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# **Chapter 2**

# An Archaeology of the Dba' bzhed Manuscript

The only absolutely certain thing is the future, since the past is always changing.1

The *Testimony of Ba*—as the work presented here is generally known-has slightly different names according to the version: Dba' bzhed, Rba bzhed, Sba bzhed, and Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma are among the best known. The differences hint at the text's distance from the historical events it describes, a point supported throughout the narrative, as we shall see in the course of this chapter. In this study we use the spelling *Dba' bzhed* because this appears in the manuscript that stands at the heart of the present book. The name comes from the Dba' clan, one of the elite families of the dynastic period. (The name is sometimes spelt Dba's in the oldest sources, as discussed in Chapter 4). The purpose of the Dba' bzhed is to chronicle the arrival and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, but it also aims—as the title indicates and the text soon reveals—to show how members of the Dba' family played a vital role in the process. In particular, the story centres on the actions of an individual called Dba' Gsas snang who took the name Ye shes dbang po when he entered the Buddhist order. He became the preceptor of King Khri Srong Ide brtsan (742-circa 800 CE) and with him was involved with the establishment of Bsam vas, the main monastery and temple in central Tibet.<sup>2</sup> This temple and the events that happened there form the core of the *Dba*' bzhed narrative.

Over the last fifty years, a number of versions of the Testimony have been discovered and published, as discussed in Chapter 1. Further versions appear to have been in circulation from an early date, and it seems likely that some of these will be found as research goes forward. For the moment and for the present book, the sources listed and described in Chapter 1 give the materials that are available. We do not seek to privilege any copy of the text at this stage. Yet, the fragment from Dunhuang, discussed below and in Chapter 3 of this volume, is the oldest surviving indication of the story and the version presented in this book is the oldest complete copy of the narrative proper currently extant. The core of this text dates between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, with the actual manuscript belonging to the fourteenth or early fifteenth centurv.3

A key problem for Tibetan historical writing is the relationship of the *Dba' bzhed* to the other versions of the narrative. All the versions are connected, but they differ in ways that point to a process of redaction and supplementation over time. How we should deal with these processes pose historical problems. In this chapter, we seek to provide some answers to these problems by examining the *Dba' bzhed* as a text and as a manuscript. Our contention is that a study of the codicology helps show how histories were assembled and how readers responded to them over time.

The *Dba' bzhed*, like most texts, was not static: it has been supplemented, commented on, corrected and amplified. It has been read and re-read through different eyes, with some of these readings showing as notations on the pages. This complex layering explains the word 'archaeology' in our chapter title. Like an ancient habitation site, the *Dba' bzhed* has many phases and layers. And like an ancient site, it has no simple or essential core. It simply continues as a place in the landscape where people have

<sup>1</sup> A Yugoslav aphorism, cited in Katherine Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 215, for which reference we are grateful to Csaba Dezső.

<sup>2</sup> The role of the kalyāṇamitra (dge ba'i bshes gnyen) is explored in Lewis Doney, "Narrative Transformations: The Spiritual Friends of Khri Srong lde brtsan," in Interaction in the Himalayas and Central Asia: Processes of Transfer, Translation and Transformation in Art, Archaeology, Religion and Polity, ed. Eva Allinger, Frantz Grenet, Christian Jahoda, Maria-Katharina Lang and Anne Vergati (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 311-20. The king's dates are revisited in Brandon Dotson, "Emperor' Mu-rug-btsan and the 'Phang thang ma Catalogue," Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies 3 (2007): 1-25.

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Willis, "From World Religion to World Dominion: Trading, Translation and Institution-building in Tibet," in Religions and Trade Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West, ed. Peter Wick and Volker Rabens (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 231-59, but note further discussion of the date below. The study of palaeography and dating are at an early stage; see Sam van Schaik, "Towards a Tibetan Palaeography: Developing a Typology of Writing Styles," in Early Tibet Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field, ed. Jörg Quenzer, Dmitry Bondarev and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 299-337. The general lack of research on book culture in Tibet outlined with characteristic laments in Leonard van der Kuijp, "Some Remarks on the Textual Transmission and Text of Bu ston Rin chen grub's Chos 'byung, a Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet," Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines 25 (2013): 120-21.

lived and continue to live. And just as a place means different things to the different people who have lived there or passed by, so too the text has different meanings for those who have come across it and paused to dwell on it. We are, in the end, not excluded from the long chain of readers: ours is the most recent deposit in a thousand years of reading and textual stratigraphy. To help demonstrate these points, we will look at the *Dba' bzhed* on two levels: firstly, the general organisation of its parts and, secondly, the internal organisation of each part, including the notations made on the folios by readers over time. The discussion here is guided by Table 2.1.

As a preliminary, we should note that we have tried to avoid repeating the observations made by Wangdu and Diemberger, who first published the manuscript in 2000.4 They identified many of the individuals mentioned in the text, discussed problematic readings and compared the Dba' bzhed with later versions. While some overlaps are inevitable, our aim has been to supplement this earlier work and, in a few places, offer a different understanding of how the text should be assessed.

# **General Organisation: Two Texts**

A key point with regard to the organisation of the manuscript of the *Dba' bzhed* is that it combines two different but related texts. This is not a new observation, certainly, but it is worth restating and reformulating in the present context. The second text begins on folio 26r and starts in a formal way: "During the first month of spring in the Horse Year, his majesty Khri Srong lde btsan died" (Figure 2.3).5 There follows an account of the confrontation between Buddhist and Bon factions over the nature of the king's last rites. Table 2.1 in this chapter outlines the events against the corresponding folios of the manuscript.

At the heart of this text is a debate between Vairocana, a Buddhist sage summoned to the Tibetan court, and Mchims Btsan bzher legs gzigs, a leading member of the Bon. After the Buddhists win the debate, the text gives a brief account of the rites performed and then, at the very end, says that: "The account of the food offering ritual is finished."6 So this section is both thematically different from what has come before and it has its own name: the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus.

The text of the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus is close in palaeographic style to the earlier folios and it was probably copied out at about the same time. However, the letters are spaced differently and some letters are written in a consistently different way. The differences appear clearly in folio 25v, where the two texts are joined (see Figure 2.2). The number of lines sometimes increases in the second text, notably in folio 26r (see Figure 2.3). Generally speaking, the writing looks more hurried. We can conclude, therefore, that this portion of the manuscript was added by a different scribe, albeit not long after the first part was written out.

#### Points of Transition Between the Two Texts

The key transition point comes in folio 25v. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, we have the text closed in the following way in line 3: "So ends the *Dba' bzhed*—the account from the Dba' perspective—the text of the noble narrative of how the dharma of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet."8 This is a definitive end, certainly. However, we can see from the folio itself that the text continues with an account of events after the death of Ye shes dbang po. From the perspective of codicology, we note that the writing style from this point onward is different (see Figure 2.2, line 4). In terms of narrative content, this change means that everything from the account of Ye shes dbang po's daughter's actions to the end of the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was written by one scribe. This scribe was different from the person who wrote the earlier part of the manuscript.

This change in writing style has a number of implications. The main conclusion we can make from the manuscript is that the scribe who wrote the text from folio 25v:4 onwards was compiling information from his sources as he wrote. The subjects of the sentences change abruptly

<sup>4</sup> Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet, with Preface by Per K. Sørensen (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The original manuscript, with folio and line numbers marked, is available here: Dba' bzhed. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo. 3359902. See also text and translation, folio 26r, end of line 2.

<sup>6</sup> See text and translation, folio 31v. Brandon Dotson renders this as the "Account of the Food-Provisioning [for the Dead]," and discusses the text in "The Dead and Their Stories: Preliminary Remarks on the Place of Narrative in Tibetan Religion," in Tibet after Empire: Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000, ed. Cristoph Cüppers, Rob Mayer and Michael Walter (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2013), 51-83, a corrected version is published in Zentralasiatische Studien 45 (2016): 77-112.

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the best diagnostic letter is ya, as can be seen in Figure 2.2. 8 Readers are also referred to the chart in this chapter and our Tibetan text and translation.

 Table 2.1: Outline of the events recorded in the text against the corresponding folios of the Dba' bzhed manuscript

		DBA' BZHED			
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes			
Title page	1r	Title of the work with later library notation.			
Summary	1v	Synopsis of the entire work and role played by the following kings: 1. Lha tho do re snyan btsan, 2. Khi Srong btsan (sgam po), 3. Khri Srong lde btsan and 4. Khri Gtsug lde btsan.			
Prelude	1v	Prelude recounting activities of earlier <i>dharma</i> kings <b>Lha tho do re snyan btsan</b> and <b>Khri Srong btsan</b> who built the <b>Ra sa</b> <i>vihāra</i> ; <b>'Thon mi Gsam bo ra</b> is sent to India; he returns with Kaṃśadatta and the <i>Ratnameghasūtra</i> and			
	2r	Daśakuśalāni (Ten Virtues); the texts are sealed and deposited in the royal treasury; the writing system is taught to four trusted attendants.			
Decree of Khri Srong btsan	2r 2v	Khri Srong btsan goes into retreat for four years to write a decree based on the <i>Ten Virtues</i> . He announces the degree publicly and orders his subjects to follow it or face the consequences; they give him the epithet 'sgam po' as a consequence. The writing system promulgated.			
Mission to the Chinese court	2v 3r	A mission to China is sent under 'Gar Stong btsan yul zungs; dispatch box episode; princess Mum shang Ong co brought to Tibet as a bride; she brings a gold image of the Buddha which is placed in the Ra mo che where she resides; the king resides in Lhan kar ta mo ra.			
The <i>Great Prophecy</i> and the two monks from Khotan	3r 3v 4r	Two monks come from Khotan to see <b>Khri Srong btsan</b> who is reputed to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara; the story is recorded as a prophecy taken exactly from the <i>Lung bstan chen po</i> .			
Intermediate dharma kings	4r	King 'Dus sro po rje rlung nam builds the Glang ri tse; his son Khri Lde gtsug brtan takes Gyim shang Ong co as his queen and builds five temples; the queen annually worships the Buddha at Ra mo che; great festivals and the <i>tshe</i> rituals are celebrated; the couple duly pass away.			
The anti-Buddhist reaction of Zhang Ma zhang	4r 4v	<b>Sna nam Ma zhang khrom pa skyes</b> (otherwise known as <b>Zhang Ma zhang</b> ) leads a revolt against the <i>dharma</i> ; the Buddha image in <b>Ra mo che</b> is removed with plans to send it back to China; monks are se back. Temples otherwise are desecrated or destroyed, some nobles are executed and the <i>tshe</i> rituals suspended. <b>Zhang Ma zhang</b> , however, does not survive: he is buried alive as the king's scapegoat af a female diviner is bribed to make a false prognostication.			
Dba' Gsas snang in Tibet	5r	Doubts about the <b>Ra mo che</b> image continue and it is sent toward Nepal. A plague arises and <i>tshe</i> riture for the dead continue to be forbidden. The children of <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> —who appears now for the first time—fall victim to the epidemic. Bon rituals are performed for appearances, but <i>tshe</i> is performed in secret. An old <b>Hwa shang</b> is summoned to foretell the post-mortem destiny of the two children.			
Dba' Gsas snang in India and Nepal and meeting with Bodhisatva (Śān- tarakṣita)	5v	<b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> is secretly initiated and practices meditation in secret; king <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> appoints him as an officer in <b>Mang yul</b> and <b>Gsas snang</b> proceeds from there to India (Mahābodhi and Nālandā) and Nepal where he worships and studies in contravention of the ban instigated by <b>Ma zhang</b> . He invites Bodhisatva (known to other sources as Śāntarakṣita) back to <b>Mang yul</b> .			
	6r	Bodhisatva predicts the building of <b>Bsam yas</b> and states he is willing to serve as <i>kalyāṇamitra</i> to the king of Tibet. He bestows the name <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> on <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> and grants him leave to return to Tibet and meet the king. Bodhisatva returns to Nepal; <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> travels to Tibet.			
Debates at court and the arrival of Bodhisatva	6v	King <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> orders <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> out of harm's way and prompts <b>Zhang Nya bzang</b> to instigate a ministerial debate in council about the merits of Buddhism.			
	7r	King Khri Srong lde btsan enters the discussion in support of Zhang Nya bzang, ordering the return of the Ra mo che image and the summoning of Dba' Gsas snang to court; the latter commends Bodhisatva. The king orders Dba' Gsas snang to Nepal to invite Bodhisatva. The lord of Nepal giving his assent, Bodhisatva proceeds to Mang yul. The Tibetan king then orders Gsas snang and Lang 'Gro snang ra to escort the preceptor Bodhisatva from Mang yul to the Ra sa vihāra where Lang 'Gro snang ra serves as his attendant.			

		DBA' BZHED			
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes			
Bodhisatva is investigated	7v	King <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> stays in <b>Brag dmar</b> , ordering the preceptor to remain in the <b>Ra sa</b> <i>vihāra</i> ; he sends three ministers (i. e. <b>Zhang blon chen po Sbrang Rgyal sbra legs gzigs, Seng 'go Lha lung gzigs</b> and ' <b>Ba' Sang shi</b> ) to investigate the preceptor and determine if he is up to mischief and black magic. The <i>brāhmaṇa</i> Janitabhadra from Kashmir is found as a competent translator. The enquiry continues for two months.			
Bodhisatva is given audience amid calamitous events	8r	The ministers are convinced that the preceptor's intentions are good and he is given audience in <b>Brag dmar</b> . With the help of translators, the preceptor reminds the king of their shared experiences in earlier lifetimes; the king studies the Indian <i>dharma</i> for six months. However, floods, epidemics and famine raise doubts.			
King reconsiders and Śāntarākṣita returns to Nepal.	8v	King Khri Srong lde btsan visits the preceptor and advises that he should withdraw in the long-term interest of establishing Buddhism in Tibet; both the preceptor and the Buddha image from Ra mo che ar escorted by Seng 'gro Lha lung gzigs and Gsas snang to a place called Blang sna'i gru tshugs. Thereafter Lang 'Gro snang ra and Gsas snang escort the preceptor to Nepal.			
Dba' Gsas snang is sent to China	8v	The king orders <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> to China in search of the <i>dharma</i> with a team of thirty including <b>Sbrang Gtsang bzher</b> and <b>'Ba' Sang shi</b> . Meanwhile the king discourses in favour of the <i>dharma</i> at court.			
Predictions in China and the arrival of the Tibetan Delegation in Eg chu.	9r	As the Tibetan delegation heads to China, the Chinese preceptor <b>Gyim Hwa shang</b> in <b>Eg chu</b> predicts their arrival, saying that two of the party are Bodhisatva emanations. He further predicts that a court astrologer will announce their arrival to the prince in <b>Bum sangs</b> and present a drawing of the two Tibetans in question. The prince informs the emperor of China, who orders a welcome if the Tibetans match the drawing and the descriptions. The Tibetans arrive and <b>'Ba' Sang shi</b> and <b>Dba' Gsas snang</b> are duly recognised as Bodhisatva emanations according to the drawing and the descriptions. An elaborate we come ensues and the party are presented to the prince of <b>Eg chu</b> and <b>Gyim Hwa shang</b> .			
Prophesies and instruc- tions of Gyim Hwa shang	9r	Gyim Hwa shang states that Sang shi is the Bodhisatva called 'Wild Horse' and prophesies that he will establish the <i>dharma</i> in Tibet. Sang shi replies that he was minded to request Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> volumes from the emperor for distribution in Tibet, but that he has decided the time is not yet right; he then asks Gyim Hwa shang if he will live to see the day. Gyim Hwa shang announces that the king of Tibet is a <i>bodhisatva</i> and predicts Sang shi will support the king in debates to come. In addition, he predicts that Sna nam Nya bzang, Mchims Mes slebs and Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs will rise to prominence in the debates.			
	10r	<b>Gyim Hwa shang</b> instructs <b>Sang shi</b> to give special attention to teaching the <i>dharma</i> to the three just mentioned and predicts they will help him and the king in debates against the non-Buddhists. He further instructs that the king should be given instructions according to the <i>Karmavidbhaṅga</i> , the <i>Śālistamba</i> and the <i>Vajracchedika</i> . He finally instructs that Bodhisatva should be invited back to Tibet at the right moment to serve as <i>kalyāṇamitra</i> to the king.			
Audience with Keng shi court	10r	The delegation travels to see the emperor at <b>Keng shi</b> and is hailed along the way; the Chinese emperor gives them a great welcome and confirms that <b>Sang shi</b> and <b>Gsas snang</b> are <i>bodhisatva</i> -s.			
	10v	<b>Gsas snang</b> thanks the emperor for his kind words and asks to meet a <b>Hwa shang</b> who might instruct them in meditation. <b>Gyim Hwa shang</b> is summoned from <b>Eg chu</b> for this purpose.			
Delegation returns to Tibet		Sang shi and Gsas snang are presented with imperial gifts; an envoy is sent ahead to announce the return of the delegation; meanwhile king Khri Srong lde btsan speaks with his ministers to reach an agreement in principle about the practice of the <i>dharma</i> . Gsas snang presents himself at court on return and it is agreed that he should proceed to Mang yul to invite Bodhisatva back to Tibet.			
Padmasambhava enters Tibet	11r	Bodhisatva invites Padmasambhava to Tibet; concurrently <b>Gsas snang</b> invites a preceptor of geomantic signs for laying the foundation of <b>Bsam yas</b> . Padmasambhava enters Tibet and subdues troublesome <i>nāga</i> -s and causes hot springs to cool. The angry spirits at <b>Snying drung</b> are subdued in a ritual contest during which Padmasambhava causes clouds, thunder, lightning and hail.			

		DBA' BZHED			
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes			
Bodhisatva petitions Khri Srong lde btsan	11v	After a month Padmasambhava pays his respects to his majesty at the palace; Bodhisatva then makes a detailed case before king <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> in favour of Padmasambhava, describing how he will be able to subdue the malevolent deities who obstructed the <i>dharma</i> in Tibet even in the Buddha's time; he will bring them into submission with divination texts and his command of the mirror divination of the four great kings.			
	12r	Bodhisatva draws on historical precedent in China, noting how non-Buddhists there were defeated by logical disputation and supernormal displays. He advocates the same in Tibet now. The king agrees that Bodhisatva and Padmasambhava should fill these roles.			
Ritual preparations for Bsam yas	12r	Bodhisatva and Padmasambhava urge the building of <b>Bsam yas</b> under the supervision of the divination expert from Nepal. The king agrees and Padmasambhava then performs the mirror divination of the four great kings.			
Padmasambhava and malevolent deities	12v	Padmasambhava changes the malevolent deities into human form and castigates them; Bodhisatva counsels them in the <i>dharma</i> through a translator. Padmasambhava advocates performing the ritual tw more times.			
Ablutions of Khri Srong lde btsan		Padmasambhava advises that the water for the ablution of the king's head should be brought from a spring called Aśvakarṇa. Using his magical powers he sends a vase there through the air; he summons the immediate return of the vase with <i>mantra</i> -s.			
Padmasambhava and the landscape	13r	The ministers reject the use of the water from Aśvakarṇa. Padmasambhava speaks at length about transforming the landscape with hydrology projects, creating springs, meadows and fertile fields so the people will be busy with productive fieldwork. To prove his point, he transforms several barren areas through <code>japa</code> and <code>dhyāna</code> .			
Khri Srong lde btsan reacts		Ministers are alarmed by these developments and raise suspicions in the king's mind; the king suspends the two further rituals commended by Padmasambhava (in folio 12v), and requests Padmasambhava to return to India.			
Padmasambhava casti- gates the king and departs	13v	Padmasambhava criticises <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> for his narrow-minded attitude, sneers at the petty p tics in the Tibetan court and makes derisory remarks about the gift of gold that the king offers to plac him. He departs for India.			
Assassination is planned		The inner assembly plots the assassination of Padmasambhava on his return route, but Padmasambhava is aware of their intentions.			
Padmasambhava sub- verts his assassination and sends a warning	14r	The archers sent to kill Padmasambhava wait in a gorge, but he renders them motionless using a <i>mudrā</i> . Approaching <b>Mang yul</b> , he announces to his escorts that if the ritual to bind the malevolent deities had been performed three times (folio 12v), the <i>dharma</i> would be well established and the king's reign and that of his successors would be long and stable. He predicts that in the final five hundred years of the <i>dharma</i> , the Buddhists will dispute among themselves and turmoil will prevail in Tibet. He releases the assassins from their frozen state and the envoys return. They give a full account to the king who becomes despondent on hearing it.			
Debates against Bon	14r	A <i>dharma</i> council is organised in <b>Brag dmar</b> and <b>Gsas snang</b> is appointed to a key role. A debate is planned between Bon and the Buddha <i>dharma</i> and the parties assemble at the palace of <b>Zus phug skyang bu tshal</b> .			
	14v	The teams for each side are named; the Buddhist are led by Bodhisatva; the only Buddhist in the list who also appeared in the prophecy of <b>Gyim Hwa shang</b> (folio 9r) is <b>Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs</b> . The Bon side is led by <b>Stag ra Klu gong</b> and others. The Bon are defeated in logical debate (supernormal displays, planned above in folio 12r, are excluded because Padmasambhava has returned to India). Bon rites, especially the slaughter of animals for the dead, are proscribed; the Bon rites are compared to the single performance of Padmasambhava after which epidemics ceased and rain has fallen in due time.			
Bsam yas	14v	Bodhisatva lays the foundation of <b>Bsam yas</b> and the divination expert from Nepal examines the auspicious signs and omens. <b>Dba' Lha btsan</b> becomes a monk,			

		DBA' BZHED	
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes	
Background activities	15r	under the name <b>Dba' Dpal dbyangs</b> . The Buddha image is brought back and reinstalled in <b>Ra mo che</b> . A temple is built at <b>Glag</b> at the behest of <b>Gsas snang</b> ; the latter urges members of his clan to follow Buddhism and a number of them and their friends convert.	
Temple plan		Bodhisatva climbs the mountain of <b>Khas po ri</b> with the king, <b>Sang shi</b> and <b>Snyer Stag btsan ldong gzigs</b> ; looking down he orders that an enclosure be made of sheaves of grass like a horse corral.	
Site examination		King <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> puts on a golden mantle and digs the site seven times with a golden hoe. He is assisted by four young nobles.	
	15v	The young nobles dig the site and small measures of rice and barley are found along with pliable clay. Inauspicious things (such as bone and charcoal) are not found. Bodhisatva is pleased and announces the project will be well accomplished.	
First temple and selection of prototypes		Construction begins with a temple for Ārya palo. The king and Bodhisatva discuss the images for the building. A Chinese vermillion seller publicly announces that he is an expert image maker and is available for the work; the king decides that Indian and Chinese prototypes should not be followed. Rather, handsome young Tibetan courtiers should be used as models; the most handsome are duly selected and the work begins.	
Temple consecration and marvellous events	16r	The shrine and its paintings and images are completed and the building is consecrated. In the evening a miraculous light shines from the top the shrine; the king orders a shrine of Amitābha be added to the top of the temple as a result. A feast to honour the Chinese vermillion seller is prepared but he has disappeared; it is concluded he was an emanation.	
Prayer to Tārā		Bodhisatva reminds king <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> that Tārā stimulated his first wish for enlightenment at the <i>vajrāsana</i> and that prayers should be made to her now as a consequence. After receiving instructions from the preceptor and while meditating in the temple of Ārya palo, Hayagrīva is heard to neigh thrice.	
Dbu rtse and the king's dream	16v	The <b>Dbu rtse</b> is built where the site was examined (folio 15r). <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> wonders about its images; in a dream a guide takes the king to <b>Khas po ri</b> where he shows him rocks in the shape of Buddhas, Bodhisatvas and other figures. In the morning the king goes to the mountain and sees that the rocks approximately correspond. Stone masons from Nepal shape the images and they are transported on a horse-cart to the temple. The earth shakes as they reach the gate and are installed in the <b>Dri gtsang khang</b> . Four $st\bar{u}pa$ -s are built.	
The blue <i>stūpa</i> and marvellous events	17r	For the blue $st\bar{u}pa$ , in the south direction, a $cakra$ is made. It goes missing and is found installed on the $st\bar{u}pa$ . The carpenter responsible dreams that the $cakra$ is installed by four men in gold chain-mail. When day breaks the four men are gone but one suit of gold chain-mail remains as the carpenter's reward. The divination expert informs the king of these happenings; the four men are acknowledged to have been the four great kings and their likenesses are engraved on a vase.	
Ye shes dbang po		The <b>Gtsug lag khang</b> is completed; <b>Gsas snang</b> is given the name <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> with his ordination (compare folio 6r).	
Indic language and new ordinations	17v	Sons of the ministers are taught the language of India but only Śākyaprabha (son of Mchims anu) and Vairocana (son of Pa'or Na'dod) and Lha bu (son of Zhang Nya bzang) and Bse btsan and Shud po Khong slebs become proficient. Rad na (son of Dba' Rma gzigs) becomes proficient also and takes Rad na as his ordination name.	
Consecration		The temple is consecrated and one hundred people are ordained including <b>Jo bo gcen khri rgyal</b> and <b>Sru btsan mon rgyal</b> .	
Reforms	17v	A proclamation is issued withdrawing the extreme punishments that were instituted by <b>Khri Srong btsa</b> (reported in folios 3r-3v above); the rule of <i>dharma</i> prevails. High and low agree to adhere to the new dispensation and charitable donations are made. Monks are assigned a standard allowance of barley each year.	
Appointment of kalyāṇamitra	17v	<b>Ye shes dbang po</b> gains supernormal insight and the king appoints him <i>kalyāṇamitra</i> (succeeding Bodhisatva, folios 6r, 8r, 10r, 10v, and whose death is incidentally reported in folio 19v); protocols and council arrangements are changed.	

		DBA' BZHED			
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes			
Endowments	18r	Ye shes dbang po suggests that long term endowments be established to support the <i>saṃgha</i> rathe than annual allotments (folio 17v). A debate ensues in court about the size of the endowments and Y shes dbang po reflects on their political, agrarian and social implications.			
	18v	In accord with <b>Ye shes dbang po'</b> s suggestion, two hundred servants are assigned to each monastery and three households (involved in agrarian production) are assigned to each monk.			
Withdrawal of Ye shes dbang po	18v	Lands are selected for the endowments, but the monk <b>Myang Ting nge 'dzin</b> and others grumble about the arrangements; <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> reports this to the king and retreats to an isolated place for medit tion. <b>Dpal dbyangs</b> is appointed in his place.			
Hwa shang arrives from China	18v	<b>Hwa shang</b> Mahāyāna arrives from China and many Tibetan monks study with him; frictions emerge due to incompatible views and some monks mutilate themselves. The disturbances come to the attention of king <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> .			
Conflicts	19r	Agitators threaten to kill the followers of the gradualist path and march on the palace; the king dispatches a messenger to <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> seeking his advice.			
Ye shes dbang po returns		The messenger reaches <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> 's isolated meditation cave; although displeased at the interruption, he agrees to return. At court he lectures the king that his meditation should not have been disturbed.			
Kamalaśīla	19v	Ye shes dbang po quotes a statement made by Bodhisatva before his death to the effect that in the fir five hundred years of the <i>dharma</i> in Tibet, Buddhists will dispute amongst themselves (compare folio 14r) and when that happens, Kamalaśīla should be summoned from Nepal.			
Preparations for the Bsam yas Debate		Kamalaśīla is summoned and preparations begin. The followers of the instantaneous path take the <i>Pra-jñāpāramitā</i> to the <b>Bsam gtan gling</b> and practice debate for two months. <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> provides an account of the gradualist position to king <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> who is convinced by it.			
Bsam yas Debate	20v	The king orders the great debate to begin and <b>Hwa shang</b> Mahāyāna sets out the position of those f lowing the instantaneous path ( <b>Ston mun pa</b> ).			
Kamalaśīla's reply	20v	Kamalaśīla sets out his reply drawn from his <i>Bhāvanākrama</i> -s. His discourse on the gradualist path continues to the middle of folio 22r.			
Sang shi's reply	22r	Sang shi sets out the understanding of charitable giving, moral conduct, forbearance, diligence, one-pointed concentration and wisdom from the instantaneous perspective. He acknowledges that approaches vary but common ground is universally agreed, such as the striving for <i>nirvāṇa</i> .			
Dpal dbyangs's reply	22v	<b>Dpal dbyangs</b> disagrees and amplifies criticisms of the instantaneous path, rejecting the validity of common terminology. He asks rhetorically which Buddha has attained Buddha-hood instantaneously, knowing full well that there is no scriptural warrant for it. He then describes the ten stages to supreme omniscience in detail; his discourse on the ten stages continues to folio 24v.			
Ston mun pa defeated	24v	The followers of the instantaneous path find themselves unable to refute the gradualists and accept defeat. The king rules that the instantaneous path shall not be followed.			
Implementation	24v	The king implements the recommendations of <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> and Bodhisatva and a translation school is established. An account is given of works translated: <i>Sūtra</i> and <i>Abhidharma</i> texts, but not <i>Mahāyoga</i> from the Tantra corpus. The <i>Kriyā</i> and <i>Ubhaya</i> are translated, so also the <i>Dīrghāgama</i> an <i>Abhidharmakośa</i> . Teachers are appointed in every place and the nobility are encouraged to study the <i>dharma</i> .			
End (1)	25r	The core text here ends as follows: "Whereas the <i>dharma</i> could not be established during the reign of the five previous kings, the <i>devaputra</i> <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> , Ācārya Bodhisatva, <b>Dba' Ye shes dbang p</b> and ' <b>Ba' Sang shi</b> —those four—established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy <i>dharma</i> was propagated widely in the region of Tibet."			
Death of Ye shes dbang po	25r	Ye shes dbang po nears death and is attended by the king with a food offering. With his passing, Khri Srong lde btsan thinks that his life will end soon and he reflects on the fact that due to the fire at Nālandā only a portion of dharma texts could be retrieved from India; as a consequence he regrets that the complete canon in China was not translated.			

		DBA' BZHED				
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes				
End (2)	25v	The text states "This is the end."				
Khri Gtsug lde btsan End (3)	25v	Text continues to the reign of <b>Khri Gtsug Ide btsan</b> during whose time scholars come from India and further texts are translated; those translations made earlier are revised according to the new languag system; 108 temples built and Vinaya rules tightened. Text states this is the end of the <i>Dba' bzhed</i> ; marginal note says "Edited."				
Dba' za Spyan ras gzigs		<b>Dba' za Spyan ras gzigs</b> , daughter of <b>Ye shes dbang po</b> (compare folio 5r) asks <b>Jo mo Byang chub</b> (s folio 19v) to build centres for <i>dharma</i> study; she builds $st\bar{u}pa$ -s; Indian tablets with writing appear.				
Khri Lde srong btsan	25v	Khri Gtsug lde btsan dies and during the reign of Khri Lde Srong btsan the king dreams that Ācārya 'Ba Rad na will translate the <i>Shes rab 'bum</i> for the first time (compare folio 19v). It is offered to the king by Dba' Mañju(śrī).				
Death of 'Ba' Sang shi	26r	'Ba' Sang shi dies and Tārā is heard weeping in the temple of 'Gran bzangs.				
End (4)		Text ends once more (reflecting some of the content in folio 25r): "Thus it was that the <i>dharma</i> was first founded."				
Funeral rites of Khri Srong lde btsan	26r	Text starts in a formal way with the death of <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> "in the Horse Year" and his funeral rites under his son <b>Mu ne btsan po</b> . Ministers in favour of Bon make arrangements, setting up a funeral tent in the <b>Mtsho mo</b> valley in <b>Brag dmar</b> ; experts in Bon practice are summoned.				
Dream of Mu ne btsan po	26r	Mu ne btsan po has a dream in which his father Khri Srong lde btsan appears with Vairocana in the A niṣṭha realm with Vajrapāṇi and Mañjuśrī; he deems that the funeral rites cannot be conducted according to Bon. He orders a discussion so a common agreement can be reached.				
Vairocana and the assembly	26v	Monks assemble and Vairocana is summoned from the kingdom of <b>Tsha ba tsha shog</b> . The two side enter the chamber and jostle for seating positions around the king; Vairocana displays wrathful entions in his beard to startle the Bon and they step away;				
Btsan bzher legs gzigs states the Bon case	27r	the Buddhists quickly occupy the right hand. <b>Btsan bzher legs gzigs</b> opens the discussion from the Bon side with an account of the wondrous regalia of the royal dynasty, how assemblies in ancient days were marked by magical happenings, how funeral practices were instituted in the time <b>Lha tho tho ri snyan shal</b> ,				
	27r	and how the rites included funeral feasts and the construction of tombs at <b>Ra ba thang</b> . The king propitiated the tutelary deity <b>Yar la sham po</b> of awesome power and the kingdom, once small, is now much expanded, its statecraft exalted. The Bon priests are commendable in action and ideology while				
	28r	their rites for the transfer of dead souls are effective and beneficial; he warns that the Indian system should not be followed otherwise the long-standing Tibetan understanding between king and subject is certain to decline.				
Vairocana replies	28r	Vairocana appeals to the king as one who belongs to an august lineage of <i>bodhisatva-s</i> and, presenting himself as humble yet experienced, asks to submit a few key points informed by wider realities:				
	28v	the auspiciousness arising from the propitiation of <b>Yar la sham po</b> , the building of tombs and so forth is much exaggerated; Nālandā is far more auspicious. Steadfast adherence to the <i>dharma</i> gave Indian rulers and their teachers lifetimes that extended to 1500 years.				
	29r	Moreover, the lineages of Indian kings, such as Indrabhūti, were uninterrupted for fourteen generations and they benefitted from a Buddha-field where virtue ripened instantaneously. Vairocana then gives a description of the Dharmadhātu palace of Akaniṣṭha (see folio 26r) which is more wondrous and auspicious than anything Bon has to offer; the awesome power of <b>Yar la sham po</b> is also exaggerated because the four guardian kings in Akaniṣṭha are more so;				
	29v	Vairocana (the main Buddha in <b>Bsam yas</b> albeit not reported in the <i>Dba' bzhed</i> ) is skilled in means and controls all conditioned existence. Turning to ritual matters, Vairocana observes that the assertion that Bon practices are good is a further exaggeration; he cites examples of how kings propitiated cruel gods, supported Bon animal sacrifice and piled up sin to such an extent that they lost their kingdoms and seats of power.				

		DBA' BZHED
Theme	folio	Summary of episodes
	30r	Vairocana continues the examples, extending them to relatives of the Yarlung kings who lost their territories as a result of following their local Bon tradition. He concludes his case with <b>Sribs po</b> , lord of <b>Snubs</b> , who offered dark Bon funeral rites and then came under the sway of Tibet. Vairocana finally notes that virtue leads to higher births, unwholesome acts to lower realms; <b>Khri Srong Ide btsan</b> being an enlightened being in human form accrued merit through his acts.
Vairocana concludes	30v	The funeral arrangements of <b>Khri Srong lde btsan</b> should thus be in accord with pure Buddhist practice: to do otherwise would be like putting a black blanket on a white horse.
Response and conclusion		<b>Btsan bzher legs gzigs</b> responds with exasperation: he complains that the Buddhists are otherworldly and that their arguments are derived from thin air; he facetiously demands that monks attend the king, run the palace council and guard the border. When Vairocana retorts that monks will happily do so, the king is delighted.
Funeral rites	31r	Monks perform the funeral in accord with the <i>Devaputravimala Sūtra</i> ; a <i>maṇḍala</i> of Vajradhātu is made; a feast is offered; the <i>Prajñāpāramitā</i> is recited.
Texts translated and protagonists depart	31r	Texts are translated by <b>Mu ne btsan po</b> , Vairocana and <b>G.yu sgra snying po</b> ; some are hidden away at <b>Bsam yas</b> in a black box. <b>G.yu sgra</b> departs for the <b>Tsha ba</b> country (for which folio 26v).
	31v	Vairocana goes to <b>Gyad</b> , but others report his going to marry the daughter of the king of Khotan and reviving the temple of <b>Lha khang gi sgo can</b> in the north.
Closing summary	31v	Thereafter, funerals are performed according to the Buddhist system. In lieu of the supposed Bon custom of concealing wealth of the deceased as hidden treasure, masters of the <i>dharma</i> institute the ritual food offering.

and, in folio 26r, the spacing between the lines is wide and studied (see Figure 2.3). The definitive end to the sentence about 'Ba' Sang shi-marked in our illustration-shows that this was drawn from an outside source or is imitating a narrative in the grand manner: "Thus it was that the saddharma was first founded."

The wording of this passage gives the impression that the scribe was drawing in material to forge a narrative bridge from the end of the Dba' bzhed to the funeral of Khri Srong lde btsan. Further, the way it is written shows that this bridge was composed expressly for this copy of the manuscript. Once we get to the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus, the scribe picks up the pace: the words are written without hesitation and he appears to be copying from his source with confidence (folio 26r:2 onward, see Figure 2.3). In addition, the author of this transitional section shows himself to know the contents of the earlier portion—what we call the Dba' bzhed proper-and to know what was needed to form a viable narrative bridge to the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus. The author has carried the narrative forward to the death of the key protagonists: Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva (=Śāntarakṣita), Ye shes dbang po and 'Ba' Sang shi.9 Their deaths pave the way for the introduc-

9 We use Bodhisatva and bodhisatva throughout this chapter based on the spelling in the manuscript of the Dba' bzhed; for wider distion of Vairocana and the funeral of Khri Srong lde btsan that is given in the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus. Two conclusions may be drawn: (a) the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was copied from an exemplar that might be early, but the narrative bridge was written later to allow that text to be added in a way that harmonised with the Dba' bzhed, and (b) the formation process around the Dba' bzhed as a text-what might be added and what might be excluded-was still under development when the narrative bridge and this actual copy of the *Dba' bzhed* was compiled. We will come to the dating problem below; for the moment, we turn to the multiple endings of the text and their chronological implications.

## Endings 1 and 2 (Figures 2.1 and 2.2)

The way that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus has been added is indicative of how many Tibetan texts were compiled. In addition to colophons—sometimes giving the title and circumstances surrounding the copy-paragraphs or nota-

cussion, Gouriswar Bhattacharya, "How to Justify the Spelling of the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Term Bodhisatva?' in From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday, ed. Eli Franco and Monika Zin, (Rupandehi: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010), vol. 2, 35-50.



tive proper.

Figure 2.1: Dba' bzhed manuscript, folio 25r with the closing sentences of the text proper marked (ending 1)

tions were occasionally appended to include information that was deemed relevant. In subsequent copies, this additional material is often written in a continuous fashion. without breaks. This results in the appended materials being incorporated into the running text, effacing the historical layers. Evidence of the same process is found in several places in the Dba' bzhed manuscript. Despite this, a reasonably close reading shows where the old endings fall, and thus how materials were added over time. 10 In the case of the main text of the *Dba' bzhed*, the first ending comes in folio 25r. This is shown in Table 2.1 and illustrated in Figure 2.1. The corresponding place in our Tibetan text and the translation may also be consulted. At this point, the Dba' bzhed states the following: "Whereas the dharma could not be established during the reign of the five previous kings, the devaputra Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba' Ye shes dbang po, and 'Ba' Sang shithose four-established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy dharma was propagated widely in the region of Tibet."11

This summarises what has been recorded in the narrative overall and is the logical end of the story. There can be little doubt that this signals the end of the text proper in the original version. However, as can be seen from Figure 2.1, the text continues without a break in the way it is written. The writing style is uniform and continuous. The literary style, however, is at variance with what has come before. The story continues with a somewhat cryptic account of the death of Ye shes dbang po, followed by reflections on the part of Khri Srong lde btsan.

This coda is then closed with punctuation marks and the statement rdzogs s+ho: "This is the end." This is

shown here in Figure 2.2 (line 1, with words marked). The

main point here is that the lines from folio 25r to folio

25v-the sentences that describe the death of Ye shes

dbang po and reflections of Khri Srong lde btsan-were

added at a later date, i. e. they are newer than the narra-

major events into account. The chronological implication,

therefore, is that this portion of the text was added after

circa 1200 and that the earlier portions of the Dba' bzhed-

what we call the *Dba' bzhed* proper—predate the early years of the thirteenth century. We will address shortly by just how much they predate it. For the moment, the main observation is that this additional portion of the text was

This newer portion (from folio 25r to folio 25v:1) contains some historical information that helps fix the date of the addition. In these lines, king Khri Srong lde btsan laments that his life will end soon and that, due to the fire at Nālandā, only a portion of the dharma could be translated. He further laments that the complete canon in China was not translated. These anachronistic remarks reflect the chronological horizon of canon formation in Song China, on one side, and the destruction of Nālandā, on the other. 12 The fire at Nālandā referred to here is the great fire that destroyed the monastery sometime between 1197 and 1206.13 This is not going to be some sort of other fire—about which we have no historical record. The Dba' bzhed has no close knowledge of day-to-day happenings in medieval Bihār, any more than other Tibetan historical works. Rather, it sees India from a distance and takes only

<sup>10</sup> Multiple endings have also been noted in the work of Nyang ral, see Daniel Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016), 141-75.

<sup>11</sup> A version of this ending appears in the text published by Mgon po rgyal mtshan under the title Sba bzhed issued from Beijing in 1980 and 1982 (see BDRC W20000), but the nature of edition precludes definitive conclusions about the relationship. This version is available here: Sba bzhed. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.437874.

<sup>12</sup> Jiang Wu and Lucille Chia, Spreading Buddha's Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon (New York: Columbia, 2015), all of Part 1 is relevant, probably the best current overview in English.

<sup>13</sup> Harmut Scharfe, Education in Ancient India (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 150.



Figure 2.2: Dba' bzhed manuscript, folio 25v with the two stated endings of the text marked (ending 2 and 3)

being transmitted within the *Dba' bzhed* proper by the early years of the thirteenth century. Moreover, this was already embedded in the exemplar on which the present manuscript was based.

# Endings 3 and 4 (Figures 2.2 and 2.4)

As if two endings were not enough, further endings are found as we read on in folio 25v. As can be seen from Figure 2.2 (line 1 onward), the scribe has again continued his copying with a small break after the ending in the first line. The narrative continues to the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan and after the short summary of what was done for the dharma in his time, the texts states: "So ends the *Dba' bzhed*—the account from the Dba' perspective the text of the noble narrative of how the dharma of the Buddha came to the region of Tibet." This is shown and marked in Figure 2.2. The text is actually named in this third ending. As the consistent writing style indicates, this sentence belonged to the exemplar on which our manuscript was based. This means that the name the Dba' bzhed was attached to the main text from the time of the exemplar.

Folio 25v:3, rather than the title page, is the earliest internal evidence for the name in this manuscript. With the name *Dba' bzhed* appearing in an added section—and after the part that belongs to *circa* 1200—it seems likely that this section is again somewhat later. Naturally, we should like to know the date. An external fix is provided by Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251). He refers to a *Dpa' bzhed* or *Dba' bzhed* and *'Ba' bzhed*, as well as *Rgyal bzhed*. <sup>14</sup> Barring later extrapolations, this points to the name being

current in the first half of the thirteenth century. Bu ston (1290–1364) knows the title *Rba bzhed*, <sup>15</sup> and that title appears in one of the oldest manuscript copies of the text, as noted in Chapter 1.

The above evidence thus attests that the title Dba' bzhed and its variants were in circulation during the first half of the thirteenth century. 16 The passage containing the title in our manuscript was also in the exemplar on which the present copy was made. We know this because, after the third ending, the text gives a series of awkward transitions to the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus and the scribe of these subsequent parts is different. To restate and summarise the matter another way: everything up to and including the third ending ("So ends the *Dba' bzhed*" on folio 25v:3) was by the first scribe. Everything after was by the second scribe (see Figure 2.2). Of course, composition and copying are different things, and the copy before us may have drawn on old material. Based on his analysis of the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus and its narrative connections with earlier texts, Dotson concluded that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus is no earlier "than the end of the intermediate period," thus no earlier than the early eleventh century. 17 However, our analysis of the first and second endings shows that the manuscript was copied out—with the Zas gtad kvi lo rgvus added—no earlier than the thirteenth century.

**<sup>14</sup>** David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha-Nature*, *Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), 68, n. 136 for which reference we are grateful to Lewis Doney.

<sup>15</sup> Ruegg, Buddha-Nature, 68, n. 136.

<sup>16</sup> Older attestations may be found but are not known to us. Per K. Sørensen, *Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies—An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century: rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 10, n. 24 says that the work was earlier called the *Rgyal po'i* (or *Bsam yas*) *Bka' gtsigs* (*chen mo*). The *Me tog snying po* borrows the final self-reference from the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma* (corresponding to SBA 1961.1–2, 91.10–92.1). However, this appears to be a later extrapolation inserted into Nyang ral's core text and anyway does not actually use the title *Sba bzhed*. Thus, we are no further back in time for the title.

<sup>17</sup> Dotson, "The Dead and Their Stories," 69, 77.



Figure 2.3: Dba' bzhed manuscript, folio 26r with the closing sentence of the supplementary text marked (ending 4)

To round off this part of our discussion, we turn to the fourth ending. It comes in the transition to the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus. As noted before, this appears in folio 26r:2 where the text reads: "Thus it was that the saddharma was first founded." See Figure 2.3. This ties in with the first ending, where the contribution of Khri Srong lde btsan, Ācārya Bodhisatva, Dba' Ye shes dbang po and 'Ba' Sang shi are mentioned. The fourth ending recounts their deaths.

# Date(s) of the Dba' bzhed Proper

The discussion given above provides a platform for determining the date of the core text, the *Dba' bzhed* proper. By this we mean the text before the material added in the supplements at the end. To state the essence of our conclusions thus far: the supplements give the terminus ante quem in that one of these mentions the fire at Nālandā, showing that the *Dba' bzhed* proper must be earlier than circa 1200 CE. This is confirmed by the name or title Dba' bzhed which appears in one of the supplements and also externally, in several variants, in the writing of Sa skya Pandita and Bu ston.

While this pins down the core text to before 1200—a date that will not be controversial—the matter is complicated by the fact that subsequent writers have interpolated material into the *Dba' bzhed* proper in a number of ways. This gives the *Dba' bzhed* proper a chronological density that is often difficult to assess. As we shall see, this has some bearing on how we read, understand and use the text.

# The Kriyāsamaraha

Textual links with the Kriyāsaṃgraha—a ritual text from Nepal describing the construction and consecration of religious buildings-confirms a chronological horizon in the 1200s. In this work, mention is made of the inauspicious items that might be encountered in a building site, such as bones, chaff, ashes and charcoal, iron, broken clay pots, pebbles and lead.18 In folios 15r-15v of the Dba' bzhed we find a parallel. At this point in the narrative, the exploration of the site of Bsam yas is described and it is noted that "pebbles, bone, pot shards and the like were not found." The king's digging with a golden hoe and the subsequent discovery of barley and rice also find parallels in the Kriyāsamgraha, which recounts how the earth should be turned with a golden plough and the ground ritually struck. 19

It is not surprising that these parallels should be found in the Dba' bzhed, because the text itself reports that a divination expert came from Nepal to examine the site of Bsam yas (see folio 14v). According to Tadeusz Skorupski, the oldest manuscript of the Kriyāsaṃgraha is dated to 1277 and a translation into Tibetan was made in the same century. This presents a chronological problem because the supplementary endings of the Dba' bzhed show that the core narrative was already in place by *circa* 1200. There are two possible explanations. The first is that the *Dba*' bzhed was influenced by the milieu of the Kriyāsamgraha rather than directly by it, and thus drew on materials that were available in the early 1200s if not before. This position can be supported by the fact that the Kriyāsaṃgraha is an anthology and that the individual rituals were neces-

<sup>18</sup> Tadeusz Skorupski, Kriyāsamgraha: Compendium of Buddhist Rituals: An Abridged Version (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2002), 31. The parallels with the Kriyāsaṃgraha noted first in Willis, "From World Religion to World Dominion," but here the implications are reassessed.

<sup>19</sup> Skorupski, Kriyāsamgraha, 38-39. Michael Walter, Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 186-89 for a wider context, albeit anachronistic in many places. Note Walter, Buddhism and Empire," 243: Tibetan sa zhag refers to a pliable grey clay used to fashion the faces of the images.

sarily well established before they were assembled in the collection.

However, such an interpretation, namely of indirect influence in the early 1200s, is based on the working assumption that the *Dba' bzhed* proper is a single unit, undisturbed by redaction. This is unlikely. When we look at the notations added to the manuscript of the Dba' bzhed, it is clear that readers had no qualms about adding comments and making corrections. There can be little doubt that earlier readers did the same, and that these earlier additions are now submerged in the running text. We will return to this below in our discussion of Nyang ral and note further instances in the folio-by-folio discussion that appears later in this chapter. For the moment, we need only note that the paragraph describing the ritual digging of the site in folios 15r-15v can be read as extraneous to the general thread of the narrative. As can be seen from our text and translation, this part of the story comes in the middle of a series of choppy transitions. One could skip easily from the king and his retinue inspecting the temple site from the hilltop (folio 15r) to the construction of the first shrine (folio 15v) without the narrative substance of the Dba' bzhed being affected. Thus, actual sources, rather than supposed antecedents for which there is no evidence, show that the portion mentioning what was uncovered while turning over the soil at the temple site was inserted into the Dba' bzhed at a time when the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* was available in Tibetan, i. e. in the second half of the thirteenth century. This may not be what we would like: a neat distinction between the supplements and the text proper. In terms of chronology, the parallels in the Kriyāsamgraha actually tell us nothing about the dates of the earlier parts of the Dba' bzhed, except that they are before the second half of the thirteenth century, a dating already known from the evidence set out above.

## Dharmasvāmin

The supposition that material was inserted into the Dba' bzhed proper during the thirteenth century is supported by a short episode that appears shortly after the consecration of Bsam yas. At this juncture, Śāntarakṣita takes the opportunity to tell Khri Srong lde btsan that the goddess Tārā stimulated his first wish for enlightenment in a former life, just as Tārā instigated the turning of the wheel of dharma when the Buddha tarried at the vajrāsana (folio 16r). This is a manifest insertion, inconceivable before the thirteenth century in that it draws on Dharmasvāmin's account of a miraculous Tārā at Bodh-

gavā.20 The known facts that Dharmasvāmin travelled to India in the 1230s, and died in 1264, points to this material entering the Dba' bzhed in the middle of thirteenth century.21

# Zas qtad kyi lo rqyus

The interface between the *Dba' bzhed* proper and the *Zas* gtad kyi lo rgyus corroborates the chronology established to this point. As noted above in our opening remarks about the organisation of the text, the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was not simply appended to the *Dba' bzhed* in a random way, but was in narrative dialogue with it.22 The chronological point here is that, if the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was in dialogue with the Dba' bzhed, the Dba' bzhed must have existed when the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was added. Dotson's conclusion, outlined earlier in our discussion of the organisation of our text, is that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus can be no older than the early eleventh century. This is the earliest possible date for the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus and thus for the Dba' bzhed.

A more precise dating can be offered in the light of our codicological observations, also given before. To repeat: the scribe who added the Zas gtad kyi lo rgvus was responsible for composing the narrative bridge, i.e. what we see in our manuscript was composed at the same time that the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus was added, and the text in the *Dba' bzhed* is the prime copy (and indeed only copy) of the bridging sentences and the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus itself. Now, the Kriyāsamgraha and Dharmasvāmin's account of Tara in the running text, coupled with the multiple endings added to the Dba' bzhed proper, tells us that additions were being made in the thirteenth century. In terms of our main concern—dating the *Dba' bzhed*—the only thing that really matters is when the Zas gtad kyi lo rgvus and the narrative bridge were added. Because the narrative bridge was written to interface the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus with the Dba' bzhed in the form it had in about 1250, the *Dba' bzhed* necessarily existed at that time. This

<sup>20</sup> Chag-lo-tsā-ba and George Roerich, Biography of Dharmasvāmin (Chag Lo Tsa-Ba Chos-Rje-Dpal): A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim, transl. George Roerich with a historical and critical introduction by Anant S. Altekar (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959), available online at Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1213643

<sup>21</sup> The passage about Tārā is contextualised in Stephan Beyer, Magic and Ritual in Tibet: The Cult of Tara (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 237.

<sup>22</sup> See the section above called 'General organisation: Two Texts.' We have drawn on and extended the idea of 'narrative dialogue' based on Dotson, "The Dead and Their Stories," 78.

may seem a disappointing result of the above investigation, but the evidence of the Zas gtad kvi lo rgvus carries us no further.

# **Nyang ral**

The author, Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-c.1192), knew elements of the *Testimony of Ba* and quotes or paraphrases it in his writing. In our earlier work, we used these connections to date the Dba' bzhed between circa 1000 and 1100.<sup>23</sup> However, since we published those observations in 2013, the study of Nyang ral has progressed substantially and this requires a reappraisal of the evidence. Indeed, we shall see below that our earlier conclusion about the date is overturned by the new research. The key monograph is Remembering the Lotus-Born by Daniel Hirshberg.24 This book argues that Nyang ral used the biography of Padmasambhava to elaborate his identity as an enlightened personality and key player in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Hirshberg's thinking developed concurrently and in dialogue with that of Lewis Doney. The latter's work has appeared in a series of publications that provide analyses of the literary output of Nyang ral and how his work was transmitted in the Tibetan tradition. The most useful for our purposes is Doney's examination of the relationship between Nyang ral and the Dba' bzhed and its sister texts.<sup>25</sup> Also relevant is Doney's study of the earliest recensions of the Zangs gling ma, Padmasambhava's biography by Nyang ral.26 Developing his interest in problems of religion and polity, Doney published a study of bodhisatva-kingship and an exploration of the role played by the king's preceptor.27 All these works will be used here for the chronological and inter-textual evidence they provide.

Striking differences exist between the Zangs gling ma and the *Dba' bzhed* in their description of the events and

dia, 1997), no. 18 and Ruegg, Buddha-Nature, 76.

personalities of the Tibetan imperial period—as scholars interested in this subject have long been aware.28 In the Zangs gling ma, Padmasambhava comes to Tibet to control evil forces and participate in the building and consecration of the temple at Bsam vas. He bestows Tantric teachings on Khri Srong lde btsan and leaves Tibet only after the king's death.29 This course of events is at variance with the Dba' bzhed and its sister versions. As can be seen from our translation—and the chart outlining the narrative (Table 2.1)—the Dba' bzhed has Padmasambhava sent back to India after some of the ministers become suspicious and the king, yielding to political pressure, agrees that Padmasambhava should return. The temple at Bsam vas is finished after Padmasambhava leaves and Dba' Gsas snang takes the lead in religious matters. He attains supernormal insight and assumes the ordination name Ye shes dbang po, becoming the king's preceptor (kalyāṇamitra) and the guiding force in the organisation of endowments for Buddhist institutions and other protocols.<sup>30</sup> These differences have a number of literary and historical implications, but for the moment our focus is chronology. We want to know whether Nyang ral can be used to date the *Dba' bzhed*.

Shared motifs and stories might be one way to determine a chronological relationship. Yet, it is difficult to determine if one text is based on another or if both draw on common sources. The only way to decide if there is a dependent relationship is to trace direct borrowings. Examples of such borrowings are found in the closing portion of the Zangs gling ma as it appears within the Chos 'byung Me tog snying po, the larger religious history of Tibet written by Nyang ral. Doney and Hirshberg have discussed how phrases from the appendicised Testimony of Ba were interwoven with the text of the Me tog snying po.31 In this passage, the portions in bold come from the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma.32

<sup>23</sup> See Willis, "From World Religion to World Dominion," drawing on internal evidence and Dan Martin, Tibetan Histories (London: Serin-

<sup>24</sup> Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, published in 2016 and cited above.

<sup>25</sup> Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and the Testimony of Ba," Bulletin of Tibetology 49, no. 1 (2013): 7-38.

<sup>26</sup> Doney, The Zangs gling ma: The First Padmasambhava Biography: Two Exemplars of the Earliest Attested Recension (Andiast: IITBS GmbH, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Lewis Doney, "Early Bodhisattva-Kingship in Tibet: The Case of Tri Songdétsen," Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie 24 (2015): 29-47; Doney, "Narrative Transformations."

<sup>28</sup> A useful summary is Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma'od zer," 10-11 and Doney, The Zangs gling ma, 4-6.

<sup>29</sup> See Doney, The Zangs gling ma.

<sup>30</sup> See Table 2.1 for the place of these events in the narrative, and Doney, "Narrative Transformations," for the role of *kalyāṇamitra*.

<sup>31</sup> Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer," and Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 171.

<sup>32</sup> This passage is translated by Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 171. For the present purpose, Lewis Doney has provided a re-translation. Flemming Faber, "The Council of Tibet according to the sBa bzhed," Acta Orientalia 47 (1986): 44 pointed to elements where Nyang ral appeared to draw on the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma, i. e. SBA 1961.1-2, but at the time he was writing the complexities surrounding the transmission and redaction of Nyang ral's work were not well understood.

Although many variant chronicles of the history of Buddhism have appeared, and some disparage them, some wish for them, some summarise them, some split them up, and some take them to be contrived, this history is free from impurities and is genuine, well understood and well written, well taught and artfully constructed. What has been compiled by ordinary people can be mistaken. Genuine textual traditions are exceedingly difficult. If something is present in all the oral instructions, who among the scholars has fabricated it? Do not give it to others, but keep the text in mind and teach it. Having been written, when held in a [suitable] vessel, it is a jewel treasury. All noble people by necessity must keep it in mind! [This is] the detailed appendicised text of the proclamation.

This borrowing comes in a section that Hirshberg has called the "fourth coda." He regards this as the last addition and not the work of Nyang ral himself. As he says with precision and elegance: "... while the addendum now appears as single unit ... it is, in fact, composed of at least five parts accumulated over at least four redactions by at least four redactors, which is evidenced by its four distinct colophons, each with a variant compound of Nyangrel's name. Like waves lapping at the shore in a rising tide, each colophon represents a high-water mark left by a distinct wave of redaction before it receded behind another."33 And indeed, it appears indisputable that the portions at the end of the *Me tog snying po* were inserted by the followers of Nyang ral sometime after his death, i.e. sometime after 1192. In terms of dating, Hirshberg notes that some of the individuals involved were contemporaries of Nyang ral, notably Zhig po bdud rtsi (1141-1199) and 'Jig rten mgon po Rin chen dpal (1143–1217).<sup>34</sup> At the very least, the first colophons show redaction in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. However, the redactor who has drawn on the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma for the fourth colophon comes at the end of the process and was probably active in the first decades of the thirteenth century. As a working hypothesis, the work can be attributed to the next generation of Nyang ral's followers and assigned to circa 1225.

This evidence means that the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma was available for reference and quotation in the first decades of the thirteenth century, a date that coincides with the evidence we have adduced for additions to, and interventions in, the Dba' bzhed. The Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma is not, of course, the oldest form of the narrative-as explained here in Chapter 1-so the Dba' bzhed

proper is necessarily earlier in time. Just how much earlier than circa 1225 is a matter of opinion and the chronological conclusions reached thus far do not help directly. At the risk of testing our reader's patience, we summarise the evidence: (a) the sequence of colophons added to the *Dba*' bzhed date after the Nālandā fire, so after circa 1200, (b) the Kriyāsamgraha points to material being inserted into the *Dba' bzhed* proper in the second half of the 1200s, (c) the account of a miraculous Tārā image appears to come from Dharmasvāmin (d. 1264), so was inserted in circa 1250 or somewhat later, (d) the Zas gtad kvi lo rgvus, itself not before the early eleventh century but more likely of the 1100s, was added to the *Dba' bzhed* no earlier than the late 1200s. The *Dba' bzhed* proper is older than all these additions. The writing of Nyang ral, as redacted, shows that the Sba' bzhed existed in circa 1225. In terms of date, therefore, the evidence from Nyang ral carries us no further. All that can be said for certain on this evidence is that Dba' bzhed proper predates circa 1200. The question arises: Can we squeeze anything further from the evidence? While this question has to be answered, most probably, in the negative, in the following section, we propose to examine the narrative relationship between Nyang ral and the Dba' bzhed in an effort to probe the lower chronology and more generally-explore the wider agendas of history writing in medieval Tibet.

## Reading Nyang ral against the Dba' bzhed

The relationship between Nyang ral and the *Dba' bzhed* and the date of the latter-can be understood from an overview of the competing nature of the two narratives. We start with Nyang ral. His work belongs to a turbulent period when different families and individuals were making claims to religious and political authority.<sup>35</sup> As a descendent in the Myang clan, Nyang ral belonged to an ancient and noble lineage, one long associated with Buddhism (as mentioned in the Dba' bzhed, e.g. folio 14v, 15r). However, Nyang ral offers not only a different history than the *Dba' bzhed*—in terms of the sequence of events and Padmasambhava's place in them-but a different vision of himself as an author and historical actor. In his representation, as touched on before, Padmasambhava comes to Tibet and initiates Khri Srong lde btsan in the ways of Tantra. He then conceals the guidebooks to these practices as hidden text treasures (gter ma). In a dramatic

<sup>33</sup> Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 174.

<sup>34</sup> Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 162–172, all of which is relevant.

<sup>35</sup> For the context in this paragraph we draw on Doney, *The Zangs* gling ma, 8-10.

narrative twist, Nyang ral inserts himself into the story as a reincarnation of Khri Srong lde btsan. As the king's reincarnation—and so the direct recipient of Tantric initiations three centuries before-Nyang ral recovers the gter ma composed by his master in the eighth century. By effectively bending time through a series of pre-incarnations what Hirshberg aptly describes as catenations-Nyang ral links himself to the establishment of Bsam vas and the imperial past. In fact, this is an understatement of Nyang ral's position: he is not simply linked to the imperial past, he is the imperial past pure and simple—a living witness to Padmasambhava, the introduction of Tantra and the building of the great temple. The boldness of this claim is astonishing, if somewhat surreal to modern eyes.

The historical vision of Nyang ral stands against the Dba' bzhed. Our text has little place for Padmasambhava and seeks to discount his importance. When we look at the organisational structure of the *Dba' bzhed* (see, again, Table 2.1), the entire Padmasambhava episode could have been dropped: his presence in Tibet has no lasting impact—aside from subduing a few malevolent deities. The narrative could have run easily from the mission of Dba' Gsas snang in China and the summoning of Śāntarakṣita (folio 10v) to the defeat of Bon in debate and the foundation of Bsam vas (folio 14r). Why, then, does the *Dba' bzhed* bother with recounting the activities of Padmsambhava if there is no enduring place for him? The reason is that the writers who assembled the Dba' bzhed could not ignore him. As we know from documents found at Dunhuang, Padmsambhava was already remembered as a significant figure in the religious landscape of the dynastic period by the late tenth century.36 If the vision of history set out in the Dba' bzhed was to have authority—and determine how historical precedent was to be used to guide the present it had to find a place for Padmasambhava, appropriately acknowledging his powers, yet relegating him to a place beneath the institutions and ordination lineages set in place by Śāntarakṣita and Dba' Gsas snang.<sup>37</sup>

Re-reading the Padmasambhava sections of the Dba' bzhed with this in mind, we note that the text does not involve Padmasambhava on the site of Bsam yas or the defeat of the anti-Buddhist deities there. Rather,

Śāntaraksita and Padmasambhava recommend that a divination expert from Nepal supervise the temple construction—a suggestion to which the king immediately agrees (folio 12r). Padmasambhava's performance of the divination ritual of the four great kings, used to subdue evil forces, is contextualised by Śāntarakṣita as a rite of state protection following precedents set in China (folio 11v). The text does not change the location of events from the royal palace and it is there that the divination is performed, duly witnessed by the court chamberlain (folio 12r). The Dba' bzhed thereby distances Padmasambhava from the site of Bsam yas.

Later in the story, Padmsambhava castigates the king for his narrow-minded attitude, sneers at the petty politics of the Tibetan court and makes derisory remarks about the king's gift of gold to him (folio 13v). From the late-twelfth century onwards, this could be read as a veiled criticism of Nyang ral—he is, after all, none other than Khri Srong lde btsan incarnate. The criticisms come directly from the mouth of his own master and rightly so: in violation of all teacher-student protocol, the king has the temerity to say that his master should return home to India. This encounter can be usefully contrasted with the deferential exchange between Dba' Gsas snang and Śāntarakṣita, when they first meet (folios 5v-6r). There the master-disciple relationship is a glowing picture of things as they should be.

Subsequent interactions between Khri Srong lde btsan and Dba' Gsas snang (who by this time has taken the name Ye shes dbang po, folio 17r) could be read as criticisms of Nyang ral also. Later in the story, the king is depicted as a hopeless character, unable to control the squabbling Buddhist monks (folio 18v-19r). With no idea what to do, he sends a desperate message to Ye shes dbang po who has gone into retreat for meditation: "Here all the monks are in conflict due to opposing (views). What should be done?" (folio 19r). When Ye shes dbang po refuses to budge, the king resorts to threats of violence: the hapless courtier Gnon Kham pa is told to go and fetch Ye shes dbang po; his certain death awaits if he fails. Out of compassion, Ye shes dbang po agrees to come, and so saves the poor man's life, but he does not hide his displeasure (folio 19r). He bluntly tells Khri Srong lde btsan that he should not have been disturbed over such a trivial matter, and that the disruption of his meditation will impact the king's life span and the stability of the dharma in Tibet. He then recommends that Kamalaśīla—Śāntaraksita's disciple—be summoned from Nepal so that doctrinal differences can be judged in the Bsam yas Debate (folio 19v). This representation of events lays the source of the whole problem on the doorstep of the king—and so Nyang ral—and places the solution neatly

<sup>36</sup> Perspectives on the Padmasambhava episode vary and the literature is extensive: Matthew T. Kapstein, Gray Tuttle, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Sources of Tibetan Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang (Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008); Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> See Doney, "Narrative Transformations," 315.

in the hands of Kamalaśīla and the designates of Ye shes dbang po. This confirms the stability and authority of their religious lineage. The Dba' bzhed even has the king (i.e. Nyang ral) declare that Ye shes dbang po is his teacher after his doubts are removed by "a proper account of the views of Bodhisatva and of the gradualists" (folio 19v).

Similar agendas can be seen in a part of the text dealing with the construction and consecration of Bsam vas (folio 16r). As noted above, Śāntaraksita tells Khri Srong lde btsan that Tārā stimulated his first wish for enlightenment, just as Tārā prompted the Buddha to begin turning of the wheel of *dharma*.<sup>38</sup> Why has this curious passage been added to the Dba' bzhed in the thirteenth century? Its manifest purpose is to detach Khri Srong lde btsan from the Mahāyoga of the Rnying ma and remind him, anachronistically, of his allegiance to the Bka' gdams pa school in which Tārā is venerated—notably by Atīśa (982–1054).39 This school advocated the gradualist approach, and it is the gradualists who are set to triumph in the coming debate at Bsam yas (folio 24v). The Dba' bzhed clarifies textual matters immediately after the debate: "From the Tantra corpus, Mahāyoga, taught without differentiating between pure and impure and meant for guiding non-Buddhists to virtue, was not translated suspecting that an erroneous understanding would arise from an improper comprehension of the basic elements of the dharma (dharmadhātu). Additionally, it was not translated for lack of a competent person in Tibet to serve (in the use of) the mantra-s." Although Padmasambhava was skilled in the use of mantra-s (openly admitted in folio 11v), there was no competent person subsequently and those outside the mainstream simply have no case and no texts. The Rnying ma are likely implied, but the Dba' bzhed is not going to dignify opponents by name: it is for readers to draw a line between the dots—or not—depending on their knowledge and inclination.40

Much of the cross-referencing in the Dba' bzhed may be hard to detect and we can claim to have tracked only the most basic and obvious links. Like every classic, the Dba' bzhed yields new meanings with each reading and like every classic it has inspired discussion through the centuries. What emerges is a work that is informed by the religious currents of the time, a text that was constituted in the dynamic world of medieval Tibet. The histories of the post-dynastic age are grappling with events long past, but they are not arguing about the basic facts—the temple at Bsam vas, King Khri Srong lde btsan, Padmasambhava and so forth. Rather, the issue is how these facts might be sequenced and interpreted, and how individuals and institutions might position themselves against the facts in a compelling way. If we accept that there is a narrative dialogue between the Dba' bzhed and Nyang ral with regard to these matters, this has implications regarding the date of the Dba' bzhed.

As noted in the previous section, based on the citation of the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma in circa 1225, the Dba' bzhed proper dates before this time. With Nyang ral born in 1124, the core of the *Dba' bzhed* proper—if it is understood as responding in part to Nyang ral as a charismatic leader-should have been assembled when Nyang ral was emerging as a powerful religious figure in the mid-twelfth century. 41 Our view is that the Dba' bzhed took shape rapidly at this time. The Dba' bzhed is not a text that evolved slowly, with accretions added here and there as the decades slowly passed. Rather, it is a text that formed quickly to meet the challenges facing those vying for the possession of Bsam yas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The cluster of chronological evidence for the *Dba' bzhed* points in this direction: the colophons added just after circa 1200, Krivāsamgraha material inserted in the late 1200s, the account of the miraculous Tārā inserted after circa 1250, the Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus appended toward the end of the 1200s. The *Me tog snying* po history, as redacted, then quotes the Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma in circa 1225. There cannot be much distance between circa 1200 and Dba' bzhed proper because the additions point to a flurry of text activity in the thirteenth century. And the fabric of the Dba' bzhed itself gives the

<sup>38</sup> See the section above on Dharmasvāmin.

<sup>39</sup> As evidenced by the Tārā temple (Sgrol ma lha khang) built by Atīśa's disciple 'Brom ston pa in the eleventh century at Snye thang, outside of Lhasa. Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, The Blue Annals, trans. George N. Roerich (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Soc. of Bengal, 1949; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), 263.

<sup>40</sup> For example, in folio 16r, after Khri Srong lde btsan receives instructions in the worship of Tārā and is meditating in the Ārya Palo shrine, "the inner courtiers and temple guards actually heard Ārya Havagrīva neigh three times." The vignette confirms the king's religious direction because Hayagrīva is an esoteric form of Padmasambhava and that deity empowers Padmasambhava in later redactions of the Zangs gling ma. The simple point here is that the worship of Tārā by the king (and by extension Nyang ral) is shown to be confirmed by

Padmasambhava. See Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer," 13; Doney, "Narrative Transformations," 318.

<sup>41</sup> Hirshberg, Remembering the Lotus-Born, 52 gives an outline of his life, noting that he received empowerments at the age of 13 (thus about 1137); two decades later he was probably at the height of his influence. Hagiographies often make their figures child prodigies, but a sceptical view leads us to temper the biographic representation, not dismiss it.

impression of text compiled in haste, with awkward juxtapositions, disjointed transitions and contradictions that are only seldom resolved. There is even uncertainty hovering over what to include and what to reject in the text proper, a point that is made especially clear in the case of the long insertion in a minute hand on folio 17r, discussed below in our folio-by-folio analysis. The rapid compilation of the *Dba' bzhed* from *circa* 1150 would help account for the other recensions of the Testimony of Ba, each seeking to expand or improve the narrative. The relationship between these many versions is not clear, but it is certain that there were a substantial number of them and that more copies of the recensions are likely to be found with the passage of time. An especially poignant indicator of the number and complexity of versions is the fact that the Dba' bzhed recension itself has no extant textual descendants.

# **Older Elements from the Dunhuang Fragment** and Mādhyamika Philosophy

The information given in the foregoing sections show that the *Dba' bzhed* existed in the late thirteenth century and if our further observations are accepted—that it was compiled rapidly from circa 1150. Yet, somehow, it seems much older, or presents itself as much older. As Louis Renou famously remarked: "Everything is much older and much newer than it seems." This is especially so in a text that attempts to map key moments from centuries before and draws on pre-existing texts to constitute its narrative. With many texts, there is a tendency among scholars to expect a long process of textual development behind the earliest version. Outside the Tibetan field, a good example is *The* Book of Enoch, an ancient Jewish work known only through secondary references in medieval sources for many centuries. In the 1700s, the first manuscripts were found—Ge'ez translations in Ethiopia. 42 The Ethiopian manuscripts do not pre-date the seventeenth century, but a papyrus folio of Enoch, found in the nineteenth century and now in the Chester Beatty Library, belongs to the fourth century CE. This is impressively early, but the situation was transformed in 1948 when Aramaic fragments were discovered in the caves at Qumran. 43 These pushed back the manuscript history of Enoch to the first century BCE.

What Qumran is for *The Book of Enoch*, the famous 'library cave' at Dunhuang is for the Dba' bzhed. Among the manuscripts found at Dunhuang is a fragment reproduced and discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume by Sam van Schaik.44 The physical manuscript fragment cannot be later than circa 1000, since it had been re-used by the time that the cave was closed in the early 1000s. Given that the text on that fragment is close to what is found in the Dba' bzhed, the fragment suggests that the Dba' bzhed narrative, or its prototype, predates circa 1000. It is also important to remember that the Dunhuang fragment was out of reach for centuries, sealed in a cave until modern times. With the parent manuscript destroyed long ago, the certain conclusion is that there were other copies of the same text in circulation and that one these copies (or a fragment of it) informed the exemplar on which the Dba' bzhed was based in the twelfth century. However, before we proceed with the implications of these facts, we are obliged to ask what we mean by the Dba' bzhed. To put the matter in a more precise way, what is the purpose of the *Dba' bzhed* as it stands in the manuscript presented in this volume and in the other versions of the *Testimony* of Ba?

While the scope of the original Dunhuang text is unknown to us, Śāntaraksita's existence is verified externally by Dunhuang documents (see, again, Chapter 3). It is not surprising to find other accounts of his arrival in Tibet in the genres of literature that are found at Dunhuang. What makes the fragment notable is the close correspondence of its wording to the Dba' bzhed (folios 7r-7v). This shows that a copy of the Śāntarakṣita narrative was available and incorporated as a vignette within the Dba' bzhed (and Testimony of Ba tradition). However, the Śāntaraksita narrative cannot be construed necessarily as an early form of the Dba' bzhed because it does not document Dba' Gsas snang—or any other member of his family—as a protagonist. The Śāntaraksita episode was certainly taken into the *Dba' bzhed*, but it was redacted in the process. This is shown by the wording: the repeated assertion that three men went to interview Śāntarakṣita-said thrice in as many lines-reveals a level of insistence that immediately prompts us to doubt the testimony: "The lady doth protest too much methinks." RBA 2011.1-discussed in Chapter 1, above, and itself redacted but preserving a more archaic version of the story-gives a different account of the individuals present at this key historical event: it

<sup>42</sup> Robert H. Charles, The Book of Enoch (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917).

<sup>43</sup> Józef Tadeusz Milik and Matthew Black, The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

<sup>44</sup> First discussed in Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang," Journal of the American Oriental Society 128, no. 3 (2009): 477-487.

says that the initial encounter with Santaraksita involved Rgyal Sbrang legs gzigs and Gnyer bskyum pa. 45 The team increases to three a little later in the story, among them 'Ba' Sang shi, as in the Dba' bzhed. This shows that there were disagreements about the people who were present at the investigation of Śāntarakṣita, even among manuscripts of the same date. The repeated insistence in the Dba' bzhed on three people was made against texts that stated otherwise. However, no matter how we read the relative relationship of the Dba' bzhed to other versions of this event, they do not change the fundamental nature of the evidence from Dunhuang: the fragment simply does not document the presence of the Dba' family. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as part of the text we now call the Dba' bzhed without corroborating evidence. To us, the only thing that the Dunhuang fragment shows is that earlier post-dynastic materials were available to the compilers the *Dba' bzhed*.

Another old motif within the Dba' bzhed is found in folio 22v, where Sang shi discusses doctrinal issues as part of the great debate. The nature of the text in this and adjacent folios is discussed in Chapter 6. From the chronological point of view, the only matter of concern is the fact that Sang shi refers to the three schools of Mādhyamika. These three schools find first mention in the work Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (circa 1055–1145).46 This portion of the text is thus an anachronism and cannot predate the first half of the eleventh century. This is the earliest possible date; it could have been added subsequently. The date of the incorporation could perhaps be traced from the circulation and citation of the work of Pa tshab Nyi ma grags. 47 In our discussion of Nyang ral (given above) we argued that the evidence suggests that the Dba' bzhed took shape around 1150. The mention of the three schools in Sang shi's speech thus seems to represent developments that were emerging in Tibetan thinking in the second half of the eleventh century. The reference to the three schools is accordingly part of the oldest materials assembled in the Dba' bzhed.

# Compilation, Notation, Redaction

The discussion so far has helped frame the textual processes taking place in the Dba' bzhed and the ways in which source materials were redacted as they were pulled into its narrative. The folio-by-folio notes given below provide specific examples as well as further observations. The ways in which primary sources were used shows how the authors and redactors of the Dba' bzhed drew conclusions from the evidence before them that accorded with their readings, their world views and their historical ambitions. The history of the imperial age in Tibet is not a set piece: from the eleventh century to the present, different narratives of the Yar lung past have existed side-by-side and in dialogue. This is because medieval religious histories, including the Dba' bzhed, have a purpose. They are concerned, at their heart, with describing the individuals, institutions, texts, and ritual practices in which the dharma properly resides. This is a key point. Historical narratives are used to name the legitimate dharma-holders who merit the trust and support of the faithful and exclude those who are not. With regard to some, such as the followers of the instantaneous path and Bon, one side may have sought to show themselves perfectly right and the other side hopelessly wrong. Yet, within the closer community and religious fold, the texts have a nuanced rhetorical and hierarchical relationship in which each side seeks to absorb, surpass and subordinate the other.

As the composition and redaction of the texts continued, an important part of the process was the understanding that writers had of themselves as authors and commentators. If we look at the pages of the Dba' bzhed manuscript we see this seemingly abstract idea in action before our very eyes: individuals have not just read the text, they have picked up their pens and inserted corrections and explanations. They have done this because they knew that they had valid points to make: in essence, they knew they were right. There is simply no other reason for the notations we see in the manuscript. This means that the text was fluid, and that its transmission involved alteration, correction and supplementation. One of the clearest statements of this in mainstream Buddhist literature is found in the Milindapañha, from the early centuries of the Common Era, where the protagonist Nāgasena outlines his vision of textual sources and his relationship to them.48

<sup>45</sup> The version we term RBA 2011.1; see "Rba bzhed (Zi ling 2011): Annotated Transcription." Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo. 3359899. See also discussion under folio 7v below.

<sup>46</sup> Ruegg, Buddha-Nature, 80 and Chapter 5.

<sup>47</sup> A start may be had from Leonard van der Kuijp, "Notes on the Transmission of Nagarjuna's Ratnavali in Tibet," The Tibet Journal 10, no. 2 (1985): 3-19; David P. Jackson, "Madhyamaka Studies Among the Early Sa-skya-pas," The Tibet Journal 10, no. 2 (1985): 20-34.

<sup>48</sup> V. Trenckner, The Milindapañho: Being Dialogues Between King Milinda and the Buddhist Sage Nāgasena (Oxford: Pali Text Society,

As sire, all the water that has rained down on the low-lying and elevated, the even and uneven, and the swampy and dry parts of a district, on flowing away from there collects together in the ocean of great waters—even so, sire, if there be a recipient, whatever are the sayings on the nine-limbed word of the Buddha that relate to submissive habits, to the practice and to the noble limbs of the special qualities of asceticism, all will be collected together here. Illustrations for the reasons out of my wide experience and discernment will be collected here also, sire, and by means of them the meaning will be well analyzed, ornamented (vicitta, suvicitta), filled out (paripuṇṇa), and completed (samānīta or pūrita samattita). As, sire, a skilled teacher of writing, on showing some writing if he is requested to do so, fills out the writing with illustrations for the reasons out of his own experience and discernment, so that that writing will become finished and accomplished and perfect (anūnika), even so, illustrations for the reason out of my wide experience and discernment will be collected together here also, and by means of them, the meaning will become well analyzed, ornamented, filled out, quite pure, and completed.

This passage in the Milindapañha is essential for cultural historians who seek to understand the evolving place of a text in a Buddhist society. To return to our archaeological analogy: there is no essential core behind the accretions, extrapolations and representations. A habitation site is an accumulation of many layers, built up over time. Each layer is simply one in the sequence. A controlled excavation involves a recognition and description of the sequence, not judgements about what is good or bad.

In a similar way, our approach does not deny the validity of text-critical methods or stemmatics. It hardly needs saying that texts are related to other texts and that the differences have chronological implications. Thus here we have sought to show how the Dba' bzhed evolved with time and in relation to other works. We set out this thinking—perhaps somewhat basic in theoretical terms because it determines how we should assess and use the *Dba' bzhed* and its sister versions. In the remaining parts of this chapter, we make a number of observations on the text and draw conclusions that seem relevant with this position in mind. Given that the assessment of the Dba' bzhed, its notations and its sister versions is still in its infancy, hopefully this will open new avenues of analysis for the future.

# Observations

# Folio 1r49

The first folio carries the title and a subsequent library notation. A similar notation appears on the first folio of the RBA 2011.1, discussed in Chapter 1.50 These notations suggest that both manuscripts were held in the Gnas bcu lha khang, located on the second floor of the main assembly hall within the 'Bras spungs monastery, but were collected, perhaps before the eighteenth century, from libraries outside (phyi) 'Bras spungs.51

#### Folio 1v

The first page of proper text displays notations and erasures that are indicative of what we encounter throughout the rest of the manuscript. The first page of the scribe's exemplar was evidently in a poor state and the person who wrote the manuscript before us faced problems making sense of his source and what he should write. Notably, in line 5, there is a space in the running text. Although no words are missing, some letters have been scrubbed out, leaving a smudge; no text is written in the space. This may be simply a badly corrected mistake, yet it seems more likely that the source manuscript was damaged and that the scribe anticipated the wording incorrectly.

The opening page provides a synopsis of the work as a whole with an abbreviated account of the dharma kings: 1) Lha Tho do re snyan btsan, in whose time texts were first found, 2) Khri Srong btsan, in whose time traditions were instituted for practising the dharma, 3) Khri Srong lde btsan, in whose time the dharma was propagated, and 4) Khri Gtsug lde btsan, in whose time the dharma was codified fully.

When we turn to related versions of the *Testimony of* Ba, the enumeration is different. In RBA 2011.1—an old

<sup>1997), 349,</sup> Isaline B. Horner, Milinda's Questions (London: Luzac, 1963), vol. 2, 202 with her footnotes that are essential for the understanding of this difficult passage.

<sup>49</sup> Throughout this section, readers are referred to the archived version of the Dba' bzhed manuscript with each folio and line numbered: Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359902.

<sup>50</sup> Photo-lithograph facsimiles available at Rba bzhed (Zi ling 2011), http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359897 and a transcription prepared from them at Rba bzhed (Zi ling 2011): Annotated Transcription. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3359899. Hereinafter referred to as

<sup>51</sup> These observations drawn from Cécile Ducher, "A Lineage in Time: The Vicissitudes of the rNgog pa bka' brgyud from the 11th through 19th Centuries" (Thèse de doctorat, l'Université de recherche Paris Sciences et Lettres, 2017), 41-45, for which reference I am grateful to Lewis Doney.

copy of about the same date as the manuscript under study—an earlier king is inserted at the start: Khri Thog je thog btsan. In his time, we are told, cymbals sounded from the realm of the gods, presaging the coming of the *dharma*. The next king, Lha Tho do re snyan btsan, is denied the epithet *lha* and is called simply Tho tho re snyan btsan, while Khri Srong btsan is given the epithet *sgam po* ('the profound').<sup>52</sup> This reveals something of the nature of RBA 2011.1, in that those who copied and redacted the text felt compelled to name the king with his post-dynastic title, rather than allowing the story to explain how Khri Srong btsan acquired the name *sgam po* (as in the *Dba' bzhed*).

**Line 6:** The position of the *Dba' bzhed* against other versions is also shown by the notation *khri btsun* added below line 6. This is an epithet of the Nepalese queen known as Bal mo bza' or Bhṛkuṭī. The point here is that the person who complied the *Dba' bzhed* did not have any further particulars of the queen in the exemplar, so this was supplied subsequently when the epithet *khri btsun* was known and used. In RBA 2011.1, we find that the detail about the queen is not yet added.<sup>53</sup> This means that the absence of an epithet for the queen in the *Dba' bzhed* is not an incidental or idiosyncratic omission and that, at the earliest level of this historical tradition, the queen was known simply as Bal rie'i bu mo.

Also of note, the following sentence in line 6 is absent in RBA 2011.1: "Furthermore, the temples of the four administrative divisions were constructed at the king's behest." The word *gzhan yang* in the *Dba' bzhed* shows that this is a supplement and that RBA 2011.1 preserves an earlier version of the text that did not contain this statement. The notation to line 6 in the *Dba' bzhed* then raises the number of temples to forty-two. The literature on this point is given by Wangdu and Diemberger, who note that the *Ma ni bka' bum* knows a scheme of twelve temples. This heterogeneous collection of 'treasure texts' was found by Grub thob dngos grub at Lhasa in the 1100s. The text then passed to Nyang ral and Rje btsun Shakya bzang

po (the latter lived to the mid-thirteenth century). In the assessment of Matthew T. Kapstein, the Ma ni bka' bum collection was in existence by 1250.57 The scholar Mkhas palde'u, whose histories date to the second half of the thirteenth century, adduced that king Khri Srong btsan built forty-two temples. 58 The trajectory of the textual tradition is accordingly clear. At the earliest level in RBA 2011.1, there is no tradition, or at least none deemed worthy of record, but by the time of the *Dba' bzhed*, there are four royal temples. Concurrently, according to Nyang ral and his followers, there were twelve temples, but by the second half of 1200s, forty-two temples were recorded. This indicates that the notation mentioning forty-two temples in the Dba' bzhed belongs to the late thirteenth century or somewhat later, and that it was added by someone who likely knew the histories of Mkhas pa lde'u or the latter's source.

#### Folio 3r

**Line 1:** After the success of the Tibetan mission to China, the ambassadors stay on. It seems unlikely that the envoys would be "detained" for two months *following* their audience; accordingly, we understand *bton* as *ston*, both pronounced the same in modern speech. This yields the probable meaning of the mission being "entertained" for two months.

**Line 3:** When they return, the name of the palace in which the king resides is Lhan kar ta mo ra. This name is probably based on a middle Indo-Aryan word akin to *alaṃkārottama* (the 'uppermost ornament'). The name appears in folio 31r as Lhan dkar ta mo ra.

**Line 4:** Here begins a story inserted from an external source, named below in folio 4r as the *Lung bstan chen po* ("*Great Prophecy*"). This is the first indication of the older sources that are brought into the *Dba' bzhed*, with this portion naming the title of the work quoted.

### Folio 4r

**Line 1:** The end of the vignette from the *Lung bstan chen po* is marked with double *shad* or *daṇḍa* marks and spaces, supporting the assessment that this is a genuine insertion from an outside source, and so indicated in the exemplar, rather than being a literary device introduced to excuse the dra-

**<sup>52</sup>** RBA 2011.1, 1v.

**<sup>53</sup>** The absence is seen at RBA 2011.1, 1v:5.

**<sup>54</sup>** The absence is seen at RBA 2011.1, 1v:5. The four temples are discussed in Michael Willis and Tsering Gonkatsang, "Armlet of the Pinnacle of the Noble Victory Banner: Locating Traces of Imperial Tibet in a Dhāraṇī in the British Museum," in *Locating Religions*, ed. Reinhold Glei and Nikolas Jaspert (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 351–52, see DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004335066\_013. As noted in this paper, the four temples betray the idea of a *maṇḍala* arrangement, something more associated with Khri Srong Ide btsan, see Skar cung Inscription, line 12 (see online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.8).

<sup>55</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 26, n. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Martin, Tibetan Histories, no. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation and Memory* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 146

<sup>58</sup> Sørensen, Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 568.

Table 2.2: Lists of temples in the source texts

DBA' 2000	Temples	RBA 2011.1	Temples	Skar cung	Temples
		Khri thog je thog btsan			
Lha tho do re snyan btsan		Tho tho re snyan btsan			
Khri Srong btsan (MS folio 1v., line 6)	Ra sa, Brag mar image and four tem- ples	Khri Srong bstan gam po (MS folio 1v., line 5)	Ra sa, Brag mar image	Khri Srong brtsan (SIDDHAM INTIB 1.1.8, line 4)	Ra sa and others
'Dus sro po rje rlung nam (MS folio 4r, line 2)	Glang gi ri rtse, anno- tations: ब्लेट्लेब्लिक्टे	['Dus is not listed]		Khri 'Dus srong (SID- DHAM INTIB 1.1.8, line 12)	Gling gi khri rtse and others
Khri Lde gtsug brtan (MS folio 4r., line 3)	'Ching bu nam ra, Kwa chu in Brag dmar, 'Gran bzangs, 'Khar brag, and Smas gong	Khri Gtsug btsan (MS folio 2v., lines 8–10)	Lha sa 'Khar phug, Brag dmar 'Gran bzan, Ma sa gong, 'Ching pha naṃ rar	Khri Lde gtsug brtan (SIDDHAM INTIB 1.1.8, line 10)	Mching phu and Kwa cu in Brag mar
Khri Srong lde btsan (MS folio 6r., etc.)	Bsam yas in Brag dmar	Khri Srong lde btsan	[MS breaks off at Śāntarakṣita's stay at Lhasa]	Khri Srong lde brtsan (SIDDHAM INTIB 1.1.8, line 12)	Bsam yas in Brag mar and others
Khri Gtsug lde btsan, annotation: ম্বাহাত্তর (MS folio 1v., line 2 and MS folio 25v., line 1).	No temple; texts translated and old translations revised; Vinaya tightened	[last portions of text not preserved]		[not named in the inscription]	
Khri Lde srong btsan (MS folio 25v., line 6)	No temple; <i>Shes rab</i> 'bum translated	[last portions of text not preserved]		Khri Lde srong brtsan (SIDDHAM INTIB 1.1.8, line 15)	Skar cung and others
Mu ne btsan po (MS folio 26r)	Appears in the annex as the son of Khri Srong lde btsan			[not named in the inscription]	

conian measures of King Khri Srong btsan on the grounds that he is Avalokiteśvara. The compilers of the *Dba' bzhed* evidently saw this as a sufficient appeal to textual authority to explain the king's policies (repealed subsequently in the time Khri Srong lde btsan, see folio 17v).

Line 2: Here we have brief mention of the ruler 'Dus sro po rje rlung nam. This king is not listed in the opening summary (folio 1v above), giving this the appearance of an inserted portion of text. His building of the Glang gi ri tse is recorded, but this information is subject to several notations in the manuscript. The name is corrected to Gling gi khri tse and we are told in a further notation that this place was in Khams. As Per K. Sørensen notes, this geographical information was known to Bu ston, so the origin of the notations may date to the fourteenth century.59

'Dus sro(ng Mang) po rje rlung nam was followed on the throne by Khri Lde gtsug brtan. He is credited with five temples (see Table 2.2). As can be seen from the table, the spelling of his name conforms to that given in the Skar cung Inscription. Slightly later in the Dba' bzhed (line 5), brtan has become btsan. The older spelling has been replaced by the standard later form. The same orthography is found in RBA 2011.1 too, also shown in the table. This confirms our earlier conclusion that RBA 2011.1, although based on an archaic prototype, was subject to redaction.

The temples that Khri Lde gtsug brtan built are listed in Table 2.2 and, as this shows, only two of these are listed in the Skar cung Inscription. Comparison with RBA 2011.1 reveals how two temples developed into five. RBA 2011.1 has only four and does not mention Kwa chu, a temple

<sup>59</sup> Sørensen, Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 569; Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 33, n. 53 notes that this temple is as-

signed to Khri Lde gtsug btsan in a number of sources rather than 'Dus srong.

that appears consistently in later versions of the *Testimony* of Ba. 60 This is telling because although RBA 2011.1 shows itself redacted in a number of places, the omission indicates that the listing of the temples attributed to Khri Lde gtsug brtan was in formation when the texts were being complied. Moreover, the absence of Kwa chu in RBA 2011.1 shows the list was developed textually, without reference to epigraphic records.61

### Folio 4v

**Line 2:** Here begins the story of the old Hwa shang sent back to China during the reaction against Buddhism after the coronation of Khri Srong lde btsan. He drops one of his shoes along the way. When this is discovered, it is understood as an omen presaging the future return of the dharma to Tibet. In the sixteenth century, Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba declared this episode to be a later addition.<sup>62</sup> While a comprehensive study of his readings is beyond the scope of the present discussion, we note that the story is in place in RBA 2011.1. This shows that it was embedded across several versions of the text by the end of the twelfth century. 63 What seems to inspire Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba's statement is the comment at the end: mchis skad, i. e. "So it is said." Perhaps this signalled that the story was not based on textual authority.

**Line 5:** The interdiction against Buddhism here can be glossed: "In the event that anybody is found practising the dharma, he shall be banished alone (i.e. without family and property) forever," (brgya la chos byed pa cig yod na pho reng du gtan spyug go zhes). Wangdu and Diemberger proposed that the reading be corrected to: rgya'i chos la byed pa cig vod na based on SBA 1982 where the reading is: rgya'i lha chos bgyid pa gcig mchis na.64 The use of the word brgya la is archaic but clear; in RBA 2011.1 this is rendered in a more updated fashion: rgva la chos byed pa zhig mchis na pho reng du gtan nas spyug go.65 The Dba' bzhed reading is thus preferable in terms of the first compila-

tion: the proclamation circumscribes all forms of dharma practice, not just Chinese. In later times, as brgva la fell out of use, there may have been a development of some kind of anti-Chinese sentiment, as Sørensen has suggested. 66 Yet, it is also possible that the correction comes from the Chinese content of the surrounding text: the Chinese image is ordered back to China, the old Hwa shang is sent back to China but leaves behind a shoe that hints at the return of Buddhism, temples are damaged and the tshe ritual suppressed. After some people are brutally eliminated, discussion turns to whether the Chinese image was threatening or harmful. As the text was transmitted, this content may have led to the assessment that brgva laprobably available to later scribes in copies that mostly read rgya la—really meant rgya'i lha. This change was in place by the time of Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba, thus in the early sixteenth century.

**Line 7:** In the context of the elimination of some apparently non-Buddhist Tibetans, we find the reading skams for which we understand skam. This generally means 'desiccated' or 'dried out' which might make sense if the person was exposed and died of dehydration. However, the word could also be understood as representing the Indo-Aryan root śus-, 'afflict,' 'injure,' 'destroy,' which seems to make sense here.

### Folio 5r

Line 1: At this point, the Buddha image from China is discussed: "The question arose among everyone, high and low, whether the Chinese devatā was threatening or harmful in accord with divination and omens." The wording shows that these concerns were in wide circulation and publicly voiced. This finds a parallel the Skar cung Inscription. From line 29 onwards, the inscription explains of how attacks on the triple gem were to be refuted.<sup>67</sup>

As a result, the seats for the triple gem that were established and the dharma of the Buddha that was embraced by successive generations of the dynasty-by my father and the ancestors—were lovingly protected in all circumstances; [and if] on account of omens in dreams, divination etc., or some other means [it was said]: "They are evil" or "They are inauspicious," that was not acted on and these words were said by great and small men alike: "They shall not be destroyed," "They shall not be renounced."

<sup>60</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 34, n. 57 contains a list of the variants.

<sup>61</sup> Compare Kapstein, Tibetan Assimilation, 35 where he posits that the *Testimony of Ba* was influenced by a pillar inscription.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 2.

<sup>63</sup> RBA 2011.1, 3r:10.

**<sup>64</sup>** SBA 1982.1–3, 9.14–15. Online at Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/ zenodo.833781. Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 37, n. 71. There, they also give the reading in Mkhas pa'i dga' ston.

<sup>65</sup> RBA 2011.1, 3r:6. The word rgya la is written in an abbreviated way, but the reading is confirmed in line 8 of the same folio: sha kya mune'i mes po rgya gar.

<sup>66</sup> Sørensen, Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 596, cited and endorsed by Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 37, n. 71.

<sup>67</sup> The text now online as SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.8.

The similarity suggests that the *Dba' bzhed* is drawing on a source text that is related to the Skar cung Inscription but not directly from it.

Line 3: Here, Dba' Gsal snang—the main protagonist—is introduced suddenly for the first time. Throughout the rest of the text, the spelling of his name is Dba' Gsas snang. Moving to RBA 2011.1, there are two forms. At his first appearance, he is called Sba Gsas snang. 68 Later, we have Dba' Gsas snang.69 Naturally, we should like to know the historical reasons for these variations. Firstly, the use of Sba when the protagonist is introduced in RBA 2011.1 can be explained as reflecting a redaction that happened when Sba was circulating as the dominant form of the name. As noted above in our discussion of Nyang ral, this spelling was current during the opening part of the thirteenth century. The redactions in RBA 2011.1 thus relate to the textual milieu of that time. The use of Dba' Gsas snang at RBA 2011.1 folio 4v:1 appears in the context of the king's command and seems to represent a fossilised borrowing from the parent text. This parent is not the Dba' bzhed as we have it, but a related version that has not been traced or has not survived. By the mid-fourteenth century, the accepted form was Sba Gsal snang, and so it has remained.70 This shows that the first use of Dba' Gsal snang in the *Dba' bzhed*—at folio 5r:3—betrays the textual currency of the time of the copy of the manuscript before us, probably in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. It is also possible that the reading comes from the exemplar, meaning that Dba' Gsal snang and Dba' Gsas snang were available variants in the twelfth century. However, by the mid-fourteenth century, as just noted, both had fallen from use. For allied problems about Gsas snang's ordination name, see notes to folio 6r:3.

**Line 6:** In the episode involving the insertion of a pearl in the mouth of Gsas snang's deceased child, the meaning is made difficult by the introduction of the Indic term śarīram. 71 The sense is that relics (śarīram) of a bodily nature emerged from the bones of the children. Perhaps when their bones were broken open small spherical objects, normally identified as śarīradhātu, were found. For this context see Dan Martin's work on relics. 72

### Folio 5v

**Lines 3–4:** Gsas snang performs  $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$  in India and rain falls in the middle of winter, i.e. December-January, an unusual occurrence. New leaves also appear; normally they come with the Monsoon in June. In Nepal, a ritual is performed called sarva wang se. This appears to represent Indic sarvavamśe and be a śraddha connected with all forebears. In other versions the term is qualified with *ston* mo, a feast or banquet.73

#### Folio 6r

Line 1: When Gsas snang meets Bodhisatva (=Śāntarakṣita), the latter uses the term śrī śrī btsan po ("his noble majesty"), a particularly Indic wording and thus an early form.

**Line 3:** The phrase ye shes dbang po dbyangs su dgags so is explained with the notation: dbang po dgags so zer. The hand of the notation and main text are the same, showing the notation was probably in the exemplar. In this instance, the notation is telling us that ye shes dbang po is meant, i.e. that dbyangs is extra. Although dbyangs (or ghosa) appears often in Buddhist contexts as the last part of a name (notably *Dba' bzhed* folio 15r, where Dba' Lha btsan takes the name Dba' Dpal dbyangs on ordination), it is not testified otherwise for Ye shes dbang po. This is the earliest appearance of the name Ye shes dbang po in the Dba' bzhed and what we see here documents an early form of his name that disappears later in this text and in other versions. We have already noted early variations in the name of Dba' Gsas snang above, while discussing folio 5r:3.

### Folio 7v

**Line 2:** Here is the crucial moment when the king sends envoys to meet with Bodhisatva. The members of the team are three in number: (1) Sbrang Rgyal sbra legs gzigs, (2) Seng 'go Lha lung gzigs and (3) 'Ba' Sang shi. There are slight but significant differences in RBA 2011.1 (folio 4v:2). Before the envoys are sent, Gsas snang returns to the palace. This statement is inserted to make Gsas snang present when the king orders two men to go and interrogate Śāntaraksita. Then, these men are named as (1) Gnyer bskyum pa and (2) Rgyal Sbrang legs gzigs.

**<sup>68</sup>** RBA 2011.1, 3r:9 = DBA' 2000, 5r:3

<sup>69</sup> RBA 2011.1, 4v:1 = DBA' 2000, 7r:2.

<sup>70</sup> Sørensen, Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 367,

<sup>71</sup> For this episode see Kapstein, Tibetan Assimilation, all of is chap-

<sup>72</sup> Dan Martin, "Crystals and Images from Bodies, Hearts and Tongues from Fire: Points of Relic Controversy from Tibetan History," in Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, ed. Shoren Ihara and Zuiho Yamaguchi (Naritasan Shinshoji: Narita, 1992), vol. 1, 183-191.

<sup>73</sup> As noted in Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 39, n. 81.

As noted in our discussion of the Dunhuang fragment, above, the *Dba' bzhed* is redacted at this point. The three names are emphasised in a way that raises suspicions; RBA 2011.1 with its two names appears to offer a more antique reading. This assessment is supported by the name Rgyal Sbrang legs gzigs. A comparison of the names in the two versions suggests that Sbrang has been added as a clan name in the *Dba' bzhed* to clarify his position as a minister. This is confirmed by the witness of the Dunhuang fragment, which gives the name of the minister as Rgyal sgra legs [\*gzigs]: zhang lon chen po rgyal sgra legs [\*gzigs].74

Slightly later in RBA 2011.1, three men return a positive verdict to the king after several months of questioning: (1) Sbrang legs gzigs, (2) Seng mgo Lha lung gzigs, and (d) Dba' Sang shi.75 The corresponding passage is in Dba' bzhed folio 8r, where only "Sang shi and others" are mentioned.

The varying details raise some points of interest. The name of one envoy is confirmed as Sbrang legs gzigs or, to give the more archaic form in the Dunhuang fragment, (Rgyal) Sgra legs [\*gzigs]. The addition of Sbrang at the start of his name in the Dba' bzhed is thus demonstrated to be a redaction. RBA 2011.1 is not entirely innocent of this process: Sang shi is given Dba' as a clan name. Some light is thus shone on the position and nature of RBA 2011.1. It is based on an old prototype, written in a simple style with none of the fine phrases in the Dba' bzhed. However, it has been redacted at a time subsequent to the Dba' bzhed, influenced by later manuscripts and subsequent religious concerns. This is shown particularly in folio 4r, where a brief account of Khri Lde gtsug btsan is given. In RBA 2011.1 we find the following additional statement inserted: "In Tibet, the noble doctrine of the Sūtra of Golden Light from China was rendered in ten volumes and due portions of the ritual performances were obtained; many musical techniques were adopted from China."76

We add [\*gzigs].

### Folio 9v

Sang shi meets Hwa Shang in China and receives a number of instructions for introducing the dharma into Tibet. The exchange concludes (line 6) with the remark that Sang shi received many prophecies like those just given. At this point, a double shad or danda marks the opening of a separate section, indicating the combination of two sources here.77

## Folio 10r

Continuing from the last line of the previous folio, the following sentences, down to line 5, use the double shad. Here further detailed prophecies and instructions are given, with the end shown by the comment "so it was said" (graso, with notation g to make gragso, i.e. grags so). Such abbreviations, not seen earlier in the manuscript, highlights that this material has been drawn from a separate source.

#### Folio 11r

After briefly mentioning that the king spoke in favour of the dharma while the envoys were away in China (in folio 10v), the narrative moves on quickly to Bodhisatva's invitation of Padmasambhava. Concurrently, Gsas snang invites a divination expert for the building of Bsam yas. The term rlungs la used in connection with Gsas snang's invitation is explained by Dotson in Chapter 4 of this volume. The expert does not reappear until folio 12r and the narrative turns to an account of the events that marked Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet. Thematically the Padmasambhava episode is self-contained. This has been pulled into the running narrative, as highlighted by the use of the verb form *red* (line 3). The same words are repeated in folio 11v:1. These are the only appearances of this verb form in the entire manuscript.78

<sup>74</sup> van Schaik and Iwao, "Fragments of the Testament of Ba," 484.

**<sup>75</sup>** RBA 2011.1, 4v:7–8. More on the clan name in the next paragraph. 76 RBA 2011.1, 2v:10 onward. For comments on the Sūtra of Golden Light, see Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, "A Perusal of Early Tibetan Inscriptions in Light of the Buddhist World of the 7th to 9th Centuries A.D.," in Epigraphic Evidence in the Pre-modern Buddhist World, ed. Kurt Tropper (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2014), 117-166.

<sup>77</sup> This device is also used to set apart the Lung bstan chen po, see folio 4r above.

<sup>78</sup> For the history of this form, Mingyuan Shao, "The Grammaticalization of the Copula Verb red in Tibetic Languages," Language and Linguistics 17 (2016): 679-715. https://doi.org/10.1177/1606822X16645742 for which reference we are grateful to Nathan Hill.

### Folio 12r

Line 7: Calamitous events are described as having taken place, repeating the phrases given in folio 11v:4. However, folio 11v describes them as having happened "last year" (na ning), while folio 12r says "previously" (gshe ni). The second seems slightly archaic, suggested also by the use of Ra sa (against Lha sa) in the same passage. The notation in folio 12r, written in dbu can, makes the correction to gzhe ning. This makes sense in itself but introduces a contradiction: in folio 11v the events occurred last year, but in folio 12r the events happen, with the notation, in the year before last. This reveals two points: (1) the first account of these events was corrected as the text before us was being copied out and edited (as recorded in folio 25v), so we find "last year" and Lha sa (as we might normally expect). The repetition has not enjoyed the same level of attention, so archaisms survive and the respectful adjective sku for the citadel has been omitted. This gives us some measure of the changes introduced across the whole of the present copy: when passages are repeated, it is always the first that is corrected, while the second is often left as it stands. (2) One of the notations in folio 12r adds sku, to match the previous page. This was done in a different hand and style than the notation changing gzhe ni to gzhe ning. This means that an earlier wave of notations makes folio 12r match folio 11v, but the second corrects a point in isolation, without reflecting on the implications of the change. This suggests that the later notations in dbu can, while perhaps correct in themselves, reveal the tendency of this commentator to impose hyper-corrections without a wider overview.

## Folio 13r

In this folio, the water for the king's lustration, brought magically from Aśvakarna by Padmasambhava, is rejected summarily by the chief ministers and poured out. Without a transition, Padmasambhava begins a disquisition about how Tibet could be made fertile and enters into meditation to effect the necessary changes. The non sequitur indicates that the two parts have been pulled into the narrative from separate sources. The rejection of Padmasambhava's proposals lead to his departure from Tibet.

#### Folio 14r

Line 6: After an account of the failed assassination attempt on Padmasambhava, the king feels despondent. The close of the story is indicated by a double shad. Moving abruptly to a new theme, probably from different source material, a debate is convened in the Pig Year.

#### Folio 14v

Line 5: Changing theme again, the Dba' bzhed records the founding of Bsam yas is announced in the spring of the Hare Year. Wangdu and Diemberger calculate that this corresponds to 763 or 775, with the completion in 779.79 The divination expert examines the site to good effect, but in line 7 the narrative breaks (by means of a double shad again) to give an account of conversions and ordinations.

### Folio 15r

Continuing the discussion of conversions and ordinations, the text mentions that Gsas snang built a temple at Glag and that the Buddha image was brought back to Ra mo che from Nepal (see folio 5r for its removal).

Line 3: The story returns to the decision to build Bsam yas in the Hare Year, showing the foregoing paragraphs have entered the text from a separate source. The continuing story adds further information about the temple's plan and construction.

#### Folio 15v

While describing the ritual examination and consecration of the site, this folio shows parallels with the Kri*yāsamgraha*. The chronological implications of this are discussed above in the main part of this chapter.

**Line 4:** The preceptor addresses the king's worries about the lack of an image-maker for the temple and says that only the requisites have to be supplied. The word used for requisites is yo byad (Skt. deyadharma), a well-known Buddhist monastic term that appears in the Bsam yas Inscription.80

<sup>79</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 63, n. 201, with further

<sup>80</sup> Text and translation of Bsam yas Inscription online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.3. For the term see Michael Willis, "Offerings to the Triple Gem: Texts, Inscriptions and Ritual Practice," in Relics and Relic Worship in Early Buddhism: India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Burma, ed. Janice Stargardt and Michael Willis (London: British Museum, 2018), 66-73. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1249658

Line 5: Here, Śāntaraksita poses a question about the images and whether they should be Indian or Chinese. In response, the king says that Tibetan models should be followed because these will inspire greater faith in Buddhism among his subjects. Where the text mentions Indian and Chinese (models), the word rgya'i (Chinese) is circled and corrected in a notation to bod gyi (Tibetan). This has been done to match the king's statement that the sculptures should be in the Tibetan style. We see here the process of redaction, carried out in order to give logic and symmetry to the text. However, there is rather more to the change than narrative consistency. The author of this notation cannot countenance the original because the text is reporting that the king overruled Santarakşita. As an individual with a wide knowledge of Buddhism, Śāntarakṣita knows of two possible sources for Buddhist imagery: India and China. More to the point, Śantarakṣita is a bodhisatva and the fountainhead of traditions in Tibet, especially from the perspective of the *Dba' bzhed*. For the commentator who has written the notation, the idea that this great sage should be contradicted or wrong is impossible.

The commentator's point of view reflects a later time, when great religious leaders were deemed infallible for all practical purposes. The style of writing of this notation is different from most of the other notations and subsequent to the present manuscript copy. This means that the notation was added after the text was copied out, so after circa 1400. The writing style is distinctive, being done with a fine-tipped pen in a learned style. Particularly indicative are the sharp ends to the ya letters. This same commentator has written notes on folio 17v:5, folio 22v:5, folio 23v:3, folio 24r:1 and 5 and folio 25v:6. The intervention on folio 22v is especially important from the historical point of view and will be dealt with below. At folio 25v, we see him correcting a statement concerning the translation of the Shes rab 'bum and the transformation of Tibet into a pure land of the Buddha. These notations show that the remark in folio 15v is not incidental. Rather, it comes from the hand of an individual who knows his religion, his history and his position.81 We dwell on this notation because it shows the problems of attempting a critical edition and, behind that, assuming that the reductive undertaking of a critical edition serves any useful purpose. From the historical perspective, there is no wrong or right in the readings: this text is showing us how readers approached the *Dba' bzhed* and interpreted it with the passage of time. Perspectives evolved and, with that, the text itself.

#### Folio 16r

In this folio, the temple's completion and consecration are mentioned. This is followed by a series of disjoined statements: there are a number of auspicious signs, the Chinese vermillion seller who made the images is found to have been an emanation and the preceptor speaks of Tārā's role in the instigation of the dharma. The chronological implications of the last point are explored in the main part of this chapter.

#### Folio 16v

With folio 16v:1, we come to the construction of the central shrine (dbu rtse). The king, once again, starts to wonder about the images. He has a dream in which a white man appears. Leading him to Khas po ri, the white man points to various rocks that have the appearance of buddhas and bodhisatva-s. When the king wakes in the morning, he proceeds immediately to the mountain where the rocks are seen to correspond to the dream. Craftsmen from Nepal are summoned to make the images and these are transported to the temple. They are installed amid auspicious signs; the upper parts of the images are dressed with clay (line 7).

This narrative is notably different from the earlier account of how the images were modelled on handsome young nobles, and the king's certain opinion that sculptures based on their appearance would inspire faith among his subjects. Although the architectural focus has shifted from the Ārya Palo shrine to the central shrine, two sources are indicated: a dream-dependent methodology as opposed to a practical choice based on living people. To keep both sources and harmonise their differences, the *Dba' bzhed* shifts the location. This is a useful device but the names demonstrate that we are dealing with a conflation of two narrative visions: the central shrine is called the Dri gtsang khang in line 6, but it is called the Gtsug lag khang in the context of the consecration in folio 17r.

One of the most remarkable features of the Dba' bzhed is that, despite the lengthy discussion of the Bsam yas temple and the pooling of source texts to give a full account, it makes no mention of the fact that the main

<sup>81</sup> The commentator was probably a man but not necessarily so, see Dan Martin, "The Woman Illusion?" in Women in Tibet, ed. Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 49-82.



Figure 2.4: Dba' bzhed manuscript, folio 17r showing the description of the Bsam yas temple inserted between line 5 and line 6 of the running text with further notations

image in the central shrine was Vairocana (Tib. Rnam par snang mdzad). This form of the Buddha was associated with an imperial cult, the foundational text being the *Mahāvairocanatantra*. This work—which took shape in the mid-seventh century-focuses on Vairocana, the first or primordial of the five wisdom buddhas.82 Śubhakarasimha translated the Mahāvairocanatantra into Chinese in 724 as 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (Da piluzhena chengfo shen bian jiachi jing); a Tibetan version was prepared slightly later by Śīlendrabodhi and Dpal brtsegs. These literary activities shed light on the kind of Buddhism advanced in eastern India, Tibet and Japan from the seventh century. It was, at heart, a royal cult centred on Vairocana with this all-seeing buddha at the centre of a circle of royal power.83 The absence of any mention of this in the Dba' bzhed shows the text is not concerned with giving an account of the political and religious matrix of the Yar lung dynasty, but more with establishing the authority of the abbots and ordination lineages in control of Bsam yas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.84

#### Folio 17r

In this folio, the architectural setting shifts again, this time to the four *stūpa*-s built around the main shrine of Bsam yas. Only one of them is described, the blue *stūpa*, though

82 Stephen Hodge, The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra, with Buddhaguhya's Commentary (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 11-14.

it is unclear why.85 Perhaps the magical installation of the dharma-cakra on top of the shrine, thanks to the four great kings, ties it to the divination of the four great kings performed in folio 12r. The patron of the blue *stūpa* is not stated.

The most conspicuous feature of folio 17r is the long insertion of an independent description of the Bsam yas temple in a minute hand (see Figure 2.4). This has even displaced the running text. We offer the following translation.86

Surrounded by a dark perimeter wall with gates in the four cardinal directions and four platforms for dismounting from horses. In the interior, the plaster floor (was) bright like a mirror upon which broad-beans rolled from the south reached the north gate. Inside the perimeter wall, not counting birds, animals were not allowed in and out.87 If people entered, they had to wash their feet. The outer temple Khams gsum was [donated] by Tshe spong za, the Sbu tshal by Pho Long za, the Dge rgyas by 'Bro za, [and] all the scriptures by Khri bzang yab lhag. That [i.e. the Bsam yas temple] which was thrice consecrated by Bodhisatva in the Sheep Year was like a heap of turquoise on the earth placed on a foundation of gold;88 finally, having gone to each and every image in the precinct of the central temple (dbu rste), he performed a religious ceremony (and) thereafter returning, everyone was seated in their respective seats. As a consequence the king was delighted.

As can be seen from Figure 2.4 and our transcription of the Tibetan, the place where this passage is supposed to be interpolated into the main text is marked clearly.

<sup>83</sup> First explored in Hugh Richardson, "The Cult of Vairocana in Early Tibet," in High Peaks, Pure Earth, ed. Michael Aris (London: Serinda, 1998), 177-181, elaborated in Willis, "From World Religion to World Dominion," with wider context outlined in Scherrer-Schaub, "A Perusal of Early Tibetan Inscriptions." See also Lewis Doney, "The Degraded Emperor: Theoretical Reflections on the Upstaging of a Bodhisattva King," Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines 49 (2019): 13-66.

<sup>84</sup> For the transformation, Doney, "Degraded Emperor."

<sup>85</sup> An interlinear note to 16v:7 contains details on the stupa-s also found in the later Testimony of Ba tradition, but this may be a coincidence rather than a sign that this information was originally in the main text of the Dba' bzhed (see Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer," 27-28, n. 51).

<sup>86</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 67-69 identify and discuss the individuals mentioned.

<sup>87</sup> Here 'grong can be understood as short for 'gro 'ong.

<sup>88</sup> We understand sa bkod pa lta ba as pṛthivīsamūheva.

The reason for the configuration of the manuscript can be understood from the narrative context. As just noted, the previous sections of the story describe the creation of images for the main temple and completion of the blue stūpa. Folio 17r and 17v follow this with mention of the people who were ordained and those who were taught the language of India. The text then moves to the king's proclamation and the steps taken to spread the dharma. It seems that the scribe of the current copy had the exemplar before him, but he noticed that there was no description of the temple there. He therefore turned to a text (perhaps a fragment) containing a description. To accommodate this, he left a blank. The end of line 5 says: "the Gtsug lag khang (gtsug lag khang)," and the start of line 6 says: "it was built (ni brtsigs)." Between these words, the scribe skipped a line for the extra material. Thanks to a slight miscalculation, the last part of the insertion spilled down to the foot of the folio (Figure 2.4). Matters are complicated by sub-notations, but the process of compilation is clear nonetheless: while the Dba' bzhed was copied from the exemplar, the text was being supplemented from other sources.

#### Folio 17v

In this folio, the account of those ordained concludes with a double shad. Then in line 3 we are told that the great consecration (pra ti chen po) was conducted in the Sheep Year. This is an unnecessary repetition given that the lengthy insertion on folio 17r has already recorded the temple consecration in the Sheep Year by Bodhisatva. The duplication, and lack of redaction, helps to confirm that the consecration did indeed take place in the Sheep Year: it is said in the exemplar and in the external source represented by the notation.

**Line 5:** The *Dba' bzhed* here describes the king's proclamation repealing the harsh punishments instigated by Khri Srong bstan. In a notation, it is said that oaths were taken and a stone pillar raised as a record (rdo ring btsugs). This is the only reference to a pillar inscription in the *Dba*' bzhed.89 This is written in a hand subsequent to the main copy of the manuscript, so it can be assigned to a period subsequent to circa 1400. Although this shows knowledge of a stone pillar inscription, presumably the one at Bsam yas, there is no intertextuality showing that the epigraphic text was consulted.

### Folio 18v

After discussion at court, Ye shes dbang po gives a ruling about monastic property: two hundred servants should be assigned to each monastery and three households to each monk. This refers to the 'upper share' or surplus assigned to the donee and documented by the copper-plate charters of the Pāla period in India.90

Ye shes dbang po then goes into retreat and, shortly after, sectarian conflicts begin to arise. Concerns about the role of the kalvānamitra and claims that he should exercise his authority and attend to the affairs of the religious community find an echo in the Skar cung Inscription but direct reference to the epigraphic text by the authors of the *Dba*' bzhed is not certain.91

Those causing particular sectarian trouble are mentioned, but the names Gnyags Bi ma la and Gnyags Rin po che look like a duplication: they both crushed their genitals, and below (in folio 20r) where the name and actions are given again Gnyags Rin po che is omitted. As seen elsewhere in the text, when sentences are repeated for the sake of the narrative, the second reading generally preserves an older or less redacted reading. In any event, the conflicts set the stage for a debate between the gradualists and those following the instantaneous path.

### Folio 20v

Line 6: After Hwa Shang has set out his views, Kamalaśīla begins a long rebuttal; this runs to folio 22r (line 5). Parallels are found in Kamalaśīla's Bhāvanākrama texts of which this appears to be a digest. Chapter 5 in this volume is given over to an analysis of these passages and the way in which the *Dba' bzhed* has pulled in source material to structure the narrative. A few supplementary remarks are added here.

<sup>89</sup> The text and translation of the Bsam yas Inscription is online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.3.

<sup>90</sup> Ryosuke Furui, Land and Society in Early South Asia: Eastern India 400-1250 AD (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020). A translation of the passage and an assessment of the Dba' bzhed in this regard was first given in Willis, "From World Religion to World Dominion," 249-50.

<sup>91</sup> The text and translation are online at SIDDHAM INTIB1.1.8 (line 37 on): "...the kalyāṇamitra will be selected from the devout guided toward *mokṣa* and from among those the most able, always selecting one whose doctrine is that of the Lord and one who is heeded also in (his) commands regarding the activities of the religious community of those who follow the doctrine of the Lord, and one who will exercise authority and attend to the affairs of the religious community."

### Folio 22r

**Lines 5–6:** A statement by the king is given in the text after Kamalaśīla's discourse: "The devaputra responded, ordering: 'The followers of the instantaneous and gradualist paths, as they please, must present their arguments in turn." After shal nas, a later hand has inserted khyed as an interlinear annotation. This form of the pronoun is honorific, softening the nature of the command. This suggests that the individual who wrote the notation was uncomfortable with the king's seeming lack of deference. The finely written letters show the intervention of the same person who commented on folios 15v and other pages. His meticulous interpolations, and the nature of his historical and doctrinal views, have already been noted and will draw attention in folio 22v.

The statement by Sang shi (from line 6) has been read as an elaboration of the gradualist position.92 It is, however, a moderate statement of instantaneous views, as explained here in Chapter 5. This created a problem for the compilers of the text and the general coherence of the narrative. Sang shi's key role in the history of Buddhism in Tibet—his presence at the first interview of Śantarakṣita at the command of the Tibetan king, his being part of the mission the king sends to China, his being recognised there as a bodhisatva, his receipt of good prophecies from an eminent sage in China and the gifts made to him by the Chinese emperor, and his participation with Śāntarakṣita and the Tibetan king in the foundation of Bsam yas-all make it rather hard to place him in the opposing, and ultimately defeated, theological camp. This apparently explains the cryptic wording of Sang shi's speech and his conciliatory tone: he that may be close to the Chinese position philosophically, but the narrative has been arranged so he is not made part of the instantaneous faction and their extremist activities and threats.

## Folio 22v

In this folio, Sang shi completes his theological statement with comments on the cause of sectarianism within the Buddhist tradition (line 4). Although these concerns are a recurrent theme in Buddhist histories, the statement is unique to the *Dba' bzhed* and its sister texts and does not seem to have a scriptural source. It is therefore worth noting, especially since it marks a moment of historical reflection.

The context (of these misunderstandings) is that after the Teacher had passed beyond sorrow, there were no doctrinal differences for a long time. Later on there emerged disagreements in the three schools of Mādhyamika in India and the fissure between the gradualist and instantaneous paths in China-not encountering (the Buddha), all the misunderstandings emerged. Otherwise, even though the approaches vary, the state of non-conceptualisation and non-observation are one. The result also, the striving for *nirvāṇa*, is one. This is universally agreed.

The gradualist and instantaneous paths are named here in abbreviated form (as in folio 22r:5 and folio 23r:2): ton tsen for ston mun pa (instantaneous) and rtsen min pa or rsten mun pa (gradualist). As noted in our discussion of chronology, above, the three schools of Mādhyamika are known only from the late eleventh century. Codicologically, the notations made on the original text are revealing. Because the verb (*zhig par gyur*) describing the break between the gradualist and instantaneous paths also technically applies to the schools of Mādhyamika, the commentator-whom we described in our discussion of folio 15v-has inserted a phrase giving an additional verb to describe the emergence of incompatible views. He then reorganises the sentence using superscript numbers. In his view the text should read as follows: kun ma mjal ba dang ma rtogs pa las gyur gyi. This can be glossed: "All emerged from the misunderstanding and the absence of encounters (with the Buddha)." The difference is subtle, but the scholar making these notations clearly felt that intervention here was needed.

#### Folio 25v

As noted in the main part of this chapter, this and the preceding folio carry the supplementary codas appended to the *Dba' bzhed* proper. At the start, it is reported that new texts were translated for the first time during the reign of Khri Gtsug lde btsan. The names of the three translators are given in abbreviated form: ka cog rnam 3. The full names may or may not have been known at the time that this manuscript was copied, but by the fourteenth century the complete names are recorded: "The translators [s]Ka ba dpal brtsegs, Klu'i rgyal-mtshan [of] Cog ro and bandhe Ye shes sde translated the Dharma [i.e. Buddhist treatises into Tibetan]."93 The name of the last mentioned appears elsewhere as Sna nam Ye shes de,94 so here Rnam is probably a mistake for Sna nam.

<sup>93</sup> Sørensen, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 412. 94 Sørensen, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, 399, n. 1359 and 412, n. 1430. Further observations are found in Wangdu and Diemberger, Dba' bzhed, 90, n. 346 and 96, n. 380

In line 6, it is said that the Shes rab 'bum was translated first in the time of Khri Lde srong btsan. The text was already recorded as being in Tibet and consulted for the Bsam yas Debate, see folio 19v. Taking the Dba' bzhed at face value, it seems to be saying the text was in Chinese because it was consulted by followers of the instantaneous path on that occasion.

#### Folio 26 r to 31r

Folio 26r contains the final coda recounting the death of 'Ba' Sang shi, followed by a separate section describing the funeral rites of Khri Srong lde btsan as organised by his son Mu ne btsan po. This section of the text, as noted above, has been discussed in detail by Brandon Dotson.

The remaining folios of the manuscript have relatively few erasures, corrections or notations. All features are given in our transcription, which can be compared to the original folios. The only point we would make in conclusion regards folio 31v. In line 1, exceptionally for the manuscript, a correction on a small slip of paper is pasted over one of the letters, giving the reading za. The person named has not been identified.