the Don-mkhar bang so, evidently following the (mistaken) description in the grave account of SYC (lDe’u-2 377.15-16; notes on Map 1). Our measurement of the grave in Zhang-mdá’, of which only some contours can be made out, revealed a diameter of c. 60m. The satellite photograph (Google Earth, 29°06′49.74″N 91°42′22.68″) suggests an even greater size.

45 It is situated close to the settlement of Bang-mdá, which we think corresponds to the ancient ‘Bangs-brtsigs (“[castle] raised by the people”), the main seat of the Yar-lung jo bo (Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 314). The impressive grave field of ‘O-ma is situated due south.

46 As for IHo-brag, an early rNyi-ba presence is registered for the eastern side-valley of Ban-pa, where one 9th-century rNyi-ba chos blon founded the Ban-pa lha-khang (Uebach 1987: 115). Later, from the time of the 12th-century master Shud-phu Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan, the area became a religious stronghold of the rNyin ma Shud-phu tradition, with sGro-ba-dgon as the main seat (later the chief residence of the Phyag-rdo-ba Nam-mkha’ rgyal-mtshan); cf. LBG 649.3-653.3.
g.Yas-ru and Ru-lag, the 'Bro, one of the three zhang or heir-producing affinal lineages of the Yar-lung house, among others, also in Myang-stod, the district adjacent to the east of lHo-kha; Hazod 2009). In imperial time, the lCog-ro apparently also had some ties to Yar-lung, where the 8th-century translator lCog-ro Klu’i rgyal-mtshan (from Shangs in g.Yas-ru)\textsuperscript{47} founded the Tshe-chu 'bum-pa. The famous stûpa reportedly contained the armour of btsan po Srong-btsan sgam-po, whose grave the lCog-ro had obtained. We do not know, however, whether the clan also had settlements in this area.

In any case, we see that seven of the grave-robber lineages came from Yar-lung 'Phyong-po or from the immediate neighbouring districts. It seems that the meeting on the eve of the grave looting is essentially a local story— one of solidarity between people of the core region of g.Yo-ru, who were bound not least by their geographical proximity. This may explain why, for example, the dBa’s do not appear in the list, the lineage primarily associated with dBu-ru (sKyid-shod and 'Phan-yul), which in the classical Tibetan historiography is attributed the decline of the spu rgyal throne.\textsuperscript{48} It is also conspicuous that seven of the lineages that the leaders of the rje dpon tshan hail from also appear among the grave robber clans, including the 'Bro and lCog-ro, but not the dBa’s. They had apparently, in the course of the 'Bro dBa’s khrugs pa of dBu-ru, lost all reputation. This striking correspondence between the rje tshan and grave-robber lineages suggests a closer connection between the two historic events, where possibly one and the same group were responsible for these significant decisions of the kheng log period. At the same time, we do not wish to exclude the possibility that there may be some older historical connections that would explain the individual grave allocations. It is conceivable, for example, that some of the relevant lines derived from the circles of the former grave custodians, the above-mentioned bang so gter srung. But currently this is mere speculation.

4. The Death of dPal-'khor-btsan and the relative chronology of the grave plundering

4.1 The ruler of “gTsang and g.Yon-ru”

In KG, the brief mention of the violent death of dPal-’khor-btsan then follows (no. iii of the above listed table). The son of 'Od-srung was born in a glang year ([lcags] glang 881, according to the lDe’u chronicles) in the residence of 'Phang-thang in Yar-stod, situated at the border with Yar-mda’. Following the division of the country after Glang dar-ma, this part of the lower Yar-lung with the ancient sites of Pho-brang, 'Phang thang, Yum-bu bla-sgang, mKhar-thog, bTsan-thang, Bya sa–all

\textsuperscript{47} Padma bka’ thang (405) has Ru-lag Shangs (sic); his father was Cog-ro Klu’i rgyal-’byung, the mother was from the 'Bring lineage.

\textsuperscript{48} It namely refers to the “wicked minister” sBas rGyal to-re (fn. 9), and to dBa’s Kho-bzher legs-steng (cf. Hazod 2009: 231).
within the closer vicinity of the representative *chos skor* of Khra-'brug—developed into the main site of the 'Od-srung dominion in g.Yo-ru, while the *chos skor* of bSam-yas (and also 'On-can-do) served as the main seats of the “Yum-brtan half” of dBu-ru.49 While the sources speak of the closure of the temples at this time, this was apparently not (yet) true for the 'Od-srung dominion, if we believe the sources, according to which both father and son were active as Buddhist rulers within their dominions. 'Od-srung is said to have established a temple in mKhar-thog (in central Yar-lung-mda’; Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 56), and the composition of the Mādhya-maka catalogue of the *'Phang thang ma* (named after the residence in Yar-lung) is to be placed in the immediate post-Glang dar-ma time (Dotson 2007). dPal-'khor-btsan is attributed the establishment of eight gtsug lag khang; the sGrol-bu sMan/d-lung temple in Lower Myang is mentioned by name (above fn. 6).50

'Od-srung died in 'Phang-thang, reportedly by poison at the hands of a certain rTse-ro;51 at that time the son was 13 years old, the sources say, a rather formulaic statement, which is also to be found with other generations of the *spu rgyal* dynasty, and not necessarily is to be read as a historical fact. His reign lasted for 18 years, which he apparently spent mostly in his residences in gTsang (in Grom-pa and Myang stod).52 According to the representation in Sa-skya sources, the son of 'Od-srung described as the “prince (btsad po) of gTsang and g.Yon-ru” is said to have been residing in Grom pa lHa rtse when the funeral for his father was performed.53

According to the IDE’u chronicles and other sources, which are probably based on the gSang ba phyag rgya can (fn. 51), dPal-'khor-btsan died at the hand of one sTag-rtse gNyags, elsewhere gNyags/sNyegs sTag-rtse-ba (GBY 215.5-6), or sTag rtse’i sNyags. The latter, given in IDE’u-1 143.2, is perhaps the correct form and would refer to one or more people of the gNyags clan associated with the place sTag-rtse.54 The gSang ba phyag rgya can gives the reasons for his forced removal: The mnga’ bdag was killed after he had ordered that some of the 'Bre lineage people (from Myang-stod, rGyal-rtse area) were to be transferred to Yar-lung and some of the

51 gSang ba phyag rgya can (of the Can lnga group), IDE’u-2 376.
52 In Yar-lung, the local tradition also mentions Bya-sa as a residence place of dPal-'khor-btsan – the site in lower Yar-mda’, which later became an estate and residence place of the house of the Yar-lung Jo-bo (Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 316). In gTsang, his residences were at the place of the later rGyal-rtse, and at the rock of lHa-rtse (today’s old lHa-rtse) in the ancient Grom-pa district.
54 It is unclear which sTag-rtse could be meant here, however, perhaps the “Tiger Cliff” of Phying-ba, which have been occupied by the sNyags, but perhaps also by the Shud-phu, i.e. the Shud-phu sTag-rtse.
gNyags to gTsang. The latter is confirmed by the lineage account *gNyags ston gdung rabs* and refers to the gNyags settlements in Mus of the La-stod Byang area. Elsewhere in the lDe’u chronicle, dpal-’khor-btsan is described as an incompetent and non-virtuous ruler (see below), but this confirmation of his order shows that at least for some time he acted as an assertive ruler of g.Yo-ru and gTsang, even though he apparently was no longer welcome in Yar-lung, his homeland.

The site of the regicide is given as Yar-lung Sham-po (/Shar-po), Sham-po Chu-nag or also as Myang-stod. This refers to Sham-bu in rGyal-rtse of Myang-stod, where dpal-’khor-btsan had a residence (fn. 52). The place is known as the seat of Dri-gum btsan-po, who also was killed there (i.e. at the old Myang-ro Sham-po of P.t. 1287; Hazod 2007). Sa-skya sources report that his son, bKra-shis brtsegs-pa-dpal of Grom-pa lHa-rts, conducted the funeral for the father (Petech 1994: 655)–evidently representing the last bang so of a mnga’ bdag of the spu rgyal line. As suggested elsewhere (Hazod 2009: 187f.), perhaps he was buried in the large grave field behind Sham-bu, an area locally known as Yar-lung. (Hence the name Yar-lung Sham-po/Myang-ro Sham-po (= Sham bu), a toponymic compound, which evidently goes back to older, prehistoric, links between the homeland of the spu rgyal and the Myang district.) So here we notice the peculiar situation according to which the first and the last ruler of the spu rgyal dynasty died a violent death at one and the same place.

4.2 From mnga’ bdag dpal-’khor-btsan to rje Khri lDe-mgon-btsan

In summarising the reign of dpal-’khor-btsan (18 years), the lDe’u chronicle states that ’Bro Tsug-sgra ldong-lha and Cang-rgyan A-bo were appointed as ministers, and continues to describe the inadequacies of the ruler, which is ultimately also seen as being responsible for the collapse of his reign. It says that, even though he took care of the repair of the leaking roofs of the ancestor’s bang so and also looked after

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55 *gNyags ston pa’i gdung rabs* 97; for this 18th-century text about the Gle-lung chos-sde, see Everding 2006: 3ff.

56 We assume the funeral mentioned for dpal-’khor-btsan was of the traditional bang so or mound burial type, although it says that this tradition ended with ’Od-srung (cf. e.g. KG 425.9). To my knowledge no tumuli are recorded for any of the Tibetan principalities that followed. Significant in this context are the authoritative edicts by the Gu-ge sovereign lHa Bla-ma Ye-shes-’od, in which it is stated that the bon shid nag po (black funeral of Bon) and “the tradition of interring treasures in tombs for the deceased” (*gshin po’i don du nor dur sped pa’i lugs*) has been prohibited. (Ra-se Dkon-mchog rgya-mtsho 2004: 125/c.1.)

57 lDe’u-1 142.16-143.8; lDe’u-2 370.20-371.10. For the following summary I follow the reading in lDe’u-1.

the preparation of Buddhist scriptures and images, he was of sinister and also stupid temper. This destroyed the foundation of the royal law and led to the outbreak of the revolt (in a glang year) and the lost of the six border areas (mtha’i rgya drug). A breakdown of civil order followed, with a complete dissolution of any trust in traditional bonds and allegiances. After the violent elimination of several ministers or representatives of the court, whose identity remains unclear, Tsang-rgyan A-bo, who is here denoted as rgyal po, threw in the towel after the death of dPal-’khor-btsan: “Even though he then took care [of the government] for three years, Tsang-rgan A-o, the king, could no longer protect it, and the throne was lost.”

It continues (lDe’u-1 143.12f.; lDe’u-2 371.13), that a meeting of subject(-clans) (in g.Yo-ru) decided to invite (the Yum-brtan descendant) rje Khri lDe-mgon-btsan from dBu-ru as their ruler. The idea of inviting one of the sons of dPal-’khor-btsan from gTsang had been rejected, because they feared the Yum-brtan clique would became ill-disposed; and it further states that due to dPal-’khor-btsan’s inability in contrast to the lineage of Khri lDe-mgon-btsan, the ‘Od-srung rgyud was not in possession of the royal heirlooms (see above), nor was the chos skor bSam-yas under their control. The account gives the reasons that led the Yar-lung clans to consider the Yum-brtan scion as a true descendant of the mes dbon rnam gsum (i.e. as a true heir to the throne), among others, because the turquoise earring (snyan g.yu) was handed over to him and because he accepted the ’Bre people (who had previously moved to Yar-lung) as equal in status (compared to the other Yar-lung clans). The significant earring was presented by the rje ’u (petty lord) of ’Phyos, possibly a representative of the ’Phyos group, who was involved in the (preceding?) grave plundering. It is said that the merit of the mnga’ bdag (Khri lDe-mgon-btsan) increased and so did the hopes of the rje ’u (involved in this covenant). The texts do not provide further details about the fate of this new alliance, which was apparently closed in Yar-lung/ ’Phyong-po. They just say that the gap between lord and subjects was large (rje kheng dbang khyad che ste) and the revolt broke out. It then follows the same sequence of the kheng log description as in dp’-bo (i-ii of the above table).

This section in the lDe’u chronicle indicates the sequence of three periods of rules, from the reign of the ’Od-srung son in gTsang to the unsuccessful triennial term of the A-bo rgyal-po and the (short-term) rule of the rje Khri lDe-mgon-btsan in g.Yo-

59 It refers to the rje ’i blon po (i.e. dPal-’khor-btsan minister) sNyags Thog-po (he had been abducted and then killed; his body was hidden in the wintery mountains, where it later appeared [after the snow melt]), Khri ’Dus-mang-po-btsan (var. blon po Khri mDung-mang-btsan), who died of illness, and dPal-bzang dge-’dun, who was wedged between rocks and put to death. The first one, sNyags Thog-po, perhaps was a closer relative of the sTag-rtse’i sNyags (above, chap. 4.1).

60 For a similar use of the turquoise earring, see, e.g. the installation of the rules of the three sTod kyi mgon (i.e. the founding fathers of sTod mNga’-ris skor-gsum), who together with their respective territory each received a specific and representative snyan g.yu (Vitali: 1996: 156, fn. 210). See also Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 25-27.
ru. The latter has been identified by Petech (and authors following him) as the son of Yum-brtan, which is rather questionable. The son is usually given as (Khri-lde) mGon-snyan/smyon, whose dates are to be set in the second half of the 9th century.\(^{61}\) With the rje Khri lDe-mgon-btsan most likely a later descendant is meant, although his identification remains uncertain, as it is generally problematic to historically put the first generations of the so-called Yum-brtan rgyud in concrete terms.\(^{62}\)

Anyway, from this sequence of events it can be concluded that the outbreak of the (g.Yo-ru) revolt reported for the time of this mnga’ bdag must refer to the period after the death of dPal-’khor-btsan, meaning a later phase of these uprisings set off in a glang year during dPal-’khor-btsan’s reign. As mentioned, according to lDe’u-1 the latter corresponds to (shing) glang 905. If one takes the calculation in the grave plundering account “nine years after the kheng log outbreak” at face value, the history of the opening of the btsan po’s tombs is likewise to be placed after dPal-’khor-btsan; it fairly corresponds to the year when the throne was lost (i.e. three years after the lug year 911, the date of dPal-’khor-btsan’s demise in lDe’u-1). The post-dPal-’khor-btsan date of the grave plundering also appears for example in the representation in Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s Bod kyi rgyal rabs (Vitali 1996: 544) or in Nel-pa Paṇḍita’s Chronicle (Uebach 1987: 85). In dPa’-bo, the statement of the killing by sTag-rtse gNyags is in the context of a more general summary of the Bod Sil-bu (fn. 7) and also serves as a bridge to the subsequent report on the future rje phran settlements represented by Yum-brtan and ’Od-srung descendants. It is therefore not necessarily to be read chronologically. This also applies to the order of the preceding paragraphs, i.e. the quotation from the Lo rgyus chen mo where, as we have noticed, the narrative of the regional principalities actually describes a final phase of the revolt period. Thus, the establishment of the local rje tshan of ’Phyos and the other of the “nine rje’i

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\(^{61}\) Based on the data of Yum-brtan (c. 843-78, according to GBY 209), the son lived in the 60s to 80s of the 9th century, in any case some years before the events of the immediate post-dPal-’khor-btsan time. Not much is known of the two figures; of Yum-brtan it says he has no bang so (GBY 209.11).

\(^{62}\) Any attempt at reconstructing the Yum-brtan genealogy remains unsatisfying, and it is not least this figure of Khri lDe-mgon-btsan that here forms a critical point. The representations in the lDe’u chronicles register for the 4th and 6th generation one Khri-lde(-po) and a Khri lDe-mgon-btsan (Hazod 2000a: 188-191). The same sources (lDe’u-1 154.1-6; lDe’u-2 390.5-9; ) speak of a Khri lDe-mgon-btsan as one of the three mnga’ bdag under whom the rekindling of the Teaching in Central Tibet took place, namely the mnga’ bdag Khri-chung (the founding father of the Yar-lung Jo-bo house and descendant of the ’Od srung brgyud), Khri lDe-mgon-btsan and Tsha-la Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan; the latter two are listed as collateral lineage relatives (Hazod, ibid.). Tsha-la’s reign can be dated to the end of 10th/ beginning of 11th century, which means that the contemporary Khri-lde mgon-btsan apparently is not identical with the same named ruler of the g.Yo-ru kheng log story. The identification of the figure, whom the petty lord of ’Phyos decorated as new ruler thus remains unclear, and it cannot much more be said as he was a descendant of a lineage from dBu-ru which the historians have called Yum-brtan rgyud; in this context in lDe’u-2 (372.2) the lineage is specified as “Khri-lde mgon-btsan gyi rgyud”.

“dpôn tshan” is to be placed chronologically after the grave plundering and also after the failed attempt in Yar-lung to remake the imperial throne through the figure of Khri lDe-mgon-btsan.

5. Conclusion

Much of the attempt at reconstructing the history of the grave plundering remains piecemeal. Nevertheless, our observations have led us to some fixed conclusions about the events in ’Phyong-rgyas, which we would like to summarise as follows:

___ In its (indirect) reference to the sa mo glang year 869, the statement in the grave plundering account “ninth year after the outbreak of the kheng log” (= 877) represents a miscalculation. It can only refer to a glang year at the time of dPal-'khor-btsan—the (shing) glang 905 if one follows the representation in lDe’u-1—which the event of the grave looting followed nine years later, in a bird year ([chu] bya 913).

___ This was apparently the same year in which the throne was lost, and probably the seizing of the necropolis took place exactly at this time, when actually there was no longer any power to prevent it. However, we do not rule out the possibility that the plundering was associated with fighting, which led to a breakup of that action (and therefore the robbery remained incomplete). But as with several other questions in this account, this remains a speculation.

___ There was an attempt to continue the throne by the invitation of an alleged scion of the spu rgyal line (i.e. descendant of the “Yum-brtan lineage”). This was apparently a local venture by petty lords of Yar-lung, and perhaps ensued under pressure from the side of the Yum-brtan clique. It remains unclear whether this event occurred before or after the grave plundering. We assume it was the latter.

___ The so-called g.Yo-ru kheng log, which apparently had its starting point in eastern lHo-kha (with the appearance of the ‘Be-bza’ and the mChims Kong mi drug), resulted in the regulation of the anarchy in the form of clan-based local rules established in the old territories of Central Tibet. The lines involved were largely the same as those that appear in the story of the grave plundering. It seems as if the decisions at the “oath plain” (fn. 18) that led to the establishment of the rje dpôn tshan and the meeting where it was decided to open the graves both had an immediate contextual and chronological connection.

___ Present in both events were the ’Bro and the lCog-ro. As throne-loyal lines they were initially not among the core activists of the rebellions. But after the fall of the dPal-'khor-btsan reign in gTsang, their loyal attitude became obsolete, and they evidently agreed to act in solidarity with the plan of Shud-pu sTag-rtse and his group in dividing the royal graves. And at the time when the “Grom-pa lHa-rtse” principality was installed by the ’Bro and lCog-ro, the two lineages had long since been released from any royal ties and obligations. The fact that the “most valuable” grave was allocated to the two lineages, i.e. the grave of Srong-btsan sgam-po, one may see as an indication of the respect these lines (and especially the ’Bro) still met with from
the part of the clan aristocracy. The question of why this grave was not (or only half?) robbed remains unsolved, however.

___ The regular opening of the graves was part of the pre-Buddhist ritual (in connection with the aftercare of the deceased), and from the late 8th/ early 9th century several tombs were subsequently re-established as gter ma sites. This fact may have played a role in the selection of the (six) graves divided among the lineages in question. We suspect that a motive for the violent act was not least the gaining of symbolic capital comparable with the earlier confiscated “royal heirlooms” (rje’i can dgu). But there is no clear evidence that would confirm a later (political) “use” of the grave contents.

___ During the time of the event in ’Phyong-rgyas, the two sons of dPal’khor-btsan (sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon and bKra-shis brtsegs-pa-dpal) were by then already in the western region. One generation later, the lDe-gsum returned to gTsang, where they and their descendants established new regional centres.63 And again, a few decades later the royal throne was revived by Yar-lung clans and other lineages through their stake in the establishment of the various rje phran of the Yum-brtan brgyud (Hazod 2000a). This was from the time of Tsha-na Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan (fl. end of 10th / beginning of 11th C.), the widely respected mnga’ bdag of bSam yas, in whose term the “dark period” of Central Tibet ended. It is an indication that in the history of the revolt the idea of the spu rgyal throne was actually never questioned. There were certain circumstances, essentially the inability to solve the question of the succession to the throne after Glang Dar-ma, that gave rise to the imperative of a general political realignment. The occurrence of arbitrary warlords in the outer regions of the empire, followed by a wave of disorientation, violence and rebellion in the inner zones preceded the consolidation of a new political orientation. The plundering of the royal tombs here reflects both sides of a transitional situation: it was part of the rebellion, and at the same time represented the beginning of a creative process—a process towards the development of a political fragmentation that was to be characteristic of Central Tibet for a long time.

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63 See Vitali 2004: 122f.; Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 314f. In one source cited in Vitali 2004: fn. 23, the date for the return of the lDe-gsum (i.e. of the sons of bKra-shis brtsegs-pa-dpal) to Grom-pa is given as water dragon 932. One might conclude, that at this time the Grom-pa lHa-rtse rje tshan of the kheng log period was already terminated.
Notes on Map 1:
The notes refer to the account in the gSang ba yang chung (see fn. 22). The details given in this text are summarised in brackets (in the order of location of the tomb, its characteristics and its name). A few additional notes are in square brackets. The personal names in bold give the spellings in the older Dunhuang documents. The numbering I to XVII follows the chronology of the succession to the throne (see Dotson 2009: 143).

{S, l }, {T, fs} {R, d} shape and size of the tomb (S = square, l = length; T = trapezoidal, fs = front side; R = round, d = diameter); based on satellite photo and Renxiang et al. 2005.

Ω tombs registered in the sources as being filled with treasures
I Khri sNyan-gzung-btsan (Khri sNya-zung-brtsan) {R, d: 40m}
(Don-mkhar-mda'; without phul (fn. 22), square tombs were unknown at that time)

II 'Bro gNyin-Ide-ru ('Bro mNyen-Ide-ru) {see fn. 44}
(In Don-mkhar-mda' (sic); ruler and subjects, the three, entered the grave alive)

III sTag-gu snyan-gzigs (sTag-bu sny-a-gzigs) {R, d: 37m?}
(Don-mkhar-mda', to the left of no. I; without phul, resembling a heap of earth.
iii.1-3 'Dos-bza' sTong-btsun 'Bro-dkar ('Ol-god sTong-btsun 'Bro-ga)
(To the left of yab [sTag-gu snyan-gzigs], no. III. [A wall is in front of no. III and iii.1 { l = c. 78m}, and the damaged site shows traces of further structures, perhaps referring to the two mounds (sa phung gnyis) behind sTag-gu (no. III) of 'Bro-tsha rMu-btsun ('Bro Dung-pyang-bzher, mother of no. II ) and Mon-bu rgyal-mtshan, and to the mound of blon po Legs-nam situated to the left of no. III.])

IV gNam-ri srong-btsan (Khris Slon-btsan) {T, fs.: 70m}
(Don-mkhar-mda', to the left of no. I. [var.: to the right of no. I]; tomb with great phul and of the shape of a shoulder blade (i.e. trapezoidal). Name: Gung-ri sog-kha)

iv.1 Tshe-spong 'Bri-ma thod-dkar (Tshes-ppong 'Bring-ma thog-dgos) {T, fs.: 40m}
(To the right of yab [gNam-ri Srong-btsan], no. IV. Name: Bang-so g.Yul-mo'i thang)

V Srong-btsan sgam-po (r. 618?-640, and c.646-649; d. 649) {S, l: 124m}
('Phyong-po-mda' [KK 309: Yar-lung Don-mkhar-thang]; size = the range of an arrow shot (fn. 29); square, with five chapels inside (fn. 41). Name: sMug-ri smug-po)
v.1-4 Ong-cong (Mun-cang Khon-co (mother of no. VII; d. 680, funeral in 683); in Don[-mkhar-]mda', on the left side [KK 309: Phying-ba sTag-rtse-ri]. Next to it are (the tombs of) the ladies Mong-bza' Khri mo-'brong (Mong Khris-mo-mnyen lDong-steng? mother of no. VI), Ru-yong btsan-mo-mthso (Ru-yong sTong-rgyal mtsho-ma; wife of Khri Thog-brtsan, and mother of lHa Tho-do sNya-btsan), and mNo-bza' Mar-dkar (rNo-bza' Mang dGar, (2nd ?) wife of lHa Tho-do sNya-btsan)

VI Gung-srong gung-btsan (Gung-srong gung-rtsan, d. 646) {T?, fs.: 54m}
(Don-mkhar-mda', to the left of no. IV. Name: Gung-ri gung-che)

VII Mang-srong (Mang-slon Mang-rtsan, d. 676) {S, l: 135m}
(To the left of no. V. Name: sNgo-bzher hral-po; fn. 29)

VIII 'Dus-srong 'phrul-rgyal ('Dus-srong Mang-po-rje, d. 704) {T, fs: 85m}
(To the left of Ma[ng]-srong (no. VII). Name: Seng-ge brtsegs-pa-can; fn. 26)

IX 'Bro-bza' sTong-dkar Phyi-mo-lod (Khri-ma-lod, d. 712/13) {S, l: 30m}
(To the left of the son, no. VIII. [See the entry for 713/14 in OTA; Dotson 2009: 108.])

X Ag-tshom (Khri lDe-gtsug-brtsan, d. 754) {S, l: 91m}
(Mu-ra-ri, to the left of no. VIII. Name: lHa-ri gtsug-nam. [No bang so is recorded for lHa Bal-po, the elder [step-]brother of no. X, who ruled from 704-05 (Dotson 2009: 143), – i.e. the Pa-tshab tsha lHa Bal-po in lDe’u-l 120.20-21, who together with his two younger brothers (Lod-po and Lod-chung) was deposed.])

x.1 sNa-nam dByibs-stang (= Mang-mo-rje bZhi-steng? d. 742/43) {S?, l: 30m}
(To the left of the tombs of yab [Khri lDe-gtsug-brtsan], no. X, and her son, no. XII)
x.a lJang tsha lHa-dbon (lHas-bon, d. 739/40) {R?, d: 28m}
(To the left [var.: in front] of the father (no. X); round-shaped)

x.2 lCang-mo Khri-btsun (Kim-shang Kong-co, d. 739/40)
[The funerals for lHas-bon and (his mother?) Kong-co were performed in 741/42, and the two were possibly buried together; Dotson 2009: 24, 121-22.]

XI Khri Srong-lde-brtsan (d. c. 800) {S, l: 124m}
(Mu-ra-ri, behind no. X; built before his death. Name: 'Phrul-ri gtsug-nam; fn. 27)

XII Mu-ni (Mu-ne-brtsan, d. 798) {T, fs: 39m}
(In front to the right of no. XI. Name: lHa-ri lding-bu)

**XIII**  Mu-tig-btsan-po (= Mu-ru; **Mu-rug-brtsan**, d. c. 804)  (T, fs: 73m)
(Don-mkhar-nda’. Name: sKya-[ring]-ldem[s]-[pa]  [var. Gyang-ri rgyang-ldam/ldem]

**XIV**  Khri lDe-srong-brtsan (d. 815)  (T, fs: 95m)
(In front of no. VIII; situated at a higher level, because the queen-mother [rMa-rgyal lDong-skar?] feared it could be flooded (fn. 25). Name: ’Phrul-chen-bzher  [var. rGyal-chen ’phrul-ri])

**XV**  Ral-pa-can (Khri gTsug-lde-brtsan, d. 841)  (T, fs: 54m)
(Don-[mkhar]-nda’, on the left side. Name: Khri sTag-smang-ri)

**XVI**  Dar-ma (Khri ’U’i Dum-brtan, d. 842)  (S, l: 34m)
(Between no. VIII and XIV. Name: Bang-ri ’khor-lo-can. [Some sources mention that the construction remained incomplete.])

**XVII**  ’Od-srung (Khri ’Od-srung-btsan)  (T, fs: 64m)
(Behind no. VIII. Name: sKyes-bu lha-bsten/rten. [It says that thereafter the tradition of constructing burial mounds ended; fn. 56])
○ = grave field with smaller (round-shaped) tombs
□ = grave field with greater (square/trapezoidal) tombs
mGos = lineage registered for this area
Abbreviations


GD  Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, Gangs can yul gyi sa la spyod pa’i mtho ris kyi rgyal blon giso bor brjod pa’i deb ther rdzogs ldan gzhon nu’i dga’ ston dpyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs. Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang 1981.

GRS  Bla-ma dam-pa bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan, rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang 1981.


IDe’u-1  IDe’u Jo-sras, Chos ‘byung chen mo bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan lde’u jo sras kyis mdzad pa, Lhasa: Bod-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang 1987.

IDe’u-2  mKhas-pa IDe’u, rGya bod kyi chos ‘byung rgyas pa, Lhasa: Bod-ljongs mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang 1987.


KT  gTer-ston O-rgyan gling-pa, bKa’ thang sde lnga. Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang 1986.


NC  Nyang-ral Nyi-ma ’od-zer, Chos ‘byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi’i bcud (Gangs-can rig-mdzod 5). Lhasa: Bod-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang 1988.

gNyags ston pa’i gdung rabs = Chos-nyid ye-shes, gNyags ston pa’i gdung rabs dang gdan rabs (Gangs-can rig-mdzod 31). Lhasa: Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpemnying dpe-skrun-khang 1997.

OTA  Old Tibetan Annals (Dotson 2009).
Padma bka’i thang = gTer chen O-rgyan gling-pa, Padma bka’i thang yig. Chengdu: Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang 1996.

SYC  gSang ba yang chung (in lDe’u-2 376.15–380.11).
TT  ‘Jigs-med gling-pa, gTam gyi tshogs theg pa’i rgya mtsho (Gangs-can rig-mdzod 18) Lhasa: Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-nying dpe-skrun-khang 1991.

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