
Timotheus Adrianus Bodt
(Bern University, Switzerland / Tezpur University, India)

As a linguist, it is always encouraging and enriching to come across publications on poorly described languages by local authors. Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin’s “tshangs-lha-hi tshig-mdzod1 - Tshanglha dictionary” is a recent example of this. The hefty volume, 713 pages plus a CD-ROM, is a valuable source of information for the approximately 200,000 Tshangla speakers in India, Bhutan, Tibet and elsewhere, and a potentially welcome contribution to Tibetology and Tibeto-Burman linguistics.

The dictionary is a description of the Padma-bkod-pa Pemaköpa variety of Tshangla, spoken in the Yarlung Tsangpo gorge from Payi and Tongjuk in Kongpo on the Tibetan plateau till Tuting just across the border in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. This variety is very close to, and mutually intelligible with, standard Tshangla as spoken in eastern Bhutan, but not mutually intelligible with any other language, including the varieties of Tibetan. The Pemakö Tshangla speakers migrated to this area in successive waves from their Eastern Bhutanese homeland between the late 17th and mid 20th centuries.

On the back cover, the dictionary is called a ‘landmark contribution to the documentation of the Tibeto-Burman languages’. This is surely the case, as there have been no previously published dictionaries of Tshangla beyond a few incomplete wordlists in, among others, Hoffrenning (1959), Das Gupta (1968), Sün et al. (1980), Zhāng

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1 As per the journal’s guidelines, the review generally confirms to the Wylie method of transcription of ‘Ucen orthography from the dictionary. However, without dwelling further on the discussion about the exact phonetic value of the ‘Ucen letter ṛ, following the suggestion by van Driem (2001: xiii) it is here represented by an ḡ and not an apostrophe. The ḡ is also preferred over Hill’s 2005 choice to use the symbol ṳ, common in Chinese transcriptions of Tibetan, although in later publications, probably to conform to editorial guidelines, Hill also employs the orthographies ṛ and ḡ. All dictionary entries are represented by a Wylie transcription of the ‘Ucen Tshangla, the Roman Tshangla entry in cursive, and an English translation. Wherever possible, the English translation follows the Tibetan of the dictionary, however, sometimes improvisation based on either the sample sentence or the reviewer’s knowledge of Tshangla was necessary.

The lack of publications on Tshangla is strange for a language with a relatively large speaker population and geographical spread, and a dictionary has been long awaited and is certainly welcomed.

The dictionary comes with a CD-ROM that contains 13 mp3 sound files with a total length of 5 hours and 45 minutes. The sound files, read by the author himself, contain all the Tshangla lexical entries as well as the Tshangla example sentences. The quality of the recordings is good, and phonetic analysis remains a possibility. Without having been able to listen to the entire CD, it is observed that for example the entries on page three were omitted. Hopefully, this is not repeated throughout the recordings. The religiously educated background of the speaker is rather prominent, for example, in the usage of the rounded vowels [y] and [ø] in lexemes where the author’s choice of ‘Ucen orthography triggers their realisation according to Tibetan pronunciation rules. However, most Tshangla speakers would pronounce the unrounded vowels [i] and [e] instead. Nevertheless, both for people who want to learn Tshangla and for linguists who want to analyse the sound system of the language, the CD-ROM is a valuable addition and a good use of the opportunities that modern technology provides.

The introduction of the dictionary contains a short overview of Tshangla and its relation to other languages, particularly Tibetan (i-vii), an overview of the spelling of Tshangla vis-a-vis the spelling of Tibetan (vii-xi), a short overview of the morphophonemic rules followed and the function of several suffixes and particles (xi-xix) and a description of the way of arranging the entries and the need for adding Roman transcriptions in the dictionary (xix-xxii). After the foreword by the translator and the acknowledgements by the author follows an index with all the head glosses. This is followed by the main body of the dictionary, containing head glosses, sub-entries, and example sentences in Tshangla with Roman transcription and Tibetan translation and definition.

The decision to call the language Tshangs-lha Tshanglha seems to be based on the purported descent of the Tshangla people from Lha Tshangs-pa Lha Tshangpa, the Tibetan Buddhist name for the Hindu deity Brahma (Bodt 2012: 180-181 and the dictionary entry brah+mA+desh Brahmadesh under entry ḡbar-ma Barma ‘Myanmar’, p. 427). To date, however, I have not met any Tshangla speakers who pronounce their ethnicity, nor their language as [ʦʰaŋɬa], rather it is pronounced as [ʦʰaŋɬa ~ ʦaŋɬa], with most uneducated Tshangla speakers realising even Tibetan lha ‘deity’ as [lɑ], with a lateral approximant rather than a lateral fricative. As earlier reported (Bodt
tshangla [ʦʰaŋla] is still retained in archaic Bhutan Tshangla varieties as the word for ‘human being, man, person’ and thus reminds us of the reconstructed Proto-Lolo-Burmese root *ʦan₁ PERSON (Matisoff 2003: 265), cf. also Bisu [ʦʰaŋʦ] (Xu 2001: 240) and Anong [ʦʰaŋʦ] (Sun and Liu 2009: 363). Other possible etymologies and references to the name can be found in Bodt (2012: 178-181). The author mentions a possible relation between the ‘indigenous’ language of Tibet, whatever that may be, and Tshangla, and therefore the importance of Tshangla for the understanding of Tibetan (page vii). Interesting is also the affiliation suggested by the author between Tshangla and the language of Manipur (Meiteilon, page vi).

The role of the translator, Dylan Esler of the Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, appears to remain limited to concisely translating the last concluding paragraph of the 23 pages of the introduction, and writing a foreword to the dictionary. That is a pity, as it is the introduction that provides meaningful and important insights in the orthographic choices made by the author.

This review has been written keeping three main points in mind: the intended audience of the dictionary; the background of the author; and the aims of the author. After discussing these, I will focus on the benefits and drawbacks of the dictionary, shortly describe some of the main orthographic choices the author has made, and finally pose several recommendations how to improve the dictionary in what hopefully will be an expanded second edition.

**The intended audience**

The intended audience of the dictionary is a local, Pemakōpa and Tibetan audience, among whom the author wants to promote the language (p. iv-vii). The author’s targeted audience does not specifically include Tibeto-Burman linguists or Tibetologists, although the value of the dictionary for these people is tacitly presumed by the translator (p. iv-v).

**The author’s background**

The author has a background in both a religious education, including an MA in Tibetan Nyingma Philosophy, and an MA in Tibetan Language and Literature. This educational background pervades throughout the dictionary, with considerable focus on religious aspects of the lives of the Tshangla people and a clear focus on trying to harmonise Tshangla spelling with that of Tibetan.
The author’s aims

From the introduction, it becomes clear that the major aim of the author has been to record the Tshangla language in an effort to preserve and promote it among the Tshangla speakers and the wider Tibetan public (in diaspora). A second aim is to illustrate his idea that the Tshangla language and its pronunciation closely reflect the Tibetan language as it was spoken at the moment that Tibetan was committed to writing: Tshangla is considered to have preserved an archaic, conservative pronunciation whereas the pronunciation of Tibetan has undergone much more phonological change. Following these two major aims, we would expect a dictionary that is complete as to content, with as many Tshangla terms recorded as possible; exhaustive in explanatory detail, with detailed and clear but nonetheless to the point descriptions; convenient and easy in its usage; and providing etymologies for both loans from, and cognates with, (written) Tibetan. The first two points will be discussed separately, the latter two points will be discussed in relation to the orthographical choices of the author.

The coverage of the dictionary

As any language, Tshangla is very rich in expressing the world of the people that speak it, and a dictionary of Tshangla would have to reflect that richness. That much said, we cannot expect a 200,000+ main entry dictionary like the Oxford English dictionaries’ second edition. With around 2,150 main entries, this Tshangla dictionary is of a medium-sized coverage, for comparison, a standard Bhutan Tshangla dictionary that has been in preparation by the reviewer contains over 3,150 main entries.

One of the major strengths of the dictionary is the wealth of sociolinguistic, ethnobotanic, socioeconomic, cultural and historical information, applicable to the Pemakö area itself and the Tshangla homeland in eastern Bhutan. Much of this information and knowledge is rapidly disappearing and the descriptions in this dictionary are a timely attempt to preserve what is still known. There are entries on both wild and cultivated useable plants and both wild and domesticated animal species. The single entry ḡbar bar ‘rice’ (p. 425) has a total of 16 sub-entries including a possibly complete list of traditionally cultivated paddy varieties. Other food grains and their ways of preparation include kha-la khala ‘bitter buckwheat’ (p. 57), gun-tsung guntsung ‘sweet buckwheat’ (p. 104), pu-tang putang ‘noodles’ (p. 358), nam cha-min nam.chhamin ‘spicy condiment made of white sesame seed’ (p. 336) and ḡbe be ‘flat unleavened bread’ (p.
Similar coverage can be found for household items, agricultural implements and practices and items of daily use such as ḡche-ma 'shifting cultivation land' (p. 195), cang-zer-ma changzerma 'arrow head' (p. 170), tor-pa torpa 'type of trap to catch small rodents' (p. 253), run-ḥdi rundi 'bamboo strap for carrying baskets' (p. 592), tog-tsi toktsi 'mortar' (p. 251) and stan-pang tanpang 'chopping block' (p. 265). There are many references to places in the Pemakö area and their short history, such as villages like po-dung podung 'Podung' (p. 363), the tsho-khag lnga tsho khak lnga 'five tsho divisions' of Pemakö (p. 494) and the pilgrimage site of De-wa-ko-Ta Dewakota (p. 295), on the traditional dress style of the Pemakö Tshangla people including the ubiquitous mon-Di mgo-shubs monde.goshup 'woollen tunic' (p. 466) or mgo-shubs kha-mung gushup.khamung 'ladies' tunic' (p. 121) still worn by women in Tibetan Pemakö; an example of a mkhar shig-pa kharshiga3 'riddle (lit. both 'telling the khar riddle' and 'de-structing the khar mansion')' and the famous Tshangla test of clever-ness and nursery rhyme a-ma la-nyi ko-ko ama.lanyi.koko 'round mother moon', in which 'where is' questions are asked and answered until either the person asking the question or answering it is at his wit's end (p. 698-702); and on religious aspects such the practice of yong ra-ba yong.rawa 'calling the life principle/energy' (Tibetan bla ḡbd) (p. 562-567).

Also impressive is the rich recording of quintessentially Tshangla words, such as le-pong lepong (n.) ‘a person who eats whenever it suits him, not sticking to timings’ (p. 619), wam-pang wampang (adj.) ‘charming, graceful, elegant, flirtatious (said of the style of girls)’ (p. 512), pra-le-mo pralemo (n.) ‘a well-adorned and well-dressed girl or woman’ (p. 366), ḡha-leng-nang4 galengnang (n.) ‘rotational labour performed by girls of a peer group on individual household demand basis’ (p. 124), to-ka-re tokare (n.) ‘dish made of grain (usu. bitter buckwheat) flour’ (p. 249), and the characteristic (partially) reduplicated adjectives such as shang-shang shangshang (adj.) ‘unkempt, uncombed, ruffled (of hair)’ (p. 630), ba-na bo-no banabono (adj.) ‘said of a religious practitioner who is either insincere in his practice or unable to explain it’ (p. 399), ḡjab-pa-hjob-po jappajopo (adj.)5 ‘omni-vorous, said of a person eating anything without specific demand or

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2 Note that both these entries basically refer to the same dress item, and also note the inconsistency in the transcription of the vowel, with gushup the Tibetan pronunciation, and gushup the Tshangla pronunciation.

3 This should be kharshikpa.

4 The Tshangla ‘Ucen spelling here applies a spurious ཁ་.

5 The Roman Tshangla should have been jappajoppo, and in ‘Ucen Tshangla again the ཁ་ is unwarranted.
preference’ (p. 207) and phe-se-ko-so phesekoso (adj.) ‘be covered with
dust on the face and the body’ (p. 378), some of which, such as hjon-
no-no jonono in the example on page 606 do not have a separate
dictionary entry, with the Tibetan translation ‘tho-lo-lo’ not being par-
ticularly enlightening either. Also peculiar are many Tshangla verbs
and noun-verb and verb-verb compounds, such as gyes-pa jespa ‘to
crack open (said of fruits that are ripened)’ (p. 108), tang leb-pha
tang-lepha ‘lightening to occur’ (p. 234), ming shog-pa ming.shokpa ‘1.
(the eyes) to burn (e.g. because of chili); 2. to be jealous’ (p. 457), the
archaic and particular Pemakö and local Bhutan Tshangla term
hchohi-ba chhoiba ‘to wash (clothes)’ (p. 200, standard Bhutan
Tshangla has zik {pe} for general washing, including clothes), pris-pa
prispa ‘to pull back (the foreskin of the penis)’ (p. 366), hod-pa hotpa
‘1. to be capable of doing (work); 2. to menstruate’ (p. 691) and ngon-
ma ngonma ‘to be pleased with, to like (of persons, food etc.)’ (p. 164).
These terms are unique and are disappearing fast, and thus deserve
recording as well as proper translation.

The focus on religious terms and terminology is sometimes a bit
overdone, and the dictionary could have been served better with
shorter entries than, for example, the almost two-page entries for the
Buddhist mantra badz+ra gu-ru bendzaguru (p. 401) or on tsha-tsha
tshatsa (sic. tshatsha) ‘votive tablets’ (p. 484). Also, entries such as zu-
lu-kha zulukha (sic. zi-lu-kha) (p. 534), the name of a former village
and now neighbourhood in Bhutan’s capital Thimphu, mon-kha
monkha ‘Monkha Nering Shri Dzong’ (p. 466), the name of a pilgrim-
age place in eastern Bhutan, or gang-steng gangteng (p. 103) ‘Gangte’
a village and monastery in western Bhutan, seem out of place in a
Pemakö Tshangla dictionary, as they have no apparent relation with
the Tshangla people in Pemakö. Similarly, what personal names like
tshe-ring rdo-rje tshing.doje (p. 491), nyim chos-rje nyim.choije and
nyim nor-bu nyim.norbu (p. 224) do in the dictionary is a bit mysteri-
ous. A three-page entry on the concept of tsha-chu las-pa

\[tzachhu.laspa \]

‘to soak in hot water springs’ (p. 486-489) also appears
overdone. Some entries are reduplicated, e.g. tsau-tsau tsautsau
‘mental confusion or tension’ on both p. 478 and p. 483. The four-
page entry for the lexeme smrang-ma mringma ‘to grumble’ (p. 469-
473) is obviously intended to state the author’s claims of the archaic
antiquity and conservative phonology of Tshangla (cf. archaic Tibetan
smreng ‘to speak’), but the Tibetan translation (‘dmod ngan ngag
*sngags? nas hdon pa la bye ste’: ‘to chant a cursing mantra for caus-
ing harm’) does not suit the Tshangla meaning. Also, there are no
references to any of the other Tshangla occurrences of the initial clus-

\[^6 \] This should have been *tang.leppha.
ter mr-, some of which, such as mras ‘pimple’, mrok {pa} ‘to keep in a disorderly fashion’ and mrek ~ mrak ~ mres ~ mras {pa} ‘to be stained with an oily or muddy substance; to get squashed’ ostensibly also occur in Pemakö Tshangla.

On the whole, the dictionary provides a good overview of the Tshangla language as spoken in Pemakö. There are examples from all lexical fields and parts of speech, including some versatile particles like sho (p. 642) whose meaning is illustrated with examples. Many terms recorded in it are very peculiar to the language, many of them are very rarely used in everyday speech nowadays and might thus disappear rather rapidly. Their recording in this dictionary comes at the right time.

The definitions

The definitions of many of the entries are straightforward and illuminating, and the author provides adequate example phrases and sentences that further clarify their meaning. Usually, when a clear one-on-one Tibetan cognate is available for a Tshangla entry the meaning becomes quite clear immediately, but it is often typical Tshangla terms with no direct Tibetan translation that require considerable explanation, in which the author has been more successful in some cases than others.

Certain Tibetan definitions seem to reflect a marked variety of Tibetan, rather than standard Tibetan. It is not clear which variety this is, but looking at the history of Pemakö this would perhaps be rKong-po, sPo-bo or Khams Tibetan. Random sampling indicates that most speakers of Central Tibetan varieties have a problem with understanding some of these definitions as well as their sample phrases. An example is hpheng pheng ‘spindle’ which is defined as zhu-lu (p. 393), whereas standard Tibetan has phang, hphang or phang-ma. Perhaps in absence of any other clear translation, the Tibetan term spags-ma ‘side dish (‘curry’) to tsampa dough’ is used to refer to any kind of side dish eaten with the main grain-based dish, such as kam-tang kamtang ‘side dish’ (p. 6) and hor-pa horpa ‘to slurp up the soup of a side dish’ (p. 692). Most Tibetans and Pemaköpa in exile, however, would be more familiar with a Hindi term like ‘curry’ or ‘sabji’.

The value of the ethno-botanical and zoological entries could be significantly increased by providing their respective common or scientific names. Explanations such as ku-ku-mom kuku.mom ‘kind of green vegetable’ (p. 8) and ping-ku-lung pinkulung and ping-pi-rung pingpirung, both ‘a kind of bird’ (p. 358) are not particularly enlightening and serve perhaps as ‘dictionary fillers’. Similarly, there are
some identification errors, a wa-ga-ri wagari is a hornbill and not a ‘vulture’ and for zum-phi zumphi ‘porcupine’ (p. 535) the Tibetan name byi-thur could have been provided. Some very common wild animals, like the phoskong ‘civet cat’, basha ‘goral’ or shangsha ‘serow’ are missing in the dictionary.

The dictionary makes no mention of which part of speech an entry belongs to. It is thus up to the reader to make out from the Tibetan translation and the examples what the function of the entry in Tshangla is. The lack of reference to the part of speech is partially understandable, as in Tshangla, like in many Tibeto-Burman languages, nominalisers can mark nouns, adverbs and adjectives as well as certain tense and aspect properties of verbs, and the formal distinction between various parts of speech is thus often blurred. Nonetheless, assigning a part of speech to every head entry would be a big improvement.

One major issue is encountered with the way in which verbs - be it what are basically monomorphic verb roots or (noun-verb/verb-verb) compounds - are presented. Tshangla has a relatively complex verbal morphology, with what could be termed as five conjugational classes (Bodt 2014: 195-198 and Bodt 2012: 422-423). Whereas it is largely the phonotactic environment (i.e. the verb root coda) that determines the conjugational class of a verb, there are also homonymous cases where the historical simplification of an underlying coda cluster is responsible for the conjugation according to a certain class, rather than the present simple coda. This fact is, unfortunately, not acknowledged in the dictionary. Instead, orthographic inconsistencies are introduced haphazardly to indicate the distinction between what are basically homonyms. Take for example the verb nub-pha nupha \(n^{{\text{\text{\textbf{\textbackslash}h}}}a}\) ‘to enter’ (on p. 343 exemplified with ‘the sun to set’, however, this verb is also used for, for example, people to enter a building) and the verb nub-pa nubpa \(n^{{\text{\text{\textbf{\textbackslash}p}}}a}\) ‘to perish, to disappear (usu. in a religious sense)’. The root of these verbs is in both cases \(n^{{\text{\text{\textbf{\textbackslash}u}}}p}\), with degemination of the coda bilabial consonant when followed by a morpheme with a bilabial consonant (in this case the past tense nominaliser -pa ~ -pha). Distinctive, at least in modern Tshangla, is to which conjugational class the verb belongs: i.e. either -pa or -pha\(^7\).

\(^7\) It goes beyond this review to pay attention to the underlying reasons for the existence of these conjugational classes and what determines a verb to belong to them. As a first indication, it may be noticed that verbs with stems ending on fricative -s always conjugate with the past tense nominaliser -pa, and that verbs with roots ending on plosive -p may conjugate either with the past tense nominaliser -pa or -pha. Relevant in this context is perhaps that the past tense spelling of the Tibetan verb snub ‘do away with, cause to perish, abolish etc.’ is bsnubs,
The dictionary would have greatly benefited if attention could have been given to this fact, by providing the stems of each verb in combination with the past tense nominaliser (or any other marker that indicates the conjugational class of the verb), e.g. nup {phal} ‘to enter’; nup {pa} ‘to perish’ rather than spurious spellings such as nupha ‘to set’ and nubpa ‘to perish’. Such an approach would also have avoided inconsistencies such as zom-ma zoma ‘to gather, to assemble’ (p. 531) where the stem of the verb appears to be zo- judging from the Roman Tshangla entry, whereas this is actually zom-[zom]. This approach would also have removed the need to provide a whole set of different head entries for conjugated verbs, such as the examples of the verb khe (khewa/khencha/khenchuma, p. 92-95) ‘1. to contract (a disease, intransitive); 2. to need, to have to, require to (auxiliary); 3. to hit (an arrow, but also the rain on the ground i.e. to rain, a latch of a lock etc., intransitive and transitive)’, or for a whole set of subentries, such as the examples of the verb khowa ‘to break, to split (of stones, bamboo, wood)’ (p. 95-97). The dictionary abounds in similar inconsistencies, again, for example, on p. 98 we find the entry ḥkhobpha ḥophpha ‘to peel off (actually ‘peeled off’)’ and a few entries later on p. 99 the entry ḥkhob-bca ḥobcha ‘peels off’, in which, when relying on the Roman Tshangla, a reader who does not know Tshangla and cannot read Tibetan, might understand these as two different verbs. Rather than providing examples of the meaning of the same verb in different tense and aspect combinations, it would be advisable to provide the verb root and its conjugational class, and then focus on the semantics of the verb, i.e. on the various meanings that a verb can have in its various contexts, but also according to its transitivity, and whether a verb operates as an independent verb or as an auxiliary. The meaning of the various verbal suffixes with their allomorphs according to the conjugational class could then be provided in the introduction. There is no need to provide for each verb a separate entry or subentry simply stating, for example, that the verb stem followed by -chhumā gives the verb a completive sense.

while the past tense of the Tibetan verb nub ‘to go down, to set etc.’ is simply nub. For establishing a possible relation between Tshangla and Tibetan as well as for the identification of loan verbs, these conjugational classes are of great interest.

What appears to be an attempt at this might be observed in the entries for bcebp-a chep.p-a ‘to hit, to bruise’ and bcebp-a chop.p-a ‘to loot kitchen utensils’ (?) (p. 176).
The second aim that the author has, is to show that Tshangla is in many ways more archaic in its pronunciation than the modern Tibetan varieties, maintaining the pronunciation of Tibetan at the time it was committed to writing. The editor (p. ii) gives as example the word for ‘chest’, which is written as brang or brang-khog in written Tibetan, pronounced as drang [ɖaŋ] in most Tibetan varieties, but still pronounced as brang, actually (p. 414) brangtong [bɹaŋtɔŋ], in Tshangla. This is an irrefutable fact. But more than this observation cannot sensibly be derived from it. The fact that Tshangla [bɹaŋ] and written Tibetan brang are the same, does not necessarily provide evidence to support any hypothesis that the historical speakers of (Old) Tibetan at the time it was committed to writing and the contemporary Tshangla speakers are somehow directly related to each other: the similarities between written Tibetan and spoken Tshangla might be the result of a much older shared Tibeto-Burman root. Two other examples might illustrate that: Proto-Tani *haŋ-brang/*hanŋ-kunŋ (Sun 1993: 99) and Dulong (Trung) [pɹaŋ] (Sün 1982: 217) are also very similar, if not the same.

A distinction has to be made between loan words from Tibetan, and inherited Tshangla words that have cognates in Tibetan. These are two fundamentally different ways as to how the part of the present day Tshangla lexicon with similar forms in written Tibetan has come into being. Loans are obviously present in Tshangla. But the long and intricate relationship between Tshangla and Central Bodish varieties makes it difficult to determine what is a loan, what is a nativised loan (often with a nativised pronunciation) and what is a native word that just happens to have Central Bodish cognates because of a shared Proto-Tibeto-Burman root.

Tshangla has been under strong influence from Bodish languages at least since the 8th century AD. Successive waves of migration
from the Tibetan plateau, the establishment of a Tibetan aristocracy ruling a Tshangla populace and the influence of both classical and spoken Tibetan through the spread of Buddhism and the administrative system has had an enormous impact on the Tshangla language. To this can be added the increasing influence of Bhutan’s national language Dzongkha during the latter century in the Tshangla homeland and, in the case of Pemakö Tshangla, the influence of different Tibetan varieties (mainly Kong-po, sPo-bo and Khams Tibetan) since the advent of the Tshangla speakers in the Pemakö area and the subsequent diaspora of part of their people.

But the distinction between inherited vocabulary and later loans is hard to make. To revert to the example of ‘chest’: can this word be considered a loan from Tibetan at the time that it was still pronounced as [braŋ] in Tibetan? And did the phonological changes that affected the pronunciation in Tibetan not take place in Tshangla? I think few people would agree to this idea, and rather consider a root like ‘chest’, which is shown cross-linguistically to be not very susceptible to borrowing, to be an inherited root. On the other hand, ḡu-lag\textsuperscript{11} ‘compulsory labour service’ (p. 542), zheb-sa zhepsa ‘honourific speech’ (p. 516), gtor-ma torma ‘dough offering’ (p. 257) and a verb like sgrub-pa ḡupha\textsuperscript{12} ‘to practice, accomplish (in a religious sense)’ (p.117) are clear Tibetan loans, cf. Tibetan ḡu-lag ‘compulsory service’, zhe-sa ‘honourific speech’, gtor-ma ‘dough offering’, sgrub ‘to accomplish, to attain etc.’, all introduced as administrative and religious terminology. There are, however, many doubt cases, even in basic lexical items. Pemakö Tshangla has gdong-pa ‘face’ (p. 303). Bhutan Tshangla, on the other hand, has gum ‘face’. Because Tibetan also has gdong-pa ‘face’, this might well be a Tibetan loan in Pemakö Tshangla. But does the fact that Dirang Tshangla also has dongpa ‘face’ mean that Bhutan Tshangla gum is actually an innovation? Or that Dirang Tshangla also borrowed dongpa ‘face’ from Tibetan?

Another example is the Tshangla verb nyong [ɲɔŋ] ‘to get, to obtain’. The Tshangla dictionary lists this under the 'Ucen spelling myong, in consistency with a Tibetan spelling of a word with a wide range of meanings, myong ‘to enjoy, undergo, feel, comprehend, taste, to experience with one of the five senses, etc.’. But there are two main issues with this approach. First of all: in this case, as in many, Tshangla has not preserved the archaic Tibetan pronunciation

\textsuperscript{11} This should be ḡulak.

\textsuperscript{12} This should have been sgrub-pha and ḡupha if consistency was maintained.
of the period when the language was committed to writing: any Tshangla speaker will say [ɲoŋ] similar to modern Tibetan pronunciation, not [mjoŋ]. And secondly, considering the meanings of Tibetan myong, the question arises whether these two words perhaps just derive from the same root. These are issues that historical-comparative linguistics has to deal with, and should not be of concern to a compiler of a dictionary of a contemporary language. But by making the orthographic choice for the ’Ucen Tshangla spelling myong, not simply nyong in accordance with Tshangla pronunciation, the author implicitly presumes either that Tibetan myong, with its wide variety of meanings, and Tshangla nyong, with a much more restricted definition, derive from the same Bodish (and not earlier, Proto-Tibeto-Burman) root, or that Tshangla borrowed the word from Tibetan, with subsequent semantic change resulting in divergent meanings and phonetic change resulting in a similar pronunciation. Luxi Bola (Pa-la, Jingpo) also has [mjь̄̄jь̄̄] ‘to get, to acquire’ (Huang and Dai, 1992), this form is even closer to the Tibetan spelling, but everyone would consider it spurious to consider this as evidence of a genetic relation between Luxi Bola and Tibetan.

Whereas I do not want to argue against using standard Tibetan spelling for Tshangla words that are clearly loans from Tibetan, I would caution against overdoing that by trying to find Tibetan spellings for each and every Tshangla word, irrespective of whether this word is an actual loan or a native word, and otherwise invent spurious spellings that do not reflect the actual Tshangla pronunciation. Thus accepting written Tibetan spellings for at least the most obvious loans, it is then puzzling to notice that the author has decided to spell an obvious recent Tibetan loan like mikshe “eye glasses” in the ’Ucen Tshangla orthography as mig-she (p. 453), in accordance with Tshangla pronunciation [mikе̞], and not according to the Tibetan spelling as mig-shel. On the other hand, for unknown reasons the author chose the ’Ucen Tshangla spelling hгah-hдang (p. 124) for the native Tshangla word gadang [gadan] without any obvious written Tibetan source. These kind of inconsistencies are a serious drawback to the dictionary.

The main point, apart from the possible ramifications of the approach taken by the author for the historical-comparative side of the story, is that this approach has serious implications for the usefulness and user-friendliness of the dictionary. A user of the dictionary will have to a priori know that Tshangla [ɲoŋ] has the ’Ucen Tshangla spelling myong listed under the syllable MA, because he will not be able to find the entry nyong under the syllable NYA. This brings me to the next point, namely a general review of the ortho-
graphic choices of the author, the consistency of the use, and the implications for the user-friendliness of the dictionary.

The orthographies and consistency of its use

In the introduction, the author describes the conventions for both his ˈUcen Tshangla and his Roman Tshangla orthographies. Unfortunately, much is lacking in the consistency of the usage of these orthographic conventions throughout the dictionary. There are plenty of instances where the orthographic rules set out by the author at the onset are not followed in the main body of the dictionary.

The Roman orthography

The Roman orthography used in the dictionary is pretty straightforward, though no motivation for the choices made is given. The choice for representing the Tshangla unaspirated and aspirated affricates [ʨ, ʨʰ] with /ch, chh/ rather than /c, ch/ respectively is unfortunate from a linguistic point of view, but understandable under influence of the prevalence of haphazard romanisation in use throughout much of the Subcontinent, although it is at variance with both the Indological tradition and the principle of economy which should govern a new system of romanisation. Many native Tshangla speakers who write their language actually employ the same orthography, because for them the /c/ represents a [k], as in English cat [kʰæt] and not an affricate [ʨ].

But when it comes to the consistent use throughout the dictionary, there are some flaws to be observed. The main issue lies with the representation of the unvoiced and voiced syllable final plosives /k ~ g/, /p ~ b/ and /t ~ d/. Whereas in some cases the unvoiced Tshangla coda /t/ is represented in the Roman orthography with a /t/, in other cases the author has followed the Tibetan orthography in the Roman orthography and written a voiced plosive /d/, e.g. stod-ka totka [totka]\textsuperscript{13} ‘at the top of (in elevation)’ (p. 266) and nad-pa natpa [natpa] (p. 335), but then pad-pa padpa [patpa] ‘leech’ not *patpa (p. 357). In other cases, the author, under written Tibetan influence, introduces a syllable-final plosive /t/ where the Tshangla pronunciation actually doesn’t even have one, such as in stod-tung todtung cf.

\textsuperscript{13} Not that here the author pronounces [tøka], in conformity with the written Tibetan spelling, rather than in accordance with the actual Tshangla pronunciation [totka]. The rounding of vowels [i] and [o] to [y] and [ø] under influence of written Tibetan spellings, even for native Tshangla words, can be observed throughout the recordings.
Tibetan stod-tung ‘jacket’ (p. 266) not *totung [totun] ‘jacket’. Other examples can be found with both the velar and bilabial plosive in coda position, which are sometimes written with Roman /p/ and /k/ and sometimes with Roman /b/ and /g/, as in lag-pa lakpa ‘hide’ (p. 609) but har-khag-tang harkhagtang not *harkhaktang ‘phlegm’ (p. 689), tseb-tseb tseptsep ‘crunchy when eating because of containing sand particles, said of e.g. flour’ (p. 477) but teb-pa tebpa not *tep-pa ‘be squeezed or quashed (in a crowd)’ (p. 247), and nub-pa nubpa [nupa] ‘to perish, to disappear (usu. in a religious sense)’ not *nuppa (p. 343), zhob zhob [ʑɔp] not *zhop ‘ritual hearth deity pollution’ (p. 519) or mo-rab morab ‘beautiful’ but then in the sample sentence morap (p. 465). Where degemination of the syllable final bilabial plosive takes place in actual pronunciation it is completely omitted in the Roman Tshangla, as in heb-pha hepha not *heppha ‘1. to settle down (of heated butter or oil); 2. to pant’ (p. 690), even though this creates a root *he- not hep-. This inconsistency between the actual Tshangla pronunciation, the written Tshangla in ‘Ucen script and the written Tshangla in Roman script is an almost constant source of ambiguity throughout the dictionary.

The choice for the use of dots to separate ‘which parts of the word are to be pronounced together’ (p. iv) in the Tshangla sample sentences is odd, as in English the full stop indicates the end of a sentence or a syllable boundary in phonetics. Moreover, this practice obscures which criteria are used to determine what in Tshangla constitutes a word, with many suffixes, enclitics and particles separated from their head word with a full stop. An example is the sentence khangri.zangpo.gai.lama.mangpo.jonma.la “Many lamas came from good lineages’, where both the ablative marker -gai and the existential copula -la, used in a periphrastic construction as the continuous past jonmala ‘having come’, are treated as independent words rather than suffixes.

The ‘Ucen orthography

The author both acknowledges that the phonology and pronunciation of Tshangla and Tibetan are different in many aspects (p. xx) and that in the past it must have been difficult for the Tibetan grammarians to compose the spelling with prefix, superscript, subscript and suffix letters and that this is still cause of weariness and inconvenience (p. ix). Nonetheless, the author then continues that as Tshangla shares 70% of its vocabulary with Tibetan14 and that Tibet-

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14 This might be an overestimate. Lieberherr and Bodt (2015) in a lexicostatistical analysis of 100 basic roots found a cognate percentage between Written Tibetan
and Tshangla have a similar sgra-gdangs ‘tune, pronunciation’, it is no more than logical and even a necessity to know and employ the various affixes of the Tibetan spelling in the Tshangla orthography as well, explaining why and how he has tried to harmonise the Tshangla spellings and grammar with that of Tibetan (p. x). In his ‘Ucen Tshangla spellings, the author thus makes profuse use of the written Tibetan sngon-hjug ‘prefixed letters’, rjes-hjug ‘suffixed letters’, yang-hjug ‘final letters’, ya-byags, ra-btags, la-btags, wa-zur ‘subscript ya, ra, la, wa letters’ and ra-mgo, la-mgo, sa-mgo ‘super-script ra, la, sa letters’. He employs these in purported loans from Tibetan, in Tshangla words with Tibetan cognates, but, most unfortunately, also in purely native Tshangla terms without justifying the necessity of their use.

So, wang [waŋ] ‘blessing’ (p. 423) is written as dbang under the syllable BA, rather than with Tshangla spelling wang under the syllable WA because it is likely a Tibetan loan, cf. Tibetan dbang ‘blessing’, and tsi [tsi] ‘fodder; weed’ (p. 482) might have been written as rtsi rather than simply tsi because of a (doubtful) Tibetan cognate rtswa ‘grass, weeds’. But why the orthographies bang [ban] ‘grass’ as ḥbang rather than simply bang (p. 424); cha [cha] ‘have {copula}’ as bcaḥ (p. 173) rather than simply ca; khungma ‘to wait’ as ḥkhung-ma (p. 92) rather than simply khung-ma (but on the other hand khongma ‘raw, uncooked’ as khong-ma, p. 82); or bamung [bamun] as ḥbah-mung ‘mushroom’ (p. 429) rather than simply ba-mung? Similarly, in Tshangla there is no phonetic difference between the adjective ringbu [riŋbu] ‘long, tall’ (p. 586) and the noun ringbu [riŋbu] ‘intestinal worm’ (p. 586), thus the Tibetan orthography ring-bu for the former and ring-ḥbu for the latter is completely based on the spelling of bu [bu] ‘insect’ in Tibetan, ḥбу, and not on the pronunciation in Tshangla.

The effect of the use of the affixes of written Tibetan on the user-friendliness of a Tshangla dictionary can also be show through the following example. If a Tshangla user living in Delhi wants to find the meaning of the Tshangla word lutumang just used by his grand-
ma, and starts searching either in the main body of the dictionary or in the index in the beginning under the syllable LA, he will not find the word. It cannot be presupposed that every user will know written Tibetan orthography well enough to start searching all possible combinations of prefixes and sub- and superscript letters for the syllable LA and (luckily under KA) end up finding klu-tu-mang [lутуту́ман] ‘pestle’. One simple solution for this problem would be to group all phonetically identical onsets together under the same syllable heading, rather than based on their Ùcên onsets.

In the following sections, I will shortly introduce some of the author’s orthographical choices for both the vowels and the consonants, and discuss the consequences this has, mainly for the user-friendliness of the dictionary.

The vowel representations

As for the vowels, the author introduces a long vowel A apparently solely on basis of the minimal pair wa wa ‘cattle’ (p. 509) and wA ḷphi-ba wa.phiwa ‘to joke’ (p. 510), with not a single other attestation of a long vowel /a/ in the dictionary apart from the Hindi loan words thA-II thali ‘plate’ (> थाली ‘plate’, p. 282) and DAg-khang drak.khang (> डाक ‘post, mail’ + Tibetan khang ‘building’, p. 328). This, in combination with the fact that in the recording there is no audible distinction between the vowel length in the two occurrences of wa15 and the knowledge that vowel length is not distinctive in any other phonological descriptions of varieties of Tshangla to date (Das Gupta 1968, Zhāng 1986, Andvik 2009, Grollmann 2013, Bodt 2014), leads to the conclusion that the long versus short vowel /a/ distinction that the author makes is unwarranted16.

The author introduces the orthographic Tibetan AI and AU to represent two Tshangla diphthongs/offglides [ai ~ aj] and [au ~ aw]. These are commonly used for transcription of Sanskrit diphthongs and are as a choice defendable over, for example, ḷi and ḷu. It is unfortunate that, ostensibly under influence of Tibetan spelling conventions, the Tshangla diphthongs are neglected in many cases, such as bral-ba braiba [braiba] ‘to separate’ (p. 418) instead of brAI-ba (cf. Tibetan kha bral-ba ‘to divorce, separate’). It is also unfortunate that

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15 In fact, rather than a vowel length distinction, the wa in wa.phiwa appears to have a high register tone onset.

16 The same can be said of the aspirated voiced velar plosive gha [gʰ] on basis of the single lexeme ghi ghi [ɡi] ‘Sichuan pepper, Xanthoxylum armatum, X. bungeanum’, with neither a convincing minimal pair besides the near-minimal pair with the existential copula gila gila ‘to be’, nor clear aspiration in the recording.
the Tshangla diphthongs/offglides [oi ~ oj] and [ui ~ uj] are not recognised as distinctive phonemes in the introduction on page viii. In the remainder of the dictionary they are haphazardly represented, either by introducing a new vowel combination such as in nyoḥE-ba nyoiba [ŋoiba] ‘to swallow without chewing’ (p. 228); with written Tibetan spelling conventions, e.g. sbkul-ba kuiba [kui ba] ‘to invoke, arouse, admonish’ (p. 43); or even completely ignored, as in bri-ba bruiba [bruiba] ‘to write’ (p. 440) under influence of Tibetan bri ‘write’. Over-reliance on written Tibetan spelling conventions rather than actual Tshangla pronunciation also results in inconsistencies such as [gau] ‘amulet box’ (p. 106), one of the few occurrences of the Tshangla diphthong [au] AU. Unfortunately, in the ‘Ucen orthography the author stuck to the Tibetan spelling gwaḥu, with for the Roman orthography the odd spelling ga.’u.

The consonant representations

The consonant inventory described is pretty standard for Tshangla and the ‘Ucen representations are straightforward. The author chose to represent the retroflex sounds with the lokta Ta\textsuperscript{17}, Tha and Da, which is understandable. What is less clear is why these retroflex phonemes are then sometimes mentioned under their alveolar counterpart syllables TA, THA and DA and sometimes with their written Tibetan spellings like sgra under the syllable GA. As distinctive phonemes, they should have been accorded their own separate dictionary headings. In the current scenario, there is the confusing and inconsistent situation that a user has to look for ḏu pha [ɖuppʰa] ‘accomplished’ (spelling sgrub-pa, p. 117) and ḏom [dom] ‘box’ (spelling sgrom, p. 117) under the syllable GA, but for the phonetically same onsets in ḏumsho [ɖumɛo] ‘gather towards this side (fire wood in a hearth)?\textsuperscript{18} (spelling Dum-sho, p. 330) and ḏomDOM ‘sound of feet stamping on a wooden floor during a traditional ‘kick dance’’ (spelling Dom-Dom, p. 332) under syllable DA.

In many cases, it is unfortunate that the author has resorted to innovating ‘Ucen Tshangla spellings for the retroflex phonemes that deviate from his own proposed orthography. There is a justification in the case of actual or plausible loans from Tibetan, such as gru ḏu.

\footnote{The single unvoiced retroflex entry Tau-li ʈauli [ʈauli] ‘wrung out?’ (p. 268) is said to be a Chinese loan, even the Tibetan translation skra dkyu-li cannot be found in the most common dictionaries, and its inclusion in this dictionary is therefore questionable.}

\footnote{The meaning of Tibetan ḡtshur is unclear, and the reason why this verb is mentioned in the imperative is similarly unknown.}
[ɖu] ‘boat’ (p. 109), Tibetan gru ‘boat’, not *Du and ḡrig-pe dikpe [dikpe] ‘to be ok’ (p. 142)¹⁹, Tibetan ḡrig ‘be ok, be alright etc.’ not *Dig-pe. But little justification can be given to extend this even to lexemes where there is no written Tibetan basis to deviate from simply writing a lokta retroflex, such as khre thre [ʈʰe] ‘veranda’ (p. 85) instead of *Thre, phrog-rkyang thokyang [ʈʰokkjæŋ] ‘Sausage vine Holboellia latifolia’ (p. 383) instead of *Throk-kyang²⁰, especially since the next lexeme, phros-pa phrospa ‘to vomit’ (p. 383) is pronounced as [pʰospa] and not as *[ʈʰospa].

The same line of thought, with plenty of examples of inconsistencies, holds for the various representations of the Tshangla affricates /ch, chh, j/, depending on the variety realised as [ʨʰ ~ ʃʰ, ʧʰ ~ ʃʃ, ʣ ~ ʤ]. Lexical entries that have an affricate onset can be found under the direct ‘Ucen syllables CA, CHA, and JA but also under the written Tibetan spellings rkya, skya, bskya spya (syllables KA, PA); khya, ḡkhya, phya, ḡphya (syllables KHA, PHA); and gya, rgya, ḡhya, bya, and ḡhya (syllables GA, BA) respectively. What this means in practice is, that a potential user who has just been called a jungpo rolang [ʤʊŋpo rolaŋ] by a Pemakö Tshangla speaker, and who has no idea of the origin or spelling the word might have in Tibetan, would have to look under syllable JA for jung-po, mjung-po, ḡjung-po or ljung-po, under syllable GA for gyung-po, rgyung-po or ḡgyung-po and under syllable BA for byung-po, to finally find it under ḡbyung-po ro-langs jungpo.rolang ‘a boy with an evil or offensive behaviour and attitude’ (p. 439), from ḡbyung-po jungpo ‘class of evil spirits’ and ro-lang rlangs ‘zombie’. That’s simply not practical, and not user-friendly. Wouldn’t it have been easier to just write it in ‘Ucen Tshangla as jung-po ro-lang, and then give the Tibetan etymology as (< Tib. ḡbyung-po ro-lang)?

In his listing of Tshangla onsets on page ix, the author does not include the lateral fricative [ɬ], in written Tibetan spelling lha, a fact consistent with most spoken Tshangla varieties. However, a grapheme /lh/ does occur in the Roman transcriptions in the dictionary, with Tibetan orthographies as divergent as rla, e.g. rlangs-pa lhankpa ‘left-over (food)’ (p. 606) under RA; kla, e.g. klam-pa lhampa ‘read, study’ (p. 41) under KA; gla, e.g. gleng lheng ‘over there, on the other side’ (p. 118) under GA; bla, e.g blug-pa lhug-pa ‘pour’ (p. 441) under

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¹⁹ Why the author lists this as ḡrig-pe dikpe with the non-past nominaliser and not as ḡrig-pa dikpa with the past nominaliser like in other verb forms is another inconsistency.

²⁰ For this lexeme even a spelling khrok-kyang might be preferable, to reflect the archaic pronunciation Standard Bhutan Tshangla [ʈʰokkjæŋ], archaic and dialect [kʰrokkjæŋ] which is, however, probably not known to the author.
BA; and sla, e.g. sla-nga lha-nga ‘frying pan’ (p. 677) under SA. Whereas the recordings do not attest a lateral fricative but a lateral approximant for these entries, there does appear to be a high register onset distinguishing these lexemes from langs-pa langpa ‘to sit; to suffice’ (p. 610); lam lam ‘road, path’ (p. 611); leng-ma lengma ‘to change (clothes)’ (p. 621); lugs luk ‘habit, custom’ (p. 616); and lam-ma lamma ‘to accept; to find’ (p. 612) respectively. But the contradictory spelling of the entries leng-gtad-pa leng-tatpa ‘towards the other side’ and leng-gtad leng-gtad lengtat lengtat ‘further and further towards the other side’ (p. 622), derivations clearly based on gleng lheng ‘over there, on the other side’ (p. 118) appear to suggest that, rather than that the ‘Ucen spelling of the lexemes with onset /lh/ in the Roman orthography represents an actually realised high versus low register onset distinction in Tshangla, the pronunciation of the speaker has been adapted to the ‘Ucen spelling employed. The complete absence of any discussion on suprasegmental features such as register onset, pitch or tone, important in Tibetan but only marginal in some Tshangla varieties, is also a shortcoming of the dictionary.

Coda consonant clusters

From a historical linguistic point of view, the dictionary provides additional evidence of what could be considered archaic retentions of syllable-final consonant clusters in Pemakō Tshangla, a feature of the language also reported in Bodt (2012: 197-201, 2014: 421-424) and Grollmann (2013: 39-41). Some of the rather abundant examples include bordpa [bort-pa] ‘to fry in oil’ (p. 410), bertpa [bertpa] ‘to be spicy’ (p. 408); ḥbyard jart- [dΧart-] ‘to be stuck together’ (p. 119, but unfortunately a main entry for this lexeme seems missing), ḥphirld phirl-la ‘to turn by itself’ (in the example on p. 390, but phirpa in the main entry), ḥkhord khort- ‘to turn’ (in the example on p. 389, but khorpa on p. 100). This is important information that needs to be further examined.

Conclusions

The Tshangla dictionary is an extremely rich source of lexical information on an important and enigmatic but nonetheless endangered Tibeto-Burman language. For an educated Tshangla speaker in Pemakō or the Tibetan diaspora the dictionary will be useful as a reference source on their own language. Similarly, for Tibetans who would like to study Tshangla it will be a useful assistance to master the vocabulary. For both groups of users, however, the biggest drawback will be the ‘Ucen orthography following Tibetan spelling
conventions and not the Tshangla phonology, not only for loans from Tibetan and Tshangla words with Tibetan cognates, but also for quintessentially native Tshangla words. This makes the usage of the dictionary time-consuming and complicated at the very least, and sometimes just outright frustrating: a user basically has to guess how the author has spelled a word. Another imminent danger is that following written Tibetan spelling conventions for Tshangla words results in a Tibetan, not a Tshangla pronunciation. In the included sound files, the author frequently, almost continuously, falls in this pit trap himself, by pronouncing the Tshangla entry based on Tibetan pronunciation rather than the Tshangla pronunciation. The absence of a reverse glossary with concise Tibetan glosses and their Tshangla translations is also a drawback, as the targeted audience has to know, or have access to, Tshangla speakers in order to use the dictionary. If someone would want to know how to say a certain Tibetan word in Tshangla, the dictionary will give no answer.

The dictionary might have some value for an educated Bhutanese audience. But for an external audience, including Tibeto-Burman linguists, Tibetologists and others, the ability to at least read, and preferably also understand Tibetan is a prerequisite to make use of this dictionary.

Hopefully, then, the author, the translator, the publisher and a linguist trained in the western tradition will find the time and funds to publish a second edition of this valuable dictionary. This should include a short overview of the basic Tshangla phonology, including onset clusters and rhymes and their realisation and IPA transcription. The Tshangla pronunciation, the spelling in the ’Ucen script, and the spelling in the Roman script should follow clear conventions and be consistent throughout the dictionary. Personally, I would strongly suggest that as much as possible, ’Ucen spellings conform the actual Tshangla pronunciation are maintained, neither adopting the spelling of cognate Tibetan words, which may or may not be loans, nor the innovation of spellings that do not reflect the Tshangla pronunciation but rather some Tibetan orthographical convention. If one of the aims be to show that Tshangla follows written Tibetan pronunciation rather closely, it is always possible to add an etymological or cognate note (cf. Tib./ < Tib.) with the written Tibetan spelling. At least the head entries, and preferably the entire dictionary should be translated into English. Entries should include a reference to the part of speech they belong to. The head entry of every verb should be its root, including the conjugational class, with as subentries noun-verb and noun-noun compounds with particular meanings. Definitions should be standardised in Central Tibetan and include as many common and/or scientific names as possible.
Definitely, the dictionary is a publication which merits being rendered accessible to a much wider audience, including Tibetologists, linguists, ethnologists and other interested individuals.

References


