Knowing Zhang-zhung: The Very Idea[1]

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On those occasions when the subject of Zhang-zhung language has come up in conversation, as it tends to do from time to time in Tibet-related contexts, it almost invariably turns toward the question of whether or not Zhang-zhung is a dead language, or, as this may also be put, Does anybody *know* Zhang-zhung today? Of course in a sense, if anyone anywhere is making *any* use of a language, or attempts however feebly to learn and make use of it, it cannot be regarded as entirely dead. The question we will consider is the following related, yet quite different one: Is it possible for us today to know the Zhang-zhung language that existed in the centuries surrounding the seventh- or eighth-century fall of the western Tibetan kingdom of Zhang-zhung?[2] The attempt to answer this question will lead us to consider the early evidence of the language along with problems in manuscript transmission, lexical resources, Tibeto-Burman comparisons and take a look at the *Innermost Treasury of Existence* to illustrate, however briefly (and however focused on vocabulary, not morphology), the range of obstacles that rise up to confront us.[3] Despite the problems,

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[1] Although they are by no means the only ones who ought to be acknowledged, I would like to single out Christoph Cüppers (Lumbini), Nathan Hill (London), Tsering Thar (Beijing) and Christina Willis (Austin), with thanks for their generous help in obtaining information and research materials that have proven indispensable for this research. I should point out that this essay is about the language and does not concern itself with Zhang-zhung script. The speculations of Namkhai Norbu on Zhang-zhung language are particularly well known, but they have largely focused on the possibility that Tibetan script was formed on the basis of an older Zhang-zhung script (see most recently chapter four, entitled 'The Written Language of Ancient Zhang Zhung,' in Norbu 2009: 149-166), and have not dealt very much with the Zhang-zhung words themselves (one of the notable exceptions being his discussions about Zhang-zhung elements in the Tibetan Emperors' names; see especially Norbu 1995: 22-25). Although the presence or absence of Zhang-zhung script is of little or no relevance in this essay, those who are interested are referred to the most recent discussions of Zhang-zhung script, by Schaik (2011: 65-67) and Blezer (in this volume).

[2] The exact date of this event is not of much consequence for the present considerations. Bon histories place it during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-brtsan, which means in the mid-to-late eighth century, although the text we know as the *Old Tibetan Annals* indicates that Zhang-zhung had already been subjected to Tibetan rule in 644 or 645 CE; see Dotson 2009: 82. For extensive discussion of this topic I refer the interested reader to Blezer 2010.

[3] We may say without much fear of contradiction that the text of the *Srid-pa'i Mdzod-phug*, or *Innermost Treasury of Existence* (for simplicity's sake, it will be called the *Treasury* in this essay) was for the first time made available to the

I believe our knowledge quest may be undertaken with a certain degree of optimism. The question is only, How much?

A group of academic philologists at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is at work on a critical text edition of the Hebrew Bible, according to a recent newspaper story.[4] They have been at work on it for five decades, which is to say half a century. At their present rate of progress, the story continues, their task will be completed in *only* another two hundred years. I should not be understood to imply that my small and individual effort to make a text edition of the Bon scripture known as the *Innermost Treasury of Existence*, or *Srid-pa'i Mdzod-phugs* ought to be compared to theirs. For one thing they are working with a full canon of sacred literature made up of a number of quite different texts. I have been working with only one scripture among the hundreds that make up the Bon collections. I started working on it in the mid-1990's, and over a period of a few years slowly but surely completed most of the work on it. Having the complete text with all its variants, in the form of a searchable computer file, I found to be an indispensible tool when writing a lengthy article published in 2000.[5] The edition is not finished yet. As long as new manuscripts keep appearing, as we may hope they will, it is possible it will never be done.

It became clear early on that an ordinary word-based text edition would not make sense, that it would be necessary to make an edition of variant lines. This is because in some places the syllables seem to behave like amoebas, dividing and recombining in interesting ways. What this means very simply is that not only word boundaries, but even syllable boundaries are not always clear, thus rendering the usual methods of marking textual variants unviable. Making a line-based edition is less awkward and inefficient than it might seem, given that the metrical scheme of this otherwise not-so poetic work adheres to brief lines of seven syllables throughout.

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world at large only with its New Delhi publication of 1966. As for Zhang-zhung morphology, hardly anything will be said in this paper about Zhang-zhung *words*. I believe there are reasonable prospects of progress on that front, and some efforts were made in the introduction to Martin 2010.

[4] This Associated Press story appeared in many newspapers and online publications, for most part under the title "In Jerusalem, Scholars Trace Bible's Evolution," on August 12, 2011 or thereabout.

[5] Martin 2000. The computer file of the text edition was circulated in 2000, and in January 2010 was posted on the internet for free download in searchable file formats (see the end of this essay, following the bibliography, under "Online Resources"). I hope that other researchers will make good use of it.

There are basically two reasons the *Treasury*, as I will call it from now on, deserves special attention. First of all, it is the most important cosmological text of Bon, in this way very much corresponding to the Abhidharma texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism.[6] It is a key text for understanding the more scientific aspects of Bon religion in areas of physics and the metaphysics of time and space, mental states analyses and so forth. A huge exegetical literature on it exists, demonstrating its enormous interest for Bon's traditional scholarship. Secondly, if we may be allowed to neglect temporarily a few relatively short *dhāraṇī*s, it is the only available text of a significant size that is largely bilingual, supplying for most part both Zhang-zhung and Tibetan languages. This promises to make it a veritable Rosetta Stone for the recovery of an evidently lost Tibeto-Burman language. In any case, since the *Treasury* was excavated in the year 1017 CE, it should be possible to count it among the very few Tibeto-Burman languages to be recorded in writing in early times — perhaps not the oldest, but certainly among the oldest.[7]

I would like to say a few words on this topic of relative age since, anyway, this question of whether anyone is "knowing Zhangzhung" involves knowing what it is that we are talking about knowing, which would of necessity include those spatio-temporal coordinates that fall under the categories of provenance and dating. To make one thing perfectly clear at the beginning, I am of the belief — perhaps because my interested in Zhang-zhung is also bound up with my interest in the excavator of the *Treasury*, Gshen-chen Klu-dga'[8] — that the *Treasury* is quite old. For myself, Zhang-zhung above all means the Zhang-zhung of the *Treasury*, and I tend to believe that *its* Zhang-zhung language is the standard against which all other evidence needs to be measured in order to assess its Zhang-zhung-ity.

No doubt some readers will object and say, What about those medical texts from Dunhuang that were called Zhang-zhung by F.W. Thomas? Aren't they older than the

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[6] For an attempt at comparing the actual textual and intellectual contents of the *Treasury* with the two principal Abhidharma texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Martin 2000.

[7] A brief survey of the early written evidence for Tibeto-Burman was supplied in the introduction (at pp. 6-7) to Martin 2010, which might be regarded as complementary to the present essay, and to some degree overlaps with it, although the earlier work was somewhat more technical in tone.

[8] Gshen-chen Klu-dga' was the main subject of my doctoral research. See Martin 2001 for the published version of the 1991 dissertation.

Treasury? Shouldn't they be regarded as the gold standard for identifying *true* Zhang-zhung?

I would answer in the negative. The Dunhuang texts were found hidden in a walled chamber in the year 1900.[9] This chamber was probably walled up in more-or-less the same time (even perhaps a slightly later time) as Gshen-chen Klu-dga's 1017 CE discoveries in southern Tibet. The *Treasury*, according to the broader Bon traditions, has claims to being *much* older than the Dunhuang text, since they believe it was concealed in the time of the Tibetan Emperor Dri-gum-btsan-po, who may be difficult to date, but let us say, as some guess, around the third or fifth century of the Common Era. The *Treasury* was, according to its own colophon, set down from the words of Lord Shenrab at a place on the borders between Zhang-zhung and Tibet by two illustrious figures in Bon history, one of them being Stong-rgyung Mthu-chen.[10] The latter was, according to the best-known chronological work of Bon, born in a year corresponding to 976 BCE. Of course we may want to argue that the date is improbable or impossible. The same author places the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha only 16 years later, in 960, and the first Tibetan emperor's birth even earlier, in 1136 BCE.[11] I suppose the first date would need to be moved forward by about four centuries, and the second date by about a millennium. Most people would not find this early dating of Stong-rgyung Mthu-chen very convincing and it is probably impossible to verify by the usual methods. My point is just that Bon traditions tend to claim *very* early origins for the *Treasury*, and these claims may seem (to many of us at least) to be begging for criticism and

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[9] For the latest word on the subject of the manuscripts, their place of concealment and their dispersal, see especially chapter two of Schaik & Galambos (2012: 13-34).

[10] I hope to do a more careful study of the colophons and historical narratives relevant to them in another place. The two persons involved in the production of the text are from Zhang-zhung and Tibet, and the implication is clear that the one from Zhang-zhung was responsible for the Zhang-zhung, while the one from Tibet was responsible for the Tibetan. Most people probably expect to learn from the colophon that it was translated from one language into the other. However, there is no mention of an act of translation here, and as far as we know from what it says, both language versions could have been produced at the same time. That may seem a small point, but not so since it could help explain why of the versions in the two languages, it is the Zhang-zhung that is less complete. The scenario for the original inscription of the *Treasury* has been described in a footnote in Bellezza 1997: 287. See also the more recent comments in Bellezza 2008: 179, which suggest Stong-rgyung may be depicted in a rock art portrait that he dates to the "early historic period (?)."

[11] This chronological work, written by the Sman-ri Monastery's abbot Nyi-ma-bstan-'dzin in 1842, gives the date of death of Dri-gum-btsan-po as 680 BCE (Kvaerne 1971: 227 no. 47). The dates for the birth of Stong-rgyung-mthu-chen (226 no. 36), the birth of Śākyamuni (226 no. 38), and the first Tibetan emperor Gnya'-khri-btsad-po (225 no. 33) are also found there. There are alternative systems of Bon chronology, but I will not allow them to distract us for the time being.

reassessment. But still, we could make a strong case that since the *Treasury* was uncovered at about the same time the medical texts were concealed, the Bon text would have at least equal claims for antiquity, and this is the important point for the time being. We could even say that it has claims for greater antiquity, but then the medical texts make no claims of antiquity for themselves — in fact they hold hardly any claims on antiquity at all apart from their being found at Dunhuang. Their scribing has been dated — rather broadly, on paleographical grounds — to the late eighth or early ninth centuries.[12]

Of course, we could turn this around and make the following very different argument: It appears certain that we have the medical texts today in the form in which they existed a thousand years ago, while the *Treasury* has spent nearly one thousand years since its excavation circulating *above* ground, undergoing scribal recopying and consequent transformations. This is true, and it is something I will go on to emphasize. I also think we have to remember that this is a distinct issue from the question of which is older.

To my mind, the most important argument against the Dunhuang medical documents has nothing to do with their age relative to the *Treasury.* It is that they are not Zhang-zhung. Let me clarify this a little. Firstly, these texts never say they are in Zhang-zhung. To the contrary, they are silent about the identity of their own language. It was F.W. Thomas who decided to call them Zhang-zhung. Early on, some very prominent scholars objected to his applying the name *Zhang-zhung* to them. Let me quote for you David Snellgrove's objection published in his review of a book by Giuseppe Tucci in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies* issued in 1959:

> "I would only question whether written documents in the language of Zhang-zhung have in fact been found in Central Asia (p. 107). This was just an idea of F.W. Thomas, which to my knowledge has not yet been substantiated. He gave no valid reason for naming as Zhang-zhung the fragments of some early Tibetan dialect, which he edited in *JRAS*, 1933, 405-10. He has also named Zhang-zhung yet another MS (Stein MS fragment no. 43) of the India Office Library."[13]

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[12] See Takeuchi, Nagano & Ueda (2001: 47-48) for the discussion.

[13] Snellgrove 1959: 377.

What David Snellgrove said over fifty years ago has yet to be disproven, and still today the identity of the language of these texts has not been determined. So, to bring this particular argument to a conclusion, we have a long tradition of Bon testimony that the name Zhang-zhung belongs to the language that is found in some of their scriptures, and above all the *Treasury*. In the case of the Dunhuang texts we would have to rely on an idea of Thomas, who died in 1956, nine years before the main evidence for Zhang-zhung would become available.[14] I would hazard to guess that if he had seen that evidence, he would have changed his mind. I strongly recommend that we in any case stop labeling these medical texts "Zhang-zhung" and choose a name that accurately reflects what we do know about them. I think that means we would have to speak of them as texts written in an as-yet unidentified Tibeto-Burman language that still largely resist our best efforts at decipherment.[15]

In order to briefly encapsulate the history of early modern academic studies of Zhang-zhung, I like to use a mnemonic device I call "The Three H's and the One S." To put them in chronological order of their main contributions, they are Helmut Hoffmann (1940, 1967, 1972), Erik Haarh (1968), Rolf Stein (1971), and Siegbert Hummel (1974+).[16] First in the list, Hoffmann published already in 1940 his summary of knowledge about the languages of Bon, including Zhang-zhung, in which he also doubted Thomas's identification of the language of his Dunhuang texts as Zhang-zhung.[17] This German-language article, "On the Literature of the Bonpo," provides a nice summary of earlier bits of scholarship not only by Thomas, but also by Berthold Laufer, A.H. Francke and others who would need to be included in a more detailed historical survey.

In many ways, the mid-1960's were a golden age for Zhang-zhung language study in the world at large. In 1965, the Zhu glossary, which glosses Zhang-zhung

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[14] The dates of F.W. Thomas were 1867-1956 according to Bacot 1956. Much of Thomas' relevant research was published posthumously (Thomas 1967 & 2011), and I haven't been able to absorb very much of the rich content of the 2011 book, although it makes a great deal of use of vocabulary items belonging to west Himalayan languages. It was published without an index, which makes it more difficult to use.

[15] See Takeuchi, Nagano & Ueda (2001), Takeuchi (2002) and Takeuchi & Nishida (2009).

[16] Hummel published several works (1974+, 1986, 1995) culminating in his 2000 book on the subject. The book includes the same three articles translated into English in the order of their publication, with three added articles that are not so much devoted to the *language* of Zhang-zhung.

[17] Hoffmann 1940: 183.

words and phrases with Tibetan translations, was published in New Delhi. In a 1967 article Hoffmann declared his intention to come out with a dictionary of Zhang-zhung that would have been based primarily on the Zhu glossary. However, in 1968, Erik Haarh had published his alphabetized and transcribed version of Zhu's glossary with his own added English translations of the Tibetan.[18]

While Zhang-zhung dictionaries were being made, only a year after the appearance of the Zhu glossary, Venerable Tenzin Namdak published something I regard as even more important for the task of knowing Zhang-zhung. I mean the 1966 publication of the *Treasury* itself. Since by far the greater part of the Zhu glossary is drawn from the pages of the *Treasury*, the wisest course would seem to be to do as Zhu, working sometime between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, did and gain knowledge of the language directly from this single most important piece of bilingual literature. [19] If this sounds too easy, it may be so. In fact, the initial obstacles — that may well include obstacles due to one's own level of preparedness — as well as the more enduring problems with following this advice and going directly to the *Treasury* are manifold, so now a few words about some of those problems.

The first and main problem is one that I think is impossible to emphasize strongly enough. Those who do not know how to read Tibetan cursive (*dbu-med*) letters will never make much if any sense of the Zhang-zhung evidence, even when the text in hand is in block letters (*dbu-can*). A second related problem: if I may ask you to imagine yourself as one of the scribes who did not know the language you were copying, there would be no way you could possibly resolve ambiguities in your readings of the individual letters (as you would surely do if it were a familiar language). Scribes under these conditions are likely to write the letters they think they see, rather than whole words that they understand.

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[18] The Zhu glossary is of uncertain date, since the author is not very securely identified. It ought to date, in any case, to sometime in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. For a discussion, see Martin 2010: 10 no. 18. Siegbert Hummel also made note of the recent appearance of the Zhu glossary in a publication that appeared two years later (Hummel 1968).

[19] Hoffmann 1972, made use of not only the *Treasury*, but even more interestingly, a few texts from the *Byams-ma* cycle that still haven't received nearly the attention they deserve in terms of their potential value for Zhang-zhung studies. This same article goes on to correct some of the mistakes of Haarh 1968, but in the process adduces quite a bit of evidence fitting the Zhang-zhung vocabulary within a range of Tibeto-Burman cognates.

Here as an example is a single line from the *Treasury*, chapter 6, on the biological world (*bcud*), a line that we might translate, 'While abiding in the light of the form realm':

rko khu khir zhi nam lu ci /	gzugs khams 'od la gnas pa'i tshe /
[S: rko lung khir zhi nam lu ci /]	
[K: rko phung khir zhi nam lu ci /]	

This shows not only the ambiguities in reading letters that look similar in cursive (in this case the letters *kh*, *l* and *ph*),[20] it also demonstrates a point for which I could give thousands of examples, which is that the letter *nga* in syllable-final position may or may not belong there; it is very difficult to be sure. The reason for this is simply that *in cursive script* the syllable-ending punctuation called the *tsheg* looks so close to the letter *nga* that it has, over time, resulted in this confusion. Zhang-zhung syllables that end in a vowel would tend to pick up the final *-ng*. The Zhang-zhung word for 'water' occurs as both *ti* and *ting*, just to give a more frequently encountered example.[21]

Another example, based on a single occurrence of a word meaning 'anchor,' is found in the *Treasury*, in its chapter eight, the chapter on the minute-to-expanded [emotional] poisons.[22] Here the Zhang-zhung word *thung-yung* corresponds to Tibetan *gting-rdo.* The Tibetan word, literally 'depth stone,' usually means 'anchor,' or depending on context perhaps also a 'weighting stone' for a fishing net or a 'plumb line' used in building planning and construction. The Zhang-zhung occurs with textual variants *thur yung, thung ung & phur thur.*[23]

While the *proto*-Tibeto-Burman word for 'stone' has been reconstructed as *lung*, the Kinnauri word is *ung*.[24] Byangsi language has *wung* or *ung*, 'rock.' Darma *7ong*,

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[20] In this case we can make use of evidence internal to the *Treasury* itself to conclude that the spelling *rko phung* is the one most attested, and therefore is most likely to be the correct reading.

[21] I believe the *ti* spelling is more authentic, but I will not try to demonstrate it here. I will leave this task to the real comparative linguists of Tibeto-Burman. Matisoff 2001: 157 appears to be unaware of this problem with the final *-ng* in Zhang-zhung word for 'water,' even though it doesn't fit with any of his comparative evidence.

[22] In Tibetan, *phra-rgyas dug.* On this Abhidharma concept, see Martin 2000: 30-32, where the provisional translation 'infiltrators' is employed. The Sanskrit is *anuśaya*, the Zhang-zhung, *ti-pra-lgyam.*

[23] The word doesn't seem to be found at all with any kind of spelling in Blo-gros-rab-gsal 2010 and Pasar 2008.

[24] The references to the sources of these words are not supplied here, since they were given already in the relevant entries in Martin 2010: 108, 201.

'rock.' This same Darma word has been transcribed (using Devanagari script) as *oṃ* — in Chaudangsi language, the identical word *oṅ*. It may not be unnecessary to point out that this word is for practical purposes identical in all these languages.[25] While the ordinary Tibetan word for 'stone' is *rdo*, we should also point out that the special Tibetan word for 'boulder,' *pha-bong*, might need to be brought into the equations, also.[26]

One point in giving this example is to show that, given the Kinnauri, Darma and Byangsi words for 'rock,' one is inclined to go with the specific variant *ung* for the Zhang-zhung word rather than the spelling *yung*. In other cases as well, comparative material could help us make otherwise difficult decisions. While some may regard this as an unacceptable procedure, it seems that given our situation, we cannot afford to refuse help from any promising source. So long as we are honest about what we are doing, I see no problem in it.

From here on it is the Darma language that will be the main subject for our attention. In recent years I have been telling everyone I think might be interested why it is I think Darma is most significant for Zhang-zhung studies. At the same time, I ought to make clear that I do not claim to be the first to recognize their connectedness.[27] I think there is, or ought to be, general consensus that among modern languages Zhang-zhung bears the closest resemblance with a cluster of languages in or near to the valley of Kinnaur, on the one side, as well as a group of languages of Uttarakhand on the other.

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[25] In this case the words look different because of different transcription practices. The syllables *oṃ* and *oṅ* represent the same sounds, bearing in mind that, after all, these are *spoken* and not generally *written* languages. The languages of the Rŭng Mŭng have never possessed anything that could be called a standardized writing system, even if the matter has been discussed in recent decades.

[26] Although this may not be entirely accurate, I think the concepts in these languages closely correspond to specific and distinct meanings of the English words 'stone' (throwable object, using one hand only), 'rock' (larger, but still possible for a single person to lift or roll), and 'boulder' (large [semi-]detached version of the same, too large to be moved by a single person). The Tibetan word for 'rock' is *brag*, while the Zhang-zhung word is *zur*. Note the entry for 'stone' in Nishi & Nagano 2001: 23.

[27] As far as published sources are concerned, Hoffmann 1972 is most pertinent, but the then-unpublished work of F.W. Thomas (2011) that we mentioned in an early note, especially its Chapter Four, represents an impressive effort. I have made use of it neither here nor, for more obvious reasons, in Martin 2010. Thomas made many specific references to Darma vocabulary, or as he calls it, "Dārmiyā."

"The West Himalayish or Kanauri subgroup comprises a number of languages of northwestern India. Included (from west to east) are Chamba Lahuli, Patani or Manchati, Tinan or Ranglo, Bunan or Gahri, Kanauri or Kinnaurik, Kanshi, Rangkhas, Darmiya, and Chaudangsi/Byangsi… Zhangzhung is now generally agreed to fit here."[28]

Those last-mentioned languages, those of the more easterly side, include speakers of not only Darma, but the quite closely related dialects/languages known as Chaudangsi and Byangsi. The speakers of all three languages are known as the Rang People, or as they say: Rǔng Mǔng.[29]

One of the most common beliefs the Rǔng Mǔng have about their own origins is that they descend from Rajput princes who escaped to the mountains during the Mughal conquest of India. They know a great deal about Tibetan culture, share a certain number of cultural practices, such as the churning of butter tea, with Tibetans — in the pre-1950 era they engaged in a lot of trade with Tibet — but they themselves do not think they bear much if any relationship with them. Even while a certain number of Tibetan words have entered into their vocabulary, the greatest bulk of their vocabulary is now of Indo-European — mostly supplied *via* Hindi and Nepali — origin. At the same time, much of the core vocabulary is clearly identical or extremely close to Zhang-zhung. These most obviously shared words include words for body parts both internal and external, directions, colors, and numbers. They share words for boy, girl, and horse. In the following listing, a slightly revised version of a list already published,[30] I supply the Literary Tibetan words for the sake of contrast.

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[28] Bradley 2002: 80. Darmiya is just another derivative way of saying Darma, although I believe the form Darma has greater local authenticity. George van Driem (2003: 312-314) has criticized some of Bradley's language classifications used in his paper in a review, but as best I can tell these criticisms have no effect on this particular passage.

[29] One way of understanding the name might take it to mean 'People of the Valley,' with reference to a Tibetan word for 'valley, gorge,' which is *rong*. However, given that Byangsi *rung* means "a mound, a hillock, a peak" (Boharā 2008: 98), and given that Zhang-zhung *r[w]ang* means 'mountain,' I believe it is better interpreted to mean 'Mountain People.' On the other hand, *Rong*, as a local ethnonym used in Sikkim for Lepchas, probably really does mean 'Valley [Inhabitants].' In Tibet, *Rong-skad* or 'Valley Language' is used to designate the language spoken by farmers, differentiating it from the language of nomads called *'Brog-skad*.

[30] Martin 2010: 18-19. This list by no means exhausts the evidence. We might want to add the Zhang-zhung word *rkur* (also spelled *skur* and *kur*), which may well correspond in sound with Darma *gwar'*, as it certainly does in meaning: 'forest.' Zhang-zhung *rko-rwang*, defined by the Tibetan word *snod*, 'vessel,' may correspond to Darma *gur'ang*, 'body' (see Hoffmann 1972: 197). Zhang-zhung *khu-phang* means 'fog,' while Darma *khu* means 'smoke.' Zhang-zhung *lang-rko*, 'spleen,' corresponds to Darma (as well as Byangsi and Chaudangsi) *loṃ-khoṃ* (pronounced

Darma	English	Zhangzhung (Tibetan)

Relational:

ba	father	*ba* (Tib. *pha*).
shiri	boy	*hri-tsa* (Tib. *bu, phru gu*).
shya	king	*rkya* (Tib. *rje*, 'lord').
tsame	daughter, girl	*tsa-med* (Tib. *bu-mo*).

Internal bodily:

ching-cha	liver	*shin* (Tib. *mchin-pa*).
khagaco	stomach	*khog-tse* (Tib. *grod-pa*).[31]
hrup	rib	*hrib* (Tib. *rtsib*).

External bodily:

be	skin	*pad* (Tib. *lpags*).[32]
gunda-la	finger (middle)	*kan* (Tib. *kan-ma, gung-mo*?).
reju	nose	*ra-tse* (Tib. *rna-ba*), noting Chaudangsi *ratse* & Byangsi *hrace*, both meaning 'ear.'
tshum	hair	*con* or *tson* (Tib. *skra*).

Colors:

mang-nu	red	*mang* (Tib. *dmar-po*).[33]
shi-no	white	*shi-nom* (Tib. *dkar-po*).[34]

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long-khong), 'spleen.' These along with still more examples may be found in Martin 2010, with the exact sources given in the respective entries.

[31] The Zhang-zhung word does not seem to appear in the *Treasury*. Here we may also have to take the Tibetan word *khog-pa* into account, although it is more likely to be used to refer to the abdominal cavity or interiority in general, rather than the stomach specifically. Early Tibetan *kog-rtse* (with variant spellings), meaning 'trap,' may also be relevant.

[32] Consulting the STEDT (see Online Resources, below), I find that Bunan *bwat* and Kanaur *bod*, both with the meaning of 'skin,' may be even closer to the Zhang-zhung than is the Darma. It rather depends on how we believe the Zhang-zhung word *pad* was pronounced. (My questionable assumption is that every letter of a Zhang-zhung syllable was pronounced, and with invariable values very probably identical with the corresponding Tibetan root letters.)

[33] In Darma the *-nu* is an adjective-forming suffix (functioning rather like the Tibetan suffix *-po*), which may therefore be disregarded for the sake of comparison.

[34] In the Zhang-zhung, *shi* and *shim* are both possible spellings.

Numbers:

nisu	seven	*snis* (Tib. *bdun*).
pi	four	*bi* or *bing* (Tib. *bzhi*).
ra [or *se*]	hundred	*ra* (Tib. *brgya*).
tako-go	first	*ti-ga* (Tib. *dang-po*).

Other:

hrang	horse	*hrang* (Tib. *rta*).
hre	field	*rig* or *tig* (Tib. *zhing*).[35]
je, tsema	barley	*zag* or *zad* ['zay'?] (Tib. *nas*).[36]
phu	copper	*phu* (Tib. *zangs*).
re-nani	west	*ra* (Tib. *nub*).
sak	breath	*sag* or *seg* (Tib. *dbugs*).
ti	water	*ti* (Tib. *chu*), but note that *ti* for 'water' is rather commonly found in Tibeto-Burman languages.

In short, the shared vocabulary occurs exactly in those areas that are most often considered to be core vocabularies of any language, suggesting that the two languages are closely related and may share lines of descent. I will leave it to the real comparative linguists to hammer out the details, but I believe this much I can say with reasonable certainty.

The correspondences between modern Darma and the thousand-year-old or more language of the *Treasury* are quite impressive. But I think the same could be said about all the other 'western Himalayan' (or West Himalayish) branch languages of

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[35] It ought to be observed here that the comparative material makes us inclined to accept the reading of *rig* over *tig* (they are capable of being confused in cursive script). However, Blo-gros-rab-gsal (2010: 132) has a listing for *tig* meaning 'field' (*zhing-kha*), and no entry for *rig* with this meaning. This is an improvement over the Pasar (2008: 85), which has neither *rig* nor *tig* with the meaning of 'field.' See the entry for *rig* in Martin 2010: 207, noting that Bunan language has a word for 'field,' *rig*, that is identical to the Zhang-zhung. The passages containing this word in the *Treasury* may require more thought. It is possible, or even likely, that the word for 'field' is in fact represented in the Zhang-zhung passage by the bi-syllabic *rig-tig* (Haarh 1968: 32 reads it as *tig-tig*), rather than just *rig*. But here it is possible, too, that the *tig* in the second syllable is only an indefinite article, which would again mean that the Zhang-zhung word for 'field' is simply *rig*.

[36] Boharā 2008: 55 has Byangsi *jai*, pronounced 'dze' meaning 'barley.' *Zad*, rather than *zag*, is more likely to be the correct Zhang-zhung form, since it occurs in more contexts, including some where it may stand for more general classes of 'seed' and 'grain.'

Kinnaur and Kumaon.[37] The one thing that makes Darma special above and beyond the others is that it is a language that was known *by the same name it is known today* in the twelfth century to the writer of the *Preface* to the *Secret Mother Tantra* commentaries.[38] I had written about this particular passage on Zhang-zhung language in my master's thesis of 1986 (revised and published in 1994). It wasn't until 2005 while I was standing in the open stacks of the Kern Institute Library of Leiden University, leafing through a chapter in George van Driem's weighty two-volume book *Languages of the Himalayas*[39] that I came to know that my earlier footnote was not even on the right track. I now believe the name Dar-ma of the twelfth-century text and the name of the modern language Darma are to be identified with each other because, well, they are in some large and significant sense *the same*, and not just in name.

Here is the passage from the preface to the *Meditation Commentary* to the *Secret Bon Mother Tantras* in the 1994 published version of the master's thesis.

> *zhang zhung las kyang skad rigs 'thun pa du ma yod pa las / 'di ni zhang zhung smar gyis sgra ste / 'chun [~gcun, 'jun] che brjod bde sgra ngag tshig gsal ba'o // des na gzhan dar ma'i sgra dang / dar ba'i sgra dang / dar ma dir gyis sgra dang / gu ge'i sgra dang / phal po che'i glang gi sgra dang / ldem ma yin no //*

> "Within Zhangzhung are several similar types of languages (or dialects), and among them what we have here [in the title of the *Mother Tantra* text] is the speech of Zhangzhung Smar, a very refined language, easily pronounced, with clear grammar, vocabulary and expressions. Apart from Smar we have the speech of Dar-ma, the speech of Dar-ba, the speech of Dar-ma-dir, the speech of Gu-ge, and the speech of the Common Cattle and Ldem-ma" [explanation of the Zhangzhung title of the *Mother Tantra* text follows].[40]

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[37] This may now be tested with ease by consulting the STEDT database, listed among the Online Resources at the end of this essay.

[38] The confirmation of the existence of Darma language at such an early date would appear to challenge the idea that the ancestors of the Darma people emigrated to their present location in the time of the Mughal conquest, although I am not ready to commit myself to any scenario for the ethnogenesis of the Rŭng Mŭng. For the master's thesis mentioned presently, see Martin 1994, page 16 in particular (and see the passage quoted herein).

[39] Driem 2001: 934-957. Meanwhile, the Kern Institute Library has unfortunately been closed.

[40] Here I've translated freshly a passage also translated in Martin 1994: 15-16, although there is no very significant difference in meaning. For the footnote in which I made an attempt to explain Dar-ma along with the other language names used here, see p. 16, note 49.

I will not review every point, just to say that in the footnote that was attached to the word Dar-ma in this passage, I was only 'thinking aloud' musing over various possibilities. But now I think the identity between the twelfth-century text's Dar-ma and modern Darma language of Kumaon, given that both may be identified as Zhang-zhung, or as a *type* of Zhang-zhung, is by far the more likely explanation. And to further this argument, the Dar-ma of the twelfth-century Bon text is also known in a passage repeated twice (with variant spellings) in Dunhuang texts, where the expression is Zhang-zhung Dar-ma, meaning that a place named Dar-ma was considered to form a part of the territory of Zhang-zhung.[41] So I believe that having come full circle, I've arrived at a seemingly odd conclusion. We might summarize this conclusion in the following way: A large part of what is necessary to "know Zhang-zhung" of early western Tibet is developing the ability to read through the textual evidence that lies before our eyes. And one very important way of resolving the ambiguities presented by the variant readings is to see what the words are in closely related or even, I would now say, Zhang-zhung-ic languages nowadays mostly located in a belt stretching beneath the belly of the Himalayan range between Chamba and Kumaon. These words are relevant because in some sense and degree they *are* Zhang-zhung, whatever else they may be.

In view of the sad present-day state of the Zhang-zhung of the *Treasury*, I'd like to end on a note of optimism, as I promised earlier in this essay. One important development is that the Darma language will soon be better documented, largely through the efforts of a recent Ph.D. from Texas named Christina Willis. Her dissertation on Darma grammar has been made freely available over the internet, and she intends to write a dictionary of Darma in the future.[42] I think this will prove indispensible for Zhang-zhung studies.

There was yet another exciting development recently when I received a copy of the early eighteenth-century Rab-brtan woodblock print of the *Treasury* thanks to the efforts and generosity of Tsering Thar. I haven't yet finished incorporating all its variant readings into the text edition. It is certainly helpful to have this further textual

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[41] These two passages may be located with ease by searching at the website of OTDO (see Online Resources, below), specifically the texts with the numbers Pt 1290 ("Zhang-zhung Dar-ma") and Pt 1286 ("Zhang-zhung Dar-pa"). In both contexts, it's the site of the ruler Lig-snya-shur.

[42] Willis 2007.

evidence. Still, I am hoping for manuscripts older than the ones that have turned up so far, which are all eighteenth-century or later as best I can tell. Just one manuscript that would date a few centuries earlier could make all the difference for assisting our knowledge of Zhang-zhung. I think "Knowing Zhang-zhung" is something we can look forward to in the future, after a great deal more work has been done on the *Treasury*, its manuscripts, and its many commentaries; and we should not neglect to add, more work on the languages of western Tibetan and its surrounding areas in general, but especially in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. In short, although no one *really* knows it yet, there is hope, justifiable hope, that we will come to know Zhang-zhung better.

Appendix:

What are the reference works most useful for Zhang-zhung vocabulary research? If learning the meanings of Zhang-zhung words is your concern, I most recommend two recent dictionaries. One of them is my own (Martin 2010), which I immodestly regard as an essential tool if for no other reason than that it laboriously covers or indexes nearly all of the past glossaries and modern academic studies of Zhang-zhung vocabulary. Of course it will in any case be useful and sometimes necessary to have a way of consulting those earlier works directly. This dictionary was initially conceived as a tool for attempting to understand the *Treasury*.[43]

In some ways a bigger and better dictionary is the one by Dagkar Geshé Namgyal Nyima. It covers Zhang-zhung terms drawn from an amazingly large number of Bon texts. The bibliography lists about 460 texts that were used as his sources.

Dagkar Namgyal Nyima (2003) *Zhang-zhung — Tibetan — English Contextual Dictionary*. Bonn: Selbstverlag. 498 pages.

If neither of these answers your purpose, there are two more very useful works that have been made available in recent years. Both of these are lexicons that include both Zhang-zhung and Tibetan words. The first is a 2008 publication from the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka:

Pasar Tsultrim Tenzin, Changru Tritsuk Namdak Nyima & Gatsa Lodroe Rabsal, *A Lexicon of Zhangzhung and Bonpo Terms*, ed. by Yasuhiko Nagano and Samten G. Karmay, with English translations by Heather Stoddard, Senri Ethnological Reports no. 76. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.[44]

Most recently, there is the dictionary of Geshé Lodrö Rabsel (b. 1971), who was himself one of the authors of the earlier lexicon:

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[43] The earliest version of this digitized dictionary to be released to a larger public was that of April 1997, on the Ligmincha website, about 40 pages in length. It was since then taken down. I understand it may still be possible to locate it in some corner of the internet, although I would no longer recommend it.

[44] This book has been reviewed by Helmut Eimer (2010), with some interesting comments.

Dge-bshes Blo-gros-rab-gsal (2010) *Gna'-bo'i Zhang Bod Tshig-mdzod* ['Dictionary of Ancient Zhang-zhung and Tibetan'] Lanzhou: Kan-su'u Mi-rigs Dpe-skrun-khang.

And finally, I must include here two recent lexicons of the languages of the Rǔng Mǔng that I obtained with the kind help of Christoph Cüppers of the Lumbini International Research Institute in Nepal. These are found in the bibliography under Bangyāl 2007 and Boharā 2008.

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