

# ÉTUDES TIBÉTAINES

DÉDIÉES À LA MÉMOIRE DE

MARCELLE LALOU



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# TIBETAN "FIFTEEN" AND "EIGHTEEN"

by

WALTER SIMON

The present article on a grammatical subject has been written as a small tribute to the memory of the late Professor Marcelle Lalou since there is convincing proof of her own interest in this field in the "*Manuel*" with which she has presented us.

As is well known and has frequently been stated ever since Alexander Csoma de Kőrös wrote the first Western grammar of Tibetan in 1834, the Tibetan numerals for "fifteen" and "eighteen" have *bco-* instead of *bcu-*. H.A. Francke<sup>1</sup> noted in 1929 that "in both cases the following unit contains the vowel *a*". An attempt to account for this apparent irregularity was made in 1955 by Professor R.A. Miller<sup>2</sup>. He suggested that the change of vowel (*o* or *ö* instead of *u*) was due to "regressive discontinuous dissimilation", basing his explanation on the change from *u* to *o* to be observed in the Lhasa pronunciation of the numeral "thirteen" (*cog-sum*) for ancient *bcu-gsum* on the one hand ("since the Lhasa form *sum* 'three' contains a sequence of two successive labial phonemes *u* and *m*"), and on the fact that in Professor B. Karlgren's reconstruction of Ancient Chinese the numbers for "five" and "eight" (*nguo* and *p<sup>w</sup>at*) are the only two of the numerals from "one" to "ten" which show a succession of two labial phonemes.

Four years later, this explanation was objected to by T. Ulving<sup>3</sup>, who denied the relevance of labial phonemes in the Chinese words. Like A.H. Francke, whose note, however, he had probably not seen, he stressed the importance of the vowel *a* occurring in *lña* "five" and *brgyad* "eight" following after *bco*, and explained the change from *bcu-* to *bco-* as a simple case of *a*-umlaut, for which he adduced Old Nordic *horna* < \**hurna* as a parallel.

Obviously neither of the two authors, nor for that matter A.H. Francke, had consulted Csoma's grammar<sup>4</sup>, followed by that of Ph. É. Fou-

<sup>1</sup> See (A.) Jäschke, *Tibetan Grammar* (with *Addenda* by A.H. Francke assisted by W. Simon, Berlin, 1929, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> *T'oung Pao*, 43 (1955), pp. 287-296.

<sup>3</sup> *T'oung Pao*, 47 (1959), pp. 75-80.

<sup>4</sup> Calcutta, 1834, Numerals, § 107, Remarks 4 (p. 63): "*bco-lña* and *bco-brgyad* are now commonly used instead of the ancient terms *bcu-lña* or *bcva-lña* (fifteen) and *bcu-brgyad* or *bcva-brgyad* (eighteen)". There are references to *bcva-lña* and *bcva-brgyad* also in his *Dictionary* of the same year. I.J. Schmidt, whose "*Grammatik der tibetischen Sprache*" (St. Petersburg and Leipzig, 1839) is little more than a German translation of Csoma's grammar, unfortunately left out *bcva*: (p. 86, 4) *bco-lña*, *funfzehn*, and *bco-brgyad*, *achtzehn*, sind jetzt allgemein gebräuchlich statt der veralteten Form *bcu-lña* und *bcu-brgyad*.

caux<sup>5</sup>, in which reference was made to earlier forms of the numerals with *bcu-* or *bcva-* as their first components. I have so far met with *bcu-lña* and *bcu-brgyad* only in Sakaki's edition of the *Mahāvvyutpatti*<sup>6</sup>, where they seem to be mistaken spellings for *bco-lña* and *bco-brgyad*<sup>7</sup>. In one instance Sakaki's edition even gives the rare form *bcvo-brgyad*<sup>8</sup>. The alternatives with *bcva* are in fact fairly common and deserve study both from the phonetic and the textual point of view, as do those with *bcvo*.

### I. The alternation of the finals *-u/-va*

Berthold Laufer<sup>9</sup> was the first, now exactly seventy years ago, to discuss the alternation between *ru* and *rva* "horn" on the one hand, and between *gru* and *grva* "angle, corner" on the other. Some time ago<sup>10</sup>, I had suggested that the two pairs might be closely related from the etymological point of view, quoting in support the article by H. Schuchardt<sup>11</sup> in which he surveyed the semantic relation between "horn" and "angle" in other linguistic fields. Basing myself on the relationship between *ru* "corner"<sup>12</sup> and Chinese *yu* 隅, ancient Chinese *ngju* (Karlgren, *G[rammata] S[erica] R[ecenssa]*<sup>13</sup>, No. 124i), I suggested for the two pairs an original labialised initial cluster *ñrv-* (*ñrvu-*<sup>14</sup>) with vowel gradation *a/u* (the labialisation being subsequently absorbed in the final *-u*) and their realisation as doublets<sup>15</sup> with either immediate loss of the initial *ñ*, or development of an epenthetic *g* and subsequent loss of the initial *ñ-* (*ñr-> ñgr-> gr-*) resulting in either *rva/ru* or *grva/gru*. The development of the initial cluster can now be supported by cases like *reñ* "stiff" < \**ñreñ* (central Chinese *ning* 凝, Ancient

<sup>5</sup> Ph. Ed. Foucaux, *Grammaire de la langue tibétaine* (Paris, 1858), p. 41 : *btcho luga*, *btcho brgyad* sont employés au lieu des anciens termes *bichou-lnga* et *btchva lnga*, quinze, et *bichou-brgyad* et *bichva-brgyad*, dix-huit.

<sup>6</sup> Kyoto, 1916 (now reprinted with the Index by K. Nishio) as N° 1 of the "Reprint Series" of the Suzuki Research Foundation, Tokyo 1962). See, e.g., Nos. 8083 and 8086. Both Csoma's edition of the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, as posthumously published by Sir Denison Ross, Satis Chandra Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Duran Charan Chatterjee (3 parts, 1910-1944), and what was legible to me in the Narthang and Peking prints of the Tanjur have generally *bco* (see Ross, p. 215, Nos. 33 and 36). Professor F.R. Hamm, who had the great kindness of checking on my behalf these two entries in the Derge and Cone Editions (Sna-tshogs, Co 113 A/B) assures me that they likewise have *bco*, not *bcu*.

<sup>7</sup> Note, however, the entry *bcu-brgyad* *bkar-k'oñs* in Sarat Chandra Das's dictionary (p. 393a).

<sup>8</sup> See Sakaki, N° 9076.

<sup>9</sup> See "Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes", 1899, pp. 199, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Asia Major, N.S., Vol. I (1949/50), p. 14, n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, XLI (1921), pp. 254-58.

<sup>12</sup> See "*Tibetisch-Chinesische Wortgleichungen. Ein Versuch*", Berlin, 1930 (Also : Mitteilungen des Seminars f. Orientalische Sprachen, Abt. I, 1929), p. 13, equation No. 81.

<sup>13</sup> Stockholm, 1957.

<sup>14</sup> In accordance with common practice I have transcribed the (triangular) *va-zur* (see about this also G. Uray, *On the Tibetan letters Ba and Wa* in "Acta Orientalia Hungarica", Vol. V (1955), pp. 101-122) as *v*, but there can be little doubt as to its bilabial, not dento-labial nature.

<sup>15</sup> Note, e.g., the alternation of *ru* and *rva* in close succession in a passage in the Amogha-pāśakalparāja (Narthang rGyud/Ba (hog) 345A<sup>2</sup> and 345A<sup>4</sup>): *dyil-ñk'or gru bzi* and *dkyil-ñk'or-gyi grva bzi-rnamsu*.

<sup>16</sup> See "*Tibetan lexicography and etymological research*" (Transactions of the Philological Society 1964), London, 1965, p. 105.

Chinese *ngjəng*, GSR, No. 956h), by the side with *hgreñ* “to stand”, or, as has been shown elsewhere, *rañs* “complete” < \**ñrañs*, by the side of *hgrañs* “satiated” (in *lto-hgrañs-pa*, literally “stomach-complete”, Skr. *paripūr-nagātra*), and a few other words<sup>16a</sup>. The relation between *bvva-* and *bvu-* forms a close, though less complicated, parallel. We witness vowel gradation *a/u* and a labialised initial cluster *bv-*, the labialisation being again absorbed before the final *-u*. A further pair where the original *va-zur* must, however, have been lost at an early date, is constituted by the adjective *rgad-pa* (or *rgan-pa*) “old” (belonging with *rga-ba* “to be old” and *bgre-ba* “to grow old”) and the verb *rgud-pa* “to decline, sink, to get weak, frail, especially with old age”. The loss of the *va-zur* (\**grva*, \**grvād*, etc.) was suggested by me to account for the partial metathesis of the *r*. In a number of other cases where we witness the vowel gradation *a/u* it must be left open whether or not the initial cluster was labialised, as, e.g., in *gža* (or *hja*) “rain-bow”<sup>18</sup> by the side of *gžu* “bow”, *c’ab* “water” honorific for *c’u* (cp. also *bca-ba* “drink” and *hc’u-ba* “to draw water”), *lcag*<sup>18</sup> “rod, switch” by the side of *lcug-pa* “flexible” and *lcug-ma* “rod, switch” and *dga-ba* “to rejoice” by the side of *mgü-ba* of identical meaning. In the pair *grabs*<sup>18</sup> “preparation” and *hgrub-pa* “to be made ready” (perfect *grub-pa* “made complete, perfect”) the unshifted position of the *r* is certain proof against an original *va-zur*. In *hp’ar-ba* “to rebound, fly up, leap” by the side of *hp’ur-ba* ‘to fly’ this would in any case have been absorbed in the preceding initial labial.

The alternation between *bvva* and *bvu* does not, therefore, seem to present us with any particular difficulty. The phonetic change from *bvva-* to *bvvo-* as pointed out by Csoma, of more recent date, can easily be understood as the result of labialisation, due to the presence of the *va-zur*, and the comparatively rare occurrence of *bvvo* shows that this development has passed through *bvvo-* as an intermediate stage.

## II. *bvva-*, *bvvo-* and *bco-* in actual texts.

The textual examples tabulated below have been divided into three groups. The first (Table A) is concerned with examples resulting from the numbering of sections (*bam-po*) and chapters (*lehu*). While these could have easily been enlarged and also extended to the numbering of pages, both these categories are liable to normalisation. In fact we witness, as a rule, a clear dichotomy between *bvva-* (Peking Kanjur<sup>18a</sup>) and *bco-* (Narthang Kanjur). I have therefore chosen as a second group (Table B) collocations of “fifteen” and “eighteen” with words where such normalisation is less likely to occur. The third group (Table C) lists the comparatively rare occurrence of *bvvo-* in the numbering of sections, as well as a few exceptions to the “dichotomy” observed in Table A.

<sup>16a</sup> See Bull. Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Vol. XXXIX (1969), pp. 287-289.

<sup>17</sup> Asia Major, loc. cit., p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>18a</sup> I noted even *bvvaḥ* in one instance. See Ti. T. XLIII, 230a<sup>4</sup>.

Table A

Bhadrakalpikā	bcva-	bco-
P (Ti. T. XXVII)	P 15 (70b <sup>6</sup> )	N 15 (237B <sup>3</sup> )
N (mDo/Ka)	18 (85b <sup>8</sup> )	18 (287B <sup>6</sup> )
mDzañs-blun	(leḥu)	(leḥu)
P (Ti. T. XL)	P 15 (76c <sup>7</sup> )	N 15 (284B <sup>2</sup> )
N (mDo/Sa)	18 (80d <sup>4</sup> )	18 (301B <sup>2</sup> )
Karmaśataka		
P (Ti. T. XXXIX)	P 15 (208d <sup>7</sup> )	N 15 (266A <sup>3</sup> )
N (mDo/Shā)	18 (222a <sup>4</sup> )	18 (321A <sup>5</sup> )
Lalitavistara		
P (Ti. T. XXVII)	P 15 (230e <sup>5</sup> )	N 15 (255A <sup>7</sup> -255B <sup>1</sup> )
N (mDo/Kha)	18 (246a <sup>7</sup> )	18 (307B <sup>1-2</sup> )
Niṣṭhāgata-bhaga-vajjñāna		
P (Ti. T. XXVIII)	P 15 (70b <sup>6</sup> )	N 15 (237B <sup>3</sup> )
N (mDo/Ga)	18 (85b <sup>8</sup> )	18 (287B <sup>6</sup> )
Vinaya-uttara-grantha		
P (Ti. T. XLV)	P 15 (87c <sup>7</sup> )	N 15 (347A <sup>1</sup> )
N (ḥDul/Na)	18 (98e <sup>8</sup> ) <sup>19</sup>	18 (390A <sup>2</sup> )
Vinayavastu		
P (Ti. T. XLV)	P 15 (70e <sup>4</sup> )	N 15 (266B <sup>1</sup> )
N (ḥDul/Ka)	18 (84d <sup>3</sup> )	18 (330A <sup>5</sup> )
Vinayavibhaṅga		
P (Ti. T. XLII)	P 15 (216b <sup>1</sup> )	N 15 (299A <sup>1</sup> )
N (ḥDul/Ca)	18 (230a <sup>7</sup> )	18 (357A <sup>7</sup> )

### III. Conclusions

(a) As already pointed out above, the distribution observed in Table A is clearly the result of normalisation on the part of the editors of the two Kanjur prints, Peking retaining the more ancient form in the numbering of sections and chapters. As might be expected, the process of normalisation

<sup>19</sup> The actual spelling is *bca-* for *bcva-*

Table B

a) 15	bcva-	bco-
Amoghapāśakalparāja : <i>ts'es</i>		N (rGyud/Ba (hog) 178A <sup>3</sup> ) P (Ti. T. VIII, 46a <sup>8</sup> ) <sup>20</sup>
Legs-nyes-kyi rgyu dañ hbras-bu bstan-pa : <i>lo</i>	P (Ti. T. XL, 338a <sup>7</sup> )	N (mDo/A 304A <sup>7</sup> )
b) 18	bcva-	bco-
Āvadānaśataka : <i>mi-sdug-paḥi</i> <i>sna-graṅs</i>	(N (mDo/Ha 319A <sup>3</sup> ) P (Ti. T. XL, 218b <sup>8</sup> ))	
Karmaśataka : <i>rig-paḥi gnas</i>	N (mDo/Sa 53B <sup>4</sup> ) P (Ti. T. XL, 16e <sup>8</sup> )	
Karmavibhaṅga : <i>p'an -yon</i>	P (Ti. T. XXXIX, 125b <sup>6</sup> )	N (mDo/La 460B <sup>4</sup> )
Lalitavistara : <i>rnam...-du g'yoṣ</i>	(P (Ti. T. XXVII, 243a <sup>8</sup> -b <sup>4</sup> ))	N (mDo/Kha 297B <sup>5</sup> )
Mun-gyi nags-ts'al- gyi sgo : <i>ston-pa</i>	P (Ti. T. XXXIX, 71e <sup>4</sup> )	N (mDo/La 257B <sup>7</sup> )

has been less effective in the case of collocations of the numerals with other words. In Table B,b we find *bcva-* in two of the five examples listed as occurring in the Narthang Kanjur. Table C shows the retention of the intermediate form *bcvo* in one example from the Narthang Kanjur, and *bco* in one example from the Peking Kanjur.

(b) From the phonetic point of view it may be observed that, read from left to right, the three columns of Table C symbolize the phonetic development we have to assume: *bcva-* > *bcvo-* > *bco-*. Moreover we witness other instances of the development *va* > *o*. First, this is reflected in the reading of *va* as *o* in Sanskrit words, as reported by Csoma in his *Grammar* (p. 7, § 14.5) (e.g. *bodhisattva* as *bo-dhi-sa-to*). Secondly, it can be found in such *variae*

<sup>20</sup> The passage has in fact *bcōhi-lña* (instead of *bco-lña*), which, no doubt, accounts for modern (Lhasa) *chö-nga* (see C.A. Bell, *English-Tibetan colloquial dictionary*, Calcutta, repr. 1965, s.v. "fifteen", also Kun Chang and Betty Shefts, *A Manual of spoken Tibetan (Lhasa Dialect)* Seattle, 1964, p. 91).



Table C

	bcva-	bcvo-	bco-
Amoghapāśakalpa- rāja			
N (rGyud/Ba(hog))	P 18 : 75b <sup>2</sup>	N 15 : 287A <sup>6</sup>	P 15 : 62e <sup>8</sup>
P (Ti. T. VIII)			
Avadānaśataka			
N (mDo/Ha)	P 15 : 200b <sup>7-8</sup>	P 18 : 216d <sup>5</sup>	N 15 : 251B <sup>6</sup>
P (Ti. T. XL)			18 : 313A <sup>5</sup>
Bhikṣuṇi- vinaya-vibhanga			
N (hDul/Ta)	P 15 : 315b <sup>2</sup>	P 18 : 325c <sup>3</sup>	N 15 : 273B <sup>5</sup>
P (Ti. T. XLIII)	18 : 321b <sup>3</sup>		
Suvarnaprabhāsa			
P (Ti. T. VII)	P 18 : 100e <sup>4</sup>	P 15 : 95b <sup>7</sup>	N 15 : 147A <sup>1</sup>
N (rGyud/Na)			18 : 156B <sup>1</sup>
Vinaya-kṣudraka- vastu			
N (hDul/Tha, Da)	P 18 : 79e <sup>2</sup>	P 15 : 66a <sup>1</sup>	N 15 : Tha 268B <sup>3</sup>
P (Ti. T. XLIV)			18 : Da 1A <sup>1</sup>

lectiones as *byi-śo* for *bi-śva* in *Byi-śo-skar-ma* (*Viśva-kar-ma*) in the *rGyal-rabs*<sup>21</sup>. Thirdly, it occurs in doublets like *k'a-śo* "hare-lip" by the side of *k'a-śva*<sup>22</sup>.

(c) From a more general point of view it may be said that we witness the survival of the first component of the doublet *bcva/bcu* only in a very limited area of the Tibetan numerical system. While *bcu* occurs both in isolation and as second element of the numerals from twenty to ninety (in addition to its occurrence as first element before the numbers from "one" to "ten" other than "five" and "eight"), *bcva-* (and its successors *bcvo-* and *bco-*) occur only before the latter two. Lhasa *cog-sum*<sup>23</sup> which was adduced by Professor Miller may well go back to *bco-gsum*, rather than to *bcu-gsum*, and thus

<sup>21</sup> See. B.I. Kuznetsov, *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (Scripta Tibetana, I), Leiden, 1966, p. 10, notes 29-30, p. 11, note 45-46, etc.

<sup>22</sup> See the Tibetan-Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary by Ch'os Grags (*brDa-dag min-tsi'ig gsal ba*), Peking, 1937, p. 75, and cf. Jäschke's Dictionary s.v. *śo-re*.

<sup>23</sup> Note, however, that the "Manual" quoted in note 20 has *cog-som*.

would indicate that the area in which *bca-* survived may be less limited in dialects, and the reading *bcohi-lña*, mentioned above in note 19 would point to a different pattern in the formation of numerals.

(d) The reason for the limitation to the numerals *lña* and *brgyad* — if we ignore *cog-sum* — may possibly be sought in the greater complexity of their initial clusters. While the other numerals have only clusters of two consonants, the complex cluster of *brgyad* is obvious even without the assumption of the loss of an earlier *va-zur* arising from the comparison with Chinese *p<sup>wat</sup>*<sup>24</sup>. In the same way, the comparison of *lña* with ancient Chinese *nguo*<sup>25</sup> would likewise presuppose the assumption of the loss of an earlier *va-zur* and therewith of a more complex initial cluster, though it must be recalled that for archaic Chinese Professor Karlgren has now assumed *ngo* (GSR, No. 58). Professor R.A. Miller's reference to the two Chinese numerals does not therefore seem without its relevance.

*Additional Note.* Professor Miller's article '*Early Evidence for Vowel Harmony in Tibetan*' (Language, Vol. 42 (1966), pp. 252-277), in which he has come back to his article in T'oung Pao, Vol. 43, came to my notice only after the present article had been fully printed out. I very much regret that I have been unable to refer to it.

<sup>24</sup> See equation 167 and the remarks preceding § 89 of the paper quoted in noted 12.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.* equation 87.