

Two Enigmatic “Megalithic” Sites in Tibet

For a long time after publication, Giuseppe Tucci’s book on the archaeology of Tibet stood out as a solitary landmark in an almost flat landscape. Notwithstanding the limited data then available, its being addressed to a popular readership and undeniable flaws, the book was praised for summarising and organising a coherent picture of the first-hand results obtained by the author in the course of several expeditions through Tibet and the Himalayas from 1928 to 1954.¹

The space dedicated to prehistory is intriguing. This chapter takes up one fifth of the book: astonishingly generous, given the state of knowledge and the lack of archaeological digs, but not surprising. Prehistory was never a main issue in Tucci’s research, but an interest in the most ancient periods of human culture is already apparent in his earlier studies on Central Italy and China (Tucci 1913; 1914), and emerged in many of his subsequent writings.² The thread connecting these works was the idea that all religions cherish rituals and beliefs were handed down from generation to generation through millennia.

What struck me, and perhaps others acquainted with Tucci’s work, is the perspective adopted in this chapter of *Transhimalaya*. In an earlier, short albeit dense and clear article, he had already outlined the main questions concerning the study of Tibetan prehistory in a wider scholarly context, also embracing linguistics, analysis of historical sources, popular beliefs and religious traditions (Tucci 1948).

There is nothing of all this in *Transhimalaya*. Here Tucci focused

on a strictly limited set of archaeological remains tentatively dated to prehistoric times (megaliths, cave dwellings, graves, surface finds) without trying to integrate them with different sources. Being aware of the difficulties in studying such a kind of monuments without excavations,³ he did not identify cultures nor propose a chronological scheme, but merely presented a review of known places and data. Special attention was paid to sites where one finds (Tucci 1973: 50):

large stones set in the ground, either by themselves or in groups, arranged in circles or sometimes in square formation or in alignments. In the middle of the group there may be either one or three taller stones set erect like pilasters, left in their natural state without any dressing.

This was a type of monument that he often photographed during his journeys and mentioned in his travelogues (Figs 1–3). After having walked thousands of kilometres through the roof of the world and visited many places away from the beaten track, he felt able to indicate the two most important sites (Tucci 1973: 50–51):

The largest group of circular stone settings of this kind, with stones 2 or 3 metres in diameter, sometimes slightly ovoid in form, either with or without the central pillar, is in the mountains above Shapgeding (*Šab dge sdiñs*) and on the road between Doṭṭakdsong and Sakya: unfortunately the photographs of these sites were lost during the crossing of a river.

¹ Tucci 1973. The publisher adopted *Transhimalaya* for the English edition, while keeping *Tibet* for the French, German and Italian ones.

² Tucci 1931a: 521–22; 1931b: 506–7; 1946: 27; 1948; 1949: vol. 2, 711–42; 1970 (mainly in the chapter on Bon); 1977.

³ *Ibidem*. See also Macdonald 1953.

Tucci further highlighted the importance of these two sites by making repeated reference to them. In *Transhimalaya* one reads that at Doptakdsong there were also caves, which may have been inhabited in prehistoric times, and again about its “monolithic stela” standing in the middle of a circle of stones. In spite of the claimed loss of the photographs, he published a picture illustrating the monolith in which, as one can observe in passing, the circle of stones is not visible (Fig. 4).⁴ We are also informed of the analogy between Shapgeding and the complex stone monument near lake Panggong discovered by Roerich, which was “eighteen parallel rows of standing stones, each row ending in a stone circle of large stones set vertically in the ground, with a kind of altar of undressed stone opposite each circle”. In a somewhat contradictorily way, Tucci adds that at Shapgeding the “circular tombs surrounded by stones are never found in large groups: usually three or four together” (Tucci 1973: 55).

Tucci was also very sparing with geographic information: he did not explain where the two sites were situated, and the map printed inside the back cover of the book shows only Shapgeding, almost midway between Phuntsholing and Shigatse. Last but not least, the names of these sites differ from publication to publication, as we shall see below. No wonder, therefore, that the scholars who faced the difficult task of drawing a picture of prehistoric Tibet afterwards, reported Tucci’s statements without any comment.⁵

The little information provided in *Transhimalaya* allows us at least to understand when Tucci visited them. He travelled the route to Sakya as well as that from Phuntsholing to Shigatse only once in his career, in 1939 (Fig. 5). That time Tucci was unable to publish an extensive narrative of his adventures, as he had previously done with the journals of the expeditions to western Tibet, to satisfy the curiosity of a wide audience about his experiences in a mystery-shrouded country. He produced only two short travel articles, in which no mention at all of Dotakdzong or Shapgeding, nor of any pre-Buddhist relic, is to be found (Tucci 1940a; 1940b). An identical silence also occurs in the much longer report written for the Ministry of War by Felice Boffa Ballaran, a captain of the Alpini (mountain force) who acted as photographer of the expedition. Boffa published it with minor corrections in 1946.⁶

⁴ Tucci 1973: 40, 51 and fig. 38 respectively.

⁵ Hummel 1975: 47, endnote 4; Chayet 1994: 57; Bellezza 1996: 81, footnote 17; 1997: 405, endnote 7 (where the author erroneously asserts that Tucci located Dotakdzong in Sa dga’ county).

⁶ Boffa 1946. A copy of the report, entitled ‘Spedizione Tucci al Tibet Centro Meridionale, aprile-settembre 1939’, was kindly made available to me by rela-

Since the passing away of Tucci, over 30 years ago, some of the unpublished documentation produced in the course of his expeditions has gradually come to light, especially photographs, giving us today the opportunity to revise the case of these two enigmatic sites.

Photographs are particularly relevant in our case, as it actually turns on lost photographs. It will be necessary, however, to adopt a perspective responding on the one hand to problems derived from the state of the documents we have to examine, and on the other to methodological issues. Photographs are produced differently than text, have a different author, have their own characteristics and are, in fact, historical documents in their own right.

We must, ultimately, shy away from the temptation to follow Tucci in using the photographs only as passive illustration of his assertions. The photographs (present or absent) are thus deprived of their role as autonomous historical documents, because they have been isolated from their original context, as a letter extracted from a correspondence or a page torn out of a book. The reconstruction of the original sequence of film rolls and frames allows us instead to evaluate photographs independently from Tucci’s intention.

The available photographic documentation of the 1939 expedition consists, for the present purpose, of a set of 74 rolls of 35-mm black-and-white negative film,⁷ and a photograph album produced by Felice Boffa Ballaran in late 1939. The album was donated to the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome in 2005 by the late Francesca Bonardi, widow of Giuseppe Tucci, and consists of 1088 pictures printed from the 35 mm negatives and arranged after the itinerary complete with captions. In some cases Boffa mounted panoramic views by overlapping series of pictures. The total number of prints used for the album was therefore larger. Some of the prints are missing, presumably as Tucci detached them for study or publication purposes.

As I have explained elsewhere, Tucci conserved the photographs of his expeditions at home for decades without keeping notes or

tives of Boffa as I was unable to recover it in the military archives. Boffa Ballaran (1897–1994), a leading Italian mountaineer, had been a member of the Austrian-Italian boundary commission at the end of World War I and a co-organiser of the Military Alpine School at Aosta, opened in January 1934. After having fought in Albania and then sided with antifascist partisans during World War II, being a staunch monarchist he retired from the army, as Italy became a republic. For a very short biography of him and a survey of his work in Tibet see Nalesini 2013.

⁷ Boffa used medium-format photographic film (6×6 and 6×9 cm) to reproduce texts and written documents, and 35 mm film for everything else. On the photographic equipment of the expedition see Boffa 1946: 127 and Nalesini 2013: 293–98.

writing captions, splitting the rolls of film negative into short strips (sometimes into single frames) and mixing them up. As a result, a remarkable number of negatives were lost, and the reorganisation of what survived and was handed over to the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome in the 1970s required considerable time and effort. The 1939 negatives were no exception, and gaps affect almost every roll of film. To get around this obstacle I reconstructed the original sequences of the frames of each roll of film as far as possible, not on the basis of the images alone, whose subject was in many cases unknown to me, but evaluating other features of the negatives; in the archivists' jargon, by analysing the extrinsic elements of the document besides the intrinsic (Nalesini 2008: 104–108). In this case I was substantially helped by the prints from the album, as Boffa wrote the progressive number of the roll and frame on the back of them, thus providing an easy way to verify the reconstruction carried out on the negatives and partially to fill the gaps.

We can now go back onto our sites. The discoveries in Tsang in 1939 had made Tucci reflect on the possible relation of the silent stone monuments with the pre-Buddhist religion and its survival in the rituals of modern popular culture. The first results of his enquiry appeared in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, a book conceived many years before but in its final form mainly based on the data gathered during that expedition and written in the gloomy years of World War II, when the memory of what he had seen was still fresh. In this book, however, Tucci mentioned only one megalithic site, which lay in the neighbourhood of Doptra, the well-known place north of Kampa-dzong on the route from Sikkim to Sakya. The dimensions of the site definitely do not appear to be imposing. He wrote: “I also noticed traces of them [i.e. the megaliths] on the top of a mountain towering over the road from Doptra to Sakya [...]. One of them was photographed by me in Doptra” (Tucci 1949, vol. 2: 729). The same monolith is elsewhere compared with that of Poo (sPu), in Spiti (Tucci 1966: 115).

Notwithstanding the different descriptions of the archaeological sites, the almost identical phrasing of *Transhimalaya* in respect to *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* and the similarity of the place names make a strong case for the identity of Dotakdzong with Doptradzong. The photographic documentation actually proves it beyond doubt.⁸ The monolith published in *Transhimalaya* as Dotakdzong fills frame 31 of roll 5, and the sequence of the frames of this roll (Fig. 7 and Appendix 1) tells us that the picture was taken after Doptradzong

(frames 21–24). The same photo occurs also in the album as picture 76 “Monolito sacro a Daptra”.

The sole photograph falling within the gap from frame 25 through 30 is a picture of a “Tibetan tailor” (“Sarto tibetano”) inserted in the album between Doptra and the monolith. Tucci had unfortunately detached it from the album, so that I cannot precisely assign it a frame number. Nevertheless, the empty space left in the album above the caption still tells us that the corresponding negative was available to Tucci and Boffa after their return to Italy. There is therefore no evidence of the loss of negatives of the “megalithic” site of Doptra, at least during the Tibetan journey.

The subject of the other missing photographs cannot at the moment be ascertained. Even if they portrayed other features of that archaeological site, however, the only known photograph was very likely the most meaningful image, as both Boffa and Tucci used it to illustrate the site in the album and in *Transhimalaya*, respectively.

Unfortunately, Boffa did not mark the place in the final map of the expedition published by Tucci (Fig. 5) nor in the sketch map found among his personal papers (Fig. 6), though the river visible in the background, presumably the Doptra *gtsang po* (river), suggests that the site was situated within easy reach from the intersection of the river and the road to Sakya over the Kheyi la.

Why Tucci later changed Doptra (rDo khra) into Dotak (rDo brag) is unclear. I can only conjecture that the main building material of the monuments he was dealing with led him to shift *khra* into *brag* because the latter is semantically akin to *rdo*.

Be that as it may, the archaeological features visible in the picture contradict Tucci's statements. In fact it seems that he completely disregarded features that were not compatible with his ideas on the Tibetan megalithic sites. To begin with, the stela on the right of the picture is not standing inside a circle of stones but near, and out of, a collapsed structure rather resembling a platform or a terrace. A second broken stone stela, or pillar, is lying on the ground in the bottom left corner of the photograph. There are not even traces of a circle of stones or of any other kind of enclosure around it. A ruined wall, not visible in *Transhimalaya* as the typographer cropped the image, is on the left of the stela/pillar. It is impossible to understand to what kind of building this wall belonged to (though it might be the plinth of a *mchod rten*), but from what one can see in the image one would think that the two features were somewhat connected when the site was still alive, as they seem to be on the same floor level.

The caves “apparently inhabited in prehistoric times” that Tucci situated in Doptra presumably are those dug into the cliff near the hermitage photographed in frame 36, whose interior is portrayed in

⁸ All photographs used in this article are held in the archive of the National Museum of Oriental Art, Rome.

frame 33. The latter occurs only two exposures after the monolith, so presumably a short distance ahead (cf. Tucci 1973: 40). The caption of this picture in the album mentions only the hermitage (Appendix 1).

My overall impression is that the site was much more complex and coherent than Tucci stated, as it was composed of several distinct features which shared the same space and may have been in use contemporaneously, though possibly erected at different times. The dating of these ruins to the prehistoric/pre-Buddhist period remains conjectural.

The case of Shapgeding is slightly different.⁹ In the concise travel report published in the *Bollettino* of the Italian Geographical Society Tucci maintained that along the route from Phuntsoling to Shigatse there are very few interesting places, and does not even mention Shapgeding (Tucci 1940: 83). Not surprisingly, among the photographs taken along the route from Phuntsholing to Narthang there is only one of Shapgeding monastery. It shows the building nested on the summit of a mountain as seen from the road running along the bottom of the valley. The preceding and following photographs were also taken from a similar position (Fig. 8, fr. 30–32). Presumably, therefore, neither Tucci nor Boffa ever approached the monastery and did not explore the mountain. The integration of the available negatives with the prints of Boffa's album fills film roll no. 34 almost entirely (Fig. 8, and Appendix 1), and demonstrates that there is no room to place an alleged lost photograph of "megalithic" monuments in the neighbourhood of Shapgeding.

This is further confirmed by a travel notebook used by Tucci in 1939, which was discovered in Tucci's last home in San Polo dei Cavalieri in the summer 2014, a few months after his widow had passed away.¹⁰ It contains notes on the route from Phuntsholing to Zhalu. For unknown reasons, Tucci wrote these pages directly in English. The journal is quite detailed, but contains only a passing mention of Shapgeding, and not a word on a possible prehistoric/pre-Buddhist site of any sort. What follows is a semi-diplomatic transcript of the relevant pages:¹¹

⁹ In *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* Tucci transcribed the place name as Šabs dge ldiñ (Tucci 1949: 205) and Šab dge ldiñs (pp. 658, 701 footnote 635), while he used Šabs dge sdiñs in *Tibetan Folk Songs* (Tucci 1966: 115) and *Transhimalaya* (Tucci 1973: 51).

¹⁰ Now in the Library of the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome, Fondo Bonardi-Tucci, Q19 (provisional code).

¹¹ I did not mark the mistakes or inconsistencies of the Tibetan transcription, dropped letters, missing diacritics and misprints, and omitted Tucci's many crossings out. The pages are unnumbered, but for easier reference I have given them numbers in square brackets. Other conventional signs: (?) doubtful reading; x illegible letter; [Fig. x] illustrations in this article.

[1] From Puntzoling we went to Potoñ. The road runs first along the Gtsan and then, at the height of the Bonpo monastery mc'os rigs(?) brygal mgon enters the valley of the Poton c'u.

The biggest village of this valley is Tashigang and there at the very end of the valley there is the monastery of Potoñ and the village of the same name [Fig. 8, frame 26].

[2] The monastery is composed of two lhak'añ. The big one contains traces of Paintings representing the mdsad pa rgya in the old style (2 fotogr [Fig. 8, frames 21–24]) and the མངས་རྒྱས་རབ་བདུན་.

[3] The other lhak'añ is now a mgon k'añ but it was not so in former times. It is composed of an atrium with new painting and the old temple which has in the external part wall paintings greatly effaced of Saskya lamas, still very well visible Kun dga' sñing po. Inside statues of Nepalese workmanship but [4] very much damaged. There the valley of the Poton c'u turns to the left [Fig. 8, frames 28–30]. Then the road enters the Šekar valley so called after a village of this name. Then it reaches the Sakya(?) monastery of Šabs dge ldiñ [5] where the valley of Šabs is centered [Fig. 8, frames 31–33]. After crossing the river Šabs chu one reaches the K'ru u dgon pa. Near it there is a Kumbum completely ruined [Fig. 8, frame 34]. Though the external building is still apparently in a good condition, there is only one chapel in which a few traces of the old paintings can [6] still be seen. These poor and effaced fragments show xxxxxx a great similarity with the paintings of Jonan.

The temple now belongs to the bKa' rguyd pa and according to the tradition it was founded by the K'ro p'u lotsäva, the master of Buston. That a lotsava really used to leave [sic] in that place [7] is shown by a iron and silver club, which the tradition says was used by the lotsava for his daily phisical [sic] exercises.

It is very heavy and on it there is an inscription which proves that the tradition is true.¹²

The inscription also testifyis [sic] to the fact that even on the XIII century Shang was a xxxxxx place for iron and silver work as it is even now.

[8] omitted¹³

[8bis–9 see Appendix 2]

[10] The temple is famous all over Tibet for his huge statue of Jampa: one of the four most celebrated in Tibet. The ađus k'añ was completely covered with paintings belonging to the XVI century [Fig. 8, frame 38]. They represent among others

¹² See Appendix 2.

¹³ This page contains only loose notes, none of which are about the places the expedition passed through.

བདེ་མཚོག་ག་ཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ་
གནས་བརྟན་བུུ་བྱུག་། རྫོ་རྫོ་འཆང་
རྣམ་ཐོས་སྤྲུལ་། རྫོ་ལ་དཀར

[11] The cell where there is the image of Jampa was decorated with paintings representing

རྫོ་རྫོ་ལེ་མས་དཔལ་
བྱམས་པ་། ག་ཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ་།
ཕྱག་རྫོང་ལྷན་རྫོང་།
རྣམ་རྒྱལ་མ

[12] The upper part of the temple is xxxxxxxy.

Then the road turns to the left and enters the big plateau of gNas which leads to the Tra la.

After about twelve miles there is the monastery of Gañs can belonging now to the dGe lugs pa.

[13] From K’ru-u dgon pa one reaches in half a day march གངས་ཅན་ dgon pa which now belongs to the yellow sect.¹⁴ It is composed of many chapels some of which contain paintings of the XVI century and others far more recent.

Some few statues are of Nepalese origin. Most probably the monastery is [14] very old but it was rebuilt in various times.

From Kanchen one reaches Narthang.

We may thus conclude that the available photographic and written documentation suggests that Tucci did not consider the monastery of Shappedging worth a visit, did not climb the mountain or find anything worth recording in the surrounding area.

In another of his works, *The Religions of Tibet*, Tucci spent a few pages illustrating his idea of the possible relation of the pre-Buddhist religion with stone monuments like pillars, enclosures and graves. In doing so, he asserted in very much the same way of *Transhimalaya*, but using a different place name, that: “Very frequent also are tombs of megalithic type in form of a circle, with or without a central stone. I saw the greatest burial place of this kind near *Seng ge rdzong*, on a mountain peak” (Tucci 1980: 225), adding that he had discovered “the presence of an installation of this type near Doptradzong and of others near Senggedzong” (Tucci 1980: 245). Tucci again used almost the same phrasing as in *Transhimalaya* but mentioned a different place name.

The only Senggedzong I was able to find in Tucci’s travelogues is a ruined fortress close to Mangnang, in western Tibet. Tucci did not actually visit it; he asked some porters to explore the site in his stead,

¹⁴ The photographs of Gangs can monastery belong to the following roll film, no. 35.

and their report contains no evidence of standing stones, cairns or similar “megalithic” monuments (Tucci 1937: 157). The original German edition of *The Religions of Tibet* was printed only three years before *Transhimalaya*, and I assume – though I cannot of course prove – that in Tucci’s mind the two place names were interchangeable, because Senggedzong was very close to Shappedging. Still, what Tucci actually saw in Shappedging/Senggedzong remains obscure.

The last point of this enigmatic affair concerns Tucci’s claims of the loss of the photographs taken in Doptra and Shappedging. It was not an isolated case in the history of Tucci’s expeditions: in 1930 in Baltistan, for instance, he suffered a loss of photographs and rubbings of inscriptions (Tucci 1978: 72). As we have seen, the loss suffered in 1939 was less catastrophic than Tucci claimed. It did not affect the documentation on Shappedging, and unlikely (and in case only partially) that on the archaeological site near Doptra.

I hope the reader will not be too perplexed if I affirm that Tucci was nevertheless reporting in good faith. When I reconstructed the set of film rolls exposed during the 1939 expedition, I soon realised that something was missing. Film no. 3 ends with a picture of the sacred rock of Chungthang, in Sikkim, while frame 3 of roll no. 4 had been exposed in Gayokang. The expedition covered the route between these two places in three legs and five days, according to Boffa’s diary, and in his notes Boffa clearly stated that he took photographs in Lachen and Thanggu (Nalesini 2013: 286–88). Yet he did not consider these photographs when he numbered the rolls, and the only logical explanation of this behaviour is that he had already lost the film.

A second loss concerned the photographs taken between Doptra and Sakya. As we have seen, Doptra is documented in roll no. 5, while the following roll, no. 6, begins with some images of Sakya. The gap is noteworthy, as Tucci and Boffa took at least a week to cover the route from Doptra to Sakya (Nalesini 2013: 283). To recover as much as possible of the lost documentation, Tucci and Boffa had to travel the same route again, but in the opposite direction, from Sakya to Mapcha and Gape. This is clearly shown by the sequences of the frames. The loss of the films therefore probably occurred as the expedition was approaching Sakya.

Over 30 years later, when the memory of what had happened in the course of the expedition was slowly fading away, Tucci may have erroneously ascribed the absence of the photographs he wanted to use for his book to that unlucky episode. We can barely imagine how frustrated Tucci felt looking, and not for the first time, the results of so many efforts and privations swept away by rushing waters during that ill-fated fording.

APPENDIX 1: COLLATIONS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTS

Roll film no. 5			
Exp.	Negative call no.	Album prints (number and captions)	Notes on the album prints
21	6130/25 ^a		
22	6130/22	72 Gompa Doptra antiche pitture murali	On the back: 5/22
23	6130/23	73 Conversando coi lama del Gompà Doptrà	Missing in the album
24	6130/24	74 Rovine dello Dzong di Doptrà	On the back: 5/24
25	missing		
26		75 Sarto tibetano	Missing in the album; hypothetical placement
27	missing		
28	missing		
29	missing		
30	missing		
31	6137/31	76 Monolito sacro a Daptra [sic]	On the back: 5/31
32	6137/32		
33	6137/33	77 Interno di un romitorio presso il lago di Doptra	On the back: 5/33
34	missing		
35	missing		
36	6573/36	78 Romitorio presso il lago di Doptra	On the back: 5/36

Note a: The person who inventoried the negatives assigned number 25 to this frame, whose real frame number is 21.

Roll film no. 34			
Exp.	Negative call no.	Album prints (number and captions)	Notes on the album prints
21	6134/21	560 Poton Gompà antichi affreschi	On the back: 34/21
22	6134/22	561 Poton Gompà	On the back: 34/22
23	6134/23		
24	6134/24		
25	missing	562 Poton Gompà	On the back: 34/25
26	missing	563 Poton	On the back: 34/26
27	missing		
28	missing	564 Valle di Poton	On the back: 34/28
29	missing	565 Piana di Valle (Valle del Poton Chu)	On the back: 34/29

30	missing	566 Fenomeni di erosione in Valle del Poton Chu	On the back: 34/30
31	6136/31	567 Il monastero di Shappedin	On the back: 34/31
32	6136/32	568 Valle Shap Chu	On the back: 34/32
33	6136/33	569 Valle di Shap Chu e monti di Thru	On the back: 34/33
34	6136/34	570 Il Cumbun di Thru	On the back: 34/34
35	Missing		
36	Missing		
37	Missing		
38	6135/38	571 Gompa di Thru: interno	On the back: 34/38
39	6135/39		

APPENDIX 2: THE THROPU INSCRIPTION

Tucci or Wang Dorje (dBang rDo rje), the lama assisting him, copied the inscription in Tibetan script written on the club discovered in the *kumbum* (*sku 'bum*) of Thropu, and referred to above, on two 10×16 cm lined pages, which he later pasted on p. [8–9] of his notebook (Figs. 9–11). This version of the inscription differs from that published in the second volume of *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (henceforth TPS) at pages 676–677 (English translation) and 762 (Tibetan text) in several details. Though none of these differences seems to affect the general meaning of the inscription, I thought it advisable here to propose a new edition based on the version in Tucci's notebook (henceforth NB), and leave any further remarks to others better versed in Tibetan language and epigraphy than I am.

I would only like to stress that the inscription is composed of two parts, indicated in TPS by the repetition of the decorations. In NB the two parts are separated by a straight solid line, and the line numbering of part two starts again from 1 (Fig. 10). The length of the lines, which are longer in part 1 according to NB, demonstrates that this is not a minor point.

Considering all these elements together, I wonder if the two parts of the inscription were physically separated, and whether they were placed on the club at different times and should therefore be considered two distinct albeit connected inscriptions. Unfortunately, apparently neither the club nor the inscription were photographed, and the dating of the club to the 13th century proposed by Tucci seems to be based solely on the tradition attributing the object to the “Kro p'u lotsäva” (Tucci 1949: 706, endnote 1038).

Because of a mere printing mistake, in TPS the mantra marking the beginning of part 2 shifted to the end of part 1. Moreover, the

footnote reference to the mantra has been mistakenly placed at the very end of the English translation.

I used the following conventions: [x] omitted in TPS; <x> emended in TPS; {x} beginning of line according to NB.

{1} མི་སྒྲིག་པ་བཟོ་བའི་འབེལ་འགར་རྗེ་¹⁵ {2} ཡིན། སློབ་དཔོན་གངས་པས་
<སྲང་>ལྷགས་ལྷ་བརྒྱུ་བའི་གསུམ་¹⁶ {3} སོལ་པ་བཏང་། སློབ་དཔོན་ཚུལ་སེང་གས་ཟངས་ {4}
ར་གན་སྲང་བྱེད་དང་ཉིས་བརྒྱ་གསེར་སྲང་ལྷ་དུལ་ {5} སྲང་གསུམ་བཏང་། མོན་དང་ཉར་
རག་ལ་བཟོའི་¹⁷མགྲ།

{1} [མི་སྒྲིག་ར་]སྲང་ར་¹⁸མ་ན་སྒྲ་ར་¹⁹མ་ཏུ་ {2}²⁰ པ་ཚ་རྒྱུ་²¹ སློབ་དཔོན་ཚུལ་སེང་གས་
ལོ་རྒྱ་བ་²²ལྷགས་ལྷ་བའི་འབེལ་འགར་པ་དང་སྲོབ་བ་ རྣམས་ཚོགས་རྗེས་པ་ར་གྱུར་ཅིག།

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¹⁵ In NB Tucci placed and badly erased a *shad* after *rdo rje* (Fig. 9).

¹⁶ NB: གསྒྲིག་.

¹⁷ NB and TPS: བཟོའོ; this seems a copyist's mistake as it leaves a senseless isolated *mgu* before the mantra.

¹⁸ NB: སྲང་སྲང་.

¹⁹ NB: སྒྲ་ར་.

²⁰ No further beginning of line marked in NB.

²¹ This seems patterned after the well-known mantra *om smara smara vimāna skara mahā java hūṃ*. I am however unable to explain the syllables *pa tsha*.

²² NB: ལོ་ཚ་བ་.

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Fig. 1: Monolith along the route from Taklakot (sPu rang rdzong) to Kardam (dKar sdum), July 5, 1935 (neg. Dep. IsMEO 6044/11, photographer: Eugenio Ghersi).



Fig. 2: Three standing stones in the neighbourhood of Shidekhar (gZhis sde dkar), July 4, 1935 (positive P.4525, photographer: Eugenio Ghersi).





Fig. 3: Monolith at Chango (Kinnaur), July 24–25, 1933 (neg. Dep. IsMEO 6048/28; photographer: Eugenio Ghersi).



Fig. 4: The archaeological ground at Doptra, May 1939 (neg. Dep. IsMEO 6137/31; photographer: Felice Boffa Ballaran).



Fig. 5: Detail of the map of the 1939 Tucci expedition (after Tucci, Tibet centrale).

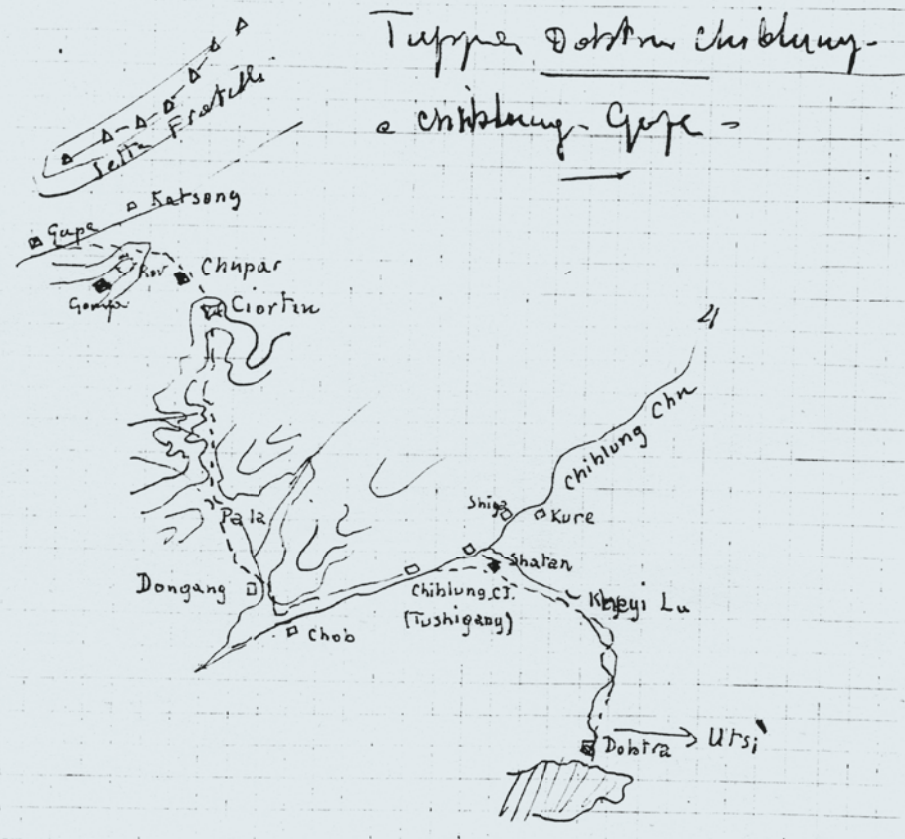


Fig. 6: Sketch of the route from Doptra to Gape (Felice Boffa Ballaran personal archive, private property).



Fig. 7: Partial reconstruction of a contact sheet of film roll no. 5, 1939. Darker sections of the filmstrips indicate existing negatives, lighter sections of the filmstrips indicate images which exist only as prints. Blank frames correspond to missing images. Frame numbers are upside down and run right to left.

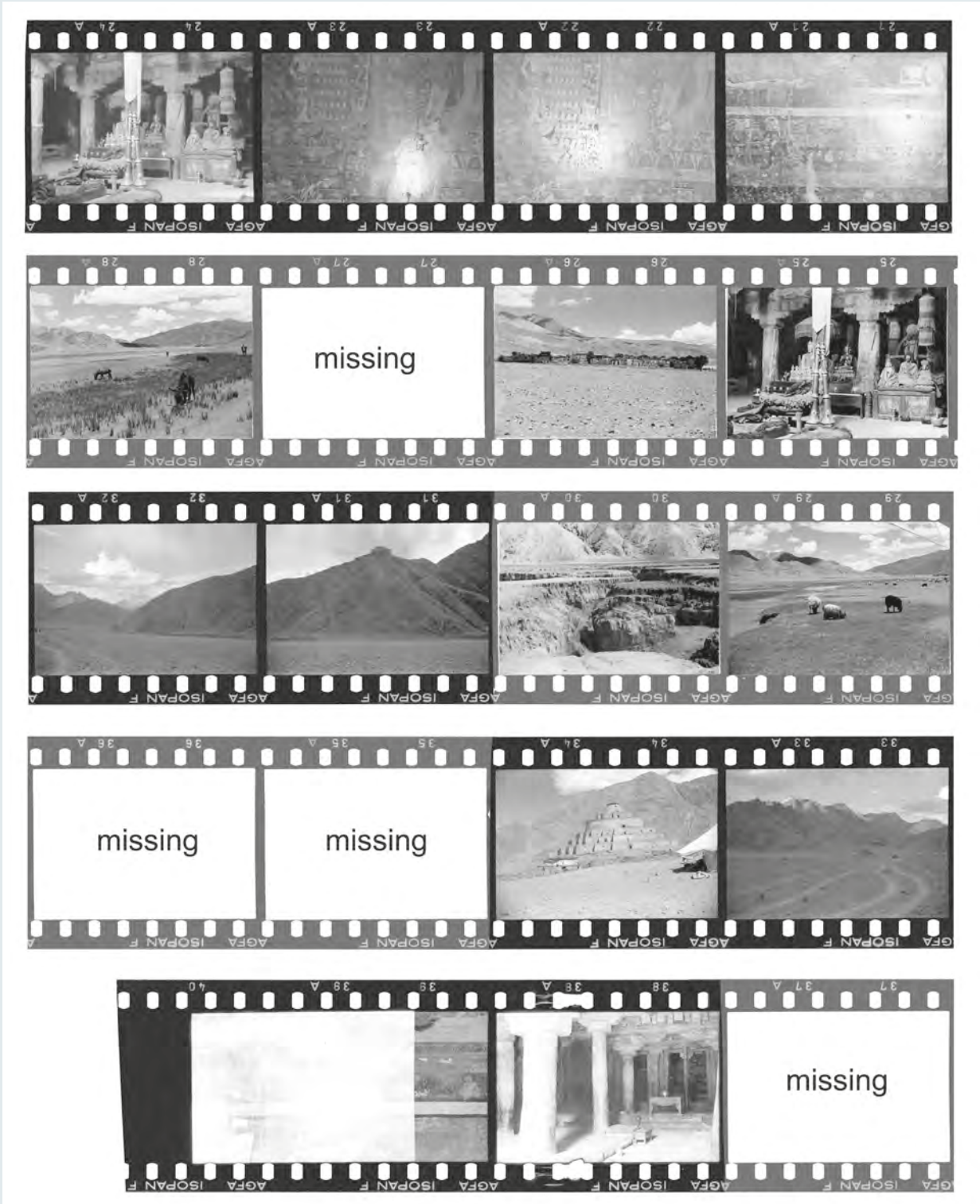


Fig. 8: Partial reconstruction of a contact sheet of film roll no. 34, 1939. Darker sections of the filmstrips indicate existing negatives, lighter sections of the filmstrips indicate images which exist only as prints. Blank frames correspond to missing images. Frame numbers are upside down and run right to left.

1. अं: सुस्ति।
 वरु: सुर-इरे. 2 वेर.
 2. अरु. ईरे |
 3. वरु || सुव रयक. अरु
 सु. वरु सुव सु
 4. सुव सु वरु सु वरु सु
 सुव सु वरु सु वरु सु
 सुव सु वरु सु वरु सु

5. सुव सु वरु सु वरु सु
 वरु सु वरु सु वरु सु
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 सुव सु वरु सु वरु सु

Fig. 9: Tucci's notebook, [8bis recto].

Fig. 10: Tucci's notebook, [8bis verso].

ॐ व. रघुन कुमि. सं. र.
ग. म. व. क. व.
अ. म. | इ. क. ~~क~~ व. क.
म. र. र. व. र. र.
ॐ. व. क. म. र. व.
ॐ. म. र. व. क. म. र. व. ॥
ॐ. र. क. ग.

Fig. 11: Tucci's notebook, [9].

