


Kinterms: New Potential Indicators for Dating Old Tibetan Documents¹

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arious dating indicators have been used in previous studies of Old Tibetan (OT) documents. We can roughly divide them into two groups: I. Content indicators (e.g., historical events and persons mentioned in a document); and II. Formal indicators (punctuation, orthography, codicology, and palaeography of a document). An attempt at a typology of OT manuscripts and their dating was undertaken by Fujieda, Scherrer-Schaub, and Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani.² In addition, a comprehensive overview of codicology, orthography, and palaeography of chosen documents is supplied in the publication of Dotson and Helman-Ważny.³ Takeuchi applied a set of distinctive text-internal features that included titles, letter formulas, and palaeography to date official documents composed in Central Asia.⁴ Heller, on the other hand, used art historical analysis of carvings accompanying the Brag lha mo, Ybis khog, and Ldan ma brag inscriptions in order to date the latter.⁵ Moreover, aspects such as paper analysis,⁶ palaeography,⁷ punctuation and orthography,⁸ or phraseology⁹ were also addressed in previous studies. However, a methodological study on dating of Old Tibetan records remains a desideratum. The majority of publications have concentrated on manuscripts and not all of their conclusions can be applied to inscriptions.¹⁰

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² Fujieda 1966; Fujieda 1970; Scherrer-Schaub 1999; Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani 2009.

³ Dotson and Helman-Ważny 2016.

⁴ Takeuchi 2004.

⁵ Heller 1997.

⁶ Helman-Ważny and van Schaik 2013.

⁷ Dalton, Davis, and van Schaik 2007; Uebach 2010; van Schaik 2014.

⁸ Walter and Beckwith 2010; Beckwith and Walter 2015; Dotson 2016; Zeisler 2016.

⁹ Walter and Beckwith 2010; Beckwith and Walter 2015.

¹⁰ Of these, punctuation and orthography in particular are very controversial indicators that can lead to oversimplification; see Zeisler 2016. The relevant question is not whether a sign (e.g., double *cheg*, reversed *gi gu*, or *da drag*) is used or not, but

The present paper puts forward yet another content indicator that has not been discussed so far: kinterms. Formally speaking, kinterms are nouns that in many languages can also be used as forms of address. Kinterms that will be analysed in this paper as forms of address are identical with kinterms that occur in reference in other OT sources. Their common characteristic is that they belong to the honorific register. Kinterms are a very special subgroup of vocabulary in every language; they contain hints at the social organisation of the language speakers and are relational, meaning they encode relations between (prototypically) two individuals.¹¹ It follows that a kinterm can be understood only in relation to its counterpart (e.g., *mother—father* or *mother—child*) and it always evokes two individuals bound to each other by a unique relationship. Therefore, the use of a particular kinterm in a text allows us to unambiguously relate the person to their kin and to determine the reference point (*ego*) for the kinterm. This in turn, I believe, can help us in identifying the regnal period in which a document was composed, by relating the royal kinterms to the already established chronology of succession of Tibetan *bcan pos*.¹² In fact this approach seems to have been tacitly applied by other scholars in their attempts of dating OT documents, but, to the best of my knowledge, was never formulated as a methodological premise. In order to fill this gap, this paper seeks to establish a secure dating method based on the evaluation of kinterms used with respect to the royal family in official nomenclature of the Tibetan Empire.

The survey is restricted to historical documents that either stem from central Tibet (inscriptions) or can be unambiguously shown to have their origins in this region (the *Old Tibetan Annals*, OTA). Historical sources from the period of the Tibetan Empire—being more

if its usage follows an identifiable pattern, in other words whether there is a coherent system in the application of various signs in the respective document. Statistical assessments of their occurrences are likewise difficult to interpret because the vast majority of OT texts are too short and so do not contain enough material to deliver a sound basis for such an analysis. Only revealing a system according to which ‘archaic’ features were applied (or demonstrating its lack) can contribute to a better understanding of the language and thus to the more secure dating of the documents. Even then, however, every text has to be treated separately and with due caution because, as demonstrated by Zeisler 2016, various ‘archaisms’ were also readily used in much later works.

¹¹ See Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 201.

¹² In a forthcoming work, I present a revised line of succession to the Tibetan throne which is also accepted in this paper; see Bialek, forthcoming b. The historical line of succession includes only those rulers who were verifiably bestowed with the title *khri* (regnal years are bracketed): Khri Sroñ rcan (–649), Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan (649–676), Khri Ydus sroñ (685–704), Khri Lde gcug rcan (712–754), Khri Sroñ lde brcan (756–797), Khri Lde sroñ brcan (797–815), Khri Gcug lde brcan (815–841), Khri Yod sruñs brcan (?).

authoritative and of privileged position in the bulk of written OT records—should be surveyed before one turns to other textual sources of the period. It is assumed that these sources more strictly followed official protocols related to the royal family and therefore constitute a more fundamental corpus for the present study. This in no way means that other records are less valuable in this regard but only that they need to be evaluated against the backdrop of the linguistic and formulaic standards set in official documents.

Apart from the introduction and conclusions, this paper consists of four major parts. In the first part the OTA are analysed in order to reveal conventions governing the application of kinterms to the royal family in official documents. The established patterns are subsequently compared with those retrieved from imperial inscriptions in the second part of this paper. By way of cross-checking of the results arrived at in the first two parts, a few post-imperial documents are then analysed, paying special attention to the use of kinterms: the *Sgra sbyor bam po gñis pa* (part 3), and the imperial edicts preserved in the *Mkhas pa dgay ston* (part 4). Both the *Sgra sbyor bam po gñis pa* and the edicts go back to records that were originally composed at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century and, it is assumed, should accord with the authorised nomenclature of the period.¹³

1. Kinterms in the OTA

The OTA are an important source for our understanding of the usage of kinterms regarding the royal family in the Tibetan Empire. Since the entries of the OTA can be dated and the ruling dates of particular *bcan pos* are established (at least approximately for most of the rulers), the analysis of kinterms is expected to reveal a pattern that governed their application in official documents. In the following presentation, I shall proceed by keeping closely to the chronology of events as witnessed by the OTA.¹⁴

¹³ The Tibetan script is transliterated according to the principles put forward in Bialek 2020. If not otherwise stated, passages quoted from OT sources have been transliterated by myself on the basis of scans made available on the IDP and Gallica. The OT orthography is strictly followed. The 'reversed *gi gu*' is transliterated as *ī*. No distinction is made between a single and a double *cheg* in the transliteration. The passages from Tibetan texts have been translated by myself. Tibetan transliterations of quoted works have been adapted to the system followed in this paper.

¹⁴ Kinterms denoting affinal relationships are not relevant for the present analysis and are thus excluded. The compound *lha sras*, lit. "deity's son", is not a kinterm but a title, and as such has been omitted in the following discussion. A more

(1) (undated passage)

bcan po gčen sroñ rcan dañ / gčuñ bcan sroñ gñīs nold nas / (PT 1288: 8)

Both the *bcan po*, the elder brother Sroñ rcan, and the younger brother Bcan sroñ fought.

Sroñ rcan is the birth name of *bcan po* Khri Sroñ rcan who is called by his full name in line 6 of the same document. The separate usage of the kinterms *gčen* and *gčuñ* (instead of the compounded form *gčen gčuñ*) and the application of the title *bcan po* only to the first one, leave no doubt that the elder brother Sroñ rcan was the *bcan po*.¹⁵

(2) 650/1

(17) // *khy[ī]* lo la bab ste / *bcan po myes khrī sroñ rcan gyī spur phyīñ bayī riñ khañ nay riñ*¹⁶ *mkhyud čhīñ* (18) *bžugste / bcan po sbon khrī mañ slon mañ rcan mer ke na bžugs* (PT 1288)

In the dog year, the body of the *bcan po*, the grandfather Khri Sroñ rcan, while being swathed in the mortuary of Phyīñ ba, stayed [there]; the *bcan po*, the grandson Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan, abided in Mer ke.

bcan po Khri Sroñ rcan died in 649. Due to the premature death of his son, Khri Sroñ rcan was followed to the throne by his grandson (*sbon*)

general discussion of the relationships within the Tibetan royal family and their impact on politics can be found in Dotson 2009: 25ff.

¹⁵ Bialek 2018a (s.vv. *rje dbyal* and *rjes ybañs*) demonstrated that in (1) *gčen* has to be interpreted as an apposition to *bcan po* and does not form one word with it; see Richardson's translation "the elder brother king", 1967: 18, n. 7. As against Beckwith's suggestion (2011: 224ff.), there was only one rightful ruler called *bcan po* at a time. If the discourse required it, additional relative terms (e.g., kinterms) could be used in order to address the particular relationship between the *bcan po* and his relative(s). Thus, we encounter phrases like, *bcan po sras*, *bcan po yab*, *bcan po myes*, and so forth. Beckwith's assumption that "there was typically a *bcan po gčen* and a (*bcan po*) *gčuñ*" (2011: 225) is unjustified and does not find any support in documents. For a discussion of the OT phrase *bcan poyi sras* and its relation to the apposition *bcan po sras*, see the end of section 1 below.

¹⁶ The second *riñ*, which directly precedes the verb *mkhyud*, should be elided; see:

[*bcan po myes khrī sroñ rcan gyī spur*]_{ABS} [*phyīñ bayī riñ khañ nay*]_{INESS} *riñ mkhyud čhīñ bžugste* (PT 1288: ll. 17–18)

[*bcan po yab gyī spur*]_{ABS} [*ba lam na*]_{INESS} *mkhyīd čhīñ bžugste* (IOL Tib J 750: l. 69)

[*bcan po yab gyī riñ*]_{ABS} [*ba lam na*]_{INESS} *mkhyīd čhīñ bžugste* (IOL Tib J 750: l. 71)

[*bcan po yab khrī ydus sroñ gyī dpur*]_{ABS} [*mer keyi riñ khañ na*]_{INESS} *bžugs* (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 152–53)

[*bcan po yab gyī dpur*]_{ABS} [*mer ke na*]_{INESS} *bžugs* (IOL Tib J 750: l. 156)

In the first passage *riñ* was arbitrarily added in a slot directly preceding the verb—a slot actually reserved for a locative adjunct (see *riñ khañ na*, *ba lam na*, *mer ke na*) as the remaining clauses demonstrate.

Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan. The kinterms (*sbon* “grandchild” vs *myes* “grandfather”) mirror the relationship of the actual ruler, Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan, to his immediate predecessor, Khri Sroñ rcan. In the following year, Khri Sroñ rcan is again called *bcan pho myes* (l. 19). This practice recurs in the OTA each time a *bcan po* dies – a kinterm (which reflects the relationship to the currently ruling *bcan po*) is used until the funeral rituals have been completed.

(3) 676/7

bcan pho sras khrī ḡdus sroñ / sgreḡs gyī lha luñ du bltam / (IOL Tib J 750: l. 67)

The *bcan po*, the son Khri ḡdus sroñ, was born at Lha luñ of Sgreḡs.

Khri ḡdus sroñ was born shortly after his father had died in the same year (see IOL Tib J 750: ll. 66–67). For this reason his father Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan is referred to as *bcan po yab* only in the notes concerning his funeral and not before – he was not a father (*yab*) to an heir when still alive; see:

(4) 677/8

bcan po yab gyi spur ba lam na mkhyīd čin bźugste / (IOL Tib J 750: l. 69)

The body of the *bcan po*, the father, while being swathed in Ba lam, stayed [there].

(5) 678/9

bcan po yab gyī riñ / ba lam na mkhyīd čin bźugste / [...] bcan pho ñen kar na bźugs šīñ / yab btol (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 71–73)

The body of the *bcan po*, the father, while being swathed in Ba lam, stayed [there]. [...] While the *bcan po* was staying in Ñen kar, [one] *btol* the father.¹⁷

(6) 679/80

pyiñ bar bcan pho yab gyī mdad btañ (IOL Tib J 750: l. 74)

At Pyiñ ba, [one] organised the funeral for the *bcan po*, the father.

Similarly, the term *yum* only denoted a woman who gave birth to an heir:

(7) 700/1

yum khrī ma lod yon čaṅ do na bźugs (IOL Tib J 750: l. 134)

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the *btol* rite, see Bialek, forthcoming c.

The mother Khri ma lod abided in Ḣon čaṅ do.

This is the first mention of Ḣbro Khri ma lod in the OTA. She was the mother of *bcan po* Khri Ḣdus sroṅ (see PT 1286: ll. 64–65) who died in 704. Until her death in 712/3 she recurs regularly as: *yum khri ma lod*, *yum*, *pyi khri ma lod*, and *p(h)yi*. The change in her appellation from *yum* to *p(h)yi* occurs following two important events: the birth of the heir to the throne (8) and the death of his father, the son of Ḣbro Khri ma lod (9).

(8) 704/5

dpyīd kho braṅ cal du rgyal gcug ru bltam / dbyard bcan po yab rma grom gyī yo (147) *tī ču bzaṅs na bźugs śīṅ / yum khri ma lod yar ybrog gī yo daṅ na bźugste* / (IOL Tib J 750)

In the spring, Rgyal gcug ru was born in Kho braṅ cal. In the summer, while the *bcan po*, the father, was abiding in Yo ti ču bzaṅs of Rma grom, the mother Khri ma lod was abiding in Ḣo daṅ of Yar ybrog.

In this passage, the ruling *bcan po* Khri Ḣdus sroṅ is called *bcan po yab* immediately after the birth of the heir to the throne, his son Rgyal gcug ru *alias* Khri Lde gcug rcan (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 185–86). Ḣbro Khri ma lod is still called “mother” because the point of reference is the actual *bcan po*, in other words her son Khri Ḣdus sroṅ.¹⁸ Only after the death of her son, she becomes “grandmother”; again, with reference to the actual ruler who is now her grandson Rgyal gcug ru. Before that happens, she is once again referred to as “mother”:

(9) 704/5

dgun bcan pho čhab srīd la mywa la gśegs pa las / dguṅ du gśegs / yum khri ma lod lhas (149) *gaṅ cal na bźugste* / (IOL Tib J 750)

In the winter, the *bcan po*, upon going on a military campaign against Mywa, passed away. The mother Khri ma lod was abiding in Lhas gaṅ cal.

Both events, the death of the *bcan po* and the whereabouts of Ḣbro Khri ma lod, are reported during the same season of the year, the winter. We can speculate that they were recorded independently on separate

¹⁸ Compare the identical phrasing in Dx 12851v: l. 5: *yum khri ma lod kyī po braṅ yo daṅ na bźugs* (trslr. after Iwao 2011: 249) “The court of the mother Khri ma lod abided in Ḣo daṅ”. The clause concerns the same events from the year 704/5 that are related in (8).

wooden tablets by royal annalists and only later combined into one document.¹⁹ That could explain the continued usage of the kinterm *yum* with regard to ʻBro Khri ma lod after the death of her son. The next year brings about a change in the nomenclature:

(10) 705/6

bcan po sras rgyal gcug ru dañ / pyī khrī ma lod dron na bžugs / (IOL Tib J 750: l. 150)

The *bcan po*, the son Rgyal gcug ru, and the grandmother Khri ma lod abided in Dron.

Both persons are also mentioned together later in the document (ll. 153, 156, 166, 168, 171, 172, 175, 179, 184, 185–86), but then Rgyal gcug ru is only called *bcan po* and not *bcan po sras*, whereas ʻBro Khri ma lod is always specified as *p(h)yi* “grandmother”.²⁰ An exception concerns the

¹⁹ There can be little doubt that the records were annually updated and thus remained roughly contemporaneous with the events they concerned; see Uray 1975: 158; Dotson 2009: 9. The practice of writing records on wooden slips and later transferring them to paper is mentioned in later sources, see: *khod drug ni / bod kyi khod kyi śod śo ma rar byas / khod śom mkhan mgar stoñ bcan gyis byas te / śiñ bu dañ rdeyu yan čhad brcis nas / śog bu mjo khal loñs pa la bris pas [...]* (Mkhas pa ldeyu 2010: 257, fol. 152r) “Concerning six means (*khod*), [one] prepared the means of Tibet at Śo ma ra [of] Kyi śod (= Skyi śod; OT *skyī śo ma ra*). The one who prepared the administrative arrangements (*khod śom* = OT *mkho śam*) was Mgar Stoñ bcan (OT: Mgar Stoñ rcan yul zuñ). After [one] had calculated on wooden slips and pebbles, [he] wrote [them] on six *mjo* loads of paper” (for a slightly different translation see Dotson 2009: 11, n. 5). This is doubtless an allusion to the events described in PT 1288: ll. 27–29. But a similar practice is mentioned in the OTA: *bcan po bkas khram dmar po śog śog ser po la spos* (IOL Tib J 750: l. 299) “Upon *bcan po* [’s] order, [one] transferred red tallies (i.e. red accounts kept by means of tally sticks) to yellow paper”. As suggested by Dotson, single annual entries were most probably first written on wooden slips (explaining their laconic character) and later committed to paper; Dotson 2009: 11 and 75. We find a hint of this practice in IOL Tib J 750: l. 202 (the entry for the year 716/7), where four lines are left empty (most probably due to a single missing wooden slip) and were apparently to be filled in later; Dotson 2009: 75. This practice would also explain the existence of different versions of single entries; not only might single years have been written on separate wooden slips but also events of a single year may even have been first committed to single wooden slips and only later connected in one entry; see “Les rubriques étaient rédigées probablement à la fin de chaque année, mais il se peut que la rédaction ait eu lieu à chaque fin de semestre ou même plusieurs années plus tard”. (“The rubrics were probably written at the end of each year, but it may be that the writing took place twice a year or even several years later”.), Uray 1975: 163.

²⁰ The omission of the apposition *sras* when referring to Rgyal gcug ru is made possible by the fact that his father was already dead but also because his father is addressed *bcan po yab* in the funeral preparations:

bcan po yab khrī ydus (153) *sroñ gyī dpur / mer keyi rñ khañ na bžugs /* (IOL Tib J 750; year 705/6)

single occurrence of the compound *phyi sbon*:

(11) 707/8

phyi sbon *lhas gañ cal na bžugs* / (IOL Tib J 750: 1. 163)

The grandmother and the grandson abided in Lhas gañ tsal.

The compound is formed according to the age-hierarchy, in other words the constituent denoting an elder person is given priority; the term for ‘grandmother’ precedes the term for ‘grandson’,²¹ even though it is the *bcan po* who is always mentioned first when the kinterms occur independently, see (10).

A puzzling element is added to the system of the royal nomenclature in the following clause:

(12) 705/6

poñ lag rañ du bcan po gčen lha bal pho rgyal sa nas phab / (IOL Tib J 750: 1. 152)

At Poñ lag rañ, [one] overthrew the *bcan po*, the elder brother Lha bal pho, from the throne.

On the one hand, we have here the kinterm *gčen* “elder brother” (for possible interpretations, see below); and on the other hand, Lha bal pho is also called *bcan po*. The words *bcan po gčen lha bal pho* were correctly interpreted by Petech as forming one phrase.²² To support this reading, we may quote from the same text the phrase *bcan po gčen sroñ rcan* (PT 1288: 8) that likewise consists of three elements: 1. the title *bcan po*; 2. a kinterm; and 3. a proper name. We know from Chinese sources that the succession to the throne after the death of Khri Ṭdus sroñ was disputed among the rival heirs and their supporters.²³ History was more favourable to Rgyal gcug ru who eventually became

The body of the *bcan po*, the father Khri Ṭdus sroñ, stayed in the mortuary of Mer ke.

bcan po yab gyi dpur mer ke na bžugs (IOL Tib J 750: 1. 156; year 706/7)

The body of the *bcan po*, the father, stayed in Mer ke.

dgun phyiñ bar bcan po (159) *yab gyi mdad btañ* / (IOL Tib J 750; year 706/7)

In the winter, [one] organised the funeral ceremony for the *bcan po*, the father, in Phyiñ ba.

²¹ Compare the compounds *gčen gčuñ*, *yab sras* or *yum sras*. In *yab myes* and *yum phyi* (see OTDO), the postulated age-hierarchy of kinship compounds is reversed: the first constituent refers to a younger person than the second one. Here a proximity-principle might have played a role: taking *ego* as the reference point, which is not included in any part of the compound (as against *phyi sbon* in (11)), *yab* refers to a relative more closely related to the *ego* than *myes*.

²² Petech 1988a: 275; Petech 1988b: 1085.

²³ Bushell 1880: 456; Pelliot 1961: 12.

the next *bcan po*. The very letter of (12) demonstrates that, on this point, the OTA contain contemporary information and were not re-edited anachronistically in order to delete the name of the 'intruder' to the throne's succession.

(13) 706/7

pyī mañ pañs noñs / (IOL Tib J 750: l. 159)

The grandmother Mañ pañs passed away.

(14) 707/8

ston phyī mañ pañs gyī mdad btañ / (IOL Tib J 750: l. 162)

In the autumn, [one] organised the funeral ceremony for the grandmother Mañ pañs.

Since all kinterms are used in the OTA with reference to the *bcan po*, we can assume that it was also the case with *p(h)yi* Mañ pañs. *p(h)yi* was the feminine equivalent of *myes*. The latter term could denote grandfather but also great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and so forth. By analogy, *p(h)yi* might have referred to grandmother and great-grandmother, and so on. However, as already observed by Uebach, none of the names of the heir-mothers quoted in PT 1286 can be identified with Mañ pañs.²⁴ One can venture two hypotheses:

1. Mañ pañs was the mother of Lha bal pho – the elder brother of Rgyal gcug ru²⁵ and the true heir to the throne – who was deposed

²⁴ Uebach 1997: 57. Without providing any arguments, Tucci identified Khon čo Mañ mo rje khri skar, the mother of Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan (PT 1286: ll. 63–64), with Mañ pañs; Tucci 1947: 317.

²⁵ The hypothesis that Lha bal pho was an elder brother of Rgyal gcug ru was upheld in Petech 1988b: 1086, Vitali 1990: 21, Kapstein 2000: 216, n. 41, and Dotson 2009: 103. The *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 contains an account that seems to support this interpretation: "The son of the first queen and the sons of the other wives fought for the throne" (Petech 1988b: 1086). Kapstein based himself on the *Rgya bod kyi čhos ybyuñ rgyas pa* by Ldeyu jo sras, who states that Khri Lde gcug brcan had an elder brother Pa chab cha Lha bal po, a younger brother Lod ma(/po) lod, and a son Ljañ cha Lha dbon; Ldeyu jo sras 1987: 120ff. Neither Mkhas pa ldeyu (284, fol. 169r) nor Dpay bo Gug lag yphreñ ba (1962: 70v6–7) mention any brother of Khri Lde gcug brcan. The validity of Ldeyu jo sras's account is questionable, for we know that Lhas bon was born as the heir to the throne (see (17)–(19) below) and as such he could not have been a son of a foreign princess (see n. 31) as indicated in his title *ljañ cha*, lit. "descendant of Ljañ (OT Yjañ)".

In 703 Tibetans sent a request to the Chinese for a matrimonial alliance, which was agreed to; Bushell 1880: 456; Pelliot 1961: 12. In the next clause, the *Jiu Tangshu* reports on a war campaign led by the Tibetans against the Mywa, during which Khri Ydus sroñ died (IOL Tib J 750: l. 148). The circumstances make it unclear

in favour of the minor Rgyal gcug ru. The use of the kinterm *p(h)yi* “grandmother” with reference to Mañ pañs would mean by that time Lha bal pho had already become father and was dead,²⁶ so his son (and Mañ pañs’ grandson) could have been perceived as the rightful heir to the throne. Since Mañ pañs died in the winter of 706/7, both Khri Ḳdus sroñ (born 676) and Lha bal pho would have had to become fathers at the age of about 15 – a rather implausible scenario.

2. Lha bal pho was the elder brother (*gčen*) of Khri Ḳdus sroñ, born to Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan and Mañ pañs. The usage of the kinterm *gčen* in the year 705/6 might have been justified by the fact that Khri Ḳdus sroñ was buried one year later (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 158–59) and until then could have remained the point of reference in the nomenclature; Rgyal gcug ru is called *sras* (with reference to his already deceased father) in 705/6. If Lha bal pho was the elder brother of Khri Ḳdus sroñ, then one could expect that his mother, Mañ pañs, would have been older than Khri Ḳdus sroñ’s mother Ḳbro Khri ma lod. The latter died in the winter of 712/3 (IOL Tib J 750: l. 186), 6 years later than Mañ pañs. In this hypothesis, Lha bal pho must also have become father (before being deposed from the throne) and had died, so then Mañ pañs could officially be addressed as *p(h)yi* “grandmother”. In this scenario, Lha bal pho usurped the throne after the death of his younger brother Khri Ḳdus sroñ in 704, taking the opportunity that the legitimate heir was not born yet or still in his infancy.

Dotson’s argument that *phyi* could refer to “a great aunt, that is, one of Khri Mañ slon’s junior queens who did not bear a *bcan po*, one of Khri Mañ slon’s sisters, a sister of Ḳbro Khri ma lod, or perhaps more to the point, a maternal grandmother”,²⁷ is misguided in so far as the OTA only record kins in the direct ascending line of *bcan pos*.²⁸ Taking all of the above data into account, I consider the second hypothesis more convincing, although the textual evidence at hand is insufficient to allow for ultimate conclusions.

(15) 721/2

yum bcan ma tog noñs (IOL Tib J 750: l. 223)

whether the Chinese princess should have married Khri Ḳdus sroñ, his yet unborn son Rgyal gcug ru, or any other son, for instance, Lha bal po.

²⁶ He could have been killed immediately after being deposed from the throne.

²⁷ Dotson 2007a: 61, n. 69.

²⁸ Chang’s suggestion that Mañ pañs was a queen of Guñ sroñ guñ rcan is more than improbable; Chang 1959: 124.

The mother Bcan ma tog died.

(16) 723/4

yum bcan ma thogī mdad btañ / (IOL Tib J 750: 1. 229)

[One] organised the funeral ceremony for the mother Bcan ma thog.

According to PT 1286: ll. 65–66, Khri Lde bcug rcan (OTA: Khri Lde gcug rcan) was the son of Ḥdus sroñ mañ po rje (OTA: Khri Ḥdus sroñ) and Mčhims za Bcan ma thog thog steñ. This is confirmed in (15) and (16) by the use of the kinterm *yum* “mother”. Bcan ma t(h)og was the mother of Khri Lde gcug rcan, who was the ruling *bcan po* in 721/2 and 723/4.

(17) 739/40

sras lhas bon dron na bźugs / *bźugs* (282) *pa las noñs* / (IOL Tib J 750)

The son Lhas bon, upon abiding in Dron, passed away.

Two elements of the sentence could suggest that Lhas bon was not the heir to the throne: 1. he is called *sras* and not *bcan po sras* (but see (19)); and 2. the verb *noñs* is used instead of the metaphorical phrase *dguñ du gśegs*. However, the clauses immediately following state:

(18) 739/40

bcan po yab dgun bod yul du slar gśegs / *bcan mo kīm šeñ khoñ čo noñs* (IOL Tib J 750: 1. 282)

In the winter, the *bcan po*, the father, returned to the Bod land. *bcan mo* Kim šeñ khoñ čo passed away.

Thus, Khri Lde gcug rcan became father (most probably to Lhas bon) but the mother was not *bcan mo* Kim šeñ khoñ čo, otherwise she would have been called *yum*. This observation is confirmed by the next passage:

(19) 741/2

bcan po sras lhas bon dañ / *bcan mo khoñ čo gñīs gyī* (288) *mdad btañ* / (IOL Tib J 750)

[One] organised the funeral ceremony for both the *bcan po*, the son Lhas bon, and *bcan mo* Khoñ čo.

Here, the fact is stated: Lhas bon was the heir to the throne, since he is called *bcan po sras*.²⁹ Kim šeñ khoñ čo is referred to as *bcan mo* but again

²⁹ There is no possibility that, as maintained by Beckwith, Lhas bon was the same person as Lha bal pho; Beckwith 2003 [1983]: 276 and 1993: 69ff. The former is

without the kinterm *yum*. The lack of *yum* is not accidental; three women, of whom we know (from other sources) that they gave birth to the heirs of the throne, are always called *yum* in the OTA; compare (7)–(9), (15)–(16), and:

(20) 742/3

bcan po sroñ lde brcan brag mar duy / (292) bltam / yum mañ mo rje noñs (IOL Tib J 750)

bcan po Sroñ lde brcan was born in Brag mar. The mother Mañ mo rje passed away.

According to PT 1286: ll. 66–67, Khri Sroñ lde brcan (OTA: Sroñ lde brcan) was the son of Khri Lde gcug brcan (OTA: Khri Lde gcug rcan) and Sna nam zay Mañ mo rje Bži steñ (OTA: Mañ mo rje). I assume that the kinterm *sras* was accidentally omitted by the scribe in (20) and the full form of his title should be: **bcan po sras sroñ lde brcan* “the *bcan po*, the son Sroñ lde brcan”.

(21) 755/6

yab gyi khor pha dag dmag myis phab / (Or.8212/187: l. 12)

Soldiers overthrew father’s retinue.

From the context we can infer that *yab* refers to Khri Lde gcug rcan, but the entry is only partly preserved; its initial part is missing.

(22) 760/1

bcan poyī sras bltam (Or.8212/187: l. 39)

bcan po’s son was born.

The phraseology of this short clause (HON *sras* and *bltam*) suggests that an heir to the throne is meant. The clause uses an unusual (for the OTA) phrase *bcan poyī sras* instead of the ubiquitous *bcan po sras*. The former was an HON equivalent of ‘X_{GEN} bu’ “the son of X”, whereas the latter formed part of an official title. The HON verb *bltam* (also used elsewhere in the OTA) suggests that *bcan po sras* was intended and so we may suspect a scribal error, in which Or.8212/187 abounds.

On the basis of the above survey, a few important conclusions can be made concerning the usage of the kinterms in the OTA:

referred to in the OTA as *gčen* “elder brother” with reference to either Khri Ydus sroñ or Khri Lde gcug rcan (see the discussion concerning examples (13) and (14)), whereas the latter is addressed as *sras* “son” of Khri Lde gcug rcan; see also Kapstein 2000: 218; Dotson 2009: 24. I assume that Lhas bon was the son of *jo mo* Khri bcun (for details, see Bialek. In Preparation).

1. The point of reference for kinterms (*ego*) was always the currently ruling *bcan po*.
2. When used alone, the term *bcan po* always referred to the current ruler.
3. Only two persons were entitled to use the title *bcan po*: the currently ruling *bcan po* and the deceased *bcan po*.³⁰
4. The title *bcan po* acquired the apposition *yab* "father" as soon as an heir to the throne was born.
5. Only the mother of the heir was given the appellation *yum*.³¹
6. *yum* referred to the mother of the ruling *bcan po*, as long as no heir was born to the latter.
7. *yum* was replaced by *phyi* when the heir to the throne was born and his father had died.
8. The heir could be referred to as *sras* "son" or *dbon* "grandson" as long as his father / grandfather (or grandmother) was alive and, after their death, until the final funeral ceremonies had been completed.³²

³⁰ In the majority of cases, the deceased *bcan po* is the father of the currently ruling *bcan po*. There is, however, one exception: *bcan po sras lhas bon*, the son of Khri Lde gcug rcan, who died earlier than his father; see (17).

³¹ None of the Chinese princesses sent to marry Tibetan *bcan pos* is ever called *yum*. They are addressed with the title *bcan mo*; see also Uebach 1997. On the other hand, none of the women called *yum* in the OTA (Khri ma lod, Bcan ma t(h)og, Mañ mo rje) ever acquires the title *bcan mo* (*bcan mo* Mañ mo rje mentioned in the year 696/7 cannot be identical with *yum* Mañ mo rje from the year 742/3). It follows that Khon čo Mañ mo rje khri skar (mother of Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan according to PT 1286: ll. 63–64) cannot be identified with the Chinese princess, Mun čaň koň čo (in OT documents, the Chinese title *k(h)on / khoň čo* is always postposed to a proper name and Mañ mo rje khri skar is a typical Tibetan, not Chinese, name; see also Richardson 1998c : 60ff.) and that *yum* Khri ma lod is a distinct person from *bcan mo* Khri mo lan (as against Tucci 1947: 317; Chang 1959: 124; Uebach 1997: 56; Dotson 2009: 83, n. 132). There is no other example in the OTA of such a severe scribal error concerning the spelling of proper names: Khri mo lan > Khri ma lod. Moreover, PT 1286: ll. 63–64 also agrees on the spelling Khri ma lod for the consort of Khri Mañ slon mañ rcan.

An analogous change of a title to *yum* is known from the history of Sa skya: the wife of the lineage head is called *bdag mo*, but this is replaced by *bdag yum* if the first-born child is female, and to *rgyal yum* if it is a boy; see Wylie 1964: 235.

As an aside, because neither of the princesses was a daughter of a Chinese emperor (see Pelliot 1961: 13, 83, 95–6 and Yamaguchi 1969: 152, n. 37) the terms *zań đbon* and *đbon* *zań* cannot be taken to indicate that the Chinese princesses gave birth to the Tibetan heir to the throne. Kinterms used to refer to political relations had a purely classificatory function.

³² Another important observation is that an heir to the throne was treated as the reference point for the kinterms right after the burial ceremonies of his father had been completed and disregarding the fact that his own enthronement might have come later. This is true of Khri Ÿdus sroň who was enthroned in 685 (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 92–93) and for Khri Lde gcug rcan enthroned in 712 (IOL Tib J 750: ll. 185–86).

2. *Kinterms in Central Tibetan inscriptions*

Traditional methods of dating inscriptions on the grounds of historical facts mentioned therein have contributed considerably to establishing a relative chronology for the majority of the Central Tibetan inscriptions.³³ The generally accepted dating of the Central Tibetan inscriptions agrees with the one proposed by Richardson:³⁴

Khri Sroñ lde brcan (756–797):	Žol, Bsam, Bsam Bell, Yphyoñ
Khri Lde sroñ brcan (797–815):	Žwa W, Žwa E, Rkoñ, Skar, Khra, Khri
Khri Gcug lde brcan (815–841):	Lčañ, Treaty, Yer ³⁵

In a recent paper, Lha mčhog rgyal discussed a newly discovered bell inscription from Dgay ldan byin čhen which he dated to the reign of Khri Lde gcug rcan (712–754).³⁶

The comparison of the conventions used in the OTA with those of the inscriptions allows us to present new arguments for more reliable dating of some of the inscriptions. Because the system used in all examined Central Tibetan inscriptions is internally coherent (and in agreement with that of the OTA) we can also extend our conclusions to those inscriptions which do not use kinterms but are consistent with the remaining inscriptions in other aspects of the titulature. Two most general remarks concerning the usage of the popular structure ‘*bcan po* + NAME’ in the Central Tibetan inscriptions are:

- A. Inscriptions in which the structure ‘*bcan po* + NAME’ can be proven to refer to the actually reigning *bcan po* on other grounds include: Žol, Bsam Bell, Rkoñ, Skar, and Treaty.

³³ Compare Richardson’s remark on the chronological order of the Central Tibetan inscriptions followed in his book: “[The inscriptions] are arranged in groups, one for each of the three reigns *to which they relate*” (Richardson 1985: v; emphasis added). The datings proposed in OTI are “determined by dates explicitly given in the text, historical figures and events mentioned in text, and the paleographic form of letters” (OTI: viii). Dating methods are never directly addressed in Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987 but we may assume that the authors followed Richardson’s approach. It is however true that, as long as no reliable rubbings or photographs are available, even the most careful philological study of inscriptions remains provisional and highly hypothetical; see Walter and Beckwith 2010: 293.

³⁴ Richardson 1985.

³⁵ This chronology was also accepted by Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 29ff., Table II. As an exception, Walter and Beckwith 2010 challenged the generally accepted opinion that all of the above inscriptions were composed during the Tibetan Empire. However, their arguments are untenable and have already been criticised in Zeisler 2016 and Doney 2014: 77, n. 65.

³⁶ Lha mčhog rgyal 2011.

- B. Inscriptions in which no other indications (apart from '*bcan po* + NAME') allow for identification of the currently ruling *bcan po* are: Yphyoñ, Khra, Žwa W and E, Khri, Lčañ, Khrom F, and Khrom R.

As can be gathered from the table presented in the Appendix, there are only three particular cases in which the structure '*bcan po* + NAME' does not refer to the contemporary ruler: 1. Žol S ll. 1–2,³⁷ but the same inscription makes it clear that Khri Lde gcug rcan is the father of the actual *bcan po*; 2. Khri l. 1 and Treaty E l. 5 contain the phrase *bcan po* Yo lde spu rgyal which addresses a legendary person; and 3. Treaty E ll. 22–26 contains a short historical narration counting a few previous *bcan pos*. Therefore, a 'weak rule' can be proposed: if an inscription from group B contains the structure '*bcan po* + NAME' in which the element NAME always denotes the same person, this inscription can be ascribed to the reign of that very *bcan po*.³⁸ Eight out of fifteen Central Tibetan inscriptions are dated by applying the 'weak rule' only, that is according to the structure '*bcan po* + NAME' in which case the given inscription is ascribed to the period of the *bcan po* addressed under NAME.

If we complement the arguments put forward by previous scholars with the new observations gained in the present paper, we acquire a new dating for some of the Central Tibetan inscriptions:

Khri Lde gcug rcan (712–754):	Dgay
Khri Sroñ lde brcan (756–797):	Žol, Bsam, Bsam Bell, Rkoñ, Yphyoñ
Khri Lde sroñ brcan (797–815):	Skar, Khra, Žwa W, Žwa E
Khri Gcug lde brcan (815–841):	Khri, Treaty, Lčañ, Khrom F, Khrom R ³⁹

In order to secure the results of the dating by means of the weak rule, a supplementary criterion will be considered as well. I have demonstrated that the postpositions *riñ la* and *sku riñ la* were used according to a strict pattern in Central Tibetan inscriptions: *riñ la* was used to denote the regnal period of a past or currently ruling *bcan po* and can be translated as "during the reign", whereas *sku riñ la* referred

³⁷ See: (1) // *bcan pho khri lde gcug* (2) *rcañ gyi riñ lay* // (3) *ñan lam klu khoñ gis* // (4) *glo ba ñe bayi rje blas byas* // (Žol S) "During the reign of *bcan pho* Khri Lde gcug rcan, Ñan lam [stag sgra] klu khoñ performed duties of a loyal one".

³⁸ It seems that this was likewise the tacit assumption made in Richardson 1985 and Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987.

³⁹ The regnal years are those established in Bialek, forthcoming b.

to “heirs before their official accession to the throne, but after they had obtained an official status, and most probably already had taken over some of the official duties”.⁴⁰ I proposed translating the latter as “during the lifetime”. Below I comment on the usage of kinterms and the postpositions *riñ la* and *sku riñ la* whenever the latter might throw more light on the proposed dating. The table in the Appendix (organised according to the proposed chronology) summarises the information gathered from all inscriptions (including a few located outside of Central Tibet).⁴¹

Žol. The Žol inscription calls the contemporary ruler *bcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan (S ll. 41–42, N l. 5), and only when juxtaposed with his father—*bcan po sras* Khri Sroñ lde brcan. The kinterms *yab* and *sras*, used with respect to Khri Lde gcug rcan and Khri Sroñ lde brcan respectively, are applied only in one passage that narrates events that either led to the death of *bcan po* Khri Lde gcug rcan or occurred shortly afterwards (S ll. 5–20). The actual ruler, Khri Sroñ lde brcan, is addressed as *bcan po sras* because the narrated events of his life are juxtaposed with, and result from, the events that brought about the death on his father, *bcan po yab*.

Bsam/Bsam Bell. Walter and Beckwith assumed that the Bsam inscription is contemporary with the Žol inscription, in other words it might have been created as early as about 764.⁴² Richardson, on the other hand, dated the inscription to the period between 779 and 782.⁴³ Khri Sroñ lde brcan is addressed in Bsam Bell (l. 8) with the apposition *yab sras stans dbyal*. The compounds *yum sras* (Bsam Bell, ll. 1–2) and *yab sras* suggest that by the time the inscription was composed, *jo mo* Rgyal mo brcan had given birth to the heir to the throne. The OTA inform us that in the year 760/1 an heir to the throne was born; see (22). The name of the heir is not mentioned in the inscription.

Rkoñ. In my opinion, and at variance with previous studies, the Rkoñ inscription was created during the rule of Khri Sroñ lde brcan, not long before his son Lde sroñ (later Khri Lde sroñ brcan) took over the reign.⁴⁴ Three arguments speak for this interpretation: 1. the son is

⁴⁰ Bialek 2018b: 402.

⁴¹ The survey includes all of the inscriptions transliterated in OTI.

⁴² Walter and Beckwith 2010: 303.

⁴³ Richardson 1985: 27.

⁴⁴ See Richardson 1985: 64ff.; Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 29 and 193; Dotson 2015: 9. In an earlier paper, Dotson expressed the opinion that the Rkoñ inscription pillar “was erected when Khri Sroñ lde bcan ruled jointly with Lde sroñ, and therefore dates to c. 798–c. 800” (Dotson 2007b: 14). Likewise Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987:

never called by his accession name (unlike in inscriptions from his own reign);⁴⁵ 2. he is never individually referred to as *bcan po*; and 3. the postposition *sku riñ la* is used instead of the regnal *riñ la*.⁴⁶

Yphyoñ.⁴⁷ The only ruler addressed by name in the Yphyoñ inscription is (*yphrul gyi lha bcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan who, in the last part of the document, acquires an additional title: *yphrul gyi lha* Byañ čhub čhen po. This resembles the appellation *bcan po byañ čub sems dpay* Khri Sroñ lde bcan from the Brag lha mo A inscription.⁴⁸ The question arises

208 took notice of the unusual name Lde sroñ but nevertheless dated the inscription to the reign of the latter: "The absence of the honorific syllables Khri-----brcan in the name may indicate that the text of this inscription was composed before the actual accession of Khri Lde sroñ brcan". Uray 1960: 207 called Lde sroñ "Prinz-Regent", suggesting that he likewise does not recognise him as an actual ruler.

⁴⁵ Compare the remark in Richardson 1985: 64ff.: "[...] Khri Sroñ lde brcan is given the title Khri, that is not applied to his son Lde sroñ. It is possible that this might imply that the latter was not fully established on the throne when the inscription was written; but too much need not be made of that. Feudatory princes may not have been so meticulous in matters of protocol as were the kings and their ministers. Lde sroñ is described as *rje* and is in a position to be asked for and to grant a valid edict". I can't agree with this argument. The wording of the inscription leaves no doubt that it was the ruler of Rkoñ po who looked to the Tibetan *bcan po* to confirm and secure his previously established rights. To ignore diplomatic protocols when in the position of a petitioner is surely not the most effective strategy. I assume that Lde sroñ was not yet the ruling *bcan po* but nevertheless had jurisdictions over some issues related to governance.

⁴⁶ Walter and Beckwith were probably the first to speak of Rkoñ *inscriptions*, arguing that "the supplemental edict beginning at l. 12 is clearly marked out by larger lettering", Walter and Beckwith 2010: 314. This idea was later developed by Dotson who described the inscription as "ostensibly the faithful publication in stone of two paper documents issued to the ruler(s) of Rkoñ po", Dotson 2013: 97. It is undoubtedly true that the inscription contains two documents and that they are distinguished typographically; see images in Uebach 1985: 77–79. However, the design of the inscription with the careful parting of the stone into two halves, prepared apparently exactly for the length of two texts, indicates that both documents were written together on one occasion. The inscription has one 'title' (l. 1) that towers over both documents. As far as I understand its contents, l. 12 recalls an earlier edict made during the reign of Khri Sroñ lde brcan, but I do not find any traces of this document in the inscription. Concluding, the inscription quotes two documents (an earlier petition and an edict) and refers to yet another, earlier edict, but as such constitutes one historical document created and published during the reign of Khri Sroñ lde brcan.

⁴⁷ Richardson dated the inscription to the period 795–800; Richardson 1985: 36.

⁴⁸ Khri Sroñ lde brcan is also called *yphrul gyi lha byañ čhub čhen po* in the Khri inscription. According to Dotson, in the latter case "we are dealing to some extent with a king's self-representation, and the posthumous refiguration of this self-representation in eulogy. In other words, it may be the posthumous name this king selected for himself, or it may be one created by other means, perhaps even by the eulogy's final redactor. Or perhaps it is, as the eulogy states, a name offered by popular acclaim, that is, by the proverbial 'all men'". (Dotson 2015: 15).

whether Khri Sroñ lde brcan did not resign from the throne in favour of his son and became a monk. In ṽphyoñ he is also called *čhos rgyal čhen po* (l. 11). The inscription could have been created after the Rkoñ inscription to commemorate and glorify the *bcan po* who had just renounced worldly affairs in order to devote himself to the religion.⁴⁹ Alternatively, as suggested by Richardson and maintained by Walter and Beckwith, ṽphyoñ could have been a funerary inscription on a pillar erected at the tomb of Khri Sroñ lde brcan—a plausible explanation for the titulature used therein.⁵⁰ The ṽphyoñ inscription is also chronologically (according to the proposed dating) the oldest inscription that uses the title *yphrul gyi lha*.⁵¹

Skar.⁵² The inscription uses kinterms extensively (see the Appendix) and does so in complete accordance with the pattern revealed by the OTA. The only ruler to whom the structure '*bcan po* + NAME' is consistently applied is Khri Lde sroñ brcan. Any other *bcan po* acquires a kinterm. Besides Žwa W (see below), the Skar inscription is another in which a *bcan po* is referred to by a personal pronoun, here plural *ñed*. Interestingly, the pronoun is used in apposition with *yab sras*, meaning "we, father and son"; its referent is clearly plural. This indicates that the father, Khri Sroñ lde brcan, was still alive when the inscription was composed, for otherwise the kinterm *sras* could not have been used

⁴⁹ On the abdication of Khri Sroñ lde brcan, see Bialek, forthcoming b.

⁵⁰ Richardson 1985: 36–37; Walter and Beckwith 2010: 301ff.

⁵¹ The titles *yphrul gyi lha* and *lha sras* are found in a complementary distribution in the inscriptions. The former is attested in: ṽphyoñ, Skar, Žwa W and E, Treaty, Dun 365, whereas the latter in: Rkoñ, Khri, Lčañ, Khrom F, Lho, and Lijiang. One and the same *bcan po* can be called *yphrul gyi lha* in one inscription but *lha sras* in another from the same regnal period (see the Appendix). It is therefore apparent that neither of the titles belonged to the official nomenclature; they were merely expressions of courtesy.

⁵² Walter and Beckwith underlined the derivative character of the Skar inscription, which in their opinion is based on the Bsam inscription; Walter and Beckwith 2010: 305ff. On this point I agree with Doney's remark, "the Skar čuñ inscription's dependence on the Bsam yas inscription does not give me reason to view the former as a 'forgery'. [...] The changes that Walter and Beckwith's excellent systematic analysis uncovers could be explained as the evolution of religious terminology, court language and chancery phraseology within a generation from the time of the Bsam yas edict [...]". (Doney 2014: 77, n. 65). From the *Sgra sbyor bam po gñis pa* (see example (24) below) we learn that the first language regulations towards standardisation were undertaken during the reign of *bcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan. The same 'Classical orthography' (*kyi(s)*, *kun*, *kyañ*, etc.) as in the Skar inscription is also encountered, for instance, in the Treaty, ṽphyoñ, or Bsam Bell inscriptions, just to mention those recognised by Walter and Beckwith as 'genuine imperial'.

with reference to Khri Lde sroñ brcan.⁵³ Since Skar is the only inscription from the reign of Khri Lde sroñ brcan which addresses the *bcan po* with *sras*, this inscription preceded all of the other inscriptions of this regnal period and, as the only one, must have been composed before 804—the year of Khri Sroñ lde brcan's death. These findings are confirmed by the Skar čhuñ edict (see below).⁵⁴

Khra. The Khra inscription only mentions *bcan po* Khri Lde sroñ brcan. In accordance with the weak rule, I date it to the reign of this *bcan po*. The bell was dedicated by *jo mo* Byañ čhub (ll. 10–11), presumably the same person as *jo mo* Byañ čhub rje (alias Rgyal mo brcan) from the Bsam Bell inscription,⁵⁵ who was the step-mother of Khri Lde sroñ brcan.

Žwa W. The West inscription at Žwayi lha khañ⁵⁶ mentions *γphrul gyi lha bcan po* Khri Lde sroñ brcan and his elder brother Mu rug brcan, who is omitted from the East inscription.⁵⁷ The inscription begins with

⁵³ This finding contradicts Doney's opinion that "[t]he summary of Khri Sroñ lde brcan's greatest achievement in the Skar čuñ and Ḥphyoñ rgyas inscriptions represent reappraisals of his life. *Such reassessments are only possible after his death*" (Doney 2014: 77; emphasis added). Alternatively, one could argue that the phrase *ñed yab sras* (l. 44) referred to Khri Lde sroñ brcan and his son, in other words Khri Gcug lde brcan, who must have already been born because he took over the reign in 815. According to this hypothesis, the kinterm *yab* would have been used for two persons: Khri Sroñ lde brcan and Khri Lde sroñ brcan. This is of course not possible in one text.

⁵⁴ With this new dating the question arises: why does neither the inscription nor the edict (see below) mention Mu rug brcan? One possibility is that the fights between him and his father still continued and so he was not invited to participate in the ceremony at the Skar čhuñ temple. Uray argued to the contrary; he interpreted the absence of Mu rug brcan from the Skar inscription as evidence for the latter being younger than the Žwa W inscription; Uray 1989: 13.

⁵⁵ See KhG *ja* 98v1–2; Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 338 and 341.

⁵⁶ Dated in Richardson 1985: 44 to c. 804/5.

⁵⁷ Compare the respective passages:

gčen mu rug brcan dañ / jo mo mched dañ (49) *rgyal phran rnam dañ / čhab srid kyi blon po man čad / zañ lon che phra kun kyañ* (50) *mnaś bsgagste /* (Žwa W) "[I] bounded by oath [all] downward from the elder brother Mu rug brcan, [my] lady-sister(s), petty kings, and councillors of the realm – all the major and minor aristocrats".

jo mo (36) *[m]ched dañ / rgyal phran dañ / čhab srid kyi blon po rnam dañ / zañ* (37) *lon phra mo thams čad kyañ brnan te / mnaś bsgags nas /* (Žwa E) "All, lady-sister(s), petty kings, councillors of the realm, and minor aristocrats, being present, were bound by the oath".

Žwa E deliberately omits the elder brother Mu rug brcan. By comparing information on highest dignitaries (mentioned in the Žwa W inscription) in the edict – issued by Khri Lde sroñ brcan on the occasion of founding the Skar čuñ temple – and in the *Sgra sbyor*, Uray concluded that the Žwa inscription must have been

the words *gnam lhab kyi rgyal po yphrul gyi lha bcan po khri lde sroñ brcan* (ll. 1–2) “the king of the vast sky, deity of magical powers, *bcan po* Khri Lde sroñ brcan”.⁵⁸ This suggests that the inscription was created during the reign of *bcan po* Khri Lde sroñ brcan, an interpretation accepted by previous scholars.⁵⁹ The title *gnam lhab kyi rgyal po* beside *yphrul gyi lha* and *bcan po* (l. 1) indicates that *bcan po* was the official title of Tibetan rulers who, however, could have been bestowed with additional titles as well, in this case: *gnam lhab kyi rgyal po* and *yphrul gyi lha*. The inscription uses kinterms on several occasions. In l. 5 we read *yab yum gyi go* “place of father and mother” that should probably be understood metaphorically. It attests to a very intimate relationship between the future ruler and Tiñ ñe yjin, who apparently acted as a spiritual teacher of the former. Equating one’s own parents with the monk is exceptional in Central Tibetan inscriptions and proves the significance of Tiñ ñe yjin for the personal life of the ruler. The familiar language of the inscription and the likewise unusual usage of the personal pronoun *ña* “I” (l. 4) can be explained as resulting from this very status of the monk.⁶⁰ From *Žwa W* ll. 9–13 we learn about fights between the father (*yab*) of Khri Lde sroñ brcan and his elder brother (*gčen*). The elder brother is identified as *Mu rug brcan* in l. 48 of the same inscription.

Žwa E. The *Žwa E* inscription was created a few years after *Žwa W*. The new edict was proclaimed for *ban de Myañ Tiñ ñe yjin* in “the later dragon year” (*ybrug gi lo phyi ma*, ll. 22–23), which could only be 812 if we agree that the inscription was created during the reign of Khri Lde sroñ brcan.⁶¹ *Žwa E* addresses the *bcan po* by two additional titles: *myiyi*

composed before the edict and the *Sgra sbyor* (1989: 12ff.) because it is the only document that mentions *Mu rug brcan*.

⁵⁸ The term *gnam lhab* used as an element of the *bcan po*’s title is not an error (as assumed in Walter and Beckwith 2010: 310) but a compound of the underlying structure **gnam lhab lhub*. For details, see Bialek 2018a: vol. 2, 233ff.

⁵⁹ See Richardson 1985: 43ff.; Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 261ff.

⁶⁰ The assumption that “[t]he emperor does not refer to himself in the first person” (Walter and Beckwith 2010: 294) is made *a priori* and results in this circular argument: because the emperor does not refer to himself in the first person in ‘authentic imperial’ inscriptions (which are defined, among others, as those in which such pronouns are not used), the inscriptions which use this pronoun are not authentic. What’s more, *ña* is not “the humble first person pronoun” (Walter and Beckwith 2010: 296) but the unmarked pronoun, the humble equivalent of which is *bdag*; Hahn 1996: 112. See Hill 2010: 550ff. for a detailed analysis of first person pronouns in OT. The usage of the pronoun *ña* indicates that the first-person narrator of the inscription perceived himself on a par with *ban de Tiñ ñe yjin*.

⁶¹ Richardson 1952: 150 and 1985: 44. Contrary to previous authors (see, e.g., Petech 1939; Haahr 1960; Richardson 1985; Dotson 2007b and 2015: 9), I argue that Khri

rgyal po lhas mjad pa and *yphrul gyi lha*.⁶²

Khri. It seems logical that the sepulchral inscription of Khri Lde sroñ brcan should be dated after his death.⁶³ The title *lha yphrul* occurs only twice in the inscriptions in Treaty E l. 34 and Khri l. 13 – each time referring to Khri Lde sroñ brcan. Because no other inscription created indisputably during his reign uses the title, we can presume that *lha yphrul* was an official title bestowed posthumously on Khri Lde sroñ brcan. Thus, the inscription was composed after the death of Khri Lde sroñ brcan, in other words during the reign of Khri Gcug lde brcan.

Treaty. The Treaty inscription can undoubtedly be dated to the year 822/3.⁶⁴ The only kinterm occurring therein is *yab* in *bcan po yab lha yphrul khri lde sroñ brcan* (E l. 34) “the *bcan po*-father, the supernatural deity Khri Lde sroñ brcan”. Khri Lde sroñ brcan was the father of Khri Gcug lde brcan during whose reign the treaty with China was signed in 821/2 and the stone pillar commemorating this event (i.e. the Treaty inscription) erected in Lhasa. The inscription also mentions other Tibetan rulers: *yphrul gyi lha bcan po* ཡོལ་ལྷ་མོ་ (E l. 5), *yphrul gyi lha bcan po* Khri Sroñ brcan (E ll. 22–23), *yphrul gyi lha bcan po* Khri Lde gcug brcan (E ll. 25–26), and the contemporary *bcan po* is addressed as *yphrul gyi lha bcan po* Khri Gcug lde brcan (W ll. 12–13; E ll. 1 and 51) and *bcan po dbon* (E l. 42; in relation to the Chinese ruler, *rgya rje žaṅ*). The past rulers are all mentioned in one single passage that narrates a glorified history of the Tibetan Empire and its history of international relations with neighbouring countries, most importantly China. This retrospective narrative has a distinct focus: the history of the Tibetan Empire and not the genealogy of the ruling family. The Treaty inscription can be unequivocally dated on historical grounds and the analysis of its phraseology also supports the accepted dating. The only

Lde sroñ brcan immediately followed Khri Sroñ lde brcan to the throne; see Bialek, forthcoming b. Consequently, 800 could well have been the first dragon year of his reign and 812 was accurately called *ybrug gi lo phyi ma*.

⁶² Beckwith's statement that “the Žwayi lha khañ inscription repeatedly refers to the *bcan po* as an ordinary *rgyal po* ‘king’” (Beckwith 2011: 227, n. 16) is inaccurate insofar as each of the Žwa inscriptions mentions the term *rgyal po* only once, each time in contexts that leave no doubt that the term was part of additional official titles of the *bcan po* and was not meant to replace the latter.

⁶³ Concerning the date of the inscription, Li Fang Kuei and Coblin propose “815 or soon thereafter” (Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 237) and Richardson “between 815, the year in which Khri Lde sroñ brcan died, and 817 by when the burial would have taken place” (Richardson 1998a: 270). In a later paper, Richardson argued for 817 as the year in which the *bcan po* died; Richardson 1998b: 278.

⁶⁴ Li Fang Kuei and Coblin 1987: 35; Pan Yihong 1992: 143ff.; OTI: 32.

historical *bcan po* addressed without a kinterm (and not in a historical narrative) is Khri Gcug lde brcan. His father is called *bcan po yab lha yphrul* Khri Lde sroñ brcan.

Lčañ. The Lčañ inscription has to be dated by the weak rule: the only ruler mentioned is *bcan po (lha sras)* Khri Gcug lde brcan.

Khrom F and Khrom R. By the weak rule, both inscriptions should be dated to the reign of Khri Gcug lde brcan.

Lho. The Lho inscription uses the titles *bcan po* and *lha sras* but without supplying any name. Thus, no dating for this inscription can be proposed based on the criteria put forward in the present work.

It is not certain to what extent the inscriptions from outside of Central Tibet followed the system used in the Central Tibetan inscriptions and in the OTA. Their evaluation causes problems because, for the most part, they are too fragmentary and do not contain enough linguistic material. For the sake of completeness, I include in this discussion those inscriptions that contain the relevant linguistic material (even if scanty). Needless to say, their chronology can only be deemed preliminary.

Dgay. In 2011, Lha mčhog rgyal published a text of a newly discovered bell inscription from the temple Dgay ldan byin čhen in the Gansu province.⁶⁵ The passage relevant for the discussion is: (*bo*)*d kyi lha bcan po khri lde gcug brcan mče(d kyi sku yon du bsñoste)*⁶⁶ “dedicated as an offering to a sibling, the deity of Tibetans, *bcan po* Khri Lde gcug brcan”. According to the weak rule this inscription should be dated to the reign of *bcan po* Khri Lde gcug brcan and thus be the oldest known inscription. The title *bod kyi lha* is otherwise not attested in the inscriptions. We find it again in PT 1287: l. 519, in a chapter devoted to Khri Ÿdus sroñ. Thus, it might have been an earlier official title.⁶⁷

Brag A. The Brag A inscription contains the phrase *bcan po byañ čub sems dpay khri sroñ lde brcan*.⁶⁸ A very similar title was given to Khri

⁶⁵ The inscription is also sometimes referred to as Dpay ri Bell inscription.

⁶⁶ I have bracketed elements that are not legible on the attached photos.

⁶⁷ The phrase *bod kyi lha* is also found in PT 16/IOL Tib J 751 but this is not a historical document. In a forthcoming paper I examine the usage of *lha* as an official royal title; see Bialek, forthcoming a.

⁶⁸ The available transliterations read *bcan* (Heller 1997: 389; OTI: 58) but the reproduction in Heller 1997 (Plate 2) in fact shows *brcan*; the letter *c* is located too far below the middle line which can be determined by comparing the letter *č* in *čub*

Sroñ lde brcan in the Yphyoñ inscription: *byañ čhub čhen po*.⁶⁹ Since the phrase *byañ č(h)ub* is not used with any other *brcan po*, we can assume that it was a part of the official title. In addition, the occurrence of this title in two unrelated inscriptions that both mention *brcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan is a strong indicator that they should be dated to his reign. The inscription uses the postposition *sku riñ la*⁷⁰ with reference to *brcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan, which could be another hint that the *brcan po* retired and the inscription stems from the time after his abdication. If both elements (the title *brcan po* with a throne-name in *khri-* and the postposition *sku riñ la*) co-occur, it could only mean that the Brag A inscription referred to the period when Khri Sroñ lde brcan was not a reigning ruler anymore but was still alive. However, it is uncertain whether the non-Central Tibetan inscriptions adhered to the same conventions as those from Central Tibet.⁷¹

Ldan 2. The Ldan 2 inscription contains the phrase *mcan po khri sde sroñ brcan riñ la* (l. 2).⁷² By the weak rule, I date it to the reign of Khri Lde sroñ brcan. It also contains a dating formula: *spreyu gi loyi dbyar*,⁷³ “the summer of the year of the monkey”, which was identified with the year 816 by Heller⁷⁴ and by Richardson in the addendum to the reprint of his paper,⁷⁵ but must be corrected to 804⁷⁶—the only monkey year in the reign of Khri Lde sroñ brcan.⁷⁷

earlier in the same line. The hook at the upper right corner is placed below the upper line indicating the existence of a superscript, the upper horizontal line of which is likewise visible in the picture.

⁶⁹ Doney discussed religious titles bestowed on Khri Sroñ lde brcan in other texts as well; Doney 2014: 76.

⁷⁰ Actually *skuyi riñ la*, l. 1; *apud* OTI: 58.

⁷¹ The inscription and the carved images were also dated to the reign of Khri Sroñ lde brcan in Heller 1997: 386.

⁷² OTI: 61.

⁷³ OTI: 61.

⁷⁴ Heller 1997: 391.

⁷⁵ Richardson 1998b: 278.

⁷⁶ See also OTI: 61.

⁷⁷ See also Imaeda 2012: 115. Almost all early Tibetan historiographers state that Khri Lde sroñ brcan died in a hen year, which can only be 817, but Ldeyu jo sras 1987: 137 and Mkhas pa ldeyu 2010: 340, fol. 201r speak of a sheep year, in other words 815. The latter was unquestionably the first year of the reign of Khri Gcug lde brcan (Treaty N 59 and Bialek, forthcoming b). Because the Ldan 2 inscription mentions peace negotiations between Tibet and China (l. 9), Richardson concluded that the monkey year must be that of 816 because the negotiations started in 810; Richardson 1998b: 278. However, the exchange of envoys already started in 803 and in the next year a delegation of 54 persons visited the Tang court; Bushell 1880: 510–11 and Pelliot 1961: 67. This might have been the event alluded to in Ldan 2.

Ybis 2. This is the first inscription that does not conform to the established Central Tibetan nomenclature: *bcan po khri lde srañ bcan gyī sku riñ la* (ll. 2–3). Khri Lde sroñ brcan died in 815 and was succeeded by his son Khri Gcug lde brcan in the same year.⁷⁸ The inscription is dated to the dog year (l. 1) which can only be 806.⁷⁹ It contains the phrase *bcan po yab sras* (l. 9) but refers to the actual ruler without using a kinterm. The inscription uses the postposition *sku riñ la* (ll. 2–3). According to the nomenclature of the Central Tibetan inscriptions and the OTA, one should have used the postposition *riñ la* until the death of Khri Lde sroñ brcan. The possible explanations for this inconsistency are: 1. the official nomenclature was not as strictly followed as in Central Tibet; 2. the difference between *riñ la* and *sku riñ la* had already become blurred (maybe after the introduction of the formula *sku che riñ la?*); or 3. the inscription Ybis 2 is a much later and inaccurate duplicate of the original inscription that was written on a cliff⁸⁰ and the copist added *sku* to the original *riñ la*.⁸¹

Dun 365. In the Dunhuang cave no. 365 inscription we read: *yphrul gyi lha rcan* (OTI: [*b*]rcan) *pho khri gcug lde brcan sku riñ la* (l. 1). This seemingly contradicts the established pattern by joining the title of a reigning ruler with the postposition *sku riñ la*, but could be explained by the later date of the inscription and the shift in terminology that occurred by that time. According to Uray, the chapel in which the inscription is written was founded in 832/3 and consecrated in 834/5⁸²—both dates fall within the reign of Khri Gcug lde brcan.

The pattern of applying kinterms in Central Tibetan inscriptions perfectly matches the one disclosed for the OTA:

1. The point of reference for a kinterm (*ego*) was always the currently ruling *bcan po*.
2. The title *bcan po* acquired the apposition *yab* “father” as soon as the heir to the throne was born.
3. The mother to the heir was given the appellation *yum*.
4. The heir could be referred to as *sras* “son” as long as his father was alive.

⁷⁸ See the notes on the Ldan 2 inscription above and Bialek, forthcoming b.

⁷⁹ Heller 1997: 390; OTI: 55.

⁸⁰ OTI: 55.

⁸¹ We encounter a similar problem with the edicts preserved in the *Mkhas pa dgay ston* (see below); they all use the postposition *sku riñ la* although the Skar inscription has *riñ la* (the Bsam and Bsam Bell inscriptions do not contain the phrase).

⁸² Uray 1984: 350–51.

Both systems are internally consistent and essentially identical. No difference could be discerned between inscriptions the dating of which is established beyond doubt (e.g., Żol, Bsam, Bsam Bell, Treaty) and those the authenticity of which has sometimes been challenged (e.g., Rkoñ, Skar, Żwa).⁸³

3. Dating Formulas in the *Sgra sbyor*

The *Sgra sbyor bam po gñis pa* (hereafter: *Sgra sbyor*) contains the discussed formulas and has been unambiguously dated to the reign of Khri Lde sroñ brcan. It begins with the clause:

(23)

*rtayi lo la bcan po khri lde sroñ bcan pho brañ skyiḡi ḡon čaḡ do na bźugs*⁸⁴

In the horse year, *bcan po* Khri Lde sroñ bcan abided in the residence ḡon čaḡ do of Skyi.

Khri Lde sroñ brcan reigned until 815. Scholars previously studying the *Sgra sbyor* have agreed that the said horse-year should be identified with the year 814/5 of the Western calendar.⁸⁵ Later, the text reads:

(24)

sñon lha sras yab kyi riñ la / ācāryabodhisattoa daḡ / ye śes dbaḡ po daḡ / žaḡ rgyal ñen ña bzaḡ daḡ / blon khri bźer saḡ śi daḡ / lo cā ba žñānadevakoṣa daḡ / lče khyi ḡbrug daḡ / bram ze ānanda la sogs pas [...] kha čig čhos kyi gźuḡ daḡ / vyākaraḡayi lugs daḡ mi mthun te / mi bčos su mi ruḡ ba rnams kyaḡ bčos /

Earlier, during the reign of the Divine Son, the father, Ācāryabodhisattva, Ye śes dbaḡ po, Žaḡ rgyal ñen ña bzaḡ, councillor Khri bźer saḡ śi, lo cā ba Jñānadevakoṣa, Lče khyi ḡbrug and Bramin Ānanda, among others, revised some (words) that, not being in agreement with the core of the *dharma* and with the grammatical tradition,

⁸³ See Walter and Beckwith 2010.

⁸⁴ The citations are generally based on Ishikawa 1990 but my readings disagree with Ishikawa on a few minor points.

⁸⁵ See Uray 1989: 13 and Panglung 1994: 161. I agree with Panglung that the Tabo version of the *Sgra sbyor* is based on an earlier redaction than the canonical one. The latter author proposed the dates 783 or 795 (during the reign of Khri Sroñ lde brcan) for the composition of the Tabo version. I deem it premature to date the Dunhuang manuscripts (PT 843, PT 845, IOL Tib J 76), because the dating formula has not been preserved in the latter.

should not remain unrevised.⁸⁶

Here the adverb *sñon* underscores the past time of the events. According to the interpretation proposed in the present paper, *yab* refers to Khri Sroñ lde brcan, the father of Khri Lde sroñ brcan. In (24) we see the pattern repeated from the OT inscriptions to use kinterms, the reference point of which is the contemporary *bcan po*. The passage additionally attests to a posthumous usage of *riñ la*.

I argued for a pragmatic shift in the usage of the formulas *riñ la* and *sku riñ la* that seems to have occurred during the reign of Khri Gcug lde brcan.⁸⁷ Yet another facet of this shift is attested in the *Sgra sbyor*:

(25)

sñon lha sras yab kyi spyan sñar mkhan po dañ lo cā ba mkhas pa ychogs pas / dharmma dkon mchog sprin dañ / lañ kar gśegs pa bsgyur te /

Earlier, in front of the Divine Son, the father, masters and skilful *lo cā bas*, who gathered, translated the *dharmma* texts [of] *Ratnamegha* and *Lañkāvatāra*.

The formula *sñon lha sras yab kyi spyan sñar* is the equivalent of *gžan ni yab myes kyi sku riñ la* from the Tabo edition of the *Sgra sbyor*.⁸⁸ We find the phrase *yab myes kyi sku riñ la* attested only once in OT, in the Lčañ inscription (l. 5). The usage of the formula *sku riñ la* together with the unspecified *yab myes* “fathers and grandfathers” indicates the more general meaning of *sku riñ la* as compared with *riñ la*.⁸⁹ In OT inscriptions the latter consistently occurred with a name of a concrete person.⁹⁰

4. The Imperial Edicts in the *Mkhas pa* dgay ston

In his groundbreaking study, Tucci convincingly argued for the historical validity of imperial documents as preserved in the *Mkhas pa*

⁸⁶ Lit. “those that were not suitable not to be unrevised”. This passage contradicts the assumption that the revision of translated works began first under Khri Lde sroñ brcan; see e.g., Uray 1989: 17.

⁸⁷ Bialek 2018b.

⁸⁸ See Panglung 1994: 170.

⁸⁹ The use of the formula *yab myes kyi sku riñ la* in the Tabo version is somehow perplexing; the clause concerns translations of two Buddhist texts: *Ratnamegha* and *Lañkāvatāra*. The Tabo version lets us believe that generations (*yab myes*) were needed in order to translate these two texts.

⁹⁰ See the Appendix and Bialek 2018b: 401ff.

dgay ston (hereafter: KhG) of Dpaṅ bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba.⁹¹ Tucci noted that the texts of the Central Tibetan inscriptions have been accurately copied by Dpaṅ bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba and so one might assume that also the edicts (*bkay gcigs*) are rather faithful copies of the imperial documents which have not been preserved.⁹²

1st edict (KhG ja 108v2–10r3)⁹³

The phraseology of the first edict of Khri Sroñ lde brcan resembles much the phraseology of the Bsam inscription. We find there expressions like *bcan po yab sras dañ sras kyi yum* (109r1) and *bcan po yab sras* (109r4).⁹⁴ The edict mentions only *bcan po* Khri Sroñ lde brcan (108v2) by name.

2nd edict (KhG ja 110r3–11v2)⁹⁵

The text begins with the phrase *bcan po khri sroñ lde bcan gyi sku riñ la* (110r3) which agrees with the established weak rule: only the currently reigning *bcan po* can be addressed with the title and the name alone. Further, the second edict says *bcan po bži mes khri sroñ bcan gyi riñ la* (110r4–5) “during the reign of the grandfather Khri Sroñ bcan”⁹⁶ and

⁹¹ Tucci 1950: 43ff.; see also Richardson 1980: 62.

⁹² Uray, in 1967, argued for the dependency of the *Mkhas pa dgay ston* on earlier post-imperial historiographical sources, so that it may be that Dpaṅ bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba himself did not have any access to the original documents. For instance, we observe that the edicts preserved in the KhG all use the postposition *sku riñ la* interchangeably with *riñ la* despite the fact that the Skar inscription as well as the inscriptions from the reign of Khri Sroñ lde brcan use *riñ la* to refer to the reign of a *bcan po* – another hint at a later redaction of the edicts.

⁹³ The close relationship between the first two edicts and the Bsam inscriptions may be assumed from the fact that in the KhG the edicts are followed by a copy of the pillar inscription which Dpaṅ bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba states contained a summary (*mdor bsdus*) of the edicts (KhG ja 111v2–3). Richardson 1980: 63 dated the edicts to the period between the completion of Bsam yas (either 767 or, more probably, 779) and 782. As an aside, neither the Bsam inscriptions, nor the edicts, mention Sāntarakṣita, who was allegedly crucial to the construction of Bsam yas.

⁹⁴ Richardson was partly right in maintaining that it “is not certain whether *sras* and *yum* in the edict refer specifically to one son and one mother or to sons and mothers” (Richardson 1980: 64). However, he overlooked the conventionalised nomenclature of imperial Tibet that included only the heir to the throne and his mother in official documents.

⁹⁵ As noticed in Richardson 1980: 63, the second ‘edict’ is referred to as *bkay mchid* at the end of the first edict (KhG ja 110r2).

⁹⁶ The phrase *bcan po bži* is ambiguous. Tucci 1950: 47 and 98, followed by Richardson 1980: 66 and Coblin 1990: 170, read *bzan* (sic) *po bži* “the fourth ancestor”; Coblin 1990: 166 confirmed the reading *bcan*. If we follow Tucci in reading “the fourth *bcan po* [counted back from Khri Sroñ lde brcan]” we arrive at a reckoning that would exclude Guñ sroñ guñ rcan, the son of Khri Sroñ rcan. This would indicate that the later tradition did not recognise him as a legitimate *bcan po*, although he must have

bcan po yab khri lde gcug brcan gyi riñ la (110r5) “during the reign of *bcan po*, the father Khri Lde gcug brcan”. Both phrases follow the OT convention of taking the currently reigning *bcan po* as the reference point for the kinterms, confirming that the edict was composed during the rule of Khri Sroñ lde brcan. *sku riñ la* in the first phrase juxtaposed with *riñ la* of the two other phrases suggests a later revision, maybe by Dpay bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba.

3rd edict (KhG ja 128v1–30v5)

The third edict accompanied the creation of the Skar inscription and was composed during the reign of Khri Lde sroñ bcan. It is the most revealing of the edicts. We find there the following expressions:

	<i>sras</i>	<i>khri lde sroñ bcan</i>		128v1
<i>bcan po</i>		<i>khri lde sroñ bcan</i>		128v2
	<i>yab</i>	<i>khri sroñ lde bcan</i>		128v3, 5, 7
	<i>mes</i>	<i>sroñ bcan</i>		128v4
<i>bcan po</i>		<i>khri lde sroñ bcan</i>	<i>ña</i>	128v5–6
	<i>mes</i>	<i>khri lde gcug bcan</i>		128v6
			<i>ñed</i>	129r2
			<i>ña</i>	129r5
<i>bcan po</i>	<i>dbon sras</i>			129r7
<i>ñed</i>	<i>yab sras</i>			129v4
	<i>yab mes dbon sras</i>			129v5

The phrase *bcan po khri lde sroñ bcan ña* unambiguously identifies the author of the edict and the currently reigning *bcan po* as Khri Lde sroñ bcan. The edict also uses the phrase *ñed yab sras* that likewise occurs in the Skar inscription. I have argued that this phrase indicates that the father Khri Sroñ lde brcan was still alive. This hypothesis is confirmed by the unique form of address at the beginning of the edict: *sras khri lde sroñ bcan*. This convention is in agreement with the observation that the kinterms *myes*, *yab*, and *sras* were used as long as the (grand-)parent was still alive and until the end of funerary ceremonies after his death. Because of the active role of the agent referents of *ñed* in the inscription and in the accompanying edict, we can conclude that Khri Sroñ lde brcan was alive and possibly present at the erection of the

been enthroned after his father Khri Sroñ rcan had abdicated. Unfortunately, OT sources remain silent on this period of early Tibetan history. Alternatively and in agreement with the syntax, *bcan po bzi* can be read as “the fourth *bcan po* [ever]”, meaning that the tradition counted Ybro Mñen lde ru as the first *bcan po*.

pillar. On the other hand, the formulation *bcan po dbon sras* suggests that an heir to the throne (*dbon* "grandson") was already born to Khri Lde sroñ bcan.

The consistency between the use of kinterms in the original OT documents and the edicts confirms the historical value of the latter and additionally supports the hypothesis that the use of kinterms in imperial documents was conventionalised and followed a strictly regulated pattern.

Conclusions

During the imperial period, the administrative vocabulary, nomenclature and, last but not least, the official titulature all evolved in a natural way and this is mirrored in the inscriptions. This paper has focused on kinterms, demonstrating that a consistent system of nomenclature relating to reigning *bcan pos* and the royal family existed that can be used to tentatively ascribe particular inscriptions to a reign of a concrete ruler. However, even this system was changing as the empire grew and new administrative means were introduced. The language had to be adjusted to the changing social and political circumstances as well. In another paper, I have demonstrated that such natural semantic changes occurred with respect to the term *rin* and the postposition *rin la* based on it, as well as in the title *rgyal po*.⁹⁷

It should be stressed that dating an inscription to the reign of a particular *bcan po* is not the same as saying that it is written or ordered by that very ruler, nor in his name. The acting authority behind creating an inscription could have been any person or institution (lay or clerical) in power and possessing enough financial means.⁹⁸ This, as well as diverging purposes for which single inscriptions were created, contributed to the variety in lexicon they display. It may also explain

⁹⁷ See Bialek 2018b.

⁹⁸ There is a widely accepted assumption that the so-called Central Tibetan inscriptions were composed during the imperial period. If one wishes to dismiss this view, it would be necessary to point to persons or institutions that could have had not only (propagandic) interest but also financial means to have these monuments erected in post-imperial times. This has not been done so far. Also, compare the comment by Richardson concerning the Bell of Yer pa: "[...] it is improbable that at the time of the Phyi-dar there would have been either a patron with the means to have so large a casting made or craftsmen with the skill to carry out the work", Richardson 1985: 144. On the other hand, no stone pillars of comparable significance in form and content are known to have been erected in post-imperial times. Therefore, as long as no alternative historical context has been offered and convincingly argued for, the traditional view, dating the inscriptions to the imperial period, has to be preferred.

the fact that each inscription contains some hapax legomena (lexemes or phrases) not encountered in other OT documents.

The dates arrived at for the Central Tibetan inscriptions in this paper were achieved by using specific linguistic criteria. Doubtlessly, more detailed philological studies will reveal additional features that could be used in future to specify the periods more accurately or to establish a relative chronology for the inscriptions created within one regnal period. Here I have concentrated on the kinterms and their usage in Central Tibetan inscriptions in order to demonstrate that they were applied according to a coherent system. This new approach to dating OT inscriptions has allowed me to present a trustworthy relative chronology for most of the inscriptions. However, some of the inscriptions could only be dated according to the proposed weak rule that deduces the time of their creation from a *bcan po* addressed in that very inscription. Needless to say, these datings are especially vulnerable to criticism and require further evidence.

Even though the method of dating documents on the grounds of the kinterms used therein could be shown to have value on its own, it would be unwise to rely only on this method and disregard traditional approaches. Nonetheless, this method has yielded results in accordance with the established facts in the cases of already unambiguously dated inscriptions. By applying the same approach to the inscriptions, the dating of which has been much debated and remains uncertain, I argue that the method can be conceived of as an auxiliary means in borderline cases. The single most valuable finding of the survey concerns the fact that, in historical documents, the reference point for kinterms (*ego*) was always the currently ruling *bcan po*.

Abbreviations

Ybis	Ybis khog inscription
Yphyon	Yphyon rgyas inscription
ABS	absolute
Brag	Brag lha mo inscription
Bsam	Bsam yas inscription
Bsam Bell	Bsam yas Bell inscription
Dgay	Dgay ldan byin chen inscription
Dun 365	Dunhuang Mogau cave no. 365 inscription
E	east-facing inscription
GEN	genitive
HON	honorific
IDP	International Dunhuang Project (see Internet Sources)
INESS	inessive

KhG	Dpay bo Gcug lag yphreñ ba 1962
Khra	Khra ybrug Bell inscription
Khri	inscription at Khri Lde sron brcan's tomb
Khrom	Khrom čhen inscription
Lčañ	Lčañ bu inscription
Ldan	Ldan ma brag inscription
Lho	Lho brag inscription
N	north-facing inscription
OT	Old Tibetan
OTA	<i>Old Tibetan Annals</i>
OTDO	Old Tibetan Documents Online (see Internet Sources)
OTI	Iwao et al. 2009
PT	Pelliot tibétain
Rkoñ	Rkoñ po inscription
S	south-facing inscription
Skar	Skar čuñ inscription
Treaty	Sino-Tibetan Treaty inscription
trslr.	transliteration
W	west-facing inscription
Yer	Yer pa Bell inscription
Žol	Žol inscription
Žwa	Žwayi lha khañ inscription

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Appendix

The occurrence of the sole title *bcan po* has not been included in the table. Inscriptions from outside of Central Tibet are coloured dark grey. Table cells coloured light grey mark references to the contemporary *bcan po* of the respective inscription as dated in the present paper. The dates of the inscriptions provided with a question mark are tentative.



Reigni ng <i>bcan</i> <i>po</i> (life years)	Inscri p.	Dat e	Lin e	Title(s)	Pronou n	Kinter m	Titl e	Nam e	Titl e	Collecti ve kinterm	Postpositi on	Regn al years			
Khri Lde gcug rcan (704– 754)	Dgay		1	<i>bod kyi lha</i>				Khri Lde gcug brca n				712– 754			
Khri Sroñ lde brcan (742–804)	Žol S	764	1–2	<i>bca n pho</i>				Khri Lde gcug rcan			<i>riñ la</i>	712– 754			
			8	<i>bca n pho</i>			<i>yab</i>	Khri Lde gcug rcan							
			11	<i>bca n pho</i>			<i>sras</i>	Khri Sroñ lde brca n				756– 797			
			16	<i>bca n pho</i>			<i>sras</i>	Khri Sroñ lde brca n							
			21– 2	<i>bca n pho</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n			<i>riñ la</i>				
			41– 2	<i>bca n po</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n							
			Žol N	5	<i>bca n pho</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n				756– 797		
				12	<i>bca n po</i>			<i>sras dbon</i>							
			Bsam			11	<i>bca n po</i>			<i>yab sras</i>					
						18	<i>bca n po</i>			<i>yab sras</i>					
Bsam B			7–8	<i>lha bca n po</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n		<i>yab sras</i>		756– 797			
Rkoñ			1	<i>lha bca n po</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n				756– 797			

									Lde sroñ		<i>yab sras</i>	<i>riñ la</i>	797– 815
		12		<i>bca n po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>				Khri Sroñ lde brca n			<i>riñ la</i>	756– 797
		13			<i>lha sras</i>				Lde sroñ			<i>sku riñ la</i>	797– 815
		19– 20			<i>lha sras</i>		<i>yab</i>						
		20			<i>lha sras</i>				Lde sroñ			<i>sku riñ la</i>	797– 815
Yphyo ñ	post 797	1	<i>lha</i>	<i>bca n po</i>			<i>yab myes</i>						
		5	<i>lha</i>	<i>bca n po</i>					Khri Sroñ lde brca n				756– 797
		16– 7	<i>yphr ul gyi lha</i>	<i>bca n po</i>					Khri Sroñ lde brca n				
		33– 4	<i>yphr ul gyi lha</i>		<i>bya ñ čhu b čhe n po</i>								
Brag A	797 – 804	1		<i>bca n po</i>	<i>bya ñ čub sem s dpa y</i>				Khri Sroñ lde bcan			<i>skuyi riñ la</i>	756– 797

Khri Lde sroñ brcan (?-815)	Skar	pre-804	1-2	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde sroñ brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	797-815	
			4-5	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>			<i>myes</i>		Khri Sroñ brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	-649	
			7-8					<i>myes</i>		Khri Ydus sroñ		<i>riñ la</i>	685-704	
			10					<i>myes</i>		Khri Lde gcug brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	712-754	
			12-3					<i>yab</i>		Khri Sroñ lde brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	756-797	
			15-6	<i>lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde sroñ brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	797-815	
			22-3	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>			<i>yab</i>		Khri Sroñ lde brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	756-797	
			44				<i>ned</i>	<i>yab sras</i>						
			52		<i>bcan po</i>			<i>yab sras</i>						
			56					<i>yab</i>					<i>riñ la</i>	
Ldan 2	804	2		<i>mcan po</i>					Khri Sde sroñ brcan		<i>riñ la</i>	797-815		
Ybis 2	806	2-3		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde srañ bcan		<i>sku riñ la</i>	797-815		
		9		<i>bcan po</i>			<i>yab sras</i>							
Khra		4		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde sroñ brcan			797-815		
Żwa W	pre 812	1-2	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde sroñ brcan			797-815		
		48					<i>gčen</i>		Mu rug brcan					
Żwa E	812	1-2	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde sroñ brcan			797-815		
Khri Gcug lde brcan (794?-841)	Khri	815	1		<i>bcan po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>				Yo lde spu rgyal				
			6			<i>lha sras</i>				Khri Lde sroñ brcan			797-815	
			13		<i>bcan po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>				Khri Lde sroñ brcan	<i>lha yphrul</i>			
	Treaty W	822/3	1-2	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>									
			12-3	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			815-841	
	Treaty E		1	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			815-841	
			5	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Yo lde spu rgyal				
			16	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>									
			22-3	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Sroñ brcan			-649	
			25-6	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Lde gcug brcan			712-754	

		34		<i>bcan po</i>			<i>yab</i>	<i>lha yphrul</i>	Khri Lde sroñ brcan			797–815
		51	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			815–841
Lcāñ S		5		<i>bcan po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>		<i>yab myes</i>				<i>sku riñ la</i>	
		10–1		<i>bcan po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>				Khri Gcug lde brcan	<i>yphrul</i>		815–841
		21		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			
Khrom F		3			<i>lha sras</i>							
		4–5		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			815–841
		31–2		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			
Khrom R		1–2		<i>bcan po</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan			815–841
Dun 365	832–5	1	<i>yphrul gyi lha</i>	<i>rcan pho</i>					Khri Gcug lde brcan		<i>sku riñ la</i>	815–841
Lho		1		<i>bcan po</i>	<i>lha sras</i>							