

Articles

DOES TIBETAN HERMENEUTICS THROW ANY LIGHT ON SANDHĀBHĀṢA *

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The importance of hermeneutics as “a philosophical discipline of rational interpretation of a traditional canon of Sacred Scriptures” *within* Buddhism has been pointed out by Thurman.¹ Buddhist texts frequently contain detailed and sophisticated arguments about the interpretation of texts (even themselves). This hermeneutical self-consciousness applies also to the scriptures (both sūtras and tantras) traditionally thought of as uttered by the Buddha himself, regarded as a historical person. Accordingly, there are two different senses in which a Western work which is to count as a worthwhile interpretation of Buddhist texts may be concerned with hermeneutics. First, the Western interpreter must be aware of himself *as* an interpreter, as bringing hermeneutic techniques to bear on his materials; in this respect he will of course be in a position similar to that of any other scholar dealing with religious texts. But secondly, he has to take into account the fact that, on the whole, the texts themselves were written with a certain degree of hermeneutical self-consciousness, in the expectation that they would be subject to, or would even require, interpretation. As Thurman points out, this was the case with the earliest Buddhist texts, most of which have a fairly straightforward “literal” sense. It will be all the more true of later texts such as the tantras, of which many passages do not seem “literally” to mean very much at all, while others contain admonitions, such as that to kill one’s fellow-creatures, which seem to run counter to everything which Buddhism has otherwise (and on good grounds) been held to stand for. Now in India and Tibet the tantras were taken seriously as Buddhist religious documents, and so it is not surprising that a substantial corpus of interpretative literature grew up alongside them.

From this alone it will not follow that, when interpreting the tantras, we *must* follow Buddhist hermeneutical tradition. But it does seem plausible that an understanding of Buddhist hermeneutics will help us; and this point seems especially important in view of the fact that most Buddhist tantric texts now available are in Tibetan, either translated from the Sanskrit or written by natives. For it would be remarkable if, in so translating and

* The form of this paper has been greatly improved as a result of suggestions made by Dr. Nathan Katz. On specific points, my indebtedness to Mr. Alexis Sanderson and to Dr. Brian Loar have been recorded in the text and notes. Conversations with Mr. Görden Sundholm (on the theory of meaning) and Mr. Edward Henning (on some of the Tibetan materials used) have also influenced what is written here in various places. My grateful thanks are due to all these people.

writing, the Tibetans were not influenced by their own hermeneutical views. Accordingly, if we wish to use these Tibetan materials in our search for an understanding of the tantras as they were seen either in India or in Tibet, we should try to understand the hermeneutical views which the Tibetans displayed in them.

Both in India² and Tibet³, attempts were made to systematize the explanatory methods used in the voluminous commentatorial literature. The methods of explanation themselves are called *bshad-thabs*⁴ in Tibetan, and the *systematic* treatment of these methods was considerably developed in Tibet by such distinguished writers as Bsod-nams rtse-mo (1142-82), Buxton (1290-1364), Btsong-kha-pa (1357-1419), and Padma dkar-po (1527-92).

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The tantric form of Buddhism is often called Vajrayāna (in contrast to the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, often lumped together and called Lakṣaṇayāna). The role of *yāna* as a hermeneutic strategy has been discussed recently by Katz (see note 1), and need not concern us here. Now, among students of the Vajrayāna there is a long-standing controversy over a group of Sanskrit terms such as *sandhā-bhāṣa*, *sandhyā-bhāṣa*, *sandhyā-bhāṣita*, etc. Do these Sanskrit terms mean something like "twilight language"⁵⁻⁷ or "ambiguous use of language"⁸? Or something like "esoteric meaning"⁹ or "secret language"¹⁰? Or something like "intentional speech"^{11,12} or "intentional language"¹³?

Looking at a wide range of primary sources, I find this lexical view of the matter rather artificial. The words have been used in a variety of ways, in many different contexts, and at different historical periods. Each of these translations tells us something about the way the words were used, but none tells us more than a small part. So we need to disentangle the different strands of usage; and when we do this, we find that, in spite of the lexical similarity, our group of words is much more heterogeneous than has sometimes been supposed. Because of the complexity of the issues raised and the need to examine many sources, I will here consider one main problem: the term *sandhyā-bhāṣa* as used in the *Hevajra-tantra*.

As is well-known, this word is used there of a kind of "secret language" or "code," for instance: "passion" stands for "wine," "strength" stands for "meat." Is there any sense in which this use of language is *intentional*? Why call it *twilight language*? The central point of my paper is quite simple. It is this: in discussing these questions, we may wish to take into account what Indian and Tibetan commentaries on the *Hevajra-tantra* say about the "code." If we choose to do this, we are committed to using, or at least taking seriously, the principles of interpretation actually applied in those commentaries. And this is possible only if we know what those principles were. So we have two things to do. We have to identify the principles of interpretation actually used, and we have to understand those principles.

The suggestion that Tibetan texts on interpreting the tantras (*bshad-thabs*) may throw light onto the controversy over *sandhya-bhāṣa* and its relatives has been made, somewhat implicitly, by Wayman. In those texts, we find the technical term *dgongs-bshad* (explanation by *intention); and the Sanskrit for this is perhaps¹⁴ *sandhyā-bhāṣitaṃ*. This last word seems very similar to the word used in the Hevajra-tantra, viz. *sandhyā-bhāṣa*; and *this* word, one might think, is just the sort of thing that *bshad-thabs* is there to explain.

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In the phrase *bshad-thabs*, "*thabs*" means "method" or "technique" or "means." The primary sense of the word *bshad-pa* is certainly "to explain," and yet there are places where it is appropriate to translate it by "to say" or "to assert"; and it has even been translated by "to express."¹⁵ Let us see why, both in "*bshad-thabs*" and in *bshad-thabs*, there are reasons for preferring "to explain" to "to express." The primary use of "to express" is one where the (logical) subject is a sentence, and the object—what is expressed—is a thought, idea, question etc. A sentence (or its utterance) *expresses* a certain content. In the primary use of "to explain," the object is still some thought, etc., but the subject is now the person who explains. A sentence does not, as such, *explain* anything; and even a proposition explains another proposition only in a secondary and derived sense. Confusion in the use of these two words in translation seems to occur mainly when they appear in the passive voice, with the proposition (or whatever) as the grammatical subject, for a proposition may be both expressed and explained. But if the object-language sentence says that an *account* is given of some sentence, proposition etc., then we need the verb "to explain." This is the most common case in *bshad-thabs*; and "to express" is then inappropriate. In my view, Tibetan *bshad-thabs* texts signal this distinction clearly by using the verb *rjod-pa* (*vac-*, *abhidhā-*)¹⁶ where "to express" is the notion expressed.

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Bshad-thabs, then, is concerned with the explanation, and more generally with the interpretation, of Vajrayāna texts. Now hermeneutics is perhaps the interpretation of texts, and the subject-matter of the study of hermeneutics is perhaps the techniques which, in a particular religious tradition, may have been used for the interpretation of its texts. Commonsense suggests that in a culture very different from ours, such as that of Tibet, the hermeneutical methods may well have been very different from ours. On the other hand, if for a moment we abstract away from the particular texts under investigation and the particular tradition they represent, we are left with nothing more than the theory of interpretation in general. And this is, broadly speaking, just what philosophers¹⁷ of language call the theory of meaning.

This very general methodological consideration may be reinforced by another which is more specific. If we broadly review¹⁸ the explanatory methods (*bshad-thabs*) used in Tibet, we see that some of them are linguistic in a rather natural sense of that word, that is, they turn on analysis either of the sentences of the text itself or of the connection between those sentences and the purposes ascribed by the commentator to their utterance. And now if we examine the linguistic methods in detail¹⁹ we find that some of them do concern distinctions of just those sorts found in the West in the theory of meaning and the theory of speech-acts. The method of explanation by *intention (*dgongs-bshad*) turns out to concern just such distinctions. This considerably simplifies our task, for it means that we have, in the theory of meaning, a source of relevant and carefully worked out concepts expressed in the language of interpretation (here, English, of course).

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As we remarked before, in the *Hevajra-tantra*,, "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" is used in referring to a kind of code, for instance²⁰ "*madana*" (lit. passion) stands for "*madya*" (lit. wine). In order to avoid taking sides in the controversy, I shall not in this context translate "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*," but shall instead use "Hevajra code" to refer just to this particular code. (Similarly, "Guhyasamāja code."²¹ Thus no attempt is made here to preserve sense, but reference is carefully preserved. It is necessary to introduce some such device now, because as Wayman has shown, the *Pradīpoddīyotana* ms. uses, in some places, the almost identical form *sandhyā bhāṣa*. Now: is the use of this word in PPD the same as, or similar to, the use of the corresponding word in the *Hevajra-tantra*? Since this is one of the main questions to be investigated in this paper, we need some clear way of signalling the distinction.

In order to find out just what the Hevajra code was, one may use commentaries on the tantra in two (related) ways. First, much of the commentarial material explains the tantra directly, without using the technical language of *bshad-thabs*. Second, we can see what technical methods, what *bshad-thabs*, were used in those commentaries. At the risk of tedium I shall stress again that the code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*) is treated in both these cases as something to be *explained*, and not as something which explains something else. In contrast to all this, we have the explanatory or perhaps hermeneutical technique, certainly part of *bshad-thabs*, called "explanation by *intention" (*dgongs-bshad*, perhaps *sandhyā-bhāṣitam*). Among other things, we have to find out whether the hermeneutical technique (*sandhyā-bhāṣitam*) was in fact used to explain the code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*). Bearing this contrast in mind, we may set out the phases of this comparison, which will be the heart of the paper, under the following seven headings:

1. The Hevajra code: *sandhyā-bhāṣa* (*dgongs-skad*)
2. The hermeneutic technique: *dgongs-bshad* (*sandhyā-bhāṣitam*?)

3. The connection between *sandhyā-bhāṣa* and *sandhyā-bhāṣitaṃ*: evidence from Sanskrit sources
4. The connection between *dgongs-skad* and *dgongs-bshad*: evidence from Tibetan sources
5. Proceeding from evidence based on Tibetan sources to conclusions about the Sanskrit terms
6. Consequences for the controversy on *sandhyā-bhāṣa*
7. Some conclusions for interpretation technique in English.

It will be necessary to go into some of these points at rather tedious length, because of the many mistakes in the literature. These mistakes are largely mistakes of interpretation, and surprisingly many of them (see section 7) are assertions unsupported by argument or evidence. Accordingly, I shall *argue* for my conclusions. The general structure of this argument may perhaps be made clearer by the following summary of the topics to be discussed under these seven headings.

1. *The Hevajra code: (sandhyā-bhāṣa)* (sometimes: *dgongs-skad*)
 - 1.1: the codewords grouped
 - 1.2: the Tibetan terms for *sandhyā-bhāṣa* correlated with these groups
 - 1.3: the uses of the code in the vajra-song and elsewhere call for explanation of the secret signs (*chomā*, *brda*) found in HT I.vii
 - 1.4: Padma dkar-po on secret signs: their unconventionality; their secrecy and the reasons for it
 - 1.5: Kong-sprul on the individual code-words (*brda-skad-rnams*)
 - 1.6: Preliminary conclusions on *sandhyā-bhāṣa*: the exact sense in which the Tibetan commentaries say it is a code (independently of *bshad-thabs* arguments)
 2. *The hermeneutic technique: dgongs-bshad* (sometimes: *sandhyā-bhāṣita*)
 - 2.1: the phrase *dgongs-pas bshad-pa*: the importance of the instrumental suffix (cf. sec.3)
 - 2.2: *dgongs-bshad* in the *Pradīpoddyotana*: analysis of the definition there, and its deficiency
 - 2.3: Btsong-kha-pa on *dgongs-bshad*: this deficiency made up; an illustration
 - 2.4: various interpretations of “*dgongs-bshad*,” but their differences are not too important
 - 2.5: Kumāra’s comparisons of *dgongs-bshad* with other methods already makes it clear why *dgongs-bshad* is irrelevant to *dgongs-skad*.
 3. *Sandhyā-bhāṣa and sandhyā-bhāṣita: evidence from Sanskrit sources*
The question framed carefully. On the *bshad-thabs* (hermeneutic) side, the exact form of the Sanskrit is not too important, nor do the Tibetan case-endings tell us much about the Sanskrit (but see sec. 2.1). The Sanskrit sources tell us that there is opposition, but not between what. On the Hevajra side, the Sanskrit texts are more helpful, but they do not make up the deficiency.
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4. *dgongs-skad and dgongs-bshad: evidence from Tibetan sources*

Here the available definitions of “*dgongs-bshad*” are much fuller, and it is evident that the Hevajra code does not fall within it. The hermeneutic (*bshad-thabs*) techniques (of the code) which are used by Tibetan authors are summarized; these techniques are *incompatible* with the use of *dgongs-bshad*.

5. What conclusions about the Sanskrit terms might we hope to draw from the Tibetan texts? Obviously the main plank of such an argument, insofar as it rests on *bshad-thabs*, has already collapsed; but the other necessary steps are pretty doubtful too. Consider the following:

5(a) The Tibetan for *sandhyā-bhāṣa* is *dgongs-skad*.

5(b) The Tibetan for *sandhyā-bhāṣita* is *dgongs-bshad*.

5(c) In a certain Tibetan context, the terms *dgongs-skad* and *dgongs-bshad* are used in certain clearly related ways.

5(d) Therefore, in the corresponding Sanskrit context, the terms *sandhyā-bhāṣa* and *sandhyā-bhāṣita* are used in similarly related ways.

Not one of these four points 5(a) - 5(d) is even approximately right. (a) is just factually wrong; the Sanskrit term mentioned in (b) is poorly established, and it is not easy to see how to make up the deficiency; in the Hevajra context, (c) is hopeless (this was section 4); the Sanskrit context mentioned in (d) does not seem to exist.

6. *Results for the controversy on sandhyā-bhāṣa*

We are to consider the group of terms *sandhā-bhāṣa*, *sandhyā-bhāṣa* etc. First, the assumption that this group is homogeneous is untenable. The word *sandhyā-bhāṣita* (etc.) does not belong with the others. Looking more carefully, we obtain two groups of (perhaps) related terms, but no longer with any lexical similarity. It seems possible that at a period earlier than that of our *bshad-thabs* texts, these two groups of terms were not, in fact, carefully distinguished. But to make use of this is to *abandon* any attempt to make use of *bshad-thabs*. On the other hand, the Tibetan (later) texts indicate what *bshad-thabs* methods were used of the code. But this information is available from the commentaries without much specific use of *bshad-thabs*, which has now become irrelevant in a quite different way. If there is any general conclusion, it is that the use of these terms must be understood first in specific contexts. When this has been done, we may *perhaps* be able to find a uniform interpretation. But there can be no *a priori* ground for assuming this.

7. *Some conclusions for interpretation technique in English.*

We need a clear adequacy criterion for our interpretations. A criterion is suggested, taken from the theory of meaning. This criterion enables us to understand in a systematic way why some current interpretations of the technical terms of *bshad-thabs*, even of such basic terms as *sgra* (*śabda*) and *don* (*artha*), are so badly wrong.

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1. The HEVAJRA CODE: *SANDHYĀ-BHĀṢĀ* (sometimes: *dgongs-skad*)

1.1 The word *sandhyā-bhāṣa* occurs nine times in HT II.iii²²; there are no variations of spelling, other than those related to inflection.²³ Though the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* words have been listed many times²⁴ we must say something about their organization. Having regard to the Tibetan commentarial tradition, it is convenient to group them into three groups as follows:

A. vv.56a-60a. Here a typical example is the first *Pāda*:

madanaṃ madyaṃ balaṃ māṃsaṃ . . .
/ma da na chang ba la sha/

This means: “*madana*” (passion) stands for “*madya*”²⁵ (wine²⁶); “*bala*” (strength) stands for *māṃsa*” (flesh, meat).

B. v.60bcd. We have:

dvīndriyayogaṃ kundurum /
vajraṃ bolakaṃ khyātaṃ padma kakkolakaṃ mataṃ //
/dbang-po gnyis sbyor kun-du-ruṃ/
/rdo-rje bo-la zhes bshad-de//padma kakkola zhes-zer/

This means: “*kundurum*” stands for “the union of two organs;” “*bola*” stands for “*vajra*,” “*kakkola*” for “*padma*.” (Though of course “*vajra*” and “*padma*” are used as euphemisms, the commentators also frequently take them in other senses.)

C. vv.62-63, which concern the five Buddha-families. Typically:

Ḍombi vajrakulī khyātā Naṭī padmakulī tathā/
/g.yung-mo rdo-rje'i rigs-su bshad//gar-ma de-bzhin padma'i rigs/

This means: “*Ḍombi*” stands for the vajra-family, “*Naṭī*” stands for the padma-family.

All three groups of usages A - C are clearly called “*sandhyā-bhāṣa*”. Groups A and B are used as a code, e.g. in the vajra-song²⁷. In the case of group C this is not obvious in the tantra itself. But as we shall see, the Tibetan commentaries describe the usages of all three groups *explicitly* in ways which strongly invite translation by “code”. Further, groups B and C are described similarly in the quoted passages by the use of the word *khyātā* (*bshad*). A literal translation of this word as here used might be “explained as meaning,” where “as meaning” is carried by the case-endings. But these case-endings are different in groups B and C. This difference is reflected in my translation in the absence of quotation-marks around “vajra-family,” “padma-family,” as compared with their presence around “*vajra*,” “*padma*.” For “*Ḍombi*” does not stand for “*vajrakula*,” while “*bola*” does stand for “*vajra*;” this difference of function is fairly clear in the case-endings, both in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Strictly speaking, a *code* is the substitution of one *word* for another *word*, and is not a kind of naming. So strictly speaking, group C should not be described by the word “code.” As we will see, the Tibetan texts do

attempt to record this distinction by translating "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" in two different ways, but their usage is not uniform, and so with this *caveat* I hope the reader will permit me to continue the use of "code" for all three groups. Let us then see how the Tibetans did translate "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" here, and what they did with the results.

1.2 The Tibetan for "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*"

In HT II,iii we find the following words:

dgongs-pa'i skad: vv. 1, 53, 54, 55

gsang-ba'i skad: vv. 61, 64, 65, 66, colophon.

These phrases contain the morphological feature *-pa'i*, *-ba'i*, which is often described syntactically as a genitive case-ending, but which in cases like this has the function of indicating that the preceding words are attributive adjectives. Thus *gsang-ba'i skad* does mean, absolutely literally, "secret language;" and if *dgongs-pa* means "intention," *dgongs-pa'i skad* means, absolutely literally, "intentional language." (There can, of course, be no question of "*gsang-ba*" or "*dgongs-pa*" meaning "twilight.") Clearly, then, the Tibetans did not see the ending in *sandhyā* as instrumental in this context. So if we find instrumental endings used in translating *sandhyā-bhāṣita*, we may feel that this use is deliberate.

Our two Tibetan words are *directly* associated with the three groups A-C in the tantra thus:

A: three occurrences of "*dgongs-pa'i skad*," vv. 53, 54, 55

B: none

C: one occurrence of "*gsang-ba'i skad*," v. 61.

The remaining five occurrences ("*dgongs-pa'i skad*" once, v.1; "*gsang-ba'i skad*" four times, vv. 64, 65, 66 and colophon) seem most plausibly taken in connection with the passage as a whole, and not with any particular portion of it.

Clearly, there is here a case for saying that "*gsang-ba'i skad*" refers to these usages (the code) in general and possibly to group C, while "*dgongs-pa'i skad*" refers to group A and probably group B, and is a particular *kind* of *gsang-ba'i skad*. This possibility is not only interesting in itself (as undermining the 1-1 connection between "*sandhyā*" and "*dgongs-pa*"), but is also part (only) of the case for translating "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*," as used of the Hevajra code, by "secret language," as Snellgrove has done; we shall see that there are other grounds for taking this translation seriously.

This feature of the Tibetan translation of the *Hevajra-tantra* has been explained by commentators along (at least) two different lines. These different lines of explanation make use of the fact that, in the tantra, there is no occurrence of "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" *specifically* associated with group B.

Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal makes use of this to associate groups B and C together. His account emphasizes the purpose for which the locutions are used. He discusses group A under the heading²⁹ "language suitable for the crowd of yogins," and this phrase corresponds, in a very loose sense, to *dgongs-skad*. Groups B and C are taken together under the heading³⁰ "language

suitable for the maṇḍala-cakra," and this corresponds in the same loose sense to *gsang-skad*.

In contrast, Kong-sprul³¹ takes the distinction in a linguistic sense. He includes both groups A and B under *dgongs-skad*, which he describes as "normally using the name of the effect to stand for the cause."³² Only group C comes under *gsang-skad*. If we were going to rely solely on Kong-sprul's version, then, we would have a stronger case for abandoning the description of group C as "code." When we come to discuss Kong-sprul's use of the term "*brda-skad*" (section 1.5), we will see this view reinforced.

Kong-sprul has thus abandoned all attempt to bring the use of *sandhyā-bhāṣa* even in this one context under one sense. But Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal's version, by taking group B with group C, leaves the possibility still open to say that both *dgongs-skad* and *gsang-skad* are some kind of code. I am not asking the reader to make a choice between these two versions. They are exhibited in order to show that the writings of well-known Tibetan authors contain a variety of views which will have to be taken carefully into account if our interpretation of "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" is in the end going to be claimed to have the sanction of the Tibetan commentatorial tradition as a whole.

1.3 Uses of the Hevajra code

The main use of the code is in the vajra-song, which has been discussed by several Western authors^{33,34} and has received a great deal of attention in Tibet.³⁵ The code is also used in other passages of the tantra, such as that on feasting.³⁶

Now an outstanding feature of the vajra-song is that many of the unusual words found in it are not in the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* chapter. The first line of the song runs³⁷

Kollaire ṭḥia bolā Mummūṇire kakkolā

In their version of the tantra, the Tibetans wisely did not translate this; nor shall I. The two capitalized words are place-names of a sort, and do not appear in HT II.iii. But at least "Mummuni" appears in the list of "places" in HT I.vii. Though the vocabulary of the tantra does thus suggest some kind of connection between the three chapters I.vii, II.iii and II.iv, we have to appeal to the commentaries to find out what this connection was taken to be.

The whole commentatorial tradition makes it clear that the Hevajra code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*) is part of something more general, viz. "signs" (*chomā*, *brda*). These appear in HT I.vii; and the "places" of that chapter are examples of such "signs." What we now have to do, then, is to consider the relation between the "signs" of I.vii and the "code" of II.iii-iv.

1.4 Padma dkar-po on signs (*brda*)

Padma dkar-po (1527-92), possibly the greatest Tibetan scholar of the Vajrayāna and certainly a celebrated mystic, wrote a study on the *Hevajra-tantra*³⁸ which, without going into much detail, groups the various themes

of that rather disorderly work in a way which makes them much more coherent than do most commentaries. Like many of his other works, it is written in a cryptic, awkward style and assumes that the reader already has a good knowledge of the subject. So some of his sparse observations may usefully be filled in with the more detailed but less incisive comments of Kong-sprul.³⁹ With Padma dkar-po, we may wish to distinguish between the following matters:

- The notion of a sign (*brda*) in general
- The notion and purposes of signs (*brda*) in the *Hevajra-tantra*
- Particular types of sign (*brda*) used in the *Hevajra-tantra*:
 - Bodily signs (*lus-kyi brda*): HT I.vii
 - Speech-signs (*ngag-gi brda*): HT II.iii

Normally in Tibetan texts translated from the Sanskrit, *brda* translates *saṅketa*, and in Buddhist Sanskrit this word basically means *sign*. It is not really necessary to specify that these signs are conventional, for no sign can designate something unless its use is governed by rules.⁴⁰ But the rules may be well and generally known, or less well-known. In the *Hevajra-tantra* the signs are called *chomā*, and though this word is also translated by *brda*, Padma dkar-po⁴¹ makes it clear that not any sign counts, in this context, as *brda*:

The essence of *brda* is that communicative intention is indicated by speech or gesture not following normal conventions.

This definition is analyzed in note 41; my interpretation is founded on the points made there about Padma dkar-po's vocabulary. He continues with a sham-etymology (*nges-tshig, nirukta*) of *brda*:⁴²

(*Chomā*) is (here) said to be *brda*, because it is like the language of the barbarians (*kla-klo*), by means of which the yogins recognise each other but cannot be recognized by outsiders.

Thus *chomā* (signs) are related to the secrecy of the tradition; and Padma dkar-po even says that this is the point (*dgos-pa*) of *brda*. Such facts give support to the translation⁴³ of *brda* by "secret signs," and I shall so translate it. Later we will see that "*brda*" is used (via the phrase *brda-skad*, lit. sign-language) to explain the terms *dgongs-skad* and *gsang-skad*. This view about "*brda*" (by no means confined⁴⁴ to Padma dkar-po) lends further weight to the translation of "*gsang-skad*" by "secret language."

Secret signs (*chomā, brda*) are associated with vows and secrecy in two slightly different ways. First, they help the yogin to recognize those initiates with whom he may have congress, in a situation (a *gaṇa-cakra*) where uninitiated people may be present.⁴⁵ Second, the use of secret signs helps him preserve his vows and avoids the wrath of the guardian deities.⁴⁷ (Of course these points are related.)

The secret gestures (*lus-kyi brda*) are dealt with in detail in HT I.vii. However, only part of the secret speech-signs are dealt with there, namely

the names of the “places” (*pīthas* etc.). The general account of how the secret speech-signs are used is given with the explanation of the rest of the individual speech-signs, i.e. the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* words, in HT II.iii.⁴⁶ The effect of all this is that the code-words do fall under the explanations of II.iii, but that these explanations have to be seen in the light of the more general notion of secret sign (*chomā, brda*) in I.vii. And this is reflected in Kong-sprul’s terminology where, even in commenting on I.vii, he refers to the language of secret signs *in general* by using the word *dgongs-skad*.

Now that we are clear what *brda* means in the present context, we can go back to HT II.iii. Here, the commentaries explain the individual words in a way which really does make the idea of a code rather explicit. The word used by Kong-sprul (and others) is *brda-skad*; let us see *how* this word is used.

1.5 Kong-sprul on code-words (*brda-skad*)

In the following passage, Kong-sprul⁴⁹ sets out the connection between code (*dgongs-skad*) and code-words (*brda-skad*):⁵⁰

That which is called *dgongs-skad* is a passage accompanied by *intention (*dgongs-pa-dang-bcas-pa*). What kind of language (*skad*) is this? It is the code (*brda-skad*) of the unsurpassed vows made in the yogīnī-tantras. This (code) is not known to those who definitely belong to the types (*rīgs*) of the *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* and who have entered the Hīnayāna. Nor is it known to those who, having entered the Mahāyāna, (adopt) the other, incomplete divisions of the tantra, that is, the *kriyā-tantra* of those who desire to smile at each other, the *cārya-tantra* of those who desire to gaze at each other, the *yoga-tantra* of those who desire to embrace and kiss each other, and the *anut-tarayogatantra*⁵¹ of those who, as a result of their karman, desire to engage in the union of the male and female organs. Even these four classes of tantra do not say⁵² that the *dgongs-skad* is such-and-such. . . .

Shortly after, Kong-sprul begins his explanation of the details⁵³:

Having told his questioner Vajragarbha to listen with fixed and undistracted mind, the Buddha sets out to instruct him on the items of the code (*dgongs-skad-rnams*) in proper order. These symbol-items (*brda 'di-dag-rnams*) usually refer to the cause by the name of the effect⁵⁴. Thus “*madana*” means “intoxication” (*myos-byed*), and brings about drunkenness (*bzi-ba*), so it is used to refer to beer (*chang*), since when one drinks beer, one gets drunk.

There follow numerous explanations on this pattern. Now at least eleven of these explanations⁵⁵ all follow the following scheme:

/rus-pa'i rgyan mtshon-pa'i brda-skad ni/ ni-ram-shu'o/

This means: As for the *brda-skad* standing for “*rus-pa'i rgyan*” (bone-ornament), it is “*niramśu*.” It is hard to think of more convincing evidence

that at least⁵⁶ here in Kong-sprul, “*brda-skad*” is being used with the sense (and not merely the reference) of “code-word.”

1.6 Preliminary conclusions on the Hevajra code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*)

We have seen that there have been serious attempts to make a distinction in sense between “*dgongs-skad*” and “*gsang-skad*,” this is important, but let us ignore it for the moment. The whole tradition brings the code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*, i.e. both *dgongs-skad* and *gsang-skad*, if these are different), under secret signs (*chomā*, *brda*). Kong-sprul says that the individual terms, sometimes called e.g. *dgongs-skad-rnams*⁵⁷ or *gsang-skad-rnams*, are all “code-words”—*brda-skad-rnams*. And these conclusions may be reached without any reliance on *bshad-thabs* materials, from Tibetan writings on the *Hevajra-tantra*. Knowing independently, then, what the Hevajra-code is, and knowing also its basic purpose, viz. secrecy and the guarding of vows, we have a solid foundation for assessing and understanding what *bshad-thabs* tells us about this code.

This discussion has made use of only a very small part of the immense range of writings available on the *Hevajra-tantra*. It is of course perfectly possible that other sources will express other views. There is no harm in this; of course the results are relative to the sources on which they are based. The writers on whom I mainly rely for the *Hevajra-tantra*, viz. Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal, Padma dkar-po and Kong-sprul, also wrote on *bshad-thabs* and had roughly compatible views in that area too. Again, there will be other writers of whom this can be said. For instance, the Sa-skyapa school had a very vigorous tradition of commentary⁵⁸ on the *Hevajra-tantra*, and used a system of *bshad-thabs* called “six instructions”⁵⁹ different from the “seven ornaments”⁶⁰ system favored by our Bka’-brgyud-pa writers and also by the Dge-lugs-pas, such as Btsong-kha-pa. Now, the term *sandhyā-bjāṣitaṃ* belongs to the “seven ornaments” and not to the “six instructions.” This is why we concentrate on Hevajra works from those traditions which, in *bshad-thabs*, use the “seven ornaments.”

2. THE HERMENEUTIC TECHNIQUE: DGONGS-BSHAD

(*sandhyā-bhāṣita*?)

2.1 The phrase “*dgongs-pas bshad-pa*”

It is, I fear, a tedious feature of this paper that so many Sanskrit and Tibetan phrases appear without a straightforward English equivalent; but if the words *sandhi*, *sandhā*, *sandhyā*, *sandhyāya* etc. possessed such equivalents, the controversy over “*sandhyā-bhāṣa*” would probably never have arisen. “*Sandhi*” etc. derive from the root *saṃ* + *dhā-*, meaning to place together, to associate. When rendered in Tibetan by “*dgongs-pa*,” these words usually carry the notions of *referring to*, *meaning*, *intending*, and sometimes *intending deceptively*. The weight, as it were, of these factors varies greatly. Since the use of all these words tends to carry the notion of purposive action, *purely as a slogan* I have represented “*dgongs-pa*” by

“*intention.” Then the literal representation of the full phrase *dgongs-pas bshad-pa* is “explanation by *intention,” or “to explain by *intention.”⁶¹ This full phrase is used quite regularly in some important sources, including JVS and D. The ending on *dgongs-pa* is always *-pas* in this context (never *-pa'i*, *-nas*, etc.) The most natural way to take the ending *-pas* is as an instrumental case-ending, and this suggests that *intention (*dgongs-pa*) is the means or instrument by which the explanation is made. This suggestion is basically bright, and it is valuable, because, as we shall see in section 3, the corresponding situation in the Sanskrit is far less clear. In any case, as observed in section 1.2, we may be sure that the use of the ending *-pas* by the Tibetans was the result of deliberate choice; for in the case of the Hevajra code, *sandhyā-bhāṣa*, the typographically identical word *sandhyā* was translated by *dgongs-pa'i*.

2.2. *dgongs-bshad* in the *Pradīpoddyotana*

Steinkellner⁽²⁾ has rightly drawn the attention of scholars to the importance of the *Pradīpoddyotana* in the historical development of Vajrayāna hermeneutics (*bshad-thabs*). The verse in which *dgongs-bshad* is defined is quoted in Sanskrit by Wayman^(6,7) and runs thus⁶²:

viśiṣṭa-ruci-sattvānām dharmatattva-prakāśanam /
viruddha-ālāpa-yogena yat tat sandhyāya-bhāṣitam, //

Some of the details of the Sanskrit will be discussed in section 3. For the moment, it is enough to observe that the verse must mean something like this: “Whatever is to be explained *intentionally is spoken by means of contradictory (*viruddha*) discourse, revealing the suchness of things to beings desiring the best.” The Tibetan translation⁶³ is perfectly straightforward:

/mchog 'dod sems-can-rnams-kyi phyir//chos-kyi de-nyid rab-ston-pa/
./'gal-ba'i tshig-gi sbyor-ba yis//gsungs-pa gang yin dgongs-bshad-do/.

Bhāṣitam = *bshad* here means explained and not expressed, not only on the grounds given in the Introduction, but because nothing can be expressed by means of a connection (*yogena*, *sbyor-ba-yis*). *Viruddha* = *'gal-ba* means “opposed” or “opposing” or “contradicting,” etc.⁶⁴ This much is (or ought to be) obvious. The real problem is about the phrase *viruddha-ālāpa-yogena* = *'gal-ba'i tshig-gi sbyor-ba-yis*. The word *ālāpa* normally means “discourse” all by itself; what then is *ālāpa-yoga*? It seems plausible to suppose that the connection (*yoga*) is with the content of the discourse; the phrase then means *exactly* an opposition between discourse and content, such as we find in metaphors and deceptive utterances. This conclusion has been reached elsewhere (see note 3) by analysis of Tibetan *bshad-thabs* texts; but here of course it rests on the merely plausible supposition about the connection. The Tibetan version of the verse yields, by itself, nothing further, and I believe that this is the best that can be done

with the verse itself (without assistance, say, from commentaries). Let us now see how this common-sense interpretation of the opposition (*viruddha*) just offered squares up with the fuller and more detailed account of Btsong-kha-pa.

2.3 Btsong-kha-pa on *dgongs-bshad*

In his commentary (*rgya-cher bshad-pa*, lit. "extended explanation") on the *Jñānavajrasamuccaya*,⁶⁵ Btsong-kha-pa takes his definition of *dgongs-pas bshad-pa* from the *Pradīpoddhyotana* because JVS does not provide adequate definitions of the "six alternatives" (*mtha'-drug*⁶⁶), and he glosses the verse thus:⁶⁷

For the benefit of those sentient beings of sharp intellect who desire the highest attainment (*siddhi*), whatever is spoken in discourse whose conventions (*sgra*) oppose the intention (*don*) (of the utterance), is explained *intentionally.

Elsewhere⁶⁸ it has been shown in great detail that the pair *sgra* (*śabda*) and *don* (*artha*), which are contrasted throughout the topic of *bshad-thabs*, are related broadly in the following way:

sgra: words, phrases, sentences; linguistic convention, linguistic meaning

don: content of a saying, proposition asserted (etc.), purpose or intention of a speech-act; reference, referent

There is no need to repeat those arguments here. But we may note that if *sgra* meant simply "word(s)," the passage would immediately give nonsense, for words without linguistic meaning cannot oppose anything. Similarly if *don* meant "meaning," the passage would again give nonsense, because there would be nothing left in *sgra* which could be opposed by *don*. Because it is so important to avoid the temptation to translate *sgra/don* by word/meaning in this context, I will try to support the general arguments of ref.3 by giving some specific ones.

There can be no doubt that Btsong-kha-pa intended us to take the opposition (*gal-ba*) of convention (*sgra*) and intention (*don*) seriously, since he expressed himself in almost the same way in several other places.⁶⁹

In order to illustrate this theme, Btsong-kha-pa also gives a rather extended example. To follow it, we must note that the difference between *dgongs-bshad* and its opposite *dgongs-min* is never exemplified by two interpretations of one and the same passage (this is the province of *drang-don* and *nges-don*⁷⁰), but always by two different passages having roughly the same purpose (*don*).⁷¹ Btsong-kha-pa's example contrasts, then, two remarks. The first says⁷²

The purpose of purifying the three poisons (*snag-ba gsum*⁷³) is to show the radiant light (*od-gsal*).

This remark is to be taken straightforwardly, it is *dgongs-min*. By contrast, the remark⁷⁴

No desire, no lack of desire, and nothing is seen in between

is said to repudiate (*bkag-pa*⁷⁵) the previous remark, inasmuch as if there is neither desire nor non-desire etc., how can there be anything to purify? Taken literally, the two remarks are in *opposition*; but since the second (like the first) is explained as showing the radiant light, the two remarks have the same purpose (as ascribed by the commentator). In the first, the linguistic meaning is in harmony with that purpose, in the second, they are in opposition. (Obviously my two uses of “opposition” are essentially identical.)

From the point of view of religious experience, the Zen-like flavour of the remark “No desire, no non-desire, and nothing is seen in between” gives us a valuable clue. For the *purpose* of these strange utterances, in which the sense of the words contradicts the utterer’s intention, is said in JVS⁷⁶ and elsewhere to be to demonstrate the ultimate (*mthar-thug-pa*) which, being a wordless experience, cannot directly be conveyed by words.

Another famous example with this flavour is that of “killing living beings.”⁷⁷ The normal buddha-intention (of compassion towards all beings) is opposed to the literal sense of the words. That is *all* that is meant here by *dgongs-bshad*.

In both cases it is obvious that the difference is not merely one of *words* (as opposed to *meaning*). For if we abstract the meaning away from the words, we are left with nothing but strings of marks on paper (or sequences of sounds) which cannot by themselves account for any difference in modes of interpretation.

2.4 *dgongs-bshad*: other interpretations

It has seemed worthwhile quoting and explaining Btsong-kha-pa on *dgongs-bshad* because his work D has been used by various Western authors.⁷⁸ Bu-ston⁷⁹ and Padma dkar-po⁸⁰ both gloss the PPD verse by saying that the normal sense of the words opposes worldly attitudes. But Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal⁸¹ and Kong-sprul⁸² both agree broadly with Btsong-kha-pa. These differences are important, but they do not affect the present arguments. Elsewhere⁸³, Padma dkar-po has given a deeper analysis of *dgongs-bshad*, not based on PPD, which implies some criticism of the earlier writers. His arguments are partly derived from ideas in the non-tantric literature (e.g. MSL); but I cannot go into this here⁸⁴.

2.5 Kumāra’s comparison

In his PPD-based analysis in F, Padma dkar-po quotes a passage from the Indian author Kumāra, who compares *dgongs-bshad* with other explanatory methods from the “six alternatives”:

Whereas *dgongs-bshad* rests on differences of *sgra* (words and linguistic meaning), *drang-don* rests on differences of *don* (purposes

ascribed).

Whereas *dgongs-bshad* opposes, *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa* is a matter of unknown signs (*brda*).

Whereas *dgongs-bshad* opposes, *sgra ji-bzhin* does not oppose.

Already the second of these remarks tells us why *dgongs-bshad* is irrelevant to the Hevajra code. For we know that this is just a matter of signs (*brda*) and of *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*. The language of secret signs (*brda*), of code (*brda-skad*) does not oppose anything, either the purpose of utterance (Btsong-kha-pa, Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal, Kong-sprul), or wordly usage (Buston, Padma dkar-po). It is *unknown* in the world, it *conceals* its purpose; and these are just the province of *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*.

3. SANDHYĀ-BHĀṢA AND SANDHYĀ-BHĀṢITA: EVIDENCE FROM SANSKRIT SOURCES

What, then, if any, is the evidence from Sanskrit sources alone that the two terms *sandhyā-bhāṣa*, used of the Hevajra code, and *sandhyā-bhāṣita* (or its variants), used of a certain method of explaining texts, are similar or connected? Here it may be accepted that the first term is indeed the name of a kind of text or passage or use of words *which is to be explained*, while the second is the name of a *method of explaining* texts, etc. This important distinction is not what is now at issue. The question before us is this: are the passages, for instance in the *Hevajra-tantra*, called *sandhyā-bhāṣa*, in fact explained, say in the commentaries on that tantra, by means of the explanatory technique called *sandhyā-bhāṣita*? Let us see what the Sanskrit sources offer us.

On the *sandhyā-bhāṣita* (hermeneutical) side, the first thing to do is to establish precise forms of the Sanskrit under examination; for although it will turn out that this is not certain, unless we can limit the extent of the uncertainty there will be no basis for discussion. Here, Wayman seems to have done most of what is necessary in ref.6 (and it is a pity that this, the most useful part of that paper, is omitted in his otherwise very similar paper, ref.7). Wayman shows that in the Bihar ms. of PPD, the *normal* form is *sandhyā bhāṣa* (two words), but that in the critical verse defining the term (quoted above) we have *sandhyāya-bhāṣitam*. Given the predominance of forms in *sandhyā-*, it seems reasonable to modify this to *sandhyā-bhāṣitam*. (By contrast the inflection on the second part of the compound has a clear function and must be left). The normal Tibetan forms are *dgongs-pas bshad-pa* and *dgongs-bshad*. Let us review the arguments about the case-endings in these phrases. First, the Sanskrit. I shall let "*bhāṣa*" stand for the different forms of the second part of the word, since they will not need to be discussed. Since *sandhyā bhāṣa* is un-compounded while *sandhyāya-bhāṣitam* is a compound, we must consider both compound and un-compounded forms. The possibilities seem to be:

(a) *sandhi* in instr. + *bhāṣa* (two separate words)

(b) *sandhyā* in nom. + *bhāṣa* (compound)

- (c) *sandhyā* as indeclinable participle + *bhāṣa* (compound)
 (d) *sandhā* + *bhāṣa* (compound)

Here, (d) takes into account the possibility that *-dhy-* is a Nepalese orthographic variation for *-dh-*. Other combinations seem implausible because there is no way of accounting for the connection of the two words. Wayman's treatment in this area is somewhat inexplicit, but it seems he wants to assimilate these cases. His argument seems to be that the (a)-like form at *Pañcakrama* II.31 is glossed by Śrī-Lakṣmī with an instrumental (in Tibetan), and the standard Tibetan form in *bshad-thabs* also has the instrumental. So in the end it does not matter which of the forms (a) - (d) we adopt, as far as morphology is concerned (his adoption of "twilight language" presumably favours (b) on other grounds). So far so good. But the Tibetan instrumental⁸⁵ does not mean, as he takes it, *in the manner of* (which would normally be *tshul-gyis*, acting as a postposition with the genitive). It means *by means of*. Because of this, the Śrī-Lakṣmī example does not help Wayman. Her phrase (ref.6, p.790) "*dgongs-pas bshad-pas bstan-pa'i don-dam-pa'i byang-chub sems*" means "the *paramārtha-bodhicitta* which is taught by explanation by means of *sandhi* (etc.)." (I don't at all think the Sanskrit in the *Pañcakrama* does mean this, but that is another matter.) In the *Hevajra-tantra*, the situation with *sandhyā-bhāṣa* is also not favourable for Wayman's argument, for as we have already pointed out, that phrase is there always translated by a form attributive adjective + noun (or morphologically, by a genitive ending). In any case, in *Pañcakrama* II.31 we also have a genitive (*dgongs-pa'i byang-chub*).

These arguments revolving around the detailed forms of the Sanskrit words, then, tell against the conclusion which Wayman has tried to draw from them. But I too find I can get only rather wavering support from them. So I will not rely on these arguments at all, but will return to the form appearing in the critical verse, viz. *sandhyāya-bhāṣitam*, merely accepting that Wayman has made a good case for modifying it to *sandhyā-bhāṣitam*; and I shall use this form as a cipher for the Sanskrit term in the PPD which is now under examination, bearing in mind that the ms. contains also the form *sandhyā bhāṣā* (uncompounded). On *bhāṣa/bhāṣita* the Tibetan is no help, since *bshad-pa* can be noun, infinitive or past participle ("explanation," "to explain," "explained").

Let us then return to the PPD verse itself. All this seems to tell us (section 2.2) is that the words or the text or the discourse (*ālāpa*) is opposed (*viruddha*) to something. To what? The guess that we have opposition between discourse and purpose or content is only plausible, not more.

On the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* (code) side, the situation is not quite so frustrating. Common sense suggests the connection between HT I.vii (on *chomā*), II.iii (on *sandhyābhāṣa*) and II.iv (the *vajragīti*), for it is obvious that the vocabulary for the latter is drawn from the two former. And the purpose of secret signs (*chomā*) in general and of the Hevajra code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*) in particular is made clear enough by HT I.vii.1 and the

Yogaratnamālā on it: the initiates use a barbarous (*miliccha*) form of communication so that they will recognise each other and not be recognized by outsiders, etc. (YRM and also the Tibetan commentaries are surprisingly vague on whether the word “*chomā*” itself is barbarous, or its referent. However, Mr. Alexis Sanderson kindly tells me that “*chomā*” is Middle Indo-Aryan from Sanskrit “*chadman*,” “*disguise*.” If this is right, then surely it is the referent, the secret signs themselves, that are barbarous.) Now obviously there is an opposition here. It is the opposition between the natural sense of the words used (say) in the *vajragīti* and the non-natural sense in which they were intended to be understood by the yogins and yogīnis (a sense explained both in the tantra itself, say at II.iii.56 ff., and in YRM [on the *vajragīti*]). And this opposition is of course just the opposition which we find in *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*, and not that in *dgongs-bshad*.

But this last step cannot be taken on the basis of the Sanskrit texts alone. For in the last analysis, the deficiency already noted in the PPD definition of *dgongs-bshad* does not allow us to make the distinction which is here at issue, between an opposition within *ālāpa* (discourse) or an opposition between *ālāpa* and something else.

We could argue from the first line of the Sanskrit verse: *sandhyā-bhāṣa* is for those who desire the highest. But bereft of Btsong-kha-pa’s gloss, that these people are those of sharp intellect (*dbang-po rnon-po*), this does not tell us enough. For those the code can be learnt by anybody, however stupid, such persons are not necessarily devoid of ambition.

So we conclude that the Sanskrit texts presently available are not enough, at least on the *bshad-thabs* side. We must turn to Tibetan texts.

4. DGONGS-SKAD AND DGONGS-BSHAD: EVIDENCE FROM TIBETAN SOURCES

Enough has already been done to show that, when indigenous Tibetan sources are taken into account, the connection between the Hevajra code (*sandhyā-bhāṣa*) and the similarly-named hermeneutic technique is very problematic. Now I want to go further than this, and to show that the Tibetan texts decisively repudiate such a connection.

The question now before us is this: are the passages in the *Hevajra-tantra* called e.g. *dgongs-skad* in fact explained by means of the explanatory method called *dgongs-bshad*? The answer is unequivocal: in the texts which I have examined, the *dgongs-skad* passages are *never* explained by *dgongs-bshad*. They are explained by other methods; and the general structure of these explanatory methods (*bshad-thabs*) is such that, given the methods actually in use, the use of *dgongs-bshad* is impossible, it is incompatible with them.

First, the methods actually in use. The linguistic conventions are non-standard. Even the Sa-skyapa tradition, which does not use the category *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*, makes this very clear. And all the Bka’-brgyud authors whom I have quoted say quite explicitly, in reference to *dgongs-*

skad, *gsang-skad* and *brda-skad*, in the Hevajra context, that all of these are *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*⁸⁶ (*na-yathāruta*, not according to normal convention). And as regards the interpretation of passages using the code-words, all our authors agree⁸⁷ that these passages possess both *drang-don* and *nges-don* (*neyārtha* and *nītārtha*) interpretations. And as Padma dkar-po has particularly emphasized (though we know it also from Kumara and Btsong-kha-pa) these methods, the ones that are actually used, can be used only if there is at least rough compatibility between the normal use of the sentence and its use in the passage under examination, whereas *dgongs-bshad* can be used only if there is *incompatibility*. Here, we clearly have compatibility; for the *chomā* (*brda*, secret signs) are used with the basic intention of keeping the tradition secret; and this is precisely in accordance with the use of a code.

Indeed, once we thus *understand* the difference between the two terms, many arguments become available. Btsong-kha-pa says that *dgongs-bshad* is for the intelligent; but it is obvious that the code can be used by anybody who knows it, however stupid. JVS and PPD both say that *dgongs-bshad* is closely connected with *mthar-thug-don*; but it is obvious that the purposes (guarding vows etc.) of the code have nothing whatever to do with *mthar-thug-don* (*pace* Kāṇha on HT II.iii.1). One could go on indefinitely.

Let us abstract for a moment from the fact that we deal with lexically similar pairs of terms: *sandhyā-bhāṣa/bhāṣita*, *dgongs-skad/bshad*. We can easily do this, for instance, by thinking of those many passages in the Tibetan commentaries which use the terms *gsang-skad* and *brda-skad*. None of these Hevajra passages so much as mentions *dgongs-bshad*. Why, then, other than because of the lexical similarity, should it ever have occurred to anybody that the terms might be related?

5. PROCEEDING FROM EVIDENCE BASED ON TIBETAN SOURCES TO CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SANSKRIT TERMS

In the review we mentioned four stages of this argument. The main point, 5(c), is hopeless, and need not be discussed further. Let us consider the other points, however.

5(a) is simply wrong. *Sandhyā-bhāṣa*, as used in HT II.iii, corresponds to the two Tibetan words *dgongs-skad* and *gsang-skad*. It is a matter of controversy whether these two words are synonymous or not, even relative to this limited context. Further, if there is a single Tibetan term which is used of *sandhyā-bhāṣa* generally in HT II.iii, that term is *gsang-skad* and not *dgongs-skad*. What these two have in common is that they are certainly varieties of *brda-skad*; but this word cannot support any comparison with "*sandhyā-bhāṣita*."

5(b) is precarious. Here it is the Sanskrit word *sandhyā-bhāṣa* which is poorly established. It is hard to ignore the occurrence of a whole range of similar Sanskrit phrases in such sources as the *Laṅkāvatara*,⁸⁸ the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*⁸⁹ and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*.⁹⁰ If we are going to take the Tibetan tradition of *bshad-thabs* seriously, we cannot ignore

these non-tantric texts, since Padma dkar-po's account of *dgongs-bhsad*, the best one known to me, is largely based on them. But as we shall see, in these texts there is no straightforward one-to-one relationship between "*dgongs-bshad*" and "*sandhyā-bhāṣita*" (or any other pair of similar terms). In relation to these sources, the *Pradīpoddyotana* (with its few occurrences of our terms) does not carry very much weight. (This situation might change, if for instance Sanskrit mss. of subcommentaries on PPD or of the *Sandhi-vyākaraṇa* were discovered.)

Similarly, the Tibetan term *dgongs-bshad* suffers competition. For a number of important Tibetan authors abandoned it and used instead "*dgongs-pa-can*."⁹¹ This is not just a matter of synonymy; a change of meaning is involved.

The inference 5(d) is also precarious. Suppose the facts under 5(a)-(c) were all in favour of the suggested hypotheses, rather than against them. What conclusion would follow? One could conclude only that the Tibetans interpreted "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" and "*sandhyā-bhāṣita*" in certain closely related ways, the relation being that set out in the beginning of section 3. If this were true (which it is not), it would be interesting. But nothing would follow about how these words were understood or used in *India*.

Conclusions about their use in India might be drawn from *bstan-'gyur* texts on *bshad-thabs* and on the *Hevajra-tantra*. Nobody has ever claimed to be able to do this. My impression (no more!) is that *dgongs-bshad*, which is important in the Guhyasamāja system, was not used in India in the Hevajra system. If this is correct, the basis for the comparison, insofar as it related to India, is non-existent. On the other hand, we have already seen how the *Hevajra-tantra* itself claims that its *sandhyābhāṣa* cannot be understood by those who practice the father-tantras (such as the *Guhyasamāja*). Some weight must clearly be attached to this claim.

In my opinion, this line of argument can hope to succeed only if one abandons Guhyasamāja-based *bshad-thabs* altogether, and looks at the *bshad-thabs* actually used in Indian commentaries on the *Hevajra-tantra*. The notion of *dgongs-bshad*, and the whole programme discussed in this paper, then probably become irrelevant. Obviously, then, one will expect quite different results. I shall sketch one such proposal, which has some attractive features, in section 6.

6. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE CONTROVERSY ON SANDHĀ-BHĀṢA

Of the group of words *sandhā-bhāṣa* etc., some, such as *sandhyā-bhāṣa*, are undoubtedly used (e.g. in HT) to refer to kinds of language. Some, such as *sandhyā-bhāṣita* or *sandhyā-bhāṣa* (both as used in PPD), seem to be names of methods of explaining tantra passages.

However, the method sometimes called *sandhyā-bhāṣita* never seems to be used to explain the language-form called *sandhyā-bhāṣa*. So our group is heterogeneous, in a rather strong sense of that word. Such heterogeneity in our group may, indeed, extend further.

If further investigation is to be based on Tibetan texts on *bshad-thabs*,

then the heterogeneity just noted will force us to consider separately at least the following groups of terms:

- (a) *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*, *gsang-skad*, *dgongs-skad*, *brda-skad*, *brda* &c.
- (c) *dgongs-bshad*, *dgongs-pa-can*, *ldem-por dgongs-pa*, *ldem-po'i ngag*.⁹²

There will also be words whose uses straddle the two groups, principally the word *dgongs-pa* itself.

Correspondingly, there will be at least two separate groups of Sanskrit words:

- (a') *na-yathāruta*, *sandhyā-ṣa* (in HT), *sandhi-bhāṣa* (in connection with GST), *chomā*, possibly *saṅketa* (e.g. in HT)
- (b') *sandhyā-bhāṣita* and *sandhyā bhāṣa* (both in PPD); *abhisandhi* and *abhiprāya* (both as interpreted by Padma dkar-po)

Again, there will be terms which straddle the two groups, such as certain uses of *sandhi*, *sandhāya*. And obviously this whole line of discussion is directly relevant only to the uses of these words in the tantras. Obviously too the purely lexical motivation for the analysis has now disappeared. But I cannot imagine any worthwhile conception of philology in which this motivation is any but the most tentative possible suggestion of *meaning*. In our division, the motivation will be the difference between words used in accounts of the linguistic conventions governing some rather unusual ways of using language (a,a'), and words used in partly *intention-based accounts of some rather different ways in which language has, on certain occasions, been used (b,b').

Now this distinction has been taken seriously in *bshad-thabs*; for, as has been shown in so many different ways, it is the basic distinction between *sgra ji-bzhin ma yin-pa* and *dgongs-bshad*. But to say this is not to say that the distinction was made or recognized or presupposed, or that it would be useful to make it, in other contexts.

The present study is based mainly on Tibetan texts written with the distinctions of *bshad-thabs* in mind. No attempt has here been made to trace the historical evolution of these distinctions.⁹³ But it seems at least plausible that there was a period when the group of notions, just discussed as separated in Tibetan accounts of *bshad-thabs*, was not so separated, and when explanations of *sandhyā-bhāṣa* and other terms in the tantras did not separate these notions. Let me briefly sketch this line of treatment of the problem, so different from that followed elsewhere in this paper.

In the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* on XII.16-18⁹⁴ and Sthiramati⁹⁵ on it, we find a lengthy treatment of linguistic usages which are not literal. The key terms here are *abhisandhi* and *abhiprāya*, translated in the Tibetan text of the Sthiramati commentary by *dgongs-pa* and *ldem-po'i ngag* respectively. Sthiramati's numerous examples include many which in *bshad-thabs* would clearly fall under either *dgongs-bshad* or *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*. The latter

term is in fact used by Vasubandhu⁹⁶ and Sthiramati⁹⁷ of the type of *abhiprāya* called *arthāntarābhiprāya* (*don-gzhan-gyi ldem-po'i ngag*). The treatment is organized in a way which makes it clear that this case is not to be thought of as something *separate* from the cases of *abhisandhi* (*dgongs-pa*) which are discussed. On the other hand, the examples given make it clear that the notion of *arthāntarābhiprāya* covers such cases as the parable of the sands of the river Ganges, which in the *Laṅkāvatāra*⁹⁸ is also described as *ayathāruta* (*sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*, not according to the literal sense) and *upāmamātra* (merely by way of comparison). So here, the two notions, later separated under *dgongs-bshad* and *sgra ji-bzhin ma yin-pa*, seem not to be separated or distinguished systematically.

The only available Sanskrit commentary on the *Hevajra-tantra* is the *Yogaratanmālā*. On the very word *sandhyā-bhāṣa* at II.iii.53, this work comments:

sandhir abhiprāyaḥ : abhiprāya-pradhānam bhāṣaṇam :
nākṣara-pradhānam ity arthah :

Thus in "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*", Kāṇha is taking "*sandhyā*" as "*sandhi*", and of this latter word he says that it means "implicit", that it is speech which is mainly implicit, and not explicit.⁹⁹

The resemblance with the MSL vocabulary is obvious. (One might have expected *na-yathāruta* instead of *na-akṣara*; but whereas "*na-yathāruta*" plays only a small part in the MSL discussion, *akṣarārtha*¹⁰⁰ is important in YRM). The general tone of YRM is Yogācāra, and Kāṇha must have been thoroughly familiar with MSL and its literature. This line of discussion also provides us with an explanation of the remark at YRM on II.iii.1: *abhisambodhi-bhāṣāṇam samdhyābhāṣāṇam*.

Padma dkar-po's account¹⁰¹ of *dgongs-pa-can* depends heavily on MSL or some similar source. His vocabulary and examples are very similar to those of Sthiramati. However he appears to translate *abhisandhi* by "*ldem-por dgongs-pa*" (not simply "*dgongs-pa*"), and *abhiprāya* by "*dgongs-pa*" (and not "*ldem-po'i ngag*"). These points and their implications will be dealt with elsewhere (see note 84).

The fact that this line of treatment of the "problem" of *sandhyā-bhāṣa* is available *and has been used in Tibet* shows us again the need for caution in the use of Tibetan texts: specifically, for restriction of our claims to the context in which our analysis was made. And it is largely for this reason that I do not want to add my voice to those urging the adoption of one of the lexical views of "*sandhābhāṣa*" etc. mentioned in the Introduction.

7. SOME SUGGESTIONS ON INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUE IN ENGLISH

If (as the *O.E.D.* suggests) philology is the study of language in general, the methods of this paper have been in great part philological. At the same time, the conclusions are very different from those of the few other articles which have used *bshad-thabs*. It may be worth sketching the methodolog-

ical basis of these differences.

As far as the analysis of texts is concerned, we may distinguish (at least) three kinds of philological activity. There is the structural analysis of sentences in terms of morphological, grammatical and syntactic notions. Then there is lexicography, the attempt to give an account of the linguistic meanings of words and phrases. Third, there is the process of *interpretation*: the attempt to furnish an interpretative description of the text in the language used for analysis.

This paper has been concerned with what is, on the face of it, a controversy in lexicography: what does "*sandhyā-bhāṣa*" mean? My conclusions, though rejecting the particular terms in which the controversy has been carried on, are still largely lexicographic. But lexicography proceeds in relation to the other disciplines; for the evidence as to the linguistic meanings of words can be found only in their use in utterances, including texts. Now it seems fairly clear that evidence of how a word was in fact used in a particular utterance can be founded only on some kind of putative description of that utterance, together with some kind of evidence or argument that the utterer intended by means of his utterance to convey to his audience a content specified in the description. The vagueness of this is deliberate; what else *could* count as evidence on which to base lexicography?

To refine this account, we may ask: what is to count as an acceptable interpretative description, in English, of a passage in a foreign language? The notion of translation is not much help here; for that notion, if it is capable of clear definition at all, remains on the level which we need to get below, as it were. Recent work in the theory of meaning¹⁰²⁻⁴ has however provided us with a notion of interpretation which does not depend on the slippery notions of meaning, sense, reference or translation and can indeed be used to *explain* those notions, yet is also not too behaviouristic to be useful for philology. Let me quote McDowell:¹⁰⁵

For that systematic imposing of descriptions to be acceptable, it would have to be the case that speakers' performances of the (linguistic) actions thus ascribed to them were, for the most part, intelligible in the light of propositional attitudes: their possession of which, in turn, would have to be intelligible in the light of their behavior—including, of course, their linguistic behavior—and their environment.

Weighty philosophical questions turn on whether this test is *sufficient* for acceptability. But we need not beg those questions here: for here it will be enough to use the test in the very much weaker form of a *necessary* condition.

Though in this paper I have not, on the whole, expressed my own conclusions by offering translations, for the purpose of comparison with other writers it will be convenient to explain McDowell's test in the case where the description is a translation, or at least near enough to speak of a translation of individual words.

Among the propositional attitudes in question are the beliefs held by the native writer about what is done in his writing-act. Perhaps he will believe that his sentence forms part of an argument, or that he illustrates or applies it later in the passage, etc. Our translation of the sentence must relate to our translation of its context in such a way as to make these beliefs *intelligible*. And this will impose constraints on our translation of the individual words of that sentence. For example if we translate what is thought on some ground or other to be an argument, so that we are ascribing to the writer a belief that his writing expresses an argument, our choice of words must make it appear at least *intelligible* that the writer also believed that his argument led to the conclusion which (we claim) he believed that it did lead to. To say this is not, of course, to say that the argument, as translated, must actually lead to that conclusion. Similarly, if we translate what is thought to be intended by our writer as an *explanation* of some locution or argument, then it must appear intelligible, from our translation, that he so thought; this is not to say that the translation has to *constitute* such an explanation; and so forth.

Put in this modest form, the point is related to one familiar in philosophy. W. V. O. Quine has said¹⁰⁶

The maxim of translation underlying all this is that assertions startlingly false on the face of them are likely to turn on hidden differences of language. . . . The common sense behind the maxim is that one's interlocutor's silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation. . . .

However, McDowell's intelligibility condition, even in the weak form in which I am using it, provides a far clearer criterion than does Quine's remark.

It is just this test of intelligibility which so often fails in the quoted papers. Over and over again, the translations of the technical terms are inconsistent with the claims made (or implied), under translation, about the content of the passages in which those terms occur. The effect is that, under translation, the natives authors' claims become unintelligible in the sense just sketched. I shall list systematically some examples related to the "six alternatives" (*mtha'-drug*¹⁰⁷).

(a) The translation of *sgra* (*śabda*) by "word" or "words," and of *don* (*artha*) by "meaning".¹⁰⁸ In section 2.3 it was shown that each of these separately makes a number of observations by Btsong-kha-pa on *dgongs-bshad* unintelligible: it becomes *unintelligible* that he believed that his explanation should have the explanatory power he ascribed to it, or that his example should have the illustrative power he ascribed to it. Concerning *don*, the same applies to his description and illustration of the difference between *drang-don* (*neyārtha*) and *nges-don* (*nītartha*) in the same work.¹⁰⁹

(b) The translation of *viruddha* (*gal-ba*) by "ambiguous"¹¹⁰ makes Btsong-kha-pa's claim in the same *dgongs-bshad* context that there is

repudiation (*'geg-pa*) unintelligible (note 69); for ambiguous discourse cannot repudiate anything.

(c) Separately from point (a) on *don*, the translation of *nges-don* by "evident meaning"¹¹¹ and *drang-don* by "hinted meaning" make unintelligible Btsong-kha-pa's (perfect correct) claim that they are used in the tantras of one and the same passage.¹¹² They also make unintelligible his illustration mentioned under (a), in which *nges-don* is not in any way more "evident," nor *drang-don* more "hinted" (quite the opposite in fact). They also make unintelligible those many cases where *drang-don* is based on a completely explicit code, while precisely *nges-don* interpretations are hidden (*sbas-te*) and, as it were, hinted. Such cases are common in the *Hevajra-tantra* and have been mentioned earlier.¹¹³

Further, the term "explicit meaning" is incoherent. (What is said may be explicit, not what is meant.) So the claim¹¹⁴ that *nītārtha* means "explicit meaning" is unintelligible (regardless of context) unless it is seen as a claim that "*nītārtha*" is incoherent. But no such claim is there made or could be seriously entertained. In particular, there is no claim, nor could there be one, that "*nītārtha*" is a metaphor.

(d) The translation of *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa* (*na-yathāruta*) by "coined term"¹¹⁵ makes unintelligible our Tibetan authors' repeated claims that the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* of the *Hevajra-tantra* is *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*. For the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* words are mostly just ordinary words, in no way "coined".¹¹⁶ Further, *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin* can be (as there) combined either with *drang-don* or with *nges-don*, but it is unintelligible how the meaning of a coined term could be "hinted," and it is pointless to describe it as "evident" (let alone "explicit").

The phrase "non-literal word" is incoherent. The claim¹¹⁷ that *na-yathāruta* means "non-literal (words)" is therefore unintelligible unless seen as a claim that "*na-yathāruta*" is incoherent; but no such claim has ever been made or could be seriously entertained, especially as regards the Tibetan "*sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*;" for given what we already know about "*sgra*", this phrase translates literally as "not according to a convention" and this is almost exactly *right*. It is useless to claim that "non-literal word" is a metaphor. This metaphor conveys nothing to me. If it is claimed that it *ought* to convey something, one might well reply with the remark attributed to Wittgenstein "Was sich überhaupt erklären lässt, lässt sich klar erklären." Enough on this theme.

These points might serve as contrast with some of those made earlier about Snellgrove's work on the *Hevajra-tantra*. Admirably, Snellgrove there undertook a large and risky project. He, too, makes questionable observations¹¹⁸ on *drang-don* and *nges-don* (inter alia). But those observations *are* based on the texts, they do tell us *something* about their content. The translations just discussed under (a)-(d) are advanced without argument or other evidential backing and seem to me to have simply no foundation in the texts at all. If philology is a science, such translations add nothing to philology.

* * *

There can, of course, be no claim that my interpretations or the theoretical considerations behind them are final or immutable. On the contrary, my interpretations are sure in due course to be replaced by better ones, capable of accounting for the Sanskrit and Tibetan terms in a wider range of contexts. It is equally likely that the theoretical background will be replaced by something better. But the *facts* about the texts which are explained by and which become intelligible to English speakers under these interpretations, will remain, and will have to be explained and rendered intelligible by any improvement on them. And in this sense (only) any improvement will have to be based on what is done here. And so it is in all scientific work.

NOTES

1. R. A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 19 (1978); Nathan Katz, "Buddhist Hermeneutics and the Yāna Controversy," to appear in the *Proceedings* of the 1981 Csoma de Korös Symposium (see note 3). Most of the analysis in these otherwise very useful papers does not apply directly to the Vajrayāna.
 2. E. Steinkellner, "Remarks on Tantristic Hermeneutics," in the *Proceedings* of the 1976 Csoma de Korös Symposium (ed. Ligeti: Bibliotheca Orientalia Hungarica no. 23, Budapest 1978). This article is based mainly on Candrakīrti's *Pradīpodyotana* (PPD).
 3. Michael M. Broido, "bShad-thabs: Some Tibetan methods of explaining the tantras," to appear in the *Proceedings* of the 1981 Csoma de Korös Symposium (ed. Steinkellner; Vienna, forthcoming). This article reviews Tibetan Vajrayāna hermeneutics on the basis of a range of sources from the Sa-skya, Bka'-brgyud and Dge-lugs traditions.
 4. Occasionally one sees the full phrase "rgyud-kyi bshad-thabs," "methods of explaining the tantras." But even the short phrase *bshad-thabs* "methods of explanation" seems to be used only of the tantras.
 5. H. P. Śāstrī, quoted in refs. 6,7.
 6. Alex Wayman, "Concerning saṃdhā-bhāṣā / saṃdhi-bhāṣā / saṃdhyā bhāṣā," in *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou* (de Boccard, Paris 1968), pp. 789-96.
 7. Alex Wayman, "Twilight Language and a Tantric Song," in *The Buddhist Tantras* (Weiser, New York 1973), ch.11.
 8. Though this phrase is not offered in refs. 6-7 as a translation, it figures importantly in the discussion.
 9. F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (New Haven 1953).
 10. D. Snellgrove, HTT on HT II.iii, passim.
 11. V. S. Śāstrī, *Indian Historical Quarterly* (1927), p.287.
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12. P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras* (Calcutta 1939), p. 27.
 13. Steinkellner, see ref.2.
 14. See refs. 6,7; the force of "perhaps" will appear below, especially in sections 3 and 5.
 15. Ref.6, 791 (twice); ref. 7, 129 (twice). See also ref. 9.
 16. On the terms *rjod-byed/brjod-bya* and *'chad-byed/bshad-bya* as used in *bshad-thabs* texts, see sections 2-3 of ref. 3; cf. also note 68.
 17. I owe the germ of this observation to Dr. Brian Loar.
 18. See Table 1 of ref. 3.
 19. See sections 3-4 of ref. 3.
 20. HT II.iii.56.
 21. JVS 293a2. See also refs. 6,7.
 22. HT II.iii, vv. 1, 53, 54, 55, 61, 64, 65, 66, and colophon.
 23. Apart from *sandhyā/saṃdhyā*.
 24. Refs. 6, 7, 34; HT II.iii.56 f. and HTT on it. None of these lists makes it clear what *stands* for what (and note 49 of ref. 34 seems muddled on this).
 25. "Madhya" in HTT is a misprint.
 26. The Tib. *chang* means, in the first instance, "beer", but here the difference is unimportant.
 27. HT II.iv.6-8.
 28. (omitted).
 29. E, 204a2.
 30. Cf. E, 204a2, b1, b4.
 31. M, 229a6, 231a3.
 32. M, 229b3; the Tib. is given in note 54.
 33. HTT 101; ref, 7, 134.
 34. G. R. Elder, "Problems of language in Buddhist Tantra", *History of Religions* 15 231-50 (1976).
 35. E, 207b3; M, 234b6; the whole of L is devoted to this song.
 36. HT II.vii.5-13.
 37. HT II.iv.6a.
 38. See K.
 39. See J and M.
 40. "Conventional" has two senses which can easily become confused. I am using it just in the sense of "governed by rules" (see note 68). But it also has the metaphorical sense of "ordinary, everyday," which is often used to translate *vyavahāra* (*tha-snyad*). The connection of *saṅketa* with *vyavahāra* is well-known (cf. BHSD); but with *brda* it is the sense of "governed by rules" which is uppermost, for instance in the translation of *vyākaraṇa* by "*brda-sprod*." Snellgrove's translation of *brda* by "conventional sign" at HT II.iii.55 is confusing just because of this ambiguity of "convention." In spite of the Skt. *saṅketa* (instead of *chomā*) it would be better to translate with "secret sign" as in HT I.vii. If "conventional" means here "governed by rules," then the qualification is redundant, for any *brda* is conventional in this sense. The question is: are the conventions known to everybody? And here, of course, they are not. Hence, "secret."
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41. K, 63b5: (*brda'i ngo-bo*) *ni/ don sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa mtshon-pa'i lus sa'am ngag-gi rnam-par-'gyur-ro/*. This quotation of course refers to the distinction between signs of body and of speech made in HT I.vii (most commentaries take this either in the introduction to the chapter, or with v.1). Apart from that, it is useful to have a definition of *brda* related specifically to HT I.vii, because the Sanskrit is *chomā* and not *sāṅketa*. Now, *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa* (Skt. *na-yathāruta*) is a term of *bshad-thabs* (see ref.3). In the *bshad-thabs* sections of G and H, Padma dkar-po gives definitions of *brda* which, though free from the contextual constraints of the *Hevajra-tantra*, are remarkably similar to the one just quoted, especially in their relation to *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*. In G (11b6) he defines the latter and then says that it has two types, viz. *brda* and *yi-ge*. Of these, *brda* is defined thus: *brda zhes-bya-ba ni, dgongs-pa'i skad-nyid-kyis gsung-pa'i 'jig-rten dang bstan-bcos phal-la ma-grags-pa'o/*: "*brda* is something expressed precisely in *sandhyā-bhāṣa* not generally known in the world or in *śāstras*." The context of this remark (I cannot give full details here) helps us to see that in the remark quoted from K, *don* stands for *brjad-don*, the communicative intention of the passage; while the contrast between the two types of *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin* (and especially Padma dkar-po's examples) helps us to see that what is here intended is not the complete absence of convention (which falls under *yi-ge* in G and H), but unusual, non-standard conventions; of course a code falls just into this category. The parallel passage in H (16b4) used not only the phrase ("*dgongs-pa'i skad-kyis*") but also "*brda'i skad-kyis*." This reinforces (in respect of Padma dkar-po) the remarks on *brda-skad* in section 1.5. (Padma dkar-po is generally reliable in respect of the consistency of his terminology from one work to another.)

42. K, 63b5-6: (*brda'i nges-tshig*) *ni/ rnal-'byor-pa nang-gis ngo shes-shing, gzhan-gyis mi-go-ba kla-klo'i skad lta-bu yin-pa'i phyir, brda zhes brtags-so/*. The reference to the barbarians (*kla-klo*, *mleccha*) is found in YRM on HT I.vii.1 and in the *Vajragarbhaṭikā* (HTT 66n.1); also E, 99a6, J, 72a7. On the YRM on *chomā*, see also section 3.

43. HTT I.vii, *passim*.

44. The locus classicus is HT I.vii.1; but see E, 99ab; J, 72b1; M, 104b3.

45. (Omitted.)

46. J, 104b2: ... *tshogs-kyi 'khor-lor... dam-tshig mi-ldan-pa-rnams-kyi nang-du*. See refs. in n.44, also K, 63a5 and b5.

47. This theme falls under HT II.iii.65-7; J, 231b6.

48. The *pīthas* etc. are listed at HT I.vii.10, and their connection with the *bodhisattva-bhūmis* mentioned at vii.11; they are then explained in vv. 12-18. The *general* explanation of *brda* etc. is connected with I.vii.1 and II.iii.53-4, after which come the individual items of the *dgongs-skad* (vv.55-60, using the classification of Kong-sprul, who calls them *dgongs-skad-rnams*) and of the *gsang-skad* (vv.61-3). The purpose of all this is explained in connection with either I.vii.1 or II.iii.64-7. Most commentators follow this scheme.

49. M, 228b6.

50. In this passage, the many occurrences of “brda-skad” oscillate between reference to the code in general and to the code-words as a collection of individuals (elsewhere: *brda-skad-rnams*). It is sometimes rather arbitrary whether we translate by “code” or “code-word”. But later in the passage the reference is unambiguously to the words.

51. Cf. HT II.iii.54cd. The reference is to the father-section of the *anuttarayogatantras*. Kong-sprul here amplifies an idea which seems to lie behind Snellgrove’s translation of v.54 (HTT 99 and fn.3). But there is an important difference. According to Kong-sprul, the secret language is not a (or the) language of smile, gaze etc.; it is the language of *vows*, as the tantra itself indeed makes clear (*samaya-sāṅketa* = *dam-tshig brda*, 55b; *dam-tshig brda-skad*, M, 229b2). This does seem to be a difference between the Hevajra and Guhyasamāja codes.

52. Thus Kong-sprul. But HT II.iii.54cd, lit.: even by the four classes of tantras the *sandhyā-bhāṣa* is not expressed (*śabdita*; Tib. *bsgrags-pa*, made known).

53. M, 229b2.

54. M, 229b3: *dgongs-pa’i skad-rnams rim-par gsungs-te/ de’ang brda ’di-dag-rnams ni, phal-cher ’bras-bu’i ming rgyu-la btags-pa yin-no/*

55. M, 229b6-230a6. In the same passage “brda-skad” is used of the *kṣetras* and *upakṣetras* as standing for the *bodhisattva-bhūmis*, from *pramudita* to the *buddha-bhūmi*. This use of *brda-skad* confirms the connection between I.vii and II.iii in a rather specific way.

56. But also in Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal in this context: E, 204a5 (twice); and in Padma dkar-po (see note 41).

57. The terms *dgongs-skad*, *gsang-skad* and *brda-skad* are all feature-universals (they are kinds of language). But the plural forms in *-rnams* are all used of items of language, i.e. words, phrases etc.

58. See the bibliography (works S1-S5).

59. Ref. 3, section 3; A, 62b-67b; E, 12a7. They also used other systems of *bshad-thabs*: A, 68a-69b.

60. See refs. 2 and 3 and the sources there quoted (especially B, D, E, F, J).

61. This is not a commitment to the phrase “*intentional language” for *dgongs-skad* (even as a slogan); I shall continue to use “Hevajra code” or whatever.

62. The verse is printed as given by Wayman^(6,7) except that some compounds have been undone.

63. As given by Btsong-kha-pa: D, 208b3. Other authors quote slightly different forms.

64. This word is very well-known in *pramāṇa*, where it means “contrary.” One can also see directly by analysis of Btsong-kha-pa’s and other texts that it means “contrary” or “opposed” etc. and not “ambiguous.”

65. The *Jñāna-vajra-samuccaya* is an explanatory (*ākhyā-*) tantra of Guhya-samāja, as Steinkellner correctly remarks (ref. 2, p.448-9). Elder (ref. 34, p.236) confuses this work with D, which is Btsong-kha-pa’s

commentary on it.

66. The “six alternatives” (*mtha’-drug*) form an important part of the system of “seven ornaments” (*rgyan-bdun*). The word *mtha’* (Skt. *koṭi*) is here not very naturally translated by “alternative” but I have no better suggestion. The six are usually thought of as forming three pairs of opposites:

nītārtha (*nges-don*) and *neyārtha* (*drang-don*)
sandhyā and *na-sandhyā-bhāṣita* (*dgongs-bshad* and *-min*)
yathāruta and *na-yathāruta* (*sgra ji-bzhin* and *-min*).

Roughly speaking, *drang-don* and *nges-don* are different interpretations of a single passage, the *nges-don* one being the more advanced in the sense of the Buddhist path to liberation; *dgongs-bshad* and *dgongs-min* are explained in the text; and *sgra ji-bzhin* and *-min* are passages understood (or not) in accordance with normal linguistic conventions. All six, and the attempts to systematize them in terms of the *sgra/don* distinction (Bu-ston’s principle) are discussed at length in ref. 3. Some current translations of these six terms are reviewed below in section 7.

67. D, 208b3.

68. See ref. 3. The whole analytic thrust of that paper is in the direction of showing that, in *bshad-thabs*, the *sgra/don* distinction is the one described. But other authors have held similar views related to other contexts. For instance, in K. K. Rāja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, we find the remark (p.11): “In India all the schools of thought have assumed a direct relationship between *śabda* and *artha*, which correspond to the *signifiant* and *signifié* of de Saussure.” Though the latter distinction is not clear enough for my purposes, it is an excellent start. A related distinction is made by P. M. Williams in translating *rjod-byed* (*vācaka*) and *brjod-bya* (*vācya*) by “language” and “referents of language” (in “Some Aspects of Language and Construction in the Madhymaka”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8 [1980], 1-45; see the passages quoted in notes 1 and 138-141 of that paper). The exact distinction varies from context to context and, because of its great importance, needs careful investigation for each context. But underlying all distinctions of this kind is a general point which may be worth stating explicitly. No item can function as a sign or symbol of any kind in the complete absence of any rules as to its so functioning. For what cannot be interpreted cannot be a sign or symbol; and interpretation presupposes rules, without which it becomes arbitrary imputation on the part of the interpreter. Now if meaning is held to include the rules whereby a sign is to be interpreted, then there can be no talk of a sign being a separate *item* from its meaning; for, shorn of those rules, it no longer is a sign. For this reason, any analytical claim based on an opposition between words and meaning, in which meaning is held to include linguistic meaning, is unintelligible. For the linguistic meaning of a word is just the rules governing its use in the language of which it is a part; and shorn of those rules, it no longer is a part of that language. My account of the *sgra/don* distinction in *bshad-thabs*, Rāja’s identification of *śabda/artha* with *signifiant* and

signifié, and Williams' relation of *rjod-byed/brjod-bya* to language and its referents, all satisfy this fundamental principle. To oppose words and meaning is to flout the principle.

69. D, e.g. 209a5, 218a3, 209b6. The last of these is the example, where the opposition ('*gal-ba*) is strengthened by the use of the verb '*geg-pa* (perf. *bkag*): to deny, to repudiate. See notes 74-76.

70. D, 218a4 (quoted at ref. 3, note 83).

71. D, 218a2 (quoted at ref. 3, note 77).

72. D, 209b7 (quoted at ref. 3, note 81).

73. They are desire (*rāga*, '*dod-chags*); anger (*dveṣa*, *zhe-sdang*); and bewilderment (*moha*, *gti-mug*). The use of the Sanskrit terms together in this way probably antedates Buddhism.

74. D, *ibid*.

75. See note 69.

76. JVS, 292b8.

77. B, 24b5 (here taken from GST ch.5); E, 10a3 and J, 39a3 (in both cases taken from HT II.iii.29).

78. See refs. 2, 3, 6, 7, 34.

79. B, 24b6.

80. F, 36a1.

81. E, 10a2.

82. J, 39a3.

83. G, 9ab; H, 16ab.

84. But see section 6 below, and my "Abhiprāya and implication in Tibetan linguistics," to appear in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*.

85. Morphologically, we do have an instrumental case-ending. What other syntactic possibilities are there? *dgongs-pas* could be an adverb, after the model of *rang-gi ngo-bos grub-pa* (*svārūpasiddha*). This would give "explained *intentionally," which in the end amounts to much the same as "explained by *intention." (But it is not compatible with "in the manner of (*dgongs-pa*).") On the other hand, *-pas* cannot be temporal; for if it were, there would be no explanation of the fact that the basically temporal (and not instrumental) form *dgongs-nas*, which is very common elsewhere, never appears in *bshad-thabs*: we never find there *dgongs-nas bshad-pa*.

86. Padma dkar-po does this in many places (see quotations and references in note 41). See also E, 10b2; J, 39b1.

On the vajra-song, Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal makes a subtle distinction of level in his use of *sgra ji-bzhin*. The code itself is, of course, *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin* (E, 10b2). Once this unusual convention is fixed, however, its normal use (relative to this context) is a higher-order *sgra ji-bzhin*: E, 208b6: /'di-dag ni, *sgra ji-bzhin-pa'i yig-don-gi bshad-pa ste, drang-ba'i don-to/*. A variation on this unusual convention, interpreting the words in terms of the *sampanna-krama*, constitutes a (higher-order) *sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin-pa*; this interpretation is said to be due to Saroruha and others (E, 208b7: /'di-dag ni, *grub-chen Mtsho-skyes-sogs-kyis rgyas-par bshad-pa'i don'te/ sgra ji-bzhin-pa ma-yin-pa dang nges-don dang sbas-pa'i don-to/*.

However Kong-sprul (M, 234b7 ff.) abandons this complication and relies more on the *tshul-bzhi* (but see 236b4). A proper analysis of his treatment will have to take into account his use of the *Zab-mo nang-gi-don* (for this is the point of the words “*Thams-cad mkhyen-pa Rang’byung zhabs-kyis gnang-ba ltar-na*” at 235b5). It is not clear to me whether the *Zab-mo nang-gi-don* is authoritative for Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal (it is not so for Padma dkar-po).

87. On the *drang-don/nges-don* distinction for the code in general, see E, 204b7; M, 230b4, 231b4, 233a2. Two of our authors give *drang-don* and *nges-don* interpretations separately for the entire vajra-song: Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal, E 207b3 and 208a7 (see note 86), and Padma dkar-po, L 2a4 and 6b1. Kong-sprul gives two similarly related interpretations, but he classifies them as *spyi’i don* (M, 234b7) and *sbas-don* (based on Nāropa, M 236a6). Our authors’ hermeneutical strategies on this song deserve much more detailed attention. But for present purposes the vital fact is that none of them used *dgongs-bshad*.

88. In the *Laṅkāvatāra* a typical form is *sandhāya* = *dgongs-te*, sometimes *ldem-por dgongs-te*, often meaning “meaning” as a ground (*not* as a noun). The form *sandhāya* = *dgongs-te* in this use is also found in the *Uttaratantra* on I.29 and elsewhere (see also BHSD).

89. In the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, BHSD gives as typical forms *sandhā-bhāṣya* = *ldem-por dgongs-te bshad-pa*. See also the quotation in ref. 6

90. In MSL, the important forms are *abhisandhi* and *abhiprāya* (see sec. 6 for remarks on the corresponding Tibetan terms).

91. The term *dgongs-pa-can*, used by Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal, Padma dkar-po, Kong-sprul and others, attributes *intention to the passage (while *dgongs-bshad* is a mode of explanation in terms of *intention).

92. The Tibetan word *ldem-po* (non-literal; riddle; misleading, indirect) is very commonly used in sūtra contexts and those relating to the sūtras; I have never seen it in PPD-based *bshad-thabs* contexts.

93. But see Steinkellner (ref. 2).

94. MSL: Levi ed., 82-3; Bagchi ed., 80-1.

95. *Mdo-sde-rgyan-gyi ’grel-bshad*, Sde-dge, *sems-tsam: mi* and *tsi*. The author’s name is given as Blo-brtan (short form of Blo-gros brtan-pa). The Sanskrit title is given as *Sūtrālamkāra-vṛtti-bhāṣyam*. The *vṛtti* on which it comments is different from (and on the whole more detailed than) the existing Sanskrit *bhāṣya* often attributed to Vasubandhu. The section on MSL XII. 16-18 is at *mi*, 240b4-243a5 and does contain a translation of most of the existing Sanskrit *bhāṣya* on these verses (but not of the *ślokas*).

96. MSL, Bagchi ed. 80.28.

97. Ref. 95, *mi* 242b3.

98. For instance there is the passage about the interpretation of the parables on the sands of the river Ganges and on the uḍumbara flower (between Laṅk. VI.6 and 7); the words *a-yathāruta* and *upāmamātra* are each used twice in the opening sentence of this passage; in other respects too it is of

great hermeneutic interest.

99. Elder's note on this gloss (40 of ref. 34) seems to miss the point of the distinction between *abhiprāya* and *akṣarārtha*.

100. YRM, e.g. 110.13, 117.6 (both times *akṣarārtha-vyākhyā*). The word *akṣarārtja* (Tib. often *tshig-don*) is the name of one of the *tshul-bzhi* (see ref. 2, p.453). YRM seems to have had a simplified system of *bshad-thabs* consisting of the following pairs: *bāhya-/ādhyātmikārtha*; *nītārtha/neyārtha*; *akṣarārtha/samanyārtha*. The first two pairs are well known; the third is probably the first two of the *tshul-bzhi*. I do not know whether the internal evidence of YRM alone is enough to enable us to work out what Kāṇha himself understood by these terms. He seems not to use the other *tshul-bzhi* terms (ref. 2, *ibid.*) *garbhi* and *kolikam*.

101. See note 83.

102. Michael Dummett, "What is a theory of meaning?": I, in S. Guttenplan (ed.) *Mind and Language*, Oxford 1975; II, in Evans & McDowell (eds.), *Truth and Meaning*, Oxford 1976.

103. Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning", *Synthese* 17 304 (1967); "Radical Interpretation", *Dialectica* 27 313 (1973).

104. John McDowell, (a) "On the sense and reference of a proper name", *Mind* 86 159 (1977) (see also the editors' introduction to Evans and McDowell, ref. 102); (b) "Meaning, communication and knowledge", in van Straaten (ed.): *Philosophical Subjects* (Oxford 1980), p. 117 (also Strawson's reply, p. 282).

105. See ref. 104(a), p.160.

106. W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object*, M. I. T. 1960, p. 59.

107. See note 66. One might wish to restrict the context to the *mtha'-drug* as interpreted by Bu-ston (B) and Btsong-kha-pa (D), since these writers are quoted by the authors discussed here. But this restriction is pointless because many other Tibetan writers held roughly the same view on *mtha'-drug* (see E, F, J). On the other hand the restriction to *bshad-thabs* (or at least to tantric) contexts must not be lifted without due care. Especially the terms *drang-don* (*neyārtha*) and *nges-don* (*nītārtha*) are used quite differently in the sūtra literature (for the hermeneutics of this use, see Thurman, ref. 1).

108. Ref. 6, 792; ref. 7, 129, 133; ref. 2, 451-6 (about 20 times!); ref. 34, 236-8 (about 10 times).

109. The description is at D, 218a3, and the illustration at D, 210a3; both are quoted and discussed in ref. 3, section 4.3.2.

110. Ref. 6, 791-2; ref. 7, 129.

111. Ref. 2, 451; ref. 34, 236 ff. Quite apart from the unintelligibility (in the special sense!) of these translations, they have no explanatory power. For the *drang-don* explanations of the vajra-song are *literal*, while the *nges-don* explanations are *figurative* (see the references in note 87; Snellgrove's use of the underlined terms in connection with explanations of the vajra-song at HTT 101-2 is not offered as a translation of anything and seems perfectly reasonable; but he drifts into error on the same point at HTT 134).

112. D 218a3: *gzhung gcig-la 'jug-pas*.

113. see note 87.

114. Ref. 2, 451.

115. Ref. 6, 796; ref. 7, 134; ref. 2, 452; ref. 34, 236. The cautious phrasing ("When the term is coined . . . it is *na-yathāruta*") and the restriction to PPD in the first two of these references takes them somewhat away from the full force of my remarks. No such caution and no such restriction are found in the third and fourth references, however.

116. There is nothing *coined* about the words *madana*, *bala*. What is *na-yathāruta* (*sgra ji-bzhin ma-yin*) is not, of course, these words, but a certain feature of their *use* (viz. the *convention* that "*madana*" is to stand for "*madya*", "*bala*" for "*māṃsa*", etc.). And of course to say that this use or this convention is coined is unintelligible.

117. Ref. 2, 452.

118. HTT pp.17 and 134.

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Indian works

GST: *Guhyasamājantra*

HT: *Hevajra-tantra*, ed. Snellgrove

HTT: Translation of HT by Snellgrove

JVS: *Jñāna-vajra-samuccaya (-tantra)* = *Ye-shes rdo-rje kun-las btus-pa*, Peking Bka'gyur, Rgyud Ca 290-294b

MLS: *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alāṅkāra* of Maitreya/Asaṅga, and its *bhāṣya* attributed to Vasubandhu. For the *vṛtti-bhāṣya* attributed to Sthiramati, see note 95.

PPD. *Pradīpoddyotana* of Candrakīrti

YRM: *Yogaratanmālā* of Kāṇha, printed in HT

Tibetan collections

S: *Sa-skya bka'-'bum* (Japanese reprint)

PK: *Gsung-'bum* of Padma *dkar-po* (Darjeeling reprint)

Tibetan works on the Hevajra-tantra

S1: Mnga'-ris-pa Jo-stan Chos-kyi Tshul-khriṃs (fl. c 1100-30): *Brtag-gnyis-kyi tshig-'grel* (S 1 33-65)

S2: Kun-dga' Snying-po (1092-1158): *Kye'i rdo-rje'i rtsa-rgyud brtag-gnyis-kyi dka'-'grel* (S 1 78-123)

S3: Bsod-nams Rtse-mo (1142-82): *Kye'i rdo-rje'i brtag-gnyis-kyi rnam-par bshad-pa nyi-ma'i 'od-zer* (S 2 41-109)

S4: Gags-pa Rgyal-mtshan (1147-1216): *Brtag-pa gnyis-pa'i rnam-bshad ma-dag-pa-rnams 'joms-par byed-pa'i rnam-'grel-dang-ldan* (S 3 96-162)

S5: 'Phags-pa Blo-gros Rgyal-mtshan (1235-1280): *Dpal brtag-pa gnyis-pa'i 'grel-pa-dag chung dang spyi don gsal-ba* (S 6 69-83)

E: Sgam-po-pa Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal (1512-87): *Dpal kye'i rdo-rje'i rgyud-kyi rgyal-po'i 'grel-pa legs-bshad nyi-ma'i 'od-zer*

- K: Padma dkar-po (1527-92): *Dpal Kye'i rdo-rje'i spyi-don grub-pa'i yid-'phrog* (PK 15 365-549)
- L: Padma dkar-po: *Brtag-gnyis-nas gsungs-pa rdo-rje'i glu skad-gnyis shan-sbyar* (PK 22 1-19)
- J: Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1813-99): *Rgyud-kyi rgyal-po dpal brtag-pa gnyis-pa'i spyi-don legs-bshad gsang-ba bla-na-med-pa rdo-rje dra-ba'i rgyan* (Dpal-spungs print)
- M: Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas: *Dpal Dgyes-pa rdo-rje'i rgyud-kyi rgyal-po brtag-pa gnyis-pa'i tshig-don rnam-par 'grol-ba gzhom-med rdo-rje'i gsang-ba 'byed-pa* (Rum-btegs print)
- Tibetan works on explaining the tantras (bshad-thabs)*
- A: Bsod-nams rtse-mo (1142-82): *Rgyud-sde spyi'i rnam-bzhag* (the section on *rgyud bshad-thabs-kyi man-ngag*, 62b5-72b2) (S 2)
- B: Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub (1290-1364): *Dpal Gsang-ba 'dus-pa'i ṭikka sgron-ma rab-tu gsal-ba* (the section on *de rtogs-pa'i don-du rgyan bdun bshad-pa*, 20b2 ff.) (vol. *ta* of the Lha-sa ed.)
- D: Btsong-kha-pa (1357-1419): *Dpal Gsang-ba 'dus-pa'i bshad-rgyud Yeshe-s-rdo-rje kun-las btus-pa'i rgya-cher 'grel-pa, rgyud bshad-thabs-kyi man-ngag gsal-bar bstan-pa* (*Bka'-'bum* vol. *ta*, 171b5 ff.; Otani 160 150-73)
- E: Sgam-po-pa Bkra-shis pnam-rgyal (1512-87): see the section on *rgyan-bdun-gyi bshad-thabs*, 8b5 ff. of the work given in the Hevajra list.
- F: Padma dkar-po (1527-92): *Gsang-ba 'dus-pa'i rgyan zhes-bya-ba Mar-lugs thun-mong ma-yin-pa'i bshad-pa* (the section called *gang-gi 'chad-byed rgyan-bdun-gyis de ji-ltar brgyan-pa'i tshul*, 32b1 ff) (PK 16)
- G: Padma dkar-po, *Dbu-ma gzhung-lugs-gsum gsal-bar byed-pa nges-don grub-pa'i shing-rta* (the section called *de spyod-pa'i gnyen-por bskor-ba 'i tshul bstan-pa*, 7b3 ff.) (PK 9)
- H: Padma dkar-po, *Brjod-byed tshig-gi rgyud bshad-pa mkhas-pa'i kha-rgyan* (the section called *tshig tshogs-pa'i rgyud-pa 'jug-pa'i tshul*, 15b2 ff.) (PK 1)
- J: Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1813-99): see the section on *rgyud spyi'i 'chad-thabs mdor-smos*, 38a2 of work J in the Hevajra list.
