NEW EVIDENCE ON THE “RENOVATION INSCRIPTION” AT TABO MONASTERY*

KURT TROPPE

The partly obliterated inscription that forms the subject of this paper provides information on both the early history of Tabo monastery (Spiti, Himachal Pradesh) and the socio-religious situation of Western Tibet in the 11th century. The three editions that have been published so far could not make use of a handwritten draft which is to be found among the unpublished works of A.H. Francke (1870–1930). The missionary’s manuscript contains the oldest available documentation of the inscription and provides text for some passages where the three later editions feature a lacuna. The present paper assesses the variant readings in the three published editions and in Francke’s draft, taking into account the additional evidence of a detailed video-documentation of the inscription which the author was able to prepare in 2002.

INTRODUCTION

The so-called “renovation inscription” at Tabo monastery (Spiti, Himachal Pradesh) ranks among the most well-known epigraphic documents in the Western Himalayas. It has been edited and translated three times, namely by Tucci (1935, 195–204), Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999)² and Thakur (2001, 252–57). While the latter two publications are primarily based on in situ transcriptions made by the authors themselves, Tucci had

---

* The research for this article was made possible by the generous support of the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF). I am also indebted to Patrick McAllister, who kindly corrected my English.
1. For an English version of the original Italian translation, see Tucci (1988, 198–204).
2. The English translation provided in this article was also published in Steinkellner and Luczanits (1997).
to rely on a copy that was prepared for him in 1933 by a local assistant. As has already been pointed out by Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 9–10), Tucci’s edition features a number of misreadings and gaps, but it provides text for some passages that were not legible any more when the transcriptions for the two more recent editions were prepared. Thus Tucci’s study is of ambivalent value, but it is based on what so far had to be considered the earliest available documentation of the inscription.

Among A.H. Francke’s unpublished works kept at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz I was able to trace a draft of an edition cum translation of the inscription’s first five lines. The manuscript has been briefly mentioned by Walravens and Taube (1992, 105) and is to be found on pp. 6r.–6v. of a notebook catalogued as “Nachlaß August Hermann Francke (Tibetologe), Nr. XI”. The short draft renders the text of the inscription in dbu can letters together with an interlinear English translation. The headlines on p. 6r. read “No. 170, Inschrift Rta-pho 1–5, Joseph Gergan’s text & translation, 1921”, but both the Tibetan text and the English translation are written in Francke’s own hand. While it is clear, then, that he must have copied an earlier transcript of the inscription by his long-time assistant Gergan, the introductory information leaves some room for interpretation in other respects. Did Gergan copy only the first five lines of the inscription or does Francke’s manuscript just render the first half of a complete original transcription of all twelve lines? Was the translation already part of Gergan’s manuscript or was it prepared by Francke? And does the date refer to Gergan’s transcription in situ or does it specify the year when Francke prepared his own copy?

In trying to answer these questions, the following facts have to be taken into account: Francke himself visited Tabo from July 29th to 30th 1909 during an expedition he conducted for the Indian Government. In his report on this visit, he summarises and discusses parts of the inscription and mentions that he had several paintings and inscriptions copied at that time (Francke 1914, 41–43). In the introduction to his travelogue he also relates that he

---

3. I am grateful to Dr. Jutta Weber and Dorothea Barfknecht of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for providing me with Xerox-copies of the document and for granting permission to reproduce them in this article.

4. The numbering is probably used in continuation of the system to be found in Francke 1906 and Francke 1907, two self-published monographs dealing with 145 consecutively numbered inscriptions.

5. Samples of Francke’s handwriting in Tibetan and in English can conveniently be found in Walravens and Taube (1992, following p. 531).
engaged a “Tibetan” for the expedition who was to assist him “in the reading and copying of inscriptions and documents” (Francke 1914, 1). The name of this assistant is not given and I could not find any mention of Gergan in the whole volume, but as Gergan had been working with Francke for some time by then and as he had in fact been educated at the Church Missionary Society school in Shrinagar, it would not be surprising if the unnamed “Tibetan” was Gergan and if he had copied and translated the inscription on the occasion of the expedition in 1909. However, I am neither aware of any sources explicitly attesting to Gergan’s participation in the expedition nor do I know of any evidence categorically ruling it out.7

In contrast, it is well known that Gergan served at the Moravian mission in Kyelung from 1920/21 to 1926,8 which must have provided him with ample opportunities to visit Tabo in nearby Spiti. In fact, it is well attested that in 1921 and 1924 he visited Lalung, which is situated less than 20 miles to the north-west of Tabo (Shuttleworth 1929, 1). Moreover, pp. 7r.–8v. in Francke’s notebook (that is, the pages immediately following the draft on the inscription in Tabo) contain sketches for a publication on two inscriptions in the Lalung temple.9 Finally, the fraction of Francke’s numerous unpublished works which is kept at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin contains a second draft on the two Lalung inscriptions10 and its short introductory notes preceding the respective transcripts of the two inscriptions read as follows (all underlining by Francke; the words between asterisks are inserted above the line):

6. For biographical information on Joseph Gergan (c. 1878–1946), see especially Bray (1983 and 1994).
7. Note that Francke (1914, 27) provides the following information about his visit to Shipke in early July 1909: “As I was not allowed to proceed to mTholding and Tsaparang myself, I asked Lobzang, a former pupil of the Poo mission school, to go there and copy any inscriptions he could find. Accordingly he went alone from Shipke, and after twelve days he returned safely to Poo. He had, however, found no inscriptions of any antiquity at either of the two places”. It seems rather doubtful if the unnamed “Tibetan” and this “former pupil of the Poo mission school” are one and the same person. For, the latter appears to have been hired just for the mission to Tholing and Tsaparang, whereas the other expedition members mentioned in the introduction to the travelogue accompanied Francke on his entire journey.
9. One of these two inscriptions has recently been published by the author of this paper (Tropper 2008). Most regretfully, the second epigraph is not preserved any more.
10. On pp. 14v.–16v. in notebook 9 of section VII (cf. Walravens and Taube 1992, 103). The Tibetan text in section VII and XI is virtually identical and it seems that the short compositions in these two sections are successive drafts.
This inscription was found *by Joseph Gergan* in the Gser-khaṅ temple of Lha-luṅ, *Spyi-ti*. It was written on the south-wall with ink and copied *and translated* by Gergan. It has not yet been published. (p. 14v.)

And:

This inscription was also copied by Joseph Gergan on the west-wall of the Gser-khaṅ-temple of Lha-luṅ, Spyi-ti. He says that he copied 26 lines out of 56. The thirty 30 [sic; K.T.] remaining were probably too much destroyed for copying. It has not yet been published. (p. 15v.)

In the light of the evidence provided in the foregoing discussion and considering that the lower part of the inscription in Tabo is much more damaged than its upper half, it seems most likely to me (1) that Gergan only copied its first five lines, (2) that he also translated them and (3) that his master copy was prepared in 1921. A complete survey of Francke’s extensive unpublished legacy which is kept at many different places might eventually allow for a definite clarification and it is also possible that such a survey will unearth more material relating to the inscription. But whatever the case may be: It is beyond question that Francke’s manuscript is based on a transcription that was prepared earlier than the one Tucci had at his disposal12 and it thus constitutes an important document not only for further research on the “renovation inscription” in Tabo but for Tibetan epigraphy in general.

In what follows, I will assess all the variant readings in the three published editions and in Francke’s draft, taking into account the additional evidence of a detailed video-documentation of the inscription which I was able to prepare in 2002. More than 350 single exposures were extracted from this video-sequence and they can now be viewed at www.univie.ac.at/Tibetan-inscriptions.13

11. The inscription actually comprises 54 lines and Francke’s manuscripts cover its text up to line 24. For more details on this discrepancy, see Tropper (2008, 6).
12. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that even Francke’s manuscript itself must have been produced before Tucci’s master copy, as Francke died in 1930.
13. Links: –> Spiti –> Tabo –> ’Du khang –> Renovation Inscription –> Closeups (01–12). There the pictures are arranged line by line with varying degrees of overlapping. In cases of doubtful readings it might thus be helpful to look at the pictures of the lines above and below the passage in question as well. As websites — like inscriptions, funding for inscription projects and other worldly things — are often of an all-too transient nature, it should be noted that CD-copies (“CD Tabo, renovation inscription”) are kept in the library of the Department for South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at Vienna University and
EDITORIAL SYSTEM AND SIGNS

Below, Francke’s manuscript is presented in the form of a diplomatic transcription, rendering its layout as close as possible to the original. In the *apparatus criticus*, Francke’s reading (F) is first repeated and then the variants of Tucci (Tu), Steinkellner and Luczanits (SL) and Thakur (Th) are given after the colon. In those places where the inscription was sufficiently preserved in 2002 the correct reading is given in bold print. If the passage was already too obliterated to allow for a definite decision or if some additional notes seemed appropriate, the respective footnotes also contain my own comments and evaluations.

A minor but rather annoying problem I had to face in quoting the variant readings was the medley of editorial signs that were used in the three published editions and in Francke’s draft. Moreover, only Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 15) and Thakur (2001, xxii) provide a *conspectus signorum* and in some respects the various systems that were used in all four versions simply could not be harmonised without overriding the objective evidence provided in these sources. With regard to the editorial signs, I have therefore rendered the readings in exactly the same way in which they are given in each of the four versions, with the exception of the single underlining which Steinkellner and Luczanits used in order to indicate where their edition differs from Tucci’s.\(^{14}\) For the convenience of the reader, I quote the explanations of the relevant signs in the two more recent editions:

Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 15).\(^{15}\)
\[
\begin{align*}
\& & \text{partly uncertain letter} \\
= & \quad \text{illegible ‘letter’} \\
\# & \quad \text{‘letter’ rubbed or broken off} \\
- & \quad \text{illegible letter, when accompanied by legible letter(s)}
\end{align*}
\]

at the Western Himalayan Archive Vienna (WHAV), presently located in the Department for Art History. The video-documentation itself (DVC 17.2002) is also kept at the WHAV.

\(^{14}\) Reproducing this feature in my collation of all four witnesses seemed to make little sense.

\(^{15}\) The differentiation Steinkellner and Luczanits make between ‘letter’ and letter is explained in a footnote (ibid.), according to which ‘letter’ means “any combination of letters in the Tibetan alphabet that occupy in vertical arrangement of the letter sequence the space of a single grapheme”, while letter “refers to the single signs for consonants or vowel modification only”. Thus a ‘letter’ can be composed of up to four letters.
+ letter rubbed or broken off, when accompanied by legible letter(s)

a/b both readings possible

? presence of further ‘letters’ uncertain

? presence of further letters uncertain

Thakur (2001, xxii):

<abc> Letters omitted in the original text, added by the author

[abc] Illegible or effaced letters, supplied by the author

[xxx] Illegible letters, number indicated by crosses

[...] Illegible or missing

[±3] Illegible letters, approximate number indicated by a numeral with ±.

Note, however, that I have rendered all readings by means of the Wylie system, as there was no risk of adulterating or suppressing any evidence by harmonising the sources in this respect. For the same reason, the gi gu log and the shad have consistently been rendered as ī and |, respectively.

Moreover, the following peculiarities need to be pointed out:

Steinkellner and Luczanits use the asterisk (*) to render the (double?)\textsuperscript{16} dbu\textsuperscript{17} as well as other ornamental signs. In order to avoid a conflation of their editorial system with my own transcription of Francke’s manuscript, I have rendered the double dbu in the latter by means of a double octothorpe (##).

Francke’s manuscript does not provide any information on where the respective lines of the inscription begin. The specifications in the three published versions are rendered in the footnotes of my transcription by means of braces ({{1}, {2}, etc.).

In the two recent editions the tsheg is generally not reproduced and the syllables are simply separated by a single space.\textsuperscript{18} Francke and Tucci provide the inscrptional text in Tibetan script and thus, naturally, with tsheg, but it is obvious that their assistants did not make any effort to faithfully render whether the small dot was extant or not, using it rather habitually instead. As a rule, I have therefore provided Francke’s text as well as the variant readings in the three published editions without any

\textsuperscript{16.} Cf. n. 19 below.

\textsuperscript{17.} In using this term, I follow Hahn (1996, 25). For frequent variations of the sign see, e.g., Scherrer-Schaub (1999, 25), Thakur (2001, 238), and Tropper (2005, 91–92, n. 65); the double dbu in the Tabo inscription most closely resembles the forms which are reproduced under 2) and 8) in the latter. For the Indian precursors from which the dbu certainly derives, see in particular the tables provided in Roth (1986) and Sander (1986).

\textsuperscript{18.} Note, however, that Thakur renders the tsheg before a shad by means of a full stop.
explicit information on the *tsheg*. In those few cases where its existence or absence seemed to be of relevance for the evaluation of the variants, I have added a comment in the footnotes.

Finally, I have also provided the interlinear English translation as it is to be found in Francke’s draft. Although it is of little help for improving our understanding of the inscription’s contents, it is of some interest as a historical document in itself. Where necessary, the reader is advised to consult the much more elaborate translations of Tucci (1935, 198–204), Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 21–25) and Thakur (2001, 254–256).
FRANCKE’S TEXT AND EVALUATION OF THE VARIANT READINGS

19. **|| F : {1} Tu; {1} * || SL; {1} | | | Th.** The inscription actually features a double *dbu* followed by two double *shad*, the latter being distinctly separated from each other (as rendered in SL) and embedding some faint blots which could be the remains of a largely faded ornamental sign.

20. **spre’u’i F, Tu, Th : spre’u’i SL.** The *tsheg* after *spre* is still clearly visible.

21. **|| F : | Tu, SL, Th**
22. *dpon* F : *dbon* Tu, SL, Th. The remaining traces rather support the reading *dbon*, but *dpon* cannot be completely ruled out. Confer n. 87, however, where the inscription clearly reads *dbon*.

23. *pa* F, Tu, Th : *ba* SL. The remaining traces allow for both readings.

24. || F : || om. Tu, SL, Th

25. *byang chub* F : *byang chub kyi* Tu, SL; *byang chub kyi nas* Th. The *gi gu* has completely disappeared, but what remains of the passage clearly supports the reading of Tu and SL.

26. *du* F : *tu* Tu, SL, Th (cf. n. 30 below)

27. *bas* || F : *bas* | Tu, Th; ||SL. The inscription reads as in SL, but the remaining traces and the available space clearly support the reading of Tu and Th.

28. || F : || Tu, SL, Th

29. *ba’i* F : *ba* Tu, SL, Th

30. *du* F : *tu* Tu, SL, Th

31. || *bdag* F : *bdag Tu, Th*, dag SL. The remaining traces and the available space allow for the conjectures || dag or *bdag*, but not for F’s || dag. Neither || dag nor the reading of SL makes any sense here, and the latter simply appears to be the result of a typing error (also cf. SL’s translation “we were commissioned...” [Steinkellner and Luczanits 1999, 21]).

32. The last letter of the last syllable before the dotted line was corrected by Francke, writing one letter on top of another. It is not clear whether an original ’ or I was amended to s, or vice versa, s to ’ or l. *sug len du bkas’/l ............* || F : *sug [pa]s* | [2] Tu; *sug#####? [2]*? *s[k]/los te* | SL (adding in a footnote that an e is visible above the space following *sug*); *sug [+]7* [2] [+]3 Th. The text in Tu is much too short for the lacuna and partly seems to result from an attempt to fill in a blank of undefined length in his assistant’s master copy. The single *shad* rendered in SL is fairly well-preserved, but the *lhag bcas* in front of it has become very blurred and could have featured a *sa mgo*. The root letter of the preceding syllable rather looks like a *k* than a *t* (cf. SL’s *s[k]/los te* and the right part of what appears to have been a *ba sngon ‘jug* is still visible. Thus, the whole passage most likely read *sug len du bka'(s) [2] bskos (s)te* | and sug len has to be taken as a synonym for lag len (i.e., “[we] were appointed by [his] order to put [it] into practice”). The word order might look somewhat unusual (cf. n. 102), but *bkas* (bsko) is attested as a set phrase (see, e.g., Zhang 1993 and Goldstein 2001, s.v.), which could explain why the two words have not been separated here.

33. *de dag ’di* F : *des na dri* Tu, SL, Th

34. *khang* F : *khang gi* Tu, Th; *khang gi* SL
dang gsal lo slar phrin las kyi rgyus\textsuperscript{35} dang bsngo ba byed par ‘dod skyes\textsuperscript{36} te\textsuperscript{37} brjod\textsuperscript{38}

are willing to express (tell?) again the story of this religious work and the dedicating (as follows):

pa ni\textsuperscript{39} gang zhig thag ring lam gyis dub ‘gyur\textsuperscript{40} zhi\textsuperscript{41} grogs dang mdza\textsuperscript{42} bo\textsuperscript{43} dag gis

For those observers such as are tired of distance of way, and is rejected absolutely by his friends and

rnam spangs pa’i\textsuperscript{44} skye bo\textsuperscript{45} lttad mo pa\textsuperscript{46} rnam sla\textsuperscript{47} gtsug lag khang mdzes\textsuperscript{48} pa\textsuperscript{49} ‘di\textsuperscript{50}

lovers this beautiful temple is built [for the use of them].

\textsuperscript{35} zin dang gsal lo slar phrin las kyi rgyus F : zind pa la dge slong phes (?) kha rgyu bdag lo rgyu Tu (adding in a footnote after lo rgyu: “Cioè: lo rgyus”); zind pa la dge slong $s ==$ bdag lo rgyus SL (adding in a footnote after $s$ that the syllable could have read “phe, pha, ne, na, she, sha” [read “phes, phas, nes, nas, shes, shas”; K.T.]); zind pa la | dge slong shes kha rgyu | bdag lo rgyus Th. The inscription basically reads as in SL, although the available space and the remaining traces rather suggest that the passage featured three or even four ‘letters’ between $s$ and bdag. Tu’s phes (?) kha could perhaps have read shes rab, and the blurred traces that follow (Tu’s rgyu) rather seem to be the remains of two ‘letters’.

\textsuperscript{36} ‘dod skyes F : ‘dod bskeyes Tu, Th; ‘dod pa skyes SL. F’s ‘dod skyes definitely has to be rejected and the remaining traces rather support the reading of SL, which is also preferable from a grammatical point of view; ‘dod bskeyes cannot completely be ruled out, however.

\textsuperscript{37} te F, Tu, SL : ti Th

\textsuperscript{38} brjod F, Tu, SL : brdzod Th. The upper right half of the root letter is slightly damaged, but nothing indicates the erstwhile existence of the small tick distinguishing j from dz. Moreover, brjod makes perfect sense here (also cf. Th’s own translation: “has said” [Thakur 2001, 254]) and brdzod is not attested in any of the standard dictionaries. Thus the latter reading should be rejected.

\textsuperscript{39} | F, Tu, Th : || SL

\textsuperscript{40} ‘gyur F, SL, Th : gyur Tu

\textsuperscript{41} || F, SL : | Tu, Th

\textsuperscript{42} mdza’ F, Tu, Th : mdza’ SL. F confirms the reading of Tu and Th, which should thus be adopted.

\textsuperscript{43} bo F, Th : po Tu, SL. The remaining traces rather support the reading bo, but a definite decision is not possible.

\textsuperscript{44} || F, SL : | Tu, Th

\textsuperscript{45} skye bo F : skye bo nyon mong Tu, SL, Th (Tu and Th adding in a footnote after snyon mong: nyon mongs)

\textsuperscript{46} pa F, Tu, SL : ba Th. The remaining traces allow for both readings.

\textsuperscript{47} || F, SL : | Tu, Th

\textsuperscript{48} mdzes F, Tu, Th : mdzes SL. The lower part of the root letter has been damaged, but traces of the small hook on the right part of the head stroke are still clearly visible.

\textsuperscript{49} pa F : pa om. Tu, Th, SL

\textsuperscript{50} ‘di F : ‘di ni Tu, SL, Th
though the story is not very sweet (or rather), this little story is the glory of for unheard ones. He sprung from


52. gyi F : gi … Tu; #ig SL (adding in a footnote to their translation that the syllable should be read as zhig [Steinkellner and Luczanits 1999, 21, n. 69]); zhig Th. The passage is largely damaged, but the remaining traces and the available space rather support the reading of Th (and SL) than those of F and Tu.

53. myi mnyan dpal F : {3} mnyan dal kyi Tu (adding in a footnote after mnyan: “Forse nyon per: mnyon [sic; K.T.], imperativo”); {3} = = gyis mnyand par gyis SL (adding in a footnote after ==: “The lower parts of two long ‘letters’ are still visible”); {3} [±3] gis mnyanda<pa> la[x] Th (adding in a footnote after [±3]: bdag). The inscription mostly reads as in SL, but what is rendered as an r there has become too damaged to allow for a reasonably certain reading and nothing at all seems to remain of the first of the “two long ‘letters’”. Th’s bdag can hardly be justified by the remaining traces and does not make much sense here (also cf. Th’s translation: “Listen to […] ephemeral narration” [Thakur 2001, 255], which has no equivalent for bdag and does not suggest any proximate conjecture for it). As the second of SL’s “two long ‘letters’” could have read d, khyed or khyod are reasonable conjectures, especially if one considers phrases like khyod kyis byos shig (’Dul ba gzhi, bam po 83, 85a2 [Derge Tanjur; likewise below]), khyod kyis nga la smros (rGya cher rol pa, 32b3), khyed kyis ltos shig (ibid., 71b4) or khyod kyis ltos shig (ibid., 75b3). Postulating a similar construction for the periphrastic imperative (cf. SL’s mnyand par gyis), the passage could then be translated as “please listen to …”, “you ought to listen to …”, “you should listen to …”, etc. Finally note that the first syllable after the lacuna is slightly damaged and could also have read kyis, but gyis would of course not seriously militate against the conjectures khyod or khyed, since irregular “sandhi”-forms are frequent in early documents and also occur elsewhere in the inscription.

54. || F, Th : | Tu; || SL. The inscription most likely read as in SL, although the lower part of what appears to have been the first shad has become heavily damaged. Marking a caesura, the triple shad would also make good sense from a text-semantic point of view. On the various means that were used to structure the text of the inscription, see Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 12–13).

55. rigs F, Tu, Th : rig SL
dpa'i⁵⁶ mi⁵⁸ rje lhas mdzad mgo⁵⁹ nag yongs kyi⁶⁰ mgon ||⁶¹ lhan cig skyes pa'i⁶² mkhyen rab

an ancestor the king (gods), and built it by the Bodhisatvatic | His together born
king who is the protector of every black man (layman). | excellent knowledge

phul byung bas |⁶³ ma rig⁶⁴ mun pa ye shes 'od mdzad des |⁶⁵ 'khor bar 'byord
got perfection, therefore he became the wisdom light for the dark ignorants. The
kingdom which he

'gyurd pa'i⁶⁶ rgyal srid la |⁶⁷ sgyu mala burgzigs pa sngon'gro bas |⁶⁸ me⁶⁹ tog phreng⁷⁰
attained in the orb of transmigrations, he was obliged to realised as an illusion.
Thus as one get a wreath

56.  dpa'i F : dpa' gi Tu, Th (Th adding in a footnote after gi: “Perhaps ni as is the
case in many verses”); dpa'i gdung SL. The second syllable is partly damaged, but the
remaining traces clearly support the reading of SL.
57.  || F, SL, Th : | Tu
58.  mi F : myi Tu, SL, Th
59.  mgo F : mgo'Tu, SL, Th
60.  kyi F, Tu, SL : ki Th
61.  || F, SL : | Tu, Th. While the first shad is mostly preserved, there are only tiny
traces of what appears to have been the second one. The available space and the regular
usage of a double shad at the end of the other verse-lines also support the reading of F
and SL, but a definite decision is not possible.
62.  skyes pa'i F, SL, Th : skye ba'i Tu
63.  The question mark in F is placed above the line and has been inserted between
the two shad by means of a wide brace. | | F : | Tu; | SL, Th
64.  rig F : rig Tu, SL, Th
65.  || F, SL, Th : | Tu
66.  'byord 'gyurd pa'i F : 'byord par gyurd pa'i Tu; 'byord par ?gyurd pa'i SL; 'byord
bar gyurd pa'i Th. While the zhabs kyu is still legible, the rest of the syllable it belongs to
is almost completely obliterated. The right half of the preceding syllable and the left part
of the following one are also mostly gone. F's 'byord 'gyurd pa'i definitely has to be ruled
out, though, as the second syllable begins with pa or ba – the latter being somewhat less
likely. If one accepts the reading par/bar (as in Tu, SL and Th) the available space rather
militates against an 'a sngon 'jug in the following syllable. The text in Tu thus seems to
be as most preferable.
67.  || F, SL, Th : | Tu
68.  | F, Tu : || SL, Th
69.  me F, Tu, Th : m'e SL. The syllable is largely damaged, which does not allow for
a decision on the erstwhile existence of a ya btags. At the beginning of line 5 (cf. n. 94) the
term is spelled mye tog, but it should be noted that the variant without ya btags frequently
occurs in early documents which otherwise feature consistent palatalisation of m before
70.  phreng F : phreng Tu, SL, Th
brnyes\textsuperscript{71} bzhin du ——— m\textsuperscript{72} nas ni ||\textsuperscript{73} ———— chos kyi\textsuperscript{74} phyir phul\textsuperscript{75} mdzad de ||\textsuperscript{76} of flowers pleased and he and offered it for use of a religious nature, m\textsuperscript{nga’} ris\textsuperscript{77} rgyud pa\textsuperscript{78} gsum rnams\textsuperscript{79} dkar por yongs\textsuperscript{80} gyur d nas ||\textsuperscript{81} dpal ldan He caused to be white all the three Mngā-ris and this Dpal-ldan bk\textsuperscript{ris}\textsuperscript{82} bde gnas gtsug lag khang ||\textsuperscript{83} rgyal ’khams ’di’i sgron mar ’dir bzhengs bkra-shis bde-gnas built for the purpose to be a lamp for this kingdom.

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textbf{71.} \textit{brnyes F : rnyes} Tu (adding in a footnote after \textit{rnyes: rnyis}); \textit{rnyis SL, Th}
    \item \textbf{72.} ———— \textit{mdang F : sangs} Tu; \textit{spangs SL, Th}. The context clearly supports the reading of SL and Th, but what remains of the passage does not allow for a definite decision. A small dot below the line could be the remaining part of what SL and Th rendered as \textit{p}.
    \item \textbf{73.} || F, SL : | Tu, Th. The remaining traces and the otherwise regular use of the double \textit{shad} rather support the reading of F and SL.
    \item \textbf{74.} ———— \textit{chos kyi F : \{4\} de thams cad chos} Tu (adding in a footnote after \textit{chos}: “Verso difettoso; forse: \textit{chos kyi phyir}, oppure una parola mancante prima di: \textit{de?”; \{4\}? –\textit{rid thams cad chos} SL; \{4\} \textit{de thams cad chos} Th. The passage is damaged in several places, but it basically seems to have read as in SL. The left edge of the panel has broken off, but a comparison with the margins of the previous verse-lines shows that the conjecture \textit{rgyal srid} suggested in a footnote to the translation of Steinkellner and Luczanits (1999, 22) is certainly possible. F’s \textit{kyi}, however, definitely has to be ruled out.
    \item \textbf{75.} \textit{phul F : dbul} Tu, SL, Th
    \item \textbf{76.} || F, SL, Th : | Tu
    \item \textbf{77.} \textit{m\textsuperscript{nga’} ris F, Tu, Th : m\textsuperscript{nga’} # SL}. F confirms the reading of Tu and Th, which should thus be adopted.
    \item \textbf{78.} \textit{rgyud pa F : rgyud pa om}. Tu, SL, Th
    \item \textbf{79.} \textit{gsum rnams F : gdul rnams} Tu; \textit{gdu# ms} SL; \textit{g[xxx] rnams} Th. In a footnote to his translation, Tucci (1935, 200) states that \textit{gdul rnams} is his emendation for the reading \textit{gdu ma rnams} in his assistant’s copy. He further mentions that instead of \textit{gdul rnams} the passage could perhaps have read \textit{gsum rnams}, but that the latter seems to be less likely to him from a grammatical point of view. However, \textit{rnams} is used quite frequently after cardinal numbers; cf., e.g.: \textit{dus gsum rnams} (sTong pa nyid bdun cu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa 24b3 [Derge Tanjur; likewise below]), \textit{bsam gnas bzhis rnams} (Theg pa chen po’i mtsan kun las bsdus pa 300b6) and \textit{phung po lnga rnams} (Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i snying po’i rnam par bshad pa 284a2). As \textit{gsum} is both corroborated by F and in line with the remaining traces, it seems preferable to Tucci’s choice. The beginning of the verse-line thus probably read \textit{m\textsuperscript{nga’} ris gsum rnams}.
    \item \textbf{80.} \textit{yongs F : ’ongs} Tu, SL, Th. The remaining traces allow for both readings, but \textit{yongs} seems preferable from a semantic point of view. On the phrase \textit{yongs su (\?)gyur}, cf. the Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary s.v.
    \item \textbf{81.} || F, SL, Th : | Tu
    \item \textbf{82.} \textit{bk\textsuperscript{ris} F : bkra’ shï [sic; K.T.]} Tu; \textit{bkra’ shis SL; bkra’ sis [sic; K.T.]} Th
The lineage of this sage is real king. Whosoever possesses really the three teachings, will plant the Wisdom-Tree, i.e. the knowledge of faith. The sacred writings did

\[\text{byas dya} \ldots \text{lha btsun} \ldots \text{mdzad ra} \text{par gzigs nas ni}\]

Budya(?). Reverend King did he saw that the temple getting old,
therefore he provided men of art, and money etc. & he appointed us, and then we furnished this [temple]
Keeping in mind that in a few cases it is open to debate whether differences between Francke’s text and the three published versions should be considered as just one reading or several, the foregoing evaluation can be statistically summarised as follows:

1) 43 readings of Francke have to be clearly rejected.
2) In 16 cases the remaining traces do not allow for a definite decision.
3) Where the three published editions differ, the combined evidence of the remaining traces and of Francke’s manuscript confirm one of the variants in 31 cases.

Leaving out the rather insignificant variants regarding the placement of the shad (to which neither Gergan nor Tucci’s assistant seem to have paid much attention) and different “sandhi”-forms, one gets the following figures: 1) 31, 2) 10, 3) 17.

Of those cases summarised under 2) special mention should be made of the two readings discussed in footnotes 32 and 79. In the first passage,
Francke’s manuscript has probably preserved correct text which has not come down to us in any of the later editions. In the second one, what appears to have been the correct reading was considered and rejected by Tucci, but it is now corroborated by Francke’s manuscript.

What is also noteworthy is the large number of wrong readings in Francke’s text. Some of them are even such that one could be tempted to think that the inscription was at least partly overwritten after Gergan had prepared his copy. But while there can be no doubt that a number of Tibetan inscriptions have been wholly or partly touched up and while there is even some evidence suggesting that the “renovation inscription” in Tabo is a palimpsest (Steinkellner and Luczanits 1999, 11), I am rather inclined to attribute most of the discrepancies between Francke’s draft and the later editions to the notorious difficulties one faces in copying such highly obliterated inscriptions in situ. Some mistakes could of course also be due to Francke’s copying of Gergan’s original transcript. That Gergan and the later copyists essentially saw the same text is especially borne out by the fact that Francke’s draft features a lacuna in almost all of the places where the three published versions also indicate an obliteration. If the inscription is really a palimpsest, the overwriting thus must have been done before Gergan came to prepare his copy.

In a wider context, Francke’s manuscript may act as an indicator for the reliability of other such records among his unpublished works and probably even of his many published studies on Tibetan inscriptions. In fact, Francke himself states that his First Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from Western Tibet cannot claim to be up to scholarly standards, as most of the in situ transcriptions were prepared by his local

---

112. For obvious examples, see Tropper (2005, 70, n. 6; also cf. 60) and Tauscher (1999, 34). Considering that the murals and statues in Tibetan temples frequently have been overpainted (the grand Jo bo in the Lhasa gTsug lag khang being the most famous case in point) it should not come as a surprise that inscriptions have been subject to a similar treatment. While such restorations are of no particular importance if the contents of the new versions are identical with those of the original ones, one has to assume that in most cases the original text was not sufficiently preserved, thus calling for a number of conjectures on the part of the scribes. The rewriting of an inscription could of course also have given rise to intentional changes of the original wording. It goes without saying that all this constitutes a serious problem with regard to the dating of Tibetan inscriptions and of the events they refer to — an issue that has been given little attention so far. The use of palimscopes and similar modern technology could eventually be of great help here.

113. A vivid description of some of these difficulties can be found in Denwood (1980, 119). Also cf. the remarks in Francke (1914, 42ff.).
assistants and as in many cases he did not have a chance to compare these copies with the original text of the inscriptions (Francke 1906, preface [facing p. 1]). The shortcomings of his study on an inscription in Balukhar (Francke 1905) have already been pointed out by Denwood, who relates the circumstances under which the text came to be transcribed for Francke, resulting in “an imperfect copy of an already poorly preserved original” (Denwood and Howard 1990, 85). While the findings of the foregoing inquiry largely concur with this assessment and suggest that Francke’s records on their own should be used with great caution, they also show that all of these sources — published or unpublished — can nevertheless be very valuable witnesses for passages where the inscriptions are now damaged.

REFERENCES


———. 1906. First Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from West Tibet / Erste Sammlung tibetischer historischer Inschriften auf Felsen und Steinen in West Tibet. Leh. [Self-published hectograph].

———. 1907. Second Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from Western Tibet / Zweite Sammlung tibetischer historischer Inschriften auf Felsen und Steinen in West Tibet. Leh. [Self-published hectograph].


