It is a common place that Tibetan historians after the re-establishment of Buddhism in Central Tibet in the 8th century gave little space to events before that time which did not have an obvious religious significance. Nevertheless, several of them can be seen to have had some acquaintance with the early inscriptions, which existed in front of their eyes, and with records in monastery archives. For example, Gou Lobsang, the author of the careful and invaluable "Blue Annals", quotes the 4th and 6th lines of the inscription on the east face of the Lhasa Treaty pillar of 811/832 (vol.nya. f.108a). He also states (vol. go f.40 b) that he has seen a letter on blue silk recording the grant of property to Myung Tsig-seng-'dzin bsan-po, but he makes no mention of two inscriptions on stone pillars at Zhwa'i Lha-khang which still survive as witness of that fact.

The Lhasa Treaty Inscription was also known to the author of the rGyal-brugs gsal-bs'i nge-long who picks out words and phrases as though from a hasty and inaccurate recollection of its contents (f. 93 a) and recommends his readers to study the inscription if they want fuller information.

The comparatively recent discovery in the Chos-byung of dPa'-bo gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba (1543) of an exception to this sketchy approach to ancient documents was, therefore, a welcome event. A manuscript copy of this work was lent to me at Lhasa in 1947 and it appears that Professor Tucci saw a printed copy on his visit to Tibet about the same time. After widespread enquiry I succeeded in locating the blocks at the lha-khang monastery in Lho-brag and it was possible to arrange for a number of copies to be printed, some of which were sent to scholars in Europe. At that time the book was known to few Tibetans at Lhasa, probably because it had been mentioned unfavourably by the 4th Dalai Lama who may have been inspired in part by the fact that the Karmapa school, to which dPa'-bo gtsug-lag belonged, had seen its principal opponents when, with the support of Cusak Khan, he had invaded Tibet and defeated the Gtsang king in 1642. In fact, where he criticizes dPa'-bo gtsug-lag, it is the Dalai Lama who appears to be mistaken; but his disapproval was enough to remove the work from the libraries of the Lhasa intelligentsia.

In that history is found, for the first time, the careful quotation of a complete 15th century inscription—that at bsam-yas. The author mentions the inscribed pillars at Zhwa'i Lha-khang (f.108). There is also a passing reference to the Lhasa Treaty pillar and short quotations from its east face (f. 132). In addition to this evidence of familiarity
with ancient inscriptions there is the unique contribution of what appears to be a verbatim quotation from the archives of some monastery, probably bsham-yas, of two edicts of Khoti srong-ldes-brtan and one of Khoti ldes-srong-brtan. These remarkable documents are authenticated by the survival on a stone pillar near lhasa of an inscription recording an edict which is clearly the counterpart of the Edict of Khot I des-srong-brtan. The inscription has been published by me in JRAS 1949 and has been examined more fully by professor Tucci in his edition of it in *Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*, Rome, 1950.

Much of the other material in this history has the appearance of being drawn from ancient sources but it cannot be so clearly linked to its original as can be the passages mentioned above.

From the foregoing examples it can be seen that Tibetan scholars had acquaintance, in differing degrees, with ancient documents although the fact that detailed reference rarely found their way into the surviving histories suggests that such documents were not regarded as of prime importance. It was, therefore, an unexpected thrill to be presented not long ago through the kindness of Athong Densapa of Birmiak, with a photograph of a collection of copies of early inscriptions which had recently come into his possession. These were stated to be the personal papers of the kathog Lama, Rig'dzin the-byang nor bu who lived in the XVIIIth century and they show that at the time of the Age of Reason in Europe and the scholarly researches of Sir William Jones in India, there was a Lama in Tibet who had taken pains to collect and to annotate the text of many important inscriptions of the VIIIth and IXth centuries.

One of these inscriptions was hitherto unknown because the lettering on the pillar which contained it had become illegible through time. It dates from the reign of Khoti srong-lde-brtan and has now been edited by me in JRAS 1964. The other inscriptions are: that at the tomb of Khot I des-srong-brtan at Phyong-geg, which has been published by professor Tucci in *Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*; the inscription from rKings-po published by me in JRAS 1954; the so-called skar-cung inscrip-  

Missing are what is probably the oldest of such documents—that from the Zhol rdzings at lhasa (c.764) which does not appear to be mentioned by any historian although the conqueror of the Chinese capital which is described there is known to them. Perhaps the tradition that this pillar was erected by a lay minister who was hostile to Buddhism led to it being ignored. Other inscriptions missing from the collection
are those at Zhwa'i Tha-khang and at mThub-bu, both of which relate to Buddhist foundations.

What is in the collection is, nevertheless, of great importance especially when it is seen that some of the materials which the Lama acquired in the XVIth century may have been either original or, more likely, copies made as much as 130 years before his lifetime. This appears from a note at the end of his copy of the Thana Treaty inscriptions to the effect that the copy was made in a water-tiger year 199 years after the water-hare year in which the pillar was set up. That is known to have been 813. It may be necessary to allow for a confusion in Tibetan chronology which has affected much of their dating from that period by the apparent omission of a cycle of sixty years, but, even so, the date of the copies is put firmly in the XVIth century. Further, a note, perhaps made by the Lama himself, on the copy of the rKong-po inscription indicates that when the text was checked on the spot with the original, about six and a half lines of the inscription were buried under sand. His copy was, therefore, taken some time before it came into his possession.

I am gradually making new editions of the inscriptions in the light of the Lama's texts. Although comparison with photographs etc., shows the state of the inscriptions as they were some 10 years ago, discloses many inaccuracies in the Lama's copies, these are largely orthographic and his contribution provides much new information of real value. It is not my intention to discuss that aspect here; but I should like to attempt a short sketch of Lama's life in the hope that others with better source at their disposal may be inclined to enlarge upon it. In a recent article "Nouveaux Documents Tibétains sur le Ml Nyag Si Hla" in Mélanges de Systéologie par M. Moisson de la Motte, published by the Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1946, Professor E. H. Stein mentions two biographies of Rigdzin Tse-dbang norbu which he saw at Gangtok. I have not had access to those works and have drawn only as the rinchen gter-ma-tsho and on verbal and written information from the present Klu-chog-don aNu-stok and the Sar-skys-pa Lama, bDog-gli-ba Pan; u'o, etc.

Tse-dbang norbu was born in 1648 in the Sa-rogan region of East Tibet and was soon recognized as the reincarnation of one Grubs-bzang Padma norbu who carried on the spiritual line of bGnas Nam-mi-kha'i rGu-snying-po as a teacher at the time of Klu-shing-slde-brtan. The boy was ordained by the rGyal-ba Rim-poché of Ka-thog the famous rNying-ma-pa monastery some 40 miles s.e. of dBo-dzhe, founded in 1094 by Lama Dam-pa De-phil-ma and which takes its name from a hill, on the slopes of which the monastery lies, bearing near its summit marks resembling the letter Pa. Tse-dbang norbu studied with the leading rNying-ma-pa teachers and also with those of the Karmapas with whom Klu-stok had
a close connection. One of his contemporaries and friends was Khamapa Si-tu Chos-kyi byang-ugs, a famous XVIIIth century scholar; and later, Tibe-dbang nor-lha became the tutor of the Xmas Khamapa Zha-sng-incarnation, bDud-'dul mdo-rje.

From Kham he went to Central Tibet where he received instruction in the Jo-lang-pa doctrines. Among the skills he developed was that of gser-rtsas, discoverer of religious texts and objects believed to have been concealed in the remote past. He travelled widely and his activities included the founding or repairing of monasteries in Western Tibet and in Sikkim, and the repair of sngh-dten gyupa in Nepal. He was greatly revered by Pho-pha-nams stobs-rjigs, the ruler of Tibet; and in 1741/42 when trouble ensued between the prai-nam of upper and lower Ladakh and there was danger of interference by the Dzungar mantsur of Kashiina, Pho-lha and the Vilhik Dalai Lama commissioned him to restore peace. That incident was referred to recently by the Chinese Government in their frontier disputes with India as evidence that Ladakh was at that time under the authority of Lhasa. In spite of complimentary remarks in Tibetan sources, it seems that his efforts did not bear lasting fruit. From Ladakh he went to Nepal and not long after, in about 1745 he died at skye-gongs where there is a sngh-dten containing his relics.

The Lama is brought vividly to life by a passage in the biography of the 'Brug-pa Lama Yon-tan mtha'-yas which shows his active personal interest in verifying his antiquarian material. Yon-tan mtha'-yas describes how when he was at Lhasa about 1744 he met Karshog Rig-gugs chen-po Tibe-dbang nor-lha stringing by the zdo-rjung outside the gTsang-lag-khang and reading the inscription on it. A copy of that inscription is, as mentioned above, included in the collection now in Atang Barma'a's possession and it may well be that the notes and corrections on it were being made at that very time by the Lama himself.