

A Ninth Century Inscription from  
Rkoñ-po

BY  
H. E. RICHARDSON

[*From the* JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, OCTOBER, 1954.]



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**D**URING my stay in Tibet from 1946 to 1950 I undertook to edit the late Sir Charles Bell's material on the inscriptions at Lhasa and Bsam Yas. This work led me to try to trace as many ancient Tibetan inscriptions as possible, and my inquiries took me to the *rdo rins* at Mtshur Phu, Sañs Rgyas Dgon-pa, Hphyoñ Rgyas, and Žva-ñi Lha Khañ, as well as to many likely but unproductive sites such as Hu Žañ and Lha-Khañ Rdzoñ. I also heard vague rumours of an old inscription somewhere near Rtse Bla Sgañ, on the Gtsañ-po (Brahmaputra). As it would have needed more than six weeks' absence from my duties at Lhasa, I was not able to visit the place myself but I eventually enlisted the help of the young but very learned Bkañ Rgyud-pa Lama, Bdud Hjom̄s Rinpoche, whose monastery is in that area and who was engaged on building a new *lha-khañ* at an ancient site called Zañs Mdog Dpal Ri. He had seen the inscription which, he said, was carved on a pillar or rock face beside the track along the north bank of the Gtsañ-po, in an area known as De-Mo Sa. It was said to be sheltered by shallow stone walls supporting tiled eaves and to be almost completely buried in sand. The few lines which were visible were reported to refer to Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan and to contain the words "Koñ Jo", from which local tradition assumed that it referred to the Chinese princess who was (incorrectly) said to be the mother of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan. The Rinpoche kindly agreed to have the pillar excavated and to copy the inscription for me. I explained fully to him how necessary it was to record only what one could see without attempting emendations by guesswork; and I asked him to measure carefully the gaps where any words or letters were effaced. I had hoped to be able to discuss the result personally with the Rinpoche but, unfortunately, before he could return to Lhasa with the copy, his monastery and his newly completed *lha-khañ* were ruined by the violent earthquake which shook south-east Tibet in August, 1950. Although I was happy to learn that my friend was safe I expected that in such a disaster my request would be forgotten; and I went away from Lhasa in September, 1950, without any more news of the inscription. But before leaving India I received from the Rinpoche the copy of the inscription on which the present article is based.

Tibetan copyists in general are not completely reliable, for the less learned are prone to make errors through ignorance and the more learned through excess of ingenuity ; but this copy shows signs of having been made with very great care. There are, nevertheless, several points I should have liked to discuss with the Rinpoche. For example, I do not quite understand his method of indicating missing letters, and I should have greatly appreciated his help in interpreting difficult passages, especially where his knowledge of local traditions would have been useful. Unfortunately the overrunning of Tibet by the Chinese has cut my communications not only with Bdud H̄joms Rinpoche but also with other friends in Tibet who gave me much help in earlier efforts to interpret ancient inscriptions ; and since leaving Tibet I have had neither time for much study of Tibetan histories nor access to all the necessary books. Nevertheless, I venture to publish this inscription with an inadequate translation and commentary, so that the text may be available to those who are able to make use of it.

#### NOTES ON THE TEXT (opposite p. 156)

1. As I have not seen the original and have not been able to consult the maker of the copy I cannot say exactly how many letters are missing ; but the indications given make it possible, here and in other cases, to guess within a letter or so. In this instance the missing name is short, it contains the vowel “ i ” and ends in “ g ” or “ ñ ”. “ H̄briñ ” fulfils these requirements.

2. About ten or twelve letters are missing. Some phrase such as “ Rkoñ Kar-po-h̄i rgyal-po byas so ” seems probable.

3. I have had to take “ Dbu rmog brtsan pa yoñ ” as a mistake in copying for “ Dbu rmog brtsan-po yañ ” because I cannot make sense of the text as it stands.

4. The missing word is clearly “ chad ”. Cf. the same phrase in the next line.

5. This word is not quite clear. It appears to be “ dñañ ” but may be “ dbañ ”.

6. “ yañ ” is the simplest suggestion.

7. “ dañ ” seems to be needed here but it usually comes at the end of a sentence not the beginning. Reconstruction is difficult here because I am not certain of the meaning of “ khrar ”.





TRANSLATION <sup>1</sup>

In the time of the Divine King Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan and of Lde Sroñ,<sup>2</sup> father and son

A charter concerning Rkoñ Dkar <sup>3</sup>-po

It has been submitted by Kar-po Mañ-po-rje and the Minister <sup>4</sup> . . . as follows: "From the time when Ña <sup>5</sup> Khyi Btsan-po, who was descended from the line of the first ancestor the Fortunate Ya Bla Bdal Drug,<sup>6</sup> came to Lha Ri Gyañ Do to be ruler of the land of men up to the time of Dri Gum Btsan-po, for seven generations, the kings dwelt at Phyiñ Ba Stag Rtse. As for the two sons of Dri Gum Btsan-po, the elder brother Ña Khyi and the younger brother Śa Khyi, Śa Khyi the younger brother became the Divine King <sup>7</sup> and Ña Khyi the elder brother *became Prince of Rkoñ Kar-po.*<sup>8</sup> At the time when the elder brother Kar-po first came from the Upper Country his two noble sons, born from the two sisters the Honourable Gñan-po Gsol-ba and the Honourable De-Mo,<sup>9</sup> by way of homage due to the royal prince performed services short of giving up their high estate. They did not diminish their own position. In this way the power of the royal princes was exalted and those who lived beneath the sway of the mighty king <sup>10</sup> like to Heaven gave him just those offerings which are due to the Centre of Heaven. And as concerning ourselves, although we are sprung from that first brother and have continued from the time of our first ancestor, when there was no separation between gods and men, in a peaceful manner to support the kingdom which is like the everlasting swastika, yet at the present time the leading Palace officials are seeking control over our taxes and are acting in a hostile manner.<sup>11</sup> We therefore pray that a charter may be promulgated to the effect that we may enjoy our privileges for ever." We have granted the above petition and have inscribed this copy of the charter which has been placed in a gilded coffer.<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with the charter for Kar-po, granted in the time of the Divine Prince, King Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan, a new charter in augmentation is granted, by order, in the time of The Divine Prince Lde Sroñ.

It is decreed that, for ever, none other shall be appointed to the kingship of Rkoñ Kar-po except for the descendants of Kar-po Mañ-po-rje. If the line of Kar-po Mañ-po-rje *should be broken*, in order that the family of the king, the elder brother, shall not fail,

there shall be appointed to the kingship one from the family of Kar-po Rgyal Brtsan.<sup>13</sup> If the line of Rgyal Brtsan also be broken, it is decreed that those who are recommended in the last will of the late king from among his near relations shall be assembled and from among them a suitable person shall be appointed.

The bondsmen, fields and pastures of Rkoñ Kar-po shall not in future be diminished. Their right to the confidential royal service<sup>14</sup> and their rents and taxes shall not be confiscated<sup>15</sup>; and there shall be no extension of the fixed contribution they now offer from their granaries,<sup>16</sup> their bran, barley or any other produce; nor any extension of the jurisdiction of the law courts<sup>17</sup> over them.

This is decreed, in the reign of the Divine Prince Lde Sroñ, by order, after consulting the nobles and ministers, in accordance with the decree made by order of the Divine Prince, the father.

#### NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

1. Much of the translation is tentative and I indicate in the notes below those passages about which I am most in doubt. The most important points in the translation are dealt with in the commentary which follows; the notes cover smaller details.

2. From the later part of the inscription it appears that the titles Lha Btsan-po and Khri are not meant to be extended to Lde Sroñ. I discuss this in the commentary.

3. The spelling “dkar-po” occurs only once in this inscription, but it appears also in the Tun Huang Chronicle (*Documents de Touen Houang Relatifs a l'Histoire du Tibet*; Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint; Paris, 1946). The spelling “kar-po” is found in Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan's Bkaḥ Tshigs contained in Dpaḥ-bo Gtsug Lag's Chos Byuñ.

4. I have suggested “Hbriñ”, see note 1 on the text. My reason for that guess is that the missing name is a single syllable and is therefore most likely to be a clan name. “Hbriñ” is the one that fits best; but I cannot trace any special connection between the Hbriñ clan and Rkoñ-po.

5. It is surprising to find “Ña Khyi” here instead of “Ñag Khri” or “Gñah Khri”, which are the more usual forms of the name of the first king of Tibet who descended from heaven on Lha Ri Gyañ Do in Yar Luñ. I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the copyist here but that is a point I should like to have checked for myself.



6. "Phyva" according to Dr. Bacot means "a standard = good luck". It is a frequently used word in the Bon mystic vocabulary. I discuss the Ya Bla Bdal Drug in the commentary.

7. Lha Btsan po = King of Tibet.

8. The words in italics are a guess. All the versions of the story of Dri Gum's sons relate that they became rulers of different parts of the country although there is no agreement on the number of his sons nor on what country each governed.

9. My translation may be quite wide of the mark. The word "bšos-pa" seems to relate to the marriage of Ña Khyi; but I am not certain that the phrase "sku bla" is used of women and there is some difficulty in taking "gsol-ba"—which can mean "to ask for a woman in marriage"—as part of a personal name. Moreover I am not happy about having to translate "mched gñis kyi" as "from among the two sisters"; "kyi" being usually possessive. "mched gñis" may perhaps refer once more to Ña Khyi and Śa Khyi.

10. This translation does not follow the text as it stands—see note 3 on text—but I cannot make sense of the phrase "dbu rmog brtsan pa yon".

11. The phrase "gtses ciñ mchis na" presents a difficulty. It seems to bring in another subject, and the petition of Kar-po Mañ-po-rje tails off in an abrupt conclusion. One would expect more to be said if this were a complaint that some officials were encroaching on the petitioner's rights. I should have preferred to read "gces" and to translate "at the present time we are leaders among the court officials and collect the principal share of taxation. It is requested that a charter be granted to the effect that we may continue to act in accordance with our loyal service in such a way as to secure our privileges". But I cannot see any other meaning for "gtses" except "harm, damage"; and my translation is based on that reading. The "Khab so", who by this interpretation had been causing trouble, seem to have been the near retinue of the King, see RAS. Prize Publication No. XIX ("Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa and The Mu-tsung/Khri Gtsug Lde Brtsan Treaty of A.D. 821-3, H. E. Richardson, 1952), pp. 16 and 77.

12. The meaning is that the inscription is a copy of the original charter which has been deposited in a "hphra men sgram bu". Formerly, on the advice of Tibetan helpers, I translated the phrase hphra men, which appears in the inscription at Mtshur Phu (see

*JRASB.*, 1949), as “ variegated stone ”; Professor Tucci suggests, more attractively, in *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings* (Rome, 1950), p. 75, note 45, that the meaning is “ silver-gilt ”.

13. Kar-po Rgyal Brtsan was presumably a near relation of Kar-po Mañ-po-rje.

14. “ Confidential royal service.” Rje Blas. See RAS. Prize Publication XIX, p. 9, or perhaps “ leadership of the nobility ”, but still implying a post in the Palace rather than in the Cabinet.

15. The Tibetan is not clear. Bla skyes myi dñañ ba (or myi dbañ ba) I take to refer to confiscation on the analogy of other inscriptions where such provisions occur. The text is not certain (see note 6 on text). I am not sure that “ dbañ ba ” can be used as a verb although there are examples in inscriptions of the phrase “ dbañ ño chog ”, apparently meaning “ whatever is in his power ”. “ dñañ ba ” now has the meaning “ to be afraid ”. Bla skyes nowadays means “ a present ”. “ Bla skye ” is translated by Dr. Bacot as “ amelioration ”. I wonder whether it could also mean “ higher authority ”. The whole passage might be translated either “ there shall be no fear of having to make a forced present of their taxation rights ” or “ higher authority shall not take over their taxation rights ”.

16. “ Stsañ,” according to Dr. F. W. Thomas (“ Tibetan Documents concerning Chinese Turkestan, *JRAS.*, January, 1927, p. 69, etc.), means “ corn ”. On the analogy of “ rta ra : stable ” and “ ldum ra : garden ”, “ stsañ ra ” might mean “ granary ”. “ Phyab ” appears to be the current Tibetan word for “ yeast ”. “ Nas,” being here followed by “ dañ ”, must be the noun meaning “ barley ”.

17. I cannot trace the word “ khrar ” elsewhere. Since it is followed by “ gyi ” it is not an inflected form of “ khra ”. It could be a mistake for “ khram : accounts ”, or “ khral : tax ”, either of which could be followed by “ gyi ”; but I take it tentatively to be an equivalent of “ khra ” and to refer to legal procedure. The whole of the preceding two lines needs further attention.

The inscription, as can now be seen, has nothing to do with any Chinese Princess. That idea is just another example of the Tibetans' lack of interest in their ancient monuments.

The earliest mention in Tibetan histories of the Princes of Rkoñ-po, whose rights the inscription records, is found in the Tun Huang Chronicle (p. 82), where they are called Dkar-po

Mañ-po-rje, and in Dpah-bo Gtsug Lag's Chhos Byuñ, where the Rkoñ Kar-po Mañ-po-rje figures as a witness to the Bkaḥ Tshigs of Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan (see Tucci, *Tombs of Tibetan Kings*, p. 103), which is clearly derived from an ancient source. Other feudatory princes (Rgyal phran) were the Dbon Ha Ža Rje, who also was a witness to the Bkaḥ Tshigs and is mentioned in the Žva-ḥi Lha Khañ inscription (*JRAS.*, 1953); and the Myaṅ Mañ-po-rje mentioned in the Tun Huang Chronicle (pp. 130 and 147). A Myaṅ princess was a witness to Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan's Bkaḥ Tshigs (loc. cit.). The allusions in the early part of the inscription to the ancient history of the Rkoñ-po princes and their relationship to the kings of Tibet only add to the confused maze of legend about the origin of the Tibetan royal line. A long examination of the various stories would be out of place here, but I shall try to link up briefly the account given in the Rkoñ-po inscription with what I have said about the early legends in R.A.S. Prize Publication No. XIX, pp. 47-50. In the inscription there is no mention of Ho Lde Spu Rgyal, who figures on the pillars at the Lhasa Gtsug Lag Khañ and at Hphyoñ Rgyas as the first god-king of Tibet; but the references to the descent on Lha Ri Gyañ Do and to Dri Gum Btsan-po as the "seventh generation" show that Ña Khyi Btsan-po, named in the fourth line of the inscription (who must be distinguished from Ña Khyi in the fifth line) is the same as Ñag (Gñah) Khri Btsan-po who, as suggested in my article mentioned above, may be identified with Ho Lde Spu Rgyal. Moreover, Ya Bla Bdag Drug from whom Ña Khyi is here stated to be descended, is found also in the genealogy of Ñag Khri as given in the Tun Huang Chronicle and other sources. Professor Bacot, in *Documents de Touen Houang*, p. 85, and Professor Tucci, in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Rome, 1949, take this name to cover six legendary ancestors, but from the accounts in the Rgyal-po Bkaḥ Thañ and in the Bon work Srid-pa Rgyud Kyis Kha Byañ Chen Mo, it appears that the name is that of one person only. There are several forms of the name, e.g. Yab Bla Bdag Drug, in the Tun Huang Chronicle, and Rje Gcig Yab La Bdal Drug in the Rgyal-po Bkaḥ Thañ. The Srid pa Kha Byañ Chen Mo gives in the nearest form to that in the Rkoñ po inscription—Phyva Rje Yab Bla Bdal Drug. That work and the Rgyal-po Bkaḥ Thañ ascribe only one wife to this figure. I therefore take the name to be "The Fortunate Ya Bla Bdal Drug". The Tun Huang Chronicle and some other sources introduce

another generation with the name Khri-hi Bdun Tshigs, between Yab Bla Bdag Drug and Ñag Khri Btsan-po. Khri-hi Bdun Tshigs is also taken by Professor Bacot to refer to seven kings ; but the Rgyal-po Bkaḥ Thaṅ and the Srid-pa Kha Byaṅ indicate that this was the name of the eldest of the seven sons of Yab Bla Bdal Drug and Dmu Za Btsun Rgyal and that he was also known as Khri Sad Hbar and that Gñah (Ñag) Khri was his son by Dmu Za Lde Mo Btsun.

The inscription also states that seven generations of kings from Ña Khyi to Dri Gum Btsan-po lived at Phyiṅ-ba Stag Rtse. Their names may be seen in the Tun Huang Chronicle (p. 82) which, being the oldest version and the one least subject to later emendation, gives the most acceptable list. The Tun Huang Chronicle also says (p. 127) that Ña Khyi lived at Phyiṅ-ba Stag Rtse. Phyiṅ-ba Stag Rtse is generally identified with the fort at Hphyoṅ Rgyas—see Tucci, *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*, p. 31, where the different stories attributing it to various founders are mentioned. There is no agreement in the various sources about Dri Gum Btsan-po's sons. The Rkoñ-po inscription mentions only Ña Khyi and Śa Khyi. Later histories give the names as Śa Khri and Ña Khri and add third son Bya Khri, but they disagree about the order in which the sons were born and about the countries in which each became king. The Rgyal-po Bkaḥ Thaṅ and the Srid-pa Kha Byaṅ support the version in the inscription to the extent that they make out that Śa Khri, under the name Spu Lde Guṅ Rgyal, became king of Tibet. Dpaḥ-bo Gtsug Lag's Chos Byuṅ and the Rgyal Rabs Gsal ba-hi Me Loṅ say that the eldest brother became Prince of Rkoñ-po, but they differ from the inscription by naming him Śa Khri. Even the Tun Huang Chronicle, which must have been nearly contemporary with the Rkoñ-po inscription, produces a different story to the extent of making Śa Khyi the elder of two brothers ; but it does agree that it was Ña Khyi who became Prince of Rkoñ-po. We may perhaps assume that the version given in the inscription by the Prince of Rkoñ-po himself contains the authentic tradition.

I have interpreted line 6 of the inscription as an account of Ña Khyi's matrimonial affairs but I am not certain that I have reached the right solution (see note 9 on translation). It is difficult in dealing with Bon religious and mythological affairs to be sure whether a syllable is or is not part of a personal name. For example, "gsol-ba," which I have taken as part of the name Gñan-po Gsol-ba,

could also mean "was suitor for". It does not add very much to notice that the name of Spu Lde Guñ Rgyal's (Śa Khyi) wife, as given in the Srid-pa Kha Byañ, is Gñan Lcam Dar mo, for "gñan" is the name of a class of minor deities; but it is more significant that in the name Sku Bla De Mo we find part of the name of a protecting deity of Rkoñ-po Koñ Btsun De-Mo Rdo-Rje (Tucci, *Painted Scrolls*, p. 728) and also that the area where the inscription was found is called De Mo Sa.

It is a relief to turn from these protean figures of legend to more realistic problems of historical fact. In *JRAS.* for 1952 and 1953, in an article entitled "Tibetan Inscriptions at Žva-hi Lha Khañ", I have discussed the possibility that Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan abdicated in A.D. 797 and was succeeded by Mu Ne Brtsan, who died soon after, whereupon Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan gradually established himself in power. I have suggested that Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan did not die until A.D. 804 and that while he lived Mu Ne and Lde Sroñ were treated as regents rather than as kings in their own right and did not receive the title Khri. The Rkoñ-po inscription records that a charter given in the reign of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan was renewed or confirmed in the time of Lde Sroñ. From this it seems that Lde Sroñ had succeeded to power at the time when the inscription was set up. But the linking of the two names and the fact that Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan is named first might be taken to support my view that there was a period when Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan and Lde Sroñ were in the position of king in retirement and uncrowned regent respectively. Even more significant in this inscription is the consistent denial to Lde Sroñ of any of the titles Lha Btsan-po, Btsan-po, or Khri. He is never called more than Lha Sras. This may be compared with the titles by which he is described in other inscriptions of his reign. In that at Sañs Rgyas Dgon-pa (the Skar cuñ inscription, *JRASB.*, 1949) he is called Hphrul Gyi Lha Btsan-po Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan; in the Žva-hi Lha Khañ inscriptions he is described as "King of men, ordained by God, Hphrul Gyi Lha Btsan-po Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan" and "Ruler of Mid-Heaven, Hphrul Gyi Lha Btsan-po Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan"; and in the inscription at his tomb at Hphyoñ Rgyas he is named Btsan-po Lha Sras Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan. I know of no other inscription in which a reigning king is denied the titles Btsan-po and Khri. It is unlikely that a feudatory prince would deliberately give less honorific titles to Lde Sroñ than to his father Khri Lde

Sroñ Brtsan unless it had been in order to do so. So this inscription supports the theory that Lde Sroñ did not receive the title Khri until the death of his father ; and it may be dated on that basis between A.D. 798 and 804.

The language of the inscription contains similar legal and official words to those in the parts of the Mtshur-phu, Žol, and Žva-hi inscriptions, which deal with similar matters. A few appearances of the *da drag* will be noticed.

In order to round off the epigraphical material of the eighth and ninth centuries, of which I have copies, I am including the text of inscriptions on three great bells of Chinese pattern—called “ coñ ” by the Tibetans—from Yer pa near Lhasa, and Bsam Yas and Khra Hbrug in Yar Luñ. These bells are mentioned by Professor Tucci in *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*, but as the text of the inscriptions on the bells at Yer-pa and Khra Hbrug has not been quoted by him and as I have a few small emendations to make in his text of the Bsam Yas inscription and some suggestions about the interpretation of all three inscriptions, it may be useful to go over some of the same ground.

Regarding the bell at Yer-pa, Professor Tucci remarks that the inscription is more or less on the same scheme as that of the Bsam Yas and Khra Hbrug bells and he says that “ unfortunately in the bell of Yer-pa the portion where the name of the king was written is gone ” (pp. 70 and 71). In fact the inscriptions on the bell are complete and there is no reason to suppose that the name of a Tibetan king was ever to be seen on it. Nor can I agree that the scheme of the inscription is similar to those at Bsam Yas and Khra Hbrug which, as will be seen, are votive offerings by royal persons in honour of Tibetan kings whose names are given in each case. The bell at Yer-pa, which hangs in a small shelter apart from the main monastic buildings, bears two inscriptions, one in Sanskrit and one in Tibetan. The Sanskrit script is an early northern form, which I am told by Professor V. V. Gokhale was in use in north India between the seventh and ninth centuries. I do not know of any other appearance of this script in Tibet. The text is the formula *Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā teṣāṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato hyavadat teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādī Mahāśramaṇaḥ*.

The Tibetan text is also a religious formula which is often found in prayers :—

ལྷ་མ་རྣམས་	ལུ་སྐྱོད་པ་ཀྱན་	ནམ་པར་སྐྱང་བ་	སྐྱད་པར་བགྱི
ཀྱི་དམ་པའི་ཚོས་	ཏུ་སྐྱང་བར་བྱེད་།	ཡང་། ། མ་འོངས་	
འཛིན་ཅིང་། ཕྱང་	བཟང་པོ་སྐྱོད་པ་	བསྐྱལ་པ་ཀྱན་ཏུ	

This may be translated freely as “ Let us hold fast to the excellent religion of the Buddhas and act in such a way as to display everywhere deeds of enlightenment ; and let us continue also, for all time to come, in the perfect practice of good deeds ”.

The text is arranged in panels as above but the sequence of the panels is not from left to right, as I have printed it, but from right to left, so that anyone going round the bell right-handed (as one should with any religious object) would be able to read the inscription in continuous form. I have not seen this arrangement elsewhere in Tibet. The inscriptions on the bells at Bsam Yas and Khra Hbrug run round the bells from left to right.

The third, fourth, and fifth letters of the first line are effaced but the reconstruction (ba rnam) is obvious. The vowel sign in “ onś ” in the third panel is missing and has been supplied in my text. The last word of the first panel reads “ pyañ ”. It ought to be “ byañ ”.

The bell at Bsam Yas is described by Professor Tucci at p. 69 of *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*. He gives a picture of it at p. 70 and the text of the inscription at p. 108. For the sake of completeness, I reproduce the text with some corrections made from my own copy.

ཇོ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་བཟན་ཡུམ་། སྐས་ཀྱིས་ཕྱོགས་བཟུང་། དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ་ལ་།  
 མཆོད་པའི་སྐད་དུ་ཅོང་། འདི་བགྱིས་ཏེ་དེའི་བསོད་། རམས་ཀྱི་སྟོབས་ཀྱིས་། ལྷ་བཙན་པོ་  
 ཁྱི་སྟོང་ལྡེ་། བཟན་ཡབ་སྐས་སྐྱངས་དབྱ། ལ་གསུང་དབྱངས་ལྷག་། ལྷ་སྐྱ་དབྱངས་  
 དང་ལྷན་ཏེ་། ལྷ་ན་ཕྱེད་པའི་བྱང་ལྷབ་། ཏུ་བྱལ་བར་སྐྱོད་ཏེ་།

The dividing lines shown above mark the sections into which the inscription is divided on the bell. There are no *śad* punctuation marks in the inscription. One of the divisions falls in the middle of a word, viz. “ dbyal ”.

The points of difference from Professor Tucci’s text are :—

“ Brtsan ” for “ btsan ” in the first and eighth sections.

Omission of “ ga ” in third section, which has been introduced by Professor Tucci by mistake. This passage is visible on his photograph of the bell.

Dbyal" for "dpyal". The former spelling appears also in Tun Huang Annals, p. 20, where the meaning is believed to be "illustrious", see p. 42.

"cu" for "bcu-hi" in the tenth section. This may make the translation less easy but is the form I find in all my copies.

"smond" for "smon" in the last section. The *da drag* has been omitted in Professor Tucci's copy.

My translation differs slightly from Professor Tucci's in view of the different reading of the first line.

"Queen Rgyal Mo Brtsan the mother and her son had this bell made as an offering for the Three Precious Ones of the Ten Directions, and prayed that by the power of its merit the Divine King Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan, the father and his son, being endowed with the most excellent voice of sixty sounds, may achieve supreme enlightenment."

The only significant difference is in the first line, where Professor Tucci, reading "Rgyal mo btsan", translates "The mother noble queen and the king and son". This implies (op. cit., p. 71) that Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan, his mother, and his son were donors of the bell. If the reading "btsan" were correct it would not only be unusual Tibetan but would raise other questions. "Jo Mo Rgyal-mo Btsan," as a compendious phrase for "King and Queen", is improbably clumsy when compared with such expressions as "yab yum", "yum sras", etc.; and I have seen no example of "btsan" used in such an abbreviation with the meaning "king". It would also be strange for a queen, even a queen-mother, to be mentioned before a reigning king; and in any case we know from the Tun Huang Annals (p. 51) that Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan's mother died in A.D. 742, the year in which he was born, and so could not have taken part with him in this donation. But the reading is in fact "brtsan" a common part of many royal names and here part of the name Rgyal-mo Brtsan, which is given as that of one of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan's queens in Dpañ-bo Gtsug Lag's Chos Byuñ in the form "Hbro Bzah Khri Rgyal-mo Btsan" (Sba Bžed has "Khri Rgyal Mañ-mo Btsan"). An objection to this identification is the mention in the inscription of a son, for Dpañ-bo Gtsug Lag and Sba Bžed say that Khri Rgyal-mo Btsan became a nun, under the name Byañ Chub Rje, because she bore no son to the king. The Tun Huang Chronicle shows that the mother of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan's sons—at least of Mu Ne Brtsan and Lde Sroñ Brtsan—was the Tshes Poñ queen, Rma Rgyal Ldoñ Skar (p. 89) and later histories include Mu Rug



Brtsan also in her family. But I have mentioned in my article in *JRAS.*, 1952, the story in Dpañ bo Gtsug Lag's Chos Byuñ that the first son born to Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan died young and I have pointed out that there is the record in the Tun Huang Annals of the birth of a son in 760. From other evidence it appears that Mu Ne was not born until about 774 and, if this is true, the long interval suggests that the first son was born to another queen. One of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan's wives was called Pho Yoñ Bzah Rgyal mo Btsun, a name somewhat similar to Rgyal-mo Brtsan ; but as she was the widow of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan, whom his son Mu Ne is reported to have married, the probability is that she was one of the younger wives and not likely to have born a son so early as A.D. 760. On the other hand, the similarity of the names of the donor of the Bsam Yas bell and the queen who later became a nun is so strong that it is reasonable to accept their identity and to conjecture that because of the death of her son, born in 760, and her failure to bear any more sons to the king, Hbro Bzah Rgyal-mo Brtsan turned to religion and took the name Byañ Chub.

The incompleteness of our evidence makes it possible to raise even more speculations. Perhaps Mu Rug Brtsan, the son who was banished, was the child of some other queen than Tshes Poñ Rma Rgyal. Perhaps "Yum sras" in the inscription means "the queen and her daughters". But these are points which appear of small weight and which further study or the appearance of new evidence may gradually eliminate.

It might also be argued that if the reference in the inscription is to the son of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan, who was born in 760, it would be evidence for an early date for the building of Bsam Yas. However, we do not know the age of this son when he died. He might have been anything up to fifteen years old, so that would not affect the view that the building of Bsam Yas took place between A.D. 763 and 775.

Turning to the inscription at Khra Hbrug we find that it was the work of Queen Byañ Chub, the lady who, on the argument above, was the donor of the bell at Bsam Yas, on this occasion using the name she took when she became a nun. The king, in whose honour the bell is dedicated, was her stepson Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan who, as I have suggested in connection with the Rkoñ-po inscription, only used the title Khri after the year A.D. 804. This would mean that the Queen was over sixty years old when she dedicated the bell. In addition to being the king's stepmother the lady appears

to have been related to him through his wives, for he is recorded as having married three ladies of the Hbro clan.

Only one small objection occurs to me. I do not know whether the title Jo Mo was used by dowager queens. It appears to be used quite freely of noble ladies, but I have no direct evidence on the point in question. In mentioning this bell (op. cit., p. 70) Professor Tucci says that the inscription states that it was made by "Byañ Chub, the wife of the donor". It would not surprise me greatly if evidence should appear to show that the story about a queen becoming a nun was transferred by later historians from the less well-known and less admired Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan to the more famous Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan. I have found to this day a tendency to ascribe all ancient monuments to the latter, even when the evidence is clearly in favour of the former. But Professor Tucci did not secure a copy of the inscription and there is in fact no statement of the relationship between the donor Queen Byañ Chub and King Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan. On the present evidence, therefore, it seems reasonable to accept the tradition as it has come down and to identify the donor of the bells both at Bsam Yas and at Khra Hbrug with Queen Hbro Bzah Rgyal-mo Brtsan, who later took the name Byañ Chub, and who was one of the wives of Khri Sroñ Lde Brtsan.

Professor Tucci suggests that the fact that Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan's name is on the bell at Khra Hbrug indicates that he founded the Gtsug Lag Khañ there and that the traditional ascription to Sroñ Brtsan Sgam-po must be rejected. But it is also a possibility that Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan rebuilt and enlarged a smaller and older building.

The inscription, like that at Bsam Yas, is written round the bell in two lines. It is broken up into sections by ribbing on the bell and the divisions are indicated in the copy below by long strokes.

དེལ་ཚེན་པོ་འདི་ཡང་ལྷ་། བཙན་པོ་ཁྱིའུ་སྤེ་སྤོང་བཙན་། གྱི་རུ \* \* ལྷན་འགྲངས་།  
 ས་བཟུགས་སོ་སོལ་། ལྷའི་ན་སྐྱ་བར་སྤྲང་ལ་། སྐྱ་པ་དང་འདྲ་བར་། ཡོན་བདག་  
 རོ་མོ་བྱང་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་། བཀྱིས་ནས་མཁེན་པོ་རྒྱའི་། དགེ་སྤོང་རིན་ཅེན་གྱིས་སྐྱུགས་སོ་  
 ཚལ་གྱི་སྐྱ་ཡོན་དང་། སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་། དགེ་བ་ལ་བསྐྱུལ་བའི་བྱིར།

Taking the damaged passage to read "dus bsnan", I translate:  
 "This great bell also, which increases and records the years of the king, Khri Lde Sroñ Brtsan, was set up to be like to the sound which

manifests the voice of God. Queen Byañ Chub made the donation, and the Abbot, the Chinese monk Rin Cen, cast it, to be a benefaction for Tshal and to call all creatures to virtue."

There are several points on which I am in doubt.

The damaged passage presents a difficulty and I have not seen the phrase "dus bsnan hgrañ ba" elsewhere.

"Sol" in "bshugs so sol" is also not clear. It seems to be derived from "gsol-ba". My Tibetan helpers did not think it could be connected with the word Lha-hi which follows, but could not suggest a translation.

"Tshal gyi sku yon." I am not sure what "Tshal" means here. It might be "the grove", implying the monastery, or it may be the name of some district. There is a place called Tshal near Lhasa where the Tshal-pa Dep Dmar was written.

At all events the general purport of the inscription is clear.

It may be useful to give a list of the inscriptions of the eighth and ninth centuries from Central Tibet which have been published up to date, and where they are to be found. I have arranged them by reigns; and the publications referred to are quoted under the following abbreviations:—

- R.A.S. P.P., XIX = "Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa and the Mu Tsung/Khri Gtsug Lde Brtsan Treaty of A.D. 821-3 from the Inscription at Lhasa," by H. E. Richardson, R.A.S. Prize Publication XIX, 1952.
- JRASB.*, 1949 = "Three Ancient Inscriptions from Tibet," by H. E. Richardson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. xv, no. 1, 1949.
- TTK.* = *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*, by Professor G. Tucci, Rome, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1950.
- JRAS.*, 1953 = "Tibetan Inscriptions at Žva-hi Lha Khañ," H. E. Richardson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1952 and 1953.
- RK.* = The present article.

REIGN OF KHRI SROÑ LDE BRTSAN, c. A.D. 755 TO 797

<i>Rdo riñ</i> at <u>Ž</u> ol, Lhasa . . .	R.A.S. P.P. XIX
<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Bsam Yas . . .	<i>JRASB.</i> , 1949 and <i>TTK.</i>
Bell at Bsam Yas . . .	<i>TTK.</i> and <i>RK.</i>
Bell at Yer-pa (?) . . .	<i>RK.</i>

## REIGN OF KHRI LDE SROÑ BRṬSAN, c. A.D. 798 (804) TO 815

<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at De-Mo Sa . . . . .	<i>RK.</i>
<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Sañs Rgyas Dgon-pa (Skar Cuñ) . . . . .	<i>JRASB.</i> , 1949, and <i>TTK.</i>
<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Žva-ḥi Lha Khañ . . . . .	<i>JRAS.</i> , 1952/1953
Bell at Khra Ḥbrug . . . . .	<i>RK.</i>

## REIGN OF KHRI GTSUG LDE BRṬSAN (RAL-PA-CEN), c. A.D. 815 TO ? 836, 841

<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Ḥphyoñ Rgyas . . . . .	<i>TTK.</i>
<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Lhasa Gtsug Lag Khañ . . . . .	R.A.S. P.P. XIX
<i>Rdo-riñ</i> at Mtshur-Phu . . . . .	<i>JRASB.</i> , 1949

The above list omits Dr. Bushell's edition of part of the Gtsug Lag Khañ inscriptions and Dr. Waddell's edition of them and the Žol inscriptions, but references to those works will be found in R.A.S. Prize Publication XIX. There is also no mention of Dr. Francke's material from Western Tibet, to which I have not had access. I therefore do not know whether it contains any inscriptions of the eighth and ninth centuries.

I heard of one place where an ancient inscription might be found. There is said to be writing in Tibetan and Chinese on the rock near a bridge across a river some three days' journey south of Tachienlu, on the road to Yaan. This is perhaps at Luting Chiao. The Tibetans call the place Rgya-ḥi Sam-pa, which may indicate that it was at some time a boundary between Tibet and China. But perhaps the inscription relates to the building of the suspension bridge which Rockhill says was made in 1701 (*Land of the Lamas*, p. 301). It is unlikely that any Western visitor will be able to check this information for some time.

There is also reported to be a *rdo riñ* at Dpaḥ Ri, north of Hsining, which relates to the Mkhas-pa Mi Gsum who fled from Tibet when Buddhism was persecuted by Lañ Dar Ma (*The Blue Annals*, vol. i, p. 63; G. N. Roerich, *RASB.*, Calcutta, 1949). That might contain information about the later days of the Tibetan kingship.

From the time of Khri Gtsug Lde Brṭsan until the Ch'ing conquest of Tibet in 1720 very few important inscriptions appear to have been set up in Central Tibet. I have a copy of fragmentary inscriptions on a *rdo riñ* at Rgyal Lha Khañ which was founded in A.D. 1012 (*Blue Annals*, op. cit., p. 88); and of inscriptions, very much damaged, from what appears to have been a boundary mark near the Gtsañ-po ferry at Ña Bso, which may date to the time of the Riñ Spuñ princes. There is also a small lead tablet in the Gtsug Lag Khañ, at Lhasa, hung so high on a pillar that all I could make out

were the characters "Da Ming" in Chinese. I was not able to get a copy but I believe that it records donations by a Ming Emperor.

There are also miscellaneous inscriptions on rock faces by the roadside, especially in the valleys of the Skyid Chu and Gtsañ-po; and there are the Tibetan versions of the major Ch'ing inscriptions at Lhasa, which I hope to edit some day.

ST. ANDREWS 1952.