ON THE POSITION OF LADAKHI AND BALTI IN THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

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Languages are vehicles of identification, and hence their classification is always culturally and politically sensitive. But political (self-) ascriptions and their motivations are not always transparent for all those who are involved with language policy, and taking ideologies for facts does not always lead to optimal decisions. Some of the problems that any attempt to maintain, reform, or even revive the Ladakhi and Balti languages faces arise from the lack of clear concepts about what these languages are, and where they come from. In order to provide a more solid base for the discussion of language reforms among Ladakhis and Baltis, I will discuss the position of Ladakhi and Balti within the Tibetan language family from linguistic and historical perspectives.

Ladakhi and Balti are often said to come closest to the 'original' Tibetan language (for example, *Thubbstan Dpalldan* 2002:237-238), but on the other hand, one may also come across the idea that the spoken language or 'phalskat' is but a deviation of the 'original' language, lacking any grammar and thus not worthy to be written down. The 'original' language is generally understood to be the language of the religious books or 'choskat' (i.e. Classical Tibetan). In order to know what the 'original' language was like, it is necessary to look at the earliest documents available and to discuss the origins of the Tibetan art of writing. It is unavoidable that certain 'truths' of Tibetan historiography have to be critically reviewed and challenged.

Thonmi Sambhoṭa and the introduction of the Tibetan script [1]

The story

According to Tibetan tradition, Emperor *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo* (617- or 569-649)[2] sent his (future) minister *Thonmi Sambhoṭa* to India to study the art

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[1] Similar arguments will be found, independently, in Christina Scherrer-Schaub's lecture on "Imperial Tibet. An archaeology of the written" (Tenth seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Oxford 2003).

of writing. *Thonmi* introduced the Tibetan script and composed eight grammatical treatises, of which only two, the *Sumcupa* and the *Rtagskyi hjugpa* survived. In the popular view, the main reason for the introduction of the script was to translate and to write down the sacred texts of Buddhism.[3] Thus the Tibetan script itself has become sacrosanct, and hence its orthography should not be altered even when used for secular purposes (and some people might even think that the Tibetan script should not be used for secular purposes at all).

The narrative of *Thonmi* and his mission to India seems to have taken shape between the 11th and the 13th centuries AD. It appears in the *Bkaḥmchems kakholma*, a 'Testament' allegedly written by *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo* himself, brought into light as a *gterma* in 1050 by *Atiśa*; the *Maṇibkaḥḥbum*, likewise ascribed to *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*, possibly compiled between 1170-1200; the *Mŋaḥbdagñaŋgi choshbyuŋ* (c.1175-1190); the *Ldeḥu choshbyuŋ* (?1230-1249); and the *Rgya-Bodkyi choshbyuŋ rgyaspa* (1260).[4] With *Bsodnams Rgyalmtshan*'s elaboration in chapter 10 of his *Rgyalrabs gsalbaḥi meloŋ* (1368), the narrative seems to have definitively turned into an accepted historical 'fact'.

In the *choshbyuŋ* of *Buston* (1323), the Emperor's name is written as *Khrilde Sroŋbrtsan*. Miller (1963:490) takes this as evidence that *Thonmi* was involved with the so-called language reform under *Khrilde Sroŋbrtsan* alias *Sadnalegs* (c.799-815). However, the element *lde* is attested, albeit in a different position, in the 9th century genealogy PT 1286, line 62 (Bacot et al. 1940:82), which has *Sroŋ Ldebrtsan*, and it is absolutely clear from the context that *Buston* refers to the son of *Gnamri Sroŋbtsan* (i.e. *Slonmtshan*), who was born in the female fire ox year 617, ascended the throne in his 13th year, following his father's demise, subdued all the petty kingdoms around him and 'used to read the written messages conveyed with the tributes' (*skyes-ḥbul ḥphrin·yig klog·go*). Having stated this, *Buston* (p. 182) goes on to say:

> Then, since Tibet had no script, *Thonmi* the son of *Anu*, was sent together with 16 fellows to study the script, and having studied phonetics (*sgra*) with the *paṇḍita Lhaḥirigpa Seŋge*, [he] assembled the 30 consonants and 4 vowels

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[2] For the early date cf. Sørensen (1994:23).

[3] Stated explicitly in *Maṇibkaḥḥbum, rnamthar*, E 190v7-191r1: 'as there was no script in Tibet for the purpose of converting the Tibetan territory to religion' *bod·khams dam·paḥi chos·la ḥdzud·pa·la bod·la yi·ge mi·ḥdug·par* and 21 deeds, E 269r5: 'as it was necessary to have a script to study the religion and as there was no script in Tibet' *chos slob·pa·la yi·ge dgos·pa·la | bod·la yi·ge med·pas*. This view is mirrored in many websites related to Tibet, cf. www.songtsen-library.org, www.turtlehillsangha.org., www.kagyumedialab.org., www.compassion-action.net/historique.htm.

[4] Sørensen (1994:167, note 462; for the dating see pp. 632-645).

in accordance with the Tibetan language and, with respect to their form, in accordance with the Kashmiri script. After [*Thonmi*] had prepared it in the castle Maru of Lhasa and had also composed eight treatises on script and phonetics, the king went into retreat for four years and studied it. [The king] translated the *sūtra Zamatogbkodpa*, *Dpaŋskoŋ*, and the *sūtra* collection *Dkonmchogsprin*. At that time, having heard that the Tibetan subjects criticised the king,[5] he introduced the law of the ten virtues and brought all the Tibetans to the religion and became famous by the name *Sroŋbtsan Sgampo*.

de·nas bod·la yi·ge med·pas Thon·mi A·nuḥi bu·la ḥkhor bcu·drug·daŋ bcas·pa yi·ge slob·tu btaŋ·bas paṇḍi·ta Lha·ḥi·rig·pa Seŋ·ge·la sgra bslabs·te bod·kyi skad·daŋ bstun·nas gsal·byed sum·cu | āli bźir bsdus·te gzugs Kha·cheḥi yi·ge·daŋ bstun·nas Lha·saḥi sku·mkhar Ma·rur bcos·nas yi·ge·daŋ sgraḥi bstan·bcos brgyad mdzad·de rgyal·pos lo bźi·ru mtshams bcad·de bslabs·so || mdo Za·ma·tog·bkod·pa·daŋ | Dpaŋ·skoŋ·daŋ | mdo·sde Dkon·mchog·sprin·la·sogs·pa bsgyur·ro || deḥi tshe bod·ḥbaŋs·kyis rgyal·po·la gśe·ba gsan·nas dge·ba bcuḥi khrims bcas·te bod·rnams chos·la bkod·pas miŋ Sroŋ·btsan Sgam·por grags·so |

The earliest of the above mentioned narratives, the *Bkaḥmchems kakholma*, chapter 9, already presents a curious detail: among the letters not found in the Indian alphabet and invented by *Thonmi* are three letters of the second class: *ca*, *cha*, and *ja* (p. 106; cf. *Maṇibkaḥḥbum*, *rnamthar*, E 191r4, 21 deeds, E 269v4-5, *Gyalrabs*, p. 68-69). This means by implication that the letters *tsa*, *tsha*, and *dza* of the fifth class should have been basic and of Indian origin. Now, everybody can see that the letters of the fifth class are derived from those of the second class with the help of an additional 'hook'.[6]

The Indian alphabets do not have simple letters for the dental affricates *tsa* etc., and the letters *ca*, *cha*, *ja*, *jha*, and *ña* form the second class of consonants, corresponding to a palatal pronunciation, similar to the Tibetan *ca*, *cha*, *ja*, and *ña*. However, at a certain time and in certain places, the pronunciation of these letters changed, so that what was written as *ca* was pronounced as *tsa* etc.[7] Based on this pronunciation, the

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[5] Or: 'since the Tibetan subjects critically listened to the king'.

[6] It might be less evident that the present arrangement of the alphabet violates the phonetic principles of Indian alphabets. The additional letters (altogether seven, since *wa* is derived from *ba* with the help of a superscribed *ḥ-* or *l-*) show different means of derivation (we also find inversion: *za < ja* and reduction: *ža* from an older form of *śa*) and one possible doubling (*ḥa < Khotanese gā*). Apparently they were inserted at different times, quite probably by pragmatists (professional scribes) rather than being designed at one time by a single scholarly phonetician. See Róna-Tas (1985:230-260) and the summary of his arguments in the forthcoming proceedings of the 11th colloquium of the International Association of Ladakh Studies, Choglamsar 2003).

[7] Cf. *Debther sŋonpo* (fol. 20a-b): 'Since some people in the east of India pronounce *tsa, tsha* and *dza* as *ca, cha* and *ja*, [he] established these three [i.e. *ca, cha* and *ja*].' *tsa tsha*

Tibetan spelling convention for Sanskrit words was developed.[8] But it is clear that the spelling rule must be substantially later than the graphic derivation of the Tibetan letters *tsa, tsha,* and *dza* from their palatal counterparts.

The later narratives further state that among the various Indic alphabets, *Thonmi* chose the *Lāñtsa* and *Wartula* scripts as models for the Tibetan letters, rejecting the *Nagara* and other scripts (*Rgyalrabs,* p. 68; *Maṇibkaḥḥbum mamthar,* E 191r3-4 has *Lāñtsha* and *Paṭula,* while 21 deeds, E 269v3-4 has *Nagara* and *Bhadrula*). However, the first Indian *Nāgari* scripts, of which the Kashmiri *Śāradā* and the Nepalese *Rañjā* (=*Lāñtsa*) are further developments, evolved from the 8th century onwards (Slaje 1993:15), and the developed styles that were imported to Tibet may be as late as the 10th or 11th centuries.[9] Obviously, this part of the story was invented some time after the introduction of the *Lāñtsa* and *Wartula* scripts into Tibet in the 10th or 11th centuries, and this introduction was projected back in the context of an overall glorification and deification of *Sroṇbrtsan Sgampo.*[10]

The historical evidence

The early documents do not tell us anything about the script being introduced at a particular time, by a particular person, or for a pre-eminent religious purpose. Especially, there is no mention of a minister *Thonmi* during the reign of *Sroṇbrtsan Sgampo* nor of any of his works in the Old Tibetan documents (Róna-Tas 1985:245), in early historical accounts, or in Chinese sources (Miller 1963:488). The only man with a similar name is *Mthonmyi Ḥbriṇpo Rgyalbtsannu,* who acted as minister under *Ḥbromñen Lderu,* the 29th king (chronicle, Bacot et al. 1040:100.17-20, 101.15-16).[11]

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dza·rnams Rgya·gar šar·phyogs·pa ḥgaḥ-žig ca cha ja žes zer·te | de gsum bkod |

[8] Cf. the Dunhuang text, PT 849, from the 10th century (Hackin 1924, English version: Verhagen 2000:31).

[9] They differ considerably from the Tibetan script, while the similarities between the latter and the late Gupta or *Brāhmī* script, which flourished in Kashmir and Khotan between the 4th and the 8th century, are obvious (Gendun Chophel 1938; Ngawang-thondup Narkyid 1982; Róna-Tas 1985:232ff.).

[10] Being complete sets, these two scripts were natural candidates for a single-handed 'invention' (J. Ph. Vogel, quoted in Francke 1912:270-271).

[11] Besides not being mentioned in the early documents, the spelling of *Thonmi*'s name is quite inconsistent, something one would not expect for a historical person of such authority: *Thonmi* ~ *Ḥthonmi* ~ *Thunmi* ~ *Tumi* ~ *Mthomi* and *Sambhoṭa* ~ *Sambhadra* ~ *Sambhūtra* (Miller 1963:488) ~ *Saḥbora* (Sørensen 1994:167, note 462), additionally *Ḥbriṇtomi Anu* (Sørensen 1994:504, appendix to note 487), which reminds us of the minister just mentioned. It is also quite astonishing that *Buston* mentions "eight grammatical works" (according to Miller 1963:486 this might be nothing more than a reminiscence

The first mention of the script is the entry for the year 655[12] in the Old Tibetan annals (PT 1288/IO 750).[13] These annals, written in a very formal square style, cover the period 641-746. The first year dated is 650. Given their reference function (see also below), it is quite possible that the annals were recorded year by year or at least from decade to decade, and it is rather unlikely that they were composed a long time after the events they describe. The beginning of the text can thus be dated into the second half of the 7th century. The entry simply states:

> It came down to the year of the hare: The emperor stayed in *Merkhe* and chief minister *Stoṅrtsan* wrote down the document(s) of the constitution/law/royal order in *Hgorti*, with respect to this one year.
>
> *yos·buḥi lo·la bab·steḥ | btsan·po Merkhe·naḥ bǯugs·śiṅ | blon·che Stoṅrtsan·gyis | Hgor·tir | bkaḥ-|-grims·gyi yi·ge bris·phar lo gcig |* (PT 1288, line 28-29).

It does not even indicate in which script the document was written. As Chinese sources describe minister *Stoṅrtsan* as being illiterate (Miller 1963:489), we may perhaps conclude that he was not able to read and write the complex Chinese characters, but used some Indic alphabet.

Later entries mention various registrations, such as the 'red register of Tsangchen' *Rtsaṅ chen phoḥi khram dmar·po* 690; another 'red register' 692; the 'transformation of the register of the officers' *khab·soe khram spos* 707;

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to *Pāṇini's Aṣṭādyāyī* or a grammatical work treating the eight cases or, according to *Tshebrtan Ẓabsdrug*, cited in (Sørensen 1994:540), appendix to note 487, to eight Indian grammatical traditions), but doesn't mention any title, not even the 'surviving' *Sumcupa* and *Rtagskyi hjugpa*, nor does any other later author make any suggestion about the content of the allegedly 'lost' works. The *Rgyalrabs* mentions four titles, but remains silent on the *Sumcupa* and *Rtagskyi hjugpa* (p. 70). The argument that *Thonmi* and the two "surviving" treatises "were so well-known that any mention may haven been considered superfluous" as referred to by Sørensen (1994:540) is far-fetched: why then should the historian write about the introduction of the Tibetan script? And would he really mention only the minor works of a famous person without at least hinting at the major ones? Miller, who always has to be read with caution (see above), even claims (1988:264) that when *Saskya Paṇḍita Kundgaḥ Rgyalmchan* (1182-1251) composed his *Yigeḥi shyorba*, he cited several passages from early versions of the *Sumcupa* and *Rtagskyi hjugpa*, indicating, however, neither the name(s) of the author(s) nor the titles of the works. According to Miller, these versions were either anonymous texts or the author(s) must have been a no-name to the *Saskya Paṇḍita*. Miller (1963:489) further argues that it is very unlikely that a mission to India would have taken place before the so-called Council of Lhasa (i.e. the Debate of *Bsamyas* 792-794), which definitely shifted the religious orientation from China to India.

[12] One can accordingly read that the oldest document dates from the year 655, but it does not seem to be preserved.

[13] The text can be found with a French translation in Bacot et al. (1940:13-27, 29-52), a facsimile edition is presented by Spanien and Imaeda (1979, plate 579-591), the Tibetan script with transliteration and translation into Chinese is found in *Dbaṅrgyal* and *Bsodnams Skyid* (1992:12-29, 93-108, 145-154).

the 'counting of the red register of the royal guard' *sku sruŋs gyi khram dmar pho brtsis* 708; the 'counting of the red register of the three brigades' *ru gsum gyi khram dmar pho brtsis* 712; the 'establishment of the red register of Dakpo' *Dags poe khram dmar pho btab* 718 and of the 'great register of the provinces and the plains of the higher and lower Lung' *mŋan daŋ | Sluŋs stod smad gyi thaŋ khram chen po btab* 721; of the 'register of the plains of the eight great provinces counted as four' *mŋan chen po brgyad las | bži̇r bcos paḥi taŋ khram btab* 728; another 'register of the plains' 742; the 'enrolment of the troops of each region in a grey register' *yul yul dmag myi khram skya brtsis* and the 'transformation by royal order of the red register into yellow papers' *btsan po bkas khram dmar pa šog šog ser po la spos-par*, both for the year 744; further a 'letter of alliance' *glo ba ñe ba yi̇g gtsaŋ* 699; and the 'laying down of the inscription' of the exchange'[14] *pha los gyi byaŋ bu bor* 743. There is further frequent mention of 'counting' *rtsis* of people, fields and forests, where we may safely assume that the result was written down.

The second annals in informal handwriting, covering the period from 743 to 763, mention letters sent by the troops of the three brigades in 759 and that some ministers are given turquoise and *kekeru* diplomas in 763 (BM 8212).[15]

Both annals mention: the places where the emperors resided in a particular year; the places where the assemblies were held; births and deaths in the royal family; disloyalties and punishments as well as appointments of ministers; wars; and epidemics among cattle. But there is no mention of religious affairs. The main purpose of royal annals was to provide references for dating official documents, and the local annals such as found in Dunhuang apparently served the purpose of dating private documents and contracts (Takeuchi 1995:25, note 5 with further references).

All this shows that the administration of the Tibetan empire was highly developed and that written documents played an essential role. Such an effective system could not have been introduced overnight, and so it is very likely that the art of writing, at least in a rudimentary form, was already known in Tibet before the advent of the Tibetan empire and at first was used primarily for quite secular purposes.

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[14] Reading *pha logs* 'other side'. In the same year, there is also mention of a *pha los* of wild and domesticated yaks. Cf. Bacot et al. (1940:67 note to line 1).

[15] Bacot et al. (1940:55-61, 62-66), Spanien and Imaeda (1979, plate 592-595), *Dbaŋrgyal* and *Bsodnams Skyid* (1992:29-33, 108-112, 154-156); *kekeru* is a precious white stone.

While the annals, in accordance with their function, refer unemo-
tionally to the bare events and thus constitute a reliable source, the
great chronicle (PT 1287)[16] is a historical narration that obviously
serves a particular political purpose. It is by no means an objective ac-
count of the facts. In a section dedicated to *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*, it men-
tions that:

> In earlier times there were no letters/written documents in Tibet and
> when the time of this emperor came,[17] the important orders/great
> constitution [based on] the (divinatory) sciences/principles of government
> (*gtsuglag*) of Tibet, the ranking of the ministers, the power of the great and
> the small, the enjoyment of good deeds, the punishment of wicked crimes
> (read *ñes*), [the planning of] the cultivation and leaving fallow of fields and
> pastures,[18] the equal distribution of the river water (read *kluŋ* for *sluŋs*,
> *bgod* for *go*),[19] the [measures of] *bre* and *phul*, weights [or money] and so
> on, all the excellent texts (*gžuŋ*) of the Tibetan laws (*chos*)[20] appeared in the

[16] Bacot et al. (1940:97-122, 123-170), Spanien and Imaeda (1979, plate 557-577),
Dbaŋrgyal and *Bsodnams Skyid* (1992:34-66, 112-141, 157-172). I will give the line of the
document as well as the page and line number in Bacot et al. (1940) under the short
form DTH.

[17] Cf. Bacot et al. (1940:161). Macdonald (1971:377) suggests the grammatically
somewhat problematic translation 'the letters which earlier did not exist in Tibet ap-
peared [in] the time of this emperor'.

[18] Bacot et al. (1940:161): cultivation and division. I take the second element as
nominaliser and the first element as belonging to the verbs *ḥdul·ba* 'tame, cultivate' and
ḥdor·ba 'throw away' or 'divide', thus 'what can be cultivated and what could be given
up/divided'. Otherwise, 'skins' and 'yokes' have to be taken as a somewhat bewildering
means of measurement, cf. Stein (1972:50, 53).

[19] Cf. Bacot al. (1940:161 with note 5). Macdonald's (1971:377) translation 'the
equalisation of the rank of [the commissioner of] the postal relay', though semantically
preferable is grammatically not possible; for *sluŋs* as 'measurement of the length of
roads' see *Dbaŋrgyal* and *Bsodnams Skyid* (1992:89, note 381).

[20] Given the preceding enumeration of lay arts, the term *chos* is not used in the sense
of '(Buddhist) religion', but rather in the more neutral sense of 'civil law' or 'custom,
manner', cf. Jäschke (1881) or other dictionaries for the different meanings of *chos*, and
similarly Stein (1985:93-95). The parallelism of the praise of *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* (below)
with this one is obvious. Note there the contrast between *chos* 'law/legislation' and
Saŋsrgyaskyi chos 'the law = religion of the Buddha'.

For the meaning of *chos* and *gtsuglag* see Macdonald (1971) and Stein (1985, particu-
larly pp. 126-129 for possible etymologies of *gtsuglag*). According to Macdonald, both
terms have been used for the basic principle(s) of government of the early emperors. As
far as they have religious connotations (Stein precludes this for *gtsuglag*), these concern a
royal ancestor cult centred on the mountain deity of *Yarlha Šampo*. It is by virtually being
a son of the gods (*lhaḥi sras*) via the lineage of *Gñaḥkhri Brtsanpo*, and thus being a repre-
sentative of the cosmic order, that the emperors have the legitimacy to rule over the
petty kingdoms. But the legitimacy has to be proved by establishing social justice and
welfare inside the empire according to traditional beliefs and customs. These principles
would have prohibited the propagation of Buddhism as state religion. It was thus neces-
sary for the Buddhist emperors, starting with *Khrilde Gtsugbrtsan*, to perpetuate these
principles outwardly while at the same time trying to re-interpret them in terms of Bud-
dhism. However, the over-successful work of re-interpretation of ideas, words, and facts

time of the emperor *Khri Sroŋbrtsan*. As all the people felt gratitude towards him, they called him the Clever One *(Sgampo)*.

Bod·la sŋa·na yi·ge myed·pa yaŋ || btsan·po ḥdi·ḥi tshe byuŋ·nas | Bod·kyi gtsug·lag bkaḥ·grims ched·po·daŋ | blon·po·ḥi rim·pa·daŋ | che·chuŋ gñis·kyi dbaŋ·thaŋ·daŋ | legs·pa zin·pa·ḥi bya dgaḥ·daŋ | ñe yo·ba·ḥi chad·pa·daŋ | Žiŋ·ḥbrog·gi thul·ka·daŋ dor·ka·daŋ | sluŋs·kyi go·bar bsñams·pa·daŋ | bre pul·daŋ | sraŋ·la·stsogs·pa || Bod·kyi chos·kyi gžuŋ bzaŋ·po kun || btsan·po Khri Sroŋ·brtsan·gyi riŋ·las byuŋ·ŋo | myi·yoŋs·kyis bkaḥ·drin dran·žiŋ tshor·bas || Sroŋ·brtsan Sgam·po žes mtshan gsol·to || (PT 1287 line 451-455, DTH:118/16-24).

Nothing is said about the introduction of the script, but we may safely conclude that *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo* started the official use of the script for the codification of laws that had previously been orally transmitted and for other administrative purposes. This could hardly have happened earlier as, for example, the codification of the law, the "great constitution" was accomplished only after his death in 655 (see above). The sudden increase of writing is reflected in the T'ang annals, which mention the Tibetan emperor's request for Chinese workmen to manufacture paper and ink or brushes in 648 (Laufer 1914:34-35).

The introduction of cultural achievements is a recurrent theme in Tibetan historical accounts and some of the more basic agricultural achievements have been ascribed several times to different persons (Stein 1972:53). As in Chinese historiography, the emperor receives his full legitimacy only by being described as a cultural hero or as the model of the just and pious emperor (Ròna-Tas 1985:96). Interestingly, the above eulogy of *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*, as well as a preceding description of the conquest of Zhangzhung, follow immediately after a eulogy of *Khrisroŋ Lde(ḥu)brtsan*, although he ruled a century later (see below). The Chronicle, obviously, does not follow a chronological order.

It turns out that the paper of the document was cut into several pieces, which were glued together again, mostly before the text was written down. But in this particular section, the paper was cut and reassembled after the text had been written (Macdonald 1971:259). The chronological mismatch does not seem to be a mere accident.[21] The

(which makes it so difficult to establish the historical truth) seems to have undermined the legitimacy of the emperors and to have paved the way for a growing opposition and thus the eventual downfall of the empire. Cf. also Haarh (1969), according to whom, however, the legitimation of the early kings was less a matter of social politics but rather a matter of ritual capability and the king's particular relation to the realm of the death.

[21] Macdonald (1971:260f.) suggests that the compiler could have had difficulties dating the conquest of Zhangzhung because, among other reasons, the name of the conqueror is not given. I wonder whether the compiler, who lived, say 50 to 100 years after *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* really would not know and would have no means of finding out

compiler apparently had some reason to insist on the pattern of the 'just emperor' and to identify *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* with *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*. This may have served to strengthen *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan*'s legitimacy.[22] The above-mentioned addition of the element *lde* in *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*'s name may have served a similar purpose.

There is some evidence, that the Tibetan intelligentsia had studied well various Chinese historical accounts, which are themselves literary constructions serving a particular purpose. The description of the evil ruler Zhow in the "*shangshu* paraphrase" (Coblin 1991:312), a fragmentary translation of an early Chinese historical text found in Dunhuang, might have well served as a model for the description of the evil ruler *Ziŋporje Stagskyabo* (PT 1287, line118ff., DTH 102.22ff.), particularly since in both cases, the exaggerated description serves the purpose of legitimating a conquest by the 'just emperor'. The passage of the controversy between *Khyuŋpo Spuŋzad Žutse* and *Seŋgo Myichen* (PT 1287 line 205-214, DTH 106.32-107.8) appears to be an almost literal translation of a Chinese anecdote found in the *Shih chi* (Takeuchi 1985).

We cannot rely blindly on the earliest documents, because they do not necessarily represent the objective truth, but might be written or compiled for a special political purpose. In particular, the passages of eulogy have to be read with a certain amount of scepticism.

The oldest attested and datable documents besides the annals are the stone pillars erected in the reign of *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* (755-794) in *Lhasa-Žol*, *Bsamyas*, and *Hphyoŋrgyas*, and an inscription on a bell in *Bsamyas* (Richardson 1985:4-41). The first one is a purely secular document, granting privileges to a minister. The other inscriptions are in fact concerned with religious matters, but their date is about 100 years later than the supposed introduction of the script.

It is under this same *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* and his father *Khrilde Gtsugbrtsan* that Buddhism was sponsored massively by the Emperors and became

whether this emperor had conquered a particular region or not. But even if so, how could he have overlooked the names of *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo* and his minister *Stoŋrtsan Yulžuŋ* appearing at the end of the passage?

[22] Like his ancestor, *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* is said to have composed a *bkaḥmchid* 'testament', where he ascribes the anchoring of Buddhism, not only its introduction, to *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo* (Sørensen 1994:23, note 63). Sørensen (1994:9-11, 22) also points to the striking parallels in the narrations of *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*'s construction of *Rasa Hphrulsnaŋ* and *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan*'s construction of *Bsamyas*. Apparently, *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* had a vital interest in appearing as the exact copy of *Sroŋbrtsan Sgampo*—even if this implied that the presumed model had to be re-constructed as a copy of himself: *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan*'s father, *Khrilde Gtsugbrtsan* had already been the victim of an anti-Buddhist reaction, and the crown prince had found it difficult to survive (Macdonald 1971:289, 370, note 609, cf. also the south face inscription of the *Lhasa-Žol* pillar, Richardson 1985:6).

the state religion. This fact is reflected in the chronicle. *Khrisroṅ Ldebrtsan* is explicitly described as the one who introduced the religion and at the same time he is pictured as the 'just emperor', whose government was so excellent that even the ministers competed only for wisdom and bravery.[22]

> At the time of the emperor *Khrisroṅ Ldebrtsan* the law/legislation (*chos*)[20] was excellent and the dominion great. ... The great principles/ sciences (*gtsuglag*) that constitute the lords of men and the owners of animals were made applicable as a rule (lit. example) for [all] men. As for the pleasure at good deeds, [the recompense] was given graciously. As for the punishment of crimes, it was made to hit with diligence. ... At that time even the ruling ministers were unanimous [in their] advice. ... They were not jealous. They never made mistakes. It was [only] bravery and wisdom that they were seeking in a competitive (lit. destructive) manner. As for the lower subjects who remained in their place, they were taught wisdom and honesty. ... After the incomparable religion of the Buddha was obtained, temples were built everywhere in the centre and in the periphery, religion was introduced, and as everybody entered [the way] of compassion and developed affection [everybody] was freed from [the circle] of birth and death.

> *btsan·po Khri·sroṅ Lde·brtsan·gyi riṅ·la | | chos bzaṅ srid che·ste | ... ḥgreṅ dud gñis·kyi rje·daṅ bdag mdzad·pa'i gtsug·lag chen·po | myi·ḥi dper ruṅ·bar mdzad·doḥ | | legs·kyi bya dgaḥ ni raṅs·par byin | ñes·kyi chad·pa ni dmyigs·su phog·par mdzad·do | | ... deḥi tshe blon·po srid byed·paḥi·rnams kyaṅ blo mthun gros gchig·ste | | ... phrag myi dog | | ñes myi·byed | | dpaḥ hjaṅs gñis ni rlag·pa bẑin btsal·te | ḥbaṅs hog·ma dal·ẑiṅ yul·na khod·pa ni | | hjaṅs draṅ gñis slob·boḥ | | ... Saṅs·rgyas·kyi chos bla·na myed·pa brñeste mdzad·nas | | dbus·mthaḥ kun·tu gtsug·lag·khaṅ brtsigs·te | chos btsugs·nas | thams·šad kyaṅ sñiṅ·rje·la ẑugs·šiṅ draṅ·bas skye·ši·las bsgral·to | (PT 1287 line 366-376, DTH:114/10-28).*

The 'great orthographic reform' in Tibet.

Under the entry *skad·gsar·bcad* 'The New Language Instruction' the Tibetan-Chinese dictionary *Bod-Rgya tshig·mdzod chenmo* (Zhang et. al. 1993) states:

> Some ancient expressions, inconvenient for writing and reading, were abolished and a more conveniently 'recitable' written language was imposed, for example the *dadrag* was abolished and spellings such as *mye* ('fire') and *ḥgyo* ('go') were simplified to *me* and *ḥgro*.

> *ḥbri·klog mi bde·baḥi brda·rñiṅ ḥgaḥ·ẑig·gi zur dor·te klog·ḥdon bde·baḥi yig·skad gtan·la phab·pa dper·na dadrag dor·ba·daṅ mye daṅ ḥgyo ẑes·pa me daṅ ḥgro ẑes·pa zor·yaṅ·du btaṅ·ba lta·bu |*

The next entry, *skad·gsar·bcad rnam·pa gsum* 'Three instructions on the new language', relates the second of these instructions to *Khrisroŋ Ldebrtsan* and *Khri Ralpacan* (i.e. to the beginning of the 9th century). The introduction of the script is implicitly counted as the first 'reform'. The third one would be the reforms of *Rinchen Bzaŋpo* and others. It seems that after the loss of the third instruction book (see below) the idea of three instructions got a temporal connotation (Simonsson 1957:228). The temporal interpretation, however, acknowledges the Bonpo tradition that writing did exist in Tibet before *Thonmi*, although it is not clear which kind of script was used: there is mention of the 'heaped script' of Persia and the small and big *smar* of Zhangzhung (*Stag·gzig Ḥo[l]·mo·luŋ·riŋ·gi spuŋs·yig, Žaŋ·žuŋ·gi smar chen daŋ smar chuŋ, Phuntshogs Tsheriŋ* 1992:43). *Thonmi*'s 'reform' could then have been the addition of missing letters and the unification of different writing styles in order to make the script more universally applicable (*Phuntshogs Tsheriŋ* 1992:43-44).

Western scholars take the 'great orthographic reform' at the beginning of the 9th century as the demarcation line between the stage of Old Tibetan and the classical book language. However, not everybody in the Tibetan scholarly circles took notice of, for example, the abolition of the *dadrag*, which still appears in texts of much later date (cf. the title of an 18th century manuscript: *Šesrabkyi pharol̲d̲tu phyinpa*, Laufer 1914:60). Quite strikingly, the alleged orthographic norms are not reflected in the official inscriptions, such as the Chinese-Tibetan treaty of 821/22. By and large, the so-called reform was aimed at a standardisation of religious terminology, and the "instruction" was the publication of the three *vyutpatti*-s 'etymological instructions' (*Mahāvyutpatti, Madhyavyutpatti,* and the lost **Kṣudravyutpatti*):[23] the first being a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary, and the second a treatise on the principles of translation (Simonsson 1957:227). The *Mahāvyutpatti* was published in order to settle the competition between two different technical vocabularies supported by the two different schools of translators: those translating from Chinese sources and those translating from Indian sources.[24] Questions of orthography seem to have been of no importance.

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[23] Cf. *Buston* (p. 191): 'what had earlier been translated was subjugated under the instruction of the new language and three kinds of instructions were established' *sŋar bsgyur·pa·rnams skad·gsar·bcad·kyis kyaŋ gtan·la phab·ciŋ │ bkas·bcad rnam·pa gsum mdzad·de │* Similarly *Rgyalrabs* (p. 227): 'All the religious [writings] were revised according to the instruction of the new language. The language instruction was made into three parts.' *chos thams·cad skad·gsar bcad·kyis gtan·la phab │ bkaḥ·bcas (bcad) rnam·pa gsum·du mdzad·do │ │*

[24] e.g. *yaŋ·dag·par gśegs pa* vs. *de·bžin gśegs·pa* for *tathāgata; skye·śi* vs. *ḥkhor·ba* for *saṃsāra,* cf. Stein (1983:162-163)

The principles of translation as laid down in the *Madhyavyutpatti* or *Sgrasbyor bampo gñispa* (Simonsson 1957:247-259) can be summarised as: while not violating the sense of the original, one should render the translation in a way that it becomes good Tibetan. The order of the Sanskrit words should be followed as much as possible, and re-arrangements should not exceed a verse. The meaning of ambiguous words should be established according to the context, but in dubious cases one should keep the Sanskrit word. One passage deserves to be quoted in full, since it clearly states that further innovation was always possible, albeit under the strict control of the administration:

> As it is not allowed that anyone should individually amend and apply a new term (*miŋ*) beyond what had been decided with respect to the linguistic methods by the [royal] order, if there should be a necessity to apply a new term individually [for] a word to be translated or explained, then one should, while keeping the term undetermined, examine in the individual schools all the arguments that may come forth with respect of whatever language (*skad*) from the religious texts and linguistic methods and in which language this had been applied to religion. After that [the result of the examination] has to be reported in the palace to the assembly [of] the followers of the Victorious One and to the school for the revision of the Dharma and after it has been decided it may be added to the register of language.

> *skad·kyi lugs ḥdi·ltar bkas bcad·pa·las so·so·nas suyaŋ ḥchos·śiŋ ḥog·tu miŋ gsar·du ḥdogs·su mi·gnaŋ·gis | bsgyur·ba·daŋ ḥchad·paḥi grwa [=sgra] so·so·nas skad gsar·du miŋ gdags·dgos·pa·źig yod·na·yaŋ | so·soḥi grwa·grwar miŋ chad·par ma·gdags·par chos·kyi gźuŋ·daŋ sgraḥi lugs·las ji skad·du ḥbyuŋ·baḥi gtan·tshigs·daŋ | chos·la ji skad·du gdags·pa dpyad·de | pho·braŋ·du Bcom·ldan·ḥdas·kyi riŋ·lugs ḥdun·sa·daŋ | dharmma źu·chen·ḥtshal·baḥi grwar phul·la | sñan·du źus·te bkas bcad·nas skad·kyi dkar·chag·gi·dkyus·su bsnan·no ||* (Simonsson 1957:259).

The 16th century *Źamatog* states that there were at least two further revisions by *Rinchen Bzaŋpo* (958-1055), and *Bloldan Šesrab* (1059-1109), which even affected the content of the basic grammatical texts:

> Later on, excellent scholars, such as *Rinchen Bzaŋpo, Bloldan Šesrab*, etc. also adhered to [the tradition]. They also revised the meaning of the *Sumcupa* and the *Rtagskyi ḥjugpa*, the original [texts] of the very scholar *Thonmi*.

> | *slad·nas Rin·chen Bzaŋ·po·daŋ* | | *Blo·ldan Šes·rab·la·sogs·pa* |
> | *mkhas·chog·mams kyaŋ de·la brten* | | *kho·na mkhan po Thon·miḥi gźuŋ* |
> | *Sum·cu·pa·daŋ Rtags·ḥjug·gi* | | *don yaŋ legs·par gtan·la phab* |
> (Laufer 1898:547).

Since this text was written down several hundred years after the events that it describes, one may again be sceptical about its historical accuracy. But it shows at the least that in the 16th century language change

was an accepted fact, and that one could even think of revising the basic grammatical texts. Tibetan had been a living language that constantly underwent various influences and changes.

Although the entry in the *Bod-Rgya tshigmdzod chenmo* does not represent the historical facts correctly, it does reflect the changes in orthography that had taken place. Apparently, the official language was, in the beginning, dominated by the eastern dialects, particularly by Amdo Tibetan. The palatalisation of the consonant *ma* before a vowel *i* or *e*, written with a *yabtags* (yasta) and pronounced accordingly as /nyi/ or /nye/, which is so typical of the Old Tibetan Documents, can still be found in the Amdo and Kham dialects, e.g., Nangchenpa /ˀmäïk/ ~ /ˀñäïk/ < *(d)myig*, for *mig* 'eye' (Causemann 1989:349), Rebkong /ˣñï-lam/ *rmyi·lam* for *rmi·lam* 'dream', /ñïl/ < *myid* for *mid* '(to) swallow', /ñe/ < *mye* for *me* 'fire', etc. (Roerich 1958:122-123). In Amdo, the *rabtags* (rasta) is typically realised as /-y-/: /cyï/ < *gyi* for *gri* 'knife', /ˣcyaɣ/ < *skyag* for *skrag* 'fear' (Roerich 1958:118). This substitution was an innovation of the Amdo dialects, but to a certain extent, such forms are even found in Balti and Ladakhi (see below). Traces of this ancient dialect variance appear also in pairs such as *ḥkhyil* 'wind, twist' and *ḥkhril* 'wind, coil round'.

<center>*Balti and Ladakhi as 'archaic' varieties
and the Balti-Amdo connection.*</center>

Baltis and Ladakhis take pride in the fact that their dialects represent the 'original language', as they pronounce most of the prefixed consonants of the written language, which have become 'mute' in most other Tibetan varieties. The pronunciation, however, does not always correspond to the written equivalent and varies from dialect to dialect. For example, *rta* 'horse', *ltacas* 'look', and *star·ka* 'walnut' are equally pronounced as /sta-/ in Leh, but as /rhta/, /lhtaces/, and /starga/ in the western dialects.[25]

A similar feature is found in some Amdo varieties, such as Rebkong or Themchen. E.g. Rebkong /škyaŋ/ or /xcyaŋ/ *rkyaŋ* 'wild ass' or /xtam/ *gtam* 'speech' (Roerich 1958:109, 118, 124). See also Bielmeier (1998). Because of this preservation of phonological features, both dialect groups, the western one (Ladakhi and Balti) and the north-eastern one (Amdo) have been classified as archaic dialects by various Western

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[25] One may add that most Baltis (and Kargilis) still pronounce the *rabtags* without changing the consonant into a retroflex (cf. *Bkraśis Rabrgyas* 1984:43).

scholars (e.g. Bielmeier 1998:584 with further references; cf. also Sprigg 2002:viii).[26]

It might be quite surprising that varieties as far apart as Balti and Amdo share the same features, while all varieties in between lack them. However, such distant sharing may be found in other language families as well. The generally accepted explanation is that the varieties in the periphery, being spatially disconnected, marginal, or imposed through the centre's colonialism, are de-linked from the developments in the centre and preserve the ancient pattern. This argument might account for the archaism of West Tibetan, but I doubt whether it accounts for the archaism of Amdo Tibetan, as the Amdo region and its language apparently were quite central in the early Tibetan empire.

On the other hand, it has been observed that most clusters of written Tibetan vanished already in the beginning of the 9th century in the central Tibetan dialects, as can be inferred from the Chinese transliteration of Tibetan names[27] as well as from orthographic conventions regarding Sanskrit names and loan words (e.g. *bskal·pa* for Sanskrit *kalpaḥ* 'aeon').[28] It might well be that this development was restricted to an idiolect of the nobility at the royal court. But given this development, one wonders why the clusters should be as prominent as they are in the western region, which became part of the Tibetan Empire only in the middle of the 7th century. The process of colonisation was certainly not completed within a single life span and might have lasted until the break down of

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[26] According to Shafer (1950/51:1017ff.; supported by Bielmeier 2004:396-398), West Tibetan would descend from an even more archaic variety than Old Tibetan and the eastern varieties, but this theory poses a lot of questions. The assumption that the verbal prefix *b-* had not yet developed contradicts the general view (also held by Shafer) that the triple phonemic opposition of voiced, unvoiced-aspirated, and unvoiced-nonaspirated consonants (*k, kh, g*, etc.) as typical for all modern varieties was not found in the proto-language but is the result of the influence of the prefixes. Even in Balti and Ladakhi one can see traces of a former prefix in sound changes triggered by that very prefix (cf. Ladakhi /tap-/ 'throw, perform' < **p-tab* < **p-dab*, Old Tibetan *ḥdebs* < **ḥ-deb-d* < **ḥ-dab-d* and *btab* < **p-tab* < **p-dab*). A remnant of the prefix shows up in compounds like /gopskor/ 'deceit' < *mgo·b-skor*, and in bound verb forms. Similarly, the Ladakhi and Balti present tense morpheme /-et/ or /-at/ goes back to a complex form: verb + *pa/ba* + *yod* (as attested in some of the dialects and generally in the negated form /-amet/), and is thus certainly *not* the precursor of the Old Tibetan present tense suffix *-d* in *byed* 'do'. This suffix, together with its effect of changing the root vowel *a* into *e*, is attested in a far greater number of verbs than Shafer assumes, e.g. *len(-d)* < **laŋ-d* 'take', or *ḥdebs* < **ḥ-deb-d* < **ḥ-dab-d* 'throw' (a more detailed refutation of Shafer's hypothesis is in preparation; cf. Zeisler [2004b]).

[27] Cf. Laufer (1914:77-94) for the Chinese-Tibetan treaty of 821/22: all prefixes except *s-* appear as mute—only prefix *b-* is re-linked to a preceding open syllable, thus /khrip zer/ for *khri bzer*, but /lwön tsan žer/ for *blon btsan bzer*, cf. Pelliot (1915:4-8).

[28] This seems likewise to presuppose that *b-* as well as *s-* were no longer pronounced or, at least, that their pronunciation was merely optional.

the Tibetan empire. If, with the establishment of an administration, the fashionable clusterless speech of the central Tibetan nobility had been dominant, it should have left at least some imprints on the developing dialect of the community being colonialised. Apparently, it was Amdo soldiers and officials who played a crucial role in West Tibet, leaving their dialectal imprint on the West Tibetan varieties, such as the prominence of consonant clusters and, particularly, the above-mentioned occasional substitution of a *rabtags* by /-y-/.

Denwood (this volume) offers a complementary perspective: Since the now desert areas of the Changthang, due to a more favourable climate, had been populated by farmers in permanent settlements up to the ninth century or even later, when a change in climate led to a drying up of the region, there was a northern belt of settlements and quite probably a cultural and linguistic continuum through which the dialectal features could be shared.[29]

Even though the model of an innovating centre and a delinked periphery is not to be dismissed in total, we might perhaps better think of different varieties or strata from the very beginning: a northern one where the clusters were prominent and a southern one where the clusters were not (or no longer) prominent. The innovation of the southern variety might have had less to do with its centrality than with a possible contact or even mixing with other linguistic communities (Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, and/or Indo-Arian), while the lack of innovation in the north-eastern variety could have resulted from its location closer to the original ethnic centre of the Tibetan linguistic communities.

Further study of the Old Tibetan material might perhaps corroborate this hypothesis. It seems that the earliest documents from Dunhuang also show some dialectal features, namely some variance in orthography, which distinguish them from the central Tibetan inscriptions. Orthographic variance can also be found in texts of the classical period, especially those of the *gterma* tradition. Some of these variants represent variations in pronunciation that can be found in the modern Tibetan varieties as well, especially assimilation features such as loss of aspiration in second syllable, loss of prefix, etc. Obviously, the early writers followed the phonetic principle of the Indian tradition, which means that they noted all subtle assimilation features, irrespective of whether a different pronunciation conveyed a different meaning or not. With the

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[29] Note that the inhabitants of that area were most probably not speaking much Tibetan before the advent of the Tibetan empire. With the growing power of the empire, however, Old Tibetan might have been adopted as a trade language.

continuing standardisation of the written language, the phonetic princi-
ple was given up in favour of the phonemic principle, which notes dif-
ferences in pronunciation only in so far as they reflect a difference of
meaning (in the case of grammatical particles, however, some assimila-
tion features were kept). One can see that even the rules of syntax of
Classical Tibetan have become more rigid so that certain features
common to both Old Tibetan and the modern varieties, e.g. pragmati-
cally conditioned split ergativity[30], are comparatively rare in classical
texts. A systematic survey of orthographic variance (typically taken as
misspelling) has yet to be made, but some examples that are relevant for
the present discussion may be given:[31]

> Assimilation of final *-s* and initial *c-* → /-š-/: *thams·šad* for *thams·cad/ chad*
> 'all' (DTH, RAMA), cf. Ladakhi /semšän/ *sem·šan* for *sems·can* 'living
> being'.

> Loss of aspiration in second syllable: *pyaŋ·cub* for *byaŋ·chub* 'enlightenment'
> (ETI); *dkon·mcog* for *dkon·mchog* 'jewel' (DTH), cf. also above and below.

> Loss of prefix in second syllable: *nam·ka* for *nam·mkhaḥ* (RAMA) 'sky'.

> Replacement of *daḥog* by *ramgo*: *rŋos·grub* for *dŋos·grub* 'siddhi, magical
> power' (RAMA); *rgu* for *dgu* 'nine' (GZER), cf. Ladakhi /rgu/ and the
> entries in JÄK; *rgod* (GZER) for *dgod* 'laugh', cf. Ladakhi /rgotcas/ and
> the entries in JÄK.

> Genitive particle: *chen·poe* for *chen·poḥi* 'of the great' (ETI); *rgyal·poe* for
> *rgyal·poḥi* 'of the king' (DTH-annals), cf. the Ladakhi pronunciation.

> Replacement of *rabtags* by *yabtags* after *ka, kha,* and *ga*: *Ša·khyi* and *Ña·khyi*
> for *Ša·khri* and *Ña·khri* (names, DTH); *ral·gyi* for *ral·gri* 'sword' (DTH), cf.
> Sham /ragi/ or /rai/; cf. also *ḥkhril* besides *ḥkhyil* (JÄK).

As already mentioned, this last variation, an innovation of the Amdo
dialects, has found its way into the vocabulary of Balti and Ladakhi.
However, it has not become a regular feature and more typically the
rabtags is preserved. The few words with a former *yabtags*, such as Balti
/go/ < *ḥgyo* for *ḥgro* 'go' and /khite/ < **ḥkhyid· de* for *ḥkhrid· de* 'leading,
taking along', as well as Ladakhi and Balti /ragi/ or /rai/ < *ra(l)-gyi* for
ra(l)·gri 'sword',[32] therefore, appear to be loanwords, and as far as these

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[30] i.e., the use of the instrumental marker with intransitive subjects for contrastive
purposes or, the other way round, the use of the absolutive for transitive subjects in or-
der to de-emphasise them.

[31] Abbreviations: DTH: Bacot et al. (1940). ETI: Richardson (1985); GZER:
Francke (1924-30). JÄK: Jäschke 1881. RAMA: de Jong (1989).

[32] Loss of ancient *yabtags* is also attested in the case of Balti, Purik, and Sham /ba-/
'do' < *bya/byed*.

three are concerned, they may well be related to the military sphere. But cf. also Nubra /thrikcas/ *ḥkhrig cas* = /khikcas/ *ḥkhyig-cas* 'be full (of smoke)' for CT *ḥkhrig* 'be cloudy, flood around'. Other word forms, which are particular only to West Tibetan and Amdo are: Balti /xmit/, Purik /ṣmit/, Sham /šmit/ ~ /rhmit/, LLV *rmid*, Amdo (Ndzorge) /hnʏd/ for CT *mid* '(to) swallow'; Purik /brombo/, Sham /brombo/, Leh /rombo/ or /rompo/, Amdo /rompo/ or /rwompo/ for CT *sbom po* 'thick' (Bielmeier 1998).

Apart from the phonological level and a small percentage of lexical items, Balti and Ladakhi have been highly innovative, particularly on the syntactical level and with respect to the complex verb constructions.[33] The most obvious innovations not shared by any other Tibetan variety are the use of the past tense markers *pa* and *pin* (< *pa yin*) as a means by which imperfect tense forms are derived from present tense forms and the regular marking of an experiencer-subject of non-volitional or non-controllable transitive verbs with the dative-locative instead of the instrumental marker.[34] Both features may be due to intensive contact with the New Indo-Aryan and Dardic languages. The 'infinitive' or gerundive morpheme *ces* (or *byes*) is another innovation, not shared by most modern varieties. Verbal nouns with the particle *mkhan*, originally 'knowing', commonly refer to the subject or agent (doer), but in Balti and Ladakhi they may equally refer to the object or patient. Based on this change in orientation, Ladakhi has even developed a patient oriented perfect construction, which comes very close to a passive construction.[35]

It seems, however, that Balti is somewhat less innovative than the Purik varieties, and that these in turn are somewhat less innovative than the remaining Ladakhi varieties. Balti and the Purik varieties do not have the patient-oriented perfect construction, and the particle *ces* has fewer functions in Balti (only gerundive/purposive) than in Purik and Ladakhi. Balti also differs from the latter two varieties (and most modern varieties) in that it did not develop the basic evidential distinction between knowledge based on immediate visual perception and other knowledge. On the other hand, only Balti and Purik employ the impera-

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[33] I would thus prefer to call them 'phonetically archaic' varieties.

[34] Thus, /khoa ridaks ñän/ 'he was able to hunt down a deer' instead of /*khoei (*khos) ridaks ñän/. In Old and Classical Tibetan as well as in the modern Tibetan varieties, this construction is restricted to a quite limited number of verbs.

[35] e.g. /i stabo bespas (bespe) tsoŋskhan-in/ 'This horse has been sold by the traveller', but not */bespas (bespe) stek tsoŋskhan-in/ *'The traveller has sold a horse'.

tive verb form for prohibitions, while Ladakhi like all other Tibetan varieties employ the present verb form instead.

With respect to the complex verb forms, Balti and the southern varieties of Purik differ in some points from Ladakhi and the Ciktan variety of Purik. At the tenth International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) seminar in Oxford in 2001, Denwood suggested that the differing Balti forms would correspond to Amdo forms, indicating a continued linguistic contact, possibly through migrations. However, beyond clan and place names (see Denwood, this volume), such migrations, if they ever occurred on a larger scale, did not leave any linguistic traces, and the linguistic connection between Balti and Amdo must have come to an end with the fall of the empire.

The Balti and Purik (Kargil) future tense construction: present verb form plus *pa/ba/ma* plus *ḥdug ḥdug* as well as the future perfect of Kharmang: present verb form plus *se/Xe* plus *ḥdug ḥdug* do not have any counterpart, the future tense construction: present verb form plus *ḥdug* is not attested as a future tense form elsewhere, but corresponds to one of the present tense constructions found in most varieties, and the perfect construction of past verb form plus *yod* is shared with Lhasa Tibetan, Kham, and Amdo. Otherwise, all Balti forms are found in Ladakhi, sometimes with minimal differences in function, while not all Ladakhi forms are found in Balti (see appendix).

Amdo and Kham Tibetan dialects, for their part, show considerable variation, and one might well find a correspondence here and there, because the inventory of the complex verb forms is restricted and the semantic convergence of some auxiliaries is motivated by their basic or full verb meaning. But such correspondences would seem to be rather accidental or arbitrary, particularly when they concern only individual forms out of a whole set. Note that formally identical constructions might have quite different meanings in different varieties.

We may conclude that the Balti perfect construction is a shared heritage of an early stage of Tibetan.[36] The Leh variety has replaced this construction completely by a construction based on the particle {*ste*}, while the Ciktan variety shows the use of both constructions with little difference in meaning. In Sham, the first construction is still in use, but rather infrequently (for more details see Zeisler 2004a).

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[36] Or a shared development from Classical Tibetan on, since this form precisely has not been attested for Old Tibetan so far. For Classical or "Middle" Tibetan texts such as the *Milaraspa rnamthar* or the *Rgyalrabs* cf. Zadoks [2004].

Given these synchronic features and the historical facts sketched above, the following relationship emerges. Balti and Ladakhi phalskat, instead of being a derivation from choskat, have their origin in an earlier stage of the Tibetan language, possibly *Archaic[37] Northeast Tibetan variety from which *Old Amdo Tibetan as well Old Tibetan developed. Balti and Ladakhi might be either linked to this archaic variety directly or via *Old Amdo Tibetan. Choskat or the classical book language turns out to be a younger cousin rather than a parent of *Old West Tibetan. Thus its orthography cannot be compulsory for the Balti and Ladakhi phalskat. The relationship can be presented roughly as follows:

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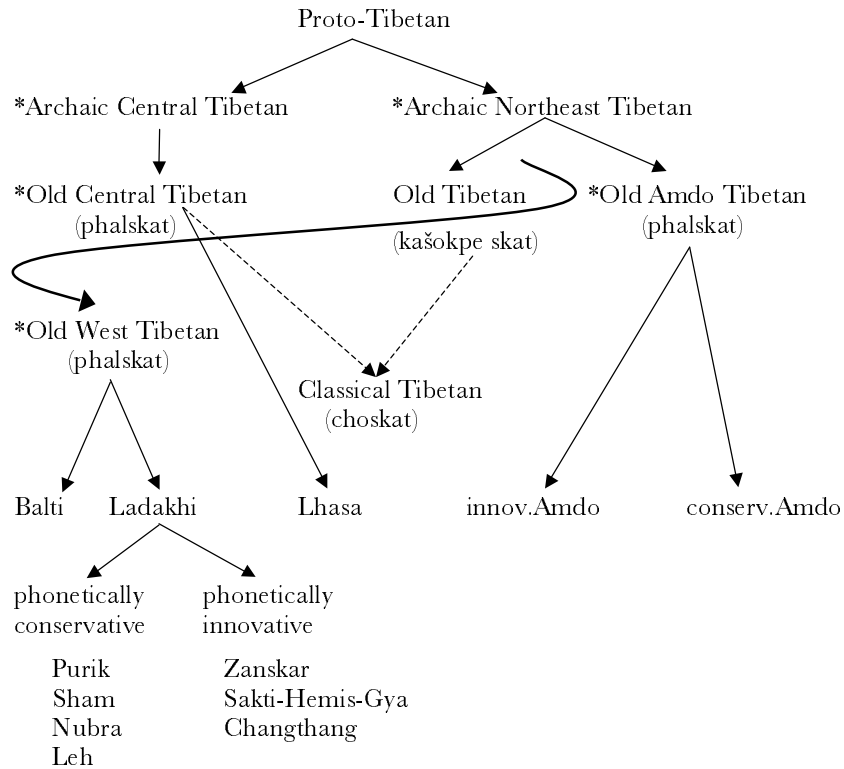
[37] "Archaic" in a temporal sense: the period of a language from which we have no documents, but some traits of which might be traced back from the oldest documents.

APPENDIX

Complex verb forms in Balti (Ba), Purik (P), Sham (S), Leh (Le), Lhasa (Lh), Nangchenpa (Na), Rebkong (Re), and Themchen (Th)[38]

	Ba	P/S	Le	Lh	Na	Re	Th
future							
-ø (basic verb form)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
-ø + *gi* + *yin/red*				+		+	+
-ø + *rgyu* + *yin /red*					+	+	
-ø + *ni* + *yin/red*						+	
-ø + *yin*			+				
-ø + *{pa}* + *yin* (Ba */yod*)	+	+					
-ø + *?li* (+ *red*)					+		
-ø + *ca(s)/ce(s)* + *yin*		+	+				
-ø + *ḥdug*	+						
-ø + *{pa}* + *ḥdug* + *ḥdug*	+						
-ø + *{Xog}* (~*yin·nog*)		+	+				
-ø + *ces* + *yin* + *nog*			+				
Past (verb form) + *yoŋ*				+			
present (non-past)							
-ø + *yod/ḥdug* (Na */red*; Ba only *yod*)[39]	+	+	+	+	+	+	
-ø + *yin/red*					+		
-ø + *gi* + *yod·pa red*				+			
-ø + *ha* [?=*la*] /*gi*							+
-ø + *?le* + *yin/red*					+		
-ø + *gi* + *yod* + *?le* + *red*					+		
-ø + *gi* + *yod* + *?gzig*					+		
-ø + *ces rag/ḥdug* (P *ca(s)*)		+	+				
-ø + *gi* + *yod* (+ *gi*)							+
-ø + *gi* + *yod·?na* + *yin/red*							
-ø + *{pa}* + *rag* (Na *gdaḥ*)			+		+		
-ø + *{pa}* + *yod*		+					
-ø + *Xin* + *yod/ḥdug* (Ba only *yod*)	+	+	+				
-ø + *ḥgro·grabs* + *red*					+		
-ø + *yod* + *pa*	+						
-ø + *yod/ḥdug* + *pin*		+	+				
-ø + *{pa}* + *mi·ḥdug*		+					
-ø + *{pa}* + *yod* + *pin*		+					
-ø + *Xin* + *yod* + *pa*	+						
-ø + *Xin* + *yod/ḥdug* + *pin*		+	+				

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[38] The forms are grouped together according to their function, for more details see Zeisler (2004a).

[39] Originally + *{pa}* + *yod/ḥdug* in West Tibetan, see note 26.

	Ba	P/S	Le	Lh	Na	Re	Th
past							
Past (verb form)	+	+	+			+	+
Past + *pin* (BA *pa* (+ *i*) + *yin*)	+	+	+				
Past + *{pa}* + *yin/red*				+		+	
Past + *ʔle* + *yin/red*					+		
Past + *ḥa* [?=*la*]							+
Past + *gzig*					+		
Past + *soŋ*						+	
Past + *gzig*						+	+
Past + *byuŋ/soŋ*				+			
Past + *thal*					+	+	+
Past + *soŋ*							+
perfect							
Past + *yod/ḥdug* (Ba only *yod*, Na /*red*, Re, The *yod* + *gi*)	+	+		+	+	+	+
Past + *yod* + *pa*	+						
Past + *yod* + *pin*		+					
{ste} + *yin/yod/ḥdug/rag* (Ba only *yod*)	+	+	+				
Past + *ʔna yin/ʔnas red*						+	
{ste} + *yod* + *pa*	+						
{ste} + *yin/yod/ḥdug/rag* + *pin*		+	+				
{ste} + *yod* + *pa* (+ Gen) + *yin*	+						
-ø + *mkhan* + *yin*		+	+				
-ø + *mkhan* + *yin* + *pin*		+	+				
Past + *yogred (yod·pa red)*				+			
Past + *(b)žag*				+			
Past + *{pa}* + *ḥdug*						+	
Past + *yod* + *gzig*							
Past (+ *gi*) + *gdaḥ*				+			
{ste} + *ḥdug·ḥdug*	+						

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