


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

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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 khri ms 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 mamo 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-embody 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 bsdams 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 spyan 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/ /spyang 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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