

Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines



Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

numéro quinze — Novembre 2008

ISSN 1768-2959

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Langues

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La *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* est publiée par l'UMR 8155 du CNRS, Paris, dirigée par Alain Thote.





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Tibetan Studies in Honor of Samten Karmay

Part II — Buddhist & Bon po Studies

Edited by
Françoise Pommaret and Jean-Luc Achard



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CONTRIBUTION A L'ETUDE DES HUIT CLASSES DE DIEUX-DEMONS
(LHA SRIN SDE BRGYAD)

Les deux articles qui suivent ont été élaborés au cours d'un séminaire de l'UMR 8047, Langues et cultures de l'aire tibétaine, auquel Samten Karmay participait. Un numéro spécial de la *Revue d'études tibétaines* (n° 2, 2002) a déjà publié la majeure partie des résultats de cette recherche collective.

Le regroupement de nos deux articles est justifié par le fait qu'ils abordent, sous des angles différents, la classification des *numina* à travers les Huit enseignements de Padmasambhava (*bKa' brgyad*). On sait, par les travaux antérieurs¹, que ces Huit enseignements forment des cycles de réalisation tantrique dont la composition est attribuée à Padmasambhava dans la tradition rNying ma pa. On sait également que les deux derniers enseignements concernent la propitiation des divinités et démons du plan mondain.

Tenzin Samphel s'intéresse aux sources canoniques des *bKa' brgyad* et aux informations sur les huit classes de dieux-démons fournies par le *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*, découvert en *gter ma* par Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer. De mon côté, j'analyse les catégories de *numina* et les fragments de mythes qui leur sont attachés dans un *tantra* du rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, le Réseau des mille dieux et démons, qui est lié au dernier des Huit enseignements, "Louanges et offrandes [aux dieux et démons] du plan mondain" (*'jig rten mchod bstod*).

Tenzin Samphel et moi sommes heureux d'apporter ici notre contribution en hommage à Samten Karmay qui, au long de toutes ces années, a si généreusement partagé ses inépuisables connaissances avec tous.

Anne-Marie Blondeau

1 V. Eva M. Dargyay, *The rise of esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1977 ; Ramon Prats, *Contributo allo studio biografico dei primi gter-ston*, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor XVII, Napoli, 1982 ; et surtout Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (référence complète dans l'article de T. Samphel), Vol. 1 : 275-283 et 458-483.

LE RÉSEAU DES MILLE DIEUX ET DÉMONS :
MYTHES ET CLASSIFICATIONS

Anne-Marie Blondeau

La Collection des tantra des Anciens (*rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*) offre un répertoire considérable – encore non exploité – de *numina* du Tibet et de leurs mythes d'origine. Ici, on analysera seulement le *Tantra du réseau des mille dieux et démons* (*lHa 'dre stong gi dr[wa] ba'i rgyud*) qui semblait le mieux à même, de prime abord, de fournir des développements sur les huit classes de dieux et démons (*lha srin sde brgyad*). En fait, cette classification n'est pas toujours énoncée clairement mais on trouve à plusieurs reprises des listes qui énumèrent les classes d'entités habituellement regroupées sous ce terme collectif (D, K, T53¹ : chap. 4 et 20, listes de huit, dans un ordre différent : *lha, bdud, btsan, rgyal po, gnod sbyin, ma mo, the'u rang, klu*). Par ailleurs, d'autres classes sont répertoriées : hybride comme les *klu btsan*, sous-classes comme les *ya bdud* et les *ma bdud*, spécifiques comme les *ja la ma* (qui vont de pair avec les *the'u rang* au chapitre 4 et pourraient être leurs épouses), les *mtsho sman*, les *pe kar / dpe dkar* (avec leur chef *dPe dkar rgyal po*, maître des richesses), les douze déesses *bsTan ma*.

Il faut remarquer, de plus, que ces *numina* sont désignés collectivement comme *dregs pa*, "les arrogants", et non *lha srin*, "dieux et démons" ou "dieux-démons" ; on pourrait arbitrairement les faire entrer dans la classification *dregs pa sde brgyad* dont Nebesky-Wojkowitz fournit plusieurs listes (1956 : chap. 16), mais très peu de correspondances entre ces listes et le *tantra* existent, qu'il s'agisse des noms des chefs et représentants des différentes classes, de leur description, ou des mythes qui leur sont rattachés (*ibid.* : 266 sq.). C'est aussi une caractéristique de ce *tantra* : il offre des données totalement originales, malheureusement fragmentaires, sur des catégories célèbres mais mal connues (par exemple les *rgyal po*, les *btsan*, ou les *the'u rang*), ou sur des catégories inconnues jusque-là.

Ainsi, les renseignements qu'il fournit sur les différentes classes de *numina* m'ont paru suffisamment nouveaux pour justifier cette contribution. Il est tout aussi impossible actuellement de déterminer l'origine de ces données que celle du *tantra*, on va le voir. Il serait donc prématuré de tirer des conclusions et je me propose seulement de dresser le catalogue de ces

¹ D figure pour l'édition de Derge, K pour celle de gTing skyes par Khyentse Rinpoche, T pour celle de mTshams brag dont deux versions seront examinées ici : celle en 53 chapitres (T53) et celle en 86 chapitres (T86). En fait, les versions "en 53 chapitres" en contiennent 54 car elles comportent deux chapitres 10 (différents l'un de l'autre) ; par commodité et parce qu'aussi bien les textes que les *dkar chag* ne comptent que 53 chapitres, je conserve cette numérotation. (Cette erreur de numérotation a aussi été relevée par Cantwell, Mayer and Fischer 2002 : vol. *hūm*).

"Arrogants", en regroupant ce qui concerne chacune de leurs classes. Mais avant, il faut évoquer les problèmes textuels posés par ce *tantra*.

1. Le *tantra*

L'histoire de la formation du *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* commence lentement à sortir de l'ignorance dans laquelle le manque d'intérêt des chercheurs l'avait laissée, mais on est loin du stade de développement des études sur le Kanjur². On sait que, jusqu'à l'édition xylographique faite à Derge au 18^e siècle, plusieurs compilations manuscrites des *tantra* "anciens" ont été réalisées à partir du 12^e siècle et diffusées par des copies sans doute plus nombreuses qu'on ne l'imaginait, si l'on en juge par l'exemple de Gung thang fourni par F.-K. Ehrhard (1997). De son côté, R. Mayer (1996) souligne l'extrême difficulté à retracer une filiation éventuelle entre les trois éditions dont on dispose couramment aujourd'hui (édition xylographique de Derge, version manuscrite du monastère de gTing skyes éditée par Khyentse Rinpoche et celle du monastère de mTshams brag au Bhutan), tant que l'ensemble des textes n'aura pas fait l'objet d'une véritable étude.

Ce préambule était nécessaire pour comprendre le problème auquel je me suis heurtée lorsque j'ai voulu confronter les trois éditions du *Réseau des mille dieux et démons*. Disons tout de suite que D et K ne posaient pas de problème majeur puisque le texte – en 53 chapitres – était pratiquement identique, à la différence que la lecture de D était nécessaire pour corriger et comprendre K, extrêmement fautif. Mais lorsque j'ai pu avoir accès à l'édition de mTshams brag, j'ai eu la surprise de découvrir que sept textes figuraient sous ce titre, de longueur variable (comportant respectivement 86, 53 [54], 22, 36, 18, 11 et 17 chapitres)³. Si les versions les plus courtes semblaient de simples doublons de la version en 86 chapitres, il est apparu très vite que cette dernière et celle en 53 chapitres différaient totalement, malgré un début commun. En revanche, la version en 53 chapitres est

² L'étude la plus complète à ce jour est sans doute Mayer 1996 : 223-242 ; voir aussi Ehrhard 1997, pour l'histoire des éditions manuscrites dans la région de Gung thang et Orofino 2002. Les catalogues de l'édition de Derge et de plusieurs versions manuscrites sont désormais accessibles, ainsi que des études sur ces versions : v. Achard 2002, 2003 ; Cantwell, Mayer and Fischer 2002 ; Cantwell 2002 ; Cantwell, Mayer, Kowalewsky et Achard 2006. On peut aussi consulter en ligne le *dkar chag* et le texte de mTshams brag, ainsi que la table des matières de D et K (THDL Nying ma Literature Collection : <http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/tibet/collections/literature/nyingma.html>). La version de gTing skyes est accessible par le Tibetan Buddhist Research Center (<http://www.tbrc.org/>).

³ Je remercie D. Germano et St. Arguillère qui m'ont généreusement communiqué leur table des matières de l'édition de mTshams brag et tout particulièrement St. Arguillère qui a bien voulu me fournir une photocopie des textes. Je dois aussi ma gratitude à J.-L. Achard qui m'a permis de consulter l'édition de Derge.

identique à D et T, si l'on excepte des variantes dans les *mantra* et quelques différences formelles⁴.

T86 figure en tête de ces versions (10e texte du volume *mi*, 46e et dernier volume de mTshams brag : 361-497). Formellement, il est mieux organisé que les versions en 53 chapitres, mais il contient très peu de précédents mythiques, au bénéfice de développements plus importants de rites apotropäiques ; seuls les chapitres consacrés aux *rgyal po* sont comparables à ceux des versions en 53 chapitres. Dans l'exposé général des classes d'Arrogants, au début, il ajoute une catégorie étrange, celle des *bodhi-sattva*, comme on le verra plus loin. On y rencontre aussi des classes originales, avec leur description : quatre *lte dkar* (? "nombrils blancs") ; mais d'autres catégories sont aussi qualifiées de *lte dkar*, vocable qui reste hermétique pour le moment. L'ensemble du texte abonde, par ailleurs, en noms de *numina*, avec leur description plus ou moins détaillée, mais en dresser le catalogue sortirait du cadre de cet article et l'alourdirait exagérément.

Ainsi, pour le sujet qui nous intéresse, nous pourrions ne prendre en compte que la version en 53 chapitres, en donnant éventuellement les leçons parallèles de T86. Dans l'édition de gTing skyes (K), c'est le dernier *tantra* de la collection (vol. 33 : 535-621) ; à l'intérieur de la section Mahāyoga, il appartient au "cycle des protecteurs de la doctrine" (*bstan srung gi skor*) et, sans que cela soit dit clairement, il semble représenter le dernier des Huit enseignements de Padmasambhava (*bKa' brgyad*), celui qui concerne les *numina* du plan mondain (*'jig rten mchod bstod*). D'après le *dkar chag* de 'Jigs med gling pa (cf. Achard 2002), il était classé différemment dans sa recension (fin du vol. *yo*, à la suite des *tantra* des Ma mo, suivi par le vol. *ri*, consacré pour l'essentiel aux *tantra* de Mahākāla) ; il se trouve dans le volume *ya* de l'édition de Derge (n° 416). Sauf indication contraire, je suivrai les leçons de mTshams brag et de Derge.

Malheureusement, aucune des éditions ne comporte de colophon, ce que relève d'ailleurs dGe rtse paṅ chen⁵ : on ne sait donc pas quand ce texte est apparu.

Il se présente de manière classique, avec un chapitre d'exposition des circonstances dans lesquelles le *tantra* a été prononcé. Vient d'abord le titre en "langue de l'Inde" (*de ba ya tri san tri su pa ti pa ya du ya mahā tantra*), puis en "langue du Tibet" : *Grand tantra du réseau des mille dieux et démons*. Suit l'hommage au Bhagavat, le Maître des secrets (*gsang ba'i bdag po*) et à son entourage, et la formule "Ainsi ai-je entendu...". Le Buddha se trouvait dans le ciel Akaniṣṭha, entouré d'une suite innombrable, lorsque le dieu Indra – interlocuteur du Buddha dans ce *tantra* – lui demande d'exercer sa

⁴ Je n'établirai pas ici une édition critique de ces trois textes mais il faut relever un détail révélateur peut-être d'une filiation entre T et K : on y trouve les mêmes erreurs de copiste – phrases interpolées, répétitions – qui n'existent pas dans D.

⁵ *dKar chag* : 538, *'gyur byang ma 'khod pa*, "Il n'y a pas de colophon de traduction".

compassion envers les êtres du monde, tourmentés par les *lha ma srin*. Le Buddha acquiesce. Il entre (chapitre 2) dans le *samādhi* "qui soumet tout à son pouvoir" et, aussitôt, tous les Arrogants s'assemblent en masse devant lui ; les uns s'évanouissent, d'autres s'arrachent les cheveux, vomissent du sang, tombent face contre terre ou sur le dos. Le Buddha entre alors dans le *samādhi* "qui guérit tout" et, instantanément, tous les Arrogants reprennent conscience ; ils font la circumambulation du Buddha, se prosternent et tous lui offrent leur formule vitale (*snying po srog pa rtsa ba*) en promettant de protéger désormais sa doctrine et d'exécuter ses ordres⁶.

Ensuite, à tour de rôle, les Arrogants viennent faire leur soumission au Bhagavat et lui confient leur formule vitale (*snying po*) d'abord, puis le moyen de les "traiter"⁷. Ce moyen est, pour chacun, un *mdos* (dans le *dKar chag* du *Rin chen gter mdzod*, Kong sprul indiquait ce *tantra* parmi les textes de base [gzhung] des *mdos*⁸). La composition est assez régulière : pour chaque chef d'une classe, puis pour chaque catégorie, un premier chapitre expose de manière très concise la disposition du *mdos* avec les objets et ingrédients particuliers à chacun, et un deuxième chapitre comporte le *bsngo ba* (qu'il faut comprendre ici dans le sens de "transposition" ; cf. Blondeau 1988 : 76), c'est-à-dire l'adjuration que l'officiant devra adresser aux *numina* lorsqu'il exécutera le rituel qui leur est dédié : c'est au début de chacun de ces *bsngo ba* que l'on trouve les fragments de mythes d'origine que l'on va regrouper maintenant. Comme on le sait mieux par les précédents mythiques bon po, plus abondants que chez les bouddhistes, ces fragments sont caractérisés par leur style archaïque : vers de cinq ou de sept pieds, phrases parallèles, disjonction des composés par la particule *ni*, termes descriptifs, vocabulaire parfois inconnu, ce qui rend leur traduction souvent difficile.

⁶ Les deux premiers chapitres dans T86 sont presque identiques, sauf à la fin où les Arrogants demandent au Buddha ce qu'est la Doctrine et ce que signifie "protéger". Le Buddha répond que la Doctrine comporte le *Vinaya*, les *Sutra* et l'*Abhidharma* ; protéger veut dire ne nuire ni à ceux-ci, ni aux yogins. À partir du troisième chapitre, les textes divergent complètement. Dans D, K, et T53, le troisième chapitre commence par l'énumération des chefs des Arrogants, qui offrent un long *mantra*. La longueur des *mantra*, avec leur langue hybride (mélange de sanskrit, de tibétain et d'une langue inconnue qui pourrait être du zhang chung, ou un dialecte de l'Ouest tibétain ?), est une caractéristique des versions en 53 chapitres.

⁷ *bcos thabs*, qui désigne généralement un traitement médical. Le terme est régulièrement employé dans les rituels *mdos* où il s'agit de traiter rituellement les *numina* afin de les rendre inoffensifs et obéissants aux ordres de l'officiant.

⁸ V. Blondeau 1987 : 102-103. Sur les rituels *mdos*, v. Blondeau 1990.

2. Les numina

En préliminaire et avant d'aborder séparément chaque classe, les chapitres 4 et 5 exposent "le traitement général des Arrogants" (ou "des principaux Arrogants" (*dregs pa spyi bcos kyi le'u*). Dans le chapitre 4, ils présentent chacune de leurs classes (au nombre de huit, mais le terme *sde brgyad* ne figure pas), avec leur spécificité maléfique :

Certains d'entre nous sont de la classe (*rigs*) des dieux : ils prennent les richesses du monde phénoménal.

Certains sont de la classe des *bdud* haineux : ils aiment tuer et dépecer.

Certains sont de la classe des *btsan* envieux : ils aiment trancher la vie.

Certains sont enfants des *rgyal po* : ils aiment [prendre] la vie et le souffle [d'autrui].

Certains sont enfants des *ma mo*-épidémies (*ma yams*) : ils envoient maladies et perturbations.

Certains sont de la classe des *klu* maîtres du sol : ils envoient grands maux et maladies.

Certains sont de la classe des *the brang* et *ja la ma* : ils détruisent le monde.

Certains sont de la classe des *gnod sbyin* : la chair et le sang les réjouissent.

(Suivent immédiatement des instructions rituelles.)

T86 (chap. 3) met dans la bouche du Buddha cette énumération – avec quelques variantes – et ajoute une catégorie en tête de ces huit classes, celle des *bodhisattva* qui résident sur terre. Indra, le roi des dieux, s'étonne que des êtres aussi nuisibles et cruels puissent être des "Éveillés" et l'explication du Buddha forme la matière du chapitre suivant (4). Il commence par énumérer les seize *bodhisattva* des Arrogants : le *bdud* lHa sbyin, le *bdud* Gangs pa bzang po⁹, le *bdud* sKos rje drang (= 'brang) dkar¹⁰, le *btsan* Ye rings rgyal ba, sKyes bu lde btsan (= sKyes bu lung btsan ?), le *btsan* 'Od khyung dkar po, le *rgyal po* I ni sems dpa', le (les ?) *rgyal po* Sems dpa' et 'Od chen, le *rgyal po* 'Od dkar, la *bdud mo* rGyal byin ma, la *bdud mo* E ka la, le *the brang* In tra sems dpa', la *ja la [ma]* dBang sdud dkar mo, le *klu* Nye dga', la maîtresse du sol (*sa bdag*) brTan ma, le *gnod sbyin* Gang[s] ba bzang po. Ces seize ont abandonné leurs appétits carnassiers, ils sont tout à fait vertueux : ils ont purifié (*byang*) les cinq poisons, ils ont parfaitement saisi (*chub*) la vérité ultime. Persévérants, ils sont courageux (*sems dpa'*) ; ce sont des *byang chub sems dpa'* (*bodhisattva*). Parce qu'ils

⁹ Gangs pa bzang po figure à nouveau, à la fin de la liste, classé comme *gnod sbyin*, ce qu'il est habituellement. Sa citation comme *bdud* est certainement une erreur qui porte d'ailleurs à 17, au lieu des 16 annoncés, le nombre des Arrogants énumérés.

¹⁰ Sur le groupe des divinités sKos et sKos rje drang /'brang dkar, voir Karmay 1986 : 85-86 et Blondeau 2000 : 255, 258.

mènent fermement une vie arrogante envers les cinq poisons, ils sont [appelés] Arrogants¹¹.

Si l'on revient aux versions en 53 chapitres, le chapitre 5 commence par près de sept pages de *mantra* "hybrides", suivis par l'adjuration de l'officiant à chacun des chefs¹² :

Hūm ! Vous *bdud*, les grands, vous les tuez et les petits, vous les tuez aussi.
 Vous, enfants de *bdud*, vous n'avez pas de compassion,
 Vous êtes les enfants des *bdud* haineux et vos actes sont le meurtre.
 Toi, le grand ancêtre des *bdud*
 Tu es appelé l'Ancêtre principal Ra tsa rgyal ba ;
 Ton fils se nomme le Grand Terrifiant du ciel (gNam gyi sdig pa chen po).
 La grand-mère des *bdud*, c'est Chu mer ;
 Sa fille est Mer mar lcam gcig ma.
 Ces deux [frère et sœur] eurent comme fils chéris,
 Leurs fils, les Treize Ya *bdud*¹³.
 Toi, l'Ancêtre principal Ra tsa rgyal ba
 Tu es appelé *bDud* à la guirlande de crânes.
 Dans ton pays, le noir pays des *bdud*,
 La forteresse des *bdud*, vertigineuse, *ldems se ldems* ;
 Ses fondations sont en or, son sommet de roc,
 Neuf pointes se dressent dans le ciel, *zangs se zangs*.
 Depuis le sommet, elle est couverte de peaux fraîches
 À l'intérieur, des carcasses humaines sont empilées
 À l'intérieur, des carcasses de chevaux forment des murailles
 À la base, s'égouttent sang et pus
 Des crânes desséchés et frais forment l'enceinte fortifiée.
 Au pied de la forteresse,
 Les loups bleus des *bdud*, *'ur et yams se yams*,
 Les choucas (*skyung ka*) oiseaux des *bdud*, *di ri ri*,
 Les chiennes des *bdud*, *'khang (?) et dir ri ri*.
 Là tu résides, grand *bdud* ancêtre.

¹¹ Dans les versions en 53 chapitres, on ne retrouvera cette catégorie d'Arrogants *bodhisattva* qu'à propos des *the'u rang*.

¹² Toutes ces adjurations se présentent souvent sous forme narrative et le fait que l'officiant s'adresse directement aux *numina* n'est rendu évident que par la sorte de refrain qui scande chacune des descriptions : "Venez ! Prenez le *mdos* ! Prenez la rançon !" J'ai adopté le parti pris de traduire systématiquement par la forme vocative.

¹³ Ce groupe n'est pas répertorié par Nebesky-Wojkowitz. Il relève (1956 : 277) un chef des hordes de *ya bdud*, au corps blanc de cristal et revêtu d'un manteau en plumes de vautour ; dans un *mdos* des Ma mo, Nag po chen mo ral pa can, *alias* *bDud mo chen mo*, est invoquée pour soumettre les *ya bdud* (*ibid.* : 385). Par ailleurs, il comprend l'opposition qu'ils forment avec les *ma bdud* comme "*bdud* d'en haut" et "*bdud* d'en bas" ; on verra plus loin qu'il n'en est rien dans notre *tantra* où les treize *ma bdud* sont des démons, distinctes des treize *ya bdud* traités dans les chapitres 25-26 (v. 2.4). Il s'agit d'une catégorie ancienne que l'on trouve dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang : cf. Karmay 2002 : 71.

Exceptée de la chair humaine, tu ne manges rien d'autre,
 Excepté du sang de cheval, tu ne bois rien d'autre.
 Tu envoies de nombreux messagers chercher de la chair,
 Tu envoies de nombreux acolytes à têtes animales (*mgo brnyan*) [créés] par
 transformations magiques.
 Ô Ancêtres des *bdud*, mari et femme, venez vers le *mdos* !
 Vous, les Treize Ya *bdud*¹⁴ :
 Toi, le Noir sans éclat (*Nag po bkrag med*),
 Tu chevauches un noir cheval des *bdud*,
 Tu portes une grande pelisse en cuivre noirci,
 Tu lances, telle une flèche, le noir lasso des *bdud*.
 Toi, le *bdud* Re ti mgo yag,
 Tu chevauches un noir cheval des *bdud*,
 Tu inscris les hommes (les naissances ? *skyes pa*) sur ta tablette¹⁵.
 Vous les quatre frères, conseillers des *bdud* (?) :
 Ma le ge shag qui réduis en poussière les trois domaines (*kham s gsum*),
 Seigneur des *bdud* Mang kug qui inscris sur ta tablette les êtres vivants,
 Nyal lde ngag btsan qui règne sur la longévité des êtres vivants,
 Et sTag zhu mched bzhi (Quatre frères à chapeau de tigre [?]),
 Votre zèle s'applique à tuer.
 Toi, Khyab pa lag rings¹⁶, tu coupes à la racine naissance et mort.
 Vous les grands *bdud*, 'Od de 'bar ba et 'Od de lkug pa,
 'Od de thom po et lkugs pa mdzu mul,
 Vous saisissez l'"âme" (*bla*) des hommes.
 Toi, Ral pa spyi bcings, tu fais aller et venir les êtres et le monde
 phénoménal (?).
 Gar bu shan thogs, tu es le grand messenger des *bdud*,
 'Khor lo bcu gnyis, tu mets en déroute le monde phénoménal.
 Toi, le grand *bdud* rGyal ba, tu prends les grands souffles (*dbugs chen*),

¹⁴ La liste qui suit comporte plus de treize noms ; leur caractère descriptif aurait pu les faire prendre parfois pour des éléments iconographiques mais ces noms sont confirmés par le chapitre 26 et par une liste parallèle – simple énumération de noms de *bdud* – dans le chapitre 8 de T86.

¹⁵ *khrām la 'debs*. Sur le *khrām shing*, à la fois arme magique utilisée dans des rituels terribles et attribut de nombreux *numina*, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 358) et l'article de P. Schwieger (1996), pour qui le *khrām/khrām shing* est destiné à retourner le mal sur celui qui l'a envoyé. Pour Nebesky-Wojkowitz, le nombre d'encoques pratiquées sur cet objet correspond au nombre d'années de celui à qui on le destine, ce que conteste P. Schwieger. Aucun des deux auteurs ne commente cet objet en tant qu'attribut de certains *numina*, ni ne relève l'usage maléfique qu'ils en font contre l'homme, caractérisé par l'expression *khrām la 'debs* que l'on rencontre dans de très nombreux rituels *mdos* : "inscrire sur le *khrām*". C'est ce que confirme le *Tshig mdzod chen mo* sous *khrām la btab*, tout en ne considérant que l'objet rituel "sur lequel on inscrit les fautes et le nom" de l'être nuisible que l'on veut soumettre. Je retiens donc l'extension du sens premier d'une planchette sur laquelle on faisait des encoches pour compter et je suggère qu'il doit s'agir d'une tablette-registre que tiennent certains *numina* sur laquelle ils inscrivent la dette (les fautes) des hommes envers eux.

¹⁶ Ce démon est célèbre comme ennemi constant de sTon pa gShen rab, le fondateur du Bon.

Thom po thom chung, tu punis et supprimes les hommes.
 Toi, Seigneur des *bdud* 'Ol po'i tshogs,
 Tu saisis les hommes tout en les frappant avec un balai,
 Les quatre ornements de tes mains sont des humains.
 Vous, Seigneurs des *bdud*, avec votre entourage de hordes de *bdud*,
 Veuillez prendre ce *mdos* du monde phénoménal !

(Suivent une énumération et description de *bdud*, dont à nouveau Khyab pa lag rings. Le texte enchaîne ensuite sur le chef des *btsan*.)

Hūm ! Toi Grand *btsan* principal (sPyi *btsan* chen po),
 Tu disputes aux *bdud* la chair et le sang,
 [Grâce à] ton grand pouvoir magique, tu voles leur part.
 Tu as un corps humain
 Et tu déploies des transformations magiques aux quatre orientes.
 Au pays des *btsan*, au-delà de trois hauts de vallée,
 Dans la rouge et vertigineuse forteresse des *btsan*,
 Tu es apparu, *btsan* à corps humain et tête de yak.
 De face, tu as une bouche et deux yeux,
 Sur la nuque, une bouche et deux yeux,
 À droite, une bouche et deux yeux,
 À gauche, une bouche et deux yeux.
 Tu apparus sur un cheval de *bse* rouge
 À huit sabots.
 Tu tues les hommes tour à tour,
 Tu découpes et manges leur chair.
 À l'est de la Montagne excellente (Ri rab)¹⁷
 Homme blanc de conque [d'une taille] vertigineuse,
 Au sud de la Montagne excellente
 Homme jaune d'or [d'une taille] vertigineuse,
 À l'ouest de la Montagne excellente
 Homme rouge de cuivre,
 Au nord de la Montagne excellente
 Homme bleu de turquoise,
 Au centre, Homme de cornaline,
 Vous qui rénez sur les cinq éléments,
 Vous qui rénez sur les trois mondes
 Vous êtes les cinq *btsan* des éléments,
 Veuillez prendre ce *mdos* du monde phénoménal !

La suite du chapitre énumère les noms de chefs des autres classes (*bdud mo*, *the'u rang*, *ja la [ma]*, *sa bdag*, *klu*), accompagnés parfois d'éléments descriptifs, mais n'offre plus de récits d'origine. Une absence remarquable, aussi bien dans cet exposé général des *numina* que dans l'ensemble des

¹⁷ Habituellement traduit par Sumeru. Ne voulant pas préjuger des origines de ces fragments de mythe, je préfère traduire simplement le terme tibétain.

tantra examinés, est celle des "dieux d'en haut" (*lha*) qui figurent pourtant en tête de la majorité des listes des huit classes de dieux et démons.

Voici maintenant, en poursuivant la lecture, les informations les plus significatives sur quelques-uns de ces *numina*.

2.1 Les *the'u rang*

Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 282-283) rassemble les données connues sur cette classe dont il relève les variantes orthographiques (*the'u rang/the'u brang/the brang*) et qu'il considère comme "une classe ancienne et importante de divinités" tibétaines. Ils figurent effectivement dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang (Karmay 2002 : 71). On les trouve dans l'entourage de rDo rje legs pa et de plusieurs protecteurs, dont Pehar qui serait un *the'u rang*. Dans le *Padma thang yig* [d'O rgyan gling pa], Pehar chez les Bhata Hor est appelé gNam thel dkar po ; par ailleurs, Padmasambhava soumet les *the'u rang* à Gla ba rkang gcig ("unipède") du Khams¹⁸. Toujours d'après Nebesky-Wojkowitz, ce sont des cyclopes unipèdes et forgerons (*ibid.* : 97-98, 101) ; un rituel *mdos* de Pehar les présente cependant avec des pieds comme des serpents (*ibid.* : 119)¹⁹. Un groupe de neuf est connu, dont la mère est la déesse Mo brtsun gung rgyal ; mais selon le *Klu 'bum* (cité par Tucci 1949 : 711), les *the'u rang* sont issus de la graisse de la tortue d'or cosmique. On trouve aussi des groupes de onze et de trois cent soixante *the'u rang*. Leurs chefs sont gNam the'u [ou thel] dkar po (*thel* blanc du Ciel), Sa thel nag po (*thel* noir de la Terre) et Bar thel khra bo (*thel* bigarré de l'espace intermédiaire)²⁰. "Ce sont des divinités d'une nature malfaisante, qui sont dites causer désunion et querelle, et rendre les enfants malades. On croit aussi qu'ils influencent le temps et, spécialement, qu'ils envoient les orages de grêle" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *ibid.* : 283). Dans les exposés sur l'origine du premier souverain tibétain, la troisième théorie, celle des Conseillers, le fait descendre des *the'u rang* (Macdonald 1971 : 212-213). Dans l'Épopée (Stein 1959 : 189), gNam the dkar po est le "dieu tutélaire" des Hor ; les origines lointaines des *the'u rang* ont été assimilées par l'épopée à travers la littérature "lamaïque" et "seule l'importance du fer et des forgerons est restée spécifique des Hor. Les *the'u rang* et leurs représentants principaux, gNam the dkar po, Sa the nag po et Bar the khra bo, n'y sont plus que des divinités bon po" invoquées aussi bien chez les Hor qu'à 'Jang ou au lHo Mon (*ibid.*). Les *the'u rang* figurent effectivement

¹⁸ À g-Ya' ri gong, dans le *lHa 'dre bka' thang* dont le chapitre 19 raconte leur soumission à Padmasambhava ; v. Blondeau 1971 : 93.

¹⁹ Des *mdos* leur sont spécifiquement dédiés, comme l'atteste le présent *tantra* ; voir aussi Eimer et Pema Tsering 1973.

²⁰ Pour Tucci (1949 : 719), leur connexion avec l'atmosphère est prouvée par le caractère astrologique de leurs noms.

dans une liste de divinités bon po et le nom de leur chef est donné comme Mang nya'u ber (Nebesky-Wojowitz 1956 : 228).

On va voir que notre *tantra* offre une vue beaucoup plus diversifiée de cette classe. Le chapitre 19 donne les indications rituelles pour la construction du *mdos* des mille un *the'u rang* et le chapitre 20 est leur "traitement", le texte que l'officiant devra leur adresser quand il leur offrira le *mdos* et dont le début est mis dans leur propre bouche :

Hūṃ ! Nous sommes les mille et un *the brang* :
 Les uns sont de la classe (*rigs*) des dieux d'en haut (*deva lha*), ils tiennent les richesses du monde phénoménal ;
 D'autres sont les enfants du démon-*bdud* maître de la mort, ils aiment le meurtre et la destruction ;
 D'autres sont les enfants des *btsan* orgueilleux, ils aiment découper et déguster la chair ;
 D'autres sont de la classe des grands *rgyal po* (*rgyal chen*) du monde phénoménal, ils sont les *ging pa*²¹ de la vie ;
 D'autres sont de la classe des *gnod sbyin* (*yaḥṣa*), ils aiment la chair et le sang ;
 D'autres, sont de la classe des *ma mo*-maléfices (? *ma mo byad ma*), ils parcourent en courant le triliocosme (*stong gsum*) ;
 Certains sont de la catégorie des rois des *klu*, leur haine et leur nocivité sont grandes.
 Les uns sont les maléfices du monde,
 D'autres prennent la longévité et le souffle ;
 Nous qui parcourons en courant le triliocosme, nous sommes mille et un²².
 [Notre] père, issu de l'élément éther,
 C'est un homme lumineux extraordinaire,
 Blanc, à un œil, cela est sûr.
 [Notre] mère, issue de l'élément terre,
 Est la maîtresse du monde phénoménal, cela est sûr.
 Leurs enfants, c'est nous, les mille et un *the brang*.
 (...) ²³
 Nous sommes les enfants du monde créé (*srid pa*),
 Nous avons pouvoir sur les trois mondes (*srid pa gsum*).
 Parmi tous les Arrogants du triliocosme,

²¹ On rencontre plusieurs fois ce terme dans le *tantra*, ainsi que *ging chen* ; le contexte indique le sens de "bourreau", et non celui des messagers musiciens de l'entourage de Padmasambhava à Zangs mdog dpal ri. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 278-280) note qu'il existe des groupes de 8 et de 18 grands *ging* et remarque que cette catégorie est différente du type comparable aux *dpa' bo* et messagers (*pho nya*). Pour lui, "dans son sens originel, *ging* (aussi *gying* et *'gying*) est le nom d'une classe de divinités bon po". V. aussi plus bas, note 24.

²² *stong gi rtsa gcig byas te*, jeu de mots intraduisible sur *stong gsum* et le nombre des *the'u rang*.

²³ T53 ajoute qu'ils sont issus de l'esprit de haine, d'obscurcissement mental, d'orgueil et de passion, avant de répéter le nom du père, de la mère, et le nombre de leurs enfants *the'u rang*.

Certains sont notre père,
 D'autres sont notre mère,
 Certains sont nos enfants,
 D'autres sont notre tribu (*sde*).
 Il n'y a rien qui ne soit à nous.
 Nous, nous parcourons le monde créé en courant.
 Pour prendre la longévité et la vie,
 Nous le faisons en un instant, il n'y a pas de doute.
 Nous raccourcissons aussi la longévité de tout notre entourage,
 Ceux qui détruisent la Doctrine, nous les "libérons" (tuons).
 Certains, de la classe des *bodhisattva*,
 Résident sur terre, observent les règles morales et pratiquent la vertu.

N'ayez pas de haine dans l'esprit,
 Vous *the'u rang* qui tranchez la vie [des êtres] du *samsāra*,
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Toi Srid pa'i dkar po (Le Blanc du monde créé) à un œil,
 Homme blanc lumineux [d'une taille] vertigineuse,
 Tu portes un vêtement des cinq couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel,
 Comme monture, tu chevauches trois rayons lumineux,
 À droite, neuf soleils d'or,
 À gauche, neuf lunes de cristal,
 Au milieu, huit planètes et les vingt-huit constellations (*rgyu skar*),
 Toi qui as un turban d'arcs-en-ciel et des tresses de conque,
 Toi, Grand être de haute taille,
 Viens aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Parfois, lorsque tu viens sous une forme émanée,
 Homme bleu de turquoise [d'une taille] vertigineuse,
 Comme monture, tu chevauches un cheval de turquoise à la bouche béante,
 Sur ta tête est noué un turban d'arcs-en-ciel,
 Tu portes sur le corps une pelisse de [plumes de] paon,
 Petit garçon de cristal, ton corps étincelle.
 [Mais] sur ta tête, ce n'est pas un turban d'arcs-en-ciel,
 C'est le diadème des maladies ;
 Ce n'est pas une pelisse de [plumes de] paon,
 Elle a des dessins empoisonnés ;
 Tu n'es pas un petit garçon,
 Tu es un grand *ging* tueur²⁴.

²⁴ *sgrol ging chen po*. Dans les textes examinés par Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), l'épithète s'applique à rDo rje legs pa, compagnon de Ral gcig ma ; il est entouré de ses 360 frères et "de hordes de *the'u rang* et de Mon pa" (p. 34). [Le nombre des frères fait penser que ce sont aussi probablement des *the'u rang*.] C'est également l'une des épithètes de Beg tse (p. 89), tandis que Yam shud dmar po est appelé *sgrol ging dmar po* ou *btsan gyi ging chen* (p. 168). Les portes du *maṇḍala* d'une forme de Yama sont gardées par quatre divinités blanches, les *sgrol 'gying chen bzhi*, d'apparence terrifiante (*ibid.* : 85). Sur les *ging*, v. note 21.

Toi, tu es le maître de tout ce qui existe,
 Tu diffuses des émanations de mille *the brang*.
 Viens aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Parmi vous, les mille et un *the rang*,
 Cent sont de la classe des *bodhisattva*,
 Cent de la famille des dieux d'en haut (*deva lha*).
 Comme monture, vous chevauchez une biche,
 Votre corps est jaune couleur d'or,
 Dans vos cent [mains] droites, vous tenez un croc,
 Dans vos cent [mains] gauches, vous tenez une cassette,
 Vous volez et accumulez les richesses des trois mondes,
 Vous habitez dans une jaune forteresse d'or à une seule porte,
 Vous prenez les neuf bijoux [qui exaucent] les désirs²⁵ et les neuf métaux
 martelés,
 Et le Joyau qui exauce les désirs,
 Vous possédez les cinq sortes de bijoux
 Et vous vous divertissez avec cent filles de dieux,
 Vos richesses et vos jouissances sont inconcevables.
 À certains vous êtes favorables,
 À d'autres, vous faites du mal.
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Parmi vous, cent sont les enfants des *bdud* haineux,
 Qui parcourez les trois mondes
 En savourant la chair et le sang.
 Cent hommes de fer d'une taille vertigineuse,
 Sur votre tête est nouée une pièce de tissu (? *pa ti/sa ti yug re*),
 Dans les mains, vous tenez des armes empoisonnées,
 Vous habitez une forteresse de fer à une porte,
 Vous êtes les messagers du maître de la mort.

Dix, vous galopez sur un loup de fer bleu,
 Dans la [main] droite vous tenez une tablette en fer à dessins en croix (*khram
 bam*),
 Dans la [main] gauche, vous tenez une scie en cuivre,
 Vous chassez les êtres en battue (*lings su 'debs shing*) et mangez leur chair et
 leur sang frais,
 Vous découpez la chair en cent une lanières et la mangez,
 En avalant leur sang d'un trait, vous éclatez d'un rire d'expulsion (*spyugs pa'i
 gad mo*),
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde phénoménal !

Soixante, vous galopez sur un jeune tigre rayé,
 Vous prenez l'"âme" des êtres,
 Vous ravissez la destinée des jeunes filles,

²⁵ *bsam pa'i nor dgu*. Il faut peut-être comprendre "neuf" ici comme marquant la totalité :
 "toutes les richesses imaginables".

Votre [main] droite tient une hache en fer,
 Votre gauche tient un filet en fer,
 Vous couvrez le triliocosme.
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Dix, vous galopez sur un ours noir,
 Vous parcourez tout le triliocosme,
 Vos cent [mains] droites tiennent un hibou bigarré,
 Vous faites tomber toutes sortes de mauvais présages,
 Vous clamez : "Tuons tous les êtres vivants sans exception !"
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Cent, grands porteurs des ordres des *btsan*,
 Vous habitez dans une forteresse de cuivre rouge,
 Une forteresse de cuivre avec une porte en *bse*.
 Vous êtes les enfants des *btsan* orgueilleux et vous parcourez les trois mondes,
 Votre chant d'expulsion, *di ri ri*,
 Vous êtes les guides de mille *btsan* (?)²⁶.

Soixante et un, vous galopez sur un lynx de cuivre rouge,
 De la chair que vous étalez, pus et sang forment comme un lac.
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Trente, hommes solitaires portant une charge,
 Chacun une charge de bambous cuivrés,
 Vous tenez dans la main une canne de cuivre rouge,
 Votre bouche furète sur le lait frais,
 Elle le rend aigre (?)²⁷,
 Vous êtes les bourreaux du bétail.
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Neuf, vous chevauchez neuf oiseaux rouges en cuivre,
 Une soie rouge est liée en turban sur votre tête,
 Vous lancez, tel une flèche, un rouge lasso de cuivre.
 Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Trois cents, vous êtes les serviteurs des *rgyal po*,
 Hommes grands [couleur] de conque,
 Vous galopez sur des chevaux blancs à crinière (*phrum* = *phru* ?) rouge,
 D'autres galopent sur des bœufs blancs,
 D'autres sur des chiens blancs et vous tenez en votre pouvoir tout ce qui existe.
 Hommes blancs [à la taille] vertigineuse,
 Vous brandissez une bannière en peau blanche ;
 Lorsque vous agitez la peau blanche déchirée teintée de cinq couleurs,

²⁶ K, T, et D ont des leçons différentes, dont aucune n'est claire. K : *gcen ston stong gi kha lo byed* ; T : *bcen ston stong gi...* ; D : *btsan stan stong gi...*

²⁷ *kha ni dkar gyi thog nyab bo // skyur gyi drungs 'byin no*. Littéralement, elle extrait la racine de l'acidité, ou amertume.

Les milliers de *the'u rang* du monde créé accourent, tremblants.
Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Cent, hommes blancs de conque [à la taille] vertigineuse,
Vous portez une cape de soie blanche,
Sur la tête des ornements incrustés de bijoux,
Vous tenez dans la main une canne de cristal.
Vous qui tenez en votre pouvoir tout ce qui existe,
Vous parcourez au galop les trois mondes
Et vous rassemblez les cohortes armées des *rgyal po* ;
Rassemblant les *bdud* et les *ma yams*,
Vous envoyez beaucoup de maladies épidémiques ;
Tenant un croc de fer à la main,
Vous êtes les *ging pa* des *rgyal po*,
Vous envoyez les maladies aux hommes et les épizooties au bétail.
Vous qui anéantissez le monde entier en le parcourant au galop,
Venez aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Un homme grand [couleur] de cuivre dont les crocs ressemblent à un grand
zor,
Avec un chapeau (*'ob*) retourné sur la tête,
Galope sur une vache blanchâtre sans corne,
Il est le témoin des serments et des accords,
Il est le chef de file de tous les dieux-démons (*lha 'dre*).
Un autre, homme grand [couleur] de *bse*,
Porte comme vêtement une couverture (?) rayée,
Sur la tête, un feutre jaune à capuche (?)²⁸,
Dans la main, il tient une canne rouge en saule,
Portant une grosse charge, il cache la bise sous son aisselle²⁹,
L'existence (*srid*) et la chance (*kha rje*) sont dans sa bouche.
Maîtres du *mdos*, prenez le *mdos* !

Un autre, blanchâtre, avec une pelisse,
tient dans la main du cuivre noir,
Il est le chef de file des trois sortes de foyers,
Les trois : foyer blanc, rouge et bleu (?)³⁰,
Il rassemble et guide les *bdud*, *btsan*, *rgyal po*, *ma yams*,
Les *sa bdag*, *klu*, *gnyan*.
Lui aussi, qu'il prenne le *mdos* du monde créé !

Un autre galope sur un âne rouge bigarré,

²⁸ *'phying ser yib shu can*. D'après le *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, *yib zhu* est un vêtement du Kong po et du sPo bo porté par les hommes et les femmes, sorte de cape sans manche qui part de la tête, d'où mon interprétation de "capuche".

²⁹ *khres chen khur zhing skye/skyes ser mchan na sbed*. Mais D corrige en *skyi ser*.

³⁰ *dkar dang dmar dang sngo thab gsum // thab sna gsum gyi sna yang drangs*. Le *Tshig mdzod chen mo* atteste l'expression *dmar thab*, "foyer rouge", qui désigne le foyer souillé dans lequel est tombé de la viande, du sang, de la peau ou des poils.

Il tient dans la main un étendard [surmonté d'un] trident,
 Il réduit à son pouvoir les Arrogants de ce monde et se plaît à tuer et dépecer.
 Viens aujourd'hui vers le *mdos* !

Vingt-et-un, hommes bleus de turquoise,
 Au vêtement de soie et turban d'arcs-en-ciel,
 Sur votre cou a poussé un goître de conque gros comme une charge,
 Vous parcourez le monde au galop sur ... (?)³¹,
 Faisant tomber toutes sortes de mauvais présages,
 Vous pourchassez tous les êtres des trois mondes, sans exception,
 En clamant : "Tuons-les ! Achevons-les !"
 Vous êtes les *ging pa* de dKar po spyan gcig (Le Blanc à un œil).
 Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Cent, qui êtes émanés, vous vous propagez dans le Jambudvīpa ;
 Quatre-vingts, vous êtes les témoins fiables du monde créé,
 Décidant du bien et du mal, vous êtes les grands porteurs d'ordre ;
 Trente-deux, rassemblant les restes sacrés (?), vous faites se détourner [les
 dieux ?] du monde³².
 Vous, cohortes de *the brang* royaux du monde créé,
 Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Cent, vous anéantissez le monde et vous êtes les "élus"³³ du grand monde créé.
 Les uns, avides, à tête de tigre,
 Vous prenez tout ce sur quoi vous descendez.
 D'autres, stupides, à tête de mouton,
 Vous rendez fous tous ceux sur qui vous tombez.
 D'autres, fous, à tête d'ours,
 Vous envoyez les maladies nerveuses (*smyo 'bog nad*).
 D'autres, à corps humain et tête d'ours *dred*,
 Vous faites s'évanouir tous les êtres et leur coupez le souffle.
 D'autres, longs, avec une capuche (?),
 D'autres, de longs hommes, droits ou courbés,
 D'autres, vous chevauchez toutes sortes d'animaux,
 D'autres, vous chevauchez éclairs et lumière,
 D'autres, vous envoyez évanouissements et pertes de conscience,
 D'autres, vous êtes les porteurs d'ordre du monde créé,
 D'autres, vous prenez la longévité, vous prenez le souffle,
 D'autres, posture dressée (? *stabs bsnol*), vous envoyez l'obscurcissement
 mental,
 D'autres, vous supprimez ce qui existe,
 D'autres, vous videz ce qui est plein,
 [Mais] à certains, vous êtes profitables,

³¹ *dra ba* (K et T), *dwa* (D) ; ce dernier peut être l'un des *spar kha*, ou une plante (?).

³² *sum cu rtsa gnyis dpal gyi lhag ma sdud cing 'jig rten byo/bhyo bzlog byed* (T et K), corrigé en *byol zlog* par D. Faut-il comprendre qu'ils ramassent les restes du rituel qui, habituellement, sont distribués aux participants ?

³³ *sKos*, voir n. 10.

Vous accroissez toutes les richesses sans exception.
Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Deux cents, vous êtes les porteurs d'ordre [qui prenez ?] la longévité, la vitalité,
le souffle du Jambudvīpa.
Mang pa tshes tho re, sPyi ring len to re, 'Dus pa se to re,
Vous demeurez dans trois forteresses,
Vous habitez dans une forteresse d'or (K et D : de *bse*) à une porte, une
forteresse de conque à une porte
Et une forteresse de fer à une porte,
Comme entourage, vous diffusez des milliers de *the rang*,
Des filles de dieux d'en haut sont vos épouses,
le Joyau qui exauce les désirs est votre subsistance.
Comme vous anéantissiez trop de dieux d'en haut
Le Maître des secrets s'est irrité ;
Vous qu'il a liés par serment,
Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Parmi vous, les *the brang*, certains font la circumambulation de la Montagne
excellente (Ri rab),
D'autres sont les maîtres des éléments,
The'u jaunes de la terre,
The'u bleus de l'eau,
Grands *the'u* bigarrés de l'espace intermédiaire,
The brang des cinq éléments,
Je vous offre aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Certains, [semblables à] des hommes, vous êtes appelés In dra :
Soixante et un grands *rgyal 'gong*,
Trente-cinq *'gong [po]* mauvais,
Vingt-et-un *'gong [po des]* accidents (*byur 'gong*),
À corps humain et tête de singe,
[Vous avez] la bouche jaune, les dents jaunes, la langue jaune ;
Le jour, vous restez couchés au fin fond des ravins,
La nuit, vous errez dans tous les bourgs.
Vous, *byur 'gong* goîtreux,
Hommes solitaires chargés d'un fardeau,
Vous tenez en main une canne blanchâtre, un seau blanchâtre.
Vous, *'gong [po]* de destruction (*phung 'gong*) au vêtement en peau de chèvre,
Il vous a poussé un goître de cuivre presque [aussi gros qu']une charge.
Cent dix³⁴, vous êtes associés avec les *sa bdag*, les *klu*, les *gnyan*,
Vous provoquez les maladies [qui causent] enflures et gonflements.
Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Une vingtaine, vous êtes ceux qui convoquent l'assemblée,
Vous êtes les avant-coureurs de tous les dieux et démons.
Parmi cette vingtaine de *the'u rang*,

³⁴ D : quatre-vingts.

Onze, vous protégez les richesses, les biens
 Et les salles de trésors du monde créé ;
 Vous, les protecteurs des richesses et des biens,
 Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !
 Neuf, vous êtes les '*gong po* du monde créé.
 [Parmi eux] vous, les trois frères qui résidez dans le ciel,
 Vous trois, gNam the dkar po, gNam lha byang chub, gNam lha dkar po,
 Vous portez [respectivement] un vêtement de soie blanche, de peau de lion
 blanc (*seng dkar*), de peau blanche,
 Vous tenez en main [respectivement] une canne de conque, une canne de
 cristal, une canne de bambou,
 Et trois bannières de victoire,
 Vous chevauchez un aigle, un lion et un chien blancs.
 Vous les trois frères blancs du ciel,
 Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !
 Vous, les trois frères qui résidez dans l'espace médian,
 Vous trois, Dri bse, Bag (D et K : Ba) bse, Lag bse,
 Vous avez un turban...³⁵
 Vous tenez une canne de fer flamboyante de lumière,
 Vous tenez une bannière [en peau] de tigre, de léopard, [en plumes] d'aigle.
 Vous les trois frères *the brang* qui résidez sur terre,
 Vous les trois, The se³⁶, Kug se, mChu rings ("Longues lèvres"),
 Vous portez [un vêtement] de soie d'eau, de feu, de *se* (*bse* ?),
 Vous tenez en main trois bannières de victoire,
 Vous tenez un seau blanchâtre, une canne blanchâtre, une bannière.
 Vous les trois frères *the brang* du monde créé,
 Prenez aujourd'hui le *mdos* du monde créé !

Cette longue invocation se termine par l'exhortation aux mille un *the'u rang* d'abandonner la haine, de prendre la rançon avec un esprit de foi et de ne pas transgresser les ordres qui leur sont donnés par leurs chefs. Suit enfin la transposition (*bsngo ba*) proprement dite des symboles, objets et effigies qui forment le *mdos*³⁷.

2.2 Les *rgyal po*

C'est la seule classe qui trouve un traitement quasi identique dans les versions en 53 chapitres et dans T86, bien que dans un ordre différent. Ils

³⁵ Incompréhensible : *khri gcig dri bse pa dri'i thod* (T), *khri gcig dri se ba dri'i thod* (K), *khri gcig dre si pa ti'i thod* (D).

³⁶ Nommé aussi parmi les *sa bdag* ; v. 2.10.

³⁷ On a ici un exemple très clair de ce sens de *bsngo ba* évoqué plus haut : "... Je vous offre ces flèches bigarrées comme forteresse : c'est une forteresse faite de matières précieuses. Ces matières précieuses, je les transpose en trésors : jouissez de ces trésors inépuisables. Ces effigies animales, je les transpose en bétail, je les transpose en grandes richesses en bétail..."

font l'objet de deux séries de chapitres : d'abord, les quatre frères *rgyal po* maîtres de la vitalité (*srog bdag*) indiquent la disposition de leur *mdos* et l'invocation à réciter (T53, K et D : chap. 21-22 ; T86 : chap. 15-16). Plus loin, si l'on suit l'ordre de la version en 53 chapitres, le grand *rgyal po* accompagné des quatre *sad* fait de même (T53, K : chap. 39-40 et D : chap. 40-41 ; T86 : chap. 9-10).

À ma connaissance, cette classe de *numina* n'a fait l'objet d'aucune étude à ce jour. Tucci (1949) ne les mentionne pas. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (*op. cit.*) les définit rapidement comme des démons de l'entourage du *rgyal po* par excellence, Pehar (à qui il consacre un chapitre entier ; on verra que *Le Réseau des mille dieux et démons* apporte un éclairage différent). Effectivement, les quatre grands *rgyal po* décrits dans le *tantra* se retrouvent, à une exception près, comme les gardiens de porte du *mdos* de Pehar (*ibid.* : 119). En médecine, les *rgyal po* sont supposés causer des maladies nerveuses. Ils n'ont pas d'équivalent en Inde, mais on ne les trouve pas non plus dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang³⁸. Ce ne serait donc pas une classe du Tibet ancien et l'on peut se demander si ils constituent réellement une catégorie de *numina* en dehors des nomenclatures tardives et si, en réalité, il ne faut pas considérer *rgyal po*, "roi", comme l'épithète de certains d'entre eux. Cela résoudrait les nombreuses questions que l'on se pose lorsqu'on rencontre une entité, habituellement rangée dans une autre classe, qualifiée de *rgyal po* ; on en verra plusieurs exemples ci-dessous.

2.2.1 Invocation aux quatre frères *rgyal po*, maîtres de la vitalité³⁹

Hūṃ ! Là-bas, là-bas, dans cette direction,
 Là-bas dans la direction du soleil levant,
 Là-bas dans un blanc pays de cristal,
 Une blanche forteresse de cristal se dresse dans le ciel, *zangs se zangs*,
 Sa porte de conque, *thabs se thabs*.
 À l'intérieur, tu résides, Ya cho dkar po⁴⁰.
 Pour un seul homme, trois noms :
 En langue religieuse de l'Inde,
 Tu es appelé Shar lha chen po ("Le grand dieu de l'est") ;
 En langue des *preta*, le Bon⁴¹,

³⁸ Karmay 1991 : 365-366.

³⁹ Je n'indiquerai pas ici les variantes de T86, sauf si elles éclairent la compréhension ou offrent des ajouts intéressants.

⁴⁰ Non répertorié par ailleurs, ni sous ce nom, ni sous ceux qui lui sont attribués ensuite. Parmi ceux-ci, rDo rje legs mchog évoque rDo rje legs pa (sur lequel voir Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, chapitre 10), mais ce dernier chevauche habituellement une chèvre, ou un lion blanc. Il n'est pas non plus classé comme *rgyal po* mais comme *btsan rgod* ou *ma sangs* et ses épithètes sont *dge bsnyen* ou *dam can*.

⁴¹ *yi dwags bon gyi skad du na*. D. ajoute une note sous la ligne : *g-yung drung bon nam (yi dwags...)*.

Tu es appelé bTsan 'gong rgyal po ("Le roi des *btsan 'gong*");
 Dans la langue de la sainte religion,
 Tu es appelé rDo rje legs mchog.
 Si l'on dit qui est ton père,
 C'est Yang (D : Yar) lha bshod kyi skyes gcig pa,
 Il est aussi appelé Yang (D : Yar) lha shod kyi skyes to re.
 Ta mère, c'est Srid pa'i bdag mo (Maîtresse du monde créé).
 Émanés de leurs deux esprits,
 Deux enfants, frère et sœur, apparurent ;
 Le frère, c'est [toi] Ya cho dkar po,
 La sœur, c'est Ma btsun U chos g-yar mo sil⁴²,
 Toi le frère, je te prie [de donner] ton "traitement" (*ming po bcos su gsol*).
 Toi, Ya cho dkar po,
 Homme blanc, tu bondis vers le haut,
 Ton cheval blanc bondit en-dessous,
 [Dans ta main ?] une louche blanche, *ta la la*⁴³.
 D'abord, tu es descendu dans le pays de Li (Khotan),
 Le [roi de ?] Li t'offrit une rançon⁴⁴
 Et te nomma Li pa Sad kyi rgyal po ("Le Khotanais, roi des Sad⁴⁵").
 Ensuite, tu es allé à Yang le shod,
 Le [roi de ?] Yang le t'offrit une rançon⁴⁶
 Et te nomma Yang pa Sad kyi rgyal po.
 Ensuite, tu es descendu au pays de Mi nyag,
 Le [roi du ?] Mi nyag t'offrit une rançon⁴⁷
 Et te nomma lTeng ro (?) Sad kyi rgyal po.
 Ensuite, tu es descendu au pays de Zhang zhung,
 [Le roi du ?] Zhang zhung t'offrit une rançon⁴⁸
 Et, comme ton œil droit était en cristal, il te nomma Shel dkar ("Cristal blanc").
 Tu portes un beau vêtement de soie blanche
 Et un turban en [peau de] lion blanche,
 Tu tiens en main des armes malfaisantes,
 Tu es le maître des *'gong po*.
 Il y eut trois sortes de rançons :

⁴² L'une des douze bsTan ma ; cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 185-188 (listes des douze bsTan ma, avec les variantes Ug chos ya ma bsil/g-ya' mo bsil/g-yar mo sil.

⁴³ T86, sans mentionner de louche (ou gobelet, *skyogs*), donne d'autres éléments descriptifs : "Tu portes sur le corps une pelisse blanc de conque, tu tiens en main une canne blanche de cristal, une épée de cuivre est fichée à ta ceinture. Tu galopes dans les quatre Jambudvīpa (*sic*), tu coupes la vitalité des êtres, tu ravis l'existence des jeunes filles, tu construis la tombe des enfants, tu étends ton pouvoir sur le monde entier."

⁴⁴ T86 précise : "Les frères, hommes robustes" (? *ming po stobs mi* ; c'est peut-être un nom propre) sellèrent un cheval blanc de Khotan avec une selle en *bse*, le chargèrent de bijoux et le lui offrirent.

⁴⁵ Sur ce terme, voir plus loin : 2.2.3.

⁴⁶ T86 : "Le roi de Yang t'offrit un cheval de turquoise [et un ?] vautour."

⁴⁷ T86 : "On t'offrit un yak blanc aux cornes rouges." Le donateur n'est pas nommé.

⁴⁸ T86 : "On t'offrit un mouton blanc [et un] oiseau blanc." Le nom qui lui est donné est Shel ger, sans explication.

D'abord, il y eut le yak blanc et les trois, *mdzo* blanche, chèvre blanche, argali
 (*gnya'* = *gnyan* ?) noir ;
 Au milieu, il y eut chèvre, mouton et oiseau⁴⁹ ;
 À la fin, tu es le maître du gâteau sacrificiel (*bshos bu*) de la largeur d'une paume,
 de la libation, du fuseau, du bambou à neuf nœuds.
 Toi, le maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !

Au-dessus des treize étages du ciel,
 Là-haut dans une forteresse de soleils empilés,
 Tu résides, "Blanc maître de la vitalité, à un œil" (Srog bdag dkar po sryan
*gcig*⁵⁰).
 Si l'on dit qui est ton père
 C'est, au tréfonds du grand océan,
 Le roi des *makara* (*chu srin*) Mataṅga ;
 Si l'on dit qui est ta mère,
 C'est Srid pa'i rgyal mo ;
 Quant à leur résidence, ils résident dans l'espace intermédiaire.
 Émanés de leur esprit,
 Le frère est "Blanc à un œil" (dKar po sryan gcig),
 La sœur est Eka "à une tresse" (T86 : Ekajati) ;
 Toi le frère, je te prie [de donner] ton "traitement" (*ming po ni bcos su gsol*).
 Toi, Srog bdag dkar po sryan gcig pa,
 Sur ta tête [se dresse tout droit] une tresse, *sha ra ra*,
 Sur ton front [étincelle] un œil, *lhangs se lhangs*,
 Dans ta bouche [grince] une dent, *thams se thams*,
 Ton œil de *gzi*, bigarré, *khyi* (D. *chi*) *li li*,
 Ta barbe noire, *phya ra ra*,
 [Tu la peignes de] tes doigts noirs, *shad de shad*.
 Un tambourin flamboyant est ceint à ton flanc,
 Il remplit de lumière toutes les maisons (T86 : le Jambudvīpa).
 Ô Srog bdag dkar po, très lumineux,
 Tu es le maître de la moitié du ciel,
 Tu es le maître de la moitié de la terre et des eaux !
 Homme blanc [d'une taille] vertigineuse, au-dessus,
 [Sur] un cheval blanc qui bondit en-dessous,
 Tu tiens en main un bâton blanc, *ta la la*,
 Tu es le maître de la vitalité de cent hommes.
 Tu portes sur le corps une dépouille de peau humaine,
 Tu tiens à la main une épée de fer aiguisée.
 La première rançon, c'est un yak blanc, un mouton blanc,
 Une *mdzo* blanche à cornes rouges
 Et un cheval blanc à crinière (? *phum/phrum* = *phru* ?) rouge : tu en es le maître.

⁴⁹ *bar pa ra se dang lug se dang bya se dang gsum zhig byung*.

⁵⁰ Pour Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), Srog bdag dkar po est un autre nom de Pehar (p. 96) et le nom qu'il portait à Bhata Hor (p. 99) ; il est situé à l'ouest dans le *mdos* de Pehar (p. 128) ; on le trouve aussi dans une liste de 13 *dgra lha* (p. 332). Mais (p. 119), un dKar mo (*sic*) sryan gcig garde la porte de l'est du palais de Pehar dans le *rgyal mdos* ; il tient un croc et chevauche un lion blanc.

La [rançon] médiane, c'est un mouton blanc, un oiseau noir,
 Un chien blanc à nez rouge
 Et un oiseau blanc à crête rouge : tu en es le maître.
 L'ultime [rançon], c'est un moelleux (? *ldem pa*) gâteau sacrificiel (*bshos bu*),
 une libation, un fuseau, un pendant de soie
 Et un bambou à neuf nœuds : tu en es le maître.
 Maître de la rançon, prends la rançon !

Là-bas, dans la direction du nord,
 Tu résides, Yam shud dmar po⁵¹,
 Tu résides sur la rouge montagne du nord.
 Au sommet, habite le *gnod sbyin* sTobs chen (*yakṣa Mahābāla*),
 À l'angle, tu résides, Yam shud dmar po,
 Au pied, tes serviteurs *btsan btsun* (?) font résonner [leurs cris ?].
 Une forteresse de cuivre rouge [vertigineuse], *ldems se ldems*,
 Dans la forteresse de cuivre rouge vertigineuse,
 Une porte de *bse* brille sur son côté (?).
 Sur quatre montagnes d'indigo bleu (?),
 Sur un joug de yak (? *g-yag shing*) en corail rouge,
 Sur un trône de cuivre rouge,
 Tu résides, Yam shud dmar po.
 Tu portes un vêtement (? *zhul khug*) de fer (T86 : en peau de tigre et sur la tête
 un long chapeau en peau de tigre),
 Tu tiens en main un lasso de cuivre [long de] neuf cent quatre-vingt dix
 brasses,
 Tu es le maître de la vitalité de cent femmes,
 Tu portes une cuirasse de cuivre.
 Tu es le maître de la première rançon : vache rouge et bœuf,
 Tu es le maître de la rançon médiane : oiseau rouge et... ?⁵²
 Tu es le maître de la dernière : bambou à neuf nœuds,
 Nourriture excellente, libation et fuseau.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !

Dans le haut du pays Khu le khu,
 Là-bas, aux limites du sud-est,

⁵¹ Pour Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), c'est un *rgyal po* de l'entourage de Pehar (p. 119 : il garde la porte de son palais à l'ouest, et non au nord, comme ici ; p. 128, il est situé au sud, dans le *rgyal mdos* ; p. 122, il est qualifié de "grand maître de la vitalité" (*srog gi bdag po chen po*). *Ibid.* : 168-170, Nebesky-Wojkowitz rapporte d'autres traditions selon lesquelles il serait identique à Tsi'u dmar po ou à rDo rje grags ldan, et il fournit d'autres descriptions où il apparaît comme chef des '*gong po*, des *btsan*... Sur ses liens avec Pehar et Tsi'u dmar po, v. Macdonald 1978. Dans son étude sur Beg tse, A. Heller (1991 : 74 sq.) relève que son nom figure dans le Pelliot tibétain 467 ; il est un *btsan* dédicataire de rituels terribles attribués à gNubs chen dans le *Beg tse be'u bum* (*ibid.* : 56-57) ; ses liens avec Beg tse sont confirmés par d'autres sources (*ibid.* : 113), tandis qu'ailleurs il est le chef des *gnod sbyin* (*ibid.* : 130 sq.).

⁵² *bya dmar gro dang / lpags bu gro se*.

Tu résides, Conseiller Khu le lag dgu ("à neuf bras")⁵³.
 [Toi, Khu le lag dgu, tu résides
 Dans une forteresse jaune en or, vertigineuse, *ldems se ldems*
 Aux têtes de poutre en turquoise, *khyil li li.*]⁵⁴
 Si l'on dit qui est ton père,
 C'est un scorpion de fer à neuf bouches ;
 Quant à sa demeure, il habite dans les profondeurs de la Montagne excellente.
 Si l'on dit qui est ta mère,
 C'est une fourmi d'or sans bouche.
 Toi, le fils émané de ces deux-là,
 Tu es un homme [à une tête et] à neuf mains ;
 Une main furète dans les profondeurs du ciel,
 Une autre furète dans ce qui est amassé (? *'dzoms la nyab*),
 Tu lances une main dans la demeure des *bdud*,
 Tu lances une main chez les *btsan*,
 Une main furète dans les récoltes d'automne,
 Une main furète sur l'existence des jeunes filles,
 Une main furète sur les laitages et les produits aigres (?)⁵⁵.
 [Les noms que l'on te donne,
 On t'appelle Tri se lag dgu,
 On t'appelle Khu le lag dgu,
 On t'appelle 'Jug pa chen po ("Le Grand intrus"),
 On t'appelle rDzus pa chen po ("Le Grand illusionniste").
 Tu chevauches un cheval jaune d'or
 Un *mu* (?) d'or est fiché à ta ceinture,]⁵⁶
 Tu portes une cuirasse jaune d'or.
 Tu es le maître des juments sans poulain et des vaches *'bri* stériles,
 Tu es le maître de tous les *chu srin* (*makara*).
 Je te fais l'offrande de gâteaux sacrificiels (*bshos bu*) par centaines (? *phrag pa*
can),
 De flèches bigarrées et d'offrandes précieuses (*spyang gzigs*).
 Toi, serviteur, grand *the'u rang*⁵⁷,
 Prends aujourd'hui la rançon,
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 (L'invocation se termine par l'explication symbolique des éléments du
mdos.)

⁵³ Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 119) : gardien de la porte nord du palais de Pehar, dans le même *rgyal mdos* ; il brandit une épée et chevauche un taureau. Mais dans un texte des *bKa' brgyad* (*ibid.* : 285), il est appelé *'gong po*, est jaune et chevauche un vautour.

⁵⁴ J'indique entre crochets, ici et plus bas, les ajouts de T86.

⁵⁵ *dkar dang skyur gyi thog*. Voir une expression similaire plus haut et n. 27.

⁵⁶ La description s'arrête là dans T86.

⁵⁷ Ou : "Tes serviteurs sont les grands *the'u rang*".

2.2.2 Les *dpe dkar*, maîtres des richesses

Les deux chapitres (37 et 38) consacrés à cette catégorie ne se trouvent que dans les versions en 53 chapitres. Ils évoquent immédiatement Pehar/dPe dkar, toujours qualifié de maître des richesses (*dkor gyi bdag po*), que l'on a l'habitude de classer comme *rgyal po*, ainsi qu'on l'a évoqué plus haut ; il n'en est rien ici. Cependant, ces deux chapitres ne se rattachent pas à ceux qui les précèdent et fonctionnent comme une sorte de préambule à ceux qui traiteront d'autres *rgyal po* (voir 2.2.3) ; c'est pourquoi je les maintiens dans cette partie.

L'origine de Pehar, sa légende, ses liens avec Vaiśravaṇa et l'Asie centrale ont déjà fait l'objet de nombreux travaux⁵⁸ ; tous s'accordent sur l'origine étrangère, tant de la divinité Pehar que de son nom. Pour A. Macdonald cependant, Pehar est un "quasi-homophone bouddhisé du nom d'un dieu du sol prébouddhique, Pe kar ou Pe dkar" (1978 : 1143). Mais on trouve aussi dans des textes bon po des démons *dpe dkar* et il est intéressant de constater que le Réseau des mille dieux et démons semble leur faire écho. Il est vrai que le chapitre du *bsngo ba* (chap. 38) ne s'adresse qu'au seul dPe dkar rgyal po (roi des *dpe dkar* ?) et que l'on y retrouve ses liens avec le Bhata-Hor ; mais la description des éléments du rituel qu'il faut leur offrir (chap. 37) est mise très clairement dans la bouche des *dpe dkar* : "Ensuite, en présence du Bhagavat, les *dpe dkar*, maîtres des richesses, exposèrent les actes rituels qui "traitent" chacun d'eux (*rang rang gi bcos pa'i las*) : "Nous (*bdag cag rnam ni*), nous sommes les maîtres des richesses du monde créé, nous sommes issus du monde créé." Sans poursuivre plus avant, je verse cet élément au dossier et traduis maintenant l'invocation à dPe dkar rgyal po.

Hūṃ ! Au début du monde créé,
 D'abord, tu étais un *bodhisattva*
 Et tu as [montré] la manière d'habiter sur la terre ;
 À cause de cela, ta conduite et tes vœux ont été altérés.
 Après être descendu sur terre, tu résidais dans l'espace.
 Ensuite, tu es descendu au pays des dieux :
 Homme blanc [d'une taille] vertigineuse,
 [Tu irradiais] des lumières blanches étincelantes, *lams se lams*,
 Sur ta tête [se trouvait] le modèle (*dpe*) des quatre continents du monde⁵⁹ :
 En demi-lune, en [forme d']omoplate,
 Rond, carré, ils étaient au complet sur ta tête.
 Les dieux t'offrirent des gâteaux sacrificiels divins (*lha bshos*),
 Toutes les sortes de fleurs,

⁵⁸ Parmi les plus importants ou les plus récents : Tucci 1949 : 734-737 ; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : chap. 7 ; Stein 1959 : 282-291 ; Macdonald 1978 ; Karmay 1991 : 354-360 ; Stoddard 1997 ; Grenet 2000.

⁵⁹ Le texte a : "des quatre Jambudvīpa".

Les cinq espèces de bijoux
 Et les substances d'offrande (*yas*) qui te conviennent⁶⁰.
 Le roi des dieux dit :
 "Si il voulait épouser une de nos filles divines,
 Celui-ci est à coup sûr un fils du monde créé ;
 Puisqu'il porte sur la tête les quatre continents au complet,
 Je l'appelle dPe dkar rgyal po"
 Et on te donna le nom de dPe dkar rgyal po.
 Parce que tu avais aussi des étamines sur la tête,
 La *bodhi* est issue de la terre,
 Et parce que tu venais du ciel,
 On te donna aussi le nom de gNam lha byang chub (Dieu du ciel-*bodhi*).
 Ensuite, tu nuisis au monde entier
 Et tu descendis sur les quatre continents,
 Tu descendis sur le pays de 'Ba' ta hor ;
 Là, tu jouissais de richesses inconcevables.
 Maintenant, tu nuis au Tibet tout entier.
 Roi du monde créé, prends le *mdos* !
 Je te fais offrande de toutes les sortes de fleurs,
 Je te fais offrande de la Montagne excellente, gâteau sacrificiel (*lha bshos*) divin,
 Je te fais offrande de la lumière des lampes,
 Je t'offre l'espace-croix de fils (*nam mkha'*) comme pays,
 Je t'offre la flèche comme forteresse,
 Je t'offre les cinq espèces de bijoux en trésor,
 Je t'offre beaucoup d'objets précieux qui réjouissent les sens.

Ainsi faut-il faire la transposition."

2.2.3 Les quatre *rgyal po* Sad

Apparemment, seul T86 consacre une séquence de deux chapitres (9-10) à ces quatre *rgyal po*. En réalité, on trouve le parallèle dans les versions en 53 chapitres sous le titre général de *rgyal po* (K et T53, chap. 39-40 ; D, chap. 40-41), parallèle qui éclaire T86 : *rgyal po chen po sad bzhi dang bcas pa* ("Le grand *rgyal po* avec les quatre Sad"), où il faut comprendre sous "le grand *rgyal po*", Srog bdag spyang gcig, l'un des quatre grands *rgyal po* invoqués plus haut (2.2.1). Ce groupe de *rgyal po* n'est pas mentionné ailleurs ; il faut remarquer que *sad* en zhang zhung est l'équivalent de *lha*, dieu d'en haut⁶¹. Plus loin dans T86 (chap. 24), les quatre Sad sont invoqués à nouveau, pour faire tomber la grêle ; là, ils sont décrits comme des maîtres de la vitalité, méchants et très nuisibles, émanations des neuf planètes

⁶⁰ Il s'agit des substances et objets constitutifs du *mdos*, tels qu'ils ont été décrits dans le chapitre précédent et que l'officiant offrira en les transposant à la fin de l'invocation.

⁶¹ Haarh 1968, index.

"sauvages"⁶² ; lumineux, ils chevauchent des rayons de lumière et sont vêtus de beaux brocards.

Traduire l'invocation qui leur est adressée dans les chapitres parallèles indiqués ci-dessus comporte de nombreuses difficultés, de vocabulaire et de structure. T86, plus long et de style plus archaïque n'est guère éclairé par les autres versions ; les noms mêmes des quatre Sad sont différents et il est malaisé de les repérer parmi tous les noms cités et leurs variantes. Ce n'est donc qu'une tentative de traduction de T86 que je donnerai ici.

Hūm ! Vous, *rgyal po*, vous ne faites pas partie des *bodhisattva* !
 g-Ya' bal (l'ardoise ?)⁶³, c'est la cause première, votre père,
 rMa bal (?), c'est la cause occasionnelle, votre mère,
 La mousse aquatique, [c'est le ?] vêtement du lac.
 g-Ya' bal, depuis autrefois,
 Tu n'as pas été vénéré, tu as été vénéré de toutes les manières (?)⁶⁴.

Seigneur des limites, lTe'o rtsal⁶⁵,
 Homme royal bleu sur un cheval bleu,
 À l'œil de turquoise, *khyi li li*,
 Tu es le démon-'dre des évanouissements,
 Tu es le démon-'dre de la folie.
 Tes dix-huit bras
 Sont de turquoise et de lapis-lazuli (*mu men*).
 Tu attaques les poumons et le cœur,
 Tu provoques folie et évanouissement.
 Comme monture, que chevauches-tu ?
 Tu chevauches un cheval de turquoise à face de corbeau,
 Tu galopes peu après minuit,
 Ton œil de turquoise grand ouvert.
 Une femme bleue,
 Avec une pelisse [couleur] d'ardoise bleue (? *g-ya' sngon*),
 Que tient-elle en main ?
 Elle tient une femme de turquoise
 Et un serpent de turquoise ;
 Elle (?) est la maîtresse des étreintes et des liens.
 [Toi], La Bleue, avec ton entourage,
 Autrefois, il ne t'a pas été fait d'offrande,
 Maintenant non plus, je ne t'honorerai pas d'offrandes ;

⁶² *gza' rgod*, habituellement Rāhu.

⁶³ Si l'on prend la leçon de D et K : *g-ya' ba*, mais tout ce passage est incompréhensible ; en voici le texte : *g-ya' bal ni pha yi rgyu // rma* (D, K et T53 : *dma'*) *bal ni ma yi rkyen // nya lcibs ni mtsho yi gos*. Plus loin, ces trois termes sont des noms propres ?

⁶⁴ *mi 'tshal de dgu ru 'tshal*. D, K et T54 : *mi mtshams brda ru mtshams*.

⁶⁵ Pour les trois autres versions : mTshams rje Yag pa cig.

Non honorée, tu n'as pas de pouvoir⁶⁶.

Toi qui es appelé rMa'i sku (? ...)⁶⁷,
 Tu portes un vêtement d'ocelles de paon,
 Sur la tête un turban d'arcs-en-ciel.
 Ce n'est pas un turban d'arcs-en-ciel,
 C'est le diadème des maladies ;
 Ce n'est pas une pelisse [de plumes] de paon,
 Elle est [couverte] de dessins empoisonnés.
 Peu avant le milieu de la nuit,
 Bleu-rouge, tu t'enroules comme un serpent.
 Tu es le seigneur de tous les *btsan* [et ?] *bdud*.
 (...) ⁶⁸

Sur la mousse aquatique,
 Tu es apparu, homme jaune sur un cheval jaune.
 Tu es le roi de tous les *klu* (et ?) *bdud*,
 Rocher jaune (? *ser brag*), œil de soleil,
 Homme jaune sur un cheval jaune,
 Huit esclaves, avec le seigneur, neuf.
 Pour un seul homme, huit bras
 Munis de grêle (? *ser*) et de l'arme magique *zor*,
 Munis d'une fourche à deux dents ('*phra* = *phra ma* ?) en turquoise,
 Munis d'une lance de cuivre,
 Munis d'un filet de cristal,
 Munis d'une épée de cuivre,
 Munis d'une flèche de fer,
 Munis de sept lasso,
 Toi le seigneur avec tes esclaves.
 Si l'on fait offrande au seigneur, les esclaves aussi sont réjouis.
 Autrefois, il ne t'a pas été fait d'offrande,
 Maintenant non plus, je ne t'honorerai pas d'offrandes ;
 Non honoré, tu n'as pas de pouvoir⁶⁹.

Toi, rDo rje bgegs pa⁷⁰,

⁶⁶ Je suis ici la leçon des versions en 53 chapitres pour cette sorte de refrain qui revient régulièrement, à la place de T86, incompréhensible : *mchod kyis ma nyan cig / smos kyis ma skyon cig*.

⁶⁷ Passage incompréhensible qui ne se trouve pas dans les autres versions : *rma'i sku zer ba rma'i 'dod pam lam // che bzang ni thang shing la...*

⁶⁸ Ma compréhension du texte est trop hasardeuse pour que je la donne ici et voici seulement le tibétain : *jo bo ni ma bdud ma // zhol zhol ni sgra (= dgra ?) yi gzugs // rma bkra ni chen mo bdun (= bdud ?) // rma yi ni sku zer la // rma yi ni mdos lam lam // zhol zhol ni rma ri zhol // bud med kyis stong khams khengs // rgya nad mig ser la // gzhogs skams dang kha yon bdag po lags // pho nya'i phyag brnyan pa // zhol zhol sgra'i (= dgra'i ?) gzugs // rma bkra che'i bdud // mchod kyis ma nyan cig // smos kyis ma skyon cig*.

⁶⁹ Le refrain est ici identique à celui des autres versions (cf. note 66).

⁷⁰ *rdo rje ni bgegs pa yis // nyi 'char zla yang 'char //* Il peut aussi s'agir d'un nom collectif : la principale des rDo rje bgegs (rDo rje bgegs kyi gtso) apparaît dans la suite de dPal ldan

Tu fais se lever le soleil, tu fais aussi se lever la lune,
 [quand] ils se lèvent, ils se lèvent de la terre.
 Tu fais aussi tomber la pluie,
 [Quand] elle tombe, elle tombe sur la terre.
 Dans un clan, un clan royal, tu es de lignée royale⁷¹ ;
 Cent hommes se prosternent,
 Ils te font offrande de musc et d'encens odorants,
 Ils te font offrande de moelle de bambou et de camphre.
 Cent femmes se prosternent,
 Elles te font offrande du lait caillé des brebis (?)⁷²,
 De yaks blancs maîtres des teintures (? *g-yag dkar btsos kyi bdag*),
 De toutes les sortes de fleurs.

Toi *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 Tu te transformes en planète,
 En dieu blanc Pa sangs (Vénus),
 Tu es entouré par les neuf grandes planètes.
 En quoi te transformes-tu encore ?
 Tu te transformes en neuf soleils d'or,
 Tu te transformes en neuf lunes de cristal,
 Tu te transformes en neuf soleils de turquoise.
 Puisque les lunes se prosternent [devant toi],
 Ne descends pas comme démon-*bdud*.
 Puisque les soleils se prosternent,
 Ne descends pas comme bourreau,
 Ô blanc Pa sangs de l'ouest.

Toi *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 Tu te transformes en les neuf frères dieux blancs du ciel⁷³.
 Ils portent une pelisse blanc de conque,
 Avec des [dessins] "œil de poisson" (? *nya mig*) vermillon,
 Des dessins d'arcs-en-ciel turquoise
 Et un *bya phur* (?) de soie.
 Dans la main, que tiennent-ils ?
 Ils tiennent une flûte de cristal,
 Ils tiennent un luth de conque.
 J'offre la rançon aux dieux du ciel.

dmag zor ma (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 30) ; c'est aussi l'une des quatre grandes *bdud mo* parmi les *bsTan ma bcu gnyis*, dont le siège est le lac Yar 'brog selon certaines sources (*ibid.* : 182-183, 187-188, 192). Rien n'indique ici s'il s'agit d'une entité féminine, sauf peut-être l'emploi dans la phrase suivante de *cho 'brang* qui, pour le *Tshig mdzod chen mo* désigne le clan (*rigs*) maternel.

⁷¹ *cho gcig rgyal gyi cho 'phrang* (= 'brang) *cig na rgyal gyi 'brang*. La disjonction des dissyllabes et les répétitions sont un bon exemple de style archaïque, mais rendent malaisée une traduction fidèle.

⁷² *g-yar mo kyugs kyi zho*, si l'on corrige *g-yar mo* en *g-*yang* mo*.

⁷³ *gnam lha dkar po spun dgu* ; mais voir plus haut, où *gNam lha dkar po* est l'un des *the'u rang*.

Toi, *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 Tu te transformes en neuf grands phénix (*khyung*) d'or
 Aux ailes de feu,
 Aux *thabs* (?) de turquoise qui zigzaguent en éclairs.
 Si tu es furieux, tu te transformes en dragon-tonnerre.
 Toi, dragon de turquoise nuisible,
 Quand tu frappes, tu fais tomber une grêle d'or,
 De ta bouche sortent des coups de foudre en fer des *rmu* (= *dmu*).
 Les oiseaux, même réunis par milliers,
 Ne sont pas plus féroces que le phénix.
 En quoi que tu te transformes, en quoi que tu te métamorphoses,
 Je te fais offrande, je fais offrande au phénix.

Toi, *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 [Tu te transformes] en lion de turquoise
 À la crinière lumineuse,
 De ta gueule coule du nectar (*bdud rtsi*),
 La corde des *rmu* (= *dmu*) s'étire depuis tes naseaux.
 Les animaux carnassiers, même réunis par milliers,
 Ne sont pas plus féroces que le lion.
 [Je te fais offrande, je fais offrande au lion],
 Gang[s] ri sengs pa sad.

Toi, *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 [Tu te transformes] en bleu dragon de turquoise,
 Maître de toutes les sources ;
 À l'intérieur de ton corps, s'amoncellent toutes les offrandes,
 Dans tes yeux, s'élèvent toutes les lèpres ;
 Tu es entouré de mille *klu* mineurs,
 Tu te transformes en Klu rje rgyal ba (Victorieux seigneur des *klu*).
 Je te fais offrande du lait de la blanche vache-*'bri*.
 Je te fais offrande, sPrul spang sad,
 Seigneur des *klu*, sPrul pa sad (*sic*).

Toi, *rgyal po*, en quoi te transformes-tu ?
 [Tu te transformes en] seigneur des *gnyan*, Dung le rje,
 Tu es entouré de mille maîtres du sol (*sa bdag*),
 Tu es le maître de gNyan lag rgyal po (?),
 Dragon des *gnyan*, le seigneur des démons-*bdud*,
 Seigneur des *gnyan*, Gang[s] pa sad.

J'offre la rançon aux quatre grands Sad.

2.3 Les *btsan*

Les chapitres 23 et 24 des versions en 53 chapitres sont consacrés au "traitement" des *btsan*. Ces *numina* bien connus ont à peine besoin d'être présentés ; il suffit de renvoyer au livre de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : *passim*). Dans l'étagement du paysage, ils sont censés occuper l'étage médian, la zone des rochers et nombre de dieux du terroir (*yul lha*) sont des *btsan*. Habituellement présentés comme des cavaliers habillés de rouge chevauchant un cheval rouge, on verra que si le roi des *btsan* correspond ici à cette image, les autres *btsan* s'en démarquent fortement. Voici la traduction de l'invocation du chapitre 24 :

Hūm ! Là-bas, dans le pays, le pays des *btsan*,
 Le pays des *btsan* par delà trois hauts de vallée,
 Là-bas, dans une forteresse rouge en *bse* qui se dresse dans le ciel,
 Des *byan lag*⁷⁴ en *bse* [sont rassemblés], *lings se lings*,
 Des chiennes en *bse*, *kangs se kang*,
 De rouges chevaux en *bse* [hennissent], *tser re re*.
 Là, [tu] résides, roi des *btsan*.
 Âpre en paroles, tu te querelles avec les *bdud* ;
 Puissant magicien, tu détestes les [dieux] *phyä* ;
 Cherchant à rivaliser, tu cherches [à rivaliser] avec les *rgyal [po]*.
 Corps humain à tête de yak,
 Tu as, de face, une bouche et deux yeux,
 Sur la nuque, une bouche et deux yeux,
 À droite, une bouche et deux yeux,
 À gauche, une bouche et deux yeux :
 Tu as quatre bouches et huit yeux.
 Ton cheval, sur un corps unique
 A huit sabots :
 quatre sabots antérieurs et quatre sabots postérieurs ;
 Ce sont les huit catégories de vitesse (? *mg-yogs pa sde brgyad*).
 Tu tiens en main un arc en *bse*
 Et une rouge flèche en *bse*,
 Tu portes une cuirasse *zhul khug* (?) en *bse* ;
 Ta tête, tu la secoues dans les domaines du monde créé.
 Aujourd'hui, viens vers le *mdos* du monde créé !

Quant à vous, les *btsan* des cinq éléments :
 Là-bas à l'est,
 Toi, enfant de la terre et de la poussière,
 Dans une blanchâtre forteresse de conquête
 À la frise (*kha bad*) de turquoise,
 Avec quatre montagnes d'indigo
 Et un portail de turquoise,

⁷⁴ Leçon de D et T53 ; K a "des oiseaux noirs" (*bya nag*).

[tu résides], homme blanc [à la taille] vertigineuse.
 [Tu chevauches] un cheval blanc à crinière rouge
 Et tu portes un bouclier de conque,
 Une flèche des *btsan* et un arc des *btsan*⁷⁵.
 Toi qui as pouvoir sur mille *dri za* (*gandharva*),
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 Là-bas au sud,
 Toi, fils de l'élément eau,
 Homme bleu sur un cheval bleu,
 Tu résides dans une forteresse de fer, bleue.
 Tu portes en main une flèche des *btsan*, un arc des *btsan*.
 Toi, maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 Là-bas à l'ouest,
 Dans une rouge forteresse de cuivre,
 [Tu résides], fils du feu et de la chaleur humide.
 Homme rouge sur un cheval rouge,
 Tu portes une flèche des *btsan*, un arc des *btsan*.
 Toi, maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
bTsan du nord, du soleil,
 Fils du vent et de la brise parfumée,
 Homme jaune sur un cheval jaune,
 Tu demeures dans une jaune citadelle d'or ;
 Tu portes en main une flèche des *btsan*, un arc des *btsan*.
 Toi qui as pouvoir sur mille *btsan* du nord,
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
bTsan du centre, homme brun sur un cheval brun,
 Tu demeures dans une brune forteresse de cornaline.
 Toi qui as pouvoir sur mille *btsan* du centre,
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 Toi, *btsan* du ciel, Ding ba rje,
 Tu règues sur l'élément espace.
 (... ?)⁷⁶
 Toi, *btsan*, homme blanc au cheval blanc,
 Tu règues sur mille *btsan* des glaciers.
 Toi, *btsan* des pentes schisteuses, homme bleu,
 Tu règues sur mille *btsan* des pentes schisteuses.
 Toi, *btsan* des alpages, homme jaune au cheval jaune,
 Tu règues sur tous les *btsan* des alpages.
 Toi, *btsan* des forêts, homme noir au cheval noir,
 Tu règues sur mille *btsan* des forêts.
 Vous, *btsan* des pentes schisteuses, hommes bigarrés aux chevaux bigarrés,
 Aujourd'hui, prenez le *mdos* du monde créé !

 Toi, *btsan* des rochers, homme rouge au cheval rouge,
 Tu habites dans un trou de rocher ;

⁷⁵ Double sens sur *btsan*, que l'on peut aussi comprendre comme "flèche puissante" et "arc puissant".

⁷⁶ *g-yas dkar ldong rum ni* /

Homme rouge, [tu n'as] qu'une lance ;
 Sur ta tête, tes tresses flamboient comme le feu,
 Dans ta main, ta lance est une jambe de démons *srin mo* (?),
 Tes yeux lancent [des éclats] semblables à une pluie de grandes étoiles.
 Comme monture, tu chevauches le lézard des rochers,
 Comme divertissement, tu te divertis avec les filles des hiboux (*srin bya*),
 Tu chevauches le renard des rochers à la bouche noire,
 Tu tiens le hibou, oiseau des rochers, en guise de faucon (?),
 En vêtement, tu portes la salissure (*dreg pa*) des rochers,
 En nourriture, tu manges le lichen (*brag skya ha bo*) des rochers,
 En boisson, tu bois les gouttes d'eau [qui suintent] des rochers.
 Tu as sous ton pouvoir des centaines de milliers de *btsan* des rochers.
 Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé !

Là-bas, au pays des *btsan*,
 Là-haut, dans la vertigineuse forteresse des *btsan*,
 Là-haut, par-delà trois vallées (? *skye ma lung gsum*),
 Tu résides, *sKyes bu lung btsan*⁷⁷.
 Noble être (*skyes bu*), que portes-tu sur le corps ?
 Tu portes une pelisse de soie rouge.
 Comme monture, tu chevauches un cheval des *btsan* jaune,
 [Tu portes] un fourreau en peau de tigre, à droite, un carquois en léopard, à gauche.
 Parfois, tu lances ton lasso, tel une flèche,
 Une épée des *btsan*, blanchâtre (? *skya 'byams*), est ceinte [à ton côté],
 Sur ton arc rouge en *bse*, [flottent] des franges blanches, *ldems se ldems*.
 Tu te disputes avec les démons *bdud* aux paroles violentes,
 Tu te mesures encore et encore aux *bdud* :
 Tu lances trois fois le dé,
 Jamais tu n'as été battu.
 Tu as sous ton pouvoir mille *btsan* des vallées (*lung btsan*).
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 Maître de la rançon, prends la rançon !

Là-bas, dans le pays, le pays des *btsan*,
 [Tu résides, *btsan*] à corps humain et tête de yak ;
 Dans ta main, tu tiens une canne en bois ornée de dessins ;
 Ta bouche lance des clous de sang (*khrag gzer*), tels des flèches,
 Dont tu fais des maladies douloureuses (*gzer ba'i nad*) pour l'homme.
 Toi, *btsan* à corps humain et tête de cheval,
 Tu tiens en main un bol rouge en *bse* ;
 Tes yeux lancent du feu et des lumières,
 Ta bouche envoie des maladies nocives,

⁷⁷ Selon le texte cité par Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 219), il appartient à la suite de Gangs chen mdzod Inga et est appelé "souverain de mille" et "souverain de la foudre" ; il chevauche un cheval rouge avec une tache blanche sur le front, porte un vêtement de soie rouge flottant et brandit le lasso rouge des *btsan*. Il tire derrière lui la "viande des *btsan*", une victime qu'il a attrapée avec son lasso.

Tes naseaux envoient vent et brouillard,
 Ta main lance le lasso des *btsan* tel une flèche ;
 Tu es un démon-*bdud* pour les hommes et tu envoies les maladies
 contagieuses au bétail.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !
 Maître de la rançon, prends la rançon !

Toi, *btsan* à corps humain et tête de cerf,
 Tu tiens en main des armes nocives
 Et ta bouche vomit le poison ;
 Ton dé, petit caillou rouge, tu le lances sur les hommes.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !

La fin du chapitre énumère, en les décrivant succinctement, toute une série d'autres *btsan* : les Ya ba skya bdun, les Ya ma skya lnga, Ya ma skya gsum et Ya ma skya gcig, tous chevauchant un cheval rouge et tenant un lasso. Parmi les milliers de *btsan* mineurs, certains habitent les rochers, d'autres dans l'eau, les arbres, les pierres, les lacs, les "supports" (*rten*), les forteresses et les forts. À côté des *btsan* des rochers, le texte mentionne les *btsan* des sépultures (*dur btsan*), bruns sur des chevaux bruns, les *se btsan* (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 310), noirs sur des chevaux noirs, les *btsan* de la naissance (? *skye btsan*), blancs sur des chevaux blancs, les trois frères *klu btsan* : l'aîné est Klu btsan le noir ; il chevauche une grenouille noire, porte une pelisse de [peaux de] poisson noir et de serpent noir et s'émane en *se bdud* et *se btsan* ; il habite les sources noires. Klu btsan le jaune chevauche une grenouille jaune et porte une pelisse [en peau] du grand poisson *rtsa mo*⁷⁸. Klu btsan le rouge chevauche un boeuf rouge aux cornes rouges, il porte une pelisse [en peau] de loup.

Cette énumération est plus ou moins reprise dans deux couples de chapitres ultérieurs, l'un consacré aux *btsan* "dispersés" (*sil ma*)⁷⁹, l'autre aux trois frères *klu btsan* (chap. 43-44, v. 2.8). Ils ne contiennent pas de mythes et apportent seulement quelques détails iconographiques supplémentaires. Seul détail intéressant, le père des trois frères *klu btsan* est dit être un *btsan lha* appelé 'Gro te rgyal ba, et leur mère est une souveraine des *klu* appelée bTsun bza' lcam gcig ma : on a donc ici l'indication très nette de l'hybridation par mariage des catégories de *numina*.

2.4 Les treize *ya bdud*

Comme on l'a indiqué au début, Nebesky-Wojkowitz (v. note 13) ne fait que citer cette catégorie, en parallèle avec les *ma bdud*, qu'il comprend

⁷⁸ Ou *tsa mo* ; attesté dans la littérature, mais non identifié.

⁷⁹ Chap. 41-42, dont le titre ne comporte que *btsan bsags pa'i le'u* et *btsan bcos pa'i le'u* ; mais le début du texte indique que les *btsan (g)sil ma* se rassemblent devant le Bhagavat.

comme *bdud* d'en haut et *bdud* d'en bas. Ils figurent déjà dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang (Karmay 2002 : 71). Ici, le chapitre 25 énumère les objets et ingrédients qu'il faut rassembler pour le *mdos* des treize *ya bdud* et le chapitre 26 comporte leur "traitement" par l'officiant, traduit ci-dessous. Si l'on considère que ces treize *ya bdud* ont pour pendant les treize *ma bdud* (chap. 27-28), il est possible de suggérer la correction *yab bdud bcu gsum*, treize *bdud* "pères" (un *Yab bdud* est attesté comme une divinité protectrice du Sikkim ; v. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 402-405). Avec quelques variantes, on trouve ici une élaboration de la liste des treize *ya bdud* donnée au chapitre 5 (v. 2).

Là-bas, dans ce pays, ce noir pays des *bdud*,
 Une forteresse en fer [se dresse] dans le ciel, *zangse zangs*.
 Sa base est d'or, son sommet de turquoise ;
 Neuf pointes [se dressent] dans le ciel, *zangse zangs*.
 Là, tu résides, roi des *bdud*,
 Céleste *bdud* à la guirlande de crânes.
 [Corps d']homme, tu émanes terre, eau et feu (?)⁸⁰
 Par toi, les treize *ya bdud* apparurent,
 [leurs] treize sœurs apparurent.
 Les puissants, ils sont tués par les *bdud*,
 Les faibles, ils sont tués par les *bdud* ;
 Plus cruels que les *bdud*, il n'y a pas.

Toi, roi des *bdud*, Re te mgo yag⁸¹,
 Tu chevauches un cheval noir gros comme une montagne,
 Tu lances un lasso noir, tel une flèche,
 Le petit homme, tu le manges comme nourriture,
 Les animaux, tu les tues comme [viande de] boucherie.
 Aujourd'hui, prends le *mdos* du monde créé !

Toi, *bdud* Nag po bkrag med ("Noir sans éclat")⁸²,
 Tu chevauches un cheval noir gros comme une montagne,
 Ton lasso, tu le lances, tel une flèche,
 Ta noire haleine, *thu lu lu*,
 Ta barbe noire, *'phyra ra ra*,
 [Tu la peignes] de tes doigts noirs, *shad de shad*.
 Toi qui, avec les cohortes de *bdud* qui chevauchent des étalons d'or,
 Lancent leurs lasso d'or, tels des flèches,
 Dont les canines saillent comme des armes magiques *zor*,
 Qui tiennent dans la main droite une tablette,

⁸⁰ *mi ni sa chu me dang sprul*.

⁸¹ Avec des variantes de son nom, il est toujours cité comme le roi des *bdud*. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : Reti 'gong yag (p. 274), Re ste mgo yag (pp. 274, 288), Re ste 'gong nyag (pp. 274, 287, 288). Selon Tucci (1949, I : 219), ce *bdud* Ri ti 'gong nyag est le père de la déesse Remati.

⁸² Chef des *dmu bdud*, selon Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 268, 281.

Font rouler les dés dans la main gauche
 Et émanent des centaines de *bdud* mineurs,
 Coupes [la vie ?]⁸³ des petits hommes,
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos*,
 Maître de la rançon, prends la rançon !

Toi, *bdud* Ma le ge shag,
 Sur le corps, tu portes une cuirasse de conque,
 En monture, tu chevauches un stupide mouton,
 Dans la main, tu tiens une faucille de fer,
 Les petits hommes, tu les tues... (*ris su gsod*),
 Les animaux, tu en fais de la viande de boucherie.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends le *mdos* !

L'invocation se poursuit en s'adressant en de courtes stances à de très nombreux *bdud*, brièvement décrits : le même Ma le ge shag, mais qui chevauche un tigre rayé, porte une cuirasse de cuivre et tient une faucille ; le *bdud* Brang dkar réside au milieu du tronc de l'arbre qui exauce les désirs, porte de beaux vêtements et prend la longévité de tous les êtres ; le *bdud* Padma gar gyi dbang phyug chevauche un buffle noir, porte une pelisse de soie fine, tient le lasso des *bdud*, envoie en émissaires des centaines de milliers de *bdud* mineurs, règne sur les trois mondes et prend la longévité et le souffle de tous les êtres ; le *bdud* rJe mang khug chevauche un léopard tacheté, porte une grande cape de cuivre noir, tient dans la main droite une hache de fer, dans la gauche un *stun bu* (? T : *gtan pa*) de fer. *bdud* des humains, il coupe les sentiers escarpés, *bdud* des oiseaux, il coupe les arbres, *bdud* des chevaux, il coupe leur bride blanche... ; le(s) *bdud* sTag zhu mched bzhi (Quatre frères au chapeau de tigre) portent un vêtement et un chapeau en peau de tigre, tiennent une canne de cuivre, dans leurs yeux flamboie le feu, de leur bouche tombe une averse de sang ; le *bdud* lKugs pa 'dzum med (Stupide, qui ne sourit pas), chevauche un stupide mouton, porte un vêtement de laine noire, ne parle pas et s'oppose à la vitalité ; le *bdud* Khyab pa lag ring chevauche un oiseau rouge aux belles ailes, il tient des armes empoisonnées et brandit une courte lance en *bse* ; le *bdud* Thom pa thom chung (Petit abruti ?) porte une pelisse de cuivre, chevauche un chameau des *bdud*, il est le maître des moutons abrutis.

La suite consiste en une simple énumération : quatre serviteurs (*phyag brnyan*) des *bdud*, quatre seigneurs des *bdud*, à tête de mouton, de loup, d'ours et de tigre ; les groupes des Rol po skya bdun, Rol po skya gsum et Rol po skya gcig ; puis, le *bdud* des dieux gSang spu (T : Gang bu), le *bdud* du ciel Mer ba, le seigneur des *bdud* sKol po, les *bdud* Ral pa spyi bcings,

⁸³ Correction proposée au lieu de : *mi bu rnams kyi* (T : *kyis*) *bdud* *gcod pa*.

'Od de 'bar ba, 'Od de snyom pa (T : smyon pa), 'Od de thon po (T : thom po), 'Od de lkugs pa.

L'invocation se termine par l'appel vers le *mdos* des cohortes de milliers de *bdud* mineurs dont les méfaits sont décrits.

2.5 Les treize *ma bdud*

Le chapitre 27 énumère ce qui est nécessaire pour ériger leur *mdos* et le chapitre 28 est consacré à leur invocation :

Hūṃ ! Nous sommes les maîtresses du monde créé.
 Là-bas, dans la direction du soleil levant,
 Sur le haut plateau appelé Pays des *gnyan*,
 Au bord d'un lac de sang miroitant,
 Où les noirs oiseaux des *bdud* [tourbillonnent], *phang ma phung*,
 Les choucas, oiseaux des *bdud*, *di ri ri*,
 Les chiennes des *bdud*... (? *'drel dang zhungs se zhung* ; T : *gzhung nge gzhung*),
 Les noires oiselles des *bdud*, *di ri ri*,
 Les chacals [et] hérons, *di ri ri*,
 C'est le lieu de réunion de dizaines de milliers de *ma mo*.
 Dans la forteresse Zo ba *gzhogs ral*,
 la *bdud mo* brGya byin kun dga' mo,
 Noire, à une tresse, parcourt en courant les trois mondes.
 Là résident les treize *ma bdud*,
 Là aussi se rassemblent les hordes de milliers de *bdud mo* ;
 Elles tuent ceux qui se présentent (?)⁸⁴, mangent leur chair et leur sang.
 Ô Grande conseillère appelée Khri gnyer (Gardienne du trône),
 Reine des *bdud*, viens vers la rançon !

À l'intérieur de cette forteresse de [cadavres] humains,
 Chair humaine, chair de cheval sont amoncélées ;
 Sang humain, sang de cheval s'étalent comme un lac ;
 Crânes desséchés et frais sont érigés en murs.
 Quant à la maîtresse qui possède cette [forteresse],
 Toi, la Noire à une tresse, tu parcours au galop tout le monde créé ;
 Tu chevauches un *bdud* tripode et "libères" tous les êtres sans exception ;
 Tu manges la chair, bois le sang ; toi qui as une tresse,
 Quand tu secoues ta tresse noire, les ténèbres [s'amoncellent], *khyi li li* ;
 Tu dévores dix mille, tu "libères" dix mille, Ô principale des *bdud mo* !
 En dévorant chair et sang frais, tu chantes un chant d'expulsion,
 Tout en dévidant une pelote d'armes (? *mtshon gru*), tu gonfles le sac des
 maladies,
 Tu envoies beaucoup de maladies *bal*⁸⁵,

⁸⁴ *mdun ltangs* (D : 'dun stangs) *gcod cing*...

⁸⁵ *bal nad*. Selon le *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, c'est une maladie grave supposée envoyée par Bal mo He le 'bar ma, une forme de dPal ldan lha mo.

Tu inscries les deux, hommes et bétail, sur ta tablette.
 Un oiseau rouge à tes côtés, tu fais rouler les dés blancs et noirs.
 Ayant tué les humains, tu portes leur peau en vêtement,
 Tes mains jouent avec leurs têtes ;
 Tu crées des armées qui repoussent les adversaires des *bdud*,
 Tu pèses les êtres sur ta balance et tu interromps le repos [des êtres] du monde
 créé.
 Ô *bdud mo* mangeuse d'hommes, prends le *mdos* !

La fin du chapitre énumère et décrit brièvement les autres *ma bdud*, chacune cadette de la précédente, mais dont le nom n'est pas toujours précisé.

2.6 Les *ja la ma*

Les chapitres 29 et 30 sont consacrés à cette catégorie inconnue par ailleurs. Dans le premier, les 360 *ja la ma* se rassemblent devant le Bhagavat et révèlent les préparatifs nécessaires à leur rituel, pour lequel tous les objets et ingrédients sont au nombre de 360 : croix de fils, etc. Elles déclarent : *bdag cag rnam ni srid pa nyul le ste...*, "Nous, nous sommes les 'errantes' du monde créé..." Cela permet-il de les rapprocher d'un personnage démoniaque qui figure dans une séquence du '*cham* de Byams pa'i lha khang, à Bumthang (Bhutan), appelé **nyulema*, personnage qui est battu et mis à mal par les *ging* ? Mais ce *nyulema* porte des habits masculins alors que les *ja la ma* sont féminines. On ne peut exclure non plus un terme d'emprunt, plusieurs de leurs noms étant des transcriptions du sanskrit. Quoi qu'il en soit, ces *ja la ma* apparaissent très semblables aux *the'u rang* (dont il existe aussi un groupe de 360 ; cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 283) dont elles sont vraisemblablement les épouses.

L'invocation du chapitre 30 alterne un discours à la première personne du pluriel et les injonctions de l'officiant à prendre le *mdos*. En voici le début :

Hūṃ ! Sous les ordres de chefs de mille [guerriers] (*stong gi sde dpon*)
 Il y a un nombre inconcevable de cohortes d'Arrogants,
 Mais celles qui parcourent au galop les trois mondes, c'est nous, les *ja la ma*,
 Les puissantes de ce monde, c'est nous ;
 La principale, E ka ma⁸⁶, est la maîtresse du monde créé tout entier.

Ô E ka ma, maîtresse de toutes les cohortes de "mères",
 Non née, tu résides dans la sphère du Dharma ; maîtresse du monde créé,
 Bien que ta pensée d'Éveil ne soit pas souillée par les fautes,
 Dans ta suite se trouvent les troupes de milliers de *bdud mo*,

⁸⁶ Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, que je remercie, m'a indiqué que *ekama* signifie "la première" en sanskrit, ce qui correspond bien au tibétain *gtso mo*, que je traduis par "principale".

Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé !

sKye 'gro ral gcig ma (Être à une tresse), tu es la maîtresse de la vie et de la longévit  de tous les  tres,
Noire, chevauchant un  ne, tu envoies ( mets ?) beaucoup de sang,
Tu r unis en assembl e les [d mones des]  pid mies, toi ma trese du monde cr e.

Agitant une peau humaine, tu chantes un air d'expulsion,
Tu envoies les *bdud* m les [ex cuter] tes  uvres et tu r duis en esclavage les *ma mo*.

Tes tresses noires sont denses comme les t n bres et tu  clates d'un rire mena ant.

Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde cr e !

Quant aux trois cent soixante *ja la [ma]*,
Certaines, vous  tes les messag res des ordres,
D'autres, vous faites tomber toute sorte de mauvais pr sages,
Certaines, vous  tes les messag res des *bdud btsan* (*bdud* et *btsan* ?),
D'autres, vous d truisez totalement les trois domaines,
D'autres, posture dress e (?), vous provoquez l'obscurcissement mental⁸⁷,
Envers certains, vous  tes utiles,
Envers d'autres, vous  tes m me des amies.
Vous  puez ou accroissez les richesses du monde,
Vous  tes maladies pour les humains, bourreaux pour le b tail,
Vous envoyez beaucoup de sortes de maladies.
Cent, vous  tes de la race des enfants de *bdud* et de *btsan*,
Vous aimez tuer et tailler en pi ces,
Vous aimez la guerre et la destruction ;
Cent, vous  tes de la race des *ma [mo]* carnivores, vous envoyez  pid mies, famines, troubles ;
Cent, vous  tes de la race des *rgyal po the rang*, vous d truisez le monde et prenez la long vit  ;
Vingt-neuf, vous rassemblez les vents froids du monde cr e,
Vingt-et-une, vous  tes les messag res des *gnod sbyin* et aimez la chair et le sang.

[Parmi] les trois cent soixante *ja la [ma]*,
Soixante, qui avez pouvoir sur tout le monde cr e,
Vous portez sur le corps un noir tissu de laine r che,
Sur la t te un capuchon (? *go lcog*) en  toffe de poil de yak,
Vous galopez sur soixante *mdzo mo* noires,
Vous courez sus   la long vit  [des  tres] du monde cr e,
Vous vous attaquez   l'enfance de tous les enfants.
Certaines, une lance courte en main, vous guidez les arm es,
D'autres, vous  tes les berg res du b tail,
Certaines, chevauchant un chameau   long cou, vous courez sus   la long vit  des enfants,

⁸⁷ Selon D : *la la brdab snol gzung rmugs byed*. La m me description caract rise une cat gorie de *the'u rang* : v. 2.1.

D'autres, chevauchant un ours noir, vous courez sus à la longévité des jeunes gens ;
 Certaines, femmes noires
 Dont les ornements de tresses s'étalent de gauche et de droite,
 Vous chevauchez une ourse *dred mo* aux pattes blanches et courez sus à la longévité des jeunes gens ;
 D'autres, vous galopez en chevauchant un *bdud* à la chair noire,
 D'autres, femmes rouges,
 Vous chevauchez un singe... (? *bzang btsan spre'u*)
 Et galopez en brandissant votre tablette (*khram gyi shing bu*) ;
 D'autres, vous galopez en chevauchant un âne des charniers à la bouche blanchâtre.
 Cent, femmes de cuivre, avec des tresses,
 Vos tresses de cuivre, telles des flèches, *sha ra ra* ;
 Vous tenez à la main, chacune, une faucille de cuivre,
 Vous galopez, chevauchant de rouges chiens sauvages de cuivre.
 Certaines, cent femmes de fer avec des tresses,
 Vos tresses de fer, telles des flèches, *sha ra ra*,
 Vous tenez chacune en main une faucille de cuivre (*sic* pour "fer"),
 Vous galopez en chevauchant cent loups de fer.
 D'autres, femmes de sang avec des tresses,
 Vous tenez un bol de sang et faites le tour des extrémités du ciel ;
 Ayant soumis les *'byung po* à votre pouvoir,
 Vous les faites tous vagabonder sur tout (?)⁸⁸.
 Ô grandes maîtresses du *mdos*, prenez le *mdos* !

Certaines, chevauchant une vache blanchâtre sans cornes,
 Vous portez sur le corps un tissu de laine rêche
 Et agitez une fine soie bleue ;
 D'autres, vous êtes les vagabondes (*nyul le*) du monde créé,
 Vous vomissez du sang et faites tomber une pluie de sang ;
 D'autres, vous êtes les messagères des *bdud*,
 Vous chevauchez un âne noir et faites le tour du monde créé ;
 Certaines, vous portez une pelisse de feu,
 D'autres, femmes noires avec un vêtement qui protège contre les armes⁸⁹,
 Vous galopez, chevauchant une renarde à museau noir ;
 D'autres, messagères du monde créé,
 Vous galopez, chevauchant un noir cheval des *bdud*,
 Vous lancez le noir lasso des *bdud* tel une flèche,
 Portant le sac des maladies, vous faites le tour des villes ;
 D'autres, vous répandez les maladies du sang et détruisez le monde créé ;
 D'autres, vous galopez, chevauchant un porc noir,
 D'autres, chevauchant un bœuf hybride⁹⁰ à cornes blanches, vous faites des gestes d'appel,

⁸⁸ *thams cad kun gyi nyul le byed.*

⁸⁹ T : *gos su can*, mais K. a *go zu can*. Pasar, Changru and Gatsa (2008 : 37) définissent *go zu* comme : *mtshon srung gi gos zhig*.

D'autres, chevauchant un yak (? *thab g-yag*) noir,
 Vous portez sur le corps une étoffe noire en poil de yak,
 Vous tenez un bol de sang et galopez dans le monde créé ;
 D'autres, vous buvez du sang et parcourez sans cesse les charniers ;
 D'autres, vous faites signe aux *lha 'dre* du monde créé et les envoyez [porter]
 les épidémies,
 Envoyant les milliers de *the'u rang* [exécuter] vos œuvres, vous les faites aller et
 courir.
 Vous les tueuses des humains et du bétail,
 Les trois cent soixante *ja la ma* du monde créé,
 Aujourd'hui, prenez ce *mdos* du monde créé !

2.7 Les *mtsho sman*

Leur propitiation occupe les chapitres 31 et 32 : *mTsho sman gyi gur mdos bsags pa'i le'u*, "Chapitre où l'on amoncelle le *mdos* des tentes des *mtsho sman*" (on plante effectivement cinq tentes, aux quatre orientes et au centre), et *mTsho sman gyi mdos kyi le'u*, "Chapitre du *mdos* des *mtsho sman*" (et non du "traitement" comme précédemment).

Ces *numina* appartiennent au groupe des *sman mo* ("femmes/remèdes"), catégorie très importante et ancienne, si elles sont identiques aux *mo sman/mu sman* des manuscrits de Dunhuang. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 198-202) les décrit et relève (p. 199, note 27) la bibliographie antérieure qui leur est consacrée. Il indique (p. 200-201) que les *mtsho sman* sont les *sman mo* qui résident dans les lacs et fournit un répertoire de groupes et de noms (dont celles qui sont liées aux principaux lacs du Tibet, avec quelques descriptions).

Ici, au chapitre 31, les troupes de blanches *mtsho sman* se rassemblent devant le Bhagavat, accompagnées des *klu*, des *sa bdag* et de leur suite (c'est-à-dire les maîtres du sol, des eaux et du souterrain).

Par son style et son contenu, le début du chapitre d'invocation qui suit, diffère grandement des autres chapitres. Après un préambule sur la vacuité des phénomènes, il décrit le processus d'évocation mentale qui, à partir de la syllabe *bhrūṃ*, crée un palais pur, Demi-lune de joyaux, à partir duquel tout est créé. Suit un *mantra* d'où l'on imagine qu'apparaissent : au centre, *dKar mo dbu dgu* (La Blanche à neuf têtes, appelée plus loin *Srid pa'i dkar mo*, La Blanche du monde créé) et, aux quatre orientes, les quatre Reines d'initiation (*dbang gi rgyal mo*) et, à l'extérieur, toutes les cohortes de *sa bdag* et de *klu*. Suit l'invocation par laquelle l'officiant les invite, leur offre de l'*amṛta*, des louanges, un *smon lam* et enfin le *bsngo ba* avec lequel

⁹⁰ *rtol bu* : croisement d'un taureau et d'une *mdzo mo*. Pour Derge : à museau blanc (*kha dkar*).

on retrouve le style des autres chapitres (les deux premières entités invoquées sont les deux principales *ja la ma* du chapitre 30) :

Hūṃ ! Ô E ka ma, maîtresse du monde créé,
Mère des reines secrètes de l'initiation qui résident au fond des océans,
Toi qui as pouvoir sur les *ma mo* du monde créé,
Aujourd'hui, prends le *mdos* du monde créé !

Ô sKye 'gro ral gcig ma, maîtresse universelle des trois domaines (*kham s gsum*),
Exécutrice des œuvres secrètes qui [envoies] sang et maladie sur le monde créé
en le maudissant,
Toi qui chantes un chant d'expulsion en envoyant épidémies et troubles,
Tu éclates d'un rire terrifiant en parcourant les quatre continents du
Jambudvīpa,
Tu tiens un bol de sang et tu galopes sur quatre-vingt mille lieues,
Tu brandis une lance et es le chef des armées,
Tu es l'adversaire violente des trois mondes.
Aujourd'hui, prends les offrandes sanglantes de chair et de sang !
Supprime les épidémies, détourne les maladies !

Hūṃ ! Ô Srid pa'i dkar mo dbu dgu ma,
Sur ton corps blanc et flexible
Tu portes une cape de soie blanche,
Sur la tête un chignon de bijoux,
Les huit grandes planètes forment ta ceinture,
Les constellations brillent à ta taille.
Tu fais tomber en pluie [les maléfices de ?] la sauvage planète Mars⁹¹,
Comme résidence, tu résides au fond de l'océan,
Comme parcours, tu parcours les trois domaines et l'espace intermédiaire.
Soleil et lune brillent à ta taille,
Tes pieds, au fond de l'océan,
terrorisent les huit grands *nāga*.
Quant aux quatre reines d'initiation aux quatre orientes,
L'une [est issue] de ton propre cœur⁹².
Au centre des profondes ténèbres de l'océan,
À l'intérieur d'une tente de soie blanche,
Est planté, en guise de tente, un grand poisson *rtsa mo*,
De noirs crapauds...(?)⁹³ ;
À l'intérieur de cette [tente],
Sur un siège de lotus à huit pétales,
Tu te tiens, dKar mo dbu dgu.
Avec ton entourage de centaines de milliers de *mo sman*,
Parfois, lorsque tu te déplaces,

⁹¹ *gza' rgod mig dmar*. *gZa' rgod* est habituellement une épithète de Rāhu.

⁹² Cette phrase semble une interpolation.

⁹³ *za ra tshags*. Le sens de "gouttière" ou tuyau d'évacuation, donné par le *Tshig mdzod chen mo* pourrait à la rigueur se comprendre ici, mais non plus loin (2.8) où l'expression s'applique à la description d'un vêtement.

Tu chevauches une biche,
 Tu parcours dans leur totalité les trois domaines.
 Toi qui possèdes tous les principes vitaux et les souffles,
 Tu es la puissante maîtresse de toutes les maladies et épidémies,
 Tu réduis en esclavage tous les *lha srin*,
 Tu appelles de la main toutes les *ma mo* des charniers,
 Tu envoies aussi en messagers tous les *sa bdag, klu* et *gnyan*,
 T'associant avec tous les grands *klu*,
 Tu envoies lèpre et maladies de peau purulentes,
 T'associant avec les *sa bdag* et les *gnyan*,
 Tu envoies enflures, boiteries, maladies articulaires, aménorrhées.
 Tes neuf têtes sont le signe que tu saisis intuitivement le sens des neuf sagesse
 (*ye shes*),
 Ton œil de sagesse voit distinctement le monde créé,
 Ton esprit flamboyant se tient dans la sphère insondable du *dharmatā*.
 Tu folâtres avec les dieux mineurs du triliocosme,
 Tu es la parèdre (*gzungs ma*) des Quatre grands rois [des quatre orient],
 Tu gouvernes le Jambudvīpa tout entier.
 Beau et pur, ton corps est blanc et flexible,
 Sans que tes pieds arpentent le sol, tu sembles te tenir sur la terre,
 Sous l'apparence d'une reine, tu es entourée par les reines d'initiation,
 Parce que tu es la principale de toutes, tu es entourée par des centaines de
 milliers de *mtsho sman*.
 Tandis que tu te tiens à l'intérieur de la tente,
 Parfois, tu chevauches un *srin* aquatique *spir*⁹⁴ ;
 Aux quatre angles de la tente,
 Il y a des bannières de victoire de *srin* aquatique loutre.
 À l'intérieur de ce palais,
 Toi, la grande Blanche du monde créé,
 Dans un crâne de crapaud noir,
 Ayant mélangé mille sortes de sangs, tu les bois :
 Mille Noires se rassemblent [et tu les lies] par serment.
 Parfois, dans un crâne [fait] des cinq sortes de joyaux,
 Tu réunis toute sorte de laits
 Et tu manges aussi du beurre et des fleurs médicinales :
 Cent mille *sman mo* se rassemblent [et tu les lies] par serment.
 Parfois, dans un crâne [humain] (*bandha*) tu bois beaucoup de sang (*rakta*) :
 Cent mille *gnod sbyin* (*yakṣa*) se rassemblent [et tu les lies] par serment.
 Dans un bol d'or précieux
 Tu mets de l'*amṛta* et tu le bois :
 Cent mille Jaunes (*ser mo*) se rassemblent [et tu les lies] par serment.
 À l'intérieur de cette tente de soie,
 Dans ce palais de joyaux flamboyants

⁹⁴ *chu srin spir/phir*. Sous la graphie *pir*, Pasar, Changdru and Gatsa (2008 : 140) indiquent : *chu gnas sems can zhig*, "un être qui réside dans l'eau", glosé en anglais : "a mythic creature that lives in water, its face appears on the capitols of pillars". Ici, comme le montre la même formulation au vers suivant (*chu srin sram*), *chu srin* ne peut traduire le *skt makara*.

fait de conque, d'or, de corail,
 De turquoise et de fer,
 Tu résides, maîtresse du monde créé.
 Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé.
 Toute sorte de viandes, toute sorte de sangs, de laits,
 Toute sorte de fleurs, toute sorte d'eaux, toute sorte de grains, je te les offre,
 Aconit, encens, bière et jus médicinaux, je te les offre en abondance,
 Avec de nombreuses effigies, je satisfais tes vœux ;
 Apaise la malveillance des *klu*,
 Apaise la malveillance des *sa bdag*,
 Dompte les maladies [causées par] les *ma mo*.

Suit la description des quatre tentes (blanche, bleue, rouge et verte) aux quatre orient, dans lesquelles résident les Reines d'initiation qui ne sont pas plus précisément nommées. La particularité de ces tentes est qu'elles sont formées, comme celle de la principale *sman mo*, ci-dessus, d'un poisson, d'un animal aquatique ou de serpents. Puis l'invocation se poursuit, adressée à de nombreuses reines des *sman mo* (non nommées), chacune résidant dans une bulle grosse comme une tente, faite de matières précieuses, de fer, etc. Une nouvelle Reine d'initiation est invoquée, *Tsa mun ti*⁹⁵, qualifiée aussi de Blanche *klu mo*, qui réside au "coin" (*gru*) de l'océan. Le chapitre se termine par une offrande générale aux sept rois des *nāga* et à tous les *nāga*.

2.8 Les *klu btsan*

Cette catégorie hybride est surtout connue par l'épopée de Gesar, où le héros soumet le démon du nord *Klu btsan* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 309 ; Stein 1959 : 4 et *passim*). Ils forment ici un groupe de trois frères, mentionné plus haut dans le chapitre consacré aux *btsan* (voir 2.3) mais inconnus par ailleurs.

Le chapitre 43 décrit les ingrédients nécessaires pour le *mdos* des Trois frères *klu btsan*, le court chapitre 44 contient leur *bsngo ba* :

Hūm ! Vous les maîtres de tout le monde créé,
 Les trois frères *klu btsan*,
 Vous envoyez maladies et toutes sortes [de maux].
 Vous qui êtes très malfaisants et êtes le renfort de tous les *lha 'dre*,
 Votre père est un *btsan*, votre mère, une fille des *klu*⁹⁶;
 Vous qui avez le comportement violent des *klu* et des *btsan* réunis,

⁹⁵ Ce pourrait être *Cāmudī* ou *Yamī*, sœur incestueuse de *Yama* (Béguin 1995 : 294, qui renvoie à Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 83-85). Mais elle a un aspect terrible, contrairement à la *Tsa mun ti* du *tantra*.

⁹⁶ K : Votre père est un dieu des *btsan*, votre mère, une reine des *klu*.

Votre père, c'est Gro te rgyal ba,
 Votre mère, bTsun za [bza'] lcam gcig ma.
 Vous, les fils, les trois frères, vous apparurent :
 L'aîné, Klu btsan le noir,
 Homme noir [de la taille ?] d'une lance,
 Tu portes une cape de soie noire,
 [Sur laquelle] des serpents noirs... (? za ra tshags),
 Ourlée de crapauds noirs,
 Tu chevauches un grand cheval noir ;
 À droite, tu mènes une armée de mille *se btsan*,
 À gauche, tu mènes [une troupe de] mille *btsan* des rochers,
 Derrière, des enfants de *klu* nuisibles,
 Devant, les grands *thel'u rang* te guident.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends ce *mdos* !

Toi, Klu btsan le rouge,
 Homme rouge [de la taille ?] d'une lance,
 Tu chevauches un bœuf rouge à cornes rouges,
 Tu portes une cape de soie rouge
 Avec des tresses de serpents rouges béants,
 Ourlée de crapauds rouges.
 De ton nez tu répands araignées et scorpions,
 Tu éparpilles ('*thor*) toutes sortes de pustules et beaucoup de sang vicié.
 Tu es le guide de centaines de milliers de *btsan* mineurs,
 Tu es le renfort des *klu* malfaisants.
 Maître du *mdos*, prends ce *mdos* !

Vous, les trois frères Klu btsan,
 Écoutez les instructions de votre maître, chef de mille [soldats] ;
 Vous qui êtes le renfort de tous les Arrogants,
 Ne guidez pas les *yi dags* [et les ?] '*dre* avides, ne prenez pas leur tête !

On aura remarqué qu'il manque l'invocation au troisième frère. De son côté, T86 ne fait que citer les trois frères mais offre un traitement particulier à Klu btsan le rouge, au chapitre 34 dont le titre est explicite : "'Traitement' de Klu btsan le rouge" (pp. 422-424), alors que le chapitre précédent concernait l'installation du *mdos* des *klu* en général. Il s'agit probablement d'une interpolation car, avant de s'adresser à Klu btsan le rouge, le *bsngo ba* commence très logiquement par l'invocation aux huit rois des *nāga*, interrompue brutalement après la description de dGa' bo et 'Jog po, tandis qu'il manque le premier vers de l'invocation à Klu btsan le rouge :

À l'intérieur de ce [pays ?],
 À l'intérieur d'une forteresse en *bse*,
 Tu résides, Klu btsan le rouge.
 Ton père, si on l'énonce,

C'est gNam gyi drod de rgyal ba,
 Ta mère, gDug rum lcam cig.
 Émanés des pensées de ces deux-là,
 Ce sont les trois frères *klu btsan* ;
 Le plus jeune, c'est toi Klu btsan le rouge.
 Toi, Klu btsan, tu es rouge,
 Tu chevauches le cheval rouge Vautour,
 Tu es paré des ornements des *klu* nuisibles,
 Klu btsan [au corps] souple,
 Tu portes une pelisse de soie rouge,
 [Sur laquelle] des serpents... (? *za ra tshags*),
 Avec un bord ourlé de crapauds *en bse*,
 Des serpents rouges... (? *sku yi regs*).
 À ta droite, des serpents grouillent,
 À ta gauche, des oiseaux de *bse* planent,
 Tu rassembles à grands cris les bœufs de l'espace médian (?),
 Tu rassembles à grands cris cent mille buffles,
 Tu tiens en main une lance rouge *en bse*.
 Doué d'une gloire malfaisante,
 Ceux qui mènent [ton armée] à droite sont des *btsan* des rochers, rouges,
 Ceux qui mènent [ton armée] à gauche sont des *se btsan* jouisseurs (? *rol po*) ;
 Avec ton entourage de milliers de *klu* malfaisants,
 Les *the brang* indomptés sont tes émissaires,
 Tu dépêches en émissaires quatre-vingt dix *sa srin*,
 Les cohortes de *klu* "dispersés" (*sil ma*) , envoient les épidémies.
 Toi, Klu btsan nuisible,
 Grand Klu btsan indompté,
 Maître des boïteries, des maladies articulaires et des enflures,
 Maître de la folie, des maladies nerveuses et de la stupidité,
 Maître des bégaiements, de l'hermaphrodisme, de la surdité (? *dig pan stobs*),
 Maître des (? *rdzings*) et des enflures,
 Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé !
 Détruis la maladie de la haine néfaste !
 Klu btsan le rouge, tu es à nouveau soumis,
 Veuille guérir les maladies !
 Toi, grand Klu btsan,
 Lorsque tu parcours au galop les trois mondes
 Ton cheval rouge se transforme en éclair,
 bTsan rouge tu flamboies de lumière,
 Tes mots d'expulsion, en tibétain (?)⁹⁷, *phu ru ru*,
 Ton armée nuisible [dense comme la pluie], *sil li li*,
 Prends ce grand *mdos* des nuisibles !

⁹⁷ *spyugs pa'i bod skad phu ru ru.*

2.9 Les douze *bstan ma*

Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 181-198) a détaillé les listes variables de ces douze déesses devenues protectrices de la doctrine. Le *lHa 'dre bka' thang* raconte leur soumission par Padmasambhava (Blondeau 1971 : 75). Dans notre *tantra*, elles révèlent au chapitre 45 la fabrication de leur *mdos* et, au chapitre 46, est énoncé leur *bsngo ba*. Un court préambule les décrit collectivement : elles sont les enfants des puissants Arrogants, les filles des grandes Arrogantes ; certaines, violentes, ont des pouvoirs magiques extraordinaires, elles font écrouler le sommet de la Montagne excellente, assèchent les océans, plus rapides que le vent, elles parcourent les confins du ciel, tiennent tablette, dés blanc et noir, sac des maladies ; elles envoient des maladies douloureuses : évanouissements, vomissements de sang.

Puis, divisées en trois groupes de quatre, selon le schéma indiqué par Nebesky-Wojkowitz, chacune est brièvement décrite (monture et vêtement). Leur liste est plus ou moins identique à la première liste citée par Nebesky-Wojkowitz (p. 182), mais elle présente moins d'intérêt puisque les lieux du Tibet avec lesquels elles sont associées ne sont même pas cités, à l'exception de "la montagne de rMa" (rMa chen spom ra). La seule originalité du *tantra* est de donner la filiation de chacun des groupes : les quatre *bdud mo* ont pour père "le Vieux du ciel" (gNam gyi rgan) et pour mère "la Noire aux rides de colère" (Nag mo khro gnyer can) ; les quatre grandes *gnod sbyin* ont pour père "le Grand à gorge de cuivre" (Zangs mgrin chen po), pour mère "la Rouge aux canines saillantes" (dMar mo mche rtsigs ma), elles sont les grandes parèdres des montagnes neigeuses ; les quatre *smān mo* ont pour père lHa chen po (Mahādeva), pour mère "la Blanche au beau visage" (dKar mo bzhin bzang ma) ; parmi elles, "Kong btsun de mo rdo rje protège le Tibet"⁹⁸.

2.10 Les *sa bdag*

Cités occasionnellement dans l'entourage de quelques *numina*, les "maîtres du sol" ne font pas l'objet d'un traitement particulier dans les versions en 53 chapitres ; on les trouve, en revanche, dans T86, aux chapitres 17-18 (pp. 391-394). Comme le remarque justement Nebesky-Wojkowitz qui leur consacre un long développement (1956 : 291-298), ils sont innombrables et, dans la perspective qui nous occupe ici, les données du chapitre 18 (*bsngo ba*) sont d'un trop faible intérêt pour poursuivre la recherche plus avant. Disons seulement qu'ils sont toujours malfaisants et sauvages, leur

⁹⁸ Classée dans les *smān mo chen mo*, avec la même formulation (*Bod khams skyongs*), in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 182. Dans d'autres listes (*ibid.* : 183, 184) il est précisé qu'elle réside au Kong po (comme on pouvait le supposer par son nom) et, p. 221, qu'elle règne sur les *sa bdag* du Kong po.

pouvoir s'exerce sur la terre et ils sont les maîtres des transformations magiques.

L'invocation s'adresse d'abord au roi et à la reine des *sa bdag* :
 Ô grand *sa bdag* du centre,
 Tu t'appelles Rin chen rgyal po,
 Tu t'appelles aussi rTsang rtsa 'khor ba⁹⁹,
 Tu te tiens sur un trône de lotus *kesara*,
 Tu fais tourner des cercles d'or,
 Tu es issu du frère (? *ming nas phyung*) de la Grande *sa bdag* du monde créé.
 Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé !

Toi qui règues sur l'élément terre,
 Grande truie d'or,
 Tu soumets à ton pouvoir la terre ;
 Puissante et belle maîtresse,
 Déesse brTan ma maîtresse de la terre,
 Toi qui règues sur les précieuses terres d'or,
 Tu es entourée d'une cour de nombreuses *sa bdag klu mo*.
 Aujourd'hui, prends ce *mdos* du monde créé !

Sont ensuite nommés les grands *sa bdag* The se¹⁰⁰ et rTsang kun¹⁰¹ qui, avec les hordes de *sa bdag* qui exercent leurs méfaits aux quatre orientes et dans les directions intermédiaires, sont invités à prendre le *mdos*. Suivent cinq *sa bdag* orientés dont les noms ne sont pas donnés : blanc au centre, chevauchant un tigre, il est habillé de feuilles d'arbre blanches bigarrées et porte un bâton, il est accompagné de mille *kṣatriya* (*rgyal rigs*) ; jaune au sud, il porte comme vêtement des feuilles d'arbre jaunes bigarrées et règne sur toute la classe des nobles (*rje rigs*) ; rouge au sud, il porte comme vêtement des feuilles rouges ; vert au nord, il est habillé de feuilles vertes. Le texte n'indique pas sur quelle caste règnent ces deux derniers.

Vient ensuite un groupe de sept frères *sa bdag* courroucés (*sa bdag spun dgu*), dont le père est Shi ri pa ta et la mère Khrag chen sdig med ma ; ils résident dans les quatre orientes, les directions intermédiaires et le zénith ; leurs sœurs, les neuf sœurs Phra mo (*phra mo spun dgu*) résident dans les cinq éléments, curieusement appelés ici terre, rocher, arbre, eau et liquides épais (? *ska*), mares, flaques d'eau, cascades.

Parmi ces grands *sa bdag* nuisibles, certains ont la forme de vaches et de bœufs, d'autres la forme de fourmis, de chiens et de porcs, etc.

⁹⁹ Probablement le même que le chef des *sa bdag* Tsang tsang 'khor ba cité par Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 287 ; v. aussi p. 297).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956 : 292), The se rgyal po, ou The se chen po.

¹⁰¹ Dans deux listes différentes, Nebesky-Wojkowitz cite un Tsang kun *lcags kyi 'khor lo can* ("avec une roue de fer"), au sud (1956 : 291) et un Tsang kun khyab pa qui réside dans l'espace intermédiaire (p. 292).

2.11 Les *lte dkar*

On mentionnera, pour être complet, ces *numina* inconnus par ailleurs. Ils ne forment à nouveau une catégorie bien identifiée que dans T86 où, dans une série de chapitres consacrés à la propitiation des *numina* qui font tomber la grêle, le chapitre 23 est intitulé "Chapitre de la grêle des quatre *lte dkar*" (*lte dkar bzhi'i ser ba'i le'u*). Ce sont en fait un *dmu*, un *bdud*, un *btsan* et un *the'u rang* qui sont qualifiés ou qui portent ce nom de *lte dkar* ; seul le *btsan* a ce qui ressemble à un nom : bTsan ta ser lte dkar. Tous quatre décrivent le rituel sanglant destiné à les soumettre aux ordres de l'officiant et énoncent leurs *mantra* puis l'invocation que le prêtre devra prononcer, dans laquelle ils sont chacun décrits sous un aspect terrible, mais sans grande originalité. Aucun fragment de mythe n'indique leur origine ou leur résidence.

Conclusion

Dans un premier temps, l'étude du *Réseau des mille dieux et démons* avait été déterminée par la recherche de sources sur l'origine des rituels *mdos*. Si cette première lecture s'était révélée infructueuse – on n'y trouve que l'énoncé succinct de l'élaboration des *mdos* destinés à satisfaire les *numina* du monde phénoménal – elle semblait prometteuse, en revanche, de données sur ces *numina* eux-mêmes, leurs classifications et leurs mythes.

En ce qui concerne les classifications, on avait envisagé l'hypothèse que tout le panthéon du *tantra* pourrait être organisé selon le schéma des huit catégories de dieux-démons (*sde brgyad*), éventuellement héritées de l'Inde comme l'a montré Samten Karmay (2002), si l'origine indienne de ce *tantra* n'était pas une pure fiction. Or, on l'a indiqué en commençant, si des listes de huit *numina* "classiques" se rencontrent parfois, elles ne sont pas regroupées sous le vocable *sde brgyad* et, par ailleurs, l'analyse du *tantra* fait ressortir une série de catégories qui ne figurent habituellement pas dans les listes des *sde brgyad* et qui échappent à toute classification connue. Quant à l'origine du *tantra*, en dehors du récit-cadre, on ne peut que remarquer la présence insignifiante du panthéon indien, au profit d'un panthéon apparemment purement tibétain (même si la terminologie qui désigne les *numina* a servi par ailleurs à traduire des catégories indiennes). Ce panthéon est d'ailleurs foisonnant et, sans prétendre avoir fait des recherches approfondies pour identifier chacun de ses membres, on peut affirmer qu'il est dans l'ensemble différent de celui relevé par Tucci (1949, vol. 2 : 717-725) et Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) à travers de nombreuses sources, auxquelles on peut ajouter le *lHa 'dre bka' thang* (Blondeau 1971). Tucci propose d'attribuer cette variabilité des nomenclatures et des noms à

l'origine régionale des textes ou des traditions ; aucun élément ne permet pour l'instant de confirmer cette hypothèse, pour séduisante qu'elle soit.

Qu'en est-il des mythes ? D'abord, il ne s'agit que de fragments de mythes d'origine, dans l'ensemble très pauvres et répétitifs (à l'exception de ceux de dPe dkar rgyal po et des quatre *rgyal po Sad*)¹⁰². En schématisant, on pourrait dire qu'ils illustrent l'un des archétypes des mythes d'origine tibétains¹⁰³ : dans un pays situé très loin, au-delà de nombreux cols et vallées, dans une forteresse vertigineuse, un ancêtre primordial et la mère primordiale engendrent un fils et une fille – ou des fils et des filles en nombre égal – dont l'union incestueuse donne naissance à une lignée (humaine ou surnaturelle)¹⁰⁴. La nature fragmentaire des mythes qui nous sont parvenus a déjà été relevée par R.A. Stein (1971) et Samten Karmay (1986), même si la tradition bon po a parfois gardé des récits plus longs et plus cohérents que la tradition bouddhiste ; "(...) on a bien souvent l'impression (...) qu'on a noté des fragments au fur et à mesure qu'on s'en souvenait"¹⁰⁵. Seul un patient travail de dépouillement des textes – canoniques et rituels – permettra peut-être de recomposer partiellement l'image du monde que s'étaient formée les premiers Tibétains.

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¹⁰³ Un autre archétype bien connu est celui de la création issue de la fragmentation d'un œuf cosmique ; v. par exemple Karmay 1986 : 83-85.

¹⁰⁴ Ce thème de l'union incestueuse n'apparaît pas explicitement dans le *Réseau des mille dieux et démons*, mais il est récurrent dans les *tantra* des Ma mo ; cf. Blondeau 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Stein 1971 : 480.

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dGe rtse paṅ chen 'Gyur med mchog grub (1761-1829)

s.d. *dKar chag : bDe bar gshegs pa'i bstan pa thams cad kyi snying po rig pa 'dzin pa'i sde snod theg pa snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa*

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LES *BKA' BRGYAD* — SOURCES CANONIQUES
ET TRADITION DE NYANG RAL NYI MA 'OD ZER

Tenzin Samphel

 Parmi les très nombreux textes où l'on peut trouver des informations sur les classes de dieux-démons, les Huit enseignements de Padmasambhava (*bKa' brgyad*) paraissent une source privilégiée. Ce sont, en effet, les sources historiographiques les plus anciennes (elles remonteraient au 8e siècle) et les plus détaillées que nous possédions sur le sujet. Mais avant d'étudier les huit classes de dieux-démons (*lha srin sde brgyad*) dans ce cycle, il semble approprié d'examiner les *tantra* dont les *bKa' brgyad* sont la mise en pratique.

1. Les sources canoniques des *bKa' brgyad*

Les cinq premiers *tantra* traitent des cinq familles de bouddha courroucés, et les trois derniers évoquent les huit classes de dieux-démons ou esprits mondains locaux (*'jig rten rang rgyud pa'i lha 'dre*). Au sein de ces derniers, la seconde partie intitulée "Prendre support sur les esprits mondains et leur faire des offrandes" (*'jig rten mchod brten*)¹ donne des informations détaillées sur les huit classes de dieux-démons. Ici, mon travail est basé sur le *gter ma* de Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* qui inclut un *tantra* du même nom, traduit par Guru Padma et Vairocana (8e siècle)² selon le colophon. Nyang ral³ mentionne que ce *tantra* est l'exemplaire du roi (*rGyal po'i bla dpe*) Khri srong lde btsan (790-845) et qu'il fut écrit avant la révision du tibétain littéraire et l'introduction de nouveaux termes dans la langue. Ce texte présente des graphies archaïques semblables à celles des manuscrits de Dunhuang : par exemple, la voyelle "i" est inscrite à l'envers ; au lieu de *la sogs pa*, on peut lire *la stsogs pa* ; en place de *dpe ltar*, on peut lire *dpe' ltar*. Par ailleurs, comme on l'a indiqué plus haut, la 7e partie du cycle *bKa' brgyad* est appelée *'jig rten mchod brten*, là où les textes plus tardifs emploient *'jig rten mchod bstod*, "louer les esprits mondains et leur faire des offrandes".

Selon Sum pa mkhan po⁴, les trois dernières parties des *bKa' brgyad* furent composées plus tard par Guru Rinpoche, une fois subjugués les démons du Tibet. Dans le catalogue du *Tripitaka* de l'université Otani, les *tantra* des huit cycles des *bKa' brgyad*⁵ sont exposés au complet.

¹ Dans l'édition de Pékin, *The Tibetan Tripitaka* (1962, tome 1, vol. 22 : 67), le *tantra* racine de ces huit classes de dieux-démons est appelé : *'jig rten mchod bstod sgrub pa rtsa ba'i rgyud* (skt. *Loka-stotra-pūja-tantra-manobhikasantakam*).

² Pour Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1973 : 73), "Pagor Vairocana réunit tous les enseignements des *bKa' brgyad*, après que Guru Rinpoche les lui ait donnés au Tibet".

³ Nyang ral 1977, vol. 1 : 248.

⁴ Sum pa mkhan po 1992 : 743.

⁵ *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, 1962, tome 1, vol. 22, *zha* : n° 461-468.

Quelques-uns furent traduits au 8^e siècle par Vimalamitra, Jñānakumāra, Vairocana et Guru Rinpoche ; les autres ne comportent pas de nom de traducteur. Dans la biographie *gter ma* de Vairocana⁶, dans le *chos 'byung* de Nyang ral⁷ et celui attribué à Klong chen rab 'byams pa⁸, on trouve le nom de tous les *tantra* originaux, traduits au 8^e siècle par sNubs Nam mkha'i snying po, mKhar chen dPal gyi dbang phyug, Vairocana, Guru rinpoche, etc. Ainsi, les *tantra* qui servent de supports aux *bKa' brgyad* étaient connus au Tibet dès le 8^e siècle et ont été enrichis plus tard par les découvertes de Nyang ral, Guru chos dbang (1212-1271), O rgyan gling pa (1323-?), Ratna gling pa (1403-1476), Pad ma gling pa (1450-1521) etc., et les textes de pratiques rédigés jusqu'à ceux de bDud 'joms rinpoche (1904-1987).

Rappelons que, selon la tradition *rnying ma pa*, parmi les neuf véhicules, les trois véhicules ésotériques sont eux-mêmes classés en trois catégories :

- la transmission longue de la lignée orale (*ring brgyud bka' ma*),
- la transmission courte de la lignée révélée (*nye brgyud gter ma*),
- la transmission profonde de la lignée de la pure vision (*zab mo dag snang*).

À son tour, la première est divisée en trois : les *tantra* du Mahāyoga⁹, la transmission orale de l'Anuyoga et les instructions (*man ngag*) de l'Atiyoga.

Le Mahāyoga comporte deux sections : celle des *tantra* (*rgyud sde*) et celle de leurs *sādhana* (*sgrub sde*) ; mais en réalité, cette dernière section est tout entière occupée par les *bKa' brgyad* ; on y trouve deux lignées de transmission, transmission orale et transmission révélée.

La première lignée, celle de la transmission orale des *tantra* Mahāyoga, concerne cinq *tantra*¹⁰ :

1. le *tantra* du Corps, lié à la famille du bouddha Vairocana (*sKu rNam snang gi rigs*) nommé '*Phags pa 'jam dpal las bzhi 'khor lo gsang ba'i rgyud* (*Ārya-mañjuśrī-karmacatuścakraḡuhya-tantra*), établi par l'*ācārya*¹¹ Mañjuśrīmitra de l'Inde de l'ouest (*rGya gar nub phyogs Rim pa gnyis pa* ; skt. ?) ;
2. le *tantra* de la Parole, lié à la famille du bouddha Amitābha (*gSung sNang mtha'i rigs*) appelé *gSang ba rta mchog rol pa'i rgyud* (*Guhya-vanośi-aśvottama-vīṇāsamata-tantra*), établi par

⁶ rGyal mo gYu sgra snying po 1995 : 248.

⁷ 1977, vol. 1 : 279.

⁸ Klong chen rab 'byams 1991 : 332. Cf. Martin 1997 : 58.

⁹ D'après rGyal mo gYu sgra snying po (1995 : 13), 128 ans après que le Bouddha soit passé en *parinirvāṇa*, les *tantra* du Mahāyoga furent les premiers à apparaître dans le royaume des hommes.

¹⁰ V. Dudjom rinpoche 1991, I : 283. Comme l'indique la note 279 (*ibid.*, II : 20), en plus du *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*, on trouve aussi ces cinq *tantra* dans le *bKa' 'gyur* de Derge (dans l'édition de Pékin : v. note 5).

¹¹ *slob dpon*, titre des maîtres dans l'école Mahāyoga. Dudjom rinpoche (1991, I : 475-481) rapporte une tradition légèrement différente.

l'*ācārya* Ārya-Nāgārjuna de Beta en Inde du sud (*rGya gar lho phyogs be ta'i yul*) ;

3. Le *tantra* de la Pensée, lié à la famille du bouddha Akṣobhya (*Thugs Mi bskyod pa'i rigs*) nommé *dPal Heruka snying rje rol pa'i rgyud* (*Śrī-heruka-karuṇākṛīḍita-tantra*), établi par l'*ācārya* Hūmkara¹², venu de l'Inde de l'est, près de Zahor (Est du Bengale) (*rGya gar shar phyogs za hor dang nye ba*) ;
4. le *tantra* relevant des Qualités, lié à la famille du bouddha Ratnasambhava (*Yon tan Rin 'byung gi rigs*) nommé *bDud rtsi chen po mchog gi lung* (*Amṛitamahā-uttama-siddhi*), établi par l'*ācārya* Mañjuśrīmitra¹³ de l'Inde de l'ouest (*nub phyogs Glang po'i tshal*) ;
5. le *tantra* des Activités, lié à la famille du bouddha Amoghasiddhi (*Phrin las Don grub kyi rigs*) appelé *rDo rje phur pa rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi dum bu* (*Vajrakīlaya mūlatantra khaṇḍa*¹⁴), établi par l'*ācārya* Prabhāhasti venu d'Inde de l'ouest¹⁵.

Ces cinq cycles de *tantra* Mahāyoga de la lignée de transmission orale furent reçus, pratiqués et transmis par ces cinq grands maîtres (*mahā-ācārya*) indiens.

Quant à la seconde lignée¹⁶, celle de la transmission révélée (les *bKa' brgyad*), elle fut communiquée par le bouddha primordial Kun tu bzang po à son entourage pur dont Śrī-Heruka, etc., et tous ces enseignements furent rassemblés par rDo rje chos et d'autres membres de l'entourage du bouddha. Comme le temps n'était pas encore venu de les diffuser dans le monde des humains, ils furent transcrits en lettres magiques (*rdzu 'phrul gyi yi ge*)¹⁷ puis déposés dans un précieux reliquaire (*rin po che'i sgrom*) scellé, remis aux mains de la *dākinī* Las kyi dbang mo che pour qu'elle les protège, et cachés sous le *stūpa* bDe byed brtsegs pa¹⁸, près du cimetière bSil ba tshal (skt. Śītavana)¹⁹. Un

¹² Pour Guru bkra shis (1990 : 102), ce n'est pas le même personnage que Bal po (Newari) Hūmkara. Selon l'école ancienne (rNying ma), il est appelé Hūmkara, mais les écoles nouvelles (gSar ma) le nomment sMan pa'i zhabs.

¹³ *Sic.* On attendrait Vimalamitra.

¹⁴ *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, 1962, vol. 3, ca, n° 78 : 45a-46b. D'après le colophon, ce *tantra* a été traduit par dPal ldan sa skya (Sa skya paṇḍita).

¹⁵ Rappelons que les manuscrits tibétains de Dunhuang contiennent des pratiques de Kīlaya (Phur pa) : Pelliot tib. 44 (cf. Bischoff et Hartman 1971 : 11).

¹⁶ V. aussi Dudjom rinpoche 1991, I : 482-483. Je continue à suivre la tradition rapportée par Nyang ral.

¹⁷ D'après les différents *gter ston*, ils auraient découvert les *gter ma* rédigés dans des écritures variées : *gter yig, mkha' 'gro'i brda yig, gnam yig, srin po'i yi ge*, etc.

¹⁸ O rgyan gling pa (1993, chapitre 22 : 159) : "Au milieu du charnier [bSil ba tshal], se trouvait le *stūpa* bDe byed brtsegs pa dans le style *lha babs mchod rten*".

¹⁹ *Ibid.* : "Le charnier bSil ba tshal est situé à cinq lieues (*dpag tshad*) au sud-ouest de rDo rje gdan [Bodhgaya]".

jour, huit *mahā-ācārya*²⁰ se réunirent autour du *stūpa*, avertis par leur intuition de sagesse ; au cours de la journée, ils virent le *stūpa* couvert de lumières et d'arcs-en-ciel et, la nuit, de nombreux dieux-démons et *ḍākinī* qui s'y rassemblaient afin de le protéger. Le moment venu, grâce aux circonstances et au *karma* mûr d'une pure inspiration, après que les huit *ācārya* aient eu présenté les offrandes rituelles tout en maintenant les protecteurs liés par serment, le chef des protecteurs, la *ḍākinī* Las kyi dbang mo che, apparut et leur donna le précieux reliquaire dans lequel se trouvaient huit boîtes faites de différents métaux précieux contenant le cycle des enseignements des *bKa' brgyad*. Il existait une neuvième boîte, faite de huit métaux précieux, qui contenait les enseignements du *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*²¹. À cette époque, les huit *ācārya* avaient été incapables de briser le sceau pour ouvrir ce reliquaire et l'avaient caché au même endroit sous le *stūpa*. Par la suite, Guru Rinpoche reçut la transmission des *bKa' brgyad* de ces huit *ācārya* et révéla leurs enseignements. Plus tard, lorsqu'il vint au Tibet, il subjuga tous les dieux-démons et ouvrit le *maṅḍala* du *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* à bSam yas 'ching bu [mChims phu] Brag dmar ke'u tshang. Auparavant, il avait conféré une initiation à ses neuf fils spirituels²² qui, chacun, avaient préparé une guirlande de fleurs dorées à jeter sur leur *maṅḍala* d'élection. C'est alors que tous les dieux-démons créèrent des obstacles : ainsi firent-ils glisser des plaques d'ardoise sur Guru Rinpoche qui prononça sur le champ "Hūṃ" et aussitôt, les ardoises prirent la forme de la syllabe "Hūṃ" ainsi proférée. De nos jours encore, ce lieu est appelé "Ardoisière semblable à la syllabe Hūṃ" (*rDza mo Hūṃ 'dra ma*).

À la même époque, Rlangs ban dPal gyi ye shes²³ déposa des fleurs sur le *maṅḍala* 'Jig rten mchod brten²⁴ et pratiqua dans la grotte "Tanière du tigre" à Mon sPa gro (Bhoutan) nommée Seng ge bsam sgrub phug. Là, il reçut les accomplissements dans l'art de subjuguier et de maîtriser les huit classes de dieux-démons. Il fut le premier

²⁰ Selon Nyang ral (1977, vol. 1 : 5), les huit grands *ācārya* indiens du cycle des *bKa' brgyad* sont : Hūṃchenkara, 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen, Klu grub snying po, Bhi ma mi tra, Pra chen ha ti, Rum bu ghu ya dhe ba, Dha na sang tri, Shan ting ghar ba.

²¹ 'Ju mi pham (s.d., vol. 21 : 15) mentionne également cette neuvième cassette, dont les autres *gter ston* qui ont découvert des cycles de *bKa' brgyad* ne parlent pas. V. aussi Dudjom rinpoche 1991, I : 483.

²² Nyang ral (1977 : 9), rapporte que "les huit ou neuf personnes qui reçurent la transmission des *bKa' brgyad* (*bka' babs mi brgyad dam dgu*)", étaient Khri srong lde btsan, sNubs ban Sangs rgyas ye shes, bTsun pa Ngan lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs, bsNubs ban dge slong Nam mkha'i snying po, Slob dpon sNyags ban Jñānakumāra, Jo mo Ye shes mtsho rgyal, 'Brog mi dPal gyi ye shes, Slob dpon Rlangs ban dPal gyi seng ge et Pa gor Vairocana. Selon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1973 : 73), ceux-là étaient appelés les neuf fils spirituels, roi et sujets, de Guru rinpoche (*rje 'bangs thugs sras dgu*). Parmi eux, certains sont parfois mentionnés comme les *rje 'bangs grogs gsum* de Guru rinpoche : ce sont le roi Khri srong lde btsan, le sujet Pa gor Vairocana et l'amie Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

²³ D'après Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1973 : 74), c'est le second Rlangs dPal gyi seng ge.

²⁴ C'est le *maṅḍala* du bouddha Dregs pa kun 'dul, dans la 7e partie des *bKa' brgyad*, entouré des huit classes de dieux-démons.

maître des *sde brgyad* au Tibet et son clan Rlangs fut connu comme la lignée des Maîtres des démons (*Rlangs 'dre 'dul gyi brgyud pa*)²⁵. Ainsi, les cinq premiers des *bKa' brgyad* sont-ils des pratiques des cinq divinités courroucées, manifestations du corps, de la parole, de la pensée, des qualités et des activités du Bouddha. Les trois derniers traitent des protecteurs mondains locaux (*'jig rten pa'i srung ma*) et sont les pratiques *des tantra* suivants :

1. des Ma mo (Mātṛkā), *dākinī* courroucées représentant le principe féminin qui détient les maladies et les affections (*mKha' 'gro ma me lce 'bar ba'i rgyud ; Dākinī agnijihvā jvalā tantra*²⁶) ;
2. des *mantra* terribles (*drag sngags*) servant à protéger de la malédiction et des obstacles (*Drag sngags 'dus pa rdo rje rtsa ba'i rgyud ; Vajramantra-bhīru-sandhi-mūlatantra*²⁷) ;
3. des louanges et offrandes aux esprits mondains (*'Jig rten mchod bstod sgrub pa rtsa ba'i rgyud ; Loka-stotra-pūja-tantra manobhika-santakam*²⁸).

2. Subjugation des huit classes (*sde brgyad*) et leur orientation dans le *maṇḍala*, selon le *Nyang ral bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*

Dans cette volumineuse collection attribuée à Nyang ral, le *tantra* racine des *bKa' brgyad* expose dans son chapitre 7 (*'jig rten mchod brten*) le sujet en détail (Nyang ral 1977, vol. 1 : 179-210). En voici un résumé : "Ainsi ai-je entendu." Dans le palais du Dharmadhātu du paradis Akaniṣṭha, le glorieux Kun tu bzang po se manifesta hors de son état paisible de *dharmadhātu* sous la forme courroucée de Che mchog Heruka (Śrī-Heruka) avec sa parèdre gNam zhal ma, subjuguant Mahādeva et Ūmadevī ainsi que tous les esprits locaux arrogants²⁹ (*'jig rten gyi dregs pa*) qui ont pouvoir sur le monde des hommes. Puis du coeur de Śrī-Heruka, la syllabe Hūṃ de couleur sombre irradia dans huit directions, se transformant en les huit bouddha courroucés³⁰ et leurs *maṇḍala* respectifs. Alors le bouddha Dregs pa kun 'dul (Qui subjugué tous les esprits arrogants)³¹ demanda à Śrī-Heruka et à sa parèdre de lui expliquer le *sādhana* (*sgrub thabs*) du cycle du *'Jig rten*

²⁵ Pour plus de détails, voir Rlangs Byang chub 'dre bkol 1986 : 44.

²⁶ *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, 1962, tome 1, vol. 10, n° 466 : 228a-256a. Selon le *Catalogue éd. Pékin*, il fut traduit par Padma et dPal gyi seng ge.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, n° 467 : 256a-272a. Selon le *Catalogue éd. Pékin*, il fut traduit par "Padma 'byung gnas et moi, Vairo".

²⁸ *Ibid.*, n° 468 : 272a-291b.

²⁹ Ici, cela inclut toutes les différentes classes de dieux-démons. Dans l'introduction des trois derniers *tantra* est indiquée la divinité tantrique respective qui subjugué Mahādeva et son entourage, etc.

³⁰ Ce sont les huit bouddha courroucés du *maṇḍala* des *bKa' brgyad*.

³¹ L'un des huit bouddha courroucés des *bKa' brgyad*, qui est situé au nord-ouest du *maṇḍala* des huit classes de dieux-démons.

mchod brten afin de subjuguier les esprits pernicioeux. Aussi, Śrī-Heruka lui en exposa non seulement le *sādhana*, mais encore le *maṇḍala*. Celui-ci est entouré de flammes qui forment une barrière de protection juste avant le charnier ; quatre portes donnent accès au centre de ce *maṇḍala* du 'Jig rten mchod brten, qui figure un rasoir à quatre pointes ; au milieu se tient le bouddha Dregs pa kun 'dul avec sa parèdre, entouré de Mahādeva et des trente chefs des esprits arrogants (*dregs pa'i sde dpon sum cu*) ; sur le pourtour, se dressent les huit villes des dieux-démons.

3. Synthèse des traditions tibétaines sur la subjugation des dieux-démons

Les sources historiographiques s'accordent avec la tradition orale pour affirmer que le Tibet, à l'origine, a été habité et gouverné par diverses classes de non-humains. De plus, les Tibétains voyaient leur terre comme dessinant le corps d'une démons couchée et considéraient que leur ancêtre n'était pas un être humain mais était issu d'un singe et d'une démons.

Dans des temps reculés, le Tibet était dominé par les différentes classes de dieux-démons, tels les ogres (*srin po*), les êtres-démons (*gnod sbyin*), les démons (*bdud*), les esprits aquatiques (*klu*), les démons *dmu*³², les esprits (*'dre*). Le pays lui-même était connu comme la terre des ogres ou la terre des esprits, des démons, etc. Certaines armes rudimentaires, telles la fronde, le lasso, la catapulte (*rdo sgyogs*) seraient des vestiges de cette lointaine civilisation. Les derniers dieux-démons qui auraient dominé le Tibet étaient les Ma sangs, de la classe des *the'u rang*. Ces Ma sangs étaient très proches des êtres humains, et leur étaient familiers.

Ainsi, le jeu de dés (*sho*), qui se joue avec trois dés, est considéré, dans la tradition orale populaire, comme un jeu des Ma sangs et le langage utilisé³³ ainsi que les chiffres sont dits des Ma sangs. Pour s'assurer de gagner, il faut procéder de la manière suivante : s'isoler dans une grotte ; provoquer un Ma sangs en le traitant de perdant ; quand enfin, il pose les mains sur les dés, les lui maintenir en lui demandant, pour la peine, de gagner désormais à chaque fois.

Une réelle compréhension de la civilisation tibétaine requerrait l'étude de l'époque préhistorique car aujourd'hui encore, les usages, les croyances et la mentalité même du peuple tibétain sont

³² Ce sont les démons qui viennent pendant le sommeil et provoquent au dormeur une sensation d'oppression.

³³ *sho bshad* est un langage spécifique au jeu de dés, pour invoquer les Ma sangs afin qu'ils fassent obtenir au joueur le nombre souhaité ; la plupart des mots de ce langage sont issus du vocabulaire érotique et physique. Ainsi, dans le langage des dés, le nombre trois est appelé *suku* ou *suk*. Quand on invoque le Ma sangs pour qu'il donne ce nombre, on dit : "*suk suk, zur gsum bu mo'i bsdad stangs red, stu dang rting ka kha sprod red*", c'est-à-dire : "Trois, trois ; le triangle est la manière de s'asseoir des filles, où les talons et le sexe se font face".

profondément imprégnés de sa mémoire ; la notion de dieu-démon est spontanée pour les Tibétains. Selon dGe 'dun chos 'phel (1903-1951)³⁴ : "Les démons *'dre* ont un oeil unique sur le front et la femelle a un long bec de cuivre avec lequel elle brise le crâne des hommes et en mange la cervelle ; ce genre de description est typique des Tibétains".

Plus tard, lors du règne du septième roi Gri gum brtsan po, on parle des relations entre les *lha*, les *'dre*, les *yul lha* et les humains. Le roi fut tué par Lo ngam et, ultérieurement, selon dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, quand le prince Ru las skyes ouvrit le coffre qui contenait le cadavre du roi, le son *ngar ra ra* en sortit et le lieu fut nommé Ngar pa thang. À ce moment, des gouttes d'or tombèrent du ciel sur le corps qui se transforma alors en dieu du ciel appelé "Goutte d'or" et devint ensuite un dieu protecteur local (*yul lha*) de ce village³⁵. C'est la première fois qu'est évoqué un roi humain transformé en dieu non-humain. Auparavant, lorsque la reine était en train de garder le cheval de Lo ngam, elle tomba endormie et rêva qu'elle faisait l'amour avec un yak blanc³⁶ ; plus tard, elle accoucha d'un morceau de sang mouvant qu'elle garda dans la corne chaude d'un yak sauvage et le nourrit au sein. Par la suite, le prince Ru las skyes grandit et vengea son père³⁷.

À cette époque – continue dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba – au Tibet central, en un lieu nommé 'On, un enfant de douze ans du clan gShen qui avait des oreilles de cheval, fut enlevé par un démon. Quand il revint douze ans après, il énonça les différents démons existant au Tibet et inventa un rituel d'offrandes pour les démons locaux (*yul 'dre*) ; il portait aussi un turban de laine (*bal thod*) sur la tête pour cacher ses oreilles. On suppose que ce sont là les prémices de la religion bon (*rdol bon*)³⁸. À cette époque, ni le *g-yung drung bon* ni le bouddhisme n'étaient connus au Tibet. (Il est, d'après les sources tibétaines, le premier être humain à avoir visité le monde non-humain, à en avoir livré des informations et à avoir inventé les rituels appropriés.)

Toujours selon le *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*³⁹, Le roi 'Bro gnyen lde'u avait épousé une belle reine du Dwags po. Or, jour après jour, elle devenait de plus en plus vilaine, repoussante même ; aussi demanda-t-elle qu'on lui rapporte du Dwags po son plat préféré et, après l'avoir mangé, elle fut de nouveau aussi belle qu'avant. Le roi, surpris, alla immédiatement visiter la réserve de nourriture dans laquelle il y avait une multitude de grenouilles⁴⁰ (dans la vallée du Yar lung, à cette

³⁴ dGe 'dun chos 'phel 1990, vol. 2 : 78.

³⁵ dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba 1985, vol. 1 : 163.

³⁶ Il est mentionné par bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1982 : 56) et par bSod nams grags pa (1982 : 15), que ce yak était le dieu Yar lha sham po.

³⁷ Voir Bacot, Thomas, Toussaint 1940 : 121, ainsi que Macdonald 1971 : 221.

³⁸ dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba 1985, vol. 1 : 164.

³⁹ 1985, vol. 1 : 171.

⁴⁰ Les Tibétains considèrent que les grenouilles, les serpents et les autres animaux aquatiques appartiennent à l'espèce des *klu* ; dans la biographie de Ras chung pa

époque – glose dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba – on appelait les poissons par le nom de grenouilles) : choqué, il attrapa la lèpre. À partir de ce moment, le Dwags po fut connu comme le pays où l'on mange des grenouilles. Finalement, le roi, la reine et le ministre sNyags thang pa yar rje se firent enterrer vivants afin d'éviter à leurs descendants de souffrir d'un tel mal⁴¹. (C'est la première mention d'une réaction des *klu* envers les êtres humains.)

C'est sous le règne de Srong brtsan sgam po (617-649/650) que, pour la première fois, les esprits de la terre et les dieux-démons auraient été subjugués. D'après le *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p. 265), après que le roi Srong brtsan sgam po eut permis de construire les temples, la princesse Brikūṭī (Khri btsun) s'en alla avec de nombreux cavaliers et les êtres-démons (*gnod sbyin*), au Dol, au Yar lung sog kha et dans d'autres régions favorables, afin de trouver le lieu propice à leur construction. Comme on avait commencé à poser les fondations de 108 temples, elles furent détruites pendant la nuit par les huit classes des dieux-démons. Alors la princesse Brikūṭī envoya un serviteur chargé d'offrandes d'or pour la princesse Kongjo afin que cette dernière fasse une divination dont le résultat fut : au sud de la colline du Palais rouge (Pho brang dmar po ri), près du lac de 'O thang, en un lieu appelé forêt des gazelles (Gla ba'i tshal) se trouvait un arbre à poison où se rassemblaient tous les dieux-démons et êtres non-humains (*lha srin mi ma yin*) qui causent famine et maladie.

Pour les détruire, le roi pria Jo bo Rinpoche. Jo bo Rinpoche sourit et deux rayons de lumière irradièrent de sa bouche et se transformèrent en Hayagrīva et bDud rtsi 'khyil ba ; de leur cœur jaillit un feu qui brûla l'arbre à poison. Par le pouvoir d'un geste tantrique (*mudrā*) ils (Hayagrīva et bDud rtsi 'khyil ba) immobilisèrent tous les dieux-démons qui furent chassés par un feu et un vent puissants au-delà du grand océan.

Au sud-ouest du palais rouge, selon les conseils de Kongjo, on construisit le *stūpa* Ke ru afin de boucher le passage des esprit féroces (*brtsan*) et les empêcher de tuer moines et pratiquants tibétains.

Au nord-ouest du palais se trouvait une grotte orientée à l'est où dormaient les esprit féminins (*ma mo*). Comme cela était cause de nombreux obstacles, la reine Ru yong bza' fit une image du Bouddha Vairocana qu'elle plaça à l'intérieur de cette grotte.

Au nord du palais était un lieu appelé Terre désertique (*bye ma'i gling*) où se trouvait, dans le palais des *klu*, le cœur même de la Démone⁴². Pour déjouer cette mauvaise influence, Kongjo fit construire le Ra mo che et y établit la statue du Bouddha Śākyamuni

(rGod tshang ras pa 1992 : 18) sont évoqués les mêmes maux causés par les *klu* en tant que propriétaires de la terre (*sa bdaḡ*).

⁴¹ Encore maintenant, les Tibétains ne brûlent pas le corps des lépreux.

⁴² Depuis les temps anciens, les Tibétains se figuraient les contours de leur terre comme dessinant le corps d'une démons couchée, la Démone, dans le cœur de laquelle était situé le palais des *klu*, qui correspondait au site Terre désertique.

âgé de huit ans (la tradition ultérieure parle de douze ans) qu'elle avait apportée avec elle de Chine.

Dans le but de supprimer les effets négatifs des quatre éléments, on édifia un *linga* de Śīva, un *garuḍa*, le *stūpa* Se ru et un lion en pierre blanche ainsi que les *stūpa* et les temples qui furent placés aux lieux correspondant aux articulations de la Démone mythique.

C'est ainsi qu'à l'époque du roi Srong brtsan, en suivant les lois de la géomancie, on a construit *stūpa*, temples et statues visant à neutraliser les énergies négatives des éléments et à subjuguier les dieux-démons.

La deuxième subjugation intervint sous le règne de Khri srong lde brtsan (742-797?) ; elle fut l'œuvre de Padmasambhava dont voici, en résumé, ce que dit le *Nyang ral chos 'byung*⁴³ :

Alors que Khri srong lde brtsan était âgé de vingt-et-un ans, comme l'*ācārya* Śāntaraksita avait échoué dans la construction de bSam yas, un messenger fut envoyé pour inviter Guru Rinpoche ; ils revenaient ensemble quand, arrivés à Mang yul Don mkhar, tous les dieux-démons du mNga' ris, tels Jo bo gyer rgod et les chefs des dieux locaux (*srid pa'i lha chen*) des neuf vallées (*rong*), les esprits féroces (*btsan*), les esprits néfastes (*gnyan*), les esprits mâles (*rgyal po*), les esprits femelles (*rgyal mo*) et les déesses (*lha mo*) se rassemblèrent pour faire obstacle⁴⁴ et tenter de réduire Guru Rinpoche et son messenger. C'est alors que Guru Rinpoche leva son bâton (*phyag 'khar*) et frappa le rocher : un chemin s'ouvrit par lequel ils traversèrent la colline⁴⁵. Voyant cela, tous les dieux-démons et la reine du monde Mu tsa med (*Srid pa'i rgyal mo mu tsa med*) furent effrayés ; ils offrirent alors leur essence vitale (*srog snying*)⁴⁶ et promirent d'être des protecteurs de la doctrine. Guru Rinpoche donna à Mu tsa med le nom de Gangs kyi yum gcig rdo rje kun tu bzang⁴⁷.

⁴³ Nyang ral 1988 : 274 sq. On trouve ici un récit très comparable à celui qui est développé par le *lHa 'dre bka' thang* (v. Blondeau 1971).

⁴⁴ Selon O rgyan gling pa (1985 : 33), la cause des obstacles que rencontrait Guru rinpoche était qu'auparavant, lorsqu'il était au Népal, il avait sauvé la vie de la princesse Kun sa de Patan, des mains des dieux, des divinités aquatiques et des esprits-démons du Népal ; par la suite, ces trois-là communiquèrent et demandèrent l'aide des démons du Kong po, du Nyang po et de toutes les régions du Tibet pour combattre Guru rinpoche et lui créer des obstacles. Voir aussi Blondeau 1971 : 29.

⁴⁵ Pour O rgyan gling pa (1985 : 38), le nom de ce chemin est connu comme "Grotte du passage du *vajra*" (rDo rje'i phug lam), car Guru rinpoche lançant son *vajra* sur le roc forma ce passage.

⁴⁶ L'essence de vie est reliée au "code secret" respectif de chacune des classes de dieux et de démons, écrit avec le sang de leur propre coeur. Par exemple, pour les classes des *brtsan*, la syllabe secrète est *tsa*, celle des *klu* est *na*, celle des *ma mo* est *ma*. Quand un maître puissant les appelait par leur nom secret, ils ne pouvaient plus rester en repos ; ils devaient obéir car ce nom est presque aussi précieux que leur essence vitale.

⁴⁷ L'une des quatre démons parmi les 12 bsTan ma. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 182.

Plus tard, il se rendit à Brin chu bar⁴⁸ où il subjuga la protectrice des frontières bKra shis tshe ring ma⁴⁹ et la nomma bDag nyid chen mo rdo rje kun grags ma. Tout au long de sa route, Guru Rinpoche subjuga les dieux-démons. Un jour, gNam sman dkar mo lui lança un éclair ; plus rapide, Guru Rinpoche souffla dans le creux de sa main où apparut un peu d'eau, dit dessus le *mantra* "sva", et jeta l'eau sur l'éclair qui fut dans l'instant transformé en sept pois secs. gNam sman dkar mo prit peur et s'enfuit dans les eaux d'un lac appelé depuis Glorieux lac de la démons (dPal mo srin mtsho). Alors, Guru Rinpoche concentra sa pensée et imagina une masse de feu au-dessus du lac qui se mit à chauffer, à bouillir au point que gNam sman dkar mo perdit sa chair et voulut s'échapper de nouveau ; mais Guru Rinpoche lui lança son *vajra* au visage et elle perdit l'oeil droit. Vaincue, elle prit refuge et lui offrit son essence vitale. Guru Rinpoche la lia par le serment d'être une protectrice de la doctrine et la nomma Gangs dkar sha med rdo rje sryan gcig ma⁵⁰.

Alors que Guru Rinpoche passait par 'Jad shul, il construisit un *stūpa* afin de neutraliser les énergies négatives de la terre ; puis, à Shang zab phu lung et 'O yug sding ma, il subjuga tous les démons malfaisants tels les dieux, les *klu*, les démons et les esprits (*lha klu 'dre srin gdug pa*) ; il les lia par une promesse. Après son arrivée à Byang gnam mtsho, où les douze bsTan ma, les douze sKyong ma et les douze Ya ma s'étaient réunies pour lui faire obstacle, Guru Rinpoche détruisit leurs résidences, les montagnes de neige et les montagnes d'ardoise, grâce à son bâton, et ainsi les subjuga⁵¹. Lorsqu'il arriva à Pho lo sha lung, Yar lha sham po se manifesta (*sprul nas*) sous la forme d'un yak aussi énorme qu'une montagne ; Guru Rinpoche le prit par les naseaux par la *mudrā* du crochet (*lcags skyu'i phyag rgya*), l'immobilisa par la *mudrā* du lasso (*zhags pa'i phyag rgya*) et le ligota par la *mudrā* de la chaîne (*lcags sgrog gi phyag rgya*) ; le son de la clochette de Guru Rinpoche le rendit fou, il offrit son essence vitale et fut subjugué.

Puis Guru Rinpoche arriva à 'Dam shod avec ses compagnons. Là, Thang lha se transforma en un gigantesque être-démon et essaya de dévorer Guru Rinpoche qui esquissa un geste de menace (*sdig mdzub*). Alors, Thang lha se transforma immédiatement en un jeune homme portant un turban orné d'une turquoise. Les compagnons de Guru Rinpoche, effrayés, lui demandèrent sa protection et s'ils avaient affaire à un dieu. Guru Rinpoche répondit : "Il est le roi des *klu* dénommé Mos thod dkar ou gNyan thang lha". L'après-midi, Guru Rinpoche assura son entourage de sa protection et s'en fut rejoindre

⁴⁸ Selon 'Bri gung bstan 'dzin chos kyi blo gros (1983 : 5), ce lieu est mentionné comme Godavari.

⁴⁹ Une des cinq soeurs déesses (Tshe ring mched lnga) de la montagne. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 177.

⁵⁰ L'une des quatre esprits néfastes (*gnod sbyin ma*) parmi les 12 bsTan ma.

⁵¹ D'après O rgyan gling pa (1985-2 : 39), les bsTan ma bcu gnyis furent subjuguées à 'O yug bre mo sna (gTsang).

Thang lha, après avoir fourré des galettes et autres bonnes choses dans sa robe. Ainsi eut-il raison de Thang lha.

Il subjuguua aussi Shel tsha rgyal mo gangs et lui donna le nom de "Celle qui subjugue la grande troupe nomade du nord, appelée rDo rje bgegs kyi gtso mo⁵²".

Quand il arriva au 'Phan po, La ro sman, sTag sman gyi gdong et Byang phug ma rassemblèrent les vents du nord et les lâchèrent sur Guru Rinpoche et ses compagnons. La plupart tombèrent à terre et furent gelés par le souffle glacial ; Guru Rinpoche lui-même tomba gelé, mais il fit en leur faveur une *mudrā* de protection et médita la neige, l'argile et l'ardoise de la montagne comme une masse de feu. Alors, la montagne commença à fondre comme du beurre et Guru Rinpoche subjuguua tous les êtres-démons femelles (*gnod sbyin mo*) et les nomma Kyin thang la ro sman du nord⁵³.

Plus tard, il résida une nuit à Kha la brag ri de sTod lung bram bu où il subjuguua tous les esprits féroces. Puis, dans la grotte de Ma zam, il subjuguua tous les démons, les esprits mâles (*rgyal 'gong*), et les démons qui s'en prennent aux enfants (*the'u rang*) à gYa' ri gong. Enfin, quand il arriva à Has po ri, le roi pensa qu'étant le roi des "têtes noires" (*mgo nag mi*), le *guru* se devait de le saluer ; de son côté, Guru rinpoche pensa que, puisque lui était le roi des hommes, des dieux et des démons, le roi se devait de le saluer. Guru rinpoche entonna finalement le chant appelé "Je suis le plus grand et le plus puissant" (*nga che nga btsan*) et, dès qu'il eut esquissé un geste de salut au roi, l'habit de ce dernier se mit à brûler. Le roi confessa alors son arrogance et lui demanda de soumettre tous les mauvais dieux-démons afin de construire bSam yas. À cette fin, il exécuta le rituel suivant : dans une tasse en *gzi*, il fit des offrandes de petites billes de pâte (*ril bu*) avec des offrandes d'eau (*chab gtor*), qu'il imprégna de puissance et de bénédictions par sa contemplation et qu'il dédia aux huit classes de dieux-démons. À ce moment et en ce lieu, tous les dieux-démons furent réunis excepté rMa chen. Guru Rinpoche le somma de paraître ; il vint mais déclara qu'il n'aimait pas cette offrande d'eau versée sur les gâteaux rituels (*gtor ma*), qu'il voulait des offrandes sèches (*skam chas*⁵⁴). Alors Guru Rinpoche disposa dans un vase des offrandes d'or et d'argent auxquelles il mélangea de la poudre de diamant, il les bénit et les transforma en offrandes aussi vastes que l'espace. rMa chen posa sa jambe droite sur la plaine gYar mo du Khams et la gauche sur le Has po ri, entouré de trois cents compagnons divins et déités locales (*zo dor* ou *yul lha*) et 'Od de gung rgyal. Tous offrirent leur essence vitale à Guru Rinpoche et furent soumis. rMa ri rab, en tant que parèdre de rMa chen reçut le nom de 'Byams drag mo rgyal. Guru Rinpoche subjuguua les douze bsTan ma, les êtres-démons, les huit planètes (*gza'*) majeures et les vingt-huit planètes mineures ainsi que

⁵² L'une des quatre démons parmi les 12 bsTan ma.

⁵³ L'une des *sman mo* parmi les 12 bsTan ma.

⁵⁴ Dans le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, vol. 1 : 112, il est indiqué que *skam chas* signifie les biens de la maison, sens qui ne saurait convenir ici.

les vingt-et-un dGe bsnyen, divinités des montagnes de neige et d'ardoise (*gangs ri mo dang g-ya' ri mo*) et tous les dieux mineurs de l'espace. Sous les ordres de Guru Rinpoche, les huit classes de dieux-démons agirent pour la construction du temple de bSam yas, en apportant les pierres, etc. Pour cette construction, le charpentier newar sBa su et le chinois Lang rtse he avaient demandé beaucoup de bois ; aussi le roi s'inquiétait de savoir comment apporter tout ce bois et s'en enquit auprès de Guru Rinpoche. Ce dernier entra en méditation et vit que tous les dieux-démons s'empressaient à la construction, sauf le *klu* maître pernicieux du sol (*klu gnyan sa bdag*) qui soufflait du poison et cherchait à nuire aux autres. Alors, Guru Rinpoche déclara au roi qu'il irait passer une semaine à la grotte de mChims phu pour subjuguier le mauvais *klu* ; pendant ce temps, il ne faudrait pas le déranger. Puis il ouvrit le *maṇḍala* de rTa mgrin na ga klu 'dul et recueillit le sable rendu puissant par le *mantra* dans un sac triangulaire de tissu bleu et rouge.

Le cinquième jour, le roi rêva du *klu* de Lha sa rkyang phu : un homme blanc sur un cheval blanc lui donnait le joyau de sa couronne et lui annonçait qu'il avait encore d'autres bijoux pour lui, et du bois ; il proposait un pacte d'amitié que le roi, content, acceptait ; alors le *klu* le pria d'intervenir auprès de Guru Rinpoche pour qu'il interrompe sa retraite, et le roi promettait de le faire. Le lendemain, il réunit ses ministres à Yom 'bog thang et partit pour mChims phu. Toute la journée, avec ses ministres, ils cherchèrent en vain l'entrée de la grotte devant laquelle Guru Rinpoche avait placé un bâton magique⁵⁵ afin qu'on ne la voit pas. Puis Guru Rinpoche retira le bâton et ils purent entrer. Alors, ils virent un grand *garuḍa* effrayant portant par la taille les deux rois des *klu*, Mal gro gzi chen et Nag po klong rdol et serrant leurs queues entre ses pattes. Le roi comprit que c'était Guru Rinpoche et comme les *klu* étaient ainsi vaincus, le roi lui demanda de les libérer, ce qu'il fit. Alors les *klu* offrirent un joyau au roi et s'en furent avec les nuages du sud vers le nord dans un roulement de tonnerre, tandis que Guru Rinpoche annonçait que dans le futur, tout le pays serait sous le contrôle du *klu* maître néfaste du sol⁵⁶, et qu'il serait cause de nombreuses maladies, telle la lèpre, et des inondations de Lhasa.

De son côté, le *sBa' bzhed*⁵⁷, raconte : "Quand le roi Khri srong invita l'*ācārya* Śāntarakṣita au palais de Klungs tshugs pour qu'il y enseigne les dix vertus, les dieux-démons, irrités, envoyèrent la foudre, des inondations, la famine, des maladies aux hommes et aux animaux.

⁵⁵ *'phrul gyi sgrib shing* : c'est un bâton magique sur lequel on a écrit un *mantra* et placé certaines substances qui rendent invisible la personne ou l'objet qui est derrière.

⁵⁶ Nyang ral lui-même subit cette malédiction : d'après Slob ma dbu chen, mKhas pa so ston et dPon chen ye shes (1977, vol 1 : 67), même s'il avait réussi à subjuguier les huit classes de dieux et de démons, à la fin de sa vie, à cause du poison des *klu*, il souffrait d'un épanchement de lymphe dans le cœur (*thugs kar chu ser bsags*). Gra pa mngon shes planta une aiguille dans son cœur pour faire sortir la lymphe mais finalement, il trépassa. Pour confesser et réparer sa faute, Gra pa mngon shes construisit le grand monastère de Gra thang skya mo.

⁵⁷ sBa gSal snang 1982 : 12.

Aussi Guru rinpoche fut-il invité ; il quitta le Népal en passant par le Mang yul et subjuga tous les dieux-démons en chemin. Puis il arriva au palais de Klungs tshugs où il pratiqua une divination du miroir. Seng mgo lha lung 'tsho bzher gnyen legs, possédé par les quatre rois gardiens (*rgyal chen bzhi*)⁵⁸ révéla : "C'est Yar lha sham po⁵⁹ qui a envoyé l'inondation qui emporta le palais 'Phang thang ; Thang lha a envoyé la foudre sur le Palais rouge et les douze brTan ma ont provoqué la famine et les maladies". Finalement, Guru rinpoche fit à nouveau descendre dans des corps humains la conscience de quelques dieux et démons locaux, ils furent subjugués et liés par serment. Ceux qui n'avaient pas été subjugués furent offerts en offrande de feu [consommés] ou opprimés sous le sol. On réussit enfin à construire bSam yas et le bouddhisme fut alors bien établi. De ce fait, Guru rinpoche accomplit deux fois des subjugations. Avant de quitter le Tibet, sur la colline du Mang yul, il déclara : "Au Tibet, s'ils [les ministres bon po] m'avaient laissé une troisième fois subjugués les dieux, les démons, les *klu* et les esprits, le roi aurait vécu longtemps et le pouvoir de ses descendants aurait été plus étendu, il n'y aurait plus eu de guerres au Tibet et le bouddhisme serait demeuré longtemps. Je m'inquiète de ne pas avoir achevé (*'phro lus*) les subjugations : à la fin des âges de cinq dégénérescences, aucune opposition ne viendra même des hindouistes (*mu stegs kyi rgol ba*) mais, du fait que ces subjugations n'ont pas été complètes, des querelles (*rtsod pa*) surviendront parmi les bouddhistes eux-mêmes et de grands troubles (*'khrugs pa chen po*) auront lieu au Tibet".

En dehors de cette soumission générale des dieux-démons par Guru Rinpoche, fréquents sont les récits de subjugations effectuées par un saint personnage : pas de biographie qui n'évoque les activités de son héros dans ce domaine. Je ne citerai qu'un exemple, qui permet de rester dans la même tradition religieuse. Dans la biographie de mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon⁶⁰, fils de Nyang ral, on peut lire :

"Un jour, mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon, à sMra'o lcog du lHo brag, après avoir lié par serment les huit classes de dieux-démons était en train de faire des offrandes de lumière. Sur le chemin, plusieurs nomades qui jouaient aux dés utilisaient de l'or en guise de pierres ou de coquillages. mNga' bdag, ne pouvant en croire ses yeux, prit un peu de ce qui ressemblait à de l'or, le testa, vit que c'était bien de l'or et pensa que ces nomades stupides l'ignoraient. Quand il leur demanda où ils avaient trouvé cela, ils répondirent qu'il y en avait beaucoup comme ça dans le nid des marmottes (*phyi ba*). Lorsque mNga' bdag s'y rendit, il trouva beaucoup de poudre d'or grâce aux marmottes qui avaient creusé sous les rochers. Il déclara que les marmottes étaient des émanations des gardiens locaux (*gzhi bdag*).

⁵⁸ Ces quatre gardiens sont Yul 'khor srung (Dhṛtarāṣṭra), 'Phags skyes po (Virūḍhaka), s'Pyan mi bzang (Virūpakṣa) et rNam thos sras (Vaiśravaṇa).

⁵⁹ L'un des dieux locaux du Tibet central.

⁶⁰ Slob ma dbu chen, mKhas pa so ston et dPon chen ye shes 1977, vol 1 : 54.

Plus tard, d'un coin de la grotte, des rochers s'effondrèrent et livrèrent passage à une marmotte et à un cerf turquoise aux bois d'or qui bondirent d'un même élan vers le nord-est au village de E. Le village de E est réputé comme le plus riche en or de tout le pays ; car, pour les Tibétains, le lieu de résidence des gardiens locaux est une mine d'or."

Une autre fois⁶¹, alors qu'il était en train de dresser une digue pour protéger Lhasa des inondations, il roula jusqu'à trois cents pierres et n'en trouva pas une de plus. Alors, il fit une retraite de trois jours et subjuga les huit classes de dieux-démons ; après avoir prié ses Lamas et *yi dam*, il reçut d'eux une prophétie lui indiquant où il trouverait des pierres et, avec l'aide des douze *bsTan ma*, il découvrit une carrière de pierres (*rdo gter*). Alors, mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon ordonna de collecter les pierres à gNyan chen thang lha et à tous les dieux-démons du Dwags po, du Kong po, de E, de dMyal et d'autres régions : ils se mirent à rassembler les pierres, telles des moutons dans la plaine. Le jour, on entendait le bruit du vent et, la nuit, un bruit de tonnerre lorsque les pierres semblaient rouler spontanément dans la plaine. Un berger au *karma* pur qui gardait ses moutons au fond de la vallée de E vit cela et pensa que ses sens l'abusaient, que cela n'était pas vrai. Mais il regarda de nouveau avec attention et vit toutes les pierres rassemblées comme des moutons par trois petits yogis portant des vêtements blancs et les cheveux longs (*ras pa dkar po ral thod*) ; ils ressemblaient parfois à des oiseaux. Il pensa qu'il devait taire ce qu'il avait vu mais il le confia quand même à sa patronne ; on comprit que c'était une manifestation des dieux-démons qui apportaient la commande de mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon pour la digue de la "Rivière du bonheur" de Lhasa (sKyid chu).

Ce sont là quelques exemples des informations fournies par la tradition historiographique tibétaine sur les dieux-démons et sur la manière de les subjuguier.

4. La classification des huit classes de dieux-démons d'après le *Nyang ral bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*

Selon 'Ju Mi pham⁶², les trois dernières sections des *bKa' brgyad* traitent des esprits locaux mondains (*'jig rten rang rgyud pa'i sde*) et tous ces esprits locaux sont inclus sans exception dans les huit classes des dieux-démons. Ici, je me suis donc basé sur le 7e chapitre du *tantra bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* (vol. 1 : 179-210), qui traite des huit classes de dieux-démons selon la tradition léguée par Nyang ral, l'une des plus anciennes sources de l'école rNying ma pa. En voici le résumé :

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1 : 28.

⁶² s.d., vol. 21 : 157.

Dans le but de subjuguer les esprits mondains, le bouddha Chemchog Heruka (Śrī-heruka) manifesta les huit classes de dieux-démons (*sprul pa'i sde brgyad*) qui sont les suivantes :

1. les dieux (*lha*, skt. *deva*) ;
2. les divinités aquatiques (*klu*, skt. *nāgā*⁶³) ;
3. les esprits féminins (*ma mo*, skt. *mātrika*⁶⁴) ;
4. les seigneurs de la mort (*gshin rje*, skt. *yāma*⁶⁵) ;
5. les démons-esprits féroces (*brtsan*⁶⁶ *bdud*) ;
6. les esprits mâles (*rgyal po*⁶⁷) ;
7. les êtres-démons (*gnod sbyin*, skt. *yakṣa*) ;
8. les planètes (*gza*⁶⁸).

Ces huit classes de dieux-démons peuvent être subdivisées, dans leur version la plus détaillée, en 80 000 différents esprits malfaisants (*bgegs*, skt. *viḡhna*) qui causent sécheresse des récoltes, famines, maladies épidémiques et autres calamités.

Dans une version médiane, il sont divisés en 360 types non-humains (*ye 'drog* ou *mi ma yin gyi rigs*) qui font obstacle aux réussites ou aux situations positives et inversent leur cours.

La version la plus courte est constituée de ces huit classes que l'on peut chacune détailler en cinq sous-catégories : externe, interne, secrète, archi-secrète et absolument cachée (*rab tu sbas pa*)⁶⁹.

1. Les huit aspects externes des dieux-démons⁷⁰ sont : les dieux (*lha*, skt. *deva*), les demi-dieux (*lha ma yin*, skt. *asura*), les dieux se nourrissant d'odeurs (*dri za*, skt. *gandharva*), les *garuḍa* (*mkha' lding*), les maîtres du sol sous la forme de serpents (*lto phye*, skt. *mahoraga*⁷¹), les

⁶³ Dans le *Mañi bka' 'bum*, *gter ma* de Grub thob dngos grub (vol. *wam* : 416), à cette place se trouvent les "maître du sol" (*sa bdag*). Selon rGod ldem (1993 : 66), ce sont les "démons aquatiques" (*klu bdud*) et dans le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, les *lto phye chen po*.

⁶⁴ Remplacées dans rGod ldem (1993 : 66) par 'Phrog ma (Hāritī).

⁶⁵ Il est écrit, dans Mi pham (s.d., vol. 2 : 157), *ging*.

⁶⁶ *bdud* seulement dans le *Mañi bka' 'bum*, mais le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* écrit, lui, demi-dieux (*lha ma yin*).

⁶⁷ D'après le *tantra* de *gShin rje gshed* cité par le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, et le *bKa' brgyad spyi don* de Mi pham, on trouve à la place les ogres (*srin po*) ; dans le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* les *dri za* (*gandharva*), habituellement des démons se nourrissant d'odeurs, et pour le *Mañi bka' 'bum*, les esprits-démons mâles (*rgyal po*).

⁶⁸ Selon le *tantra* de *gShin rje gshed* cité dans le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, et le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* lui-même, on trouve à cette place "demi-humains" (*mi'am ci*).

⁶⁹ On trouve déjà une classification très similaire dans le *sDe brgyad gser skyems* de gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (Dudjom rinpoche, vol. 2 : 158-159). V. aussi une classification légèrement différente dans Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 254 sq. S. Karmay (2002) montre l'origine indienne de cette classification en huit, qui se trouve déjà dans des *sūtra* du Mahāyāna.

⁷⁰ Pour plus de détails concernant ces huit classes externes, voir le *Ngan song sbyong ba'i rgyud*, d'après le *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1985, vol. 3 : 3090.

⁷¹ Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 311) écrit : "On les appelle les maîtres bleus du sol (*sa bdag sngon po*)" et, p. 312, les *lto phye* sont décrits comme des maîtres du sol.

demi-humains (*mi'am ci*, skt. *kiṃnara*), les divinités aquatiques (*klu*) et les esprits fantômes (*lus srul po*).

2. Les huit aspects internes sont : les esprits mâles (*rgyal po*), les êtres-démons (*gnod sbyin*), les seigneurs de la mort (*gshin rje*), les divinités aquatiques (*klu*), les esprits (*'dre*), les ogres (*srin po*), les esprits féminins (*ma mo*) et les esprits féroces (*btsan*).

3. Les huit aspects secrets sont : les *ma sangs*⁷², les *ging*⁷³, les dieux guerriers (*dgra lha*), les démons *dmu*⁷⁴, les dieux non bouddhistes (*mu stegs*, skt. *tīrthika*), les *dāka* (*mkha' 'gro*), les démons nuisibles (*mgong po*⁷⁵) et les démons qui s'en prennent aux enfants (*the'u rang*).

4. Les huit aspects archi-secrets des dieux-démons sont les manifestations des huit consciences (*rnam shes*). Ainsi, les *ma mo* sont nées de l'*ālayavijñāna*, les seigneurs de la mort sont nés de la conscience (*rnam shes*), les démons sont nés de la conscience illusoire (*nyon yid*, skt. *kleśavijñāna*), les dieux sont nés de la conscience des yeux, les ogres sont nés de la conscience des oreilles, les *klu* sont nés de la conscience du nez, les êtres-démons sont nés de la conscience de la langue, les esprits féroces et les planètes sont nés de la conscience du corps.

5. Les huit aspects absolument cachés sont : le désir (*'dod chags*), la haine (*zhe sdang*), l'ignorance (*gti mug*), l'arrogance (*nga rgyal*), l'avarice (*ser sna*), la jalousie (*phrag dog*), la colère (*khong khro*) et l'esprit malveillant (*gnod sems*).

Tous les dieux guerriers, les esprits mâles et les *ging* sont des classes de dieux.

⁷² Pour Namkhai norbu (1997 : 14), "Masang are a class of semi-divine beings of the theurang type".

⁷³ Selon Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 310), "Kang king est un nom chinois et on peut trouver cette divinité courroucée sur les murs de nombreux monastères. C'est à la suite de la mauvaise prononciation de son nom qu'on l'appelle maintenant Ging". Mais pour Sle lung (1979, vol. 2 : 10), "Srin po, du haut du mont Meru, cria 'ke'u' avec colère et Nāginī cria 'kang kang' de désir ; ces deux sons créèrent ensuite un mâle et une femelle Ki Kang ; leur union sur le mont Meru donna naissance à Rāhula, qui se mit aussitôt à réciter 'kikang kikang' et fut donc connu plus tard sous le nom de Kikang".

⁷⁴ Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 312) : "Les *dmu* sont les démons qui viennent dans les rêves pendant le sommeil et provoquent au dormeur une sensation d'oppression ou d'impuissance (*grib gnon gdon*)".

⁷⁵ Comprendre '*gong po*, probablement. Dans l'histoire primitive du Tibet de mKhas btsun bzang po (1986 : 53), on trouve les noms de neuf frères '*gong po* : le démon nuisible à tête de loup qui provoque les querelles, le démon nuisible à tête de *bra ba* (une sorte de marmotte) qui provoque la sécheresse, le démon nuisible à tête d'homme qui provoque les maladies chez les humains, le démon nuisible à tête d'oiseau qui provoque les maladies chez les animaux, le démon nuisible à tête de rat qui cause la malchance, le démon nuisible à tête de chameau qui provoque les événements néfastes, le démon nuisible à tête de chien qui cause la rupture de l'engagement tantrique (*samaya*), le démon nuisible à tête de singe qui provoque la discorde, le démon nuisible à tête de lapin qui provoque l'avarice. V. aussi Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 284-285 et 508.

Toutes les divinités aquatiques, les *tīrthika* (*mu stegs*) et les *rudra*⁷⁶ sont des classes de démons.

Toutes les *ḍākinī*, les déesses, les ogresses et les *bal mo*⁷⁷ appartiennent aux divinités aquatiques féminines (*klu mo*) ou aux *ma mo*.

Tous les *yab rje*, *yab shud*, *ge gong* et *ze drangs* sont de la catégorie des esprits féroces (*btsan*). (Ces catégories sont inconnues.)

Rog ti, Byi tri pa tra (parmi les neuf planètes) et Rāhula (Khyab 'jug⁷⁸) sont de la catégorie des planètes.

Tous les *mon pa*⁷⁹, démons mâles nuisibles qui s'en prennent aux enfants, sont des esprits féroces (*btsan*)⁸⁰.

Tous les démons terrifiants sont des ogres (*srin po*) et tous les esprits fantômes (*'dre*), des seigneurs de la mort (*gshin rje*).

5. La propitiation des dieux et démons

Dans un *sgrub thabs* du *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* (Vol. 1 : 179), il est dit que les dieux (*lha*) ont pour résidence des montagnes de neige ou d'ardoise et les substances d'offrande qu'on leur consacre sont des chevaux, des chèvres, des moutons, des chiens, des yaks, des vautours, des images d'animaux sauvages et de tous les arbres fruitiers. On doit considérer ces offrandes comme supports de prière et plaire aux dieux par une attitude pareille à celle d'un roi envers eux : cela procure du pouvoir. Au contraire, si on leur déplaît, ce pouvoir est perdu ; les effets, positifs ou négatifs, sont très rapides.

Les *klu* ont l'océan pour demeure, ainsi que les lacs, les étangs, les plaines herbeuses. (D'après rGod ldem [1993 : 53], les *klu* vivent dans l'eau et les maîtres du *sol* (*sa bdag*) sur terre.) Les substances qu'on leur présente en offrandes sont des produits laitiers, des sucreries, des nourritures riches et des plantes médicinales. On doit considérer ces substances d'offrande comme supports de prière et plaire aux *klu* par une attitude semblable à celle d'un serviteur envers eux ; chacun doit leur obéir et s'ils ne sont pas contents, des situations néfastes et la lèpre surviennent.

Les *ma mo* demeurent dans de vastes forêts et des charniers. Leurs offrandes caractéristiques consistent en des images d'animaux, de forêts, d'êtres humains, des bannières de victoire, des drapeaux, des conques, des tambours, des parasols et des rosaires. En considérant ces objets d'offrande comme supports de prière et en plaisant aux *ma*

⁷⁶ D'après Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 312), Rudra, dont le sens est "Violent" (*drag po*) appartient à la famille des démons *bdud*.

⁷⁷ Dans le rituel d'offrande aux *ma mo* de bDud 'joms gling pa (1985 : 190), une *bal mo* est citée, *bal mo* He le 'bar ma. (Une déesse He la 'bar ma est décrite dans Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 193.)

⁷⁸ Selon Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 313), il est aussi connu sous le nom de sGra can.

⁷⁹ Les démons de la frontière.

⁸⁰ Cependant, pour Sog bzlog pa (1998 : 312), les *'gong po* sont de la catégorie des esprits mâles.

mo par l'attitude d'une mère envers elles, on obtient nourriture et abri, les gens se montrent proches et affectueux. Sinon, plus rien ne réussit et on n'obtient en retour que des maladies.

Les seigneurs de la mort (*gshin rje*) ont établi leur résidence dans les roches noires et de grands châteaux. Leurs substances d'offrandes sont des charniers, des palais de crânes, des planchettes de bois marquées de croix (*khram shing*), des bœufs. En considérant ces offrandes comme supports de prière et en plaisant aux *gshin rje* à la façon d'un dieu envers eux, on bénéficie d'un esprit pacifique et de protection. Mais si on leur déplaît, cela crée des désaccords, une mauvaise harmonie et des situations néfastes.

Les esprits féroces (*btsan*) demeurent dans des roches rouges et on leur offre des arcs et des flèches, des drapeaux rouges, des oiseaux, des drapeaux militaires (*ru dar*), des chevaux et toutes sortes d'armes : armures, casques... En prenant ces substances pour supports de prière et en plaisant aux *btsan* par une attitude semblable à un ami envers eux, on obtient un pouvoir d'attraction (*gid 'phrog pa*) ou, dans le cas contraire, des maladies, des querelles et des accidents mortels.

Les démons (*bdud*) résident dans des roches noires, et leurs offrandes privilégiées sont de précieux reliquaires (*ga'u*), des chevaux et des œufs. En les considérant comme supports de prière et en plaisant aux *bdud* à la façon de parents envers eux, on jouit de la prospérité, de richesses matérielles, de bétail. Sinon, on souffre de la pauvreté et de la faim.

Les êtres-démons (*gnod sbyin*) ont pour demeure les montagnes, les vallées et les villes. On leur offre particulièrement des armes, de la viande fraîche, des charniers et des substances désirables. En considérant ces objets comme supports de prière et en plaisant aux *gnod sbyin* par l'attitude de serviteurs à leur égard, on s'assure le pouvoir de bien parler et d'être obéi. Dans le cas contraire, on n'est pas écouté et de nombreuses disputes surviennent.

Les planètes (*gza'*) ont pour résidence les sommets des chaînes de montagne, l'embouchure des rivières. Leurs substances d'offrandes consistent en arcs et flèches, peaux de serpents, viande de chèvre noire : en les prenant comme supports de prière et en plaisant aux planètes comme un maître envers elles, on obtient de prompts réussites ; sinon, on subit la foudre, des glissements de terrain et des troubles.

Ces huit classes de dieux-démons se situent à un niveau mondain et les rituels d'offrande qu'on leur consacrait ne devaient être effectués qu'après avoir accompli une certaine récitation et s'être transformé en son *yi dam* (divinité d'élection). C'est pourquoi on peut lire dans le *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*⁸¹ :

"Sans la récitation complète du *mantra* au cours de la retraite,

⁸¹ Vol. 1 : 429.

Si le pratiquant commande intensivement les dieux-démons par le rituel,

Cela peut se retourner contre lui".

Le *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* (vol. 3-8) expose divers *tantra* concernant les huit classes de dieux-démons et les rituels qui leur sont consacrés, tels le *tantra* du Corps appelé "Subjugation des esprits locaux pernicious" (*sKu rgyud dregs pa 'dul ba*), le *tantra* de la Parole appelé "Mantra noir" (*gSung rgyud ngan ngag nag po*), le *tantra* de la Pensée appelé "Noire essence du cœur" (*Thugs rgyud srog tig nag po*), etc.

Divers types de rituels sont mis en œuvre pour la propitiation des dieux-démons : des rituels d'ablution (*'khrus*), des libations (*gser skyems*), des rites de rançon (*glud*), des offrandes de nourriture (*gtor ma*), des offrandes aux divinités de la terre et à celles de l'eau (*sa chog, klu gtor*), des fumigations (*bsang*), etc.

Lors de ces rituels, il semble important, d'après les sources, de respecter la hiérarchie des dieux et des huit classes de dieux-démons. Ainsi, le rituel de libation (*gser skyems*) inclus dans le *Nyang ral bKa' brgyad*, commence avec les prières de refuge, de pensée d'Éveil, d'offrande en sept branches, puis leur purification en vacuité et, enfin, la visualisation de soi-même en tant que bouddha Che mchog Heruka. Suit l'invitation faite au bouddha d'accepter les offrandes et leur distribution à toutes les classes de dieux-démons.

Un autre exemple est fourni par le *rGyags brngan lha bsang* de rGod ldem (1993) : au moment du rituel de fumigation, les offrandes vont d'abord aux cinq familles de bouddha, aux Protecteurs des trois familles⁸², aux Trois Joyaux, aux cent divinités paisibles et courroucées, puis aux huit bouddhas des *bKa' brgyad* et une offrande finale est accordée aux dieux-démons. Si on s'adresse correctement aux dieux-démons locaux, ils suivront les ordres du pratiquant et ceux-ci seront rapidement accomplis, de la même façon qu'un chien suit les ordres de son maître.

En plus de cette hiérarchisation des puissances surnaturelles, le même texte établit la tripartition bien connue entre le domaine des dieux en haut (*steng lha khams*), le domaine médian des esprits néfastes (*bar gnyan khams*) et le domaine souterrain des *klu* ou des maîtres du sol (*'og klu khams*) :

"J'offre à tous les dieux des fumigations rituelles
qui emplissent le ciel,
J'offre à tous les esprits néfastes des fumigations rituelles
qui emplissent l'espace médian (*bar snang*),
J'offre à tous les *klu* des fumigations rituelles
qui emplissent la terre (*sa gzhi*),
Enfin, je présente des offrandes aux huit classes de dieux-démons
qui sont liés par serment"⁸³.

⁸² Jam dpal dbyangs, *Phyag na rdo rje et sPyan ras gzigs*.

⁸³ *Ibid.* : 53.

Conclusion

L'étude du *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* a montré la richesse de ce cycle pour comprendre la classification des dieux-démons, leurs caractéristiques, leur localisation, leurs manifestations, etc.

Les sources bouddhistes s'accordent pour dire que jusqu'au vingt-septième roi, lHa tho tho ri, la culture tibétaine était basée sur les narrations (*sgrung*), le langage symbolique des énigmes (*lde'u*) et le *bon*, qui traitent principalement des êtres non-humains et de leurs différentes caractéristiques, de la façon dont ils pouvaient influencer sur le monde humain par leurs pouvoirs surnaturels, des moyens d'entretenir avec eux une bonne relation en respectant la nature et en accomplissant des rituels d'offrandes. C'est pour cette raison que l'esprit tibétain est très spontané dans sa croyance aux dieux en tant que bien et aux démons en tant que mal.

Toutes ces différentes classes d'êtres non humains sont considérées comme des protecteurs de la vie matérielle. Généralement, on compte deux niveaux hiérarchiques des classes non humaines : ceux appelés les êtres de sagesse et ceux appelés les êtres mondains (*ye shes pa'i lha dang 'jig rten pa'i lha*). Les êtres de sagesse sont supposés être des manifestations de bouddha et de *bodhisattva* visant à aider et protéger les êtres. Dans ce cas, la relation des humains à eux n'est pas liée à des offrandes ou des rituels mais, si l'on pense à eux, alors le lien est établi et ils aideront leur fidèle dans sa vie matérielle et spirituelle actuelle, ainsi que dans la prochaine.

Concernant les êtres mondains, ils sont liés à l'homme par les offrandes et les éloges qui leur sont adressés. S'il arrive que l'on oublie de les propitier par des offrandes, cela peut provoquer de nombreux désagréments, pour soi-même comme pour autrui. Au contraire, leur accorder continuellement des offrandes peut être bénéfique sur le plan matériel, mais seulement pour cette vie. D'où l'importance de faire des offrandes à ceux qui ont été subjugués et liés par serment par Guru rinpoche ou les maîtres qui ont atteint le même stade dans la pratique du *mantrayana*. 'Ju Mi pham⁸⁴ écrit : "Une fois que l'on est lié aux dieux-démons au travers d'offrandes, notre attitude envers eux doit être celle d'un maître avec ses chiens : le maître nourrit et commande, les chiens obéissent".

Pour les Tibétains, on l'a dit, le Tibet était la terre supposée des dieux-démons ; de nos jours encore, si quelqu'un tombe malade, est victime d'un accident ou de quoi que ce soit de mauvais, c'est interprété comme un signe des dieux ou démons locaux et on effectuera alors divers rituels. De même, pour les décisions importantes l'avis de l'oracle ou la divination d'un lama sont requis. Ces manières de faire et de penser sont encore très vivantes dans la culture tibétaine du vingt-et-unième siècle.

⁸⁴ s.d., vol. 21 : 165.

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THE SUN OF THE HEART AND THE *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum**

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EPHE, Vème Section

Background

In recent years we have seen much progress in scholarship clarifying the historical development of the Rdzogs-chen traditions of contemplative practice. Not long ago, this topic was, to quote Churchill in a context he never dreamt of, “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” but now — thanks in large measure to the initial impetus provided by the late Herbert Guenther’s interpretations of the writings of Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa (1308-64); to the pioneering contributions on the early formation of the Rdzogs-chen of Samten G. Karmay, to whom the present work is dedicated; and to the access to traditional instruction provided by some of the leading contemporary teachers of Rdzogs-chen meditation —, we face instead many particular riddles contained within a field whose general features no longer appear to be so mysterious as formerly they did.¹

One of these particular puzzles is the collection of Rdzogs-chen tantras from the library of Rtogs-ldan Rinpoche that was published in 1971 under the title *The Rgyud 'Bum of Vairocana* (hereinafter: *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*). As the introductory remarks accompanying that work made clear, the collection had obvious affinities with the then known edition of the *Rnying-ma-rgyud-'bum*, but also included many tantras not identified in the available catalogue of 'Jigs-med-gling-pa (1730-1798).² Questions surrounding the origi-

* The present essay was first presented to the International Association of Tibetan Studies meeting at Indiana University (Bloomington) in 1998. It is a pleasure to make it available in the present collection honoring a friend of many years, Samten G. Karmay, whose work has done so much to open the present subject-matter for scholarly investigation.

¹ For relevant background see, especially, Guenther 1975-76, 1984, 1994, Karmay 1988, Ehrhard 1990, Dudjom 1991, Germano 1994, Achard 1999, van Schaik 2003, Klein and Wangyal 2006, and Arguillère 2007. On the question of Rdzogs-chen in the Dunhuang documents, first explored in the work of Karmay, see most recently Meinert 2007. There have been, in addition, numerous popular translations of Rdzogs-chen texts that I do not attempt to document here.

² Since the original publication of *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* many additional materials for the study of the *Rnying-ma-rgyud-'bum* collections have become available. The Tibetan Buddhist Nyingma Tantras Archive, a project at the University of Virginia under the direction of Prof. David Germano, is seeking to develop a complete, comparative digital catalogue of the available sources. See also Ehrhard 1997. See now, too, the valuable resource created by Cantwell et al. 2002.

nal provenance of the collection, the period and lineage in which it was compiled, remained unanswered.

In the course of my work on the English version of the late Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che's *Rnying-ma'i chos-'byung*, I became intrigued by references to the transmission of Rdzogs-chen materials in the Zur lineage, particularly during the 12th century. In the accompanying bibliography (Dudjom 1991 II: 269), I hazarded the guess that one of the works mentioned in the hagiography of Zhig-po Bdud-rtsis (1143-1199), namely, the *Sun of the Heart of Contemplation* (*Bsam-gtan snying-gi nyi-ma*, Dudjom 1991 I: 654), could be identified with a similarly titled text, the first text in fact contained in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, which is entitled *Pañ-sgrub-rnams-kyi thugs-bcud snying-gi nyi-ma*, the *Sun of the Heart Which is the Essential Spirit of the Scholars and Saints*.³ This guess led me to comment speculatively to several colleagues about the possible provenance of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, and this *snyan-brgyud* came to be published, and later cited, without my prior knowledge or permission.⁴ I am now fairly convinced that my original hunch was in essence correct, and in the body of this essay will attempt to substantiate this, at the same time drawing out what conclusions might be warranted for our thinking about the history of the Rdzogs-chen tradition and the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* itself, while also now providing interested colleagues with an appropriate citation.

The Sun of the Heart

The Sun of the Heart opens with a short introduction (3.1 - 4.1), in which two Tibetan bhikṣu-s, Bai-ro-tsa-na (Vairocana) and his companion Legs-grub, are in the course of receiving instruction from Shri Sing-nga-pra-pa-ta (Śrī Siṃha) in the assembly hall of Ha-he-na-ku-sha (Dhahena).⁵ Coming to the exposition of the esoteric instructions in the area of mind (*man-ngag sems-phyogs*), he perceives that it is the time for Tibet to be tamed by this teaching, and so he imparts six particular teachings to them:

1. *Rig-pa khu-byug*
2. *Rtsal-chen sprugs-pa*

³ *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 1, plates 1 - 172. In the remainder of this essay I refer to passages from this text by page and line number, given in parentheses without further identification.

⁴ Germano 1994. The article in question in fact cited my unpublished opinions so frequently that it is a matter of some astonishment that the editors of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* made no effort at all to verify the many remarks that were attributed to me there. Germano's reference was repeated in Ehrhard 1997: 263.

⁵ Throughout this article I transcribe names and terms exactly as they are found in the *Sun of the Heart*, adding other, more widely known designations in parentheses where relevant.

3. *Khyung-chen lding-ba*
4. *Rdo-la gser-zhun*
5. *Mi-nub rgyal-mtshan nam-mkha'-che*
6. *Rmad-du byung-ba*.

With the original circumstances in which the teaching was imparted to the Tibetans thus described, the text launches into a series of expositions of the first five texts just enumerated, providing also brief indications regarding the qualities of the guru and appropriate circumstances for practice. It frequently describes these teachings as having been transmitted from Kun-tu-bzang-po to Dga'-rab-rdo-rje, and sometimes thence to 'Jam-dpal-bshes-gnyen.⁶ I shall not discuss here in detail the identifications of the texts that are referred to by the titles just mentioned: the relationship between the first five titles and the five corresponding teachings is made very clear in the *Sun of the Heart* itself, and these five, moreover, correspond to the list of five "earlier translations of the Mental Class" found in many Rnying-ma-pa works⁷—the *Rig-pa khu-byug* and *Rdo-la gser-zhun* in particular are now very well known to contemporary students of Rdzogs-chen.⁸ The sixth, the text called *Rmad-du byung-ba*, a phrase that occurs in the titles of several Sems-sde tantras, is also usually included in the later lists of tantras transmitted by Śrī Siṃha to Bai-ro-tsa-na.⁹

This series of five teachings, which comprise more than half of the *Sun of the Heart* (to 104.6), is followed by a disquisition on "exegetical methods in general" (*spyir bshad-thabs*), explained in terms of the "aural transmissions relating to view, meditation, conduct and result" (*lta-bsgom-spyod-*

⁶ The pagination of the five teachings is as follows: 1. *Rig-pa khu-byug* (4.1 - 14.4); 2. *Rtsal-chen sprugs-pa* (14.4-22.1); 3. *Khyung-chen lding-ba* (22.1-48.6); 4. *Rdo-la gser-zhun* (49.1-64.4); 5. *Mi-nub rgyal-mtshan nam-mkha'-che* (64.2-104.6). The close of the last interestingly remarks that "that [teaching] is not like what has been said in [the teachings of] the translators of the dharmacakra and Śākyamuni" (*de ni chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba mdzad mkhan dang/ shag thub la sogs par brjod pa lta bu ma yin no,104.5*). The phrase *chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba mdzad mkhan* may also be understood on analogy to *'khor lo bsgyur ba* in the sense of Cakravartin.

⁷ The first five are often classed as the *snga'-gyur lnga*, the "five early translations," among the eighteen tantras of the *Rdzogs-chen sems-phyogs* that Vairocana transmitted. There are, however, differing redactions of these tantras in circulation and I have not yet attempted to identify the works referred to in the *Sun of the Heart* with actual texts to which we now have access. On the basis of the titles alone we may propose, however, the following general identifications, at least as a point of departure: 1. *Rig-pa khu-byug* (*Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 5, no. 8.a; Kaneko no. 8.1); 2. *Rtsal-chen sprugs-pa* (*Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 5, no. 8.b; Kaneko no. 8.3); 3. *Khyung-chen lding-ba* (*Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 5, no. 8.c; Kaneko no. 8.2); 4. *Rdo-la gser-zhun* (=Byang-chub-kyi sems bsgom-pa, *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 5, no. 8.d; Kaneko no. 14); 5. *Mi-nub rgyal-mtshan nam-mkha'-che* (perhaps to be identified with *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 4, no. 4; see Karmay 1988, p. 23, n. 22).

⁸ Karmay 1988, Norbu and Lipman 1987.

⁹ *Rmad-du byung-ba* occurs in the title of *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 2, no. 2 (cf. Kaneko nos. 10, 20, 40, 42).

'bras-kyi snyan-(b)rgyud, 105.1-120.6). This subject-matter is further amplified by a group of brief commentaries and outlines on four Rdzogs-chen tantras, each given with its title in the vulgar Sanskrit often found in Tibetan works of this period, but with alternative titles at the end of each work. The texts in question are:

1. 'Bras bu rin po che dang mnyam pa'i rgyud kyi dka' 'grel, also called Rin po che za ma tog 'bar ba (121.1 - 127.3).
2. Lta ba ye shes mdzod chen chos kyi dbyings, also called Rin po che 'phrul gyi lde mig (127.3 - 130.5).
3. Bsgom pa ye shes gsal ba chos kyi dbyings, also called Yang gsang thugs kyi lde mig (130.5 - 132.6).
4. Spyod pa ye shes 'bar ba chos kyi dbyings, also called Zab mo mchog gi lde mig (133.1 - 134.5).

The texts of the tantras commented upon here are included in the second volume of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*.¹⁰

Finally, it is of great interest that the work closes with an extended discussion of "exegetical methods for explaining the precepts" (*man-ngag bshad-pa'i bshad-thabs*, 134.5 - 172.3). Here it treats of five major topics, explaining the teaching in terms of the significance of: (1) the history (*lo-rgyus*, 135.1 - 164.3), (2) the root [of the teaching, i.e. *byang-chub-kyi sems*] (*rtsa-ba*, 164.3 -6), (3) yoga (*rnal-'byor*, 166.2-169.3),¹¹ (4) the purpose (*dgosched*, 166.2-169.3) and (5) the words themselves (*tshig*), in fact a commentary on the *Rig-pa'i khu-byug*, referred to here as the "text" (*gzhung*, 169.3 - 172.3). The first and fullest of these sections is of special importance, as it is certainly one of the earliest relatively well-developed histories of the Rdzogs-chen traditions, it establishes the provenance of the work within the early Zur lineage, and it seems clearly related to the later expanded biographies of Bai-ro-tsa-na, known generally under the title '*Dra-'bag chen-mo*.¹² To call this a "history," however, is perhaps misleading, for this

¹⁰ *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 2, nos. 1.d-g. As Mr. Philip Stanley reminded me, the four texts commented upon here are among the Rdzogs-chen works preserved in the Peking edition of the Tibetan canon, nos. 5039-5042. Perhaps it is significant, too, that we find texts relating to the '*Khor-ba rtsad-gcod* cycle in close proximity (nos. 5031-5035), which is also the case in *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 2, nos. 1.a-c, and i-n. The provenance of the Rnying-ma materials that are found in the Peking edition of the canon remains an intriguing problem. The Zur, of course, were active in China under the Yuan, but more pertinent, no doubt, was the reception by the Fifth Dalai Lama of elements of the old *Zur-lugs*. Cf. Ehrhard 1997: 262-263.

¹¹ This passage interestingly expands upon various explanations of the Tibetan term *rnal-'byor*, and offers a very fine example of the manner in which some Tibetan religious circles were exploring the peculiarly Tibetan connotations of Buddhist terminology, quite apart from questions of Sanskrit usage.

¹² Note also that while a manuscript version of the '*Dra-'bag chen-mo* is included in vol. 8 of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, it certainly has no original relationship with the other

section of the *Sun of the Heart* is primarily a lineage-list, expanded with the inclusion of occasional myths and legends. It opens with a version of the well-known Rdzogs-chen account of the primordial enlightenment of the buddha Samantabhadra,¹³ and then lists the succession of teachers of the Rdzogs-chen in India, providing only brief remarks on the circumstances of transmission from Samantabhadra through Mañjuśrīmitra (135.3 - 138.6). The entire lineage in India is as follows, and will be seen to resemble closely the list derived from the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo* as given by Karmay.¹⁴

1. Kun-tu-bzang-po (Samantabhadra)
2. Rdo-rje-sems-dpa' (Vajrasattva)
3. Dga'-rab-rdo-rje (Dudjom 1991 I: 490-494)
4. 'Jam-dpal-bshes-gnyen (=Mañjuśrīmitra, Dudjom 1991 I: 493-493)
5. Rgyal-po 'Da'-he-na-ta
6. Sras thu-bo Ha-ti (Rājahasti)
7. Sras-mo Pa-ra-ni
8. Rgyal-po Yon-tan-lag-gi bu-mo Gnod-sbyin-mo byang-chub
9. Rmad-'tshong-ma Par-na
10. Kha-che'i mkhan-po Rab-srang
11. U-rgyan-gyi mkhan-po Ma-ha-ra-tsa (= King Indra-bhūti)
12. Sras-mo Go-ma-de-byi (Princess Gomadevi)
13. A-rya A-lo-ke
14. Khyi'i rgyal-po Gu-gu-ra-tsa (Kukkurāja)
15. Drang-srong Ba-sha-ti (= ṛṣi Bhāṣita)
16. Rmad-'tshong-ma Bdag-nyid-ma
17. Na-ga-'dzu-na (Nāgārjuna)
18. Gu-gu-ra-tsa phyi-ma (the later Kukkurāja)
19. 'Jam-dpal-bshes-gnyen phyi-ma (the later Mañjuśrīmitra)
20. Lha'i mkhan-po Ma-ha-ra (Devarāja)
21. Bud-dha-kug-ta (Buddhagupta)
22. Shri Sing-nga (Śrī Siṃha)
23. Dge-slong-ma Kun-dga'-ma

manuscripts comprising the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* itself, and thus should not be considered to be properly part of this collection. One of the later redactions of the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo* is now available in English translation: Palmo 2004.

¹³ Dudjom 1991 I: 115-119 and 447-450, Kapstein 2000: chapters 9-10.

¹⁴ Karmay 1988: 19-21. The two lists are almost identical. Karmay was unaware that the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo* was indeed repeating a received tradition at this point, and not itself inventing the lineage it reports. The concurrence between the *Sun of the Heart* and the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo* here possibly strengthens my suggestion that the *Sun of the Heart* forms an important part of the background for the latter text.

24. Bye-ma-la-mu-tra (Vimalamitra)
25. 'Phags-pa Bai-ro-tsa-na

The *Sun of the Heart* further specifies (138.6) that numbers 18-24 constitute the “lineage of seven,” with Bai-ro-tsa-na as the eighth added to this group.

There are many interesting features of this list, which merits a much fuller analysis than space permits here. I confine myself to two topics of interest:

(a) As its inclusion in the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo* demonstrates, some knowledge of the lineage as given here was preserved through at least the 14th century, though the Rnying-ma-pa historians who do refer to it tend to abbreviate it, mentioning the figures 4-24 only as an enumeration of twenty-one, twenty-three, or twenty-five generations, among whom few particular names are given.¹⁵ This sometimes results in the enumeration of the intervening generations being forgotten altogether: in the *Gsan-yig* of Gter-bdag-gling-pa (1646-1714), for instance, the *Rdzogs-chen-sems-sde* lineage passes directly from 'Jam-dpal-bshes-gnyen through Śrī Siṃha to Bai-ro-tsa-na, although the lineage in Tibet that follows is closely similar to that given in the *Sun of the Heart*.¹⁶ The figures in the lineage in India who were still to some extent remembered seem to have been those also mentioned in connection with the traditions of Mahāyoga and Anuyoga, certainly the most important aspects of the Zur-lugs for the later *Rnying-ma Bka'-ma* tradition.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Nyang-ral* 488, for instance, mentions a lineage passing through “five hundred who were learned, including the twenty-five generations” (*(gdung rabs) nyi shu rtsa lnga la sogs pa mkhas pa lnga brgya la brgyud*). *Klong-chen chos-'byung* 202-203 enumerates Rgyal-po Dha-he-na-ta-lo, Sras thu-bo Ha-ti Rā-dza-has-ti, Sras-mo Pa-ra-ni, Klu'i Rgyal-po, Gnod-sbyin-mo byang-chub and the former Kukkurāja as having beheld the visage of Dga'-rab-rdo-rje. He further remarks that, down to Vimalamitra, there are differing enumerations of 25, 23, 21, 7, 5, 3, and 1 generation(s) in the lineage of transmission. Kong-sprul (1813-1899), *Gdams-ngag-mdzod*, vol. 12, 702.6, refers to the “twenty-one learned ones” (*mkhas-pa nyi-shu-rtsa-gcig*) intervening between Dga'-rab-rdo-rje and Bai-ro-tsa-na in the lineage of the “eighteen empowerments of the expressive power of awareness” (*rig-pa'i rtsal-dbang bco-brgyad*) according to the Kaḥ-thog tradition, and enumerates a lineage of the *Rdzogs-chen sems-sde* stemming from Kaḥ-thog (704.2-5) that passes from Dga'-rab-rdo-rje through Mañjuśrīmitra, Dha-he-ta-la, Go-ma-de-ba, Rab-sngang-brtan, Tshogs-bdag, Klu-sgrub, Rdo-rje legs-brtsal, Ku-ku-rā-dza, Thor-tshugs-dgu-pa and Mar-me-mdzad to Śrī Siṃha and thence to Bai-ro-tsa-na. That the Kaḥ-thog school may have preserved a richer tradition than the central and western Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa in regard to some of the obscure figures listed in the Indian *Rdzogs-chen* lineages is apparent, too, in the *Sems-sde'i rgyud-lung-gi rtsa-ba gces-btus nang-gses le-tshan bdun*, given in *Bka'-ma*, vol. 17.

¹⁶ *Gter-bdag Gsan-yig*, plate 38.

¹⁷ Examples include Indrabhūti, Gomadevī, and Kukkurāja. See, e.g., Dudjom 1991 I: 458-462. On the mahāyoga and anuyoga lineages of the Zur, refer to *Mdo-dbang* and Dudjom 1991 I: book two, part five.

(b) Some of the relatively obscure figures mentioned, for instance, the nun Kun-dga'-ma, are also known to Gnubs-chen Sangs-rgyas-ye-shes's *Bsam-gtan mig-sgron*.¹⁸ Moreover, the form of Buddhagupta's name, Buddha-kug-ta, conforms with other relatively early sources, including once again Gnubs-chen.¹⁹ This seems to suggest that the *Sun of the Heart* belongs to a stratum in the history of the Rdzogs-chen still close to that of the *Bsam-gtan mig-sgron*, which indeed was also current within the early Zur tradition.²⁰

Following the enumeration of the lineage in India, the lengthiest part of the history is given over to a biography of Bai-ro-tsa-na, treating especially of his exile in Rgyal-mo-rong in the east, and his disciple G.yu-sgra Snying-po (138.6 - 163.5). This entire section of the work merits careful comparison with the account of Bai-ro-tsa-na in the later *'Dra-bag chen-mo*, of which the *Sun of the Heart* is possibly one of the prototypes.²¹ The historical discussion then closes with an enumeration of the lineage from G.yu-sgra onwards (163.5 - 164.3). Knowledge of the figures mentioned here was, of course, very well preserved in the later tradition.²²

- 27. Bsnyags-gnya' (Gnyags Jñānakumāra)
- 28. Sog-po Lha-dpal-gyi-ye-shes
- 29. Bsnyabs (Gnubs) Sangs-rgyas-ye-shes
- 30a. Thugs-kyi sras bzhi (Pa-gor Blon-chen 'Phags-pa, So Yes-shes (sic!) dbang-phyug, Sru Legs-pa'i sgron-ma, Bsnyabs Khung-lung (Khu-lung) Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho; cf. Dudjom 1991 I: 612-615)
- 30b. Sras Ye-shes-rgya-mtsho
- 31. Myang-mi Shes-rab-mchog
- 32. Myang Ye-'byung

¹⁸ *Bsam-gtan mig-sgron* 316 and 412.

¹⁹ Norbu 1984 consistently reads "Buddhagupta," correcting against the *Bsam-gtan mig-sgron*. The orthography of other old sources, such as the *Dkar-chag ldan-kar-ma* and Peliot tibétain 44 (where it is a question of the transcription of the name Śrīgupta), however, confirms that the reading *kug-ta/gug-ta* does correctly represent the old Tibetan transcription.

²⁰ This is not to say, however, that it is necessarily the case that the composition of Gnubs-chen's work (circa 10th century) and that of the *Sun of the Heart* were very close. I am maintaining only that both are familiar with similar sources and doctrines, and unfamiliar with developments such as the *snying-thig* traditions, so that both seem to stem from a common matrix within the early Rdzogs-chen tradition. Nevertheless, this does not preclude their composition being separated by several generations.

²¹ Note that at the very beginning of this account plates 139-142 are out of order. The correct order here should be: 138, 141, 142, 139, 140, 143, 144, etc.

²² BA 102-141, *Mdo-dbang* 148-261, *Gu-bkra* 242-283, Dudjom 1991 I: 600-652. Significantly, some members of this lineage are named in the labels of an exquisite ca. 13th century *thang-ka* depicting the blue Vajrasattva and now in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Refer to Huntington and Huntington 1990: 309-13 and Kapstein forthcoming.

33. Zur Sha-kya-'byung-gnas
34. Rtse-mo lnga dang rtse-kog (Zhang 'Gos-chung, Me-myag 'Byung-grags (Khyung-'dra), Gzad Shes-rab-rgyal-po, Tsag Bla-ma, Zur-chung Shes-rab-grags-pa; cf. Dudjom 1991 I: 622, where the text reads *rtse-mo bzhi dang rtse-kog-gcig*, the last being Tsag Bla-ma)
35. Ka-bzhi gdung-brgyad (only the "four pillars" (*ka-bzhi*) are listed here: Skyo-ston Shakya ye-shes, Yang-kher (Yang-kheng) bla-ma, Rlan Shakya bzang-po, Mda'-dig Chos-shag (Mda'-tig Jo-shāk); cf. Dudjom 1991 I: 642, where the "eight rafters" (*gdung-brgyad*) are also enumerated.)
36. Lha-rje Mda'-tsha hor-po (= Zur Sgro-phug-pa)
37. Lce-ston Rgya-nag
38. Dbus-pa Shakya bla-ma

The list then closes with the characteristic phrase, *des bdag la gnang ngo*, "He bestowed it on me" (104.3). But who is this "me" that occupies the final position in the list? I would suggest that the name immediately preceding, Dbus-pa Shakya bla-ma, is likely to be identified with one of Lce-ston Rgya-nag's leading disciples, Dbus-pa Ston-śāk, who is most often referred to in the histories by his epithet Dam-pa Bse-sbrag-pa (Dudjom 1991 I: 651-2). If this is correct, the self-reference may be due to none other than Zhig-po Bdud-rtsis, who counted Ston-śāk among his teachers and who, as we have seen, was involved in the transmission of the *Sun of the Heart of Contemplation*. Should we understand this to mean that he is the probable author of our text? I do not think that we should rush to such a conclusion, for the references to the *Sun of the Heart* in the histories suggest that it was already more or in less in existence, perhaps as a sort of compendium of treasured Rdzogs-chen instructions of the Zur tradition, though Zhig-po Bdud-rtsis may well have played a role in its redaction in the form in which it is preserved in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* today.

Implications

What, if anything, does this tell us of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* itself? One could, I suppose, argue that in the course of rumaging through old manuscript collections the compiler of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* found this interesting old Sems-sde text and decided to include it, in which case it really tells us nothing at all about the history of the collection of which it is but a small part. I think, however, that such a scenario is rather unlikely, and does not reflect a viable approach to the historical analysis of Tibetan scriptural corpora. While some tantras may have incidentally entered the

Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum in this way, it is unlikely that an expository work, that is not itself a tantra, would have come to occupy a preeminent position within the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* in this fashion. It is on the whole better to suppose that our collection is derived from earlier collections, and that one of these prominently included the *Sun of the Heart*, prominently enough in fact so that it would come to be placed as the very first text in the first volume of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*. Evidence of such a collection would plausibly point to the initial core which grew into the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*. And, indeed, there is evidence of such a collection.

Let us now consider further the reference, mentioned earlier, to the *Sun of the Heart of Contemplation* in Dudjom Rinpoche's *History*. It occurs in close connection with the mention of Zhig-po Bdud-rtsis's study of the "Twenty-four Great Tantras of the Mental Class, including the *All-Accomplishing King* and the *Ten Sūtras*." A generation later, his disciple Rta-ston Jo-ye (b. 1163) is reported to have "studied the *Triple Cycle of the Mother and Sons*, [which comprises] the *All-Accomplishing King*, the *Ten Sūtras* which are its exegetical tantras, and the four groups of exegetical tantras pertaining to the *Tantra which Uproots Saṃsāra* (*'khor-ba rtsad-gcod-kyi rgyud*) ... and the commentaries on meditation [including] the *Six Suns of the Heart* (*snying-gi nyi-ma drug*)..." (Dudjom 1991 I: 658).²³ This last title, I think, may also refer to our text, for as we have noticed above, its point of departure is the transmission of a group of six Rdzogs-chen tantras. Let us note, too, the conspicuous presence in the first several volumes of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* of materials relating to the *Kun-byed-rgyal-po* and the *'Khor-ba rtsad-gcod* cycle of tantras.²⁴

Based upon what we have already seen, it is reasonable to assume that during the period with which we are here concerned, roughly the 12th century, there was an on-going process of compilation, within the Zur lineage, of texts and traditions connected with that tradition's treasured teachings of the *Rdzogs-chen Sems-sde*, or *Sems-phyogs*, to use the expression that is actually employed within these texts.²⁵ The initial parts of the *Bai-ro-*

²³ The entire passage mentions several other texts and teachings, including the *Bsam-gtan mig-sgron*, which are also not represented in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*. If I am correct that the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* is derived in part from an earlier Zur-lugs collection, it must be noted nevertheless that it is not a collection of which we have precise knowledge from our available sources. I defer here discussion of the "twenty-four great tantras of the mental class" (*sems-phyogs-kyi rgyud-sde chen-po nyi-shu-rtsa-bzhi*) referred to above. For their enumeration as given by Klong-chen-pa, see Dudjom 1991 II: 284-285. Possibly some of these are to be identified in *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 1, nos. 2 and 3, etc.

²⁴ *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*, vol. 1, no. 4, gives only the last of the three main sections of the *Kun-byed-rgyal-po*, while vol. 2, no. 1, includes the *'Khor-ba rtsad-gcod* cycle. The *Mdo-bcu* (Kaneke no. 10) are nowhere to be found in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum*.

²⁵ The threefold classification of the *sde-gsum*—*sems-sde*, *klong-sde*, *mang-ngag-gi sde*—appears to originate in the tantras of the latter category and is unknown to the other systems of Rdzogs-chen. A single reference to the threefold classification in the *rnam-thar* of

rgyud-'bum seem likely to have arisen as a result of this process, perhaps in one of the Western Tibetan lineages stemming from the Zur,²⁶ so that what we find in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* today includes a truncated version of the Rdzogs-chen teachings of the Zur.

At the same time, we must note that large sections of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* appear to have no relation to the known Zur traditions. Franz-Karl Ehrhard has observed that a number of these tantras found in the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* also appear in versions of the *Rnying-ma'i rgyud-'bum* recently located in Nepal.²⁷ This may suggest some filiation among the textual traditions of the Rnying-ma-pa in the western parts of the Tibetan world, and perhaps the earlier existence of one or more collections that at some point were conjoined with the materials that, as I propose here, must derive from a branch of the Zur. In order to begin to sort out some of riddles that remain here, it will be no doubt useful to begin to compare our evidence regarding the Rdzogs-chen canons in West and Central Tibet with the available documents concerning the early Rdzogs-chen traditions of Kaḥ-thog.²⁸ One hopes that the tracing of textual stemma on the basis of the available collections, in tandem with internal historical references, such as those I have indicated here, will permit us eventually to document the formation of the Rnying-ma Rdzogs-chen corpus in the crucial period from the 11th through 14th centuries.

Given the importance of the Zur lineage in the history of the *Rnying-ma Bka'-ma* traditions,²⁹ it remains puzzling that we have no evidence, so far as I have been able to locate to date, of later transmission, or even knowledge, of the *Sun of the Heart*, excepting of course the mere mention of the title in the histories.³⁰ Even the *Gsan-yig* of the great Gter-dbag-gling-pa, in documenting the continuous transmission of the Zur tradition of the Rdzogs-chen, refers only to relatively late *khrid-yig*.³¹ One reason for this was no doubt the great success of the *snying-thig* traditions, which overshadowed the older approaches to the Rdzogs-chen, while absorbing much of their

Khyung-po rnal-'byor (written c. 1140) may be the earliest reference outside the tantras themselves, and perhaps reflects later editorial intervention. Refer to Kapstein 2004.

²⁶ Dudjom 1991 I: 702 mentions a Ya-stod zur-pa tradition, from which Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa apparently received some instruction. Besides this brief reference, however, nothing has so far come to my attention that would shed light on the Zur traditions in Western Tibet.

²⁷ Ehrhard 1997. Note that the tantras common to the collections studied by Ehrhard are concentrated in volumes 6-7 of the *Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum* (with some also in vols. 4-5), while the works I am tracing to the Zur-lugs are concentrated in vols. 1-2.

²⁸ Relevant sources include *Theg-pa spyi-bcings* and *Rgya-mtsho mtha'-yas*, on which see Kapstein 2000, pp. 97-106.

²⁹ See especially *Mdo-dbang* and Dudjom 1991 I: book two, part five.

³⁰ E.g., *BA* 138, *Gu-bkra* 281.

³¹ *Gter-bdag gsan-yig*, plate 38, refers to two such works (*khrid-yig che-chung*) both authored by Blo-gros-bzang-po, who precedes Gter-dbag-gling-pa himself by only three generations.

teaching.³² In the *Sun of the Heart*, for instance, we find much emphasis on bringing mind to rest in its natural state (*sems-nyid rnal-du phebs-pa*), a teaching that becomes formalized as part of the preliminary practice (*sngon-'gro*) in the *snying-thig* traditions and their offshoots. Moreover, the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo*, in later times at least, no doubt supplanted whatever older biographies of Bai-ro-tsa-na were still to be found. The great interest shown by later Rdzogs-chen masters, particularly 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i dbang-po (1820-1892) and his disciples and colleagues, in the recovery and renewal of old and even lost teachings known only from the historical record, never seems to have extended to the early Zur-lugs.³³

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³² The ascent of the *snying-thig* traditions may have corresponded, too, to a general shift in emphasis from *bka'-ma* to *gter-ma* teachings within the Rnying-ma-pa lineages.

³³ 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse and 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, however, were not altogether without interest in the Zur. According to a story I have been told repeatedly (by the late Dezhung Rinpoche, among others), but which I have not yet seen in written sources, they made great efforts to capture the vital force (*srog*) of the great, miraculous Heruka image of 'Up-pa-lung that had been constructed by Zur-po-che (Dudjom 1991 I: 626-28, 634-35) but which in their day no longer existed.

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ENDURING MYTHS: SMRANG, RABS AND RITUAL
IN THE DUNHUANG TEXTS ON PADMASAMBHAVA

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Introduction¹

ver the last nearly four decades, Samten Karmay has made numerous extraordinary contributions to the emerging discipline of Tibetology. Amongst his most significant works are his many and wide-ranging studies of indigenous Tibetan beliefs, including a remarkable series of essays on indigenous Tibetan ritual and its close relation to myth.² This paper is considerably inspired by Samten Karmay's work on indigenous Tibetan myth and ritual. In it, we propose to look at the strategies that were employed by early Tibetan tantrists to transform and partially indigenise the imported Indian tantrism they encountered, a movement that contributed substantially to the rNying ma tantric culture that has continued to thrive into the present day. More specifically, we want to examine if the deployment of a particularly Tibetan understanding of the proper relation of myth to ritual might have become important to this indigenising process.

Historical context

The particular examples of indigenisation under discussion here quite likely belong to the post-Imperial period, often known as the 'time of fragments' or '*sil bu'i dus*'. When referring to this approximately 150-year period with specific reference to the dissemination of Buddhism, we now propose to call it the Intermediate Period of the propagation of the teachings. Such a periodisation was not as far as we know distinguished by traditional Tibetan historians, and our term is a neologism. Had traditional Tibetan historians made such a distinction, they would perhaps

¹ We are extremely grateful to the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for their generous sponsorship of the research from which this paper has been generated. Part of this paper is based on our research on the Dunhuang Phur pa corpus, which is published as Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer 2008: *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang*. Vienna: The Austrian Academy of Sciences Press. Thanks are also due to Dr Dan Martin, Dr Yael Bentor, Dr Ron Davidson, Dr Françoise Pommaret, Professor Geoffrey Samuel, and Peter Szantos, for valuable comments and suggestions.

² In his sophisticated analysis of myth and ritual, Samten Karmay very considerably advances and develops a general direction initially indicated by his teacher, Rolf Stein, in the well known article of 1971, "Du récit au rituel clans les manuscrits tibétains de Touen-houang."

have called it something like the '*bstan pa bar dar*'.³ In our usage, the Intermediate Period postdates what is commonly called the *bstan pa snga dar*, or Earlier Period of the propagation of the teachings, which is associated with the official translation projects of the Imperial period. The Intermediate Period also pre-dates what is commonly called the *bstan pa phyi dar*, or Later Period of the propagation of the teachings, that gathered pace with the renewed translational and other activities mainly from the late tenth century onwards. The term Intermediate Period thus serves to disambiguate the relationship between the highly esoteric rNying ma tantrism as we have it today—predominantly an Intermediate Period tradition—from the quite different and much more exoteric Buddhism that was officially sponsored by the Tibetan Empire—the *snga dar* proper. Much existing and especially traditional nomenclature fails to make any such distinction, presenting modern rNying ma esotericism as though it were a *snga dar* tradition stemming from the Imperial period. This is clearly misleading, and moreover draws attention away from the quite unique and remarkably creative contributions of the Intermediate Period.

A significant rhetorical stance or ideological trend of the Intermediate Period (although clearly not the only one!) was to indigenise Tantric Buddhism, to make it more properly Tibetan, and less foreign or alien.⁴ How-

³ The usage of '*bar dar*' for this period was spontaneously coined by Christopher Beckwith on June 10th 2008 in Oxford, during the animated discussion that followed his Numata Distinguished Guest Lecture entitled *The Central Eurasian Culture Complex in the Tibetan Empire: The Imperial Cult and Early Buddhism*. On further reflection, it proved to be an extremely useful concept. However, to avoid confusing this neologism with any actual traditional Tibetan term, we prefer to use the English equivalent, Intermediate Period. In addition, Bryan Cuevas has pointed out to us that at least one major traditional scholar —bCom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri— did use *bar dar*, but quite differently, to denote the early part of the *phyi dar* associated with Rin chen bzang po (see Cuevas 2006: 47). Yet not very many Tibetans took up Rig pa'i ral gri's usage, which was explicitly rejected by Bu ston. Dan Martin informs us that the only traditional scholar he knows of apart from Rig pa'i ral gri who uses the term *bar dar* is the relatively obscure figure of dGe ye Tshul khriṃs seng ge, in his history *Chos 'byung Thos pa'i rGya mtsho Dad pa'i Ngang mo rNam par rTse ba* published in the year 1474; yet he uses *bar dar* in relation to the Kālacakra transmission (personal communication, 21st August, 2008).

⁴ Our use of the term 'indigenisation' in this paper needs clarification. We are not attempting to hypostatise a binary opposition between the indigenous and the imported, nor are we attempting to argue that all modifications to Buddhist tantrism in Tibet stem from any such binary structure. Rather, we envisage the complexity within Tibet of the interrelationship and interpenetration of multiple foreign and indigenous elements over long periods of time. In similar vein, we do not wish to hypostatise a monolithic entity designated as 'the indigenous'. On the contrary, we must envisage an ethnically complex and culturally pluralistic background within which both elite and popular religions co-existed, as well as core Tibetan beliefs and beliefs of the neighbouring subjects they conquered (an excellent consideration of this was presented by Prof. Christopher Beckwith in his Numata Distinguished Guest Lecture ; see note 2). In addition, we must point out that there were already earlier attempts at indigenising Buddhism that pertained to the *snga dar* proper, just as there were certainly later

ever, within this ideological trend, overt syncretism or hybridisation with non-Buddhist traditions was either avoided or carefully controlled, so that such traditions were always keen to present themselves as fully Buddhist. It is partly out of this Intermediate Period process of indigenising Buddhism whilst down-playing hybridisation that the modern rNying ma tradition has grown, and it is this process that we are interested in studying here. This mode of indigenising might well have been a continuation of policies already begun in the *snga dar* proper, although we are not yet in possession of enough evidence to assess such a hypothesis properly. The Bon texts (as we now have them) show several possible signs of origins from a similar Intermediate Period cultural matrix, but here an important rhetorical stance or ideological trend seems to have entailed a higher degree of hybridisation, whilst also transforming Buddhism so thoroughly that it no longer carried the identification of Buddhism at all.⁵ By contrast, a major rhetorical stance or ideology (but by no means the only one!) that increasingly came to the fore in the *phyi dar* was to lay claim to an authentically Indic form of Buddhism that was as little changed as possible.

Both the examples of Intermediate Period indigenisation we will examine here focus on the figure of Padmasambhava, whose mythology became absolutely fundamental to the rNying ma school and central to its indigenising strategies.⁶ Both examples come from the Dunhuang texts:

indigenising efforts in the *phyi dar*, despite its Indianising rhetoric. In this paper, however, our examples are specifically Intermediate Period, and pertain specifically to what later emerged as the rNying ma tantric tradition. Michael Walter (in press) addresses many of these issues in a highly original way.

⁵ This conclusion is partly based on our as yet incomplete readings in what are widely said to be the earliest Bon Phur pa texts, notably the *Ka ba nag po* cycle. Speculatively speaking, the parts we have read so far might show possible signs of hybridisation with both popular religion (numerous kinds of spirits and demons of the landscape acting as obedient servants) and with the official Imperial cult (an emphasis on bird and hawk imagery for the higher deities—compare e.g. with the bird-headdress wearing ritualists of Ral pa can's court in the *Xin Tang shu* 130f, as described in Walter (in press), Ch.1 note 75). However, we are as yet quite uncertain how such texts can be reliably dated. Hence in locating Bon origins within the Intermediate Period, we are self-consciously following the herd of existing Bon studies – which might, of course, eventually prove to be mistaken, and the shared cultural patterns with rNying ma texts might turn out to have other explanations.

⁶ We hope that in a future article, we will be able to address the larger and more complex question of how the fully developed Padmasambhava mythology might itself represent a form of indigenisation. For example, we are interested in how it might have served as a fundamental central mythic matrix in rNying ma Buddhism with functions that were structurally parallel to that of the pre-Buddhist mythic matrix of the sacral emperor, which, as Karmay and others have argued, provided the foundation of so much of the Imperial religion (Karmay 1998: 289). As well as the Padmasambhava myths, those of Gesar and Shenrab should also be mentioned. We hope that yet a further paper will look at another aspect of indigenisation: the transformation of the originally Indic Rudra-taming myth in rNying ma hands, and its redeployment as a major structuring myth that makes sense of tantric ritual at numerous different levels. In Tibetan hands,

contrary to some earlier studies that put its development somewhat later, we now know that the Padmasambhava mythology was already moderately well represented among several Dunhuang texts that probably date from the last quarter of the tenth century.

Samten Karmay's understanding of myth and ritual

One of Samten Karmay's most notable findings is that in indigenous Tibetan religion, an attendant archetypal myth is usually integral to a ritual performance, in the sense that the ritual and its archetypal myth taken together form a model (*dpe srol*).⁷ In such constructions, the myth is presented as logically prior, so that the ritual cannot function without it, and upon which the ritual is thus dependent; hence we can never fully understand the rituals unless we also understand their myths (see, for example, Karmay 1998: 245ff and 288ff; see also Karmay forthcoming). In popular indigenous and especially Bon po rituals, the mythical component is called the *rabs* (account) or *smrang* (proclamation of the origin myth). These terms are clearly quite old, since they occur frequently in Dunhuang ritual texts. In the ritual performance, the officiant will often identify with the main protagonist or some other leading character in the myth. He might also identify himself as the spiritual heir or lineage holder (*brgyud 'dzin*) of the master who first enacted the prototypical ritual deed as narrated in the myth. In these ways, Karmay writes, the ritual is 'situated in a mythical spatio-temporal context'; knowledge of and reference to the supporting myth is therefore an indispensable requirement for the performance of the ritual, which is presented as 'the re-enactment of the mythical past'. As Karmay explains, 'the ritual itself therefore consists in the re-enacting of the myth, thereby legitimizing the ritual performer as well as sanctifying his action in the process of performance' (Karmay forthcoming: 3).

Karmay also identifies a key difference between Buddhist tantric ritual of Indian inspiration (*sādhana*, *sgrub thabs*) and indigenous models. The

the Rudra-taming myth begins to function within ritual and doctrine in a way that might well expose specifically Tibetan patterns of thought, similar to those identified by Samten Karmay.

⁷ Samten Karmay, writing in the 1980's, briefly refers to a specific anthropological debate concerning the connection between myth and ritual, and wisely dissociates himself from it. He writes: 'It is not certain whether myth always precedes ritual and, in my opinion, the question remains unsettled. I do not propose to solve the problem here since in Tibetan tradition myth is an integral part of rite.' (Karmay 1998: 288). Thus avoiding any fruitless search for a universal model of how ritual and myth might develop in relation to each other, Karmay's work instead achieves great value by revealing the particular cultural templates through which myth and ritual explained each other in Tibet.

Indian-inspired *sgrub thabs* is ostensibly primarily aimed at the realisation of the deity by the practitioner (*sādhaka*, *sgrub pa po*), although related mundane goals are certainly also found. By contrast, Tibetan autochthonous ritual, he writes 'was often concerned with the everyday life of the people. It functions to create social cohesion and moral obligation among the members of the village community. It encourages communal organization centering upon the cult of the local spirits connected with water, soil, rocks and mountains.' Equally, Karmay's analyses of the centrality of the sacral emperor in indigenous ritual, and of the political implications of mountain deities, also point to a communalistic understanding of religious ritual on a more macro scale (Karmay 1998: 288ff and 432ff).

In addition, Karmay has pointed out that within the actual ritual texts, whether modern editions or ancient manuscripts from Dunhuang, the myth is generally not spelt out in full, but only alluded to briefly, usually by naming the chief characters in the myth. A type of repetition is also apparent: quite often, ostensibly different rituals use the same basic stereotypical mythic structure and major mythic protagonists of the same name, occurring repeatedly in different ritual contexts (Karmay forthcoming: 3). This basic stereotypical structure narrates a theme of the world's first origination from nothingness into a state characterised by a primal harmony between humans and spirits. However, this is lost by man's various misdemeanors such as hunting, polluting the waters, digging the ground, cutting down trees, or committing murder, all of which create forms of pollution (*mnol*, *dme*), and give rise to a state of tension between humans and spirits, and a degeneration of society, health, and the times in general. However, the original harmony can be reclaimed by the activity of the suitably qualified ritualist armed with the appropriate rituals, which re-enact the original harmonious state explained in the myth.

We believe that Karmay's distinction between indigenous and Indian-derived *sādhana* rituals certainly has considerable truth, although one also has to be careful not to overstate this difference. The importance of rituals for practical ends in Indian derived tantrism should not be underestimated. Moreover, Buddhist *sādhana* rituals certainly do employ myth, and very prominently on occasion: for example, *sādhana* rites for the Medicine Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru, Sangs rgyas sman bla) refer to the myth of his great vows as contained in his Mahāyāna scriptures, and Amitābha or Kālacakra rituals will also refer to their own famous mythic themes. Even the prescribed re-enactment by the contemporary ritualist of an original prototype ritual is found in popular tantric Buddhist rites such as the Earth Ritual, which occurs, for example, in the Indic *Vairocanaḥisambodhi-sūtra*,⁸ likewise one finds the re-enactment of an original prototype ritual in the bathing sequence for the consecration of images, as described in

⁸ For a detailed study of the Earth Ritual, see Cantwell 2005.

Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* (see Tanemura 2004: 274).⁹ One might also argue that a largely pre-literate society's 'myths' within ritual are narratively equivalent to a more literate culture's scholastic doctrines within ritual - for example, the Buddhist idea of six realms of existence within *saṃsāra* underpins the popular recitations of Avalokiteśvara's six-syllabled mantra, where the *sādhaka* re-enacts Avalokiteśvara's activity of liberating the six realms in recitation and visualisation. It is also important to recall that Tantric *sādhana* in general can be seen as recreating the universe in such a way as to recover its primal purity, through the process of visualising its cosmogony.¹⁰

Nevertheless, on aggregate if not on every occasion, indigenous Tibetan ritual use of myth does tend to have a subtly different 'flavour' to Indian *sādhana*. According to Karmay's characterisation of it, indigenous Tibetan ritual: [1] more consistently and explicitly prescribed the re-enactment by the contemporary ritualist of an original prototype ritual – what is merely commonplace or implicit in Indic ritual, is much more ubiquitous and explicit in indigenous Tibetan ritual. [2] According to Karmay's account, indigenous Tibetan ritual gave proportionally more weight to the cults of specific named localised spirits and named geographical features in the visible landscape than did Buddhist *sādhana*. [3] According to Karmay, indigenous Tibetan ritual's stereotypical narrative described the loss of original harmony through human provocation of the spirit world, while Buddhism's theory of decline has in addition to this its major discourse of psychological misperception of the unreal as real. [4] According to Karmay, indigenous Tibetan ritual aimed towards the stated primary goal of a social and environmental harmony; by contrast, Buddhism has in addition to this the goal of universal salvation. [5] Indigenous Tibetan ritual, as described by Karmay, does not seem to have had Buddhist *sādhana*'s ultimate goals of realising the deity. [6] Indigenous Tibetan ritual, as described by Karmay, does not seem to have had Buddhist *sādhana*'s methods for achieving worldly goals, which can depend on the power of the yogin's mind and his visualization, rather than on the influence of externally existent spirits.

The intention of this paper is to begin an investigation into if and how such indigenous structures of myth and ritual, so integral to indigenous religion, impacted on the indigenisation strategies followed by early Tibetan Buddhist tantric authors, as revealed in the Dunhuang manuscripts and other early sources.

⁹ Thanks to Yael Bentor for this reference.

¹⁰ Thanks to Dan Martin and Yael Bentor for their stimulating suggestions.

Overview of indigenising strategies in myth and ritual

The Dunhuang tantric texts are early enough that they can potentially yield insights into the indigenising strategies of the Intermediate Period. Other sources, such as texts from the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*, can also contain some early materials, sometimes overlapping textually with the Dunhuang materials.¹¹ There are of course many aspects to the complex indigenising processes, including the use of typically indigenous poetic forms of onomatopoeia, rhetorical question and answer sequences, and so on and so forth. Here, however we will focus on just one feature of indigenisation: the use of myth in ritual. Within the small sample of Dunhuang tantric texts that we have so far read, we find four overlapping aspects to the use of myth in tantric ritual as an indigenising strategy:

[a] The introduction of myths for use with tantric rituals with personal names, locations, and other categories, such as plants, that had specific relevance to Tibet rather than India. We find this in our examples discussed below of PT 307 and PT 44.

[b] The integration in a typically indigenous manner of myth within Tantric Buddhist rituals, resembling the *dpe srol* structure described by Karmay (found in Dunhuang texts such as PT 307 and PT 44; surviving also in modern *rNying ma* ritual, e.g. the *bsTan ma bcu gnyis* rites, and the Taming of Rudra myths, within contemporary *sādhana*).

[c] Such myths could provide prestigious charters for clans of the Intermediate Period, for example by presenting names of ancestor figures as senior disciples of Padmasambhava, and further linking these with the original taming of Rudra, as we find in PT 307 and PT 44, and surviving also in contemporary ritual. Hence they potentially shed light on the social dynamics driving the production of Intermediate Period tantrism.

[d] The development and transformation of existing Indic myths into something quite different from their original Indic formulation, in a manner more relevant to Tibetans (e.g. the various differences between Indic and Tibetan Rudra narratives).¹²

¹¹ See Cantwell and Mayer 2008 for a discussion of the substantial passages shared between the Dunhuang Phur pa texts and transmitted NGB Phur pa texts. In a forthcoming publication, we discuss the eighty-four folio Dunhuang text IOL Tib J 321, which contains an entire Mahāyoga tantra and commentary still canonically preserved.

¹² As we point out above, although Indic in origin, we believe the Rudra narratives were comprehensively refigured in Tibet, notably with regard to their application in ritual and doctrine. However, they are not the only such example. Along broadly similar lines, Imaeda 2007 provides a fascinating example of a comprehensive Tibetan adaptation of a Mahāyāna myth from the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*. This work, known as *The Cycle of Birth and Death*, is very clearly an effort at indigenisation, here intended to encourage the adoption of Buddhist mortuary practices. The work has no less than eight different witnesses among the Dunhuang mss., indicating it might well have been popular. Because the particular examples of Buddhist translation literature the author used are all cited in *IDan kar ma*, and because of its non-compliance with the

Evidence of each of these four aspects of indigenising strategies involving tantric myth and ritual are found in Dunhuang texts, so that we know they were already in place by the late tenth century, either complete or in clearly manifest prototype form. These early indigenising strategies were so successful that they became part of the basic fabric of the rNying ma tradition, and are still clearly evident in contemporary rNying ma *gter ma* composition, which we shall also demonstrate below. In this paper, we are going to focus largely on the first and second strategies, with some incidental reference to the third and fourth as well.

**Tibetan personages, places and deities, incorporated into an indigenous-style mythic account (*rabs*) used to underpin tantric ritual:
PT 307 and PT 44**

PT 307 is a text that describes Padmasambhava and one of his disciples, Rlang dpal gyi seng ge, working in tandem jointly to subdue the seven goddesses of Tibet and convert them into protectresses. It is clear that PT 307 has both mythic and ritual dimensions, which are related. Interestingly, PT 307 is also presented in a distinctive three-part structure, which we believe to be worthy of further investigation, not least because it persists in later rNying ma literature, as well as in other Dunhuang texts of this type. In PT 307, the three parts of the structure appear as background information, myth, and precise ritual instruction.

The first part of the text lists the iconographical appearance, qualities and mounts of the seven goddesses, and what they are to be called, in a manner that informs meditation on them (e.g. rDo rje Kun gsal ma is pink, wears black robes, and rides a blue horse; etc. etc.). The middle part of the text narrates the myth of how they were originally tamed as the *saptamātrkā* so well known to Indian tantric literature, at the time when Rudra was tamed; and then tamed again in Tibet in the guise of seven Tibetan goddesses by Padmasambhava and Rlang dpal gyi seng ge, who renamed them to make them into helpers of Buddhists in Tibet, and eternal guardians of the territory of Tibet. The final part of the text provides the ritual recitation by which the present day yogins, the spiritual heirs of Padma and Rlang who first enacted the ritual deed as narrated in the myth, remind the goddesses of their previous vows, and exhort them to do their duties. Thus the rite is, as Karmay writes, 'situated in a spatio-temporal context', constituting a 're-enactment of the mythical past'.¹³

translational terms of the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, Imaeda suggests the work might have originated from the *snga dar* period, around the year 800.

¹³ Such three-part structuring of materials that include a *smrang* or *rabs*-like narrative persists in the later tradition, where it is clearly evident in *gter ma* texts dealing with the

Dalton has already made a very worthy analysis and translation of this manuscript, showing how it homologizes the well-known Indic *saptamātrkā* with indigenous female deities: if south of the Himalayas it was the *saptamātrkā* that were subdued by tantric Buddhist power, north of the Himalayas this procedure was now applied to seven indigenous Tibetan goddesses that were identified with the *saptamātrkā* (Dalton 2004). Clearly, this is an attempt at indigenisation. However, Dalton has not addressed the question of how the narrative section of the text works in the context of indigenous Tibetan ritual, nor entirely understood how the key structural features of the text have persisted into modern times.¹⁴ Just as important as the simple replacement of the *saptamātrkā* by indigenous goddesses that he notes so usefully, is the very particular *manner* in which the narrative section has been embedded in and employed within Buddhist tantric ritual. The narrative placed together with its ritual re-enactments seems to represent a Buddhist calque on the indigenous Tibetan pattern in which

taming of indigenous Tibetan deities by Guru Padma. An excellent source for this can be found in the 14th century Byang gter traditions for pressing down the *sri* demons (*sri mnan*), an indigenous Tibetan practice widely incorporated into rNying ma ritual. The *Byang gter phur pa'i sri gnon gyi ngag 'don chog khrigs rdo rje'i lhun po* was compiled by Rig 'dzin padma 'phrin las in the 17th century but based *inter alia* on Rig 'dzin rgod ldem's revelation, *Sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa*, and on a further text called *mNan pa'i gzer kha*. In it we find the following introductory words signalling a *smrang* or *rabs* type of presentation:

'Now we need to know the ritual system of pressing down, developed following the method described in the history books which tell how Guru Padma controlled these demons by pressing them down in the past.' (Boord forthcoming: 223) And shortly later on we find the three-part structure: 'According to the *mNan pa'i gzer kha*: "With regard to teaching the genuine act of pressing down, (a) the manner of the *sri*'s former arising is taught, (b) the manner of their suppression in the middle period is taught, and (c) the manner of their final pressing down is also taught. These are the three.' (Boord forthcoming: 224). On inspection, we see can see that the first of the three parts provides the necessary general background description of the *sri* demons, describing how each of the major types was born, their respective names, their respective appearances, their respective dwelling places, and what each of them feeds on. This description is indispensable to for any magical or meditational dealings with the *sri*. The second part of the text narrates the mythic story of how Padma suppressed the *sri* in times past. The third section gives the present day ritual, drawing on these myths, so that the rite is 'situated in a spatio-temporal context', constituting a 're-enactment of the mythical past'. Thus the three-part structure of the Byang gter text is more or less identical to the three-part structure of PT 307, and both texts deal with the taming by Guru Padma of indigenous categories of demons in highly similar ways. For an excellent discussion of the *sri* and their suppressing (*sri mnan*) within Byang gter, see Martin Boord, forthcoming, Chapter Six.

¹⁴ Dalton (2004) argues that the narrative structure of his text, in which Rlang dpal gyi seng ge works together with Padmasambhava, has been forgotten in later literature, as a consequence of the increasing emergence of Padmasambhava as a personage of unique importance. Thus he writes of Rlang dpal gyi seng ge's presence in this narrative that, "the important role played by a native Tibetan was inconsistent with the later narratives and so was forgotten." Here Dalton's analysis is clearly mistaken, as we shall show below.

each ritual system was inextricably associated with its myth. In other words, the narrative part of this text is intended to work very similarly to a *smrang* or *rabs*, as a mythic template for the Buddhist rituals contained in the last part of the text. As we point out above, Karmay has described how in indigenous religion, such myth is always combined with its related rituals, to form a 'model' (*dpe srol*). A ritual cannot function without its myth and is therefore dependent upon it. Although a Buddhist text, PT 307 appears to be structured along the lines of the indigenous *dpe srol* template.

The great success and extraordinary survival of PT 307 as a Buddhist *dpe srol* becomes swiftly evident when we delve into almost any of the full-length rituals of the developed and contemporary rNying ma tradition. It is easily discerned in the rites for the special category of goddesses known as the Ancient Established Protectresses (*brtan ma*), often enumerated as twelve-fold (*brtan ma bcu gnyis*), who have a special role in protecting the land of Tibet and its boundaries. Their names in modern ritual, as Dalton has already remarked, although typically fluid, nevertheless closely coincide with the list of names given in PT 307.¹⁵ Throughout the developed rNying ma tradition, these *brtan ma* occur as mundane or semi-mundane leaders of hosts of further female deities whose initial taming and binding under oath by Padma and Rlang(s) dpal gyi seng ge must be celebrated anew at the end of all rNying ma pa *tshogs* or community ritual feast practices. This is done through very distinctive and regularly performed ritual acts typically known by such names as the "Offering to the Assembly of Ancient Established Protectresses" (*brtan ma'i tshogs mchod pa*). These *brtan ma* offering rites are so integral that they are very much the rule, rather than the exception. Hence in countless rNying ma rituals still regularly performed—one might even say as a part of the standard basic template of Mahāyoga and Anuyoga ritual—it is the very same pair of Indian master and leading Tibetan disciple mentioned in PT 307, Padmasambhava and Rlang(s) dpal gyi seng ge, who continue to be

¹⁵ Compare the names in Nebesky Wojkowitz 1956: 181-198 with the names in Dalton 2004. The lists of *brtan ma* we have compiled ourselves from various later rNying ma sources show a similar fluid overlap. In PT 307, each of the seven goddesses has a name preceded by "rdo rje", indicating their Buddhist name, along with a quite different second name: [1] rDo rje kun grags ma = rKong la de mo. [2] rDo rje kun tu bzang = Sha myed gangs dkar [3] rDo rje kun gsal ma = lHa ri g.ya' ma skyol [4] rDo rje ye shes mchog = bDa' la btsan mo [5] rDo rje sgron ma = Kha rag khyung btsun [6] rDo rje 'od chags ma = Byang gi gser tang yi ge 'khor 'dul ma [7] rDo rje g.yu sgron ma = lHo'i ting ting. In some of the *brtan ma* lists we have consulted so far from the later tradition, versions of the two names for a goddess in PT 307 can begin to refer to two separate goddesses, instead of being the two names of a single goddess. Thus two of the goddesses of PT 307 have correspondences through both their two names with four separate and frequently occurring members of the later *brtan ma* lists, while four of the goddesses of PT 307 have at least some correspondence between one of their names and a member of the later *brtan ma* lists, and just one PT 307 goddess seems to lack any clear correspondence between either of her names and the later *brtan ma* lists.

celebrated as together subduing the powerful specifically female protectresses of Tibet. Moreover, the goddesses in modern ritual often have many of the same names as listed in PT 307. We find such *brtan ma* rituals, to give just four examples out of the hundreds available, in the early twentieth century 'Chi med srog thig gter ma of Zil gnon nam mkha'i rdo rje,¹⁶ in the mid twentieth century bDud 'joms gNam lcags spu gri las byang,¹⁷ in the late Dil mgo mKhyen brtse's notes to the composite *gter ma*, *Lam rim ye shes snying po*,¹⁸ and in gTer bdag gling pa and Dharma Śrī's seventeenth century Anuyoga sādhana, *Tshogs chen 'dus pa*.¹⁹ To give one brief example, we read in the liturgy of the early twentieth century *gter ma*, 'Chi med srog thig:

Bhyo! From out of the expanse of the spatial field of exceedingly great emptiness, the clear light female deity's space, clouds of mamō space dancer manifestations [arise]. Assembly of Ancient Established [protectresses] who protect the land of Tibet, come to this place of the Great *Samaya!* ...Assemblies of [your] emanations, emanations of emanations, and [their] compounded emanations, innumerable, filling the whole of space, all [you] phenomenal mamos of (worldly) existence: in bygone times, at the great Vajra Rock cave of *asuras* on the [Tibetan] boundaries with India and Nepal, Master Padma and Rlangs chen dPal gyi seng ge tied [you] to the *samaya*, and [you] offered the essence of your life-force. Having promised to be servants and subjects, in accordance with the *samaya* to be respectful and to befriend those who uphold even [just] the name of mantra, accept this torma of elixir *samaya* substances, [consecrated by] the rinsing water of *samaya*. Protect the boundaries [around] the centre and periphery of the Tibetan realm. Expel the amassed armies of Duruka...²⁰

¹⁶ Although this *gter ma* was originally revealed by Zil gnon nam mkha'i rdo rje in 1904, the textual cycle has contributions from the Fifteenth Karma pa, mkha' khyab rdo rje (1871-1922), and the late bDud 'joms rin po che; hence, it is contained in bDud 'joms Rin po che, 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, *The Collected Writings and Revelations of H. H. bDud-'joms Rin-po-che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje* (Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1979-1985), vol. *Pha*, 75-554. This specific section is within the root practice text by the *gter ston* himself.

¹⁷ bDud 'joms Rin po che, *The Collected Writings*, vol. *Tha*, 139, 143, in the *brtan ma* rite.

¹⁸ This *gter ma* was jointly revealed by mChog gyur gling pa (1829-1879) and mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820-1892), and its commentary written by Kong sprul; see Erik Pema Kunsang (trans.), *The Light of Wisdom Vol II* (Boudhanath: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1998), 204-5.

¹⁹ In *Tshogs chen 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs dngogs grub char 'bebs* of the sMin grol gling tradition of gTer bdag gling pa (1646-1714) and Dharma Śrī (1654-1718), Rlangs chen dPal gyi seng ge, together with the Slob dpon Padma 'byung gnas, is similarly identified in the *brtan ma bskyang ba* section as the one responsible for binding the protectresses under oath; *Rñin ma Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. *pha*, 436.1.

²⁰ bDud 'joms Rin po che, *The Collected Writings*, vol. *pha*, 134-5: *bhyo: shin tu stong pa chen po'i dbyings: 'od gsal yum gyi mkha' klong nas: rnam 'gyur ma mo mkha' 'gro'i sprin: bod khams skyong mdzad brtan ma'i tshogs: dam tshig chen po'i gnas 'dir byon: dkar mo zhi ba'i sman mo bzhi: rang rig sman phran 'bum gyis bskor: ser mo rgyas pa'i gnod sbyin bzhi: 'khor tshogs ser mo 'bum dang bcas: nag mo gtum pa'i bdud mo bzhi: rang 'dra'i bdud rigs 'bum bcas rol: sprul pa yang sprul nying sprul tshogs: grangs med nam mkha'i mthar khyab pa: snang*

To sum up: in PT 307 we see a Dunhuang Buddhist text that presents a myth together with its attendant ritual, highly suggestive of the pre-Buddhist *dpe srol* structure. Using this indigenous structure, it proceeds to (i) indigenise an important set of Indic goddesses by homologising them with Tibetan equivalents (ii) introduce specifically Tibetan locations (iii) introduce two personages, one Indian and one local, but both specifically located in Tibetan history (iv) this provides a long-lasting and successful template for subsequent rNying ma Buddhism (v) and just as Karmay has pointed out for the Bon myths he analysed, the later rituals in the transmitted tradition tend to allude to the narrative (*rabs*) quite briefly, yet nevertheless they are logically constructed around it (vi) the ritual is one of worldly deities, and hence concerned with worldly welfare, but not now so much for the social community of pre-Buddhist ideology, but more for the religious communities of post-Buddhist ideology.

We have mentioned above that such myths could provide prestigious charters for clans in the Intermediate Period, for example by presenting names of ancestor figures as senior disciples of Padmasambhava. The promotion of an ancestor figure for the Rlang(s) clan seems to be a major feature of PT 307, and no doubt had clan-political implications in its original context of utterance. This paper is more concerned with the indigenisation of ritual rather than in the social dynamics of clan politics, so here we focus more on ritual and doctrinal implications of the inclusion of Tibetan personages. In that respect, perhaps one further fundamental doctrinal point should be made, to remedy an imbalance or misunderstanding implicit in much recent Tibetological writing. In the Mahāyoga rituals concerning Guru Padma, both ancient and modern, it is important that the primary focus on the main Guru figure should not cause us to underestimate the symbolic importance given in the underlying mythic narrative (*rabs*) to the communal nature of the efforts of the archetypal students, patrons and gurus in communally promoting and continuing the tantric tradition in Tibet. This communal aspect is not only stressed in the old mythological stories, but has equally become built into later tantric ritual liturgies and practice. Representation of the communal aspect has in fact become symbolically crucial from a rNying ma doctrinal point of view, since the entire purpose of the Mahāyoga teachings is presented as the possibility for subsequent practitioners right up to the present day—the contemporary spiritual heirs of Guru Padma and his early Tibetan disciples—to themselves manifest realisation. Hence in the context of the regular tantric ritual assembly feasts (*tshogs*), the group of practitioners seeks to re-enact

zhing srid pa'i ma mo kun: sngon tshes slob dpon padma dang: rlang chen dpal gyi seng ge yis: rgya bal so mtshams a su ra'i: rdo rje'i brag phug chen po ru: dam la btags te srog snying phul: bran dang 'bangs su khas blangs nas: sngags kyi mtshan tsam bzung rnam la'ang: gus shing grogs byar dam bcas bzhin: dam rdzas bdud rtsi'i gtor ma dang: dam tshig bshal chu 'di bzhes la: bod khams mtha' dbus so mtshams srungs: du ru ka yi dmag dpung zlog:.

and re-embodiment the archetypal creation of the tantric *maṇḍala* within a specifically Tibetan environment, in which the local spirits are integrated into the tantric assembly, and the *samaya* bond between the deities, the practitioners and the retinue of emanations is reaffirmed. Idealized Tibetan predecessors of the subsequent and present day practitioners thus have a vital symbolic place. This is why Rlang(s) dpal gyi seng ge—and, in other contexts, other early Tibetan figures as well—are explicitly referred to in such rites as the *brtan ma* and *chad gtor* offering sections of the *tshogs* rite.²¹ It is worth considering if the centrality of this communal aspect in rNying ma Mahāyoga, involving deities, practitioners, their patrons and the local spirits, might have some kind of resonance with the communal aspect that Samten Karmay has shown to be so characteristic of indigenous ritual. We will find just such a communal pattern repeated in our next example, PT 44.

PT 44

PT 44 is a well-known Dunhuang text that has attracted a number of previous studies.²² It claims at its outset to explain 'The Origins and Doctrines of Phur bu' (*phur bu'i khungs dang gtan tshigs*).²³ Like PT 307, and the later Byang gter texts we mention above, PT 44 comes in three sections, dealing with myth, meditation teaching, and ritual instruction. Here it is the first part that gives the mythic account and the second part that gives a general background, here in the form of doctrinal and meditational underpinnings; while the third part gives the precise instructions on ritual performance.

²¹ For another example of "team work" in subduing local deities beyond the *brtan ma* example, see bDud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri las byang (Bdud 'joms rin po che, *The Collected Writings*, vol. *tha*, 139), where one finds a longer list of Tibetan disciples (but still including Rlangs) who here help the Guru to subdue the female Phur pa protectresses within Tibet. Dalton's work on PT 307, then, properly speaking should be understood to demonstrate a long-term persistence in a mythological account, rather than an earlier forgotten version, as he thought.

²² Lalou (1939: 14) drew the attention of scholars to the text. Tucci (1949: 88, cited in Bischoff and Hartman 1971: 11), considered it constituted evidence for the historicity of Padmasambhava. Bischoff and Hartman (1971) made a pioneering study of it, including a full transcription and translation. Stein (1978) commented on it further. More recently, Kapstein (2000: 158–9) included a translation and discussion of the first half of the text relating to Padmasambhava's establishment of the tradition, while van Schaik (2004: 184–6) has mined it for the references to *Atiyoga* in the second section, which supplies a terse description of the Phur pa teachings. Cantwell and Mayer (2008) analysed the entire text in relation to its central concern, "*the origins and doctrines of Phur bu*".

²³ The term *gtan tshigs* is often translated along the lines of 'axiom', 'proof', or even 'edict'. The etymology of the term suggests a statement (*tshig*) that is permanent (*gtan*). Here *gtan tshigs* probably seems best translated by 'doctrine', although we remain open to better suggestions.

The mythic part of PT 44 is complex, encompassing four interconnected episodes. Firstly it describes the initially antagonistic encounter at the Asura Cave in Yang le shod in Nepal between Padmasambhava and some particularly dangerous *bSe* goddesses of Nepal, and how Padmasambhava overcame the goddesses. Secondly, it describes how this encounter is deeply involved with Padmasambhava procuring the Phur pa teachings from Nālandā; and how Padmasambhava and his disciples bound the goddesses by oath as the protectors of the Phur pa teachings. Thirdly, it describes how Padmasambhava and his disciples realised Phur pa, displaying the resultant *siddhi*. Fourthly, it presents the lineage of accomplished Phur pa practitioners in Tibet.

As with PT 307, part of the mythic section resembles a *rabs* for subsequent ritual, which remains vibrantly alive into present times, occurring in virtually every Phur pa cycle, in many or most rNying ma protector rites, and beyond. However, it does not become the *rabs* for the origins of the Phur pa deity himself or his rituals (that is supplied by a different myth which we hope to analyse in a future article). Rather, it primarily serves as the *rabs* for the rites of the *bSe* goddesses as the Phur pa protectors, a tradition that has remained extremely important among the rNying ma pa up to the present day.²⁴

In the Dunhuang version, the part of the mythic narrative relevant to the *bSe* appears as follows. The setting is an occasion when Padmasambhava is said to be meditating at Yang le shod:²⁵

²⁴ The other parts of the mythic section serve four other functions, which, while mythologically important to the indigenising of tantric Buddhism in Tibet, might not in every case strictly speaking resemble *rabs* or *smrang*, although they do have many overlapping features. In other words, although frequently alluded to in future ritual texts, they do not necessarily present a myth that is presented as logically prior and necessary to the performance of a rite, nor a story to be re-enacted in the ritual. In this way, the narrative of P 44 also (i) supplies the myth of how and why the Phur pa teachings came to Tibet (note that the Indic provenance of many of the Phur pa tantras was disputed: see Karmay 1998: 33); (ii) supplies a few elements of the myths of Padmasambhava, especially explaining how he came to use Vajrakīlaya in his approach to Tibet, perhaps also alluding to the amazing powers of his hat; (iii) supplies the myth of the holy power place of the Asura Cave at Yang le shod, an enormously important sacred site for the rNying ma pa to this day; (iv) supplies the myth of the archetypal practitioners, Padmasambhava and his Tibetan students, whose deeds must be emulated by their present day spiritual heirs. All these aspects of the narratives are prototypical for the numerous later Phur pa *lo rgyus* accounts (i.e. the historical and mythological literature often found at or near the beginning of collections of Phur pa liturgical texts, or in the introductory sections of commentarial texts). All of them serve to indigenise Indian tantrism to Tibet by supplying a supportive mythology that invokes names, places and events located within horizons familiar to Tibetans. However, in the present analysis of myth and ritual in relation to the indigenous *dpe srol* structure, it is the first of them, the myth of the taming of the goddesses into Phur pa protectors, that is the most important, and hence we will focus on that.

²⁵ Transcription of the relevant part of the Tibetan text of PT44: (3)/bse 'i lha mo bzhi zhiḡ / /nam sros tsam na/ /myi thams/ /chad kyis srog gcod cing lbug/ /s phrog pa

(3) at about the time of twilight, a [group of] four *bSe* goddesses killed all the people and appropriated their breath. Then Padmasambaba became short [of breath?],²⁶(4) [his?] breath similarly having been snatched away, [so he] rubbed [against them?] and saying, "what is this?", [he] captured and put [them] in [his] hat and departed. On arriving at Na len dra (Nālandā), [he] uncovered the hat and an exceedingly (5) beautiful woman physically appeared. [She] also promised to protect the Phur bu practice, and [he] furthermore empowered [her] as this very protectress. (6) Moreover, the omens being good, [he] playfully laughed and made an offering of a handful of gold dust, [thus] procuring the *Phur bu'i 'bum sde*. (7) Having returned to Yang [la] shod in Nepal, [he] performed [everything] included in the practices from the general *Kriyā* up to *Atiyoga*. (8,9) For the entirety of these *yānas*, out of all the secret tantras, [he] simply announced the specific oral transmissions of Phur bu from the *Phur bu'i rgyud 'bum sde*. Having thus established the practice transmissions, [he] once again escorted [back] the '*Bum sde*. (10) Then the master Sambhava, the Nepalese Ser po, In tra shu gu tu and Pra be se etc. (11) performed practice in the Asura cave. [They] performed practice enjoining the four *bse* goddesses with non-transcendent forms. (12,13) [They] gave [the goddesses] the four names: Outwardly Bestowing Great Sorceress (*Phyi byin phrul mo ce*),²⁷ Miraculously Bestowing Food (*Zas byin rdzu phrul can*); Conjuress Bestowing Nobility (*Phags byin mthu mo che*); Miraculously Bestowing Life (*Tshe byin sgyu phrul can*). For seven days [they] performed

las/ /pad ma sam/ /ba bas khong thung zhing lbugs/ (4) /phrog pa ltar mdzad nas/ /byugs pas [c(/ts)]ir ces zin/ /nas dbu zhu 'i nang du bcug/ /nas bzhud na/ /na len drar/ /byon te dbu zhu phye na shin/ (5) /du bud myed sdug gun ma/ /gcig kyis gzugs su snang/ /nas/ /phur bu bsgrub pa 'i/ /srungs mar yang dam bcas/ /srungs ma nyid du yang dbang (6) /bskur/ /snga rtags kyang/ /bzang nas/ /rtse dgod la/ /gser phye phul gang yang/ /yon du 'phul nas/ /phur bu/ /'i 'bum sde spyang drangs sde/ (7) /bal yul yang [la?] shod/ /du byon ba las/ /spyi 'i/ /kri ya yan chad a ti/ /yo ga man chad du gdog/ /s par bsgrub pa mdzad/ (8) /pa dang/ /gsang ba 'i rgyud/ /thams chad du phur bu 'i/ /rgyud 'bum sde nas/ /theg/ /pa mtha' dag kyis don du/ /phur bu 'i lung so so tsam/ (9) /tsam du bka' gtsal de/ /de lta/ /r bsgrub pa 'i lung gtan/ /la phabs nas/ /'bum sde/ /yang slar bskyal nas/ / (10) /de nas a tsa rgya sam ba ba/ /s/ /bal po ser po dang/ in/ /tra shu gu tu dang/ /pra be se/ /las bsogs pas/ /a su ra/ (11) /'i brag pug du bsgrub pa mdzad/ /pas/ /ma 'das pa 'i gzug/ /s can bse 'i lha mo bzhi/ /bskul nas bsgrub pa mdzad/ (12) /de/ /phyi byin phrul mo ce dang/ /zas byin rdzu phrul can dang/ /phags byin mthu mo che dang/ /tshe byin sgyu phrul can dang/ (13) /bzhi ru mtshan gsol lo/ /bsgrub pa chen po zhags bdun/ /byas pas/ /'phags pa rdo rje/ /gzho nu 'i zhal mngon sum/ /du mthong ngo/ /

²⁶ *khong thung*. Alternative translations (such as Kapstein's short-tempered) are possible, as are other interpretations of the rest of this sentence, but they are not critical to our argument here. The alternatives are discussed in Cantwell and Mayer 2008.

²⁷ *phyi byin*: as it stands, this might appear to be the odd name out; one might expect the first part of the name to indicate something more obviously of worldly value. It would seem inappropriate to force the name into conformity with the rest of the list, however. The *Sa skya Phur chen*'s equivalent is *spyi byin*, which indicates giving universally (see below, and also Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 46).

the Great Accomplishment, through which [they] saw the face of the Noble Vajrakumāra in person.

The narrative in which the goddesses are brought under control in PT 44 is very similar to the narratives in the extant transmitted canonical literature. The *'Bum nag* is an extremely influential work, nowadays located in the rNying ma *bKa' ma* collection, and often said to be the oldest extant Phur pa commentary. In this source we find a dusk attack on the breathing and the goddesses' expressed desire for the life-breath of the four continents,²⁸ followed by their submission and promise to protect the teachings, and the bestowal of new names. In fact, there also appears to be a close parallel to the theme of the Guru confining them in his hat. The mention in the *'Bum nag* is very brief and not entirely clear but it seems to suggest that when in the evening the Guru notices that his breathing has been restricted, he rubs [against them?] with his hand, asking what it is that he feels. He then puts [them?] into a casket, which he seals with a *mudrā*. In the morning, he looks and there are four good [looking] women, whom he then questions and binds with *mudrās*.²⁹ Although the translation here is slightly uncertain,³⁰ it seems that we have the same theme of the Guru capturing and magically imprisoning the goddesses, who reveal gentler forms and make their submission on their release.

However, there is one important difference between the myth in PT 44 and in the developed rNying ma tradition. In the transmitted rNying ma texts, the principal Phur pa protectresses consist of three quartets of goddesses: (1) the four Dog-Headed Goddesses (*Shwa na*, *Sho na*)³¹ who head the assembly; (2) the four Grande Dames (*bDag nyid chen mo*), or Re(ma)tī sisters (*Re tī mched*); and (3) the four Earth Mistresses (*Sa bdag ma*), also known as the four *bSwe mo* or *bSe mo*.³² In the later sources, all three quartets are usually said to be tamed by Padmasambhava at Yang le shod; yet in PT 44, we only find one set tamed there, the *bSe*. Nevertheless there is little doubt that the four *bse* goddesses in PT 44 correspond to the third quartet of the modern system, the Earth Mistresses or *bSe mo*: not only do they share the distinctive designation of *bSe*, but they also share with the

²⁸ See the *'Bum nag*, Boord 120; Volume Tha, 233.3 (nga gling bzhi'i srog dbugs 'dod zer/) srod thun la gu ru'i dbugs thums rngubs pa zhig byung/ phyag gis byugs pas ci cig 'dra ba zhig zin bsnyam byed de/ zam tog tu bcug ste mu dras rgyas btab pa las/ nangs par bltas pas bud med bzang mo bzhi 'dug ste su yin dris pas/ bse'i lha mo bya ba yin zer/ khyod ci 'dod byed pas/ nga gling bzhi'i srog dbugs 'dod zer/ der phyag rgyas bsams pa dang/ srog snying phul/ gsang mtshan re re btags/ (the *'Bum nag*, Volume Tha, 233.1–3)

²⁹ Note that Boord (119) reads the words concerning the casket as suggesting an analogy for the Guru's sensation of his breath being restricted.

³⁰ The correct Sanskrit would be *Śvamukhī*, and *Śvamukhī* in the plural form. The rNying ma tend to render it as *Shwa na* or *Sho na*, etc.

³¹ They are generally also accompanied by a male group of Great Noble Ging (*sKyes bu ging chen*).

later tradition distinctive names ending in *-byin*. Hence in the modern *Sa skya Phur chen* (45v–46v), for example, they are called *sPyi byin*, *Ya byin*, *bSe byin*, and *Phag byin* (there are endless further variants in other texts). We are not yet sure why the later accounts talk of three quartets, while the early text PT 44 only has one, but such variations often occur in ritual literature, and this variation makes little substantive difference to the theme of our exploration here.

Modern ritual texts dedicated to the Phur pa protectors are performed regularly, on a daily basis in most rNying ma monasteries as part of the general rites for the protectors (*chos skyong*, *dharmapāla*). In addition, more extensive rites to the Phur pa protectors are performed by those who particularly worship Vajrakīlaya, the most popular of rNying ma *yi dam* deities. In these rituals, the mythic narrative of the deities being initially tamed by Padmasambhava is, just as Karmay pointed out for his Bon po texts, alluded to only in brief. However, the accompanying *lo rgyus* texts that usually accompany Phur pa collections ensure that its meaning is not forgotten. To take just one example, we find the following story of the taming of the *bSe mo* in the *lo rgyus* section of the bDud 'joms *gNam lcags spu gri* (Volume Tha, 30–32):

"Then, [Padmasambhava] arrived nearby the region of the Enlightenment Spring, at the grove of winter flowers and skeletons, and at twilight, [he] made one little observation. [His] body felt heavy and dense, while into [his] presence, [there] came an unclear vision. Seizing hold [of it] in [his] hand, [he] put [it] into a small vessel³³ and sealed [it down] with Vajrakīlaya. In the morning, [he] looked and there were four fearsome looking women, extending across the expanse of the sky. Knowingly, the Master asked, 'who are you?' and [they] replied, 'we are the four *bSwe mo* sisters,' and also, '[we are] the queens of the four seasons.' Again, [they said,] 'formerly, we brought the lives of people and livestock throughout the worldly realms under control. Now, too, please empower us do the same again!' Each offered up [to him] the essence of [her] life-force, so without empowering [them] in this way, the Master taught [them] Vajrakīlaya. [They] listened and were bound to overpower and destroy the lives of the meditation practitioners' hindrances. [He] tied black silk diadems on each of [their] heads, bestowed upon each of them human skin *phur pas*, dressed [them] all in strong coats of armour, mounted [them] all upon stallions to ride, and gave [them] four lakes as the places to sustain [them]. Giving each [of them] secret names, *Shu len ta ri* etc.,³⁴ [he] enjoined them, saying, 'the time has come for the Great Earth

³³ Assuming that *spar bu* = *par bu*

³⁴ The set of "secret names" indicated here is also found in other sources, but not in PT 44. The canonical NGB scripture, the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, lists them in Chapter 13 as Kumadari, Śudari, Camundari and Kaṅkadari, while in Chapter 19, its *mantroddhāra*, upon reconstitution they emerge as Kunmandari, Dṣuldari, Camundhari and Kaṅkadari (see Mayer 1996: 128–9). The *Sa skya Phur chen* (44r–45r) includes these names in verses before the invocations using the names which seem partially parallel to those in PT 44

Mistresses', and [he] created the array of [their] essential root heart [syllables], saying, 'ajiti aparajite'.³⁵

Among the Phur srung ritual texts by the same author, the following more cryptic excerpted verses are addressed to the *bSe mo*:

"Hüm! In bygone days, in the presence of the Master Padma Tö-treng,³⁶
(you) promised to (be) the protectors of Phurpa,
and were endowed with the samaya to guard the yogin(s) as (your) child(ren),
along with (your) emanations (of) male and female attendants, (we) praise
(you)!

....

Dark blue Ya byin wears a large blue silk robe,
(she) holds an iron hook and a stabbing phurpa, and rides a turquoise dragon.
Yellow De byin wears a large black silk robe,
(she) holds an golden lasso and a porcupine, and rides a makara.
Dark red bSwe byin wears a red silk trailing robe,
(she) holds an iron chain and a supreme phurpa,³⁷ and rides a lasso of lightning.
Dark green Phag byin wears a large blue silk robe,
(she) holds a bell and a phurpa, and rides a sea-horse.
Four sister Earth Mistresses, please come here and accept the tormas.
Effect the accomplishment of the ritual actions that the yogin has entrusted (to you).

as discussed above. A myes zhabs comments on the relations between the different names: Ku lan dhara is also called, rDo rje Ya byin ma (469.7–470.1); Shu lan dhara is also called, rGya (sic. = spyi?) byin ma (470.6); Tsa mun ta is also called, rDo rje bSe byin ma (471.6–472.1); and Kam ka dhara is rDo rje Phag byin ma (473.1–2).

³⁵ de nas chu mig byang chub ris kyi 'gram me tog dgun yang mi skam pa'i tshal der byon nas srod la dgongs pa cung zhig mdzad/ sku nyams su lci thibs se ba dang spyang sngar yang rib rib pa zhig byung ba phyag gis bzung ste spar bur bcug cing rdo rje phur pas rgyas btab nas bzhag /nangs par gzigs pas/ bud med 'jigs su rung ba nam mkha'i mthongs su sleb pa bzhi 'dug ste/ slob dpon gyis mkhyen bzhin du khyed cag su yin gsungs pa na/ bdag cag ni bswe mo mched bzhi zhes kyang bya/ nam zla dus bzhi'i rgyal mo zhes kyang bya/ sngon yang 'jig rten khams kyi mi phyugs kyi srog la dbang bar byas/ da dung yang de ltar dbang bskur du gsol/ zhes zer te so so'i srog snying phul bas/ slob dpon gyis de ltar dbang ma bskur te rdo rje phur pa bshad pa dang/ nyan pa dang/ sgom sgrub byed pa la bar du gcod pa'i srog la dbang gyis shig par dam stsal nas/ dar nag gi cod pan re re mgo la btags /zhing gi phur pa re re lag tu bskur/ dbang gi bswe khrab re re lus la bkon/ bskyod pa'i rta pho re re 'og tu skyon/ rten gyi mtsho bzhi gnas su byin/ shu len ta ri la sogs pa'i gsang mtshan re re'ang so sor btags shing/ sa bdag chen mo'i dus la bab/ /ces pa'i bskul dang/ a dzi ti a pa ra dzi te zhes pa'i srog snying yang rtsa bar bkod par mdzad do/ (bDud 'joms *gNam lcags spu gri lo rgyus*, Volume Tha: 30–32)

³⁶ Thod-phreng: Skull-Garlanded, a name of Guru Padma.

³⁷ *mchog phur*: the implication here is the same as in the term, *sras mchog*, that is, a phur pa which embodies the deity as a "supreme son" of the principal deity.

Not shirking from the promise of (your) former heart vows,
 guard the Teaching and the Holders of the Teaching of Vajrakīlaya!
 Clear away all adverse circumstances afflicting we³⁸ yogins and our circle,
 and bring about all conducive circumstances without omitting any.”³⁹

Hence PT 44 (like PT 307) is a Dunhuang Buddhist text that presents our earliest surviving version of an enduring and probably indigenous goddess taming myth. In the later tradition, we see that this myth is integrally linked to a protector goddess ritual, in a manner highly suggestive of the pre-Buddhist *dpe srol* structure: the myth is presented as logically prior, without which the ritual cannot function, and upon which the ritual is thus dependent. In the ritual performance, the officiant must identify with the main protagonist and other leading characters in the myth, seeing himself as the spiritual heir or lineage holder (*brgyud 'dzin*) of Padmasambhava and his disciples, who first enacted the prototypical taming of the *bSe mo* as narrated in the myth.

However, unlike PT 307, PT 44 does not give us an actual rite to worship the goddesses; and without such direct evidence, we cannot be absolutely certain that its myth was intended for ritual usage at the time PT 44 was written. However, since PT 44 already describes the *bSe* goddesses as transformed into protectresses, empowered by Padmasambhava, and vowed to protect the Phur pa teachings, it is quite likely that their worship was already envisaged by the time PT 44 was written, and we do find evidence for such worship in other possibly early texts, such as the '*Bum nag* and the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*,⁴⁰ so it might well be old, as we would expect.

Judging by their continuing popularity ten centuries later, the myths in PT 44 must be seen as a highly successful strategy for indigenisation. The

³⁸ *bdag cag*: note that we have emended the text here; the original gave, "*pa dag cag*", which must be a scribal error.

³⁹ Hūm/ sngon tshe slob dpon padma thod phreng gi/ /spyan sngar phur pa'i srung mar zhal bzhes pa// rnal 'byor bu bzhin skyong ba'i dam tshig can/ /lcam dral bka' sdod sprul par bcas la bstod/...

/ya byin mthing nag dar sngon ber chen gsol/ /lcags kyu gdab phur 'dzin cing g.yu 'brug zhon/ /de byin ser mo dar nag ber chen gsol/ /gser zhags byi thur 'dzin cing chu srin zhon/ /bswe byin dmar nag dar dmar 'jol ber gsol/ /lcags sgrog mchog phur 'dzin cing glog zhags zhon/ /phag byin ljang nag dar sngon ber chen gsol/ /dril bu phur pa 'dzin cing chu rta zhon/ /sa bdag mched bzhi 'dir spyon gtor ma bzhes/ /rnal 'byor bcol ba'i phrin las 'grub par mdzod/...

/sngon gyi thugs dam zhal bzhes ma g.yel bar/ /rdo rje phur pa'i bstan dang bstan 'dzin skyong / /rnal 'byor bdag cag 'khor dang bcas pa yi/ /'gal rkyen kun sol mthun rkyen ma lus sgrubs/ (phur srung dam can bcu drug gi gtor ma'i cho ga phrin las dga' ston, bDud 'joms *gNam lcags spu gri*, Volume Tha: 222-5)

⁴⁰ While tradition and a good quantity of circumstantial evidence hold such classic rNying ma titles as these to be early, we really have no absolute certainty as yet on the dates of their versions as we currently have them. However, such evidence as textual parallels with Dunhuang texts indicate that early material is certainly contained in the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*. We are less certain about the '*Bum nag*.

myths have succeeded in: (i) introducing into the heart of an ostensibly Indic (Nālandā) tantric system an important set of goddesses from nearby Nepal, a place close by and familiar to many Tibetans; (ii) provided a profile for a named teacher, Padmasambhava, who, although Indian, was of special significance to Tibet; (iii) introduced an account of miraculous accomplishments achieved by named Tibetan forebears in specifically Tibetan locations; (iv) provided a long-lasting and successful template for subsequent rNying ma ritual that locates the Phur pa teachings in a mythical spatio-temporal framework, allowing the ritualist to identify himself as the spiritual heir or lineage holder (*brgyud 'dzin*) of the masters who first enacted the prototypical ritual deed: a structure culturally valued by Tibetans; (v) just as Karmay has pointed out for the Bon myths he analysed, the later rituals in the transmitted tradition tend to allude to the narrative quite briefly, yet nevertheless they are logically constructed around it.

This concludes the first part of our study of the indigenising features found in Intermediate Period tantric literature, with particular reference to the use of myth within ritual as an indigenisation strategy. We hope that in the future we might be able to take this study forward in a number of ways: [1] by looking at the indigenising role of clans in the production of Intermediate Period tantric literature; [2] by looking at the development and transformation of existing Indic myths into something quite different to their original Indic formulation, in a manner more appealing to Tibetans, with particular reference to the Rudra taming myth; [3] by looking at the structural embedding of myth within Tantric Buddhist rituals in a manner familiar or suitable to a Tibetan audience; [4] by looking at the mythic complexes surrounding Padmasambhava as a form of indigenisation, with further reference to gShen rab and Ge sar. In all probability, neither this nor the forthcoming parts of this study would have existed without Samten Karmay's seminal elucidation of the functioning of myth within Tibetan ritual. Our heartfelt aspiration is to become worthy *brgyud 'dzin* of such an illustrious academic predecessor.

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THE MALEVOLENT SPIRITS OF STANG VALLEY (BUMTHANG)
— A BHUTANESE ACCOUNT*

Kunzang Choden

Introduction

Bumthang is located in the central part of Bhutan and consists of four major valleys which correspond to the four administrative blocks namely, Chos 'khor, Chu smad, U ra and sTang. Bumthang is home to one of the earliest Buddhist temples, Byams pa'i lha khang which according to tradition was built by King Srong bstan sgam po (d.649/50) Today, it has as many as ninety eight temples for the population of about twenty thousand. Bumthang is considered to be one of the most sacred places in Bhutan, blessed by Guru Padmasambhava's presence in the eighth century. Many of the region's legends and folklore have their origins in or are associated with the activities of the great teacher.

For the people of Bumthang, he not only introduced Buddhism but also subjugated and incorporated the aboriginal spirits, of the area and included them into the *chos srung* category. But what seems to have evaded the subjugation are the lowly spirits, *shi'dre*, *gson'dre*, *the'urang* (Bum.¹ *thaybrang*)' *khor dang rgyalpo* (Bum. *korthang gaipo*) etc. whose existence impinge on the lives of the people and compel interaction on a daily basis. These spirits were, perhaps, too many in numbers and too insignificant in persona, and yet too dynamic in character to be included in scheme of the Guru's subjugation. No specific mention of these spirits is ever found in any texts nor are they included in the *gtor grel* (Bum. *tordrey*) during formal rituals of *gsol kha* of the *chos srung*. So, free and beyond the confines of the *gtor grel* these malevolent spirits have survived like lawless men to cause havoc among the people. The malevolent spirits which are classified as *'khor dang rgyalpo* are considered to be part of the retinue of the deity Pehar rgyal po. The more mobile and elusive are the *shi'dre* and the *gson'dre* whose powers and personalities fluctuate but whose malevolency has a tenacity to constantly remind the people of their presence and their influence. These spirits cause a wide range of harm ; from spoiling the fermentation process of grains for alcohol to the deaths of humans and animals; from superficial scratches on human bodies to causing the rotting away of internal organs. The malevolent spirits are not only acknowledged but feared, held in awe and placatory rites have to be performed for them.

* This article was originally prepared for the Franco-Austrian Vienna Seminar on local deities (1996) but never published.

¹ Bum. means Bumthangkha, the non written language of Central Bhutan. Dz. Means Dzongkha.

Although all the valleys have their own localized malevolent spirits, this article will focus on the spirits who rule the valley of sTang. First of all, sTang has the largest number of spirits and second the beliefs and practice of propitiating malevolent spirits appears most varied here and finally, my personal experiences are generally limited to this area. Informants do not readily talk about the subject and interviewing persons associated with the spirits would not be considered proper by most. Much of the information here has been collected through participation and observation. This paper will look at the basic beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the malevolent spirits. The characteristics of spirits will be described. Attempt will be made to trace their origins and investigate how they came to be in sTang valley and how they identify themselves to this territory. The symptomatic conditions resulting from the visitations of the evil spirit will be described and the methods of feeding and appeasing them will be outlined. Various methods of divinations to isolate and identify each spirit will be also discussed.

Identification: - Who are they and how can we tell?

What makes some spirits malevolent? Generally it is believed that when people die if the officiant who conducts the rite of *'pho ba*, the transference of the *rnam shes* (the conscious principle) and performs the cremation rite is not learned or powerful enough and, therefore, not effective, the conscious principle of the deceased loses his/her path to rebirth or liberation from the cycle of births and becomes a *shi'dre*² a malevolent spirit of the dead. Other times some people who are dying, cannot sever their attachments to certain objects or belongings. The attachments propel the spirits to a life of restless wandering. As will be noticed later in the paper, some of the spirits are recognized and named after the object or food they were attached to at the time of their death. Spirits today, identified as *Chudung*³ (Bum.) and *Wali*⁴ (Bum.) were probably results of strong attachments to these particular objects. The astrologer who conducts the divinations and calculations for the diseased, determines, among other things, that the spirit of the deceased is clinging to specific objects and people. In the case of *gson'dre* a malevolent spirit of the living, it is believed that an evil spirit is housed within the body of certain living people. The people who possess the evil spirit are generally seen be highly ambitious, blatantly envious and fiercely competitive. The question of why

² In case the officiant who conducts the *'pho ba* and cremation rituals is not adequate the *rnam shes* gets stolen by the *bdud*

³ *Chudung* is a pipe of bamboo or metal used for blowing air to kindle a fire in the hearth.

⁴ *Wali* is special utensil with a spout for melting and pouring butter into the butter lamps.

certain people are more susceptible to become the receptacle for evil spirits more than others is simply explained by the virtue of their karma.

Usually when a person falls ill or has an accident, the householders consult a diviner to ascertain the causes of the illness or the calamity. As many times as a diviner will advise some known Buddhist ritual, he/she may divine that the cause of the illness to be a *gdon*, a malevolent spirit. If the remedy or the counteractive measures to the illness or calamity is to be a standard Buddhist ritual the professional/religious people are approached but if the cause is a *gdon* the villagers themselves perform the propitiatory rites. Most times the diviner is the village astrologer, (*rtsis pa*) but it can also be any religious person and other times even lay people who have established themselves as having the power of divination. The most common way of divination is by using the prayer beads, '*phreng mo*. The astrologers or other religious practitioners, take the prayer beads in their hands and rub them between the palms while they chant invocations to their personal deities, then they blow on to the prayer beads. With closed eyes they randomly take a segment of the strand between the thumbs and the fingers and count the beads taking three or sometimes five beads at a time and move simultaneously inwards. Depending on how many beads are left over, a divination is pronounced. Other times *sho mo* or divination using dice is practiced. Three dices are thrown and the total sum of eyes are studied. Usually, as this method is considered to be devised by 'Jam dpal dbyang (Manjusri), invocations are made to him. Although, diviners say that invocations are just as often made to their personal individual deities before doing *mo*. While some practitioners refer to a manuscript to pronounce a divination, others simply speak out their findings extemporaneously without any books or notes. Another version of the '*phreng mo* is to hold the prayer beads folded in half and hold it on the forehead. If the prayer beads remain still there is no *gdon* while a swinging motion indicates the presence of a *gdon* who has to be identified. Some clairvoyants claim to bestow divinations by just studying the face of the person seeking a *mo*. At times when there are no diviners available, people resort to what they call *spra thag ma*⁵, "monkey divination". This method usually involves folding over the outer flap of the man's garment, *gos*, and measuring with one's hand span certain segments repeatedly following a certain order. Diviners say that they are themselves amazed by the differing measurements they get each time for the same segment of the cloth.

⁵ Monkeys are believed to imitate human beings. Therefore, people who do divination, without having the required initiations or empowerment are seen as monkeys imitating the real diviners.

The first step of the *mo* is to see if the cause of the illness is a *gson'dre* or a *shi'dre* or a *rgyal po*. Once these variables are known then the harmful spirit has to be isolated and identified. This is done through a process, whereby, the person seeking the *mo* thinks of a suspected spirit which the diviner confirms or rejects. If a spirit is confirmed, the specific feeding ritual can commence but if it is rejected the person has to continue to think of more spirits until a particular one is confirmed. The person will, based on the obvious symptoms of patient and the circumstances the patient encountered (like meeting a person from the household of a *gdon* or being in the vicinity of *gdon*) or special dreams⁶ that the patient may have had, isolate and identify the most likely *gdon* through guessing and elimination, rejection and confirmation.

There are some people who are known to be worshippers of the *Pang lha Gomo*, which I call the spirit of the wilderness. These people are said to obtain every gratification in this life but will be bonded to this spirit for eternity without any chance of ever attaining nirvana. The *Pang lha* is said to reside in the dark and deeply forested mountains. According to local belief, those people who dare to make this choice enter into a pact with the spirit. The potential worshipper, must with the utmost secrecy go into the dark and deep forest of the mountains and invoke the spirit. This, they do with a well prepared feast and a game of dice. They have to have a black dice for the spirit and a white dice for themselves. The winner of the game will eat the feast. The dice have to be especially crafted so that the white dice has only the winning number, 'one' on all sides while the black dice has only the losing number, 'six' on all sides. Each time the dices are cast the person gets the winning number and the spirit the losing number. The person eats the feast and challenges the spirit again and again. Eventually the spirit initiates physical contact by putting its huge hairy arms over the shoulders of the person. At this time, without displaying any form of fear or without ever looking back at the spirit the person must clasp steadily around the arm and never let it free. The spirit will struggle furiously to be freed. The person must continue to hold on. Finally the spirit will beg to be released. At this time the person must lay down his conditions of help and protection under all circumstances. The spirit will agree but only after the person has agreed to his terms also. The person must never worship any Buddhist gods or take any blessings or empowerment from Buddhist monks. The *Pang lha* is then said to take residence on the shoulder of the person, ever ready to help and protect the worshipper.⁷ Although *Pang lha*

⁶ Dreams of kings, lamas and queens represent *rgyal po* while dreams of yellow dogs, foxes, and babies eggs and nondescript women represent *gdon*.

⁷ Some older people recall an incident of a *Pang lha* worshipper who became quite famous as a reader of the Kanjur text. He could read the text at a tremendous speed. Some people suspected him of being a *Pang lha* worshipper. Once they invited him to

worshippers are viewed with suspicion and skepticism they are sought after for their powers of divination. The accuracy of their divination is attributed to the spirit sitting on the shoulder of the worshipper and whispering divinations to the person

Food and ritual: “Whoever you are and where ever you come from”

Once a malevolent spirit is identified, preparation for the placatory procedures are made. Each spirit, according to its nature of being and its societal status is treated appropriately, observing a set of standard norms. While some spirits must be accorded respect and deference, others are treated with contempt and reprimanded. Burning of *bsang*, (fumigation of juniper, azalea branches, wormwood and pine branches) and *sur*, (*dkar sur*: meaning white *sur* contains barley flour with some butter and honey or *dmar sur* : meaning red *sur* and meat is added to the previously mentioned mixture) and giving *ja*, *chang*, *longs spyod* (*ja*-tea, *chang*-alcohol and *longs spyod*-abundance of material goods in this case food) is the basis of the feeding ritual. People refrain from feeding spirits before midday because this would increase their powers. Malevolent spirits are preferably fed only after the sun has moved past the midday position.

Just as living human beings crave special foods so do the malevolent spirits. While the standard tea and alcohol are prescribed in nearly all feeding rituals the *longs spyod* or abundance of food is different in most cases. Certain spirits require such specific foods that they are known by the food they crave eg. *Keptang*⁸ (Bum.) and *Choedam*⁹(Bum.).

When the food is ready the appropriate seating arrangement is prepared and the food is served, using specific utensils. After the service, the food is taken out of the house and scattered. It is this act of scattering that has led to the phrase, “scattering for the malevolent spirits” when referring to the placatory rites to the *gdon*. Although the scattering appears to be random, preferably it should be scattered in the direction of the *gdon*'s residence or at the crossroads. The person feeding the spirits says, “Who ever you are and where ever you have come from, eat, eat and drink and drink.” If at this call, dogs and ravens come to eat the food it is believed that the hungry have responded to the propitiation and are

do a public reading to which he agreed. But before he started to read they made invocations to the *chos srung* who frightened away the *Pang lha* and the reader could not recognize a single letter of the text.

⁸ Keptang is an unleavened circular bread made of wheat flour.

⁹ Choedam is a hard dough preparation made by mixing bitter buckwheat with water, very similar to polenta. This dough is usually eaten as a mid day meal by people who go out to work in the fields or to mind animals out in the pastures. It is also a typical food of this region.

partaking of the food given to them. Before the person who has carried out the rites returns to the house she/he must spit three times onto the ground, so that the spirits do not follow him /her back into the house.

Many times the patient feels some relief after the propitiation but sometimes the feeding has to be repeated. In some cases no amount of scattering has any effect on the patient and at these times it is accepted that there were more than one malevolent spirit involved. The divination was muddled and the food has not reached the main spirits. In such cases the ritual of *rgyal po'i rgyal mdos* dedicated to Pehar rgyal po is sometimes performed as all '*khor dang rgyal po* belong to his retinue.

Not all people are susceptible to the malevolent spirits, only people whose *dbang thang* and *rlung rta* are on the wane are effected by the spirits. Feelings of fear, doubt and hesitation in people also make them more vulnerable to spirit attacks.

Spirits in sTang valley

Anytime food is being scattered for the malevolent spirits, all the spirits come, so, the experienced feeder says, "those who are responsible, come forward, those who are not responsible move backwards". This ensures that only the spirits responsible for particular situation are fed. There are about 13'000 people living in 250 households spread across some 20 villages in the sTang valley. Most village recognize at least one major *gdon* each. Coming down the valley, north-south, the first *gdon* one encounters is (Bum. *Keptang*) which is an unleavened circular bread made from wheat flour, in the village of Takhung. This *gdon* is a *gson'dre* which causes muscular pains, headache and stomachache. Naturally, it is *Keptang* that is served to the visiting spirit. Butter is spread on the bread and placed on a sieve that is turned up side down. Names of all the dead people the household has ever had have to be included while serving the food. The spirit is said to be the spirit of a royal courtier from Pad tsahal gling in Chos' khor valley who had married a lady from the village of Takhung. The standard litany is, "Of course we know that your village is too high for you to cultivate wheat and that you are craving wheat. So, we are serving you *keptang* made of wheat flour. You didn't have to come gleaning¹⁰ so far. Now eat all you can and leave."

Today one rarely hears of this spirit. Its power has diminished and it does no harm. The reason is that the main people associated with the spirit

¹⁰ This spirit is housed in a village located at an altitude of 3000m. and too high for the cultivation of wheat. Traditionally the people of the village would come down to the valley at the wheat harvest to glean and beg for wheat. It is assumed that just as the people crave for this grain, even the spirits crave for the taste of wheat.

are now dead and the living descendants and relatives have migrated to other parts of the country, thereby undermining the power of the spirit.

Table 1: List of spirits, symptoms and remedies

Name	Type	Location	Symptoms	Remedies
<i>Keptang</i> (Bum.)	<i>gson'dre</i>	Taklung	Muscular pain Headache Stomach ache	<i>Keptang</i> served with butter
<i>Dambrib nang nai gay</i> (Bum.).	<i>shi'dre</i> and <i>gson'dre</i>	O rgyan chos gling	Scratches Bites (fang marks)	<i>Sur</i>
<i>gNas skor pa</i>	<i>rgyal po</i>	Nang Nang and Binzibi	Giddiness Body pain Sudden headache	<i>Ja, chang, longs spyod</i>
<i>Bla ma</i>	<i>shi'dre</i>	Shel brag	Tremors	<i>Chang</i> and <i>phuy</i> (Bum.)
<i>Ladom</i> (Bum.)	<i>shi'dre</i>	Sarmed	Illness related to the head	<i>Sur</i> ; sometimes <i>ja, chang, longs spyod</i>
<i>Nam lha dkar po</i>	<i>gson'dre, shi'dre, rgyal po</i>	Jamshrong	Muscular ache, pain Scratches Dislocation Broken bones	<i>Phuy</i>
<i>Takseng</i> (Bum.)	<i>rgyal po shi'dre</i>	Pralang, Bebzur	Headache Vomiting Nausea	<i>Sur, chang</i>
<i>Tukpo</i> (Bum.)	<i>rgyal po</i>	Tangsud O rgyan chos gling	Vomiting Diarrhea	<i>Throdan</i> (Bum.), <i>sur</i> and <i>chang</i>
<i>Choedam</i> (Bum.)	<i>shi'dre gson'dre</i>	Tasur	All kind of illness accompanied by scratches	Buckwheat <i>glud</i>
<i>Chudung</i> (Bum.)	<i>shi'dre</i>	Narut	Sudden headache accompanied by vomiting	Feeding ritual (rice, meat, drinks)
<i>Wali</i> (Bum.)	<i>shi'dre gson'dre</i>	Pangshing	All kinds of illnesses Accidents	Feeding ritual (rice, meat, drinks)

A household in the village of O rgyan chos gling was believed to possess the evil spirit of *Dambrib nang nai gay* (Bum.) or "those who live in the *dambrib* bush" (*Elaeagnus parvifolia*). At the height of its power the spirit was dreaded for it was a mixture of both *shi'dre* as well *gson'dre*. As in the case of the *Keptang* this spirit has also disappeared completely.

The spirit of the pilgrim (*gNas skor pa*) of Binzibi and Nang Nang, also referred to as *drag shos*¹¹ came to live in the valley of sTang not by choice but through trickery. Many years ago an important person of the royal court, probably with the rank of a *drag shos* went on a pilgrimage to Tibet. He died while in Tibet and his spirit began to harm the local inhabitants. The Tibetans of the area collected all his belongings loaded them onto his horse and led the horse until it crossed into Bhutan. The spirit then lived for a while in Chos 'khor stod or upper Chos 'khor valley. Once again the spirit began harming the people and they resolved to get rid of him. They collected all his belongings and propitiating him coaxed him to follow them to a nicer place. As the belongings were carried eastwards to Tang, the spirit followed. On crossing the Phephela, the pass that leads from Chos khor valley to Tang valley, the person who carried the luggage put it down on a rock and told the spirit that he had to relief himself. On this pretext, he quietly returned to his village. The spirit remained with his belongings on the rock waiting for his guide to come back to take him to a nicer place. The guide of course never came back for a long time but man from the village of Nang Nang found the bundle of belongings and unknowingly carried it home. The spirit thrived and flourished in Nang Nang. A marriage between the villages of Nang Nang and Binzibi provided dual residences for the spirit who rages havoc in the valley as one of the most dreaded spirits to this day.

As in life the status and power of a spirit is also related to its power and social status in the society. Being the spirit of a *drag shos* this spirit is considered to be powerful, deserving of deference and respect. The spirit has the prefix *gNang pa* to its name. This perhaps corroborates its historical linkage to having spent some time in the adjoining valley of Chos 'khor stod, more precisely in the village *gNang lhakhang* where the inhabitants are referred to as *gNang pa*. As with all spirits their power and status rises or falls with number of times they can cause harm and also by the actual rise and fall of the social status of the living family members with whom the spirit is associated. Legend has it that spirit of the Pilgrim was so harmful that people of sTang beseeched a lama to subjugate it. The lama performed the ritual of *bgags dur* and entrapped the spirit into a metal container which was sealed and placed in the deepest part of the sTang Chu. The Pilgrim was never heard of for a while. But one monsoon day when the river swelled up, the container was washed ashore and a cow herder found it. The cow herder unknowingly broke the seal and opened the container. Out of the opened container came a weak, dazed and ruffled pigeon who flew away. But as it flew away it said, " I shall

¹¹ *Drag shos* is a title, traditionally for a male. The title is either inherited in case of the aristocracy/ nobility or earned through merit and bestowed upon an individual by the king.

never harm you and your kin." True to it's words, to this day the spirit of gNas skor pa never harms the village of Kizom from where the cow herder had come. While the rest of valley sTang must appease and placate gNas skor pa regularly as it causes illness ranging from giddiness, pain from "the head to the toe" and strong and sudden headache, the people of Kizom boast that they never even have to do," so much as burn a *sur* for gNas skor pa."

During the feeding ritual of gNas skor pa, a mat is laid out for the spirit and then it is reverently addressing as *drag shos* and invited to sit on the mat. It must be ensured that the fold of the mat is in front, unlike in the case of the living people where the two ends of the carpet should be in the front. A small table is placed in front of the mat and *ara*¹², tea and either *tsampa* or roasted rice (*zarpa* Bum.) is served as a welcome offering. Reverence and respect are shown as would be shown to a *drag shos*, thus, using only honorific terms the person doing the feeding will say, "We did not realize that you had come. Please sit down and eat what we have to serve you. We are ashamed that what we have to offer is unworthy of you but this is the best that we have. We hope that you will not be offended or humiliated or by our humble offerings". Then a meal of cooked rice, meat and *ara* is served, as the server converses with the visiting spirit in whispered tones of humility and hospitality. Names of all the dead as well as the living are called upon to come and eat the meal being served.

bLama: Shel brag

This is said to be the spirit of a lama who actually came from the adjoining district of Lhun rtse from a place called Brula. This lama who originally came from the western part of Bhutan, probably, Punakha, was a rather accomplished person. He had with him a servant who was also a monk. The lama specialized in death rituals (*mi shi bla ma*). Upon his death his servant assumed the responsibilities of his master and became the *mishi* lama. He was probably not as learned or accomplished as his master. When he died his conscious principle stayed attached to a wooden bowl. About fifty years ago a man from the village of Shel brag in sTang who was a servant in the service of the sister of the second king was sent on a special mission to Brula. These missions were called *bangche* (Dz.) or tax imposed by power, these taxes were levied on individuals or households who had offended the ruling family or were seen as a threat to the ruling household. In extreme cases these *bangche* tax were called *shepya* (Dz.)

¹² Ara is an alcoholic drink made from fermented grains through the process of distillation.

which literally means “sweeping up the property.” So this man from sTang had gone on such a mission. He confiscated the property of the household who possessed the bowl and handed over everything to the princess as he was expected to do but kept for himself this particular wooden bowl. The spirit of the monk who had become inseparable from the bowl followed him and came to live in his house. The man responsible for the act is long dead but the spirit continues to live in the house and associates itself with the members of the family. The symptoms of illness caused by the spirit of the lama are usually tremors.

As it is the spirit of a lama, *bsang*¹³ is burnt and he is greeted with *bangchang*¹⁴ (Dz. B) and *singchang*¹⁵ (Dz., Bum.). As he is an outsider he is served a typical Bumthang pa dish hand rolled bitter buckwheat (*Fagopyrum tataricum*) noodles called *lakgri puta* (B). The spirits usually inflict on the patients the same physical ailments as they themselves suffered from. The symptoms of tremors is considered to be associated with the nervous systems, foods which have an adverse effect on the nerve diseases have to be avoided. Thus, garlic, onions and pork must never be served. Using the terms of honor and conferring the due reverence, the lama is served, “You have not visited us for so long. You have come a long way. The food that we serve you are the best foods of Bumthang.” Pointing out the items, the server says, “Here are *bang chang* and *sing chang*. This is *lakgri puta* (Bum.) Please eat and drink all you can and go back to your cattle.” Addressing his companions and his retinue, comprising of both the living and the dead, the server again says, “If it is the spirit of the dead, don’t feel any attachments. If it is the spirit of the living, please don’t be jealous of us. We are no better than yourselves. Go away now. If you leave by the mountain pass, block the pass with snow and if you leave by the lower paths block it with thorny bushes.”

Ladum (Bum.) (Short arm) : Sarmed

The short armed spirit is said to be the *shi'dre* of a man who had an injured arm. The symptoms of this spirit is repeated yawning with any kinds of illness related to the head. This is a lowly spirit who does not

¹³ A cattle herder suddenly became ill after a person from the household of the lama had visited him. As suspected the divination confirmed that it was the spirit of the lama who had caused him to become sick. After the placatory rites the patient got worse. Later it was found that instead of offering *bsang* someone had inadvertently burnt *sur* and offended the lama further. After offering *bsang* the patient did get better.

¹⁴ *Bang chang* is an alcoholic drink made by pouring hot water into a mass of fermented grains, usually wheat or barley.

¹⁵ *Sing chang* is an alcoholic drink made by straining the liquid from the fermented grain mass.

warrant any deference or respect and he is treated with contempt verging on open hostility. Usually *sur* is burnt and is sufficient but other times *ja, chang longs spyad* is given. The litany is openly hostile, "You owe us nothing and we owe you nothing. Why have you come? Eat and drink what we are giving you and go away. We have nothing more to give. If you don't release our patient we have no choice but to shame you. We may be compelled to bring the food and pour it into your water container. Imagine what all the people will say."¹⁶

Nam lha karmo (White divinity in the sky)

Jamshrong is believed to be a deadly combination of *gson'dre, shi'dre* and *rgyal po*. Recent improvements in the economic status of the family who hosts the spirit is said to have increased the malevolency of the spirit and currently it is one of the most harmful ones in the valley. The presence of the spirit is recognized by muscular aches, pains and scratches and it inflicts upon the victim. It also causes sprains, dislocations and even broken bones in both humans and animals. The spirit is fed food consisting of rice with meats served with tea and *ara*. A *phuy*, (Bum.) a container for measuring volume (750 gm), is placed upside down on a sieve that is also turned upside down. Food for the main person is served on the *phuy* while the food for the associated persons and the retinue/ followers is served on a sieve. As this village is located at the southern end of the sTang valley, the spirit is first greeted: "You have come far up the valley. You have come a long way". Then referring to all the members of the household, the person feeding the spirit says: "All those of you who are here eat all you can, take with you for those who are not here. Why have you come? We are neither related in any way or dependent upon each other. You are wealthier, and more able than us, so why are you jealous of us? Just as you have come all the way, now, go back all the way."

Names of all the living and dead, all who are related to the family are mentioned saying, "See we do not discriminate anyone. Eat, drink and go away."

Takseng (Bum.) (Yoke) : Pralang and Bebzur.

The spirit known to be associated with a '*khordang rgyalpo*. Specifically it is said to be a spirit attached to a yoke. The yoke is believed to be an ordinary one save for a small turquoise which is embedded in it. Legends

¹⁶ The malevolent spirits like human beings are highly sensitive to shame.

claim that the spirit caused harm and the embarrassed householders cast away the yoke. But a man from Pralang found it and took it home and of course the spirit followed the yoke to Pralang.¹⁷ Nobody knows for sure where the original yoke is today but both the villages are generally associated with the spirit. The most specific symptom of the spirit is heaviness and pain on the neck similar to the stress and discomfort inflicted to a bull under a yoke. This spirit causes headaches, vomiting and nausea. The standard food served is cooked dough of wheat or buckwheat with butter accompanied by *sing chang* and *sur*. The server says, "Now go away. If you know how to come you must also know how to go away. Eat, drink and go away".

Some people feed the spirit with buckwheat pancakes. A large girdle is placed on the fire and different sized pancakes are cooked for the spirit and his retinue. The size of the pancake is in accordance with the status of each follower.

An effigy of the spirit is believed to be kept in a cupboard in a house in the village of Bebzur.¹⁸ The effigy is said to be that of a small man with a round hat and riding a ram. This spirit has to be clothed in a new garment every year. The garment is very special in that it has to be produced in one day. A sheep is washed, sheared, the wool cleaned and carded and the yarn spun and woven into a fabric and stitched into a garment and put on the effigy, all in one day! There is a similar tradition in the adjoining valley of U ra. According to the U ra tradition the spirit is quite accommodating and at times when the people are unable to offer him a new garment they invoke him and beg to make his own garment. Legend has it, that at such situations, a small dwarf in a torn woolen garment can be seen plucking wool from the sheep. This dwarf, they believe, is the *rgyal po* heeding to his patron's pleas and making his own garment. This spirit is supposed to be so keenly aware of the problems of his patron that he will even stoop so low as to steal manure for his householders. There is a commonly cited story that at one time the householders did not have any cattle but the cattle shed was always full of manure while neighbor who had many cattle had no manure in the shed. Suspicious the neighbor stuck a feather into every cow pat in the shed. Next morning he saw that all the cow pat with

¹⁷ There appears to be some confusion as to where the yoke originally belonged. Some informants say that a man from Pralang found the yoke which was cast away by Bebzur while others say the opposite is the case.

¹⁸ Opposite to the village of Bebzur is the village of Kun bzang brag in which is located a spirit associated with the padding of cloth that goes under the yoke. This spirit called *Takor* (B.) is not known outside of its village. Over the recent years many residents of Kun bzang brag village have relocated further down the hill to be closer to the road. Although the particular household which hosts the spirit has remained in the old village the spirit causes harm among those who remained as well as those who have shifted.

the feathers still stuck in them were in his neighbor's shed. The *rgyal po* had done it.

There is one version of a legend that says that the householders of Bebzur were so ashamed by the presence of the spirit and the social victimization which they had to endure that they decided to get rid of the spirit. The householders took the effigy down to the sTang river and cast it into water. But as time passed the spirit avenged this misconduct by causing the family members to die one after another. The remaining members panicked and went to the spot where the effigy had been thrown in, asked forgiveness and beseeched the spirit to come back to the house. The spirit apparently did come back but it never forgave the householders completely. It no longer helps them as much as he used to before the fall out. Today the people from this household have to look after their own cattle and sheep and guard their crops against wild animals like the rest of the villagers. The spirit is said to have taken charge of these chores in the past.

**“Go away like dirt washed off,
go away like you have been plucked off”:
Tukpo (Rags) (B.): Tangsud and O rgyan chos gling.**

The spirit of Rags is a *khor dang rgyal po* and is presently considered to be one of the most formidable of the spirits in the valley. This spirit has now spread to two villages through matrimony. It is said that the spirit is housed in one of the houses in the village of Tangsud. This spirit induces vomiting and diarrhea. *Throdan* (Bum.) which is cooked *tsampa* or buckwheat with butter on a *brey* (Bum.) — a utensil for measuring volume for grains and flour —, is served. *Sur* is burnt and *singchang* is served with these admonition: “You have not come physically but your mind has come and is harming us. You should be ashamed of yourself. What will the people say if they know that you are being fed like this? Now, eat, drink and be gone. How can people of your intelligence do such things, hurting dumb animals (a mithun¹⁹ was suffering from diarrhea and eventually died) who cannot speak nor describe it's pains. You do know that this animal is very costly, if something should happens to the bull, you can be sure that the owners will not leave you in peace. Release the animal now.”

Some people say that the quickest and the most effective way to appease Tukpo is to mix some wheat or barley flour with butter rub the mixture over the body of the patient and burn it as a *sur*.

¹⁹ Mithun is a semi wild bull (*bos frontalis*) brought from the north eastern regions of India for cross breeding with the local cow. It is an expensive animal and therefore highly valued.

The spirit of Tukpo has spread to two other households through marriages. Recently I witnessed a propitiatory rite during which the person feeding the spirit said, "Look at the poor daughters of your household. They are pretty and able but no man dares to marry them for the fear of the spirit. Restrain yourself a little, don't send your spirit out freely." Soon after this incident a young man who began to have a relationship with one of the girls was ostracized by his family because they were so afraid that they too would be included in the feeding rituals. For, during the feeding ritual anyone remotely connected to the family is included,

"Eat, eat, drink, drink, all of you,

Phaskai: everyone connected through the father

Boska : everyone connected through the son

Maskai: everyone connected through the mother

Sonkai: all the living ones

Shinkai: all the dead ones

Gawathunsh: friends and well-wishers

Aro: male friends

Romo: female friends"

Choedam (Bum.) (Buckwheat dough): Tasur.

This spirit was at its peak a decade or so ago due to one of the women from the household being connected an important personality from the area, but now as the people associated with it have moved away after the death of this important person its power has diminished considerably. The spirit is a deadly mixture of *shi'dre* and *gson'dre* and it caused all sorts of illness usually accompanied by scratches on various parts of the body. The dangers of the scratches are that they could internalize in which case that patient can suffer greatly or even fatally. The scratches become internalized if certain foods like milk and cheese are eaten. There are methods to bring out the scratches either by applying the liquid extracted from the creeper (*rubia sp. manjitha roxburghi.*) or rubbing the aching body parts with grains that have been fermented for alcohol distillation. Application of *snags dmar* (butter blessed with mantras by lamas and used for wounds, pains and aches) is considered detrimental to the condition of the patient and must be avoided on all accounts.

The feeding ritual for this spirit is as elaborate as it is specific. *Glud* are made of a dough known as *choedam* which is made of buckwheat flour and water. The *glud* are then arranged in a winnowing basket. The main spirit is given a three tiered pedestal and around it are placed smaller triangular *glud* to represent all the relatives, associates and friends. The triangular

tips of the *glud* are bent down to ensure that they do not become too ambitious or powerful. Cooked rice or even uncooked rice, in case of emergency, with pieces of meat are placed around each effigy. Some members of the household only drink tea while others drink alcohol. Therefore, while feeding this spirit each member of the household has to be identified by name and told that the drink of their preference is being served.

Chudung (Bum.) (Blow Pipe): Narut

This spirit often referred to as Aei Jaimo's blowpipe is probably her *rnam shes* which stayed attached to pipe for blowing air onto a fire to kindle it. This spirit is recognized by the suddenness of headaches accompanied by vomiting. Although the spirit is called *chudung*, the pipe does not feature in any part of the feeding ritual. Rice, meat, drinks are served, the spirit is welcomed and coaxed to eat and drink all it can and to take with it as much as it can. It is coaxed and cajoled but at the same time subtle and brazen threats are given and the spirit is warned not to harm the patient any more.

Wali (Bum.) Pangshing

A *Wali* is a special utensil with a long handle and a spout for melting and pouring butter into the butter lamps. This *shi'dre* obviously stayed attached to a *wali*. Traditionally sweet buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) dough had to be cooked in this utensil and be served to the spirit. A resident of Pangshing recently complained that as the society's economic status is improving the spirits too are becoming more demanding. The spirit is no longer appeased by buckwheat dough but with rice served with meat.²⁰ This spirit is not very well known outside the village but the villagers complain that it is harmful and they have to feed it regularly.

"It is an intangible thing that we have not touched or seen": people who are accused of possessing the spirits display different reactions. Some take it with good humor and even joke about it and tease saying, "Be careful, my spirit can give you terrible stomachache and I'll send my spirit after you." Others are defensive and are angered if they know that the spirit

²⁰ In the cool temperate regions of Bumthang rice cannot be grown. Traditionally only the nobility and the rich people could afford to bring rice from the warmer subtropical valleys while for the common people it was a rare luxury. Today rice is more readily available and it is the preferred staple food even in Bumthang.

associated with their household is being fed. Still others get aggressive and demand that the food should not be scattered behind them but given to them personally. Some years ago, villagers of a particular village took to court a family whose spirit was believed to be causing repeated harm. The villagers wanted the particular family evicted. The case, however, was dropped when the victim pleaded, "What can we do? We have not harmed you personally or intentionally. They say the spirit is with us. But as it is an intangible thing that we have neither touched or seen, we are, victims as much as you are."

Although the characteristic of intangibility is definitely associated with the malevolent spirits, some people claim to have actually seen them. The descriptions of the usually intangible beings conform to the same descriptions conjured in everybody's minds as learned imageries which have been reinforced as standard appellations of the spirits. The general color of these spirits seems to be gray which causes them to sometimes be called the, "gray ones." They are said to be small in stature, dwarfs and cretins and the most distinguishing feature is their mouth which is said to be prominently big and some look like tea strainers. The tea strainers are conical so that the narrow tips like the proboscis of insects can be inserted into the victims' bodies to suck up the blood. The *shi'dre* are recognized by the harm they inflict and when they speak out through the medium but the *gson'dre* are said to appear in darkness of the night as they appear in real life. For the fear of being recognized they hide their faces by turning away from direct view or by covering their faces with scarves. Some of them haunt the nocturnal spaces as ghost fires.

Travelling in Bumthang one can often see branches of the *berberis* bushes or nettle branches pressed down with boulders at the entrances of bridges and cross roads. People who are accused of possessing spirits cleanse themselves off the malevolent spirits by symbolically brushing their bodies. Other travelers do it to cleanse themselves of spirits that may travel with them clinging on to them.²¹ While the *shi'dre* are said to travel with people the *gson'dre* are more independent and travel as whirlwinds during the day and ghost fires in the night. People usually spit into a whirlwind and say pha la la la. Some people even call out the name of the person they suspect may be the whirlwind to shame them. There are stories of how people have put a stake at the spots where the ghost fires disappear and caused physical injury to the people responsible. Traditional beliefs assert

²¹ Sometimes when a medium speaks out in a trance the spirits identify particular people they traveled with which causes much embarrassment. Therefore travelers must be cautious not to be the transporters of malevolent spirits by taking the proper precautions.

that every ninth women is considered to be a potential *gson'dre* while only every hundredth man is a potential malevolent spirit. Women with sharp incisors are looked upon with fear and suspicion while men with same kinds of teeth are considered as a potential hero.

Reclaiming and identifying a malevolent spirit

After a family member has died and his/her *shi'dre* is suspected to cause harm the living members sometimes perform a ritual to reclaim and identify the *shi'dre*. Usually when the *rnam shes* of dead people which have been taken by other malevolent spirits such as *bdud* the spirit of the person becomes a harmful *shi'dre*. For this ritual a qualified lama who can perform the *sbyin sregs* ritual and a medium, *dpa' bo/dpa' mo* are required. The medium recalls the *shi'dre* from *bdud* and then goes into a trance. The *shi'dre* identifies herself/himself and speaks of it's miserable conditions often crying for help. The *zan ngo* ritual is conducted. Food and drinks are offered to the spirit of the dead person and it partakes of the food. The lama then conducts '*pho ba* on the spirit after which the medium comes out of the trance. This ritual remedies any inadequacies during the time of the '*pho ba* or the cremation and the spirit of the dead finds its path and is freed from being a malevolent spirit bonded to a *bdud*. *Gson'dre* can also become freed if those possessed by evil spirits take special blessings and empowerment from powerful lamas.

Conclusion: Changes and Territorial Continuity

Traditionally the belief in spirits was shared by all the inhabitants of the region especially at a time when there was little else in form of curative methods to treat illnesses. Today the rites and rituals for feeding and placating malevolent spirits is practiced in nearly all the villages but the knowledge and skills appears to be confined to the elderly and the women. While the educated youth may not actually perform the rituals, they condone the practices and help. There are, however, skeptics who openly declare their disdain and disbelief in the custom and dismiss the whole thing as backwardness and superstition. And the spirits themselves? They are as accommodating and versatile as the people today are. The foods and utensils they accept are becoming more as contemporary in tune with the times they live. At one feeding ritual, I heard a server say, " Serve Britannia biscuits and make sure to serve coffee, the *drag shos* used to like coffee better than tea." The traditional utensils are being replaced by more contemporary ones. The bamboo sieves are replaced with nylon and

plastics ones and the empty cheese and butter cans find reuse in replacing the *phuy*.

Today the changes taking place are obvious in every aspect of the Bhutanese societies. People's attitudes, behaviors and life styles are changing, and the people of sTang are surely not an exception. But the spirits of sTang are still very much associated to the territory and the livelihoods of the people of the valley. Their specific but continuing preference for particular foods eg. hand rolled buckwheat noodles, buckwheat dough etc. affirm their special association with the specific territory of sTang. While changes in the preference for particular food as in the case of the *Wali* spirit for rice and meat as opposed to the traditional sweet buckwheat dough is surely reflective of the changes in the economic realities of today, the traditional foods associated with the individual spirits are the typical foods from grains that are still the major crops grown in the valley. Even the spirit of Takseng's needs a woolen garment which has to be processed in one day; from shearing the wool from a sheep to a ready-to-wear garment is reflective of the sheep rearing and wool processing traditions typical of this territory. Although the spirits are known to travel outside their territories either on their own or with human travelers, irrespective of the place where they presently/ temporarily are, they always identify themselves, during traces of *dpa bol dpa mo*, as spirits of sTang.

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TUVINIAN IMAGES OF DEMONS FROM TIBET

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uva, today a republic within the Russian Federation covering an area less than half the size of Germany but inhabited by 305.000 people only, is located in the south of Sibiria and just north of Mongolia at the upper course of the Yenisei River. The majority of the people, about 200.000, are Tuvans, a group of Turcic speaking people who were since the 17th century — due to Mongolian and Manchurian rule — strongly influenced by the Tibetan form of Buddhism. Until today the Buddhist worldview exists beside the traditional animistic world view and shamanistic practices. Since the 1930s the communists repressed all Buddhist and shamanistic traditions. Buddhist monasteries were closed and many of their books were burnt. Nevertheless a lot of Buddhist manuscripts written in Tibetan language and script survived. However, most of them originally not belonged to the libraries of the former Buddhist monasteries of Tuva but to the private property of single families of married lamas who hid them during the period of persecution in hard to access rock caves. In 1953 Dr. Mongusch Kenin-Lobsan started secretly to collect these texts. Later he was able to organise real expeditions on behalf of the National Museum of Tuva which nowadays houses about 20.000 texts. Thanks to the initiative of Ms Rita Sumba and the support of the present director Anatoly Kombu the museum has started to catalogue its Tibetan books. The special selection of manuscripts nowadays preserved in the National Museum of Tuva is explained by their origin: The majority of them was not meant for the curriculum of Buddhist monasteries but for performing magic rituals according to the needs of the common people. Many texts are wellworn handwritten copies in *dbu can* script from the beginning of the 20th century as they are written on modern industrial paper. Although Tuva has been clearly dominated by the dGe lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism much to my surprise I have seen quite a lot of rNying ma texts.

Among the manuscripts are several small leaves with depictions of symbols and spirits well known to us from the context of Tibetan Buddhism. As an example I want to present a series of fifteen demons whose images are drawn with coloured pencils on the front of four thin cardboards. The smallest card showing one image only has a size of 6,8 x 7 cm (the size of the actual image is 3,4 x 6,4 cm), the second showing two images has a size of 5,4 x 9,3 cm. The other two leaves with six images each measure 21 x 7,3 cm. Together with other cards and manuscripts the set is preserved in a small package bearing the signature 1-108. The cards obviously were meant for use in rituals addressing the specific demons. Similar cards presenting different series of demons have been published by Bethlenfalvy (2003).



The fifteen demons depicted here are generally summarized as the fifteen great *gdon*¹ of children (*byis pa'i gdon chen lnga*), that is to say a group of demons who especially afflict children. We know drawings of the demons from the illustrations to the Blue Beryl, the medical treatise of the dGe lug pa scholar and famous politician *sde-srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mstsho (1653-1705).² In the following table I assign the Tuvianian

- 1 Regarding a description of the character of the *gdon* in general especially as demons causing diseases see Tucci and Heissig (1970): 193, 195. As such demons the *gdon* are also briefly characterized by Tseng (2005): 51. For further general remarks on the *gdon* see Clifford (1984): 148-55. In a text composed by Mi pham rnam rgyal in 1908 the fifteen *gdon* of children are mentioned together with other beings whose specific existence is explained by the evil deeds of their last life (Schuh 1973: 225).
- 2 Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje and Meyer (1992), vol. 2, 262, illustrations no. 85-99. Exactly the same drawings of the demons and spellings of the respective names are in Wang le and Byams pa 'phrin las 1986: 316, 318. But note that the illustrations to the Blue Beryl *ibidem* depict two different groups of fifteen demons of children.

images to the names as they are listed in these illustrations.³ In brackets I add the variations in spelling as given by Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las.⁴

1. 'Jam po ('Jam pa po) — ox (*ba glang*) (Fig. 1)
2. *Ri dvags rgyal* (*Ri dvags rgyal po*) — deer (*ri dvags*) (Fig. 3)
3. *sKem byed* (*sKem byed pa*) — young man (*gzhon nu*) (Fig. 2)
4. *brJed byed* (*brJed byed pa*) — fox (*wa*) (Fig. 4)
5. *Khu tshur can* — raven (*bya rog*) (Fig. 5)
6. *Ma mo* — human being (*mi*) (Fig. 6)
7. *Dza mi rta* (*Dza mi ka*) — horse (*rta*) (Fig. 7)
8. 'Dod pa can — vajra (*rdo rje*) (Fig. 8)
9. *Nam gru* — dog (*khyi*) (Fig. 9)
10. *Srul po* — pig (*phag*) (Fig. 10)
11. *bZhin rgyas* (*bZhin brgyad pa*) — owl (*'ug pa*) (Fig. 14)
12. *Ma 'phyang* (*Mig 'phyang po*) — bat (*pha wang*) (Fig. 15)
13. *gNya' lag can* — chicken (*bya gag*) (Fig. 13)
14. *Ma dga' byed* (*Ma dga' byed pa*) — cat (*byi la*) (Fig. 11)
15. *Bya* — winged animal (*'dab chags*) (Fig. 12)

Without giving further details Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975: 310) just mentions a group of eighteen such demons. The names are also listed by Duff 2007 according to the text *mDo rgyud bstan bcos du ma nas 'byung ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs shes ldan yid kyi dga' ston* written by dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po under the entry *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*. In this list the names have the same spelling as in the Illustrations to the Blue Beryl with one exception: Instead of *Ma 'phyang* we find *Mig 'phyang*. Baker and Shrestha (1997: 84f) also mention the group of fifteen "demons of childhood". However, the eight images and names of demons which are depicted in the illustration belong to a different group of fifteen demons of children also listed and depicted in the Illustrations to the Blue Beryl (261f, no. 69-83).

According to the *gZi brjid*, the famous Bon biography of *ston pa gShen rab* — as quoted by Nam mkha'i nor bu (1989: 294; Namkhai Norbu 1995: 142) —, the group of fifteen demons is divided into the five so called *pho gdon* (male *gdon*), the seven *mo gdon* (female *gdon*), one so called *las byed rgyal* (the action performing *rgyal po*), one *las byed bsen* (the action performing *bsen mo*) and one *sprul gzhi* (cause of illusion), together fifteen. Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (2002: 1488) presents a different spelling of these names: five *phog gdon*, seven *mi gdon*, one *las byed rgyal* and one *las byed sen* and four *sbrul* (snakes, *sbrul bzhi*) which is obviously a corruption of *sprul gzhi* because otherwise the total number would be eighteen instead of fifteen. Five of the names are also given by Nam mkha'i nor bu (1989: 294f): *Srul po*, *sKem byed*, *brJed byed*, *Nam gru* and *Bya*. In the English version of his book (Namkhai Norbu 1995: 142f) the *Srul po* are described as "that cause to rot", the *sKem byed* as "that emaciate", the *brJed byed* as "that cause oblivion", the *Nam gru* as a "name of a constellation" and the *Bya* as "birds". However, Namkhai Norbu does not identify them as members of the fifteen great *gdon* of children but merely lists them among all different kind of *gdon*.

- 3 The names are translated by Gyurme Dorje and Fernand Meyer as 1) "Gentle ox[-faced] demon", 2) King of the wild life [Lion-faced Mṛgarāja]", 3) "Dehydrating demon", 4) Demon of epilepsy", 5) "Fist-forming demon [Muṣṭisandhi]", 6) "Mātaraḥ demoness", 7) "Man-horse demon", 8) "Attachment-demon", 9) "Revati", 10) Demon of decomposition", 11) "Broad-faced demon", 12) "Non-descending demon?", 13) "Demon with birdneck and talons", 14) "Displeasure-causing demon", 15) "Bird-faced demon" (Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje and Meyer 1992: vol. 2, 261).
- 4 Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (2002: 1488) lists all names of the individual fifteen demons and mentions their respective appearance (*gzugs*).

Except of some varieties in spelling⁵ the Tuvinian cards differ especially with regard to the figures 6 and 12. While according to the illustrations to the Blue Beryl the *Ma mo* has the appearance of a human being below it is given the head of a goat. And the winged animal called *Bya* (bird) is called *Kyi* or *Kyi ni* below. Neither this word nor the image gives a clear indication of what being this could be.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

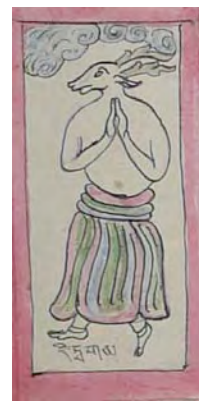


Fig. 3

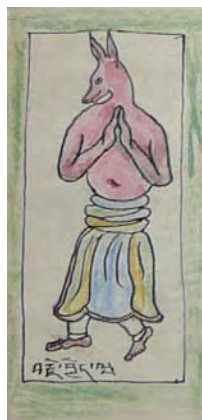


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

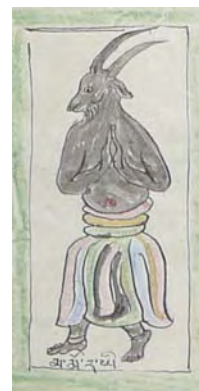


Fig. 6

⁵ But note that the figures 1, 3, 14 and 15 of the Tuvinian images do not have the names of the respective demons.



Fig. 7

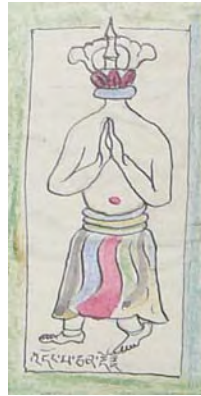


Fig. 8

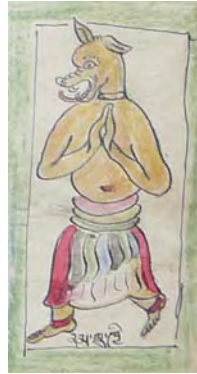


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

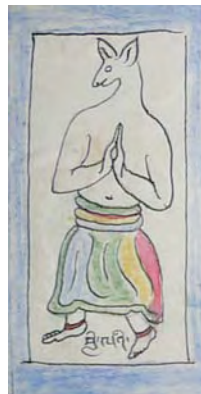


Fig. 11

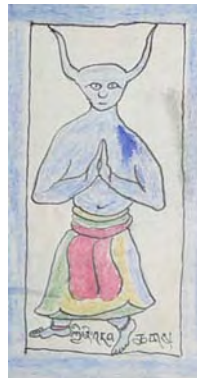


Fig. 12



Fig. 13

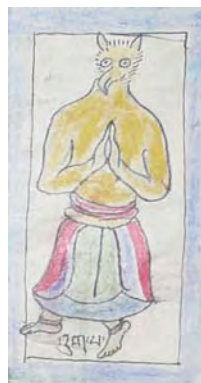


Fig. 14

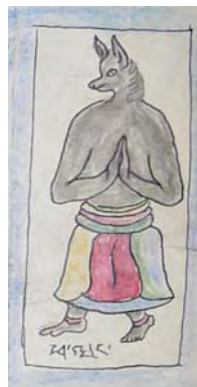


Fig. 15

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THE BUDDHIST PRINCESS AND THE WOOLLY TURBAN:
NON-BUDDHIST OTHERS IN A 15TH CENTURY BIOGRAPHY¹

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The analysis of references to ‘Bonpos’ in a fifteenth century biography has prompted me to reflect on what this term may have meant in the context of the religious climate of the time and in the context of that particular form of Buddhist narrative.

The biography of the Gungthang² princess Chokyi Dronma (Chos kyi sgron ma, 1422-1455) describes how during the earlier part of her life she had a series of encounters with Bonpos. Against her will she was married to the prince of southern Lato (La stod lho) defined as a keen supporter of Bonpo practices and had complex interactions with his court priests. Eventually she abandoned him to become a nun and follow a Buddhist religious life (and would eventually become the first Samding Dorje Phagmo). In this biography, compiled shortly after her death (see Diemberger 1997)³, Chokyi Dronma is thus depicted as a Buddhist hero and her conflict-laden interactions with followers of the ‘religion of Shenrab’, the wearer of the ‘woolen turbans’ (*bal gyi thod*), feature repeatedly. But who were these people? They could have been either members of local Bonpo monasteries or, more likely, a sort of court priesthood devoted to ancestral cults protecting the ruling house of southern Lato.

This paper will explore the passages in the biography that refer to these ‘Bonpo’ arguing that they were at the same time representatives of local cults and a reflection of literary and religious tropes. These passages provide a remarkable example of how ancient Indian notion of ‘heretics’ (*mu stegs pa*, *Skt. tīrthika*)⁴ could be merged with terms that refer to Tibetan non-

¹ I wish to thank the British Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Italian Ev-K2-CNR Committee for supporting the research on which this article is based. I also wish to thank Charles Ramble, Brandon Dotson and Bruce Huett for providing materials, comments and assistance in the completion of this paper.

² The kingdom of Gungthang (Gung thang) alias lower Ngari (mNga’ ris smad) established by a splinter of the ancient Tibetan royal house (see *Gung thang rgyal rabs* and Everding 2000).

³ In the volume *When a Woman becomes a Dynasty: the Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet* I gave a literary translation of the biography and discussed its compilation. Here I am going to quote passages in a more detailed translation, giving the transliteration of the Tibetan text in the footnotes.

⁴ The rendering of *mu stegs pa*, which translates the Sanskrit *tīrthika*, as ‘heretics’ is problematic and has been queried (see for example Karmay 2005: 159). ‘Non-Buddhists’ would probably be more accurate. However, I use the English translation ‘heretics’

Buddhist religious practices and of how references to real local practitioners could be used to substantiate a blanket category that identified, from a Buddhist point of view, the non-Buddhist 'other'. Rather than considering the notion of 'Bonpo' as a mere reference to a specific religious tradition, it might therefore be more fruitful in such a context to consider it as a relational term: a performative and contextual construction of non-Buddhist 'otherness', a fluid category encompassing a variety of not necessarily related religious practices and literary references against which are defined the deeds of a Buddhist hero⁵. By trying to solve the apparent paradox that Chokyi Dronma's Bonpo husband was the son of a celebrated Buddhist ruling family this paper will show how the construction of this category might be based on a very selective interpretation of events and encompass a variety of heterogeneous phenomena that are in all likelihood real but not necessarily related.

Chokyi Dronma and her Bonpo husband

As to be expected, Chokyi Dronma's biography describes her as a deeply Buddhist person since her early childhood. Her early spiritual aspirations were shattered by her marriage to Tshewang Tashi (Tshe dbang bkra shis), the son of the ruler of the neighboring Kingdom of southern Lato (La stod lho)⁶. He did not only represent Chokyi Dronma's entanglement in a worldly life but also the pursuit of religious aspirations perceived as hostile to Buddhism. Predictably the relationship between them was marred from the very beginning. The marriage gifts that he sent through his envoys were already inauspicious. The biography (folio 12a)⁷ tells that for the ceremony they took along "a hat said to have belonged to Shenrab", the

since it is still the most common and, in a Buddhist perspective, highlights the original sense of doctrinal departure on the basis of a common Indian religious background. The extension of this category so as to include the Tibetan non-Buddhist traditions is an interesting process in itself.

⁵ Stein observed that the position of the Bonpo "may have resembled that of Taoism in China which, on top of its own system, had a tendency to gather within it, or take credit for, unorganized and disparate folk customs and religious techniques (Stein 1972: 229).

⁶ He was the son of Situ Lhatsen Kyab (Si tu Lha btsan skyabs), the grand-son of Situ Chokyi Rinchen (Si tu Chos kyi rin chen) and a descendant of Sa skya dpon chen 'Od zer senge. The genealogy of this family is described in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 4a-8a).

⁷ *De'i tshes na 'jig rten la grags pa ltar du sa spyod tshes dbang bkra shis kyi tshem che dkar po cig 'khor gsum gshen rabs kyi sgröl zhwa cig rnam gsung pa so nams khyer te/ sgo mangs kyi kyams mthil du sku la bzhes par zhu pa na: 'jig rten rje su bzung pa'i slad du nam bza' dang sku 'khor rnam bzhes/ bon po'i zhwa gon pa rtog pa byed gsung ring du 'phangs par gyur to/.*

founder of the Bonpo religion, and items of clothing that had been offered to her by her future husband, Tshewang Tashi. The bride accepted the clothing and the jewels but “threw away the Bonpo hat”. She thus refused the gift that would entangle her in the web of moral and religious obligations to her husband.

Despite the initial misgiving the marriage went ahead. When the nuptial procession approached Shekar, the capital of southern Lato, her future husband,

“the prince who was a devotee of Shenrab, sent some sixty Bonpo priests, wearing turquoise furry cloaks (*g.yu yi thul pa*)⁸ and woolly turbans (*bal gyi thod*)⁹, carrying drums and *shang*, to perform some rituals of exorcism (*bgegs bskrod*). It was a depressing sight, like seeing Zangmo of Magadha leave the Buddha in the dwelling of the Anathāpin-dikavihāra and worship the heretical Jain teachers in the town of Buram shing phel. The princess said, “We can’t stand this! Chase them away throwing stones!” Her retinue did accordingly. The Bonpo escaped like scared ducks, leaving their ritual instruments at the crossroads like stones and pebbles. Thinking of this episode, the great *yoginī* invoked the victory of the Buddhist gods (*lha rgyal*). This seems to be the first auspicious gesture by which she paid respect to the doctrine of the Buddha. By doing so, for the first time, she revealed to the watching people that she was an emanation body (*sprul ba’i sku ’dzin pa*). They did not dare to raise their eyes and said, “This daughter-in-law is extremely beautiful and has great power and honor (*dbu ’phang mtho*)!” Later she heard this and thought: ‘This is a good omen!’ (*rten ’brel*)! (folio 16a-17a)¹⁰

⁸ These turquoise cloaks were possibly similar to the blue fur mantle of a Bonpo village member encountered by Milarepa. This was a rich man who wished that Milarepa looked after his funeral despite the opposition of his community. For a discussion of this episode in relation to the Bonpo see Stein 1972: 239. Many of Milarepa’s deeds took place in Chokyi Dronma’s homeland and his life and songs were compiled by Tsangnyon Heruka, sponsored by Chokyi Dronma’s brother, the Gungthang king Thri Namgyal De. Tsangnyon Heruka may have been familiar with Bonpo priests like those described in the biography of Chokyi Dronma, and with the climate of competition between Buddhists and Bonpo.

⁹ A well-known distinctive feature of the Bonpo like the drums and the *shang* cymbals (see Stein 1972: 233).

¹⁰ *rgyal bu de gshen rabs la skyabs gnas su ’dzin par snang bas/ bon po g.yu yi thul pa gyon pa bal gyi thod brten pa/ rnga bshang lag spyad du ’dzin pa drug bcu tsam gyis bgegs bskrod bgyid par brtsom pa na/ ma ga ta bzang mo mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga’ ra ba nas ston pa bcom ldan ’das kyi zhabs las ring du song stel/ grong khyer bu ram shing ’phel du mu stegs kyi ston pa gcer bu zad byed kyi tshogs la mchod gnas su ’dzin pa mthong pas yid rab tu dub pa bzhin du gyur nas: rang gi mkhor rnams la ’di ni bdag gis kun tu mi bzod kyis/ rdo ba dang ’phongs la rab tu bskrod cig ces bsgoof’khor rnams kyis kyang le lo ma yin par de bzhin du bgyis pa las/ bya gag gi phreng pa zhig pa bzhin du gyur nas rnga dang bshang la sogs pa rnams ni gzhi mdo’i gyo mo bzhin du bor nas rang gi yan lag la brtsis su byed pa tsam du zad do/ de ltar gyur pa na ni rnal*

As she tried to settle in as a new bride Chokyi Dronma tried to follow the customary expectations. However she is also depicted as already openly opposing Bonpo rituals and practitioners:

“Later, while the Bonpo were expected to perform the marriage rituals (*lha 'dogs pa*) in the royal palace, she said, ‘I am a Buddhist, I am not a worshipper of the [Bonpo] Woolly Turban (*bal gyi thod*). Please respect my beliefs!’ Accordingly, only the Bonpo teacher of her husband remained to celebrate a Bonpo consecration (*bon po mnga' gsol*), assisted by four other priests. Then the Queen of the Buddhas (*rgyal ba'i dbang mo*), by meditating on her deity revealed herself as its embodiment, and the followers of Shenrab, intimidated by this sight, became extremely anxious and dropped their ritual instruments.”¹¹ (folio 17a-17b)

For a while she tried to adapt to her new life at Shekar. At that time she used to express religious views that contrasted with those of her husband in the form of debates, possibly trying to win him over by using a device that had been used since the dawn of Buddhism in Tibet and, even before, in India:

“She insisted on a debate between the great long-standing tradition of the Buddha lord of the *dharma* and the evil tradition of Shenrab in a way similar to the manner in which Sakya Pandita debated with the heretics, so that the winner would establish the practiced religion. However such a beautiful vision could not be realized as she intended”¹² (folio 19b-20a)

The biographer presumably was referring to the famous debate between Sakya Pandita and Harinana and other prominent Hindu masters, probably Śaivaites, in Kyirong around the year 1238 (see Tucci 1999 [1949]:

'byor dbang mo'i zhal nas lha rgyal ba'i tshig gis spro ba bteg ci gsung ngo/de ltar na bstan pa rin po che la srid zhu chen po mdzad par 'gyur ba'i rten 'brel gyi sgo dang po mnyes par mdzad do/ltas mo la mngon par lhags pa'i skye bo rnam la sprul ba'i sku 'dzin par mdzad pas spyen cer gzigs par gyur ba na/ slar de dag gis blta bar ma yod de kha cig na re bag ma ni rnam pa 'char dbu 'phang mtho zhes gleng par byed cing/.

¹¹ *de nas rgyal mo'i khang bzangs su phyogs te bon pos lha 'dogs bgyid par 'dod pa na/ kho mo ni chos pas lha la thogs shig bal gyi thod brten pas ni ma yinno gsung pa la rang gi 'dod pa dang sbyor bar zhu phul nas/ drung tshes dbang ga rang gi slob dpon cig su nyid kyi bon lugs kyi mnga' gsol tsam bgyid pa la/ sku 'khor bzhi tsam gyi dbus su ci nang bgyid par zhus nas/ de dang de'i las la 'jug pa na rgyal ba'i dbang mos rang gi lha'i de nyid dran par byes te blta stangs kyi gzir bas gshen rabs kyi rgyal mtshan 'chang ba yon mchod 'khor dang bcas pa thams cad la shing tu mi zad pa'i 'jigs pa byin nas rang gi lag cha rnam rang dbang med par shor/.*

¹² *rje btsun sa skya panditas mu stegs byed dang brten pa dbang du btsugs nas/ brtsod pa la zhugs pa de gcig na du/ chos kyi rje sangs gyas bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs chen po dang/ gzhen rabs kyi lugs ngan dpang du btsugs nas mig mangs cig/ sus zhabs rtog du 'gyur ba cig bgyid pa lags zhus kyang/ las kyi ri mo ni rnam par bkra pas dgongs pa ji lta ba bzhi du ma gyur mod.*

626; Everding 2000: 353). Despite her attempts Chokyi Dronma was unable to impose her religious views on her husband. However she was able to defend her position concerning the education of their daughter:

“Later Tshewang suggested that Yundrung Lingpa, a great Bonpo master, should become the child’s teacher. The Magnificent Lady replied, ‘Had this child been a boy, you would have had the power to decide. However, [since the child is a girl,] an there is an agreement concerning female property, I request that she takes refuge in our Jewel of Buddhism’.”¹³ (folio 27a)

Chokyi Dronma claimed control over her daughter relying on the Tibetan idiom of relatedness that implied the distinct transmission of goods and roles through a patrilineal bone line and a matrilineal flesh line. The fruit of her union with Tshewang Tashi, however, did not survive for long and died when she was visiting her parents in Gungthang. While she was there the princess received the news that her daughter had died:

“While she was in Ngari she thought a lot about the premature death of her daughter. At first her mother-in-law did not have the courage to tell her. Eventually the Great Situ sent her a letter: ‘You came here fruitfully, but we were not as fruitful as you were. As nothing else could be done, we tried to earn merit by conducting her funeral in the best possible way.’ The Great Yogi thought that her daughter had died because her father had requested some Bonpo priests to take care of her and wrote a reply saying, ‘It is the fate of any being that has been born to die. We cannot help it. However, the child should have lived longer, but because of the actions against Buddhism this did not happen. This child will find its own way. Now there is no point in worrying.’”¹⁴ (folio 31b)

Although she showed remarkable equanimity in front of the loss of her daughter, she apparently attributed her death to Bonpo rituals and healing practices that she assumed her husband had instigated. In her mind these

¹³ *slad kyis tshé dbang pas phru gu ‘di’i skyed/ bsring pa’i slob dpon gyung drung gling pa la ‘chol lam zhes gsung pa na/ dpal gyi dbang mo phrug ma’i gsung gis bu pho yin na khyed rang sku dbang btsan pa la lags mod/ bu mo’i nor la ‘dum ‘dug pas ‘u cag rang gi dkon mchog la ka skyabs gnas zhu ba lags gsung/.*

¹⁴ *mnga’ ris su phebs shul sras kyi myu gu mi bzhugs par dgongs pa bzhin du gyur/ btsan lcam pa yum sras zhu ma bod pa la/ si tu pa nyid kyis gzung shog mdzad nas drung nges byes go chod nas phebs pa la/ nged kyi phul go ma chod mchis pa/ on kyang dge rtsa ni legs so bsgrubs lags zhes phul/ rnal ‘byor dbang mo’i sras kyi myu gu de yab kyi bzhed pas bon pos gso ba’i tshul brtan pa ‘dra bas/ zhu lan du lar skyes pa’i mtha’ ma mchi ba lags sems las kyi mi phen par gdas/ on kyan tshé de las ring tsam cig yong rgyu lags na’ang/ dkon mchog la ngo log tsa na de ka las ma’ das pa yin/ myu gu mo rang la ‘gro sa cig yod/ mchi tsa na sems las ma dgos lags so zhes pa’i zhus yig phul/.*

were in contrast with the Buddhist religion. During her stay at Shekar she kept supporting Buddhism and opposing the Bonpo as epitome of everything that had to be criticized. She was able to guarantee propitious weather and wellbeing of the country even better than court priests:

“What had to be praised, like the precious doctrine of the Buddha, was praised, what had to be criticized, like the banner of Shenrab and so on, was criticized. An ocean of magnificence spontaneously gathered in the great myriarchy, the crops were plentiful, there was enough water to irrigate the arid soil and the rains came on time. Everything became perfect.”¹⁵ (folio 34a-34b)

This state of affairs was not to last. Soon after the death of her daughter, Chokyi Dronma felt that the moment to abandon secular life had arrived and she started a struggle against both her in-laws and her own family. This culminated in a scene deeply reminiscent of the story of Mahāsiddha Lakṣmīnkarā (see below), and to some extent of the Buddha himself, in which she cut her hair, hurting herself and leaving everybody startled. At that point she was granted the right to leave and become ordained at Palmo Choding. Her brokenhearted father-in-law agreed with her wish and then decided to leave for a retreat. Before her departure she paid a last visit to her husband to ask for his formal permission to leave:

“He replied: ‘It seems that you are not to stay at my side for this life, and there is no hope that you will become my protector in a future life. You only behave as you fancy. Why do you ask me?’”¹⁶ (folio 42b)

He thus bitterly admitted the total failure of their union. Taking advantage of his father’s absence, Tshewang Tashi decided to wage war, in revenge, against the monastery and against the kingdom of Gungthang. The controversial military aggression was stopped as soon as his father Situ Lhasen Kyab returned to Shekar. Tshewang Tashi remained an unsettled character and died young a few years later, most likely before his father. The last time he appeared in Chokyi Dronma’s biography is when she heard of his demise. On that occasion she insisted in praying for his spiri-

¹⁵ *bstod par 'os pa'i sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa rin po che'i dbu 'phangs ni rab tu bstod/ slad par 'os pa'i gshen rabs kyi rgyal mtshan la sogs pa ni rab du bsnyal/ phyogs bcu'i dpal gyi rgya mtsho thams cad 'os pa med par ngang gis 'dus nas khri skor chen po der ni/ sa gzhi la 'bru smin pa dang/ lung pa skal po la chu skol ba dang/ char pa du su 'bab pa la sogs pas snod gyi 'jig rten thams cad phun sum tshogs par gyur cing/.*

¹⁶ *de nas tshe dbang pa nyid la chos bgyid pa zhu ba gsol pas/ tshe di la bdag gi gam du 'dug pa ni mi byed par 'dug; phyi ma'i skyabs gnas ni mi re: kyed rang ji ltar mno ba yan pa mi bgyid dus nga la dri rgyu ci zhig yod/.*

tual liberation despite the fact that the people of her entourage failed to understand her attitude and were critical of her actions. Chokyi Dronma's biographer apparently used this as an occasion to celebrate her compassion that defied all conventions and expectations. Indeed she went on to become both a fully ordained *gelongma* (*dge slong ma*) and a renowned *yoginī* following masters such as Bodong Chogle Namgyal (Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1376-1451), Thangtong Gyalpo (Thang stong rgyal po 1361-1485), Vanaratna (1384-1468) and Pal Chime Drupa (dPal 'Chi med grub pa).

The power of literary tropes

The biography of Chokyi Dronma, despite some remarkably distinctive traits, follows the general template of a *namthar* (*rnam thar*) – an account of spiritual liberation. It has therefore an exemplary character and is informed first of all by the Life of the Buddha, which was the original paradigm for an exemplary Buddhist life (Tambiah 1984). The biography describes how Chokyi Dronma revealed herself as a Buddhist hero in a narrative in which non-Buddhist antagonists play a significant role and are explicitly said to recall the 'heretics' faced by early Buddhists. The narrative is therefore apparently informed by the description of these early confrontations – the debate being one of the most common tropes.

Another trope that is very likely to have informed the narrative is the story of one of the Eighty-four Mahāsiddha, Lakṣmīṅkarā,¹⁷ of whom Chokyi Dronma was later considered a reincarnation¹⁸. This Indian princess was forced to marry a non-Buddhist king of a neighboring country. While her marriage was being celebrated she opposed the priests sent by her husband-to-be to welcome her and forced them to flee. Shortly after her marriage, she pretended insanity and cut her hair. She became an ascetic dwelling in cemeteries covered in ashes, and eventually managed to convert her former husband to Buddhism. Although this story is not explicitly referred to in Chokyi Dronma's biography, it was almost certainly known to its compiler, for Lakṣmīṅkarā was mentioned as a previous incarnation of Chokyi Dronma by the biographer of her master Bodong Chogle Namgyal¹⁹ (written before her biography was compiled). The representation of Tshewang Tashi as a keen follower of Bonpo practices and as the unde-

¹⁷ Her story is briefly narrated in Abhayadatta's *Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahasiddhas* (Robinson 1979: 250ff.; Shaw 1994: 110ff).

¹⁸ See Diemberger 1997: 239ff.

¹⁹ See Biography of Bodong Chogle Namgyal 268.

sired husband hostile to Buddhism may have been profoundly informed by this literary model. Like Lakṣmīṅkarā's husband, Tshewang Tashi sent his priests to welcome his bride and tried to impose his religious practice on her, and Chokyi Dronma responded exactly like Lakṣmīṅkarā. The end of the story was more subdued in Chokyi Dronma's case, probably to fit the actual events, but seems to have been written in the same vein, for after his death she is said to have stated that she would not give up on him until he would reach enlightenment.

The power of literary tropes often lies in that they provide a framework to organize actual experience, and the relevant narrative, rather than the source of complete preconfigured images. Especially when the writing occurs close to the events, the power of realistic detail is essential to confer authoritativeness to the text as an accurate and truthful account. It is therefore to be expected that in the biography of Chokyi Dronma, the rendering of details exceeds the literary tropes informing the narrative. For example the physical and psychological features of Tshewang Tashi appear too realistic to be a mere reflection of ancient narratives. He has a goiter, is mentally unstable, suffers of *rlung* disorders, undergoes specific crises, wages a real (albeit unjustified) war, and lives in the shadow of his parents, being resentful for not being taken seriously enough when important decisions are taken. From the point of view of Chokyi Dronma's biography, he is the anti-hero, the estranged husband that she gives up to devote herself to a Buddhist life. It is thus not surprising that he is not treated very sympathetically. In order to fully justify her momentous separation, which led to general disruption and a war, a certain amount of 'character assassination' was probably necessary (perhaps like an account in *Hello magazine* describing an ex-spouse in a conflict ridden divorce case?). But Tshewang Tashi was real and, at least initially, his description may have easily evoked memories in people who experienced him or heard of him.

One of the most surprising features in the narrative is that Tshewang Tashi is portrayed as a keen Bonpo follower while his father appears as a wise Buddhist ruler – an image that was further emphasized in later sources²⁰. This raises a number of questions concerning the relationship between the young prince and his parents as well as concerning the actual religious attitudes of his father (see below). Another interesting feature that seems to exceed literary tropes is the description of the Bonpo priests and their ritual instruments which resonates with what is known of priests of the ancient Tibetan royalty and 20th /21st century descriptions of the

²⁰ He appears a member of the heroic Buddhist family of the rulers of southern Lato (Lho bdag) celebrated in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (see Wangdu and Diemberger 1996) and as a sponsor of Thangtong Gyalpo in his biography (269-270).

rituals of mountain cults in the region. In the next paragraph I shall explore the kind of religious practices that may have constituted the background against which the biographer of Chokyi Dronma compiled his text at the end of the fifteenth century.

A court priesthood devoted to ancestral cults?

During the fifteenth century Bonpo monasteries were certainly present in the Lato-Gungthang region. For example the monastery of Labuk or Palha Puk²¹ on the shore of the Palkhu (dPal khud/dPal khyung) Lake was presumably thriving for it is during this period that it was restored and decorated with its unique mural paintings (Baumer 2002: 137). It is possible therefore that the Bonpo invited to perform rituals at the court of the rulers of southern Lato were members of gradually consolidating Bonpo monastic communities that were competing with Buddhist institutions for influence and sponsorship. There is however the possibility that at the court of the rulers of southern Lato there was a priesthood devoted to ancestral cults, perhaps related to the Bonpo monastic communities but not necessarily identical with them. This is suggested by what we know about contemporary mountain cults in the region.

The nomadic area to the north of Shekar was the domain of the Porong rulers. Like the rulers of Lato and Gungthang these were keen supporters of the Bodongpa tradition and kept close contacts with both ruling families. From recent accounts by members of the Porong community in Tibet and in exile it is known that the Porong rulers were also involved with a class of priests, called Aya (A ya), who were devoted to the local mountain cults and played an important role in a sort of royal rituality. Aya used to transmit their ritual competence and empowerment through 'their bones' (*rus ko*) passed on from father to son. Until 1959 Aya priests used to celebrate a yearly animal sacrifice in honor of the mountain god Takyong. On that occasion the Porong ruler used to go with the Aya priest to a holy spot on the slope of the mountain where a white sheep would be sacrificed and the Aya would call for prosperity (*yang 'gug*) and perform divination reading the entrails of the animal. The community used to wait at the foot of the mountain and then participate in a feast in which the meat of the sacrificed animal would be shared (see Diemberger and Hazod 1997: 271-

²¹ Christoph Baumer describes the monastery of Palha Puk (sPa lha pug), the "Cave of the Pa gods" (often locally referred to as Labuk with a different explanation for its name) presumably founded in the 11th century by a member of the Pa (sPa) clan on the eastern shore of the Palkhu (dPal khud/dPal khyung) Lake and restored in the 15th century. He also mentions the monastery of Yadur in the Kyirong area as connected to Palha Puk.

272; Ramble 2007: 683-720 for a detailed account). The ritual relationship between Porong rulers and Aya did not interfere with the fact that they were considered a Buddhist ruling family.

According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 13a) the rulers of southern Lato had the mountain god Gangmar (sGang dmar) as a main protector. This was a reddish peak in the vicinity of Dingri that was considered linked to the ancient Tibetan royalty²² and reportedly appeared as a red horseman in order to rescue Lhatsen Kyab's father, Situ Chokyi Rinchen (Si tu Chos kyi rin chen), when he was taken prisoner by the army of the rulers of northern Lato²³. This wrathful god is locally considered to be a brother of the Porong protector Takyong (rTa skyong/rTa khyung) and, until 1959, has been locally worshipped with animal sacrifices similar to those celebrated by the Aya priests for the sake of the Porong rulers (Diemberger and Hazod 1997: 268-270ff.). Such sacrifices were considered to be unacceptable from a Buddhist point of view. However, according to people who have witnessed their celebration, some members of local monastic communities were often present, as were members of the local administrative elite. In the Tibetan context this would generally be considered an aberration. However it is known that among Mongolian practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism this has been a rather common occurrence (Humphrey and Laidlaw 2007: 255-276) and might perhaps have been more frequent in Tibet than is currently assumed.

There is also the evidence of recent Aya cults to the south of Shelkar, in Phadrug, close to a locality called Shenkyung (gShen khyung) where the protector of Shekar monastery is considered to have had his original abode²⁴. Aya priests of Kyar used to make a live offering of a 'divine sheep' (*lha lug*) and members of the Shekar monastic community used to participate in these cults by looking after the *bsangs* rituals (Ramble 2007: 703-704). Charles Ramble and I came across this particular Aya tradition in a most unpredictable way: the head monk of Shekar monastery, the late Lobsang Sherab, who was a Gelugpa by training, replied to our question whether he knew anything about Ayas " I am an Aya!" He went on to explain how he had Aya 'bones' which enabled him to celebrate specific rituals to prevent hail and call for rain. He added that this was not good according to his training as a Gelugpa monk, but the community insisted

²² This deity mentioned in the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* (see *Bod kyi deb ther khag lnga* 130) is considered related to the protectors of the ancient Tibetan royal house, the Rolba Kyabdun (Rol pa skya bdun), and is discussed by Ariane Spanien/ Macdonald (1971: 300).

²³ The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 13a), which gives an epic narrative of the event, reports that an earlier source, the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, mentions the red horseman that rescued the Situ as being Pholha Lhatsen Gangmar (Pho lha lha btsan sgang dmar).

²⁴ This is called Tashi Ombar (bKra shis 'od 'bar). On its mythology see Hazod 1998: 68-72.

that he fulfilled this role and therefore he felt obliged to do so. He then explained to us the details of the Aya tradition of Kyar to which he was related.

Charles Ramble (2007: 683-720), in his article reviewing the Aya category of priests, observes that some of them used to wear impressive woolen turbans evoking the term *bal thod can* reminding us of how priests that protected the ancient royal house of Tibet were often described²⁵. In some instances such priests considered themselves as having their origin in Zhangzhung and belonging to the Bonpo²⁶, but were not identical with members of specific Bonpo institutions. They seem to appear in a variety of remote places throughout Tibet, are sometimes considered equivalent to *lha bon* priests and, although it is difficult to infer the continuity of their traditions with references in historical literature, they present some striking similarities with what is known of ritual practitioners protecting the ancient Tibetan royal house. It is therefore plausible that the ruler of southern Lato in the fifteenth century may have been closely connected to a local priesthood of this kind, with its symbolic woolly turbans (*bal kyi thod*) and ritual instruments such as the *shang* and the drums. They would be 'a local type of priest concerned with ensuring protection and prosperity of their communities' (Ramble 2007: 715) and devoted to the cult of the ancestral deities of the southern Lato rulers presumably in a manner similar to that followed by the Porong ruler until 1959.²⁷

The rituals performed by this priesthood may have easily raised some objections from Buddhist masters and possibly prompted efforts to either fight or reform them. In this light it is not surprising that Lama Chopel Sangpo (Bla ma Chos dpal bzang po), the chaplain of the king of Gungthang Thri Lhawang Gyaltsen (Khri Lha dbang rgyal mtshan), i.e. Chos kyi sgron ma's father, did not only fight against the Bonpo (Biogra-

²⁵ The term appears for example in the *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (p57), see also Ramble 2007: 687-688. At the time of the compilation of this historical work in the 14th century, it is possible that the woolly turbans were not only a literary trope from dynastic times but also a reference that evoked living practices.

²⁶ For example Aya Bonpo are mentioned as the priests consecrating Thadrug (Khra 'brug) temple in its foundation myth (see Ramble 2007: 683; Sorensen and Hazod 2000: 155-156). In an interview the Ala of Nyemo mentioned as the ancient place of origin of his tradition Zhang zhung (Ramble 2007: 705-706) .

²⁷ The role of priests of this kind in marriage rituals is supported by an indication given in a ritual text described by Samten Karmay. This text was composed by Kong sprul Yontan rgya mtsho (1813-99), who was originally a Bonpo, for the marriage of the prince of Derge with the daughter of an aristocratic family from Central Tibet. It provides an integration of a Bonpo ritual framework with Buddhist divinities. In this text a *lha bon* called Thokar (Thod dkar), i.e. White Turban, celebrates an original marriage between gods and human beings (Karmay 2005: 147-148).

phy of Chopel Sangpo folio 4b) but is also known as the author of an Aya ritual text that follows the Nyingma tradition (Ramble 2007: 707)²⁸. In this manuscript the name Aya appears only in the title whereas the rest seems to be a common Nyingmapa ritual text. This mystery, which puzzled Charles Ramble and has no obvious solution, might reflect Chopel Sangpo's attempt to adapt a standard Buddhist text for use by the Aya priestly community of Kyirong or elsewhere in the region. As a court chaplain he was an eclectic manipulator of the political and religious scene of Gungthang. He was therefore a plausible reformer of a local priesthood and may have done so by introducing Buddhist ritual texts substituting their orally transmitted ritual practices.

Chokyi Dronma is likely to have followed in the footsteps of the chaplain of her father and to have tried to purify religious practices by starkly opposing what she may have considered as an unacceptable compromise with followers of local cults. These were seen as similar to the ancient antagonists of Buddhism, equated to 'heretics' (*mu stegs pa*) and generically labeled as Bonpo. Sakya Pandita's debate against the 'heretics' in Kyirong is explicitly mentioned as a source of inspiration in Chokyi Dronma's fight against the Bonpo. Independently from whether such priests followed cults of Indian Śaivaites origin, Zhangzhung origin or indigenous, these were associated by the fact that they were all seen as standing in contrast to Buddhism. In the compilation of the biography, Chokyi Dronma's husband – the anti-hero – was the ideal figure to embody the support of such practices, which could in fact have been promoted by a variety of people.

The coexistence and close interactions of different traditions was probably a widespread phenomenon in a context in which a patron could support different, competing traditions at the same time. For example, the *Blue Annals* (112-113.) mention a patron who invited at the same time a Bonpo, a tantric priest and a Buddhist monk who decided to build a temple together and eventually quarreled among each other. In the Himalayan valleys to the south of Lato, I encountered a comparable scenario with Nyingmapa Lamas and a *lha bon* priests sharing altars and tolerating each other despite the fact that the latter were performing animal sacrifices. This arrangement was considered perfectly acceptable locally but was looked upon critically by Buddhist visitors to the area who would label it dismissively as 'Bonpo'. The *lha bon* however would never consider themselves members of a specific Bonpo tradition. The fact that reality tends to be much more fuzzy and multilayered than any binary opposition Bud-

²⁸ This text belongs to the Nebesky-Wojkowitz collection at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, and has the title *A ya'i mdos kyi zin bris bkod pa legs so*, i.e. "Notes about Aya mdos rituals".

dhist/non-Buddhist would allow for, is also attested by Lobsang Sherab's double identity as Gelugpa monk and Aya mentioned above.

Like Chopel Sangpo, Chokyi Dronma is likely to have followed the template of the Buddhist reformer and propagator of the correct doctrine. Her deeds were possibly part of a Buddhification process that was happening throughout the region, trying to rationalize a fuzzy complexity according to a binary model. This was presumably linked also to a lively competition for patronage in the context of an increased production of wealth and enhanced communication in the aftermath of the Sakya/Yuan rule.²⁹

A Bonpo prince in a Buddhist family?

In Tibet it is rather common that the affiliation to a certain religious tradition is passed on in the family. It is therefore surprising to find the description of a keen Bonpo supporter within a Buddhist ruling family, especially without any reference to a clear religious contrast between father and son. How can this apparent paradox be explained? What may have actually informed Chokyi Dronma's biographer while using the literary trope of the non-Buddhist princely husband?

One explanation may focus on the psychology and the personal relations within the ruling family of southern Lato. Situ Lhatsen Kyab was firmly established at Shekar, and was the son of Situ Chokyi Rinchen, a famous Buddhist ruler celebrated in local epics³⁰. He had married a woman from the ruling family of northern Lato, repeating the pattern of his father's marriage alliance³¹. In Chokyi Dronma's biography both the Situ and his wife often appear as concerned about their son, who seems to have had a difficult personality, sometimes prone to mental instability. The Situ

²⁹ For example the rulers of southern Lato emerged thanks to the Sakya/Yuan rule and promoted economic development, trade and communication in their domain (see *Shel dkar chos 'byung* 33a.b). Although in later chronicles they are especially celebrated for their promotion of Buddhist institutions, they may well have been directly or indirectly the sponsors of the Bonpo monastery on the shore of the Palkhu Lake.

³⁰ In particular *The Thirteen Great Propitious Deeds of the Situ (Si tu legs mdzad bcu gsum)* reported in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 8b-34b) and originally quoted from an non extant earlier source, the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*.

³¹ According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 7a) Lhatsen Kyab married a daughter of the ruler of northern Lato Namgyal Dragpa (Byang bdag rNam rgyal grags pa, 1395-1475) and fathered Tshewang Tashi (Nam mkha tshe dbang bkra shis), Chokyi Dronma's husband. Lhatsen Kyab's father, Situ Chokyi Rinchen had married the daughter of the ruler of northern Lato Jamyang (Byang bdag 'Jam dbyangs) (see Wangdu and Diemberger 1996: 31).

seems instead to have been very balanced and tolerant, mainly concerned with keeping him at peace. So much so that when Chokyi Dronma rebelled and cut her hair, he accepted her request to be allowed to leave Shekar to be ordained, but begged her to appear in front of his son, her husband, as if nothing had happened in order to keep him quiet – which she did by dressing up and wearing a wig. Tshewang Tashi's mental state was not necessarily related to his religious interests but in Chokyi Dronma biography these two aspects of his life appear as closely related. Unless Tshewang Tashi actually used Bonpo practices to assert himself against his father – which is not indicated in the text – his personal negative qualities may have been enhanced and linked to his religious sympathies by Chokyi Dronma's biographer keen to underpin the narrative template he had in his mind.

A different, yet related explanation for the paradoxical religious affiliation of Tshewang Tashi may lie in the possibility that the Situ himself, although a keen supporter of Buddhist masters, cultivated also links to a priesthood devoted to ancestral cults and to Bonpo communities. In this case, Chokyi Dronma's biographer may have decided to be silent about her father-in-law's support of ancestral cults and enhance his Buddhist features as a respectable and compassionate ruler³² – in final analysis he was a powerful player in the political arena and an important patron of Buddhist masters. He may have attributed instead all the support to rituals that antagonized proper Buddhist practices at Shekar to his son, her unstable husband, who could be blamed for them. It is remarkable that all Chokyi Dronma's decisive negotiations were done with her father-in-law whereas her husband was the one who sent the ill-omened gifts and religious practitioners, wanted to appoint the Bonpo tutor for their daughter and possibly instigated the celebration of Bonpo rituals and healing practices that in her eyes brought about their daughter's death. Could Tshewang Tashi have done all this without the endorsement of his father? Isn't it more likely that marriage gifts, marriage celebrations, tutoring and rituals were decided by father and son together? Perhaps Situ Lhatsen Khyab and Tshewang Tashi were both supporters of a variety of Buddhist and Bonpo communities at the same time and were both followers of local ancestral cults. This seems to be implied also by the general statement indicating that Chokyi Dronma was 'criticizing the banner of Shenrab', for this would not have been an issue at Shekar if the Situ had not allowed for its existence. If this is the likely scenario, the biographer seems to have

³² Doubts on the actual strength of his religious beliefs is also evoked by the fact that he apparently neglected an important Buddhist collection preserved at Shekar. This was found in disarray by Chokyi Dronma who made a point of looking after it properly (Diemberger 2007: 161).

brought together several not necessarily related elements in describing the character of Tshewang Tashi: his personal weaknesses; the ancestral cults of his family towards which he may have had a particular propensity; the blame for the death of Chokyi Dronma's infant daughter; the war; the literary trope of the anti-Buddhist royal husband. In this context the category Bonpo/followers of Sherab/heretics appears as a literary construction that reflects a highly selective interpretation of actual events and brings together a range of real but possibly different and disjointed phenomena.

The construction of the non-Buddhist 'other'

The *dBa' bzhed* provides us with an interesting example of how the relationship between Buddhists and their antagonists could be construed in a relational way in the description of a Buddhist-Bonpo debate in the aftermath of emperor Thrisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan)'s death. The term 'Bonpo' indicates here the ensemble of non-Buddhist practitioners supported by the 'black ministers' (*blon po nag po*). For example it is used to describe the priests who came to celebrate the funeral, listed as: "one hundred and twenty seven Bon po such as A gshen, Byi spu, mTshe [mi] Cog [la], Ya ngal from 'Phan yul"³³ (folio 26a). More generally, it indicated, loosely, the political and religious supporters of a non-Buddhist system of beliefs and practices that linked royal power to mountain cults. This politico-religious theory was epitomized in the speech by the main 'Bonpo' minister who, during this debate, pleaded for keeping the traditional customs that included the worship of the ancestral mountain Yarlha Shampo (Yar lha zham po), royal funerals, rituals celebrated by the court priests (*sku gshen*) etc. According to him all this gave great majesty (*mnga' thang*) and high political authority (*chab srid mtho bo*) to the kingdom, which relied on the sacred law (*gtsug lag*) and on priests (*sku gshen*) such as the Tshe mi and Cog la protecting the king. If these customs were not continued, he warned, "the political authority (*chab srid*) based on the relationship between lord and subjects would decline" (see *dBa' bzhed* folio 27b-28a). In the reported speech the 'Bonpo' minister referred to Buddhism as the "religious tradition from India" (*rgya gar chos lugs*) as opposed to the Bonpo tradition (*bon lugs*). His argument in favor of the Bonpo is then attacked by the Buddhist representative. In a confrontational context the terms Bon and Bonpo seem to have been used as an overarching category to indicate a particular political and religious positioning rather than a specific religious tradition. The use of the term 'Bon' in this passage of the *dBa' bzhed* is

³³ *Bon po la 'phan yul gyi a gshen dang byi spu mtshe cog ya ngal brgya nyi shu rtsa bdun.*

also consistent with that found in Dunhuang documents (PT 972, PT 1284 and PT 239/II) reporting a Buddhist criticism of the pre-existing religion, equated to that of the 'heretics' (*mu stegs bon*), i.e. the 'non-Buddhists' (Karmay 2005: 157-168). These documents reflect Buddhist conversion attempts against the background of a loosely defined ensemble of religious practices seen as worldly and spiritually unsatisfactory. This perspective certainly continued and was enhanced in the post-dynastic era, since we know that encounters and competition with loosely defined Bonpo appear in the biography of many Buddhist masters, most notably Milarepa. In the context of Buddhist narratives the term Bonpo may have often defined anything that could be loosely subsumed under this category even when organised and institutionalised Bonpo communities were becoming established developing their own distinctive 'Bonpo' narratives.

Remarkably, when Chokyi Dronma chased away the Bonpo priests sent by her husband to welcome her, people commented that she had truly a high honor (*dbu 'phang mtho bo*). She had in fact dared to challenge and compete with an important source of the ruler's spiritual and political empowerment and of the country's prosperity. This is reinforced in the passage in which she is said to have been able to guarantee prosperity, timely rain and fertility of the fields while praising Buddhism and criticizing the 'banner of Shenrab'. This expression is significantly followed by the words '*la sogs pa*', i.e. 'and so on', which indicate that it encompassed a whole range of symbols and practices. Although by the fifteenth century the term Bonpo often indicated an organized tradition similar and competing with Buddhist ones, in this context it seems primarily used within a confrontational discourse. Used in this way, the notion of 'Bonpo' could easily overlap with that of 'heretics' in the construction of a binary opposition between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, as happens in the Dunhuang documents discussed by Samten Karmay and in several instances in Chokyi Dronma's biography. These are remarkable examples of how the 'others', the non-Buddhists, could be defined by merging the ancient Indian notion of 'heretics' used originally to define Jains and various Indian non-Buddhist traditions with terms that refer to Tibetan non-Buddhist religious practices. Such a category could indicate a variety of different things at the same time: local ancestral cults, non-Buddhist traditions that had come to Tibet from elsewhere, political opposition to Buddhist representatives and even compromises and adjustments among traditions considered unacceptable from a Buddhist point of view. A critical look at the biography of Chokyi Dronma and the *dBa' bzhed* suggests that sometimes rather than considering the notion of 'Bonpo' as a reference to a specific religious tradition, it might be more fruitful to consider it as a relational term: a performative and contextual construction of non-Buddhist 'otherness', a fluid category that may encompass a variety of not necessarily related religious practices, political or personal antagonism, perceived moral

shortcomings and references to literary tropes³⁴. Nevertheless, some of the heterogeneous elements that constituted this category were likely to be real and experientially attestable for this is what conferred circumstantial credibility to the trope applied to a specific situation.

Conclusion

Ancestral cults coexisting with Bonpo and Buddhist traditions constituted the likely background for the life story of Chokyi Dronma as a hero of Tibet's Buddhification; continuing the deeds of Padmasambhava and Milarepa. The biographer's distinctive use of the term 'Bonpo' – or any equivalent such as 'the woolen turban', 'the banner of Shenrab' – reflected in this case a confrontational and generalizing view, which contrasts with the use of these words in more specific and less judgmental contexts. It is this view that informed his way of weaving a narrative around what he witnessed or heard of. He thus described the conflict between Chokyi Dronma and her husband as a stark confrontation between a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist view of the world, between alleged highest moral virtue and total human failure – feeding on, and trying to overcome, the fuzziness of real life. This was the background against which Chokyi Dronma, despite all her idiosyncrasies, could emerge as a Buddhist hero, challenging and compassionate. At the centre of a strong literary image, in which the Bonpo epitomized all human shortcomings, she could be celebrated, for the benefit of followers and patrons, as a triumph of an ultimate Buddhist morality that defied the messy and conventional understandings of the world around her.

Were then the Bonpo mentioned in Chokyi Dronma's biography just a literary creation? The Bonpo with the woolly turbans were in all likelihood real but the boundaries between different traditions were still fluid and the category may have easily included heterogeneous forms of local priesthood as well as Bonpo monastic communities. Already in imperial Tibet, Buddhism and pre-existing traditions had stood in a continuous dialogue, mutually defining each other (see Kapstein and Dotson 2007: vii-xii). This dialogical relation was enhanced and transformed in the later centuries. Narratives that celebrated the Buddhists in contrast to the Bonpos made them increasingly present in public discourse as a homogenous, distinctive entity. The construction and enforcement of a binary opposition at a time of increasing competition for patronage may have thus substantially con-

³⁴ A parallel process may have led to the alleged attribution of a Bonpo identity to Langdarma, which is currently increasingly doubted (see for example Karmay 2005: 28,29).

tributed not only to the definition of distinctive Buddhist traditions but also of the Bonpo.

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THE CULT OF RADRAP (RA DGRA),
“NEP” OF WANGDUE PHODRANG (BHUTAN)

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Introduction

Ropitiated as a destroyer and worshipped as a creator, Radrap (Ra dgra), the guardian deity of Wangdue Phodrang (dBang 'dus pho brang) is more familiar to the residents than Lord Buddha. Through the conduct of various rituals all the villages in the region pay homage to him. Even people from other parts of Bhutan who are stationed in the area frequently visit Radra Nekhang (*Ra dgra gnas khang*), the temple of Radrap in Wangdue Phodrang town, to make offerings¹ and also receive the blessing of the deity. For the people of Shar, Radrap is the source of peace and prosperity as well as fear. Despite their attachment to Radrap, only a few can recount a vague and chronologically disjointed history of this personality. However, the rituals in his honour are alive, though comparatively indistinct. Within this framework, the research on which the present article is based was conducted in the village of Bjena gewog² (sBe nag rged 'og) under Wangdue Phodrang district. The rationale for choosing it comes from the fact that Radragang (Ra dgra sgang), the peak of Radrap is located in the area. This paper will make an attempt to briefly touch on the history of the deity, besides describing the festival and the rituals conducted in his honour.

Historical background of Radap

Before discussing details of the cult, festival and rituals in honour of Radrap, it would be worthwhile to know the story of this supernatural figure. The background anecdotes can help us to understand the reasons behind Radrap's emergence as the guardian deity of Wangdue Phodrang. Originally this deity was a Tibetan *btsan*. In the eight century when Guru Padmasambhava visited Tibet this *btsan* promised to be the gurdian(*gter bdag*) of his treasures. As a mark of appreciation, Guru named him Genyen

¹ The offerings generally consist of rice, fruits, meat, wine, oil for butter lamps, incense sticks and money.

² A gewog (dz: rged 'og) is a local level administrative unit comprising several villages. A number of gewogs then make up a district. In our case, the name of the gewog is Bjena.

Chenpo³ (*dge bsnyen chen po*), the great upasaka. This, however, is not a feature that is unique to him as many such figures were made to take vows to protect the Doctrine of Buddha. Then, in the thirteenth century, in Druk Ralung (*'Brug ra lung*) in front of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo⁴ (*Pha jo 'Brug sgom zhigpo*), this treasure guardian of Guru rededicated his service to the protection of the Dharma. Thereafter, he became bound by oath (*dam can*), to protect the Doctrine of Buddha. At an unspecified period, when Mendi Phud Nidup, a trader from Khothangkha village⁵ went to Tibet, he met this *btsan*. The trader, realising the power of the *btsan*, tempted him to come to his village as their general (*dmag dpon*) and deity. On being asked to describe the mountain in his village which was offered as the abode, the man said:

The summit is the blooming place of chuga (*chu kha*)flowers.
 The middle is the singing place of khuju ngyoem (*khu ju sngom*).
 The base is the growth place of patsha damru (*dpag tsha 'dam ru*).⁶

As the chuga flower blooms only in the highlands and cane shoots and elastostoma in the lowlands we can understand the enormity of the mountain with its base in the sub-tropical zone and its summit among the cold high peaks. The trader said this with the intention of igniting the interest of the *btsan* to come to Bhutan. Having tempted the deity, the two journeyed to Bhutan. A little before entering into the territory of Bjena gewog, when they reached a small pass the *btsan* complained that he was feeling lethargic (dz: *tser yang 'tseraw mas*). This gave the pass the name the "lethargic mountain" (*tser las la*⁷). On reaching another peak the *btsan* moaned that he was feeling sick (dz: *na yang naw mas*). So the mountain

³ Source: *brGya tsar* ritual text, p.8. This text is read while conducting the ritual which is also called by the name of the text. (see footnote 13). The text is available in all the Radra Nekhang. The one mentioned here is that of the Nekhang located in Wangdue Phodrang town.

⁴ Phajo was a 13th century Buddhist saint who introduced Drukpa Kagyu (*'Brug pa bka' brgyud*) school to Bhutan. The title Phajo is also referred to the local priests who conduct *lHa 'bod* festival in Shar and Central part of Bhutan. However, It should be noted that Phajo Drugom Zhigpo is not associated with *lHa 'bod* as he was a Buddhist while this festival is a non-Buddhist one.

⁵ This village is under the jurisdiction of sBe nag rged 'og. We find the peak adode of Radrap in this village.

⁶ // mgo chu kha me tog shar sa./ bar khu ju sngom 'khyams sa./ mjug dpag tsha 'dam ru skyes sa./

Chuga, khuju ngyoem, patsha and damru are Bhutanese names for *Rheum nobile* (a specis of rhubarb), the cuckoo, cane shoot and elastostoma (a type of weed consumed as a vegetable) respectively. In the text patsha and damru appears like one word but they are not; it is the Bhutanese way of naming them together.

⁷ Tser is the contracted form of tser yang 'tseraw mas.

was named the “sick mountain” (*na ri mu*).⁸ On encountering the third peak the trader announced that this would be the abode. But when the *btsan* reacted strongly, saying that it was much smaller than the one described, the trader admitted that he had told him a lie and the peak acquired the name the “lie mountain” (*dz: shob la*⁹). Even today these mountains are referred to by the same appellations. Continuing a little further the two reached a place from where the present abode could be seen. So, the trader informed the *btsen* that the peak which was visible from where they were standing was the abode where *chuga flowers* bloomed. In comparison with the high mountains of those in Tibet, this one in Bhutan appeared rather small to the *btsan*, which provoked him to comment: “it just has the height of a goat” (*dz: ra bzum chig rang mas*). Thereafter, the peak became the abode of the *btsan* and it was named “goat-like mountain” (*ra 'dra sgang*). The *btsan* too was given the title Radrap which is derived from the name of the mountain. He then settled on the peak and became the deity of the people in the locality. However, there were times when he turned wrathful and caused harm to the people. It was only when the villagers sacrificed a bull that the anger of the deity could be appeased.¹⁰

On the other hand, a contradictory version claims that this figure was known as monk Sangay Tenzin (Sangs rgyas bstan rdzin) who was born to mother Lham Goem (lHam gom) and father Tshen Dey Rikay (Tshan lde ri ke) from Kham (Khams). At Druk Ralung he took monastic vows and later followed Phajo Drugom Zhigpo to Bhutan, where he assisted in the propagation of the Drukpa Kagyu (*'Brug pa bka brgyud*) school. As Phajo gained political importance in the course of the diffusion of his school of Buddhism, Garton (Gar ston),¹¹ one of his sons, was sent to Khothangkha as a chieftain. Monk Sangay Tenzin, only an assistant companion, soon gained popularity as a lama. After the death of the monk, a man of the locality was supposedly possessed by his spirit, who spoke through him to the other residents. Fearing the destructive side of the spirit, they agreed to

⁸ *Na* stands for sick while *ri* could mean mountain or forest.

⁹ *Shob* means lie.

¹⁰ The version of the encounter of Radrap and Mendi Phub Nidup was recounted orally by the residents mentioned here below. The interviews were conducted in the villages of Trashi Tokha, Balakha and Tokha from 17th to 23rd December, 1998. The fieldwork was sponsored by Sherubtse College.

- a. Chhimi Dema, 81 year-old villager.
- b. Ugyen Dorji, 75 year-old local priest.
- c. Agay Dorji, 69 year-old farmer.
- d. Pema Tenzin, 58 year-old bar-tender.
- e. Sangay Dawa, 41 years old shopkeeper.
- f. Dorji, 21 years old farmer.

¹¹ History of Bhutan: Course book for class IX and X, part I, published by CAPSS, Education Division of Bhutan, 1994, p. 36.

accept him as their guardian deity. A mountain peak known as Radragang was then offered as his abode and the deity was named Radrap thereafter. Despite this generous gesture and their high regard of him as their deity, the local residents could not escape his malevolent nature and fell victim to it. It was only after they promised to sacrifice a bull and conduct a festival in his honour that his wrathful manifestation was calmed.¹²

Until a few years ago, a bull was sacrificed and the festival known as *Bala Bongko* was conducted collectively by the people of Bjena Gewog from 18th to 20th of the first month of the lunar calendar. Today, however, with strong influence of Buddhist teachings, the villagers of the area do not perform any more bull sacrifice, but buy meat from the market to conduct the festival. This will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

It is of course difficult to defend either of the two versions and say which holds more truth. Nevertheless, the former has claimed the general acceptance of the people. This can be supported by the fact that in the *brGya tsar*¹³ ritual text of Radrap, there is a mention that he was appointed the guardian of treasures (*gter bdag*) by Guru Padmasambhava besides naming him "*Genyen Chenpo*". Also, going by the names of the mountains the former version carries more weight for the people.

Coming to the second anecdote, the truth extends as far as the mention of one of the sons of Phajo Drugom Shingpo ruling the village of Khothangkha in Bjena Gewog, but written history does not give even a slightest information about Radrap. Furthermore, the ritual text also lacks information on his coming to Khothangkha as an assistant of the son of Phajo. Despite these shortcomings we cannot totally disregard the account, as the staunch followers of Radrap argue that their deity was at one time a learned monk named Sangay Tenzin.

Radrap: his manifestations

From a layman's conception the deity has three manifestations.¹⁴ He assumes the form of a king, a monk and a *btsan* known as Dupo Tiyag

¹² The second version was narrated by the following residents. The interviews were conducted in Themakha and Phuntshogang from 24th to 27th of December, 1998 under the patronage of Sherubtse College.

- a. Gomchen Samdrup, 65 year-old lay priest.
- b. Gyeltshen, 60 year-old ex-incharge of Bala Lhakhang.
- c. Getay Dorji, 67 year-old caretaker of Bala Lhakhang.
- d. Pow Taphu, 62 year-old shaman.

¹³ However, in this region, the ritual text as well as the ritual itself is popularly known as "*brGya tsar*". As such the concept of this nomenclature applied in this article is that of the villagers. *brGya tsar* actually means 100 times.

¹⁴ Informants (see footnote 12).

(*bDud po ti g.yag*). The king and the monk are the benign manifestations responsible for the provision of peace, happiness and prosperity. On the contrary, Dupo Tiyag with his fiery wrath acts as a destructive agent to punish people whose faith in Radrap turns shallow. The bull sacrifice and the *brGya tsar* ritual is conducted to assure that the wrath of Dupo Tiyag is not activated. As for the peaceful manifestations, they are content with fumigation, erection of white flags without inscriptions and libations (*gser skyems*).

The description of Radrap by the '*brGya tsar*' text differs as follows: Radrap resides in a three storeyed palace constructed of jewels and crowned with a golden pinnacle. The air is filled with the melodious music of the bells hung on the walls. At the four corners outside the palace are houses each adorned with a parasol on top. Three tiers of jewelled walls (*lcags ri*) protect the palace. Within the palace, on a golden throne shaped like a lion sits the majestic Radrap on the cushion of the sun and the moon. Flames of fire jet forth from his body. He has a red wrathful face, two eyes like the sun and the moon, a tongue like thunder and a terrifying voice. He is dressed in a gold-plated jacket of iron chain-mail and a helmet decorated with turquoise. In his right hand he holds a sword (*gle gri*) to destroy the foes. The gem (*nor bu*) in his left hand is the source of alms and charity. To tour the three worlds under his domain he rides the horse Chugsey. This horse has the power to tour the world in the wink of an eye. It also can read the mind of his master.

Around him are his manifestations:

- (1) In front of him is the white peaceful guardian of treasures (*gter bdag*) holding a bowl containing jewels. Riding on a white horse he moves around providing food and wealth to the subjects of Radrap.
- (2) On the right is the black wrathful three-eyed Dupo Tiyag. His responsibility is to destroy the enemies of the deity with the sword in his right hand and a mountain-sized tusk.
- (3) The rider of Tanag Tingkar (*rta nag rting dkar*), "a black horse with white hooves," Dushag Nagpo (*bDud zhags nag po*), stationed on the left, captures and tames evil people with the black rope from which his name is derived.
- (4) Nearby is a monk robed in yellow with a bowl in his left hand and a stick with stupa on the top (*mkar sil*) in his right. He preaches and guards the Dharma.
- (5) At the back is the great warrior Magpon Chenpo Lutsen Pelzang (*dMag dpon chen po Klu btsan dpal bzang*). He has a red wrathful face, three eyes and pointing hair. In his right hand is a spear, and in his left a snake (to be used as rope). Riding on the sunrays he destroys the enemies of Radrap and help people who seek refuge in him.

There is a variation between the oral and the written tradition as the scripture describes the deity as being surrounded by five manifestations. Here, the fact that Tiyag, Dushag Nagpo and Magpon Lutsen Pelzang perform the same function allows us to categorise them as one wrathful personality. In this case, the oral tradition and the text converge as there would be three forms: the benign guardian of treasures (*gter bdag*) who is the furnisher of food and wealth; the monk who is responsible for the propagation of the Dharma; and the three manifestations who destroys the adversaries of Radrap and also punish the people who commit sacrilege.

Bala Bongko - an annual festival

As the festival is conducted at Balakha village of Bjena gewog it is befittingly referred to as Bala Bongko. "Bala" is the contracted form of the village name "*Balakha*" but, unfortunately, no local resident could give the exact spelling of Bongko, let alone the explanation of it. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the term is derived from the combination of two words: '*bod*' meaning "call" and '*skor*' meaning "turn." The invocation of the local deity by the local priests and the male participants in turn on the final day of the festival supports the proposition. It is possible that time has worn out the original word "*'bob-skor*" and replaced it with the existing "*Bongko*." However, we cannot rule out the idea that it could also be *Bon skor*, a "Bon practice" which in Bhutan designates all non-Buddhist rituals. Not the least, it could also be interpreted as *Bon 'khor* which would mean a "Bon community."¹⁵

The 1998 annual festival could not be conducted on the usual date because of the unavailability of the local priests. About 95 households from the different villages, namely Themakha, Balakha, Lhamoekha, Phuntshogang, Trashi Tokha, Tokha and Dagaygang, all under the jurisdiction of Bjena gewog sponsor the festival through their individual contributions which may take the form of either rice to money. The first form of contribution is in the form of rice. Each household gives about two kilograms of rice which is used not only for the preparation of the sacrificial cakes, but also to feed the local priests for the three days and to host dinner for the local male participants on the final day. Money constitutes the next form of contribution. Here the households are categorized into three groups corresponding to their economic status. The rich group pays about ngultrum¹⁶ fifty, the middle income group about

¹⁵ This interpretation was suggested by Professor Charles Ramble while editing this particular paper.

¹⁶ The ngultrum is the name of the Bhutanese currency. The exchange rate oscillated around \$ 1 for ngultrum 44.15 in September, 1999.

thirty and the poor parts with ngultrum ten. The collected amount is used to cover the price of the bull which is slaughtered and sacrificed to the deity. As such the cash contribution fluctuates according to the price of the bull. Today, the sum is used for purchasing meat from the market.

A group constituting five men is nominated on a yearly basis to organise the festival. They are responsible for the collection of donations, issuing invitations to the priests and purchasing meat. They also look after the temporarily built residence, a hut, which is intended to house the sacrificial cakes and lodge the priests. Since it is the responsibility of the organisers to host the priests, they also sojourn in the temple for the entire duration of the festival.

The first two days of Bala Bongko holds little attraction for the spectators as they have hardly any dances and are more of a preparatory period. The priests remain occupied in preparing for the final day which involves making the sacrificial cakes and invoking Radrap at different intervals. The night, however, is enlivened with the arrival of the local male participants who rehearse for the final day following the instructions of the main priest. Interestingly there is a head male priest (*dpa bo*) (pronounced as *pawo*) and also the seasoned one, a male assistant (*dpa' chung*) (pronounced as *pochu*), and two priestesses (*rnal 'byor ma*) (pronounced as *neljorma*). The *pawo* becomes the leader and initiates the dance.

The presence of both the young and the elders adds to the already excited crowd. The night becomes more lively with the conclusion of the rehearsal session. What normally follows then is a competition of songs and dance between the men and the women and at times between the participants of different villages. While the older group remain engrossed in watching the scene, the frolicking youth (men in particular) indulge in eve-teasing the young maidens and annoying the elders. Yet for some, it is time for paying court to the ladies and starting amorous affairs which at times lead to matrimony.

The finale: 20th day of the first month

It is the day when people of all strata dress in their finest clothes, wear the best ornaments and jewellery and display their prized bowls carved out of wood and ivory and lined in silver. Although the festival has little didactic religious content a crowd, attired in colourful finery and bearing packed meals, assembles at the scene of the activity. This becomes an interesting sight for both the outsiders and the villagers as well.

The invocation of Radrap by the priests (*pawo*, *pochu* and *neljorma*) begins at around sunrise. With expectant eyes the villagers and even the monks wait for the priests to enter slowly into a trance as the spirit engulfs

them, and start to utter their predictions for the year ahead. The village folks are given a detailed account of both the good and the ills that await them during the course of the year. At times they delve further, attempting to elicit predictions about the well being of an individual household. It is for this very reason that the elders do not absent themselves from this part of the festival.

All the *pawo*, *pochu* and *neljorma* have their own specialized prediction. At this stage, as if they were selecting goods in the market, the interested candidates pick the priest of their choice and listen to the prediction. As the festival involves the same priests for several years, it poses no difficulty for the village folks to make their selection as they know the right person to listen to. However, most are attracted by the *pawo*, the head of the team and also the seasoned one.

While the men remain engrossed in the predictions the women folks attend to the rest of the family members, serving them tea and snacks or anything they have packed. While the priests remain preoccupied with their prediction, the organizers and the butcher slaughter the bull in a nearby forest. A symbolic part of the meat is then offered to the deity and the rest served as dinner to the local priests and the warriors (*dpa' zap*). Today, as mentioned earlier, in lieu of a bull, the local residents buy meat, following an unanimous decision made a few years ago. The post-invocation scene is the time for feasting as this is the moment when the villagers break for lunch, after which they gather once again at the festival spot.

A little before noon, about 28 male participants assemble in the temple (*mgon khang*) of Radrap. The men are the representatives of what are considered to be the 28 original households out of a total of 95. The rest consist of those who settled at a latter period or who have broken away from these original households.

The participants present themselves dressed in their finest. Their heads wrapped up in colourful scarves, swords slung on their left hips, their torsos covered with white scarves, they represent the warriors (*dpa' zap*) of the past who had been recruited to fight the civil wars as well as the battles with Tibet and the British. Like their forefathers they too offer money (*snyen dar*) to the local deity, and pray for his blessing. In the act of invoking Radrap, the warriors yell out at the top of their voices. In the past this was done to seek the help of Radrap before proceeding to the battlefield. However, today, the invocation is intended to subdue and pacify the evil spirits and to prevent them from causing any harm to the village. Following this, the warriors leave the temple in a procession with other men bearing banners. The aim of this banner is to usher in good luck. Circumbulating the temple once they march slowly and stop at a place called Bala Pogto which is about 400 meters south of the temple. The organizers come in tow to check the presence of all the 28 warriors in the

procession. If from any household, a mere 18 year old is found to be one of the participants, he would be sent back and the household marked for offence and for breaking the law, as only adult men are considered fit to be warriors. This done, the warriors face the temple and once again yell the invocation of the deity before finally returning to the festival spot. The warriors then draw their swords and make three rounds of the hut where the sacrificial cakes are kept. With one hand holding the sword high up in the air and the other gripping the end of the scarf, their movement becomes very wild and vigorous. They turn and spin as they shout and yell, reproducing the noise of the battlefield.

Exhausted now, the warriors march back to the courtyard of the temple, line up in two rows and settle for tea while an elderly man carrying the banner and a sword chants words in praise of Radrap. In tune with his enticing words, his movement too becomes graceful and seductive as he spins and dances slowly and gently. Towards the end he yells and becomes wild threatening the adversaries about the power of the sword of Radrap. He then approaches the seated warriors who individually offer him betle nut and leaf as a gesture of gratitude and appreciation. Time permitting, a few folk dances are performed as an entertainment for the spectators, otherwise the "warrior dance" and the cry of the warriors follow. A little later the warriors rejoin the priests who are in the process of invoking Radrap.

The other priests take repose while the *pawo* who is now surrounded by the warriors initiates the wild dance. As he moves the *pawo* also recite words¹⁷ that are repeated by the participants. Gradually, the flow of words becomes rapid with the quickening tempo of the dance; the surrounding warriors jump in and out of the circle.

Eventually, the circle is broken as one of the warrior makes a grab at the *pawo*. Holding on to his belt, the rest of his companions follow suit as each holds on to the belt of the man in front, forming not a circle but a chain. The vigour of the dance is still maintained, as the participants jump and turn along with the *pawo* who stands at the head. The wild dance, which forms zigzags in the line, is believed to be an act of driving away the evil spirits. This continues for some time after which the dancers disperse for the evening tea. The concluding session of the festival begins a little before sunset.

¹⁷ The words recited are under:
 "Tonde Phajo said to Sonam Peldon:
 Sonam Peldon's vagina is large.
 Sonam Peldon is full of wetness.
 Sonam Peldon's vagina is large." (Cheki, 1994; 118).

The tour of the villages

The spectators return home and lie in wait for the reception of the warriors and the priests who would pay a visit to all the villages that had sponsored the festival. An old worn-out container is filled with varieties of crops (*bru sna dgu*),¹⁸ chilli, chopped pieces of meat and a bunch of willow twigs painted black at one end. These items of propitiation are prepared by each household. The folks of each village gather and normally put their propitiation container at crossroads and wait for the priests and warriors to come and ward off bad luck as well as other calamities.

In the meantime, the priests and the warriors assemble in front of Bala Lhakang and start the tour of the villages. The first village that they visit is Phuntshogang. In each village the warriors perform the warrior dance and repeat the words of the *pawo*. Then, they gather near the propitiation container and chant:

1 year, 2 years, 3 years.....9 years
 1 month, 2 months, 3 months.....9 months,
 1 night, 2 nights, 3 nights.....9 nights.
 Remain subdued here for 9 years, 9 months and 9 nights.¹⁹

Then they savagely smash and throw away the propitiation containers yelling: "Remain nailed down here." The evil forces dispelled and subjugated, the priests and the warriors sit in two rows. Tea and parched rice (dz: *zaw*) brought by each household is served lavishly, even to the children and other spectators. At the request of the villagers a few folk dances are performed by the warriors to entertain the gathering and especially to celebrate their subjugation of the obnoxious spirits. The same program is conducted in the villages of Tokha, Dagaygang, Trashi Tokha and Themakha.

It is only after the nightfall that the priests and the warriors are back at Balakha. Tired, they are only too happy to line up in two rows for dinner, which by tradition is delayed so as to oblige the warriors to dance and entertain the spectators. Despite their exhaustion, after tea is served they dance till dinner time. The warriors and the spectators return to their home yelling and singing in fulfillment as their deity is appeased and invoked and evil subjugated.

¹⁸ *Bru na dgu* (pronounced as *druna gu*) are the nine varieties of crops which differs from one region to another. Generally, these consists of rice, wheat, buckwheat, millet, maize, oat, mustard, soya beans, etc.

¹⁹ dz: // lo chi lo gnis, lo gsum.....lo dgu
 zla chi zla gnis zla gsum.....zla dgu
 zhag chi zhag gnis zhag gsum...zhag dgu
 bsnem nas bsnem //

Other rituals to the deity

The “*brGya tsar*”²⁰ ritual, that initially demanded a bull sacrifice is yet another salient ritual in honour of Radrap. Now, bull sacrifice is substituted by the purchase of meat. The “*brGya tsar*” ritual is conducted on any of the days convenient to the family. Contrary to the Bala Bongko, this ritual is organised by individual households. The priests have no role as it is performed by about five monks or lay priests. The only preparation required are the rice or flour sacrificial cakes and seven plates of offerings (*tshogs*) which comprises rice, fruits, vegetables, meat, biscuits, etc. The ritual, which is accompanied by instruments such as cymbals, trumpets and drums, lasts a little more than an hour. The rich conduct it several times a year. The poor, for their part, try to keep the ritual as an annual feature, lest the wrath of the deity strike them.

Offering of libation (*gser skyems*) requires no special preparation or the assistance of the specialists. Every morning with the rise of the dawn, many individuals praise Radrap. A bowl is filled preferably with wine (*dz: a.ra*)²¹ and if not with black tea and a short text²² that takes just a few minutes is recited. The illiterate followers of Radrap, for their part, memorise the text.

The cheapest but the most cumbersome offering of homage to Radrap is the erection of white flags without inscriptions at Radragang in Khothangkha. From the nearest village it takes more than an hour and a half of uphill climbing for an average walker. For this reason, many people send their flag through anyone paying a visit to the peak abode of Radrap. Only after the purification of the flag by fumigation (*bsang*) and sprinkled water, is it taken to the peak. Once there, people prostrate three times, attach the flag to a pole, offer fumigation (*bsang*) to cleanse the impurities that might have been brought with them. When the fumigation is offered they just say “*bsang, bsang, bsang*” which could mean “be purified” or “be cleansed.” The next step is the offering of money (*snyen dar*) which is normally put in the holes around. Following this, with the participants yelling three times at their loudest, the flag is erected. Then, prostrating three times, they take leave of the abode. Despite the lack of prayer inscriptions on the flag it bears important significance. The flag is the symbolic dress of Radrap. At times, the villagers detach the old flags and bring them home as a gift of their deity. This cloth is used to wrap the packed meals and other items. The local residents believe that the probability of polluting the abode by woman is more resulting from their menstruation cycle. If a female pays a

²⁰ see footnote 13.

²¹ *A. ra* is a kind of wine prepared by distilling fermented malt. It is a popular drink in all the villages of Bhutan.

²² The name of the text is also called *gser skyems dpe cha*.

visit to the abode of Radrap, the deity transforms himself in a wrathful form and punishes the people with unwanted rainfall and hailstorm. So, as in the case of temple of the deities (*mgon khang*), the abode of Radrap is barred to the female visitors.

Conclusion

Some refer him as father (*ap*) Radrap while for others he is their brother (*a jo*) Radrap. It is no surprise that the villagers of Bjena gewog before their meal chant:

The Triple Gem,
Radrap, brother of Shar
Accept this offering of clean food.²³

Even while going to bed people chant:

The Triple Gam,
Radrap, brother of Shar,
I take refuge in you.²⁴

For his subjects, Radrap is omnipresent and all-powerful. During archery and other games, many contestants seek the help, strength and the skill of the deity for victory. The blessing of Radrap is sought for safety even when making long journeys and while going to a new place. Today, when people purchase new vehicles they offer money (*syam dar*) and scarf to Radrap and in return they receive the blessing in the form of talismans and scarf. These are then tied inside the vehicle so that the chance of accidents is minimised. Rituals are conducted at regular intervals and prayer flags erected in honour of Radrap, the "father and brother of the Shar people." In return for their zealous faith in the deity, people believe that they will be rewarded with prosperity, success, good health and happiness. All in all, the faith of the people and the power of Radrap can be subsumed in three sentences:

"Go for trade; he is the merchant.
Reside in the village; he is the chieftain.
March to the battlefield; he is the general."²⁵

²³ dz:// blam dkon mchog gsum
a jo shar gyi Ra dgra
lto phud gtsang ma'i phud las bzhes//

²⁴ dz:// blam dkon mchog gsum
a jo shar gyi Ra dgra
skyabs dang mgon gzigs cig//

²⁵ dz:// tsong lu 'gyon tsong dpon
gyul lu sdo dn gyul dpon

For the people of Bjena and of Wangdue Phodrang, in general, Radrap is the almighty, the embodiment of their hope, prosperity and wellbeing as well as an object of awe.

Acknowledgement

I take this privilege to thank Madam Françoise Pommaret and Professor Samten G. Karmay for constantly guiding me in my research works. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Ch. Ramble for editing this work.


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MKHA' 'GRO DBANG MO'I RNAM THAR,
THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE GTER STON MA
BDE CHEN CHOS KYI DBANG MO (1868-1927?)¹

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 In 1998 sPrul sku bsTan pa'i Nyi ma published in Lhasa a version of the Bonpo *bKa' rten*. A catalogue of this collection has been edited by Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano in 2001.² Volume 149 contains a text, marked as 149-5 in the *Catalogue*,³ which has no initial title but carries the marginal title *mKha' 'gro dBang mo'i rNam thar*, written in *bsdus yig*,⁴ which consists of 382 pages (800-1182). This is the hagiography of bDe chen Chos kyī dBang mo, whose birth in Nyag rong shod (dKar mdzes district of present-day Sichuan Province) is placed by the sMan ri Abbot Nyi ma bsTan 'dzin (1813-1875) in the Earth-Dragon Year, *i.e.*, 1868.⁵

bDe chen Chos kyī dBang mo was a student of the famous Bon teacher Shar rdza bKra shis rGyal mtshan (1859-1934).⁶ When she was 51 years old (Earth-Horse Year/1918), near the hermitage of Nor bu phug, at dMu-rdo in rGyal mo rGya'i rong, she revealed a textual treasure (*dBang mo'i rnam*

¹ This contribution was presented at the Xth IATS Conference, Oxford, 2003. The study of the biography of this remarkable figure was undertaken within the general frame-work of a research programme commissioned by the University of Rome, focused upon the liturgy and practices of *gCod* in the Bon tradition. As we shall see, bDe chen Chos kyī dBang mo represents a modern protagonist of this type of teachings, in view of the *gCod* texts that she is said to have revealed and compiled. I wish to thank Dan Martin, who prompted me on the existence of this biography, Hanna Havnevik and Tsering Thar for their much appreciated help, as well as the 33rd Abbot of sMan ri Lung rtogs bsTan pa'i Nyi ma dPal bzang po, for his very kind advice.

² See *A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts*, Karmay and Nagano eds., 2001.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 975.

⁴ The word *mKha' 'gro* is mistakenly rendered as 'grogs' in the above-mentioned *Catalogue*.

⁵ The place of birth is given in the hagiography as lHang lhang Brag dkar Nor bu Yang rtse, *i.e.*, Brag dkar lHang lhang Nor bu Yang rtse, which refers to a sacred mountain where the *gter ston* Sangs rgyas Gling pa, who was connected to the monastery of rTse drug as an incarnation of Blo ldan sNying po (b. 1360), revealed many treasures (see *Survey*, Karmay and Nagano eds., 2003, pp. 181-189; for Blo ldan sNying po, a representative of the Bon Aural transmission, see references in Karmay, 1977). The veneration of the site falls every Dragon year (*Survey*, p. 424). I wonder whether there could possibly be a connection with the fact that bDe chen dBang mo was also born in such a year. A footprint of mKha' 'gro bDe chen dBang mo is said to exist near Lung dkar monastery in sBra chen rdzong in north-eastern Tibet (*ibid.*, p. 138).

⁶ However she also received many teachings from other non Bonpo masters, such as, for example, A 'dzom 'Brug pa 'Gro 'dul dPa' bo rDo rje (1842-1924), a famous *rdzogs chen* master and treasure revealer (see Namkhai 1986, p. 153), who bestowed upon her a long life empowerment when she was 26 (1893); see *dBang mo'i rnam thar*, p. 824, *passim*.

thar, p. 1089). This *gter ma* contains sixteen hagiographies of female saints, including those of Maṇḍarava and Ye shes mTsho rgyal, and seems to be one of the few Bonpo treasure texts revealed by a woman in recent times. bDe chen Chos kyi dBang mo's discovery is mentioned by Shar rdza bKra shis rGyal mtshan, in his *Legs bshad mdzod*, as the *mKha' 'gro bka' thang*.⁷ bDe chen Chos kyi dBang mo is also credited with the compilation of a liturgical text on the practice of *gCod*, entitled *Yum chen kye ma 'od mtsho'i zab gsang gcod kyi gdams pa las phran dang bcas pa'i gsung pod*.⁸

The structure of the biography is based upon different sections that contain, year by year, the principal activities carried out by this *mKha' 'gro ma*, the places visited, the teachers met, the spiritual practices accomplished, and most importantly, the dreams, the very many dreams of clarity that accompany her spiritual development, but that at some point of her life become even more crucial, inasmuch as they represent the key for the opening of textual treasures that are mind-generated, or of the indexes (*dkar chag*) of texts and the texts themselves, that are materially obtained and found in numerous places by the greatly active *gter ston* gSang sngags Gling pa (b. 1864), a list of whose discoveries is contained in the above-mentioned *Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen texts* (*Indices*, p. 301, and the *Catalogue* itself, p. 156, *passim*).

bDe chen dBang mo becomes gSang sngags Gling pa's spiritual friend and consort, and thanks to her visions/dreams, gTer chen, as he is always called in the text, successfully obtains many of his *gter ma*.

It is this team-work, this exalted spiritual cooperation gradually emphasized, that represents in my view one of the most emblematic features of this piece of literature.

There is a kind of *iter* that is repeated anytime a *gter ma* is to be discovered. When the *mKha' 'gro ma* finds herself in any given place for pilgrimage or practice purposes, she has a dream. She recounts it the next day to gTer chen and/or to other teachers who happen to be with her at that moment. Then she goes with gTer chen to the place that has been revealed as holding treasures, following his request for assistance, where mystic signs of all sorts appear to everyone. Offerings to the Three Jewels are performed, and during, or immediately after this stage, gTer chen receives the *dkar chag* of different *gter mas*, most of which are actually styled 'new' (*gter gsar*). Then the treasure place is sealed, with more offerings and invocations performed to invoke the benevolence of the Protectors. These revealing activities become more and more frequent during the course of her life, and towards the middle part of it, it becomes

⁷ See Karmay, 1972, p. 189, where she is mentioned as *mKha' 'gro bDe chen dBang gi sGron ma*. The text has been the object of a preliminary study by this writer, presented during the VIIIth IATS Seminar at Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.

⁸ Tshering Wangyal, TBMC, Dolanji, 1974. Her prayers to the sacred Bon ri mountain of Kong po are also extant; see Karmay 1977, p. 76.

really clear to the teachers involved the key role that bDe chen dBang mo plays in this respect, and as a result, teachers compose praising long life invocations in her honour, which are reproduced in the text.

bDe chen dBang mo's dreams begin at a young age, at 6 or 7 — when, starting to be more knowledgeable, she shows great inclination for virtue and a great shame for misbehavior — especially with the appearance of a mystical girlfriend, who takes her to beautiful places, where they gradually meet religious figures, and deities that are of primary importance for the Bonpo and the Buddhist tradition respectively. She indeed was a disciple of Shar rdza rTogs ldan, from whom she received full cycles of *rdzogs chen* teachings.⁹

These teachings, especially those of *Khregs chod* and *Thod brgal*, became her main practices, together with long life practices, and other teachings derived from the *gter mas* of her consort.

The fact that she also received essential instructions from non Bonpo masters is especially meaningful within the context of her spiritual awakening, because the indications provided by her dreams and visions gradually confirm that she is indeed an incarnation (*yang srid*) of Ye shes mTsho rgyal, and that it is through secret words and communications linked to this queen of the *Dharma* and the Buddha family of Padmasambhava, who also appears to her on numerous occasions, that she is able to retrieve her own *gter mas*, and provide gTer chen with the mystical keys to unfold his treasures. This is also confirmed by the way in which the teachers who write long life invocation prayers for her describe her connection and her status with respect to the tantric consort of Padmasambhava. There is no qualitative contradiction whatsoever in terms of Bon/Chos teachings, which in the *mKha' 'gro's* visions/dreams are primarily of a *rdzogs chen* nature, and thus challenge, *de facto*, any sense of sectarian limitation. These visions/dreams are so many — with a rate of about one if not two per page — that sometimes, when reading the text, it is hard to remember or distinguish the boundary between the different levels of reality, a boundary that seems to progressively fade, to become almost inconsistent and maybe unnecessary, when viewed from the direct

⁹ She met Shar rdza at his hermitage, called Shar rdza bDe chen Ri khrod, when she was 34, and received teachings such as *Tshe dbang Bod yul ma* (see *Bon Kanjur*, Martin, Kværne and Nagano eds., 2003, p. 323), *gCod, A khrid* (see Kværne and Rikhey, 1996), *Phur pa* (see *Bon Kanjur, op.cit.*, pp. 295-297), *rDzogs chen Yang rtse Klong chen* (Sherab Wangyal, TBMC, New Delhi, 1973), *Khro bo rGyud drug gSang ba bSen thub* (see *Bon Kanjur, op.cit.*, pp. 343-346), *Zhang zhung sNyan rgyud* (see *Bon Kanjur, op.cit.*, pp. 510-525), *Zhi khro* (see *Bon Kanjur, op.cit.*, pp. 659-678), *Ge khod rGyud chen* (see *Bon Kanjur, op.cit.*, pp. 384-398), and teachings on *rTsa lung (dBang mo'i rnam thar, p. 895)*. She also received teachings on *gCod* from lCang sprul Tshe dbang g.Yung drung. This *Bla ma* was the 26th in the lineage of lCang lung g.Yung drung mThong grol gling, a monastery situated in dPal yul county, dKar mdzes prefecture; see *Survey*, Karmay and Nagano eds., 2003, pp. 406-409.

perspective of the increasing profoundness of bDe chen dBang mo's spiritual accomplishments.

The biography is mostly narrated in the first person, and proceeds year by year, as noted above. We learn that she was born in mDo smad Nyag in the Earth Male Dragon Year (1868). She is immediately recognized for being of superior birth by some *Bla mas*. She shows loving kindness from a very young age, and expresses her compassion for simple and unfortunate people like beggars and disabled ones; she protects animals, and preserves the life of even the tiniest of insects, such as fleas. We also learn that for many years she severely suffered from an imbalance of phlegm (*bad kan*), and for that reason, she had many long life rituals performed for her, and consequently, also practiced those rituals herself.

Each section, comprising several years, is compiled by one of her disciples whose names are related. We read of the numerous pilgrimages undertaken together with gTer chen, even to Khyung lung dNgul mkhar of former Zhang zhung. Then there are several religious visits, in Central Tibet, to the main Bonpo and Buddhist sites, and in the mDo smad area, which later becomes the main location for the couple's *gter ma* activities. At first, it is only a matter for her of receiving teachings from different *Bla mas*, but when her spiritual status and role become consolidated, a shift occurs in the way those religious meetings unfold, and the travels are undertaken upon specific invitations that are issued to the now well-known gTer chen Yab Yum, who in turn dispense their teachings, and discover treasures under public amazement. What follows is an example of this process.

[1159] gTer chen Yab Yum are invited to go to Hor yul upon invitation of the monk bsTan 'dzin Phun tshogs. They slowly travel there, stopping at various monasteries and temples, offering ceremonial scarfs, performing rituals, consecrations and so on.

At a lake there, she obtains a *gter ma* statue of Klu grub Ye shes sNying po,¹⁰ as well as a text, directly from the Klu btsan mo guarding the treasures of that lake. Once they get to Hor, they are received *en route* by a procession on horse composed of high *Bla mas*, *sPrul skus*, officers, as well as Ga rgyal, the King of Hor himself; then they are escorted to the royal palace. On the way, bDe chen dBang gi sGron ma has a vision, whereby the history of, and the actual local deities are revealed to her. Then they go to the palace of the prince, and the Hor king sponsors a huge event, with dances etc., after gTer chen has bestowed the empowerment of two of his *gter mas*, the sTag la Me 'bar and Long-life/Prosperity ones, together with teachings of the A khrid sNgon 'gro. She is asked to give teachings too, and the way in which she refers to this fact appears as being altogether

¹⁰ An important gShen connected with the propagation of the tantric cycles of *sPyi spungs* teachings (for references see Rossi, 1999, *passim*).

very humble and inconsequential. Then the invitation from a nearby monastery arrives. During the night, she has a pure light vision of a woman whose words are like crystal beads, and who tells her that emanations will come uninterruptedly [1166]. The next day, when they get to the place called Klu phug, an old lady actually gives her a crystal rosary. She sees this as a very good sign. Everybody exhorts the couple to 'open the treasure door', which has been identified in the back of the mountain. They reach the place with all the others, perform ritual offerings and libations (*tshogs*), and from the cave gTer chen retrieves a long-life text, here called *tshé ril*, while she reveals a statue of the Bon deity gShen lha 'Od dkar. They see many signs and letters, and pure visions of profound spiritual connections arise. Then they seal the opening, do a great consecration of the place including maṇḍala offerings, and then go back to the royal palace. On an auspicious day, they expound the text, and gTer chen finalises the index of the contents of the *gter ma*, which is related in the biography [1167].

Progressively, we also learn about the way in which the political situation degenerates in Nyag rong, with incursions carried out by the Chinese army. The struggles intensify in 1911. Her old maternal uncle and younger brother, who both had a very prominent role in her life, have to move elsewhere; the subjects undergo extreme suffering, her father and other relatives are captured.

The visions and prophecies revealed to mKha' gro bDe chen dBang mo do not lack descriptions about the degenerate times that human beings are mostly contributing to worsen by way of their mean and irresponsible behaviour; of how difficult it will be to practise the sacred *Dharma*, and how little hope is there to evolve spiritually, even if the teaching is present, although the possibility does exist for those who have the strength to go against the current of egotism and mental delusiveness.

There is no colophon in the text. When bDe chen dBang mo reaches the age of 59 (in the Tiger Fire Year/1926), the text relates how she receives a prayer-invocation from gTer chen, which is reproduced, and which describes in loving terms their spiritual connection and his wishes for her long life [1180]. Then it describes another vision of her about the pure field of Ye shes mTsho rgyal, followed by a request from her retinue to open the door to another *gter ma*, which she does, and to write down the *dkar chag* of the *gter ma* [1181]. The biography ends with a dream about O rgyan Rinpoche, who appears to bDe chen dBang mo surrounded by Wisdom Holders, *mKha' 'gro mas* and Protectors, in an explosion of rainbows, wondrous signs and auspicious omens [1182].¹¹

¹¹ mKha' spyod dBang mo (?-1987), sister of sMon rgyal lHa sras, and daughter of Kun grol Hūm chen, the Sixth Kun grol Grags pa (b. 1700), was considered an incarnation of

The number of places visited by bDe chen dBang mo, and of the teachers mentioned in the text is quite impressive. Except for the few quoted here, identifying the exact location of monasteries as well as gathering information about all the teachers represents an interesting aspect of the study of this inedited source, requiring a detailed research that falls beyond the context of this contribution, but that needs to be addressed nonetheless. The text, in fact, broadly provides us with useful data in terms of the monasteries that existed, the teachers that were active, the teachings that were expounded, the patrons of Bon, the sponsoring of the publication of teachings, including the *gter mas* of gSang sngags Gling pa, but also the new compilation of the Bonpo *bKa' 'gyur*,¹² and also the gTer chen Yab Yum's visit to the sPa lineage monastery, and the meeting with sPa mchog g.Yung drung bsTan pa 'Brug grags (alias 'Brug sprul),¹³ as well as the religious gatherings in hermitages, and travels with the then 28th Abbot of sMan ri, mKhan chen Phun tshogs Blo gros.¹⁴

In conclusion, when considered from the perspective of the various Tibetan literary typologies,¹⁵ this *rnam thar* represents a good example in terms of a description of the spiritual progress of a specific saintly figure, which in itself should serve the purpose of inspiring, if not exhorting devotees to the practice of *Dharma*. It is also a valuable source for understanding, to a certain degree, religious life in relevant areas during the end of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries. Moreover, it could also be considered as a confirmation of how *gter mas* continue, still nowadays, to represent a significant element within the spiritual and cultural expressions of the Tibetan people.

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mKha' 'gro bDe chen dBang mo, and was herself a *gter ston ma*. For an account of one of her discoveries see Hanna, 1994; cf. Havnevik, 1989, p. 82, and *Survey*, pp. 437, 440.

¹² Which is mentioned as consisting of 158 volumes. This would have happened when she was 58 years old, that is to say, during the Ox Year/1925 (*dBang mo'i rnam thar*, p. 1163).

¹³ For whom see *Survey*, p. 133. For a study of Bonpo clans and family lineages see Lhagyal, *New Horizons*, 2000, pp. 429-508.

¹⁴ See *Survey*, p. 30. For a biography of the 33rd Abbot of sMan ri, see Bya 'phur Nam mkha' rGyal mtshan, 1994.

¹⁵ See Cabezon and Jackson eds., 1996, p. 30, Kvarne, and Gyatso, in Cabezon and Jackson eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 138-146, and pp. 147-169 respectively.

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A TENTATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF
THE *BYA RU CAN* KINGS OF ZHANG ZHUNG

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 dedicate this small study of a classic of the Bon po literature to mkhas dbang dKar rme'u bSam gtan rgyal mtshan with deep devotion for his work and example. Hardly anyone in the studies has been able to combine Tibetan depth of thought with Western critical analysis as he has done so consistently. His learning is such that he can wade with ease into the ocean of Tibet's most disparate subjects (Bon, imperial Tibet, the Dalai Lamas, Ge sar, the *rus mdzod* texts and many others) and disciplines (history, philosophy, ritual, anthropology etc.), and author path-opening contributions, providing immaculate translations and state-of-the-art assessments. A true *thams cad mkhyen pa!*

There is little secular history of Zhang zhung in the Bon po sources, while religious historiographical material focusing on the school's masters and their activities is much more profuse. The few secular accounts available are overwhelmed by a consistent concern for cultural geography which is doubly meaningful when it can be used to corroborate historical investigation.

One piece of Zhang zhung pa secular historiography, not without controversial religious implications and notions impinging on cultural geography, is the outline of the *bya ru can* kings. The mystery surrounding these rulers makes dealing with them a tantalizing endeavour, especially due to the wide-ranging implications engendered by the headgear they seemingly wore. It is also a baffling subject to tackle because it is difficult to place these kings in a historical context that stands up in absolute terms if limited to an analysis of events on the Tibetan plateau. Beyond acceptance that these kings existed, doubts, problems and limitations mar any study of them, particularly concerning their relative chronology, hierarchy and division of power, and order of succession.

The material on the *bya ru can* kings does not allow one to establish firm grounds for dealing with these aspects. The task I propose to undertake in this paper is to highlight some of the concepts and notions that these accounts convey, such as whether they present segments of genealogies, a single one or no genealogy at all. The exercise I propose here is thus more an attempt to detect in these lists a thread that links them logically than an exercise in absolute historical validity. For those who do not attribute much historical credibility to the Bon po sources, my attempt will be no more than conceptual acrobatics on one of the several topics in Tibetan culture of doubtful veracity. For those who see in the Bon po sources a root

for decoding the ancient past of the plateau before sPu rgyal Bod took over Tibet and dispelling the clouds of proto-history, it would provide some basic ideas on the power system in Zhang zhung and the rulers who exercised it at an approximate time in antiquity. I am non committal on the validity of the effort and leave the judgement on its reliability entirely to the reader.

Literary passages related to the bya ru can kings

The sources that contain a treatment of the *bya ru can* kings are few, most of them written by modern authors who have drawn on dKar ru Bru chen bsTan 'dzin rin chen's *Ti se'i dkar chag*,¹ an important but late text which deals with a vast array of topics both historical and geographical, apparently based on ancient material.² Much older than *Ti se'i dkar chag* is the *Dul ba gling grags*, one of the works associated with the members of the rMa clan. It refers only obliquely to the *bya ru can* kings, for it deals with the period during which they seemingly flourished. *Dul ba gling grags* has been attributed to the 12th century,³ an early date for the extant Tibetan literature but in any case far too late to have recorded historical events in Zhang zhung near the time of their occurrence.

The two classifications of the *bya ru can* kings are found in the second part of dKar ru Bru chen bsTan 'dzin rin chen's *Ti se'i dkar chag*, which is dedicated to history—the preceding part concerns sacred geography. A

¹ See bsTan 'dzin rnam dag, *sNga rabs Bod kyi byung ba brjod pa'i 'bel gtam lung gi snying po*; Nam mkha'i nor bu, *The Necklace of gZi: A Cultural History of Tibet and Zhang Bod lo rgyus Ti se'i 'od*. Among the non-Tibetan authors, Dan Martin has dedicated a section entitled "Birdhorns" to the *bya ru*, the headgear they are said to have worn, in his Ph.D. dissertation *The Emergence of Bon and the Tibetan Polemical Tradition*. I wish to thank him for his kindness in providing me with a copy.

² While the kings of Zhang zhung are not associated with the Garuda paraphernalia in the Buddhist literature, some of its earliest extant *chos 'byung* use the metaphor of a bird of prey for the sTag gzig rgyal po in the classification of the kings of the four quarters, chosen by appointment. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p. 98 lines 14-15) and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p. 226 line 6) read: "sTag gzig rgyal po bya khyur khra zhugs 'dra"; "The king of sTag gzig is like a hawk intruding into a flock of birds"; elsewhere *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p. 222 lines 18-19) says: "sPyod pa ni Bod la bya khyur ltar myul"; "The behaviour [of the king of sTag gzig] is to make reconnaissance in Bod like [a hawk] into a flock of birds"; finally *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 156 line 8) writes: "sTag gzig rgyal po bya khyur khra ltar rgyug"; "The king of sTag gzig speeds like a hawk into a flock of birds". My thanks go to Dan Martin for the reading proposed here.

³ In "Identification de la tradition appelée bsGrag-s-pa Bon-lugs" (n. 24) Blondeau cites the attribution of *Dul ba gling grags* which she proposed in *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des hautes Études* XCIII either to rMa Srid 'dzin (b.1092; see *ibid.* p. 52) or to his son rMa lCam me, which places this text sometime during the 12th century.

first classification (p. 574 line 1-p. 578 line 5) associates the *bya ru can* kings with alleged religious activity (numbers are mine):

“Dzam gling gi phyogs bcu kun tu bstan pa spel ba’i dus su yang/
sTag gzig gi yul nas drang srong Khri lde ’od po zhes bya ba bya rgod du
sprul de/ Zhang zhung gi yul Gangs Ti se shel gyi mchod rten lta bu’i
mgul/ gnas brtan rin chen pho brang du/ gnas brtan chen po ’od khri
spungs kyi drung du bab ste/ zhe sa dang bsnyung ’dri ba la sogs mdzad
do/ Gangs ri chen po’i g.yon phyogs A ti gsang ba g.yung drung phug tu
[note: A ti phug zer] dgra bcom sems dpa’i ’dus sde khri drug stong du
bstan pa spel lo/ de’i dus su yang zhabs nas ’deg pa’i rgyal po/ Gangs ri
chen po ’de’i mdun du Gar ljang g.Yu lo rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba [note:
rGyang grags zer] dang ru yang/ 1) Zhang zhung srid pa’i rgyal po Khri
wer La rje gser gyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du yang Khri lde ’od po’i slob ma/ drang srong Dang ba yid
ring zhes bya ba des/ Zhang zhung Pu mar hring (p. 575) gi yul du Mu le
mtsho yi gling du [note: La ngag mtsho zer]/ dgra bcom g.yung drung
sems dpa’i ’dus sde sum stong sum brgya ru bstan pa spel lo/ de’i dus su
yang zhabs nas ’deg pa’i rgyal po/ Pu mar hring yul du sTag chen rngam
pa’i yongs rdzogs mkhar zhes bya ba de rtsa/ 2) sPung rgyung gyer gyi
rgyal po ’od kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar yang du Dang ba yid ring gi slob ma drang srong Gung rum
gtsug phud ces bya ba des/ Zhang zhung Tsi na’i yul [note: Gro shod zer]
Bye ma g.yung drung tshal du/ dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa’i ’dus
sde chen po chig khri bdun stong du bstan pa spel lo/ de’i dus su’ang
zhabs nad ’deg pa’i rgyal po/ Zhang zhung Tsi na’i shod Dum pa tshal
gser gyi mkhar zhes bya ba de ru/ 3) Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang ’od
kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du yang Gung rum gtsug phud kyi slob ma/ drang srong rDzu
’phrul ye shes zhes bya ba des/ Zhang zhung sPos ri ngad ldan pa’i shar
phyogs/ La (p. 576) mor sdo yi khang bu’i gling du/ dgra bcom g.yung
drung sems dpa’i ’dus chen stong phrag du ma ru bstan pa spel lo/ de’i
dus su’ang zhabs nas ’deg pa’i rgyal po/ Zhang zhung Tsi na’i yul sPos ri
ngad ldan gyi rtsa ba/ grong khyer sTag sna gling [note: Bon ri sTag sna
rong zer] gyis dbus/ sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru/
4) sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du’ang rDzu ’phrul ye shes kyi slob ma/ drang srong Ye shes
tshul khrims zhes bya ba des/ Zhang zhung Kha yug gi yul bDud rtsi
sman gyi nags tshal du/ dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa’i ’dus sde
stong dang drug bcu’i bstan pa spel lo/ de’i su’ang zhabs nas ’deg pa’i
rgyal po/ Zhang zhung Kha yug gi yul Mu rdzong chen po khro chu’i
mkhar zhes bya ba de ru/ 5) Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po utpala ’od kyi bya
ru can nyid do//

de ltar du'ang Ye shes tshul khriims kyi slob ma/ drang srong g.Yung drung tshul khriims zhes bya ba des/ Zhang chung Khyung lung gi grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes yul gyi khab Khyung chen spung pa'i ri [note: mKhar gdong zer] la yang/ dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i (p. 577) 'dus sde grangs med du bstan pa spel lo/ de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'deg pa'i rgyal po/ grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes yul gyi dNgul mkhar dkar po khro chu'i rmengs rdo can de ru yang/ 6) Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du'ang g.Yung drung tshul khriims kyi slob ma/ drang srong gTsug phud rgyal ba zhes bya ba des/ Zhang chung Ru thog gi yul gSang brag g.yung drung gtis pa'i tshal du'ang/ dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde stong phrag du ma ru bstan pa spel lo/ de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'deg pa'i rgyal po/ Zhang chung Ru thog gNam rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru/ 7) Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po enda 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du yang gTsug phud rgyal ba'i slob ma/ drang srong Ye shes rgyal ba zhes bya ba/ Zhang chung sPos ri ngad ldan gyi rtsa ba grong khyer sTag sna gling gi khab/ mchod rten Ghan dha chen po'i drung du yang/ dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde khri drug stong du bstan pa spel lo/ de'i (p. 578) dus su'ang zhabs nas 'deg pa'i rgyal po/ Zhang chung Tsi na'i yul sPos ri ngad ldan gyi rtsa ba/ grong khyer sTag gling gi dbus/ sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru/ 8) sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can nyid do//

de ltar du Ye shes rgyal ba'i slob ma/ drang srong dPal gyi dbang phyug zhes bya ba des/ Bod kyi yul du 'Dul ba'i bstan pa rgya chen por spel ba'o zhes so//

de ltar Zhang chung gi yul du mi lo nyis stong lnga brgya ru/ 'phags pa'i sems dpa' rnam kyi sku tshe mtha' ru phyin zhing/ zhabs nas 'deg pa'i rgyal po rnam mnga' thang 'byor pa rgyas pa'i/ 'Dul ba'i bstan pa'ang phyogs bcu kun tu dar ro//".

"When the teachings spread in all the ten directions of 'Dzam gling, drang srong Khri lde 'od po from the land of sTag gzig transformed into a vulture/eagle and landed upon the piled throne of the great *gnas brtan*-s in the precious palace of the *gnas brtan*-s (sic) at the neck of the crystal *mchod rten*-like Gangs Ti se in the land of Zhang chung. He performed [deeds] such as paying homage and asking respectful questions. To the left of Gangs ri chen po at A ti gsang ba g.yung drung phug [note: known as A ti phug] he diffused the teachings at the 16,000 gathering places of the *dgra bcom sems dpa'*-s. At that time the king who supported him was Zhang chung srid pa'i rgyal po Khri wer La rje gser gyi bya ru can [residing] at Gar ljang g.Yu lo rdzong mkhar [note: known as rGyang grags] in front of Gangs ri chen po.

Likewise Khri lde 'od po's disciple, drang srong Dang ba yid ring, diffused the teachings at the 3,300 gathering places of the *dgra*

bcom sems dpa'-s at Mu le mtsho yi gling [note: known as La ngag mtsho] in the land of Zhang chung Pu mar hring (p. 575). At that time the king who supported him was sPung rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po 'od kyi bya ru can [residing] at the foot (sic) of sTag chen ngam pa'i yongs rdzogs mkhar in the land of Pu mar hring.

Likewise Dang ba yid ring's disciple, drang srong Gung rum gtsug phud, diffused the teachings at Bye ma g.yung drung tshal in the land of Zhang chung Tsi na [note: known as Gro shod] at the 17,000 great gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s*. At that time the king who supported him was Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru can [residing] at Dum pa tshal gser gyi mkhar of Zhang chung Tsi na'i shod.

Likewise Gung rum gtsug phud's disciple, drang srong rDzu 'phrul ye shes, diffused the teachings at the many thousand great gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s* at La (p. 576) mor sdo yi khang bu'i gling in the east of Zhang chung sPos ri ngad ldan pa. At that time the king who supported him was sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can [residing] at sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar in the centre of the town sTag sna gling [note: known as Bon ri sTag sna rong] at the foot of sPos ri ngad ldan in the land of Zhang chung Tsi na.

Likewise rDzu 'phrul ye shes's disciple, drang srong Ye shes tshul khirms, diffused the teachings at the 1,060 gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s* at bDud rtsi sman gyi nags tshal in the land of Zhang chung Kha yug. At that time the king who supported him was Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po utpala 'od kyi bya ru can [residing] at Mu rdzong chen po khro chu'i mkhar in the land of Zhang chung Kha yug.

Likewise Ye shes tshul khirms's disciple, drang srong g.Yung drung tshul khirms, diffused the teachings at innumerable gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s* at Khyung chen spung pa'i ri [note: known as mKhar gdong] at Zhang chung Khyung lung, the castle of the town cherished by the Victorious Ones (p. 577). At that time the king who supported him was Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can [residing] at dNgul mkhar dkar po khro chu'i rmengs rdo can ("with foundation stones in molten metal"), the town cherished by the Victorious Ones.

Likewise g.Yung drung tshul khirms's disciple, drang srong gTsong phud rgyal ba, diffused the teachings at the many thousands gathering places of *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s* at gSang brag g.yung drung gtis pa'i tshal in the land of Zhang chung Ru thog. At that time the king who supported him was Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po enda 'od kyi bya ru can [residing] at Zhang chung Ru thog gNam rdzong mkhar.

Likewise gTsong phud rgyal ba's disciple, drang srong Ye shes rgyal ba, diffused the teachings at 16,000 gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'-s* in front of mchod rten Ghan dha chen po of the castle in the town sTag sna gling at the foot of

Zhang chung sPos ri ngad ldan. At that (p. 578) time the king who supported him was sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can [residing] at sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar in the centre of the town sTag gling at the foot of sPos ri ngad ldan in the land of Zhang chung Tsi na.

Likewise Ye shes rgyal ba's disciple, drang srong ['Pham shi] dPal gyi dbang phyug, diffused the teachings of 'Dul ba in the land of Bod extensively.

Likewise in the land of Zhang chung for 2,500 human years, owing to the accomplished life of those 'phags pa sems dpa'-s, and the extensive power and prosperity of the kings who supported them, the teachings of 'Dul ba were diffused in all the ten directions".

The list of eight *bya ru can* kings is neatly organised conceptually; the *bla ma* and patron are mentioned side by side together with their religious and secular seats respectively. The secular side of the lists of *bya ru can* kings in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* goes hand in hand with a purported diffusion phase of 'Dul ba Bon in Zhang chung at a time fully historical in terms of the Buddhism of North-West India but extremely ancient in terms of Tibetan historiography.

In this section of *Ti se'i dkar chag* dedicated to the alleged diffusion of 'Dul ba in Zhang chung, brought there from sTag gzig there are eight *bya ru can* kings and seven territories (Gangs Ti se, Pu mar hring, Tsi na'i shod, Tsi na'i yul sPos ri ngad ldan, Kha yug, Khyung lung and Ru thog):

1. Gangs ri chen po: Khri wer La rje gser gyi bya ru can;
2. Pu mar hring: sPung rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po 'od kyi bya ru can;
3. Tsi na'i shod Dum pa tshal: Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru can;
4. Tsi na'i yul sPos ri ngad ldan: sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can;
5. Kha yug: Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po utpala 'od kyi bya ru can;
6. Khyung lung dNgul mkhar dkar po: Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can;
7. Ru thog: Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po enda 'od kyi bya ru can;
8. Tsi na'i yul sPos ri ngad ldan: sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can.

The castles from which the kings ruled are as follows:

1. Khri wer La rje ruled from Gar ljang g.Yu lo rdzong mkhar in front of Gangs Ti se;
2. sPung rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po ruled from sTag chen rnam pa'i yongs rdzogs mkhar in Pu mar hring;

3. Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po ruled from Dum pa tshal gser gyi mkhar in Tsi na'i shod;
4. sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po ruled from sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar at sPos ri ngad ldan;
5. Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po ruled from Mu rdzong chen po khro chu'i mkhar in Kha yug;
6. Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po ruled from dNgul mkhar dkar po khro chu'i rmengs rdo can in Khyung lung;
7. Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po ruled from gNam rdzong mkhar in Ru thog; and
8. sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem ruled from sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar at sPos ri ngad ldan.

A second list in dKar ru Bru chen bsTan 'dzin rin chen's *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 599 line 2-p. 601 line 4) classifies the *bya ru can* kings on the basis of the territory they ruled and reckons a larger amount of them (numbers are mine):

"Khyad par Zhang zhung khri lde bco brgyad gtsos pa'i yul chen bco brgyad la mnga' dbang che ba'i rgyal po / 1) srid pa gnam nas skos pa'i Zhang zhung srid pa'i rgyal po / Khri wer La rje gu lang gser gyi bya ru can dang / 2) Zhang zhung Zil gnon rgyal po rlabs chen khyung gi bya ru can dang / 3) Hri do gyer spungs rgyal po kang ka shel gyi bya ru can dang gsum ni / Gangs ri chen po'i mdun rGyang ri g.Yu lo ljong pa'i rdzong mkhar du chags so /

De ltar du'ang Khyung lung rgyal ba mnyes yul du / 4) Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can dang / 5) rGyung⁴ yar mu khod rgyal po gzha' tshon 'od kyi bya ru can dang / 6) Gyi le Gu ge'i rgyal po un chen dung gis bya ru can dang gsum mo /

Zhang zhung Pu mar hring gi yul (p. 600) 7) sPungs rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po bya ru 'od kyi bya ru can dang / 8) Nye lo wer ya rgyal po phra men 'od kyi bya ru can dang gnyis so /

Zhang zhung Tsi na'i yul du 9) sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po zom shang lcags kyi bya ru can dang / 10) Zo dmar this spungs rgyal po me dpung 'od kyi bya ru can dang gnyis so /

Zhang zhung Ta rog yul du 11) bDud 'dul dbal gyi rgyal po nyi shel lcags kyi bya ru can dang / 12) Li wer gyer gyi rgyal po zla shel 'od kyi bya ru can dang gnyis so /

⁴ Rather than *g.yung*, as in Nam mkha'i nor bu (*Zhang Bod lo rgyus Ti se'i 'od* p. 81 line 8), unless the original text at his disposal has a different spelling.

Zhang zhung sTa (so spelled) sgo'i yul du 13) Shel rgyung hri do rgyal po zo dmar 'od kyi bya ru can dang/ 14) Lig mur nam mkha' rgyal po baidur⁵ 'od kyi bya ru can dang gnyis so/

Zhang zhung Kha sgyor yul du 15) Mu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru can dang/

Zhang zhung Kha yug yul du 16) Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po utpala 'od kyi bya ru can dang/

Zhang zhung La dag (so spelled) yul du 17) Nye lo wer ya rgyal po gnam lcags dbal gyi bya ru can dang/

Zhang zhung Ru (p. 601) thog yul du 18) Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po enda 'od kyi bya ru can sogs/ Zhang zhung rgyal po bya ru can bco brgyad 'di rnams kyi ring la/ Zhang zhung khri sde bco brgyad la sogs yul chen bco brgyad kyi mgo bo non pa dang/ g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa phyogs bcur rgyas shing/ sku tshe yang mi lo gnyis stong du bzhugs pa dang/ phung po stag med du Sangs rgyas pa dang yod pa'o / /".

I translate here only the last lines of these passages since my classification of the list of the eighteen *bya ru can* kings (see immediately below) is *de facto* a translation:

“During their time, these eighteen Zhang zhung *rgyal po bya ru can* controlled the *yul chen bco brgyad* (the “eighteen great lands”) such as the Zhang zhung khri sde bco brgyad. The teachings of g.Yung drung Bon were diffused in the ten directions. They existed for 2,000 human years, did not leave their remains behind and were fully enlightened”.

In the list of these rulers there are eighteen *bya ru can* kings but only ten lands or perhaps nine because—see above—Gangs Ti se was part of Kha sgyor according to bsTan 'dzin rnam dag (g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i *byung khung nyung bsdu* p. 622 line 1):

1. Gangs ri chen po; three *bya ru can* kings:

Zhang zhung srid pa'i rgyal po Khri wer La rje gu lang gser gyi bya ru can;

Zhang zhung Zil gnon rgyal po rlabs chen khyung gi bya ru can;

Hri do gyer spungs rgyal po kang ka shel gyi bya ru can;

2. Khyung lung; three:

Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can;

rGyung yar mu khod rgyal po gzha' tshon 'od kyi bya ru can;

Gyi le Gu ge'i rgyal po un chen dung gis bya ru can;

3. Pu mar hring; two:

⁵ Nam mkha'i nor bu's reading *bhe bhus* (ibid. p. 81 line 15) does not correspond with the spelling in the edition I have used.

- sPungs rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po bya ru 'od kyi bya ru can; and
Nye lo wer ya rgyal po phra men 'od kyi bya ru can;
4. Tsi na; two:
sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po zom shang lcags kyi bya ru can; and
Zo dmar this spungs rgyal po me dpung 'od kyi bya ru can;
5. Ta rog yul; two:
bDud 'dul dbal gyi rgyal po nyi shel lcags kyi bya ru can; and
Li wer gyer gyi rgyal po zla shel 'od kyi bya ru can;
6. sTa (so spelled) sgo'i yul; two:
Shel rgyung hri do rgyal po zo dmar 'od kyi bya ru can; and
Lig mur nam mkha' rgyal po baidur 'od kyi bya ru can;
7. Kha sgyor; one:
Mu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru can;
8. Kha yug; one:
Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po utpala 'od kyi bya ru can;
9. La dag (so spelled) ; one:
Nye lo wer ya rgyal po gnam lcags dbal gyi bya ru can;
10. Ru thog; one:
Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po enda 'od kyi bya ru can.⁶

Five of the eight *bya ru can* kings associated with the alleged diffusion of *Dul ba* in Zhang zhung are mentioned in the list of eighteen. They are:

1. Khri wer La rje ruling from his castle in front of Gangs Ti se;
2. sPung rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po of Pu mar hring;
3. Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po of Kha yug;
4. Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po ruling from Khyung lung; and
5. Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po of Ru thog.

The lists of the *bya ru can* kings have several limitations that put their reliability in serious doubt. One of them is the late date of the source which records these enumerations, although all available literature is late in comparison with the period in which the *bya ru can* kings presumedly lived (see below).

Another is the suspicious grouping of these rulers into eighteen—a stereotype in Tibetan culture—according to one of the two available lists. In my view, one can dismiss the validity of this arrangement since dKar ru cites neither his authority nor the reason for grouping the *bya ru can* kings

⁶ According to Dan Martin ("Birdhorns" n.95), *mu mar* is the equivalent of Tibetan *gser btso* or *gser rgod* meaning "golden bomb". I do not see the relevance of this reading in the context of the king's dynastic title. I would render *btso* as "refined", and thus *gser btso* as "refined gold". But I prefer to read it as a reference to a division of the Mu tribe characterised by the colour gold/yellow (see below).

so, but this argumentation is not sufficient to rule out their historicity. Ascertaining historical validity must rest on more probing evidence.

A third doubt is over the disputable record of the alleged diffusion of 'Dul ba in Zhang zhung, sponsored by some of the *bya ru can* kings, events also mentioned in the much earlier 'Dul ba *gling grags*.

The bya ru crown

I deal with this issue only as it concerns the kings mentioned by dKar ru. In his *Emergence of Bon and the Tibetan Polemical Tradition*, Dan Martin contributes meaningful evidence that the *bya ru* was originally a religious emblem. He cites the various typologies of *bya ru*-s worn by g.Yung drung sems dpa'-s and Ye gshen-s in similar lists mentioned in *Khams brgyad 'bring po*—rediscovered by gShen chen Klu dga' in 1017—and *g.Yung drung las rnam par rgyud*—rediscovered by Khu tsha Zla 'od—which are remarkably close to the crowns of the kings in the list of eighteen (ibid. p. 118-137).⁷ These are the first signs of the adoption of the *bya ru* in the extant literature, and they link it with the status of a Bodhisattva. Here there is no trace of the association of the *bya ru* with a secular function.

The first text to establish a link, although indirect, with the royalty is *Grags pa gling grags* text 1 (p. 13 line 2-p. 14 line 1)—a *gter ma* rediscovered by mTha' bzhi Ye shes blo gros either in the late 12th or the first half of the 13th century, and thus another early Bon po source—which attributes the use of the *bya ru* to gShen rab mi bo himself (also see Dan Martin's "Birdhorns"). This early source says that gShen rab put on headgear made up of a crystal *mchod rten* flanked by a *bya ru* on each side, from which a drum and cymbals were hung. He transformed into a *khyung* and flew to the land of rGya gar Pha sha ka ru.⁸ There he imparted teachings to rGya gar Si ti gnya' na (Siddhijñāna according to Martin) and lha bdag ("divine lord", the king of Pha sha ka ru?) sNgags dro. The local king became his follower and the *ston pa* offered him the crystal *mchod rten* with horns which became his object of devotion. The king ordered his people to worship it.⁹

⁷ A text attributed to Jo bo rje and translated by rGya brTson seng (thus before 1039 when the latter died)—the earliest so far known Buddhist work dealing with the *bya ru*—should be added to them (see Martin, "Birdhorns"). Entitled *sKu dang gsung dang thugs rab tu gnas pa*, it mentions the *bya ru* as a component of the *mchod rten* finial.

⁸ D.Martin in his Ph.D. dissertation (ibid. n. 77) proposes, among other possibilities, to identify Pha sha ka ru with Puṣkarāvati.

⁹ As well known, *bya ru*-s or rather horns appear on the finial of Bon po *mchod rten*-s in the place of the solar and lunar disc finial of the Buddhists (see D. Martin, ibid. p. 118-137). Apart from the references given by Martin, one should see Me nyag rNam dag gtsug phud's *mChod rten gyi dpe ris blo gsar mgul rgyan*, a modern collection of Bon po *mchod rten* typologies, where horns are an invariable feature of the design.

Given the antiquity attributed to gShen rab mi bo by the Bon po sources, one could presume that this account locates the inception of the custom of wearing the *bya ru* first in North-West India, where gShen rab is said to have operated, and then elsewhere. However, it documents only the transfer of the significance of this headdress between two regions of the Indian subcontinent.

Its royal significance was subsequent to the spiritual one because it was recognised as a symbol of Bon in a kingly milieu owing to the promulgation by the ruler of Pha sha ka ru. The episode thus emphasises that the cult of the *bya ru* was the result of royal patronage. This conception portrays the *bya ru can* kings of Zhang chung in a guise not too dissimilar from the *chos rgyal*-s of sPu rgyal Bod (primarily the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnams gsum*), who combined in their persons the power sanctified by their protection of the religion with their secular power as absolute monarchs.

Grags pa gling grags contributes further important indications, this time on the transfer of the *bya ru* from a religious milieu, supported by the royalty, to a more distinctively secular significance. It mentions the insignia granted to Bon po proponents in antiquity by the kings they protected. The marks of honour given to Gyer zla med and the reasons behind this grant are significant to the present study.¹⁰ The text says that he was awarded insignia by Khri thobs nam brtsan. He received the *rgod gsum*: a turquoise *bya ru*, a vest of white female vulture/eagle feathers and a tiger skin collar (ibid p. 30 lines 3-6).

lHa Tho tho ri granted thrice signs of greatness (*che rtags*) to the Zhang chung Bon po Shel le mig dmar. He first gave him the skins of rat, lynx, and wolf; and, subsequently, the skins of tiger, leopard and a species of wild cat, known as *gung*, plus a tiger skin helmet. He finally awarded Shel le mig dmar the *khyung ru* and *dbal ru* (ibid. p. 32 lines 2-5; see below for Gangs Ti se Zil gnon rgyal po rlabs chen, who wore the *khyung gi bya ru*, and La dwags Nye lo wer ya rgyal po who wore the *gnam lcags dbal gyi bya ru*).

It should be noted that these *gshen*-s received their insignia not so much owing to their above mentioned attainments as Byang chub sems dpa', but following military conquests, for these accounts say that they were at the head of the armies which defeated foreign countries (lJang and minor kingdoms in rGya gar respectively).

Although these conquests at the expense of lJang and principalities of metropolitan India cannot be historically verified, the most pertinent notation to the subject of the *bya ru* is that, although Gyer zla med and Shel

¹⁰ The *bya ru* is not mentioned among the components of the outfit of the *gshen*-s during the time of the gNam gyi khri bdun (*Grags pa gling grags* text 1 p. 22 lines 4-5). They comprised a white turban pierced with eagle feathers, and skins of white lynx, white wolf and *stag gzig gung gsum* ("tiger, leopard and another kind of wild cat").

le mig dmar were religious masters, the activity for which they were granted these signs of distinction was exclusively secular. Even the term adopted to describe these insignia (*che rtags*) echoes closely the marks of distinction given to members of various clans by the sPu rgyal Bod *lha sras btsan po*-s (see, e.g., *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p. 112 lines 8-16). This is the closest the sources get to making of the *bya ru* a symbol of religion and secularism, with secular symbolism being preponderant in these cases.

On the issue of its meaning, one can conclude that there are literary indications of the *bya ru* as a secular implement long predating dKar ru's attribution of the crown to kings of Zhang zhung.

Morphologies

A passage formulated in a similar way in several Bon po sources—and best expressed in Shar rdza's *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod*—which relates in mythical terms the appearance of the Khyung po clan in Zhang zhung is useful for establishing that, in the traditional conception, the unusual “bird horns” are proper to male Garūda-s.¹¹

In order to explore the features of these headdresses with Garūda horns and speculate on how zoomorphic the various types of *bya ru* crowns worn by those kings of Zhang zhung actually were, I will go through the descriptions before dealing with the accounts of dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin

¹¹ *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod* (p. 148 line 17-p. 147 line 4) has an articulated account of the event: “Dam pa Khyung gi gdung rabs dngos ni / Kun tu bzang po'i sprul pa Rig snang 'od kyi rgyal po zhes bya bas / 'gro ba'i don la dgongs nas sku gsung thugs las sprul pa'i bya khyung gsum yas mar 'phur nas Zhang zhung gi yul Kha yug Me tog mdzes pa'i tshal la bab / de la Zhang zhung gi mi rnams ngo mtshar skyes nas mthong ma myong ba'i 'dab chags zer ba la rgan po kha cig na re / rwa co 'dug pas khyung pho yin 'dug zer / der khyung gsum dbyings su 'phur nas song ba'i shul tu bltas pas spar mo sa la reg pa'i drod rlangs las sgong nga (p. 147) dkar nag ser khra bzahir 'dril ba brdol ba'i nang nas mtshan dang ldan pa'i khye'u re re byung ba'i ming yang Khyung po zhes btags te / che ba Khyung dkar Thog la 'bar / de 'og Khyung ser lHa khyung / de 'og Khyung 'Phags khra mo / chung ba Khyung nag Mu Khyung rgyan zhes grags / /”; “As for the actual lineage of the noble Khyung po, three *khyung*, the body, speech and mind emanations of Rig snang 'od kyi rgyal po, the manifestation of Kun tu bzang po, flew down from space, for the sake of benefiting mankind. They landed at Zhang zhung Kha yug Me tog mdzes pa'i tshal (“grove”, i.e. “settlement”). The people of Zhang zhung were astonished. They said they had never seen birds like those. Indeed an elder remarked: “They have horns, so they must be male *khyung*-s (Khyung pho)”. On inspecting the place from where the three *khyung* birds flew away, on the spot the [birds] had touched with their claws, [they saw that] four eggs ripening from the vapour of the heat, (p. 147)—white, black, golden and multicoloured—were generated. Each of the handsome infants who appeared from them was named Khyung po. They were named [as follows]: the eldest, Khyung dkar Thog la 'bar; the next one, Khyung ser lHa khyung; the next one, Khyung 'Phags khra mo, and the youngest, Khyung nag Mu khyung rgyan”.

chen in full. The descriptions of the *bya ru-s* are more detailed in the list of eighteen than in that of eight which has just a few significant additions, so I will concentrate on the former and add the latter in cases of divergence.

- The three kings ruling from Gangs Ti se respectively wore a *bya ru* made of pure (*gu lang*) gold (*gu lang gser gyi bya ru*);¹² another with a Garūda depiction between its horns (*rlabs chen khyung gi bya ru*, a *bya ru* “with an imposing Garūda”) and a third one in crystal with a depiction of a heron (*kang ka shel gyi bya ru*).¹³

- Two of the kings ruling from Khyung lung respectively wore a radiant jewelled *bya ru* (*rin chen 'od kyi bya ru*), another one emitting a rainbow radiance (*gzha' tshon 'od kyi bya ru*), and the third a crown made of mother-of-pearl (*un chen dung gis bya ru*—*un chen* seemingly refers to a kind of mother-of-pearl—while the list of eight has rather the king of Khyung lung wearing a *rin chen 'od kyi bya ru*, which is more intelligible).

- Both kings ruling from Pu mar hring wore radiant *bya ru-s*, one made of coral (?)¹⁴ (*bya ru 'od kyi bya ru*), and the other made of gold and silver decorations on iron (*phra men 'od kyi bya ru*); (the list of eight has one ruler wearing a *rin chen 'od kyi bya ru*).

- The kings ruling from Tsi na wore radiant *bya ru-s*, one in the iron used to make the typically Bon po hollow cymbals (? , *zom shang lcags kyi bya ru*),¹⁵ and one radiant with flames (*me dpung 'od kyi bya ru*). This contrasts with the list of rulers associated with 'Dul ba which says that the rulers of sPos ri ngad ldan wore the same *bya ru*, the two ruling from sPos ri ngad ldan a *lcags kyi bya ru* and the one from Dum pa tshal in Tsi na'i shod a radiant *bya ru* made of turquoise (*ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru*; *ga ljang*: “turquoise” according to Nam mkha'i nor bu, *Zhang Bod lo rgyus Ti se'i 'od n.* 142 on p. 164).

- The two kings ruling from Da rog respectively wore an iron *bya ru* with solar disc and another radiant one with lunar disc, both in crystal (*nyi shel lcags kyi bya ru* and *zla shel 'od kyi bya ru*).

¹² *Gu lang* brings to mind the famous *Gu lang gser kha* in *g.Yas ru byang/eastern Byang thang*. There are references to the frequentation of this gold mine especially during *bstan pa phyi dar*. One proverbial episode describes a mature *gNyo*s lo tsa ba, a very young *Mar pa lo tsa ba* and others extracting gold from there in order to finance their journey to India in search of the Noble Religion (*Kha rag gNyo*s *kyi gdung rabs* (f. 2b line 2-3): “*gNyo*s, who was fifty-six, was the oldest. *rJe Mar pa*, who was seventeen, was the youngest. Twenty children of Tibet went to India. They stayed for many days at the place called *La stod Cung pa sa*. Then they went to *Gu lang gser kha* to search for gold”).

¹³ *Nam mkha'i nor bu* (ibid. n. 136 on p. 164) decodes *kang ka* as crystal, but such a reading is redundant because the crown is already said to have been made of crystal (*shel gyi bya ru*).

¹⁴ *Nam mkha'i nor bu* (*Zhang Bod lo rgyus Ti se'i 'od p.* 81 line 10) corrects *bya ru* into *byi ru*.

¹⁵ *Zom shang* is decoded by *Nam mkha'i nor bu* (ibid. n. 138 on p. 164) as “iron” in the language of Zhang chung. The presence of *zom shang* in the description of that crown would then be pleonastic, given that it was a *lcags kyi bya ru*.

- The two kings ruling from rTa sgo wore radiant *bya ru* made of *zo dmar* (what kind of red [*dmar*] material [*zo*] is it?) and *baidurya* respectively (*zo dmar 'od kyi bya ru* and *baidur 'od kyi bya ru*).
- The king ruling from Kha sgyor wore a radiant *bya ru* made of turquoise (*ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru*; see Nam mkha'i nor bu, *ibid.* n. 141 on p. 164).
- The king ruling from Kha yug wore a radiant *bya ru* with an *utpala* flower (*utpala 'od kyi bya ru*).
- The king ruling from La dwags wore a *bya ru* with a *dbal* (“pinnacle”?, “blade”?) in meteoric iron (*gnam lcags dbal gyi bya ru*).
- The king ruling from Ru thog wore a radiant *bya ru* made of *enda* (*enda 'od kyi bya ru*), a kind of precious stone (according to Nam mkha'i nor bu, *ibid.* n. 140 on p. 164). This is *indra* [*ni la*] in my view, hence his crown was made of emerald.

The headdresses all have *bya ru*-s upon them, but vary considerably in their material and implements. Indeed not a single *bya ru* worn by the rulers classified as eighteen is the same. The presence of horns in the headgear of the *bya ru can* kings is, in almost every case, its only zoomorphic feature. Only two *bya ru* are entirely zoomorphic. They are those defined as *rlabs chen khyung gi bya ru* and *kang ka shel gyi bya ru* (seemingly the full depictions of an imposing male Garūda and of the kind of migratory heron which is still found quite widely in the Himalaya, the Tibetan plateau and India despite ecological damage). They were worn in the list of eighteen by Zil gnon rgyal po and Hri do gyer spungs rgyal po respectively, who both ruled from Gar ljang g.Yu lo ljong pa'i rdzong mkhar in front of Gangs Ti se.

It was but natural that the allusion to the presence of Garūda horns on these crowns primarily attracted the attention of Tibetan savants of the past and present as well as western Tibetologists. I wish to stress here another feature of this headgear which is not secondary: the headdress of ten of the eighteen *bya ru can* kings radiated with light, a characteristic found in the crowns of Indo-Iranic rulers of the North-West.

Coins from North-West India

A first point of departure from the limitations in the understanding of dKar ru's accounts is to attempt an investigation of the crowns worn by the kings ruling in North-West India during different periods, given the contiguity with Zhang zhung. One should not exclusively look for zoomorphic crowns because the headgear had other features besides the

Garūda horns.¹⁶ A search into numismatics is compulsory to detect traces of royal representations of the ancient kings of the Indo-Iranic borderlands, and shows that various monarchs had zoomorphic crowns. They belonged to dynasties of the Indo-Iranic borderlands often quite far apart in terms of cultural background and period of flourish.

This exploration has intrinsic limitations—and thus is attempted only briefly here—because the *bya ru* originally was a symbol of spiritual attainment and its transfer to a lay milieu may not support an assimilation to the crowns of the Indo-Iranic rulers, which, despite having manifest religious implications, fully belong to the secular sphere.

Emphasis on zoomorphic crowns is detectable as early as the Indo-Greek kings of Bactria during the 2nd century b. CE,¹⁷ and since that time kings of the Indo-Iranic borderlands are depicted wearing crowns with animal ornamentations. No depictions of rulers with horned headgear are found among the coinage that has been unearthed during excavations with one possible exception which depicts an unidentified male personage and not necessarily a ruler.¹⁸

Winged crowns were much worn by Sassanid kings. They were sometimes full ornithomorphic depictions, the closest in conception to the insignia worn by the lords of Zhang zhung, but noticeably without horns (see, for instance, the coins of Hormisdas (Hormazd) II in F.D.J. Paruk, *Sāsānian Coins* p. 88-90, plate IX and table V). However it is far from

¹⁶ Stang, “Arabic Sources on Amdo and A Note on Gesar of gLing” (p. 16-17) mentions the two horned forerunners of Islam. Alexander the Great is called “two-horned” (“Dū I-qarnain”), reminiscent of the *bya ru* worn by kings of Zhang zhung. Those considered his descendants, the Indo-Greek kings, wore zoomorphic crowns.

¹⁷ Hellenistic coins depicting on the obverse the Indo-Greek king Demetrios (r. ca. 190 b. CE-171 b. CE) wearing an elephant scalp were struck at Balkh, Merv and other localities including North Afghanistan (Mitchiner, *Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage vol.1 The Indo-Greek and Their Early Antecedants*, Chapter Three: *The Expansion South of the Indu Kush* type 103). Some of them were overstruck by Phar, a lord seemingly of Iranian origin (ibid. type 122). The coins of another Indo-Greek ruler, Lysias (r. ca. 145 b. CE-135 b. CE), an associate of Eucratides south of the Indu Kush, are similar to those of Demetrios (ibid. vol. 2 *The Apogee of the Indo-Greeks*, Chapter Five: *The Apogee of the Indo-Greek Realm* type 259). Choresmian coins show an anonymous king wearing a crown with a lion head on the obverse (50 CE-500 CE; ibid. vol. 3 *Contemporary of the Indo-Greeks*, Chapter Nine: *Some Contemporary Coin Series Struck in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkestan* type 499). The coins of the Parthian ruler Phraates II (ca. 38 b. CE-2 b. CE) show on the obverse his diademed head with an eagle in the background (ibid. vol. 5 *Establishment of the Scythians in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Chapter Thirteen: *Parthian Coinage Struck in the Eastern Provinces* type 644).

¹⁸ Coins of the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles who reigned in present-day North Pakistan ca. 171 b. CE-160 b. CE show a standing male figure wearing long garments and boots, and holding a sword in the right hand and a hook in the left. The peculiarity of the image is its headdress which is apparently winged and has a pair of big, downward-turning horns (see Mitchiner, ibid. vol. 2 *The Apogee of the Indo-Greeks* Chapter 4: *The Greek Conquest of Pakistan and the Revolt of Eucradites* type 149).

proven that there was any common ground between the Sassanid crowns and the *bya ru*, owing to the difficulty in ascertaining the period during which the *bya ru can* kings ruled, if indeed they ever existed. My few historical observations at the end of this paper show that a tentative placement, if plausible, is beset by doubts and problems. They suggest that the Sassanians are too late to have influenced the court customs of the *bya ru can* kings.¹⁹

The winged headcrowns found in the dominions of the Western Turks during their control of areas such as Balkh and Gandhara are even later (those jointly struck by the Western Turk prince Vasudeva and the Sassanian viceroy Mandarshah, or else those of the Turkic Vajara Vakhu Devah and a later prince of Balkh; see Mitchiner, *Oriental Coins and Their Values Non Islamic States and Western Colonies AD 600-1979*, Medieval Northern and Central India p. 26).

Judging from the extant material, it would seem that the *bya ru* was peculiar to Zhang chung, but the available hoards of coins cannot possibly exhaust the numismatic universe of the Indo-Iranic borderlands and thus any assessment is per force inconclusive.²⁰

The other main feature typical of most of the *bya ru* crowns—that of being radiant with light—is shared by the crowns of several Indo-Iranic kings from the same broad period in which the kings of Zhang chung bearing horned crowns purportedly lived. The luminous feature of the helmets of the Indo-Iranic kings is represented by a filigree/relief dotted pattern around their crown. The radiant feature of the Zhang chung crowns finds parallels as early as the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians (see, for one, the coins of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares in Mitchiner, *Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage vol. 8: The Indo-Parthians and Their Kushan Neighbours*, Chapter Twenty-three: *The Rise of the Indo-Parthians* type 1070).

One can provisionally assume that the crowns of these monarchs in the Indo-Iranic borderlands were indeed zoomorphic and radiant like those of the *bya ru can* kings, but lacked the horns of the Zhang chung rulers.

The *rlabs chen khyung gi bya ru* and *kang ka shel gyi bya ru*—apparently a prerogative of kings residing at Gangs Ti se—are thus the nearest in conception to the zoomorphic scalp on the head of some Indo-Greek kings

¹⁹ In my *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p. 163 and p. 425) I mentioned the influence of the Sassanian court customs upon local traditions in an array of Asian countries including Tibet, but I did not say that the *bya ru* of the kings of Zhang chung were so derived. I indeed refer there to the persistence of these royal manners in later periods of Tibetan history. This applies to the late Sassanid rulers such as Peroz who still wore winged crowns (see Mitchiner, *Oriental Coins and Their Values Non Islamic States and Western Colonies AD 600-1979*, *Medieval Northern and Central India* p. 20-22).

²⁰ Dan Martin ("Birdhorns" p. 118-137) mentions paintings of personages with decorations resembling horns in the niches of Bamiyan.

(mainly elephant heads with trunk) or Choresmian rulers (lion-headed), as shown by their coinage.²¹

Other features of the *bya ru*, for instance the material of which they were made (metals, such as meteoric iron, simple iron, pure gold etc., and precious stones such as turquoise, crystal, coral [?], *baidurya* etc.), remain perforce elusive partly because of the linguistic difficulties of decoding the passages which describe them and partly because they are problematic to ascertain on coins.

Two or three same crown insignia of the sPos ri ngad ldan rulers (see below) are a sign that, in some areas of Zhang zhung, kings would have borne regalia specific to their dynastic line. This is somewhat confirmed by the above mentioned crowns of the *bya ru can* kings reigning from Gangs Ti se, which were fully zoomorphic, a feature not shared by the headgear of the other rulers of Zhang zhung.

Royal geography

dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* holds that the *bya ru can* kings shared the same kind of insignia, distinguishable by some variants, but ruled from different capitals in Zhang zhung.²² Seen from the viewpoint of the territories comprised in the dominions of the *bya ru can* kings, the two lists differ significantly.

The lands composing Zhang zhung according to the list of the eighteen *bya ru can* kings are the areas of Gangs Ti se and Khyung lung; Pu mar hring; Tsi na; Kha yug; Kha sgyor; the areas of Da rog/Ta rog mtsho and sTa sgo ; La dwags and Ru thog.

²¹ The transmission of Phur pa'i Bon (dPal ldan tshul khriims, *bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* p. 107 line 17-p. 108 line 8), originated in 'Og min, was imparted by gShen rab mi bo along a lineage which included, in the fifth generation after him, a master who wore Garuda attire (dBal Bon khyung slag can, lit. "dBal Bon wearing a Garuda skin")—possibly a dress made of feathers (ibid. p. 107 line 22). This lineage is conspicuous because some of its members had zoomorphic outfits (tiger and bird [*ti ti me sic for ti ti re/ri*, "partridge"?]). Judging from a calculation by *mi rabs*, if the lineages of the alleged 'Dul ba diffusion in Zhang zhung and Phur pa'i Bon are not mythical, the use of Garuda symbols, in this case as a sign of spiritual achievements, would have predated the reference to the first *bya ru can* king. The feather attire worn by dBal Bon is an early sign that, in the Bon po perspective, a spiritual value was attributed to anything pertaining to the Garuda and continued to be so for a remarkably long time after the Bon po literature ceased to document the use of the horned crown among the royalty. In perceptibly later times, Buddhists too made use of the *bya ru* as a symbol of attainment (see, for instance, the case of Ling gor Cha ru [sic for Bya ru], a disciple of Mi la ras pa; *Nyang ral chos 'byung* p. 493 line 4).

²² For a reconnaissance of sites in Zhang zhung, including those associated by dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen with the *bya ru can* kings, see Bellezza, "Territorial Characteristics of the Pre-Buddhist Zhang-zhung Paleocultural Entity", forthcoming. I am grateful to him for giving me a copy of his article.

The lands of Zhang zhung mentioned in the list of eight are the area of Gangs ri chen po; Pu mar hring; Tsi na'i yul (centred on sPos ri ngad ldan) and Tsi na'i shod; Kha yug, plus the area of Khyung lung, and Ru thog.

The discrepancies between the two lists of the *bya ru can* kings are that Tsi na'i shod (Dum pa tshal) is missing from the longer one, and Da rog/Ta rog, sTa sgo, Kha sgyor and La dwags are missing from the shorter one. But beyond these peculiarities that obviously descend from a comparison between the two lists, it is the meaning that the lands assume in the territorial layout of the kingdom that is significant.

If one looks at the alleged diffusion of Bon po 'Dul ba in Zhang zhung as gleaned from the reference to the territories in which it purportedly occurred, one realises that it would have been restricted to a limited area in comparison with the extent of lands ruled (concomitantly or subsequently) by the eighteen *bya ru can* kings. Religious diffusion, if ever it actually took place in the form described in 'Dul ba gling grags, is not a criterion with which to assess secular divisions of power. The two lists of *bya ru can* kings seemingly indicate that Zhang zhung had a different territorial extent in as much as the kingdom is larger in the classification into eighteen rulers. There are no clues as to whether the different extents of the kingdom are due to the fact that not all the kings in the list of eighteen, who are said to have ruled over additional areas of the region, were *chos rgyal* like those in the list of eight and thus were not included in the latter, or whether the kingdom actually underwent an expansion into neighbouring territories such as Nag tshang and other areas in central Byang thang on its eastern border and La dwags on the north-western border.

One cannot even say that the *bya ru can* kings formed a confederation, implying some form of balanced or unbalanced equal standing, or whether they obeyed a hierarchy in which Khyung lung and sPos ri ngad ldan, said to have been *grong khyer chen po*-s, were the major centres in the region. Even the term *grong khyer chen po* does not allow one to conclude that they were the centres of power—possibly the two capitals—as they may only have been major places of cultural aggregation. Castles must have exercised that function, and the localities defined *tshal*-s in the list of eight rulers must have been the major religious centres.²³

Going then by a simply territorial criterion based on the principles of centrality and contiguity, one could suggest that the regions enumerated in the list of eight rulers were considered as the core lands of the kingdom

²³ The monastic centres allegedly founded during that phase are called *tshal*, with the exception of Dum pa tshal (a secular centre). In its most basic meaning *tshal* stands for a vegetated locality (hence an oasis?), apt for survival, but here it is used in the sense of a grove where spiritual beauty makes natural beauty meaningful.

(Zhang chung khri sde).²⁴ The areas of Da rog/Ta rog—bordering on Tsi na to the north of the latter—and of sTa sgo, La dwags and marginally Ru thog, the latter rather more for political reasons than territorial, would have been more peripheral. The dual nature of Ru thog should be stressed because, although contiguous to the territorial core of Zhang chung and no more distant from Khyung lung or Gangs Ti se than, for instance, Tsi na'i shod Dum pa tshal, it was a separate (but related) centre of power at least during the last period of the Zhang chung kingdom (see Vitali, "Fragments of Zhang chung's secular history: the Lig myi hrya dynasty and its "destruction"", forthcoming).

According to dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag*, Khyung lung is not a single site but an area of limited extent, composed by the contiguous localities of rNgul/dNgul mkhar and Khyung chen spungs pa'i ri. The relative position of Khyung lung and Kha yug is often confused in the Bon po sources. Khyung lung, being on the border of Kha yug, is believed to be part of it in several cases, and in others outside it, but the former understanding is preponderant. dKar ru keeps the two areas separate, and thus he propounds for the latter solution.

The identification of Kha sgyor is more doubtful. bsTan 'dzin rnam dag suggests that Kha sgyor corresponded with the area of Gangs Ti se and the lakes.²⁵ I am unable to propose an assessment of my own and thus to adopt a constructive approach. It should be noted that the distinction in the list of eighteen between the *bya ru can* rulers who reigned from Gangs Ti se (one in the list of eight and three in the list of eighteen) and the one ruling from Kha sgyor does not rest on close contiguity, as in the case of Khyung lung and Kha yug, because the mountain and lakes would have fallen well within Kha sgyor according to bsTan 'dzin rnam dag. It is also possible that Gangs Ti se was kept separate owing to its prominence.

The note accompanying the reference to Pu mar hring which says that this territory was centred on La ngag mtsho helps to identify it with the western sector of Pu hrang stod. It is somewhat conspicuous that there is no trace of Pu hrang smad among the lands of Zhang chung associated with the *bya ru can* rulers despite the fact that its lower elevation makes it more fertile and wealthy, thus more hospitable. But the catalogues of lands of Zhang chung in *Ti se'i dkar chag* show that, with the exception of La dwags, the lands ruled by the *bya ru can* kings were located at an higher

²⁴ In the list of eighteen, dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen's *Ti se'i dkar chag* makes use of the Zhang chung khri sde bco bryad and yul chen bco bryad concept, which at least in the case of the list of the eighteen *bya ru can* kings is a stereotype, because they ruled, as said above, over ten territories at best. This is a recurring cliché in the *dkar chag*, for dKar ru applies the same number to 'Dzam gling itself, and mentions the 'Dzam gling gi yul chen bco bryad (ibid. p. 583 line 7).

²⁵ bsTan 'dzin rnam dag, g. *Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i byung khung nyung bsdus* (p. 622 line 1): "Zhang chung Kha skyor ni/ Gangs ri mtsho gsum gyi rgyud du yin tshod/"; "[I] guess that Zhang chung Kha skyor was the area of the Gangs ri mtsho gsum".

altitude on the plateau than in neighbouring lands giving way to the Himalayan range.

*Lands of Zhang zhung in the lists of
the bya ru can kings and sPyi spungs khro 'grel*

It is worth making a brief comparison with a Bon po territorial classification of the strongholds of Zhang zhung not associated with the *bya ru can* kings. Three of the four *dbus kyi mkhar* mentioned in the classifications in many Bon po sources—the late 14th century *sPyi spungs khro 'grel* by sKyabs ston Rin chen 'od zer being possibly the earliest, neatly compacted by bsTan 'dzin rnam dag in his *'Bel gtam snying po*—correspond with castles inhabited by *bya ru can* kings.²⁶ They are Gangs Ti se g.Yu lo mkhar, Khyung lung and sPos ri ngad ldan.

Gad kyi Byi ba mkhar, the additional castle in the *dbus kyi mkhar bzhi*, probably does not correspond with the *bya ru can* king's residence sTag chen rngam pa'i yongs rdzogs mkhar in the vicinity of La ngag mtsho, but they seem to have been in the same zone. It remains unclear whether the area of Gad—comprising Byi ba mkhar and gSer gyi bya skyibs—east of La ngag mtsho, is believed to have been part of Pu mar hring, Kha yug or the area of Gangs Ti se. A major discrepancy concerns the last of the four *dbus kyi mkhar*, sTag la mkhar situated in Pu hrang smad, a region to which no castle of any of these kings is attributed.

²⁶ bsTan 'dzin rnam dag, *g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i byung khungs nyung bsdu* (p. 620 lines 6-p. 621 line 6): "The four central (p. 621) castles were Khyung lung rngul mo mkhar on a peak in eastern Gu ge; Pu hreng sTag la mkhar in the centre of Pu hreng; Ma pang sPos mo mkhar to the east of [mtsho] Ma pang; and La shang g.yu lo mkhar to the north of Gangs ri [Ti se]. Some include Gad kyi Byi ba mkhar in the enumeration, which is on the border of the upper side of Gro shod. The six regional forts were Dwang ra Khyung chen rdzong in Byang [thang] smad; Ra bzhi Seng ge rdzong in Byang [thang] stod, corresponding with the land north of Ru thog; Mang yul sTag mo rdzong [note: sPyi rong, sic for sKyi rong] in lHo smad; Se rib 'Brug mo rdzong in lHo stod, [situated] in upper Glo Dol po; rBal te rTa mchog rdzong in the west; and Gyim rngul Glang chen rdzong in the east". In *sNga rabs Bod kyi byung ba brjod pa'i bel gtam snying po* (p. 28 line 17-p. 29 line 5) bsTan 'dzin rnam dag revises his previous assessments, possibly on the basis of sKyabs ston's *sPyi spungs Khro 'grel*, for he says: "There were four castles in the central region and four regional forts, which enjoyed great fame as royal residences of Zhang zhung. The four castles were Khyung lung dngul mkhar, sPu hring sTag la mkhar, sMe Shang Byi ba mkhar and Ma pang sPos mo (p. 29) mkhar plus Gad kyi Byi ba mkhar. As for the latter, on p. 59 of sKyabs ston's *Khro 'grel* it is said: "Among the five castles, Gad kyi byi ba mkhar has *g.yag* and *rkyang* skulls hanging from the ceilings. This is where all the *rig 'dzin-s* gathered". Many other castles are said to have existed, such as Kha yug 'Dam khar, Gu ge rTsa hring mkhar and Byang gi Ra bzhi mkhar. The four regional forts were Dwang ra Khyung chen rdzong, Se rib 'Brug mo rdzong, Ru thog Seng ge rdzong and Mang yul sTag mo rdzong. It is said that there many others, such as sBil ti Hrang rdzong".

Three of the four *phyogs kyi rdzong*-s mentioned by sKyabs ston do not correspond with the castles of the rulers in the more peripheral areas (Da rog/Ta rog, sTa sgo and La dwags). Ru thog is the only shared territory, but rNam rdzong mkhar, the castle attributed to the *bya ru can* king of the region, does not correspond with the fort of Ru thog included in the groups of *phyogs kyi rdzong*, namely Seng ge rdzong. Given the alleged antiquity of the eight *bya ru can* kings linked with alleged 'Dul ba activities (see below), one may have to opine that rNam rdzong mkhar should be seen as an earlier residence.

The extent of Zhang chung conveyed by the positions of the *phyogs kyi rdzong*-s of sKyabs ston's *sPyi spungs khro 'grel* and its imitators is considerably greater than the larger conception of territories of the kingdom in the two lists of *bya ru can* kings. The list of eighteen adds Ru thog, Byang thang and La dwags to the core of the kingdom. sKyabs ston includes the more distant territories of Mang yul, Se rib and sBal ti within the boundaries of Zhang chung in the east, south and west respectively.²⁷

Does the dissimilar demarcation of the kingdom in these Bon po sources refer to different historical phases? Or is it the outcome of different criteria, based on cultural diffusion rather than sovereignty/political control?

The increase in number of the Zhang chung regions in the list of eighteen kings vis-à-vis the list of eight in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* cannot be taken as evidence that the kingdom had undergone a territorial expansion. The notion that Da rog/Ta rog, sTa sgo, Kha sgyor and La dwags were territories annexed after the reigns of the first eight *bya ru can* kings should be dismissed. If bsTan 'dzin rnam dag's location of Kha sgyor is accepted, this would have been an integral area around Gangs Ti se and the lakes that linked Kha yug, Pu mar hring and Tsi na, territories in the core of the kingdom. So at least for Kha sgyor this hypothesis is untenable. Otherwise, collateral royal lineages would have been formed in areas contiguous to the major centres such as Gangs Ti se.

To sum up the geography of Zhang chung according to the lists of *bya ru can* kings:

- Gangs Ti se was possibly part of the region known as Kha sgyor;
- The small area of Khyung lung marked the border between Gu ge and Kha yug;
- Pu mar hring was the western sector of Pu hrang stod (west of Ma pang g.yu mtsho);

²⁷ With the distinction between areas in the centre and at the periphery in mind, it should be noted that the extent of the territories said to have been controlled by the various *bya ru can* kings were drastically different. Regions such as Tsi na, Ru thog or Nag tshang were vast in comparison with Kha yug, Kha sgyor or Pu ma hring, but the latter probably fell within the wider geographical notion of Zhang chung khri sde.

- Tsi na was Gro shod;
- Da rog/Ta rog yul (including the lake of the same name) was the area to the north of Tsi na, bordering on Nag tshang in the east, possibly Kha sgyor in the west and Tsi na in the south;
- sTa sgo'i yul was Nag tshang;
- Kha sgyor could have been the eastern part of Pu hrang stod, inclusive of Gangs ri mtsho gsum;
- Kha yug (inclusive of Preta puri) was the area with borders demarcated by Khyung lung in the west and La ngag mtsho in the east;
- La dag (so spelled) possibly corresponded with the present-day region of the same name;
- Ru thog was centred on the locality still known by the same name; it extended up to the La dwags border in the west, towards north-western Byang thang in the east (inclusive of the area of the gold mines) and towards the Onion Range in the north.

*The lists of the bya ru can kings: myth or history?
A classification of these rulers*

The alleged 'Dul ba Bon masters

Although *'Dul ba gling grags* has no trace of the *bya ru can kings*, this source deals with the various generations of masters said to have diffused *'Dul ba Bon* in Zhang zhung and, according to dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag*, to have received the support of the contemporary generations of these kings. Several names in this lineage differ between the two sources, but their temporal sequence is substantially the same:

<i>'Dul ba gling grags</i> (p. 121 line 3-p. 123 line 3 and p. 125 line 3):	<i>dKar ru's Ti se'i dkar chag</i> (p. 573 line 7- p. 578 line 5):
Mu cho ldem drug	Mu cho ldem drug
rTsug gshen rgyal ba	
Drang srong rgyal ba	
rTsug sras rMa lo	
Khri lde Gung grags	
dMu tsa tra he pe	
Khri lde 'od po	Khri lde 'od po
lHang lhang rtsug phud	
Thar pa yid rings	Dang ba yid ring
Thugs dkar ye shes	
Gu rum btsan po	Gu rum gtsug phud
'Od la gsal 'bar	
rDzu 'phrul ye shes	rDzu 'phrul ye shes
Ye shes tshul khrim	Ye shes tshul khrim

g.Yung drung tshul khrim Ga chu/ 'Pham shi/ Ya gong and lDe btsun Co Ye shes	g.Yung drung tshul khrim Ye shes rgyal ba [Pam shi] dPal gyi dbang phyug
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Bya ru can kings and alleged 'Dul ba Bon masters

A rough idea of the relative positioning of these Bon po masters and the *bya ru can* kings can be had from the teacher-disciple succession in the transmission of 'Dul ba Bon in 'Dul ba *gling grags*, and more cursorily in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag*, which has the merit of linking the two groups:

<i>bya ru can</i> kings	alleged 'Dul ba masters
1. Zhang chung srid pa'i rgyal po Khri wer La rje (interval corresponding with the preaching of lHang lhang gtsug phud)	Khri lde 'od po
2. sPung rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po (interval corresponding with the preaching of Thugs dkar ye shes)	Thar pa yid rings
3. Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po (interval corresponding with the preaching of 'Od la gsal 'bar)	Gu rum btsan po
4. sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem	rDzu 'phrul ye shes
5. Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po	Ye shes tshul khrim
6. Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po	g.Yung drung tshul khrim
7. Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po	gTsug phud tshul khrim
8. sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem	Ye shes rgyal ba

The first three in the list of eight *bya ru can* kings are said to have patronised each alternate generation of 'Dul ba masters. The second half of the list of these kings shows that sponsorship by the rulers purportedly became continuous.

Incidentally, the list of the 'Dul ba masters associated with the *bya ru can* kings is incomplete in *Ti se'i dkar chag* if one compares it with 'Dul ba *gling grags*. Several masters in the segment allegedly active in sTag gzig are entirely absent. dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen begins his list of 'Dul ba proponents with Khri lde 'od po, the disciple of Mu tsa tra he pe, because he is credited with bringing 'Dul ba from the Indo-Iranic borderlands to Zhang chung.

dPal ldan tshul khrim (*bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* p. 219 line 3-p. 221 line 10) defines the lineage of 'Dul ba Bon up to rDzu 'phrul ye shes as the *sTag gzig gi mkhan rgyud*. From his disciple Ye shes tshul khrim up to gTsug phud tshul khrim it is called the *Zhang chung gi mkhan rgyud*. The lineage of Zhang chung mNga' ris descended from his disciple Ye shes rgyal ba, and that of dBus gTsang from Ya gong.

The lineage of the *'Dul ba* masters of Zhang zhung in *'Dul ba gling grags* is only partially more complete. It omits the last proponent before monastic discipline purportedly suffered a setback in the kingdom.²⁸ Thus

²⁸ *'Dul ba gling grags* (p. 121 line 3-p. 122 line 3 and p. 125 line 3): "De'i mkhan po Mu chos khrims kyis sde bzung nas rang 'byung mchod rten bzhi'i rtsa bar khrims phog/ 'Dul ba rtsa bor bzung/ de'i mkhan po rTsug gshen rgyal ba/ ri khrod gcig pu la bzhugs/ de'i mkhan po Drang srong rgyal ba/ de'i mkhan po rTsug sras rMa lo/ de'i mkhan po Khri lde gung grags/ de gsum gi bka' zhung snyan bshad kyis sde bzung/ de'i mkhan po dMu tsa tra he pe/ brag rgon bka' thub kyis sde bzung/ de'i mkhan po drang srong Khri lde 'od po Mu cho'i stan pa bzung/ bshad snyan gyi sde bzung/ de'i mkhan po drang srong lHang lhang rtsug phud kyis/ 'Dul ba rgyud drug gi yig sna btab/ 'Dul ba rnam par 'byed pa'i sde mig tu mtshan btags/ khrims sde btsugs/ khrims 'chal ba kun gsos/ de'i mkhan po drang srong Thar pa yid rings/ mNgon pa sde bzhi la yig sna btab/ bshad nyan gyi sde btsugs/ mNgon pa dri med gsal (p. 122) ba'i lung zhes su grags/ de'i mkhan po drang srong Thugs dkar ye shes/ las khrigs byang bu bzhi bcu la phyag len mdzad/ Las khrigs gal ba rig pa'i sgron ma zhes su grags/ de'i mkhan pu drang srong Gu rum btsan pos gong ma'i rjes su bzung/ stan pa'i gnyer mdzad/ de'i mkhan pu 'Od la gsal 'bar/ dus chen gyi sde bzung/ de'i mkhan pu drang srong rDzu 'phrul ye shes kyis rdzu 'phrul stobs kyis sTag gzig gi yul 'Ol mo lung ring su byon/ rang 'byung shel gyi mchod rten nang nas/ ston pa'i gdung Sha ri ram la rGya gdan drangs/ gzi'i ga'u ru gsal nas/ dngul zhun ma la khyung mo byas na stan pa'i rten du bzhag/ de nas Ye shes tshul khrims kyis/ rDzu 'phrul ye shes la lung bzhi bslangs pa la/ lung dang po sde bzhi/ gnyis pa bskyangs thabs lnga/ gsum pa yon tan drug/ bzhi pa mNgon pa bla med skor/ de ltar blangs nas gnas dang sde ru phye/ de'i mkhan pu g.Yung drung tshul khrims/ Brag dkar rtse rdzong la g.Yung drung lha rtse'i gas mkhar bzhengs/ khrims sde la gnas par byas/ de la mkhan pu bzhi byung ba la/ Ga chu rTsug phud rgyal mtshan/ Ya gong Ye shes rgyal mtshan/ 'Pham shi Pal gyi dbang phyug/ lDe btsun Rab gsal dang bzhi byung/ de bzhi'i ring la sde bzhi chen po bzhengs/ Ga chu Byang 'Dam (p. 123) shong sNar mo ljongs su/ g.Yung drung khri 'dul gyi lha khang bzhengs/ Bra nag rTa brgo sum lag tu/ Khri 'dus gsang ba'i dgon pa bzhengs/ Bon gyi 'khor lo skor/ Ya gong lHa sa Yer pa'i rlungs su bDud 'dul g.yung drung khrims gnas kyis lha khang bzhengs/ bdud po Bir rdong tshar bcad/ 'Pham shi La stod Gram pa ru/ Khri 'dus 'od kyis lha khang bzhengs/ nyan bshad rka bzhi Bon gyi stan pa mdzad/ lDe btsun gyis Ra sar g.Yung drung rol pa'i lha khang bzhengs/ g.Yas ru g.Yon ru ru gnas phran bcu gnyis rtsigs//"; "His (i.e. gShen rabs's) disciple, Mu cho, ruled the monastic communities and imparted the law at the foot of a self-originated *mchod rten*. He mainly upkept *'Dul ba*. His disciple was rTsug gshen rgyal ba. He exclusively stayed at hermitages. His disciple was Drang srong rgyal ba. His disciple was rTsug sras rMa lo. His disciple was Khri lde gung grags. The latter three ruled the community practising austerities, [studying] the doctrine, teaching and listening. His disciple was dMu tsa tra he pe. He ruled the community practising austerities at a rock monastery. His disciple, drang srong Khri lde 'od po held the teachings of Mu cho. He ruled the community practising teaching and listening. His disciple drang srong lHang lhang rtsug phud composed the miscellaneous document on the six lineages of *'Dul ba*. The title *'Dul ba rnam par 'byed pa'i sde mig* was given to it. He established a monastic community. He restored the law that had degenerated. His disciple was drang srong Thar pa yid rings. He composed *mNgon pa sde bzhi* and founded a community of teaching and listening. The title *mNgon pa dri med gsal* (p. 122) *ba'i lung* was given to it. His disciple was drang srong Thugs dkar ye shes. He composed [a text] on the practice of the monastic observations (*las khrigs*) [written] on forty wooden tablets. The title *Las khrigs gal ba rig pa'i sgron ma* was given to it. His disciple, drang srong Gu rum btsan po, followed in the footsteps of his predecessors. He was a keeper of the teachings. His

one learns about Ye shes rgyal ba only from dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen's *Ti se'i dkar chag*.

The differences between the two texts indicate either that their authors did not draw information from the same tradition, or that dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen only deals with the alleged Bon po masters who were sponsored by the *bya ru can* kings while *'Dul ba gling grags* records a more complete list, including masters not known for their interaction with those local kings, and the foundation of monastic centres.

The bya ru can kings of Gangs Ti se

Khri wer La rje gser gyi bya ru can, the earliest ruler bearing the horned crown in the list of eight, which is conceived in temporal sequence, is given the appellative of Zhang chung *srid pa'i rgyal po* ("lord of existence" or "lord of creation" of Zhang chung). To my knowledge, no other *bya ru can* king is attributed the same title.²⁹ Is this a sign that, in the case of the *bya ru can* kings, Zhang chung *srid pa'i rgyal po* identifies the first ruler of the group?

He is described as a contemporary of Khri lde 'od po, credited in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 574 lines 1-7) with bringing *'Dul ba* from sTag gzig

disciple 'Od la gsal 'bar ruled the community of the holy celebrations. His disciple drang srong rDzu 'phrul ye shes, owing to the power of his miracles, went to sTag gzig 'Ol mo lung ring. From inside a self-originated *mchod rten* he extracted the relics of the *ston pa*, the Sha ri ram [from] rGya. Having displayed them in a *ga'u* made of *gzi*, he made a female *khyung* with melted silver to consolidate the teachings. Then, as for the the four instructions of rDzu 'phrul ye shes received by Ye shes tshul khirms, the first instruction was the four communities, the second the five methods of preserving [the monastic community], the third was the six qualities, and the fourth the cycle of the supreme *mNgon pa*. Having received them likewise, he opened [the door of] holy places and monastic communities. His disciple g.Yung drung tshul khirms built g.Yung drung lha rtse'i gsa mkhar at Brag dkar rtse rdzong. He firmly preserved the monastic communities. As for his four disciples, they were Ga chu rTsug phud rgyal mtshan, Ya gong Ye shes rgyal mtshan, 'Pham shi Pal gyi dbang phyug and lDe btsun Rab gsal, altogether four. During their time the four great communities were established. Ga chu built g.Yung drung khri 'dul gyi lha khang at Byang 'Dam (p. 123) shong sNar mo ljongs. He built Khri 'dus gsang ba'i dgon pa at Bra nag rTa brgo (so spelled) sum lag. He turned the wheel of Bon. Ya gong built bDud 'dul g.yung drung khirms gnas kyi lha khang at lHa sa Yer pa'i rlungs. He eradicated the demon with a fly head. 'Pham shi built Khri 'dus 'od kyi lha khang at La stod Gram pa. He promoted the instructions of Bon on teaching and listening, and the four austerities. lDe btsun built g.Yung drung rol pa'i lha khang at Ra sa. He built the twelve minor holy places in g.Yas ru and g.Yon ru". *Ibid.* (p. 125 line 3): "lDe btsun gyi mkhan pu Co Ye shes //"; "lDe btsun's disciple was Co Ye shes".

²⁹ Dagkar Namgyal Nyima, "Concise Analysis of Zhang chung Terms in the Documents of Tun-huang" (p. 430-431) says that many kings of Zhang chung are attributed the title of *srid pa'i rgyal po*. This frequency may be found especially in the case of the kings of the rMu/dMu dynasty, but does not apply, as I say in the text, to the *bya ru can* rulers.

to Zhang zhung. His castle, Gar ljang g.Yu lo mkhar rdzong, in front of the southern face of Gangs Ti se, is associated with the locality where, in the first quarter of the 13th century, the 'Bri gung pa monastery of rGyang grags was founded by rdor 'dzin Ghu ya sgang pa.³⁰

One passage of *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 554 line 7-p. 555 line 5) is useful to establish that the lineage of Khri wer La rje is considered by this source as the main one in the kingdom. It says that gshen chen po lDe bo gsung chen, an emanation of gShen rab mi bo, went to Gangs Ti se—defined as the Zhang zhung *yul gyi dbus dkyil*, the “centre of the land of Zhang zhung”—sPos ri ngad ldan and mtsho Mu le rgyud. He gave instructions to srid pa'i rgyal po Khri wer La rje gung (so spelled) lang gser gyi bya ru can and others. A temple, namely gsas khang Nor bu spungs rtse was built at this centre (i.e. the royal capital Gar ljang g.Yu lo mkhar rdzong). The temple, too, is thus placed in front of Gangs Ti se which, the same sentence says, was also the centre of lHo 'Dzam bu gling.

This would imply that the capital of Zhang zhung is situated by the *bya ru can* accounts at Gangs Ti se, and only subsequently at Khyung lung, and that the three *bya ru can* rulers who, according to *Ti se'i dkar chag*, reigned from their castle in front of the mountain could have been the supreme lords of the kingdom. But it is not known whether, according to dKar ru, they were contemporary with other kings wearing the *bya ru*, and thus no clue is given to ascertain whether others were subordinate to them. Indeed only one ruler with his seat at Gangs Ti se (Khri wer La rje) is included in the lineage of eight *bya ru can* kings who were active in some sort of (broken?) sequence, and the way they are classified may imply that the other seven *bya ru can* kings after him also enjoyed some type of sovereignty.

However, it seems doubtful that the seat of the main Zhang zhung *bya ru can* kings (Gangs Ti se, sPos ri ngad ldan, La ngag, Khyung lung, Kha yug, Dum pa tshal and Ru thog) was moved so often and its control changed hands so frequently in the course of a limited number of generations. These royal seats are likely to be mentioned in dKar ru's compilation of eight because of the alleged establishment of monastic centres in each of these areas, and, going by dKar ru's idea, it is probable that the hierarchy remained unchanged.

³⁰ dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 565 lines 2-5) has Khri wer La rje interact with gShen rab mi bo. This is in contradiction with the indications provided by the *dkar chag* itself that the same king was ruling when Khri lde 'od po brought 'Dul ba to Zhang zhung. Another reference to Khri wer La rje in *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 524 line 3-p. 525 line 5) is in relation with *gter ma*-s hidden by the *srid pa'i rgyal po* wearing the *gu lang gser gyi bya ru* with the collaboration of the Bon po Hri rtsa mu wer dkar po, and bound to be rediscovered by Dran pa nam mkha'. The *gu lang gser gyi bya ru* is the crown attributed exclusively to Khri wer La rje in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag*.

It is more difficult to formulate suggestions concerning the seats of power of those *bya ru can* kings who are not linked with alleged 'Dul ba activities because dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen gives no explanation for grouping them together. Hypotheses as to why there is more than one king associated with the same locality in the list (Ti se, Khyung lung, sPos ri ngad ldan, Pu mar hring, Da rog/Ta rog and sTa sgo) would be gratuitous.

The bya ru can kings of Tsi na

The two courts in the land of Tsi na (one in Tsi na proper, the other in Tsi na'i shod) appearing in the list of eight, with their own rulers and individual secular and religious centres, apparently show that power in this land was divided into two halves comprising the territory later known as Gro shod, as dKar ru says in a note.

He says that the earliest of those rulers was Gu wer nor gyi rgyal po who reigned from the castle of gSer mkhar at Dum pa tshal in Tsi na'i shod, manifestly the secular seat in the area. He is credited with the patronage of the activity of Gung rum gtsug phud, the disciple of Dang ba yid ring (better spelled Thar pa yid rings by 'Dul ba gling grags), at Bye ma g.yung drung tshal. This shows that the border of the two areas of Tsi na is drawn not far from Bye ma g.yung drung, the sources of the rTa mchog kha babs.

Four different rulers of Tsi na sPos ri ngad ldan are recorded in the two lists in *Ti se'i dkar chag*. The two kings in the list of eight and one in the list of eighteen bore the title of sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po but wore different kinds of iron *bya ru*; the fourth ruler, Zo dmar this spungs rgyal po, wore an individual crown (a *me dpung 'od kyi bya ru*).

The earlier of the two, sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem of the list of eight, seemingly dwelled at the castle sTag sna dBal gyi ljong mkhar in the town (*grong khyer*) of sTag sna gling, at the foot of sPos ri ngad ldan. Apart from Khyung lung, sTag sna gling is the only site qualified as a *grong khyer* (see above), which indicates that dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen reckons these two localities the main ones in Zhang zhung khri sde.

The religious centre allegedly established by Gung rum gtsug phud's disciple rDzu 'phrul ye shes, and patronised by the *bya ru can* king sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem, is placed at La mor sdo yi khang bu'i gling, to the east of sPos ri ngad ldan. It is thus assigned to the side of the Gangs Ti se mountain range facing Byang thang, with sPos ri ngad ldan itself, part of the same range, being the westernmost edge of this geographical divide.

Four generations after the first sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem, the last *bya ru can* king mentioned in the list of eight, who bore the same dynastic title as his predecessor, is said to have reigned from the same

castle—sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong mkhar—in the town (*grong khyer*) sTag sna gling, at the foot of sPos ri ngad ldan. The same account adds that a focal point of sTag sna gling was the Ghan dha *mchod rten* near which Ye shes rgyal ba, the disciple of gTsong phud rgyal ba, established a monastic community with the sponsorship of the king. He seemingly was responsible for the building of the *mchod rten*, the name of which may indicate its typology as a large bell.

There is at least a fifth king of Tsi na found in the sources, another sTag sna rgyal po Khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru [can] of sPos ri ngad ldan, who does not appear in either of dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen's lists. He is mentioned by dPal ldan tshul khri (bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan p. 96 lines 20-22) in the transmission of Ge khod and mGon po, which this *bya ru can* king received from Mu wer btsan po. He wore the iron *bya ru* used by other kings from this locality, which could be taken as the prerogative of these rulers, given the similarity of their headgear.

The bya ru can kings of Pu mar hring

The name of the sTag chen rngam pa yongs rdzogs mkhar castle of the Pu mar hring ruler sPung rgyung rgyer gyi rgyal po who purportedly sponsored Thar pa yid rings has significant implications. Its description as *rngam pa* ("sinister", "horrifying") seemingly depends on the fact that it was situated on the shores of Mu le mtsho'i gling, also known as La ngag mtsho, in the list of eight. The account of the *bya ru can* kings holds the well known view that La ngag was the lake of evil forces vis-à-vis Ma pang g.yu mtsho, the lake of good forces.³¹

The bya ru can kings of Kha yug

I have tried to show the location of Zhang zhung Kha yug, the land associated by dKar ru with Sad hri gyer gyi rgyal po, who ruled from Mu rdzong chen po khro chu'i mkhar, elsewhere ("Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history: the Lig myi hrya dynasty and its "destruction"", forthcoming). Kha yug included Preta puri and the sources of the Glang chen kha babs up to the western shores of La ngag mtsho. In the other

³¹ One should remark that the negative value assigned to La ngag mtsho could be a relatively new concept from the Indian tradition. Staal ("The Lake of the Yakṣa Chief" p. 283) says that the inauspiciousness of La ngag mtsho is absent in the epic and Purāṇic literatures and attributes it to late Hindu sentiments. This would have happened as late as the 17th century with the Hinduisation of Jumla (ibid. n. 26). If so, it would mean that a late notion was incorporated by dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen into an ancient historical layer.

direction, its western limit, bordering on Gu ge, extended to the vicinity of Khyung lung. Ye shes tshul khrim, the disciple of rDzu 'phrul ye shes, allegedly established a monastic community in this area of Zhang chung with the sponsorship of the same king.

The name of the royal castle of Kha yug is meaningful in more ways than one. The association with the Mu (or rMu/dMu), the ancestral ethnos of Zhang chung of Indo-Iranic origin, is not immediate in my view because *mu* also means “sky” in the local language. Hence Mu rdzong chen po khro chu'i mkhar could mean either “molten-metal castle, great fort of the sky” or “molten-metal castle, great fort of the Mu”. It should be noted that following the migration of a group of them to Zhang chung, the Khyung po had their stronghold in Kha yug (see n. 10), and one wonders whether the definition Mu rdzong betrays an ethnic overlap. The fact that the castle is said to have been of molten metal refers—I think—to the outstanding feature of Preta puri, i.e. its sulphurous hot spring.

*The bya ru can kings of Khyung lung
and the local seats of secular and religious power*

dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen has it that Khyung lung was the sphere of activity of both the *bya ru can* ruler Slas kra Gu ge'i rgyal po and g.Yung drung tshul khrim, the disciple of Ye shes tshul khrim, whom the king patronised. The king is said to have ruled from his castle dNgul mkhar dkar po (i.e. Khyung lung dngul mkhar) khro chu'i rmengs rdo can, and the purported 'Dul ba master was at Khyung chen spungs pa'i ri. dKar ru remarkably adds that the latter was also called mKhar gdong. These statements show that he regarded Khyung lung dngul mkhar as distinct from mKhar gdong.

Ti se'i dkar chag states that mKhar gdong was the spiritual seat of the area and a main centre of human aggregation (*grong khyer chen po*). The location of this place, famous for a stone statue of Dran pa nam mkha', is high up on a barren hill in the eastern part of the Khyung lung area, and overlooks dPal rgyas, a temple which was part of Srong btsan sgam po's *srin mo* scheme.³² The secular seat was a short distance to the west, where the (later) ruins of Khyung lung dngul mkhar, the residence of the Khyung

³² Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi me tog gi phreng ba* (p. 18 lines 17-18): “[Srong btsan sgam po] built both Pra dum and dPal rgyas kyi lha khang to prevent the floods of mtsho Ma 'phang (so spelled) [note: if it overflows, it will swell the sKyin thang river]”. It should be noted that Srong btsan sgam po chose the sacred area of Khyung lung—indeed the foot of the hill on which its ancient religious centre stood—to build dPal rgyas, but it is equally conspicuous that Ne'u pandi ta includes in the same classification a temple which he says was built at Khyung lung itself. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p. 244 lines 17-18), *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (respectively p. 117 line 2 and p. 286 lines 18-19) have a temple in Khyung lung but not dPal rgyas.

lung *bya ru can* rulers and later the Lig myi rhya dynasty—thus the centre of royal power—stand amidst an extensive cave colony on both sides of the Glang chen kha babs.

These statements disprove the view popular among some modern Bon po savants and inherited by some western Tibetologists that mKhar gdong is the spot where Khyung lung dngul mkhar, the archetypal capital of the kingdom, was situated.

Another factor in favour of reading dKar ru's placement of Khyung lung dngul mkhar in this locality is the association of dNgul mkhar dkar po with *khro chu* ("molten metal", "molten/boiling substance"), in the same way as the description of the site in Kha yug identifies Preta puri. This geological feature does not exist at mKhar gdong. In its entirety, the description of Khyung lung dngul mkhar conveys the sense that the castle's foundation stones were rooted (*rmengs* [i.e. *rmang*] *rdo can*) in a boiling sulphurous spring (*khro chu*), and indeed there is another boiling sulphurous spring in the area adjoining the grassy flatland which leads to the Khyung lung village.³³

A passage in *Ti se'i dkar chag* concerning the well-known division of Zhang zhung into successive, tripartite sets of regions (*phug*, *bar* and *sgo*, "inner, intermediate and outer [regions]") usefully reiterates dKar ru's view on the subject. When discussing the *dbus sgo* ("the central outer [region]") of Zhang zhung and its *phug* ("inner") sub-division in particular, dKar ru keeps Khyung lung dngul mkhar and Khyung chen spungs pa'i ri as two separate localities.³⁴

A collation of the two theories (pro and con mKhar gdong as the site of Khyung lung dngul mkhar) shows that the understanding of the Khyung

³³ dKar ru seems inclined to locate the silver castle to the southern side of the Khyung lung cave complex on the left bank of the Glang chen kha babs. My own inspections, although lacking any scientific criterion, at least convinced me that the morphology of this area, where there are equally massive remains of troglodite inhabitations, could have allowed the construction of a castle. Its traces could have been obliterated. One should consider that devastation was visited upon Khyung lung dngul mkhar not only by sPu rgyal Bod, which seems to have diligently cleansed the traces of Zhang zhung (and most likely of its capital in particular), but also that sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon contributed a further imposition of non-indigenous power there centuries later. Ruins of ramparts at mKhar gdong might apparently be a sign of the existence of a castle. The hill of mKhar gdong on the right bank of the Glang chen kha babs and a twin one on the left occlude on both banks the bed of the river which flows on flatland. It is not a gorge, for it is more spacious, but a strategic point where natural defenses can be improved with ramparts. This is a better place to fortify the access to the Khyung lung area than farther downstream towards the Khyung lung village, and ramparts were seemingly meant to control entrance to it rather than to defend the residence of the Zhang zhung king.

³⁴ dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen, *Ti se'i dkar chag* (p. 598 line 6): "De ltar du'ang dbus sgo ni/ phug Khyug chen spungs pa'i ri dang Khyung lung dngul mkhar/ /"; "Likewise, as for the *dbus sgo*, its *phug* is [composed by] Khyung chen spungs pa'i ri and Khyung lung dngul mkhar".

lung area in antiquity underwent a remarkable change in late times. The assessment of the lost sites of Khyung lung, presumably based on ancient documents, completed by dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen in wood dragon 1844 (see p. 656 line 2 in its colophon), was drastically reformed.

dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen was a forerunner of the movement for revival of the ancient glory of Zhang chung in the Bon po tradition of his day. His painstaking effort to study the ancient geography, history and culture of the area of Gangs Ti se—the heart of the ancient kingdom—and the crude anti-Buddhist polemical outbursts in *Ti se'i dkar chag* betray his line of thinking. This revaluation of Zhang chung continues unabated in exile well after the Chinese invasion.

Khyung sprul 'Jigs med nam mkha'i rdo rje (1897-1955) was one of the main proponents of this movement, and his selection of the plain below the mKhar gdong hill as the site for his monastery of Gur gyam in 1936 was meant to recall the ancient past of Zhang chung at a major centre of the kingdom (see *Khyung sprul gyi rnam thar* vol. II p. 1-88). But despite the association of mKhar gdong with Khyung lung dngul mkhar attributed to him by the above-mentioned masters of Bon, it is significant that Khyung sprul did not establish his monastery at the village of Khyung lung. I am of the opinion that Khyung sprul himself did not reform the traditional conception that mKhar gdong was a religious centre of Zhang chung, masterfully recorded by dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen half a century before Khyung sprul was born. Indeed Khyung sprul built his monastery where dKar ru held that the religious centre of Khyung lung stood. The reform of mKhar gdong's significance from a religious to a secular function was the work of later Bon po masters.

The bya ru can king of Ru thog

Mu mar thog rgod rgyal po, the name of the Ru thog king who resided at the gNam rdzong mkhar castle according to *Ti se'i dkar chag*, and sponsored g.Yung drung tshul khriims's disciple gTsug phud rgyal ba, the purported establisher of a monastic community at gSang brag gyung drung gtams pa tshal, seems to indicate divisions in the Mu/rMu/dMu tribe (see above n. 6). At least one of them is identifiable by the colour gold/yellow—*mar* in the language of Zhang chung means "gold" according to various Tibetologists.³⁵ Further, the presence of a Mu/rMu/dMu ruler in Ru thog expands the known diffusion of this clan

³⁵ See, for instance, the decoding of the name Sad mar kar by Rolf Stein ("La langue Zhang-zhung du Bon organisé" p. 249). He says *sad*: "dieu"; *mar*: "or" and *kar*: "lumière", which I read as "Divine golden light" in a way similar to Hoffmann ("Zhang chung: the Holy Language of the Tibetan Bon po" p. 377) rather than Stein's "Reine splendeur d'or".

to the north of Zhang zhung khri sde, in an area where toponymic evidence suggests the migration of another sTag gzig ethnos, the gNyan.

All in all, the two lists in *Ti se'i dkar chag* mention twenty-one *bya ru can* kings (the eighteen who appear in the larger list plus three who appear only in the enumeration of those associated with the alleged diffusion of 'Dul ba). A few stray references in the literature can be added, such as the sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po mentioned by dPal ldan tshul khrim (bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan p. 96 lines 20-22) (see above).

Some speculative observations on the bya ru can kings

'Dul ba gling grags (p. 125 line 8) attributes the end of the alleged diffusion of 'Dul ba Bon in Zhang zhung to disputes between the local monastic communities. They occurred after the time of the last of the eight *bya ru can* kings, as I show immediately below. The same text adds that the strife coincided with the reign of Mu la sangs, the son of Mu wer btsan po; neither of these two is said to have worn the ornithomorphic crown.

The last *bya ru can* king mentioned in dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag* as having been connected with the last master of 'Dul ba in Zhang zhung was the above mentioned sTag sna gzi brjid rgyal po Khri ldem of sPos ri ngad ldan, who interacted with Ye shes rgyal ba.

According to dKar ru's *Ti se'i dkar chag*, the end of the alleged diffusion of 'Dul ba communities in Zhang zhung occurred one generation after Ye shes rgyal ba. 'Dul ba gling grags delays the disputes that led to the disruption of those 'Dul ba communities by one generation. He assigns them to the time of Co Ye shes who came after Ye shes rgyal ba and the latter's disciple, lDe btsun in the lineage of 'Dul ba Bon (ibid. p. 125 line 7). The same text says that the first signs of the strife had already manifested during the time of lDe btsun and his contemporaries (Ga chu rTsug phud rgyal mtshan, Ya gong Ye shes rgyal mtshan, 'Pham shi Pal gyi dbang phyug and lDe btsun Rab gsal; ibid. p. 125 lines 2-3).³⁶

'Dul ba gling grags offers a more consequential interpretation because a placement of the end of 'Dul ba Bon in Zhang zhung one generation earlier would not allow for the reign of dMu wer btsan po, the father of Mu la sangs.

³⁶ 'Dul ba gling grags says that 'Dul ba Bon was brought to Central Tibet during the time of Ga chu, 'Pham shi, Ya gong and lDe btsun because they allegedly built temples, defined as the four great *gnas sde*, in this region but also one temple in Zhang zhung (Ga chu at Byang 'Dam shod sNar mo gling and Bra nag rTa bsgo (so spelled) sum lag; Ya gong at lHa sa Yer pa'i rlung; 'Pham shi at La stod Gram pa; lDe btsun at Ra sa, in g.Yas ru and g.Yon ru) (ibid. p. 122 line 7-p. 123 line 3).

The Bon po sources classify the first *bya ru can* king and then dynastic succession in Zhang zhung after the last of them by means of both evidence internal to their tradition and reference to the sPu rgyal dynasty. These are shaky attempts at fixing a chronology and thus at attributing a period to the existence of the *bya ru can* kings, if they existed. These attempts fall short of acceptability because dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen links the appearance of the first *bya ru can* king with the Bon po master Khri lde 'od po whose historicity is not proven by external evidence, and the last of the eight to the gNam gyi khri bdun kings of sPu rgyal Bod whose attribution to a period in antiquity is far from ascertained. Khri lde 'od po is said to have spearheaded the alleged spread of 'Dul ba Bon in Zhang zhung some eighty years after Mu cho ldem drug, the immediate successor to gShen rab mi bo (dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen, *Ti se'i dkar chag* p. 573 line 7-p. 574 line 2). There is a recurrence of the number eight in dKar ru's work which seems to be more symbolic than historical.³⁷ The reference to eighty years after Mu cho ldem drug does not help to fix a period for Khri lde 'od po either, if he actually existed.

The statement in *Ti se'i dkar chag* that the eighteen *bya ru can* kings were contemporaries of the gNam gyi khri bdun and Sa'i legs drug is equally inconclusive.³⁸ This assertion, mentioned in a prophecy ascribed to gShen

³⁷ There were eight generations of *bya ru can* kings, eighteen *bya ru can* kings ruling from different seats of power, eight generations of disciples of gShen rab mi bo and the alleged eighty years of Khri wer La rje's reign, not to mention the eighteen divisions of the Zhang zhung communities (Zhang zhung khri sde bco bryad) and the eighteen lands of Zhang zhung (Zhang zhung yul chen bco bryad).

³⁸ dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen (*Ti se'i dkar chag* p. 572 line 7-p. 573 line 5) cites a prophecy by gShen rab which announced the coming of the eighteen *bya ru can* kings in Zhang zhung and of the gNam gyi khri bdun and Sa'i legs drug in Bod at the time of Khri lde 'od po. This reads as follows: "De yang bdag gis mdzad pa brya dang drug cu'i 'gro don mthar phyin zhing/ gdung tshab chen po Mu cho ldem drug (p. 573) byon pa'i dus der/ Zhang zhung dang Bod yul gyi 'du gnas gsum cu rtsa bdun dang/ sTag gzig gshen gyi yul nas drang srong 'Od kyi ming can gcig gis dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde brya stong khri 'bum grangs med bstan pa spel par gyur cig/ de'i dus su yang bstan pa de la zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po/ Zhang zhung gi yul du Ye srid lha las bab pa'i rgyal po bya ru thob pa bco bryad 'ong par gyur cig/ Bod kyi yul du'ang gnam nas bab pa'i khri bdun/ sa las bab pa'i legs drug soggs/ 'khor lo bsgyur pa'i rgyal po bcu gsum 'ong par gyur cig/ /"; ""After I complete 160 deeds for the benefit of sentient beings and my great successor Mu cho ldem drug comes, the thirty seven 'du gnas of the lands of Zhang zhung and Bod, plus the *drang srong* from the gShen land of sTag gzig, whose name will be 'Od, will contribute to spread the teachings [at] the 100, 1,000, 10,000, 100,000 and innumerable gathering places of the *dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'*-s. At that time, too, rulers who will support the teachings [will appear]. Eighteen kings wearing the *bya ru* and descended from the *Ye srid lha*-s will appear in the land of Zhang zhung. In the land of Bod, too, the Khri bdun will descend from the sky (i.e. the gNam gyi khri bdun) and the Legs drug originating from the earth (i.e. the Sa'i legs drug) will appear as thirteen kings altogether who will turn the wheel of the teachings". There is an internal inconsistency in *Ti se'i dkar chag*. Before gShen rab's prophecy about the coming of the *bya ru can* kings at the time of Khri lde 'od po's

rab mi bo, implicitly assigns those kings in the list of eighteen and missing in the list of eight, to the period after the decline of 'Dul ba in Zhang zhung. Reference to the Sa'i legs drug seems to imply that, according to dKar ru, those rulers reigned after the *bya ru can* kings in the list of eight.

No less inconclusive is the statement in bsTan 'dzin rnam dag's *g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i byung khungs nyung bsdus* (p. 624 line 4) that Mu wer btsan po lived during the time of gNya' khri btsan po,³⁹ which would make of Mu la sangs a contemporary of Mu khri btsan po, the second of the gNam gyi khri bdun. For his part, in *bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan*, dPal ldan tshul khrims says that the reigns of Mu la mu sang and Deng khri btsan po, the third gNam gyi khri bdun ruler, were coeval.⁴⁰

Even if one of these correspondences is correct, linking the *bya ru can* kings with the gNam gyi khri bdun does not solve the problem of assigning gNya' khri btsan po and his successors to a specific period of antiquity, a conundrum complicated by contradictory hints at large. In short, the assessment of the Bon po sources based on the gNam gyi khri bdun does not provide absolute evidence.

The signs gathered up to now do not allow one to say with confidence that the accounts of the *bya ru can* kings provide irrefutable evidence of their historicity. If, nevertheless, one should try to assign them a place in history on the basis of the indications provided by dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen, a few clues are provided by the Bon po literature.

An important historical reference in 'Dul ba *gling grags* to major events in North-West and Central India—military campaigns and regnal foundations—allows an approximate temporal positioning of Mu wer btsan po and Mu la sangs, which lends them historical credibility. This material touches upon the waves of invasions of North-West India by Indo-Iranic peoples in antiquity. I have discussed this supportive external evidence at some length elsewhere in relation with other issues ("Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history: the Lig myi hrya dynasty

preaching, dKar ru makes a not better identified Khri wer gser gyi bya ru can interact with gShen rab mi bo (ibid. p. 565 line 2-p. 566 line 3).

³⁹ In the passage in which he says that Mu wer btsan po and gNya' khri btsan po were contemporary (*g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i byung khungs nyung bsdus* p. 624 line 4: "Mu wer sTag sna rgyal po/ 'di Bod rgyal gNya' khri'i dus//"), bsTan 'dzin rnam dag conflates the identities of Mu wer btsan po and the sPos ri ngad ldan ruler sTag sna rgyal po Khri ldem. The often mentioned passage of dPal ldan tshul khrims's *bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* (p. 96 lines 20-22) shows irrefutably that they were two persons.

⁴⁰ dPal ldan tshul khrims, *bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* (p. 223 lines 11-12): "Zhang zhung rgyal po Mu la mu sang dang/ Bod rgyal Deng khri btsan po'i sku tshe'i smad/ 'Dul bstan nang 'khrugs rim bzhin nyams gyur te/ 'dus gnas khag ni lo rim bzhin du zhig//"; "During the later part of the lives of the Zhang zhung rgyal po Mu la mu sang and the Bod rgyal Deng khri btsan po, the 'Dul ba teachings progressively declined owing to internal disputes, and the various gathering places were destroyed year after year".

and its “destruction”, forthcoming). The magnitude of these issues prevents any hasty discussion here. I wish only to summarise its salient aspects. This material helps to approximate the period of the takeover by the rMu/dMu of the throne of the Hos rulers of Zhang chung, whose reign is documented in a Tun-huang manuscript (P.T. 1136), and the circumstances surrounding this achievement, which is ascribed to Mu la sangs’s father, Mu wer btsan po. This confirms that dynastic change in Zhang chung occurred one generation after the purported existence of the last of the eight *bya ru can* kings, followed in the next generation by the disputes that disrupted the alleged ‘Dul ba communities in Zhang chung.

Hence, if they actually were historical monarchs, the eight *bya ru can* kings who supported the monastic foundations in Zhang chung described by dKar ru would have ruled before this dynastic and religious change in the kingdom. During the time of ‘Pham shi dPal gyi dbang phyug, the last of the alleged Bon po masters of ‘Dul ba before the purported transfer of these teachings to Bod, the monastic communities declined. At the time, Mu la sangs, the son of the Mu wer btsan po who had established the rMu/dMu on the throne of Zhang chung, was already in power. The inclusion of one Mu wer rgyal po ruling from Kha sgyor in the list of eighteen indicates that some *bya ru can* kings reigned after the Hos relinquished the throne of Zhang chung to the rMu/dMu.

An approximate assessment of those events, among others more directly related to the political developments in Zhang chung, assigns the regnal period of the last *bya ru can* king to around the third quarter of the 1st century b. CE (see *ibid.*, forthcoming).

dKar ru’s idea that some of the *bya ru can* kings ruled after the end of the alleged diffusion of ‘Dul ba in Zhang chung is not an isolated one. Bon po sources have it that the *bya ru* as royal insignia continued to be used after the last ruler of the group of eight and did not end with the secular and religious changes in Zhang chung. During the period immediately following the takeover of the throne of Zhang chung by the rMu/dMu, at least the above mentioned sTag sna rgyal po Khri ldem lcags bya ru [can], who was active under the sovereignty of Mu wer btsan po,⁴¹ bore the iron bird-horned crown worn by other rulers of this locality (see dPal ldan tshul khriims, *bsTan ‘byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* p. 96 lines 20-22). It goes without saying that reference to additional rulers bearing the same crown further complicates understanding of the relation between the groups of *bya ru can* kings mentioned by dKar ru.

Their treatment shows that the *bya ru can* kings, if ever they existed, cannot be defined as a dynasty as they are presented by dKar ru bsTan

⁴¹ Mu wer btsan po imparted to him the transmission of Tantric teachings concerning Ge khod Zhang skor and mGon po (see above). Like dKar ru’s *Ti se’i dkar chag*, dPal ldan tshul khriims’s passage, owing to its brevity and focus on religious matters, does not clarify the aspects of royal hierarchy between the two.

'dzin rin chen in the opening sentences of his list of eight (see above n.37) but, at best, a compilation of micro-dynasties reigning in different divisions of Zhang zhung and belonging to slightly different periods. dKar ru's classification as an incoherent group makes any attempt to assign a period to those eighteen *bya ru can* kings not mentioned in the list of eight a futile exercise. Nothing more can be said than that their grouping implies some kind of fragmentation of power, which must have been the system dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen had in mind. This includes the possibility of collateral lines ruling semi-independent areas of Zhang zhung, farther away from the cradle of the kingdom (such as La dwags, or Nag tshang where sTag sgo is located) and in different (later?) periods.⁴²

The structural and conceptual tidyness of the classifications in the two lists of *bya ru can* kings, supported by accounts of the political developments in the contiguous Indo-Iranic borderlands, does not help to remove the doubts about the historical authenticity of these rulers' patronage of monastic discipline.⁴³

I have no grounds on which to establish whether the diffusion of 'Dul ba before the turn to the CE is an exercise of fantasy dignifying the reformed

⁴² bsTan 'dzin rnam dag in his *g.Yung drung Bon gyi bstan pa'i byung khungs nyung bsdu* compacts the reigns of the *bya ru can* kings into two or three phases (*skabs 'gar*). He says (ibid. p. 624 lines 1-3): "De nas Gu ge'i rgyal po Slas tra 'od kyi bya ru can la sogs bya ru thob pa'i rgyal po bco brgyad ni/ Gu ge/ Pu hreng/ Ru thog/ La dwags/ Shang/ Gu rib [note: Me ri gsang ba 'khor lo las so] rnam su dngos dang rdzu 'phrul ci rigs pas byon no/ 'di'i bya ru thob pa'i rgyal po rnam ky'i mtshan zhib tu Grub dbang gi Gangs ri'i dkar chags su gsal/ 'di byon tshul ni skabs 'gar nyis gsum tsam mnyam sdebs dang/ skabs 'gar re rer byon no/ /"; "Then the eighteen kings bearing the *bya ru* such as the Gu ge king Slas tra (so spelled) 'od kyi bya ru can appeared in Gu ge, Pu hreng, Ru thog, La dwags, Shang and Gu rib [note: the latter excerpted from *Me ri gsang ba 'khor lo*] with all kinds of power and miracles. The names in detail of the kings wearing the *bya ru* are elucidated in Grub dbang's *Gangs ri'i dkar chags* (so spelled). Their appearance coincided with two or three [different] slots of time. They appeared in each of those slots of time". His statement remains unsubstantiated, for he neither singles out the *bya ru can* kings who could have been contemporary nor attempts to link these kings to any period after classifying them in those few different time slots. He is of the opinion that the *bya ru can* kings acceded quite erratically, but believes they were a genealogy.

⁴³ In his "On Swat. The Dards and Connected Problems", Tucci first cites passages from Lamotte (*Histoire du Bouddhisme indien des origines à l'ère Śaka* p. 366-369) who says that Buddhism was first diffused in the north-western sector of the Indo-Iranic borderlands, such as in Gandhāra and Uḍḍiyāna, during the Maurian period, and then in Kapiśa and Kashmir when Kaniṣka was ruling (ibid. p. 57). Tucci holds that *Vinaya* went through a phase of prosperity in those territories during the reign of the same Kuśāna king, and mentions Levi ("Les éléments de formation du Divyāvādāna") who is of the opinion that some related texts of the Sarvāstivādin-s and Mulasarvāstivādin-s can be dated to not later than the beginning of the 3rd century CE (ibid. p. 59). But in the long run Tucci opines that, although the literary tradition of monastic observance can be linked with Kaniṣka, versions of these *Vinaya* texts in the local languages were commonly circulated before this ruler (ibid. p. 60).

Bon po tradition responsible for elaborating it, or whether it is a phase in the religious history of Zhang chung that long predates the activity of Bon po proponents, characterised by rituals in general and funerary rites in particular, contained in the Tun-huang material. It is nowhere confirmed that monastic discipline was the first form of Bon po preaching. Had it (ever) been so, one would have to envisage, on the basis of *'Dul ba gling grags* and *Ti se'i dkar chag*, that developments in Zhang chung and sPu rgyal Bod led to a drastic change in the religious panorama of the two kingdoms. Both would have lost their ancient traditions of monastic discipline, for the Bon po sources believe that it was transferred to Bod when it declined in Zhang chung. I cannot offer any elaboration on such statements that could carry much historical and religious weight if proven correct. Their appraisal is a difficult task that has yet to be attempted.

Although external evidence is instrumental in attributing a tentative period to the literary references to the *bya ru can* kings, it is not much help in establishing whether they were historical rulers. While the Hos and rMu/dMu dynasties are substantiated by evidence external to the Bon po sources (Tun-huang documents and fragments of ancient Indo-Iranic political developments), the existence of the *bya ru can* kings is not. It is indeed significant that a text such as *'Dul ba gling grags*, dealing with the time and context in which dKar ru says they operated, does not mention them at all. They could have been, as said above, kings from different (collateral) lineages or could have belonged to quite different periods, as bsTan 'dzin rnam dag is inclined to believe (see n. 41), if they existed at all. There are signs that their court customs resembled those of the Indo-Iranic borderlands, but this could amount to cultural cosmopolitanism rather than historical traces. Moreover the putative fragmentation of power in the core lands of Zhang chung into many royal or princely seats held by many lords in a limited span of time conveys the sense of an improbably extreme feudalism.

It is easy to infer a theory about dKar ru bsTan 'dzin rin chen's mental process in writing about the *bya ru can* kings of Zhang chung. In the pursuit of his legitimate aim of bringing back to light the buried glory of Zhang chung, he could have taken the references to the *bya ru* in the ancient sources as a sign of spiritual attainment and transferred them to a secular milieu, like *Grags pa gling grags* more vaguely does. It would seem that dKar ru based himself on *'Dul ba gling grags* for the religious context into which he placed his list of eight *bya ru can* kings. However this is a bold theory, for it would mean acceptance of the dismissive view that makes kings who wore the distinctive crown imaginary.

On the one hand I hardly believe that dKar ru was so bold and imaginative. It is also incorrect and against historical method to assess events on the basis of an inference about the mental disposition of an author. On the other, it is equally bold to accept the existence of the *bya ru*

can kings blindly. Any judgement of the question awaits evidence to be unearthed in the future. For the time being, dKar ru's accounts of the *bya ru can* kings should be seen as one more proof that history can be [willingly or unwillingly] written in undecipherable ways.

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STON PA GSHEN RAB: SIX MARRIAGES
AND MANY MORE FUNERALS

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**First Part: A Brief Survey of Early Developments
In Narratives on *gShen* and *Bon***

gShen and *Bon* in Dunhuang Sources

As is well known among tibetologists, old Tibetan sources repeatedly mention ritualists, who are variously named or described as (*pha*) *gshen rab(s) (kyi) myi bo*.¹ These old sources are evidently not Buddhist and were found somewhat off-centre to Tibet in the so-called ‘Library’ Cave #17, in Dunhuang, Eastern Turkestan. Many have also noted that these brief references to ritualists relate to the name of the founder of Bon, sTon pa gShen rab mi bo,² which starts appearing systematically in the first self-consciously Bon sources, such as the *Klu ’bum* and *mDo ’dus*. In fact, given the relatively late emergence of Bon literature—starting during the so-called *phyi dar*, the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (from approximately the 10th–11th c. AD)—these stray Dunhuang references may represent the earliest textual evidence for the name. Non-Buddhist, Tibetan-language Dunhuang sources thus seem to have preserved the earliest extant precursors of a *gShen rab(s)* figure, including some narrative context.

The Dunhuang *gShen rab(s)* references and descriptions mostly appear in a context of ritual on death and healing and seem to imply a senior male figure who, considering his name and function, either is the best *gShen* ritual specialist (*gshen rab*), or is a man (*myi bo*) with great ritual expertise, who simply hails from the *gShen* clan (*gshen rabs*). At one point even a tantalisingly brief iconography appears.³

¹ References appear in Karmay (1975) and slightly more extensively, also in Stein (1988), later.

² See amongst many others Karmay (1983) and Stein (1988); see also Chu Junjie (1991).

³ PT1289:612f, a funerary text about animal sacrifice (c.q., *mdzo mo*) describes *gShen rabs* as a type of tantrist: ... *GSHEN RABS KYI MYI BO pha se gshogs / [613] gshang dril chen na phyag ma g-yon na snams / gshog the ra ther bu ni phyag ma g-yas na snams / shi ni bdur rlag ni tshol / myi gshin ni gshen kyis sado *sad *do*. For the mythic embedding of the ritual use of bird wings, see also PT1194:36–55 and Stein (1971:514). See now also the *Mythic Origins of the Bird Wing Liberator* in Bellezza (2008:506ff, cf. 429ff). Here and elsewhere in section III of his Herculean study, Bellezza—quite courageously in fact—presents tentative renderings of often extremely problematic Dunhuang passages. But one wonders why reference to Stein’s and others’ ground-

These texts also mention quite a few other *gshen* ritual specialists by name, in similar contexts, such as, frequently, (Pha) Dur *gshen rma da* (na), but also *sGal gshen tho'u yug*, etc. (these names often appear there in many variants, listed elsewhere: see next note).

The words *gshen* and *bon* are well attested in Dunhuang manuscripts. They mostly appear in non-Buddhist sources as technical terms for ritual specialists. Knowledge of the precise distinction of these ritualistic titles seems to have already been lost at the time of their recording in Dunhuang or elsewhere. The names, the various types of

breaking work on the same passages and to earlier solutions of the same problems is so conspicuously absent. Mainly a posthumously published, equally tentative translation of IOL731 by Thomas (1957) apparently deserves a brief but rather dismissive review (p.529, n.623). Also, the Gendün Chöphel syndrome apparently still plagues Tibetan Studies, alas: certainly since translators from Russian and Chinese are meticulously credited, one also wonders why the learned Triten Norbutse and Menri Geshes who by their own saying have laboured on the translations from the Tibetan remain without credit or mention!

On iconography, also compare a later, rather more exotic description of *Sri bon* 'Dur bon (sic!) rma da that appears in the in the *Dur gsas lha srung bskul shing spyan drangs pa* of the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* funerary collection (*Bon bKa' 'gyur* III, Vol.6, pp.303.6ff.): p.304.1: .../ *phyag na 'dur gshog ldem pa bsnams!* ... One page earlier (p.302.6ff), Srid *gshen Mu cho ldem drug* is likewise graphically described. The *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* and 'Dur *chog* cycles are traditionally attributed to Khu tsa zla 'od (11th c. AD) or to Thog thog lhung lha.

For the wing implement in funerary context, see from the same collection, untitled, pp.197.3ff, and for its mythic origins, see the *gShog rab(s)* also included there, p.213ff. Cf. Bellezza 2008:429ff: Bellezza's very interesting and detailed comparison of the wing origin narrative of the PT1194 and the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur*, more than anything else perhaps, also highlights the marked differences between these strata of texts and thus underlines the great caution that one should observe when attempting to understand and interpret, in accordance with later historiographical (re)constructions and doctrinal exegesis, earlier Dunhuang-period texts—leaving aside for the moment the involved question how long the rituals, myths and narratives that appear there predate the compilation of individual texts. Based on his ubiquitous, trademark 'exegetically enhanced' readings and reconstruction of Dunhuang funerary sources, Bellezza then tries to reach even greater time-depth and to reconstruct prehistoric mortuary rites. Yet, along this exegetical path even the most intrepid, die-hard explorer may easily fall into the trappings of anachronism, traditional exegesis (cf. p.543, n.697), and apologetics. In the book announcement and introduction (p.12), Bellezza indeed promises (new) *philological* methodology (cf. his methodological prelude to section II, pp.201–5). But philology, methodologically, usually would direct its analyses in the opposite direction: deconstructing later textual elaboration in historical perspective, i.e., in reference to earlier literary strata, rather than reconstructing earlier layers from later historical (re)constructions and attempt exegesis (at the risk of anachronism).

ritual specialists, and their occurrences in sources, will be discussed in more detail somewhere else.⁴

As said, Dunhuang gShen rab(s) narratives usually show a simple paradigm of crisis and crisis management, solving problems relating to illness and death by means of healing rites and funerary service and seem to be used in a context of ritual recitation (e.g. *smrang* or *rabs*) of precedents (and the implied credits) that typically precede ritual.⁵ This story paradigm is also common to a much wider stock of Dunhuang stories relating activities of unnamed *gshen* and *bon* ritual specialists. A similar paradigm also appears in the *Klu 'bum*, the 'hundred thousand' verses on *nāga-s* (snake deities). Partly, this source may be contemporaneous (starting 10th c. AD?) and partly perhaps also later (that is to say, the collection may have developed over some time). The paradigm resurfaces again in later collections, such as among others, briefly in the (probably) 11th c. AD *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* and '*Dur chog* funerary texts.

Dunhuang references to a gShen rab(s) figure most likely pertain to the 9th–10th c. AD, but that is basically just a wild guess, be it one of an educated variety.⁶ The polished narrative structure of

⁴ See forthcoming publication on the 'location' of origin of Bon. This is the second volume in a tripartite publication project based on the Leiden *Three Pillars of Bon* research programme (funded by NWO and Leiden University, 2005–2010). The publishing programme furthermore includes a Ph.D.-thesis by Kalsang Norbu Gurung, which deals specifically with the topic of the founder of Bon (third 'pillar'). Also included is a monograph of a preceding project: *Antecedents of Bon Religion in Tibet*. This deals with continuity and change in Bon doctrine at the turn of the first millennium AD, particularly in death ritual and the so-called 'Aural Transmission from Zhang zhung' (first 'pillar', funded by NWO, 2002–2005). Bellezza (2008) in his section III approximately covers the same ground that I intended to cover in the 2002–05 NWO *Antecedents* project. I of course shared a research outline of this project on continuity and change in death ritual with him early in 2003 and also a more elaborate description by means of a historiographical paper at the Oxford IATS 2003 (cited by him on p.202, n.1, in his historiographical prelude). Under this configuration it is probably necessary clarify that beyond that early exchange, his present publication was prepared independently from my project, using his own resources and research data. The other two volumes in the Three Pillars project will also give more in-depth discussion of aspects and topics that this survey can only briefly touch upon. For developments of the gShen rab myth in early Bon sources, I particularly refer to the third 'pillar' of the forthcoming publications.

⁵ See, amongst many others, Stein (1971), Lalou (1958), and Karmay (1998).

⁶ Most likely, we have to settle for a relatively late date of most of the Dunhuang documents used for this study (cf. Beckwith PIATS 2006); "most": simply because I haven't studied all yet. We probably should not take the generally presumed antiquity of Dunhuang documents (as dating to the imperial period) for granted. Early dates for some documents, such as for instance proposed by MacDonald (1971), have failed to convince. Rolf Stein in my opinion rightly raised questions

Dunhuang stories involving gShen rab(s) *cum suis* suggests that, by then, they had already become stock narrative tropes, in which a gShen rab(s) (kyi) myi bo and Dur gshen rma da (na) and a few others (the mentioned sGal gshen tho'u yug etc.), by epic concentration, had become the focal points of excellent 'priestly' characteristics. They appear a-historically as ideal-typical ritual agents and story characters. The opaque narrative form of the stories suggests considerable distance to their contexts of origin and to historical and topographical realities connected to the names—if there ever were historical persons underlying them (but cf. Thomas 1957, in his several introductions). This gestation may take us back one or more centuries for the possible historical origins of the names and, less likely: events; say 7th–8th c. AD? What is reflected in Dunhuang sources may thus have been shaped by a considerable period of oral *cum* written transmission and therefore adhere to the logic of narrative, more than that of history and topography. If there ever were concrete historical and geographical contexts connected with the names and stories, it will be difficult to infer those from the late form and shape the stock of story elements that they have become part of has reached us in.

Still, something more can be said about the origins of the narratives. The *gshen* ritual specialists that are mentioned by name may have been particularly famous ritualists, whose 'names' have become legendary. For (Pha) gShen rab(s) (kyi) myi bo it is moreover possible, if not likely, that we are dealing with descriptions of a priestly function (Stein 1988:44) and not with a particular individual or personal name. Could this ritual expertise have been the privileged specialisation of a gShen clan? These are of course not necessarily mutually exclusive: it may be difficult to draw a clear boundary between name and title.

about that in his review of her work in "Tibetica Antiqua" (1985). I presently work on the assumption that the Dunhuang documents that I am dealing with are late imperial at the earliest, but probably mostly post-imperial in their redaction. So far, my working hypothesis has been that the earliest records that I use would fit a date in the 9th-10th century AD. On the other hand, what is recorded in non-Buddhist Dunhuang documents may reflect traditions that reach back one or more centuries before their date of composition. I do not doubt that some Dunhuang sources represent and preserve traditions—historical, ritual, narrative and otherwise—that in any case predate the formation of the first self-consciously Bon documents (the *Klu 'bum* is a bit of a border-line case), which perhaps start forming from the 10th c. AD. That still makes non-Buddhist Dunhuang sources roughly contiguous with the earliest self-consciously Bon sources and in any case contemporaneous with Tibetan Buddhism. Also, to state the bleeding obvious: for practical reasons, consciously non-Buddhist interest groups in the early *phyi dar*, wherever they were, did not relate to the physical documents that are preserved in Dunhuang, but to comparable traditions that may have been around also elsewhere.

The later *sTon pa* gShen rab character may thus have developed from a *primus inter pares* among *gshen* and *bon* ritual specialists, whose historicity we cannot now trace anymore in the opaque story characters that remain in Dunhuang-period narratives. Alternatively, the name may also derive from a ritualistic title that in the early *phyi dar* was read as a personal name, by Tibetan interest groups: newly styled bon po-s, who, consciously or not, allowed their collective memory to coagulate around a respectable non-Buddhist name or person, a suitable perceived founder of their newly invented ‘non-Buddhist’ tradition.

What is important to stress, however, is that in the narratives that remain in Dunhuang sources there is *no evidence whatsoever* to indicate that the gShen rab(s) figure mentioned there was considered to be a founder of a tradition called Bon. There also is no connection whatsoever of Dunhuang gShen rab(s) narratives to Zhang zhung or Ta zig, even though those place names do appear in other contexts: the narratives mostly are securely located more centrally in Tibet. I have argued elsewhere (PIATS 2006) that the connection of the myth of the founder with Zhang zhung and Ta zig significantly postdates even early self-consciously Bon literature: it is conspicuously absent from collections such as the *Klu 'bum*, *mDo 'dus* or the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur*; all of which, in some form or other, seem to pertain to the inceptive period of Bon: the 10th–11th c. AD.⁷ Dunhuang gShen rab(s) narratives also

⁷ Occasionally, Bellezza (2008) also notes such indications of non-Zhang zhung provenance (e.g. p.369), only to gloss them over forthwith, for unclear reasons. Through circumstantial and occasionally also anachronistic arguments, based on often much later sources and unverifiable traditional attributions, he attributes Zhang zhung provenance to rites such as are described in the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* and in Dunhuang sources. He subsequently harnesses these ‘exegetically enhanced’ data as circumstantial evidence—a missing link as it were—for arguing that the rather indifferent early and/or pre-historic material data from in the field may also pertain to ‘Zhang zhung’. This argument utterly fails to convince. It is a fragile theoretical edifice that I should not recommend dwelling in. The narratives he discusses mostly *clearly are not* located in Zhang zhung, which moreover otherwise is a well-known entity in this period. Thus the evidence, before exegetical enhancement, in fact appears to argue against the thesis of a cradle of Tibetan culture in Zhang zhung and also to contradict the book’s title. These systematic attempts to project a grand Bon Zhang zhung Empire back into earlier sources by interpolation, and beyond that into Tibetan pre- and proto-history, based on traditional historical constructs and exegesis in later Bon and Buddhist historiography, are a telling example for the fundamental dangers that may lurk in this exegetically tinged methodology. Most of the weight of the arguments now lies in the starting hypotheses and not in unadorned evidence (i.e., before exegetical enhancement). Based on the overwhelming lack of a connection to Zhang zhung in the earliest sources, one should probably advise to rename the book simply to *Foundations of Civilisation in Tibet*, not insisting on identifying Zhang zhung, rather

contain no convincing references to Bon as a self-conscious religious tradition. To clarify this important point we need to discuss very briefly some crucial terms: *bon*, *bon po* and *g-yung drung bon*.

1. A Brief Note on Bon

The most convincing indications so far for an ‘established Bon religion’ in the imperial period have been pointed out by Samten Karmay, as early as 1981.⁸ Informally, we long ago agreed to disagree on this. It is very difficult to find *terra firma* for Bon in the period. Before moving on with our survey, I should like to spend some time with Karmay’s discussion of ‘imperial Bon’ and try to put up some problematic points for further discussion, even though I realise it will not be possible to settle the issue yet. Karmay (1998/1981:166) quotes from PT972:

so so byis pa skye bo rnams/ mu stegs bon la yid ches te/ las kyi don du mtshan ma spyod/

“Ordinary people, have faith in Bon, the ‘non-Buddhist doctrine’. For activity they (i.e., ordinary people who follow Bon) indulge in materials” (ibid. p.163).⁹

We do not need to search very long for the appropriate meaning of the word *bon* in this context, as it is clarified in a following passage: warning people not to have faith in *mo bon* ritual specialists.¹⁰ These *mo bon* here may indeed designate that ubiquitous diviner-type of ritual specialist that meets us so often in Bon sources, also the earliest ones:

mo bon dag la srid ma ltos/ 'dre srin dag la yar ma mchod/ bdud dang bgag (bgegs) la skyab ma tshol/ ... (ibid. p.166).

traditionally, as *the* foundation of that civilization—a thesis as of yet unproven and even flatly contradicted by evidence.

⁸ For discussion of possibly early evidence for Bon in the imperial period see Karmay (1998/1981:157f.); cf. also his article on the *Can lnga* (see esp. pp.289ff.). Much of his work on myth and ritual is in fact geared toward clarifying ancient Tibetan religious culture, e.g., his articles on: the little black-headed man; the soul and the turquoise; *glud* offering; *bsangs*; and *rlung rta* (cf. p.532 & 35). Karmay argues convincingly for the survival of ancient rites and beliefs (much more convincing than some recent, often anachronistically and poorly argued—or even downright nativist—efforts). I still hesitate calling this Bon, but that does not in any way diminish the importance of the discussion (cf. also Stein 1988 and Chu Junjie 1991).

⁹ Alternatively, following a kind hint by Dan Martin one might translate *las kyi don du mtshan ma spyod* as: for their affairs they investigate omens (rely on divination).

¹⁰ Cf. also the use of *mo ba*, in the text on divination (*mo*) PT1047:20 (on this text see MacDonald 1971:272ff). Cf. also ITJ0738:1v12 and 1v62: *mo bab*.

“Do not put your trust in the *mo bon*. Do not worship the *'dre* or the *srin*. Do not seek protection from the *bdud* or the *bgegs*. [Then extols the Buddhist alternative; *ibid.* p.163]”

Therefore *mu stegs bon*, given the context, must apply to the *mo bon* type ritual specialist and does not refer to the general public, which is here admonished to seek refuge in the Buddha and the *saṅgha* rather than in these diviner?-type Bon ritual specialists. The addition of the phrase “ordinary people who follow Bon”, in Karmay’s translation, at the implied subject of the following sentence, while certainly possible, is not really necessary. The interpretation that the text itself suggests is moreover entirely in keeping with other occurrences of personal uses of the term *bon* in Dunhuang sources: they invariably point to ritual specialists of some sort (not necessarily ‘diviners’—if that indeed is the trade that *mo bon* here implies).

Karmay (1998:160) points to another possible indication: *bon yas 'dod smrang*: “The Bon (religion) is the archetypal myth of rituals which require ritual objects of offering” in PT239. In a careful analysis of this cryptic Tibetan passage, Karmay shows that it needs to be contrasted with Buddhist sensibilities also voiced there. Given that wider context, the use of the word *bon* indeed appears ambiguous. Yet, given the full array of usage of the word *bon* for a person in Dunhuang sources, this occurrence too, while indeed more ambiguous than in PT972, fits the meaning of ritual specialists better than that of an organised religion of some sort (or of ordinary adherents of that).¹¹ Given the ritualistic activities implied, it seems to refer specifically to the concrete trade of Bon ritual specialists and not to some abstract entity ‘Bon religion’ (which also is not attested anywhere else in documents of the period).

However remarkable, these passages as such do not warrant or recommend positing an entire self-conscious cluster of traditions with “a firmly established religion embodying a popular system of belief known as Bon”. All we can gather from PT972 is that people put faith in Bon ritual specialists, and that Buddhists should advise against that.

‘Ordinary followers’ are not named in PT972. If there would have been such followers or an implied religious tradition, one would expect (rather numerous) references elsewhere. The issue of self-naming without ‘other’ is of course problematic. But in this case, Buddhism clearly was already established and hence there *would have been* a real need for a distinctive name, in case such an ‘established religion called Bon’ really existed at the time.

¹¹ I am not sure whether one can draw a clear distinction between ‘ritual specialist’ and ‘ordinary adherent’ here.

Karmay quite rightly notes that the term *bon* occasionally (but only very rarely) is also used for something of ‘religious’, probably mainly ritual, content and cites several Dunhuang-period passages in support.¹² On close examination, however, these occurrences do not really affect the above analysis. Sparse references to *bon* ‘religious’ (ritual) content also invariably appear to refer to the specific content of ritual performance of Bon specialists and they do not imply the more abstract notion of some kind of self-conscious, organised, popular or elite Bon religion.¹³

Given the present state of knowledge and evidence, prevalent academic sensibilities—as aptly expressed in ‘Ockham’s razor’—do not recommend assuming an entity such as ‘an established religion called Bon’. Positing, without any additional compelling evidence, that the various ritualistic phenomena that in Dunhuang sources are associated with *bon* and *gshen* imply some kind of organised religion, popular or otherwise (cf. the funerary rites of PT1042), i.e., that they would imply an entity beyond the concrete phenomena described and named, would be superfluous at best and could be confusing and seriously get in the way of the future heuristics at worst.

I readily concede that it is logically impossible to *prove* that a pink elephant does not exist and I therefore do not recommend arguing that there could not possibly have been imperial-period Bon religion. My point is that given the data and pending further evidence, we *need not* hypostasise ‘early Bon’: it is not compellingly mentioned, described, or even suggested in the most closely contemporary sources. Bon may be implied, but we have no way of ascertaining that. At the present state of knowledge, it would simply be an unnecessary assumption.

¹² Karmay (1998:161.n14).

¹³ Karmay refers to what looks like a preamble to the title of the funerary text PT1040.1: [1] \$ /:/ bon 'di gsang ba'i bon gis sul [2] yang bslag pa lo tus gi bro la thogso / [3] \$ /:/ rgyal byin gi rabs /, discussed by Stein 1971:545. The occurrence of *bon* in PT1248.1: (p?)a' bu tsa' bon rabs/ phyag sbal na mchis pa la dpe' blangs pa'ol ('the account of Bon, entitled the Son of the Father. This was copied from the manuscript kept at the official library') is uncertain, as the first one or two syllables are missing. In any case *bon rabs* clearly places *bon* in the context of *rabs*, which is part of what we saw that *bon* ritual specialists do. The word *bon*, as a non-personal reference to the content of ritual appears closely associated with the verb *gyer*, reciting or chanting in a ritual manner: see, for instance, the funerary text PT1134.124: *bon gang gis/ ni/ bgyerd/* and PT1136.56: *nub gsuM bon gshen bon du bsgyerd*. PT443, among all kinds of evil (magic) that the deity invoked there, Ma ha ba la rdo rje mchog, will protect against, are mentioned curses and incantations by *bon* and by (people from) *Yol* (Lalou 1947:222). This reference to *bon* similarly and typically implicates ritual specialists or their repertoire.

The conspicuous lack of imperial-period ‘Bon’ self-references *vis-à-vis* the undeniable presence of Buddhist ‘others’ (that from their side entertain plenty of such references) would in rather fact suggest that contrary, that there was no imperial-period Bon religion. The chances that no clear self-references whatsoever would have remained for a presumably comprehensive and powerful imperial-period ‘Bon’ religion, such as we find described in later Bon and Buddhist sources, would defeat any statistical likelihood of the hypothesis, however well argued (for instance by Karmay).

That leaves us with the burden—a fascinating task in fact—to study how these later narratives on Bon came to be; as I presently propose to do for a sample of stories in the *mDo ’dus*, which refer to sTon pa gShen rab’s marriages.

2. A Brief Note on Bon po

We also need to look into the crucial designation *bon po*. In contrast with the word *bon*, *bon po* only rarely occurs in Dunhuang documents, mainly in that odd funerary document PT1042 and also a few times in PT1285, a true treasure trove for narratives on *bon* and *gshen* and their presumed locations. In these sources the use of *bon po* seems to indicate shifts in usage, perhaps one or more innovations on older schemes of *gshen* and *bon* specialists.

In PT1042, a shift in usage clearly involves or coincides with a specific and distinctly technical use of the term *bon po*, as a ritual title that is combined with other systematic terms that seem to describe a function rather than the usual toponym or patronym (it is then usually followed by a more personal-looking name). This needs to be contrasted with the construction of names in texts such as PT1285. In PT1042, references to *bon po* specialists also often typically cluster together with references to *sku gshen* type specialists.

Even as late as the *phyi dar mDo ’dus*, *bon po* still appears as a designation for ritual specialists only. But, needless to say, by the time of the *mDo ’dus*¹⁴ the word *bon*, signifying all kinds of special teachings, old or reformed, is already ubiquitous.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Blezer 2008, “William of Ockham, Jan van Gorp and Tibetan Studies: Some Notes on Dating the *mDo ’dus*”, forthcoming CNRS: Paris 2008.

¹⁵ While *g-yung drung bon* in the *mDo ’dus*, except for the titles, appears only four times, each time in chapter 12 (*ston pa la bdud kyi cho ’phrul* [added later: *bstan pa*]/*btul pa’i le’u*), which moreover may be later additions.

Together with IOL734 (v. Thomas 1957), a ritualistic narrative on ‘the age of decline’, the mentioned PT1285¹⁶ probably is one of the most important documents for understanding the structure of non-Buddhist Dunhuang-period ritualistic narratives and the character of *bon* and *gshen*. It may well reflect one of the above-mentioned shifts in usage of the term *bon po* for a ritual specialist, which, eventually, became epitomised by the *gShen rab(s)* character, as its ideal type.

In the light of received wisdom, it must appear strange that in texts such as PT1285 all the really competent *gshen* and *bon po* hail from areas near Central Tibet, mainly the Yar klung(s) rtsang po area, while droves of exotic male (*pho* or *pha*) *gshen thod (d)kar* and female *mo gshen* appear ineffective in their methods¹⁷ and almost seem to be ridiculed.¹⁸ Local *bon po*-s are without exception depicted as superior to the exotic male (*pho*) and female (*mo*) *gshen*. That these male and female *gshen* types are associated with foreign origins is explicitly indicated. They are vaguely said to be from *dags ri dkar po* (sunny white mountain; *yang* 陽) and *sribs ri nag po* (shadowy black mountain; *yin* 陰), successively.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Lalou (1958), Stein (1971) and Dotson, “Bon and Gshen in Old Tibetan Ritual Texts”, forthc. in *JAOS*.

¹⁷ PT1285:39–41, 66–68, 86f, 110, 136f, 151f, and 165–76.

¹⁸ See Lalou (1958:162), this mocking quality is also clearly implied in her paraphrase of the passages.

¹⁹ Stein (1971: 510-11) associates these ‘mountains’ or their sides, with *yin* and *yang*. But compare IOL734.175–185, where *bDag[s] ri* (thams cad) are connected to *Pu rMa bo* and *Sribs ri* (thams cad) to what may be his spouse (ICam) *Yul ma*. In ll.46–8 they appear in a configuration more familiar from PT1285 (*pho* & *mo gshen brgya*). Thomas (1957) considers the possibility of the difference in usage of the northern and southern slopes of mountains in Eastern Tibet; he refers to Futterer (1901:I.430) and Tafel (1914:II.170).

Cf. also the use of *phu* (upper) and *mda’* lower parts of a mountain, associated with *gdags* [emend: *dags*] and *srib* [emend: *sribs*], successively, in one of the texts found in the *dGa’ thang ’bum pa* in *gTam shul*, the *rNel dri ’dul ba’i thabs* (*gTam shul dga’ thang ’bum pa che nas gsar rnyed byung ba’i bon gyi gna’ dpe bdams bsgribs*, Lhasa 2007, published by Pasang Wangdu) 2.3f, repeated at many other places. This seems only one of the numerous variants of this narreme that were produced during lengthy transmission. In the same text (23.11f), *gdags shIng pha rgu dang / sribs shing ma rgu* appear. A bit more similar to the Dunhuang form, which probably is more original, is a passage on pp.354ff where at least the male *gshen* are invited: *gdags [dags] ri dkar po las/ pho gnyen thod dkar gnyer/ gdo [gto] dang dpyad bgyis na ’a/ ...*

The non-Buddhist *dGa’ thang ’bum pa* texts seems to retell and rephrase ancient Dunhuang period ritual narratives in slightly adjusted forms. The dating of these texts is uncertain. In any case, it seems improbable that the non-Buddhist section, which Pasang Wangdu identifies as Bon, would physically pertain to the imperial period. But the fact that some of the narratives and rituals continue ritual narrative traditions of the Dunhuang period should be obvious indeed. Equally obvious are the stray odd name and other anachronistic elements that reveal later

Are *pho gshen thod dkar* perhaps outlandish folks from Tokharistan (Tho kar?), those Yüeh-chih or Yuèzhî?²⁰ Are they folks from the region of Bactria, who also happen to wear white turbans (*thod dkar*. cf. Lalou 1958:162)? Or are those *pho gshen thod dkar* merely male ritual specialists of unknown origin who wear white turbans, as opposed female *mo gshen* who wear a *zhu/zhwva bub*?²¹ As said, these *pho* and *mo gshen* come in droves and remain anonymous, while local *bon po*-s, instead, have personal names. But note that many of the named *bon po*-s also feature the *gshen* element in their names: the use of the designation *bon* or *gshen* as such, certainly does not seem to be a relevant divide for these PT1285 figures.

The Myi bo and the even more ubiquitous rMa da-type of *gshen* or *bon po* seem to be the ideal-typical first *bon po*-s, who evolved from those more competent, new-style aboriginal *bon* and *gshen* (whose expertise is extolled in PT1285). The latter are local, central to western Tibetan ritual specialists who are considered more efficient and are mentioned by individual names. The superiority of local *bon po*-s over foreign, possibly far-western, male and female *gshen* again points to some innovation in *bon* expertise, having, at least initially, taken place in the area where the PT1285 narratives, according to their long lists of locations clearly are located: in the upper reaches of the rTsang po River.²² Was this old rTsang (chen) area—which at that time may have reached up to Ma pang and Ti se²³—perhaps the actual historical proto-

redaction of the material. See, for instance, the odd names of a king and his queen in the same *rNel dri 'dul ba'i thabs* p.11.4ff: *da nI rnel dri sha ru gzung ba'I rabs la/ pha dang yab gyI mtshan/ srId pa'i lha rab g-yung drung 'od gyi rgyal po dang / ma dang yum gyi mtshan/ g-yung drung khri 'od gyi rgyal mor bshos pa'I sras/ /bu byung bo mor byung/ /...* The phrases are identical to what also appears in Dunhuang sources, but the names and the use of *g-yung drung* therein look post-imperial. The multiplication of variants of these narremes together with some odd names, argue for a somewhat later (post-imperial) date of the text. It may be more cautious to consider a date no earlier than the eleventh century for all the materials found, and not, as does Pasang Wangdu, only for the Buddhist texts. We all eagerly await Karmay's discussion of these finds.

²⁰ Cf. the identification by Chris Beckwith, in an engaging lecture at the EPHE in Paris, May 29th 2008, where he spoke on Yüeh-chih (Yuèzhî): "On the Name and Identity of the Tokharians".

²¹ Lalou (1958:201) discusses this at length. N.B. in the middle of the 8th c. AD, Tokharistan included Tajikistan. References to exotic ritual specialists of that ilk may later have been resumed in western Ta zig origin myths.

²² See Dotson, "Bon and Gshen in Old Tibetan Ritual Texts", *forthc.* in *JAOS*.

²³ Thomas (1957) repeatedly points out that rTsang in an older context may refer to a larger area (rTsang chen) than the area presently known as gTsang province. rTsang chen is mentioned in one of the texts discussed by Thomas (1935:4&298) and in early historical documents from the Dunhuang period (Bacot 1940:184). This

heartland of 'Bon', rather than those vague regions to the far West of Tibet, indicated in later sources? The traditional *Come-from-the-West* narrative is indeed remarkably underdeveloped in these and other early texts. Significantly, that master narrative only rises to ascendancy with or in fact shortly after the advent of self-conscious sTon pa gShen rab hagiography. Lists of locations in PT1285 may indeed point to the oldest known proto-heartland, if not of gShen rab and Bon, then at least of the earliest narratives regarding the gShen rab-type of *bon po* and his retrospective trade.²⁴ Most interestingly, they are located in the vicinity of the itinerary of gShen rab when, according to the *mDo 'dus*, he left rKong po and founded Khyung lung rngul mkhar. This passage is discussed at length in an article on the location of that castle, forthcoming in the PIATS 2006.

As indicated, PT1042²⁵ may represent a unique strand within this *bon po* innovation. In an idiosyncratic way, PT1042 employs a wide array of technical terms for *bon* specialists, such as *mjol* or '*jol*, *phangs*, *snyun*, *smag*, *rlad*, and *sman bon*. References to *bon* specialists with personal names (such as often appear in PT1285) are conspicuously absent and it features a frequent and relatively unique occurrence of the *sku gshen* title. It may thus represent an altogether different strand, unrelated to what we see reflected in, for instance, PT1285 and its narratives on efficient local *bon* and *gshen*.

When compared to other such rites in Dunhuang sources, the singular complexity and elaboration of the death rites in PT1042 help underline its relatively unique character (and that of PT239; cf. also S504 and S562). One might try testing the hypothesis that PT1042 and its revisions according to Buddhist standards (PT239 &c.) are not so much an authentic surviving early record of ancient rites but a late

rTsang chen is probably identical to the old rTsang in Bacot (1940), and rTsang bod, also in Bacot (1940). For an elaborate description of rTsang chen, see the geographical introduction in Thomas (1957). The name rTsang for the area is of course determined by the presence of the Ya ru rtsang po (Brahmaputra). That ancient greater rTsang area probably reached all the way from present dBus up to the Ma pang and Ti se area.

²⁴ The opposing circuits of P1285, as described by Dotson in "Bon and Gshen in Old Tibetan Ritual Texts", forthc. in *JAOS*, could also point to such an innovation. The east-west '*bon*' circuit deviates from the regular ones and might suggest a new order of things. The west-east '*gshen*' circuit suggests being the more regular route, as found in P1286 and P1290. But I seriously doubt that the differences in list of localities systematically relate to *bon* and *gshen* as such; they rather point to rituals concerning marriage (east-west) and healing or death ritual (west-east). There seems to be no relation between the ordering of localities and *bon* & *gshen*.

²⁵ Discussed by Lalou (1953), Haarh (1969); cf. also Stein (1970) and Chu Junjie (1991).

resume—in any case contemporary with the arrival of Buddhism—of what non-Buddhist funerary rites were remembered, thought, or simply supposed to be like in early Buddhist times, and arranged long after, specifically for the burial of historical Yar klung(s) kings and nobles; perhaps they were even arranged post-imperially;²⁶ possibly a bit like those 'dur type of death rites of the *Khrom 'dur* and 'Dur *chog gter ma* literature, (re)invented somewhere around the 11th c. AD.

The name Bon, as in g-Yung drung Bon, seems to have been coined in the early *phyi dar* period, or shortly before, in explicit reference to earlier *narratives about bon* and *gshen* ritual specialists that survived from the imperial period. As we saw, Dunhuang sources have indeed preserved quite a few of these. Pha gShen rab(s) kyi myi bo is only one of them—and not even the *gshen* most frequently mentioned. Later survivals of these narrative traditions are also extant, e.g. in the *gNag rabs*²⁷ and *rNel dri 'dul ba'i thabs*. In Dunhuang sources, *gshen* specialists are mentioned slightly more frequently than the ones that are explicitly labelled *bon*. But in most Dunhuang sources the distinction between them already appears opaque or confused. The rise of or shift to the designation *bon* instead of *gshen*, for ritual specialists may mark one of, *again perhaps*, a series of innovations. But we of course have to be careful not needlessly to historicise data and create chronologies and innovations where there are none: we may simply be looking at approximately synchronic variability.

So much should be clear: looking, as many have done, for the origins of the name Bon in the earliest roots of the semantics of the syllable/verb/noun “*bon*” in Dunhuang sources by far precedes the relevance of the same for its recycled usage in the early *phyi dar* Bon period. This exercise would only be meaningful if the usage of the word *bon* in the imperial period would relate more directly and more significantly to the way it was engaged by early *phyi dar* groups that appropriated the word for their identity discourse.

Those later *phyi dar* Bon groups are entirely ‘subaltern’ Buddhist in outlook but at the same time are fully entitled to their separate Bon status. Present-day bon po-s o may legitimately claim to be heirs of so-

²⁶ This will be discussed in the first (*Antecedents*) volume of the *Three Pillars* publication project.

²⁷ gShen rab myi bo is one of the *gshen bzhi*: see the *gNag rabs* in Pasang Wangdu (2007), p.19.8f: *gshen bzhi spyang drang 'tshal/ glud bzhi gtang bar bzang // bdud bon dreng nag chu lcags dang / thar bon dru skyol dang // glud bon ngag snyan dang / gshen rab myi bo bzhi/ ...*

called pre-Buddhist Tibetan culture, but *with the same 'genetic' right* they may also claim to be legitimate heirs of pre-*phyi dar* or even pre-*snga dar*—perhaps also Central Asian—varieties of Buddhism. One might push this a bit further and posit that it may be a bit pedantic to argue that Tibetan Buddhists are more rightfully entitled to early Buddhist heritage than are bon po-s. Conversely: while bon po-s clearly have sought, engaged, and (re)invented so-called indigenous heritage, often in adjusted or 'reformed' formats (which clearly reveal shared ethical, soteriological and doctrinal sensibilities), Buddhist traditions carry that Tibetan heritage as well. See, for example, Karmay's (1998) discussion of what are generally presumed to be widely shared continuities from 'indigenous' Tibetan periods, such as, concepts of the soul and the turquoise, *glud* offering, *bsangs*, and the use of *rlung rta*. The main difference lies in how all this is engaged in identity discourse.

3. A Brief Note on g-Yung drung Bon

As is well known, *g-yung drung* first appears in Tibetan inscriptions²⁸ and in early translated Buddhist texts. There it signifies "eternal", but it is also used in the sense of a permanent state of release, a nirvanic category (Buddhist religious context). The earliest occurrences in Dunhuang sources confirm this usage. But the Tibetan semantic fields of *g-yung* and *drung*, taken individually, are surprisingly limited and cannot support the usual meaning "eternal" of the combination *g-yung drung*. See for example what appears in the combined wisdom of the THDL lexical database:

g-yung: **DM** [contributed by Dan Martin] *nges pa*. Gces 587.3. 'bangs mi'am bran g-yog. *nges pa. zhan pa*. A clan. Btsan-lha. *rmu rgod dul ba'i spyod pa gzhan bas g-yung*. Zhi-byed Coll. I 271.2.

JV [contributed by Jim Valby] statue labor, cross between cow and yak, place in Tibet.

drung: **YOGA** [Yogācārabhūmi Glossary] antike.

DM O.T. = *rtsa ba*. Blan 301.1. Stein.

JV his holiness, near to, beside, at, to, title/address of honor, civil officer, official, presence of, near to.

IW [contributed by Ives Waldo] 1) root; 2) near, in front of, in the presence of [h]; 3) attendant.

RY [contributed by Erik Hein Schmidt, Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary] *bla ma'i drung nas* - in the master's presence. beside, next to; attendant, -- *pa* - Sir, reverend; near, before, presence of, near to.

²⁸ E.g., the Zhol inscription, erected approximately 764 AD (Richardson 1985:1–25).

Presumed or real ‘Zhang chung’ lexicon also cannot explain *g-yung drung*. ZZ *Drung mu* (*swastika*) seems to derive from Tib. *g-yung drung* (see Dan Martin’s *Zhang-zhung Dictionary*, e-text July 2007),²⁹ with the productive *Zhang chung* marker *mu* added (cf. Martin 2000:75 on this).

By all appearances the combination *g-yung drung* is a loan word.³⁰ That being so, the most likely option would be a loan from Chinese:³¹ probably some regional form of Chinese from the Tang-period or before. The *Mahāvīyutpatti* relates the Tibetan translation term *g-yung drung* to the Sanskrit *sanātanaḥ*. Sakaki’s edition, at *sanātanaḥ* and *g-yung drung*, gives a straightforward Chinese translation 不動 (*bu⁴ dong⁴*: not changing) but also a more curious, somewhat Tibetan phonetic-looking 永中 (*yong³ zhong^{1/4}*), a combination that I am not familiar with. Mathews does not list it and, apart from personal names, 永中 does not seem to occur frequently in older Chinese texts. According to his introduction, Sakaki’s Chinese renderings derive from perhaps late 13th or at the latest 18th c. AD Chinese equivalents, based on the Tibetan. Often these were not checked against Buddhist sources.

There are numerous combinations with 永 to consider and the problems besetting early Chinese phonology are complex and beyond the competence of a non-specialist. This problem requires serious and methodical linguistic investigation that would lead far beyond the present article. I will nonetheless make a modest start, hopefully for linguists to follow (Appendix I). However plausible the connection based on modern Mandarin pronunciations may seem, I see only tenuous evidence to support derivation from 永中, 永終, or 永常, from older layers of Chinese; and if so, the derivation most likely occurred long before the Tibetan Dunhuang period.

The identity of Bon as we know it now is epitomised by the phrase *g-yung drung bon*, a term has been in use since the earliest self-consciously Bon literature, such as the *mDo ‘dus* and *Klu ‘bum*. The

²⁹ DRUNG MU [1] (*g-yung drung*) *swastika*. ZZH. Zhu, seven times. Humm1, p. 491. Sgra 123. (*g-yung*) ZB. [2] (*rin chen*) jewel, precious substance. Humm1, p. 513. [3] (*shin tu*) Humm1, p. 513. [4] (*gyur med*) unchanging, immutable. Mdzod. Note that all four meanings are attested in Mdzod.

³⁰ The prescript “ga” is not uncommon to loan words (cf., for example Tibetan *g-yu*, turquoise, and Chinese 玉 *yü⁴*, precious stone, especially for jade); e-mail communication by Chris Beckwith (July 11th, 2008).

³¹ Thanks are due to Dorothée Kehren, for kindly pointing out the possibility of a loan from Chinese.

usage in the *mDo 'dus*³² (and *Klu 'bum*)³³ mainly seems to invoke an old sense of *g-yung drung* and refers to an exalted if not transcendent state or realm (also attested in Dunhuang sources);³⁴ shadows of eternalism loom large in between the lines. Something like that is also implied in the frequent phrase *g-yung drung lha'i bon* (exalted or 'high' Bon, 'of the gods'; reminiscent of the Dunhuang phrase *lha'i chos*),³⁵ particularly frequent in self-references.³⁶ Interestingly, this also appears as *g-yung drung dag pa'i bon*: pure Bon.

g-Yung drung bon in the *mDo 'dus*³⁷ (and the *Klu 'bum*)³⁸ is closely related to statement of truth. Generally, truth (*bden*) is considered a key

³² E.g., *g-yung drung mi 'gyur snying po long* (p.60.6), *zad med g-yung drung dbyings su gnas pa'i bon* (p.124.1) and *'gyur med g-yung drung thob* (in a unique enumeration of types of bon on pp.123.3–4.1:

de la bon gyis rnams grang na/

1) *'dus byas 'khor ba'i bon rnams/*

2) *'dus ma byas pa mya ngan la 'das pa'i bon/*

3) *thugs rje rgya chen po bon rnams/*

4) *'phrul ngag bden pa'i bon/*

5) *srid par brgyud pa'i bon/*

6) *dge sdig 'byed pa'i bon/*

ston pa'i bka' ni

1) *gnam bab bon/*

2) *rang shar rig par rang rdol bon/*

3) *rgyu mthun rang lug bon/*

4) *rdo shing rang 'gyur bon/*

5) *skye med gdod nas dag pa'i bon/*

6) *snang med dpe' las 'das pa'i bon/*

7) *tshad med lhun [124] la rdzogs pa'i bon/*

8) *zad med g-yung drung dbyings su gnas pa'i bon/*

9) *brtsal med lhun gyis grub pa'i bon/*

See also *mi ldog g-yung drung sa thob* (p.160.4), *g-yung drung brtan byed* (p.175.5), and *bkra shis g-yung drung sems mchog thob pa'i bkra shis* (p.191.3)

³³ *Klu 'bum dkar po* (the rTags brtan phun tshogs gling edition), pp.18.5f.: *g-yung drung gi bon 'phrul ngag bden pa chu rgyun*.

³⁴ E.g., PT16.34r1: *sku tshe g-yung drung du bzhes te /*; PT239.14r5: *bde skyid g-yung drung gnas su phyl'n par shog / /*; and PT1287.376: *... skye shi las bsgral to / g-yung drung du bton to / /*. For a more elaborate discussion, see Stein (1983:163,169f; ref. Dan Martin); he speculates that *g-yung drung* might point to Chinese Buddhist vocabulary.

³⁵ See, e.g., Karmay 1998(1981):159.n.7. He believes that in the imperial period *lha'i chos* and *lha la yid ches chos byan* (*bya*) in PT1284 do not refer to Buddhism but to 'Bon'.

³⁶ Cf. also references to presumed linguistic origins: *g-yung drung lha'i skad du*: in the language of ...

³⁷ *g-Yung drung bon* appears synonymous with *bden pa'i bon* (p.94.5, 152.2), *ma 'khrul bden pa'i bon* (98.1) or *'phrul ngag bden pa'i bon* (122.1, pp.123f (123.4), and on p.219.2f).

³⁸ 24.6f: *bon g-yung drung gi dbyings thams cad dang/ ... g-yung drung gi sa bcu thar pa'i bon no//*.

characteristic of Bon, as much as untruth (*rdzun*) is typical for demonic teachings and doings (or for the demon par excellence: *bDud Khyab pa lag ring*). Untruth not merely implies telling lies, but here is used in the sense of mistaken, ineffective, false, unethical (harmful and *therefore* ineffective) teachings. The older quality of *g-yung drung bon*, as eternal and indestructible, is further specified as changeless: *g-yung drung 'gyur med bon*.³⁹ Part of the latter phrase also occurs in a related context of truthfulness, when *gShen rab* defends his non-violent ways (no hunting), against *bDud Khyab pa lag ring*, as the practice (*spyod pa*) of *ma 'khrul bden pa'i bon* (unerring true Bon), which he then, most curiously, explains as protecting the eternal and changeless realm or empire:⁴⁰ apparently true, eternal, and changeless Bon equals defending the eternal empire! This may reveal some of the real-life implications (or aspirations) of truthfulness and effectiveness.⁴¹ Of course, *g-yung drung bon* also frequently appears as a reference to a body of ritual lore (like *gyer*; also attested in Dunhuang sources)⁴² or corpus of teachings, apparently with four gates.⁴³

³⁹ P.97.3; cf. also *g-yung drung mi 'gyur gyer* (sgo), on 146.4.

⁴⁰ P.98.2: *g-yung drung mi 'gyur rgyal srid skyongs*, cf. Karmay.47b.4f: *g-yung drung ma 'gyur rgyal sras spyod*.

⁴¹ Cf. PT16.35r1ff: \$ /: / *thang du gtsigs kyl gtsug lag khang bzhengs par mdo gams kyl kham kyi dbang po rnam kyls dkon mcog gsum la mcod cing yon phul ba 'dI'i bsod nams dang / byin gyl riabs kyis [35r2] lha btsan po rje blon 'khor dang bcas pa'I sdig pa thams cad nI byang / bsod nams dang ye shes kyl tshogs nI yongsu rdzogs nas chab srId mjal dum g-yung drung du brtan sku tse rIng zhing lha dang myl'i bde skyid [35r3] phun sum tshogs pa la gnas te / bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'I byang cub lhun gyls grub par smon to / /*

PT16.35v2ff: *'o lde spu rgyal gnam gyl lha las myl'I rjer gshegs pa yong gls sku bla gnyan / chab srId che / chos bzang / gtsug [35v3] lag che bas yul byung sa [ngod (/dod)] tshun cad rje'I gdung ma gyurd te / chab srId g-yung drung du brtan zhIng che ba'I bka' drIn chen pos phyogs bryad du khyab par khebste / ...*

PT16.40v1ff: *thugs sgam dbu rmog brtsan ba'I rje blon thugs la 'phrul dgongs phas rgya drug 'jang las stsogs pha [40v2] bar du bka' myl mnyand pa yang 'bangs gnyug ma dang 'dra bar rnal du phab nas dbu rmog brtsan la chab srId che ba'I 'dab la phyogs par gsol nas / mjal dum gyi gtsigs bcas nas [40v3] rdo rIngs la brIs / gtsIgs kyl gtsug lag khang bzhengs nas so kham kyl khrom nI dal / yul chen po'I dbus skyid cing dar par bgyIs pa 'dI las bka' drIn che ba ma mcis pas srI zhu dang bka' [40v4] drIn dran ba'I mtsan pa tsam du dkon mchog gsum la yon ba'I bsod nams kyls / bod rje blon 'khor dang bcas pha sku tshe dang mnga' thang g-yung drung du grub la bod kham na phas kyl dgra dang 'khrug pa'I myl gragste /*

⁴² PT1136.56ff: *nub gsuM bon gshen bon du bsgyerd na sang 'gi nam nangs na 'geg lug nag po dang 'geg ra rgya bo la bdud dgu ni bdud du bor zhing [57] mchis / / lcam lho rgyal byang mo tsun gi mgul nas / / rtsi dag gnag chig grol ching mchiste zhal mdangs dkar ni sla re 'od de zhal dang [58] bzhad pa lta zhing bzhugs nas / / yab rtsang ho de'i hos bdag gis shid du ni gtang 'tshal 'brang du ni gzugs 'tshal zhes gsung nas [59] rgyal thag bryad bas*

Present-day bon po-s take care to distinguish g-Yung drung bon from so-called unreformed 'old Bon' and, since approximately the 18th c. AD, also from gSar bon; while stressing the point that the latter *au fond* also are Bon. The distinction specifically of gSar bon obviously is a more recent concern (and one which also is not on the forefront of explanations shared with an outsider). But in reference to the distinction of contemporary Bon from 'unreformed' varieties of Bon, such as may still be preserved in its lower vehicles, bon po-s seem to have retained memories of developments of early *phyi dar* Bon identity discourse. There is a fair chance that the term *g-yung drung bon* in early Bon discourse was originally coined precisely to set it apart from this-worldly goals and apotropaic rites of 'unreformed' Bon, such as that mentioned nebulous (and probably (re)invented) pre-imperial entity '*dur bon*', which, even though it is referred to in Dunhuang sources, we mainly know from later historiography on earlier periods and from later *gter ma* literature such as the *Dur chog* and *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* rites. g-Yung drung bon thus sets itself apart as a reformed and nirvanic variety of Bon, which instead strives toward (a state of) release or liberation, here apparently characterised as *g-yung drung*. Needless to say, these are goals that accord well with *phyi dar* Buddhist sensibilities, but it is interesting that *phyi dar* bon po-s elected a term so obviously associated with 'vile' eternalism.

When it appears in an old context, we therefore may have to translate g-Yung drung bon as 'Nirvanic Bon' rather than as 'Eternal Bon'. Thus an old (i.e., older than Bon) Tibetan translation term for the Buddhist *summum bonum* was elected as *the* Bon shibboleth, which may even be a phonetical rendering of a Chinese loanword!

Continuing the Discussion:
gShen and Bon in Early Bon Sources

Back to our brief survey of the early history of gShen rab stories: the Dunhuang gShen rab(s) character, who in many stories does indeed appear slightly senior (Stein 1988:44), for understandable reasons makes it into the role of founder, while his colleagues in narrative, such as the Dur gshen rma da (na)-type of *gshen*, seem all but forgotten.

la bchas se gru bzhi lung du brtsiste / yab kyis do ma ra ni bkra la bya drangso / |. Cf. PT1134.124: *bon gang gis / ni / bgyerd / ...*

⁴³ P.109.2f: *g-yung drung bon sgo bzhi* (Karmay.52b.2 omits *bzhi*), at the mention of the *ma brtag pa'i dgra bzhi*.

Quite contrary to later usage, the *Dur gshen* type even occurs slightly more frequently in old ritualistic Dunhuang-period sources than does the *gShen rab(s)* type of ritual specialist. Considering the great importance of healing and death ritual in that literature, this should hardly come as a surprise. '*Dur*' refers to tombs and funerary rites after all, associated with controversial blood sacrifices, a Buddhist anathema. It is probably for this reason that the old '*dur gshen*' funerary type ritual specialist was eventually marginalised; for example: banished, in a most telling way, to the specific contexts of the exceptional funerary rites of those somewhat eccentric '*dur gter ma*' cycles, such as the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* and '*Dur chog*', which are attributed to Ku tsha zla 'od (sPa ro find, perhaps of the 11th c. AD) or to Thog thog lhung lha. It is telling indeed that the rMa da-type *gshen* should rise to prominence once again precisely in these self-proclaimed '*dur*' rites.

These late '*dur*' death ritual cycles consciously seem to court—and perhaps also to a certain extent reinvent—that good old & powerful, but controversial '*dur*' funerary expertise, to be used, eccentrically, especially for cases of violent, sudden, or accidental death (*gri 'dur*). I was told—in fact by the very recipient of this felicitation volume—that '*dur*' rites would not be considered appropriate for ordinary deaths.⁴⁴

Dur gshen rma da (na) also occasionally reappears in other, later Bon sources, such as, the *mDo chen po bzhi* (in all three titles), in the *Srid pa rgyud kyi kha byang*⁴⁵ and the *Kun 'bum*.⁴⁶ In the *mDo chen po bzhi* we incidentally encounter very interesting spelling variants: instead of *rma da* we also find *rma lo*⁴⁷ and *rma bo* (more on these elsewhere).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ More on this follows in my forthcoming volume on *Antecedents of Bon Religion in Tibet*, which deals with continuity and change in Bon funerary doctrine at the turn of the first millennium. See now also Bellezza, 2008 and cf. n.4 above: he makes extensive use of these *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* and attempts to embed his findings of material remains in (north-)western Tibet, particularly those pertaining to funerary culture, in this and other Bon sources via his trade-mark 'exegetically enhanced' readings of non-Buddhist Dunhuang funerary texts.

⁴⁵ E.g., p.31.7 of the Dolanji MS (cf. p.314.6 in the *Bon bKa' 'gyur* III version of the *mDo 'dus*).

⁴⁶ In the *Kun 'dul lcags lha*, p.353, the name '*dur gshen rmad da*' appears as one of the eight great protectors (*skyobs pa chen po*). All of these will be discussed in detail elsewhere ('Location' volume).

⁴⁷ *sNod rten 'byung ba chags 'jig pa'i mdo*, p.144.2, and *Srid pa kham ssum sems can skye mchi'i mdo*, p.124.5: '*dur gsas rma lo*.

⁴⁸ *Bla med go phang sgrub thabs*, p.486.3, and *sNod rten 'byung ba chags 'jig pa'i mdo*, p.60.6 and 148.5: '*dur gsas rma bo*. These clusters of names will also be discussed in the forthcoming monograph on the 'location' of origin of Bon and the significance of the rMa name in its history of ideas.

These first oblique Dunhuang references to a gShen rab(s) character—in a sense of course unfortunately⁴⁹—appear rather off-centre, compared to the opposite far western corners where the heartland of Bon is usually visualised.⁵⁰ Thomas (1957) feels that he has good reason to believe that, language-wise and narratologically, some Dunhuang sources are of local origin and he therefore assumes that some passages may in fact have originated in that very north-eastern quarter of the Tibetan empire. It should indeed be obvious that Dunhuang narratives and their elements partly may not only have been *recorded* in north-eastern Buddhist Dunhuang, but may in fact also have *originated* there and not in a traditionally presumed western heartland of Bon. I now emphatically refer to the origins of individual narremes and not to the early locations in which these narremes later were incorporated into the narratives that eventually fed into Bon master narratives and *phyi dar* Bon identity discourse.

Some narrative content of Dunhuang sources may indeed gravitate on north-eastern Tibet for the simple reason that the narratives were around in that area. While, because of its proximity and availability, local cultures thus may have left a more significant stamp on the library than those from other quarters of what was then becoming Tibet, and while the first narremes on gShen rab(s) were preserved somewhat off-centre, we nonetheless have reason to believe that what was collected in the Tibetan Dunhuang caves reflects narrative traditions that were prominent in wider Tibet, also for instance in southern

⁴⁹ Imagine finding such caches in areas where Bon later was most prominent!

⁵⁰ As I will argue in the 'Location' volume, through examination of narratives and by tracing individual narremes through various non-Buddhist Dunhuang and early Bon sources, we are able to localise a proto-heartland of 'Bon' (if there ever was such an entity beyond its literary tropes) much closer to Central Tibet than has generally been assumed. Analysis of Dunhuang sources yields a cluster of names and narremes, the central elements of which, quite serendipitously, receive surprising independent confirmation from later Bon sources, which are usually overlooked. The exact topographical locations that go with the names are still unclear; the descriptive parts are not entirely consistent and also not completely inconsistent. This may be because, as the master narrative developed, the location moved westward. In any case, the heartland 'trajectory' seems to lie mainly within the ancient rTsang chen river area, probably somewhere between rKong po and the Kailas area. But what look like the earliest layers in Dunhuang narratives may even put it squarely in present-day dBus.

The deliberations on the (personal) use of the word *bon po* in Dunhuang Tibetan and early Bon sources also already anticipate on that conclusion: this is where the really good *bon* and *gshen* ritual specialists are from!

quarters.⁵¹ Important evidence testifying to the presence or survival of narratives of that ilk in other areas of Tibet does occasionally surface, such as in the *Klu 'bum* (cf. Stein 1971), in some of the texts that were recently recovered from dGa' thang 'bum pa in southern Tibet (Pasang Wangdu 2007), and in other Bon sources as well.

The scattered narrative relics from Dunhuang most likely reflect wider narrative traditions, which formed the point of origin of later, self-consciously Bon legends about a *ston pa* called gShen rab mi bo.⁵² The *ston pa* variety of the name of the founder is first attested in the *Klu 'bum* and thus starts developing no earlier than the early Buddhist *phyi dar*. This is the time that non-Buddhist interest groups felt challenged to show to the world a suitable founder who could outshine that other famous *ston pa*, the historical Buddha of successfully emerging *phyi dar* Buddhist sects. Work within the *Three Pillars of Bon* research scheme on the available sources confirms the obvious and ubiquitous observation that, like for other pillars of identity, also for narratives on the founder we cannot but observe that the quantum leap into self-consciously Bon narratives takes place at the turn of the first millennium AD.⁵³

From that turning point onward, stories not only gain narrative weight and complexity, but also acquire a distinct identity vector. Ritualistic narrative traditions evolve into the type of teaching hagiography and identity discourse that we still find reflected in extant recensions of the 'biography' of the founder of Bon, the *mDo 'dus*⁵⁴ and, in a more developed manner, in the *gZer myig*⁵⁵ (and *gZi brjid*). A good starting hypothesis would therefore be that the *mDo 'dus* and *gZer myig* use a comparable matrix of oral and written traditions of narratives regarding a gShen rab(s) figure, the earliest written records of which we find in Dunhuang sources.⁵⁶

⁵¹ In any case, I am far from arguing that the heartland of Bon would be anywhere near Dunhuang (cf. Beckwith, PIATS 2006). The fact that about the only pre-tenth c. AD non-Buddhist Tibetan sources that we have, hail from the Dunhuang area and the fact that obviously much material of local relevance ended up in those caches, should not seduce us to conflate the two, and assume that the haphazard preservation of references to non-Buddhist culture in an eccentric location recommends that eccentric location as the centre of that non-Buddhist culture.

⁵² See Stein 1988, cf. Karmay 1975 and Spanien/MacDonald 1978–79.

⁵³ See the 'Location' volume of the *Three Pillars of Bon* programme.

⁵⁴ In one volume, Karmay (1975:176f) presumes parts may date back to the 10th c. AD or before. See Blezer 2008, "William of Ockham, Jan van Gorp and Tibetan Studies" and Gurung, forthc. PIATS 2006.

⁵⁵ Usually in two volumes; according to Karmay (1975:177) to be dated around the 11th c. AD or earlier.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Blezer 2008, "William of Ockham, Jan van Gorp and Tibetan Studies". More elaborate discussion will appear in a forthcoming Ph.D. thesis on the creation

It is at this point in time that the grand narratives on gShen rab and Bon really take off. They start to 'get organised' and develop, they breed and split like amoebas, in conjunction with the formation of Bon as a cluster of more or less consciously non-Buddhist interest groups in Tibet. As far as the structure and complexity of the stories goes, there is a considerable gap between narratives reflected in Dunhuang sources and those contained in hagiographical sources of the turn of the first millennium.⁵⁷ But, as said, the older paradigm also remains productive in later times, e.g., in then still developing *Klu 'bum* collections, which continue the older Dunhuang narrative paradigm and develop it further (as is clearly indicated by the mentioned use of the title *ston pa*, "teacher"), but also in other, later (often ritualistic) texts.

Later hagiographical collections made use of narratives that were 'around'. The main narratives of later hagiography, such as the *mDo 'dus*, still are of the crisis management type, but the paradigm appears more elaborate now and also includes elopement (nb. of gShen rab), occasional construction work, and the like as stock elements. The typical elaborated story paradigm features gShen rab, now styled sTon pa, going or being invited abroad, resolving a crisis, teaching, and bringing home a bride as a prize. The Dunhuang layer of narratives barely carries a vector of (collective) identity, while, on the other hand, the later *phyi dar* hagiographical layer is clearly and consciously narrating towards a religious founder and a separate Bon cultural and religious identity and thus clearly reflects the emergence of an 'organised' form of Bon religion (however factionally and regionally disjointed and apparently disorganised).

The narrative develops further into the humongous 14th-c. AD *gter ma gZi brjid*.⁵⁸ And as legends grow, the date of birth of the founder seems to move back in time and even out of time, to the preternatural, eventually ending up in the Indian Palaeolithic; thus 'out-originating' the historical Buddha by a landslide. mKhan chen Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (b. 1813) in his *Chronology of the Teachings (bsTan rtsis)* dates gShen rab to 16.016 BC (see Kværne 1971)!

of the myth of the founder of Bon, by Kalsang Norbu, within the *Three Pillars* research and publication scheme.

⁵⁷ Which are styled *Dus gsum* [founder] *'byung khungs kyi mdo*, with varying indications for the "founder": *sangs rgyas*, *ston pa*, *bde gshegs*, cf. Blezer 2008, "William of Ockham, Jan van Gorp and Tibetan Studies".

⁵⁸ Up to 12 volumes, traditionally believed to have been 'dictated' in vision to Blo ldan snying po (b.1360).

**Second Part: The gShen rab Marriage Stories in the *mDo 'dus*:
The Expanded 'Expedition Abroad' Narrative**

Now let us look at some samples for the gShen rab narrative paradigm of the extended type in the *mDo 'dus* and examine how these relate to the more limited Dunhuang paradigm and to each other. As said, the later, more developed sTon pa gShen rab mi bo narrative paradigm is also of the crisis management type. It typically takes the form of an 'expedition abroad'-narrative. It occurs in several stencilled variants, which, because of their topographical implications, I will discuss in more detail elsewhere ('Location' volume).⁵⁹ Those expanded narratives have been preserved in the *mDo 'dus* and also in the larger hagiographical collections, the *gZer myig* and *gZi brjid*. I will here only briefly discuss these stories in their briefest and presumably (read: apparently) least edited form, such as they appear in the *mDo 'dus*. Six expeditions and marriages are mentioned here (see Appendix II), involving the daughters of:

1. the King of Hos (Dang ba yid ring;⁶⁰ main narrative in *mDo 'dus* chapter 9);
2. the King of dPo' (main narrative in chapter 10);
3. the lHa (only brief mention in chpt. 6 and 18);
4. the gSas (only brief mention in chpt. 6 and 18);
5. the King of rKong po (Central Tibet; main narrative in chpt. 12);
6. Kong tse (main narrative in chpt. 11).⁶¹

⁵⁹ One reason to look more deeply into the possibility of cloning of the expedition abroad narratives in early Bon hagiography and summarily include that discussion in the 'Location' volume is because those excursions abroad also map out the topographical environment of the narrative centre of the gShen rab myth and thus also reflect back on the narrated heartland of Bon, *casu quo*, 'Ol mo lung ring, Khyung lung dngul mkhar, and indirectly also on Ta zig and Zhang zhung. The likelihood of a stencilling of the marriage stories is prone to have consequences for the perceptions of the topographical and political realities that are referred to in the stories as well.

⁶⁰ This probably is a fictional character. Note that a *rgyal chen po hos dang ba yid ring* is also mentioned in one of the *mDo chen po bzhi*: the *Bla med go 'phang bsgrub thabs*, on p.365A: *Bla med go 'phang bsgrub thabs*, on pp.364.7ff: *sngon gyi skal pa dang po la/ yul mchog 'dzam bu gling gi snying pa/ stag gzig gi yul/ 'ol mo lung ring gi lho phyogs/ gshin rje'i gling khrod ba ma che'i mtsho gling nal dur bya dang / dur seng dang / dur stag dang / zhags pa can dang / gnam la 'chong ba dang / nag la skem pa dang / lcags ri la nye ba rnams/ gdug par byed pa'i yul de nal ri gtsug rum 'bar ba bya ba yod do/ grong khyer lang ling chen pa bya ba yod do/ rgyal po chen po hos dang ba yid ring gi bya ba yod do/ slob dpon chen po drang srang gtsug gshen rgyal ba bya ba/ rgyal po chen po la btsun mo phyza 'gu ling ma ting bya ba/ sras rgyal buy id de ring mo dang/ gsal ba ring mo bya ba/ bu mo gsal dga' yid gtong shes bya / ... See also the discussion of Ho de'i hos bdag later.*

The Lha and gSas merely occur in listings of marital alliances and their contexts are not narrated in the *mDo 'dus*; the others are fully narrated 'expeditions abroad'. Another early source, the *bsGrags pa rin chen gling grags* (Dolanji MS, Khedup Gyatso, p.29:1) does not even mention the Lha, gSas, and Kong tse episodes. It only mentions marriages with the Hos, dPo', and rKong za. The basic plot and main character types of the episodes are very similar and are entirely comparable to the simpler Dunhuang paradigm. It may be interesting to note that in the *mDo 'dus* the pairs of offspring or relatives show remarkably little individuality. The cardboard pair of rMa lo & g-Yu lo (relatives), for instance, usually acts as one entity and is of uncertain, if not confused, descent (more on that in the 'Location' volume). Their artificiality is clearly apparent and so is that of the Lung 'dren & rGyud 'dren (dPo') or the gTo bu & dPyad bu (Hos) pair (offspring), whose names refer to familiar pairs of doctrinal and ritual elements. They may even have entered the respectable gShen family tree as textual corruptions. In any case, all appear the artificially construed, ideal-typical, male kin and offspring of a great man. Comparison of the four main stories suggests that all may be calques from one of two prototypes: either the brief story of rKong po provided the prototype or, perhaps, the typologically similar Hos story (which in its narremes eventually might relate to old rTsang instead).

gShen rab in rKong po

Among the successful marriage exploits of the great man and teacher gShen rab, the rKong po prototype certainly stands out because in some of its referents—even though not in its plot!—it could possibly be (partly) historical. The rKong po story provides the briefest version of an expedition-abroad narrative with little elaboration, embellishments and inserts. In its referents, it also appears most securely seated in history. The historicity of the King of rKong po, rKong rje dKar po rmang po rje, is relatively firm: he already meets us in early written

⁶¹ Note that the '*Dul ba gling grags* (p.117.7ff), attributed to rMa (ston shes rab seng ge) 12th c. AD?, mentions some of the above kings: (in a long list ...) *de nas rgya pa'i dus gsang [118] ba 'dus pas ston pa mdzad/ de dus khri shes dkar po thugs kyi sprul pa las! rgyal po drug sprul pa las! gdung rgyud kyi rgyal po drug gang zhe na/ dmu gshen lha'i dung rgyud/ shag gar gsas kyi bdung rgyud/ hos nam gsas kyi rdung rgyud/ dpon [dpo'] gsas kyi rdung rgyud/ rgya dgod gsas kyi rdung rgyud/ gnyan kha 'gying gi rdung rgyud/ ...* Namgyal Nyima Dagkar in his Graz article connects these kings with Ta zig, it is not sure what that deduction is founded on (as far as this passage is concerned): it is not at all apparent from the context in the '*Dul ba gling grags*. Also the *Srid pa rgyud kyi kha byang*, p.307.4, refers to six kings, in connection with the *yab bdal drug*.

sources, such as the rKong po inscription (Richardson, 1985:64ff) and Dunhuang sources (e.g., PT1060, PT1285–87 and ITJ0734). It is interesting to contemplate that this reference to a rKong rje dKar po might incidentally preserve the same trace of a date for the narrative origins of the gShen rab character as does the narrative outlook of relevant Dunhuang sources: it also points to approximately the 8th c. AD, for the matrix from which narrative elements were drawn.

The Confucius or Kong tse story may have been incorporated into this cycle of ‘expedition abroad’ and marriage stories merely because of (structural) similarities with the rKong po story. That marriage episode, too, is not listed in the *Gling grags* text (Dolanji 29:1); it therefore looks like a later addition. (rGya) Kong tse ‘phrul gyi rgyal po (rGya = China), as a name, seems to be a conflation of a transliteration and a translation. The Chinese (rGya) Kong or Keng tse is a story character known from similar narratives preserved in Dunhuang, in Tibetan and Chinese,⁶² but also from a later Mongol version,⁶³ and from other Chinese versions that surfaced more recently in China (19th c. AD; for the latter see Soymié, 1954). The Tibetan name obviously transliterates the Chinese name Confucius (Kong Fuzi, 孔夫子), but it here denotes a king (*rgyal po*) and story character without significant Confucian associations. The character Kong (孔) is rendered by Kong or Keng. Stein argues that it has to be read as “sage or divine being, possessing supernatural powers” and that this in turn has been translated into Tibetan as ‘*phrul* or *sprul*’ (Stein, 1973:417). In the Tibetan version of the Chinese name Confucius: Kong tse ‘phrul gyi rgyal po, a phonetic rendering (Kong tse) thus appears to have been joined to a translation of the same (‘*phrul*).

In the process of assimilation of the Kong tse story, Tibetans may however have read “Kong” as a toponym, similar to “rKong” or rKong po in rKong rje dKar po. It is very well possible that the main reasons for including this particular narrative in the *mDo ‘dus* are the match in ‘toponymical’ (r)Kong names and some other, more structural similarities in the narratives as well. The form in which the story eventually appears in the *mDo ‘dus*, definitely shows similarities with

⁶² See Karmay’s (2000:169ff.) article: “The Interview between Phyva Keng-tse lan med and Confucius”; who bases himself on the *gZer myig* version of the story and studies its relation to the older Dunhuang versions. Cf. now also Shen yu-lin in RET 12, 2007 and Kalsang Norbu in the proceedings of the first *International Seminar for Young Tibetologists* in London (2008).

⁶³ That Mongol version apparently derives from a Tibetan one that probably was not earlier than the 13th c. AD, which suggests that there may have been other Tibetan versions around.

the rKong po story, such as the crisis paradigm, important construction work (temple in the sea and the central caste called Khyung lung rmgul mkhar—its founding is in fact *only* mentioned in these two stories), and, of course the marriage exploit. There also is a more subtle associative, somewhat tangled fabric of motifs perceptible in the narrative and in references elsewhere, which somehow involve the Kong or Keng tse name. In Tibet, the Kong or Keng tse name is connected with astrological and other practical skills or wisdom.

In this light, a description of Yid kyi khye'u chung in *mDo 'dus* (p.59.6): *Yid kyi khye'u chung rdzu 'phrul can* [60] *yi ge 'phrul slag sku la gyon/* deserves comparison to the attempted explanation of the name of Kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po on the basis of *gab tse* astrology in the *gZer myig* and *gZi brjid*. In the *gZer myig* Kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po is said to have been born with special signs.⁶⁴ In the *mDo 'dus*, *rdzu 'phrul can yi ge 'phrul slag*—a magical (*rdzu 'phrul can*) fur coat (*slag pa*) with magical ('*phrul*) letters (*yi ge*)—may derive from a phrase used elsewhere: '*phrul gyi yi ge 'phrul* and *lag* (hand), in reference to astrology:⁶⁵ the magical letters of *gab tse* astrology on the palm of the hand (*lag*) of Kong tse, in the Yid kyi khye'u chung narrative, in transmission, changed into a coat (*slag*) with magical letters.

The Kong tse or Confucius story may have been 'just one of those narratives that were around' at the north-eastern borders of Tibet, at the time that the sTon pa gShen rab hagiography started to develop: probably simply too good a story to ignore. In spite of the somewhat serendipitous nature of the inclusion of the Chinese Kong tse story into the *mDo 'dus* gShen rab repertoire, its presence should also alert us that for understanding the gShen rab character, Chinese connections may occasionally also need to be pursued.

⁶⁴ See the edition of the *gZer m(y)ig* Tsering Thar, Beijing 1998 (1991), chapter 13, p.536.11ff: ... *lag pa g-yas g-yon gyi mthil la/ gab rtse'i 'phrul gyi yi ge sum cu rgyal rtags su 'khor bar bris nas chags pa/ de la yab kyang shin tu spro ba skyes nas/ mtshan gsol pa nil rgyal po rgya'i rigs la 'phrul gyi yi ge gab tse sum cus 'khor bar bris pas/ rgya kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal por ming btags so.*

⁶⁵ Cf. also the *gZi brjid*, Dolanji *dpe cha* edition, vol.11, chapter 50, p.1891ff, which apparently does not locate the letters on the palms of the hands (in fact it is not clear from the text where exactly they are supposed to manifest): ... *rkang mthil na 'gyur ba med pa'i g-yung drung shar ba/ ...* [189.3] ... *shin tu yang mtshan dang ldan pa lags na/ 'phrul gyi yi ge sum cu bris pa zhig snang ba/ mtshan yang rgyal po rgya yi rigs kong rtse 'phrul gyi dbang yig can zhes bya bar btags so/ ...*

gShen rab(s) in rTsang:

Hos dang ba yid ring, rTsang Ho de'i hos bdag and His po his bdag?

Already in Dunhuang sources, a Lord of Hos appears in the immediate narrative environment of a gShen rab(s) myi bo figure. Here too, gShen rab(s) myi bo comes to the aid of a Lord of Hos (and his son). In the second part of PT1136 we find a 'healing/funeral' narrative in which a lord from rTsang (chen), Jo bo rTsang Ho de'i hos bdag, and his son, variously called sMa bu, rMa bu, and Smra bon zing ba'i zing skyes, are involved in securing proper funerary service for their unfortunate daughter and sister. This story also involves a marital alliance with a Lord from Gu ge (rkang phran), which apparently is not entirely successful and leads to the lady's misfortune. The similar clustering of narremes in the simpler Dunhuang version of the story may therefore render it a very likely candidate for the construction of the expanded Hos-story in the *mDo 'dus* or for the other marriage stories.

We therefore need to look into the Jo bo (Lord) of rTsang, called Ho de'i hos bdag, of PT1136. There appear to be problems, particularly concerning names. These problems seem to be the result of conflation and condensation of story elements over time, so typical of orality. The name Hos bdag, 'Master of (the) Hos', clearly suggests a ruler of an area or people called Hos, such as indeed also meets us later in *mDo 'dus* chapter nine. But if his son is named sMa, rMa or sMra bu (zing ba'i zing skyes) and if rMa would have to be understood as a toponym, then the reading of his name could be problematic. One would rather expect something like rTsang or Hos bu. Compare, for instance Hos za, for the name of the married daughter of the King Hos (Dang ba yid ring), in the *mDo 'dus*, where all this appears in more polished form.

As has become evident in a detailed study of the uses of *smra/rma/sma* in Dunhuang sources (forthc. 'Location' volume), the fact that *rma* might also function as a toponym, at least elsewhere, is not at all unlikely.⁶⁶ As such the name may have migrated from stories originating in the rMa chu (river) area in far north-eastern Tibet to other narrative contexts. Yet, most likely, the name sMa/rMa bu in PT1136 does not specifically mean son of a man from the rMa chu area anymore, but in this narrative, in a different geographical context, the name may have assumed the meaning of *myi bu*, son of man, more or less in a mythical sense, as also invoked in ritual recitation, such as in

⁶⁶ The uses of *rma* of course do not necessarily need to match in all text locations.

smrang and *rabs*, a genre that the stories under discussion definitely pertain to. This argument is developed in greater detail elsewhere, the middle-length version (*'bring po*) of which will appear in an edited volume on *Emerging Religions, Breaking the Paradigm* (of traditional historiography) and a full-length version (*rgyas pa*) in the 'Location' volume. The main conclusions of that research, I have resumed in Oxford, for an invited lecture, which may come on-line soon.⁶⁷ PT1136 and a couple of other Dunhuang sources are very important for our understanding of the development of gShen rab(s) and its narrative environment, including visualisations of a heartland of Bon.

Coming back to the name *hos*. Based on its occurrences in Dunhuang sources, it seems very unlikely that *hos* in Hos bdag is to be taken as a toponym. PT1136 and IOL734, suggests that Ho de'i hos bdag is a narrative variant of the name His de chen po (father and king) and the deity's (or king's) name His po his bdag, both of which appear in IOL734 (cf. Thomas 1957:IV:52ff.); or *vice versa*. In IOL734 meets us another group of stories that involve similar 'rMa' characters. *Hos* there appears a variant of *his* and I therefore should advise against digging into *hos* for further realia. But this orthographic manoeuvre of course merely shifts the burden of a 'breathless' (*his*) exercise in toponymy from *hos* to *his* (or *vice versa*). The narreme may have been around for a while. This is a fine example for how clusters of names (central Tibetan Hos and originally Eastern Tibetan rMa) migrate and are transmuted.

The migration did not stop here. The *mDo chen po bzhi* and *mDo 'dus* may erroneously derive *hos*, as if it were a toponym, from older narratives about a Hos bdag in rTsang, as are preserved in Dunhuang texts. The reading of *hos* as a toponym in the name of the king that in the *mDo 'dus* is called Dang ba yid ring, creates the need for to a locality called Hos and thus gave rise to a novel narrative entity: six Hos mo islands: Hos mo gling drug.⁶⁸ But here too, we see that 'new' often merely implies 'newly recycled' in accordance with pre-existing names and sensibilities. The *mDo 'dus* Hos mo gling reconstruction of Dunhuang-period *hos* narremes, incidentally, also seems to indicate that the rTsang area, where the Hos bdag in the Dunhuang precursor hails from, relates to Hos mo gling and perhaps to the nearly homophonous 'Ol mo gling!

⁶⁷ Oxford University Faculty of Oriental Studies, *Numata Distinguished Guest Speaker Series: The Advent of Buddhism in Tibet*, March 7th 2008: "Narrating the Centre of Bon: Narrating Bon out of the Centre".

⁶⁸ Cf. the *Kun 'bum khra bo bzhus pa'i dbu phyogs* (tentative dating 13th c. AD or younger), p.30.6, where these six islands are located in the north-eastern direction of gShen yul 'Ol mo lung ring (p.28.3f).

This is a conclusion that we also reached independently, in the above-mentioned middling and long versions of our discussion of the topographical implications of narrative elements. Early indications for a proto-heartland of Bon are more centrally in Tibet. Hos mo gling and 'Ol mo gling originally may have been related narrative entities that both were associated with a proto-heartland of Bon, but that at some point went separate ways. The *mDo 'dus* king of Hos, like gShen rab, in its literary construction might thus also refer to a fictional character.

A 'great king' Hos dang ba yid ring also appears in one of the *mDo chen po bzhi*.⁶⁹ In an elaborate geographical layout he is placed in the city Lang ling, south of sTag gzig gi yul 'Ol mo lung ring,⁷⁰ located in the heart of Yul mchog 'Dzam bu gling. Incidentally, that is also the place where, according to the *gZer myig*, gShen rab's father, rGyal bon thod dkar, first spotted his lovely wife rGyal bzhad ma, gShen rab's mother. It is well known that the *mDo chen po bzhi* live from the same fount of stories as the *mDo 'dus* (Blezer 2008, "Ockham").

The Open Ends of *Hos* and *Bon*

But the Hos story does not end with the narrativisation of Dunhuang-period precedents into the expanded expedition abroad narratives of Bon hagiography on its founder. In fact, it seems that later tradition, in its narrative reconstructions of pre-tenth century themes from 'non-Buddhist' founts that it considered suitable for this purpose, has very closely followed the leads—say: native narrative vectors—that the original contexts provided or suggested, not only to these later, increasingly self-conscious bon po-s in the early *phyi dar*, but to us still. Thus, not only do we see the new major narrative vectors of Bon identity-discourse arise, together with those, we also see minor vectors appear, which look like vestiges as it were, of original contexts of the recycled narrative elements, which were retained as significant.

If we carefully study later perceptions and connotations of *hos*, we have reason to believe that emerging bon po-s perceived the Hos narratives on gShen rab(s) myi bo—as they presently are still reflected in PT1136—as being inextricably close to gShen rab(s) and the origins of their own tradition and identity.

⁶⁹ See the *Bla med go 'phang bsgrub thabs*, chapter one: 'Chi bdag zlog byed kyi mdo las Gling bzhi'i le'u, pp.363–6, esp. p.365.4. The passage is quoted above at the expedition abroad narratives (see the King of Hos).

⁷⁰ The *Kun 'bum* also locates Lang (ma) ling to the south of 'Ol mo lung ring: p.30.5 and p.59.3f. (Lang ling).

Besides the inclusion of *hos* narremes into later sTon pa gShen rab hagiography, another telling sign is that, perhaps already shortly after its incorporation into the first Bon legends and myths on a founder—at least from the twelfth century AD—the word *hos* even moved to the very centre of Bon, as a general, abstract, and presumably Zhang chung term for a bon ritual specialist,⁷¹ which was also believed to cover many of the other meanings of *bon*.⁷² The connection between the Lord of Hos and gShen rab(s) apparently was perceived to be so close—as in narrative analyses they indeed turn out to be—that later traditional scholars have had to conclude that *hos* and *bon* are near-

⁷¹ Already in the 12th c. AD, Hos started to shift from its original and specific 'location' in narrative, of a clan name or toponym, a usage also still reflected in the *mDo 'dus*, to a more generic qualification for Bon. See for example the *rGyud thugs rje nyi ma'i man ngag ye shes zang thal*, a text included in the *bKa' 'gyur rgyud sde'i skor*, vol.VI, pp.455-560, Dolanji 1972. This text was discovered by Gu ru rnon rtse (b. 1136 AD), whose Buddhist name according to the volume introduction is supposed to be A ya bon po lha 'bum. In an interesting list of lexical equations (pp.500f), on p.500.2 there appears lists for *bon* and *gshen*: *zhang chung skad du hos/ me nyag skad du rog rog/ bru zha'i skad du rung smar / bod skad du bon/ zhang chung skad du u pa ya/ me nyag skad du ni lde hrangs/ bru zha'i skad du zang zang lha/ bod skad du gshen/*.

⁷² Another possibly relatively early reference we find in the highly interesting *Ka ba gling dgu*, collection, of nine volumes in Vol.Ca, Vol.50 of the Mongyal Lhasay (III) edition (this is Vol.53 of the Bon *bKa' 'gyur*, 203ff. in the 1991 edition, arranged by Ayong Rinpoche). According to the *dKar chag* of Bla ming g-Yung drung tshul khriims dbang grags (b.1868), this cycle of nine texts was extracted from the red *mchod rten* at bSam yas by two A tsa ra (p.108: *a tsa ra rnam gnyis kyis bsam yas mchod rten dmar po nas thon pa'i ka ba gling dgu las ...*). On pp.33.1ff: (Ayong ed.: ff.17r.1ff) we read that the 'Bar ba'i klong gyi ston pa answers and teaches Rin po chen snyan gyi khye'u chung po on the spontaneously arising *hos* teachings from the vast expanse of the primordial dimension: *spyir na hos bya ba ni/ bon gyi bye brag shes pa yin/ bon gyi bye brag ma 'gag pa yin/ dung phur [millions] bya ba rnam drangs yin/ rdol ba'i rdol thabs bsam mi khyab/ rig pa rdol nas shar tsam na/ hos rdol ces kyi de la bya/ g-yung drung hos kyi sgom bu ni/ lta ba rang 'byung la zer/ lta ba rang 'byung klong chen ni ...* This passage is revealing for later uses and constructions of *hos* but also for the contested issue of *rdol bon*.

A late digest of these developing sensibilities appears in the *rNam bshad dka' gnad rab gsal*, by the abbot of sMan ri, mKhan chen Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (b. 1813 AD), published in the *Shes rab kyi bla na med par phyin pa mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan las skabs dang po'i rnam bshad tshig don dka' gnad rab gsal*, *The Bonpo Approach to Prajnaparamita*, pp.57-406, Vol.I, Dolanji 1985. On p.92.5 Nyi ma bstan 'dzin writes: *hos zhes bya ba ni/ ye srid g-yung drung bon gyi gsang mtshan lta bu yin te/ ston pa'i phyag mtshan/ bla gur/ rten rdzas rnam la/ hos ru dang/ hos gur/ hos cha zhes sogs gsung pa dang /*. Not only is *hos* equivalent with *bon*, with *g-yung drung bon* even, it also lends its name to sTon pa gShen rab's attributes, his staff tent etc. (quote from Dagkar's contextual ZZ dictionary). The Hos ru is discussed in chpt.26 of the '*Dul ba yongs rdzogs rnam dag sdom byed kyi rgyud* (in '*Dul ba rgyud drug, Bon bKa' 'gyur* III, Vol.3, pp.425.5–28.3, reference by Dan Martin).

synonyms, be they perceived as words from different languages: presumably from Zhang zhung and Tibetan.⁷³

The Hos clan of Hos mo ling drug is then construed as being associated with Zhang zhung as one of its ancient priestly tribes, in analogy to the way that the dMu and gShen clan eventually become associated with 'Ol mo lung ring: Hos apparently was perceived as being so central to gShen rabs and 'Ol mo lung ring that, with the passage of time and after many recastings of Bon origins—and *after* Zhang zhung had moved to the centre of Bon identity—it almost became a multiform of the Bon master narrative. Apparently this could happen in spite of the fact that the Ho de'i hos bdag, in his original context, was marked as a Lord of rTsang. Discussion of his location should also be tied in with my analysis of the location of *yul chab kyi ya bgo*, also mentioned in PT1136 (and PT1060), discussed elsewhere.⁷⁴

⁷³ It is interesting that while *hos* is visualised as a Zhang zhung word, *bon* is considered a Tibetan exonym!!

⁷⁴ I first presented these ideas during the Bonn 2006 IATS (paper forthcoming). While Bellezza then still passionately disagreed with me, I may have been more convincing then, than I surmised. I proposed to read *yul chab kyi ya bgo* and *yar chab rtsang po* (probably a comparable entity, that appears in the *mDo 'dus*, p.102.2ff., Khedup Gyatso edition) as the area defined by the upper divide or headwaters of the (Yar lung rTsang po) river in old rTsang chen. Bellezza interrupted the proceedings of the panel and pointed out that, in his view, *yul chab kyi ya bgo* could not possibly mean that. He strongly felt that it is abundantly clear from the following passage in PT1136: the mention of the marriage of a Lord of Gu ge (rkang phran), that *yul chab kyi ya bgo* should be located in Guge, in western Tibet. During the discussion session, the next day, he explained that, certainly considering the mention of a large marriage party, the wedding should be visualised as taking place in Guge, and that *yul chab kyi ya bgo* therefore should also be located in western Tibet, probably even west of Kailas, near Guge (likewise PT1136 and its rituals).

I use that passage in the forthcoming IATS paper together with some other, related passages, notably PT1060, to argue for a more central location of the Khyung lung castle. The reference to the headwaters of the Yar lung rTsang po curiously seems to place matters in the upper reaches of that river, in old rTsang chen, broadly conceived—as it has to be in the imperial period: somewhere along the rTsang po, between central Tibet and Kailas & Tise. In my reading of PT1136, the Lord of Gu ge came to *yul chab kyi ya bgo* to woo a local lady, lCam lho rgyal byang mo tsun, so the scene setting of the events and hence *yul chab kyi ya bgo* are somewhere in rTsang (chen), where the Lord of rTsang and his daughter are from.

While Bellezza and I did not manage to come to an agreement there and then, I am both honoured and surprised to read that he chose to publish my Bonn thesis after all, and not to pursue his own opinion on the matter. Bellezza now also cites the same PT1060 passage in support. But, alas, he subsequently forgot to disambiguate his translation sufficiently (p.528 reads: “Well then, [her parents] elected to betroth lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun to the lord of the people of Gu-ge, in the river country of the upper headwaters”). What is worse, he does not draw the

Within the current narratological analyses, these kind of literary appropriations and recastings of 'Bon's' perceived past may provide revealing insights into the construction and genealogy of religious historical knowledge. Reflection on the construction of the narratives reveals some of the sensibilities according to which older narremes are reassembled into new narrative structures and contribute to new master narratives: it shows which traditional links are respected and eventually even cultivated, such as Hos-gShen rab(s), and which associations later authors feel obliged or at liberty to ignore, such as the connection Hos-rTsang. The rise of Ti se-centred Zhang zhung sacred geography, in which, probably somewhere around the time of construction of the *Gling grags* narratives, matters Bon become connected to Zhang zhung, Ta zig etc., does not allow the Hos name to remain attached to its early rTsang origins. This is not so much topographical negligence but the simple logic of religious narrative that prioritises expression of particular structures and potentials for meaning over historical and geographical fact. It certainly constitutes a problem or even contradiction to modern sensibilities of space and time, but it may simply be 'the right thing to do' in terms of logic of religious myth.

Conclusions

Considering the narrative proximity of the Dunhuang and *mDo 'dus* Hos stories, their general proximity to the *mDo chen po bzhi*, and the perceived importance of the Hos name and the *hos* type, I should

logical conclusion from that new insight into the *yul chab kyi ya bgo* location and does not adjust his argument accordingly, as would definitely be needed! If the main plot of that section of PT1136 is really in rTsang, it cannot, as Bellezza (2008:522) argues, be adduced as important evidence for the Zhang zhung associations of death rituals engaged in that passage.

This is not an isolated incident, it holds for most of the evidence Bellezza adduces in his section III. The cosmetic redecoration of evidence and exegetical interpolation and enhancement mark that whole section. The main early sources adduced, mostly do not compellingly require—or even allow—being associated with Zhang zhung; in fact, most do not even mention it (which Bellezza occasionally duly notes, but then quickly glosses over). Elsewhere goropises the argument by invoking as a supporting hypothesis a stark conspiracy theory: references to Zhang zhung were systematically left out in sPu rgyal Buddhist dominated literary production (2008:203f). Even apart from the fact that one should be extremely cautious engaging auxiliary hypotheses, considering that he mainly deals with Bon and non-Buddhist Dunhuang sources, this is also not a very plausible scenario! This assumption seems to resonate with markedly partisan, anti-Buddhist sentiments that regularly crop up in the book.

indicate the Hos story as the most likely prototype for the marriage exploits in the *mDo 'dus*. PT1136 even involves an arranged marriage! After all, the earliest gShen rab hagiography is traditionally classified under the *mDo chen po bzhi!* Even though the rKong po story arguably presents the briefest form of a later expedition abroad paradigm, for the reasons mentioned, I should still prefer to identify the Hos story.

Because of preceding publication and ongoing research (Stein 1988 and Kalsang Norbu) it would probably be both unnecessary and premature to write into the conclusions that sTon pa gShen rab is a *phyi dar* literary invention that goes back to non-Buddhist ritualistic narratives of the end of the first millennium AD; but here it is, just in case someone might have missed that.

What probably intrigues me most is that we are actually able to observe how, at the beginning of the *phyi dar*, old narremes and names are recycled into new narrative contexts that self-consciously reflect emerging Bon identity. The master narratives and identity vectors are new but the narrative elements, more often than not, are not.

It is also clear that a smattering of context and various religious, historical, and literary sensibilities remain connected to migrating narremes and determine whether and how they eventually are incorporated into new contexts and master narratives. A clear example for this is the vicissitudes of the controversial *Dur gShen rma da* name.

Generally, we get a sense of how Bon narratives emerge at the turn of the first millennium AD and also start to appreciate which traditional sensibilities rule historiographic (re)constructions of identity narratives of that ilk, simply by studying how early Bon identity discourse is consciously assembled from pre-existing antecedents, which are genuinely believed to belong to a pre- or in any case non-Buddhist and 'indigenous' past—to use that despicable "i"-word, at least once. Clearly not everything that could fit the story frame goes.

There also is a notion that the literary void from which Bon emerges as a writing tradition at the beginning of the second millennium in Buddhist Tibet may not be that empty after all. To some that is perhaps reassuring. The sparse disparate reflexes and relics of the preceding period that are preserved in Dunhuang sources present an off-centre, fragmentary, but at least relevant and real record. This allows one to extrapolate to a more complete matrix of rituals and narratives that may have existed at the time, in oral and written forms, and may have informed emerging Bon, perhaps in a manner quite similar to the dynamics of construction that we have analysed here, for the *mDo 'dus* expedition-abroad narratives and their Dunhuang precursors.

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Appendix I: *g-Yung* and 永, and on *Drung* and 中, 終 or 常

This appendix is meant to facilitate those who would like to pursue the hypothesis of possible early borrowing of Tibetan *g-yung drung* from Chinese. There are several combinations with 永, *yong*³, that we need to consider for tracing *g-yung drung* to Chinese vocabulary; not all are equally likely, however. Phonetically, the most eligible candidates are:⁷⁵

永中 *yong*³ *zhong*^{1/4}, a combination of Mathews 7589: *yung*³ and 1504: *chung*^{1/4}: the middle;⁷⁶

永終 *yong*³ *zhong*¹: = 永久 and 永远终止,⁷⁷ combination of Mathews 7589: *yung*³ and 1500: *chung*¹: the end, finally; death; the whole of; after all; still;

永常 *yong*³ *chang*², 7589.26: constantly: 永 *yong*³ (7589, *yung*³: perpetual; eternal; long; far-reaching) combined with 常 *chang*² (221, *ch'ang*²: constantly); and perhaps

永存 *yong*³ *cun*²: perpetual existence, cf. 永存性 *yong*³ *cun*² *xing*⁴ (7589.22: permanency, continuance): 永 and 存 *cun*² (6891, *ts'un*²: to be in existence).

But also see some semantically and partly also phonetically related combinations, such as:

永生 *yong*³ *sheng*^{1/5}, 7589.35 eternal life: 永 and 生 *sheng*^{1/5} (5738, *shêng*¹: life);

永遠 *yong*³ *yuan*³, 7589.44: perpetually, eternally, forever: 永 and 遠 *yuan*³ (7734, *yüan*³: distant in time & place);

永久 *yong*³ *jiu*³, 7589.7: perpetually; eternally: 永 and 久 *jiu*³ (1188, *chiu*³: finally, a long time).

Considering its semantics and even morphology, Tibetan *g-yung drung* may be a loan word. Chinese recommends itself as a likely source. But we should appreciate the timeframe and trace which phonetical values pertain to the periods in which borrowing is most likely to have occurred: probably at the end of the first millennium or before. Plausible-

⁷⁵ My thanks go to Bill Baxter, Chris Beckwith, Wolfgang Behr, Roland Bielmeier, George van Driem, Guo Hui, Felix Haller, Weldon South Coblin, Tsuguhito Takeuchi, and Jeroen Wiedenhof, who all in the best of academic tradition provided advice and important further leads. These preliminary notes could not have been extended without their expert help. I nonetheless assume full responsibility for any shortcomings and oversights.

⁷⁶ Perhaps 中 is here used phonetically?

⁷⁷ 永远终止, *yǒngyuǎn zhōngzhǐ*: "end forever", from *Hànyǔ dà cídiǎn* 漢語大詞典; reference and translation kindly provided by Bill Baxter.

looking phonetical values of modern Mandarin would first need to be related to (reconstructions for) Late or Early Middle and Old Chinese.

This is where the first problems for the hypothesis arise. Non-linguists cannot critically discuss Late Middle Chinese presentations as they appear in Pulleyblank (1991), but we should at least note their provisional nature and appreciate that there is considerable disagreement among specialists. Pulleyblank (1991) presents the following:

p.377: *yǒng*, 永, 85:5, M17088: Yuan *yŋ̊*, *juŋ̊*, Late MCh. *yajŋ̊*, Early MCh. *wiajŋ̊*, K764a: for a long time; perpetually, forever;

Cf. Baxter (1992:804): 永 *yǒng* < *hwæŋX* (MCh) < **wraŋ?* (OCh) (764a): 9.1B, 9.2B, 9.3B;

Please note that Baxter's proposed OCh initial **wr* meanwhile has been hypothesised as **G^w(r)* (adapted from Pan Wuyun (1997:19), now also accepted by Baxter & Sagart);⁷⁸

Cf. Takata (1988:404f), based on Old Tibetan transcriptions of the 9th–10th c. AD Hexi dialect in north-western China, finds *weng*(2), *we*, *wen* and 'u';⁷⁹ he lists 切韻 (*Qie⁴ yun⁴*) transcription *x^wäiŋ²*, and for 河西 (*he² xi¹*), for the late mediaeval period, he reconstructs *ji^wäi²*,⁸⁰

p.410: *zhōng*, 中, 2:3, M00073A, Y. *tʂuŋ*, L. *triwŋ*, E. *truwŋ*, K1007a: middle, center; see also *zhòng*;

p.410: *zhōng*, 終, 120:5, M27372, Y. *tʂuŋ*, L. *tʂiwŋ*, E. *tʂuwŋ*, K1002e: end, finish; the end, forever;

p.50: *cháng*, 常, 50:8, M08955, Y. *tʂʰaŋ*, L. *ʂfiaŋ*, E. *dziaŋ*, K725e: constant, usual;

And see also less likely formations (most of which need not be discussed any further):

p.67: *cún*, 存, 39:3, M06943, Y. *tʂʰuŋ*, L. *tʂʰuŋ*, E. *tʂʰwəŋ*, K432a: exist, remain survive;

p.280: *shēng*, 生, 100:0, M21670, Y. *ʂəŋ*, L. *ʂajŋ*, E. *ʂiajŋ/ʂe:jŋ*, K812a: be born; life; living, alive; fresh; raw;

p.387: *yuǎn*, 遠, 162:10, M39047A, Y. *ɣeŋ*, L. *yan*, E. *wuan*, K256f: distant, far; see also *yuàn*;

p.161: *jiū*, 久, 4:2, M00118, Y. *kiw*, L. *kiw*, E. *kuw*, K993a: for a long time.

⁷⁸ Thanks to Wolfgang Behr for this reference.

⁷⁹ Cited by Takata from the TD, *Tiandi bayang shenzhoujing*. Thanks to Weldon South Coblin for clarifying this.

⁸⁰ Takata (1988) seems to support Pulleyblank's EMCh *wiajŋ*. Thanks to Chris Beckwith for this reference.

文言	Modern, Pinyin	Early Mandarin	LMCh	EMCh	OCh	(Source)
永常	yong ³ chang ²	juŋ ^ˊ tʂʰaŋ ^ˊ	yajj ^ˊ ʂʃiaŋ	wiajj ^ˊ dziaŋ		Pulleyblank 1991
			hɟwæŋX dzɟyɑŋ		*wraŋʔ dʒɑŋ	Baxter 1992
永中	yong ³ zhong ^{1/4}	juŋ ^ˊ tʂuŋ	yajj ^ˊ triwŋ	wiajj ^ˊ truwŋ		Pulleyblank 1991
			hɟwæŋX trjuwŋ		*wraŋʔ*k-ljuŋ	Baxter 1992
永終	yong ³ zhong ¹	juŋ ^ˊ tʂuŋ	yajj ^ˊ tʂiwŋ	wiajj ^ˊ tɕawŋ		Pulleyblank 1991
			hɟwæŋX tʂjuwŋ		*wraŋʔ*tjuŋ	Baxter 1992
永存	yong ³ cun ²	juŋ ^ˊ tʂʰuŋ	yajj ^ˊ tʂʰuŋ	wiajj ^ˊ tʂʰwəŋ		Pulleyblank 1991

There clearly are problems with the hypothesis:

- 1) 中: *zhong*^{1/4}, L *triwŋ* and E *truwŋ*, while phonologically close to Tib. *drung*, lexically is off, while 永中 is poorly attested in literary evidence and therefore is an unlikely source.
- 2) 終: *zhong*¹, while very similar in Mandarin, in L *tʂiwŋ* and in E *tɕawŋ*, does not relate well to *drung*. Lexically, the core of its semantic field (“end”) also seems less on the mark.
- 3) 存: The palatal affricate *cun*², L *tʂʰuŋ* and E *tʂʰwəŋ*, for quite similar reasons as in the previous option, phonologically is difficult to reconcile with *drung* (but perhaps only more so).
- 4) 常: *chang*², in spite of its vowel quality, may be the most likely candidate of all. The vowel discrepancy between L *ʂʃiaŋ* or E *dziaŋ* and *drung* might be accounted for: one would ‘merely’ need to accommodate a vowel change from *a* to *u*. Depending on regional phonetic values of Tibetan *-u-*, which at least in modern eastern Tibet may approach *-a-*, this problem may well resolve itself on the receiving end; but that is of course not recommended procedure! Weldon South Coblin informs me that in very late medieval Chinese dialects of the Gansu corridor, the vowel of words like 常 became rounded and in Tibetan transcriptions were spelled *-o-*. Also noting that Old Tibetan made a sharp distinction between the vowels *-o-* and *-u-* in the finals *-ung* and *-ong*. Also, these late transcriptions postdate the pertinent period of ca. 600 AD by about 400 years. So South Coblin feels this may be a blind alley.⁸¹

There also are problems with 永. Baxter’s representation in ‘Qieyun’ Middle Chinese: *hɟwæŋX* (pronounce: *wɛŋʔ* or *yɛŋʔ*) would seem to allow borrowing into what is later written as Tib. *g-yung* (*yuŋ* or *yəŋ*).⁸²

⁸¹ E-mail communication, July 19th 2008.

⁸² E-mail communication, July 18th 2008.

But Pulleyblank's bilabial *wiaŋʹ* and Baxter's OCh reconstruction **wraŋʹ?* contradict this (cf. his *wəŋʹ?* for *hɟwæŋX*). South Coblin, from his expertise on old north-western Chinese, also represents 永 as *ueŋ* (Qieyun *juwəŋ:*), in the relevant period of around 600 AD, i.e. the Qieyun period in the history of Chinese phonology.⁸³ Baxter and he moreover are in agreement with the important data procured by Takata, based on Old Tibetan transcriptional data: *weng(2)*, *we*, *wen*, and *'u* (see his Hexi reconstruction *ji^wäi[~]2*). Baxter and South Coblin in this context also both point to (*jyutping*) *wiŋ⁵*, in modern Cantonese.

South Coblin (*ibid.*) underlines that the pronunciations of *yong³*: *joŋ* or *juŋ*, for 永, where the main vowel is rounded and matches present Lhasa pronunciation of *g-yung* (*juŋ*), do indeed not appear in varieties of standard Chinese until later. The earliest orthographically attested one known is in 'Phags-pa Chinese.⁸⁴ Then one finds them in Ming and Qing times in Korean sinological and European missionary transcriptions of Guanhua from central & north China. This is of course rather (too) late for our concern. He therefore feels that the vowel similarity between modern standard Chinese pronunciation of 永 and (Old) Tibetan *g-yung* may be coincidental. Baxter also believes that the present-day Mandarin phonetics *yong³* (*juŋ*) for 永 may be relatively late: *yeŋ* > *yəŋ* > *juŋ*—*yəŋ* is what many Mandarin dialects have.⁸⁵

But apparently *weng* (and *wiŋ*) is not the only avenue open. Wolfgang Behr informs me that the MCh initial **hj*, which Baxter derives from OCh labiolaryngeal **wr*, following Pan Wuyun (1997), meanwhile is generally believed to derive from a labialized OCh uvular **G^w(r)*.⁸⁶ Laurent Sagart gives a list of reconstructions based on that initial **G^w*, which in his view indeed must have been inherently labial or labialised and in MCh thus primarily occurs in words with a rounded vowel or with a medial *-w-*.⁸⁷ The OCh initial **G^w* of 永

⁸³ E-mail communication, July 19th 2008; cf. South Coblin (1994), the Geng group, entry1062.

⁸⁴ South Coblin (2007:111), entry 38: *x̣yung* [*ḥyug*]; 永 is listed at the tone *shǎng* (上).

⁸⁵ E-mail communication, July 18th 2008.

⁸⁶ This has been adopted into the Baxter-Sagart system, occasionally with slight modifications.

⁸⁷ In "Reconstructing Old Chinese uvulars in the Baxter-Sagart system", a paper read at the 40th ICSTLL, Haerbin, 27th–29th of September, 2007 (reference thanks to Behr), Sagart gives (OCh > MCh > Mandarin):

王 **G^waŋ* > *hɟwɑŋ* > *wáng* "king" (WT *gong* "a superior one");

胃 **[G^w]ʌ[t]-s* > *hɟw+jH* > *wèi* "stomach" (WT *grod-pa* "stomach");

于 **G^w(r)a* > *hju* > *yu²* "go; at" (WT *'gro* "go");

preferably fed into Tib. *ga* and could not result in *ya* (in Tib. *g-yung*, pronounced as *juŋ*).

South Coblin (1986:105)⁸⁸ thus, based on such sensibilities, connects 永 to Tib: *rgyang* “distance” and the related *rkyong* “to extend, stretch, spread” (cf. Starostin).⁸⁹ Thus other connotations of 永: “long, far reaching” have fed into Tib. “distance” and “to stretch, extend”.

This may appear confusing: while, in reference to work in a relevant period in north-western China by Takata, South Coblin and Baxter propose that 永, **G^wrang?* through the Middle Chinese representation *hwæŋX*, fed into late mediaeval Hexi *weng*(2) and eventually into modern Cantonese *wing*⁵, there apparently also exists another possible avenue for 永, which leads from *G^wrang?* into Tib. *rgyang*. Would that perhaps open new possibilities for derivation of Tib. *g-yung* in the Qieyun period? But, needless to say, we took care to historicise Chinese phonology properly, but we should of course also be on guard against anachronisms in the pronunciation of Tibetan!

Probably since at least the 9th c. AD,⁹⁰ the prescript *ga*- in *g-yung* is not articulated anymore in Central Tibetan (it merely causes a shift to a high tone). But in Proto- and Early Old Tibetan, *g-yung* was still pronounced *xjuŋ* or *gjuŋ*. The ancient pronunciation has been preserved in eastern (e.g. Amdo-region)⁹¹ and western Tibetan (e.g. Balti)⁹² dialects,

越 *[ɕ]at > *hwot* > *yuè* “transgress” (WT ‘*grod-pa* “to go, to travel”);
 袁 *[ɕ]a[n] > *hwon* > *yuán* “long robe” (WT *gon* “garment”).
 Quoted from version 0.97.

⁸⁸ **Long/stretch (1):**

**gwliang* → + -x (Pre Chinese **gwliangx* >) 永 OCh **gwliangx* > *juwŋg*;
 Tib. *rgyong-ba brgyangs brgyang*: extend, stretch; *rgyang ma*: distance;
 **gwliang* → stem: (Proto Tib. **gryang* >) *rgyang*.

⁸⁹ See now also on-line resources (Copyright 1998-2003 by S. Starostin) at the URL:
http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?single=1&basename=/data/sintib/stibet&text_number=2557&root=config:

Proto-Sino-Tibetan: **q^wǎŋH* (r-).

Meaning: distant, stretch.

Chinese: 永 **wraŋ?* long, distant.

Tib.: *rgjaŋ*: distance; *rgjoŋ* (p. *brgjaŋs*, f. *brgjaŋ*): to extend, stretch, spread; *rkjoŋ* (p., f. *brkjaŋ*): to stretch, extend.

Comments: Coblin 105.

Cf. **q^wǎŋH*, **K^wǎn*.

⁹⁰ The earliest Old Tibetan inscriptions and written documents indicate that the prescript *ga* was not pronounced anymore in 9th c. AD Central Tibetan. Thanks to Tsuguhito Takeuchi for clarifying this (e-mail July 19th, 2008).

⁹¹ For examples for this cluster in the Themchen dialect from Northern Amdo, see Haller (2004:240):

which have remained largely oblivious to Central Tibetan reforms. One might therefore still attempt to connect OCh **G*^w to Tib. *g-yu* (note the labial (*u*) onset in both!) and thus relate OCh **gwjiangx* or **G*^w*rang?* to Proto or early OT *g-yung*: *xjuŋ* or *gjuŋ*. For *g-yung drung*:⁹³

文言	(Old) Tibetan	(E) Mandarin	MCh	OCh	(Source)
永常	<i>gjuŋ druŋ</i> > <i>juŋ druŋ</i>	<i>yǒng cháng</i>	<i>hwæŋX dzɿyang</i>	* <i>G</i> ^w <i>rang?</i> * <i>djang</i>	Baxter's with * <i>G</i> ^w
永中	<i>gjuŋ druŋ</i> etc.	<i>jwǎng tǒng</i>		<i>gwjiangx</i> * <i>k-ljung</i>	South Coblin 1985
		<i>yǒng zhōng</i>	<i>hwæŋX trjuwng</i>	* <i>G</i> ^w <i>rang?</i> * <i>k-ljung</i>	Baxter's with * <i>G</i> ^w
永終	<i>gjuŋ druŋ</i> etc.	<i>yǒng zhōng</i>	<i>hwæŋX tsjuwng</i>	* <i>G</i> ^w <i>rang?</i> * <i>tjung</i>	Baxter's with * <i>G</i> ^w

Common sense would recommend lending considerable weight to Takata's conclusions on the phonetic value *weng*(2) of 永, found in transliterations pertaining to the in 9th-10th c. AD, relating to the 河西 (*he² xi¹*) dialect (cf. *j^w ai⁻²*). This indeed is a corner of north-western China where Tibetan and Chinese intensively met, roughly in a relevant period. But, on second thought, one should also appreciate that any borrowing ought to be dated significantly before the earliest occurrences of *g-yung drung* in Tibetan inscriptions etc. The Zhol inscription already dates to approximately 764 AD. Dunhuang was not

NOUNS:

g-yaq, Themchen *xjaχ*: castrated yak;

g-yu, Themchen *xjɿ* turquoise;

g-yog po, Themchen *xjoχku*: servant;

VERBS:

g-yar, Themchen *xjar*: to borrow;

g-yug, Themchen *xjɿç*: to throw;

g-yol, Themchen *xju*: to keep off (sunlight).

⁹² For examples from Western Tibetan Balti (*xju*) see Bielmeier (1985:181). He kindly shared some examples by e-mail communication (July 22nd 2008):

hjaq beside *xjaq*—WT *g-yaq*: yak;

xju—WT *g-yu*: turquoise;

hjoq beside *xjoq*: cover, quilt, WT *g-yogs*, and the verb *xjoq*: to cover, WT *g.yog*.

Bielmeier also points to a different development for the word for "lynx", which is simply *i* in WAT (Western Archaic Tibetan). The WT background is not clear, as we find the two spellings *g-yi* and *dbyi* in WT. Felix Haller (2004) noted that in Themchen WT *dby-* and *g-y-* seem to merge into *ghj-* (*gh* for the voiced velar fricative "ghamma"). Thus Themchen *ghjarkha*: summer < WT *dbyar kha* (cf. Haller (2004), Themchen 38), but cf. Balti *ghbjar*: summer < WT *dbyar* vs. *xja*: rust < WT *g-ya'*.

⁹³ Gong Hwang-cherng (2002) wrote on Old Tibetan *g-y-* and related questions. See esp. pp. 383ff: Tib. *g-y-* in his reconstruction represents a glottal stop onset plus glide: *ʃj-* (thanks to South Coblin for this reference).

conquered by Tibetans until 781 AD, or, at the earliest, in the 60s of that century: being besieged perhaps in the 50s and 60s (Horlemann 2002). Historical data, like phonetical data (shift *gjuŋ* to *juŋ*), therefore also make a loan as late as the Tibetan Dunhuang period seem unlikely. If *g-yung drung* was borrowed at all, it must have happened earlier, probably before the rise of literary Tibetan.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

1) Available historical linguistic and phonological data do not encourage derivation of the modern Lhasa pronunciation (*juŋ*) of the first syllable of Tib. *g-yung drung* from Modern Mandarin pronunciations of 永, *yong*³. Instead, most linguists, starting from a hypothetical Old Chinese reconstruction **G^wrang?*, prefer a phonological development that prioritises the bilabial quality of the reconstructed bilabialised uvular stop **G^w* into something that closely resembles Baxter's representation of the position of the syllable in the Middle Chinese system as *hɟwæŋX* and emphasise a development through a mid to lower-mid front unrounded vowel into something that may have sounded like *ueŋ*. This is a development that moreover is entirely compatible with the data acquired by Tanaka for the late mediaeval Hexi: *weng*(2). It can also be followed into modern Cantonese *wing*⁵.

At the same time, South Coblin and Starostin have formulated a possible loan of the syllable represented by 永 into Tib. *rgyang* etc. This seems to represent an entirely separate route, which prioritises another main quality of the reconstructed **G^w*: its quality as a uvular stop **G^(w)*. This alternate route would allow connecting 永 to a Proto Tibetan or Early OT pronunciation of *g-yung* as *ɟjuŋ* or *gjuŋ*, especially if the inherent bilabiality would later manifest as the vowel colour *-u-*. Following Sagart (2007), we have reason to believe it did. See, for example, his reconstructions for the arising of the *-u-* vowel following a *G^w(r)* initial:

- 于 OCh **G^w(r)a* > MCh *hju* > *yu*² "go; at" (WT 'gro "go");
 越 **[G]^wat* > *hɟwot* > *yuè* "transgress" (WT 'grod-pa "to go, to travel");
 袁 **[G]^wa[n]* > *hɟwon* > *yuán* "long robe" (WT gon "garment").

But note that on the Tibetan side this invariably results in a rounded *-o-* and *not* in a Tib. *-u-*. Perhaps this is comparable to the shift that South Coblin observed for *-ang* to *-ong*, but not to *-ung*, in late mediaeval dialects of the Gansu corridor. Perhaps we should visualise this second phonological route elsewhere, and not in north-western China?

2) The second character for a possible loan from Chinese remains even more uncertain. Even the most likely matches for Tib. *drung* in *g-yung drung*, such as: (永)常, (永)中, or perhaps also (永)終, all appear problematic in some way. Still, derivation of *g-yung drung* from 永常, even though it poses problems in the lack of bilabial colouring of its vowel and therefore is not deemed very likely, also cannot be ruled out completely. We should note that while the rise of a rounded *-o-* is in some situations attested for later periods, a Tib. *-u-* remains tenuous and hypothetical. Therefore, if borrowing from Chinese is tenable at all, given the available options, a loan from 永常, through (Baxter) **G^wrang?* *djang* seems the most likely scenario. But in any case, we would then be looking at a loan from Old Chinese into Proto or Early OT rather than a loan from some Tang-period Chinese into early literary OT.

More textual support on both sides would be needed to confirm anything at this point; but that would lead too far beyond our present concern. I nonetheless hope that these few notes may inspire more thorough and methodical investigations by specialists.



APPENDIX II: THE MARRIAGE STORIES OF STON PA GSHEN RAB according to the <i>mDo 'dus</i> (Mongyal Lhasay's <i>Bonpo bKa' 'gyur</i> (III) edition = Khedup Gyatso MS edition, Dolanji 1985)					
Hos za rGyal med ma	dPo'u za Thang mo	lHa za Gung drug	gSas za Ngang drug	rKong za Khri lcam	Kong tse'i bu mo
hos za rgyal med 42.4, 203.4f hos za rgyal med ma 67.2, 179.6 hos za 192.5	dpo' za thang mo 42.5f, 81.3, 100.6 dpo'u za thang mo 80.2f sring mo dpo'u zang thang mo 81.2f dpa'o za thang mo 100.1,3 dpa'o za 100.6, 101.2 dos za thang mo 179.6 dpo za 192.5f dpo za thang mo 203.6 dpon za thang mo 217.6	lha za gung drug 43.1 lha za bzang drug 179.6	gsas za ngang drug 43.2, 179.6	rkongs za khri lcam 43.4 rkang za khri lcam 102.2 rkong lcam 108.3 , 218.2 kong za khri lcam 180.1	'phrul sgyur 43.6, 89.1 kong za 'phrul bsgyur 179.6f
(rtsang ho de'i) hcs (bdag): P1136.31-58		cf. Lha za gung (mo) tshun : IOL TIB J 731:44,47f = Thomas (1957:11&23): Text IA		rkong rje dkar po: P1285.1094, P1060.88; rkong de dkar po: P1285.1019; rkong yul: P1285.1018, 1093, 1174, 1181, 1188, 2016, 2024, P.1060.88; rkong lha: P1285.1181f; (lha) rkong lha: P1060.88; rkong [g]shen: P1285.1094, 1181 rkong shin bu mo: P1285.1009; rkong brag: P.1285.2017; rkong?: P1285.2085; rKong po inscription: see Richardson 1985:64-71	

A Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #1 B Chapter 9:59.3–70.5 C - D - E - F Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #4 G Chapter 20:190.6–195.2 H Chapter 22:200.6–212.4 I -	Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #2 - Chapter 10:70.5–82.2 - Chapter 12:89–109.4 Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #3 Chapter 20:190.6–195.2 Chapter 22:200.6–212.4 Chapter 23:212.4–220.1	Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #3 - - - - Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #1 - - - -	Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #4 - - - - Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #2 - - - -	Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #5 - - - Chapter 12:89–109.4 Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #6 - - Chapter 23:212.4–220.1	Chapter 6:36.5–45.2 #6 - - Chapter 11:82.3–89.4 - Chapter 18:153.3–186.2 #5 - - - -
[A 6:42.4] hos za rgyal med khab tu bzhes/ sras ni gto bu 'bum sangs dang/ dpyad bu khri shes gnyis 'khrungs so/ bu mo gshen za ne'u chen 'khrung/ [42.5]	[A 6:42.5] dpa'o za thang mo khab bzhes pa/ sras ni lung 'dren rgyud 'dren dang/ bu mo gshen khye'u chung 'khrungs/ [42.6]	[A 6:42.6] de nas mgon gsum phya phul [yul] du/ gshen rab thugs kyis [kyi] [43] dgyes sde mo/ lha za gung drug khab tu bzhes/ mu cho ldem drug sras su 'khrungs/ de yang mu med bon la mkhas pas/ grang med cho rab shes/ dung gis ldem shing 'dzin/ mngon shes drug ldan no/ [43.2]	[A 6:43.2] gsas za ngang drug leg pa'i khab/ sras cig (... 'ol drug thang po 'khrung/) 'ol mo lung rings su/ sde drug bon la mkhas (... srid pa'i thang chod mkhas/) pa'o// [43.3]	[A 6:43.3] shes rab lam gyis dgyes sde mo/ bdud kyi rta phrog pa'i cham/ rkongs za khri lcam blang/ gshen bu rkang [rkong] tsha 'khrung/ mi rgyud de la grol/ ya ngal gyis gang lags/ [43.5]	[A 6:43.5] mu khyud bdal pa'i mtsho gling du/ kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po yis/ dge' skos an tse phyas byas de/ ston pa gshen rab mi bo'i/ bstan pa rnam gsum rjes bzhags mdzad/ kong tses bu mo 'phrul sgyur phul/ gshen bu [44] 'phrul bu thung 'khrungs ste/ 'phrul bsgyur rtsis la mkhas pa'o// [44.1]
[B 9] de nas ston pa gshen rab la/ hos dang pa [sic] yid ring kyis zhus pa'i mdo'// de nas ston pa gshen rab nyid yab rgyal bon thod dkar la/ rin po che'i na bza' phul/ lha'i zhal zas phul byas ste/ yab myes rgyud gyis bon rnam nyon/ smrang rgyud 'bum la mkhas par gyur/ de nas gcung po	[C 10] de nas shes rab phul du byung ba'i/ ston pa gshen rab mi bo dang/ dpo [sic] rgyal 'bar sgron zhu don mdo/ sdig can mi rgu drangs pa'i le'u/ ston pa gshen rab mi bo dang/ gnas mchog 'ol mo lung rings su/ me rtog tshal du bzhugs cing/ sras ni gto [71] bu 'bum sangs dang/ yab sras mjal cing	-	-	[E 12:101.5] de nas khyab pa lag ring gyis/ gshen rab dkor la cho 'phrul bstan/ bdud phrug shar ba rkya bdun gyis/ gshen rab rta bdun khyer nas song/ rkong po yul du rta rjes bstan/ kha ba sub mas rta rjes bcad/ nyi ma dgu shar kha ba bzhus/ [102] bdud ri nag po bon rir bsgyur/ la dor brag 'phrang rta lam	[D 11:82.3] de nas ston pa gshen rab la/ gsang ba mdo rgyud [sic] kyi zhus pa/ e ma shes rab phul phyung ba'i/ ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid/ kong tse 'phrul gyis rgyal po'i/ dgongs pa yongs su grub pa'i/ rgyu dang rkyen rnam ci ltar lags/ ces zhus/ ston pas bka' rtsal pa// kye ma

<p>rma lo g-yu lo 'khrung/ bkra shis zhal sros mdzad pa la/ shar phyogs gling nas skyes bu cig/ sangs po 'bum khri'i sprul pa ste/ gshen za ngang ring ma'i sras/ yid kyis khye'u chung rdzu 'phrul can [60] yi ge 'phrul slag sku la gyon/ skos gyis chags [phyag] shing phyag na bsnams/ 'brug rta sngon po chibs su bcib/ ston pa'i mdun du shar gyis byung/ lha phyag 'tshal nas chags shing phul/ e ma ston pa thams cad mkhyen/ mi shes mun sel ye shes sgron// gsal ba'i 'od ldan ye shes spyan/ 'gro don gzigs la phyag 'tshal lo/ bdag ni yid kyis khye'u chung yin/ gshen rab tshang pa? bya'i [sic!] rgyud/ sangs po 'bum khri'i sprul pa ste/ 'gro ba 'dren pa'i thar lam can/ bdag la thar pa'i lam ston zhu/ ces zhus/ ston pas bka' rtsal pa/ yid kyis khye'u chung thugs rje can/ thabs kyis sprul pa'i rdzu 'phrul ldan/ 'gro ba 'dren pa thar pa'i bon/ g-yung drung mi 'gyur snying po long/ theg pa chen po'i bon la spyod/ lung 'dren rgyud 'dren? grol bar gyis/ [61] rgyal po hos kyis 'gro don spyod/ 'gu ling ma ti sgribs pa byangs/ de nas thog med</p>	<p>bon bshad tshe/ lho phyogs gling nas sgra snyan grags/ de tshe rgyal po 'khor tshogs cig/ ston pa'i spyan sngar shar kyis phyin/ 'dod pa dgu 'gyur nor bu phul/ lha phyag dgu 'tshal 'di skad zhus/ 'gro ba'i dpal ngon gshen rab mchog/ 'jig rten sgron ma skyes bu'i phul/ rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i thugs/ / cir yang sa le sprul pa'i sku/ zhal mthong zhus pa'i don ched ni/ bdag ni rgyal po dpo'i [sic!] rigs/ dos [sic!] rgyal 'bar ba'i sgron ma can/ yul ni khri tang 'byams pa'i gling/ dge ba sha stag spyod pa'i sa/ de'i nub gling khri bu chung/ rgyal po 'phra mo khri 'od dang/ btsun mo khri btsun gsal mo la/ rgyal bu khri shang bya ba skyes/ rgyal bu khri shang glud du ni/ bran phrug khri shes bsad dgos skad/ spa gyim shang gong po[?] bon por bsnyags/ [72] ha 'da nag po bsad mi byas/ rgyal bu nad pas smras pa ni/ pha ma ngan pas bdag la phan du re ba dang/ mo bon rdzun mas za 'dod byas pa dang/ ha dha nag po shin tu glen pa dang/ bran phrug dag la rang dbang med pa yis/ 'di lta bu las ngan spyad pa yi ri mug/ ma rig gti mug mun pa'i rgyu/ mo bon cig rdzun mam</p>			<p>gtod/ lcag phub dgu phud brag ris phugs/ mda' drangs chu mig dkar po'i mkhar sgor slebs/ brag 'brang chu dor mda' lam btod/ rta brkus le lon rkong rje yis/ rkang za khri lcam gshen la phul/ shul lam yar chab rtsang po phyung// lha ri gyang dor zhal bdun bzhugs// shul dkar rtsang bya g-yung drung khar/ ston pa'i zhabs rjes btod/ khyung lung rngul mkhar brtsigs/ gshen bu rkong tsha de ru 'khrungs/ de nas ma pang mtsho la chags/ klu'i ston pa lo cig mdzad/ ti tse gang gi rtse mo ru/ ma sangs lha'i zhal dro drangs/ de nas slar yang 'ol mo gling/ khri smon lam rgyal bzher dag tu byon/ ston pas khyim spangs rab tu byung/ [102.6]</p>	<p>'dus pa'i 'khor rnams nyon// gang du 'dzam gling lho tshogs [sic!] nas/ rgyal po sa'i snying po la/ bu ni che ba rtag blo gsal/ de'i pha'i mgo bo bcad/ 'bring ba sdang sdems mchog/ de'i ma'i nu ma bcad/ bu chung [83] gsol [sic!] mchog dge ba spyad/ sngun [sic!] du pho bo gnyis che [sic!] 'phos te/ bdag ni rgyal bu sdig pa can/ klu srin nag por skye gyur nas/ gcung po dge ba spyod pa'i/ grogs cig byed pa'i smon lam btabs/ rgyal po gsal mchog tshe 'phos pas/ 'ol mo gling gis nub phyogs su/ yul na [sic!] rgyal lag 'od ma'i gling// mkhar ni khri sgo rtse brgya nas/ grong khyer 'phrul bsgyur bkod pa ru/ yab ka 'da ma gser 'od dang/ btsun mo mu tri gas 'od ma'i/ sras kong tse 'phrul gyis rgyal por skyes/ de dad pa bsod nams dge stobs kyis/ mu khyud bdal pa'i mtsho gling du/ srin po stag gis [sic!] grog byed de/ gsas khang chen chen bzhing pa'i/ rlung rdor rje rgya gram gzhi la rmang [sic!] bris/ mtsho khar rming thon grub la nye ba la/ btsun mo gnyen lcam [84] 'od ma gsal/ g-yag [sic!] 'khor bcas pas tshor nas mthong/ gsang tshig yum la shor ba'i</p>
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<p>mngon sangs rgyas/ ces gsung lung bstan rab du thob/ re [sic!] rjes nub phyogs gling nas nas/ rgyal po 'khor tshogs mngon du byon/ lha rta dkar po ston pa la phul/ lha phyag 'tshal nas zhus pa'i mdo// e ma ston pa lha mis gto// bdag ni rgyal po hos kyis rigs/ dang ba yid ring bya ba lags/ yul hos mo gling drug dag nas 'ong// rgyu [sic!] las dang [sic!] pas sems bskyed de/ lam du tshogs bsags sgrib sbyangs phyir/ bston pa gshen rab gdan 'dren 'ongs/ yunkyis mchod gnas dag dus zhus/ ston pas thugs rje 'dzin par zhu/ ces zhus ston pas bka' rtsal pa// kye ma rgyal po dad pa can// bdag ni bar po so brgyad du/ bkra shis zhal sros byed pa'i/ nga dang 'dra ba'i slob [62] bu cig/ rgyal po'i mchod nas lo gsum gyis/ ces gsungs/ yid kyis khye'u chung/ tshu [sic!] bzang smra mkhan khye'u chung khyod/ g-yung drung gtsug gshen rgyal ba ste/ hos rgyal dang ba yid rang gyis/ lo gsum tshogs bsags mchod gnas gyis/ ces gsung/ khye'u chung zhal nas ni/ slob dpon lha'i bka' byung na/ dmyal bar gtong yang cha sems med/ bden pa'i</p>	<p>smin gyis/ rgyal bu khri shang shi rgyu la/ sdig can mi dgu ro dgu byung/ dmag mi sum stong las dbang gyur/ e ma las ngan mun byas yi ri mug/ ces smras yi mug skyes ste ngus/ bran phrug dag gis 'di skad do// // kye ma sems can skyes nas shi ba la/ ci ste me [sic!] bon bden 'gyur nas/ rgyal bu'i glud du nga 'gro nas/ rgyal bu mi shi sos pa na/ brag [sic!] phrug sdug pa shi ba rung/ ces pa'i tshig kyang brjod de 'dug/ de la rgyal bu dag gis pha ma yis/ brag [sic!] phrug sdug pa snying rje ste/ rgyal bu shi nas rgyal rab chad/ [73] rgyal bu sos pa'i thabs yod nas/ brag [sic!] phrug glud du gtong bas leg/ ces smras bran phrug glud du btangs/ brag [sic!] phrug sha btsen bzhin du bzungs/ mog pa rkang pa g-yas la 'then/ bon pcs lag pa g-yas pa then/ ha 'da nag po snying phyung ste/ sha rnams glud du phyogs bzhir gtor/ mo bon khyim du phyin tsa rgyal bu shi nas 'dug/ mo bon skyeng ste lceb nas shi/ de rje bran phrug dag gis pha ma'i// ha 'da nag po'i snying phyung bsad/ de nas bran phrug a ma des// rgyal po 'phra mo khri 'od kyis// mkhar dang rtse mthon dag la zhugs/</p>				<p>nyes pa yis/ srin po'i dmag stong the les btabs nas khyer/ de tshe mgon btsun phyi'i [sic!] grong khyer nas/ phyen [sic!] tse len [sic!] med thugs rje skyes/ kong tse 'phrul gyis rgyal po yis/ dge skos mtha' ru phyin bya'i phyir/ khye'u chung tsi ber dung 'phring [sic!] can du byon/ lha srin 'tshams kyis gzu'o [sic!] mdzad/ dge dang mi dge'i shen [sic!] phrag phyces// dge ba'i skos thebs lha mi rgyal gyur te// kong tse rgyal po yid rang rab tu thob/ dge ba'i skos mkhan an tse phyia la zhus/ de tshe lha bu yid ni smon lam skyes/ skyin gyi ral ga gyon zhing gser gyis ral gri thogs// klu'i bu tsa dung sprul thor gtsug can/ gsas khang brtsigs pa'i las ni nged kyis byed do zer/ de tshe srin po mya ngan dmod pa skyes gyis [85] ni/ srin gyis gsas khang brtsigs du/ rgyal nyid gsang tshig mnyam/ khye'u chung tsi ber can khyod/ slob dpon dgo'am ci/ ces pas/ a tse lan gsungs pas// lus rin po che 'od kyis dpe'i gzhi bting te/ thugs 'phrul gyis bang mdzod kyis don khog phub te/ dbang po nyi ma'i zer la bden lam drang/ rig pa gar sphyin 'dra</p>
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<p>bka' rtsal ston pa'i bka' / bdud dang srin pos mi gcogs nas / rang gis srog la bab gyur kyang / slob dpon bka' bcag mi srid pas / bdag ni ston pa'i gsung ltar bgyi / ces gsung / / 'brug rta ston pa la 'bul / shing rta 'khor lo chibs su bcib / / khye'u chung hos mo gling la gshogs / chu bo gyim shang bya ltar rgal / yul ni hos mo gling drug byon / mkhar ni 'bar ba tse rgu nas / rgyal po'i 'khor kyis [63] bsu ba byas / tshogs bsags bsnyen bkur rga [sic!] ston byas / de nas g-yung drung gtsug gshen rgyal ba des / ka 'da shel kyis brag phugs du / lo gsum hos gyis bla mchod byas / hos 'khor khrims dmag song ba'i tshe / btsun mo 'gu ming [sic!] ma ti mas / slob dpon cig bu dro la drang / dro gsol bsngo ba byas pa ni / bdag g-yung drung gtsugs gshen rgyal ba nges / / dpang po med par gro mi gsol / de ring dpang med tro [sic!] gsol ba'i / dbang [sic!] po drang strong ne tsos kyis / 'dod chags dug gis ru ma yin / 'khor ba'i sdug bsngal skyed shing ste / sgyu ma'i lus kyis chags pa spang / ces brjod slob dpon bron [sic!] nas song / btsun mos rang gis skra bal nas /</p>	<p>der bran gyis rgyal sa bzung ba la / bdag rgyal po 'bar sgron 'phrag dog skyes / 'khor gyi dmag mi sum stong bsdus / mkhar phags bran 'phrug pha ma bsad / sdig pa dmags mi spyi'i khur / de 'dra'i las ngan byung [74] byung ba 'di / ci yi rgyu dang ci'i rgyu rkyen / 'bras bu ngan pa ci lta bu 'byung / drang na drangs thabs ci ltar lag / gshen rab ston pa nyid la zhu / ces zhus ston pa nyid la zhu / ces zhus ston pas gsang lam / rgyal po 'bar ba'i sgron ma can / khyod ni zhu don thab la mkhas / 'gro don mdzad pa'i bsam pa can / dge ldan sems la sdig mi 'gyur / de la nam yang ngan song med / ci ltar sdig cin [sic!] mi dgu yang / sngon dus las spyod ngan pa las / smon lam ma dag rgyud las byung / rkyen ni sdig pa'i mams smin tshogs / 'bras bu ngan pa smin pa ni / de la rgyal bu khri shang ni / bsam pa bzang po'i gtan dag gis / sum bcu rtsa gsum lha ru skyes / lha bu dri ma med par skyes / bran phrug khri shes bsam bzang ste / dga' ldan lhar [75] skyes / khri shang ma ni bsam ba 'bring tsam ste / lceb pas chu bur can gyis dmyal bar skyes / khri shang ma ni bsam ngan ste / lcags kyis sog les lus</p>				<p>ba'i tshig gis 'bru sbyar te / blo rig pa'i yeshes thams cad mkhyen bar shar / ljag 'phrul ldes phyas pas slob dpon dgos sam ci / ces pas srin poskyeng de song / der lha glu lha ma yin gyis brtsigs / de rming rtsal ldan srin gyis gyis brtsigs pas brten / bar gnyen po lhas btags pas brjid / nang rdzu 'phrul klus bris pas bkra / skos sgam po phyas mdzad pas legs / lag bsod ldan mis bla bas grub / byin bder gshogs lhas brlabs pas rgyas / [86] bstan pa rnames gsum rjes bzhag mdzad pas ni ngo mtshar ro / / de yang gas khang zhal sros su / ston pa gshen rab 'khor 'das spyan drong nas / sku yon gser gyi ban glang la / rin chen sna tshogs bstad dang / dar mtshon mdzes pa'i rmad gos phul / bkra gsal mdzes pa'i mchod sprin bsham / / kar nag bkra gsal zhal sros mdzad / / de tshe bdud ni gdug pa'i tshogs / phyogs bzhi dag nas bar chod brtsams / de'i tshe mtshan ldan khye'u bzhi yang / rngams pa'i 'khro chen ru bzhi sprul / shar nas zo bo dbu dgu byung / byang na gze ma dbu dgu byung / nub na ru tso dbu dgu byung / lho nas rom po dbu dgu byung / 'jigs pa'i dbu dang</p>
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<p>rgyal po la ni 'phra ma smras/ khyod kyis bla mchod tsod yod de/ dro drangs dus la nga la 'jus/ skyigs nas kho bdag bros so zer/ rgyal pos slob dpon bzhed pa nas/ 'gu ling ma ti [64] 'bul dgongs tshe/ drang srong ne tses [sic!] smras pa ni/ he he dang ba yid ring kye/ hos khang nang du hos ru can/ btsun mos dro ni drang dus su/ nga la 'bras can byin nas ni/ bdag g-yung drung gtsug gshen rgyal ba ni/ dpang po med par dro gsol ba ni/ dpang po drang srong ne ne tsos gyis zer na/ cig pur gshegs kyis thal/ btsun mo cig pur skra bal cing/ gcs ni rang gis ben [sic!] mos bkral/ ma nyes dpang po ne tso yod/ rgyal po btsun mo rdzun la bden pa med/ drang po 'jig rten kun du bden/ g-yo sgyu gya gyus mdza' bshes bslu/ ces zer ne tso 'phur nas song// de rgyal po slob dpon gtsug rum 'bar 'tshal gshegs// lam du gser mgar zhigh dro bslang tshe/ gser sbram rgan mos brkus de bskungs/ da ci dro gsol btsun pas khyer ro zhes/ slob dpon dag la klong btang ste/ mgar ba mgar dri phyung nas blang/ [65] mgar ba'i dmig la ho ru drud/ mgar bas mig</p>	<p>po gtub par skyes/ mo ma sding nga sding mi ni/ yang shi yang sos myal ba ru/ bud med lus la dred mong mgo can cig tu skyes// sbrul gyis mig za/ sdig pas sna nas za// rtsangs pas lce la za/ sdom nag pos snying la za/ sbal pas lte ba za zhing/ me ma mur la 'bog/ de 'dra'i dmyal bar skyes/ bon pos za 'dod dbang gis mi shes shes byas rdzun du smras/ lceb pas dmyal ba thig nag gnas su skyes/ de yang sbrul nag mgo gsum pa cig tu skyes/ mgo cig sog les gcod cing/ mgo cig tho bas brdung/ mgo cig sta re can kyis gsas/ mjug [76] ma chur btsu/ rked pa me ru sreg/ yang shi yang sos der skyes/ gha ha dha nag po ni/ byol song mun nag gling chen du/ lus ni phag nag cig tu skyes/ sdug bsngal ni lcags kyis phur bzhi gnan nas/ lcags kyis sdig pa bran phrug dag gis pha ma ni/ bsha gtub byed ma'i dmyal bar skyes/ mi lus ra lug mgo can la/ srin po pho mos spu gri rnon po yis/ srog khung kha phyas snying phyung za bar skyes/ rgyal po dmags mi stong dang chas// da lta shi nas lha ma yin/ dang 'thab rtsod chen po byed bar skyes/ sdig sbyangs dge ba spyad nas/ dga' ldan lha'i gnas</p>				<p>zhal gyis bswo sgra yin/ bdud srin bar chod dmags rnam rgyangs 'tshams bcad/ mtha'i lcag ri rgyab tu thams cad ma lus bdas/ bswo rag sheg zhi thun/ ge [87] rlung myal thum/ ces brjod bdud dang srin po btul/ de rjes gtso bzhi bder gshegs stong rtsa brgyad/ mkha' la sprin dpung gtib ba ltar byon/ byin rlabs rmad byung cho 'phrul bstan/ sa yang rnam pa drug du g-yos/ de tshe kong tse 'phrul rgyal gyis/ ston pa la ni nges zhus pa/ shes rab phul 'byung ston pa'i mchog/ pho brang lhun gyis grub pa dang/ gtso bzhi bder gshegs stong rtsa brgyad/ mkha' la sprin gtib nas kyang// byin brlab cher du bab pa dang/ mchod pa sprin dpung 'byung ba'i/ rgyu dang rkyen rnam ci ltar lags/ ston pas 'khor la bka' rtsal pa/ pho brang lhun gyis grub pa ni/ rgyal po dad pa skyes pa dang/ bsod nams bsags pa'i rgyu las byung/ rkyen ni kun bzang thugs sprul pa'i/ en tse lan med phya'i byas/ mkha' la bder gshegs sprin ltar 'dus/ thugs rje [88] 'gron don gzigs pa ste/ rgyal po dag pa'i snang ba yin/ bde bar gshegs pa gtso bzhi ni/ dbyings dang ye shes</p>
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<p>gis mngon shes grub/ mgar mos gser sbram brkus pa mthong/ hos rus mgar dri la rug byas/ nga ni gtsug gshen rgyal ba yin/ ngas btsun mo 'gu ling ma ti la/ mi gtsangs par yang ma spyad nas/ mgar ba khyod kyi gser sbram la/ ma byin par yang ma blang nas/ mgar dri gye bo gser du shog/ / / ces brjod mgar dri gser du gyur/ / mgar bas phyi phyag 'tshal nas log/ 'phrul mgar gung chu khyod nyid ni/ rgyal po hos ni nga bda' dang 'phrad pa nas/ slob dpon gtsug gshen rgyal ba ni/ ri gtsug rum 'bar ba'i nag tshal du/ bya khra gzan la 'dzums bzhin ni thal/ gyim sham chu la bya ltar lding nas thal/ thal mo zhes ci 'phrin smras so gsung/ ces gyis gsang nas de byas pas/ chu bo gyim shang 'gram nas ni [66] rgyal po 'khor tshoms phyir la log/ btsun mos klong btag nyes pa'i/ 'gu ling mdze'i ma ti klu/ zin de la gtsug gshen snying po thugs ije skyes/ drang srong ne tso'i rnams 'phrul de/ mo ma kun shes thang po btangs/ btsun mo 'gu ling mdzes zin pas/ g-yung drung gtsug gshen rgyal ba la/ klong btab nyes pas klu'i zin/ mdze nad</p>	<p>su skyes/ drang na drangs thabs 'di lta ste/ rgyal bu bran phrug pha ma dang/ mo bon ha 'da nag po dgu/ rgyal po dmag mi sum stong rnams/ sdig sgrib dus cig sbyangs par 'gyur/ ces gsungs/ rgyal po dga' ba [77] skyes/ u du 'bar ba'i me tog phul/ 'jig rten sgron ma gshen rab lag/ sngar byas sdig la 'gyod tshad 'gyi/ phyin chad dge ba gzhung bzhin srang/ ci ltar bgyis na sgrib sbyangs zhus/ ces zhus/ ston pas bka' rtsal pa/ rgyal po 'bar sgron rdtul shug can/ dge' spyod myur du brtsams nas 'grub/ / bsam brtan gzhu brdung shes rab mda' 'phangs nas/ rnams shes yul brgyad nyon mongs dgra bsod rgos/ bder gshegs lha gshen srid pa la/ mtshan byang phyag 'tshal nas myur du 'byong/ 'gro la sbyin gtong rtul shug bskyed/ bdun du mi thog sgrib pa 'byong/ ces gsung/ rgyal pos yang zhus pa/ lha mi'i ston pa sgron ma'i mchog/ sa le gsal ba'i ye shes spyang/ snang srid bkra ba'i mkhyen rgya can/ bdag dang bdag 'dra'i sgrib sbyangs phyir/ bdag gis gnas su 'byon par zhu/ [78] ces zhus/ ston pa gshen rab nyid/ / gser gyis chags shing phyag tu 'dzin/ / gser gyi shing rta'i khri</p>				<p>mkha' la mnyam/ thabs dang shes rab zung du 'brel/ tshad med bzhi yis thugs rje byung/ deng 'dir yon bdag byed pa ni/ sngon du rgyal po gsal mtshog [sic!] gis/ bdag la dge tshogs bsags pa'i/ snga ma'i las 'brel bzhag pa'i/ bstan pa mnam gsum rjes bzhag ni/ 'gro don mtha' ru phyin pa'o/ / / ces gsungs bkra shis zhal sros dang/ ding dir rgyu sbyor yon gyi bdag/ sgos btsan kong tse 'khrul rgyal dang/ spyi btsan ris drug sems can rnams/ gsas khang chen po bzheng pa dang/ bder gshegs stong gis mtshan brjod cing/ bstan pa rnams gsum rgyas 'gyur nas/ dge ba mtha' ru rgyas 'gyur te/ kun kyis bla med 'bras bu thob par shog/ ces gsungs so/ kong tse las sog [sic!] 'khor rga mgu [sic!] rjes su [89] yid rang nas/ rga [sic!] ston mchod pa cher byas so/ de nas kong tse 'phrul rgyal gyis bu mo 'phrul bsgyur khab tu phul/ sras bu 'phrul bu chungs 'khrungs ste/ gtsug lag rtsis gyis bon la mkhas/ de la ston pa gshen rab kyis/ rdzu 'phrul rkang pa bzhi ldan pas/ khri smon rgyal bzhad dag tu byon/ bkra shis zhal sros cher byas so/ /g-yung drung dag pa'i bon/</p>
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<p>rab tu mi bzad pa/ de la phan cing bsod [sic!] pa'i thabs/ ston pa gshen rab gdan drangs nas/ tshogs bsags sgrib pa sbyangs nas phan zer/ / der ston pa 'khor bcas gdan drang nas/ ston pas 'gu ling ma ti la/ khyod kyis gtsug gshen rgyal ba ni/ spyang drangs tshogs bsags lha phyag 'tshal lo/ spyang sngar nyes pa bshags nas byang/ de lan [sic!] klu'i gtong mi 'gyur ces gsungs/ kun shes thang po yin [sic!]/ gtsug gshen rgyal ba spyang drangs te/ nyes [67] pa bshags byang byas shin du/ lha mo sum brgya phyag 'tshal te/ tshogs bsags las ngan mdze nad sos/ der btsun mo rin chen gcal bkram phul/ hos rgyal dang pa [sic!] dga' dgu nas/ bu mo hos za rgyal med ma/ rin chen rgyan kyis btas nas ni/ / ston pa gshen rab khab tu phul/ / bram ze blo gsal? mtshan bltas nas/ mtshan bzang bkra shis legs so brjod/ khri smon rgyal bzhad dag tu byon/ rga ston lha gsol che ru byas/ sras ni gto bu 'bum sangs dang/ spyad bu de ni khri shes 'khrungs/ bu mo gshen za ne'u chen 'khrungs/ de nas yid kyis khye'u chung gis/ [67.2]</p>	<p>la bzhugs/ g-yung drung sems dpa' stong dang lnga brgya dang/ 'khor bcas khri thang 'byams pa'i gling/ grong khyer lhun grub 'dus pa byon/ phyag dang rim 'gro bsu ba bgyis/ mkhar ni shod pa gcegs [sic!] pa ru/ sras bu rma lo g-yul lo yis/ nyi zla gnyis kyis gur yang phub/ gsang ba (mdo sdud)? yid kyis khye'u chung yis/ pad ma ris kyis gdan yang bting/ rgyal po 'bar ba'i sgron ma'i/ gsol zas ro mchog brgya dang ldan/ nor bu gzi 'bar phul/ kye ma ston pa thugs rje can/ rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i gshen rab mi bo sgron ma'i mchog/ rgyal phran khri shang nad kyis zin/ nad de cis kyang ma sos par/ pha ma mo bon bran phrug ha 'da dang/ dmag mi tshu ched sdig la gnas pa 'di/ ci'i rgyu dang ci'i rkyen/ ston pa'i sgron ma bdag la bshad du gsol/ ces zhus/ ston [79] pas bka' brtsal pa/ sngon tshe snga ma rgyal bu de/ tshe stod dpon bsad bcad byas/ tshe smad gto rgyal ye mkhyen la/ srog gcod spang ba'i ston pa blangs/ dge bcu tshad mar spyod pa yis/ 'dir ni rgyal bur skyes pa'o/ tshe thung sngon gyi srog bcad rnam smin yin/ pha ma mo bon had 'da rnam/</p>				<p>mdo 'dus pa rin po che'i rgyud las/ bstan pa rnam gsum rjes bzhag mdzad pa'i le'u ste bcu cig pa'o/ // // [89.4]</p>
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<p>('brug rta sngon po chibs su bcib/ myur mgyog rdzu 'phrul lcag gis brabs/ klog 'gyu skad cig ci bzhi bar/ gsas chen ru bzhi gdan yang drangs/ shar nas gar gsas btsan po byon/ [68] byang na rgod gsas kham pa byon/ nub nas gsas rje rmang po byon/ lho nas gnam gsas khyung rum byon/ bar po so brgyad phyogs bzhi ru/ bka' rtags rnga gshang dung slang [sic!] bzhi/ rang bzhi mkha' nas mams bab byung/ sa gdug bla res rgyal mtshan bzhi/ 'khor lo dpal bye'u dung dang nya/ pad ma bum pa rgyal mtshan gdug/ rin chen sna bdun gter dang brgyad/ me tog 'dze dgu char du bab/ sgo bzhi mdzod lnga klog bshad mdzad/ de nas gsas chen ru bzhi yis// gar dha [sic!] 'phyo ba dung gis mdog/ rgod rta lding ba gser lo dang/ gsas rta bang chen mtshal bu dang/ gnam rta gyi ling 'gros po che/ ston pa gshen rab bcib par phul/ de tshe ston pa'i zhal nas ni/ bon ni sgo bzhi mdzod dang lnga/ chab dkar sngags rgyud phyi nang dang/ chab nag srid rgyud che chung dang/ dpon gsas lung rgyud che chung dang/ [69] 'phan yul 'bum sde rgyas</p>	<p>rgyal bus dge ba spyod pa la// mo mas sdig spyod 'khor ba yin// rgyal po khyod ni snga ma 'dur gshen skyes/ dmag mi rnams ni ltad mo ba/ bdag ni 'dur gsas yin zhes byas/ de rnams rnam smin yam du 'dir 'tshogs/ de bas sgrub pa dus 'dir sbyangs/ ces gsung/ rgyal po 'khor bcas gyis/ ston pa'i zhabs la phyag 'tshal te/ bder gshegs stong gis mchod pa bsham/ snying po brjod cing bstod pa byas/ 'khor ba dong sprug snying po brjod/ ris drug glud kyis tshim par byas/ bden [80] pa'i don yang bstan pa yin/ lta dang cho 'phrul chen po byung/ rgyal po dmag mi sum stong bcas/ mkha' la 'od bzhi mngon sangs rgyas/ 'jig rten 'khams ni bde la bkod/ slad nas rgyal po 'bar sgron sras/ dpo'u lag ngan bya ba dang/ dpo'u lag ngan bya ba dang/ dpo'u za thang mo shul du lus/ de la mtshan ldan khye'u bzhi yis// gshen rab dag la slar zhus pas/ e ma yab cig gshen rab mchog/ 'jig rten stong par gyur tsam kyis/ 'gro ba lhag med sangs rgyas nas/ rgyal bu lcam dral lus pa 'di/ ci'i rgyu dang ci'i rkyen/ dbyings dang ye shes thabs kyi sku/ sku gsum kha' la yab pa cig/ ces zhus/ ston pas bka'</p>				
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<p>bsdus dang/ gtsang ma mtho thogs zas don mdzod/ gzungs so dag la 'dzin shes gyis/ bdag sgo dag la ming ying thog/ go lam dag la don snyed mdzod/ ces brjod/ sgo bzhi mdzod lnga gtan la phabs/ de nas gung la brag seng ge brgya [sic!] bsnol su/ bdud ma tang ru rings btul/ / mtho ris khri smon rgyal bzhad rtser/ rgyal po hos kyis 'gro don rdzogs so/ de nas mgon btsun phyai phul [sic!] du/ snang ldan g-yu rtse bya ba ru/ ye shes lha'i ston pa la [=gshen lha 'od dkar] / 'gro ba 'dul ba'i bon rnam zhus/ de nas shar lho nub byang phyogs bzhi ru/ ston pas 'brug rta sngon po bcibs/ lha rta ke ru snyan kar la/ gto sgro spyad sgro rtsis sgro smansgro dang/ lho sgro gshen sgro zung gsum ma drug bkal/ rnga gshang dung slang bzhi dang chas/ gsas chen bzhi ru 'dren ston byas/ yid kyis khye'u chung gis [70] sna 'dren byas/ sras bu zung gsum ya drug dang/ mo ma kun shes thang po dang/ bon gyis 'khor lo phyogs bzhir bskor/ gto spyad 'bum sde gtan la phabs/ de nas 'dzam bu gling bzhi ru/ skad rigs mi cig sum brgya drug bcu las/</p>	<p>brtsal pa/ dpo' rgyal sngun dus sangs rgyas pa/ tshogs bsags sgrib pa byang ba yin/ rgyal bu ming sring lus pa 'di/ rgyal bu skye ba lnga brgya ru/ 'tshams med sdig pa spyod pa [81] yin/ dus 'dir rgyal bu skeyes pa ste/ da rung lhag ma ma dag pas/ bdag nyid mya ngan 'das tsam nas// thar pa'i go 'phong bzod thob bo/ sring mo dpo' zang thang mo ni/ sngon nas bdag dang me tog 'thor/ smon lam lhan cig btab pa'i/ bdag gis grog su phran [sic!] pa yin/ / de phyr rgyal pos phul ba legs/ ces gsung dpo' za thang mo ni/ / ston pa gshen rab khab tu bzhes/ kho ma ne'u chung dag tu bsus/ dga' ston bkra shis lha gsol byas/ nor sbyin dag gis g-yang yang blangs/ sras bu lung 'dren rgyud 'dren 'khrungs/ bu mo gshen za ne'u chung bltams/ mi nor sna dgu phogs su byin/ gto sgro spyad sgro bka' ru gtad/ de nas phyi rol tshal bzhi ru/ lha rgyud gshen rgyud srid rgyud dang/ don rgyud rgyud sde bzhi rnam dang/ don mdo bcu bon gyi [82] 'khor lo bskor/ lung 'dren rgyud 'dren dag la gtad/ rgyal po dpo'i [sic!] 'gro don mthar phyin no/ g-yung drung lha'i bon/ mdo 'dus pa rin po</p>				
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<p>bon skad 'gyur mi cigs pa re re bzhags/ slar yang 'ol mo gling du byon/ bar po so brgyad mkhar du thams cad kun 'dus/ g-yung drung lha'i bon/ mdo 'dus pa rin po che'i rgyud las/ ston pa gshen rab mi bo dang/ rgyal po hos dang ba yid ring zhu don kyis mdo/ hos za rgyal med khab tu bzhes nas/ sras 'khrungs pa'i le'u ste dgu pa'o // // [70.5])</p>	<p>che'i rgyud las/ rgyal po dpo'i [sic!] 'gro don mdzad cing dpo' [sic!] za thang mo khab tu khab tu bzhes pa'i le'u ste bcu pa'o // // [82.2]</p>				
-	<p>[E 12:98.4] gshen rab sgo bzhi mdzod 'chad dus/ khyab pa gsas chen ru bzhi sprul/ kye ma ston pa gshen rab nyid/ nged gsas chen ru bzhi bya ba yin/ nyi ma phyogs bzhi'i dpon gsas lags/ gshen rab mi bo 'di ltar gyi/ bon ni 'dod pa dgu 'gyur lags/ go mtshon dmag gis dpung chos la/ nyi ma phyogs bzhi'i [99] nor la rgyal gor gyis/ ces smras/ gshen rab lan btab pas/ kye ma khyab pa lag ring po // gsas bzhi ma yin 'jig rten skyongs/ 'khor ba zo chu'i rgyun ltar 'khor/ gshen rab mi ru ma 'gyur med/ drin chen ma la sdang ba de/ bdud men gzhan la ga la yod/ nga zhe sdong [sic!] spangs pas dmag dpon len/ 'dod chags spangs pas nor ming len/ nga rgyal spangs pa sde mi 'jom/ rgyal sa</p>	-	-	-	-

	<p>[sic!] sde bzhi rang gi rang gi sde/ khyab pa rmongs pa'i bslu tshig za/ ces gsung sras bzhi mnga' 'od chud/ gshen rab phyai'sku 'tsho tshe/ khyab pa lha'i bu 'dra sprul/ btsun mo rnams la bslu tshig smras/ gshen rab phya'i sku 'tsho tshe/ ngo phya'i bu mo gtsug [sic!] mor blang/ de gto sgro dpyad sgro zhug la [100] srog/ du ba phyai' yul du 'gro/ gshen rab mi bo 'dir dgong nges/ ces pas dpa'o [sic!] zang thang mo slongs [sic!] bsgyur nas/ gto sgro dpyad sgro zhugs la bsregs/ gto bu spyad bus spar do zin/ yi ge dpa'o 'bru lnga dang/ gto'i byang bu sum brgya dang/ gto gyis byang bu dgu bkra zin/ gto spyad 'bum ste zhugs la song/ dpa'o [sic!] za thang mo khyab pas bslus/ bu ni bdud bu go bo chung/ yul ni bra ma khri 'od dang// sems can bsod nams sogs pa byung/ mo ma sding nga sding lom smras/ bslu ba'i bon gyis bslu byas ste/ snga dro gshen la me tog 'thor/ phyi dri ying brgab spu dri brgyad/ bslu ba'i bdud bu gong chung gum/ dpa'o [sic!] za de la mya ngan smre/ de la gshen rab kyis smras/ dpo' [sic!] za thang mo smre cig/ bu 'di bdud kyis bslu [101]</p>				
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	<p>ba'i bu/ la la srin kyis dmod pa'i bu/ la la bgegs kyis bar chod bu/ la la lan chags snyags pa'i bu/ lha'i thugs rje'i bu rka'o' / ces gsungs/ dpo' [sic!] zas dran ba rnyed// gshen ne'u chung khyab pas bslus/ bdud phrug stag bu thung dang gzigs bu thung/ sha la mgam zhing khrag la 'thung/ ne'u chung de la blo'gyur nas/ nu ma bcad nas gzan du sgyur/ mo gling kho ma ne'u slob// lung 'dren rgyud 'dren dral dang mjal/ sras su yum gshen rab dga' spro skeyes/ [101.5]</p>				
[F 18:179.6] hos za rgyal med ma/	[F 18:179.6] dos [sic!] za thang mo	[F 18:179.6] lha za bzang [sic!] drug	[F 18:179.6] gsas za ngang drug dang/	[F 18:180.1] kong [rkong] za khri lcam dang/ bder gshegs 'byung ba'i yum la phyag 'tshal bstod/	[F 18:179.6f] kong za [180] 'phrul bsgyur [sic!]
[G 20:192.4] gzhon nur gyur tshe rtsal dang yig rtsis stob ldan zhing/ gzhon nur kun gyi rab tu gyur lha mi kun gyis bstod/ rgyal rigs rgyal srid skyong phyir hos za dpo [sic!] za khab tu bzhes/ rma lo g-yu lo gto bu spyad bu sprul pa'i sras bu bltam/ gto sgro dpyad sgro rtsi sgro sman sgro 'gro ba'i [193] phan yon mdzad/ sgo bzhi mdzod lnga bon sgo dbye ba'i bkra shis shog/ [193.1]	[G 20:192.4] gzhon nur gyur tshe rtsal dang yig rtsis stob ldan zhing/ gzhon nur kun gyi rab tu gyur lha mi kun gyis bstod/ rgyal rigs rgyal srid skyong phyir hos za dpo [sic!] za khab tu bzhes/ rma lo g-yu lo gto bu spyad bu sprul pa'i sras bu bltam/ gto sgro dpyad sgro rtsi sgro sman sgro 'gro ba'i [193] phan yon mdzad/ sgo bzhi mdzod lnga bon sgo dbye ba'i bkra shis shog/ [193.1]	-	-	-	-

[H 22:203.4]: nub ni khri smon rgyal bzhad ni/ pad ma rag ga zangs las grub/ rin chen bzhi bkra dpag tshad bdun/ hos za rgyal med de'i khab/ gto bu spyad bu 'khrungs pa'i/ [203.5]	[H 22:203.5] byang nas kho ma ne'u chung ni/ in tra ni li g-yu las grub/ rin chen gser gyi sa gzhi bkra/ lcags ri dpag tshad bdun gyis bskor/ dpo [sic!] za thang mo'i gling ste/ bras [sic!] ni lung 'dren [204] rgyud 'dren dang/ gshen za ne'u chung 'khrungs pa'o/ [204.1]	-	-	-	-
-	[I 23:217.5] (bdag phywa'i ston par gshegs dus su/ khyod kyi btsun mor nam kyang bslus/) gto sgro spyod sgro bsregs tu bcug/ dpon za thang mo slus pa'i/ bdud bu gong bo chung yang sprul/ mo bon sdig to bdud las byas/ [218] khyod gshen za ne [sic!] chung bslus nas khyed/ bu stag bu thung dang gzig bu thung tsha bo bcas pa bslus par sems/ [218.1]	-	-	[I 23:218.1]: (khyod dkor la cho 'phrul bstan dus su/ khyod rta bdun khyer nas rkong po yul la khyer/) bdag rkong lcam khab tu bzhes tsam na/ khyod rkong rje bcas ste bar chod byas/ [218.3]	-

NB. This text was mainly typed by Dan Martin and proof read by Kalsang Norbu and also by me. Kalsang Norbu is working on a critical edition of the *mDo 'dus* based on all three presently manuscripts available and also envisions translation. This comparative table will not anticipate on this work and merely attempts to render the text of the Khedup Gyatso Dolanji edition as accurately as possible. While gratefully acknowledging the work and generosity of the mentioned colleagues, I assume full responsibility for any mistakes in this rendering of the original manuscript.

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY BONPO PILGRIM IN WESTERN TIBET
AND NEPAL: EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF DKAR RU GRUB
DBANG BS'TAN 'DZIN RIN CHEN

Charles Ramble

 Kar ru Grub dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen rgyal mtshan bde can snying po is best known as the nineteenth-century author of the *Gangs ti se dkar chag*, the longest and most elaborate of the (admittedly few) Bonpo guides to Mt Kailash. The general impression of the author that we distil from this work is of a rather tetchy Bonpo polemicist and the most important architect of what we may, for want of a better term, refer to as “Zhangzhung nationalism”. Among his other writings, Karu (as I shall refer to him henceforth for the sake of simplicity) also wrote an autobiography that has attracted very little scholarly attention. This lengthy work, consisting of 575 pages (folio sides), does nothing to dispel the image of Karu as a staunch champion of his faith; but it does offer an altogether more nuanced three-dimensional portrait of its protagonist than the *Gangs ti se dkar chag* allows.

Inasmuch as the work (which I shall henceforth refer to as the *Autobiography*) is a *rnam thar*, it is coloured by hagiographic features that conventionally justify its composition as an exemplary account of a life dedicated to the goal of spiritual liberation. His visionary encounter with divinities and sages, and the narratives of the acute hardships he endured in his quest will surely be a fund of moral support for anyone who reads the work for its inspirational message; but Karu was an inveterate traveller, whose peregrinations took him the length and breadth of Tibet, across much of the Nepal Himalaya, through Kathmandu – which he visited several times – and as far as the Indian borderlands. In the course of his journeys he met as wide a cross-section of the region’s population as it is possible to imagine: clerical hierarchs of different Buddhist schools and other religions, as well as kings, ministers, governors, ordinary monks and nuns, traders, customs officers, nomads, farmers and outcastes. The conversations he had with these people range from lengthy debates on philosophical or doctrinal topics to casual exchanges among fellow-travellers. A feature of these encounters is that Karu’s interlocutors are all real people, and not just vectors of prefabricated attitudes set up for demolition by his exemplary discourse. Contrary to what we might have expected from the author of the *Gangs ti se dkar chag*, Bonpos in the narrative receive no special favours above Buddhists; some of his sharpest barbs are directed at his co-religionists, while he is often lyrical about the open-mindedness and civility he received from the most unexpected quarters, such as self-avowed opponents of Bon, Hindus, and, on one occasion, a community of marmot-hunting Tibetan pariahs. The ethnographic cameos he offers of the exotic Himalayan communities

among whom he sojourned provide some of the delightful and fascinating aspects of the work.

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to such a long and complex work within the confines of the present article, and an examination of the intriguing doctrinal debates recorded by Karu must be altogether forgone for the sake of brevity. The purpose of this preliminary account, then, will be: to present the circumstances in which the work was written; to outline its general structure and literary features; to identify Karu's family background and his early life, and the reasons for his abandonment of his native region; to offer a few salient examples of encounters he had during his travels. Karu left Nepal for the last time in 1852, and before his death in 1861 was an important figure in the religious politics of the Bonpos in Central and East Tibet. I hope in the future to undertake a more extensive study of this and other works by Karu, but for the present it must be enough to offer a glimpse into the rich and eventful life of this well-travelled Bonpo pilgrim.

Although the English title of the work describes it as an autobiography, the text is characterised by the authorial ambiguity that is typical of many such accounts. The events were related by the master, but set down in writing by one of his disciples, a certain Rin chen phun tshogs from rGyal rong. The later parts of the work appear to be a collection of eulogies composed by other disciples and associates. The degree to which his amanuensis altered and edited his master's narrative is difficult to tell, but his mediation is apparent in certain formal and stylistic features: notably the fact that honorific terminology is applied to Karu, and that the entirety of the text is in verse; the bulk of the narrative consists of lines of nine syllables, though the lines of the introductory passages are longer, while an assortment of other metres are used to characterise the devotional songs and other eulogies offered to Karu. The difficulties created by the irregularity of the orthography are exacerbated by the fact that genitive and agentive forms are used apparently interchangeably throughout.

The occasion for embarking on the project of an (auto)biography arises in Kyirong, where Karu and a handful of his disciples have just completed a number of domestic rituals for a prominent member of the rDo dmar pa family. (This in itself is interesting, since the rDo dmar pa are an eminent clan of rNying ma pa *sngags pa*.)¹ The master is being regaled with songs, dances and gifts when Rin chen phun tshogs, who has been in retreat in a nearby cave, entreats the master to compose his life story. Karu at first demurs, dismissing the idea as a pointless exercise: it would be the story of a life in which nothing had been achieved, a record of the laughter of beggars, and as vain as beating an old dog ever harder with a stick, like wind in an empty valley, or listening attentively outside a hollow cave (9-10). Karu remains intractable for a further two months; a period of hope and expectation

¹ For the history of the rDo dmar pa family, see Brag sne Kun bzang chos 'phel 1996.

that makes Rin chen phun tshogs feel as if he is sitting naked in the cold and dark and waiting for the sun to come up. And at last Karu relents, and agrees – just to satisfy his disciple’s wishes – to give an account of whatever he can remember about his life.

The work is divided into twelve chapters, each ending with a descriptive title. While these chapters are ostensibly thematic, a particularly convenient aspect of the narrative is the interpolation of the author’s age, as well as the date, before the events that are recorded in any given year. This enables the reader to establish a clear chronology of the activities that are described – such as the composition of certain texts, the occurrence of epidemics, and the travels and other deeds of certain well-known religious and secular figures.

While the first chapter is concerned with preliminary considerations, largely connected with the merits and demerits of the *rnam thar* genre, exemplary precedents for such writing and so forth, the biography proper begins in the second chapter (17ff.). The scene is set: Karu and his disciples are in sMan lung in sKyid grong, which is stated to be a part of Zhang zhung. A nearby mountain, mTshal ri, is described lavishly in terms of the conventional marvellous features it presents if seen from an “inner” and “secret” point of view: its vase-like form, its square foundations, its streams of nectar, and its tripartite vertical division into realms inhabited respectively by the lama and *yi dam* at the peak, the vidyadharas and dakinis that swarm like clouds around the mountain’s neck, and the Bon protectors at its base (17-18).

Before his birth, the account tells us, Karu was entreated to accept incarnation by hosts of divinities who addressed him as “the emanation of the great *vidyādhara* sNya chen” – a reference to the legendary sage sNya chen Li shu stag ring that recurs in the work with considerable frequency. They besought him to take birth in mDo smad Hor; and then, in the course of his life, to reject worldly wealth like a nest of venomous snakes, to perform austerities such as “essence extraction” (*bcud len*); to receive his lama’s teachings like nectar; and, among other things but above all, to compose a systematic presentation of the sacred white snow-mountain Ti se, the great soul-mountain of gYung drung Bon, and to spread the doctrine in the ten directions of the barbarous south like a fire across a grassland (23-24).

Karu was duly conceived in the first month of an Iron Bird year (1801), in the town of Sog sde bon dgon, which is located in the valley named Khra zhu, in the east of the savage borderland of Hor (in Khams).² His father was She tsu wer ma of the Bāi’u ldong dmar clan, and his mother Dang ra g.yu mi of the rGyal rmog sog po clan. His actual birth took place at sunrise on the eighth day of the tenth month of that year (24-25). Within three days of his birth Karu fell seriously ill, but recovered within a hundred days thanks to the intervention of a large cohort of gods and goddesses (25).

² The statement in the English preface to the *Autobiography* that “his birthplace was western Tibet in the vicinity of Ti-se” is therefore incorrect.

The first of his many visions occurred in his second year, when he had an encounter with a hero of sNya chen Li shu stag ring, who revealed to him his accomplishments of earlier lives and bestowed numerous teachings on him (26-30). His descriptive guide to Kailsah, the *Gangs ti se dkar chag*, was perhaps prefigured by a vision of the mountain he had in his fifth year, which presents Ti se, its environs and its denizens in highly structured numerical sets (mainly based on the number 33). The vision ended with a eulogy offered him by a group of saints and divinities who prophesied that he would receive the mind-treasure of the *rDzogs chen dMar khrid [dug lnga rang grol]* in his 25th year (30-36).

A relative on his mother's side – perhaps his maternal great-uncle – named A mye rGyal rmog A rgyas – recommended to Karu's parents that he should be given a monastic education, since he was so clearly the incarnation of a lama, and he gave young Karu the name A yang. The following year his father approached the local monastery of Nor gling, and the boy was duly admitted under the tutelage of a certain lDang lnga Kun dga'. It was on the third day of the Sa ga zla ba in a Fire Tiger year (1806) that Karu began to learn the Tibetan alphabet (36-39). Two years later, in 1808, he moved into A tsho shes tshus house in Nor gling monastery, and took his upāsaka vows in the presence of an incarnation of sTong rgyung mthu chen, a *drang srong* (corresponding to the rank of *dge slong*) named gYung drung rgyal ba, who was the head of the monastery at that time. At this ceremony he was given the name bsTan 'dzin dbang phyug.

The monastery of Nor gling – or, to give it its full name, Sog rTing ngu bon dgon Nor bu gling – was founded in 1748 by lHun grub dbang ldan, who was born in sDe dge, in Khams. Karu would later succeed gYung drung rgyal ba as the seventh head of the monastery, and was responsible for building the monastery's assembly hall during his incumbency (Karmay and Nagano 2003: 85-87). gYung drung rgyal ba's predecessor was a certain dPal ldan tshul khirms, whom Karu refers to in the *Autobiography* as his own root lama.

The five years that followed Karu's matriculation into Nor gling were his honeymoon period with the monastery and monastic life. Following a detailed account of the ceremonial routines of the community, he remarks that he felt as blissful as if he were in paradise, and that after receiving the four initiations of sGrib sbyang rin chen sgron ma from an important reincarnate lama (*mchog sprul chen po*) named bsTan 'dzin dbang drag he had the impression that he was actually meeting the gods in heaven. No one, he thought, could possibly be as happy as he was.

His precocious scholarly achievements were given public recognition when one of the proctors of Nor gling, gYung drung 'od zer, bestowed on him a "hero's cloth" (*dpa' dar*) and sang his praises to the assembly of monks: although many young novices had joined the monastery since its establishment, none had got to don monkish robes within just three years of their arrival; the boy was a credit to his father (whom the proctor referred to as Ka ru Bris pa) who was excellent and

wise, eloquent, courageous and – most pertinently, we might be forgiven for suspecting – wealthy. The monks applauded Karu by blowing loudly on their conches (41-42); but as every schoolchild knows, this sort of public approbation of diligence and scholarly merit by a figure of academic authority can be a poisoned chalice – as Karu would soon discover for himself. Karu took his vinaya vows at the age of ten. The biography describes in great detail the procedures followed in the course of the ceremony, the observances that were enjoined on him, and the ritual during which he was given this ordination name: *bsTan 'dzin rin chen*.

For the year 1812 Karu records an unpleasant event that occurred when he was away from the monastery to take part in the funeral rites for a local notable: an “internal theft” (*nang rkun*) in the monastery that resulted in the loss of all his possessions – his hat, his boots, his bowl and his clothing. His family demanded an inquiry into the affair, but because of the scandal and disrepute this would have brought down on the monastery Karu assured them that the crime had not been committed by one of the monks. The same year marked the end of his halcyon days in Nor gling monastery, with the deaths of both his grandparents and his influential father (55). Two years later there was a major blow when his family’s herds of livestock were wiped out by an epidemic. The household itself disintegrated and its members dispersed. This sudden decline into poverty and the death of his father meant that the young prodigy was now defenceless against the vengeful resentment his privileged treatment had provoked among his peers, and the name-calling and bullying began in earnest (56).

In 1819 he was instructed by one of his teachers, a certain Drang srong Tshul khrim – possibly dPal ldan tshul khrim, his root lama – to undertake a 149-day retreat in a mountain hermitage (58). The detailed description of the instructions he was given provide the justification for the title of this, the third, chapter: “the [part of the] biography in which I studied closely with my lama and received initiations, oral transmissions, instructions and so forth” (66).

The contemplative life suited Karu, and he spent extended periods of the subsequent years in his mountain hermitage. This, too, elicited the jealousy and hostility of other members of the monastic community, “who wished to place obstructions in my path”. Nor gling was requested to provide 21 monks to perform a ceremony for the royal gShen family (*rgyal rigs gshen*):

But because of heavy snow the animals we had would not be able to go. It was one of the rules of Nor gling monastery that the younger members would have to carry on their backs as much as they could. If there was any younger member who said he wouldn’t be able to go, he would surely be dismissed from the community – so the proctors

would proclaim emphatically in their addresses to the assembly. I therefore had no choice but to interrupt my retreat and go (74).³

The importance of the gShen family in the area is borne out by the fact that in this same year (1822) the monastery's liturgical tradition was changed from the "old" (*rnying*) to the new, gShen system (*gshen lugs gsar lugs*). Because of the long spells he had spent in retreat Karu had failed to learn this new convention and was cautioned by the proctors. He applied himself diligently and mastered the new format within a month – an achievement that was appreciated by some of his seniors but that stimulated even greater hostility towards him among the majority of his peers (74-75).

The following year (1823), while he was in reclusion, the high-ranking reincarnate lama mentioned above, bsTan 'dzin dbang drag, began a 100-day retreat in the same location with some of his acolytes from the monastery who "had achieved the title of 'contemplative'" (*rtogs ldan ming thob* – Karu's formulation is certainly ironic). The latter were unconfident about how to carry out retreats, and in their jealousy of Karu they accused him of being in competition with the lama, which made Karu apprehensive about his imminent audience with him. Far from admonishing him, however, the master publicly praised the diligence shown by "Ka ru *rtogs ldan*"; which did little to help his popularity (76). During this period, Karu had to leave his retreat to go and perform a ceremony his mother's house.

Then they again messed up my place, as before, by leaving excrement and other disgusting things in my dwelling. And on top of that, a certain contemplative who was actually an anchorite in nothing other than name, said to me: "Day and night you go around the hills and valleys; you are either robbing the monks' cells or chasing women, or stealing sheep from the villages – you're in possession of meat and cheese that you didn't have before!" (78).⁴

The incident led to Karu being publicly berated in highly abusive terms by "the greatest vow-breaker among them, a sinful robber-chief with heretical views, who held the title of 'head proctor' (*khriims chen*), named Rad sla wer ma". The censure he received – ostensibly

³ *Kha ba che phyir nor yod 'gro mi thub / gzhon pa rgyab khur thub tshad 'gro dgos pa'i / nor gling bla ma grwa tshangs bsgrig lam yin / gzhon pa mi 'gro zer ba'i mi 'byung na / dgon pa'i sgrig nas gtong nges go bar gyis / zhes zer dge bskos tshogs gtam ches cher byed / de nas dbang med mtshams grol 'gro dgos byung /*

Note: all citations from the Autobiography are presented in unedited form, as they appear in the text. Contracted forms (*bsdus yig*) are indicated in the transliteration by the use of hyphens.

⁴ *Yang skyar sngar ltar nang du rkyag pa dang / rdzas ngan sna tshogs phab nas gang ngan byas / de ltar ma zad rtogs ldan kho'o yang / ri khrod bsdad pa'i ming tsam ma gtogs pa / ri 'gro lung 'gro nyin mtshan med par 'gro / yang na grwa gshag rkun ma rgyab sams 'am / yang na nag mo'i sham du 'gro ba 'am / yang na yul sde rnam ki lug sku bsam / sngar yang med pa'i sha dang chur ba 'dug /*

conveying the words of *mchog sprul* bsTan 'dzin dbang drag – was the last straw. The injustice of his punishment, combined with the ambient hostility towards him and a dream he had had in which he visited the thirteen foremost sacred sites of Bon, persuaded him to leave the monastery to embark on a pilgrimage. Following in the footsteps of “the princely Kun grol [grags pa]” (*kun grol rgyal sras*; b. 1700) he headed south-west, visiting all the main pilgrimage sites (*bla rten*) and ending up in Kong po Bon ri, where he had several inspirational visions.

Interrupting his pilgrimage because of concerns about his family he returned to Nor gling, where he found that the previous antipathy towards him had abated somewhat (84). The following year, in accordance with the prophecy cited above, he received from a certain A snyen shes rgyal the essential precepts of the *dMar khrid dug lnga rang grol*, which had a profound effect on him (85-88).

In 1825 he embarked on a longer pilgrimage with four companions. The journey, which lasted almost three years, took the group through the main sites of Central Tibet – sMan ri, mKhar sna, and Dar lding among others — as well as Buddhist centres such as bKra shis lhun po and Sa skya. From there they travelled westwards as far as the Sutlej Valley, “visiting all the sacred sites of Zhang zhung” (*zhang zhung gi gnas kun mjal*) – more than a score of which are listed, a record that makes this account particularly helpful for students of Bon pilgrimage – before returning to Nor gling in 1828 (88-90).

In 1829 Karu was given leave of absence from the monastery to perform funeral rites in a private household where a certain Ba tsha dBang rgyal had died. The most memorable event this year was an attack by a large band of brigands.

About three hundred mounted bandits descended on the settlement of some 25 households. They attacked at daybreak, just as the sun was rising. They killed about nine men and horses, and after seizing whatever valuables and livestock (*nor*) there was they melted away like a rainbow. Although I'd been struck by arrows and all sorts of other weaponry, I didn't suffer a single wound. On my return to Nor gling monastery everyone was completely amazed at my quality of invulnerability.⁵

Karu's patron had been impoverished as a result of the lightning raid, but recompensed him for his services with whatever food and clothing he could (91-92).

⁵ *De tshe dgra jag 'jigs pa 'di ltar byung / me dud nyer lnga'i grangs tsam yod pa la / dgra jag rta pa sum brgya tsam zhig byung / nam lang nyi shar bar nas dmags rgyab ste / mi rta dgu tsam bsad nas gang yod nor / phrog bcom byas nas 'ja' yal ltar du song / de tshe bdag la mda' mtshon kun brdeg kyang / lus la mtshon cha cir yang tshugs ma gyur / de ltar nor gling dgon du sleb tsam na / bdag la mtshon gyis ma tshugs yon-tan la / kun gyis ya mtshan ches cher byed par 'dug /.*

The sixth chapter opens with a portentous assessment of the present degenerate age, where people are bestial and their words and deeds in particular are the objects of the author's censure.

Bonpos act in ways that violate Bon, and revile the Bon religion; Buddhists behave in un-Buddhist ways and destroy their own doctrine; people from the central regions speak and dress like those from the borders, while people from the borderlands take on the speech and clothing of dBus; ... vulgar spirit-mediums fill the land, vaunting themselves as "heroes" and "heroines", making clairvoyant prophecies for all and sundry; they perform rituals for guiding the dead and for reversing the misfortunes of the living; those who are not reincarnate lamas act as if they were, [while others] claim to be treasure-revealers; yet others, claiming to be prophets, lead women around like dogs; ancient monasteries, monuments and power-places are now visited and revered by only very few, while new monasteries, shrines and sacred sites are the objects of offerings and devotions, and are given fancy names....⁶

And as a consequence non-virtuous acts proliferate, and natural catastrophes occur (97).

In the course of one of his visions (104-106) Karu was instructed by his teacher "to raise the victory-banner of the doctrine in all places" (*phyogs med gnas su*) – and he obeyed these directions so promptly that people wondered whether he had taken to the air, or fallen off a cliff, or had been swept away by a torrent, or eaten by wild beasts. This vanishing act brings to an end the sixth chapter, "the [part of the] biography in which I received prophecies from divinities and my lama, and abandoned my milieu and my native land" (106).

Life for a pilgrim could be a hazardous affair. Karu records two close shaves he had shortly after embarking on his journey in 1829 when, "after wandering through empty places, I came to the place known as Nag chu". First, bandits:

Although I had nothing, they told me I was a horse-thief and took my clothing, and beat me savagely with their weapons. But thanks to my lama's compassion my body became as hard as rock, and the bandits were amazed. Later, someone called rDo ring rgam pang skar ma took pity on me, providing me clothing and food before sending me on my way.⁷

⁶ ...bon po bon min spyod cing bon la sdang / chos pa chos min ston cing rang bstan bshig / dbus mi mtha' skad 'don zhing mtha' chas byed / mtha' mi'i dbus skad 'don zhing dbus chas byed / ...lha pa lha ma ma rab rgyal khams gang / dpa' bo dpa' mo yin zer che skad 'don / dngos shes lung bstan kun la de'i byed / gshin po'i yar 'dren gson po'i rkyen zlog byed / sprul min sprul 'dra gter ston yin zhes smra / lung bstan yod ces bud med khyi ltar khrid / ri lung rgyug cing jag rkun khyi ra byed / rgyal khrims chos khrims gshig cing grub thob zer / dgon rnying rten rnying gnas rnying khyad 'phags la / bskor phyag mchod 'bul byed pa shin tu nyung / dgon gsar rten gsar gnas gsar yin tshad la / mchod 'bul bskor byed ming brtags mtshan snyan gsol /.

⁷ Cir yang med kyang rkun bu mang tsam gyis / khyod ni rta rkun yin zhes lus gos 'phrog mtshon gyi lus la brdung bsdeg mang byas kyang / bla ma'i thugs-rje'i lus 'di ldo ltar gyur /

And then, mastiffs:

At the place called A 'dams glang gling gong I had the following terrifying encounter with dogs. These were hounds of the Degenerate Age that been nourished with the flesh of human corpses and dead horses. A pack of about thirty of them attacked me. But while they were in the process of biting and dragging me and pulling me around, a man on a white horse came by. They went off after him, and I was saved.⁸

But Karu took these misfortunes in his stride, seeing them all as opportunities for the purification of his body (*lus kyi sdug bsngal sbyongs*;107).

The places he went on to visit are described in varying degrees of detail, and cursory treatments of the external, physical manifestation of the sites are generally followed by elaborations of their appearance when seen with inner vision, and the author's religious loyalties are never far away. The Potala, for example, may look like a large town – indeed, it is the very vision of the Six Realms in one; but seen inwardly it is a Bonpo phenomenon, and anyone who reveres it with prostrations and circumambulations will surely be born in 'Ol mo lung ring. In a similar vein, Buddhist protectors such as bSam yas Brag btsan dmar po and the yaksha of lHa sa, rTsi['u] dmar and lCam sring, declared their support for him (110), assuring him that his onward journey to gTsang would be free of obstacles. rTsi'u dmar soon gave evidence of his good faith: manifesting as a storm of red dust he forced Karu to take shelter in a corral where he met a large party of officials from Lhasa, whose leader gave him gifts and received teachings from him (111).

One of the places he visited on this itinerary was gYu rtse, a barren but atmospheric site located in modern Nag chu prefecture, regarded by Bonpos as one of the 37 celebrated "Assembly Places" (*'du gnas*). In the course of a visit I made here in 1997 with my colleague Hildegard Diemberger I was happy to discover a number of short works that Karu had written and left here almost 170 years earlier – fragments of devotional pieces that to the best of my knowledge constitute the earliest known compositions attributable to him.

Irritated by the fact that numerous Bonpo sites had come to associated with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (*slob dpon rgod ldem shakya bzang po*) and the true origins of the site confused by the construction of Buddhist temples and stupas, Karu made use of his time in gYu rtse to carry out a detailed examination of the relevant Buddhist and Bonpo *byang gter* literature. His research proved invaluable in a debate he had

rkun bu kun kyang ya mtshan cher byas song / de tshe rdo ring rgam pang skar ma zhes / snying rje cher ldan zhig gi lus gos dang / kha zas ster zhing lam bstan grogs kyang byas /
⁸ *De 'tshams a 'dams glang gling gong du yang / ku kur khyi yi 'jigs pa 'di ltar byung / dus ngan mi ro rta ro'i 'grang pa'i khyi / ztag gzig lta bu sum cu'i grangs tsam gyi / bdas nas za drud 'then gsum byed pa'i tshe / de phyir rta pa dkar po gcig thon nas / de la 'ded tshe rang yang 'jigs las thar /*

with a Buddhist visitor to gYu rtse, a physician called E mchi Blo bzang from Khams. In response to Karu's assertion that the nearby site of Zhal brag zang zang was a Bonpo sacred site, the physician flew into a rage and accused Karu of being a superstitious heretic. Karu replied patiently by pointing out that in the Sa dge rnying 'brug byang gter, the "gTer ston rgyal ba rGod ldem" himself states that he was incarnation of the twelfth-century Bonpo *gter ston* dPon gas Khyung rgod rtsal; which abruptly ended the argument (121).

Karu left gYu rtse for "Zhang zhung Pra thun rlung tshal" – almost certainly the mTha' 'dul temple of Pra dun rtse – which he identifies as an essentially Bonpo site. From here he intended to go to Muktinath (Chu mig brgya rtsa) in Nepal, but on reaching the sKo ra Pass that leads to Blo bo (this spelling and Glo bo are used interchangeably), he was confronted by the local protectress (*zhing skyongs* [sic] *lha mo*), who told him that the time had not yet come for him to extend his mission to Blo bo; he should rather go to Central Tibet and the Kailash area (122).

Karu then records a touching episode that occurred while he was near a place called Zhang zhung Dum pa tshal, where he had gone to see hand- and footprints and the meditation cave of sTon pa gShen rab. He went to beg alms at a nearby settlement of outcaste artisans who were hunters (*mgar ba rigs ngan khyi ra ba*). Reading the prelude to this passage, my heart sank in anticipation of a formulaic conversion scene in which Karu would persuade the hunters to give up their sinful livelihood. Far from it:

I had a little of the tea and tsampa they'd offered me for sustenance, but it affected my vital wind and left me completely breathless, and for a whole day I was like a lifeless corpse. "The yogi's dead", the outcastes said, and they were all terrified. Then after I recovered and got up, all the outcastes said to me: "Yogi, you've over-exerted yourself, and because you haven't eaten properly in a long time your vital wind is affected. Without meat (*dmar bcud*) you won't get better. We've killed many harmless animals, so please have some of this meat to purge our sins". Then they offered me the meat of kyang (wild donkey) and marmot. "I am one to whom the razor of the Enlightened One has been applied",⁹ I replied. "You are good-hearted (*bsam bzang*) and wonderfully meritorious people, but even if it costs me my life I won't eat kyang and marmot meat". They all wept. Then one of them, by the name of mGar ra bKra shis, said, "Even if you don't [eat the meat of] a marmot that has fed on the grass of clean hillsides, or drunk the water of clean valleys, if you just have a tiny piece of kyang meat you'll be able to continue your austerities without interruption. You'll again be able to visit sacred sites where you can accumulate virtue; our sins will be purged and the accumulations [of means and knowledge] for living creatures will be perfected. Have this, and we shall take on ourselves whatever fault may come of it." So they besought me and prostrated and told their rosaries. At that I felt so compassionate to them that I

⁹ Meaning, of course, that he was a shaven-headed monk.

thought, well, whatever happens, and I drank a bowl of broth. At that my awareness became acute and I felt a physical improvement. I stayed for three days, and though I didn't eat the meat I drank a bowl of broth every day, and felt better in mind and body. I offered them all an appropriate prayer of dedication (122-23).¹⁰

Not long after this episode Karu gave up meat and blood for thirteen years. However, this decision seems to have been motivated less by his experience with the outcastes who saved his life than the practice of "essence extraction" (*bcud len*), which he presently took up with enthusiasm. In point of fact, he appears to have abstained from meat for longer than the initial thirteen years: at the age of 47, five years beyond the expiry of this period, he fell ill in Dolpo and was encouraged by a physician to eat meat for the sake of his health. On this occasion he declined, and instead offered a disquisition on the spiritual benefits of vegetarianism (321-22).

His subsequent travels in Western Tibet took him, in 1830, to the celebrated monastery of 'Khor chag, near the Nepalese border. It was at this point that one of his companions, Ngag dbang lhun grub, announced that there were five households of his relatives in nearby Humla ('Om lo) – and the pilgrims duly set off down the Karnali Valley into Nepal. Although they visited numerous Bonpo sites, it was a community of Indian sadhus (*rgya gar gu ru dzwo ki*) that particularly caught his attention. These ascetics – "who live for three hundred years" – "were performing many amazing austerities", which he records in detail: practices such as disjointing their own arms and joining their hands on the crowns of their heads in a permanently frozen attitude; nurturing plants in the palms of their hands until they grew to a height of around six feet; maintaining unbroken silence; abstaining from eating and instead depending for nutrition on milk drawn in through the nose; never sitting down; never rising from a prone position (125).

He was also as fascinated by the unfamiliar domestic animals (Indian sheep with long tails, Indian goats the size of horses, buffaloes

¹⁰ *Ja rtsam phran bu gtad pa'i bcud zos tshe / rlung la phos nas lan cig dbugs chad de / nyin gang gcig la shi ba'i ro ltar mtshungs / rigs ngan rnam kyis rnal 'byor grongs zer nas / kun kyang 'jigs skrag ches cher byed par 'dug / de nas dbugs gsos yar la lang pa'i phyir / rigs ngan kun gyi bdag la 'di ltar zer / rnal 'byor khyed ni dka' thub sdug bsrang che / nyi mang mi zas med pa'i rlung skyon yin / dmar bcud med nas khyed ni gsos mi 'gyur / nged kyi nyes med ri dags mang bsad pa'i / de yi sdig sbyang phyir du sha 'di bzhes / zhes zer rkyang dang phyi ba'i sha yang gter / bdag ni sangs-rgyas skra gri phog pa'i mi / khyed rnam bsam bzang ha cang bsod nams che / shi na'ang rkyang dang phyi ba'i sha mi za / zhes bya kun kyang mig nas mchi ma blug / der nang mgar ra bkra-shis zhes bya ba'i / ri gtsang rtswa za lung gtsang chu 'thung ba'i / phyi pa min na rkyang sha til tsam zhiig / bzhes nas khyed rang dka' thub thog med 'dug / slar yang dge sbyor sgrub pa'i rten du 'ong / nged cag sdig sbyang sems tshogs rdzogs 'ong / 'di bzhes nyes 'gal gang yod bdag gis khur / zhes zer kun gyi phyag-'tshal ma ni bgrangs / de la bdag-gis snying rje cher shor nas / ji ltar 'ong zhes sha khu phor gang btung / de phyir rig pa gsal zhing lus bde byung / de nas zhag gsum der bsad nyin re bzhin / sha yang ma zos khu pa phor re btung / de tshes lus bde rig pa hur du song / de rnam kun la bsngo smon yang dag byas /.*

and white cows) as by the wildlife: tigers, leopards, poisonous water snakes, black turtles (or frogs), “water sprites” – presumably crocodiles – peacocks, cuckoos and parakeets. He offers a succinct description of the people who inhabit the Nepal-India borderlands: the men wear no clothes apart from cotton turbans, while the women wear only skirts, with bangles on their arms and legs; they give their daughters in marriage at the age of eight, and for all communal activities (*skyid sdug gang byed*) they play string instruments, sing, play drums and dance (125-26). Since the description of these people is quite similar in other respects to the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, whom we shall encounter presently, I shall not reproduce his ethnography in further detail.

Karu found several patrons in western Nepal, including a certain Na ga klu'i rgyal po, for whom he performed priestly duties for the next two years. Although he was generally well received wherever he went, he remarks that the area of West Tibet known as Hor yul was particularly marked by hostility to Bon. Here, deaths among people and cattle, heavy snowfalls and sandstorms were routinely explained as the result of maledictions (*ltas ngan*) from the lands of the Bonpos. One of his patrons here was a local chieftain (*mgo pa*), but Karu, sensitive to the prejudice he had encountered, discreetly withheld from him the information that his chaplain (*bla ma a mchod*) was a Bonpo (126). But others discovered his religious affiliation and subjected him to a litany of insults – artisan, butcher, outcaste, corpse carrier *inter al.* – adding that he would impair the life of his patron and those associated with him. Eventually, the *mgo pa* himself confronted Karu with the matter of his provenance. Karu's enraged response was a searing evocation of caricatures about Bonpos from the east: “I am from Khams, that land of brigands, and I reduce my enemies to dust and ashes; I am a follower of the Bon religion, a black heretic, and if anyone treats me badly I'll tear apart his body, his life and his senses; I am a monk from the *grwa tshang* of Thob rgyal sman ri ...”, (127). The *mgo pa*, to his credit, smiled cheerfully and answered, in some embarrassment, “Oh, sman ri – that's the same school as bKra shis lhun po,” and he asked Karu to continue to act as his chaplain. The spontaneous association between sman ri and bKra shis lhun po that the *mgo pa* made is intriguing. The Panchen Lama at this time was dPal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma (1782-1853). The previous incumbent but one had been Blo bzang ye shes (1663-1737), a member of the Bonpo Bru family, but it would be surprising if the association between Bon and the throne of bKra shis lhun po was still current a century later. The *mgo pa*'s acceptance salvaged Karu's reputation, and the two even went so far as to swear an oath of association as preceptor and patron (*mchod yon*), a bond that was to last until the latter's death in 1856 (129; 481).

Karu went on to travel extensively in the Kailash area. It was during this trip that he accumulated most of the material that formed the basis

for his guide to Kailash, the *Gangs Ti se dkar chag*, that was written in 1844.¹¹

I shall pass over these travels and encounters to the occasion when, in 1833, he was staying at a place called Gung chung zhur mo brag. While he was in meditation the protective divinity of the place (*zhing skyong*) appeared to him with the announcement that the time had now come for him “to convert Kha rag [and] Glo bo” (147).

He set off with a small party of eastern Tibetan pilgrims, and after crossing many passes and rivers, reached the sacred site of Muktinath (*chu mig brgya rtsa*), where he saw the flames that miraculously burn on earth, stone and water – as they continue to do down to the present day. In a nearby monastery he met a scholarly monk to whom he introduced himself by the title he had borne in Khams: *rtogs ldan*. The scholar burst into laughter and advised Karu not to use this title of himself locally, as it was a cause of embarrassment: a certain rTogs ldan drang srong from Kong po who had lived in the area, he explained,

“was in a relationship: he referred to this wife as ‘mother’; but then she had a child from their incestuous union, so ‘*rtogs ldan* from Kong po’ [has come to mean] someone who is the husband of his own mother. And what’s more, in this area ‘*rtogs ldan*’ denotes the ‘husbands’ of the nuns with matted hair. You really shouldn’t use the word *rtogs ldan* – much better to call yourself ‘*bla ma grub thob!*’” (149-50).¹²

Karu asked the helpful scholar about the nearby Bonpo village of Klu brag and was told that the inhabitants practised both “white” and “black” Bon, and that there were two eminent figures in residence: a

¹¹ The *Gangs ti se dkar chag* was written in 1844. The preface to Prats and Norbu’s edition of this work states that, at the time, “the author was dwelling in the sGrub-k’añ’od-gsal-rañ-šar meditation cave of the monastic community of gYung-druñ-bstan-pa’i-gliñ of the Šel-žig abbey, in the Zal-mo-sgañ area (K’ams) (1989: xxii). The *Autobiography* makes no reference to the author travelling to Khams in this year: on the contrary, he seems to have spent almost the entirety of his time in the vicinity of Lake Dang ra. In fact the colophon to the dKar chag gives the location as: *zhang zhung bon gyi ’du gnas zal mo’i sgang / rta sgo lha btsan mched bdun mdun gyi zhol / dang ra g.yu mtsho sngon mo’i g.yas kyi zur / dge rgan lha btsan dkar po’i g.yon gyi zur /...*(106)

At the “Assembly Place” Zal mo’i sgang of Zhang zhung Bon, at the foot of the seven lha btsan brothers of Mt rTa sgo, at the right-hand edge of the Blue Lake Dang ra, at the left-hand edge of Mt dGe rgan lha btsan dkar po...

It is clear from this brief extract that the Zal mo’i sgang in question is not the well-known area of Khams, but a locality of the same name in the vicinity of Mt rTa sgo and Lake Dang ra in Western Tibet. Although Karu describes Zal mo’i sgang as a “dus gnas” – i.e., one of the 37 “Assembly Places” of Bonpo sacred geography, it does not feature in either of the two lists given in Karmay 172: 40-41. Both rTa sgo and Dang ra are, however, cited in the second of the two lists.

¹² *Kho’o nang tshang gnyis byung skyes dman la / a ma yin zhes tha ma nal bu byung / rkong po’i rtogs ldan a ma’i khyo ga zhes / de ltar ma zad ’di yul kha des la / rtogs ldan ral can a ne’i khyo ga zer / rtogs ldan ming de ha cang ma zer cig / zhes smras bla ma grub thob zer na dge /.*

certain “Grandfather” (*mi me = mes mes*)¹³ Drang srong, and an elderly monk from Amdo known as dBon po’i dbu bla. There was, however, a problem insofar as the ritual procedures with which the latter was familiar were not the same as those from Klu brag. They went on to have a discussion about the *sri gnon* ritual for the subjugation of vampires (*sri*), in which Karu explained to him the necessity – which is to the present day a contentious matter for the Bonpo priests of Klu brag – for burning the captured consciousness of the vampire in the course of the exorcism. The discussion continued to the more general matter of the difference between “black” and “white” Bon, which Karu sets out at length. His lucid exposition of these categories (150-55) provides a very helpful “emic” understanding of these contentious terms.

When Karu arrived in Klu brag he found the little community gathered in the village temple, drinking beer as a prelude to the harvesting. The people, whom he found warm and hospitable, offered him water and firewood, and asked for religious instructions. The Ya ngal clan, which had founded Klu brag around the beginning of the 12th century, was still present in the village; but although the family has continued to flourish in Dolpo, the archives of Klu brag reveal that it did not survive here into the twentieth century: the members of the lineage he met were the last of the line in Mustang.

Then, as now, Klu brag was a community of hereditary householder-priests, and Karu seems to have been taken aback by the offence to his expectations about standards of monastic discipline. When he raised the matter he received the reply that ordained monks did occasionally come from Tibet to spend time in the settlement; but that after a few years they generally succumbed to alcohol and women (156).

Karu’s response to what he perceived as the spiritual need of the community was to set down in writing the meditation system he had received as a mind-treasure in his 25th year: the *dMar khrid dug lnga rang grol*, which to this day features in the annual ritual cycle of Klu brag (155).¹⁴ He also enjoined the Klu brag pas to renounce Black Bon (157) –

¹³ “Grandfather” in this context does not necessarily signify age; even now it is used as an honorific prefix in Klu brag for religious figures. When the relatively youthful reincarnate lama of Jomsom took up residence in the village after completing his education in India he was – and still is – referred to as “Mes mes sprul sku”.

¹⁴ The colophon to the fourth part of the *dMar khrid dug lnga rang grol* (*dMar khrid* 431-38) states that it was written at the sacred site of sTag ri ’khra bo in the Kailash area: *Khyung ka ru ba’i sprang ’khyams po bstan ’dzin rin chen du ’bod pa’i / ’dzam bu gling gis dbus dkyil / ti tse gangs kyi g.yas zur / ma pang mtsho yi g.yon zur / stag ri khra bo’i gnas de ru gang dran gang shar du bris pa’o / (437)*

However, it appears that this refers to the fourth section alone. The colophons to the first three sections contain no information about where Karu was when he wrote them, and no dates for the work are provided anywhere. In fact the published version of the work represents only a part of Karu’s extensive writings on the *dMar khrid dug lnga rang grol*. The original manuscripts are preserved in the village of Klu brag, in Mustang, but I have not yet been able to discern from these the date and place of their composition.

an intriguing prohibition insofar as it implies that animal sacrifice may have been practised here at the time – as it was in most of the surrounding Buddhist villages until the 1950s.

This was the first of several visits Karu made to a community for which he clearly developed a close attachment. He cites a passage from the lineage history of the Ya ngal clan, in which the community's founder, Yang ston (= Ya ngal gyi ston pa) bKra shis rgyal mtshan, observes that the spiritual qualities of the place are such that a meditator can achieve more in a week here than in a year anywhere else; and in spite of the dubious conventional morality of the people, "They will follow no religious tradition other than their own Bon faith, even so much as a sesame-seed, even if they were to fly off into the air" (161).¹⁵

After relating encounters he had at Muktinath with a Sa skya pa tantrist and an Indian sadhu – both of them striking for their open-minded lack of sectarianism – he offers one of his welcome ethnographic summaries, this time of the area of southern Mustang:

The dress of the people of this area is as follows: the men tie their hair up in topknots, and wear Tibetan clothing; the women wear turquoise headdresses and chubas. They are good-hearted, argumentative, amenable and prone to jealousy. The wide variety of languages that are spoken here include Nepali, Newari, Se skad and Tibetan. The people greatly enjoy singing and dancing, and are not much interested in merit. They are traders, and carry their loads on their backs. Their sustenance consists of rice, tsampa, beer and spirits. Tibetan food, tea and butter are rather scarce, and the [varieties of?] food and drink are limited. By way of livestock they have cattle, goats, sheep, dzos and horses. Since animals are rarely slaughtered, there are few meat and blood products. Their household property consists of grain and woven broadcloth, and it is only through trade that they have things such as gold and silver. Although there are few men in the religious community there is a sizeable female component. The Bon religion is present, along with the rNying ma pa and Sa skya pa schools of Buddhism. Among the men there are only lay followers, and not even any novice monks. The celibate females undergo a three-year retreat; the yogic results are significant, and they are very kind-hearted (160).¹⁶

In 1834 Karu travelled north to Tre ba – a Bonpo enclave north-east of sKyid grong – where he was the object of jealousy and hostility on the

¹⁵ *rang lugs bon 'di ma rtogs grub mtha' gzhan / mkha' la 'phur yang nges shes til mi byed /*

¹⁶ *De yul mi rnams cha lugs 'di ltar 'dug / pho rnams mgo la thor cog bod kyi chas / mo rnams mgo la g.yu zhur smad gos cher / sems dkar kha tsha bcos sla chags sdang che / skad lug yon dang bal po gser skad dang / bod skad la sogs sna tshogs shes par 'dug / glu gar rol rtsad las la shim du dga / bsod nam cher med khe tshong mi khyur byed / kha zas 'bras rtsam chang dang a rag byed / bod zas ja mar dkon zhiing bza' btung snyung / sgo zog ba glang ra lug mdzo dang rta / sems srog gcod nyung zhiing sha khrag dkon / nang zog 'bru rigs snam 'phrug tshong ma gtogs / gser dngul la sogs nang zog cher mi 'byung / dge 'dun pho sde cher med mo sde mang / chos lugs bon dang rnying ma sa skar (sic) 'dug / pho rnams dge snyen ma rtogs rab byung med / mo rnams gtsang btsun lo gsum chod pa dang / rtsa rlung ltags thon byams sems ldan pa yod /*

part of the monks of Bya dur monastery (165). He returned to Glo bo shortly afterwards and undertook a 100-day retreat in the temple of Ge kar. Glo bo Ge kar is highly revered for its association with Padmasambhava, and one of the visitors during Karu's stay was the King of Glo bo, 'Jam pa dgra 'dul, who descended on the place with a retinue of thirty riders in the course of a summer festival. The king tested Karu's mettle with questions about the etymology of the name of sTon pa gshen rab mi bo, and the eight-syllable mantra of the Bonpos. The well-rehearsed answers were so thorough that the king invited Karu to his palace to perform rituals for him, adding that he had two Bonpo chaplains in residence. The king clearly had an enquiring mind, and took advantage of Karu's presence to challenge his new chaplain on a number of contentious issues, such as the geographical location of 'Ol mo lung ring and the doctrinal distinctiveness of Bon. These discussions provided the stimulus for Karu to write an explanatory book about Bon, but unfortunately this work has not come to light.

The king was by no means the only dignitary of Mustang with whom Karu was to have dealings. In the same year he was invited by the Duke of Southern Baragaon, Khri thob dpon po Gung rgyal and another nobleman, Zil gnon (175). Both of these individuals feature as prominent figures in the archives of the region (Ramble 1998: 314-15, 317; Schuh 1994: 44). Three years later Gung rgyal again invited him to perform domestic rituals for him; and in 1846, shortly after Gung rgyal's death, Karu was asked to officiate at funeral rites for his departed patron (305).

Karu's sojourn with the king ended when a delegation of three nuns came to invite him back to Klu brag. It was during this second stay in the Bonpo community that Karu supplemented his well-established renown as a scholar with a reputation for possessing extraordinary powers. Against the advice of the villagers he embarked on a retreat in one of the caves high above the settlement. Heavy snow cut him off from the community, which was unable either to provide him with necessities or to escort him down. After several days of peering vainly through the falling snow in the hope of a party of villagers coming to rescue him, a rainbow appeared, and he saw five people approaching his cave. But as they drew nearer he saw that they were not Tibetan men: they were women, naked except for bone ornaments and red-and-white flowers sprouting from their *bhāga*. The visitors bore him down to the settlement, where the amazed villagers found him. "Did you fly?" they asked. Some sceptics looked for his footprints in the snow, but could find no traces of his descent (174-75).

Karu made numerous visits to Klu brag over the course of the next seventeen years. The *Autobiography* provides a great deal of valuable information about the religious organisation of the community at the time, but there is insufficient space here to examine these observations. I hope to give them the attention they deserve in a future work concerned more specifically with the religious life of Klu brag. In any event, it is clear that Karu and the people of Klu brag developed a

warm relationship during these visits. Two of his closest disciples, bsTan 'dzin nyi ma and his nephew Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, were both Klu brag pas of the Glo bo Chos tsong clan. The official "passport" (*lam 'khyer*) on which the three travelled through Tibet was kept in the village until recently. In 1863, two years after Karu's death, bsTan 'dzin nyi ma wrote a collection of devotional verses in honour of his late teacher under the title *sNyigs dus kyi rnal 'byor ba bstan 'dzin nyi ma'i gsung ba'i blo sbyong dang 'brel ba'i mgur ma*.¹⁷ Apart from his legacy of the *dMar khrid dug lnga rang grol*, Karu's main contribution to the community was the village temple, gYung drung phun tshogs gling, the building of which he sponsored in 1846. Karu provided rice, tea, beer, tsampa and meat to a value of 300 Gorkha *ṭam* (*go ṭam*); the geomantic rites were performed by a reincarnate lama from Gung thang, while a craftsman from Dolpo saw to the carpentry; the work was completed by the entire community of Klu brag – then numbering around fifty people – within the space of one-and-a-half months (305).

As we might expect, the Bonpo settlements of Dolpo claimed a good deal of Karu's attention over these years, but for lack of space his many activities and encounters there must also be passed over in the present article. I shall, instead, present some of his experiences in the Kathmandu Valley and the adjacent Buddhist areas to the north.

In 1838 Karu travelled down via Kutang and Nubri, in the Manaslu region of Nepal, down to the Kathmandu Valley, where he spent several months. One of the places that particularly attracted his attention was Swayambhunath (Phags pa shing kun), where he had numerous visions. The sight of Karu begging for alms here by the side of road with a few companions proved irresistible for a passing group of sadhus. The language in which they attempt to communicate in the following extract is a convincing pot-pourri of the mangled Hindi and Nepali in which an Indian cleric and a Tibetan pilgrim are very likely to have conversed:

At that point there came the so-called chief priest of the King of Nepal, known as the "Venerable Great Teacher from India" with a retinue of around three hundred sadhus. They were naked but for red turbans around their heads and red loincloths around their nether parts. The chief of these sadhus, who was in a completely green palanquin with glass windows, said, "O *bābā*, *ghar kahā ho?*" which means, "Brother, what country are you from?" To which I replied, "*ghar mahācina ho*", meaning, "My home is in China". My disciples and I had our mandalas, staffs and bowls in front of us, and he remarked about them: "*vaise*¹⁸ *kyā ho? hāt ho ki?*" – "What's that you have? Might it be your market stall?"

¹⁷ This work has been printed in India by the Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre (Dolanji), but the publication is unavailable to me at the time of writing. The text at my disposal is a copy I made from the original manuscript, kept in Klu brag.

¹⁸ In spite of the helpful Tibetan translations he provides, some of Karu's Hindi/Nepali formulations are opaque, and my renderings are therefore speculative.

“deutā pujā ghar ni ho” I replied: “That’s the shrine for worshipping our gods”. At that he climbed down from his palanquin and said, *“Bābā, unka māl mero hami samāe holā?”* Meaning, “Is it all right if I handle these things of yours?”

“Chune holā holā,” – “Yes, yes, you may touch them.”

“Accha ho, accha ho,” he said – “Ah, you’re a good man!” After this point neither of us could really understand what the other was saying, and dPal ‘byor of sKyid rong stepped in as interpreter (198-99).¹⁹

The chief sadhu then asked him about the tantric tradition of having consorts (*rig ma*), and whether it has been abandoned by everyone in Tibet. The ensuing discussion so pleased the sadhu that he offered to draw up Karu’s horoscope, and duly proceeded to work it out on a stone. Among the details that emerged from his calculations were that Karu had been a great lama in a previous life; he had mastered all the sciences and had had the ability to fly. The two exchanged gifts, and continued to see each other for the next three days until the sadhu and his retinue returned to India (198-201).

A later visit Karu made to Kathmandu in 1843, when he visited other sacred sites such as Namobuddha (sTag mo lus sbyin) and Baudha (Bya rung kha shor), provides the opportunity for one of his ethnographic set pieces, this time about the Newars, whose un-Tibetan bathing habits elicit from him one of the most delightful analogies in the whole work:

The people aren’t greatly interested in their future lives or the cultivation of merit; they’re good-hearted, amenable, and earnest in pursuit of the here-and-now. They do not care much about the welfare of others, and don’t know a great deal about virtue and sin. Though there is no hostility, there is an army and they possess weaponry; the men have no proper clothing but cover their lower halves with loincloths; they have cotton turbans and golden earrings. The women wear red cloth headdresses, tie their hair in a chignon, and have gold nose-rings with pendants; they have bracelets on their arms and legs, and they don’t need shoes. They eat once a day and quench their thirst with water. They keep very clean and wash themselves the way ducks do. They eat rice, millet and maize, as well as chicken, fish, eggs, garlic and onions. As their domestic animals they keep elephants, buffaloes,

¹⁹ *de mtshams yam bu rgyal po’i dbu bla zhes / rgya gar ma ha gu ru ’ju zhes pa / bla ma dzwa ki dpon g.yog sum brgya tsam / gos med gcer bu mgo la thod dmar dkris / gsang ba’i mtshan mar dhu ti dmar-po dkris / de nang gu ru dzwa ki gtso bo yi / khri gang ljang la shel sgo yod pa’i nang / ho bha ba ghar gang ho zhes pa / de gang zhe na’ang / mched grogs pha yul gang nas yin zhes so / de la bdag gi ghar ma ha tsi ni ho zhes pas / de gang zhes na / pha yul rgya nag nas yin zhes-so / nged rang dpon slob rnams kyi mdun du ma ’dal mkhar sil lhung bzed sogs yod pa de la / yang kho’o u si ca ho / ha kra ho ci zhes pa / khyod kyi de gang yin khrom bkram sa e yin zhes-so / de la bdag gis rde’u ta’i pu dzwa ghar ni ho zhes pas / lha yi mchod pa ’bul ba’i rten yin-no zhes so / der kho’o khri khar nas mar babs bha ba u nu ka mal me ro ha mi sa ma’i ho la / zhes pa khyod gyi bca’ lags ’di la nga yi rags su rung ngam zhes so / bdag gis ’dzus na’i ho la ho la zhes pa / la legs so rag na ’ong drag zhes so byas pas / der kho rang a ca ho a ca ho zhes pa / ha ha khyod yag po red zhes so / de nas phan tshun go brda’ ma khrol tshe / skyid rong dpal ’byor zhes pa’i lo tsa bsgyur /.*

cows and bulls, as well as dogs, goats, pigs and suchlike, and also chickens and horses. The hills and valleys are completely covered with fields and settlements. In the forests there are different kinds of wild animals such as barking deer (?), wild bovines, wild goats, wild boar and wild people, as well as jackals, tigers, leopards, bears, goral and sambar deer (?). For “god” they say *deuta*, and for “lama” they say *guru*. “King” is *mahārāja* and “queen” is *mahārāni*. “Minister” is *jarnal* (= “general”), and “general” is *jamindar*.... For “worshipping divinities” they say *puja garne*.²⁰ The objects of their worship are Mahādeva and Durga, to whom they make blood-sacrifices. They pray to them and ask for phenomenal powers. When a man dies, his wife is burned alive with him.... (235-36).²¹

His subsequent travels in the region of Tsum and Nubri brought him into contact with a community of householder-priests whose attitudes towards celibate monasticism clearly took him by surprise. Among other things, the author of the following passage might well be grateful that he was a nineteenth-century Tibetan, or we would surely accuse him of perpetrating the Orientalist fantasy of a twentieth-century Englishman.

People of that land who are a hundred years old look as if they are of the same age as Tibetans who are thirty. With the exception of true siblings they behave quite unashamedly with one another, and speak without reserve. There are no lamas or monks, ordained or otherwise, who observe rules, but all are tantric householders who frequent women. They belong to the rNying ma pa and bKa’ brgyud pa schools. Consequently, if you tell the people in this area that you’re an ordained monk, they’ll think it’s a complete fabrication, because to be a lama you need to be a member of the appropriate clan; and since monks therefore have to maintain their patrilineages, anyone who says he doesn’t sleep with women is regarded as a liar. To say that you don’t need a woman is very badly considered, or else an indication that you’re sterile or homosexual. It causes utter revulsion. Or else, if you say you’ve given up women they think you’re making it up, and guffaw loudly—everyone just laughs in amazement. “Our country is a Hidden Land; the

²⁰ The vocabulary list he provides here is of course in Nepali, as opposed to Newari.

²¹ *Mi rnams phyi tshes dge sgrub byed pa med / sems dkar bcos sla kha tshar rang don 'bad / gzhan phan cher med dge sdig cher mi shes / dgra sdang med kyang dmag dang go mtshon bsags / pho rnams gos med dhu ti 'og sgor skris / mgo la ras thod rna la gser lung btags / mo rnams ras dam mgo la dar dmar thod / skra yang ltag mdud sna la gser snas chu / rkang gdub lag gdug rkang lham mi dgos pa / kha zas nyin re lto re kha skom chu / gtsang sbra che ba ngang pa'i khru byed 'dra / kha zas 'bras dang ko to ma ge dang / bya sha nya sha sgong nga sgog tsong byed / sgo zog glang chen ma he ba dang glang / khyi ra phag sogs bya dang rta sogs 'dug / sa zhing yul mkhar ri lung med par gang / ri la ri d'wag kri sna sha ra dang / glang rgod ra rgod phag rgod mi rgod dang / lce spyang stag gzigs dom dang rgya gor ra / kha sha la sogs ri dags sna tshogs 'dug / lha la rde'u ta bla mar ghu ru ho / rgyal po mahaa ra dza rgyal mo la / mahaa rad ni blon po 'jar rnyal zhes / dmag dpon dzwa ma dar zhes dmag mi yang / ... dkon mchog mchod pa spu dza ghar ni zhes / skyabs yul dbang phyug yab yum dmar mchod byed / 'dod gsol smon lam 'debs cing dngos grub zhu / pho shi mo yang lhan du gson sreg byed /*

men are heroes and the women heroines, and anyone who lives here is really happy..." (262-63).²²

After his final departure from Nepal in 1852, Karu spent the remaining decade of his life occupied with religious responsibilities. In gTsang he was the root lama of the throne-holder of sMan ri, and was closely involved with the Bru family at the time when its last scion, bsTan pa'i dbang phyug, was recognised as the Eighth Panchen Lama – an event that was to lead to the extinction of this eminent Bonpo line; and in Khams, he became the head of his former monastery, Nor gling. These activities lie outside the scope of the present account, and I hope to give them the attention they deserve in a separate study. The excerpt with which I would like to close this overview concerns an episode that occurred during a visit he made in 1843 to the Nepal-Tibet borderlands in the region of sKyid grong, and describes his departure from a community where he had enjoyed a warm reception. The passage epitomises Karu's keen eye for unfamiliar ethnographic detail, while at the same time providing a vignette of real value to anyone interested in Tibetan folk ritual, particularly in ceremonies related to the acquisition and preservation of prosperity and good fortune. It is, furthermore, an appropriate way to bid a temporary valediction to a remarkable traveller:

When we left, all the men and women wiped me and my disciples down with white cloths, and in sing-song voices they repeated the words "*Phywa* (sic) and *g.yang*, don't leave us, don't wander off, but collect here!" Then they accompanied us up to a certain point, where they made offerings, including purifying smoke for the gods and valedictory drinks of beer. The accompanying party remained there, but told us that we ought to turn around and look three times: looking back three times is an auspicious gesture to signify that even if we don't meet again in this life we should do so in the next. And each time we looked back the people called out, "Victory to the gods!" (267-68).²³

²² *de yul mi rnams lo brgya lon pa dang / bod kyis mi rnams sum cu lon pa gnyis / rgas gzhon lo mnyam 'dra 'dra 'dug pa'o / pha bu ma bu rtsam las ma gtog pa'i / ngo tsha cher med kha yi lab chos smras / bla ma grwa pa dge slong khirms ldan med / kun kyang sngags 'chang khyim pa bud med brten / chos lugs rnying ma bka' rgyud lugs srol 'dug / der brten de yul dge slong yin zhe na / de la shin du bden par mi 'dzin pa / bla ma yin na gdung rgyud dgos pa yin / grwa pa de bzhin rgyud 'dzin dgos nges pa'i / bu med spang zhes de ni shin tu rdzun / bud med mi dgos de ni mtshan ngan nam / yang na rab chad ma ning rigs ngan yin / zhes zer kun gyi skyug bro ngan pa byed / de ltar ma yin bud med spang zhes na / shin tu rdzun zhing rab du bgod re bro / zhes smras kun kyang ha ha bgod cing mtshar / bdaq sogs rnams kyi yul ni sbas yul yin / pho rnams dpa'o mo rnams dpa' mo yin / 'di ru bsdad na shin tu spro bar 'gyur /*

²³ *phebs tshe nged rang dpon slob rnam la yang / pho mo kun gyi dar dkar g.yab kyi phyis / phywa g.yang ma 'gro ma 'khyam 'dir 'dus zhes / glu dbyangs skad kyi yang yang 'bod par byas / de nas sa bskor gcig du skyel ma byed / mchod 'bul lha bsang skyel chang la sogs byed / skyel ma der sdod nged rang rnams kyi yang / yang yang phyir mig lan gsum blta dgos zhes / lan gsum bltas pa'i 'di ru ma mjal yang / phyi ma mjal ba'i rten 'brel [yin] zhes zer / lan re ltas tshe lha rgyal re re 'bod /.*

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LE CORPS D'ARC-EN-CIEL ('JA' LUS) DE SHARDZA RINPOCHE
ILLUSTRANT LA PERFECTION DE LA VOIE RDZOGS CHEN*

Par Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS)

Introduction

Bien qu'elle représente l'un des arcanes les plus profonds de la tradition tibétaine toute entière, la notion de Corps d'Arc-en-ciel ('ja' lus) est devenue une sorte de banalité dans certains cercles occidentaux, au point qu'elle a donné lieu à de très nombreuses méprises et à des idées fausses extrêmement tenaces. Si certaines de ces erreurs ne sont aucunement des surprises dans les diverses branches du *New Age*, errements découlant d'amalgames successifs qui dénaturent les traditions combinées les unes aux autres¹, les Tibétains eux-mêmes ne sont pas forcément étrangers aux raccourcis rapides et faciles qui altèrent la réalité d'un phénomène aussi précis de libération manifeste. Néanmoins, si cette altération est relativement fréquente chez des maîtres en contact quasi constant avec des occidentaux, elle est rejetée avec des arguments très intéressants par la plupart des patriarches actuels des traditions bon po et rnying ma pa de la Grande Perfection². Pour les détenteurs de ces lignées, il est en effet important d'éviter les amalgames au sein de la tradition elle-même, afin de lui conserver les principes d'authenticité et de canonicité indispensables à la pérennité des enseignements eux-mêmes. D'une manière assez simpliste, l'amalgame consiste à mettre en équivalence le Corps de Lumière ('od lus) ou Corps illusoire (*sgyu lus*) en tant que Fruit de la pratique des Tantras et le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel ('ja' lus) ou Corps de Lumière ('od lus, même terme) en tant que signe indiquant la réalisation du Corps de Perfection (*rdzogs sku*) dans la pratique Dzogchen³.

* Je tiens à remercier ici Marianne Ginalski pour ses corrections et suggestions proposées dans la phase finale de la rédaction de cet article.

¹ Il ne serait pas inintéressant de mentionner ici une part notable de la bibliographie occidentale et fantasque qui aborde le thème du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel mais le sérieux (*sic !*) avec lequel ce sujet est traité dans les ouvrages du *New Age* nous interdit bien évidemment d'en formuler une critique minutieuse. En réalité, le traitement qui est fait de ce Corps dans de tels ouvrages montre que leurs auteurs n'ont connaissance ni du phénomène lui-même, ni de la littérature traditionnelle qui y fait référence et encore moins des pratiques qui y mènent.

² Voir note suivante.

³ Dans le premier cas, il s'agit d'un Fruit ou d'un but à atteindre, dans le second, de la manifestation d'un signe (*rtags*). La différence est gigantesque. Voir à ce sujet Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, *Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings*, p. 40-41, 44-45, etc. Sur des forums internet, certains identifient les deux types de Corps sans comprendre que les différences en termes de pratiques accomplies impliquent des différences en termes de manifestation du Fruit. Le Corps illusoire (*sgyu lus*) des Tantras est le Fruit d'une transformation basée sur les Phases de Développement et de Perfection (*bskyed rim* et *rdzogs rim*), alors que le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel est la manifestation naturelle du Corps de Jouissance (*longs sku*) : cette manifestation est un signe (*rtags*) de réalisation indiquant que le parcours complet de la Voie du Franchissement du Pic (*thod rgal*) a été accompli.

Il existe un certain nombre d'exemples dans lequel cet amalgame apparaît effectivement, mais il faut comprendre que, dans ces cas précis, les références qui sont faites au Corps de Lumière ne renvoient ou ne correspondent pas à ce que l'on entend par Corps de Lumière dans les Tantras⁴. C'est d'autant plus vrai pour des traditions anciennes comme celle de Vimalamitra et de son *Essence Perlée du Secret* (*gSang ba snying thig*) dans lesquelles le fruit du système de la Grande Perfection se traduit par l'obtention d'un Corps de lumière ('*od lus*). L'on imagine en effet sans peine les méprises occasionnées par l'usage d'expressions identiques qui ne renvoient pas à ce que l'on est en droit d'attendre d'elles, à savoir : un seul et même principe. Ainsi, le Corps de lumière de la tradition de Vimalamitra est un Corps d'Arc-en-ciel — c'est une évidence —, mais il ne s'agit pas d'un Corps de lumière tel qu'on l'entend dans la tradition des Tantras supérieurs⁵.

Dans la mesure où le phénomène semble à la fois mal connu et mal compris, tant par les traditions "extérieures" (*phyi pa*) qui se sont accaparé le concept à travers sa désignation si caractéristique que par certains auteurs ou maîtres tibétains eux-mêmes, il me semble important de l'analyser en fonction de ses représentations propres et de rapporter à titre d'exemple la description du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel de Shardza Rinpoche (1859-1934).

I. Les instructions Dzogchen menant au Corps d'Arc-en-ciel

D'une manière générale, le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel se conçoit comme le signe (*rtags*) manifeste de l'atteinte du Fruit de la Voie Dzogchen. Comme on l'a vu à l'instant, c'est particulièrement en ce sens qu'il convient de l'interpréter et de le distinguer des Fruits des autres Voies, telles que celle du Grand Symbole (Mahāmudrā) ou des Tantras supérieurs. Peu importe que l'on se trouve dans l'une des trois Sections du Dzogchen ou que les termes *khregs chod* et *thod rgal* ne soient pas employés dans les instructions concernées, les fondements de la pratique de la Grande Perfection s'expriment d'une part, dans la transmission décisive de la confrontation à la nature de l'esprit accompagnée des techniques contemplatives permettant d'en intensifier l'expérience et de la stabiliser sans régression ; et d'autre part, dans le développement de cette expérience à travers son expression visionnaire graduellement

⁴ Pour ne citer que Klong chen pa, son *Theg mchog mdzod* n'emploie jamais l'expression '*ja' lus* mais toujours '*od lus* (I, p. 560, 673 ; II, p. 130, 190, 206, etc.), et l'usage n'est pas fait dans un contexte décrivant le corps illusoire (*sgyu lus*) mais bien le corps de lumière correspondant au Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Il en va de même dans son *Tshig don mdzod*, avec de rares occurrences du terme (voir *inter alia* p. 259, 339, 453, 460 [dans une citation du *Thal 'gyur* puis du *Nyi zla kha sbyor* sous '*od kyi lus*]).

⁵ L'évidence de la distinction à effectuer tient directement à l'une des définitions du système de la Grande Perfection selon laquelle celui-ci ne dépend pas des phases de Développement et de Perfection (*bskyed rdzogs la rag ma lus*) et ne s'appuie pas sur les principes de ces deux modalités de la pratique tantrique.

intensifiée jusque dans sa manifestation paroxystique (*tshad*) qui marque l'épuisement (*zad*) de ce dynamisme de manifestation et le retour à la Vacuité primordiale, c'est-à-dire la matrice, céleste et absolument vierge de limite, de ce même potentiel visionnaire. Évidemment, cette présentation est extrêmement abrupte et vertigineusement elliptique, mais c'est exactement dans cette perspective qu'il convient d'interpréter la manifestation du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel⁶.

Ce Corps se manifeste au terme du parcours de la Voie dite du Franchissement du Pic (*thod rgal*) ou encore "Franchissement du Pic Spontané de la Claire-Lumière" (*'od gsal lhun grub thod rgal*) qui caractérise l'essentiel des instructions de la Section des Préceptes (*Man ngag sde*)⁷. Dans la tradition Bon po, cette pratique du Franchissement du Pic s'appuie sur un ensemble de quarante-deux points-clefs (*gnad zhe gnyis*) qui couvrent l'ensemble des données spécifiques à son accomplissement. Cette technique est, à quelques détails près, identique dans la tradition rNying ma pa, exception faite de la classification complète des quarante-deux points-clefs qui, à ma connaissance, n'existe que dans le Bon. Cette manière d'exposer les principes de la contemplation des visions de l'état naturel remonte à une allégorie contenue dans un texte intitulé *Le Coucou du Discernement* (*Rig pa'i khu byug*)⁸ révélé par gShen chen Klu dga' en 1017⁹. Jusqu'à ce que Shardza Rinpoche en décrypte la signification, l'allégorie elle-même était restée incomprise et, apparemment, même la tradition orale accompagnant le texte original n'en donnait qu'une interprétation incomplète et, de toute façon, incorrecte en regard de celle révélée par Shardza lui-même¹⁰. Le décodage de l'allégorie est d'ailleurs l'une de ses grandes fiertés spirituelles.

Les quarante-deux points-clefs qui forment donc l'arcane principal de cette pratique peuvent se regrouper en un ensemble de onze collectifs réunis comme suit :

1. Les points 1-4 portent sur les points-clefs yogiques (*gnad*, à savoir les points-clefs des trois portes, des portes d'émergence de

⁶ Et c'est, de même, précisément la raison pour laquelle il faut clairement distinguer ce Corps du Corps illusoire ou Corps de lumière de la Voie des Tantras.

⁷ La pratique du Franchissement du Pic est une pratique reposant sur un ensemble de manifestations visionnaires dont les principes sont en fait communs aux trois Sections de la Grande Perfection. La présence de ces développements visionnaires est notamment clairement démontrée dans les textes de *Sems sde* de la tradition Bon po.

⁸ C'est l'un des principaux traités de la Section de l'Esprit dans le Bon. Il faut noter que le texte n'a rien en commun, si ce n'est son titre, avec le tantra éponyme existant dans la tradition rNying ma pa. Sur le texte bouddhique, voir Samten Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 41-59.

⁹ Je reviendrai sur ce texte dans un travail en cours d'achèvement.

¹⁰ Le commentaire du texte interprète l'allégorie de manière pratiquement littérale et, de toute évidence, il ne soupçonne en aucune manière sa signification véritable, à moins que, dans sa propre rédaction, il se contente uniquement d'une interprétation exotérique, ce qui relèguerait la signification réelle de l'allégorie à la seule transmission orale. D'après Lopön Tenzin Namdak (entretien Paris 2001), ce n'est toutefois pas le cas. Voir le *Rig pa khu byug* [*gi 'grel pa = Kun tu bzan po' gsungs pa'i bka' 'grel*], fol. 37b et seq.

- la Sagesse, de l'Objet et du souffle-Discernement), c'est-à-dire les techniques à adopter qui servent de base au développement de la pratique elle-même ;
2. les points 5-8 (décrivant les quatre canaux de lumière, *'od rtsa*) exposent l'anatomie visionnaire qui permet d'expliquer l'émergence des prodiges visionnaires du Franchissement du Pic ;
 3. les points 9-12 exposent les quatre Lampes (*sgron ma bzhi*) ;
 4. le point 13 (consacré à l'éclat du Discernement, *rig pa'i mdangs*) explique la nature visionnaire de l'état naturel dont l'éclat jaillit "extérieurement" (et non le Discernement lui-même) ;
 5. les points 14-21 exposent les Huit Portes de la Spontanéité (*lhun grub sgo brgyad*) ;
 6. les points 22-25 exposent les Quatre Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) ;
 7. le point 26 explique la nature quintuple des visions ;
 8. les points 27-31 exposent la nature des cinq Sagesse (*ye shes lnga*) ;
 9. les points 32-33 exposent les Trois Corps (*sku gsum*) ;
 10. les points 35-38 exposent les quatre Préceptes servant de supports finaux (*mtha' rten gyi man ngag bzhi*) ; et
 11. enfin, les points 39-42 expliquent la nature des quatre Connaissances Sublimées (*shes rab bzhi*)¹¹.

L'adoption des premiers points-clefs va permettre à l'adepte d'inhiber les souffles karmiques (*las rlung*) qui parcourent ses canaux internes en sorte qu'une fois la dissipation de ces souffles effectuée, le souffle de la Sagesse (*ye shes kyi rlung*) s'élève automatiquement (*rang shugs kyis*). Ce souffle se trouve au centre de la Tente Brune des Cornalines (*mchong gur smug po*) dans laquelle le Discernement (*rig pa*) s'exprime dans les splendeurs visionnaires formant le déploiement de ses prodiges quincolorés. L'éclat de ce Discernement (*rig pa'i mdangs*) va, toujours grâce à l'adoption des points-clefs et à l'établissement de l'adepte dans l'expérience indéfectible de l'état naturel, cheminer à l'intérieur du Canal dit de la Cavité de Cristal (*shel sbug can*) pour jaillir par la double Lampe d'Eau (*chu sgron*) qui correspond à l'extrémité supérieure de ce canal aboutissant au centre même des pupilles. Le Discernement demeure, lui, immuable au centre du cœur, tandis que son éclat va se déployer et s'intensifier au sein de l'Espace (*dbyings*)¹².

¹¹ Pour le détail voir Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, vol. II, p. 205 et seq. ; voir également Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, p. 84-113. Sur la pratique de *thod rgal* en général et la description des points-clefs, voir Achard, *Le Pic des Visions*, *passim*.

¹² Voir le détail de la pratique in Achard, *The Four Lamps*, p. 24-38.

III. La Vision du Paroxysme du Discernement

Au cours de la pratique, qui s'effectue bien entendu en retraite pendant des mois et des années, l'adepte est confronté à quatre étapes visionnaires principales appelées les Quatre Visions (*snang ba bzhi*), à savoir :

- la Vision de la Réalité Manifeste (*bon nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*),
- la Vision de l'Accroissement des Expériences Lumineuses (*nyams snang gong 'phel gyi snang ba*),
- la Vision du Paroxysme du Discernement (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*), et
- la Vision de l'Épuisement de la Réalité (*bon nyid zad pa'i snang ba*)¹³.

Chacune de ces visions se caractérise par des éléments visionnaires particuliers. Ceux qui nous intéressent ici relèvent de la quatrième partie de la troisième Vision¹⁴. Dans le *Tantra des Principes du Père et du Fils* (*Yab sras don rgyud*), il est dit à propos de cette Vision :

Ensuite, pour ce qui est de la Vision du Paroxysme du Discernement,
 Dans la mesure où toutes les apparences sont (alors) scellées par l'Espace¹⁵,
 Les manifestations de la terre, de l'eau, du feu et de l'air se trouvent naturellement purifiées :
 Les visions de la grande Claire-Lumière (imprègnent) l'Espace sans limite, (tandis que)
 Dans chaque Disque Lumineux paraissent les Corps des Cinq Clans,
 En d'infinis maṇḍalas de bouquets quintuples (comportant) des Couples, etc.,
 Qui s'élèvent en gorgeant le ciel (tout entier)¹⁶.

¹³ Le cycle du *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* décrit un système à Cinq Visions (*snang ba lnga*) explicitement rattaché à la pratique des retraites dans l'obscurité (*mun mtshams*). Toutefois, il s'agit simplement d'un découpage particulier et non d'une différence significative avec le système à Quatre Visions. Les deux classifications représentent simplement des "richesses spécifiques" (*khyad nor*) du Franchissement du Pic. Voir Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 327. Pour la description analytique des Quatre Visions, voir Achard, *The Four Lamps*, p. 31-38.

¹⁴ Chaque Vision est divisée en quatre sous-étapes, chacune représentant une Terre (*sa*) du Plein Eveil, d'où les seize Terres (*sa bcu drug*) de la Grande Perfection en général, et de la Voie du Franchissement du Pic en particulier.

¹⁵ Cette représentation, qui peut sembler extrêmement cryptique, renvoie à un ensemble de données très précises : au cours de la deuxième Vision de *thod rgal*, les expériences visionnaires qui forment les visions de l'Espace (*dbyings kyi snang ba*) "scellent" l'expérience intérieure du Discernement ; à ce stade, le Discernement ne connaît plus aucune fluctuation éventuelle et se confirme dans sa double expression fondamentale : visionnaire et sapientiale. Sur la deuxième Vision, voir *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 279-286. A présent, c'est l'ensemble des apparences qui est scellé par les visions de l'Espace et non plus seulement le Discernement de l'adepte.

¹⁶ Ce déploiement optimal des visions quintuples marque le seuil paroxystique de cette troisième étape du Franchissement du Pic. Il est dit qu'à ce stade, l'Eveil sera obtenu de manière indubitable en cette vie-même.

De ces (Corps) se manifestent des rayons lumineux qui se relient à ton propre corps
Et, immuable, tu parviens au Paroxysme (de ton Discernement) sans méditer. »¹⁷

Au sein des Disques Lumineux qui irisent et gorgent le déroulement complet de cette vision, apparaissent des Demi-Corps (*sku phyed*), puis des Corps seuls (*sku rkyang*)¹⁸, indiquant l'atteinte paroxystique du Corps d'Apparition. Puis, à mesure que les visions gagnent en intensité, les Couples des Cinq Clans (*rigs lnga yab yum*) apparaissent et expriment l'atteinte paroxystique de la Sagesse du Corps de Jouissance. Puis, les divinités centrales en union apparaissent dans un maṇḍala distinct de leur Entourage, chaque maṇḍala étant entouré d'une enceinte quinticolore, indiquant que l'adepte est sur le point de parvenir à la réalisation ultime du Corps Absolu. Lorsqu'il est parvenu à ce stade, il a en réalité obtenu les signes — indiqués par les visions correspondantes — qu'il a parachevé ou est en passe de parachever les Trois Corps du Plein Eveil et qu'il ne reprendra plus naissance.

A la lecture de cette très brève description, l'on peut se demander en quoi cette vision s'avère paroxystique. Pour cela, il faut analyser les divers éléments qui composent sa désignation. Littéralement, celle-ci doit être rendue comme la Vision (*snang ba*) de l'Atteinte (*phebs*) Paroxystique (*tshad*) du Discernement (*rig pa*). La signification de Vision est évidente et n'exige pas d'explication particulière ici. Reprenons dans l'ordre tibétain original la définition contextuelle des trois membres restants :

- le Discernement (*rig pa*) est en fait le Discernement qui demeure sur la Base (*gzhi gnas kyi rig pa*, la connaissance directe de l'état naturel) qui est rendu manifeste (*mngon du gyur*) grâce à la pratique de la Voie ; au cours de cette troisième vision, il se présente comme l'éclat naturel des visions de la Base (*gzhi snang gi rang gdangs*) spontanément exprimé dans le déploiement visionnaire des Corps et des Sagesse de l'état naturel, et totalement parachevé sous la forme de maṇḍalas ;
- le Paroxysme (*tshad*) correspond à la progression visionnaire allant des Demi-Corps jusqu'aux maṇḍalas complets de déitiés avec leur Entourage, etc.

¹⁷ *Yab sras don rgyud*, cité in Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 287 : *de nas rig pa tshad phebs snang ba ni/ dbyings kyi snang ba thams cad rgyas thebs pas/sa chu me rlung snang ba rang dag stel 'od gsal chen po'i snang ba 'byams klas dbyings/ thig le re re'i nang du rigs lnga'i sku/ yab yum la sogs lnga tshon tshom bu yi/ dkyil 'khor tshad med nam mkha' gang ba 'char/ de las 'od zer rang lus 'brel pa snang/ ma sgom tshad la phebs pa 'gyur ba med/*. Le *Yab sras don rgyud* est le même texte que le *Tantra des Principes des Trois Corps* (*sku gsum don rgyud*) révélé par gSang sngags gling pa en 1885. Voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 56 n. 212. Le Père (*yab*) et le Fils (*sras*) correspondent respectivement à Dran pa nam mkha' et Tshe dbang rig 'dzin.

¹⁸ Les Demi-Corps renvoient à des visions incomplètes des divinités dont on ne voit par exemple que des moitiés de visage, seulement le haut ou le bas du corps, ou bien encore un membre avec ses parures, etc. Les Corps seuls font référence à des divinités complètes, mais sans entourage et sans parèdre.

- l'Atteinte (*phebs*) indique qu'il n'existe pas d'état visionnaire supérieur à celui-ci, c'est-à-dire qu'il n'y a rien au-delà de cette étape, si ce n'est la quatrième vision qui n'a en réalité pas de caractéristiques visionnaire particulière.

Maintenant que la signification de cette troisième phase du Franchissement du Pic apparaît plus clairement dans sa définition littérale, il faut se demander ce qu'elle a de particulier et en quoi elle est intimement liée à l'obtention du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Pour cela, il faut en décrire le déroulement plus en détail¹⁹.

Dans le *Tantra des Principes du Père et du Fils*²⁰, il est dit :

Etant donné qu'extérieurement les visions se libèrent en Claire-Lumière, la matérialité est abolie ;
Avec le corps illusoire qui se libère en lumières, les saisies souillées sont purifiées ;
Etant donné que l'Esprit se fond dans la Claire-Lumière, les manifestations de l'égarement sont abolies.
Les liens unissant karma et imprégnations seront alors tranchés.

Les quatre vers de cette citation montrent clairement qu'il faut aborder quatre thèmes centraux dans cette vision : 1. extérieurement, l'atteinte paroxystique des visions (1^{er} vers) ; 2. intérieurement, l'atteinte paroxystique du corps (2^e vers) ; 3. secrètement, l'atteinte paroxystique du Discernement (3^e vers) ; et l'atteinte paroxystique de la rupture avec tout lien saṃsārique.

Le paroxysme extérieur des visions se traduit par le fait que tout se manifeste pour l'adepte sous une forme lumineuse qui indique que la matérialité des choses a été transcendée et est "entravée" ou "interrompue" (*'gags*). L'adepte se découvre alors des facultés particulières comme celle consistant à animer des objets à distances (télékinésie), etc. Son corps lui-même semble par intermittence ne plus conserver de matérialité atomique et tout apparaît comme un champ pur d'une pureté aussi extraordinaire qu'infinie.

Le paroxysme intérieur du corps coïncide avec un événement hautement sibyllin qui est la source, si l'on peut dire, ou l'impulsion qui va manifester le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel : alors que toutes les visions rayonnent comme les champs purs des Vainqueurs des Cinq Clans, dans le cœur de chacun d'entre eux s'ouvre une sorte de lucarne (*skar khung*) de lumière à partir de laquelle s'élèvent des rayons quinticolores enroulés comme des cordes qui vont se fichent dans le propre cœur de

¹⁹ Je me base ici exclusivement sur le *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 289-291. L'avantage de cette section du *dByings rig mdzod* est qu'elle synthétise l'ensemble des principes à énoncer dans ce contexte. On peinerait sans doute à trouver une explication aussi claire dans le reste de la littérature Bon po, y compris dans les œuvres de Bru rGyal ba (1242-1290) et d'autres. Voir une explication simplifiée in Lopen Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, p. 101-103.

²⁰ Cité in *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 289 : *phyi snang 'od gsal grol bas rdo bcas nub/ sgyu lus 'od grol zag bcas 'dzin pa dag/ sems nyid 'od gsal thim pas 'khrul snang nub/ las dang bag chags 'brel thag chad par 'gyur/*.

l'adepte. A ce moment, cinq ou neuf Disques Lumineux semblables à des bols empilés apparaissent au-dessus de la tête de l'adepte, tandis que les doigts de ses mains commencent à se gorger de lumières quincolorées qui vont lentement gagner l'ensemble de son corps. Sa matérialité corporelle disparaît progressivement au profit des déploiements infinis des champs purs des Eveillés. Au sein de la Demeure de Nacre (*dung khang*, le centre du cerveau), se manifestent les maṇḍalas des Divinités Courroucées (*khro bo*), tandis que les Buddhas Paisibles rayonnent au niveau du cœur.

Le paroxysme secret du Discernement se traduit par la résorption définitive de l'esprit discursif, du mental et des consciences et se caractérise par l'acquisition des six presciences (*mngon par shes pa drug*)²¹, le développement d'une Sagesse hors de toute limite, d'absorptions prodigieuses, etc.

Enfin, pour ce qui est du paroxysme marquant la rupture avec tout lien saṃsārique, lorsque tous les liens karmiques et les imprégnations de même nature sont définitivement tranchés, la matérialité du corps se trouve purifiée, entraînant la purification automatique des canaux et des souffles. En conséquence, le complexe formé par la réunion des agrégats, des facultés sensorielles, des organes de perception et de leur domaine respectif de perception²² est détruit, entraînant ainsi la destruction réelle des liens qui unissaient le corps et l'esprit. La cohésion du corps, de la parole et de l'esprit impliqués dans la saisie du Saṃsāra est renversée, en sorte que l'aspect subtil du Discernement jaillit comme une étoile filante, débarrassé des sceaux qui le confinaient à une expression latente. Désormais, le retour à la discursivité égotique et à l'identification du soi au discours intérieur est impossible. Néanmoins, comme la cohésion des trois portes n'est pas entièrement abolie (puisque l'adepte possède encore un corps, une parole et un esprit), le yogi perçoit en réalité les deux types de manifestations : saṃsāriques et nirvāniques.

Ainsi, grâce aux maîtrises des points-clefs de la pratique, les souffles karmiques et les concepts sont naturellement purifiés en leur propre domaine sans qu'il soit nécessaire de les purifier intentionnellement. Le souffle de la Sagesse (*ye shes kyi rlung*) se manifeste alors en brillant de tous ses feux, en sorte que la matérialité du corps se libère en sa contrepartie véritable ou sublimée.

Lorsque l'adepte parvient à ce stade de la pratique et qu'il voit les signes de ses expériences atteindre leur expression paroxystique, il sait qu'il va en très peu de temps parvenir à la quatrième et dernière étape du Franchissement du Pic, à savoir la Vision de l'Épuisement de la Réalité (*bon nyid zad pa'i snang ba*), aussi naturellement et

²¹ 1. L'Œil divin ; 2. l'Ouïe divine ; 3. la connaissance des pensées d'autrui ; 4. le souvenir des vies passées ; 5. la capacité à accomplir des miracles ; et 6. la faculté d'épuiser les écoulements ou impuretés. Voir une liste différente in *dByings rig mādod*, II, p. 421. Ces presciences s'accompagnent également de l'obtention d'Yeux divins (*spyān*) et de potentiel (*rtsal*), sur lesquels cf. Achard, *The Four Lamps*, p. 83-86.

²² Ce complexe est techniquement appelé "réunion des constituants temporaires [de la personne]" (*glo bur gyi bsdus pa'i tshogs pa*).

inévitablement que, selon l'image traditionnelle, une femme enceinte met un terme à sa grossesse en accouchant. Au cours de cette ultime Vision, il est en fait confronté à trois épuisements :

1. extérieurement, les visions, qui jusqu'alors n'avaient fait que s'intensifier, se figent (c'est-à-dire interrompent leur accroissement au terme de leur manifestation paroxystique) avant de se résorber dans la Pureté Primordiale de l'Espace originel ;
2. intérieurement, tous les attachements de l'esprit sont épuisés ; et
3. secrètement les hordes discursives qui affectent habituellement l'esprit s'épuisent et le continuum de l'adepte se recueille dans l'Essence du Corps Absolu.

III. Les divers types de Corps d'Arc-en-ciel

D'une manière générale, on considère que l'adepte qui est parvenu au terme de la quatrième vision du Franchissement du Pic a dépassé les dix terres de la Voie des Sūtras et les treize terres de la Voie des Tantras. Il se tient en fait à l'aube de la seizième terre de l'Eveil selon la Voie de la Grande Perfection et, à ce stade, des signes particuliers, répartis en fonction des trois portes de l'individu, apparaissent :

- le corps de l'adepte tend à se dématérialiser temporairement ou par intermittence et à s'exprimer en orbes de lumières qui l'irisent tout entier ;
- sa parole tend à se répéter en sons mantriques semblables à des échos ; et
- son esprit se sépare des apparences ; il n'est plus affecté par elles et se manifeste dans sa propre Réalité, en s'abîmant dans l'état du Non-né (*skye med*).

Ces signes indiquent que le processus de réalisation du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel est en cours. Le yogi qui en fait l'expérience est ainsi alerté sur la nécessité de s'isoler afin de laisser le déroulement des signes s'effectuer sans qu'aucun obstacle ne vienne interférer.

D'autres signes interviennent, indiquant l'imminence du *nirvāṇa* : parmi ceux-ci, il faut mentionner les signes dits "visibles par autrui" (*gzhan gyis mthong ba*) qui concernent la perception même que les disciples par exemple ont de leur maître, lorsque celui-ci est sur le point d'atteindre le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Certains voient ainsi le maître sous la forme d'un Corps divin (*lha sku*), ou bien ils notent que le corps du maître ne projette aucune ombre, que ses pieds ne touchent pas le sol, etc.

Les signes visibles par soi-même (*rang gis mthong ba*), c'est-à-dire par celui qui parvient à ce stade de réalisation, sont extrêmement nombreux mais les plus importants sont très certainement les presciences qui émergent dans le continuum.

Apparemment, le processus d'émergence de ces signes peut prendre entre dix jours et dix mois, selon les individus. Au terme de cette période, les ultimes obscurcissements associés à la connaissance (*shes bya'i*

sgrib) sont dissous²³, en sorte que la Sagesse de la Vacuité (*stong nyid kyi ye shes*) se trouve intégralement parachevée. L'adepte parvient ainsi à ce que l'on désigne comme la Base de la Pureté Primordiale (*ka dag gi gzhi*), c'est-à-dire à l'état du Corps Absolu lui-même. C'est là le moment de l'obtention du Fruit ultime qui se traduit par le déploiement des Corps (*sku*) et des Sagesse (*ye shes*) formant les deux modalités sublimées par lesquelles le Fruit du Plein Eveil se manifeste pour l'adepte.

On distingue en réalité quatre types de Corps d'Arc-en-ciel :

- le Corps du Grand Transfert (*'pho ba chen po'i sku* ou *'pho ba chen mo'i sku*) ;
- le Grand Corps d'Arc-en-ciel (*'ja' lus chen po* ou *'ja' lus chen mo*) ;
- le Petit Transfert (*'pho ba chung ngu*) ; et
- le Petit Corps d'Arc-en-ciel (*'ja' lus chung ngu*)²⁴.

La gradation dans l'obtention de ces Corps est évidemment exprimée en fonction des capacités des adeptes : les meilleurs obtiennent le corps du Grand Transfert ou celui du Grand Corps d'Arc-en-ciel ; les moyens obtiennent le Petit Transfert ; et ceux de capacités inférieures, le Petit Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. La différence dans ces corps se manifeste également en termes de résidus (*lhag ma*) qui demeurent après le nirvāṇa de l'adepte et qui peuvent être utilisés par les disciples comme reliques.

Il est difficile de dire lequel de ces Corps Shardza Rinpoche a atteint, étant donné que, comme on le verra ci-après, son déroulement — mais non son obtention — a été perturbé par l'irruption d'un disciple. Selon toute évidence, l'intervention du disciple a été motivée par l'analyse des signes indiquant que Shardza allait réaliser un Grand Corps d'Arc-en-ciel, sans aucun résidu. Cette intervention semble avoir ainsi limité les signes extérieures de l'obtention à celle d'un Petit Corps d'Arc-en-ciel.

IV. Le contexte spirituo-littéraire de l'époque

La période au cours de laquelle Shardza Rinpoche manifesta l'essentiel de ses activités spirituelles est une période extrêmement riche et féconde pour la tradition Bon po en général et pour le système de la Grande Perfection en particulier. Elle a vu s'exercer les activités de personnages aussi importants que bDe chen gling pa (1833-1893)²⁵, gSang sngags gling pa (1864-?), bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal (dBal 'bar stag slag can, 1832-1894?), le cinquième Kun grol grags pa rin po che (gTer chen bDud 'dul gling pa), Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang 'gyur med (le fils de bDe chen gling pa), mKha' 'gro bde chen dbang mo (la parèdre de gSang

²³ Ces obscurcissements s'expriment dans une très subtile saisie impliquant un agent saisisseur, des objets saisis et l'action même de la saisie. La confrontation directe à la nature de l'esprit les suspend temporairement.

²⁴ Sur ces Corps, voir Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 152-154.

²⁵ Sur bDe chen gling pa, voir *id.*, *Bon po Hidden Treasures*, *passim*.

sngags gling pa), etc. Dans la tradition bouddhique, c'est l'époque qui fait immédiatement suite aux activités des premiers initiateurs du mouvement *Ris med*²⁶ et qui voit se déployer celles de 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros (1896-1959) pour ne mentionner que l'une des figures bouddhiques les plus emblématiques et les plus remarquables de cette période et de cette région du Tibet²⁷.

À l'époque où Shardza reçoit sa formation et à celle où il diffuse ses enseignements, le Bon a connu de grands changements dans l'Est tibétain. Les traditions initiées par les quatre grands Corps d'Apparition (*sprul sku rnam pa bzhi*)²⁸ se sont largement diffusées et ont, dans une certaine mesure, éclipsé — au moins dans la plupart des régions de l'Est du Tibet — les traditions de sMan ri et de g.Yung drung gling originaires du Tibet Central. Le rôle joué par Shardza dans ce cadre est tel que certains n'ont pas hésité à le taxer de professer un "Bon Nouveau" (*bon gsar*) sans que cela soit réellement ni explicitement le cas²⁹. Bien évidemment, plusieurs de ses maîtres et nombre de ses disciples se rattachent à ce mouvement³⁰, mais l'existence même d'un mouvement tel que *Bon gsar* et son qualificatif ("nouveau" dans un sens dépréciatif et allant *a contrario* de la tradition "ancienne" de sMan ri par exemple) sont des éléments que Shardza a refusé de distinguer du "tronc" originel du Bon Eternel. Il considérait cette tradition "nou-

²⁶ 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892), Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899) et gTer chen mChog gyur gling pa (1829-1870). Sur ces trois personnages, G. Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, p. 235 *passim*.

²⁷ L'éclectisme spirituel de mKhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros s'est par exemple traduit par un intérêt plus que prononcé pour le Bon. L'on sait par exemple qu'il a demandé la transmission du *Trésor de l'Espace-Discernement* (*dByings rig mdzod*) à Shardza Rinpoche lors du passage de ce dernier par sDe dge en 1914 (*shing stag*, voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 79) et qu'il a entretenu cet intérêt par des échanges particuliers avec d'autres maîtres Bon po comme dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. J'y reviendrai dans un travail en cours sur ce dernier personnage qui joua un rôle clef dans la tradition Bon po moderne, en tant que défenseur ardent de l'identité (au moins sur le plan spirituel ultime) du Bon et du Bouddhisme. Voir par exemple son *Bon chos kyi rnam par dbye ba so sor smos pa nor bu ka ta ka'i phreng mdzes*, p. 1-88 et l'abrégé de celui-ci in *Bon chos kyi rnam par dbye ba mdor bsdus*, p. 89-112.

²⁸ sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po (1360-1385), Mi shig rdo rje (qui est, supposément, l'incarnation immédiate de sPrul sku Blo ldan), Sangs rgyas gling pa (1705-1735), et Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700) ; voir Achard, "Contribution aux nombrables de la tradition Bon po : L'Appendice de bsTan 'dzin Rin chen rgyal mtshan à la Sphère de Cristal des Dieux et des Démons de Shar rdza rin po che", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 4, p. 101. Certains patriarches contemporains du Bon Eternel se trouvent gênés par la présence de sPrul sku Blo ldan dans cette classification, dans la mesure où plusieurs de ses révélations (à commencer par le *gZi brjid*) sont considérées comme relevant du Bon Eternel. Ils préfèrent dans ce cas ajouter bDe chen gling pa à cette liste, sans que cela soit particulièrement convaincant. Cette position est, par exemple, celle de Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche (entretien privé, Shenten Ling, 2006).

²⁹ On pense, bien entendu, aux assertions du *geshe* de Yungdrung Ling, Shes rab grags pa, qui furent d'ailleurs contredites par une déclaration de l'abbé de Menri, Phun tshogs blo gros. Voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 98, p. 116 n. 327.

³⁰ Les patriarches qui ont d'ailleurs procédé à la ré-édition de ses *Ceuvres* en 16 volumes, sont tous d'éminents représentants du *Bon gsar*.

velle” comme représentant des Trésors nouveaux (*gter gsar*) et n’appréciait guère les critiques des *dge bshes* de sMan ri à propos de ces traditions plus récentes³¹. D’ailleurs, l’appellation *Bon gsar* n’est pas retenue comme pertinente par les adeptes qui se rattachent à cette tradition de révélations nouvelles. Au contraire, elle leur apparaît parfois comme péjorative³² et elle l’est effectivement dans la bouche des Bon po “orthodoxes” explicitement rattachés au système de sMan ri. Quoi qu’il en soit, le phénomène *Bon gsar* gagne en intensité et en diffusion dans l’Est tibétain depuis le 18^e siècle au point qu’à l’époque de Shardza, les systèmes et les cycles phares de cette tradition sont les représentants littéraires et spirituels les plus actifs du Bon dans son expression la plus large. Le phénomène a soulevé nombre de polémiques, y compris hors de la tradition Bon po, mais pas pour les mêmes raisons³³.

Plusieurs cycles et transmissions ont joué un rôle décisif dans la formation Dzogchen de Shardza et sa réalisation des principes sur lesquels cette tradition s’appuie. En premier lieu, l’influence originelle de ces deux maîtres-racines, dBal ‘bar stag slag can (1832-1894?) et bDe chen gling pa (1833-1893), a été prépondérante dans l’approche tolérante de Shardza à l’égard, non seulement du *Bon gsar* en général, mais en particulier de l’approche consistant à affirmer l’identité de valeur entre le Madhyamaka, la Mahāmudrā et le Dzogchen³⁴. Toutefois, il faut bien comprendre que la perspective d’identité éventuelle entre ces trois formes d’enseignements se réalise au niveau du Fruit de ces Voies — même si les modalités de manifestation de ce Fruit sont totalement différentes entre les trois — et que les partisans de cette approche sont parfaitement conscients de l’impératif gradualiste à conserver dans l’explication des instructions concernées. Ainsi, Shardza précise que son maître dBra sprul (dBal ‘bar stag slag can) insistait sur une approche graduelle en vertu de laquelle les pratiques du Madhyamaka, de la Mahāmudrā et du Dzogchen s’adressent respectivement aux adeptes de capacités inférieures, médianes et supérieures. Il est également clair que chacun de ces systèmes possède une Vue, une Méditation, une Conduite et un Fruit spécifiques. Il devient alors difficile de maintenir l’identité entre les trois, sauf si l’on fait de cette identité une sorte de processus graduel, conforme aux enseignements de mNyam

³¹ *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 71.

³² Certains *Bon gsar pa* modernes ne sont toutefois pas de cette opinion et acceptent l’appellation qui est pour eux synonyme de Nouveaux Trésors (*gter gsar*), même si cette identification est ambiguë et pose un certain nombre de problèmes qu’il est impossible d’aborder ici. Pour eux, l’emploi de l’expression n’implique par ailleurs pas nécessairement de syncrétisme avec le Bouddhisme.

³³ Voir à ce sujet A-M. Blondeau, “La polémique soulevée par l’inclusion de rituels Bon po...”, *passim*. Sur l’un des cycles à la source de cette polémique, voir dBra khyung sKal bzang nor bu, *sMon gshen gyi gdung rabs ji ltar byung ba brjod pa*, p. 88-91 ; voir également Achard, “Kun grol grags pa and the revelation of the *Secret Treasury of the Sky Dancers on Channels and Winds*”, *passim*.

³⁴ Cette théorie est rejetée, avec des arguments extrêmement convaincants par Yongdzin Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche in *Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings*, p. 57-106. Voir également du même auteur (mais en tibétain cette fois-ci), *Dwogs sel ‘ga’ zhig gleng ba’i le’u rin chen gtsag bu*, pp. 71 et seq.

med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415) et à la tradition de la Voie Progressive (*lam rim*). Cette gradation, évidente, ne transparait toutefois pas dans l'énoncé de l'identité des trois Voies. En fait, c'est l'interprétation littérale de cette identité qui pose des problèmes insolubles lorsque l'on compare ces approches selon le modèle récurrent de la Base, de la Voie et du Fruit, car l'on se rend compte alors des différences irréconciliables qui existent entre elles, notamment en termes de pratique de la Voie (*lam nyams su len tshul*), ou bien en termes de manifestations du Fruit ultime coïncidant avec l'atteinte non-régressive de la dernière Terre conformément à chacun de ces systèmes³⁵.

Tout au long de sa vie, Shardza Rinpoche a été un infatigable diffuseur des enseignements des *Instructions sur le A Primordial (A khrid)*, du *Grand Abîme du Faîte Suprême de la Grande Perfection (rDzogs chen Yang rtse klong chen)* et de *La Transmission Orale du Zhang chung (Zhang chung snyan rgyud)* qu'il a, à maintes reprises, transmis à ses disciples. Son intérêt constamment renouvelé pour la grande diversité des cycles d'instructions Dzogchen du Bon — à commencer par le *Zhang chung snyan rgyud* — est une évidence pour quiconque à étudié ses œuvres exégétiques consacrées au système de la Grande Perfection. Toutefois, sa préférence pour le cycle des *Instructions sur le A Primordial (A khrid)* apparaît clairement dans son développement spirituel, sa production littéraire, ainsi que dans le Fruit de son parcours méditatif.

Comme on le sait, le cycle de l'*A khrid* remonte à rMe'u dGongs mdzod (Dam pa ri khrod pa chen po, 1038-1096) qui en a élaboré les principes à partir du corpus des *Neuf Séries de Traités Mineurs sur l'Esprit (Sems smad sde dgu)*³⁶. Selon la tradition tardive, il aurait ainsi défini un ensemble de quatre-vingt sessions (*thun mtshams brgyad cu pa*) qui aurait été lui-même réduit à une série de trente sessions (*thun mtshams sum cu pa*) par 'Gro mgon Blo gros rin po che (A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1198-1263), avant d'être finalement compilé en un ensemble de quinze sessions (*thun mtshams bco lnga pa*) par Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1290)³⁷.

³⁵ C'est à dire la dixième ou onzième Terre pour le Madhyamaka et les Sûtras ; la onzième ou treizième pour les Tantras ; et la seizième pour le rDzogs chen. Sur le système des seize Terres, voir Shardza Rinpoche, *dByings rig mdzod*, vol. II, p. 243-246.

³⁶ Ces *Neuf Séries* appartiennent aux révélations de gShen chen Klu dga' (996-1035), sur lequel voir Dan Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, *passim*.

³⁷ *Khrid yig dmar mo mdzub tshugs*, p. 59-60. Shardza Rinpoche semble être un partisan de l'existence des quatre-vingt sessions, même si jusqu'à présent aucun texte présentant ces sessions n'est parvenu jusqu'à nous. Il semble que cette absence remonte relativement loin dans le temps. Cette présentation en trois étapes marquant le destin littéraire de l'*A khrid* est contredite par l'existence d'un manuscrit représentant la tradition de g.Yor po Me dpal (1134-1169) et suggérant fortement que la version en quatre-vingt sessions n'a jamais existé. Celle-ci est de toute évidence le fruit d'un malentendu graphique. J'en ai exposé le détail in Achard, "g.Yor po me dpal (1134-1169) et la tradition ancienne de l'*A khrid*", à paraître.

Plusieurs siècles plus tard, à partir de gShen gu Nyi ma rgyal mtshan³⁸, les préceptes de l'*A khrid* furent répartis en deux catégories : les Instructions Blanches ou générales (*dkar khrid*) et les Instructions Rouges ou essentielles (*dmar khrid*). Nyi ma rgyal mtshan donna la transmission des deux types d'instructions à Dam pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (originaire du Nyag rong)³⁹ et c'est à partir de celui-ci que la lignée se scinda en deux branches principales de transmission : la première — celle des Instructions Blanches — échut à rTogs ldan Shing rkang ba, alors que la seconde — celle des Instructions Rouges — fut donnée à g.Yung drung ye shes, un patriarche originaire de la région de dGe shes rtsa⁴⁰. La lignée passa ensuite par plusieurs maîtres, jusqu'à Kun grol grags pa⁴¹ qui mit en forme le système — apparemment jusqu'ici uniquement oral — des Instructions Rouges et en rédigea les préceptes dans son *Traité d'Instructions qui pointent du Doigt l'Essentiel (Khrid yig dmar mo mdzub tshugs)*⁴². Finalement, la transmission parvint un siècle plus tard à bDe chen gling pa (Tshe dbang grags pa, 1833-1893)⁴³, à son fils aîné Tshe dbang 'gyur med⁴⁴, avant d'aboutir à Shardza Rinpoche lui-même. C'est sur cette double tradition des Instructions Blanches et Rouges — ainsi que sur d'autres sources faisant autorité, comme le *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, le *rDzogs chen gser zhun*, et le *rDzogs chen gser thur* — que Shardza élaborera la base de sa pratique spirituelle qui devait finalement le conduire à la réalisation ultime de la Grande Perfection : le Plein Eveil manifesté dans le déploiement du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel.

V. Le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel de Shardza Rinpoche

Le *nirvāṇa* de Shardza Rinpoche est présenté comme son œuvre ultime servant à la conversion des êtres, et est clairement mis en parallèle avec celui du Buddha sTon pa gshen rab. Dans un *sūtra* anonyme (cité par dBra ston, *Shar rdza'i rnam thar*, p. 417), sTon pa gshen rab a dit :

— Moi-même, je ne vais pas dans l'Au-delà de la souffrance⁴⁵

³⁸ Il est le vingt-et-unième patriache de la lignée de l'*A khrid* dans laquelle il apparaît sous le nom de sTag gu Nyi rgyal. Voir sa biographie in Achard, *Les Instructions sur le A Primordial*, volume I, p. 85-87.

³⁹ Voir sa biographie in *ibid.*, p. 87-89.

⁴⁰ Voir *ibid.*, p. 89-91.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96-99.

⁴² Ce cycle est en fait une sorte de condensé de l'ensemble des instructions (en provenance également d'autres sources) compilées par Kun grol rin po che dans son *dMar khrid dgongs pa yongs 'dus* ; voir Kun grol, *Khrid yig dmar mo mdzub tshugs*, p. 61.

⁴³ Achard, *Ibid.*, p. 103-106. Sur bDe chen gling pa, voir plus généralement, *id.*, *Bon po Hidden Treasures*, *passim*.

⁴⁴ Voir *Les Instructions sur le A Primordial*, p. 106-108.

⁴⁵ C'est-à-dire que le Buddha n'a pas à subir de passage menant à son *nirvāṇa* puisqu'il est déjà pleinement *nirvāṇisé*. Selon Lopön Tenzin Namdak, il est déjà *nirvāṇisé* avant même sa venue sur ce plan de l'existence, point crucial qui distingue le *mDo 'dus* (dans lequel il n'est pas déjà éveillé lors de sa venue sur la terre) des

Et le Bon lui-même ne sera pas aboli⁴⁶ mais,
 Afin de décourager ceux qui espèrent en l'éternité,
 Je vais pour une fois révéler le mode (d'entrée) dans le
*Nirvāṇa*⁴⁷.

Dans cette perspective, et toujours selon l'opinion de dBra ston (p. 417), Shardza Rinpoche a songé que le moment était venu de laisser son Corps Formel se résorber dans l'Espace de la Claire-Lumière (*gzugs sku 'od gsal gyi dbyings su bsdu ba*) afin, précisément, de décourager (*sun phyung ba*) les êtres prisonniers des liens et des attaches qui les font espérer dans l'éternité (*rtag pa*), c'est-à-dire les êtres professant des conceptions éternalistes⁴⁸. Au moment de cette décision, Shardza annonça qu'il avait les jambes lourdes et qu'il se sentait mal, alors qu'aucune maladie put être identifiée. Lorsque ses proches lui demandèrent plus directement s'il était malade, il répondit que le moment était venu pour lui de s'en aller, c'est-à-dire d'entrer en *nirvāṇa*. Les membres de son entourage firent alors rapidement procéder à de nombreuses cérémonies rituelles destinées à prolonger la vie du maître, à écarter les obstacles à sa vitalité, etc. On procéda à de considérables récitations du mantra des cent syllabes (*yig brgya*)⁴⁹, des rituels de rachats d'animaux destinés à être abattus et auxquels on rend leur liberté (*tshe thar*), des offrandes de *maṇḍala*, des rites consistant à stabiliser la vitalité du maître (*zhabs brten*) et de très intenses prières ou suppliques (*gsol 'debs*). On demanda également à d'importants *sprul sku* de la région du rDza yul de réciter des prières, etc., mais Shardza Rinpoche lui-même intervint et dit (p. 418) : « — Le moment est venu pour moi

autres biographies de sTon pa gshen rab. Sur le *mDo 'dus* et sa datation, voir Henk Blezer, "Methodological Reflections on Dating the *mDo 'dus*", *passim*.

⁴⁶ Cela signifie que les enseignements de sTon pa gshen rab ne disparaîtront automatiquement pas après le *nirvāṇa* de ce dernier. Rappelons cependant que, comme toutes choses, l'enseignement du Buddha est considéré comme un phénomène impermanent (*bon mi rtag pa*) et donc voué à la destruction. La présence ou pérennité de l'enseignement est l'un des éléments clefs entrant dans les conditions optimales qui donnent à la naissance humaine les qualités rédemptrices nécessaire à l'optention du Plein Eveil. Voir Achard, *The Dawn of Awareness*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ P. 417 : *mDo las/ bdag kyang mya ngan 'da' ma yin/ bon kyang nub par mi 'gyur tel rtag tu re rnams su phyung phyir/ lan gcig mya ngan 'da' tshul bstan/*.

⁴⁸ L'éternalisme et le nihilisme sont les deux extrêmes (*mtha' gnyis*) principaux dans lesquels on range les hérétiques. D'une manière générale, ces deux extrêmes entrent dans un cadre de quatre modalités simplement appelées "les quatre limites" (*mu bzhi*) qui regroupent : 1. l'existence (*yod pa*), 2. la non-existence (*med pa*), 3. la permanence ou éternalisme (*rtag pa*), et 4. le nihilisme (*chad pa*). Cf. Achard, "Contribution aux nombrables bon po", p. 102. La saisie éternaliste figure également parmi le collectif dit des "quatre ténèbres" (*mun pa bzhi*) dont le quatrième point est défini comme "les ténèbres associées à la saisie de la personne comme étant permanente" (*skyes bu rtag 'dzin gyi mun pa*), autrement dit comme l'ignorance qui croit en la permanence du soi (*id.*, p. 102).

⁴⁹ Il s'agit du mantra utilisé dans la pratique de confession (*bshags pa*) et qui sert à purifier les obscurcissements. Voir la signification de ce mantra in Achard, *Le Miroir Abrégé des Formules*, p. 4-8. Il existe d'autres formes de ce mantra — totalement différentes — comme par exemple celle qui figure in *Yi ge brgya pa'i gzungs* (*gZung 'dus*, vol. 1, p. 340-342, compilé par Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung) dans lequel il constitue l'essentiel du *Sūtra du Flot des Joyaux* (*Rin chen rgyun gyi mdo*).

(de mourir) et l'on ne pourra rien y changer » (*kho bo dus la babs pas bcos su mi btub*). Il rassura également les disciples qui avaient reçu la transmission de ses cinq Trésors (*mDzdo lnga*)⁵⁰ en les assurant qu'ils n'avaient rien à regretter dans la mesure où les transmissions avaient été données dans leur entièreté.

Face aux requêtes dévouées de ses disciples, Shardza Rinpoche consentit néanmoins à demeurer en vie quelques mois de plus. Ainsi, au bout de quelques semaines, sa santé sembla s'améliorer grandement. Selon dBra ston (p. 418), son corps se déplaçait avec légèreté et son visage avait retrouvé son teint éclatant. Certains disciples confessèrent avoir vu le maître sous la forme d'un Cops divin (*lha sku*) lumineux, tandis que d'autres disaient que ses pieds ne touchaient pas le sol lorsqu'il marchait⁵¹.

C'est à cette époque que Yongs 'dzin rin po che Drang srong [Seng ge] nyi ma⁵² fut invité à sTeng chen dgon pa où il s'adonna à une pratique de médecine (*sman sgrub*) jusqu'à ce que Shardza lui-même intervienne et suggère d'effectuer cette pratique selon le *mandala* du Rig 'dzin gsang sgrub de bDe chen gling pa (1833-1893)⁵³. Certains participants à ce rituel dirent que le corps de Shardza Rinpoche ne projetait aucune ombre, même devant la lumière des lampes à beurre. Après la conclusion du rituel, Shardza reprit sa pratique continuelle et invita ses disciples à réciter une prière d'aspiration (*smon lam*) que lui-même psalmodiait quotidiennement depuis l'âge de 54 ans (p. 418-419).

A ce moment, un vieil homme nommé Tshe rnam, qui se trouvait dans son ermitage et qui était un disciple de Shardza, fut frappé par une maladie et ramené à sa demeure familiale. Au bout de quelques jours, Shardza annonça soudainement que Tshe rnam était décédé, sans que personne autour du maître n'eût reçu la moindre information à ce sujet. La nouvelle finit par parvenir à l'entourage de Shardza le jour même, à l'heure du thé (*ja skabs*). Pour dBra ston, cela signifie que Shardza avait atteint une maîtrise spéciale des presciences (*mngon shes*), à commencer par la capacité à voir les esprits des êtres dans le Bardo⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Le *dByings rig mdzod*, le *sDe snod mdzod*, le *Lung rigs mdzod*, le *Nam mkha' mdzod* et le *Legs bshad mdzod*. Sur ces textes, voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, *passim*.

⁵¹ L'on a vu précédemment que ces signes sont à ranger parmi les signes visibles par autrui (*gzhan gyis mthong ba*).

⁵² Responsable de sTag zhig mgon pa près de sDe dge. Il fut, avec Nyi ma bdud 'dul, l'un des deux personnages qui, en 1922, apportèrent à Shardza les textes du *rtog ge ba bsTan 'dzin grags pa* relativement à la polémique sur les ouvrages bon po inclus dans le *Rin chen gter mdzod*. Voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 92.

⁵³ Le *Rig 'dzin gsang sgrub* (encore appelé *sKu gsum dgongs 'dus*) est l'un des plus importants *gter ma* de bDe chen gling pa. Ce cycle comprend une partie d'œuvres yogiques et *rDzogs chen* (dans le volume 2), et une partie de textes rituels tantriques (dans le volume 4). L'ouvrage principal sur les *sman sgrub* dans ce cycle est le *'Chi med bdud rtsi sman gyi sgrub thabs* (vol. 4, p. 1-31 ; voir Achard, *Bon po Hidden Treasures*, p. 87, texte no. 178).

⁵⁴ L'obtention des presciences (*mngon shes*) va de pair avec celles des Yeux (*spyen*) qui accompagnent la réalisation du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Voir Shardza, *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 201. Sur les Yeux, voir Achard, *The Four Lamps*, p. 84-85. En fait, l'émergence de ces presciences et de ces Yeux correspond à un ensemble d'expériences relevant du Discernement (*rig pa nyams snang*) qui se développent en

Toutefois, le maître lui-même n'en faisait aucun état et n'en disait même rien de manière aussi ouverte. dBra ston rapporte (p. 419) que lorsqu'il était questionné à ce sujet en de telles occasions, Shardza ne formulait la plupart du temps aucune réponse.

Cette période qui précède la manifestation du *'ja' lus* est en fait une sorte de prélude à l'obtention ce Corps et se caractérise par de nombreux prodiges ou phénomènes singuliers. Réduire ces derniers à de simples expressions littéraires est probablement une réaction spontanée de l'historien, mais il n'est pas certain que ce soit l'attitude la plus intéressante à adopter dans ce domaine. L'un de ces phénomènes singuliers semble être le caractère incertain (*nges med*) du discours de l'adepte dont la cohérence apparaît perdue pour l'auditeur ou bien dont la profondeur échappe au commun. Un jour par exemple, quelqu'un questionna Shardza à propos de sa réalisation en termes d'expériences contemplatives (*dgongs nyams*) et celui-ci donna une réponse apparemment elliptique mais en réalité très précise. Il déclara ainsi :

« — Dans le ciel des trois portes de la délivrance, brillent (les astres) solaires et lunaires des cinq Sagesses. »⁵⁵

En d'autres termes, pour Shardza, les visions de la Réalité brillent sans interruption, dans la mesure où il a atteint un niveau de pratique que l'on désigne de manière imagée comme "l'horizon de la Claire-Lumière" (*'od gsal 'khor yug*) ou "l'horizon du jour et de la nuit" (*nyin mtshan 'khor yug*), expressions renvoyant au rayonnement continu des visions de la Claire-Lumière, au cœur de la pratique du Franchissement du Pic (*thod rgal*).

Le sentiment de détachement du monde éprouvé par le maître allait s'accroître encore le mois suivant (Mai-Juin 1934). dBra ston rapporte ainsi qu'un jour, après un repas dont il ne prit que quelques bouchées, Shardza aurait "ouvertement" (*yeings stabs su*)⁵⁶ laissé son bol flotter dans l'air, avant de déclarer :

même temps que les visions "extérieures" (*phyir snang ba*) s'accroissent sur le parcours du Franchissement du Pic (*dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 286). En réalité, ces prescences apparaissent lors de la troisième vision de *thod rgal*, la Vision du Paroxysme du Discernement (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*, *op. cit.*, p. 290). Sur la liste des six prescences et leur signification, voir Achard, *The Four Lamps*, p. 85-86.

⁵⁵ P. 420 : *rnam thar sgo gsum gyi nam mkha' la/ ye shes lnga'i nyi zla 'char 'bar 'dug*. Les trois portes de la délivrance (*rnam thar sgo gsum*) sont : 1. la Vacuité (*stong pa nyid*) de l'état naturel vierge de partialités et de distinctions individuelles ; 2. l'absence de caractéristiques (*mtshan ma med pa*) de cet état qui transcende le langage et l'imagination ; et 3. l'absence d'aspiration (*smon pa med pa*) quant au Fruit, étant donné la non-régression éprouvée par l'adepte au sein de l'expérience du Discernement (*rig pa*). Le ciel (*nam mkha'*) de ces "trois portes" symbolise l'aspect céleste, infini et irréductible de l'état naturel. Les astres lunaires et solaires indiquent que les visions des cinq Sagesses rayonnent continuellement, de jour comme de nuit. L'on peut évidemment interpréter ces astres autrement, mais pas dans ce contexte. Sur les trois portes de la délivrance, voir Tulku Thondup, *Buddha Mind*, p. 71-72 ; Khenpo Kunpal, *Drops of Nectar*, p. 170.

⁵⁶ Les adeptes parvenus à ce stade rechignent souvent à manifester des prodiges (*rdzu 'phrul*) qui ne sont pour eux que des moyens inférieurs de conversion.

« — Je suis un yogi de la Grande Perfection. Les meilleurs (des adeptes) meurent comme des vieux chiens ; les moyens meurent comme des mendiants ; les derniers meurent comme des rois ; de ces trois manières, étant donné qu'il ne convient pas d'œuvrer selon la dernière, ne restons-pas là !⁵⁷ » et, ce disant, il se mit en route sur le champ. Avec un groupe de disciples, il parvint à Rab zhi steng ("la Colline de la Paix Suprême") et s'y installa. Shardza demeura dans une petite tente, assis nuit et jour dans la posture du lotus ou bien dans celle du *Ṛṣi*⁵⁸, et entonnant de nombreux chants de réalisation⁵⁹. Il demanda aux disciples rassemblés de s'adonner à des festins d'offrandes (*tshogs mchod*) et des pratiques de confessions (*skong bshags*).

Le dixième jour du mois⁶⁰, il participa à un festin d'offrandes selon le cycle du *Tshe dbang bod yul ma* révélé par Bon zhi g.Yung drung

⁵⁷ P. 420 : *nga rdzogs pa chen po'i rnal 'byor pa/ rab khyi rgan ltar 'chi ba/ 'bring sprang po ltar 'chi ba/ tha ma rgyal po ltar 'chi ba gsum las tha ma ltar bya mi 'os pas 'dir mi 'dug...* Ce passage est inspiré d'un extrait du *Yang rtse klong chen* que Shardza cite d'ailleurs dans son *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 398, concernant les trois manières de mourir des yogis (*rnal 'byor pa'i 'chi lugs gsum*). Le passage cité du *Yang rtse klong chen* se lit comme suit : « — Les meilleurs meurent comme des lions ; les moyens meurent comme des vieux chiens ; et les derniers meurent comme des rois » (*rab ni seng ge ltar du 'chi ba dang/ 'bring ni khyi rgan ltar du 'chi ba dang/ tha ma rgyal po ltar du 'chi ba'o*). L'interprétation que Shardza en donne a la teneur suivante (*op. cit.*, p. 398-399) : les yogis aux capacités supérieures, qui meurent comme des yogis, meurent dans des grottes ou des vallées isolées sans que personne ne les voit et sans que n'intervienne aucune circonstance extérieure. Ils ne placent en aucune manière leur espoirs sur l'accomplissement de rituels et de divination lorsqu'ils sont mortellement malades et n'ont aucune préoccupation pour leur crémation et les rituels associés. Ils se contentent d'intégrer l'Espace-Discernement (*dbyings rig*) et de mourir naturellement de la sorte.

Les adeptes aux capacités médianes meurent comme des vieux chiens, c'est-à-dire sans ami ou soutien, au bord d'un chemin ou au croisement de plusieurs routes, sans aucun attachement. Les yogis dignes de ce nom doivent mourir selon ce mode ou le précédent.

Les adeptes ordinaires, qui meurent comme des rois, font faire des divinations, des rituels, etc. Au moment de leur mort, ils rassemblent autour d'eux leur famille et leurs proches pour que tous s'abîment en lamentations. Ils prévoient également les cérémonies *post-mortem* comprenant la crémation et les rituels associés. Les personnes qui meurent de la sorte sont indignes du nom de "yogi" parce que leur comportement indique qu'elles n'ont pas développé une confiance suffisante en les enseignements de la Grande Perfection et qu'elles ne sont pas parvenues à une confiance suffisante en la pratique.

⁵⁸ Cette posture est la plus fréquemment employée pour la pratique du Franchissement du Pic, mais celle du lotus — qui correspond littéralement pour les bon po à la posture en cinq points — peut également être utilisée pour ce type de pratique. L'on pourrait se demander si, parvenu à ce stade de la pratique, un adepte a encore besoin d'artifices tels que les postures pour poursuivre sa méditation, étant donné que — théoriquement — il a très bien pu s'en passer précédemment au cours des années de contemplation. Ce serait se méprendre sur la nécessité de l'adoption des postures afin de développer les visions. Ici, il n'est pas du tout question de cela — Shardza étant déjà parvenu au paroxysme des visions —, mais plutôt de contrôler les canaux, les souffles et les essences séminales (*rtsa rlung thig le*), afin qu'aucun obstacle ne s'élève éventuellement avec les bouleversements physiologiques occasionnés par l'obtention du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel.

⁵⁹ Selon toute évidence, ceux-ci n'ont, à ma connaissance, pas été notés.

⁶⁰ Correspondant apparemment au 24 Mai 1934.

gling pa⁶¹. Après le rituel, il demeura longuement absorbé dans la contemplation du ciel, mais au cours de l'après-midi, il fit venir ses disciples et leur prodigua d'ultimes conseils, les exhorta à préserver leurs engagements (*samaya*) et à maintenir la pureté de leurs vœux, tout en précisant que tout devient possible pour celui qui ne les a pas transgressés.⁶²

Ensuite, le 13^e jour du mois (Dimanche 27 Mai 1934), il fit dresser une petite tente (*cog gur*) et s'y installa. Après l'accomplissement d'un ultime festin d'offrandes selon le cycle du *Tshe dbang bod yul ma*, il donna des bénédictions de la main (*phyag dbang*) à chacun de ses disciples et, à la fin, il ordonna que les pans de l'entrée de la tente soient cousus et que personne ne vienne le déranger pendant sept jours. Pour que les circonstances auspicieuses (*rten 'brel*) soient favorables, il demanda également que ses disciples s'adonnent collectivement aux festins d'offrandes selon the *Tshe dbang rgya gar ma*⁶³, le *Tshe dbang bod yul ma* et le *Dran pa tshe sgrub*⁶⁴. Alors que les disciples se préparaient à effectuer les festins comme demandé par le maître, celui-ci entonna les deux chants suivants :

« — Désormais, je n'ai plus d'attachement pour cette (existence) *samsāri*que :
Depuis que j'ai reconnu que tout est mon propre dynamisme et mes propres visions,
Je me suis libéré dans l'Espace de la Base originelle et primordialement pure ;
Puissé-je de surcroît parvenir ultimement au bien des migrants sans exception ! »⁶⁵

Et :

« — Le Vide originel totalement vierge de limite est l'Essence de la Pureté Primordiale⁶⁶ ;

⁶¹ Sur cette collection, voir Karmay, "Dorje Lingpa and His Rediscovery of the "Gold Needle" in Bhutan", *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 10.

⁶² Sur le système des engagements, voir mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, "gSang ba'i dam tshig gi rnam dbye gsal ba 'od kyi rgyan zhes bya ba", in Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 264-265, no. 330. Sur les trois vœux (*sdom gsum*), voir *ibid*, p. 141-148, textes nos. 10-13. Shardza a composé un certain nombre de festins d'offrandes (*tshogs*) permettant de restaurer les engagements brisés. Voir par exemple, *id.*, *Enlightened Rainbows*, nos. 126, 189, etc.

⁶³ Cycle révélé par dByil ston Khyung rгод rtsal (1175-?) dans le sanctuaire du Zang zang Lha brag.

⁶⁴ Sans autres précisions, il est difficile d'identifier ce texte ou ce cycle. Voir tout de même le volume 48 du *Bon gyi brten 'gyur chen mo*, p. 505 et seq.

⁶⁵ P. 421 : *da nas 'khor ba 'di la mi chags pal thams cad rang rtsal rang snang ngo shes nas/ ka dag dang po'i gzhi dbyings grol nas su/ slar yang 'gro don ma lus mthar phyin shog/*.

⁶⁶ Pureté Primordiale (*ka dag*), Essence (*ngo bo*) et Vacuité ou Vide originel (*ye dag*) sont tous trois synonymes dans le glossaire de la Grande Perfection. Ces termes renvoient à l'expression ultime de la nature de l'esprit (également présentée ici comme libre de toute limite), que l'on peut encore définir comme sans racine ou source (*rtsa bral*, c'est le fameux Vide originel sans racine [*ye stong rtsa bral*] que l'on retrouve *inter alia* dans la prière à la lignée du *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*), transparente (*zang thal*) et vierge de partialité (*phyogs bral*). C'est au sein de cette Essence originelle que s'élève le dynamisme (*rtsal*) de l'état naturel exprimé dans le dé-

Les Corps et les Sagesse sans entrave sont le déploiement de la Spontanéité ;
 Les phénomènes samsāriques et nirvāniques sont (entièrement) purifiés au sein du grand Vide qu'est l'Espace de la Base, en sorte que
 La Sagesse, immuable dans l'Abîme du Discernement en lequel s'épuisent les phénomènes,
 Se déploie dans le royaume de la grande Transcendance innée des concepts :
 Ainsi, moi, le yogi libéré du nœud des espoirs et des craintes, j'ai l'esprit serein⁶⁷. »

Après avoir entonné ces chants, il prononça à trois reprises : « — Que [tout] soit auspiceux (*Mu tsug smar ro*)⁶⁸ ! Vertu (*dge'o*) ! », puis il s'installa dans la posture en cinq points⁶⁹.

C'est alors que ses disciples se rassemblèrent autour de lui pour chanter une fois *La Prière d'Aspiration au Corps Absolu* (*Bon sku'i smon lam*)⁷⁰, un important texte rDzogs chen composé par Shardza lui-même et formant une sorte d'abrégé quintessentiel de son *Trésor de l'Espace-Discernement* (*dByings rig mdzod*), sous la forme d'une courte prière d'aspiration (*smoṅ lam*) à la mélodie hantée, suivie d'un commentaire extensif des principes de la Grande Perfection⁷¹. Le maître et ses disciples demeurèrent ensuite dans un état de contemplation, accédant

ploiement de la Clarté naturelle de l'esprit. C'est précisément ce qui est exprimé dans le deuxième vers avec le déploiement de la Spontanéité défini comme l'émergence des Corps (*sku*) et des Sagesse (*ye shes*) formant l'expression authentique du Fruit lui-même.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* : /*ye stong mtha' bral chen po ka dag gi ngo bo/ /sku dang ye shes 'gags med lhun grub kyi rol pa/ /'khor 'das bon rnam gzhis dbyings stong chen du dag pas/ /bon zad rig pa'i klong du 'pho med kyi ye shes/ /gnyug ma blo 'das chen po'i rgyal khabs su phyams gdal/ /re dogs mdud pa grol ba'i rnal 'byor nga blo bde/.*

⁶⁸ C'est la traduction habituellement employée en langue du Zhang zhung. Pour avoir "que tout soit auspiceux", l'on devrait avoir la formule tout aussi classique *tha tshan mu tsug smar ro*. En réalité, *mu tsug* renvoie dans les glossaires à *bkra shis* qui convient donc pour "auspiceux" (le second sens, celui d'immuabilité, ne convient pas au contexte), alors que *smar ro* n'est de toute évidence pas une forme souhaitative mais correspond au Tib. *bzang* (*ba/po*), bon, parfait. Dans certaines occurrences, il a également le sens de sublimation (*smin pa*), auquel cas la traduction de cette expression devrait être "Que se subliment les auspices !". La formule en langue du Zhang zhung est bien évidemment considérée comme l'équivalent classique du sanskrit *sarva maṅgalam* mais elle ne lui correspond pas littéralement.

⁶⁹ Cette posture est celle qui est traditionnellement employée dans la plupart des sessions de méditation et est également appelée "posture du mode quintuple" (*cha lugs lnga ldan gyi 'dug stangs*) ou bien l'on réfère à elle avec l'expression dite des "cinq sceaux du corps" (*lus kyi phyag rgya lnga*), etc. (voir *inter alia* Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung, *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi khrid rim lag len*, p. 610, ainsi qu'une combinaison des noms de cette posture [*rang bzhin cha lugs kyi phyag rgya lnga*] in Achard, *La Pratique des Six Points Essentiels*, p. 95). Elle a une symbolique très particulière dont les éléments sont expliqués par exemple dans *La Transmission Orale de Tshe dbang rig 'dzin* (*Tshe dbang snyan brgyud*) ; voir *Lag khrid ma rig mun sel zhes bya ba*, p. 94-95.

⁷⁰ *Bon sku'i smon lam gti mug gnyid skrog*, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 298-300, nos. 218-220. J'ai préparé une traduction de ce texte qui devrait être prochainement augmentée d'un commentaire à paraître.

⁷¹ Il est clair que les disciples n'ont chanté que la prière elle-même.

à l’égalité (*mnyam par bzhas*) de l’état naturel. Puis, lorsque les mouvements respiratoires de Shardza s’interrompirent, son visage devint soudainement blanc et lumineux comme celui d’un jeune homme. Ce phénomène de changement soudain de teinte faciale est récurrent dans les descriptions de Corps d’Arc-en-ciel que l’on retrouve dans des textes récents⁷². Evidemment, cet élément contraste radicalement avec le tein cadavérique d’un mourant, résultant de l’arrêt de l’afflux sanguin dans la partie supérieure du corps, avec l’interruption des battements du cœur⁷³. Dans le cas d’un Corps d’Arc-en-ciel, il marque au contraire le début de l’iredescence finale du Discernement dont le rayonnement vient embrasser la totalité des quatre éléments constitutifs du corps physique et les transformer dans leur contrepartie sublimée (c’est-à-dire visionnaire).

A ce moment précis, des assistants scellèrent la tente en cousant les pans de l’entrée, tandis que Shardza Rinpoche s’absorbait uniment dans la Contemplation de l’Espace de la Pureté Primordiale (*ka dag gi dbyings*)⁷⁴. Le dynamisme de sa réalisation — traduit dans la fusion des apparences visionnaires et de l’esprit (*snang sems*) en une seule saveur unique⁷⁵ — entraîna la résorption de toutes les visions (qui forment la Clarté extérieure [*phyi gsal*] des prodiges de l’esprit et expriment l’agencement visionnaire de la Sagesse elle-même) au sein de ce que l’on désigne comme l’Espace intérieur (*nang dbyings*), c’est-à-dire l’Espace du Corps du Vase de Jouvence (*gzhon nu bum pa’i sku’i dbyings*)⁷⁶.

⁷² L’on retrouve ainsi une description similaire dans le Corps d’Arc-en-ciel réalisé par son disciple Zla ba grags pa en 1935. Voir dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, *rje btsun bla ma ‘ja’ lus pa chen po dbra sras kun bzang nam mkha’i snying po’i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar ud ‘bar me tog ces bya ba* (Enlightened Rainbows, no. 326), p. 714.

⁷³ Le tein cadavérique devrait être d’autant plus marqué que la position assise est celle qu’adoptent les adeptes en passe de réaliser le Corps d’Arc-en-ciel. Pour une personne ordinaire dans une telle position, le sang, qui n’est plus pompé par le cœur, subit la gravité et descend progressivement dans le bas du corps.

⁷⁴ Cet état est celui de l’Essence immaculée de l’esprit, vierge de toute partialité et distinction individuelle. Il s’agit de la condition ultime et purissime de l’esprit parfaitement recueilli dans la pureté originelle de son propre mode d’être. L’Espace (*dbyings*) dont il est ici question n’est jamais un “élément” dans le rDzogs chen, c’est au contraire l’Abîme céleste et infini qui est le domaine en lequel se déploie l’expression authentique de la Réalité, et qui est en même temps totalement indifférencié des prodiges visionnaires (*snang ba’i cho ‘phrul*) de cette même Réalité. C’est d’ailleurs ce qu’exprime clairement le composé *Espace-Discernement* (*dByings rig*).

⁷⁵ *ro gcig*. Cette saveur est celle de la Vacuité (*stong pa nyid*) animée par la quintessence de la Claire-Lumière. S’il n’avait pas atteint le Corps d’Arc-en-ciel à ce moment, la conscience de Shardza Rinpoche serait restée “consciente” du moment de déconnexion entre le corps et l’esprit et, en entrant dans le Bardo du Corps Absolu primordialement pur (*ka dag bon sku’i bar do*), elle serait restée immuable et parfaitement absorbée au sein de l’Essence de Corps. Si, toutefois, un souffle karmique avait subsisté, l’entraînement au Franchissement du Pic au cours de la vie lui aurait assuré la faculté de reconnaître les déploiements du Bardo de la Claire-Lumière de la Réalité (*bon nyid ‘od gsal gyi bar do*) sans aucune difficulté.

⁷⁶ Cet état est parfois désigné comme celui de la Contemplation du Précieux Reliquaire (*rin po che ga’u dgongs pa*). Il y est fait référence comme à une Contemplation (*dgongs pa*) parce qu’il est doué d’une nature totalement sapientiale et parfaitement

Lorsque la tente fut scellée, l'on peut imaginer sans peine le désarroi des adeptes présents au moment de l'événement. D'après dBra ston, ils ne tardèrent pas à se lamenter, ayant compris que le maître allait entrer en *nirvāṇa*. Une lamentation anonyme en six quatrains apparaît à ce stade dans la biographie (p. 422) et est, selon toute apparence, de la main de dBra ston lui-même. Elle a la teneur suivante⁷⁷ :

« — Hélas ! Hélas ! Que l'Œil du monde tout entier,
L'unique Soleil du Bon se couche à présent,
Et au sein des denses ténèbres (du monde), les migrants
Héritent du destin d'aveugles privés de guide.

Grâce à ton aspiration familiarisée au long de *kalpas* sans nombre⁷⁸,
Tu as fait serment de prendre tous les migrants sous ta garde ;
Nous autres, disciples qui avons mis nos espoirs en toi,
Se peut-il que nous soyons ainsi abandonnés sans protecteur ?

Ton visage réjoui, le son altruiste de ton Verbe
Et ton Cœur aimant assurent la préservation de la Révélation et
des êtres ;
Mais à présent, hors du champ du mental qui les évoque,
Je n'aurai plus la fortune de les voir et entendre, et cela
m'attriste.

En raison du mauvais karma accumulé depuis des âges sans
commencement,
Et des épaisses imprégnations de leur mauvaise fortune, (les
nescients)
Considèrent le Corps Eternel Immuable comme une illusion,
Une manifestation erronée qu'ils perçoivent comme fluctuante
et périssable.

recueillie au sein de sa propre expression vierge de toute limite. Cet état est décrit comme un Reliquaire (*ga'u*) parce qu'il est scellé par le sceau de la réalisation qui empêche le déploiement de sa nature vers l'extérieur. Enfin, il est qualifié de Précieux (*rin po che*) parce qu'il renvoie à l'ensemble des prodiges visionnaires de l'état naturel qui sont l'expression originelle du trésor même de l'esprit. Cet état est celui que l'on atteint au terme de la quatrième phase de la quatrième vision du Franchissement du Pic.

⁷⁷ P. 422 : *kye ma kyi hud 'jig rten kun gyi mig/ bon gyi nyin byed gcig pu da ni nub/ 'gro ba 'di rnams mun pa'i smag rum du/ long ba mig bu bor ba'i skal pa thob/ grangs med bskal bar goms pa'i thugs bskyed kyis/ 'gro kun rjes su 'dzin par dam bcas nas/ bdag cag khyed la re ba'i gdul bya rnams/ mgon med thang du 'dor ba cang srid dam/ dgyes pa'i zhal dang phan mdzad gsung gi gdangs/ byams pa'i thugs kyis bstan 'gro skyong ba'i tshul/ da ni de dag dran pa'i yid yul las/ mthong dang thos pa'i skal ba med 'dis skyo/ thog med dus nas bsags pa'i las ngan gyis/ skal ba ngan pa'i bag chags 'thug po 'dis/ 'pho med g.yung drung sku yang 'pho 'jig tu/ mthong ba'i rdzun snang sgyu ma'i tshul la ltos/ mchog gzigs bla ma'i zhal gyi padmo las/ gdams ngag sbrang rtsi'i ro bcud myong na yang/ rjes su bsgrub pa'i nan tan bral ba rnams/ rtag 'dzin gdon gyis bslus bar da gdod gol/ yun ring dus nas bskyangs pa'i mgon gcig pu/ gzugs sku'i bkod pa dbyings su brtul na yang/ mkhyen pa'i thugs kyis rtag tu rjes dgongs nas/ tsho rabs kun tu rjes su bzung du gsol/.*

⁷⁸ Cette aspiration est bien entendu celle du développement de l'Esprit de Parfaite Pureté (*byang chub sems*) qui a deux desseins (*don gnyis*) altruistes : œuvrer au bénéfice des êtres et de soi-même.

Même si, du lotus épanoui en la bouche du maître contemplant
la Précellence⁷⁹,
Ils savourent l'élixir savoureux et sucré⁸⁰ de ses instructions
orales,
Je comprends que ceux qui sont privés de la persévérance à en
pratiquer (les principes)
Soient dès le départ⁸¹ trompés par le démon de la saisie éternale.
liste.

Ô Protecteur, toi qui as pris soin de moi depuis si longtemps,
Même si l'agencement de ton Corps Formel se résorbe⁸² dans
l'Espace,
Je prie pour que, ton Cœur (omni-)scient songeant continuelle-
ment à moi,
Tu me prennes à ta suite⁸³ tout au long de la succession de mes
naissances ! »

dBra ston rapporte avec retenue le désarroi des disciples à ce moment. En effet, tous ceux qui s'étaient rassemblés auprès du maître se sentaient réellement comme des aveugles égarés dans une plaine immense, sans plus aucun repère pour les guider. Une lamentation apparemment collective est transcrite par dBra ston en ces termes :

« — *Kyema* ! L'ami de tous les migrants sans exclusion, l'unique Soleil de la Révélation se couche dans le ciel⁸⁴. Nous, les êtres ordinaires en proie aux tourments, privés de l'œil de l'intelligence permettant d'analyser ce qui est à accepter et ce qui est à abandonner, nous restons derrière. Le guide qui allume le luminaire du Bön sur cette terre s'en est allé et il n'y a plus désormais que de sombres ténèbres. »⁸⁵

Après ces lamentations, des phénomènes atmosphériques particuliers furent constatés, notamment la couleur du ciel qui prit une teinte de

⁷⁹ Je me permets cette licence quant au sens de *mchog gziags* qui est rendu ici littéralement avec l'idée de voir véritablement la réalité des choses.

⁸⁰ Je répugne à utiliser l'adjectif *mielleux* ici qui conviendrait certes littéralement, mais qui n'aurait évidemment pas le sens désiré en français, bien au contraire.

⁸¹ *Da gdod* a également le sens de "complètement" et alterne parfois avec *da gzod* qui, dans la langue classique de traduction, correspond au skt. *idānīm*, lequel a également pour sens "justement" (Huet, *Héritage du Sanskrit*, p. 67) que l'on pourrait rendre dans le présent contexte par "précisément". Sur ce composé, voir par exemple Felix Erb, *Sūnyatāsaptatīrti*, p. 60, p. 158 n. 563.

⁸² Sur le sens de *brtul pa* signifiant *bsdus pa*, voir Dan Martin, *Tibetan Vocabulary*, p. 307.

⁸³ *rjes su bzung* implique évidemment d'être un disciple dans la suite du maître.

⁸⁴ *dGung du nub* est une formule traditionnelle indiquant le décès à l'honorifique, le retour au ciel (*dgung*) étant de toute évidence un rappel direct de la montée aux cieux des anciens rois Tibétains.

⁸⁵ P. 423 : *kye ma 'gro ba yongs kyi ma 'dres pa'i mdza' bshes bstan pa'i nyin byed gcig pu ni dgung du nub/ bdag cag nyams thag gi skye bo blang dor la dpyod pa'i blo gros kyi mig ldongs pa dag ni shul du lus/ sa chen po 'dir yang bon gyi sgron sbar ba'i sa mkhan kyang stong pas da ni mun pa mun nag tu gyur to/.*

pur saphir. Ces modifications affectant l'environnement jouent un rôle particulier et encore peu éclairci dans la manifestation du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Je ne suis pas certain qu'il faille simplement considérer les récits qui les rapportent comme utilisant des artifices littéraires derrière lesquels ne se cache aucune réalité "tangibile". Il pourrait en effet sembler que la récurrence de ces thèmes atmosphériques et leur description soient autant d'éléments suggérant une simple emphase littéraire, décrivant des événements plus ou moins stéréotypés à mettre en parallèle avec le *nirvāṇa* du Buddha. Cela est toutefois loin d'être évident. Les quelques récits de témoins dont on dispose font tous état de ces phénomènes⁸⁶, que certains rangeront sans hésitation dans le registre subjectif des hallucinations collectives provoquées par un excès de foi. C'est très certainement là un raccourci d'un scepticisme à n'en pas douter excessif et qui ne tient pas compte de la typologie des signes apparaissant au cours du processus de réalisation du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel. Il existe en effet des signes spécifiques qui caractérisent cette obtention et qui sont, selon le modèle tripartite traditionnel, répartis en signes extérieurs (*phyi rtags*), signes intérieurs (*nang rtags*) et signes secrets (*gsang rtags*)⁸⁷.

Le lendemain matin, aux premières lueurs de l'aube, Shardza obtint pouvoir sur l'éclat naturel de la Claire-Lumière Spontanée (*lhun grub 'od gsal gyi rang gdangs*). A ce moment, ses agrégats impurs et les impuretés associées aux éléments qui les constituent commencèrent de se dissoudre progressivement dans l'Espace (*dbyings*). Au même instant, un dôme d'arcs-en-ciel large comme un grand tambour et fulgurant de couleurs éclatantes apparut au-dessus de la tente ; parallèlement, aux quatre orientes de ce dôme apparurent des disques de lumières au-dessus desquels des lignes verticales quinticolores se dressaient telles des bannières de victoire déployées dans le ciel.

Le second jour qui suivit la fermeture de la tente⁸⁸, un tremblement de terre frappa la région et des sons rugissants furent entendus alentours. Au cours du troisième jour, des bruits de tonnerre furent entendus dans le ciel et, au cours de la nuit, un phénomène extraordinaire se déroula : un gigantesque arc-en-ciel blanc, semblable à une étoffe déployée se manifesta au-dessus du dôme d'arc-en-ciel, plongeant depuis les hauteurs infinies de l'espace pour pénétrer au cœur même de la tente.

Le lendemain matin, des semblances de fleurs faites de perles éclatantes apparurent sur les pentes des montagnes alentours, tandis qu'une pluie de fleurs à quatre et huit pétales tombait sur la tente et dans toutes les directions. La plupart des fleurs disparaissaient avant de toucher terre, mais certaines atteignirent le sol concrètement.

⁸⁶ Voir *iner alia* dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, *rJe btsun bla ma 'ja' lus pa chen po dbra sras kun bzang nam mkha'i snying po'i ruam par thar pa ngo mtshar ud 'bar me tog ces bya ba* (*Enlightened Rainbows*, no. 326), p. 714-716.

⁸⁷ Les signes extérieurs recouvrent ces manifestations atmosphériques, etc.

⁸⁸ Correspondant selon le système Phugpa au Lundi 28 Mai 1934.

Puis, au moment même où le soleil se levait, un bouquet d'arcs-en-ciel quinticolores se déploya depuis l'intérieur de la tente, semblable à une dense fumée s'élevant et disparaissant dans le ciel. dBra ston précise que ces phénomènes purent être vus de tous ceux qui étaient présents. En examinant les signes extraordinaires qui émanaient de la tente encore scellée, certains se dirent que le maître était en train de passer en *nirvāṇa* et qu'il se pourrait bien que ce *nirvāṇa* fût sans résidus. C'est à ce moment que l'un des principaux disciples de Shardza, le yogi Tshul khirms dbang phyug⁸⁹, s'adressa à l'assemblée proche de la tente, en disant :

« — A évaluer de tels signes extraordinaires et cette profusion de rayons lumineux, (je dirais que) le corps du vénéré maître lui-même semble disparaître en lumière ; pour cette raison, il serait formidable que nous puissions adresser nos prières à un support d'offrandes et d'hommages. »⁹⁰

Autrement dit, Tshul khirms dbang phyug veut préserver des reliques du patriarche pour les mettre dans un reliquaire ou un stūpa, avant que son corps ne disparaisse totalement. Après avoir décousu les pans de l'entrée de la tente, il entra en adressant une fervente prière au maître. A l'intérieur, il vit que le corps de Shardza n'avait pratiquement pas bougé de la posture dans laquelle il était lorsque la tente fut scellée, et qu'il fulgurait au-dessus du sol, à une distance d'environ une coudée. Son corps avait progressivement diminué de taille jusqu'à atteindre celle d'un enfant d'un an (*byis pa lo gcig pa*). Au toucher, il apparut à Tshul khirms dbang phyug que le cœur de Shardza était chaud. A peine eut-il touché le corps que celui-ci tomba sur les tapis, en sorte que certains des ongles des pieds et des mains de Shardza furent dispersés entre des coussins et les plis de sa robe. Le corps lui-même avait diminué en taille de manière proportionnelle et put être placé dans un reliquaire.

L'on peut se demander si cette action a pu avoir une quelconque répercussion sur l'obtention du Fruit de Shardza et si elle a pu conséquemment en limiter la portée. La question a le mérite d'être posée car la décision de Tshul khirms dbang phyug va à l'encontre de l'ordre donné par Shardza de ne pas entrer dans la tente avant sept jours. Selon la tradition orale qui entoure encore l'événement⁹¹, cela n'a en réalité eu aucun effet étant donné que, lors de cette obtention, l'esprit s'est définitivement recueilli au sein du Corps Absolu sans naissance

⁸⁹ Il fut un assistant et un disciple fidèle de Shardza, tout au long de sa vie, depuis la première excursion du maître sur le futur site de bDe chen ri khrod, en 1891 (Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 37). Il fut également le porteur de la requête demandée à Shardza de rédiger un commentaire au *Tantra du Plein Eveil Parfait du Fruit* (*'Bras bu rdzogs sangs rgyas pa'i rgyud* ; *ibid*, p. 73). Sur ce texte — qui est devenu un ouvrage central, extrêmement important dans la tradition de Shardza, voir *ibid.*, no. 323, p. 366.

⁹⁰ P. 424 : *'di lta bu'i ya mtshan pa'i ltas dang 'od zer 'phyur ba 'di la dpags na rje bla ma nyid kyi sku 'od du yal ba 'dra bas phyag mchod kyi rten zhig gsol ba btab na legs/.*

⁹¹ Entretien privé avec Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Paris, Août 1994.

(*skye med bon gyi sku*) et que ce qu'il advient de la matérialité du corps physique est destiné d'une manière ou d'une autre à disparaître. En interrompre le processus avant son terme final n'influe donc en aucune manière sur la réalisation de celui qui atteint ce niveau ultime du Fruit du Plein Eveil. L'acte, somme toute assez spectaculaire, de Tshul khrim dbang phyug n'est pas ainsi regardé par la tradition comme une offense ou bien comme une action déraisonnée qui eût pu entraver l'obtention du Fruit de Shardza Rinpoche.

Au moment où Tshul khrim dbang phyug quittait la tente avec le corps du maître enveloppé dans ses robes, de nombreux prodiges se produisirent à la vue de tous, tels que de multiples lumières irisées, des lignes verticales (*gyen 'geng*), des rayons concentriques (*rtsibs shar*), des agencements de lumières circulaires (*zlum 'khrigs*), des semblances d'ombrelles (*gdugs*) de lumière, des filets et des festons (*drwa ba dang drwa byed*), etc.⁹²

Lorsque le reliquaire fut ramené dans l'ermitage de bDe chen ri khrod, le sixième Kun grol rin po che (Hūm chen 'gro 'dul gling pa) dirigea les cérémonies d'usage avec l'exécution de rituels importants, à commencer par celui du *Kun bzang don gyi phrin las*⁹³, mais également ceux du *bDe gshegs 'dus pa*⁹⁴, du *g.Yung drung klong rgyas*⁹⁵, etc. D'autres maîtres importants participèrent aux rites funéraires. De nombreux adeptes récitèrent la formule des cent syllabes (*yig brgya*) et les trois essences mantriques (*snying po gsum*), tandis que d'autres se retirèrent pour une retraite individuelle et fermée de cent jours de pratiques intensives afin de se connecter aux bénédictions du maître.

Après la conclusion des cérémonies, le jeune frère de Shardza — Tshul khrim bstan 'dzin — et son neveu, le *rgyal tshab* Blo gros rgya mtsho, distribuèrent les possessions de Shardza en procédant à des donations à divers monastères, à commencer bien entendu par sTeng chen dgong pa. Le corps de Shardza fut finalement placé dans l'ermitage supérieur de bDe chen ri khrod, avec ses cheveux et ses on-

⁹² Dans les textes classiques de la Grande Perfection, la typologie de ces manifestations est extrêmement bien caractérisée. Ces apparences visionnaires sont associées à l'obtention de pouvoir sur les cinq Sagesses et comprennent ainsi des manifestations: 1. de lignes verticales (*gyen 'geng*), 2. de rayons concentriques (*rtsibs shar*, c'est-à-dire des rayons de roue orientés autour d'un centre ou moyeu), 3. de quadrilatères (*gru chad*), 4. de fragments (*dum bu*) de formes variées ou indéterminées, et 5. de formes d'étoffes (*snam bu*) irisées. Voir Shardza, *dByings rig mdzod*, II, p. 239-240. Les formes en filets (*drwa ba*), festons (*drwa phyed*), damier (*mig mangs ris*), interstices de filets (*mig tshags*), et de dôme de brocart (*za 'og gur khyim*) indiquent, quant à elles, la faculté désormais obtenue par l'adepte de transcender les cinq agrégats (*phung po lnga*). Cf. *id.*, p. 240.

⁹³ Il s'agit, dans ce contexte, du rituel de festin d'offrandes (*tshogs*) du *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*. Il existe évidemment d'autres textes de même titre, comme par exemple dans le *Yang rtse klong chen*, etc. Ce n'est toutefois pas ici une sorte de titre générique car la référence renvoie spécifiquement à un texte donné. Voir *inter alia* le *Kun bzang don gyi phrin las la ba rgyas 'debs*, in *Bon gyi brTen 'gyur chen mo* (2nd ed.) vol. 22, p. 583-597.

⁹⁴ Probablement le cycle révélé par bDe chen gling pa.

⁹⁵ Le corpus traditionnel pour l'accomplissement des rituels funéraires. Voir le volume 74 de la première édition du *Kanjur Bonpo*.

gles déposés dans un vase de cristal. dBra ston nous apprend également qu'un stūpa en cuivre et en or fut construit à l'ermitage inférieur — dGe thang — qui devait accueillir l'intégralité des reliques.

Shardza Rinpoche n'est pas le seul maître de cette branche de la tradition Bon po à avoir atteint le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel dans les décennies récentes. L'un de ses principaux disciples, Zla ba grags pa (Kun bzang Nam mkha'i snying po, 1882-1935), parvint à la même réalisation quelques mois seulement après son maître⁹⁶. En tant que fils du célèbre *gter ston* dBal 'bar sTag slag can (1832-1894?) et élève du cinquième Kun grol rin po che (bDud 'dul gling pa), Zla ba grags pa fut également un important patriache du Bon Nouveau (*Bon gsar*). Par ailleurs, dans *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*⁹⁷, Lopön Tenzin Namdak rapporte les témoignages de deux moines résidant depuis à Triten Norbutse au Népal, et ayant assisté au Tibet (dans la deuxième partie des années 1980) à la crémation des corps de deux disciples de Tshe dbang 'gyur med⁹⁸, Tshe dbang bde chen snying po (?-1969/70) et gTsug phud 'od zer (?-1983), les agrégats physiques des deux moines ayant diminué de taille en un mode proportionnel qui rappelle de toute évidence celui de Shardza Rinpoche lui-même.

Parmi les adeptes de Shardza mieux connus du côté bouddhique, l'on peut mentionner Nyala Changchub Dorje (1826-1978?) qui figure apparemment dans la liste des principaux élèves du maître⁹⁹, et sa propre fille dont le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel fut l'un des plus récents parmi ceux dont la réalisation est accompagnée de probables témoignages directs¹⁰⁰.

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⁹⁶ Voir Achard, *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 373-374.

⁹⁷ Appendix I (p. 135-137).

⁹⁸ Il fut l'un des disciples principaux de Shardza dans la dernière partie de sa vie. J'ignore ses dates, mais il est différent du fils éponyme de bDe chen gling pa. Celui dont il est ici question est connu avec l'épithète Bya btang (Voir *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 77). Il apparaît de toute évidence comme un patriarche du *Bon gsar*.

⁹⁹ *Enlightened Rainbows*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁰ bSod nams don grub, *sNga 'gyur rnying ma'i 'ja' lus grub pa'i skyes bu 'ga' zhig ngo sprod mdo tsam zhus pa*, p. 8 et seq. Parmi les témoignages les plus récents, l'on peut également mentionner le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel réalisé par rTogs ldan rin po che (Dri med g.yung drung) en 2002 à Klu phug dgon. Voir notamment Kun gsal snying po, *rje rin po che rag zhig rtogs ldan dri med g.yung drung dgongs pa bon dbyings su thim tshul*, p. 145-147.

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BONPO TANTRICS IN KOKONOR AREA

Tsering Thar

The Kokonor area is a region where the Bon religion has flourished very strongly. Apart from Reb-gong¹, which is the chief centre of the Bon religion in the area, there are also sTong-che² and Ser-gya³ in Khri-ka⁴, Se-bza⁵ in 'Ba, 'Brog-ru'i⁶ sTong-skor⁷ in Mu-ge-Thang⁸, Shar-steng⁹, To-shes¹⁰ in Ba-yan, Bon-tshang-ma¹¹ in rDo-sbis, Dung-dkar¹² in Chab-cha¹³, Che-rji'i sTong-skor in Che-rji¹⁴ pasture west of Chab-cha, and Bon-brgya¹⁵ in the pasture north of Kokonor. There are many traces of the early Bon religion to be found everywhere in Amdo, even in predominantly Buddhist areas. Bon was also involved in the history of the later spread of Buddhism in the 10th century.

¹ Reb-gong is the original Tibetan name of the place, whose official name is Tongren in Chinese. It is a county of rMa-lho (Huang nan in Chinese) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

² sTong-che is the original name of a long valley in Chu-nub (He xi in Chinese) Xiang (an administrative region below county) of Khri-ka (Gui de in Chinese) county of MTsho-lho (Hai nan) Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³ Ser-gya is the name of a village in Shar-lung (Dong gou in Chinese) Xiang of Khri-ka County of mTsho-lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁴ Khri-ka is the original name of the county (Gui de) in MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁵ Se bza' is the name of a village in 'Ba'-chu (Ba shui) Xiang of Tong de County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁶ 'Brog-ru means nomadic tribe, and refers to the nomadic tribes radiating from the sTong-che valley, as compared to farming tribes in the sTong-che valley.

⁷ sTong-skor is a large tribe in the Kokonor area to which the author belongs. There are several sTong-skor in the area such as sTong-skor in the sTong-che valley, the 'Brog-ru'i sTong-skor, Che-rje'i sTong-skor, etc.

⁸ Mu-ge-thang is a plain in 'Go-mang Xiang of Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁹ Shar-steng is the name of a village in gSer-gzhung (Jin yuan) Xiang of Ba-yan (Hua long) County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁰ To-shes is the name of a village in gSer-gzhung Xiang of Ba-yan County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹¹ Bon-tshang-ma is the name of a village of rDo-sbis, the name of a place in Xun hua Sala Autonomous County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹² Dung-dkar is the name of a Bonpo monastery in Ur-rti Xiang, Gong he County of MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹³ The capital of MTsho-lho prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁴ Che-rji is the name of a pasture and a Xiang of Gong he County of MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁵ Bon-brgya is the name of a large nomadic tribe which is divided into three counties, rTse-khog County of rMa-lho Prefecture, and Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture, and Tong de of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province. It is also a small village in Chu-khog Xiang of Reb-gong, which is mentioned in the present paper.

When we think of religious professionals in Tibet, we usually think only of monks in monasteries. But in the Kokonor area in Amdo, there is another kind of professional group of Bonpo Tantra who in the local tradition are called dPon¹⁶ as individuals and Bon-mang¹⁷ as a group. They are lay people in daily life but are simultaneously also Tantrics in their temples called gSas-khang. They have families, and do the normal work of farmers or nomads. They gather in the gSas-khang for regular religious activities on some special days. Besides their own religious activities, they visit Bonpo families to perform rituals for driving away evil spirits tormenting and hurting people, especially when the spiritual life of the patient is very weak and vulnerable. They have gathering places for their religious activities called gSas-khang, and there is a complete system for their regular gatherings of tantric rituals as well.

In the Bonpo sources, I have not been able to find any record describing the regular activity of Bon-mang in history as it occurs in the Kokonor area nowadays, but the activity of individual Bonpo Tantrics existed in history and continues still. There are two types of rituals they do, Yi-dam rituals for the benefit of their own enlightenment, and rituals that serve the goals of other people. From the beginning of the later spread of the Bon religion, especially in the time of gShen-chen klu-dga' (996-1035), many students gathered around him and his disciples and they studied and practiced Bonpo Tantra together, so that there must have been some group activities. This method of learning in groups became the main way of transmitting Bonpo teachings over the centuries, but it is difficult to relate it to the regular activities of Bon-mang in the Kokonor area without any clear historical statements. Some Bonpo sources mention the lives of many famous Bonpo masters, for example Zhu-ye legs-po, an important student of gShen-chen klu-dga', called in the Bonpo historical sources dBangldan phur-thogs 'dzin-pa¹⁸. He was one of the four great scholars (mKhas-bzhi)¹⁹ and a lay person. The majority of Bonpo masters and scholars were Zhu-ye legs-po were lay people up until the time of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (1356-1415). After that, Bonpo monks and monastic Bonpo teachings increasingly replaced lay Tantrics and their purely tantric teachings in Tibet, although these latter have remained very active. Anyway, although there are not many written sources describing the activities of lay Tantrics, apart from a few famous masters, they have been quite active for centuries now. For example, we

¹⁶ In the pronunciation of the Amdo dialect, dPon is pronounced as Hon.

¹⁷ In the pronunciation of the Amdo dialect, Bon is pronounced as Won, so Bon-mang is called Won mang.

¹⁸ ZTLR, p. 254.

¹⁹ Bru rGyal-ba g.yung-drung, Zhu-Ye legs-po, sPa-ston dPal-mchog and rMeu dPal-chen.

may mention the dPon in the Kokonor area, the dBal²⁰ in dGe-bshes-Khog of rGyal-rong, and the gShen-po²¹ in Khro-skyabs. The first are the main topic of this paper; the second are lay Tantrics in dGe-bshes-khog in rGyal-rong called dBal, or A-khu-dBal. Their dress is called dBal-chas, the flags on their hats are called dBal-dar. There are always some dBal in every village active as family priests and every dBal has some families as permanent clients. The families that patronize a dBal usually offer food to their dBal in as great quantity and as often as they can, especially on certain traditional festivals, such as the new year. A dBal has to visit each client family to conduct ceremonies when the family requires, even if no offering is made. They usually conduct sTag-la, dBal-gsas, Ge-khod or rNam-'joms rituals for families. Some rituals are done regularly and some only on occasion. A dBal lineage is called dBal-brgyud; the title is hereditary. Not every member of a dBal lineage family can be a dBal and inherit the tradition. A dBal and his family enjoy respect from the whole Bonpo community. Although there are some monks in the villages they remain at peace with the dBal, because the responsibilities of a dBal and a monk are very clear and different, in that dBal perform rituals for all the problems of one's present life, such as disease and disaster, etc, while monks perform rituals only for the next life, such as the death ritual or giving empowerment (dBang-bskur-ba). The third group are the gShen-po. In Khro-skyabs in rGyal-rong, the situation is quite different. The king of Khro-skyabs used to appoint nine gShen-po as lay Tantrics, mainly for the royal family. However they also performed rituals for ordinary people, especially when a family of ordinary people conducted a group ritual. There has to be at least one gShen-po among the Tantrics, and the gShen-po has to be the head-guide of the ritual. There were also some Mo-pa (fortunetellers) appointed by the Khro-skyabs King. They were official Mo-pa for the royal family but also served ordinary people in Khro-skyabs. Both gShen-po and Mo-pa had a good position in their society, this tradition is still alive. No one appoints people to be gShen-po or Mo-pa nowadays, but their descendants may inherit the tradition. Anyway, there are many Bonpo Tantrics in the Tibetan cultural area and they continue to be active, but I have found that only in the Kokonor area does there exist a complete system of regular ritual activities for the wider group of Bonpo Tantrics.

gSas-khang

In the history of the Bon religion, there have been three kinds of places used for Bonpo religious gatherings, 'Dus-gnas, gSas-mkhar

²⁰ dBal is the name of individual Tantrics in dGe-bshes-khog, which is a valley of Rong-brag (Dan pa) County of dKar-mdzes (Gan zi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

²¹ gShen-po is the name of individual Tantrics in Khro-skyabs (Jin chuan) county of Rnga pa (A ba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

and gSas-khang. According to Tibetan sources, King Mu-khri bTsan-po, invited one hundred and eight Bonpo from Zhang-zhung to Tibet to spread the Bon religion. They built thirty-seven 'Du-gnas, religious centers, in Tibet. Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan compiled important records about and made a long list of all of 'Du-gnas and the masters who were in charge of the centers²². Ever since King gNya'-khri btsan-po, the first King of Tibet, almost every King had a sKu-gshen, and built a center for religious gatherings. The commentary of *Yang-rtse* and some older texts called the centers gSas-mkhar²³, but in some later texts²⁴ like *Legs- bshad-mdzod* they are called gSas-khang²⁵, the later texts obviously following DGSG. We do not know exactly how those centers were built, but perhaps, we can judge the architectural forms from the meaning of 'mkhar' (castle, fortress) and 'khang' (hall) in Tibetan language, gSas means deity in the Zhang-zhung language. Although both gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have existed in the Tibetan cultural area until now, in the sources mentioned above, it is often difficult to distinguish them. It seems that there was no great difference between gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang at the King time. But, today, gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have become two different things in the Tibetan cultural area. Usually, "gSas-mkhar is a wooden storehouse or small house made of stone or of mud on top of which the horns of a stag or a wooden spear or a wooden sword or some branches of the auspicious trees like juniper are placed; on these are hung some threads of wools of different colors and they are adorned with a rLung-rta; inside the gSas-mkhar there are various kinds of Bum-gter, as in the case of Spo-se. Inside the big gSas-mkhar there is the receptacle of the god, Lha-yi rten-mkhar; other varieties; pho'i-lhai dgra-lhai Yul- lha'i rten-mkhar"²⁶. The kind of gSas-mkhar just mentioned is to be found in Khams. A similar gSas-mkhar exists in Rgyal-rong, consisting of four small wooden storehouses on top of a house, with a small bSang-khang in the center of the gSas-mkhar. Only the dBal, the Bonpo Tantrics in Rgyal- rong, perform rituals on top of the house for families. Furthermore, when people construct La-btsas, they always make a gSas-mkhar in which to keep the deity. This ritual is found all over Tibet. In a word, gSas- mkhar have existed and exist now in many forms, but they were and still are for keeping some kinds of deities to whom offerings are made. One difference between the gSas-mkhar of the past and those of today, is that the present ones are kept in family houses, and in La-btsas in the mountains, while in the past, they had to be in a public place, because it was for people to

²² LSRT, p. 167.

²³ BLNP, p. 79.

²⁴ DGSG, p. 158.

²⁵ LSRT, pp. 130-132.

²⁶ Tibetan Folk Songs from Gyantse and Western Tibet, the text by Prof. Namkhai Norbu, summaries and notes by G. Tucci, *Artibus Asiae*, Ascono, Switzerland, 1966, p. 188.

make offerings. Gradually gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have been changing their form and content. Particularly, since the spread of Buddhism and the Bonpo monastic system in Tibet, gSas-mkhar have become much less common than before, and are left only in some family homes, and at La-btsas; gSas-khang seem always to have been religious centers for Tantrics of the Bon religion, but they are numerically much fewer than before, too. 'Du-gnas means only a place for a religious gathering, without implying whether there is or not any other kind of center. Gsas-mkhar or gSas-khang could obviously be a kind of center in which people may gather for religious activities, so there could not have been a big difference between gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang in the past, at least in a literal sense. gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang are frequently confused even in some historical records.

Although the records concerning gSas-mkhar or gSas-khang mentioned above refer only to Central Tibet, from Brag-dgon-pa's great work²⁷, we can be certain that this kind of center was built in other places of Amdo as well as the Kokonor area. Many of them were destroyed by Buddhists or converted to Buddhist uses in the past. With a Japanese project on Bonpo monasteries, I visited every Bonpo monastery and gSas-khang in the Kokonor area in 1996. The Kokonor area perhaps the only place where the old gSas-khang remain and are still in use for religious activities. There are fifteen gSas-khang, mostly confined to Reb-gong, in addition to some other gSas-khang in surrounding places such as Ba-yan, gCan-tsha²⁸, Khri-ka, Chab-cha, 'Go-mang²⁹ and rTse-khog³⁰. Reliable Bonpo texts tell us that there were no monks in the Bon religion, strictly speaking, while the Kings were building the gSas-khang. Bonpo monasteries appeared very much later. The difference between a gSas-khang and a monastery is that the holders of a gSas-khang are lay Tantrics, and of a monastery, of course, monks. In a monastery, they learn both Sutra, Tantra, and rDzogs-chen, but in a gSas-khang, they learn and practice only Tantra and rDzogs-chen. It seems that the gSas-khang and its religious function preserve a tradition from the time of the Kings, while the monastery and its system are much newer in Tibetan history. They have affected Tibetan society, especially the Bonpo community, as two religious systems in the Bonpo tradition until now. According to oral history³¹, Phrom gSer-thog lce-'byams, a Bonpo scholar among the six great world scholars ('Dzam-gling rgyan-drug), who came from the Kokonor area, spread the Bon religion in that area; "At the place in Phrom of Ge-sar, there is Khri-gshog rgyal-mo (Ge-sar Phrom-khyi

²⁷ DMCB, p. 661.

²⁸ gCan-tsha (Jan zha) is a county belonging to rMa-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

²⁹ 'Go-mang is the name of a Xiang of Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³⁰ rTse-khog (ze ku), a County of Rma lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³¹ BGLG, p. 5.

yul-gru-na, khri-gshog rgyal-mo'i mtsho-mo-yod")³². During the time of Khri-srong lde-btsan, Dran-pa Nam-mkha' was in Reb-gong and built a huge monastery in A-ba ngos-bzang of Reb-gong³³). During the time of King (Dar-ma) U-dum-btsan, because of religious persecution, three brothers of Grub-thob, all Saints, escaped from Central Tibet to take refuge in Reb-gong. The first place where they stayed is called Chad-lung-thang, which means "the place of exhaustion", is in front of Bon-brgya monastery³⁴. Then, these three brothers took up their residence in three villages in Reb-gong, 'Khor-lo bsgyur-rgyal in Spyrting village, Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal in Ngo-mo village, and Khyung-dkar tshang-ba in Khyung-bo village. They spread the Bon religion not only in Reb-gong but also in some more distant places and built many gSas-khang, too. The spiritual inheritance and the descendants of the three Saints cover the whole of Reb-gong and even some other places in the Kokonor area. Since Reb-gong is a place where the Bonpo culture is still strongly alive, they are still using the expression gSas-khang for their gathering hall, but in other places, Buddhist expressions such as Lha-khang, Ma-ni-khang, or commonly Spyi-khang are used, because they are isolated very much as Bonpo and are surrounded by Buddhist monasteries, Lha-khang and Ma-ni-khang.

A gSas-khang usually consists of a single one-storey hall, sometimes there is a second, smaller storey, just to contain more statues and thangkas). Usually, to catch the daylight, the building of a gSas-khang faces south, and there is a walled enclosure in front where people can gather. There may be some simple houses within the wall such as a storehouse and a kitchen used to hold rituals, and a dormitory for the guardian of the building. The material and workmanship of a gSas-khang and the statues and thangkas inside depends on the local economic situation, but the traditional order and location of statues was important, at least until forty years ago. Nowadays, most gSas-khang have been rebuilt, with the result that the statues are in disorder. However the oldest order of statues observed by the Bonpo is to have the Sangs-rgyas³⁵ of three times with their backs to the back wall and facing the door of the hall, while right and left of them should be the eight Sems dpa', and nothing else. For historical reasons, almost all of the new gSas-khang were rebuilt in the eighties of this century. The excitement of the political upheaval after the cultural revolution made the traditional order of statues less important than before. Since all the holders of a gSas-khang are Tantrics concerned with the different

³² BGLG, p. 5.

³³ BGLG, p. 5.

³⁴ The only Bonpo monastery in Reb-gong, about 30 Km South-West of Rong-po (Long wu) town, the capital of rMa-lho Prefecture.

³⁵ gTo-rgyal ye-mkhyen as the Sang-rgyas of the past, gShen-rab mi-bo as the Sang-rgyas of the present, and Thang-ma me-sgron as the Sang-rgyas of the future. The eight Sems-dpa' are gTo-bu 'bum-sangs, dPyad-bu khri-shes, Yid-kyi khye'u-chung, Lung-'dren gsal-ba, brGyud-'dren sgron-ma, rGyal-sras 'Phrul-bu-chung, rKang-tsha g.Yung-drung dbang-ldan, gDung-sob Mu-cho ldem-drug.

wrathful deities they mostly rebuilt statues of those deities whose ritual they practice in their daily life. Besides gShen-rab mi-bo, such Tantric deities as sTag-la, dBal-gsas, Byams-ma, Ge-khod, 'Bum-pa, Rams-pa etc., are found instead of the older ones. Of course there are a few gSas-khang still attempting to keep the traditional order of statues, for example, dPon-tshang Lha-khang of sTong-che in Khr-ka, where they keep the Sangs-rgyas of the three times facing the door, but have added Byams-ma and aMra-seng on two sides of the three Sangs-rgyas, and where they keep the eight Sems-dpa' on the two sides but have added two different sTag-la. As we know, the tradition of Bon-mang is a kind of continuation of Bonpo Tantra from a very early time in which the Bon religion was not influenced by Buddhist Sutras as much as the Bonpo monastic teachings are. Yet, although Bon-mang have always observed only the tantric deities, the gSas-khang could not withstand completely the influence from the Sutras and monastic systems. After the theoretical revolution of the Bon religion in the fourteenth century by Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan from sMan-ri monastery³⁶, his influence has been growing more and more in Tibet, and his statue also was added by Bonpo people to the gSas-khang although he is purely a monastic figure. In the gSas-khang, we can see clearly the position of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan in the local people's esteem. For instance, in some gSas-khang, Shes-rab rgyal-tshan's statue is set up in the second place to the right or left of the main statue, as at Ngo-mo gSas-khang. In other gSas-khang, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan has even become the main statue as at Gad-pa skya-bo gSas-khang in Reb-gong, To-shes gSas-khang in Ba-yan, and Ser-gywa gSas-khang in Khri-ka. But in a few gSas-khang such as Hor-nag gSas-khang in Reb-gong and Shar-steng gSas-khang in Ba-yan, his statue is not found at all. This does not mean that the local people have no faith in him but less. Usually, most figures of the old gSas-khang are old deities instead of historical figures, but in the new gSas-khang, one starts to find historical figure such as Dran-pa nam-mkha'. After the fourteenth century, because of the influence of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan and sMan-ri monastery which was under intensive Buddhist influence, Bonpo monasteries and monks have gradually replaced gSas-khang and lay Tantrics in most areas of Tibet, leaving just odd corners such as the Kokonor area in Amdo. Even in the gSas-khang there, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan, a monastic figure, appears as the main statue as we have noted. Dran-pa nam-mkha', another important historical figure of the eighth century, sometimes also appears even as the main statue such at rKa-gsar³⁷ gSas-khang of Chab-cha, but his influence is much less, and one may see few places with his statue. Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, who corresponds to dPal-ldan lha-mo in Buddhism, is an

³⁶ An important Bonpo monastery founded by Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan in the fourteenth century, in 'U-yug (wu you) Qu of rNam-gling (Nan ling) County of gZhis-ka-rtse Prefecture in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

³⁷ rKa-gsar is the name of a village belonging to Gong he County of mTsho-lho prefecture.

indispensable deity for gSas-khang, monasteries, and most Bonpo families as a guardian deity. rNam-par rgyal-ba, a deity of victory, is appearing more and more in gSas-khang and monasteries, and some single Lha-khang in the countryside, and not only those places. More and more mChod-rten of rNam-par rgyal-ba have been built, usually for subjugating some negative spirits and cursed places, but sometimes also for stopping the spread of Islam in the Tibetan cultural region, especially in Amdo.

So-nag is a large nomadic tribe in the pasture of rTse-khog, where So-nag gSas-khang is situated. Since they do not have a monastery, some Bonpo monks who came from this tribe and area are living in the gSas-khang as in a monastery so that lay Tantrics and monks are mixed together. This looks like a temporary situation, but it could also be considered the beginning of a change of the gSas-khang system into a monastic one in the area, because many gSas-khang historically changed into a monastic system in the same way. Buddhism has always had a strong influence on the gSas-khang system. For example, Kra-grong gSas-khang and Nyin-lta gSas-khang in Reb-gong, and Zhwa-khra gSas-khang in gCan-tsha, have already been divided between the two religions, Bon and Buddhism. Buddhists have set up their statues in one side of these Bonpo gSas-khang. Both religions are practiced separately, but together in the same gSas-khang. Of course they were Bonpo gSas-khang first, and then the first group of people in the village was converted to Buddhism. In the beginning, they only had the Bonpo gSas-khang to practice in, but later, when the Buddhist group became stronger, they attempted to convince the Bonpo people to share the gSas-khang to a greater extent, because they also wanted space for their statues. After that, when the Buddhist group became strong enough, the gSas-khang could be converted to Buddhism, and renamed as a Ma-ni-khang or an 'Du-khang of a monastery of some school of Tibetan Buddhism. This religious situation shows us the evolution of the Bon religion toward Buddhism in Tibet, and why gSas-khang are disappearing into the history of Tibetan religion. This change of Bon into Buddhism is still going on. The gSas-khang in the Kokonor area could be the last group remaining in the Tibetan cultural region at present.

At every gSas-khang, two gNyer-pa, or store-keepers, are responsible for looking after the gSas-khang's property and keeping the environment clean, and organizing all the religious activities of the year. The two take turns staying in the gSas-khang to offer prayers. Usually the two gNyer-pa hold office for one year. Continuing the tradition, many Buddhist families invite Bonpo Tantrics to their homes to continue Bonpo rituals for their family members even if they have already become Buddhists, but, usually, they do not invite them to perform rituals for people's deaths, because they are still lay people. The difference between the Tantrics and the monks, is that the former help people mostly in this life, while the latter help people for the next life. Normally there is a hereditary system for being a Tantric. One

must be a Tantric in case one's father or uncle used to be. This is called dPon-rgyud, the family lineage of the Bon Tantrics. A family which has dPon-rgyud always intends to continue this tradition in the family. Similarly, if a family sends one boy to a monastery to be a monk, they also intend to keep this tradition in the family. This is called as Grwa-rgyun, the family lineage of a monk. Tantrics perform practices as individuals, small groups, or all together. They are free to go to families for rituals alone or in a small group, but regular rituals must be in gSas-khang.

Reb-gong Bon-mang

In the Kokonor area, there are three sizes of Bon-mang. Reb-gong Bon-mang is the largest group with fifteen gSas-khang; of middle size are sTong-che Bon-mang with four gSas-khang in Khr-ka, and To-shes and Shar-steng Bon-mang with two gSas-khangs in Ba-yan. The remaining Bonpo gSas-khang perform rituals in groups at their individual gSas-khangs.

Reb-gong is a quite large agricultural area. It is surrounded by many mountains forming a good microclimate for agriculture. Since many villages are located in the hills, it is not very convenient for traveling. Three religious groups, Bonpo, rNying-ma-pa and dGe-lugs-pa comprise the religious community of Reb-gong. The Bonpo group consists of Bon-brgya monastery, the fifteen gSas-khang and their disciples. According to my statistics of 1996, during the field-work of the Japanese project of Bon research, there were 681 Bonpo families in 46 large tribes, each including several branch tribes, and 617 Tantrics in a Bonpo population of 4368 in Reb-gong.

The gSas-khang of Reb-gong are divided into four groups, strictly speaking, but two in general:

Yar-nang Bon-mang are:

Bon-brgya gSang-sngags dar-rgyas-gling (at Bon-brgya village),
Mag-sar g.Yung-drung bstan-dar-gling (at Mag-sar village).

Tantrics in these two gSas-khang are descendants of Khyung-po bsTan-pa dar-rgyas, a famous Tantric in their history. These two villages traditionally do not participate in the dPyid-chos and sTon-chos of Reb-gong Bon-mang. The last Bon-brgya Tulku attempted to bring them under the order of Reb-gong Bon-mang but without great success. There used to be a gSas-khang for the gDung-nges tribe called gDung-nges Grub-pa kun-'dul-gling in mDo-ba village where the Bon-brgya valley opens, and together with Bon-brgya and Mag-sar it used to be called Yar-nang Bon-mang or Yar-nang Bon-sde khag-gsum, but as most people of the gDung-nges tribe have already converted to Buddhism, only a few Bonpo Tantrics and their families are left in the village.

Five gSas-khang in the eastern part of Reb-gong comprise Stod-phyogs Bon-mang:

1. Theg-chen bon-'khor lhun-grub-gling (at rGya-mtsho-dpal or A-rga- steng village)
2. gSang-sngags rig-'dzin dar-rgyas-gling (at Gad-pa skya-bo village)
3. Theg-chen smin-grol rgya-mtsho-gling (at gDong-mgo vil- lage)

These three gSas-khang are the seats and their Tantrics are spiritual descendants of Grub-chen 'Khor-los bsgyur-ba'i-rgyal po, one of those who first in history to come to Reb-gong to spread the Bon religion.

4. rGyal-bstan ye-shes rgya-mtsho-gling (at Ngo-mo vil- lage)
5. Rig-'dzin thugs-rje byang-chub-gling (at Gyang-ru vil- lage),

The Tantrics of these two gSas-khang are the spiritual descendants of Grub-chen Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, also one of the first to come to Reb-gong to spread Bon. People say that Gyang-ru Rig-'dzin thugs-rje in the thirteenth century defeated an evil spirit protecting the continuation of monks in Ra-rgya monastery so that it could continue to receive monks and be respectfully honored by gTsang Pandit as the source of his Rus- dpon (family priest).

Five gSas-khangs in the Northeast of Reb-gong comprise sMad-phyogs Bon-mang:

1. mDo-sngags phun-tshogs dar-rgyas-gling (at Gling rgya village)
2. Kun-'dus g.yung-drung 'gyur-med-gling (at Zho-'ong nyin-tha village)
3. Sgrub-pa'i rgyal-mtshan mi-'gyur-gling (at Dar-grong village)
4. Khyung-dkar rig-'dzin smin-grol-gling (at Khyung-bo- thang village)
5. gSang-sngags bdud-'dul lhun-grub-gling (at sDong- skam village).

rTogs-ldan Kun-bzang klong-grol and his son sNang-gsal lhun-grub in the fifteenth century were born there and made a great contribution to the Bon religion as the spiritual descendants of Grub-chen Khyung- dkar tshang-ba, who was a famous Tantric.

Three gSas-khangs in North of Reb-gong comprise Snyan-bzang Bon- mang:

1. gSang-chen smin-grol dpal-ldan-gling (at Hor-nag village)
2. Rig-'dzin kun-'dus rnam-rgyal-gling (at sTong-che village)

Since sTong-che village has the same origin as sTong-che village of Khri-ka, all the Bonpo of sTong-che are disciples of Khyung-mo Tulku of Khri-ka, and there is a seat for him in this gSas-khang.

3. Khyung-dkar bstan-pa rgya-mtsho-gling (at Khyung-po la-ga village)

This is a very old gSas-khang in Reb-gong, although we do not know when it was built or by whom.

sNyan-bzang Bon-mang joins sMad-phyogs Bon-mang for all the religious activities of Reb-gong Bon-mang.

All the above are together called the one thousand nine hundred of Bon-mang of Reb-gong who hold Phur-pa (Reb-gong Bon-mang phurthogs stong-dang dgu-brgya). Bon-brgya dGe-legs lhun-grub rgya-mtsho is the master of the whole Bon-mang of Reb-gong. sTod-phyogs and sMad-phyogs are the main groups of Reb-gong Bon-mang, the other two groups being smaller.

In Reb-gong Bon-mang, the largest group of Bon-mang in the Kokonor area, there are mainly four types of rituals, dPyid-chos and sTon-chos being the two largest. The whole Reb-gong Bon-mang gather twice a year for the rituals, 5th to 8th January for dPyid-chos (the ritual of spring), and 8th to 10th October for sTon-chos (the ritual of Autumn). The full three days of the rituals must be practiced, so the Tantrics must gather one day before. The Tantrics, especially elders who live in remote villages must come one day before and stay with families near the gSas-khang where the event takes place. They practice mainly dBal-gSas in addition to short 'Bum-pa and sTag-la. All the gSas-khangs in Reb-gong take turns to be the place for these rituals. In the people's eyes even in practice, Reb-gong Bon-mang is considered a whole, rather than individual gSas-khangs. There is a complete system for regular practices. For Reb-gong Bon-mang, there are two dGe-bskos every year, one dBu- mdzad every three years, one Khri-pa and one gNyer-pa every year, and one gYung-drung slob-dpon every three years. Two dGe-bskos are holders of the discipline of the Bon-mang. One of them must be from sTod-phyogs Bon-mang, the other from sMad-phyogs Bon-mang, because those two are the largest groups of the four in Reb-gong Bon-mang. dBu- mdzad is the chant guide of the ritual. The Khri-pa is the head of the whole Bon-mang, but at the same time he is also responsible for organizing dPyid-chos, the ritual of spring, as the gNyer-ba is for sTon-chos, the ritual of autumn. The Khri pa has a high position in Reb-gong Bon-mang, and there is special throne for him on the same level as the master, Bon-

brgya Rinpoche, when the Bon-mang gather for rituals. Any kind of ritual in Reb-gong Bon-mang must honor the Khri-pa of the year with his throne even in his absence to show their respect. The g.Yung-drung slob-dpon is responsible for all the practice.

The second size of ritual is that of Yi-dam kun-'dus (Yi-dam kun-'dus kyi chos-thog). This is a more serious ritual and Tantrics who intend to participate in it are limited to those older than twenty-nine. It takes place from 10th to 13th May, rotating once a year among all the gSas-khangs in Reb-gong. One dBu-mdzad of this group takes responsibility for three years. The g.Yung-drung slob-dpon and the Khri-pa are the same people as for Reb-gong Bon-mang. The gNyer-pa is different from that of Reb-gong Bon-mang, because he must organize the whole ritual, which involves much work.

The third size of ritual are those of mKha-'gro gsang-gcod and of Zhi-khro. The former is from 1st to 4th April, and the latter from 1st to 4th May. They have been separately held by two groups of Reb-gong Bon-mang, namely sTod-phyogs Bon-mang and sMad-phyogs Bon-mang (see below). The three year dBu-mdzad of Yi-dam Kun-'dus ritual must be the dBu-mdzad of the Reb-gong Bon-mang ritual group he belongs to, and the remainder of the group have to find someone else to be their dBu-mdzad. There are two new gNyer-pa for the two groups. There is neither a Khri-pa for either group nor a g.Yung-drung slob-dpon for the rituals, but the Khri-pa of Reb-gong Bon-mang must be honored by a throne, and two good Tantrics who take the first seat of the front table must take the responsibility of g.Yung-drung slob-dpon.

The fourth size of ritual is held by individual gSas-khang. Tantrics must gather in their own gSas-khang for the ritual of Tshe-dbang rig-'dzin or Kun-bzang rgyal-ba 'dus-pa on 10th of each month in which there is no common ritual in Reb-gong Bon-mang.

The position of Tantrics in the rituals of Reb-gong Bon-mang is very important. I visited the dPyid-chos of 1998 in the gSas-khang of Hor-nag la-ga village, so I will try to describe the position of Tantrics there. The two rows of the front dais are always very attractive when a ritual is going on. There are two Bang-kha on the two seats at the head of the front dais in the gSas-khang during a ritual. People say that Bang-kha is Zhang-zhung word for the master of the Mandala (dKyil-'khor gyi bdag-po) they made in front of the main statue in the gSas-khang when a ritual is going on. One of them must be the sGrub-dpon, the consultant of the ritual. Until the middle of this century, the two Bang-kha had to be guardians of the gTor-ma of Yi-dam and Bon-skyong of the ritual, which is on the main dais directly between the two seats of Bon-brgya Rinpoche and the Khri-pa, even at night till the end of the ritual, but nowadays they follow the ritual only in the day time. The two Bang-kha must be Tantrics with full experience of Tantric practices, so that they are usually very old Tantrics who have practiced for a lifetime, with the result that they enjoy universal respect in the Bonpo community. The seats of the dBu-mdzad and the

g.Yung drung slob dpon are in the middle of the two rows of the front dais, with the seat of the dBu mdzad higher than all the Tantrics but lower than the seats of the master and the Khri pa. The seats between the two Bang kha and the dBu mdzad and g.Yung drung slob dpon are for old Tantrics who used to be officials of Reb-gong Bon-mang. They are considered to be very powerful in Tantric practices. The seats between the g.Yung drung slob dpon and the dBu mdzad and the musicians at the end of the rows are for some Tantrics who are good at chanting. Then, there are musicians up to the ends of the rows. The back rows are for other Tantrics who follow the rituals, and some new Tantrics who have to be in the backmost rows to learn by observation.

After the ritual of Reb-gong Bon-mang, there is an activity called sDe-'bod (invitations from the village), when village people invite the Tantrics to their dwellings to perform rituals for the family. They do some simple rituals of purification for the past year and for invoking fortune and happiness for the coming year. The family welcomes the Tantrics by blowing trumpets and Chinese bamboo flutes and setting off some firecrackers. The Tantrics come in to the houses and sit, then perform rituals under the guidance of the dBu-mdzad for about ten or fifteen minutes, before going to another family. A family usually offers only an apple or other single fruit as a symbolic offering. Since there are many procedures to follow in the three day rituals, it is very late when they finish, sometimes already dark, but the village people wait for this opportunity for years, so that sDe-'bod must be carried out although it is late afternoon or even evening.

The most important things for a Tantric who is practicing supreme Tantra are the four natural conditions (Ma-bcos-pa bzhi): natural hair like a weeping willow (sKra ma-bcos-pa lchang-lo), a natural container such as a skull cup (sNod ma-bcos-pa thod-pa), a natural white cloth (Gos ma-bcos-pa dkar-po) and a natural mind like an innate mind. You must have long hair as a basic precondition, then you must receive the four transmissions of long hair (Ral-dbang bzhi) of a Yidam which you mainly practice from a master. The four transmissions are: the outer transmission of the pot (phyi bum-pa'i dbang); the inner transmission of wisdom (Nang ye-shes kyi-dbang); the mystical transmission of special sense (gSang-ba khyad-par don-gyi dbang); the absolute mystery transmission of words (Yang-gsang don-gyi dbang). As a preparation for the transmission, a Tantric who has already received the transmissions of long hair must braid the applicant's hair, and the latter then can receive the transmissions from a master. After that, they must always wear the hair in braids instead of cutting, and furthermore, they usually put some yak's hair in their braids to make them bigger and longer. Usually they wind their hair into a coil and cover it with a Ral-shubs, a black cloth, which they take off only when they prostrate themselves before a statue or pay a respects to a master or some one else they meet. We can not be sure how far back this long hair tradition goes, but we can see from some

Bonpo thangkas that many early Bonpo masters wore long hair. The great master sPa-ston dPal-mchog wanted to be a monk in his later life, and went to Khro-tshang 'Brug-lha, but the latter refused to cut his hair because he saw that there were a couple of Khro-bo, a wrathful deity, on every braid (DGSG p.214). Secondly, they use a human skull for drinking, because it is natural, not manufactured thing. Thirdly, white refers to the color of the hat, dKar-mo rtse-rgyal. From the remote past, Bonpos have always called themselves Zhwa-dkar bstan-pa or Zhwa-dkar Bon which means "the religion of white hat" or "Bon of the white hat". Bon-pos say that this is because a great master of Bon called Li-shu stag-ring used to wear a dKar-mo rtse-rgyal. Fourthly, the natural mind is considered by Bonpo as the foundation of the mind, especially in rDzogs-chen teachings. During the rituals of Bon-mang, every Tantric must hold a cymbal in the left hand and a Da-ma-ru (handdrum) in the right, putting on the Bonpo hat, dKar-mo rtse-rgyal, and a rosary of Rag-sha (a tree of India). A few Tantrics, who are considered to be powerful in Bonpo Tantra, put on a kind of hat called Dom-lpags (bear skin) with a bronze mirror in the middle. Two sGom-thag of red silk cross the Tsha-ru, winter clothing made of lambskin. They drape a cloak of Tibetan woolen cloth over their shoulder, which must have leopard skin collar. They must wear traditional Tibetan boots.

Since the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area is small, there have always been only a few important Bonpo Tulkus who guide all or most gSas-khang and monasteries. Bon-brgya Dge-legs Lhun-grub rgya-mtsho is the most learned and important Bonpo Tulku in north Amdo at the present. He usually lives in Bon-brgya monastery, the only Bonpo monastery in Reb-gong. Bon-brgya monastery is located in the Bon-brgya valley in Chu-khog Xiang of Reb-gong, about 30 Km south west of Rong-bo town, the capital of Reb-gong.

The Cham of Reb-gong Bon-mang is quite simple: there are several single dances such as Zhwa-nag, A-bse rgyal-ba, Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, rMa-chen bom-ra, sTag-ri-rong, gShin-rje, dMu-bdud, dMag-dpon, and mChod-'bul gyi lha-mo.

The Remaining Bon-mang

Besides Reb-gong Bon-mang, sTong-che Bon-mang of Khri-ka is the second largest Bon-mang in the Kokonor area. sTong-che is a big valley in Khri-ka in which there are about a hundred tribes in nine big Tibetan villages. The valley people are mainly engaged in farming but half of many families graze animals in the mountains which surround the valley. Since many nomadic tribes surrounding the valley spread from sTong-che, they still have the same name as sTong-che tribes, and share many relatives. Both the farmers and nomads have preserved the name sTong-che up to now but the expressions sTong-che for the farmers in the valley and 'Brog-ru (nomadic tribes) of sTong-

che for the nomads in the pasture, or sTong-che'i ru yul-'brog gnyis, the tribes outside and at home of sTong-che, are used to make a distinction. Bon, rNying-ma-pa and dGe-lugs-pa are the three religious groups comprising the religious community in sTong-che. For the Bonpo group, there is one monastery, Khyung-mo, and four gSas-khangs, sPyi-khang of sKa-rgya sTong-skor village, lHa-khang of dPon-tshang village, lHa-khang of sBra-ser village, and lHa-khang of Khyung-mo village. In the sTong-che valley, the names of the gSas-khang have already been changed to Buddhist forms such as lHa-khang or sPyi-khang instead of being called gSas-khang. They do not use the expression gSas-khang any more but continue to practice Bonpo Tantra. There is a Bonpo Tulku called Khyung-mo sprul-sku sTobs-ldan dbang-phyug who has been honored as the principal master of both Khyung-mo monastery and sTong-che Bon-mang in Khri-ka and sTong-che of Reb-gong. As a part of sTong-che, the nomadic tribes have been coming to sTong-che gSas-khangs to participate in all the rituals, and many Tantrics of the four gSas-khangs in sTong-che come from the nomadic tribes. But since they are always moving about the pasture, where some places are very remote and not convenient for coming to sTong-che, the two big groups among the tribes, 'Brog-ru'i sTong-skor and 'Brog-ru'i dPon-tshang, have been using two temporary gSas-khangs in tents for rituals. They are about 150 Km west of sTong-che. Stong-skor consists of sTong-skor and Mar-nang, two large tribes with more than a hundred families altogether. In recent decades, the sTong-skor tribe has built a small brick and cement gSas-khang in their pasture, and their tent gSas-khang finished its moving life. It is called sTong-skor spyi-khang in common language, and officially g.Yung-drung gsang-sngags gling. The other one, dPon-tshang tshogs-ras in the common language and g.Yung-drung bstan-dar gsang-sngags gling in the official, still follows the moving nomadic tribes in the pasture. For obvious reasons, Khyung-mo Tulku of sTong-che holds both gSas-khang and Tshogs-ras as master.

There is another tent gSas-khang, Bon-brgya'i tshogs-ras, in Bon-brgya pasture, about 150 Km south west of sTong-che. Since this nomadic Bon-brgya tribe in Ba-shi-thang and Bon-brgya village in Reb-gong have the same origin, Bon-brgya Rinpoche holds Bon-brgya tshogs-ras as master. Tshogs-ras of 'Brog-ru'i dPon-tshang and Bon-brgya are very likely the only two tent gSas-khang of the Bon religion in Tibetan cultural area at present.

Ser-gywa is a small village in sTag-rig valley in Khri-ka. Ser-gywa Bon-mang is also a small group, and they practice by themselves in their gSas-khang.

In Ba-yan, people call the Bon-mang as To-shes Bon-mang and Shar-steng Bon-mang separately, instead of using Ba-yan Bon-mang for both, but they always practice together in the two gSas-khang in turn under the guidance of bsTan-'dzin Rinpoche who lives in To-shes village.

Zhwa-khra Bon-mang of Mi-'gyur dbal-mo gsang-chen gling in Zhwa-khra village of Snang-ra valley in gCan-tsha county, is north of Reb-gong. Because Zhwa-khra Bon-mang spread from rKa-bar-ma village of sDong-skam in Reb-gong, and because sDong-skam Tulku sNang-gsal Lhun-grub, their master, was, and his reincarnation, sDong-skam dKon-mchog bstan-'dzin lhun-'grub, is, a student of Bon-brgya Tulku, the former and the present, Zhwa-khra Bon-mang's rituals are the same as Reb-gong's, as I mentioned before, Buddhists have already joined the Zhwa-khra gSas-khang, both rituals and statues. Bon-mang and sNgags-mang (Tantrics of rNying-ma-pa) perform rituals in turn in Zhwa-khra gSas-khang. Both Bonpos and Buddhists have set up some of their statues in the gSas-khang. Furthermore, Shakyamuni is the main statue, and there is also Padma-sambhava. The only remaining Bonpo statue is rNam-par rgyal-pa, meaning that the Bon religion in this area and their gSas-khang will last no longer than one generation.

So-nag Bon-mang is in rTse-khog county, sKa-gsar Bon-mang in sKa-gsar village of Chab-cha. Zhwa-khra³⁸, So-nag, rKa-gsar, sTong-che and Ser-gywa Bon-mang highly honor the Bon-brgya Tulku as their the principal master. Since Ba-yan, where To-shes and Shar-steng Bon-mang are, is north of Kokonor, and they have a master³⁹ there to lead their religious activities, they do not have close relations with the Bon-brgya Tulku.

Another sTong-skor is in Che-rji pasture, 118 Km west of Chab-cha. It spread from sTong-skor of sTong-che valley, and has already become a large nomadic tribe called A-rig sTong-skor. Most people of this tribe have already converted to Buddhism but they still keep the tradition of having some Bonpo rituals at home. The few Bonpo families of the tribe have a small gSas-khang for Bonpo rituals which they call Ma-ne-khang.

Furthermore, there are some Bonpo villages where there are no longer gSas-khang or monastery, like the three villages of Mar-nang called Mar-nang bon-sde Khag-gsum, which are Bon-tshang-ma, Balung (or dBal-lung) and Lho-ba villages in rDo-sbis. These three villages are said to have spread from Spyi-tshang village of Reb-gong. Bon-tshang-ma was the gZhi-dpon (or Rus-dpon), the family priest of sBis-mdo dpon-tshang, the chief family of sBis-mdo in which the Tenth Panchen Lama was born. There is still a small gSas-khang and

³⁸ Zhwa-khra is the name of a village in sNang-ra Xiang of gCan-tsha County of rMa-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³⁹ The present master of Ba-yan Bon-mang is bsTan-'dzin dbang-rgyal, son of rTse-dbus-tshang bSod-nams g.yung-drung dbang-rgyal (1893-1949), who was very powerful at the beginning of the twentieth century and held the seal as master of Bon-mang and the monasteries and people in the East (Shar-phyogs sngags-bon dgon-grong-spyi'i bla-ma rTse-dbus-pa'i tham-ga) given by Ma Bufang, the Islamic warlord in Qinghai in the first half part of the twentieth century. The present master was born in 1932 as the reincarnation of Kun-bzang rin-chen of sNang-zhig monastery in rNga-pa.

some Tantrics there except for Lho-ba village which is already completely converted to Buddhism.

The people of a village called Se-bza' in Tongde county, south of Kokonor, are Bonpos and they rebuilt a small gSas-khang very recently.

Some related points

The gSas-khang in the Kokonor area are obviously a continuation of the gSas-khang or gSas-mKhar which have existed in Central Tibet since even before King Srong-btsan sgam-po in the seventh century A.D. In the eighth century A.D, Bonpos suffered persecution from King Khri-srong lde-btsan, and fled from Central Tibet to remote places such as Amdo and Khams. Nowadays, many of the gSas-khang and monasteries in Amdo and Khams have their history in both written and oral records, which always mention someone who came from Lhasa, or elsewhere in Central Tibet, and built their gSas-khang or monastery. For example, we may cite the records of gSas-khangs in Reb-gong⁴⁰ and Khyung-mo monastery⁴¹ in Khri-ka. There are many traditions of ritual in Bonpo Tantra including the forms of gShen, Bru, Zhu, sPa and rMe'u, all of which come from Central Tibet. Most gSas-khang of Reb-gong and Khri-ka still practice the Bru tradition (Bru-lugs)⁴². In the monastic system, "Gwra-sa"⁴³ is the most important tradition for Bonpo monasteries in the Kokonor area. These facts are enough to prove that the Bon-mang and their rituals in the Kokonor area are a kind of continuation of the Bon religion of Central Tibet,

⁴⁰ According the oral history, Dran-pa nam-mkha' came to Reb-gong first, practiced at Gong-mo gur-khang in North Reb-gong and built A-ba ngos-bzang monastery. Then three brothers from the Khyung family of dBus (Central Tibet) took refuge from religious persecution in Reb-gong, and spread the Bon religion in Reb-gong, so that Reb-gong Bon-mang descended from them.

⁴¹ Khyung-mo monastery is the only Bonpo monastery in sTong-che valley of Khri-ka. According to the Autobiography of Khri-ka Kun-bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan (gShen-gyi dge-sbyong Khri-ka ba Kun-bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan gyi rnam-thar) (unfinished manuscript), Sog-btshun sTon-pa Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan, the founder of Khyung-mo monastery, was from Sog-sde of Nag-chu-kha and became a monk of gYas-ru dben-sa monastery of gTsang. He then came to Khri-ka in Amdo to spread the Bon religion.

⁴² Bru is for Bru rGyal-ba g.yung-drung (1242-1290), who was one of the four important students of gShen-chen klu-dga'. Because of his achievement in spreading Bon, his teaching and its tradition became an important one in the Bon religion. Because of the birth of the fifth and eighth Panchen Lamas in this family, it disappeared from Bonpo history, but his teaching tradition is still alive in the Bon religion.

⁴³ After the flood-destruction of gYas-ru dben-sa monastery in 1386, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan and his sMan-ri monastery became the most important master and monastery in the Bon religion, especially in the monastic tradition. In the Kokonor area, many Bonpo monks have gone to sMan-ri monastery to receive their vows and they call it "going to the Grwa sa".

even if we know very little about the latter. The gSas-khang system is a complete system different from the monastic one, and the origin of the gSas-khang was much earlier than that of the monastery. We know for certain that Bonpo Tantrics were active in ancient Tibetan society before the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, but we cannot be sure when the system was formed.

In the Kokonor area, there is another group called sNgags-mang collectively and sNgags-pa or dPon-individually, who are rNying-ma-pa Tantrics and have their own system of rituals. Their system of rituals and their dress are similar to those of Bonpos, but the rituals, of course, are different. One important thing is that their sNgags-khang or Ma-ni-khang, the gathering place, is also very similar to the Bonpo gSas-khang except for the statues and Thangkas inside. Some of them have stories of their origin related to Bonpo gSas-khang. It is hard to estimate how many of them used to be Bonpo gSas-khang, but I would like to venture the hypothesis that there must be an evolution from Bonpo gSas-khang to sNgags-khang or Ma-ni-khang of rNying-ma-pa. Furthermore, if you broaden your field of vision, even the 'Du-khang or main hall of any Tibetan monastery could be considered a variety of Bonpo gSas-khang, thus in Ba-yan, the Bonpo people still call their gSas-kang as 'Du-khang. If you build a monastery, a 'Du-khang, a gathering place, is a prerequisite. The remainder consists of additions to the-'Du khang. Of course, from gSas-khang, you can easily find influence of the monastic tradition of the Bon religion, even that influence of rNying-ma-pa or dGe-lugs-pa, but the gSas-khang was the first kind of constructed hall for religious gatherings in Tibetan history. Basing ourselves on Tibetan sources, we can trace its origin back to the time of gNya'-khri btshan-po, the first King of Tibet. Until the time of Srong-tsan sgam-po, in the seventh century, there were several gSas-khang in Central Tibet, even in Lhasa. So when Tibetans built the first monastery in Tibet, there was no better model to choose than the gSas-khang.

With the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, particularly the later spread in the eleventh century, Buddhism has gradually become the main religion, so that Bon is only able to survive in some remote or isolated corners. Reb-gong is one corner where the Bon religion is still alive in its ancient form, especially with the Bon-mang and the ritual system of Tantrics. Of course, individual dPons, the Tantrics of Bonpo Tantra, not only in the Kokonor area but also in rGyal-rong, have continued their tradition since the time of the Kings. Although they do not use the same names, they are practicing the same Bonpo Tantra and they have the same religious function in society. But the formation of Bon-mang as a group and their system still poses a problem. Is it a continuation of the ancient Bonpo tradition or a creation of Bonpos in the Kokonor area?

According to the information I have provided above, the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area is small, and it is divided into several even smaller groups which are isolated very much by surrounding

Buddhist groups. Many of them are very likely to come to an end except for a few relatively stable ones such as Reb-gong, sTong-che and Ba-yan. Even those groups which are well established, are still undergoing change. Bonpo families and their Tantrics are getting fewer and fewer. There may be two reasons for this: firstly, religious faith among the young generation is gradually fading away, and they are more and more interested in modern life; secondly, to be a Buddhist rather than being a Bonpo is popular and even a source of pride. This is because the Bon religion has been considered a bad faith in Tibetan society in general so that many Bonpo reluctant to acknowledge their religious faith in Bon, especially when they are outside their own community. In the Kokonor area, Reb-gong is the center of the Bonpo community. According to Bonpos, this is not only because it is the largest community and because the most important master is there, but even more importantly because Reb-gong Bon-mang strictly preserves the tradition in most aspects. Other communities are smaller as well as less strict.

The Bon-mang in the Kokonor area could be a key to research not only on the present Bon-mang themselves but particularly on the ancient Bon religion, Tantrics both as individuals and as groups and their function in society.

Abbreviations

BLNP *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po* by bsTan-'dzin rnam-dag, published by the auther, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Community, Dolanji, Dist. Solan, (H.P.).

CBPJ *Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljong shing* by Sum-pa Ye-shes dpal-'byor, Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992, Lanzhou.

DGSG *bsTan pa'i rnam bshad dar rgyas gsal ba'i sgron me* by sPa stan rgyal bzang po, Krung-go bod-kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1991, Beijing.

DMCB *mDo smad chos 'byung ngam Yul mdo smad kyi ljongs su thub bstan rin po che ji ltsr dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa deb ther rgya mtsho* by Brag-dgon-pa dKon- mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas, Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982, Lanzhou.

DTNP *Deb thar sngon po* by 'Gos-lo gZhon-nu-dpal, Si chuan Mi-rigs dpe-skrun- khang, 1984, Chengdu.

KPGT *mKhas pa'i dga' ston nam Dam pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba rnams kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa mkhas pa'i dga' ston* by dPa'-bo gTsug-lag phreng-ba, Mi- rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1985, Beijing.

LGRN *Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal gyi rnam par thar ba mdo tсам brjod pa thub bstan khang bzang mdzes pa'i tog*, (pp.489-513 of rJe 'jigs-med rigs-pa'i blo-gros kyi gsum-rtson pod-bzhi-ba) by Tshe-tan zhabs-drung, mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dpe-skrun- khang, 1992, Ziling.

LSRT *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod dpyod ldan dga' ba'i char* by Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan, Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1985, Beijing.

NMCB *rNying ma'i chos 'byung ngam bstan pa'i snying po gsag chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho* by Thub-bstan 'od-gsal bstan-pa'i nyi-ma, Bod-ljongs Mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992, Lhasa.

NTMP *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* by Ne'i Pan-di-ta Grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros, in *Bod-kyi lo-rgyu deb-thar khag-lnga* (Gangs-can rig-mdzod 9), Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun-khang, 1990, Lhasa.

SKGN *Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar ram rje btsun bla ma dam pa nges pa don gyi g.yung drung 'chang dbang dpal Shar rdza ba chen po bKra shis rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba thar 'dod mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan* by dBra-ston bsKal-bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan, Krung-go'i bod-kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1990, Beijing.

TTKT *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* by Tshe-tan zhabs-drung, mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982, Ziling.

ZTLR *Zhang bod kyi bstan 'byung lo rgyus lha rgyud rin chen phreng ba ma bcos gser gyi yang zhun* by Kun-bzang blo-gros, in manuscript of G.yung-drung gling monastery of Tibet.

BGLG *Bon-brgya dgon sman ri bshad sgrub smin grol gling gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* by Bon-brgya dGe-legs lhun-grub rgya-mtsho, manuscript.

