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The Heritage Buddhist Manuscripts of Ladakh: Tibetan Buddhist Canons and the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Georgios T. Halkias

The history of the earliest transmission of Indian Buddhism to Tibet in the 7th to 8th centuries is the story of the transmission of its scriptures. Tibetan translations of Sanskrit texts from the early imperial period, along with manuscripts translated from the 11th century onwards, contributed to the formation of Buddhist scriptural collections. Today, different versions of the Tibetan Kangyur survive in the interior and at the margins of the Tibetan cultural world. This research report serves as a modest introduction to the illustrated *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Perfection of Wisdom*) manuscripts and handwritten Buddhist canons preserved in the Indian north-western Himalayas. Their further study will undoubtedly advance our knowledge of Ladakh's cultural and religious heritage and offer critical insights to the formation of Tibetan canonical literature. The purpose of this overview is to highlight the results of initial findings, explain how they relate to existing knowledge, and raise important themes for additional enquiries.

Keywords: Tibetan Buddhist canons, illustrated and gold manuscripts, *Prajñāpāramitā*, Ladakh, Himalayan Buddhism.

Introduction

From the first half of the 10th century onwards, the region of Ladakh came under the administration of kings descending from the royal family of the dismantled Tibetan empire. Over the centuries, an independent kingdom emerged, noted for its political and commercial influence in the Himalayas, and for being a stronghold for the promulgation of Tibetan Buddhism and monasticism. It left behind a rich Buddhist legacy of ornate temples (*Ba sgo*, *He mis*, *Shel*, *lCe bde*), exquisite statues, reliquaries, two-storied prayer-walls, and hand-crafted, unique specimens of the Tibetan Buddhist canon: the Kangyur (*bKa' 'gyur*, translation of the words of the Buddha) and the Tengyur (*bsTan 'gyur*, translation of the commentaries) and illuminated manuscripts.

In 2007 and 2008, under the auspices of the Warburg Institute (University of London), and again in 2010 and 2011 as a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), I conducted extensive fieldwork in the western Himalayas. At that time, I surveyed a good number of Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh and witnessed several handwritten canonical manuscripts executed with red letters on white paper, and on black-blue tinted paper with alternating lettering of gold, silver, and copper colours. As in other parts of India, Nepal, and Tibet, some of the most stunning illuminated scriptures are the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Perfection of Wisdom*) sutra, samples of which are in display at the monastic museums of Chemde (*lCe bde*), Matro (*Ma spro*), and Likir (*Klu dkyil*). The Chemde museum displays a striking example of a luxury *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript bound by two ornately carved wooden covers (*glegs shing*) gilded and painted with large embalmed silver letters and adorned in Chinese silk

veils (*zhal khebs*). Decorative motifs in Ladakh's scriptural corpus feature calligraphic writing, ornamentation, raised initial letters and/or entire words and phrases, and a variety of coloured illuminations of Mahāyāna Buddhist deities at the borders of manuscripts. These elements reveal distinct stylistic periods executed by Ladakhi and/or foreign artists dating from at least the 17th century, if not well before that.

Collections of the 'Words of the Buddha'

There is much we can learn from canonical collections about the evolution of Tibetan Buddhism both as a multifaceted event unfolding in specific religious-cum-regional environments, and as a cultural enterprise not impervious to partisan choices concerning the inclusions and exclusions of texts from the canon. In addition to the value of their contents for classical Buddhist philology and text-critical scholarship, Buddhist scriptures are seen as power-objects for veneration and blessings, repositories of the Buddha's teachings, and supports of the Buddha's speech (*gsung rten*). Across the Tibetan plateau and the culturally Tibetan regions of the Himalayas, Tibetan Buddhist scriptures or *pecha* (*dpe cha*) are addressed with the same language used for religious icons, altar pieces, and relics, and are handled in ritual worship in similar ways across South Asia (Kim 2013). Their creation and use as sacred objects can provide us with valuable information concerning the artistic, cultural, and religious sensitivities of Himalayan Buddhists. In his history of the Kangyur, Harrison (1996: 84–85) summarizes these points and is worth quoting in full:

Most modern Western scholars, trained as they are in an academic or scientific approach to texts, view the translations preserved in the bKa' 'gyur (and bsTan 'gyur) as a series of windows through which the historical development of Buddhist thought and practice can be glimpsed. In these translations many texts have been captured which would otherwise have disappeared forever. They contain information, meanings and messages which Western scholars are concerned to extract and use in the pursuit of their own purposes; they have a content which can be appropriated intellectually. Tibetans are also capable of reading in this fashion, as the prolific nature of Tibetan scholarship indicates, yet at the same time they also believe the texts to be "meaningful" in a further sense. That is to say, they both contain meanings within themselves—in particular, the teachings relating to liberation from suffering—and have meaning or significance in

their own right, as symbols of that liberation, the latter sense clearly being dependent on the former. Thus, as complete entities the texts of the bKa' 'gyur are thought to be powerful and transformative, as physical objects when seen or touched or as sounds when uttered or heard, whether or not intellectual understanding takes place.

Much of the pioneer text-critical research focusing on establishing the stemma of the Ladakhi canons has been led by Helmut Tauscher and his team at the University of Vienna.¹ This is an important area of scientific research and there is still much work to be done on the collections known to us and on the collections that have not yet been studied. All Tibetan Kangyur, which amount to more than twenty identified to date and whose contents range anywhere between 100 to 110 volumes, have been allocated by scholars to four stemmas. While the majority seem to derive from the 14th century *Tshal* Kangyur prototype (1347–1351), none of the Ladakhi manuscript canons seem to go back to this line of transmission. According to Tauscher and Lainé (2008: 340), the Stog and Shey Palace collections display affinities with the *Thempangma* (*Them spangs ma*), a line that includes hand-written Kangyur prepared at Gyaltsé in 1432 (Eimer 2012: xviii) and copied thereafter many times, especially during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. There are also a few mixed canons that display 'contamination' from the *Tshalpa* and *Thempangma* lines, like the Narthang Kangyur and a related xylograph from Lhasa. Lastly, there are collections that do not belong to either of these lineages. They are classified as 'local' or 'independent' canons for the time being since a common stemma or line of descent has not been established. It appears that the Hemis and Basgo Kangyur were produced locally and share noticeable affinities to each other (Tauscher and Lainé 2015: 477)—even though the former contains only a few tantric texts whereas the latter preserves a large amount of tantric selections. In addition to complete and partially complete Ladakhi canons, there are also some extraordinary illuminated manuscripts in monastic establishments and in family homes in Basgo and other areas.

Manuscript Collections in Ladakh and Zanskar

There is a substantial number of canonical collections and illustrated texts in Ladakh and Zangskar preserved across temples (*lha khang*), assembly halls (*'du khang*), monasteries (*dgon pa*), and in scripture temples or *Kangyur Lhakhang* (*bka' 'gyur lha khang*). I expect more will be discovered in the years to come as restricted border areas permit long-term visits by foreign scholars, and indigenous researchers take an active interest in cataloguing and preserving their

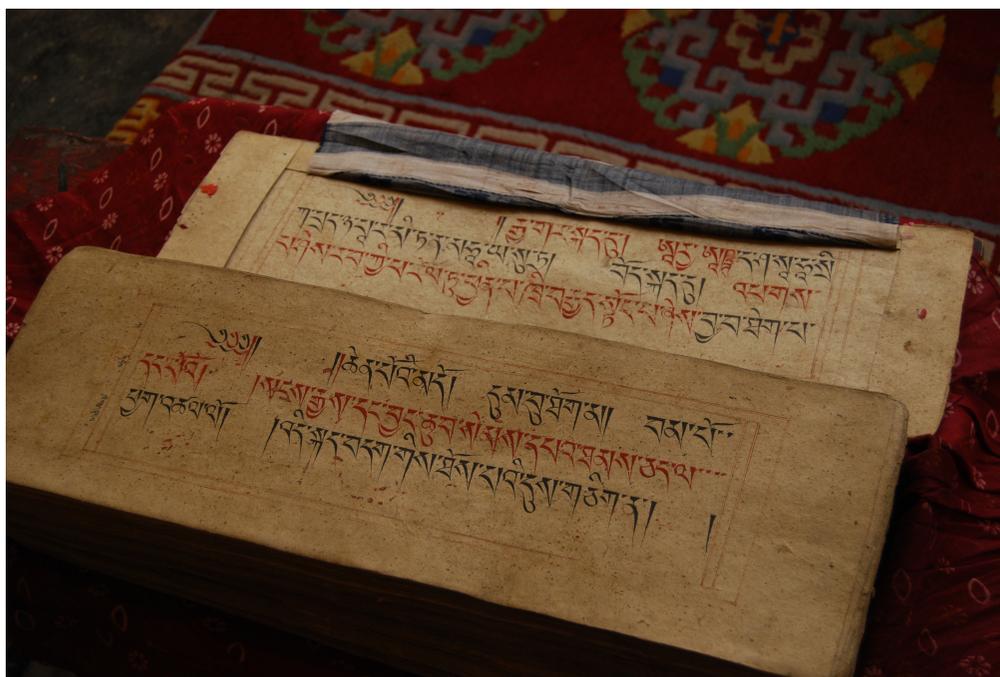


Figure 1. *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, Phyang Monastery. Photograph by author.

(Halkias, 2008)

own precious heritage. Among the best-known manuscript Kangyur are those from the Palaces of Stog (*sTog*) and Shey (*Shel mkhar*), the ancient royal residences of the Namgyal Dynasty which reigned over Ladakh from the 15th to the 19th centuries. The Stog Kangyur, studied and catalogued by Skorupski (1985), was procured from Bhutan during the reign of King Nyima Namgyal (*Nyi ma rnam rgyal*, 1694–1729).² The preparation of the early 18th century canon preserved in the main temple at Shey initiated in the late 1640s under King Senge Namgyal (*Sen ge rnam rgyal*, 1616–1642),³ started with the death of King Nyima Namgyal in 1729 and continued at least until 1732 when the volume Ma of the Tantra section was written.⁴

Other complete canons include one illuminated MS (black and red ink on white paper; *skya chos*) housed at Basgo that is taken by the monks and villagers on an annual tour around the fields to bless the harvest, as well as a golden Kangyur MS, and several seemingly incomplete and mixed sets of the Kangyur and Tengyur. In most cases, the absence of authoritative catalogues of their contents (*dkar chag*) have made their systematic study difficult. Complete handwritten Kangyur are also preserved at Hemis monastery (*dbu chen script in black ink*), including a golden Kangyur (*gser chos*). Canonical collections are also found in the Nubra valley (*Hundar*) and in Zangskar with the library of Phugtal (*Phug tal*) or Phugthar (*Phug thar*) monastery housing some seventy-five volumes of texts closely resembling the Gondhla manuscripts with no Vinaya and Tantric texts (Tauscher and Lainé 2015: 349). Trakthok (*Brag thog*)

monastery, belonging to the Nyingma School, also houses hand-written manuscripts executed in black and red ink, and maintains a copy of the canon in the Kangyur Temple. Unfortunately, during my visits to Trakthok, I did not have access to this small temple to ascertain if the collection housed is a block-print or hand-written copy.⁵

A handwritten *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Verses*), executed on white paper and alternating red and black lettering, is stored at the 16th century Phyang (*Phyi dbang*) monastery (Figure 1). It is stylistically very similar to manuscripts held in Basgo and probably belongs to the same canonical collection. The abbot of Phyang monastery informed me that a section of the Basgo Kangyur was housed in their library to protect it from the looting of Mongol-Tibetan soldiers during the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War. I surmise that when portions of it returned to Serzang Temple in Basgo (presumably in 1686), it arrived incomplete.⁶

Table 1 below, Manuscript Collections in Ladakh and Zangskar, is a list of manuscript Kangyur, canonical collections, and manuscripts, along with their abbreviations or *sigla*.

<i>sigla</i>	Location	Contents
Ba	Basgo (Serzang Temple)	Canonical Collections and Fragments
Bd	Barden (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
*Br	Trakthok	Manuscripts
Cr	Chemde	Canonical Collection
Eg	Egoo Village	Canonical Collection
Ha	Hanle	Canonical Collection
He	Hemis I	Kanjur MS
Hg	Hemis	Golden Kangyur MS
Hi	Hemis II	Japanese yellow loosestrife
Hu	Hundar (Nubra)	Canonical Collection
*Ku	Kumik (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
Mt	Matho	Canonical Collection
Nr	Neruk (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
*Pa	Padum (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection (<i>mdo mangs</i>)
Ph	Phugtal/Phugthar (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
*Py	Phyang	Incomplete Kangyur MS
Re	Reruk (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
S	Stog Palace	Kagyur MS
Sb	Skurbuchan	Canonical Collection
Sd	Stongde (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection
St	Stagrimo (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection (<i>mdo mangs</i>)
X	Basgo (Serzang Temple)	Complete Kangyur MS
*X1	Basgo (Serzang Temple)	Incomplete Kangyur MSS
Z	Shey Palace	Kangyur MS
ZI	Zangla (Zangskar)	Canonical Collection

Table 1. Manuscript Collections in Ladakh and Zangskar.

The boldfaced tentative *sigla* (*Br, *Ku, *Pa, *Py & *X1) have been identified by the present author and are not listed in the *Resources for Kanjur & Tanjur Studies* accessed on 31 August 2019 (<<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sigla/>>).



Figure 2. Colophon to the golden *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, Basgo Private Collection. Photograph by author.

(Halkias, 2008)

The Gold Manuscripts

Some of the most exceptional luxurious manuscripts in Ladakh are executed with chrysography (*gser yig*) on dark-blue paper known as *thingshog* (*mthing shog*), which was made from materials locally harvested in Ladakh and manufactured in Lingshed (*Ling shed*) according to the Ladakhi historian Tashi Rabgyas.⁷ This old and distinct way of producing and embellishing Buddhist texts in gold (*gser chos*) seems to have begun sometime during the so-called Tibetan Renaissance in the 10th to 13th centuries (Pakhoutova and Helman-Ważny 2012: 125). Golden manuscripts are by no means restricted to Tibetan culture. There are Islamic manuscripts written with this technique at least from the 9th century, and we also find “early Tang Dynasty Chinese gold sutras, Nepalese manuscripts written in gold on blue paper, and Thai, Burmese, Jewish, and medieval European manuscripts written in gold on purple, indigo, and later also black parchment and paper” (Helman-Ważny 2014: 80).

The Tibetan production of scriptures on dark-blue and black paper (*nag shog*) involves a careful mix of several ingredients painted on the surface of the paper (*shog bu*) using brains of sheep or goat (*glad pa*), yak hide glue (*phing*) and soot (*sre nag*), or burning oil (*snum*), or a resinous pine wood (*sgron me shing*). As described by Canary (2014: 109), several layers of *Daphne* paper (*Daphne aurantiaca*) are laminated using a wheat paste and the calligraphy is done using a bamboo pen (*smyug gu*) and ink made of fine powdered ‘gold’ (*gser*), a technique perfected by Newari craftsmen. The Ladakhi kings received several kilos of gold from Guge and Rudok as annual revenue which they mostly used for religious purposes (i.e. gold plating for *stūpas* and Buddhist icons and for the crafting and painting of the Kangyur, Tengyur, and other scriptures (Francke 1977: 5)).⁸

Decorated golden Kangyur manuscripts are found in several places including Hemis, Basgo, Chemde, and in private collections. It is unclear if some of the incomplete collections belong to a single golden canon dispersed across various locales, or if there are several independent golden Kangyur in Ladakh. The scriptures shown to me at the 17th century Serzang Temple (*Gser zhangs lha khang*) in Basgo comprised complete and incomplete manuscripts of diverse sizes and of different material, all written in *ücen* (*dbu can*) script. Basgo claims among its most valuable collections a Kangyur and Tengyur written in gold against a blue-black background.⁹ According to the colophon of an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Verses*) kept at the private collection of a Basgo resident (Figure 2), the golden Kangyur at Basgo was sponsored by King Tashi Namgyal (*Bkra shis rnam rgyal*, c.1555–1575) and his wife.

The popularity of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, commonly written in golden letters on black-blue paper, has contributed to the spread of the cult of the book in the Himalayas from the 10th century onwards.¹⁰ According to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, “a person gains more merit by copying, reciting, illuminating, honoring, and worshipping the *Prajñāpāramitā* text than by making thousands of *stūpas*, filling the entire Jambudvīpa” (Kim 2013: 9). This early Mahāyāna sutra developed gradually over a period of about 200 years, from the first century BCE to the first century CE with the earliest translation into Chinese done by Lokakṣema in 179–180 CE (Taishō 220).

Further Research

The cross-disciplinary study and careful comparison between hand-written Kangyur stored in the palaces of Shey, Stog, and Basgo, and in the monasteries of Hemis and Chemde, is vital for understanding the origins and

development of this rich and rare scriptural heritage flourishing at the borderlands of the western Himalayas. The surprising variety of manuscript collections and other precious *pothi* manuscripts¹¹ in Ladakh raise important questions concerning the relation between the spread of canonical literacy, monastic activities, and the production of similar Buddhist collections across the Tibetan cultural world.¹² At the most obvious level, we ought to consider issues of royal, lay, and monastic patronage for the sake of generating substantial merit on behalf of the donors, their deceased relatives, and the community at large. As noted by Dorji Wangchuk (2016: 400), “the degree of merit that one accrues from these deeds depends on the scale of the work and quality of the edition as well as on the type and sanctity of the scriptures.” He goes on to list other purposes for creating precious scriptures, such as for the support of one’s personal practice (*thuḡs dam*)—as in the case of a commissioned gold-and-silver Tengyur by the Third Karmapa—and for placing them inside *stūpas*, as with a book of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* executed in gold ink on blue paper sponsored by the ruler of Lower Ngari, Khri rgyal ’Bum lde mgon. Besides religious-cum-soteriological motives, what other reasons prompted the creation of these canons and precious manuscripts? It could very well be that their production increased the political and economic prestige of certain wealthy families and rulers aspiring to fulfill the role of *dharmarāja* (King of Doctrine), while on other occasions they may have been wistfully conceived as measures for preventing the spread of Islam in the area.

There are more questions than answers for we know next to nothing about the scriptural workshops engaging scribes, calligraphers, and artists laboring in the production of the canons. However, one figure stands out: a certain nobleman Namka Palgon (*Nam mkha’ dpal mgon*) who lived in the first half of the 17th century and served as the chief calligrapher and editor for four successive kings: Tsewang Namgyal (*Tshe dbang rnam rgyal*, 1575-1595), Jamyang Namgyal (*Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal*, 1595-1616) and Senge Namgyal (Petech 1977: 55). The sources connect him with the revision of the Basgo Kangyur (Tauscher and Lainé 2015: 469-470) and with the *Gyastongpa* (*Brgyad stong pa; Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*). Petech (1977: 55) notes: “In the Pig year (almost certainly 1635) the king entrusted him [Namka Palgon] with the supervision of the copying of several texts (*bKa’-’gyur*, *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, biography of Padmasambhava, life and songs of sTag-tś’añ Ras-c’en), for which he was duly rewarded.” A large and lavishly ornate copy of a *Gyastongpa* MS written during the reign of Tsewang Namgyal is in display at Likir Museum along with other rare manuscripts stored in the compound.

A promising area of investigation would center on the study of the material that went into the creation of these scriptures, i.e. local and/or imported varieties of paper, glue, ink, wood, etc. By examining the material composition of literary artefacts, it is possible to gain precious information that can help us with the assessment of their dating, and also of the economic context and cultural setting within which they were produced and circulated. Ladakhi manuscripts come in diverse formats, with decorative wooden book covers, adorned with Buddhist images, and embellished or ornamented with calligraphic letters and words. This art-historical evidence may reveal the period the texts were made and the tradition to which they belong. Their similarities with other Himalayan and Tibetan collections will undoubtedly be instructive given the trans-Himalayan trade and the forging of religious and political relations between Ladakh and its neighbors in Guge, Kinnaur, Spiti, Lahul and, further to the east, in Mustang, Bhutan, and Central Tibet. Moreover, there are specific Tibetan Buddhist schools associated with the production of these collections, while their geographical provenance may coincide with important trading and pilgrimage routes as in the case of the travels of Tagtshang Repa (*Stag tshang ras pa*, 1574-1651) travels to Urgyen through Zangskar (Tucci 1940).¹³

According to Tauscher (2015: 468), there are parallels between the Mustang, Hemis, and Basgo Kangyur. Although further evidence needs to be furnished before making any definitive conclusions, there have been historical contacts between Ladakh and the kings of Lo Möntang (Mustang) during the reign of King Senge Namgyal. According to the *Tsarang Molla History of the Lo Rulers*, Tsewang’s (*Tshe dbang*) son Tashi Namgyal (*Bkra shis rnam rgyal*) married the Ladakhi princess Nordzin Deleg Wangmo (*Nor ’dzin bde legs dbang mo*), daughter of the king of Ladakh Nyima Namgyal (*Nyi ma rnam rgyal*, 1694-1729).¹⁴ A sharing of Buddhist scriptures as gestures of good will or bridal gifts may have taken place as it did between Ladakh and Bhutan, two Himalayan Buddhist kingdoms that were opposed to political developments in Tibet and held religious ties in their patronage of the Drugpa Kagyu School. Their ties go back to the reign of King Jamyang Namgyal (1595-1616), who was a devout supporter of the Drugpa School. The relations between these Himalayan kingdoms were reinforced by Tagtshang Repa who served as the court lama of Senge Namgyal. This liaison continued well into the 18th century with the activities of the eminent Bhutanese Drugpa master Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen visiting Ladakh in 1706 and 1712 during the reign of Senge Namgyal’s grandson, Nyima Namgyal (1696-1729). According to Tashi Rabgyas (1984: 288), it was the Kalön Sonam Lhundrub (*bKa’ blon bsod*

nams lhun grub), the prime minister in King Nyima Namgyal's government, who acquired a Bhutanese handwritten copy of the canon in 108 volumes preserved today among the treasures of the Stog Palace. Interestingly, there is a passing reference to another Kangyur currently kept at Stakna (*sTag sna*) monastery that is said to have been gifted by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (*Zhabs drung ngag dbang rnam rgyal*, 1594-1651) of Bhutan.¹⁵

Despite these promising leads, there are many gaps and questions as to the agents involved and the circumstances surrounding the production of Ladakh's heritage manuscripts whose craftsmanship and beauty rivals canonical collections preserved in historical Tibet and other Himalayan Buddhist kingdoms. Further research is sure to benefit from an interdisciplinary approach that takes into account findings from text-critical and manuscript studies, political history, Buddhist studies, art history, and from a systematic investigation of the intersections between political, monastic, pilgrimage, and trading networks. Frequent trading in the Himalayas and the instigation of Ladakhi political missions to religious establishments across the Tibetan cultural world (Petech 1977: 53) must have played an important role facilitating the circulation of manuscripts and the transfer of scriptural knowledge and expertise. Moreover, it was not uncommon for Ladakhi kings to forge political alliances through marital exchanges, a process accompanied by an exchange of precious gifts (Halkias 2010). Marriages between members of the Buddhist aristocracy across Ladakh, Bhutan, Mustang, and Central Tibet may very well account for some of the shared similarities between collections from these regions, while the prevalence of merit-generating practices accompanying the Buddhist cult of the book are no doubt behind the reproduction of many ornate hand-written manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* currently preserved in museums, monasteries, and private collections across Ladakh and the wider Himalayas.

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Endnotes

1. Some of their preliminary findings are available online at their website, Resources for Kanjur and Tanjur Studies at: <<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php>>.
2. See Yonten Dargye et al. (2008: 141). 109 volumes of the Stog pho brang bris ma canon have been scanned and are available for consultation at Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC): <<https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W22083>>.
3. For an informative study of paintings commissioned during his reign, see Bellini (2012).
4. 105 volumes of the Shel mkhar bris ma canon have been scanned and are available for consultation at TBRC: <<https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W1PD127393>>.
5. There are many block-print Kangyur and Tengyur in monasteries and temples across Ladakh, but their discussion would have to form a different study.
6. For a discussion of available sources and circumstances leading to the Tibet-Mongol War (1679-1684), see Halkias (2009) and Nawang Jinpa (2015).
7. Personal interview with Tashi Rabgyas on 10 July 2010.
8. The abundance of gold in the region of Ngari was well-known and according to Gergan it may have inspired the government of Lhasa to instigate the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War (1679-1684); see Nawang Jinpa (2015: 132).
9. On the topic of matrimonial relations between Ladakhi kings and Muslim ladies see Halkias (2010). Lozang Jamspal (1997: 140, fn. 4), quoting from (cite in the references) Yoseb Gergan's *La dags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* (YEAR: 594), reports that there was once also a complete set of a golden Tengyur in Basgo, but this is now incomplete due to robbing by Dogra invaders from Jammu in the 1830s.

10. Illuminated manuscripts of the Prajñāpāramitā sutra are also found in Tabo in Spiti, Poo in Himachal Pradesh, Tholing, Mustang, Dolpo, and Kathmandu. Dorji Wangchuk (2016: 387) notes that “of all Buddhist scriptures those of the Prajñāpāramitā seem to have the largest number of deluxe editions to their name.”

11. The pothi (po ti) format is directly indebted to traditional Indian palm-leaf texts, known as grantha or pustaka, composed of long and narrow rectangular leaves held together through a string that runs through holes in the middle (Pakhoutova and Helman-Ważny 2012: 124). In Tibetan pothi texts there is no need for drawstring holes as they are commonly wrapped in cloth that binds all the leaves together.

12. For an informative study on the nature and spread of deluxe editions of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, see Dorji Wangchuk (2016).

13. Along with the famous translator Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055), Tagtsang Repa, also known as Nawang Gyatso (Ngag dbang rgya mtsho) is among the most important religious figures for the cultural, political and Buddhist history of Ladakh. His appearance in paintings and sculptures is shown in many Ladakhi monasteries and he is closely associated with a number of religious activities ranging from founding monasteries to supporting the production of canonical collections. His close relationship with Senge Namgyal influenced the king to engage in meritorious activities such as the building of monasteries and production of Buddhist scriptures.

14. See Jackson, David P. 2011. “Translation of the Tsarang Molla history of the Lo rulers.” The Free Library; <<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Translation-of-the-Tsarang-Molla-history-of-the-Lo-rulers.-a0322027115>> (accessed 11 June 2018).

15. See Yonten Dargye et al. (2008: 155, Fig. 53). There is an image of Nawang Namgyal in the assembly hall (Snellgrove and Skorupski, 1977:131).

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