

# PART I

## THE ILLUMINATED FUNERARY MANUSCRIPT

### Philological and Historical Analysis of the Illuminated Funerary Manuscript

On the basis of its grammatical and orthographic peculiarities, I have estimated that the illuminated funerary manuscript was written between 1000 and 1250 CE. It may be that some of its linguistic curiosities are vernacularisms rather than survivals from the Old Tibetan language. Nevertheless, the nature of the language supplies convincing evidence for the considerable antiquity of the manuscript. Although decidedly composed in Classical Tibetan, the text is infiltrated by Old Tibetan grammatical and orthographic matter of the kind exhibited in the funerary texts of the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa corpora. As reflected in the composition of the illuminated funerary manuscript, we might therefore speak of a transitional period and language in non-Buddhist ritual traditions that existed in Tibet in the early first millennium CE. The periodization of the document arrived at relying upon linguistic methodologies has been corroborated by chronometric analysis of a piece of its fabric (Figs. 1, 2).<sup>22</sup> The results obtained indicate that the manuscript was written in the 11<sup>th</sup> or first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.

A number of orthographic and grammatical features can be used to adduce the antiquity of the illuminated funerary manuscript. That the text exemplifies a literary language with survivals from Old Tibetan is seen in the concurrent usage of spellings such as *rin-cen* and *rin-chen* (jewel) or *dra-tsugs* and *dra-tshugs* (supporting latticework). They exist in this manuscript as anachronisms. Its other relict features can be summed up as follows:

1. The use of the *ya-btags* with the letter *ma* (e.g., *myi* for *mi*, *mye* for *me*)
2. The absence of the *d*, *s* and *l* prefixes in certain words (e.g., *kar* for *dkar*, *ngar* for *sngar*, 'O-de for 'O-lde)
3. The choice of the prefix *r* instead of *d* (e.g., *rgongs* for *dgongs*)
4. The use of the suffixed *s* in the old manner (e.g., *rings* for *ring*, *yags* for *yag*)
5. The tendency to suffix the so-called 'small a' (*a-chung*) to a word ending in *a*, *i* or *u* (e.g., *rdzi'* for *rdzi* (herder), *zhags-pa'* for *zhags-pa* (lasso), *grub-pa'* for *grub-pa* (to accomplish), *dmu'* for *dmu* (sky, a type of spirit), *'di'* for *'di* (a pronoun), *na'* for *na* (a locative case sign), *la'* for *la* [a postposition])<sup>23</sup>
6. The detachment of the postpositive particle *'i* from the affixable noun (e.g., *sbrul 'i* for *sbrul gyi*)

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<sup>22</sup> A fragment of the manuscript that had been removed from the rest of the text by a former owner was used as the sample. It contained portions of typically rendered illustrations and was subject to AMS analysis: Sample No. Beta-272516; conventional radiocarbon age: 960 BP + /- 40 (viz., number of years before 1950 CE); 2 Sigma calibrated result (95% probability): Cal 1010 to 1170 CE; intercept of radiocarbon age with calibration curve Cal 1040 CE. Ideally, it now remains for the manuscript to undergo complementary scientific testing.

<sup>23</sup> On the possible variable phonetic value of the *a-chung* in Old Tibetan literature, see Hill 2005; Coblin 2002.

7. The use of obsolete liaisons (e.g., *stingsu* for *steng su*, *'tshamsu* for *mtshams su*)
8. The presence of Old Tibetan verb forms (e.g., *gshags* as related to *gshegs*, *bsrid* as related to *srid*)



Fig. 1. The recto side of the assayed manuscript fragment. The two figures appear to have been part of the Ja-3r frame, divine gazelles found in the first half (invocation and propitiation of the psychopomps) part of the death ritual



Fig. 2. The verso side of the fragment of the manuscript submitted for chronometric analysis. The three hatted figures in this illustration probably belonged to the Ja-3v frame; they represent deities who carry out a funerary ritual tradition known as *ste'u*

The type of script employed in the illuminated funerary manuscript also furnishes us with some evidence for its age. It belongs to a paleographic stratum characterized by the transition from *dbu-can* to *dbu-med* scripts. Most of the strokes that form the letters are quite well formed, but the lineation producing the tops of letters tends to be attenuated. The letter *sa* in particular has evolved into a *dbu-med* form. An older transitional script is represented in the archaic ritual texts of the Gathang Bumpa collection; this style of calligraphy is more florid, the letter *ba* more rounded (as in some Dunhuang manuscripts and Upper Tibetan rock inscriptions, etc.), and it generally has a more cursive quality than that of the manuscript. Also, as regards the letter *dza*, it is sometimes written idiosyncratically so as to resemble the letter *ja*, while the letter *ja* has been contracted to resemble the letter *nga*. Some other letters of the illuminated manuscript also have a more or less non-standard appearance. Another peculiarity of the text is the rendering of the affix *'i* without the *a-chung*.

An excellent indication of the illuminated manuscript's antiquity is its very contents. The divine personalities and ritual structures of the text dovetail with its old-fashioned spellings, grammar and syntax. The ritual guides of the deceased are a series of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic

deities, which are endowed with an elementary identity and iconography. The appellations of these figures match their character, in that they belong to an obsolete onomasticon. Of all the special terminology presented in the manuscript, the word *lhe'u* (literally 'little god') stands out most prominently. This term is used as an epithet for humans, clearly an allusion to their divine pedigree.<sup>24</sup> Calling human beings 'little gods' also alludes to their return to a divine realm or status after death, as part of a belief system I have called a 'closed teleological cycle'.<sup>25</sup> In the illuminated manuscript the term *lhe'u* is also appended to 'castle' or 'fortress', the place in which the dead reside in companionship with their ancestral deities. The prototypic *lhe'u* personality is Lhe'u yang-ka rje of Pt 1134. His demise figures in one of several Old Tibetan accounts explaining the use and significance of horses and sheep in the archaic funerary rite.

It is curious that although written just nine or ten centuries ago, the illuminated funerary manuscript betrays no hint of Buddhist or Eternal Bon philosophy and praxis. Evidently, it was part of a stream of eschatological tradition differing in significant ways from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur or the Buddhist *bar-do* complex. In other words, it represents a funerary tradition that exhibits no signs of a formalized Lamaist framework. In the extant text, there are no lineage lamas to venerate, no sectarian doctrines to uphold, and no recognition directly or indirectly of a supreme Buddha figure.

The precise nature of the relationship of the illuminated manuscript with the funerary materials of Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang presented in this study is not obvious. Although these respective works share homologous eschatological motifs and ritual practices, it is not explicit that they were used in the same evolving body of funerary rites. It is possible that the illuminated manuscript and the Old Tibetan texts of this study belonged to different streams of Tibetan tradition, those followed by different social, linguistic or regional groups. At this stage in the inquiry, little else can be said about the provenance of the illuminated manuscript.

<sup>24</sup> According to Stein (2010, *Antiqua* III: 149, 150), the kindredness of the Tibetan kings and *lha* was often expressed using the diminutive: *lhe'u*. In a soul evocation text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur entitled *Bla 'bod 'bring po*, the descent from the deities is stated explicitly: "In the beginning, as you descended from the *lha*, your clan (*gdung-rus*) is noble. Intermediately, as you appeared as the 'mighty one',\* your engendering lineage (*ske-rgyud*) is high. Lastly, you were born in a commoner caste (*smang*) in the society of humans" (*khyod dang po lha la grol ba'i (= bas) gdung rus btsun / bar du gnyan la shar ba'i (= bas) skye rgyud mtho / tha ma smang (= dmangs) la 'khrungs pa mi yi rigs /*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 417, 419. As regards the origins of ancient rites, the regent (*sde-srid*) Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho credits the god Spyian-ras-gzigs with saying, "The lineage of men should descend from the gods [like] a lineage of rivers touches glaciers" (Stein 2010, *Antiqua* III: 179). Furthermore, *Ma ni bka' 'bum* affirms that in the beginning there was no separation between the gods and men (*ibid.*, 178). On this primal connection between humans and divinities, see also Bellezza 2005, pp. 428, 429. Furthermore, see Haarh's masterful study (1969: 318). For *lhe'u* as part of the proper name of a human figure, see Lhe'u btsan-pa in Pt 1068 (lns. 6, 9, 20; Stein 1971: 525; Bellezza 2008: 504). For deities that carry *lhe'u* / *le'u* as part of their names, see Lhe'u-rje zin-tags / Le'u-rje zing-po in Pt 1043 (Stein 2010, *Antiqua* III: p. 150 [n. 50]), as well as Lhe'u yang-ka-rje in Pt 1134 (*ibid.*; Stein 1971: 491; Bellezza 2008: 384 (n. 93); *infra*, pp. 221–234). The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Bon 'di gyver 'go legs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 491–496, anonymous), Nos. 495, ln. 6 to 496, ln. 1, expresses the inseparability of two classes of divinities and the 'little gods'. It states: "The *lha* and *gsas* and *lhe'u*, the three brothers" (*lha dang gsas dang lhe'u sras gsum /*).

\* *Gnyan*. A type of spirit that lives in the intermediate realm between the heavens and underworld. In the cosmogonic text *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags* (written in the 13th century CE), attributed to King Khri-srong lde'u-btsan (742–797 CE), a divine grandfather (*A-mye*) named Khri-to chen-po married three women who belonged to the *gnyan*, *dmu* and *srin* classes of elemental spirits. Union with his three wives gave rise to the 'Six Clans of Tibet' (Bod-mi'u gdung-drug). For this myth, see Karmay 1998, pp. 271–273; Bellezza 2005, pp. 405–409; Haarh 1969, p. 282.

<sup>25</sup> For further elaboration, see Bellezza 2008, p. 525 (n. 591).

The prose of the illuminated funerary manuscript is highly condensed, with its major procedures, historical background and eschatological orientation presented in an abbreviated manner. This extreme brevity has added to the challenge of deciphering the signification of its constituent lines. We can expect that when this text was read at a funeral there were a number of ancillary provisions that accompanied it. For instance, the participating deities were probably feted with a relatively broad range of edible and non-edible objects. Moreover, the intricate procedural aspects enshrined in other archaic funerary literature suggest that a number of different rituals were conducted as part and parcel of the entire funeral. These may have included the reconditioning of the corpse and consciousness of the deceased (*gsos-ba*), the evocation of the consciousness principle of the deceased (*bla-'bod*), the containment of the consciousness principle in special receptacles (*bla-rten*), and the final consignment of the dead to the other world (*grub-pa*).<sup>26</sup>

The illuminations of the manuscript were probably used in conjunction with receptacles conceived of as enshrining the soul or consciousness principle of the deceased at the funeral venue. The depictions themselves were envisaged as aiding the dead in their passage to the afterlife, functioning as visual guides to the divine beings that serve as psychopomps. More than fifty gods and goddesses, many in pairs and triads, are depicted in the illuminations of the funerary manuscript. Each of them possesses Tibetan facial features and styles of dress. The attributes of the deities and objects found in the paintings are also of Tibetan origin, as a perusal of the text indicates. Direct reference to these various props is made in the readings. Similarly, the menagerie of animals introduced in the manuscript is of direct relevance to the dispensations being carried out. The species by name are mentioned in most cases.

The forty largely intact frames of the illuminated funerary manuscript are arrayed on its recto and verso sides. Each full frame measures around eleven centimeters by sixteen centimeters, with the smallest of them having dimensions of eleven centimeters by thirteen centimeters.<sup>27</sup> Ten additional frames are now highly fragmentary, with only small parts of their illumination or text intact, bringing the total to fifty. What remains of these other frames is so insignificant that they are not indexed separately in this work. The manuscript can be divided into two major parts: the psychopomp ritual (twenty recto frames) and the *ste'u* ritual (twenty verso frames). The two parts of the manuscript consist of a series of illuminations and accompanying passages that form narrative and performative sequences. There are written indications showing that each half of the manuscript originally had thirteen series. Most if not all of these twenty-six series consisted of four frames each. This means that the manuscript may have been comprised of at least one hundred and four frames, or fifty-four more than the entire present number. Additionally, the text may have been provisioned with prefatory material that introduced the ritual pedigree and performance, as minimal as this may have been. Possibly, there was a concluding portion to the funerary ritual as well. Despite the fragmentary nature of the illuminated manuscript, enough of it has endured to furnish us with a wide cross-section of its philosophic and procedural elements. This death ritual for women is simple in form and unique in nature but, as we shall see, it has close thematic links to other Tibetan archaic funerary texts.

<sup>26</sup> For a summary of funerary ritual structures of a syncretistic nature (containing both archaic and Lamaist elements) in the widely encompassing Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 389–411.

<sup>27</sup> These frames bear some resemblance to the funerary *tsag-li* of Eternal Bon; although *tsag-li* are individual cards on separate sheets of paper. In both the illuminations of our manuscript and the *tsag-li* there are depictions of funerary divinities and animals gifted to the deceased. However, the *tsag-li* are part of a genre of death rituals in which Buddhist-style eschatological constructs predominate. In the Eternal Bon funeral, the *tsag-li* are displayed before a *byang-bu* (a stereotypic depiction of the deceased used as the seat of his or her consciousness or *rnam-shes*) to assist the departed one in achieving liberation. For a study of Eternal Bon *tsag-li*, see Kværne 1985.

In total, eighteen different series (nine rectos and nine versos) in the illuminated funerary manuscript are identifiable. However, only two of the eighteen extant series possess all four frames in full. Although this text is highly fragmentary, the sequence in which each constellation of paintings and words is presented below appears to be the correct one. That is to say, the unfolding of the text adhered to in this work conforms to the progression intended by its authors. The placement of individual series in the sequence was carried out using alphabetical and numerical indices provided in the text, the contiguity of frames on the same strip of paper, narrative carryover, and the matching of cut lines of text and images. Each of the eighteen series of the manuscript is designated with a Tibetan letter corresponding to the remnant of the original alphanumeric indexing system still found on the recto side. Individual frames have been assigned a number denoting their relative position in a series. A correspondence between the recto and verso sequences is maintained in this work.

Time has not been kind to the illuminated funerary manuscript. In addition to having many missing sections, it has been arbitrarily cut, soiled, creased, and frayed. An inspection of the paper at points of damage reveals that it is composed of four layers of extremely fine material, which were bonded together. The durability of this four-ply pasteboard is at once apparent. What type of adhesive, if any, was used to produce this high quality paper is not known.

The colors used in the paintings are various shades of red, yellow, orange, green, brown, tan, blue, gray, and white. Nonetheless, some fading of the pigments and degradation of the paper has occurred, thus an accurate assessment of the original palette is not always possible. For instance, some of what now appears as olive green in hue seems to have originally been a brighter color in the teal range. Much of the white pigment used has ablated, but most other paints are still strongly fixed to the paper. Some parts of figures were not filled in with paint and are merely demarcated with the same black ink used to draw the outlines of all subjects. We can assume that blank spaces were used to give the effect of a beige tone. The text appears to have been written with the same ink used in the sketches. However, no scientific analysis of the pigments, ink or paper has yet been undertaken.

Each illumination possesses a thick border that sets it apart from the text. These borders vary considerably, setting each frame apart just like the individualistic figures in the paintings. The borders were painted with one to three colors or were drawn in black ink only. Some borders are decorated with parallel diagonal lines or matching curvilinear strokes drawn in ink. Most of the paintings have plain backgrounds devoid of color and embellishment, limiting the context in which the various figures are seen. Nonetheless, there are a few exceptions. In the Ca-1r frame, a pair of deities is depicted suspended over what appears to be a range of mountains. In another frame (Pa-4r), a solitary goddess is surrounded by yellow mounds (heaps of gold and jewels?) and wavy green lines (earth or water?). Two other recto paintings were rendered with solid orange or gold backgrounds (Nga-4r, Nya-3r).

Although a reading of the text demonstrates that its users must have perceived its divine anthropomorphic figures as possessing great power and ability, their understated appearance in the illustrations masks this quite effectively. The simplicity of the apparel worn by the divinities

in the manuscript contrasts with the often lavish presentation of deities in Lamaist iconography.<sup>28</sup> There are fifty-four such gods and goddesses (including fragmentary examples) in the extant text. Their austere portrayal may be specially related to their function as protectors of the dead, the starkest of human conditions. All anthropomorphic figures have staid or stern countenances, but none are overtly wrathful or wildly expressive. In fact, the gods and goddesses represented in the funerary manuscript seem quite ordinary, the antetypes of the living and the deceased human beings with whom they ritually interact. The dress of the deities mirrors their composure; it is elegant but simple in appearance. The hue of the textiles is rich but never loud, and many of the color combinations employed seem rather muted. Some of this somber quality, however, is the result of the darkening of the pigments over the centuries. What material the costumes were envisioned as being made of is debatable, with wool, silk, cotton and other types of textiles all credible. Whether attired in shirts, tunics or long robes, the clothes worn on the torsos of the deities open down the middle with the left side tucked under the right side. This style of wearing dress has clear imperial-period precedents.<sup>29</sup> In more recent times, most Tibetan upper garments (*phyu-pa*, *stod-thung*, etc.) have the right panel lying underneath the left panel.

Where a lack of headgear permits close examination, the gods are all shown with short hair or closely shaven heads. Goddesses wear their sparse hair long and probably unbound. This lack of hair may have been a symbol of hoary age, the result of the deities having long ago taken up residence in the parallel world of the dead. Jewelry is also conspicuously absent from the bodies of the divine beings, as is elaborate footwear. That this rather severe iconography is representative of deities belonging to the far side of existence is established in the Nga-4v frame. Here a divine couple who died in what was probably conceived of as primal times, presides over the funeral and help endow the living with newborn children. These are critical functions of funerary deities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur as well.

<sup>28</sup> I have not been able to pinpoint analogous iconographic representations in Lamaist art. However, contemporaneous and somewhat later human figures attired in a manner fairly reminiscent of the deities of the illuminated funerary manuscript are known. These ancillary figures are found in the frescoes of the Ta-po and A-lci monasteries and include nuns (?), pilgrims and noblemen. See, for example, Klimburg-Salter 1997, pp. 86 (figs. 48, 49), 87 (fig. 50), 124 (fig. 121), 140 (fig. 140), 168 (fig. 183), 169 (fig. 185); Goepper 1996, pp. 137, 166. The dress in these Buddhist murals seems to include matching shirts and pants, but the cut and fit of these items of clothing, as part of a style of art exhibiting Iranian, Indian and Central Asian cultural influences, is different from the illustrations in the manuscript. The costumes of the figures in the illuminated manuscript are more comparable to those on painted coffins unearthed at the Guolimu cemetery, on the northeastern Tibetan Plateau, and dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. For the Guolimu painted coffins see *op. cit.* Tong and Wertmann 2010. Although the robes of the Guolimu burial art are more opulent and varied in style, some have trim in contrasting colors and open down the middle, not unlike those of the illuminated manuscript. Also, underrobes appear to be depicted in the illustrations of both sources. For more on the painted coffins of Guolimu, see *infra*, pp. 243–246. Some of the robes of our text are comparable to fancier ones of Sassanian style found in a fresco at Qizil, in the Tarim Basin. The four figures of this depiction are identified as 'Tocharian donors' and dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. For this image, see Wikipedia contributors 2007. It would appear therefore that clothing worn by deities of the illuminated funerary manuscript, while fundamentally of indigenous design, may have been influenced by types of attire that circulated beyond the Tibetan Plateau in the second half of the first millennium CE. A cosmopolitan orientation is also a signature of certain early Tibetan ritual texts, where various nations are cited as part of the offerings regimen.

<sup>29</sup> As noted, this same manner of wearing robes is found in figures portrayed on the painted coffins of Guolimu. For the clearest example, see Tong and Wertmann 2010, p. 198 (fig. 13). Also, see the sketch of three Tibetan figures in Dunhuang cave 359 (Tong 2008: 431 [fig. 6.5.2-6]). The jacket of the *rgya-lu-chas* costume (used by lay officials for ceremonial occasions), which is thought to be based on an ancient prototype, had a central closure (cf. Heller 2002). Heller (*ibid.*) notes that Chinese vestmental protocol indicates that imperial-period Tibetans closed their garments right over left. Three frescoes from the extremely important Byang-mo grottoes (in Gting-skyes County), Cave IK1, which can probably be dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, also depict figures whose garments open down the center. See *op. cit.* Chinese Archaeology 2012.

It is abundantly clear that the illuminations belong to an iconographic tradition of native persuasion quite different from conventional Lamaist art of the last millennium. In content and form, the illustrations are devoid of Indian artistic inspiration or that of other Buddhist cultures. This indicates that the paintings either belonged to an ongoing tradition of portraiture that originated before Lamaist domination, or to a folk tradition that coexisted with it. The most salient motif the illuminations have in common with Indian art is the size of the human ear; it is drawn exaggeratedly large. While we cannot rule out the possibility that the illuminations represent a genre of art that appeared in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, this seems an unlikely prospect. The archaic ritual contents of the text suggest that the modes of portrayal are likewise attributable to a religious tradition that predates the early second millennium CE, even if certain stylistic and technical innovations in the art of drafting of a later period are imprinted upon it. That is not to say, however, that the illuminations capture Tibet's religious past in some grand and encompassing manner. As the provenance of the text remains unknown, we must consider the prospect that it features a localized genre of painting, which had limited esthetic and intellectual currency in Tibet. Until other such illuminated manuscripts are documented and published, the historical and geographic source of this art will remain an open question.

In addition to lone deities, divine couples and brotherhoods of gods, the illuminations include a variety of birds, cervids and other animals painted in the same prosaic manner. Some of the birds are depicted with multicolored plumage. The matter-of-fact approach that underpins this art lends the various zoomorphic figures an anatomical realism that facilitates their identification. The weapons brandished by the deities include the bow and arrow (Cha-1r, Cha-4r), sword (Pa-2v), maul (Ca-2v), battle-hammer (Cha-2v), and lasso or snare (Tha-2v). Given the rudimentary nature of the drawings, few art historical clues that could aid in the wider cultural placement of these armaments can be gleaned from their portrayal. Other ritual objects wielded by the deities are feather-like items and wheels (Ca-1r, Na-2v). Trees and tree-like objects as part of the *ste'u* ritual also figure prominently in a number of paintings. These diverse ritual instruments aid in freeing the deceased from the clutches of malevolent beings. Likewise, elaborate tents of various precious substances are depicted as part of ritual exercises to free the dead from demonic hindrances.

The four frames of each series in the psychopomp ritual (Division One, Sde-tshan gcig) of the illuminated funerary manuscript are ordered as follows:

1. Presiding funerary deity
2. Little birds habitat (*bye'u-slungs*)
3. Deer habitat (*sha-slungs*)
4. Divine protector of wild ungulates (*ri-dwags srung-ma*)

1. The presiding deities of the first frame of each series appear as solitary figures and in pairs (Ca-1r, Cha-1r, Na-1r). They belong to popular categories of indigenous spirits,<sup>30</sup> namely the celestial

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<sup>30</sup> The word 'indigenous' or 'native', as used in this work, refers to customs and traditions that arose in Tibet and which do not have their origins in Lamaism. I also apply these terms to ancient non-Buddhist customs and traditions that may possibly have been introduced from foreign sources, but which came to be assimilated into the Tibetan world through a process of indigenization. Indeed, the historical origins of 'indigenous' cultural phenomena in Tibet are extremely complex. I avoid the use of the word 'autochthonous' to describe such phenomena to sidestep the suggestion that they are aboriginal in nature or belonging to a single, synchronic body of 'original' culture. Some cultural patterns, such as the propitiation of mountain gods and lake goddesses, may well have autochthonous origins, but this cannot be shown definitively with the textual evidence available.

gods (*lha*), territorial gods (*yul-sa*), warrior gods (*sgra-bla*), and their female counterparts (*sman*). As noted, these divine allies of the dead appear to fulfill an ancestral function as the prototypes of human beings. This is indicated in the regular use of the term *lhe'u* (little god) to refer to humans, implying that the celestial gods or *lha* and mortals share the same origins and pedigree. While the funerary deities of the manuscript are of an elemental iconographic character, their equivalents in Eternal Bon literature tend to exhibit more complex sets of attributes and activities.<sup>31</sup> In either case, the main functions of the funerary deities is to vanquish malevolent entities believed to plague the deceased and to bring benefit to those left behind in the world of the living. These modalities that negate harm and bestow good fortune are fundamental to the Tibetan ritual tradition in both its ancient and contemporary forms.<sup>32</sup>

The first frame in each series of Division One has a performable structure founded on a philosophy and praxis well known in Tibetan rituals of a 'worldly' or pedestrian bent. These require that the native divinities be flattered with praise (*stod-pa*), befriended with offerings (*mchod-pa*), and petitioned for aid (*gsol-ba*).<sup>33</sup>

2. The second frame of each series features flocks of little birds, each of which is made up of three or four different species that share the same range or habitat (Ca-2r, Cha-2r, Tha-2r, Na-2r, Pa-2r). There is also a chief bird in each frame that belongs to another species. These leaders of the flocks are large birds such as the lammergeyer, horned eagle and peacock. Born from eggs of precious substances, these birds are the 'equipment of females' (*sman gyi dkor*). The term *dkor* refers to the property or wealth of a deceased female, those divine ornithic beings that aid in freeing her from the diabolic impediments thought to riddle the after-death state of existence. As such, I have chosen to translate *dkor* as 'equipment', highlighting its logistical and operational functionality.<sup>34</sup> The term *dam-pa* is often applied in the manuscript to describe

<sup>31</sup> In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the eradication of the demons of death is conducted by a highly developed pantheon of funerary deities, some of which are horned. For a description of the appearance and activities of these gods, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 464–468. In the *bar-do* traditions of Lamaism, ornate deities largely of Buddhist philosophical inspiration are involved in liberating the dead from the intermediate state. For information on the *bar-do* and its deities see, for example, Evans-Wentz 1927; Thurman 1994; Blezer 1997; Cuevas 2003; Gyurme Dorje 2005.

<sup>32</sup> This essential twofold role is eloquently summed up in a stock phrase of the archaic funerary tradition: "May the pure divine portal of the living... be opened" (*gson gyi lha sgo tshang... phyed par shog*). "May the open portal of the tomb of the dead... be sealed" (*shi-ba'i dur sgo bye... chad par shog*). For this expression with minor variations in phraseology, see Haarh 1969, pp. 110–113, 342; Bellezza 2008, pp. 404, 405, 432, 447.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed description and analysis of the invocation, appeasement and exploitation of deities in Eternal Bon ritual performances, see Karmay 1998; Bellezza 2005; Snellgrove 1967; Norbu 1995.

<sup>34</sup> In the illuminated funerary manuscript, the term *dkor* is sometimes used in conjunction with the word *longs-spyod* to signify the 'possessions equipment'. Extraordinary animals as the possessions or belongings (*longs-spyod*) of a living individual are also recorded in the Ma-rgyud tradition, where the legendary saint of yore, Spe-bon thog-'phrul, had aquatic oxen and sheep as his personal possessions (Bellezza 2008: 215). Called Spe-bon thog-rtse in the *Rigs 'dzin rig pa'i thugs rgyud*, this saint was served by wild yaks and water monsters (*chu-srin*; Bellezza 2001: 58). The word *dkor* / *kor* in the archaic funerary tradition can be traced to Old Tibetan funerary texts such as Pt 1042 (ln. 103), where it is used to refer to possessions (often animals) that are always indispensable (*'phral du ma-mchis su myi-rung ba'i dkor*; Bellezza 2008: 452 [n. 309]). In Pt 1040 (lns. 100, 109), we find *thang-ba'i dkor*, sacrificial funerary gifts for the dead (Bellezza 2010a: 41 [n. 25]). In Pt 1068 (ln. 103), the 'great possession' (*dkor-chen*) refers to a line of royally owned cattle suitable to act as the bearer of the soul of a deceased woman (Bellezza 2008: 540). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Spyi skos gsum gyi thang khrims bshad pa le'u bzhi pa'o*, *dkor* denotes ritual livestock offered by *bon* priests to facilitate the suppression of negative forces afflicting the dead (*ibid.*, 409). In the ancient ritual text *Klu 'bum nag po*, the patriarch Gshen-dbang confers upon his son Srid-gshen mgon-po the wealth (*dkor*) of a special drum, flat-bell (*gshang*) and conch, in order that he could carry out funerary rites for human beings (*ibid.*, 481). Also in the *Klu 'bum nag po*, a turquoise riding horse as valuable property (*dkor*) is the inheritance of the ill-fated Tshangs-pa rab-'byor, which presumably

the *dkor*, which in the funerary context has the connotation of ‘absolutely needed’ or ‘superior’, rather than meaning, ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ per se. In contemporary Upper Tibet, spirit-mediums (*lha-pa* / *lha-mo* / *dpa’-bo* / *dpa’-mo*, etc.) retain the tradition of owning or controlling special helping spirits that aid them in their work of healing and prophecy. This mastery of personal deities is known as *lha-bdag*. The proprietary spirits of the mediums are often associated with sacred lakes and mountains and other topographical features.<sup>35</sup>

The second frames of all but one series end by addressing the whole flock or ritual unit of birds in terms of their habitat or range (*slungs*). This phraseology suggests that the source or homeland of birds is as important as the species that come from it, as part of the ancient Tibetan preoccupation with origins. *Slungs*, a specialized pastoral and wildlife term, is used in the manuscript to denote the habitat or geographic fountainhead of cervids as well as birds.<sup>36</sup> The officiants request these birds to ‘not scatter’ (*myi byer-ba*) in the wind or forest. This appeal intimates that the birds must work in concert to free the deceased from the formidable obstacles of the postmortem realm. In the Tha-2r frame, the chief of the flock, a lammergeyer, effectively carries out the same function by being master of the four cardinal directions. Presumably, the birds acting in unison helped the consciousness principle or soul of the deceased remain integral, while the scattering of the birds could signal its dissolution. The psychopomp function of the flocks of birds is spelled out in the Ca-2r and Cha-2r frames, where they are described as leading the way through geographic obstacles, those that exist in the zone after death. The stumbling blocks encountered by the deceased take the form of a rock formation and forest. In Pa-2r, it is simply stated that the birds ‘also lead the way to go’ (*gshags kyi shul yang ’dren*), recapitulating their essential psychopomp function.

3. The third frame in each series of the manuscript features another set of zoomorphic allies of the dead (Nga-3r, Cha-3r, Ja-3r, Nya-3r, Ta-3r, Tha-3r, Pa-3r). With one exception all of these sets of animals are wild ungulates. Deer, ibex and what appear to be gazelle and antelope are represented. As there were probably thirteen frames with these kinds of animal helpers (as indicated in Pa-3r), we might expect that other wild ungulates of Tibet, such as the blue sheep, argali sheep and yak, may also have once graced the illuminations. The wild ungulates appear

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became his companion on the journey to the afterlife (*ibid.*, 484). Incidentally, the family or clan name of this figure, Tshangs-pa, suggests that he may have lived in Upper Tibet. In any case, Tshangs-lha is a deity associated with Zhang-zhung (Bellezza 2008: 300 [n. 295]). The same function for the horse is indicated in ITJ 731r, a funerary ritual origins tale in which a deceased man’s trusty steed becomes his *do-ma*, the mount that carries his soul or consciousness principle across the river of the dead (*ibid.*, 531–537). This crucial function of the *do-ma* is encapsulated in the phrase *chab-gang* / *chu-gang* (literally: ‘above the water’), which evolved in the Eternal Bon tradition into a term denoting the funerary presents given to the deceased to achieve liberation (*ibid.*, *passim*). Stein 2010 (Antiqua III) defines *chab-gang* as ‘correct way of life’. In the funerary area, Stein sees this term as having to do with ‘courage’ (Stein 1971: 487 (n. 24), 498; Stein 1970: 169). While such understandings of *chab-gang* may hold true in other Old Tibetan passages, in archaic funerary rituals it usually has a word-for-word sense. See *infra*, pp. 168 (fn. 291), 187, 222, 225, 228, 243.

<sup>35</sup> For example, the late *dpa’-mo* of the Mount Rta-rgo region, Sri-thar sgrol-ma, reported that she was the owner (*bdag-mo*) of thirteen helping spirits of the *sa-bdag* class (Bellezza 1997: 319). Likewise, Lha-pa bsam-gtan (a pseudonym) of the Bse-’khor region claims to own a large and colorful group of *nor-lha* (wealth gods), many of which are in zoomorphic form (Bellezza forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Dung-dkar (2002: 2083) defines the term *slungs* as follows: “The pastoral lands of the plains of the shepherds integrally connected through the distance a yak can cover in a single day” (*’brog thang gi ’brog tshugs gcig ste / g.yag gis nyin gcig chod thub pa’i lam thag /*). In the bureaucratic Old Tibetan Annals (ITJ 750), *slungs* is the unit of distance traveled by a minister in a single day, a length of approximately 30 *le-dbar* (15 km; Dotson 2009: 112 [n. 263]). *Slungs* / *bslungs* also designates the time-span or perceived expanse between the two solstices and the two equinoxes (Dagkar 2003: 400; Pasar *et al.* 2008: 278).

as family groups: father, mother and child. This domestic or familial aspect strikes a chord with the traditional duties of women. The wild ungulates are portrayed as extremely fleet of foot and graceful in movement, qualities that made them especially well suited to aid the deceased in her passage through the hazardous world between death and the afterlife. Each kindred group of animals comes from the ‘deer habitat’, a realm in which they reign supreme. Interestingly, in praise of their magnificent qualities, some of the wild ungulates are said to produce milk and wool that is exploited by humans. Like the birds, these quadrupeds are offered as the ‘essential equipage’ (*dkor gyi dam-pa*) of females.

4. The fourth frame in each series pertains to the divine protectors of deer and other wild ungulates (Nga-4r, Ca-4r, Cha-4r, Ja-4r, Pa-4r). These gods mostly appear as solitary figures but also in one instance as a trio. The guardians of wild ungulates belong to the *sgra-bla*, *yul-sa*, *lha*, and *sa-bdag* (spirits of the earth) classes of spirits. They ensure that the dead are not harmed by demons that hinder passage to the next world. These divinities also make certain that the zoomorphic psychopomps do not disperse, a situation ostensibly that would jeopardize the deceased’s journey through the intermediate zone.

Frame Pa-4r has the most complete listing of offerings proffered to the divinities for services rendered to the dead. The gifts enumerated include vermillion (*mtshal*), incense (*spos*), roasted barley meal (*zhib*), and butter (*mar*). These presents are granted to the protectors of cervids in compensation for seeing the consciousness principle of the deceased through the perilous purgatory. In frame Pa-2v of Division Two of the manuscript, barley meal, butter and libations (*skyems*) are also mentioned as offerings. The offerings cited in the manuscript are in fact common gifts in many Tibetan ritual performances.<sup>37</sup>

The four frames in the *ste ’u* ritual (Division Two, Sde-tshan gnyis) of the illuminated funerary manuscript are ordered as follows:

1. The *ste ’u* structure and its functions
2. The deities born of jewel hail (*rin-chen ser-ba*) that oversee the *ste ’u* ritual
3. The deities that help execute the *ste ’u* ritual
4. The origins and ritual use of the funerary tent

1. The *ste ’u* ritual structure described in the illuminated manuscript is of an obscure nature (Ca-1v, Cha-1v, Na-1v). This type of ritual assemblage (*sde ’u / ste / te*) is also present in Pt 1134 and ITJ 731r (see p. 231). Nonetheless, much can be gleaned about its purpose from the illuminated manuscript. The Ca-1v frame states that it is the receptacle or tabernacle (*rten*) of the deceased. Typically, in archaic ritual performances a variety of *rten* are employed to attract the consciousness principle of the departed to the funerary venue. Once it has been deposited in the receptacle the consciousness principle undergoes ritual rehabilitation, in order that the duress experienced by the deceased by virtue of being dead is eliminated. The *rten* is also seen as a highly insulated environment that affords protection from the host of demons ever ready to attack the newly deceased.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For the extensive offering regimen in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, see Bellezza 2008 (Part III), *passim*. Rather than *zhib* per se, in this Eternal Bon literature we find barley offerings in the form of parched barley meal and butter cakes (*zan-mar*), a barley meal and butter preparation (*phye-mar*) and barley porridge (*skyo-ma*; *ibid.*, 422), as well as the ubiquitous barleycorn. In *Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*, there is both *’ol-kon* and *zhib-mar*, two types of barley and butter pastries. Also, as we shall see, in Pt 1134 there is unroasted blue barleycorn (*ngar-pye sngon-mo*), and in ITJ 731r parched barley meal paste (*bag*).

<sup>38</sup> According to the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur text *Tshe ’das rigs drug gi gnas nas drangs thabs*, in funerals there are

Passages in the illuminated funerary manuscript demonstrate that the *ste'u* structures were envisioned as models or emblems of lofty mountains and celestial phenomena. The accompanying illustrations in the first frame of each series suggest that it may also have been viewed as a microcosm of the world tree.<sup>39</sup> Although these cosmic paragons have various permutations in the text, the accompanying illustrations show that they physically share much in common. The *ste'u* is depicted as a cruciform structure tipped with what appears to be foliage and embellished with leaves and other objects. The bent arms of the construction convey a certain flexibility, suggesting that it may have been built of wood or bamboo. Around each *ste'u* flies a pair of birds; these are liable to be the creatures that deliver the deceased's consciousness principle to the *ste'u* and/or carry it from the *ste'u* to salvation. Moreover, the birds of the *ste'u* may stand guard at the funeral site to prevent airborne demons from interfering with the ritual undertakings. As such, these birds have a psychopomp and/or apotropaic function. Differences in the depiction of each bird pair probably indicate that they represent the male and female of their species.

2. The second frame in each series is dedicated to the deities that preside over the *ste'u* ritual and other elements of the funeral (Ca-2v, Cha-2v, Tha-2v, Na-2v, Pa-2v). Emanating from jewel hail, many of these deities belong to familiar classes of spirits such as the divine *gshen*, *lha*, and *klu*.<sup>40</sup> In each frame their mount and the ritual instruments they brandish are cited in the text and depicted in the accompanying paintings. Through their great magical power (*mthu-che*) and mighty skill (*rtsal-drag*), the presiding deities conquer all the demons of death. They also function to protect the 'little god females' (*lhe'u-smān*), the deceased and her surviving female kith and kin.

3. The third frame in each series presents a divine triad; those that help execute the *ste'u* ritual (Nga-3v, Cha-3v, Ja-3v, Nya-3v, Ta-3v, Tha-3v, Pa-3v). The gods represented include the *yul-sa*, *lha*, *klu*, *smān*, *phyā* (*phywa*), and those of the seasons, rocks, earth, and plants. The inclusion

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three basic types of receptacles or supports: those for the mind, soul and body of the deceased. Of special interest is the soul receptacle (*bla yi rten*), a piece of bamboo or rhododendron, because the *ste'u* of the illuminated funerary manuscript have arboreal qualities as well. For the *rtēn* in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see *ibid.*, pp. 412, 413, 422–429.

<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the *mdos* constructions (ritual supports for the enticement and coercion of deities) are often seen as models of the world mountain or universe. The world mountain Ri-rab lhun-po has eschatological significance as a heavenly realm and corresponds to the archaic ancestral paradise known as *dga'-yul* (*ibid.*, 478, 479). In the *Bla 'bod 'bring po* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the juniper, an important funerary ritual object, is imagined as the world tree: its roots penetrate the depths of the ocean, its branches reach all four worlds, and around its crown revolve the sun, moon and stars (*ibid.*, 421).

<sup>40</sup> Although these types of elemental spirits do not play such a prominent role in Eternal Bon funerary traditions, their cooperation is still seen as crucial in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. For example, in *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng ba'i las gzhung nyin bon* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-bten*, vol. 6, Nos. 251–295, anonymous), Nos. 255, ln. 4 to 256, ln. 2, it reads: "In the very middle of this night of existence, mighty *lha* and *srin*, please give us your attention. Today, *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* direct your attention to us, the party of *gshen*, who make the funerary performance of the slaughter of the *sri* and *gshed* of death. Today, *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* do not be ambivalent towards us, the party of *gshen*, who make the funerary performance of the slaughter of the *sri* and *gshed* of death. We appease you with various gifts (*yon*) and compliments (*pad*). We offer you golden libations (*gser-skyems*) and turquoise libations (*g.yu-mngon*) and give you *shel-tshig* (parched barleycorn in special shapes) and silvery bird feathers. Do not be ambivalent / waver. Do not be petrified. Be our ally. Be the defender-protector of these benefactors (*yon-bdag*)"\* (*do nub srid pa'i dgung gang 'di / lha srin gnyen (= gnyan) po dgongs su gsol / de ring bdag cag gshen sde yi / sri bsrid (= bsad) shi gshed 'dur byed na / sa bdag klu gnyan dgongs su gsol / di* (more commonly = *'di*) *ring bdag cag gshen sde yi / sri bsad shi gshed 'dur byed na / sa bdag klu gnyan ma mthur cig / yon dang pad kyi so sor bcas / gser skyems g.yu mngon mchod pa dang / shel tshig bya spu dngul mdog 'bul / ma 'thur ma sngangs / sdong grogs mdzod / yon bdag 'di yi mgon skyabs mdzod //*).

\* Those associated with the dead: his or her family and friends.

of the word *bu* (son) in the appellations of many of these male figures indicates that they are the scions of various classes of deities. The use of this term points to a role subsidiary to that of the presiding deities of the *ste'u* ritual in the second frame of each series. Their filial status may also allude to a generic identity as ancestral protectors of the dead, in that they are children of primary gods as are the humans they serve. In the third frame of the various series we are introduced to the funerary tent (*gur*, *sbra'u*), and the canopy (*khabs*) and carpet (*gdan*) that exist in conjunction with it. Some of these canopies and carpets are metaphorical in nature and have to do with atmospherical phenomena. These ritual objects have a prophylactic function, sequestering the deceased and funeral venue from disrupting demons. These types of ritual tools are described in other archaic funerary rituals as well.<sup>41</sup> In the accompanying illustrations the divine trio of the

<sup>41</sup> The use of tents in archaic funerary rituals appears to have been widespread. In the manuscript Pt 1134 (ln. 56), 'a tent of the mind that is white' (*thugs sbra ni dkar-po*) is erected and a 'wild yak' (*khod-mo*) mattress (presumably made of wild yak hide) laid down (Bellezza 2008: 409 [n. 171]), a ritual procedure closely matching what we find in the *ste'u* ritual of the illuminated funerary manuscript. In Pt 1042 (lns. 15, 31, 42, 51, 61, 125, 134, 136), a text that enumerates the many ritual procedures required before burial can take place, a 'tent of the mind' (*thugs-gur / thugs kyi gur*) was erected on or near the tomb (*bang-so*), a type of tent also recorded in Pt 1134 (cf. *ibid.*, 409 (n. 171), 513).<sup>\*</sup> This tent of the early historic period was apparently raised as a ritual measure to protect the consciousness principle of the deceased from skyborne demons and other airborne interferences during its consignment to the afterlife. This is the function of the tent in our manuscript and in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur as well. Pt 239 also notes a mortuary tent made of yak hair called the *ring-gur* (*ibid.*, 500; Stein 1970: 160, 171, 178 [n. 22]). The *ring-gur* (tent of the corpse) is noted in conjunction with the *thugs-gur* in Pt 1042 (lns. 40, 42, 51, 61, 125). The first study of the funerary ritual tent was made by Marcelle Lalou (1953) in her pioneering translation of Pt 1042 (also see Stein 1970, p. 178 (n. 22); Haarh 1969, pp. 368–370, 373–375). In her work, Lalou referred to the *thugs-gur* as 'dais de l'ame' and the *ring-gur* as 'dais du mort', understanding them as part of an ensemble of ritual instruments. These instruments included the funerary ritual transport horse and yak (*do-ma*), those special animals believed to carry the soul of the deceased over the river of the dead to the afterlife. Other instruments used in concert with the tents are the *zo-rig* (sickle, an apotropaic implement), *nam-kā / nam-kha* (thread-cross as a ritual support for the soul), *smra-zhal* (a speaking (?) mind and/or soul effigy), *zhal* (mind and/or soul effigy), and *sku-rten* (body support). The *zhal* and *sku-rten* must have carried various kinds of emblems, likenesses or possessions of the dead. That the *smra-zhal* may denote an effigy with the power of speech is suggested by later folklore concerning tales of the deceased speaking during their funerals. Related to this belief is an important theme of the archaic tradition, in which the departed and his or her kith and kin are united one last time at the funerary venue. In lns. 122–126 of Pt 1042, there is a list of ritual weapons that function to protect the effigies. These permitted the mind of the deceased to be led safely by the *mnabs-sgye* (a kind of woolen clothing that belonged to the deceased),<sup>†</sup> and subsequent deposition of the *smra-zhal* and *zhal* in the *thugs-gur* and presumably the *sku-rten* in the *rings-gur*, as part of final ritual preparations for burial. Cf. Bellezza 2008, p. 412 (n. 180). In a text providing a comprehensive summary of the philosophical and ritual elements of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the tent, corresponding with that in our manuscript, is called the 'soul tent' (*bla-gur*). It is said to facilitate the transformation of the deceased into an ancestral spirit (*mtshun*) by suppressing the thirty-three classes of ambivalent spirits known as *g.yen*. See *ibid.*, 400, 409. Tents (*gur*, *sbra*, *sbrél*) are also referred to in Eternal Bon literature, in conjunction with the ritual horse that carries the deceased to the afterlife (*ibid.*, 458). In *Tshe 'das rigs drug gi gnas nas drangs thabs*, a text attributed to the primordial *gshen* 'Chi-med gtsug-phud, the parasol (*gdug-khabs*) and canopy (*bla-bre*) are erected above the soul receptacles (*ibid.*, 412, 413). The *Rgyal po bka' thang* mentions both of these ritual objects in the context of funerary rites carried out for King Srong-btsan sgam-po (died 650 CE; *ibid.*, 293, 294; Haarh 1969: 35). The *Bla rdo bal lam rten dang sprad pa bla rdo dkar po'o* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur appears to document an ancient custom in which soul stones of the living in the form of turquoise or gold nuggets were wrapped in wool and suspended from parasols (Bellezza 2008: 415, 417). A funerary carpet is noted in Pt 1136 (ln. 19) as part of an explication of funerary rites (*shid*) and burial procedures ('*brang*): "As the carpet, they laid down the northern carpet wild yak (*khod-mo*) carpet (*gdan byang gdan khod mo ni gdan du bting /* *ibid.*, 520, 521). In *Mi rabs mched gsum khro bo'i gshed 'dul*, the funerary priests ('*dur-gshen / 'dur-bon*) enumerate various ritual procedures which includes the use of a carpet: "For the suppression of tangible existence (*snang-srid*) by our magnificence, we need a carpet of precious threads underneath us" (*snang srid zil gyis gnon pa'i phyir / 'og na na nam gdan cig dgos /* *ibid.*, 475).

<sup>\*</sup> The defining of *thugs* as 'mind' is a translation convention. While this term has to do with the psychological dimension of an individual as opposed to the *ring* or physical dimension, early historic-period ontologic conceptions attached to this term in the non-Buddhist context are not well understood.

*ste'u* ritual motions towards a slender tree. The function of this tree is never explicitly given in the manuscript, but the use of trees as apotropaic and receptible instruments is recorded in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.<sup>42</sup>

4. The fourth or final frame in each series of the *ste'u* ritual describes the funerary ritual tents and those who first used them (Nga-4v, Ca-4v, Cha-4v, Ja-4v, Pa-4v). These tents are depicted in the accompanying illustrations as quite elaborate structures, which include an intricate supporting latticework. The funerary tents are made from various precious substances, as befits an object of eschatological significance. Perhaps in ancient times the supporting structures were fabricated from bamboo or cane and colorfully painted to simulate various precious substances. The funerary tents may not have been particularly large, as most of them may only have accommodated the consciousness principle of the deceased and the ritual supports to which it was affixed.<sup>43</sup>

In each frame a divine couple is said to have benefited from the erection of the tent. Not only do these pairs of male and females of the *yul-sa*, *lha*, *sman*, and *rgya* orders of deities support the correct execution of the concurrent funeral, they appear to represent ancestral divinities, the antetypes upon which the original lineages of Tibetans are based. This is indicated by their evocation at the beginning of each frame as part of a highly condensed etiologic myth. The proclamation of ritual origins (*smrang*) formed a cornerstone of Tibetan archaic ritual traditions and is still present in Eternal Bon ritual performances even if its significance has diminished over time.<sup>44</sup> *Smrang* legitimize the practice of rituals by affirming their historical authenticity and by professing their time-tested efficacy. In that way, they provide the foundation for the recitative and performative aspects of religious endeavors.

According to the pertinent frames of the manuscript, the correct deployment of the funerary ritual tent 'cuts the chain of death' (*shi-bgab*), something that is 'good for the living' (*gson la bzang*).

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† Also, see *sgye-ma* (a coarse woolen cloth) in ITJ 731r (*ibid.*, 514). Haarh (1969: 370, 374) misapprehends *mnabs-sgye* as meaning 'vessels'.

In the chapter *Bal la dril ba rten dang sprad pa* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Bla rdo bal lam rten dang sprad pa bla rdo dkar po'o* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 170–172, anonymous), No. 170, ln. 1, there is a description of the *thang-gos* (funerary clothing), which belonged to the deceased. This is considered a highly potent ritual attraction because the deceased can still recognize his or her scent. The text notes that as a baby, an individual's scent merges with his mother's in his clothes. Interestingly, the Lhopos of Sikkim made a life-sized effigy of the deceased, called *byang-bu*, with his or her clothes, which is thought to have sometimes talked or cried out. This practice was outlawed by the 16<sup>th</sup> Karma-pa on the grounds that it belonged to *bon*. See *op. cit.* Balikci 2008, pp. 279, 280.

<sup>42</sup> In the *bla-rdo srid-rabs* text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the juniper tree, stone and vulture are presented as the three archetypal soul receptacles (Bellezza 2008: 414, 416). In another text of the collection, the juniper is an apotrope coined the 'head juniper' (*dbu-shug*), which was erected to protect the soul of the deceased and to rid him or her of distress (*ibid.*, 398, 399, 408). In a soul invocation text of the same collection, the head-juniper, *nam-mkha'* and wing, are the supports of the deceased's body, speech and mind respectively (*ibid.*, 418, 419, 421). In a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text explicating the function of the seven 'soul circles' (*bla-'khor*), the juniper is said to fulfill all the desires of the deceased and to be his or her divine refuge (*ibid.*, 425, 428).

<sup>43</sup> Kvaerne (1985: 17) opines that the *ring-gur* and *ring-khang* may have been used to house an image or model of the dead. Nevertheless, according to the Old Tibetan Annals entry of 705 / 706 CE, the corpse of Btsan-po (Emperor) Khri 'dus-srong, was placed inside a *ring-khang* at a location called Mer-ke (Haarh 1969: 358, 388; Dotson 2009: 102, 103). Also, in the Old Tibetan Annals entry of 650 / 651 CE, King Srong-rtzan was deposited inside a *ring-khang* (Dotson 2009: 83 [n. 131]). Each king appears to have had his own *ring-khang* in 'Phyong-rgyas (Haarh 1969: 360).

<sup>44</sup> For discussions on the significance of the *smrang* in archaic and Eternal Bon literature, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 34, 68; 2008, pp. 342, 343, 373; 2005, p. 350 (n. 32); Stein 1970, pp. 170, 179 (n. 23); Stein 1971, p. 536; Karmay 1998, pp. 160; Karmay 2010, pp. 55, 56; Norbu 1995, pp. 241, 242, 273; Snellgrove 1967, pp. 20, 256 (n. 9).

This benefiting of the relatives and friends of the dead left behind in the world of the living is a fundamental aim of Tibetan funerary culture.<sup>45</sup> In the last line of three frames (Nga-4v, Ca-4v, Cha-4v), the tent is ‘offered as the salutary model’ (*dpe-bzangs* (C.T. = *dpe-bzang*) *don du ’bul*), a telling statement of intent. In general terms, *dpe* are educative tools or models of normative activity in all types of social settings, be they formal or informal. Nevertheless, in this context *dpe* harks back to the ancestral precedents of the ritual tent and the manner in which it is to be made and used as per the established tradition.<sup>46</sup>

Twenty-four frames (recto and verso) of the illuminated funerary manuscript carry a small perforation in the middle ringed by a uniform-sized circle stamped in red ink. All second and third frames of the extant document were manipulated in this manner. These small holes, as a means of binding the manuscript, were used to maintain the correct sequence of frames. The fragmentation of the extant document, however, precludes a definitive assessment of this system of organization. The holes and red circles marking frames indicate that these sheets of paper were fixed to a vertical metal pin. This custom of pinning folios as a method of organizing them is also found in some older Lamaist texts. The apparatus employed consisted of an iron pin set into a wooden base known as *po-ti lcags lung-ma*. When very long folios were selected for treatment in this way two iron pins were used.

A few comments on the historical origins and development of the motifs and concepts presented in the illuminated funerary manuscript are in order. Most noteworthy is the elementary nature of the textual provision. The work is not overlaid by complicated doctrinal material or complex ritual procedures. The innate simplicity of the wording is mirrored in the iconography and identity of the deities. They are spirits incumbent in the Tibetan environment and have both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms. This rudimentary quality of the manuscript may possibly signal that it was composed for the funerals of those of more humble socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>47</sup> Yet, it must be pointed out that funerals of women who died of natural causes were generally simpler than rites conducted for individuals who perished through violent means.

Two possible historical hypotheses regarding the contents of the manuscript are indicated: 1) it represents the survival of an earlier Bodic funerary tradition, or 2) it constitutes a folk tradition that coexisted with Lamaist religious culture of the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between these two historical scenarios, the contemporary of that time informing the more ancient. However the funerary rite of the manuscript may have evolved, I am persuaded to view it as a genuine relic that predates the conversion of Tibet to Lamaism. For one thing, the pantheon and ritual instruments recall those found in Old Tibetan funerary documents. Moreover, the predominance of animal psychopomps has a primitive ring about it. Yet, no matter how far back in time the origins of specific elements in the illuminated manuscript can be traced, the

<sup>45</sup> On the benefits of funeral rites to the living and the dead, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 361–366.

<sup>46</sup> The transmission of paradigmatic knowledge (*dpe-lung*) from teacher to disciple is the backbone of Tibetan funerary traditions, especially in their archaic configuration. Witness the tale of the prehistoric funerary priest ‘Dur-gshen rma-da transmitting this knowledge to a group of ‘dur-gshen (*ibid.*, 386). In what appears to be a remnant of an older cultural tradition, the guardian and purveyor of the funerary *dpe* is a *sri*, a primitive type of female spirit (*ibid.*, 414–416).

<sup>47</sup> The socioeconomic structure of ancient Tibet in the funerary context is touched upon in an untitled text of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, which details the extraordinary qualities and uses of the hand-tool bird wing (*phyag-mtshan gshog-pa*). This text enumerates twelve occupational and social rungs, from priests (*gshen*) and highly respected elders (*bkra-rgan*) down to the impoverished or base (*ngan*). The wings of different species of birds were used in the funerals of each category of people. For more information, see *ibid.*, 429–432.

fact remains that it was written in the language of its time. This linguistic imprint of the age may have had a bearing on the work's content, resulting in it not being as 'archaic' as it seems.

Not only do questions surrounding the historical orientation of the manuscript remain open, so too do those regarding provenance. While gods of the imperial era pantheon (e.g., 'Od-de gung-rgyal and Lha-sras lha-bo che) figure in the manuscript, that does not necessarily prove this funerary rite enjoyed widespread geographic usage. Its purview may have been restricted to a certain region. Nevertheless, the inclusion of gods important to the Spu-rgyal dynastic lineage and wild ungulates distributed widely over the Tibetan Plateau suggest that this was not a particularly provincial document.

### System of Notation and Translator's Note

The Classical Tibetan (C.T.) equivalents of idiosyncratic and Old Tibetan (O.T.) grammatical and orthographic forms are provided in the transliterations of the illuminated manuscript and other texts of this study. Special notations used in this book are as follows:

Classical Tibetan lexical equivalent: (C.T. =)

*Gcig-shad*: /

*Gnyis-shad*: //

*Tshig-shad*: // \*\*\* //

*Sbrul-shad*: // °°° //

Reconstructed words and uncertain readings bracketed by: {}

One syllable missing from text: {#}

Two syllables missing from text: {##}

Three syllables up to an entire grammatical line missing from text: {###}

Amendment to text: (+)

Deletion to text: (-)

Spelling or grammatical correction: (=)

Concerning Old Tibetan documents, no attempt has been made to differentiate an *i* vowel sign that is neither regular nor inverted but which has been inscribed in an intermediate position. The direction of the *i* vowel sign is often highly arbitrary, with the same words being spelled both ways in the texts of this study. Also, letters and syllables that have been crossed out in manuscripts are not designated in the transliterations provided.

To give the translation of the illuminated funerary manuscript a more vibrant sense, I have elected to employ second person pronouns in many instances. This is more in keeping with the tone of the text than third person pronouns, for much of it deals with transactions between the deities and ritualists. This connection is predicated on two types of activities: the giving of gifts (*'bul-ba*) and the making of appeals (*gsol-ba*). The deities of the manuscript were not abstract entities to the funerary ritualists but rather a tangible and helping presence (parallels here to the Lamaist ritual tradition need no comment). In certain places, third person pronouns have been selected because these are largely concerned with the origins and qualities of divine figures in a narrative context.

## Division One: The Psychopomp Ritual



Nga-3r

The frame designated Nga-4r is indexed in the illuminated funerary manuscript as part of the fourth series (Nga bzhi-pa). It is situated on the same strip of paper as the Nga-3r frame. The Nga-1r and Nga-2r frames have not survived, nor have any frames belonging to the Ka, Kha or Ga series of the manuscript. What kinds of divine anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures they may have promoted (save that they were closely related to extant examples) is a moot point.

The Nga-3r frame is dedicated to the wild ass (*rkyang*), an equid native to the Tibetan Plateau. In this frame a pair of wild asses, chestnut in color with dark manes, tails and hooves, are illustrated. These two represent the male and female of the species (as indicated in other ternary frames). Unfortunately, the heads of these divine creatures were cut away from the rest of the frame and are no longer extant. The wild ass is said to have appeared from the deer habitat, a recurring reference to the extraordinary homeland and divine lineage of wild ungulates, many of which are actually deer. The wild ass carries the epithet ‘kicker little bird’ (*phra bye’u*), described as having a pace ‘faster than the wind’ (*rdzi bas mgyogs*). Equids are, needless to say, renowned for their swiftness and ability to kick. The soubriquet ‘little bird’ refers to the mythic power of flight, such as that attributed to the *rkyang* and horse in the old funerary rite. The speed and skill of the *rkyang* is summed up in the line: “You go wherever as fast as you think it” (*gar gshags*

*dgongs pas slebs so /*). We shall encounter this understanding of the equid's speed as something as fast as thought in Pt 1134 as well (see *infra*, pp. 225–234). Possessing the facility to move unimpeded, the equids are the most commonly occurring funerary transport animals in archaic ritual literature. It is known as the *do-ma*.<sup>48</sup>

The wild ass is offered as a mount to the 'noble female' (*sman-btsun*), a reference to the deceased for whom the text is being read. As shall be seen in Part II, this term denotes dead women in a thanatological state one step removed from the afterlife. The final thanatological state is the divine form itself: *sman* for women and *lha* for men. In the last line of the frame, the deceased is asked to pay close attention to the recital being made on her behalf:<sup>49</sup>

The kicker little bird wild ass appeared from the jewel cervid habitat. Your running pace (*bang-rlabs*) is faster than the wind. You go wherever as fast as you think it. We offer this white mouth wild ass son as the mount of the respected female. And concentrate your mind<sup>50</sup> on this [invocation].

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *yi sha slungs nes* (C.T. = *nas*) / 'phra bye' (= *bye'u*) *rkyang bu byung / bang rlabs rdzi bes* (C.T. = *bas*) *mg-yogs / gar gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *rgongs* (C.T. = *dgongs*) *pas slebs so / rkyang bu kha ar* (C.T. = *gar*) 'di' (C.T. = 'di + /) *sman btsun bcibs* (C.T. = *chibs*) *par 'bul / dang thugs 'di la rgongs* (C.T. = *dgongs*) //

<sup>48</sup> The origins and ritual functions of the *do-ma* are spelled out in texts such as Pt 1060, Pt 1134, Pt 1136 and ITJ 731r, which are variously studied in Thomas 1957, ch. 1A, pp. 9–16, 20–28; Stein 1970, pp. 164, 165, 184 (n. 47); Stein 1971, pp. 485–502; Macdonald 1971, pp. 373–375; Haarh 1969, pp. 266, 267; Bellezza 2008, pp. 517–538; *infra*, pp. 221–243. For an account of the *do-ma* in a remarkable Eternal Bon text entitled *Rta gtad* (*Horse Offering*), see Bellezza 2008, pp. 452–459. In this text the *do-ma* is attributed with the power of flight (as we shall see, this is also conveyed in the Dunhuang literature). Not surprisingly, in a Naxi manuscript furnishing the origins of the funerary transport horse, its parents are *khyung*-like birds (Rock 1955: 148–150). An illuminated Naxi funerary manuscript depicts, among other things, a *dto-mba* priest holding a flat-bell and a spear with a flag leading the horse of Gshen-rab and the winged sheep of the gods (*ibid.*, pl. vi). Also see Naxi depiction in Brauen 2011, pp. 38, 39. I am of the opinion that the term *do-ma* is etymologically related to another Old Tibetan word, *do* (island, headland), and to *ma* (mother or a feminizing agent). The *do-ma* (probably meaning literally something to the effect of 'island mother') is the refuge or vessel in the postmortem sea.

<sup>49</sup> Commanding the attention of the deceased is of vital importance in soul evocation (*bla-'bod*) ritual literature. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 417–422.

<sup>50</sup> *Thugs*. When cited alone in archaic funerary rituals, this term denotes the essential persona, mind or consciousness principle, that part of the deceased that exists in the postmortem realm before moving on to the afterlife.



Nga-4r

The enumeration of this frame as part of the fourth series of the manuscript is explicitly recorded below the final line of the text. As with first frames, the final frames of each series in Division One of the illuminated manuscript are dedicated to deities that aid the dead. More specifically, these fourth-frame figures are divine protectors of the wild ungulate guides, the carriers of the consciousness principle of the dead. In this particular frame three gods are presented by name. They each carry the word ‘agate’ (*mchong*) as an element of their appellations, the plain and patterned stones that have been highly valued in Tibet since antiquity. It is not uncommon for deities of the indigenous pantheon to have agate as part of their name or to have this precious substance as one of their attributes. In the accompanying illustration, these three gods are attired in matching olive-green shirts with tight-fitting red sleeves and collars and olive-green pants with red cuffs or red inner pants. They sport beige sashes and have little hair on their heads. The middle figure sits cross-legged and has both of his arms raised above his head in what may be a beckoning or defending gesture. The companions flanking him stand with their legs deeply flexed and one arm akimbo.

As the text makes clear, this triad of ‘divine ‘men’ (*mi-pho*) are *sgra-bla*, an important class of archaic funerary gods. The three *mchong* figures are the ‘protectors of wild ungulates’ (*ri-dwags srung-ma*) of pelagial splendor and the *sgra-bla* of females, particularly the individual for whom the funerary ritual is made. The archaic term for women is used in the text: *lhe’u-sman*.<sup>51</sup> The addition of *lhe’u* (literally: ‘little god’) to *sman* (woman) signifies that they are of the same divine origins or status as males. The trio of agate gods is credited with defeating the *btsan* demons of the north, ‘riders of the wild ass’ (*rkyang-zhon*).<sup>52</sup> As the protector and shepherd of wild ungulates, the agate deities are called upon to prevent their dispersal. As with the flocks of birds in second frames, any such dispersion would signal misfortune for the departed one:

From the boulder of agate appeared the deer castle three men, the three men Mchong-la ‘od-smug (Agate Emitting Purplish Light) and Mchong-la ‘od-’bar (Blazing Light Agate) and Sgra-bla mchong (Agate Warrior Spirit). You are the protectors of wild ungulates, the *sgra-bla* of females (*lhe’u-sman*). You subdue the *btsan* of the north, the rider of the wild ass. Also, act as the shepherd of the herds of wild ungulates with [fine] fur coats who does not let them disperse.

*mchong yi* (C.T. = *gi*) *pha bong les* (C.T. = *las*) / *sha mkhar myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *gsum bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) / *mchong la ‘od smug dang* / *mchong la ‘od ‘bar dang* / *sgra bla mchong yi myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *po* (C.T. = *pho*) *gsum* / *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ste* / *lhe’u sman sgra bla lags* / *byang btsan rkyang zhon ‘dul* / *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *spu khyu yang* / *myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer ‘tsho’* (C.T. = *‘tsho*) *rdza ‘i* (C.T. = *rdzi*) *mdzod shig* (C.T. = *cig*) // // *nga bzhi pa*

<sup>51</sup> This term (*lhe’u dang sman*) is found in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur text dealing with the ritual uses of bird wings and the twelve categories of humans for which funerals are performed. In this list the *lhe’u dang sman* occupy the tenth position, which is below that of ‘noble female consorts’ (*mo-btsun dbyel-mo*) and ‘noble female *bon* meditators’ (*sgom-btsun bon-mo*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 429–431. This relative placement may possibly indicate that the illuminated funerary manuscript was composed for women of ordinary socioeconomic rank. The simplicity of the ritual dispensation seems to support such an attribution. Nevertheless, it is also possible that our text’s more elementary character is indicative of an older cultural stratum. If so, this more old-fashioned rite may have eventually been relegated to a lower social standing.

<sup>52</sup> There are a number of supernal figures called *byang-btsan*, the most famous of which is Rkyang-khra, a *btsan* rider of the wild ass. For lore about this territorial god of the eastern Byang-thang, see Bellezza 1997, p. 56; 2005, pp. 217–221. In *Rnying ma’i rgyud ‘bum*, *byang-btsan* is a yellow-colored figure who holds an arrow, resides in a golden castle and rides a yellow horse (Blondeau 2008: 228). This type of spirit should not be confused with a notorious ghost of the same name, which was eventually defeated by Eternal Bon adepts.



Ca-1r

The first frame of the Ca or fifth series is dedicated to the divine couple known as Lha-sras lha-bo che and Lha-za gang-cig ma. The last three grammatical lines of the Ca-1r text are detached from the rest of the frame. They are found in the text that appears above the Ca-2r image.

As is well known, the title *lha-sras* (son of the gods) was applied to the Tibetan kings in recognition of their sacral status. The deities of this first frame seem to hover over mountain peaks, illustrating their celestial origins. These mountains are red and white in color, although most of the white pigment has worn away. As with other deities of the illuminated manuscript, there is some question as to the exact style of the clothing worn. Lha-sras lha-bo che wears a mustard-yellow shirt with a red collar, border and sleeves. His shirt appears to be tucked into his blue and brown pants, which are trimmed in red and held up by a thin, light-colored sash. Alternatively, this figure may wear two pairs of pants, the inner set longer and red in color. In each of his hands he holds feather-like objects that are likely to be ‘the weapon of the *dbal*’ referred to in the text. If so, we can expect that they were conceived as being able to cut through iron and possessing other awesome capabilities. In Eternal Bon literature, *dbal* refers to a class of ritual implements that are extremely sharp, fiery or explosive in character. *Dbal* also denotes a set of powerful magical practices, as well as a type of ancient priest (*dbal-bon*).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> For general information on *dbal* (phenomena, deities and personalities), see Norbu 1995, pp. 206–214, 285 (n. 65).

Lha-za gang-cig ma is also rather sternly dressed in what is either an olive-green robe with long sleeves over which is a red apron, or an olive-green blouse and matching red skirt with an olive-green border or underskirt. A yellow-colored medial strip on her lower garment may be an extension of her sash or where the ends of this item of clothing meet.

Known most often as Lha-bo lha-sras / Bla-bo bla-sras, Lha-sras lha-bo che is a celebrated god in Tibetan ritual and cosmogonic traditions. He is especially prominent in archaic and Eternal Bon ritual narratives.<sup>54</sup> In the text accompanying the illustration, the country of Lha-sras lha-bo che and Lha-za gang-cig ma is given as Sa-le-ljon, a paradisiacal realm.<sup>55</sup> According to the illustration of the frame, it appears to have been situated above the mountaintops. Their castle is set on a rock formation (*brag*) known as Smon-lam, a word that in Classical Tibetan has come

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Also see Bellezza 2005, *passim*; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, *passim*. On the O.T. *bal-bon* (*sic*) Rum / Rom-po in Pt 1285, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 259; *infra*, p. 203 (fn. 397).

<sup>54</sup> In *Skabs chog gtad g.yar gyi rgyab yig* of the *Klong rgyas sgrub skor*, Lha-bo lha-sras appears as a god of the *Phya* lineage and ally of the dead (Bellezza 2008: 451). In the Dunhuang manuscript ITJ 734, Bla-bo bla-sras (Soul Person Son of the Soul) acts as a divine funerary officiant who summons the good fortune capability (*g.yang*), using ephedra (*mtshe*; *ibid.*, 436, 437); also see Thomas 1957: ch. iv, pp. 56, 57, 68; on the substance ephedra in ITJ 734, see Stein 1971, pp. 507–509. In an Old Tibetan ransom ritual origins (*byol-rabs*) text, Lha-bo lha-sras travels from what appears to be the other world to assist the priest Gshen-rab myi-bo with conducting the *gto* (a diverse group of beneficial rites) and *dpyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites) for his imperiled client. For the complete account of this tale and more lore about the god Lha-bo lha-sras, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 83–88. In the historical work *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, Lha-bo lha-sras is presented as one of 'Twelve Wise Men' (Shes-pa-can bcu-gnyis) who met King Gnya'-khri btsan-po (Haarh 1969: 105, 175). This treatment of Lha-bo lha-sras as a mortal man who lived when Tibetan civilization was being founded (traditionally attributed to Gnya'-khri btsan-po) accords with his identity as an ancestral deity. The origin of Sgam-btsun lha'o lha-sras (*sic*) is given in a rare manuscript of significant age entitled *Lha bo byung khungs* (anonymous), a transcription of which I obtained in Lhasa. In this text Lha'o lha-sras is one of three gods in a group known as Lha-rabs sgam-gsum (the other two members are Sgam-btsun li-sho thang-po and Srid-pa'i lha-than 'phrul-po che). This divine trinity is presented as allies of the *gri-bon*, *dbal-bon* and *rgod-bon*, three types of funerary priests. The relevant *srid-rabs* reads, "In Lha-yul gung-thang 'od-'byam (Effluent Country of the Gods Vault of the Heavens), 'Od-de gung-rgyal of the *lha* lineage came as the ruler and master of the silver castle with a turquoise peak and golden cornices called Lha-'khar g.yu-rtse (Divine Castle Turquoise Peak). 'Od-de gung-rgyal of the *lha* lineage in his pleasure [produced] three drops of conch (white) water. He put it inside the moon (right) horn of the wild yak ('*khong-mo*'; in other texts spelled *khod-mo* / *kho-mo*; see *infra*, p. 238 [fn. 511]). By [the action of] Chab-ma nyi-lo of the *smān* lineage: three drops of red blood of the body (womb; *sku 'i mtshal khrag*) [were produced]. She put it inside the spiraling sun (left) horn. After three nights and four days, Gshen-rabs mi-'o (*sic*) put the *li-khu* (blood and semen in the Zhang-zhung language, according to Eternal Bon tradition) in a pure (*dang-pa*) *hor-ru* (in this context, a type of sacred vessel) and mixed together the red blood and conch water. He inscribed the holy seal (*bka'-tags*) of miraculous letters upon it and said spells and made miraculous hand signals (*phyag-rgya*) upon it. After nine months and ten days [measured in] the heavens, Srid-pa gnam-phyib gung-rgyal (the goddess Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal) wrapped a blue felt around [the *hor-ru*]. The son of man (*mi'i-bu*) and son of the *lha* (*lha'i-sras*), more intelligent than the *phyā* and more noble than the *smu* (also *dmu* / *rmu*), was [born as] Sgam-btsun lha'o lha-sras" (*lha rabs 'od de gung rgyal de / lha yul gung thang 'od 'byam du / rngul* (C.T. = *ngul*) 'khar (C.T. = *mkhar*) g.yu' (C.T. = *g.yu*) rtse kha bad ser (= *gser*) / ming yang lha 'khar (C.T. = *mkhar*) g.yu rtse bya / de 'i mnga' dang bdag du gshegs / lha rabs 'od de gung rgyal gyis dgyes kyi du (= *dung*) chab thigs pa gsum / zla ru 'khong mo 'i nang du gsal / smān rabs chab ma nyi lo 'is / sku 'i mtshal khrag thigs pa gsum / nyi ru 'khyil pa 'i nang du gsal / rgung (C.T. = *dgung*) ma zhag gsum dro bzhi' (= *bzhi*) nas / li khu gshen rabs mi 'o yis / hos ru dang (C.T. = *dwangs*) pa 'i nang shed du / mtshal khrag dung chab gnyis su sras / rdzu 'phrul yig 'bru 'i bka' tags (C.T. = *rtags*) bris / bka' ngag 'phrul gyi phyag rgyas btab / sgung (C.T. = *dgung*) ma zla dgu' (C.T. = *dgu*) ngo bcu' (C.T. = *bcu*), nas / srid pa snam (= *gnam*) phyib gung rgyal gyis / phyang ru sngon po 'i nang du sbas / mi 'i bu la lha 'i sras / phyā bas sgam la smu bas btsun / sgam btsun lha'o lha sras yin /).

<sup>55</sup> Presumably, the country of Sa-le-ljon is characterized by the eponymous magical plant, which fulfills all one's nutritional needs. On this plant, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 218, 416. In a text explaining the origins of King Gnya'-khri btsan-po, *dga' sa-le* is a celestial realm and seat of the cosmogonic god Stag-rje 'al-'ol (Haarh 1969: 213).

to mean ‘prayer’, particularly one that is aspirational in nature, but this term appears to have had a wider semantic purview in ancient times. In an iteration of the ancient and pervasive mythic theme of generative forces and other types of important activities taking place between the two halves of the dichotomous universe, the divine couple is cited as situated between the lake (of the lower realm: *yog* / *’og*) and the rock formation (of the upper realm: *steng*). Lha-sras lha-bo che is referred to as ‘general’ (*dmag-dpon*) and the ‘lord’ (*rje*) of the *sgra-bla*, that class of warrior spirits still prevalent in contemporary Tibet.<sup>56</sup> The god’s partner is described as a *smān*, the female counterpart of the *lha* in the sacred geographic traditions of Tibet to this day. These divinities oversee the ‘castle of the little gods’ (*lhe’u-mkhar*), the ‘fortress of females’ (*smān-dzong*) and the ‘fortress of the warrior spirits’ (*sgra-bla’i rdzong*), an allusion to the ultimate destination of the dead or something closely akin to the afterlife in which the dead exist amid their ancestral deities.

With his ‘weapon of the *dbal*’ (*dbal-mtshon*) and the assistance of his consort, Lha-sras lha-bo che defeats two types of evil spirits, the *btsan* and *gzed*,<sup>57</sup> as well as the demonic cause of lethal epidemics (*g.yam-dri* / *g.yam-gri*). Now that the magnificent qualities of the divine couple have been spelled out, they are called upon by the ritualists to make a conferment. In some frames of the text the line requesting the assistance of the deities reads: “we call [to be blessed with] male children” (*ne’u zhon pho smos la*), but the appeal for progeny in this particular frame is worded somewhat differently. The concerned line is partially obliterated, as it coincides with the ill-conceived cutting of the text into two parts. Only a portion of a single letter (*ma*?) of two syllables has survived and it is not part of the word for ‘youth’ (*ne’u-zhon*, C.T. = *na-gzhon*). Such requests or demands for assistance are always accompanied by the making of offerings to the divine object of propitiation. This offerings regimen is epitomized in our funerary text by the giving of a ‘castle of the *sgra-bla*’, an epithet here for an ensemble of ritual objects that may have included sacred edible sculptures (*gtor-ma*), thread-crosses (*nam-mkha*’), replicas of castles (*mkhar-thabs*), ransom ritual figurines (*lingga*), and placatory models of the cosmos (*mdos*), which acted as the residence and possessions of the divine couple at the ritual venue:

In the country of Sa-le-ljon above is the castle of the rock formation Smon-lam  
and the conch-white swirling lake. In between the lake and the rock formation is

<sup>56</sup> In the text *Bla ’bod ’bring po*, the deceased is asked to come to the helmet with the bird feather plume (*rmog-mo bya-phod*), a ritual support or receptacle, where he will behold the *sgra-bla* and *pha-lha* (father god), deities which aid in his or her salvation (Bellezza 2008: 418, 421). In another funerary text of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, it is the *sgra-bla* who slay the demonic *bdud* yak, its hide being used to produce a sack that ritually neutralizes the demons of violent death (*ibid.*, 438). *Dbu rgyan bya ru’i lo rgyus smrang gyer* of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur records the *sgra-bla* of the sky led by the horned lion (*hor-mu*, a Zhang-zhung word) and the *sgra-bla* of the earth led by the dragon, as types of funerary deities that subdue the *klu*, *’dre*, *srin*, and *bdud*, elemental spirits believed to interfere with the passage of the deceased to the afterlife (*ibid.*, 443, 446). In *Gri gzas gshed la dbab pa*, another text of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur collection, there is a *smrang* affirming that the ancient *gri-bon* (priest specializing in funerals of those who died violently), Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal, by making various offerings, erecting the *mdung-dar* (spear with ensign) of the *sgra-bla* and playing the drum and flat bell (*gshang*) for them, was highly effective in the ritual defeat of the demons of violent death (*gri*; *ibid.*, 468). For mention of the *dgra-bla* (*sic*) in an Old Tibetan document (Pt 1043), see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 267.

<sup>57</sup> For the ritual subjugation of the *gzed*, tormentor demons of the dead, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 436, 438. On the *gzed* demons in the *Klu ’bum* and Pt 1060, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 269. In the text *Gnyan gyi ’bum*, the *gzed*, along with the *lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*, *smān*, *srin*, and *btsan*, is a class of primal deities (Karmay 2010: 60, 61). The *gzed* are also noted in the divination texts Pt 1051 and Pt 1052.

Lha-sras lha-bo che [and] Lha-za gang-cig ma when she went to benefit.<sup>58</sup> The castle of the *lhe'u* and fortress of the *sman* is that of the general, lord of the *sgra-bla*, the fortress of the *sman*, the fortress of the *sgra-bla*. In your hand you {hold the weapon} of the *dbal*. You subdue the *gzed*, *btsan* and epidemics of violent death. Also, we call upon you [to be blessed with] males {###}. We bestow this fortress of the *sgra-bla* [upon you].

*yul sa le ljon stingsu* (C.T. = *steng su*) / *smon lam brag kyi mkhar* / *dung mtsho dkar mo 'khyil* / *mtsho dang brag bar du* / *lha sras lha bo che* / *lha za gang cig ma sman du gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *pa'i tshe'* (= *tshe*) / *lhe'u mkhar sman rdzong ni* / *dmag dpo{n}* *sgra bla'i rje* / *sman rdzong sgra bla'i rdzong* / *phyag na dbal {mtshon bsnams /}*<sup>59</sup> *gzed btsan g.yam dri 'dul* / {###} *pho smos kyang* (+ /) *sgra bla'i rdzong dang sprad* /

<sup>58</sup> *Sman du gshags pa'i tshe*. The word *gshags* is either a variant spelling or an O.T. inflected form of the C.T. verb *gshegs* (to depart). For a discussion of this term in the *byol-rabs* text discovered in the Gathang Bumpa, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 49 (n. 51). As we shall see, other occurrences of *gshags* are found in the Gathang Bumpa funerary manuscripts. The pronunciation of this word in Hor-skad and certain dialects of Khams conforms to the spelling found in these funerary texts.

<sup>59</sup> The first of these two illegible words (*mtshon*) is the last word in the text on the piece of paper with the Ca-1r illustration. The second word (*bsnams*) has been added conjecturally to the text above the Ca-2r illustration.



Ca-2r

The second frame of the fifth series of the funerary manuscript is dedicated to a flock of five divine protective birds whose leader is a raptor. This raptor (perhaps a falcon?), like his avian companions, is depicted in the painting with multicolored plumage. Three of the four smaller birds are cited by name in the text, but no reference is made to the fourth one. They are born from eggs of *bse*, a lustrous whitish metal that may denote a type of copper or copper alloy. Although this particular example is highly abbreviated, the proclamation of origins (*smrang*) was the cornerstone of Tibetan archaic ritual performances, legitimizing and empowering the actual performance. The three smaller birds are described as occupying a rock formation. One appears to have a feathered crest (*'go-cog*) and one is called *gtsos-to*, a word that may be a descriptive term rather than denoting a specific species. The smaller birds are described as leading the way along the rock formation, an allusion to a fundamental archaic Tibetan funerary theme; that of the newly deceased encountering geographic obstacles en route to the hereafter.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> In the archaic funerary traditions birds fulfill a variety of ritual functions, not least of all as the destroyers of the demons of death. The text *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen 'phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur rin chen mo las / me 'gal sri*

In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, these barriers to salvation are thought to occur in what is known as the *bar-sa* ('middle ground' or 'intermediate land').



Fig. 3. A red ochre pictograph depicting what appears to be a divine raptor leading a supine human figure, *Bkra-shis do-chung*, Gnam-mtsho. Probably protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE). This apparent guiding of the dead by an ornithic spirit suggests that the related theme in the illuminated manuscript had long historical and cultural precedents

The text now moves to the chief of the flock with his powerful wings (*gshog-drag*), the guardian raptor. Called 'little bird' (*bye'u*), this is a term of endearment rather than a reference to physical size, and it is applied to the rest of his flock and other groups of birds in the manuscript as well. The raptor, a 'bird of the wind' (*rlung-bya*) has 'wings that cover space' (*gshog-pas bar-s nang khebs*). These descriptive phrases indicate that this bird occupies a position of command in the ethereal realm, making it an ideal protector and guide of the dead in their bid to reach the afterlife. In the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, this next world was conceived of as being situated in the heavens, explaining the key function of birds in the text.<sup>61</sup>

*bsad kyi smrang ngo* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 529–531, anonymous) furnishes an origin tale about the bringers of fire for burning the nests of the *sri* (class of homicidal spirits). It is centered on two birds, a small sparrow-like species (*bye-ma len-rtse*) and a 'red-breasted cock' (*bya-pho mtshal-bu*). The little bird could not bring the fire, so the rooster volunteered, saying that he was able to do the task.

<sup>61</sup> A celestial afterlife is of course an important theme in religious and mythological traditions worldwide, Himalayan and Inner Asian cultures being no different. In Tibetan literature, it is well represented in various texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and is most commonly referred to as *dga'-yul* (joyous land), but also as the *gtsang-sa* (pure land), *bde-ba'i sa* (blissful land) and *mtho-ris* (heaven). Stein (1971: 497 (n. 51); 2010, *Antiqua* V: 263), using Dunhuang manuscripts, understood *dga'-yul* / *dga'-ri* / *skyid-yul* as euphemisms for the afterlife, as did Macdonald (1971: 365, 366); both scholars making huge strides in our understanding of ancient funerary traditions. In a summary of the philosophical and procedural elements of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur entitled *Spyi skos gsum gyi thang khrims bshad pa*, it states that it is through the guidance provided by the executors of the funeral that the deceased reaches the *dga'-yul*. This is specifically accomplished by the separation of the essential self of the deceased from his or her soul-circles or receptacles, as described in the *bla'-khor* ritual text. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 393, 406, 423–429. For the transfer of the deceased's soul and mind to the *dga'-yul* using ritual transport horses (*do-ma*) in an Eternal Bon funerary text, see *ibid.*, pp. 452–458. A similar function is also carried out by the funerary sheep mount and guide (*chibs-lug*) in the same literature (see *ibid.*, 461–463). Of special interest are origins tales concerning the passage to the afterlife in Pt 1134 studied by Stein (1971: 495–499). For a description of the *dga'-yul* paradise taken from the cosmological text *Mdzod phug*, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 478, 479; and from the Dunhuang manuscripts more generally, see Stein 1971, pp. 497–499, 512; Stein 2010 (*Antiqua* V), pp. 263, 264. A closely related boreal realm, *Dga'-yul byang-rnam* of Pt 1136, is noted in Bellezza 2008, pp. 518, 520; Stein 1971, p. 497 (n. 52); also see *infra*, p. 216. In otherwise highly competent work, Tibetologists have sometimes confused the *dga'-yul* with the *gshin-yul* (land of the dead), a conception that has impeded an accurate assessment of archaic funerary traditions. For this perception of *gshin-yul* as paradise, see, for

The *bse*’egg hatched on the rock formation [and from it appeared] the crested little bird of the rock formation, the little bird of the rock formation with the handsome feathers and the little bird of the rock formation *gtsos-to*, who lead the way along the rock formation. They are the equipage of wealth of the females. [Big raptor] you are the little bird protector-defender, the wind bird with the strong wings; the wings that cover space. [Big raptor and flock,] be the guardian protector little birds of the little bird habitat [unit] that does not disperse in the wind.

*bse*’ (C.T. = *bse*) *sgong brag la rdol / brag bye’u ’go cog* (C.T. = *lcog*) *dang / brag bye’u spu sdug dang / brag bye’u gtsos to res (+ /)* *gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *shul brag la ’dren / long* (C.T. = *longs*) *spyod sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dkor // bye’u mgon srungs ma de / rlung bya gshog drag des / gshog pas bar snang khebs / bye’u slungs rlung la myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer ba’i / bye’u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma mdzod //*

A tiny remnant of the third frame of the fifth textual series is on the same strip of paper as the Ca-2r frame. It features a cervid, a set of antlers being visible.

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example, Stein 1971, p. 497; Stein 2010 (*Antiqua I*), p. 59; Macdonald 1971, pp. 366, 373–375; Imaeda 2007, pp. 106, 131; Imaeda 2010, p. 153. Haarh (1969: 367), adhering to the same conception, perceived the *gshin-po* as the ultimate form of the king in the confines of the tomb. Rather, my study of Tibetan funerary traditions indicates that *gshin* denotes the dead in the after-death state, a provisional form of being that must be overcome if he or she is to attain salvation. In contemporary Tibet, the *gshin* spirits and country still retain negative associations. In Tibetan sources, the *gshin-yul*, home of the *gshin* demons, is perceived of as a transitional zone, a place the dead must pass through on their journey to the afterlife. Effecting this passage is one of the major aims of the archaic funerary rituals, as revealed in ITJ 733 (Ins. 36, 37): “During the era evil, may our sons and grandsons obtain wisdom. Also, at death may they not go on the wrong road in the *gshin-yul*. May they go to the felicitous land (*skyid-yul*)” (*dus ngan pa’i nang na / bdagi bu tsha ’dzangs* (C.T. = *mdzangs*) *shing rags* (C.T. = *rag*) *par ’ong* (C.T. = *yong*) / *shi na yang gshin yul na lam log par myi ’gro*’ (C.T. = *’gro*) / *skyid yul du ’gro*’ (C.T. = *’gro*) /). These lines are part of an aspirational prayer in which salvation forms the central theme (Ins. 32–36). These lines relate that below the sky, [and above] the earth, in order to bring about the benefits of existence for the ‘bipedal man’ (*’greng-myi*) or humans, gifts and prostrations are offered. It is prayed that, “the bad times are quickly finished and the good divine times appear quickly” (*dus ngan pa ni myur du zad par smon to*’ (C.T. = *to*) / *lha’i dus bzang po la myur du bab...*). Furthermore, it is directed that for the refurbishment of the good times to arise quickly for those who died in the past, gifts and prostrations are to be offered to an unnamed *lha*. Also, for the paternal ancestors (*pha-myes*), the words of the text are to be spoken and *gtor-ma* (?) offered. Thus, the benefits for those concerned with the reading of this ritual narrative is that while alive they will not have to fear (*’ji*’ = *’jigs*) premature death. This is followed by the aspiration concerning their sons and grandsons quoted above. Pt 1134 relates how an individual named Gdangs dre’u-rje btshan-ba after an accidental death could not pass through the *gshin-yul* and other *gshin* topographical features, leading to the failure of his funeral. It reads (Ins. 35, 37, 38): “[The deceased] could not cross the three heights of the pass of the dead. He could not traverse the precious (*mar-ba*) [sheep] *gshin-yul*... [The deceased] could not cross the ford, the ford of the dead (*gshin-rab*); and also he could not traverse the wide pass of the dead (*gshin-la*)” (*gshin la gong gsum/ma rgald* (C.T. = *rgal*)/*gshin yul mar ba ma bgrod /... rab gshin rab ma rgald la gshin la / yang / ma rgald*). This reference to the *skyibs-lug* sheep as the guide that shows the way through the *gshin-yul* is elaborated upon in the same text (Ins. 190–195). In *Rta gtad*, an Eternal Bon funerary transport horse ritual text, a piece of turquoise that functions as a symbolic lamp illuminates the way forward through the darkness of the *gshin-yul*, a hurdle that must be overcome if the deceased is to reach the *dga’-yul*. It reads: “On the previous day, if it was that the colored turquoise was not set up, the path of darkness, the *gshin-yul* is not opened” (*khar song g.yu mdangs mi gzugs rgyus / gshin yul mun pa’i lam mi phyed /*). For a fuller analysis of some of the Pt 1134 and Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur materials presented here, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 455, 458, 459, 502, 503, 510–512. Other Pt 1134 narratives are examined below.



Ca-4r

The final frame of the Ca series has been detached from the rest of the manuscript. It is identified through its alphanumerical designation (part of which has been obliterated). This frame concerns a divine defender (*mgon*) of humans and their holy prototypes, the gods (*lha*) and goddesses (*sgan*). This unnamed god appeared at a jewel boulder (*pha-bong*), which, like references to eggs and rock formations in the text, can be taken as representing a theogonic prop. As with the divine brotherhood of Nga-4r, this unnamed deity is the protector of wild ungulates. The accompanying illustration depicts him in a white shirt trimmed in red and matching white pants with red cuffs. Instead of depicting red trim, this figure possibly wears red inner garments. His footwear is the color of brown leather and on his head he wears an olive-green hat with a rounded crown and two flaps. This headgear is not dissimilar to the felt and brocade types worn traditionally in Central Tibet to this day. The god is shown kneeling with one arm akimbo. He is flanked by two trees on his right side and one tree and two blossoms on his left side. By virtue of its portrayal, this vegetation must have been perceived as instrumental in the liberation of the deceased.

As noted, trees are accorded a prominent place in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary rite (see *supra*, p. 27 [fn. 42]). Quite curiously, the flaps on the god's hat in color and form recall leaves, and one can only wonder if some connection between it and the depicted foliage was intended. According to the text, the god of this frame is the hunter (*rngon-pa*) of the *bdud* and *btsan* and, although the predicate is missing in the next line, he cannot but slaughter or subdue these classes of demons. In the final sentence of the frame this white-clad divine ally of the funeral is requested not to allow the concerned wild ungulates to wander apart:

A jewel boulder manifested in the four directions and center, [and from it] there existed the human defender, the *lha* defender, the *sman* defender, this king. You are the wild ungulate protector {##}. You are the hunter of the *bdud* and *btsan*. Also, by your magic prowess and power you {slaughter} [the *bdud* and *btsan*]. {Act} as the shepherd of the herd of wild ungulates with [fine] fur coats who does not let them disperse.

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *pha bong cig phyogs bzhi dbus su sprul / myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *mgon lha mgon na sman mgon rgyal po bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) / *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma* {## /} *btsan bdud kyi rngon pa yang* (+ /) *mtshu dang dbang yis* (C.T. = *gis*) {*gsod* /} *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *spu khyu yang* (+ /) *myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer 'tsho rdza'i* (C.T. = *rdzi'i*) {*mdzod* //}

*Cha-1r*

The sixth series in the manuscript still enjoys all four frames, the textual and illustrative continuity between them unmistakable, despite the ill-advised manner in which they have been separated. The first frame in the series is dedicated to an archetypal divine couple, Lha-sras skyes-cig (Son of the Lha Only Male) and Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo (Lake Sman Queen). Like the Tibetan kings themselves, the mountain god Lha-sras skyes-cig is a son or scion of the cosmogonic *lha*. Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo is a common appellation for chief goddesses of the great lakes of Tibet.<sup>62</sup> This pair is rendered either resting on one knee or in an almost acrobatic display standing on one heavily bent leg. The god is clothed in a tight-fitting orange-red shirt and olive-green pants with pinkish cuffs or pinkish inner pants. He wears nothing on his bald head. He is shown shooting

<sup>62</sup> One of the best known goddesses who carries this appellation is Gnam-mtsho phyug-mo che. For her description as Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo, see Bellezza 1997, pp. 110, 111, 286 (n. 42); 2001, pp. 60, 61; 2005, p. 315. For Bkra-ri gnam-mtsho as Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo, see Bellezza 2001, p. 235; and for Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho being referred to in the same way, see Bellezza 2005, p. 246. A goddess called Mtsho-sman-rgyal-mo is also recorded as the mother of the great god Ge-khod (Bellezza 2008: 305). A Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo constitutes a member of the Srid-pa'i lha-dgu group (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 339). Mtsho-sngon khri-shor in A-mdo is part of a group of five lakes known as Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo spun-lnga / Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo mched-lnga (*ibid.*, 201). On Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo, also see Hazod 1996.

a bow and arrow with the trajectory and target of that arrow depicted.<sup>63</sup> On the deity's right side is a tiger-skin quiver (*stag-dong*), a symbol of great warrior spirits.<sup>64</sup> The goddess is attired in a short olive-green blouse with long sleeves and a mustard-colored undershirt. Her legs are clad in close-fitting pants with olive-green cuffs or olive-green inner pants.

Due to the somewhat fragmentary condition of the text and the highly abbreviated style of its composition, the reading I provide below may not be as developed as the authors intended. Hailing from the celestial realm of Lha-yul gung-thang (Country of the Gods Vault of the Heavens),<sup>65</sup> Lha-sras skyes-cig as a *yul-sa* (deity of the locale) is associated with a snow mountain

<sup>63</sup> Divine allies of funerals in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur employ the bow and arrow as an exorcistic instrument (Bellezza 2008: 466).

<sup>64</sup> A survey of *gsol-kha* literature shows that mountain gods customarily wear the tiger-skin quiver on the right side and the leopard-skin bow case (*gzig-shubs*) on the left side. Cf. Norbu 2009, p. 18 (n. 8). According to Eternal Bon tradition and popular belief, these 'implements of males' (*skyes-chas*) represent a carryover of an ancient Tibetan warrior tradition (Bellezza 2005: 214, 263). In a brief origins tale of the tiger-skin quiver, it is called the possession of 'heroic males' (*stag-shar*; *ibid.*, 408, 409).

<sup>65</sup> An excellent description of Lha-yul gung-thang is found in the famous Eternal Bon guide to Mount Ti-se, *Ti se 'i dkar chag*. It is called the meeting place of the gods that is like a golden wheel of one thousand spokes, which abuts Myi-yul skyid-thang (Land of Humans Plain of Happiness). See *op. cit.* Norbu 2009, p. 28. Also, see Haarh 1969, pp. 141, 221, 231. In ITJ 731r, Lha-yul gung-dang (*sic*) is one of the heavenly countries in which lived the celestial horse maternal ancestor of the *do-ma* (Bellezza 2008: 530, 533; also see Haarh 1969: 223). In the first section of Pt 1060 (Ins. 1–35), Lha-yul gung-thang is portrayed as the divine realm from which the lineages of horses that gave rise to the *do-ma* originated (this text is not a divination text as has been claimed; rather it is dedicated to an explication of the various *do-ma* pedigrees). The descent of the funerary transport horses in Pt 1060 is given in three major stages: 1) the primal appearance of the horses of elemental spirits, 2) the appearance of horses on earth, and 3) the appearance of the various horse lineages of the *do-ma*. In this three-fold epiphanic segue, horses of the stars, clouds and rainbows are listed among common classes of spirits, reinforcing the celestial nature of the *do-ma* (as does their ultimate origins in Lha-yul gung-thang): In Lha-yul gung-thang, the *kha* and *bang* (the male and female primal state or generative entities), these two, mated and their offspring was the horse with white fur, the horse of the *lha*. This horse god (*rta-lha*) is described as *gnyan te ma btub*, which indicates that this divine animal was so powerful that it could not be tamed or ridden. Of this horse it is also said, *gdod* (C.T. = *gtod*) *de ma bcad*, signifying that its mane (*gdod*) remained uncut because it could not be tethered to a stake (i.e., not domesticated). This horse had a small mane (*phum-phum chungs*, C.T. = *chung*) and its tail was in one clump (*nyag-cig*), signifying wildness. For his pleasure ('*o-mnyen*) this *rta-lha* [was offered] one pedicel (*nyag*) of ephedra (*mtsho-mo* = *mtshe-mo*), a pod of mustard seeds (*yungs-mo sgangs*) and a silver [vessel] filled with libations. Thereafter, a horse with black fur was born, the horse of the *bdud*. In the text, he is described and offered to in the same manner as the white *rta-lha*. Then, a *shu-bo* (?) horse with a white forehead (*zhur-po*) is born, the horse of the *dmu*, who is described in the same way. The text continues in this vein with the blue horse with a white forehead of the *dmu* (the heavens?), the white horse with the marking of a fawn (*she'u*) of the stars, the red *lu-shu* (?) horse of the rainbow (*gzha'*), the '*ol-ba* (dark brown) horse with the white forehead of the clouds, the blue horse with the beige tail of the *gnyan*, the vermilion-red horse with the white forehead of the *klu*, the *shu-mo* (?) horse with the white legs (*la-gar* C.T. = *lag-dkar*) of the *sman*, and the black horse with the striped mane of the *srin*. The text then announces the paternal lineages (*cho*) and maternal lineages ('*brang*) of the earthly horses, who are descended from those of the elemental spirits. In the sky the clouds the color of white, on earth the horse with white fur (*gnam la sprin kha-bo... dkar na // sa la rta spu dkar*). Secondly, in the sky the clouds the color of black (*gnag*), on earth the horse with black fur. This same formulation is applied to the horse with brownish fur, the horse with blue fur, and the horse with yellow fur. The text then describes the birth of the first human lineage *do-ma*, the cherished one (*snying-dgas*),\* from the mating of the *kha* and *bang* in Lha-yul gung-thang. Their son is the horse of the *lha* with white fur, the scion of the paternal and maternal lineages of the *rta-lha* that function as *do-ma*. Similarly, the text goes on to enumerate the various horses of the paternal and maternal lineages of *do-ma*, a list that parallels the types of horses already noted in the text. On these various horses in Pt 1060, also see Bellezza 2005, p. 468 (n. 154). For a description of an anthropomorphic *rta-lha*, see *ibid.*, p. 327. On the terms *cho* and '*brang*, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 456, 522, 523. In his account of the same Pt 1060 excerpt, Stein (1971: 541, 542) thought that the terms *cho* and '*brang* designated parallel species or categories of horses, rather than gender.

\* This term is not *snying-dags*, as has been supposed. For an etymological analysis, see Bellezza 2008, p. 511 (n. 529).

and Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo with a white lake as its *smān* (lake goddess). This couple exemplifies the ancient mythic theme of father-mountain and mother-lake, which is still entrenched in Upper Tibetan culture. In the folklore of that region, this divine dyad is held to have brought into existence various elements of the universe. As the *yul-sa* of the snow mountain, the god is called Sa-bla mgon-skyabs (Protecting Earth-Soul), while the goddess of the divine lake is named Sa-sman 'jam-le.<sup>66</sup> This cognominal identification with the earth seems to bring these two personalities in close correspondence with the 'owners of the soil' (*sa-bdag*) spirits.<sup>67</sup> The pair are referred to as 'personal protectors' (*sku-srungs*), but the full import of this line is not known, because two of its syllables were obliterated through the cutting of the fabric of the manuscript. In any event, mountain gods and lake goddesses often serve as the protectors of prominent individuals and local communities. The remainder of the text pertains to Sa-sman 'jam-le, an ancestral goddess who appears to be described as the 'female little god youth' (*ne'u-zhon lhe'u-smān*), in the same way that mortal women would be. She and her wild ungulate helpers live in a snow castle (poetic reference to a snow mountain), as well as in a divine white lake. In the translation, I treat these as the proper names of places, lending them a less abstract sense. In the last line of the text the goddess is portrayed as the tender and beneficent one:

In Lha-yul gung-thang, Lha-sras skyes-cig [and] Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo, these two, when they went to benefit, the white snow mountain and white divine lake, these two, were the fortress of the *yul-sa* and *smān*. At the white snow mountain resides Sa-bla mgon-skyabs. In the divine white lake lives Sa-sman 'jam-le. The personal protector {# #}. The *lhe'u-smān* youth and the resident wild ungulates reside in the castle and fortress of Kha-ba 'od-mkhar (Resplendent Snow Castle) and Lhamtsho dkar-mo (Divine White Lake). Sa-sman 'jam-le, she who very affectionately benefits (*smān*).

*lha yul gung dang* (C.T. = *thang*) *du* (+ /) *lha sras skyes cig dang* (+ /) *mtsho sman rgyal mo nyis* (= *gnyis*) / *smān du gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *pa'i tshe* / *gangs ri dkar po dang* / *lha mtsho dkar mo nyis* (= *gnyis*) / *smān dang yul sa'i rdzong* {/} *gangs ri dkar po la* / *sa bla mgon skyabs bzhugs* / *lha mtsho dkar mo la* / *sa sman 'jam le gnas* {/}<sup>68</sup> {##} *sku srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *lags* / *ne'u*

<sup>66</sup> The term '*jam-le*' (derived from '*jam*'; 'gentle', 'soft') must describe a pacific or loving quality.

<sup>67</sup> The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *G.yang gzhi sri gshed dbang sdud sa bdag bcos pa*, an origins tale (*srid-rabs*), recounts how the prehistoric funerary *gshen* Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal neutralized the harm unleashed by the *sa-bdag* and two other common classes of elemental spirits, the *klu* and *gnyan*, with *gto* rites. Thereafter, groups of these spirits were appeased with offerings of bird feathers and *shel-tshig* (ritualistic parched barleycorn), in order that they would serve the interests of the funerary ritualists. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 439–442. In the Eternal Bon ritual text *Sri ggas bong ba stag chung*, an eponymous bumblebee funerary god is empowered by *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan*, enabling him to slay the demonic killers of children (*chung-sri*); see *ibid.*, pp. 475–477. In another Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text, *Sa bdag klu la zhu ba gsol ba 'di skad* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 523–524, anonymous), Nos. 523, ln. 6 to 524, ln. 2, five *sa-bdag* of different colored earth are propitiated in order that the funeral venue can be borrowed from them. They include bird and deer forms: master of the white-colored earth – Stag-dkar bya yi mgo can (Bird-Headed White Tiger); master of the yellow-colored earth – Rdol-ser sha-ba'i mgo-bo can (Deer-headed Yellow Yak); and master of the red-colored earth – Bya-dmar lcags kyi gshog-pa can (Iron-winged Red Bird). These types of deities with their grotesque composite appearances typify the iconographic complexity of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur pantheon, a more baroque tradition than that presented in the illuminated funerary manuscript. The iconographic development of these Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur figures seems to parallel the historical evolution of various animal-headed deities in the Rnying-ma *bar-do* (Zhi-khro dam-pa rigs-brgya) literature, an area of inquiry beyond the scope of this book.

<sup>68</sup> Below this point, the remainder of the text was detached from the strip of paper with the Cha-1r illustration and now appears above the Cha-2r illustration. An examination of the manuscript indicates that this cutting took place some time ago.

(C.T. = *na*) *zhon* (C.T. = *gzhon*) *lhe'u sman* {*dang* / #} *ggas* (= *gnas*) *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*)  
*rnams* / *kha ba 'od mkhar dang lha mtsho dkar mo yi* (+ /) *mkhar dang rdzong la bzhugs* / *sa*  
*sman* {'*jam*} *le 'di* (+ /) *sman la 'o re byams* // //



Cha-2r

The second frame of the series is concerned with birds born from an iron egg in the forest. They comprise the pheasant (*khu-long*), nightingale (*'jon-mo*), what may be the magpie (*ke-ke*), and another bird known in the text as *zer-mong*. The nightingale is called the 'bird priest' (*bya-gshen*), a reference to its status as an ally of the funerary priests (*dur-gshen* / *'dur-gshen*). This divine bird is noted in the Dunhuang manuscript Pt 1136.<sup>69</sup> These four birds function as the equipage of the dead that 'also lead the way in the forest' (*nags la shul yang 'dren*) of the postmortem realm. The chief of the birds is the long-beaked (*mchu-ring*) *kang-ka*, a species of vulture that dwells in the 'southern' forests'.<sup>70</sup> This bird, as the eater of human corpses, carries

<sup>69</sup> In Pt 1136, the nightingale appears as a divine funerary ritual functionary who aids the priest Gshen-rab myi-bo in conducting the death ritual for a suicide victim. For the full account, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 525–529; Bellezza 2010a, pp. 40–42. Stein (2010, *Antiqua* V: 256) misunderstood the suicide victim of this tale, Lady Lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun, as suffering from a neck ache and dying by accidental means. Macdonald (1971: 264, 265), in her analysis of the same tale, does not furnish the cause of death of Lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun.

<sup>70</sup> The large bird (*rgya-bya*) *gang-ka* (*sic*) also contributes to the funerary ritual procedures of Pt 1134 (lms. 189, 190). In the nuptial songs and the Ge-sar epic of Ladakh (La-dwags), the vulture is the king of birds (*bya-rgod rgyal-po*),

the epithet *dur-bya* (bird of the cemetery) in common parlance. The vulture and his beneficial flock are requested to serve as the guardians of the deceased; those divine allies that do not fly off in separate directions:

The iron egg opened in the forest [and from it appeared] the little birds of the forest, the magpie and the pheasant and the *zer-mong* and the bird priest nightingale who also lead the way in the forest. They are the superior equipage. They are the little bird defender-protectors of the long-beaked *kang-ka* who appeared in the southern forest. He controls the forest realm. They are his little bird rosary (flock) of benefit. Act as the little bird protector-defenders that do not disperse in the forest.

*lcags sgong nags la rdol / nags bye'u ke ke dang / khu long zer mong dang / bya gshen 'jon* (C.T. = 'jol) *mo des (+ /) nags la shul yang 'dren / dkor yi dam pa lags /(+ /) bye'u mgon srungs ma ni / lho ga nags mtshal* (C.T. = *tshal*) *nes* (C.T. = *nas*) / *kang ka mchu rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *byung / shing khams dbang du sgyur / sman yi bye'u 'phring* (C.T. = *phreng*) *rnams / shing la myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer ba'i (+ /) bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma mdzod // //*

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one of four animal species that originate from eggs, which rule the cardinal directions (Haarh 1969: 162; Tucci 1949: 719). It must be observed, however, that both Tucci (*ibid.*) and Haarh (*ibid.*) did not fully appreciate the epithet *bya-rgod rgyal-po*, translating it as “royal wild bird”. The four animals in this Ladakhi folk tradition, the vulture, golden fish, white lion and striped tiger, are *sgra-bla / dgra-lha* deities. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur's *Rus thabs mar zhus* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 497–510), a text featuring various zoomorphic funerary deities, there is a divine vulture (*rgod-po*; No. 498, lns. 3–5). This passage reads: “Rgod-po thang-yag ldem-pa's paternal ancestor (*myes-po*) is 'Phrul-ru dkar-po (Male Miraculous White Horn) and his grandmother / maternal ancestor (*phyi-mo*) is 'Phrul-ru dmar-mo (Female Miraculous Red Horn). Their purpose is to defeat the demons of death that chop (*gtub pa'i gri*)” (*rgod po thang yag ldem pa'i lus blang nas / nga yi myes po 'phrul ru dkar po yin / phyi mo de 'phrul ru dkar (= dmar) mo yin / gtub pa'i gri 'dul ba'i don chod (= ched) la /*).



Cha-3r

The next frame in the sixth series is dedicated to another species of wild ungulate, the ibex (*skyin*). The three depicted are brown, russet, and brown, beige and tan in color. The ibex is native to Ladakh (La-dwags), Zanskar (Zangs-dkar), Spiti (Spi-ti), and Baltistan (Sbal-ti), all on the western edge of the Tibetan Plateau, and to many areas of north Inner Asia. Thus, the inclusion of the ibex in the archaic funerary traditions of Tibet seems to allude to cultural influences originating from the northwestern highlands or northern Inner Asia.<sup>71</sup> This wild goat of the crags is described as having a ‘beautiful gait’.<sup>72</sup> The text conveys that fine clothes were produced from

<sup>71</sup> In Pt 1136, it is the divine ibex Skyin-po ru-thog rje (Lord Male Ibex Surmounted Horns) who summons the nightingale bird ritualist Bya-gshen 'jon-mo (Bellezza 2008: 529; 2010a: 41). In the *La dwags rgyal rabs*, a figure known as Skyin-pa thang-rje is referred to as an ancestor of the Smra zhang-zhung lineage (Haarh 1969: 283), but it is not clear if this god has anything to do with ibex. Pirie (2008: 178) describes a Ladakh ritual known as *shi-mi tshal-ma*, held on 30<sup>th</sup> day of 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, in which the ibex has a role. In the afternoon of that day, a platter of food consisting mostly of meats from a Lo-gsar (New Year) yak is taken up a hill and offered to the ancestors. Afterwards, a smaller platter with bread and ibex made of dough (common Lo-gsar offering objects in Ladakh) is placed on a rocky outcrop and a recitation is made to those who have died.

<sup>72</sup> It is worth observing that the three animals illustrated under the name *skyin* have anatomical features more in keeping with the markhor than the ibex. The massive body of the male and its twisted horns in particular recall the

its hair (*spu*) and wool (*bal*). It is not known if this is merely a figurative affirmation intended to endow the ibex with the most praiseworthy of qualities or something more. If this panegyric is actually based on an ancient tradition (such as that connected to the Tibetan antelope), hunters would have slain many animals in order to produce clothing. The yogurt of the female ibex is said to ‘cleanse diseases of the body’ (*sku-snyun 'byang*), another means of extolling the virtues of this species. It is very difficult to see how ibexes could have been captured, corralled and milked, and this may simply be another trope. The ibex is called an attendant or messenger that can run very far. Moreover, as with the wild ass of Nga-3r, this divine animal reaches anywhere as quickly as it is invoked in the mind. In the last instance, this great asset of the dead is offered to the departed one:

From the jewel cervid habitat is the long-horned male ibex and the beautiful movement female ibex and also the kid ibex with the beautiful gait,<sup>73</sup> these three. Your hair and wool are the clothes of excellence. The yogurt [of the female] cleanses diseases of the body. You are the attendants that can run very far. You go wherever as fast as you think it. We offer this superior equipage.

*yang rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (C.T. = *nas*) / *skyin po'* (C.T. = *po*) *ru rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *dang* / *skyin mo stabs sdug dang* / *skyin bu yang stabs sdug gsum* / *spu bal na bza'i mchog* / *zho yis sku snyun 'byang* / *pho nya ring rgyug byed* / *gar gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *bsams* (C.T. = *bsam*) *bas 'khor* / *dkor yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dam par 'bul* // //

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markhor, a wild goat of the Great Western Himalaya and mountainous tracts of western high Asia. Once found in Ladakh as well, the markhor is known as *ra-po-che* / *ra-mo-che* in the dialect of that region. Whether the ibex or markhor is really intended in the illuminated funerary manuscript, both species are native to regions lying west of Upper Tibet.

<sup>73</sup> *Stabs-sdug*. This can also be translated as ‘prancing’ or ‘legs folded gracefully underneath the body’.



Cha-4r

The final frame of the Cha series is dedicated to the famous mountain god of Tibet, 'Od-de gung-rgyal, in his role as the protector of wild ungulates and the commander (*dpon*) of ten thousand territorial deities (*yul-sa*). In the illumination he is clad in a suit of golden laminar armor. Underneath his armor he appears to be wearing red pants, the hem of which is visible. He has on a helmet with a chin guard and a crest (*'phru*) consisting of a long red plume. In his right hand he holds an arrow between his thumb and index finger, and with his left hand he grasps the top of a standing bow. The rendition of mountain gods as archetypal warriors is common in Tibetan sacred geographic traditions.

The text affirms that 'Od-de gung-rgyal is the 'source of the *lha*' (*lha yi grol phugs*),<sup>74</sup> as do other Tibetan theogonic traditions.<sup>75</sup> He is recorded as being both beneficial (*sman*) and greatly affectionate ('*o-byams*), the unstinting preserver of cervids. The final line of the ritual reading asks 'Od-de gung-rgyal not to afflict the funerary equipage of wild ungulates with three common classes of problematic spirits: the *bdud*, *btsan* and *srin-po*. In Tibetan lore, chief mountain gods control vast circles of elemental spirits, which can both aid and plague human beings depending on one's relationship to them. In contemporary Tibet, individuals rely on lamas, lay priests and spirit-mediums to help when the accord between them and the host of spirits sours:

The protector of wild ungulates is the god 'Od-de gung-rgyal, the commander of the ten thousand *yul-sa*. You are the source of the *lha*. As you are very affectionate towards women, you greatly preserve the deer, so do not send the *bdud*, *btsan* and *srin-po* enemies to the various wild ungulate equipages of women.

*ri dags srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ni / lha 'od de gung rgyal ni* (+ /) *yul sa khri yi dpon / lha yi grol phugs lags / sman la 'o byams la / sha la skyabs che bas / sman dkor ri dags* (= *dwags*) *snams* (= *rnams*) / *bdud btsan srin po yi* (+ /) *sgra* (C.T. = *dgra*) *la ma skur shig // // cha drug pa*

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<sup>74</sup> For the imperial period, Karmay (2003: 69) characterizes the *lha* as a general designation for autochthonous gods associated with the sky, which play a part in the myths of origin of Tibet's first king, Gnya'-khri btsan-po. This characterization is particularly relevant here given 'Od-de gung-rgyal's role as a royal genealogical figure. In light of the funerary texts of this study, Karmay's pithy definition of the *lha* can be augmented to include the wider functions of personal protector and prototypic male ancestral figure.

<sup>75</sup> 'O-lde gung-rgyal (*sic*) is an important divine figure in various indigenous theogonies of Tibet, and particularly as the father of the Lha-dgu, nine key mountain gods of Central Tibet. In the divination text ITJ 740, 'O-de gung-rgyal (*sic*) delivers a positive prognosis (Dotson 2007: 21). 'O-lde gung-rgyal has been written about extensively in scholarly works. See, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 208, 209, 221; Thomas 1957, ch. iv, p. 86; Tucci 1949, pp. 728, 730; Haarh 1969, pp. 253–255, 258, 259, 261, 267, 268, 311, 317; Macdonald 1971, pp. 208, 299, 302; Karmay 1998, pp. 254, 266, 296, 297, 305, 434–437, 444; Stein 2010 (*Antiqua III*), p. 151; Bellezza 1997, p. 44–46, 95; 2005: 180 (n. 19), 201, 202; 207–210, 472, 476; 2008, pp. 350–352.



Ja-3r

This series in its final frame is identified as the seventh in the text. Like other ternary frames in the various series, Ja-3r is given over to a family of wild ungulates, which appears to designate the Tibetan gazelle (*Procapra picticaudata*). The identification of this animal is made through the accompanying illustration (and the detached piece used for AMS analysis) and by a process of deduction (this major wild ungulate species of Tibet does not appear elsewhere in the manuscript). Sandy brown to grayish in color with a white rump patch, the male of the species has short, slightly curved horns. This physical description of the Tibetan gazelle accords well with the illustration provided in the frame. In the text this species is called a *dan*. Although the common Tibetan word for gazelle is *dgo-ba*, reportedly in the old hunting lore of Tibet there were various synonyms for this species, which were inspired by prominent physical traits of the animal.<sup>76</sup> The text makes reference to clothing made from the hair and wool of the *dan*.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Although I have not carried out substantive research in this field, this is what is reported by informants in Upper Tibet. It is often said that hunters had special vocabularies of ancient origins, describing the gender, age and appearance of the various ungulates of the Byang-thang. For a brief account of the vocabulary of quarry, see Bellezza 2008, p. 462 (n. 345).

<sup>77</sup> Deer wool (*sha-bal*) and antelope wool (*gtshos-bal*, C.T. = *gtsod-bal*) are elements of the healing ritual narratives in Pt 1285 (Ins. 32, 50, 53).

The custom of using the downy undercoat of antelope for textiles is found in the shawl weaving of Kashmir. However, no such industry using gazelle wool exists today. The offering of the wild ungulate equipage constitutes the last line of the frame:

From the jewel cervid habitat is the conch-colored male gazelle (*dan-po'*) and the female gazelle (*dan-mo*) *lco gar-ma*<sup>78</sup> and the gazelle calf (*dan-bu*) with the beautiful gait, these three. Your hair and wool are the clothes of excellence. We offer this superior equipage.

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (C.T. = *nas*) / *dan po' dung mdog dang* / *dan mo lco gar ma dang* / *dan bu stabs sdug gsum* / *spu bal na'* (C.T. = *na*) *bza'i mchog* / *dkor yi dam par 'bul*  
// \*\*\* //

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<sup>78</sup> The term *gar-ma* alone denotes the prancing or gamboling of the female gazelle. The signification of the word *lco* is not clear.



Ja-4r

The final frame of the Ja series is devoted to the wild ungulate protector and king of the *yul-sa*, Lha-ste sbrang-ba. The illustration shows a figure in a white shirt and pants with red trim or red inner pants. He also has a white hat with horn-like flaps and a crest of what might be two white and yellow feathers. On either side of the god are flowers with eight yellow petals and a red and yellow corolla. Lha-ste sbrang-ba is praised as the source of the *lha* and *sman* deities, the ‘father of all gods of the locale’ (*yul-sa kun yi yab*) and the guardian of females.<sup>79</sup> To conclude

<sup>79</sup> This deity may be identical or closely related to Srid-rje ’brang-dkar, a cosmogonic god who gave rise to the various spirits and living beings. For his description see Norbu 1996, pp. 166, 274 (n. 11); Norbu 2009, pp. 48, 80 (n. 11), 86, 87; Karmay 1998, pp. 128, 129, 179 (n. 31); Bellezza 2005, p. 396; 2008, p. 466. Srid-rje ’brang-dkar and a kindred cosmogonic god also find a place in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur as demon destroyers. In the *Gsas mkhar ’gug dang sri bsad de ’di skad do* (New Collection of Bon *bka’-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 628, ln. 4 to 653, anonymous), a subchapter for slaughtering the *sri*, it reads (Nos. 641, ln. 6 to 642, ln. 2): “The departing Gangs-chen srid-rje ’brang-dkar together with Ma-ha phyra-rje ring-dkar whose coming great raucous reverberates through the *sri-khung* (cavity for slaughtering the *sri*)” (*gangs chen srid rje ’brang dkar chas / ma ha phyra rje ring dkar bcas / hab sgra chas pa’i sri khung bskon /*). In a *mkha’-klong gsang-mdos* ritual, Gangs-chen srid-rje ’brang-dkar and two counterparts are called the arbiters (*gzu-bo*)

the reading, this native god is requested not to plague gazelles with *gzed* demons, something that would interfere with the passage of the deceased through the intermediate zone:

The protector of wild ungulates is the king of the *yul-sa* Lha-ste sbrang-ba. You are the source of the *lha* and *sman*. You are the father of all the *yul-sa*. You are the guardian defender of the *sman*, [and] the protector of the wild ungulates. Do not send the *gzed* to the *dan-po* (*sic*) and *dan-mo*.

*ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ni* / *yul sa'i rgyal po ste lha ste sbrang ba de'i* / *lha sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *grol phugs yin* / *yul sa kun yi yab* / *sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *mgon skyabs ste* (C.T. = *te*) / *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *lags* / *dan po dan mo dag gzed la ma skur shig* // \*\*\* //

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and jurists (*khriims-bdag*) that oversee and protect the ransom being offered (Blondeau 2000: 255, 258). In *Gnyan gyi 'bum*, these three figures, Srid, Skos and Phya, were called upon by humans to aid in creating a viable way of life on earth (Karmay 2010: 61).



Nya-3r

The eighth series and those that follow are sequenced according to numerical indications found on the verso side of the manuscript. Unfortunately, the first frame of the Nya series is missing from the extant manuscript, while the second frame has been reduced to just two syllables found above the Nya-3r illumination. This imperative (*mdzod-shig //*) commands in very direct language the birds that were found as part of the Nya-2r frame. As so little remains of the text, this frame is not treated separately in this work.

The third frame of the eighth textual series pertains to a family of cervids, the adult male and female of which are called *yur-po* and *yu-mo* respectively (nowadays *yu-mo* simply means 'doe'). The fawn accompanying them is referred to in the diminutive as the 'little fawn' (*she'u-chung*). These deer hail from the 'jewel cervid habitat' (*rin-chen sha-slungs*). The cervids of the frame can most probably be identified as the white-lipped deer (*Cervus albirostris*), a species endemic to the Tibetan Plateau. The body of the adult white-lipped deer tends to be dark brown in summer and light buff to grayish brown in winter, while fawns typically have a mottled pelage.

This coloration of the species corresponds quite well with the illustration of the three deer in the text.

The stag is described as endowed with antlers of variable or multiple points (*ru-zed*), and the doe as a female with a ‘keen sense of smell’ (*rdzi-bshor-ma*). As with the kid ibex in the Cha-3r frame, the fawn is said to have a beautiful gait. Interestingly, the text praises the deer by depicting them as extremely powerful beasts of burden, which is probably an allusion to their perceived ability to carry the consciousness principle of the deceased across the intermediate zone.<sup>80</sup> This intimate association of the deer with humans is reinforced in the next line of the text, which makes reference to the doe being milked (*bzho*). One can only wonder if these lines refer to the actual domestication of deer in ancient times or to something more figurative. This is one of the most explicit references to the taming of deer I have discovered in Tibetan textual sources.<sup>81</sup>

A fuller understanding of the psychopomp function of deer in the archaic funerary rite will come with the study of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* in Part II. The final line of the reading describes the deer family of the deceased female as her ‘essential property’ (*dkor gyi dam-pa*), the funerary gifts that aid in salvation:

From the jewel cervid habitat appeared the stag with the horns of variable points, the keen sense of smell female doe and the little fawn with stripes. If loaded up you are extremely powerful. If milked...<sup>82</sup> We offer this essential equipage.

<sup>80</sup> In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Rus thabs mar zhus bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 497–510, anonymous), among an exposition of various lineages of funerary deities and the invitations extended to them to come to the ritual venue, is the imagery of the apotropaic wild ungulate horns (Nos. 504, lns. 4, 5). Like the deer in the illuminated funerary manuscript, the deer and gazelle in this work are attributed with great qualities useful in the liberation of the deceased. In this particular example, their horns destroy a lupine *bdud* demon referred to by name. The relevant passage reads: “Your *dbal* horn on the right is the horn of the deer. Your *dbal* horn on the left is the horn of the gazelle. Between the deer and gazelle [horns] destroy to dust the wanderer *bdud* agent of violent death (*gri*). Destroy Gri-bdud spyang-ba” (*dbal ru g.yas pa sha ba'i ra (= rwa) / dbal ru g.yon pa rgo* (C.T. = *dgo*) *ba'i ra / sha rgod (= dgo) 'dzo pa'i bar na / gri bdud 'khyams pa'i (= pa) rdul du brlag / gri bdud spyang ba cham la phab /*). In Pt 1068, a mortuary unguent is made using rendered deer fat (Bellezza 2008: 504, 505). Moreover, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the hides of sacrificial deer are used in a *gshed* destruction rite, and to produce a bag for the containment of the consciousness principle, which wards off attacking demons (*ibid.*, 436, 438, 471).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *infra*, pp. 64, 65. A most intriguing reference to what appears to be tame or domestic deer is found in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (Pt 1287), where the Tibetan princess Sad-mar-kar, who was married to the Zhang-zhung king Lig-myi-rhya, bemoans the wildness of the herds of deer and wild asses she has come to possess. For this account, see Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946, p. 156; Uray 1972, pp. 10, 36. In the Dpa'-shod County site of Lha-klu mkhar (Khams cultural region), there is a rock carving depicting an anthropomorphic figure sitting astride a stag (Suolang Wangdui: 1994: 167, fig. 229). Tang Huisheng and Zhang Wenhua (2001: 95 (fig. 225) date this petroglyph to 700–800 CE and identify the rider as a shaman, but no reasons for their attributions are given. Likewise, in Kanutse, in western Ladakh, there is a petroglyph of an anthropomorphic figure mounted on a stag (with the male organ depicted), following another stag and trailed by a long-tailed spotted carnivore (snow leopard?). An image of this composition was obtained courtesy of Laurianne Bruneau, a rock art researcher. This petroglyph may date to the Tibetan protohistoric period. Nevertheless, the cultural orientation of the Ladakh deer rider petroglyph is uncertain (on the same boulder are Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions). It is not at all clear what the two rock art deer riders signify, nor is it likely we will ever know with any certainty. They could be indicative of the domestication of the deer for the purposes of riding, as with the reindeer of Siberia. However, it seems more plausible that these are numinous depictions of deities or cultural heroes. A mythic theme is particularly well suited to the Ladakh petroglyph, with its carnivore escort and rider with wing-like arms. Another possibility is that these deer riding portrayals of the Tibetan Plateau symbolize transport of the consciousness principle to the afterlife. As we shall see, this latter theme is well represented in Old Tibetan funerary literature.

<sup>82</sup> This line is completed by the words, *bcabs par g.yes so*, which are of unknown signification.

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (= *nas*) / *sha yur po ru zed dang* / *yu mo rdzi bshor ma* /  
*she'u cung* (C.T. = *chung*) *ris bkra byung* / *bkal na tshan stobs che* / *bzho'* (C.T. = *bzho*) *na bcabs*  
*par g.yes so* / *dkor yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dam par 'bul lo* // //



Ta-3r

The first frame of the ninth series is entirely absent, but the last three textual lines of the second frame are partially intact. They are found immediately above the Ta-3r illumination. From what is legible these lines ask the birds of the Ta-2r frame not to scatter, and order them to serve as the defenders of the deceased.

The Ta-3r frame is dedicated to the *nyig*, which appears to be the Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsoni*). The common Tibetan name for this wild ungulate is *gtsod*, but there appear to be various synonyms for this wild ungulate in the old hunting culture of Upper Tibet. The male of the species should be called *nyig-po* (in the text the female is designated *nyig-mo* and the juvenile, *nyig-bu*'), but the text reads: *nyi-gri*. This is either an outright misspelling or reference to this wild ungulate's role in funerals of those killed by violent or accidental means (*gri*). The adult couple are said to have a 'beautiful gait that is lovely to behold' (*stabs-sdug spyang-ngar mdzes*). Their graceful movements were no doubt seen as crucial in leading the deceased to salvation. This frame culminates in the offering of the divine family of *nyig* to females. In addition to the deceased, this is liable to include her surviving female relatives in a bid to prevent further misfortune:

From the jewel cervid habitat appeared the male *nyi-gri*, the one who gambols; the female *nyig* versed in trotting; and the baby *nyig* with the beautiful gait. As the male [*nyig*] gambols ( 'gro) and the female [*nyig*] trots (*mdur*), your beautiful gait is lovely to behold. We offer this equipage to females.

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (C.T. = *nas*) (+ /) *nyi gri 'gros mkhan dang / nyig mo mdur mkhas dang / nyig bu' (C.T. = bu) stabs sdug bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) / *pho 'gro mo mdur bas / stabs sdug spyang* (= *spyan*) *ngar* (C.T. = *sngar*) *mdzes / sman la dkor du 'bul lo // \*\*\* //*



Tha-2r

Two fragmentary textual lines of the Tha-1r frame are found above the Tha-2r illumination. The final grammatical line of the Tha-1r frame is addressed to the deceased and reads: “We offer [these deities] as the defenders and protectors” (*mgon dang skyabs su 'bul lo //*).

The Tha-2r frame of the tenth ritual series is given over to four smaller birds and their leader. They were born from a jewel egg that hatched on earth and in space (*dog-mo dbyings la rdol*), signifying that this was an event of cosmic proportions. The four lesser birds are named or described. Only one of these four colorful birds can be readily identified: the crow (*pho-re*; C.T. = *pho-ro*). The four smaller birds are once again called the essential or superior equipage of the deceased. The chief of the flock is the majestic lammergeyer (*thang-kar*, C.T. = *thang-dkar*), the largest and highest flying of Tibetan birds. This lammergeyer of conch (a poetic reference to its white color) is described as the ‘controller’ or ‘conqueror’ of the four directions (*phyogs bzhi dbang du sdud*). This mastery over the four directions epitomizes the prominent place the

*thang-kar* holds in ancient Tibetan religion and mythology.<sup>83</sup> The last line of text consists of the formulaic appeal for the five birds of this frame to be the guardians of the deceased:

Also, a jewel egg opened on earth and in space. A little bird *dang-ding* and a crow of sweet speech and a little bird *lam-ba* and a red-breasted *kon-to-re* are the superior equipage. The little bird protector-defender is the conch lammergeyer controller of the four directions. [*Thang-kar* and flock], be the little bird guardian protectors.

*yang rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sgong nga gcig* / *dog mo dbyings la rdol* / *bye'u chung dang ding dang* / *pho re skad snyan dang* / *bye'u chung lam ba dang* / *brang dmar kon to re* / *dkor pa'i dam pa lags* / *bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ni* / *dung yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *thang kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *des* (+ /) *phyogs bzhi dbang du sdud* / *bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma mdzod* //

<sup>83</sup> The *thang-dkar* functions as a common remedial deity for the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet (Bellezza 2005, *passim*), in what is probably a carryover of archaic religious tradition. In the ritual text *G.yang len*, a *sgra-bla* called 'Phur-shes bya-rgod thang-dkar (Lammergeyer Vulture with the Knowledge of Flight) is found (*ibid.*, 404). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the wing of the lammergeyer is used in the funerals of respected elders (*bkra-rgan*), in order to prevent the mind and soul of the deceased from splitting apart (Bellezza 2008: 431). The ritual origins of such wings are treated in Pt 1194 (*ibid.*, 506–510; Stein 1971: 514). A poetic description of the divine lammergeyer, ally of the funerary priests, is found in the text *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las gri gsas gshed la dbab pa*, (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brien*, vol. 6, Nos. 533–574, anonymous), Nos. 547, ln. 1 to 548, ln. 1, a work mostly given over to the *gri-gsas*, the gods that destroy the demons of violent death. It reads: "From inside the hatched egg of conch, the vulture of conch lammergeyer. His body manifestations belong to the innumerable worlds (*stong-khams*). His celestial iron beak and claws is the file (*bdar*) of the *dbal*. He soars in the sky with his sword (*ral-gri*) wings. He skims across the innumerable worlds with his scimitar (*chu-gri*) tail feathers. His saber (*spu-gri*) bunches of feathers are spreading rays of the *dbal*. His southern (stormy) clouds bird feathers spread out everywhere (*thal ma thul*). His eyes emit the light of the sun and the light of the moon. His paternal lineage is that of the great screech. Sometimes he makes a manifestation, the manifestation of a man of wind and light mounted on a vulture of hail\* and the breeze. He soars in the clouds of the intermediate space. He holds a white feather wing of the soul. He races above the innumerable worlds. In the three realms of existence (*srid-gsum*) his speech is extremely powerful. He is the *gri* defeating great defending protector. You have been bestowed with a name and appellation. You are called Mgyog-gsas rgod-rum dkar-po. In ancient times you vowed to defeat the *gri*. Now, you, also act as the mighty guide of the soul (*bka'*) and mind (*thugs*) of this departed one" (*dung sgong brdol ba'i nang shad na / thang dkar dung gi bya rgod la / sku lus sprul pa stong khams ldan / gnam lcags mchu sder dbal bdar / gshog pa ral gri mkha' la phyar / mjug sgro chu gri stong khams nyug / spu tshogs spu gri dbal zer 'phro / bya bur* (C.T. = *spu*) *lho sprin thal ma thul / nyi zer zla zer spyen gyi 'od / ngar skad che ba yab la rigs / lan re sprul pa mdzad tsam na / rdzi 'od sprul pa'i mi pho yi / skyabs ser ngad kyi rgod la zhon / bar snang sprin gyi dbyings nas* (= *na*) *'phyo / bla gshog sgro gar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *yug gcig bsnams / stong khams bla la bang re mgyogs / srid gsum bka' la dos re drag / gri thub skyabs pa mgon re che / de la ming dang mtshan gsol ba / mgyog gsas rgod rum dkar po bya / sngar yang gri thub gnyer du blangs / da yang deng gi tshe 'das 'di / bka' thub* (= *thugs*) *'dren pa'i gnyen* (= *gnyan*) *du long* /).

\* The word hail (*ser*) is preceded by *skyabs*, which in this context is of unknown import.

In a Buddhist polemic, the Bon tenet known as 'subjugation of / by the vulture' (*rgod 'dur-ba*) is branded erroneous. This is a clear reference to the apotropaic functions of vultures in the archaic funerary rites. For this polemic, see Martin 2001, pp. 190, 191. In his otherwise excellent translation, Martin (*ibid.*) has misunderstood *rgod 'dur-ba* as 'vulture interment'. On *'dur-ba* as the equivalent of *'dul-ba*, see Snellgrove 1967, p. 300; Bellezza 2008, p. 371 (n. 35).



Tha-3r

The next frame in the tenth series of the funerary text features a family of deer called *kha*. This is probably the Tibetan red deer (*Cervus elaphus wallici*), which has a reddish-brown coat and a white patch on the rump. The fawns of the Tibetan red deer are born with whitish spots. The coloration of the stag, doe and fawn in the illustration closely matches that possessed by this species. According to the text, the stag has the color of *bse*, probably here a pale reddish shade. The doe is described as conch or white in color (a reference it seems to her underbelly), while the fawn has spots (*ris-bkra*). The precious substances of conch and *bse* also convey the sacred character and supernal qualities of these divine deer. The revered qualities embodied in these materials were harnessed in the liberation of the dead, as were the animals themselves.

As are many minor deities in Tibetan sacred geographic traditions, the cervids of this frame are called attendants or messengers (*pho-nya*). Their ability to run very far (*ring rgyug mdzad*) would be very useful in traversing the protracted spaces of the intermediate zone. It is reputed in the text that the *kha-mo*'s 'milk is the excellent food' (*'o ma zas kyi mchog*). If this affirmation is to be taken literally, it would appear that, like the white-lipped deer, the Tibetan red deer may have been tamed or domesticated at one time. Nevertheless, this textual reference may just constitute a mythic understanding of prehistoric times held by the circa 11<sup>th</sup>-century CE authors and should not be taken as an archaeological fact. Rather than intimating an ancient economic situation, real or perceived, it may possibly be that the authors had in mind a figurative reference to the milk of a divine animal (like the milk of the white snow lioness in Lamaist literature). The last line of the frame announces the offering of the cervid family as the essential equipage of the deceased:

From the jewel cervid habitat appeared the *kha-po* of *bse* and the *kha-mo* of conch and the fawn (*khe'u-chung*) with spots. You are the attendants that run very far. The milk [of the doe] is the excellent food. We offer this superior equipage.<sup>84</sup>

*rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (= *nas*) / *bse yi kha po dang* / *dung yi* (C.T. = *gi*) *kha mo dang* / *khe'u chung ris bkra'* (C.T. = *bkra*) *byung ngo* / *pho nya ring rgyug mdzad* / 'o ma zas kyi mchog / *dkor* (+ *yi dam par 'bul* //)

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<sup>84</sup> This standard refrain was removed from the text when the manuscript was cut and is reinstated here.



Na-1r

The eleventh series (Da) of the illuminated funerary manuscript is completely missing. The twelfth series has just two extant frames. The text of the first frame is now highly fragmentary, as it was damaged and cut in half. Like Cha-4r, it pertains to 'Od-de gung-rgyal, the great mountain god of 'Ol-kha. In the Cha-4r frame 'Od-de gung-rgyal is ready for battle, while in Na-1r he has a domestic demeanor. 'Od-de gung-rgyal is attired in matching olive-green pants and shirt and is shown sitting cross-legged, arms at his side. His standing consort wears a long forest-green robe and what appears to be a red apron. The name of this goddess is not found in the extant text of the frame. Standing between the divine couple is a light-colored ungulate with flaming horns, most probably the sheep mentioned in the text. This animal is an attendant of 'Od-de gung-rgyal specially selected as an ally of the dead.

Something appears from the mind manifestation (*thugs kyi sprul pa*) of 'Od-de gung-rgyal but the object of this sentence is now largely illegible. The blaze emanating from the horns of the divine sheep subdue the *dre* (C.T. = '*dre*'), but the words detailing the manner in which this is done have been effaced from the text.<sup>85</sup> The '*dre*' is a class of demons that in both Eternal Bon

<sup>85</sup> In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Gri gsas gshed la dbab pa*, nine *dbal* deities born from eggs of different precious substances, each with fiery horns, are the destroyers of the various demons who afflict the deceased (Bellezza 2008: 466).

and Buddhism is often attributed with plaguing those in the postmortem realm. The horns of the sheep in the painting must have blazed the way through this miasmic wilderness. In the next line, the speech (of the sheep?) is brought to bear upon the class of demons called *gzed*, but the verb is missing from the text. Unfortunately, the next three or four lines of the text have also been lost. The final sentence of the frame is missing the last two syllables, one or both of which constituted the predicate. Given the context of the remaining portion of the sentence, this verb must have been ‘destroyed’ or another word with a related meaning. This destruction or subjugation of the *bdud* ‘master of death (*’chi-bdag*)’ is carried out by the sheep, which is called *lhe’u-lug*. This term can be read as ‘sheep of the little gods (humans)’. This thanato-spirit, possibly the only truly domestic animal presented in the manuscript, must be identical to or closely related to the *skyibs-lug* / *chibs-lug*, the psychopomp sheep that played a vital role in the archaic funerary traditions of Tibet:<sup>86</sup>

From the mind manifestation of *’Od-de gung-rgyal*... The blazing fire on the horns...  
subdues the *dre*. By your speech the *gzed*... By the qualities of the *lhe’u-lug*, the  
*bdud* master of death...

*’od de gung rgyal yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *thugs kyi sprul pa les* (C.T. = *las*) {###} *rwa la mye* (C.T. = *me*)  
*’bar bas* {##} *dre* (C.T. = *’dre*) *’dul / skad kyi s gzed* {#} {####} {####}<sup>87</sup> {####} {####} *lhe’u lug*  
*yon tan yis* (C.T. = *gyis*) *’chi bdag bdud* {##}.

<sup>86</sup> In a Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur-related text, we find the *chibs-lug* as one of the *gtad-g.yar* (literally: ‘given and lent’), a series of presents for the deceased (Bellezza 2008: 459–464). The use of the term *gtad* to describe the *skyibs-lug*, the Old Tibetan version of this psychopomp animal, is found in Pt 1042, Ins. 106, 107.\* For studies of the *skyibs-lug* / *skyib-lug* / *skhyibs-lug* / *skyi-lug* in Pt 239, Pt 1042, Pt 1134, and Pt 1194, see Lalou 1953, p. 357; Haarh 1969, pp. 370, 373, 376, 378; Stein 1970, pp. 162, 169, 182 (n. 35); Stein 1971, pp. 484, 496, 514, 515; Macdonald 1971, pp. 365, 366, 374; Bellezza 2008, pp. 500–503; *infra*, pp. 213–220. In Pt 239 (Ins. r10-2, r10-3), it reads: “By the properly [presented] *skyib-lug* funerary gift (*stad-pa*, C.T. = *gtad-pa*), may the surviving relatives be well and lucky afterwards” (*skyib-lug legs-par stad-pas // gnyen-dun* (C.T. *gnyen-’dun*) *slad-ma rnams la // rjes bzang zhing bkra-shis par gyur cig //*). In a more Buddhist-influenced Eternal Bon funerary ritual, the sheep, yak, horse, *khyung*, lion, and dragon are *gtad-pa*, representing various positive mental qualities (Kværne 1985: 17, 18). According to Haarh (1969: 376, 378), *skyibs-lug* can be glossed ‘crypt sheep’, and was probably deposited in the tomb after being sacrificed. I am more inclined to define this term as ‘sheep of the shelter’, a reference to the shelter it provided the dead during the postmundane crossing. Furnishing harborage as a surrogate ally of the deceased was this sheep’s prime function; its appointment in the tomb a consequence of that role.

\* The term *gtad* in Pt 1042 has been read as *gtang*, leading to an incomplete assessment of the *skyibs-lug* and other aspects of the archaic funeral. Lalou (1953: 357) and Haarh (1969: 370, 376, 377) in their readings thought that *gtang* denotes a ‘shaft’ or ‘grave pit’ in which offerings to the dead were deposited. For my reading of the same Pt 1042 passage, see 2008, p. 451 (n. 309).

<sup>87</sup> The remainder of the text of this frame was detached from the illumination and now appears above the Na-2r frame.



Na-2r

The second frame in the Na series is dedicated to another flock of divine birds; this one born from an egg that ‘opened at the margin of the living and dead’ (*gson gshin mtshams su rdol*). Straddling the great existential divide, the pedigree of these multicolored birds could not be better suited to work as funerary allies.<sup>88</sup> Rather than the species being enumerated, the four

<sup>88</sup> In the Mu-cho’i khrom’dur text furnishing the origins of the soul stone, the three main soul receptacles, the stone, juniper tree and vulture, appear at the very margin (*’tshams*) of existence (*yod*) and non-existence (*med*; Bellezza 2008: 414, 416), a position of overarching cosmic proportions. In a soul evocation text of the same collection, we find addressed to the deceased the following lines: “Raise your head up at the margin of existence (life) and non-existence (death). Show us your face at the margin of light (*gsal*) and shadows (*grib*). At the margin of the dead (*shi*) and the living (*gson*), look towards us with your eyes” (*yod med mtshams su dbu yar khyod (= khyogs) / gsal grib ’tshams* (C.T. = *mtshams*) *su zhal tshur ston / shi gson ’tshams* (C.T. = *mtshams*) *su spyen tshur gzigs /*. See *ibid.*, p. 419, 421. By arriving at these cosmological junctions, the soul of the deceased attains a state of equipoise. In both the Mu-cho’i khrom’dur and Dunhuang funerary manuscripts, this ritual homeostasis is called the ‘ordered position’ (*gral*). It is in this light that the psychopomp birds in the Na-2r frame should be understood.

lesser birds have titles featuring their salient qualities. The first one mentioned is Gshin-bye'u 'dzin-ma (Little Bird Holder of the Dead); its appellation declaring funerary credentials. The second bird is Mjug-dar mdzes-mo rgyal (Silk Cloth Tail Queen of Beauty); the reference to silk or another fine quality cloth (*dar*) here recalls the use of this material in both archaic and contemporary funerary rituals and is suggestive of a long tail.<sup>89</sup> The third bird, Dang-ma skad-snyan (Purity Melodious Speech), guides the dead by its sweet song. The fourth bird, Chang-ka 'dab-drag, has very powerful wings (the meaning of *chang-ka* is unclear), which are very useful in making the ultimate passage.

According to the text, the quartet of birds calls out to receive the deceased female, who is referred to simply as *sman* (woman) here. The equipage of the four lesser birds is then offered to aid the departed one. The text next turns to the chief of the flock, the highly celebrated horned eagle of Tibet, the *khyung*. In the illustration this golden-breasted king of birds is crowned with two erect horns and two horn-like ears. The covering of the firmament with his wings illustrates mastery over the celestial realm. The text concludes by making the standard requests to the birds of this frame. These birds of the avian habitat serve the *sman*, which is probably a reference to both the class of prototypic divine females and their mortal representatives:

Also, a jewel egg opened at the margin of the living and the dead. Gshin-bye'u 'dzin-ma, Mjug-dar mdzes-mo rgyal, Dwangs-ma skad-snyan, Chang-ka 'dab-drag, these four, call to receive the *sman*. We offer this superior equipage. The little bird defender-protector is the bird of power, the great *khyung*, who with his wings covers space.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> The description of the tail of this bird seems to allude to the use of a long strip of white cloth (*dar-dkar*) in both archaic and prevailing funerary rites of Tibet, as well as those in adjoining regions. Now more or less a ritual formality, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *dar-dkar* is called a 'bridge', that which assists the deceased in crossing to the afterlife or to a more abstract form of liberation. On the use of the *dar-dkar* in Tibetan funerals, see Waddell 1895, pp. 493, 494; Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 25; Bellezza 2008, pp. 397, 402, 408, 410, 560, 561.

<sup>90</sup> As a proper name, this would read 'Powerful Bird Great Horned Eagle' (Dbang-bya khyung-chen). According to the soul wing ritual text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, at the funerals of great religious practitioners (*gshen*) the 'miraculous *khyung* [wing] of the firmament' (*nam-mkha'i khyung 'phrul*) should be raised (Bellezza 2008: 431). Pt 1194 identifies the vulture wing as the origin of the bird horns (*bya-ru*) and horned eagle horns (*khyung-ru*) that surmount the *gsas* (a class of gods to which many of the divine funerary allies of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur belong; *ibid.*, 506, 507, 509). In another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the funerary god Ye-yod dbang-chen (Great Powerful Primordial Existence) has a *khyung* horn and *khyung* claws, which he directs against the 'dre, *klu* and *srin* disruptors of funerals (*ibid.*, 443, 445). Also found in the same text is the divine funerary ally Gnam-gsas khyung-rum (Sky God Khyung World Womb, *ibid.*, 446). In another work of the same collection of death rituals, a brotherhood of nine funerary *dbal* deities are accompanied by one hundred iron *khyung* (*ibid.*, 466). Furthermore, the bumblebee funerary god Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung was empowered by the *khyung* (*ibid.*, 476). In Pt 1136, *khyung* horns are erected on the head of the first ritual transport horse (*do-ma*), foreshadowing the *khyung* imagery in the *rta-gtad* text of Eternal Bon. See *ibid.*, pp. 452–464, 522; cf. Stein 1971, p. 495 (n. 48). In Pt 1134, an ancestral patriarch, Mgon-tshun phywa, places bird horns on the *do-ma*, before two *bon-po* can conduct the funeral (*infra*, pp. 230–232; Stein 1971: 495). With what is known from Pt 1194, we can probably take these 'khyung horns' or 'bird horns' as referring to sacred vulture feathers. For the *khyung* in a Naxi illuminated funerary scroll see Rock 1955, pl. ix. *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las gri gsas gshed la dbab pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 533–574) provides a description of the demon-destroying funerary *khyung* of the *gri-gsas* class of deities (Nos. 556, ln. 2 to 557, ln. 1): "Bswō! One egg hatched at the corner of the castle of the *dbal*. From inside it a water bird *khyung* of the *gri-gsas* [appeared]. You are in a leather greatcoat (*slag-pa*) of extremely turbulent (*skyin-'dangs*) water.\* You have feathers of sword and scimitar (*chu-gri*) wings. On your head are flexible celestial iron (*gnam-lcags*) *khyung* horns. You are ornamented with a great jewel crest (*gtsug*), a salutary sign of the *dra-ma klu*.† With the light from your golden lake eyes you make the *bdud* of violent death cower and faint. With your *dbal* beak, which is like a bowed mountain of iron, you devour starting from the head the black *klu-bdud*. With your celestial iron sickle *dbal* claws you seize the heart

Act as the little bird defender-protectors. Little bird habitat [unit] of the *sman*, act as the protector that does not disperse.

*yang rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sgong* (C.T. = *sgo*) *nga cig* / *gson gshin 'tshams* (C.T. = *mtshams*) *su rdol* / *gshin bye'u 'dzin ma dang* / *mjug dar mdzes mo rgyal* / *dang* (C.T. = *dwangs*) *ma skad snyan dang* / *chang ka 'dab drag bzhis* / *sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *sun ma 'bod* / *dkor yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dam par 'bul* / *bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ni* / *dbang bya khyung cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *des* / *gshog pas nam mkha* (C.T. = *mkha'*) *khebs* / *bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma mdzod* / *sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *bye'u slungs rnams myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma mdzod* //

of the red (bloody) mouth *gshed* of violent death. Iron hooks and sabers are spread on your feathers. Mercilessly beat down the enemies (*dgra*), blighters (*gdon*), agents of violent death (*gri*) and homicidal spirits (*sri*). From your mouth falls the extremely turbulent *dbal* water, which deluges the country realm of the *bdud*. From your nostrils falls a mighty conflagration (*rma-'dangs*),<sup>‡</sup> which overturns Btsan-yul brgyad-gong (apparently, the country of the *btsan* demons)” (*bswo sgong gcig dbal mkhar zur la brdor* (= *rdol*) / *nang na gri gsas chu yi bya khyung la* / *skyin 'dangs chu yi slag pa can* / *ral gri'i sgro la chu gri'i gshog* / *gnam lcags khyung ru dbu la ldem* / *nor bu rin chen gtsug tu rgyan* (= *brgyan*) / *dra ma klu la yag pa'i rtags* / *spyang mig gser tshong* (= *mtsho*) / *'od zer gyis* / *gri bdud kham* (= *'kham*) *shing rgyal* (= *brgyal*) *bar byed* / *lcags ri bkug 'dra'i dbal mchu yi* / *klu bdud nag po mgo nas 'cha* / *gnam lcags rgya zor dbal sder gyis* / *gri gshed kha dmar snying nas bzung* / *spu la spu gri'i lcags kyu 'phros* / *dgra gdon gri sri'i dmyal thag chod* / *zhal nas dbal chu skyi 'dangs 'bebs* / *bdud yul gri kham rba la g.yeng* / *shangs sgor mtshon gyi rma 'dangs 'beb* / *btsal* (= *btsan*) *yul brgyad gong kha zhabs zlog* /).

\* For primary and secondary references to *skyin-'dangs* / *skyin-dang*, see Bellezza 2010a, 75 (n. 168).

† The word *dra-ma* is usually associated with the *sgra-bla* and has the import of ‘vanquishing hero’, ‘victorious one’ or ‘champion’ (Bellezza 2005: 384 [n. 141]).

‡ For primary and secondary references to *rma-'dang(s)* / *rman-dang*, see Bellezza 2010a, 75 (n. 168, 169).

As seen in the descriptions of funerary deities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text of *gri-gsas* gods, their imagery is more extravagant than the naturalistic depictions of deities of the same species in the illuminated funerary manuscript. In the same text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur there are more such fanciful zoomorphic spirit allies of the funerary priests (Nos. 562, ln. 6 to 563, ln. 6):

Mount: Rngam-drag *gsas kyi khyung* (Terrible Ferocity Khyung of the *Gsas*), Rider: Mthu-mgon *lcags kyi dbal-khra* (Great Magic Power Protector *Dbal Hawk* of Iron).

Mount: Mgyog-gsas *thang-dkar rgod* (Swift *Gsas Lammergeyer*), Rider: *Dbal-gsas bse yi bya-klag* (C.T. = *bya-glag*; *Dbal-gsas Eagle* of Bse).

There is also a *gsas* deer mount ridden by *Drag-tshan dbal-sgo gsas*, a dragon mount with a lion rider, an ox mount with a goat rider; a cloud mount with a white dog rider, and a tiger mount with a donkey rider. According to the text: “Each of them has seven ancillary manifestations, each of which holds a regimental banner (*ru-mtshon*) of the *dbal*. They like the [battle cry] *bswo* and are pleased by the [battle cry] *cha*. Their forms agilely move about the peak of the *dbal* mountain. They play on the shores of the *dbal* lake. Each pair makes manifestations in the expanse of space. They are greatly affectionate towards the *bon* and *gshen*. They are extremely rough towards the enemies and *sri*” (*re re la yang bdun bdun sprul* / *ru mtshon dbal dar re re thog* / *bswo la dga'zhing cha la dgyes* / *dbal ri'i rtse la sku rtsal spyang* / *dbal mtsho 'dab la rol zhing rtse* / *bar snang mkha' la sprul pa sdeb* / *bon dang gshen la 'ol re byams* / *dgra dang sri la dbal re rtsab* /). In Eternal Bon funerals of a Buddhist-influenced rite, the *khyung* is the holder of knowledge, who eliminates obscurations that prevent the deceased from achieving enlightenment. Liberation of the deceased occurs when he or she is united with the primordial Buddha Kun-tu bzang-po, which coincides with the display of the last *tsag-li* of the death ritual. See *op. cit.* Kværne 1985, pp. 18, 25.



Pa-2r

The final line of the Pa-2r, Pa-3r and Pa-4r frames confirms that this is indeed the last or thirteenth series in Division One of the illuminated funerary manuscript.

Four textual lines of the Pa-1r frame have survived, the upper three of which are fragmentary. As such, the name of the deity / deities and the lore surrounding them in this frame of the manuscript have disappeared. What is readable accords with the frames we have already examined. Whatever their identity, these deities exist in the castle and fortress of the *lhe'u*, the final resting place of the dead or a place / dimension closely aligned to it. The final grammatical line of Pa-1r exhorts the deities to action, asking them 'not to have a mind to be physically idle' (*sku ma-g.yel thugs ma-phang shig*).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> In *gsol-kha* literature, deities that are the object of propitiation are often asked or ordered 'not to be distracted' (*ma-g.yel*); their complete and undivided attention required to realize the objectives of the ritualists.

Also, the wild ungulates of the *sman* and *yul-sa*. You abide in the castle fortress of the *lhe'u*. Do not see yourselves as being physically lazy.

{###} {###} {###} {###} *sman dang yul sa'i ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *kyang* (+ /) *lhe'u mkhar rdzong la brten / sku ma ye la* (= *g.yel*) *thugs ma phang shig* {/}

The second frame of the Pa series is dedicated to another flock of divine funerary birds. These birds are also depicted with multicolored plumage. As with some other second frames of the first part of the manuscript, only three of the lesser birds are given by name: cuckoo (*khu-byug*),<sup>92</sup> parrot (*ne-tso*) and *the-ba*.<sup>93</sup> According to Tibetan folklore, the *the-ba* has brownish plumage and is considered the messenger of the cuckoo and the one that announces its arrival. This quartet of birds 'also shows the beneficial way' (*sman lam shul yang mtshon*), the path of liberation, to the deceased. As part of this funerary equipage, there is the 'beautiful peacock' (*rma-bya sgag-mo*), who is entrusted with the flock's protection and custodianship. In the accompanying illustration the peacock is shown with its head swung back towards its tail, an old manner of depiction. By its great magical power (*mthu-che*) and mighty skill (*rtsal-drag*) this *dkor* 'also leads the way to go' (*gshags kyi shul yang 'dren*) for the deceased:

Also, a jewel egg opened in the four directions<sup>94</sup> and from it appeared a turquoise cuckoo bird and a parrot who speaks and an agate *the-ba*. You {also} show the way of benefit. We offer you as the superior equipage. Beautiful peacock little bird guardian protector, do not let disperse the beneficial (*sman*) little bird rosary (flock) and act as their keeper. Little birds, by your magic power and mighty skill also lead the way to go. We offer you as the superior equipage. The little bird habitat [units] are finished.

*yang rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sgong nga cig / {na pa} phyogs bzhi rdol / g.yu bya khu byug dang / ne tso smra mkhas dang / mchong yi* (C.T. = *gi*) *the ba byung / sman lam shul {yang} mtshon / dkor yi dam par 'bul // bye'u mgon srungs* (C.T. = *srung*) *ma ni / rma bya sgag* (C.T. = *sgeg*) *mo des / sman yi bye'u 'phring* (= *'phreng*) *rnams / myi byer 'tsho'* (C.T. = *'tsho*) *rdzi mdzod (+ /) {#} bye'u cung* (C.T. = *chung*) *de rnams ni (+ /) mthu che rtsal drag bas gshags* (C.T. = *gshegs*) *kyi shul yang 'dren / dkor yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dam par 'bul lo // bye'u slungs tshar ro // //*

<sup>92</sup> In the text *Rus thabs mar zhus* there is the divine cuckoo (Nos. 500, ln. 6 to 501, ln. 1). The relevant passage reads: "The cuckoo of turquoise *lhang se lhang* (conveys the sound of its call): In the mix of clouds and air, it picks up between the horns (crest) on its head the egg of the agent of violent death (*gri*) as large as a mountain and flings it into the wind" (*g.yu yi khu byug lhang se lhang / 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *na rlung sprin 'dzom pa'i ra* (= *rwa*) *bar der / gri yi sgo nga ri tsam rlung la 'phang /*). Other zoomorphic spirit allies in the same text include the *dbal* bird, otter (*'gyur-sram*), golden lion (*gser gyi seng-ge*), *dbal* yak and striped tiger (*stag ra* (= *ris*) *khra-bo*; Nos. 501, ln. 1 to 503, ln. 2). For the cuckoo in pre-modern Tibetan folklore, see Richardson 1998, pp. 711–713.

<sup>93</sup> In the Eternal Bon tradition, these three lesser birds form part of a group of thirteen sacred birds called *bya-bon bcu-gsum*. In the *Gzi brjid*, this group of birds is invoked in the Sngang-gshen theg-pa, as part of a large group of deities mostly consisting of *sgra-bla*. See *op. cit.* Snellgrove 1967: 64, 65, 258 (n. 22).

<sup>94</sup> Two syllables *{na pa}* found in this line are of unknown signification.



*Fig. 4. A copper alloy talisman (thog-lcags) depicting a peacock regardant (4.5 cm in height), early historic period (650–1000 CE) or vestigial period (1000–1300 CE). The heads of peacocks are customarily shown facing backwards on thog-lcags. Private collection*



Pa-3r

This final (*mtha'-ma*) frame in the set of cervid habitats is dedicated to the marmot (*phyi-ba*) and badger (*grum-pa*). While these two species and some of the wild ungulates presented in the text are not cervids, they are deemed to belong to the same divine order of creatures. The deer lending its name to this network of animals reflects its sacred character and exceptionally important ritual role. In the translation below, I treat both the badger and marmot as being males but this is not at all certain. The turquoise badger is the bearer of nectarous waters (*bdud-rtsi chab*) and the lineage representative (*gdung-sob*) of females. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur the badger, along with the monkey and bat, form a triad of funerary animals with apotropaic functions.<sup>95</sup> In the illuminated manuscript the badger carries out two crucial ritual operations for the deceased: lustration with sanctified water and protective measures

<sup>95</sup> In the text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur detailing the origins and ritual procedures of this great funerary tradition, Ston-pa gshen-rab prescribes a special monkey, badger and bat (*gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa*) as harm-resisting instruments for the pacification of noxious spirits afflicting the dead. The inclusion of this zoomorphic trio at the very beginning and end of the funeral outlined in this text suggests that they once possessed substantial ritual roles. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the specific functions of the monkey, bat and badger, also called the 'three blocker brothers' (*thub-chod spun-gsum*), are not elaborated. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 381, 382, 390, 405, 411. The illuminated funerary manuscript suggests that these figures of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur were zoomorphic spirit allies of the funerary priests, which were assigned special ritual operations. A white monkey, white badger and bat also participate in a ransom offering ritual (*glud*). For this account, see *op. cit.* Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, pp. 55, 56.

by virtue of it being the surrogate of females.<sup>96</sup> The golden marmot ‘introduces the mark of magnificence’ (*gzi-mal sbyor*) to the *lhe’u-sman*, the deceased woman and probably her surviving female relatives as well. This magnificence, brilliance or splendor that the marmot delivers to the subjects of the funerary performance appears to be a special type of protective and good fortune-bestowing force.<sup>97</sup>

The text next announces that the possessions equipage (*longs-spyod dkor*) is tantamount to the thirteen different cervid habitats or orders. This is a clear indication that the psychopomp ritual of the illuminated funerary manuscript originally consisted of thirteen series. The text then affirms the primal or ultimate identity of these thirteen cervid habitats, a legitimizing mechanism commonly employed in Tibetan archaic ritual traditions. In the words of the text: “In primal times it existed like that” (*dang-po de ltar bsrid do*). Finally, the text recapitulates the conferment regime of the first part of the funerary manuscript, stating that the various animals of the ritual have been offered as the *dkor* or equipage for all the male and female offspring (*sras*) of the little (darling) gods; in other words, the deceased human beings. From this line it can be understood that the *dkor* of birds and ungulates served the needs of the deceased by guiding and protecting her. The final line of the text unambiguously states that this ritual sequence is now completed:

From the last cervid habitat is the marmot and badger, these two. The badger is the color of turquoise. He brings the nectarous waters, so the badger acts as the lineage representative of females. The marmot is the color of gold. He introduces the mark of magnificence (*gzi-mal*) to the *lhe’u-sman*. The wealth equipage amounts to the thirteen deer habitats as well. In primal times it existed like that. We offer the belongings equipage to the brother and sister little *lha* progeny. The jewel deer habitat is completed.

*sha slungs mtha’ ma nes* (C.T. = *nas*) (- *ni*) / *phyi ba’* (C.T. = *ba*) *dang grum pa nyis* (= *gnyis*) / *grum pa’* (C.T. = *pa*) *g.yu yi mdog* / *bdud rtsi chab len bas* / *sman yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *gdung sob*s (C.T. = *sob*) *mdzad* / *phyi ba’* (C.T. = *ba*) *gser yi mdog* / *lhe’u sman gzi’* (C.T. = *gzi*) *mal sbyor* / *longs spyod dkor yi grangs* / *sha slungs bcu gsum*<sup>98</sup> *yang* / *dang po de ltar bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) *do* / *lhe’u sras lcam dral la longs spyod dkor du ’bul* // // *rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *yi sha slungs rdzogs s.ho* // °°° //

<sup>96</sup> On the use of nectarous water (*bdud-rtsi chab*) to purify the deceased in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 397, 399, 408, 417, 434. The surrogate called the ‘lineage representative of females’ (*gdung-sob*) in our text is the badger. In an overview of ritual procedures in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, it reads: “[The deceased only son of existence] was restored by the surrogate [and] nectar (*bdud-rtsi sob kyis gsos*).” \* In *ibid.* (p. 399), I misread this line as: “He was restored by *sob* nectar.” In *ibid.* (p. 408), it also states, “For the herbs that restore the body, it is essential [to administer] all the medicines, pulverized jewels, first offerings of libations, and the herbs of the tomb” (*phung po gdung sob rtsi gsol du / sman dang rin chen zhogs* (= *bzhog*) *ma dang / skyems phud rtsi dur bcas par ’ishal* /). This sentence should read: “For the herbs to embellish the surrogate body of [the deceased’s] corpse, it is essential [to collect] all the medicines, pulverized jewels, first offerings of libations, and the herbs of the tomb.”

\* Similarly, according to Stein (*Antiqua* III, 2010: 174), in death rites *gso-ba* means ‘healed’ or ‘revived’. This term however must not be construed as the necromantic raising of the dead, but rather as an action operating on the therapeutic level.

<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in a Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur origins myth, two primal deities confer the ‘magnificence and blessings of their power’ (*dbang gi gzi byin*) on the fledging *dbal* funerary gods. In the ritual sequel of the same text it states: “Please bestow upon us the magnificence and blessings of the power of the *dbal*” (*gzi byin dbal gyi dbang gsol*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 466, 467.

<sup>98</sup> The text was sliced in two here; the words above this point accompany the Pa-3r illustration and those below this point are joined to the Pa-4r painting.



Pa-4r

The final frame in Division One of the illuminated funerary manuscript is given over to a goddess named Lha-mo brtan-ma (Goddess Earth Woman). This divine ‘mistress of the earth’ (*sa-bdag*) is the *sgra-bla* or protective spirit of the *lhe’u*, the ‘little god’ humans. Although the text says that she is ornamented with five different jewels (*rin-chen sna-nga*), in the accompanying illustration there is no sign of gems on her body. In this painting she wears a red upper garment with forest-green trim. The rest of her body is obscured by a yellow mound, which may represent a heap of gold. Other yellow mounds in the illustration may also depict precious substances. As an earth goddess (*brtan-ma*), she must have been seen as the guardian and dispenser of the treasures of the land.<sup>99</sup> She is recorded as defeating various classes of

<sup>99</sup> Lha-mo brtan-ma, as the mistress of the earth of Tsang-tsang ’khor-ba-sa (the king of the *sa-bdag*) and all other spirits that ‘rule over the earth’ (*sa la mnga’ mdzad*), is noted in a *gsol-kha* text attributed to the four renowned Bon practitioners of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE known as the Mkhas-pa mi-bzhi. These spirits are given offerings so that the ritualists might attain dominance over the locale. See Bellezza 2005, p. 331. Also, see Blondeau 2008, p. 244; Nebesky-

demons as well as pestilence. This protector of wild ungulates is petitioned in order that the herds (*khyu*) of the four directions (*phyogs-bzhi*) do not disperse. In this culminating frame of the psychopomp funerary performance, the divine defenders of deer are offered victuals (*zhal-sros*). This is the most complete suite of offerings spelled out in the manuscript. It comprises standard items of the Tibetan ritual tradition. The last line of the frame announces the completion of the ritual pertaining to divine protectors of wild cervids:

From the deer castle habitat is the *sa-bdag* queen, Lha-mo brtan-ma, she who is ornamented with five different jewels. You are the *sgra-bla* of the *lhe'u*. You subdue the lethal epidemics (*g.yam-dri*), *gzed*, *btsan*, and *srin-po* of the earth. Do not scatter the wild ungulate herds with [fine coats of] fur in the four directions. With vermillion, incense, roasted barley meal, and butter, we offer victuals to the deer defenders. The deer defender habitat [ritual] is completed.

*sha mkhar slungs ma ni* (C.T. = *nas*) / *sa bdag rgyal mo ste* / *lha mo brtan ma des* / *rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sna lnga brgyan* / *lhe'u yi sgra bla lags* / *g.yam* (C.T. = *yam*) *dri gzed btsan dang* / *sa yi srin po 'dul* / *ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *spu khyu yang* (+ /) *phyogs bzhir ma byer ro* / *mtshal spos gzhib* (C.T. = *zhib*) *mar yis* / *sha mgon zhal sros gsolo* // *sha mgon slungs ma {rdzogs so}* //

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Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 287, 297. For this goddess (Sa yi lha-mo brtan-ma) in a fumigation offering (*bsangs-gsol*) ritual of an Upper Tibetan spirit-medium (*lha-pa*), see Bellezza 2011c, p. 26.

## Division Two: The *Ste'u* Ritual



Nga-3v

The first three series of the *ste'u* ritual are missing from the illuminated funerary manuscript. That there were three preceding series is confirmed in the Nga-3v text, which indicates that it is part of the fourth series of the *ste'u* ritual.

The third frame in the Nga series of the *ste'u* ritual is that of the sun and moon, pointing to a celestial focus. It is conducted by three gods who are the sons of the *phy*a, Phya-bu yang-kar (White Basis of Good Fortune Phya Son), Phya-bu dos-drag (Extremely Powerful Phya Son) and Phya-bu byin-byang.<sup>100</sup> In the accompanying painting these gods are attired in robes orange to red in color with either forest-green trim or inner robes. Their heads were lost when the painting was cut by previous handlers. Based on other ternary frames of the *ste'u* ritual, it is very likely

<sup>100</sup> The *phy*a / *phywa* are a native class of cosmogonic gods instrumental in the mythic rise of the Spu-rgyal royal dynasty and *bon* priestly lineages. They have been widely written about in the non-funerary context. For example, see Stein 2010 (*Antiqua* III), pp. 147–160; Macdonald 1971, pp. 350–354; Dagkar 1999; Karmay 1998, pp. 249–251. Stein (*ibid.*, 147) notes that the *phy*a are sometimes the equivalent of the *lha*. In the list of gifts given to the deceased known as *gtad-yar*, the *phy*a lineage god Lha-bo lha-sras acts as a companion in the afterlife. This divine figure is a prototypic ancestral god of the Tibetans. See Bellezza 2008, p. 451; 2010a, pp. 83–88; *supra*, p. 35 (fn. 54).

that they had peaked white hats surmounted by a feather plume. The trio of divine figures is shown standing and gesturing with their left hands towards a tree painted on the left side of the illumination. That this object is a tree is confirmed in the text of the Pa-3v frame. By their very depiction, it appears that trees constituted an important material component of the *ste'u* ritual.

According to the text, in pursuance of being offered to the gods, the *ste'u* of the funeral (*bdur*) requires two types of precious tents, as well as a canopy and carpet. The carpet consists of a cloak made of white bird feathers (*bya-thul dkar-po*), a sacred garment with celestial overtones.<sup>101</sup> Probably made of lammergeyer feathers, the placement of this robe on the ground is redolent with symbolism, none of which is spelled out in the funerary manuscript. We might surmise that the bird-feather cloak signaled an upward orientation, the direction the consciousness principle of the deceased must go in order to reach the afterlife:

The name of the fourth *ste'u* is the bright-light sun and moon *ste'u*. *Phya-bu yang-kar* and *Phya-bu dos-drag* and *Phya-bu byin-byang*, these three, [of] the *ste'u* of a well-done funeral. The golden tent, turquoise tent and patterned brocade canopy above, [and] the feather cloak carpet below are offered [to the three *phyas* gods].

*ste'u bzhi mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *ba ni / nyi zla 'od gsal ste'u / phya bu yang* (C.T. = *g.yang*) *kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *dang phya bu dos drag dang / phya bu byin byang gsum / bdur* (C.T. = *'dur*) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *grub pa'i ste'u / gser gur g.yu gur dang / za bog* (C.T. = *'og*) *ris cen* (C.T. = *can*) *kha yi khabs / bya thul dkar po 'og kyi gdan du 'bul // //*

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<sup>101</sup> This is the *bya-rgod dkar-mo'i thul-pa*, a robe made of white vulture (probably lammergeyer) feathers, which is also supposed to have been conferred upon high ranking *bon* priests of the protohistoric period. See Bellezza 2001, p. 66; 2008, p. 228.



Nga-4v

In the final frame of the fourth *ste'u* series a prototypic divine couple is brought to the fore. The female is dressed in red with a blue-green collar and the male in a shirt of a greener hue. The tent painting has intricate latticework, is gold and teal in color, and not particularly large in size. However, the text tells us that this tent has a dark blue (*mthing*) lattice of support (*dra-tshugs*) and a white [body].<sup>102</sup> This discrepancy was evidently viewed by the users of the text as relatively unimportant, physical variations in all thirteen tents of the *ste'u* ritual as being paramount. The funeral of the god and goddess of this frame took place in Bar-yul gling-drug (Middle Country Six Realms), which appears to be an epithet for the earth. It served as a model (*dpe*) for the subsequent funerals of mortals, the divinities and humans joined together genealogically as well as ritually. Thus, deathliness in both its mythic and physical aspects relied on the same hallowed remedies. In the last instance, the standard appeal for the birth of male children is made and the requisite gifts offered in return. This focus on male progeny seems to reveal a gender bias reflective of patrilineal traditions. By ensuring the birth of boys, the patriliney was perpetuated, as is still the case in Tibet:

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion of the term *dra* (lattice, grate, etc.), see Uray 1962, pp. 219–223.

When the funeral [was performed] at the death of Yul-sa khri-do-re and Khri-lcam gling-mo skar, in Bar-yul gling-drug, a conch-white little tent with the dark blue lattice of support was that which was made. Today, we call [to be blessed with] male children and offer on behalf [of the deceased] this salutary model.

*bar yul gling drug du / yul sa khri do re dang / khri lcam gling mo skar / grongs pa bdur* (C.T. = 'dur) *dus su / dung sbre'u dkar po la (+ /) mthing yi dra tshugs can les* (C.T. = las) *bzhingso* (C.T. = bzhengs so) // *de ring ne'u* (C.T. = na) *zhon* (C.T. = gzhon) *pho smos la dpe'* (C.T. = dpe) *bzangs* (C.T. = bzang) *don du 'bul lo //*



Ca-1v

The first frame of the Ca or fifth series features a *ste'u* called the 'sparkling jewel conch' (*rin-chen dung 'od 'bar-ba*). It is said that the top or peak (*rtse*) of this arboreal ritual construction shines with the light of the conch. Little birds of conch fly around the structure. The relative position of these avian functionaries is given in the text as *skabs na*. As per the illustration, this denotes the lower portion of the *ste'u* construction. The last line of the text verifies that the *ste'u* is indeed the receptacle or tabernacle (*rten*) of the 'noble woman' (*sman-btsun*), an epithet for the deceased.<sup>103</sup>

The fifth *ste'u* was bestowed the name resplendent light jewel conch *ste'u*. On the top of it the light of the conch shines. Near the bottom little conch birds are flying. At the base is spread a lotus of eight petals. It is the receptacle (*rten*) for the arrival of the noble woman.

*ste'u lnga mtshan gsol ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) / *rin chen dung 'od 'bar ba'i ste'u* / *rtse la dung 'od 'bar / skabs na dung bye'u 'phur / rtsa na phad* (C.T. = *pad*) *ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) 'dab brgyad bdal / *sman btsun byon ba rten* //

<sup>103</sup> In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, what appear to be non-gender-specific epithets for the dead include *'phang-btsun* / *phangs-btsun* and *mi-btsun*.



Ca-2v

The second frame of the Ca series features a god that emanated from the hail of the meadow. This icy generative agent is of course associated with the sky and the awesome forces that come from it.<sup>104</sup> The god is attired in red with olive-green sleeves, cuffs and trim, or in underclothes of this color. The meadow (*spang-ma*) is described with the term *yur*, which may signify something to do with irrigation or water. He who oversees the *ste'u* ritual, Gcod-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje (Cutter King Defender of the Little Gods Lord), is depicted and described as 'mounted on a hawk' (*bya-khra bcibs*) and brandishing a maul used in battle (*dbyug-tho*).<sup>105</sup> He defeats the *gnyan* and

<sup>104</sup> In a related mythological motif of the oral tradition of Snying-drung, after ingesting some hail a woman became pregnant with the son of the mountain god Gnyan-chen thang-lha, a strong and handsome youth named Sengge dmag-dpon (Lion General; Bellezza 2005: 199 [n. 93]).

<sup>105</sup> The Lamaist counterpart of this god is found in an Eternal Bon funeral in which *tsag-li* (illustrated cards used for ritual and initiation) are employed. This is Gcod-pa khra-slag-can (Cutter One Wearer of the Hawk Greatcoat), one of the so-called thirteen primeval *gshen* (*ye-gshen*), divinities that rescue the dead from the *bar-do*. Gcod-pa khra-slag can is lavishly dressed in a gown that appears to be of indigenous origin while he is bedecked in Indian ornaments such as a

*bdud* demons that haunt the deceased, presumably by pounding them with his maul. The action asked of Gcod-rgyal *lhe'u-mgon rje* and the edible offerings given him as compensation are of a standard kind in many archaic rituals. They represent the produce of both herders and farmers:

Also, a jewel hailstone manifested in the *yur* meadow [and from it appeared] Gcod-rgyal *lhe'u-mgon rje* (Cutter King). You ride a hawk mount. You brandish a maul. For your activities you subdue the *bdud* and *gnyan*. With your great magic power and mighty skill, come as the guardian of the female *lhe'u*. With meal, butter and libations, we offer victuals to the defender of the *lhe'u*.

*yang rin chen ser ba cig / spang ma yur la' (C.T. = la) sprul / gcod rgyal lhe'u mgon rje / chibsu bya khra bcibs / phyag na dbyug to (C.T. = tho) bsnams / lasu gnye (C.T. = gnyan) bdud 'dul / mthu' che rtsal drag pas / lhe'u sman mgon du spyon / gzhib (C.T. = zhib) mar skyem (C.T. = skyems) pa 'is (C.T. = yis) / lhe'u mgon zhal sros gsol //*

A fragment of the Ca-3v illumination is on the same strip of paper as the Ca-2v frame. In the Ca-3v frame, only the heads of the three deities and the point of a tree have survived. With their peaked hats topped by plumes or feathers, the painting of these gods of the *ste'u* ritual shares an iconography characteristic of all third-frame figures. The style of their headgear resembles the pointed felt hats used by horse racers and shepherds in Upper Tibet (Figs. 5, 6).<sup>106</sup>

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crown of three diadems, large hoop earrings and armlets. Other *ye-gshen* in the group include Khyung gi ru-mtshon can (holds a *khyung* ensign), Rgod kyi 'phar-'dab can (holds a vulture wing), Che-rgyal rgod-zhu can (wears a vulture hat), and Rma-bya'i ldem-rgyang can (holds a peacock tail feather). For reference to these *ye-gshen*, see *op. cit.* Kværne 1985: 20, 21. The species of birds from which the main attributes of the listed *ye-gshen* come are all accounted for in the illuminated funerary manuscript, where they function as leaders of the flocks that guide the dead through the physical obstacles of the intermediate plane of existence (see Tha-2r, Na-2r and Pa-2r).

<sup>106</sup> The horse racer's hat is topped by a plume of white lammergeyer feathers, symbolizing the swiftness of this bird and the power of flight. It is traditionally fabricated from white felt but nowadays those made of imitation materials abound. In terms of its general form, the hat of *ste'u* gods is also reminiscent of that commonly worn in pre-modern times by the O-bo'i hor / A-pha hor, the dominant pastoral group of the eastern Byang-thang. This hat style of the eastern Byang-thang and some others with pointed crowns are generally known as *Ar-zhwa*.



*Fig. 5. The hat of horse-racers in Mon-'tsher, complete with appliqué designs and showy plumes of lammergeyer feathers. This photo was taken just before the start of the annual horse-racing festival (rta-rgyug) in 2006*



*Fig. 6. The peaked felt hat of the A-pha hor worn by the son of the late spirit-medium, Bstan-grag lha-pa. Here he is assisting his father while the medium invokes the gods of the trance ceremony. Photo taken in 1997*



Ca-4v

Two textual lines of what comprised the Ca-3v frame are partially intact. They are located above the Ca-4v illumination. These lines seem to relate the funerary ritual carpet to pearls (*mu-tig*) and crystal (*shel*).

The Ca-4v text features the highly abbreviated origins tale of a prototypic divine couple, for which the funerary ritual tent was first erected. As such, this frame closely parallels the contents of Nga-4v and other fourth frames, the *klu* replacing the *yul-sa* of previous text. As in other illustrations of final frames, the two deities stand behind the tent. In this painting the tent is red and yellow in color:

Also, when the funeral (*bdur*) [was performed] at the death of Klu-sras gzhon-nu (Son of the Water Spirit Youth) and Klu-lcam bzang-mo (Daughter of the Water

Spirit Good Female), {these two}, the little conch-white tent with {a copper} lattice of support was that which was made. {We call to [be blessed with] male children}. We offer [this tent] as the salutary model (*dpe'-bzangs*).

*yang klu sras gzhon nu dang / klu lcam bzang mo {gnyis /} grongs pa bdur (C.T. = 'dur) dus su / dung sbre'u dkar po {la / bzang (C.T. = zangs)} yi (C.T. = gi) dra tshugs can les (C.T. = las) bzhings (C.T. = bzhangs) / {ne'u (C.T. = na) zhon (C.T. = gzhon) pho smos} la / dpe' (C.T. = dpe) bzangs (C.T. = bzang) don du 'bul /*



Cha-1v

Fortunately, all four frames of the sixth series of the *ste'u* ritual have survived intact. The first Cha frame is dedicated to a *ste'u* structure very similar to the Ca-1v example. Its two birds of agate fly around the top of the ritual construction. In the painting its midsection and base are ornamented with vegetation. The text tells us that these sections of the *ste'u* are embellished with 'ripened grain' ('*bras-bu smyin*') and four eggs respectively. The significance of these eggs is not immediately apparent. In Eternal Bon tradition eggs often have cosmogonic and theogonic significance, as they do in the funerary texts of Gathang Bumpa. Perhaps the eggs and ripened grain signify a new beginning in the afterlife:

The sixth *ste'u* was bestowed the name resplendent jewel agate *ste'u*. Around its peak little agate birds are circling. In its middle there is ripened grain of agate. At the base there are four eggs of agate.

*ste'u drug mtshan gsol ba / rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *mchong 'od 'bar ba'i ste'u / rtse la mchong*  
*bye'u 'khor / skabs na mchong yi* (C.T. = *gi*) '*bras bu smyin* (C.T. = *smin*) // *rtsa na mchong yi*  
 (C.T. = *gi*) *sgong bzhi yod* //



Cha-2v

In this frame, the *ste'u* ritual god that emanates from the jewel hailstone of a red rock formation is named Rtse-'dzin lhe'u-mgon rje (Holder of the Peak Little Gods Defender Lord). This god appears to belong to the *rtse-lha*, a group of gods dwelling in the heights responsible for the martial victories and material success of their petitioners. *Rtse-lha* were customarily enshrined in the uppermost portion of castles and homes.<sup>107</sup> This rider of the eagle wields a battle-hammer (*tho-ba*) in his right hand, a weapon of the Eternal Bon tradition as well.<sup>108</sup> Rtse-'dzin lhe'u-mgon rje is attired in clothes typical of the illuminated manuscript. His eagle mount has a red body and tail, brown wings and an olive-green head. Brandishing his battle-hammer, Rtse-'dzin lhe'u-mgon rje defeats the demons of the stars. This is of particular importance because the archaic funerary tradition holds that the denizens of heavenly bodies can hinder the journey of the dead to the celestial otherworld.<sup>109</sup> It is because of Rtse-'dzin lhe'u-mgon rje's prodigious

<sup>107</sup> According to Stein (1972: 222, 223), the *rtse-lha* include the *pho-lha*, *mo-lha* and *dgra-lha*. For reference to the related group of spirits known as *rtse-rdzi*, see *infra*, p. 218 (fn. 143).

<sup>108</sup> In the origins tale of a *gshed* destruction ritual of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, it is said that it was Ston-pa gshen-rab, the founder of the Eternal Bon religion, who exhorted his followers to take up arms against the demons of death with weapons such as the battle-hammer (Bellezza 2008: 474).

<sup>109</sup> Stellar demons of the *g.yen* class are noted in the *smrang* of ITJ 731r, where they are invoked in an imprecation (*ibid.*, 535). In the ritual synopsis that forms the first part of this same manuscript (lns. 1–38), the star (*skar-ma*) *g.yen*

prowess and strength that ritualists call upon him to be the defender of ‘little god women’. In return, he is offered choice viands:

Also, a jewel *ser-ba* manifested on the red rock formation [and from it appeared]  
 Rtse-'dzin *lhe'u mgon-rje*. You ride on an eagle mount. In your hand you brandish  
 a battle-hammer. You subdue the *bdud* of the stars and the *btsan* of the stars. As you  
 have great magic power and mighty skill, come as the protector of the *lhe'u-sman*.  
 We offer barley meal and butter victuals to you.

*yang rin chen ser ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *cig / brag ma dmar la sprul (+ /) rtse 'dzin lhe'u mgon rje /*  
*chibsu klag* (C.T. = *glag*) *la bcibs / phyag na tho ba bsnams / skar bdud skar btsan 'dul / mthu*  
*che rtsal drag bas / lhe'u sman mgon du spyon / gzhib* (C.T. = *zhib*) *mar zhal sros gsol //*

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and planets (*gza'*) figure in a ritual of propitiation, so as not to harm the *do-ma* funerary horses. See *infra*, pp. 238–240. In the text *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng ba'i las gzhung nyin bon* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 251–295), Nos. 256, ln. 2 to 258, ln. 2, it enumerates the types of spirits that aid the funerary priests. Among these deities are those of the planets and stars. The list includes named *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* of the four cardinal directions, *lha*, *gnod-sbyin*, wealth deities (*nor-lha*), protectors of the four cardinal directions (*rgyal-chen*), guardian deities of the ten directions (*phyogs-skyong*), planetary [deities] (*gza'*), and [deities of the] constellations (*rgyun-skar*). Perhaps the goddess of the Nga-4v frame, Khri-lcam gling-mo skar, is also an example of a deity that originated in the stars.



Cha-3v

In the third frame we learn that the name of the *ste'u* of the Cha series is 'billowing southern clouds' (*lho-sprin 'thibs-pa*). 'Southern clouds' is a Tibetan expression that often refers to dark thunderheads appearing in the south.<sup>110</sup> This *ste'u* is the handiwork of three gods who are the sons of *smān* goddesses.<sup>111</sup> They are clothed in pants and shirts; two pairs of which are in matching colors while the third outfit consists of a white shirt and yellow trousers. Their pants

<sup>110</sup> *Sngags gyi mdo 'dur rin chen 'phreng ba mu cho 'i khrom 'dur las mi yul sa mtshams su che rtsod lhang* (= *ldang*) *'gran bzhugs* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 93–104, anonymous) is a text whose underlying theme is the epic struggle between the ritualists and deceased, as the former tries to stabilize and channelize the consciousness principle of the latter. In this context, another austral meteorological phenomenon is invoked. This is the southern wind (*lho-rlung*), an awesome force that circulates around the entire world (No. 97, ln. 4). It reads: "I the '*dur-gshen* together with the departed (*tshe-'das*) even when he is as gigantic as the southern wind" (*lho rlung tsam cig rgya che na / 'dur gshen nga dang tshe 'das nyid*).

<sup>111</sup> *Sman-sras* and *smān-bu*. A figure named Sman-bu is listed in the *La dwags rgyal rabs* as one of the ancestral deities of the Tibetans (Haarh 1969: 282), an identity that can be imputed to the three gods of this frame of the manuscript. This is a matrilineal tradition as such, in which female divinities form the basis of genealogical reckonings.

have cuffs or they wear inner pants of a contrasting color. They have the same type of hat as their counterparts in other ternary frames of the *ste'u* ritual; only in this case they have red plumes. These three divine sons of the *sman* stand on one bent leg in an athletic pose. This trio is apparently shown moving and pointing towards the slender tree on the left side of the frame. It seems as though the three gods are beckoning the deceased to follow them upward. The text notes that the covering above is the southern clouds and the carpet below is the turquoise mist. This atmospherical imagery adds gravitas to the ritual performance, endowing it with the majesty and wonder of sky-bound phenomena.<sup>112</sup> In the last line, the text informs us the funeral is that of the erected thirteen sky-blue (dark-blue) little tents (*mthing sbre'u bcu-gsum phubs*), a prelude to the next frame of the manuscript.

The sixth *ste'u* is named the *ste'u* of the southern billowing clouds. *Sman-bu la-se*, *Sman-bu yu-ne* and *Sman-sras skyes-cig*, these three, [of] the *ste'u* of the well-done funeral. The canopy above is the southern clouds. The carpet below is the turquoise mist. The funeral performance is the erected thirteen sky-blue little tents.

*ste'u drug mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *ba ni / lho sprin 'thibs pa'i ste'u / sman bu la se dang / sman bu yu ne dang / sman sras skyes cig gsum / bdur yags grub pa'i ste'u / lho sprin bla'i khabs / g.yu bun 'og kyi gdan / mthing sbre'u bcu gsum phubs te bdur* (C.T. = *'dur*) //

<sup>112</sup> In the *Gshin sgro srid rabs dang nang du gsas rdo* text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, there is an origins tale (*srid-pa*) about the sky and earth supports, in which the canopy-like sky and carpet-like earth are the nexus of apotropaic funerary activities (Bellezza 2008: 438). The narrative content of this Eternal Bon myth suggests considerable antiquity, even if it is presented in Classical Tibetan.



Cha-4v

This frame debuts with an abbreviated origins tale (*smrang*) concerning the funeral of another archetypal divine couple, Lha-bu 'brang-kar and Lha-sman 'phrul-mo.<sup>113</sup> In order that the funeral of the *lha* couple was well done or good (*yags*), a conch-white little tent with a 'lattice support of turquoise' (*g.yu'i dra-tshugs*) was fashioned. The 'conch-white' color probably suggests that it was made of cotton or silk (like other tents of the *ste'u* ritual), rather than yak hair or some other coarse material of a darker color. In the illustration, Lha-bu 'brang-kar and Lha-sman 'phrul-mo are simply dressed, just like other divine figures of the manuscript. The male figure is shown attired predominantly in red while the female figure is mostly in teal-blue. The ritual tent they stand next to has white, orange and olive-green components. Residing in the ancestral afterlife, this divine couple was seen as presiding over the erection of the tent in successive funerals.

<sup>113</sup> In Classical Tibetan historical texts, *lha-bu* is recorded as forming part of the proper names of ministers in the time of Tibet's eighth and ninth kings: Lha-bu smon-gzung and Lha-bu mgo-dkar (Haarh 1969: 131, 165, 403). As is well known, the epithet *lha-sras* (son of the *lha*) was affixed to the names of Tibetan kings. According to Walter (2009: 113), the titles of ministers, viz., Lha'i-zung, Lha-lod and Lha-bzang, articulated the beneficial relationship between the *lha* as an ancestral spiritual being and its living descendant, and the highest such titular expression was Lha btsan-po.

As in some other frames of the manuscript, the text implores Lha-bu 'brang-kar and Lha-sman 'phrul-mo (probably in conjunction with the other four deities of the Cha series) to bestow male children upon the surviving members. In the final line of the frame the tent is offered as the 'salutary model' (*dpe-bzangs*):

When the funeral at the death of Lha-bu 'brang-dkar and Lha-sman 'phrul-mo [was conducted], the conch-white little tent with a turquoise lattice of support was that which was made. As the *bdur* of the deceased was well done, the cut chain of death was good for the living. We call [to be blessed with] male children. We offer [this tent] as the salutary model.

*lha bu 'brang kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *dang* / *lha sman 'phrul mo dag* / *grongs pa bdur dus su* / *dung sbre'u dkar mo la* / *g.yu'i dra tsugs* (C.T. = *tshugs*) *can les* (= *las*) *bzhings* (C.T. = *bzhengs*) / *grongs pa bdur* (C.T. = *'dur*) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *pas* (+ /) *shi bgab gson la bzang* / *ne'u zhon* (C.T. = *na gzhon*) *pho smos la dpe bzangs* (C.T. = *bzang*) *don du 'bul* //



Ja-3v

The first two frames of the seventh series have disappeared from the extant manuscript. In the third frame of the Ja series, the *ste'u* is called the one that 'soars in space' (*bar-s nang 'phyo-ba*). It is positioned below the country of the gods and above the earth or on a par with the world of humans, signaling the *ste'u* ritual's advantageous placement in the three vertically aligned dimensions of the universe (*srid-pa gsum*). Three funerary gods of the *ste'u* are named in the reading. They are depicted wearing long robes over what may be skirts of contrasting colors. Their hands are raised at chest level in benediction or as a signal. The portion of the strip of paper with the tops of their heads had been cut away by former owners. It formed the sample submitted for chronometric analysis. The third eye in the forehead of the central figure (partially visible in the illustration) is not an original iconographic feature. This Lamaist embellishment must have been added to the painting at a later date, perhaps indicating that the manuscript was in use for a long time. Two of the three deities of the frame, Dbyar-bu sngon-brang and Ston-bu bcud-skyes, appear to be the gods of the summer and autumn seasons respectively. While *brang* in Classical Tibetan is defined as 'dwelling place' 'chest' or 'forest', in this more antiquated context it appears to refer to the land as singular expanse or entity.<sup>114</sup> I therefore translate the

<sup>114</sup> The word *brang* is found in Pt 1134 (ln. 56) as part of funerary ritual: "the way of the mind is the joyous dwelling place" (*thugs shul ni dga' brang*). This is a reference to the heavenly destination of the consciousness principle of the dead. In Pt 1068 (ln. 54), there is the phrase: *brang btsugs*, the erection or establishment of a series of burial rituals,

name Dbyar-bu sngon-brang as ‘Son of the Summer Blue (Verdant) Countryside’. The name Ston-bu bcud-skyes can be rendered as ‘Son of the Autumn Birth of the Essence (Sap)’. As for the third deity of the frame, Smrigs-bu yid-tsam, the signification of his name is unclear.

A slender tree occupies the left side of the frame. In this example, the drizzle<sup>115</sup> is the canopy of the ritual while the fallen snow is its carpet. The text informs us that the funeral is made by the rain of nectar. Presumably, this refers to a rite of purification designed to rid the deceased’s body and mind of all afflictions:<sup>116</sup>

The seventh *ste’u* is the *ste’u* that soars in space. Looking up, the *lha-yul* is visible. Looking down, the earth (*dog-mo*) is visible. Looking in the middle space (*bar-s nang*), the country of humans (*myi-yul*) is visible. In that way this is the *ste’u* that soars. Smrigs-bu yid-tsam, Dbyar-bu sngon-brang and Ston-bu bcud-skyes, these three, [of] the *ste’u* of the well-accomplished funeral performance. The drizzle is the canopy above. The snow is the carpet below. The funeral performance is by the rain of nectar *bdur*.

*ste’u bdun bar snang ’phyo ba’i ste’u / yar bltas lha yul snang / mar bltas dog mo snang / bar bltas myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *yul snang / de phyir ’phyo ba’i ste’u / smrigs bu yid tsam dang / dbyar bu sngo na* (= *sngon*) *brang / ston bu bcud skyes gsum / bdur* (C.T. = *’dur*) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *grub pa’i ste’u / sbrang char ble* (C.T. = *bla*) *yi khabs / kha ba’* (C.T. = *ba*) *’og kyi gdan / bdur* (C.T. = *’dur*) *rtsi char pas bdur* (C.T. = *’dur*) // //



Fig. 7. This copper alloy object (3.7 cm in height) belonging to the *thog-lcags* class of talismans depicts two anthropomorphic figures whose hands are joined over their chests in a prayerful attitude, in a similar manner to the illustration in *Ja-3v*. Like some deities in other illuminations, this pair of figures appears to be wearing trousers and shirts (as their legs are fully visible) and the individual on the left has peaked headgear. Stylistic clues suggest that this artifact dates either to the protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE) or early historic period (650–1000 CE). A more refined assessment of its age awaits additional archaeological and art historical data. Private collection

closely connected to tombs, as in the house of the dead or earthly representation of the afterlife. According to Pt 1136 (ln. 58): *’brang* (sic) *du ni gzugs ’tshal* (let us erect the *’brang*).

<sup>115</sup> *Sbrang-char* (literally: ‘honeyed rain’) connotes rain that is light, steady and beneficial.

<sup>116</sup> In a ritual text for the Eternal Bon god Ge-khod, *Ge khod bdud ’dul gsang ba’i rgyud las rigs drug gnas su drangs pa’i le’u*, the washing of the corpse and the negative mental imprints (*bag-chags*) of the deceased is carried out using ‘the great rain of wisdom nectar’ (*ye-sheś bdud-rtsi’i char-chen*; see Bellezza 2008: 397).



*Fig. 8. A copper alloy fibula from western Tibet (14.3 cm by 14.6 cm), protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE). The nine anthropomorphic figures of this fibula each have hands joined together, palm pressing against palm, in a similar attitude to the gods in Ja-3v. These figures may be depicted wearing pants and shirts. The two figures in the middle row are flanked by rearing lions. The central motif is common in fibulae of western Tibet of both the protohistoric and early historic periods. It consists of the head of a divinity forming the top of a ring that may have symbolized the universe. Below this motif is a peacock regardant. What are probably birds (now highly worn) are found on the outer edge of the object. This position on fibulae is commonly taken by pairs of birds. Private collection*



Ja-4v

The final frame of the seventh series briefly tells the tale of the funeral of a noble man and woman, a son and daughter of upper Rtsang (C.T. = Gtsang). For the funeral of this apotheosized pair, a *ste'u* ritual tent was made with a special type of cloth from Rtsang and a lattice from the wood called *mu-le drum-shing*.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps this cloth had sunburst designs. In the accompanying illustration this tent is multicolored, and there are remnants of a blue-gray pigment applied to it. In the final line of the text the primary purpose for conducting the funeral is once again stated:

In Kha-la rtsang-stod, when the funeral [was performed] at the death of the Rtsang prince (*sras*) Snying-khar and Rtsang princess (*lcam*) Si-li-ma,<sup>118</sup> the white cloth of

<sup>117</sup> This mythic wood of much ritual value is closely related to the great wish-fulfilling (*dpag-bsam chen-po*) world tree (cf. Dagkar 2003: 301; Pasar *et al.* 2008: 189). In a text furnishing the origins myth of the Eternal Bon drum, *Khro bo rnga rabs*, the primal *gshen* Gsang-ba 'dus-pa fashioned a drumstick out of this wood (Bellezza 2005: 426). The *mu-le grum* (*sic*) tree is customarily associated with the north, and is where the Zhang-zhung god Mu-wer is said to have manifested (Bellezza 2008: 324). In the divination text Pt 1043 (Ins. 69, 79), this fabled tree is called *mu-le drum-shur* / *mu-le trum-shur*, and is associated with the stars of the heavens.

<sup>118</sup> Lady / Princess (lCam) Si-le-ma from Smra-yul thang-brgyad is a major character in the Old Tibetan *byol-rabs* of the Gathang Bumpa collection. For her tale, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 72–75. While the geographic source differs in the

Rtsang with sun designs with the lattice of support of *mu-le drum* wood [tent] was that which was made. As the funeral of the deceased was well done, the cut chain of death was good for the living.

*kha la rtsang stod du / rtsang* (C.T. = *gtsang*) *sras snying khar dang / rtsang* (C.T. = *gtsang*)  
*lcam si le ma / grongs pa bdur* (C.T. = 'dur) *dus su / rtsang yi* (C.T. = *gi*) *dar kar* (C.T. = *dkar*)  
*nyi ma ris la / mu le drum shing yi* (C.T. = *gi + /*) *dra tsugs* (C.T. = *tshugs*) *can les* (C.T. = *las*)  
*bzhings* (C.T. = *bzhengs*) / *grongs pa bdur* (C.T. = 'dur) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *pas / shi bgab gson*  
*la bzang //*

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*byol-rabs* and the illuminated funerary text, these references may possibly refer to the same personality, one attributed to conterminous regions. In an origins myth of the killer demons (*gshed*), a *mo-sri* slays a woman of Smra-yul thang-brgyad before escaping to Kha-la rtsang-stod (Bellezza 2008: 471). If indeed it is the same Si-le-ma, she must have married Snying-khar after her lover Klu-rab bzang-to-re was slain in the *byol-rabs*. Nevertheless, given the mythic nature of these ancient tales, a more fluid and less literal reading of her identity is prudent.



Nya-3v

The first two frames of the eighth series in the *ste'u* ritual are no longer with the manuscript. The third frame is called Ma-bu khrun-snar, which can probably be translated as 'Extending the Height of the Mother and Child', a reference to the efficacy of the *ste'u* in assisting in the liberation of the deceased. This liberation was defined in terms of sheer altitude rather than being couched in the philosophical dictums of Lamaism. This frame is dedicated to another triad of *ste'u* gods, which appear to be sons of the archetypal deities of the soil, rocks and plants: Sa-bu ljon-brang (Son of the Soil Forest Countryside), Rdo-bu yag-brang (Son of the Stone Good Countryside) and Rtsi-bu' lon-brang (Son of the Plants Moist Countryside). These three figures wear the same style robes and hats as do others in the *ste'u* ritual, but each outfit has different color combinations. They stand next to a thin tree; this one brown and yellow in color. The funerary tent they preside over is described using imagery characteristic of the *ste'u* ritual:

The eighth *ste'u* is named Ma-bu khrun-snar *ste'u*. Sa-bu ljon-brang, Rdo-bu yag-brang and Rtsi-bu' lon-brang, these three, [of] the *ste'u* of the well-accomplished funeral. The turquoise tent is the canopy above. The carpet of agate is the carpet below.

*ste'u brgyad mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *ba ni / ma bu khrun snar ste'u / sa bu ljon brang dang / rdo bu yag brang dang / rtsi bu' (C.T. = bu) lon (C.T. = rlon) brang gsum / bdur (C.T. = 'dur) yags (C.T. = yag) grub pa'i ste'u / g.yu gur ble'i (= bla'i) khabs / mchong gdan 'og kyi (C.T. = gi) gdan //*



Ta-3v

The final frame of the Nya series and the first two frames of the Ta series are no longer extant. The ninth *ste'u* is named after the mythic mountain at the center of the world, Ri-rab lhun-po. This suggests that at least certain *ste'u* constructions were envisioned as representing towering mountains. Ri-rab lhun-po is an extremely lofty peak associated with the 'joyous land' (*dga'-yul*), the ancestral afterlife in the archaic traditions of Tibet.<sup>119</sup> In this case, the three *ste'u* gods are kings of the *yul-sa*, who are attired like other third-frame figures of the *ste'u* ritual. The ostensible feather surmounting each hat is orange in color, which probably signifies a particular species of bird. In this frame, the funerary tent is of conch and the funerary carpet of *byang* (?):

<sup>119</sup> Among the Naxi, the world mountain also plays a part in the guidance of the deceased to the afterlife. In one illustration of a Hei Zhi Pi ritual manuscript used on the final day of a funeral, the seven golden mountains and seven turquoise lakes encircling Mount Sumeru are depicted. On the uppermost mountain sits a peacock, on the lowermost mountain a blue cuckoo, with other animals on the intervening mountains. See *op. cit.* Rock 1955, pl. vii.

The ninth *ste'u* is named the Ri-rab lhun-po *ste'u*. The three *yul-sa* kings [of] the *ste'u* of the well-accomplished funeral. The small conch tent is the canopy above. The carpet below is the carpet of *byang*.

*ste'u rgu'i* (C.T. = *dgu'i*) *mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *ba* (+ /) *ri rabs lhun po ste'u / yul sa'i rgyal po gsum / bdur* (C.T. = *'dur*) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *grub pa'i ste'u / dung sbre'u ble* (C.T. = *bla*) *yi khabs / byang gdan 'og kyi* (C.T. = *gi*) *gdan* // \*\*\* //



Tha-2v

As with the Tha-2r frame situated on the opposite side of the Tha-2v frame, two fragmentary textual lines of the preceding frame have survived. The final grammatical line of the Tha-1v frame is incomplete but what is legible reads, “At the base [of the *ste'u*], the jewel tree (*ljon shing*)” (*rtsa na rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *ljon shing*...).

The second frame of the tenth series is dedicated to Klu-rgyal *lhe'u-mgon rje* (King of the Klu Defender of the Little Gods Lord). He appeared from a hailstone (*ser-ba*) made of a precious material on an ocean island, another awe-inspiring location. Dressed all in red with contrasting trim or inner garments, an orange snake *chun-po* is draped over his arm, a rope-like coiled ornament. In his left hand this king of the water spirits holds a lasso or snare (*zhags-pa'*), an attribute of many protector deities used to seize and strangle demons. Mounted on an ox, Klu-rgyal *lhe'u-mgon rje* is supplicated to protect the ‘little gods’ or humans. For his pains, libations are proffered:

Also, a jewel hailstone manifested on the island in the ocean [and from it appeared] Klu-rgyal *lhe'u-mgon rje*. You are ornamented with a snake *chun-po*. You ride an oxen mount. In your hand you hold a lasso. By your great magic power and mighty skill, act as the defender-protector of the *lhe'u*. We offer with the nectarous libations.

*yang rin chen ser ba cig / rgya mtsho gling la sprul / klu rgyal lhe'u mgon rje / sbrul 'i (C.T. =  
gyi) chun pos brgyan / chibsu glang la bcibs / phyag na zhags pa' (C.T. = pa) bsnams / mthu che  
rtsal drag pas / lhe'u mgon srungs (C.T. = srung) ma mdzod / bdud rtsi skyems gyis mchod //*



Tha-3v

The third frame of the tenth series features a triad of standing figures attired in robes with long sleeves that completely cover their hands. Tied with a sash, these robes are olive-green or yellow in color and have pinkish red trim or underrobes. Their hats have a feathery plume and a broad crown like other third-frame headgear. In this set of hats the plumes and brims are brownish in color. The three gods stand next to a statuesque brown tree. The text states that this frame is the *ste'u* of the 'heights of the white snow mountain' (*gangs-kar mthon-ba*), another altitudinous location. This is the only line of the text to have endured:

The tenth *ste'u* is the *ste'u* of the heights of the white snow mountain.

*ste'u bcu gangs kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *mthon ba'i ste'u* /



Na-1v

The eleventh (Da) series is entirely missing from the illuminated funerary manuscript. The twelfth in the series is the *ste'u* of highly lustrous copper (*zangs 'od-'bar*). The birds of the *sman* illustrated and referred to in the text are probably those of goddesses along with their human progeny. The central portion of the arboreal *ste'u* construction is girt in what are referred to as eggs of *bse'* (probably a whitish copper). The text then describes the base of the structure but much of this line has been obliterated. We can surmise that the two illustrated ungulates at the base of the *ste'u* are mentioned as funerary allies. The animal on the right appears to be a goat or sheep, the one of the left is perhaps a doe:

The twelfth *ste'u* of the shining copper. On the peak soaring little birds of the *sman*.  
In the middle eggs of *bse'* {are arrayed}. On the base jewel...

*bcu gnyis zangs 'od 'bar'* (C.T. = 'bar) *ba'i ste'u* / *rtse la sman bye'u lding* / *rked la bse'* (C.T. = *bse*) *sgong {rtsigs}* / *rtsa na'* (C.T. = *na*) *rin chen*...



Na-2v

The second frame of the Na series features a god emanating from a jewel hailstone (*rin-chen ser-ba*), Gshen-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje (King of the Gshen Defender of the Little Gods Lord), who as a 'defender of the little gods' (*lhe'u-mgon*) serves as an archetypal protector of human beings, particularly the dead.<sup>120</sup> In the illustration, he is depicted attired in a matching olive-green shirt and pair of pants with red trim (or inner pants) held up by a yellow sash. He rides a *dbal* mount, which refers to an extremely strong and spirited horse. In the painting this bay horse has a darkish mane and tail. As the text confirms, Gshen-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje grasps a wheel in each

<sup>120</sup> In two different *smrang* recounting the origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the three primal gods who engender its practice are called *mgon-lha* (defender gods) (Bellezza 2008: 378, 385). As such, this trinity of gods as well as those in the illuminated funerary manuscript can be viewed as the ultimate protectors or custodians of the dead.

of his hands, a symbol of sovereignty and tremendous power.<sup>121</sup> It is this god that is credited with subduing all *gshin-rje*, the most prevalent class of funereal demons.<sup>122</sup> He is invited as the guardian of the *lhe'u*. His specific function here, of course, is to protect the deceased. In return for his services, *Gshen-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje* is offered jewels (*rin-chen*) and ambrosia (*bdud-rtsi skyems*).<sup>123</sup> *Skyems* (libations) often refers to beer, one in which turquoise or gold is deposited in order to enhance its desirability.<sup>124</sup>

Also, a jewel hailstone manifested in the four cardinal directions and intermediate directions [and from it appeared] *Gshen-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje*. You ride a *dbal* horse mount. You hold a wheel in each of your hands. By your great magical power and mighty skill you defeat the *gshin-rje* of the four directions. We invite you as the defender of the *lhe'u*. We proffer offerings of jewels. We offer with nectarous libations.

*yang rin chen ser ba cig / phyogs bzhi'i 'tshamsu* (C.T. = *mtshams su*) *sprul / gshen rgyal lhe'u mgon rje* (+ /) *chibsu dbal rta bcibs / phyag na 'khor lo bsnams / mthu che rtsal drag bas / phyogs bzhi gshin rje 'dul / lhe'u yi mgon du spyon / rin chen mchod pa 'bul / bdud rtsi skyems gyis mchod //*

The heads of the three *ste'u* gods of the Na-3v frame are found below the Na-2v text on the same piece of paper.

<sup>121</sup> Likewise, the funerary god and prototypical *gshen* Ye-yod dbang-chen is described holding the wheels or circles (*'khor-lo*) of the sky and earth, signifying his sovereignty over all existence (Bellezza 2008: 443, 446).

<sup>122</sup> This horde of demons has persisted in the Eternal Bon and Buddhist religions of Tibet. The Old Tibetan term *gshin* denotes the dead and various funerary phenomena, giving rise to words in the vocabulary of the Dunhuang, Gathang Bumpa and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collections such as *gshin-myi* (the dead), *gshin-gshen* (funerary priest), *gshin-gsas* (class of funerary gods), *gshin-chu* (river of the dead), *gshin-chab* (waters of the dead), *gshin-rab* (ford of the dead), *gshin-lam* (path of the dead), *gshin-cha* (clothing and ornaments of the dead), *gshin-dur* (funerary rites), *gshin-rtsis* (horoscope for the dead), *gshin-yul* (land of the dead), and *gshin-zan* (victuals for the dead), among others.

<sup>123</sup> According to an overview of ritual activities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the participating divinities require receptacles in which to manifest at the funeral (as do divinities in many other types of Tibetan religious rituals). These receptacles are called *lha-rten* (divine support) and *gsas-'khor* (circle of the *gsas* gods), which are in the form of stones, grain, spears, and arrows with decorative hangings. Sacrificial cakes and libations accompany these receptacles to make them more inviting to the deities. See Bellezza 2008, p. 406. The *gsas* and *dbal* are the two most common classes of funerary deities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 58) note the importance of these two categories of deities to Tibetans. See, also, Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), p. 123 (n. 12).

<sup>124</sup> For the origins of libations and the beer and gold that produce them in an Old Tibetan manuscript of Gathang Bumpa, see Bellezza 2011d.



Pa-2v

Five textual lines of the Pa-1v frame (most of which are illegible) are found on the same strip of paper as most of the Pa-2v frame. Speaking of the *ste'u*, the last line of Pa-1v states: “Now (*do-mod*), it is {sanctioned / given} as the receptacle for the arrival of the little god woman” (*do mod lhe'u sman yi byon rten* {gnang}).

As in other second frames of the *ste'u*, the thirteenth example in the ritual sequence features a protective god born from a jewel-like hailstone. This *yul-sa* class deity is attired in the manner typical of illuminations in the text and is equipped with a sword in the way of a warrior, as are many other territorial gods. He rides a brown wild ass with a dark blue mane and tail. His name is Yul-sa *lhe'u-mgon rje* (God of the Locale Defender of the Little Gods Lord). He defeats the *btsan* and *bdud* demons who hail from the north. This direction appears to have been especially critical because texts indicate that the *dga'-yul* ancestral paradise was situated in the north. As the guardian of ‘little god’ humans (specifically the deceased and those attending the performance of the ritual), Yul-sa *lhe'u-mgon rje* is feted with the standard ensemble of offerings of the funerary ritual:

Also, a jewel hailstone {opened on} earth and space [as] Yul-sa lhe'u-mgon rje. You {ride} a wild ass mount. You hold a sword in your hand. By your great magic power and mighty skill, subdue the *bdud* of the north and the *btsan* of the north. Act as the guardian defender of the female *lhe'u*. We offer barley meal, butter and libations, the victuals, to you the defender of the *lhe'u*.

*yang rin chen yi ser ba cig / dog mo dbyings {la rdol /} yul sa lhe'u mgon rje / chibsu rkyang la {bcibs} / phyag na ral gri bsnams / mthu che rtsal drag pas / byang bdud byang btsan 'dul / lhe'u sman mgon skyabs mdzod / gzhib (C.T. = zhib) mar skyems {yis} / lhe'u mgon zhal sros gsol //*



Pa-3v

This frame is dedicated to *ste'u* ritual gods associated with a ritual juniper tree. The text thus confirms that analogous objects in other ternary frames of the *ste'u* ritual are also trees. The three *ste'u* gods of the final series are Mgon-bu lha-sras (Guardian Son Scion of the God), Klu-bu rin-cen (Jewel Son of the Water Spirit) and Sdings-bu g.yu-le (Turquoise Son of the High Ground).<sup>125</sup> They are illustrated in a manner typical of the funerary manuscript. Their hats are each topped with a black plume. The tent is described as being a canopy or protection overhead, while the carpet or buffer below is called *mching-gram*. This appears to be a kind of felt (C.T. = *phying*). The last three textual lines of the frame were cut and now appear on the same strip of a paper as the Pa-4v frame. The first of these textual lines is no longer fully legible. It is followed by vegetative imagery. The passage concludes with the ritualists reiterating the protective function of the divine executors of the *ste'u* ritual:

<sup>125</sup> The addition of *le* to the word 'turquoise' (*g.yu*) in the name of the last god appears to invest it with little or no extra lexical value. See pp. 135 (fn. 183).

The thirteenth swastika turquoise juniper *ste'u*. Mgon-bu lha-sras, Klu-bu rin-cen and Sdings-bu g.yu-le, these three, [of] the *ste'u* of the well-done funeral. The small cloth tent is the canopy above. The *mching-gram* is the carpet below.<sup>126</sup> The shining golden flower. The brocade and silk bark. You are the defender and protector of youth, the little gods' progeny.

*bcu dsum* (C.T. = *gsum*) *d.yung* (=g.yung) *drung g.yu shug ste'u / mgon bu lha sras dang / klu bu rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *dang / sdings bu g.yu le gsum / bdur* (C.T. = 'dur) *yags* (C.T. = *yag*) *grub pa'i ste'u / dar sbre'u bla'i khabs* (C.T. = *khebs*) / *mching gram 'og kyi* (C.T. = *gi*) *gdan / {###} {###} gser yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *me thog* (C.T. = *tog*) *bkra / shun pa zab* (= *za-'og*) *dang dar ro // lhe'u sras ne'u* (C.T. = *na*) *zhon* (C.T. = *gzhon*) *yi* (C.T. = *gi + /*) *mgon dang skyabsu yod //*

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<sup>126</sup> The textual line that was split in two when the manuscript was cut begins at this point. It is not treated in this work.



Pa-4v

This very last frame of the *ste'u* ritual preserves an origins tale for the erection of the funerary ritual tent. The divine couple of this frame belongs to the Rgya / *rgya*, an ancient clan and class of priests and deities.<sup>127</sup> This *rgya* pair are attired in a familiar manner and stand on either side of a tent with red, brown and bluish stripes. No latticework is depicted in the drawing of this tent. The deities hold the ends of a piece of cloth or some other long object attached to the top

<sup>127</sup> In Dunhuang lists of principalities Rgya is a Central Tibetan land. This was the homeland of the *rgya-bon* Leg-tang rmang-ba / Leg-dang rmang-ba. In later Eternal Bon sources this figure is sometimes erroneously connected to China. See *op. cit.* Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), pp. 254, 258, 259, 263; also, Macdonald 1971, p. 200. In the Eternal Bon tradition, Rgya-mkhar was a castle of the Dmu situated in Zhang-zhung (Dagkar: 1999: 50). For reference to Rgya in Zhang-zhung and the 'upper regions' (*stod-khams*), see Norbu 2009, pp. 65, 135. Also, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 270, for Rgya-yul in the *Klu 'bum*. According to Pasar *et al.* (2008: 46), Rgya / *rgya* is a clan name as well as a class of Zhang-zhung spirits akin to the *btsan*. This clan is also noted in Bu-ston's *chos-'byung* as that of the infamous minister Lo-ngam, which Haarh (1969: 329, 403) takes to be the same as Rhya of Pt 1287. On Rgya, also see *infra*, p. 151 (fn. 233).

of the tent. The text tells us that the *rgya* cloth (*dar*) and supporting latticework of *rgya* wood (*shing ljon-pa*), as part of a well executed funeral, permitted the ‘various spirits of the locale to become *lha* in ancient times’ (*gna'yul-sa de rnams... lha ru grub-bo*).<sup>128</sup> This line expressing an ancient precedent seems to signify that like deceased humans who are well attended to at funerals, the terrestrial *yul-sa* also became part of the celestial orders of *lha*. Thus a kinship between the territorial deities and humans is implied here. As is well known, the tradition of prominent families (and others) being genealogically related to *yul-sa* / *yul-lha* was widespread in premodern Tibet. The use of the word *gna'* to describe the origins of archaic funerary customs is found in texts of the Dunhuang, Gathang Bumpa and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collections, as part of a stock phrase. For the authors and users of these texts, the various myths of origins to which the word ‘ancient’ is appended exemplified a primal or prehistoric antiquity.<sup>129</sup>

The all-important plea for the surviving members to be blessed with male offspring is again made in this frame. After all, it is only through the continuation of family lines that the social tragedy of death is rectified or overcome. The final line of the text pronounces the concurrent funerary performance well done, indicating that this frame belongs at the culmination of the *ste'u* ritual:

When the funeral [was performed] at the death of Rgya-sras khru-na and Rgya-lcam {yags}-mo btsun, patterned *rgya* cloth with designs and a lattice of support of *rgya* wood [tent] was that which was made. In ancient times, by the well-done funeral, the various *yul-sa* became *lha* as well. We call [to be blessed with] male children. The funeral of the deceased is {well done}.

<sup>128</sup> The text of this frame reveals that *rgya-khang dar*-{*rgyas*} in Pt 239 (ln. r1-2) does not refer to a Chinese textile import as Stein supposed (1970: 170, 171). Nor does it mean ‘spreading silk of the big house’, as I tentatively put forth in Bellezza 2008, p. 500 (n. 476), but rather *rgya-khang* denotes a special type of funerary ritual structure associated with the *rgya* deities. It is probably a cloth tent or canopy of billowing silk or some other desirable material (*dar*). As with the *rgya* objects in the illuminated funerary manuscript, the *rgya-khang* of Pt 239 is integral to the proclamations of origins; in the latter case, in the form of what appears to be a ‘banner of the profession of origins’ (*smrang-dar*).

<sup>129</sup> For an analysis of this ritualistic formula and temporal attestation in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, Pt 1068 and Pt 1136, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 403, 410, 505, 506, 526, 529, 539, 542; 2010a, p. 42. There is the same formula in Pt 1194 at the conclusion of an ‘origins myth of the sheep’ (*lugs-rab*, C.T. = *lug-rabs*; lns. 56–74). In this narrative, the sheep becomes the vehicle for going above the water (*chab-gang*), that which leads the deceased across the postmortem river. As demonstrated in the first part of the origins myth of the funerary guide sheep (*skyibs-lug*) in Pt 1194 (lins. 1–37), this primal ritual activity is closely connected with three funerary priests: Gshen-rab myi-bo, Dur-shen rma-da and Sgal-gshen tho'u-yug (see *infra*, pp. 213–220). The psychopomp sheep is told by the '*dur-gshen* that when in the land of the living it eats only grass, but in the *gshin-yul* 'Brem-dang it will eat shoots of green grain ('*bras kyi lcang-pa*), a butter and barley meal preparation (*phye-mar*), and sugarcane juice (*bu-ram nyu-gu-cu*, C.T. = *bu-ram smyug-gu-chu*). If it was to remain in the world of the living its flesh would eventually be eaten by many congregating birds (*sha bya za ni ral ma rold*), its bones pulled out one by one (*rus pa... khal ma khol*), its head and tail cut to dangle from its body (*mgo rnga bdas ni ban ma bun*), and its blood drunk with a slurping action (*khlag pas 'thungs ni chab ma chib*). Persuaded in such a manner, the sheep is ordered to traverse the passes of the *gshin-yul* and to cross its fords together with the deceased. Finally, the *lug-rabs* states (lins. 73, 74): “In ancient times, benefiting, the merit was like that. In ancient times, benefiting, the merit was like that, as it is today, benefiting, the merit is like that” (*gna' de ltar phan ching* (C.T. = *cing*) *bsod do* // *gna' de ltar phan ching* (C.T. = *cing*) *bsod na di ring de ltar phan ching* (C.T. = *cing*) *bsod do* /). For elements of this Pt 1194 account, see Stein 1971, pp. 514, 515; Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 263. In the origins myth of Pt 1039, in which the generic ritual figure Rma-bu mching-rgyal is predominant, it affirms (ln. 26): “In ancient times the benefit, the merit, was like that” (*gna' de ltar 'phan* (= *phan*) *te bsodo* /). Also (lins. 34, 35): “Beneficial in ancient times, beneficial now; as it was meritorious in ancient times, it is now meritorious” (*gna' phan da phan gna' bsod na da bsod*). Stein (1971: 515, 524, 526) in his treatment of the Pt 1068 and Pt 1194 occurrences of this formula, translates the word *gna'* as ‘autrefois’, a French word with a wider chronological embrace than ‘ancient’ alone. Quite curiously, Stein did not attempt a historical or cultural analysis of the significance of this formula.

*rgya sras khru na dang / rgya lcam {yags} mo btsun / grongs pa bdur (C.T. = 'dur) du su / rgya dar ris cen (C.T. = can) la / rgya shing ljon pa yi (+ /) dra tshugs can les (C.T. = las) bzhings (C.T. = bzhengs) / gna'yul sa de rnams kyang (+ /) bdur (C.T. = 'dur) yags (C.T. = yag) lha ru grub bo // de ring ne'u (C.T. = na) zhon (C.T. = gzhon) pho smos kyang // grongs pa bdur (C.T. = 'dur) {yags (C.T. = yag) po' (C.T. = po)} {###}*

The illuminated funerary manuscript we have examined expounds with considerable color and verve a ritual system of safe harborage, psychopomps and guardian deities of the dead. Nevertheless, this treatment of the ancient funeral is abridged, leaving many of its elements unaccounted for in the text. In Part II of this book, the basic constructs of the archaic funerary tradition are presented in greater depth. In the process, many other facets of this crucial part of olden Tibetan culture are revealed.