The official introduction of paper in Tibetan administration in 744/745

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In the Old Tibetan Annals (OTA) one can find a number of terms which still are difficult to understand. In some cases the meaning of the word is not known while in other cases, the literal meaning of a term is evident, however, the details and connotations it once might have suggested are unknown. This is even more so the case with some terms referring to administrative measures reported in OTA, where only the facts are noted whereas the details remain in the dark. In the following I will investigate the terms khram, khram dmar-po, khram-skya and shog-shog ser-po.

khram ‘tally’

The tally is a simple and ingenious device for concluding contracts. By cutting notches, indentations or incisions into a piece of wood in duplicate and by breaking or by cutting the wooden stick, each party is provided with its matching piece of documentation. The use of the tally was widespread in the administration in our medieval times (German: ‘Kerbholz’, French: ‘taille’) when great part of the population was illiterate. In Tang dynasty China, too, a variety of tallies is known (Des Rotours 1952) and the tradition of the basic idea of two matching parts of the tally survives to the day, however, in most cases it seems to serve the purpose of identification.

In early Tibetan state organisation and administration the khram ‘tally’, lit. ‘notch’, ‘indentation’ or ‘indentation’ in wood had been widespread, too. Apart from the Old Tibetan Annals reference of khram is also found in the sBa-bzhed (R.A. Stein 1961: 41, l. 3-5) with regard to the monastery of bSam-yas: glo ’bur rnam na bsm las byongs pa’i skor lhag ma ’di na ’di yod khyis rtis yi ge khram shing sgrom gang de’i srung ma khram khang gi rgyal po / phyi’i chos skyong dpe har la gsal “The
In OTA I, the version prepared for a civil board (Uray 1975: 165) *khram* is once\(^4\) attested with reference to the *khab-so*,\(^5\) lit. the ‘purveyors to the bTsan-po’s household’.\(^6\) Further more it appears three times\(^7\) in the compound *thang-khram/tang-khram*. From the context, it is hard to decide on the correct translation of the term *thang/tang* which covers the meaning of ‘authority’, ‘rate’, ‘value/s’, ‘valuation’. However, it can be observed that the *thang-khram* had been made on the occasion of changes in the territorial division of Tibet which affected also the offices and officials. In one out of these cases a *thang-khram* explicitly had been established upon the change of officials.

A somewhat more lose combination of *khram* with regard to *thang* is found in an Old Tibetan funeral ritual. Lalou translated *thang* by “valeur” and *khram* by “inventaire”. With regard to the two-pieces system of the tally, it is noteworthy in this attestation that a tally (? or: the two pieces of one tally) had been handed over to each of the two parties.\(^8\)

In Central Asian sites formerly occupied by the Tibetans, Marc Aurel Stein had unearthed Tibetan tallies in great number, differing in size and varying in form, dating from the second half of the eighth century at the earliest.\(^9\) However, despite the great number of finds of incised and in-

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\(^4\) I.O. 750, l. 110/year 707-708: mngan gyi khab soe khram spos “they changed the tally of the tax-officers under the mNgan [fiscal governor]”.

\(^5\) In this entry *khram* could possibly refer to *thang-khram*, too.

\(^6\) I follow Uray 1983: 546 and fn. 3 who interpreted the *khab-so* as “civil servants who levied taxes for the central government”.

\(^7\) I.O. 750, l. 171/year 721-722: mngan dang / slungs stod smad gyi thang khram chen po btab “he established the great tally of authority of the mNgan and the post offices/officials of sTod/West and sMad/East”; l. 200/year 728-729: mngan chen po bryad las / bzer bcos pa’ti tang khram btab “he established the tally (or: tallies) of authority of the Great mNgans who had been reduced from eight to four” and l. 239/year 742-743: shud pu khong zung dang / lang kro khong rtsan gnyis / ‘byung ‘jug rtsis bgyiste thang khram btab “after an account/writing concerning the dismissal and appointment of Shud-phu khong-zung and Lang-kro khong-rtsan, the two, had been made, the tally of authority was established”. For the wider context of these measures and the translations compare Uray 1962: 353-360, especially n. 16.

\(^8\) Cf. Lalou 1953: 357, PT 1042, l. 104-106: rgyal gya is thang bcad de khram / gnyis bgyis te // gcig ni zha ‘bring rje bo thang chen po la gti d / khram gcig ni skyibs lugs la gti d “the rgyal decided on the authority and made two tallies. One [tally] he handed over to the great authority, the chief-servant, one tally he handed over to the skyibs-sheep.” On the role of the skyibs-sheep as “guide sur le chemin du mort” cf. R.A. Stein 1971: 484.

\(^9\) For illustrations e.g. Stein 1921: IV, pl. CLXXI. The documents are kept in the British Museum and were first researched by F.W. Thomas in 1927-1933 (s. Thomas TLTD
scribed wooden tallies, the attestation of the term khram on the tallies themselves is scarce. There are, however, a few exceptions to be noted in the following.

Takeuchi’s observation of inscribed wooden tallies being formed of a khram-ma ‘mother-tally’ and khram-bu ‘child-tally’, with the khram-bu cut off on the right bottom corner, is especially interesting (Takeuchi 2003: 49 and pl. 8b). Obviously the tally had developed from an original type with two identical matching pieces into a new type with two pieces of different size with the khram-bu serving for both, identification and receipt.

The term khram-tshan appears in land registers among the paper finds from Central Asia. Thomas translated it (TLTD 2: 88) as “Khram-account”, whereas Takeuchi (1994: 853-854) could show that khram-tshan was the designation of “units” [of people]. One could perhaps translate it more precisely as “a unit of people (tshan) registered on one tally”.

khram dmar-po ‘the Red Tally’,10 n. of a conscription

The earliest dated textual attestation of a khram, is found in OTA I, where a special tally, the khram dmar-po is mentioned altogether six times in the following entries:

- Year 690/691, winter: rtsang chen pʰa’i j khram dmar po btab pʰa “They established the Red Tally11 of the men/males (pʰa) of rTsan-ch’en” (I.O. 750, l. 55).
- Year 692/693, winter: khram dmar po btab / “They established the Red Tally” (I.O. 750, l. 61).
- Year 708/709, summer: sku srungs gyi khram dmar po bṛtsis / “They made an account (or: writing) of the Red Tally of the Guards” (I.O. 750, l. 116).

1951-1955). Tsuguhito Takeuchi presently prepares a complete publication of all the wooden documents – not all being tallies – in total around 2 300 pieces.

The following in part is a revised and enlarged version of my paper “On the Red Tally in the Old Tibetan Annals” presented on the occasion of the 8th IATS Seminar, Bloomington, Indiana 1998.

10 Bacot and Thomas (DTH: 37) translate khram dmar-po as “le registre rouge” and refer to khra-ma “register, index” in a footnote. There is no doubt that khram and khra ma are related and khram certainly is a short form of khra ma (like e.g. yig and yi ge). So far, this meaning of khra-ma is only presented by Csoma de Kőros and it is noteworthy that khra ma in this meaning is not found in Old Tibetan texts. However, the word khra ma ‘judicial settlement’ is attested in legal documents dating from the 18th and 19th centuries (cf. Schuh 1981: 114, doc. XII dated 1773, l. 8: khra yig ‘letter of judicial settlement’; p. 196, doc. XXVI dated 1830, ll. 2, 22-23: phra ma and p. 227, doc. XXX, dated 1861, l. 6: khra, l. 20: khra ma). It may be noted that khra ma occurs also in the spelling phra ma. One can frequently observe the spelling pʰr for kʰr (and the reverse) or gr for tr, but an investigation in order to explain the interchange of these clusters so far has not been made.
Year 712/713, winter: *ru gsun gyi khram dmar pho brtis/* “They made an account (or: writing) of the Red Tally of the Three Horns” (I.O. 750, l. 136).

Year 718/719, summer: *dags poe khram dmar pho btab/* “They established the Red Tally of Dags-po” (I.O. 750, l. 157).

Year 744/745, winter: *btsan po bkas khram dmar po shog shog ser po la spes* “by the order of the bTsan-po the Red Tally had been changed into yellow paper (I.O. 750, l. 248).

This list shows that the Red Tally was either ‘founded’, ‘established’, ‘fixed’, ‘drawn up’ (*btab*) or ‘counted’, ‘incised’, ‘written’ (*brtis*). and that it had been changed [from wood] to yellow paper by the order of the bTsan-po [Khri IDe-gtsug-brtsan]. It can be observed that out of six times, the Red Tally was dealt with four times in the winter assembly and twice in the summer assembly. It is important to note that the Red Tally is mentioned with regard to great territorial units like rTsang-chen, the Three Horns (*ru gsun*) which at that time were the territorial units of Tibet proper, further with the former principality of Dags-po and once with the Guards.

Therefore it is unlikely that the Red Tally refers to a simple tally. The usage of the term rather points to an administrative measure of greater dimension. Uray (1963: 206) was the first to elucidate the term in remarking “‘the red notch’ of Dags-po, i.e. a kind of conscription known with reference to territories of the four ‘horns’ only” (transl. HU). In order to provide the complete details, I shall investigate this term more closely in the wider context of OTA I. The entry of the year 743/744 preceding the last attestation of the Red Tally of the year 744/745 allows us to deduce a more specific meaning ‘conscription’. In this particular year we can even observe the sequence of measures that led to the establishment of the Red Tally.

a) Year 743/744, summer: *pha los gyi byang bu bor* / “he [the Great Councillor] discarded the wooden tablets [of the registration] of the male able-bodied adults” (I.O. 750, l. 243).

b) Year 743/744, winter: *skyi rnamsu rgod g.yung gyi pha los cen po bkug* / “in rNams in Skyi the male able-bodied adults obliged to military and those obliged to corvée service were convoked for the great registration” (I.O. 750, l. 243-244).

c) Year 744/745, summer: *yul yul dmag myi khram skyi brtis* / “the ‘Whitish Tally’ of the soldiers of each region was written” (I.O. 750, l. 246).

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12 G. Uray (1972: 27) translates *bor* differently by “were laid down” in the meaning of ‘were prepared’.

13 For this interpretation of *pha-los* see Uebach and Zeisler (2008: 315-318).

14 It is hard to decide whether here *yul* is used in a general way or whether it refers to the defined territorial units, the *yul-side/yul-tshan* (cf. Takeuchi 1994; Uebach 1997a).
d) Year 744/745, winter: skyi sho ma rar ... dmag myi mkhos chen po bgyiṣte / “In Sho-ma-ra in sKyi they established the great administration (or: institution) of the soldiers” (I.O. 750, l. 247-246).

e) Year 744/745, winter, immediately following the above entry d): btsan po bkas khram dmar po shog shog ser po la spos “by the order of the bTsan-po the Red Tally had been changed to yellow paper” (I.O. 750, l. 248).

Summing up the above data, it becomes evident that in the summer of the year 743/744 the register of the male able-bodied adults formerly made with the help of wooden tablets had been discarded. Therefore in the winter of the same year both, the male able-bodied adults obliged to military service and those obliged to corvée service were convoked for a great registration in order to obtain actual data. On the basis of these data, in the following summer of the year 744/745 the tally of the soldiers only, was written in the “Whitish Tally”. Thereafter, in the assembly of the winter in 744/745 the great administration (or: institution) was established and the bTsan-po decreed that the Red [wooden] Tally should be substituted by [the one written in black and white on] yellow paper.

As to administrative measures preceding the establishment of the Red Tallies in the earlier entries it can be stated:

- Year 690/691: The Red Tally was established for rTsang-chen, a territory conquered only after a rebellion had been quelled in 687/688. The event took place at a site of rTsang-chen.

- Year 692/693: Though in the preceding year administrative measures are recorded, some of which seem to have specifically relevance to military affairs, such as the zhugs-long dmar-po — a hapax legomenon, the meaning of which has been open to guesswork — it cannot be said with certainty to what unit the Red Tally of this year refers.

- Year 708/709: This is the first reference of the Guards (sku-srungs). It shows, that the Red Tally was established also for a specific military unit.

- Year 712/713: This is the first reference of Tibet’s territorial division into Three Horns (ru gsum). The establishment of the Red Tally was an overall military reorganisation of Tibet proper, which was preceded by the convocation of many male able-bodied adults for registration (pha-los mang-pho).

- Year 718/719: The establishment of the Red Tally of the former principality of Dags-po marks its complete inclusion into the

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15 Uray (1960: 42-43 and fn. 22) by rights takes the term to refer to a conscription, too. Further he refutes Thomas' translation “fire-tidings [corps]”.

administration of Tibet. It was preceded by the marriage alliance of the imperial princess Khri-mo-stengs and the vassal ruler of Dags-po in 688/689.16

This review shows that the Red Tally was made for regions conquered or otherwise included into the empire, like gTsang-chen and Dags-po. It was also established for special units within the army, like the Guards (and perhaps the zhugs-long). In cases where the Red Tally was established for the whole of Tibet (ru-gsum or later ru-bzhi) it was preceded by the convocation of the male able-bodied adults for registration necessary among other (cf. fn. 18) to gain actual data.

As to the qualification of the tally by ‘red’ there are no clues whether it refers to a notch or an incision of a specific form or to a tally-stick showing red paint or whether it was called ‘red’ only because of the general association of the red colour with blood/army. Interestingly, A.H. Francke (1921: 1463) noted that some wooden tablets are “marked by a broad stroke of red colour, running around the middle… On one of these documents the red stroke was apparently painted with blood”. These remarks in part are confirmed by Takeuchi (2003: 49), who also noted that some khram show a faded red paint.

khram-skya ‘the Whitish Tally’, n. of a conscription written [in black and white] on paper

The term khram-skya is translated by Bacot (DTH: 52) by “registre gris”. However, the translation of skya as ‘grey’ is not corroborated by the dictionaries.

According to D. and J. Jackson (1984: 92 and glossary) skya/skya-bo is ‘light’, ‘whitish’, ‘pale’; in combination with colours, e.g. ljang-skya ‘light green’, sngo-skya ‘light blue’ etc. while ‘grey’ in Tibetan is thal-kha lit. ‘ash-colour’, a combination of white + ink black (snag); ‘whitish grey’ thal-dkar, is a combination of white + grey; ‘bluish grey’ thal-sngon, is a combination of whitish grey + light blue (mtthing-skya).17

17 An interesting reference of skya is also contained in the following remark of dPa’-bo (21b1), first indicated by R.A. Stein 1984: 267, who did not translate skya: yang tha (Stein emended to thang) shing skya chu ris kyi yi ge ’bangs phal pa raems la guang skad “de plus on dit qu’au people ordinaire on donne un insigne (portant) l’image d’un pin et d’un cours d’eau”. This quote of dPa’-bo seems to be quoted from mKhas-pa lDe’u’s text. He enumerates the shing skya chu ris kyi yi ge “the ensign of pale wood with a design of water-waves” as the last, i.e. the most inferior of the six minor ensigns (lDeKh256:4). Therefore, the text presented by dPa’-bo does not require an emendation. My interpretation is: “The most inferior (yang tha) ensign, [a piece of] pale wood with a design of water-waves is said to have been given to the common subjects.” I wonder whether this quote refers to an ensign or whether it describes a tally.

Bettina Zeisler kindly informed me about the following reference of shing skya in the Ge-sar epos. In the context of the birth of the 18 heros/relatives of Ge-sar, also the birth of skYa-ba rgod-po, an ‘uncle’ of Ge-sar (Stein 1959: 56) is described: shing
The literal translation of *khram-skya* therefore should be ‘whitish/light/pale tally’. It is hard to imagine at once to what it might refer. There is, however, another Tibetan term, *skya-ris*, which provides a clue to the meaning of *skya* in the present case.

A sketch or an outline for a coloured painting is called *skya-ris* (TTC; D.+J. Jackson), lit. ‘drawing of whitish’ though it is usually done with charcoal (or later also with pencil) on a whitish underground, either on a substance applied on concrete or fabric or else simply on paper. Thus it corresponds to what we call ‘drawing in black and white’, ‘drawing in ink’ or ‘drawing in charcoal’. The term *skya-ris* refers to a drawing, but the concept is expressed quite differently from what we are used to. In the Tibetan expression, the whitish, colourless grounding is highlighted while in Western languages the contrast of black and white or the medium is referred to.\(^\text{18}\)

With regard to the fact that OTA I record the change from Red Tally to yellow paper, the account/writing of the ‘Whitish Tally’ reported in the year of 744/745 therefore may be taken to designate that it was written in black and white on paper.\(^\text{19}\) In other words, the Whitish Tally was a tally only in name.

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\(^{18}\) This is valid also for the term *skya chos* ‘Dharma-texts written or printed on whitish paper’. This term is attested in a text by sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho on the different ways of editing Dharma-texts presented by Ch. Cüppers in his paper “Book production in Tibet during the second half of the 17th century” on the occasion of the colloquium “Edition, éditions: l’écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir”, 29-31 mai 2008, Paris. Compare also the entry in TTC s.v. *skya chos* where the term is explained by “shog bu dkar por snag tshas bris pa’am snag tshas spar blub pa’i chos dpe”, ‘Dharma-text/book written or printed in black ink on white paper’.

\(^{19}\) The very fragmentary OTA II, a version prepared for a military board (Uray 1975: 165), also records the period of 743-745 in which the change from Red Tally to yellow paper took place. However, this record of the events is far less detailed than the version of OTA I and quite importantly, there is no mention of the Red Tally and its change to yellow paper, at all. Nevertheless, it is in accord with OTA I as to the date and the fact that the registration of the male able-bodied adults had been made. The relevant passages read: Year 743/744, summer: bod yul gyi pha los gyi mgo mdzad / “he/they made the beginning of the male able-bodied adults’ registration of Tibet” (Br.M.Or. 8212, l. 1); Year 743/744, winter: pha los bgyis pa / “they had made (i.e. finished) the registration of the male able-bodied adults” (Br.M.Or. 8212, l. 2); Year 744/745, winter: skyi sho ma rar … ru bzhi mkhos bgyis pa / “In Sho-ma-ra in skyi they had established the administration (or: institution) of the Four Horns” (Br.M.Or. 8212, l. 3).

A deviation from OTA I is to be observed in the report for the year 744/745. Instead of *dmag myi mkhos chen po* “the great administration (or: institution) of the soldiers” we find here *ru bzhi mkhos* “the administration (or: institution) of the Four Horns”. One may argue that in the version serving a military board, it is understood that soldiers are referred to. However, more likely the phrasing is to be explained by the fact, that the administrative organisation of the soldiers is made in thousand-districts of a ‘Horn’. Therefore obviously the administrative measures of
shog-shog ser-po ‘yellow paper’

The entry of the year 744/745, it is worth stressing, provides the first dated attestation of the word shog ‘paper’ in Tibetan literature.

This is especially remarkable because according to the Tang Annals, the bTsan-po had asked among other things for paper and ink to be sent already in the year 648 (Pelliot 1961:6). Paper at least had been known for quite some time at the bTsan-po’s court, and perhaps had also been used in the correspondence with the Chinese court.

The duplication of the word shog in the term shog-shog cannot be explained with certainty. It may refer to ‘single sheets (or: pieces) of paper’, ‘a multitude of paper’, to ‘paper for each’ or to the material of paper in general (cf. Uray 1954).

References of paper in later literature with regard to imperial Tibet in general associate paper with yellow colour. Probably by yellow paper the coarse locally made paper known from the Central Asian finds is meant. Here it seems futile to discuss the exact colour of the yellow paper introduced in the administration of Tibet in 744/745 since so far not a single specimen has come to light.

The importance of the reference in OTA I lies in the change of material, from wood to paper. Taking into consideration the great number of Tibetan soldiers, a considerable amount of paper was necessary to carry out such a large scale administrative task.

However, there is not only the economic factor. Unless it is assumed that the paper was simply cut with indentations or inscribed with a system of strokes, the change of the Red Tally to yellow paper implies also an advanced literacy of the people involved in establishing the registration and at least basic knowledge of reading/writing among the recipients of the tally.

the years 743-745 should not be seen as being performed only to gain actual population data, but rather in order to take into account the great change of Tibet’s organisation from Three Horns into Four Horns, which were first mentioned in 733/734. This change first of all affected the military organisation and led to its great re-organisation as reflected in the wording of OTA II (cf. Uray 1960).

There remains, however, the fact that the term mkhos ‘administration’ or ‘institution’ apparently implies the establishment of the Red Tally is included. It may therefore be inferred that it also implies — though unrecorded — that a Tally for the soldiers of subdued countries and peoples is made whenever the mkhos for the respective country or people is reported. This is the case for Zhang-zhung, the ‘A-zha, Sum-ru, mDo-smad, mTong-sod, Khrom and Jang. It is understood that in expanding her empire, an enforcement by soldiers from countries subdued was vital for Tibet (cf. Uebach 2003).

J.P. Drège (1987) who had dedicated a number of studies to the research in the quality of paper found in Dunhuang, showed with respect to its colours that there are at least eight different shades of this colour yellow. Therefore in addition to a designation by appearance, he applied the more subtle designation according to the system of A. H. Munsell (1905), which originally had been introduced to describe the colours of the soil.
Finally it must be mentioned with regard to the system of two pieces inherent of the tally that so far it is unknown whether the Red Tally was a tally only in name or whether each soldier of the Tibetan army was provided with one part of the tally perhaps as a token for identification or whether each unit or subunit received the respective number of tallies for its files.

In concluding it can be said that the fact that paper was officially introduced in Tibet for administrative purposes in the military organisation does not come as a surprise, since her power was built on her military strength. However, it is only about twenty years later that we learn from OTA II and from the Zhol inscription that ‘letters’ (yi-ge), more precisely ‘certificates of rank’ had been issued. Again around twenty years later we are informed by dPa’-bo that the first edict of Khri Sron-lde-btsan was “written in gold on blue paper”.

Thus the question arises whether the official introduction of paper in Tibetan administration in 744/745 may have paved the way for the rapid spread of Buddhist scripture in the following decades. Or was it perhaps the reverse and an already existing literature, Buddhist and/or secular served as a model in introducing paper in Tibetan administration? At present this question remains but it is hoped that future research will contribute to answer it.

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dPa’-bo s. Lokesh Chandra
DTH s. Bacot, Jacques, F.W. Thomas, Ch. Toussaint
IITBS International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Halle (Saale)
I.O.750 Plts. 581-591, s. Spanien et Imaeda
JA Journal Asiatique, Paris
lDeKh s. mKhas-pa lDe’u
Li/Coblin s. Li, F.K. and Coblin, W.S.
LLV s. Francke, A.H. 1905-1941
MTH Monumenta Tibetan Historica
OTA Old Tibetan Annals
PIATS Proceedings of the International Association for Tibetan Studies
PT 1042 s. Lalou 1953 and Imaeda, Takeuchi, etc. 2001

21 A document of identity is generally imperative for a soldier, but perhaps the Tibetans had invented another device for identification.

22 Br.M.Or. 8212, ll. 59-61, Year 763/764: Cf. Richardson 1985, p. 20, l. 34; Li/Coblin 1987, inscr. II N, l. 37.

23 dPa’-bo (108b2): shog bu thing ga la gser gyis bris nas. See also Tucci 1950: 44, 95.


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