Foreign Names and Places in Tibetan Newspapers of the 1950s and 1960s

Franz Xaver Erhard (Leipzig University)
and
Xiaoying 笑影 (Leipzig University)

Tibet was in close contact with neighbouring civilisations for all its known history. This cultural exchange tremendously impacted the religion, culture and language spoken on the Tibetan plateau. Buddhism was the most significant import, leaving a strong imprint in the Tibetan language, including many loanwords and Indic names. One of the more difficult things in the Tibetan language is naming foreign people and places beyond its semiotised cultural sphere. In past centuries, important places, such as along the Silk Road, in Mongolia, or India, received their own Tibetan names. Similarly, the Indian Buddhist deities, saints and sages received Tibetan names. However, in modern times and increasingly in the mid-twentieth century, the integration of Tibet into Communist China, Tibet and a Tibetan readership became exposed to an enormous number of Chinese and international place names and personal names.

In the Divergent Discourses project,[1] while preparing Ground Truth, i.e., accurate and verified transcriptions of samples of the project's newspaper corpus to train a text recognition model, we compiled a list of 1,299 foreign personal and place names found in the

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newspapers alongside their original and Chinese forms.[2] We discovered, perhaps not too surprisingly, that many of these proper names were rendered in multiple ways into Tibetan, which is not only causing potential problems for our plan to digitally and automatically mine the newspaper corpus, but the variety of approaches to bring these names into the Tibetan language also tells us about the avenues these terms travelled and the practice of newspaper editing/translating as well as the state of minority language policies in the PRC of the 1950s and 1960s.

1   Introduction

Since ancient times, Tibet has been in close contact with and entertained cultural exchanges with its neighbours. This exchange doubtlessly has left its imprint in the form of loanwords and foreign place and personal names in the Tibetan language, or rather Tibetan languages, as various rules apply in the language variations of Amdo, Kham or Central Tibet. These loans had to be adapted to Tibetan phonetic and orthographic rules and eventually incorporated into the Tibetan lexicon. In this process, many of these foreign borrowings became increasingly difficult to distinguish from original Tibetan words over time. An oft-quoted example is དེབ་ཐེར་ *deb ther*, a Tibetan term for 'annals', which is a loan from the Persian دفتر *daftar*.

Borrowings from a wide range of languages are known, including Khotanese (Emmerick 1985), Mongolian, Turkish, Hindi, and English, but mostly alongside the import of Buddhism from Sanskrit and Chinese (Beyer 1993; Laufer 1919; Laufer 1916). As Bertold Laufer emphasised, many loanwords were introduced alongside Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, and their phonetic values represent contemporary Chinese pronunciation (Laufer 1916: 407).

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2   The dataset is divided into three separate csv-files containing (1) 96 Tibetan names, (2) 414 non-Tibetan foreign personal names, and (3) 787 non-Tibetan foreign place names, always including variants and the corresponding English or Chinese forms, see Erhard and Xiaoying 笑影 2024.

To represent foreign words, in particular loans from Sanskrit, and their pronunciation in the Tibetan language, several conventions emerged over time, such as the use of subscribed ཨ ' to represent long vowels as in ཀཔལ *ka pā la* for Sanskrit *kapāla* or the five reversed letters (*log pa'i yi ge lnga*) to transcribe Sanskrit retroflexes as in *paṇḍita* པཎྜི. A subscribed ྷ *h* represents aspirated voiced stops and affricates of the Sanskrit original.[3]

In modern language usage, interestingly, the fricative [f] in loanwords or foreign names is generally represented with the un-Tibetan ligature ྥ *h+pha,* as in ྥརནཟི *h+pha ran zi* (France) or ཧེལུའུ ྥ *he lu'u sha'o h+phu* (Nikita Khrushchev).[4] The assumption that this is a recent invention of the PRC is supported by the fact that Goldstein (2001: 1176) lists only 29 entries starting with ྥ *h+pha,* all generally representing Chinese borrowings, while the Tibetan dictionary compiled by Lobsang Tendar (Blo bzang bstan dar 2010), published in India, lists no entry for ྥ *h+pha.*

Intriguingly, there is no uniform system for rendering foreign names in Tibetan. In the 18th-century *Biography of Doring Paṇḍita*, for example, the widely travelled author Tenzin Panjor (Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, 1760-c. 1811) gives vivid descriptions of the Chinese cities of Xining fu 西寧府, Lanzhou fu 蘭州府, Xi'an fu 西安府, or Chengdu fu 成都府. He names these places Zi ling hu ཟིལིངྷུ, Khreng tu hu ཁྲེངྟུྷུ, etc, thus transcribing the character *fu* 府 with the Tibetan ྷ *hu.* At other places, the fricative [f] is rendered in Tibetan with the aspirated ཕ *pha* ཨཕིརིཀ *a phi ri ka* (Africa) (NIB 1955.06.04) or ནེཕ *ne pha* transcribing the acronym NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency) during the China – Indian war in Arunachal Pradesh (TIM 1963.02.01)

These preliminary remarks demonstrate that the Tibetan language has developed various techniques to include foreign terms and names in its vocabulary and showcase its ability to adapt to various cultural and linguistic influences over time. Borrowings then are also not stable

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[3]   Peter Schwieger gives a comprehensive overview of letters used to render Sanskrit in Tibetan (2006: 23).

[4]   This ligature is referred to in modern textbooks from the PRC as the "one additional letter" (*kha snon yi ge gcig*), see e.g. (Skad yig 1993: 22).

but undergo change influenced by social and political tidings. While in the first half of the 20th century, British and British-Indian culture and the English language had significant influence as many technical terms, such as རིལུ *ri li/lu* > rail, or མོཊ *mo ṭa* > motor = car, amply demonstrate, in the second half of the 20th century, this influence is superseded by the influx of Chinese concepts and linguistic borrowings. Hence, the now obsolete English borrowing པེསེཀོབ *pe se kob* > bioscope, cinema, [5] which was replaced by གློགབརྙན *glog brnyan*, explained by Beyer (1993: 138) as a loan translation of the modern Chinese 电影 *dian ying*.

2   *The list of place names and personal names: selection criteria and sources*

The entries in this list were randomly selected while transcribing sample pages from the newspapers. It goes without saying that this list is far from being complete or representative of all the choices of the newspaper editors of the period.

We anticipated complications with unsystematic orthography in the representation of the names of countries, regions, cities and other places as well as personal names of authors, politicians and statesmen in our newspaper corpus. We created the list (and are still adding names) to allow for normalisation or enhance Named Entity Recognition (NER) at a later stage. Therefore, we collected non-Tibetan place names and personal names as well as names of persons with both a Tibetan and a Chinese name, such as སངསརྒྱསཡེཤེས Sangs rgyas ye shes 天寶 Tian Bao or Tempa Landoo བསྟནཔལྷུནའགྲུབ Bstan pa lhun 'grub 丹巴隆舟 alias 高搴桂 Gao Qiangui.

The list of foreign person and place names was extracted from the following newspapers:

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5   Nowadays generally out of use, the term པེསེཀོབ *pe se kob* has only made it into one dictionary, Goldstein and Narkyid (1986: 69), which lists it as a borrowing from Hindi and synonym to *glog brnyan*.

(1)   People's Republic of China:

- *Mtsho sngon bod yig gsar 'gyur* Qinghai Tibetan News (QTN),
- *Kan lho'i gsar 'gyur* South Gansu News (SGN),
- *Dar mdo'i gsar 'gyur* Kangding News (KDN),
- *Dkar mdzes nyin re'i gsar 'gyur* Ganze Daily News (GDN),
- *Ming kyāng tshags dpar* Minjiang News (MJN),
- *Bod ljongs nyin re'i gsar 'gyur* Tibet Daily (TID),
- *Gsar 'gyur mdor bsdus* News in Brief (NIB)

(2)   India:

- *Yul phyog so so'i gsar 'gyur me long* Tibet Mirror (TIM)
- *Rang dbang gsar shog* Freedom (FRD),
- *Rang dbang srung skyob gsar shog* Defend Tibet's Freedom (DTF),
- *Krung dbyang gsar 'gyur* Central Weekly News (CWN),
- *Bod mi'i rang dbang* Tibetan Freedom (TIF).

The name list contains 1,299 entries in total. The larger part are place names with 787 entries with their spelling variations. "Indonesia" appears here with 13 different spellings. Among the 417 personal names, Zhou Enlai is the entry with the most variants.

3   Transcription and its variants in Tibetan newspapers of the 1950s and 1960s

The newspapers in the Divergent Discourses project's corpus stem from a period of tremendous political and social change. The newspapers report on local events and the several provinces of the PRC and beyond in the world. Besides new political concepts of democracy, communism, feudalism, etc., new technologies such as "combine harvester" (KDN 1955.05.28), "aerial seeding" (QTN 1959.01.28), "veterinary disease control" (QTN 1959.03.04), a plethora of geographical names, political and administrative titles and names of politicians, presidents and others are for the first time transcribed

into Tibetan in these papers. Despite the tendency for centralised control, the newspapers' authors, editors, and translators utilise the approaches outlined above to the best of their ability to render all these new terminologies, place and personal names in Tibetan. However, they do not follow a unified system, and various approaches become evident when flipping through the newspapers' pages. Additionally, there are multiple renditions of some names, sometimes even in the same publication. In the extreme case, we found as many as 12 different ways to render the name of the important Communist leader Zhou Enlai in Tibetan.

3.1   Transcription of Chinese names

For the same Chinese name, several different transliterations are found. The example of the Chinese Communist politician and long-term prime minister Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898–1976) demonstrates that the transcription into Tibetan was not following a unified system but was done by individual authors or translators:

- གྲུའུ་ཨེན་ལེས་ *kru'u en les* (Note: final *sa* is not an agentive marker)
- གྲུའུ་ཨེན་ལེ་ *kru'u en le*
- གྲེའུ་ཨེན་ལེ་ *kre'u en le*
- གྲེའུ་ཨེན་ལན་ *kre'u en lan*
- གྲའུ་ཨན་ལན་ *kra'u an lan*
- གྲེོ་ཨེན་ལེ་ *kre'o en le*

Additionally, as a comparison of newspapers of different regions shows, the authors or, more likely, translators based their transcriptions on the Tibetan target dialect of their publication. For example, we can differentiate transcriptions based on Amdo pronunciation in the *Mtsho sngon bod yig gsar 'gyur* (QTN): གྲིག་ནིན་ལེ་ *krig nin le*. This writing reflects the Amdo dialectal pronunciation of what, again, is the local Chinese dialect of Xining (tʂu nə̃ lɛ) rather than the Beijing dialect-based Mandarin (tʂou ən lai).

The *Min kyāng tshag dpar* (MJN) offers transcriptions based on Kham pronunciation again reflecting the Barkham local Chinese dialect pronunciation of Zhou Enlai (tsəu ŋən nai):

- ཀྲིའུ་གིན་ལེའི *kri'u gin le'i*
- ཀྲིའུ་གིན་ལའི *kri'u gin la'i*

The transcriptions found in the *Tibet Mirror* (TIM) published in Kalimpong, on the other hand, are based on Hindi or, ultimately, English pronunciation:

- ཙའོ་ཨེན་ལའི *ca'o en la'i*
- ཙའོ་ཨན་ལེ *ca'o an le*
- ཙའུ་ཨེན་ལའི *ca'u en la'i*

3.2 *Transliteration of non-Chinese names*

When dealing with non-Chinese names, a variety of different approaches are widespread. For example, the Russian Khrushchev (Хрущёв, 赫鲁晓夫 *he lu xiao fu*), the name of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964 Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971), is transcribed in three different ways:

First, editors attempted to phonetically transfer the Chinese 赫鲁晓夫 *he lu xiao fu* resulting in the variations already described above:

- ཧེ་ལུའུ་གཤའོ་ཧྥུ *he lu'u sha'o h+phu*
- ཧེ་ལུའུ་གཤའོ་ཧྥུས *he lu'u sha'o h+phus*
- ཧེ་ལའུ་གཤའོ་ཧྥུས *he la'u sha'o h+phus*
- ཧེ་ལོའུ་ཤོ་ཧྥུའུ *he lo'u sho h+phu'u*
- ཤེ་ལུའུ་སྐྱོ་ཧྥུ *she lu'u skyo h+phu*
- ཧེ་ལུ་གཤའོ་ཕུ *he lu sha'o phu*
- ཧེ་རུ་གཤའོ་ཕུ *he ru sha'o phu*

Second, transcriptions attempt to imitate the Russian pronunciation, but struggle with the consonant clusters: ཁུ་ཤེ་ཙོབ (*khu she cob*) or ཁུ་ཤེ་ཆོབ (*khu*

shi cob) seek to phonetically transcribe "khru-sh-chev" dividing up the consonant щ "shch" across two Tibetan syllables. Similarly, in the Amdo dialect-based transcription, the Russian consonant cluster хр "khr" is split into two syllables in ཀེ་རུ་དྲི་ (*ke ru dri*), rendering "kh-ru-shchev". In both cases, additional vowels are inserted in deference to Tibetan phonotactics.

Similarly, the toponym Việt Nam (Vietnam 越南 *yue nan*) is rendered in different ways, sometimes following various Chinese dialects, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- ཡོ་ནན་ *yo nan*
- ཡའོ་ནན་ *ya'o nan*
- ཡུ་ལན་ *yu lan*
- ཡུ་ནན་ *yu nan*
- གཡོད་ནའན་ *g.yod na'an*
- གཡོད་ནཱན་ *g.yod nān*
- གཡོད་ནན་ *g.yod nan*

Alternatively, transcriptions imitate the Vietnamese or English pronunciation:

- ཝི་ཊ་ནམ་ *wi ṭa nam*
- ཝེཊ་ནམ་ *weṭ nam*
- བི་དི་ནམ་ *bi di nam*
- བི་ད་ནམ་ *bi da nam*
- བི་ནམ་ *bi nam*

Regarding personal names in the wider Sinosphere, most Japanese and Koreans officially write their names in Chinese characters. Each Chinese character has a distinct Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese pronunciation. In Tibetan newspapers, such names are generally transcribed following the Chinese characters. The Japanese Kishi Nobosuke 岸信介 would be pronounced as An Xinjie in Chinese. The Tibetan ནན་ཞིན་ཀེ་ *nan zhin ke* (QTN) derives from the Chinese pronunciation An Xinjie. Another example is the name of Kim Il-sung 김일성 (1912–1994), the "eternal president" of North Korea, has the

Chinese form 金日成 *jin ri cheng.* The Tibetan transcriptions ཅིན་རི་ཁྲེང *cin ri khreng* or ཅིན་རི་དྲིན *cin ri drin* (NIB) follow the Chinese.

Chinese name forms were discarded in Vietnam at the end of the 19th century. Still, the practice was followed by a few persons, mostly in cultural contexts. So, for example, the Vietnamese Politician Lê Thanh Nghị (1911–1989) is quoted in Tibetan newspapers as ལིས་ཆིང་ཡིང *lis ching ying* (GDN), a Tibetan transcription of his Chinese name 黎清毅 *li qing yi* (GDN).

3.3   *Multiple Origins for Transcriptions for the Same Place*

For many countries, several Tibetan names are circulating, which have different origins. Thailand, for example, is frequently transcribed following the English toponym "Thailand" with several slight variations:

- ཐའི་ལཎྜ *tha'i laṇḍ*
- ཐའི་ལནྜ *tha'i lanḍ*
- ཐ་ལན་ཌི *tha lan ḍi*
- ཐ་ལན་ཌ *tha lan ḍa*
- ཐེ་ལེན *the len*
- ཐའི་ལན *tha'i lan*

At the same time Thailand is found in Tibetan newspapers denoted by its pre-1939 name Siam, rendered in Tibetan as སི་ཡམ (*si yam*) or ཤྱམ་ཡུལ (*shyam yul*). The latter name is a mixed form and combines the phonetic transcription ཤྱམ *shyam* with ཡུལ *yul*, a Tibetan term for "country". This approach is also followed in the mixed borrowing from Chinese 泰國[6] *tai guo* where alongside the full transfer ཐེ་ཀོ *the ko*, or ཐེ་གོ *the go*, the

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[6]   The traditional character 國 is used in our newspapers before 1959, and the simplified form 国 after 1959.

transfer ཐེའི *the'i* (Thai) is combined with རྒྱལ་ཁབ *rgyal khab*, the Tibetan gloss for country to the mixed form ཐེའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ *the'i rgyal khab* (Thailand).[7]

Sri Lanka is well known in classical Tibetan literature under the name ལང་ཀ *lang ka* or ལང་ཀཱ *lang kā* or Simhala (སིང་གལ *sing ga la*) which is still used in Tibetan newspapers, e.g. the Central Weekly News (CWN), together with the variants སིང་གལའི་གླིང *sing+gal 'i gling*, སངྒིལ *sanggil* (TIM), and སེང་གལ *seng+ga la*. Nevertheless, in other instances, the newspaper editors opted for a modern transcription of Sri Lanka based on the Chinese 斯里蘭卡 *si li lan ka*: སིརིནྜ *si ri na gha*.[8] Finally, there are also transcriptions of the older English name Ceylon as སེལོང as well as of the Chinese borrowing 錫蘭 *xi lan* as ཤིལང *shi lang*, ཤེལན *she lang*, or ཤིས་ལོན *shis lon*.

The Vietnamese capital Hà Nội is phonetically transcribed from Vietnamese as ཧེནོ *he no* or from its Chinese name form 河内 *henei* as ཧོནའེ *ho na'e* or ཧོནི *ho ni*. Alternatively, we also found the old name of the city Đông Kinh (東京 *dong jing*, literally 'eastern capital') phonetically transcribed following its Vietnamese pronunciation as སྟོང་ཁུན *stong khun*.

An interesting case is "Germany" most often transcribed phonetically from English as ཛརམན *jar man* or འཛརམན *'jar man*, or from the Chinese 德國 *de guo* as དེགོ *de go* or ཏེགོ *te go*. In the newspapers of the 1950s and 1960s, we found the now mostly obsolete forms དེ་ཡིས་ཀྲི *de yis kri*, ཏི་ཡི་ཀྲི *ti yi kri*, or ཏེ་ཡིས་ཀྲི *te yis kri* probably deriving from the German 'deutsch' (ˈdɔɪtʃ) via Chinese 德意志 *de yi zhi*.

3.4   Coexistence of Transcription and Translation

The previous section dealt with phonetic transcriptions from different etymologies, all imitations of respective pronunciations. This section

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7   Alternatively, the syllable *the'i* could be read as *the* (Thai) plus possessive *'i*, changing the phrase to "country of the Thai [people]". According to Stephan Beyer the combination of a "transfer with a native gloss on the meaning of the transferred element" (1993: 145) is well attested in examples such as in *rma bya* (peacock) combining Skrt. *māyura* and Tib. *bya*.

8   In some Chinese dialects, especially in Sichuan and Yunnan, 蘭 *lan* is pronounced as nã, næ, or nan. It is also not uncommon to see mix-ups in the pronunciation of *l* and *r*. For example, Krang Dbyi sun (2000) gives སི་ལི་ལན་ཁ *si li lan kha* for Sri Lanka.

showcases the differing approach to linguistic borrowing that focuses on the meaning and attempts translations in full or part of the original term.

- The county Maoxian 茂縣 phonetically transcribed in Tibetan newspapers as མོང་ཤན་ *mong shan*, མོང་ཤེན་ *mong shen*, མོང་ཞན་ *mong zhan*, མའོ་ཤིའན་ *ma'o shi'an*, but also partly translated as in མའུ་རྫོང་ *ma'u rdzong*.
- Hainan Island 海南島 *hai nan dao* is transcribed as ཧེ་ནན་ཏོའོ་ *he nan to'o*, but also partly translated as in ཧེའི་ནན་གླིང་ཕྲན་ *he'i nan gling phran*.
- Europe 歐洲 *ou zhou* is transcribed as ཡུ་རོབ་གླིང་ *yu rob gling*, or ཡོ་རོབ་གླིང་ *yo rob gling*, ཡའོ་རུབ་གླིང་ *ya'o rub gling* as well as phonetically གིའུ་ཀྲིའུ་ *gi'u kri'u*, རྔུའུ་ཀྲུའུ་ *rngu'u kru'u*, or རྔུའུ་ཁྲུའི་ *rngu'u khru'i*.

The examples above show the coexistence of phonetic transcriptions alongside partial translations. Particularly, the components "county" 縣 *xian*, "island" 島 *dao*, or "continent" 洲 *zhou*, which usually form a part of the toponym in Chinese (e.g. "Maoxian" cannot simply be referred to as "Mao"), were translated into Tibetan as རྫོང་ *rdzong*, གླིང་ཕྲན་ *gling phran*, and གླིང་ *gling* respectively.

An example of a full translation of a place name is the Inner Mongolian capital of Hohhot (ᠬᠥᠬᠡᠬᠣᠲᠠ) rendered 呼和浩特 *hu he hao te* in Chinese and subsequently phonetically transcribed into Tibetan as ཧུ་ཧོ་ཧའོ་ཐེ་ *hu ho ha'o the* or referred to in its translation from Mongolian as མཁར་སྔོན་མོ་ *mkhar sngon mo*, the Blue City.

3.5   *Different Names in Tibetan and Chinese*

Almost all regions with Tibetan populations have places with two or more unrelated names. Most of these places are located in frontier regions with high ethnic diversity. Culturally or politically dominating ethnic groups maintained their own place names independent of other ethnic groups' names. Additionally, many frontier places received Chinese names during the Qing Dynasty. In 1706, the county ལྕགས་ཟམ་ཁ་ *lcags zam kha* in today's Ganze TAP, Sichuan, was named 瀘定 *lu ding* by Emperor 康熙 Kangxi (r. 1661–1722). In the newspapers, however,

besides the Tibetan name also the phonetic transcription of the acquired Chinese name ལུའུ་ཏིན *lu'u tin* is used.

Some examples, to name but few, are the famous trade hub of Kangding 康定 in Sichuan, which is known as དར་རྩེ་མདོ *dar rtse mdo* in Tibetan. Further to the north is Luhuo 爐霍, otherwise known as བྲག་མགོ *brag mgo*. In Qinghai, རེབ་གོང *reb gong* (occasionally རེབ་ཀོང *reb kong*), the home of the Tibetan monk-scholar Gendün Chöphel (*dge 'dun chos 'phel* 1903–1951), is known in Chinese as 同仁 *tong ren* and often referred to in Tibetan newspapers in the phonetic transcription ཐུན་རིན *thun rin* or ཐོང་རིན *thong rin*. In today's Tibetan Autonomous Region, Yadong 亞東, the trade port on the route to India, is known as གྲོ་མོ *gro mo* in Tibetan. In Yunnan, today's Shangri-La (香格里拉 *xianggelila*, སེམས་ཀྱི་ཉི་ཟླ *sems kyi nyi zla*) until 2001 used to be known in Chinese as Zhongdian 中甸 and རྒྱལ་ཐང *rgyal thang* in Tibetan.

3.6   Confusions

Historical influences, dialectal varieties and homophony in both source and target language provided a broad spectrum of linguistic borrowings and approaches to transcription. At the same time, they also were the source of confusion and mistakes: The names of the Chinese provinces 陝西 Shaanxi and 山西 Shanxi, are homophones in Chinese with only the tone of the first character differing. Consequently, they are transcribed identically in Tibetan (ཧན་ཧྲེས or ཧྲན་ཧྲེས) but refer to different locations depending on the newspaper. Only the context can clarify whether 陝西 Shaanxi or 山西 Shanxi is referred to.

In general, in newspapers such as the News in Brief (NIB), the Minjiang News (MJN), or the Central Weekly News (CWN), the Chinese province Yunnan 雲南 is referred to in the newspapers as ཡུན་ནན *yun nan*, ཡུན་ནའན *yun na'an*, ཡུལ་ནའན *yul na'an*, ཡུན་ནཱན *yun nān*, or ཡུན་ལེན *yun len* based on the Chinese name of the province. In the *Tibet Mirror* (TIM), however, the Tibetan term ཡུན་ནན yun nan is used to refer to Greece in the form ཡུན་ནན་རྒྱལ་ཁབ *yun nan rgyal khab*. While the general transcription of Greece is based on the Chinese 希臘 ཧེ་ལ *he la* ཧེ་ལན *he lan* or English གི་རིསི

gi ri si, the choice of ཡུན་ནན་ *yun nan* (TIM) seems to be derived from the Hindi यूनान (*yūnān*) or Persian یونان (*yūnān*) term for Greece.

4   *Conclusion*

On first sight, the implications of these varying transcriptions seem mostly relevant to questions of normalisation (see article Kyogoku *et al.* 2025 in this issue), which is a necessary process in the creation of a digital corpus that ensures that, e.g., all searches return a full list of results, but more importantly, that all processes run on the corpus yield reliable results. However, our preliminary and hand-compiled list of just over a thousand foreign place and personal names and their Tibetan transcriptions also allows us to draw a few conclusions about the socio-historical context of the transcriptions and the newspapers from which they were culled.

First, although for centuries engaged in cultural and political exchange, Tibet was not prepared to easily and smoothly digest the massive influx of Chinese terms in the 1950s and 1960s, many of which also represented new political or social concepts.

Second, the coinage of new borrowings in the form of translations or transcriptions was left to individual translators, resulting in an enormous variety of transcriptions based on (a) the source language or dialect and (b) the target Tibetan dialect corresponding with the newspaper's distribution area.

Third, this individualisation of transcription practices highlights two points: For one, translations and transcriptions into Tibetan initially did not follow a centralised system (as is well established today with committees and publications that control the coinage of new terms). It also shows how long and difficult it is for such a system to emerge and solidify. But more importantly, it suggests that the developments in the 1950s and 1960s were extremely rushed and did not leave much time for planning and standardisation. To quickly bring out the message its translation was left to local translators at the cost of a unified vocabulary. In our understanding, this underlines the

importance of mass communication, in our case, newspapers, in the formative years of the PRC in its Inner Asian frontier regions.

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