PART THREE:
SEMANTICS (WORDS AND WORD CLASSES)
ON THE OLD TIBETAN TERM KHRIN
IN THE LEGAL AND RITUAL LEXICONS

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During the period of the Tibetan Empire (c.608–c.866), Tibet developed a complex administrative and legal system that supported the paired trends of centralisation and the assimilation of subjugated territories and peoples. This legal and bureaucratic system also facilitated the levying of troops, the collection of taxes and the legislation of the empire in general. While conquered territories were required to pay tribute, the subjects of the Tibetan emperor were liable to pay numerous taxes and duties. Among the duties required of Tibetan subjects were corvée labour and military service. Failure to comply with any of these taxes or duties resulted in legal proceedings and punishment (chad). With such bureaucracy and legal methodology, of course, came a new vocabulary containing a certain degree of jargon and formulaic expressions. In this paper I will examine one particular term, khrin, from the legal lexicon as it appears in numerous OT sources, and consider its employment in ritual settings as well.

1. PREVIOUS THEORIES ON KHRIN

The first modern scholar to remark on the meaning of the term khrin was Giuseppe Tucci, who treated the term as it appeared in the Skar chung Edict of Khri Lde srong btsan preserved in Dpa' bo Gtsug lag’s Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston (hereafter abbreviated KhG). Tucci translated khrin as ‘protection’, but stated in a note that his translation was “[d]oubtful” (Tucci 1950: 53, 83, n. 115). Soon after, Richardson, in his treatment of the inscriptions at Zhwa’i Lha khang, took khrin to be “the equivalent of khrims”, and translated it as ‘legal proceedings’ (Richardson 1952: 34, n. 6). Richardson maintained this definition of khrin in his later work, though with a bit of uncertainty (Richardson 1985: 25, 51, 161). F.W. Thomas translated the term as ‘judgment’ in TLTD3: 118, citing the compound khrin sa from the “Annals of the 'A zha Principality” (TLTD2: 8). Not long after, Thomas translated khrin as ‘import’ without further comment (AFL: 39). Róna-Tas essentially