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'Translation Archaeology' in Practice: Researching the History of Buddhist Translation in Tibet

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Article abstract

This paper is a report on a 10-month period of archival research aimed at uncovering key data related to the translation of the Indian Buddhist canon into Tibetan, a remarkable achievement that took some 900 years to complete. Our previous research relying on secondary (English-language) sources found that much information was either missing or unsubstantiated. In particular, the seemingly simple question of how many translators were involved in producing the Tibetan canon could not be satisfactorily answered. Without this foundational data, it is impossible to determine how many texts each translator produced, or who the most prolific translators were in Tibet's history. Thus, Phase 1 of the archival research was to record the names, dates, and other relevant data of all the translators listed in the Tibetan canon. Phase 2 focused on researching biographical materials of some of the translators discovered during Phase 1. Pym calls this type of work "translation archaeology," which is concerned with answering questions such as "who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect" (Pym 1998: 5). The data gathered at the end of the research period is presented and analyzed, difficulties encountered are discussed, and areas of further research are suggested.

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‘Translation Archaeology’ in Practice: Researching the History of Buddhist Translation in Tibet

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RÉSUMÉ

Ce document constitue un rapport sur des activités de recherche archivistiques d’une durée de 10 mois visant à rassembler des informations sur la traduction du canon bouddhiste indien en tibétain, entreprise remarquable dont la réalisation a pris plus de 900 ans. Nos recherches antérieures effectuées sur la base de sources secondaires (en anglais) ont révélé qu’une grande partie des informations étaient manquantes ou peu étayées. Notamment, la question – en apparence simple – de savoir combien de traducteurs avaient participé à la traduction du canon en tibétain n’avait pas trouvé de réponse satisfaisante. Sans cette information fondamentale, il est impossible de déterminer combien de textes ont été traduits par chaque traducteur, ou encore quels étaient les traducteurs tibétains les plus prolifiques. La première phase de recherche consistait à consigner les noms, dates et autres renseignements pertinents sur les traducteurs énumérés dans le canon tibétain. La deuxième phase consistait à rassembler de la documentation biographique sur certains des traducteurs découverts pendant la première phase. Pym a dénommé ce travail « archéologie de la traduction », une discipline qui cherche des réponses aux questions suivantes : « Qui a traduit quoi, où, quand, comment, pour qui et dans quel but » (Pym 1998 : 5). Les données rassemblées à la fin de la recherche sont présentées et analysées, puis nous discutons les difficultés rencontrées tout en suggérant de futurs domaines de recherche.

ABSTRACT

This paper is a report on a 10-month period of archival research aimed at uncovering key data related to the translation of the Indian Buddhist canon into Tibetan, a remarkable achievement that took some 900 years to complete. Our previous research relying on secondary (English-language) sources found that much information was either missing or unsubstantiated. In particular, the seemingly simple question of how many translators were involved in producing the Tibetan canon could not be satisfactorily answered. Without this foundational data, it is impossible to determine how many texts each translator produced, or who the most prolific translators were in Tibet’s history. Thus, Phase 1 of the archival research was to record the names, dates, and other relevant data of all the translators listed in the Tibetan canon. Phase 2 focused on researching biographical materials of some of the translators discovered during Phase 1. Pym calls this type of work “translation archaeology,” which is concerned with answering questions such as “who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect” (Pym 1998: 5). The data gathered at the end of the research period is presented and analyzed, difficulties encountered are discussed, and areas of further research are suggested.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

histoire de la traduction, Tibet, bouddhisme tibétain, archéologie de la traduction, traduction du bouddhisme
translation history, Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, translation archaeology, Buddhist translation

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the Tibetans have one of the most remarkable histories of translation activity in the world. Starting in the 7th century and continuing for some 900 years, the Tibetans transmitted, preserved and translated the entire contents of the Indian Buddhist canon, a body of work involving hundreds of translators and amounting to more than 4,500 texts and 73 million words. As one Tibetologist notes, the production of the translations that became the Tibetan canon was "one of the greatest cultural exchanges that the world has ever seen" (Skilling 2009: 23).

Despite the vast scope and great historical importance of this translation activity, however, not to mention the rich source of material that such a history could yield, little research by translation scholars has been carried out regarding Tibet's translation tradition.[1] And while scholars of both Tibetan Studies and Buddhist Studies have extensively analyzed the results and effects of Buddhist translations on Tibetan society as a whole, no scholarly research has focused on the translators themselves as individuals.

This paper is a report on a ten-month period of archival research[2] aimed at uncovering key data related to translators (and translation) in Tibetan history. Our initial attempts to locate information about Tibet's historical translators (for example, how many individuals took part, who they were, the circumstances under which they worked, the methods they used, and the theories they developed) relied exclusively on materials produced by Tibetan and Buddhist Studies scholars in English.[3] Based on these materials, two papers were published on this topic (Raine 2010; 2011), but many lacunae and unanswered questions remained.

Indeed, research relying only on secondary-language materials quickly revealed that some of the most fundamental data on translators in Tibetan history was either missing or unsubstantiated. In particular, the seemingly simple question of how many translators were involved in producing the Tibetan canon could not be satisfactorily answered. This, then, became the obvious starting point for the archival research, which was divided into two phases. The first phase focused on collecting and recording the names, dates, and other relevant data of all the translators listed in the Tibetan canon. Phase 2 focused on researching biographical materials of some of the most prolific translators discovered during Phase 1.

When the entire research project is complete,[4] it is expected that the data collected will include the names of every translator listed in the Tibetan canon, their ethnicity, their dates of translation activity, and the number of texts that each person translated. In addition, through the biographical research undertaken in Phase 2 of the project, it is hoped that detailed information on their backgrounds and translation activities will be revealed. In this paper, the data gathered at the end of the initial ten-month period of research will be presented and analyzed, any difficulties encountered will be discussed, and areas of further research will be proposed.

2. Method and Theory in Translation History

In the literature on translation history as a field of study, its methodology, and its future prospects, a number of metaphors have been used. Santoyo writes that while much work has been done in translation history in recent years, there are still "vast

unknown territories" that remain to be researched. He likens translation history to a mosaic, in which there are still a great many small pieces, or tesserae, missing, as well as "blank spaces" that need to be filled in. "The full design is far from complete," he writes, and "much is still unknown" (Santoyo 2006: 13).

If this metaphor is applied to the translation history of Tibet, our research indicates that a great many "blank spaces" still remain, due to the paucity of research carried out by scholars of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, who often overlook the questions that a translation historian would ask, as well as by Translation Studies scholars. In many ways, Tibet is a terra incognita in academic research, since travelling and working in that region is both politically sensitive and – since 2008 – virtually impossible for non-Chinese. Further, Tibetan Studies is a relatively new academic discipline with only a small contingent of researchers fluent in Tibetan or Sanskrit, and their focus, so far, has not been on issues directly related to translation. Thus, the pieces of the mosaic that make up Tibet's translation history are still very few in number.

In *Method in Translation History*, Anthony Pym sets forth several principles for carrying out research into translation history, the second of which is that the translator as an individual should be "the central object of historical knowledge," not the translated text, nor its "contextual system, nor even its linguistic features" (Pym 1998: ix). Only by first understanding as much as possible about the "human translator" can one progress further in the field of historical research and address questions such as why translations were produced in a particular time and place ("social causation"), and the nature of the translators' relationships to their patrons and clients (their "social entourage") (Pym 1998: ix).

Pym terms this foundational work "translation archaeology," which is "concerned with answering all or part of the complex question of 'who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect.'" This work, he writes, could include "anything from the compiling of catalogues to the carrying out of biographical research on translators" (Pym 1998: 5). The metaphor of translation archaeology has proved to be an apt one in the present research, as will be seen below, but it should be noted that in Pym's work, the term "translation archaeology" is only mentioned briefly in his introduction and is not elaborated upon in any detail. In particular, whether "translation archaeology" differs from (or comprises one aspect of) translation history as a whole is not discussed.

We consider this term to refer to that aspect of translation history that is concerned primarily with researching specific *paratextual data*, such as the names of individual translators; the number of translators involved in a certain project or time period; biographical information on translators (ethnicity, dates of birth and death, translation training and educational background, etc.); who the most prolific translators in a given time period were, translator-to-text ratios, and other questions of a similar nature. This interpretation of Pym's term is based upon his own comments and on his insistence on the "human translator" as a central object of research, as well as on our own experience in researching translation in Tibetan history, where a great deal of such data has yet to be uncovered.

Translation history, on the other hand, encompasses not only research aimed at collecting paratextual data but also the study of a corpus of translated texts, their linguistic features, their impact on society, the networks between authors, translators

and publishers, patronage, and a number of other linguistic, social and historical issues. In fact, it is the latter type of research that forms the major part of Pym's 1998 work, which is focused on the translated text, its contextual features, and theoretical and methodological issues. He discusses, for example, lists, sets of data, frequencies that illustrate statistical trends, "transfer maps" of influences on the production of texts, how to study norms and systems, and the like. Nowhere does he elaborate on how to obtain the data upon which his research is based or provide guidance as to how the researcher should collect "archeological" materials focused on the human translator.

In the case of Tibet, so little of this type of foundational research has been carried out on the translators themselves – on who they were, and on when, how, where, and with whom they worked – that it is not only impractical but perhaps even inadvisable to carry out detailed analyses of the translated texts that they produced, due to the incompleteness of the underlying data. Indeed, in the literature on translation history methodology, there are few studies that discuss issues related to this crucial level of research. The most useful to the present research is the work of D'hulst (2010), who offers a set of guidelines that expand and elaborate upon the points raised by Pym.

D'hulst outlines eight questions that researchers of translation history should ask, the first being "who?." Echoing Pym's comment on "the human translator," D'hulst states that addressing this question means directing one's focus to the translator as an individual, studying, for example, their background, training and gender. In an earlier article on the same topic, he terms this "the translator's intellectual biography" and writes that it can also include information on the translator's family, socio-economic background, ideological and cultural profile, translation concepts, explicit and implicit poetics, gender, and so forth (D'hulst 2001: 24).

The second type of question to be asked, "what?," refers to what has been translated and what has not, what the criteria were for selecting texts to be translated, and similar queries. To address this question, D'hulst writes, one needs to study bibliographies of translations. D'hulst also includes here other essential questions, such as "what has been written on translation?" and "which genres or modes of reflection on translation does a culture generate?" Prefaces, criticism, treatises, historical works and theories are the most common forms of material studied in this regard (D'hulst 2010: 400).

The third question asks "where?": where were the translations produced and where were they distributed? He notes that the distribution of translations "is rarely limited to one linguistic or cultural community" (D'hulst 2010: 400). The fourth type of question asks "with what means" were translations produced? What sort of support was offered to translators, and with what effect? These questions may refer to how patrons treated the translators and their work, subsidy mechanisms, and so forth (D'hulst 2010: 401).

"Why?" questions include, for example, why do translations occur or why do they occur the way that they do, in certain forms? This closely relates to Pym's concept of "social causation." D'hulst states that such historical analysis of translations requires "the reconstruction of explicanda (such as translation forms and functions) through the understanding of the interplay between many factors (translation procedures, norms of target cultures, political and economic constraints, etc.)" (D'hulst 2010: 401).

Sixth is the question of how translations are made, such as their historical production and the evolution of translations and their norms. D'hulst remarks that this line of inquiry "is by far the most developed area of historical research" in translation history (D'hulst 2010: 402). "When" is the seventh question, and includes investigating the origins of translations, "modes of temporal categorizations of translations" (periodization), and the clines of translation. Interestingly, D'hulst here states that "a true archaeology of translation is still lacking" (D'hulst 2010: 402), but that bibliographies and databases may help to uncover cline patterns.

The final question to be asked by researchers is "to what effect?," meaning what are the effects of translations, their functions and their uses in a given society? Translations operate in complex networks and "are also part of larger mediating structures or systems" which Even-Zohar terms the concept of "transfer" (D'hulst 2010: 403). D'hulst does not specify whether or not researchers should follow his specific ordering of questions, starting with "who" and ending with "to what effect," but there is a logical sequence that can be roughly adhered to.

These eight sets of questions form an excellent schema for researchers to follow and provided a rough methodological framework for the present study. However, as in Pym's work, there is nowhere in D'hulst's article any discussion of *how* to undertake the research necessary to answer these many, often complex, questions. Both Pym and D'hulst appear to assume that this level of methodology is somehow already known or apparent to researchers, but in fact is a "blank space" itself in translation history. It is hoped that this paper, by explicating the *how* involved in answering at least some of D'hulst's questions, will fill in this gap and provide some measure of guidance for other researchers dealing with cultures whose translation history is still in its infancy.

Theoretical issues related to translation history are varied and will not be reviewed here, apart from one in particular that is highly relevant and has been raised by both D'hulst (2010) and Rundle (2011; 2012). D'hulst briefly discusses two approaches that can be taken to translation history: The first asks what translation can mean for our understanding of history, in particular of cultural practices, and the second asks what history can mean for our understanding of translation and its many forms (as a process, product, theory, etc.). In the article in which he raises this point, he focuses on the second approach (D'hulst 2010: 397).

Rundle expands in detail on this set of approaches, writing that when one carries out research into translation history, one is faced with a choice: to either use the material on translation that one uncovers to contribute to a "wider, general or more global history of translation" – in effect, addressing an audience of fellow scholars in Translation Studies – or to address the scholars who share an interest in the historical subject that one is studying and introduce to them the insights one has gained regarding translation phenomena (Rundle 2011: 33).

Rundle contends that "the more historical our research, and the more embedded it is in the relevant historiography, the less obviously enlightening it is for other translation scholars who are not familiar with this historiography" (Rundle 2011: 33). And by the same token, the more we address other Translation Studies scholars, the less we are contributing to the historical research in our field. He argues that introducing "the insights that the study of translation can bring to a wider community of cultural historians, who do not usually take translation into consideration, should

be at least one of the objectives of historians of translation" (Rundle 2011: 33). Similarly, Bandia urges translation historians to start viewing themselves "as historians – rather than as translation scholars or practitioners 'masquerading' as historians" (Bandia 2006: 46).

This theoretical approach is particularly relevant to the present research because it is situated at the convergence of not just two, but three fields of study: Buddhist Studies, Tibetan Studies, and Translation Studies, the first two of which are heavily based in historical research. Furthermore, this particular convergence of disciplines has seldom, if ever, been the subject of any academic study, due to the relatively recent emergence of Tibetan Studies and the small number of researchers working in that field. Buddhist scholars do regularly perform detailed textual studies of historical translations, and Tibetan Studies scholars do examine how the translations have influenced and affected Tibetan society as a whole, but each of these approaches takes translation as a subsidiary activity. No researcher in Buddhist Studies or Tibetan Studies has ever studied the history of the Tibetan translators themselves.

By contrast, one of the aims of translation history is to focus on the translators and translations themselves as *primary* objects of study, and to ask those questions that are either overlooked or simply considered unimportant by scholars in other fields. As a researcher, it is my hope not only to contribute to my own field, but to also reach out, as Rundle advises, to "scholars outside translation studies who share the same historical interest" (Rundle 2012: 232). Thus, in carrying out the present research, it has been necessary to strike a balance between not getting lost in the great mass of historical materials on Buddhism in Tibet, while still gaining sufficient knowledge of this subject matter so as to correctly orient and place translation phenomena within that historical context.[5]

Further, the question of which scholarly community one is addressing is pertinent, since we must assume that few of my colleagues in Translation Studies have any knowledge of this region or its history. Conversely, we must be aware that some of my insights into Tibet's translation history may appear simplistic or even irrelevant to historians of Buddhism or Tibet, whose interest is often in broad socio-religious or cultural issues. Buddhist and Tibetan Studies scholars, when they do discuss translation, tend to view it as a product, rather than a process; and when they do research individual translators, they tend to focus on the translators' social actions and how these influenced the development of Buddhism in Tibet.

Rundle suggests that it is, in fact, not possible to address both audiences at the same time, and that one must choose to either "contribute to *a history of translation* or to *translation in history*" (Rundle 2011: 35; italics in the original). Although we concur with his theoretical formulation in general, we do not agree that one cannot at least aspire to reach both audiences. In this paper we have attempted to address scholars of Translation Studies as my main audience, while also aiming to make my findings available to interested Buddhist or Tibetan scholars.

In his conclusion, Rundle writes that a new strand of research ought to emerge involving "the application to other fields of the interpretative perspectives" of Translation Studies (Rundle 2011: 41). In the case of the present research, this will mean introducing to Buddhist and Tibetan scholars some of the methods and approaches used in translation history, with the aim of not only contributing to these fields but also enriching them.

3. Research Findings: Phase 1

The first phase of the research focused on answering the most fundamental questions related to translation history: how many translators took part in translating the enormous corpus of Buddhist literature into Tibetan, a task which not only profoundly and irreversibly transformed Tibetan society but also resulted in the form of Buddhism known as Tibetan Buddhism, now rapidly spreading in the West and around the world. This activity is the archaeological equivalent of digging in the topsoil, the uppermost layer that one must remove before reaching the "treasures" buried more deeply in the ground.

Without this information, we can never have an accurate list of the names of these individuals and therefore begin the next layer of research: studying their biographies for details of their lives and work. Further, although certain translators are highly acclaimed in Tibetan history, such as Rinchen Zangpo (957-1055), there has never been a full accounting of how many (or which) texts each translator produced, a task which must be based upon an accurate total number of translators and which, in turn, would produce a list of the most prolific translators in Tibet's history.

Prior to this research, the only total figures on translators in Tibetan history available in English-language materials reported that there were either 721 or 870 individuals who took part in Tibet's 900-year translation endeavor. Tsepag (2005) is the only scholar to have published such figures, and he cites two different sources. The first is the most recent edition of the Tibetan canon, published in the United States by Dharma Publishing (Thartang 1983); it is the largest edition and contains many texts not previously included in earlier editions. According to Tsepag, the index in this edition of the canon lists a total of 870 "scholars" and 5,109 texts (Tsepag 2005: 53).

Tsepag also gives figures from a well-known historical record of Tibet known as the *Red Annals* (Debther marpo), which he claims lists the total number of translators and scholars as 721 (551 Tibetan translators and Indian scholars in the early period and "more than 170" in the later period).[6] Compared to Dharma Publishing's edition, there is a difference of nearly 150 individuals. In another source, 157 translators are listed for the later period according to "the religious chronicles of Tibet" (Lobsang 2002: 140) rather than the "more than 170" that Tsepag lists, but Lobsang's article is only focused on the later period of translation activity and does not mention the total number of translators in Tibet's history.

Though Tsepag does correctly cite the Dharma Publishing figure of 870 individuals,[7] he fails to mention that no distinction is made in the index of how many of the translators were Tibetans and how many were Indian *panditas,* or religious scholars, who worked with the Tibetans as aides in deciphering and explaining the Sanskrit texts. Similarly, in the figures cited from the *Red Annals*, it is not made clear how many of the 721 individuals were Tibetan translators and how many were Indian scholars. To translation historians, this distinction is crucial.

To resolve the discrepancy between the two figures and ascertain the actual number of translators and panditas, a research assistant was hired in Dharamsala, India, where the most comprehensive collection of archival materials on Tibetan history can be found, at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA). This researcher spent five months carefully recording the name of each translator listed

in the index of the Derge edition of the Tibetan canon, widely considered the most reliable edition of the canon, and the edition on which Dharma Publishing's edition was based.[8] The Derge canon, like all editions of the Tibetan canon, is divided into two main collections: the Kangyur, or teachings of the Buddha, and the Tengyur, or exegetical commentaries. This organizational system required the researcher to count the two collections separately.

Two tables of the researcher's findings are presented below, one for the Kangyur and one for the Tengyur. Following the commonly accepted method of periodization for Tibetan history, we aimed to count the number of texts, translators and panditas in the early period (617-839) and the later period (958-1717). Since the index of the Derge edition includes only the titles of individual texts and the names of those who translated them (see table 1 and table 2 below), not the dates that each text was translated, the researcher then searched other Tibetan-language sources for biographical data on each translator, in order to determine in which period each translator worked. He was unable to find biographical information for some individuals; thus, they are listed below under "Translators" as "Period unknown." Similarly, a small number of texts could not be accurately dated; these are listed under "Texts" as "Period unknown."

TABLE 1

Data from the Kangyur (Teachings of the Buddha)

Texts			**Translators**			**Panditas**
Early period: 380	Later period: 207	Period unknown: 10	Early period: 32	Later period: 68	Period unknown: 7	108 (+32 Tibetans)
597 (+503) = 1,100			107			

TABLE 2

Data from the Tengyur (Exegetical Commentaries)

Texts			**Translators**			**Panditas**
Early period: 212	Later period: 2,260	Period unknown: 128	Early period: 29	Later period: 225	Period unknown: 44	330 (+97 Tibetans)
2,600 (+833)=3,433			300			

Several points on these figures require clarification. First, the total numbers of texts in the two collections are easily verifiable and not in dispute here. However, a large percentage of the texts do not list the translator's names. Thus, in the Kangyur, of the 1,100 texts, only 597 have the translators' names listed, while 503 do not. In the Tengyur, of the 3,433 texts, 2,600 have translators' names attached to them, while 833 do not. This is important – and was not mentioned in any of the English-language materials studied – because without knowing who translated each text, it is impossible to determine how many texts each translator was responsible for translating, or to have accurate text-to-translator ratios in each period. This is an area that requires further "archaeological excavation."

Second, the number of panditas is displayed in the above manner in order to distinguish between Indian panditas (the main figures) and Tibetan panditas (the

figures in brackets). Though the majority of panditas were Indians, there were also a small number of Tibetan translators who acted as panditas to other Tibetans, helping to clarify difficult points of philosophy or terminology. The latter were, in all cases, also translators and have been counted among the total number of translators, thus there is some overlap between the two categories.

Another area of overlap that caused considerable difficulty for the researcher was the fact that many translators worked on texts in both the Kangyur and Tengyur, thus the two totals could not be added together. The researcher had to manually count the total distinct number of translators, which amounted to 336 individuals. The name of each translator was recorded in a database, together with the number of texts translated for both the Kangyur and Tengyur, their period of activity, the panditas they worked with, and other relevant data. The total figures for both the Kangyur and Tengyur, with all overlapping data accounted for, are as follows:

Table 3
Derge Index Totals (Kangyur & Tengyur)

Texts			**Translators**			**Panditas**
Early period: 592	Later period: 2,467	Period unknown: 138	Early period: 44	Later period: 241	Period unknown: 51	371 (+113 Tibetans)
3,197 (+1,336) = 4,533			336			

We can now compare this data to the figures previously known before the archival research began. Since the total number of texts is not the subject of this research and is not in dispute, the focus in the following table is on the numbers of translators and panditas.

Table 4
Previously Published Figures vs. Present Research Findings

Previously published figures			**Present research findings**		
Translators and panditas (Tsepag, Dharma Publishing)	Translators and panditas (Tsepag, Red Annals)	Translators only (Lobsang Shastri)	Translators (total)	Panditas (periods unknown, Indians only)	Translators and panditas
870 (250 in Kangyur, 620 in Tengyur)	721 (551* in early period, 170 in later period)	157 in later period	336 (44 in early period, 241 in later period, 51 period unknown)	371	707 (336+371)

* Found to be mistaken

A number of important differences and discrepancies are immediately apparent. While the previously known figures for both translators and panditas combined are roughly similar (taking into account that Dharma Publishing's edition contains around 600 more texts than the other editions), the figure of 551 translators and scholars in the early period, as cited by Tsepag from the *Red Annals*, appeared unreasonably high. Therefore, the researcher was instructed to check the original source and he found that, in fact, the number stated in the *Red Annals* was not 551, but 51

(Dorje 1981: 331). The correct figures stated in the *Red Annals* are 51 translators in the early period and 170 in the later period, making a total of 221 translators. (Indian panditas were not, as it turned out, included in these figures.) Since the *Red Annals* was originally published in 1363 and the Derge edition was compiled hundreds of years later, the number of translators in the *Red Annals* for the later period is not accurate, though the early figure should be.

Mistakes made in Tsepag's article have thus been rectified. Another great discrepancy is the number of translators listed in the later period, which according to Lobsang Shastri was 157, according to Tsepag was 170, and according to our research was at least 241. As stated above, the later period *Red Annals* figure cited by Tsepag is not accurate due to its date of publication, but why Lobsang's figure is even lower is not known. Further checking of his sources may be needed. If we assume that the early period figure of 51 translators from the *Red Annals* is correct, then seven of our "period unknown" translators would belong in this period. If we add the remaining 44 "period unknown" translators to our known later period figure of 241, that gives a total of 285 for the later period. The final figures concluded from the research are shown below.

TABLE 5
Phase 1, Final research findings

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Translators (Tibetans only)</th><th>Panditas (Indians only)</th><th>Translators and panditas (total)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Early period: 51</td><td>Later period: 285</td><td rowspan="2">371</td><td rowspan="2">707</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">336</td></tr>
</table>

It should be noted here that it has not yet proved possible to distinguish how many panditas were involved in each period, due to a paucity of biographical materials on them as individuals. Lobsang Shastri's research, which was focused on panditas who went to Tibet in the later period only, lists "about 30" (Lobsang 2002: 141), but this does not include the many panditas who worked with Tibetans in India, which must account for a large percentage of total panditas. This should be an area of further research.

Based upon these findings, it is also, unfortunately, not yet possible to have an accurate list of the most prolific translators in Tibet's history, because so many (29.5%) of the texts translated did not have the translators' names attached to them. This is an area that will be investigated further as the project proceeds. It is also not possible to calculate a text-to-translator ratio for each period, due to this same lack of data. It is hoped that when the third and subsequent phases of research are conducted, which will be in collaboration with a Tibetan Studies scholar, deeper methods of archival research will be used that will yield the desired results.

4. Research Findings: Phase 2

The second stage of the research was to locate and record biographies of all of the translators listed in the database created during Phase 1, in order to uncover information on their background, training, translation methods, and theoretical and other

writings they might have made on their translation work.[9] In fact, this work had already partially begun during the first phase, since the researcher had to consult a number of reference materials in order to determine the dates that each translator was active. Some of these source materials contained biographies and were used for Phase 2 of the research.[10]

Of the 336 translators' names that were recorded in the database from the index of the Derge canon, biographies have thus far been found for 207 individuals, or 61.6 percent of the total. Sorting the full data collected according to the number of texts that each translator translated, a list of the most prolific translators was generated. This was then cross-referenced with the list of biographical materials that had been found, and a new list of 207 individuals was created, again sorted in order of number of texts translated. Of these 207 individuals, 27 were from the early period of Tibet's religious history, and the remaining 180 were active in the later period.[11]

The individual who translated the largest number of texts, Yeshe De (born in the mid-8th century), translated an astonishing 345 texts.[12] The next most prolific was Yarlung Drakpa Gyaltsan (born in the early 14th century) who translated 251 texts. The numbers decreased dramatically from that point, and at the bottom of the list there are 53 translators who only translated one text each. The table below, which lists the breakdown of translators and texts translated, reveals that the majority of translators found so far translated a very small number of texts.

Table 6
Number of Texts Translated by Individuals with Biographies

Number of texts translated	Number of translators
over 300	1
200-300	1
160-200	2
100-110	2
60-69	2
50-59	2
40-49	2
30-39	3
20-29	8
10-19	31
7-9	18
4-6	35
1-3	100
TOTAL	**207**

Of the 207 translators in this list, biographies for 43 individuals were translated into English and studied, with the priority given to the most prolific translators (with the exception of those who had already had their biographies previously published in English). Using this sample of approximately 20 per cent of the total individuals

with biographies, it was hoped that certain patterns would emerge upon which future research could be based. The biographies were studied for commonalities, such as the absence or presence of certain biographical details and the inclusion (or exclusion) of information on their translation activities.

The biographies found on the 207 individuals varied in length from one or two sentences to full books (though the majority were one or two paragraphs in length). The researcher was instructed to read and translate 43 of these biographies, including five full-length books, one of which was over 300 pages long. Rather than translate the five books, the researcher was asked to produce an outline of the text's contents and, if any details on the individual's translation activities were found, these were to be translated. When there were multiple biographies available for a given individual, the researcher was asked to choose the biography with the most relevant information to our purposes (translation activities, numbers of texts translated, and theoretical writings).

The findings of the biographical materials studied are presented below, with the name of each translator shown on the far left and the five columns indicating the presence of each type of content with an "x." The translators are listed in order of the most prolific to the least prolific.

TABLE 7
Summary of Content of Biographical Materials Studied

	Early life and studies	Travels to India or Nepal	Religious life	Translation activities	Comments by others on their translations
Yeshe De				x	
Yarlung Drakpa Gyaltsan	x	x	x	x	
Patsab Tsultrim Gyaltsan	x	x		x	
Tsultrim Gyalba	x	x	x		
Rinchen Drak			x		
Paltseg Rakshita			x	x	
Drokmi Shakya Yeshe		x	x		
Go-Khukpa Lheytse		x	x	x	
Choekyi Sherab		x	x	x	
Nyima Gyaltsan	x	x		x	
Shakya Aod	x	x		x	
Geba'i Lodro		x	x	x	
Marba Choekyi Wangchuk	x	x	x	x	
Smritijnanakirti (Indian)			x	x	
Patsab Nyima Drak	x	x	x	x	
Maban Choebar	x	x	x		
Dro Bhirmabhi			x	x	
Gya Tshondue Sengge	x	x	x	x	
Buton Rinpoche	x		x	x	
Chogro Lui Gyaltsen					
Dawai Aodser				x	
Phagpa Sherab	x		x	x	
Rinchen Chog			x	x	

Dro Sherab Dakpa		x	x	x	
Nyan Darma Drak		x		x	
Drakjor Sherab		x	x		
Goechoe Dub			x	x	
Lodro Tenpa	x	x	x	x	
Shalu Lotsawa Choekyong Zangpo	x		x	x	x
Sonam Gyatso	x		x		
Sonam Gyaltsan	x		x		
Ra Lotsawa Dorje Drak	x	x	x	x	
Shongton Dorje Gyaltsan	x	x	x	x	x
Go Lotsawa Shyonnu Pal	x		x		
Choekyi Tsondue	x	x		x	
Rongzom Chokyi Zangpo	x		x		
Tsami Sangye Drakpa	x	x	x	x	
Taranatha	x		x		
Gyalwai Jungney	x		x		
Kher Ged Khorlo Drakpa		x		x	
Dharmapala	x		x		
Jnanakumara		x	x	x	
Shong Lodro Tenpa	x		x		

The column titled "Translation activities" includes mentions in the biographies of any information related to their translation work, such as the number or titles of texts translated. However, in nine out of the 29 biographies with this content, the information simply states that he "translated many texts into Tibetan" or "he excelled in Sanskrit and translated many texts into Tibetan." The most common content was of the individual's religious life, with translation activities being the second most common, their early life and studies the third most common, and travels to India or Nepal the fourth most common. The fifth column, "comments by others on their translations," only has two entries but the comments discovered are intriguing[13] and the fact that such comments do exist is encouraging for future research.

The above data may be seen as a representative sample of typical biographies of Tibetan translators, as they are taken from a variety of sources that contain large amounts of biographical material. The two most frequently used sources were Lobsang Trinlay (2003) and Samten (2005), the latter being an encyclopedia containing biographies of many individuals in Tibetan history, not only translators. Thus if we extrapolate from this data, we may assume that future findings will contain similar types of content, the knowledge of which will help direct further research.

At the start of the research period, it was hoped that reflective or theoretical writings on translation by individual translators, or indications of the presence of such writings elsewhere, would be found, but this was not the case for the biographies sampled. Prior to the present project, when solely English-language materials on Tibetan history were consulted, only one publication was found that discussed translation from a theoretical perspective.[14] Further, in the few full-length biographies of translators that have been published in English, such as those of Rinchen Zangpo (see Tucci 1988) and Vairochana (born 824 C.E.) (see Nyingpo 2004), very little men-

tion is made of their translation activities apart from, in the former case, a full list of all the titles that he translated.

However, it is difficult to believe that out of 900 years of translation involving more than 300 translators, none of them recorded their thoughts and experiences related to their translation activities. Is it possible we are simply looking in the wrong place, and that biographies of Tibetans may yield little information in this regard? Evidence to the contrary – and encouragement to "dig deeper" – is found by examining the translation history of China, where hundreds of the same Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese over a similarly long period of time.

In Cheung's (2006) groundbreaking anthology of translation discourse from ancient China, 57 writings by individuals who took part in translating the Buddhist canon into Chinese are presented, analyzed and commented upon. Of these, 22 were recorded in prefaces to translations of sutras, 18 were recorded in biographies, 16 were from other sources, such as essays and historical records, and one was from a postscript to a translation. These writings include discussions on translation as a product and as a process, the methods and principles that the translators employed, the difficulties they encountered, translation criticism, the qualities that a translator should possess, and other topics (Cheung 2006: 5).

While the Buddhist translation histories of Tibet and China have many differences, as well as some similarities, given the large volume of texts translated and the number of translators involved in the Tibetan tradition, it is reasonable to assume that there are writings of a theoretical nature by Tibetans. Two possible reasons for the current lack of such materials immediately present themselves: First, Chinese history has been studied by scholars, both domestic and foreign, much more thoroughly and for a much longer period of time than Tibetan history. Second, during Tibet's turbulent history, in particular during the Cultural Revolution, countless books and hundreds of monasteries – the repositories of the very records that might contain such writings – were completely destroyed. What the present-day researcher has at his or her disposal are the remains of this cultural devastation.

Long writes that in the history of translation, two types of writing on translation theory are typically found. The first is a response by writers who also happen to be translators, "whose particular experience of translating has inspired analysis of practice in theoretical terms, or whose translation has provoked reaction that the translator feels obliged to defend" (Long 2007: 69). These writings often consist of discussions of specific strategies or processes. The second type "is more philosophical and includes speculation on the nature and effect of translation in general terms" (Long 2007: 69).

Long's specialty is the history of Christian translation, which she states "probably accounts for more translation activity in the first two millennia of the Common Era than any other single factor and certainly accounts for the most discussion about translation" in the Judeo-Christian world (Long 2007: 72). If this is the case with Christianity, it should be true for other major religions as well, given the complexity of linguistic, epistemological and cultural issues involved in religious translation. Interestingly, Long notes that research thus far has shown that for Buddhism and Hinduism, historical information "is less specifically related to translation" and that "there is much scope for further research in this area" (Long 2007: 73). Indeed, the present research highlights how much more work remains to be done on Tibet's

Buddhist history, and the search will continue for whatever treasures have yet to be discovered, by examining more biographies, prefaces of translations, and other historical records.

6. Conclusion

In his paper "Blank Spaces in the History of Translation," Santoyo discusses a number of under-researched areas of knowledge in translation history, four of which are especially pertinent to the present research. The first is the daily practice of translation, especially of non-literary texts. Santoyo writes that the "practical, everyday forms of translation," as well as those of a more cultural nature, "are not as well documented" as literary translations (Santoyo 2006: 16). Religious texts fall into this category, especially religious texts that informed and formed an entire culture's identity, as Buddhist texts did in Tibet.

The second "blank space" is translated texts that are survivors of lost originals, which function in history as "true originals" because the text from which they derived has disappeared (Santoyo 2006: 28-9). This is particularly relevant to Tibet's translation history, since the vast majority of Buddhist texts translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan no longer exist in their original.[15] A third neglected area is the "incorporation of minority and/or minoritized languages into translation history research" (Santoyo 2006: 38). Both Tibetan and Sanskrit are minor languages, with the latter being, in fact, a dead language, and little research into either of these languages has been carried out within Translation Studies.

The fourth is what Santoyo (2006: 38) refers to as "the urgent task of de-Westernizing the history of translation." This call has been made by many translation scholars in recent years, and is indeed one of the primary purposes of the present research. The importance of discovering writings on translation theory and practice in Tibetan history cannot be overstated, for having such knowledge would contribute greatly to our understanding of how religious translators in ancient times viewed and carried out their work.

Cheung's 2006 anthology of writings by translators of Buddhism in China demonstrates that not only is it possible to uncover these treasures, which are themselves a source of valuable information, but that doing so is a crucial step in moving beyond the current Eurocentric conceptualization of translation, to a more inclusive understanding of what this act has meant through the ages and in diverse cultural and historical contexts. Before this can be accomplished, however, the "blank spaces" in regional translation histories must be filled in, in particular in those regions that are less studied and that fall outside of European and Western geographical boundaries.

In the case of Tibet, this includes uncovering data such as the names and dates of all the translators, the texts that each person translated, and who they worked with. An accurate list of Tibet's most prolific translators must be compiled, translator-to-text ratios should be generated, and all available biographical materials on these individuals need to be located and studied. In addition, catalogues of translations must be compared, prefaces and colophons of translations examined, and other historical materials perused for possible avenues of further research. Only through carrying out such a systematic investigation will theoretical writings on translation

be discovered, which will allow these translators' voices to be heard and contribute to our knowledge of both regional and global translation history.

The "archaeological" research carried out thus far has laid a firm foundation for the tasks above to be accomplished. The present study has also corrected mistakes found in secondary literature, identified areas of further research, and brought to light certain practical and methodological difficulties, such as the lack of translator attributes in many archival materials. Once the paratextual data that is the focus of the present project has been compiled and made available, studies may then be carried out on large corpuses of translated texts, as well as on multiple translations of individual texts, in order to trace and identify translation strategies and techniques and other such patterns.

It is hoped that this paper may provide guidance for two types of translation historians: researchers studying regional histories that have received little attention by translation scholars, and those researching topics that would benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration. As mentioned above, the next phases of this project will be carried out in collaboration with a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism who is familiar with the research methods and archival materials of that field. The importance of interdisciplinary work has been emphasized by a number of scholars writing on translation history, including Rundle (2011), Long (2007), and O'Sullivan (2012: 137), who urges translation scholars to "migrate" between disciplines in order to "embed translation in a wider dialogue."

Rundle suggests that in order for researchers to move beyond addressing only other scholars in Translation Studies and to reach out to scholars "who have the background to appreciate the historical significance of their research," it may be necessary for them to distance themselves "from some of the methodology that currently informs translation history" as carried out within Translation Studies (Rundle 2011: 34-35). Based on the research carried out thus far, we would like to suggest a somewhat more positive formulation: that researchers of translation history need not "distance themselves" from the methodology that informs their own field, but that they may find, as we have, that at a certain point the methods available in Translation Studies become insufficient or inadequate, and that interdisciplinary collaboration becomes both necessary and mutually beneficial.

This need may occur for a number of reasons, including a) archival records, due to the language or time period that they are written in, may be inaccessible to translation historians; b) the researcher's breadth and depth of historical knowledge of that particular area of study may be insufficient; c) the researcher's knowledge of databases and bibliographical materials may be lacking; and d) networks built up with experts and scholars in that field of study may be absent. Conversely, a scholar in the relevant field, working on his or her own, may lack the perspectives, theoretical framework and methodology of a translation historian. It is hoped that by forging a new "inter-discipline" between Translation, Buddhist and Tibetan studies, by applying the best methods and practices of both fields, an accurate and complete picture will eventually emerge of Tibet's rich and vast translation heritage.

NOTES

1. We (Raine 2010, 2011) are the only Translation Studies scholar having published on the topic of Tibet's translation history. While it is possible that scholars working in languages other than English or Tibetan (such as Chinese or Japanese) may have published materials on this topic, none has yet been located that would add to the present research findings.
2. The research was carried out between September 2011 and June 2012 and was supported by a Direct Faculty Research Grant (DA12B3) provided by Lingnan University, Hong Kong.
3. Though we have studied the Tibetan language, our knowledge of classical Tibetan is not sufficient for archival research; thus, a Tibetan researcher was hired to assist in this project.
4. The entire project is estimated to take several years with the ultimate goal of producing a comprehensive book on the subject of translation in Tibetan history.
5. Long describes this succinctly, stating that when carrying out research on translation history, "the problem is to find a way through the maze of historical material and emerge triumphant with specific information relating to case studies in translation" (Long 2007: 64).
6. Dorje Tsalpa Kunga (1981): *The Red Annals* [Deb ther dmar po], Beijing, Nationalities Publishing House. Tibetan history is most commonly divided into the "early period (snga dar) (617-839) and the "later period" (phyi dar) (958-1717) of the transmission and translation of Buddhist texts. Tsepag (2005: 53) writes that in the early period, "over five hundred and fifty one Tibetan and Indian scholars had contributed in the translation works." In the later period, "there were more than hundred [sic] and seventy scholars involved" and according to Dharma Publishing's edition of the Derge canon, there were over 870 scholars involved in translation, including 250 in the Kangyur, which contains 1,115 texts, and 620 in the Tengyur, which has 3,387 texts with an additional 607 supplementary texts (ibid.).
7. Private correspondence (June-August 2011) with Elizabeth Cook of Dharma Publishing confirmed this number.
8. The Derge edition was originally produced between 1729 and 1744 and had many later redactions. Since the Dharma Publishing edition was not available at the LTWA and is only held at a small number of libraries, the 1934 Derge edition of the canon was used for archival research (Sde dge bka 'gyur dkar chag [Derge Kangyur Index] and Sde dge btan 'gyur dkar chag [Derge Tengyur Index], published by Tohoku Imperial University, Japan).
9. Despite the incompleteness of the data discovered during the first phase of the research, it was decided to begin the second phase immediately afterward, due to the availability of funds and to the fact that the collaboration with a Tibetan Studies scholar could not begin until a later date.
10. These materials are in Drakpa Jungney and Lobsang Keydup (1992), Lobsang Trinlay (2003), Samten (2005), and Tsering and Gyatso (2001), which are all relatively recent publications by Tibetan scholars that contain biographies of varying lengths of important individuals in Tibetan history. One of the methodological difficulties of researching Tibetan history is that Tibetan scholars, such as these listed here, do not follow the common Western academic practice of citing sources of information, thus the original source of these biographies cannot be verified. However, it is assumed that the four authors above compiled their biographies from a variety of authoritative historical materials, such as the *Red Annals* and *The Blue Annals* (Debther ngonpo), which were originally published in the 14th and 15th centuries, respectively. See Raine (2010) for a discussion of the traditional form of Tibetan biography (namthar) and its relation to translators' biographies in Tibetan history.
11. The great discrepancy between the number of individuals with biographies in the early and later periods is not surprising. At the end of the early period, Tibet entered into a period of great political upheaval and religious suppression, which lasted for some 150 years. During this time, many texts were lost or destroyed; thus, researching the early period of Tibetan history is particularly problematic.
12. The unit "texts" is used in this research to denote individual sutras, tantras or commentaries, which were all of varying lengths, rather than the number of pages translated. Although the latter manner of calculation would be more accurate, it is not used because the exact number of pages of every text is not available.
13. For example, in the biography of the well-known translator Shalu Lotsawa Choekyong Zangpo, his biographer writes: "When this Lochen [great translator] orally translated Indian texts into Tibetan while only reading Indian texts, the students, reading the Tibetan translation, would not see a single mistake and only the best students could keep up with him because he was so fast" (Lobsang Trinlay 2003: 1758).

14. This is in a work on Sakya Pandita by Gold (2008), which contains an account of this great master's theories on language and translation, as seen from the perspective of one of Tibet's most renowned scholars. See Raine (2011) for a discussion of this work.
15. This fact has spurred researchers to attempt to recreate the lost originals by back-translating a number of Buddhist texts from Tibetan into Sanskrit. This project is being carried out in the Restoration Department of the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India and, as an important aspect of Tibet's translation history, is an area worthy of research.

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