
*The organisation of stage stations in Central Asian
colonial provinces of the Tibetan Empire according to
Pelliot tibétain 1096r¹*



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Abstract

Based on the first English translation of the Old Tibetan document with the shelf mark Pelliot tibétain 1096 recto, the article analyses the internal organisation of a stage station (sluñs) in the Central Asian colonial provinces of the Tibetan Empire. It examines officials and offices that constituted a stage station, as well as persons who were using its services. By comparing the information contained in the document with later reports of foreign travellers, the article reconstructs the organisation of a stage station. It also brings to light certain traits that were apparently common to the first historically attested relay system of the Tibetan Empire and the succeeding system introduced by the Mongols during the thirteenth century CE.

Keywords: Tibetan Empire, Silk Road, relay system, stage station, transportation, Pt 1096r

The Old Tibetan (OT) document examined in the following article provides us with an exclusive insight into the organisation of a stage station in Central Asian colonial provinces of the Tibetan Empire. Tibetan post services and the transportation system as such have thus far drawn little attention of Western scholars, of whom only Uebach has devoted a study to the relay system of the imperial period.² To the best of my knowledge, there exists only one

¹I would like to acknowledge financial support provided by grant BI 1953/1-1 of Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in years 2017–2020. I wish to thank Diana Lange for helping me with the identification of stage stations on the maps of the Wise collection.

The Tibetan script is transliterated according to the principles put forward in J. Bialek, ‘Towards a standardisation of Tibetan transliteration for textual studies’, *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 56 (2020), pp. 28–46. Tibetan proper names are hyphenated in order to enhance their readability in the text flow. Only the first letter is capitalised.

²H. Uebach, ‘Notes on the Postal System (*sluñs*) in the Tibetan Empire in the 7th–9th Centuries’, in *Unearthing Himalayan Treasures: Festschrift for Franz-Karl Ehrhard*, (eds.) V. Caumanns, M. Sernesi and N. Solmsdorf (Marburg, 2019), pp. 449–455.

detailed study on later developments of and foreign influences on the Tibetan relay system, namely P. Maurer, ‘The Tibetan Governmental Transport and Postal System: Horse Services and Other Taxes from the 13th to the 20th Centuries’, *Buddhism, Law & Society* 5 (2019), pp. 1–58. Owing to the scarcity of sources, however, Maurer concentrated on the organisation of the relay system as such, leaving aside the functioning of its most basic units—the stage stations.³ The present study attempts to fill this gap by analysing the only thus far known OT document that sheds light on the internal organisation of a single stage station.

Pelliot tibétain 1096 recto (hereafter: Pt 1096r) is an original OT document, to be specific a summons concerning a dispute over two lost or stolen horses. Like all texts from the Pelliot tibétain collection, Pt 1096r was discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century in Cave 17 of the Mogao Caves, southeast of Dunhuang, and brought to Paris by Paul Pelliot.⁴ The document is composed in Old Literary Tibetan (OLT).⁵ Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts we still lack clear criteria on which to date single documents of the period.⁶ Accordingly, the date and the place of the composition of Pt 1096r, as well as its ‘authorship’, remain unknown. Since the text is an original judicial document, it was most probably written in a law court by an authorised person. Two arguments speak in favour of the hypothesis that Pt 1096r originated in Central Asian colonies of the imperial Tibet: (1)

³Uebach devoted a part of her article to the internal organisation of a stage station, but her interpretation of Pt 1096r (the backbone of her research) is problematic (see below). In addition, interesting information on the relay system of pre-modern Tibet can be found scattered throughout Lange’s meticulous study of the nineteenth-century maps in the Wise collection. See D. Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas by a 19th Century Tibetan Lama. A Journey of Discovery* (Leiden, 2020).

⁴Pelliot’s own account of the “Dunhuang library” can be found in P. Pelliot, ‘Une bibliothèque médiévale retrouvée au Kan-sou’, *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient* 8, 3/4 (1908), pp. 501–529. For a general description of the Pelliot collection, see A. Fujieda, ‘The Tunhuang Manuscripts: A General Description Part I’, *Zinbun* 9 (1966), pp. 1–32.

⁵‘Old Literary Tibetan’, or more commonly ‘Old Tibetan’, is the written language of non-translatory Tibetan documents discovered in Central Asian oases and of the imperial inscriptions from Central Tibet. OLT roughly encompasses the period between the script invention in the 630s or 640s and the formation of analytical verb constructions and phonemic tones in the ninth century. See T. Takeuchi, ‘Formation and Transformation of Old Tibetan’, in *Historical Development of the Tibetan Languages*, (eds.) T. Takeuchi and N. Hayashi (Kobe, 2012), pp. 3–17; J. Bialek, ‘The Proto-Tibetan clusters sL- and sR- and the periodisation of Old Tibetan’, *Himalayan Linguistics* 17, 2 (2018), p. 39, fn. 98.

⁶Most recent contributions to the topic include: T. Takeuchi, ‘Sociolinguistic Implications of the use of Tibetan in East Turkestan from the end of Tibetan Domination through the Tangut Period (9th–12th c.)’, in *Turfan Revisited*, (ed.) P. Zieme (Berlin, 2004), pp. 341–348; J. Dalton, T. Davis and S. van Schaik, ‘Beyond Anonymity: Paleographic Analyses of the Dunhuang Manuscripts’, *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 3 (2007), pp. 1–23; H. Uebach, ‘Notes on the Palaeography of the Old Tibetan Inscriptions: Zhol and bSam yas’, in *Édition, éditions: l’écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, (eds.) A. Chayet, C. Scherrer-Schaub, F. Robin and J.-L. Achard (München, 2010), pp. 411–428; M. Walter and C. I. Beckwith, ‘The Dating and Interpretation of the Old Tibetan Inscriptions’, *Central Asiatic Journal* 54, 2 (2010), pp. 291–319; A. Helman-Ważny and S. van Schaik, ‘Witnesses for Tibetan Craftsmanship: Bringing together paper analysis, palaeography and codicology in the examination of the earliest Tibetan manuscripts’, *Archaeometry* 55, 4 (2013), pp. 707–741; S. van Schaik, ‘Towards a Tibetan palaeography: Developing a typology of writing styles in early Tibet’, in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, (eds.) D. Bondarev, J. Quenzer and J.-U. Sobisch (Berlin, 2014), pp. 299–337; C. I. Beckwith and M. L. Walter, ‘Dating and characterization of the Old Tibetan Annals and the Chronicle’, in *From Bhakti to Bon. Festschrift für Per Kværne*, (eds.) H. Havnevik and C. Ramble (Oslo, 2015), pp. 53–88; B. Dotson, ‘Misspelling “Buddha”: The officially commissioned Tibetan *Aparimitāyur-nāma mahāyāna-sūtras* from Dunhuang and the study of Old Tibetan orthography’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, 1 (2016), pp. 129–151; B. Dotson and A. Helman-Ważny, *Codicology, paleography, and orthography of early Tibetan documents* (Wien, 2016); B. Zeisler, ‘las.stsogs etc. – On internal cues for dating Old Tibetan documents’, *Zentralasiatische Studien* 45 (2016), pp. 467–491; J. Bialek, ‘Kinterms: New potential indicators for dating Old Tibetan documents’, *Revue d’Études Tibétaines* (2021 Forthcoming).

some of the proper names of persons involved in the case are of non-Tibetan origin (see section entitled Persons below); and (2) the text explicitly mentions Śa-ču (i.e. Dunhuang) as the place of residence of two horse owners. The document is complete, bearing eight seals of persons involved in the case: six seals of guarantors (Qan-hwa-hwa, Den-bun-γde, Čaň-stag-bžer, Yo-gaň Reγu-skyes, Gñi-ba Lha-mthoň, and Śig-śiň-śiň), a seal of the defendant Yo-gaň G.yu-la-skyes, and a seal of a witness who was an anonymous judge from aristocracy (*žai lon žal che pa*). The legal aspects pertinent to the document have already been comprehensively discussed by Brandon Dotson and so do not need to be restated here.⁷

The present article concentrates on the organisation of stage stations (*sluis*) in the period of the Tibetan Empire. Namely, Pt 1096r provides some details on a *sluis*, people related to it, as well as services offered by a *sluis*. Therefore, its primary objective is to present the first annotated translation of the document in a Western language, accompanied by a diplomatic transliteration, and a glossary (see Appendix). In the discussion section, the contents will be scrutinised in order to enhance our understanding of the *sluis*-institution.

Historical context

At the turn of the sixth and seventh century CE, by conquering its immediate neighbours, a small polity centred in the Yar-valley (OLT *yar luis*), sometimes referred to as the Yar-luň Kingdom, arose to become an important military and political actor on the Tibetan Plateau. In the 630s this polity started its expansion beyond the valleys of Central Tibet, subduing Sum-pa, Žaň-žuň and Ṽa-ža (Ch. 吐谷渾 Tǔyùhún) over the following thirty years. These conquests mark the emergence of the Tibetan Empire. With varying luck, the Tibetan Empire then continued its expansion through the seventh and eighth centuries, temporarily controlling territories beyond the Tibetan Plateau, including the Central Asian Silk Roads. Its demise started in the 840s, triggered by an unstable internal political situation and the declining economy that mirrored the worsening international economic situation from the 830s onward.⁸

The expanding Tibetan Empire required an efficient administrative system to control—politically and economically—the newly subdued territories and peoples. To this end an extensive relay system had to be established that could support communication between the socio-political centre of the Empire (now located in the valley of the Skyi-ču river) and its dependent territories and colonies. Our knowledge of this system is still in its infancy, and is largely based on sporadic mentions of *sluis* ‘stage station’—the nodes of the communication network—and messengers, as in the following passages:

*γdun ma mkhar phrag du / blon khri sum ijes bsdus nas / mian (222) daň / sluis stod smad gyi than
khram čhen po btab / (ITJ 750)*

⁷B. Dotson, ‘Introducing Early Tibetan Law: Codes and Cases’, in *Secular Law and Order in the Tibetan Highland*, (ed.) D. Schuh (Andiastr, 2015), pp. 285ff.; see also, K. Iwao, ‘Preliminary Study of the Legal Court Proceedings in the Old Tibetan Empire’, in *Secular Law and Order in the Tibetan Highland*, (ed.) D. Schuh (Andiastr, 2015), pp. 315–322. Unfortunately, I did not have access to Wang Yao 王堯, and Chen Jian 陳踐, *Dunhuang Tufan wenshu lunwenji 敦煌吐蕃文書論文集* (= *Selection of the Old Tibetan documents*), (Chengdu, 1988) who likewise studied the document under consideration.

⁸C. I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, 2009), pp. 158ff.

The council, convened at castle Phrag by councillor Khri-sum-rje-[rcañ-bźer], issued great tallies of jurisdiction for *mīan* and the upper and lower stage stations (*sluñs*).

bod kyi gcug lag bkay grims čhed po dañ / blon po yi rim pa dañ / čhe čhuñ (453) gñis kyī dbaṅ thañ dañ / legs pa zin pa yī bya dgay dañ / ñe yo ba yi čhad pa dañ / zin ybrog gi thul ka dañ dor ka dañ / sluñs kyi go bar bsñams (454) pa dañ / bre pul dañ / srañ la scogs pa // bod kyi čhos kyi gźuñ bzañ po kun // bcan po khri sroñ brcan gyi riñ las byuñ ño / (Pt 1287)

The Tibetan principles—the great law—successions of councillors, prerogatives for (lit. of) both, great and small ones, rewards for good ones that adhere [to us], punishments for culprits, standardisation of *thul ka* and *dor ka* of fields and pastures, and of distances between (lit. of) stage stations (*sluñs*), [weight units] *bre*, *phul*, and *srañ*, among others, all the good foundations of the Tibetan customs appeared from the reign of *bcan po* Khri Sroñ-brcan.

(36) *da čhab sīd gčig čñi // njal* (37) *dum čhen po yāi ltar nyad pas* (38) *dbon žaṅ dgyes pa yi bkay phriñd* (39) *sñan pas kyañ ydrul dgos te //* (40) *phan chun gyī pho ña ydoñ ba yañ // lam* (41) *rñiñ par byuñ nas // sña lugs bžin* (42) *// bod rgya gñis kyī bar // cañ kun* (43) *yog du rta bñes la //* (ST Treaty W)

Now, the politics being one, because a great agreement was reached in this way, it being necessary to travel with good messages from [lit. of] the pleased nephew and uncle, travelling messengers of both sides appeared on old roads as well. Hence, according to earlier customs, let horses be changed at Cañ-kun-yog between Tibet and China!

In this context, Pt 1096r represents an invaluable source of information on the internal organisation of *sluñs* that constituted the basic units of the relay system of the Tibetan Empire. Even though due to its concise and highly technical language the text may occasionally be difficult to comprehend and therefore to translate, it delivers unique details on the functioning of a stage station under the Tibetan rule. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the document is a legal one and so the organisation of the stage station is not its main concern.

Translation

In the first half of the last autumn month of the dragon year, the messenger Gžams-khoñ-khri came to the encampment of Par-kog,⁹ asking for one horse of Qan-bcan-zigs-chan. Upon it was necessary to send [the horse] back,¹⁰ deputies of the head of the stage station, head of the encampment, among others, said: “Having taken away the horse, [we] placed [it] in the encampment. Thereupon [it] got lost”. After [they] had not given the horse back, having seized Li Qab-sab-ñañ, the groom of the stage station, [one] inquired [him].

Thereupon [the groom] said: “It is true that we put the horse in the encampment of the stage station. Upon handing [it] over to Li Žen-ydo, the light brown horse got lost”.

⁹The name Par-kog does not seem to be attested in other OT documents, but Thomas quotes several other place names that begin with the syllable *par* (F. W. Thomas, *Tibetan literary texts and documents concerning Chinese Turkestan* [London, 1935–55], vol. 4, p. 60b).

¹⁰The meaning of *zlogs* is uncertain for *rigs* required nominalised *v1* in genitive (cf. H. A. Jäschke, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary* [New York, 2003], p. 528a, s.v. *rigs*). I tentatively identify it with *zlog* ‘to cause to return’.

“Summon Qab-sab-ñāñ, as well as Žan-γdo, and, having spoken¹¹ [to them], swear a sincere oath: ‘Upon putting this horse in the encampment, the lost one was indeed there. We have not taken [it] away. [We] have not stolen [it]!’ If [you] can make the vow, give a replacement! If [you] cannot make the vow, being decided according to the law, [one] will have examined the sincerity (*dkar*) regarding the very Qab-sab-ñāñ, among others.”

Upon having said [so] on the eighth day of the first winter month of this year, up to the fourteenth day [of the month] Qab-sab-ñāñ as well as the worker Žan-γdo did not come. Then, having summoned Yo-gaṅ¹² G.yu-la-skyes, the head of the encampment, to the court, [one] inquired [him].

“The messenger Gzams-khoñ-khri, having asked for one horse of a man from Śa-ču¹³, came to the encampment of Par-kog. Thereupon, as for this horse, both the messenger and the groom Qab-sab-ñāñ prepared to mount the stallion. There were not many messengers. After some messenger-horsemen had come and the horse of the man from Śa-ču was bound,¹⁴ I said to the messenger(s) and the groom: ‘[The horses shall] not come across [each other].’ I ordered to the groom ‘Catch the horses whomever [they] belong to, bring [them], [and] bind [them] again!’ Later, the day after the next day, Jeγu-hiñ-yir,¹⁵ having come again to the encampment, asked ‘Where is my horse?’ Qab-sab-ñāñ said: ‘Both horses of the man from Śa-ču were in the courtyard¹⁶ [of]¹⁷ the head of the stage station. Thereupon, Jeγu-hiñ-yir, riding a one [and] leading a one, fled away.’ [I] listened to Qab-sab-ñāñ. Concerning the horse, it was not left free by myself.” [Thus Yo-gaṅ G.yu-la-skyes] said.

As for the pleadings [of] the horse owner Hiñ-ce, [he] was saying: “Once,¹⁸ my horse was three nights long in the pen; there was no other horse of the stage station. If the head of the encampment must have seen this horse, [I] request [you] to ask: ‘If [he] is despondent about [the horse] being stolen,¹⁹ where is he?’”

¹¹I identify *mos* with CT *smos*, v2 < *smo* ‘to say, to speak’; cf. Nangchen *m^hy* “with *je* to clarify one’s kinship relations (e.g. before getting married)” (R. Bielmeier et al., *Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects (CDTD)*. Volume 2: *Verbs* [Berlin, 2018], p. 983).

¹²Takeuchi interpreted Yo-gaṅ as a name of a people that remains unidentified thus far. See T. Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Contracts from Central Asia* (Tokyo 1995), p. 132.

¹³Modern Dunhuang; Tib. Śa-ču < Ch. Shāzhōu 沙州.

¹⁴OTDO has *bya bsdas* but the reading of the last two syllables of l. 13 is uncertain. The first one looks more like *čya*, whereas the second one begins with a sign that can hardly be identified with any letter of the Tibetan alphabet. Its last letter could be either *s* or *m*. Since no such a word as **bsdas* seems to be attested in written sources, I read the syllable as *bsdam*. The meaning and function of *bya* remain unexplained.

¹⁵A certain Jeγu-hiñ is mentioned in Pt 1208/Pt 1221: B1 as surety (see Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Contracts*, pp. 252ff.). It is not certain whether this is the same person as Jeγu-hiñ-yir of Pt 1096r.

¹⁶Compare Yolmo [jildo] ‘courtyard’ (CDTD: 7854, s.v. *g.yul ythag* ‘threshing floor’).

¹⁷For this reconstruction compare *sluis phon gyi g.yul thog* in l. r24.

¹⁸The translation of *mam žhig la* as ‘once’ is purely contextual.

¹⁹The phrase *glo ba žhuñ* is known from only a few OT documents:

dpya par glo ba žhuñ (IT) 737.1: 396 ‘to fear the blame’ (J. W. de Jong, *The story of Rāma in Tibet: text and translation of the Tun-huang manuscripts* [Stuttgart, 1989], p. 43)

žhab ychal du / glo ba žhuñ (Or.15000/495: 4) ‘[with] little hope of obtaining water’ (TLTD, vol. 2, p. 165)

rgya[-] rkun tu glo ba čuñ (Or.15000/91: 4; Thomas’ reading: *rgya[n] kun tu glo ba čuñ*; Takeuchi’s reading: *[rgyan rkun] du glo ba čuñ*, (T. Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Manuscripts from East Turkestan in the Stein Collection of the British Library* [London, 1998], vol. 2, p. 51) ‘is very stupid’ (TLTD, vol. 2, p. 241)

mčhi bar glo ba žhuñ (Or.15000/542: 6) ‘*glo ba žhuñ* to go/say’ (the text is badly damaged)

mi slouis su glo ba žhuñ (*Liγi yul luñ bstan pa*, D 4202, *sprini yig*, ñe 177r2) ‘I will be dejected about not having erected them’ (R. E. Emmerick, *Tibetan texts concerning Khotan* [Oxford, 1967], p. 25)

At that time a minion of the stage station appeared. *thum čhu ma*, having appeared afterwards, said “[I] am coming from Ĵu-čan to Lug-luñ to help”.²⁰

Having clarified [the circumstances],²¹ [one] decided: “Concerning the lost horses of Hiñ-che, among others, the head of the encampment, among others, truly feared [its] stealing”.²² [Thus] it was said.

The head of the encampment, upon being inquired, said, “Upon this horse had come to the encampment, I ordered the groom Qab-sab-ñañ that [he] must (*šig* = IMP) bind the horse again. [Qab-sab-ñañ said:] ‘Once, both horses were in the courtyard of the head of the stage station. Thereupon, Jeŷu-hiñ-yir, riding a one [and] leading a one, fled away.’ [I] listened to Qab-sab-ñañ”.

After [one] had previously set a time for Qab-sab-ñañ to [secure] guarantors, [he] did not arrive on time. Neither did Žañ-ŷdo arrive.

[Decision:] While initiating (lit. fixing) the dispute [over] the lost horses, it was not feasible to settle (lit. defend) [it]. Therefore, [one] decided that the head of the encampment must provide (lit. give) guarantors, summon Qab-sab-ñañ and Žan-ŷdo, and plead on the full moon day of the first winter month.²³

Sealed for the guarantors of [Yo-gañ] G.yu-la-skyes with the guarantor seals of Qan-hwa-hwa, Den-bun-ŷde, Čañ-stag-bžer, Yo-gañ Reŷu-skyes, Gñi-ba Lha-mthoñ, and Šig-šiiñ-šiiñ, among others, with the personal seal of the person concerned (i.e. Yo-gañ G.yu-la-skyes), and with the witness seal of an aristocrat-judge.

Tibetan Text

The text has been transliterated by the author on the basis of scans made available on Gallica.²⁴ The document consists of 31 lines of text immediately followed by eight seals in red

gnod par glo ba čhuñ (Liyi yul luii bstan pa, D 4202, sprññ yig, ñe 179r1) ‘one is dejected about the harm’
(Emmerick, *Tibetan texts*, p. 33)

In addition, Or.1 5000/146: r6 preserves the phrase *glo čhuñ*, which might be a mere abbreviation of *glo ba čhuñ*. We observe that, with one exception (Or.1 5000/91: 4), *glo ba čhuñ* requires terminative of either a verb stem or a nominalised v1. In the former case the verb stem appears to be v4: *sloñs su* and *rku su* (< **rkus su*; in Pt 1096r). It seems that de Jong treated *glo ba čhuñ* as a near-synonym of CT *sems čhuñ* ‘a timid mind’ (J: 576b). The latter is attested in modern dialects in the meaning ‘caution’ (CDTD: 8812). de Jong’s interpretation is supported by another passage from Pt 1096r: *rku su yañ glo ba čhuñ na* (l. 20) vs *brkusy yañ dog[s] šes* (l. 22). Both clauses concern Yo-gañ G.yu-la-skyes, the head of the encampment. In the second passage *glo ba čhuñ* has been replaced by *dog[s]* ‘to fear’. On these grounds I propose translating *glo ba čhuñ* as ‘to be desponded, disheartened’. For *glo ba* ‘breast’ and its metaphorical meanings in OLT, see J. Bialek, ‘Stretching the body, stretching the mind. The OT noun *ring* revisited’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 168, 2 (2018), p. 408, fn. 34.

²⁰Due to the unknown meaning and function of *thum čhu ma* the interpretation of the whole passage remains tentative. Ju-čan and Lug-luñ, presumably toponyms, are otherwise not attested.

²¹*dbyañs* seems to have been a technical term frequently used in judicial texts in conjunction with *bčad* ‘decided’ or *žal če* ‘sentence’. On the other hand, in Pt 1283 it co-occurs with the verb *bslab/bslabs* (v1 *slob* ‘to learn; to teach’) in two forms: *dbyañ* and *sbyañ(s)*. On this rather meagre evidence I relate *dbyañs* to CT *sbyoñ* ‘to exercise, to practise; to study’ and *ybyoñ* ‘to be skilled’; all derived from $\sqrt{bjañ}$.

²²DSM glosses *dog na* as ‘soñ na’ (Bcan-lha-ñag-dbañ-chul-khrims, *Brda dkrol gser gyi me loñ* (Beijing, 1997), p. 333, but the argument structure does not fit well with a verb of going. Therefore, I read **dogs* for the attested *dog*; the final -s might have been elided before the following sibilant: -s > Ø / _+š-. The reading **dogs* is supported by the earlier phrase *rku su yañ glo ba čhuñ* (l. 20).

²³I.e. on the fifteenth day of the current month. The decision was apparently made on the fourteenth day (l. 9).

²⁴<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8306378p.r=pelliot%20tibetain%201096?rk=21459;2> (accessed 2 October 2020).

ink. The seals evince that Pt 1096r is an original document and therefore of greatest historical value. Its orthography uses neither reversed *gi gus* <Ɪ> nor double *chegs* < : > characteristic of many OT texts. The text was edited, most probably by the scribe himself, for in ll. 20 and 25 some syllables are added below the main line. The first eleven lines are written with approximately the double of the line spacing of the rest of the document. Likewise, the letters of the first part are considerably bigger than in the second part. The letters of the second part are less carefully written, which fact might have resulted from a faster writing. The change occurs in the middle of l. 11. We observe that the hand changes exactly where the statement of the head of the encampment (ll. 11–8) begins. It is therefore conceivable that the statement was written down simultaneously in the court. A thorough paleographical analysis could perhaps reveal more details on the issue.

Critical apparatus

✱	deleted by JB
g	deleted by the scribe
[s]	reconstructed
{o}	amended
rku	text added by the scribe below the line

(r1) § // *ybrug gi lo yi ston sla ba čuñs gyi ño la // qan bean zigs chan gyi rta gčig // pho ña gžams*
 (r2) *khoñ khri ycal čin / par kog gi chugsu mčis nas // slar zlogs payi rigs pa las // sluñs gyi dphon* (r3)
sna chugs phon la scogs pa // rta phrogste // chugsu bžag pa las / / stor čes mčiste // rta slar ma (r4)
scal nas // sluñs gyi rta rji li qab sab ñañ / bzuñste rmas pa las //

sluñs chugsu rta bdag čhag (r5) *gis bžag pa yañ mad // li žen ydo la gthad pa las // rta snar mo stor*
čhes mčiste /

(r6) *qab sab ñañ / žan ydo yañ khug la // rmos te / rta ydi chugsu bžag pa las / stor pa ma lags*
 (r7) *re // bdag čhag gis sbyañs re brkus re šes bro dkar gis / thob šig / bro phod na skyin ba phob*
 (r8) *šig / bro ma phod na // khrims bžin gčhad par bgyis te // kho na qab sab ñañ la* (r9) *scogs*
pa // dkar drus /

lan ydyi dgun sla ra ba ches bgyad la bgyis pa las / ches bču bžiyi (r10) *bar du qab sab ñañ dañ /*
khuñs po žan ydo yañ ma mčhis nas // chugs phon / yo gañ (r11) *g.yu la skyes grar bkugste rmas pa*
las //

pho ña gžams khoñ khri / ša ču pa yi rta gčhig (r12) *ycał te // par kog gi chugsu mčhis pa las // rta ydi*
pho ña dañ / rta rji qab sab ñañ gñis gyis rta / pho (r13) *skyon bar bgyis pa las // pho ñañ mañ po ni*
ma mčhis // pho ña rkya ygay mčhis pa la // ša ču payi rta bya bsdam (r14) *pa la ma thug šes // pho*
ñā dañ rta rji la bdag gis bgyis // rta ga la mčis pa / loñ la sky{o}l (r15) *slar skris šig par rta rji la yañ*
bdag gis bsgos pa las // phyi de nañ par jeyu hiñ yir slar chugsu (r16) *mčhis te / ñayī rta ga re žes rmas*
pa las // qab sab ñañ gi mčhid nas / ša ču payi rta gñi ga sluñs phon (r17) *g.yul thog na mčhis pa las /*
jeyu hiñ yir gis gčig žon gčig khrid de broš šes / qab [sab] ñañ (r18) *la thos // rta ni bdagis ma thoñ žes*
mčhiy //

rta bdag hiñ ce mčhid šags rnam čhig la / bdag gi rta chugs (r19) *khon na dguñ gsum mčhis pa / sluñs*
gyi rta gžan gčhig kyañ ma mčhis la / rta ydi chugs phon gyis myi mtho_ñ (r20) *du yañ myi ruñ na /* rku
 [s] *su yañ glo ba čhuñ na / khoñ ta gar mčhis žes rmar gsol žes mčhi //*

de yi che sluñs gyi bu gñer čhags // (r21) thum čhu ma phyi la čhagste // ju čhan yan čhad dan / lug luñ man čad du gñer du mčhi źes mčhi nas //

dbyañs (r22) te bčhad pa // hiñ che la scogs payi rta stor pa // chugs phon la scogs pa la / brkusy yañ dog[s] śes (r23) gsol //

chugs phon rmas pa las / rta ydi chugsu mčhis pa las / bdag gis rta slar (r24) skri[s] śig par rta rji qab sab ñañ la bsgos / nmam čhig la rta gñi ga sluñs phon gyi g.yul thog (r25) mčhis pa las // jeɣu [hiñ yir] gis gčhig źon gčhig khrid de bro[s] ste soñ źes //

qab sab ñañ la thos / (r26) śes mčhiy /

qab sab ñañ sñar gñay dus btab pa las kyani / dus su ma mčhis / źan ydo (r27) yañ ma mčhis //

rta stor pa tha sñad ydogs śiñ bsgyañ (read: bskyañ) du myi ruñ gis // chugs phon yañ gñay (r28) scol la / qab sab ñañ dan / źan ydo khug la // dgun sla ra ba ña la mčhid śags ychol čhig (r29) par bčade // g.yu la skyes gyi gñay la // qan hwa hwa dan / den bun yde dan / čañ stag bźer dan / yo (r30) gañ reɣu skyes dan / gñi ba lha mthon dan / śig śiñ śiñ la scogs payi gñay rgya dan / khon tayi (r31) sug rgya dan // źañ lon źal čhe payi dpañ rgyas bthab pha // (eight red seals)

Discussion

The term *sluñs* occurs seven times in the document, sometimes as a simple lexeme, sometimes forming part of a compound (e.g., *sluñs chugs*, *sluñs phon*). However, its explanation requires examination of at least one more technical term: *chugs*. To elucidate their meanings, I will first examine persons mentioned in the document who were closely related to the *sluñs* and then look at the organisation and services of the latter.

Persons

The document mentions several persons related to the *sluñs*. The exact nature of the offices they held is not completely clear, but we learn that the institution was hierarchically organised with a *sluñs phon* ‘head of the *sluñs*’ at its head. The following discussion particularises the functions of the persons involved in the events reported in Pt 1096r.

In ll. 2–3 ‘deputies (*sna*) of the head (*dphon*) of the *sluñs*’ are mentioned, one of whom is *chugs phon*, ‘head of the *chugs*’. The phrase *sluñs gyi dphon* can be identified with *sluñs phon* recurring in ll. 16 & 24.²⁵ The compound *dphon sna* suggests that a *sluñs* had a superior called *dphon* (specifically, **sluñs dphon*), who had at least a few deputies (*sna*), one of whom was called *chugs phon* (< **chugs dphon*, lit. ‘head of the *chugs*’). From this a hierarchy emerges: a *sluñs phon* supervised a *chugs phon*. The *sluñs phon* remains anonymous in Pt 1096r and, we may assume, was not conceived of as in any way involved in the case.²⁶

²⁵Compare hereto the CT term *rta zam gyi spyi dpon* ‘Oberpostmeister’ (I. J. Schmidt, *Tibetisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* [St. Petersburg, 1841], p. 210a). The same function was apparently also referred to as *rta zam mgo pa* ‘Stationsvorsteher’ (O. Corff (ed.), *Auf kaiserlichen Befehl erstelltes Wörterbuch des Manjurischen in fünf Sprachen: “Fünfsprachenspiegel”: systematisch angeordneter Wortschatz auf Manjurisch, Tibetisch, Mongolisch, Turki und Chinesisch* [Wiesbaden, 2013], vol. 1, p. 96, 0365.3), ‘Postmeister’ (*ibid.*, p. 99, 0379.2). On *rta zam*, see below.

²⁶However, it is possible that the *sluñs phon* would have been brought to justice in case the *chugs phon* would not have appeared in the court. In Uebach’s words, “[t]he most important task of the chief of the post-station (*sluñs phon*), apart from checking the insignia of emissaries, was to check whether the seals of the missives the emissaries carried were intact or had been tampered with. If the missive showed signs of having been opened, the emissary was sent back to the previous station for an investigation. There was a potential death penalty if the emissary was found guilty” (Uebach, ‘Notes on the Postal System’, p. 450f.) This information is based on a passage from Pt 1290 (ll. 110–2; for its discussion see A. Macdonald, Ariane, ‘Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290’. in

The head of the *chugs* in the *sluīs* concerned was Yo-gaŋ G.yu-la-skyes (ll. 10–1). The head of the *chugs* was subject to the head of the *sluīs*. He was summoned to the court after the groom Qab-sab-ñāñ and the worker Li Žāñ-γdo had not arrived. Hence, we can infer that the head of the *chugs* was directly responsible for the groom; he was in the capacity of giving orders to the groom (ll. 23–4). He also had to take responsibility for groom’s misdeeds. In his accusation the horse owner Hiñ-ce was asking whether looking after horses was not the duty of the head of the *chugs* (ll. 19–20).

Pt 1096r documents three distinct offices or positions that seem to have been directly involved in taking care of horses: *rta ŋji*, *khuīs po*, and *bu gñer*. Because *rta ŋji* apparently had some kind of superiority over *khuīs po*, I think it more proper to translate the former as ‘groom’ and the latter as ‘worker’ (see below). I understand groom as denoting a person responsible for the management of horses in all aspects, whereas worker would have been responsible for feeding, cleaning, etc. To judge from the etymology of *bu gñer* (< **bu gñer ba*), the term denoted a minion helping in the *sluīs*.

A *sluīs* had a groom—*sluīs gyi rta ŋji*. In the *sluīs* under discussion it was Li Qab-sab-ñāñ (ll. 4 & 12).²⁷ The latter was responsible for horses kept in the *sluīs*; he had to bind (*skri*) them and look that they did not run away (l. 24). Therefore, when the horses got lost he was the first suspect (l. 4). His immediate superior was the head of the *chugs* (*chugs phon*), to whose orders the groom had to obey (ll. 23–24).

Li Žen/Žan-γdo is once called *khuīs po* (l. 10)²⁸ but his role in the events is enigmatic. In l. 5 we read that the groom Qab-sab-ñāñ handed a light brown horse over (*gthad*) to Žan-γdo and the horse got lost. From then on Žan-γdo, together with Qab-sab-ñāñ, was accused of losing the horse. They were summoned to the court but did not appear (l. 10). Consequently, the head of the *chugs*, Yo-gaŋ G.yu-la-skyes, was summoned and

Études Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou [Paris, 1971], pp. 317–326, and R. A. Stein, ‘Tibetica Antiqua 2. L’usage de métaphores pour des distinctions honorifiques à l’époque des rois tibétains’, *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 73 (1984), pp. 262–264, but the latter document does not put *sluīs phon* in charge of messengers; it does not even mention *sluīs phon*. Hence, Uebach’s conclusions, even though possible, are premature regarding the textual sources at our disposal.

²⁷Dotson considered the syllable *li* in Li Qab-sab-ñāñ and Li Žen-γdo (see below) to be a family name (Dotson, ‘Introducing Early Tibetan Law’, p. 285). The latter is a typical transcription of a Chinese name, and so here Li can be identified with the Chinese family name 李. The given name Žen-γdo is also attested in Pt 1104: 23 (cf. Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Contracts*, p. 227). The name Qab-sab-ñāñ is more problematic. The given name consists of three syllables. Neither Qab nor Sab-ñāñ are found separately, but the name Sam-ñāñ recurs in documents analysed by Takeuchi and was reconstructed by the latter as a Chinese given name (*ibid.*, p. 192). Sam-ñāñ could have resulted from the assimilation of the original *-b* to the following nasal: *-b > -m / -ñ-*. However, in all cases Sam-ñāñ follows a Chinese family name, but in Pt 1096r it comes after the syllables Li Qab. The problem remains unsolved.

²⁸Dotson explained the phrase *chags payi khuīs po* as ‘borrower’ (Dotson, ‘Divination and law in the Tibetan Empire: the role of dice in the legislation of loans, interest, marital law and troop conscription’, in *Contributions to the cultural history of early Tibet*, (eds.) M. T. Kapstein and B. Dotson [Leiden, 2007], p. 69) but this meaning does not seem to fit the context of Pt 1096r. It is questionable whether *khuīs po* was related to *khuīs* ‘origin’, for the latter was an abstract term and the former apparently denoted an official. I think one should rather turn in this context to the modern compound *las khuīs* ‘office, department, bureau’ (M. Goldstein, *The new Tibetan-English dictionary of modern Tibetan* [New Delhi, 2004], p. 1070a; cf. also R. Bielmeier et al., *Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects* [2013 draft], 8296). The *Pentaglot Dictionary* lists the following equivalents of *khuīs* (Man.) *falgarī*, (Mon.) *balγad*, (Tu.) *faš āyvān*, (Ch.) *shū 署*, translating it as ‘Dienststelle’ (Corff, *Auf kaiserlichen Befehl*, vol. 2, p. 596a, 2758.2). Accordingly, etymologically the most plausible explanation of *khuīs po* would be ‘a male person (*-po*) affiliated to an office (*khuīs*)’. Since the office in question was a *sluīs* and the *khuīs po*’s duties included taking care of horses, I propose translating the term simply as ‘worker’, understood as denoting an employee who does manual or non-executive work.

obligated to bring the groom and *Žan-γdo* to the court. It follows that *Žan-γdo* was likewise employed at the *sluis* and subject to *Yo-gaṅ G.yu-la-skyes*. Moreover, because he received the horse from the groom *Qab-sab-ñāñ*, he must have also been subject to the latter. If *khuis po* denoted an official, he was ranked below *rta rji*.

A third person, apparently helping with horses, was *sluis gyi bu gñer* (l. 20) ‘minion of the *sluis*’. Nothing is known of this official apart from his relation to the *sluis* and the fact that he occurred to help (l. 21). It is also not clear why is he mentioned in the case; the passage (ll. 20–21) seems out of context.

These were the officials working in the *sluis*. Apart from them the document mentions other persons as well. On several occasions an owner of a horse is spoken of:

qan bcan zigs chan gyi rta gčig (l. 1) ‘one horse of *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan*’

śa ču pa yi rta gčhig (ll. 11 and 13) ‘one horse of the man from *Śa-ču*’

śa ču payi rta gñi ga (l. 16) ‘both horses of the men/man from *Śa-ču*’

rta bdag hiñ ce (l. 18) ‘horse owner *Hiñ-ce*’

hiñ che la scogs payi rta (l. 22) ‘the horses of *Hiñ-che*, among others’

We have two proper names: *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan* and *Hiñ-ce*. In addition, from l. 16 we infer that one horse was claimed by a certain *Jeγu-hiñ-yir*. In the next line the same person is said to have fled away with two horses. The circumstances are not completely clear, but it seems that *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan* and *Hiñ-ce* kept their horses in the *sluis* and *Jeγu-hiñ-yir* used the opportunity to steal the horses. Once the text speaks of ‘one horse of the man from *Śa-ču*’, once of ‘both horses of the men/man from *Śa-ču*’. The most plausible explanation is that both *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan* and *Hiñ-ce* were from *Śa-ču* and each kept one horse in the *sluis*. However, contrary to *Hiñ-ce*, *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan* does not seem to have been involved in the case.

Jeγu-hiñ-yir seems to be the thief; he came to the *dhugs* claiming that his horses were there (l. 16) but he fled riding on one horse and leading the second one along (l. 17).

Pt 1096r mentions yet another person: messenger (*pho ña*) *Gzams-khoñ-khri* (ll. 1–2 and 11), who came to the *dhugs*, asking for the horse of *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan*. He was apparently sent by *Qan-bcan-zigs-chan* to bring the latter’s horse back. In this context we may remark that persons who attended the *sluis* and changed their horses there were referred to as *pho ña* (see l. 13).²⁹

The document ends with the (poorly preserved) seals of eight persons involved in the case whose names and positions are given as:

Guarantors: *Qan-hwa-hwa*
Den-bun-γde
Čañ-stag-bžer
*Yo-gaṅ Reγu-skyes*³⁰

²⁹Pt 1096r only mentions messengers in connection with the *sluis*. This however does not mean that nobody else was entitled to use the services of the *sluis*, as asserted by Uebach (Uebach, ‘Notes on the Postal System’, p. 452). Merchants or Buddhist pilgrims are two other groups that must have visited *sluis* on their long journeys. We know from later sources that many of the stage stations were located close to market places as shown on the maps of the Wise collection (Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, p. 273) and, for example, *Skra-bdun* (Tradün) stage station was even located within *Skra-bdun* monastery (*ibid.*, pp. 281–283).

³⁰Possibly a relative of *Yo-gaṅ G.yu-la-skyes*. In this case, *Yo-gaṅ* would have been a family name (but compare fn. 12 above).

Gñi-ba Lha-mthoñ

Śig-śiñ-śiñ

Defendant: Yo-gañ G.yu-la-skyes (*chugs phon*)

Witness: an anonymous aristocrat-judge

Internal organisation of the *sluñs*

The internal organisation of the institution as depicted in Pt 1096r can be partly reconstructed on the basis of the offices that formed it. In the preceding section I discussed the following officials:

sluñs phon ‘head of the *sluñs*’

sluñs gyi dphon sna ‘deputies of the head of the *sluñs*’

chugs phon ‘head of the *chugs*’

rta rji ‘groom’

khuñs po ‘worker’

bu gñer ‘minion’

pho ña ‘messenger’

The institution itself consisted of several distinct compartments. Its most general name was *sluñs*. It was managed by the head of the *sluñs*. Within the *sluñs* there was a *sluñs chugs* (l. 4), lit. ‘*chugs* of *sluñs*’, also simply referred to as *chugs*, in which horses of messengers were put (*bžag*). The *chugs* concerned in Pt 1096r is called ‘*chugs* of Par-kog’ (l. 2). This suggests that a *sluñs* could have several *chugs* and each of them bore its own name. A *chugs* was overlooked by the head of the *chugs*. A *chugs* had a *chugs khor* (< **chugs ykhor*), lit. ‘*chugs*-pen’, where horses stayed overnight (ll. 18–19). Grooms and workers took care of horses that were staying in the *chugs*. The field of responsibility of minions is difficult to establish. The head of the *sluñs* had his private courtyard (*g.yul thog*) in the *sluñs* (ll. 16 and 24), which was used to separate horses of special guests from plain horses.

The picture of the *sluñs* that emerges from Pt 1096r reveals its complex and hierarchical organisation. Regarding the meanings of particular terms that recur in the text, the above analysis allows for the following interpretations:

- *sluñs* ‘stage station’, managed by a *sluñs phon* ‘head of the stage station’; it included one or more ‘encampments’ (*chugs*);
- *chugs* ‘encampment, camp site, base’ denoted a site within or in the direct proximity of a stage station where horses were held; it was managed by a *chugs phon* ‘head of the encampment’. *chugs* most probably also encompassed accommodation sites for humans, like a special building (**chugs khañ*) or tents;³¹

³¹The word *chugs* was derived by conversion from v4 of the verb *ʃjug* (for analogous derivatives in OLT, see J. Bialek, ‘Old Tibetan verb morphology and semantics: An attempt at a reconstruction’, *Himalayan Linguistics* 19, 1 (2020), pp. 302f.). Its etymological meaning can be reconstructed as *‘sth. that is settled, established’. In the meaning ‘encampment, camp site’ *chugs* entered into CT lexicon in compounds like *chugs khañ* or *chugs sa* ‘caravansary, or merely a level, open place near a village, where traveller’s (sic) may encamp, or where public business is transacted’ (J: 449a). *chugs sa* is also attested in modern Balti with the meaning ‘place where one can stay, especially for the raja and his

- *chugs khor* ‘pen’ (lit. ‘encampment-pen’) denoted an enclosure in which horses were kept overnight.

Conclusions

Information on the internal organisation of a *sluñs* provided by Pt 1096r is scanty. Nevertheless, in this respect, the document discussed in this article is our best source for the period of the Tibetan Empire. Even though travel literature, native as well as foreign, is exceptionally abundant for the post-imperial period, thus far no detailed descriptions of the internal organisation of stage stations have surfaced.³² We find occasional pieces of information strewn

residence’ (CDTD: 6805). Moreover, Schmidt glossed *ra zam gyi chugs pa* as ‘ein Posthaus, Posteinrichtung’ (Sch: 210a), whereas Das called stage stations on the way from Lhasa to Beijing *gya-tsuḡ* (S. C. Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet* [London, 1902], p. 186), doubtlessly for LT **rgya chugs*. Takeuchi, following Thomas (TLTD.2: 172), understood *chugs* as denoting a group of watchmen that consisted of four men (T. Takeuchi, ‘The Tibetan military system and its activities from Khotan to Lob-nor’, in *The Silk Road. Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, (ed.) Susan Whitfield [Chicago, 2004], p. 51b). I think that this interpretation is based on a misunderstanding. Neither Thomas nor Takeuchi have quoted any passage that would unanimously show *chugs* as referring to a group of humans. Thomas also presented an alternative interpretation: ‘camping arrangements’ (*ibid.*). I think that in military contexts *chugs* denoted a base or a camp site too, whereas members of a group stationed there were called *chugs pa* (Or.15000/112: r2). Uebach followed Takeuchi in interpreting *chugs* as ‘a small military unit of four watchmen’ (Uebach, ‘Notes on the Postal System’, p. 451) and was therefore compelled to conclude that the *sluñs* of Pt 1096r had a military watch. That this interpretation is flawed is most clearly seen in ll. 1–2 where a messenger comes to a *chugs* looking for a horse or in ll. 4 and 6 where a horse is put in a *chugs*. Apart from that, Uebach does not seem to be aware of the semantic shift she had to make in order to reconcile the textual data with Takeuchi’s interpretation; a group of people, ‘watchmen’, is taken in her analysis to be identical with the location at which this group served, ‘watch’. Uebach’s discussion of watches within stage stations is based on this erroneous reading of Pt 1096r. The passage from *Dbay bžed* likewise quoted by Uebach, *gsas snañ* [...] *sluñs chugs pho brāñ du mchiste* (6r4–5, *apud* P. Wangdu and H. Diemberger, *dBa’ bzhed: the royal narrative concerning the bringing of the Buddha’s doctrine to Tibet* [Wien, 2000]), should be read ‘[Dbay] Gsas-snañ went to the residence [in] an encampment of a stage station.’ As is known from later sources (see below), stage stations provided accommodation to travellers and messengers in either houses or tents. The more important and spacious a postal station, the more ‘luxurious’ its lodgings could have been. For instance, Sa-dgaṅ (Saga) fort (LT *ḡon*) housed a stage station and is depicted as consisting of several buildings (Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, p. 278, no. 286 on Fig. 10.33, Add.Or.3015 fi) whereas the station in Shigatse is characterised as ‘a large building in the city’ (T. G. Montgomerie and Pundit, ‘Report of a Route-Survey Made by Pundit, from Nepal to Lhasa, and Thence Through the Upper Valley of the Brahmaputra to Its Source’, *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 38 (1868), p. 208). On Skra-bdun (Tradiün) Kawaguchi even wrote: ‘It is in fact not a temple but a town (Tazam), one of the most populous and wealthy in northern Tibet (E. Kawaguchi, *Three Years in Tibet* [Madras, 1909], p. 217). The stage station mentioned in *Dbay bžed* might have been located on the border, for earlier the text states that Dbaṅ Gsas-snañ was a *so blon* ‘councillor of the frontier’ in Mañ-yul (for Mar-yul? 5v2, *apud* Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa’ bzhed*).

³²Following the restitution of the relay system by the Mongols in the thirteenth century (L. Petech, ‘Tibetan relations with Sung China and with the Mongols’, in *China among Equals*, (ed.) M. Rossabi [Berkeley, 1983], p. 186f.; Maurer, ‘The Tibetan Governmental Transport’, pp. 15f.), the term most commonly used for stage station was *ra zam* ‘Poststation’ (Sch: 210a), sometimes spelled *taḡum* in English literature (Montgomerie and Pundit, ‘Report of a Route-Survey’, p. 147) and *tazum* on a map from the Wise Collection (e.g., nos. 294 & 299 in Add.Or.3015 fi; see also Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, p. 274). The compound *ra zam* was coined partly as a borrowing, partly as a loan-translation, mirroring Mon. *morin jam* ‘Pferdepost’ (P. Olbricht, *Das Postwesen in China unter der Mongolenherrschaft im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* [Wiesbaden, 1954], p. 45, fn. 101; for this etymology, see also B. Laufer, ‘Loan-words in Tibetan’, *T’oung Pao* 17, 4/5 (1916), p. 494, No. 176). Mon. *morin* = *ra*, whereas the second syllable, *jam* (‘road, route, way or pass’, F. D. Lessing, *Mongolian-English Dictionary* [Berkeley, 1960], p. 1033; concerning its etymology, Kotwicz wrote: ‘Aussi dans la phase initiale *žam* ~ *jam* pouvait désigner les distances entre les points fixes où l’on relayait les chevaux, plus tard, ces points même, et, finalement, la ligne de communication tout entière, y compris les points de relais et les intervalles intermédiaires’, W. Kotwicz, ‘Contribution aux études altaïques’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 16 (1950), p. 336), was independently borrowed into Tibetan as *ŷam* from which *ŷam mo* (also spelled *ŷay mo*, Laufer, ‘Loan-words’, p. 494) ‘Poststation’ (Sch: 175b) was derived. Laufer remarked that ‘under the Mongols, Tibet was divided into twenty-seven *jam* (‘departments’), a chief officer (*jam dpon*) being appointed in each’ (*ibid.*; Petech likewise mentioned 27 (Petech, ‘Tibetan relations’, p. 187), but Maurer spoke of 28 stage stations, Maurer, ‘The Tibetan Governmental Transport’, p. 16). I assume that the form *ra zam* resulted from folk etymologisation in which the original –*ŷam* was replaced by a better-connoted

throughout the literature, as, for instance, the following remarks in the journey report of Montgomerie:

These Tarjums are from 20 to 70 miles apart; at each, shelter is to be had, and efficient arrangements are organised for forwarding officials and messengers. The Tarjums generally consist of a house, or houses, made with sun-dried bricks. The larger Tarjums are capable of holding 150 to 200 men at a time, but some of the smaller can only hold a dozen people; in the latter case, further accommodation is provided by tents. [...] Each Tarjum is in [the] charge of an official, called Tarjumpá, who is obliged to have horses, yaks, and coolies in attendance whenever notice is received of the approach of a Lhasa official. From ten to fifteen horses, and as many men, are always in attendance night and day. Horses and beasts of burden (yaks in the higher ground, donkeys in the lower) [...] are supplied by the nomadic tribes, whose camps are pitched near the halting houses.³³

Montgomerie's observations thus concur with the information retrieved from Pt 1096r. A stage station (*sluñis*) was a complex institution consisting of several compartments that were called encampments (*chugs*). Each of these provided accommodation for a distinct group of travellers or messengers (either in houses or in tents).³⁴ In addition, each encampment possessed its own pen (*chugs khor*) where horses (or other pack-animals) were kept separately, most probably so that they did not get mixed up and could be returned to their owners after the tax service has been fulfilled. It is conceivable that the messenger Gzams-khoñ-khri, who came to the encampment looking for the horse of Qan-bcan-zigs-chan (Pt 1096r: 1–2), was to bring back the horse to its owner.³⁵ We can speculate that each *chugs* was dependent on tax services of one particular community of tax-payers, either a group of households, a village, or a nomadic camp: *rta zams* of later times were supplied with horses and cattle by the nearby living nomads as part of their tax obligations.³⁶ Montgomerie reports that, depending on the topography of the area, either yaks or donkeys were kept. This agrees with the information from the *Old Tibetan Annals* that one distinguished between stage stations located in the upper and in the lower parts of the country: *mian*

zam 'bridge': **rta yjam* > **rta yam* > *rta zam*. Das noted two pronunciations: *tazam* and *tajam* (S. C. Das, *A Tibetan-English dictionary with Sanskrit synonyms* [Delhi, 1902], p. 532b); the latter still reflecting the original **rta yjam* and suggesting that the folk etymology *rta zam* was a local development and had not spread over the whole Tibetan speaking area (n.b., Das' etymology reading *rta zam* as 'horse bridge' (*ibid.* and S. C. *Journey*, p. 185) is obviously mistaken, as already noticed by Laufer, 'Loan-words', p. 494). It is feasible that the change **rta yjam* > *rta zam* first occurred around stage stations located in a vicinity of a bridge or a river ferry. Three such stage stations can be identified on the basis of the maps from the Wise collections: Čhu-šul (Chushul; no. 129) near Lčags-zam (Chakzam) ferry station (no. 132; Add.Or.3016 f3 and Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, pp. 251–252, Fig. 10.2 on p. 249); Pa-mam-rjoñ (Panam Dzong; no. 195) near Pa-mam bridge (no. 197; Add.Or.3016 f2 and Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, pp. 262–265, Fig. 10.11 on p. 261); and Lha-rce-rjoñ (Lhatse Dzong; no. 246) near Lha-rce ferry station (no. 248; Add.Or.3016 f1 and Lange, *An Atlas of the Himalayas*, p. 265, Fig. 10.17 on p. 269). The vowel *-u-* in *tarjum* and *tazum* is an English transcription of the Tibetan short vowel *-a-* in a closed syllable (cf. Eng. *sum* [sAM]). Likewise, the word internal *-rj-* doubtlessly mirrors the English pronunciation of the compound **rta yjam*. Apart from the simple compound *rta zam*, one also encounters formations like *rta zam yjay mo* 'Relaispost, Poststation' (Corff, *Auf kaiserlichen Befehl*, vol. 1, p. 214, 0880.3). The latter was most probably coined to disambiguate the meaning of *rta zam* after the origin of *zam* (< *yjam*) had already fallen into oblivion.

³³Montgomerie and Pundit, 'Report of a Route-Survey', pp. 147f.

³⁴The list of *rta zams* provided in *ibid.*, pp. 207f. also contains a short description of each place, indicating what kind of accommodation was available there.

³⁵This again suggests that the stage station of which the encampment Par-kog formed part was located not far away from Ša-cu.

³⁶Maurer, 'The Tibetan Governmental Transport', pp. 15f.

dai / sluīs stod smad gyī thañ khram žhen po btab / (ITJ 750: 221–2) ‘[The council] issued great tallies of jurisdiction for *mrians* and the upper and lower stage stations’.³⁷

We find common traces in the organisation of the imperial *sluīs* system and the post-imperial *rta zam* system re-established by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Our knowledge remains very limited, but it is conceivable that the Mongols did not create the system, but rather reformed the existing one that must have survived the disintegration of the Empire, if not for the sake of information circulating then at least to support regional trade.

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Abbreviations

√	reconstructed verb root
Ch.	Chinese
CT	Classical Tibetan
CDTD	R. Bielmeier et al., <i>Comparative Dictionary</i> (2013 draft)
D	S. C. Das, <i>A Tibetan-English dictionary</i>
Eng.	English
IMP	imperative
ITJ	IOL Tib J
J	H. A. Jäschke, <i>A Tibetan-English Dictionary</i>
LT	literary Tibetan
Man.	Manchu
Mon.	Mongolian
Or.	Oriental Collections of the British Library
OLT	Old Literary Tibetan
OT	Old Tibetan
OTDO	Old Tibetan Documents Online
Pt	Pelliot tibétain
Sch	I. J. Schmidt, <i>Tibetisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch</i>
TLTD	F. W. Thomas, <i>Tibetan literary texts</i>
Tu.	Turkic
v1, v2, v3, v4	verb stems
V	verb

³⁷Uebach’s translation ‘western and eastern’ (Uebach, ‘Notes on the Postal System’, p. 450) for *stod smad* is untenable in this context; cf. also B. Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals. An Annotated Translation of Tibet’s First History. With an Annotated Cartographical Documentation by Guntram Hazod* (Wien, 2009), p. 112.

Appendix: Glossary to Pt 1096r

<i>dkar</i>	sincerity
<i>bkug</i> (v2), <i>khug</i> (v4)	to summon
<i>rkus</i>	see <i>brkus</i>
<i>rkya</i>	horseman
<i>skyol</i> (v4)	to bring
<i>skyin ba</i>	replacement
<i>skyon</i> (v1)	to mount
<i>skris</i> (v4)	to bind
<i>brkus</i> (v2) <i>rkus</i> (v4)	to steal
<i>bskyañ</i> (v3)	to defend
<i>khug</i>	see <i>bkug</i>
<i>khuis po</i>	worker
<i>kho na</i>	the very
<i>khoñ ta</i>	he, person concerned
<i>khrid</i> (v1)	to lead
<i>khirms</i>	law
<i>ga</i>	who
<i>ga re</i>	where is?
<i>gar</i>	where?
<i>gra</i>	court
<i>glo ba žhuni</i>	to be despondent
<i>dguñ</i>	night
<i>dgun</i>	winter
<i>bgyis</i> (v2)	to prepare; to say; AUX
<i>ygay</i>	some
<i>brgyad</i>	eighth
<i>bsgos</i> (v2)	to order
<i>ña</i>	I
<i>no</i>	first half of a month
<i>ñnar</i>	previously
Čaň-stag-bžer	guarantor
<i>čuñs</i>	last
<i>gčig</i>	one
<i>bčad</i> (v2) <i>gčhad</i> (v3)	to examine
<i>bču bži</i>	fourteenth
<i>mči</i>	see ¹ <i>mči</i>
<i>mčis</i>	see ¹ <i>mči</i>
<i>mčis</i>	see ² <i>mčhis</i>
<i>žhags</i> (v2)	to appear
<i>žu ma</i>	?
<i>gčhad</i>	see <i>bčad</i>
<i>gčhig</i>	see <i>gčig</i>
<i>bčhad</i>	see <i>bčad</i>
¹ <i>mči</i> (v1) <i>mčhis</i> (v2)	to come
² <i>mči</i> (v2)	to say
<i>mčhid</i>	speech
<i>mčhid šags</i>	pleadings
<i>mčhiy</i>	see ² <i>mči</i>
¹ <i>mčhis</i>	see ¹ <i>mči</i> / ² <i>mči</i>
² <i>mčhis</i> (v2)	to be there; to belong to
Žu-čaň	place name (?)
<i>ña</i>	the full moon day
<i>gñay</i>	guarantor
<i>gñay rgya</i>	guarantor seal

<i>gñi ga</i>	both
Gñi-ba Lha-mthoñ	guarantor
<i>gñis</i>	both
<i>gñer</i> (v1)	to help
<i>btab</i> (v2) <i>thob</i> (v4)	to throw; <i>rgyas btab</i> to seal; <i>dus btab</i> to set a time; <i>bro thob</i> to swear
<i>rta</i>	horse
<i>rta bdag</i>	horse owner
<i>rta pho</i>	stallion
<i>rta rji</i>	groom
<i>ston</i>	autumn
<i>stor</i> (v2)	to get lost
<i>tha sñad</i>	dispute
<i>thug</i> (v1)	to come across
<i>thum</i>	?
<i>thoni</i> (v4)	to let free
<i>thob</i>	see <i>btab</i>
<i>thos</i> (v2)	to listen
<i>gthad</i> (v2)	to hand over
<i>bthab</i>	see <i>btab</i>
<i>mthoñ</i>	to see
<i>dus</i>	time
<i>de</i>	that
Den-bun-γde	guarantor
<i>dogs</i>	to fear
<i>drus</i> (v2)	to examine
<i>bdag</i>	I
<i>bdag žhaq</i>	we
<i>ydi</i>	this
<i>γdogs</i> (v1)	to fix
<i>bsdam</i> (v3)	to bind
<i>nañ par</i>	the day after the next day
<i>nam žhig la</i>	once
<i>snar mo</i>	light brown
Par-kog	name of an encampment
<i>dpañ rgya</i>	witness seal
<i>pho ña</i>	messenger
<i>phod</i>	to be able
<i>phob</i> (v4)	to put; <i>skyin ba phob</i> to give a replacement
<i>phrogs</i> (v2)	to take away
<i>phyi</i>	later, afterwards
<i>dphon sna</i>	deputy of the head
<i>bar du</i>	up to
<i>bu gñer</i>	minion
<i>bya</i>	?
<i>bro</i>	oath
<i>bro dkar</i>	sincere oath
<i>bros</i> (v2)	to flee away
<i>dbyañs</i> (v2)	to clarify
<i>γbrug</i>	dragon
<i>sbyañs</i> (v2)	to take away
<i>mañ po</i>	many
<i>mad</i>	to be true
<i>man žad</i>	to
<i>rma</i> (1) <i>rmas</i> (v2)	to inquire; to ask
<i>rmas</i>	see <i>rma</i>
<i>rmos</i> (v2)	to speak

<i>ycał</i> (v1) <i>γchol</i> (v4)	to ask; <i>mčhid śags ychol</i> to plead
<i>scal</i> (v2) <i>scol</i> (v4)	to give
<i>scogs</i>	among others
<i>scol</i>	see <i>scal</i>
<i>chugs</i>	encampment
<i>chugs khor</i>	pen
<i>chugs phon</i>	head of the encampment
<i>che</i>	time
<i>ches</i>	day
Jeγu-hiñ-yir	thief
Žañ-γdo	see Li Žen-γdo
žañ lon	aristocrat
žal che pa	judge
žon (v1)	to ride
<i>gžan</i>	other
Gžams-khoñ-khri	messenger
<i>bžag</i>	to place, to put in
<i>bžin</i>	according to
<i>zlogs</i>	to send (?)
<i>bzuñ</i> (v2)	to seize
<i>yan žhad</i>	from
Yo-gañ G.yu-la-skyes	head of the encampment
Yo-gañ Reγu-skyes	guarantor
G.yu-la-skyes	see Yo-gañ G.yu-la-skyes
<i>g.yul thog</i>	courtyard
<i>ra ba</i>	first
<i>rigs</i>	to be necessary
<i>ruñ</i>	to be suitable/feasible
<i>lags</i>	to be
<i>lan</i>	year
Li Žen-γdo	worker of the stage station
Li Qab-sab-ñañ	groom of the stage station
Lug-luñ	place name (?)
<i>lo</i>	year
<i>loñ</i> (v4)	to catch
<i>ša ču pa</i>	man from Ša-ču
Šig-šič-šič	guarantor
<i>sug rgya</i>	personal seal
<i>soñ</i> (v2)	to go
<i>sla</i> (ba)	month
<i>slar</i>	back; again
<i>sluñs</i>	stage station
<i>sluñs phon</i>	head of the stage station
<i>sluñs chugs</i>	encampment of the stage station
<i>gsum</i>	three
<i>gsol</i> (v1)	to request; to say
Hiñ-c(h)e	horse owner
Qan-bcan-zigs-chan	horse owner
Qan-hwa-hwa	guarantor
Qab-sab-ñañ	see Li Qab-sab-ñañ