Czaja / Hazod
The Illuminating Mirror
The Illuminating Mirror

Tibetan Studies in Honour of Per K. Sørensen
on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday

Edited by
Olaf Czaja and Guntram Hazod

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Preface

On December 18, 2015 Per K. Sørensen is celebrating his 65th birthday. It is our great pleasure and honour to present a felicitation volume on the occasion of this event, bringing together contributions from numerous colleagues who in the past and the present were in close scholarly exchange with the honouree. The Tabula Gratulatoria supplements the number of colleagues who feel connected to this illuminating scholar and teacher. However, this list – we are certain – will continue to rise in the years to come, for the jubilarian’s productivity and scientific outreach are unbroken. That’s saying something about someone who is just as notorious for his energy, commitment and working speed, as at the same time for the high mastery of the Tibetology discipline in a rather unusual breadth.

His well-known enormous erudition in different genres of Tibetan literature (from medieval historiographical and religious texts to the many variants of oral literature, but also in philosophical literature and its Sanskrit basic texts) provides testimony of Sørensen’s wide-ranging interests, something that is combined with his endeavour of following a rather holistic approach in his work. The inspirations emanating from from Sørensen’s workshop relate on the one hand to his teaching career as a professor of Central Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig (since 1995), on the other hand to the rich academic contacts that he maintains – the latter combined with a principal curiosity and openness for methodological additions to his own works, as it is expressed not least by his collaborations with representatives of anthropological, archaeological, art historical and other not merely text-oriented fields of Tibetan Studies.

But mostly it is he himself, who is contacted, either by colleagues who ask for assistance in the field of textual studies, where Sørensen, as we know, always proves a generous supporter, or from the part of academic institutions. Within the subject of Tibetan Studies there is probably hardly anyone who authored more expert assessments or Gutachten for research projects than Per Sørensen, by which means he not insignificantly also helped to shape the academic world of this discipline. His over 50 reviews (including book reviews) and numerous prefaces and introductory notes to book publications are impressive evidence of his demand awareness in this area.

“I am Danish”, is an often heard saying by Per, with which he also likes to accentuate with a wink his for many people astonishing if not irritating manners that rather prefer bluntness and directness instead of diplomatic caution. But actually there are only few colleagues, who know more details about the person Per Sørensen, or about his origins and the career as a Tibetologist. How did one from the working class environment of Copenhagen come to this (at that time still) exotic subject of Tibetology? We thought, we will let him tell himself about that and about his other biographical stations, the specifics of his research interests as well as his general assessment of the discipline in regard to its possible future developments.

The respective interview was conducted at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin, short Wiko) on the 6th of June in 2015, where Sørensen on several occasions stayed as a guest researcher in the framework of a Tibet Focus Group conducted by the
In the case given, Per was in Berlin to attend a scientific presentation by Tsering Gyalpo at Wiko – the long-time Tibetan colleague, who tragically died a few weeks later. Tsering Gyalpo is also one of the contributors in this volume, whose paper in Tibetan we supplemented by some adjustments after his passing, such as an English abstract, some corrections and the captions for the photographs related to this contribution.

The Interview is followed by two appreciating essays (Anne Buchardi and Yonten Dargye) related to Per Sørensen’s longstanding (Denmark supported) research project in Bhutan, and by the listing of the honouree’s major publications. The main part of the book with 33 essays on a whole covers fairly wide-ranging historical and topical niches, simply in due line with Per’s broad fields of interests. Yet, we refrained from a thematic division of this collective volume, and the essays simply follow the alphabetical order. We wish to thank the authors for their contributions and also for the good cooperation in connection with the editing procedure. Jan Seifert (Leipzig) thankfully took care of the image editing and the textual design. Likewise, our sincerely thanks go to Erland Kolding Nielsen, director of the Royal Library of Denmark, and the Austrian Academy of Sciences’ Institute for Social Anthropology, Vienna, for the financial support in printing the present volume.

Finally, we hope that this volume will find its joyous acceptance by Per Sørensen in the form as it was intended, namely as the Festschrift for an exceptional leading representative of the Tibetan Studies community, and for a most inspiring and also generous colleague, and for a friend.

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karl yamamoto
Q. Per, looking back almost 45 years of studying the culture on the Roof of the World and reading endless amounts of Tibetan literature in all its diversity, we find that this is a fitting occasion to conduct an interview to hear about your path to our discipline or Fach as we say in German. You have witnessed the unparalleled development of Tibetology at close range. How did your career take form, how did it all start? Here at the beginning, please tell us about your family background?

A. Oh, I doubt it will interest anyone, but in fact I grew up in a normal working class home and neighbourhood in Copenhagen. The way for me to towards Tibet and on to Tibetology had a lot to do with – surely something we all can recognise – fantasies about the mysterious and inaccessible world on the “Roof of the World.” In my case coming from a lowland country where the highest point in Denmark barely being more than 150 metre above sea-level – no kidding, represented by a small hill appropriately (and totally seriously) in Danish called Himmelbjerget (“The Mountain of Heaven”), it was obvious that you take a liking to real mountains, and quite early on I entertained such fantasies, greedily consuming books and pictures of the world of mountains. To be true, it all started, being probably no more than 10 or 12 years of age, with fantasies of picturesque Switzerland and the Alps. I think I knew, as a young lad, all about the towns and valleys and mountains in Switzerland by name, without ever having set foot there. Gradually, the interest for geography and mountains widened and intensified, and it eventually moved towards the Himalayas. I have always been carried away by fantasies. It was all armchair wisdom I gleaned from traveller’s books, and in particular, it probably was the adventure of Heinrich Harrer’s Seven Years in Tibet that had an extraordinary impact on me. It was an amazing read, exciting and adventurous, no wonder it became a world success. I read and reread it many times, I think, underlining many passages, and I was so enticed that I started to read as much as I could about the life in Tibet and Lhasa. Much later, incidentally, I even went to Kitzbühel in Austria to visit Heinrich Harrer privately.

Q. Erik Haarh is a well-known Tibetologist who was to determine much of your interest on a more serious level? How did this come about?

A. Correct. At that point, I had no clue whatsoever whether one actually could study Tibetan. I was barely 18 years old; Tibetan studies at the most were exotic and practically non-existent, and, with a few exceptions, mainly cultivated by Sanskritists reading the Buddhist canon where Tibetan proved indispensable due to the relative accuracy in their rendering of often lost Sanskrit original sources. Now, we should not forget that accessing material on Tibet was not so easy as in our days with the internet. One day, it was in 1969, I stumbled upon a newspaper article about an historian of religion, who was about to defend his dissertation, the huge chef d’oeuvre of his called The Yarlung Dynasty. It was a long interesting article about the author behind the book, Erik Haarh (1929–1993), my future teacher (here root-teacher would probably be an appropriate word to use). The article spoke volumes about the hardship he encountered

* The interview was conducted by Guntram Hazod, Berlin, June 6, 2015.
as a librarian at the Royal Library of Denmark, the huge amount of sources in different languages he had to consult in order to write his book. He was at that point responsible for the Oriental Collection stored there and at the same time, the article described how the writing of this groundbreaking thesis consumed most of the time of his family life during long evenings and weekends. Working on this book, a solitary undertaking, where you enter uncharted territories all by yourself, meant that at the point of submitting his thesis, Erik faced a divorce. Nevertheless, I soon found out that at the University of Copenhagen, it actually was possible to study Tibetan and Mongolian, aside from all the other major Asian languages, like Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese. Erik offered some courses in classical Tibetan. The reason for the small Tibetan programme was that research on Central Asia in fact has a long tradition in Denmark. Erik Haarh had an interesting career: in the 1950’s he studied in Rome with Giuseppe Tucci, a sojourn that nourished his interest for Tibetan history, a favourite topic of Tucci. It was an interest that Erik at a later point urged me to cultivate. In a way we have here a short bla ma brgyud pa from Tucci, Haarh to my humble person (obviously as Erik’s primary student) and now continuing to my students. This is what tradition and continuity probably are all about. As to Erik and his importance, it might be worthwhile to refer to Gene Smith who once wrote that during one of his first trips to Europe, in the early 1960’s, he passed through Copenhagen and spent a few days with Erik at the library. It proved to be a sort of highlight on Gene’s trip and he later wrote how impressed he was by Erik’s broad reading and profound knowledge of Tibetan literature. Well-read scholars of Tibetan history in Europe at that time were rare, the pioneering French and Italian scholars for sure, and the Hungarians (rightly proud of the legacy of Csoma de Kőrös), so Géza Uray in Hungary, to mention the most prominent ones. Erik’s The Yarlung Dynasty is a wonderful, solitary piece of work that proved to have great impact within Tibetology, by focusing not least on Tibetan post-imperial historical sources. In my eyes, it is still a highly readable, in no way outdated study on the religious cosmology and ideology of the early kings of Tibet. I am sure
you will endorse this assessment. At the same time, our knowledge of Tibet’s earliest history and religious ideology prevailing then was about to take a Quantum Leap with the French school of Marcelle Lalou, Rolf Stein and Ariane Macdonald (later Ariane Spanien) as well as Anne-Marie Blondeau who almost exclusively focused on the unique sources from Dunhuang. Still, I am surprised that Erik’s large opus never was reviewed. The reason could well be that it either was difficult to review because of it many topics presented in such a comprehensive way or it was because up through the 1970’s and 1980’s, much of the research on Tibet’s earliest history was, with some good reason, disproportionally focusing precisely on the extant Dunhuang material.

Now, what is funny: well before I was allowed to be enrolled at the university, I decided to call upon Erik both at the university and privately. I remember vividly how I quite unpretentiously went to his private home. He surely must have been quite surprised at having at his doorstep a young man who was about to shower him with simple questions about culture and language. I am not quite sure why, but my energy and perseverance might have impressed him, to the extent that he invited me to come regularly, in fact every Saturday. For months we read classical Buddhist texts in Tibetan at his private home. What a gesture! Before I entered the gate to the university, I was well underway into the niceties and complexities of classical Tibetan. Most Tibetologists were using the Buddhist religion or dharma as their gateway into our studies, this was less the case for me, though I did move around in the incipient milieu of the dharma circles in Copenhagen too, especially around Ole and Hannah Nydahl who had just arrived from Nepal full of entrepreneurial and spiritual energy for the Buddhist religion. They were, as we know, quite successful in establishing dharma centres around the world. For me, my key interest remained with the books and texts.

Q. You became the first magister (Master) in Tibetology in Northern Europe?

A. So it seems, throughout the 1970’s, I studied at the university all along also Sanskrit, at times also Chinese and Japanese alongside with Tibetan, at the same time I had to work to make a living. There were few stipends around indeed, at least not for me and well into the 1980’s, after I had submitted my master thesis I had to attend to work, almost everyday in order to make an outcome. These years of work, mostly postal work often at night, surely has deprived me of the opportunity to write a few monographs more. Still, although the perspective was anything else than rosy, I kept upholding my interest and motivation. Finally, in 1981, a few years beyond schedule to be true, I submitted my thesis, and for some odd reason, this event aroused some interest in the local newspapers and media. I recall how one early morning at nine o’clock – after another night with work until five o’clock into the morning, a number of journalists was knocking on my door and wanted to make
an interview with this strange young man. I had no clue why, but the idea of someone who took upon himself to study such a subject and being the first in Scandinavia aroused the media’s curiosity. Numerous newspapers found it worthwhile to report the incidence.

Q. You had worked for a long time on a Tibetan master narrative, if one may say so, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies.

A. This 14th century work indeed caught my attention for various reasons; one was Erik’s persistence to look at it as a key source for understanding the creation of a national myth. In a number of ways the text came to represent a sort of prototype of Tibetan historiography, repeatedly quoted in most subsequent Tibetan history books that deal with Tibet’s golden imperial era. Genealogies, whether royal or otherwise, are expressions of social or, as here, national memories. The reason for its popularity is evident: its normative compositional structure that in many ways is emblematic of Tibetan historiography. It thus turned into a model for countless other historiographical writings in Tibet and the core content of the work constitutes, as you mentioned, a sort of master narrative of Tibetan historical writings, replete with fictionalised histories that became part and parcel of a national epic of Tibet. Another aspect was the relative simplicity of the language and its normative, literary style. Over the years it served for me as a point of departure for trawling, in a more systematic way, through numerous sources in order to understand the history and formation of the text and its genesis. It was indeed well worth doing. More generally, my experience from reading Tibetan literature, whatever genre, is that you benefit enormously from allowing yourself a very broad reading of different kinds of sources, irrespective of which epoch you read. The literary and linguistic richness is baffling. Tibetan literature surely counts as one of the truly rich and diverse traditions found among the Asian civilisations. For my part, I have benefitted enormously from my curiosity for a wide range of literary sources. The texts supplement themselves in numerous ways, often a concept, however complex, or an expression, a phrase keeps stunning me in its semantic diversity, at times a phrase traced in a totally different context has improved my understanding of its use in another context. What I want to say, I fell I have a much firmer understanding and appreciation of numerous literary genres and their language. I find great pleasure and a genuine interest in travelling criss-cross through the Tibetan literature, and reading a variety of sources, whether religious, historical, literary, poetics, medical literature or – what in particular fascinates me – folk or popular literature, what is known as oral literature.
Q. Please tell us more about your experience with oral literature.

A. Well, this genre, hitherto depressingly little studied, has interested me for years. It started with the celebrated songs of the 6th Dalai Lama and it was a gateway to a (folk-)literary universe to me, with a rich metaphorical and figurative language that often remains unregistered in standard dictionaries. Oral and folk literature, whether poetic, figurative and idiomatic, possesses a wealth of uncharted phrases, often with ambiguous or equivocal semantics, in fact a language of its own. For instance you find it vividly present, say in the biographies and songs of Milarepa, to mention one prominent example. Fortunately, during the last couple of years some progress has seen the light of the day. One genre of tremendous intricacy is proverbs. Paremiological studies are still a neglected area within Tibetology. Compiling a dictionary that records this kind of language is an urgent desideratum.

Q. After some years, you got the vacant chair in Leipzig. The chair in Central Asian Studies (Tibetan and Mongol Studies) at the second oldest university in Germany (over 600 years old, only surpassed by Heidelberg) had survived the vicissitudes and the regime change in East Germany with the reunification in 1990. How did it happen?

A. This is nothing to talk about. But it is true, Leipzig indeed has a long history in Oriental Studies and can pride itself of some pioneers in Central Asian studies too, to mention a few, the versatile Berthold Laufer, Erich Haenisch, Paul Ratchnevsky, Friedrich Weller and my predecessor Manfred Taube. Interesting here is the combination of Tibetan and Mongolian studies. To be true, the history behind the appointment is extraordinary to say the least and possibly interesting to tell. In fact, following its announcement, I didn’t apply for the position within the time limit imposed. Still, I had no assignment anywhere after I had the fortune of being in Bonn on a Humboldt stipend. On the contrary, I encouraged a number of colleagues to apply for Leipzig; in the end, an impressive number of senior scholars was among the applicants for the vacant position too. What unusual is, a few days after the commission had gathered to interview the candidates, I suddenly received a letter from the head of the search committee, Bernhard Kölver, who kindly encouraged me to apply in spite of the fact that the deadline since long had expired. I had no idea why. One incident might have played a role, somehow. Those among the older Tibetological generation who knew about the academic situation at the end of 1970’s, the 1980’s and part of the 1990’s, surely recall how Jan Willem de Jong as chief-editor in his Indo-Iranian Journal (IIJ) with his incredible erudition and broad reading was roundly feared for his critical reviews of countless books, one might not believe it today, but a positive review from his pen, often the exception than the rule, hence was received with considerable relief. He literally read everything he got his hands on, and as chief editor of IIJ, it was quite a lot and he read, it appears, most of the review copies offered to IIJ for review. There is a lot of Old School tradition in his approach. In case of my Divinity Secularized, a critical study of the songs ascribed to the Sixth Dalai Lama which I earlier (1990) had submitted as my doctoral thesis, a collection rich in folk-literary vocabulary, de Jong kindly reviewed and lauded it profusely, beyond any reasonable measure. At that time, such reviews had some impact, and from the pen of de Jong a huge one.
Now, back to the position in Leipzig. Anyhow, one Saturday, quite extraordinary, the entire committee reassembled in Leipzig from all over Germany for the sake of my belated candidacy only: I had arrived in Berlin from Copenhagen with the night-train early in the morning, and following the interview in Leipzig in the afternoon, I returned to Berlin and back to Copenhagen. Sunday morning, I was utterly surprised when I got a call again from Leipzig asking me to accept the offer and start in Leipzig. What a story, quite unusual, life is truly unpredictable.

Q. I know your have been to Bhutan countless times, tell me about this project.

A. Yes, Bhutan is something close to my heart and a fortunate commitment that I had the pleasure of initiating, being involved with from the very start. It was a development aid project sponsored by Denmark, a twinning project that started in the mid 90’s and lasted for almost 15 years, and situated in the cultural area (there are not too many of such projects) between the National Library of Bhutan and the Royal Library of Denmark. The primary long-term objective was to assist Bhutan through comprehensive institutional strengthening in surveying its huge indigenous scriptural tradition (largely written in chos skad or classical Tibetan and in the local rdzong kha idiom), comprising not only the holdings kept in the National Library but all over the country, where local collections were covered by a number of survey teams. To this purpose, a huge electronic databank was developed, tailored to the specific needs and modalities of Tibetan literature. By now, the entire collection of indigenous books and manuscripts at the library and many collections throughout the country have been inventoried; during our work on location we have traced a good number of rare texts. It has been gratifying and for me a true blessing to have this welcoming opportunity to go on “text-hunts” for scriptures throughout Bhutan, where we occasionally and predictably were able to trace many exciting books. The databank is currently accessible online and in terms of the amount of entries probably one of the largest in the world. In addition, with a number of Bhutanese colleagues, we have conducted research on a number of interesting historical figures in Bhutan’s history. It has been a great success, I think, and it had been a pleasure to work in Bhutan.

Q. Returning to historiography, the agreement between Vienna (Austrian Academy of Sciences, AAS) and the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences (TASS) also opened up for the possibility for you to be involved in this fruitful collaboration.

A. Yes, it was Ernst Steinkellner, the ubiquitous and indefatigable scholar who has made Vienna a key centre of research in Europe. Recalling my huge interest in Tibetan historiography, he kindly thought of me to be the one who could look at the significance of this new version of Sba bzhed, an exemplar of this very old text that holds an unique position within Tibetan historical writing (Dan Martin in his fine survey of historical sources, incidentally, lists it as no. 1). Access to this rare manuscript had been made possible though the fruitful cooperation between the academies in Lhasa and Vienna. Guntram, you surely can tell much more, since you have been involved from the very start. As to Sba bzhed or here Dba’ bzhed, the text has baffled us for long since its initial publication by Stein in the 1960’s. Its final publication by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, to which I then wrote an introduction, is a major, albeit evidently initial investigation into this text tradition, much more research is needed to unravel the remaining niceties of this complex text.
As you know, apart from my Dbâ’ bzhed commitment my contacts with the Vienna – TASS collaboration became a fairly deep and long-lasting dimension following the meeting of the two of us at Bloomington (the 8th IATS conference in 1998). You had just come across a bundle of rare historical texts in the G.ya’ bzang monastery (in Upper Yar lung, Lhoka region). For some odd reason you posed a question, knowing my interest for historical sources, whether I by chance knew of a testament ascribed to Strong btsan sgam po, a text evidently that stood in direct relation to the Ma ni bka’ ’bum and Bka’ chems Ka khol ma. The text was called Bka’ chems Mtho mthing ma, an extremely rare 13th century adaption of these texts evidently written or composed by the G.ya’ bzang founder Chos kyi smon lam in order to tinge his work with the authenticity and legitimacy of these “royal testaments.” Now the coincidence: an unique exemplar of this text had survived in a monastery in Nepal and had been copied by the staff of the NGMPP programme. What’s more: I had studied and commented on this text in my aforementioned book (Tibetan Buddhist Historiography. The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies), a circumstance that had not escaped you, but unknown to you was that a unique, and sole exemplar of the manuscript had survived. This proved to the auspicious beginning of our years-long work on medieval institutions and landscapes in Central Tibet. In the end, it paved the way for a number of publications in the field of philology, history and culture related to Tibet’s rich historical past. I have been fortunate to be part of the publication work, which is related to the rich cultural history of Tibet, conducted in our attempt to unravel innumerable cultic, religious and political bonds that had linked people, institutions, sanctuaries and territories throughout parts of Central Tibet. Such inquiries could be expanded endlessly in order to fill up still-yawning gaps in our knowledge of a congeries of hegemonies that both shaped and determined the regional as well as the supra-regional history of the Snowland in medieval time. The philological, topographical and anthropological inquiries conducted in this process have been exciting challenges, impossible without good and inspirational team-work. Although cumbersome and painstaking, I feel that a holistic approach, whenever feasible, allow you to draw a far more accurate and precise picture whether of an epoch, an institution or of an area, or as the approach we have chosen, a combination of these. The relational nature between historical sites, the individuals involved and the cults and rituals, religious or political, executed, becomes more evident.

Q. You often dive into a topic making no limits and reservations, be it a period or an historical person, one gets the impression that you never rest before you have read everything about the topic in the indigenous sources. What drives you to take such a dramatic stance?

A. I don’t think that is something special. We all have that feeling, you want to get behind the scene and you are not satisfied before you have at least scanned through all available literature concerning the topic whether it being an epoch, a person or an institution or a textual tradition for that matter. One example is the controversial person of Lama Zhang and his institution Tshal pa Bka’ brgyud pa, or the history of Lhasa and the role that water (here flooding), geography and environment played in the formation of the site. Also here one benefits immensely if one allows oneself to look into all the genres that even remotely relates to the topic in question. Yet, in the end, what you write is always an attempted construction, one day later a new source turns up and you have to reject your former assumption or thesis! There are never final answers. As Michel Foucault said in another context: “If you knew when you began a book
what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?“ (in his Discipline and Punish). Well, to be true this is the point. Isn’t it marvellous that you never really know what comes up in the end? Starting from scratch, often empty-handed, and in the end you often have something quite different. It can be scaring, yes but it is the writing process and the incessant altering in your understanding that count and this is the personal reward or gratification, if you want. And understanding takes time, information and data collected must be consumed and only slowly surfaces a (hopefully) more appropriate understanding.

Q. As a person and scholar who never ceases being fascinated by Tibetan texts and its rich scriptural tradition, we would like to ask what fascinates you so much, what is the mystery behind the texts?

A. Well, first of all language is a magic creation, ever changing and utterly flexible, its most inimitable wonder thus is its sheer richness and diversity in expression. And the vocabulary and writing style changes with the author involved, it may sound banal, but precisely this is its strength. So on the one hand, the affluence found in the Tibetan language, whether written or oral, whether anonymous or authored, and irrespective of period and not least genre, is truly staggering. On the other hand, a considerable element of conservatism in terms of phrases and semantics can be observed. I love to find samples of expressions, idioms, or plain words that haven’t changed whether you find it, say in Dunhuang sources or in modern books or in spoken vernacular. In whatever context, they often purport the same semantic meaning and the spelling is largely the same. For more than a millennium, due to its relative isolation, Tibet in many fields remained a society (and so her language) of remarkable inertia. Imagine any other country and any other language where any young schoolboy with some luck can read a modern and a classical text without major problems. My enthusiasm is also aroused by the numerous genres and literary expressions found in classical and modern texts. We should never forget, if we look back in time, that an educated Tibetan, as a scholar and as a writer, was almost exclusively a trained monk (in a few cases they were lay literati) who dominated the scholastic and intellectual scene, a situation not much different from other medieval societies for that matter. And most often they were erudite polyhistors, with an encyclopaedic knowledge and well versed in all fields of writing and composition, whether in the field of logic, history, doctrine, philosophy or poetry and so on. They mastered it all. Their monastic socialisation and training meant that they mastered the conventions and norms needed in order to handle topics and writing styles of different nature. I mentioned it before, but this keeps fascinating me, and it is a reason why I keep reading texts of any nature written in Tibetan. The benefit, in my eyes, is that by reading more broadly and cross-disciplinary, so to say, you often experience that an expression or phrase that had caused problems in one (con)text through its use in a different semantic context becomes far more comprehensible. Reading different texts and genres is time-consuming, and not to the liking of all Tibetologists working with texts caught as they often are within their thematic specialisation, still the benefits are at hand. Written sources are witnesses of the past, a reflexive and telling mirror to the past, and most often the only ones, and if available they are easily accessible. As Hrabanus Maurus [9th cent.] once said: “The written word alone flouts destiny, revives the past.” This holds true for historical sources, and although representing subjective or ideological constructions, with critical precaution and appropriate awareness
of the pitfalls that lurk in those witnesses of the past, we can still make good use of them in our attempt to reconstruct the past. Another well-known quality when we talk about Tibetan Buddhist texts is their relatively high reliability. I never stop admiring how those people on the Roof of the World, isolated in this barren landscape and with limited manpower managed with such determination and motivation to translate accurately and with precision such complex philosophical and doctrinal (mainly Sanskrit) texts into the grammatically and semantically far less sophisticated language of their own. What an achievement! With the help of an available Tibetan translation, it is possible to reconstruct a lost Sanskrit original, precisely due to the relative reliability in their transmission of the written legacy of Buddhism. Tibet surely remains such one civilisation with an enormous output of texts and written scripture, whether translations of canonical Indian texts or their own indigenous literature, not least their sheer endless number of hermeneutical and commentarial, literary productions generated by them throughout most of the past millennium.

So as a researcher a simple advice: one should leave no stone unturned, and with pragmatism and a good amount of curiosity keep digging into the past, my interest was what the texts offered us, by doing a sort of textual archaeology.

Q. What is in for the future? Here at the end, what would you suggest any newcomer and any student of Tibetan studies, what do you see of particular interest?
A. This is a difficult question. Well, the ideas and the topics that await the intrepid student are readily at hand, I would argue. And the chances are many. Firstly, we must take note of the fact that Tibetology by now is a well-established discipline of its own, well within academia, at the universities, but certainly also outside those halls of education. Tibetological positions have mushroomed in academic circles. How wonderful. When I look back 40 years, in the 1970’s, a major Tibetological publication was published just once a year at best, today one can barely count the yearly output, and the figures are more impressive when we look at the number of scientific articles produced. Gratifying too is the enormous breadth and topical diversity within our discipline, again in the past those working on Tibet or reading Tibetan were mostly bibliophile philologists, today in the wake of Tibet being more accessible, fieldwork is a must, although not all scholars seem to draw appropriate benefit from this possibility. Academically, Tibetology has become a worldwide phenomenon. The current IATS conferences started in Zürich in the mid-1970’s, with a truly modest number of participants, and the upcoming 14th IATS conference in Bergen (Norway) will host and accommodate probably over 500 scholars who shall attend numerous panels, with a topical diversity unknown in the past. What a success! Tibet is and must be on the map, not only politically, but also due to the fact that its culture and civilisatory achievement and its spiritual legacy are well worth documenting and studying. Throughout history, whenever another civilisation or culture entered into contact with the Tibetans, the other civilisation often were the recipient of lasting influences stemming from the Snowland – sure it was or became a two-way traffic, replete with cross-polination, if you can use this word, but the cultural impact and fillip exerted by the Tibetans was enormous; just look at the dominant influence that Tibetan Buddhism holds not only in the neighbouring countries, exporting with great success their understanding of Buddhism, a phenomenon to be observed around the world even today in the trail of the diaspora.

So the premises for a student and a newcomer could not be better. I cannot give any concrete advice. He or she must find his or her own way and this may take a while. Important is to remain ever curious. When I observe the young scholars they indeed prove diligent in posing the right questions and seeking interesting new topics. What I personally find fascinating is the combination of text and field work, of material data, the combination is useful, say in unraveling the history of an area or a territory laden with history or vestiges of historical activity – to be true we have attempted to demonstrate this approach in a number of micro-histories of certain central sites in Tibet, such as in Yar lung and the Lhasa area. A desideratum is to include archaeological inquiries into these investigations, you yourself have paved the way and thus turned a page in Tibetan historiography by systematically registering the numerous, mostly imperial-time, tumuli sites scattered throughout Central Tibet. As you know, this is a commitment for the future. Any proper study in this exciting field still needs to be permitted by the authorities. It can eventually only be done in collaboration with local scholars. But a beginning has been made. Another topic of personal interest is the huge amount of local, narrative literature that the Tibetans can boast of, I am not particularly referring the rich Indic Buddhist heritage, but to the indigenous literature. What an intriguing field, and it has barely been researched.

Q. Thank you Per.
Danish Contributions to Tibetology: Per Sørensen in Denmark and Bhutan

Anne Buchardi

Hesitating for a moment the young man finally pressed the doorbell. He had travelled to an unfamiliar address north of Copenhagen in the darkness of a windy and chilly autumn evening. Deciding on an impulse to turn up unannounced at the private residence of a famous man, had seemed like a good idea at the time, but now he was starting to wonder what kind of reception he might get. After what seemed like an eternity, the door finally swung open and – after a brief exchange – he was invited inside.

He found himself welcomed into the warm and brightly lit study of the scholar and newly appointed Doctor of Philosophy, Erik Haarh. This crucial moment would have a profound impact on the rest of his life. It marked the beginning of Per Sørensen’s long and distinguished career as a Tibetologist.

The year was 1969 and shortly before, the eighteen-year-old Per had noticed a newspaper article, quite by chance. The article had caught his eye as it described a dissertation on ancient Tibetan kings by Erik Haarh. The reason for the article was no doubt the highly specialised nature of Haarh’s chosen subject. With his thesis, Haarh highlighted a hitherto unknown chapter in the religious history of ancient Tibet. He demonstrated how the ideology of kingship and its role in an ancient society were connected with religious cosmology, based on textual evidence describing funeral rites among the early kings in the Yarlung valley of Tibet.

Finding such esoteric information among the trivial news of the daily newspaper immediately fired the imagination of young Per. He was already deeply fascinated by mountainous and far-away places, and he regularly got himself hopelessly lost in books on Tibet. Having read the article, he decided on the spot to find that scholar and, if possible, become his student so as to learn more about Tibet and its language.

The rest is history, as they say. Luckily for those of us who got to know Per later on, as his students, colleagues or fellow researchers, Erik Haarh was friendly and accommodating towards the young man who showed up on his door step, and he soon started giving Per private lessons in the Tibetan language.

Haarh himself had been something of a pioneer, and had been very alone in Denmark in his passion for Tibet. He started out studying oriental languages with Poul Tuxen and others. He then developed a special interest in the Tibetan languages and went to Rome to study with Guiseppe Tucci. After completing his MA in History of Religion in 1955, he started teaching at the University of Copenhagen. He was also engaged as librarian at the Oriental department of the Royal Library in 1956 and became Head of the Department in 1962. On completion of his magnum opus, *The Yarlung Dynasty*, in 1969, he went on to become Head of the Department of History of Religion at Aarhus University and Professor there in 1983.

Haarh was exceptionally gifted as a teacher. This quality he passed on to Per along with a rigorous standard of scholarship. Per also inherited his all consuming enthusiasm for acquiring and sharing knowledge. After studying privately with Haarh for about a year, Per enrolled at the University of Copenhagen in 1971 and eleven years later he became the first MA in Tibetology in Northern Europe.

Now it was Per’s turn to appear in several Danish newspapers, which interviewed the bright young graduate in the summer of 1982 (see Fig. 2). Per took this opportunity to inform the Dan-

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1 Haarh 1969.
ish public of the existence of a significant collection of Tibetan texts being held at the Royal Library. The collection represented the result of several Central Asian Expeditions carried out by Danish explorers, notably Prince Peter. He told the interviewing journalist that the presence of such texts in Denmark had played a vital role in the research that led to his thesis.

Sensing that the journalist was somewhat puzzled, silently questioning the possible relevance of obscure Tibetan texts—many of which were Buddhist manuscripts—Per pointed out that these might serve as an inspiration in the pursuit of modern science. He went on to inform the journalist that the Nobel prize winning Danish physicist, Nils Bohr, had publicly stated, that his study of Buddhist relativity based on the Danish Indologist Poul Tuxen’s dissertation of 1911, had played a decisive role in his interpretation of Einstein’s theory of relativity. In the field of quantum mechanics this is known as “The Copenhagen Interpretation.”

Per’s own interests were chiefly focussed on indigenous Tibetan literature, such as poetry and history, rather than Buddhist texts translated from Sanskrit. He started teaching at the University of Copenhagen immediately after graduating, and he frequently taught in other Nordic countries as well. After Per had obtained his Doctor of Philology degree in 1990 with his dissertation Divinity Secularized he was constantly invited to lecture abroad. In 1993 Per was approached by representatives from NIAS (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies) and Danida (Danish development assistance under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to evaluate a possible future library project in Bhutan. Per saw here an unique opportunity for designing a project that would not only assist Bhutan in preserving its literary heritage but which would also become a major resource for the field of Tibetology worldwide.

The National Library of Bhutan had been established in 1967. In 1993 following the retirement of the venerable Lopon Pemala, after 20 years as the Library’s second director, there was an interim of a few months before a new director was installed. During this time, the deputy director, Gyonpo Tsering, and the library research officer, Khenpo Puntshok Tashi, prepared a library development project proposal and approached the Planning Commission and the Danish Liaison Office in Bhutan for approval and support.

Shortly thereafter Danida sent a project formulation mission to inspect monastic and private collections held at the library in the capital as well as in Bhutan’s cultural heartland, specifically Orgyen Choling in Tang valley. The team leader had originally envisaged a fairly general library development project to introduce modern library management routines at the National Library, but the literature she encountered in Bhutan was of an entirely different nature than she had seen before, and she soon realised that evaluation by a Tibetologist was needed to formulate a project that would meet the needs of the National Library and the indigenous collections found in the entire country of Bhutan.

In the fall of 1994, Per therefore made the first of what would become a long line of visits to Bhutan. What he saw confirmed his expectations of large numbers of texts to be investigated, catalogued and conserved. Upon his return he formulated a project proposal suggesting that the Royal Library of Denmark become the project partner. He approached the Chief of The Department of Orientalia and Judaica, Stig Rasmussen, who responded favourably. A project, which became known as Institutional Strengthening of the National Library of Bhutan, was then

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2 With some exceptions, such as his 1986 study of Candrakirti’s Triśaraṇasaptati.
3 Sørensen 1990.
4 Danish development cooperation with Bhutan began in 1978 and has contributed to development of various sectors such as health, urban planning, freedom of press, education as well as cultural preservation since 1989.
designed and endorsed by the library’s director Erland Kolding Nielsen, as a twinning project between the National Library of Bhutan and the Royal Library of Denmark.

Meanwhile Per had been encouraged to apply for a position at the University of Leipzig. He was unanimously approved for the position as Professor of Tibetology and Mongology, that same year. Sadly, this marked the end of Per’s presence in Denmark and the field of Tibetology at the University of Copenhagen thus lost a bright and rising star.

However, Per continued to exert his influence on Danish involvement in the field of Tibetology especially through the Bhutan project. While Stig Rasmussen held the position of Principal Responsible Party in Denmark throughout the project period, Per acted as the chief consultant. The project became immensely successful and was operating through four consecutive project phases of three years each, the last of which was extended twice. The project period totalled 14 years (1996–2010).

I collaborated with Per on the project for eight years as a researcher and consultant (2002–2010). This was the natural outcome of my function as curator for the Tibetan Collection at the Royal Library of Denmark, a position that I combined with teaching Tibetology at the University of Copenhagen. I had already met Per through mutual friends, and seen him at the University in the early 1990s. After he moved to Leipzig we had lost contact.

When I went on an extended trip to Eastern Tibet in 2002 to acquire books for the Royal library, I had the opportunity to visit The National Library of Bhutan for the first time. Under
the auspices of the Twinning Library project I enjoyed a two-month research period there. This is when I understood the importance and the magnitude of the project that Per had helped conceive, and it was a great pleasure for me to participate in the project later. In the following I will sketch a number of the project activities that Per initiated or contributed to.

Per and Gregor Verhufen had initially spent two months at the library in August of 1996 (see Fig. 5). This marked the actual beginning of the implementation of the first phase of the co-operation (1996–1999) during the tenure of the third director Sangye Wangchuk. A priority at this time was to set up a system for the digital input of the metadata of the National Library’s collection of Tibetan literature, known as the so-called chos skad-collection. Apart from the acquisition of the necessary hardware, software and design of a true type Tibetan / Dzongka font, a genre classification system had to be devised.

Per undertook to work out a genre classification system that could be used for the National Library digital catalogue that would allow genre specific data base searches. As anyone who has ever worked with Tibetan literature will know, traditional Tibetan books are notoriously complicated to catalogue: each volume often consisting of a large number of subtexts - often of diverse genres; each volume carries various levels of title types and authors may use up to four or five different names, depending on the occasions or the type of compositions. Per embraced the challenge with his characteristic enthusiasm and speed.6

The Bhutanese librarians responded with great interest and, led by librarian Daza Drukpa, they dedicated themselves to the enormous task of typing the metadata of all the texts held in the library, a large building containing four stories of written sources. As their skill and routine grew, the input process picked up speed over the years, until it was largely concluded around 2008 with a staggering 100.000 digital records, detailing information about each and every subtitle in the entire chos skad-collection of the National Library. Proof-reading and fine-tuning of the records started immediately upon completion of the in-put. Efforts to link this database with other digital Tibetan libraries, in particular the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (TBRC), became part of this process.7

TBRC was an important collaborating partner in the work on the database. The founder and director of TBRC, Gene Smith (1936–2010), had worked directly with the second library director, Lopon Pemala since the 70’s, during the PL480 program, and Gene continued to extend constant support to the National Library throughout the Danish Project period. As a precursor to the digital database, a valuable card catalogue had been created by the Tibetologist Yoshiro Imaeda, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), during his ten years as researcher and adviser to the library in the 1980s. The presence of Chris Fynn as resident project consultant, with his Tibetan language and IT skills, played an important role in the Twinning Library data base development. When the database became accessible on the library’s website in 2008 it was the most extensive database of Tibetan literature offering on-line search in Tibetan fonts.8

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5 In Bhutan bod skad (Tibetan language) is referred to as chos skad (Dharma language).
6 This was also published as an article in Studies in Central and East Asian Religions, s. Sørensen 1996.
7 www.tbrc.org.
8 As of January 2015 the Open Public Acces Catalogue yielded 77,800 records for texts in dbu can and 37,168 records for texts in dbu med, totally over 110,000 records. See The National Library of Bhutan’s webpage www.library.gov.bt For database search go to “OPAC Search for book” in the upper corner of the left hand menu. The National Library’s entire database continues to be hosted by the server at The Royal Library of Denmark.
Per knew that there were an untold number of texts deposited in the thousands of temples scattered around Bhutan’s twenty districts. The temples were sometimes located within family compounds or privately looked after. Out of respect for the traditional sentiments surrounding the safekeeping of these National treasures, it was decided that the Bhutanese librarians themselves as well as other Bhutanese library staff would visit these temples, in order to record the titles and the condition of these texts.

Although not directly involved in the “Mobile Unit” cataloguing process, Per nevertheless visited a large number of temples throughout Bhutan in connection with his research collaboration with Bhutanese scholars at the library, especially with Dr. Yonten Dargyé.9 Research became an important focus in the project’s second (1999–2002) and third (2002–2005) phases, during the tenure of the fourth director Mynak R. Tulku (1999–2004). Important project milestones during this time were conservation workshops for the library staff as well as the Danida-funded Archives Project which resulted in a brand new climate controlled Archive building.

Per and Mynak R. Tulku agreed that the time was ripe for highlighting the library’s role as a research institution, an aspect which remains the ultimate aim of the resource building and conservation efforts. It was decided that the library would host an International Conference

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9 The results of this collaboration were the publication of The Biography of Pha ’brug-sgom zhib-po in 2001 and Play of the Omniscient in 2008.
on Literature and the entire costs would be covered by project funds. Invitations went out to selected Tibetologist and specialist in Buddhist literature and conservation around the world. The conference titled “Written Treasures of Bhutan: Mirror of the Past and Bridge to the Future” took place in Thimphu in the summer of 2005 (see Fig. 6). By this time Dorje Tshering had taken over as the fifth director (2005–2007), following the retirement of Mynak R. Tulku. The conference was a great success and resulted in a two-volume publication of proceedings that Per took an active role in editing.\(^\text{10}\)

Per continued his research and consultant activities during the fourth and final consolidation phase of the project (2006–2009). He was collaborating with Gyonpo Tshering who had been the chief research officer throughout the project period and who took over as the sixth director when Dorje Tshering was transferred in 2007. Even though the project has formally come to a conclusion Per is still actively involved in research and publications based on Bhutanese sources.\(^\text{11}\)

Throughout the project period, Per displayed an ability to balance his considerable professional and diplomatic skills with an easy-going manner and a sense of humour, which made collaboration with him a great joy. His enthusiasm for his field is contagious and his colleagues invariably become his friends. I saw this happening in Bhutan and I see it happening wherever he goes. There is no doubt that Per played a vital role in facilitating the Danish support, which contributed to the evolution of The National Library and Archives of Bhutan. The library has emerged as an important research institution locally and it has joined other digital Buddhist libraries on-line, thereby contributing to the field of Tibetology globally.

Bibliography


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\(^{10}\) *Written Treasures of Bhutan: Mirror of the Past and Bridge to the Future*, 2008.

\(^{11}\) See the article by Yonten Dargye in this publication.
I am delighted to learn that students and well-wishers of Professor Sørensen are bringing out a festschrift in his honour to mark his attaining a flourishing 65 years of age. As a close friend, it gives me great pleasure to write this short, celebratory note reflecting on the personal relationship that has developed between us over the years since 1997, when Per first came to Bhutan as a consultant for a library development project funded through Denmark’s development cooperation program, known as Danida.

Bhutan and Denmark had started working together in 1990, and in 1996 a long-term Danida-funded project was launched between the National Library of Bhutan and the Royal Library, Denmark. The overall aims of this twinning project, entitled *Institutional Strengthening of the National Library of Bhutan*, were to establish a modern national library and to identify and preserve the national written heritage in order to secure and strengthen the national culture as a central element in a now rapidly changing society where the written sources were scattered and in danger of disappearing. The project was implemented under the leadership of the Head of the Oriental and Judaica Collections at the Royal Library as Principal Responsible Party, with the assistance of various consultants over the years. Carried out in four phases, the twinning project finally closed in October 2010. Per, recruited as Expert Tibetologist at start-up, remained involved throughout all four phases.

Bhutan’s government stresses the importance of research activities and the National Library’s policy includes research and translation on important topics of national relevance. This being the case, in phase two of the Danida Project priority was given to joint research and translation activities with Per as research counterpart on the Danish side.

The first book that Per and I worked on together involved research on and translation of the biography of our revered sage Phajo Drugom Zhigpo (1184–1251), who was sent south by his teacher after completing religious studies at Druk Ralung and went on to establish the Drukpa Kagyu lineage in Bhutan, thus fulfilling a prophesy which had been made by the founder of the lineage before he expired. The biography of Phajo Drugom Zhipo is one of the most important documents of this early period of dissemination of the Kagyu tradition in Bhutan. Our research resulted in publishing an annotated English translation of the biography which was officially released in April, 2002. In preparing this work, we travelled to different places in Bhutan to trace the footsteps of master Phajo and find the parallel sources. Though we are of contrasting nature – he is ever active and fast-going whereas I myself am slow-going – we went along very well in carrying out our work together. In particular he was so kind to me and mentored me in whatever possible way he could and brought me back on track wherever I went wrong in the process of doing research and translation.

The second book we worked on was the 9th Je Khenpo’s biography of Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen. This title was identified as a research work to be jointly undertaken during the third phase of the Project. The 9th Je Khenpo Shakya Rinchen was an outstanding scholar, and his biography of Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen (1647–1732) is considered a landmark in the literary and religious history of Bhutan. We Bhutanese regard Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen as a reincarnation of the Buddha Maitreya, and the 9th Je Khenpo’s account of his life is a major historical source of information concerning political events in Bhutan during the 17th and early 18th centuries.
Most interestingly, under Per’s initiative this collaborative research work took us together to Tibet – Lhasa, Samye, as far as eastern Tibet (Kham Derge and environs), in search of any traces of our scholar-saint’s own journeys in this region so long ago. Gyonpo Tshering, at that time the National Library’s Chief Research Officer, was the third man in our team. The travel was most memorable, giving the opportunity to actually see in person the religious and historical places that are highly venerated in the Buddhist world. Throughout my life I will cherish the memories of this 10-day expedition which was initiated and then undertaken with Per’s support and guidance. Similarly, our collaborative research work also took me to the University of Leipzig in Germany and to the Royal Library in Copenhagen on more than three occasions at Per’s invitation so I could work on our topic with him. On each occasion of my visit, he extended a warm hospitality. Having had an opportunity to work with him was a great boon; from him I learned many things in the research field, thus widening my experience and exposure in the research arena.

Our collaborative research work finally resulted in the 2008 publication of a book entitled, “Play of the Omniscient: Life and Works of Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltshen, an Eminent 17th–18th century Druk Master”. Though in the beginning we doubted this book would attract many readers, we subsequently learned it was well received by readers both within and outside the country. Publication of this book has undoubtedly contributed to meeting the growing need for further and accessible reference materials on our history, culture and traditions. Thus we are well-satisfied with our achievement.

Implementation of the fourth and final phase of the Danida Project began in November, 2007. Included in this phase was provision for continuation of our collaborative research and translation activities. Our third phase project on Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltshen had taken longer than originally envisaged so it was only in 2009 that we could begin work on a new collaborative activity.

As a follow-up to the third phase project, Per and I began a study on the two oldest edifices in Bhutan, Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro and Jampay Lhakhang in Bumthang, with the aim of drawing up a history of these earliest temples in the country (Fig. 7). The temples are said to have been built in the 7th century by King Songtsen Gampo, who is traditionally credited with being the first to bring Buddhism to the Tibetan people. These two temples are known as supine demoness temples since they were erected as taming temples, the purpose of which is to suppress forces opposed to Buddhism. André Alexander, program director of the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) was collaborating with us on this project.

The principal aim of the new project was to retell the original narrative of the founding of these two temples and to chart their history down through the ages to the present day. The initial research work involved seeking out sources offering details as to who were in charge of the two temples throughout the period. (Sources are mainly silent prior to the 17th century founding of Bhutan as a nation state, but fragmentary information can still be gathered here and there.)

In August, 2009 André and Per visited Bhutan in connection with the research on Jampay Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang. They travelled with me to Bumthang to see the structures of old temples and during our visit we were able to measure and register all important temples in the area. Per was also collaborating with André on a related research project on imperial-time architecture in Tibet, as part of which we were trying to trace all thirteen of the supine demoness
temples including the two in Bhutan. The project was expected to result in a book on the demo-
ness temples which would include contributions by Bhutanese architects on the sites and also
historical material contributed by Per and me.

Sadly, André Alexander passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in January, 2012. His co-
directors at the Tibet Heritage Fund have committed themselves to continuing its important
work and to maintaining his legacy. Work on the NLAB research project has had to be shelved
but I remain hopeful that Per and I may be able to take it up again later.

Under the joint research and translation component of the Danida Project, research officers
at the National Library were mentored by counterparts internationally recognised in their own
research fields. Through this program we have become better equipped to reach out to Bhutan’s
new generation of educated (and increasingly secularised) citizens with the publication of semi-
nal works relating to Bhutanese culture and history in English translation. At the same time,
the program has served to publicise Bhutan’s own literary tradition in the wider, international
arena.

Over the 14-year project period, our research capacity was strengthened, research materials
were made more accessible and personal ties between Bhutanese and Danish researchers were
built. The Research Division has gone from strength to strength over the years, due in large
measure to Per’s enthusiastic and unyielding support, supervision, advice and more importantly
‘research lung’ he empowered.

I wish Per a peaceful and healthy life for many more years ahead!

Dr. Yonten Dargye,
Chief Research Officer
National Library & Archives of Bhutan
Publications of Per K. Sørensen

(Selective, listed only books and articles that have been published in non-Nordic languages)

I. Books

1. Monographs


Rare Texts from Tibet. Seven Sources for the Ecclesiastical History of Medieval Tibet. Bhairahawa: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2007.


I.2 Edited volumes


II. Major Articles (book chapters, articles in journals, selective)


Coveted Relic. The Khasarpāṇī Idol of Bhutan,

Tibetan Religious Historiography,

**III. Reviews**

Over 50 Reviews as well as lexical entries in a large number of leading academic journals and anthologies, such as *Indo Iranian Journal, Acta Orientalia, Studies in Central and East Asian Religions, Zentralasiatische Studien, The World of Music*, etc. (individually not listed).
The Lions of ‘Chad kha: A Note on New Findings of Stone Monuments in Central Tibet from the Tibetan Imperial Period

Guntram Hazod

1. Introduction

In a side valley of eastern Mal gro, the old district to the east of Lhasa, there is the monastery of ‘Chad kha situated halfway up on the northeast side of the valley (Fig. 1). It can be seen from the modern highway, which runs from the district capital of Mal gro Gung dkar up the Mal gro river towards Kong po. Having often passed by, I visited this rather less known, original Bka’ gdams pa site only recently (2013, and again in 2014), where two battered stone lions in the courtyard caught my attention. According to a local account, they had a longer migratory history and originally came from a nearby tumulus field, one of the numerous imperial era burial mound sites of Central Tibet that can be registered today. The following notes give a first assessment of these monuments’ purported origin, combined with some stylistic and contextual comparisons related to other grave lions known from imperial Tibet and a few remarks on representations of the early Tibetan lion iconography.

2. ‘Chad kha dgon and the site’s earlier historical environment

‘Chad kha (var. Mchad kha) was founded by the Bka’ gdams pa master Bya ‘Chad kha pa Ye shes rdo rje (1101–75) after – so the locals say – he had previously already practised for a longer period in the caves in the mountains behind his later seat. ‘Chad kha pa was from Lo ro in Lho kha (southern Central Tibet), which together with the adjoining areas north and north-east, Gnyal and Byar, is often referred to by the compound name of Gnyal Lo ro Byar gsum. In the 11th century, this region became the dominion of the Chos rgyal Bya ba, one of the post-imperial branch lines of the Tibetan emperor dynasty.3 The designation Bya, denoting ‘Chad kha pa’s “lineage name” (gdung rus), apparently goes back to this royal Bya ba line. In his youth, he

1 The fieldwork was conducted in the framework of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) project P 25066-G19; in 2014 it was accompanied by Hubert Feiglstorfer and Martin Gamon, both from this project. I finished the final version of this paper during my stay as fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin 2014/15. I am grateful to Amy Heller, Shawo Khacham, Christiane Kalantari and Olaf Czaja for their helpful comments to an earlier draft, including providing photographs and links to further comparative material.

2 An earlier mention of the stone lions (including some photographs) was given by the author on the TTT project website (see below fn. 8) in 2013, updated in 2014. A modern Tibetan guidebook on the religious sites of Mal gro briefly refers to the two lions “in front of the ‘Chad kha pa i gtsug lag khang;” Chakha Dawa 2013: 104. Following the information we gave him during a private conversation in June 2014, the Tibetan scholar Pasang Wangdu visited ‘Chad kha in summer 2014 and shortly afterwards announced the finding in a brief note in the Bod ljongs zhib ’jug (3) 2014 (not at my disposal). For an even earlier recording of the lions by visitors, see below fn. 7.

3 This refers to one of the sub-lines of the Yar lung jo bo genealogy. See Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 314–19.
Fig. 1. 'Chad kha and the area of eastern Mal gro.

Sigla: □ = imperial era sites (108 = grave field) — = the way of the lions. (Hazod 2015; based on satellite imagery 12/2010; DigitalGlobe 2014.)

Fig. 2. The stone lions at the entrance to the main temple of 'Chad kha (Photo: Hazod 2013).
served as an attendant to Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags (1084–1161), with whom he participated in the religious council of Sambhoda of Gnyal. (Sambhoda refers to Sambhot, originally spelt Sa ‘bo ra, the birthplace of the famous imperial minister Thon mi Sambhota.) After various stays in Lho kha (in Yar lung, G.ye i.a.) ‘Chad kha pa arrived in the Lhasa area, where Sha ra ba Yontan grags (1070–1141), from the teaching line of Po to ba Rin chen gsal (1027/31–1105), became his principal teacher. During the succeeding generations of students, starting with ‘Chad kha pa’s chief disciple Se Spyil bu pa Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1121–89) from Gnyal, an influential Lho kha branch of the Bka’ gdams pa tradition in Mal gro and neighbouring districts developed. It manifested in a series of religious foundations, namely Spyil bu (var. Lcil bu) in Klung shod, Gro sa in ’Phan yul (exact localisation unknown), Spang sa (due east of ’Chad kha), or Dge ’dun sgang (east of Dga’ ldan in Skyid shod, i.a.). The most significant monastery was Spyil bu, whose abbots came from a lateral line of the Chos rgyal Bya ba until the 14th century and who, like Spyil bu pa himself, also probably presided over the mother seat of ‘Chad kha.3

The ‘Chad kha of today is a modern reconstruction from the 1990s with two main buildings, the central temple and the mgon khang, situated immediately in front of the extensive ruins of the ancient ‘Chad kha. These ruins relate to a later extension phase after the convent became a teaching centre of the Dge lugs pa from the 15th century onwards, which was closely associated with Rva steng and Spyil bu.4 When entering the courtyard of the monastery one is rather surprised to find two massive stone lions on the right and left of the entrance to the main temple. They stand in front of the classical image of two Tibetan snow lions (gangs seng ge) depicted on the entrance curtain, conveying as it were a consistent scene (Fig. 2), but it was obvious at a first glance that the sculptures are much older and deriving from a different context to the monastery’s founding period or a later time. In fact, according to the local information, they were brought there a few years ago from down the valley, where they were kept in a (now demolished) shrine behind Kyigu village (spelled Skyid khu in official documents). A photograph of 2006 shows the two lions apparently at this place (Fig. 5).5 Apart from one of the informants, who believes the figures came from the nearby ruined site described as ani dgon pa (nunnery),

4 The name Sa ‘bo ra relates to a rock at this place that resembles a ‘bo, i.e. vessel representing the ‘bo volume unit of measurement. (Hazod, based on local information from a visit to Thon mi Sambahota in 2009; the site is located not far east of present-day Lhun rste Township). On the Thon mi presence in Gnyal, see Rangdra 1999; on the Sambhoda council, see Ra lo rnams thar 290; Deb ngyen 457.10–12 (Roerich BA 1995 [1949] 376–77).

5 Cf. Bka’ gdams cho’ byung 475–93; Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar 256–63; Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 317 (with further source references). In his guide book, Chakha Dawa 2013: 104 gives the year 1146 as the date of foundation of the ‘Chad kha rnying ma, “Old ‘Chad kha” (Chakha Dawa 2013: 104), which, however, we did not find attested in the sources used for this study. Before the foundation of Spyil bu, Se Spyil bu pa is said to have erected the “New ‘Chad kha” (‘Chad kha gsar ma) in 1164, which later served as place for the winter sessions of the monastic community (cf. also Martin 2001: 17). From the textual sources it is not entirely clear of where this ‘Chad kha gsar ma is to be located. In Las chen’s description it appears as if the old and new monastic seats relate to one and the same place, cf. Bka’ gdamschos’ byung 48.14–17. Among the locals, there is also the legend that the original monastery was situated on the plain near the Mal gro river, information that we were not able to further verify.

6 They were collectively addressed as rva sgreng ‘chad kha spyil bu gsum; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 695. Parts of the ruined site possibly go back to Spyil bu pa’s foundation of the ‘Chad kha gsar ma, but also see the previous note.

7 According to an information by Shawo Khacham (Sichuan University; Centre for Tibetan Studies) from November 2014, his colleague Shesrab Sango took the picture of the lions at their place in the village on his way to ‘Chad kha dgon in 2006. On the photograph, the lions appear in a somewhat random position leaning on each other, as if they had just been brought there.
the locals agree that the original site was the burial ground on the hill opposite the monastery, known as Sa’i ‘rum pa dmar ri, “mountain with the red earth stupas”. This field is numbered 105 in the maps of Fig. 1. The numbers refer to the list of burial mound sites in the area of Central Tibet, the core region of the Tibetan empire (c. 600–850 CE), which was drawn up by the author based on years of in situ surveys including the use of satellite imagery (current state of the list: 1–398). The related research project aims to document and analyse the most important sites of this funeral tradition related to the time of the empire and the previous chieftain period.\(^8\) Number 105 is one of circa twenty-five imperial grave fields in the area of present-day Mal gro Gung dkar County, where the attribution as an imperial site is mainly based on construction criteria as indicated by our data from in situ surveys and also from descriptions in textual sources. (It refers to fields, which together with smaller (often pre-imperial) tumuli also include larger walled, usually trapezoidal catacomb graves, for the most part historically plundered and some completely opened.) A similar number of grave fields, and sometimes even much higher (such as in ‘Phan yul with 74 fields) are to be found in the other districts of the Skyid chu area around Lhasa. As is well known, this was the core region of the ancient Bu ru (Central Horn), where many of the regularly visited imperial residence places and places of the council are to be located, in this region mostly used as summer places. The historically most significant imperial residence within Mal gro was certainly Sbra stod tshal (Upper Tent Park) in Rgya ma; established by Khri Snom mtsan (Gnam ri Srong btsan) in circa AD 600, it was something like the founding residence of the Tibetan empire, in this capacity, but also in terms of architectural features similar to Fusi (伏俟城), the “capital” of the Tuyuhun (吐谷浑) due west of Qinghai Lake.\(^9\) The residence was later used by the btsan po (emperor) Khri Gtsug lde btsan (r. 815–41), who within Mal gro inter alia also resided in Gzi sbug (the old Zu phug, not far from ‘Chad kha; Fig. 1), where according to post-imperial sources he was killed in the residence of Mal gro Zhom pa (var. Zham pa) (referring to the today’s ruins of Zhva ma pho brang, situated next to Rkyang bu tshal, the latter known as imperial assembly place).\(^10\) We may consider that the valley where ‘Chad kha is located also once served as a royal residence and/or a place of the council. The locals generally speak of the settlement area of Skyid khu, in conformity with the name of the valley’s main village. This could refer to one of the not identified “Kyi” and Mal gro (older spelling Mal tro) places registered in the Old Tibetan Annals, such as Mal tro Lrams or Mal tro Skye (Skyi?) bye (Hazod 2009: 216). The ruins of two striking towers at the foot of the Sa’i ‘rum pa dmar ri — unique for this section of Mal gro — are said to be the remains of an original group of six towers of the Bya ‘khyung ‘bab sa type (Fig. 1).\(^11\) They most likely relate to an early post-imperial secular rule, perhaps the donors behind the ‘Chad kha foundation, but one often finds such establishments especially in the context of continuing older local histories.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) For details see the website www.oeaw.ac.at/tibetantumulustradition, hereafter TTT.

\(^9\) For a reconstruction of the campsite in Rgya ma, see Hazod 2014. For a description of Fusi after Chinese sources, see Tong 2008: 78. For the much older yet related situation of imperial campsites in light of the Xiongnu polity archaeology, cf. also Bemmann 2011.

\(^10\) Chakha Dawa 2013: 109, 111; Hazod 2014.

\(^11\) I.e. towers, described as having been built as safeguard against the Khyung birds terrorising the country.

\(^12\) See Hazod 2007. The badly damaged rectangular tower constructions are built of rammed earth and consist of two parts, a main chamber and an ante-chamber. The ground plan of the southern building is approximately 10×4m, the tower is circa 10m in height, the wall circa 0.85m in width (data by Feiglstorfer 2014). Further ruins of unknown origin in the same valley are the “Dzongtse ling” (Rdzong rtse gling) on the mountain opposite the towers (Fig. 1). They are described to be a former “military seat”.

3. The 'Chad kha lions and their original place

The reason for my visit to 'Chad kha in 2013 was to record the cemetery number 104 situated immediately next to the monastery. It is clearly visible on satellite images and today, after the registration by the Cultural Relics Bureau in Lhasa, it is also officially registered as “'Chad kha bang so” (“Chad kha burial mounds”). The field is an imposing site with some architectural peculiarities and a central elite grave mound of 48m at the front. But, at the time of my first visit, I did not have a chance to visit the opposite field 105, whose main tomb is visible from afar, towering over the valley. Accompanied by my colleagues, the architect Hubert Feiglstorfer and Martin Gamon, a specialist in prospective archaeology, the visit in 2014 now allowed us to study and document the lions and their surroundings more accurately. We took the path up to the place of origin of the stone monuments, namely the main mound (105.M-1), as the locals assured (Fig. 3). We chose the route on which according to a popular account the lions had been brought down. This says that a shepherd once found the figures at the grave and slid them down the steep slope, hence this widely visible “slide lane” on the slope and the broken legs of the two lions. In reality, the light markings on the hillside are the traces of a much used and partially paved path, which halfway up runs past the ruins of the above-mentioned ani agon pa before it arrives at an alpine plateau at the top. There are six major tombs plus a group of smaller, round (probably older) mounds further behind. Going along the path, one would arrive at the neighbouring valley of Sdings kha and the much larger burial ground 107 (Fig. 1).

The trapezoidal M-1 earth mound (size: 40m at the front), decorated with prayer flags, is relatively well preserved, although with the typical sinkhole on top that indicates older openings of the monument. A slight depression paved with some stones situated at the left corner of the mound’s front, facing the southeast, may have been the location of one of the lions. It is not so clearly visible on the right-hand corner, but one can assume that the two lions were placed at the corners to the left and right. This corresponds to the situation at the two other lion-guarded burial mounds known in Central Tibet, namely in 'Phyong rgyas, where they sit in front of the grave of btsan po Khri Srong lde btsan (r. 756–c.797), and at the central mound (M-1) of the

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13 This is evidently a literal doubling for the toponym 'Chad kha is the later or variant spelling of Mchad kha, with mchad kha (mchad, mchad pa) besides being bang so, an old form for (imperial) tumulus. Thus, 'Chad kha means the “place with the burial mounds”, similar for example to the Mchad kha in the Mang ra valley in upper Mal gro, where a grave field is located (number 115 on our list, situated opposite the Zhva’i lha khang). In his discussion of a 12th-century Tārā thangka, which mentions Mchad kha pa (sic) and his chief disciple Spyil bu pa inscribed on the rear, Dan Martin, not knowing the circumstances on site, rightly concludes in this context: “It is entirely possible that Old Mchad-kha was founded on or near the site of a cemetery to which Mchad-kha-ba went in order to meditate on impermanence.” Martin 2001, fn. 36. As noted above, the local tradition has it that the founder has previously practised meditation in the caves of the mountains behind ‘Chad kha. It is well feasible that the caves had a much older use in a funeral context, similar to what has been observed elsewhere in Central Tibet, see “thematic introduction” on the TTT website.

14 The “lion tomb” of 'Phyong rgyas (grave field Mu ra, 032 of our list) is variously ascribed in the literature to the emperors Khri Gtsug lde btsan (r. 815–41), Khri Srong lde btsan (r. 756–c.797) or also Khri Lde gtsug btsan (r. 712–c.754). Cf. Wang Renxiang et al. The latter opinion became a kind of “official” view, represented in a modern stone inscription installed at this bang so, see below fn. 28. However, here we see the proposed identification suggested by Panglung as still being most reasonable. In line with this, the Seng ge can, “(tomb) with the lion”, from the account of the plundering of the royal tombs, relates to the grave of emperor Khri Srong lde btsan; Hazod 2013.
field of Khrom chen in Lha rtse. The boulders lying around M-1 are remarkable and apparently they are the same stone used for the lions (likely volcanic rock). The shape and size of some of these pieces plainly appears ideal for carving the statues in question.

The lions are of different size. The chunky left one (seen from the front) is the larger of the two, 90cm in height and 120cm in length. The semi-broken legs make an unambiguous identification of the posture difficult. The angled waist and the head drawn backwards rather point to a crouching than a standing position. The smaller one on the right is even more damaged, with the legs on one side almost completely missing. It is still more crudely carved than the counterpart, whose curled mane and tail are well modelled. The muscles of the front legs are indicated by decorative patterns. As a whole both resemble rough drafts rather than artistically highly finished compositions. Nevertheless, they give the impression of robustness and strength in keeping with their function as guardian figures. Both are dyed with red ochre and have clear depressions along the body’s head, neck and back as one often finds on worshipped natural stones (Fig. 4b). The tomb lions of ’Phyong rgyas and other imperial monuments such as pillars show similar traces of use. They are apparently the result of rubbings with a stone or other object, which pilgrims used in order to later place the dust or the rubbing stone itself on their house altar. This use of the images in an evidently religious (Buddhist) context can be dated at least to the time when the lions were kept in the shrine on the valley floor. The period referred to in the shepherd story of the stones’ relocation cannot be ascertained more precisely, however. The older locals say the lion shrine was already here when they were children. At the same time, the stone statues show traces of natural erosion that point to a longer, possibly centuries-long outdoor location, and it may well be that they were already revered when they were close to the grave, albeit probably not with the same appearance of an artificial red colour. (The latter is missing on the photo from 2006 (Fig. 5) and was apparently attached only after the lion’s relocation to the monastery.) The naming of the site as “mountain with the red earth ’bum pa” indicates a local Buddhist classification which probably dates from later (post-imperial) time. Yet this should not prevent us from considering the original context of the lions’ placement at the tomb as already being a Buddhist one. In any case we regard the local account of the lions’ original place as being most reliable. This means that M-1 of 105 represents a third imperial-era “lion grave” that can now be registered for Central Tibet.

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15 Tsewang 2011: 83–92 for a recent study of this site (no. 339 on our list, situated next to the smaller, separate field of 340); see Heller 2003 and Hou Wei 2010 for a description of the lions.

16 Assessment by Franz Otter (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna) on the basis of a sample taken from one of the rocks situated next to the grave.

17 As to the “red earth ’bum pa (= burial mound)”, the earth all around the barrows indeed has a slight reddish colouring (see Fig. 3), but we cannot be sure if this is meant by this designation. The Xin Tangshu speaks of red plastered buildings with a white tiger painted on the wall, which in the case of elite burials were erected near the tombs (Bushell 1880: 521; Stein 2010: 98).
4. The grave lions of imperial Tibet: Some comparative observations

The lion grave of Khrom chen had an inscription stele, which is to be dated to the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan. It is quite likely that the one of 'Phyong rgyas too had originally a *rado ring*, if we assume that the Khri Srong lde btsan commemorative pillar known from its location as the “stele at the 'Phyong rgyas bridge” was originally set up at the tomb of this emperor.9

Outside Central Tibet there are stone lions ascribed to a grave of the Kaoxiaotu cemetery, one of the remarkable necropolises in the east-Tibetan Dulan district.10 The area was part of the territory of the above-mentioned Tuyuhun (Tib. ’A zha), descendants of the Murong section of the proto-Mongolian Xianbei (鮮卑), who settled around the Qinghai Lake from the 4th century, where they established a powerful confederation headed by a king. As is known, from the 660ies it was part of the Tibetan empire – classified as a “minor principality” (rgyal phran). The structural (and presumably also ritual) parallels with the burial-mound tradition of Central Tibet are striking,21 but the (earlier) history of influence in this respect is by no means clear. The stone lions in question are of different sizes and were reportedly found in the same stratum as an early 8th-century Tang period (*kaiyuan tongbao*) coin. In the same context, inscribed wooden slips and Buddhist devotional clay images (*tsha tsha*) were also found as well as fragments of a stone pillar lying near the mound.22

These grave lion pairs (abbreviated hereafter as PL = lions of 'Phyong rgyas (Fig. 6); KL = lions of Khrom chen (Fig. 7); DL (lions of Dulan; Fig. 8); CL = ‘Chad kha lions) – apart from the principal position (i.e. rather crouching in the case of CL and KL, sitting in an upright posture in PL, DL) – are stylistically quite different. This can be seen, for example, with respect to the shape of the tail (a bushy tail on the lion’s flank in DL and PL, a short, non-bushy tail in CL and possibly also in KL), or with regard to the shape of the mane (clearly curled in DL and suggested in CL, rather wavy in PL and KL). The sculpturally unfinished character of CL and KL is evident; in the case of KL, the rear legs are not worked out at all (Huo Wei: 2010: 70). As to the artistic provenance, Tong (*op. cit.*, p. 104) sees the DL, KL, and PL as “clearly Tang China”. Heller (2003a: 58f.) is more nuanced – considering other contemporary or older lion images as well besides Chinese. She also noticed Persian influences (in PL), or analogies to representations from Central Asia or Sogdiana, respectively (in DL). The parallels to Tang China (618–907 CE) mainly apply to PL, especially in relation to the stone guardian lions (*shishi, 石獅*) at the famous

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18 See Wangdu 2013: 189ff. The stele is said to have originally been erected at the rear on top of M-1 of field 339 and is currently kept somewhere in Lha rtse township (Huo Wei 2010).

19 See Richardson 1985: 36f. For a translation and analysis of this inscription, which evidently dates from the time after the death of Khri Srong lde btsan, see Stein 2010: 111–15. The later sources speak of an inscription stele at the foot of the latter’s grave, or they describe this monument as the “tomb with the outside decoration”, which may specifically refer to this attachment of the grave lions and the stele (Hazod 2013). On its upper part, below the canopy, the rear face of the pillar has a carving of a striding lion – stylistically recalling the (Mañjuśrī related) lion drawing in Dunhuang cave 17, Whitfield and Farrer 1990: cat. no. 60; Richardson 1998: 271. The pillar is said to have been be “cleaned” these days and is later again to be placed at the ‘Phyong rgyas bridge (information 6/2014). It had previously been there at least since the 18th century, but possibly much earlier; cf. Richardson 1985: 36.

20 Tong 2008: 91–92. Two very similar yet much smaller stone lions, 40cm in height, are recorded in the same area, possibly coming from inside a grave chamber or a cave temple (Heller 2007: 57).

21 See most recently the study by Tong 2008.

22 Tong 2008: 91, 104. For a description of the lions and the stele and their later fates, see also Heller 2007: 56–57.
Qianling (乾陵) tombs (near the capital Chang’an; here abbreviated QL),\(^{23}\) and – still even more clearly – to one of the lions at the tomb of Li Hong (in Yenshi Xian, Honan (abbreviated YX; see Fig. 9).\(^{24}\) The analogies refer to the principal attitude: the upright sitting posture, with advanced breast, the head thrown back and the body resting on heavy legs altogether indicate an image of insuperability; but it also applies to details of the mane, muscles or tail, which in YX are stylistically strikingly similar to PL. In QL, the muscles are formed differently, as well as the manes (flowing in PL, whereas QL represents the whorl pattern as it was typical for lion sculptures already before the Tang period).\(^{25}\) In the treatment of the mane and other features in PL, Richardson (1998: 271–72) sees parallels to contemporary images from Nepal, and he points to the otherwise pronounced similarities to a stone lion from Tumshuq (between Kashgar and Aksu).\(^{26}\) A rather poor copy of the latter (probably much older) monument is given in von Le Coq (Fig. 10).\(^{27}\) The parallels, as we see it, mainly concern the patterning of the muscles, an element which we also find indicated in the ’Chad kha lions, who in their basic composition actually show more similarities to the Tumshuq lion than the PL.

We see the position of the PL, facing the burial mound, as rather unusual. It is possibly the result of a later repositioning.\(^{28}\) Guardian figures for a tomb or similar constructions usually face to the front. In other (often more religious) contexts, the pair stand opposite and face the centre, or they face to the front while the bodies are in profile and facing away from each other, as in the type of throne-supporting lions.\(^{29}\) Finally, we also find differences with regard to the sizes of the grave lions’ pairs. It is namely largely identical in the case of KL and PL, while the one on the right is much smaller in DL and CL. Whether this imbalance reproduces the distinction of the grave lions’ pairs. It is namely largely identical in the case of KL and PL, while the one on the right is much smaller in DL and CL. Whether this imbalance reproduces the distinction of the grave lions’ pairs.

\(^{23}\) www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/30.66.2 (accessed 16.08.2014). This monumental structure with the graves of Emperor Gaozong (d. 683) and Empress Wu Zetian (d. 705) became archetypical in terms of layout and structural decoration for subsequent Tang emperors’ tombs (Eckfeld 2005: 19ff). In China, the carving of stone lions (including the version of the “winged lion”) goes back to the time of the Eastern Han (25–220 CE); cf. Feltham 2010.

\(^{24}\) Sirén 1998 [1925], vol. 2: 34, plate 425A. Li Hong was the son of Gaozong and Wu Zetian (prev. note).

\(^{25}\) See www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/30.66.2 (accessed 04/2015).

\(^{26}\) For the Tibetan occupation of this part of the Buddhist city-states in the Tarim basin in the second half of the 7th century, see Beckwith 1987: 28–30, 34, 40.

\(^{27}\) von Le Coq 1982 [1928]: Tafel 47.

\(^{28}\) Recently two stones with inscriptions in Chinese and Tibetan have been set up in front of the tomb, in the area between the lions. The texts are intended to offer the visitors a historical “Introduction to the stone lions” (rdo’i seng ge’i nga spro). The Chinese text in brief it says (transl. by Tsering Gyalbo): The two lions facing north and south of the hanging po of Khri Lde gtsug btsan were produced according to the Tang tradition and are witness to the good relationship between China and Tibet in the 8th century as initiated by Kim sheng Kong co (i.e. the second Chinese Princess, who arrived in Lhasa in 711 as bride of the later emperor Khri Lde gtsug btsan). The Tibetan inscription differs from the Chinese one as it describes the two lions as pho seng byang and mo seng lho, the northern male lion and the southern female lion. The latter is the destroyed one with no head any more. The position of the stone statues is more correctly at the north-east and south-west corner of the mound. To our knowledge, there is no evidence for the sources for this asserted mid-8th-century identification (see also above fn. 14), which evidently is here interlinked with the wish to proclaim the today’s official view concerning the early China-Tibet contact history.

\(^{29}\) Cf. Tsering Gyalpo in the present volume; see also Heller 2003: Fig. 11; 2008: Fig. 7, 14.
The guardian lions discussed here are all representative of an ancient imperial iconography. One sees it in a large-scale cultural and historical context with its origins in the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia and Anatolia that is related to the institution of the “royal hunt” and the cult of the Great Mother Goddess. It is also influenced by its further development and dissemination throughout the world of the Silk Road through Achaemenid Persia (from 6th cent. BCE) and the subsequent Hellenistic period (Feltham 2010). This means that beyond the regions where the Asiatic or Persian Lion (Panthera leo persica) was not native, such as Tibet and China, the existence of the lion motif was often the product of an introduction from outside or the result of a specific adaptation history. Apparently the principal symbolic statement remained relatively constant, denoting an image of tamed wildness in the service of royal power. This is particularly true of the types of lion figures protecting a threshold – a “city”, gate, tomb – often appearing in pairs, sitting, standing, crouching or even in a striding posture. However, even if we concede such general historico-cultural relationship it does not help us to identify the origin of the Tibetan imperial grave lions. Stylistically there is not much in common even between themselves. Concerning their possible provenance, with the exception of PL, we only find some vague indications. Perhaps we should see this uncertainty also as a witness to a multicultural artistic presence in Tibet, especially in the period of the 8th and 9th century, where in addition to products of clear provenance it also gave rise to stylistically hybrid representations, or products, where indigenous artisans drew on different models at the same time from the cultural environment of Tibet’s lively contact history during that time.

5. The early Tibetan lion iconography and the question of the dating of the ’Chad kha lions

The grave lions are only the more visible manifestation of a fairly diverse lion representation that have been known in Tibet at least since the 7th century. Long before the “snow lion” became a central emblem of Tibetan Buddhist lore, we find it in an architectural context of religious buildings as, for instance, the beam-support lions in the Jo khang (mid-7th cent.), probably a Nepalese product, or the wooden lion of the contemporary Grom pa rgyang. Moreover, they can be found in various decorative details of commodities (Heller 2003a: 58f.), or also as the central image of certain authoritative seals. Finally, perhaps related to the latter, it is not least known as an emblem related to the regional military division of imperial Central Tibet, namely for the banners of the Horns. Several of the altogether eight Upper and Lower Horn banners are described as having been marked with a lion, namely a white lion striding across the sky, a red lion, a black-maned lion and a lion with a versicoloured mane. The Horn banners and

30 For the Royal Hunt related to the lion, see Alsen 2006: 162, et passim. For the Great Mother Goddess (Kybele and related figures) and the lion, see Feltham 2010 and the references cited there.

31 See for example the lion of Karakiz (Hittite, 2nd mill. BC; https://nordonart.wordpress.com/2012/07/26; accessed 3/2013), the lion of Tayinat (neo-Hittite Patina, 950–725 BC; http://sites.utoronto.ca/tap; accessed 3/2013), the lion of Amphipolis (4th cent. BC; www.theamphipolistomb.com/lion), or the (early Hellenistic?) lion of Hamadan; www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamadan-vii; accessed 08/2014.

32 A winged lion or also a crouching lion is mentioned in the sources, specified in this connection as the seal of the (great) garrison(s), khrom, khrom chen; cf. Dotson 2007: 312; Stein 2010: 100.

In Tibet, the first (Buddhist) stone images of lions in the form of a pair supporting a centre, namely the throne of Vairocana, are to be dated to the early 9th century. The pictorial spread of the cosmic Buddha Vairocana corresponds to the vision of imperial cosmopolitanism which became central in Tibet after the turn towards a Buddhist empire in the time of btsan po Khri Srong lde btsan. The establishment of the lions at the latter’s grave may be seen precisely in this context of a specific appreciation of this actual first Tibetan Buddhist emperor, whose funeral was reportedly conducted according to the “white (i.e. Buddhist) doctrine.” We see it as rather unlikely that the ’Chad kha lions preceded the PL, but similarly to KL they decorated the resting place of a 9th-century (Buddhist?) representative of the imperial power. However, other approaches are also conceivable.

The commands of the Horn regiments were assigned to individual aristocratic families or family lines. The “white lion regiment” of Upper Additional Horn (Ru lag stod), for example, was under the ’Bro, one of the major Tibetan minister families, whose graves have been associ-

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34 See Di Cosmo 2010 (2002): 176–78 for the characteristics of the Xiongnu governmental, territorial and military organisation and his assessment of an “institutional continuity within the Inner Asian political tradition”; cf. also Di Cosmo 2011: 45–48.
35 The individual banner images (and also other characteristics of the horn divisions such as the battle order – metaphorically in one case described as “marching like a lion in the snow”) may largely go back to pre-imperial times, to the rgyal phran or chiefdom period (before 7th century). However, while in the Buddhist context in Tibet the lion (as a symbol of both the Teaching and royalty) was distributed in various representations (not least in personal naming, the toponymy and classification of the landscape) the “Lord of the Animals” otherwise does not appear to be dominant in the symbolic world of pre-Buddhist or pre-imperial Tibet – compared, for example, with the other prominent feral cat, the tiger (stag). The image of the latter is known as the sign of heroism per se, a circumstance to which the frequency of stag as part of personal names arguably is related. (This may also concern place names in case stag does not mean stag pa, i.e. birch tree.) One may add that in our opinion Stein’s conclusion that the combination of tiger and heroism was an adoption from China (2010: 98) overlooks to take into consideration much older historical genealogies related to Central Asia. One of the arguably older, pre-Buddhist lion adaptions may lie behind Seng ge brtsegs pa (“lion building”), the name recorded for btsan po ‘Dus stong’s burial mound in ’Phyong rgyas. We do not know exactly what this refers to, but the fact that the grave was erected by the “Hor people” as recorded in later sources may suggest Central Asian motifs (Hazod 2013). Even earlier, one Seng go (i.e. seng ge, lion head?) family played a prominent role in the formative period of the Tibetan empire. The chief or “great man” (myi chen) of this family line, Seng go Myi chen, once has conquered Dvags po in service of his lord, emperor Khri Slon mtsnshan (Richardson 1998: 85, 132). His name reportedly was locally known in Dvags po until recently. Somewhat unclear is the assessment of the “lion throne” (seng ge’i khri) recorded as part of the furnishing of the pre-historic “treasure tomb” (nor gi hung so) on the Yum bu bla mkhar mountain in Lower Yar lung, but probably this is related to the time of the re-establishment of this “tomb” as gter ma site in the early 9th century, see Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 101–02, 149. Finally, Bruneau and Bellezza note that the lion is also to be found in (pre-historic) rock art of Upper Tibet (incl. Ladakh), although it was not a common motif in contrast to that of the more frequently occurring tiger or striped feline, Bruneau and Bellezza 2013: 17, 28.
36 i.e. the monumental Vairocana stone reliefs of Ldan ma brag (Heller 2003b [1994]) and of Lha ’bab thang in Smar kham County. The latter possibly has to be dated slightly earlier, see Tsering Gyalpo in this volume.
38 See Dotson 2013 for an analysis of the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus (quoted in Dba’ bzhed), which he identifies as a (10th-century?) “charter myth” with regard to the text’s principle message – the triumph of the funeral based on Buddhist tantra over the ritual means and their related ideas of the bon po. See also Bjerken 2005: 829f.
ated with the field of Khrom chen and the lion tomb (339.M-1) respectively (Wangdu 1994). Meeting the 'Chad kha lions in such a personal or lineage-specific connection cannot be ruled out, but apart from the fact that we are lacking here indications from the sources it is not the reading we would favour. We rather see the Tibetan grave lions simply as an architectural addition that was introduced after foreign (arguably Tang Chinese or Tuyuhun) models to visibly indicate the new quality and dimension of Tibet’s imperial power. The lion pair at the grave of Khrom chen and the 'Chad kha lions would thus as it were represent regional of central power, related to unidentified high state or military officials. In this sense, it is quite conceivable that there were originally more grave lions. Today they have been lost or still lie buried under the surface around larger mchad or bang so of Central Tibet’s necropolises dated to the 9th century.

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39 In this context, it has been referred to the 'Bro Khrom mda’ Cung pa of the list of the “nine great ones”, whose greatness was represented by a white lion (fur lined?) cape (seng ge mo’i gong glag/dlag). See Vitali 1996: 169, 178; Dotson 2007: 117. The personal name is possibly to be read as the junior member (i.e. “younger brother”, cung pa = gzung po?) of a ‘Bro family from Khrom mda’. The latter refers to the lower part of the Khrom area in Gtsang, where the Khrom chen village with the bang so field nearby is located, Wangdu 1997: 10.

We often find Seng ge or Seng dkar as part of the name of ‘Bro members, indicating a title of leading representatives of the ‘Bro. It could be that commonly it characterised a certain division of this trans-regional lineage, which inter alia is known to have had territorial links in Mnga’ ris, and Pu hrang respectively. Vitali gives many examples for ‘Bro Seng and ‘Bro Seng dkar of Stod and concludes that seng dkar was a title of the ‘Bro of Stod (Vitali op. cit., ibid). Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po informs us that is was one ‘Bro Seng dkar who offered the land to the Mnga’ ris founder king Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon where the latter erected his sku mkhar Nyi bzang in Pu hrangs. ‘Bro Seng dkar’s lineage then became the zhang (maternal uncle) lineage of this new dynasty (Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs 129b). (The chapter on Mnga’ ris in the Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs represents an important addition to Nga’ dbang grags pa’s Mnga’ ris rgyal rabs (Vitali 1996), the La dvags rgyal rabs and other basic sources on early Mnga’ ris skor gsum; ibid. 123b.6–139b.)

40 In the list of banners, a “red lion” is given as the sign of the Upper Left Horn (alternatively, one source has a “facing lion”, seng ge kha sprod), whereas various forms of “red flags” are mentioned for both halves of the Central Horn (Dotson, op. cit., 198). The ‘Chad kha of the eastern Mal gro was administratively part of Upper Dbu ru, Hazod 2009: 197.

41 In fact, several pairs of stone lions of possible imperial origin have recently come to light in Central Tibet, on which I was informed of only after completing the present paper. This relates to stone statues at temples in Skyid grong and Ding ri as well as at a temple in Bkra shis sgang of Lha rtse County. The latter statues are said to be kept now in the Tibet Museum of Shigatse (Information by Shawo Khacham, email plus photograph of the “Bkra shis sgang lions” from November 2, 2014). Based on an initial assessment of the photographs, they may originally have been grave lions, similarly to the situation at ‘Chad kha, and arguably related to the imperial necropolis near Bo don dgon, south of Bkra shis sgang township (see field no. 329 at the TTT website).

A somewhat peculiar situation is conveyed in stone lions produced in the museum context of today – in a way as if they were meant to reconstruct a historical reality virtually. The newly built “Srong btsan sgam po Memorial Hall” in Rgya ma (Hazod 2014), architecturally an intended adaptation of an imperial sku mkhar, represents such a curiosity. Two modern lions made of cement (clearly a copy of the ‘Phyong rgyas lions) adorn the entrance to this museum, which has the classical Buddhist vita of the “founder king” as its content. In the courtyard, there is a pillar with a Chinese inscription that is externally a copy of the dbon zhang dsa ring of Lhasa. In one of the rooms on the upper floor, two Tibetan mastiffs of the “lion type” are guarding the re-enactment scene of a campsite, where the emperor and his ministers are holding a meeting. The two dogs are stuffed animals, which – so we were told in 2010 – are later to be replaced by stone lions.
6. Concluding remarks: The making of the lions

How we can picture the making of the 'Chad kha lions? To our knowledge, there is not much information in the sources on the organisation of craftsmanship in Tibet of the imperial time in textual sources. With respect to metallurgy, for example, considering here only the manufacture of armour and weapons (its possessing a high quality much regarded by Tibet’s neighbours), the existence of permanent (regional) craft centres of production can be assumed.\(^{42}\) On the other hand, there are indications of “mobile centres”, where temporary workshops were established in connection with specific religious foundations, involving artisans of different origins and being abandoned after the construction was finished.\(^{43}\) This indicates pragmatic solutions: the monuments and objects were manufactured \textit{in situ} and if possible from material that was available directly from the surroundings. For example, the base material for the early 9th century bell (\textit{cong}) of Khra ’brug monastery, which according to its inscription was cast by a Chinese master, comes from a place not far behind the temple, which is still named after it (Cong). There was probably a similar organisation of temporary workshops with regard to stonemasonry, using local quarries or nearby boulders for the raw material.\(^{44}\) One can expect that they were situated in the immediate vicinity of the place selected for the monument’s erection. As mentioned above, the latter appears to have been the situation in the making of the 'Chad kha lions. We have not been able to identify any specific models for their artistic executions and do not know whether foreign sculptors were involved. In our estimation, they are the more or less well-made products of native masons, perhaps under some guidance of foreign masters. In any case they were most likely manufactured on site, using stone from the same place that arguably provided the building material for the walls of the tomb and its chambers. The question of who was buried in the mound M-1, or to which family line the tombs of this field in general can be allocated, remains unanswered. What we can assume is that this architectural addition required previous consent from the central authority or from the emperor himself, who in this way paid tribute to the outstanding services of one of his loyal officials.

\(^{42}\) There is reason to believe that the widespread sites of ruins in Central Tibet, locally described as \textit{brgya grong} (“100 families”), relate to permanent settlements of miners (of iron, copper, silver, gold). Some may indeed go back to imperial time if not earlier (Hazod 2014). We find an indication of this form of organisation in Lha Bla ma Ye shes ’od’s edict (10th cent.). It states that accommodations were provided for 100 families of gold workers (here related to the monastic foundations of early Gu ge kingdom; Rase Konchog Gyamtsho 2004: 121). However, it remains unknown of whether such quarters also included metal-working centres. See Clarke 2006: 21–23.

\(^{43}\) See for instance the case of the 7th-century temple of Khra ’brug; Hazod 2005: 249ff. Cf. also the story of the wandering “seven craftsmen” from 'Phan yul related to religious foundations of the same period; Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 51.

\(^{44}\) Cf. Hazod 2014.
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Fig. 3. The central tomb (M-1) of the grave field 105 (Photo: Hazod 2014).

Fig. 4a. and Fig. 4b. Details of the stone lions of ’Chad kha (Photo: Hazod 2013).
Fig. 5. The stone lions of `Chad kha at their former place in the village (see Fig. 1) (Photo: Sherab Sangpo 2006)

Fig. 6. The stone lion of 'Phyong rgyas (Photo: Feiglstorfer 2014).

Fig. 7. The stone lion of Khrom chen (Photo: Shawo Khacham 2011)

Fig. 8. One of the grave lions of Dulan (Photo: Heller 1997).

Fig. 9. The lion of the tomb of Li Hong (in Yenshi Xian) (Photo: Sirén 1998 [1925], Pl. 429A).

Fig. 10. The stone lion of Tumshuq (Photo: von Le Coq 1982 [1928], Tafel 47).