Death and Beyond in Ancient Tibet

Archaic Concepts and Practices
in a Thousand-Year-Old Illuminated Funerary Manuscript and
Old Tibetan Funerary Documents of Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang



John Vincent Bellezza

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JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA

Maps by Guntram Hazod

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Front cover: Tibetan yellow bronze (*li-ser*) plaque depicting confronting horses with sphere and carrying objects on their backs (flaming jewels?), set between stylized clouds and mountains (6 cm x 2.5 cm).
Of significant antiquity (private collection)

Back cover: Lha-sras lha-bo che and Lha-za gang-cig ma, frame Ca-1r of the illuminated funerary manuscript, circa 1000–1150 CE

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To the Tibetans

Table of Contents

Foreword 1

Acknowledgements 3

An Introduction to the Funerary Documents of This Study 5
- Part I 5
- Part II 6
- Part III 9
- Other sources 11

PART I The Illuminated Funerary Manuscript

Philological and Historical Analysis of the Illuminated Funerary Manuscript 15
- System of Notation and Translator's Note 29

Division One: The Psychopomp Ritual 30
- Nga-3r 30
- Nga-4r 32
- Ca-1r 34
- Ca-2r 38
- Ca-4r 41
- Cha-1r 43
- Cha-2r 47
- Cha-3r 49
- Cha-4r 51
- Ja-3r 53
- Ja-4r 55
- Nya-3r 57
- Ta-3r 60
- Tha-2r 62
- Tha-3r 64
- Na-1r 66
- Na-2r 68
- Pa-2r 71
- Pa-3r 74
- Pa-4r 76

Division Two: The *Ste'u* Ritual 78
- Nga-3v 78
- Nga-4v 80
- Ca-1v 82
- Ca-2v 83
- Ca-4v 85
- Cha-1v 88
- Cha-2v 89
- Cha-3v 91

Cha-4v 93
Ja-3v 95
Ja-4v 98
Nya-3v 100
Ta-3v 102
Tha-2v 104
Tha-3v 106
Na-1v 107
Na-2v 108
Pa-2v 110
Pa-3v 112
Pa-4v 114

PART II THE GATHANG BUMPA FUNERARY DOCUMENTS

An Introduction to *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* 117
Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter I 121
Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter II 128
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 1 130
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 2 133
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 3 135
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 4 137
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 12 143
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 5 148
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 6 149
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 7 152
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 8 153
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 9 160
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 10 160
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 11 162
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 13 163
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 14 164
Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 15 165
Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter III 167
An Introduction to *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa* 177
Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa: Chapter I 182
Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa: Chapter II 193
Origins Myth No. 1 193
Origins Myth No. 2 196
Origins Myth No. 3 197
Origins Myth No. 4 198
Origins Myth No. 5 199
Origins Myth No. 6 200
Origins Myth No. 7 205
Origins Myth No. 8 206
Origins Myth No. 9 209
Origins Myth No. 10 210

PART III: Selected Origins Myths and Rituals From the Dunhuang Funerary Manuscripts

The Origins Myth of the *Skyibs-lug* in Pt 1194 213
The Origins Myth of Lhe'u yang-ka' rje in Pt 1134 221
The *Do-ma* Funerary Transport Horse Ritual in ITJ 731r 236

Conclusion 249

Bibliography 257

Indexes 269

Maps

Map 1. The Tibetan Highlands 12
Map 2. The Core Areas of Central Tibet 13

List of Figures

Fig. 1. The recto side of the radiometric assayed manuscript fragment 16
Fig. 2. The verso side of the fragment of the manuscript submitted for chronometric analysis 16
Fig. 3. A red ochre pictograph depicting what appears to be a divine raptor leading a supine human figure 39
Fig. 4. A copper alloy talisman known as *thog-lcags* depicting a peacock regardant 73
Fig. 5. The hat of horse racers in Mon-'tsher complete with appliqué designs and showy plumes of lammergeyer feathers 85
Fig. 6. The peaked felt hat of the A-pha hor worn by the son of the late spirit-medium Bstan-grag lha-pa 85
Fig. 7. This copper alloy object belonging to the *thog-lcags* class of talismans depicts two anthropomorphic figures whose hands are joined over their chests in a prayerful attitude 96
Fig. 8. A copper alloy fibula with nine anthropomorphic figures from western Tibet 97
Fig. 9. A flattened copper alloy tube of the *thog-lcags* genre of talismans and sundry objects 141
Fig. 10. The golden burial mask discovered recently in Chu-thags, Gu-ge 159
Fig. 11. As indicated by the prominent attachment loops (one is hidden from view), this small figurine of a stag was designed to be displayed on the body 183
Fig. 12. A petroglyph depicting a stag standing below a counterclockwise swastika and a teardrop-shaped form 183
Fig. 13. Two *chu-srin* heads of typical early Tibetan style flanking a panther-like head 203
Fig. 14. A *thog-lcags* featuring a sheep head surmounted by a large object resembling flaming jewels 215
Fig. 15. A copper alloy ornament of the *thog-lcags* class featuring a winged horse 230
Fig. 16. The six interrelated funerary scenes of coffin plank No. 2, Tomb M1, Guolimu 247

Foreword

One of the most chilling episodes in the Old Testament is the story of Saul raising Samuel from the dead. Saul is about to lead his army into battle against the Philistines, and wishes to call up the dead prophet in the hope that he will give a favorable prognosis about the outcome of the battle. But no one can be found to perform the divination because Saul himself has banned the practice of necromancy, on pain of death, within his kingdom. However, he assumes an appropriate disguise and is led clandestinely to his fateful meeting with the Witch of Endor, who reluctantly agrees to his request. The shade of Samuel, irked at being disturbed from his slumber, tells the king in no uncertain terms that he will lose the battle, and returns once more to his subterranean home. In his study of the biblical antecedents of the Christian Resurrection, Geza Vermes underlines the importance of this story for what it reveals about the conception of the after-death state in one of the earliest recorded phases in Judaic thought. At the very least what we learn is that the realm of the dead seems to be a uniform, undifferentiated place. Vermes reminds us that the refraction of the realm into regions of bliss or chastisement as befitted the deeds of the dead while they were in life, as well as the stratification of this domain and the addition of intermediate zones, are part of a later development.

The evidence presented by John Vincent Bellezza in this remarkable study suggests that the evolution of the Tibetan after-death world has moved in precisely the opposite direction. The phantasmagoria of the *bardo* notwithstanding, the Buddhist vision offers a monotonous landscape compared with the richness of the Tibetan realms of the dead that preceded it, with a paltry repertoire of remedial interventions confined largely to the manufacture and transfer of merit. The texts discussed in this book, by contrast, reveal an extraordinarily varied range of measures to be taken in the event of precisely-defined instances of what an anthropologist would call 'bad death'. The untoward circumstances of premature demise, rather than the accumulation of any moral debt, consign the deceased to the clutches of soul-snatching demons in a realm of misery where they, too, assume a demonic nature. They must be liberated from their captors and guided through successive stages to an exalted condition by the ministrations of specialized priests, with the help of animals that act as bearers and guides.

The four texts, or sets of texts, that provide the substance of this book, may reasonably be described as archaic, to the extent that they belong to one of the oldest strata of Tibetan writing, or else are significantly marked by the conventions of that literature. Rolf Stein, one of the pioneers of research on the ritual texts of Dunhuang, observed that the efforts of his predecessors had "suffered badly" from a failure to consult similar materials from a later period for comparative purposes.* In the present work, the Dunhuang mortuary texts – like the funeral cycle of the Bonpos – feature in an ancillary role to two other sets: two works from a collection of manuscripts found in a stupa in southern Tibet and, most spectacularly, an incomplete illuminated manuscript from a private collection.

It has been plausibly argued by several scholars that, apart from the debt it owes to Indian Buddhism, Bon might be construed as a legacy of the Buddhist tradition of Central Asia. Perhaps so, but it is equally true that the components of the 'nine-vehicle' classification of Bon are diverse enough that a multiplicity of origins is a more probable explanation. In the absence of any obvious candidate for the source of the beliefs presented here, the law of parsimony supports

the likelihood that the content of these texts represents a truly indigenous tradition, albeit one with considerable local variation.

It is a matter of real regret that the complex of beliefs and rituals represented by texts such as those examined here are execrated by followers of the major Buddhist schools on the grounds that they are somehow primitive, the legacy of an embarrassing backwardness that was supplanted by a superior Buddhist eschatology. This contempt is unwarranted: in the same way that many Tibetans proudly vaunt the Darwinian implications of the monkey-and-demoness anthropogonic myth, it could equally be argued that there is something very modern about a worldview that recognizes such a close kinship and mutual dependency between humans and the natural world as we find in these funerary texts.

If the evidence of these and other texts is so heterogeneous that we cannot reasonably speak of a formal tradition, we are surely justified at least in recognizing a time-honored complex. And if the components of this complex have seemed marginal or parochial, the reason is obvious: the material is very sparse, and even when it does come to light the linguistic challenges it presents are daunting. Publications such as the present one are all too few, but they constitute crucial pieces in the identification of a half-forgotten world of supernatural beings, priests and heroes, and a literary expression of such force and beauty that would be hard to find in later writing. A thorough treatment of the material such as we find here is especially welcome, since, apart from its lucid presentation of the sources, it provides us with valuable tools for the understanding of others that might come to light. With more to compare, the comparative enterprise becomes easier. In the same way as it is possible to draw meaningful comparisons between Dunhuang Pt 1285 and the Naxi corpus (Stein), or between these two and the mythic recitations of the modern Magar (de Sales), the juxtaposition of the four textual collections analyzed here reveals a clear cultural continuity. The result is a solid bulwark from which we can reach out to other isolated examples of oral, literary or performative art and establish their place in the emerging complex. Although Buddhism is not synonymous with Tibetan culture, as an extreme view would have it, its contribution to that culture has of course been enormous; but the present study is part of an inexorably growing body of evidence of the degree to which it has also contributed to its impoverishment.

Charles Ramble

* "...Ces textes plus modernes sont souvent plus clairs et plus explicites que ces manuscrits. Il est clair qu'il faut étudier les premiers pour comprendre les seconds. M. Lalou et F. W. Thomas ont beaucoup pâti du fait qu'ils les ont ignorés" (Stein 1971: 482).

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Finally, it must be pointed out that any mistakes or shortcomings in this book rest squarely upon my shoulders. I appeal to the reader to make an allowance for my imperfect understanding of Tibetan culture and literature.

An Introduction to the Funerary Documents of This Study

The aim of this monograph is to elucidate the eschatological patterns and ritual constructs of death rites in ancient Tibet. The work is centered on an illuminated funerary manuscript, two funerary texts recently recovered in southern Tibet, and funerary documents discovered in the Dunhuang grottoes a century ago. Other Tibetan literature that supports the analysis and interpretation of these texts is also marshaled. This book builds upon the prior efforts of the author to explicate the otherworldly dimension in early Tibetan religion and culture.

The majority of the documents selected for this study were written between circa 800 CE and 1100 CE. They furnish a lucid view of cultural traditions that circulated around Tibet before its religious universe became saturated with Buddhism and Buddhist-influenced doctrines and practices. Four main genres of text are used in this study: an illuminated funerary manuscript of great rarity and texts from the Gathang Bumpa (Dga'-thang 'bum-pa), Dunhuang and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collections. Although these textual materials belong to four distinct bodies of literature, many cognate funerary motifs, personalities and narrative sequences resonate between them. This common ground, as well as antique contents unique to each source, constitutes what I style the 'Tibetan archaic funerary tradition(s)'. The term 'archaic' was selected to stress the antiquated nature of this literary matter and its relevance to an earlier period in the cultural history of Tibet.

By definition, the historical origins, conceptual structures and practical methods of the archaic funerary tradition are fundamentally non-Buddhist in nature. While it can be readily argued that archaic elements have permeated the prevailing funerary traditions of Tibet, those conducted today owe much of their inspiration and exercise to Indic religious culture, as adopted by the two modern religions: Tibetan Buddhism and Eternal (Swastika, G.yung-drung) Bon. For the purposes of this study, these two faiths can be grouped under one term: Lamaism.[1]

Part I

The painted manuscript of Part I of this study only came to light recently. It was kindly made available for study by its present owner, Moke Mokotoff, an art collector residing in New York City.[2] The document was composed in Classical Tibetan, in the 11th century or first half of the 12th century CE. It not only features an old funerary ritual of much interest and charm, it boasts a

[1] I use this term to denote formal or organized religion in Tibet, an institution in which clerics and masters called lamas (*bla-ma*) dominate. This term as employed in this work carries absolutely no negative connotations and does not hark back to Victorian models of Tibetan religion. In a book such as this where religious traditions of very different historical and theological orientations are compared and contrasted, it is necessary to distinguish between them simply and unequivocally, thus the application of the words 'Lamaist' and 'archaic'. Another term defined in the same manner as Lamaism could conceivably be coined, but the usage of a pre-existing word in the English language seems better indicated.

[2] Originally, I planned to deliver a study of the illuminated funerary manuscript to the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) conference held in Vancouver in 2010, but I was unable to attend.

series of illustrations that are of considerable art historical significance. These quaint depictions of deities, zoomorphic spirits and ritual instruments are rendered in an indigenous style of art that is virtually unknown to the field of Tibetology.[3]

The illuminated funerary manuscript now contains forty interrelated sections or frames that are fully or mostly intact. Each frame is comprised of a textual passage and a painting. This document was written for the funerals of women (*sman*), and particularly for the latter stage of the rite.[4] It is concerned with the protection of the departed at the funeral venue, thereby insuring her smooth passage to the afterlife. It appears that this valediction of the deceased was originally formatted as several long strips of paper that may have been concertinaed. Some adjoining frames of the document are still part of single sheets, while others were cut and subsequently rejoined or left in isolation. The not always skillful reattachment of the frames was executed with a needle and thread or with adhesive tape. As the manuscript now stands, two or three frames are commonly presented as an integral unit. The correct ordering of the various parts of the manuscript proved a formidable feat. Not only were frames of the text haphazardly reattached by former owners, more than half the total number of them are now missing.

Part II

Part II of this study examines the two Old Tibetan funerary documents deposited in the Dga'-thang 'bum-pa (hereinafter called Gathang Bumpa) of Lho-kha: *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* and *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa*. These manuscripts were recovered from inside this *mchod-rten* and published in 2007.[5] The Old Tibetan materials from Gathang Bumpa, while not very extensive, probably constitute the most important cache of ancient texts discovered in Tibet in many years.[6] The two Gathang Bumpa texts of this study contain an extraordinary selection of origin myths and ritual regimens designed to extricate those who died from violent causes (*dri* / *gri*) from the grasp of demons. As with other formal proclamations of ritual origins (*smrang*), these tales of the beginning were designed to legitimize and empower the funerals in which they were recited. As I shall show in due course, these manuscripts appear to have been written circa 850–1000 CE.

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[3] The contemporary Baima of Wen County in Gansu and Pingwu County in Sichuan have illuminated funerary manuscripts, but this art is very different from that of the manuscript studied in this paper. The *bon* priests of the Baima still make and use such texts. Other funerary rituals of the Baima are carried out by Buddhist monks, *rdol-bon* shamans and Taoist priests, illustrating the syncretistic nature of their religious culture. This information on the Baima primarily came from Mikio Miyamoto (in personal communication). I am also indebted to Miyamoto for sending me images of Baima illuminated folios. The Nakhi (Naxi) of southwestern China have illuminated funerary cards, but these are different in style and content from the illuminated funerary manuscript. For illustrations of a set of these cards, see Mathieu and Ho 2011, pp. 176, 177. The Naxi also have illuminated funerary scrolls. Rock (1955: 210, 215) describes the Hä-zhi-p'i (Hei Zhi Pi) ritual system, which employs scrolls that may reach ten meters or more in length. On the third and final day of a Naxi funeral, the Hei Zhi Pi scroll is unrolled in a northeastern direction from the head of the coffin. It is thought to assist the deceased in crossing the nine mountain spurs and seven great waters of the postmortem realm. These scrolls are illuminated with deities, priests, ritual objects, and geographic entities in a style heavily influenced by Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist art. For images of a Hei Zhi Pi scroll, see *ibid*., pls. vi–x; Brauen 2011, pp. 38, 39; Mathieu and Ho 2011, pp. 178–191.

[4] Among more than a dozen Naxi funerary rituals listed by Rock (1955: 3–5) are several dedicated to women.

[5] The manuscripts of the Gathang Bumpa were discovered in 2006 and published in the book *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed pa'i bon gyi gna' dpe bdams bsgrigs* (eds. Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-'dus (Pasang Wangdui) and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring), 2007. For information on the physical source of these texts, see Karmay 2009, pp. 55–63; Bellezza 2010a, p. 32 (n. 6).

[6] Karmay (2009: 57) sees the significance of this discovery as comparable to that of the Dunhuang texts.

The manuscript with the nominal title of *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* (*Various Methods of Subjugating the Rnel-drĭ*) now consists of twenty-four folios.[7] Unfortunately, folios belonging to the beginning and end of this aptly named text are missing. This document is primarily focused on women who died in childbirth or from violent means while pregnant with child. The text scrutinizes the supernatural causes of these kinds of misfortune and proffers ritual methods for successfully coping with them.[8]

A perusal of the contents of *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* demonstrates that the obsolete term *rnel-dri* / *rnel-gri* denotes violent and tragic causes of death, whatever their source, in women who are pregnant or delivering a child. These anthropomorphized agents of death also lead to the demise of children carried by afflicted mothers. Furthermore, the term *rnel-dri* refers to the deceased herself, the one who has died through this set of causes and who has become a demoness.

It was through strict adherence to the archaic funerary tradition,[9] as laid out in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, that *rnel-dri* were overcome. From what has been written, these pernicious forces were seen as a major vector of chronic misfortune in ancient Tibetan society. Consequently, extraordinary ritual measures were adopted to neutralize and repulse them. The object of these practical and mystic undertakings was the rehabilitation of the dead and the security of the living.[10] In the text, *rnel-dri* are subject to various potent exorcistic exercises in the same basic way as would be treated any other troublesome demon. Through ritual subjugation of the *rnel-dri*, ill-fated females were transformed into ancestral deities (*mtshun*), opening the way to their ascent into the afterlife.

Like other archaic ritual texts discovered in the Gathang Bumpa, *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* sets out a sequence of *smrang.* These origins tales can be divided into three distinctive parts or chapters. Chapter I (now incomplete) is comprised of several interconnected origins tales, which are concerned with ritual actions that liberate the deceased as *rnel-dri* from the underworld. Chapter II contains fifteen origins myths that expound upon the various types of unnatural death that lead to the appearance of *rnel-dri*. In recounting these tales of women who perished during pregnancy and childbirth, the text progressively propounds the elaborate ritual system that is thought to have brought about their liberation. Chapter III diverges from the primary theme of

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[7] For the facsimile of this document, see *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che* 2007, pp. 131–178; for the transcript, *ibid*., pp. 33–59. For a list of major parts of this work, see *ibid*., s.v., index.

[8] This text, characterized as one of wretched stories about women who died in childbirth and who require special purification rites, is noted in Karmay 2009, pp. 63, 64. Karmay (*ibid*.) observes that he has never encountered such a ritual text in the Eternal Bon corpus. Dotson (2008: 45 (n. 23), 62, 63) also notes the text.

[9] In contrast, Samten Karmay, in his highly informative papers (2009, 2010), refers to the archaic ritual systems in the texts of Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang as 'Bon'. Karmay explains (*ibid*., 63) that ritual traditions of the imperial period and post-11th century CE milieu were never totally interrupted, thus the same term for them is applicable. While the historical continuity he postulates is undeniable, I decline from designating archaic cultural materials with the proper noun (Bon) to avoid confusing the institutional structures and historical circumstances of the early historic period (650–1000 CE) with those of later times. I employ the common noun (*bon*) to denote the archaic class of priests, ritual traditions and cosmological motifs to which it is specifically applied. My usage of the term therefore is more in line with the understanding of R. A. Stein (2010). As Stein (*ibid*., Antiqua III: 188) also notes, there is no real break between the ritual materials of the Dunhuang manuscripts and later Tibetan tradition. This is a cardinal point: continuities in the historical development of Tibetan funerary traditions are evident throughout this work. For more on the semantic framing of the term *bon*, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 206, 501 (n. 482).

[10] That the ancient funerary rites were designed for the benefit of both the dead and the living was recognized by Tucci (1980: 231) and by Haarh (1969: 367).

rnel-dri formation and subjugation to present the origins of the funerary rite for elderly women who died of natural causes. The second and final origins tale of Chapter III consists of a long but fragmentary account of the identification and defeat of an anthropomorphized agent of violent death (*dri-ma*).

The manuscript *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa* (*Various Origins Myths of the Horned Deer that Shows the Way*) is another work rich in archaic funerary lore.[11] It now consists of sixteen folios; however, an examination of the text demonstrates that at least two additional folios are missing from the extant document. This work delineates the origins of the stag that functioned as a vessel for the *dri*, those mortals who have died from violent and accidental causes. As such, this deer is called the *dri-sha*. Other parts of the text describe the *chu-dri*, agents of waterborne death.

Sha ru shul ston rabs can be divided into two separate but complementary chapters. Chapter I is comprised of just one origins myth. It begins by enunciating the wide purview of the types of *dri*. It then relates how in the beginning of time cervids and humans were of mutual benefit to one another. Various people tried to entice the deer to come with them, but it is a *dri-bon* who finally wins his trust. This funerary priest guided the horned deer through the various stages of the underworld and up into the idealized otherworld. The stag then returned to the world of humans to act as their lodestar to paradise. This origins tale constitutes one of the most extensive and lucid accounts of the postmortem journey in Old Tibetan literature, filling a crucial void in our understanding of early historic-period (650–1000 CE) eschatology.

Chapter II of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* can be divided into ten interrelated origins myths mainly given over to the *dri* and other creatures responsible for the death of humans. The grotesque origins of various *dri* from the Upper Tibetan region are colorfully described in the text. These aquatic spirits and the people they confront resided in and around the four great rivers of southwestern Tibet (Indus, Sutlej, Karnali, and Brahmaputra). This localization of the etiologic myths lends credence to claims made in Classical Tibetan literature that this headwaters region (as part of what is traditionally seen as the kingdom of Zhang-zhung) was a fountainhead for many of the death rites that spread across Tibet.

Funerary ritual activities for those who died accidentally or violently in water (*chu-dri*) are specified in several of the origins tales in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*. However, coverage of ritual procedures in this text is not nearly as comprehensive as in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs.* The key funerary priest of Chapter II is the *dri-bon* Dbal-lcags, who is probably the psychopomp featured in Chapter I as well. In one tale, an 'island of existence' is mentioned as the homeland of the *dri-sha* (sacrificial deer psychopomp) and his spirit companion. Treated as a place with an actual physical geography, this location may well refer to one of the islands in the great lakes of Upper Tibet. These islands were once important cultural centers.

Among the most prominent human personalities in Chapter II of *Sha ru shul ston rabs* are those carrying what appears to be a clan appellation: Spug / Sbug. While the Spug are associated with Upper Tibet in this text, no such clan still seems to exist in the modern-day region. The text also regales us with the mythic origins of the four rivers of southwestern Tibet. In the penultimate

[11] For the facsimile of this manuscript, see *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che* 2007, pp. 179–211; for the transcript, *ibid*., pp. 60–75. Karmay (2009: 58, 64) reads this title as *Stories Showing the Way to the Deer*. His reading comes from treating the noun *ru* (horn) as a case sign, a misunderstanding of the signification of the title.

narrative, a type of water monster known as a *chu-srin* from one of these rivers contributes to the creation of a cosmogonic god.[12] Even today in upland Tibet, lakes and their resident aquatic spirits such as the *klu* and *sman* are commonly credited with procreative powers. The final origins myth in *Sha ru shul ston rabs* deals with the sky-ocean nexus that gave rise to both *dri* and humans. The sky and water, as binary generative forces, are widely attributed with the creation of all sorts of beings and things in the oral tradition and in Eternal Bon literature.

Part III

Part III of this book pertains to three different manuscripts of the Dunhuang collections (French and British). These documents and others from Dunhuang represent the oldest known literary sources for the study of Tibetan archaic funerary traditions. Their tremendous historical value is primarily derived from the fact that they were composed without recourse to Buddhist influences. They comprise the finest literary record we have of what appear to be longstanding cultural and religious practices.[13] Moreover, the conceptual and material structures described in Dunhuang manuscripts are critical in tracing cognate materials in other textual resources to the early historic period. Although written in Old Tibetan as well, the two manuscripts of the Gathang Bumpa featured in this work postdate many of the archaic funerary rituals of the Dunhuang collections. As shall be explained in the course of this work, the paleography, grammar and format of the relevant Dunhuang manuscripts are indicative of greater age.

Selected for translation and analysis in Part III are materials particularizing the mythic origins and ritual deployment of sheep and horses, the zoomorphic psychopomps of the archaic funerary rite. These cardinal narratives propounding the wellspring of the funerary tradition are incorporated in the manuscripts designated Pt 1194, Pt 1134 and ITJ 731r.[14] Part III begins with the first division of Pt 1194, an explication of the origins of the *skyibs-lug*, the sheep that guides the dead across the funereal expanses of the postmortem realm. The fifth origins tale of Pt 1134 is then examined. This is a story about the redemption of the first individual to be a recipient of *do-ma*, the horses that mystically transport the dead through the provisional hell after death. The portion of ITJ 731r highlighted in this study is its first section, a synopsis of the ritual performance for *do-ma*, a many-colored affair.

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[12] The use in this work of English terms such as 'god', 'deity', 'divinity', 'spirit', 'demon', etc. to describe supernatural personalities of a positive or negative character should be seen as merely a literary convention. The Tibetan equivalents assigned to these culturally laden terms are provided in the translations so as to avoid semantic confusion.

[13] Still valid is Stein's (2010, Antiqua III: 187) observation that no document dating to the pre-Buddhist period has ever been discovered. As I have discussed elsewhere, epigraphic evidence assembled in the field to date continues to make such a discovery an unlikely prospect. Stein (*ibid*., Antiqua V: 232) also considered the possibility that the contents of certain Dunhuang manuscripts may predate the 7th or 8th centuries CE, adding, "However, this will never be anything more than a hypothesis." On philological grounds, his position is entirely justified. Nevertheless, there remains the promise of hard archaeological evidence addressing some of the questions surrounding the etiology and chronology of Old Tibetan funerary traditions. For archaeological data suggestive of a prehistoric antiquity for certain archaic funerary traditions recorded in Dunhuang texts, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 544–557.

[14] I have relied on facsimiles of Pt 1134 and Pt 1194 published in Imaeda *et al*. 2000. My copy of IOL Tib J 731 recto (henceforth abbreviated ITJ 731r) came from a microfilm facsimile obtained at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University. The shortened form of the accession code for India Office Library Tibetan works (ITJ) is used throughout this monograph.

The first origins myth of Pt 1194 recounts the creation of the *skyibs-lug* with the aid of three funerary priests of legendary status: Gshen-rab myi-bo, Dur-shen rma-da and Sgal-gshen tho'u-yug. This text is one of seven known Old Tibetan sources for lore about Gshen-rab myi-bo.[15] However, Pt 1194 is the only source for the mythic origins of the psychopomp sheep that seems to have survived in Old Tibetan literature, endowing it with great historical value. By establishing the new 'religious custom' (*chos*) of the *skyibs-lug*, the funerary priests are framed in the story as great benefactors of humanity.[16] They initiate a covenant between sheep and humanity, culturally exalting the sheep by assigning it a role well beyond mundane economic functions. In order to create the first sheep guide of the dead, the funerary priests had to win it back from a dissembling and murderous *srin* demon. The priests do this through evocation and instruction. The making of the *skyibs-lug* was done in collaboration with its mother, and this child sheep must be enticed with delicious food offerings. Once the sheep was ritually secured by the funerary priests, it could act as the surrogate relative of the deceased in the traverse of the postmortem barrier. Thus the way to the hereafter was opened.

The fifth and longest origins myth in Pt 1134 is primarily occupied with the *do-ma* funerary transport horses. The two main characters of the story are the patriarch 'Gon-tsun phywa and his ill-destined son Lhe'u yang-ka rje. In the text 'Gon-tsun phywa is depicted as an archetypal *bon* ritualist and divine figure. The son was an individual of fine qualities, who passed away after a fatal dispute with his maternal uncle. 'Gon-tsun phywa went to great lengths to revive Lhe'u yang-ka rje, but it was to no avail. In the end, he turned to a funerary priest (*gshin-gshen*) to help conduct the burial rite. A part of this rite involved two horses, the *do-ma*. However, these horses were frightened by a crafty wolf and ran away. 'Gon-tsun phywa chased the horses over huge distances and even tried to trap them but he was unable to apprehend these animals. The two equids were finally caught by a lord of the Dmu lineage. Noble in spirit, the horses agreed to serve as the *do-ma* for Lhe'u yang-ka rje; even though they knew that their mission meant sure death. With the *do-ma* in the proper place, the burial of the son could go ahead. The horses were outfitted with ritual ornaments, and they were instructed by 'Gon-tsun phywa to pass through the postmortem murk and to reach the celestial paradise along with their human charge. As the prototypic carriers of the dead, the *do-ma* were successful in carrying out their work. These mounts along with the *skyibs-lug* beacon and Lhe'u yang-ka rje were established in their new abode above the nine layers of the sky.

The *do-ma* ritual in manuscript ITJ 731r brings to light ceremonial procedures and cultural lore not well represented in other Old Tibetan sources. This ritual was part of the last stage of the ancient Tibetan funerary rite. It occurred after the deceased had undergone psychological stabilization through mystic reconditioning of his consciousness. The text begins by definitively segregating deathful mischance from the good luck incumbent in livestock and other economic foundations.

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[15] The other six are Pt 1068, Pt 1134, Pt 1136, Pt 1289, ITJ 731r, and the *byol-rabs* (the origins myth of a type of ransom offering) text of the Gathang Bumpa collection. These six works form the focus of study in Bellezza 2010a.

[16] There is a long held Tibetological belief that the early historic-period religious specialists (*bon-po* and *gshen*) who carried out rituals such as funerals belonged to a cult almost exclusively devoted to serving the king and his court. Recently, Kværne (2009: 23) put forward this view, adding that such priests were typical of an agricultural society with a centralized government. Although there is no question that *bon* and *gshen* priests were active in serving the spiritual needs of royalty, the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa funerary documents indicate that they were also engaged with a much wider cross-section of society. As observed by Dotson (2008: 67), the *bon* ritual systems in Pt 1285 and other Dunhuang manuscripts cannot be distilled down to a royal or state religion. It should also be noted that a good many origins myths integrated into the Old Tibetan ritual tradition are set in pastoral or venatic regions of Tibet. Like today, in the early historic period, the higher reaches of the Tibetan Plateau were primarily given over to stock rearing and hunting.

This ritual segregation was believed to separate the social success required by the living from the malefic forces of death. The second part of the *do-ma* ritual revolves around the propitiation of stellar and planetary demons, which could interfere with passage to the empyrean. As part of this sequence, the *do-ma* are warned not to eat offerings designed for the stars and planets and not to be misled by these uranic beings. The third part of the ritual covers genealogical precedents of the person for whom it is being executed. The next section of the *do-ma* performance persuades the departed to well and truly accept the fact of death. A series of powerful metaphors are used to convey this blunt message. With nowhere else to turn, the deceased was seen as ready for the final journey. The text tells us that together with the *do-ma* the dead person fords the river and climbs the pass, demarcating the postmortem stage of existence from paradise. In the last instance, the expired one apprehends a rainbow, signaling his entry into paradise, a world utterly cut off from the one in which the living reside.

Other Sources

Other ritual manuscripts of the Dunhuang collections are also investigated in this book. Ancillary to this study, these documents clarify narrative elements and ritual operations described in the illuminated manuscript, Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang manuscripts featured in Part III. These supporting works elaborate upon fundamental eschatological themes, adding to an overall appreciation of death rituals in ancient Tibet. Those Dunhuang references derived from secondary sources are tucked away in footnotes, as are supplementary Dunhuang passages that are paraphrased or translated in this book. Of special note is material pertaining to salvation in ITJ 733, the cosmic origins of the *do-ma* in Pt 1060, and healing rituals in Pt 1285.

A number of primary sources derived from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur[17] collection also underpin this book. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is an Eternal Bon assemblage of over one hundred individual texts incorporated in both the New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten* (vol. 6) and the Bon *bka'* (vols. 31 and 39). Devoted to many aspects of funerary ritual history and performance, this body of literature is a compilation of archaic and Buddhist-style lore and praxis. It began to be assembled circa the 11th century CE.[18] Written in Classical Tibetan, the codification and editorial bent of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur were tailored to serve the tenets of Eternal Bon, a religion that has much in common with Tibetan Buddhism. Traditionally, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is attributed to the prehistoric *gshen* Mu-cho ldem-drug and his father Ston-pa gshen-rab.[19] Some of its texts are thought to have been rediscovered by Thog-thog lhung-lha and other unnamed treasure finders (*gter-ston*).

Although the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur contains a number of philosophical constructs and ritual methods that can be attributed to the early historic period, it is very much a body of literature composed to suit the religious purposes and *Zeitgeist* of the early second millennium CE. Replete with ritual knowledge of varied sorts, much of this collection is devoted to exorcistic

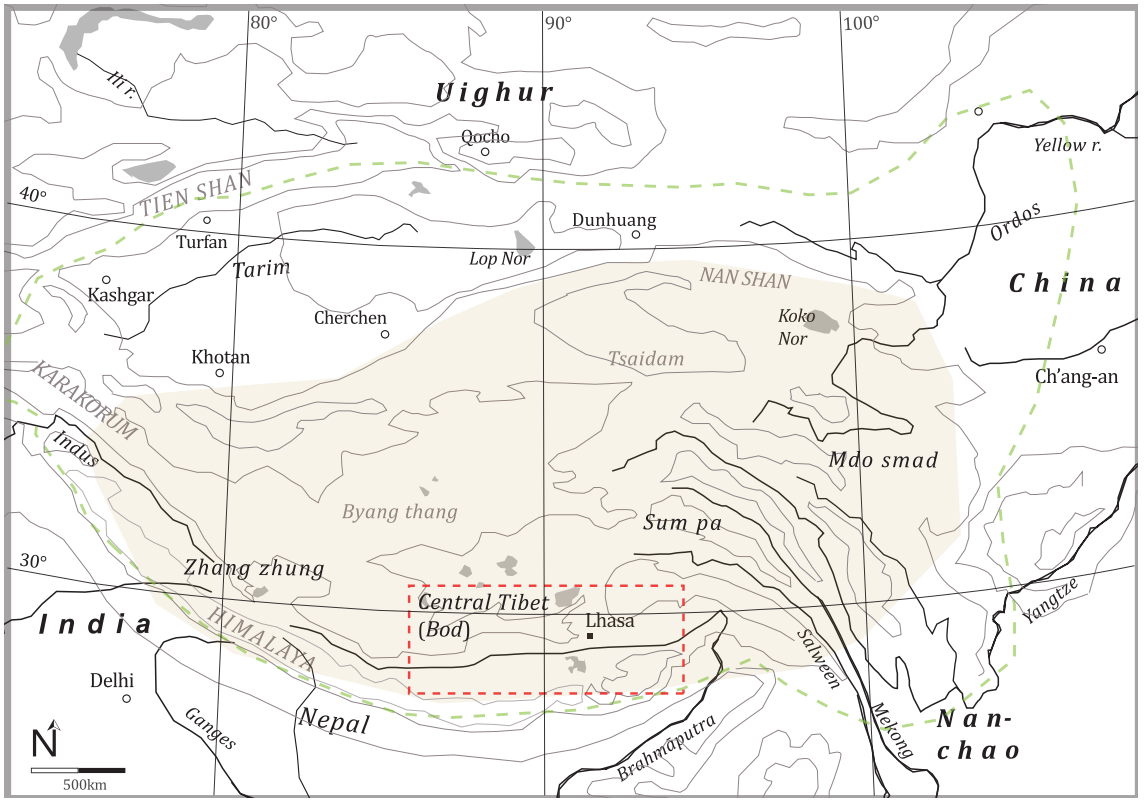
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[17] Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho. Karmay (2009: 63) translates the word *khrom* in this title as 'public', but this is not strictly correct. For a clarification of this term, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 367, 377, 380.

[18] For a comprehensive introduction to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 367–372; Martin *et al*. 2003, pp. 540–571.

[19] On the identity of Gshen-rab myi-bo in Old Tibetan (O.T.) sources, see Bellezza 2008; 2010a; Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), pp. 255–258; Stein 1971, pp. 485 (n. 13), 490, 520, 522. Studies published on his Eternal Bon counterpart, Ston-pa gshen-rab, include (among others) Karmay 1998, pp. 108–113; Karmay 1972, pp. xvii–xxi; Karmay 2005, pp. 139–210; Kværne 1995, pp. 17–21; Hoffman 1961, pp. 85–97.

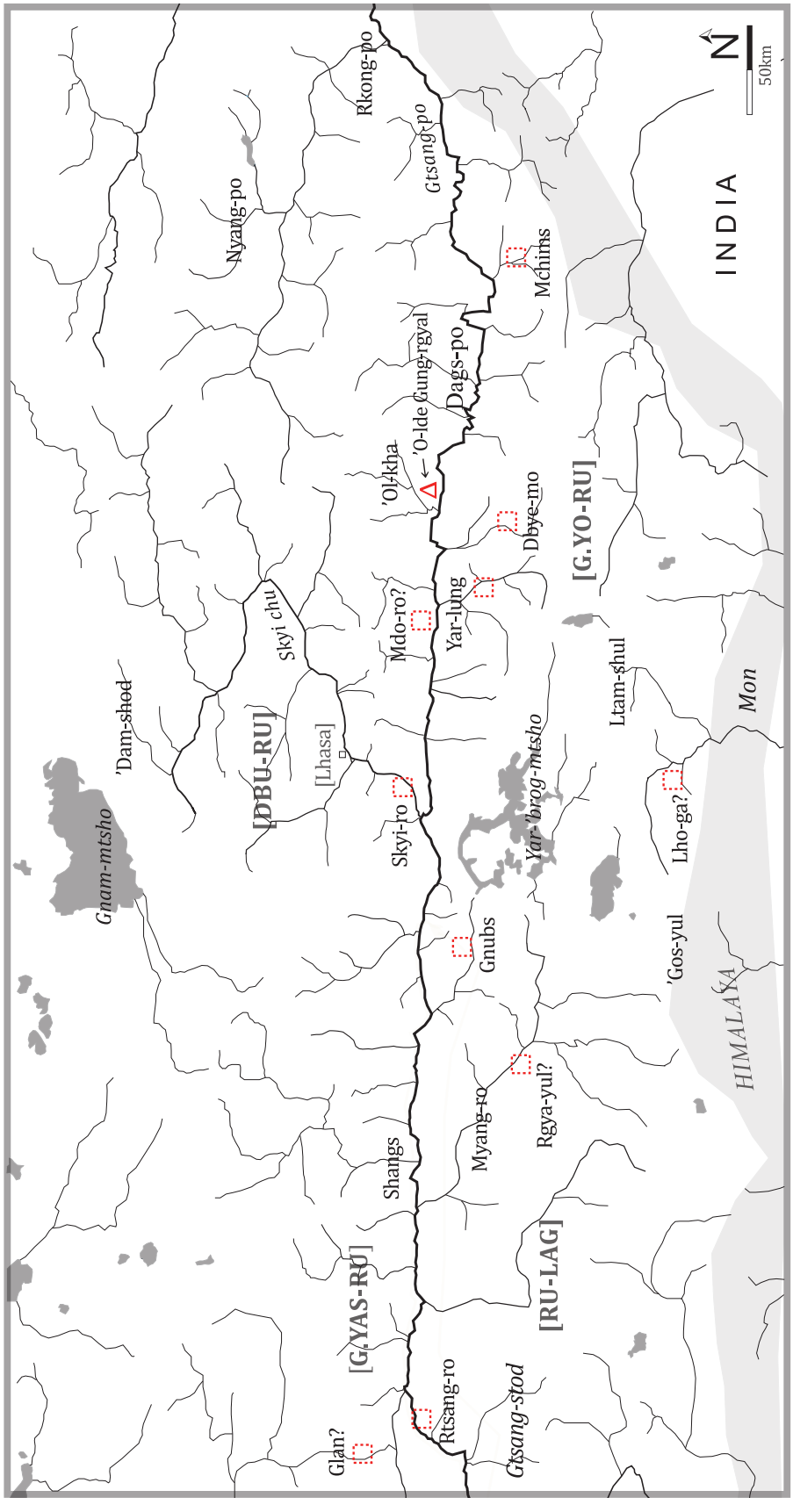
rituals designed to uncouple the demons of death (*gshed*) from the soul or consciousness principle of the deceased.[20] According to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the consciousness principle was a bipartite phenomenon consisting of the *bla* and *yid* or *bka'* and *thugs*. The *bka'* as an utterance or aspiration is the equivalent of the *bla*, the soul or animating force that is the seat of the personality. The *yid* or *thugs* is the mind, the prime perceptual and cognitive faculty of an individual.[21] Nevertheless, in Old Tibetan literature, the *yid*, *thugs* or *bla* mostly occur separately as a singular consciousness principle that endures *post obitum*. As regards the Tibetan funerary universe, innovation abounds in Classical Tibetan literature but so do much older eschatological concepts and mythic motifs.



Map 1. The Tibetan Highlands

[20] In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Mi rab* (= *rabs*) *mchad gsum khro bo'i gshad 'dul dbus phyogs bzhugs pa legs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, Nos. 1131–1163, anonymous), there is a vibrant description of the male *gshed* (there are also female *gshed* or *gshed-ma*), who come in the form of animals, and the common grouping of elemental spirits known as *lha-srin sde-brgyad* (Nos. 1156, ln. 6 to 1157, ln. 1): "This oath-breaking *gshed-po* of evil activities at times manifests as birds, wild ungulates and livestock, and at other times it manifests as different aquatic animals. All the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* assume any manner of manifestation" (*lan re 'dab chag ri dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *g.yung dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *sprul / lan re chu gnas dag tu sprul / dam nyams gshed po las ngan 'di / lha srin sde brgyad thams cad la / ma sprul pa ni gcig kyang med /*).

[21] For further information on the consciousness principle, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 363, 364.



Map 2. The core areas of Central Tibet, with major place names featured in the texts

PART I

The Illuminated Funerary Manuscript

Philological and Historical Analysis of the Illuminated Funerary Manuscript

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

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

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

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

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

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

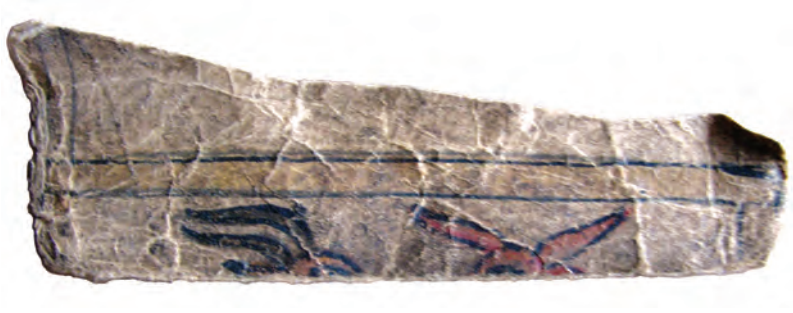


Fig. 1. The recto side of the assayed manuscript fragment. The two figures appear to have been part of the Ja-3r frame, divine gazelles found in the first half (invocation and propitiation of the psychopomps) part of the death ritual



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[25] For further elaboration, see Bellezza 2008, p. 525 (n. 591).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[38] According to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Tshe 'das rigs drug gi gnas nas drangs thabs*, in funerals there are

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[45] On the benefits of funeral rites to the living and the dead, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 361–366.

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

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

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

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

System of Notation and Translator's Note

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

Classical Tibetan lexical equivalent: (C.T. =)
Gcig-shad: /
Gnyis-shad: //
Tshig-shad: // *** //
Sbrul-shad: // °°° //
Reconstructed words and uncertain readings bracketed by: {}
One syllable missing from text: {#}
Two syllables missing from text: {##}
Three syllables up to an entire grammatical line missing from text: {###}
Amendment to text: (+)
Deletion to text: (-)
Spelling or grammatical correction: (=)

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

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

Division One: The Psychopomp Ritual



Nga-3r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nga-4r

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ca-1r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ca-2r

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ca-4r

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

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

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

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



Cha-1r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cha-2r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cha-3r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[73] *Stabs-sdug*. This can also be translated as 'prancing' or 'legs folded gracefully underneath the body'.



Cha-4r

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ja-3r

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

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

[77] Deer wool (*sha-bal*) and antelope wool (*gtshos-bal*, C.T. = *gtsod-bal*) are elements of the healing ritual narratives in Pt 1285 (lns. 32, 50, 53).

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

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

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

[78] The term *gar-ma* alone denotes the prancing or gamboling of the female gazelle. The signification of the word *lco* is not clear.



Ja-4r

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nya-3r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[82] This line is completed by the words, *bcabs par g.yes so*, which are of unknown signification.

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



Ta-3r

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

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

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

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



Tha-2r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Tha-3r

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

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

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

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

[84] This standard refrain was removed from the text when the manuscript was cut and is reinstated here.



Na-1r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[87] The remainder of the text of this frame was detached from the illumination and now appears above the Na-2r frame.



Na-2r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Pa-2r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[94] Two syllables {*na pa*} found in this line are of unknown signification.



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



Pa-3r

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Pa-4r

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

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

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

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

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

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

Division Two: The *Ste'u* Ritual



Nga-3v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nga-4v

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

[102] For a discussion of the term *dra* (lattice, grate, etc.), see Uray 1962, pp. 219–223.

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

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



Ca-1v

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

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

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

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



Ca-2v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



Ca-4v

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

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

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

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

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



Cha-1v

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

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

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



Cha-2v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cha-3v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cha-4v

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

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

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

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

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



Ja-3v

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

[115] *Sbrang-char* (literally: 'honeyed rain') connotes rain that is light, steady and beneficial.

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



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



Ja-4v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nya-3v

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

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

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



Ta-3v

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

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

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

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



Tha-2v

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

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

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

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



Tha-3v

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

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

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



Na-1v

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

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

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



Na-2v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Pa-2v

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

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

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

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



Pa-3v

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

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

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

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

[126] The textual line that was split in two when the manuscript was cut begins at this point. It is not treated in this work.



Pa-4v

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART II

The Gathang Bumpa Funerary Documents

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

Part II begins with *Rnel drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* or any of the other texts of the collection.

A few observations pertaining to text-internal features of *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* are due in order to place it in within a historical framework. Nevertheless, a detailed paleographic[131] 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 drĭ '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

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[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 drĭ '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 drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs.*

The calligraphy of *Rnel drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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]

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[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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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

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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 drĭ '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 netherworld, 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] *shĭng-ring lce-dmar*,[141] a black arrow (*mda'-rgyud nag-ma*), a striped / multicolored

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[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 rĭngs 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 drĭ '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 (*kyĭ*, 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 gyĭ 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 drĭ '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.

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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-bsĭl-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 gyim-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 (*kyĭ*, 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 accidently 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 khyĭm-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 (*zang*s), 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-grǐ-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 drǐ '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 Avernal frogs 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 humans[153] of *byang*, at each dawn, at sunrise (*nang-par nyǐ-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 Sarameya 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 expanse[154] in blood. They laugh *lhag ge lhag*.[155] At each dusk, at sunset (*do-nub nyĭ-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 gyĭs*). 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 gnyĭs '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 gyĭ yul na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *byang gyi myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *bo 'bum* // *nang par nyĭ ma shar tsam na* / *byang mtsho dmar po 'i nang nas byung* / *byang brag dmar po 'i rtse la byung* // *las su cĭ mdzad na* // *khrag gyi than ma 'dĭngs* // *bzhad dang lhag ge lhag* // *do nub nĭ ma nub tsam na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *byang mtsho mar* (C.T. = *dmar*) *po 'i nang du mchongs nas mchĭs* / *ngud* (C.T. = *ngu*) *dang shums se shums* / *phyi na ci brang na* / *lcags gyĭ spyang mo 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang* / *zangs gyĭ phar mo lce brgyad 'brang* // *da sha la za zhĭng khrag la 'thung du mchi* // *rgyab la nĭ ci khur na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *lcags gyĭ 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 cĭg* / *khyod gyi thugs lam na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *de khyed gyi las yĭn snyem* (C.T. = *snyam*) *ste* // *khyod gyĭ las myen* (C.T. = *min*) *gyĭs* // *'phrin las ngan pa 'phro bor cig* / *khyod gyi snying lam na* / *lcags gyi sbal pa de* / *khyod gyi khyo dang stangs yĭn snyem* (C.T. = *smyam*) / *de ni khyod gyĭ khyo dang stangs myen* (C.T. = *min*) *no* / *de ni khyod gyĭ sha la za zhĭng khrag la 'thung du 'ong* / *khyod de dang ma 'grogs cĭg* // °°° //

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.

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[154] *Than-ma 'dĭngs* (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 victuals[162] are also proffered (*sprad*).

yul der phyin pa dang / *lug cǐg kyang* / *der gsad* (C.T. = *bsad*) / *lug la rma yang der bsha'* / *bda'* (C.T. = *brda*) *blan cǐg yang der blan* // *gsung lan cǐg der dbab* / *bshos cha cig 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 khyǐm-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.

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[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 drǐ '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 gyǐ than* (C.T. = *thang*) *ma 'dǐngs* (C.T. = *bting*) *pa de* // *nyon mo khyod gyǐ las yǐn snyem* /.

[164] *De 'i kha nas pha ya ngal khyǐm gong gyis 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 *sman* 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-grĭ* (*sic*):

> They had died, the *rnel*-[*dri*] had died. Transformed,[167] they were transformed into *sman*. 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 *sman*. 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-grĭ-mo*. It is finished.

grongs yang rnel te grongs / bskyal ba sman du bskyal / rma them pa rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *rdzogs par shes na / bu grĭ mo sman du rung / de'i chu ser tshan du rung / 'dĭ 'i ya* (C.T. = *yas*) *stags* (C.T. = *rtags*) *nĭ 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 gcĭg go / de yan cad rnel grĭ mo 'i bsangs lags te / rdzogs s.ho // °°° //*

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[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 *sman*, 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 drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs: Chapter II

The second chapter of *Rnel drĭ '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 *drĭ*
3. Calling the *drĭ-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 *drĭ* 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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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

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[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 drĭ '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. Ritualistically, 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 srong-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 *rnel-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 skyĭ-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*) *rnel-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 zhĭb du mnyes* /). Literally meaning 'tanned to fine particles', *zhĭb 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

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[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 (lns. 179, 320). In Pt 1136 (lns. 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*, Ral-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 *sman* 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]

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[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 (*tshĭg-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 *rnel*. That *dri* disappeared, it disappeared into the sky. The *grĭ-bon* [Ra]-lcags skyĭ-rgyal subdued the cruel *drĭ* 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'ĭ tshĭg bshad la* / *yul gser yul gser stod na'* (C. T. = *na*) / *gser lcam nyag nĭ rnel te grongs* / *de 'i dri yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *gnam du yar* (C.T. = *yal*) / *grĭ bon lcags skyĭ rgyal gyĭs* / *drĭ rgod las g.yung du btul* / *pags 'khengs las zhĭb du mnyes* / *drĭ 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 *rnel-dri*: 'Khar-ba'i bo-mo (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Bell-metal)
Officiant: *drĭ-bon* Ra-ljags skyĭ-rgyal
Metaphor: The fresh (*gsar*) hide was meticulously tanned.
The wild *drĭ* 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 *rnel-dri*: Shel gyĭ bo-mo (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Crystal)
Officiant: *drĭ-bon* Ra-ljags skyĭ-rgyal
Metaphor: The frozen hide was meticulously tanned
The *grĭ* (*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 *rnel-dri*: Zangs gyĭ bo-[mo] (C.T. = bu-mo, Young Woman of Copper)
Officiant: *drĭ-bon* Ra-ljags skyĭ-rgyal

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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'-brten*, 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 *drĭ* was changed into a noble one
The *mtshun* was transformed into a *sman*

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

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 2

The second origins myth ([*srid*]-*rabs*) in Chapter II of *Rnel drĭ '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 Efflugence Swastika Lha Lineage of Existence) and her mother G.yung-drung khrĭ-'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 Skyĭ-rje rmang-po,[179] the victim of the story was murdered

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[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 drĭ '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 Haarh 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 khrĭ-'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 Skyĭ-rje rmang-po. She became pregnant with child.[182]

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[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 refresh[184] herself. G.ya'-srĭn tshub-ma (Srĭn of the Slates Tempest) and Gangs-srĭn 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 antlers[186] 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 nĭ rnel dri sha ru gzung ba'ĭ rabs la / *pha dang yab gyĭ mtshan* / *srĭd pa'i lha rab* (C.T. = *rabs*) *g.yung drung 'od gyi rgyal po dang* / *ma dang yum gyi mtshan* / *g.yung drung khrĭ 'od gyi rgyal mor bshos pa'ĭ sras* / *bu byung bo* (C.T. = *bu*) *mor byung* // *myĭng* (C.T. = *ming*) *dang mtshan btags pa'a* / *lha lcam phye ma lam* / *su'ĭ khab dang dbyal du gshegs* // *skyĭ rje rmang po dang dbyal du gshegs* / *bu dang sras cĭg mnga'* / *g.ya' le spang mtshams su* / *spang sangs mdzad du gshegs na'* / *g.ya' srĭn tshub ma dang* / *gangs srĭn phywar ba gnyĭs phas gyis byung* / *sha chu ru brgyad pa cĭg du brdzus nas* / *lha lcam phye leb ni* / *rwa'ĭ* (C.T. = *rwa yi*) [190] *rgyal gong du blangs* / *nas gum mo* // *pha bo yab gyĭs* / *drĭ bon ra ljags spyan grangs* (C.T. = *drangs*) *te* / *drĭ 'dul shid bgyid na* / *drĭ'i brla* (C.T. = *bla*) *ma khugs* / *lha lcam phye ma lam* / *kyĭ brla* (C.T. = *bla*) *nĭ sha ba bcu* (C.T. = *chu*) *ru'i rgyal gong na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *yĭn cang shor te song nas* / *sha cu* (C.T. = *chu*) *ru de bzung nas* / *dri yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *ba'ĭ 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 drĭ '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

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[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 *khams-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'ĭ* (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 *rnel-drǐ* 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 *drǐ* 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 *rnel 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 woman[193] 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 over[194] 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 *drǐ*. The soul of the *drǐ*

[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] *Myǐ-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 around[195] the primal stone. The stone was taken and established as the receptacle of the disappearance-prone *drǐ*. The wild *drǐ* was subdued to tameness. The fresh hide was meticulously tanned. The *drǐ* 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 gyǐ mtshan* / *zangs 'gar se'u pa dang* / *ma nǐ 'gos za phyam dar ma* / *myǐ ma bshos bshos na* / *'gos za phyam dar ma* / *sku la sras cig mnga'* / *g.ya* (= *g.ya'*) *le spang gong du* / *myǐ* (C.T. = *mi*) *mo rol du gshegs* / *bas gyi* (= *phas kyi*) *ra rdzǐ yǐs* / *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*) / *drǐ 'i brla* (C.T. = *bla*) *ma mchǐs* / *smra gor gling la 'gor* / *drǐ 'i brla* (C.T. = *bla*) *chags sgo ra ra* / *smra gor rdo blangs te* / *drǐ yar ba'ǐ rten du btsugs* / *drǐ rgod las g.yung du btul* / *pags gsar las zhib du gnyes* (C.T. = *mnyes*) // *drǐ las mtshun* (= *btsun*) *du phab* / *mtshun las sman du bskyal* // °°° //

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 4

The fourth origins myth of *Rnel drǐ '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 appellation[196] 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 (*khab*) 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

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[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 *myǐng* (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 mzangs* (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; Haarh 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*, *srĭn* 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 *srĭn*. 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 gyĭ mtshan / 'gos rje 'gos po dang / ma dang yum gyĭ mtshan / za za zangs mo btsun // bshos dang nams gyĭ sras / bu byung bo (C.T. = *bu*) *mor byung / myĭng dang mkhan btags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) */ 'gos za yam 'dar ma' / zhal bzangs* (C.T. = *bzang*) *zla re nya // rĭngs* (C.T. = *ring*) *mzangs* (C.T. = *bzang*) *smyug re lden* (C.T. = *ldem*) */ su'i khab dang dbyal du gshegs na // lung gyĭ ya phu na lha gnyis gsas dang / gsum gyĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / lung gyĭ mda' na / klu gnyĭs gnyan dang gsum gĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / 'gre* (C.T. = *'dre*)[201] *srĭn gdon dang gsum gyĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhed do gsung / pha bo slad pa che / 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *che slad pa che // lha gnyĭs gsas dang gsum la ma stsal lo // klu gnyis gnyan dang gsum la ma stsal lo // 'dre gnyĭs 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 / srĭn dang bye ste mchis / bden dang bye ste mchis // su'ĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhes / zangs yul zangs stod na'* (C.T. = *na*) */ zangs 'gar se 'u pa'ĭ 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 boys[204] asked, 'who are you girl?'. 'Gos-za replied, 'my own[205] father is called

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[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 gyĭ.* 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*).' 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 (*dkrĭs*) 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 cĭ gsol na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *nam* (C.T. = *na*) *bza' gu zu gsol* / *chĭbs su cĭ mchĭbs na* / *ra dra tsa rgan mo bcibs* / *'gol yul 'gos stod na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *du gshegs* / *na* // *shul du su dang mjal* / *bus bu ra rdzi lug rdzĭ gnyĭs dang mjal* // *bus sba'ĭ mchĭd na re* / *bu khyod su bgyis pa dang* / *'gos za'ĭ mchĭd na' re* / *bdag gyĭ pha smos pa* (C.T. = *ba*) *'gos rje 'gos po thang* (= *dang*) / *ma nĭ za za zangs mo btsun* / *bdag rang 'gos za phyam ma 'dar* (- /) *ma* // *de skad bgyĭs pa la* / *ra rtsĭ lug rtsĭ khus btab pas* / *'gos za phyam dar rdab cĭg bsnun* / *'gos za brgyal te gda'* / *lug rtsĭ rga* (C.T. = *dga'*) *ste gda'* / *lug rtsĭ sa rdo gcig 'phangs* / *rdo 'phangs 'go* (C.T. = *mgo*) *ru phog* (+ /) *rkang pa mthur gyis dkrĭs* // *rta 'grogs g.yang kar 'grogs* / *rbab du lhung ste grongs* / *gu zu rlung gyis* (C.T. = *gis*) *btab* (C.T. = *brdab*) // *gu zu rlung gyĭ* (C.T. = *gis*) *skye* (C.T. = *ske*) *la dkris* // *'gags nas chu ru lhung ste grongs* / *de nas rbos de nes mo rang lcebs ste* / *shĭ* //

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 skyĭ-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

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[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 rbos de nes mo rang lcebs ste* / *shĭ* //. 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: *shĭ*, 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 woman[210] there were nine *drĭ*. 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 skyĭ-rgyal was invited by

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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 gsum 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 waters[213] 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 drǐ rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *dar* / *lug rtsǐs* (C.T. = *rdzi*) *rto* (= *rdo*) *brgyab pa'ǐ dri ste gcǐg* (+ /) *rta grǐ dang gnyǐs* / *g.yang dri gsum* / *rbab* (C.T. = *bab*) *gri dang bzhi* // *'gags drǐ dang lnga* / *chu dri grug* (C.T. = *drug*) / *bu drǐ dang bdun* / *lcebs drǐ dang brgyad* / *de nas zangs 'gar se'u pas bshas pa'ǐ ro rmed dang rgu* / *za ma mo cig la lus gri rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *de dar* / *zangs 'gar se'u pa 'ǐs* / *dri bon ra ljags skyǐ rgyal de ltar gnyer* / *dri tho rgu* (- *cǐg*) *btsugs* / *bya mgo rgu sna dmyǐg* (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 phyǐr yen* (= *g.yen*) *ma che* / *shi phyir gchags* (C.T. = *chags*) *ma rǐng* /



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

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[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'ĭ* (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 gyĭ dral* (C.T. = *gral*) *du bzhag / bu grĭ sman du bskyal / gna' de ltar phan de bsod do / da pu* (C.T. = *bu*) *la gyer ba la phan de bsod do // °°° //*

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[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 Haarh 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 gyĭ 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 drĭ '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-srĭ btsan-bye phag-po sna-rĭngs 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]

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[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'-brten*, 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-drĭ 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

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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 1n. 3), indicating that they possess a function not unlike that alluded to in the *Rnel drĭ '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 drĭ '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-myĭ rmu-rgyal,[220] who carried out highly obscure ritual activities

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thabs sogs, a *bya-bang* is associated with a plain in Pt 1052 (ln. r132) and in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (ln. 442). A basket full of *bya-bang* / *bya-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*), Myĭ-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 an 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. = *khab*) *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. = *khab*) *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. = *khrung khrung*) *ni sngo* (= *sgong*) *rdol na* / *brdung du* / *bgar ma 'tshald* / *rje grongs gyis myed* / *g.yu grugs gyis myed myi* / *smon nĭ smon du* / *ma rung mtshe gzugs gzugsu ma tsugs* (C.T. = *btsugs*) *na do ma snying dangs* (= *dgas*) *gĭ* / *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 (lns. 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* / *srĭn yar srin pa sna rĭng 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-myĭ 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; Haarh 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 gyĭ lha las myĭ'ĭ rjer gshegs pa yong gĭs sku bla gnyan* /). In the pillar inscription of King Khri-lde srong-btsan (Sad-na-legs, lns. 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 gyĭ lha las myĭ'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 drĭ '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, Skyĭ-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-drĭ* 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-srĭ btsan-bye phag-po sna-rĭngs 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 (*tsa ra ra*). The placenta had become wrapped around [the baby]. The *lha* above was unclean. The *grĭ-ma* below was undefeated. It was given the name and appellation Rnel-drĭ bkrags bshar-ma.

yang rnel drĭ rabs cĭg 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 bsrĭd* (C.T. = *srid*) *pa'ĭ sras* / *bu byung bo* (C.T. = *bu*) *mor byung* / *de la mtshan btags pa* / *rtsang lcam ngar mnyag nĭ* / *yar rje rmun bu'ĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhes* / *bshos dang nams gyi sras* / *bu byung ma ran bar* // *ma'ĭ khong du* / *yar srĭ btsan bye phag po sna rĭngs zhugs* / *bu cĭg bkrags te* / *ma mgo gyen du bstan* / *bu mgo thur du bstan* / *gtĭng thrag* (C.T. = *khrag*) *tsa ra ra* / *sha ma dgab la dkris* / *yar de* (C.T. = *te*) *lha ma bsangs* / *mar te grĭ ma ma btul* / *myĭng dang mtshan btags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) / *rnel drĭ 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-myĭ rmu-rgyal, with thirteen types of wood and…[225] From the thirteen *gson-ma*[226] the *lha* above was purified. The *srĭ* 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 yĭs myĭ* (C.T. = *mi*) *ma btsas* / *bya bang thang la blags* (C.T. = *lhags*) / *btang ma cĭ las btang na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *rgam rgu'ĭ* (C.T. = *dgu'i*) *ras las btang* / *bse mkhar smug po nas* / *myĭ gshen lha gshen na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *lde gshen rmun bu dang* / *tshe myĭ* (C.T. = *mi*) *rmu rgyal gyĭs* / *shĭng sna bcu gsum dang* / *sle mo ngo cen dang* / *snyags ma 'dram rĭngs las btang* / *shing bu rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang de la 'gal pa bgyĭs* / *gson ma bcu gsum las* / *yar te lha bsangs* / *mar te srĭ bnan* (C.T. = *mnan*) / *lha'ĭ gshegs shul phye* / *rje'i*

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[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 cĭ las btang na'* / *rgam rgu'ĭ 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 rĭngs las btang* / *shing bu rgu dang de la 'gal pa bgyĭs* /.

[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 / *myĭ* (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*) / *rnel 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 *rnel-dri* origins myths of Chapter II in the order in which they appear in the text. The fifth *rnel-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-'brĭng. In a lower part of a valley (*lung gyĭ ma-mda'*) lived Sman-btsun khyud-khyud khyud-mo. In the middle part of a valley (*lung gyĭ bar-tshĭgs*) 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-srĭn 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 gyĭ btab* /). She died as a *rnel*-[*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-'brĭng (*sic*), fell ill (*snyun gyis zin*). To make (*mgyĭs* = *bgyĭs*) 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

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[228] *Zla ba ngo bdun na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *sku'ĭ lhubs na bu cĭg dang sras mnga'.*

[229] *Thrag* (C.T. = *khrag*) *glangs* (C.T. = *rlang*) *glang* (C.T. = *langs*) *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 gyĭs 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 gyĭ bzhĭ 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 gyĭ bzhĭ mdor bnan* (C.T. = *mnan*) / *drĭ mo de 'ĭ ming* (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-'brĭng (*sic*) was benefited. Today, the benefit is like that (*'gra 'o*). That benefit and merit is done to fine particles (*zhib du bgyĭ*, 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 lcang-'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-'brĭng-ba.[232] [The former] had no wife and mate.

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

[231] *Rje kha dang kha 'brĭng la phan no* / *da yang de dang 'gra* (C.T. = *'dra*) *'o* / *phan bsod zhib du bgyĭ '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 drĭ '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*) *zhĭng 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'ĭ khab du myĭ 'gro*). Rmu-rje btsan-ba is one of accursed works (*las mngan-ba mchĭs 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 (*'drĭs-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 mchĭ*).

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 gyĭs 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.

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[233] According to Hazod (2009: 174), Rgya-yul gtan-bzangs is a western land, which is perhaps in or around Purang 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 drĭ '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'ĭ 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 Khrĭ dang-rje. The mother and wife was Khrĭ 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 Skyĭ-bdag btsun-mo coupled and their son Skyĭ-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 *drĭ* was to be subdued to tameness. The *drĭ* was converted

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[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 gyĭs 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'ĭ rmong-pa / Rje 'ĭ 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 lngang-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 *dbyĭ-mo* (shrubs?), the types, the nine types [of ritual objects], were taken away (*phyun*g).

dri tho rgu (C.T. = *dgu*) *zhĭg btsugs* / *drod pa rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *skur bu rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) / *slug gu rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *yis* / *drĭ rgod las g.yung du btul* / *drĭ 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*) *yĭs* / *dbyĭ mo rigs rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang* / *rĭgs 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-grug[244] lived Lord Lho-rgyal lĭng. His daughter was Lho-za drĭl-bu sĭl-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 drĭl-bu sĭl-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 gyĭ mthĭl la zug*) by the point of the bamboo of the south, which had been defeated (cut down) to its base."[245] This accident

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[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'-brten*, 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 nĭ 'jĭng-drug (*sic*). According to Stein (2010, Antiqua I: 80; Antiqua III: 176, 182; Antiqua V: 261), the Lho clan is closely related to the Rngegs 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 gyĭ nang gtĭng na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *snyung ba la* / *lho shing ldem ba'ĭ rtser gshegs na* // *lho smug* (= *smyug*) *rtse nas bcom ba'ĭ rtsa ba zhĭg* // *zhabs gyĭ mthĭl 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 drĭl-bu sĭl-sil sman died as a *rnel-grĭ*. She was led (*khrĭd*) 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 shĭg re shĭg na'*), Lho-za drĭl-bu sĭl-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 shĭg re shĭg na' (C.T. = *na*) / *myĭng* (C.T. = *ming*) *po lho bu stong sum rje dang* / *yab lho rje lang lĭng gyis* // *de la srĭng mor chags gyis* // *mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *gyi lha bnol lo* / *mying* (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 thĭs-dang spa ye-ye and Ya-ngal gyim-kong. Evidently, by this point, the family of Lho-za drĭl-bu sĭl-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 drĭ '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-shĭng 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

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[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 (lns. 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 rĭgs… gong*) were obtained. For three nights these things were cast away into a meadow. For three days these things were set aside[248] 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 (*rĭg-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 rĭgs 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* // *rĭ dags* (C.T. = *dwags*) *cho ma cho rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *la nĭ bsdĭ* / *gtsos* (C.T. = *gtsod*) *thrag* (= *khrag*) *spyin mo dang* / *shing gu rĭg chun 'chan la nĭ gda'* (C.T. = *brda*) *blan gsung phab* / *yar ke gdang pa la zhus bus* / *phyag kyang bsros* / *rkyang gyĭ 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 drĭl-bu sĭl-sil 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]

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[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 *bsdĭ*.

[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 *sbyin-mo*.

[251] This is followed by the remainder of this grammatical line of the text plus three whole lines of ambiguous import: *'chan la nĭ gda'* (C.T. = *brda*) *blan gsung phab* / *yar ke gdang pa la zhus bus* / *phyag kyang bsros* / *rkyang gyĭ 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 rĭgs* (= *rim*) *nas phyung* /.

[253] In that communication between these two ontological categories was opened: *Gson gshĭn 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 (*'brĭng*) *sman-bon* [presents] were offered." This is the priest or priestess who retrieved Lho-za drĭl-bu sĭl-sil sman from the netherworld. Consequently, it is stated that, "She went away (*gshag*s) as the *lha* and *sman*. She was bestowed the name Lha-za drĭl-bu sĭl-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 (*tshĭg*) 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 gyĭ cha cĭg bral* // *ngan khung tshĭg kung* (C.T. = *khung*) *nang na ma bzhugs shĭg* / *thugs shul rga* (C.T. = *dga'*) *brang bgrod te gshags cĭg* / *nongs gyĭ dur kung* (C.T. = *khung*) *nas dgyes lha sar gshags cĭg* // °°° //

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 drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs.* Various kinds of *'dong-mo*,[258] umbilical cords of various kinds, whatever kinds are available (*rĭgs 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

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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

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[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 (lns. 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 gĭ 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 drĭ '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 *gshĭn* [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 gyĭs bsang* / *rtsĭ sman sna tshogs sprad* // *ma bu ro phye te* / *khug rta'ĭ tshang 'dra bar tshal* // *gcĭg pha rol du bskyal* / *cĭg 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 cĭg tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *zan cig dang sprad do* // *de nas bnal khabs gsol* // *gshĭn thab dbyung* // *gdo* (C.T. = *rdo*) *rnams khrus 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*) // °°° //

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[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 (lns. 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. = *mnol*, 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-srĭn zla-gar and Rtsang-srin bo-de. She died in the same dreadful manner with which we are already acquainted. The woman became a demoness named Rnel-grĭ 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-cĭg-ma, who lost her child while it was still in the womb. The perpetrator of this outrage was the *srĭn* of Nubs, the 'Child Stealer' (Bu-rkun):

> In the country Gnubs-yul gling-grug,[264] Rje-gnubs gyĭ srĭs-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-cĭg-ma, who was received as the wife and mate of Gnubs-rje srĭs-pa (*sic*). The son of their mating and seasonal activity [was expected] after more than a year. Gnubs-srĭn 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]

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[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 *srin* 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). Haarh (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 (Haarh 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 cĭg zla ba rdĭb* /.

yul gnubs yul glĭng grug (C.T. = *drug*) *na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *rje gnubs gyĭ srĭs pa la* // *che mchĭs cung* (C.T. = *chung*) *mchĭs yang khab dang dbyal ma mchis* / *khab dang dbyal btsal ba* / *yul byar yu la lhums kyĭ nang shed na* // *lha byar lha zhal kar dang* / *tha nga rtsang mo thang dang bshos pa'ĭ bu* / *dbyar za nyag cĭg mas* / *gnubs rje srĭs pa'ĭ khab du bzhes* // *bshos dang nams gyĭ sras* / *lo dus zla mal du* / *gnubs srĭn bu rkun gyĭs* / *ma'ĭ 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-cĭg-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-cĭg-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-cĭg-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 srĭs-pa (read: Dbyar-za nyag-cĭg-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 gtĭng bkrum mo* (C.T. = *bkrugs*) // *yar ste lha ma mchod* / *mar de dri ma btul* / *drĭ mo 'dre ru red* / *'dreng yang rabs su bcad* / *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* / *shĭng rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *grungs* (C.T. = *drung*) *nas phyung* / *yar te lha yang bsangs* / *mar te dri yang btul* / *rmel* (= *rnel*) *drĭ thag shal ma* / *thur la spyi te btang* / *gnubs rje srĭs pa la* / *bdud dang gchags* (C.T. = *gcags*) *ma mchis* / *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

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[267] The next two lines of the text read: *'dreng yang rabs su bcad* / *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*) *rnel*: 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]

Rnel-dri Subjugation Origins Myth No. 11

The next *rnel-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 thĭng-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 *rnel*." Mdo-lcam rma-lo's demise is recounted in the formulaic lines of other *rnel-dri* subjugation myths. She was transfigured into the demoness Rnel-grĭ 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 gyĭ 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

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[270] *De ring rnel drĭ 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: *myĭ phung sol da ste* / *skyibs lha dbyar ma 'phangs* /. The identity of this deity is not clear.

[273] *Myĭ* (C.T. = *mi*) *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-khrĭ 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 cĭg*).

sgo sgo mo cig bgrod 'tshal lo / *smyug ma g.yu'i sgo* / *se ba zangs gyĭ sgo* / *'dong mo lcangs* (= *lcags*) *gyĭ sgo* / *sgo mo bcu gsum la 'ga 'ga tsam cĭg 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 mthĭng-btsun as his wife. Skyo is probably a clan name but a 'Skyo-yul' has not been geographically identified. Skyo-za mthĭng-btsun expired in the same terrible way repeatedly described in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*. The homicidal demon was named Dbye-srin yug-mo and the deceased woman as a demoness was called Rnel-drĭ 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.

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[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 (ln. 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 mthĭng-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-grĭ*."[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 Mchĭms-yul rgu-sul, the lord was Mchĭms-rje ne-'u-sing and his wife Lde-lcam gung-ro sman. The killer of the pregnant woman was Mchĭms-srĭn pha-bo. Nine *gshen* made the *gdo* (C.T. = *gto*). At the crossroads, the father Ya-ngal gyĭm-kyong (*sic*) collapsed (*mdzol*, C.T. = *mdzul*) the nine *srĭ-gung* (= *srĭ-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]

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[280] *Bya rgod gson ma la* / *gser gyĭ sha btags pa* / *gnam gyĭ 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 myĭ 'di la rnel grĭ phyug* (= *phyung*) *'tshal 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 tshe'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 bgyĭd 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 drĭ '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 Mchĭms-za byĭ-rib-ma, and the daughter Glan-grum-ma'ĭ sĭ-le-ma. Glan-grum-ma'ĭ sĭ-le-ma had no husband, but she met G.ya-spangs (C.T. = G.ya'-spang) skyes-cĭg (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 sĭ-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'ĭ sĭ-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-cĭg, wanted to claim Glan-grum-ma'ĭ sĭ-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 sĭ-le-ma appeared as nine types of *dri*. Among them was the *rtsog-drĭ* (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 drĭl-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 drĭl-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 drĭl-bu] bound the head of the corpse [of Glan-drum sĭ-le-ma] to a state

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[285] These include thirteen boxes (*sbrum*, C.T. = *sgrum*), thirteen *zho-'dzag 'dzag-pa* (?), thirteen *tha-ma byĭ-ba theng-leb* (?), thirteen *'dong-shas* (?), thirteen *stag-pa'ĭ rgam-shĭng* (a type of wooden object), thirteen swirling waters (*chu-dkyĭl*), and thirteen *sbra-khyĭm sgang sbrĭd-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-dung ni da cung ru*).

suppression (*mgo-ro 'dam du chud*) inside the *rme-khung* of nine levels (*rĭm-rgu*).[288] The father Ya-ngal gyĭm-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-drĭ* 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-grĭ* 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-grĭ*. It is finished.

de ring rnel grĭ'i gzhung du gdul (C.T. = *'dul*) *lo* / *ro phyir g.yen ma che* // *shĭ phyĭr gson myi 'brang* (C.T. = *drangs*) *ngo* / *thed dul* (C.T. = *'dul*) *dul* (C.T. = *'dul*) *bya'o* / *rnel grĭ 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 nyĭgs se nyigs* / *ro smad 'jam gyĭs khugs se khugs* /.

Rnel drĭ '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 drĭ '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 gzĭg-'brang is shown. This is the tradition (*lugs*) of Phag-bon gsas-khrĭ."[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 gzĭg-'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 drĭl-bu sĭl-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 khrĭ-'phang skyol, was married to 'Gon-bstun phywa who resided at the very edge of the sky (*gnam gyĭ 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 drĭ '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 lcang-'brang, the progeny of the mating of the father Stengs gyi brag-cha dĭng-ding (*sic*) and the mother Dbyar gyĭ 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 khrĭ-'phang skyol, was received as whose wife? She was received as the wife of 'Gon-bstun phywa at the very edge of the sky.

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[289] *Bkra za gzĭg 'brang gyĭ rabs la 'tshal lo / phag bong gsas khrĭ'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 mchǐs kyang* // *khab dang dbyal ma mchǐs* / *rma yul ngang 'brang lcang 'brang* / *na* / *pha stengs gyi brag cha dĭng ding dang* / *ma dbyar gyĭ drum cha ngur ngur 'chos* (= *'tshos*) *pa'ĭ sras* / *myĭng po dral po thang ba rmu thang gyĭs* / *srĭng mo rmu za khwa cung sman* / *sten khogs po 'i khab du bzhes* // *sten te khogs po 'i sring mo lcam mo ba* / *sten za khrĭ 'phang skyol* / *su'ĭ khab du bzhes na* / *gnam gyĭ pha mtha' na* / *'gon* (C.T. = *mgon*) *btsun phywa'i khab du bzhes* /

The next line of the text is incomplete. It seems to convey that 'Gon-bstun phywa belonged to the Phwya 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

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[290] This line reads: *phywa lug* (C.T. = *lugs*){#} *la pa can rĭn 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 drĭ '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 phya (*sic*) is the paradise of the Bon-po. This god also has divinitory functions in Pt 1043 (ln. 24, Gnam-rtse mgon-tsun) and in ITJ 739 (ln. 4v4, Mgon-btsun ni phya). 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 gtings-na rje'. [This son] risked (*bsdos*) [provoking] the *bdud* and [going] above the water (*chab-gang*, i.e., tantamount to death). Although [Mgon-tshun gtings-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 (*rgra*) of this son of the mighty was heard (*nyand*) [by Mgon-tshun gtings-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 gtings-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 gtings 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 cĭg mnga'* /.

[295] *Re shĭg 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: *mthĭng gyi nam shĭng 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 drĭ '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 (lns. 44, 47), Pt 1287 (lns. 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 gzĭg-'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 *phye-mar* (butter and barley meal preparation), a rectangular block of butter, *gzhĭb-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 drĭ '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 *phye*-[*mar*] and *zhib-mar 'ol-kon*, all of which were laced with gold. Inside a golden [vessel in the form] of a

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[297] *Myi kho mo la drongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) *gyi mtshan 'dogs na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *bkra za gzĭg 'brang du thogs cĭg* /. *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 dĭng-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-ding 'bras*), and in *Mkhas pa lde'u*, when King Gnya'-khri btsan-po comes to earth, he drinks *dang-ding '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 lcam dral gyĭs* / *byang gyĭ btab nas* / *mar gyĭ gdar po ce dang* / *phye'ĭ gdar po ce dang* / *zhĭb mar 'ol kon dang* / *gser gyĭ la btab na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *gser gyi ngang mo bya 'ĭ nang du* / *bu ram nyug* (C.T. = *smyug*) *chu dang* / *rngul* (C.T. = *dngul*) *gyĭ la btab nas* / *rngul* (C.T. = *dngul*) *mo gyi ngang mo bya'i nang du* / *'bras cang* (C.T. = *chang*) *ding bas bkang* / *zangs la btab nas* / *zangs gyĭ ngang mo bya'i nang du* / *'brĭ zho gnyug* (C.T. = *snyug*) *'brang* (C.T. = *sbrang*) *gyĭs bkang ste bno* /

The text goes on to state, "A name (*myĭng*) 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 drĭ '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 gyĭ thabs la / *rĭn po ce'i* (C.T. = *che'i*) *gdar bu cĭg* / *stag gyĭ lcub mo gcig* // *bya rgod gyĭ rgyus pa 'a ma* / *g.yag thag sngon po la btags la* / *drĭ ma cha la sna cĭg btags la* / *sna gcĭg shu gu* (C.T. = *shug pa*) *gting* (C.T. = *rting*) *kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *cĭg la btags la* / *sa la btsugs la 'dĭ 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

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[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*) *gyĭ bang sor myĭng* (C.T. = *ming*) *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*) *cĭg* / *bkra yar rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *du ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *cĭg* / *brgya la stong la yar* (C.T. = *yal*) *ba na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *bdud dang cho lo ma 'gyed cĭg* / *brgya la stong la 'gyed pa na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *bu tsha skugs su ma 'dzugs cĭg* / *tsha byug* (= *phyug*) *skugs su ma 'dzugs cig* / *nor phyug skugs su ma 'dzugs cig* / *brgya la skugs su 'dzugs pa nĭ* / *rin po* (+ *che*) *'i gdar bu dang* / *stag gyĭ chub mo skugs su tshugs* (C.T. = *'dzugs*) *cĭg* / *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*) *cĭg* / *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-khrĭ. 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 consumed[307] *'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* (*yĭ-gu*) of Phag-bon gsas-khrĭ. It is the *bon* tradition of Phag-bon gsas-khrĭ. It is finished.

myĭ rgan gnyĭs 'ol kon 'gam (C.T. = *'gams*) *du gzhug go* / *gna' gtam zlos su gzhug go* // *khyo ga dang bud gang yang rung ste de skad bya'o* / *phag bon gsas khrĭ yĭ gu* (C.T. = *ge*) *yĭn no* // *phag bon gsas khrĭ i bon lugs* / *rdzogs s.ho* // °°° //.

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[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 gzhug*. 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 drĭ '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-khrĭ, the mother 'Phrul gyĭ 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

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[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 sdĭng-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 nǐ 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 khrǐ dang // yum 'phrul gyǐ lde myig gnyǐs nǐ 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*) *nǐ phyi na 'brang ngo // bya rgod gyǐ* {*slag*} *pa ni rgu* (= *sku*) *la gsol lo // sgong gyi tha chungs kha brtol* (C.T. = *rdol*) *bas ni // myǐ shi sos gyi* {#} *yor byungs ngo // brgyu she lcags gyi rgan mor byung ngo // sku la nǐ bya rgod gyi slag pa gsol lo // shel gyǐ 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 lǐ-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 'ǐ ni myi bo che // ma dang ni yum gyi ma tshan* (C.T. = *mtshan*) *na // phywa bdag nǐ mtshun mo gnyǐs / bshos dang nǐ nam gyǐ sras / jo co* (C.T. = *jo*) *ni dral po nǐ skar ne ce shel rogs / lags // srǐng mo ni lcam mo ba ni // skar lǐ 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 lǐ-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

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[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 lĭ-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 (*nyĭn '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 shĭgs*), [the Phywa sister] summoned Pho-gshen nĭ-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

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[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 gyĭ 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 kyĭ* (C.T. = *gi*) *nĭ 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 (*myǐ-shi sos*), Kod-shel-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-lǐ 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-mchǐ*). 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 (*yol-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 barleycorn[325] *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.

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[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 rǐm-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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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.

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[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), *yǐge* (insignia), *btsud* (imprisoned), *phab* (sacked) and *mkhos bgyǐs* (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), *btab* (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 *mchǐs* (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

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[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., *gshegso*, *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-khrĩ of *Rnel drĩ '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 Xiaohe 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 Xiaohe 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 panegyrical 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 bzhĭ, 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 anthroporphized *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:

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[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 yĭn 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 yĭn no // btsan mi dmar rta dmar yĭn 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 nĭ // gle sbar drol pa yin no // btsan gyi ra ba yĭn no // bdud kyi rngon pa yĭn no // A tsi A la' la' // dri bu nga'* (C.T. = *nga*) *rgyal dang sha ru bye bye bsal na' // drĭ dang sha ru de ltar phye 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

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[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 gyĭ rngon yĭn 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 (*khras*), 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.'

drĭ bon zhal nas kyang // nga' (C.T. = *nga*) *ma dang sum ma dang myĭ sngun // sha drin myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *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 gyĭ rten yang byas / 'bros kyĭ ri dang khras* (C.T. = *'khras*) *kyi sul yang 'byas* (C.T. = *byas*) / *sha drin mi 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*) *nĭ sha ba bya ra bar pho ma ro gu lo ma stong thub ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *sha ru yĭ bya ra bar bzhag go // rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *sha'* (C.T. = *sha*) *rmun bu nĭ // dbyi thul snar po dang // btsan thul khra bo dang / stag gzig kyĭ thul pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) // *rgun* (C.T. = *dgun*) *kyĭ 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:

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[336] This sentence is the incomplete rendering of the line: *Nga'* (C.T. = *nga*) *ma dang sum ma dang myĭ 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 yĭn bas* // *gdo pho mo nga'* (C.T. = *nga*) *yĭ 'phyĭr 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 shĭ 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* // *shĭng thog sna rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *dang mngon 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 nyĭd yĭn 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 *nyĭ mag-ma* (?) as the *glud*.

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[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 'ĭ brgyal la bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) //.

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

[344] This appears to be the meaning of *gnyen-lam mtha'-bzhĭ* (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 drĭ '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 drĭ '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' (*gshĭn-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 Khrõnasa (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 (*yid*) 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 (*gshĭn-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

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[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 Ndshĕr-ndzĭ-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: *nan 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*) *yĭ ming ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *nĭ mchong la'* (C.T. = *la*) *sgo mos bgyi // sgas* (C.T. = *skas*) *gyĭ ming ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *ni // gzi sgas* (C.T. = *skas*) *nyer bu bgyi // sha 'a* (= *ba'*) *khyod der gshags zhig / der ran gzhin chab ldan yang // rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *gsum de na dgyes // rgung* (C.T. = *dgung*) *gsum tshun chad du bzhugs zhĭng snying mi dgyes // pha dang ma yĭ yul ma lags // de las phar gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) *// gser gyi sgo mo la // g.yu yĭ skas btsugs pha'* (C.T. = *pha*) *der gshags shĭg // 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 gyĭ 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 gyĭ 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 gyĭ 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 'ĭ sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) *// sen men sgas btsugs ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *// sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *de ru gshags shĭg / de de ran ran gshĭn 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 'ĭ sgo mo la'* (C.T. = *la*) *// yid kyi skas btsugs bas // der byon na'* (C.T. = *na*) *// 'jigs pa gsum dang der phrad do'* (C.T. = *do*) *// bdud gyĭ rngon 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-mĭg*) there will be manifest.' Thereafter, the deer went on to the country of Undying Swastika.

'jigs pa gsum po deyang (= *de yang*) *// dri bon gyĭs 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 mĭg 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

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[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 (*cĭr*) 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 (*rĭn-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 gyĭ 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 shĭg* // *gcen po yas se gshegs na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *spu thog cĭr* (C.T. = *gcer*) *yang ston pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *spu thog me bas gsal* // *skad gca'* (C.T. = *cha*) *dang glĭng bas* (C.T. = *bus*) *ston pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *yas gshags na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *yum yas gshags pa nĭ* // *rdzu 'phrul rĭn po ces* (C.T. = *ches*) *brgyan pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) / *yas gshags* // *sha 'ĭ 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.

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[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 vermillion 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 (*'phye'*). 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 mĭ 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 nĭ* // *yab la rangs su 'phul* // *rgyang bu dang gser 'phye'* (C.T. = *phye*) *nĭ phu la rangs su phul* // *de nas yab dang yum kyis* // *sha ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *la mĭng 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 mchĭ* (C.T. = *'chi*) *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' mĭ '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 nĭ 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

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[361] The meaning of the first part of the first line is unclear: *rĭng 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.

spyan 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*) *kyĭ '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 gyĭs 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 spyan cig gzigs* // *yab gyĭs gsung cĭg gsungs* // *thugs log cĭg brgyal* // *yum gyĭs car* (C.T. = *gcer*) *gyĭs gzigs na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *thugs yed* (C.T. = *yid*) *gyĭs sngangs* // *log cĭg brgyal yum gyĭ mchĭd na'* (C.T. = *na*) *re* // *lus kyĭ bu skyes na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *mtha' ma' ci ltar mchĭ'* // *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 (*sdĭg 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,

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[365] These three syllables convey the sinuous nature of the stripes. In Pt 1194 (lns. 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 kyĭ bu skyes na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *mtha' ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *ci ltar mchĭ'* //.

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

[368] *Bgyi na cĭ 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 (*mǐ-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 *ljǐ-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*) // *myǐ* (C.T. = *mi*) *la'* (C.T. = *la*) *rwa skyes pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) // *sdǐg ru ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *lags sam* / *'dab stǐg* (C.T. = *sdig*) *'dab ma'* (C.T. = *ma*) *lags sams* (C.T. = *sam*) // *stǐg* (C.T. = *sdig*) *ris ma'i* (= *ma*) *lags sams* (C.T. = *sam*) // *bgyi na cǐ ru bgyǐ* // *pha'* (C.T. = *pha*) *yab kyi zhal na'* (C.T. = *na*) *re'* (C.T. = *re*) // *di mǐ men* C.T. = *ma yin*) *dre'* (C.T. = *'dre*) *yǐ bu* // *gdags man spar gyǐ 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 gyǐ bu'* (C.T. = *bu*) *chung du ma bsad na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *skyes nas* (= *na'*) *rta la rdung* C.T. = *brdung*) / *ljǐ rmang bya yǐ 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' bzhǐ (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 bzhǐ. While neither group is explicitly connected to the four fabled rivers of southwestern Tibet (Chu-bo bzhǐ), they are mentioned in conjunction with them. Together with three other so-called 'portals', the Chu-bo bzhǐ 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' bzhǐ (*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 bzhengs*). 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 khyǐl-ba, and Chu-ste 'khyǐl-ba', these four. These are the Chu yi zungs-pa' bzhǐ. 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 bzhǐ: 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 (*bchǐbs*) 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 bzhǐ (Four Rivers), and one portal is Chu yǐ lag-pa' bzhi (Four Tributaries). The Chu 'i zungs-pa' bzhǐ 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 gyǐ 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 gyĭ* /// *phyag brnyan dkar de yam ba dang* // *lcags de 'bar dang* // *mtsho ste khyĭl ba dang* // *chu ste 'khyĭl ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *bzhĭ* // *chu yĭ zungs pa' bzhĭ* // *yang de ltar bzhĭ* // *'o* // *chu blud* (C.T. = *glud*) *thams cad yang de la'* (C.T. = *la*) *'bul lo'* (C.T. = *lo*) // *chu yĭ zungs bzhĭ yang* // *pha ni gnam khol pha'* // *ma nĭ mtsho mo bdal drug du bshos na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *pho bo gcen po nĭ chu btsan rol pas bya'* (C.T. = *bya*) // *chu rta sngon po chibs su bjibs* (C.T. = *bcibs*) // *de de yĭ gcung po ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *chu btsan sngon pos 'bya'* (C.T. = *bya*) // *de yĭ 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 bchĭbs* (C.T. = *bcibs*) // *chu yĭ btsan bzhĭ yang de ltar lags so* // *chu yĭ sgo ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *bzhĭ la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *skyi bu la sgo gcĭg* // *mtsho gli* (= *gling*) *la sgo gcĭg* // *chu bo bzhĭ la sgo gcĭg* // *chu yĭ lag pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *bzhĭ la sgo gcĭg* // *chu 'ĭ* (C.T. = *chu yi*) *zungs pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *bzhĭ la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *chu mkhar bchu* (C.T. = *chu*) *gsum du srĭd do'* (C.T. = *do*) // *mtho ni sgal* (C.T. = *sgar*) *brang rgod gyi mtho* // *mkhar skal 'brang* (= *brang*) *rgod kyi mkhar* / *rgyang yang skal* (#) *bu cĭg rgyang* / *do mod gnam gong la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *'bros gyĭ rĭ dang khras* C.T. = *'khras*) *kyĭ sul* // *mtho bzhengs lugs las bzhengs* // *bgyĭs 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 drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*:

> Also, the *chu-dri* of women. Skar-bu cĭg-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-'breng*) 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.

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[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 cĭg 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 drĭ la' (C.T. = *la*) // *skar bu cĭg sman* // g.*yu rje yag pa 'ĭ khab dang dbyal du bzhes* // *nyĭ ma nyĭn cĭg na'* (C.T. = *na*) // *thugs su gthon* (C.T. = *gdon*) *zhugs ste* // *gnam shug lo bzangs la'* (C.T. = *la*) // *sha 'breng mnyen gyĭs bdags* (C.T. = *btags*) // *rtse* (= *rtsed*) *zhĭng '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* // *drĭ dang bzhun du gum* // *yas stags* (C.T. = *rtags*) *dang mtho* (= *tho*) *yĭ 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 sa-ched-po and the mother, these two, making love, mated. In the next year (*sang-phod lo*), there was just one round (*grĭl*) 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* // *srĭd ba sngon pos gnam 'phub* (C.T. = *phub*) // *grags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *gtĭng cen skyi' btĭng* // *gnam sa'* (C.T. = *sa*) *gnyĭs las bsrĭd pa'ĭ bu* // *yab gnam bdag sa ched pos bgyĭ 'o'* // *yum gnyĭs bshos su bshos ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) // *sang phod lo dus na'* (C.T. = *na*) / *sku na'* (C.T. = *na*) *sgong tsam grĭl* (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*.

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[373] The next line of the text has to do with the earth spread out below: *grags pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *gtĭng 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 kyĭ ge ma du gong ma' 'phangs 'phangs su gsol* // *'phar dang drĭ dags dkar po nĭ* //.

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. = *btab*) 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*

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[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 *skyĭ-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 bzhĭ 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 bzhĭ (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-bzhĭ*) 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

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[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: *shĭd gdang pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *nĭ mag pa 'os bzang ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) // *do rgyal thugs kyĭ sgom bu nas* //* *yab mes khrĭn* (C.T. = *phrin*?) *du tsha' 'ĭ do nod* // *myĭ 'ĭ sku rgyan gzhan du myĭ gdang* (C.T. = *gtong*) *ngo'* (C.T. = *ngo*) //. These lines pertain to the *shid*, 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 (*khrĭn*?) 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 (*mtshǐs* (= *mchǐs*) *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-rog 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

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[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 deployed[386] 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 kyis 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 kyis* // *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

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[385] The Eternal Bon ritual text *Mu ye pra phud phya'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 Skya-ring 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 Rgya-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*} *// rtsĭ sman dang gtsos khrag gyĭs* (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*) *'tshos zhes bgyĭ 'o // rje sbug po dang gyĭ 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 kyĭ 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.

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[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*) *kyĭ 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 kyĭs* // *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-po[397], the *rgod-bon* (vulture priest) Thang-yag,[398] and the *chab-gshen* Gyur-bu.

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[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 (lns. 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 (*rĭng*) [of the deceased].' Castle…

pha dang yum lcam 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 zhĭg skad nas* // *dri 'dul na'* (C.T. = *na*) *sbur* (C.T. = *spur*) *dang rĭng 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

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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 (*'khyĭl*) [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. = *rlon*) *du zos* // *nya khrag lon* (C.T. = *rlon*) *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 bzhĭ chu la thung ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *yĭn no'* (C.T. = *no*) // *srog gcod cing shan bar bskos ba yĭn 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 'khyĭl* (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):

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[399] Chu-srĭn 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-srĭn 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 srĭn rgyal ba' 'dug na* / *gnam las che* (= lce) *phab ste* // *chu srĭn rgyal ba chu 'ĭ nang du bsad do* // *'brug dang klag* (C.T. = *glog*) *gnyĭs 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 *bzhĭ-'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*) *nĭ 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 bzhĭ '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.

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[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 line[406] 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 shǐg 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 rĭn po ce* (C.T. = *che*) *sbram cig bdums ste btang na de 'i ming ni* // *ri dang ni dger por btags* // *so* // *pha nĭ 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. = *dngul*) *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

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[404] Born from eggs these include: Zom-shangs lcags-mtsho, Ma-pang g.yu-mo mtsho, La-nag bsil-mo mtsho, and Gung-chu dngul-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-snang.[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 bzhĭr bsrid (C.T. = *srid*) *do'* (C.T. = *do*) / *chu po* (C.T. = *bo*) *na ra nĭ 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'*

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[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-snang*) 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'ĭ 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-srĭn 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 back[413] 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 srĭn 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 zhĭng '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 srĭd pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *sa*

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[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 yĭ // *gong gyi srid pa'* (C.T. = *pa*) *bskos so* / *rtsĭ 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 up[416] 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

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[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 'ĭ 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 gnyĭs kyang srĭd pa 'ĭ 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-rtsǐ*, 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-tshĭgs became Dri-bdud byi-yan, Dri-btsan phyi-yan and Dri-g.yen rgu-yan[423] 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 (*gshĭn*) 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 drĭ '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.

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[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 *g.yen*.

[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.

PART III

Selected Origins Myths and Rituals from the Dunhuang Funerary Manuscripts

The Origins Myth of the *Skyibs-lug* in Pt 1194

The Dunhuang manuscript Pt 1194 now consists of 74 lines of text in the scroll format (*shog-dril*; most other archaic funerary documents of Dunhuang are also scrolls). This document, however, is incomplete; an indeterminate part of its first portion is missing. The text is divided into three thematically interconnected etiologic myths (*rabs*), which pertain to the origins and use of the psychopomp sheep. The middle origins myth of Pt 1194 (lns. 37–55) describes the genesis of the vulture wing implement, which was used as the 'respondent of death' (*gshin-than*), a tool wielded in conjunction with the ovine funerary guide (see *supra*, p. 164 [fn. 281]). This mounted vulture wing appears to have aided and/or empowered the sheep in its passage through the obstacles of the postmortem realm. The third origins myth of Pt 1194 (lns. 56–74) recounts how the psychopomp sheep was enticed to serve humanity (see *supra*, p. 115 [fn. 129]). Many of the narrative elements in this final account are introduced in the first etiologic tale of the text.

I have already discussed how on a paleographic, grammatical and text format basis Dunhuang funerary documents such as Pt 1194 appear to predate the Gathang Bumpa documents of this study. As a point of departure on the road to further inquiry and analysis, I put forward that Pt 1194, as well as texts such as Pt 1134 and ITJ 731r, were composed between 750 and 900 CE. This hypothetical date places these manuscripts in the imperial period or within a half century of its demise (for further discussion on the age of the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang see, *supra*, pp. 177–181).[425]

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[425] Recently, my esteemed colleague Henk Blezer (2008; 2010), if I understand him correctly, in two cursory studies of archaic ritual traditions, holds that Tibetans were incapable of recording in their literature any collective memory that predates the 7th and 8th century CE. Blezer's stance appears to be part of a wider trend in his work to overlook a demonstrable pre-imperial cultural existence. Blezer (2008: 424) suggests that the historical origins of the names of personalities in non-Buddhist Dunhuang ritual manuscripts might date to the 7th or 8th century CE, at the earliest, believing that this is ample time to account for the formation of the onomasticon. As for narrative events in the same Dunhuang sources, Blezer sees a 7th or 8th century CE basement as even less likely (*ibid*.). In line with his beliefs, Blezer adds that the Dunhuang manuscripts which mention Gshen-rab myi-bo probably date to the 9th or 10th century CE, but qualifies his position by stating that his is a "wild guess" (*ibid*., 423, 424). It is curious therefore that in the same paper, Blezer suggests that the *pho-gshen thod-dkar* of Pt 1285 are "perhaps outlandish folks from Tokhar-i-stan (Tho kar?), those Yüeh-chih or Yuèzhi" (*ibid*., 431). The ethnonym Yuezhi (*sic*) of course designates a people who lived on or adjacent to the Tibetan Plateau (before migrating west to Transoxiana) in the 2nd century BCE. In a temporally compressed view of the grammatical development of Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan, Blezer insinuates that Eternal Bon materials are contemporaneous with the Dunhuang manuscripts by stating that collections belonging to the former like the *Klu 'bum* and Dur mchog (= 'Dur-chog) are "partly closely contemporary sources" (Blezer 2010: 30). This assertion is not borne out by a study of the grammatical and paleographic evidence. The *Klu 'bum*, while containing many archaisms, was first composed in what might be called a transitional or early form of the Classical Tibetan language, and can probably be dated in its initial form to the 10th century CE (codicological study is required to confirm this assertion). The 'Dur-chog

Although the three manuscripts spotlighted in this final part of the study all date to the same general time period, they exhibit contrasting calligraphic characteristics and are clearly the work of multiple scribes. The handwriting of Pt 1194 has a slightly more cursive quality than Pt 1134 or ITJ 731r. It appears to reveal the first glimmers of the *dbu-med* script. Hard-to-read letters, lines deviating somewhat from the horizontal, and numerous cross-outs give it the look of having been copied at a fairly rapid rate. Pt 1134 appears to have been inscribed by no less than two different penmen. Parts of the first third of the text were written in a very careful penmanship (see especially lns. 50–85). The remainder of the document exhibits freer style handwriting. The letters of this *dbu-can* document are consistently and evenly formed. Rather than the more common single *tsheg* (one dot) of other texts, most of the syllables within lines are separated by a double *tsheg* (two dots). The staid handwriting and use of the double *tsheg* may possibly signify that Pt 1134 was used in more formal ceremonial settings than certain other archaic funerary documents of Dunhuang. The first or ritual part of ITJ 731r was inscribed clearly and boldly, while latter parts of the same document were more hastily laid down (with a number of cross-outs) probably by another individual using a different writing instrument. The speedy copying of Dunhuang funerary manuscripts may possibly be related to a demand for multiple copies as a consequence of war.

The first origins myth of Pt 1194 lays the narrative groundwork for the entire text, introducing the psychopomp sheep and the ritualists that appointed it (lns. 1–37).[426] The highly fragmentary nature of the first 16 lines of Pt 1194 precludes a complete translation of the extant myth. The smudging of the ink in places also compounds difficulties involved in obtaining an accurate reading. I have opted instead to paraphrase the text, remaining as close to its grammatical structure as possible. As the first part of the account is missing, it is not clear whether it is the author himself or the ritualists telling the story in the opening lines of the manuscript. However, this does not have much bearing on the contents of the account. How much of the story once preceded the current first line, I dare not speculate, except to say that it may have been quite substantial.

Discarding the first four lines of the text due to their severe fragmentation, this examination of the origins myth begins midstream with ln. 5. It is here that the three priests of the fable are introduced. The most celebrated of these is Gshen-rab myi-bo, the prototype or inspiration for Ston-pa gshen-rab, the legendary founder of Eternal Bon. Gshen-rab myi-bo and his activities are also chronicled in five other Old Tibetan Dunhuang funerary manuscripts and the *byol-rabs* text of Gathang Bumpa.[427] Nevertheless, the funerary priest that is most cited in Pt 1194 is

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genre (including the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur), with its decidedly more modern verb morphology, case forms and vocabulary, began to be compiled at the end of the 10th century or in the 11th century CE. The Classical Tibetan signature of these Eternal Bon works is also reflected in the styles of calligraphy used to produce the various manuscripts. These are of types familiar to students of Eternal Bon literature. Furthermore, Blezer brands all non-Buddhist ritual traditions of the Dunhuang manuscripts and cognate materials in Eternal Bon works as "controversial" and "subaltern" (*ibid.*, 2010: 31, 32). Yet, he fails to provide even a superficial explanation as to what this vast body of cultural traditions (documented in no less than forty Dunhuang manuscripts, the Gathang Bumpa corpus and hundreds of Eternal Bon texts) is subordinate to or why it is disputable. For the sake of an accurate picture of the religious and cultural complexion of ancient Tibet, such sweeping characterizations should be eschewed.

[426] A preliminary assessment of this origins myth is undertaken in Stein 1971, pp. 512–514.

[427] The other Dunhuang texts are Pt 1068, Pt 1134, Pt 1136, Pt 1289, and ITJ 731r. For the most extensive treatment of these references, see Bellezza 2008; 2010a; Stein 1971; Stein 2010. Karmay (2009: 65) describes the *byol-rabs* text as a tale of conflict between humanity and the *klu* after a period of harmony, which necessitates the ritual intervention of *bon* priests. Viewed more inclusively, it is primarily concerned with demonstrating the legitimacy and efficacy of the *byol* ritual system of healing in a variety of narrative settings.

Dur-shen rma-da (C.T. = 'Dur-gshen rma-da), a figure that has great importance in many archaic funerary ritual works including other Dunhuang manuscripts, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and *Klu 'bum nag po*.[428] As we have seen, this legendary personality was the founder of a *rnel-dri* funeral (*supra*, p. 166). The third funerary priest is Sgal-gshen tho'u-yug, whose only mention in Pt 1194 comes in line 5 of the text. Rgal-gshen the'u-yug (*sic*) is also recorded performing a funeral with Mu-co ldem-drug (*sic*) in *Klu 'bum nag po*.[429]

The three funerary priests of Pt 1194 are the initiators of the custom of the psychopomp sheep, antetypic benefactors of humankind. In this work, the bond between humanity and sheep is one of profound depth and importance. This compact reveals the existence of a culture and way of life in which pastoralism and sheep-herding were an essential component. In a more remote age, or later on as a subsidiary activity, wild sheep were actively hunted, as documented in the Upper Tibetan rock art record. The exaltation of animals and their vital role in the human sphere, beyond the purely economic, starkly sets apart the religion of the ancient Tibetans from the doctrinal position of Buddhism and Eternal Bon. In Lamaism, animals are seen as occupying a lesser rung of existence and of no direct consequence to the quest for spiritual liberation. In practice, animals to this day retain a prominent place in the rituals and myths of Tibetans, a state of affairs that can be traced back to Old Tibetan documents such as Pt 1194. The solemn pact between sheep and humanity is trenchantly depicted in the first origins myth of this text, in which the funerary priests save a slain sheep from demonic oblivion. Once they have diverted this hapless little sheep from following in the tracks of a *srin*, they appoint him to aid the dead in general. The priests have helped the sheep avoid misery at the hands of a dissembling she-demon and now he is to act as the archetypal psychopomp, illustrating the principle of reciprocity underlying many ancient Tibetan rituals.



Fig. 14. A thog-lcags *featuring a ram's head surmounted by a large object resembling flaming jewels (4 cm in height). While this object may or may not be a* skyibs-lug*, it does depict a numinous or sacred form of the sheep. This talisman was worn for protection and good fortune. A ram's head upon which rest one or three* mchod-rten *is a well-known* thog-lcags *genre, but the type depicted here is far more unusual. It appears to date to the early historic period (650–1000 CE) or perhaps a little later. Private collection*

As the ritual initiators, it is the three *gshen* who debut in Pt 1194 that may introduce the geographic setting of the story (Sman-thang thang bal-ma) and its bête noire (Ag-sa rgyal-pa). Through sorcery, this *srin* assumed the appearance of the mother of the sheep son. Under this false guise

[428] For multiple references to this personality, consult Bellezza 2008; Stein 2010.

[429] See Bellezza 2008, pp. 483, 487. This funerary priest of Pt 1194 is noted in Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 257.

she offered him the choicest of drinks and foods. By virtue of being tainted by a demon (as the impersonator of the sheep mother, she is called Ma-dgo ['Baneful Mother' ?]), what she fed the sheep boy eventually killed him. The paraphrasing of the text begins below:

> The fathers Gshen-rab myi-bo, Dur-shen rma-da[430] and Sgal-gshen tho'u-yug spoke. It appears that they first mention a separation and someone on horseback, but the text is too fragmentary to know for certain. The location of the tale is a place called Sman-thang thang bal-ma. The *srin* Ag-sa rgyal-pa… in order to cause harm (*nyen-byang*) to the son of the sheep, this *srin* magically transformed (*rdzus*) itself into the boy's mother; [the boy] would be no more. This female brute (*dred-mo*) magically transformed itself; [the boy] would be no more. The *srin* transformed itself… It offered [the boy] mead (*sbrang-chang*) *khyal-khyil*,[431] the sparkling[432] mead… honey sweet (*dngar*)… [The boy] consumed much (*za-za*) of the honey sweetness…. [The boy] and Ma-dgo (the *srin* in disguise) had met… in a meadow. To the boy, Ma-dgo fed much (*gso-gso*) sweetness (mead) *byang byang* (?) and curd with molasses (*nyug*-[*chu*]) *pyang pying* (?) and the essence of the breast (milk) [sweetened] with honey. The boy was no more (he died).[433]

(ln. 5)… *pha gshen rab myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *bo dang dur* (C.T. = *'dur*) *shen* (C.T. = *gshen*) *rma da dang sgal gshen tho'u yug zhal na re* / {#} (6) {###} *zhon ni bu khyod kyi sman thang thang bal ma ni* /[434] *srin Ag sa rgyal pa 'is* {#} (7) {###} *la nyen* (C.T. = *nyes*) *byang* (= *byed*) *du 'tshal te ma srin ru rdzus gyis myed do ma dred mo ni rdzus kyis* {*ka*} *myed do* {#} (8) {*# srin*} *rdzus kyi chab ma ru* / *sbrang chang khyal khyil du sbrang zi ma gong te* {*nyul*} *gyis sbrang rtsi dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*) (9) *la* {#} / *sbrang rtsi dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*) *za za na* / {*sbrang*} *pyug tshar te mchis na bu gso* {##} *nas spang* {*sbrang*} {*zi*} (10) *{ma} gong du ma dgo dang de ru mjal te* / *ma dgo 'is bu gso gso nas* / *dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*) *byang byang ni* {##} (11) {##} *gyi zho nyug* (C.T. *snyug*) *pyang pying ni sbrang nu ma 'i rtsi* / *bu myed kyi go ni ma dgo mo spang snar g.yel* {*go* #} (12) {##} *'is bgyiste* /

The text now moves to the real mother of the poisoned sheep boy. She was named G.yang ngo-rtsa (White Sheep with Red Markings on the Face),[435] the possession of Dga'-zen te chen-po, a primal human or god. In the third portion of Pt 1194 (ln. 68), we learn that Dga'-zin te'i chen-po (*sic*) is the patriarch of Dga-yul (C.T. = Dga'-yul) byang-rnams, a boreal land closely associated with the afterlife. The mother went in search of her lost son but could not locate him. In words as true to the text as possible, this is related as follows:

> Now, the [real] mother of this boy was G.yang ngo-rtsa, the property (*dkor*) of Dga'-zen te chen-po. The wolf (*spyang-khu-khu*) had been dispatched (*skyes*)… (apparently) by Ma-dgo to the meadow, so that it could eat the corpse of the sheep

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[430] That these two figures are found in the text (lns. 5, 16) is noted in Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 257.

[431] This expression illustrates that the mead appeared as a swirling sheet of liquid, as if it had just been poured into a vessel for drinking. For reference to mead in a ritual for the god Phu-wer, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 356, 358.

[432] *Zi-ma*. This word appears to be is closely related to the C.T. *zegs* (water spray).

[433] From what remains legible in the remaining part of the grammatical line, it appears that Ma-dgo discarded the sheep boy's corpse in a meadow.

[434] In this textual line three syllables have been crossed out by a horizontal stroke of the writing instrument. Any unneeded or mistaken inditement is not treated in the transliteration of the text.

[435] Called a *dmar-rtsa* or *dmar-zhal*, this kind of sheep is still prized for ritual purposes by the *'brog-pa* of the Byang-thang. See Bellezza 2005, pp. 132, 164, 342 (n. 502).

> boy. Here sunrays (*zer*) were shining through (*tong tong*) the turquoise mist.[436] The sheep son was no more… Saying, 'I shall search for my son, the boy who is no more', G.yang-mo ngo-rtsa (*sic*) with her sons (?) The-zhon and Ne-zhon… roamed all over (*bskor bskor*) [but] the boy could not be had.[437]

(12)… *da dga' zen te chen po'i dkor ma g.yang ngo rtsa'i bu spyang khu khu 'a skyes* (C.T. = *bkyes*) *to'i* {##} (13) *ne* {#} *bu rlag ste zer tong tong g.yu bun pun zhing mchis ste* / *lug bu myed gyi ni bu ru te* {#} (14) {##} *bu myed bu ru bgyi 'tshalo gsung nas g.yang mo ngo rtsa ni bu the zhon ne zhon bsnam shing* {#} (15) {##} *bskor bskor na ni bu myi gda'* / *bldag bldag* (C.T. = *ldag ldag*?) *ni dbo cha gda' ste* {##} (16) *ni* {#} *zhing mchiso /*

The fathers (*pha*) Gshen-rab myi-bo and Dur-shen rma-da directly enter the narrative again. They announce that the slain sheep is to have a special function for the deceased, which will be explained more fully later in the text. Patiently yet forcefully, the priests demonstrate to the distraught G.yang ngo-rtsa that her son had fallen victim to the demon Ma-dgo. The two *dur-gshen* (C.T. = *'dur-gshen*) relate to the sheep mother how exactly this demon lured her son to his death. The events thus far described in the text are characterized as the 'old custom' (*rnying gi lugso*), because they are historical (as much as this myth can be) in nature. They deal with the death of the sheep in the distant past. This is differentiated from the 'new custom' / 'new religion' (*chos-gsar*), which pertains to the succedent appointment of the deceased sheep son in the service of humanity. The text affirms that this new way enjoyed the approbation of both the sheep son and his mother. The text is framed as follows:

> The fathers Gshen-rab-rab myi-bo (*sic*) and Dur-shen rma-da spoke, 'You, G.yang ngo-rtsa, your son… the compensation (*skyin-ba*) of your son, the substitute (*tshab*) for the destroyed one.' [The priest's continued to speak]: 'Go calling out *'ba' 'ba'*,[438] [but] the dead do not return to the living. Above Sman-thang thang (*sic*), Ma-dgo-mo (*sic*) perceived of as the mother in an upward (respectful) [manner] (*yar*) fed [your son]. Ma-dgo perceived of as the mother [and your son] went together (*breng*). For one year he had the provisions (*brgyags*) of honey and molasses (*nyag-nyug*).'[439] Now, the new custom. That above (*khar*) is the old custom. Well (*'o-na*), for the [deceased] son, that which is ridden (*zhon ne zhon*) is benefiting and meritorious. The boy who has no mother knows (*go*) like that. The mother who has no son also knows like that.'

(16)… *pha gshen rab myi bo dang dur shen rma da'i zhal* {*nas*} *g.yang ngo rtsa khyod* {*kyi*} (17) *bu* {#} *ni bu'i skyin ba rlag gi ni tsham* (= *tshab*) *'o 'ba' 'ba' ni bos shing song shig gshin pyir* (C.T. = *phyir*) *du ma* (18) *gson 'gro mod ma sman thang thang bla ma'i go ma dgo mo yar gyis gsos te ma dgo breng* (C.T. = *'breng*) *ni* (19) *ma'i go mdzod chig* / *sbrang rtsi nyag nyug* (C.T. = *smyug*) *kyang lo'i ni brgyags lags mod* / *da chos gsar ma lagso khar* (C.T. = *kha la*) (20) *ba ni rnying gi lugso* / *'o na bu te zhon ne zhon la phan ching bsod do* / *bu ma myed kyi go yang de ltar go ma bu* (21) *myed kyi go yang de ltar go* /

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[436] *G.yu-bun-pun*. The addition of *pun* to *g.yu-bun* appears to be an ornamental feature that may relay a quality or attribute of turquoise mist.

[437] The next grammatical line in the text seems to show these sheep doing much licking (*bldag bldag*), as well as other actions, but it is highly fragmentary.

[438] The sound of the bleating of a sheep, like the English onomatopoeic baa baa.

[439] *Nyag* does not appear to add an additional layer of meaning to *nyug* (C.T. = *smyug*)-[*chu*].

In order to commence the 'new' religious tradition, the lineage of a particular human or of all humans in general had to be recited by officiants in the wake of the origins myth. This sequence of the text appears to have been chanted by priests in a concurrent funerary ritual rather than by the two archetypal priests of the *smrang*. It is also stated by these latter-day practitioners that while other god(s) were propitiated by a prototypic father and mother, it was the divinity Ma-dag dkar-po who was satisfied with what had been offered. It appears that this deity became the patron of the psychopomp sheep ritual. Like other Old Tibetan funerary rituals, divine allies play an instrumental but understated role in this performance. This strongly contrasts with Classical Tibetan works where the appearances and activities of various deities are described in much more detail. The overall impression this affords is that after 1000 CE, the funerary gods became far more objectified; the reification of what formerly had been a ubiquitous or pedestrian presence. As do priests in other archaic funerary texts, the officiants figuratively operate from above the sky (*gnam gang la*), the purest and most powerful of positions (see *supra*, p. 167). These priests intone the sacred speech (*gtam*), telling the tale of the sheep son, a cautionary lesson for the dead that they should not tarry on the passes and fords of the postmortem landscape. These words of the *dur-gshen* or *gshin-gshen* are designed to capture the attention of the deceased and to lead him or her to the funerary venue.

Next, the gifts of the sheep mother and even those of the imposter mother are declared. Along with the inherent sacerdotal power to persuade the dead, the priests entice them with the delicious food offerings of their mother, maternal aunt (*sru*) and maternal uncle (*zhang*).[440] Among these offerings is sweetened yogurt, a food preparation first encountered in the prototypic funeral of an elderly woman (see *supra*, p. 171). As with matrilineal aspects in the dynasty of the first seven kings of the so-called Yar-lung dynasty (Khri-bdun) and the imperial political institution of the *zhang-blon* / *zhang-lon*, the relatives chosen in this funerary ritual elevate the standing accorded maternal relations in the early historic period, and by mythic extension, in prehistoric times as well. While quite a bit has been written on the ways in which maternal uncles aided their royal nephews in ascending the throne, Pt 1194 hints at an interrelated custom with far-reaching cultural ramifications. Nonetheless, from the scanty passage at hand little else can be said about this putative avuncular funerary tradition. The text unfolds as follows:

> Today and tomorrow to pronounce the human lineage, the lineage (*cho*), to pronounce [the lineage] of the father of the dead and mother… For their activities, although the mother and father worshipped many times (*mchod mchod*) the *lha* for protection, the *lha* did not protect. They also worshipped and compensated (*skyin-ba*) Ma-dag dkar-po… who was pleased… Today (*du-mod*), above the sky, the fathers (the *gshen*) made the [sacred] speech, they made the speech of ancient times, that also was made as the speech… of protection. That the [sheep boy's] corpse, yes, was below (*rmad*): The very kind (*drin drin*) mother (G.yang-mo ngo-rtsa) was calling out (*'bod*): 'This sweetened yogurt, the sweets are here. My boy, do not pursue (*phrang*) the pass of the heights, do not set out (*chin*) to the ford in the bottomland. The honey and molasses of the mother are also here.' The yogurt with molasses of Ma-dgo is also here; her *pye-mar* (butter and parched barley preparation) is here.

Next, the text communicates that the loving relatives of the current deceased are also here [at the funerary venue]:

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[440] For a similar evocation of the dead (*bla-'bod*) in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 421, 422.

> Boy, if you desire your mother, look at your mother. Younger brother (*nu*), if you desire your maternal aunt, look at your maternal aunt. Boy, if you desire your maternal uncle, look at your maternal uncle. The rain falling from above fills completely the reservoir (*rdzing*) below.'[441]

… *di ring sang lta na myi smo* (= *smos*) *pa yang cho las smoso* / *shi 'i pha dang ma smos bu* (22) *kyi pha mas lasu lha mchod mchod na mgosu* (C.T. = *mgon du*) *lha ma 'goste* (C.T. = *mgon te*) *ma dag dkar po gyang* (C.T. = *kyang*) *du bchado* (C.T. = *mchod do*) *skyin ba dar* {#} (23) {*mnyes*} *gyas ma 'tshabs* {*mdo*} *la du ni gnam rdib na dka ba ni ris ma rton* {*dkra dung*} *bud gshegs na* {##} (24) *sa* {#} *lond* / *du* (C.T. = *do*) *mod gnam gang la pha dang ni gtam bgyi mod gna' 'i gtham* (C.T. = *gtam*) *bgyis da'i srung du* {#} (25) {#} *gtam byas na gyang* (C.T. = *kyang*) *ro ni rmad* (C.T. = *smad*) *du gda' 'o* // *ma drin drin ni 'bod ching 'dugo* / *dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*) *zho dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*) *ni 'di na* (26) *yod do* / *bu mtho la ru yang ma phrang* (C.T. = *'brang*) *shig dma' rab du ni ma chin* (C.T. = *phyin*) *chig* / *ma sbrang rtsi nyag nyug* (C.T. = *snyug*) *kyang 'di na* {*yod*} (27) *do* / *ma dgo 'i zho gnyug* (C.T. = *snyug*) *mo yang 'dina* (= *'di na*) *yod do gda' pye* (C.T. = *phye*) *mar 'da' 'de yang 'di na yod do bu gnyen* {*'o*} (28) *byams gyi sris don no bu ma 'dod ma la ltos shig nu sru 'dod ni sru la ltos shig* / *bu 'dod ni zhang la* {*ltos*} (29) *shig char yas bab sru gsolo rdzi* (= *rdzing*) *mas langs kyĭ skyabs gsol lo* //

The officiants, with the force of the psychopomp origins myth behind them, continue to call upon the dead to heed their words and instructions. Their elocution is characterized as the *bon* that protects (*bon dang srung*); *bon* here referring to the sacerdotal expertise and ritual methods possessed by the funerary priests. To attract the deceased to the funeral venue, the most emotive of strategies are used in the text. Pt 1194 portrays the acting priests as the surrogate father of the dead, while the sheep is his surrogate mother. The *gshen* admonish the dead not to be led astray or beguiled by the demons of the after-death realm. As in the case of the sheep son, it is these demons that caused his or her demise. This caveat is graphically rendered in the text. The text also makes it patently known that while the living and the dead abide in an existential equilibrium thanks to the funerary rite (*shid*), they are ineluctably separated from one another. The relatives in the world of the living have given the departed the choicest gifts but no more than that are they capable of doing.

The priests now invoke their archetype, Dur-shen gyi rma (*sic*), stating that it was he who had made the sheep the surrogate mother of the deceased. In such a role, the sheep carries the epithet *spo-ma nye-du*, as do the *do-ma* funerary ritual transport horses. This expression signifies that the sheep and *do-ma* are the surrogate relatives of the deceased in the form of livestock.[442] Furthermore, like the slain sheep boy, a sacrificial sheep in the concurrent funeral serves as compensation (*skyin-ba*) and the substitute (*tshab*) relative for the dead, he or she who is bereft of all living relations. In conclusion, the first origins myth of Pt 1194 relays that this male sheep was the wealth, property, endowment, good fortune, or benefaction (*long*) awarded by the mother sheep for use by the deceased, in a covenant seen as originating in a primal past (in the text the dead is tantamount to his name). The text conveys these portentous activities as follows:

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[441] This *dpe* or example signifies that the relatives of the deceased sheep son are as beneficial as a full reservoir is to crops and other vegetation.

[442] *Spo-ma nye-du* means something to the effect of 'the mother that moves to a new residence (*spo-ma*) relations (*nye-du*)'. Jäschke (1881: 331) cites the word *spo-sa* as denoting a place newly occupied by shepherds, a term that appears to be lexically related to the O.T. *spo-ma*.

> The [deceased] son and fathers (the *gshen*) were engaged in dialogue (*gtam bya mod*), the *bon* that protects: 'You son, the mother you imagine (*snyam*) is not your mother. You son, that mother is the magically transformed *srin-mo*, she is not [your mother]. That magically transformed female brute is not [your mother].' They said, 'The hand of that female is carrying the shuttle (*thag-zangs*), the long shuttle, with which she has broken (*gchag*) the son's legs.' They said, 'The hand of that female is carrying the *mthing gi nam* (?) with which she has plucked out (*bru*) the boy's eyes (*dmyig*). The living and dead are reconciled by the making of the *shid*. [Nevertheless], the living and dead cannot signal to see each other. Their intentions / thoughts (*dgongs*), day... and night, are irreconcilable.[443] Also, the dead boy and living mother, these two, the living and the dead, cannot signal each other. The dead boy and the living mother, these two, are separated. They are not [together]. The mother has given you in accordance with the mother's desire and the maternal aunt has given you in accordance with the maternal aunt's desire. You sheep *spo-ma nye-du* of that very kind mother, father Dur-shen gyi rma saw it suitable to attest (*bzhag*) the testament (*chems*) clearly (*sil-don*) in your ear *drum* (?), that you act as the substitute mother of he who has no mother, [the substitute mother] of the uttered (*dbyung*) name of the dead. [Act as] the substitute [mother] of the dead, the compensation of the destroyed. You be the compensation of the dead, the benefaction (*long*) [of the mother]. You be the substitute of the destroyed, the benefaction [of the mother sheep].'

(29)… *bu chang* (C.T. = *yang*) *pha dang gtam bya mod bon dang* (30) *srung* {#} / *bu khyod ma yin snyam ste ma yin no bu khyod ma ni srin mor rdzus kyis myedo dred mor rdzus kyis* {*myed*} / (31) *do / {ma'i} lag na thag zangs* (C.T. = *gzangs*) *gzangs rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *khyer te bu rkang pa gchago* (C.T. = *bcag go*) *zer ro bu ma'i lag na mthing gi nam* {#} (32) *khyer te bu'i dmyig* (C.T. = *mig*) *bru 'is zer ro* / *gson gshin shed* (= *shid*) *rgyi* (= *bgyi*) *mthun no gson gshin brda myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *mjald* (C.T. = *mjal*) *to nying* (= *nyin*) *zhing* {#} (33) *gchig mtshan zhing dgongs myi mthun bu shi ba dang ma gson gnyis kyang gson gshin brda myi* {*mjal*} (34) *lo bu gshin dang ni ma gson gnyis bye 'is myed do ma 'dod ni ma'i go sru 'dod ni sru 'i go* / *ma drin* (35) *drin 'de* (= *'di*) *re ga lug spo ma nyi* (= *nye*) *du khyod pha dur shen gyi rma 'is thugs rung du ni chems bzhag go snyan drum du ni* (36) *sil don to gyi ma myed kyi ma'i tshab mar bgyi 'o shi ba'i mying* (C.T. = *ming*) *nas dbyung* (C.T. = *phyung*) *shi 'i tshab ma rlag gi skyin ba* (37) *'o* / *shi'i skyin long* (C.T. = *longs*) *shig rlag tshab long* (C.T. = *longs*) *shig* /

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[443] This sentence conveys, for example, while the living are awake in the day and asleep at night, the dead are awake at night and asleep in the day. In other words, they belong to opposite worlds.

The Origins Myth of Lhe'u yang-ka' rje in Pt 1134

The fifth and final origins tale of Pt 1134 is concerned with the death and redemption of an ancestral figure known as Lhe'u yang-ka' rje (lns. 67–134).[444] This tale is as long as the four origins tales that precede it combined. Lhe'u yang-ka' rje (in Eternal Bon, his name is rendered Lhe'u g.yang-dkar rje) is the prototypic *lhe'u* or 'little god', the son of the divine patriarch known as 'Gon-tsun phywa. As we have seen in the illuminated funerary manuscript, *lhe'u* is an epithet for the deceased, in recognition of his or her genealogical affinity with the celestial deities. Cultural justification for the use of this term in the illuminated funerary manuscript, therefore, is derived (directly or indirectly) from this account in Pt 1134, a text that predates it by as much as three centuries.

The fifth etiologic myth of Pt 1134 is occupied with the funerary horses known as *do-ma*, those animals that brave the topographic barriers of the postmortem world to deliver the dead to the doorstep of the afterlife.[445] As noted, there are other major accounts featuring *do-ma* and their origins in the Dunhuang manuscripts. These include Pt 1136 (two origins tales), ITJ 731r (one ritual and one long origins tale), Pt 1060 (a number of interrelated tales), as well as the more minor etiologic myths in the other four narratives of Pt 1134. It is no mere accident that so much attention was lavished on the *do-ma* in the archaic funerary texts of Dunhuang, for this custom was seen as essential in delivering the dead to the otherworld. That there are no less than ten variant tales in Old Tibetan recounting the origins and use of the *do-ma* indicates that in the early historic period, the tradition of funerary transport horses was sufficiently ingrained and widespread to have engendered its own mythography. These tales vary in location, the priests and families involved, the causes of death, and in ritual methodology. The history and pedigree of the surviving *do-ma* foundation myths are highly obscure. Nevertheless, Pt 1060 affirms that each of the constituent regions of Upper Tibet and Central Tibet (and Drugu north of Tibet) had its own lineages of *do-ma*. Perhaps, therefore, the extant etiologic tales represent the cultural legacy of different geographic areas and social configurations. Even if this is not true for every origins myth, it appears to hold true for some. If so, this adds weight to the view that early historic-period funerary texts exemplify a fusion of pre-existing traditions.

The proponent of the fifth origins tale in Pt 1134 is the primordial father and *bon* priest 'Gon-tsun phywa. It is he who must cope with the loss of his son Lhe'u yang-ka' rje. This proves to be a long and difficult proposition, but eventually 'Gon-tsun phywa is able to appoint two *do-ma* along with the *skyibs-lug* sheep guide to carry the spirit of Lhe'u yang-ka' rje to the otherworld situated high in the sky. As the *do-ma*, these horses function to cross the rivers and passes of the postmortem geography on the journey to paradise.

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[444] This origins myth is reviewed in Stein 1971, pp. 494–497. Brief reference to this myth is found in Bellezza 2008, p. 384 (n. 93). Pt 1134 originally contained no less than five origins myths, the first of which is now incomplete. For the third and fourth origins myths of Pt 1134, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 510–513; for the fourth origins myth also see *supra*, p. 145 (fn. 220). For the second origins myth see *supra*, p. 168 (fn. 291). The second origins myth is also mentioned in Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 264. For reference to other *do-ma* myths, see *supra*, p. 31 (fn. 48).

[445] Interestingly, in contemporary eastern Nag-chu, *do-ma* denotes the horse used to carry a corpse or the stereotypic effigy of the dead (*byang-bu*) to the charnel grounds. The word *do-ma* is also employed by horsemen to signal displeasure when their charge is not heeding commands properly. Words that are probably etymologically related include *'do-ba* (horse), and *'do-chung* and *'do-chen* (breeds of horses). Pt 1042 (ln. 15) confirms that yaks can serve as the *do-ma* as well. For the origins myth of a hybrid female yak that functioned as the *do-ma* for a young woman in Pt 1068, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 538–541.

From his name as well as from the events of the narrative, it can be deduced that ’Gon-tsun phywa (C.T. = Mgon-btsun phya) was an archetypal protector of the dead who belonged to the Phya / Phywa lineage of uranic gods. Based on an eschatological tradition elaborated upon in *Rnel drĭ ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*, the *tsun* / *btsun* component of his name might be seen as signifying the dead in their form as the noble occupants of the empyrean.

As do many other origins myths in the archaic funerary tradition, this Pt 1134 tale begins with the search for a wife by an ancient highborn male. In this story he is ’Gon-tsun phywa, the celestial figure who lived above the sky (*gnam*) and the heavens (*dgung*). These two terms for the firmament are synonyms, their juxtaposition one of many instances in the story of words used in parallel in iterative language. The subject of a sentence when deemed sufficiently important is repeated twice, adding substance and circumstance to the words spoken. Thus we find ‘wife and mate’, ‘son and child’ and so forth in the text. Predicates are often used in a similar way in the story; repetition of the action driving home the significance what is being described. This style of writing is more akin to verse than prose, yet it has the characteristics of both, combining the prosaic detail of the narrative with the metrical structure of poetry. This form of composition is probably best described as belonging to an epic style.

’Gon-tsun phywa married the lady Tang-nga bdud-mo tang. By contrast in Chapter III of *Rnel drĭ ’dul ba’i thabs sogs*, the wife of ’Gon-btsun phywa (*sic*) was Sten-za khrĭ-’phang (see *supra*, p. 167). That in the fifth narrative of Pt 1134, his wife was the daughter of the lord of the *bdud* would prove problematic. Nature taking its course, a son was born to this couple, Lhe’u yang-ka’ rje. This youth is depicted as a virtuous and capable individual. It appears that his mastery of horses led Lhe’u yang-ka’ rje to engage in a race or contest with his maternal uncle. The text is clear that by doing so the youth was risking death, which is expressed through the stock archaic eschatological expression, ‘above the water’ (*chab-gang*). As a result, Lhe’u yang-ka’ rje and his maternal uncle became deeply opposed to one another. The death of Lhe’u yang-ka’ rje was at the hands of the *bdud* and *sri*, standard personified agents of violent death:

> The origins myth of Lhe’u yang-ka’ rje: In ancient times,[446] in the sky above, high above the heavens, long ago when the deluge (*skyin-dang*) had not fallen,[447] ’Gon-tsun phywa did not have a wife and mate, so he searched (*btsald*) for a wife and mate. He took the daughter of Bdud-rje btsan-tog skyold, Tang-nga bdud-mo tang, as his wife and mate. The son (*sras*) of their mating and seasonal activity, a boy (*bu-po*), was begotten (*byung*). The son (*sras-dral*) who was born (*bltam*) was bestowed a name (*mying*), a name (*mtsan*) was bestowed upon the son: Lhe’u yang-ka rje (*sic*), the man of the power of the *lha* mighty one (*btsan*),[448] the learned (*mkas*) and mighty man[449] who rejected (*’tor*) bad [activities]. He completely controlled[450] the swift [horse]. He risked (*sdos*) [provoking] his maternal uncle and [going] above the water. He risked (*bsdos*) [provoking] his maternal uncle *bdud* and [going] above the water. He and the *bdud* fought bitterly (*bslogs-mnard*). He was ravaged (*mnard*) by

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[446] This is followed by *kar ga la gzhe* (C.T. = *ye*) *dgu ga la*, words that seem to poetically reinforce the antiquity in which the story is set.

[447] Perhaps *skyin-dang* is cited here as an allusion to an ancient flood, which is traditionally believed to have struck Tibet.

[448] This is followed by *mags sgog tog*, which is of unclear signification.

[449] This is preceded by the syllable *g.ya*, the meaning of which is ambiguous.

[450] *Dkyus stsol* (= *rtsol*). The C.T. equivalent expression is *dkyus thag bcad pa*.

> the maternal uncle *bdud*. Lhe'u yang-ka rje was penalized (*bcad*) by the *bdud* from the sky. From the earth rose up the *sri*. He died, he was no more.

(ln. 67) *lhe'u yang ka' rje'i rabso* // *gna' kar ga la gzhe dgu ga la* // (68) *skyin dang ma bab gyi ba snga na gnam gyi ya' bla na* / *dgung gĭ ya stengs* (C.T. = *steng*) *na'* / *'gon tsun phywa zhig khab dang* / (69) *dbyal ma mcis* (= *mchis*) *kab* (C.T. = *khab*) *dang dbyal btsald* (*btsal*) *pa* / *bdud rje btsan tog skyold gyi sras mo tang nga bdud mo tang* (70) *zhĭg kab* (C.T. = *khab*) *dang* / *dbyal du blangs te bshos tang* (C.T. = *dang*) / *nams* / *gyi sras* / *bu po ru* / *byung* / *sras dral du bltam* (C.T. = *bltams*) *bu'i mying* (C.T. = *ming*) (71) *btags* / *sras gĭ mtsan* (C.T. = *mtshan*) *btags pa* / *lhe'u yang ka rje ni lha dbang*[451] *btsan myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *mags sgog tog ni* (72) *g.ya myi mkas* (C.T. = *mkhas*) *btsan ni 'ngan* (C.T. = *ngan*) *'tor* (C.T. = *dor*) *mkyogs* (C.T. = *mgyogs*) *ni dkyus stsol zhang dang chab gang sdos* zhang (73) *bdud dang chab gang bsdos bdud dang yang bslogs* (C.T. = *bslags*) / *mnard ni zhang bdud gĭs mnarde lhe'u yang* (74) *ka rje gnam las* / *ni bdud bcad* (C.T. = *chad*) *sa las ni sri langste grongs gyis* / *myed*

The father 'Gon-tsun pywa (*sic*) looked upon his son with much concern. Like doting fathers everywhere, the patriarch attempted to induce Lhe'u yang-ka rje to get up. Although he had some inkling that his son had perished, the father was still in a state of disbelief. 'Gon-tsun pywa offered his boy a castle, lands, servants, and livestock, but none of these had the intended effect of making him stir. The opulence of these offerings indicates that 'Gon-tsun pywa was an individual of noble rank, as are many other personalities in the old origins myths. Despite his blandishments, the unmistakable signs of death in Lhe'u yang-ka rje had set in and eventually 'Gon-tsun pywa had no choice but to acknowledge these:

> On the morning of the next day, the next day,[452] the father and patriarch looked and saw, 'Gon-tsun pywa looked and saw that his boy was not standing, his son was not standing. He was no more. The father and patriarch said, 'Gon-tsun pywa said, 'how was his mind finished, how was his patrilineage *'old* (finished?)? If you like (*bzhed*) a castle (*mkar*) in the heights to take (*bzhes*) to go (*bzhud*) there with, if you like a country in the bottomland to take to go there with, I shall make them.' But, the boy did not stand, the son did not stand. [The father said,] 'Otherwise, if you like, [take] ten mighty male servants (*khol-pa*) and livestock (*pyugs-bdag*) of many kinds?'[453] [The father] made clear, 'Take many (*dags-bo*) valleys and many (*dgu*) lakes, and male and female sheep, if you like.' However, the boy did not rise, he was no more. Well, 'Gon-btsun pywa (*sic*) looked and saw that the eyes [of his son] were blue-colored.[454] When he looked at his flesh it was as white as cloth (*dar*).

sang gĭ nam nangs / *dgung* (75) *sangs* / *na' pa* (C.T. = *pha*) / *yab gyis bltas te gzis* (= *gzigs*) / *'gon tsun pywas* / *bltas* / *te* / *gzĭgs pa na* / *bu* / *ma bzhengs sras* (76) *ma* / *bzhengs* / *gyis myed* (C.T. = *med*) *pha* / *yab gĭ zhal nas 'gon tsun pywa'i zhal nas bu ci la thugs chad cĭ la* (77) *'brang 'old mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *mkar* (C.T. = *mkhar*) *bzhed na bzhes te bzhud dma' yul bzhed na bzhes* / *te* / *bzhud ces bgyis na* (78) *bu ma* / *bzhengs sras* / *ma bzhengso 'o na* / *btsan* / *khol* / *pa* / *bcu dang pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) *bdag* (C.T. = *dags*) / *sna dgu* / *bzhed* / *tam* (79) *lung dags bo mtso* (C.T. = *mtsho*) *dgu na ra lug mying srĭng* / *bzhed* / *na bzhes shes bgyis gyang bu ma bzhengs* (80) *gĭs*

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[451] The scribe overlooked one stroke of the letter *b* in this word.

[452] This is the general import of *sang gĭ nam nangs* / *dgung sangs*.

[453] The interrogative *tam* is used here.

[454] Eyes that have turned blue are a sign of death for Tibetans.

myed / *'o na 'gon btsun* / *pywas* / *bltas te gzigs* / *na spyan* / *bltas* / *na mtsang* (C.T. = *mtshon*) / *bas sngo sha* / *bltas gyis* (81) *dar* / *bas dkar*…

'Gon-tsun pywa was a great *bon* in his own right and a divinity of the *gsas* class (as are many other archaic funerary deities). He chanted for three nights and conducted an evocation of his son's soul, but this had no effect. The author as narrator states in plain but edifying language that Lhe'u yang-ka rje was dead. What appears to have been the victorious horse of the maternal uncle, Bdud-rje btsan-tog skyold, was named Btsan-rgyal kha-ba. Still, no reason is tendered why the uncle directly or indirectly murdered his nephew. We might read into this account an ongoing rivalry between the maternal and paternal families of Lhe'u yang-ka rje. These tensions may have been exacerbated by a tribal fault line between the *mgon* / *lha* and *bdud*, but we do not really know. Perhaps the intrigues that led to the death of a not insignificant number of Spu-rgyal rulers while still relatively young are instructive here. In any event, the text focuses on the desperation of 'Gon-tsun pywa and his continuing efforts to try to resuscitate his son:

> 'Gon-tsun pywa as the learned *bon* and mighty *gsas*, picked up in his lap Lhe'u yang-ka rje, his son that was no more. For three nights he chanted (*bsgyer*)[455] but even after that [his son] was dead, he was no more. He called out vigorously (*'o-'bos*) [to his son's] soul[456] but even after that he was dead. His eyes were wide open but even after that he was dead, he was no more. The father and patriarch said, 'Gon-tsun pywa said, 'The swift Btsan-rgyal kha-ba completely prevailed (*dkyus rtsol-ba*) [in the race]. [My son] was imperiled (*bsdos*) by the maternal uncle and [going] over the water. He died from the maternal uncle *bdud*, the *bdud* who matched his stride (opposed him).[457] How was the dead man revived (*sos*) or not revived through therapy (*gso*)? How was the split (*gam-ba*) rock (*gor*) joined (*'byord*) to be made whole (*sbyar*) or not joined?

'gon (C.T. = *mgon*) *tsun* (C.T. = *btsun*) / *pywa las* / *bon* / *bkhas* (C.T. = *mkhas*) *gsas drag myede bu lhe'u yang ka rje ni pang du blangs* (82) *te zhag gsum* / *du bsgyer gyang bu myi mtsag* (C.T. = *mtshags*) *snar gyang sladu* / *grongs* / *gis myed bla za 'o 'bos* / *gyang* (83) *sla du* (= *sladu*) *grongs spyan bye* / *'ang* / *sladu grongs* / *gyis myed* / *pa yab gi zhal* / *nas* / *'gon* (C.T. = *mgon*) *tsun* (C.T. = *btsun*) *pywa'ǐ* (84) *zhal nas btsan rgyal kha ba mgyogs dkyus rtsol ba* / *zhang dang chab gang bsdos bdud* / (85) *dang bang*[458] / *byal bslags gis* / *zhang* / *bdud gyis* / *bgrongs* (C.T. = *grongs*) / *na* / *myi shi ba 'di gso na sos* (C.T. = *gsos*) / *sam* (86) *myi sos* (C.T. = *gsos*) / *gor* / *gam ba 'di* / *sbyar na 'byord tam myi* / *'byor ches* /

Mgon-tshun phywa' (*sic*) proceeded to obtain expert assistance from a funerary priest (*gshin-gshen*), who was a *bon* or ritual specialist in the *gto* (beneficial rites) and *dphyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites). This priest is called the son of the *lha* (*lha* / *i* / *bu'*) and nephew of the *srin* (*srin gyi tsha'*), a reference to his uranic patriline and chthonic matriline. This is a genealogical articulation of the Tibetan mythologem of the progenerative heaven and earth. Despite their best efforts, neither father nor priest could resuscitate Lhe'u yang-ka rje. There was no alternative

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[455] This is followed by *gyang bu myi mtsag* (C.T. = *mtshags*) *snar*, the general import of which seems to be that the deceased was not disturbed or shaken during the chanting.

[456] *Bla-za*. The addition of *za* seems to invest 'soul' with a honorific sense and/or more strongly objectifies it.

[457] The 'matching of the stride' is the general import of *bang* / *byal bslags*, which is indicative of a fierce competition or rivalry.

[458] Although not well written, this word is indeed *bang* (pace) as demonstrated in ln. 13 of Pt 1134.

left except for these two to conduct the funeral. A large burial ceremony (*mdad-shid*)[459] was held and the *chab-gang* readied. The 'over the water' gifts were two horses: the elder brother (*phu*) Bgyogs (Swift One) and the younger brother (*nu*) Yid-mgyogs (Swift [As] Thought). It will be recalled that in the illuminated funerary manuscript the wild ass is said to be able to go anywhere as fast as it thinks it. These two horses were 'set in the ordered position' (*grar bchud*). What this regulation of the funerary horses consisted of in ritual terms is spelt out later the text. According to the final part of the narrative, as well as from indications in the *rta-gtad* text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, this mystic procedure coincided with the caparisoning and display of the equids:

> At the edge of the sky, on the apex (?) of the heavens, the son was the son of the *lha*, the nephew was the nephew of the *srin*. He, the mighty *bon gshin-gshen*,[460] was invited by Mgon-tshun phywa'. These two did the *gto* and did the *dphyad*. The therapy (*gso*) did not revive (*sos*) the dead one. The split stone was not joined together, so they conducted (*gtang*) a great *mdad-shid*. They made that which superimposes (*brtsig*) itself above the water. Now, the rapidly going (*gnyigs*) funerary ritual transport mounts (*chibs-do*) in unison were to be placed in the ordered position. The elder brother Bgyogs (Swift One), and the younger brother Yid-mgyogs (Swift As Thought) were placed in the ordered position.

gnam / *gyi* / *pha mta'* (C.T. = *mtha'*) / *dgung* (87) *gi* / *pa 'brum* / *na* / *bu ni lha* / *'i* / *bu'* (C.T. = *bu*) / *tsa* (C.T. = *tsha*) *ni* / *srin gyi tsha'* (C.T. = *tsha*) / *bon gshin* / *gshen drag* / *chig* / *yod* / *na* / (88) *de gnyar* (= *gnyer*) *te'* (C.T. = *te*) / *mgon tshun phywa'* / *dang gnyis* / *gyis* / *gto bgyis* / *dphyad* (C.T. = *dpyad*) *bgyiste'* / *myi shi* / *ba* (89) *ni* / *gsor myi sos* / *gor gam* / *ba ni* / *myi 'byor gyis* / *mdad shid cher gtang* (C.T. = *btang*) *cha* (= *chab*) *gang cher brtsig ches* / (90) *bgyiste* / *da' chibs do* / *gnyigsu* / *grar* (= *gral*) *bchud* (C.T. = *chud*) / *na* / *phu dang bgyogs* (C.T. = *mgyogs*) / *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) / *nu yid mgyogs* / *grar* (= *gral*) (91) *bchud* (C.T. = *chud*) /

The text now diverges from the death of Lhe'u yang-ka rje to recount the critical role played by a quartet of animals. These comprise a fish, otter, bird, and wolf, in that order. They were bound to a mutual oath to remain the best of friends. The instrument for oath-taking in the text is the *mtho* (C.T. = *tho*), a custom that survived until modern times. *Tho* (often a pile of stones) was erected by oath-takers as a register of their solemn act. By establishing a *tho*, the pledge between two parties is thought to have been witnessed by heaven and earth. However, in our story the two carnivores among the four allies broke their oath. The otter Sram-che dang-dngul was the first to renounce his pledge. In the text it is said that this is like a mother and child who drink poison (*ma bu dug 'tungs*). This vividly portrays the repulsion and censure that oath-breaking incited. Apparently, there was no greater transgression in ancient Tibetan society.[461] Forswearing his oath, the cunning carnivore Wa-che' sbyang-dom ate the fish Nya-ce yor-rmang. Discovering his remains, the bird Bya-che' lchogs-mo disposed of his piscine friend's corpse high in the heavens in a gesture of loyalty and respect:

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[459] Also *'das-shid*. This term appears to denote funerals in which there is an entombment rite. For this term in *Klu bum nag po* and Pt 1042, see Haarh 1969, pp. 361, 362; Bellezza 2008, pp. 457, 486, 488. An abbreviated expression denoting the performance of a funeral occurs in the Old Tibetan Annals (*mdad-btang*) and in the Old Tibetan Chronicle (*mdad-gtong*).

[460] *Bon gshin* / *gshen drag.* The import of these words in Pt 1134 was not ascertained by Stein (2010, Antiqua V: 254).

[461] For Old Tibetan terms associated with oaths, oath-taking between the *btsan-po* and nobles, oath-taking as a religious and political rite, and cross-cultural features of oaths in imperial-period Tibet, see Walter 2009, pp. 10–12, 24–27, 174–186, etc. On the social magnitude of oaths in the early historic period, also see Bellezza 2008, pp. 222, 223.

> Now, at one time, in a place on the earth,[462] among the eight Drang-nga dbyen there were four big ones. They became bosom friends (*shag-rag*), who pledged an oath[463] that was pledged on the *mtho*. Nya-ce yor-rmang, Sram-che dang-dngul,[464] Bya-che' lchogs-mo,[465] and Wa-che spyang-ldom,[466] these four, were the bosom friends that pledged (*bchad*) the oath, which was pledged on the *mtho*. Sram-che' dang-dngul (*sic*) ate (renounced) the oath of the bosom friend (*shag-rag*).[467] The mother and child drank poison. Wa-che' sbyang-ldom (*sic*) ate his oath of the bosom friend, [killing] Nya-che yor-mang (*sic*). He ate, yes, his flesh. He drank, yes, his blood. Bya-che lchogs-mo took away the corpse of Nya-che yor-mang on top of his flapping (*mdab-ma*) wings. [With his wings] he cleared away the clouds of the open expanse of the sky.[468] He made off (*bor*) above the sky, he made off above the heavens. He cast out Wa-che spyang-ldom (*sic*) from inside the corpse of Nya-che yor-mang.[469]

da' (C.T. = *da*) *re shig re shig na* / *sa ma ba'i* / *tog* (C.T. = *dog*) / *na drang nga dbyen brgyad gyi nang na che bzhi zhig* (92) *shag rag bgyiste* / *mna' bchad* (C.T. = *bcad*) *mtho* (C.T. = *tho*) *bchad* (C.T. = *bcad*) / *nya ce yor rmang sram che dang dngul* / *bya che' lchogs* / (93) *mo wa che spyang ldom* / *dang bzhi'* (C.T. = *bzhi*) / *sha* (= *shag*) *rag* / *mna* (= *mna'*) *mtho* (C.T. = *tho*) *bchad* (C.T. = *bcad*) *nas* / *sram che'* (C.T. = *che*) / *dang dngul gis* / (94) *shag rag* / *mna'* / *zos* / *ma bu dug 'tungste* (C.T. = *'thung ste*) / *nya che yor mang* / *wa che'* / *sbyang* (C.T. = *spyang*) / *ldom gis* / *shag* (95) *rag mna* (= *mna'*) *zoste* / *nya che yor mang gi* / *sha la ni za* / *grag* (= *khrag*) *ni 'tung* (C.T. = *'thung*) *zhing mchis* / *bya che lchogs mos* (96) *nya che yor mang gi* / *ro'* (C.T. = *ro*) / *mdab* (C.T. = *'dab*) *ma'ï* / *gshog tog* (C.T. = *thog*) *du* / *blangste* / *sphrind* (C.T. = *sprin*) *gyi go* / *bsald* (C.T. = *bsal*) / *gnam* (97) *gyi* / *mthongs phye ste* / *gnam gong yang du* / *bor dgung gong yang du bor* / *nya che yor mang gi* (98) *ro'* (C.T. = *ro*) / *nang nas* / *wa che spyang ldom* / *byung* (C.T. = *phyung*) *ste* //

Mgon-tshun phywa prepared the *chol-rold* of *bse* (white copper?) for the two horses. This appears to be a special type of corral in which horses were kept for *do-ma* ritual use.[470] However, the two funerary ritual transport horses ran away. The text is not explicit here but it is assured by the storyline that they were spooked by the wolf Wa-che' spyang-dom. This sly creature must have been dropped by the bird Bya-che' lchogs-mo near where Swift One and Swift As Thought were pasturing. Consequently, the patriarch was forced to chase these errant horses over a high pass and valley bottom, yet he could not apprehend them. The gap between Mgon-tshun phywa and the animals was increasing as the two horses escaped through a narrow passageway:

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[462] *Sa ma-ba'i tog* (C.T. = *sa-ma-dog*). Literally: 'not land, not earth', i.e., both of them.

[463] *Mna'-bchad*. This expression has been largely replaced by *mna'-bskyal*.

[464] Silver in the name of this otter refers to the white fur of its belly.

[465] This great bird (*bya-che'*) appears to be a female swallow or lark (*lchogs-mo*, C.T. = *lcog-mo*).

[466] This 'great fox' (*wa-che*) seems to have qualities of the wolf (C.T. = *spyang*) and black bear (C.T. = *dom*) as well.

[467] The eating of oaths (*mna' zos*) is called *mna' za-ba* in Jäschke (1881: 312) and is defined as 'to swear falsely' or to 'commit perjury'.

[468] A similar expression is found in 1194 (lns. 49, 50), whereby an element of the funerary ritual wing hand-tool clears away the clouds: *gnam mthongs sprin gyi go seld* (= *sald*, C.T. = *bsal*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 508, 510.

[469] *Nya che yor mang gi ro'* (C.T. = *ro*) / *nang nas* / *wa che spyang ldom* / *byung* (C.T. = *phyung*) *ste* //. This reading suggests that the fish was gigantic and that the wolf ate it from the inside out. Perhaps instead this sentence should be understood as follows: The corpse of Nya-che yor-mang was removed from inside Wa-che spyang-ldom.

[470] For the identification of the *chol-rold* / *cho-rol* as an enclosure in Pt 1134, Pt 1136 and *Klu 'bum nag po*, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 263; Stein 1971, p. 495. While this gloss is the most plausible one, it is not certain (cf. Bellezza 2008: 527). There is also a possibility that this term denotes some type of ceremonial halter.

> Mgon-phywa (*sic*) prepared (*'chos*) the *cho-rold* of *bse* of the beloved *do-ma* Mgyogs and Yid-mgyogs in Smyangs-mtsherd[471] of the north. The mounts Mgyogs and Yid-mgyogs, these two, fled. Mgon-tshun phywa, in order to capture (*gzung*) [the horses], pursued (*bsnyags*) them but could not overtake them (*ma-slebs*). He did not catch (*zind*) them. [The horses] fled to the heights of the pass. He also pursued them there but could not overtake them. [The horses] fled to the ford in the bottomland. He also pursued them there but could not overtake them. He pursued them over a widening distance (*dbye che la*) but he could not catch them. [The horses] fled to the crossing of the narrow passageway (*'prang*) but [Mgon-tshun phywa] could not catch them.

mgon phywa'i do ma snying dgas / *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *mgyogs* (99) / *yid mgyogs* / *gyi* / *bse 'i* / *cho rold* / *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) / *byang gi* / *smyangs mtsherd 'choste chibs tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *mgyogs* (100) / *yid mgyogs* / *gnyis bros te* / *song mgon tshun* / *phywas* / *bsnyags* / *na ni ma slebs* / *gzung du* (101) *ni* / *ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *mtho la ru bros* / *gyang bsnyag du ma slebs* / *dma' rab tu bros* / *gyang bsnyag tu ma slebs* / (102) *dbye che la* / *bsnyags* / *gyang ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *'prang* (C.T. = *'phrang*) *rub* (= *rab*) *tu bros* / *gyang ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) /

His physical ability to outrun the horses sorely tested, Mgon-tshun phywa' changed tactics. He knew that Swift One and Swift As Thought had been drinking from a turquoise spring situated next to a boulder, so he laid a trap. The patriarch rigged up a hobble, and in order to get the horses to step into his fetter, he sprinkled salt around it. His ingenuity, however, was insufficient. Although the two horses did indeed become tangled in the hobble, they managed to dislodge it from its anchorage and bolt. With the line of the hobble still attached to the horses, they took flight, first to a mountain and valley, and thence to a series of springs. In the text each of these six springs is characterized by an elemental metal or alloy. This selection of metals reflects the existence of a sophisticated technological order, one that first arose in Tibet in the second half of the first millennium BCE, as excavations of tombs in Gu-ge have revealed. The escape of the equids over mountains and valleys and past bodies of water is reminiscent of the passage through the postmortem realm they will eventually undertake. Their route recalls the one taken by the *dri-sha* in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*:

> At one time, at the edge of the sky, on the apex (?) of the heavens, there was a boulder (*pha-bong*) of turquoise as large as a yak. Behind the boulder as big as a yak there was a spring of turquoise from which [the two horses] were drinking. There at the blue turquoise spring a hobble (*mang-lag*) of *bse* was arrayed (*'bres*) [by Mgon-tshun phywa']. He scattered (*gtor*) salt (*lan-tsha'*) on [the ground] from an egg vessel.[472] The elder brother Swift One and the younger brother Swift As Thought, these two, were drinking water from the turquoise spring. They were licking the salt (*ldag*) on [the ground] from the egg vessel.[473] As [the two horses] went, they were impeded (*togs*) by the *mang-lag*. The elder brother Swift One and the younger brother Swift As Thought, these two, were bound together (*sbreld*), they were attached together over a long stretch (*rgyang*) by the binding [hobble]. They carried the *mang-lag* and off they went (*byer*). [Mgon-tshun phywa'] pursued them to the mountain and valley, these two, but he could not overtake them. At the spring of turquoise [he tried to]

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[471] This is the name of a pastoral encampment (*mtsherd*, C.T. = *mtsher*).

[472] *Dgon* (= *sgong*)-*rtsig*. This appears to denote a vessel made from a hollowed out egg. In the oral tradition of Upper Tibet, it is said that such vessels once existed.

[473] *Dgo-tsheg*. This is the same object as the *dgon-rtsig* above.

> catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*]. At the spring of gold [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*]. At the spring of silver [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*]. At the spring of brass [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*]. At the spring of bell-metal [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*].[474] At the spring of iron [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*]. At the spring of copper [he tried to] catch the *do*-[*ma*] [but] he could not catch the *do*-[*ma*].

re shig re shig na / *gnam gyi* / *pa* (C.T. = *pha*) (103) *mtha'* / *dgung gi* / *pha 'bram* (= *'brum*) *na* / *g.yu'* (C.T. = *g.yu*) / *yi pha bong* / *g.yag tsam shig mchis* / *g.yu'i* / *pha bong g.yag* / *tsham* (C.T. = *tsam*) (104) *gyi* / *pha rold* (C.T. = *rol*) / *na* / *g.yu'i* / *chu* / *myig* (C.T. = *mig*) / *la* / *chu 'tung* (C.T. = *'thung*) *zhing mchis* / *g.yu'i chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) *gi* / *dngo* (= *sngo*) *ru* / *bse 'i* / *mang* (105) *lag ni bres* / *lan tsha'* (C.T. = *tshwa*) / *dgon* / *rtsig* / *gang zhig ni* / *gtor te bzhag* / *pu* (C.T. = *phu*) *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *mgyogs tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *nu yid* (106) *mgyogs* / *gnyis* / *g.yu'i* / *chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) *tu* / *chu 'tung* (C.T. = *'thung*) *zhing* / *lan tsha* (C.T. = *tshwa*) *dgo tsheg* / *gang la* / *ldag ching* / *gshegs* / *pa la* / *bse* (107) *mang lag la togs* (C.T. = *thogs*) / *pu dang mgyogs* / *nu yid mgyogs* / *gnyis* / *sbreld* (C.T. = *sbrel*) / *rgyang sbrel tu sbreld* (C.T. = *sbrel*) / *nas* / *mang* (108) *lag* / *gyer* (C.T. = *khyer*) *te byer* / *ri lung gnyisu* / *bsnyags gyang ma slebs* / *g.yu'i chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) *du do zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *do ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) (109) *gser gi chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) *du do zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *do ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *dngul* / *gi chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) / *tu do zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *do ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *ra gan gyi* / *chu* (110) *tu do zind* (C.T. = *zin*) *do ma zind* (C.T. = *zin*) / *khar ba'i* / *chu myig* (C.T. = *mig*) / *lchags* (C.T. = *lcags*) *gyi chu zangs* / *gyi chu tu* / *do zind* (C.T. = *zin*) *do ma zin* /

The horses continued to run away from 'Gon-tshun phywa. They arrived at the mountain of the Dmu, a faraway land that may have been conceived of as lying at the threshold of the heavens. A Dmu personality named Dmu-rje rgya'-bdun came to the aid of the patriarch. Cooperation or collaboration between the Dmu and Phywa is a common theme in Tibetan ritual and mythic literature. These two lineages shared kin relations, helping to explain their teamwork in primal and ancient settings. Dmu-rje rgya'-bdun lassoed the absconding horses and placed them in the *cho-rol*. 'Gon-tshun phywa took possession of the two *do-ma* and tearfully explained to them how he had lost his son. He implored the horses to help him and they pledged to act as the mystic mount for Lhe'u yang-ka rje. As the ones who can go above the water (*chab-gang*) and on the pass (*la ru*), the crossers of the ford, it is these horses that would deliver the deceased son to the far side of the river of the dead.[475] A shallow ford (*yang-ba rab*) separated thralldom from bliss.

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[474] This sentence and the next two sentences describing springs of precious metals are abbreviated in the text in various ways.

[475] In the archaic funerary tradition, the motif of traversing the postmortem obstacles of a river and a pass en route to the final ford is an extremely important one. It is also found in Pt 1068, Pt 1136, Pt 1194, and ITJ 731r. In 2008 and 2010a, I treat all of them except the Pt 1194 version of this motif, but omit reference to the 'pass of the dead'. This occurred because I failed to disambiguate the noun *la* from the postposition *ru*. I regret this oversight and will now rectify my earlier translations. In Pt 1068 (lns. 113, 114), it reads: "You, also act as the beloved livestock [female hybrid yak] (*pyugs* {*spo*}*-ma nye-du*), the one who goes above the water [and] on the pass, the one who can cross (*spogs*) the shallow ford" (*pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) {*spo*} *ma nye du khyed gyang chab gang laru* (C.T. = *la ru*) *mdzod cig yang ba rab du spogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *'tshalo*). Also in Pt 1068 (lns. 122, 123), Dur-shen rma-da says, "From today onwards, you also be the female hybrid yak (*mdzo-mo*), the one who can go above the water [and] on the pass, the one who can cross the shallow ford" (*mdzo mo khyod gyang* / *di ring 'pan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *chad na chab gang laru* (C.T. = *la ru*) *bgyi 'tshal yang ba rab du spogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *'tshal gyis*). In Pt 1136 (lns. 25, 26): "[Bal-bu], you are the *pyugs smo-ma* (mother

It was the final frontier on the route to salvation. The horses were unequivocal in their promise to the patriarch, saying that they will drink the great poison with their own lips (*dug chen mchus 'tungs*). This metaphor communicates not only the great sincerity of the horses but also reflects their awareness that the journey they will embark upon is a one-way trip from the land of the living to the land of the dead. That *do-ma* were indeed sacrificed is implied in the fourth origins myth of Pt 1134, where it is stated that the two horses who belonged to the patriarch Myi-rab 'grep ru-cho were put inside the *se* (the grave itself or a ritual element of the tomb):[476]

> [The horses] fled to the mountain, they fled to the heights of the Dmu mountain. From the mountain summit (*ri-kha'*), Dmu-rje rgya'-bdun cried out (*khus-btab*). The horses were contained (*bkug*) in the great expanse of the Dmu and caught (*bzungs*) by the unseen[477] lasso of the Dmu. They were bound[478] by the binding wild yak cord (*sgrog*). [The horses] were put in[479] the *cho-rol* of *bse* and kept (*bzhag*) there. With the bridle lead (*srab mda'*) held [in his hand],'Gon-tshun phywa captured [the horses] and cried afar (loudly), he cried so [saying], 'My only son, the only one; the degenerated one, he died. His vital wind (*stug*) was destroyed. Elder brother Swift One, younger brother Swift As Thought, you two, can you go above the water [and] on the pass or not? Do you know how to cross the shallow ford or do you not [know] how to cross the shallow ford?' [The horses] forthrightly replied (*lan-chen*), 'We promise to drink the great poison with our lips.'

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livestock?), the one who can go above the river and over the pass, the one who can cross the shallow ford" (*pyugs* (C.T. *phyugs*) *smo ma khyod kyis chab gang lar* (= *laru*) *bgyi 'tshal yang ba rab du spogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *'tshal*). Also in Pt 1136 (ln. 29): "[The colt Bal-bu] went above the water, yes, on the pass [and] crossed the shallow ford" (*chab gang ni lar* (= *laru*) *btab yang 'ba'* (C.T. = *ba*) *rab du spagste* (= *spogste*) /). In Pt 1194 (lns. 59, 60): "*Spo-ma nye-du*, you also be the one who can go above the water and on the pass" (*spo ma nye du khyod kya* (= *kyang*) *chab gang la ru ni bgyi 'tshal lo*). For occurrences of the passage under review in the ritual performance of ITJ 731r, see *infra*, pp. 239–243. In the *smrang* narrative of the same text (lns. 99–101), the horse Khug-ron rmang-dar says, "You, man Rma-bu ldam-shad, would you like to go above the water [and] on the pass or not? Would you like to cross the shallow ford or not? If you want me to do (go) above the water [and] on the pass and cross the shallow ford, from today henceforth, yes, I will carry you for your one hundred-year or longer life (*bshos-tshe*)" (*myi rma bu ldam shad* / *khyod chab gang la ru bgyi 'am myi bgyi yang ba rab du sbog* (C.T. = *'bog*) *gam myi sbog* (C.T. = *'bog*) // *chab gang la ru bgyis la yang ba rab du sbogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *na* // *de ring sang lda na ni bshos tshe lo brgya la ni ring bkhuro* (C.T. = *'khur ro*) //). Also in ITJ 731r (lns. 129, 130): "Today henceforth, you beloved livestock, the cherished *do-ma*, also act as that likeness and that {equivalence}* and go above the water, yes, on the pass, and cross the shallow ford" (*sang lda na phyugs spo ma nyedu do ma snying dgas khyed rmams khyang* (= *kyang*) *da de dang 'dra de dang* {*mtshungs*} *gyis* / *chab grang* (= *gang*) *ni la ru mdzod chig yang ba ni rab du sbogs shig* /).

* *'Dra dang* {*mtshungs*}. The 'likeness' and 'equivalence' referred to here is a ritual concept connected to the *glud* or similar ritual systems, whereby the *do-ma* acts as the surrogate ally for the deceased.

[476] See Bellezza 2008, p. 513. Commenting on Tibetan burials in Central Tibet and in northeastern Tibet, Tong (2008: 96, 97) observes that animals such as horses, cattle, yaks, sheep, and dogs, were either directly buried in tombs or deposited in sacrificial pits or trenches arrayed around grave mounds. Sometimes great numbers of animals were sacrificed such as is found at the Chawugang cemetery in Lha-rtse, where there are dozens of sacrificial horse pits (*ibid*.). In the *Sui Shu*, it reports that hundreds of horses could be ritually slain in funerals of the Tibetan Plateau (*ibid*.). The immolated horses of Tibetan burials may represent *do-ma* in some cases and ransom offerings in other depositional contexts. The Buddhist historian Nyang-ral (12th century CE) also notes that a sheep and a mare were slaughtered during a funerary ritual carried out by an ancient *bon-po* (Bellezza 2008: 235).

[477] *Gsung*. This word signifies that the lasso was thrown from behind the horses. They would not have been able to see it until it was too late, thus it was 'secret'.

[478] *Rdod* / *brdod*. This O.T. word is etymologically related to the C.T. *sdod*, the imperative for 'stay', in that both terms connote immobility.

[479] *Bchug*, the O.T. form of the C.T. *bcug* but with a slightly different semantic field. Also see *supra*, p. 150 (fn. 232).

ri la (111) *bros te song dmu ri mtho la bros te song na* / *dmu rje rgya'* / *bdun gyis* / *ri kha'* (C.T. = *kha*) / *khus* / *btabste dmu* (112) *dbye che la* / *bkug dmu zhags* / *gsung gis* / *bzungste* (C.T. = *bzung ste*) / *'brong gi* / *rdod sgrog gis brdod* / *bse'i* / *cho* (113) *rol du ni bchug ste bzhag na* / *'gon tshun* / *phywas* / *srab mda'* / *nas ni* / *bzung ste* / *bshums mo rgyang* (114) *gis* / *bshumste* / *nga'i* / *bu chig* / *chig* / *'pan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *te grongs* / *sdug* (= *stug*) *ste ni rla* (= *rlag*) *gis* / *myed* / *na* / *pu dang mgyogs* (115) / *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *nu yid mgyogs gnyis* / *gyis* / *chab gang la ru bya 'am myi yang ba rab tu spogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *sam* (116) *myi spogs* (C.T. = *'bog*) *shes* / *bgyis* / *lan chen* / *kha'is* (C.T. = *kha yis*) / *blangs* / *dug chen mchus 'tungs* (C.T. = *'thung*) /



Fig. 15. A copper alloy ornament of the thog-lcags *class featuring a winged horse (4 cm x 3.7 cm), early historic period (650–1000 CE) or vestigial period (1000–1250 CE). This object appears to have interconnected three lines or accessories worn on the person or as a component part of horse tack or some other assemblage. In addition to having funerary associations, racing horses and those belonging to divine and heroic figures are often ascribed with the power of flight in Tibetan culture.*
Private collection

Mgon-tshun phywa accords many honors on Swift One and Swift As Thought, befitting the critical work to which they have been entrusted. They are given a castle to live in and are served the best foods and beverages. In preparation for their momentous passage, the horns (feather crest) of a bird (*bya-ru*) are tied on top of their heads. This ritual accoutrement signifies the mystic power of flight, a fundamental quality of the wondrous *do-ma*.[480] The bird horns also recall the great funerary bird, the horned eagle (*khyung*) of Tibet (see *supra*, p. 69 [fn. 90]).

The actual burial rites and the construction of the tomb were done by a priest (*gshen-bon*) named Rgya-bon brim-tang (a professional title followed by a personal name). Like other great funerary practitioners in Pt 1134, the *rgya-bon* Brim-tang is a descendant of the uranic *lha* (patrilineage) and the telluric *srin* (matrilineage), a sign of his immense sanctity and skill. He is also characterized as the '*bon* of humans' (*myi-bon*) and the '*bon* of the gods' (*lha'i bon*), demonstrating that his abilities extend to two of the most vital ontological categories, for essentially he belongs to both. This priest built the *se* and *rgyal-tag brgyad*,[481] major elements of the tomb design. Rather than the tomb itself, the *se* and *rgyal-tag* seem to denote its spatial limits as expressed in ritual performance. That the *rgyal-tag* was suspended (*bre*) is not in accord with a rigid structure such as a tomb, reinforcing its associations with the funerary tent. Also, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *se* is an ensemble of

[480] The ability of the *do-ma* to take to the air is highly developed in the *rta-gtad* text. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 452–459.

[481] For an analysis of the *rgyal-thag brgyad* (*sic*) in the funerary context, see *ibid*., pp. 520 (n. 563). According to Haarh (1969: 141), in Tibetan conceptions of the tent as a microcosm of the universe, it has eight ribs demarcating the sky and it revolves around the eight-spoked wheel of the sky. In addition to delimiting the eight divisions of space, the *rgyal-thag brgyad* of the black yak hair tent (*sbra-nag*) is more prosaically the medial band (*rgyal-thag*) to which the eight major *chon* (poles, guy lines and stakes) are affixed.

ritual offerings that appears to have been set up at the gravesite or charnel ground. The text explains that the overarching *rgyal-tag* partitioned (*bsgos*) the *se*. As such, we can envision the quadrate *se* being divided into eight sections. The text also mentions *gshin-sde'u nyer-bu*, a mortuary structure that was built up (*brtshigs*). This can only be a type of *ste'u*, which must have been used in a manner consistent with its functions in the illuminated funerary manuscript. In ITJ 731r (ln. 125), it reads: "The *ste*, the *gshin-ste nyer-bu*, was made (*bchas*, C.T. = *bcas*)". Other ritual funerary structures include the wild yak (hide) mattress,[482] four poles (?) and four bird sculptures (?):

> The father Mgon-tshun pywa (*sic*) put (*bchugs*) them inside an iron castle, in a castle of nine pinnacles. They were fed[483] green shoots (*lchang-pa*)[484] of grain (*'bras*).[485] They ate (*bsgams*) unroasted (*ngar-pye*) blue barleycorn (*sngomo*). They were served molasses. On top of their heads (*glad*) the horns of the bird were attached *'ong 'ong*.[486] The mighty *gshen-bon*, the son of the *lha* and nephew of the *srin*, the *bon* of humans and the *bon* of *lha*, Rgya-bon brim-tang, suspended the eight *rgyal-tag* in the sky and established the square *se* on the earth. In concealment, the *se* partitioned (*bsgos*) by the *rgyal*-[*tag*] was established in the valley.[487] The *gshin-sde'u nyer-bu* was erected. The northern wild yak (*kod-mo*) mattress (*brtan*) was arranged (*bkod*). Four wooden poles[488] were erected (*btshugs*). The four *bya-dgyi* were raised (*spard*).[489]

pha mgon chun (= *tshun*) / *pywas* (C.T. = *phywas*) (117) {*khri*} *de mkar* (C.T. = *mkhar*) *lchags* (C.T. = *lcags*) / *mkar* (C.T. = *mkhar*) / *rtshe* (C.T. = *rtse*) *dgu'i* / *nang du bchugste* // *'bras* / *gyi* / *lchang* (C.T. = *lcang*) *pa la* / *sand* (C.T. = *bsan*) / *nas* / (118) *sngomo* (C.T. = *sngo mo*) *ngar pye* (C.T. = *phye*) / {*la*} *ni* / *bsgams* (C.T. = *'gams*) / *bu ram nyug* (C.T. = *smyug*) *chu la ni* / *blud* / *glad la ru btags sna bya ru 'ong 'ong* / *bon* (119) *gshen drag* / *bu ni lha'i bu tsha ni srin gyi tsha'* (C.T. = *tsha*) / *myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *bon* / *lha'i bon* / *rgya bon brim tang gis* / *rgyal tag* (C.T. = *thag*) *brgyad* (120) / *ni* / *gnam las* / *bre se gru bzhi ni* / *sa la* / *bchas* (C.T. = *bcas*) / *bas la ni* / *rgyal* /

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[482] That this is something put down as a kind of supporting mattress or carpet (*rtan*) is further indicated in Pt 1134 (ln. 56), where the wild yak (*khod-mo*) mattress is arranged (*bkod*) in conjunction with the erected (*pub*, C.T. = *phub*) tent of the mind (*thugs-sbra*). The *rtan* as a kind of ground-cloth is confirmed in Pt 1136 (ln. 19), where this wild yak hide object is called a *gdan* (carpet), something that is laid out (*bting*). For these references to the wild yak mattress, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 409 (n. 171), 513, 521.

[483] *Sand* (C.T. = *bsan*). This word is commonly used in pastoral regions of Upper Tibet and Hor to refer to the feeding of livestock.

[484] For mention of *lcang* / *ljang-pa* (*sic*) and *bu-ram myug-chu* (molasses) in archaic funerary myths, also see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 263.

[485] Contrary to common definition, *'bras* in such contexts as archaic funerary rituals refers to grain generally and barleycorn more specifically, not rice.

[486] *'Ong 'ong* appears to convey that these 'horns' stood erect.

[487] Gurung (2011: 3–5) in an interesting paper on the parentage of Gshen-rab mi-bo from Eternal Bon sources examines lns. 119 and 120 of Pt 1134, in which he treats the *rgyal-tag* as being the protection cord of a class of deities known as *rgyal*, noting that this is one category of spirits in the *lha-srin sde-brgyad*. However, the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* is a system of classification that emerged in works from the later spread of Buddhism (*bstan-pa phyi-dar*) and is not found in Old Tibetan archaic ritual materials, nor are the *rgyal* spirits present in these Old Tibetan sources.

[488] *Shing tang bzhi'*. Also, see Pt 1134 (ln. 51): *shing tang bzhi.* A similar description of the building of a tomb in Pt 1068 (ln. 115) reads: *shing-gdang* (= *shing-gdung*?) *bzhi*, four wooden members (?). See Bellezza 2008, p. 541. Furthermore, the iron Khu-khu, the copper Pyo-pyo and Mgyogs (Swift One) in Pt 1134 (lns. 54–57), refers to three *do-ma* in their mystic flight to the afterlife and to the deposition of their corpses in the tomb. This latter ritual operation could only have taken place after the two horses had been sacrificed. That Khu-khu and Pyo-pyo are in fact *do-ma* in this text had escaped me. See *ibid*., pp. 512, 513, 541; *supra*, p. 145 (fn. 220).

[489] Also, *bya-dgyigs bzhi* (Pt 1068, ln. 116) and *bya kyi bzhĭ* (Pt 1134, ln. 51). See *ibid*., pp. 512, 541.

bsgos / *lung na ni* / *se bchaste'* C.T.= *bcas ste*) / (121) *gshin sde'u nyer bu ni brtshigs* (C.T. = *brtsigs*) *byang brtan* (C.T. = *rten*) *kod mo ni bkod* / *shing tang* (C.T. = *dang*) *bzhi'* (C.T. = *bzhi*) / *ni btshugs* (C.T. = *tshugs*) / *bya dgyi* (122) *bzhi ni spard* (C.T. = *spar*) /

With the erection of bird horns on the *do-ma* and the setting up of the burial structures, the horses were prepared for their magic flight by taking up the regulated position (*gral*). It was then time for the final ritual ornamentation of the mane with cloth. The tails of the *do-ma* were allowed to hang freely. On the other hand, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the tails of the *rta-gtad* are braided.[490] This appears to bespeak differences in *do-ma* rituals that such a seminal cultural activity might have engendered in its various forms (geographic, socioeconomic, cultic, etc.). The text notes that the relatives (*gnyen*) of the deceased were on hand to see these ritual proceedings. The *bon* (consisting of ritual knowledge and activities) was recited, the soteriological instrument par excellence.[491]

In other Old Tibetan contexts, *bon* is somewhat more narrowly defined as ritual traditions of curative or divinatory dimensions. Those who possessed these means were often referred to in general terms as *bon-po* (e.g., see Pt 1038, Pt 1068, Pt 1285). The word *bon* was of sufficient significance that it formed part of the proper name or title of ritual specialists in a variety of Dunhuang texts such as Pt 1136 (Smra-bon gyi zing-ba), Pt 1285 (e.g., Ltam-bon dmus-long, 'Ol-bon 'jang-tsa mon-yug), ITJ 734 (Pya-bon kyu-ra, Lha-bon 'prang-zu and G.yang-bon theg-leg,), Pt 1289 (Lho-bon 'ol-lcogs), and the Old Tibetan Annals (Lhas-bon). In these examples, the word *bon* is attached either to the region or primary occupational specialization of the personality: e.g., the *bon* of the 'Ol [country] or the *bon* of *pya* (C.T. = *phywa*, the foundation for good fortune).[492] As an element of the proper names of archetypal priests, *bon* was imbued with sacral and prestigeful connotations. As we have seen in Pt 1134, this sacerdotal occupation was also called *gshen-bon* (this term is found in Pt 1136 and the Gathang Bumpa *byol-rabs* text as well), a composite of the two most popular classes of archaic ritualists. This alludes to their interdependent relationship.

As the *do-ma* requires a travel guide, Mgon-tshun phywa presented the *skyibs-lug*. He announced that this effectively marked the establishment of the custom, the prototype for subsequent generations of funerary priests, who either recited it from memory or read the words of this text. Perhaps many written copies of this *smrang* and other Old Tibetan origins myths once existed but there are no means for determining how widespread their circulation actually was. Our text states that the funerary rite (*bdur*) had a salutary effect on the living. This is in recognition that

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[490] Likewise, in the ritual horse burials of Pazyryk some of the tails were knotted. For a comparison of the *do-ma* tradition with archaeological evidence for cognate horse sacrifices among the Scytho-Siberians, see *ibid*., 549–553.

[491] *Bon* as a term for the abstract and material aspects of archaic ritual tradition also occurs in Pt 239, Pt 1136 and ITJ 734. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 501, 529; 2010a, p. 51 (n. 65). The '*bon* of rehabilitation (*gso*)' in Pt 1134 likewise denotes a ritual tradition (see *supra*, p. 145 [fn. 220]). Also see the *lha* of *bon* in the *byol-rabs* text of the Gathang Bumpa collection (Bellezza 2010a: 78).

[492] In this work we are already acquainted with the *dur-bon* / *'dur-bon*, *dri-bon* / *gri-bon*, *rgod-bon*, and *dbal-bon*. For other types of funerary priests in Pt 1042 and the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (*phangs bon-po*, *sman bon-po*, *snyun bon-po*, *thar-bon*, *glu-bon*, *gto-bon*, and *sna-bon*), see Bellezza 2008, pp. 374, 375. For the priests of Pt 1042, also see Tucci 1980, p. 231 (although the functions Tucci assigns each type remain to be confirmed). In Pt 1043, a divination text, there are three types of *bon* specialists: *dre-bon* (C.T. = *'dre-bon*), *dgung-bon* and *sman-bon*.* In the *byol-rabs* text the following specialists are found: *bdud-bon*, *thar-bon*, *glud-bon*, and *dbal-bon* (Bellezza 2010a).

* I have observed that the *sman-bon* / *sman bon-po* may possibly denote priests specializing in the mystic refurbishment of the corpse. In light of the illuminated funerary manuscript, an alternative hypothesis is that this type of religious functionary may have been in charge of the funerals of females.

its practice is as crucial to the living as it is to the dead. Virtually all archaic funerary rituals are at pains to make this point. The text also mentions as an afterthought goats in great numbers that serve to recover the deceased. This is a reference to the *dri* animals, the sacrificial creatures that ransom those who died from unnatural causes. As we have seen in the Gathang Bumpa texts, *dri* livestock are given to the homicidal demons in exchange for the dead:

> The swift ones were established in the forefront (*dngard*) of the ordered position as the beloved *do-ma*, the ones with white fur growing on the rump (*pon-kar skyes*) and the [white] belly (*'dab*). The older brother Swift One and the younger brother Swift As Thought, these two, were established in the forefront of the ordered position. Fine cloth (*dar*) was tied to their manes (*pum*). Their tails were allowed to hang freely (*slungs su bchug*). The relatives [of Lhe'u yang-ka' rje], yes, they that could see [the spectacle]. The *bon*, yes, that which was chanted (*bsgyerd*). Mgon-tshun phywa gifted (*gtad*) the *skyibs-lug mar-ba*.[493] [He said], 'Now, today, hereafter,[494] the *skyibs-lug mar-ba* shall be given. My degenerated son died. His vital wind was destroyed.' By the *bdur* of the expired one, the living were bedecked (*pras*) with the good speech (*mgur*). To find the lost man, thousands of goats of the livestock.

mgyogs / *gral du dngard* (C.T. = *ngar*) / *na* / *do ma snying dgas* / *pon* (C.T. = *'phong*) *kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *skyes* / *'dab phu dang mgyoggsu* (C.T. = *mgyogs su*) (123) / *nu yid mgyogs* / *gnyis* / *dral* (C.T. = *gral*) *du dngard* / *mgyogs* / *pum* (C.T. = *phum*) *ni dar gis* / *bchings* (C.T. = *bcings*) / *rnga ma ni slungs* (124) *su bchug* (C.T. = *bcug*) / *gnyen gang gis* / *ni* / *blta'* (C.T. = *ltas*) / *bon gang gis* / *ni* / *bgyerd* / *mgon tshun* / *phywa'is* / *skyibs* / *lug* (125) *mar ba la* / *gtade* // *da di ring pa 'chadu* (C.T. = *ched du*) *skyibs* / *lug* / *mar ba la gta* (= *gtad*) *do* / *nga 'i* / *bu* / *'pan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *te ni grongs* / *sdug* (= *stug*) (126) *ste ni rlag* / *na* / *grongs myi bdur na* / *gson* / *mgur pras* (C.T. = *spras*) / *rlag myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *btsal na* / *pyugi* (C.T. = *phyugs gi*) *ra stongs* (C.T. = *stong*) /

To conclude the story of the first *do-ma* ritual, Mgon-tshun phywa resumes speaking. He explained to the two valiant horses that they are to cross the heights that lie between them and the afterlife. The patriarch commands the *skyibs-lug* in a similar manner. It was to be the guide of the *do-ma* and the deceased son, the one that leads the way over the postmortem ford. The two *do-ma* and Lhe'u yang-ka rje, these three entities, are said to be tantamount to the feathers of the 'black bird' (the crow). This is an obvious allusion to the mystic power of flight horses that carry the dead were thought to possess. The choice of the crow here seems to be made in cognizance of his hardy and versatile nature, just the kind of imagery called for given the taxing journey ahead. This reference sheds light on the presence of the crow in other archaic funerary rituals as well. Again, Mgon-tshun phywa called directly upon the *skyibs-lug*. He requested this sheep to conduct (*bgris*) the two *do-ma* and Lhe'u yang-ka rje through the postmortem realm, which is likened to a foggy and misty enclosed space (*smug-rum na-bo*).

The patriarch then announces that the ancestral deities (*btsan-btshun*), who lived above the nine layers of the sky, will look after the deceased man and livestock. The inclusion of *btsan* in this archaic term seems to underline that the *mtshun* belong to the dead. Here, the *btsun* (the dead in a state of thanatological normalcy) and *mtshun* (the dead in the afterlife) are to all intents and purposes synonymous. It is the highest heaven that the 'father of the dead' stipulates will be the

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[493] *Mar-ba* is an epithet for the *skyibs-lug*. It seems to mean something to the effect of 'the precious one'. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 460, 502 (n. 490).

[494] *Pa-'chadu*. The C.T. equivalent is *phyin-ched du*.

dwelling place of the expired human and animals. In this narrative it is located above the nine layers of the sky (*gnam rim-pha dgu*; also see second narrative of Pt 1134, *supra*, p. 168 [fn. 291]), but in two other Old Tibetan accounts there are thirteen layers of the sky (see *supra*, p. 176). The number of levels that compose the sky finds much resonance in other sets of objects and beings of the archaic and Eternal Bon traditions. In these traditions the numerals nine and thirteen carry the connotation of completeness in a cosmological or magical sense.

Although they will all reside in the celestial sphere, the heaven-bound wayfarers in Pt 1134 each have their own place. As on earth, animals and humans live with their own kind in the afterlife. To finish the origins tale of Lhe'u yang-ka rje, the text declaims that in ancient times he was benefited by the *do-ma*, as the story itself shows:

> 'Now, older brother, the Swift One, and younger brother Swift As Thought, you two, man and livestock, shall also traverse the pass of the heights. *Skyibs-lug mar-ba*, be the guide that crosses the ford in the bottomland with the man and livestock. *Skyibs-lug mar-ba*, be the guide. Now, today, hereafter, the elder brother Swift One, the younger brother Swift As Thought and Lhe'u yang-ka rje, you three, are the equivalent (*mtshungs*) of the feathers of the crow (*bya-rog-gu*). *Skyibs-lug mar-ba*, you are to conduct Lhe'u yang-kha rje' (*sic*), the elder brother Swift One and the younger brother Swift As Thought, these three, through the mists of the foggy confined space (*smug-rum*). Above the nine levels of the sky, the *btsan-btshun* are appointed to look upon you. Also, the man and livestock are appointed to stay there together. Also, like the deer and female yak who are separate and at a distance from one another (*logs la snar*), the associated man and livestock are separate and at a distance from one another.' In ancient times who was of benefit and merit? The beloved *do-ma* was of benefit and merit to Lhe'u yang-kha rje'.

da' (C.T. = *da*) / *pu* (C.T. = *phu*) (127) *dang mgyogs* / *tang* (C.T. = *dang*) / *nu yid mgyogs* / *gnyis* / *mtho la rkal* (C.T. = *rgal*) *gyang myi phyugs* / *mnyam* / *du* / *skyibs lug* (128) *mar bas* / *drongs shig* / *dma* (*dma'*) *rab 'bog gyang myi phyugs myi phyugs* / *mnyam* / *du skyibs lug mar* (129) *bas drong shig* / *da di ring pan* (= *pa*) *chadu* (C.T. = *ched du*) / *pu dang mgyogs* / *dang nu yid mgyogs* / *dang lhe'u yang ka rje* (130) *dang gsum* / *yang* / *bya rog gu'i* / *spu dang mtshungs* / *smug rum* / *na bo* (C.T. = *na bun*) *ro* / *skyibs lug* / *mar* / *bas* / (131) *bgris* (C.T. = *dkris*) / *na* / *lhe'u yang kha rje'* (C.T. = *rje*) / *pu* (C.T. = *phu*) *dang mgyogs* / *nu yid mgyogs* / *gsum yang* (132) /// *gnam* / *rim pha* (C.T. = *pa*) *dgu'i* / *steng du btsan btshun* (C.T. = *mtshun*) *lta* / *dkos* (C.T. = *bskos*) / *na* / *bzhugs* / *gyang myi phyugs* / *mnyam* / *du* (133) *dkos* (C.T. = *bskos*) / *na bzhugs* / *sha bri* (C.T. = *'bri*) *ltar* / *logs* (C.T. = *log*) *la* / *snar gyang myi pyugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) / *mnyam* / *du logs* (C.T. = *log*) / *la* / *snar* /// *gna* (C.T. = *gna'*) (134) *su la pan* (C.T. = *phan*) *te bsod* / *na* / *lhe'u yang kha rje'* (C.T. = *rje*) / *la* / *do ma* / *snying dgas* / *pan* (C.T. = *phan*) *te bsod* ///

With the completion of the origins myth featuring Lhe'u yang-ka rje, Pt 1134 moves to the concurrent consecration and deployment of the *do-ma*, a liturgy of great length and complexity (lns. 134–297).[495] This ritual performance occupies a little more than half of the Pt 1134 manuscript. Rather than Lhe'u yang-ka rje, its deceased is known by a generic appellation: Rma-bu mchin-rgyal. In this funeral the departed one is referred to as *myi-btshun* (C.T. = *mi-btsun*,

[495] Translation of this extremely valuable material is still pending. The presence of vocabulary and activities with limited correspondence to Classical Tibetan funerary texts renders this endeavor very challenging. For translation of a passage in the Pt 1134 ritual (lns. 190–195) that deals with priestly instructions to the *skyibs-lug*, see *ibid*., pp. 502, 503.

lns. 224, 254, 255), whose death as a *dri* was associated with a miserable place and equated with a happy state when death as a *sman* occured. Much of this extensive ritual is devoted to the sacerdotal management of the journey of the sheep and horses through the postmortem realm. Its fundamental elements are the same as above, the origins tales having set the substance and tone for it. The provisional place after death (*gshin-yul*) is called 'Brem-dang. This *do-ma* and *skyibs-lug* ritual commences with a set of instructions that are blown into the ear of the deceased. These are called the 'three words of speech' (*btams* (C.T. = *gtam*) *pa ngag-tshig sum* [C.T. = *gsum*]).

In order to entice the mystic transport animals to make the arduous journey they are first told: "On the joyous mountain, the mountain, are the herbs of the dead heaped high in the meadow. In the joyous country, the country, the river of the dead, the river is blue."[496] This is the only occurrence I have encountered in the archaic funerary tradition of the use of the word *gshin* to describe phenomena directly connected to places characterized as joyous (*dga'*), a word reserved as an epithet for the afterlife. As we have seen, the *gshin-chu* / *gshin-chab* forms the border between the netherworld and the road to paradise. Therefore, I am of the opinion that this deliberate mixing of provisional phenomena (*gshin*) with the essentially permanent phenomenon of 'joyous' places is motivational in nature, as part of the initial thrust of the ritual. It appears to have been composed to get the *do-ma* and *skyibs-lug* moving in the right direction through the postmortem space. In these ritual proceedings, the afterlife is specifically known as Dga'-yul byang-rnams (indicating that it is a boreal land) and Dga' dang skyid-pa'i yul (Land of Joy and Happiness). This is the final resting place of the dead and their livestock companions.

[496] Ln. 143: *ri dga'* / *ri* / *la* / *gshin* / *rtsi pang* (= *spang*) / *phung* / *yul dga'* / *yul* / *na* / *chu gshin chu ni snga*. For treatment of these lines, see also Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 263; Stein 1971, p. 497.

The *Do-ma* Funerary Transport Horse Ritual in ITJ 731r

To complete this study of the archaic funerary rites of Tibet, we turn to the first part of ITJ 731r (lns. 1–38).[497] This portion of the text constitutes another ritual for the *do-ma*, the funerary horses that transport the dead through the postmortem *gshin-yul*.[498] Unlike its counterpart in Pt 1134, this ritual is in an abridged form. As concise as it may be, the ITJ 731r ritual performance contains unique material, significantly expanding our understanding of the consecration and dispatch of the *do-ma*. As with the *do-ma* ritual of Pt 1134, the special details presented in ITJ 731r make this a document of exceptional cultural historical value. The importance and scope of this work is enhanced by the much longer *do-ma* origins tale that follows the ritual.

Do-ma rituals in general comprised the last step of the archaic funerary rite. Already completed by this point in the observance were the major functions of 1) divining the cause of death, 2) summoning the deceased, 3) capturing and neutralizing the cause of death, and 4) transforming the dead into a thanatological state of normalcy. These other main components of the funerary rite have been examined at length in this book. The *do-ma* ritual, as the final measure of the funeral, was concerned with the accession of the deceased into the afterlife. Although various commemorative observances may have been held subsequently, the deployment of the *do-ma* coincided with burial and the postmundane voyage to paradise.

The first part of the ITJ 731r *do-ma* ritual is preoccupied with definitively separating the good fortune of the living from the misfortune of death. It was considered absolutely necessary that all facets of economic and psychological well-being were removed from the shadow of evil thought to descend on those who remained behind in this world after a death. It appears that in early historic-period Tibet, there was a real fear that the dead might carry off the various types of fortuity that make life tenable.[499] In ITJ 731r, the special force seen as essential for successful living is called *byin*. In Classical Tibetan this term is often defined as ‘blessing’, ‘magnificence’ or ‘splendor’. While its Old Tibetan meaning subsumes all these glosses, the semantics of *byin* are bundled up in the notion of the vital essence or fundamental power in all the props of well-being.[500] For lack of a suitable word in English, I have opted to translate *byin* in this context

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[497] The actual translation begins with ln. 2 of the document. The first line of the text is highly fragmentary but from what can be read, in structure and content it is not unlike ln. 2. I have worked from a facsimile of ITJ 731r, thus I cannot comment on how much of the text might have preceded what is now its first line, as based on a physical inspection of the paper. Nonetheless, from the opening of the extant text, it does not seem that much of the ritual is missing.

[498] That this is a short form of the *do-ma* ritual, see the last words of the performance, *infra*, p. 243. A translation of this ITJ 731r ritual sequence was attempted by F. W. Thomas, a scholar who made great contributions to our understanding of imperial-period Tibet. For his translation of the text under scrutiny, see Thomas 1957 “Text, Translations and Notes” pp. 20–22, and for his transliteration, pp. 9–11. Published posthumously, Thomas viewed this ritual as an allegory of a golden age (*ibid*., 8). Evidently, due to inadequate cultural and philological resources, Thomas’ translation is seriously flawed. Yet, it must be kept in mind that he was working on this material in a period before Eternal Bon texts and native Bon scholars were widely available for consultation.

[499] As noted, the theme of defending the good fortune capability (*g.yang*) of objects and animals in this world is reflected in a passage from Pt 1042, a funerary ritual for individuals of high social rank. In that text, *sku-gshen* priests ensure that the *g.yang* of horses, sheep and yaks are retained in the world of the living. This same theme of protecting the good fortune of horses and other vital constructs of the living is found in the Eternal Bon funerary transport horse (*rta-gtad*) text. For the study of these references, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 454, 455, 457, 458. Also, see *supra*, p. 172.

[500] It appears that the C.T. term *byin-po* (‘ordinary’, ‘most’, ‘all’) is derived from this all-embracing quality connoted by the O.T. *byin*.

simply as 'benefaction'. In the ritual performance, all of those things with *byin* are cut away from their corresponding evil (*sdig*). The word *sdig* here does not denote 'moral evil' or 'mental obscuration' in a Lamaist sense. Its Old Tibetan usage does not convey an ethical dimension per se, rather it is the polar opposite of *byin*. Thus *sdig* can be defined as the force that brings infelicity to all things.

The *do-ma* ritual of ITJ 731r begins with the benefactions of limpid waters being meticulously cleaved from opposing evils. This appears to symbolize the total removal of noxious influences from the clients sponsoring the ritual or perhaps even for human society as a whole. This widely inclusive intent is reinforced in the text with its invoking the harborage of all manner of salutary energies. This sets the tone for the rest of the first part of the *do-ma* ritual. After focusing on the big picture, the text directs the ritual separation of the yaks, horses, sheep, and swine from negativities. The livestock so chosen possess special markings or qualities that make them suitable for ritual usage. Next, the benefactions of the deceased's possessions (*dgor*) are isolated from negative forces, in order that his next of kin can continue to reap benefits from them. Also called upon is the protection of the water used in irrigation and the aromatic herbs used in fumigation of the fields. With the ritual immunization of the basic economic constructs of life (agrarian and pastoral) completed, the text moves to human beings themselves. In culmination of this process of indemnifying all positive qualities, the *g.yang* (good fortune capability) of long-life is singled out for ritual care:

> The great benefactions of the three very pure (*dang-dang*) waters are sequestered (*dgaro*) upwards.[501] The evils are cut outside far away (*rgyang sdĭg nĭ pyi ru gchado*). The great benefactions of the {two} very pure *mkhar* (castle?) waters[502] and the third water are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away. The great benefactions of whatever is available ({*ga*} *thod-thod*) in beneficial (*sman*) benefactions[503] are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away. The great benefactions of the white-faced[504] female yaks are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away. The great benefactions of the sheep in the meadow (*spang*) are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.[505] The great benefactions of the horses in the pasture (*gsing*) are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.[506] These are followed by (*phyir*) the benefactions of the vermilion (red) goats and the benefactions of *cha* (?) sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.[507] These are followed by the benefactions of the yaks and hybrid yaks[508] sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.[509]

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[501] *Yaru*. This denotes an auspicious direction, i.e., away from the taint of mortiferousness.

[502] This is followed by the word *na-'bum* (= *na-bun*, mist?).

[503] This is followed by the word *pad-pad* (?).

[504] This translation is allowable only if {*ga*}-*la* is read as the equivalent of *gwa-ba*.

[505] This line and the proceeding one are abbreviated in the text without notation. The following words are to be interpolated: *dgaro* (C.T. = *dgar ro*) / *rgyang sdĭg ni pyi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*). This is followed in the text by a much shorter and more problematic abbreviation: *byin nga ba phyi ru spyiso*. That this excerpt is shorthand for a fuller text is indicated by the letter *nga*, which functions in this text as does the *ga-sa nag-'khyog* symbol of Classical Tibetan, which denotes where a repetitive segment of text is to be interpolated in succeeding lines. The shorthand symbol *nga* is used in irregular ways in the text.

[506] This sentence and the one preceding it are heavily abbreviated in the text without notation.

[507] This sentence and the one preceding it are heavily abbreviated in the text with the notation *nga*.

[508] *Snor* (C.T. = *nor*) *la mdzo* could also just refer to *mdzo* alone and can be translated as: 'the wealth, the hybrid yaks.'

[509] This sentence and the one preceding it are abbreviated in the text with the notation *nga*.

> These are followed by the benefactions of the pigs in the shelter sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.[510] The great benefactions are sequestered upwards on the very top (*spyi*). The evils are cut outside far away. The great benefactions of the possessions of the honorable deceased (*rgyal-phung*), the essence (*bchud*) of his ruined (*ral-mo*) castle, and the waters and incense applied (*stigs*) to his sown fields are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away. The great benefactions of the wild yak[511] [and] the lineages of the little (sweet) long-life (*tshe'u*) *g.yang* are sequestered upwards. The evils are cut outside far away.

(ln. r2) *dang dang* (C.T. = *dwangs dwangs*) *bchu* (C.T. = *chu*) *gsum gyĭ byin chen nĭ yaru* (C.T. = *yar-ru*) *dgaro* (C.T. = *dgar ro*) *rgyang sdĭg nĭ pyi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) // *mkhar bchu* (C.T. = *chu*) {*gnyis*} (r3) *na 'bum da nga* (= *dang*) *dang* (C.T. = *dwangs dwangs*) *bchu* (C.T. = *chu*) *gsum gyĭ byin chen nĭ yar ru dgaro* / *rgyang sdĭg ni pyi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) / {*ga*} (r4) *thod thod gyĭ byin sman pad pad gyi phyin* (= *byin*) *che nĭ yaru dgaro rgyang sdig ni phyi ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) // {*ga*} (r5) *la 'bri 'i byin che ba yaru dgaro rgyang stig* (C.T. = *sdig*) *pa byi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) // *spang la lug gyi byin che* {*yaru*} (r6) *gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) *byin nga ba phyi ru spyiso* // *gsing la rta'i byin* // *mtshal la ra 'i byin ra dang cha'i* (r7) *phyir byin nga rgyang stig pha*[512] // *snor* (C.T. = *nor*) *la mdzo 'i phyir byin nga rgyang stig pha*[513] // *skyibs la* (r8) *phag gyĭ phyir byĭn che rgyang sting* (= *sdig*) *ba* // *byĭn che ni yaru spyi 'o* (+ *dgaro*) *rgyang stig sdig ni pyi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru* {*gchado*} (r9) *rgyal phung ba 'i dgor* (C.T. = *dkor*) *mkhar ral mo'i bchud* (C.T. = *bcud*) // *zhing ta ba'i* (C.T. = *btab*) *rna* (C.T. = *sna*) *chab gsang* (C.T. = *bsang*) (r10) *gyi stigs* // *byĭn che ni yaru dgaro rgyang sdĭg ni pyi* (C.T. = *phyi*) *ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) // *'brong gyi kho nan* (r11) *g.yang gyi tshe'u rigs las byĭn che nĭ yaru dgaro* // *rgyang stĭg* (C.T. = *sdig*) *ni phyi ru gchado* (C.T. = *gcad do*) //

The second part of the *do-ma* ritual consists of services rendered by ritualists on behalf of the *do-ma* horses. From what has been written, the biggest challenge posed to the passage of *do-ma* to the otherworld was the spirits known as *g.yen*. As seen in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, the *g.yen* are enjoined not to interfere in the transformation of the dead into *mtshun*. So strong is concern about the *g.yen*, they are an object of a standard injunction in that text. In ITJ 731r, the *g.yen* are propitiated so that they do not misguide the *do-ma*. The *g.yen* singled out for appeasement are the nine (all) *g.yen* of the stars (*skar ma g.yen dgu*). Those of the planets are also noted. They are offered a roasted barley preparation, bird feathers, a flag, nectar, an arrow point, sheep wool, and milk in particular formats that presumably were considered most efficacious.[514] Some of these offerings and the manner in which they are given are directly connected to Kha-le rdzang-stod (*sic*), a region in upper Gtsang province. This same location, Kha-la rtsang-stod (*sic*), plays a part in the Ja-4v frame of the illuminated manuscript, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs* (see *supra*, pp. 98, 99, 143, 147). In Pt 1060, Kha-la stsang-stod (*sic*) is one of the thirteen countries in which the various lineages of *do-ma* originated. The origins myth that makes up the bulk of ITJ 731r is set in another antetypic land of the *do-ma*, Byang-ka

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[510] This sentence and the one preceding it are abbreviated in the text without notation.

[511] This is modified by the word *kho-nan*, a quality of the wild yak or a type of wild yak. This term is closely related in meaning to *kod-mo* / *kho-mo* / *khod-mo* (wild yak).

[512] *Pha* appears to be an indicator for *pyi ru.*

[513] This word appears to be an indicator for *pyi ru.*

[514] In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text explicating the funerary prescriptions (*thang-khrims*), the *g.yen* of the heavens (*gnam-g.yen*) are propitiated with birds, *bshos* (an offering cake), libations, and *mgon-cha* (various other ritual offerings), in order that they return to the sky and do not interfere with the funeral performance. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 395, 406.

snam-brgyad of the pastoral northern regions. As such, the geographic orientation of this text is the western portion of the Tibetan Plateau (uppermost portion of Gtsang and the Byang-thang).[515]

The *do-ma* are cautioned not to consume the presents arrayed for the *g.yen*. They are warned that they should not stray or follow the stars and planets. The ritualists speaking through the words of the text specifically ask the stars and planets not to kill the deer. This deer can only be the *dri-sha*, the sacrificial prototypic guide of the dead in the postmortem world. We know from *Sha ru shul ston rabs* that the deer, like the *do-ma*, goes above the water (*chab-gang*), a sacred transporter of the dead over the river of the dead. What is not clear is the precise ritual relationship between the deer and horse in discharging their duties. There is no indication in the texts on how they might have been used in conjunction with one another at funerals. Also in this ritual segment there are three divine female offering figures. The first one cited is Drug-drug btshan-mo, who is directed to provide plowed fields to the stellar demons. This goddess or primal human is herself closely associated with the stars. Next there is the female sheep herder of the stars (*skar-ma lug-rdzĭ-mo*), who makes an offering of woolen threads. The third figure is the female yak calf herder of the stars (*skar-ma be'u-rdzĭ-mo*), who presents a full bucket of milk to the stellar demons.

In the second portion of the *do-ma* ritual, the subjugation of the *g.yen* of the stars and planets and the harm they cause is of vital regard. The great stress put on appeasing and subjugating the *g.yen* of the stars and planets in this text can be explained by the celestial alignment of the ancestral paradise. As the consciousness principle was being delivered to the world above by the *do-ma*, it was this host of spirits that could most block its progress. As implied in *Rnel drĭ 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, these inmates of the heavenly bodies, suspended in the firmament as they are, were viewed as the final obstacle to salvation:

> Furthermore,[516] today, for you the cherished (*snying-dgas*) *do-ma*, the livestock *spo-ma nye-du*: The nine *g.yen* of the stars, the *g.yen*, for eating, lick the *bag*[517] of these bird feathers (*spu*) and erected (*zug*) flag (*ldar*) [ensemble].[518] The seven hundred and seventy thousand planets and stars in the sky consume the nectar (*zil*) and lick the *bag* of the {good} speaking (*smra-le*) *tho* [ensemble], which strikes the ground from the crossroads.[519] Also, in Kha-le rdzang-stod, you [have been given] that which is erected (*rdze-ma*), the red arrow point and spindle (*'pong*) of birth,[520] do not kill (*ma-khums*) the deer. The star *g.yen* have been offered to (*'tshal*) [in this manner]. Drug-drug btshan-mo, give (*dbog-chig*) the plowed (*rmos*) fields of the

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[515] For the identification of Byang-ka snam-brgyad with the Byang-thang, see Bellezza 2010a, p. 69 (n. 148).

[516] *Da-chung*. For this conjectural reading, see *supra*, p. 165 (fn. 287).

[517] *Bag du ldag*. This expression is widely used in the dialects of Mnga'-ris. *Bag* is a parched barley meal (*rtsam-pa*) paste made with tea, yogurt or whatever else is at hand. This preparation is often licked, especially when the bowl containing it is nearly empty. Thus, the word *ldag* has come to signify the eating of *rtsam-pa* (or yogurt).

[518] It appears that the bird feathers and flag were erected on a pile of *bag*. This suite of offerings includes *phyĭ-g.yal* (?) of nine kinds (*cho-dgu*) and is modified by the word *mad* (?).

[519] *Mdo*. This word could refer to the confluence of rivers or valleys rather than roads per se. Stein 2010 (Antiqua III: 174) misconstrues ln. 14 of the text, stating that it refers to the *do-ma* eating among the seven hundred and seventy thousand stars. As seen in *Rnel dri 'dul ba'i thabs sogs*, the *tho* is one of the major ritual instruments for reconditioning the consciousness principle of the dead. The power of speech attributed to the *tho* in ITJ 731r indicates that it fulfilled a harborous function for the deceased.

[520] The 'arrow point' or 'little arrow' (*mde'u*) and the 'spindle of birth' (*'pong-skye*, C.T. = *'phong-skye*) refer to the ancient Tibetan custom of presenting an arrow at birth to a male and a spindle at birth to a female, as receptacles for their personal protective deities. For details in the funerary ritual context, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 428, 429.

> star crossroads, in Kha-le rdzang-stod.[521] The star *g.yen* have been offered to [in this manner].[522] The many bunched (*yeng nge yeng*) sheep wool threads (*snal*) of the female sheep herder of the stars who takes care of sheep at the crossroads, in Kha-le rdzang-stod. The star *g.yen* have been offered to [in this manner]. The little milk bucket (*ze'u*) with white (milk) inside, [not] the shaky (*mgul*) empty milk bucket (*zo*) that is to be doubted (*dogs*) [as to whether it contains something] of the female yak calf herder who drives cattle at the crossroads, in Kha-le rdzang-stod. The star *g.yen* have been offered to [in this manner]. You livestock *spo-ma nye-du*, that is the *bag* for the nine *g.yen* of the stars, the nine *g.yen*, to eat. [Do-ma], do not consume the nectar and do not lick the *bag* that is for the seven hundred and seventy thousand planets and stars. Do not go together [with the *g.yen*] for protection. Now, to subjugate (*dbyung*) the nine lineages, the lineages [of *g.yen* and *gza'*], the cutting of their punishments (*chad*) is effected; their various types of punishments are subjugated.

(r12) *da ring da chung du phyugs spo ma nyedu do ma snying dgas khyed la // skar ma g.yen dgu 'i* (r13) *g.yen du ni za bag du nǐ ldag / pas phyǐ g.yal cho dgu ni spu ma mad ldar* (C.T. = *dar*) *zug* (C.T. = *bzug*) *na gnam* (r14) *la gza* (C.T. = *gza'*) *skar bdun bum bdun khrǐ zǐl du za bag du ldag // pas smra le* {*bzang*} (r15) *tho re mdo nas gzhi bdungs* (C.T. = *brdung*) *khyang* (C.T. = *kyang*) *kha le rdzang stodu mde'u rdze ma dmard* (C.T. = *dmar*) *'pong* (C.T. = *'phong*) *skye* (r16) *sha ma khums // skar ma g.yen gyǐs 'tshald // drug drug btshan mo skar mdo na mo* (r17) *zhing rmos khyang* (C.T. = *kyang*) *kha le rdzang stodu dbog chig dngar ma gsol skar ma g.yen gyis 'tshal* (r18) *// skar ma lug rdzǐ mo mdo nas lug 'tshos kyang* (C.T. = *kyang*) *kha le rdzang stod du snal* {#} (r19) *yenge* (C.T. = *yeng nge*) *yeng skar ma g.yen gyǐs 'tshal // skar ma be'u rdzǐ mo mdo nas ba bdas gyǐ* (r20) *kha la rdzang stodu zo stong mgul* (C.T. = *'gul*) *na dogs* (C.T. = *dwogs*) *ze'u nang ma dkar skar ma g.yen gyis* (r21) *'tshald // skar ma g.yen dgu 'i g.yen du* (*dgu*) *ni za bag du ni lag* (= *ldag*) *gyǐs byugs* (C.T. = *phyugs*) *spo ma* (r22) *nyedu khyen rnams la // gnam la gza* (C.T. = *gza'*) *skar bdun 'bum bdun khrǐ 'is // zil du ni* (r23) *ma za shǐs* (= *shǐg*) *bag du ni ma ldag shǐg skyabsu ni ma 'khrǐ shig // da rigs dgu rigs* (r24) *nas da dbyungo* (C.T. = *phyung ngo*) *// chad dgu chad gyǐs da gchado // zhes bgyis la chad rigs nas byungo* (C.T. = *phyung ngo*) //.

The third part of the *do-ma* ritual is focused on historical precedents. They are presented in brief, making their full import hard to discern. Firstly, there is the establishment of the human (deceased's) lineage. Only by having a genealogy, a prescribed place in the social and divine worlds, as symbolic as it might have been, could ritual intervention be successful on the deceased's behalf. A genealogical endowment is found in many origins myths attached to Tibetan archaic traditions. Each being, as well as each cultural emblem (ritual tools, arms, costumes, etc.), was assigned highly defined origins, which were proclaimed in the ritual context. It might be speculated that in other spheres of ancient life such as festivals, statecraft and war, similar declamations of ultimate sources were also made by bards, priests and others.

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[521] As with the Indus, Brahmaputra and Sutlej headwaters in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, the star crossroads (*skar-mdo*) appears to allude to a tradition in which the stars demarcated the landscape, as well as to topographic features serving as sightlines for stars. See *supra*, p. 208. Until modern times, the *'brog-pa* of Upper Tibet commonly used landforms to mark the sidereal passage of time. See Bellezza 1997, p. 201.

[522] This sentence also includes *dngar* (C.T. = *mngar*?) *ma gsol*, which seems to say that the stellar demons are not propitiated with sweets.

The next words of the text appear to invoke a competition between either humanity collectively or the dead specifically and the *smra* (a class of primordial humanoids). The series of herbivores noted may have aided these human players in their contest with the *smra*. However, the grammatical structure of this passage is questionable, rendering my reading less than ideal. Perhaps this passage is an allusion to mankind's victory in an epic cosmic battle, but we may never know. Be that as it may, the text moves on to pronounce the rise and execution of the great funerary lineage, which is divided into two main branches: *shid* (funerary rites) and *'brang* (burial procedures). This is followed by statements pertaining to cavorting with *btsan* and arriving before they do. These lines appear to be directed at the deceased but this is uncertain. To reflect this ambiguity, I employ the nominative case pronoun 'he'. Providing this voice is correct, it is an allusion to the need of the dead to remain free of demonic encumbrance if they are to reach paradise:

> The paternal lineage (*cho*) of humans. To do (present) the paternal lineage. To establish the maternal lineage (*'brang*) of humans, yes, the maternal lineage.[523] To compete (*mtho-btsams*) with the *smra*. Yo-ba: the antelope / gazelle with horns of countable furrows (*gnyer*-[*ma*]), the sheep (*g.yang*) and *phya-bo*:[524] the *ba-men* (large cattle with much milk),[525] the *rta-men* (donkeys?) with red foreheads. The *shid* lineage then appeared and the *'brang* lineage was explicated (*shor-ro*). Now, today and tomorrow, he does not compete (*'dran*) with the *btsan*. He arrives quickly [in the race] before [the *btsan*] do.[526]

(r25) *myi cho la ni cho bgyis myi 'brang la ni 'brang btshugs* (C.T. = *btsugs*) *smra yo ba la* (r26) *ni mtho btsams* {*dgo*} *ru chag* (C.T. = *chags*) *pa la ni gnyer bgrangs g.yang phya bo la ni rna* {*btas*} (r27) *ba men ni sgyid bcad rta men ni dpral dmar // shid rabs shig ni de nes* (C.T. = *nas*) (r28) *byung 'brang rabs ni de nis* (= *nas*) *shor / ro* (C.T. = *shod do*) *da di ring sang lta na btsan ni 'dran* (C.T. = *'gran*) *myi bad* (C.T. = *byed*)[527] {*mgyogs*} (r29) *ni dkyus myi chol* (C.T. = *bcol*)…

The text remains focused on the deceased, communicating that he is well and truly dead. A series of stark statements are employed to drive this bleak reality to the fore of his consciousness. The expired one has been reduced in wealth to the parched barley preparation customarily offered to the dead. Moreover, his death is as irrevocable as the exemplifying activities in the text. In this necrology, among the metaphors invoked are those of a broken egg and a chipped turquoise.[528] Reflecting the martial nature of ancient Tibetan society, another way death was unmistakably communicated is through the imagery of dull weapons, an anathema to any proud warrior. If that is not enough, even the regular offerings of foodstuffs and beverages the departed once made to the deities can no longer be observed:

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[523] For the role of human lineages in various rituals of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 396, 407, 419, 428.

[524] The precise connection of the *phya-bo* (a kind of good luck sheep?) with the animals that follow is unclear. The words in question read: *la ni rna* {*btas*}.

[525] This is followed by the words *ni sgyid bcad*, the meaning of which is uncertain.

[526] This sentence is the general import of {*mgyogs*} *ni dkyus myi chol* (C.T. = *bcol*).

[527] Interestingly, this word is still pronounced as *bad* in the Hor-skad dialects of eastern Nag-chu.

[528] With slight variation, these appear to be standard early historic-period necrologic devices of the funerary rite. For these metaphors in Pt 1134, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 383, 513; 2010a, pp. 36–38; *supra*, p. 145 (fn. 220). For the chipped turquoise metaphor in the *do-ma* origins tale of ITJ 731r, see *ibid*., 2008, pp. 532, 537; 2010a, pp. 43, 44.

> Furthermore, it has been shown that as his household wealth (*dud-phyugs*), the defective and deteriorated (*nyam-nyes*) bipedal man (*'greng myi-bu*) has [only] parched barley flour paste. It has been shown that all the sons (*dral-bu*) and daughters (*pra-mo*) tower over (*rngam*) the broken tree. It has been shown that if [something] is inserted (*drangs*) in a thicket (*dbyi-mo*) of rose (*se*) and barberry (*skyer*), all the rose and barberry sways (*g.yos-so*). [It has been shown] that if [something] is inserted in the *srol-kong* (?) of the lungs, all the passageways (*rtsa*) of the lungs quiver (*g.yoso*). The decayed one,[529] yes, the lord is dead. The crane bird egg, yes, it is cracked (*rtol*). The good turquoise, yes, it is chipped (*grugs*). The hard sharp-edged weapons are dull: the lord, yes, of this clan, is dead. His prime offerings (*phud*) overhead [to the deities] have fallen away (*nyams*).[530]

'greng myi bu ni nyam nyes dud phyugs (C.T. = *phyug*) *pu ni yang bag* (r30) *tshal* (= *'tshal*) *lo / shing stong* (C.T. = *sdong*) *po gchig* (C.T. = *gcig*) *chag na dral bu pra mo* (C.T. = *dpra mo*) *gun* (C.T. = *kun*) *rngam* (C.T. = *rngams*) *'tshalo* (r31) *se skyer dbyi mo gcig drangs na / se skyer gun* (C.T. = *kun*) *g.yos so / glo'i srol kong gcig drangs* (r32) *na glo rtsa kun g.yoso dpan* (C.T. = *'phan*) *te ni rje grongs bya khrung khrung na sgong rtol* (C.T. = *rdol*) *to bzang ste ni* (r33) *g.yu grugs so / rno'i ni ngar yal rus kyi ni rje grongs glad gyi ni phud nyams /*

Facing the harsh fact of his own death, the deceased has no option left but to make the epic switchover to the otherworld. To get there he is dependent on the *do-ma*, his surrogate relative. It is the *do-ma* who is entrusted with carrying him over the waters of the dead. This existential overpass is not made where the water is deep or fast moving but at a wide ford, just as a living horseman negotiating a river would make a crossing. The fording of the river of the dead is phrased several different ways in this concluding part of the *do-ma* funeral, underscoring its exceptional importance to the ritual performance. The text also notes that the lord's (epithet for the deceased) 'ordered position' (*gral*) has been carefully established to the heights (*gral ni mtho gnyer tshal lo*). This ritualized regulation of his consciousness demonstrates that the deceased has been guided to the final and highest rung of his post-obit existence. He is now ready for ultimate liberation.

In the very last act of the ritual, the funerary priests pronounce that the 'lord of the mind' (*yid kyi rje;* apparently, the fully reconditioned consciousness principle of the deceased) comes to see a long rainbow (*gzha-ring*). This supernal spectacle exists at the marchland of the afterlife, the very last phenomenon that those in the world of the living can apprehend. Beyond that point no more evocations were required, for the deceased had slipped beyond, joining his ancestors in the parallel world of the dead. This is a world irreversibly cut off from the one inhabited by the living. In the archaic funerary tradition, this otherworld is styled the 'joyous land' (*rga-yul* / *dga'-yul*, *skyid-yul*), 'joyous mountain' (*dga'-ri*) or 'joyous dwelling-place' (*rga-brang*):

> Now, today, the cherished (*snying-dgas*) *do-ma*, the livestock *spo-ma nye-du*, goes over the water and on the pass. He crosses (*sbog*) the shallow ford (*yang-ba rab*).

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[529] *Dpan*. This word is very closely related in meaning to the current verb form *'phan-pa* (deteriorated, broken). See Bellezza 2008, p. 530 (n. 624).

[530] I first examined this line and those flanking it in Bellezza 2008, p. 530 (n. 624). Readers of both will notice several minor differences in tone. Also, in my earlier reading, I did not appreciate that *phud* (first and best offerings) referred directly to religious observances.

> The ordered position of the lord, his ordered position, is fixed in the heights.[531] [The deceased] has gone above the water and on the pass. [The deceased] has crossed the shallow, yes, ford. The lord of the mind has now also encountered (*mjal-lo*) the long rainbow *dung-gsang* (?).

phyugs (r34) *spo ma nyedu* / *do ma snying dgas da di ring chab gang laru* (C.T. = *la ru*) *bgyi ʼtshal* / *yang* (C.T. = *yangs*) *ba rab du sbog* (C.T. = *ʼbog*) (r35) *tshal* (= *ʼtshal*) *lo gral rje gral ni mtho gnyer tshal lo rtsi byang rtsi ni gda mnabs ʼtshal* (r36) *lo chab gang la ru bgyi tshal* (C.T. = *ʼtshal*) *lo yang* (C.T. = *yangs*) *ba ni rab du sbog* (C.T. = *ʼbog*) *tshalo* (C.T. = *ʼtshal lo*) / *gzha* (C.T. = *gzha'*) *ring dung gsang* (r37) *yid ki rje dang yang da mjal lo* //

The last grammatical line of the text furnishes a kind of colophon for the performance. In archaic funerary texts colophons are rare (and very welcome) additions. The author(s) in no uncertain language encourages the recitation (*smos*) and propagation (*gzhan nǐ lobs*) of this *do-ma* ritual. It is called the paternal lineage (*cho*) and chapter of the father (*pha'i le'u*), indicating that this ritual provision belongs to a legitimate priestly (*gshen* / *bon*) lineage. The author(s) also makes known that this is an abridged version of the ritual. In the words of the text: "This paternal lineage, the chapter of the father, is to be spoken. It is to teach to others. This was written as a minimum elaboration (*gal*) [of the ritual provisions set forth]."[532]

To conclude this study of the archaic funerary traditions of Tibet we turn to the extraordinary discovery of two lavishly painted wooden coffins from the Guolimu cemetery, in the Tsaidam Basin, Qinghai (A-mdo), in 2002. These paintings afford a graphic index of imperial-period Tibetan funerary practices and are directly comparable to the materials examined in this book. That is not to say, however, that the funerary rituals of this study are identical with those depicted on the coffins of Guolimu. There are likely to be variations among them, reflective of different geographic and cultural exigencies. Nevertheless, our texts and the coffin paintings from the Tsaidam basin share fundamental eschatological concepts and ritual actions.

The painted coffins were discovered in two wooden chambers and have been estimated (on stylistic grounds and by the types of grave goods) to date to the mid-8th century CE (corroboration using chronometric methodologies should be undertaken).[533] These coffins of juniper wood have

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[531] The next words of the text, *rtsi byang rtsi ni gda mnabs ʼtshal lo*, appear to do with the enrobing of something (the *gda*?) in color or paint. Perhaps this refers to the application of pigments on the body of the corpse (cf. Bellezza 2008: 512), but at this final send-off stage of the funerary ritual this seems unlikely. In Pt 1134 (lns. 31, 66), there is the O.T. spelling: *rtshi* (paint / coloring agent).

[532] *Cho smos pha'i le'u lagste gzhan nǐ lobs lagso ʼdir ni gal chung zhig briso* // (lns. 37, 38). It would be a great discovery if a longer more elaborate version of this *do-ma* ritual was to be found. One can only wonder how many Old Tibetan ritual texts may still be hidden away in Tibet.

[533] Descriptive information on these coffins and burials is taken from Tong and Wertmann 2010, pp. 190–205; Tong 2008, pp. 153–175. For more data on the Tibetan funerary archaeology of Qinghai, see Tong 2008. These authors provide detailed and competent treatment of the subject and furnish graphic reconstructions of the painted coffins. The functional correspondences between the Tibetan archaic funerary traditions and painted coffins of Guolimu made by Tong and Wertmann are, generally speaking, sound. For their understanding of archaic funerary culture these authors rely on two Chinese language studies made by Chu Chunjie (1989). An English version of the same papers was published in 1991 (see Chu Junjie [*sic*]). It must be pointed out that Chu Chunjie's study is very heavily indebted to the work of Lalou 1953; Haarh 1969; Stein 1971. Chu Chunjie's treatment of the narratives and ritual procedures in Pt 1042 and Pt 1136, however, is marked by certain misconceptions (see Chu 1991). For example, Tong (2008: 158), in his reference to Chu's work, states that Pt 1136 (lns. 20–29) speaks of the courage the *do-ma* is to have and the tomb-building that this horse is to carry out, when no such content is found in this narrative. For these lines of Pt 1136, see

an almost rectangular shape and rounded ends.[534] The two coffins are made up of side, end and top panels (the bottom panels are now missing). On the basis of the costumes and face painting with a red pigment (vermilion or red ochre?) in the coffin paintings, Tibetan inscriptions (some of which have to do with *sri* subjugation rituals), as well as tomb morphology, these burials have been identified as being primarily affiliated to imperial-period Tibetan culture (the Chinese call it 'Tubo'), which had assimilated the underlying Tuyuhun culture, and to which Tang cultural traits were amalgamated.

Tomb M1 contained the remains of a man and a woman. The coffin (plank No. 1) of this interment displays three different scenes: hunting on horseback, a caravan on the way to a banquet, and the banquet itself with a yurt and related activities such as love-making. Tong and Wertmann (*ibid*.) believe that these scenes depict the living world of pastoralism. However, given the placement of these paintings on a casket, it is much more likely that they represent an idealized portrayal of the otherworld. As we have seen, the afterlife in Tibetan archaic funerary traditions was conceived of as a place that paralleled the one of the living, in terms of its material and social structures. According to archaic conceptions, the dead must not be unduly attached to the living if they are to reach paradise. In the successful completion of a funeral, the separation of the living and the dead was viewed as essential and irrevocable. Therefore, there would be little sense in painting the enjoyments of the world of the living in a burial. The hunting of deer and the wild yak on plank No. 1 is of quarry most frequently recorded in Old Tibetan ritual narratives. Evidently, this favored activity of the Tibetan ruling classes was believed to take place in both the world of the living and the world of the dead. The tradition of hunting wild yaks and deer with long bows on horseback can be traced to the prehistoric rock art of Upper Tibet. The rock art record indicates that early hunting culture had economic as well as ritualistic components. The presence of a circular yurt on the same plank can be assigned to the Turco-Mongolian Tuyuhun cultural sphere.

Tomb M1 (coffin plank No. 2) is composed of six interrelated scenes: 1) guests bringing three or four heavily caparisoned horses (Tong and Wertmann 2010 liken this scene to the funerary ritual horses of Pt 1042); 2) a mourning scene centered on a tent with tearful women, a drummer and two large vessels (the tent is compared to the *ring-gur* and *thugs-gur* of Pt 1042, see *ibid*.; Tong 2008: 140, 141); 3) two mounted archers shooting at an almost fully effaced object (authors, *ibid*., note that similar scenes are found on other coffin planks; they interpret it as the *bon* ritual slaying of the homicidal evil spirit); 4) offering of sacrificial cattle and a horse (likened in *ibid*. to the *bon* custom of psychopomp animals, ransom offerings and provisions for the dead); 5) a man mounted on an unadorned horse leading the deceased couple (likened in *ibid*. to the horse that carries the dead to paradise in Pt 1136); and 6) a banquet and love-making.

Scene No. 1 of tomb M1 (coffin plank No. 2) does indeed probably show the *do-ma*. The ornate decoration of these horses and their position at the bottom right-hand corner of the panel (as a fundamental ritual construct of the entire painting) indicate so much. Immediately above these three or four horses is the drummer in scene No. 2. This bare-headed drummer may be a funerary priest or sacerdotal assistant involved in removing any demonic taint that may have

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Bellezza 2008, pp. 521, 522. On the floral patterns and fantastic animals embellishing the end panels of the wooden coffins and their affinities to Han and Tang art, see Tong and Wertmann (*ibid*., 205–207).

[534] According to Tong and Wertmann (2010: 211, after Hou 1993), only stone sarcophagi have been discovered in Central Tibet. Nevertheless, in western Tibet a wooden coffin was discovered in a burial in Mon-'tsher, which has been AMS dated to circa 300 CE. Other wooden coffins have also been unearthed in Mon-'tsher and Gu-ge. For a preliminary report, see Bellezza 2010b.

accompanied the deaths. In addition to banging his kettledrum, he may have chanted. Just to the left of the three horses in scene No. 1 is the tent of scene No. 2. Interestingly, this tent is shown as being less in height than the figures standing around it, as are the funerary ritual tents of the illuminated funerary manuscript. Likewise, the curvilinear ornamentation of the tent painted on the coffin gives the impression that its shell would have been made of a textile. Scene No. 2, while containing what appears to be mourning women, is better described as portraying the final valediction of dead through the *ring-gur* or *thug-gur* ritual activities. Scene No. 3 is situated directly above scene No. 2. Its bowmen recall the ritual use of the bow and arrow for slaying the demons of death in archaic funerary praxis. As for scene No. 4, the manner in which the cattle and horse are being driven with long sticks towards the funerary tent (in the opposite direction of the psychopomp rider and deceased in scene No. 5) indicates that these animals specifically functioned as *dri* livestock, those living creatures dispensed for the repurchase of the dead. It appears that the first horseman in scene No. 5 is a funerary priest figuratively leading the deceased couple (who are the only ones mounted on fully caparisoned horses, the *do-ma*) through the postmortem world to the afterlife. That the tomb M1 occupants were of a lofty social rank is reflected in their headgear, the tallest of any depicted on the plank of wood. It can be inferred from their costumes, the size of the tomb and all the pomp and circumstance of their portrayed funeral that this couple belonged to the nobility. The lead figure wears a robe, turban and boots.[535] This guide holds in his right hand a five-sided object decorated with roundels mounted on a handle. This seems to be a *nam-kha* or thread-cross, an important ritual implement for housing and guiding the dead through the postmortem realm.[536] In any case, this is a liberating tool of some kind. Behind this object trails a long, billowing cloth, which also appears to be attached to the helve grasped by the funerary priest. This can only be the white cloth (*dar-dkar*) that shows the way (*lam-ston*) to heaven or some closely related ritual object that bridges the postmortem realm.

Scene No. 5 is located immediately to the left of scene No. 3. The way in which the heaven-bound are trailed by the two mounted archers firing their bows in scene No. 3 does in itself suggest that these latter figures are shown destroying demonic obstacles blocking the path to heaven. The position of scene No. 6, on the extreme left side of the plank immediately following the ostensible guiding of the dead towards paradise, strongly suggests that it is a rendition of the idealized afterlife. The seated male and female figures flanking the tent are most plausibly the *mtshun* or deified ancestors of the deceased couple. Other people in the scene are perhaps more distant relatives and retainers. The deceased couple is obviously of high social status. Their ancestors are being waited upon solicitously by those who are preparing a feast. Several figures stand outside the tent. These may represent ministers or other close confidants of the noble couple. As does the world of the living, this afterlife has mountains and vegetation and all manner of human delights.[537]

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[535] On the turbans and dress of figures in the coffin paintings, see Tong and Wertmann 2010, pp. 207–209. It is noted that two main types of turbans are represented: a high turban with spiral pleat and a thick coiled turban. The former turban is of the type that King Srong-btsan sgam-po and other royal figures of the Tibetan imperium are commonly depicted wearing in Tibetan paintings and sculpture. The latter type of turban (red or white in color) continued to be used by certain Eternal Bon practitioners until the modern period and is still worn today in some fringe regions of the Tibetan Plateau.

[536] In a Hei Zhi Pi funerary scroll of the Naxi, there is a depiction of the priest Dongba Shilo on horseback holding a flag and flat-bell. Following him is a white horse with a thread-cross (*naka*) mounted on a horse with saddle and stirrups. In this particular illustrated sequence of the scroll, Dongba Shilo is leading the soul of the deceased through the strife-torn realm of the titans. See *op. cit*. Brauen 2011, pp. 38, 39. Dongba Shilo is often equated with Ston-pa gshen-rab. On the thread-cross in Pt 1042 and the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see *supra*, pp. 26 (fn. 41), 157 (fn. 259).

[537] Tong (2008: 155, 160, 163) and Tong and Wertmann (2010: 2002) acknowledge that scene No. 6 portrays paradise, but they do not elaborate on this theme. In their work, no information on the original orientation of the coffins is given.

Similarly, the side planks of the coffin in tomb M2 of the Guolimu cemetery, with its hunting of deer, wild asses and a wild yak, as well as a banquet, a couple residing in a yurt, and love-making, may also be a representative of the idealized afterlife. If so, the dead were perceived as participating in the same kinds of activities they did whilst alive, just as is indicated in the archaic funerary texts. The painting on another plank from tomb M2 is highly damaged. From what is discernable, its scenes are largely analogous to those on the coffin of tomb M1.[538]

Tong (2008: 44) does report the orientation of two corpses in Tibetan-Tuyuhun burials of Qinghai; their heads face north and west. North and west are noted in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition as the directions of the afterlife. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the end of the coffin ostensibly depicting paradise in tomb M1 of the Guolimu cemetery, faced either northwards or westwards.

[538] Other painted coffin panels presumably from the same region are housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) and in private collections. For reference to these, including an art historical analysis, see Heller forthcoming.



Fig. 16. The six interrelated funerary scenes of coffin plank No. 2, Tomb M1, Guolimu. Drawing courtesy of Tong Tao

Conclusion

An ancient group of Tibetan death rituals that share many basic elements in common has been studied in this book. These native documents include an illuminated funerary manuscript, manuscripts of the Dunhuang and Gathang Bumpa collections, and texts of the Eternal Bon religion. These textual assets build upon each other to reveal an archaic eschatology and praxis of great depth and intricacy.

Virtually all of the ritual edifice in the Old Tibetan language was composed and transcribed anonymously, reflecting its deeply embedded cultural and chronological character. These documents do not appear to have been proprietary or sectarian in nature; they were the patrimony of a wide cross-section of Tibetans. The Classical Tibetan Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, while being nominally attributed to the sage Mu-cho ldem-drug, furnishes scant bibliographic data as well. Even if religious history was viewed differently by its Eternal Bon compilers, this anonymity is emblematic of a long and hazy past, as are the Old Tibetan funerary materials.

This monograph has mainly considered literary sources written in the Old Tibetan language or in an early form of Classical Tibetan. Old Tibetan ritual texts pose formidable philological challenges to those who would comprehend them. As this work has shown, one of the keys to unlocking the archaic lexicon of Old Tibetan is the various dialects of spoken Tibetan. Translations made in this work have benefited from vocabulary and syntax present in the vernacular of Khams, Hor and Stod. A wealth of Old Tibetan terms and grammatical structures exist in the dialects of these regions and in others of the Bodic world. Nevertheless, for this linguistic treasure to be more readily available to students of Old Tibetan, an amplification of lexicographic research (including the publication of dialectal dictionaries) is needed.

Another key to understanding Old Tibetan ritual literature lies in the Eternal Bon corpus, for this resource has retained the linguistic and historical signposts needed to elucidate archaic ritual traditions. In particular, the texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection have proven pivotal in unraveling the conceptions and activities written about in older funerary sources. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is in effect a bridge between the archaic traditions and those still observed in Tibet today. This cycle of texts has retained a wide spectrum of archaic concepts and practices, wedding them to Buddhist sensibilities and doctrines. Moreover, the Bonpo composed these funerary texts in Classical Tibetan, a product of their early second millennium CE authorship. The more familiar language of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, combined with the sedulous efforts of its authors to preserve ancient traditions through the agency of religious principles still flourishing today, makes it an ideal departure point for the exploration of the older literary corpus.

That Eternal Bon has preserved archaic cultural traditions is resounding confirmation of R. A. Stein's thesis that the *bon* of Eternal Bon and the *bon* of the Dunhuang manuscripts is the very same word.[539] As this eminent Tibetologist makes clear in his analysis, the signification attached to the term *bon* has indeed changed over time, but the semantic chain linking its evolution

[539] For this thesis, see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), pp. 232–246. In his exposition, Stein also makes note of the ideas of David L. Snellgrove and Samten G. Karmay in determining the nature of the word *bon* and its application to the contemporary Tibetan religious setting. Less clear is the interrelationship between the *bon* of archaic ritual texts and

remains unbroken. In the funerary sphere, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur stands out as historical proof of this continuity in Tibetan culture and religion. Tibetologists may continue to quibble over the extent and nature of cultural continuity, but Stein's thesis concerning the historical profundity of *bon* remains as valid today as when it was formulated a generation ago.

The explicative role played by the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur in this study of archaic funerary traditions is not an isolated occurrence. From the readings I have made, it becomes evident that Eternal Bon literary resources can be brought to bear with great effectiveness on other Old Tibetan ritual traditions, divination and therapeutic rites paramount among them. While graphologic analysis of handwriting, grammatical inquiry into individual words and structures, literary theory, and statistical analysis of single words and word patterns have all added to our knowledge of the Old Tibetan ritual tradition – each in its own way – it is surely the philological exposition of these texts that is called for first and foremost. It is here, in understanding what has been written, that Eternal Bon sources are invaluable. For fathoming the significance of ideas articulated in Old Tibetan and spotlighting their cultural historical background, there is no better tool. Nonetheless, Eternal Bon texts are not some silver bullet to all the obstacles in the path of understanding older sources. For one thing, they are incomplete in scope. Eternal Bon sources must also be harnessed judiciously, avoiding above all else the archaization of Indic infiltrations and transfigurement resulting from Lamaist reinterpretation.

The manifold conceptual and procedural bonds in the texts of this study establish the existence of an essential funerary tradition in ancient Tibet. All the texts featured share a fundamental thanatopsis, one based on the belief in a transitional existence immediately following death. As we have seen, this postmortem world was viewed as fraught with danger, requiring the ritual aid of specialized personnel. These funerary priests were culturally invested with the power to free the departed from deathly obstacles and demons. A battery of elaborate rituals was developed for this purpose, each tailored to specific causes of death. Highly diverse in material and liturgical terms, all of these practices had but a single aim: to extricate the dead from the postmortem morass and catapult them into the ancestral paradise.

The Tibetan literature surveyed in this work presents all the major eschatological and practical elements exhibited in any highly developed funerary ritual system. We have examined materials that deal with the preparation of the corpse for interment, the construction of burial structures, entombment, the honoring of the departed, protection from the ghouls of death, security for the living, and guiding of the dead to heaven. That said, there are still funerary materials from Dunhuang that have not been adequately presented and analyzed in Tibetology. The second or procedural half of the *do-ma* ritual in Pt 1134 and the extensive ransom offerings (*glud*) that constitute ITJ 734 are two of the longest texts that require further attention. It has not even been determined whether ITJ 734 was designed for purchasing the dead from the hell beings or if it is a ritual dedicated to the needs of the living. There are also a number of shorter Dunhuang texts that pertain to dying, death and resurrection that could be re-examined to good effect. Texts such as Pt 1042, Pt 1060 and ITJ 733 immediately come to mind.

Elements of the archaic funerary tradition resonate strongly with other types of ritual traditions in Old Tibetan literature. It is not unusual to find that the gods of the funerary rite are the same gods of divination, or that human personalities in the myths of death also grace the accounts

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use of the word by different cis-Himalayan peoples to denote various aspects of orally transmitted indigenous religious traditions. This is an area of study that demands far more attention than it has received to date.

of healing and well-being. Furthermore, the *mo* (divinatory rites), *phywa* (prognostic rites), *gto* (beneficial rites of various kinds), and *dpyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites) of funerals have much relevance to the curative regimen expounded in Old Tibetan documents. One cannot fully appreciate the historical and cultural significance of this quadpartite ritual armory without examining all areas of usage. Here again, Eternal Bon literature can help, for it is a fecund source of information about the basic structures and specificities of many ancient rites.

The encompassing nature of ancient Tibetan death rites reflects a vibrant societal component articulated through common ceremony and household observance. However, the texts are largely mute on collateral aspects of funerals. There is little indication about the rules governing attendance and behavior at funerals, the clothes attendees may have worn, mourning customs, or about meals served to guests. The archaic funerary texts also omit discussion about customs regulating memorial services and priestly working conditions. Perhaps the most glaring of all omissions is that little of written substance on mortuary architecture has come down to us (only archaeological research can fill this lacuna).

Aside from entire segments of ceremonial and customary expression missing from the extant archaic funerary texts, the ritual provision is itself incomplete. Around twenty Old Tibetan funerary ritual texts of any length are known to have survived, but conceivably there may have been many dozens if not hundreds of variants in early historic times. We lack documents for the funerals of warriors, priests and sages, etc. Perhaps the passing of luminaries in ancient society did not entail a knotty rite. In any case, the social aspects of such funerals would have constituted an impressive spectacle. Grand processions and public functions connected to these deaths must have abounded. As with the passing of great lamas in later times or notable persons in other indigenous cultures, perhaps in pre-Buddhist times, the sky was perceived as ablaze with signs marking the event. We can only imagine. Moreover, there is a range of causes for premature, violent, or accidental death for which there is no dedicated ritual performance. It might be surmised that those who met their end through poisoning, fires or warfare, etc. may have warranted specially designed funerals, as perhaps did young children. It is plausible as well that origins tales once accompanied the deployment of virtually all ritual tools and offerings. We can expect there were once Old Tibetan etiologic myths for drums, arrows, vessels, textiles, costumes, jewels, precious metals, conduits, tents, caskets, burial mounds, and all other types of funerary instruments. Likewise, trees, flowers, cakes, beer, mead, sweets, dairy products, water, and grain are likely to have had their own origins myths recited on appropriate occasions. Although there are etiologic tales for funerary deer, sheep and horses, those for the various species of birds (save for vultures) and other animals that appear in the ancient eschatological tradition are conspicuously absent from the written record. It must be added that Eternal Bon has recorded a good many etiologic myths, a large portion of which remain virtually unknown to the outside world.[540]

It can be persuasively argued that the archaic funerary texts tell us more about how people lived in ancient Tibet than how they died. This argument can of course be made in the study of any funerary tradition the world over. Perhaps the most salient of these anthropological matters is the principle of reciprocity that governed social life in early Tibet. It seems that the Tibetans of a millennium or more ago possessed a stringent sense of honor and entitlement, each societal action

[540] The Eternal Bon *smrang* of a few select ritual objects can be found in Bellezza 2005, pp. 419–483. For a translation of the Gathang Bumpa myth explaining the origins of beer and gold, see Bellezza 2011d. Much more work is required to understand the true breadth of Eternal Bon etiologic tales, a rewarding research topic for future efforts.

carrying its own established price and reward. Infractions of the social and legal codes met with what was seen as the commensurate sanction or punishment. The scenario painted here is derived from the great lengths the texts go in furnishing the dead and the agents of death with everything that is due them. The ritual execution is punctilious in this regard. All who participated in the funeral had to do their part, nothing less and nothing more.

Hence, as regards the Tibetan archaic world view, the textual evidence adduced in this monograph points to the principle of reciprocity governing social relations as having been closely aligned to the commensurability of the twin ontological categories of the living and the dead.

Ancient Tibetans operated *a priori* from a different cultural perspective than do their modern descendants. Needless to say, differing sets of beliefs and practices engender or inform alternative world views. Before proceeding further, it is prudent to observe that a broad-strokes approach to understanding the past is beset by the same intrinsic drawbacks as any overarching perspective on history. With this admonition in mind, I tender the comments below as a rough sketch of the funerary *Zeitgeist* of the archaic era and the Lamaist era.

The ritual texts of the Lamaist religions are thoroughgoing in their offering of obeisance to the wisdom deities and/or the Buddha. These sources are also very vocal in paying homage to religious doctrines and in their praise of holy masters. No such lavish displays of allegiance and affection are expressed in the archaic funerary texts. These sources remain laconic, as if such concerns were largely irrelevant or taken for granted. Ancient Tibetans certainly had their share of gods and human exemplars but these were not singled out in Old Tibetan texts for worship, rather they appear to have been part and parcel of life, in the same way as any other unspoken reality. We might read into this that the divine was an all-embracing affair, as natural as the trees and stones, or drinking water and walking down a road. Even what arguably was the greatest of archaic religious masters, Gshen-rab myi-bo, is accorded just one praiseful word in Old Tibetan sources: father (*pha*). That these *gshen* and *bon* came from the sky and were the descendants of deities is seen as sufficient endorsement of their holiness. But even here they were not unique, because the same was more or less claimed for the entire ancient Tibetan population. It is not my intention to overly romanticize early Tibetan religious culture, but to simply point out that matters seen as critical in the Lamaist tradition were not accorded the same weight in earlier times. In this light it is worth mentioning sacred ejaculations or mantras: these loom large in the Indic tradition but are hardly recognized in Old Tibetan funerary texts.[541]

Another central issue pertains to the exercise of virtue. The ritual narratives of Old Tibetan literature are primarily preoccupied with practical techniques required to treat illness and death. They dwell far less on the philosophical or ethical dimensions of human suffering. It is clear that victims and their relations were afflicted with much distress and grief, otherwise painstaking and costly ritual procedures would hardly have been necessary. The thrust of each story always remains on the ritual measures themselves, rather than on any moral or emotive justification for

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[541] The booklet of the Gathang Bumpa collection containing the *gnag-rabs*, *byol-rabs* and *gser-skyems* texts has six mantras (*sngags*) inscribed on the last folio (Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-'dus and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring 2007: 129). This folio is partly cut away, thus there may have been additional lines of mantras as well. These mystic formulae were written in a different hand and in a more refined script than the rest of the document, indicating that they were an amendment. They were probably added after 1000 CE, in response to the growing use of mantras in Tibetan ritual, a custom adopted (at least in part) from Vajrayāna Buddhism. There are also three lines of spells in *Sha ru shul ston rabs*; see *supra*, p. 192.

their implementation. These tales, as a matter of insuring the common good through the path of action, have an almost juridical tone. They are the product of a people of much industry and ability, who placed their faith in the tenets of historical ratification and professional authority. Moreover, the archaic funerary texts are devoid of reasoned argumentation or sacerdotal musing. In contrast, in Lamaist ritualism, an airing of fundamental philosophical ideas and ethical imperatives customarily precedes or accompanies physical responses.

I am inclined to see Lamaist professions of holiness and virtue as not only mirroring a different religious make-up, but also as indicative of a different kind of social contract. This compact was in part predicated on sectarian loyalties, which have had a profound influence on the course of history in Tibet. In contrast, in the archaic era, religious loyalties appear to have been ordained mainly through genealogical and regional channels.

While the various sects of Buddhism and Eternal Bon have been embroiled in rivalries, they have been largely united in combating or revamping vestiges of the archaic cultural legacy. A critical facet of the Lamaist project in the last millennium has been the drive to assimilate or eliminate pre-existing traditions and customs (wherever these are seen as inimical to its core values and ethos). There is much ethnographic and doctrinal evidence to show that Eternal Bon and Buddhism are still on guard against unwanted archaic or unorthodox influences impinging upon their religious ideology. In order to thrive, Lamaism has resorted to a variety of social strategies, from winning the love and regard of populations to suppressing those things seen as sinful. The efforts to disseminate the Eternal Bon-Buddhist doctrine (*bstan-pa*) have been highly successful and this creed and the Tibetan people are now inseparable.

Yet, Lamaism as Buddhism or a Buddhist-like religion is a work in progress, as revealed in a variety of heterodoxic practices and old-fashioned ideas still circulating in the Tibetan cultural domain. Flagrant discrepancies stalk the cultural landscape of Tibet, contradiction in one form or another a part of all societies. Take the popular notion of the *bas-yul*, hidden lands to which Tibetans are thought to escape in times of turmoil. It is popularly believed that the inhabitants of these secret paradises achieve immortality. The *bas-yul* as a nonpareil world recalls the afterlife of the archaic funerary tradition. Perhaps its intellectual genesis is partially attributable to such eschatological conceptions, an almost unassentive acknowledgement of the cultural past. Other dramatic examples of unconventional beliefs include the *ro-lang* (‘reanimated dead’) and *mi-shi btsan-skyes* (‘a person dies, a *btsan* is born’ ghosts), cultural phenomena closely associated with the Lamaist era. These two types of the unrestful dead are not very Buddhist doctrinally speaking. Nonetheless, they haunt the popular imagination and require substantial ritual intervention. Perhaps such irregular beliefs stem from a misconceived or misappropriated archaic cultural heritage, specters of an unresolved past. Whatever their etiology, the *ro-lang* and *mi-shi btsan-skyes* are symptomatic of a Lamaist funerary culture that has for a millennium struggled to cope with death and its aftermath.

Were followers of the archaic traditions also keeping at bay the demons of alternative beliefs? There is no written indication that they were, but the early historic-period record is very scant and drawing a firm conclusion either way is not possible. We can assume though that archaic Tibet, like Lamaist Tibet, had its own apparitions of fear and disgust. The robust ritual framework of the early historic period, and its attribution to an earlier era, however, seems to have served the interests of its adherents well. The unambiguous language of the relevant texts bears this out. The priests are cast in this literature as getting on with their mission without a profession of faith enshrined in a written set of abstract principles or devotional articles. Not only do the archaic

ritual texts indicate that early Tibetans enjoyed long established historical precedents in their cultural and religious affairs, their origins were assigned a native, not a foreign, pedigree. That at least is how the authors of the *smrang* would have it. Autochthonous origins (as real or contrived as they may be) appear to have imbued early historic-period Tibetan society with a secure and firmly rooted sense of itself. The observations I draw here are well suited to the textual posture, even if historical reality was quite different. Perhaps imperial-period Tibetans were engineering origins myths to cope with their own demands, such as those incumbent in the maintenance of a polity fit for upholding an empire. This would seem to have been so.

The ideas encapsulated in the archaic death rituals of Tibet are rich and exuberant, the product of a people with a deep regard for the workings of the cosmos and human mind. The religious concepts of the ancient Tibetans have a literalness about them not found in the Lamaist religions. As do certain modern religions, ancient Tibetan belief held that there is an essential persona after death, one that migrates to the underworld or afterworld. This perceived form of existence had its own reality, born from the consensus of social imagination and dialogue. Lamaism and its subscription to the doctrine of the 'nature of emptiness' (*stong-pa nyid*) poses a stark contrast by comparison. No such reversion to a permanent self or eternal condition is required in this highly evolved philosophical dictum. Yet, the physical interpretations of what ancient Tibetans considered was truly real colored their world view as completely as does the sublime *Weltanschauung* of Eternal Bon and Buddhism. Whatever the respective philosophical merits of these diverse perspectives on death, their collective social impact could in theory be measured utilizing a cognitive archaeological or ethnohistorical metric.

The sheer intellectual and material wealth borne in the archaic funerary traditions broadcasts that Tibet was endowed with culturally advanced societies in the time before the spread of Lamaism. An extensive assortment of material goods are cited in the texts, their creation requiring sophisticated manufacturing capabilities and systems of trade and distribution. One of the strongest manifestations of cultural brilliance in the early historic period is the Old Tibetan language itself. Although relatively few documents in this tongue are extant, what has survived supplies us with a veritable treasure trove of philological data. The purview of Old Tibetan personal pronouns, technical terms, modifiers, and verbs is exceptionally wide. Moreover, its syntax is very economical from which springs a potent expressive capacity and outstanding rhetorical eloquence. With the rise of Buddhism, the Tibetan language acquired a vast new vocabulary and the grammatical adroitness to articulate the highly refined systems of logical discourse and prosody originating in India, a huge step in its linguistic development. On the other hand, the innate facility in Old Tibetan to convey the mythic, the ritual and the epic gradually atrophied. While Old Tibetan only appeared in written form in the 7th century CE, its uniqueness and grammatical competency communicate a language that had already sustained many centuries of endogenous development.

An open question is to what degree the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition correlates with archaeological facts on the ground. In my fifth book, *Zhang Zhung*, in a bid to reconcile the empirical and textual bodies of evidence, I begin to address this matter. Impeding further inquiry into this topic is the nascent state of Tibetan archaeology. Save for my efforts in Upper Tibet, comprehensive surface surveys are still pending in other regions of the Tibetan Plateau and legitimate excavations everywhere have largely stalled. Whenever the pace of archaeological research picks up in Tibet, the findings can potentially be scrutinized against the archaic funerary tradition of the texts. It remains to be shown how closely allied the empirical and textual approaches to understanding death in ancient Tibet really are. Ultimately, this will be a multi-generational project, but there is no better time to make headway than right now.

In this monograph, the archaic Tibetan funerary tradition has been treated almost solely as an artifact of Tibet. Follow-up studies could to good effect investigate how this funerary complex informed other cultures over time and space, and how in turn it was influenced by other peoples.[542] Coming to grips with the historical and environmental forces that may have kindled cultural transactions in Inner Asia and beyond is crucial to further discovery. We know that major mythic themes and ritual motifs associated with ancient Tibet rippled through a variety of cultures. Some of these are virtually universal in scope, having little or nothing to do with culture A directly impacting culture B. Universally held convictions include a hell in which human beings are tormented and a paradise where they reside joyfully. These common conceptions and impulses notwithstanding, the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition may prove instrumental in better understanding extinct or moribund beliefs and practices in other parts of Eurasia. Whether in the realm of ideas formulated, words spoken or actions taken, it remains to be determined to what scale pervasive funerary traditions are representative of historical, cultural or ethnical ties. The historical value of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition as a touchstone for cross-cultural inquiry is further enhanced by its anachronistic mantle. It appears that the early historic-period Tibetans were among the last peoples in Eurasia to systematically record in their literature widely distributed funerary materials that do not bear the mark of modern religions.

Fruitful comparative study could focus on a broad spectrum of ethnological and antiquarian phenomena. For instance, the passage of the dead through the obstacle-laden netherworld to the happy land of the manes in Orphic religion seems particularly relevant to Tibetan funerary mythology. The role of dogs in funerary rites, the various mythic rivers separating the damned from the liberated, the divine saviors of the dead, ritual instruments and costumes, to mention just a few areas, are all ripe for cross-cultural inquiry as well.

This conclusion has touched upon some of the ways forward for advancing our knowledge concerning death in ancient Tibet. To be sure, in one form or another, the desire to understand the greatest of existential questions is a perennial preoccupation. This study of Tibetan funerary traditions is dedicated to that quest, one small step in a never-ending journey of discovery.

[542] For a preliminary study in this area, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 543–568.

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INDEXES

(Listed in Alphabetical Order)

1 Place Names (real and imagined)

’A-zha 128
Altai 182
A-mdo 43, 243

’Brem-dang 115, 235
Baltistan / Sbal-ti 49
Bar-yul gling-drug 80, 81
Bkra-ri gnam-mtsho / Kre-de’i mtsho 43, 200
Bkra-shis do-chung 39
Bre / Chu-stod 208
Bre-gu gnam-snang 208
Brgya-lam rgyal-’jong 149
Bsam-yas 151
Bse-’khor 23
Bshag-bsangs / Shar-tshang 183
Btsan-yul brgyad-gong 70
Byang-ka snam-brgyad 238, 239
Byang-mo 20
Byang-thang 33, 53, 84, 130, 205, 216, 239
Byang-yul 124
Byar 160
Byar gyi lcang-bu 160
Bya-ri gtsug-ldan 208
Byar-yu la-lhums 160

Central Asia 177
Chawugang 229
Chengdu 121, 157
China 6, 114, 157
Chu yĭ lag-pa’ bzhi 195
Chu yi sgo-ba’ 195
Chu-bo ’ga-’ga / Chu-po ga’-ga’ 200, 207, 208
Chu-bo bzhĭ / Chu chen-po bzhi 195, 206
Chu-shul 160
Chu-thags 157, 159

Dags 150
Da-rog mtsho 200
Dbye / Dbye-mo 146, 150, 163, 164
Dbye-mo yul-bzhi 163
Dbye-mo yul-drug / Dbye-mo yul-drug-ku / Dbye-mo yul-grug / Dbye-mo yul-dug 146, 163
Dga’-yul byang-rnam / Dga’-yul byang-rnams / Dga-yul byang-rnams 39, 216, 235
Dga’ dang skyid-pa’i yul 235
Dgra-yul 164
Dgu’-yul / Dgu-sul / Dku-yul 164
Dpa’-shod 58
Dung-yul dung-stod 133
Dwags-po 164

Eastern Turkestan / Xinjiang 180, 182

Fu 155

’Gol-yul ’gos-stod 138
G.yung-drung chi-myed 189
Ga-gor ga-la mtho-po 201
Gangs-ma’i g.ya’-skya mtho-po 201
Gansu 6, 180
Gdug-myi sha-chan 208
Glan-chu 165
Glang-chen gtsang-po / Sutlej 8, 184, 206, 208, 240
Glang-chen kha-’bab 206
Glan-gda’ mar-ba 165
Glan-yul / Glan 148, 165
Glan-yul glan-stod 165
Gnam-mtsho 39, 43
Gnubs / Nubs 128, 160
Gnubs-shul / Gnubs-shul gling-drug / Gnubs-yul gling-grug 146, 160
Gnyal 160
Gong-sum 175
Grog-po skras-thod mtho-po 201
Gro-shod 206
Gser-yul gser-stod 132
Gting-skyes 20
Gtsang / Rtsang 98, 99, 136, 143, 150, 151, 160, 205, 206, 238, 239
Gu-ge 157, 159, 169, 170, 227, 244
Gu-ge lho-smad 169
Gung-chu dngul-mtsho 207
Guolimu 20, 243, 246, 247
Gzi-dmar rgod-tshang mtho-po 201

Himalaya 50, 157, 170, 188
Hor 142, 231, 249

Hos kyi ljangs-tshal 140

India 9, 156, 170, 208, 254
Indus 8, 184, 206–208, 240

Kanutse 58
Ke'u li-mi sha-chan 208
Kha-ba 'od-mkhar 45
Kha-la rtsang-stod / Kha-le rdzang-stod / Kha-la stsang-stod 98, 99, 143, 147, 160, 238–240
Khams 37, 58, 249
Khar-yul khar-stod 132
Kha-shag ngang-thung mtho-po 201
Khra-sum 162
Khrõnasa 188
Khwa-rtse 169
Khyi-shig ra-zor mtho-po 201
Khyung-chen spungs 206
Khyung-lung 206
Kinnaur 208

Ladakh / La-dwags 47, 49, 50, 58, 182
La-ngag mtsho / La-nag bsil-mo mtsho / Ltag-ga gser-mo mtsho / La-ngag ser-mtsho 173, 207, 208
Lha-chu 208
Lha-klu mkhar 58
Lha-mtsho dkar-mo 45
Lha-rtse 229
Lha-yul gung-thang / Lha-yul gung-dang / Lha-yul gung-thang 'od-byam 35, 44, 45
Lho-bla pha'-bong 153
Lho-ga lang-drug / Lho-ga nĭ 'jĭng-drug / Lang-drug / Lho-ga lung-grug 153
Lho-kha / Lho-ga 6, 153, 154
Lho-shing ldem-ba 153
Lop Nor 182

Malari 157
Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho / Ma-pang g.yu-mo mtsho 173, 207
Mchims / Mchims-yul 128, 150, 164
Mchĭms-yul rgu-sul / Mchims-yul dgu-sul / Mchims-yul dgu-shul / Mchims-yul gru-shul / Mchims-yul gyi dgu-yul 164
Mchong-la' sgo-mo 189
Mdo-ro / Yul mdo-ro 151, 162
Mdo-ro lung-gsum / Lung-gsum 151, 162
Mdzo-po smag-spod mtho-po 201
Mer-ke 27
Mogao Cave No. 17 119
Mon-'tsher 85, 129, 244
Mongolia 182
Mon-yul sum-ston 208
Mtsho mu-le Õd 173
Mtsho-gling 195
Mu-le 173
Myang-stod 151
Myi-yul skyid-thang / Myi-yul rkyi-thang 44, 145

Na'-ra 'dza'-ra / Chu-bo na-ra / Na-ra dza-ra 207, 208
Nag-chu 150, 221, 241
Nag-tshang 151, 183, 201
Nepal 140, 188, 208
Ngang-brang gsang-brang 150
Ngang-la ring-mtsho 200
Ngas-po 146, 162
Ngas-po brag-mar glang gyĭ ser-'ga 162
Ngas-po khra-sum 146

'Ol 150, 232
'Ol-kha 66

'Phan-yul 162
'Phrul-stod 173
'Phrul-yul 173
'Phyong-rgyas 27
Pazyryk 232
Phrad-nyas gnyan-thod mtho-po 201
Phywa-yul 174
Pingwu 6
Pu-rang 151
Pu-rang stod 206

Qinghai 182, 243, 246
Qizil 20

Rdo 151
Rdo-chen srid-lung mtho-po 201
Rgya-la rgyal-'jong 150
Rgya thang-myed 145
Rgyal-phran bcu-gnyis (Twelve Principalities, Twelve Minor Kings) 128
Rgya-mkhar 114, 151
Rgya-mkhar stegs-pa 151
Rgya-yul / Rgya 114, 150, 151
Rgya-yul gtan-bzangs / Rgya-yul gdan-bzangs / Gtan-bzangs / Gdan-bzangs 151
Ri dang ni dger-po / Ri-dang / Dger-po 206, 207
Ri-rab lhun-po 25, 102, 103, 198, 201
Rkong-yul 150
Rma-bya gtsang-po / Karnali 8, 184, 206–209
Rma-bya kha-'bab 206–208
Rma-bya mdzes-brjid 206
Rma-chab sngon-mo 207, 208

Rmu-yul 149, 151, 167
Rmu-yul ngang-'brang lcang-'brang 149, 167
Rngegs 150, 153
Rong-nag mgar-tshang mtho-po 201
Rta-mchog 'og-'dzin 206
Rta-mchog gtsang-po 200, 207
Rta-mchog kha-'bab 206
Rta-rgo 23
Rtsang-shul mthon-ba' 160

Sa-le-ljon 35, 36
Sa-rdzong 157
Satma Mazar 182
Sengge 'gying-ba 206
Sengge gtsang-po / Indus 8, 184, 206–208, 240
Sengge kha-'bab 206
Seng-stod 208
Shan-rtsa 165, 201
Sha-yul gangs-po gangs-dkar 192
She'u sbug-yul 208
Shel gyi rdo-ring bya-slag 140
Shel shel yul-stod 132
Sho rtsang-po / Khyi-sha rtsang-po 207, 208
Siberia 58, 182
Sichuan 6, 157
Sikkim 27, 144
Sin-dhu 208
Skor-tsho'i shig-nyin gyis mtho-po bcu-gsum 201
Skya-ring mtsho / Ske-ring mtsho 201
Skyi 128, 152, 198
Skyi-bu 195, 211
Skyid-chu / Skyi-chu 133
Skyid-shod 152
Skyi-ro lchang-sngon / Skyi-ro ljang-sngon / Skyi-yul 'jing-sngon / Skyi-ro 133, 146, 150, 152, 162
Sman-thang thang bal-ma / Sman-thang thang 215–217
Sme-bdun / Smre-bdun / Big Dipper 208
Smon-lam 35, 36
Smra-yul thang-brgyad 98, 99
Smug-tshogs khung-lung mtho-po 201
Smyangs-mtsherd 227
Snying-drung 83
Span-chung dmag-zor mtho-po 201
Spiti / Spi-ti 49
Spu-dmar glog-dmar mtho-po 201
Spu-rgyal bod / Sbu-rgyal bod 207, 208
Srid-yul thang-ma ldem-dro 140
Stag-gzigs 149
Sten-yul 167, 169
Sten-yul dru-mong bzhi-stengs 167, 169
Subcontinent 170, 208
Sum-pa 181

Tapje 188
Tarim Basin 20
Tho kar 213
Ti-se 44, 207, 208
Tokhar-i-stan 213
Tsaidam Basin 243
Tuyuhun 155, 244

Uttarakhand 157

Wen 6

Yar gyi lho-rngags 208
Yar-lha sham-po 143, 146, 147
Yar-lung 145, 146, 150, 163, 218
Yar-lung gtsang-po / Brahmaputra 8, 184, 188, 193, 200, 202, 206, 207, 209, 240
Yar-lung sogs-dkar / Yar-lung sogs-ka / Yar-khyim sogs-{kar} / Yar-khyims sogs-yar 143, 145, 146
Ye-sangs thang-bdal 203
Yum-bu bla-mkhar 171

Zangs-dkar / Zanskar 49
Zangs-yul zangs-stod 132, 138
Zhang-zhung 8, 23, 35, 36, 58, 98, 114, 149, 152, 157, 167, 169, 173–176, 181, 184, 197, 198, 206, 207
Zom-shangs lcags-mtsho 207

2 Proper Names of Humans, Divinities and Demons

A-bo ya-ngal 162
Ag-sa rgyal-pa 215, 216
A-ba ’brong 188
A-ma ’brong 188

’Byo-ra ’byor-’jong 173
Bal-bu 228, 229
Bdud-rje btsan-tog skyold 222, 224
Be-ba lhun-po 209
Bgyogs 225
Bkra-za gzig-’brang 171
Bla-mo thang 175
Brgyu-she-lcags / God-she-lcag / Kod-she-lcag 174, 176
Bstan-grag lha-pa 85
Btsan-ba 153
Bu-rkun 160
Bu-ston 114
Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg 144
Bya-che mer-ba’ 195
Bya-che’ lchogs-mo 225, 226
Bya-dmar lcags kyi gshog-pa can 45
Bya-gshen ’jon-mo 49

’Chi-med gtsug-phud 26
Cerberus 124
Chab-ma nyi-lo 35
Chang-ka ’dab-drag 69
Che-rgyal rgod-zhu can 84
Chog-rje btsan-ba 198
Chu yi zungs bzhĭ 195
Chu yi zungs-pa’ bzhĭ / Chu ’i zungs-pa’ bzhĭ 195
Chu-bdud ’khor-bzhis 199
Chu-bdud khyil-ba’ 199
Chu-bdud ye-ro blangs 195
Chu-btsan brgyal-ba 195
Chu-btsan rol-pa 195
Chu-btsan sngon-po 195
Chu-dri zang-g.yag / Chu-srĭn zang-yag 203, 209
Chu-lcags rgyal-mo 168
Chu-srin de-bos 203
Chu-srin do-bo zang-yag 209
Chu-srin rgyal-ba / Chu-srĭn rgyal-ba’ / Chu-srĭn rgyal-ba 204, 205
Chu-ste ’khyĭl-ba’ 195

’Dur-gshen rma-da / Dur-shen rma-da / Rma-da / Dur-shen rma-rda-na / Dur-shen gyi rma 10, 28, 115, 121, 130, 140, 145, 164, 204, 215–217, 219, 228

Dbal-bon gong-rum / Rum-po / Rum / Rom-po 35, 203, 204
Dbal-gsas bse yi bya-klag 70
Dbal-lcags 8, 199, 200
Dbang-bya khyung-chen 69
Dbyal drum-cha’i ngur-ngur / Dbyar gyĭ drum-cha ngur-ngur 150, 167
Dbyar-bu sngon-brang 95, 96
Dbyar-za nyag-cĭg-ma 160, 161
Dbye-bla spyi-gangs / Dbye-bla spyi-gang gangs / Dbye-bla spyi-bgangs / Dbye-bla spyil-gangs 146, 163
Dbye-gshen mkhar-bu 164
Dbye-rje khar-pa / Dbye-rje khar-ba / Khar-ba 163, 164
Dbye-srin yug-mo / Yug-mo 163
Dbye-za ko-ma 163
Dga’-zen te chen-po / Dga’-zin te’i chen-po 216
Dge-’dun chos-’phel 129
Dgu-gri zing-po rje / Dgu-khrĭ zing-po rje 162
Dkar-de yam-ba 195
Dkar-ru grub-dbang bstan-’dzin rin-chen 207
Dmu-bon ye’u-than rmang-ba / Dmu-bon ye’u-than btsan-ba 150
Dmu-g.yang rje 149
Dmu-lcham gong-nga gong-chung 150, 167
Dmu-rje rgya’-bdun 228, 229
Dpa’-bo gtsug-lag 153, 160
Drag-tshan dbal-sgo gsas 70
Dra-la / Yar-srin {dra-la} 143, 146
Drang-nga 226
Dri-bdud byi-yan 211
Dri-btsan phyi-yan 211
Dri-g.yen rgu-yan 211
Drug-drug btshan-mo 239
Dung gyĭ bo-mo 133
Dun-shags 174
Dwangs-ma skad-snyan 69

’Go-ra 152
’Gos-rje ’gos-po 137, 139
’Gos-za phyam dar-ma / ’Gos-za phyam-dar 136
’Gos-za yam ’dar-ma’ / ’Gos-za yam ’dar-ma / ’Gos-za / ’Gos-za phyam-ma ’dar-ma / ’Gos-za phyam-dar 136–139, 142
’Gyam-za ting-gug 145
G.ya-sman sil-ma 166
G.ya’-srĭn tshub-ma 135
G.yang ngo-rtsa / G.yang-mo ngo-rtsa 216–218
G.yang-bon theg-leg 232

G.ya-spangs skyes-cĭg 165
G.yu'i-gdung 199
G.yung-drung gyi sha-pa' ku-los 192
G.yung-drung khrĭ-'od gyi rgyal-mo 133, 134
G.yu-rje yag-pa 196
Gangs-srĭn phywar-ba 135
Gcod-pa khra-slag can 83
Gcod-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje 83, 84
Gdangs dre'u-rje btshan-ba 40
Ge ma-sangs 'phrul-po 176
Ge ma-sangs sad-dgar / Ge sad-dkar 'khrul-po 176
Ge-khod 43, 96, 157, 176
Ge-sar 47, 176
Ge-za lan-mo 176
Gla-me nyag-cig 200
Glan ngam-len 148
Glan-grum-ma'ĭ sĭ-le-ma / Glan-rum sĭ-le-ma 165
Glan-rgan da-ba 165
Glan-gshen dril-bu / Glan-shen drĭl-bu 145, 165
Gle-sbar drol-ba 185
Gnam khol-pha' 195
Gnam-bdag sa-ched-po 197
Gnam-gsas khyung-rum 69
Gnam-mtsho phyug-mo che 43
Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal / Srid-pa gnam-phyib gung-rgyal 35, 201
Gnam-ri srong-btsan 129
Gnam-srin thang-nga 174, 175
Gnubs-gshen sum-po 161
Gnubs-lha mthon-drug 146
Gnubs-srĭn bu-rkun 160
Gnya'-khri btsan-po / Gnya'-khri 35, 52, 146, 149, 153, 160, 168, 170
Gnyan-chen thang-lha / Thang-lha ya-bzhur 83, 146
Gnyan-gsum thod-de rgyal-ba 176
Gnyi-sla tshe'u 164
Gor-ca btsan-ba 185
Gri-bdud spyang-ba 58
Gri-gum btsan-po / Dri-gum btsan-po 119, 144, 154
Gsang-ba 'dus-pa 98
Gser-lcam nyag 132
Gshen-dbang 22
Gshen-rab myi-bo / Gshen-rabs mi-'o 10, 11, 35, 47, 115, 174, 213, 214, 216, 252
Gshen-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje 108, 109
Gshin-bye'u 'dzin-ma 69
Gtangs-brag cha-dang 150, 167
Gung-bdud yam-pa 199
Gyam-mo che 145
Gyur-bu 203, 204

Ji-che mer-ba 199

'Khar-ba'i bo-mo 132
Kar-bu ljon-pyug 163
Karma-pa 27
Kha'-rgongs sol kyi sha / Kha-bo sol 200–202
Kha'-sha 'om-po 200
Khang-za thĭs-dang spa ye-ye / Khang-za 154
Khri 'dus-srong 27
Khri 'i bdun-tshigs / Khri-bar la bdun-tshig / Khri-sad ber bdun-tshig 211
Khrĭ dang-rje 152
Khri nam-rje 152
Khrĭ nam-skar 152
Khri-bdun 144, 218
Khri-lcam gling-mo skar 81, 90
Khri-lcam rmang-ma lod 152
Khri-lde srong-btsan / Sad-na-legs 146
Khri-srong lde'u-btsan 17
Khri-to chen-po 17
Khu-byug gsung-snyan 140
Khug-ron rmang-dar 229
Khyol tshol-ma 176
Khyung gi ru-mtshon can 84
Klan ma-sangs 176
Kle nyi-ma 188
Klu-bu rin-cen 112, 113
Klu-lcam bzang-mo 86
Klum-lha thugs-po 146
Klu-rab bzang-to-re 99
Klu-rgyal lhe'u-mgon rje 104
Klu-sras gzhon-nu 86
Kun-tu bzang-po 70

Lcags-de 'bar 195
Lcags-te ku-ku / Lcags-ste khug-khug 145
Lcam cig-ma' 206
Lde-gshen rmun-bu / Lde'u-shen rmun-bu 145–147
Lde-lcam gung-ro sman 164
Leg snya-shur 152
Leg-tang rmang-ba / Leg-dang rmang-ba 114, 151
Lha'i-zung 93
Lha-bon 'prang-zu 232
Lha-bu 'brang-kar 93, 94
Lha-bu mgo-dkar 93
Lha-bu smon-gzung 93
Lha-byar lha-zhal kar 160
Lha-bzang 93
Lha-lcam phye-ma lam / Lha-lcam phye-leb 133–135
Lha-lod 93
Lha-mo brtan-ma / Sa yi lha-mo brtan-ma 76, 77

Lha-pa bsam-gtan 23
Lha-rabs sgam-gsum 35
Lhas-bon 232
Lha-sman 'phrul-mo 93, 94
Lha-sras lha-bo che / Lha-bo lha-sras / Bla-bo bla-sras / Sgam-btsun lha'o lha-sras / Phywa-sras sgam-po / Lha-sras sgam-po 29, 34–36, 78, 201
Lha-sras skyes-cig 43–45
Lha-ste sbrang-ba 55, 56, 209
Lha-za drĭl-bu sĭl-bu sman 156
Lha-za gang-cig ma 34, 35, 37
Lha-za sgong-mo 206
Lhe'u btsan-pa 17
Lhe'u yang-ka rje / Lhe'u g.yang-dkar rje / Lhe'u yang-ka' rje 10, 17, 221–225, 228, 233, 234
Lhe'u-rje zin-tags / Le'u-rje zing-po 17
Lho-bla 'i gang-rgyal 153
Lho-bon 'ol-cogs / Lho-bon 'ol-lcogs 153, 232
Lho-bon mon-bon thod-kar 154
Lho-bu lang-ling 153
Lho-bu stong-gsum rje 154
Lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun 47
Lho-rgyal lĭng 153
Lho-rje lang-ling 154
Lho-za drĭl-bu sĭl-sil sman 153–156, 167
Lig-myi-rhya 58
Lo-ngam 114
Ltam-bon dmus-long 232
Lung-srin phyom-pa 209

Ma-bu khrun-snar 100, 101
Ma-dgo 216–218
Ma-ha phya-rje ring-dkar 55
Mchims-bza'-ma / Mchims-bza' me-tog 164
Mchĭms-rje ne-'u-sing 164
Mchims-sa klu-rgyal 164
Mchĭms-srĭn pha-bo 164
Mchĭms-za byĭ-rib-ma 165
Mchims-za sha-chang 164
Mchong-la 'od-'bar 33
Mchong-la 'od-smug 33
Mda-srĭn 148
Mdo-gshen mar-rta 151
Mdo-lcam rma-lo rma-lo sman / Mdo-lcam rma-lo 162, 163
Mdo-rje btsan-ba 151
Mdo-rje sum-po 162
Mdo-srin glo-gsum 151
Med-po ye-bu tod-tsam 144
Mgon-bu lha-sras 112, 113
Mgon-tshun gtings-na rje' 168
Mgon-tshun phywa / Mgon-tshun pywa / Mgo-gsum tsha / 'Gon-bstun phywa / 'Gon-tsun phywa / 'Gon-tshun phywa / Mgon-btsun phya / 'Gon-tsun pywa / Mgon-phywa / Mgon-tshun pywa / Mgon-tshun phywa' / Gnam-rtse mgon-tsun / Mgon-btsun ni phya 10, 69, 167, 168, 221–233
Mgyog-gsas rgod-rum dkar-po 63
Mgyog-gsas thang-dkar rgod 70
Mjug-dar mdzes-mo rgyal 69
Mkhas pa lde'u 170, 176
Mkhas-pa mi-bzhi 76
Mkhyen 'bum-khrĭ 173
Mthu-mgon lcags kyi dbal-khra 70
Mtsho' ched-po bzhi 207
Mtsho-bdud sa yi mer-ba 199
Mtsho-mo bdal-drug 195
Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo 43, 45
Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo spun-lnga / Mtsho-sman rgyal-mo mched-lnga 43
Mtsho-ste khyĭl-ba 195
Mu-cho ldem-drug / Mu-co ldem-drug 11, 140, 198, 215, 249
Mu-wer 98
Myi-bo che 174
Mying-mtshan / Mye-mtshan rmang-po / Myi-'chan 151
Myĭ-rab 'greng ru-cho / Myi-rab ru-cho / Myi-rab 'grep ru-cho 145, 229

Ne'u 164
Ne-zhon 217
Nu yid-mgyogs 168
Nya-ce yor-rmang 225, 226
Nyi-pang sad 174

'Od-de gung-rgyal / 'O-lde gung-rgyal / 'O-de gung-rgyal 29, 35, 51, 52, 66, 67, 146
'Ol-bon 'jang-tsa mon-yug 232
'O-lde spu-rgyal / 'Od-lde spu-rgyal / 'Od-de spur-rgyal / 'Od-lde spur-rgyal 146
'On-brang 151

'Phrul gyĭ lde-myig 173
'Phrul-ru dkar-po 48
'Phrul-ru dmar-mo 48
'Phur-shes bya-rgod thang-dkar 63
Pha-bong mong-skyes 148
Pho-gnyen thod-dkar 165
Pho-gshen nĭ-la 175
Phu-wer 174, 216
Phya 56
Phya kha-rje dang-po 174
Phya-bu byin-byang 78, 79

Phya-bu dos-drag 78, 79
Phya-bu yang-kar 78, 79
Phywa-bdag / Mtshun-mo 174
Pu dang mgyogs 168
Pya-bon kyu-ra 232

Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal / Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal / Ra-ljags skyĭ-rgyal / Ral-ljags bon-po 'od-cag 'brug / Ral-ljags bon-po / Ra'-lcag 36, 45, 130, 132, 133, 139, 140, 149, 152, 203, 204
Rda-lde lcags-po 121
Rdo-bu yag-brang 100, 101
Rdol-ser sha-ba'i mgo-bo can 45
Rgod kyi 'phar-'dab can 84
Rgod-po thang-yag / Rgod-po thang-yag ldem-pa 48, 203
Rgya-bdag btsun-mo 151
Rgya-bla'i 'brong-nam 151
Rgya-bon brim-tang / Brim-tang 230, 231
Rgya-bon leg-dang rmang-ba / Leg-tang 114, 151
Rgyal-bon thod-dkar 174
Rgyal-bu mthing-ge 131
Rgya-lcam {yags}-mo btsun 115
Rgyal-lha dkar-po 200, 202
Rgyal-po li-byin har 174
Rgya-rje btsan-ba' 151
Rgya-rje mying-mtshan 151
Rgya-sras khru-na 115
Rgya-za shangs-kar / Rgya-za 151, 152
Rje 'brang-kar / Bskos-rje 'brang-dkar 209
Rje da' zha-'brĭng / Rje kha-da zha-'brĭng / Rje kha-dang kha-'brĭng 148, 149
Rje ya-bo 160
Rje-gnubs gyĭ srĭs-pa / Gnubs-rje srĭs-pa / Gnubs-rje sribs-pa / Snubs-rje sris-pa 160, 161
Rje-rgyal btsun-mo 122, 123
Rkang-dmar 151
Rkang-pran 160
Rkyang-khra 33
Rma ma-sangs 176
Rma-bu ldam-shad 229
Rma-bu mchin-rgyal 234
Rma-bya'i ldem-rgyang can 84
Rmu-'brĭng-ba 149
Rmu-bdag rgyal-mo 149
Rmu-bdud ren-pa' 151
Rmu-bdud yam-ba 151
Rmu-rje 149, 151
Rmu-rje btsan-ba 149, 151
Rmu-thang-ba 149
Rmu-za khwa-cung / Rmu-za khwa-cung sman 167, 169–171
Rnel-bkrag dgab mar-ma / Rnel-dri dgab-mar-ma' 151, 153
Rnel-dri dgam-dmar 149
Rnel-drĭ bkrags bshar-ma 144, 147
Rnel-drĭ thag-bshar-ma / Rnel-dri thag-bshar / Rnel-dri thag-shal-ma / Rnel-grĭ thag-shal-ma / Rnel-grĭ thag-shal-ma' 160–164
Rngam-drag gsas kyi khyung 70
Ro-ga ma-sangs 176
Rtsang-gshen snyal-ngag 160
Rtsang-lam ngar-mnyag 143, 144, 146, 147
Rtsang-rje bud kar-na' 147, 160
Rtsang-srin bo-de 160
Rtsang-srĭn zla-gar 160
Rtse-'dzin lhe'u-mgon rje 89
Rtsi-bu' lon-brang 100, 101

Sa'-bdag btsun-mo 193
Sa-bla mgon-skyabs 45
Sa-bu ljon-brang 100, 101
Sad-mar-kar 58
Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho 17
Sarameya 124
Sa-sman 'jam-le 45
Sbug-bu cig-ba' thang 205, 206
Sbug-rje sbug-po thang 206
Sbyangs-bon lha-tshon rgyal-ba 131
Sding-nga sdĭng-lom 173
Sdings-bu g.yu-le 112, 113
Sengge dmag-dpon 83
Sgal-gshen tho'u-yug / Rgal-gshen the'u-yug 10, 115, 215, 216
Sgam-btsun li-sho thang-po 35
Sgra-bla mchong 33
She ma-sang 176
She ma-sangs / She ma-sangs thod-dkar 176
Shel gyĭ bo-mo 132
Shes-pa-can bcu-gnyis 35
Si-le-ma 98, 99
Skar lĭ-byin 174, 175
Skar-bu cĭg-sman 196
Skar-ne ce-shel rogs / Skar-ne che-shel rogs / Kod shel-lcag / Skar-lĭ byin dun-cag 174–176
Skos 56
Skyĭ-bdag btsun-mo 152
Skyi-bu bdun-tshigs / Skyi-bu bdun-tshĭgs 211
Skyi-gshen rgyan-ngar 152, 162
Skyĭ-lha pya-mangs 146
Skyĭ-ljags phyug ljon-pa / Skyi-phyug ljon-pa 152
Skyin-pa thang-rje 49
Skyin-po ru-thog rje 49
Skyin-za thĭng-tsun-ma 162

Skyi-rje btsan-ba 152
Skyi-rje btsan-po 152
Skyi-rje rmang-po / Skyĭ-rje rmang-po / Skyi-rje'ĭ rmong-pa / Rje 'ĭ rmong-pa / Rmang-po 133, 134, 152, 198
Skyo-za mthĭng-btsun 163, 164
Sman-btsun khyud-khyud khyud-mo 148
Sman-bu 91, 92
Sman-bu la-se 92
Sman-bu yu-ne 92
Sman-sras skyes-cig 92
Smra-bon gyi zing-ba 232
Smra-lcam mi-mo 136
Smrigs-bu yid-tsam 96
Snar-rdzong 174
Snying-khar 98, 99
Spe-bon thog-'phrul / Spe-bon thog-rtse 22
Spug grang-ma ru-rings 198
Spug gyim-rtsan rma-chung 198
Spug gyim-thang rmang-bu 198
Spyan-ras-gzigs 17
Sram-che dang-dngul / Sram-che' dang-dngul 225, 226
Sras-sten bu-lo rmang 169
Srid-gshen mgon-po 22
Srid-pa'i lha-dgu / Lha-dgu 43, 52
Srid-pa'i lha-rab g.yung-drung 'od gyi rgyal-po 134
Srid-pa'i lhe-than 'phrul-po che 35
Srid-rje 'brang-dkar / Gangs-chen srid-rje 'brang-dkar / Srid 55, 56
Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung 69
Srin zo-bo ring-po 154, 155
Srin zo-zo ring-po 121, 122
Srin-tsan dgu-bo kha 151
Sri-thar sgrol-ma 23
Srong-btsan sgam-po / Srong-rtsan 26, 27, 142, 245
Stag-dkar bya yi mgo can 45
Stag-rje 'al-'ol 35
Sten-lcam bra-ma 169
Stengs gyi brag-cha dĭng-ding 167
Sten-te khogs-po / Sten khogs-po / Sten-te khogs-po 167, 169
Sten-za khrĭ-'phang skyol / Sten-za khrĭ-'phang 167, 222
Ston-bu bcud-skyes 95, 96
Ston-pa gshen-rab 11, 74, 89, 198, 214, 245

Tang-nga bdud-mo tang 222
Ta-nga ngur-mo tang 168
Tha-nga rtsang-mo thang 160
Thang-ba dmu-thang / Thang-ba rmu-dang 150, 151, 167
Thang-nga 147
Thang-nga dmu-mo thang 150, 167
Thang-nga rgya-mo thang 151
Thang-nga rtsang-mo thang 147
Thang-nga' rtsang-mo thang 160
Thang-yag ldam-pa / Thang-yag / Thang-yag ltem-ba 203, 204
The-zhon 217
Thog-thog lhung-lha 11
Tsang-tsang 'khor-ba-sa 76
Tshangs-lha 23
Tshangs-pa rab-'byor 22
Tshe-myĭ rmu-rgyal 145–147

Wa-che' spyang-dom / Wa-che' sbyang-ldom / Wa-che spyang-ldom 226

Yab-bla bdag-drug / Yab-bla bdal-drug 131, 168
Ya-bzhi 174
Yama 124
Ya-ngal gyim-khong / Ya-ngal gyim-gong / Ya-ngal gyim-kong / Ya-ngal khyĭm-gong / Ya-ngal gyĭm-kyong / Ya-ngal 121, 123, 126, 154, 164, 166
Yar-mo thang-nga 146
Yar-rje rmun-bu 143, 146, 147
Yar-srĭ btsan-bye phag-po sna-rĭngs 143, 147
Yar-srin pha-sna ring-po / Pa-sna ring-po 143
Ye-gshen dbang-rdzogs 140
Ye-shes mgon-po 144
Ye-smon rgyal-po 131, 168
Ye-yod dbang-chen 69, 109
Yid 'ong-ma 149
Yid kyi khye'u-chung 198
Yid-mgyogs 225, 227
Yo-ba 241
Yor-rmong 208
Yos-bong ha-ra chung 148
Yul-sa khri-do-re 81
Yul-sa lhe'u-mgon rje 110, 111

Zangs gyĭ bo-mo 132
Zangs-'gar se'u-pa / Zangs-'gar se-'u-pa 136–142
Zangs-te pyo-pyo / Zangs-ste 'phywo-phywo 145
Za-za zangs-mo btsun 137, 139
Zhang-zhung mu-lto-ba 173, 174
Zhi-khro dam-pa rigs-brgya 45

3 Glossary of Terms in Tibetan Languages

A la' la' (exclamation for how strange) 185
A tsi (exclamation for how dismaying) 185
A-mye (grandfather) 17
A-ru-ru / *U-ra-ra* (exclamation for pain) 150
Ar-zhwa (a type of hat) 84

'ba' 'ba' (bleating of sheep) 217
'bangs (servant) 198, 203
'bod (to call out) 218
'bog / *sbog* / *spogs* (to ford) 168, 228
'brag 168
'brang (burial procedures, maternal lineage) 44, 96, 241
'brang / *phrang* (to follow) 218
'bras (grain, rice) 231
'bras kyi lcang-pa (shoots of green grain) 115
'bras-bu smyin (ripened grain) 88
'bras-chang dĭng-ba / *sngon-mo 'ding-ding 'bras* / *dang-ding 'bras-chang sngon-mo* / *ding-ba* (highest quality beer) 170
'breng / *breng* (went together) 217
'bres (arrayed) 227
'brĭng (middle) 156
'brog-pa (shepherd) 123, 152, 191, 216, 240
'brong-bu (wild yak) 206
'bru (kernel of grain) 176
'brum (berry) 176
'bul-ba / *'bul* / *phul* (to offer, offered) 29, 178, 187
'byor / *'byord* (to join) 224
ba (cow) 122
ba' ra ra' (conveys the flapping of wings) 193
ba'-dan (banner) 191
bab (fell) 178
bag (parched barley meal paste) 24, 239, 240
bag-chags (negative mental imprints) 96
bal (wool) 26, 27, 50, 54, 144, 201, 216
bal-che (great wool) 201
ba-men (large milking cow) 241
bang (stride) 168, 224
bang (womb, primal state) 44, 160
bang-rlabs (running pace) 31
bang-so (tomb) 26, 119, 142, 171
bar-do (postmortem state) 17, 22, 45, 83, 124, 199
bar-sa (postmortem realm) 39
bar-snang / *bar* (intermediate space) 96
bar-snang 'phyo-ba (soars in space) 95
bas gyi (opposite side) 136
bas-yul (hidden land of refuge) 253
bcad / *gchad* (to cut) 154, 223
bcag bcag-pa' (step by step) 191
bcas / *bchas* (to make, to prepare, to establish) 231
bcibs / *bchĭbs* / *bjibs* (to ride) 195
bcud / *bchud* (essence) 238
bcug / *bchug* / *bchugs* (lodged, invaded, put inside, installed) 150, 229
bdab / *'dab* (to pound) 210
bdag-mo (mistress) 23
bdag-rang (I myself) 139
bdams (selected) 207
bdar-bdar (vigorously polished) 175
bdas (to drive out) 155
bdas nas byung-ba (stalked) 175
bde-ba'i sa (blissful land) 39
bdud (type of demon) 36, 42, 44, 52, 58, 67, 69, 75, 84, 90, 96, 110, 111, 126, 145, 151, 161, 165, 168, 172, 184, 185, 190, 199, 222–224
bdud-bon (type of priest) 232
bdud-rtsi / *bdu-rtsĭ* (nectar) 109, 155, 211
bdud-rtsi chab (nectarous waters) 74, 75
bdud-rtsi skyems (ambrosia) 109
bdums 207
be-chal (a saponaceous herb) 123
bgri (violently killed) 146
bgyer / *bsgyer* / *bsgyerd* (to chant, chanted) 162, 163, 178, 224, 233
bka' (a consciousness principle) 12
bka'-tags (sacred seal) 35
bkal (loaded) 158
bkang (to be filled) 141
bkod (arranged) 231
bkra (well-being) 172
bkra-'dur (funerary rite for elderly) 153, 167, 171
bkra-bon (type of funerary priest) 153
bkra-btsun (category of the dead) 153
bkra-bu (category of the dead) 153
bkrags (fearful) 147
bkra-mo (deceased elderly woman) 153, 156
bkra-mtshun (category of the dead) 153
bkra-rgan (highly respected elders) 28, 63
bkra-rgyal (category of dead males) 153, 156
bkra-za (category of dead females) 167, 170, 171
bkrum (agitated) 161
bkrus (to lustrate, to cleanse) 142, 145
bkug (to contain) 229
bkum (to kill) 135
bkur (to honor) 168
bkye' / *skyes* (dispatched, allotted) 178, 200

bla / *brla* (soul, a consciousness principle) 12, 157, 199
bla-'bod (evocation of the soul) 18, 31, 218
bla'-chags (soul site) 200
bla-'khor (soul circle) 27, 39, 157
bla-bre (canopy) 26
bla-gnas (soul receptacle) 153
bla-gur (soul tent) 26
bla-ma (adepts and clerics) 5
bla-rdo / *brla-rdo* (soul stone) 27, 135, 136
bla-rten / *bla yi rten* (soul receptacle) 18, 25
bla-za 224
bldag bldag 217
blon-ce (chief minister) 178
bltam (born) 222
bltas de gzig (a vision) 175
blus (rescued) 121
bnal 158
bnan (suppressed) 146
bnol (illicit sex) 165
bnol-khung (type of ritual cavity) 155
Bod-mi'u gdung-drug (Six Clans of Tibet) 17, 131
bog-le (vulture's foot) 155
bo-mo (girl) 132, 133, 138, 179
bon (archaic class of priests, ritual traditions, cosmological motif) 6, 7, 10, 22, 27, 33, 70, 78, 79, 121, 127, 131, 140, 144, 145, 151–153, 157, 158, 168, 172, 180, 188, 214, 219–221, 224, 225, 231–233, 236, 243, 244, 249, 250, 252
bon-mo (priestess) 33, 173–176
bon-po (archaic religious specialists) 10, 69, 130, 139, 142, 149, 150, 168, 180, 229, 232
bor (to abscond, to discard) 125, 145, 226
brag (rock formation) 35, 126
brag-bya (owl) 165
bral (expelled) 156
brang / *'brang* (dwelling place, chest, forest) 95, 196
brang btsugs (establishment of a series of burial rituals) 95
brda-blan / *bda'-blan* / *gda'-blan* (to make ritual hand signals) 126, 155, 202
brdar / *'dar* (to grind, to file) 210
brdung / *brtungs* (forged) 205
brdzu / *brdzus* / *rdzus* (false guise, magically appearing, magically transformed) 194
bre (to suspend) 230
brgyags (provisions) 217
brgyal / *rgyal* (unconscious) 198
bris-ma (lactation) 199
brko / *brkos* / *rkod* (to carve, to dig) 127, 155
bros (fled, absconded) 178
brtan-ma (earth goddess) 76, 77
brtsig / *brtshigs* (to superimpose, to build up) 225
brtul (disengaged) 210
bsad (to slaughter) 126
bsag (suite of ritual operations) 127
bsan / *sand* (the feeding of livestock) 231
bsang / *gsang* (incense) 198
bsangs-gsol (fumigation offering ritual) 77
bsangs (purified, purification) 127, 146, 154
bsas 211
bsdongs (to be allied) 151
bsdos (risked) 168, 222, 224
bse / *bse'* (a metal) 38, 40, 64, 65, 107, 124, 125, 145, 226, 227, 229
bsgos (partitioned) 232
bsha' (to skin) 126
bshal / *bshald* / *bshal'* 155, 162
bshan / *shan* (type of contaminating filth) 150
bshan-bu (butcher) 148
bshar gyĭs btab (to sift) 151
bshos (type of sacrificial cake, life) 150, 170, 238
bshos (to mate) 134, 136
bshos-cha (vegetarian food offerings) 126
bshos-tshe / *bshos* (life) 150, 229
bshums / *bzhums-mo* (cried) 211
bskang-ba (appeasement and expiation ritual) 117
bskor bskor (roaming all over) 217
bskos / *sgos-so'* (to appoint, appointed) 178
bskul / *skul* (to call upon) 210
bskul-pa (signaling and commissioning ritual) 143, 207
bskyal (placed, to have seen off, to have delivered) 127, 158
bslags 168
bslogs-mnard (fought bitterly) 222
bsngal (womb) 160
bsnyags (pursued) 227
bsrid-pa' 'i mtsho-gling (lake island of existence) 200
bstan-pa phyi-dar (later spread of Buddhism) 231
bstus (to control) 202
bswo (a word of praise, battle cry) 69, 70
btab / *bdab* / *gdab* (to make, to do, to sprinkle, levied) 142, 178, 198
btags / *bdags* (to bind, to tie, to hang, to name) 171, 187, 207
btang / *btangngo* / *gtang* (to send, to conduct, emitted) 178
bting (to spread out) 231
btsal / *btshald* / *'tshal* (to search) 145, 150
btsan (type of spirit, mighty one) 33, 36, 37, 42, 52, 70, 77, 90, 110, 111, 114, 126, 144, 165,

btsan (cont.) 184–186, 195, 222, 233, 241, 253
btsan-btshun (ancestral deity) 233, 234
btsan-dri (type of death demon) 193, 197
btsan-po (king, emperor) 27, 146, 180, 225
btso (cooked) 123
btso / *gtso* / *gtsho* (magic bomb) 165, 176
btsog-gri / *rtsog-drǐ* (an agent of violent death) 165
btsog-sgrib (contaminating filth) 150
btsud (imprisoned) 178
btsugs / *btshugs* / *tsugs* (erected, appointed, established) 145, 178, 231
btsun / *tsun* (noble one, category of the dead) 130–133, 222, 233
btungs (to massacre) 135
bu (son) 26
bud (woman) 172
bu-gri (agent of infant death) 148
bu-grǐ-mo (infants and mothers of violent death) 124
bul-tog / *bu-tog* (soda) 123
bun ne bun (conveys action of plunging into water) 126
bu-po (boy) 222
bu-ram smyug-gu-chu / *bu-ram nyu-gu-cu* / *bu-rum nyug-chu* / *bu-ram myug-chu* (sugarcane juice or other sweetening agent) 115, 170, 231
bus-bu (boy) 138
bus-sba 138
bya (bird) 122
bya-bang / *bya-wang* (species of pheasant) 144, 145, 147
bya-bon bcu-gsum (group of thirteen sacred birds) 72
bya-che' (great bird) 226
bya-dgyi / *bya-dgyigs bzhi* / *bya kyi bzhǐ* 231
bya-gshen (bird priest) 47, 49
bya-gshog phyag-cha (hand-tool bird wing) 164
bya-gtor (method of corpse disposal) 139
bya-khra bcibs (mounted on a hawk) 83
byang 124, 125
byang byang 216
byang-bu (funerary tablet, likeness of the deceased) 18, 27, 157, 221
byang-byong 176
byang-ka (the north) 210
bya-pho mtshal-bu (red-breasted cock) 39
bya-ra-ba (keeper) 186
bya-rgod rgyal-po (king of the birds vulture) 47, 48
bya-rog-gu (crow) 234
bya-ru (bird horn) 69, 230
bya-slag (bird robe) 140
bya-thul dkar-po / *bya-rgod dkar-mo'i thul-pa* (cloak of white vulture feathers) 79
bye bye bsal (definitively separated) 185
bye'u (little bird) 39, 158
bye'u-slungs (little bird habitat) 21
bye-ma len-rtse (small sparrow-like bird) 39
byer (to separate) 227
byin (blessing, magnificence, benefaction) 236, 237
byin-po (ordinary, most, all) 236
byol (type of ransom ritual) 121, 214
byol-rabs (origins myth of a type of ransom ritual) 10, 35, 37, 99, 117, 145, 156, 165, 173, 214, 232, 252
byugs (brushed) 202
byung / *byung-ngo* / *byung-ngo'* (begotten, appeared) 179, 209, 222
byur (type of demon) 138
bza' / *za* (designator of female gender) 154
bzhag (kept) 220, 229
bzhed (to like) 137, 223
bzhes (to receive, to take) 138, 178, 223
bzhǐ-'brul-ba 206
bzho-ba / *bzho'* (to milk) 58, 59, 123
bzhon (to ride) 151
bzhud (to accompany) 223
bzhugs (resided) 150, 178
bzhun 196
bzug / *zug* (erected) 239
bzung / *bzungs* (seized, captured) 178, 211

'chi (to die) 135
'chi-bdag (master of death) 67
'chos (to prepare) 227
cha (battle cry) 70
chab (water) 204
chab gyi ma-bzhug (lower stretch of river) 145
chab gyi ya-bgo (headwaters) 145
chab-gang / *chu-gang* (above the water) 23, 115, 168, 222, 225, 228, 239
chab-gshen (type of priest) 203, 204
chab-mǐg (spring) 190
chab-rum / *chab-rom* (frozen water) 202
chad / *bcad* (penalized, punishment) 223, 240
chag / *gchags* (broken) 176
chag-chag brgyab (to repeatedly strike) 175
chal-gsum (three detergents) 123
chang / *cang* (beer) 171
chang-ka 69
chen-po / *ched-po* (big) 205
che-zhe (elder sister) 211
chibs-do (a mount) 225
chibs-lug (funerary sheep mount) 39, 67

cho (paternal lineage) 44, 218, 241, 243
chod / *mchod* (to cut, to break off) 175
chog myi cog (not sanctioned) 150
cho-lo (dice) 172
chol-rold / *cho-rol* 226, 228, 229
cho-ma cho-rgu (all manner of) 121, 155
chon (poles, guy lines and stakes) 230
cho-rabs (origins tale of a ritual) 117
chos (religious custom) 10
chos-gsar (new religious custom) 217
chu (water) 134
chu-bya (waterfowl) 194
chu-bdud (type of aquatic demon) 193, 195, 199
chu-dkyĭl (swirling waters) 165
chu-dri (agents of waterborne death) 8, 193, 196, 198, 199, 202, 203
chu-gri (scimitar) 63, 69
chu-nad (water disease) 152
chung / *cung* (small) 193
chun-po (a coiled ornament) 104
chu-ser (amniotic fluid) 127, 148, 161
chu-srin (water monster or crocodile) 9, 22, 193, 202, 203, 207–209
cĭr (naked) 191

'dab (belly) 233
'dab-ma / *mdab-ma* (flapping) 226
'das-log (the returned dead) 124
'das na' (gone beyond) 124
'ded / *bdad* / *gdad* (to follow) 198
'dong / *gdong* (to lead) 187
'dong-mo 127, 156, 163
'dong-mo (wooden tea churn) 165
'dong-shas 203
'drang /*'drangs* (erected) 202
'dre (type of demon) 36, 66, 67, 69, 138, 154, 161, 190
'dre-bon / *dre-bon* (type of priest) 232
'drĭs-rka (without affinity) 151
'dro'-bo 205
'dul-ba /*'dul* / *gdul* /*'dur-ba* (to subjugate) 63, 132
'Dur-chog (collection of funerary traditions and practices) 213
'dur-bon / *dur-bon* (funerary priest) 26, 167, 232
'dur-gshen / *dur-gshen* (funerary priest) 26, 28, 47, 91, 115, 121, 123, 130–132, 140, 154, 164, 166, 204, 215, 217, 218
'dzugs / *tshugs* (to place, to set up) 172
da (now) 125
da re shĭgs (sometime after) 175
dags-bo (many) 223
dan / *dan-po'* / *dan-po* / *dan-mo* / *dan-bu* (gazelle) 53, 54, 56
dang-dang (very pure) 237
dang-ding (a species of bird) 63
da-pu (now) 142
dar (fine cloth, silk) 69, 115, 176, 202, 223, 233
dar / *ldar* (flag) 239
dar-dkar / *dar-kar* (fine white cloth) 69, 187, 245
da-ring (today) 165
dbab (to activate) 126
dbal (class of deities, class of ritual implements, extremely sharp, fiery, explosive, system of powerful magical practices) 34, 37, 58, 63, 69, 70, 72, 75, 108, 109, 130, 132
dbal-bon / *bal-bon* (type of priest) 34, 35, 150, 203, 204, 232
dbal-gsas (class of gods) 70, 132
dbal-mtshon (weapon of the *dbal*) 36
dbal-ru yams se yams (extremely sharp and pointing in opposite directions) 193
dbang gi gzi byin (magnificence and blessings of power) 75
dbog-chig (give!) 239
dbu (head) 173
dbu'-breng (head cord) 154
dbu'-skas (head ladder) 154
dbu-shug (head juniper) 27
dbyal (wife) 137, 145
dbyam 186
dbyam-bu (flat boulder) 165
dbyar / *dbyard* (summer) 179
dbye (divided, separated) 178, 190
dbyi (lynx) 122
dbyig (eye, circular design) 141
dbyĭ-mo 153
dbyi-mo (thicket) 242
dbyi-rus (verterbrae) 123
dbyug-tho (maul used in battle) 83
dga' / *rka* (joyous, to like) 151
dga' sa-le (a celestial realm) 35
dga'-ri (joyous mountain) 39, 242
dga'-yul / *rga-yul* (joyous land) 25, 39, 40, 102, 110, 131, 132, 156, 242
dgab (body below the waist) 143
dgaro (sequestered) 237
dgo / *dgo-ba* / *rgo* (gazelle) 58, 122
dgongs / *rgongs* (mind) 220
dgon-rtsig / *dgo-tsheg* 227
dgos / *rgos* (must) 187
dgra (enemies) 70
dgu / *rgu* (nine, a multitude) 122, 178, 207, 223
dgun / *rgun* (winter) 186, 202
dgung / *rgung* (night, heavens) 169, 189, 222
dgung du gshegs / *rgung du gshegs* (passed away

into the heavens) 169
dgung-bon (type of priest) 232
dgyes (contented, pleased) 156, 193
dkar / *kar* (white) 15
Dkon-mchog gsum (Buddha, his Law and his Community) 123
dkor / *dgor* (property, wealth) 22, 23, 72, 169, 216
dkor gyi dam-pa (essential property of the dead) 24, 58
dkris / *bgris* (to conduct) 233
dkrĭs (wrapped up) 139
dkyus rtsol-ba (to completely prevail) 224
dma' / *rma* (inferior realm, bottomland) 122, 150
dma' them-pa / *rma them-pa* (rungs of the underworld) 121, 124
dmag (army) 179
dmag-dpon (general) 36, 83
dmag-rab gyi rta-po (horse of the excellent army) 168
dmangs / *smang* (commoner caste) 17
dmar-rtsa / *dmar-zhal* (white sheep with red face) 216
dme / *sme* / *rme* (pernicious contamination) 145, 150, 166
dmu / *dmu'* (sky, type of spirit) 15, 17, 35, 44
Dmu / Smu / Mu (a lineage) 10, 114, 149, 150, 168, 169, 184, 228, 229
dmu-thag / *dmu-dag* (celestial cord) 144, 154, 180
dngul / *rngul* (silver) 124, 178
do (island) 31
do (to match, to best) 150
do-bsdur (to compete) 150
dog-mo (earth) 62, 96
dom (black bear) 122, 226
do-ma (equid or yak mount of the dead) 9–11, 23, 26, 31, 39, 44, 69, 90, 122, 133, 145, 168, 172, 183, 184, 198, 219, 221, 226–245, 250
do-mod (now) 110, 196
dor / *'tor* (rejected) 222
do-rgyal 199
dpa'-bo (male spirit-medium) 23, 133, 153, 160
dpa'-mo (female spirit-medium) 23
dpag-bsam chen-po (wish-fulfilling world tree) 98
dpags-bu (animal hide) 122
dpe (model, example, precedent, metaphor) 28, 80, 130, 219
dpe-bzangs / *dpe'-bzangs* (salutary model) 28, 87, 94
dpe-lung (transmission of paradigmatic knowledge) 28
dpon (commander) 51
dpyad / *dphyad* (diagnostic and therapeutic rites) 35, 145, 148, 150, 160, 163, 165, 203, 204, 251
dra (lattice, grate) 80
drag (mighty, potent) 172
dral-bu (son) 242
dral-po (brother) 174
dra-ma 69, 70
drangs (inserted) 242
drangs-ba (to blow) 198
dra-tsa 138
dra-tshugs / *dra-tsugs* (supporting latticework) 15, 80, 93
dred-mo (female brute) 216
dri-bo / *grĭ-ma* (homicidal entity) 130, 147
dri-bon / *drĭ-bon* / *gri-bon* (type of funerary priest) 8, 35, 36, 128–130, 132, 135, 139–141, 148, 149, 152, 155, 185–191, 199, 200, 203, 204, 232
drigs se drig 173, 174
dril / *grĭl* (rounded, roll) 197, 204
dri-lug (sacrificial funerary sheep) 126, 158
drim drim-pa' (journeyed) 191
dri-ma (anthropomorphized agent of violent death) 8, 171
dri-mo (female homicidal spirit) 136, 139, 149, 151–153, 161, 175, 176
dri-mtho (funerary ritual structure) 204
drin drin (very kind) 218
dri-rgyang (funerary ritual structure) 204
dri-sha (deer vessel for *dri* demon) 8, 191, 193, 200–202, 227, 239
dri-tho (funerary ritual structure) 139, 141, 152, 204
drod (warmth) 210
drod-pa (animal gut) 141, 149, 152
drug / *grug* (six, sixth) 126
drung / *brungs* (beside) 198
dud-phyugs (household wealth) 242
du-mod (today) 218
dung (conch) 124
dung-gsang 243
dur-bya (bird of the cemetery) 48
dur-khung / *dur-kung* (tomb, grave) 119, 156
dus-bzhi skal-pa (four seasons) 211
dwogs / *dogs* (doubted) 240

'gags (strangled) 139
'gal-pa / *mgal-pa* (funerary ritual wood) 127, 141
'gams / *'gam* / *bsgams* (to consume dry or fried foods) 168, 172
'go-ba'i lha (five personal protective deities) 144
'go-cog (an avian quality) 38
'gogs-shing (type of ritual plank) 140
'gran / *'dran* (to compete) 241
'grang (counted) 197

'greng-myi / *'greng myi-bu* (bipedal man) 40, 242
'gro (to gambol, to walk, to go) 61
'grol-pa 190
'gur-lha / *mgur-lha* (group of mountain gods) 144
g.ya'-ma / *g.ya'-le* (slates) 135
g.yam-dri / *g.yam-gri* (demon of epidemics) 36, 77
g.yang (good fortune capability, type of sheep) 35, 169, 172, 201, 236–238, 241
g.yang-gzhi / *g.yeng-bzhi* (flayed skin) 152
g.yang-ze / *g.yang-kar* (edge of a precipice) 139
g.yen (class of demons) 26, 89, 131, 140, 141, 149, 162, 163, 166, 211, 238, 239, 240
g.yengs (swept away) 196
g.yos-so / *g.yoso* (swaying, quivering) 242
g.yu-bun / *g.yu-bun-pun* (turquoise mist) 217
g.yug / *g.yag* (swooshing) 210
g.yu-mngon (turquoise libations) 25
g.yung-drung (swastika) 5, 133, 134, 189, 191, 192
gal (elaboration) 243
gam-ba (to split) 224
gangs-kar mthon-ba (heights of the white snow mountain) 106
gar re gar (conveys rapid movement of the eyes) 193
gar-gsas (class of gods) 132
gar-ma (caper of the antelope) 54
gcag (to split) 127
gcan-mo (carnivorous female spirit) 122
gcen-po / *gchen-po* / *pho-bo gcen-po* (big brother) 173, 179, 195
gcer / *car* 191
gcig / *gchig* (one) 179
gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa (ritual monkey, badger and bat) 74
gdags (sunny place) 122
gdags-shĭng pha-rgu (nine father sunny woods) 154
gdan / *brtan* / *rtan* (mattress, carpet) 26, 154, 231
gdar-bu (small rectangular form) 171
gdar-po (rectangular block) 170
gdo / *gdos* (due cause) 187
gdod (mane) 44
gdon / *gthon* (class of demons) 70, 138, 150, 165, 175
gdong-sol (charcoal) 200
gdos-pa (material form) 185
gdos-rkyen (result of an action or process) 187
gdug-khabs (parasol) 26
gdung / *btungs* (to draw) 210
gdung-rus (clan) 17
gdung-sob (lineage representative) 74, 75
Ge (a divine lineage) 176
Ge-gzhu 173
ge-ma (class of demons) 197
gjam (placidity) 190
gla (musk deer) 122, 200
glad (top of the head) 231
gling-bu / *glĭng-ba* (flute) 191
glu-bon (type of priest) 232
glud / *blud* (ransom ritual) 74, 121, 143, 145, 146, 154–156, 184, 186, 187, 190, 195, 200, 229, 250
glud-bon (type of priest) 232
gna' (ancient) 115
gna' dang-po (primal ancient times) 197
gna'-gtam (ancient tale) 172
gnag (black) 44
gnam (sky) 122, 222
gnam du 'phangs (went away into the sky) 144, 147
gnam-lo / *rgung-lo* (the year reckoned in the sky) 169
gnam rĭm-pa bchu-gsum (thirteen layers of the heavens) 176
gnam rim-pha dgu (nine layers of the heavens) 234
gnam shug-lo (type of very large juniper) 196
gnam-snang (bright sky) 208
gnas (holy place) 200
gnod-sbyin (class of demigods) 90
gnyan (class of spirits) 17, 25, 36, 44, 45, 83, 84, 90, 132, 137, 138, 150, 176
gnyen (relatives) 232
gnyen-lam mtha'-bzhĭ / *gnyen-lam mtha-bzhi* 187
gnyer-ma (furrowed, grooved) 189
gnyigs (rapidly going) 225
gnyug-'brang (sweetening agent of honey) 171
go (armor) 210
go (to know) 217
gon (wears) 209
gong (grouse) 122
gong-ba (border) 207
gong-sum (three heights) 150, 175
gor-glags (round cauldrons) 153
gor-mo / *gor* (stone) 136, 149, 224
gor-ra (round corral) 187
grags / *drags* (roar) 210
gral (ordered position) 68, 168, 232, 242
grangs (conveyed) 142
grar bchud (set in the ordered position) 225
gre-sbar 190
grib (shadows) 68
gri-gsas (class of funerary gods) 63, 69, 70
gri-tho (type of funerary ritual object) 139, 149

gro-bo / *dro-bo* 198
grong-khyer (city) 168
grongs / *drongs* (died) 162, 165, 170
grongs-ba / *drongs-ba'* (deceased) 199
grub-pa / *grub-pa'* (to accomplish, to attain, final consignment) 15, 18
gru-bzhi (a burial structure) 168
grugs (chipped) 242
gru-gzings / *'dru-gzings* (boat) 205
grum-pa / *grum* (badger) 74, 75, 122
gsal (light, brightness) 68
gsang-po mdung-thub 198
gsar (new, fresh) 132
gsas (type of divinity) 17, 69, 70, 109, 137, 138, 157
gsas-'khor (circle of the *gsas* gods) 109, 157
gsas-mkhar / *bse-mkhar* (type of shrine, temple) 134, 137, 145, 147, 157
gser (gold) 124
gser gyi seng-ge (golden lion) 72
gser-skyems / *skyems* (libations) 24, 25, 75, 84, 105, 109, 111, 196, 252
gser-zhal (golden funerary effigy) 157
gshang (flat-bell) 22, 36
gshed / *gshed-ma* / *gshed-po* (demons of death) 12, 25, 58, 70, 89, 99, 130, 139, 163, 165, 185
gshed-khung (enclosure for exorcising demons of death) 123
gshegs / *gshegs* (to depart) 16, 37, 119, 178
gshen / *gshen-po* (archaic religious specialists, class of spirits) 10, 11, 25, 26, 28, 45, 69, 70, 83, 98, 109, 121, 132, 140, 144, 145, 147, 150, 151, 162–165, 169, 173, 180, 188, 215, 217–220, 243, 252
gshen-bon (priest) 230–232
gshen-gsas (class of gods) 132
gshin / *gshĭn* (the dead) 40, 109, 158, 164, 211, 235
gshin-cha (clothing and ornaments of the dead) 109
gshin-dur (funerary rites) 109
gshin-chab (waters of the dead) 109, 163, 235
gshin-chu (river of the dead) 109, 163, 188, 189, 235
gshin-gsas (class of funerary gods) 109
gshin-gshen (funerary priest) 10, 109, 145, 168, 218, 224, 225
gshin-la (pass of the dead) 40
gshin-lam (path of the dead) 109
gshin-po (the dead) 40
gshin-rab (ford of the dead) 40, 109
gshin-rje (funereal demons) 109, 126, 189
gshin-rtsis (death horoscope) 109
gshin-sde'u nyer-bu / *gshin-ste nyer-bu* (funerary ritual structure) 231
gshin-than (respondent of the dead) 213
gshin-yul (land of the dead) 39, 40, 109, 115, 131, 235, 236
gshin-zan (victuals for the dead) 109
gshog-drag (powerful wings) 39
gsing (pasture) 237
gso (rehabilitation, therapy) 145, 224, 225
gsob (type of effigy, replica) 161
gso-ba (healed, revived) 75
gsod-pa (slaughter) 185
gso-gso (to feed much, to feed continually) 216
gsol-ba / *gsol* (to propitiate) 22, 29
gsol-kha (propitiatory ritual) 44, 71, 76, 117
gson (living) 68
gson la bzang (good for the living) 27, 94, 99
gson-ma (female living ones, vulture) 147, 164
gsos-ba / *sos* (to recondition, to revitalize) 18, 174, 176, 224, 225
gsung (secret) 229
gtad (to gift) 233
gtad / *gtad-pa* / *stad-pa* (presents for the dead) 67, 131
gtad-g.yar (presents for the dead) 67
gtar-tshan (molten iron) 176
gter-ston (religious treasure-finder) 11
gto / *gdo* (group of beneficial rites) 35, 45, 118, 130, 140, 145, 148, 150, 160, 163–165, 173, 203, 204, 224, 225, 251
gto-bon (type of priest) 232
gto-nag (system of wrathful rites) 172
gtong / *gdang* (to dispatch, to perform) 200
gto-pa (type of ritual specialist) 140
gtor (to scatter) 227
gtor-ma (edible ritual sculptures) 36, 40
gtsang-sa (pure land) 39
gtso (chieftain) 128
gtsod (antelope) 60
gtsod-bal / *gtshos-bal* (antelope wool) 53
gtsos-khrag (antelope blood) 201
gtsos-to (an avian quality or species of bird) 38, 40
Gtsug (a divine lineage) 168
gtsug (crest, head ornament) 69
gtub pa'i gri (demons of death that chop) 48
gtun-bu (pestle) 165
gum (to die) 135, 178, 196
gur (tent) 26
Gu-rib / Gu-ribs (a clan) 149
gu-zu (type of costume) 138, 139
gyad-mo (type of spirit) 122
gyer / *gyer-ba* (to chant, a chant) 127, 142, 152

gyes / *dgyes* (separated) 210
gza' (planet) 90, 240
gzed (type of demon) 36, 37, 56, 67, 77
gzha' (rainbow) 44
gzha'-gdan (seat of the rainbow) 192
gzhag (to keep) 127
gzhan nǐ lobs (propagation) 243
gzha-ring (long rainbow) 242
gzhe (primordium) 197
gzhi-bdag (spirit of the locale) 144
gzhung (major tradition) 131, 185
gzi-byin (majestic) 210
gzig-shubs (leopard-skin bow case) 44
gzi-mal (mark of magnificence) 75
gzu-bo (arbiter) 55
gzugs (body) 145
gzung-'tshal (that which captures) 200

hor-mu (horned lion) 36
hor-ru (type of vessel, staff) 35
Hor-skad (a Tibetan dialect) 37, 150, 165, 171, 187, 199, 241
hu-nu (expression of fear) 150

'jags (small rocks) 210
'jal / *bjal* (reciprocated) 202
'jam (gentle, soft) 45
'jam-le 45
'jigs (fear) 40
'jigs-pa gsum (three fears) 189
'jon-mo (nightingale) 47, 49
ja-mdong (wooden tea churns) 156
jo-jo / *jo-co* (brother) 174

'khar / *khar* (bell-metal) 124, 127
'khor-lo (circle, wheel) 109
ke-ke (a species of bird) 47
kha (a primal state or agent) 44
kha / *kha-po* / *kha-mo* / *khe'u-chung* (a species of deer) 64, 65
kha-'dzin (supervisor) 131, 140, 144
kha'i shing 202, 203
khab / *kab* (wife) 137
khabs 158
khabs (canopy) 26
khal (saddlebag) 158
khams-sangs (rejuvenated, refreshed) 135
kang-ka / *gang-ka* (a species of vulture) 47, 48
kha-thur (turned upside down) 154
khod-mo / *'khong-mo* / *kho-mo* / *kod-mo* (wild yak) 26, 35, 170, 231, 238
khol / *khol-pa* (servant) 202, 223
kho-nan 238
khrag / *thrag* (blood) 152
khras (sheltering) 186, 196
khrigs ge khrig (conveys rhythmic movement) 174
khrims-bdag (jurist) 56
khrĭn 199
khrom (multitude, public) 11
khu-byug (cuckoo) 72, 140
khug-ma (sack) 176
khug-rta / *khugsta* / *khug-sta'* / *gug-sta* (swallow) 158
khu-long (species of pheasant) 47, 144
khum-pa 176
khung (cavity) 156
khung-bu (cavity) 127
khungs nas ded-pa (forthright actions) 187
khus-'debs (to cry out) 187
khus-btab (to cry out, to shout) 139, 229
khwa 169
khyal-khyil (swirling sheet of liquid) 216
khye'u (small boy) 193
khyel / *'khyĭl* (carried off) 205
khyi / *kyĭ* / *gyib* (dog) 122, 123, 135, 198
khyo (husband) 125
khyo-ga (man) 172
khyu (herds) 77
khyung (horned eagle) 31, 67, 69, 70, 84, 173, 207, 208, 230
khyung-ru (eagle horns) 69
klu / *klu-mo* (water spirits) 9, 25, 36, 44, 45, 69, 86, 90, 124, 130–132, 137, 138, 149, 150, 170, 214
klu-bdud (type of demon) 69
kon-to-re (a species of bird) 63
krung-krung (crane) 145
ku-ku (type of bird) 145
kyi-gnag (black dog) 173

lam-ba (a species of bird) 63
lam-ston (to show the way) 245
lan-chen (to forthrightly reply) 229
lan-tsha' (salt) 227
lcam (wife) 98, 187
lcang-pa / *lchang-pa* / *ljang-pa* (green shoots) 115, 231
lce (class of funerary deities, meteor) 132, 205
lcebs-gri (agent of suicide) 148
lce-dmar 121
lcog-mo / *lchogs-mo* 226
lcub-mo / *chub-mo* / *lcim-mo* (hide) 171, 172
Lde (a dynasty) 163
lde-gshen (type of priest) 143, 145–147
ldem se ldem (conveys graceful swaying) 191

le-dbar (a unit of distance) 23
len-bu / *lem-bu* (hair) 198
Lha btsan-po (epithet for Tibetan king) 93
lha'i bon (*bon* of the gods) 230, 231
lha-bdag (master of spirits) 23
lha-bon (type of ritual system, type of priest) 140, 232
lha-bu (son of a god) 93, 94
lhag ge lhag (conveys a rueful laugh) 125
lhags (wind) 198
lhags (to land, to arrive) 162
lha-mo (type of female divinity, spirit-medium) 23, 76, 77, 170
lhang se lhang (conveys the call of the cuckoo) 72
lha-pa (spirit-medium) 23, 77, 87
lha-rten (receptacle for divinities) 109, 157
lha-sras / *lha'i-sras* (son of a god) 29, 34–36, 43–45, 78, 93, 112, 113, 121, 201
lha-srin (grouping of spirits) 163
lha-srin sde-brgyad (group of elemental spirits) 12, 231
lha-tho (type of shrine) 134
lha-yul (realm of the gods) 35, 44, 45, 96
len / *glan* (to take) 172
lhe'u / *le'u* (little god) 17, 22, 33, 37, 221
lhe'u-lug (a funerary ritual sheep) 67
lhe'u-mgon (defender of the little gods) 108
lhe'u-mkhar (castle of the little gods) 36
lhe'u-sman (little god females) 25, 33, 45, 75, 90
Lho (a clan) 153
lhog / *glog* (pernicious illness) 148
lho-rlung (southern wind) 91
lho-sprin 'thibs-pa (billowing southern clouds) 91
lhug / *s.hug* (utterance) 193
lhum (womb) 197
lhums (pregnant) 153
li-khu (blood and semen) 35
lingga (ransom ritual figurines) 36, 155, 156
ljǐ-rmang 195
ljon-shing (tree) 104
log (revolted, reversed) 178
Lo-gsar (New Year) 49, 191
lo-ma (year) 186
longs-spyod (possessions) 22, 75
longs-spyod dkor (possessions equipage) 75
lta-mo (those looking on) 187
lte / *lde* (navel) 150
Lto (a clan) 153
lto (belly) 194
lug-gtad (funerary sheep gift) 131, 189
lug-rabs / *lugs-rab* (origins myth of the sheep) 115
lugs (tradition) 167, 180
lung gyǐ bar-tshǐgs (middle part of a valley) 148
lung gyǐ ma-mda' (lower part of a valley) 148
lung gyi ya-phu (upper part of a valley) 148
lung-pa (homeland, valley) 173
lu-shu 44

ma (mother, female) 48
ma-g.yel (undistracted) 71
ma-'grogs (not accompanied) 125
ma'i mngal (mother's womb) 151
ma'-lan 187
ma-btul (undefeated) 161
mag-pa / *mag-pa'* (bridegroom residing with wife's family) 187, 199
ma-khugs (unsummoned) 135
ma-khums (unkilled) 239
ma-mchod (unpropitiated) 161
ma-mo (diviner) 176
ma'-mo (mother) 200
mang / *mangs* (many) 206
mang-lag (hobble) 227
mar (butter) 24
mar-ba 40, 165, 233, 234
Ma-rgyud (Mother Tantra) 22
ma-rig (undiscerned) 150
ma-rnyed / *ma-snyed* (not found) 123
ma-sangs (an ancestral brotherhood) 175, 176, 211
ma-sangs rus-rgu (nine *ma-sangs* clans) 176
ma-sangs spun-rgu (nine *ma-sangs* brothers) 176
ma-slebs (unovertaken) 227
mching-gram 112, 113
mchod mchod (to continually worship) 218
mchod-pa (to offer in worship) 22
mchong (agate) 32
mchu-ring (long beak) 47
mda' (lower valley) 122
mda'-rgyud ldem-pa (arrow with flexible shaft) 205
mda'-rgyud nag-ma (striped or multicolored arrow with brocade) 121
mdad-shid / *'das-shid* (burial ceremony) 225
mdog (color) 191
mdos (type of ritual edifice) 25, 36, 127, 192
mdung-dar (spear with ensign) 36
mdur (to trot) 61
mdzo / *brdzo* / *mrdzo* (hybrid yak) 200, 202, 203, 228, 237
mdzo-mo (female yak hybrid) 228
mdzul / *mdzol* (collapsed) 164
med (non-existence) 68
me-dbal (white hot fiery mass) 176

med-yul (country of non-existence) 191, 192
me-long (mirror) 175
mgon / *'gon* (defender) 41, 224
mgon-lha (defender god) 108
mgul (shaky) 240
mgur (good speech) 233
mi-bla (human soul) 131
mi-btsun / *myi-btshun* (an epithet for the dead) 82, 130, 234
mi-dga' / *myi-rga* (unjoyous) 175
mi'i-bu (son of man) 35
mi-kha (calumny) 140
mǐ-men (non-human) 195
mi-mo / *myi-mo* (woman) 126, 136
ming / *mying* / *myĭng* (name) 137, 171, 222
mi-pho (man) 33
mi-rabs rgyud (hereditary lineage) 132
mjal-lo / *mjal-lo'* (met each other) 211, 243
mkha'-klong gsang-mdos (type of ritual) 55
mkhan (imputation of name) 137
mkhar / *mkar* / (castle) 223, 237, 238
mkhar-thabs (ritual replicas of castles) 36
mkhas / *mkas* (learned) 222
mkhos bgyĭs 178
mna' zos / *mna' za-ba* (to commit perjury) 226
mna'-bchad (to pledge an oath) 226
mna'-bskyal (to pledge an oath) 226
mnabs-sgye (kind of woolen clothing) 26, 27
mnad (false, scandalous) 194
mnar / *mnard* (to torture, to ravage) 168, 222
mngad 145, 150
mngar / *dngar* (sweet) 216, 240
mngon-cha / *mngon* (funerary offerings) 25, 153, 187, 190
mnol / *bnol* (serious form of contamination) 158
mnol-thub (contamination-proofing) 121
mnyen (well-tanned) 196
mo (divinatory rites) 150, 173, 199, 251
mo-btsun dbyel-mo (noble female consort) 33
mo-lha (god of females) 89, 143, 144, 170
Mon / Bskal-mon (various ancient and contemporary tribes of Tibet and the Himalaya) 123, 140, 154, 157
Mon-tho (type of ancient stele) 139
mo-rdo (stones used for divination) 173
mo-sri (demonic slayers of females) 99
mtha'- ma (final one) 74
mtha'/ *mta'* (frontier) 175, 179
mtho / *mto* (heights) 122, 148, 168
mtho bcu-gsum (thirteen heights) 201
mtho-'da' (heights) 122
mtho-btsams (to compete) 241
mthong (to behold) 175
mtho-po (mountain heights) 201
mtho-ris (heaven) 39
mthu-che (great magical power) 25, 72
mthus-'thab / *thus-bthab* (embroiled in a fight) 199
mtshal (vermillion) 24
mtshams / *'tshams* (margin, border) 16, 68
mtshan / *mtsan* (name) 179, 222
mtshan-byang (funerary name tablet) 156–158
mtshan-gsold (to adopt a name) 179
mtshe / *mtshe-mo* (ephedra) 35, 44, 145
mtsher / *mtsherd* (pastoral encampment) 227
mtshun / *mtshun-lha* / *mtshun-mgon* / *lha-mtshun* / *pha-mtshun* / *ma-mtshun* / *mo-mtshun* / *srid-pa'i pha-mtshun* (ancestral deities) 7, 26, 131–137, 140, 153, 233, 238, 245
mtshun rigs-lnga (five kinds of ancestral deities) 131
mtshungs (equivalence) 234
mu-le drum-shing / *mu-le drum* / *mu-le drum-shur* / *mu-le trum-shur* (a type of wood) 98, 99
mun ltar 'thibs (covering of darkness) 210
mur ru ru (to chew upon) 211
mu-stegs-pa (adherent of non-Lamaist religion) 180
mu-tig (pearls) 86
myes-po (paternal ancestor) 48
myi byer-ba (unscattered) 23
myi-bo (man, humans) 124
myi-bon (*bon* of humans) 230
myi-gnang-pa' (to not concede) 187
myi-gshed (manslayer) 130
myi-gson (living human) 211
myi-khyim (household) 201
myi-ma (noble woman) 136
myi-rung / *ma-rung* (inappropriate, unsuitable) 22, 123, 145, 210
myĭ-shi sos (rehabilitation of the dead) 176
myi-yul (country of humans) 44, 96, 145

nag-mo / *nags-mo* (black female) 150
na-gzhon / *ne'u-zhon* (youth) 36, 45
nam / *nams* (seasonal) 134
nam-kra 189
nam-mkha' / *nam-kā* (thread cross) 26, 27, 36, 157, 206
nam-mkha' stong-pa (empty space) 206
Nam-pa ldong (a language) 121
ne'-gsing (pasture) 191
ne-ne (paternal aunt) 176
ne-tso (parrot) 72
ne'u-zhon lhe'u-sman (female little god youth) 45, 47
ngag (speech) 168

ngan (impoverished, base, evil) 28
ngang-mo (female goose) 171
ngar (mighty, to snort) 210
ngar / *dngard* (forefront) 223
ngar / *ngar-pye* (unroasted, raw) 231
ngar-pye sngon-mo / *sngomo* (unroasted blue barleycorn) 24, 231
ngo ma-zin (unrecognized) 175
ngur (grunt) 198
nongs (to perish) 152, 156, 168, 178
nor gyi bang-so (treasure tomb) 171
nor-lha (wealth gods) 23, 90
nu (younger brother) 219, 225
nya (fish) 122
nyag (pedicel) 44,
nyag-cig (one clump) 44, 200
nyag-nyug 217
nyam-nos (defunct) 162
nyam-nyes (defective and deteriorated) 242
nyams (fallen away, declined) 242
nyan / *nyand* (to hear) 168
Nyang / Myang (a lineage) 186, 187
nye-du (relations) 219
nyen-byang (to cause harm) 216
nyer-bu 189
nyĭ mag-ma 187
nyig / *nyig-po* / *nyig-mo* / *nyig-bu'* / *nyi-gri* (antelope) 60, 61
nyon-mo (woman of misery) 126
nyung-ma (turnip) 170

'o-'bos (to call out vigorously) 224
'o-byams (greatly affectionate) 52
'od dkar-po (white light) 206
'ol de 'ol (conveys sinuous nature of tiger stripes) 194
'ol-ba (sparrow hawk, dark brown) 44, 161
'old 223
'ol-kon (a barley and butter pastry) 24, 170, 172
'o-mnyen (pleasure) 44
'ong 'ong 231
O-bo'i hor / A-pha hor (a pastoral tribe) 84, 85

'phab 201
'phan / *'pan* / *dpan* /*'phan-pa* (degenerated, deteriorated, broken) 145, 242
'phang-btsun / *phangs-btsun* (an epithet for the dead) 82, 130
'phangs (funerary) 197
'phangs (went away) 147
'phar-mo / *phar-mo* (female wild dog) 121
'phol (pulled) 203
'phong / *'pong* (spindle) 239
'phong-dkar skyes / *pon-kar skyes* (white fur growing on the rump) 233
'phra bye'u (kicker little bird) 30, 31
'phral (tribute) 154
'phrang / *'prang* (narrow passageway) 128, 227
'phru (finial) 51
'phrul gyi khug (magical sack) 175
'phub (suspended) 197
'phyo (to swim) 197
pad (compliments) 25
pha'-bo' (father) 200
phab (converted, sacked, to have brought down) 130, 178, 201
pha-bo (father, patriarch) 135, 138, 164, 179
pha-bong (boulder) 41, 148, 227
Phag-bon gsas-khrĭ (a funerary tradition) 167, 172, 180
pha-lha (father god) 36
pha-myes (male ancestors) 40, 132
phan (benefit) 153
phangs bon-po (type of priest) 232
phar (thither, to put over) 135, 191
pha-rol (other side, beyond) 135, 158, 202
pha-se 135
pho-brang / *po-brang* / (royal court, palace) 179
pho-gshen thod-dkar (white turbaned male priest) 150, 213
pho-lha (god of males) 89, 144
pho-ma ro-gu (crow) 186
pho-nya (attendant, messenger) 64
pho-rog / *pho-re* (crow) 62
phrad (to meet) 138
phrin / *prin* (messenger) 164
phu (elder brother, upper valley) 122, 192, 225
phub / *pub* (to erect) 197, 231
phud (first offering) 242
phug-rgu 202
phug-ron (pigeon) 165
phum / *pum* / *phum-phum* (mane) 44, 233
phung-po spo (transport of corpse to another place) 156
phur / *'phur*) (stake) 82, 210
phya (prognostic rites) 150, 251
Phya / Phywa (a divine lineage) 35, 56, 168, 169, 174–176, 222, 228
phya / *phywa* / *pya* (class of spirits, basis of good fortune) 25, 35, 78, 79, 201, 232
phya-bo 241
phyag-brnyan (attendant) 195
phyag-mtshan gshog-pa (hand-tool bird wing) 28
phyag-rgya (magic hand signals) 35
Phya-gshen theg-pa (first vehicle of Eternal Bon teachings) 150

phyal / *pyal* (taken) 168
Phya-lugs / Phywa-lug (a lineage or tradition) 168
phyang / *'phyang* (to hang down) 175
phye / *'phye'* (dust, fine particles) 192
phye-mar / *pye-mar* (barley meal and butter preparation) 24, 115, 170, 218
phyi-ba / *phyi* (marmot) 74, 122
phyi-mo (grandmother, maternal ancestor) 48
phyin / *chin* (to set out) 218
phying (felt) 112
phyi-phyi (to thoroughly clean) 175
phyu-pa (Tibetan-style robe) 20
phyogs-bzhi (four directions) 77
phyogs-skyong (guardians of the ten directions) 90
phyugs-dags / *pyugs-bdag* (livestock) 223
phyung / *dbyung* (to subjugate, to cast away, to remove) 153, 158, 178
phywa-blags / *phya-klag* / *pya-bklags* (to make a prognosis) 176
phywang 175
po-ti lcags lung-ma (device for binding folios) 28
pra-ma (curse) 145
pra-mo (daughter) 242
pyang pying 216
pyo-pyo (type of bird) 145, 231

ra-ba (enclosure) 185
ral-ga (robe made of silk or other precious textile) 176
ral-gri (sword) 63
ral-mo (ruined) 238
rang-lcebs (suicide) 139
rangs (enjoyment) 191
ran-ran (very appropriate) 189
ra-po-che / *ra-mo-che* (markhor) 50
rbab ltar dril (avalanche) 204
rba-drag (powerful current) 196
rbu 150
rbu-ba (waves) 191
rdod / *brdod* 229
rdol / *brtol* / *rtol* (opened, cracked) 173, 242
rdol-bon (type of shaman) 6
rdo-ring (long-stone, pillar) 140, 182
rdung (to strike) 195
rdze-ma (that which is erected) 239
rdzi / *rdzi'* (herder) 15
rdzi bas mgyogs (faster than the wind) 30
rdzi-bshor-ma (keen sense of smell) 58
rdzing (reservoir, water container) 141, 219
rdzogs-so' (it is finished) 192
rga-brang (joyous dwelling place) 156, 242
rgal (to pass over) 126, 168
rgod (cruel) 130, 142
rgod 'dur-ba (subjugation by the vulture) 63
rgod-bon (type of funerary priest) 35, 203, 204, 232
rgod-po / *rgod* (vulture) 48, 122
rgog-mo 149
rgun-na srod (winter evening) 208
Rgya (a clan) 48, 122
rgya (class of spirits) 27, 114, 115
rgyab / *brgyab* (back) 194
rgya-bon (type of priest) 114, 151, 230, 231
rgya-bya (large bird) 47
rgya-khang / *rgya-khang dar-rgyas* (a ritual structure) 115
rgyal-che (great monarch) 204, 205
rgyal-chen (protectors of the four cardinal directions) 90
rgyal-phran (principality) 128, 133, 151
rgyal-phung (category of the dead) 238
rgyal-po (king) 180
rgyal-thag brgyad / *rgyal-thag* / *rgyal-tag* (a ritual burial structure, medial band on tent) 230, 231
rgyal-thugs 186
rgya-lu-chas (a type of costume) 20
rgyang (wall, a long distance) 139, 192, 196, 204, 227, 228, 230, 237, 238
rgyang-bu (a ritual object) 192
rgyan-kar (white ornament) 205
rgyun-skar (constellation) 90
Rhya (a clan) 114, 151
ri-dwags srung-ma (protector of wild ungulates) 21, 33
rĭg-chun (bundle) 155
ri-kha' (mountain summit) 229
rĭm-rgu (nine levels) 166
rin-chen / *rin-cen* (jewel) 15, 109
rin-chen ser-ba (jewel hail) 24, 108
rin-chen sna-lnga (five different jewels) 76
ring / *rings* (long, far) 198
ring / *rings* / *rĭng* (human body) 26, 137, 199, 204
ring gĭ zhal (funerary effigy of the body) 157
ring-brsel (body relics of holy personages) 137
ring-gur (a type of mortuary tent) 26, 27, 244, 245
ring-khang (mortuary house) 27
ring-mkhan (a mortuary specialist) 137
rin-po-che / *rĭn-po-ce* (jewel) 191
ris-bkra (spots) 64
rje (lord) 36
rje bkra-mo (category of female dead) 156
Rje-bo (Lord) 152
rkang-'go (foot bones) 123
rkyang (wild ass) 30

rkyang-zhon (rider of the wild ass) 33
rlag (to destroy) 145
Rlang (a clan) 146, 148
rlangs / *glang* (vapor) 210
rlon / *lon* (fresh) 205
rlung-bya (bird of the wind) 39
Rma (a clan or tribe) 176
rma-'dangs / *rma-'dang* / *rman-dang* (mighty conflagration) 70
rma-bya sgag-mo (beautiful peacock) 72
rmang (steed) 122
rma-them rgu (nine levels of the underworld) 154
rme-khung (cavity for subjugating funerary demons) 166
rmong 122
rmos (to plow) 239, 240
rmun-bu 143, 145–147, 186
rnag / *snag* (flesh) 211
rnams / *snam* (various) 128
rne'u (blue sheep lamb) 158
rnel-dri / *rnel-gri* (violent causes of death in pregnant women) 7, 8, 117, 121, 127–130, 132–135, 137, 139, 143, 147–150, 152, 153, 155, 156, 160–167, 215
rnel-dri-mo (demonic slayer of pregnant women) 123
rnel-khung (cavity for subjugating *rnel* demons) 155, 165
rnel-mo (homicidal female spirit) 122
rngams / *rngam* (to tower over) 242
rngon-pa (hunter) 42
rngub-pa (to inhale) 210
rngul-mo (type of silver vessel) 171
rno-ba'i mtshon / *rno* (sharp-edged weapon) 145, 197, 205
rnying gi lugso (old custom) 217
Rnying-ma (a Buddhist sect) 45
ro (corpse) 158
rol (beyond) 127
rol du (for sport, for enjoyment) 178
ro-sel (cleansing of the corpse) 121
ro-smad (lower part of corpse) 166
ro-stod (upper part of corpse) 166
rta (horse) 122
rta-gtad (funerary horse offering) 69, 131, 225, 230, 232, 236
rta-lha (horse god) 44
rta-men 241
rta-rgyug (horseracing festival) 85
rten / *brten* (receptacle, tabernacle) 24, 82, 122, 134, 135, 168, 182, 201
rten-mkhar (type of shrine) 157
rting-dkar / *gting-kar* (white heel) 171
rtsa (passageway, nerve) 242
rtsal-drag (mighty skill, great power) 25, 72
rtse (peak) 82
rtse-lha (god of the peak) 89
rtse-rgyal (something very pointed) 135
rtsi / *rtshi* (herbs, paint / coloring agent) 243
rtug (flatulence) 203
ru (horn) 8
ru 'u (small horn) 206
rus-mdzod (clan treasury literature) 131
ru-mtshon (regimental banner) 70, 84
rus gyi 'go (epiphysis) 211
rus-rgu (nine clans) 176
ru-zed (antlers of variable or multiple points) 58

sa (earth) 122
sa-bdag (earth spirits) 23–25, 45, 76, 77, 90, 130, 131, 152, 193
sang-phod lo (next year) 197
sba / *rba* (cane) 123
sbal-pa (frog) 121
sbra / *sbra-nag* / *sbrel* 26, 230
sbra-khyĭm sgang sbrĭd-ma (type of tent) 165
sbrang-chang (mead) 216
sbrang-char (honeyed rain) 96
sbre'u (little tent) 26
sbred 199
sbrel / *sbreld* (to bind together) 227
sbubs / *sbubs-mo* (ritual pipe or conduit) 141, 142
sbyar (to make whole) 224
sde-srid (regent) 17
sdig (evil, sin) 237
sdod (stay!) 229
sdong-mo (tree, wooden vessel) 156, 163
sdos / *bsdos* (to risk, to be imperiled) 168, 222, 224
se-ba / *se* (rose) 163, 242
se-mo / *se* (a burial structure) 168, 229–231
sems-can (animal) 199, 204, 211
sems-can chen-po bzhi / *sems-can cen-po bzhi* (four great animals) 210
sen-men 189
ser / *ser-ba* (hail) 63, 90, 104
sgal (encampment) 195
sgeg-sa / *skegs* (a type of bird) 158
sgo / *sgo-mo* / *sgo-ba'* (portal) 162, 163, 195
sgo ra ra (conveys spinning motion) 137
sgom-btsun bon-mo (noble female *bon* meditator) 33
sgom-bu (flower bud) 199
sgong / *bsgong-nga* / *rgong* / *rgongs* (egg) 145, 173, 197, 211
sgra / *rgra* (sound) 168

sgra-bla'i rdzong (fortress of the warrior spirits) 36
sgra-bla / *dgra-bla* / *dgra-lha* (warrior spirits) 22, 24, 33, 36, 37, 48, 63, 70, 72, 76, 77, 89, 124, 131, 132, 144
sgrog (cord) 229
sgrum / *sbrum* (box) 165
sgrum-chag / *sbrum-chags* (broken box) 200
sgyed-bu / *sgyed-po* (hearth stones) 123
sgye-ma (a coarse woolen cloth) 27
sha (deer) 122
sha-'breng (cord of deer hide) 196
sha-bal (deer wool) 53
shad (comb) 123
shag-rag (bosom friend) 226
shal (mountain slope) 155
shal-ba (ritual stone missiles) 127
sha-rjen (raw flesh) 160
sha-shor (to hunt deer) 202
sha-slungs (deer habitat) 21, 57
She'u (a clan) 152
she'u-chung (fawn) 57
shel (crystal) 86, 124
shel-tshig / *she'u-tshig* (ritual parched barleycorn) 25, 45, 144, 151
shi (dead) 68, 135
shi 'i yul (country of death) 145
shi-bgab (to cut the chain of death) 27
shid (group of funerary rites) 26, 135, 145, 199, 219, 220, 241
shing ljon-pa (wood) 115
shing-gdang 231
shing-ring / *shing-rings* 121, 153, 205
shĭng-ring lce-dmar 121
shing-ris 122
shod-do / *shor-ro* (to explicate) 241
shu-bo / *shu-mo* 44
shu-gu (juniper tree) 171
shu-gu 'bum (ancient juniper tree) 153
shums se shums (conveys loud crying) 125
shungs (abuse) 211
sil-don (to make the meaning clear) 220
skad-gca' (strains of sound) 191
skar-mdo (star crossroads) 240
skar-ma g.yen (stellar demons) 89
ske-rgyud (engendering lineage) 17
skol (retainer, servant) 201
skom / *sgom* (thirst) 209
skran (tumor) 150
sku yi rten (body receptacle) 157
sku-bla (divine personal protector) 146, 153, 163, 170
skugs (wager) 172
sku-rten (body receptacle) 26
sku-smad (lower body) 136
sku-srungs (personal protector) 45
sku-stod (upper body) 136
skya 122
skyabs (protection, defense, protector) 185
skya-mo (pale female) 126
skyas-bdab (to climb up) 186
skyengs (embarrassed) 187
skyer (barberry) 123, 242
skyes-bu / *skyi-bu* (holy man, man) 195, 211
skyes-chas (implements of males) 44
skyes-pa pho (man) 140
skyibs-lha (god of the shelter) 162
skyibs-lug / *skyib-lug* / *skhyibs-lug* / *skyi-lug* / *chibs-lug* (sheep guide of the dead) 9, 10, 39, 40, 67, 115, 122, 158, 168, 178, 198, 213, 215, 221, 232–235
skyid-yul (happy land) 39, 40, 156, 242
skyĭ-mtshal 199
skyin (ibex) 49, 122
skyin-'dangs / *skyin-dang* (mighty deluge, great turbulence) 69, 70, 222
skyin-ba (compensated, compensation) 217–219
skyo-ma (barley porridge) 24
skyo-ma'-ba' (sorrowful mother) 198
skyon / *bkyon* / (defect, harm) 145
slag-pa (greatcoat of leather) 69, 173
slogs (to poke) 175
slu-gu / *slug-gu* (container for tea and beer) 141, 152
skur-bu (type of container) 141, 152
slungs / *bslungs* (habitat, range, an astrological measurement) 23
smad / *rmad* (lower) 218
sman (to benefit, beneficial) 45, 52, 72, 153, 237
sman bon-po (type of priest) 232
sman gyi dkor (equipage of females) 22
sman-bon (type of priest) 156, 232
sman-btsun (noble female, an epithet for the female dead) 31, 82, 130, 148
sman-bu (child of the female divinities) 91, 92
sman-dzong (fortress of females) 36
sman-mo (type of female spirit) 170
sman-sras (son of the female divinities) 91, 92
smon (prayers) 145
smos / *smos la* (to recite, to declaim) 122, 243
smra (to say) 193
smra (a primal quality, a primal human) 136, 241
smra gor-rdo (type of stone) 136
Smra zhang-zhung (a lineage) 49
smra-gor gling (primal soul stone sphere) 136
smra-le (speech facility) 239

smrang (proclamations of ritual origins) 6, 7, 27, 36, 38, 89, 93, 108, 117, 126, 128, 131, 133, 136, 142, 161, 167, 173, 178, 184, 185, 188, 193, 201, 212, 218, 229, 232, 251, 254
smrang-dar (type of banner) 115
smra-zhal (a type of funerary effigy) 26, 157
smug-po (reddish brown) 166
smug-rum na-bo (foggy and misty enclosed space) 233
smyug / *smyug-ma* (bamboo) 123, 163
sna-bon (type of priest) 232
Snang-gshen theg-pa (second vehicle of Eternal Bon teachings) 72
snang-srid (tangible existence) 26
snar-po 186
sna-tshogs / *rna-tshogs* (various types) 123, 156
sngags (spells) 175, 252
sngags-pa (lay religious practitioner) 188
sngar / *ngar* (before) 15
sngas / *rngas* (head first) 136
sngo-ma 'bru-bu (blue barleycorn) 176
sngo-mo (blue barleycorn) 168
sngubs (to rear up) 210
snur / *gnur* (pestle) 165, 176
snyem (to imagine, to think) 125, 185
snying-dgas (cherished one) 44, 145, 168, 239, 242
snying-lam (mind) 185
snyogs (agitated) 210
snyun bon-po (type of priest) 232
snyun gyi zo (prognosis) 150
snyun gyis zin (fell ill) 148
so-nams (to till the ground) 134
spang / *spangs* / *spang-ma* (meadow) 83, 237
spang-sangs 135
spard (to raise) 231
spo-ma nye-du 219, 220, 229, 239, 240, 242
spos (incense) 24
spo-sa (place newly occupied by shepherds) 219
sprad (to proffer, to apply, to administer) 126, 158, 199
spras / *pras* (bedecked) 233
sprugs (subjugated) 164
spu (feather, hair, fur) 50, 191, 239
Spug / Sbug (a clan) 8, 152, 193, 198, 201–206
spu-gri (saber) 63
spur / *sbur* (corpse) 123, 199, 204
Spu-rgyal (a Tibetan dynasty) 29, 78, 128, 146, 207, 211, 224
spur-khab 198
spur-khung / *spur-khang* (burial chamber) 123
spyang-khu-khu / *spyang* (wolf) 216, 226
spyang-mo (female wolf) 121
spyi (very top) 238
spyin-mo 155
sra (impervious) 210
srab mda' (bridle lead) 229
sram / *'gyur-sram* (otter) 72, 122
sras (son, offspring) 75, 98, 222
sras-dral (boy) 222
sreg / *srag* (quail, partridge) 122
sri / *sri-mo* (class of homicidal demons) 25, 28, 39, 55, 70, 122, 130, 136, 139, 143, 144, 146, 147, 158, 204, 222, 223, 244
srib (shade, shady place) 122
sribs-shing ma-rgu (nine mother shady woods) 154
srid / *bsrid* (to exist, to appear) 16
srid-gshen (type of priest) 22, 140
srid-gsum (three realms of existence) 63
srid-pa (existence, origins tale) 92
srid-pa'i lha-rabs / *lha-rabs srid-pa* (divine lineage of existence) 133
srid-rabs / *rabs* (origins tale) 35, 45, 117, 132, 152, 213
sri-khung / *srĭ-khung* (cavity for slaughter of *sri* demons) 55, 164
srin / *srĭn* / *srin-po* (class of demons) 10, 17, 25, 36, 44, 52, 69, 77, 121, 126, 134, 135, 137, 138, 143, 146, 151, 152, 160, 161, 163, 168, 174–176, 215, 216, 224, 225, 230, 231
srin gyi tsha' (nephew of the *srin*) 224
sring-mo (elder sister) 206
srog (life-force) 205
srog-gdos (the cause by which someone is killed) 187
srog-lha (god of the life-force) 144
srol-kong 242
srol-po (practices) 185
sru (maternal aunt) 218
stabs-sdug (beautiful gait, to prance, legs folded gracefully underneath the body) 50, 60
stag-dong (tiger-skin quiver) 44
stag-ma (martial symbols) 151
stag-pa'ĭ rgam-shĭng 165
stag-ris khra-bo (striped tiger) 72
stag-shar (possession of heroic males) 44
stangs / *stang* (husband, wife) 125
stangs dbyal (husband and wife) 179
sten-dgu' (nine rungs) 154
steng (upper realm, upper part) 36
sten-rab rgu (nine levels of hell) 154, 167
stigs (to apply) 238
stod (upper region) 130, 173
stod-khams (upper regions) 114
stod-pa (praises) 22

stod-thung (Tibetan-style shirt) 20
stong-khams (innumerable worlds) 63
stug (vital wind) 145, 203, 229
sug-chal (a saponaceous herb) 123
sul (couloir) 186

'thab / *bthab* / *'tab* (to fight) 178, 210
'then-bya (withdrawn, dragged, pulled) 158
'tshal (in offering, to set forth) 96
thag-zangs / *gtag-zangs* (shuttle) 175, 220
thal ma thul (spreading everywhere) 63
tha-ma byĭ-ba theng-leb 165
than /*gthan* (bad omen, respondent) 176
than-bya 158
thang (legal term, of funerary objects and rituals) 122, 144
thang-ba'i dkor (gifts for the dead) 22
thang-dkar / *thang-kar* (lammergeyer) 62, 63, 70
thang-gos (funerary clothing) 27
thang-khrims (prescribed funerary ritual procedures) 144, 157, 238
thang-sha (prescribed funerary meat offerings) 144
thar-bon (type of priest) 232
the'u / *be 'u* (claw) 152
the-ba (a species of bird) 72
thed (old and tattered things) 147, 166
them-pa (stage, level) 121, 122, 124
tho (type of funerary ritual structure, register, structure for making oaths) 139–141, 148, 149, 196, 225, 239
tho-ba (battle-hammer) 89
thod (head, skull) 173
tho-drag 196
thog-lcags (class of copper alloy amulets) 73, 96, 141, 183, 203, 215, 230
thog-ma' (primal age) 197
thor-ba' / *thor-ba* 150
thub / *bthub* (able to) 178, 186
thub-chod spun-gsum (three blocker brothers) 74
thug (grazed) 209
thugs (a consciousness principle, mind, heart) 12, 26, 31, 63, 150, 156, 182, 196, 199, 203, 220
thugs kyi rten (mind receptacle) 157
thugs kyi sprul pa (mind manifestation) 66, 67
thugs kyi zhal (funerary effigy of the mind) 157
thugs-cad (heartbroken) 138
thugs-glud / *thugs-blud* (ransom offering of the mind) 200
thugs-gur / *thugs kyi gur* (tent of the mind) 26, 244
thugs-kar (class of heroic spirits) 131
thugs-lam (mind) 125
thugs-log (benumbed) 194
thugs-sbra (tent of the mind) 231
thugs-yed gyĭs sngungs (shocked) 194
thul (type of robe) 186
thu-mo 125
thun (group of exorcisitc rituals) 127, 162
togs (impeded) 227
tong tong (shining through) 217
tsa ra ra (conveys the gushing of blood) 147, 148
tsag-li (illustrated cards) 18, 70, 83
tsam (so much, so many) 124
tsan-dan / *tsa-'dan* (sandalwood) 166
tsha 122
tsha' (lambskin) 191
tshab (substitute) 217, 219
tshan (a system of lustration) 127, 142, 158
tshar-slog / *tsha-log* (lambskin robe) 198
tshe-'das (deceased) 91
tshe'u (sweet long life) 238
tshĭg (scorching) 156
tshĭg-bshad (verse) 132
tshigs / *gtshigs* (joints) 211
tshul (this side) 158

'u-tshu (expression of pain) 150

wa-che (great fox) 226
wer-ma (class of heroic spirits) 132

yab-gdung (father's lineage) 194
yag / *yags* (good) 15, 93
yal / *yar* (to disappear, to escape) 130, 147, 172
yang-ba rab (shallow ford) 228, 242
Yar-lung (a dynasty) 218
yar-rgal na (to ascend) 125
yaru / *yar* (upward) 217, 237
ya-stags / *yas-thag* / *ya-stag* / *yas-rtags* (ensemble of ritual tools and offerings) 127, 155
ye-gshen (primeval priest) 83, 84, 140
yeng nge yeng (many bunches) 240
ye-shes (wisdom, knowledge) 96, 144, 207
yid (a consciousness principle) 12, 157, 189
yid kyi rje (lord of the mind) 242
yi-dam (tutelary deity) 140
yĭge (insignia) 178
yi-ge / *yĭ-gu* (writing, letters) 172
yin-cang 135
yod (existence) 68
yod-yul (country of existence) 191
yog / *'og* (lower realm) 36
yol-go (type of pot) 176
yon (gifts, qualities) 25
yon-bdag (benefactor) 25

yu-gar (white handle) 148
yul-sa / *yul-lha* (god of the locale) 22, 24, 25, 27, 44, 45, 51, 52, 55, 56, 72, 81, 86, 102, 103, 110, 111, 115, 131, 132, 143, 144, 165
yungs-mo sgangs (pod of mustard seeds) 44
yur 83, 84
yur-po / *yu-mo* (a deer species) 57, 207

zag 122
zags (fallen) 122
zal-mo (type of bird) 165
za-ma mo (woman) 140
zam / *'zam* (bridge) 202
zang zang (standing high, towering) 154, 164
zangs (copper) 124
zangs 'od-'bar (highly lustrous copper) 107
zangs se zangs (conveys something towering and pointed) 154
zangs-bu (small copper vessel) 123
zang-yag (to stand very high and sharp, to tower above, rows of pointed objects) 154, 203, 209
zan-mar (parched barley meal and butter cakes) 24
za-za (to consume much) 216
ze'u (little milk bucket) 240
zegs (water spray) 216
zer (speech, sunray) 193, 217
zer-mong (a species of bird) 47, 48
zhabs-'bring / *zha'-'bring* (helper, servant) 187
zhags-pa / *zhags-pa'* (lasso, snare) 15, 104
zhal (type of funerary effigy, face) 26, 156–158, 178, 198
zhal-sros (victuals) 77
zhang (a Zhang-zhung language term) 173
zhang-blon / *zhang-lon* (matrilineal ministerial institution) 218
zhang-po (maternal uncle) 198
zhib (roasted barley meal) 24
zhib-mar / *gzhĭb-ma* (a barley and butter pastry) 24, 170
zho bzhos (milked for yogurt) 198
zho-'dzag 'dzag-pa 165
zhog-mo (sheet) 201
zhogs (shavings) 200
zho-nyen (lead) 189
zhu-bub (type of headgear or head ornament) 150
zhung-zhag (horned eagle) 173
zhur-po / *bzhur* (horse with white forehead) 44, 150
zil (nectar) 239
zi-ma (sparkling) 216
zin / *zind* (to catch) 227
zla re nya (as or like the full moon) 137, 138
zo (milk bucket, condition of a patient) 150, 240
zo-dor (type of spirit) 132
zo-rig (sickle) 26