

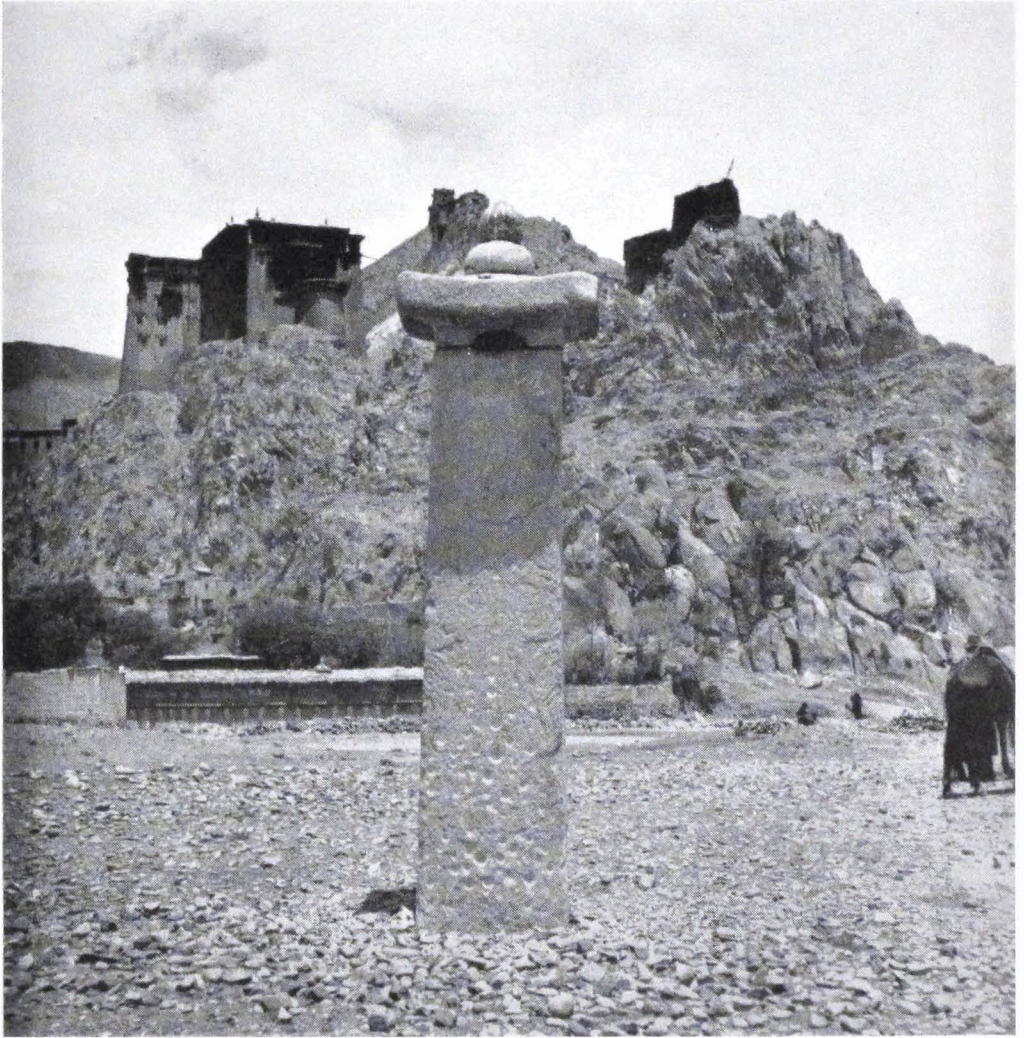
A NEW INSCRIPTION  
OF KHRI SRONG LDE BRITSAN

By H. E. RICHARDSON

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Pillar of Khri Srong Lde-brtsan at 'Phyong - rgyas village,  
with lion and dragon carvings  
'Phyong - rgyas Rdzong in background

[Frontispiece

# A NEW INSCRIPTION OF KHRI SRONG LDE BRTSAN

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>JRAS</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (London).
<i>JRASB</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal.
KLS Tomb	Inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde Srong Brtsan.
LI	<i>Inventaire des Manuscrits Tibétains de Touen-houang</i> , M. Lalou. Paris 1939–1950.
RT	Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu.
TH	<i>Documents de Touen-houang Relatifs a l'Histoire du Tibet</i> . J. Bacot, F. W. Thomas, C. Toussaint. Paris 1949.
Thomas, Folk Literature	<i>Ancient Folk Literature from N.E. Tibet</i> . F. W. Thomas. Berlin 1957.
TLTD	<i>Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents</i> . F. W. Thomas. London, 1935–1955.
TPS	<i>Tibetan Painted Scrolls</i> . G. Tucci. Rome 1949.
Treaty Pillar	Inscriptions on pillar near Jo-khang of Lhasa, concerning the treaty between Tibet and China, A.D. 821–822.
TTK	<i>The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings</i> . G. Tucci, Rome 1950.

THERE RECENTLY CAME into the possession of Rai Bahadur T. D. Densapa, of Gangtok, manuscript copies of six early Tibetan inscriptions, believed to have been owned formerly by Lama Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu. The Lama, who lived from 1698/99 to 1755, belonged to the Ka-thog branch of the Rnying-ma-pa sect and was renowned as a scholar, statesman, historian and *gter-ston* (discoverer of hidden religious texts and relics). The last two qualities explain his interest in old inscriptions. The texts include five which are already known:

1. The inscription on the pillar at the tomb of Khri Lde Srong Brtsan (c. 815) *vide The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*, G. Tucci, Rome 1950. (TTK) pp. 36–41 and 91–93.

2 and 3. The inscriptions from the east and west faces of the pillar near the Jo Khang at Lhasa (Treaty Pillar); the western inscription being the treaty between Tibet and China in 821–822 of which the Chinese text is also inscribed on the pillar. These inscriptions have been edited several times; the most recent works are in *Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa*, H. E. Richardson, London 1952, and *The Inscription of the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 821–822*, Fang-kuei Li, in *T'oung Pao* XLIV, 1955.

4. The Inscription from De-mo in Rkong-po (c. 810–815). H. E. Richardson in *JRAS.*, April 1953.
5. The “Skar-cung” inscription from Ra-ma Sgang near Lhasa (c. 810–820). H. E. Richardson in *JRASB.*, 1949; and G. Tucci, *op. cit.*

The sixth inscription, which is described in the MSS. as being “on the stone pillar at the bridge-head at ‘Phyong-rgyas”, relates to the reign of Khri Srong Lde Brtsan (755–797) and is hitherto unknown.

With his customary generosity, Rai Bahadur T. D. Densapa, who is a distinguished Tibetan scholar and the owner of a fine library including many rare historical works, has given me photographs of the six texts and has agreed that they should be published. I am undertaking a detailed comparison of the manuscript with existing editions of the known inscriptions and the rubbings and photographs on which those editions are based. This will take time; and, the text of the unknown inscription is, therefore, being made available without delay. It is intended, when publishing the other material, to give a short note on the life of Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu (hereafter referred to as RT) and full details of the MSS. containing the copies of the inscriptions. In the meantime, it is hoped that the short comments offered here will suffice as an introduction to the text.

The MSS. fall into three parts, each in a different hand. What appears to be yet another hand — possibly that of RT himself — has made notes on several of the texts, some of which suggest that the writer of the notes corrected his copy by comparing it with the original inscription. The new inscription is in a collection of four in the same hand (the other two parts contain only one inscription each) which includes that from the tomb of Khri Lde Srong Brtsan (KLS Tomb) and the two from the Lhasa treaty pillar (Treaty Pillar). At the end of the text of the treaty inscription there is the comment that the copy was made 599 years after the water-hare year in which the pillar was set up. That year was 823; so it appears that some, if not all, of the copies were made about two and a half centuries before they came into the possession of RT. The material may therefore claim considerable antiquity although there can, of course, be no certainty that what came into the hands of RT were the identical copies made in the 15th century or subsequent copies of that copy. It fills in several lacunae in existing texts, due to damage on the stone pillars. An assessment is, therefore, necessary

of the degree to which new readings and, as here, a completely new text can be accepted as reliable.

Even with the help of ladders and binoculars there is plenty of scope for error in making eye-copies of inscriptions on tall pillars where much of the writing is well above eye level and some of it may have suffered damage. Later, in recopying what was roughly written on the spot further mistakes may creep in and be perpetuated and added to in subsequent recopying. Comparison with photographs and rubbings of the pillars themselves shows a number of inaccuracies in RT's texts probably arising from such causes. It is evident, also, that his copies have undergone considerable editing. Each shows some slight variation in the nature and extent of the demonstrable inaccuracies it contains; but, in general, differences from the original fall into the following categories:




- a. probable misreading of words or passages on account of their distance from the eye, or damage to the stone.
- b. the omission, without indication, of words or letters either through oversight or because they were not legible.
- c. the apparent — though rare — alteration of the text where some obsolete word or expression was not understood.
- d. modernization of the old orthography to bring it into line with current usage. This has led to the alteration in almost every instance of the reversed *ki gu*, the omission of most of the occurrences of the *da drag* and of the *ya btags* in such words as *myi*, *myed*, *myes*, and the substitution of e.g. *-sogs* where the original has *stsogs*, *rtsigs* for *gtsigs*, *zhal snga* for *zha snga* and so on.
- e. disregard of the punctuation of the original; some marks being omitted, others wrongly inserted.

It may be added that the copies do not show the division of the inscription into the lines in which they appear on the pillars.

In judging the acceptability of those new passages in RT's copies, where no check by photographs or rubbings is possible, a full examination of the nature of all the demonstrable inaccuracies in each inscription is necessary. It is necessary also to allow for the possibility that passages which are effaced today were also effaced, wholly or in part, when the copies were made and that some of the new readings may be reconstructions based on guesswork. It is not possible to attempt here a detailed evaluation of the chances; for each such case must be considered on its merits and in its own context. But — to anticipate the presentation of the complete

evidence — my general conclusion is that, while there are many inaccuracies in each text, these are mostly on details of orthography and punctuation; and that the texts may be accepted as providing a substantially reliable version of the original.

It seems reasonable to assume that a hitherto unknown text, for which no independent check is possible, making its first appearance in a collection of such copies of known inscriptions would share the same degree of authenticity and reliability and that we have, subject to similar discrepancies in detail, a substantially acceptable version of an ancient original. Fortunately, it is possible to go a little further in attesting the authenticity of this new text. The pillar “at the bridge-head at 'Phyong-rgyas”, to which it is ascribed, still stands and has been seen by Professor Tucci and myself. In TTK Tucci says of it (p. 42) “Under the fort there is another pillar, but the inscription is completely gone, only a few letters being now visible”. I visited 'Phyong-rgyas in 1949, the year following Tucci's visit. The photograph (Plate I) was taken then and shows the pillar, the fort and the bridge, which is a very modest affair marked by the two rows of stones visible to the left of the horse in the photograph. The pillar is, at a rough estimate, 10 feet high by 2 feet, or a little more, in breadth. The south face, which is shown in the photograph, bears traces of a lightly carved, freely drawn, figure of a lion with below it a more stylized carving of a dragon in the Chinese manner. On the north face are the fragmentary remains of an inscription, in which I was able to make out the words *Khri Lde Srong* and a few other words and letters. I recorded these, line by line, each in approximately its proper position on the stone. When RT's MSS. came into my hands quite recently, I compared it with my notes and found that it is possible to fit them together to an extent which is surprising in view of the fragmentary nature of the survivals, and, in doing so, to go some way towards a reconstruction of the original arrangement of the inscription on the pillar. I give an example from the first ten lines in which the fragments are shown with the relevant passage in the new text below each line. In the transcription *i* represents the reversed *ki gu*.

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1.      | lh x x x i<br><i>lha dang myi'i</i>  |
| 2 to 4. | illegible  |
| 5.      |  l x b <br> <i>lha btsan po</i> |

6. illegible.
7.           g                 i ma nya  
*lha'i gtsug lag ni ma nyams gnam*
8.                             thun par m  
*sa'i chos dang ni 'thun par mdzad / sku*
9.                             s brjod pa'i  
*yon tan yongs kyis brjod pa'i yi ge /*
10.   s so //  
*nam zhig rdo rings la bris so //*
11. illegible
12.         dz         dang /     bu         btsan po' i  
*mdzad pa dang // dbu rmog brisan po byin*

Similar sporadic fragments are recorded down to line 26 thus establishing an unmistakable link between the new text and the inscription on the pillar.

In the transcribed text, which follows, the arrangement by lines which I have attempted on the basis of my fragmentary notes, although not claiming to be totally accurate, is perhaps not very far from the original. RT's text, although subject to the same sort of modernization which can be seen in his other copies, contains a few traces of the old orthography. He completely suppresses the reversed *ki gu* but a *da drag* is shown — *gyurd* in line 25 — and examples of the archaic *ya btags* appears in *myes* line 5 and *myi* in line 32. On that basis and on the evidence of the other copies, I have restored the *ya btags* where it would indubitably have appeared in the original. The principles underlying the use of the reversed *ki gu* are too uncertain for any attempt to restore it except where my notes show that it actually existed. The punctuation of the copy appears to be very defective. Inscriptions of the period are usually rather heavily punctuated; the nearest in date to this one — the inscription at Bsam-yas — being particularly so. It is not credible that in the original inscription six complete lines from line 5 to the end of line 10 would have lacked internal punctuation, I have therefore supplied a minimum of punctuation to enable the text to be read intelligibly. So that my contributions may be readily identifiable they are made with a single *shad*. Punctuation from the MSS., which is indicated there only by spacing and an occasional single *shad*, has been shown by double *shad*.

'phyong rgyas stag rtse zam sna'i rdo rings la

1. ཨ། lha btsan po yab myes lha dang myi'i
2. rjer gshegs te / chos gtsug lag ni
3. lugs kyis bzang // dbu rmog brtsan po ni /
4. byin du che'o //
5. ཨ། lha btsan po khri srong lde brtsan gyi zha
6. snga nas kyang / yab myes kyis lugs bzhin /
7. lha'i gtsug lag ni ma nyams / gnam
8. sa'i chos dang ni 'thun par mdzad / sku
9. yon tan yongs kyis brjod pa'i yi ge /
10. nam zhig rdo rings la bris so //
11. chos rgyal chen pos phrin las su ci
12. mdzad pa dang // dbu rmog brtsan po'i byin
13. gyis / chab srid skyes pa las stsogs pa'i
14. gtam gyi yi ge / zhib mo gcig ni / gud
15. na yod do //
16. ཨ། 'phrul gyi lha btsan po khri srong lde
17. brtsan gyi zha snga nas / mtha' bzhi'i rgyal
18. po gzhan dang myi 'dra ste / byin gyi sgam dkyel
19. chen po dang / dbu rmog brtsan pos / yar ni
20. ta zhig gyi mtshams man chad / mar ni long
21. shan gyi la rgyud yan cad / chab 'og 'du
22. ste / chab srid ni lho byang shar nub /
23. mthas klus par che'o // de ltar chab srid.
24. che ba'i byin gyis / bod yong yul che / khong
25. phyug du gyurd pas / nang nas kyang / nam
26. zhar bde zhing skyid par gnas so //
27. thugs la byang chub spyod pa rlabs po
28. che mnga' bas / 'jig rten las ' das pa'i
29. chos bzang po brnyes nas / kun la bka'
30. drin du byin no // de ltar 'greng dud
31. gnyis la / 'phral yun gnyis kyis bka' drin
32. chen pos ma khyab pa myed de // myi yongs
33. kyis mtshan yang / 'phrul gyi lha byang chub
34. chen por gsol to //



## NOTES

I have made the following alterations to RT's text, on the basis of other contemporary originals. line 1 *myes* for *mes*; line 13 *las* for *la* (*stsogs*) line 17 *zha* for *zhal*. (RT has *zha* in line 5); line 18 *myi* for *mi*; line 30 *byin no* for *byino*; line 32 *myed* for *med*.

In line 12 I have altered *brtsan po* to *brtsan po'i* on the basis of my notes and in comparison with TH p. 114 which reads *dbu rmog brtsan po'i byin kyis*.

All the single *shad* punctuation is supplied by me. Two instances of the reversed *ki gu* are shown as *i*.

The lines have been numbered for ease of reference.

The descriptive title is in a different hand from the body of the inscription.

## TRANSLATION

On the stone pillar at the bridge-head at 'Phyong-rgyas.

When the Divine Btsan-po, the ancestors, came to rule over gods and men,<sup>1</sup> by their customs religious learning was excellent;<sup>2</sup> their mighty helmet was great in glory.

The Divine Btsan-po Khri Srong Lde Brtsan, too, in accordance with the customs of his ancestors did not impair the learning of the gods; he acted in agreement with the religion of heaven and earth.<sup>3</sup> Of his meritorious achievement, praised by all, a record has been written on a stone pillar never to be destroyed.<sup>4</sup> Of what deeds the great Religious King<sup>5</sup> did, of the increase of his kingdom by the glory of his mighty helmet, and so on, an account recording them in detail exists elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

The Divine Manifestation, the Btsan-po Khri Srong Lde Brtsan being beyond comparison with the other kings of the four frontiers, by his gloriously profound intellect and his mighty helmet, in the upper direction from the borders of Ta Zhig<sup>7</sup> downwards and in the lower direction from the line of passes of the Long Shan,<sup>8</sup> all was drawn together beneath his sway; and his dominion extended south, north, east and west, to the furthest bounds. In this way by the glory of the greatness of the dominion, the whole of Tibet became great in territory and wealthy throughout.<sup>9</sup> And from within, too, always being at ease it dwelt in happiness.<sup>10</sup> When through possessing in his mind the acts of enlightenment<sup>11</sup> in great abundance he had found the excellent religion of the Transcender of the World, he bestowed it as a favour on all. In this way, as to both men and

beasts,<sup>12</sup> there was none not covered by his great favour both for the present and the future. And all men gave him the name 'Phrul Gyi Lha Byang Chub Chen Po- The Great Enlightened Divine Manifestation.

## NOTES

The above text may be compared with the passage in the Tun Huang Chronicle describing the reign of Khri Srong Lde Brtsan. (TH pp.114–115) although exact parallels are few, the spirit and idiom are similar. Some examples will be quoted in the notes which follow.

1. Similar phraseology about the kings coming to rule gods and men appears in the inscription at Khri Srong Lde Brtsan's tomb, in that at Rkong-po De-mo and in the treaty inscription at Lhasa.

2. TH echoes this with the phrase *chos bzang srid che ste*.

3. Whether *lha'i lugs* and *gnam sa'i chos* are antithetic and refer to Buddhism and Bon respectively, or whether — as is probable — both are epithets of Bon has been examined by Tucci in TTK (note in addenda). To avoid long comment here, the point is reserved for examination later in this article.

4. *nam zhid*. cf. *nam du yang ma zhid*, Skar -cung inscription lines 19 and 20: Bsam-yas inscription line 6. (*JRASB.*, loc. cit.)

5. There is no other instance in early inscriptions of the epithet Chos Rgyal (Dharma raja) being used of a Tibetan king.

6. *Gud du* cf. the Bsam-yas inscription. The account said to exist elsewhere might refer to the inscription on the pillar which is stated to have been set up at the tomb of Khri Srong Lde Brtsan; but it could also refer to some such documents as the king's two edicts recorded in the Chos Byung of Dpa'-bo Gtsug-lag 'Phreng-ba (TTK pp. 44–50.)

7. *Ta zhid*. There is no clear description of the border between Tibet and the Ta zhid. "Ta che" (Ta-shih) is said by Chavannes (*Documents sur les Tou Kiue Occidentaux*) to have been given by the Persians to the Arabs. In Tibetan usage it appears to cover the regions to the west of Kashgaria and the north of Kashmir; and the name survives there in Tajikistan. In the time of Khri Srong Lde Brstan, when the Tibetans controlled most of Chinese Turkestan, Ta Zhid would in effect mean the Abbasid Caliphs — who were of Persian origin — and their Arab, Persian and other subjects in Transoxiana.

8. TH p. 115 has the parallel passage *chab srid che ste long shan la rgyud yan chad*. Long Shan is perhaps the Lung-shan pass, between Ch'ing-shui hsien and Lung-chou, which separated Chinese territory from that of the Tibetans — see Li Fang-kuei *op. cit.* p. 10.

9. In RT's copy of KLS Tomb inscription a similar expression is found: *bod yongs kyis khongs la yul phyug ste*. This is a new reading in a place where the stone of the pillar is damaged giving a defective text in TTK.

10. Echoes of lines 16 to 26 are scattered through the passage in TH 114–115 *btsan po'i zha snga nas / thugs sgam ba'i rlabs dang / dbu rmog brtsan po'i byin kyis / nyi ngog rgyal po gzhan dpaya' phab pa dang / . . . chab srid mtha' bzhir bskyed / nang gi bde ba ni snyoms par mdzad*.

11. *byang chub kyis spyod pa* (Bodhicaryā), is a technical term of Buddhism.

12. *'greng dud*. This expression is found also in TH 114 — *'greng dud gnyis kyis rje mdzad pa*. There the editors translate “hommes et animaux” on the analogy of *dud'gro* an animal that goes in a stooping posture. Two learned Tibetan scholars, consulted separately, unhesitatingly interpreted it as referring to higher and lower status among men — i.e. nobles and subjects. Nevertheless, the evidence of early documents appears to support the other interpretation here. See TLTD II p. 93 *'greng ('gring) myi*; LI 16 *'gring mgo nag*; and Thomas Folk Literature pp. 46, 47 etc. *'greng myi'o cog*. In those passages *'greng* seems to refer, simply to men. It is just possible that the reference may be to noble men and one passage in LI 1134 might seem to support that — *myi rab 'greng ru*. But on the other hand, in the extract quoted in LI 1196 there appears to be a contrast between men and beasts . . . *'greng rje ni btsan pho la gyu'i ni mkhan bas dphen / dud gyi rta pho la bal gyi ni . . .*

The inscription contains no precise indication of its date but may be assigned to fairly narrow limits at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century. If, as mentioned in the notes above, it refers to a memorial pillar at the king's tomb, it could be dated not long after his death. It is usually accepted that Khri Srong Lde Brtsan ceased to reign in 797 but, as I have suggested elsewhere, it is possible that he did not die until some years later. On the other hand, if the reference to other accounts of his reign is of a more

general nature, the inscription could have been erected in his lifetime probably towards the end of his reign when his reputation for piety had been established by such acts as the foundation of Bsam-yas and the great religious debate there c. 792–794 (Demiéville *Le Concile de Lhasa* p. 177).

It is not immediately clear why the pillar should be where it is — on a flat, barren, stony site at the corner of the village near one of two small bridges which cross a shallow stream and lead to the royal tombs some half a mile distant. There is neither tradition nor probability that a tomb existed there. I have suggested elsewhere that the emphasis on the king's devotion to Buddhism may have made the inscription unacceptable for a place in the royal burial precinct where the old rites still held sway. But that is no more than speculation. The site, which nowadays appears obscure and deserted, was probably of some importance in earlier times. 'Phyong-rgyas was an ancient royal residence and, although Khri Srong Lde Brtsan preferred Brag-mar, near Bsam-yas, it may be assumed that throughout the royal period it would have been inhabited by people connected with the court and with the royal burial ground, and that the road to the now neglected tombs was busy then with processions not only on the occasion of royal burials but also for the annual ceremonies for the dead and for other rituals. Further, the great development of communications by the Chinese, after their seizure of Tibet in 1950, and the revival of the route *via* 'Phyong-rgyas past the Gri-gu Mtsho to Lho-brag and Bhutan suggests that that road may also have been of importance to the Tibetan kings in their day of military expansionism.

So many problems about the reign of Khri Srong Lde Brtsan, whose reputation in later religious history is so great, remain unanswered that the content of the inscription may seem disappointingly meagre. But any contemporary evidence is valuable; and here we have some additional, if indirect, light on the relations between the new Buddhism and the old Bon. This brings us back to the meaning of *lha'i gtsug lag* etc. touched on in note 3 above. The inscription might appear to support the view, dismissed by Tucci, that *lha'i lugs* refers to Buddhism and *gnam chos* to Bon. After mention of the king's activities in those two spheres, the text goes on to say that his achievement, praised by all, is written on a stone pillar (presumably the one bearing this inscription cf. Treaty Pillar E. line 4). As the later part of the text eulogizes Khri Srong Lde Brtsan's Buddhist faith, it might be thought that the earlier part refers to his

zeal in harmonizing the new and the old; and the description of the king as Chos Rgyal in that same passage might also indicate his Buddhist character. It is true that in documents of the period the word *chos*, without further qualification does not imply the Buddhist religion. The name of the legendary ancestral king 'O Lde Spu Rgyal is frequently connected with *chos*: see Treaty Pillar E. line 9 *chos khrims bzang po*; KLS Tomb line 2 *chos lugs bzang po*; THA p. 81 *chos bzang du byed*; TLTD II p. 93 *chos bzang gtsug lag che*. But, apart from this inscription, the only early instance of the title Chos Rgyal as applied to a Tibetan king of which I know, is clearly in a Buddhist context (LI 130). That, however, is not enough to support a connection in the passage under consideration between *lha'i gtsug lag* and Buddhism; and when Buddhism is unmistakably meant it is called either *Sangs Rgyas kyi chos* (Bsam-yas and Skar-cung); or *Sangs Rgyas kyi chos bla na myed pa* (THA 114); or '*Jig rten las 'das pa'i chos bzang po* as in this inscription line 28

There was opportunity for some blurring of the lines of division between the two religions; for when Buddhism reached Tibet it had taken under its wing much of the Hindu pantheon complete with gods, nagas, magical practices and so on. That provided a bridge between old and new and helped towards the eventual absorption of many Bon practices on the fringes of Tibetan Buddhism. And so, although the majority of references to the *lha* are in a Bon context, we also find in early Tibetan texts such expressions as *Sangs Rgyas Bcom Ldan 'Das lha'i rgyal po* (LI 133). The document in TLTD II p. 93 already mentioned, is an example of the co-existence of old and new. Its occasion was the founding of a *gtsug lag khang* on the frontier in connection with the treaty between Tibet and China in 821–822, and some of its language is similar to that of the Lhasa Treaty Inscription. It begins with Buddhist invocations; goes on to praise 'O Lde Spu Rgyal; passes to the reigning king Khri Gtsug Lde Brtsan whose Bon ancestry it eulogizes; and then, if the text is correct, it relates how the king looked after *gtsug lag khang* (presumably Buddhist) and also took pleasure in all the *sku bla ring rdzi (ri rtsi?) dang gnam sa'i lha klu*; finally there is a prayer that the king may attain Buddha-hood. That sort of mélange of religious ideas is reflected in the honorific title—'*Phrul gyi lha byang chub chen po* — which is applied to Khri Srong Lde Brtsan in the new inscription.

'*Phrul gyi lha btsan po*, with the variant *Lha 'phrul*, is an epithet frequently applied to themselves by the kings in their inscriptions.

In the titles of neighbouring rulers, the Tibetans must have been long acquainted with the idea of the divinity or quasi-divinity of the king; but the idea of *'Phrul* seems to be specifically Tibetan and to foreshadow the practice of reincarnating Lamas — *sprul pa'i sku* — so popular in Tibetan Buddhism from the 12th century onwards. The word does appear in a Buddhist context in early Tibetan documents, usually with its meaning of “magic” or “illusion”; but there are instances of its use in a different sense e.g. *spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug gi rnam par 'phrul pa bstan pa* (LI 572); *'phrul gyi dge slongs* (LI 649); *de bzhin gshegs pa rnam par 'phrul ba* (LI 733); *sangs rgyas gyi 'phrul gyi sngags* (LI 747). Nevertheless, the most frequent occurrence of the word is in a lay context as a high honorific applied to kings and ministers — e.g. *'phrul dgongs*; *'phrul mnga'*; *'phrul gyi lugs*; *'phrul gyi zha snga nas* (see TLTD III sub *'phrul*, and Treaty Pillar E 52, 55). In this connection, the parallel to the frequently occurring *'phrul dang mtshungs ba* provided by the similar expressions *lha dang stang ba* (*lha dang 'dra ba*) and *dgung dang 'dra ba* points clearly to Bon inspiration.

There is, therefore, an air of syncretism in the title *'Phrul gyi lha byang chub chen po* with its association of the Bon idea of *'Phrul pa* with the Buddhist *Byang Chub* — Enlightenment. It is perhaps possible to see a similar pattern in the division of the inscription into three sections, each introduced by the honorific initial sign. The first, lines 1–4 — is a general introduction; the second — lines 4–15 praises the king in his character as traditional ruler; and the third — lines 16 to the end — which treats briefly of his territorial achievements and his acceptance of Buddhism, ends with the composite honorific title by which he was known. Even if it is going too far to look for a deliberate design of that sort, the total effect of the inscription is to support deductions which can be made from other early documents, that the champions of the new religion had to proceed with circumspection and that Buddhism, so far from being dominant and aggressive, was concerned to maintain a precarious foothold and to make the most of such common ground as it could find with Bon.

The style and diction resemble those of the other royal inscriptions which fall within the period of about 40 years from 790 onwards. The same stately, semi-mystical epithets are used — *'phrul gyi lha btsan po*; *sgam dkyel chen po*; *dbu rmog brtsan po*; etc. Such expressions are lacking in the earliest surviving inscription, the *Zhol rdo rings* at Lhasa, c. 767; but that is the work of a powerful noble concerned

with recording his own influence and achievements during the early years of Khri Srong Lde Brtsan. In construction the new text is comparatively simple and there are no obvious cruces, although the scamped punctuation is a minor difficulty and one can never be sure of catching all the *nuances* of *brda rnying-pa* language. At all events, even though it cannot claim to be a completely authenticated primary source, it is a welcome addition to the corpus of Tibetan inscriptions.