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Bio-sketch
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Translating the Tibetan Buddhist Canon:
Past Strategies, Future Prospects

ABSTRACT
This paper is a companion piece to a previous paper published in this journal (Raine 2010), which focused on the identity of the translators in Tibetan history and the context in which they worked. In this paper, the focus is on the formation and contents of the Tibetan Buddhist canon and the translation strategies used by the Tibetans during their nine centuries of translating Indian Buddhist texts. Guidelines for translation laid down by King Tride Songtsen (r. 799-815) are examined and analyzed, followed by a discussion of how these protocols were used by later translators, scholars and editors of the Tibetan canon. As with the earlier paper, in this paper the historical study of translation is linked to present times, with the final section devoted to examining recent efforts to render the Tibetan Buddhist canon into English and other languages. Institutional imperatives to coordinate this work, and the practices and norms that have been established for translation, are discussed. As Tibetan Buddhism continues its process of transmission to countries in the West and beyond, how translators choose to render these often recondite religious texts into multiple languages will be of great interest to scholars of both translation and Buddhist studies.
ABSTRAIT
Cet article en accompagne un précédent publié dans ce journal (Raine 2010), qui portait sur l'identité des traducteurs dans l'histoire tibétaine et le contexte dans lequel ils travaillaient. Dans ce présent article, l'accent est mis sur la formation et le contenu du canon bouddhiste tibétain et les stratégies de traduction auxquelles ont recouru les Tibétains lors des neuf siècles durant lesquels ils ont traduit les textes bouddhistes indiens. Les directives en matière de traduction prévues par le roi Tride Songtsen (règne: 799-815) sont examinées et analysées, s'ensuivra une discussion sur la façon dont ces protocoles ont été utilisés plus tard par les traducteurs, les chercheurs et les éditeurs du canon tibétain. Comme dans l’article précédent, celui-ci fait un lien entre l'étude historique de la traduction et l'époque contemporaine, la dernière section étant consacrée à l'examen des efforts récents visant à traduire le canon bouddhiste tibétain en anglais et dans d’autres langues. Les impératifs institutionnels pour coordonner ce travail, les pratiques et les normes établies pour la traduction sont abordés. Alors que le bouddhisme tibétain poursuit son processus de transmission vers l’Occident et au-delà, la manière dont les traducteurs choisissent de rendre ces textes religieux souvent abstrus dans plusieurs langues présentera un grand intérêt tant pour les chercheurs spécialisés en traduction que ceux spécialisés en études bouddhistes.

Keywords
Tibet, translation, translation history, Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhist translation

I. Introduction
For decades in Translation Studies (TS), religious translation research has been centered on the Bible, which Western scholars often treat as synonymous with the term “scripture” or even “canon”. Only in recent years has TS moved beyond this Judeo-Christian centrum, a move best exemplified by the publication of the edited volume Translation and Religion: Holy Untranslatable? (Long 2005). Although approximately half of the articles are related to translation in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the others cover a variety of world religions including Buddhism, Islam, and Sufism. However, in the literature of TS overall, studies by translation scholars of the other religions are negligible in number.

One such “other” religious tradition is Tibetan Buddhism, a form of Buddhism that developed in Tibet through a dual process of transmission and translation and that has been gaining great popularity worldwide in recent decades. The lack of translation research into this religion is particularly surprising when one considers that the scale, scope and duration of the translation of the Indian Buddhist canon into Tibetan is among the greatest achievements in world translation history, involving hundreds of translators, centuries of effort, and thousands of texts.
Indeed, as one religious scholar notes, the volume of Buddhist scriptures (whether Tibetan or otherwise) “amounts altogether to a thousand and more times that of the Bible” (Smith 2000: 147).

This paper is a companion piece to a previous paper published in this journal (Raine 2010), which focused on the identity of the translators in Tibetan history and the context in which they worked, providing a diachronic view of the historical process of translation activity in ancient Tibet. The present paper examines the formation of the Tibetan Buddhist canon itself and the translation strategies used by the Tibetans when translating from Sanskrit. As with the earlier paper, in this paper the historical study of translation is linked to present times, with the final section devoted to examining the recent efforts by translators to render the Tibetan Buddhist canon into English and other languages.

A number of key questions are addressed in this paper: In the historical translation of Buddhism from India to Tibet, what methods or guidelines (if any) were used by the translators, and how consistent—both diachronically and intertextually—were their translation methods across the canon? While many have remarked on the apparent uniformity and high quality of the Tibetans’ translations, what do we know about how this standard was maintained? These questions are discussed in sections two and three of the paper, which provide an overview of the formation and contents of the Tibetan canon, followed by an in-depth examination of the translation strategies used.

Turning to modern times, how much of the voluminous Tibetan Buddhist canon has been translated into Western languages thus far? Who is translating these texts, under what authority (if any), and what methods are they using in their translation work? Is there any continuity between the translation methods of the Tibetan translators and the current work underway? These questions are the focus of the fourth section of the paper, the aim of which is to bridge past and present, East and West, in the context of Buddhist translations.

II. The Canon(s) of Tibetan Buddhism

2.1 Defining “canon” and “Tibetan Buddhism”

Before discussing the materials that constitute what we are here calling the Tibetan Buddhist canon, certain definitions must be clarified, in particular the somewhat problematic term “canon,” which has strong Christian connotations. In a general sense, a canon refers to a fixed set of authoritative and accepted religious
texts, or the core teachings of a particular religion. In Buddhism, however, with its varied regional and doctrinal forms and its lack of a centralized religious authority to officially sanction a given text as part of a canon, the meaning becomes more ambiguous. Not only is the Buddhist “canon” unfixed and open, there is “a large number of distinct canons,” such as the Pali canon, the Chinese canon, and the Tibetan canon, with each canon containing different sets of texts (Smith 2000: 147).

In early Buddhism, the Tripitaka, or “three baskets” of teachings, formed the core texts for hundreds of years, and thus the term “canon” has often been applied to these materials. The Tripitaka consists of three sections: vinaya (texts on monastic discipline), sutra (general Buddhist teachings) and abhidharma (advanced Buddhist doctrine). When the Mahayana tradition arose around 200 B.C.E., “the question of the Buddhist canon became much more complex” because many additional sutras were accepted (Ray 1993: 159). With the rise of the Vajrayana several centuries later, the tantras (esoteric teachings) were also accepted by certain Mahayana schools, and thousands of tantric texts and commentaries were translated by the Tibetans. All of these texts form what—for the sake of convenience—we shall refer to here as the Tibetan canon.

The second term to be defined is “Tibetan Buddhism.” The problematic of this phrase is twofold: First, the historical Tibetan translators translated texts belonging to Indian Buddhism. The term “Tibetan Buddhism” is a modern construction that refers to the form of Buddhism that gradually developed in Tibet as a result of that historical translational process. Second, some of the texts translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan were in fact not related to Buddhism at all, but were on subjects such as grammar, astrology, poetics, history and medicine. In this paper, “Tibetan Buddhism” refers to the entire body of texts that were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan and adopted as part of the “canon” in a process that shall be described below.

2.2 The Formation of the Tibetan Canon

Translation activity in Tibet began in the 7th century and continued unabated for nearly 200 years (c. 617-839, known as the “early period,” Tib. sgna dar), after which a long period of political turmoil caused a temporary halt to the process of transmission and translation. In the 10th century, the “later period” (c. 958-1717, Tib. phyi dar) of translation began, with translation activity lasting for more than 700 years. During these nine centuries, the Tibetans voraciously studied
and translated virtually every text that they could find: the early Tripitaka, the Mahayana texts, the Indian commentaries (shastra) to the sutras, the tantras, and the commentaries to the tantras, as well as other works of a non-religious nature.

The hundreds, and then thousands, of manuscripts translated into Tibetan were housed both in local monasteries and at the palaces of the kings who sponsored the translation work. In the 14th century, these texts were organized into two main collections known in Tibetan as the Kangyur (Tib. bKa’gyur, the teachings of the Buddha) and the Tengyur (Tib. bsTan’gyur, commentaries or exegetical treatises written by Indian scholars, or panditas). Together, the Kangyur and Tengyur are commonly referred to as “the canon of Tibetan Buddhism” with the Kangyur sometimes being considered the “primary canon” and the Tengyur the “secondary canon” (Eimer 2002: 7). Some also, therefore, speak of “canons” in relation to these sets of Tibetan texts.6

Unlike certain other religious canons, the Tibetan canon was never “closed,” and new texts were continually being added, amended, and deleted. As Schaeffer and van der Kuijp note, fundamental to understanding the Tibetan canons is that they were “open entities” and were “to some degree subjective compilations, based in part on the interests and biases of the individual compiler[s] or to the school to which he or they belonged” (2009: 11). Schaeffer writes:

[T]he Kangyur and Tengyur as a whole were never permanently fixed, though of course some sections remained more stable than others. Considered in this light, the Tibetan collection might be thought of as a “canon” not in the sense of the biblical canon (with its relatively small number of approved works) but rather like a literary canon, a collection of “great books,” the authenticity of which may be agreed upon by a large majority of concerned intellectuals, yet details of which are the subject of constant debate as the collection is reproduced. (2009: 151)

The first handwritten Kangyur and Tengyur appeared in 1312, when China’s Yuan dynasty emperor facilitated its compilation. This collection was produced and preserved in Narthang Monastery in Tibet and is known as the Narthang edition (Shastri 2007: 23). Subsequently, more than 20 redactions of the Kangyur and Tengyur were produced in different locations by different scholars (Schaeffer 2009: 14). One of the most renowned such individuals was the scholar and translator Buton Rinpoche (1290-1364), who was acclaimed “for his textual scholarship, which included making new translations, revising or editing translated works, and filling in gaps in faulty texts” (Schaeffer 2009: 16).
The advent of xylographic printing heralded a new age for book production in Tibet, and the centuries that followed saw a flourishing of canonical compilations. New texts and new translations were added, old translations were revised, and catalogues were made for each edition. Thus we cannot say that there is only one Tibetan Buddhist canon, although many of the older versions are no longer extant, or exist only in fragments and are held in various parts in the world, as shall be briefly introduced below.

2.3 The Contents of the Canon

Thanks both to the work of the ancient Tibetan cataloguers and modern Buddhist scholars, the contents of the Tibetan canon are well known to us. The Kangyur is divided into three main sections: sutra (mDo), vinaya (’Dul ba) and tantra (rGyud). Each section is then subdivided according to its main texts (Harrison 1996: 83). The Tengyur also is divided into main sections of sutra and tantra, but has more sub-sections and also contains a section of works of a non-religious nature (Tsepag 2005: 59).

The most recent version of the Kangyur and Tengyur is the 1980 Derge edition produced by Dharma Publishing, which has a total of 1,115 texts in the Kangyur and 3,387 texts in the Tengyur (Tsepag 2005: 53). Currently, there are copies of the Narthang, Peking, Derge and Lhasa editions of the Kangyur and Tengyur held at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India (Shastri 2007: 26). Copies of the Narthang edition are also held in various libraries and monasteries around the world (Shastri 2007: 38-39).

The following table presents data on the four editions of the canon about which the most information is known:

Table 1: Data on Four Editions of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Dates Published</th>
<th>Kangyur, no. of texts</th>
<th>Tengyur, no. of texts</th>
<th>Total no. of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narthang</td>
<td>1730-1742</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>3,973</td>
<td>4,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cone</td>
<td>1721-1772</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>3,327</td>
<td>4,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derge</td>
<td>1729-1744</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>3,358</td>
<td>4,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma Publishing</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>3,387</td>
<td>4,502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variations among the four editions in Table 1 are minimal, in particular in regard to the total numbers of texts. The catalogues made by the
Tibetans provide not only the titles of works (in Sanskrit and Tibetan) and the names of authors and translators, but also give detailed information on the number of words, folios, and verses translated. In Dharma Publishing’s edition, the Kangyur consists of 65,420 folios, 450,000 lines and 25 million words, while the Tengyur consists of 127,000 folios, 850,000 lines and 48 million words (Tsepag 2005: 54).

Due to the large number of versions of the Tibetan Buddhist canon—each of which contains somewhat different sets of texts—modern translators are faced with the difficulty of determining how many total texts there are that need to be translated. At a recent conference of translators of Tibetan Buddhism that was aimed at discussing the massive undertaking of translating the canon into Western languages, D. Phillip Stanley of Naropa University presented detailed data from his research, in which he combined all of the existing editions of the Kangyur and Tengyur and provided a total number of all texts known to have been produced. This information is shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Numbers of Texts and Pages in the Kangyur and Tengyur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kangyur</th>
<th>Tengyur</th>
<th>Total Kangyur &amp; Tengyur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sutra</strong></td>
<td>374</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>3,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tantra</strong></td>
<td>795</td>
<td>4,093</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no. of texts</strong></td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>4,093</td>
<td>5,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of pages</strong></td>
<td>51,576</td>
<td>18,402</td>
<td>98,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutra</strong></td>
<td>98,555</td>
<td>63,270</td>
<td>231,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no. of pages</strong></td>
<td>69,978</td>
<td>161,825</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Translation Data from Tibetan History

Roughly speaking, it can be said that translation in the early period of Tibetan history focused largely on the sutras that are collected in the Kangyur, while the translators in the later period emphasized translating the commentaries that are collected in the Tengyur. However, the actual picture is somewhat more complex and will be only briefly presented here.

We know from royal catalogues such as the lDan karma, which is dated c. 812 C.E. and was preserved in the Tengyur, that the sutras were translated first (Schoening 1996: 113-114). The translators of the early period in Tibetan history translated an estimated 50,300 pages (or 97.4% of the total number of pages) of sutras in the Kangyur, which amounted to 312 sutras (or 83.4% of the total number
of sutras) out of the total 374 sutras (Stanley 2009: 535). They also translated 44% of the total pages in the combined Kangyur and Tengyur in the early period, and most of this work was done in the short 79 years between the arrival of the Indian master Shantarakshita in Tibet in 763 C.E. and the assassination of King Lang Dharma in 842 C.E. (ibid.).

In addition to the sutras, the early translators also translated 80 pages of commentary for every 100 pages of sūtra, as these two types of religious texts are closely related (Khyentse 2009: 33). This prodigious rate of translation activity is often attributed to the royal patronage and facilities provided to the translators of the early period. The translators of the later period focused mainly on the tantras and their related commentaries, as well as a variety of other non-religious materials. The later translators translated 72.1% of the pages and 90.8% of the texts of all commentaries collected in the Tengyur (Stanley 2009: 535).

Table 3 below provides data on the numbers of pages and numbers of texts translated in both the early period and later period of Tibetan history, divided by type (Kangyur texts and Tengyur texts). Texts in the Kangyur are on average longer than texts in the Tengyur, with the former having an average of 60 pages per text and the latter 40 pages (Khyentse 2009: 89-90). Although much is known in terms of data of translations completed in Tibetan history, there are still many unresearched areas, such as the question of how the Tibetans chose which texts to translate (Schoening 1996:121).

Table 3: Translation Data from the Early and Later Periods of Tibetan History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Period</th>
<th>Later Period</th>
<th>Totals Kangyur and Tengyur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translations completed (by type)</td>
<td>56,915 of Kangyur</td>
<td>13,055 of Kangyur</td>
<td>231,794*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45,078 of Tengyur</td>
<td>116,746 of Tengyur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total translations completed</td>
<td>101,993</td>
<td>129,801</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translations completed (by type)</td>
<td>629 of Kangyur</td>
<td>540 of Kangyur</td>
<td>5,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>376 of Tengyur</td>
<td>3,717 of Tengyur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total translations completed</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>4,257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The small discrepancy in the total number of combined Kangyur and Tengyur pages, which in Table 2 is 231,802, is due to certain estimates made by Stanley (2009) in his calculations of translated pages.
III. Guidelines and Strategies of the Tibetan Translators

Having briefly outlined above the structure, size and contents of the Tibetan canon, we shall now address the critical question of what is known of how these more than 5,000 texts were translated into Tibetan, a question that is not only of historical import, but also has significance to today’s translators of Tibetan Buddhism into Western languages.

Strategies used by translators in ancient Tibet may be divided into two types: those related to terminology and those related to all other translation issues (e.g. syntax, linguistic conventions, specific translation methods for proper nouns, etc.). Terminology was standardized in the early period and culminated in the publication of the *Mahavyutpatti*, a Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary of Buddhist and other terms with nearly 10,000 entries, which is still used today by scholars as a lexicographical reference work.

The *Mahavyutpatti* (MVP) was created c. 814 at the order of King Tride Songtsen (r. 799-815). Since there was no standardized religious terminology in widespread use in Tibet at that time, the compilers of the glossary were spared the problem faced by those who are now translating Tibetan Buddhism into Western languages: “to decide which existing word to choose as the least misleading equivalent of a Sanskrit Buddhist term, for which there is manifestly no true equivalent available” (Snellgrove 1987: 441).

The most common method used by the Tibetans was to invent new terms, rather than use Sanskrit loan words. For example, for the Sanskrit word *Dharma* (Buddhist teachings)—which in the West has been retained in its transliterated Sanskrit form—the Tibetans created an entirely new word (Tib. *chos*) which took on the same, or similar, semantic value for them as the word *Dharma* did for the Indians.

Kapstein notes the “extreme reluctance on the part of the Tibetans” to include Sanskrit loan words in their language (2003: 758). While some words that had no accepted Tibetan equivalent were eventually adopted (using transliteration or naturalization), such as translating the *campaka* flower as *tsam-pa-ka* or the city Varanasi as *Wa-ra-na-si*, “in general, Tibetan coinages came to be strongly favored” (ibid.) Kapstein remarks that “owing to the artificiality of many such expressions, they preserved something of a foreign and exotic (or sometimes learned) flavor despite their Tibetan appearance” (ibid.). Thus, an apparently conscious strategy of foreignization was practiced by the Tibetans in determining
how to render the thousands of religious, technical and other terms used in Sanskrit sutras.

The MVP was compiled at around the same time as a companion work known in Sanskrit as the Madhyavyutpatti (Tib. Sgra-sbyor bam-po gnyis-pa)\(^\text{17}\), which consisted of two parts: an introduction written by King Tride Songtsen that provided a number of prescriptive rules for translation, and a larger section that gave detailed explanations for more than 400 of the entries in the MVP. While both works contributed greatly to the standardization of translations in Tibet, it was the Madhyavyutpatti (MDVP) that provided clear guidelines for all translators to follow.

Although Buddhist scholars and Tibetologists have known of the MDVP for decades, this important document has received little attention thus far in TS.\(^\text{18}\) The entire introduction contains some 20 rules, of which approximately half elaborate on methods related to lexical matters such as creating neologisms and how new terms should be established. The remainder provide concise instructions to translators on how to proceed with their work. Since the focus of this paper is on strategies used by the Tibetan translators, rather than on terminological issues, the main instructions in the MDVP will next be discussed and analyzed, and excerpts of the translated paragraphs provided.\(^\text{19}\)

3.1 *The Rules for Translation in the Madhyavyutpatti*

The most frequently cited and well-known paragraph from the MDVP provides a general set of rules for handling translation of syntax from Sanskrit into Tibetan:

As for the manner of translating Holy Religion, translate into the best possible Tibetan without violating the interpretation. When translating the Dharma, if the meaning of the Tibetan when translated holds together without changing the order of the words in Sanskrit, then translate without changing the order of the words. If an improved understanding results from changing the order, then change the order as you translate but keeping within a single phrase (or verse)…. (Snellgrove 1987: 442)

The phrase “holds together” in the above translation is somewhat ambiguous and should be clarified here. In Wedemeyer’s translation of this paragraph, the phrase “should be easy to understand” (2006: 150) is used instead. Hahn translates it simply as “good language” (2007: 136) while Scherrer-Schaub uses “to the full advantage of Tibetan” to translate the Tibetan phrase *gar dbe bar*
Thus, we can understand this paragraph to mean that if a translation that adheres to the source text word order is grammatically correct and “easy to understand” in the target language, then one should translate in that way. In all other cases, as long as the meaning of the source text is preserved, target language syntax and grammar should be adhered to, and the style of the translated text should be natural in the target language.

Apart from the general guideline on handling word order and syntax, a number of specific rules were also given for translators to follow. Showing a clear knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and usage, the king gave instructions on how to treat Sanskrit verbal prefixes (Skt. upasarga), saying that such prefixes “should be translated literally and as an extra element only if they have a semantic effect; those which do not add anything semantically…need not be translated as an extra element, but rather the entire verb may be translated according to the meaning” (Wedemeyer 2006: 150). Similarly, particles (a common feature in both Sanskrit and Tibetan), should be handled with care and precision:

While translating words like pari, sam, upa etc., i.e., such [words], that are particles or have a kind of ornamental [function], the method to achieve correspondence with the meaning [is as follows]: One should translate literally using [adverbial expressions like] yongs su [=completely], yang dag pa [=in the right manner] or nye ba [=near to]. However, in the case of such [particles whose usage] does not add to the meaning [of the simple word] it is not necessary to enlarge [the translation] by additional words, but one should translate according to the meaning. (Hahn 2007: 136-7)

Thus, in dealing with such particles, the translator should aim for grammatical equivalence, or what is commonly known in TS as formal equivalence. The king also described the best method for translating proper nouns, a question which has vexed translators the world over for centuries. His intelligent recommendation of using transcription combined with expansion has become the norm for many modern-day translators when handling such lexical items:

If one translates the names of countries, species, flowers, plants, and the like, one errs and the terms are awkward. Though it may be correct to translate approximately, it is uncertain whether or not the meaning is just right. In those cases, add at the head [of the word] ‘country’ or ‘flower’ etc., according to whatever is named, and leave the Sanskrit unaltered. (Kapstein 2003: 756-57)
The king thus recommends that when translating proper nouns, if a new phrase is created in Tibetan and the resultant meaning is unclear or ambiguous, then the Sanskrit term should be transliterated with a word added to elucidate its function. Several examples of this method can be found in the Tibetan version of the *Jatakamala* (Garland of Birth Stories), where the Sanskrit word *amraphala* (mango fruit) is translated as *shing tog a mra'i 'bras bu* (“mango fruit, a fruit growing on a tree”) and the proper noun *sibayah* is translated as *yul shi bi pa rnams* (“the inhabitants of the country called Sibi”) (Hahn 2007: 138-139).

How to translate numbers is also addressed in this document, with the recommendation that such should be done according to Tibetan usage:

> As for numbers, if one translates in accord with the Sanskrit, one speaks, for instance, of “thirteen hundred monks with a half,” which, if translated in the Tibetan manner, is ordinarily “a thousand two hundred fifty.” Because there is no contradiction in meaning, and [the latter] is easier in Tibetan, put numbers capable of summarization in the Tibetan way. (Kapstein 2003: 757)

Other items discussed in the MDVP include how to handle synonyms, how to translate honorifics and the many different epithets for Buddhas, and strict rules on who is allowed to translate tantric texts. It is clear from these protocols that the normative standard dictated by the king was to remain as close to the source text as possible, without altering the meaning, while allowing for such grammatical changes as were necessary to conform to standard target-language usage and conventions.

In the parlance of TS, this approach is known as “faithful” or “semantic” translation. A faithful translation is defined by Newmark as one which “attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures” and semantic translation “differs from ‘faithful translation’ only in so far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value…of the SL text” (1988: 46). These two methods of translation are closely analogous to the overall results that would obtain if one followed the guidelines laid down by the king in his royal decree of 814, and the early translators’ adherence to these rules are often cited as being responsible, in part at least, for the high quality and precision of their translations.

3.2 Translation in the Later Period
Following the collapse of the centralized kingdom in the 9th century, Tibet entered a period of political turmoil, about which very little is known. Translation was resumed some 120 years later, but in markedly different socio-historical circumstances. Apart from the MDVP, no other documents of a similar nature have yet come to light, nor have any other common guidelines been discovered to have been used by translators in Tibet. Thus, one may reasonably ask, precisely how much—or how little—did the later translators adhere to the rules set down by the king in 814? If they did not follow these guidelines, what strategies did they use in the 10th-18th centuries?

Given the tremendous volume of materials that were translated; the large number of translators involved (over 700); and the vast differences in time, location, socio-political climate, and support available for individual translators across the centuries, a definitive answer to these questions is not possible at present. In addition, not enough individual comparative textual studies have been published on the work of the Tibetan translators to form a corpus which would provide data for systematically examining Tibet’s translation history, using a model such as that set forth by Pym (1998).

However, modern research into Tibet’s history has revealed some fascinating insights into these questions. It is well established that the translators of the later period did, in general, have access to the MVP and MDVP, though to what extent they used these documents and how closely they adhered to the guidelines is a subject of some debate. In particular, the previously accepted notion of the consistently accurate and precise quality of the Tibetans’ translations overall is being challenged by modern scholarship.

Hahn (2007) notes that during the early period, the principles in the MDVP were “mostly followed” and “the result is a great number of excellent Tibetan translations of important works from that time,” in particular the translation of the whole of the *Vinaya* and two early collections of Buddhist legends known as the *Avadanasataka* and the *Karmasataka* (2007: 136-137). Hahn goes so far as to state that the Tibetan version of the *Jatakamala* (Garland of Birth Stories) is simply the MDVP “put into practice” (2007: 138).

However, Hahn’s study concludes that after the early period ended and translation activity was interrupted, there was a “considerable change in the standard of the Tibetan translations. The new style became more mechanical, and the wise rules” of the MDVP were “largely ignored” (Hahn 2007: 143). Another
important factor responsible for the change of quality in the later translations is the fact that there were fewer Indian *panditas* in Tibet with whom the Tibetans could work, as they did previously in the early period.

In Wedemeyer’s study of a corpus of Tibetan translations, he concludes that the translators in the later period on the whole did translate terminology quite accurately according to the MVP, “with only slight variation in Tibetan words used to translate Sanskrit lexical items” (2006: 169). However, apart from their faithful use of the glossary, “the products of individual Tibetan translators exhibit a wide range of variant renderings of their Sanskrit originals” and “variability with regard to syntax and morphology is legion” (*ibid.*). In particular, “one sees widespread license being taken with the rendering of verbal forms” and a number of other elements of grammar (Wedemeyer 2006: 169-70).

Wedemeyer maintains that the “widespread myth of the absolute precision (and the consequently assumed univocality and transparency) of the Tibetan translations is misleading in a number of ways” (2006: 151). He contends that not only was there variation in the quality of the translations produced, but that the reason for their *apparent* consistency is due to historical developments that resulted in the (post-translation) standardization of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.

During the formation of the canon in Tibet, many translations were discarded and others selected based upon the criteria and standards of the various editors and compilers of the canon. This process was accelerated by the invention of block printing, which allowed for mass production of the canon. Once block printing and xylographic editions were introduced, the excluded manuscripts of translations that were seen as “unfit” were discarded and “almost none of the excluded translations have come down to us today” (Wedemeyer 2006: 153). Wedemeyer concludes that “the landscape of Tibetan translation is by no means the uniform and mechanical place some authors make it out to be” (2006: 177).

Further evidence of variation in the translators’ works is found in an important 13th-century document recently translated and studied by Jonathan Gold (2008). The *Gateway of Learning* (Tib. *Mhkas pa’ jug pai’i sgo*) was written by scholar, translator and head of the Sakya sect of Buddhism in Tibet, Sakya Pandita (1182-1251). During Sakya Pandita’s time, scholars in Tibetan monastic institutions “struggled, above all, with the complexities of understanding their scriptures in translation from Sanskrit” and in his work on this subject, Sakya Pandita “reflects
with greater depth than any other premodern Buddhist on the nature of translation” (Gold 2008: ix).

During the later diffusion period, Tibetans continued to regard India as the primary and most authoritative source of religious (and other) learning and, as Gold argues, this is an important reason for the “special veneration that has always been reserved for the great translators” who made the journeys to India and made the teachings accessible in Tibetan. “Indeed, translation was often considered the quintessential scholarly ability, and translators the greatest intellectuals” (Gold 2008: 25). Sakya Pandita himself was given the title “master translator” (bla ma lo tsha ba) (ibid.).

However, despite their crucial role in Tibet’s history, Gold notes that “there are precious few discussions of just what translators do, and why it is so important that their work is good” (2008: 25). The Gateway of Learning may be “the first systematic and detailed discussion of translation” to appear in Tibet since the MDVP and is one of the most “practical and theoretical discussions of translation in any language before the modern period” (Gold 2008: 25-26). If other works on translation were produced in the interim between the royal decree of the king in 814 and the publication of Sakya Pandita’s work, they have either been lost or not yet discovered.

Sakya Pandita strove to educate Tibetans in Sanskrit poetics, literary theory and other types of Indian knowledge that he felt were indispensable to understanding the scriptures and therefore, to upholding the Buddha’s teachings. He believed that the role of the translator and the role of the expositor, who reads and teaches the translated text, were equally vital. Once the translator’s job is complete, he wrote, it is the responsibility of the expositor, or teacher/scholar, to interpret the translation correctly. For this reason, all “translations presume, and therefore require, a specialized scholarly community in Tibet to mediate their interpretation” (Gold 2005: 125).

One section of the Gateway to Learning is devoted to Sakya Pandita’s concerns about the translations that he studied in his work as a scholar. These problems were of great importance to expositors, whom he believed must be aware of the kinds of mistakes and common errors that translators made. For the sake of brevity, these four main concerns will only be outlined here; the reader is referred to Gold’s two publications on this topic (2005, 2008) for full details.

1) Problems in translating terminology
Gold lists four types of problems related to terminology: a) improper or inconsistent use of terms, especially between translators of the early and later periods. b) Differences due to regional usage and local idioms. c) Inconsistent translation of proper names, which sometimes are translated literally and sometimes are transliterated. d) Terms that are translated into Tibetan “with a semantically faithful transformation” by describing the meaning instead of literally rendering the Sanskrit term (Gold 2008: 29).

2) Problems caused by the techniques used by Tibetan translators

Expositors must be aware that Tibetan translators often added words when translating in order to clarify the meaning. There are four types of this kind of problem, all of which Gold calls problems of “excessive glossing” (Gold 2008: 30). This resulted in teachers giving expositions on expressions that did not, for example, exist in the Sanskrit original.

3) Problems caused by common mistakes in translation

This category includes translation mistakes that occurred “in decoding the Sanskrit, as opposed to re-encoding the meaning into Tibetan” (Gold 2008: 31). It includes mistaking one word for another synonymous word, or simply for a similar word, and wrongly dividing words. Thus it was essential that expositors were familiar with not only these types of common mistakes, but also with Sanskrit grammar and language.

4) Problems caused by unintelligible context

This category includes problems that arise from being unfamiliar with contexts that the translator has left unexplained, such as “common tropes and proper names that assume knowledge of Indian literature” (Gold 2008: 32-33). Only in discussing this last problem does Sakya Pandita criticize translators as a whole, chastising even “expert translators” who due to an ignorance of Indian lore, for example, wrongly translate one of the names for Krishna (Gold 2008: 34).

Gold emphasizes that the deficiencies in the translations that Sakya Pandita discusses are not to be blamed on the translators (apart from point 4, above). On the whole, he agrees with their translation strategies and only makes disparaging remarks about the translators when they sacrifice the meaning of the Sanskrit in order to write in more comprehensible Tibetan. Moreover, Sakya Pandita “never suggests that the translations are unreadable in Tibetan” (Gold 2008: 27). Gold concludes that Sakya Pandita believed that the translators’ main task was “to preserve in Tibetan as much of the Sanskrit as possible, notwithstanding the
interpretative difficulties this causes” (2008: 35). Such hermeneutic issues were seen to be within the purview of the expositor’s task, not the translator’s.

The scope and type of mistakes identified by Sakya Pandita indicate that, in fact, not all translators adhered to the rules laid down in the MDVP, or even the terminology prescribed in the MVP, although the problems outlined above are relatively minor. Human error, inconsistent use of terms, excessive glossing and lack of contextual understanding are common mistakes seen in many kinds of translations, even those for which guidelines are provided by the end-user. Though the Gateway of Learning does not mention which translations Sakya Pandita examined in gathering his data—information which would have been valuable to scholars studying this period of translation history—this work nonetheless provides a rare glimpse into the quality of translations carried out up to the 13th century.

After Sakya Pandita’s time, the MVP and the MDVP continued to be used by translators and editors. In particular, it is known that the editors and compilers of the Tibetan canon regularly consulted the MVP and MDVP in their work. Evidence of this is seen in the colophons in the Tshalpa edition (1347-1349) of the Kangyur (later preserved in the Lithang edition of the Kangyur), which “mention the active use” of the MVP and MDVP in correcting the language of the texts in the Kangyur (Stanley 2009: 661).

Both the famed scholar and editor of the Tibetan canon Buton Rinpoche (1290-1364) and his “scholarly descendant” (and translator) Shalu Lotsawa Chokyang Zangpo (1441-1527) are known to have made use of the MVP and MDVP (Schaeffer 2009: 24-25). Indeed, up until the end of the later period, there is evidence that 18th-century scholars such as Situ Panchen Chokyi Jungne (1700-1774) still referred to the earliest grammars made by Thonmi Sambhota, credited with developing the Tibetan script in the 7th century, and to the MVP and MDVP (Schaeffer 2009: 101).

It is clear from this examination of the materials available on translation in Tibet that there is more not known than known of this long and rich period of translation history. A multitude of questions still remain to be answered, and much more research should be carried out by scholars familiar with this field. For example, one question not touched on at all in the existing literature is related to the translation of culture and culturally-specific lexical items.

Given the fact that Tibetan and Indian cultures were entirely dissimilar, how did the translators bridge these tremendous gaps in knowledge? We saw above
that the one wholesale criticism levied against translators by Sakya Pandita was to do with a lack of contextual understanding of Indian culture. How many such gaffes were made by the Tibetans? Were the early translators—who spent more time in India than those in the later period—equally as culpable of such errors? How did the later translators, who had less access to Indian panditas in Tibet, handle questions of cultural specificity? These questions, and many others, must be left to future researchers. Without a doubt, a great many more textual studies of individual translations are needed before we can fully understand and analyze the translation strategies used by the Tibetans.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for TS scholars, what did the hundreds of Tibetan translators think about, write about, and conclude from the work they did on this centuries-long translation project? Thus far, my own initial research has revealed little more than a small handful of brief statements. This situation is in stark contrast to what is known of the Chinese, who translated hundreds of the same texts as the Tibetans. The writings and theories of a number of the early translators of the Buddhist sutras in China, such as Kumarajiva, Xuan Zang and Dao An, have been known of and extensively studied by scholars for decades, and an anthology of Chinese discourse on translation, most of which is by Buddhist translators, has been compiled and published (Cheung 2006). With the current call in TS to move beyond Euro-centric conceptions of translation, the work of discovering what the Tibetans have to contribute to the theoretical aspect of the field is particularly acute.

IV. Translating the Tibetan Buddhist Canon: Current Status and Future Prospects

The historical study of translation in Tibet of Buddhist sutras, tantras, and other texts is perhaps of greatest value for today’s translators, who are struggling with many of the same issues as their predecessors, though in a markedly different social, cultural, and linguistic context. This section of the paper discusses the question of how many of the more than 5,000 texts in the Tibetan canon have thus far been translated into English and other languages, examines current efforts to translate the canon, and looks ahead to the future of this monumental endeavor.

In 1996, Cabezon and Jackson wrote that, although Tibetan literature has a history of 1,300 years and has had a vast scope of influence, it has only become known to scholars outside of Tibet in the past 45 years and thus far, “only a tiny
portion of the vast Tibetan corpus has been translated” (1996: 12). In the 15 years since this statement was made, little has changed in terms of the quantity of translation work accomplished, but recent years have seen great progress in a number of areas. In particular, there has been a surge of interest in bringing together translators and scholars working on translating Tibetan Buddhism, coupled with a number of organizational imperatives aimed at coordinating the work of these individuals.

In 2008, a conference of translators of Tibetan Buddhism was held in Boulder, Colorado, sponsored by the Light of Berotsana translation group, which was attended by some 140 participants. One of the outcomes of that conference was the formation of a Translator’s Guild as well as an online forum for translators (Lotsawa Forum) (Khyentse 2009: 42). The next major conference was a gathering of some 50 translators, scholars and Tibetan lamas in Bir, India on March 16-20, 2009, sponsored by the Khyentse Foundation. These two landmark conferences marked the first time that translators of Tibetan Buddhism from different schools, lineages, translation committees and universities came together to discuss their work and how to coordinate their efforts. A third conference in Sarnath, India was held in January 2011 to specifically discuss issues of translating the Tengyur.

Up until now, translation work on Tibetan Buddhist texts has been a sporadic, individual affair, often carried out by groups connected to a particular teacher or lineage. In addition, there have been diverse types of people doing translation work, including scholars, lay practitioners, monks and nuns. As Garfield notes, the translation of Buddhist texts in general “was once the exclusive province of academic philologists” and were highly complex undertakings, “involving critical editing of original materials, the comparisons of multiple editions of the source text, compilation of extensive lexicons, and were texts aimed almost exclusively at other academics” (2009: 92).

This has changed in the past decade or so, with more academics in the field of religious studies playing a key role in translating important texts, as well as many non-academics working on translations as part of a committee or, in some cases, on their own. Garfield makes a distinction between the translation work of philologists and religious studies scholars, writing that the former choose texts to translate that they deem to be important historical objects of study, while the latter group are more interested in the religious significance of the texts (2009: 92). The latter’s audience is not only academics but also the general public, and religious
studies scholars “are now producing the body of texts that are taken as canonical by the current generation of students and practitioners of Buddhism in the West” (Garfield 2009: 93).

In addition, other “interlopers” on the philologists’ preserve is individual practitioners, whose translations contain “no scholarly apparatus at all” (Garfield 2009: 93) and who choose texts to translate “for their soteriological efficacy, for their importance for rituals in the traditions in which these translators practice, or because of their role in the relevant teaching lineage” (ibid.). The result of these disparate and uncoordinated acts of translation are “bookshelves filling with a disparate set of Buddhist texts, translated using a disparate set of methodologies, aimed at a variety of audiences, translated in pursuit of a variety of agendas” (ibid.).

Thus, the need for coordination and indeed, perhaps even some form of centralization, has been of increasing concern in recent years, culminating in the two translation conferences in 2008 and 2009. Below, in accordance with the scope of this paper, the current efforts underway at translating the Kangyur and Tengyur will be discussed.

4.1 Translating the Kangyur

At the “Translating the Words of the Buddha” conference, sponsored by the Khyentse Foundation and held in Bir, India in March 2009, one of the most important questions discussed was how to prioritize among the thousands of texts in the Tibetan canon yet to be translated. At the time that the conference proceedings were published, no final decision on this had been made, but later it was determined that the Kangyur texts should be the main priority for the Khyentse Foundation’s translation project, now entitled “84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.” This fact is reflected on the project’s website, where the following statistics are given:

- 70,000 Kangyur pages to be translated
- 2,637 pages sponsored so far
- 67,363 pages to go

Thus, the project is only in its initial stages and no translations have yet been completed, though as of May 1, 2011 there were 48 works in progress. The urgency and importance of this translation project was emphasized throughout the conference. In his opening remarks, convener Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche stated that people who are able to read classical Tibetan these days are rare, and that in
100 years “there will be almost no Tibetans who can read the words of Kangyur and Tengyur and understand their meaning” (Khyentse 2009: 6). One participant noted that another reason the texts in the Kangyur are such “precious repositories” of Indian Buddhism is that “a large number” of them no longer exist in Sanskrit (Khyentse 2009: 24).

Traditionally in Tibet, and even nowadays among Tibetans, the Kangyur is often treated as an object of devotion and “little effort is invested in understanding the meaning of each word,” and this is a practice that should be neither admired nor emulated (ibid.). Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche voiced concern that if the Kangyur is not translated into modern languages, this practice could be perpetuated by modern generations. He equated the Kangyur to the Bible as being the source texts of the Buddhist religion, and for this reason they should take priority over the commentarial treatises in the Tengyur (ibid.).

Among the many topics discussed during the conference were the difficulty of translating prayers and chants, standardization and choice of terminology, translation style, and the importance of training translators. The translations produced through this project will be made available on the project’s website free of charge. It was decided that the translations should be made widely available and should not be the copyright of any individual or group, since the texts are considered a “part of world heritage” (Khyentse 2009: 69).

At the end of the conference, pledges were made to carry out translation work or to offer support in other ways by various groups and individuals, including the Nitartha Translation Network, the Dharmachakra Translation Group and the Padmakara Translation Group. The conference participants created 5-year, 25-year and 100-year goals, with 100 years being the amount of time it was determined was necessary to reach the project’s ultimate goal: “To translate and make universally accessible the Buddhist literary heritage” (Khyentse 2009: ii). Since it is not known precisely which texts have already been translated, one of the five-year goals is to identify all texts that have been either partially or fully translated and to make this information available before assigning further translation tasks.29

In May 2011, the 84000 project released an “84000 Editorial Policy” document30 that outlines the specific criteria for choosing texts to translate, translation and editorial principles, issues of style, and organizational matters. It states that translations of the Kangyur are not expected to include critical editions or historical and philological research, and that footnotes should be used “sparingly”
(Khyentse 2011: 11), since the target audience is not meant to be academics but rather “non-specialist but educated readers,” and the emphasis is on “producing a readable translation of the existing text within a reasonable time-frame” (Khyentse 2011: 3).

In the initial phase of the project, English will be the target language, but translations into other modern languages will be undertaken when the appropriate infrastructure is in place. Following the traditional practice used in Tibet, translators should work in teams or groups, consisting of source and target language experts, scholars, editors and others (Khyentse 2011: 4), not as lone individuals. In fact, the 84000 editorial policy is somewhat akin to the MDVP in its guidelines for translators, though the former is of a more comprehensive nature.

Like the MDVP, it instructs translators on how to render proper nouns, honorifics and verse, how to handle terminology, and other matters. It also instructs translators on how to write the introduction to each text, which will introduce the background and significance of the source text and include a description of the particular difficulties encountered in its translation (Khyentse 2011: 10). This project—now still in its infancy—will be an invaluable and rich source of material for the study and research of Buddhist translations in modern times, and translation scholars should follow its progress closely in the years and decades to come.

4.2 Translating the Tengyur

As seen above in section 2, the Tengyur is a great deal larger than the Kangyur, containing more than three times as many texts and more than twice as many pages. In addition, it is generally considered to be more difficult to translate than the Kangyur, which contains many stories, parables, and other texts that were intended for a more general audience. In contrast, the more than 4,000 commentaries in the Tengyur, which are the work of over 700 Indian panditas, were written in a scholarly style, many in an academic setting, and contain highly technical language and abstruse concepts. Thus, it is appropriate that the organization spearheading the work of translating the Tengyur is an academic institution, the American Institute of Buddhist Studies (AIBS) at Columbia University in New York City.

The AIBS was founded in 1972 “with the ambitious mandate to create and support the necessary long-term institutional framework within which to translate and present the Tibetan Tengyur.”31 However, it is only in the past decade that there has been substantial work done toward this goal, and as stated on the AIBS website,
efforts to translate the Tengyur thus far have been “mostly unorganized and sporadic and have resulted in the translation and distribution of only approximately 5% of the Tengyur texts.” To date, AIBS has only published five titles from the Tengyur, with six more titles forthcoming.

Unlike the Kangyur project, the AIBS-sponsored translations of the Tengyur are carried out with an academic orientation and are accompanied by critical editions of the source texts. Producing critical editions is considered an essential part of the work of translating the Tengyur and requires specialized text-critical skills normally only learned in an academic setting. Thus, this undertaking is not only larger in scale than the Kangyur but also requires a different type of translation training. Despite the enormity of the task, AIBS is committed to translating every text in the Tengyur over the next generation. The institute has calculated that it will require approximately US$11 million over the next 30 years to fund its mission.

Translating the Tengyur was the sole subject of a conference held from Jan. 8-11, 2011 in Sarnath, India entitled “Translating the Tengyur: In the Tradition of the 17 Pandits of Nalanda University.” Jointly sponsored by its host institution, the Central University of Tibetan Studies, and AIBS, it was attended by people from all over the world who wished to translate these texts into English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and a dozen or more European and other languages. This multiplicity of target languages is another factor that distinguishes it from the Kangyur translation project.

In a report on the conference published by the Tsadra Foundation, it was noted that a point made by many of the delegates was that a key issue involved in translating the Tengyur into their respective languages was not that of funding but rather one of expertise and training. The report states that “there simply are not enough well-trained translators capable of working on what are some of the most difficult texts in Buddhist literature” and “the lack of qualified translators is felt not only in Spanish or Hindi or Russian, but in every language” (Tsadra 2011).

Like the Kangyur project, the question of how to prioritize texts to translate was a vital question, but one which had been determined prior to the conference itself, whose title indicated its focus. Following the advice of the Dalai Lama, an advisor to the AIBS, the 491 texts written by the 17 most renowned pandits (panditas) of India’s ancient Nalanda University were determined to be the project’s priority texts to translate (Yarnall 2011).
Speaking at a Buddhist Studies conference later in 2011, Dr. Tom Yarnall of Columbia University noted that the commentaries in the Tengyur were written in the multi-lingual, multi-cultural context of Nalanda, a liberal arts university, and that the authors were aware that their audience consisted of many different types of people of different faiths and nationalities, similar to the situation faced by modern-day translators. Thus, today’s translations of the Tengyur should reflect this and, despite the academic rigour required of this work, they should produce “contemporarily relevant translations” (Yarnall 2011).

4.3 Conclusion

It is clear from this study that the task of translating the Tibetan Buddhist canon into English and other languages is a monumental undertaking that requires both tremendous financial resources and a large number of highly-skilled and specially-trained translators. Indeed, the goal of the 84000 project to make the entire Tibetan canon “universally accessible” in 100 years is quite optimistic, given the length of time it took the Tibetans to complete their translation of the Indian Buddhist canon. Although modern translators have advanced technological resources at their disposal, at present they lack the patronage and funding, as well as the human resources, that are necessary for the completion of their goals.

While historical practices have undoubtedly influenced the work being done today, should modern translators emulate the procedures of their predecessors, or strive to create new models based on modern technologies and knowledge, including the vast resources of the field of TS? Should they follow the protocols laid down by the king in 814 and also translate their texts using literal or semantic approaches? Wedemeyer answers this question in the negative, concluding in his study that the strict rules set forth by the 9th-century imperial court were “a wholly theoretical ideal incapable of realization due both to the vagaries of language and to the humanity of translators,” and he cautions contemporary translators against following the same set of translational norms (2006: 170).

Judging from the 84000 project’s editorial policy document on how to translate Kangyur texts, and the academic orientation of the AIBS in translating the Tengyur, it appears that each group has established its own set of norms based on an evaluation of text type, audience expectations, and other factors. The strategies used by the translators of tomorrow is just one of the many areas of research to be pursued by scholars in both the fields of TS and Buddhist studies. As Tibetan
Buddhism continues its process of transmission to countries in the West and beyond, how translators choose to render these often recondite religious texts into multiple languages will be of great interest to scholars of both disciplines.
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1 Long mentions this in the introduction to her edited volume, writing that “translation theorists who work in this geographical area [Europe and the USA] are used to regarding scripture as synonymous with the Bible” (2005: 2). Sheppard notes: “Frequently scholars have used scripture and canon synonymously, although ambiguity in both terms, particularly in the latter, suggests the need for more careful definitions and historical finesse” (2004: 1410; italics in the original).

2 The term “strategies” here is used in a generalized sense to refer to any type of guideline, method, or procedure used by translators. As Gambier points out, “strategy is one of those ambiguous terms in TS: it is not only used in different ways, but it also seems to be in competition with a dozen other terms” such as procedures, techniques, shifts, methods, etc. (2010: 412). As Gambier notes, different TS scholars use different terms, often to refer to the same procedure, but he concludes that strategies are most often used at the global level and are “defined by different agents of the translation event” while tactics are “the translators’ concern only” and are “used at the local level.” Both strategies and tactics “are involved in the process of achieving the translation assignment” (2010: 417). Thus, in this paper, “strategies” is an appropriate term to use to refer to the guidelines laid down by the Tibetan king.

3 Gene Smith wrote that when foreign scholars first compared some of the translations of Sanskrit texts found in the Tibetan canon, “they were impressed by the meticulously faithful rendering that the translators achieved” (2001: 181). See also quotes by Snellgrove (1987) and Clark (1951) in Raine (2010: 136-137).

4 A small number of early scriptures were translated from Chinese. Snellgrove mentions eight that were in the early lDan karma catalogue, out of a total 736 titles (1987: 441).

6 It should be noted here that indigenous religious literature that was written by Tibetans after the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet is not included in what is commonly referred to as the Tibetan canon. These texts, known in Tibetan as *sungbum* (the collected works of individual teachers), number in the thousands and are gradually beginning to be translated into English and other languages. Since they are not considered part of the canon, they are not included in the present study.

7 The first xylograph of a Kangyur was the 1410 Beijing Kangyur sponsored by China’s Yongle emperor in the Ming Dynasty (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp 2009: 23).

8 Some scholars divide the Kangyur into two sections only, sutra and tantra. Using this division, the texts types listed in the sutra category are: *Vinaya* (monastic discipline), *Prajnaparamita* (Perfection of Wisdom sutras), *Paritta* (the 13 Nikaya sutras), *Avatamsaka* (Flower Ornament sutra), *Ratnakuta* (Heapd Jewels sutra), Collected sutras, and the *Mahaparivirvana* sutra. The text types listed under the tantra category of the Kangyur are: tantra, old tantras, *Kalachakra* (Wheel of Time) tantras, *Dharani* (collections of mantras), and *Pranidhana* (aspiration prayers) (Stanley 2009: xvi).

9 The Tibetan canon is also available online. The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center library (www.tbrc.org) currently provides outlines and full-text views of different editions of the Kangyur and Tengyur.

10 Data for this table is from Tsseag (2005: 53). For many other tables on the numbers of texts, pages, genres, etc. in the Tibetan canon, see http://84000.co/kangyur-tengyur-genres/

11 Data for this table is from Khyentse (2009: 88-90).

12 One page is one side of a two-sided folio.

13 For an extremely detailed discussion of the Tibetan canon, its contents and structure, see the more than 700-page doctoral dissertation by Stanley (2009).

14 Sutra commentaries were written after the sutra itself, not at the same time. About one-tenth of the sutras in the Kangyur have commentaries, all of which are in the Tengyur (Schoening 1996: 120).

15 Data used in compiling this table is from Stanley (2009: 535, 536, 592, 594, 595).

16 Chinese and Mongolian terms were also later added in subsequent versions.


18 To the best of my knowledge, the first mention of these works by a TS scholar is in Raine (2010).

19 A full translation of the MDVP has been recently made available online by the University of Oslo in its Bibliotheca Polyglotta (https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php), in the Thesaurus Literatureae Buddhicae section, but the translation is only “a preliminary attempt” according to Professor Jans Erland Braarvig, the person in charge of this project (Braarvig 2011), thus is not used in the body of this paper. Several Buddhist scholars have produced published translations of individual paragraphs of the introduction (Scherrer-Schaub 1999, Kapstein 2003, Snellgrove 1987, Wedemeyer 2006, Hahn 2007) and these are the main sources used here.

20 Although the written Tibetan language was developed based on an Indian script, the two languages are not syntactically similar. As Hahn notes, “an inflectional language like Sanskrit permits a comparatively free word order whereas an agglutinating language like classical Tibetan has a relatively strict word order” (2007: 125).

21 See paragraph 21 of the University of Oslo’s Bibliotheca Polyglotta translation.

22 See paragraphs 22 and 23 of the University of Oslo’s Bibliotheca Polyglotta translation.


24 See Raine (2010: 145-149) for background on the translation history of this period.

25 In *Gateway of Learning*, Sayka Pandita discusses both the MVP and MDVP, clear evidence that later scholars knew about and referred to these works (Gold 2008: 26-27).

26 An example of literal translation mentioned by Sakya Pandita is translating the Indian place name Magadha as *bying ‘dzin*, which means “bearing all people,” which an expositor, if not familiar with this usage, could misunderstand (Gold 2008: 29).
Due to the hitherto uncoordinated efforts by individuals and translation committees, the vast majority of texts have never been translated, while a few have been translated many times, such as the *Bodhicharyavatara*, which has ten different published translations (Khyentse 2009: 73).

Preparing “critical editions” forms a large part of the work of Buddhist scholars, and consists of comparing all existing source texts of a particular work, in various languages, and on the basis of that work producing a fully annotated and referenced edition which then becomes the “source text” used for translation.