

TIBETAN-MONGOLIAN RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS PROJECT

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Several contributions in this volume have shown how people did things to books and other objects they considered significant as cultural heritage and as religious legacies. More subtly however, we have also perceived that these books and relics were doing things to people. They seemed to be endowed with what Gell identified as the 'agency' of artefacts (Gell 1998). Even though Gell himself focused his theory on art objects his thought seems to have some scope also for literary production. From the Tibetan Buddhist viewpoint, it is precisely because books have such an 'agency', i.e. make a difference to the people or the sentient world as a whole, that they are attributed a great spiritual importance as objects. They can be seen as extensions of the personhood and intentionality of the Buddha and of the later masters who continued his legacy. Such a spiritual agency of the books is however not what this article aims to explore, as this is dealt with elsewhere (Phuntsho forthcoming; Diemberger forthcoming). As the final chapter of the volume on the rediscovery of cultural treasures, this paper shows how books figure at the centre of networks of human relations by taking the case of our work around particular collections preserved in the UK.

In the introduction we have suggested some parallels between the way in which books were treated in ancient Tibet and the modern efforts of Tibetan scholars to rediscover and restore texts which had been lost or dispersed during the Cultural Revolution. A Cambridge based project funded by the AHRC with the aim of cataloguing, microfilming and digitizing Tibetan holdings in the UK has produced unexpected insights into how this kind of operation in the West may also mirror Tibetan Buddhist views of books and blend traditions of reverence for written words across national and cultural boundaries.

An exemplary and revealing instance of Tibetan views and practices about books is illustrated by some passages in a recently discovered biography of a 15th century Tibetan princess, Chos kyi sgron ma, who became a fully ordained nun and participated in several activities related to ancient texts, their preservation and their dissemination (see Diemberger in this volume). According to her biography she retrieved at Shel dkar 'a set of canonical commentaries (*Bstan 'gyur*) written in gold that had been made by her ancestor' which were in disarray and she reordered them, restoring their

spiritual integrity. A closer look at the Tibetan vocabulary used for the holy books reveals the way books are viewed in the Tibetan context, which stands in contrast to our conventional view of the book as a passive reading object, generally implied in modern English wording. The books made by Chos kyi sgron ma's ancestor in fact had been "invited" (*spyang drangs*) from mNga' ris . [...], Chos kyi sgron ma wanted to "see" (*mjal*) them and eventually "offered" (*phul*) robe (*nam bza'*) and belt (*sku rags*)" to clothe them. This vocabulary indicates that the books were in fact addressed with the same terms used for honorific persons.. Also, the holy books by their sheer presence prompted Chos kyi sgron ma to find, restore and look after them, fulfilling thereby a moral obligation that had been neglected by the family she had married into. Later in her life, she also engaged in the production and dissemination of the writings of her master, Bo dong phyogs las rnam rgyal. These books would become the object of worship and other rituals for his disciples, and the basis for a community which has lasted over five-hundred years. In this way, the books represented not only the word but also the 'distributed personhood' of the master shared among all those who followed his teachings (see Sudbury in this volume).

The Tibetan attribution of spiritual personhood to the books is no doubt a re-enactment of the classical Buddhist view of the holy books. One finds this already expressed in the final chapters of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines: . "...when, through the Tathagata's sustaining power, [this *sūtra*] has been well written, in very distinct letters, in a great book, one should honour, revere, adore and worship it, with flowers, incense, scents, wreaths, unguents, aromatic powders, strips of cloth, parasols, banners, bells, flags and with rows of lamps all round, and with manifold kinds of worship [...]. So long as this perfection of wisdom shall be observed in the world, one can be sure that 'for so long does the Tathagata abide in it' [...] beings are living in the presence of the Tathagata who will hear this perfection of wisdom, take it up, study, spread, repeat and write it and who will honour, revere, adore and worship it " (Conze 1973:299)

In Tibet this religious perception of the book or teachings as the teacher in verbal or literary form is often compounded with historical memories that refer to the Tibetan imperial period. With a strong admiration for the great religious and political achievements of the 7th to 9th centuries, Tibetans undertook concerted efforts to rebuild the past glory and discover the remnants of the ancient heritage. This has been distinctively expressed in the practice of rediscovery of ancient texts in the *gter ma* tradition especially since the thirteenth or fourteenth century (see for example Dreyfus 1994: 205-218). It is

a similar Tibetan Buddhist morality which seems to pervade the actions of those groups of Tibetans who are currently trying to re-discover, restore and catalogue books and manuscripts that have survived the Cultural Revolution. This Buddhist mindset, has also blended in with other forms of morality and scholarship that came to Tibet and the Himalayan regions through contacts with the Western traditions of thought rooted in European Enlightenment and with Chinese traditions of scholarship. Some of the papers in this volume reflect the work of scholars that embody the conflation of different scholarly traditions, which often blurs the distinction between the religious and the secular, the traditional and the modern (and post-modern).

The blending of different tradition of scholarship in Tibet does not seem to have been a one-way process. A collection of books that had come to the UK over a hundred years ago has provided us with a remarkable example of how books may have an agency that reaches across space and time, bringing together a transnational network of people. For this reason we decided to conclude this collection of essays with an article dedicated to the “Tibetan-Mongolian rare Books and Manuscript project”, which was mainly focused on the cataloguing and microfilming of the so-called Younghusband collection that had come to the UK in 1905.

Books ‘in search’ of a project...

In April 2003, in New York, Gene Smith and Zenkar Rinpoche were in a coffee shop animatedly describing the new possibilities offered by digital technologies for archiving and distributing Tibetan texts - an entire library could be contained in a hard drive the size of a shoe-box or less, and texts could be printed even in remote places and according to need. What a wonderful present such a hard-drive could be for the re-born centres of Tibetan Buddhism! And how much could be made available over the web! The discussion moved on, touching on the important archives that had been coming to light in Tibet and eventually turned to a further question: what about the texts buried in libraries in other parts of the world? Some of them were readily accessible, but others might not be as easily available.

Hildegard Diemberger, was one of the people sitting around the table. She had recently moved to Cambridge so Gene mentioned the Tibetan materials kept at the Cambridge University Library. He asked about the Younghusband collection,

which he had had the chance to browse in the 1960s. He knew that the materials collected in Tibet by Dr. Austine Waddell, medical officer and archaeologist to the 1903/4 British mission, had been split among different institutions, Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian at Oxford, the British Museum and the India Office in London. He mentioned several important works that had been torn apart by this partition, recalled some unique texts from this collection that had already been the object of research such as the *rNyim ma rgyud 'bum* and the *Shel dkar bka' 'gyur* and then mentioned other items that so far had not been captured by the radar of tibetologists, such as several early block-prints from Gungthang. He suggested that it would be wonderful if these materials could be reassembled, using both traditional and new technologies, and in order to make them more readily available to Tibetans across the world and to the international community of scholars.

The group became aware that the presence of these books, lying dormant in the library, while so much was going on in terms of retrieval of Tibetan resources meant that concrete action needed to be taken. Both Gene Smith and Zenkar Rinpoche, enthusiastically called for an exploration of the current state of affairs and offered their help to make the collection more accessible; and so the project began...

Gene and Zenkar Rinpoche's suggestion was readily taken on at Cambridge and a few weeks later, they were invited there to make a preliminary assessment in order to prepare an application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for microfilming, digitising and cataloguing the collection. The hub for the project was going to be the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit of the University of Cambridge in co-operation with the institutions housing the collection. The team¹ was gradually enriched with the curators of the British Library and the Cambridge University Library; the chairman and the directors of the management committee of MIASU; other consultants from Tibet and Inner Mongolia; and an energetic administrator. Karma Phuntsho would be the centre of the project taking charge of the actual day-to-day work of cataloguing and supervising the photographic units at the different sites. The scope of the project was also widened beyond the original idea of reassembling virtually the Younghusband collection, for this project was in a position to act as a pilot for a

¹ The UK based team was led by Stephen Hugh-Jones and its core was composed by Karma Phuntsho, Burkhard Quessel, Craig Jamieson, Hildegard Diemberger, David Sneath, Caroline Humphrey and Libby Peachey.

UK Union Catalogue of Tibetan Resources and cover a parallel work on Mongolian materials.

After one-hundred years of its arrival in the UK the 'Younghusband collection' had now started to bring together a heterogeneous and transnational team of people, all sharing the idea of making it globally accessible and enabling a virtual return of the texts, at least the most important ones, to their land of origin. These books, which survived the upheavals of Tibet's recent troubled history thanks to a controversial operation of colonial collecting (sometimes described as looting), could eventually participate in the current movement of Buddhist revival and preservation of Tibetan culture.

New Life from Old Books

Among the people drawn by the Younghusband collection was Karma Phuntsho. Karma had just defended his thesis on the philosophy of Emptiness at Oxford and was about to embark on post-doctoral research in Paris when he was introduced to the project. Alak Zenkar Rinpoche and Hildegard Diemberger briefed him about a possible research post to study, catalogue and document rare Tibetan books and manuscripts in libraries in the UK during the seminar of International Association of Tibetan Studies in September, 2003. Hildegard had by then put in place the project proposal. It was at this conference where Karma Phuntsho had also delivered a CD of rare titles of *rNying ma rGyud 'bum* to Robert Mayer who was overjoyed to receive it. This made him realise how important books and manuscripts were for international researchers, students and teachers, and sowed the seed for his eventual significant involvement with the project as chief researcher.

However, it was only in the following year, through the advice and persuasion of Gene Smith and Alak Zenkar Rinpoche, the two most distinguished luminaries in the field of Tibetan Buddhist literary, bibliographical and archival studies, that the seed sown at the conference gradually burgeoned into an enthusiasm for exploring and studying rare manuscripts. The project begun a new chapter in his academic life and enticed him on an adventure to rediscover and unravel the 'hidden treasures' which lay in the restricted sanctuaries of the British archival repositories. His academic interest and occupation, which until then concentrated on religious philosophy, gradually veered to the search and study of rare books and manuscripts (See Phuntsho in this volume).

Stephen Hughes-Jones, Hildegard Diemberger and Craig Jamieson had by the beginning of 2004 secured full funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), under its Resource Enhancement Scheme to run the project. The project was to be executed as a collaborative venture among scholars and institutions in the UK, US, Europe and Tibet. It built a network of professional consultants and advisors including experts on Tibetan, Mongolian, Indian and Buddhist Studies and bibliographical technology.

The project aimed at conserving, consolidating and cataloguing the Tibetan and Mongolian resources available in the University Library, Cambridge, The British Library and the Bodleian Library. However, our primary focus was on what we loosely termed the Younghusband Collection of Tibetan texts acquired during the 1903-4 British mission to Tibet, which perhaps formed the single largest acquisition of Tibetan literature made during British colonial history and is one of the most significant collections of the Edwardian period. It comprised significant portions of the Tibetan collections in the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the Cambridge University Library. A detailed discussion of the acquisition and the content of the collection can be read elsewhere.² Here, we provide a very brief account of the provenance of the Younghusband collection and the processes used by the project to reach its two-fold objective: to conserve the materials through duplication in the most viable format and to enhance their visibility and accessibility by the way of catalogues and dissemination of copies.

The so-called Younghusband Mission, which turned out *de facto* to be a full-scale invasion of Tibet, took place during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899-1905). The British Government was under the suspicion that the Tsarist Russian hegemony was spreading to Tibet at the invitation of the thirteenth Dalai Lama Thub bstan rgya mtsho through the Buryat monk Dorjiew. They were convinced of growing Russian presence in Lhasa, the Forbidden City. With the Great Game or rivalry for supremacy in Central Asia between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia at its height, control over Tibet was both militarily strategic and commercially beneficial as a gateway to China. The suspicion of Russian presence led to a group of individuals actively campaigning for the British to enter Tibet against a strong isolationist policy adopted by Lhasa toward the

² *The Detailed Catalogue of Cambridge Tibetan Collection* (forthcoming) and "Younghusband Mission and Its Textual Legacy" (forthcoming)

outside world in general and the British power in India in particular. It was in such a political climate that Lord Curzon appointed Colonel Francis Younghusband, an earnest adventurer and ambitious imperial officer, to head a civil mission to Lhasa escorted by a large army of some 3000 soldiers and 7000 support staff under Brigadier James Macdonald.

One of the persons on the mission was Colonel Lawrence Austine Waddell, a medical doctor. He was also the archaeologist to the mission and was thus the main person responsible for the acquisition of the collection. Charles Allen later called him 'the chief looter'³ for this role. Beside Captain Frederick O'Connor, the official interpreter for the mission, Waddell was the only person who had some knowledge of Tibetan and things Tibetan. He appears to have had a strong inclination for cultural exploration and some prior knowledge of Buddhism. Although his knowledge of Tibetan culture and religions was vastly inadequate to properly understand its intricacies and underlying concepts, it was for his days a rare and admirable achievement.

The books, termed as the Younghusband collection, were all collected by Waddell 'in the intervals of professional duties in the midst of battles in a hostile country'.⁴ He claims that 'every single volume of this huge Tibetan collection was selected with my own hands'.⁵ Almost all of the books were acquired by May 1903 in or on the way to Gyantse, under what he calls 'exceptionally favourable circumstances of acquiring rare manuscripts and volumes otherwise unobtainable'.⁶ These 'favourable circumstances' were the numerous military clashes during which the invading army besieged and ransacked several monastic and family establishments. He even claims to have risked his life to collect the books. He writes: "On being told that there were several Tibetan books in the house of the headman, I hurried in through a labyrinth of dark passages, crowded with boxes of gunpowder, and found some books, which I had brought out hastily as the adjoining house was afire, and I had to run the gauntlet of explosions, which were occurring all around, and the

³ Charles Allen at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s1206292.htm>. See also Allen (2004), pp. 223, 225-6, 241, 305-7.

⁴ Waddell (1912), "Tibetan Manuscripts and Books, etc, Collected during the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa," *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, July 1912, p. 6

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1

house in which I had been blew up a short time afterwards.”⁷ The books, he remarks, had also given him protection from explosives thrown at them when the British were under siege in the Changlo manor in Gyantse.⁸

Very little was collected after Gyantse according to Waddell, due to ‘unfavourable circumstances’. After the last battle at Kharo La pass, the Tibetans surrendered and gave in to British demands to enter Lhasa. There was no confrontation and this left the mission very little opportunities to gain uncontrolled access to books. Besides, Younghusband had by then lost the unflagging support of the Government of India for the Tibet campaign, which came from his chief ally and patron Lord Curzon, and was instead sternly reprimanded for exercising excessive authority and senseless looting. When the British mission returned from Tibet, after signing a nominal treaty and finding no Russian presence, Waddell brought back with him ‘300 mule loads’ of about 2000 volumes of religious books. He collected for both the Government of India and for himself - but it is difficult to verify what proportions were intended for each party. The largest part of the books were sorted, listed, packed and then later shipped to the UK where the collection got distributed between the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, the British Museum and the India Office. The latter two collections have now been put together in the British Library. These books and other Tibetan books at Cambridge University Library, Liverpool World Museum and Ancient India and Iran Trust form the scope of the Tibetan-Mongolian Rare Books and Manuscripts Project.

The Work Process

At the very outset of the project, a meeting of the project applicants, the three librarians at the British Library, the Bodleian and Cambridge University Library, Gene Smith, Zengkar Rinpoche and Karma Phuntsho was convened to discuss the best mode of conservation and reproduction. Microfilming and digital scanning/photography were considered as the only two options. Microfilms, the librarians agreed, have proven to be quite durable while digital images, notwithstanding their flexibility and reproducibility, are recent inventions whose overall lifespan is yet to be known. Questions have been raised about both the sustainability of digital copies as archival data with no clear-cut

⁷ Waddell (1988), *Lhasa and Its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903-1904*, New York: Dover Publications, pp. 22-30, 25, 32, 115-6, 226-9, p. 162

⁸ Waddell (1912), “Tibetan Manuscripts and Books, etc, Collected during the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa,” *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, July 1912, p. 5, pp. 6

mechanism for long-term storage and the sustainability of digital practice as a technological method in the fast-changing age of electronics. Yet, microfilm, it was feared, is fast becoming obsolete with the profusion of digital innovations. Not only is its use largely limited to libraries, there were serious concerns as to whether the technology and its supporting machinery will be sustained much longer. After much discussion, it was decided that archival surrogates of the texts would be made both in microfilm and digital format for the entire collection.

The first task for the project was to foliate the books using a soft pencil in order to prepare them for microfilming. This had to be done as the pages were loose leaves and the staff at the photography department did not read Tibetan and therefore were unable to follow the sequence of the pages. It was a tedious task to foliate hundreds of thick volumes and a Tibetan monk had to be hired for a short period to speed up the process. Despite our best efforts to quickly finish the onerous task of foliation, the process was often hampered for hours by the temptation of reading the book. At times, the unwanted attention of the curious co-readers at the library who have never seen the like of Tibetan tomes interrupted the work, and occasionally comments were received that one should not be scribbling on the manuscripts. An amusing report was made at the Bodleian to the then Tibetan librarian, Ralf Kramer by a 'responsible' reader that 'a Nepali-looking guy is writing all over the manuscripts'. Ralf explained that Karma Phuntsho had been paid to do so. The foliation of the books in Cambridge was completed after some six months and the process gave an initial hint of the range of texts that were in the collections and thus of the literary significance of the project.

While the photography began in earnest at Cambridge, Karma Phuntsho also started work on the detailed catalogue under the guidance of Burkhard Quessel of the British Library using a specific catalogue database. The catalogue data were created with the help of an XML editor (XMLmind) and customized templates. The latter were based on a data type definition which was originally developed by MASTER (Manuscript Access through Standards for Electronic Records) -- a European Union funded project to develop an on-line catalogue of medieval manuscripts in European libraries. With slight modifications the MASTER standard proved to be very suitable to create rich manuscript descriptions of our Tibetan material. The features provided by this data format include:

- “Philological” markup, i.e. to add regularised forms to spelling variants in titles or other text passages. This allows searching for both the original spelling and the standardised forms.
- Quotes from the text can be as long or short as seems appropriate. Inside the quotes markup of terms, dates, as well as personal and place names can be applied. This allows for searches like “show me all sponsors mentioned in colophons” but also for the automatic creation of specialised indices for a printed version of the catalogue. Keys can be added in order to link to external authority databases. Personal names have key attributes which link to the database of the Tibetan and Buddhist Resource Center (<http://tbrc.org>) A specific strength of the xml format is that names etc are marked up where they occur, e.g. in a colophon, which means that a search will take you directly to the source of the information.
- Whereas the xml data contain pure contents, stylesheets (xslt) can be applied to create a wide variety of output: from HTML pages for the web to PDF for a printed catalogue complete with automatically generated indices, cross references etc. A very special feature of the programme is also its capacity and flexibility to display the data, which are typed in roman characters using Extended Wylie Transliteration System, in both roman or in Tibetan *dbu can* script in the final output. This latter facility is particularly effective in making the catalogue useful for traditional Tibetan scholars and monks who have no exposure or only a poor knowledge of the Wylie transliteration scheme. The records were first produced as a simple collection of xml files on the cataloguer’s laptop. They were then loaded into a database server (eXist – an open source native xml database <http://exist-db.org>). The server is hosted at Department of Social Anthropology at Cambridge University, and presently provides a simple but expandable search interface. It represents the first phase of what is to become a comprehensive Union catalogue of Tibetan manuscripts and block prints in the UK.

A liturgy for the offering of Tshogs 'khor

BP, 3ff, 95 x 523 [leaves], 70 x 495 [written], 6 lines. Script: dbu can.

Medium: black. Foliation: [left pag tib]. Condition: good. Acquired:

Author:skal bzang rgya mtsho

Title[tib]: *dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi tshogs mchod dga' ston 'dzum zhal*

Title[margin][tib]: *'jigs tshogs*

Incipit: [1r1-1r2] rnam dag 'gyur ba med pa'i ye shes lnga / / chos kun mngon par rdzogs pa'i snying po las / / kun rdzob sgyu ma'i gar mkhan khro bo yi / / dbang po gshin rje gshed la gus pas 'dud / / zag med bde stong mchog gi gar mkhan ma / / snang ba cir yang 'char ba'i 'dod yon ros / / lha dang rnal 'byor tshim byed tshogs 'khor gyi / / cho ga dga' ston 'dzum zhal 'di na bzhad / /

Explicit: [2v5-3r1] de ltar dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed chen po'i tshogs mchod ji ltar bya ba'i tshul 'di ni / slob dpon **shAnti pas** mdzad pa'i 'jigs byed tshogs mchod du nang gi rnal 'byor gtso che ba las lag len ha cang mi gsang ba dang / **paN chen thams cad mkhyen pa** gong mas stsal ba'i 'jigs byed kyi tshogs mchod la gzhis byes te bstan pa'i gsal byed du gyur pa'i dam pa chen po lung rtogs yon tan du mas nye bar phyug pa'i **lcang skya mchog sprul rin po che** nas bskul ma mdzad pa ltar gshin rje gshed kyi rnal 'byor pa'i tha shal ba shAkya'i dge slong **blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtshos** sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni drung yig **tshang skyes blo ldan** no / /

Other copy:TBRC no W2573.

A very important feature of the project was its highly collaborative approach and inter-institutional networking. The project included the collections and the people at the British Library, the Bodleian, the Cambridge University Library, the Ancient India and Iran Trust and the Liverpool World Museum. Karma Phuntsho spent much of the second and third year travelling between these places foliating and cataloguing the books and ordering their microfilm and digital copies. In addition to making new friends of librarians and curators, this provided ample opportunities to understand the institutional structures of these repositories and their basic policies and practices concerning their collections. It also revealed to him different librarians' or curators' view of the book specific to its archival context and setting.

The co-operative efforts of the project stretched beyond just the British institutions. The project involved the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in the United States, the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences and the Paltseg Institute in Lhasa. Besides having Zenkar Rinpoche and Pasang Wangdu as visiting consultants, a team from Cambridge visited Tibet to exchange knowledge and skills with the bibliographers and archivists in Tibet. These exchanges enriched the understanding of the situation of the book in Tibet and various efforts made there by institutions and individuals to salvage the books and manuscripts which survived the Cultural Revolution. It gave us a better picture of the status of the book culture, literary activities and socio-cultural significance and implications they had for the people of Tibet and their Chinese leaders. The collaborative venture also interestingly revealed a new outlook on the books, coming especially from the Chinese administration. Particular mention may be made of the keen interest shown by a high level delegation of the Chinese and Tibetan bureaucrats to Cambridge to learn about the work of the project.⁹

The tangible outcome: a summary of the catalogued, microfilmed and digitised material

The Tibetan-Mongolian Rare Books and Manuscripts Project ended in 2007. The entire Tibetan holdings in the Cambridge University Library acquired before 1960, except for the *Lha sa bka' 'gyur* and *Snar thang Bstan 'gyur* for which microfilms or/and scans already exist elsewhere, has been microfilmed. The microfilms have then been scanned to create bitonal, greyscale digital images at a minimum of 300 dpi. The only canon microfilmed and scanned in Cambridge is the *Sde dge bka' 'gyur* in red ink. The bundles have never been opened since they were bound with yak hair at the time of their production over a hundred years ago. Although the faint red ink on thin cream paper also makes it very difficult to read or microfilm, the collection has been successfully microfilmed and the microfilms converted to digital scans. In order to preserve the integrity of the Cambridge collection in its digital form, the digital scans for the *Lha sa bka' 'gyur* and *Snar thang bstan 'gyur* have been obtained from Gene Smith. In addition, separate digital photographs have been taken of all

⁹ The delegation visited Cambridge November 2006 and devoted considerable time to a visit of the University Library looking at the Tibetan and Sanskrit holdings. The head of the delegation was Hu Chunhua, at that time secretary-general of the Communist Party of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

multicoloured illuminations and illustrations. Such photographs produce larger files but with more information. All Tibetan books in the Ancient India and Iran Trust in Cambridge and in Liverpool World Museum have also been microfilmed and digital scans made from the microfilms. A manuscript of *gter ma* medical texts together with other blockprints and illuminated manuscripts have been photographed. The entire collections of Tibetan books in the Cambridge University Library, the Ancient India and Iran Trust and the Liverpool World Museum are available now in microfilm and digital scans.

In the same manner, the Younghusband books in the Bodleian Library, except for *Snar thang bstan 'gyur*, have also been reproduced in microfilms, scans and colour photographs. The *Snar thang bka' 'gyur* was not filmed because microfilm copies of *Snar thang bka' 'gyur* are available in the British Library. Moreover, this Bodleian copy is incomplete and in poor condition and, hence, seen as unfit for filming. Microfilms have been created for all the Younghusband books at the British Library for which there were no earlier microfilms. These microfilms have been then scanned to create digital copies. A large bulk of the Younghusband collection in the British Library however has already been microfilmed. It was not within the remit of the project to create duplicates of these microfilms or to digitally scan them. Such attempt was not only unnecessary but would have proved unrealistic given the sheer bulk of the materials and the limited finances. These materials include the *Snar thang* blockprint *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur*, for which microfilms exist in the British Library and scans in Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, the Shel dkar manuscript *bka' 'gyur* which is now often known as the London *bka' 'gyur* and for which microfilms are available in the British Library and microfiche in several places in Britain, the manuscript copy of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, popularly known as the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu edition or the Waddell *Rgyud 'bum*, for which only microfilms are available in the British Library.

The complete reproduction of Cambridge and Liverpool Tibetan collections in microfilm and digital surrogates is supplemented by a detailed catalogue of the items, which is available both online and in print, in roman transliteration for the former and in *dbu can* script for the latter. It is hoped that the catalogue will be displayed in both roman and *dbu can* script in the near future as part of the Union Catalogue scheme. No attempt has been made to catalogue the canonical corpuses in detail by creating entries for every title contained in them as there already exists similar catalogues elsewhere and it was not feasible for the project due to the sheer number of the titles in them. A detailed catalogue

of the Younghusband materials in the Bodleian is also now available online but no printed version has been envisaged as the materials form only a small portion of the considerably larger collection of Tibetan books that has been built at the Bodleian. A catalogue at an extended hand list level has also been produced for the Younghusband books in the British Library by Burkhard Quessel.

The significance of the project

Foremost within the sense of accomplishment at the conclusion of project is a thorough knowledge of the significance of each holding. The project provided the opportunity to unravel assumptions about the Younghusband collection, which had been neglected and hidden for over a century, and to assess its significance as a whole. The collection may have seemed quite poor in its content at a first glance, but it gradually proved to be a substantial one, especially for an acquisition made in an era when knowledge of Tibetan literature was almost non-existent, in the process of a ravaging war, and with only lukewarm state or institutional support to collect books. Austine Waddell, who took the initiative to collect and undertook the cumbersome task of finding, sorting, unpacking, listing, packing and shipping the books, possessed an impressive understanding of Tibetan language and Buddhism for his day.

His acquisition, Waddell claimed, was 'by far the richest and the largest collection of Tibetan literature to reach Europe'.¹⁰ This was certainly true with Britain. Waddell sent five sets of the canonical collections alone including two copies of *Snar thang bka' 'gyur*, one set of *Snar thang bstan 'gyur*, the Shel dkar manuscript *bka' 'gyur* and the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* manuscript. The last two are the gems of Waddell's acquisition although neither of them are complete. The collection also contains a great number of early woodblock prints such as the *Mani bka' 'bum* from Snga ris (i.e. mNga' tis) Khyung rdzong dkar po which has a detailed colophon providing much information and insight into the historical and literary activities taking place at the time of its production. Both the Younghusband collection and other books acquired for Cambridge by such persons as Rev. C. Taylor and Prof. D. Wright contain great assortment of very interesting manuscripts and block prints, too numerous to be mentioned individually here. They are now available online or in print for public access. There are also a lot of different editions of the same titles such as the

¹⁰ Waddell, "Tibetan Manuscripts and Books, etc, collected during the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa", *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, July, 1912, p.1

Biography of Milarepa and the *Mani bka' 'bum* useful for textual and codicological studies. A substantial portion of the block prints were from Bkra shis lhun po, which was the predominant religious establishment in the Gtsang region through which the mission passed and in which Waddell collected most of his books. For us, it confirms the preponderance of Bkra shis lhun po's influence and books in the region and its thriving book production before and at the time of the mission.

While the collection at Cambridge and the Youngusband books have all the marks of largely open and random acquisition, the books at Liverpool World Museum reflect a specific interest by Charles Bell in historical and legal writings. Thus, the collection, albeit a very limited one, consists of many historical and biographical writings such as the biographies of the Dalai Lamas, the first historical accounts of Bhutan, the Blue Annals, the Clear Mirror, the Feast of the Youth, Bu ston's and Tāranātha's histories of Buddhism and very fine manuscripts of No min han's world geography and the history of Nyang region. Also in the collection are three legal books and literary writings.

The very small collection at the Ancient India and Iran Trust contains, beside four titles of commonly known texts, a special incomplete manuscript of a *gter ma* text entitled '*Chi med bdud rtsi'i bum pa*. The text, which claims its contents to have been delivered by Padsambhava to Ye shes mtsho rgyal, deals with a certain epidemic disease caused by the *gnyan* spirit called the Three-fold Dark Fit (*rgyug gyel nag po sum sgril*), which is to spread in the future, and prescribes various spiritual and medical preventions and cures for it. Whether this is an allusion to the historic plague that swept through Asia and Europe roughly around the time of the explosion in Tibet of such *gter ma* literature is a question that is tempting to ask. Or is the outbreak of the Dark Fit yet to occur and is this text, that we have discovered, the only priceless source of universal panacea and the last hope for mankind as the text would have us believe? That would be stretching one's imagination too far for an academic. For now, the team are satisfied that the exploration and documentation of the Tibetan books and manuscripts in the British repositories have led them to raise such historical questions and helped re[de]fine our understanding of the Tibetan literary world, or at least of the Tibetan holdings in the inner stacks of the British archives and libraries.

Thus, from the seeds sown in a coffee shop in New York, has developed an international and culturally diverse team sharing a range of skills and

techniques, both old and innovative. These techniques are being constantly refined, shared and thereby enhanced, by cross - fertilisation with other teams working in the field of document preservation. These people are doing things to books, but the books, in the process of being reviewed, reproduced and stored have had wide ranging effects on those involved, including scholars from many disciplines, but also, most importantly, on Tibetan communities both in Tibet and elsewhere. Revered texts can now be made available, in a variety of formats, to interested parties worldwide. They can also be returned, complete, to the religious communities in Tibet thereby enriching, through the agency of the book both as text and ritual object, the religious experience for monastic and lay society.

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