

PART II

THE GATHANG BUMPA FUNERARY DOCUMENTS

An Introduction to *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*

Part II begins with *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, a text primarily designed for grappling with the death of pregnant women. Although its thematic divisions do not carry subtitles per se, a perusal of the manuscript indicates that it is divided into three major portions or chapters. Each of these chapters is further partitioned into individual origins tales of the *srid-rabs* or *cho-rabs* genres. These tales were devised to be proclaimed as a precedent (*smrang*) to the actual practice of funerals. The funerals they describe revolve around the subjugation of the violent causes of death in expectant women (*rnel-dri*).

The paper on which *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* was written was cut into oblong folios and bound together into a booklet.¹³⁰ Each of the recto and verso sides of the manuscript contain nine to thirteen textual lines, with eleven textual lines per folio being most common. This document is written in prose with variable numbers of syllables bracketed by *shad*. I have not inspected the actual manuscript, having to make do with the excellent facsimiles of the Gathang Bumpa texts published in *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che*. Thus, I can hardly comment on the physical characteristics of the paper and binding materials used in producing *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* or any of the other texts of the collection.

A few observations pertaining to text-internal features of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* are due in order to place it in within a historical framework. Nevertheless, a detailed paleographic¹³¹ and grammatical analysis of this text and other Old Tibetan documents of the Gathang Bumpa collection are beyond the purview of this work. I will therefore limit myself here to the most basic of observations.

The calligraphy of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is a type of *dbu-can* script, in which slight attenuation of the heads of letters is discernable.¹³² The handwriting is scrawlier than that of the *byol-rabs* text or adjoining folios of the manuscript styled *Gnag rabs zhes bya ba*, which are

¹³⁰ While usually more elongated than this text, some works used in the propitiation of environment-bound deities such as those of the *gsol-kha* and *bskang-ba* genres are still cut into squarish folios. As with the archaic prose and poetry sometimes exhibited in these sorts of texts, the shape of their folios can be taken as representing a literary anachronism.

¹³¹ In this regard, it would be useful to identify Old Tibetan manuscripts that may have been written by the same hand. For a preliminary graphologic study focused on this subject, see Dalton *et al.* 2007.

¹³² Some specialists would actually classify this script as an early form of *dbu-med*, but I retain this designation for the more cursive calligraphy associated with scripts still prevailing today. As noted by van Schaik (forthcoming-b: 341), the classification of Tibetan writing as either *dbu-can* or *dbu-med* does not appear to be found in Old Tibetan literature. On the paleographic and historical development of *dbu-med* from *dbu-can*, see van Schaik *ibid.* Van Schaik makes an excellent case here for *dbu-med* having been derived from *dbu-can*.

also part of the Gathang Bumpa collection.¹³³ This scrawliness, together with the squatness of the folios, may indicate that *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* somewhat predates *Gnag rabs*. Greater age also seems indicated by a slightly higher frequency of Old Tibetan spellings, terms and grammatical structures in *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*.

The calligraphy of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* has a slightly more cursive and orderly quality than most of the archaic funerary texts of the Dunhuang collections (such as Pt 1060, Pt 1068, Pt 1134, Pt 1136, ITJ 731r, etc.). In terms of calligraphy, it is most comparable with the archaic funerary manuscript Pt 1194, but the script of the latter text is still closer in form to others of Dunhuang than it is to the Gathang Bumpa materials. The more regular nature of the hand that inscribed *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is also manifested in the generally more evenly spaced lines of script. It can thus be concluded that the calligraphy of the *Rnel drī 'dul ba thabs* is technically more evolved than that of cognate materials from Dunhuang. These paleographic distinctions, along with the scroll format of the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang, indicate that these works were composed earlier than *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*.

The greater age of the Dunhuang funerary texts under review is also mirrored in the non-standard use of stops (*shad*). In the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts, the *shad* is employed in a manner more closely resembling the grammatical convention established in Classical Tibetan. Although the usage of the *shad* in the Gathang Bumpa documents is far less idiosyncratic than that of the relevant Dunhuang manuscripts, it is still rather arbitrary by Classical Tibetan standards. There is also a slightly higher incidence of Old Tibetan orthographic constructions in the relevant Dunhuang manuscripts than in the Gathang Bumpa funerary documents. The single most significant marker of old spellings for any historical linguistic analysis of these texts is that of verbs. That is because the frequency of obsolete nouns and modifiers is more directly affected by the nature of the things being written about. Descriptions of extinct ritual functions tend to exhibit a higher rate of old-fashioned spellings of nouns than ritual matters that made the leap to the Lamaist era. As the spellings of verbs as well as their morphology is less content sensitive, they appear to be a better index of relative age and historical linguistic development in Old Tibetan ritual literature. A conspicuous archaic orthographic trait of certain verbs in the Dunhuang funerary texts is the final (now voiceless) consonant *d*. This usage does not occur in the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts. Moreover, what came to be the Classical Tibetan spellings of words used in the Gathang Bumpa texts are more frequently interchanged with Old Tibetan spellings than is found in the Dunhuang manuscripts under review. This phenomenon of amplified dual spellings also appears to be indicative of a later period in the development of written Tibetan. In the examination of *Rnel drī 'dul ba thabs* that follows, special attention is paid to identifying Old Tibetan spellings and verb inflections that differ from their Classical Tibetan counterparts. This is a modest first step in a comparative grammatical study of the Gathang Bumpa documents.¹³⁴

¹³³ For the facsimile of this text, see Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-'dus and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring 2007, pp. 85–130.

¹³⁴ Karmay maintains that non-Classical spellings in the Gathang Bumpa texts are primarily the result of these being phonetic renderings of an oral tradition spoken in a 'dialect'. He uses the examples of *gshags* for *gshegs*, *dri* for *gri* and *gdo* for *gto*. Karmay contrasts the Gathang Bumpa materials with Dunhuang manuscripts like the ones of this study, which he states were more or less composed in a literary language but with early spellings. See *op. cit.* Karmay 2009, p. 64. Given the probable antiquity of some of the tropes and motifs in the Gathang Bumpa (and Dunhuang) texts, these are indeed likely to have begun as oral traditions. Yet, like the Dunhuang materials, the Gathang Bumpa texts under examination were composed in Old Tibetan. As will be shown consistently in this study, where the Classical variants of Old Tibetan words can be provided, this vocabulary has orthographically changed in ways that are often predictable (e.g., *ka* to *kha*, *pa* to *pha*, *to* to *tho*, *ta* to *tha*, *cu* to *chu*, *ce* to *che*, *dro* to *gro*, *myi* to *mi*, *mye* to *me*, etc.). In fact, much of the vocabulary in the Gathang Bumpa texts carries the same spellings as the Dunhuang manuscripts. This is

Given that the illuminated funerary manuscript of this study, which was composed essentially in Classical Tibetan, has been scientifically dated to circa the 11th or first half of the 12th century CE, it is likely that *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* predates this period. An allowance in terms of age seems to best account for the more dominant Old Tibetan orthographic and grammatical features of this Gathang Bumpa document. A pre-11th century CE date is also indicated by the nature of the funerary dispensation. It is closely associated with burial in tombs. In *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, two types of burial structures are specified: *bang-so* (tomb often overlain with a prominent superstructure such as a mound) and *dur-kung* (C.T. = *dur-khung*, tomb or grave pit). As we shall see, this text also propounds a number of mortuary customs that took place at or near the tomb. By circa 1000 CE, under the influence of Lamaism, interment in monumental mortuary structures had ended in Tibet (although rudimentary burials in the ground have in some cases continued to the present day).

While a pre-11th century CE date is indicated for *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, its calligraphy is more refined than many of the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang. Moreover, it is in a booklet rather than a scroll format, and to reiterate, its orthography and verb morphology have a somewhat more familiar cast. Taken together, this evidence indicates that the Dunhuang documents are older than their Gathang Bumpa counterparts. I shall operate from the assumption that the Dunhuang archaic funerary texts were composed circa 700–900 CE (and probably more specifically: 750–850 CE), as is commonly supposed.¹³⁵ The archaic nature of the language and subject matter is historically reflected in the period of occupation of Dunhuang by the Tibetans.¹³⁶ As is well known, Tibetans conquered Dunhuang in the 780s CE and remained in control of the region until the mid-9th century CE. It is certainly possible and maybe even likely that certain manuscripts were composed in Tibet itself (perhaps at an earlier date), and transported to Dunhuang to serve the spiritual needs of those who died. An army engaged in almost constant military campaigns would have required the observance of customary funerary ritual traditions for its fallen comrades. The discovery of cognate funerary personalities, narrative motifs and ritual structures in the Gathang Bumpa documents lends credence to a possible Central Tibetan provenance for the archaic funerary materials of Dunhuang. It was the Tibetans themselves who were the users of non-Buddhist funerary manuscripts in their own language. This usage may even have been exclusive on their part. The indigenous character of the texts under review militates against them having been widely exploited by other ethnic groups or nationalities allied with the Tibetans, especially those who had already adopted Buddhism, Manichaeism or other cosmopolitan religions. Thus, when the Tibetans retreated from Dunhuang there would have been little or no cause to import these funerary materials, despite continued use of the Tibetan

demonstrated by comparing the orthography of texts featured in Parts II and III of this study (see *infra*, pp. 178–180). As for the word *dri*, it commonly occurs as an element in the proper name of King Dri-gum (Gri-gum) btsan-po in historical texts of the first few centuries of the second millennium CE. On *gshags* possibly being an obsolete inflected form of the verb *gshegs*, see *supra*, p. 37 (fn. 58). This is not to say that some spellings of words in Old Tibetan ritual texts were not influenced by the dialects spoken by their scribes. They may well have been. However, there are no grammatical reasons to believe that the Gathang Bumpa texts were rendered in a more folkish or less literary form than the Dunhuang manuscripts. As we shall see in the course of this work, the language of the Gathang Bumpa documents is of a very high order of compositional sophistication.

¹³⁵ A date of composition before the middle of the 8th century seems quite unlikely, as documents written on paper before this time have not been positively identified. For a paleographic analysis of Tibetan documents inscribed on stone or written on wooden slips, as well as for an exposition on the introduction of writing in Tibet, see van Schaik 2011.

¹³⁶ For a history of the discovery of the Dunhuang documents (focused on Mogao Cave No. 17, the 'Library Cave'), which includes excellent diagrams, see Imaeda 2008.

language as a lingua franca in the Dunhuang region for some time. Similarly, even if the Tibetan archaic funerary rites had been forced upon subjugated peoples of the Dunhuang region, they would have been freed from this cultural imposition with the withdrawal of the Tibetan forces.

Subscribing to a still hypothetical chronological framework, I shall put forward that the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts with their more ‘classical’ traits were written circa 850–1000 CE.¹³⁷ I assign this date to reflect an intermediate historical stage in the development of literary Tibetan between the Dunhuang archaic funerary documents and the illuminated funerary manuscript. Nevertheless, thorough codicological analysis of all the concerned texts is required to verify this hypothesis (for further discussion on the chronology of these documents, see *infra*, pp. 177–181).

¹³⁷ On the dating of the Gathang Bumpa documents, also see Bellezza 2010a, p. 46. Karmay (2009: 63) also holds that these texts predate the 11th century CE.

Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter I

The first part of the first chapter of the text is missing. An examination of the adjoining text suggests that as many as several folios may have been lost. Much of the material that would have supplied a narrative context to the ritual practices and myths recorded in Chapter I is lacking.

Chapter I is comprised of a circle of origins tales that explicates ritual methods of appeasement and subjugation used in the liberation of the newly dead from the demonic occupants of the underworld (No. 1, ln. 1 to No. 9, ln. 6).¹³⁸ This nether region in which those who died as *rnel-dri* found themselves is designated the 'lower levels' (*rma them-pa*, C.T. = *dma' them-pa*). Rather than an adjective, the word *rma* in this context might be better read as a noun: 'lower realm'. Nine *them*, the levels, stages, steps, or rungs of the underworld, are enumerated in the text.

Sacrificial meat offerings play a large role in the first recountal of Chapter I. As the initial part of this origins tale is no longer extant, the interrelationship between its existing parts cannot be assessed with any surety. Understanding the story is further complicated by the disappearance of many sacrificial rites in Tibet or their recreation into more metaphorical forms. The cultural and textual benchmarks that would have given meaning and purpose to such practices were largely swept away with the rise of the Lamaist religions.

The first extant folio of the text recounts the horrors of the lowest rung of the underworld. As shall be seen, this description is very similar to that of the other eight layers of hell. The incomplete account begins with what appears to be a female inmate woefully laughing. As her work, she covered everything in her own blood. At dusk she emerged from a blue iron lake. She wept while being devoured by an iron female wolf (*spyang-mo*) with nine heads and a copper female wild dog (*phar-mo*, C.T. = '*phar-mo*') with nine heads. Her flesh was also eaten and her blood drunk by an iron frog (*sbal-pa*) with nine heads and by a *srin* fiend named Srin zo-zo ring-po.

In order to rescue (*blus*) the wretched soul from the underworld, the father Ya-ngal gyim-khong (an archetypal priest) intervened,¹³⁹ providing various offerings to the hand of Srin zo-zo ring-po. Presumably, it was this *srin* that had captured the deceased, who must have perished as a *rnel-dri*. Articles given to Srin zo-zo ring-po in the first extant folio comprise 'all manner of carnivorous birds',¹⁴⁰ *shing-ring lce-dmar*,¹⁴¹ a black arrow (*mda'-rgyud nag-ma*), a striped / multicolored

¹³⁸ The numbers used in this paper to designate folio and line numbers conform to the text and its transliteration in *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che*. In subsequent designations abbreviations are used, consisting of a period with the folio number to its left and the line number to its right.

¹³⁹ According to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, in addition to receiving the main teachings and originations transmission, Ya-ngal gyim-gong (*sic*) was schooled in contamination-proofing of the deceased's consciousness principle (*mnol-thub*) and in cleansing of the corpse (*ro-sel*) by the fabled funerary priest ('*dur-gshen*) Rma-da (Bellezza 2008: 386). The Eternal Bon work *Rnam par dag pa'i 'bum bzhi las rin po che gnyen* (= *gnyan*) *gyi 'bum bzhugs so*, anonymous (*bka'*, vol. 141, published by Kun-grol lha-sras mi-pham rnam-rgyal, Chengdu, 1999), No. 10, lns. 4, 5, tells us that Ya-ngal gyim-gong was his name in the Tibetan language, while in the ancient language of Nam-pa ldong, he was called Rda-lde lcags-po.

¹⁴⁰ *Bya-gcan cho-ma cho-rgu*. On the expression *cho-ma cho-rgu*, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 82 (n. 205).

¹⁴¹ 'Long sticks with red tongues' (?). Less likely, *lce-dmar* refers to the (red) *lce* class of funerary deities. On various types of *shing-rings* (*sic*) in a *glud* (*byol*) ritual of the Gathang Bumpa collection, see *ibid.*, pp. 61, 67, 89. The identity of this ritual object is not clear; in the *byol* ritual, it states, "... long sticks with white ornaments on which three words of the father (*gshen*) spells and three words of the *bon* spells were cast (*shing rings rgyan dkar la // pha sngags tshigs gsum dang / bon sngags tshigs gsum btab*). Given its ritual context, the *shing-ring* of Old Tibetan texts may possibly

arrow with brocade,¹⁴² animal hides (*dpags-bu*),¹⁴³ and a silver [vessel] full of libations.¹⁴⁴ By the presentation of these offerings the deceased was rescued from the clutches of Srin zo-zo ring-po. Hence, the departed one was able to quickly pass through the portal of the first or lowest rung (*them*) of the netherworld.

In addition to the initial offerings of birds and other things, the second extant folio of the text (2.2–2.8) enumerates the *brten* (C.T. = *rten*), receptacles or supports consisting of many types of animals, each of which is described as a *zag*. This obscure term appears to denote a mount or something to be ridden.¹⁴⁵ It may also carry the connotation of that which escorts or accompanies, as in divine allies of the funerary priests. In the text there are *zag* animals of the sky (*gnam*), earth (*sa*), upper valley (*phu*), lower valley (*mda'*), sunny places (*gdags*), and shady places (*srib*), all of which function as *rten*. Some of these species of animals have a place in the illuminated funerary manuscript as well. Animals play diverse roles in Tibetan archaic ritual traditions and this seems especially true in the funerary sphere. The *zag* animals listed in *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* include the bird (*bya*), vulture (*rgod*), lynx (*dbyi*), *tsha* (?), grouse (*gong*), quail / partridge (*srag*, C.T. = *sreg*),¹⁴⁶ deer (*sha*), gazelle (*rgo*, C.T. = *dgo*), antelope (*gtsos*), ibex (*skyin*), musk deer (*gla*), *rmong* (?), fish (*nya*), otter (*sram*), marmot (*phyi*), badger (*grum*), horse (*rta*), steed (*rmang*), cow (*ba*), *skya* (magpie?), dog (*kyi*, C.T. = *khyi*), and black bear (*dom*). The text continues by stating that, “The nine (many) *zag*, the *zag*, the support, have gone away.”¹⁴⁷ These animals appear to help free the deceased mired in the first or lowest stage (*them-pa*) of the inferior realm (*rma*, C.T. = *dma'*). This place might be referred to as the ‘provisional hell’, in that one may escape from it provided the correct ritual measures are taken. In the words of the text: “[She] has passed above the first level of the lower realm and gone onward.”¹⁴⁸

Chapter I now diverges with the prolegomenous line (2.8): “Then the father and mother of disease” (*der nad gyī pha ma*), immediately followed by “to declaim” (*smos la*). What is first uttered in the text is a description of a copper vessel filled with medicinal herbs, the wording of which is difficult to comprehend. This is succeeded by the statement, “The water of illness was consumed” (*snyun-chab gsol-lo /*). The proponent of the story, a woman named Rje-rgyal btsun-mo, went to a variety of places with nine or a multitude (*rgu*, C.T. = *dgu*) of female spirits of the *thang*. The same Rje-rgyal btsun-mo probably featured in the first part of Chapter I of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* as well. As noted, the term *thang* is used to define objects and ritual categories prescribed in the funeral. Here the spirits of the *thang*, the *sri-mo*, *gcan-mo* (carnivorous female), *rnel-mo*, and *gyad-mo* (very strong females?), are infernal beings.

be related to the *shing-ris* (painted boards) of the Eternal Bon ritual tradition. For the *shing-ris*, arrow, spindle, silk hangings, and effigies ensemble in a ransom rite, see Blondeau 2000, p. 255.

¹⁴² *Mda'-bkra za-'ug-ma* (C.T. = *za-'og*).

¹⁴³ The next offering listed appears to be a kind of sheep: *mon-lug glas-gang*.

¹⁴⁴ *Skyem-pa rngul-gang* (C.T. = *skyems-pa dngul-gang*).

¹⁴⁵ As such, this word seems to be etymologically related to the C.T. *zags* (fallen), in that it connotes something that ends up somewhere else. Perhaps, therefore, the O.T. *zag* can be best defined as ‘conveyance’.

¹⁴⁶ In Pt 1134 (ln. 149), the *do-ma* (transport horse of the dead) and the *skyibs-lug* (sheep guide of the dead), as part of their journey across the postmortem realm, are ordered to, “Cross the heights (*mtho*)* like the grouse and quail” (*mtho 'da' na / gong sreg / lta'r* (C.T. = *ltar*) / *rgol chig /*)! Also, in Pt 1194 (lns. 64, 65), the *skyibs-lug* and his human charge, which are likened to the grouse and quail or a mother and daughter, are ordered to cross the heights together (*mtho ste ni gong srag* (C.T. = *sreg*) *ma bu mo dang mnyam du la rgol chig*). Thus, it can be inferred that these two species of birds were accorded an important eschatological function in the archaic funerary tradition.

* The addition of '*da*' to *mtho* (*mtho-'da'*) does not appear to augment its signification.

¹⁴⁷ *Zag rgu zag la brten* (C.T. = *rten*) *te gshegs*.

¹⁴⁸ *Rma* (C.T. = *dma'*) *them pa cig yar ru rgal te gshegs pa*.

For years, Rje-rgyal btsun-mo did not wash her hair (*lo ru dbu ma-bsil-ba*). Thereafter, she washed her locks with the soda of the north (*bu-tog*, C.T. = *bul-tog*), *be-chal* (a saponaceous herb) of Mon, and *sug-chal* (another saponaceous herb) of Tibet (Bod). In the text, these three detergents are called *chal-gsum*. As her comb (*shad*), Rje-rgyal btsun-mo used the cane (*rba*, C.T. = *sba*) of the north. This may be a figure of speech referring to the extremely rough dried tongue of the yak, which at one time was used as a comb in nomadic areas of Tibet. She also used the wooden comb of Tibet and the bamboo (*smyug*) comb of the Mon. Mon in this context refers to cis-Himalayan regions, as it often does in Classical Tibetan literature.

The text now moves to the description of an obscure funerary ritual procedure (3.5–4.6). Bereft of the commenceable folios of Chapter I, it is nigh impossible to understand how this ritual is linked to the tale of Rje-rgyal btsun-mo or to the exertions of the 'dur-gshen Ya-ngal gym-khong. The performable sequence begins with a small copper vessel (*zangs-bu*), which is used for milking (*bzho-ba*, treating?) an unnamed disease. The text states that this vessel is placed underneath the corpse (*spur*), i.e., the corpse was placed inside the vessel. Alternatively, rather than the corpse per se, this may actually be shorthand for the burial chamber (*spur-khung* / *spur-khang*). It is worth noting that vessels made of ceramics have been recovered from tombs excavated in Tibet, as part of so-called urn burials. A triangular *gshed-khung* (enclosure used for exorcising homicidal demons) was dug and encircled by a ring of thirteen daggers of barberry (*skyer*). In Eternal Bon exorcistic procedures, this bitter yellow wood is also employed to make circumvallating daggers or pickets. Below (inside) the *gshed-khung* three hearth stones (*sgyed-po*, C.T. = *sgyed-bu*) were erected.¹⁴⁹ The small copper vessel in which there were thirteen types of meat was placed on these stones. It is stated that even if [all these thirteen types of meat] cannot be found (*ma-snyed*, C.T. = *ma-rnyed*), it is inappropriate (*myi-rung*) to do this ritual without the meat of a black sheep, black pig and black dog (*kyi*, C.T. = *khyi*), these three. Those meats are cooked (*btso*) in that way (no details of the process are given in the text). Various types (*rna-tshogs*, C.T. = *sna-tshogs*) of vertebrae (*dbyi-rus*) and foot bones (*rkang-'go*) are also added to this preparation and it is further cooked in that way. The last part of this ritual exercise becomes more abstruse (3.10–4.6). It has to do with ritually opening the portals on the passageway to the rest of the underworld.

The second half of Chapter I describes an elaborate ritual conducted to purify the *rnel-dri-mo*, causing it to be brought up from the netherworld (4.6 to 9.7). In this process, Rje-rgyal btsun-mo of the former tale and all others who died of unnatural causes after her must successively ascend the second to ninth levels of the lower realm. However the moral code of ancient Tibet might have been articulated, it is evident from this ritual narrative that the underworld was something to be avoided at all costs. If one ended up there due to being violently or accidentally killed, his or her only recourse was the services of the funerary priests. It was the 'dur-gshen that guided the dead across the multi-tiered hell. In prototypic form, this work was done by the priest Ya-ngal khyim-gong (*sic*).

¹⁴⁹ In the contemporary ethnographic context, the three hearth stones are laden with cosmological symbolism as the center point of the 'brog-pa (herders of the Tibetan highlands) tent. They are popularly associated with the three vertical realms of the universe (*srid-pa gsum*), and also with the Buddha, his Law and his Community (Dkon-mchog gsum).

In the text, hell is depicted as an entire world unto itself. Each of its nine rungs contains a sky, earth, water, upper valley, lower valley, sunny place, and shady place.¹⁵⁰ The geographic entities of the infernal realm are red, white, variegated, and yellow in color. These spatial features are also associated with various precious substances: *byang* (?), whitish copper (*bse*), conch (*dung*), silver (*rngul*, C.T. = *dngul*), copper (*zangs*), crystal (*shel*), bell-metal (*'khar*, C.T. = *khar*), and gold (*gser*). The dead of this provisional Hades are harried by female wolves and female wild dogs.¹⁵¹ Another denizen of the netherworld, iron frogs with nine heads, also create much suffering for the hell-beings. Finally, after being freed from the ninth rung of the underworld, the babies and mothers who have died a violent death (*bu-grī-mo*) are fit to be transformed into goddesses (*sman*). The text outlines some of the ritual activities that facilitate this divine metamorphosis, but it is only in Chapter II of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* that the full intricacy of these measures is revealed.

Extrication from the infernal regions begins with the second rung, escape from the first rung having been already recounted in the text, as part of an origins myth. The topographic features of the second tier are all red in color. It is where a swarm of one hundred thousand men and women spend their nights in a lake and days on a rock formation. These are the dead of the postmortem realm. Although it is not explicitly stated in the text, this is where the most unfortunate have become trapped indefinitely. They are destined to inhabit the lakes and rock formations of the netherworld for a long time, if not forever. This is suggested by the use of the word *tsam* ('so much', 'so many') appended to the dusk and dawn of the text. A long journey through the underworld is explicitly mentioned in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, where the first deer to make the passage spends up to eight years on one of its layers (see *infra*, pp. 181–192). However long their tenure, it is a terrible ordeal in a classical hellish sense for the inmates, complete with the gnashing of teeth and wailing. Grotesque female wolves and wild dogs eat the flesh of the dead. If that is not enough, each of the human prisoners is burdened by a frog they carry on their back. So distressed and disoriented are these bedeviled persons that they believe these frogs to be their mates. In reality, these spectral frogs are fiends of the abyss, which consume the flesh and drink the blood of their victims. The funerary priests, who act as the narrators of this tale, command the deceased to desist from fraternizing with these ravenous amphibians. Presumably, if no such sacerdotal aid was available, the dead would be left to spend their time in torment. In Tibet, frogs are most often associated with the *klu* of the lowermost realm of the three tiers of existence. They have a reputation for being prolific feeders. It is cultural themes such as these that may help to explain the existence of Avernus in an ancient funerary rite of Tibet:

To go beyond ('*das na*') the second level of the lower realm (*rma them-pa*): In the red sky, also on the red earth, also in the red water, also in the upper red valley, and also in the sunny and shady red [places]. In the country of Byang-yul,¹⁵² the one hundred thousand humans¹⁵³ of *byang*, at each dawn, at sunrise (*nang-par nyi-ma*

¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, echoes of this infernal geography have survived in a much later Buddhist account of a '*das-log* (the returned dead). In the *bar-do* he encounters various topographical features that must be either ascended or descended (Cuevas 2007: 311–315).

¹⁵¹ See also *infra*, p. 173. The hellish role played by canines in the underworld was a widespread feature of many cultures in Eurasia (and in other parts of the world). It will suffice to mention the three-headed Cerberus of Greek and Roman mythology, the four-eyed Saramaya of Yama in Sanskrit literature, and the hellhounds of ancient Germanic peoples. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, an octad of funerary deities associated with the *sgra-bla* lead dogs of great speed (Bellezza 2008: 443, 446).

¹⁵² It is not clear if the word Byang as a toponym means 'northern' or if it denotes a specific precious substance, as in subsequent occurrences in the passage.

¹⁵³ *Myi-bo*. In this context, this word denotes both men and women.

shar), come out from inside the red lake of *byang*. They go to the peak of the red formation of *byang*. What actions do they do? They cover an entire expanse¹⁵⁴ in blood. They laugh *lhag ge lhag*.¹⁵⁵ At each dusk, at sunset (*do-nub nyi-ma nub*), they alight (*mchongs*) [and enter] inside the red lake of *byang*. They cry *shums se shums*.¹⁵⁶ What follows after them? Iron female wolves with nine heads and copper wild dogs with eight tongues. Now,¹⁵⁷ these [canines] eat their flesh and drink their blood. What do [the one hundred thousand humans] carry on their backs? They carry iron frogs with nine heads; these they carry. You, do not stay there. You [one hundred thousand humans], do not stay there.¹⁵⁸ You [one hundred thousand red humans], in your mind (*thugs-lam*) you think (*snyem*) that is your work. You, do not do that work (*las myen gyis*). From now on discard (*bor*) these evil tidings and activities. In your heart, you think that the iron frogs you are carrying are your husbands (*khyo*) and wives (*stangs*).¹⁵⁹ Those are not your husbands and wives. Those have come to eat your flesh and drink your blood. You, do not accompany (*ma-'grogs*) those [frogs].

rma them pa gnyis 'das na' (C.T. = na) / gnam yang dmar po la' (C.T. = la) / sa yang dmar po la / chu yang dmar po la' (C.T. = la) / phu mda' yang dmar po la / gdags srib yang dmar po la // yul byang gyi yul na' (C.T. = na) / byang gyi myi (C.T. = mi) bo 'bum // nang par nyi ma shar tsam na / byang mtsho dmar po 'i nang nas byung / byang brag dmar po 'i rtse la byung // las su ci mdzad na // khrag gyi than ma 'dngs // bzhad dang lhag ge lhag // do nub ni ma nub tsam na' (C.T. = na) / byang mtsho mar (C.T. = dmar) po 'i nang du mchongs nas mchis / ngud (C.T. = ngu) dang shums se shums / phyi na ci brang na / lcags gyi spyang mo 'go (C.T. = mgo) rgu (C.T. = dgu) dang / zangs gyi phar mo lce brgyad 'brang // da sha la za zhing khrag la 'thung du mchi // rgyab la ni ci khur na' (C.T. = na) / lcags gyi sbal pa 'go (C.T. = mgo) rgu (C.T. = dgu) khur la khur te gda' // khyod de na ma bzhugs shig / khyed de na ma bzhugs cig / khyod gyi thugs lam na' (C.T. = na) / de khyed gyi las yin snyem (C.T. = snyam) ste // khyod gyi las myen (C.T. = min) gyis // 'phrin las ngan pa 'phro bor cig / khyod gyi snying lam na / lcags gyi sbal pa de / khyod gyi khyo dang stangs yin snyem (C.T. = snyam) / de ni khyod gyi khyo dang stangs myen (C.T. = min) no / de ni khyod gyi sha la za zhing khrag la 'thung du 'ong / khyod de dang ma 'grogs cig // °°° //

The text now states: “To ascend (*yar-rgal na*) the third level of the lower realm”. These words, like the rest of the ritual, were designed to be read by the funerary priests. The sky, earth, upper valley, lower valley, sunny [places] and waters of the third level are variegated in color. In that country is the *bse* lake *thu-mo* (?). The text then notes: “The [ritual] methods and recitation are just like the mode above.”¹⁶⁰ With this instruction, it is shown that the ritualists are to recite all the words found as part of the second level, in precisely that sequence, substituting a variegated topography for a red one.

¹⁵⁴ *Than-ma 'dngs* (C.T. = *thang-ma bting*). For example, this expression is used to describe the appearance of grain spread out over an entire pad or dried whey over an entire tarpaulin.

¹⁵⁵ The trisyllabic indicator *lhag ge lhag* conveys that the men laughed in unison a woebegone laugh.

¹⁵⁶ *Shums se shums* conveys that the red men cried vigorously and in a sustained manner.

¹⁵⁷ *Da*. In this context, it is used precisely as the English ‘now’ to introduce a statement or question.

¹⁵⁸ The second person pronouns *khyod* and *khyed* are used interchangeably here and in the remainder of this paragraph of the text. These can be read as the singular and plural forms of the pronoun respectively, but this distinction appears rather arbitrary in this narrative context. For more on the grammatical function of these pronouns in Old Tibetan, see Hill 2010, pp. 559–561.

¹⁵⁹ When the word *stangs* (spelled *stang* in some documents) stands alone it denotes ‘husband’, as used later in this same ritual narrative.

¹⁶⁰ *Thabs dang gyer lugs bcas gong ma dang 'gra'o*, (C.T. = *'dra'o*) //.

The fourth level of the lower realm was omitted by name. Its geographic features are white in color and its inmates are the one hundred thousand men of conch. Once this is spelled out, the text instructs, “The methods [and chanting] are just like above.”

The fifth level of the lower realm also has white geographic features. Inside its silver white lake are one hundred thousand women (*myi-mo*) of silver. Again, it states, “The methods [and chanting] are just like above.” The text then goes on to prescribe the sacrifice of a sheep. This can only be the *dri-lug*, the sheep immolated in the funerals of those who died from unnatural causes. The fifth rung is in the strategic position of straddling the middle point of the lower realm, probably explaining why the sacrifice was carried out at this juncture in the ritual. Not only is the flesh of the sacrificial sheep offered to the animals of hell (and perhaps other demons as well), its skin is used in an exorcistic procedure to rid the dead of devilish impediments.¹⁶¹ In the words of the text:

When arriving in that country, one sheep is also slaughtered (*bsad*). That sheep for the lower realm is skinned (*bsha'*). There the [skin] is used to make a signal (*bda'-blan*). There the speech is also made (*dbab*) one time. There the victuals¹⁶² are also proffered (*sprad*).

yul der phyin pa dang / lug cġg kyang / der gsad (C.T. = *bsad*) / *lug la rma yang der bsha' / bda'* (C.T. = *brda*) *blan cġg yang der blan // gsung lan cġg der dbab / bshos cha cġg yang der sprad do //* °°° //

The text continues with: “To pass over (*rgal*) the sixth (*grug*, C.T. = *drug*) level of the lower realm.” This is also a red country but its lake, rock formation (*khrag* = *brag*) and denizens are of copper. The lines of text for the sixth level are almost the same as those of the second level. There are however a few minor variations. The entering into the lake of the one hundred thousand women of copper is depicted by a trisyllabic indicator, *bun ne bun*. These three syllables convey the action of plunging into the water. The one hundred thousand hell-bound females are referred to by the epithet *nyon-mo*, which can be glossed ‘woman of misery’ or ‘female of misfortune’. A variant line reads: “You *nyon-mo* think that your work is to cover an entire expanse in blood.”¹⁶³ However, the text in the next line affirms that that is not their work. Finally and most importantly, the text states, “The father Ya-ngal khyġm-gong intervened to rescue those [one hundred thousand women]”¹⁶⁴ This line demonstrates that it was this priest who served as the archetypal figure in the ritual of liberating the dead from the underworld.

To ascend the seventh level of the lower realm required passing through the standard series of physical features, all of which are white in color. They are found in the country of crystal. Inside its lake of crystal are one hundred thousand women of crystal. This lake is also called the ‘beige / light grey / pale yellow female’ (*skya-mo*). The text instructs that the rest of the standard recitation is also to be made.

¹⁶¹ The use of demon-slaying animal hides is described in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *G.yang gzhi sri gshed dbang sdud sa bdag bcos pa*. The beating of the sheep skin on the ground is said to defeat the *bdud*, *btsan*, *srin*, and *gshin-rje* spirits. The same text also contains a *smrang* detailing the origins of the first sheep sacrifice. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 439–442. This Classical Tibetan work, however, makes no reference to the underworld. The prime function of the animal skin ritual to disentangle the dead from the infernal regions, as elucidated in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, was skirted by the author(s) of *G.yang gzhi sri gshed dbang sdud*. This omission may have been the result of the need to foster the Lamaist ethos of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

¹⁶² *Bshos-cha*. This refers to vegetarian food offerings such as grain, sweets and fruits.

¹⁶³ *Khrag gyġ than* (C.T. = *thang*) *ma 'dġngs* (C.T. = *bting*) *pa de // nyon mo khyod gyġ las yġn snyem /*.

¹⁶⁴ *De 'i kha nas pha ya ngal khyġm gong gyġs blus so //*.

The eighth level of the lower realm has red landforms and is the country of bell-metal ('*khar*, C.T. = *khar*). Inside the beige bell-metal lake are one hundred thousand women of bell-metal. The instructions to recite the rest of the reading are the same.

To pass beyond (*rol*) the ninth level of the lower realm the dead must negotiate yellow topographic features. The yellow golden lake of this country holds one hundred thousand golden women. To conclude the ritual, the text diverges from the earlier liturgical structure. It is vouchsafed that the expired *rnel-dri* has now been turned into a *smān* goddess. This transformation occurs through the ritualists understanding the methods to bring the dead up through the nine rungs of the netherworld. Reference is also made to the depuration of amniotic fluid (*chu-ser*). As shall be seen in Chapter II, the loss of amniotic fluid accompanies the death of a number of women in the origins myths. The text observes that cavities or closed spaces (*khung-bu*) are carved out (*brko*) by the various tools and offerings of the ritual (*ya-stags*).¹⁶⁵ This 'carving' is a metaphor for the efficacy and the forcefulness of the ritual dispensation. In an outline of the ritual provisions taken to remove the dead from the underworld *shal-ba* are noted. *Shal-ba* are stone missiles used in rituals of the *thun* type, an exorcistic procedure still observed in Eternal Bon.¹⁶⁶ The nine '*gal-pa* are also mentioned, the various types of wood used in archaic funerary rituals. In the contemporary Tibetan setting, '*gal-pa* is more narrowly defined as the wood used in cremations. In another procedure to free the dead from the steps of the underworld, wooden tea churns ('*dong-mo*) are split. In conclusion, the text asseverates that the chants (*gyer*) of the *bsag* (suite of ritual operations) are the same for each tier of the netherworld. It is the successful execution of this ritual performance that decontaminates the *rnel-grī* (*sic*):

They had died, the *rnel-[dri]* had died. Transformed,¹⁶⁷ they were transformed into *smān*. If you know that the nine levels of the lower realm are completed [ritually], the slain mother with child (*bu-dri-mo*) is suitable as a *smān*. It is appropriate to do the lustration (*tshan*) of that amniotic fluid. The ritual elements carve out the cavities of each of these nine levels. The nine *shal-ba* [and] the nine '*gal-pa*: the '*gal-pa* and *shal-ba* are kept (*gzhag*) on each [of the nine levels] as well. On each [of the nine levels] tea churns are split (*gcag*). The methods of *bsag* together with the methods of chanting are the same [for each level]. That which is above is the purification (*bsangs*) of the *rnel-grī-mo*. It is finished.

grongs yang rnel te grongs / bskyal ba smān du bskyal / rma them pa rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *rdzogs par shes na / bu grī mo smān du rung / de'i chu ser tshan du rung / 'dī 'i ya* (C.T. = *yas*) *stags* (C.T. = *rtags*) *nī rma them pa re re la khung bu re re rgu brko // shal ba rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) / '*gal pa rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) / '*gal pa dang shal ba re re yang gzhag* (C.T. = *bzhag*) / '*dong* (C.T. = *mdong*) *mo re re yang gcag / bsag thabs dang gyer thabs bcas gcīg go / de yan cad rnel grī mo 'i bsangs lags te / rdzogs s.ho // °°° //*

¹⁶⁵ Stein (2010, *Antiqua* V: 266) notes alternative spellings: *yas-thag*, *ya-stag* and *yas-rtags* (C.T.), but limits the signification of the term to the offerings of threads used in the *mdos* rituals. In actuality, this term has a much wider purview in Old Tibetan and Eternal Bon ritual literature.

¹⁶⁶ For a description of the *thun*, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 454–456.

¹⁶⁷ The verb *bskyal* (saw off, delivered) in this context refers to the *rnel-dri* being received as a *smān*, or their transference into divine female beings. In order to convey this sense of the word *bskyal* as a valedictory ritual operation, I have opted to translate it as 'transformed'. This term is used in subsequent origins myths of the text.

Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter II

The second chapter of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is given over to a series of origins tales that recount the creation of *rnel-dri* and the ritual methods that lead to their defeat. It begins with a passage announcing its aims in a series of pithy sentences that include (9.8–9.11):

1. Making offerings to the [deities] of the sky and earth
2. Subduing the earth and separating the wildness and tameness of the *drī*
3. Calling the *drī-bon* for aid
4. Origins tales of the various (*snam*, C.T. = *rnams*) chieftains (*gtso*) [in] the various lower [realms] (these chieftains appear to be the psychopomps)
5. Cutting (widening) the narrow passageway (*'phrang*) of the *drī* of the deceased
6. [The origins tale] of other things like the six portals [above] (this last element refers to the doorway of each rung of the underworld)

The agony recounted in the *rnel-dri* subjugation origins tales of Chapter II is part and parcel of the perennial suffering of humankind. That these traumatic events are so ingrained in the human condition gives us occasion to consider that they may belong to a tradition already well-established by the time they were written down in their present form. While the ritual procedures and appliances championed in the text are likely to have been the object of considerable innovation over time, the eschatological edifice upon which they were built is liable to have very deep historical roots. This is borne out by the momentous causes of mortality and the requirements for salvation, an imperative best explained as being molded on a prehistoric cultural template.¹⁶⁸ Yet, even if the lore and prescriptions encapsulated in the *rnel-dri* subjugation myths emerged from the mists of prehistory, they appear to have been reconfigured for an imperial-period milieu before being anthologized in our post-imperial-period text.

The imprint of Tibet's imperium upon *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is nowhere better seen than in the geographic scope of its origins myths. Its various *smrang* are set in the traditional principalities (*rgyal-phran*) of Upper Tibet and Central Tibet. Most of these principalities are noted in the Dunhuang manuscripts, references to which are made in this work with their debut in the stories. Some of the principalities mentioned such as Mchims, Gnubs and Skyi formed part of a political grouping called the Twelve Principalities / Twelve Minor Kings (Rgyal-phran bcu-gnyis). Well known in Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan historical literature, the Rgyal-phran bcu-gnyis in the context of our text is thought of as the political precursor to the Spu-rgyal kings of Central Tibet. In this Central Tibet-centric tradition, the rise of its sovereigns is part of the same historical saga as the region's constituent ancestral principalities.¹⁶⁹

Old Tibetan works such as *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* and Pt 1285 (a text of prototypic curative rites and priests) highlight the travails of noble families that founded or ruled over sundry principalities. Like other mortals, they are depicted facing their share of misfortune and sometimes perishing through illnesses, accidents and murder. In these texts, the highborn are

¹⁶⁸ As regards the archaic texts of Gathang Bumpa, Karmay (2009: 57) also embraces the position that they do indeed elucidate beliefs that existed in Tibet prior to the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century CE.

¹⁶⁹ Of course, *rgyal-phran* also denoted subjugated territories such as 'A-zha during the imperial period, but this application of the term is not very relevant to the historical setting of the textual narratives under scrutiny.

portrayed in the guise of archetypal aristocrats, those persons of primal or olden times whose clan or tribal name is synonymous with the principality in which they lived.

That the greatest of princes and princesses suffered and died as others do acts as persuasive endorsement for the funerary ritual system explicated in our text. The mytho-historical circumstances of the nobility evince the overarching efficacy and social application of the *rnel-dri* funerary rituals more effectively perhaps than anything else could. Plainly, the ritual provisions described were designed (figuratively and/or literally) for the death of all pregnant women in ancient Tibet. In this regard, the lofty social status of the protagonists in the *rnel-dri* subjugation origins myths alludes to a tribal or strongly communal society. The import of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is unmistakable: the entire population of each prehistoric principality and those of succeeding ages were joined together in an integral conceptual and practical arrangement concerning dying and death.

The geographic ambit of Chapter II is used to systematically explicate the ritual activities prescribed in the text. The fundamental philosophy and practices behind *rnel-dri* subjugation is expounded in the first two origins tales, which take place in allegorical or mythic locations. The remaining thirteen etiologic myths of Chapter II all transpire in various principalities of Tibet. Ritually, each of these stories builds upon the one preceding it to gradually present the entire *rnel-dri* subjugation system. New activities and tools are introduced in almost every story until this funerary observance is revealed in all its color and complexity.

The *rnel-dri* subjugation rituals are performed by various funerary priests (of the *gri-bon / dri-bon* stripe), archetypal figures in their own right. The ritual labors carried out by these personalities intimate a cultural order of significant sophistication. The richness of the ideas and objects in this and other Old Tibetan funerary rituals were the province of a civilized people, one with highly developed manufacturing capabilities, trade networks, and intellectual exchanges. This historical scenario belies later stereotypes of a benighted Tibet in the period before Buddhism prevailed.¹⁷⁰

The fifteen *rnel-dri* origins myths of Chapter II deal with death through illness, homicide, accidents, and even sorcery. These disasters were very much magnified by the victims being pregnant at the time of their demise. The causes of premature death in these women can be outlined as follows:

Origins Myth No. 1:	Generalized conditions
Origins Myth No. 2:	Gored by a deer
Origins Myth Nos. 3, 4:	Homicide
Origins Myth No. 5:	Self-mutilation
Origins Myth No. 6:	Illness probably precipitated through sorcery
Origins Myth No. 7:	Illness
Origins Myth No. 8:	Accident
Origins Myth Nos. 9, 10:	Illness

¹⁷⁰ Even the great 20th century Tibetan intellectual Dge-'dun chos-'phel, who was keenly attuned to ancient history, fell prey to such biases. He claimed that up to the time of King Gnam-ri strong-btsan (late 6th century to early 7th century CE), Tibet did not have trade relations with other countries and her inhabitants did not know how to weave well. See *op. cit.* Stoddard 2009, pp. 247, 248. Archaeological work carried out in the last two decades squarely contradicts the above historical characterization. Nowhere more is this seen than in the recent discovery of a burial in Mon-'tsher (Upper Tibet) dating to circa the 3rd or 4th century CE, which contains a rich array of textiles, metalware and imported items like cane and silk. For information on this burial, see Bellezza 2010b; 2012c.

Origins Myth No. 11:	Miscarriage
Origins Myth No. 12:	Trauma associated with childbirth
Origins Myth Nos. 13, 14:	Illness
Origins Myth No. 15:	Riding accident

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 1

The first origins myth or tale of Chapter II appertains to a series of five countries and five women, each of which carries the name of a metal or other precious substance (9.11–11.4). This narrative account of the *rnal-dri* is elementary in structure, expounding upon the seminal themes of subjugation and transformation in an unembellished form. These basic ritual motifs run through the more elaborate narratives that follow in the chapter. The first origins myth relies on a series of prototypic countries and metaphors to convey the great effectiveness of the ritual measures and the priest it endorses. The word *stod* (upper region) appears in each toponym, perhaps as an allusion to the fundamental importance of Upper Tibet in archaic ritual traditions.¹⁷¹

As is customarily portrayed in stories of the subjugation of the demons of death in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, in the first tale of Chapter II, the homicidal *dri* disappears or escapes (*yar*, C.T. = *yal*) before it is eventually captured and subdued by the presiding funerary priest.¹⁷² This narrative convention illustrates the grave and arduous nature of freeing someone from the curse of violent death. In this case, the liberating *gri-bon* is the legendary prehistoric figure Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal (he is found in other origins myths of the text as well).¹⁷³ It is written that this '*dur-gshen* conquered the wild or cruel (*rgod*) *rnal-dri*, rendering it into a docile entity. This action is incisively depicted through the use of a *dpe* or metaphor, one that recurs throughout the chapter: "The frozen hide was meticulously tanned" (*pags 'khengs las zhīb du mnyes /*). Literally meaning 'tanned to fine particles', *zhīb du mnyes* demonstrates that the *dri* was irremediably defeated. With this victory, deceased pregnant women who became *dri* were turned into something honorable or noble (*btsun*). As already observed, the terms '*phang* / *phangs-btsun* and *mi-bstun* are used as epithets for the deceased in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Similarly, in the illuminated funerary manuscript, a deceased woman is called *sman-btsun*. All of these terms denote a dead person unenthralled by the *gri* and *gshed*; an individual who, providing the correct ritual actions are instituted, is fit to become a divine being. According to the text, the *dri* was converted (*phab*) or wrought into a *btsun* or 'noble one'. This metamorphosis led directly to the creation of an apotheosized entity

¹⁷¹ The deeply rooted nature of Upper Tibet (Stod and Byang-thang) in the origins of archaic cultural traditions is discussed in Bellezza 2010a, pp. 70–72. Also see Bellezza 2008. This vast region will also repeatedly crop up in this study of Old Tibetan texts.

¹⁷² This manslaying entity (*dri-bo*) is noted in Pt 1047 (Ins. 179, 320). In Pt 1136 (Ins. 14, 15), it reads: "The man slain by the agent of violent death (*dri*), by the human killer (*myi-gshed*) wild yak" ('*brong-bu myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *gshed kyis myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *dri ru bkrongs* (C.T. = *grongs*), cf. Bellezza 2008: 520). In the same vein, Pt 1134 (ln. 224) states, "The noble man died through the / as a *dri*" (*myi-btshun* (C.T. = *mi-btsun*) *driru / grongs-pa*).

¹⁷³ This priest is well-suited to this work, for a text that explicates the origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur records that the '*dur-gshen* Rma-da specifically taught Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal how to slaughter the *sri* and defeat carnivorous demons (Bellezza 2008: 386). In another Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text, it is said that Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal was successful in vanquishing the *gri* because of three special *dbal* funerary gods, the sons of a primal pair of deities (*ibid.*, 468). In yet another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal (*sic*) appeases the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* with *gto* rites, in order that the funeral venue could be established (*ibid.*, 439, 440). In the Eternal Bon history *Bsgrags pa gling grags*, Ra-ljags bon-po 'od-cag 'brug (*sic*) uses the ritual bird wing to destroy the *gshed-po* and *gri* (*ibid.*, 493).

(*mtshun*), which in turn was transformed into a *smān* or female divinity.¹⁷⁴ It follows that if a man was subject to an analogous ritual of *gri* subjugation, as a *mtshun* he would be tantamount to a *lha*. The *mtshun* appear to have functioned not unlike the manes and shades of ancient Greek and Roman religion (save that they resided in a celestial rather than a chthonian world).

Although the *mtshun* are no longer particularly influential in Tibetan culture, this genre of deities played a pivotal role in ancient eschatological beliefs.¹⁷⁵ The *mtshun* / *mtshun-lha* / *mtshun-mgon* are well represented in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, where they function to protect the living and dead. They are the ones who receive the dead into the ancestral paradise.¹⁷⁶ This is effected by the transformation of the human soul (*mi-bla*) into a *mtshun* through the ritualistic efforts of the 'dur-gshen. In an abbreviated *smrang* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection, the priest Sbyangs-bon lha-tshon rgyal-ba is asked to carry out this transformation so that the deceased could be conducted to the realm of the *lha*. For this mystic process to take place, the old *mtshun* or deified ancestors must accept the dead as one of their own. Moreover, it is considered essential that spirits such as the *g.yen* who might interfere with the reception of the dead are sent off, something that is expedited through the group of funerary gifts known as *gtad-pa*.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Our text demonstrates that Haarh (1969: 226) was correct to postulate an etymological relationship between the words *btsun* and *mtshun*.

¹⁷⁵ For the *mtshun* in the contemporary context, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 393 (n. 120).

¹⁷⁶ The *mtshun* / *mgon-mtshun* / *lha-mtshun* were identified as 'deified ancestors' by R. A. Stein (2010, *Antiqua* I: 22, 62, 63, 74). In a Chinese cultural framework, Pt 986 records the tradition of making offerings to the divine ancestors (*lha-mtshun mchod-pa'i lugs*; *ibid.*, 46). In the same cultural orbit *lha-mtshun* is cited in Pt 746 and Pt 749 (*ibid.*, 62). As Haarh duly noted (1969: 226), the *mtshun* are central to the ancient Tibetan rites connected to the dead. Haarh (*ibid.*, 112, 226) defines the *mtshun* as the 'manes of the defunct', dividing them into male and female groups (*pha-mtshun* and *ma-mtshun* / *mo-mtshun*). Furthermore, Haarh (*ibid.*) cites two types of *mtshun*: those that function as tutelary deities of specific families and those that represent the deified dead in a generalized sense. In *rus-mdzod* (clan treasury) literature, paternal *mtshun* of existence (*srid-pa'i pha-mtshun*) of a generic nature are genealogically associated with the 'Six Clans of Tibet' (Bod-mi'u gdung-drug), as well as with *dgra-lha* and cosmogonic gods of national importance such as Ye-smon rgyal-po, Yab-bla bdal-drug and Rgyal-bu mthing-ge. The archaic funerary texts do not attempt to describe the teleologic dimension of the *mtshun*. Thus, it is not known if they were believed to have existed in perpetuity, or if their ultimate fate was something else such as being reabsorbed into the primordium or somehow recycled into other elements of the cosmos.

¹⁷⁷ For an elaboration of the identity and function of the *mtshun* in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, as introduced in this paragraph, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 393, 400, 401, 406, 409. In the *rta-gtad* ritual text it is the funerary transport horse that carries the deceased across the infernal *gshin-yul*. The horse having carried out the mission to which it was entrusted, this text goes on to say: "You [the deceased], skillfully pass to the *dga'-yul*. Skillfully pass to the great *mtshun* country above. [You] should arrive in the superior place of the paternal ancestors (*yab-myes*). Today, you noble *mtshun* man, you noble one, stay there happily" (*khyod dga'yul thabs kyis bgrod pa yin / mtshun yul steng chen thabs bgrod do / yab myes* (C.T. = *mes*) *gong ma'i gnas slebs so / de ring mi mtshun btsun po khyod / skyid par bzhugs shig mi btsun khyod* /). Moreover, in the *lug-gtad* ritual, the funerary guide sheep carries out much the same function. For these textual references, see *ibid.*, 455, 458, 461, 463. In *Rin chen phreng gzhung gi le'u* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 1–73, nominally attributed to Gsang-sngags grags-pa), a text laying out the key ritual activities and requirements of the funerary tradition (*gzhung*), mention is made of five kinds of *mtshun* (*mtshun rigs-lnga*, No. 5, ln 3), but no further details are provided. More recent Lamaist literature for the propitiation of the *mtshun* suggests that the *mtshun rigs-lnga* could possibly be composed of one of the following groupings: 1) the *mtshun* of parents, grandparents, great grandparents, uncles, and aunts; 2) the *mtshun* of various colors; or 3) the *mtshun* of the country, mountain, lake, castle, and tree (each physical feature having counterparts in the world of humans and in the world of the *lha*). In *Bon 'di gyer 'go legs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 491–496, anonymous), Nos. 491, lns. 4, 5, the funerary priests call upon a host of indigenous deities including the *mtshun* in order to subjugate the demons that might interfere in their ritual activities: "Down from the heights of the peak of existence and up from the depths of the swirling ocean, the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and mighty *yul-sa*, the *mtshun*, and the *thugs-kar* (a class of heroic spirits akin to the *sgra-bla*) [and] *sgra-bla*, be the supervisors (*kha-'dzin*) of us, the *bon*" (*mtho srid pa'i rtse mo man chad*

The first origins myth (*rabs*) in Chapter II begins with the country and woman of gold:

The verses (*tshig-bshad*) of the subjugation (*gdul*) of the *dri*: In the country Gser-yul gser-stod (Country of Gold Upper Gold), Gser-lcam nyag died as a *rnal*. That *dri* disappeared, it disappeared into the sky. The *grī-bon* [Ra]-lcags skyī-rgyal subdued the cruel *drī* to tameness. The frozen hide was meticulously tanned. The *dri* was converted into a noble one. The *mtshun* was transformed into a *sman*.

dri gdul (C.T. = 'dul) *ba'i tshig bshad la / yul gser yul gser stod na'* (C. T. = na) / *gser lcam nyag nī rnal te grongs / de 'i dri yar* (C.T. = ya) *gnam du yar* (C.T. = ya) / *grī bon lcags skyī rgyal gyīs / drī rgod las g.yung du btul / pags 'khengs las zhīb du mnyes / drī las btsun du phab / mtshun las sman du bskyal // °°° //*

The countries, victims and other pertinent matters are repeated in the four succeeding sequences of the same tale. This basic information and the crushing of the funereal demons and the genesis of divine beings from the deceased can be summarized as follows:

Country: Khar-yul khar-stod (Bell-metal Country Upper Bell-metal)

Deceased as a *rnal-dri*: 'Khar-ba'i bo-mo (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Bell-metal)

Officiant: *drī-bon* Ra-ljags skyī-rgyal

Metaphor: The fresh (*gsar*) hide was meticulously tanned.

The wild *drī* was changed into a noble one (*mtshun* = *btsun*)

The *btsun* (= *mtshun*) was transformed into a *sman*

Country: Shel shel yul-stod (Crystal Upper Country Crystal)

Deceased as a *rnal-dri*: Shel gyī bo-mo (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Crystal)

Officiant: *drī-bon* Ra-ljags skyī-rgyal

Metaphor: The frozen hide was meticulously tanned

The *grī* (*sic*) was changed into a noble one

The *mtshun* departed [to the afterlife] as the *lha* (*mtshun las lhar ru gshegs*)

Country: Zangs-yul zangs-stod (Copper Country Upper Copper)

Deceased as a *rnal-dri*: Zangs gyī bo-[mo] (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Copper)

Officiant: *drī-bon* Ra-ljags skyī-rgyal

dang / dma'rgya mtsho 'khyil rnams yan chod kyis / sa bdag klu dang yul sa gnyan / mtshon (= *mtshun*) *dang thugs kar sgra bla rnams / bdag cag bon gyi kha 'dzin mdzod /*). Similarly, in *Lha rgyal khrus gsol phyag 'tshal mnga'gsol rnams yod do* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-bsten*, vol. 6, Nos. 655–658, anonymous), No. 655, lns. 4, 5, the *lha-mtshun*, as a generic class of deities, is invoked along with the paternal ancestors and other divine allies common to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur to remind them of the crucial role they play in freeing the dead: "The male ancestors (*pha-myes*) and *lha* on the shoulders of me the *gshen-po*, the *lce* and *dbal*, these two, of me the 'dur-*gshen*, the *dbal*-[*gsas*] and *gshen*-[*gsas*] and *gar-gsas*, these five, and the *klu*, *gnyan*, *yul-sa*, and *zo-dor*, these nine, [and] the army of *lha-mtshun*, *sgra-bla* and *wer-ma*, do your heroic work and do not spoil things" (*gshen po bdag gi pha myes phrag lha dang / 'dur gshen bdag gi lce dbal gnyis / dbal dang gshen dang gar gsas lnga / klu gnyan yul sa zo dor dgu / lha mtshun sgra bla wer ma'i dmag / dpa' ba'i las byas chud ma zos /*). The reference to the *lha* and *pha-myes* riding on the shoulders of the 'dur-*gshen* epitomizes the importance attached to the evocation of the ancestral spirits of the deceased by the ritualists, in order that the apotropaic aspects of his or her funeral are successful. The receptacles of the *mtshun* (divine ancestors) in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are rhododendron and bamboo. Through these ritual objects the *mtshun* are believed to purify the hereditary lineage (*mi-rabs rgyud*), facilitating one last meeting between the living and dead before effecting the transference of the deceased to the *dga'-yul* paradise. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 423, 424, 427, 428.

Metaphor: The frozen hide was meticulously tanned
The wild *dri* was changed into a noble one
The *mtshun* was transformed into a *smān*

Country: Dung-yul dung-stod (Conch Country Upper Conch)
Deceased as a *rnel-dri*: Dung gyī (C.T. = gi) bo-mo (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Conch)
Officiant: *grī-bon* (*sic*) Ra-ljags skyī-rgyal
Metaphor: The fresh hide was meticulously tanned
The wild *dri* was changed into a noble one (*btshun*, C.T. = *btsun*)
The *btshun* (= *mtshun*) was transformed into a *smān*

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 2

The second origins myth ([*srid*]-*rabs*) in Chapter II of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* relates how a young woman found redemption through the sacerdotal capture and use of a stag (11.4–12. 4). As with most other *smrang*, a genealogy of the protagonist, Lha-lcam phye-ma lam, is provided before her sad fate is recounted. Her father was Srid-pa'i lha-rab(s) g.yung-drung 'od gyi rgyal-po (King of Effluence Swastika Lha Lineage of Existence) and her mother G.yung-drung khri-'od gyi rgyal-mo.¹⁷⁸ The names of these figures identify them as deities in the primal or cosmogonic cast, underlining the mythic nature of the tale. The expression or title *srid-pa'i lha-rabs* / *lha-rabs srid-pa* abounds in Tibetan etiologic myths. As with many other *smrang* narratives in Old Tibetan ritual literature, the marriage and the making of children of the protagonists are recounted. This fundamental motif of union and begetting encapsulates the very essence of the *smrang* as a device that heralds the origins of things. The generative process, be it cosmogonic, sexual or magical is at the heart of the narrative, linking the various segments of the storyline together.

Pregnant with the child of the lord Skyi-rje rmang-po,¹⁷⁹ the victim of the story was murdered

¹⁷⁸ In a brief reference to the text, Blezer (2008: 431 [n. 19]) rightly notes that this genealogy is identical in structure to those in Dunhuang manuscripts. He also observes (*ibid.*) that the interposition of the word *g.yung-drung* in the names of the king and queen give them a post-imperial ring. While I concur, Blezer's assertion that this means *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* may date to the 11th century or later (*ibid.*) is not indicated by its grammatical structure, orthography or vocabulary. As noted (and which will be explained further, *infra*, pp. 177–181), I am inclined to place the archaic ritual manuscripts of the Gathang Bumpa collection in the 850–1000 CE timeframe, pending codicological verification. Karmay (2009: 63) is also of the opinion that the occurrence of the term *g.yung-drung* in the archaic texts of Gathang Bumpa does not preclude a pre-11th century CE date for them.

¹⁷⁹ A Skyi-rje rmang-po as the father of two ill-fated children is found in the second narrative of Pt 1068. He hails from Skyi-ro lchang-sngon. In the *do-ma* lineages listed in Pt 1060, an eponymous personality is the lord of Skyi-ro ljang-sngon (*sic*). This homeland refers to the Skyi-chu / Skyid-chu valley downstream of Lhasa. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 538, 539. An individual of the same name and locale (with minor spelling variations) is also mentioned in Pt 1285 (lns. r28, r186), Pt 1286 (ln. 10), Pt 1290 (ln. v6), and ITJ 734 (ln. 8r316). Lalou (1965: 202) has also tabulated these references to Skyi-rje rmang-po. See also Norbu 2009, p. 144; Lalou 1958, pp. 158, 182, 186; Dotson 2008, p. 47. On Skyi-ro ljang-sngon and Skyi-rje rmang-po in ITJ 734, cf. Thomas 1957, ch. iv, p. 94. For Skyi-rje rmang-po in a Dunhuang text, Dpa'-bo gtsug-lag's history, and in a Classical Tibetan manuscript, where he is the leader of a principality (*rgyal-phran*), see Haahr 1969, p. 241. What can be confidently stated is that Skyi-rje rmang-po was a primary ancestral or archetypal figure of the Skyi-chu region. Moreover, the occurrence of the same persona in various Dunhuang manuscripts, nicely illustrates the cultural common ground that existed in the early historic period. These Old Tibetan texts were clearly informed by the same historical and mythic sources. The integral cultural and literary wellspring that such texts reflect is touched upon in Stein 1971, *passim*.

by a *srin* that had magically transformed itself into a stag.¹⁸⁰ The antlers of this animal are those of ‘water’ (*chu*), which is probably a reference to the way in which the curving points resemble waves on a river or lake. The father of the deceased woman called upon the funerary priest Ra-ljags to officiate over her funeral. However, Ra-ljags was unsuccessful in summoning the soul of the victim, who had become a *dri*. Salvation for Lha-lcam phye-ma lam came only after a horned deer was caught and set up as a support or receptacle (*rten*) for the *dri* she had become. Although the text does not elaborate, it appears that the deer’s rack was critical in its ability to act as the vessel for the soul of the deceased. The practice of using deer, blue sheep, argali, and ibex horns as receptacles for elemental spirits on *lha-tho* and *gsas-mkhar* shrines is still common in the Tibetan world. As in the illuminated funerary manuscript and Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, the deer in this account serves a protective function in the funerary dispensation. As we shall further see, the value of this animal and its anatomical parts in archaic death rituals cannot be overestimated.

Like the first origins myth of Chapter II, the process of deliverance for Lha-lcam phye-ma lam was fourfold: 1) the ‘taming’ or exorcism of the *dri*, 2) the *dri* turned into a noble one or brought into a thanatological state of normalcy, 3) the resulting appearance of the *mtshun* shade in the postmortem realm, and 4) the *mtshun* becoming a *sman*, signaling the uptake of the apotheosized deceased into the hereafter:

Now, the origins tale of seizing the horned deer (*sha-ru*) and *rnel-dri*: The father and patriarch Srid-pa’i lha-rab g.yung-drung ’od gyi rgyal-po and the mother and matriarch G.yung-drung khrī-’od gyi rgyal-mo mated and their offspring was a child born, born as a daughter.¹⁸¹ The name and appellation bestowed [upon the daughter] was Lha-lcam phye-ma lam. Whose wife and mate did she go as? She departed as the wife and mate of Skyi-rje rmang-po. She became pregnant with child.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ That deer were sometimes seen as something to be defeated is attested in the rock art record of Upper Tibet. An inscription made in conjunction with the depiction of a stag, which may date to what I refer to as the vestigial period (1000–1300 CE), reads: “This deer was subdued by a man like me” (*Sha wa (= ba) ’di ko mi nga gra (= ’dra) ’dul yin*). For this inscription and rock art composition, see Bellezza 2001, pp. 214, 349 (fig. 10.60).

¹⁸¹ Stein (2010, *Antiqua* V: 264), in a reference to Pt 1134, translates *pa* (C.T. = *pha*) *dang yab kyi mtshan* as ‘some man’, and *ma dang yum gyi mtshan* as ‘some woman’, overlooking the stateliness of these phrases. They read better as follows: ‘the name of the father and patriarch’ (variously, ‘the father, the patriarch’) and ‘the name of the mother and matriarch’ (‘the mother, the matriarch’). This type of parallelism applied to the object of sentences is a hallmark of ancient Tibetan storytelling. Stein’s (*ibid.*, 270) translation of *ma dang yum* as ‘mother’ and *pha dang yab* as ‘father’ does indeed capture the signification of these words but not their rhetorical spirit. In one instance, Stein (*ibid.*, 266) inexplicably defines the word *bshos* as ‘evil’, rather than its actual meaning: ‘mated’ or ‘made love’. Yet, in another instance he clearly understands the import of *bshos dang nams kyi sras* as “children created” (*ibid.*, 270). This expression literally means ‘son / offspring of their mating and nocturnal / seasonal [activity]’. I thank Brandon Dotson for suggestions concerning the parallelism in this line. The use of the word *nams* (closely related to the C.T. word *nam*) conveys the act of producing children, in the appropriate or customary time as part of the normal course of nature. This sense of the word has survived in the term *so-nams* (to till the ground). Also, Stein (*ibid.*, 271) translates *khyab* (= *khab*) *dang dbyal du bgyis* as “a man and woman are united and have children”, and *kyab* (= *kab*, C.T. = *khab*) *dang dbyal du blangste* as “a young man marries a girl”. In fact, the former line should read: “made / did as the wife and mate”, and the latter as “taken as the wife and mate”. I only point out this imprecision in the highly distinguished work of the late R. A. Stein because the lines under discussion, or variations thereof, punctuate many archaic ritual origins myths.

¹⁸² *Bu dang sras cig mnga’* (literally: possessed by a child, by progeny).

At the margin of the meadow and slates,¹⁸³ [she] went to refresh¹⁸⁴ herself. G.ya'-srin tshub-ma (Srin of the Slates Tempest) and Gangs-srin phywar-ba, these two, appeared therein.¹⁸⁵ Magically appearing (*brdzus*) as a deer with water antlers of eight points, Lha-lcam phye-leb (*sic*) was impaled on the points of the antlers¹⁸⁶ and died.¹⁸⁷ The patriarch,¹⁸⁸ the father, invited the *dri-bon* Ra-ljags. Doing the *dri* subjugation and *shid* (funeral), he could not summon (*ma-khugs*) the soul of the *dri*. The soul of the Lha-lcam phye-ma lam was lost on the water antler tips of the deer.¹⁸⁹ So, catching the water horn deer, it was established as the receptacle of the disappearance-prone *dri*. The wild *dri* was subdued to tameness. The *dri* was converted into a noble one. The *mtshun* was transformed into a *sman*.

da nī rnel dri sha ru gzung ba'i rabs la / pha dang yab gyī mtshan / srīd pa'i lha rab (C.T. = rabs) g.yung drung 'od gyi rgyal po dang / ma dang yum gyi mtshan / g.yung drung khri 'od gyi rgyal mor bshos pa'i sras / bu byung bo (C.T. = bu) mor byung // myīng (C.T. = ming) dang mtshan btags pa'a / lha lcam phye ma lam / su'i khab dang dbyal du gshegs // skyī rje rmang po dang dbyal du gshegs / bu dang sras cīg mnga' / g.ya'le spang mtshams su / spang sangs mdzad du gshegs na' / g.ya'srin tshub ma dang / gangs srin phywar ba gnyis phas gyis byung / sha chu ru brgyad pa cīg du brdzus nas / lha lcam phye leb nī / rwa'i (C.T. = rwa yi)¹⁹⁰ rgyal gong du blangs / nas gum mo // pha bo yab gyīs / dri bon ra ljags spyang grangs (C.T. = drangs) te / dri 'dul shid bgyid na / dri'i brla (C.T. = bla) ma khugs / lha lcam phye ma lam / kyī brla (C.T. = bla) nī sha ba bcu (C.T. = chu) ru'i rgyal gong na' (C.T. = na) / yīn cang shor te song nas / sha cu (C.T. = chu) ru de bzung nas / dri yar (C.T. = yal) ba'i rten du btsugs / dri rgod las g.yung du btul / dri las btsun du phab / mtshun las sman du bskyal // °°° //

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 3

The third etiologic myth in Chapter II of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, in addition to standard ritualistic elements, focuses on the soul stone (*brla-rdo* [*sic*]) needed to contain the *dri* associated with prenatal death (12.4–13.1). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *bla-rdo* is considered essential for the liberation of the dead. These mystic stones are ritually used to harbor the consciousness

¹⁸³ G.ya'-le. The phrase of which it is a part (regularly used in Eternal Bon ritual literature) indicates that this word can only be an O.T. equivalent of g.ya'-ma.

¹⁸⁴ Spang-sangs. This term appears to be related to the C.T. word *kham-sangs* (rejuvenated, refreshed), specifically as denoting the restorative or recreational qualities of meadows.

¹⁸⁵ Phas gyis byung. As regards this reading, I am indebted to Stein (2010, *Antiqua* V: 269), who commenting on Pt 1289 and the *Klu 'bum*, recognized *pha-se* as a dialectal or archaic form closely related to the C.T. *phar* (thither) and *pha-rol* (other side). I consider Stein's reading superior to 'suddenly [came]', which I had offered earlier (*Bellezza* 2010a: 216 [n. 85]).

¹⁸⁶ Rwa'i (C.T. = rwa yi) rgyal-gong du blang. The word *rgyal* here is etymologically related to the C.T. term *rtse-rgyal*, denoting something very pointed, like horns, thus the addition of 'points' to the translation.

¹⁸⁷ Gum-mo. On the grammatical usage of the verbs *gum*, 'chi, shi (to die), *bkum* (to kill), and *btungs* (to massacre) in the Old Tibetan Annals, see Hill 2008.

¹⁸⁸ Pha-bo. This quaintly constructed O.T. term may be read as an honorific expressing venerability or a storied quality.

¹⁸⁹ This sentence comprised of three grammatical lines in the text includes the phrase *yin-cang*, the meaning of which is not clear in this context.

¹⁹⁰ The large triangular *wa-zur* in this word (horn) was mistranscribed as the letter *ba* here and in other occurrences in *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che*. On the paleography of the large *wa-zur*, see Zeisler 2011, pp. 201–206.

principle of the deceased during the rites of evocation and rehabilitation. In the concluding part of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral, the consciousness principle is detached from the *bla-rdo* in order that they may achieve passage to the afterlife or Buddhist-style liberation.

The first lines of origins myth No. 3 provide the name of the doomed woman as well as that of her husband. Her hearty appetite for carnal pleasure leading to pregnancy is also recounted. The harrowing tale of senseless murder that follows takes place while the victim, 'Gos-za phyam dar-ma, was frolicking in a meadow. The text provides graphic details of her demise. The murder weapon was a stone called *smra gor-rdo*. The term *smra* indicates the precedential quality of the stone in this *rnal-dri* narrative.¹⁹¹ 'Gos-za phyam dar-ma was transmogrified into a *dri*, and as is often the case in Tibetan thanotopsis, the deceased absconds, wandering no doubt in the gloom of the after-death realm. Nevertheless, through her innate attachment to the 'primal soul stone sphere' (*smra-gor gling*) she was able to be saved. As in the tale of the woman killed by a deer, it is the agent of slaughter that is harnessed as an essential funerary ritual instrument. This fundamental connection between that which kills and that which emancipates underscores the primal or ancient nature of such *smrang*, as seen by their authors and users. These origins myths signal that the sacral deer and stone were handed down through the generations to serve as cardinal receptacles for slain women in their untamed or parlous state. Whether this was an idealized religious inheritance of limited historical depth or one with truly prehistoric roots cannot be conclusively determined with the evidence at hand. I suspect, however, that the latter is the case.

Once 'Gos-za phyam dar-ma was securely housed in the soul stone, her liberation could go ahead. The *dri* she had become was first made docile, the painstaking nature of which is summarized in the metaphor of tanning we have already examined. Incumbent in this action are the various ritual measures taken in archaic funerals to defeat the *dri*. Subsequent to this conquest, the *dri* assumes a 'noble' character, pursuant to its transformation into a *mtshun* and finally into a *sman* goddess:

The origin tale of the soul stone of the *rnal dri-mo*: The name of the father and the patriarch was Zangs-'gar se'u-pa and the mother was 'Gos-za phyam dar-ma.¹⁹² This noble woman (*myi-ma*) mated and mated (*bshos bshos*) and 'Gos-za phyam dar-ma became pregnant with child (*sku la sras cig mnga*'). This noble woman¹⁹³ went above the slates and meadow for enjoyment. From the opposite side (*bas gyi*), a goat herder threw a stone and it hit 'Go-za phyam-dar right on top of the head. Her upper body (*sku-stod*) through this homicidal act slumped over¹⁹⁴ and she died. Her lower body (*sku-smad*) with child and offspring through [this violence] died. To subjugate the *dri* and make the funeral, there was not the soul of the *dri*. The soul of the *dri*

¹⁹¹ See Bellezza 2008, pp. 413–417, for the soul stone (*bla-rdo*) origin myth of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The term *gor-mo* denoting a stone (either generically or as one with special ritual functions) occurs three times in this myth.

¹⁹² The name of this figure indicates that her clan and/or ancestral homeland was known as 'Gos. According to Sørensen and Hazod (2007, vol. 1: 118 (n. 207); vol. 2: 382, 383), 'Gos-yul straddled western Bhutan and southern Gtsang.

¹⁹³ *Myi-mo* (C.T. = *mi-mo*). For an occurrence of this honorific term expressing venerability or a storied quality (thus the translation: 'noble woman'), see Bellezza 2005, pp. 180, 182, para. iv. This word also occurs as part of the name of a prototypic female victim in a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur *smrang* about the *sri* agents of violent death: *Smra-lcam mi-mo* (Bellezza 2008: 470, 471).

¹⁹⁴ *Rngas* (C.T. = *sngas*). Literally: 'head first'.

appeared spinning around¹⁹⁵ the primal stone. The stone was taken and established as the receptacle of the disappearance-prone *dri*. The wild *dri* was subdued to tameness. The fresh hide was meticulously tanned. The *dri* was converted into a noble one. The *mtshun* was transformed into a *sman*.

rnel dri mo 'i brla (C.T. = *bla*) *rdo 'i rabs la / pha dang yab gyi mtshan / zangs 'gar se'u pa dang*
/ ma nĩ 'gos za phyam dar ma / myĩ ma bshos bshos na / 'gos za phyam dar ma / sku la sras cig
mnga' / g.ya (= g.ya') le spang gong du / myĩ (C.T. = *mi*) *mo rol du gshegs / bas gyi (= phas kyi)*
ra rdzi yĩs / smra gor rdo cig 'phangs // 'gos za phyam dar glad pa'i rgyas su brgyab / sku stod
gri dang rngas (C.T. = *sngas*) *su drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) */ sku smad bu dang sras gyis grongs /*
dri 'dul shid bgyi na' (C.T. = *na*) */ dri 'i brla* (C.T. = *bla*) *ma mchĩs / smra gor gling la 'gor /*
dri 'i brla (C.T. = *bla*) *chags sgo ra ra / smra gor rdo blangs te / dri yar ba'i rten du btsugs / dri*
rgod las g.yung du btul / pags gsar las zhib du gnyes (C.T. = *mnyes*) *// dri las mtshun (= btsun)*
du phab / mtshun las sman du bskyal // °°° //

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 4

The fourth origins myth of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* relates the same brutal murder of a pregnant woman as origins myth No. 3. Origins myth No. 4 is the longer version of this *rnel-dri* tale. In the aftermath of the killing, this story expatiates upon elements of the *rnel-dri* funeral (13.2–16.10). The horrid tone of such narratives is used to demonstrate that the ritual of subjugation is efficacious even in the most extreme of situations. The main character of this story is the pitiable 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma' (*sic*), a woman described through metaphors as being very attractive. She was desired in marriage by a host of different spirits. However, her love was for a *srin* with whom she could not marry. It can be assumed that this was because the two belonged to different lineages or tribes, intermarriage between them being socially proscribed. Instead, as we have seen, 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma' was given to a figure called Zangs-'gar se-'u-pa (*sic*):

Another origin tale of the *rnel dri*: The name of the father and patriarch was 'Gos-rje 'gos-po and the name of the mother and matriarch was Za-za zangs-mo btsun. The offspring of their mating and nocturnal activity was a child born, born as a daughter. The name and appellation¹⁹⁶ bestowed [on the girl] was 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma'. Her lovely face was like the full moon.¹⁹⁷ Her lovely body was flexible like bamboo.¹⁹⁸ To whom did she go as the wife (*khabs*) and mate (*dbyal*)? 'We desire (*bzhed*) her as the wife and mate', said the two *lha* and the *gsas*, these three, of the upper part of the valley. 'We desire her as the wife and mate', said the two *klu* and the *gnyan*, these

¹⁹⁵ *Sgo ra ra*. This trisyllabic indicator conveys a spinning motion. The circling of sundry indigenous deities around a common type of receptacle known as a *gsas-mkhar* is described in a text for their propitiation. See Bellezza 2005, pp. 335–338.

¹⁹⁶ *Mkhan*. In this context, it is an imputation of *myĩng* (C.T. = *ming*).

¹⁹⁷ In the grammatical construction of this sentence, the phrase *zla re nya* signifies 'as (or like) the full moon'.

¹⁹⁸ *Rings mzung* (C.T. = *bzang*) *smyug re lden* (= *ldem*). Here the Old Tibetan word *rings* / *ring* can be defined as 'human body'. In other texts of the archaic funerary tradition, *ring* refers to the corpse and is found in compound words to denote various mortuary objects. See *supra*, pp. 26 (fn. 41), 27 (fn. 43). On this term, also see Walter 1998; Haahr 1969, p. 360. A specialist in disposing of corpses is called *ring-mkhan* (Stein 1972: 238). In a more restrictive sense, *ring* is an honorific for the corpse of the king (Dotson 2009: 102, 103). *Ring* as denoting the corporeal form has persisted in the term for the bodily relics of holy personages, *ring-brsel* (cf. *ibid.*, 83 [n. 131]).

three, of the lower valley. 'We desire her as the wife, the mate', said the 'gre, srīn and gdon, these three. Her father (*pha-bo*) was highly resistant; in his head he was extremely stubborn.¹⁹⁹ She was not bestowed upon the two *lha* or *gsas*, these three. She was not given to the two *klu* or *gnyan*, these three. She was not bestowed upon the two 'dre or *sman*,²⁰⁰ these three. She was not given to the 'dre, *srin* or *byur*, these three. The girl (*bo-mo*) was heartbroken (*thugs-cad*) as she was separated from the *srīn*. She was separated from truth (her love). Who received (*bzhes*) her as his wife and mate? In Zangs-yul zangs-stod, she was received as the wife and mate of Zangs-gar se-'u-pa.

yang rnel gri 'i rabs cig la' / pha dang yab gyī mtshan / 'gos rje 'gos po dang / ma dang yum gyī mtshan / za za zangs mo btsun // bshos dang nams gyī sras / bu byung bo (C.T. = bu) mor byung / myīng dang mkhan btags pa' (C.T. = pa) / 'gos za yam 'dar ma' / zhal bzangs (C.T. = bzang) zla re nya // rīngs (C.T. = ring) mzangs (C.T. = bzang) smyug re lden (C.T. = ldem) / su'i khab dang dbyal du gshegs na // lung gyī ya phu na lha gnyis gsas dang / gsum gyī khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / lung gyī mda' na / klu gnyis gnyan dang gsum gī khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / 'gre (C.T. = 'dre)²⁰¹ srīn gdon dang gsum gyī khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / pha bo slad pa che / 'go (C.T. = mgo) che slad pa che // lha gnyis gsas dang gsum la ma stsal lo // klu gnyis gnyan dang gsum la ma stsal lo // 'dre gnyis sman dang gsum la ma stsal lo / 'dre srin dang byur (+ dang) gsum la ma stsal lo // bo (C.T. = bu) mo thugs cad (C.T. = chad) nas / srīn dang bye ste mchis / bden dang bye ste mchis // su'i khab dang dbyal du bzhes / zangs yul zangs stod na' (C.T. = na) / zangs 'gar se 'u pa'i khab dang dbyal du bzhes /

Nearly ready to give birth, 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma' decided to travel to see her father. It is not possible to read into the text the state of her mind or if marital discord played a part in her decision to go abroad. Passing through 'Gol-yul 'gos-stod on horseback, she was accosted by two herders, who asked her to identify herself. As she was replying to their query, the shepherds called out loudly, causing the young woman to fall from her horse. Lying unconscious, the miscreants threw a rock at 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma's (*sic*) head. This caused the horse to bolt and for the woman to get caught up in the halter. 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma was dragged by the horse to the edge of a precipice, falling to her death. Even more gruesomely, the text tells us that after the fall she was strangled by her very dress. Whatever justice the two herders faced is unrecorded in the text, as it is dedicated to the welfare of the deceased:

After a time of nine months she said she wanted to meet (*phrad*) her father. What did she wear on her body? She wore a costume of *gu-zu*.²⁰² What mount did she ride? She rode an old she-goat.²⁰³ She went to 'Gol-yul 'gos-stod. Along the way who did she meet? She met boys (*bus-bu*), a goat herder and a sheep herder, these two. The boys²⁰⁴ asked, 'who are you girl?'. 'Gos-za replied, 'my own²⁰⁵ father is called

¹⁹⁹ This sentence is the general import of *pha bo slad pa che 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *che slad pa che*.

²⁰⁰ This must refer to the son of an ancestral lineage originating with the *sman* spirits.

²⁰¹ In the transcription of the text in *Dga'thang 'bum pa che* (No. 13, ln. 9), 'gre was erroneously transcribed as 'gro.

²⁰² Also *go-zu*. In Eternal Bon ritual texts, a type of overcoat endowed with protective properties used by goddesses. See Bellezza 2001, p. 60; 2005, p. 357; 2008, p. 315; Pasar *et al.* 2008, p. 37.

²⁰³ *Ra dra-tsa rgan-mo*. The term *dra-tsa* must describe the appearance of the animal or be the name for a particular type of goat.

²⁰⁴ *Bus-sba*, an O.T. term that can only denote the boys themselves.

²⁰⁵ *Bdag gyī*. The use of this first person reflexive pronoun is in line with the use of *bdag-cag* in O.T. sources by someone of lower status addressing or referring to someone of higher status. On this usage of *bdag-cag*, see Hill 2010, pp. 557–559.

'Gos-rje 'gos-po and my mother is Za-za zangs-mo btsun. I myself (*bdag-rang*) am 'Gos-za phyam-ma 'dar-ma (*sic*).²⁰⁶ Saying those words, the goat herder and sheep herder shouted (*khus-btab*) and 'Gos-za phyam-dar (*sic*) struck [the ground]. 'Gos-za was unconscious. The sheep herders were pleased. The sheep herders threw a stone of the ground. The thrown stone hit her on the head. Her feet were wrapped up (*dkris*) in the halter. The horse started, it started to the edge of a precipice.²⁰⁶ She fell down and died. Her *gu-zu* was picked up by the wind. Her *gu-zu* became wrapped around her neck. Strangled (*'gags*) after falling into the water, she died.²⁰⁷

zla ba ngo rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *na / pha dang phrad do gsung / sku la cī gsol na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *nam* (C.T. = *na*) *bza' gu zu gsol / chībs su cī mchībs na / ra dra tsa rgan mo bcībs / 'gol yul 'gos stod na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *du gshegs / na // shul du su dang mjal / bus bu ra rdzi lug rdzi gnyīs dang mjal // bus sba'ī mchīd na re / bu khyod su bgyis pa dang / 'gos za'ī mchīd na're / bdag gyī pha smos pa* (C.T. = *ba*) *'gos rje 'gos po thang (= dang) / ma nī za za zangs mo btsun / bdag rang 'gos za phyam ma 'dar (- /) ma // de skad bgyīs pa la / ra rtsī lug rtsī khus btab pas / 'gos za phyam dar rdab cīg bsnun / 'gos za brgyal te gda' / lug rtsī rga* (C.T. = *dga'*) *ste gda' / lug rtsī sa rdo gcig 'phangs / rdo 'phangs 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *ru phog (+ /) rkang pa mthur gyis dkrīs // rta 'grog g.yang kar 'grog / rbab du lhung ste grongs / gu zu rlung gyis* (C.T. = *gis*) *btāb* (C.T. = *brdab*) // *gu zu rlung gyī* (C.T. = *gis*) *skye* (C.T. = *ske*) *la dkrīs // 'gags nas chu ru lhung ste grongs / de nas rbo de nes mo rang lcebs ste / shī //*

Due to her horrific death, the text tells us that 'Gos-za yam 'dar-ma's body was possessed by no less than nine *dri*. The first eight of these demons represent the chain of ugly events that led to her expiration. The ninth *dri* arose through her husband Zangs-'gar se'u-pa, who after recovering the body of his wife, dismembered it. This seems to be an allusion to the so-called 'sky-burial' (*bya-gtor*), a very common means of corpse disposal in Tibet for centuries. If so, this may be the oldest extant literary reference to this mortuary practice.²⁰⁸ The text seems to say, that while sky-burial may have sufficed for those who died of natural causes, it was insufficient for those who perished as *dri-mo*. With the creation of nine *dri* in place of his wife, a very serious situation to say the least, Zangs-'gar se'u-pa invited the *dri-bon* Ra-ljags skyī-rgyal to respond to the problem. This priest first erected nine *dri-tho*, a type of erect ritual structure of unknown construction, which was probably made of stone or wood. Subsequent *rnel-dri* origins myths indicate that this was the primary ritual measure taken.²⁰⁹ Next, the text describes a complicated

²⁰⁶ *G.yang-kar*. This is an O.T. word that is identical to or very close in meaning to the C.T. *g.yang-ze* (edge of a precipice).

²⁰⁷ This is followed by two lines, the complete import of which is unclear: *de nas rbo de nes mo rang lcebs ste / shī //*. Rather than meaning 'suicide', the word *rang-lcebs* seems to refer to death caused accidentally by the woman's own belongings. That 'Gos-za phyam 'dar-ma had expired is emphasized by the one-word line: *shī*, which shows that she was now among the dead.

²⁰⁸ For a general survey of mortuary practices in contemporary Tibet, see Malville 2005; Gouin 2010.

²⁰⁹ The Eternal Bon historical work *Bsgrags pa gling grags* states, "By Ral-ljags bon-po 'od-cag 'brug (*sic*) thirteen crows landed on the tips of the thirteen *gri-tho*. By the wing, he could cut the *gshed-po* and the violent death (*gri*) iron [weapons]" (Bellezza 2008: 493). The funerary *tho* is also mentioned in the *Klu 'bum nag po* in rather obscure ritual circumstances (*ibid.*, 489, 492); it states: "The soldier(s) put on armor and circled the *tho* with his / their weapons held aloft... He / they passed some distance through the *tho*, and at the last *tho* he / they dug in the earth and pressed down the *sri*" (*dmag pas khrab gon nas / mtho (= tho) skor mtshon phyar... mtho (= tho) dang rgyang rgal bshags* (C.T. = *gshags*) *te sa bskor nas tho tha ma la sri gnan nas /*). It is evident from this reference that at least certain types of *tho* were significant physical objects erected in rows. As I have noted (2008, 2011b), the standing stones at Upper Tibetan funerary sites are sometimes called Mon-tho, many of which form linear arrays. It remains to be shown if these *tho* of highland folklore have any correspondence with the *tho* of the archaic funerary rituals recorded in Tibetan literature.

sacrificial procedure, which involves the parts of birds, organs and blood. The details of this funerary immolation are not clear; they are now nothing more than a tradition consigned to the depths of history.

The text now moves to address the funeral in which the origins myth was read. It seems to furnish a warning to the *g.yen* spirits that they should not attack the corpse, but the grammatical structure of this line is somewhat hazy. As already seen, for the dead to be transformed into *mtshun*, it is essential that the thirty-three types of *g.yen* spirits are repulsed. This is succeeded by a line that appears to be addressed to the friends and family of the deceased; that they should not be overly preoccupied with her death:

In the body of one woman²¹⁰ there were nine *dri*. One: hit by the stone of the sheep herder *dri*. Two: the horse *gri*. Three: the abyss *dri*. Four: falling from a height *gri*. Five: strangulation *dri*. Six: water *dri*. Seven: child *dri*. Eight: death through personal possessions *dri*. Nine: thereafter Zangs-'gar se'u-pa cut up her corpse.²¹¹ In the body of one woman were nine *gri*. The *dri-bon* Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal was invited by

The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text entitled *Mi kha bkar ba'i smrang gyer bzhugs legs* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 173, 174, anonymous), which contains a narrative on the origins of *mi-kha* (calumny),* notes a type of *tho* that is erected to expel *mi-kha* beyond its bounds. This *tho* (of stone) is topped with a wooden plank on which spells of the *yi-dam* (tutelary deity) are written (called 'gogs-shing). In the oral tradition of Upper Tibet, in addition to being called 'tho of the Mon', the standing mortuary stones or menhirs of ancient ceremonial sites are often dubbed *rdo-ring* (long-stones). A reference to *rdo-ring* has surfaced as a place name in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Gshen bon rang yul nas chas pa'i chas thabs* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 83–92, anonymous). This text is designed to be used by ritualists just before they set out to a funeral venue. It centers on the invocation of prototypic ritualists of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, in order that they will act as the allies of the officiating priests. The reference to a *rdo-ring* is found as part of an account about a triad of ancient practitioners, who are invoked after the primal celestial being that is the architect of the ritual tradition (Nos. 84, ln. 5 to 85 ln. 5): "Kye! Today, the father is going, the *bon* (traditions and practitioners) is going, what was the first lineage to be going? In the first epoch of existence, the karmic cycle of birth and death, the many excellent *lha-bon* of space came to act as the kings of the earth. Supervisor (*kha-'dzin*) Ye-gshen dbang-rdzogs (Primordial Gshen Perfected Power), come from the good house in the nine layers of space, he who composes the *gto* lineage of primordial existence. From the *gshen* country Hos kyi ljangs-tshal, come manifestation 'Dur-gshen rma-da. Rma-da search for and tame the souls of humans. From Shel gyi rdo-ring bya-slag (Pillar of Crystal Bird Robe),† come 'dul-gshen Khu-byug gsung-snyan (Melodious Speech Cuckoo), he who purifies (alleviates) the suffering between the living and the dead. From Srid-yul thang-ma ldem-dro, come *srid-gshen* Mu-cho ldem-drug, he who knows the ritual traditions of the epoch, existence and *gshen* (priestly knowledge), these three" (*kye / di ring pha chas bon chas na / chas rab (= rabs) dang po su la blangs / sngon gyi srid pa dang po la / skye shi las kyi kha 'khor bas / nam mkha'i lha bon mang rab gcig / sa yi rgyal mdzad du byon / nam mkha' dgu rim khang bzang nas / kha 'dzin ye gshen dbang rdzogs chos / ye srid gto rabs gtan la phabs / gshen yul hos kyi ljangs tshal nas / sprul sku 'dur gshen rma da chos / mi bla rma da dul (= 'dul) gyi tshol / shel gyi rdo ring bya slag nas / 'dul gshen khu byug gsung snyan chos / shi gson bar gyi mya ngan sangs / srid yul thang ma ldem dro nas / srid gshen mu cho ldem drug chos / bskal srid gshen gum cho rab (= rabs) mkhyen*).

* For *mi-kha* as a cause of death among the Thakali of Nepal, see Vinding 1982, p. 307.

† Citing this place name in Bellezza 2008, p. 493 (n. 467), I misread *bya-slag* (bird robe) as 'bra-slag'. Although the nature of the long-stone in the toponym is unknown (natural or manmade?), it does accord with reference to the binding of the soul to a *rdo-ring*, as related by a *gto-pa* (ritual specialist) in the soul stone origins text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (*ibid.*, 415–417). I am persuaded to believe (pending more information) that these literary references to *rdo-ring* represent the transmission of a dim cultural memory of prehistoric mortuary practices from Upper Tibet. On the probable cultural obsolescence of the *sui generis* pillar monuments of upland Tibet by the imperial period, see Bellezza 2012a.

²¹⁰ *Za-ma mo* (woman), parallel to the term *skyes-pa pho* (man). This may not be a reflexive pronoun, as stated in Bellezza 2010a, p. 75 (n. 167).

²¹¹ *Ro dang rmed (= smad?)*; if so, 'corpse and organs'.

Zangs-'gar se'u-pa like that. [The *dri-bon*] erected the nine *dri-tho*. Nine bird heads, nine eyes and noses, nine skins, nine *slug-gu*,²¹² nine *skur-bu* (a type of container), nine animal guts (*drod-pa*) filled (*bkang*) with nine [types] of blood. The nine types of grass and impounded waters²¹³ were cast off in a downward direction. Nine [types] of funerary wood (*mgal-pa, sic*) were cast off in a downward direction. Great harm of the *g.yen*, do not follow after the corpse. Do not be attached to the dead for a long time.

za ma mo cig la lus la dri rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) dar / lug rtsis (C.T. = *rdzi*) rto (= *rdo*) brgyab pa'i dri ste gcig (+ /) rta gri dang gnyis / g.yang dri gsum / rbab (C.T. = *bab*) gri dang bzhi // 'gags dri dang lnga / chu dri grug (C.T. = *drug*) / bu dri dang bdun / lcebs dri dang brgyad / de nas zangs 'gar se'u pas bshas pa'i ro rmed dang rgu / za ma mo cig la lus gri rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) de dar / zangs 'gar se'u pa 'is / dri bon ra ljags skyi rgyal de ltar gnyer / dri tho rgu (- cig) btsugs / bya mgo rgu sna dmyig (C.T. = *mig*) rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) / pags bu rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) / slug (C.T. = *slu*) gu rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) / skur bu rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) / drod pa rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) / khrag rgus (C.T. = *dgus*) bkang ste / rtsa rdzing sna rgu thur du brug (C.T. = *brub*) / 'gal (C.T. = *mgal*) pa rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) thur du dgar (C.T. = *bkar*) / ro phyir yen (= *g.yen*) ma che / shi phyir gchags (C.T. = *chags*) ma ring /



Fig. 9. A flattened copper alloy tube of the thog-lcags genre of talismans and sundry objects, possibly protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE). Larger specimens such as that shown here were typically designed with prominent loops running along opposite sides of the tube. While smaller examples may possibly have been strung on the body for decorative purposes, larger ones appear to have functioned as implements (for ritual use?). Although the appearance of the conduits mentioned in origins myth No. 4 of Chapter II is unknown, this common class of thog-lcags indicates that pipes or tubes were a popular accouterment in ancient Tibet. Bob Brundage collection, USA

The description of the exercises carried out to subjugate the nine *dri* of the unfortunate woman continues. It appears that these demons were conveyed through nine *sbubs* / *sbubs-mo* of various precious substances. This is a kind of ritual pipe or conduit with eyes (*dbyig*), the latter a reference either to orifices or markings. Some Tibetan antique copper alloy mirrors and other ritual objects are embossed with nine or more 'eyes', which have good fortune bestowing and cosmological significance. The use of these conduits constitutes the final ritual action in defeating the *dri*. A form of this obsolete ritual practice appears to survive in 'dur rituals still carried out today by

²¹² C.T. = *slu-gu* (container for tea and beer).

²¹³ Rather than a reservoir, in this context *rdzing* refers to water held in a vessel.

the Bon-po. Reportedly, in some Hor regions of Tibet, the demons of death (represented by a diagram) are ritually conveyed through the hole in a millstone, so as to subdue them. Although nine *sbubs-mo* are cited in the text, only six different ones are listed. After the defeat of the nine *dri*, the corpses of the mother and fetus were sparged with lustral substances. The two were now ready for burial in a tomb (*bang-so*), a task carried out by the husband of 'Gos-za phyam 'dar-ma, Zangs-'gar se'u-pa. What kind of tomb, typologically speaking, the text refers to here is not specified. There is a big variety of tomb types known in the Tibetan archaeological record, from large masonry and earthen mounds to those with only minimal stone superstructures.²¹⁴ Given the probable noble birth of the victim in this story, however, it might be expected that her *bang-so* was of significant proportions.

This consigning to the grave could only take place because the victims had been brought into what was perceived of as the ideal thanatological state. Accordingly, the stricken mother with child was transfigured into a *sman* divinity. As is commonplace at the end of such *smrang*, it is pronounced that the power and efficacy of this funerary ritual is as real contemporaneously as it was in 'ancient times'. For the authors and users of such texts the hoary power of its word was unquestioned:

[The *dri*] were led through the *sbubs*, the *sbubs* of nine eyes: the yellow golden *sbubs*, the blue turquoise *sbubs*, the white silver *sbubs*, the blue iron *sbubs*, the red copper *sbubs*, and the purplish brown agate *sbubs*. They were conveyed (*grangs*) through the *sbubs*, the nine *sbubs*. 'Gos-za phyam 'dar-ma, the mother and baby of cruel (*rgod*) violent death (*gri*), were subdued to tameness. From many types of water, [their corpses] were lustrated (*bkrus*). With many types of *tshan* [their corpses] were sprinkled (*btab*). Zangs-'gar se'u-pa placed [the corpses] in the *bang-so* in the position on the right.²¹⁵ The mother and baby of violent prenatal death (*bu-dri*) were transformed into a *sman*. The benefit and merit of ancient times was like that. Now (*da-pu*) [also], this *gyer-ba* (chanting) [of the above] is of benefit and merit for the [deceased and survivors].

sbubs mo dmyig (C.T. = *mig*) *rgu'i* (C.T. = *dgu'i*) *sbubs nas 'dren* // *gser sbubs ser mo dang / g.yu sbubs sngon ma dang / rngul* (C.T. = *dngul*) *sbubs dkar mo dang / lcags sbubs sngon mo dang / zangs sbubs dmar mo dang / mchong sbubs smug mo dang / sbubs rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *sbubs nas grangs* (C.T. = *drangs*) // 'gos za phyam 'dar ma / bu gri rgod las g.yung du btul / chu sna mang po nas bkrus / tshan sna mang po nas btab / zangs 'gar se'u pa yis / bang so g.yas gyi dral (C.T. = *gral*) du bzhang / bu gri sman du bskyal / gna' de ltar phan de bsod do / da pu (C.T. = *bu*) la gyer ba la phan de bsod do // °°° //

²¹⁴ For a description and analysis of tomb types in Upper Tibet, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 110–141; 2011b; for Tibetan tomb types more generally, see Chayet 1994, pp. 71–86; Mortari Vergara Caffarelli 1997; for the location and description of Tibetan royal tombs, see Panglung 1988; for the burial and tomb of King Srong-btsan sgam-po and the physical structure and geographic placement of royal tombs, see Haahr 1969, pp. 350–352, 380–397. The *Sui Shu* and *Jiu Tang Shu* annals of the Chinese note that Tibetan (royal) grave mounds were flat-topped, built of earth and stone, and house-like in appearance (Tong and Wertmann 2010: 190, 191).

²¹⁵ *G.yas gyi dral* (C.T. = *gral*). This is traditionally a relative location of high status. For instance, in later times, dignitaries such as lamas at convocations took up their seats in the 'prescribed position on the right'. This optimal positioning of the deceased woman in the tomb signifies that her consciousness principle was fully reconditioned.

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 12

An especially helpful narrative for understanding the major storyline motifs and ritual structures of Chapter II in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is origins tale No. 12 (30.1–31.7). This etiologic myth focuses on the death of a woman about to give birth, by what in modern medical terms would be viewed as trauma. Thus, the *rnel-dri* ritual of subjugation was not only seen as effective in cases of lethal accidents and homicide but also when death was caused by a medical condition. On a sociopsychological level, it can be presumed that the ritual performance described in the text was designed to help address the fear and concern ancient Tibetans had when pregnant women were lost. In contemporary Tibetan communities, negative emotions and responses surrounding unnatural death are still believed to require intensive ritual intervention. In both the ancient and present day cultural environments, pacification of these disturbances is considered mandatory.

In the opening part of origins myth No. 12, it is given that the husband of the ill-fated woman came from Yar-lung sogs-ka, the famous breadbasket region in southern Tibet. This man, Yar-rje rmun-bu, had sought a wife in Kha-la rtsang-stod, an area in the upper portion of Rtsang (C.T. = Gtsang) province, some four hundred kilometers to the west.²¹⁶ As in other origins myths of the text, this event is set in the distant past as part of an archetypal funerary ritual performance. Clearly, this is a depiction of a matrimonial alliance between far-flung regions belonging to different principalities of Central Tibet. It is hard to know whether this was actually an established custom among noble families in prehistoric times. It is worth to mull over the prospect that such a characterization may constitute an early historic-period literary machination, with the object of presenting the sociopolitical integration of Central Tibet as a deeply rooted historical affair. This complicated question is probably best addressed through more rigorous archaeological exploration of the Tibetan Plateau.

According to the story, Yar-rje rmun-bu's wife, Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag, was nearly ready to deliver their child when a *sri* fiend named Yar-srī btsan-bye phag-po sna-rings invaded her womb.²¹⁷ This intrusion by an anthropomorphized agent of slaughter startled the fetus, causing severe trauma for it and the mother, initiating premature delivery. Sadly, the placenta became wrapped around the baby (*sha-ma dgab la dkris*), resulting in wholesale blood loss. This calamity appears to describe a placental abruption with associated nuchal cord, a medical emergency, whereby the umbilical cord becomes wrapped around the baby's neck or body increasing tension on it to the point that the placenta is torn away from the wall of the uterus, causing catastrophic blood loss. The use of the word *dgab*, however, seems to indicate that the umbilical cord became twisted around the lower part of the child. In pre-modern times, such a complication during childbirth often led to the death of a mother and the baby she was carrying. As a result of this misfortune, the 'lha above was unclean' (*yar de lha ma bsangs*). The *lha* referred to here is custodial in nature, a personal protector such as the *yul-lha* (territorial deity) or *mo-lha* (guardian of women in either a generic form or in the guise of specific clan and family deities).²¹⁸

²¹⁶ For various citations to Kha-la rtsang-stod and the Yar-lung sogs-kha locale in the Old Tibetan ritual context, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 64 (n. 125), 69 (n. 147), 70 (n. 149).

²¹⁷ Hazod (2000: 213) observes that a *lde-gshen* with allegiance to Yar-lha sham-po, who gave a ransom offering (*glud*) to Yar-srin pha-sna ring-po and Dra-la in the text ITJ 734, was engaged in a ritual act that facilitated the process of dynastic succession. Sørensen and Hazod (2005: 224 (n. 10), 260) also note the *glud* for the two *srin* of Yar, Dra-la and Pa-sna ring-po. This latter *srin* is almost certainly the same demon as the one in the *rnel-dri* origins myth.

²¹⁸ The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text entitled *Dpa' khrom bskul ba khing sri bshad bda' dad pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brien*, vol. 6, Nos. 435–450, anonymous), constitutes a 'call for support ritual' (*bskul-pa*) directed at the hordes of

From the violent death of Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag, a female *gri* named Rnel-dri bkrags bshar-ma arose, the deceased transmogrified into a ghoul.

The narrative goes on to state that the protective *lha* of the dead woman ‘went away into the sky’ (*gnam du ’phangs*). A metaphor about a goose disappearing into a lake drives home the loss of this *lha*. The text also uses the metaphor of a pheasant (*bya-bang*) reaching a plain to emphasize that Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag had been abandoned by her *lha*. We have already seen the participation of a different species of pheasant (*khu-long*) in the funerary rite of the illuminated manuscript.²¹⁹ Evidently, it was believed that the personal guardian spirit normally aided the deceased in reaching the other world. Tibetan folk tradition holds that a *lha* is born

deities, in order that they destroy the arrogance of the agents of death and harm; i.e., to send (expel) them far off. In this ritual the various personal deities are called upon for this very purpose (Nos. 438, ln. 6 to 439 ln. 3), indicating that they possess a function not unlike that alluded to in the *Rnel dri ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*: “The five ‘go-ba’i *lha* (*yul-lha*, *sgra-bla*, *pho-lha*, *mo-lha*, *srog-lha*), the nine *lha* that protect the life-force, the *lha* of the holder of the *dmu-dag* (celestial cord) of the sky,* the *lha* that protect in the winds of intermediate space (on earth), the thirteen ‘gur-*lha* (mountain divinities of Central Tibet) of the lords (Tibetan kings),† *pho-lha* and *sgra-lha* of the subjects, and the various *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* anywhere they reside, please receive this, the red prescribed ritual meat offering (*thang-sha*)‡ of all the *kha-’dzin* (divine supervisors) and *rtse-rdzi* (keepers of the summit; spirits that protect from above). The time has come to defeat the *gri* and *sri*” (*lus la ’go ba’i lha lnga dang / srog la skyobs pa’i lha dgu dang / gnam gyi dmu dag* (C.T. = *thag*) ‘*dzin pa’i lha / bar snang rlung la srungs pa’i lha / rje yi ’gur lha bcu gsum dang / (- gri sri) ’bang gi pho lha sgra bla dang / gar bzhugs yul sa gzhi bdag sogs / kha ’dzin rtse rdzi thams cad kyi / dmar gyi thang sha ’di bzhes la / gri sri ’dul ba’i dus la bab /*). As for sacrificial meat offerings in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, the *Bla rdo bal lam rten* states that to cast out the demons plaguing the deceased, various offerings including the heart of a yak are required (Nos. 171, No. 5 to 172, No. 1): “Med-po ye-bu tod-tsam (a demon), who wields the black lasso of the *bdud* in his hand, do not sow discord and do not cause harm to the *gshen-po* in the uppermost place. The heart organ of the yak, *shel-tshig* (ritual roasted barleycorn), bird feathers, and leaves of gold and turquoise are for banishing the *bdud* on the nape of the neck, for sending far away the *btsan* on the nape of the neck”§ (*med po ye bu tod tsam gyis / bdud zhags nag po lag na thog / gshen po gral gong yi (= gi) / bdud du ma ’beb la / dbyen du ma rdzu shig / g.yag gi don snying dang / shel tshig bya spu dang / gser g.yu zhog ma yi / ltag bdud gyen du bkar / ltag btsan gyen du brkyads /*). For other references to sacrificial meat offerings in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur and Pt 1068, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 439, 441, 470, 471, 503–506.

* Walter (2009: xxvii (n. 9) claims that the *dmu-thag* (*sic*) almost certainly originated from a Central Asian Buddhist custom, citing late protohistoric period tombs in Turfan that were equipped with long lengths of silk yarn, so that monks could assist local nobility in their ascent to heaven. However, I see no reason to postulate such a restricted source for the *dmu-thag*. Aside from its associations with the ascent after death of the Khri-bdun (first seven kings of Central Tibet), and with Dri-gum btsan-po (the eighth king), the *dmu-thag* is an integral part of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur funeral, and the use of white cloths to help guide the dead to salvation is ingrained in the non-Buddhist funerary traditions of many Himalayan peoples. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 392, 560, 561; *supra*, p. 69 (fn. 89).

† For the names and lore about the ‘gur-*lha* / mgur-*lha*, see Bellezza 1997, pp. 47, 48, 77 (n. 56–58).

‡ On the term *thang*, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 452, 470, 471; 2010a, p. 90 (n. 244). I have defined *thang-khrims* as both ‘prescribed funerary procedures’ and ‘prescribed ritual procedures’, with the second gloss perhaps more accurate. This is in light of work done by Uebach (2008: 58) on *thang* as a legalistic term meaning something to the effect of ‘authority’, ‘rate’ or ‘valuation’. Also see Dotson 2011, p. 91 (n. 23); Dotson 2009, pp. 52, 53 (n. 73).

§ The nape of the neck was a metaphorical locus of revenge in ancient Tibet. For example, see this imagery in the ITJ 731r narrative in Bellezza 2008, pp. 531, 535, 537.

According to Balikci (2008: 161, 162), the Lhopos of the Sikkim village of Tingchim have ancestors in the form of *pho-lha*, *mo-lha* and other *bon* deities that appear in possession rituals. These apotheosized ancestors are thought to reside in *bon* paradises located in mountains between the valleys of Ha and Chumbi. In Tingchim, the *pho-lha* and *mo-lha* are thought to protect genealogical lineages, bestow male descendants, ensure abundant harvests, and sometimes dispense advice and make predictions (*ibid.*, 164). Communications with ancestors takes place during a biannual harvest festival held in every household, when mediums are called in to divine the cause of illness (*ibid.*). The divine ruler of these ancestral paradises and deities is Ye-shes mgon-po (*ibid.*, 102, 383).

²¹⁹ In Pt 1136, a divine intermediary most probably in the form of a pheasant known as *Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg* acts as a messenger in the funeral of a princess. See Bellezza 2008, p. 529; 2010a, p. 41 (n. 26). As in *Rnel dri ’dul ba’i*

with each person, and it was probably this kind of deity that accompanied the dead. Two textual lines follow that seem to relate how the funerary priests were sent for, before two *gshen* come from a *bse-mkhar*. This denotes either a castle made from *bse* (a whitish copper?) or it is an Old Tibetan rendering of the Classical Tibetan *gsas-mkhar*, the temple edifices of ancient Tibet. On grammatical grounds, the second possibility is more plausible. The two *gshen* of the story are Lde-gshen rmun-bu and Tshe-myi rmu-rgyal,²²⁰ who carried out highly obscure ritual activities

thabs sogs, a *hya-bang* is associated with a plain in Pt 1052 (ln. r132) and in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (ln. 442). A basket full of *hya-bang* / *hya-wang* feathers is found in an Old Tibetan *glud* ritual (Bellezza 2010a: 90).

²²⁰ In Pt. 1134 (lns. 47–66), a high-status funeral, consisting of the *gto*, *dpyad* and *shid* rites, is performed by the mighty (*drag*) funerary priests (*gshin-gshen*) Dur-shen rma-rda-na, Glan-shen dril-bu and Lde'u-shen rmun-bu (*sic*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 384, 512. This funeral is part of the fourth origins myth of Pt 1134. The first section of the tale (lns. 39–47) gives a context to the rest of the story. It can be translated as follows: “In the headwaters (*chab gyi ya-bgo*), Myi-rab 'greng ru-cho searched (*btshald*) for a wife (*kab*) and mate (*dbyal*). In the lowermost waters (*chab gyi ma-bzhug*), the daughter of Gyam-mo che was 'Gyam-za ting-gug. He took her as his wife and mate. A *bdud* put a curse (*pra-ma*) [on the patriarch]. By this harm (*bkyon*), yes, the basis of good fortune (*pywa*) defect, the degenerated (*'pan*) Myi-rab 'greng ru-cho died. His *stug* (vital wind; see *infra*, p. 203 [fn. 396]) was destroyed (*rlag*). He was no more. The sharp weapon (*rno*) was broken. He was no more. In the country of dead (*shi 'i yul*) humans, the humans, was the dead man. He was no more. The father (*ba*) was in the country of the destroyed. The father was destroyed. He was no more. The degenerated son was dead. The rehabilitative (*gso*) *bon* was not had. Beaten,* the crane (*krung-krung*) egg (*sgong*) was opened. The lord was dead. He was no more. The turquoise was chipped. The man was no more. The prayers (*smon*), yes, the prayers were not suitable (*ma-rung*). The ephedra (*mtshe*) body (*gzugs*) as the body could not be established (*tsugs*).† The beloved (*snying-dgas*) *do-ma* (funerary ritual transport horse) with the name of Lcags-te ku-ku (likened to an iron bird known as *ku-ku*) and the excellent military horse, Zangs-te pyo-pyo (likened to a copper bird known as *pyo-pyo*).”‡ In the *byol-rabs* text of Gathang Bumpa (contains origins tales of a type of *glud*), this same Myi-rab ru-cho (*sic*) of Myi-yul rkyi-thang is the main personality of one story. The horses of this individual are identical with the Pt 1134 account: Lcags-ste khug-khug (*sic*) and Zangs-ste 'phywo-phywo (*sic*). In the *byol-rabs* tale, these horses are frightened and run all the way to the sands of Rgya thang-myed, a metaphorical land at the edge of death. Belonging to a living person in the *byol-rabs*, the horses are presented to that same man after death in Pt 1134. These texts essentially chronicle the life history of the *do-ma*, a practical military asset repurposed as a ritual tool. For this *byol-rabs* myth, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 59–62.

* This is followed by a grammatical line of unknown import: *bgar ma 'tshald* /.

† This sentence appears to refer to the creation of a ransom offering (*glud*) for the deceased, which was made with the critical funerary herb ephedra.

‡ *Do-ma* are ascribed with the power of flight in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and explicitly connected to birds in Pt 1136 (Bellezza 2008: 452–459, 525, 527, 528).

The text of the pertinent Pt 1134 passage reads: *chab gyi ya bgo* (C.T. = *mgo*) *na / myi rab 'greng ru cho zhag / kab* (C.T. = *khag*) *dang dbyal / btshald* (C.T. = *btsal*) *pa / chab gyi ma bzhug na / 'gyam mo tshe 'i bu mo / 'gyam za ting gug / chig kab* (C.T. = *khag*) *dang gdar (= dbyar) du blangs / na pra ma* (C.T. = *phra ma*) *ni / bdud / gyis bgyis / bkyon* (C.T. = *skyon*) *ni / pywa / bkyonte* (C.T. = *skyon te*) */ myi rab 'greng / ru cho / 'pan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *te ni grongs gyis myed stug ste ni rlag / gis / myed / rno ste ni / chagis / myed / myi myi shi 'i yul / na myi shis myed / ba* (C.T. = *pha*) *myi rlag gi yul na ba rlag gis myed / 'pan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *gyi bu grongs na / gso ru / bon ma mcis (= mchis) / krung krung* (C.T. = *khung khung*) *ni sngo (= sgong) rdol na / brdung du / bgar ma 'tshald / rje grongs gyis myed / g.yu grugs gyis myed myi / smon ni smon du / ma rung mtshe gzugs gzugsu ma tsugs* (C.T. = *btsugs*) *na do ma snying dangs (= dgas) gi / mying ba ni lcags te ku ku dmag rab gyi rta poni (= po ni) zangs te / pyo pyo*.

In Pt 1285 (ln. r88), Lde-gshen rmun-bu cleanses (*bkrus*) the very serious contamination known as *sme* (C.T. = *dme*). *Dme* is caused by serious crimes such as incest or the murder of relatives. In the same text (ln. r175), this priest is associated with the sacred mountain Yar-la sham-po (*sic*) in Yar-lung. Also in Pt 1285 (lns. r188–r190), Lde-gshen rmun-bu cures the king of Yar-lung sogs-dkar (*sic*) 'Ol-lde spur-rgyal* of the illness of vertigo (*snyung yang-ma yong*), the illness of dimmed vision associated with the rapid pathological movement of the eyes (*snyung blang-ma gleng*) and the illness of utter stupefaction (*snyung mang-ma mong*), using a baby gazelle with a white rump (*dge'u phongs dkar*). Lde-gshen rmun-bu for three nights carried out a ritual procedure to rid the patient of *mngad* and for three days to rid him of *rba*. These two Tibetan terms appear to denote disease-causing illnesses, which were defeated by the ritualists using the same forces (see *infra*, p. 149 [fn. 232]). For another synopsis of these Pt 1285 healing narratives, see Lalou 1958, 184, 187.

with various kinds of wood. The result of their labors was that the *lha* above was purified (*bsangs*) and the *sri* below suppressed (*bnan*). The text states that as a path had been forged, the *lha* could now come to the funerary venue. It goes on to inform us that this god is no other than the famous mountain god Yar-lha sham-po, the *lha* guardian it appears that was lost by Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag when she became a *dri*.²²¹ Furthermore it is stated: “The clear and bright lamp of the lord” (*rje'i snang gsal sgron*), a metaphor for Yar-rje rmun-bu having the means for a final reunion with his dead wife.²²² Accordingly, the humans and *lha* met, as did the lord and his subjects. This mystical encounter occurred as part of the concluding portion of the prototypic funeral before the passage of Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag to the afterlife. Following the description of the funerary ritual, origins myth No. 12 declaims the benefit of Yar-lha sham-po both in the time of the story and during subsequent readings:

In ITJ 734 (Ins. 8r321–8r325), it states: “In the country Yar-khyim sogs-{kar}, in which the lord of the country 'O-lde spu-rgyal (*sic*) resided, there appeared the *srin* Yar-srin sna-ring-po from the country of the *srin*. In the country of the Rlang (a clan), he violently killed (*bgri*) the nine men of fire and men of water. Lde-gshen rmun-bu was summoned. He petitioned† the *lha* [for protection]. He petitioned Yar-lha sham-po [for protection]. He cast (*bor*) the ransom offering (*glud*) to the *srin*, he cast the ransom offering to Yar-srin {dra-la}” (*yul yar khyim sogs {kar na'} // yul rje 'o lde spu rgyal bzugs* (C.T. = *bzhugs*) / *na / srin yar srin pa sna ring po'i mchid* (C.T. = *mchis*) *nas / srin {#} yul / mye* (C.T. = *me*) *myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *dgu chu myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *rlang kyi yul du bgri zhes mchi'* (C.T. = *mchi*) / *lde gshen rmun bu bkug ste / lha la nyan du / btsugs na / yar lha sham po la nyan du btsugs / srin la gludu bor na / yar srin {dra la} la glud du bor //*). The other priest in the text, Tshe-myi rmu-rgyal, by virtue of being a ‘Man of Tshe’, a fabled sacerdotal lineage associated with the first Tibetan king, Gnya'-khri btsan-po, can also be localized in Yar-lung sog-ka (*sic*).

* On 'O-lde spu-rgyal / 'Od-lde spu-rgyal / 'Od-de spur-rgyal / 'Od-lde spur-rgyal, a celebrated legendary ancestral figure, see Thomas 1957, ch. 1v, p. 94; Stein 2010 (*Antiqua I*), p. 30, (*Antiqua III*), p. 182, (*Antiqua IV*), pp. 202, 204, 230; Haahr 1969, 241–244, 302–309; Macdonald 1971, pp. 198, 199, 316, 342, 349, 353; Richardson 1998, pp. 56, 125–127, 130, 156; Tucci 1949, p. 733. Stein 2010 (*Antiqua III*), p. 177, relates how in Pt 1286 none of the chieftains of the prehistoric principalities could obtain the helmet of 'O-lde spu-rgyal, thus they could not become the first king of Tibet. In ITJ 751 (ln. 35v2), it reads: “The god of the heavens, 'O-lde spu-rgyal, came as the *sku-bla gnyan* (mighty divine personal protector) of the lord (the Spu-rgyal king)” (*'O lde spu rgyal gnam gyi lha las myi'i rjer gshegs pa yong gis sku bla gnyan //*). In the pillar inscription of King Khri-lde srong-btsan (Sad-na-legs, Ins. 1, 2) it reads: “The divine son emperor (*btsan-po*) 'O-lde spu rgyal, the god of the heavens, came as the lord of men” (*btsan po lha sras / 'o lde spu rgyal // gnam gyi lha las myi'i rjer gshegs pa //*). The text (and physical state) of this funerary pillar is also examined in Tucci 1950, pp. 35–41; Richardson 1985, pp. 84–91. As with human beings more generally, but in a more encompassing or grandiose manner, the Spu-rgyal kings saw themselves as the descendants of the *lha*. Perhaps the imperial-period custom of raising pillars such as the one for Sad-na-legs was culturally inspired by the older uninscribed funerary pillars of Upper Tibet, but corroborating evidence is not yet forthcoming.

† *Nyan du / btsugs*. Given its lexical and grammatical construction, the import of this phrase appears to be ‘listen to us’ thus, ‘to petition’ or ‘to propitiate’.

²²¹ On Yar-lha sham-po, see Hazod 2000. Reportedly, the mother of this god is Yar-mo thang-nga, an ancient goddess of Yar-lung, and his father is the ancestral mountain god 'O-lde gung-rgyal (Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 250, 260). Yar-lha sham-po is a well-known protective deity of the *sku-bla* class, which was propitiated by members of the Spu-rgyal dynasty. As the *sku-bla* of the royal line, he was the object of a regularly held pacification ritual (*ibid.*, 260). This *sku-bla* belongs to an important early historic-period ennead of gods known as the *lha-dgu*. In addition to the royal *sku-bla* Yar-lha sham-po, chiefs of other Central Tibetan principalities propitiated the particular *lha-dgu* member of their region as the *sku-bla*. The most extensive analysis of the *sku-bla* to date is found in Macdonald 1971, pp. 268–309. Macdonald (*ibid.*) notes that the *sku-bla* functioned as the deified vital principle of the kings. For a discussion on the *lha-dgu* and *sku-bla*, see Karmay 1998, pp. 441–449. Karmay (*ibid.*, 449) tabulates the *lha-dgu* from the Dunhuang manuscript ITJ 734. More detailed information about the *lha-dgu* in ITJ 734 is found in Thomas 1957, ch. iv, pp. 93–95. In addition to Yar-lha sham-po of Yar-khyims sogs-yar (*sic*), other gods of the *lha-dgu* with geographic relevance to the origins myths of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* include Gnubs-lha mthon-drug and Thang-lha ya-bzhur of Gnubs-shul, Klum-lha thugs-po of Ngas-po khra-sum, Skyi-lha pya-mangs of Skyi-ro ljang-sngon, and Dbye-bla spyi-gangs of Dbye-mo yul-drug.

²²² In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, it is considered essential that the deceased and his or her next of kin are joyfully united one last time, before they are irrevocably separated in the world of the dead and the world of the living. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 401, 410.

Another *rnel-dri* origin tale: In the country of Yar-lungs sogs-ka, Yar-rje rmun-bu did not have a wife and mate. He searched for a wife and mate. In Kha-la rtsang-stod, the offspring of existence of Rtsang-rje bud kar-na' [and] Thang-nga rtsang-mo thang was a child born, born as a daughter.²²³ The name bestowed on that daughter was Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag, she who was received as the wife and mate of Yar-rje rmun-bu. The offspring of their mating and nocturnal activity was a child about to be born. Yar-srī btsan-bye phag-po sna-rīngs took up residence in the mother's womb. The fetus became fearful (*bkrags*). The mother's head was thrown up. The fetus's head was presented downward. A profuse amount of blood poured forth (*tša ra ra*). The placenta had become wrapped around [the baby]. The *lha* above was unclean. The *grī-ma* below was undefeated. It was given the name and appellation Rnel-dri bkrags bshar-ma.

yang rnel dri rabs cīg la' (C.T. = la) / yul (+ yar) lungs (C.T. = lung) sogs ka na / yar rje rmun bu la // khab dang dbyal ma mchis / khab dang dbyal btsal ba' (C.T. = ba) / kha la rtsang stod na / rtsang rje bud kar na' (C.T. = na) / thang nga rtsang mo thang du bsrid (C.T. = srid) pa'i sras / bu byung bo (C.T. = bu) mor byung / de la mtshan btags pa / rtsang lcam ngar mnyag nī / yar rje rmun bu'i khab dang dbyal du bzhes / bshos dang nams gyi sras / bu byung ma ran bar // ma'i khong du / yar srī btsan bye phag po sna rīngs zhugs / bu cīg bkrags te / ma mgo gyen du bstan / bu mgo thur du bstan / gtīng thrag (C.T. = khrag) tša ra ra / sha ma dgab la dkris / yar de (C.T. = te) lha ma bsangs / mar te grī ma ma btul / myīng dang mtshan btags pa' (C.T. = pa) / rnel dri bkrags bshar ma //

The *lha* went away (*'phangs*), it went away to the sky. The goose disappeared (*yal*), it disappeared in the lake. The *lha* no longer befriended the human. The *bya-bang* arrived in the plain.²²⁴ From the purplish *bse-mkhar*, the human *gshen* and *lha gshen*, Lde-gshen rmun-bu and Tshe-myī rmu-rgyal, with thirteen types of wood and...²²⁵ From the thirteen *gson-ma*²²⁶ the *lha* above was purified. The *srī* below was suppressed. The way to go of the *lha* was opened. The clear and bright lamp of the lord. The humans and *lha* met. The lord [Yar-rje rmun-bu] and his subjects met. The benefit and merit of Yar-lha sham-po was like that. Also, today, it is just like that. The *rnel-dri* is subjugated.²²⁷

lha 'phangs gnam du 'phangs / ngang yal mtsho ru yal / lha yīs myī (C.T. = mī) ma btsas / bya bang thang la blags (C.T. = lhags) / btang ma cī las btang na' (C.T. = na) / rgam rgu'i (C.T. = dgu'i) ras las btang / bse mkhar smug po nas / myī gshen lha gshen na' (C.T. = na) / lde gshen rmun bu dang / tshe myī (C.T. = mī) rmu rgyal gyīs / shīng sna bcu gsum dang / sle mo ngo cen dang / snyags ma 'dram rīngs las btang / shing bu rgu (C.T. = dgu) dang de la 'gal pa bgyīs / gson ma bcu gsum las / yar te lha bsangs / mar te srī bnan (C.T. = mnan) / lha'i gshegs shul phye / rje'i

²²³ On various female figures whose first name is Thang-nga in Pt 1040, Pt 1136, Pt 1285, and in later Bon literature, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 260.

²²⁴ This is followed by two lines that remain opaque: *btang ma cī las btang na' / rgam rgu'i ras las btang /*.

²²⁵ The import of the next three lines of the text, a ritual procedure involving various kinds of wood turned into the funerary wood, is enigmatic: *sle mo ngo cen dang / snyags ma 'dram rīngs las btang / shing bu rgu dang de la 'gal pa bgyīs /*.

²²⁶ 'Female living ones'. This appears to denote ritual instruments in the form of a vulture. See p. 164.

²²⁷ This is followed by the last two lines of the story, which have to do with the subjugation of the blood [death] that occurred: *thed khrag bshar gdul (C.T. = 'dul) lo / thed /*. On *thed*, see p. 166.

snang gsal sgron / myi (C.T. = *mi*) *dang lha ru mjal / rje dang 'bangs su mjal / yar la* (C.T. = *lha*)
sham po la de ltar phan te gsod (C.T. = *bsod*) *do / da yang de dang 'gra'o* (C.T. = *'dra'o*) / *rnal*
dri gdul (C.T. = *'dul*) *lo / thed khrag bshar gdul* (C.T. = *'dul*) *lo / thed // °°° //*

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 5

We shall examine the remaining *rnal-dri* origins myths of Chapter II in the order in which they appear in the text. The fifth *rnal-dri* origins myth describes the death of an expectant mother through illness and self-inflicted trauma (16.10–19.2). According to the tale, in the upper part of a valley (*lung gyi ya-phu*) lived Rje da' zha-'brīng. In a lower part of a valley (*lung gyi ma-mda'*) lived Sman-btsun khyud-khyud khyud-mo. In the middle part of a valley (*lung gyi bar-tshigs*) was the man with the name Glan ngam-len. The text also names two birds: Pha-bong mong-skyes and Yos-bong ha-ra chung. The latter bird went to the upper valley. These birds may have served as harbingers of the events that transpire in the narrative but nowhere is this made manifest. The text continues by describing various movements and transactions across the valley.

It came to pass that Sman-btsun khyud-khyud was pregnant with child, with offspring, for a period of seven months,²²⁸ when the demon Mda-srīn entered her womb. This caused the baby inside her to become ill. Out of desperation, Sman-btsun khyud-khyud took out the 'butcher' (*bshan-bu*), which refers to a knife with a white handle (*yu-gar*) kept on her person, and suddenly stabbed herself (*sku la lhams gyi btab /*). She died as a *rnal*-[*dri*]. One might argue whether the woman intended to kill herself or took this drastic action without thinking of the consequences. Be that as it may, she was demonized in the postmortem state. The text graphically describes the grisly manner in which she perished. She had developed a serious illness (*glog*, C.T. = *lhog*) inside her body, which filled with blood. As in origins myth No. 12, the mother's head was thrown up and the fetus's head was presented downwards, signaling the termination of a normal pregnancy. The umbilical cord had become wrapped around the baby. "The steam from the blood rose up like the cries [of the mother]."²²⁹ The amniotic fluid (*chu-ser*) poured out profusely (conveyed by the trisyllabic indicator *tsa ra ra*). This could only have been caused by the rupturing of the amniotic membrane as a consequence of lethal trauma suffered by the woman.

The husband of Sman-btsun khyud-khyud, Rje kha-da zha-'brīng (*sic*), fell ill (*snyun gyis zin*). To make (*mgvis = bgyis*) the *gdo* (C.T. = *gto*, beneficial rites) and *dpyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites) for the *bu-gri* (agent of baby's death) and *lcebs-gri* (agent of suicide) through which Sman-btsun khyud-khyud *cig* (*sic*) was killed, the *dri-bon* Ra-ljags was invited. He erected nine *mtho* (= *tho*). As a result, the cruel *dri* were subdued to tameness. That these *tho* were associated with mountains as well as the word itself being confused or interchangeable with *mtho* (heights) here (and in other origins myths of the text) appears to signify that the dead were being raised up. That is to say, the function of the *tho* was to assist the consciousness principle of the departed in reaching the requisite altitude needed to attain the afterlife. This entailed an ascent from the netherworld. This upwards thrust is illustrated in ITJ 731r, where the 'the ordered position [of the dead] is carefully established in the heights (*gral ni mtho gnyer tshal lo*) as a precondition for

²²⁸ *Zla ba ngo bdun na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *sku'i lhubs na bu cig dang sras mnga'*.

²²⁹ *Thrag* (C.T. = *khrag*) *glangs* (C.T. = *rlang*) *glang* (C.T. = *lang*) *ltar mkhun /*.

salvation (see *infra*, pp. 242, 243).²³⁰ This skyward function of the *tho* is also shown by the manner in which crows land on the *gri-tho* as agents of the successful funerary rite performed by Ral-ljags bon-po (see *supra*, p. 139 [fn. 209]). The crow as an instrument in the journey to the empyrean is also registered in Pt 1134 (see *infra*, pp. 185, 186).

The next line of the text is the stock phrase about the fresh hide being meticulously tanned, unequivocally registering the demise of the *dri*. With this accomplished, the *dri-bon* took a stone (*gor*) from a slate [mountain], and operated on the corpse, using that stone (*gor gyis ro-bshas*) to remove the dead baby (*bu-ro byung*, C.T. = *phyungs*). The custom of the slate knife suggests that a disposable implement of great purity was required for this repugnant task. It is also possible that the text makes reference here to an ethnomedical tradition of Stone Age antiquity, but this might be a far-fetched interpretation. The text then enumerates the objects used in the concluding mortuary exercises:

The tips of nine funerary woods (*'gal-bu*), nine animal guts (*drod-pa*), a herd of nine goats, nine *rgog-mo* (?). The [baby's corpse] was then buried at a crossroads (*shul gyi bzhī mdor bnan*). That *dri-mo* was named Rnel-dri dgam-dmar. The funerary wood [with effigy of deceased] was ignited (*bgrang*).

'gal bu 'go (C.T. = *mgo*) *rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang / drod pa rgu dang / ra sogs rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang / rgog mo rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang / shul gyi bzhī mdor bnan* (C.T. = *mnan*) / *dri mo de 'i mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *ni rnel dri dgam mar / de 'gal pa'i kha la bgrang* (C.T. = *drangs*) /

An unknown exorcistic procedure using vessels made of animal gut filled with water was then directed against the *dri*: *drod-pa'i rdzing brug* (= *brub*). This is followed by the two standard admonitions addressed to the *g.yen* (not to harm the corpse) and to the survivors (not to be chronically attached to the dead). In conclusion: “Rje kha-dang kha-'brīng (*sic*) was benefited. Today, the benefit is like that (*'gra 'o*). That benefit and merit is done to fine particles (*zhib du bgyi*, i.e., precisely like that).”²³¹

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 6

The sixth origins myth unfolds in Rmu-yul, an ethereal land located in either Central Tibet or Upper Tibet (19.2–21.3). In the country Rmu-yul ngang-'brang lchang-'brang, in the Rmu castle Brgya-lam rgyal-'jong, Rmu-rje btsan-ba and Rmu-bdag rgyal-mo mated. Their children were Rmu-thang-ba and Rmu-'brīng-ba.²³² [The former] had no wife and mate.

²³⁰ Also, in Pt 1134: *gral ni mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *ma lebs* and *gral ni mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *yang slebs*. For a discussion of these passages, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 510, 513.

²³¹ *Rje kha dang kha 'brīng la phan no / da yang de dang 'gra* (C.T. = *'dra*) *'o / phan bsod zhib du bgyi 'o // °°° //*.

²³² The Rmu lineage is associated with both Upper Tibet and Central Tibet. *Bshad mdzod* states that before the descent of King Gnya'-khri to earth he lived in Rmu-yul, which was ruled by Rmu-rje (Stein 2010, Antiqua III: 158). Similarly, *Dpag bsam ljon bzang* notes that Rmu-yul is the heaven from which Gnya'-khri came (Haarh 1969: 217, 218, 268, 269). Dagkar aptly observes (1999: 48, 49) that many famous members of the Dmu (also spelled Smu / Mu) clan were associated with Zhang-zhung. In the genealogical text *Gu ribs pha rabs byung khungs mdor bsdus* (*Abridged Origins of the Gu-ribs Paternal Lineage*), anonymous (twelve folios), the origins of the Gu-rib / Gu-ribs clan of Upper Tibet is traced to the *lha* Dmu-g.yang rje and the *klu* Yid 'ong-ma. The legendary founder of Eternal Bon, Gshen-rab, also belonged to the Dmu clan and was born in a heavenly land called Stag-gzigs. From these various references to the

Rmu it would appear that this lineage had diffused across Upper Tibet and Central Tibet in deep antiquity. Pt 1285 (ln. r58) records that the Dmu country was Ngang-brang gsang-brang, its capital Rgya-la rgyal-'jong, its lord Gtangs-brag cha-dang and his wife Dbyal drum-cha'i ngur-ngur (cf. Lalou 1965: 194). While the patriarch and matriarch of Pt 1285 appear to differ from those in *rnel-dri* origins myth No. 6, the location and castle are identical. Nonetheless, the same patriarch and matriarch (with typical orthographic variation) of the Rmu (*sic*) in Pt 1285 grace the first origins myth in Chapter III of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* (see *infra*, p. 167). On Thang dmu-mo thang and Thang-ba dmu-thang in Pt 1285, also see Stein 2010 (*Antiqua V*), p. 260. According to this origins myth of Pt 1285 (lns. r58–r76), the son of the father and mother of the Dmu was Thang-ba dmu-thang and the middle child was the daughter Tha-nga (= Thang-nga) dmu-mo thang. The younger daughter was Dmu-lcham gong-nga gong-chung. The son Thang-ba dmu-thang had not crossed the pass (*lha* = *la*) of the heights, the Dmu pass of three rises (*gong-sum*). He had not crossed the ford of the bottomland (*dma*). He had not crossed the ford of the Dmu lake *thor-ba* (satellite lakes hydrologically interconnected with a main lake?). He remained stationary for a long time (*bzhugs-bzhugs*). Then, at one time, a demon (*gdon*) lodged (*bchug*, C.T. = *bcug*, but with a somewhat altered field of meaning) in his mind (*thugs*). He wielded all kinds of weapons in his hands (*phyag du mtshon dar*). He mounted a horse and went; he mounted the Dmu horse with the white forehead (*bzhur shu* (?) [horse]). He went on the Dmu pass of the three rises. On the heights rose up a *gnyan*. He went to the bank of the Dmu lake *thor-ba* (*sic*). In the bottomland rose up a *klu*. Thang-ba dmu-thang gasped in fear (*hu-nu*) during the long nights of autumn. He cried out in pain ('*u-tshu*; related to the C.T. *A-ru-ru* / *U-ra-ra*) during the long days of spring. Parasols were raised above and carpets spread out below [for the ritual therapists].* From the sunny white mountain, one hundred white turbaned male priests (*pho-gshen thod-dkar*) grouped together and performed the *mo* (divinatory rites) and *phya* (prognostic rites), but they could not find the status of his illness (*snyun gyi zo*).† They could not discern (*ma-rig*) the navel (core, *lde*, C.T. = *lte*) of Thang-ba dmu-thang's tumor (*skran*). From (*la* = *las*) the black female (*nags-mo*, C.T. = *nag-mo*) shady mountain one hundred female *gshen* with *zhu-bub* (a type of headgear or head ornament) convened and performed the *mo* and *phya* but they could not search (*'tshal*, C.T. = *btsal*) for the status of his illness. They could not discern the core of the tumor. There was a divine (*lha*) *bon-po*, there was Dmu-bon ye'u-than rmang-ba. He washed out the pernicious contamination (*sme*, C.T. = *dme*) from the mouth of Thang-ba dmu-thang with snow. He immersed the hand of pernicious contamination (*smye* = *sme*) in the lake. The *bon-po* by doing the *gto* (beneficial rites) and *dpyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites), the patient's illness was broken up (*bram* (C.T. = *gram*) *zhing byul byul*). He identified the status of the patient's illness. He also discerned the core of the tumor (*skan* = *skran*). The *bon-po* Dmu-bon ye'u-than btsan-ba (*sic*) then said that this Thang-ba dmu-thang had a *gdon* lodged in his mind and that he had raised the weapons (*sa* = *mtshon*?) in his hands. The *bon-po* continues to describe what had transpired precisely as given in the narrative above. After being explained like that, Thang-ba dmu-thang asked the *bon-po* about the *mngad* and *dbu* (= *rbu*) that were or were not sanctioned (*chog myi cog*). These two terms refer to specific illness-causing conditions or forces brought about by contraindicated behavior or actions, but their precise meaning appears to have been lost in the medical vocabulary of Tibet. Dmu-bon ye'u-than replied that the *mngad*, *rbu* and *bshan* (nowadays a type of contaminating filth (*btsog-sgrib*) caused by slaughtering animals) were more than matched (*do*)‡ by him. Thang-ba dmu-thang then realized that the *rbu* was contracted (*rbu ru rbu*) over three nights while the *shan* (*sic*) was contracted (*shan ru bshan*) over three days. This occurred when he had put the golden saddle (*gser-sga... bstad*) on the Dmu horse with the white forehead and had placed the conch bridle in its mouth (*dung srab... pas bsrabs*, i.e., when he had travelled). In conclusion, this Pt 1285 narrative states that Thang-ba dmu-thang's life (*bshos*)§ [had been preserved] from his illness. The text now turns to the concurrent curative ritual by bringing the ancient myth to bear upon the present day (*gna' bas da'...*). For a short reference to the above narrative, see Dotson 2008, p. 49; for a synopsis of it, see Lalou 1958, pp. 183, 184. As Stein (2010, *Antiqua V*: 252, 253) and Dotson (*ibid.*, 43, 44) note, the *mo*, *phya*, *gto*, and *dpyad* are the pillars of the diagnostic and therapeutic system propounded in Pt 1285, and extend to regions such as Rngegs, Dags, Mchims, Rkong-yul, 'Ol, Rgya, Rtsang, Skyi-ro, Yar-lung, and Dbye. Karmay (2009: 64, 65) observes that this diagnostic and therapeutic system forms the core of the first vehicle of Eternal Bon teachings, *Phya-gshen theg-pa*. For a more comprehensive review of the structure and contents of Pt 1285, see Lalou *ibid.*; Dotson *ibid.*

* This raising of tents and the laying out of carpets for the formal reception of *dbal-bon* priests is described in Eternal Bon texts. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 354–356.

† *Zo* is a word still used in the Hor-skad dialect to denote the condition of a patient, be it positive or negative. This term is not found in contemporary lexicons.

‡ This word is still found in the C.T. term *do-bsdur* (to compete), but its O.T. sense is closer to the way in which *do* is still used in the vernacular of the eastern Nag-chu region: to convey the besting of an opponent.

§ For this O.T. gloss, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 513, 534, 536; see also *bshos-tshe*, *infra.*, p. 228 (fn. 475).

He went to find a wife and mate. In the country Rgya-yul gtan-bzangs, the father Rgya-rje btsan-ba' and the mother Rgya-bdag btsun-mo mated. Their daughter was Rgya-za shangs-kar."²³³ Thang-ba rmu-dang (*sic*) asked to have her as his wife, but she responded with a stinging dismissal of him and his country. In a message, Rgya-za said, "I will not go as the wife of the Rmu (*rmu'i khab du myi 'gro*). Rmu-rje btsan-ba is one of accursed works (*las mngan-ba mchis so*)." Rgya-za added that Rmu-yul ngang-'brang is very disagreeable,²³⁴ and that she does not like *rka* (C.T. = *dga'*) to ride (*bzhon*) the horses of the Rmu. Continuing her denunciation, Rgya-za complained that she had no affinity (*'driś-rka*) with the martial symbols (*stag-ma*, C.T. = *rtags-ma*) of the Rmu, a group of sanctioning instruments or customary emblems. Furthermore, she cared not to press the servants of the Rmu into service. She concluded her message by reiterating: "I will not be his wife" (*khab du myi mchī*).

The text continues by asking the rhetorical question: "Then, whose wife did she go as?"²³⁵ She was received in Mdo-ri lung-gsum by Mdo-rje btsan-ba.²³⁶ After three months, Rmu-bdud ren-pa' (a demon) sent Rmu-bdud yam-ba and Mdo-srin glo-gsum allied together (*bsdongs*). Mdo-srin glo-gsum stayed here and there.²³⁷ Then it stayed in the mother's womb (*ma'i mngal*). Inside her body she developed an illness and blood filled the area. The vicious attack on Rgya-za by the demonic henchmen of the Rmu was nothing less than this clan avenging the rejection it suffered at her hands. What is not obvious is whether this sorcery was deliberately orchestrated by the spurned Rmu-thang dang-ba (or one of his clansmen) or without his knowledge by his *bdud* allies. This origins myth spares us the hideous account of how the woman and her fetus met their end. Crucial to the story is that she had become a *dri-mo*, the post-obit specter.

The name of that *dri-mo* was Rnel-bkrag dgab mar-ma. The ritual measures taken to vanquish this demonized human begin with the sifting (*bshar gyis btab*) of *she'u-tshig* (C.T. = *shel-tshig*).²³⁸ Then the 'fire iron' and 'water iron' were cast down (*thur du bor*), as part of an exorcistic function.

²³³ According to Hazod (2009: 174), Rgya-yul gtan-bzangs is a western land, which is perhaps in or around Pu-rang or western Nag-tshang; however, he also notes that Rgya (= Rhya?) is a clan of Myang-stod in southern Gtsang. Lalou (1965: 200) tabulates information about the Rgya locality and personalities from several Old Tibetan sources: the capital was Gtan-bzangs (Pt 1285) / Gdan-bzangs (ITJ 734) / Rgya-mkhar stegs-pa (Pt 1060); its lord was named Mying-mtshan (Pt 1285) / Mye-mtshan rmang-po (ITJ 734) / Myi-'chan (Pt 1060); his wife was Rgya-bdag btsun-mo (Pt 1285); his priest (*bon*) was Rgya-bon leg-dang rmang-ba (ITJ 734) / Leg-tang rmang-ba (Pt 1285); and his [*sku*]-*bla* was Rgya-bla'i 'brong-nam (Pt 1060). On Rgya-yul gdan-bzangs (*sic*), also see Thomas 1957, ch. iv, p. 95. In Pt 1285 (ln. r118), the daughter of Rgya-rje mying-mtshan and Rgya-bdag btsun-mo was Thang-nga rgya-mo thang and the offending *srin* was Srin-tsan dgu-bo kha. On Thang-nga rgya-mo, also see ITJ 734, lns. 160, 161. For a brief description of this Pt 1285 narrative, see Lalou 1958, p. 185. All relevant Old Tibetan (including *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*) sources speak of the same Rgya locale and appear to refer to the same patriarch and matriarch as well, as part of an interrelated set of origins myths. On Rgya, also see *supra*, p. 114 (fn. 127).

²³⁴ *Rtsed tsha-ba* (C.T. = *rtsod tsha-bo*).

²³⁵ *De nas su'i khab du gshegs*.

²³⁶ The ancient principality of Mdo-ro is mentioned in other texts as well. Hazod (2009: 174, 175) opines that Mdo-ro lung-gsum, as noted in ITJ 734, is perhaps in eastern Tibet. More recently, Hazod (in personal communication) pinpoints this location as probably being the Rdo district east of Bsam-yas. Lalou (1965: 197), also working from ITJ 734, records that the capital of Mdo-ro was Lung-[gsum], its lord 'On-brang, its *srin* Rkang-dmar, and its *gshen* Mdo-gshen mar-rta. Haarh (1969: 242) notes that Yul mdo-ro is one of the principalities (*rgyal-phran*) listed in a C.T. manuscript.

²³⁷ *Mar zhugs rgur* (C.T. = *dgur*) *ru zhugs*.

²³⁸ Special parched barleycorn also used in a variety of Eternal Bon rituals. The various colors and shapes that occur through roasting barley grains are likened to different types of livestock. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *shel-tshig* is used to repulse demons and attract deities to the funeral. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 406, 440, 441.

Nine (or many) animal guts filled with water (*drod-pa'i rdzing*) were cast down. Nine (or many) funerary woods were vigorously cast down (*thur du dgar*, C.T. = *bkar*). The *dri-bon* Ra-ljags erected the three *dri-do* (= *dri-tho*). The wild *dri* was subdued to tameness and from it the noble one appeared.²³⁹ [The *dri*] was struck with the claws (*be 'u*, C.T. = *the 'u*) of the vulture. It was hit with the skin (*g.yeng-bzhi*, C.T. = *g.yang-gzhi*) of the blue sheep.²⁴⁰ In ancient times Rgya-za shangs-kar was benefited. Nowadays, to whomever [they are directed] is benefited by these chants (*gyer-ba*). These chants or sacred utterances signify the entire ritual performance.

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 7

The seventh tale of ritual origins begins by naming the main characters and their parents (21.3–22.11). The father and husband was Khri dang-rje. The mother and wife was Khri nam-skar. The son was Khri nam-rje. The daughter was Khri-lcam rmang-ma lod, her lovely face was like the luminous moon (*zla re 'od*). “Who received her as his wife and mate? In the country Skyi-ro ljang-sngon, the father Skyi-rje btsan-ba and the mother Skyi-bdag btsun-mo coupled and their son Skyi-ljags phyug ljon-pa,²⁴¹ was to receive her as his wife.” In a description of their marriage they are depicted with their foreheads touching upward and their noses touching downward,²⁴² signs of union and affection still observed by Tibetans (especially by the *'brog-pa*). After nine months, the *srin* of Skyi, 'Go-ra, lodged himself in Khri-lcam rmang-ma lod's womb, causing a 'water disease' (*chu-nad*), a malady akin to edema that must have led to the extreme bloating of the woman's body. Much blood (*thrag*, C.T. = *khrag*) also appeared in her body cavity.

The remainder of this origins myth follows a narrative pattern established in previous tales. The mother and child assume distressed positions and the umbilical cord became wrapped around the baby, causing them to perish (*nongs*) as *bu-dri*. Skyi-phyug ljon-pa invited Ra-ljags to perform the necessary funeral rite:

By the nine *dri-tho*, nine animal guts (*drod-pa*), nine containers (*skur-bu*), and nine pots (*slug-gu*), the cruel *dri* was to be subdued to tameness. The *dri* was converted

²³⁹ The next line of the text pertains to the defeat of the *dri-mo* through the waving of what may have been a bird wing: *rma snam gtso rnam lhabs gyis btul /*.

²⁴⁰ This practice refers to the use of the skins of sacrificial animals as apotropaic instruments. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *G.yang gzhi sri gshed dbang sdud sa bdag bcos pa* (*Sa-bdag Reparation Conquest with the Flayed Skin of the Life-Cutter Gshed*) details this type of funerary ritual. See *supra*, p. 126 (fn. 161). In the abbreviated *srid-rabs* found in this work, the officiating priest (*bon*) is also Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal. For a translation and analysis of this text, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 439–442.

²⁴¹ For localization data concerning Skyi-ro ljang-sngon and its identification with Skyid-shod, see Sørensen and Hazod 2005, pp. 220, 230; Sørensen and Hazod 2007, vol. 1, pp. 17–27; Hazod 2009, p. 172; also see Thomas 1957, *General Introduction*, p. 11; Lalou 1965, pp. 201, 202, 215ff. For Skyi-yul 'jing-sngon (*sic*) as a setting for a ransom ritual origins myth in a Gathang Bumpa text, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 66, 67; for Skyi-ro ljang-sngon / lchang-sngon in the origins myths of other archaic funerary traditions, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 472 (n. 375), 522, 538, 539. Stein (2010, *Antiqua III*: 179) notes Skyi-rje btsan-po as a chief of this principality. In Pt 1285 (lns. r173, r187), Skyi-gshen rgyan-ngar is the priest of Skyi-rje rmang-po in Skyi-ro ljang-sngon. ITJ 734 (ln. 8r317) mentions this same priest. For a review of the Pt 1285 Skyi-ro narrative, see Lalou 1958, pp. 186, 187. In Pt 1290 (ln. r3), She'u and Spug are ministerial clans associated with the Lord (Rje-bo) Leg snya-shur (of Zhang-zhung), although in lns. r4 and v6 of the same text, these clans are associated with Skyi-rje'i rmong-pa / Rje 'i rmong-pa. Similarly, Pt 1060 (lns. 76, 77) notes Shu'u and She'u as ministerial clans connected to Skyi-rje rmang-po of Skyi-ro ljang-sngon (*sic*).

²⁴² *Dbu btud mtho nas btud / shangs blan rma* (C.T. = *dma' nas blan /*.

into a *mtshun*. The nine funerary woods, nine round cauldrons (*gor-glags*) and nine *shu-gu 'bum* (ancient / virgin / large junipers), nine types of *dbyi-mo* (shrubs?), the types, the nine types [of ritual objects], were taken away (*phyung*).

dri tho rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *zhig btsugs* / *drod pa rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *skur bu rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) / *slug gu rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *yis* / *dri rgod las g.yung du btul* / *dri las mtshun du phab* / *'gal pa rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang* / *gor glags* (C.T. = *sla-nga*) *rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) / *shu gu 'bum rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *yis* / *dbyi mo rigs rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang* / *rigs rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *rigs nas phyung* /

The text then announces: “The history of that *dri-mo* named Rnel-dri dgab-mar-ma’ [is finished].” The text adds the standard admonition about those left behind to desist from being overly attached to the dead. Next, it is written that the corpse’s head was beaten down and its legs broken (*'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *brdung... rkang gcag*). Clearly, corpses of those who died as *rnel-dri* were not something to be venerated. In contemporary Tibet and high Himalayan regions, corpses are sometimes ritually disfigured and bones broken to prevent the dead from being reoccupied by demons. The breaking up of the corpse in the *rnel-dri* origins myth places this mortuary custom into a historical context of considerable depth. The next line of the text has to do with the funerary offerings (*mngon-cha*) given by the people in attendance. *Shing-rings*, arrows and the *dri* arrow with a white nock were offered. With this, the cruel one was subdued to tameness, and from the *dri* a *mtshun* appeared. In conclusion, it is stated, “The benefit (*phan*) in ancient times was like that benefit. Now, that is the benefit (*sman*) for this deceased woman (*bkra-mo*).”²⁴³

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 8

This tale further expounds upon elements of *rnel-dri* demonology and the ritual structures that entrap lethality (23.1–26.1). In the country of Lho-ga lung-grug²⁴⁴ lived Lord Lho-rgyal ling. His daughter was Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman. She went on top of a large boulder called Lho-bla pha'-bong. This physical feature appears to have been a soul receptacle (*bla-gnas*) of the Lho clan. “On it stayed Mon-'dre re-btsun who was sporting and playing there. Pregnant with child (*lhums*), [Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman] fell ill deep inside and came upon the tip of Lho-shing ldem-ba (Flexible Southern Tree). The sole of her foot was impaled (*zhabs gyi mthil la zug*) by the point of the bamboo of the south, which had been defeated (cut down) to its base.”²⁴⁵ This accident

²⁴³ *Gna' phan de ltar phan // da bkra mo 'di la sman no // °°° //*. The term *bkra* specifically refers to those among the dead whose thanatological condition permits salvation or entry into the afterlife. *Bkra* in this context may possibly signify the radiant appearance of those who are able to enter the afterlife. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text entitled *Sa mig sprad pa bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-bsten*, vol. 6, Nos. 1201–1207), a work that explicates appropriate geographic qualities of charnel grounds, terms for the honorable deceased include *bkra-mtshun*, *bkra-btsun*, *bkra-rgyal*, and *bkra-bu*. Also, in *Gzi brjid*, we find *bkra-'dur* (funerary rite for elderly), and *bkra-bon* (a type of funerary priest) in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 366, 386. Also, see *infra*, p. 167.

²⁴⁴ A place in the Lho-kha region. In her tabulation of geographic locations from Dunhuang texts, Lalou (1965: 196) provides the following information: the capital of Lho-ga was Lang-drug (Pt 1060), its lord was Lho-bu lang-ling (Pt 1289), its *bon* Lho-bon 'ol-cogs (Pt 1289), and its *lha* (*sku-bla*) Lho-bla 'i gang-rgyal (Pt 1060). Hazod (2009: 173) also notes Lho-ga lang-drug in Pt 1060 and Pt 1289. In Pt 1052 (ln. r188), the same location is found: Lho-ga ni 'jing-drug (*sic*). According to Stein (2010, Antiqua I: 80; Antiqua III: 176, 182; Antiqua V: 261), the Lho clan is closely related to the Rngags clan, and is equated with the Lto clan. According to the historian Dpa'-bo gtsug-lag, Lho was the residence of Btsan-ba, one of the twelve wise men who met King Gnya'-khri after his descent to earth (Haarh 1969: 171).

²⁴⁵ *Mon 'dre re btsun dang // rtse (= rtsed) zhing rol zhing bzhugs // sku lhums gyi nang gting na' (C.T. = na) / snyung ba la / lho shing ldem ba 'rtser gshegs na // lho smug (= smyug) rtse nas bcom ba 'rtsa ba zhig // zhabs gyi mthil la zug //*.

was precipitated by the 'dre demon of Mon, cis-Himalayan parts of which are rich in bamboo. At least in our text, Lho-kha may have been seen as extending south of the Himalayan divide, an imperial-period geographic tradition (and perhaps political reality) it would seem. Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman died as a *rnel-grī*. She was led (*khriḍ*) by Srin zo-bo ring-po beyond ('das) the nine levels of the lower realm (*rma-them rgu*), beyond *sten-rab rgu*.²⁴⁶ She was pushed into an inauspicious [place] and lost ('*phan te nong / sug te rlag /*).

The next passage in the text furnishes further historical verification for the still widely held Tibetan belief that personal deities can be sullied or frightened off by anguish and trauma. A ritual remedy for this problem is purification, which probably consisted of fumigation with aromatic herbs and sparging with lustral liquids. However, no details of the *bsangs* carried out by the father and brother are given in the text:

Sometime after that (*da re shīg re shīg na'*), Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman's brother, Lho-bu stong-gsum rje, and her father, Lho-rje lang-ling, by their attachment to the girl (i.e., their worry for her), caused the brother's *lha* to become contaminated (*bnol*). The brother and father purified (*bsangs*) the *lha*.

da re shīg re shīg na' (C.T. = *na*) / *myīng* (C.T. = *ming*) *po lho bu stong sum rje dang / yab lho rje lang ling gyis // de la srīng mor chags gyis // myīng* (C.T. = *ming*) *gyi lha bnol lo / myīng* (C.T. = *ming*) *dang yab gyis bsangs //*

The text goes on to inform us that the father and brother invited the priests Lho-bon mon-bon thod-kar (C.T. = *thod-dkar*), Khang-za thīs-dang spa ye-ye and Ya-ngal gyim-kong. Evidently, by this point, the family of Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman realized she had died. The epithet 'white turban' (*thod-dkar*) quite frequently forms part of the names of ancient priests in Tibetan literature. The ritualist named Khang-za may have been a priestess, because *za / bza'* when attached to a clan name or other appellation is a designator of female gender. As will be recalled, the 'dur-gshen Ya-ngal gyim-khong (*sic*) also features in Chapter I of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*.

The narrative proceeds to outline the ritual performance that extricates the deceased girl from the netherworld. These ritual actions can broadly be classed as a ransom offering (*glud*) delivered in exchange for the deceased. First listed are nine father sunny woods (*gdags-shīng pha-rgu*) and nine mother shady woods (*sribs-shing ma-rgu*). Then a number of other objects were assembled. Much of this ritual sequence is no longer well understood:

The gold was summoned [to be ritually available], the silver was summoned [to be ritually available]. The gold tribute ('*phral*) and turquoise tribute, and the ritual

²⁴⁶ *Sten-rab rgu* when inverted appears to be a synonym for the nine levels or nine stages of the underworld (*rma-them dgu*). In the Old Tibetan Chronicle (Ins. 14, 15), presaging the death of King Dri-gum btsan-po, the head cord (*dbu'-breng*) standing up very high (*zang-yag*) is cut (*gchad*, C.T. = *bcad*), and the head ladder (*dbu'-skas*) of nine rungs (*sten-dgu'*) is turned upside down (*kha-thur*). The head cord is that which connected the king to his celestial lineage and the afterlife and is closely related or identical to the *dmu-thag* (celestial rope). The inversion of the head ladder is a sign of violent death and seems to indicate that Dri-gum btsan-po was bound for the netherworld. The term *zang-yag* is commonly employed in Eternal Bon ritual literature (also see *infra*, p. 203 [fn. 395]) and its meaning is closely related to the O.T. *zang zang* (see *infra*, p. 164 [fn. 281]) and to the non-lexical *zangs se zangs* (conveys a towering, pointed object like a mountain; see Bellezza 2005: 320). For this Pt 1287 passage, cf. Zeisler 2011, pp. 105, 123.

emblems (*ya-stags*)²⁴⁷ of [a person] of the very highest lineage (*mtho dang rīgs... gong*) were obtained. For three nights these things were cast away into a meadow. For three days these things were set aside²⁴⁸ on a mountain slope (*shal*). The nine tributes, the tributes, were driven out (*bdas*) [with Srin zo-bo ring-po]. Each and every type (*cho-ma cho-rgu*) of wild ungulate.²⁴⁹ The antelope (*gtsos*) blood offering.²⁵⁰ Nine (or many) woods in a bundle (*rīg-chun*).²⁵¹ The hand signals were made (*gda'-blan*), [while] a vulture's foot (*bog-le*) [was held] accompanied by speech (spells).

gser 'gug dngul 'gug dang / gser 'phral (C.T. = 'khral) *g.yu 'phral* (C.T. = 'khral) *dang / mtho dang rīgs dang ya* (C.T. = yas) *stags* (C.T. = rtags) *gong nas 'byung ba rnams / nub gsum spangs* (C.T. = spang) *su bor / nang gsum shal du bshal' / 'phral rgu* (C.T. = dgu) *'phral la bdas // rī dags* (C.T. = dwags) *cho ma cho rgu* (C.T. = dgu) *la nī bsdī / gtsos* (C.T. = gtsod) *thrag (= khrag) spyin mo dang / shing gu rīg chun 'chan la nī gda'* (C.T. = brda) *blan gsung phab / yar ke gdang pa la zhus bus / phyag kyang bsros / rkyang gyī rgu rdugs dang / rgod gyi bog* (C.T. = bo) *le la / gda'* (C.T. = brda) *blan gsung yang phab /*

With the performance of all these ritual actions, the cruel *dri* was tamed to submission. The text proceeds by announcing that, “[Lho-za drīl-bu sīl-sīl sman] was brought upwards through the nine levels [of the lower realm].²⁵² Each and every kind of nectar (*bdud-rtsi*) was offered.” This last ritual procedure alludes to the refurbishment of the departed woman's consciousness principle, a prerequisite to her scaling the otherworld. The text then affirms, “The living and the dead, these two, were introduced through signaling”.²⁵³ This describes the mystic reunion of kith and kin with the deceased at the funeral venue before her final valediction, a process explicated in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The text continues: “Thirteen *bnol-khung* were dug.”²⁵⁴ This appears to describe a series of pits or cavities used to securely contain the contamination generated through unnatural death. The next line in the text has to do with the *rnel-khung*, a ritual cavity for the imprisonment of negativities associated with the *rnel-dri*. With their capture it is affirmed: “To the hand of Srin zo-bo ring-po each and every kind of *glud* were offered.”²⁵⁵

²⁴⁷ In the *Klu 'bum nag po*, the *yas-rtags* (*sic*) among other objects and sacrificial animals are utilized by the *dri-bon*. In that same account, a soldier who played a part in apotropaic aspects of the funeral wore the armor of the *yas-stags* (*sic*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 487, 489. According to the *Sui Shu*, in the Fu kingdom, the relatives of the deceased donned armor and brandished swords in order to kill the evil spirit responsible for the death (Tong and Wertmann 2010: 198, 199). These authors (*ibid.*) hold that the customs of the Fu kingdom were analogous to those of imperial-period Tibet and Tuyuhun.

²⁴⁸ This is the conjectural meaning of the predicate *bshal'*. For other possible glosses of *bshal / bshald* (*sic*), see Bellezza 2010a, p. 49 (n. 55, 56).

²⁴⁹ The predicate of this sentence is the unknown word *bsdī*.

²⁵⁰ *Spyin-mo*. This O.T. term seems to denote things given as an offering. If there was a C.T. equivalent of this noun it would be *shyin-mo*.

²⁵¹ This is followed by the remainder of this grammatical line of the text plus three whole lines of ambiguous import: *'chan la nī gda'* (C.T. = brda) *blan gsung phab / yar ke gdang pa la zhus bus / phyag kyang bsros / rkyang gyī rgu rdugs dang /*. The action taken includes hand signals and speech. A body part or trait of the wild ass forms the subject of the last line.

²⁵² *Mtho len rgu rīgs (= rim) nas phyung /*.

²⁵³ In that communication between these two ontological categories was opened: *Gson gshīn gnyis kyang brda sprad /*.

²⁵⁴ *Brkos*. Also spelled *rkod-[ba]* (Das 1902: 77).

²⁵⁵ *Srin zo-bo ring-po 'i phyag du glud cho ma cho rgu phul /*. A key part of the *glud* in both the ancient and modern contexts is the use of effigies. Cuevas (2011) furnishes cross-cultural data on the ancient role of effigies in Tibet. He also outlines the ritual functions, iconography and art history of the class of effigies known as *lingga* (*sic*). In his edifying work, Cuevas alleges that the use of effigies in Tibetan rituals was almost certainly derived from more ancient

The next line cites the *lha* and *sman*, but its signification is obscure.²⁵⁶ This is followed by: “To the hand of the middle (*’brīng*) *sman-bon* [presents] were offered.” This is the priest or priestess who retrieved Lho-za dril-bu sil-sil sman from the netherworld. Consequently, it is stated that, “She went away (*gshags*) as the *lha* and *sman*. She was bestowed the name Lha-za dril-bu sil-bu sman.” This last line of the origins myth tells us that the deceased woman had found liberation by becoming a *sman* goddess, a being fit for residence in the afterlife. In this concluding part of the origins myth, the rewards accrued to the ritualist as well as to the deceased are stipulated based on the criterion of reciprocity.

At this juncture, the text diverges to give instructions to its users regarding the objective of the *rnel-dri* subjugation ritual. It begins by making the conventional claim that the story just pronounced belongs to a bygone era. The commands are directed to the concurrent deceased and are an invaluable source of Old Tibetan eschatological beliefs. The departed woman is ordered not to remain in the ritual cavity, in which menacing aspects of the *rnel-dri* are confined. Rather, she is to proceed to the afterlife known here by the euphemism ‘joyous dwelling place’ (*rga-brang*), a synonym for the *dga’-yul* or *skyid-yul* of other archaic funerary rituals. The *thugs* in this context is the entire consciousness principle or intrinsic self of the deceased, that part of the human being which exists separately from the corpse *post obitum*. Hence, the deceased is directed to the place of the gladsome *lha*:

In ancient times the benefit was like that. Now for the benefit of *rje bkra-mo* and *bkra-rgyal*:²⁵⁷ One part of disease is expelled (*bral*). Do not stay in the evil cavity (*khung*), the scorching (*tshīg*) cavity. Go away to the joyous dwelling place, the way of the mind (*thugs*). From the tomb (*dur-kung*) of the perished (*nongs*) depart to the place of the contented (*dgyes*) *lha*.

gna’ de ltar phan / da rje bkra mo bkra rgyal la sman / nad gyī cha cīg bral // ngan khung tshīg kung (C.T. = *khung*) *nang na ma bzhugs shīg / thugs shul rga* (C.T. = *dga’*) *brang bgrod te gshags cīg / nongs gyī dur kung* (C.T. = *khung*) *nas dgyes lha sar gshags cīg // °°° //*

The text goes on to elaborate the ritual dispensation that aids in securing the liberatory conditions just prescribed. This ritual outlay contains unique elements, building further upon the intricate material and intellectual edifice propounded in Chapter II of *Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*. Various kinds of *’dong-mo*,²⁵⁸ umbilical cords of various kinds, whatever kinds are available (*rīgs sna-tshogs nas phyung*), are all part of the process moving the corpse to another (and better) place (*phung-po spo*).

The text then continues with its exorcisory exercises, noting the *zhal* and *mtshan-byang*, types of effigies or likenesses of the deceased used as receptacles for the consciousness during the

practices originating in India. The only evidence he provides for this claim is circumstantial in nature; that ritual effigies are well represented in Indian Buddhist canonical texts, which began to be translated into Tibetan in the 8th century CE. See *op. cit.* Cuevas 2011. While many *lingga* are certainly of Indian Buddhist origins, it cannot be asserted that all Tibetan effigies are. The *glud* of the *rnel-dri* text, as well as that of Pt 1042, Pt 1134, ITJ 734, and the *byol-rabs* of Gathang Bumpa, is part of an indigenous stream of Tibetan culture, which does not owe its conceptual or ritual constituents to Buddhism.

²⁵⁶ *Lha dang sman du bsnya ste btang //*.

²⁵⁷ Generic names for the concurrent dead, female and male, respectively. See *supra*, p. 153 (fn. 243)

²⁵⁸ This either denotes wooden vessels (*sdong-mo*) or wooden tea churns (*ja-mdong*).

funerary rite. These were standard ritual objects in the archaic funerary armory of Tibet.²⁵⁹ In the early ritual setting, these objects were part of depurative procedures relying on animal blood and medicinal plants, as our text makes explicit. A more unusual procedure entailed the use of

²⁵⁹ The *mtshan-byang* ('name tablet') or *byang-bu* is one type of receptacle for the consciousness principle of the dead, which is still employed in contemporary funerary rites of Tibet. For the *mtshan-byang* in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 396, 407, 412, 413, 422, 426, 471; for a summary of this ritual object in the scholarly writings of others, see *ibid.*, p. 396 (n. 127). For the *zhal* (literally: 'figure' or 'face') in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see *ibid.*, pp. 396, 407, 412, 422. In a soul evocation text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the yellow golden *zhal* is called the body receptacle (*sku yi rten*) and the *mtshan-byang* is the mind receptacle (*thugs kyi rten*). In the text that lays out the *thang-khrims* or laws governing funerals, the golden *zhal* and *mtshan-byang* are termed soul-circles (*bla-'khor*), which are supports for the bipartite consciousness principle of the deceased, the *bla* and *yid*.^{*} In Pt 1042 (Ins. 30, 124, 125), there is mention of the *zhal* and *smra-zhal*† in conjunction with the thread-cross (*nam-kā*). That these types of ritual objects are closely related is confirmed in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, where the *nam-mkha'* (*sic*) itself is said to be the gold, silver, conch, and silk *zhal* (*ibid.*, 426). In Pt 1042 (ln. 42), the equivalent of the *sku yi rten* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is the *ring gī zhal*, while the equivalent of the *bla* and *yid zhal* is the *thugs kyi zhal*. Here, as in many other areas of funerary conceptualization and praxis, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur has with great fidelity preserved pre-existing traditions.

^{*} The *gser-zhal* may possibly be derived from the custom of golden burial masks discovered recently in prehistoric Himalayan tombs. These masks have come to light in Chu-thags (Gu-ge), Malari (Uttarakhand) and Sa-rdzong (Glo). The most elaborate of the three is the specimen from Gu-ge, which was discovered in a tomb during road construction. A preliminary report describing it was made by Li Linhui at the International Conference on the Prehistory of the Tibetan Plateau (August 21–24, 2011), held at Sichuan University, Chengdu (China). Li Linhui was so generous as to give me a copy of his entire presentation as well as high resolution photographs of the funerary mask. The Gu-ge mask is comprised of two gilt or solid gold plates. The rectangular upper plate appears to represent a crown or headpiece. It is embossed with two rows of animals. The lower row consists of three wild ungulates resembling blue sheep facing to the left. Each of these animals occupies the bottom portion of a three tiered object surmounted by a bulbous structure. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text promulgating the *thang-khrims*, the receptacles for the *lha* and *gsas* allies of the funeral are called *lha-rten* and *gsas-'khor*, which take the form of weapons, barleycorn, libations, stones, and other things (Bellezza 2008: 395, 406, 407). Nevertheless, in an Eternal Bon text from the Ge-khod cycle, *lha-rten* is an elementary tiered structure for the ritual housing deities first used in the Zhang-zhung kingdom (*ibid.*, 252–258). Various kinds of tiered structures for enshrining deities are common in the Tibetan world and are often known as *gsas-mkhar* or *rten-mkhar*. These types of structures abound in the ancient rock art of highland Tibet. They appear as stone and iron models and miniature copper alloy talismans as well. As seen in the funerary literature of this study, wild ungulates customarily served as psychopomps. The mask embossment may represent actual or figurative ritual objects and animals used in the funeral of the deceased interred in the tomb. Applying these cultural historical and ethnographic data to the golden funerary mask of Gu-ge spawns the hypothesis that the embossed ungulates are zoomorphic funerary deities and the tiered structures enclosing them are their receptacles, which were used during the evocation ritual. Furthermore, the *zhal* used in conjunction with a baby blue sheep in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* (see p. 158) may describe a ritual procedure with direct relevance to the function of the Gu-ge burial mask. The superior line of figures on the upper plate of the mask consists of six birds: two confronted pairs in the center and solitary birds at either end of the row. This line of avian figures is stationed between the upper sections of the three tiered structures. Between one confronted pair of birds is what appears to be a tree. The birds appear to be an aquatic species or possibly cranes. As we know, birds are well represented in the archaic funerary tradition. Similarly, those on the mask are probably likenesses of funerary spirits that aided the deceased in the passage to the afterlife. The ostensible tree is also best interpreted as a funerary ritual instrument with apotropaic and trailblazing functions (such as the *ste'u*). The lower plate of the golden mask consists of the likeness of a human countenance with oval eyes and a long, thin nose bridge. These facial features give the impression that the mask depicts a Caucasian. According to the folklore of Gu-ge, in ancient times, the non-Tibetan Mon / Bskal-mon tribe was very active in the region. The Gu-ge golden funerary mask dates either the Iron Age (circa 700–100 BCE) or protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE), but chronometric verification is pending. For more on the three golden funerary masks discovered in the Himalaya, see Bellezza 2011e; 2011f.

† Probably the 'speaking effigy', after the belief that this object acted as a mouthpiece for the dead during their final interaction with the ritualists and relatives. This kind of belief has survived until quite recently in the funerary culture of the Tibetan world. See *supra*, p. 27 (fn. 41).

a swallow's (*khug-rta*) nest, one half of which was allotted to the deceased mother and the other half to her child. This action was either conducted beside the *zhal* and *mtshan-byang* or at the site of the actual burial. In this ritual performance, a blue sheep lamb (*rne'u*), as another sacrificial animal, functioned as the van to paradise. The blue sheep lamb may also have been the bearer of provisions for the deceased in the next life. This offering may be akin to the *skyibs-lug* (see *infra*, pp. 213–220). The corpses were also sparged with a fragrant liquid. The next procedure involved much waving, as the funerary priests gesture with their hands to push away the funereal demons. A sheep (*dri-lug*) and barley pastries were the edibles used in appeasing the spirit killers. Then, along with the *gshin* demon, it appears that all the contamination suffered by the departed one was forcibly sent off. The text explains that these ritual measures lead to the defeat of the *sri* (the cause of death in pregnancy). In conclusion, the ritualists are advised to conduct the rite just as is specified in the text:

Below [the other offerings?] the effigy (*zhal*) is placed.²⁶⁰ Also, in the last place, the *mtshan-byang* is made. Various kinds of blood are used to purify. Various kinds of medicinal herbs are applied.²⁶¹ The corpses (*ro*) of the mother and child are separated. A swallow's nest is cut in half and half placed (*bskyal*) here [with the baby] and half there [with the mother].²⁶² A baby blue sheep is loaded (*bkal*) with a saddle bag (*khal*) and is sent (*gtang*). It is cast away (*dbyung*) to the land of purity. Much fragrant lustral liquid (*tshan*) is sprinkled (*gdab*) [on the corpse]. The [demons] are waved away many times. Then one sheep and barley cakes (*zan*) are given (*sprad*). Then the *bnal*²⁶³ is attired in clothes (*khabs?*) and with the *gshin* [demons] once and for all cast away. The stones are washed. The *sri* below the waist (*gdab*) is suppressed. Benefit and merit: this side (*tshul*) and the other side (*pha-rol*) are joined together. To be well accomplished, make [the funeral] like that.

'og du zhal than bya / mtha' ma yang mtshan byang / bya'o // thrag (C.T. = *khrag*) sna tshogs gyis bsang / rtsi sman sna tshogs sprad // ma bu ro phye te / khug rta'i tshang 'dra bar tshal // gcig pha rol du bskyal / cig tshu rol du bskyal / rne'u la khal du bkal / la gtang ngo // gtsang sar dbyung ngo / tshan spos mang pos gdab / gda' (C.T. = *brda*) blan mang po byas la / de nas lug cig tang (C.T. = *dang*) zan cig dang sprad do // de nas bnal khabs gsol // gshin thab dbyung // gdo (C.T. = *rdo*) rnams khros bya / dgab sri gnan / pha rol tshul (C.T. = *tshur*) dang sbyar la // sman bsod / legs par byed pa la / de ltar bya' (C.T. = *bya*) // °°° //

²⁶⁰ This gloss is only possible if *than-bya* is read as the C.T. *'then-bya*. This could also mean 'withdrawn', 'dragged', or 'pulled'.

²⁶¹ *Sprad*: 'to apply' or 'to administer' in this context, rather than its more common sense: 'to give'.

²⁶² The swallow is one of the thirteen sacred birds of Eternal Bon (Snellgrove 1967: 258 [n.22]). The little bird (*bye'u*) *khugsta* / *khug-sta* / *gug-sta* (*sic*) is a psychopomp in the large and intricate funerary ritual of the second half of Pt 1134 (Ins. 213, 232, 252, 253, 265). In the same performable sequences another bird known as *sgeg-sa* / *skegs* is also styled *bye'u*, a term that may strictly signify 'small bird', rather than one of endearment as in the illuminated funerary manuscript.

²⁶³ This word may denote the personification of *bnol* (C.T. = *mmol*, a serious form of human contamination).



Fig. 10. The golden (gilt?) burial mask discovered recently in Chu-thags, Gu-ge. This exceptionally important artifact consists of two separate sheets of metal probably joined together by thongs. The vestiges of a burial shroud are attached to paired perforations along the edge of the mask (by dating this textile the age of the mask can be inferred). The upper plate is ornamented with repoussé caprids, birds and tiered ritual structures (see supra, p. 157 [fn. 259]). Photo courtesy of Li Linhui

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 9

This tale expands the geographic scope of the *rnel-gri* subjugation ritual to include a location in Rtsang (26.1–27.2). The narrative has the same elementary structure of other myths in Chapter II. In the country of Rtsang-shul mthon-ba', the lord of Rtsang, Rje ya-bo, received Thang-nga' rtsang-mo thang as his wife. More than one year later her womb was invaded by Rtsang-srñ zla-gar and Rtsang-srñ bo-de. She died in the same dreadful manner with which we are already acquainted. The woman became a demoness named Rnel-grī thag-shal-ma'. The *gto* and *dpyad* was carried out by Rtsang-gshen snyal-ngag. His priestly exertions led to the opening of the way of the *lha*. This tale concludes with the stock assertion: "As it was beneficial in ancient times, it is also now beneficial" (*gna' phan na / da yang phan no //*).

Thang-nga' rtsang-mo thang of origins myth No. 9 has virtually the same name as a personality in origins myth No. 12, but in that account she is the mother of the slain woman (see *supra*, p. 147). If these eponymous figures are taken to be the same woman, then, Kha-la rtsang-stod was her ancestral homeland and she managed to have a child with a Rtsang-rje bud kar-na' (a different husband from Rje ya-bo?) prior to her ill-fated pregnancy and death. It is more likely however that these references are to two different women of the same family or clan who share a common appellation. They may have been envisaged as living many years apart.

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 10

The next tale contains another harrowing account of the loss of a pregnant noble woman, which is set in the southern Tibetan region of Gnubs (27.2–28.7). The victim of this narrative was Dbyar-za nyag-cig-ma, who lost her child while it was still in the womb. The perpetrator of this outrage was the *srñ* of Nubs, the 'Child Stealer' (Bu-rkun):

In the country Gnubs-yul gling-grug,²⁶⁴ Rje-gnubs gyī srñs-pa, although he had big and small [relatives] (*che-mchis cung-mchis*), he did not have a wife and mate. He searched for a wife and mate. In the country of Byar-yu la-lhums:²⁶⁵ The daughter of Lha-byar lha-zhal kar's and Tha-nga rtsang-mo thang's mating was Dbyar-za nyag-cig-ma, who was received as the wife and mate of Gnubs-rje srñs-pa (*sic*). The son of their mating and seasonal activity [was expected] after more than a year. Gnubs-srñ bu-rkun went inside the mother's womb (*bang*). The child was no more as its raw flesh (*sha-rjen*) had been eaten and its blood drunk in the womb (*bsngal*).²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ For the localization of Gnubs, see Hazod 2009, pp. 172, 173. In ITJ 734, this principality is called Gnubs-shul gling-drug, its lord Gnubs-rje sribs-pa and its *srñ* Rkang-pran (Thomas 1957, ch. iv: p. 93). Lalou (1965: 194, 195) adds that the Gnubs capital is also rendered Gling-dgu (Pt 1285, Pt 1290) and its lord called Gnubs-rje sris-pa (Pt 1286, Pt 1290). Haahr (1969: 241, 243) also cites this region and ruler. Stein (2010, Antiqua III: 150) mentions the Gnubs clan. According to the historian Dpa'-bo gtsug-lag, Snubs-rje sris-pa (*sic*) was subjugated by King Gnya'-khri (Haahr 1969: 105, 175).

²⁶⁵ Sørensen and Hazod (2007, vol. 1: 176) place Byar in southern Tibet. Hazod (2009: 215) opines that a location called Byar gyi lcang-bu is possibly in the Chu-shul environs. Hazod (in personal communication) also suggests that Byar may be the Bya(r)-yul east of Gnyal.

²⁶⁶ The next line of the text is of murky import: *bu cīg zla ba rdīb /*.

yul gnubs yul gl̥ing grug (C.T. = drug) na' (C.T. = na) / rje gnubs gyī srīs pa la // che mchīs cung
(C.T. = chung) mchīs yang khab dang dbyal ma mchīs / khab dang dbyal btsal ba / yul byar yu la
lhums kyī nang shed na // lha byar lha zhal kar dang / tha nga rtsang mo thang dang bshos pa'i
bu / dbyar za nyag c̥ig mas / gnubs rje srīs pa'i khab du bzhes // bshos dang nams gyī sras / lo
dus zla mal du / gnubs sr̥in bu rkun gyīs / ma'i bang du zhugs / bu ru ma red par / bu sha rjen du
zos / ro thrag (C.T. = khrag) bsngal (C.T. = mngal) du 'thungs /

The death of Dbyar-za nyag-c̥ig-ma is depicted in the standard rhetorical content of the text. An additional line reads: “Yellow water like a racing horse” (*chu-ser rta ltar rgyug*). This simile vividly depicts the amniotic fluid running out from the ruptured amniotic membrane of the dying mother.

The tale carries on by describing the fallout from the death of Dbyar-za nyag-c̥ig-ma. The contamination in death of this noble lady had adverse consequences for the mountain and lake divinely linked to her. That she was indeed of a high socioeconomic station is illustrated by the reaction of an entire mountain and lake to her death. These natural objects were no doubt home to her personal protectors. As the *lha* of Dbyar-za nyag-c̥ig-ma was sullied, she became an unrestrained *dri-mo*. The local priest who came to aid her was Gnubs-gshen sum-po. In the text, he is endowed with the power of flight, thus he was associated with the celestial realm, as are so many funerary priests of the Old Tibetan and Eternal Bon funerary *smrang*. Gnubs-gshen sum-po made an effigy as the ransom offering in his bid to rid the deceased woman of the offending *dri*. This was in the form of a bird and nine uprooted trees. As a result, she was saved from the clutches of the *bdud*:

The contaminated (*bnol*) *lha* [caused] the snow mountain to melt. The contaminated lake was agitated (*bkrum*) from its depths. The *lha* above was unpropitiated (*ma-mchod*). The *dri* below was undefeated (*ma-btul*). The *dri-mo* was as a 'dre.²⁶⁷ “Gnubs-gshen sum-po soared in the sky. The likeness (*gsob*) of an 'ol-ba (sparrow hawk) made with its peeled [skin] and [filled] with earth was sent by him.²⁶⁸ He removed nine trees complete with their roots (*grungs nas phyung*). The *lha* above was purified. The *dri* below was defeated. Rnel-dri thag-shal-ma was sent downward.²⁶⁹ Gnubs-rje srīs-pa (read: Dbyar-za nyag-c̥ig-ma) was not led away (*gchags*) by the *bdud*. In ancient times the benefit was like that benefit.

lha bnol (C.T. = *mnol*) *la gangs bzhu 'o* // *mtsho bnol gl̥ing bkrum mo* (C.T. = *bkrugs*) // *yar ste lha ma mchod* / *mar de dri ma btul* / *dr̥i mo 'dre ru red* / 'dreng yang rabs su bead / *dud yang sna ru phol* (C.T. = *phog*) // *gnubs gshen rum po yis* // *gnam la 'phyo ba dang* / *sa la 'ol ba'i gsob de la bshus te btang* / *sh̥ing rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *grungs* (C.T. = *drung*) *nas phyung* / *yar te lha yang bsangs* / *mar te dri yang btul* / *rmel* (= *rnel*) *dr̥i thag shal ma* / *thur la spyi te btang* / *gnubs rje srīs pa la* / *bdud dang gchags* (C.T. = *gcags*) *ma mchīs* / *gna' phan de ltar phan* /

As in most other *rnel-dri* subjugation myths and many *smrang* of other Old Tibetan ritual traditions, this one finishes with brief reference to its use in the present tense. The text warns the

²⁶⁷ The next two lines of the text read: 'dreng yang rabs su bead / *dud yang sna ru phol* //. This appears to be a trope conveying that the human lineage had been cut and the livestock led away.

²⁶⁸ In reference to Lamaist ritualism, Heller (1985: 258) notes that the *gsob* serves as a support (*rten*) to which evil is transferred. The *rnel-dri* text furnishes a historical precedent and an indigenous model for this Tibetan Buddhist ritual custom.

²⁶⁹ This line includes the construction: *spyi te*, which is of unclear syntactic value.

g.yen not to interfere with the disposal of the corpse. It is also stated that the concurrent deceased has passed beyond the portals of the underworld: “Today, this defunct (*nyam-nos*) *rnæl*: Great harm of the *g.yen* do not follow after the corpse. She has departed from the door, the portal. Her *lha* is purified. Her *dri* is defeated.”²⁷⁰

Rnæl-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 11

The next *rnæl-dri* subjugation origins tale returns to the country of Skyi-ro ljang-sngon, in the environs of Lhasa (28.7–29.11). “In the country Skyi-ro ljang-sngon, Skyi-rje rmangs-po did not have a wife or mate. He went to search for a wife. In the country of Mdo-ro lung-gsum, Mdo-rje sum-po and Skyin-za thing-tsun-ma mated and their daughter, Mdo-lcam rma-lo rma-lo sman, went to be the wife and mate [of Skyi-rje rmangs-po].” From their union, “A boy appeared, a son who was begotten not well formed.”²⁷¹ The mother died (*grogs* = *grongs*) as a *rnæl*.” Mdo-lcam rma-lo’s demise is recounted in the formulaic lines of other *rnæl-dri* subjugation myths. She was transfigured into the demoness Rnæl-grī thag-shal-ma.²⁷²

The unshielded condition of Mdo-lcam rma-lo is amply depicted in the text: “The human had no *lha*. She was like the bird landing (*lhags*) on a plain.”²⁷³ This simile speaks of vulnerability; birds being in an inherently weak position when there are no high points upon which to alight. The text then testifies, “A-bo ya-ngal from Ngas-po brag-mar glang gyī ser-’ga invited Skyi-gshen rgyan-ngar.” It is curious that a figure from another region (Ngas-po) is recorded as summoning the funerary ritualist.²⁷⁴ Given our current state of knowledge, this early historic-period reference to cultural and social interchange between different principalities of prehistoric Tibet is difficult to assess. The narrative resumes by stating, “For three days [Skyi-gshen rgyan-ngar] purified. For three nights he chanted (*bgyer*).”²⁷⁵ These ritual actions led to the defeat of the *dri*, the purification of the deceased woman’s *lha*, the opening of the way of the *lha*, and the final reunion of Mdo-lcam rma-lo with her husband.

In conclusion, this origins myth documents the repulsion of demonic intrusions that could interfere with the burial of Mdo-lcam rma-lo and with her voyage to the world beyond. This ritual warding away of the *g.yen* transpired at a series of thresholds or portals (*sgo* / *sgo-mo*). As we have seen and will continue to see in the other funerary text of Gathang Bumpa, these portals

²⁷⁰ *De ring rnæl drī nyam nos ’di / ro phyir g.yen ma che // sgo sgo mo zhig bgrod te gshags / lha bsangs so / dri btul lo //* °°° //.

²⁷¹ *Bu ru ma rung bar / bu byung sras bltams ba*. These lines describe a malformed or otherwise damaged fetus.

²⁷² Two lines follow in which the ‘god of the shelter’ (*skyibs-lha*) is noted: *myī phung sol da ste / skyibs lha dbyar ma ’phangs /*. The identity of this deity is not clear.

²⁷³ *Myī* (C.T. = *mī*) *la lha ma mchis // bya dang ’dra te thang lha lhags /*.

²⁷⁴ For the localization of the Ngas-po principality (in and around the present day ’Phan-yul), see Hazod 2009, *passim*. Lalou (1965: 199) notes that the Ngas-po capital was Khra-sum (Pt 1286, Pt 1290, ITJ 734) and its lord Dgu-khrī zing-po rje / Dgu-gri zing-po rje (Pt 1290). On Ngas-po, also see Thomas 1957, ch. iv, p. 93.

²⁷⁵ *Nyin gsum bsangs / mtshan gsum bgyer /*. An additional line of the text describing the ritual activities of the *gshen* reads: *nang gsum bshal du bshal /*. This may possibly refer to preparation of a kind of *thun* used for three mornings, with the final *bshal* in this passage meaning ‘to sift’, or ‘to rinse’. *Thun* is an exorcistic ritual practice in which mustard seeds, sand, stones and other objects are empowered with spells to serve as magic missiles. *Thun* is typically prepared in a cauldron. See *supra*, p. 127.

were envisioned as marking each rung of the after-death journey.²⁷⁶ In this textual example, these portals are said to number thirteen, but only three are specifically enumerated. The first half of this series of thresholds were thought to exist in the netherworld, the second half on earth and beyond. As we know from Chapter I and other archaic funerary accounts, these two halves of the postmortem route are divided by the 'waters of the dead' (*gshin-chab*) or 'river of the dead' (*gshin-chu*). The chanting (*bsgyer*) connected to these portals is a reference to the role of the psychopomp priest, who must spell out to Mdo-lcam rma-lo exactly what she will encounter on each stage of her journey to the empyrean:

The [*g.yen*] were sent away from the door, the portal. The portal of turquoise bamboo (*smyug-ma*). The portal of copper rose (*se-ba*). The portal of the iron 'dong-mo'.²⁷⁷ The chanting of the thirteen portals was done in sequence ('ga 'ga tsam cġg).

sgo sgo mo cig bgrod 'tshal lo / smyug ma g.yu'i sgo / se ba zangs gyġ sgo / 'dong mo lcangs (= lcags) gyġ sgo / sgo mo bcu gsum la 'ga 'ga tsam cġg bsgyer ro // °°° //

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 13

This origins tale follows the same elementary narrative pattern of others in Chapter II (31.7–32.8). The death of the mother and child is caused by a *rnel-dri* that induces a fatal medical condition. The geographic setting of this story is Dbye-mo yul-grug.²⁷⁸ Its lord, Dbye-rje khar-pa, took Skyo-za mthġng-btsun as his wife. Skyo is probably a clan name but a 'Skyo-yul' has not been geographically identified. Skyo-za mthġng-btsun expired in the same terrible way repeatedly described in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*. The homicidal demon was named Dbye-srin yug-mo and the deceased woman as a demoness was called Rnel-dri thag-bshar-ma. As we continue to see, it appears that each ancient principality of Tibet had its own primary *srin* or agent of violent death. These *srin* are the counterpoint to the *lha*, as seen in the class of binary spirits known as *lha-srin*. The *srin* are generally of the female gender and are associated with the underworld. They actively work to kill and drag down the dead into their infernal realm. Yet, their function as *gri* or *gshed* notwithstanding, these *srin* may have been seen as divine emblems of female lineages, chthonic goddesses and territorial protectors, especially in the cultural schema of a very remote era.²⁷⁹ In any case, it is commonplace for indigenous spirits in Tibet to have an ambiguous character, dispensing both harm and benefit.

²⁷⁶ While the portals of these O.T. documents were conceived of as having a literal existence, the portals (*sgo*) of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, are of classificatory significance. The various procedural aspects of funerals or portals (these are generally divided into *gto* and *dpyad*) form the '*dur-gyer*'. '*Dur-gyer*' denotes the entire archaic funerary tradition, and particularly to its origins and transmission as something that is chanted. For an explication of the funerary portals and '*dur-gyer*' in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 373–386.

²⁷⁷ Probably a type of tree or plant (in a generic sense: C.T. = *sdong-mo*).

²⁷⁸ According to Hazod (2009:173), Dbye is situated east of Yar-lung and is probably identical to the Lde dynasty ancestral center. Lalou (1965:193, 194) tabulates basic information about Dbye from Dunhuang manuscripts: the country is called Dbye-mo yul-bzhi (Pt 1286), Dbye-mo yul-dug / drug in (Pt 1060, Pt 1285, ITJ 734) and Dbye-mo yul-drug-ku (Pt 1039); the name of the *sku-bla* of this principality is Dbye-bla spyi-gang gangs (ITJ 734), Dbye-bla spyi-bgangs (Pt 1060) and Dbye-bla spyil-gangs (Pt 1285). Furthermore, Thomas (1957, ch. iv: 94), working from ITJ 734, notes that the lord of Dbye-mo is Dbye-rje khar-ba, its *srin* Yug-mo and its *gshen* Kar-bu ljon-pyug. Haarh (1969: 241) also furnishes basic information about Dbye. To these lists can be added the lord and lady of Dbye in Pt 1039 (In. 08): Dbye-rje khar-ba and Dbye-za ko-ma.

²⁷⁹ For a discussion on the broader nature of the *srin*, see Bellezza 1997, pp. 37, 38, 160; Haarh 1969, *passim*.

The flying away of the personal *lha* of Skyo-za mth̃ng-btsun in the sky, or the disappearance of the proverbial goose in the lake, acted as a clarion call for ritual intervention. The text appears to say that the priest of this tale, Dbye-gshen mkhar-bu, “Opened the wide expanse of the sky with the suspended golden meat [offered] to a living female vulture.”²⁸⁰ We know from the second origins myth of Pt 1194 that having direct access to a sky unmarked by obscurations was considered essential in the successful conduct of the archaic funerary rite.²⁸¹ A bird is connected to the clearing of the sky in the fifth origins myth of Pt 1134 as well (see *infra*, p. 226).

Of course, Dbye-gshen mkhar-bu’s ritual undertaking resulted in the woman’s *lha* above being purified. Moreover, “Rnel-dri thag-bshar was completely subjugated (*sprugs*).” Thus, the way of the *lha* was opened and the final reunion between the living and the dead could take place. This meeting occurred at the funerary ritual venue, a final way station en route to paradise. Finally, the text asseverates, “In ancient times the Dbye lord Khar-ba was benefited. Today, to be shown [in this way, benefits] that person who has become a *rnel-gr̃*.”²⁸²

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 14

This tale is structured in the manner of other examples we have examined (32.9–34.1). The ill-fated couple is that of Mchims-yul, another prehistoric Central Tibetan principality in traditional Tibetan historiography.²⁸³ In Mch̃ms-yul rgu-sul, the lord was Mch̃ms-rje ne-’u-sing and his wife Lde-lcam gung-ro sman. The killer of the pregnant woman was Mch̃ms-sr̃in pha-bo. Nine *gshen* made the *gdo* (C.T. = *gto*). At the crossroads, the father Ya-ngal gỹim-kyong (*sic*) collapsed (*mdzol*, C.T. = *mdzul*) the nine *sr̃i-gung* (= *sr̃i-khung*). With one umbilical cord, one funerary wood and one *gson-ma* (a vulture), the *lha* above was purified and the *dri* below defeated. Turning to present day concerns, the text declares that, “It is also appropriate to carry out the purification of the *rnel*. It is also appropriate to subjugate the *rnel*.”²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ *Bya rgod gson ma la / gser gỹi sha btags pa / gnam gỹi mthongs yang phye /*.

²⁸¹ Pt 1194 contains an origins myth for the funerary ritual implement vulture wing called the ‘hand-tool bird wing’ (*bya-gshog phyag-cha*) used by the *dur-gshen* Rma-da. This wing is described as the respondent (*than*) and messenger (*prin*, C.T. = *phrin*) of the dead in the provisional and perilous postmortem state (*gshin*), and was used to forge a pathway to the heavenly afterlife. It was fitted with various objects including those that functioned as iron stairs towering in the sky (*skas lchags* (C.T. = *lcags*)... *gnam du zang zang*) and to clear up clouds in the expanse of the sky (*gnam mthongs sprin gyi go sald* (C.T. = *gsal*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 506–510.

²⁸² *Gnya’ dbye rje khar ba la phan / da mỹi ’di la rnel gr̃i phyug* (= *phyung*) *’ishal lo // °°° //*.

²⁸³ For the localization of Mchims (in eastern Dwags-po), see Hazod 2009, p. 173, 174. Lalou (1958: 184; 1965: 196, 197) provides the following references: the Mchims-yul dgu-sul / Mchims-yul dgu-shul capital is called Dgu’-yul (Pt 1286) / Dgu-sul (Pt 1060, Pt 1285) / Dku-yul (Pt 1039) / Dgra-yul (ITJ 734), its lord is Ne’u (Pt 1286, Pt 1060, ITJ 734) or Gnyi-sla tsh̃e’u (Pt 1285), and the lord’s wife is Mchims-za sha-chang (Pt 1286). Haarh (1969: 242) makes note of other spellings derived from three different texts: Mchims-yul gru-shul / Mchims-yul gyi dgu-yul, the place of Mchims-rje ne’u. Haarh (*ibid.*, 42, 51, 55, 56, 337) also records the following noble personalities: Mchims-sa klu-rgyal and Mchims-bza’-ma / Mchims-bza’ me-tog. Also, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), p. 179; Thomas 1957, ch. iv, p. 94.

²⁸⁴ *Rnel bsangs bgyid kyang rung / rnel dri gdul* (C.T. = *’dul*) *yang rung /*.

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 15

The final proclamation of origins in Chapter II of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* expands the geographic ambit of the ritual performance still further to take in the ancient region known as Glan-yul (34.1–37.3). The location of this territory is still uncertain. As we have seen, a priest from this region, Glan-shen dril-bu, is noted in Pt 1134 (see *supra*, p. 145 [fn. 220]). The tale can be summarized as follows: In Glan-yul glan-stod, the father was Glan-rgan da-ba, the mother Mchims-za byi-rib-ma, and the daughter Glan-grum-ma'i si-le-ma. Glan-grum-ma'i si-le-ma had no husband, but she met G.ya-spangs (C.T. = G.ya'-spang) skyes-cig (Only Male of the Slate and Meadow). The name of this figure indicates that he was a territorial deity or some other type of local spirit (e.g., the well-known *yul-lha* Gnyan-chen g.ya'-spangs of Shan-rtsa). Also, Skyes-cig is appended to the names of various localized spirits (e.g., see pp. 43–45). The two of them engaged in illicit sex (*bnol*) under a white-colored flat boulder (*dbyam-bu*), in the upper part of a valley. An illegitimate child (*rnel*) was about to be born to the woman. Her father, Glan-rgan da-ba, became ill. Glan-rum si-le-ma (*sic*) went on horseback to see him. She arrived at Glan-gda' mar-ba in the country of Glan during the third month of summer. The rock formation bird (*brag-bya*, the owl) and a pigeon (*phug-ron*) [suddenly] flew off. The horse started and both the horse and girl fell into the Glan-chu river and died (*drongs*, C.T. = *grongs*).

This narrative throws up a number of questions germane to its cultural import. The misfortune suffered by Glan-grum-ma'i si-le-ma and her father appears to have been ushered in by the woman's consorting with an unsuitable being. It seems that her spirit lover, G.ya-spangs skyes-cig, wanted to claim Glan-grum-ma'i si-le-ma for his own by hastening her death through birds that acted as his henchmen. Provided that this interpretation is concedable, it suggests that this spirit may have been a *btsan* or *bdud* or another kind of localized spirit with infernal associations, which could benefit from her being ensnared in the underworld.

Glan-rum si-le-ma appeared as nine types of *dri*. Among them was the *rtsog-dri* (C.T. = *btsog-gri*), the agent of violent death associated with the contamination caused by the woman's illicit relationship. The *gshen* Pho-gnyen thod-dkar was invited from the sunny mountain to do the *gdo* (C.T. = *gto*) and *dpyad*. The *lha* was to be purified and the *dri* defeated. The ritual activities subsequently described are extremely obscure. They revolve around groups of thirteen objects.²⁸⁵ By this ritual being performed for three nights, Glan-gshen dril-bu purified the *lha* and by carrying it out for three days, he defeated the *dri*. For revenge (*sha-glan*) against the owl and the pigeon, Glan-gshen dril-bu threw the magic bomb (*gtso*) and pestle (*gnur*, C.T. = *snur*).²⁸⁶ The *dri* manslayer (*gshed*) was placed inside a cavity (*khung du zubs*). An effigy made from the skin of the water bird *zal-mo* was pulled out (*thon du gdon*) from the *rnel-khung*. Furthermore, at that time,²⁸⁷ [Glan-gshen dril-bu] bound the head of the corpse [of Glan-rum si-le-ma] to a state

²⁸⁵ These include thirteen boxes (*sbrum*, C.T. = *sgrum*), thirteen *zho-'dzag 'dzag-pa* (?), thirteen *tha-ma byi-ba theng-leb* (?), thirteen *'dong-shas* (?), thirteen *stag-pa'i rgam-shing* (a type of wooden object), thirteen swirling waters (*chu-dkyil*), and thirteen *sbra-khyim sgang sbrid-ma* (a type of tent).

²⁸⁶ For use of a pestle (*gtun-bu*) as a magic missile in the *byol-rabs* text of the Gathang Bumpa collection, see Bellezza 2010a, pp. 74, 75.

²⁸⁷ This is a conjectural reading for the expression *da-rung da-chungs du*. *Da-chungs* / *da-chung* / *da-cung* appears to be very closely related to the word *da* (now). *Da-rung* is the O.T. term for 'still' or 'moreover', as is still used today. For occurrences of this expression in the Dunhuang manuscripts, see Pt 1134, ln. 66 (*da-rung ni da-cung / du*); Pt 1285, lns. v52, v53 (*da-rung da-chung du*); ITJ 739, ln. 1r5 (*da-rung ni da-chung du*); and Pt 1052, ln. r159 (*da-cung ni da-cung ru*).

suppression (*mgo-ro 'dam du chud*) inside the *rme-khung* of nine levels (*rīm-rgu*).²⁸⁸ The father Ya-ngal gyīm-kyong used reddish brown (*smug-po*) sandalwood (*tsa-'dan*, C.T. = *tsan-dan*) in purification. The bound head of the corpse was taken away and the white horse pulled from the water. It was Dur-gshen rma-da' who transformed the *rnel-drī* into a divine *sman* and bestowed the name G.ya (C.T. = G.ya')-sman sil-ma upon her.

As is customary, after completing the *rnel-dri* subjugation ritual origins tale, the text turns to the funeral for which it has been recited. It includes the suppression of the *thed*, old and tattered things including the corpse:

Today, the base of the *rnel-grī* is subdued. Great harm of the *g.yen*, do not follow after the corpse. The living, do not follow after the dead. The subjugation of the *thed*, the subjugation, has been accomplished. Revenge has been definitively taken against the *rnel-grī*. It is finished.

de ring rnel grī'i gzhung du gdul (C.T. = 'dul) *lo / ro phyir g.yen ma che // shī phyīr gson myi 'brang* (C.T. = *drangs*) *ngo / thed dul* (C.T. = 'dul) *dul* (C.T. = 'dul) *bya'o / rnel grī sha glan yan cad // rdzogs s.ho*

²⁸⁸ The *rme-khung* (literally: 'defilement cavity') appears to have functioned as the ritual structure in which all the contamination of the nine rungs of the netherworld were eliminated. For *sme* (identical or closely related to *rme*) in Pt 1285, see p. 145 (fn. 220), p. 150 (fn. 232). This is followed by two lines pertaining to the reconditioning of the upper part and the lower part of the corpse (*ro-stod*, *ro-smad*), which are described using trisyllabic indicators: *ro stod dbu bzangs nyīgs se nyīgs / ro smad 'jam gyīs khugs se khugs /*.

Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter III

Chapter III is composed of two origins myths. The first tale focuses on an old woman who died of natural causes in very distant times. This is the only narrative in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* to furnish details of a funeral in which mischance did not play a hand in death. The second tale returns to the theme of the subjugation of the supernatural causes of violent death, introducing a Zhang-zhung priestess of great ritual aptitude.

The first origins myth in Chapter III is dedicated to the funeral of a category of the untroubled dead known as *bkra-za* (37.3–40.4). This rite for an elderly woman begins by stating, “The origins tale of *Bkra-za gzīg-'brang* is shown. This is the tradition (*lugs*) of Phag-bon gsas-khrī.”²⁸⁹ This latter figure was a *'dur-bon* priest, the executor of the funeral for an old woman (*bkra-'dur*) of primal times. As shall be seen later in the story, this woman, *Rmu-za khwa-cung*, at her own behest, became known after death as *Bkra-za gzīg-'brang*. *Rmu-za khwa-cung* became the wife of *Sten-te khogs-po* of *Sten-yul*. The geographic location of *Sten-yul* seems unattested in other sources. As will be recalled, the victim in *rnel-dri* origins myth No. 8, *Lho-za drīl-bu sīl-sil sman*, was taken beyond *sten-rab rgu*, which appears to be an epithet for the various strata of the underworld (see *supra*, p. 154). The text also informs us that the elder sister of *Sten-te khogs-po*, *Sten-za khrī-'phang skyol*, was married to *'Gon-bstun phywa* who resided at the very edge of the sky (*gnam gyī pha mtha'*). This place spotlights his celestial or divine character, an identity emulated by the great funerary priests of the archaic tradition as well. It would seem therefore that while *'Gon-bstun phywa* was a uranic figure, his wife may have belonged to a chthonian lineage. An extension of the same body of funerary lore recorded in Pt 1134 furnishes many more details about *'Gon-bstun phywa* and his son (see *infra*, pp. 221–234).

We are already acquainted with the mother (*Dbyal drum-cha'i ngur-ngur*) and father (*Gtangs-brag cha-dang*) of *Rmu-za khwa-cung* (*Sten-te khogs-po's* wife), as recorded in a healing narrative of Pt 1285 (see *supra*, p. 150 [fn. 232]). However, the offspring of this couple are given as *Thang-ba dmu-thang* (son), *Thang-nga dmu-mo thang* (elder daughter) and *Dmu-lcham gong-nga gong-chung* (younger daughter). No mention of *Rmu-za khwa-cung* is made in Pt 1285. Moreover, that account is focused on *Thang-ba dmu-thang*, while the story in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is concerned with a daughter. Examined in aggregate, the various Old Tibetan origins tales weave an elaborate narrative tapestry, the threads being various personalities who share kinship relations. These are not stories of individuals or nuclear families existing in isolation, they are the sagas of extended families united through close cultural bonds as well as undisclosed political alliances. That these *smrang* deal with corporate entities enhances their tribal or socially inclusive character:

The father *Sten-te khogs-po* lived in the country of *Sten-yul dru-mong bzhi-stengs*. Although he was of greatness, he had no wife and mate. In the country *Rmu-yul ngang-'brang lchang-'brang*, the progeny of the mating of the father *Stengs gyi brag-cha dīng-dīng* (*sic*) and the mother *Dbyar gyī drum-cha ngur-ngur* (*sic*) was the son and male child *Thang-ba rmu-thang* (*sic*) and the daughter *Rmu-za khwa-cung sman*. *Sten khogs-po* (*sic*) received her as his wife. The elder sister of *Sten-te khogs-po* (*sic*), *Sten-za khrī-'phang skyol*, was received as whose wife? She was received as the wife of *'Gon-bstun phywa* at the very edge of the sky.

²⁸⁹ *Bkra za gzīg 'brang gyī rabs la 'shal lo / phag bong gsas khrī'i lugs lags so //*.

yul sten yul dru mong bzhi stengs na (C.T. = *na*) // *yab sten te khogs po bzhugs / sten te khogs po la che mchīs kyang* // *khabs dang dbyal ma mchīs / rma yul ngang 'brang lcam 'brang / na / pha stengs gyi brag cha dīng dīng dang / ma dbyar gyī drum cha ngur ngur 'chos (= 'tshos) pa 'i sras / myīng po dral po thang ba rmu thang gyīs / srīng mo rmu za khwa cung sman / sten khogs po 'i khabs du bzhes* // *sten te khogs po 'i srīng mo lcam mo ba / sten za khri 'phang skyol / su 'i khabs du bzhes na / gnam gyī pha mtha' na / 'gon* (C.T. = *mgon*) *btsun phywa 'i khabs du bzhes* /

The next line of the text is incomplete. It seems to convey that 'Gon-bstun phywa belonged to the Phywa tradition or lineage (Phywa-lug, C.T. = Phya-lugs).²⁹⁰ This well-known figure is considered the divine ancestor of human beings in a celebrated cosmogony, the most famous mortal of which is Gnya'-khri btsan-po.²⁹¹ 'Gon-bstun phywa's place in this origins tale may

²⁹⁰ This line reads: *phywa lug* (C.T. = *lugs*) {#} *la pa can rīn dang cha ru gcal* /.

²⁹¹ In *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru*, Mgo-gsum tsha (*sic*) are four brothers of the *lha* lineage, who ultimately trace their origins to the cosmogonic couple Ye-smon rgyal-po and Chu-lcags rgyal-mo. For this etiologic myth see Bellezza 2008, p. 351. These brothers (three or four in number) belong to the Phywa lineage in other versions of this Central Tibetan cosmogony. For details, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 397, 398; 2008, p. 273. However, like *Rnel drī 'dul ba 'i thabs sogs*, in Pt 1134, Mgon-tshun phywa / 'Gon-tshun phywa is a singular personality. Some of his activities in this manuscript are reviewed in Stein 1971, pp. 494–497. Stein (*ibid*) aptly refers to this figure as the 'father of the dead'. Das (1902: 286) reports that the city (*grong-khyer*) of Mgon-btsun phywa (*sic*) is the paradise of the Bon-po. This god also has divinatory functions in Pt 1043 (ln. 24, Gnam-rtse mgon-tsun) and in ITJ 739 (ln. 4v4, Mgon-btsun ni phywa). Cf. Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), p. 261. Pt 1134 is a work that furnishes several origins myths and ritual performances, in which the horses and sheep that transport the dead through the postmortem realm, the *do-ma* and *skyibs-lug*, have a central role. The first complete origins tale of Pt 1134 (lns. 11–23) introduces Mgon-tshun phywa' and other fundamental personalities and motifs that run right through the entire text. It was a son of Mgon-tshun phywa' who was the recipient of the first funerary rite, which included the use of the *do-ma*. By relying on these two horse brothers, the deceased son was able to make it across the topographic obstacles of the postmortem realm. This tale can be closely paraphrased as follows: Above the heights, above the heavens, the father, the patriarch, was Mgon-tshun phywa' (*sic*), and the mother, the matriarch, was Ta-nga ngur-mo tang. The son of their mating in the season was Mgon-tshun gtīngs-na rje'. [This son] risked (*bsdos*) [provoking] the *bdud* and [going] above the water (*chab-gang*, i.e., tantamount to death). Although [Mgon-tshun gtīngs-na rje'] strode quickly (*bang*), the *bdud* matched (*bslags*) each [step] he took (*pyal*). The *bdud* tortured (*mnard*), yes, tortured the son of the Phywa, who died. Thus, the beloved (*snying-dgas*) *do-ma* Pu dang mgyogs (Swift Old Brother) and Nu yid-mgyogs (Younger Brother Swift [as] Thought), the horse of the excellent army (*dmag-rab gyi rta-po*) [became the funerary ritual horses].* At the edge of the sky, above the apex of the heavens, the son was the son of the *lha* and the cousin was the cousin of the *srin*, the *gshin-gshen* (funerary priest), the *bon* (the religious practices and practitioner): the speech (*ngag*), the sound (*rga*) of this son of the mighty was heard (*nyand*) [by Mgon-tshun gtīngs-na rje'] in the Spring, until the sun went down (i.e., the funerary evocation rites were completed). Pu dang mgyogs and Nu yid-mgyogs arrived in the heights (*mto*), the ordered position (*gral*) of the lord (the deceased). The flesh was painted / clothed (?). The lord was honored (*bkur*) to his great satisfaction (*ngo yang mto*). The horses that honored him accompanied ('*brag*, related to C.T. = '*grogs*?) Mgon-tshun gtīngs-na rje' a great distance above the nine layers of the sky. Also, they crossed (*rgal*) the heights of the passes. The livestock (horses) and man crossed together. Also, they crossed ('*bog*) the fords of the bottomland. The man and livestock crossed together. [There] the blue (green) herbs (*rtshi*) are blue (green) even in winter. The man and livestock were together in that blue (verdancy). Also the man and livestock together ate† the unroasted (*ngar*) blue barleycorn (*sngo-mo*). The *se-mo* was well transported. The defunct one (*nongs*) of the transported *se-mo* went above the nine layers of the sky. The square of the perished one was transported. The *se-mo* and *gru-bzhi* are synonyms closely connected to tombs. In Pt 1134, their transport is a metaphor for the successful completion of the funerary rite. In ITJ 731r, Yab-bla bdag-drug of the Mgon-tshun phywa / Mgon-tshun pywa appoints the high pastures as the country of the horse and the northern areas as the country of the yak (Bellezza: 534; Stein 1971: 486, 487). Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), pp. 152–154 discusses the Phya, Dmu and Gtsug as divine races that gave rise to the various lineages of humans.

* It is also possible that *dmag-rab* should be read as *dmag-rabs* (military lineage). On the war-horse of a nobleman serving as his *do-ma* after death in another Pt 1134 origins myth, see *supra*, p. 145 (fn. 220).

† '*Gam* (C.T. = '*gams*). This word is only used to denote the consuming of dry or fried foods. See *infra*, p. 172 (fn. 307).

point to a Central Tibetan cultural orientation for the country of Sten-yul dru-mong bzhi-stengs. The liaisons recorded in this narrative hint at the nexus between the two most important cosmogonic lineages (primarily patrilinear) of Tibet: the Rmu / Dmu and Phya.²⁹² As for the main setting of the funeral activities, a location in either Central Tibet or Upper Tibet is indicated. According to Eternal Bon sources, this latter region was an ancestral homeland of the Rmu (see *supra*, p. 149 [fn. 232]). Curiously, the main character, Rmu-za khwa-cung sman, may possess a name with a Zhang-zhung etymology in part. In any case, Khwa-rtse is the name of a famous Buddhist monastery founded in the early 11th century CE in Gu-ge lho-smad.²⁹³

In the text, the nature of Rmu-za khwa-cung sman's husband's wealth is made known: "The property (*dkor*) possessed by Sten-te khogs-po was a sheep (*lug*), the sheep (*g.yang*)."²⁹⁴ The significance of this disclosure is hard to judge. It may indicate that Sten-te khogs-po was a shepherd by profession or it may function to introduce the sheep as an essential funerary ritual instrument. Nevertheless, sheep are never again mentioned in this origins tale. In due course, Rmu-za khwa-cung became an elderly woman, as is made graphically clear in the text: "The time came when Rmu-za khwa-cung sman reached one hundred years of age. Upon getting up from a crawl (*kog-kog*) she could not stand erect (*ma-spyod*). She supported her body (*sku la brten*) with a golden staff (*'khar-ba*)."²⁹⁵ The text goes on to state that Rmu-za khwa-cung passed away into the heavens (*rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *du gshegs*) in old age (*bgres*).²⁹⁶ She left a will (*kha-chems*) as a testament (*bzhag-pa*) to Sras-sten bu-lo rmang and Sten-lcam bra-ma. These two were her son and daughter respectively. The 'will' Rmu-za khwa-cung left behind served as a manifesto for the way in which funerals for elderly women were to be conducted.

The transliteration of the above origins tale is as follows: *gnam gyi ya bla dgung gi ya stengs* (C.T. = *steng*) *na / pa dang yab smos / na / mgon tshun phywa' / ma / dang yum smos na / ta nga ngur mo / tang / bshos tang nams gyi sras / mgon tshun gtangs na rje'* (C.T. = *rje*) */ mgon tshun pywa'i / sras shig / btud (= bdud) tang (= dang) ni chab gang / bsdoste* (C.T. = *bsdos ste*) *// bdud dang bang pyal* (C.T. = *phyal*) */ bslags / mnard (= mnar) ni bdud gyis mnar te // pywa'i sras shig / grongs / na / do ma snying dgas / ni pu* (C.T. = *phu*) *dang mgyogs / tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *dmag rab gyi rta po / nu yid / mgyogs / gnam gyi pa mtha* (C.T. = *mtha'*) *dgung gi pa 'brum nas / bu ni lha 'i / bu / tsha ni srin gyi tsha ste'* (C.T. = *ste*) */ bon / gzhin (= gshin) gshen drag gi / pa ngag ni rgrar* (C.T. = *sgrar*) *nyand* (C.T. = *nyan*) */ dpyid nyi ni nub tu 'jugs / pu* (C.T. = *phu*) *dang mgyogs tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *nu yid mgyogs gnyis / rje gral / ni mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *yang slebs / sha rtshi ni gda' / yang mnabs rjes bkur ni / ngo / yang mto'* (C.T. = *mtho*) */ rtas bkur ni / 'brag gyang ring / gnam rim pa dgu steng du mgon tshun / gdings na re / la mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *rgal gyang / myi pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) *mnyam du rgal / dma rab 'bog gyang / myi pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) *mnyam du rgal / rtshi* (C.T. = *rtsi*) *dbyar sngo dgun du sngo yang / myi pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) *mnyam du sngo / sngo mo / ngar 'gam* (C.T. = *'gams*) *yang myi pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) */ mnyam du 'gam / se mo bgrod legso / gnam rim pa dgu / 'i steng nas / par gshegs na se mo bgrod nongste / gru bzhi bgrod nongste /*

²⁹² Stein (2010, *Antiqua* III: 147, 148): observes that Phya often denotes the agnatic line (father's) and Dmu the cognatic line (mother's).

²⁹³ At least in one gloss, *khwa* is the Zhang-zhung word for 'black' (Martin 2010: 13).

²⁹⁴ *Sten te khog po la dkor du lug dang g.yang cig mnga' /*

²⁹⁵ *Re shīg na rmu za khwa cung sman / rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *lo* brgya bzhes te / kog kog* (C.T. = *gog gog*) *bzhengs ma spyod / gser gyi 'khar ba sku la brten /*. This is followed by two lines of ambiguous import: *mthing gyi nam shing phyag 'jus te / gson gyi ri khang nas /*. They may be a metaphor for life or the end of life. The first line possibly refers to a sky tree of deep blue. The second line seems to say, "From the mountain house of the living."

* The *rgung-lo* of our text is the equivalent of the term *gnam-lo*, which is still familiar today. These terms signify that the firmament is the marker of the year. *Rgung-lo* can also be viewed as the honorific for 'year'.

²⁹⁶ In the Old Tibetan Annals, the phrase *dgung du gshegs* is used as a euphemism for the death of the king (cf. Dotson 2009: 91, 92, 102, 103; Hill 2008: 71, 72). As in *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, in the Old Tibetan Annals, it patently refers to the ultimate destination after death. On this expression for the death of royalty, also see Pt 1286 (Ins. 44, 47), Pt 1287 (Ins. 7, 84, 164) and the Zhol pillar inscription (s0010). For use of this phrase for death more generally, see ITJ 734r (ln. 2r045; Bellezza 2008: 513).

In her last disposition, Rmu-za khwa-cung said, “The name conferred upon me the human in death is to be Bkra-za gzīg-’brang.”²⁹⁷ The testatrix added, “I am to be served the *bshos* (offering cakes made of grain in various shapes) of death (*drongs*, C.T. = *grongs*), a rectangular block (*gdar-po*) of *phyé-mar* (butter and barley meal preparation), a rectangular block of butter, *gzhib-ma* (= *zhib-mar*) ’ol-kon (another type of butter and barley preparation), and grain beer *ding-ba*.”²⁹⁸

Having made her last will and testament, Rmu-za khwa-cung could die in peace. Her son and daughter saw to it that her wishes were fulfilled by furnishing the stipulated funerary offerings. This description of the funerals of elderly women demonstrates that the ritual provision for them was far less elaborate than for women who died violently. For one thing, it does not explicitly prescribe sacrificial animals or ritualized animal parts. The characteristics of these respective funerary performances reflect basic thanatological differences in the two categories of the dead (death through natural means and death through violent or accidental means), as outlined in *Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*. When a person’s demise was seen as having a demonic etiology, a more robust ritual battery was marshaled, in order that the deceased could achieve a divine status and entry into the afterlife. The offerings of barley, butter and beer, the produce of agriculturalists and pastoralists, in the funeral of *bkra-za* have been widely available in various forms in Tibet for several millennia. Thus, there is no surprise that the origins myth depicts these ingredients as fundamental to the funerals of aged females. The sweetener (*bu-rum nyug-chu*) mentioned in the text may either be a native or an exotic ingredient. If produced from turnips (*nyung-ma*), it was derived from a local crop. On the other hand, the use of molasses, sugarcane juice or a solution of bamboo pith, as a basic constituent of the funerary ritual (and other archaic death rituals), may presuppose the establishment of long-standing trade connections to the Indian Subcontinent.²⁹⁹ Vessels in the form of female geese in the text may well be emblematic of the *mo-lha* of the deceased in the form of a *klu-mo*, *lha-mo* or *sman-mo* class goddess. That these vessels were fashioned from precious metals points to the high social status of Rmu-za khwa-cung; making her a fit subject for the prototypic funeral of elders:

Having spoken thus, she passed away. Her son and daughter brought a rectangular block of butter from the north, a rectangular block of *phyé-[mar]* and *zhib-mar* ’ol-kon, all of which were laced with gold. Inside a golden [vessel in the form] of a

²⁹⁷ *Myi kho mo la drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) *gyi mtshan ’dogs na*’ (C.T. = *na*) / *bkra za gzīg ’brang du thogs cīg* /. *Kho-mo* is the first person singular pronoun used by females, the counterpart of *kho-bo*. That female and male gender pronouns exist in Old Tibetan is but one grammatical construction that attests to the refinement of this language. According to Hill (2010: 554–556), *kho-bo* is used by someone addressing an equal.

²⁹⁸ *’Bras-chang dīng-ba*. This special expression refers to barley beer of the highest quality, as part of an ancient Tibetan cultural tradition. In Pt 126, as one of the offerings to a *sku-bla*, there is blue grain [barley beer] (*sngon-mo ’ding-dīng ’bras*), and in *Mkhas pa lde’u*, when King Gnya’-khri btsan-po comes to earth, he drinks *dang-dīng ’bras-chang sngon-mo*. See Bellezza 2005, pp. 341, 342.

²⁹⁹ The deposition of bamboo and cane objects in tombs in western Tibet also provides some justification for this view. On this topic, see Bellezza 2008, p. 115; Bellezza 2010b. That trade as well as direct cultural links existed is also supported by the discovery of golden funerary masks on both sides of the Central Himalaya (in Gu-ge and Uttaranchal; see *supra*, p. 157 [fn. 259]). Furthermore, widespread Transhimalayan trade in salt, grain and livestock (and their products) of later historic times may also have older precedents. Among the most persuasive pieces of circumstantial evidence for ancient trade routes between Tibet and the Central Himalayan region has to do with borax. Borax, the source of which is Upper Tibet, must have been in great demand in ancient India, for use as a flux in metallurgy, a mordant in dyeing and as a medicine (Joshi 1989: 21–23; Joshi and Brown 1989).

female goose (*ngang-mo*) bird: molasses laced with silver.³⁰⁰ Inside a silver vessel (*rngul-mo*) [in the form] of a female goose bird: grain beer (*cang*) to the brim. Inside a copper [vessel in the form] of a female goose bird: female yak yogurt (sweetened with honey (*gnyug-'brang*) filled to the brim.³⁰¹

skad nas 'das so / sras lcām dral gyīs / byang gyī btab nas / mar gyī gdar po ce dang / phye'i gdar po ce dang / zhib mar 'ol kon dang / gser gyī la btab na' (C.T. = na) / gser gyī ngang mo bya 'i nang du / bu ram nyug (C.T. = smyug) chu dang / rngul (C.T. = dngul) gyī la btab nas / rngul (C.T. = dngul) mo gyī ngang mo bya'i nang du / 'bras cang (C.T. = chang) ding bas bkang / zangs la btab nas / zangs gyī ngang mo bya'i nang du / 'brī zho gnyug (C.T. = snyug) 'brang (C.T. = sbrang) gyīs bkang ste bno /

The text goes on to state, “A name (*myīng*) was bestowed (*btags*) on the *bang-so* of death. It was called *Bkra-za gzig-'brang*.”³⁰² This valuable reference to mortuary practices indicates that the name of the primal deceased female elder was given to tombs of elderly women in early historic-period Tibet. *Bkra-za* as noted is the term for aged women who have passed away naturally; *Rmu-za khwa-cung* of this etiologic tale being its originator. The signification of the term *gzig-'brang* is not apparent, except that it may pertain to female ancestral lineages, but more plausibly it is a term or epithet for the tomb.

The first account in Chapter III of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* goes on to expound upon the ritual provisions of the funeral without further recourse to *Rmu-za khwa-cung*. In this sequence the funeral reverts back to a more defensive posture and describes a method of subjugating violent agents of death (*dri-ma*). It appears that this passage was added to the text in the event that the passing of an elderly woman was not as problem-free as that described in the origins tale above. The words are those of the officiating priest:

The methods of the *bkra-'dur*: one jewel in a small rectangular form (*gdar-bu*), [wrapped in] tiger hide (*lcub-mo*),³⁰³ and bound with the ligaments of a vulture or blue yak hair cord, to which the various *dri* are tied, which [in turn] is bound to a juniper (*shu-gu*) with the bark at the bottom of its trunk removed,³⁰⁴ [and] erected in the ground. This is the speech that is spoken.

bkra 'dur gyī thabs la / rīn po ce'i (C.T. = che'i) gdar bu cīg / stag gyī lcub mo gcīg // bya rgod gyī rgyus pa 'a ma / g.yag thag sngon po la btags la / dri ma cha la sna cīg btags la / sna gcīg shu gu (C.T. = shug pa) gting (C.T. = rting) kar (C.T. = dkar) cīg la btags la / sa la btsugs la 'dī skad bya'o /

The last part of the funerary ritual for old ladies pertains to the importance of keeping the basis of good fortune among the living. It was intended to protect the legacy of the children and

³⁰⁰ A Tibetan-made giant golden wine ewer in the shape of a goose is recorded in the Tang Annals as a gift given to the Chinese in 641 CE (Heller 1998: 100; Heller 2002). This zoomorphic design may have been widely applied to vessels in the early historic period, as it had both funerary and non-funerary functions.

³⁰¹ In a description of the treasure tomb (*nor gyi bang-so*) of Yum-bu bla-mkhar found in *Rgyal po bka'i thang yig*, it also refers to vessels made of the same three precious metals: gold, silver and copper (Haarh 1969: 352–356).

³⁰² *Drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) *gyī bang sor myīng* (C.T. = *mīng*) *btags pa' (C.T. = na) / bkra za gzig 'brang du btags so //*.

³⁰³ In the Hor-skad dialect, this old-fashioned term would be spelled *lcim-mo* (hide).

³⁰⁴ This preparation of the juniper is communicated in the expression ‘white heel’ (*gting-kar*, C.T. = *rting-dkar*).

grandchildren of the departed. A prevailing Tibetan belief holds that unless properly safeguarded, the dead could carry off the forces that ensure prosperity in the world.³⁰⁵ The ritual ensemble described clearly functioned as a substitute offering for the *bdud* demons, so that they would not gamble with the good fortune of the living. In the words of the text:

The well-being (*bkra*) that vanishes (*yar*) in the sky, do not disappear! The well-being that vanishes in the heavens, do not disappear. *Bdud*, do not play dice (*cho-lo*) with the hundreds and thousands [of types of well-being] that [could] disappear.³⁰⁶ Do not place (*'dzugs*) our sons and grandsons as the wager (*skugs*) when playing with the hundreds and thousands [of types of well-being]. Do not place our grandsons' wealth as the wager. Do not place our wealth as the wager. The hundreds of wagers that are placed is the small oblong jewel, and the wager that is to be placed (*tshugs*) is the hide (*chub-mo*, *sic*) of the tiger. The blue yak cord and vulture ligament and the juniper with the bark removed from the base of its trunk is the wager that is to be placed. That said, do not take (*glan*) the potent (*drag*) *g.yang*.

bkra yar (C.T. = *yal*) *gnam du ma yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *cīg / bkra yar rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *du ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *cīg / brgya la stong la yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *ba na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *bdud dang cho lo ma 'gyed cīg / brgya la stong la 'gyed pa na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *bu tsha skugs su ma 'dzugs cīg / tsha byug* (= *phyug*) *skugs su ma 'dzugs cig / nor phyug skugs su ma 'dzugs cig / brgya la skugs su 'dzugs pa nī / rin po (+ che) 'i gdar bu dang / stag gyī chub mo skugs su tshugs* (C.T. = *'dzugs*) *cīg / g.yag thag sngon po dang / bya rgod rgyus pa dang / shu gu gting* (C.T. = *rting*) *kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *skugas* (= *sku gas*) *su tshugs* (C.T. = *'dzugs*) *cīg / byas la g.yang drag du (+ ma) glan* (C.T. = *len*) *no /*

In conclusion, the tale of the original elderly woman for whom a funeral was made broadens its purview to take in the opposite sex. It is stated that this is the written tradition known as Phag-bon *gsas-khrī*. The account ends by affirming that this is a *bon* tradition. *Bon* here, as in some Dunhuang accounts (see *infra*, p. 232), denotes the body of archaic ritual traditions, either in part or in whole. In Eternal Bon documents, *bon* came to mean the entire religion and even the entire universe. Nevertheless, from extant Old Tibetan textual sources, it is difficult to know how much of early historic-period religious tradition was actually subsumed under this term:

The elderly humans, these two, had consumed³⁰⁷ *'ol-kon*. The ancient tale (*gna'-gtam*) has been told. Saying this speech is appropriate for any man (*khyo-ga*) or woman (*bud*). It is the *writings* (*yī-gu*) of Phag-bon *gsas-khrī*. It is the *bon* tradition of Phag-bon *gsas-khrī*. It is finished.

myī rgan gnyīs 'ol kon 'gam (C.T. = *'gams*) *du gzhus go / gna' gtam zlos su gzhus go // khyo ga dang bud gang yang rung ste de skad bya'o / phag bon gsas khrī yī gu* (C.T. = *ge*) *yīn no // phag bon gsas khrī i bon lugs / rdzogs s.ho // °°° //*

³⁰⁵ For the retaining of the good fortune capability (*g.yang*) in the world of the living in Pt 1042, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 454, 455. For this fundamental theme in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see *ibid.*, pp. 401, 404, 410, 411, 454, 457, 458, 461, 462, 464; also see *infra*, pp. 236–238.

³⁰⁶ In the *do-ma* (funerary transport horse) ritual connected to Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the deceased is advised, "Do not compete with the *bdud* in dice" (*bdud dang cho lo ma 'gyed cig /*). See Bellezza 2008, p. 458. In a *gto-nag* (a ritual system of a wrathful character for human betterment) and a *bla-'gug* (soul summoning ritual) performed in tandem, in Mustang, there is a sequence in which contestants play dice on behalf of the patient and the offending spirit (Ramble 2009: 215–217, 219).

³⁰⁷ *'Gam* (C.T. = *'gams*) *du gzhus*. As noted, the verb *'gam* is used to denote the action of eating dry foods like parched grain and dried whey nuggets.

The second and final origins tale of Chapter III of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* is woefully incomplete (40.4–47.11). Both interpolated folios and those at the end of the text appear to be missing, precluding an understanding of this story in its entirety. I have opted to present the narrative in the textual sequence decided upon by the editors of *Gtam shul dga'thang 'bum pa che*. While this arrangement of folios may be somewhat conjectural, I am at a loss to suggest a better order for the materials at hand. As fragmentary as the narrative is, it is of sufficient importance to warrant close attention. Most notably, it contains what may be the most extensive account of the origins and ritual activities of a priestess (*bon-mo*) found in an Old Tibetan document.

However much of this origins myth is missing, we can be assured that the conflicts described are ultimately resolved, adding further weight to the successful execution of funerals for women in the mythic past. This *smrang* is the only one in the Gathang Bumpa collection of Old Tibetan texts to be explicitly connected to the Upper Tibetan territory of Zhang-zhung.³⁰⁸ It is called the origins tale of Ge-gzhu, which can probably be taken as a name in the Zhang-zhung language.³⁰⁹ The chronicle begins by recounting the genesis of three sacerdotal siblings. Their cosmogonic parents produced three eggs inside the lake of the Miraculous Country ('Phrul-yul), Mtsho mu-le Ōd. This is most probably one of the two greatest lakes in southwestern Tibet, La-ngag mtsho or Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho, both of which carry the Zhang-zhung name Mu-le in Eternal Bon literature.

The oldest sibling, who is in zoomorphic form, became the *gshen-po* of upper (*stod*) Zhang-zhung. In this narrative context, it would appear that 'upper' refers to far-western Tibet. His having a head ornament or headdress of the *khyung* corroborates Eternal Bon claims that the magnificent horned eagle was a totem or emblem of Zhang-zhung (in both a religious and political sense).³¹⁰ The second brother is presented by name: Zhang-zhung mu-lto-ba. He is attired in a vulture skin greatcoat (*slag-pa*), a customary dress of ancient masters and deities in Eternal Bon literature. A black dog (*kyi-gnag*) follows this figure, an animal that is liable to have eschatological connotations (see *supra*, p. 124 [fn. 151]). From the last egg appeared the funerary priestess of Zhang-zhung, the rehabilitator of the dead. From her ritual implement, the stones of divination (*mo-rdo*), it can be determined that this woman was a *bon-mo* specialized in oracular functions.³¹¹

Origins tale of Ge-gzhu. In the country of 'Phrul-yul, yes, 'Phrul-stod, inside Mtsho mu-le Ōd, the father Mkhyen 'bum-khrī, the mother 'Phrul gyī lde-myig. These two mated and their progeny in three eggs (*bsgong-nga*) appeared. From the opened (*brtol*) big brother (*gchen-po*) egg was the *gshen-po* of upper Zhang-zhung, who on his head (*dbu*) had a head (*thod*) [ornament] of the *khyung drigs se drig*.³¹² His iron

³⁰⁸ In Eternal Bon lexicons, it is held that *zhang* is the Zhang-zhung word for valley / homeland (*lung-pa*) and *zhung* (*zhung-zhag*) is the *khyung* or horned eagle. For a discussion of this tradition, see Tsering Thar 2009, p. 25.

³⁰⁹ In any case, *ge* on its own or as part of compound words in the Zhang-zhung language denotes various types of spirits and phenomena associated with them. See *op. cit.* Martin 2010, pp. 59, 60; Pasar *et al.*, 2008, pp. 35, 36; Dagkar 2003, pp. 142–144.

³¹⁰ Unquestionably, the horned eagle is a cultural motif of great antiquity in Upper Tibet. On Upper Tibet rock art depictions of horned raptors dating to prehistoric and early historic times, see Bellezza 2012b.

³¹¹ In the *byol-rabs* text of the Gathang Bumpa collection, we meet two *bon-mo*, Sding-nga sding-lom of the sky and 'Byo-ra 'byor-'jong of the earth, who possess the same forty-two crystal beads, which they used to conduct beneficial rites (*gto*) and divination (*mo*; Bellezza 2010a: 51).

³¹² The movement or appearance conveyed by the trisyllabic indicator *drigs se drig* is not clear. Perhaps it communicates a pulsation.

goat legs *khrigs ge khrig*.³¹³ From the opened blue iron egg was the one known as Zhang-zhung mu-lto-ba. The black dog that looks something like a tiger followed after him (*stag tsham ni phyi na 'brang ngo*). On his body he wore a vulture skin {greatcoat}. The mouth of the last egg opened. By [the one in] it, the dead human's [consciousness] was rehabilitated. She appeared as the old woman of Brgyu-she-lcags. On her body, yes, she wore a vulture skin greatcoat. In her hand she held forty-two crystal stones of divination.

ge gzhu la gyi rab (C.T. = *rabs*) *la // yul 'phrul yul ni 'phrul stod na // mtsho mu le Ōd gyi nang na ni // yab mkhyen 'bum khrī dang // yum 'phrul gyī lde myig gnyis ni bshos pa 'i sras ni // bsgong* (C.T. = *sgo*) *nga gsum du byung ngo // sgong gyi gchen* (C.T. = *gcen*) *po kha brtol* (C.T. = *rdol*) *bas ni // zhang zhung stod gyi gshen po ba la // dbu la khyung thod drigs se drig // rkang pa ra lcag khrigs ge khris* (= *khrig*) *// lcags sgogs* (= *bsgong*) *sngon po brtol* (C.T. = *rdol*) *bas // zhang zhung mu lto ba zhes bya ba ni / kyi* (C.T. = *khyi*) *gnag stag tsham* (C.T. = *tsam*) *ni phyi na 'brang ngo // bya rgod gyī {slag} pa ni rgu* (= *sku*) *la gsol lo // sgong gyi tha chungs kha brtol* (C.T. = *rdol*) *bas ni // myī shi sos gyi {#} yor byungs ngo // brgyu she lcags gyi rgan mor byung ngo // sku la ni bya rgod gyi slag pa gsol lo // shel gyī mo rdo bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis ni / phyag na bsnams so //*

The origins tale continues by tendering characters who hailed from what may well be another Upper Tibetan location, Phywa-yul. The patriarch of this country is named Myi-bo che (Great Holy Man) of the Phywa. His name and clan may suggest that this figure was a kinsman of what was probably the greatest priest of the archaic cultural horizon, Gshen-rab myi-bo.³¹⁴

In the country of Phywa-yul, yes, Ya-bzhi. In the Phywa castle, yes, Snar-rdzong, the name of the father and patriarch was Myi-bo che, yes, of the Phywa. The name of the mother and matriarch was Phywa-bdag, yes, Mtshun-mo. These two mated and the offspring of the season was the brother (*jo-co*), yes, the brother (*dral-po*), Skar-ne ce-shel rogs. The sister, yes, the sister, was Skar li-byin,³¹⁵ yes, Dun-shags.

yul phywa yul ni ya bzhi / phywa mkhar ni snar 'dzong (C.T. = *rdzong*) *na // pha dang ni yab gyi mtshan // phywa 'i ni myi bo che // ma dang ni yum gyi ma tshan* (C.T. = *mtshan*) *na // phywa bdag ni mtshun mo gnyis / bshos dang ni nam gyī sras / jo co* (C.T. = *jo*) *ni dral po ni skar ne ce shel rogs / lags // srīng mo ni lcām mo ba ni // skar li byin ni dun shags lags //*

The remainder of this origins tale is rich in narrative details but because it is incomplete, the storyline is quite blurred. In addition to missing folios, three of the extant ones are torn. The Phywa son was pursued by a murderous *srin* named Gnam-srin thang-nga. His sister, Skar li-byin, through a vision in a magic mirror ascertained that he was imperiled. In order to decide on the correct course of action, a *bon-mo* was summoned from the highest and remotest of terrestrial sites. Described as a rocky gully on a snow mountain, this harbor of the *bon-mo* may possibly

³¹³ These three syllables convey that his legs moved rhythmically. It appears that this figure had a zoomorphic body or religious emblem in the form of a goat.

³¹⁴ In *Gzer mig*, Phya (*sic*) is the clan of the maternal uncle of Gshen-rab's father, Rgyal-bon thod-dkar (Dagkar 1999: 48). *Mdzod phug* has it that Phya kha-rje dang-po, the ruler of the Phya, was the paternal uncle of Rgyal-bon thod-dkar (Stein 2010, *Antiqua III*: 149 [n. 49]).

³¹⁵ Li-byin can be identified as having a Zhang-zhung etymology. The name Rgyal-po li-byin har is associated with two Zhang-zhung gods, Nyi-pang sad and Phu-wer (Bellezza 2008, p. 325 [n. 359]).

refer to the characteristic locations of all-stone corbelled residential architecture in Upper Tibet. These elite archaic structures of many kinds (now all ruined) are situated in lofty and defensible spots.³¹⁶ In particular, those that may have functioned as temples or religious hermitages are often set in high altitude hollows or amphitheatres.

The *bon-mo* determined that the nine *ma-sangs*, a legendary ancestral brotherhood, were to be called in to defeat the *srin*. Skar li-byin did just that but it is only after much time and effort that the *ma-sangs* brothers were able to prevail against the *srin*. Although the *srin* was killed, as a newly emergent *dri-mo* it had to be subdued. The extant text ends before this can be fully accomplished.

We are told that Skar-ne ce-shel rogs went to the *srin* [country] Gong-sum. In that country there was the female, Gnam-srin thang-nga, yes, Bla-mo thang. She held a golden shuttle (*gtag-zangs*, C.T. = *thag-zangs*). She stalked (*bdas nas byung-ba*) the son of the Phywa with it clenched in her hand. The Phywa daughter was sunning herself (*nyin 'de yung bzhugs-pa*) on top of the Phywa castle of nine peaks. Her heart was not joyous (*myi-rga*, C.T. = *mi-dga*). She became very distressed and fainted.³¹⁷ From a magical sack (*'phrul gyi khug*) she took out a miraculous mirror (*me-long*) and cleaned (*phyi-phyi*) and vigorously polished (*bdar-bdar*) it. In it she beheld (*mthong*) a vision (*bltas de gzig*) of her brother being stalked by the *srin*. Using the mirror upon which spells (*sngag* = *sngags*) [were said],³¹⁸ she shot fiery sparks [at Skar-ne ce-shel rogs]. Her brother was totally engulfed by the fire (*me-le gyi 'ogs* (C.T. = *'og*) *du chud*). The *srin* poked (*slogs*) at the fiery mass to find her prey.³¹⁹ She also repeatedly struck (*chag-chag brgyab*) [the fire] with her golden shuttle, breaking it apart (*mchod*, C.T. = *chod*).

The *srin* made thirty-three evil spells and a white tent collapsed on Skar-ne che-shel rogs (*sic*). Sometime after (*da re shigs*), [the Phywa sister] summoned Pho-gshen nī-la. He could not recognize (*ngo ma-zin*) the agent of harm (*gdon*). As this priest was unsuccessful in his divination, the priestess born from the last of three eggs in Zhang-zhung had to be called. Not only was she highly skilled in augury, the text states that she played an instrumental role in funerary ritual activities.

From the edge of the sky and the apex of the heavens,³²⁰ in the rock formation snow mountain couloir (*ser-rga*, C.T. = *ser-ga*) behind the snow mountain,³²¹ the *bon-mo* who rehabilitates

³¹⁶ For descriptions and surveys of the ancient corbelled architecture of Upper Tibet, see Bellezza 2011a; 2008; 2002; 2001.

³¹⁷ *Phywang-phywang bgyid*. The O.T. word *phywang* (repeated for emphasis) is etymologically closely related to the Classical Tibetan *phyang* / *'phyang* (to hang down).

³¹⁸ Several syllables are missing from this line due to folio No. 41 having been torn.

³¹⁹ Words are missing here due to a tear in the folio. I have recreated this line conjecturally.

³²⁰ This is the general import of *gnam gyi pha mtha* (C.T. = *mtha*) *rgungs* (C.T. = *dgung*) *chu 'brum nas* /. That *'brum* probably corresponds closely with *mtha* is suggested in ITJ 738 (1v65), where the formula is written: *dgung kyī* (C.T. = *gi*) *nī pha mtha' na*. This ultimate homeland of the priestess is employed in the narrative to underline the power and sanctity of the *bon-mo*. This is a place beyond the pale of ignoble earthly happenings. In ITJ 731v (ln. 70), the similarly worded expression is found: *gnam 'gi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *pa mtha* (C.T. = *mtha*) *dgung 'gi* (C.T. = *gi*) *pha 'brum*. Again, in Pt 1134 (lns. 15, 16): *gnam gyi pa mtha* (C.T. = *mtha*) *dgung gi pa 'brum nas* / (see also lns. 23, 47, 86). For these Pt 1134 and ITJ 731v references and the tales in which they appear, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 511, 516; *infra*, pp. 225, 227. Also see Pt 1040 (ln. 35).

³²¹ The link between the heavens and montane residence of the *bon-mo* in this origins tale, may possibly allude to parallel spatial associations in the archaic residential architecture of Upper Tibet. A sky-bound cultural theme, hand in hand with social prestige and strategic concerns, best explains the siting of ancient elite residences in extremely lofty locations (cf. Bellezza 2008: 307, 308).

the dead (*myi-shi sos*), Kod-she-lcag (*sic*), was summoned. She made a divination with forty-two crystal stones of divination and made the prognosis (*phywa-blags*).³²² She recognized the agent of harm. The diviner (*ma-mo*) *bon-mo* said the nine clans (*rus-rgu*) *ma-sangs* were to be summoned and the magic bomb (*gtsho*, C.T. = *btso*) and pestle (*gnur*, C.T. = *snur*) thrown at the white tent, so that it would break apart (*gchags*, C.T. = *chag*).

The Phywa daughter Skar-lī byin dun-cag (*sic*) dispatched the *gnyan* cum *ma-sangs* Gnyan-gsum thod-de rgyal-ba, who with a magical bomb (*gtso*, *sic*) and pestle split apart the tent that ensnared her brother. However, the lord of bad omens (*gthan*, C.T. = *than*) said something to the effect of, ‘this action does not have my authorization’ (*gtan gyi ’bangs su ma-mchī*). To subjugate the *srin* culprit, all nine *gnyan* threw *gtso* at her. The other eight were: Klan *ma-sangs*, She *ma-sang* (?), {##}-*sangs*, Rma *ma-sangs*, She *ma-sangs*,³²³ Ro-ga *ma-sangs*, Ge *ma-sangs* ’phrul-po, and Ge *ma-sangs* sad-dgar / Ge sad-dkar ’khrul-po. These are called the ‘nine *ma-sangs* lineages’ (*ma-sangs rus-rgu*) or nine *ma-sangs* brothers (*ma-sangs spun-rgu*). In order to capture the *srin-mo*, these *ma-sangs* were dressed in robes (*ral-ga*) of silk or another precious material (*dar*) of various colors. Nevertheless, they were unable to handle the molten iron (*gtar-tshan*) by-product of the bombs, and in each instance it disappeared underneath the ground. The *srin-mo* Thang-nga was finally destroyed under the snow-white tent, but it is not clear what the fate of the Phywa brother was. The *srin-mo* became a *dri-mo*.

The *bon-mo* of the rehabilitation of dead humans, God-she-lcag (*sic*), announced that the *ma-sangs* of the nine clans were unable to complete the *gtso* against the *dri-mo* Khyol tshol-ma (the *srin* in her deceased state), although they knew where the *dri-mo* was. The eldest *ma-sangs* brother, Ge *ma-sangs* ’phrul-po, tried again but to no avail. Then Skar li-byin, dressed in a white silk *go-zu* (magical overcoat for females), tried her hand. She offered with a golden pot (*vol-go*) of grain libations *byang-byong* (?). She threw the *gtso* and pestle, but was unable to catch the *dri-mo*. Finally another *ma-sangs*, Ge sad-dkar ’khrul-po, was able to handle the molten iron bomb. He scattered seven kernels of blue barley (*sngo-ma ’bru-bu*) in the sky. The paternal aunt (*ne-ne*) of the *ma-sangs* was named Ge-za lan-mo, and she lived above the thirteen levels of the sky.³²⁴ The seven kernels of barleycorn³²⁵ *khum-pa* (?) of turquoise fell into her country. The aunt became very distressed. She pulled out a miraculous mirror from a sack (*khug-ma*). She saw a vision of the white hot fiery mass (*me-dbal*) and the [tent] collapsed. The story continues, but the last lines of the extant text are highly fragmentary and little more can be gleaned from them.

³²² In other Old Tibetan ritual texts this expression is rendered *phya-klag* / *pya-bklags*.

³²³ In the list of the nine *ma-sangs* found in the *Rgya bod kyi chos ’byung rgyas pa* by Mkhas pa lde’u (late 13th century CE; pp. 224, 225), this is the only member of the list in common: She *ma-sangs* thod-dkar (*sic*). I am inclined to see these different listings as having a geographic bias, with the one in *Rgya bod kyi chos ’byung* pertinent to Central Tibetan tradition, rather than Zhang-zhung.

³²⁴ *Gnam rīm-pa bchu* (C.T. = *bcu*) *gsum*. The expression ‘above the thirteen layers of the sky / heavens’ also occurs in PT 1038 (ln. 12), when describing the ancestral homeland of Tibet’s first king (Bellezza 2008: 278). This is the highest and holiest of realms, the homeland of the ancestral deities. In our origins myth there are three *ma-sangs* figures whose names begin with the clan or lineage appellation Ge: Ge-za lan-mo, Ge sad-dkar ’khrul-po, Ge *ma-sangs* ’phrul-po. See, also, the *ma-sangs* named Ge-sar who hailed from northwestern Tibet (Vitali 1996: 571 [n. 976]). The best known god with the appellation Ge is Ge-khod (Demon Destroyer). He is considered the chief god of Zhang-zhung, according to Eternal Bon tradition. For the Ge-khod ritual tradition, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 300–329; 2005, pp. 443–456; Karmay 1998, pp. 143–146, 389–412; Norbu 1996, pp. 109–120, 167–170. Another *ma-sangs* in the text is Rma *ma-sangs*. For Rma clan associations with Zhang-zhung, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 70 (n. 148).

³²⁵ The word *’brum* is used here, which can refer to any type of ‘berry’ in the widest sense of the word. While I cannot comment on the nature of its derivation, this word is etymologically related to *’bru* (a kernel of grain).

An Introduction to *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa*

Like *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa* consists of a body of myths and rituals appertaining to funerals. The sixteen folios of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* consist of six to nine lines of text on each side of a leaf. Most frequently, the recto and verso sides of folios have seven lines of text. This document was written in prose with variable numbers of syllables bracketed by *shad*. The leaves of this work are somewhat more elongated than those of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*. In this case, the style of the format does not appear to be a determinate in questions concerning the relative age of these two texts. These documents are of one grammatical and orthographic makeup. Like other Old Tibetan ritual texts of Gathang Bumpa, the folios of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* were bound to produce a booklet.

Sha ru shul ston rabs was written in a *dbu-can* script, in a handwriting that is cruder and blockier than the calligraphy of *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*. Nonetheless, the calligraphy of both these texts reveals a tendency to round and abbreviate the strokes of letters, setting them apart from the *dbu-can* scripts of Old Tibetan funerary texts of Dunhuang. In the Dunhuang documents the lines forming most letters are inscribed more discretely in conformance with still observed *dbu-can* calligraphic conventions. Yet, in both collections of Old Tibetan texts, the curvature of the letters *la*, *ba*, *sa* and *'a* in particular anticipate the creation of the various *dbu-med* scripts used in writing Classical Tibetan works.³²⁶ These four letters lack the angularity associated with the standard *dbu-can* form.

As with *Rnel drī 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, *Sha ru shul ston rabs* appears to have been composed in what may be termed the intermediate phase in the development of literary Tibetan (circa 850–1000 CE). As noted, the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts exhibit many of the orthographic and grammatical traits of Old Tibetan, adding significantly to those exhibited in related Dunhuang manuscripts. A comprehensive comparative grammatical study of these various archaic ritual texts would go a long way to elucidating the fundamental characteristics of the Old Tibetan language, a language that in terms of its semantics and syntax is of a very high order of literary sophistication. In a step towards identifying the obsolete linguistic features of Old Tibetan more generally, passé orthographic and grammatical constructions are highlighted in the treatment of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* below.

³²⁶ As classified by van Schaik (forthcoming-a), the Dunhuang texts of this study belong to one of the four styles (epigraphic, square, official and monastic) of handwriting attributed to the imperial period. These texts are comparable to the 'official style' of van Schaik (with the exception of Pt 1042 which he presumably includes in his 'square style'). As van Schaik holds, the 'official' script is almost certainly the predecessor of the fully cursive scripts with many calligraphic features that came to be known as *dbu-med*. See *op. cit.* van Schaik forthcoming-a; van Schaik forthcoming-b. Van Schaik (in personal communication) on paleographic grounds estimates that the Dunhuang archaic funerary texts were composed circa 800–850 CE and the Gathang manuscripts circa 900–1000 CE. Having examined samples of official documents written in *dbu-med* from Dunhuang and Central Asia that van Schaik dates to the 830s and 840s CE (forthcoming-b: 343–345) and what he calls the post-dynastic epistolary style of script from the second half of the 9th century CE (forthcoming-a), I think it is prudent on paleographic grounds to widen the possible date of composition of the Gathang funerary texts to include the second half of the ninth century CE as well. I hasten to add that the stylistic analysis of scripts suffers from the same inherent limitations as any other stylistic assessment, where hard chronometric and historical data acting as independent verification are lacking. In respect of the science, I urge the institutional holders of Dunhuang manuscripts to undertake without further delay and with utmost care and precision chronometric analyses of these materials.

While the Gathang Bumpa texts under study are almost certainly post-dynastic in composition (as indicated by the handwriting and format), their grammatical structure is that of Old Tibetan. In this regard they bear remarkable similarities to the Old Tibetan Annals, a text that is thought to date to the mid-8th century CE.³²⁷ That many grammatical traits of the Old Tibetan Annals (henceforth OTA) and Gathang Bumpa documents are analogous, is convincing evidence that the latter does indeed preserve with much fidelity imperial-period mytho-ritual narratives. The cognate conceptual and procedural props in the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa funerary manuscripts support this thesis as well. These include the postmortem ordeal, the celestial afterlife, the psychopomp sheep (*skyibs-lug*), effigies of the dead (*zhal*), and barley and butter preparations used in oblations, to mention but a few parallels. Furthermore, the *smrang* on which these rituals were based were formally chanted (*bsgyerd* / *bsgyer*) by the same corps of archetypal funerary priests.

That the OTA and Gathang Bumpa materials are grammatically akin to one another is especially noteworthy when we consider that they belong to very different literary genres. The language of the OTA is bureaucratic in content and prosaic in tone. Terms and phrases common in it such as *blon-ce* (chief minister), *yŋge* (insignia), *btsud* (imprisoned), *phab* (sacked) and *mkhos bgyis* (carried out the administration) are not met with in the Old Tibetan funerary texts of this study. The two Gathang Bumpa documents are narrative in nature and were composed in a prose enriched by prosodic features. Storyline complexity, allegories, figures of speech, and a larger range of technical terms mold this literature in ways not seen in the OTA.

While on the whole, the vocabulary in the Old Tibetan Annals and Gathang Bumpa works varies significantly, both reveal similar verb morphology, employing the same verb stems and inflected variants. Lexically speaking, verbs appearing in both sources carry identical or closely related meanings. These verbs include: *gum* (died), *gshegs* (departed), *dbye* (divided, separated), *bzhugs* (resided), *bab* (fell), *'bul* / *phul* (offered), *btav* (levied, made), *rol du* (for sport, for enjoyment), *bzung* (seized, captured), *log* (revolted, reversed), *nongs* (died, perished), *bskos* (appointed), *phyung* (removed), *bkye'* (dispatched, allotted), *btang* (sent, emitted), *bzhes* (took, received), and *bros* (fled, absconded).³²⁸ Perhaps more telling than the isolated predicates listed above is the regular use of *bgyis* / *bgyi* (to do, to make) and *mchis* (to do, to have), which function as both auxiliary verbs and verb stems. These words are a very prominent feature of the verb morphology of the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa documents. The more antiquated spelling in the Dunhuang manuscripts (*mcis*), however, does not occur in the Gathang Bumpa materials. Also in the OTA of an older orthography is *btshugs* (appointed), as opposed to *btsugs* (erected) in the Gathang Bumpa texts. The same Old Tibetan spelling *btshugs* (established) and *bchug* (installed) of the OTA are also found in Pt 1134 and ITJ 731r. Nevertheless, verbs of a comparable old-fashioned orthography are also conspicuous in the Gathang Bumpa documents, e.g., *bthub* for *thub* (able to), *bthab* for *'thab* (to fight). In this assessment of orthographic features that may be indicative of relative age, less stock can be placed in Gathang Bumpa spellings such as *rgu* for *dgu* (nine) and *rngul* for *dngul* (silver). While these undoubtedly represent an obsolete orthography, these

³²⁷ Dotson (2009: 74) even maintains that the first and longer version of this document has a claim to being the oldest Tibetan composition (we can take his statement as including works composed on paper and not inscribed on stone). Dotson (*ibid.*) also opines that early entries of the Old Tibetan Annals may have retained the original language of the mid-7th century CE. If this view is proven true, it would augment the time span in which Old Tibetan was used as a literary language in extant documents, providing more chronological leeway for its grammatical development.

³²⁸ Some of the words in this list are exclusively Old Tibetan verbs and some have made the linguistic crossover to Classical Tibetan. The glosses in English provided here come from this work and Dotson 2009.

spellings were retained in Classical Tibetan, as seen in early Eternal Bon ritual texts. Similarly, the prolific use of the word-initial clusters *myi* for *mi* and *mye* for *me*, while of ancient origins, persisted in Classical Tibetan texts for some time.

Although it can be argued that the orthography of verbs and other words in the OTA is slightly more antiquated than in the Gathang Bumpa materials, the same cannot be said of the Dunhuang funerary texts of this study, nor of Pt 1285. All in all, the spellings in these texts are just as antiquated. Moreover, there is no subset of verbs in the OTA revealing a more archaic verb morphology. We can conclude from this and other evidence that the OTA is no more grammatically ancient than the Dunhuang manuscripts of this study. Therefore, their dates of composition are liable to fall into the same band of time. This time frame may possibly be measured in decades, not in multiples of centuries.

The repertoire of case forms in the OTA and all Old Tibetan funerary texts of this study are largely comparable. For example, the genitive particle *'i* often stands alone in these works, and there is the regular occurrence of the instrumental case *'is*. The system of liaisons used in the OTA is analogous to that of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts (e.g., *gshegsso*, *drangste*, *shuldu*), but this is not shared by the Gathang Bumpa texts. It is not clear, however, whether the sparse usage of such liaisons in the Gathang Bumpa materials is a grammatical indicator of lesser age or merely a compositional feature with minimal chronological relevance (e.g., *byungs ngo* / *byung ngo* instead of *byungste*). In the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa manuscripts, *khyed* is used interchangeably with *khyod* as a second person singular pronoun. In Classical Tibetan, *khyed* is the second person plural pronoun.

Some nouns are also interchangeable in the OTA and Gathang Bumpa texts (e.g., *dmag* (army), *stangs dbyal* [husband and wife]). The most prominent archaic orthographic feature detectable in the Old Tibetan Annals and certain Dunhuang funerary documents, which is not found in the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts, is the use of a *d* as a final consonant (e.g., *dbyard* (summer), *mtshan-gsold* [adopted the name]). Nevertheless, the simultaneous usage of unaspirated and aspirated consonants in nouns of both collections (e.g., *po-brang* / *pho-brang* (royal court / palace), *mkar* / *mkhar* [castle]) is correspondent. Some nouns do have a more antiquated orthography in the OTA than in the Gathang Bumpa manuscripts (e.g., *mtsan* for *mtshan* (name), *gchig* for *gcig* (one) and *mta'* for *mtha'* [frontier]). These obsolete spellings are also attested in Pt 1134, Pt 1194 and ITJ 731r. Nevertheless, in the Gathang Bumpa texts there are archaic spellings of other nouns found in the Dunhuang materials (e.g., *bo-mo* (girl), *gchen-po* [big brother]), as well as archaic spellings peculiar to the former source (e.g., *pha-bo* (father), *gtsho* [magical bomb]). Finally, the tendency to suffix the so-called *a-chung* to a final vowel *a* is no more prolific in the Old Tibetan Annals than it is in the Gathang Bumpa texts. In fact, the orthographic conventions adhered to in the OTA and Gathang Bumpa reflect a quite similar state of development.

To reiterate, the grammatical and orthographic elements outlined above indicate that the OTA is older than the Gathang Bumpa funerary manuscripts. Nevertheless, these funerary texts exemplify many grammatical and narrative features that strongly suggest they are also representative of imperial-period cultural tradition, whatever their precise dates of authorship. The grammatical and orthographic structures of the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang

and the OTA are remarkably in accord with one another, indicating that they were composed in the same general period of time.³²⁹

As for the historical sources of various origins myths of the Gathang Bumpa funerary texts one can only speculate. In this regard, I shall build upon my hypothesis that these texts represent a codification or homogenization of traditions pertaining to the resolution of violent death.

³²⁹ The Tibet specialist Michael Walter in the prologue to his 2009 tome (pp. xxi–xxvii) discusses Old Tibetan documents he sees as truly dating to the imperial period. In this category he includes the Old Tibetan Annals, Pt 16, ITJ 751, certain epigraphic resources, a few legal and commercial documents, and possibly some fragments from Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Gansu. According to Walter, other Dunhuang manuscripts fail to meet the criteria that would authenticate them as imperial-period documents. Thus, in one fell swoop, he dismisses most of the Dunhuang corpus as not directly applicable to the study of religion in that period. Walter claims that these works were written in ‘pre-classical Tibetan’, which he characterizes as a “virtually modern style”. Walter makes these allegations without furnishing a shred of philological or codicological evidence to support them. He only offers his reader the following statement: “This is not the place for the sort of detailed paleographical or stylistic analysis which could assign these documents a relative chronology through the categories described above.” Walter goes on to assert that the ‘*a-chung* paleography’ of the inscriptions found in Dunhuang manuscripts may be an “affectation” or perhaps a “deliberate imitation”. To my mind, it is hardly likely that such a large and varied collection of documents could be self-consciously manipulated in the manner suggested by Walter. Walter adds that the ‘archaic style’ (presumably he means one or more styles of early handwriting here) cannot be considered an indicator of great antiquity. Again, he provides no concrete paleographic evidence for his assertion. He then arrives at the conclusion that there is “a very small amount of reliable information” contemporaneous with the imperial period upon which to reconstruct its religious culture. In an attempt to add weight to his arguments, Walter maintains that bona fide imperial-period Dunhuang documents are devoid of the following narrative motifs: 1) obsession with Glang dar-ma as the evil emperor, 2) preoccupation with how *bon-po* and *mu-stegs-pa* harmed Tibet, 3) opposition of noble clans to the royal sponsored spread of Buddhism, 4) the *btsan-po* in a subservient position to *bon-po* and Buddhists, 5) the *btsan-po* ascend on the *dmu-thag* after death, and 6) the ruler referred to as *rgyal-po* instead of *btsan-po*. Whatever the validity of the above criteria for rooting out post-imperial sources, most assuredly not one of them marks the Old Tibetan documents of this study. Perfunctory pronouncements concerning the historical validity of Dunhuang sources spill over into the book chapters as well. For example, Walter states that Pt 1042 cannot be from the imperial period because its language is not Old Tibetan, it is too detailed and unique, and it contains many prescriptive verses that give it an abstract quality (pp. 192, 193). I must beg to differ here too: Pt 1042 is an Old Tibetan document by any measure and complex abstractions and actions are indeed a hallmark of virtually all Old Tibetan funerary texts. Walter even goes so far to claim that Pt 1042 might be a Buddhist text in which the *bon-po* inserted themselves to convince others of their role in the imperium (*ibid.*). Are we to presume, then, that the *bon* and *gshen* foisted themselves on other Old Tibetan non-Buddhist funerary, healing and divination texts of Dunhuang as well, making them fabrications of the most elaborate and sophistic kind? Walter notes that Pt 1042 does not mention the creation of funerary mounds or annual ancestral sacrifices, thus it cannot be a comprehensive document of the royal interment rite (p. 212 [n. 46]). This statement is valid, but it can be more generally observed that not one of the Old Tibetan non-Buddhist funerary texts is truly comprehensive. They each focus on a limited number of narratives and ritual exercises, constituent parts of an extremely extensive and intricate funerary tradition, royal or otherwise. Walter continues with such speculations: Bon (abstract noun) may have arisen with Buddhist practitioners attached to the royal court, and Buddhist monks may have conducted the entire royal burial rite including the sacrifice of life (pp. 210 (n. 41), 212 [n. 47]). This kind of argumentation leads Walter to declaim, “ergo, what need or place for Bon?” As for the *gshen*, he opines that they remain so vague as to have a problematic relationship with religious traditions of the imperial period (p. 210 [n. 41]). This is simply not so, for in the texts of the present study and in others of the Dunhuang collection, the *bon* and *gshen* are unambiguously depicted as the sacerdotal backbone of the archaic ritual tradition. As already noted, as an abstract noun, *bon* denotes either a part of or the entire archaic ritual tradition, something portrayed as of great value to humanity. In addition to the *bon* tradition (*lugs*) Phag-bon gsas-khrī of *Rnel dri ’dul ba’i thabs sogs* (see *supra*, p. 167), in Pt 1134 there is the *bon* that is chanted, and the *bon* that protects in Pt 1194 (see *infra*, pp. 219, 220). Scrutinizing the position Walter takes in his 2009 book one can only conclude that by primarily treating Buddhism and royal topics, his religious history of the imperial period is woefully incomplete. It is needless to say an author’s prerogative to limit the scope of his or her study. More crucially, however, by discarding Old Tibetan archaic ritual texts, Walter willfully misrepresents and distorts the imperial-period religious scene.

Given their wide geographic purview and ritual remit, the various threads of funerary lore tied together in the two Gathang Bumpa texts of this study appear to have disparate origins. This underlying diversity, the weaving together of sundry origins myths and rituals, was part of a deliberate editorial effort on the part of the authors. This anthologizing of funerary myths and traditions is best explained as emerging with the rise of a singular Tibetan polity. The materials presented in these two manuscripts might be seen as derived from an imperial-period sociocultural integrative movement, one with both formal (state) and popular (civic) dimensions. While these texts appear to postdate the imperial period, they are best seen as heirs to such a project, for they echo much found in the Old Tibetan funerary texts of Dunhuang.

Rather than being entirely the brainchild of imperial-period authors, some raw materials for the amalgamation of archaic funerary philosophies and customs may indeed have come from pre-existing traditions. That at least is how the temporal underpinnings of many of the origins myths were envisioned by their authors. Nevertheless, the Old Tibetan funerary texts are most definitely not some fossilized cultural record of prehistoric times. At their most archaic, they represent an elaboration, adaptation or interpretation of antecedent traditions. Proto-nations widely noted in Tibetan literature such as Zhang-zhung and Sum-pa are traditionally credited with having their own languages. The embracing of any of their cultural legacies in the imperial context would therefore have required translation into the Tibetan language, further expanding the scope for the reformulation of older materials. The merit of this inclusive historical hypothesis is that it respects the affirmations of early historic-period authors, by placing their accounts in a widely encompassing civilizational regime. As for historical validation in any objective sense, that requires documentation of an empirical nature.

However ancient certain funerary themes and motifs in the Gathang Bumpa texts might prove to be, the widespread presence of metallic objects and attributes, including iron, reveal that their various myths sprung up from a technologically advanced culture. In archaeological terms, such a human order could not have existed before the developed Iron Age (post-600 BCE), at the very earliest. Yes, it can be entertained that like the standardization of the imperial period, the introduction of iron technology in the funerary myths represented an Iron Age innovation, whereby even more ancient materials were reinterpreted for that time. Nevertheless, this type of argument aside from being unverifiable runs the risk of attempting to reach back in time *ad infinitum*. But perhaps that is the crux of the historical argument: there are no real origins, just new beginnings.

Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa: Chapter I

The first chapter of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* takes up nearly one-third of the extant text and is complete (1.1– 9.4). This chapter contains a single tale about the horned deer ally, the animal appointed to guide human beings through the postmortem depths and heights. It recounts how a stag came to serve as a secure receptacle (*rten*) for the mind (*thugs*) of the deceased. This prototypic deer support was envisaged as providing safe sanctuary for the newly dead who had assumed the form of a *dri*. The stag was the one capable of retrieving the consciousness principle of the deceased from the underworld. Relying on this ritual harborage, the dead could make their way unimpeded to the afterlife. The deer as an animal with funerary functions is known from various late Bronze Age and Iron Age cultures of north Inner Asia as well.³³⁰

³³⁰ The most celebrated example is the flying or gamboling deer carved on funerary stelae known as deer stones, which were raised by pre-Scythic cultures in Mongolia, southern Siberia and the Altai. In an overview of the chronology and cultural complexion of deer stones, Fitzhugh (2009) hypothesizes that the carvings of deer on these stelae represent the divine protector and guide of the souls of warriors. If direct comparisons are warranted, Tibetan archaic funerary texts suggest that the engraved deer of the pillars of north Inner Asia represent sacrificial psychopomps. Despite being derived from different cultural materials and scholarly disciplines, both of these views are remarkably in accord with one another. In the cemetery of Satma Mazar of Eastern Turkestan (thought to date to the Iron Age), nine wooden vessels were discovered inside a large tomb (among other grave goods and human remains, including two dolichocephalic skulls belonging to a Europoid population). Next to these wooden vessels were five wooden plates upon which food offerings had been placed. On one of these wooden vessels two deer are carved. See *op. cit.* Baumer 2011, pp. 54, 57 (pl. 5), 59. One of these deer is of the type commonly occurring in the petroglyphs of Ru-thog (and less commonly in Ladakh). This category of rock carvings of wild ungulates (including cervids) and the Satma Mazar example are conceived on a curvilinear schema and are characterized by prominent double volute body ornamentation. The style of horns, legs and heads also share close stylistic affinities. The sheer frequency, variability and areal uniqueness of wild ungulate rock art of this kind on the western Tibetan Plateau indicate that it is native to this region. The Satma Mazar deer may be depicted with both its head facing forward and swung backwards towards its body. Both head orientations are represented in Ru-thog rock art. For this rock art, see Bellezza 2001, pp. 213–315, 345–350; 2002, pp. 136–138, 226, 228; 2008, pp. 169, 174, 189–199; also see Suolang Wangdui 1994. The Satma Mazar specimen may suggest that some rock art counterparts in Ru-thog also had a funerary function. Other petroglyphs of this type in Ru-thog, however, are part of hunting scenes and appear to have had alternative functions. On the same wooden vessel from Satma Mazar is a deer carving in a style strongly reminiscent of the eastern steppes. Two distinctive styles of cervid art being found on the same funerary vessel suggest that the culture responsible for Satma Mazar adopted artistic influences from both the Upper Tibetans and the Saka-Scythians (or possibly other Iron Age cultures of north Inner Asia). This reflects the geographic placement of Eastern Turkestan between the Tibetan Plateau and the Eurasian steppes. A yak with a double volute design stylistically intermediate between Ru-thog and the disjointed scroll motif of north Inner Asia is found on a yak petroglyph from the Lushan site of the Qinghai Plateau. For this image, see Tang Huisheng and Zhang Wenhua 2001, ff. fig. 14. This yak engraving also appears to be indicative of an interregional Iron Age diffusive process. Cultural interactivity between the steppes and Upper Tibet and Ladakh is explored through the rock art record in more detail in a forthcoming paper. Also, see Bellezza 2011g. For the use of Ephedra in the funerary traditions of the Bronze Age Xiaohé culture of Lop Nor and the archaic ritual traditions of Tibet, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 53 (n. 68). Also, the erect wooden poles found at Xiaohé and cemeteries of the Taklamakan may possibly have monumental and ritual analogues in the *rdo-ring* of Upper Tibet and the deer stones of the steppes. The degree to which the cultural dynamism of Upper Tibet and the steppes, as mirrored in their rich ensembles of funerary monuments, affected prehistoric Eastern Turkestan, remains to be properly gauged.



Fig. 11. As indicated by the prominent attachment loops (one is hidden from view behind the neck), this small figurine of a stag was designed to be displayed on the body. This *thog-lcags* class talisman highlights the deer's role as a protector and animal with magico-ritual qualities in ancient Tibet. Between the horns of the deer is a jewel, which is more clearly rendered in some specimens. This copper alloy object may date to the protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 650 CE), but it could possibly have been cast as late as the early historic period (650–1000 CE). A more accurate determination of its age and provenance awaits archaeological inquiry. Bob Brundage collection, USA

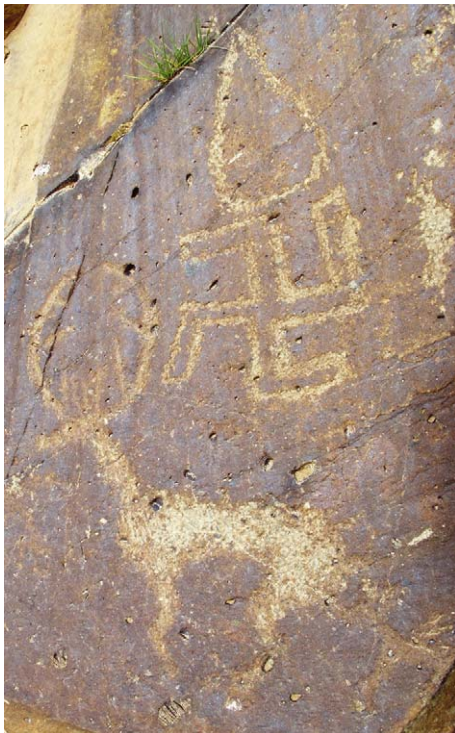


Fig. 12. A petroglyph depicting a stag standing below a counterclockwise swastika and a teardrop-shaped form (representing the sun or a jewel?), Bshag-bsangs (I-16), in Nag-tshang.³³¹ Although the stag has undergone retouching, the uniform carving and wear characteristics of the respective elements indicate that this is an integral composition. While its symbolism and function cannot be known with any exactitude, the stag is clearly depicted in some type of magico-ritual and/or panegyric context. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of sacred symbols in the portrayal. There is other rock art at the same site exhibiting similar manufacturing techniques and states of degradation, which includes inscriptions that can be dated to the early historic period. Thus, an analogous date or one not too much earlier for this petroglyph is best indicated. There are also deer depictions at Bshag-bsangs in non-hunting contexts from deep within the prehistoric epoch

The vital function of the ritual stag depicted in this origins tale elevates it to the exceptionally important position of a cultural icon. It would appear that the 'horned deer that shows the way' (*sha-ru shul-ston*) acted as either an alternative or supplement to the *do-ma*, the funerary transport horses and yaks that figure prominently in other archaic funerary ritual texts. It may be that the *do-ma* was adopted from an older prehistoric tradition of using wild ungulates in funerary rites but this is pure speculation. In one passage of Chapter I, like the *do-ma*, the deer is ascribed with

³³¹ This rock art site is also known as Shar-tshang. For other images of this petroglyph, see Suolang Wangdui 1994, p. 114 (fig. 116); Bellezza 2008, p. 167 (fig. 286).

the power of securing the liberation of the dead from the dismal constrictions of the postmortem realm. However, *Sha ru shul ston rabs* goes one step further than most other sources and actually retails the journey of the psychopomp ungulate through the portals and on the ladders, leading from the netherworld athwart the waters of the dead to the hereafter. This afterlife is described in geographical terms as an ideal montane land for deer. The only Old Tibetan text devoted to *do-ma* that portrays the mystic journey after death in such lavish detail appears to be Pt 1134 (see *infra*, pp. 226–229).

The ritual fate of the horned deer that shows the departed the way is not very explicit in Chapter I. It appears that this deer had to be sacrificed in order to accompany the dead on the onward journey to the otherworld.³³² The various ransom offerings (*glud*) enumerated in the story bear this out. These were given in compensation to the first deer for his service as a psychopomp to humanity. Of course deer also got to enjoy heaven along with the humans they carried there, or so it was believed. In fact, the entire tale deals only with the very first journey of the deer to paradise, the subsequent passage of humans implicit in the text.

An initial line in Chapter I states that this origins tale belongs to the traditions of the Rmu (a genealogical lineage that developed clan or tribal characteristics). As noted, in some ritual and historical settings the Rmu / Dmu is associated with Upper Tibet. In the interrelated sequence of origins myths in Chapter II, there are definite indications pointing to the ancient Upper Tibetan region. The most notable of these geographic signposts is the Chu-bo bzhī, the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet (Indus, Brahmaputra, Karnali, and Sutlej). This adds weight to an Upper Tibetan homeland for the custom of the horned deer that shows the way. Although far from certain, it might be hypothesized that this origins tale was based on an oral or bardic tradition, which was instated in the imperial-period funerary corpus subsequent to the conquest of Zhang-zhung, in the mid-7th century CE.

The translation of Chapter I that follows has been rendered quite freely. Particularly, in the first paragraph of the text presented below, the fluid use of postpositions, particles and verb inflections casts doubt on the precise syntax of the prose. These grammatical difficulties are compounded by the strangeness of the mythic material presented, for I know of no other example of a *smrang* that articulates the origins of the psychopomp deer. This etiologic myth devotes considerable space to denigrating the attempt of the *dri* to inveigle the guidance of the dead. These anthroporhized *dri* in the guise of the *bdud*, *btsan*, and *rmu* spirits are cast as imposters, who attempt to usurp the ritual function held by horned deer. Using two quaint expressions, the narrator of the story denounces the demons' deceit. The *dri* impersonators are shown for what they really are: cold-blooded killers of humanity.

The text seems to imply that in the very beginning of time the roles of the *dri* and horned deer may have been undifferentiated. However, as it came to be, their identities and functions ended up diametrically opposed to one another. This led to the irrevocable separation of the evil spirits and the beneficial cervids. A unitary source of all things that diverges into positive (white) and negative (black) modalities is a fundamental theme in Eternal Bon cosmogonies. These dualities of the universe often spring from generative eggs:

³³² In this context, it is worth noting that deer, along with horses, sheep, cattle, and dogs, are the sacrificial animals found interred in Tibeto-Tuyuhun burial mounds (Tong 2008: 86). Also, according to the *Liao Shi*, at the wedding ceremony of a Liao princess she was presented with a carriage accompanied by sacrificial deer and sheep for eventual use in her funeral (Ramble 2012).

The origin tale of the horned deer that shows the way.³³³ The origins of the thirteen *dri* from the sky. The origins of the *dri* from the earth. The origins of the thirteen *dri* from the intermediate space (*bar*). The origins of the twelve *dri* from stone, and the thirteenth, Gor-ca btsan-ba. The origins of the thirteen *dri* from fire. The origins of the tradition (*gzhung*) of the horned deer from the Rmu practices (*srol-po*). The horned deer is not just of any manner of material form (*gdos-pa*). These are the defenders (*'gon*) and protectors (*skyabs*). You yourselves (*yu-bu*) prideful *dri* sons, in your mind (*snying-lam*), you imagine (*snyem*) yourself as the horned deer {defender}.³³⁴ You are not the horned deer defender. Firstly, you do not have (*ma-yin-to*) the slaughter (*gsod-pa*) [of demons in mind]. Prideful *dri* sons, you yourself do not have the defense of the horned deer in your mind. You yourselves are the *bdud*, the black men with black horses; the *rmu*, red men with red horses; [and] the *btsan*, red men with red horses. *A tsi* (how dismaying)! *A la'la'* (how strange)! In the mind of the defender horned deer, you prideful *dri* sons imagine [yourselves as the benefactors?]. Firstly, as the executioner (*gshed-ma*) possessed by you yourselves there is Gle-sbar drol-ba. There was the *bstan* enclosure (*ra-ba*). There was the *bdud* hunter.³³⁵ How dismaying! How strange! The prideful *dri* son and the horned deer were definitively separated (*bye bye bsal*). Today, the *dri* and horned deer are also separated like that.

sha ru shul ston kyi rabs la // de ring sangs lta byung ba lags so // gnam dri bcu gsum las byung ba lags so (C.T. = so) // *sa dri las byung ba lags su // bar dri bcu gsum las byung // rdo dri bcu gnyis na'* (C.T. = na) // *gor ca btsan ba dang bcu gsum las byung // me dri bcu gsum las byung // sha ru 'i gzhung ni rmu srol po las byung ba'* (C.T. = ba) *lags so // gdos pa 'i sha ru ma'* (C.T. = ma) *lags so /// de rnams kyi 'gon* (C.T. = mgon) *dang skyabs lags so // dri bu nga rgyal khyod kyi snying lam na'* (C.T. = na) // *yu bu 'i {'gon, C.T. = mgon} sha'* (C.T. = sha) *ru yin snyem* (C.T. = snyam) *ste // de 'i 'gon* (C.T. = mgon) *sha ru ma yin no // khyod dang po gsod pa ma yin to* (C.T. = no) // *dri bu rgyal khyod kyi snying lam na'* (C.T. = na) // *yu bu 'i 'gon* (C.T. = mgon) *sha ru ma'* (C.T. = ma) *yin no // yu bu bdud ni myi gnag rta gnag yin // rmu mi mar rta mar yin no // btsan mi dmar rta dmar yin no // A tsi A la'la' // 'gon* (C.T. = mgon) *sha ru 'i snying lam na'* (C.T. = na) // *yu bu dri bu nga rgyal yin snyam ste // yu bu dang po khyod kyi gshed ma ni // gle sbar drol pa yin no // btsan gyi ra ba yin no // bdud kyi rgon pa yin no // A tsi A la'la' // dri bu nga'* (C.T. = nga) *rgyal dang sha ru bye bye bsal na' // dri dang sha ru de ltar phyen nas kyang //*

The speaker in the next sequence of the story is a *dri-bon*, a funerary priest probably conceived of by the author(s) as having lived long before the text was written. The text establishes that humans and deer were joined in a mutually beneficial relationship, a solemn and unbreakable pact. In exchange for their guiding of the dead, the habitat of the deer was enhanced by humans. Interestingly, it appears to be the crow (a bird with many variant names in Tibetan dialects) that is the keeper of the deer, a function it is said to have maintained for one thousand years. The invoking of such a long period of time confers an epic quality upon the narrative and reminds us how such *smrang* were conceived of in deeply historical terms. The horned deer under the care

³³³ This is followed by the line: *de ring sangs lta byung lags so* /. In addition to mentioning today and tomorrow, it proclaims the origins of something unmentioned (the ritual discourse itself?).

³³⁴ This sentence appears to be the correct grammatical rendering of *dri bu nga rgyal khyod kyi snying lam na'* (C.T. = na) // *yu bu 'i {'gon, C.T. = mgon} sha'* (C.T. = sha) *ru yin snyem* (C.T. = snyam) *ste //*.

³³⁵ *Bdud gyi rgon yin no //*. Although there is the usage of the genitive affix in this construction, it is intended that the *bdud* themselves are the hunters.

of crows is described as being caparisoned in luxurious robes and garlanded with jewels. Yet, despite its exalted position, this deer could not reach the highest of heights, the lead-in for the rest of the story:

Also, the *dri-bon* said, ‘I... the man of earlier times.³³⁶ How did the deer show great kindness to humans? [In the beginning] there was no *dri* defender to defend. The receptacle made of the mind (*thugs*) [of the dead] that had no *rgyal-thugs* (the mind of the living?): It was made the couloir (*sul*) of sheltering (*khra*s), the mountain of escape. The great kindness of the deer to man was like that. In what way was the man very kind to the deer? The way was shown where there had been no road of the deer. Also, the place of repose [was made] where there had been no place. Now, the keeper (*bya-ra-ba*) of the deer was the crow (*pho-ma ro-gu*) who had been able to do this for one thousand years (*lo-ma*). It was kept as the keeper of the deer. The deer of winter (*rgun*), the *rmun-bu*,³³⁷ has the lynx robe (*thul*),³³⁸ the striped robe of the *btsan*, and the tiger and leopard robe. In winter [the deer] wore these winter clothes. He wore a *dbyam* (type of coat?) with a variegated border. The various types of jewels were hung (*bdags*) on the right horn and the left [horn]. To climb up (*skyas-bdab*) to the heights, the horned deer to climb up: the horned deer could (*bthub-po*) not thus go.’

drī bon zhal nas kyang // nga’ (C.T. = *nga*) *ma dang sum ma dang myī sngun // sha drin myi* (C.T. = *mī*) *la’* (C.T. = *la*) *che ci tsug che // dri ’gon* (C.T. = *mgon*) *med kyi ’gon* (C.T. = *mgon*) *yang nas // rgyal thugs med kyi thugs gyī rten yang byas / ’bros kyī ri dang khra* (C.T. = *’khra*) *kyi sul yang ’byas* (C.T. = *byas*) */ sha drin mī la de ltar che ’o // myi drin sha la che ba’i ci tsug che na’* (C.T. = *na*) *// sha ba lam med kyi lam yang stan // gnas med kyi gnas kyang bsdod na / da’* (C.T. = *da*) *nī sha ba bya ra bar pho ma ro gu lo ma stong thub ba’* (C.T. = *ba*) *// sha ru yī bya ra bar bzhag go // rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *sha’* (C.T. = *sha*) *rmun bu nī // dbyi thul snar po dang // btsan thul khra bo dang / stag gzig kyī thul pa’* (C.T. = *pa*) *// rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *kyī rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *char (= cha) ru gsol lo // dbyam bu gong bkra’* (C.T. = *bkra*) *gsol lo // rin chen sna tshogs kyis // rwa g.yas dang g.yon la’* (C.T. = *la*) *bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) *so’* (C.T. = *so*) *// mtho skyas bdab na’* (C.T. = *na*) */ sha ru skyas bdab na’* (C.T. = *na*) *// sha ru ’gror ma bthub* (C.T. = *thub*) *po* (C.T. = *pa*) *//*

A primal mother and father were responsible for the capture of the first horned deer receptacle. However, a *dri-bon* convinced the deer that he should go with him and not the premier couple. He told the deer a story about a homicide committed by the Nyang, in which his species aided in the *dri* suppressing funerary ritual. This may possibly refer to the well-known Nyang (Myang) lineage of Central Tibet. The priest in making his case noted that the couple did not have just cause to take the deer. In order to win his favor, the *dri-bon* was sure to make ample offerings in the form of ‘father’ and ‘mother’ ransom offerings (*blud*) to the cervid. Consequently, the deer expressed his willingness to accompany the *dri-bon*, who was to show the deer the way to the heights:

³³⁶ This sentence is the incomplete rendering of the line: *Nga’* (C.T. = *nga*) *ma dang sum ma dang myī sngun //*. It may have to do with the funerary priest invoking his ancestral and/or sacerdotal lineage.

³³⁷ This term denotes the deer of wintertime or describes a specific quality that deer have in wintertime.

³³⁸ The lynx coat is modified by the word *snar-po*, which is probably a quality of that clothing.

The deer spoke thus, ‘At first, when I was captured, they were the due cause,³³⁹ thus I said, I must (*rgos*) by this result be led (*gdong*) by you, the father and mother.’ The *dri-bon* said, ‘The Nyang of [ancient] existence murdered the heart (a human). The horned deer defender was made [as the receptacle] in consequence of the *dri* of that dead human. You did not receive due cause [from the father and mother]. I offer the *pho*-{*blud*} and {*mo*}-*blud*, the nine types of fruit and the funerary ritual offerings (*mgon-cha*) as the due cause.’ Again, [the deer spoke],³⁴⁰ ‘I will not concede (*myi-gnang-pa*)’ to the humans (the father and mother) who captured me, but to the *dri-bon* himself. I will go with the *dri-bon* as the functionary’,³⁴¹ said the deer. The *dri-bon* replied, ‘I myself (*bdag srid-pa*) of forthright actions (*khungs nas ded-pa*) will show you who has no path the way there.’

sha ru 'i mchid nas / nga' (C.T. = nga) dang po 'dzin bar byed ba' (C.T. = ba) // gdo khyod yin bas // gdo pho mo nga' (C.T. = nga) yi 'phyir gdong (C.T. = 'dong) rgos (C.T. = dgos) su gsung / dri bon gyi zhal na' (C.T. = na) re // bsrid (C.T. = srid) pa' (C.T. = pa) nyang gyis nying (C.T. = snying) bsad pa' (C.T. = pa) lags // myi (C.T. = mi) drir shi nas gon (C.T. = mgon) sha ru la bgyis ba' (C.T. = ba) lags so // gdos ma lan no // gdo pho {blud (C.T. = glud) mo} blud (C.T. = glud) du // shing thog sna rgu (C.T. = dgu) dang mgon cha cig dbul (C.T. = 'bul) lo // yang {####} nas // nga' (C.T. = nga) mi 'dzin du myi (C.T. = mi) gnang pa' (C.T. = pa) // dri bon nyid yin no' (C.T. = no) // dri bon nga' (C.T. = nga) yi zha' (C.T. = zhabs) 'bring du 'dong gyis gsung / dri bon gyi zhal nas // bdag srid pa khungs nas ded pa la' (C.T. = la) // khyod lam med gyi lam ston //

The text now asks rhetorically, “What ransom offerings (*blud*) did the *dri-bon* offer (*phul*) [to the deer].” It included the hanging of something on the points of the deer’s antlers among other things.³⁴² Nevertheless, the departure of the stag with the funerary priest would not be so straightforward. There were other players in the field and they too wanted this deer as their own. The text tells us that the deer spoke again, saying, “The *mag-pa*’ (a bridegroom residing matrilocally) said as he had captured me, I must accompany the *mag-pa*’.”³⁴³ The *dri-bon* retorted that the *mag-pa* could not take responsibility (*ma'-lan*) or something to that effect. The *dri-bon* told the deer that he should not go with the *mag-pa* and his four grandparents or family,³⁴⁴ but rather with him and his ransom offering. This is followed by the deer returning as the speaker in the story but this passage is pockmarked with illegible words. The deer recounts how the wife (*lcam*) either of the *mag-pa* or someone else cried out (*khus-'debs*), so as to herd him into a round corral (*gor-ra*), and asked that he go with her. This woman desired the deer to be that which is offered to her to go above the water and on the pass,³⁴⁵ the animal that would mystically transport her over the infernal rivers and mountains to the otherworld. As the ransom offering, she wanted to give the deer a white silk (*dar-kar*, C.T. = *dar-dkar*) *go-zu* (magic overcoat for females). Then the deer recounted how those looking on (*lta-mo*) asked the bashful (*skyengs*) animal to go with them. He was offered the striped arrow *nyi mag-ma* (?) as the *glud*.

³³⁹ *Gdo / gdos*. This O.T. word survives in the Hor-skad dialect of northern Tibet in the expression *gdos-rkyen* (the result of some action or process). Also, in Hor-skad is the expression *srog-gdos*, the cause by which someone is killed.

³⁴⁰ There are illegible syllables here in the text but the import is clear enough; it is the deer who is again speaking.

³⁴¹ *Zha'-'bring* (C.T. = *zhabs-'bring*). This term can also be glossed ‘helper’ or ‘servant’.

³⁴² In the words of the text: *bzhag brang bzhag thod // sha ba 'i rwa 'i brgyal la bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) //.

³⁴³ *Nga'i 'dzin bar byed mag pa' (C.T. = pa) yin bas // mag pa' (C.T. = pa) 'dong skad*.

³⁴⁴ This appears to be the meaning of *gnyen-lam mtha'-bzhi* (Literally: ‘the four ends [of] relations path’. This genealogical term also occurs in Pt 1194 (ln. 59): *gnyen-lam mtha' (C.T. = mtha') bzhi*.

³⁴⁵ *Bdag chab gang lar ra (= la ru) 'debs pas lags so //*. See p. 228 (fn. 475).

The text continues with a fecund description of the stages of the journey embarked upon on in the push to the ancestral paradise. This voyage is undertaken to cater to humanity and by virtue of this, it must perforce mimic the one they embark on *post obitum*. The narrator is the *dri-bon* himself, who instructs the deer on precisely what he will find on each rung of the voyage upwards towards the afterlife.³⁴⁶ As was customary, this *smrang* must have been recited at the funerals of those who died through causes associated with the *dri*. These words establish that funerary specialists like the *dri-bon* were psychopomps in the most direct and immediate of ways. It must be stressed that like Chapter I in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, Chapter I of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* enshrines a principle that still prevails in Tibet today: it is the funerary priests of various stripes who are able to aid the dead. From the ancient *gshen* and *bon* to today's lamas and *sngags-pa*, this remains the cornerstone of Tibetan funerary praxis.

Initially, the *dri-bon* enumerated five stages of the postmortem odyssey in allegorical language. This half of the excursion consisted of five waystations, each of which is associated with a portal and a ladder made of precious substances. The deer passing through a portal climbed up on a ladder to reach the next level. This shows that these places were envisioned as being vertically aligned. Each of them is a whole world onto itself with everything the deer needed to sustain itself. The various topographical features of the nine levels in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* also serve to portray the underworld in its entirety (see *supra*, pp. 121–127). The length of time the deer was to remain on each tier of the journey progressively increased. The *dri-bon* admonished the deer repeatedly, telling him that none of these postmortem rungs of existence are where he is to permanently reside. The priest noted that the parents of our deer will not be found on any of those steps, a powerful incentive for the animal to continue upwards.

The sixth stage of the journey brought the deer to the 'waters of the dead' (*gshin-chab*). This topographical feature corresponds with the 'river of the dead' (*gshin-chu*) in other sources, the

³⁴⁶ The deer as a creature that bridges the underworld and the superior world is found in a contemporary Gurung (Tamu) rite of the Nepal Himalaya. In the village of Tapje, a harvest celebration culminates in the sacrifice of a wild deer by the *ghyabrē* shamans. The belly of sacrificial deer is sliced open and its beating heart removed. This act is thought to unite the upper and lower worlds. As a result, it is believed that rain falls and vegetation grows. The deer sacrifice is seen by the Gurungs as rectifying the failure of one of their mythic ancestors to make good on a promised offering to the miniature beings of the underworld. It is said that this hunter-ancestor tried to kill a golden horned deer, but was unable until an earth spirit appeared to him in a dream. The earth spirit directed the hunter to enter the underworld named Khrōnasa (Tibetan = Khro gnas-sa?) and make an offering of a fish and a bird, in order to obtain the horned deer. The hunter entered the underworld by climbing down nine ladders. After three days, he found and killed the deer but failed to leave the stipulated gift. The hunter escaped back to the world of humans, but the denizens of the underworld exacted their revenge by causing the death of animals and the hunter's own son. The captured deer is sacrificed to the Ghale (a prominent Gurung clan) ancestral deity (Father Wild Yak, A-ba 'brong) at a grove sacred to the god. The trees here and at a nearby sacred grove dedicated to Mother Wild Yak (A-ma 'brong) are thought to link the lower and upper worlds. Likewise, the Gurung shaman's drum is made from the skin of the deer, which is seen as linking the two realms together. The deer's ability to connect the upper and lower worlds clearly echoes between Gurung cultural practices and the mythic representations of our text. This appears to be no coincidence, for Kle nyi-ma, a tutelary deity (in the form of a bird) of the Ghale, which participates in the deer immolation, is said to have been brought by the Gurung from Tibet. For the account of deer sacrifice among the Gurung, see *op. cit.* Mumford 1990, pp. 63–74. For other Gurung cultural practices that parallel those of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 562–566. A prospective historical scenario that demands further attention is one of the Gurungs having migrated directly from Upper Tibet in antiquity (their homeland is situated in cis-Himalayan regions south of the Upper Brahmaputra). That the Gurungs refer to themselves as Tamu and the horned deer of the text is stated to be a tradition of the Rmu, seems to support such a supposition.

great divide between the infernal realm of the *gshin-rje* demons and the higher spheres.³⁴⁷ In this origins myth, the step after the waters of the dead is that of the reclaimed mind (*vid*) of the deer. In archaic death ritual practices, this thanatological station occurs when the consciousness principle of the deceased has been safely deposited in the receptacles set out for that purpose at the funeral venue. The horned deer is told that he will be accosted there by ‘three fears’ (*jigs-pa gsum*), which are various types of demons. The text, however, is quick to add that those fears are eliminated by the ritual objects employed by the *dri-bon*.

After emerging from the underworld and the assault of the demons, the deer arrived in the joyous snow mountain country. This paradisiacal land was the penultimate stage of the stag’s journey. It is just one rung short of immortality. The final place on the postmortem trek prescribed by the *dri-bon* is called Undying Swastika (G.yung-drung chi-myed), the realm of the ancestors.³⁴⁸

Thereafter, [the *dri-bon*] entreated the deer to depart (*gshags*). [He said], ‘You will go ahead from here to the pass named Mchong-la’ sgo-mo (Agate Pass Portal), to the ladder (*sgas*) with the name of Patterned Agate Ladder Furrowed One (?).³⁴⁹ You, deer, go there. It is appropriate as there is water there. Enjoy there for three nights (*rgung*). You will not enjoy staying there any longer than three nights. This is not the country of your father and mother. From there you go ahead to the golden door and onto the turquoise ladder.³⁵⁰ It is appropriate as there is water there. Enjoy there for three months. You will not enjoy staying there any longer than three months. This is not the country of your father and mother. From there you go ahead to the copper door, on the erected ladder, the ladder of *khar* (bell-metal). Deer, enjoy there for three years.³⁵¹ From there you go ahead to the door of iron, onto the erected ladder, the ladder of lead (*zho-nyen*). Deer, come there. Enjoy there for five years.³⁵² From there you go up to the door of conch, onto the erected golden ladder. Deer, come there. Enjoy there for seven years.³⁵³ From there you go up to the door of coral, onto the erected ladder of *sen-men* (lapis lazuli?). Deer, come there. There it is very appropriate (*ran-ran*) as it holds the waters of the dead (*gshin-chab*). Enjoy there for eight years. It is enjoyable but it is not the country of your father and mother. Deer, from there you go ahead to the door of *nam-kra* (?), onto the erected ladder of the

³⁴⁷ For the *gshin-chu* in Pt 1134, see *infra*, p. 235. In the *lug-gtad* text of Eternal Bon, it reads: “By the sheep, [the deceased] passes beyond the overflowing river of the *gshin*” (*gshin-chu mer-ba lug gis bgrod* /; Bellezza 2008: 463, 632).

³⁴⁸ The ascent through various realms until the paradise of the ‘undying swastika’ is attained is echoed in Naxi funerary traditions. The funerary priests of the Naxi ritually lead the dead through various realms until reaching the ultimate station, that of the thirty-three swastika gods of the thirty-three realms on high. This is the domain of the ancestors, a resplendent white land and white heaven with white horses and white men. The last book chanted on the evening of the second day of the funeral, the *Ndshër-ndzī-mi*, describes the various places, beings and objects that the deceased will encounter en route to the ancestral realm and provides instructions on how to proceed there. See *op. cit.* Rock 1955, pp. 199–209, 205, 217, 218. For an illustration of the realm of the thirty-three gods, see *ibid.*, pl. viii; Mathieu and Ho 2011, pp. 186, 187.

³⁴⁹ *Gzi-sgas nyer-bu*. *Nyer-bu* appears to be an O.T. nounal form of *gnyer-ma* (furrowed, grooved) as in a ladder consisting of a notched timber, like that used in some cis-Himalayan and Transhimalayan houses.

³⁵⁰ The succeeding four sentences form a recurring passage with months being substituted for nights. This is clearly indicated by the instructive line: *nam go nga ma dang char 'dra'* (C.T. = ‘dra’).

³⁵¹ As noted in the text, this is followed by the last two lines of the recurring passage.

³⁵² This is followed by the last two lines of the recurring passage.

³⁵³ Again, this is succeeded by the last two lines of the standard passage.

mind. Going there, you will encounter the three fears. There you will encounter the *bdud* hunters and the *gre-sbar*³⁵⁴ [and] *'grol-pa*.'³⁵⁵

de nas sha ba' (C.T. = *ba*) *gshags bar gsol* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *khyod 'di las phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *la'* (C.T. = *la*) *yī ming ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *nī mchong la'* (C.T. = *la*) *sgo mos bgyi* // *sgas* (C.T. = *skas*) *gyī ming ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *ni* // *gzi sgas* (C.T. = *skas*) *nyer bu bgyi* // *sha 'a* (= *ba'*) *khyod der gshags zhig* / *der ran gzhi chab ldan yang* // *rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *gsum de na dgyes* // *rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *gsum tshun chad du bzhugs zhūng snying mi dgyes* // *pha dang ma yī yul ma lags* // *de las phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *gser gyi sgo mo la* // *g.yu yī skas btsugs pha'* (C.T. = *pha*) *der gshags shīg* // *nan go nga ma dang char 'dra'* (C.T. = *'dra*) // *zla gsum de na'* (C.T. = *na*) *dgyes* // *de las 'phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *zangs gyī sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *khar ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *'i sgas* (C.T. = *skas*) *skas btsugs pas* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *der gshags zhig* / *lo gsum de na'* (C.T. = *na*) *de dgyes* // *de las 'phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *lcags gyī sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) / *zho* (C.T. = *zha*) *nyen* (C.T. = *nye*) *skas btsugs bas* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de ru gshags zhig* // *lo lnga de na'* (C.T. = *na*) *dgyes* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de las yar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *dung gyi sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *gser gyī skas btsugs ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *der gshags shig* // *lo bdun de na'* (C.T. = *na*) *dgyes* // *de las yar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *byur ru 'ī sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *sen men sgas btsugs ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de ru gshags shīg* / *de de ran ran gshin chab ldan yang* // *lo brgyad de na'* (C.T. = *na*) *dgyes* // *dgyes kyang yab dang yum gyi yul ma'i lags* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de las phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *nam kra 'ī sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *yid kyī skas btsugs bas* // *der byon na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *'jigs pa gsum dang der phrad do'* (C.T. = *do*) // *bdud gyī rñgon ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *dang gre sbar 'grol pa' dang der 'phrad do'* (C.T. = *do*) //

Those three fears were propitiated (*gsol*) by the *dri-bon* with golden funerary ritual articles (*mngon*) and blue turquoise. The three {fears} were separated (*dbye*) from the deer. [The *dri-bon* continued], 'From there go ahead to the deer country snow mountains and the pleasure will be manifest (*dgyes ste mngon*). The placidity (*gjam*) and pleasure of the spring (*chab-mīg*) there will be manifest.' Thereafter, the deer went on to the country of Undying Swastika.

'jigs pa gsum po deyang (= *de yang*) // *dri bon gyīs gser mngon dang g.yu sngon gyis gsol lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) // *sha bar 'jigs ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *gsum dang dbye ste bdang ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) // *de las phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *sha yul gangs dkar dgyes ste mngon* // *chab mīg gda' gjam* (C.T. = *'jam*) *dgyes de mngon* // *de nas g.yung drung ma chi* (C.T. = *'chi*) *myed* (C.T. = *med*) *gyi yul du byon no'* (C.T. = *no*) //

The *dri-bon*'s words of guidance are finished at this junction in the story. The text follows up by describing the ancestral paradise of Undying Swastika. It is an idyllic land endowed with ample fodder and limpid water, an ideal environment for deer. Here the stag was felicitated with a banner and other precious things. It was there the deer first met his brother whose fur shone with an otherworldly brilliance. As in the paradises of many other cultures, the sound of the flute could be heard in Undying Swastika. Our deer also met his mother who was ornamented in numinous jewels. His outbound journey was completed with this joyous reunion. The deer had been given the *glud* and shown the way to his cervid ancestors. Thus, to uphold his part of the bargain, he returned to the countries of the humans and the predatory *dri*. Had the deer tarried in paradise, he would have been of no use to mortals who die from unnatural causes. And now that

³⁵⁴ This is possibly a group of *'dre* (*sic*).

³⁵⁵ This appears to refer to a group of demonic executioners.

he knew the way through the postmortem labyrinth, the stag would be an especially useful ally to human beings:

In the upper valley above [the deer] saw the herbs of the deer *ldem se ldem*.³⁵⁶ In the valley confluence below [the deer] saw the golden pasture (*ne'-gsing*) with the deer water, the flowing spring. Then the deer came up and a banner (*ba'-dan*) of precious substances was put over (*phar*) his right and left horns. [The *dri-bon* said], 'Go up with the gold and turquoise of fame on your horns.'³⁵⁷ [The deer] came to his older brother who showed his exposed (*cīr*) fur.³⁵⁸ His fur was shining brighter than fire. [The deer] (protagonist) hearing the strains (*skad-gca'*) of the flute (*gling-ba*) came up, up to his mother, who was bedecked in miraculous jewels (*rīn-po-ce*). He came further up. Replying [to his parents], the younger brother deer (the protagonist) went step by step (*bcag bcag-pa'*) to the country of the humans; he journeyed (*drim drim-pa'*) to the country of the *dri*.

phu ru yar ltas na' (C.T. = *na*) // *sha rtsi ldem se ldem* // *mda'sum mar bltas na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *gser gyī ne'* (C.T. = *ne'u*) *gsing* (C.T. = *sing*) *la'* C.T. = *la*) // *sha chab lu ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) 'bab // *de nas sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *yar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *rwa g.yas g.yon la'* (C.T. = *la*) / *rin po cen* (C.T. = *che*) *kyi ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *dan phar de* // *rwa gser dang g.yu ru 'grags* (C.T. = *grags*) *pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *yar gshegs shīg* // *gcen po yas se gshegs na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *spu thog cīr* (C.T. = *gcer*) *yang ston pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *spu thog me bas gsal* // *skad gca'* (C.T. = *cha*) *dang glīng bas* (C.T. = *bus*) *ston pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *yas gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *yum yas gshags pa nī* // *rdzu 'phrul rīn po ces* (C.T. = *ches*) *brgyan pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) / *yas gshags* // *sha 'ī gcung po mi yul bcag bcag pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) / *dri yul drim drim* (C.T. = 'grim 'grim) *pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *ni gta' blan* //

After the deer returned to the country of humans to be their helper in death, he presented special gifts from that land to his mother, father and brother. The notion of reciprocity permeating ancient ritual indicates this giving of gifts insured that the deer ally of humans would have his place in the afterlife. This heaven is again equated with a white snow mountain and is called Undying Swastika Country of Non-Existence (G.yung-drung mchi-med med-yul). The expression 'country of non-existence' (*med-yul*) denotes the parallel realm of the dead and carries no negative connotations. It is the existential counterpoint to the country of the living, which might be labeled *yod-yul*. The realm of the dead was called as such because it could not be directly perceived or entered by the living. *Med-yul*, therefore, signifies a place existing beyond the pale of the senses and ordinary activity, rather than being 'non-existent' in an unequivocal sense:

The deer gave to his mother for her enjoyment (*rangs*) the various kinds of herbs (*rtsi-na'*) and water with waves (*rbu-ba*) of the country of humans. He gave to his father for his enjoyment, a gift of the lynx robe and lambskin (*tsha'*) robe.

³⁵⁶ This still popular trisyllabic indicator in Tibetan prosody conveys the graceful swaying of the herbs.

³⁵⁷ Ethnographic data from Upper Tibet suggests that in addition to the decorations specified in the text, red ochre or vermilion may have been used to decorate the fur of any such *dri-sha* used in actual funerals. During New Year (Lo-gsar) celebrations and at other special occasions, the 'brog-pa paint intricate designs on livestock offered to indigenous deities. These designs can represent the saddle of the divinity to which the animal is dedicated. For more information on this custom, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 466–469; 2008 p. 454 (fn. 314).

³⁵⁸ Here and in the next line of the text the word *spu* (fur) is followed by *thog*. Perhaps, *thog* adds no extra semantic value here or, alternatively, it may possibly be the equivalent of *mdog* (color).

He gave to his older brother (*phu*) for his enjoyment, a *rgyang-bu*³⁵⁹ and gold dust (*'phyé*). Then his father and mother bestowed a name upon the deer. He was bestowed [the name] G.yung-drung gyi sha-pa' ku-los. They appointed Sha-yul gangs-po gangs-dkar (Deer Country White Mountain Snow Mountain) as his country and place, and specifically, G.yung-drung mchi-med med-yul.

sha bas kyang mī yul gyi rangs su rtsi na' (C.T. = *sna*) *cho rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang / chu'i rbu* (C.T. = *lhu*) *ba dang // yum la rangs su 'phrul lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) *// dbyi thul dang tsha'* (C.T. = *tshar*) *thul nī // yab la rangs su 'phul // rgyang bu dang gser 'phyé'* (C.T. = *phyé*) *nī phu la rangs su phul // de nas yab dang yum kyis // sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *la mīng bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) *pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *// g.yung drung gyi sha pa' ku los su bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) *so'* (C.T. = *so*) *// yul dang sa'* (C.T. = *sa*) *bskos pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *// sha yul gangs po gangs dkar // g.yung drung mchī* (C.T. = *'chī*) *med med yul du sgos so'* (C.T. = *so*) *//*

The final lines of Chapter I pertain to the deer used in concurrent ritual performances (9.1–9.4). There is an abstrusely worded passage of four grammatical lines addressed directly to the deer. This sacred animal is told that consequently he is sent without gifts (as there is everything in paradise for him). Also, there is no one there to aim an arrow at him (*mda' mī 'phan*). Finally, the deer is commanded to depart on a long journey (*yun du gshags*) to the seat of the rainbow (*gzha'-gdan*), an epithet for paradise (on this rainbow, also see *infra*, pp. 242, 243). This is followed by three lines of spells, which ostensibly were to be said at the consecration of the funerary ritual horned deer: *ni dril nī dril // dril la phud // se dod do //*. An examination of the syllables of these spells demonstrates that they are of a native linguistic character. The penultimate line of the chapter pronounces that, “The deer that shows the way [tale] together with the spells is good.”³⁶⁰ The very last line of the chapter aptly states, “It is finished” (*Rdzogs-so' //*).

³⁵⁹ A ritual object or class of objects. In Eternal Bon, the *rgyang-bu* is a major constituent of the *mdos*, a ritual for the enticement and coercion of deities, which relies on models of their residences or of the universe.

³⁶⁰ *Sha ru shul ston dang sngags dang chas ste bzang //*.

Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa: Chapter II

Chapter II of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* contains ten different origins myths that are thematically related to one another. The origins and activities of several types of *dri*, particularly those associated with the great rivers of southwestern Tibet, are recounted. The ten origins tales can be listed as follows:

- Origins Myth No. 1: Origins of a lineage of male *dri*
- Origins Myth No. 2: Story of a *chu-dri* that causes a woman to perish in a river
- Origins Myth No. 3: Origins of the *btsan-dri* that kill through sharp weapons
- Origins Myth No. 4: Tale of the death of a man by a *chu-dri*
- Origins Myth No. 5: Death of a man in which a quartet of *chu-bdud* is implicated
- Origins Myth No. 6: Origins of the *dri-sha* and death of a lord
- Origins Myth No. 7: Account of the livestock wealth of a Spug family
- Origins Myth No. 8: Source of the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet
- Origins Myth No. 9: Origins of the *chu-srin* of the upper Brahmaputra River
- Origins Myth No. 10: Common sky and ocean origins of aquatic demons and humans

Origins Myth No. 1

The first origins tale of Chapter II is devoted to demonology, specifically that connected to a *dri*, his two brothers and their four attendants (9.4–14.3). These four man-slaying attendants and other demons are associated with the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet, strongly suggesting that this *smrang* originated in Upper Tibet.

The tale starts by announcing that after a period of twelve months,³⁶¹ a boy was born. This boy followed his father keeping him in view (*bu las 'phar ltas*). The text explains how beautiful (*sdug*) he looked, what lovely actions (*bdzad*, C.T. = *mdzad*) he had, and what melodious utterances (*s.hug*, C.T. = *lhug*) he possessed. A melodious sound came from the child's throat. The father and mother were pleased (*dgyes*) with him. The mother's name was Sa'-bdag btsun-mo, but the name of the father is not provided in the text. From the mother's name it can be seen that at least one lineage of *dri* was traced back to the *sa-bdag*, the spirit denizens of the earth still well-known in contemporary Tibet.

Thereafter, the child's development took a turn for the worse. For three nights and four days, the boy's (*khye'u*) mouth was small and he had small (weak, *cung*, C.T. = *chung*) speech (*smra*); his talking (*zer*) was weak. For three nights and four days, horns grew on top of his head.³⁶² As for these horns, the text conveys that they were extremely sharp and pointing in opposite directions (*dbal-ru yams se yams*). The text continues with lurid details of the malformed boy:

[The father and mother] looked at his iron blue eyes *gar re gar*.³⁶³ They looked at his body with its bird wings, the wings of the vulture *ba'ra ra*'.³⁶⁴ They looked at his

³⁶¹ The meaning of the first part of the first line is unclear: *rīng na' bya tsham 'phar*.

³⁶² *Zhag gsum 'dro* (C.T. = *dro*) *bzhi na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *glad la rwa yang 'skyes* (C.T. = *skyes*) //.

³⁶³ This trisyllabic indicator conveys the rapid movement of the eyes.

³⁶⁴ These three non-lexical syllables convey the flapping of the wings.

hands, the hands of the waterfowl (*chu-bya*). They looked at his hindquarters, the tail of the tiger. He had the stripes of the tiger 'ol de 'ol.³⁶⁵ They looked at his back (*brgyab*), his back of iron. They looked at his belly (*lto*), the belly of copper.

spyān las phar ltas na' (C.T. = *na*) // *lcags myig* (C.T. = *mig*) *sngon mo gar re gar* // *lus las phar ltas na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *bya 'dab rgod 'dab ba' ra ra'* // *lag ltas chu bya lag* // *bzhugs ltas stog* (= *stag*) *kyi 'jug* // *stag ris 'ol de 'ol* // *brgyab* (C.T. = *rgyab*) *bltas lcags kyi brgyab* (C.T. = *rgyab*) // *lto bsla* (C.T. = *la*) *ltas bzangs* (C.T. = *zangs*) *kyi lto* //

The parents were clearly traumatized by the horrid transformation of their son. They were also deeply afraid for their son and expressed much shame at their predicament. These were all understandable reactions given the terrible misfortune suffered by the couple:

The boy had assumed many false guises (*brdzu*). His father eyed him. The father called out [loudly]. His mind reversed (froze, *thugs-log*) and he became unconscious. His mother stared (*car*) and was shocked (*thugs-yed gyis sngungs*). The mother's [mind] froze and she became unconscious. Afterwards, she said, 'This boy, born of my body, what will become of him?'³⁶⁶ How small is the father's lineage (*yab-gdung*)? How false (*mnad*)³⁶⁷ is the mother's aunt's (maternal) lineage?

brdzu (C.T. = *rdzu*) *yang brdzu* (C.T. = *rdzu*) *de byung* // *yab kyis spyān cig gzigs* // *yab gyis gsung cīg gsungs* // *thugs log cīg brgyal* // *yum gyis car* (C.T. = *gcer*) *gyis gzigs na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *thugs yed* (C.T. = *yid*) *gyis sngangs* // *log cīg brgyal yum gyi mchīd na'* (C.T. = *na*) *re* // *lus kyī bu skyes na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *mtha' ma' ci ltar mchī'* // *yab gdung gchungs* (C.T. = *chung*) *sam'* (C.T. = *ngam*) // *yum sru mnad zhan nam* //

Shame gave way to loathing and the parents were convinced that their son must be done away with. However, it appears that they were not successful in eliminating this abomination. After reviling the boy's grotesque appearance, the father spoke in metaphors. The horse noted in the text refers to the father himself and the hunted bird to his wife. These metaphors make it abundantly clear that this was a man in fear for his life and that of his wife:

The father looked upon the boy's body on which horns grew on the human. [He said], 'How sinful are these horns (*sdīg ru ma' lags sam*)! How sinful are these bird wings! How sinful are these stripes! What must be done?'³⁶⁸ The father, the patriarch said,

³⁶⁵ These three syllables convey the sinuous nature of the stripes. In Pt 1194 (lms. 52, 53), the expression 'ol 'ol may also depict a tortuous trajectory. Commenting on this word in Bellezza 2008, p. 510 (fn. 523), I suggested that 'ol 'ol might connote a luminescent quality.

³⁶⁶ In characteristic Old Tibetan form, this sentence exhibits much grammatical refinement. As a result of this structural fluency, these two grammatical lines read like poetry: *lus kyī bu skyes na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *mtha' ma' (C.T. = ma) ci ltar mchī'* //.

³⁶⁷ That this term means 'false' or 'scandalous' is indicated by the definition given in Das 1902 (after Schmidt), p. 754.

³⁶⁸ *Bgyi na cī ru bgyi* //. Semantically, this is nearly the equivalent of the decidedly less elegant Classical Tibetan expression: *ga-re byed dgos kyi red*. This is just one of many examples that could be given to illustrate the gracefulness and pithiness of O.T. prose in ritual literature. To gain a fuller appreciation of the beauty and sophistication of the Old Tibetan language is a study in its own right. As more materials become available in translation, a fuller grammatical assessment of this language will become feasible.

‘This is the non-human (*mī-men*) son of the *dre*’.³⁶⁹ If we don’t kill this son of the wild yak when it is young, when it grows up it will strike (gore, *rdung*) the horse. If we don’t kill this son of the *ljī-rmang* (?) bird when it is young, when it grows up it will be known as the hawk to the bird.’

lus la phar ltas na’ (C.T. = *na*) // *myī* (C.T. = *mī*) *la*’ (C.T. = *la*) *rwa skyes pa*’ (C.T. = *pa*) // *sāḡ ru ma*’ (C.T. = *ma*) *lags sam* / ‘*dab stīg* (C.T. = *sdig*) ‘*dab ma*’ (C.T. = *ma*) *lags sams* (C.T. = *sam*) // *stīg* (C.T. = *sdig*) *ris ma*’i (= *ma*) *lags sams* (C.T. = *sam*) // *bgyi na cī ru bgyī* // *pha*’ (C.T. = *pha*) *yab kyī zhal na*’ (C.T. = *na*) *re*’ (C.T. = *re*) // *dī mī men* C.T. = *ma yin*) *dre*’ (C.T. = ‘*dre*) *yī bu* // *gdags man spar gyī tsha*’ // *chung du ma*’ (C.T. = *ma*) *bsad na*’ (C.T. = *na*) / *skyes na*’ *dgra*’ (C.T. = *dgra*) *ru ldang* (C.T. = *sdang*) // *tsang* ‘*brang* (= ‘*brong*) *g.yag gyī bu*’ (C.T. = *bu*) *chung du ma bsad na*’ (C.T. = *na*) // *skyes nas* (= *na*’) *rta la rdung* C.T. = *brdung*) / *ljī rmang bya yī bu chung du ma*’ (C.T. = *ma*) *bsad na*’ (C.T. = *na*) // *skyes na*’ (C.T. = *na*) *bya la khra zhes bya*’ //

The misshapen demonic boy is recorded as having two younger brothers. He also possessed four attendants (*phyag-brnyan*): the Chu yi zungs-pa’ bzhī (Four Strengths of the River). Another noted troublesome quartet of spirits residing in the water was a group of *btsan*, which have an almost identical name: Chu yi zungs bzhī. While neither group is explicitly connected to the four fabled rivers of southwestern Tibet (Chu-bo bzhī), they are mentioned in conjunction with them. Together with three other so-called ‘portals’, the Chu-bo bzhī form a topographic galaxy known as Chu yi sgo-ba’ (Four Portals of Water). As the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet are a complementary part of this circle of lakes and rivers, we can be reasonably assured that the geographic placement of this tale is Upper Tibet. As we shall see, this localization is strengthened by geographic lore in other origins myths of Chapter II. The Chu ‘i zungs-pa’ bzhī (*sic*) reside in thirteen aquatic castles as described in the text. This account ends with the four Chu yi zungs pa’ taking libations ‘established from the tradition’ (*lugs las bzhegs*). This concluding line of the story indicates that these four creatures of the water were the object of a propitiatory rite with long historical antecedents:

His younger brothers (*gchung-po*) were Chu-bdud ye-ro blangs and Bya-che mer-ba’. Their attendants were Dkar-de yam-ba, Lcags-de ‘bar, Mtsho-ste khyīl-ba, and Chu-ste ‘khyīl-ba’, these four. These are the Chu yi zungs-pa’ bzhī. The four are like that. These are the ones to which all the water ransom offerings (*blud*) are to be offered. The Chu yi zungs bzhī: The father is Gnam khol-pha’. The mother is Mtsho-mo bdal-drug. They mated and the eldest brother (*pho-bo gcen-po*) is called Chu-btsan rol-pa. He is mounted (*bjibs*) on a blue aquatic horse mount. The next younger brother is called Chu-btsan sngon-po. The next younger brother is called Chu-btsan brgyal-ba. He is the controller (*mnga’-mdzad*) of the red waters. [These two younger brothers] ride (*bchībs*) black aquatic horses. The four *btsan* of the water are like that. The four portals (*sgo-ba*’) of water: one portal is Skyi-bu (?), one portal is Mtsho-gling (Lake Realm / Lake Island), one portal is Chu-bo bzhī (Four Rivers), and one portal is Chu yī lag-pa’ bzhī (Four Tributaries). The Chu ‘i zungs-pa’ bzhī live in the thirteen water castles; the lofty encampment (*sgal*), the vulture (of the sky) lofty

³⁶⁹ This is followed by a metaphor that sanctions the murder of the boy on the grounds that if it was not done when he was young, he would become the hateful enemy when grown up: *gdags man spar gyī tsha*’ // *chung du ma*’ *bsad na*’ / *skyes na*’ *dgra*’ (C.T. = *dgra*) *ru ldang* (C.T. = *sdang*) //.

abode (*brang*); the castle apportionment, the castle of the unyielding hall (*'brang*).³⁷⁰ Now (*do-mod*), high in the sky, is the gully of the sheltering (*khras*) mountain of escape. Established in the heights, established from the tradition, [the Chu yi zungs pa'] partake of pure libations.

de yi gchung (C.T. = *gcung*) *po ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *chu bdud ye ro blangs ste* // *bya che mer ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de rnams gyi* // *phyag brnyan dkar de yam ba dang* // *lcags de 'bar dang* // *mtsho ste khyil ba dang* // *chu ste 'khyil ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *bzhī* // *chu yi zungs pa' bzhī* // *yang de ltar bzhī* // *'o* // *chu blud* (C.T. = *glud*) *thams cad yang de la'* (C.T. = *la*) *'bul lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) // *chu yi zungs bzhī yang* // *pha ni gnam khol pha'* // *ma nī mtsho mo bdal drug du bshos na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *pho bo gcen po nī chu btsan rol pas bya'* (C.T. = *bya*) // *chu rta sngon po chibs su bjibs* (C.T. = *bcibs*) // *de de yi gcung po ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *chu btsan sngon pos 'bya'* (C.T. = *bya*) // *de yi gcung po ba chu btsan brgyal bas bya'* (C.T. = *bya*) // *chu mar* (C.T. = *dmar*) *po la'* (C.T. = *la*) *mnga' mdzad* // *chu rta nag po la bchibs* (C.T. = *bcibs*) // *chu yi btsan bzhī yang de ltar lags so* // *chu yi sgo ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *bzhī la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *skyi bu la sgo gcīg* // *mtsho gli* (= *gling*) *la sgo gcīg* // *chu bo bzhī la sgo gcīg* // *chu yi lag pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *bzhī la sgo gcīg* // *chu 'i* (C.T. = *chu yi*) *zungs pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *bzhī la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *chu mkhar bchu* (C.T. = *chu*) *gsum du srid do'* (C.T. = *do*) // *mtho ni sgai* (C.T. = *sgar*) *brang rgod gyi mtho* // *mkhar skal 'brang* (= *brang*) *rgod kyi mkhar / rgyang yang skal* (#) *bu cīg rgyang / do mod gnam gong la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *'bros gyi rī dang khras* C.T. = *'khras*) *kyi sul* // *mtho bzhengs lugs las bzhengs* // *bgyis la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *skyems gtsang mas gsol lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) // °°° //

Origins Myth No. 2

By virtue of their gender, the first story of the genesis of demons appears to refer to the aquatic slayers of men, while the second origins tale relays the story of a female water *dri* (14.3–15.1). This demoness arose from a woman who ill-advisedly decided to swing from a juniper tree. When the line supporting her broke, she was swept down a river to her death. It may be that this big (ancient) juniper was considered the abode of spirits, which were angered by the woman trespassing on their domain. The tale ends with the text prescribing the ritual constituents (*yas-stags*) and *tho*, which are stated to be like those noted above. This suggests that *Sha ru shul ston rabs* had at least one companion text, as do many Tibetan ritual works today. In any case, the ritual impedimenta cited have analogues in the origins myths of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*:

Also, the *chu-dri* of women. Skar-bu cīg-sman was received as the wife and mate of G.yu-rje yag-pa. One day a demon (*gthon*) lodged (*zhugs*) in the mind (*thugs*) of the woman. She tied a well-tanned (*mnyen*) cord of deer hide (*sha-'bren*) on a sky juniper.³⁷¹ She was playing (swinging from the tree) very enjoyably when the well-tanned deer hide cord broke. She fell into the depths of the sky (very big) river with a powerful current (*rba-drag*). She was swept away (*g.yengs*) by the current.³⁷² She died (*gum*) as a *dri* and *bzhun* (?). The ritual constituents and *tho* like the tradition above. It is finished.

³⁷⁰ This is followed by an incomplete line that also describes the castle. In this line a synonym for castle or fortress, *rgyang* (literally: walls), is employed: *rgyang yang skal* (#) *bu cīg rgyang* //.

³⁷¹ *Gnam shug-lo*. This describes a very large tree whose boughs seem to spread far out into the sky.

³⁷² This line begins with the words *tho-drag*, which seems to indicate that the current was extremely strong.

yang bud med gyi chu dri la' (C.T. = *la*) // *skar bu cig sman* // *g.yu rje yag pa 'i khab dang dbyal du bzhes* // *nyi ma nyin cig na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *thugs su gthon* (C.T. = *gdon*) *zhugs ste* // *gnam shug lo bzangs la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *sha 'breng mnyen gyis bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) // *rtse (= rtsed) zhing 'rol* (C.T. = *rol*) *rol na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *sha 'breng mnyen mo chad* // *gnam chu rba drag steng (= gting) du lhung* // *tho drag rba la'* (C.T. = *la*) *g.yengs de* // *dri dang bzhun du gum* // *yas stags* (C.T. = *rtags*) *dang mtho (= tho) yi gzhung gong ma dang dra' 'o* // *rdzogs so* // °°° //

Origins Myth No. 3

The third etiologic tale of Chapter II is for a *btsan-dri* demon (15.1–15.7). This story employs mythic themes that were and still are pervasive in Tibet. The *btsan-dri* appears to be the type of demon associated with death through armaments, the killer of warriors and the violent. Firstly, the dawn of the universe is invoked, the ultimate source of all things. In identical or similar language, Eternal Bon has widely preserved this generative nexus at the beginning of time. Likewise, the celebrated mythic theme of the various aspects of existence appearing between the matched sky and earth is articulated here. As with other elements of creation, the text states that sharp-edged weaponry shares this same hoary wellspring. Thereafter, the *dri* of this narrative began its life as a piscine creature:

In primitive ancient times (*gna' dang-po*), the primordium (*gzhe*) in the primal age (*thog-ma'*): From where did the *btsan-dri* arise? From where did the sharp weapons spread? They arose in the suspended (*'phub*) blue sky of existence.³⁷³ They are the child of existence of the sky and the earth, these two. The father Gnam-bdag sached-po and the mother, these two, making love, mated. In the next year (*sang-phod lo*), there was just one round (*gril*) egg in her body. Counted (*'grang*) in some months and days [afterwards] there was something like a fish swimming (*'phyo*) in her womb (*lhum*).³⁷⁴

gna' dang po // *gzhe* (C.T. = *ye*) *thog ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) // *btsan dri byung ga' nas byung* // *rno mtshon dar gang nas dar* // *srid ba sngon pos gnam 'phub* (C.T. = *phub*) // *grags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *gtang cen skyi' bting* // *gnam sa'* (C.T. = *sa*) *gnyis las bsrid pa'i bu* // *yab gnam bdag sa ched pos bgyi 'o'* // *yum gnyis bshos su bshos ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *sang phod lo dus na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *sku na'* (C.T. = *na*) *sgong tsam gril* (C.T. = *dril*) // *zhag zla tsam 'grang* (C.T. = *bgrang*) // *lhum na'* (C.T. = *na*) *nya'* (C.T. = *nya*) *tsam 'phyo* //

The last two lines of folio No. 15 speak of the *dri* that emerged from the egg (*rgongs*, C.T. = *sgong*) of the *ge-ma*, a class of demons in the Zhang-zhung language, which is associated with the dead and funerary phenomena (*'phangs*).³⁷⁵ The second line was linked to another line, although that line and the rest of the story and perhaps others as well are absent from the extant text. That is because there was at least one more folio belonging to *Sha ru shul ston rabs* interpolated between folio No. 15 and what is designated No. 16 in *Gtam shul dga'thang 'bum pa che*.

³⁷³ The next line of the text has to do with the earth spread out below: *grags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *gtang cen skyi'* (= *kyis*) (+ *sa*) *bting* //.

³⁷⁴ The signification of the next line of the text has not been ascertained: *sha lam gzhan du 'grang* (C.T. = *bgrang*) //.

What 'counted as another deer path' has to do with the storyline is debatable.

³⁷⁵ *De nas rgongs kyī ge ma du gong ma' 'phangs 'phangs su gsol* // *'phar dang dri dags dkar po ni* //.

Origins Myth No. 4

The fourth origins tale is bereft of an indeterminate portion of its first part, complicating comprehension of the remaining portion (16.1–17.5). Understanding the story is further impeded by the very nature of the account, a description of a ritual preceding actual burial. This extinct religious activity is far removed from the intellectual universe of later generations of Tibetans. Given these impediments, the paraphrasing of the text submitted below does not attempt to capture with any fidelity the grammatical person intended by the author. Problematic grammatical constructions are also sidestepped in order to avoid introducing too much ambiguity in the presentation of the story. This origins tale is chiefly concerned with the funeral procession of an individual named Chog-rje btsan-ba. In conformance with the storyline of other origins myths in Chapter II of *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, he was the victim of a *chu-dri*. With the consummation of the funeral expounded upon, this demon was defeated.

The extant text begins with a maternal uncle (*zhang-po*) and what appears to be a burial shroud (*spur-khab*). Chog-rje btsan-ba was covered with the white sheep [skin]. The tan (*dro-bo*, C.T. = *gro-bo*) Spu (= Spug)³⁷⁶ sheep was offered as the *skyibs-lug*.³⁷⁷

The next part of the tale describes a funeral procession of retainers and sacrificial animals, the grieving mother of the deceased, and a few ritual operations. A blue Spug *do-ma* was offered.³⁷⁸ The Spug hybrid yak with long (*rings*, C.T. = *ring*) horns was loaded and followed behind (*bdad*, C.T. = *'ded*). The many Spug servants (*'bangs*) followed (*gdad*, C.T. = *'ded*) closely behind (*brungs*, C.T. = *drung*). In [a pile of] all types of incense (*gsang*, C.T. = *bsang*) as large as Ri-rab lhun-po (the world mountain), a spear with a white cloth of the *lha* was erected, the *gsang-po mdung-thub*. The Spug hybrid yak with long horns made (*bdab*, C.T. = *btad*) the speech of three grunts (*ngur*). A conch [white] dog (*gyib*, C.T. = *khyi*?) followed afterwards. The sorrowful mother (*skyo-ma 'ba'*) [of the deceased] was unconscious (*rgyal*, C.T. = *brgyal*). Her hair (*lem-bu*, C.T. = *len-bu*) spread over her chest. A wind (*lhags*, i.e., breath) was blown (*drangs-ba*) on her face (*zhal*). The next line of the text has something to do with a blue Spug horse. Then the Spug *grang-ma ru-rings* (a type of livestock with long horns) was milked for its yogurt (*zho*

³⁷⁶ The various funerary animal offerings in this story are described as or belong to the Spug, an enigmatic term that appears to be a proper noun. For Spug as the name of a clan, see Macdonald 1971 p. 266; Stein 2010 (*Antiqua* III) p. 182, (*Antiqua* V), p. 261; Uray 1972, pp. 16, 17; for Spug as a place name, see Stein 2010 (*Antiqua* I), p. 14. Richardson (1998: 30) notes that Spug occurs in a list of principalities as a minister of Skyi (its ruler was named Rmang-po). According to Richardson (*ibid.*), Spug has a non-Tibetan ring to it and may derive from an eastern branch of the widespread complex of peoples known as Zhang-zhung. Richardson further notes (*ibid.*) that Spug gyim-thang rmang-bu was involved in an alliance to establish the grandfather and father of Srong-btsan in power, circa 580 CE; and Spug gyim-rtsan rma-chung was sent to Zhang-zhung in 653 CE as its administrator. It does make political sense that one of the region's own was sent to govern it. An Upper Tibetan localization for the word Spug accords with the text and the denizens of the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet. Yet, it is also possible that in this origins myth rather than the clan itself, *spug* may denote a precious substance.

³⁷⁷ In the celebrated ritual text *Klu 'bum nag po* there is an account about Ston-pa gshen-rab in the form of a small child known as Yid kyi khye'u-chung, who explains to the archetypal funerary priest Mu-cho ldem-drug that his ritual labors were contraindicated. Among the objects noted by Yid kyi khye'u-chung are those of our text: the *skyibs-lug* followed by the *spur-khab* (probably a burial shroud) and lambskin robe (*tsha-log*, C.T. = *tshar-slog*). See Bellezza 2008, p. 491. Mention of this *Klu 'bum* funerary narrative is also found in Stein 2010 (*Antiqua* V), pp. 265, 266.

³⁷⁸ In *Klu 'bum nag po*, in order to subdue the *dri* killers of humanity, the *dri* horse as well as the *dri* bird, *dri* sheep and *dri* yak are found. See Bellezza 2008, p. 491.

bzhos). The Spug goat *skyi-mtshal*³⁷⁹ was milked for its yogurt. The text then mentions the first milk of lactation (*bris-ma*), followed by a black deer. The result of these ritual actions was that, “The water *dri* was subdued” (*chu-dri bdul* (C.T. = ‘*dul*) *lags*).³⁸⁰

The last line of the story notes the four (*bzha* = *bzhi*) great *chu-bdud*. As we shall see in the next origins tale, the Chu-bdud chen-po *bzhī* may well be the water monsters of the headwaters of the four major rivers that arise in southwestern Tibet.

Origins Myth No. 5

The fifth origins tale details the recovery of the consciousness principle of an individual who was killed directly or indirectly by the Chu-bdud chen-po *bzhī* (17.5–18.7). The funerary activities were carried out by a personality known as the *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags. This is likely to be the same *dri-bon* who features in Chapter I of this text. This is supported in origins myth No. 6 of the text, which presents the *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags as instrumental in the creation of the first deer *dri* receptacle. The procedures executed by Dbal-lcags are not all comprehensible and the storyline is befogged, compelling me to treat this origins tale in an abridged fashion.

The narrative begins by furnishing the parentage of the four great *chu-bdud*. The father was called Ji-che mer-ba. The mother was called Mtsho-bdud sa yi mer-ba. They had four sons: the big brother was called Gung-bdud yam-pa. The next (younger) one was called Chu-bdud ‘khor-bzhis. The next (younger) one was Chu-bdud khyil-ba’. [The youngest brother] was G.yu’i-gdung (Lineage of Turquoise), these four. Apparently, the elder brother *chu blud* (= *bdud*) became embroiled in a fight (*thus-bthab*, C.T. = *mthus-’thab*) that led to someone’s death. A few syllables are missing from the text here but it appears that someone recovered the corpse of the victim. Afterwards, something was hung on the ‘iron of four corners’ (*lcags kyi zur-bzhī*) alongside (*sbred*, C.T. = *sprad?*) the corpse (*spur*) and body (*ring*). The mind (*thugs*) and soul (*bla*) were also obtained.

The *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags is now introduced into the narrative. He determined either through divination (*mo*) and/or prognosticatory rites (*phwya*) that in the beginning, the deceased (*drongs-ba*, C.T. = *grongs-ba*) [of the violent water death], who was carried downstream, had his soul (*brla*, C.T. = *bla*) swept upward into the mouth of the four great animals (*sems-can*). These four animals are the *chu-bdud* themselves. Dbal-lcags also instructed that the ransom offering

³⁷⁹ This word denotes a reddish color on one or more parts of the goat’s body.

³⁸⁰ Four more lines complete this origins tale, the meaning of which is obscure: *shīd gdang pa*’ (C.T. = *pa*) *nī mag pa* ‘*os bzang ngo*’ (C.T. = *ngo*) // *do rgyal thugs kyī sgom bu nas* // * *yab mes khrīn* (C.T. = *phrin?*) *du tsha*’ ‘*i do nod* // *myī* ‘*i sku rgyan gzhan du myī gdang* (C.T. = *gtong*) *ngo*’ (C.T. = *ngo*) // . These lines pertain to the *shīd*, which in this reference refers to the latter part of the funerary rite. It is suitable (‘*os bzang*) for the son-in-law (*mag-pa*) to perform (*gdang*) it. The paternal ancestors (*yab-mes*) give a message (*khrīn?*) to their grandchildren that their jewelry is not to be disposed of (?).

* *Sgom-bu* is a word used in the Hor-skad dialect to denote a flower bud. In this context, it may refer to the essence of the deceased’s mind. The obsolete term *do-rgyal* (literally: ‘victorious island’ or ‘royal island’) cannot be satisfactorily defined. It may possibly denote a safe zone in which the dead is contained just before the burial of the corpse and the consignment of the consciousness principle to the heavens. On a purely speculative basis, the Lamaist word for the intermediate state after death, *bar-do*, could be viewed as derived directly or through intermediary etymons from the term *do-rgyal*.

of the mind (*thugs-blud*, C.T. = *thugs-glud*) was to be dispatched / performed (*gdang*, C.T. = *gtong*) without blood. This priest also mentioned a broken box (*sbrum-chags*, C.T. = *sgrum-chag*) as part of the *glud*. Then horn shavings (*zhogs*), gold shavings, gold boxes, and turquoise boxes were given into the hands of the four great animals. Consequently, the soul and mind of the deceased were had (*mtshis* (= *mchis*) *so*). Although the tale ends here, the recovery of the consciousness principle of the departed presages the successful completion of the funeral and his or her ascension into paradise.

Origins Myth No. 6

In the sixth origins tale of *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, a lord is killed while leading a hybrid yak (*mdzo*) across one of the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet (18.7–22.7). This account alludes to fish as once being part of the Tibetan diet, as do various other Tibetan literary sources.³⁸¹ It appears that the plunder of aquatic resources by a gluttonous lord led to his demise.

The story begins by announcing that there is no *dri-sha*, the deer receptacle (*ten*) for the soul of the *dri*. The *dri-sha* is tantamount to the horned deer that shows the way in Chapter I, the cervid that guides the deceased, extricating from the netherworld and delivering to the otherworld. In this origins tale the parentage of this miraculous deer is given. The text verifies that this deer who is named Kha'-rgongs sol kyi sha resided in Upper Tibet, by noting that he drank from the Upper Brahmaputra (Chu-bo 'ga-'ga). The deer lived on an island with Rgyal-lha dkar-po (White Lha of Victory), a figure who appears to be the territorial deity of that place. As much as an island in this mythic format can be localized, it might be identified with one of the Upper Tibetan lakes lying to the north of the Upper Brahmaputra (now called Rta-mchog gtsang-po). Those bodies of water with islands include Ngang-la ring-mtsho, Da-roq mtsho and Bkra-ri gnam-mtsho / Kre-de'i mtsho. Whether or not this account is connected to any of these islands, they were indeed loci of important archaic horizon settlements.³⁸² The story continues by recounting how the *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags conferred the wool of the deer on seven households. This appears to signal the creation of a fundamental bond between humans and cervids. Next, Dbal-lcags ritually prepared the deer to occupy the place of the offending *dri*. This sublime cervid functioned as the celestial transport animal, the one who could surmount the full range of postmundane heights:

Furthermore, at that time,³⁸³ the soul site (*bla'-chags*) did not have the receptacle. Furthermore, at that time, that which captures (*gzung-'tshal*), the *dri-sha* speech: The father (*pha'-bo*) of the deer, Kha'-sha 'om-po, the mother (*ma'-mo*) of the deer, Gla-me nyag-cig.³⁸⁴ To say [the name of the son] of their coupling: Kha'-rgongs sol kyi sha' with the undercoat as white as a snow mountain. His fur was as black as charcoal (*gdong-sol*). He drank [the water of] the Brahmaputra. With Rgyal-lha dkar-po, the land that he lived on was the holy place (*gnas*) on the lake island of existence (*bsrid-pa' 'i mtsho-gling*). The *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags allotted (*bkye*) seven

³⁸¹ For example, see the Old Tibetan Chronicle reference to the fish of southwestern Tibet in Uray 1972, p. 10.

³⁸² For information on these insular archaeological sites, see Bellezza 2001; 2008; 2011a.

³⁸³ This is the probable meaning of *da'-rung da'-cung du*. See *supra*, p. 165 (fn. 287).

³⁸⁴ The *kha*' element of the father's name probably refers to the Tibetan red deer (see *supra*, pp. 64, 65) and the mother appears to be a kind of musk deer (*gla*). This ostensible mixing of two different cervid species reflects the precedential or seminal quality of the *dri-sha*.

households (*myi-khyim*) the great wool (*bal-che*) [of the deer].³⁸⁵ He hung a sheet (*zhog-mo*) of iron on [the *dri* deer]. He deployed³⁸⁶ that white and charcoal (black) deer above the thirteen heights (*mtho bcu-gsum*).³⁸⁷ The positioning of the *dri* was the position in the deer. The positioning of the deer was the position in the heights.

da' rung da' cung du' (C.T. = du) // bla' (C.T. = bla) chags kyi ten (C.T. = rten) ma mchis na' (C.T. = na) // da' rung da' chung du' (C.T. = du) // dri sha gzang (gzung, C.T. = bzung) tshal skad na' (C.T. = na) // sha ba' (C.T. = ba) 'i pha' bo' ni // kha' sha 'om po lags // sha ba' (C.T. = ba) 'i ma' (C.T. = ma) mo {#} gla me nyag cig lags / sha ba' (C.T. = ba) nyis (= gnyis) smos kyiis kha' rgongs sol kyi sha' (C.T. = sha) // bar (= bal) na' (C.T. = na) kha rgongs (= gangs) bas kyang dkar // spu na' (C.T. = na) gdang (= gdong, C.T. = sdong) sol bas kyang gnag // chu bong (= bo) 'ga 'ga la' (C.T. = la) ni thung // rgyal lha dkar po la' (C.T. = la) ni sa' (C.T. = la) // bsrid (C.T. = srid) pa' (C.T. = pa) 'i mtsho gling la' (C.T. = la) gnas // dri bon dbal lcags kyiis // bal che myi (C.T. = mi) khyim bdun ni bkye' // lcags kyi zhog (C.T. = zhogs) mos ni bdags (C.T. = btags) // khar (= dkar) sol kyi sha ba' (C.T. = ba) de' (C.T. = de) // mtho bcu gsum gyi gong du 'phab (C.T. = phab) // dri chags sha la chags // sha chags mtho la chags //

The text continues by reiterating that the deer was made docile enough to serve humanity. This seems to describe a taming process, which must have entailed corralling and habituation with humans. This lore accords with the milking of cervids and the use of their hair to make clothing, as related in the illuminated funerary manuscript. The *dri-sha* was feted with a number of offerings including antelope blood (*gtsos-khrag*), which was applied to the animal's coat. With the completion of this story, the text introduces another facet of the *smrang*, that of the lord of the Spug. This nobleman, as he was addressing his retainers (*skol*), told them that while he had eaten all sorts of animals, he had never eaten the miraculous deer Kha-bo sol (*sic*), nor had he

³⁸⁵ The Eternal Bon ritual text *Mu ye pra phud phy'a'i mthur thug* contains an origins myth for a deer that served as the support or receptacle (*rten*) for the *phywa* (basis for good fortune) and *g.yang* (good fortune capability) of humans and their ancestral deities. This magical deer named Dung-sha shel-ru can (Crystal-horned Conch Deer) lived on an island located north of the world mountain, Ri-rab lhun-po. In primal times, guided by the goddess Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal, Phywa-sras sgam-po / Lha-sras sgam-po (Lha-bo lha-sras) reached this island and after much negotiation was able to capture Dung-sha shel-ru can for humanity. For this myth, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 472–483. *Sha ru shul ston rabs* also depicts the island dwelling deer as a good fortune bestowing creature, as portrayed through the distribution of its 'wool' to seven prototypic or primal families. Traditionally, sheep wool and the downy undercoat of wild ungulates (especially when white in color) are considered an auspicious material and are used in a variety of rituals. The great benefits that accrue from insular deer also recall the sacred geographic qualities of islands in the lakes of Upper Tibet. For the role of the deer in good fortune summoning (*g.yang-gug*) and sacrificial rites, as examined from an Eternal Bon textual and Central Himalayan ethnographic perspective, see Ramble forthcoming.

³⁸⁶ 'Phab. This word is the equivalent of the C.T. *phab* (to have brought down) or is closely related to it, but with a somewhat different meaning in this context.

³⁸⁷ 'Thirteen heights' are also known in the sacred geographic tradition of modern day Upper Tibet. In eastern Nag-tshang there is the Skor-tsho'i shig-nyin gyis mtho-po bcu-gsum (Encircling Daylight of the Thirteen Heights), which refers to thirteen mountains that circumscribe a long arc around the east side of the Shan-rtsa Valley and Skyaring mtsho / Ske-ring mtsho. These thirteen mountains or heights (*mtho-po*) are said to trace the passage of the sun. The thirteen are given as follows (from south to the northwest): Rdo-chen srid-lung mtho-po, Smug-tshogs khung-lung mtho-po, Mdzo-po smag-spod mtho-po, Khyi-shig ra-zor mtho-po, Kha-shag ngang-thung mtho-po, Span-chung dmag-zor mtho-po, Gangs-ma'i g.ya'-skya mtho-po, Ga-gor ga-la mtho-po, Spu-dmar glog-dmar mtho-po, Gzi-dmar rgod-tshang mtho-po, Rong-nag mgar-tshang mtho-po, Grog-po skras-thod mtho-po, and Phrad-nyas gnyan-thod mtho-po. The spellings provided above should not be taken as necessarily authoritative. It was with considerable difficulty that, in 1997, I located one man in the Shan-rtsa County seat who had written down these names some years earlier. It is alleged by residents of Shan-rtsa that the tradition of the thirteen heights is an ancient one.

burnt the wood of Rgyal-lha dkar-po. The island where these two extraordinary figures lived is characterized as being beyond (*pha-rol*) the river (Brahmaputra), hinting that the text has a real Upper Tibetan geographic location in mind:

Then the wildness and the tameness of the deer were separated. Fire and water were conferred on the [deer] as the responding signs (*gda'-blan*), and on its fur medicinal herbs and antelope blood were brushed (*byugs*).³⁸⁸ The lord and servants (*khol*) reciprocated (*bjal*) [the deer in this way]. The servants and the lord discussed this care [lavished on the deer]. Lord Sbug-po said, 'While I have eaten every kind of [deer] imaginable, I have not eaten the deer of Kha-bo sol.³⁸⁹ While I have burnt every kind of wood imaginable, I have not burnt [the wood] of Rgyal-lha dkar-po. On the far side of the Brahmaputra grows [the wood] of Rgyal-lha dkar-po. On that island lives the deer of Kha-bo sol.'

de nas sha ba rgod g.yung dbye' (C.T. = *dbye*) 'o // *me chu dang sprad gda'* (C.T. = *brda*) *blan spu* {*la*} // *rtsi sman dang gtsos khrag gyis* (C.T. = *gis*) *byugs la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *ci go cog bye' la* // *rje dang khol du bjal* (C.T. = 'jal) *lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) // *skol* (C.T. = *khol*) *rje'* (C.T. = *rje*) 'shos zhes bgyi 'o // *rje sbug po dang gyi chid* (C.T. = *mchid*) *nas* // *sha ma zos rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *zos kyang* // *kha bo sol gyi sha ma zos* // *shing ma bus rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *bus kyang* // *rgyal lha dkar po yi me ma bus* // *chu bo 'ga 'ga 'i pha rol na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *rgyal lha dkar po skyes de mchis so'* (C.T. = *so*) // *de yi glang* (= *gling*) *la kha bo sol kyī sha ba gnas so'* (C.T. = *so*) //

Charged by the excitement of gaining a new experience, the Spug lord went off to hunt the deer. He attempted to create a bridge out of white cloth to span the Brahmaputra. The bridge the Spug lord tried to build was composed of silk or another high quality textile (*dar*), in the form of *phug-rgu* (?). From the nature of the material it can be assumed that this was some type of suspension bridge.³⁹⁰ Unsuccessful in his bid to span the river, the Spug nobleman had no choice but to wait until winter, when the river was frozen. However, he did not wait long enough. The lord was making the crossing with a hybrid yak when in the middle of the river he was pulled down by a *chu-srin*³⁹¹ and *chu-dri*. The hybrid yak managed to survive but the lord lost his life. That he was crossing into the territory of a probable territorial deity of immense importance surely did not help his cause:

[The Spug lord] went to hunt deer (*sha-shor*).³⁹² He erected ('drangs) a bridge ('zam) of white silk *phug-rgu*. The king of winter (*rgun*) controls (*bstus*) the sky, land and water.³⁹³ The blue-colored water was frozen with white ice.³⁹⁴ Thereafter, [the lord] led a Spug hybrid yak (*brdzo*) with long horns. The lord went to cross the river.

³⁸⁸ The anointing of the deer's fur in this manner set it apart as the *dri-sha*. This is followed by the line: *ci go cog bye' la* //. This may signify 'all other things' (ornaments), as in the C.T. expressions: *yod do cog* and *ci cog*.

³⁸⁹ *Kha bo sol gyi sha ma zos rgu zos kyang* //. I highlight this line as another readily recognizable example of the great refinement that was attained in the prose of the Old Tibetan language.

³⁹⁰ I know from my peregrinations in much of the Tibetan world that suspension bridges were traditionally made of braided willow twigs or yak hair cords.

³⁹¹ In the Indian cultural context, the *chu-srin* is often equated with the riverine crocodile. In the native Tibetan setting, however, this is also a type of water monster (see fig. 13).

³⁹² This line includes the syllables *kha'i shing*, which seems to mean 'wood of the Tibetan red deer'. Perhaps this refers to a hunting implement.

³⁹³ This sentence figuratively portrays how in the middle of the winter the landscape is locked in a deep freeze.

³⁹⁴ *Chab-rum*. This quaint O.T. term literally means 'womb of the water'. Also: *chab-rom* (Das 1902: 410).

In the middle of the river there was Chu-srin de-bos and in the middle of the river there was Chu-dri zang-g.yag.³⁹⁵ They pulled (*'phol*) the hybrid yak (*mrdzo*) by the nose. The man was carried down. The hybrid yak carried away was delivered upwards. That degenerated (*'phan*) lord died. His vital force expired.³⁹⁶

kha'i shing sha shor du gshegs so' (C.T. = *so*) // *dar dkar phug rgu yi chu la'* (C.T. = *la*) '*zam* (C.T. = *zam*) '*drangs* (C.T. = '*drang*) *na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *kyi rgyal po yis gnam sa chu 'is bstus* (C.T. = *bsdus*) / *chu 'i kha'i dog sngon // po la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *chab rum dkar por chags so'* (C.T. = *so* // *de nas spug brdzo* (C.T. = *mdzo*) *ru rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *khrid nas // rje chu rgal du gshegs so'* (C.T. = *so* // *chu 'i gzhung shed du chu srin de bos yis // chu yi gzhung shed du chu dri zang g.yag kyis // mrdzo* (C.T. = *mdzo*) *yi sna 'phol te'* (C.T. = *te*) // *mi kha' thur du khyer // mrdzo* (C.T. = *mdzo*) *khyer gyen du khyer // rje'* (C.T. = *rje*) '*phan de drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) / *stug ste drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) //



Fig. 13. Two chu-srin heads of typical Tibetan style flanking a panther-like head. This copper-alloy ornament (5.5 cm in height) of the thog-lcags class can probably be attributed to the early historic period (650–1000 CE). Private collection

The next of kin of the Spug lord were deeply saddened by his death. The servants (*'bangs*) of the deceased called in four funerary priests to conduct his funeral: the *dri-bon* Ra'-lcag (*sic*), the *dbal-bon* Rum-po³⁹⁷, the *rgod-bon* (vulture priest) Thang-yag,³⁹⁸ and the *chab-gshen* Gyur-bu.

³⁹⁵ C.T. = *Zang-yag*. This term is regularly used in Eternal Bon ritual works. Here it signifies that this creature had very pointed fangs. See *supra*, p. 154 (fn. 246).

³⁹⁶ *Stug ste drongs* //. The O.T. term *stug* probably denotes the vital energy or core wind associated with human life. It appears to be etymologically related to the C.T. words *rtug* (flatulence) and *thugs* (heart, mind).

³⁹⁷ For background information on this priest, one of the founders of the funerary tradition in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 377, 379 (n. 69). Also see Norbu 1995, p. 147; Norbu 2009, p. 78. In Pt 1285 (Ins. r153, r154) the *bal-bon* Rum / Rom-po (*sic*) performs the *gto* and *dpyad* in conjunction with healing an illness (entire story to ln. r159). Cf. Stein 2010 (*Antiqua V*), p. 259.

³⁹⁸ Rather than a priest specializing in the death rituals of warriors (*rgod*), the *rgod-bon* are better defined as 'vulture priests'. This is supported by the Pt 1194 origins tale of the funerary ritual wing instrument. Its father is the lammergeyer named Rgod-po thang-yag (his parentage is given in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur; see *supra*, p. 47 [fn. 70]). It would appear that this vulture lent his name to the *rgod-bon* Thang-yag. If so, it can be easily imagined that his priestly lineage and its emblems and tools pertained to lammergeyers. In one text explicating the origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, Thang-yag is said to have propagated the funerary ritual at the *rgod* (vulture) country, Ye-sangs thang-bdal (Purified

The latter figure appears to have been a specialist in rituals related to water (*chab*) and death by drowning. Thus far, I have not located this priest's name in any other textual source. That four legendary adepts were convened to conduct the funerary rituals for the Spug lord underlines his high social standing and ancestral importance. The basic ritual functions stipulated by the priests are of the kind already examined. However, the corpse of the lord still had to be recovered if the funerary rite was to be profitable:

His father, mother and sister, these three, [were so sad] that they started to beat their chests (*brang rgag du bcom*). They cried like an avalanche (*rbab ltar dril*). Then the ten servants of Sbug invited the *dri-bon* Ra'-lcags, the *dbal-bon* Rum-po, the *rgod-bon* Thang-yag ltem-ba, and the *chab-gshen* Gyur-bu to make the *gto* (beneficial rites) and *dpyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites). Thus the father Ra'-lcag (*sic*), said, 'He died, he died in the water. To subdue the water *dri* do in this way.' He said, '[Erect] the thirteen *dri-tho*, the thirteen *dri-rgyang* and the thirteen *dri-mtho* on top of one another.' He then said, 'To subdue the *dri*, we have not the corpse (*sbur*) and body (*rñg*) [of the deceased].' Castle...

pha dang yum lcang dang gsum gyis / bya' brang rgag du bcom // bshums mo rbab ltar dril (C.T. = 'dril) // *de nas sbug 'bangs bcu yis // dri bon ra'* (C.T. = *ra*) *lcags dang / dpal (= dbal) bon rum po dang // rgod bon thang yag ltem ba dang // chab gshen gyur bu gnyer nas // gto dang dbyad (= dpyad) bgyis na'* (C.T. = *na*) *pha ra'* (C.T. = *ra*) *lcag* (C.T. = *lcags*) *zhal nas // drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) *ni chu ru drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) *pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *lags // chu dri 'dul 'tshal skad nas // dri mtho (= tho) bcu gsum / dri rgyang bcu gsum / dri mtho bcu gsum // brtsigs zhig skad nas // dri 'dul na'* (C.T. = *na*) *sbur* (C.T. = *spur*) *dang rñg ma mchis // mkhar...*

The above paragraph concludes the text on folio No. 21. There is at least one folio missing between this leaf and the one labeled No. 22 in *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che*. At least some of the missing text must have described how the corpse and mind of the Spug lord were recovered. The story of the funeral of the Spug lord picks up midstream with the construction of a ritual boat. This model boat is laden with various ritual instruments of the type already encountered. Its function was to divine the cause of death. It was revealed that the Spug lord had consumed fresh fish meat and blood, sealing his fate. It is written that the sons of the four *rgyal-che* (great monarchs) had perished as a result of his gluttony. The four *rgyal-che* appear to be identical to or closely related to the four great animals (*sems-can*), the creatures that rule over the four rivers of southwestern Tibet. Their 'sons' were lesser aquatic animals such as fish. The cause of death in this origins tale indicates that in early historic-period Tibet a taboo against eating fish was conceived of as having prehistoric antecedents. Nonetheless, there are a number of Classical Tibetan accounts of fishermen in Upper Tibet in the biographies of saints set in the 8th to 13th century CE, so it seems likely that there was not a blanket ban on eating fish in ancient Tibet. To this day, many Tibetans disapprove of eating fish caught in their rivers and lakes.

Through ritual inducement, one of the killers of the Spug lord, Chu-srin rgyal-ba, admits to the ritualists that he was indeed responsible for the death of the Spug lord. From what remains of this origins tale its ending appears premature. It is likely though that the Spug lord's death ritual

Primordial Uninterrupted Plain). This place name appears to be a metaphor for the limpidity and vastness of space. In another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the 'dur-gshen Rma-da is recorded as instructing both Dbal-bon gong-rum (*sic*) and Thang-yag ldam-pa (*sic*) in the methods of slaughtering the *sri* and defeating the carnivore demons. For these Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur accounts, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 378, 386; for the pertinent tale in Pt 1194, see *ibid.*, pp. 506–510.

was detailed in the missing portion of the text; this being a kind of postscript to the divinatory functions that accompanied the funeral:

A big (*ched-po*) boat (*'dru-gzings*) was made, on which *shing-rings*, white ornaments (*rgyan-kar*), an arrow with a flexible shaft (*mda'-rgyud ldem-pa*), and thirteen types of cloth and *srogs-bzhi* (four sacrificial animal offerings?) were placed on each corner and a golden lamp hung upon it. From it [it was revealed] that [the Spug lord] had eaten fresh (*lon*) fish meat. He had drunk fresh fish blood. The sons of the four *rgyal-che* died in the water. [The Spug lord] ended up in the stomachs of the four great animals. Chu-srin rgyal-ba said,³⁹⁹ 'I live in the river and drink the four waters. I was appointed the butcher wielding sharp-edged weapons (*rno-ba'i mtshon*) that cut [the lord's] life-force (*srog*). I forged (*brtungs*) the water iron *'dro'-bo* (?) sharp-edged weapons, separating [the lord] from the bodies of the fish. I carried away (*'khyil*) [the lord] into the middle of the river.'

... 'des 'dru (C.T. = *gru*) gzings ched (C.T. = *chen*) po bcas // shing rings rgyan kar (C.T. = *dkar*) dang // mda' rgyud ldem pa dang // dar sna bcu gsum dang // srogs (C.T. = *srog*) bzhi zur bzur (C.T. = *zur*) bzhag la // nas gser sgron btag (C.T. = *btags*) nas nya sha lon (C.T. = *r lon*) du zos // nya khrag lon (C.T. = *r lon*) du thungs // rgyal che bzhi 'i // bu chur shi ba yin no // sems can chen po 'i ltor chu song bya ba de yin no' (C.T. = *no*) / de bcas chu srin rgyal ba'i mchid nas / nga ni chu la gnas pa bzh'i chu la thung ba' (C.T. = *ba*) yin no' (C.T. = *no*) // srog gcod cing shan bar bskos ba yin bas // rno ba'i mtshon gzung brgyos // chu lcags 'dra' bo la rno yi mtshon brtungs (C.T. = *brdung*) nya yi lus la dbye blangs // chu 'i gzhung la 'khyil (C.T. = *khyel*) ste so //

Origins Myth No. 7

This abridged origins tale enumerates the livestock wealth of a Spug / Sbug family (22.7–23.5). It may have been composed to show that the Spug owned the special types of animals needed to conduct the funerals of their clan members. The son of this story, Sbug-bu cig-ba' thang, may be the victim in the previous etiologic myth. If so, then this account also provides the names of his father, mother and sister. The yaks, sheep and goats that are noted must have acted as model offerings for concurrent death rituals associated with the reading of the text. Geographic indicators divulged in the story include the 'north' (Byang-thang) and Rtsang (the province and/or the river):

³⁹⁹ Chu-srin rgyal-ba' (*sic*) is also found in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (Pt 1287, lns. 517–519), as part of a mythical account: "Inside a great lake dwelt Chu-srin rgyal-ba'. The heavens cast down meteors (*lce*) and slew Chu-srin rgyal-ba in the water. If thunder and lightning, these two, cast down tongues of fire, that which is not harder than a rock formation shall be split asunder" (*mtsho ched po 'i nang na / chu srin rgyal ba' 'dug na / gnam las che (= lce) phab ste // chu srin rgyal ba chu 'i nang du bsad do // 'brug dang klag* (C.T. = *glog*) gnyis kyis lce phab na{s} brag las sra ba myed pa yang dral lo /). I am indebted to Brandon Dotson for bringing this reference to my attention. He also generously provided me with a translation, to which I conform in all but superficial ways. Also see Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946, p. 169. From geographic indications given in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, it appears that the lake noted above in the Old Tibetan Chronicle was located in Upper Tibet. Here is yet another example of how narrative elements disseminated widely between the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa documents.

At one time, in the Spug country Upper Sbug (*sic*), the father was Sbug-rje sbug-po thang. The mother was Lha-za sgong-mo. The offspring of their mating in the season was born as the son and daughter. The son's name was Sbug-bu cig-ba' thang. The daughter's name was Lcam cig-ma'. What was the property possessed by the son and the daughter, these two? They had the wild yak ('brong-bu) of the north, the *bzhī*-*'brul-ba* (?) of Rtsang, the Sbug hybrid yak with long horns, and the elder sister (*sring-mo*) female hybrid yak of the Sbug.⁴⁰⁰ They possessed seven herds of Sbug sheep [and] one herd of Sbug reddish goats.⁴⁰¹ They possessed many (*mangs*) Sbug servants.⁴⁰²

re shig re shig na' (C.T. = *na*) // *spug yul sbug stod na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *pha'* (C.T. = *pha*) *nĩ sbug rje sbug po thang* // *ma ni lha za sgong mo dang* // *shos* (= *bshos*) *dang nam gyi sras* // *lcam dral gnyis su blham* (= *bltams*) // *mying po sbug bu cig ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *thang* // *sring mo lcam cig ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *dang* // *lcam 'dral de gnyis la dkor du ci mang* (= *mnga'*) *na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *byang gyi 'brong bu dang* // *rtsang gyi bzhī 'brul ba dang* // *sbug brdzo* (C.T. = *mdzo*) *ru rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *dang* // *sring mo sbug gyi mrdzo* (C.T. = *mdzo*) *mo* // *drang ma ru 'u bsam* // *sbug lug khyu bdun mnga'* // *sbug ra skyi mtshal khyu cig mnga'* / *sbug 'bangs mangs* (C.T. = *mang*) *por mnga'* //

Origins Myth No. 8

In the next interrelated etiologic tale of *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, the origins of the four rivers of southwestern Tibet are given (23.7–26.1), perhaps the only extant Old Tibetan work to do so. The sources of the four rivers that originate in southwestern Tibet (in Pu-rang stod and Gro-shod) remain very important to the sacred geography of the region.⁴⁰³ The narrative of this myth is condensed and the prose at times abrupt, compounding the difficulties of understanding it in full. As with many Eternal Bon origin myths, empty space (*nam-mkha' stong-pa'*) and white light (*'od dkar-po*) are primary generative agents. Clouds appear from the luminous primordium, which became like white brocade of many designs or composite qualities. The border of this metaphorical brocade is equated with a mountain called or described as *Ri dang ni dger-po*.

⁴⁰⁰ This is followed by a line describing the hybrid yak: *drang ma ru 'u bsam* //. She had small horns (*ru 'u*).

⁴⁰¹ *Skyi-mtshal*. This term might possibly denote specific portions of the goat being red in color rather than the whole animal.

⁴⁰² This is followed by an interrelated tale of just three lines (23.5–7) in which at one time the hybrid female yak with long horns could not understand the lord's words, so she absconded. She was pursued by the Sbug lord. They arrived on the summit of the heights; that benefit: *Re shig re shig* na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *rje dros* (C.T. = *gros*) *su ma to ste'* (C.T. = *ste*) / *sbug mdzo ru rings bros ste song* // *sbug gyis rjes bcad na'* (C.T. = *na*) *mtho la rgur khar slebs de bsod* //.

* In the transliteration provided in *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che* this word is rendered as *zhig*. Although this spelling is grammatically correct, the scribe appears to have written the letter *sha*, in conformance with the spelling in other occurrences of the same word and expression in the text.

⁴⁰³ According to the Eternal Bon pilgrimage guide *Ti se'i dkar chag*, in eastern Zhang-zhang there is a mountain in the shape of a standing horse named *Rta-mchog 'og-'dzin* from which the *Rta-mchog kha-'bab* (Brahmaputra) originates. In northern Zhang-zhung there is a mountain in the shape of a standing lion called *Sengge 'gying-ba* from which the *Sengge kha-'bab* (Indus) originates. In western Zhang-zhung, in the Khyung-lung valley, there is a mountain in the shape of a standing elephant named *Khyung-chen spungs* from which the *Glang-chen kha-'bab* (Sutlej) originates. In southern Zhang-zhung there is a mountain called *Rma-bya mdzes-brjid* from which the *Rma-bya kha-'bab* (Karnali) originates. See *op. cit.* Norbu and Prats, pp. 15, 16 (for the translation) and p. 115 (for the Tibetan text). For reference to the Four Great Rivers (Chu chen-po bzhi) in *Ti se'i dkar chag* and other sources, see Norbu 2009, pp. 32, 33, 70–72; see, also, Vitali 1996, p. 92 (n. 6). For the exploration of these four river sources, see Bellezza 1993.

This is either a mythical mountain or possibly Mount Ti-se as the *axis mundi*. Although it is not explicitly stated in the story, it is this mountain on which the waters that formed the Four Brother Lakes (Mtsho' ched-po bzhi) originated. The name of these four lakes is never given but they may be similar or identical to the four holy lakes of Eternal Bon, a tradition said to have originated in Zhang-zhung times.⁴⁰⁴ These highly celebrated lakes arise in the neighborhood of the sources of the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet.⁴⁰⁵ The lakes of our story are said to have remained impounded until a primal *chu-srin* struck them with his horn-like fangs, causing the waters to run down:

At one time, from empty space a white light came into being, and from the middle of that light white clouds were emitted (*btangngo*). It [became] white brocade (snow) of many (*dgu*) [designs] on which one line⁴⁰⁶ of jewels was set on the border (*gong-ba*). The name bestowed (*btags*) on it was Ri-dang, yes, Dger-po. The father came into being as the color of water. The four brother lakes eddied yet they could not flow down. In the waters of existence the fangs of the *chu-srin* appeared as the four silver bird horns of wisdom / knowledge (*ye-shes*). Thereafter, [the *chu-srin*] glided in the waters and struck [the lakes with his horns] and thence the waters overflowed and cascaded.

re shig re shig na' (C.T. = *na*) / *nam ka* (C.T. = *mkha'*) *stong pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *las* // '*od dkar po cig du srid do'* (C.T. = *do*) '*od dkar po la* 'i *sbyil* (C.T. = *dkyil*) *nas* / *sprin pa dkar po btangngo* // *rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *za bug* (C.T. = '*og*) *dkar po la* // *gong ba rin po ce* (C.T. = *che*) *sbram cig bdums ste btang na de* 'i *ming ni* // *ri dang ni dger por btags* // *so* // *pha ni chu yi kha dog du bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) *do'* (C.T. = *do*) / *mtsho'* (C.T. = *mtsho*) *ched* (C.T. = *mched*) *po bzhir* '*khyil de bab du ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *btub bo* / *chu*'is (C.T. = *chu yis*) *bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) *pa la chu srin kyi mche ba la ye shes rngul* (C.T. = *ngul*) *bya rur bzhir bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) *do* // *de nas chu la* '*phyo zhing rgyab la* / *tshor lud chur bab'o* /

The flow of the waters led to the birth of four fabled rivers: Na'-ra 'dza'-ra, Chu-bo 'ga'-ga, Sho rtsang-po, and Rma-chab sngon-mo. They arose from a mythic *chu-srin*, *khyung*, fish, and elephant respectively. The Chu-bo na-ra (*sic*), which flows northward through unidentified places and/or their peoples, is the Indus River (Sengge gtsang-po).⁴⁰⁷ The Chu-po 'ga'-ga flows through the land of Sbu-rgyal bod (Spu-rgyal bod); it is the Brahmaputra River (Rta-mchog gtsang-po / Yar-lung gtsang-po). The Sho rtsang-po / Khyi-sha rtsang-po is the Karnali River (today's

⁴⁰⁴ Born from eggs these include: Zom-shangs lcags-mtsho, Ma-pang g.yu-mo mtsho, La-nag bsil-mo mtsho, and Gung-chu ngul-mtsho. For further information, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 326, 327; 2008, pp. 329–331; Norbu 2009, pp. 28–31; Norbu and Prats 1989, pp. 12–14, 111–113.

⁴⁰⁵ These four lakes and four rivers appear to be mentioned in a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary *bskul-pa* ritual text, *Dpa' khrom bskul ba khing sri bshad bda' dad pa bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 435–450, anonymous), No. 441, lns. 4, 5: "The four protectors of the four swirling lakes. The four mistresses of the four flowing rivers" ('*khyil-ba'i mtsho-bzhi'i srung-ma bzhi* / '*bab-pa'i chu-bzhi'i bdag-mo bzhi* /).

⁴⁰⁶ 'One piece' or 'one row' is the contextual meaning of the unknown term, *sbram-cig*. This is followed by another enigmatic word, *bdums*, which may be a verb. Perhaps the word *bdams* (selected) was intended here (viz., 'one line of selected').

⁴⁰⁷ However, this is contradicted by the *Ti se'i dkar chag*, which states that Na-ra dza-ra (*sic*) is a name for the Rma-bya kha-'bab and flows in a southerly direction. See *op. cit.* Norbu and Prats, p. 16; Norbu 2009, p. 34. Nevertheless, given the geographic indications in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, this assertion by the author of the *Ti se'i dkar chag*, Dkar-ru grub-dbang bstan-'dzin rin-chen, appears to be misplaced.

Rma-bya gtsang-po), which supposedly drains Ltag-ga gser-mo mtsho (La-ngag ser-mtsho).⁴⁰⁸ The fourth river, Rma-chab sngon-mo, is the Sutlej (Glang-chen gtsang-po), which flows through Mon-yul sum-ston (Kinnaur). In Classical Tibetan sources, these four rivers usually spring forth from a lion, a horse, a peacock,⁴⁰⁹ and an elephant respectively, a choice of animals in keeping with Buddhist tradition. The text comments that along the (lower) reaches of the Sutlej River harvests are generated three times in a single year (*lo-cig la ston lan-gsum byung-ngo*). This can only be a reference to the agricultural potential of the stretch of the Sutlej that flows through tropical India. The narrative by observing that the Big Dipper is not (fully) visible in the (late) summer in this region strengthens its association with lower latitude climes. A keen interest in astronomical matters as shown by ancient Tibetans is evinced here:

That is called the flowing water. These waters, the four great rivers, Chu-bo 'ga-'ga, Sho rtsang-po, rMa-chab sngon-mo and Na'-ra 'dza'-ra, these four, came into being. Great river Na-ra, yes, flows from the mouth of the *chu-srin*. It flows in a northerly direction from the mouth of Bre-gu gnam-s nang.⁴¹⁰ That became the river of the Ke'u li-mi sha-chan [and] Gdug-myi sha-chan.⁴¹¹ That called Chu-po ga'-ga' (*sic*) flows from the mouth of the *khyung*. It flows through the country of Sbu-rgyal bod, the country circumscribed by the Smre-bdun (Big Dipper) stars. The white (auspicious) Bod, yes, is auspicious because of that [river]. The Khyi-sha rtsang-po, yes, flows from the mouth of the great fish Yor-rmong. It dries up the waters of Ltag-ga gser-mo mtsho (La-ngag mtsho). It flows through Yar gyi lho-rngags and She'u sbug-yul.⁴¹² Rma-chab sngon-mo, yes, flows from the mouth of the elephant. It flows through Mon-yul sum-ston. It flows in the country where on winter evenings (*rgun-na srod*), not summer [ones], the Sme-bdun (*sic*, Big Dipper) stars rise. Thereafter, the ox plowed the farmland that produces a harvest three times in one year.

chur bab bya ba yin te // chu la chu 'o chen po bzhi ni // chu bo 'ga 'ga dang // sho rtsang po dang // rma chab sngon mo dang / na'ra 'dza'ra dang bzhir bsrid (C.T. = *srid*) *do'* (C.T. = *do*) / *chu po* (C.T. = *bo*) *na ra ni chu srin gyi kha nas bab pa'o* (C.T. = *bo*) / *nyi ma byang phyogs bre gu gnam snang gyi kha nas bab pas // de'* (C.T. = *de*) *ke'u li mi sha chan gdug myi sha chan gyi chur song ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) // *chu po* (C.T. = *bo*) *ga'ga' bya ba ni khyung gyi kha nas 'bab ste'*

⁴⁰⁸ The *Ti se'i dkar chag* notes that the Rma-bya gtsang-po originates in the Lha-chu before flowing into La-ngag ser-mtsho and onwards through to India via Bya-ri gtsug-ldan (Vitali 1996: 92 [n. 6]). The Lha-chu flows along the western flank of Mount Ti-se and through a wide plain before debouching into La-ngag ser-mtsho. However, this lake has no outlet, so any hydrological connection to the Rma-bya gtsang-po would have to be subterranean in nature. As I know from my explorations, the source of the Karnali River actually comes from Himalayan glaciers. This geographic source is more in keeping with an alternative description of it; see *supra*, pp. 206 (fn. 403).

⁴⁰⁹ In *Blon po bka'thang yig*, the Rma-bya kha-'bab is called Sin-dhu and issues from a *khyung* (Norbu 2009: 70–72).

⁴¹⁰ This appears to be the name of the constellation Bre. For this constellation and others in a traditional grouping of twenty-eight, see Dung-dkar 1992, pp. 57, 58. The inclusion of 'bright sky' (*gnam-s nang*) as part of the name or a description of Bre-gu certainly fits a reading as a constellation. The source of the Indus is found north of Mount Ti-se in the Seng-stod region. It may be that from a certain geographic perspective these headwaters appear to arise out of this constellation. The alternative or present-day name given for Bre, Chu-stod (Upper Waters / Upper River), seems to reinforce this view. Our textual reference to Bre-gu might also allude to a more inclusive astronomical tradition, in which Upper Tibetan rivers such as the Indus were envisioned as sightlines for tracking the movement of constellations across the sky.

⁴¹¹ These two entities appear to be regions of the Indian Subcontinent or possibly tribes that may have lived along the mountainous upper stretch of the Indus.

⁴¹² These are possibly two regions in northwestern Nepal.

(C.T. = *ste*) // *sbu* (C.T. = *spu*) *rgyal bod gyi yul sgar* (C.T. = *skar*) *ma smre* (C.T. = *sme* / *smin*) *bdun gyis 'khor pa'i yul du bab* (C.T. = '*bab*') (C.T. = *bo*) *po // bod dkar ba ni de nas / dkar ro'* (C.T. = *ro*) // *khyi sha rtsang po ni nya che yor rmang gyi kha nas bab* (C.T. = '*bab*') *po* (C.T. = *bo*) // *ltag ga gser mo mtsho chu nas du bkam* (C.T. = *skam*) *mo // yar gyi lho rngags dang she'u sbug yul du bab* (C.T. = '*bab*') *bo // rma chab sngon mo ni glang po ce* (C.T. = *che*) *yi kha nas 'bab po* (C.T. = *bo*) // *mon yul sum ston du bab* (C.T. = '*bab*') *pa'o* (C.T. = *bo*) // *skar ma sme bdun dbyar myed rgun na'* (C.T. = *na*) *srod la 'tsha'* (= '*char*') *ba'i yul du bab* (C.T. = '*bab*') *bo'* (C.T. = *bo*) // *de nas glang gyis zhing rmos bas // lo cig la ston lan gsum byung ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) //

Origins Myth No. 9

This origins myth provides lore about Chu-srin zang-yag (*sic*), the water monster of the Upper Brahmaputra introduced in origins myth No. 6 (26.1–27.2). The son of this *chu-srin* swallowed the son of the great fish Yor-rmang (the mythic originator of the Karnali River). With his fangs this fish son named Be-ba lhun-po grazed the back of the *chu-srin*, causing him to bleed. From this blood the great cosmogonic god Rje 'brang-kar / Bskos-rje 'brang-dkar is said to have been born. As already noted, this may be the same god as Lha-ste sbrang-ba of the Ja-4r frame of the illuminated funerary manuscript. The generative power of aquatic beings asserted in the text is a cultural theme that has persisted in Upper Tibet to the present day. The story proceeds to declaim progenerative qualities but in a way that is quite ambiguous. At the end of folio No. 26, the text mentions herbs and the forest, something that does not connect well with the first line of folio No. 27, a sign that at least one folio is missing from the manuscript. The tale, at least that represented by the last few lines of this excerpt, ends with a recapitulation of the creation of the lakes from rain. Essentially, this is a mythic history of Upper Tibetan lakes:

At one time, Chu-srin zang-yag and Lung-srin phyom-pa, these two, mated and their son Chu-srin do-bo zang-yag was begotten (*byung-ngo*). For his food he eats water. For his clothes he wears (*gon*) water. For his thirst (*sgom*) he drinks water. The great fish Yor-rmang's son is Be-ba lhun-po. While Be-ba lhun-po glided, swimming in the water, he ended up in the mouth of the *chu-srin*. The sides of his right fangs grazed (*thug*) the skin [of the *chu-srin*] along the small of the back⁴¹³ and tore it. His innards bled. Rje 'brang-kar came into being. Bskos-rje 'brang-dkar is the one who appoints (*sgos-so*) [existence]. Furthermore, at that time, the people of existence resided on the earth: the existence appointed of the high one. The herbs and forest...⁴¹⁴ That also confers the lordly symbols. From the sky rain struck and the rain swirled on earth. The water in the lakes was conveyed downward. It has been said.

re shig re shig na' (C.T. = *na*) // *chu srin zang yag dang // lung srin phyom pa ga nyis* (= *gnyis*) *'tshos pa'i bu ni chu srin do bo zang yag du byang* (= *byung*) *ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) / *de zas su chu za'* (C.T. = *za*) / *de gos su chu gon sgom* (C.T. = *skom*) *du chu thung // nya che yor rmang gyi bu ni be ba lhun po lags so'* (C.T. = *so*) // *be ba lhun po la rkyal zhing 'phyo na // chu srin gyi khar du song ngo // mtshe* (= *mche*) *ba g.yas gyi zur thug // pha sa rgyab gyis pags pa ral de // khong khrag phyung // rje 'brang kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *bsrid* (C.T. = *srid*) *do'* (C.T. = *do*) / *bkos rje 'brang dkar kyis sgos* (C.T. = *bskos*) *so'* (C.T. = *so*) / *da rung da chung du // myi srin pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *sa*

⁴¹³ *Pha-sa* (literally: 'father's place').

⁴¹⁴ The very first line of folio No. 27 is incomplete: "The height (*'phang*) of {#} was lower."

la gnas pa yi // gong gyi srid pa' (C.T. = *pa*) *bskos so / rtsi dang nags mtshal {#} ba'i 'phang rmas* (C.T. = *smad*) *so'* (C.T. = *so*) // *de yang rje stag* (C.T. = *rtags*) *stsal do'* (C.T. = *do*) // *gnam la sa* (= *las*) *char phog la las* (= *sa*) *la char bskyil* (C.T. = *'khyil*) // *mtsho la chur drang skad do'* (C.T. = *do*) //

Origins Myth No. 10

The final origins tale in *Sha ru shul ston rabs* describes the common source of the 'four great animals'⁴¹⁵ of the four rivers, humans and the *dri* (27.3–30.6). The ultimate source of these various beings is the sky and sea, the prime generative agents in indigenous Tibetan cosmogonies (with the earth often taking the place of the sea in this binary arrangement). The story begins with an account of how *ad initium* the mighty sky and sea considered fighting each other for supremacy. In this vivid mythic account these two great contenders are likened to wild bull yaks locked in combat. Their portrayal in the text demonstrates that the male sky and female earth were perfectly matched in terms of status and power. Together in unison they acted to produce existence.

The origins tale states that at one time, the mighty (*ngar*) rearing up⁴¹⁶ blue sky and the majestic (*gzi-byin*) ocean mirror, these two, could not agree on who was greater (*che la zhal ma-dum*). This was the way of the time of their fight (*'tab*, C.T. = *'thab*). It was midnight. At that time these two pounded (*'dab*, C.T. = *bdab*) a stake (*'phur*, C.T. = *phur*) into the ground.⁴¹⁷ They were to draw (*btungs*, C.T. = *gdung*) the bow of the sharp [arrow]. They donned impervious (*sra*) armor (*go*). They said things in preparation for winning the battle. Then they went to the site of their combat.

They would fight in the manner of two wild yaks of the north (*byang-ka*) who grind (*'dar*, C.T. = *brdar*) their horns against each other. The small rocks (*'jags*) would be kicked around like hail falling from the sky. They would snort (*ngar*) at each other, like the roar (*drags*, C.T. = *grags*) of the dragon of the sky. The swooshing (*g.yag*, C.T. = *g.yug*) of their tails would be like the covering of darkness (*mun ltar 'thibs*). It would be an example of the grinding of the teeth [and horns] of the tiger and yak joined in combat.⁴¹⁸ However, the fight between these two wild yaks did not take place. They pacified (disengaged, *brtul*) their locked, yes, horns (*ru ni tshus*). Their tails, yes, came down.⁴¹⁹ Although agitated (*snyogs*), the two separated (*dgyes*, C.T. = *gyes*). They each went their own way (*so sor gyes ste song*). Then the mighty blue sky and the magnificent ocean, these two, spoke. These two said to each other that a fight between them was inappropriate (*'thab du myi-rung*). They both agreed. For example, they were like yaks on friendly terms. They said, 'You and I, both of us, shall found existence.'⁴²⁰

The existence of one thousand (innumerable) years [measured in the] sky. The existence called upon (*skul*, (C.T. = *bskul*) by these two was the formation of a red-colored egg. It could not open (*la* (= *rdol*) *du ma btub*). It grew in the vapor (*glang*, C.T. = *rlangs*) and warmth (*drod*) of

⁴¹⁵ *Sems-can cen-po* (C.T. = *chen-po*) *bzhi*.

⁴¹⁶ *Sngubs*. I take this to be an O.T. word to which C.T. *rngub-pa* (to inhale) can be etymologized.

⁴¹⁷ This action as a martial ritual was taken to demarcate the fighting ring.

⁴¹⁸ *So 'dar* (C.T. = *brdar*) *ba 'i dpe ni / stag dang g.yag la blangs so //*.

⁴¹⁹ *Rnga ma ni lubs su phab ste'* (C.T. = *ste*) // When yaks fight or are alarmed they raise their tails.

⁴²⁰ *Khyod yu bu gnyis kyang srid pa 'i gzhi gzung*.

the four seasons (*dus-bzhi skal-pa*). The four great animals (*sems-can cen-po*) appeared from it. The mouths of the four great animals chewed on (*mur ru ru*) dark blue eggs. The liquid from those dark blue eggs trickled down their mouths (*kha chu'dzags*). The father and mother of those eggs hurled abuse (*shungs*) at the four great animals. The father, mother and elder sister (*che-zhe*), these three, cried so heavily (*bzhums-mo*, C.T. = *bshums*) they could be heard from afar. However, from one of the eggs appeared Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs,⁴²¹ but his bones had become disarticulated (*rus bar lhags gyis thal*). As he had perished, his joints (*gtshigs* (C.T. = *tshigs*) were reassembled. His bones were healed (*bsas*, related to C.T. *gsos*) by various types of nectar (*bdu-rtsi*, C.T. = *bdud-rtsi*) applied to them. With this application, the heads (ends) of the bones (*rus gyi 'go*) came together. With a second application, the bones and matter (flesh, *snag*, C.T. = *rnag*) connected. With a third application (*cha-gsum gsol*), the body of [Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs] was rendered into the likeness of an egg (*rgong*).⁴²² Yesterday and the day before yesterday, in the past, Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs became Dri-bdud byi-yan, Dri-btsan phyi-yan and Dri-g.yen rgyu-yan⁴²³ These three went above the horns of the deer (the receptacle of the *dri*).⁴²⁴ As a result of there being a vessel in which the killers of human beings could be contained, the practice of the funerary rite could go ahead. Thus, the text states that, "Today and tomorrow the living humans (*myi-gson*) and the dead (*gshin*) meet each other (*mjal-lo*')." The humans then returned to their country (*myi song yul du los so*).

Finally, this last origins myth of the text states, "The horned deer who does not wander in places shows the way" (*sha ru gnas myi 'khyams shul stan [= ston]*). This in effect can be seen as the name of the entire text. In the very last instance it is written: "The captured (*bzung*) horned deer of the Skyi-bu dun-tshigs is concluded (*brdzogs*, C.T. = *rdzogs*)."

If the accounts of Skyi-bu dun-tshigs and that of the *ma-sangs* in Chapter III of *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* are taken at face value, it would appear that prehistoric Upper Tibet shared a closely related body of genealogical myths with Central Tibet. The same can be said of many funerary traditions. Of course, it may be that this depiction of the cultural fabric of a remote age is primarily an imperial-period innovation designed to encourage the social integration of the empire. The assemblages of archaic mortuary and residential monuments in Upper Tibet and in Central Tibet are different in many respects, suggesting that these two regions possessed varying cultural foundations. Only through further archaeological inquiry (and perhaps the discovery of more Old Tibetan literature) will questions regarding the ethnical and cultural makeup of the constituent regions of the Tibetan Plateau in antiquity be satisfactorily addressed.

⁴²¹ His name translates as 'Holy Man (*skyi-bu*, C.T. = *skyes-bu*) that Joins the Seven'. Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs appears to represent the first human being. His name is reminiscent of another entity, the middle one of seven brothers, in an alternative Bdun-tshigs theogonic tradition: Pt 1286 (Khri 'i bdun-tshigs), Pt 1038 (Khri-bar la bdun-tshig) and *Bsgrags pa gling grags* (Khri-sad ber bdun-tshig). In these sources, this figure is a divine precursor of the first Tibetan king. For this Spu-rgyal cosmogonic divinity, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 275, 277, 278. Given these various textual indications, Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs might be viewed as an Upper Tibetan ancestral variant of the Bdun-tshigs of Central Tibet.

⁴²² *Sku rgong* (C.T. = *sgong*) *kyi stong tu gsol lo* (C.T. = *lo*) //.

⁴²³ Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs was turned into three *dri* because he had died in violent circumstances. The three instances of *yan* in the names of these demons should be read as *gyen*.

⁴²⁴ *Sha ba'i ru gong yan song ngo* //

In the origins myths of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* ancestral personalities and activities informed the practice of early historic-period funeral rituals. The past through the agency of the *smrang* was continually re-enacted in such texts, in narrative progressions traced by their authors and users to primal times. This theme of the ancestral precedent and its latter day emulation is further elaborated upon in Part III of this book. In this historical progression the archaic funerary documents of Dunhuang preface those of Gathang Bumpa, bringing us one step closer in time to a beginning that is forever shrouded in myth.