

# Tibet in Dialogue with its Neighbours:

History, Culture and Art of Central  
and Western Tibet, 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century

Erika Forte, Liang Junyan, Deborah Klimburg-Salter,  
Zhang Yun, and Helmut Tauscher (eds)



## 8-15 世纪中西部西藏的历史、文化与艺术

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# **TIBET IN DIALOGUE WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS:**

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AND WESTERN TIBET, 8<sup>TH</sup> TO 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

EDITED BY

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1 Forewords

~ History

310 Zhang Yun

Several Questions Concerning Yang Tong (Zhang Zhung)

318 Cristina Scherrer-Schaub and Kurt Tropper

Ruler, Translators and Teachers: On Some Murals and Captions in the Lo tsā ba lha khang of Ri ba (mNga' ris)

330 Chen Qingying and Wang Xiaojing

Research on Purangir: An Analysis Based on the Biography of the Sixth Panchen Lama

341 Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp

A Fifteenth Century Biography of Lha bla ma Ye shes 'od (947–1019/24): Its Prolegomenon and Prophecies

376 Shen Weirong

The Political and Religious Legacy of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in Ming China: An Investigation into the Role of Tibetan Buddhism in the Formation of the Political and Religious Institutions of the Tangut Xia Kingdom and the Mongol Yuan and Ming Dynasties

~ Art and Archaeology

392 Deborah Klimburg-Salter

Along the Pilgrimage Routes between Uḍḍiyāna and Tibet: The Gilgit MSS Covers and the Tibetan Decorated Book Cover

407 Xie Jisheng and Yu Shuo

Eight Great *Stūpas Sūtra* Illustrations and Cultural Exchange between China and India in the Early Song Dynasty: The Origin of the Iconography of the Eight Great *Stūpas* in Mogao Cave 76



- 420 **Zhang Changhong**  
The Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara *Maṇḍala* of Nyag Lha khang in mNga'ris, Tibet
- 440 **Shargan Wangdue**  
A Historic Survey of Mang yul Gung thang rgyal rabs City and Other Architecture Ruins in smad mNgavris
- 452 **Sonam Wangden**  
A Brief Introduction to the Bronze Statues of the Btsan po (བཙན་པོ་) Period

### ~ *Textual Studies*

- 463 **Helmut Tauscher and Bruno Lainé**  
The 'Early Mustang Kanjur' and its Descendents
- 482 **Xiong Wenbin**  
Marvellous Images, Epithets, *Sūtras* and *Dhāraṇīs* of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (*Zhufo pusa miaoxiang minghao jingzhou* 诸佛菩萨妙相名号经咒) and Tibetan Buddhist Woodblock Prints in Inland China during the Ming Dynasty

### ~ *Heritage Preservation*

- 493 **André Alexander †**  
Natural Disasters and Historic Preservation - Behaviour of Traditional Tibetan Architecture During Earthquakes and Flashfloods
- 500 **Heather Stoddard**  
Eight Preservation Histories 1994-2000: The Shalu Association in Co-operation with the Bureau of Cultural Relics of the TAR

### ~ *Digital Visual Archiving and Information Systems*

- 510 **Verena Widorn**  
The Western Himalaya Archive Vienna (WHAV) - Towards a Centre for Digital Humanities
- 516 **Karel Kriz**  
Understanding and Communicating Space: Cultural History Information System of the Western Himalaya from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century
- 519 **Postface**



Plate I: Miniatures from the Hemis Kanjur.





Plate 2: Miniatures from the Basgo Kanjur.





Plate 3: Book-covers from the Basgo Kanjur.

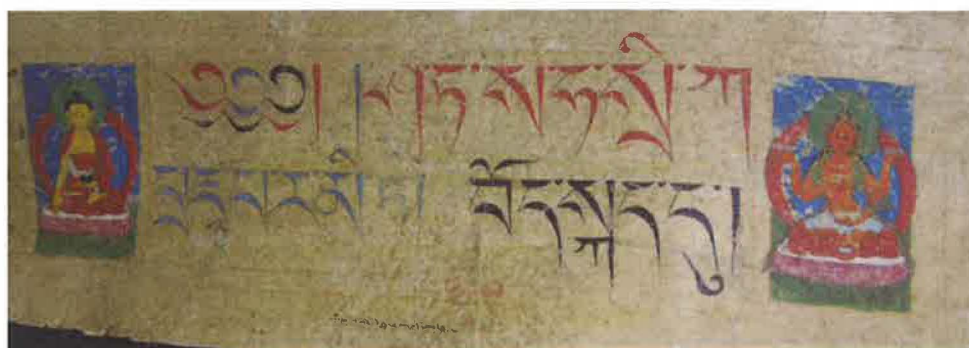
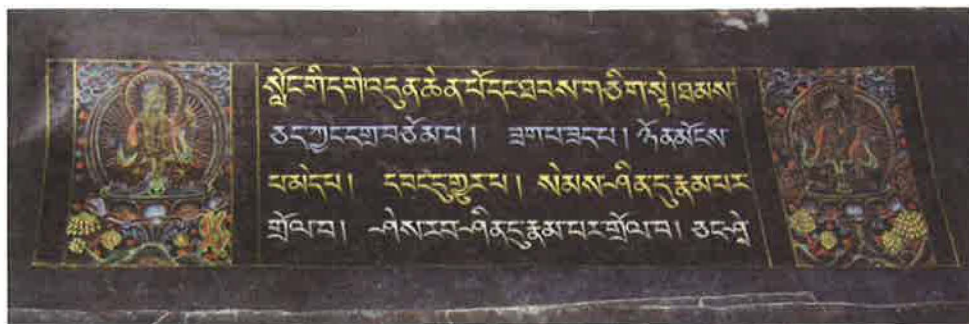


Plate 4: Examples of the 'Golden Kanjur' and other ornamental manuscripts at Basgo gSer zangs lha khang.



## The 'Early Mustang Kanjur' and its Descendents

Helmut Tauscher and Bruno Lainé

This paper reflects preliminary results of some of the latest activities of the research project 'Tibetan Manuscript' of Vienna University (henceforth abbreviated TMPV – 'Tibetan Manuscript Project Vienna').<sup>1</sup>

In the attempt to unveil the history of genesis and development of the Tibetan Buddhist canonical literature it is, of course, crucial to study the Kanjurs of the two mainstream groups:

The 'Tshal pa group' descends from a manuscript Kanjur compiled at the Gung thang Monastery of Tshal in the province dBus in Central Tibet in the years 1347–1351. It is represented, among others, by the generally and well known xylograph Kanjurs from the Imperial China, 'Jang sa tham/Lithang, Derge, and Cone. The majority of the Kanjur editions known today belong to this group.

The 'Them spangs ma group' goes back to a manuscript Kanjur prepared at rGyal rtse in the province gTsang shortly after 1430.<sup>2</sup> It comprises basically the manuscript Kanjurs of Ulaanbaatar, Tokyo, London/Shel dkar, Stog, and Shey. Apparently, none of the Them spangs ma Kanjurs has ever appeared in printed form, which might be one of the reasons for the more limited dissemination of this group.

However, apart from these two main transmission lineages and the 'mixed Kanjurs' that combine these two, the so-called 'local' or 'independent' Kanjurs come – increasingly – to be of particular interest for Kanjur research – or, with the words of Peter Skilling,<sup>3</sup> "more and more, local Kanjurs are the key" –, exactly for the reason that they are local and independent, do not belong to either of the main traditions, and give evidence of a greater variety of religious texts available in Tibet by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century than the mainstream Kanjurs do.

Both 'local' and 'independent' are rather vague terms and call for definitions. 'Independent', one could argue, in this context and for the time being simply means 'not belonging to either the Tshal pa or the Them spangs ma group', disregarding the possibility of other lines of dependence that we simply do not know of as yet. In addition, this term can refer only to a collection *in toto*, not to individual texts.

1 Financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): Project S 9803-G21, a sub-project of the National Research Network 'The Cultural History of the Western Himalaya from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century'.

On a general level, our thanks for several years of collaboration in the field are due to the leaders of our local team in Ladakh, Lobzang Wangdus and Tsewang Phunchok, and some brilliant heads and busy hands behind them; not all of them can be quoted here by name. Equally, we do not want to mention by name those persons in prominent positions within the Basgo Welfare Committee, who, for obscure and irrational reasons, prevented the completion of our work at Basgo.

With regard to this paper, in particular, we wish to thank Peter Skilling for valuable advice, Georgios Halkias for sharing his photos of the 'Golden Kanjur' of Basgo, Roberto Vitali for making relevant literature available to us, John Bray for sharing the photo of fig. 2, and to the Moravian Church Archive and Library with its archivist Lorraine Parsons for the kind permission to publish it, and, last but not least, Sarah Teetor for rendering our English understandable.

2 Eimer 1992, xviii dates it to 1431, Eimer 2012, xviii to 1432.

3 E-mail communication of May 3, 2012.

But what about 'local'? Helmut Eimer defines a local Kanjur as a manuscript Kanjur housed in a remote area, similar to the mainstream Kanjurs in contents and size, but differing, in particular within the *mdo sde* and *rgyud sde* sections, with regard to the texts included and their arrangement; it contains texts absent from the mainstream Kanjurs, texts in different recensions or translations, even translations from a different version of the Sanskrit original, occasionally it contains two or more versions of the same text, and its sources might pre-date the archetypes of the two main groups of Kanjurs (Eimer 2012, xxi).

To this two criteria can be added:

1. It is produced locally, compiled from material locally available. In fact, this logically follows from what has been said above; it is spelt out only for the sake of emphasis. Still, it remains open – and probably has to remain open – what size area or defined by what kind of boundaries should be referred to by 'local'. Regardless of whether and how this problem can or will eventually be solved, here 'locally available' is understood as 'available in a particular place without being imported for the purpose of compiling a Kanjur'; this should be true at least for the greater part of the collection.

Taking the mobility of texts (Skilling 1997, 103f.) into consideration, 'locally available' does, however, not mean 'available in a particular place exclusively'. The occurrence of the same peculiarities in two collections of manuscripts does not necessarily prove direct interdependence of the two; the same textual material can be 'locally available' in different places, derived from a common source.

Although a direct influence cannot be ruled out with certainty, the similarities between the Phug brag and O rgyan gling Kanjurs most probably point to such a common source rather than to a direct relation. Similarly, it seems rather unlikely that the *mdo mangs* volume recently discovered by TMPV<sup>4</sup> at Hundar in the Nubra valley, Ladakh, written probably in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, is a direct or indirect copy of volume 94 (*mdo sde* Ge) of the Phug brag Kanjur, although the two resemble each other in every respect, including the peculiarities of pagination and marginal titles<sup>5</sup>.

2. An important criterion for a canonical collection to be regarded a local Kanjur is its impact on other Kanjurs. It should not be copied, re-copied, and disseminated, neither as a whole nor partly. It might have been copied, as it is the case with the O rgyan gling Kanjur, but the copy, too, remained 'local'. Otherwise, with regard to the history of development, it would be on the same level with the Tshal pa and the Them spangs ma Kanjurs, and it would have to be regarded as the ancestor of a 'group', regardless of how small this group might be or have been. Obviously, it is very difficult to decide whether this criterion is fulfilled; it urgently calls for the addition 'according to our present knowledge'. This addition, however, is in fact tacitly implied in every scholarly or scientific statement in every field of research, in particular in Kanjur research.

Presently the Kanjurs of Phug brag,<sup>6</sup> O rgyan gling (Samten 1994) and Bathang,<sup>7</sup> as well as the 'Early Mustang Kanjur' – as Helmut Eimer named it in his edition of its *dkar chag* (Eimer 1999) – are generally regarded as local Kanjurs. The last one, however, does not fulfil all the criteria.

Although it probably has never been easily accessible, Mustang with its capital Lo Manthang (Glo sMon thang) can hardly be called a 'remote place' by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the time of compilation of this Kanjur, when it had gained independence from Gung thang under King A ma dpal (ca. 1380–1440) and turned into the major power of the region.<sup>8</sup>

4 See note 1.

5 The individual texts are marked by the letters *ka*, *kha*, *ga* ... and paginated separately; the marginal titles refer to the individual text and not to the volume.

6 Catalogued in Samten 1992.

7 Catalogued in Eimer 2012.

8 The *Tsarang Molla* says that he "became the master of the Ngari myriarchy" (Jackson 1984, 146), which is probably to be identified with eastern or lower mNga' ris (mNga' ris smad), consisting of the districts Glo bo, Dol po, and rDzong dkar (*op. cit.*, 10). The formulation of Vitali 1996, 484, "the major power in West Tibet", is probably to be understood in the same way. See also Vitali 2012, 127ff. (this publication became accessible to us only after the completion of this paper).



Apparently, the Early Mustang Kanjur was neither compiled from material locally available, nor did its impact remain strictly 'local'. Its commonalities with manuscript Kanjurs at Hemis and Basgo in Ladakh are too significant to be explained by a common source or by mere coincidence. In addition, taking into consideration that a manuscript of its *dkar chag* was discovered not in Mustang but in the Mu gu district of Western Nepal (Eimer 1999, 7),<sup>9</sup> it may be justified to assume that its impact was not restricted to these Ladakhi Kanjurs, and to postulate a 'group' which descended from the Early Mustang Kanjur and was disseminated – to what extent ever – in the border regions of south-western Tibet. For the time being, this group of Kanjurs shall be named 'Mustang group', as there is no evidence for a direct predecessor of the Early Mustang Kanjur, and we have to depart from the assumption that it actually is a Mustang edition, regardless where from the textual material had been collected. Still, this assumption of a 'Mustang group' remains highly hypothetical, as by now, apart from the Ladakhi Kanjurs mentioned, not a single collection of texts has come to light that could be identified as its representative. Further research has to verify our assumption or prove it wrong.

According to the introductory parts of its *dkar chag*, the Early Mustang Kanjur was prepared at the order of the "ruler A ma dpal bzang po rgyal mtshan", because "in consequence of the very long time elapsed several volumes had decayed and at that juncture no complete volume of the Kanjur existed in any one place" (Eimer 1999, 11). This seems to refer clearly to the 'Golden Kanjur' prepared for the royal family of Mustang in 1436–1447 (*op. cit.*, 12), although some points in the history of its production remain doubtful, or at least worth mentioning:

Glo bo mKhan chen (1456–1532), in his *rJe btsun bsod nams lhun grub*, relates that when the Sa skya pa master Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456), on the invitation of King A ma dpal, visited Glo bo/Mustang for the first time in 1427, he brought the Buddhist canon with him (Kramer 2008, 21 and note 63). The biography of Kun dga' bzang po, however, contradicts this information when it reports for the same year that "at that time in Lo there was no complete Kanjur, so he [= Kun dga' bzang po] collected one" (Peissel 1976, 245).

In 1436, during his second visit, the same biography relates, Kun dga' bzang po and A ma dpal discussed the production of the Kanjur, and began to write it in gold. It was completed in 1447, on Kun dga' bzang po's third visit to Glo bo – in the meantime A ma dpal had already passed away and his son A mgon bzang po (\*1420) was king in Glo bo – and a catalogue of it was prepared (Peissel 1976, 245).

The *Tsarang Molla* is silent about this event. It attests A ma dpal to have supported the Buddhist community in many ways, but commissioning "the making of sacred scriptures, including the Kanjur, the Tanjur,<sup>10</sup> the collected works of the Five Sakya Founders, ... all of them being written with only powdered gold" it reports only for the reign of King A mgon bzang po (Jackson 1984, 147).

The introduction to the *dkar chag* of the Early Mustang Kanjur, on the other hand, suggests that there had already existed a Kanjur in Mustang before King A ma dpal ordered the production of a new one in 1436, but "in consequence of the very long time elapsed" it had decayed, and "no complete volume of the Kanjur existed in any one place" anymore. Which Kanjur does it refer to? The one brought by Kun dga' bzang po in 1427, according to Glo bo mKhan chen? These years might have been a time of political turmoil in Glo bo/Mustang (cf. Kramer 2008, 20), but the text does not mention violence or fire or any other catastrophes, not even 'unfavourable circumstances' or anything of that kind; so, are nine years really a "very long time" in the life of a Kanjur, enough to utterly destroy it?

What might have been the origin of this Kanjur that was of no use anymore by 1436? Was it brought by Kun dga' bzang po from Ngor or Sa skya, or was it of local origin? We will never know. Or, if it is true what the biography of Kun dga' bzang po tells us, and he "collected" a Kanjur in 1427, where did he do so? Again, we will never know. As all the above information is gained from secondary literature only, these questions shall not be pursued here any further.

9 It is not clear whether this district belonged to the domain of King A ma dpal.

10 This information on the production of a Tanjur is doubtful; no traces of it are extant in Mustang, and also the local scholars and lamas have no knowledge of it. See Mathes 1997, 127f.

Nevertheless, it might be safe to take as fact that a Kanjur existed in Mustang at the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century, which makes it older than the Them spangs ma Kanjur. Unlike that one, however, this 'Old Mustang Kanjur' did not leave any traces, at least none that could be detected by now. In addition, one has to be aware of the fact that when early historical records refer to a 'Kanjur', it is by no means clear what this term implies in that particular place and time in terms of contents, arrangement, or extent. It might not be used in the strictly technical sense of later centuries, but simply refer to any collection of Buddha's 'word in translation'.<sup>11</sup>

As fact it also can be taken that Kun dga' bzang po was to a high degree involved in the 1436 compilation of the new, i.e. the Early Mustang Kanjur; a printed version of its *dkar chag* is even included in his collected writings.<sup>12</sup> As "no complete volume of the Kanjur existed in any one place" in Mustang at that time, it can be concluded that he brought the material from Tibet, in that case either from Ngor or from Sa skya. We do not know of any major activities to collect canonical texts at Ngor at that time, but in Sa skya such activities had started around 1272, sponsored by the Mongol imperial family, culminating in 1285–1287, and already in 1275–1278 a Kanjur is reported to have been produced at the order of Lama 'Phags pa (Schaeffer and Kuijp 2009, 14ff.). It is easily possible that Kun dga' bzang po had recurs to this material. However, the Early Mustang Kanjur does not directly reflect any collection that we know of.

The first western scholar to refer to this Kanjur was the French anthropologist Michel Peissel, who visited Mustang in 1964 and at Lo Manthang was shown one volume of a richly decorated and illustrated manuscript Kanjur, written in gold. He was convinced that he had before him "one of the volumes that the Holy Lama Ngorchen Kunga Zampo had ordered to be made in Mustang in 1436" and that "beyond doubt this was one of the one hundred and eight volumes of the famous gold Kanjur of Lo; ... over five hundred years old and ... certainly a masterpiece of Tibetan scholarship and craftsmanship" (Peissel 1976, 245ff.). In his enthusiasm, he was mistaken about the age. No attempt has been made so far to date it, but it is now generally believed to be a copy of the Early Mustang Kanjur. A second copy is extant at Tsarang, both in the possession of the royal family (Mathes 1997, 127).

In 1988, the manuscript of the *dkar chag* mentioned above, entitled *mDo sngags bka' gyur dkar chag*, was discovered and photographed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP); in 1999, it was published by Helmut Eimer.

In 1996, the NGMPP got access to the assumed copy of the Early Mustang Kanjur kept in the castle of Tsarang and photographed the first ten volumes of the *rgyud* section. Klaus-Dieter Mathes (1997) published a preliminary study and detailed analysis of the Kanjur: some volumes are missing, some are doubled, and in a few cases, even a third or fourth copy of the same volume was found (Mathes 1997, 128).

It is certainly an obvious assumption to consider the two Kanjurs at Lo Manthang and at Tsarang copies of the Early Mustang Kanjur;<sup>13</sup> it does, however, still wait to be verified. There is a considerable discrepancy in the number of volumes the respective collections consist or consisted of.

11 On this topic, see Schaeffer and Kuijp 2009, 10ff.

12 *Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum. The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism*. Edited by bSod nams rgya mtsho. Vol. 10, Tokyo 1969, 344/1/1–349/2/6. See Eimer 1999, 9; cf. Eimer 1994.

13 Mathes 1997, 127 uses the expression: "These collections supposedly go back to ..."



section	Early Mustang	Tsarang	
	Number of volumes		
<i>rgyud</i>	21	15	(missing: vols Ta, Ma)
<i>gzungs 'dus</i>	3	--	
<i>gzungs 'bum</i>	6	--	
<i>'dul ba</i>	16	13	(missing: vol. Nga)
<i>'bum</i>	18	18	
<i>nyi khri</i>	6	4	
<i>khri brgyad</i>	4	3	(missing: vols Kha, Ga)
<i>khri pa</i>	2	3	
<i>brgyad stong</i>	1	1	
<i>sher sna tshogs</i>	1	--	
<i>mdo sil bu</i>	40	30	
<i>mdo che bzhi</i>	23	19	(missing: <i>Phal chen</i> vol. Cha)
<b>total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>106</b>	

Partly, these differences are easily explained; in the *mdo che bzhi* section, consisting of *Myang 'das*, *Phal chen*, *dKon brtsegs*, and *Chos dran*, e. g., the discrepancy is due to the fact that in the Early Mustang Kanjur the three volumes of *Myang 'das* are duplicated, and *dKon brtsegs* consists of seven volumes instead of the 'normal' six. In the other cases, there could be various reasons, and only after the manuscripts from Tsarang (or Lo Manthang) have become accessible, it will be possible to judge their significance.

In addition, the individual sections appear in a different order in the *Early Mustang Kanjur Catalogue* and in Mathes' survey, which probably follows "a list attached to a pillar of the Kanjur room in Tsarang castle" (Mathes 1997, 130). The *mdo che bzhi* section does not, according to this survey, exist in the Tsarang Kanjur. It is also not to be found in the Ladakhi Kanjurs under consideration. However, as in the catalogue of the Early Mustang Kanjur, too, there is no continuous sequence of volume sigla within this section and each of the four sūtras start with vol. Ka, it can be suspected that it is a section within the *dkar chag* only, not within the Kanjur.

Since no further study on this material was possible in Mustang after 1996, Eimer's *Early Mustang Kanjur Catalogue* has, for the time being, to serve as the only base for the systematic study and structural analysis of any canonical collection in comparison with this Kanjur and to relate any canonical collection to the postulated 'Mustang group' of Kanjurs.

As already mentioned, canonical collections to be compared with the Early Mustang Kanjur were discovered in Ladakh. The rNam rgyal kings, who ruled Ladakh from ca. 1500 until the fall of the empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were not only mighty warriors and did not only entertain good relations to the Muslim community – rGyal Khatun, the mother of King Seng ge rnam rgyal (1616–1642)<sup>14</sup>, after all, was a Muslim princess from Baltistan<sup>15</sup> –, first of all they were devote supporters of Buddhism, and, among other activities,<sup>16</sup> they sponsored a considerable number of Kanjurs. As xylograph printing was introduced in Ladakh only relatively late, the art of manuscript production was preserved on a high level, and manuscript Kanjurs were produced until the heydays of the rNam rgyal dynasty in the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century.

14 On the conflict between Seng ge rnam rgyal and his younger brother Nor bu rnam rgyal, who occupied the throne in 1623–1624, see Petech 1977, 40f.

15 On the topic of matrimonial relations between Ladakhi kings and Muslim ladies see Halkias 2010; for the general rNam rgyal – Muslim relation see Zain-ul-Aabedin 2009.

16 For donations given by 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal to Buddhist institutions in Central Tibet, e.g., see Petech 1977, 34f.

Several manuscript collections have been digitized and studied by the TMPV team, e.g., the manuscript Kanjur of Shey (Ladakh) (Lainé forthcoming) or the manuscript collection of Phukthar (Zanskar). In recent years, the major collections at Hemis and Basgo attracted closer attention. There are several (incomplete) copies of 17<sup>th</sup> century Kanjurs kept at these places, which are very closely related to each other and show a very strong influence – to say the least – of the Early Mustang Kanjur with its Sa skya roots. In this respect, they form a unit among the Ladakhi Kanjurs which is considerably distinct from the Kanjurs of the Stog - Shey line, which is some 100 years younger, can be counted among the Them spangs ma group<sup>17</sup> and has, according to the Stog *dkar chag*, its more immediate origin in Bhutan (Skorupski 1985, xi-xii) with her 'Brug pa tradition.

Nothing is known about the circumstances, under which these Mustang manuscripts – or copies thereof – might have reached Ladakh. Their import might have been influenced by the fact that at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Gu ge was conquered by Ladakh (Petech 1977, 45),<sup>18</sup> Mustang was certainly an immediate neighbour of the Ladakhi empire, possibly even to some extent under its influence.<sup>19</sup> sTag tshang ras pa Ngag dbang rgya mtsho (1574–1651) might also have played his role in this transaction. Invited for the first time by King 'Jam dbyangs mam rgyal (1595–1616) when he passed through Zanskar on a pilgrimage to Uḍḍiyāna in 1614/1615, this Tibetan 'Brug pa master came to Ladakh only some years later, and he became the leading religious authority under King Seng ge rnam rgyal. As a descendent of the 'Khang family, he was related to the hereditary abbots of Sa skya (Petech 1977, 35), and it might be possible that via these relations he got into contact with the Mustang group of Kanjurs. – Least we get lost in mere speculation, let us return to safer grounds.

In 2007, a great number of canonical manuscripts were discovered by local monks at Hemis Monastery, in a sealed basement room underneath the Tshoms lha khang, which is considered to be – together with the 'Du khang – the oldest chapel of the monastery (Tshe dbang rig 'dzin 2009, 46 and 48). It was evident from the beginning that these manuscripts might have some value for the study of the transmission of the Buddhist canonical literature in Ladakh, but the poor state of preservation and the disorder of the folia made any immediate closer investigation impossible.

An analysis and digital documentation started in 2009, after the material was sorted, cleaned, and put in order by a local team financed in the beginning by the National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi (supervised by the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar, Leh), and subsequently by the TMPV. It came to light that the majority of the manuscripts belong to two Kanjurs. Both of them are written in *dbu can* script in black ink on rather thick and coarse paper of a light brownish or beige colour. One of them is of the 'standard Kanjur size', i.e. ca. 70 x 20 cm, with an average of 7–8 lines per page, the other one is slightly smaller, ca. 50 x 15 cm, has 6 lines per page as an average, and shows a number of illuminations<sup>20</sup> within the *mdo sde* section. The total number of leaves amounts to some 50,000, i.e. about 50% of two Kanjurs. Unfortunately however, this does not make one complete Kanjur, as many portions are extant in both versions, while others are missing altogether. In general, there is, e.g., only very little *rgyud* material extant. Of the larger Kanjur, there exist only fragments of one single volume, containing only rNying ma tantra. Within the smaller one there are nine incomplete volumes, three of them show the same volume siglum Pha, although they do not contain the same texts; one volume is, again, rNying ma tantra.

17 Although the more or less contemporary Kanjurs of Stog and Shey are very closely related, they show considerable differences as well, e. g., in the arrangement of the *dkon brtsegs* (Ratnakūṭa) section (see Tauscher and Lainé 2008, 353–356), and also deviations from the other Them spangs ma Kanjurs. Such an instance with regard to the *Bhikṣuṇīvivhaṅga* was recently pointed out by Shayne Clarke in his paper "Multiple Mūlasarvāstivādin Monasticism: On the Affiliation of the Tibetan Nuns' Lineages and Beyond", read at the Oslo Buddhist Studies Forum, June 12, 2012 (e-mail communication of June 28, 2012). The analysis of individual texts, however, has not yet been carried out systematically on a bigger scale, and any respective information is restricted to random observations.

18 Cf. also the map in Francke 1907, opposite p. 90.

19 The *La dwags rgyal rabs* mentions in a short statement that Seng ge rnam rgyal "brought Lho-mo-sdañ into his power" (*mnga' 'og tu bcug*); see Francke 1926, 110 (translation) and 41 (Tibetan text).

20 For some examples see plate 1.



In addition, there are some 4,800 leaves of manuscripts in golden ink on dark blue or black paper. Although they are locally considered as the remains of a 'golden Kanjur', apparently the greater part of them did not belong to such a collection, but to various *mdo mangs* volumes.

Kanjurs written in gold or silver ink are generally held in much higher esteem, and also historiographic works hardly ever mention 'ordinary' ones. Nevertheless, for the time being, these 'golden' fragments are not studied any further; the investigation concentrates on the two black-and-white Kanjurs, as they are much more promising with regard to Kanjur research. Both of them were probably produced within a relatively short period of time, one being a copy of the other, or both being copies of a common model.

Hemis (He mi) Monastery, situated some 30 km south of Leh, was founded in 1630<sup>21</sup> by sTag tshang ras pa and King Seng ge nam rgyal, and the production of the first manuscript Kanjur could have begun shortly afterwards. This

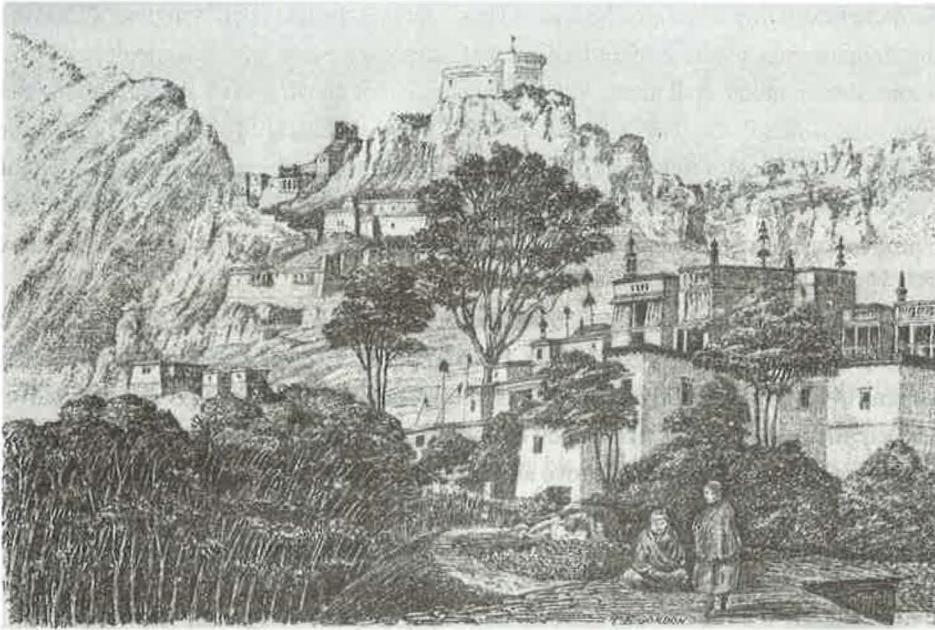


Fig. 1: Hemis Monastery and Na ro rdzong Fort around 1876

assumption is supported by the fact that one of the colophons mentions as a reviser Nam mkha' dpal mgon,<sup>22</sup> a well-known figure of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, still popular among educated Ladakhis of today.

Nam mkha' dpal mgon, native of the village Sa phud/Sa bu/Saboo<sup>23</sup> some six km south-east of Leh, was *dpon chen* under King Seng ge nam rgyal. A popular saying combines "the lion-like king Seng ge nam rgyal, the tiger-like *bla ma* sTag tshang ras pa, and the sky-like *dpon chen* Nam mkha' dpal mgon" into some sort of an 'intellectual

21 See Tshe dbang rig 'dzin 2009, 21. This date, however, is not possible according to the chronology of Rabgias 1984 (cf. below, note 28), where the foundation of Hemis is mentioned in the chapter on Seng ge nam rgyal (p. 193), whose reign is dated to 1590–1620 (p. 178).

22 The colophon of the *Vajrasikharamahāguhyayogatantra* (vol. *rgyud* Ta, 257a5f.) reads: *rgya gar gyi mkhan po rdo rje slob dpon chen po Karma badzra pa'i zhal mnga' nas dang | lo tstsha ba dge slong gZhon nu tshul khriims kyis bsgyur cing zhus pa'o | 'di'i ma dpe la snga zhus nas Nam mkha' dpal mgon gyis byas | | namaḥ sa manta bha dra la ||* For biographical information on Nam mkha' dpal mgon see Gergan 1975, 389–396, Thub bstan dpal ldan 1988, 104–117, and Shakspo 2010, 37. See also Thub bstan dpal ldan 2009 = 2011. Both publications became accessible to us only after the completion of this paper.

23 On this village see Thub bstan dpal ldan 1988, 104f. and Shakspo 2010, 35ff. See also Thub bstan dpal ldan 2009 = 2011.

triumvirate'.<sup>24</sup> Petech (1977, 55) calls him "one of the foremost noblemen of Señ-ge-rnam-rgyal's time", possibly referring to a similar expression in the sources as we find it in Rabgias 1984, 185: *dpon gtso bo lta bu* "something like the most prominent lord/official"; according to Shakspo (2010, 19 and 37) he was the king's "chief calligrapher" or "chief scribe". Apparently, however, his main task was the revision of texts or supervision of their production, and the title *dpon chen* might have to be understood also as *slob dpon chen po*, 'chief scholar'. Two verses, obviously composed by Nam mkha' dpal mgon, in a colophon at Basgo make evident that he considered himself a scholar and expert in Tibetan grammar and old and new orthography/terminology, and that he knew some Sanskrit as well.<sup>25</sup>

All in all, Nam mkha' dpal mgon is said to have served four successive kings as *dpon chen*: Tshe dbang rnam rgyal (1575–1595), 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal (1595–1616), Seng ge rnam rgyal (1616–1642), and bDe ldan rnam rgyal (1642–1694) (Gergan 1975, 389; Thub bstan dpal ldan 1988, 109f. and 2009=2011, 72),<sup>26</sup> and during that time "he revised 407 volumes of large and small sūtras".<sup>27</sup>

The sources do not explicitly mention a Kanjur at Hemis among the texts that Nam mkha' dpal mgon revised or supervised (some authors connect him rather to a Kanjur at Basgo; see below), but a contemporary document relates that the king entrusted Nam mkha' dpal mgon with the supervision of copying several texts, among them a Kanjur.<sup>28</sup> It is dated to a pig year, which Petech (1977, 55) identifies as "almost certainly 1635", and if this assumption is correct, this document may very well refer to one of the Hemis Kanjurs or at least parts thereof. The only appearance of Nam mkha' dpal mgon's name is in the colophon of an individual text; there is no direct evidence for his being involved in the production of the complete Kanjur, but it can be suspected from everything that is known about him.

The village of Basgo (Ba mgo)<sup>29</sup>, situated some 30 km to the west of Leh, is presently scattered over seven km, and it houses a resident population of some 1200 people. Until Upper and Lower Ladakh were united during the reign of King Bhagan (ca. 1460–1485), the royal fort of Basgo towering above the village was the court of the lords of Lower Ladakh. Thereafter it became the first capital of united Ladakh under the newly founded rNam rgyal dynasty, and it remained an important residence (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977, 82ff.) until at least the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Portuguese traveller Diego d'Almeida who came to Ladakh in 1601 found the king's residence still at Basgo (Petech 1939, 174), before it was moved to Leh (Gle), Shey (Shel mkhar), and, eventually, Stog.

24 See Gergan 1975, 389: *kha dper | rgyal po seng ge dang 'dra ba'i Seng ge rnam rgyal | bla ma stag dang 'dra ba'i sTag tshang ras pa | dpon chen nam mkha' dang dra ba'i Nam mkha' dpal mgon | ces grags so |* Nam mkha' dpal mgon is, however, not mentioned in the *La dwags rgyal rabs*.

25 Apart from this rather clear message, these verses might be understood as a response to critique and polemics that he had faced, although noting of that kind is mentioned in the sources accessible to us:

| 'jam dbyangs gnyis pa thon mi sum rtags dang || de'i 'grel lo paṇ mang pos mdzad pa dang |  
| gsar rnying brda dag rnams la yid gzhangs pa'i || mkhas mi mkhas kyi nam mkha' dpal mgon ngas |  
| dag dang ma dag ci rigs mthong gyur na'ang || mkhas rlom dgyes phyir res shig ma bzhin bzhag  
| dge de kha dmar 'dogs pa'i don du bsngo || shu bham | m | astu sarba dza ga tāṃ |

"I, Nam mkha' dpal mgon, whether or not an expert learned in the *Sum rtags* of Thon mi, the second Mañjuḥśa, its commentaries, the works of many translators and scholars, and the old and new orthography/terminology, although I have seen correct and incorrect as it is, in order to satisfy those who pretend to be experts, for the time being I leave [everything] according to the original [and] dedicate this benefit to those who criticise [me] (*kha dmar 'dogs pa* ?). Welfare for all mankind!"

These verses appear rather ambiguous, and they could be interpreted in quite a different way as well; this, however, is not the task of this paper to decide.

26 According to Thub bstan dpal ldan 2009 = 2011, 67, however, Nam mkha' dpal mgon's career appears to have started under King Seng ge rnam rgyal. The dates given in this paper, if not stated otherwise, are according to Petech 1977. They are, however, not undisputed; cf., e. g., the list of Ladakhi kings in Shakspo 2010, 265f. comparing the dates according to Rabgias 1984 and Petech 1977. Thub bstan dpal ldan 1988, 110 gives for the lives (or reign?) of the four kings mentioned a time-span of "some 78 years" (*mi lo bdun cu don bryad tsam*) instead of 120 years (1575–1694) according to Petech, and 111 years (1530–1640) according to Rabgias.

27 Gergan 1975, 389: ... *des mdo che chung sdom bzhi brya dang bdun 407 zhus so ||*

28 This document is published *op. cit.* 395f. and Thub bstan dpal ldan 1988, 110f. Cf. also Petech 1977, 55 and Shakspo 2010, 19.

29 Cf. also the spelling *bab sgo* in old inscription and, occasionally, the *La dwags rgyal rabs* (Francke 1926, 112ff.).



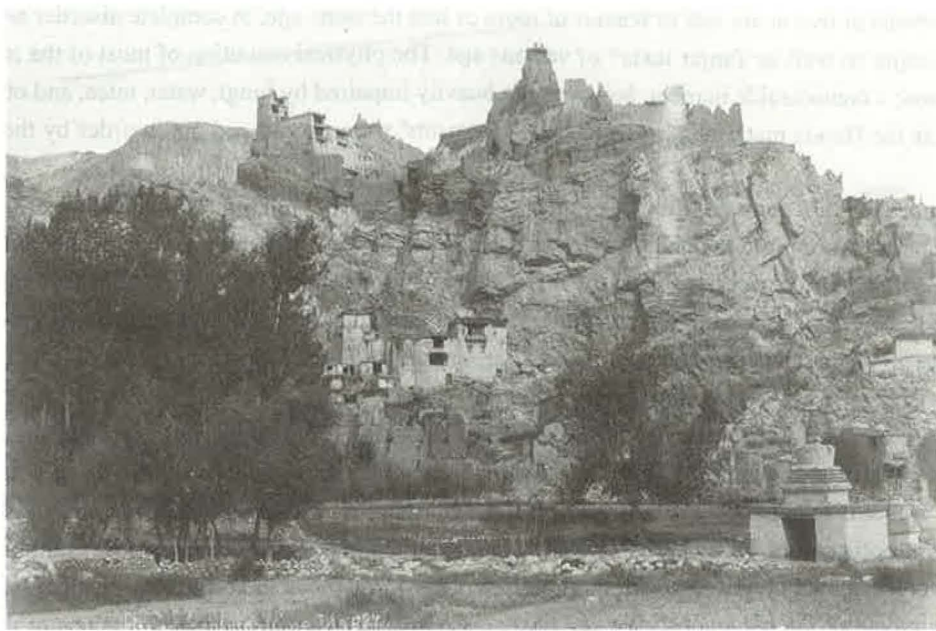


Fig. 2: Basgo fort (in ruins) with Byams pa lha khang (left) and gSer zangs lha khang (right) around 1890

Within the ruins of Basgo Fort, the three temples are the only buildings that have survived the centuries: Byams pa lha khang, believed to have been built during the reign of *lha chen* Grags pa 'bum lde (ca. 1410–1435), and richly furnished with murals under King Tshe dbang rnam rgyal (ca. 1575–1595), gSer zangs lha khang, constructed during the reign of King 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal, and enlarged by his son, King Seng ge rnam rgyal, and Byam chung lha khang, initially constructed as a mosque for rGyal Khatun, the wife of 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal and mother of Seng ge rnam rgyal.

Of these, gSer zangs lha khang nowadays houses all the manuscripts extant at Basgo Fort; they are the remains of what once must have been an impressive holding of canonical collections. Even if we take into account that in later years, i. e. after the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dogra wars, gSer zangs lha khang might have served as a store for incomplete and damaged manuscripts of the region – comparable to Tabo Monastery in Spiti (Steinkellner 1994, 131) – and not all the manuscripts preserved there were originally in the possession of the Basgo court, the number of Kanjurs available in the area by the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century must have been considerable.

Among the manuscripts at gSer zangs lha khang there is one complete black-and-white Kanjur of the 'standard Kanjur size' (ca. 70 x 20 cm) with an average of 7–8 lines per page, written in *dbu can* script; for the greater part it very closely resembles the material from Hemis Tshoms lha khang. It is partly illuminated,<sup>30</sup> well kept in traditional Tibetan bookshelves, and in general in a fairly good physical condition.

Although the majority of the manuscripts apparently date from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Kanjur as such was compiled as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to local informants sometime in the 1970s – a note on a piece of paper used for repairing a broken leaf gives the date 25:10:86 –, making use of the vast textual material locally available. Folios that could not be restored from the available stock were replaced by newly written ones of inferior quality with regard to both paper and calligraphy. Judging from the repeated re-pagination (see below) and other evidence, however, similar attempts to compile a Kanjur or complete one that had partly been destroyed must have been undertaken more than once already earlier. In addition, gSer zangs lha khang houses a considerable amount (ca. 60.000

30 In the same way as in Hemis, the illuminations – some of them unfinished – are, with very few exceptions, to be found within the *mdo sde* section; for examples see plate 2. Some of the book covers are richly painted or carved and might be of some interest to art history; for examples see plate 3.



leaves) of fragments of five or six sets of Kanjur of more or less the same age, in complete disorder and mixed with fragments of Kanjur as well as Tanjur texts<sup>31</sup> of various age. The physical condition of most of the manuscripts is, again, fairly good; a considerable number, however, are heavily impaired by fungi, water, mice, and other causes. In the same way as the Hemis material, also the Basgo 'fragments' were treated and put in order by the local TMPV team.

Among them there are some 900 folios of manuscripts that clearly pre-date the foundation of the chapel and appear to have been part of proto-canonical collections of the 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century, showing ancient orthography and palaeography and all the peculiarities of the respective manuscripts from Tabo, Gondhla, Tholing, or Phukthar (De Rossi Filibek 2007, 58; Tauscher 2008, xxxviff.). This is of particular interest, as remains of such proto-canonical collections have previously been discovered in Zanskar, but not in Ladakh proper. Of course, this fact did never speak against the existence of such collections at Ladakh.

The majority of these fragments, however, date from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and represent the same type of manuscripts as the Hemis and Basgo Kanjurs do. Again, Nam mkha' dpal ngon is mentioned as a reviser, but unlike in Hemis, where his name appears only once, the Basgo material, within the Kanjur as well as the fragments, preserves several occurrences within both *mdo* and *rgyud* texts. These occurrences range from simple references to the elaborate verses quoted above.<sup>32</sup> In fact, these verses occur three times in absolutely identical form (including the apparent misspelling *shu bham mastu* for *shu bham astu*); twice they seem to fit with the rest of the manuscript with regard to handwriting and quality of ink, the third occurrence is obviously a later addition in a different hand, writing style, and ink.

Among the manuscripts kept at gSer zangs lha khang, the pride and main concern of the local community is beyond doubt what they call the 'Golden Kanjur'. At the time of our visits (2008–2011) it was safely locked away – and certainly not "on display", as Shakspo 2010 claims – in a metal trunk, which measures ca. 3 x 2 x 1.5 m and is thus much too small to hold a Kanjur that is anywhere complete, in particular because it contains also fragments of at least three more ornamented manuscripts.<sup>33</sup> The actual number of extant leaves of either of these manuscripts is unknown to us, the majority of them, however, apparently belong to a partly illuminated, precious luxury Kanjur written in gold, silver, copper and turquoise ink on dark blue paper. Locally it is believed that these are the remains of a Kanjur commissioned by King Seng ge nam rgyal, produced under the supervision of *dpon chen* Nam mkha' dpal ngon, and partly destroyed during the Dogra wars (Cf. Shakspo 2010, 19).<sup>34</sup>

In the same way as the 'Golden Kanjur' of Hemis, and for similar reasons, these manuscripts are not studied any further, and the investigation concentrates on the black-and-white material.

As the Hemis and Basgo Kanjurs are closely related and very much alike in every respect, for the present purpose they are treated as representing the same line of textual transmission, although the Basgo catalogue is not yet completed. The entire *mdo sde* section of one of the Kanjurs from Hemis, however, has been catalogued and compared in a structural analysis with the Early Mustang Kanjur, the Tshal pa (Derge) and Them spangs ma (Stog) groups of Kanjurs, as well as with the Phug brag Kanjur.

Comparing the entire *mdo sde* sections, the agreement between Hemis and Mustang becomes evident, as well as their deviation from all the other Kanjurs (see Diagram 1)<sup>35</sup>. The only difference between Hemis and Mustang are minor interruptions of the Mustang line, which indicate that some texts contained in Basgo-Hemis are missing from

31 Due to unfavorable conditions, this material could not be investigated or documented at all.

32 See note 27.

33 For examples see plate 4.

34 Although it is not stated explicitly, this passage suggests that it is also the Kanjur referred to in the document mentioned above (note 30).

35 In this graphical presentation of their distribution, each of the texts is identified by a number indicating its position within the respective collection. The sequence of the Hemis Kanjur is then taken as the basis for comparison. For a detailed description of this method see Lainé 2009, 11 (Appendix 1).

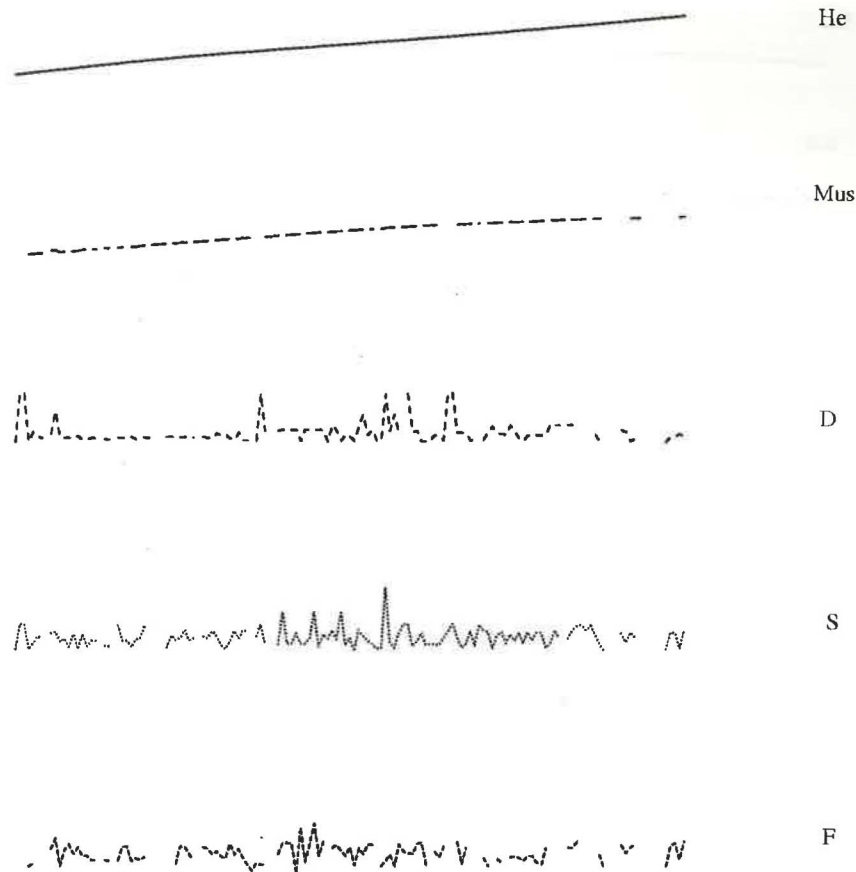


Diagram 1: The *mdo sde* sections of the Kanjurs of Hemis (He), Mustang (Mus), Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) in comparison

this collection; they were either actually missing from the Early Mustang Kanjur, or they were simply not entered in the *dkar chag*.

In a comparison of individual volumes also material from Basgo could be taken into consideration, and in these cases the overall situation becomes even more evident.

Vol. Nya contains a sufficient number of texts (13) to be considered representative for the general arrangement of the texts in the *mdo sde* section. Diagram 2 clearly shows the perfect agreement between Basgo, Hemis, and Mustang with regard to both the texts contained and their arrangement within the volume.

The greater part of vol. Zha (see diagram 3) could be restored from the 'fragments' and taken into account in this analysis, in addition to the complete Kanjurs of Basgo and Hemis. This fragment consists of only the first 13 out of the 22 texts of this volume, but within this part it is identical with the two complete Kanjurs, and it is to be expected that the same was originally true for the rest of the volume. Basgo must have housed several copies of the same Kanjur.

With regard to its relation to Mustang, the situation is slightly different from vol. Nya: the agreement is not perfect, but nevertheless striking. The *dkar chag* of the Early Mustang Kanjur lists only ten titles within this volume; five texts of the Basgo-Hemis repertoire (Nos. 7, 9–12; see below) are missing. No. 7 is a duplication of the *Acintyabuddhaviṣayanirdeśa*, which is, of course, also included in the *dkon brtsegs* section. Although it might be the case that these texts were originally contained in the Early Mustang Kanjur, and only by accident the titles were not

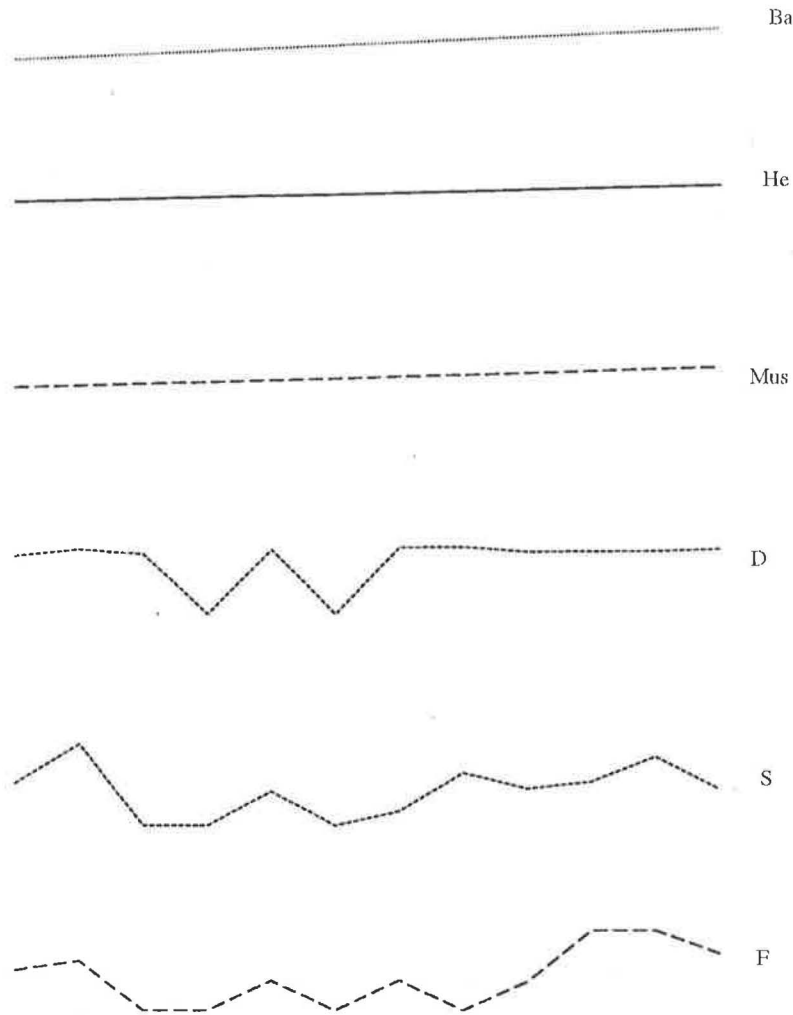


Diagram 2: *mdo sde* vol. Nya of the Kanjurs of Basgo (Ba), Hemis (He), and Mustang (Mus), compared with Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) [any volume]

included in the *dkar chag*, this is hard to imagine in this particular instance, and certainly it cannot be taken as an hypotheses.

The last entry in the catalogue is a *bKra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa'i mdo* (No. 648). Basgo-Hemis has five successive *bkra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa* texts (Nos. 15–19) instead, and here a slip of the *dkar chag* seems to be more likely than in the previous case. If we assume that the entry in the catalogue represents a certain number of texts with the same title, vol. Zha of Mustang (Nos. 639–648) would – apart from the omissions mentioned above – be in agreement with texts 1–19 of the Basgo-Hemis volume. Without this assumption there are, as indicated in Diagram 3 and the table below, four more texts missing in the Mustang collection.

The last three numbers of this volume, covering a total of less than 6 folios, are clearly an addition to the Mustang version, for what reason ever. This set of *bkra shis tshigs su bcad pa* texts corresponds to Lithang, *ḍul ba Pa* (vol. 13) 337b4–342a1. In particular noteworthy is No. 22. It is a short passage from the *Lalitavistarasūtra*,<sup>36</sup> it starts

36 Corresponding to fols. 185a–187a in the Derge edition.

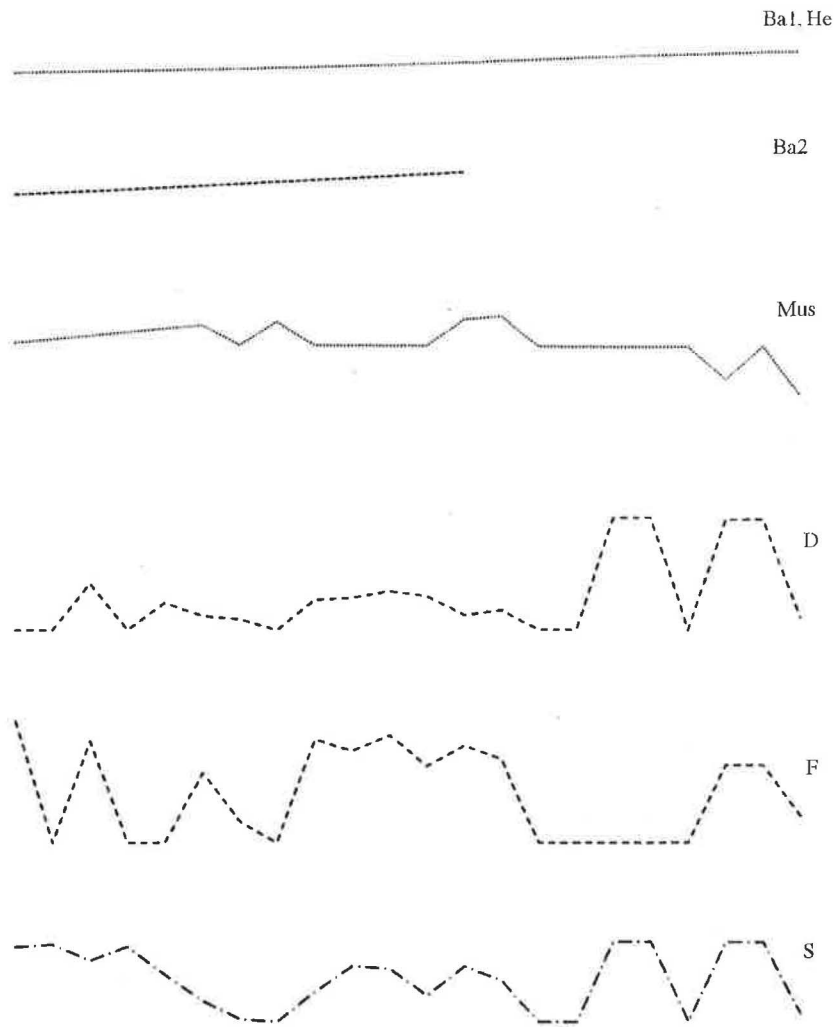


Diagram 3: *mdo sde* vol. Zha of the Kanjurs of Basgo (Ba1 - complete Kanjur , Ba2 - fragments), Hemis (He), and Mustang (Mus), compared with Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) [any volume]

without mentioning a title, and the colophon reads *shis pa brjod pa'i || le'u zhes bya ba rdzogs s.hyo*, which is not to be found in the canonical versions of the sūtra. In Derge (No. 1107) as well as in Lithang (340a2–342a1) it is included as *Shis par brjod pa'i tshigs su bcad pa*.

Content of vol. *mdo sde* Zha and the distribution of its texts in the Kanjurs of Mustang (Mus), Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F), referring to the respective number of each text and the volume in which it is contained; dots (...) within the titles represent *zhes bya ba('i)*:



	Basgo-Hemis	Mus	D	S	F
1	gSer mdog gi rtogs pa brjod pa	639	4144 <i>'dul 'grel Su</i>	310, Chi	373, Go
2	'phags pa dGa' ba'i bshes gnyen ... rtogs pa brjod pa	640	4146 <i>'dul 'grel Su</i>	319, Ji	
3	'Phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa ... mdo	641	345, Am	254, Sa	312, Khi
4	Ku na la'i rtogs pa brjod pa	642	4145 <i>'dul 'grel Su</i>	311, Chi	
5	'phags pa Byang chub sems dpa' byams pa dga' ldan gnas su skye ba blangs po'i mdo	643	199, Tsa	195, Zha	
6	'phags pa sNang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa ... chos kyi rnam grangs	644	103, Nga	87, Ta	214, Dza
7	'phags pa Sangs rgyas kyi yul bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa ... theg pa chen po'i mdo		79 <i>dkon Ca</i>	11.35 <i>dkon Ca</i>	65 <i>dkon Ca</i>
8	Pho brang 'khor skyong ... theg pa chen po'i mdo	645			
9	'phags pa rGyal po la gdams pa ... theg pa chen po'i mdo		221, Dsa	124, Pha	317=379 Khu, Go
10	bCom ldan 'das kyi gtsug gtor chen po de bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba sgrub pa'i don mngon par thob pa'i rgyu byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi spyod pa dpa' bar 'gro ba'i mdo le'u stong phrag bcu pa las le'u		236, Wa	230, 'a	196=282 Tsha, Ku
11	'phags pa sKu gsum gyi theg pa chen po'i mdo		283, Ya	219, Za	330, Khu
12	Byang chub sems dpa'i so sor thar ba chos bzhi sgrub pa ... theg pa chen po'i mdo		248, Za	109, Na	235, La
13	'phags pa Ga ya mgo'i ri zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo	646	109, Ca	229, 'a	298, Ke
14	'phags pa rNam par mi rtog pa 'jug pa ... mdo	647	142, Pa	170, Dza	103=172= 256=344 Da, Tsa, Sa, Kho
15	bKra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa	648			
16	bKra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa				
17	De bzhin gshegs pa lnga'i bkra shis tshigs su bcad pa		822=1105 <i>rgyud Wa,</i> <i>gzungs Wam</i>	242=330=762 Ya, Ji, <i>rgyud Tsha</i>	
18	dKon mchog gsum gyi bkra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa		827, Wa	332, Ji	
19	bKra shis kyi tshigs su bcad pa				
20	bDe legs kyi tshigs su bcad pa	604, Ba	817=1101 Wa, Wam	329, Ji	99=237=371 Da, La, Go
21	bDe legs su 'gyur ba tshigs su bcad pa		818=1102 Wa, Wam	328, Ji	100=238 Da, La
22	Shis pa brjod pa'i le'u		1107, Wam		

These examples will suffice to illustrate the very close relation between the Early Mustang Kanjur – represented, as already stated above, by its *dkar chag* – and the Kanjurs of Basgo and Hemis. In addition, these examples make clear that the latter two are directly and immediately related; with regard to the history of Kanjur development they could, in fact, be regarded as ONE Kanjur. Unless the discrepancies between Mustang and Basgo-Hemis are of Ladakhi origin, the connection to the Early Mustang Kanjur, on the other hand, must have taken place via an intermediate manuscript which still has to be discovered. Any relation to the Tshal pa and Them spangs ma lines of transmission, however, can be ruled out for either of the three.

Contrary to the *mdo sde* section, the arrangement of the *dkon brtsegs* (Ratnakūṭa) division in Basgo-Hemis does not follow the Mustang Kanjur, but basically preserves the typical ‘Western Tibetan’ sequence of texts, as it can be seen in the proto-Kanjurs of Tabo, Gondhla and Phukthar, and the Kanjurs of Shel dkar/London and Shey (Tauscher and Lainé 2008, 353–356).

Of the other sections of the Kanjur no equally clear picture can be presented. In various ways this is connected with the particular development of this body of literature, first of all within the *rgyud sde* section, where the situation presents itself much more complicated, and no relation to any known Kanjur tradition is evident.

In the earlier, proto-canonical collections from Western Tibet (Tholing, Tabo, Gondhla, Phukthar) practically no tantra is extant at all; the texts that could be counted as ‘tantra’ and are extant in these collections are more or less restricted to *gzung ’dus* (\**dhāraṇīsāṅgraha*), which is counted as a separate section in various Kanjurs, among them the Early Mustang Kanjur.

As already mentioned above, one of the Kanjurs in Hemis contains only very little tantra, and the second one merely one volume of rNying ma tantra, which is not included in most of the Tibetan Kanjurs, also not in the Early Mustang Kanjur, at least not in its catalogue. The *rgyud sde* sections of the Kanjurs of Stog and Shey are presumably taken over from a Kanjur of the ‘Phyin ba stag rtse sub-division’<sup>37</sup> of the Tshal pa group. In Basgo, on the other hand, a relatively large amount of tantra texts are preserved, in the complete Kanjur as well in the fragments, but they cannot, at the present stage of research, be related to any known tradition.

Taking the late date and the circumstances of its compilation into account, the Kanjur of Basgo does not provide any conclusive information about the original content and design of this section. In order to reconstruct it, at least tentatively, it is, therefore, necessary to analyse in detail all the material at Basgo. This, however, is an enterprise for several years to come.

Parts of the Kanjur are in severe disorder, and the attempt to re-establish the correct order is complicated by the repeated re-pagination, including also changes of the volume siglum. Not in all the cases it is clear which of the pagination should be considered ‘valid’, occasionally it is obviously none of them.

The examples shown in Fig. 3 are taken from two copies of the *SarvatathāgataguhyatantraYogamahārājādāvaya-samatāvijaya-nāma-vajrasrīparamamahākālpādi* extant among the fragments, but similar instances appear within the Kanjur as well. The first of them is included in a vol. Nya, but, as the traces of an older siglum show, it has been shifted there from a vol. Tha; the second one is contained in a vol. Tha with changes of only the pagination, not of the volume.

In the complete Kanjur, too, the same text is included in vol. Tha, but there are traces of an insufficiently deleted siglum Nya (see Fig. 4). However, the reasons for shifting it from Nya to Tha or vice versa are mysterious: in Derge and Peking it is contained in vol. Cha, and in other Kanjurs, including Mustang, it is not preserved at all.

In addition, the beginning of this text is rather unusual in many ways. Obviously it was meant to start on a new page, but there is a bit more than one line of an unidentified and ‘deleted’ text at the beginning of the page. The title of the text is not given in its full form, but abbreviated, as it appears in marginal titles: *gNylis med che ba*. The fol-

37 For this group of Kanjurs see Eimer 1992, xvii.



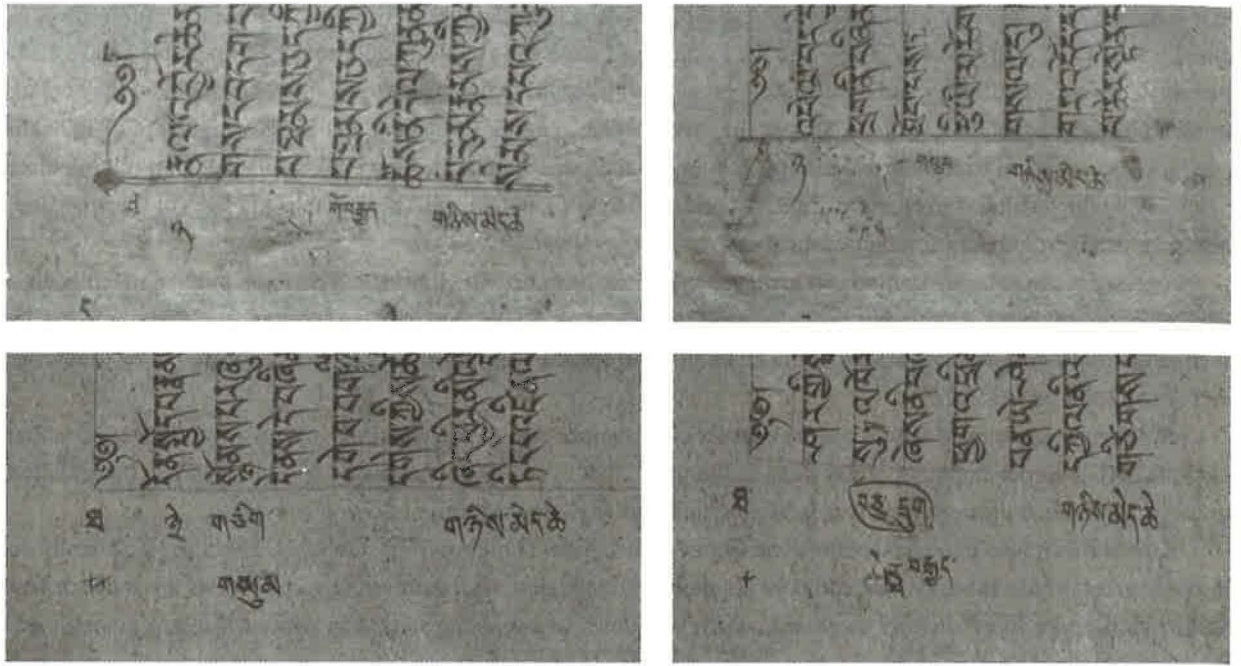


Fig. 3: Examples of re-pagination in the Basgo Kanjur fragments



Fig. 4: Beginning of the Sarvatathāgataḡuhyatantra

lowing line gives a short *dkar chag*, explaining that this text is the first of three in this volume.<sup>38</sup> However, the folio bears the pagination 31 – following a folio 150 –, and also the rest of the *dkar chag* does not agree with the actual content of the volume.

The following page, which should contain the actual beginning of the text, starts with a few words scratched away, and then – without the usual introductory passage – *de nas bcom ldan 'das ... zhugs te ...*

Among the fragments a considerable number of rNying ma tantra are to be found, either in separate volumes marked as *rnying ma*, or mixed with other tantra in the same volume. None of these texts were taken over in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Kanjur compilation. Strikingly, some of these rNying ma texts preserve traces of the old orthography, primarily the *ya-btags* in the words *myed* and *myi*.

38 po ti 'di nang dang po gNyas med che ba | gnyis pa dPal mchog | gsun pa rDo rje snying po dang le mtshan gsun gzhugs so ||



At least one text in this collection is not known from any other source, a *dPal rDo rje sme (b)rtsegs kyi tantra* (\*Śrī Vajrabhūṛkumkūṭa-tantra). It is a mixture of the well-known *Ārya Vidyottama-mahātantra* (D 746) and an unidentified text, merging into each other several times. Textual conflations of that kind are known from other manuscript collections as well, and they may result from the fact that the leaves of the recension copied were in disorder (Tauscher 2008, xlv-xlvii). This possibility can probably be excluded in this case; we have three fragmentary copies of the same text, all showing the same intersections in the same place. More likely, this text is an early *rNying ma tantra*, where such mixtures occur rather frequently. However, it is not contained in a volume explicitly marked as *rnying ma*, and a *dPal rDo rje sme (b)rtsegs kyi tantra/rgyud* could not be identified in any *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* either.

Within the frame of this paper it is, evidently, not possible to mention all the peculiar features of the Basgo manuscripts, and all the evidence for the repeated re-arrangement of their texts, which finally resulted in the 'Basgo Kanjur' as it is now kept at gSer zangs lha khang. In summing up one might observe that when studying this material one starts to understand what the term 'conflation' really means, which is frequently used in connection with the development of Tibetan Kanjurs. Basgo might serve as an – extreme, but maybe not altogether untypical – example of how Kanjurs were compiled from the earliest days onwards, making use of all the available material, regardless of which origin it might be.

The questions occurring in this context are not merely problems of 17<sup>th</sup> century Ladakhi Kanjur collections and compilations; in the first place they concern, on a more general level, the history and the sources of these collections. The answers to many of them might be hidden in yet unexplored proto-canonical manuscript collections in the Western Tibetan Himalaya regions on both sides of the border of the PR China. It is our sincere hope that in the future collaboration with our Chinese colleagues will result in making this material accessible to international research.

## List of figures, plates and diagrams

Fig. 1: Hemis Monastery and Na ro rdzong Fort around 1876 (Gordon 1876, opposite p. 2).

Fig. 2: Basgo fort (in ruins) with Byams pa lha khang (left) and gSer zangs lha khang (right) around 1890. © Moravian Church Archive and Library (MAL).

Fig. 3: Examples of re-pagination in the Basgo Kanjur fragments.

Fig. 4: Beginning of the *Sarvatathāgataguhyatantra* ....

Plate 1: Miniatures from the Hemis Kanjur (photo by the authors).

Plate 2: Miniatures from the Basgo Kanjur (photo by the authors).

Plate 3: Book-covers from the Basgo Kanjur (photo by the authors).

Plate 4: Examples of the 'Golden Kanjur' and other ornamental manuscripts at Basgo gSer zangs lha khang (photos by G. Halkias).

Diagram 1: The *mdo sde* sections of the Kanjurs of Hemis (He), Mustang (Mus), Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) in comparison.

Diagram 2: *mdo sde* vol. Nya of the Kanjurs of Basgo (Ba), Hemis (He), and Mustang (Mus), compared with Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) [any volume].

Diagram 3: *mdo sde* vol. Zha of the Kanjurs of Basgo (Ba1 – complete Kanjur, Ba2 – fragments), Hemis (He), and Mustang (Mus), compared with Derge (D), Stog (S), and Phug brag (F) [any volume].

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