

PART III

THE ARCHAIC FUNERARY TRADITIONS OF TIBET AND ZHANG-ZHUNG

And death, to the Etruscans, was a pleasant continuance of life, with jewels and wine and flutes playing for the dance. It was neither an ecstasy of bliss, a heaven, nor a purgatory of torment. It was just the natural continuance of the fullness of life. Everything was in terms of life, of living.

Lawrence, *Etruscan Places*¹

His bows, for action ready bent,
And arrows, with a head of stone,
Can only mean that life is spent,
And not the old ideas gone.

Philip Freneau,
*The Indian Burying Ground*²

1 Tibetan Archaic Funerary Traditions in the Light of Archaeological Research

As we have vividly seen, ancient Upper Tibetan culture relied heavily on burial as a means of disposing of the dead. Burial grounds and funerary monuments are found throughout the region, documenting the geographic universality of the tradition of interment. Moreover, these utilitarian and ceremonial funerary structures exhibit a great deal of diversity, reflecting considerable temporal, socioeconomic and even cultural variability. To date, I have found no Tibetan text that corroborates the material tradition of burial in Upper Tibet in anything more than a cursory fashion. Tibetan literary sources tell us that interment was a fact, but give few clues about the mortuary practices related to the preparation of the corpse, or the architectural forms that developed around the various types of inhumation. Tibetan literature does, however, describe the ritual activities associated with ancient funerals and burial practices in noteworthy detail. The Dunhuang and g.Yung-drung (Swastika) Bon documents lay bare a composite of funerary rites of significant complexity, the product of refined philosophical and technological formations.

¹ Enright 1987, p. 130.

² Enright 1987, p. 131.

This great Tibetan funerary tradition originated in a geographic and intellectual environment largely at variance with that of the Subcontinent and its Indic religions, such as Buddhism. The cultural differences between Indian Buddhist and ancient Bon funerary traditions extend to virtually all areas of comparable analysis, encompassing the world outlook, ritual praxis, and the material objects used in matters related to death. It would appear that the archaic funerary materials owe their genesis in large measure to patterns of cultural development that occurred on the Tibetan Plateau before and during the imperial period. While enrichment of the ancient Tibetan funerary tradition through contact with adjoining peoples (particularly in the direction of the Inner Asian steppes) is strongly indicated, many of the tradition's basic elements appear to be genuine manifestations of Tibetan cultural and technical innovation. As explicated in Part I, the indigenous character of archaic funerary traditions is mirrored in the distinctive assemblage of burial monuments found in the uplands of the Tibetan Plateau.

This part of the study further demonstrates that Tibetan funerary traditions, as elucidated by archaeological exploration, textual studies and ethnographic inquiry, reveal the existence of a recognizable Tibetan cultural milieu. That is to say, Tibet was and is in possession of a unique (Tibetanized) thanatopsis with attendant beliefs, customs and practices. A thorough interdisciplinary exposition of Tibetan funerary culture is nevertheless still a long way off. Much more research based on a regimen of excavation is required if we are to fully tie together the disparate methodological threads furnished by the literary and ethnographic records with the emerging ethnoarchaeological model. The qualitative and quantitative correlation of specific philosophical and ritual structures of the Tibetan literary tradition to mortuary archaeology has hardly begun. My aim in writing on Tibetan funerary culture is to furnish a starting point for this type of allied research and exploration.

Our current state of knowledge does not permit an exhaustive assessment of the chronology of each of the many philosophical, ritual and recitative structures portrayed in Tibetan literature. Furthermore, the material cultural, ethnohistorical and geographic implications of the various funerary traditions contained in the literary records are mostly unknown quantities. At this juncture, an examination of the general correspondences in the funerary traditions as elucidated by joint archaeological, textual and ethnographic investigation must suffice. The interdisciplinary study of congruencies in Tibetan funerary traditions is, however, constrained by temporal limitations. The dating of currently observable anthropological phenomena to a particular period must be subject to some form of historical corroboration in order to be credible. In this respect, the temporal depth of present-day cultural manifestations can be validated only when they occur as datable historical 'facts'. The existence of an isolated textual reference to a particular contemporary ethnographic phenomenon is not a sufficient proof of continuity without supplementary evidence documenting this through time and space to the Tibet of today. Needless to say, this standard of determining the historicity of present-day cultural activities in Tibet is difficult to attain. Thus, most claims of longstanding continuity must perforce remain hypotheses. While the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts, through their Bon textual analogues, provide stringent verification of the antiquity of contemporary funerary practices only in certain instances, they do support the hypothetical survival of a wide range of death rituals to the present time. It can sometimes be established, but more usually must be hypothesized, that many aspects of Tibetan funerary culture date to the imperial period or its aftermath. At the same time, archaeological data from Tibet and other regions of Inner Asia increasingly suggest that the Tibetan funerary tradition as represented in Dunhuang and Bon sources is, in fact, considerably more ancient than the imperial period. A panoply of funerary motifs and practices appears to have stemmed from a marking of death in

ritual observance reaching far back into the Tibetan Iron Age.³ After presenting the pertinent texts, I explore the prospects for an Iron Age antiquity of Tibetan funerary culture using archaeological evidence, and use this theoretical chronological placement to account for the far-reaching nature of specific aspects of Tibetan thanatology.

There is as yet no means at our disposal to ascertain how much of the written materials presented in this work is specifically applicable to mortuary traditions as actually practiced in ancient Upper Tibet. While there is significant evidence to suggest that Upper Tibet served as a wellspring for at least some of the archaic Tibetan funerary traditions, the texts do not furnish us with many indications of the geographic origination of the rites and readings contained within. As with most non-Buddhist/indigenous religious practices that appeared in the post-tenth century CE organized Bon religion, it is traditionally assumed that the funerary traditions were likewise transferred from Zhang-zhung to other parts of the Tibetan Plateau. While there are literary references that lead us to believe this may have been the case, the nature and extent of this particular form of cultural diffusion remains highly obscure. What can be established from the extant Dunhuang and Bon literary materials is that, by the imperial period, intricate funerary traditions embedded in sophisticated philosophical and ritual systems had spread across much of Tibet. Moreover, the wealth of beliefs and activities associated with the reposit of the corpse and the steorage and renaissance of the deceased in the funerary rites find commensurate expression in the rich monumental remains of the royal epoch throughout Tibet.

With the exception of just a few origin myths, the funerary texts do not engage in a localization discourse. Although the etiology of a good number of funerary elements points to Zhang-zhung, this is seldom explicitly stated. Little attempt was made to pin down where a certain form of funeral or burial may have been first practiced, let alone set out a discussion about the intricacies of regional variations. This leads to a considerable problem in using Tibetan literature to serve as an instrument of archaeological interpretation in any given geographical context. We simply do not have the inditements needed to gauge how much of the recorded funerary lore is relevant to prehistoric and early historic Upper Tibetan burial practices. We are mostly left with general indications; valuable but geographically non-specific correspondences between the literary sources and the empirical approach of archaeology.

Close inspection of the Dunhuang and Bon funerary materials shows that they were composed to be applicable to widely divergent Tibetan geographic contexts. In fact, great pains were taken to present the funerary tradition as applying throughout the Plateau. I take this geographic inclusion primarily as a sign of imperial period efforts to create a Plateau-wide funerary culture as part of an

³ It should be pointed out at the outset, that many of the general themes of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition given in the Dunhuang and later Bon documents correspond with recurring patterns found throughout ancient Eurasian (and world) thanatological mythology. These include the notions that the recently dead are potentially dangerous to the living, and that special measures must be taken in order to ensure the continued well-being of those still alive. The dangers the dead pose to the living in India, Siberia and other world cultures are examined in Frazer 1933; Bendann 1969. A seminal feature of Eurasian funerary mythology is the motif of the deceased encountering infernal geographic obstacles on the way to the next world, which is vividly reflected in Tibetan literature as well. As in the Dunhuang and Bon texts, it would appear that the funerary rites of many ancient peoples contained ritual conferments and magical procedures conceived of as aiding the deceased in the difficult journey to the afterlife. The belief in the final resting place of the dead being a pure realm or a celestial heaven is another characteristic of ancient Eurasian mythology held in common with the Tibetan tradition.

intensive process of cultural and political integration. The achievement of some degree of linguistic and social amalgamation would have aided the rulers of the Tibetan empire in strengthening their dominion over the entire Plateau. The tactical use of religious beliefs to unify the diversified ethnical and cultural mosaic of Tibet must therefore have been of paramount importance. In my view, the existence of a standardized corpus of written funerary rites was likely to have been one agent among many in a deliberate bid to Tibetanize the pre-existing traditions of the proto-tribal unions (such as Sum-pa, Zhang-zhung, A-zha, Me-nyag, and so forth). I further hold that the creation of a systematic Tibetan funerary tradition may have had the effect of blurring or eradicating antecedent proto-tribal cultural diversity.

A comparison of the mortuary archaeology of Tibet and the textual funerary rites demonstrates that an important interface between these manifold sources of data does indeed exist. An elucidation of the commonalities shared by Tibetan literature and archaeology is useful in setting the agenda for further research and inquiry. Let us then briefly review these literary and archaeological parallels using an Upper Tibetan frame of reference. The custom of offering a variety of physical objects, as mentioned in the funerary texts, seems to have direct correspondence to the grave goods uncovered from tombs of many typologies. In particular, the pedestrian custom of depositing bones and horns of equids and caprids in tombs can probably be correlated to funerary texts, in which these animals functioned as sacrificial offerings and magical vehicles of the deceased. The deposition of knives, arrows, textiles, vessels and other objects in tombs is reflected in their ritual usage in the funerary literature as well. The existence of standing stones (*rdo-ring*) and *tho* (minor ceremonial structures) is also documented in both the archaeological and written records. Another prominent concurrence between archaeological data and the funerary literary corpus has to do with the location of virtually all ancient cemeteries on dry, well-drained ground. As we shall learn, the *Klu 'bum* makes it eminently clear that the consignment of mortal remains well away from water sources and the *klu* spirits that inhabit them was an unshakable imperative. There also appears to be some correlation between the siting of tombs on mountaintops and the celestial afterlife of the Tibetan funerary chronicles.

2 A Bird's Eye View of Tibetan Funerary Traditions

In short, the Bon funerary tradition is designed to alleviate the suffering believed to be felt by someone who has been severed from the world he or she had become acquainted with during the course of life. This would appear to be the prime impetus behind the formulation of funerary rites in the imperial period and many of the practices adopted by the Tibetan Buddhists as well. It is commonly thought by both Bon-po and Buddhists that the deceased experiences fear, confusion and longing at the time of death. It is considered essential that these afflictive mental states be neutralized in order that the deceased reaches a superior eschatological fate. In Buddhism and assimilated Bon doctrinal reckonings, which have prevailed over the last millennium, this would entail the attainment of a better rebirth or, in ideal circumstances, enlightenment. In the archaic funerary traditions, which can be directly traced through the Dunhuang manuscripts to the early historic period, the superior state after death is reunion with one's manes in a uranic paradise.⁴ A positive outcome for the deceased in both the archaic and prevailing traditions⁵ is accomplished through the exercise of diverse funerary rites, which share many liturgical and procedural elements in common.

In addition to liberating the deceased, the Bon funerary performances are designed to benefit the living by preventing the deceased from interfering in their affairs. They serve as a bulwark against further misfortune and death. The centerpiece of the Tibetan funeral in both its archaic and prevailing configurations is the sacerdotal presence. Priests adept in the correct performance of funerary rites are seen as pivotal in the great transition from death to salvation. This relationship between the deceased and the functionaries of Bon and Buddhism is epitomized in a popular song entitled *The Nectar of Profound Dharma, the Buddhist Dharma*:

The father lama, sun of space, is not greatly necessary when in repose free from care,
[but] he is necessary when going along the copper caldron of death's hell. The nectar
of the profound holy Dharma is not greatly necessary when in repose free from care,
[but] it is necessary when going through the *bar-do* after death. g.Yung-drung Bon,

⁴ In the *dBa' bzhed* (attributed to the late imperial or early post-dynastic period), in the period of King Khri-srong lde-btsan, after the two children of dBa' gsal-snang passed away a Buddhist funeral was secretly convened by a *hwa-shang* (Chinese Buddhist monk). The *hwa-shang* is recorded as having placed a pearl half stained with vermilion in the mouth of the deceased daughter, which supposedly appeared in the newborn son of the same mother as a tooth colored in the same manner. This episode is used to illustrate the validity of the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth. Interestingly, in the same account, the deceased son is said to have been reborn among the *lha*. See Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, pp. 15, 38, 39. This birth in the *lha* realm appears to be a concession to the archaic funerary traditions.

⁵ In this work, I will refer to native funerary traditions that can be provisionally or positively shown to have existed in the early historic period as the 'archaic tradition', and those Bon funerary traditions that have assimilated Buddhist ideas and practices as the 'prevailing tradition'. Some Buddhism-derived funerary traditions may actually predate some 'archaic' Tibetan variants. My aim in making this two-fold distinction is not so much to demonstrate relative antiquity as to illustrate that differing religious orders are involved. While the archaic and prevailing corpora of traditions are derived from different cultural sources, a good deal of syncretistic interconnection exists between them. This makes clear delineation into two discrete categories of tradition often problematic. The timeline of historical developments that led to the formation of the prevailing Bon and Buddhist funerary traditions remains obscure. This is chiefly because the relevant Bon funerary texts do not acknowledge their debt to Buddhist thought, nor do the Buddhists regularly trumpet their cultural debt to the Bon-po. Further complications arise from the fact that most of the Bon funerary texts are anonymous and as yet undated.

the silver mirror, is not greatly necessary when in repose free from care, [but] it is necessary when leading mother beings of the six realms to paradise (*bde-'gro*).⁶

Funerary rituals (*'dur*) range from those that are abbreviated and simple to elaborate ceremonial dispensations that last several days. Generally speaking, the type of funeral to be performed is dictated by the cause of death, and the wishes and economic means of the surviving family members. A typical funeral and the proscriptions associated with it in contemporary northern Tibet are briefly described in a Nag-chu studies journal.⁷

Generally, three days after death the burial (disposal) is made.⁸ No greeting is given to the transporters of the corpse (*phung-po*) to the charnel grounds (*dur*). In the rNying-ma and Bon-po religions the *'dur-chos* (syncretistic funerary ritual) must be held for the deceased. The *zhi-khro* (evocation of peaceful and wrathful deities) is made and the *byang-zhu* (card with name and likeness of deceased) is written. After the corpse is sent away, those with 'connections of the hearth'⁹ visit [the deceased's household] and offer butter for the butter lamps, money and goods. As a sign of bereavement (*mya-ngan*), for 49 days the household members do not wash their hair or put on new clothes.¹⁰ For one year males do not ride horses and females do not sing or dance at festivals.¹¹

In the archaic (and to a lesser degree in the prevailing) Bon funerary traditions, the cause of death, as well as the distress that is believed to beset the deceased, is attributed to various types of negative entities. These often appear in the form of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic demons. They include the *bdud* (cause of old age, sickness and death), *gdon* (obstructions of well-being and life), *sri* (life-cutting fiends) and, most importantly, the *gshed* (human killers). In general

⁶ *Chos zab mo dam chos bdud rtsi*. See *dMangs glu snyan dbang bdud rtsi* (published by mTsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun khang: Zi-ling, 1997), p. 178. The song reads: *pha bla ma dgun gi nyi ma de / sos dal nyin dgos mkho mi che ste / shi dmyal ba'i zangs kha 'grim nyin mkho / chos zab mo dam chos bdud rtsi de / sos dal nyin dgos mkho mi che ste / tshe phyi ma'i bar do 'grim nyin mkho / bon g.yung drung dngul dkar me long de / sos dal nyin dgos mkho mi che ste / ma 'gro drug bde 'gror khrid nyin mkho /*.

⁷ See "Byang rigs tsho pa'i yul srol gom gshis kha shas skor", anonymous, p. 113, in *Nag chu sa gnas srid gros dbu brnyes nas lo sum cu 'khor bar rten 'brel zhu ba'i ched bsgrigs*, pp. 106–117. Nag-chu: Nag-chu sa-gnas srid-gros lo-rgyus rig-gnas dpyad-gzhi'i rgyu-cha rtsom-sgrig-khang.

⁸ The dismemberment of corpses and the feeding of them to vultures and occasionally to other animals (such as dogs) is the prime method of disposal in contemporary Tibet. Cremation is also resorted to in certain places and conditions. Wylie (1964–1965: 235) describes the cremation of commoners (*mi-ser*) and higher-status individuals from Sa-skya. In recent centuries, interment was generally reserved for the victims of epidemics (smallpox, tuberculosis, etc.) and those who perished in wars. In eastern Tibet rudimentary methods of burial are also used for those who died from other causes. The disposal of corpses in rivers also occurs in Tibet, particularly among those who cannot afford the 'sky burial' rites. According to Wylie (*ibid.*: 233), water burial is a preferred means of corpse disposal at Yar-'brog g.yu-mtsho. Among the Bhotia of Uttaranchal, those who die of serious diseases are also buried (Sherring 1906: 122, 126).

⁹ *Thabs kyi 'brel-ba*. Those households specially connected to others in an arrangement of mutual aid and cooperation. These families are obliged to visit the household of the deceased and offer small gifts and consolation.

¹⁰ Songs of bereavement and pain (*tsher-glu*) in Yol-mo are an important part of strategies used to help survivors cope with death and personal loss. For translations of these *tsher-glu*, see Desjarlais 1992, pp. 96–134.

¹¹ Descriptions of observed Tibetan Buddhist and Bon funeral performances are found in Mumford 1990, pp. 196–224; Kværne 1985, pp. 11–26; Tucci 1980, pp. 197, 198; Bell 1968, pp. 285–300; Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 18–28; Waddell 1895, pp. 489–497. According to Skorupski (1982: 361), funeral rites of the rNying-ma *byang-gter* tradition have the following major elements: *'pho-ba* (consciousness transference), readings from the *Bar do thos grol*, *byang-chog* (ritual to guide deceased to a better rebirth using an effigy card), and the *ro-sreg* (cremation ceremony).

terms, the *gshed* (literally, executioner) are the set of anthropomorphized factors leading to death, whatever their roots; and, more particularly, to violent or accidental causes of death. The *gshed* are also believed to haunt the deceased and obstruct him¹² from finding salvation.¹³ In the Bon funerary traditions practiced at present, the *gshed-bkral* ritual is performed to prevent the deceased's soul from being captured by evil entities, which would block it from obtaining a better rebirth or liberation. Customarily, the *gshed-bkral* is performed three days after death and once a week for a period of seven weeks. After the *gshed* is apprehended through sundry ritual means, it is symbolically slain. Once the deceased is out of the grip of the *gshed*, he must be prevented from trying to return to the world of the living.¹⁴ This enables the deceased to leave the existence that follows immediately after death and head for a more salutary future in either a conditional or eternalistic new existence. In the prevailing Bon tradition, the deceased is guided to the best rebirth possible, which is also dependent on the karmic burden incurred during life. In consonance with the compassionate ideal in Lamaist religions, even the slain *gshed* demon is guided to a better rebirth.

This epic struggle between the deceased, the demons of death and the funerary priest allies unfolds in the arena of an interim existence interposed between the extinguished life and a future life. In the prevailing Bon tradition, this post-death existence or condition is known as the *bar-do* or *bar-ma* (intermediate state), and as the *bar-sa* (intermediate place, intermediate ground) in the archaic tradition. It is during this provisional existence, in the aftermath of death, that most funerary activities occur. Once the funeral rituals associated with the postmortem state have been conducted, the mortuary rites are completed: those activities prescribed for disposal of the corpse.

It is considered paramount that the Bon funerary priests (*'dur-bon*) separate the departed from the *gshed* and convey him to the next existence. In prevalent religious conceptions, there are three fundamental components of mental activity that make up the individual: the *bla*, *yid* and *sems*. It is these three ontological entities that are involved in the process of ritual evocation. In Tibetan philosophical traditions, a great deal of discourse is devoted to these terms, the details of which are defined according to sectarian thought and the type of Buddhist vehicle (*theg-pa*). In relation to the prevailing Bon funerary traditions, these terms can be briefly defined as follows:

- 1) *Bla* is the animating principle or force that permits one to be aware of oneself and the external environment. It emanates from both the *sems* and *yid*.¹⁵
- 2) *Yid* is the component of the mind in which emotional, sensory and cognitive processes take place, as well as its discriminative aspect.
- 3) *Sems* is the primary consciousness principle, the fundamental currency or underpinning of the mind. It is referred to as the basis of all mental activity (*kun-gzhi*).

In the archaic funerary tradition, *bla* and *yid* subsume the function of the *sems* to produce a bipartite system, which accounts for the totality of the mind and mental activity. There is also a

¹² I will use male gender pronouns as a literary convention. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the textual passages and interpretive materials presented in this work are applicable to both males and females.

¹³ A somewhat more Buddhicized explanation of the *gshed* is found in Martin, Kværne, and Nagano 2003: 543.

¹⁴ For example, in Bon funerals held in sTeng-chen, after the grip of the *gshed* is broken, the houses of the deceased's relations are surrounded with ashes to repulse the departed.

¹⁵ For a helpful description of the *bla yid* and *sems* in the Bon context, see Norbu 1995, p. 254 (n. 2). Snellgrove (1967: 118, 119, 121), without providing a critical discussion of these terms, glosses *bla*, *yid* and *sems* as 'spirit, thought and mind'.

different two-part classification of the mind in the archaic funerary tradition known as the *bka'* *thugs*. The *bka'* appears to be tantamount to the *bla* and is related to the common meaning of this word as an utterance or aspiration.¹⁶ The *thugs* is comparable to the *yid* as the prime perceptual and cognitive faculty of the individual. It is not at all clear in the Bon funerary literature why there exist two bipartite phenomenological systems, nor is the relationship between them explained. They appear interchangeably, and even the twin components are combined indiscriminately, as if their historical pedigree and significance had been lost by the time the Bon funerary texts were written down in their present form.

The dual purpose of the *'dur* rituals is to guide the one who has passed away and to protect those left behind. The armature of ritual performances functions to prevent the deceased from returning to his or her former home and relatives, and wrecking havoc in the world of the living. This separation of the dead (*shi-ba*) from the living (*gson-pa*) is of paramount importance, for it is believed in both the archaic and Lamaist literary settings that these two ontological categories constitute existential poles, diametrically opposed to one another. In the archaic historical setting this has been succinctly expressed as follows: "On behalf of living beings, the 25 *gshen-po* fully mastered the complete separation of the living and the dead, these two."¹⁷ It is commonly held that the dead and living can be reconciled with one another but may never inhabit the same sphere, for the former is a pernicious influence on the latter, robbing the vitality of those still alive. The *'dur* rituals are also dedicated to the living in two other major ways: they guard them from falling prey to an unnatural death, and they shore up the good fortune capability (*g.yang*) on which they depend. These embody both the archaic and prevailing funerary traditions' two main functional modes: apotropaic and providential.

The *'dur* rituals are given primarily in the fourth vehicle or system (*theg-pa*) of Bon teachings known as Srid-gshen.¹⁸ The exorcism of obstructive forces hampering the liberation of the deceased, however, is also part of the third vehicle, *'Phrul-gshen*. A description of the philosophy and main ritual activities of the prevailing Bon funerary tradition is found in the biographical work *gZi brjid*.¹⁹ It records that when sTon-pa entered his fourth *gshen* year (his fourth century in human terms) he taught the Srid-gshen vehicle as requested by Srid-gshen gtsug-phud, son of Srid-pa ye-khri bdal-'od. In the text, sTon-pa explains that the place, time and cause of a future death are uncertain, and that there are 60,000 *gdon* (demons) who are vengeful towards the deceased. By the power of karma (*las*) born from delusion (*'khrul-pa*), the deceased perceives the three components of the mind, *bla*, *yid* and *sems*, as separate entities. The deceased does

¹⁶ The soul as something connected to the voice and the expulsion of breath was a pervasive belief in the ancient world. The Han dynasty Chinese believed in a soul (*hun*) associated with the breath, as did the Greeks (*psyche*, *thymos*), Romans (*anima*, *animus*), and Jews (*nepesh*) (cf. Ying-shih Yu 1987: 374, 377 (n. 31)).

¹⁷ *bsGrags pa gling grags: 'Gro don mthar phyin pa'i gshen po nyi shu rtsa lnga ni / gson gshin gnyis kyi go cha byed / See p. 285, para. vi.*

¹⁸ According to a text in the Byams-ma cycle rediscovered by Khro-tshang 'brug-lha (11th century CE) (see *Zhang bod lo rgyus ti se'i 'od* by Namkhai Norbu, Lhasa: Krung-go'i bod kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun khang, 1996, pp. 312–317), during the time of King Nya'-khri there was the Bon tradition of Shes-pa bcu-gnyis (Twelve Systems of Knowledge), which included *'Dur-shes srid-gshen* for recovering the *bla*, *yid*, and *sems* (consciousness principles) of those who died through violent or accidental means caused by the life-cutter demons. This system of knowledge is recorded as being carried out by the *gshen*.

¹⁹ See *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, attributed to sTang-chen dmu-tsha gyer-med, rediscovered by sPrul-sku blo-ldan snying-po (born 1360 CE) (Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang: Lhasa, 2000), vol. 3, pp. 43–48. Contemporary Bon funeral practices are largely based on the *gZi brjid*. The *gZer mig* is also a model for funerary traditions still observed by the Bon-po (cf. Kværne 1985: 10).

not comprehend the nature of mind as pure awareness (*rig-pa*) and egolessness (*bdag-med*) but erroneously apprehends it in dualistic terms of a subject and object (*bdag-po gnyis*). It appears that, at the time of birth, a benefiting *lha* and harming *'dre* are born with the person due to this deeply rooted ignorance.²⁰ After death, the deceased has all the senses he had when alive, but he is in a state of great distress. This is described in the text by various similes such as:

- “Terrified like a trapped wild ungulate” (*'Jigs skrag bred pa ri dwags rgyar chud 'dra l*).
- “Like a [prisoner] in a dark jailhouse pit without hope of liberation” (*Thar du mi re mun khang brtson (= btson) dong 'dra l*).
- “Like the sorrow of an onager/horse (*ku-hrang*) at the ends of the earth”²¹ (*Yid kha rmongs pa sa mtha'i ku hrang 'dra l*).²²

The *gZi brjid* explains that on account of the great suffering associated with death, the rituals of the Srid-gshen vehicle are done in accordance with the calculated cause and circumstances of death in order to extricate the deceased from his misery (cf. Snellgrove 1967: 119). The *bla*, *yid* and *sems* are combined and put into a very wide, blissful intermediate place (*bar-sa bde yangs-pa'i gnas su zhogs*). They are then taught the Bon portal of remembrance,²³ and are finally guided to the blissful realm (*bde-ba'i gnas*) of the *bon-nyid* (reality as it is). The Srid-gshen Bon portal has two main parts: *shid* methods (preliminary practices based on calculation of the cause of death) carried out by the *bon-po* of the lineage of existence, and *'dur* methods (the main funerary practices; namely, the summoning and guiding of the deceased and the slaying of the *gshed*).²⁴

²⁰ This is phrased (p. 46): “It is held that a *lha* is born at the same time. It is held that a *'dre* is born at the same time” (...*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i lha ru 'dod l ...lhan-cig skyes-pa'i 'dre ru 'dod l*). Karmay (1998: 132) maintains that the Tibetan archaic belief in a god and demon born at the same time as each person was gradually altered by Buddhist thought. This belief became assimilated into the doctrine of karma and then further refined to embody the concept of innate intelligence and ignorance (*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i rig-pa dang ma-rig-pa*). It is in such a sophisticated philosophical framework that the notion of ignorance (*ma-rig*) is presented here in the *gZi brjid*. See also, Snellgrove 1967, pp. 117, 259 (n. 37). In Buddhist *bar-do* literature there is a motif in which the judgment of the deceased is carried out by the *lhan-cig skyes-pa'i lha* and *lhan-cig skyes-pa'i 'dre*, who count white and black pebbles respectively (Evans-Wentz 1927: 165, 166). In Sikkim, this pair is called Lha (d)kar chung and bDud-nag chung (*ibid.*: 165, 166). In the Byang-thang, these same twins are known as Las kyi bu-chung dkar nag (Black and White Boys of Destiny) (for mention of them in the sacred geography of gNam-mtsho, see Bellezza 1997a: 180). These dichotomous pairs of deities that judge the deeds of the dead would appear to represent an eschatological tradition that existed before the development of the Tibetan *bar-do* literature. Tucci (1980: 194, 195) sees old Iranian influences related to the postmortem conflict between the embodiments of the good and bad consciences as having permeated the *lhan-cig skyes* tradition. Evans-Wentz (1927: 35, 36) compares the weighing of the deeds of the deceased by the king of the *gshin-rje* with the activities of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, and even suggests a common origin.

²¹ *Sa-mtha'*. This is a metaphor for a wasteland or a place without companions.

²² For a fuller account of the fate that befalls the recently deceased, taken from the *gZi brjid*, see Norbu 1995, pp. 87–89. A translation of an excerpt from a syncretistic Bon funerary liturgy in the Srid-gshen theg-pa of the *gZi brjid* is found in Snellgrove 1967, pp. 117–123. In this elegant liturgy, the active participation of the ritualists is more pronounced than in the *Bar do thos grol* dispensations, but not nearly as intervenient as that found in the archaic rites of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

²³ *rJes-dran bon-sgo*. This pertains to instructions that remind the deceased that he is dead, of the futility of trying to cling to the old life and its attractions, and of the benefits of the new existence.

²⁴ A ritual for recovering the soul of the deceased is translated in Norbu 1995, pp. 90–96. A *gshed-'dur* (vanquishing of *gshed*) ritual from a *gcod* tradition text is found in the same work (*ibid.*: 97–102). The comparative study of these rituals is helpful in understanding some of the apotropaic mechanisms found in the Bon funerary traditions I present in this work.

According to the *gZi brjid*, there are four types of funerals:

- 1) *bKra-'dur* (funeral for elderly people) – when well done, it brings prosperity to succeeding generations
- 2) *sTag-'dur* (funeral for young adults) – when well done, it augments the life and welfare of surviving family members
- 3) *Srin-'dur* (funeral for children) – when well done, it increases the number of children
- 4) *Gri-rgod* (funeral for those who die accidentally or violently) – when well done, it defeats the life-cutters of youth (*gzhon-sri*)

3 A General Introduction to the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

3.1 The Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur and its Relationship to Ancient and Contemporary Funeral Rites

Many death ritual texts are scattered throughout Bon literature. The most comprehensive funerary cycle in the Bon religion is known as the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, a compendium of archaic and Buddhist-inspired traditions.²⁵ It is named after Mu-cho/Mu-co ldem-drug, a legendary *gshen* who is said to have received the funerary teachings directly from sTon-pa gshen-rab. The 'dur itself is described as *khrom* (a multitude) because there are a great many branches of knowledge, ritual appointments, deities, and people involved in its execution.²⁶ The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is primarily preserved in eponymous volumes of the Bon canon and *bka'-rten* collection, but a few texts belonging to this tradition have strayed into other volumes of Bon literature as well. Much of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is regarded as *bka'*, the words of the founder of Bon, sTon-pa gShen-rab, which form the canonical works of the religion. In most of the texts, colophons (*mdzad-byang*), compilers (*phyogs-sgrig byed-mkhan*) and discoverers (*gter-ston*) are conspicuously absent. As we shall see, this is just one indication of the antiquity of the literature that came down to g.Yung-drung Bon, the organized Bon religion, at the beginning of the second millennium CE.

While a number of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur traditions can be traced to the non-Buddhist milieu of imperial period Tibet, there is considerable evidence that the various scriptures of this textual cycle underwent a long process of revision and reinterpretation. These modifications in the narratives and rites of the ancient traditions are in some instances clearly visible, but others remain conjectural. Grammatical assessment and etymological analysis as tools for ascertaining age remain problematic, as the linguistic development of Old Tibetan is still not well understood due to the paucity and fragmentation of the extant literary materials. By and large, it appears that the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur evolved in tandem with Tibetan cultural and linguistic changes over the centuries. The modification of its content and structure can, therefore, be seen as part of the systemic process of Buddhicization affecting most facets of Tibetan religious life. The compositorial revamping of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary tradition along Buddhist lines, however, was not radical enough to expunge many of the archaisms still found in its literature. In fact, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur has preserved cultural and linguistic relics and reformulations to a greater extent than almost any other genre of Bon literature. A reason could be the delicate nature of the philosophical and practical provisions made for death, a very sensitive and momentous aspect of the human condition. It would seem that succeeding generations of Bon scholars and ritualists were hesitant to radically alter the wording and doctrinal import of funerary literature, out of fear and respect for the old traditions developed to cope with the inevitability of death and the misfortune that accrues to those left behind.

²⁵ I have taken most of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur texts for study from volume 6 of the New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, which contains a heterogeneous body of canonical and non-canonical literature. In the Bon *bka'* collection there are two other volumes devoted to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, vol. 31 (54 texts) and vol. 39 (64 texts). These are listed individually and basic bibliographic information provided for them in Martin, Kværne and Nagano 2003. The bulk of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection is devoted to exorcistic rituals that are designed to separate the *gshed* demon of death from the consciousness principles of the deceased. In subsection 6.14, I will furnish a representative sample of this exorcistic literature.

²⁶ Martin, Kværne and Nagano (2003: 540, 541) have translated *khrom-'dur* as 'public burial', an inaccurate rendering of the signification of the phrase.

As it has come down to us, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur must be viewed as a generalized or idealized version of archaic cultural tradition. It makes no allowance for the different types of funeral performances that must have been conducted in ancient times; those reflecting the ethnic, economic, cultural and geographic variations that existed on the Tibetan Plateau before and during the imperial period. Moreover, our examination of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur will reveal that it is likely to have been a composite tradition derived from disparate sources, conflated after the late tenth century CE to produce an integral literary corpus. As noted, in early historic times, funerary traditions may have been systematized to reflect a single imperial polity and the concomitant cultural and linguistic homogenization of Tibet. The creation of a common Plateau-wide political structure must have been predicated on the institution of unifying cultural transactions. The blending and revision of pre-existing funerary traditions would have helped to foster a common sense of social cohesiveness, essential to the esprit de corps of the Tibetan empire's military forces. A common ideational and ritual provision for its stricken heroes (even within the arena of continuing regional cultural differences) would have facilitated a sense of overall solidarity in the face of combat. As I have considered in previous works, this reformation of antecedent tradition to conform with the realities of the imperial social and political context also seems to be reflected in extant ritual literature pertaining to the Srid-pa'i lha-dgu (Nine Gods of Primal Existence), Ti-thang-spom gsum (Ti-se, Thang-lha and sPom-ra, the three chief mountain gods of Tibet) and the *mi'u rigs* (proto-clans). I raise these speculative historical issues because even if certain Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary traditions have a prehistoric origin, as the Bon-po maintain, it seems likely that they were reordered or reinterpreted with the rise of imperial Tibet.

Nowadays, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is not widely practiced in an active or literal fashion, although readings from its texts are routine at some funerals. The intricacies of the archaic ritual performances described in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature and the cultural setting behind them are no longer well understood or paid much attention. The Bon-po allege that the demise of this funerary tradition occurred over a period of many centuries through a process of attenuation, resulting from social pressures exerted by the wider Buddhist community. This would in part appear to be the case, because most of the Mu-cho'i funerary traditions have been discontinued and largely forgotten. Quite remarkably, we appear to be dealing here with historical forces unleashed more than a millennium ago, for the antiquity of specific Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur traditions are corroborated by the Dunhuang funerary texts. As we shall see, the Dunhuang manuscripts preserve cognate ritual materials that served as the textual precedent and historical foundation for the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The cosmogonies, mythic themes, priestly lineages, offering articles, ritual practices, and vocabulary held in common by these respective bodies of Tibetan literature demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that later Bon works have preserved, with a significant degree of integrity, the funerary culture of the imperial period and its aftermath (for a tally of these correspondences, see pp. 498, 499).

In the contemporary Bon religious milieu, much shorter funeral rituals derived from the philosophy and praxis of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are used.²⁷ This abridgement of the stockpile

²⁷ Kväerne (1985: 11, 12) divides contemporary Bon death rites into three main parts: 1) transference of consciousness of the deceased (*'pho-ba*), ideally to a transcendental realm beyond the cycle of birth and death; 2) the use of tablets (*byang-bu*) to summon the consciousness of the deceased and to guide it to liberation; and 3) cremation of the corpse, preferably after the deceased has achieved final liberation. Skorupski (1982: 361) cites the same major elements in the funeral rites of the rNying-ma Byang-gter tradition: 1) *'pho-ba* (consciousness transference), 2) readings from the *Bar do thos grol*, 3) *byang-chog* (ritual to guide the deceased to a better rebirth using an effigy card), and 4) *ro-sreg* (cremation ceremony). Also, see Brauen 1978. For the Bon tradition of *'pho-ba*, see Tenzin Namdak 1993, pp. 115–133.

of rites is partly because the resources for large and complex ritual expenditures are not easy to find. Nevertheless, in important ways the contemporary 'dur fit into the general ritual scheme of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The following operative themes are common to both the archaic and prevailing funerary traditions:

- 1) Obstructions and demons are expelled from the funeral venue.
- 2) The deceased's consciousness is separated from the *gshed* demon of death.
- 3) The deceased is summoned into a receptacle for his or her consciousness, called a *byang-bu bzhu*, the construction of which requires some personal effects of the individual who has died.
- 4) The lamas console the deceased and admonish him to relinquish attachments to the living.
- 5) The deceased is offered food and beverages by the surviving relatives.
- 6) The deceased is conveyed to his new existence through the evocation of the mind and soul.
- 7) At the conclusion of the ritual, the *byang-bu bzhu* is burnt, indicating that the deceased has been successfully led to a better rebirth/salvation.

3.2 The Geographic Setting of the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

The geographic scope of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur spans the entire breadth of Upper Tibet and Central Tibet. Nyang (Myang) (in eastern gTsang) is mentioned in a text expounding on the origins of the funerary tradition and in an apotropaic ritual. In other texts of the collection, rTsang (gTsang) and Yar-yul sogs-ka (in Lho-kha) are cited in various etiologic myths of ritual performances. Sum-pa is indirectly referred to in a rite for the destruction of homicidal fiends, as is sKy-i-ro ljang-sngon in dBus. The explicit mention of Zhang-zhung, however, is conspicuously absent in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary texts save indirectly, where one of them is reported to be a *gter-ma* (revealed text) from that country (see p. 473, fn. 376). Recognition of the western origins of this cycle of literature, nevertheless, is implicit in the country assigned to its purported founder, that mystic land known as 'Ol-mo lung-ring. If localization is at all possible, this would seem to be a realm in the Indo-Iranic borderlands west of Tibet. The founder of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, Mu-cho ldem-drug, appears to be endowed with a Zhang-zhung name. We have already met with the yogi Mu-cho 'bar-ba, a figure who is supposed to have hailed from the country of Zhang-zhung kha-rag (see p. 217, para. xix). The word *mu* (often referring to the sky and celestial phenomena) forms part of many Zhang-zhung language religious expressions and liturgical formulae.²⁸ Moreover, the term *smrang* (prototypes upon which the funerary rituals are based) is etymologically related to sMra, a proto-tribal group of Zhang-zhung. The ethnonym and toponym 'sMra' is referred to on a number of occasions in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. More to the point, funerary texts in the Dunhuang manuscripts and *Klu 'bum* collections refer directly to Zhang-zhung or to the pastoral and venatic environment of the Tibetan uplands.

The text *bsGrags pa gling grags* contains an account of a Zhang-zhung *bon-po* being called to attend to the funeral of an Indian Buddhist who was creating disturbances.²⁹ This tale is set during the reign of Tibet's 36th king, Rlung-srong rlung-btsan (676–704). As his divine ritual allies, the

In the Tibetan bKa'-brgyud tradition, 'pho-ba is part of the Six Teachings of Nāropa (1016–1100). For a study of certain elements of 'pho-ba in the rNying-ma and bKa'-brgyud-pa schools, see Ching Hsuan Mei 2004.

²⁸ For numerous examples, see Dagkar 2003, pp. 286–302; Martin 2001b.

²⁹ sNyan-rong manuscript: fol. 39a, lns. 4–7. Tibetan Text III-1, p. 610.

bon-po She-le dmig-dmar brought three famous Zhang-zhung gods with him. The passage begins with the Indian speaking:

“For subjugating demons (*dam-'dre*) the *bon-po* are powerful and have great ability, so it is preferable to call upon them.” Thus seven swift messengers were sent to Tibet to invite the *bon-po*. Offering jewels to the royal *gshen* (the king), they made their request, so the royal *gshen* therewith dispatched the *bon-po* of Zhang-zhung called She-le dmig-dmar to India. For his *lha* he beseeched Ge-khod, Mu-thur and Pra-phud. The *bon-po* and *lha* were invited simultaneously. The *bon-po* went with the pride of his *lha*.³⁰ First offering him gold, the Indians requested that he subdue the *dam-'dre* of Buddhism. Beseeching his *lha*, the *bon-po* defeated the savage (*ru-tra*) black *srin-po* and the *dam-'dre* of the dead Buddhist.

A definite attribution of the Bon funerary tradition to Zhang-zhung is found in a well-known Buddhist historical account that has come down to the dGe-lugs-pa.³¹ As part of the description about the second phase of Bon, the introduction of the funerary tradition to Tibet is assigned to three unnamed *bon-po* of Zhang-zhung and two other western countries in which the Bon religion is reputed to have thrived. This so called 'Khyar-bon (Derived Bon), which appears in a tripartite system of historical classification (a tradition unknown in Bon), is said to have begun with the demise of Tibet's eighth king, Gri-gum btsan-po. The description of the functional and magical capabilities of the *bon-po* priests in this Buddhist account are certainly in keeping with *gshen* lore preserved in Bon sources, giving it a ring of authenticity. Like the funerary priest She-le dmig-dmar, one of the *bon-po* called in to conduct the funeral of the king worshipped Ge-khod, either as a single figure or as a class of deities:

'Khyar-bon: The *bon-po* of Tibet did not know how to do the *bshid* (funeral ritual) of King Gri-gum btsan-po, so three *bon-po* were invited from Kashmir, Bru-sha and Zhang-zhung to conduct the funeral ritual of violent death (*gri-bshid*). One of them as a consequence of the worship of the Ge-khod, *khyung* and *me-lha* (god of fire),³² demonstrated his ability to go into the sky astride a drum, handle red-hot

³⁰ *Lha'i nga-rgyal dang bcas nas byon-pa*. This indicates the *bon-po*'s ability to fully visualize and communicate with his deities, thus demonstrating his mastery of them. The *bon-po* therefore was unafraid of demons, dangers, etc.

³¹ See *Thu'u bkwan grub mtha'* (Pan-Chen Bsod-Nams Grags-pa Literature Series, vol. 60, N. Kanara: Drepung Loseling Library Society, 1992), p. 381. Tibetan Text III-2, p. 610. This passage was taken verbatim from '*Jig rten mgon po'i gsung bzhi bcu pa* by 'Bri-gung gling-pa shes-rab 'byung-gnas (12th century CE). It is from this parent text that Vitali (1996, p. 101 (n. 16)) made his translation of the same citation. *Thu'u bkwan*'s work on the history of Bon has captured the attention of many Tibetologists and has been duly translated a number of times (including Haahr 1969; Tucci 1980). Martin (2001a: 191, 191 (n. 28)) in his careful working of the passage is inclined to change the wording of *sog-dmar* (a type of scapulamancy) to *srog-dmar* (blood sacrifice) but he gives no reason for his preference. I think this unlikely, as *sog-dmar* occurs in the text in conjunction with two other methods of divination. Stein (1972: 232), in his rendering of the passage, translates *gri-'dul* as 'subjugation of the sword', which does little to convey the nature of this funerary rite. Vitali (1996: 101 (n. 16)) seems to translate the mystic practice of *gtar-ba* as 'blood-letting', a medical designation that is wide of the mark. As noted in Namkhai Norbu's (1995: 40, 237 (n. 24)) study of the same passage, this word has to do with the ritual handling of red-hot objects (see p. 371, fn. 33). For a critical discussion of the polemic nature of *Thu'u-bkwan*'s work, see Bjerken 1998.

³² This listing of three types of divinities represents some understanding of Zhang-zhung religious traditions. It could be that *Me-lha/Me-la* rgyung is really intended here, one of the gods of the ten directions of the Ge-khod and Me-ri cycles. For a listing of these ten deities see Dagkar 2003, pp. 305, 306.

objects,³³ cut iron with a bird feather, and so forth. One of them could distinguish the good and bad by the performance of the *ju-tig* (divination through knots), *lha-bka'* (divination through the pronouncements of the deities), and *sog-dmar* (scapulamancy) divinations.³⁴ One of them knew the various components of the funerary rites, the eradication of the distress of the dead³⁵ and the subjugation of the violent causes of death (*gri 'dul-ba*).

A text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur has preserved an invocation to Ge-khod cycle deities of Zhang-zhung mentioned in the above quasi-historical accounts.³⁶ This primary funerary text (*gzhung*) contains a wide range of death rituals, such as the purchasing of the funeral venue from the elemental spirits, invitation of the deities who aid the deceased, the evocation of the consciousness principles of the dead, and the slaughter of the *gshed* and *sri* (the demonic causes of death).³⁷ The Zhang-zhung gods are specifically called upon to conquer the demons of death plaguing the deceased. The occurrence of these deities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature adds substantial weight to a Zhang-zhung localization of the archaic funerary tradition:

³³ *gTar-ba*. This refers to the ritual use of iron or stone objects (most often an iron axe-head) thoroughly heated in a fire, which are part of the *dbal-chu* rituals of the Ge-khod cycle (for the *dbal-chu* see p. 354). These red-hot objects are taken in the hands of the ritualists as magical instruments, and are believed to remove obstructions and purify the environment and living beings. This action of handling red-hot things also functions as a demonstration of the magical prowess of the Bon priests. Also see Dagkar 2003, pp. 33, 34 (n. 58).

³⁴ *Sog-dmar* is a type of *sog-mo*, in which the deity presiding over the divination may have been a *btsan*. *Sog-mo* divination entails placing the dried shoulder blade of a sheep in a fire and observing the resulting cracks. According to the *gZi brjid*, this system of prognostication originated with the diviner (*mo-ma*) lDing-nga lding-lo, who hailed from 'Ol-mo lung-ring (Norbu 1996: 135, 136). The word *sog-mo* may be etymologically related to the Hor-sog (Turco-Mongolians), who often use this method of divination (*ibid.*). Gu-ge tshe-ring rgyal-po (2005: 178–180) identifies three different methods of *sog-mo* practiced in Upper Tibet. They include the use of a sheep's shoulder blade upon which hot embers are placed. The shoulder blade is then waved around while the diviner utters the following (*ibid.*: p. 179): "Be the divination that augurs correctly, be the divination that augurs correctly: be the divination augured correctly of the white *lha* shoulder blade. Unfold means and successful outcome, unfold means and successful outcome: be the means and successful outcome that unfolds of the red *btsan* shoulder blade. Be good, be good: be the good epoch of the blue *klu* shoulder blade" (*mo thig mo thig lha sog dkar po 'i mo thig / jus rgyugs jus rgyugs btsan sog dmar po 'i jus rgyugs / bzang ngo bzang ngo klu sog sngon mo 'i skal ba bzang /*).

³⁵ *gShin-po 'dur-ba*. *gShin-po/gshin/gshin-bu* is used in funerary literature to denote the deceased in the provisional postmortem state, a precarious and potentially dangerous time and place for both the living and dead. It is believed that at this time the deceased is particularly vulnerable to attack from the infernal *gshin* demons. '*Dur-ba* denotes the subjugation of all evil forces that try to harm the recently dead. It is the equivalent of the better-known term '*dul-ba*.

³⁶ See *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho 'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng ba 'i las gzhung nyin bon bzhugs so*, attributed to the legendary prehistoric funerary priest Mu-cho (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 251–295), nos. 266, ln. 2 to 267, ln. 3. The text *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho 'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng gzhung gi mtshan bon dbal tshogs skul pa bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 1071–1109), nos. 1079, ln. 1 to 1087, ln. 1, also mentions Wer-spungs, Ge-khod, Yo-phyra and Mu-dur (Mu-thur) in demon-destroying orisons.

³⁷ Haarh, in his monumental work (1969: 112, 269, 270), appropriately points out that the terms *sri*, *srin* and *srid* are etymologically related. He, however, misapprehended the *sri* and *srin* as 'manifestations of the defunct', depicting a hellish fate that awaited the deceased in the period before the reformation of Bon with the death of King Gri-gum btsan-po. As we shall soon see, a central theme of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature is that from time immemorial the Bon religious functionaries have had the power to rid the dead of the demons that took away their lives.

bSwo! We invite dBal-chen mu-dur (mu-thur) from inside the yellow gold castle. Please come with your assembly of wrathful males and wrathful females. Conquer the evil-doing *sri* of violent death. Conquer every enemy and obstructor.³⁸ *bSwo!* Rise and come, dBal-chen pra-phud, from inside the red copper castle. *bSwo!* Rise and come, dBal-chen ge-khod, from inside the blue turquoise castle. *bSwo!* Rise and come, dBal-chen yo-phya, from inside the white conch castle. *bSwo!* Rise and come, Rlung-rgyal wer-spungs.

³⁸ The three preceding lines of requests (made to Mu-thur) also follow each of the subsequent invocations to deities in the passage.

4 The Legendary Origins of the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

4.1 The Origin Myths and Lines of Transmission

Quite appropriately, the first text in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur documents the legendary history of the Bon funerary tradition, detailing its source, transmission and tangible benefits.³⁹ The mythic origins set out in this text, claiming a prehistoric pedigree, remain unverifiable. As I will show in due course, however, utilizing archaeological, cultural historical and ethnographic tools of analysis, the foundations of certain elements of the Mu-cho ldem-drug funerary tradition do indeed point to archaic cultural sources. For the Bon-po no such critical analysis is required for they rely on religious faith, the intrinsic truth of their sacred texts, and the wisdom of their collective traditions handed down over the generations to assert the prehistoric nature of their funerary traditions. The Bon-po hold that the narrative of origins articulated in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is itself sufficient proof for the establishment of the great age of the Mu-cho funerary tradition. More crucial to them than the precise age of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is the use of its etiologic narrative to illustrate that it has come down to the present day in an unbroken chain of succession. In practical and doctrinal terms, how far back in time the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur transmission might extend is of secondary importance to its preservation and continuation over time.

As with many other major Bon ritual traditions, the account of the history of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur in the first text of the cycle begins with a proclamation of its origins (*smrang*). Virtually all ancient Bon rituals are prefaced by a *smrang*, setting the stage for their recitative and performative components. In more recent Bon observances, the *smrang* is often dispensed with and the ritual commences with the preparation of the implements and offerings needed for its implementation and with the purification of the ritual venue.⁴⁰ In the case of Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur texts, the *smrang* is a legitimizing mechanism, authenticating the source and great value of the various aspects of the funerary tradition. The *smrang* also serves as a propaedeutic instrument that edifies successive generations of ritualists in the correct performance of funerals.

The Mu-cho funerary tradition shares the universal mechanism of genesis found in much Bon literature: a springing forth from the primal state (*ye*) (para. i). The engine of creation in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur was a trio of gods known as the *mgon-po lha*, the residents of the inchoate universe. These deities are no longer well documented in the Bon tradition. The scant evidence available suggests that they were the prototypical guardians of Bon, who may have some relation to the mGon-po nram-gsum of the Ge-khod cycle of Zhang-zhung divinities (see p. 306, fn. 310). The text then proceeds to elucidate the early transmission of the funerary tradition. The first personages noted are three kings of beneficial rites (*gto*)⁴¹ who reside in the house of Hos. Hos appears to be a word with a Zhang-zhung etymology that has most or all of the signification of the word Bon as both a proper and general term (the religion, a class of priests, a cosmological

³⁹ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen 'phreng gzhung gi le'u* (Chapter of the Jewel Rosary Primary Scripture from the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts), by gSang-sngags grags-pa (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 1–73), nos. 7, ln. 1 to 12, ln. 3. Tibetan Text III-3, pp. 610–612. A summary of this origin tale taken from an analogous *bka'* source is found in Martin, Kværne, and Nagano 2003, pp. 540, 541.

⁴⁰ An outline of the successive stages of Bon ritual observances is furnished in Bellezza 2005a, pp. 175, 176.

⁴¹ In one system of classification these are the *smra-shes gto-dgu* (nine groups of rites of various kinds designed to appease the elemental deities and to enlist their aid). For general information, see Namkhai Norbu 1995, pp. 163–173.

universality, the recitation of sacred words, etc.).⁴² In total, 18 different personalities or groups of individuals are mentioned, and they are recognized as forming a temporal sequence from the beginning of the lineage to Zhang-zhung times (paras. i–iv). In Bon cosmological conceptions, the number 18 has the connotation of completeness or a totality.

The first four funerary lineage-holders are divine figures who occupy the rarified realm of various paradises (para. i). The fifth member of the funerary tradition is the great founder of the systematized Bon religion, sTon-pa gshen-rab (para. ii). His placement in the middle of the succession indicates that those who came before him were the primeval transmitters of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. In systematized Bon, sTon-pa gshen-rab represents the divide between the divine (celestial) and human (terrestrial) holders of the funerary lineage. As such, sTon-pa is depicted as a precedential figure (a prototypic conduit of religious truth and ritual technique) and not strictly speaking as a revelatory figure (a creator or ultimate source of religious truth and ritual technique). Two more stages in the succession are noted in the text before the tradition is passed on to Mu-cho himself (para. ii). Of special distinction is the sixth member of the lineage, the funerary ('dur) gshen rMa-da,⁴³ who as we shall see has a prominent role in the Dunhuang funerary texts. The holding of the lineage at each stage of the transmissive succession is depicted by reference to the sacred chant (*gyer*) that each of the 18 personalities and groups of individuals possess.⁴⁴ The use of this special term acts as a device to demonstrate the antiquity of the funerary tradition ('dur-gyer) and that it originated from legitimate sources. The 18 holders of the lineage are regarded as the early practitioners of 'dur-gyer as well as other Bon doctrines in general. As a common noun, *gyer* shows that the Bon traditions in earliest times were passed on from generation to generation as an oral tradition. The word is also a proper noun (Gyer), the Zhang-zhung lexical equivalent of Bon (the religion).

The funerary lineage records a number of types of *bon-po* involved in the propagation and practice of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The first of these is the *dbal-bon* (para. ii), a priest who conducts the esoteric *dbal* traditions of tantra and fierce magic. Also noted are the 'dur-bon (funerary priest),⁴⁵ 'dul-gshen (exorcist priest), *gri-bon* (priest specializing in the funerary rites of those who died by accident or violence), *rgod-bon* (military chaplain?), *thar-bon* (priest who shows the deceased the way to liberation), *glu-bon* (cantor priest), and *gto-bon* (priest who conducts the beneficial rites of the funeral). The final *bon-po* mentioned is the *sna-bon*, a religious practitioner specializing

⁴² It is often held that Hos is the secret name of Bon in the Zhang-zhung and sTag-gzig languages (cf. Dagkar 2003: 17). Moreover, *hos-ru* is the staff held by sTon-pa and *hos-gur* the tent of sTon-pa (*ibid.*: 17). Hos as a country (Hos-mo gling-drug of Hos kyi zhing-khams gling chen-po, the domain of Hos-rje dang-ba yid-ring) is mentioned in the *gZi-brjid* and *gZer-mig* (Dagkar 2003: 17; Kværne 1980: 88).

⁴³ I have treated 'dur-gshen as a description of this personality, but it can also be legitimately seen as part of his proper name ('Dur-gshen rma-da). This also holds true for all the various types of *bon* (priests) noted in the lineage. It is generally thought that these personalities became known by the work they engaged in and that it became part of their personal names. I have rendered my translation where appropriate in titular form rather than using cognomens to highlight the richness of religious occupational specialization documented in this funerary text.

⁴⁴ In the *gZi brjid*, as with other Bon traditions of the nine vehicles, the etiologic aspects of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are referred to as the *History of the Funerary Rites of Existence* (*Srid pa shi rabs lo rgyus*). It is recorded as being transmitted from sTon-pa gshen-rab to Srid-gshen gtsug-phud in this manner: "According to the history of *Srid pa shi rabs*: from the dawn of existence when the *dpe* (archetypal exposition) of existence was kept, the Bon *smrang* as the tradition of existence has been chanted until the present time" (*Srid pa shi rabs lo rgyus las / sngon gyi srid pa chags pa nas / srid pa dpe blang da lta'i bar / srid pa'i lugs su bon smrang gyer /*). See Snellgrove (1967: 118, 119) for the transliteration of the text and his translation.

⁴⁵ Haahr (1969: 112) correctly notes that the *dur-gshen* ('dur-gshen) functioned to remove or suppress obstacles and evils derived from the dead that confront the living.

in the performance of life-cycle rituals and other types of rituals that have tangible benefits for people in this life.⁴⁶

The narrative of origins now goes on to place the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur even more firmly within the ambit of Bon beginnings by invoking the three most famous legendary *gshen* of primordial times: 'Chi-med gtsug-phud, gSang-ba 'dus-pa and sTag-la me-'bar (para. v). These divine personalities are recorded as maintaining the teachings of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur under the auspices of tantric tradition. A word on tantra (*sngags*) is in order here. According to the Bon tradition, tantra (mystic transformative practices) exists as a class of primary teachings integral to the fabric of the religion. Two major forms of tantra believed to have been practiced in archaic days are *dbal* and *spyi-spungs*. An inspection of these traditions shows that they do indeed contain a significant amount of indigenous material as well as much that is of Indic inspiration. As the names of this and other texts in the funerary cycle clearly indicate, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is itself classified as a tantra. That is primarily because of the esoteric and miraculous nature of the teachings (their ability to effect a positive metamorphosis during the postmortem period), as it bears only minimal resemblance to the Vajrayāna traditions originating in India. Through the tantra of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur rites, the deceased is changed from an abject figure cowering in fear to one fit to partake of the salvation of a better rebirth or liberation (prevailing eschatological notion) or entry into the ancestral hereafter (archaic eschatological notion).

Once the lineage has been fully propounded, the text begins the explication of the doctrines of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (para. vi). These doctrinal traditions are referred to using the metaphor 'funerary river' (*chu-mo'i 'dur*). It is conventionally explained in Bon that the river metaphor signifies all the various doctrinal systems which, like rivers to the sea, lead to the same ultimate destination, the state of enlightenment. Reference is made to the cyclical existence of living beings (*yul 'khor-ra 'khor*), which must be an Indic influence that was adopted after the conversion of Tibet to Buddhist values and thought. g.Yung-drung Bon and Buddhism champion a philosophical view that all sentient beings undergo an endless cycle of rebirths, the quality of which is dependent on one's moral conduct (*spyod-pa*) and discriminative insight (*rnam-par 'byed byed kyi blo*). The literature we will be exploring, however, also expounds on an alternative Weltanschauung wherein human beings after death join their deified ancestors in paradise. In brief, the archaic tradition revolves around the transfer of an individualized personal existence in this world to an eternal heaven while the prevailing funerary tradition is predicated on a series of existences, progressing until the purification of all imprints leads to the ultimate state of liberation from pain and suffering. In Buddhism, this final destination is characterized by the extinguishing of individualized personal features. The teleological divide so described starkly differentiates the archaic and prevailing philosophical outlooks in the Bon funerary tradition, and will warrant close attention in the pages to follow.

The importance of the legendary *gshen* Mu-cho, rMa-da and a third figure named Khu-byug (Cuckoo) is underscored by them having the distinction of receiving the funerary teachings from sTon-pa himself (para. vii). As with other Bon teachings, the various aspects of the funerary doctrine are referred to as portals (*sgo*). The text explains that they are generally divided into two

⁴⁶ PT. 1042 records the following types of funerary priests: *dur-bon-po* (funeral officiant), *phangs bon-po* (mortuary specialist?) (ln. 29), *smam bon-po* (a priest who 'refurbished' the corpse?) (ln. 76), and *snyun bon-po* (a priest who removed the sensation of distress and illness afflicting the deceased?) (ln. 57). The various types of priests involved in the diverse funerary activities recorded in PT. 1042 emphasize the ceremonial complexity and historical depth of the Tibetan archaic funerary traditions.

major groups, *gto* and *dpyad*. In the funerary context, the *dpyad* are ritual procedures conducted to ascertain the cause of death, which includes various astrological calculations (*rtsis*). *dPyad* is the complete system of examination techniques for understanding the conditions in which someone died, as well as fixing the timeframe, venue and specific ritual dispensations that should be applied to the funeral. The determinations of the origin of the deceased in his past life and the best time and place for his funeral are believed crucial to his welfare.⁴⁷ The *gto* are the actual ritual activities and readings associated with the funeral and mortuary practices. As with the *gto* in other Bon traditions (such as medicine and divination), in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur they are practices that benefit all concerned, and insure a salubrious finale to the funeral. The most fundamental of the *gto* rites are those executed to borrow the funeral venue from the *sa-bdag* and other local deities, which entails their propitiation. This is done in order that the elemental spirits do not interfere with the transit of the deceased to the new existence. The *gto* includes the *smrang* (proclamations prefacing the actual execution of a ritual) as well as the rituals themselves, carried out to aid both the deceased and the survivors.

The text now turns again to Mu-cho ldem-drug and his performance of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur for a god and then for sTon-pa (paras. viii, ix). It is also Mu-cho who makes the transition from the heavens to 'Ol-mo lung-ring, a numinous land that the Bon-po consider may have once existed here on earth. As is often the case in Bon mythology, the orders of demons are not pleased that such a valuable and beneficial teaching is about to be released in the world, and they try to prevent its propagation with all kinds of terrible happenings (para. x). They are unsuccessful as Mu-cho brandishes a black bird's wing. The wings of various birds are one of the most potent apotropaic instruments in the archaic funerary tradition, although they are hardly resorted to in the contemporary Bon funeral. Mu-cho also throws ephedra and mustard seeds, two substances that appear to act as signals to the divine allies and as magic weapons. Undeterred by the provocations of the demons, sTon-pa orders Mu-cho to prepare the funeral (para. xi). Mu-cho then goes on to teach the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur to innumerable *gshen*, and to propagate it throughout the universe.

The first text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur now skips to the time of Tibet's eighth king, Gri-gum btsan-po, who is said to have been the victim of Srin-rje (the Lord of Death) black magic (para. xii). As a result, he was slain by his own minister, Lo-ngam.⁴⁸ Once the king's body was recovered, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral was held in Nyang, a district in eastern gTsang (para. xiii).⁴⁹ This is said to have been very beneficial to the Tibetan kingdom and to have subdued the

⁴⁷ Evans-Wentz (1927: 18, 19, 27, 28) notes that an astrologer (*rtsis-pa*) is called in to make the death horoscope, which is employed to determine the proper method of corpse disposal, the time and manner of the funeral, and the way in which the demon of death can be exorcized from the home of the deceased. A more detailed treatment of a death horoscope is given in Waddell 1895, pp. 489, 490. It ascertains that a *btsan* was responsible for the death of a child, and how the pernicious effects of this demon on other members of the household could be neutralized. A most detailed description of the death horoscope (*gshin-rtsis*) covering the cause of death, the nature of corpse removal, the prediction of future rebirth, and so forth is found in Mumford 1990, pp. 196–204.

⁴⁸ The son of the murdered Gri-gum btsan-po Ngar-la skyes (also called Ru-las skyes) went to the castle of the murderer Lo-ngam rta-dzi to exact revenge. In order to gain access and kill its many occupants he devised the following stratagem: "On account of there being a vulture nest opposite the castle he wore the skin and feathers of a vulture" (*mkhar gyi pha rol na rgod tshang yod pa la snyad btags nas bya rgod kyi gsob tu zhugs te l*). See *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*, p. 248.

⁴⁹ There is also a Nyang district in the Yar-lung gtsang-po valley adjacent to rKong-po, but I believe that this is a reference to the Nyang of eastern gTsang. Geographic and clan data supporting my identification are furnished in Sørensen and Hazod 2005, p. 227 (n. 17); Hazod forthcoming.

lha and *srin* spirits. After the recovery of the corpse, the Bon historical text *bsGrags pa gling grags*⁵⁰ has this to say about the funeral of Gri-gum btsan-po: “Thereafter his *bang-so* was built at Yar-lung. The funeral ritual (*'dur*) of the epoch of existence was conducted by the *bon-po* of the right,⁵¹ the holder of the iron horns of the bird, Ral-ljags skyi-rgyal, and others.” Furthermore, *bsTan pa 'i rnam bshad dar rgyas gsal ba 'i sgron ma* records:⁵² “At Bre-sna, in the country of rKong-po, 100 *gshen-po* carried out the *gri-'dur* of the king, so the living became lucky and sPu-lde (ninth Tibetan king) himself was able to control the kingdom.⁵³ The position of the dead was advanced and Gri-rum was guided to liberation.”

One version of why the Mu-cho funerary rituals are known as a multitude (*khrom*) is recorded in the first text's etiologic tale (para. xiii). This is said to be because the elemental spirits of the universe, which were present in such great numbers at the funeral of King Gri-gum, were pacified by virtue of its performance. At the end of the narrative of origins, the great benefit of the Mu-cho 'i khrom-'dur is again reiterated, a theme that runs through this epic tale of ritual beginnings:

- i) Firstly, the history has three [parts]: To begin with, from the primordium (*thog-ma*) the three *mgon-po lha* conceived this tradition. The chants of the three *gto* kings in the Hos house of the excellent and blissful holy place of the uppermost circle. The chants of the excellent incarnate *gshen* Lha-'bum at the *gsas-mkhar* (temple) of 'Bum-khang gsang-ba (Secret 'Bum House). The chants of the *gTo-rgyal bla-med* (None Superior King of *gTo*) inside the *gsas-mkhar* of 'Dus-pa don (Aggregated Essential Signification). The chants of the four Hos-pa *gshen* at the *gshen* country of *gShen-rab lha-sgang* (Excellent *gShen* Upper Lha).
- ii) The chants of the great *gShen-rab ston-pa* at the crystal castellation of *Ri-rab*. The chants of the four *Ma-pang gshen* at the country of the *lha*, *Ma-pang 'khor-can*.⁵⁴ The chants of the *dbal-bon* *Rum-po* at the *dbal* country of *Thang-ma bying-brgya*. The chants of *Mu-cho ldem-drug* at the *srin* country *Dang-ma*⁵⁵ *ldem-drug*. The chants of the four *Ma-pang gshen* at the *gshen* country of *Tshangs-pa lha-yul* (Pristine Divine Country).⁵⁶
- iii) The chants of the *'dur-gshen rMa-da* at the *gshen* country of *Hos kyi ljang-tshal* (Verdant Grove of the Hos). The chants of *Ye-ngar*⁵⁷ *gyim-gang* at the *gyim* country, *Gyim-stod yangs-pa* (Expansive Upper *Gyim*). The chants of the *'dul-gshen Ra-ljags* at the *dbal* country, *Kha-*

⁵⁰ sNyan-rong manuscript: fol. 32a, ln. 5: *de nas yar lung su bang so btag / skal srid kyis (= kyi) 'dur / g.yas kyi bon po lcagkyi bya ru can dang / ral rjag spyi (= ra ljags skyi) rgyal las swogs gis mdzad do /*.

⁵¹ This refers to the Bon custom of royal priests being seated on the right-hand side of the king as well as the practice of protecting the kings from this side.

⁵² By sPa-ston bstan-rgyal bzang-po (circa early 15th century CE), from *Sources for a History of Bon. A Collection of Rare Manuscripts from Bsam-gling Monastery in Dolpo (Northwestern Nepal)* (published by Tenzin Namdak, TBMC, 1972, nos. 498–769), no. 664, lns. 6, 7: *gshen po brgya yis rkong yul bre snar / rgyal gyi gri 'dur mdzad pas / gson bkra shis ste spu lde 'i (= ldes) rgyal sa zin no / gshin gnas spar ste gri rum thar par drongs so /*.

⁵³ Bre-sna was once the political center of rKong-po, and in the vicinity there is the cemetery of sKyi-mthing (Hazod forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Literally: ‘Circular Mother’s Lap’ or ‘Mother’s Lap with Circle’. It is not clear whether this refers to the lake *Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho*.

⁵⁵ *Dang-ma* (pure) is currently spelled: *dwangs-ma*.

⁵⁶ The country of *Tshangs-pa lha-yul* is liable to be geographically associated with the upper reaches of the *gTsang-po* river (*gTsang* and *Tshangs* may be etymologically related) and the god *Tshangs-pa* (a *Zhang-zhung* deity and chief of the *lha*).

⁵⁷ The *Ya-ngal* clan is meant here, members of which were *sku-gshen* (royal priests) for Tibet’s first king, *gNya'-khri btsan-po*. See pp. 374–376.

bo gang-sad. The chants of the *gri-bon* Rog-po at the *gto* country, rKong-ma'i gsas-mkhar. The chants of the *rgod-bon* Thang-yag at the *rgod* country, Ye-sangs thang-bdal (Purified Primordial Uninterrupted Plain).

- iv) The chants of the *thar-bon* Gru-bskyol at Lha-mi brda-sprod⁵⁸ kyi zhing-khams (Salutary Realm of That Which Interprets Between Lha and Humans). The chants of the *glu-bon* Gyer-mkhas at Mi gdon bar gyi shan-'byed (That Which Distinguishes Between Humans and Demons). The chants of the *gto-bon* Byon-khri at Bar gyi spyang-'dren la shag-'dabs.⁵⁹ The chants of the *sna-bon* Li-byin at g.Yung-drung mtha'-rgyas sgo-sprod (Swastika Future Expansion Opposite Portals).⁶⁰ These are the principal 18 [practitioners of 'dur]. Additionally, there are an infinite number of adepts.
- v) Secondly, according to the nine procedures (*mtha'-dgu*) of the inner and secret tantras: At the upper place of the *lha*, as well as other places, the teachers of the three *gsas-mkhar*⁶¹ are 'Chi-med gtsug-phud, gShen gsang-ba 'dus-pa, dBal-bon stag-la me-'bar, and others, and there are many Gyer portals of funerary methods ('dur-thabs) of the secret knowledge-holders.
- vi) Thirdly, at the demarcation of the birth and death cycle, the cyclical existence of living beings, there are countless Gyer portals of the funeral ritual methods of the Bon *gshen* of Srid-pa rgyud (Lineage of Existence).⁶² Here, to enter the portal of the practices of the funerary river: Firstly, where did it exist? Intermediately, how was it created? Lastly, where was it propagated?
- vii) To begin with, that which appeared from the mind of the three *mgon-lha* arose in the minds of the three great *gto* lineage [masters]. Although the emanation body (*sprul-sku*)⁶³ gShen-rab ston-pa very clearly knew worldly and other-worldly⁶⁴ existence (*bon-rnams*), he also obtained the teachings of the multitude of *gto* and *dpyad* on the crystal castellation of Ri-rab. He taught the teachings of the multitude of *gto* and *dpyad*, each of them, to the 100,000 *gshen-po*, conquerors of living beings. Among them the 'dur-gshen rMa-da, the *dbal-bon* Khu-byug and Mu-cho, these three, were empowered with the *smrang* portals (refers to the 'dur ritual foundations) of the body, speech and mind. They then delineated the 'dur portals of the 18,000 *stong-sde*⁶⁵ of existence one by one, and so they came into being.

⁵⁸ *brDa-sprod* is interpretation through language, signs and dreams, etc.

⁵⁹ The name of this (metaphorical?) place has something to do with invitation and debating.

⁶⁰ *sGo* (portals) as well as *chu* (rivers) are metaphors employed for various systems of Bon teachings. Doors and rivers symbolize the way to the same destination: enlightenment. The portals are found opposite one another because there are several that are thought of as being symmetrically arrayed.

⁶¹ This is probably a reference to the outer, inner and secret aspects of the teachings (*gsas-mkhar*).

⁶² This denotes the Chab-nag (Black Waters) system of Bon doctrines, which primarily pertains to life-cycle rituals, rituals for prosperity and protection, and funerary rituals.

⁶³ One of the three spiritual bodies or fundamental ontological states in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Bon known as *sku-gsum*: 1) *bon-sku* (emptiness essence), 2) *rdzogs-sku* (perfection body, luminous nature of mind), and 3) *sprul-sku* (emanation body, the compassionate dynamic of cognition).

⁶⁴ This dualistic realm is described as '*khor* (samsara, the world of pain and suffering) and '*das* (nirvana, the world of bliss).

⁶⁵ *sTong-sde* (division of one thousand) is the place where the 'dur was disseminated, but it could have a double meaning and refer to a funerary classification system as well.

- viii) Secondly, intermediately, how it was created: While Mu-cho ldem-drug turned (taught) the wheel of Bon in the country of titans (*lha-min*), the *lha* and titans fought. When the son of the *lha* Yang-drags died, [Mu-cho] performed the precious tantric funeral rituals (*sngags-'dur*); the son of the *lha* became happy as a result. The agitation between the *lha* and *srin* was pacified. gYung-drung Bon was spread as well. Thereafter, the omniscient gShen-rab showed himself in the manner of death.⁶⁶
- ix) Subsequently, the doctrine of the speech⁶⁷ began in the time of Mu-cho ldem-drug, the representative of the lineage (*gdung-sob*). From the country of the *lha*, he came down to the country of the *gshen* 'Ol-mo lung-ring, and then the *gshen* king and Hos (Bon-po) assembled. To show as an example for future generations, they made the pretence of offering *cu-gang*⁶⁸ to the father [gShen-rab].
- x) At that time, in the *gshin* (demons who attack the dead) country of Gra-ma gru-bcu, all the *g.yen-khams*⁶⁹ of tangible existence (*snang-srid*) assembled an army. They sent down snow, blizzards, hurricanes, thunderbolts, hail, avalanches, and contagious diseases. They brought down epidemics upon the humans, *smra* and *gshen*.⁷⁰ To keep the honorable traditions for [future generations], the representative of the lineage (Mu-cho) held aloft a black wing with *mdzod*.⁷¹ He cast ephedra⁷² and seven mustard seeds. Beseeching the *lha* of power, father gShen-rab, a blue cuckoo manifestation of gShen-rab alit upon the tip of the wing with *mdzod*.

⁶⁶ *Mya-ngan 'da' tshul bstan*. This means that sTon-pa was apparently dead but, being all powerful, in a spiritual sense he did not die.

⁶⁷ *gSung-bstan*. It is commonly reckoned by the Bon-po that we are now more than 8000 years into the period of the Bon doctrine of the speech. Beginning with Mu-cho, this period is supposed to last for 10,000 years. The Bon doctrine of the body (*sku-bstan*) also endured for 10,000 years, ending with the worldly death of sTon-pa. At the end of the current epoch, the world will enter the period of the Bon doctrine of the mind (*thugs-bstan*), which will also stretch for 10,000 years. It is then thought that the Bon religion will come to an end in the world.

⁶⁸ The offerings of food, beverages and clothing by relatives and associates to the deceased.

⁶⁹ The 33 orders of unruly and semi-divine spirits. The *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, vol. 2 (Chengdu: Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-nying skrun-khang, 2000), pp. 408–410, notes 33 types of *bon-po*, each belonging to one group of the *g.yen-khams*, illustrating the semi-divine nature of these spirits. These *bon-po* are divided into three groups: *yar-g.yen gnyen* (= *gnyan*) *po bcu-gsum* (reside in the highest realm), *bar-g.yen gtod-pa dgu* (reside in the intermediate realm), and *sa-g.yen che-ba bcu-gcig* (reside on or under the earth and in the water). Two of the 18 lineage holders listed in our 'dur text, the *dbal-bon* Rum-po and Srid-bon mu-co (Mu-cho ldem-drug), are found in the first group of *g.yen-khams*. Three others, Srin-bon ya-ngal gyim-gong (Ye-ngar gyim-gang), 'Dre-bon glu-bod gyer-mkhas (the *glu-bon* Gyer-mkhas) and Byur-bon sna-bon li-byin (the *sna-bon* Li-byin), are part of the third or telluric group of *g.yen-khams*. A *sman bon-po*, sMan-bon 'brim-tang snar-ma, is also a member of the *sa-g.yen che-ba bcu-gcig*. In this context, he appears to be a specialist in the propitiation of the *sman* goddesses. In one work (Bellezza 1997a: 111), I affirm that *sman* as a class of goddesses or women is semantically related to medicine (*sman*), in that both senses of the word denote a beneficial agent. The theme of 33 gods inhabiting the three vertical planes of the cosmos is known in the *Rgveda* and in Iranic tradition (Keith 1925a: 82–86).

⁷⁰ In this context, the *smra* and *gshen* are the supernatural *bon-po* living in the divine realms.

⁷¹ The precise meaning of *mdzod* is not clear. It seems to refer to streamers, banners or tassels that embellish the wing.

⁷² *mTshe*. A rejuvenating agent in Tibetan medicine. For other Bon ritual applications of this plant, see Karmay 1998, pp. 387, 388. According to the *dBa' bzhed*, in the time of King Khri-lde gtsug-brtan and King Khri-srong lde-btsan, there was a class of Buddhist (or syncretistic?) funerary rites known as *tshé*. No explanation of them is given. See Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, pp. 33–35, 35 (n. 58), p. 37. It is possible that these *dBa' bzhed* citations to *tshé* actually refer to *mtshe* as a special group of death rituals.

- xi) [gShen-rab] instructed [Mu-cho] to appoint the *gcol-chung na-ro khu-tsa*⁷³ and other things [for the 'dur]. Also, Mu-cho taught the 100 *gshen* disciples and the 100,000 *gshen-po* conquerors of living beings the precious tantric funeral rituals, the jewel rosary of the tantric funeral texts, which explicate the full textual tradition. He and the other *gshen-po* translated their doctrine downward from the summit of existence and upward from the bottom of hell, in all the great worlds of the innumerable world systems (*stong-gsum*).⁷⁴
- xii) After seven generations of kings, the *the'u-rang* (a kind of demon) manifestation Mang-snye U-wer came between [the kings' lineage].⁷⁵ King Gri-gum btsan-po was born [and] the Bon of the Swastika declined. He incurred the retribution (*la-yog*) of acting contrary to the deeds of his paternal ancestors (*sngon gyi yab-myes*). Through sorcery Srin-rje dgu-rdzogs sent the sovereign with the mane, the minister possessed by the *thel-rang* (*sic*) and the magician (*sngags-pa*) with the pimpled face. Their advice bred wrong ideas so the Lord searched for a combatant.⁷⁶ The king, entering into combat with his subject Lo-ngan rta-rdzi, was slain.
- xiii) His [body] was cast into a river at Thar-pa rong in Upper Nyang. The corpse was caught by Klu-lcam khod-de lag-ring. Later, the prince sP'u-sde gong-rgyal and Ru-las skyes assembled the *bon* and *gshen*, and carrying out the funeral ritual for violent death (*gri-'dur*), many Tibetan people gathered. During the performance, the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* [of the] *g.yen* division of tangible existence also assembled in large numbers. They were renowned as the great funeral rituals, the jewel rosary multitude, funeral ritual texts of the tantra of Mu-cho. By their performance the agitation of the [*lha-srin*] *sde-brgyad* was pacified and the happiness of the kingdom expanded, and the g.Yung-drung Bon doctrine spread. That is why the Bon portals are very greatly benevolent.

⁷³ A ritual device, and possibly a type of divine officiant, in the form of a monkey (*spre'u*), badger (*grum-pa*) and bat (*pha-wang*). See *sPyi skos gsum gyi thang khirms bshad pa*, para. iv, pp.

⁷⁴ This is followed by a passage that somewhat diverges from the main theme (nos. 10, ln. 5 to 11, ln. 3). I include it here to maintain textual continuity: "Thirdly, finally, where the [funeral rituals] were propagated: After the *dbud* Khyab-pa stole the seven horses of sTon-pa in 'Ol-mo lung-ring, [sTon-pa] came to Tibet to conquer him. From his mind he manifested a mountain in the shape of a spear point (Bon ri) and placed many sacred signs around it. He prayed that the Tibetan atheists (*mtha'-khob*) would be subdued, and by the power of his prayer gNyan-khri btsan-po and [*sku-gshen*] Nam-mkha' snang-ba mdog came to Tibet to protect the Bon doctrine there."

⁷⁵ *Bel gtam lung gi snying po* contains a more detailed account of this demonic attack on the lineage of the Tibetan kings (p. 73). It is taken from the Bon historical text *mDzod sgra 'grel*, written by Bla-chen dran-pa nam-mkha' of Zhang-zhung, which was discovered by the adept Gyer-mi nyi-'od at Dang-ra khyung-rdzong (in 1108): "At the castle of Nyang-ro sham-po, in the country Nyang-ro stag-tshal, there was the *btsan-po* Khri-lde yag-pa and his queen sBrang-za lha-rgyan, these two. The mother was possessed by the *the'u-rang* manifestation Mang-snya U-wer, who was born nine months and ten days later as their son. After some months and years, he grew up, and had red hair, round eyes and a black mole on his right palm. He always spoke of killing. He was intent on sinning and liked weapons and armor. As he had the signs of a violent death on his body right from the womb, he was given the name Gri-gum btsan-po by the *sku-gshen*, Pha-ba, mTshe and bCo" (...*yul nyang ro stag tshal / mkhar nyang ro sham po na / btsan po khri lde yag pa dang btsun mo sbrang za lha rgyan gnyis la / sras the'u rang mang snya U wer gyi sprul pa zhugs te / zla dgu ngo bcu nas sras shig sku 'khrungs pa / de yang zla las lo grangs su skyed tsam na / skra rtsa dmar la mig zlum pa / lag mthil g.yas pa na sme ba nag po yod pa / kha nas gsad gcad du smra ba / sdig pa la mos shing go mtshon la mos pa zhid byung ste / de ma'i lus gri rtags lus (= rum nas) la tshang ba zhid 'dug nas / sku gshen pha ba mtshe beo yis mtshan yang gri rum btsan por btags so /*).

⁷⁶ According to *Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung* by Shakya rin-chen sde (14th century CE), it was the king of Zhang-zhung who dispatched one of his subjects in order to sow discord between King Gri-gum and his minister Lo-ngam byi-khrom (Norbu 1996: 276, 277).

The activities of Mu-cho Idem-drug are covered in more detail in another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur entitled *Fourth Chapter Explicating the Three General Appointments of the Thang-khrims from the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts*.⁷⁷ The term *thang-khrims* denotes the prescribed funerary activities as set forth in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The use of *thang-khrims* to refer to a set of laws or prescriptions is documented in a Dunhuang manuscript, indicating that this term was part of imperial period legal traditions.⁷⁸

The text describes how, when Mu-cho and his associates tried to convene the funeral of sTon-pa, they met stiff resistance from the *g.yen-khams*, the orders of unruly elemental spirits (paras. i, ii). These ambivalent and powerful spirits can hurt the interests of humans as much as aid them. In this instance, the *g.yen-khams* sought to take revenge on the circles of *gshen*. As in the narrative of origins in the first text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, Mu-cho used a black bird's wing, ephedra and mustard seeds to signal sTon-pa. sTon-pa consequently manifested as a blue cuckoo and landed right on the tip of the bird's wing (para. iii). He announced that he was not really dead and that a bulwark must be erected against the elemental spirits. sTon-pa prescribed a special monkey, badger and bat (*gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa*)⁷⁹ as harm-resisting instruments that pacify the noxious spirits. Their inclusion in such a seminal portion of the narrative suggests that they once occupied a substantial role in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Despite this prominence, the significance of the *gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa*, also called the 'three blocker brothers' (*thub-chod spun-gsum*), and the animals chosen to represent them is obscure. This is an excellent example of how various Bon archaic funerary traditions may have disintegrated over time. It seems likely to me that these animals were zoomorphic spirit allies of the funerary priests, not unlike the remedial spirits of today's Upper Tibetan spirit-mediums (*lha-pa*). The bat in particular figures in various Bon origin myths (*rabs*),⁸⁰ so it is not surprising to also see its participation in a tale detailing the formation of the funerary tradition. The last paragraph of the legendary origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur relates how these creatures repelled the *g.yen-khams* and the harm they had brought with them:

- i) In the *gshen* land of the 60 countries the only father gShen-rab ston-pa, despite being immortal, once acted as if he had passed away in the state of impermanence. Subsequently, Mu-cho, 'Ol-drug and the eight *gshen* disciples assembled in Hos.⁸¹ When the eight *gshen* assembled in Hos offered the Father *cu-gang* (gifts for the deceased), the many *g.yen-khams* did assemble. They said, "When this Bon gShen-rab mi-bo was alive and not dead he had great power and strict command over the *g.yen*. We were faultless and he punished us. For this we must take revenge and use coercion."
- ii) They sent down snow, blizzards, hurricanes, thunderbolts, hail, avalanches, and contagious diseases. So, at the funerary performance of the *gshen* kings and Hos (Bon practitioners), the *g.yen* let epidemics fall upon the humans, *smra* (ancestral human figures) and *gshen*. The many circles of *gshen* were rendered unconscious and collapsed. The assembly of *gshen*

⁷⁷ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen 'phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las spyi skos gsum gyi thang khrim (= khrims) bshad pa le'u bzhi pa'o* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 105–123), nos. 107, ln. 1 to 109, ln. 2. The text is anonymous. Tibetan Text III-4, p. 612.

⁷⁸ PT. 230, lns. 18, 19: "The subjects acted in contravention ('gal) of the precepts (*bka'-lung*) of the prescribed law (*thang-khrims*)" ('*bangs zhig blka (= bka') lung thang khrims dang 'gal bar spyod pa l*).

⁷⁹ Spelling as in the text. Also see p. 380, para. xi.

⁸⁰ For example, in the text *Mi'u rigs bzhi lha sel lha mchod rgyas pa*, the bat (and lark) act as emissaries for the ritual veneration of the original Tibetan clans (Bellezza 2005a: 211, 212).

⁸¹ In this context, Hos refers to a country closely related to 'Ol-mo lung-ring.

kings was afraid and panicked. Mu-cho was very displeased at this. He beseeched the *lha* of power, the father *gShen-rab*. He held aloft the black wing with embellishments (*mdzod-ldan*). He scattered ephedra and seven mustard seeds in the sky. He cried out to the father *gShen-rab*.

- iii) *gShen-rab* possessed the entire range of miracles and manifested as a turquoise cuckoo bird (*khu-byug*). He landed on the tip of the hand-tool wing. From [the cuckoo's] mouth emanated tremulous (*lhang lhang*) speech: "I *gShen-rab* have not passed away. I the mighty Bon *gshen* have not declined. After I pretended to pass away, the *lha* and *klu* of the sky, earth and intermediate space, and the obedient ones of Bon, the *sde-brgyad* (eight orders of elemental spirits), did not offer *chab-gang*⁸² to the *gshen*. They are attempting to obstruct and oppose. The *g.yen-khams* of tangible existence are shameless (*rna re chung*). Now, as a vanguard against (*ngo-len*) the shameless *g.yen*, we need the *gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa*." Thus came the instructions of the father.
- iv) The *bon* of existence Mu-cho *ldem-drug* installed the monkey with the *ni tshor ro* (?) and human likeness, the badger,⁸³ and the 'not mouse, not bird' with teeth and wings (bat) as the *gshen* who can block (*thub-chod*). As the vanguard against the assembled *g.yen* multitude, [sTon-pa] first dispatched the three blocker brothers. The epidemics of the *g.yen* multitude that had befallen [the *gshen*] were again pacified.⁸⁴

The origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are also treated in another text in the funerary cycle entitled *The Raising and Chants of the Lha, Bon and gShen, These Three*.⁸⁵ Like the two other etiologic myths we have examined, this variant developed after the emergence of the systematized Bon religion at the end of the tenth century CE. These accounts are woven around reformulated lineages of ritual practitioners and the exclusivist divine aura of sTon-pa *gshen-rab*, foundations of the present-day Bon religion. This origin tale (*srid-rabs*) of the funerary tradition begins with the state of primordial absolute nothingness (*dang-po yang-med*) in which the three *mgon-po lha* reside (para. i). The great *gto* and *dpyad*, the substructure of the tradition, arose in the minds of these gods with the first glimmering of primordial existence (*ye yod cung tsam zhig*). Although already omniscient, sTon-pa received these teachings from Srid-pa sangs-po 'bum-khri, the chief cosmogonic deity of Bon, who features in many cosmogonic accounts (para. ii).⁸⁶

⁸² Literally, 'over the water'. This is a variant spelling of *cu-gang*, the funerary gifts presented to the deceased by his relations.

⁸³ The badger (*grum-pa*) is described by the unknown phrase: *thod-de rma-bo*.

⁸⁴ The text, in small letters, now moves to preliminary instructions for carrying out the funeral with the *gcol-chung na-ra bu-tsa* (no. 109, lns. 3–6). It informs us that liturgical alterations (*kha-bsgyur*) can be made in the usual fashion. It is stated, "Should the *lha* and *g.yen* come down from above, send them back with the three who can block. Should the *dmu*, *bdud* and *btsan* appear from the four cardinal directions, send them back with the three who can block. Should the 'dre rise up from the subterranean tombs (*sa-'og dur*), send them back with the three who can block" (*lha g.yen steng na* (= *nas*) 'bes (= 'beb) *na yang* / *thub chod gsum gyi* (= *gyis*) *slar la lhos* / *phyogs bzhi'i dmu bdud btsan g.yos kyang* / *thub chod gsum gyi* (= *gyis*) *slar la lhos* / *sa 'og dur 'dre ldang ba yang* / *thub chod gsum gyis slar la lhos* /). The text also instructs the ritualists to hold the three brothers (*spun-gsum*) in their hands while reciting the text, before dispatching them. Then, holding the hand-tool wing (*phyag-mtshan gshog*), the officiants are to set out (*bshas-btab* = *bshams-btab*) the funeral ritual.

⁸⁵ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las* (*From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts*) *lha bon gshen gsum gyer bzhengs bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 237–249), nos. 242, ln. 2 to 247, ln. 6. No author or colophon is found in the text. Tibetan Text III-5, pp. 612, 613.

⁸⁶ For the activities of this progenerative figure, see pp. 349–351.

Of all the 100,000 *gshen* who received the teachings from sTon-pa, the 'dur-*gshen* rMa-da is singled out for special mention (para. iii). The text states that he is really tantamount to gShen-rab himself (*gShen-rab nyid dang gcig mod*) as a funerary authority. The doctrine of reincarnation (*sprul-sku*) is cited to account for rMa-da's ability to replace gShen-rab in this role. This explanation of the origins of the funerary tradition was enabled by the adoption of tantric concepts concerning the 'three spiritual bodies' (*sku-gsum*) by the systematized Bon religion. The text continues to speak of groups of 100,000 ritual traditions and practitioners. This numerical denomination conveys the completeness of the funerary teachings and the full complement of practitioners.

The occurrence of rMa-da as a prototypical priest can be traced to the Dunhuang manuscripts, underscoring his seminal role in the archaic funerary traditions. Along with sTon-pa *gshen-rab* himself, rMa-da appears in these primarily imperial period documents as an archetypal funerary priest in the origin tale proclamations (*smrang*) of various traditions connected to the funeral ritual. In PT. 1134, the father (*pha*) Dur-shen (mod. = 'Dur-*gshen*) rma-da, gShen-rabs (mod. = gShen-rab) myi-bo and sKar-shen (mod. = sKar-*gshen*) thi'u-bzhug announce to the *pyugs spos ma nye du* (the beloved horse on which the deceased's consciousness principles are mounted): "You are dead. The lord is dead, you are no more. Chipped, the turquoise is chipped, so it is no more. The degenerated ('*pan*) son, yes, he is dead. The crane egg, yes, it is cracked. The sharp⁸⁷ bow, yes, it is broken."⁸⁸ In another funerary manuscript, PT. 1068, we read: "The brother invited (*gnyer*) gShen-rab myi-bo, Dur-*gshen* gyi rma-da and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, these three."⁸⁹ This line is found as part of a story about a sister's tragic death in extreme poverty while her brother was away hunting gazelle and deer to provide them with food. It occurs as the brother is seeking the help of the *gshen* to rehabilitate his sister's corpse and mind. Also in PT. 1068 (ln. 90), the father Dur-*gshen* rma-da, gShen-rab myi-bo and gShen-tsha lung-sgra are mentioned when expressing their ability to help the deceased by declaring that they have the *dp Yad*.⁹⁰ In the same manuscript, Dur-*gshen* rma-da is cited in the context of carrying out recondite funerary procedures (ln. 122) (see pp. 538–541).

Lha bon gshen gsum gyer bzhengs observes that rMa-da is descended from a group of nine divine funerary *gshen* brothers, who are described as power gods (*dbang-lha*) (para. iv). As part of the Bon tradition of origins, the divine parents and grandparents of this *gshen* brotherhood are listed in the text. While his brothers go off to various celestial and terrestrial realms, rMa-da stayed behind to be the king of the *bon* and *gshen* priests, and the supervisor (*gnyer-dpon*) of the 100,000 portals of proclamation teachings (*smrang-sgo*) (para. v). To his inner circle of *gshen* he revealed all the teachings: the use of the forceful wing instrument, soul rescue, the destruction of the predatory

⁸⁷ *rNo*. This describes sharp-edged weapons such as the sword and arrow. See p. 530, fn. 634.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, lns. 61, 62: *khyed gyang* (= *kyang*) *grongs rje grongs gis myed grugs g.yu grugs gis myed na 'pan gi ni bu grongs so khrung khru* (mod. = *khrung khrung*) *ni sgong rdold / rmo'i ni gzhu chag gis...* For information on the ritual context of this passage, see pp. 510–513.

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, lns. 87, 88: *ming po dral pos gshen rab myi bo dang dur shen* (= *gshen*) *gyi rma da dang gshen tsha lung sgra gsum zhig gnyer de...* The contents of this tale in their entirety are examined on pp. 538–541.

⁹⁰ For full text, see pp. 538–541. These Dunhuang passages raise the vexing issue of the identity of gShen-rab myi-bo/mi-bo, which has been grappled with by Tibetologists for decades. It has been pointed out that gShen-rab, in six occurrences in the Dunhuang manuscripts, appears in the capacity of a funerary priest (Stein 2003a: 598–600) (for other instances of gShen-rab myi-bo in PT. 1136 and PT. 731 verso see pp. 513, 525–528). It must be added, however, that he was not merely a priest, but a formative figure in the Tibetan funerary tradition. There is no indication in these texts as to the social status of gShen-rab or to his position as the sole founder of the Bon religion. According to the Bon-po scholars that I have consulted, these passages contain no imputation of relative status, and merely show that gShen-rab performed funerary rites along with his close disciples.

demons, the cleansing of disease, and all other ritual specifications (paras. vi, vii). Of particular interest is the instruction of several of rMa-da's disciples in the contamination-proofing (*mnol-thub*) and cleansing of the corpse (*ro-sel*). This is one of the few references to mortuary practices connected to the preparation of corpses for burial found in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. It would appear that the ancient Tibetans believed corpses could be a source of misfortune, a belief found in modern Tibet (and many other cultures throughout the world). Until subsurface archaeological data are systematically compiled, we only have these scant Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur references to go by in order to understand what kinds of mortuary procedures may have been involved. From a general study of ancient Tibetan cultural history, we might expect that fumigation, lustration, impregnation of body tissues with ochre and other medicinal substances, and even the substitution of body parts and organs by artificial models all figured in early Tibetan mortuary practices. In fact, the final portion of this narrative of origins obliquely states that corpses were sprinkled with liquids of the *sel*, the name of an important class of ancient purificatory rites (para. ix) (see pp. 220, 274, 276, para. vii).

rMa-da also taught countless other *gshen* of the three realms of the universe, the five elements and various topographical features, illustrating the great reach and pervasiveness of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (para. viii). The Dunhuang funerary manuscript PT. 1134 likewise acknowledges the divine status of the lineage of rMa-da and three other practitioners of the funerary *gto* and *dpyad* (in a manner not unlike the theogonies of the Tibetan kings). As in later Bon works, reference to the apex or end of the sky describes the nexus of origination:⁹¹

At the end of the sky, beyond the heavens,⁹² the sons were the sons of the *lha* [and] the cousins were the cousins of the *srin*: the mighty (*drag*) *bon* funerary (*gshin*) *gshen*,⁹³ Dur-gshen rma-da-na, Glan-gshen dril-bu, lDe'u-gshen mun-bu, and Bon-gshin gsas-drag⁹⁴ did the *gto*, and did the *dpyad*, and did the *shid*.

Near its conclusion, this Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur tale of origins divulges that Mu-cho ldem-drug is even more fundamental to the unfolding of the transmission of the funerary teachings than rMa-rda (para. ix). This is because Mu-cho was a scion of sTon-pa's lineage. There is no indication of this patrimony, however, in the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. In any event, these primary figures propagated the Bon 'religious system' (*gtsug-lag*) to large groups of practitioners. The common meaning of the term *gtsug-lag* as sacred texts, religious methods and religious sciences is recorded in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (Stein 2003b: 535, 536). This corresponds to its signification in

⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, lns. 47–50: *gnam gyi pa mta dgung gi pa 'brum na / bu ni lha'i bu tsa ni srin gyi tsa ste bon gshin gshen drag cig dur shen* (mod. = *gshen*) *rma da na glan shen* (mod. = *gshen*) *dril bu lde'u shen* (mod. = *gshen*) *mun bu bon gshin gsas drag gis gto bgyis dpyad bgyis pa shid bgyi* (mod. = *bgyis*)...

⁹² *gNam gyi pa mta dgung gi pa*. In the *Klu 'bum* we find the same expression written in the standard orthography of later times: *pha mtha' dgung gi pha*. In PT. 1134 this line terminates with *'brum na*; the semantic value of *'brum* to the sentence is not clear.

⁹³ A corresponding line is found in another part of the same text (lns. 86, 87): *gnam/gyi/pha mta'/dgung gi/pha mta' 'brum/na/bu ni lha'i bu'/tsa srin gyi tsha' /*. This line also prefaces the invitation of the mighty *bon* funerary *gshen* (*bon gshin gshen drag*) that occurs in another origin tale (*rabs*) in PT. 1134 (begins on line 67). It concerns the deceased elder son of the god 'Gon-tshun/mGon-tshun phywa (a divine ancestor of humans) and the goddess/demoness Tang-nga bdud-mo tang,* who was the daughter of bDud-rje btsan-tog. Named Lhe'u yang-ka rje/Lhe'u yang-ka' rje, the son was killed by the *bdud* descending from the sky and the *sri* rising from the earth.

* This figure (Thang-nga bdud-mo thang) is an attendant in the circle of the Bon tutelary god Khro-bo dbang-chen.

⁹⁴ Given customary Bon usage, the name of this funerary priest is probably best rendered as Bon-gshen gsas-drag.

the Bon funerary tradition.⁹⁵ In conclusion, the text asseverates that the funerary tradition was spread to all corners of existence:

- i) In the beginning, how did the *gto* of existence come into being? In the beginning, how did the ascendant *dpyad* arise? In the beginning, in absolute nothingness, there were the lords, the three, empty space, mist and light breeze. From these three a little of primordial existence appeared, arising in the mind of the three *mgon-lha*. In [existence] a little coalescence (*bag tsam*) and a few [minute particles] the size of dust (*rdul tsam*) arose in the mind of the three great and excellent *gto* (*mgon-lha*).
- ii) The great *gto* [master] gShen-rab lha-'bum recited the 100,000 *gto* and *dpyad* at the temple (*gsas-mkhar*) of 'Bum-khang gsang-ba. Although the emanation body (*sprul-sku*) sTon-pa gshen-rab knows everything that is cognizable⁹⁶ in nirvana and samsara ('*khor 'das*), to effect the transmission of the 100,000 divisions of the *gto* and *dpyad* he listened to Srid-pa sangs-po 'bum-khri on the crystal castellation of Ri-rab.
- iii) Then the 100,000 *gshen* conquerors of living beings received the teachings of the 100,000 *gto* and *dpyad* from the emanation body sTon-pa gshen-rab. During that time and period, the empowerments (*dbang*) and teachings (*lung*) of the funeral ritual of Srid-gshen⁹⁷ on guiding living beings to liberation were conferred upon the funerary *gshen* rMa-da. He was appointed the manager (*gnyer-dpon*) of the 100,000 *smrang* portals.⁹⁸ Although the funerary *gshen* rMa-da is really equal to gShen-rab himself, for the propagation (*spel-ba*) of the 100,000 *smrang* portals, he was born as the incarnation of someone else.
- iv) In the land of the father's country, the Bon country called Dang-ma ldem-drug, in the verdant garden of the *gshen* country Hos, was the paternal castle, the Bon castle Dar-khams skong-mo. Inside this secret crystal castle was the grandfather of Bon Yid-lha snang-ldan rje (Mind Lha Lord Holder of Tangible Existence), the all-knowing victorious one; the grandmother of Bon 'Ol-za lcam-cig ma, the woman of very strict commands and miracles; the father Khri-lde khri-sangs rje, the elder *gto-rab mang-rum*;⁹⁹ and the mother Nyi-ma thum-thum ma, the space queen. Their son manifestations were the begotten (*bltams*) nine brother funerary *gshen lha* of power.
- v) The four elder brothers went to be the *bon* and *gshen* of the four sky portals (*nam-mkha'i sgo*). They controlled the nine *g.yen* of the sky. The four younger brothers went to be the *bon* and *gshen* of the four continents of Ri-rab. They controlled the nine kingdoms of earth. The

⁹⁵ Stein also notes that *gtsug-lag* can be defined as 'wise teachings' and good customs relating to one's comportment. He opines, I believe quite correctly, that before the term *gtsug-lag* came to denote the Sanskrit word *ārṣa*, it may have already been a part of the Tibetan [religious] vocabulary. See Stein 2003b, pp. 535, 536, 565. The non-Buddhist cultural aspect of the term is indicated in the 'Phyong-rgyas *rdo-ring* inscription (ln. 5): "According to the *gtsug-lag* of the swastika (*g.yung-drung*)." The Bon religious character of this inscription (recorded in *rGyal po bka' thang*), written on the request of King Sad-na legs (reigned 798–815 CE), suggests that archaic funerary rites persisted well into the imperial period. See Tucci 1950, pp. 37, 39–41, 91.

⁹⁶ *Bon kun mkhyen*. In this context, *bon* denotes existence or phenomenal reality. On this definition of the term *bon* as explicated in the text *Klu 'bum*, see Reynolds 2005, pp. 37, 415 (n. 25).

⁹⁷ The fourth vehicle (*theg-pa*) or system of Bon teachings.

⁹⁸ In this context, the litanies proclaiming the origins of the funerary rituals, as well as their general liturgical makeup and manner of practice.

⁹⁹ The precise meaning of this expression is not known. It shows that the father is the central holder of the *gto* lineage.

- ninth (youngest) one of the nine, the manager of the 100,000 *smrang* portals, is called the funerary *gshen* rMa-da. He was the king of the paternal *bon* and *gshen*. The funerary *gshen* rMa-da rotated the wing of the vulture. In his mind he also retained the excellent *gshen* mantras. On his tongue arose the holy *smrang* lineage. He recited the 100,000 *smrang* of the *gto*. He opened the crystal treasury of the *bka'-bgo*.¹⁰⁰ He explicated the 100,000 great ones of the turquoise treasury. He opened the crucible (*zhun-khung*) of the turquoise *phyag-rgya*. He spread the 360 *'dur* methods from the 360 *shid* methods.¹⁰¹
- vi) [rMa-da] exhaustively taught the *'dur* and *gso*¹⁰² to the 18 *stong-sde* (divisions of one thousand) of existence. He delivered to his [student] audience the main teachings (*gzhung*), branch teachings (*lag*) and origination transmissions (*dpe-lung*) of the funeral rituals (*shi-'dur*). Moreover, to his audience the *gshen-po* Ya-ngal gyim-gong, Yar gyi zha-nag, mThon gyi lham-nag, Za-ba khra-zhu, Khang-zas yo-mo, and mKhas-pa ru-sha (Scholar Deer Horns), he related and described the contamination-proofing (*mnol-thub*) and cleansing of the corpse (*ro-sel*). To the *gshen-po* Thar-bon gru-skyol, Glud-bon gyermkhas, gTo-bon byon-khri, and sNa-bon li-byin he related and described wing liberation (*gshog-thar*) and soul rescue (*bla-bslu*).
- vii) To the *gshen-po* Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal, dBal-bon gong-rum, Rog-pa thugs-kar, and Thang-yag ldam-pa he related and described the slaughtering of the *sri* and the defeat of carnivore [demons]. To the *gshen-po* Thum-bu re-nag, Khang-za ne-ting, sKran-bon mang-ra, and sNyun-bon na-ra nu-ra he related and described the removal of disease (*nad-spo*) and the purifying of illness (*snyung-sbyang*). To the *gshen-po* 'Dur-gshen khu-byug, gNam-bon dgong-btsan, gTo-rgyal ye-she, 'Bring-dang snar-ba, and bKra-bon sdeng-nam he related and described the measured path¹⁰³ of the funeral rituals (*'dur-shid*).
- viii) Also to the others, the *gshen-po* who requested [teachings], the 12 *gnam-bon* who came from the middle of the blue sky, the 12 *sa-bon* who came from the earth, the 12 *bar-bon* who came from the world of tangible existence, the five *gshen* of the elements, the *bon* and *gshen* of the land, stones, mountains, and rock formations, and the many hundreds of thousands of minor *gshen*, he gave whatever was needed to whoever needed it. In that way, the 100,000 *gto* and *smrang* teachings of divine gShen-rab were explicated.
- ix) [rMa-da] subjected [all] to the law of Mu-cho and sTon-pa. gShen-bon khu-byug melodiously chanted [the rituals]. [The corpses] were sprinkled with the *sel* (purificatory liquids) of Ya-ngal spa. [The teachings] were explicated by 'Dur-gshen rma-da. The nine armies of existence and eight appointed ones received the kindness of the *gtsug-lag* (Bon religious system) [pertaining to funerary rituals]. Then the many hundreds of thousands of *gshen-po* disseminated the 100,000 divisions of Bon *gtsug-lag* in the three worlds (*khams-gsum*) and the three realms of existence (*srid-gsum*). From the pinnacle of existence down to the bottom of hell, all were converted to *bon* and *gshen* [practice].

¹⁰⁰ These are the exhortations to the deities to remove evils and protect the ritualists and their benefactors. They occur in ritual sequences for the expelling of obstructions and demons. This line is succeeded by one having to do with *glud* (ransom offerings) and *phyag-gya* (a group of funerary doctrines pertaining to the restoration of the well-being of deceased?). It is not included in this translation.

¹⁰¹ This line indicates that the *'dur* represent the ancillary funerary practices, while the *shid* are the main funerary practices.

¹⁰² In this context, the restoration of the well-being of surviving members of the deceased's community.

¹⁰³ *Lam-tshad*. This indicates the specifications of the ritual performances.

4.2 Biographical Accounts of the Prime Founders

In conclusion to this study of the ritual origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, we turn to short biographical accounts of the chief funerary figures of yore, Mu-cho ldem-drug and 'Dur-gshen rma-da. The first of these is a hagiology of Mu-cho found in the *gZi brjid*.¹⁰⁴ It describes him in glowing terms, as befits the primary successor of sTon-pa's lineage. I have condensed this hagiology from the text as follows:

The *phywa* king Ye-rje thang-po gave his daughter Phywa-za gung-drug to sTon-pa for one of his wives. The king gave the couple the castle of rTse-bla yang-thog and the country of Phywa-ma gling-drug. In the year following their marriage Mu-cho ldem-drug was born. After his birth his body was bathed by the *lha-mo* and *klu-mo*. Various *bon-po* conducted a ritual for the protection of his life (*sku-srung gi rim-gro*). One year after his birth the *bon-po* pronounced that he had the good qualities associated with the great lineage representative of the Victorious One (sTon-pa). He received teachings from sTon-pa and mastered the 84,000 portals of Bon. His excellent body was as stable as a great mountain (*mi-'gyur lhun-po sku-mchog*) on which spreads the wish-fulfilling world tree of excellent qualities (*yon-tan dpags-bsam gyi ljong-pa rgyas-shing*). By the rain of the blessings of his benevolence, he will cultivate the superb fruit of liberation in the wastelands of the living beings of the six realms. He will lead sentient beings upwards.

Descriptions of Mu-cho ldem-drug and 'Dur-gshen rma-da are contained in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, where they appear as apotheosized figures invoked to defeat the *gshed* demons of death.¹⁰⁵ In this source their appearances are typical of the prehistoric and imperial period Bon sages found in so many other works. rMa-da wears headgear that sports turquoise bird horns, as do the special *gsas* and *gar* deities of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. As we shall see, this type of ritual helmet is used by the funerary gods as a potent weapon against demons. The reference to the tiger's gait (*stag-'gros*) and the lion's manner of movement (*seng stobs-gcod*) of rMa-da refers to a ritual dance in which the chthonic *srin* demons are suppressed. He himself is called a *sri-bon*, a specialist in eliminating the harm caused to the living and dead by the *sri* (and *srin*), a homicidal class of spirits:

- i) *bSwo!* In the limitless temple (*gsas-mkhar*) treasure fortress, the *srid-gshen* Mu-cho ldem-drug has a bright-blazing white-colored body. You wear a crystal *prog-zhu* (a type of crown) on your head. You wear a white *la'u* (mantle) on your body. You hold a flexible conch [-white] stick¹⁰⁶ in your hand. You rest upon a white lion seat. Mu-cho ldem-drug with your entire circle, please come as my collaborator, the *dbal-bon*, for the purification of contamination and the slaughter of the *gshed* of the deceased, this dead one who has expired.

¹⁰⁴ *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, vol. 8 (Chengdu: Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-mnying skrun-khang, 2000), pp. 203–206.

¹⁰⁵ See *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom mdur* (= 'dur) *chen mo las 'dur gsas* lha srung bskul shing spyang drangs pa bzugs so* (*The Invitation and Commission of the Funerary gSas Divine Protectors from the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Tantric Jewel Rosary Funeral Ritual Texts*), anonymous (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 297–322), nos. 302, ln. 6 to 303, ln. 3 and 303, ln. 6 to 304, ln. 3. Tibetan Text III-6, p. 614.

* *Dur-gsas* is a special class of funerary deities.

¹⁰⁶ *Shing*. Probably a staff or pointer used as a symbol of authority.

- ii) *bSwo!* In the *gsas-mkhar* Dar-khang skang-mo,¹⁰⁷ the *sri-bon* 'Dur-gshen rma-da has a green-colored body with ornaments. On your head are erected the bird horns of turquoise. You wear a striped tiger *slag* (animal-skin robe). In your hand you hold the flexible wing of the funeral. Your feet move with the gait of the tiger and the manner of the lion. 'Dur-gshen rma-da with your entire circle, come as the collaborator of me, the *dbal-bon*, for the purification of contamination and the slaughter of the *gshed* of the deceased, this dead one who has expired.

¹⁰⁷ Alternatively, this could be a description of the *gsas-mkhar* rather than a proper name.

5 The Sequence of Philosophical and Ritual Structures in the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

5.1 A Description and Analysis of the Fundamental Features of the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

In this Section, I provide a comprehensive summary of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, with a translation and analysis of the important features of this great funerary tradition. The text Fourth Chapter Explicating the Three General Appointments of the Thangs-khrims outlines the conduct of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral.¹⁰⁸ The substance of this text recapitulates the complex system of ritual activities, proscriptions and explanations found in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature. While this description of the funeral is soundly based in archaic cultural traditions, we must not expect that it captures the rites carried out in ancient times with perfect fidelity. These would have varied in accordance with social, economic and regional factors (as reflected in the mortuary archaeology of the Plateau). The text under consideration here, like other Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur texts – all written down after 980 CE – represents a reformulation of antecedent funerary tradition to a greater or lesser extent. As discussed, the extant textual cycle is a recasting of imperial period funerary traditions in the light of subsequent linguistic and religious advances. The grammatical structure and ritual content of the cycle as a whole seem to confirm this. The social agents that led to these revisions, however, largely remain submerged in the institutional and doctrinal framework of the Bon religion of the first half of the last millennium. There may also be special instances of Indic mythic themes that were amalgamated into the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition before the imperial period. While this type of protohistorical development cannot be confirmed with the textual and archaeological data at hand, it remains a hypothetical possibility and will be discussed where appropriate.

The three appointments cited in the title of the text pertain to the following areas of the ritual apparatus: 1) the appointments of life (gson-skos) – paras. vii–ix; 2) the appointments of the gshen (gshen-skos) – paras. x–xxii; and 3) the appointments of the funeral (shid-skos) – paras. xxiii–xxix. The gson-skos treat the crisis of dying and the vital techniques that allay that suffering. The gshen-skos are the various activities that stabilize the mind and soul of the deceased so that he can find his way to a positive new existence. The shid-skos are the ritual exercises that permit the deceased and the living to come to an accord, the final valediction of the deceased and his entry into the celestial realm.

The elaborate procedures of the funeral ritual are efficiently outlined in the text, providing an authoritative overview of the activities that are conducted when death is impending, and in its aftermath (paras. v–xxix). The text also briefly explains the significance and value of each funerary procedure, conferring a doctrinal or philosophical dictum upon them. In the last three paragraphs of the text the advantages of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral are reiterated (paras. xxx–xxxii). In this final section, the ritualists in carrying out the funeral assert that they 'follow the ancient tradition' (srid-pa gna'i rjes-'brang). As we shall see, such claims are also made in the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. The text spells out the formidable value of this ritual enterprise, which is predicated on the correct transaction of the thang-khrims (prescribed funerary procedures). I will

¹⁰⁸ From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts, folios 109, ln. 6 to 123. Tibetan Text-III-7, pp. 614–617.

expound upon the funerary activities and their meaning on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis before presenting a translation of the text.

Paragraph v:

- a) Rental of funeral venue from the environment-bound deities
- b) Recital of the origin tale of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur
- c) The establishment of the prescribed ritual procedures (*thang-khrims*) with the assistance of the special monkey, badger and bat (*gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa*)

The first component of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is leasing the funeral venue ('*dur-sa*) from the territorial deities of the earth and sky. This is accomplished by carrying out rituals such as *gsol-kha* (propitiation and associated requests) and *bskang-ba/bskang-gso* (offerings for appeasement and expiation). The second step in the funeral is to recite the litany enumerating the original lineage holders of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, which is described as the 'origin tale of the father' or 'patriline source' (*yab kyi 'brang*). Thereafter, the 'three blocker brothers' participate in erecting the ritual framework of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, underlining their fundamental importance to the Bon funerary tradition.

Paragraph vi:

- a) Essential admonitions for the successful execution of the funeral

In the Bon archaic funerary tradition, the living and dead are presented as two parallel ontological categories of human existence. It is explicitly stated that the *thang-khrims* is what leads to the definitive separation of the living from the dead, thus maintaining the balance in the cosmos between these two categories of existence. It is also made known that the *thang-khrims* is instrumental in allowing a pathway of communication to be opened between the living and dead during the funerary ritual. This mystic discourse addresses the urgent matter of the living and dead reconciling with the inexorable existential chasm that lies between them. The text states that, for this to be successfully realized, the three main funerary appointments (*gson-skos*, *gshen-skos* and *shid-skos*) must be properly executed. The officiants must therefore go out of their way to find the special ritual objects needed for the funeral.

Paragraph vii:

- a) The indispensable nature of acquiring merit during one's life¹⁰⁹
- b) The offering of *glud* in preparation of death

The text unmistakably sets out the methods in which meritorious deeds (*tshogs-chen*) can be acquired for a successful transition to the new life. One must have purified defilements (*sgrib-sbyang*), confessed wrongdoings (*ltung-bshags*), paid back whatever debt was owed to others, engaged in charity, and made religious offerings. The text cautions that the making of these virtuous activities is no longer possible once one enters the postmortem state (*bar-do*).¹¹⁰ References to the *bar-do* are rare in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, all the more so among the archaic funerary liturgies. The tangential nature of the *bar-do* to this cycle of Bon literature and its customary occurrence in Buddhist ritual contexts strongly suggests that it was grafted onto a body of pre-existing funerary

¹⁰⁹ The vital importance from a Buddhist perspective of acquiring religious virtues before death is discussed in Lopez 1997a.

¹¹⁰ According to Freemantle and Chögyam Trungpa (1987: 10), *bar* means 'in between' and *do* 'island' or 'mark'. In scholarly literature, *bar-do* is most commonly glossed 'intermediate state'.

materials as a Buddhicizing feature. The term *bar-do* does not crop up in the non-Buddhist Dunhuang funerary texts. The *bar-do* as the intermediate state is equated with the Sanskritic *antarābhava*.¹¹¹ In the Tibetan tradition it is characterized by a series of fantastic visions that appear after death and may last up to 49 days.¹¹²

Paragraph vii of the text has a moralistic tone about it; all the more so with its mention of transmigratory attachments/worldly attachments (*chags-'khor*). However, mention of the necessity of paying back others for any misdeeds (*lan-chags*) wrought against them may possibly touch upon an archaic moral code. Traditionally, a crime against another such as murder, theft or kidnap had a price placed upon it, which had to be paid by the perpetrator to the aggrieved party. This custom of *lan-chags* was prevalent in Upper Tibet until the Communist period. The sanctioned use of proportional punishments was a stabilizing force in pre-modern pastoral society. This formalized form of retribution served as a major juridical mechanism, maintaining the social and legal contract that existed between disparate herding groups.¹¹³ The historical precedent for this custom of equivalent payment can be tracked to the imperial period.¹¹⁴ Beyond

¹¹¹ According to Cuevas (2003: 41, 42), the earliest description of the *antarābhava* is found in the Sarvāstivādin work *Mahāvibhāsa*. The most elaborate treatment of the *antarābhava* is in Indian Buddhist works attributed to Vasubhandu, circa the fourth or fifth century CE (Blezer 1997: 13, 13 (n. 61)). In his *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubhandu attempted to prove the existence of the *antarābhava* through the application of scholastic reasoning (Cuevas: 2003: 40, 41). Cuevas (*ibid.*: 43) maintains that in the seventh and eighth century CE, *antarābhava* was reinterpreted by tantricism, incorporating the metaphysical and soteriological features of this religious tradition. Little is known about the *antarābhava* doctrine in the imperial period; it emerges as a distinctive teaching only in the 11th century CE (*ibid.*: 39). The Tibetan Buddhist eschatological tradition upholds that the phantasmagoric visions that appear to the deceased are in fact generated by his own mental stream of consciousness. In the soteriology of the *bar-do* doctrine, in order to escape the endless cycle of rebirths it is necessary for the deceased to realize through pure awareness (*rig-pa*) that the visions he is experiencing arise in the *chos-dbyings/bon-dbyings* (the realm of reality), and are in fact a manifestation of the *chos-nyid/bon-nyid* (reality as it is). The doctrine of transmigration and the suffering inherent in the human condition was also firmly established in the Hindu tradition. An early reference is found in Canto XI of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna* (circa fourth century CE). See Pargiter 1904, pp. 69–71. For a discussion about the processes of dying, which are characterized by the dissolution of the ordinary physical constructs of life and the loss of the faculties of consciousness, as described in the *Guhyasamāja*, see Lopez 1997b, pp. 442–444.

¹¹² The Bon work *sGron ma drug*, attributed to sNang-bzher lod-po (eighth century CE), furnishes a sophisticated phenomenological presentation of the *bar-do* in which Indian concepts are prominent (Blezer 1997: 68–70). According to rDzogs-chen teachings, the inability to recognize the intrinsic reality (*chos-nyid/bon-nyid*) is the primary cause of rebirth in cyclical existence. Bon rDzogs-chen teachings related to the *bar-do* state are discussed in Reynolds 2005, pp. 237–245. The most famous Tibetan Buddhist work pertaining to the *bar-do* is *Bar do thos grol*, a text that has undergone much study by Western Tibetologists. While the *Bar do thos grol* is attributed to Gu-ru rin-po che (eighth century CE), it belongs to the *gter-ma* tradition of Karma gling-pa (14th century CE). Cuevas (2003: 32, 33) points out that the Tibetan tradition of the *bar-do* was not systematically formulated until the 13th or 14th century CE, although some features appear to have been established as early as the 11th century CE. For translations and discussions of the *Bar do thos grol* and allied literature, see Evans-Wentz 1927 (with a psychological exposition of the three *bar-do* by C. G. Jung and a foreword by Lāma Anagarika Govinda); Freemantle and Chögyam Trungpa 1987; Orofino 1990; Thurman 1994; Blezer 1997; Cuevas 2003; Gyurme Dorje 2005. See Mumford (1990: 209–224) for an incisive account of the *Bar do thos grol* as performed in a Gurung ethnographic context.

¹¹³ A general discussion of customary law in nomadic regions during the mid-20th century CE is found in Norbu 1997, pp. 68–73.

¹¹⁴ In a brilliant study of PT. 1071 by Richardson, we learn that it sets out penalties for causing the death or injury of someone with an arrow in a hunting accident, and for failing to rescue someone who has fallen under a wild yak. According to the law of homicide (*thong-myi khrims*), compensation (*stong mnyamo*) and blood money (*myi-stong*) had to be paid in the event of culpable death. Blood money ranged between 50 and 10,000 *srang*, illustrating the relative value of human life, as the least severe fines were levied upon those of high status who had inadvertently caused the death of a low-status individual. Even those of the highest status (the *zhang-blon/zhang-lon*) could be put to death for

the obvious abhorrence of cowardice and the strict hierarchal nature of society, the legal picture portrayed in PT. 1071 is very much one in which the scrupulous paying of debts owed to others, as part of a system of proportional justice, served as the apparatus that enabled the regulation of society. This fundamental reciprocity is also demonstrated in *Khrims bcas pa'i mjad pa*, where King Srong-btsan sgam-po is supposed to have promulgated four basic laws (*rtsa-ba bzhi'i khrims*) in accordance with his role as the great protector of Buddhism.¹¹⁵ These basic laws read:

If someone kills they must pay blood money. If someone steals they must repay it eight times over plus the actual stolen goods, a nine-fold [penalty]. If someone commits sexual misconduct they must make a payment. If someone tells a lie they must swear an oath [that they will not do it again].¹¹⁶

Paragraph vii of the text also notes that *glud* should have been offered before death (*'das-kha*). These are ransom offerings in the form of effigies, which are designed to act as substitutes for the victims of disease and misfortune. The tradition of *glud* originated from the indigenous cultural environment of Tibet and is of considerable antiquity, as attested by its mention in the Dunhuang manuscripts.¹¹⁷

Paragraph viii:

- a) The imperative of knowing one's personal deities before death

The text describes the importance of one who is dying being familiar with the receiver (*sun-ma*). This seems to refer to personal deities (such as the *pho-lha*), and possibly to the orders of funerary *lha* and *gsas* that assist the deceased in finding his new existence. The uses of mantras and four *dmu* cords are cited as helping the departing one in this epiphanic process. In this context, the *dmu-thag* appears to be the link that binds one to one's protective deities.¹¹⁸

Paragraph ix:

- a) The consolation of the person dying
b) Instructions given to the one dying in the proper manner of breathing

The text makes clear that there must be the correct basis (*gting*) for a contented death, which is predicated on renouncing the attractions of the world of the living. It also appears that the ritualists provide instructions to the one who is dying on how he or she can reach the dGa'-yul.

failing to pay the blood money that was due an aggrieved party. Likewise, high officials could be executed for not rescuing someone who had fallen under a yak, while they would be exempt for accidentally killing someone with an arrow. The extreme penalties for cowardice and the shirking of one's duty highlight the stringent sense of honor that marked the warlike Tibetan society of imperial times. See Richardson 1998, pp. 150–158.

¹¹⁵ Uray 1972b, pp. 50–53. According to Uray (*ibid.*: 59, 65, 68), these four basic laws and the 16 moral rules were attributed to King Srong-btsan, in both a historical and ideological sense, to justify later efforts at statutory codification. Excerpts of this code of law dating to the late royal period are found in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*.

¹¹⁶ This translation of the four basic laws is taken from the transliteration provided in Uray 1972b: *bSad na stong 'dod do / brkus na rgyal (= brgyad) 'jal dngos dgu 'dod do / 'dod log spyod na rin 'dod do / brjun smras na mna' sgog go zhes /*.

¹¹⁷ See p. 398, fn. 134. Among Buddhists, the *glud* is also an exorcistic ritual; the demon of death is lured into the effigy thus diverting it away from the living relations (cf. Cuevas 2003: 72, 73).

¹¹⁸ For the Tibetans of 'Jang, the *dmu-thag* is a white cloth or cord that is attached to the head of the deceased, in order to show the way to a better rebirth.

This is the eternalistic paradise (*mtsho-ris*) of the ancestors of the archaic tradition. It can variously be translated as 'Happy Land', 'Happy Country', 'Joyous Land', or 'Joyous Country'.¹¹⁹ The text then observes that it is through proper breathing that the one dying can differentiate between the old and new *mtshun-mgon*. The *mtshun-mgon* are the ancestral protectors of one's personal lineage.¹²⁰ They are closely tied to the genealogical history of individuals and help set them apart (in a consanguine and spiritual manner) from other family groups. The *mtshun* have a protective function both in life and after death; thus the text refers to the old and new among them.¹²¹ It is the *mtshun* ancestral spirits that receive their deceased kin into the dGa'-yul.¹²²

Paragraph x:

a) Preliminary prophylactic procedures after death

The *gshen* funerary priests must first suppress the 'three naked ones' (*sgren-gsum*) of the postmortem experience. These appear to be the first demons that terrorize the deceased. It seems likely that they are the cause (in anthropomorphic form) of the great fear and confusion experienced by the newly dead. The text specifies their suppression with various animal skulls and other wrathful ingredients. Animal skulls are frequently employed in various Tibetan exorcistic rites involving

¹¹⁹ One of the fundamental teachings of the *Bar do thos grol* is that unless enlightenment is achieved, one experiences the pain and suffering of rebirth in one of the six realms of existence. Tantric Buddhism has also devised an alternative soteriological system that attempts through ritual means to convey the deceased to a Buddhist paradise. The ratiocinative contradiction inherent in the *Bar do thos grol* was first noted by Waddell (1895: 492): on one hand the Buddhist priests try to guarantee a better rebirth for the deceased, and on the other they attempt to commend his spirit to the western paradise of 'Od-dpag-med. Even in the last phase of the intermediate state, the *srid-pa bar-do*, a way to the paradise of Vajrapāni is still open to the deceased (Evans-Wentz 1927: 189, 189 (n. 4)). Cuevas (2003: 37) traces this belief to PT. 239, where a fourth fate of the dead is discussed (in addition to the three lower rebirths of the *ngan-song*): that of Ālaka, the northern summit of Mount Me-ru, the residence of Vajrapāni and the sacred realm of the gods. According to Cuevas, the apparent purpose of this text was to insure the safe passage of the dead to this heavenly realm. Kapstein (2000: 7, 8) notes that expostulations directly addressed to the deceased in PT. 239 became a distinguishing feature of the *bar-do* rites in later times. Snellgrove and Richardson (1980: 110) see the *bar-do* concept of guiding the consciousness of the deceased in contravention of Buddhist arguments against an enduring personal principle, and therefore being of a non-Buddhist origin. Tucci goes so far as to label the officiant of the *Bar do thos grol* as a psychopomp who accompanies the deceased on each stage of the 49-day long journey of the intermediate state. According to Tucci, this rite essentially attempts to subvert the course of karma, which is reflective of old Tibetan beliefs concerning ritual interventions made on behalf of the deceased. See Tucci 1980, pp. 193, 194, 196. Hummel (1967) sees the *bar-do* as an expression of an older and more widely distributed tradition of the deceased passing to the country of the dead or to a gnostic union in which there is a continuation of the psychosomatic state of the living.

¹²⁰ Haarh (1969: 112) incorrectly refers to the *mtshun* as 'roaming manifestations of the tombs', when in fact they occupy a place in the heavenly afterlife. Haarh (*ibid.*: 226) maintains that *mtshun* is etymologically related to *btsun* (noble female; an honorific word for women). The linguistic ramification of Tibetan root words does indeed leave room to entertain such a relationship. Belief in the *mtshun-lha* as an ancestral or funerary spirit is still found in the Byang-thang (and other regions of Tibet). They are said to live in cemeteries and to be harmful if transgressed. In order to appease the *mtshun-lha*, human remains left after a sky burial are often transported to a sacred place and deposited in a reverential manner. This practice, called *dur-sa spo*, is supposed to appease the *mtshun-lha*.

¹²¹ As noted by Samuel (1993: 447), in 'shamanic' societies (he presumably includes indigenous Tibetan culture within this distinction) the dead who managed to distinguish themselves whilst alive may go on to become deified ancestors who have the power to intervene in the affairs of the living.

¹²² The *mtshun* are not explicitly cited in the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. In what seems to be the definitive send-off of the deceased in PT. 1042 (lms. 97, 98), however, the *yul-lha* and *gnyan* deities, owners of places, are noted in tandem with the paternal and maternal ancestors (*yul lha yul bdag gnyang (= gnyan) / yab myes yum phyi /*). This may well be a veiled reference to the ancestral figures of the afterlife, for this passage is followed by what appears to be a list of gifts that the deceased requires in the afterlife (see p. 451, fn. 309). Moreover, the *mtshun* are often conceived of as belonging to the *gnyan* class of spirits.

the *sri* demons of death.¹²³ It is also written that the *gshed* (demon-causer of death) must be apprehended, and this is accomplished by collecting the blighter elements (*'byung-bdud*). These are various articles fashioned from the primary elements that harm the *gshed*.

Paragraph xi:

- a) Appeasement of the *sa-bdag* of the funeral venue
- b) Subjugation of the earth *srin* with an exorcistic dance
- c) Luring the sky *g.yen* back to the sky

The text declares that without the permission of the *sa-bdag* (earth spirit sovereigns), a place for the funeral cannot be secured. This is won through various precious offerings such as gold and turquoise. The *srin* of the earth must also be suppressed if the *sri-khung* (hole of the *sri*) is to be dug. In the latter stages of the funeral, a cavity is dug to imprison and slay the *sri/srin* implicated

¹²³ The placement of various types of animal skulls on a corpse in order to repel the harm caused by demons is discussed in Waddell 1895, pp. 489, 490. As the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur indicates, this is a Bon exorcistic rite that was adopted by the Buddhists. In a tomb of the Dulan-Reshui site, in Qinghai (dated to the eighth or ninth century CE), an anthropomorphous *linga* was drawn on the skull of an equid. Amid short inscriptions on the same skull is one that reads: *rita sri mnan* (suppress the horse of the *sri*). See Heller 2003, pp. 2, 5, 10. Recently, four sacrificial enclosures in Tshwa-chu thang, Nag-chu county, were excavated by a team of archaeologists surveying the line for the new Tibet railroad (Cultural Relics Bureau of Tibet 2005, *et al.*). This archaeological site is now largely destroyed. The subrectangular enclosures were between 2.5 m and 10.2 m in length, and contained a large assortment of animal bones (domestic and wild herbivores, carnivores, and rodents), unglazed ceramic jugs and other objects (see *ibid.*, pp. 125–152 for a general description of the site and the artifacts recovered). In the sacrificial pit below enclosure II, a human skull (brachiocephalic type of young adult), which had sustained a serious injury, was discovered (pp. 132, 199, 207). *dBu-med* inscriptions were found on a number of the animal bones, most of which are highly worn and illegible. The clearest and most extensive of these inscriptions is written on a cow skull unearthed from enclosure IV (*ibid.*, pl. 50, nos. 1, 2). On the basis of these inscriptions and a comparative analysis of the ceramics, Tshwa-chu thang has been assigned to the ninth to 11th century CE (*ibid.*, p. 150). Unfortunately, no chronometric assessment was undertaken in order to verify these assertions. I present the following description and analysis of the inscription on the cow skull. Four horizontal lines of script are written on the right side of the cow skull and three lines on the left side. It reads:

Right side, ln. 1: *na {lcam} gnan no*

Ln. 2: *{ba} 'u lcam gnan no*

Ln. 3: *nya'o {'i} 'bag {ste} gnan no*

Ln. 4: *{three or four syllables illegible} gnan no*

On a right angle to these four lines: *god-'dre* (a demon afflicting livestock)

Left side, ln. 1: *{probably one illegible syllable} {bsen} nag mo gnan no*

Ln. 2: *{probably two illegible syllables} grag gnan no*

Ln. 3: completely illegible

On a right angle: *{dkor}*

gNan-no means 'I/we suppress' (in this context, *gnan* is not a future tense verb), *bsen nag-mo* is a type of female demon, *nya'o* refers to effigies used in tantric rites of slaughter, and *'bag* often denotes masks. The significance of the inscription is highly enigmatic. Two possible historical scenarios regarding the function of the four ritual enclosures at Tshwa-chu thang are indicated. One is that they functioned as part of an elaborate rite of destructive magic (of the *gtad* or *mthu* varieties). If so, the sheer scale of the project indicates that the participants were of high social status and acting against a powerful enemy, such as an invading army or rival political and/or ecclesiastic force. In this context, the human skull was one of the magic implements deployed against the enemy. The other functional scenario is that the enclosures were constructed as part of complex *sri*-suppressing rites to defeat the agents of death, which took place at a socially important funeral. If this is the case, the deceased (one or more individuals) may have been the object of sky burial or cremation (save possibly for the interment of the damaged human skull). What is evident in either case is that the bones and skulls were used to subdue a number of antagonistic forces or demons.

in the death of the deceased. The *sri* is resolutely dealt with in this way to prevent it from harming the surviving members. The *sri-khung* rite is accompanied by a ritual dance said to resemble the movement of fierce carnivores. As we saw in his hagiography, this choreography is attributed to the *gshen* of yore, 'Dur-gshen rma-da (see p. 388). Likewise, the *gnam-g.yen* (elemental spirits of the sky) must be sent back to their abodes in the sky, enticed through a variety of attractive offerings.

Paragraph xii:

- a) The sequestering of the deceased from demonic attackers

The *g.yen* and *bdud* spirits are repulsed from the funeral ritual using a curtain (*tsom-yol*), which apparently is erected around the corpse. The demons are also bought off with precious gifts so that they do not interfere with the advent of the uranic *lha* allies of the deceased. The aid of these funerary deities is indispensable in the salvation of the dead.

Paragraph xiii:

- a) Appeasement of the 12 mighty ones through offerings
- b) The erection of the receptacles for the *lha* and *gsas* allies

The 12 mighty ones (*gnyan-po*) are conciliated with nine mighty or essential (*gnyan-po*) articles, which are unspecified in the text. The identity of this group of deities is not certain; it possibly represents prototypic ancestral figures related to the *mtshun*. The next step in the ritual sequence is the establishment of the receptacle or support (*rten*) for the *lha* and seven sets of *gsas-'khor* (divine tabernacles) for the *gsas*. These receptacles take the form of weapons, barleycorn, libations, stones, and other things. In the contemporary context, the *gsas-'khor* could also be a type of magical diagram, as are certain talismanic *srung-'khor* and tabernacular *srog gi 'khor* still used by the Bon-po and Buddhists. The *gsas* and *lha* are closely related common classes of celestial deities. *gSas (sad)* is the Zhang-zhung language equivalent of the *lha*.¹²⁴

Paragraph xiv:

- a) The invoking of the *lha* and *gsas* allies

The funerary *gshen* must first proclaim the origins of the hand-tool wing (*phyag-mtshan gshog*), a powerful instrument that functions to call the gods from the sky. This is carried out using the *kha-gser* (mouth gold) and *kha-g.yu* (mouth turquoise). This is a reference to the ancient Bon custom of the turban-clad *gshen* priests placing precious substances in their mouths while reciting the liturgies, in order to demonstrate the power and worth of their words.¹²⁵ The text also stipulates that various edible offerings are made to the *gsas* to persuade them to conquer the *gshed*.

Paragraph xv:

- a) The seizure of the *gshed*

¹²⁴ For numerous examples of Zhang-zhung lexical references to the *sad*, see Martin 2001b; Dagkar 2003, pp. 386–392. In the contemporary ethnographic context, the *sad* are a common class of elemental spirits dwelling in sacred rocks, juniper trees and particularly water in Lahoul (Lho-yul/Lha-yul), Himachal Pradesh.

¹²⁵ According to the Bon inner esoteric teachings (*nang-rgyud*), ritualists place unrefined gold (*mu-mar/mu-dmar*) in their mouths to increase the efficacy of the recitations. According to the outer esoteric teachings (*phyi-rgyud*), turquoise and gold are placed on either side of the mouth to offer homage to the teachings of gShen-rab. See Dagkar 2003, p. 292.

The text describes the ritual tools needed to capture the *gshed* demons. This is accomplished by setting up a '*brup-khung*, a common exorcistic device in Tibetan ritual magic. It consists of a triangular enclosure in which evil spirits are imprisoned before being slain. Inside the '*brup-khung* there are weapons, a tent and other objects, which are used to seize and restrain the *gshed*.¹²⁶

Paragraph xvi:

a) The erection of the receptacles for the *bla* and *yid* of the deceased

There are seven sets of receptacles for the *bla* and *yid* known as *bla-'khor* (soul circles). One is a golden effigy (*gser-zhal*), which was probably a likeness of the deceased or his clan symbol. Another is the *mtshan-byang*, a tablet or paper with the name, vital facts and image of the deceased, which has remained a popular soul receptacle to the present day.¹²⁷ Two soul receptacles are related to the physical aspects of the deceased: the corpse stone (*gdung-rdo*) and the corpse support (*gdung-rten*), which is made from unused bamboo (*smyug-rgod*) and fragrant rhododendron (*sur-dkar*). The names of these two receptacles indicate a double meaning, with *gdung* also referring to the clan or lineage (*gdung-rus*) of the deceased. They symbolize the various anatomical parts of the corpse such as the bones, which are representative of his hereditary lineage. As such, the *gdung-rdo* and *gdung-rten* reflect the importance of clans as a fundamental Tibetan social grouping, especially in ancient times. Another *bla-'khor* is made from articles of clothing that belonged to the deceased (*dri-ma*). The *dri-ma*, with its olfactory imprint, is an especially powerful magnet for the deceased, and is still commonly used in funerals.¹²⁸ The spindle (*'phang*) and arrow (*mda'*), symbols of womanhood and manhood respectively, are the other two *bla-'khor*.

¹²⁶ Tibetan Buddhist practice as well has adopted the *gshed* as the cause of death, and it must be exorcised to prevent it killing other family members. In Buddhist doctrine, the attack of the *gshed/gshed-ma* is generally explained as the fruition of negative karma (cf. Cuevas 2003: 72). In the Buddhist *srid-pa bar-do* (the intermediate state of becoming, the last of the three stages of the *bar-do*) the life-taking *gshed-ma* are the ones who chase the deceased to his rebirth. With other evil spirits in tow, the *gshed* try to force the deceased into the most inferior rebirth possible. As per the Buddhist tradition, visualization of Vajrapāni or another tutelary deity is the only hope of salvation. See Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 185, 185 (n. 3), 186.

¹²⁷ Nowadays, the *mtshan-byang/byang-bu* often includes a photograph of the deceased. The ritual use of the *byang-bu* in a modern funeral is described in Cuevas 2003, pp. 76, 77. Waddell identifies the *mtshan-byang* (spelling it *mtshan-spyang*) as a Bon feature. He describes it as an effigy made from a stool or block of wood dressed with the clothes of the deceased (in Buddhist practice the *mtshan-byang* is commonly confused or combined with the other types of soul receptacles). The *mtshan-byang* is given a share of all meals for the duration of the death ritual, which can last upwards of 49 days. At the end of the funeral observance it is burnt and the ashes used to make *tsha-tsha* (miniature clay sculptures), which are deposited in a high location and on the family altar. See Waddell 1895, pp. 495–497. Also, see Skorupski 1982, p. 362. For a description of the funerary *tsha-tsha* of Ladakh, see Brauen 1982, p. 326. For the funerary *tsha-tsha* of Klu-brag village in Mustang (Glo), see Ramble 1982, p. 340. Evans-Wentz (1927: 20–24) provides a description of the *byang-bu* similar to Waddell's, and mentions that the effigy has a card printed with an idealized likeness of the deceased's face. He adds that the color and type of flame appearing when the *byang-bu* is burnt augur the type of rebirth the deceased will have. See also Tucci 1980, pp. 197, 198. The *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* yoga tantra (first translated into Tibetan in the eighth century CE by Śāntigarbha and Jayarakṣita, and again in the second half of the 13th century CE by Chos-rje dpal) records the use of effigies (*gzugs-brmyan*) and the writing of the name of the deceased with saffron as objects used to liberate the dead from great fear, eliminate sins, and deliver the deceased from hell. See Skorupski 1983, pp. xxiv, 81, 82, 319.

¹²⁸ The theme of the deceased being drawn to odors in the intermediate state also finds a place in Indic tradition. It is noted in Sanskrit *abhidharma* works (Blezer 1997, 23, 23 (n. 102)).

Paragraph xvii:

a) The slaying of the *gshin-rje*

The text is unambiguous in stating that the soul container (*bla-sgram*) of the *gshin-rje* must be destroyed if the deceased is to find salvation. A number of instruments and offerings for this purpose are mentioned in the text. The *gshin-rje* are demons that haunt the intermediate state or place after death. They routinely try to capture the souls and minds of those who have died in order to prevent them from reaching liberation or the paradise of dGa'-yul.¹²⁹

Paragraph xviii:

a) The elimination of the evil propensities of the deceased

This segment of the funerary ritual is carried out to prevent the deceased from ending up in hell (*na-rag*), the realm of the *gshin-rje*. This entails the purification of the deceased with various ritual instruments such as weapons and edible sculptures. The text notes that the impurities permeating the deceased's mind are due to the evil propensities or negative imprints (*bag-chags*) of the six realms of living beings (*rigs-drug bag-chags*), clearly a Buddhist philosophical concept. In a text of the Ge-khod cycle written to guide the deceased to a better rebirth or liberation (this type of ritual is an integral part of the recitative traditions of many higher Bon divinities), the purification of the deceased is expressed as follows:

Ōm! From the ocean of the pure sphere of *bon* (reality), the smoke of the beneficent mind spreads like clouds. The great rain of wisdom nectar falls down. Pitiable deceased one who has discarded the body, we wash your body and all *bag-chags*.¹³⁰
Wash the corpse and purify the person's [contaminants].¹³¹

White cloths, cords and lamps are also used to purify the deceased and actively show him the way to his new existence (these objects are directional and illuminating in nature).¹³² The *glud* (ransom offerings) of *lan-chags* (debts accrued for wrongdoings) seem to stem from an archaic cultural tradition whereby one had to discharge all obligations to society before death. I am inclined to see this as part of an ancient custom in which others had a right to retributive justice for wrongs wrought upon them before the wrongdoer's death (otherwise his passage to the dGa'-yul would be effectively blocked). In any case, retributive justice was still common in pastoral regions of Tibet prior to the Communist period. This readiness to retaliate and seek redress through violent means

¹²⁹ The *gshin-rje* also appear in the *Bar do thos grol*, where they savage the mental body of the deceased (Evans-Wentz 1927: 166, 167). In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the *gshin-rje* are conceived of as the forces that cause the fears associated with the process of dying and the forces that create mistaken appearances in the consciousness of the deceased (Lopez 1997b: 450).

¹³⁰ This line is followed by mantras.

¹³¹ *Ge khod bdud 'dul gsang ba'i rgyud las rigs drug gnas su drangs pa'i le'u* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 242, nos. 1237–1246, no colophon), nos. 1239, ln. 5 to 1240, ln. 2: *Ōm bon dbyings dag pa'i rgya mtsho las / thugs rje'i du ba sprin bzhin bgyis / ye shes bdud rtsi'i char chen 'babs / tshe 'das nyon mongs lus rjes kyi / lus dang bag chags thams cad bkru bar bya'o / phung po bkru la mi gtsang sbyangs /*.

¹³² Both Waddell (1895: 493, 494) and Evans-Wentz (1927: 25) describe the use of a long white scarf to guide the deceased. One end is tied to the corpse and the other is held by a lama who leads the funeral procession. This practice is common throughout the Tibetan world despite the denial of a belief in a personal soul by all schools of Buddhism. Evans-Wentz notes that the chief lama holding the scarf looks back from time to time to assure the spirit of the deceased that he is going in the right direction. This custom is directly attributable to the philosophical and ritual universe of the Dunhuang funerary texts and *Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur*.

stemmed from the notion of retribution or poetic justice, the receiving of what one deserves in the end (*la-yog*), a pervasive aspect of the martial culture of the pastoral uplands and Khams. All societies, past and present, have moral structures that highlight the activities and psychological states they consider salutary and desirable. In order to insure social compliance, societies often resort to coercive mechanisms, fear of the fate befalling one after death being paramount among them. The belief in a hell populated by diabolical *gshin-rje* may have served such a purpose in the archaic cultural horizon of Tibet.

Paragraph xix:

- a) The purification of the contamination of the deceased

The ethical dimension in an indigenous context is again touched upon here. The agents of contamination are *'dre* (polluting activities) and *sme* (pernicious forms of defilement resulting from heinous acts such as the murder of one's relatives). The text explicitly states that the way to paradise (*mtho-ris*) is blocked unless these baleful stains (*'khri*) are purified. The ritual methods for doing so are outlined in the text, and include an ornamented sheep and palanquin. Presumably, the deceased's consciousness was summoned to these objects in order that the rites of purification could be conducted.

Paragraph xx:

- a) The use of the head stone and the head juniper
b) The use of a special *glud* to eliminate the suffering of the deceased

During this stage of the funeral it appears that the corpse's head is placed on or near two objects called the head stone (*dbu-rdo*) and the head juniper (*dbu-shug*). These protective instruments function as the soul fortress (*bla-rdzong*), and seem to be employed to orient the soul of the deceased towards the Elysian dGa'-yul.¹³³ A human effigy (*ngar-mi gzugs*) of grain and animal figures (*gzugs-'gros*) of poisonous ingredients function as the *glud* that relieves the suffering experienced by the deceased.¹³⁴

¹³³ At the funerals of those who commit suicide, the Nakhi erect special juniper and poplar trees known as *dtv*. The main function of the *dtv* is to guide the soul of the deceased through the various hell realms upwards to the sphere of the gods. See Rock 1955, pp. 104, 224.

¹³⁴ This type of *glud* (like the *bla-glud* of para. xvii) is probably one and the same as the *thugs-glud* (ransom offerings of the mind) of the Dunhuang manuscripts. For instance, in PT. 1042 (ln. 97), mention is made of a white lamb ransom offering of the mind (*thugs-glud lug-gu dkar-po gcig l*). The same line of the text also notes 13 soul receptacles (?) (*gla (= bla) sgang bcu gsum l*). Lalou's (1953: 356, 356 (n. 6)) rendering of *gla-sgang* as medicinal herbs seems untenable to me, given the number of receptacles and the liturgical context. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *bla-glud* is recorded as aiding in setting the soul and mind (*bka'thugs*) of the deceased free from the world (see p. 407, para. xvii). Haarh (1969: 372, 373), however, mistakenly sees the *thugs-glud* as a substitute offering for the corpse. He further maintains that as the ancient funerary tradition developed the *thugs* and corpse may have come to be seen as one unit. Waddell (1895: 494, 495 (n. 4)) describes the making of dough effigies (*glud*), each with the head of a tiger, bird or ape, to expel the death demon. This *glud* ritual was held at night and entailed the brandishing of weapons by lay people, as well as the casting of hot pebbles in all directions. The use of *glud* and *ngar-zan* to forestall death is discussed in Orofino 1990, pp. 34–36, 96–100; and Germano 1997, pp. 466–471, 483–485. The exorcistic application of hot sand and stones by spirit-mediums is described in Bellezza 2005a. A lifesize effigy of a deceased person that appears to be of the *glud* type, which is about to be thrown in a river, is illustrated in Tucci 1977, ff. 52. See also Desjarlais 1992, p. 94, fig. 11.

Paragraph xxi:

- a) The administration of sundry medicinal substances to restore the well-being of the deceased

Medicinal compounds in powdered, liquid and vapor form are used during this stage of the funerary ritual. The philosophy behind these mortuary rites and the choice and administration of the things used in their performance are poorly understood by the modern Bon-po. The treatment of the corpse with aromatic vapors (?), medicinal baths (?) and herbal impregnators (?) is recorded as relieving the great distress experienced by the deceased. The use of hybrid yak butter and deer fat to rehabilitate a corpse in order that a deceased sister's funeral can be successfully conducted is colorfully described in the two narratives of PT. 1068 (see pp. 503–506, 538–541). A detailed treatment of such mortuary practices is also found in another text from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection.¹³⁵ It begins with a tale of origins, which revolves around an individual who was slain by the Rol-po rkya-bdun.¹³⁶ The restoration (*gso-ba*) of his corpse was accomplished with several applications of nectar (*bdud-rtsi*), a method of lustration (*tshan*) with reviviescent qualities. So successful was this refurbishment that the deceased is recorded as actually speaking and walking. Rather than a form of necromancy per se, this hyperbolic account is designed to demonstrate how efficacious the restorative techniques of the ancient *bon-po* were. Once the renovation of the corpse is complete, the deceased is able to take up residence in the various soul receptacles, his temporary but safe abode in the postmortem state:

- i) During the ancient time, the elders of existence had a son of existence, the only son of existence. He was killed by the extremely sharp (*dbal*) weapons of the seven *bdud* Rol-po rkya-bdun. The *gshen* *bdud-rtsi* grub-pa restored him by medicinal nectar. By [the application of nectar] one time, [the only son of existence] obtained [the original] luster of his body. By [the application of] nectar two times, he quickened with breath.¹³⁷ By [the application of] nectar three times, his body stood up and teetered (*kog kog*). He uttered a little bit (*thal thol*) of speech. On his body were streamers (*'phan*) of silk. He was restored by *sob* nectar.¹³⁸ As it was of benefit to the only son of existence, today it is of benefit to this son of the *smra*.¹³⁹
- ii) Various types of medicinal nectar, nine types of jewels, various types of compounded incense, types of corpse herbs (*phung-po gdung-rtsi*), and the application of *sobs* on the corpse are used as the medicines for the disease [of the deceased]. By the good qualities of the nectar, may the deteriorated body of the pitiable deceased one of the intermediate state (*bar-do*) be refurbished. May his deteriorated senses be cleared. May his repulsions (*yid-ga 'chus*) be opened (cut away). May all his deteriorations be purified. May the *bla*, *yid*, *sems*, these three, without delusions come and circle this support of the corpse (*gdung-rten*). Come and

¹³⁵ See *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen 'phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo gshen gyi bla 'khor cha bdun bgrang ba bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 883–913, no colophon), nos. 909, ln. 3 to 910, ln. 6. Tibetan Text III-8, p. 617.

¹³⁶ For descriptions of this class of deities, see Bellezza 2005a.

¹³⁷ This is the rough meaning of this recondite line: *Srid dang dbugs su dbyal /*.

¹³⁸ *Sob/sobs bdud-rtsi* is an applied substance, perhaps an unguent of some kind. According to Ramble (1982: 339), in Klu-brag village (Glo) three days after a death, a ceremony called *zhag gsum-pa* is held at a local monastery in which *chang* (beer), *a-rag* (liquor), sweet tea, and salt are offered to the deceased, so that he can partake of their fragrance. This ceremony includes an effigy of the deceased called a *sob* (?).

¹³⁹ A class of primordial humans (as in the *smra mi gshen gsum*). The use of this word as an epithet for the deceased, for whom this proclamation of origins (*smrang*) is recited, indicates his firm placement in the long legacy of human and divine existence.

reflect upon these bereaved and loving ones. Wear the soul home (*bla-khyim*),¹⁴⁰ corpse house (*gdung-khang*) and shroud of slumber (*mnal-kheb*).

Paragraph xxii:

- a) The offering of gifts to the deceased
- b) The suppression of the headrest

At this stage of the funeral the deceased receives the *gtad-g.yar* (literally: given and lent), a wide range of presents that represent everything he will need in his new existence. They include all the things he would have had recourse to in his life, such as farming and pastoral assets, hunting implements, arms, foodstuffs, household items, and even special deities to keep him company. Of special significance are the gifts given to the deceased by his relations; these are known as *chab-gang/cu-gang*. The text explains that this is also the time when the headrest (*sngas*) is suppressed (*non*). The headrest is closely related to the head juniper and head stone but the nature of their association has been lost with time. It would appear that at the time of burial the headrest is symbolically pushed down, allowing the deceased to be freed from tellurian forces and earthly attachments. In PT. 1068 a butchered female hybrid yak serves as the headrest (see p. 504)

Paragraph xxiii:

- a) The performance of the *sel* rites
- b) Requesting permission for the *shid*

The *shid* is the final major component of the funeral, which probably coincides with the transport of the corpse for final disposal. It begins with the *sel*, a set of potent rites to clear away all obstructions, including the placation of the attending spirits and various purification exercises.¹⁴¹ The *shid* must be sanctioned by the presiding deities if the old *mtshun* (ancestral spirits) are to acknowledge the new *mtshun* (the deceased). As part of this ritual process the oldest or most senior *mtshun* is offered gifts.¹⁴²

Paragraph xxiv:

- a) The ascent of the new *mtshun*

The text cautions that, unless they are thwarted, the orders of elemental spirits (*g.yen*) could bar the deceased, who is to be transformed into the new *mtshun*, from rising up to join the other ancestral spirits. The *g.yen* are stymied by four types of special offerings called *gtad-pa*. Among them are a tent of the soul (*bla-gur*) and the *se*. The *se* appears to have been a special ritual structure of sundry components that was erected at the grave site. The tomb (*se gru-bzhi*), functioning in the same safeguarding manner, must have figured in the *se* rite of ancient times as well. The superstructures of many tombs and funerary ritual enclosures in Upper Tibet are four-sided, just as described by the term *gru-bzhi*.

¹⁴⁰ This type of soul receptacle is mentioned in IOL 734 (*rla-khyim*). See p. 437, fn. 270.

¹⁴¹ The *sel* is a fundamental set of exorcistic and purificatory rites applied to humans, animals, deities, and the environment in general. It is primarily used for the benefit of the living. For a description of the *sel*, see Bellezza 2005a, pp. 207–214; Norbu 1995, pp. 103–107.

¹⁴² In *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen 'phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las gshen bon rang yul nas chas pa'i chas thabs*, anonymous (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 83–92), no. 85, ln. 4, an ancient funerary *gshen-bon* is requested to effect the transformation of a human soul into a *mtshun* (*mi-bla mtshun-sgyur*). The text asks, “sByangs-bon lha-tshon rgyal-ba, go forth from Gling-bzhi tshangs-pa'i sgo-bzhi. Transform the human soul into a *mtshun* and conduct it to the *lha*.”

Paragraph xxv:

- a) The construction of the coffin and tomb
- b) The subjugation of the *yi-dwags*

The text specifies that an ornamented *gdung-khung* (literally: corpse cavity) and *gdung-khang* (literally: corpse house) are established for the deceased. In later historic times, the *gdung-khung* came to mean the vessel in which relics of saints were enshrined for placement in reliquary *mchod-rten*.¹⁴³ During the archaic cultural horizon, the *gdung-khung* must have denoted the coffin, reliquary or sarcophagus for the mortal remains, as it is directly connected to the burial mound (*bang-so*) in the text. The *gdung-khung* may have designated the grave pit as well, which in higher-status burials was likely to be a cist or stone-lined chamber. Tibetan funerary traditions suggest that the *gdung-khung* accommodated the corpse in either a supine or squatting position. The *gdung-khang* appears to refer to the entire tomb, the design and construction of which remain obscure.¹⁴⁴ The text also notes that a divine supervisor (*kha-'dzin*) for the *shid* is necessary in order to subdue the *yi-dwags* (ghouls). The text asserts that all of these funerary activities have as their approbatory foundation the *dpe*. Generally speaking, *dpe* are examples, instructional tools, illustrations, stories of origins, ancestral precedents for ritual traditions, and archetypal myths. In this textual context, *dpe* describes the manner in which the funeral is to be carried out as per the established tradition.

Paragraph xxvi:

- a) Dispelling the demons of burial
- b) The reunion of the deceased with his relations through the offering of *cu-gang* and *gtad-pa*

According to the text, other types of demonic entities may lurk around the burial site. These must be repulsed from around the perimeter of the *se*. In order that the dead person and his living relations can be joyfully reunited for the last time, the various *cu-gang* and *gtad-pa* funerary gifts must be presented to the deceased by those who survive him. This joyful meeting occurs when the deceased is freed from the shackles of the demon-ridden intermediate state with its deep attachments and suffering. The deceased is now poised to become a *mtshun* (ancestral spirit).

Paragraph xxvii:

- a) The imperative of separating the living and dead
- b) The requirement that the deceased enter the mandala of the *lha*

Again, the text states that it is essential for the living and dead to be separated. The reason given is that if they were not disconnected from one another, the living could be drawn into an unnatural vortex of death. As part of this segregation, the living must have the things that belong to them, and the fortune capability (*g.yang*) inherent in these resources and vital factors, shored up. Once that which belongs to the living and dead is properly and decisively divided, the deceased must become acquainted with the mandala of the *lha* allies. The mandala (*dkyil-'khor*) can be defined

¹⁴³ For example, a description and photograph of Atisha's old 5 m tall reliquary *mchod-rten* are found in Bell 1931, pp. 58, 59.

¹⁴⁴ *Rin chen phreng ba gzhung gi nyin bon le'u gnyis pa'o* (no. 352, ln. 6) notes that a precious protector of the corpse, the *lding-khang* (bier/coffin), is made. The *gdung-khang* must also be closely related to the *ring-khang* (literally: 'corpse house', a mortuary or tomb) of the Dunhuang funerary texts. See p. 486, fn. 423.

as the appearance, activities and place of residence of the deities.¹⁴⁵ This epiphany is effected by a white cloth and a lamp to herald the way.

Paragraph xxviii:

- a) The separation of the *bla* of the deceased from the *bla* receptacles

It is now the time in the funeral exercise when the *bla* of the deceased is pried away from the *bla-rdo* (soul stones) and other soul receptacles that have been erected for him. The text is adamant that unless the deceased has been cleansed of his worldly attachments he cannot achieve liberation (*thar-pa*). This final purging of the longings for the past life is done with specially empowered ephedra and barleycorn. Once the soul of the deceased has been separated from the soul receptacles of the ritual, the last vestiges of his worldly existence, the relatives bid him their final farewell. The soul is conducted into the sky or space (*nam-mkha'*), the location of the celestial paradise (*mtho-ris*) or dGa'-yul.¹⁴⁶ In prevailing eschatological conceptions, the ideal ultimate destination of the deceased is the state of enlightenment. The soul receptacles are then destroyed once and for all, cutting the deceased off from the world of the living. Despite making reference to burial procedures earlier, the text now stipulates that the corpse is cremated.¹⁴⁷ This mixing of the methods of corpse disposal in the same funerary observance typifies the composite or syncretistic nature of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature.

Paragraph xxix:

- a) The consummation of the transfer of the deceased to the new existence

¹⁴⁵ There are both archaic and prevailing deity mandalas in the Bon funerary tradition. As we shall see, the assembly of archaic funerary divinities includes to the *lha*, *gsas*, *dbal*, and *gar* classes of gods (such as those of the Me-ri and Ge-khod cycles), which possess distinctive iconographic and behavioral attributes drawn primarily from indigenous Tibetan culture. In the prevailing Bon and Buddhist traditions an entirely different system of soteriological deities has developed, one that is predicated on Indian tantricism. The tantric system is based on the well-known mandala of the 100 *zhi-khro* deities, the advent of whom is viewed as an immutable phenomenological aspect of the *bar-do*. The tantric deities of the *bar-do* constitute a highly elaborate and prescriptive delineation of the psychodynamic of the postmortem state. The appearance of the *zhi-khro* deities according to the *Bar do thos grol* is treated in Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 126–151. A discussion of the *zhi-khro* gods is also found in Blezer 1997, pp. 39–66. According to Blezer (*ibid.*: 39, 40), the *zhi-khro* of the *bar-do* can probably be traced to the gSang-ba snying-po, a group of tantras that Tibetan tradition indicates were orally transmitted through Vimalamitra. As such, the Indian originals probably predate the eighth century CE.

¹⁴⁶ The Olympian afterlife and the indispensable nature of the ritual activities carried out to guide the departed to that world are still embedded in the Moso and Nakhi cultures of IJang. These beliefs and rituals are closely related to those enshrined in our Bon text, presupposing a common historical source and/or intensive cultural interactions over a substantial period of time. The funerary mythology and rites of the Nakhi are competently studied in Rock 1955, from which the following summary of pertinent data comes. The Nakhi deceased is led to the sky-bound sphere of the ancestors. There the deceased enters the 33 dimensions of the good gods. This journey is often made with the dead visualized on horseback. The deceased must surmount the hell realm to emerge into the realm of the gods, where he is met by his parents and grandparents. Once he arrives, the road connecting the dead to the living is ritually closed once and for all. During the journey to the afterlife, the deceased is counseled on what might befall him along the way. The route is elaborately demarcated using familiar geographic markers. The dead must also be instructed about the place in which the ancestors dwell, an alpine or pristine grasslands paradise.

¹⁴⁷ According to Evans-Wentz (1927: 26), earth burial is still carried out in some remote districts of Tibet, and throughout Tibet when death is attributed to contagious diseases. In the same reference, Evans-Wentz notes that Tibetans generally disapprove of earth burials out of fear that the deceased may try to reclaim his body. I have heard the same concern expressed repeatedly by Tibetans in their folklore, which holds that should a corpse be buried it may become reanimated (*ro-lang*). The self-professed supremacy of Lamaism has not been sufficient to prevent a proliferation of *ro-lang* tales from springing up throughout the Tibetan world.

b) The making of the receptacles for the funeral pyre ashes

This is the final stage of the funerary ritual for, ideally, the process of conveying the soul upwards is irrevocable. If not, the text warns that the deceased could be consigned to transmigratory existence. The deliverance of the deceased is accomplished through the 'path of consummation' (*grub-lam*), whereby the deceased is empowered to enter his new existence. In this description of the Bon funeral ritual, the mortal remains are cremated. The pyre ashes are then fashioned into receptacles and deposited in a shrine for the remains (*gdung-rten*), which is also called *mkhar-bu* (little castle). In more recent centuries, the ashes of the deceased have been mixed with clay and sacred substances and molded into funerary sculptures (*tsha-tsha*).¹⁴⁸ These *tsha-tsha* are placed in holy caves or other pristine locations. When *tsha-tsha* contain the relics of saints they are deposited in specially built shrines known as *gdung-rten mchod-rten* or *sku-gdung mchod-rten*. The text, however, stipulates that the *mkhar-bu* funerary shrine is to be erected high on a lofty mountain. I think it possible that there is some functional correspondence between the *mkhar-bu* of the text and the archaic mountaintop cubic tombs with small central depositories in western Tibet (as part of a historical continuum). Nevertheless, it would appear that human bones were enshrined in these western Tibetan tombs, while our text describes the *mkhar-bu* as accommodating the ashes of a cremation.

Paragraph xxx:

a) A declaration of commitment to the ancient Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur tradition

The text now acknowledges that the ritual and philosophical structures (*gtsug-lag*) as set out above are in accordance with the *thang-khrims* (prescribed funerary procedures) of the three *gshen* (sTon-pa, Mu-cho and rMa-rda). The text also states that the participants in this funeral have followed and adhered to the source (*rjes-'brang*) of the ancient tradition (*srid-pa gna'*). This wording confirms that the funeral ritual as recorded here is derived from an old precedent (disregarding the question of subsequent textual manipulations). According to the text, the *thang-khrims* constitutes the bedrock of the funerary tradition, and its liturgical and material components must not be altered. This textual injunction, however, seems to have left plenty of room for philosophical reinterpretation based on Buddhist-style doctrines and ethics.

Paragraph xxxi:

a) Aspiration for the well-being of both the living and the dead

¹⁴⁸ The funerary customs of cremation and the making of *tsha-tsha* with the bodily remains have their roots or reinvention in Indian tradition. In the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* yoga tantra (first translated into Tibetan in the eighth century CE by Śantigarbha and Jayarakṣita, and again in the second half of the 13th century CE by Chos-rje dpal (1197–1264 CE), an important parent source for Tibetan Buddhist death rituals), and a commentary by Vajravarman, the *ro sbyin-sreg* is described in some detail. The deities that preside over it are the five Tathagātha, Agni (Me-lha), and the wrathful four-armed figure Jñānadeva Trailokyavijaya.* This latter deity, the destroyer of sins, holds a noose, *vajra* and lotus, and wears a diadem. Once the corpse has been properly cremated, its ashes and bone particles are mixed with scented water, dairy products, camphor, and clay, and molded into *caitya* or images. See Skorupski 1983, pp. xxiv, xxix, 81–87, 319–323. It is reported that in Lhasa infants who died under one year of age were dried in clay pots before being cremated. The ashes were then used to make *tsha-tsha*, which were deposited on surrounding mountains. Using elaborate mortuary procedures, most members of the Sa-skya 'Khon lineage were also cremated and their remains made into *tsha-tsha*. See Wylie 1964–1965, pp. 234–240. The Bhotia of Uttaranchal bury deceased children (Sherring 1906: 123).

* This deity is mentioned in an eighth-century CE historical context in *Authentic Proof of the Scriptures* (Kapstein 2000: 61, 62.).

The text affirms that the proper execution of the *gtug-lag* in conformance with the *thang-khrims* allows the living and dead to pay their last respects to one another before being permanently segregated in an act of mutual benefit. This wish for the bifurcation of destinies is famously phrased: “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*).” When this happens, the deceased finds the ‘swastika consummation path’ (*g.yung-drung grub-lam*) of liberation, and the vital *phywa* and *g.yang* of the living is resuscitated. This theme of the door of the *lha* being opened and the door of the tomb being closed recapitulates the utility of the properly executed funeral, which benefits both the dead and the living. The path to paradise or enlightenment is through the door of the *lha*, and the shutting out of the demons that infest the postmortem zone is typified by the sealing of the tomb door.¹⁴⁹

Paragraph xxxii:

- a) A reiteration of the intent to execute a peerless funeral
- b) The wish that any negative consequences of an imperfectly conducted funeral fall upon the demons of death

¹⁴⁹ This dichotomous metaphor (with some minor variations) is also encountered in para. vi of this same account (p. 405), in para. viii of the hand-tool wing liturgy (p. 432), and in para. xii of the origins and ritual usage of the bird horns text (p. 447). These twin lines sum up the great power of the Bon funerary rite, which symmetrically operates in the realms of the living and the dead. This statement first came to prominence with the groundbreaking work of Haarh (1969). I will now consider the flaws in Haarh’s historical analysis of the development of Bon, in which these lines are pivotal. Unfortunately, his exposition of the progression of the Bon religion in early times has remained influential in academic circles to the present day. Haarh (*ibid.*: 110–113, 342) promotes the thesis that the death of King Gri-gum btsan-po (significance and circumstances surrounding his death discussed by Haarh on pp. 328–333) ushered in the initial stage of a ‘new religion’, epitomized by the same lines we find in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur. His position that a transition from an ‘animistic’ to a ‘theistic’ religion occurred in the time of King Gri-gum is, however, untenable. Haarh’s attempt to understand and historicize the Bon funerary tradition was impaired by his dependence on Buddhist sources, a dependence underscored by his insistence on rendering the funerary tradition (*’dur-bon*) as *dur-bon* (*’bon* of the tombs). Haarh was misled by the Buddhist tripartite classification of the historical evolution of the Bon religion(s), and he did not appreciate that the *’Khyar-bon* reference in *Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long*, which speaks of the importation of *bon-po* from Zhang-zhung to perform the funeral of King Gri-gum (see pp. 370, 371), depicts a diffusion of tradition rather than a fundamental change in the composition of Tibetan religion. Furthermore, Haarh was influenced by the notion of linear progress in the historical development of religious culture that was still favored in his time. He would have us believe that this ‘new religion’ came about in order: “To open the door to the lHa of the Living, to shut the door to the Tombs of the Dead, and to lead the Living along the Path of the Swastika.” He asserts that, “By closing the doors of the tombs *it cuts the bond that ties him (Tibetans) to the World of the Defunct*, and by opening the door to the lHa *it ties a new bond connecting him with the World of the Gods. It replaces the superiority of the chthonic powers with that of the celestial ones.*” The passage under consideration, however, provides little rationale for believing a new religious order came into being with the death of King Gri-gum. First of all, the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur and Bon historiographic materials we have been examining clearly spell out a longstanding continuity in the Bon funerary tradition, with no epochal break coinciding with the death of King Gri-gum. As we have seen, Bon-po maintain that their religion was persecuted in the reign of this king, not utterly transformed or replaced (see pp. 237, 286). Haarh has missed the significance of the passage pertaining to the opening of the door of the living and the closing of the tomb of the dead. It is not an articulation of historical fact, but is concerned with declaiming the great effectiveness of the Bon funerary system; its import is doctrinal not historical. An insightful analysis of the shortcomings of constructing a history of the development of Bon founded on the *Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long* discourse in Bjerken (1998: 93, 99, 100) divulges that Haarh’s portrayal closely conforms with that of Tucci in *The Religions of Tibet* and shares its reliance on the scheme laid out in this Buddhist text. Tucci (1955: 203, 204) theorized that the death of Gri-gum btsan-po marked a seminal shift in Tibetan religious development in which a nomadic people invading from the northeast introduced a religious tradition characterized by the deification of heaven and the concomitant displacement of telluric divinities.

The ritualists confirm that they have executed the funeral in an exemplary fashion, meeting all the stipulated material and verbal requirements. In an allowance for a less-than-perfect performance, the ritualists imprecate the *sri* and *gshed* demons of death, hoping that any harm that arises from such inadequacies will rebound (*bzor*) on them. In the final instance that enigmatic monkey, badger and bat team – the ‘three blocker brothers’ (*thub-chod spun-gsum*) – are invoked, just as they were at the beginning of the funeral ritual.

5.2 The Salient Features of the Funerary Tradition in the Words of the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

Herein follows a translation of paras. x–xxxii of the *Fourth Chapter Explicating the Three General Appointments of the Thang-khrims*:

- v) Now, from the great and powerful sovereigns (*mnga'-bdag*) of the sky and earth, borrow a funeral ritual place as large as a mirror.¹⁵⁰ Fashion the foundation (*gzhi*) of this dead person's (*phangs-btsun*) funeral ritual (*'dur-ba*). Firstly, it is essential to pronounce the origin tale of the father (*yab kyi 'brang*). I, the *gshen*, do not do the setting out of the *thang-khrims* (prescribed funeral ritual procedures). The three blocker brothers (*thub-chod spun-gsum*) have to do that.
- vi) The three blocker brothers have said that if, during the *'dur* of this dead person and the setting out of the *thang-khrims*, the divine portal of the living (*gson gyi lha-sgo*) cannot be opened and the door of the tomb of the dead (*shi-ba'i dur-sgo*) cannot be closed, the dead and living cannot happily meet and the heavenly way (*mtho-ris lam*) cannot be shown. That is why the *thang-khrims* is set forth. At the establishment (*slongs*) of the *'dur* of this dead person, the three great ritual/textual (*gzhung*) appointments must proceed in good order. We need a multitude [of ritual articles] that others do not need. We have to search for a multitude [of ritual articles] that others do not search for.
- vii) At first, during the great appointment of life before death, if defilements (*sgrib*) were not purified, it is impossible to cleanse defilements in the intermediate state (*bar-do*). That is why before death, to purify defilements, it is essential to cleanse defilements and confess wrongdoings many times. If merit has not been [acquired] before death, it is impossible to repay the retributive debt (*lan-chags*) [owed] to others. That is why, before death for merit, it is essential to do charity (*sbyin*) and make religious offerings (*mchod*) to accumulate merit. If the way is not cleared before death, the path of liberation (*thar-lam*) is obstructed by the demons (*bdud*) of transmigratory attachments. That is why, before death, for the cleansing of the way (*shul-bsal*), it is essential to offer *glud* detached from the longings of attachment.
- viii) If one has not moved towards the [divine] receiver before death, one cannot recognize the secret divine path. That is why, before death, for the reception, it is essential to show the way with four *dmu* cords. If the *lha* was not revealed before death, the *lha* of wisdom cannot be seen after death. That is why, before death, for [the divine] introduction (*sprod*), it is essential to have divine mantras (*lha-sngags*) arrayed on the body.¹⁵¹ If one has not

¹⁵⁰ *Me-long*. The size of this venue is unclear.

¹⁵¹ In the yoga tantra tradition of *Sarvadurgatiparisodhana*, mantras are written on various parts of the body of the deceased as part of a consecration process (Skorupski 1983: 83, 84 (n. 27)).

recited (*bzla*) the secret spells (*gsang-'dzab*) before death, it is impossible to find the path of the holy place of perfection. That is why, before death, for the recitation of the heart secret spells, it is essential [to recite] the Wisdom Star Arrow¹⁵² heart syllables.

- ix) If there is not the basis to die contentedly before death, worldly phenomena are perceived of as salutary (*skyid*). That is why, before death, for a contented death (*shi-brod*) it is essential to show the way into the sphere of the dGa'-yul. If one is not assisted in receiving breath before dying, one cannot differentiate (*brda' mi 'phrod*) between the old and new *mtshun-mgon* (ancestral protectors). That is why, before death, for the receiving of breath it is essential to become acquainted with the rhythmic inhalation and exhalation of the breath.
- x) Then, at the great appointment of the *gshen*: firstly, if the three naked ones are not suppressed, all works cannot successfully proceed. That is why, to suppress the three naked ones, it is essential [to collect] a pig skull, a badger skull, and a dog skull; it is essential to collect black water, charcoal and black wood. If the *gshed* of the deceased is not hooked and seized, there is no method to tame the wild *gshed*. That is why to hook and seize the *gshed* of death, it is essential [to collect] the constituents of the blighter elements (*'byung-bdud*).
- xi) If the great and powerful *sa-bdag* are not satisfied, there is no method to fix the funeral ritual on the ground. That is why, to satisfy the *sa-bdag*, it is essential [to offer] gold, turquoise, grains, medicines, and other items. If the earth *srin* is not firmly suppressed, there is no method to dig a *sri* hole in the ground. That is why, in order to press down the earth *srin*, it is essential [to dance] the tiger's gait (*stag-'gros*) and the lion's movement (*seng-tshom*). If the sky *g.yen* are not sent off to the sky, sky epidemics can fall down to earth. That is why, to send off the sky *g.yen*, it is essential [to collect] birds, *bshos* (a type of offering cake), *mgon-cha* (various types of ritual offerings), and *gser-skyems* (libations).¹⁵³
- xii) If the curtain in between is not put up, the exterior wild *g.yen* can rush inside. That is why, for the curtain in between, it is essential [to arrange] parched grain,¹⁵⁴ bird feathers and *zhugs-shang*.¹⁵⁵ If the *bdud* looming above are not expelled from up high, there is no method to rouse the winged *lha* and the *lha* of power. That is why, to expel the *bdud* looming above, it is essential [to collect] unrefined gold (*gser-rgod*), unused turquoise (*g.yu-rgod*), *rgyang-rgod*,¹⁵⁶ the shavings¹⁵⁷ of the drum, the shavings of the *gshang*, and parched grain.
- xiii) If the 12 mighty ones (*gnyan-po*) are not appeased, they could brutalize (*stabs su bcad*) even those without fault. That is why, at the beginning of the ritual, it is essential [to give] the appeasement offerings (*bcos-yon*): the nine pure mighty things. If the seven sets of *gsas-'khor* (*gsas* circles) are not established, there is no foundation for the coming of the

¹⁵² Ye-shes skar-mda'. I have not been able to identify this mantric tradition.

¹⁵³ The occurrence of libations made from different types of foodstuffs is attested in the elaborate funeral ritual described in PT. 1042, demonstrating the antiquity of such offerings. The types of ritual beverages noted in this Dunhuang manuscript include: *gro-skyems* (wheat beer libations), *rgun-skyems* (grape wine libations) (ln. 26), and *'bras-skyems* (rice beer libations) (ln. 72).

¹⁵⁴ *Shel-tshig*. This term specifically refers to the various colors and shapes that occur through the process of roasting grains. These grains are likened to different types of livestock.

¹⁵⁵ In this context, *zhugs-shang* probably denotes incense rather than parched grain.

¹⁵⁶ Given the textual context, this is probably some type of precious stone.

¹⁵⁷ *bZhog*. This refers to deposits scraped from musical instruments, which are used as ritual offerings.

lha and *gsas*. That is why, for the *lha-rten* and *gsas-'khor*, it is essential [to establish] all the *gsas* bases: the *gsas* stone, *smra-ma*,¹⁵⁸ the *gsas* spear, the *gsas* arrow with decorative hangings, the *gsas-sang* (a kind of *gtor-ma*), and *gsas* libations.

- xiv) If the origins of the hand-tool wing (*phyag-mtshan gshog-khung*s) are not proclaimed (*ma-smos*), there is no method to invoke the winged *lha* and *lha* of power. That is why, for invoking the *lha* of power, it is essential [to use] the mouth gold (*kha-gser*), the mouth turquoise (*kha-g.yu*) and the turban. If the victuals of the wrathful gods (*gsas-rngam*) of the funeral are not properly arranged, there is no method to invoke the heroic multitude, the subjugators of the *gshed*. That is why, for the subjugation of the *gshed*, it is essential [to arrange] the wrathful victuals (*rngam-zas*), the red *bshos* of the *dbal* and the *bshos* of the *gsas*.
- xv) If the hand-tools to summon and slay are incomplete, there is no method to summon and slay the *gshed* of the dead. That is why, for summoning and slaying the *gshed*, it is essential [to set up] a black *'brup-khung* with a dagger picket, at the bottom of which there are fruits of poison thorn-wood (*dug-tsher*), long blue and red cords, white and black *snying* (mantras or mustard seeds), a tent of black cloth with *'dzol* (guys?),¹⁵⁹ food for luring [to bring] vengeance [upon the *gshed*], the waving black flag ritual constituent for summoning, an iron hook, a snare, a chain, a hammer, and an ax.
- xvi) If the seven sets of *bla-'khor* (soul circles) are not established, there is no method to install the *bla* and *yid* (soul and mind) into the support. That is why, for the ritual venue (*'khor-sa*) of the *bla* and *yid*, it is essential [to arrange] a golden figure, a tablet with the name of the deceased (*mtshan-byang*),¹⁶⁰ and a corpse stone (*gdung-rdo*), these three; articles of the deceased's clothing (*na-bza'dri-ma*) and the enrobing juniper (*mnab-shug*); rhododendron and unused bamboo as the corpse support (*gdung-rten*); a time arrow and time spindle.¹⁶¹
- xvii) If the soul container (*bla-sgram*) of the *gshin-rje* (demons of death) is not split, there is no method to summon the deceased's soul and mind (*bka'thugs*) from the world. That is why it is essential [to collect] the ritual articles of splitting the soul container, instruments, miraculous syllables, a flapping wing, bright lamps, a resplendent rainbow-colored *nam-mkha'*,¹⁶² a soul *glud*, and many black *gtor-ma*.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Also *smran-ma*. This denotes the grains (usually barleycorn) that carpet the altar. This practice belongs to the *Phya-gshen* vehicle of Bon.

¹⁵⁹ The meaning of the next object or descriptive phrase (*gsang-'tshol*) is not known.

¹⁶⁰ The *Sarvadurgatiparisodhana* yoga tantra records the use of a type of effigy (*gzugs-brnyan*) and the writing of the name of the deceased with saffron as actions used to liberate the dead from great fear, eliminate their sins, and deliver them from hell. These function through the correct performance of the yoga tantra mandala. This tantra is designed to extricate the dead from hell and insure their rebirth in the pure abodes of the gods. See Skorupski 1983, pp. 81, 82, 319. In the Buddhist tradition, the effigy and name card serve the same general purpose as the Bon *bla-'khor*, to aid the trouble-plagued deceased. They operate, however, from an entirely different soteriological basis, in which the theme of cyclical rebirths is central. Unlike the way they are thought of in the archaic funerary tradition, these objects are not soul receptacles and their use in the Buddhist death rituals does not radically contravene the doctrine of karma.

¹⁶¹ The word 'time' (*dus*) seems to be a reference to the marking of the deceased's life passing.

¹⁶² This is usually an elaborate cross-shaped object made from thread, but it could also be made in other shapes, such as that of a *khyung*. For various types of *nam-mkha'* (glossed: thread-crosses), see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.

¹⁶³ The use of *gtor-ma* (sacrificial cakes) in an ancient funeral ritual is documented in a Dunhuang manuscript (PT. 1042, ln. 79): "...a large *gtor-ma* was made (*gtor-ma chen-po bgvis*)..."

- xviii) If the enclosure for hell (*na-rag*) purification is not erected, there is no method to purify the evil propensities of the six realms. That is why, for the ornaments of the purification enclosure, it is essential [to collect] the six *gtor-ma* of the *glud* of *lan-chags* (debt owed others for misdeeds committed), the six hooks of the guide of the mind's benevolent qualities (*thugs-rjes*), the six swords of the cutting of the cord of the dead, the six lamps of bright light, the six rainbow-colored catching cords of the guides, the six vases of purificatory ablutions,¹⁶⁴ and the bridge of white cloths of the way ahead.
- xix) If the nine contaminations that stain are not purified, there is no method of obtaining a divine placement in paradise (*mtho-ris*). That is why it is essential [to collect] the ritual articles (*yas*) of purifying the 'dre that stain, the various *glud* of in between the sky and earth, kinds of adornments, ornamented sheep, and ornamented articles. If the throne of purity is not installed, it is possible that the nine *sme* (pernicious forms of contamination) will once again stain. That is why, for absolute purification, it is essential to make the throne of the funerary palanquin (*gnya'-shing tshang*).
- xx) If [the corpse's head] is not positioned on the head juniper and head stone in a resilient level area in the intermediate place,¹⁶⁵ there is no protecting soul fortress¹⁶⁶ of the intermediate stage (*bar-pa*). That is why, for the protector headrest, the wood in the direction of the head, it is essential [to set up] the head juniper and soul stone of the intermediate stage. If disease has not been removed and illness purified, the soul is endangered by painful imprints.¹⁶⁷ That is why, for the *glud* and ritual articles that cleanse illness, it is essential [to make] a human figure of six grains, five animal figures of poison, and to wash away poisons by all the poisonous ingredients.
- xxi) If the head juniper and *gdung-rtsi* (probably a medicinal infusion) are not administered, the memory is clouded by the intoxication of poison and [the deceased experiences] its body as exhausted and immobilized. That is why, for the banishment of disease (*nad-byin*) and for refreshment (*dbug-phyung*), it is essential [to administer] the vapor of *gdar-tshad gsum* (?). 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.

¹⁶⁴ This is followed by a line of unknown meaning: *rGams dang rgug dang rig dang ni /*. For the Buddhist ritual use of vases and sacred syllables to purify the obstructions of the deceased, taken from *Tantra of the Sun and Moon's Intimate Union*, see Germano 1997, pp. 490–493.

¹⁶⁵ *Bar-sa*. Snellgove (1967: 122, 123) glosses *bar-sa* as the 'intermediate state' with no critical comment. This term appears to be the Tibetan archaic cultural horizon counterpart of the Indic *bar-do*. Rather than an intermediate phase in an abstract sense, it is an intermediate location. It occurs as a definable place like that located between the paradisiacal deities and the chthonic demons, and/or that between the terrestrial world of the living and the celestial world of the dead. Its use in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur in archaic ritual contexts indicates that the *bar-do* and *bar-sa* should not be confused with one another. As we shall come to further appreciate in the course of this study, the archaic funerary rites in general present a much more literal or physical interpretation of space in the postmortem state than is found in the Indian-influenced funerary literature of the Bon-po and Buddhists.

¹⁶⁶ The description of the soul fortress (*bla-rdzong*) using the word 'phru (usually pennants that decorate the top of a military helmet or the crown of a shrine) indicates that its position is overhead in the heavens. This is corroborated by Stein (2003b: 549), who comments that, in ancient texts, 'phru can mean the summit of the heavens.

¹⁶⁷ *Bag-chags zug-gzer*. This is a reference to the still-held belief that for a few days after death, the deceased is very much distressed by the causes of death and the suffering associated with them.

- xxii) If funerary presents (*gtad-g.yar*) were not given in the intermediate place during the entombment in the burial mound tomb (*bang-so dur-bu cung*), the headrest cannot be suppressed by the *bon-po gshen*. That is why, for the suppression of the headrest of the *dur* (tomb or corpse), it is essential for the assembled relatives [to offer] *chab-gang*, the banquet that unfolds pleasantly and cheerfully, types of clothes, foodstuffs, livestock, [other] types of wealth, and the *cu-gang* of the five primary elements.
- xxiii) Then, at the time of the great *shid* appointment: firstly, at the beginning of existence,¹⁶⁸ for the *sel*: if the basis to satisfy [the deities] is incomplete, they could become frenzied, dangerous and wild. That is why, for the *gzhi-skor* (?) of satisfaction, it is essential to (?).¹⁶⁹ If permission is not requested for the *shid*, the new and old *mtshun* (ancestral deities) cannot recognize each other. That is why it is essential to skillfully request permission and [offer] food to the oldest¹⁷⁰ *mtshun* intermediary.
- xxiv) If the new and old *mdzad-shing* (?) are not joined, the *mtshun* of the tomb (*dur-bu*) in the intermediate place cannot rise up. That is why, for the rising of the *mtshun* of the tomb at the joining of the new and old dominions (*mnga'-thang*), where the nine *g.yen* could bring down evil occurrences (*g.yel*) at the *shid*, it is also essential to offer the four types of *gtad-pa* (types of offerings) of the veil [that covers the *g.yen*]. If there is no *se* and tent for the *shid*, the nine *g.yen* could bring down the [evil] *g.yen* upon the *shid*. That is why, to establish the *se* and set up the tent, it is essential [to collect] *se* wood, wild rose (*se-ba*), *se* ornaments, cloth, *spu-slubs* (feathers and/or animal hair), and a tent of the soul (*bla-gur*).¹⁷¹
- xxv) If there is no jewel throne *gdung-khung* (coffin), there is no resting place to accommodate the *gdung* (corpse) of the burial mound (*bang-so*). That is why, for the resting place of the corpse it is essential [to make] a colorful *phyag-rtse* (?) tomb/reliquary (*gdung-khang*). If a supervisor for the *shid* is not appointed, the male and female famished ghosts (*yi-dwags*) are frenzied and wild. That is why, to show the *dpe* of activities, it is essential [to offer] the libation of rectitude (*gzu-skyem*)¹⁷² of the supervisors.

¹⁶⁸ *Srid-pa'i gong*. This phrase is a poetic device indicating the start of the final stage of the funeral.

¹⁶⁹ This clause, *gta'dang zung bzung tsham yal*, refers to some type of supporting material.

¹⁷⁰ Alternatively, *gong-ma* could denote the senior-most *mtshun* or the *mtshun* preceding the deceased.

¹⁷¹ This appears to be a metaphor for a large group of offerings amassed to form a tent-like heap. In later funerary conceptions, it may have come to denote a special kind of *gtor-ma*. In PT. 1042 (lns. 135, 136), we find instead the analogous 'tent of the mind' (*thugs-gur*) as part of an abstruse ritual exercise that seems to be intended to precipitate the flight of the deceased's consciousness principle to the celestial afterlife. According to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *bla-gur* was employed to shield the deceased from the *g.yen* demons during the highly sensitive process of ancestral reunion. The use of such ritual objects in early historic period tombs is confirmed by this PT. 1042 passage: "From the top of the tent of the mind, a [section] as large as a shield was cut out, and it was kept at the chest (in the middle) of the burial mound (*bang-so*)" (*thugs gur gyi steng nas / phub tsam gcig bcade / bang so'i/thugs kar du gzhago l*). PT. 1134 (ln. 56) describes the same type of funerary appointments and reads: "The white mind tent is set up. The mattress (*rten*), the northern wild yak (*khod-mo*) [hide?] mattress was laid down" (*thugs sbra ni dkar mo pub* (mod. = *phub*) *rten byang rten khod mo ni bkod l*).

¹⁷² The identity of this beverage is not known. *gZu-bo* is a word describing those who impartially observe and render judgment.

- xxvi) If the listeners and quickly fleeing listeners¹⁷³ of the *shid* are not repulsed, [the separation] of the living and dead, these two, cannot be obtained. That is why, [to dispense] the articles of quickly fleeing (?) outside, it is essential to guard the inside of the *se* circle. If the living and dead are not joyfully introduced, there is no way to show mercy and assistance [to the deceased]. That is why it is essential that the seven teachings of *cu-gang* and four types of *gtad-pa* are introduced.
- xxvii) If the [shares] of the living (*gson*) and dead (*gshin*) are not divided, the accidental death of the living could follow in the wake of the dead. That is why it is essential [to collect] the things of the living and the things of good fortune (*g.yang*). If the visage (*ngo*) of the *lha* and its mandala are not revealed at the completion of the division of wealth as is needed, the one who protects from the fears of the country of the *gshin* will not be known. That is why, as the ritual constituents to open the door of the mandala, it is essential [to display] the bridge of white cloths and the lamp of the way.
- xxviii) If the *bla* is not separated from the *bla-rdo* (soul stone), by the bad propensities of its evil nature it could take the wrong path. That is why, upon separating the *bla* and *rten* (support), it is essential that the *bla* is conducted into space and, upon [giving] offerings, that the *bla-rten* (soul support) and corpse (*gdung*) are burnt in a fire. If worldly attachments are not separated, these attachments make it impossible to obtain liberation. That is why, as the ritual articles that remove attachment, it is essential [to broadcast] the miraculous message of explicating ephedra and barley,¹⁷⁴ and for the loving relatives to bid farewell.
- xxix) If the path of consummation in space is not shown, [the deceased] will return again and again along the path of the three worlds (*khams-gsum*). That is why, for a beacon on the path of consummation, it is essential to consummate the three places and five paths.¹⁷⁵ If the ashes of the funeral pyre are not molded into receptacles, one could err towards the nihilism (*chad-lta*) of there being nothing. That is why, according to the system of religious science (*gtsug-lag*) of existence, the pyre ashes of the corpse are mixed together with the pure [things]¹⁷⁶ and the dirty ashes,¹⁷⁷ and on the upper reaches of an auspicious high mountain a little castle (*mkhar-bu*) is fashioned as the receptacle of the remains of the corpse (*gdung-rten*). Subsequently, full prayers are made there once in a while.
- xxx) In that way, according to the system of religious science, it was the three *gshen-po* who can cut [obstacles] who properly set out the *thang-khrims*, so we the funeral party (*lhe'u*), the *gshen*, *bon*, and ministers follow the ancient tradition (*srid-pa gna'*). By the benefits

¹⁷³ This reading is only possible if '*drag-ltar*' is corrected to '*drog-ltar*', but it is not certain this was the author's intention.

¹⁷⁴ *brDa-sprod mtshe nas*. ephedra and barleycorn are used by the ritualists to guide the deceased, hence they are described as having an explanatory function.

¹⁷⁵ *Lam-lnga*. These are metaphorical positions or stages on the path to enlightenment, through which the officiants guide the deceased. In prevailing Bon funeral rituals they are symbolically marked by swastikas drawn on a long cloth. The five paths are: *sgom-lam* (path of meditation), *mi-slob-lam* (path of non-studying), *tshogs-lam* (path of accumulation), *sbyor-lam* (path of union), and *mtshong-lam* (path of seeing).

¹⁷⁶ *gTsang*. This must refer to substances like medicinal herbs and unsullied mineral substances.

¹⁷⁷ *bTsog-thal*. This seems to allude to the ashes of the wood used to incinerate the corpse.

and merits of the series of *cu-gang*, during the funerary rites ('dur) of the funeral ('dur-ba) of the deceased, we do not chant whatever we heard as the holy utterances (*bon*). We do not offer whatever we saw as the funerary articles (*yas*).

- xxxii) We *bon* (priests) chant in accordance with the laws of the religious science. Hear this *gto-bo*:¹⁷⁸ the accumulated funerary articles are gathered on a plain at the funeral. In that way, the divine portal of the living is purified by such a law and such a funeral. May the pure divine portal of the living be opened by setting out the *thang-khrims*. May the opened portal of the tomb be closed by setting out the *thang-khrims*. May the dead and living through the fate connecting them meet again by setting out the *thang-khrims*. May the swastika consummation path of the *gshen* be heralded by setting out the *thang-khrims*. May the declining *phywa* and *g.yang* of the living be summoned by setting out the *thang-khrims*.
- xxxiii) The beneficial qualities of the *thang-khrims* are great like that. In this fashion, the funeral ritual procedures, instructions and recitations are procured. In this fashion the sacred utterances (*hos*) of the 'dur-gshen were chanted. In this fashion, the accumulated articles of the funeral ritual were gathered. For the [various] branches of setting out the *thang-khrims*, [let the sins] of what was not completed and what could not be found rebound upon the evil-doing *sri* and *gshed*. Let the three brothers who can cut stop the [evil *g.yen-khams*].

¹⁷⁸ The *gto* funerary ritualists.

6 An Examination of the Archaic Eschatological and Ritual Pillars of the Mu-cho'i Khrom-'dur

6.1 The Receptacles of the Deceased's Consciousness Principles

As we have seen, the salvation of the deceased is dependent on the ritualist being able to restrain his or her consciousness principles in various types of receptacles, so that they can then be stabilized and purified. A description of the supports or receptacles (*rten*) for the body, mind and soul of the deceased is found in a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text known as *Methods of Guiding the Deceased from the Six Realms of Living Beings*.¹⁷⁹ Although it is attributed to a mythic prehistoric *gshen*, this text furnishes a description of the *rten* that is somewhat in keeping with prevailing funerary practices. The Bon-po, nonetheless, view the ritual objects listed in the text as having their origins in the remote past. They are believed to be part of the original funerary teachings of the Bon religion. While a prehistoric origin cannot be adduced from the textual and archaeological evidence at our disposal, the use of similar receptacles to contain the consciousness principles of the deceased can be traced to a period no later than imperial times. This underscores the indomitable nature of Tibet's old funerary culture despite the modifying influences that were exerted upon it by Buddhism.¹⁸⁰

The text divides the receptacles of the funerary rituals into three basic types: those for the body, speech and mind (para. i). These three aspects of human existence are also closely associated with Buddhism. The body support (*sku-rten*) is a small hanging (*'phan-chung*) that probably featured a likeness or emblem of the deceased. In the contemporary period, photographs are used for this purpose. The speech support (*gsung gi rten*) is the *mtshan-byang*, a tablet containing vital data about the deceased. In the prevailing funerary ritual, this is a piece of paper with a likeness of the deceased, as well as his name, clan, occupational title, and various mantras. The mind support (*thugs kyi rten*) is a golden figure (*gser-zhal*), which at one time may have been an elaborate effigy of the deceased. In addition to these three receptacles, the text specifies two others that appear to have been part of an alternative (and probably older) conception of the human consciousness principles (*bla* and *gid*) of the deceased. These are the soul support (*bla yi rten*), a piece of new bamboo; and the mind support (*gid kyi rten*), articles of clothing owned by the deceased (*dri-ma*).

¹⁷⁹ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las (From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts) tshes 'das rigs drug gi gnas nas drangs thabs*, attributed to 'Chi-med gtsug-phud (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 663–749), nos. 668, ln. 1 to 669, ln. 1. Tibetan Text III-9, p. 618. 'Chi-med gtsug-phud is the previous incarnation of the Bon founder gShen-rab. His biographical details are found in Karmay 1972, pp. xx, xxi; Reynolds 2005, pp. 30, 34, 46, 47.

¹⁸⁰ A list of supports for the deceased are found in an obscure ritual setting in PT. 1042 (ln. 30): “*Zo-rig* (sickle), *nam-kā* (thread-cross), *smra-zhal* (mind and/or soul effigy), *zhal* (mind and/or soul effigy), and *sku-rten* (body support)...” Also in PT. 1042 (lns. 122–124), the receptacles of the deceased are mentioned in conjunction with the hand-tool (*phyag-cha*) weapons that function to destroy the *gshed* demons of death, as expounded in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The citation of these ritual implements occurs in the context of a funeral procession held subsequent to the arrangement of offerings: “The four hoe men* were the first in the line of departure (*gshegs kyi rim-pa la thog-ma*). After them (*de'i 'og tu*) were the hand-tool spearmen (*mdung-pa*). After them were the hand-tool battleaxe (*dgra-sta*) [carriers]. After them were the *gshen*. After them were the sickle [carriers]. After them were the *nam-ka* [carriers]. After them were the *smra-zhal* (an effigy of the deceased) [carriers]. After them were the *zhal* and body support (*sku-rten*) [carriers].”

* *Yag-pa*. It is much less likely that this is a variant spelling for ‘yak keeper’.

The name suggests that these clothes are imbued with the odor or subtle energy (mind) of the deceased.¹⁸¹

The text commands the deceased to use these supports as his body because his lifeless corpse is no longer suitable for this purpose (para. ii). The deceased is told that to be liberated from the *gshed* demon of death and to reach paradise he must listen to the instructions of the ritualists and his *lha* allies. A strong indication of the penetration of Vajrayāna Buddhism into this text, at least as regards terminology, is the invoking of the five types of Buddhas (bDe-gshegs rigs-Inga). This passage concludes with a listing of the methods used by the ritualists to help the deceased throw off the shackles that keep him bound to worldly existence:

- i) Kye! Listen to me, expired one (*tshe-'das*), listen. You were the existence flesh figure of primordial existence.¹⁸² You have appeared from the destiny of the cut chain [of vital being], which terminated your previous [life]. You are wandering unobstructed in the intermediate state (*bar-ma*) of existence. We will purify your evil propensities and defilements. Listen to the truthful speech of the excellent *gshen*. The canopy and parasol are the cover above. This small hanging is a measure of the body.¹⁸³ The receptacle of the speech (*gsung gi rten*) is the letters of the *mtshan-byang*. The support of the mind (*thugs kyi rten*) is this golden figure. The receptacle of the soul (*bla yi rten*) is the unused bamboo of three joints. The receptacle of the mind (*vid kyi rten*) is the *dri-ma* clothing.
- ii) Make these three the supports of your body, speech and mind. Take these as your bodily form. Listen to the commands of the teacher guide (*'dren-pa'i slob-dpon*). Come here for a moment. For separating from the *'dre*-eater *gshed* and proceeding on the steps to heaven (*mtho-ris gom-pa*), remember the teacher and *lha*. Bear in mind your relations, wealth and food. By the blessings of the five types of Buddhas; and the power of the wrathful kingly *yi-dam*; and the power of our hand-signals, mantras, meditation, ritual constituents, and spells; we will remove your obstructions.

6.2 The Mythic Origins of the Soul Stone

To help remove the soul of the deceased from the confines of the intermediate place (*bar-sa*) and convey it to paradise, a number of receptible instruments have been devised in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The most outstanding of these objects is the soul stone (*bla-rdo*). This ritual prominence is likely due to a custom that prevailed in Tibet since early times: the use of precious stones (*bla-rdo*) and sacred mountains (*bla-ri*) to enshrine the souls of individuals, clans, and even large swathes of the old Tibetan nations. For example, rTa-rgo is commonly called the soul rock formation (*bla-brag*) of Zhang-zhung (Bellezza 1997a: 293, 321 (n. 1); 2005a: 245).

A remarkable origin tale (*srid-rabs*) of the *bla-rdo* is found in another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur cycle entitled *The White Soul Stone Introduction to the Soul Stone Wool or Support*.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ These five supports are noted in the practice of a contemporary Bon funeral as well. For reference and illustrations, see Brauen 1978, pp. 56, 57.

¹⁸² This refers to all the various incarnations of the deceased from primordial times onwards, and/or the essential primal origins of the deceased through theogonic descent.

¹⁸³ *sKu yi tshad*. This describes the support of the body (*sku*) aspect of the deceased.

¹⁸⁴ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho 'i khrom 'dur chen mo las (From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts) / Bla rdo bal lam rten dang sprad pa bla rdo dkar po 'i (= po 'o)*

Some vague passages and story-line haziness show that this abridged work is no longer fully intact. During its recitation, the funerary *gshen* are instructed to wrap the *bla-rdo* in [white] wool (para. i). The recital of the origin myth (*srid-rabs*) enables the officiants to insert the soul (*bla*) and mind (*thugs*), the twin consciousness principles of the deceased, into the *bla-rdo* receptacle or support. The text now moves directly to the narrative of origins (*smrang*) (para. ii). At the dawn of existence, a maternal *sri* figure came down from the heavens to augment the fertility of the human race. The protagonist of this origin myth, the *sri* as a progenetrix rather than a demoness, potentially dates to an early phase of Tibetan culture. The usage of the radical *sri* and its various linguistic permutations would seem to hark back to a formative period in the development of the Tibeto-Burman religions.

The *sri* carried out her mission by binding the souls of the children of the *lha* (gods), the human beings, at a primal soul rock formation (paras. ii, iii). This soul rock was of two materials, gold and turquoise, representing two of the most popular substances from which soul objects (*bla-gnas*), sacred offerings, and the ornaments of Tibetans are made. The term *lha-bu* (son/children of the gods) is of special interest, as it can be traced back to the native cosmogonies of Tibet. According to the IDong clan lore text *IDong rus mdzod*, “There is no man who did not originate from the *lha*” (Vitali 2003a: 3), illustrating the ubiquity of this belief. The term (*lha'i bu*) is also found in an early historic period description of a prototypical funeral performed by Dur-gshen rma-da and three associates, where it affirms their divine origins: “The sons were the sons of the *lha*, the cousins were the cousins of the *srin*.”¹⁸⁵

The *bla-rdo srid-rabs* text is explicit in relating that, during a person's lifetime, the *bla-rdo* is the support of their *phywa* (basis for well-being) and *g.yang* (capability for good fortune), while after death it is the receptacle of the soul (*bla*) and mind (*thugs*) (para. iii). The soul receptacles therefore were applicable to both the living and dead in a seamless interface, a cultural historical motif no longer well represented in Tibet. At this juncture in the soul stone ritual, the text instructs the ritualists to preserve the mind of the deceased at the *bla-rdo* (para. iv). The deceased is referred to by an archaic term *bla-bo* (literally: soul person), which seems to be indicative of his disincarnate status. Resuming the narrative of origins, the *sri* moves to the very margin (*mtshams*) of existence (*yod*) and non-existence (*med*) to meet three important soul receptacles: the stone, juniper tree and vulture. The divide or border between the positive and negative universes transcends the dualistic bounds of existence, according to Bon cosmology. This realm is beyond the ordinary constraints of the world and is where primal deities, such as the *sgra-bla*, dwell.¹⁸⁶

The female *sri* is then recorded as empowering the stone and juniper tree to fulfill crucial roles for the deceased (para. v). Three other animals, the deer, cuckoo and crane, are also noted in the text. These animals are either the signs of purity (*tshangs-pa'i rtags*) or they play an instrumental role in the creation of these holy symbols. The deer, cuckoo and crane are still held in high regard by the Tibetans and are the object of countless legends and proverbs. Thereafter, the mother *sri* came down to earth and obtained a human form in order to spread the human race, and be the guardian of the *bla-rdo* for the benefit of those who died (para. vi). She is recorded as being the keeper of the prototypical (*dpe*) funeral rituals of the dead, investing them with a strong gynarchic or matrilineal aspect. This is in contrast to the patrilineal or paternal bias of the origin narratives

(New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 167–170). No author is given. Tibetan Text III-10, pp. 618, 619.

¹⁸⁵ PT. 1134, lns. 47, 48: ...*bu ni lha'i bu tsa ni srin gyi tsa ste... /*. Cousin (*tsa*) probably refers to the maternal lineage. See p. 384.

¹⁸⁶ The cosmological transcendence of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* is a theme found in Bon invocatory texts dedicated to this class of deities. For various examples, see Bellezza 2005a.

we have already examined in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. I think it likely that this *sri* personality represents a stream of funerary tradition that originated from a prehistoric substratum of one or more of the Tibetan paleocultures. Eventually it came to be woven into the corpus of Bon funerary traditions. As mistress of human life and death, this figure is cast in the form of a great mother goddess. The divine *sri* is a particularly vivid example of the composite nature of the Bon funerary cycle, redolent of an alternative cosmogony.

The text now moves to the time of the early funerary ritualists (*gto-pa*), one of whom announces that, in order to bind the soul of the deceased, a 'long-stone' (*rdo-ring*) is needed (para. vii). The identity and historicity of this ritual instrument cannot be positively established for no details are provided in this text, nor anywhere else in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. By virtue of being described as a receptacle for the soul of the deceased, it would appear that the funerary *rdo-ring* were selected on an ad hoc basis. Nevertheless, we cannot discount the possibility that permanently erected mortuary pillars were intended, like those found at many Upper Tibetan archaic burial sites. The use of pillars to attract souls is indicated by a member of the retinue of dMag-dpon (Che-btsan rgyal-po yang-ne wer), one of Bon's three greatest *btsan* protectors (the other two are A-bse and Hur-pa). In a *bskul-pa* (signaling and commissioning ritual) for dMag-dpon it is written: "rDo-ring dmar-po (Red Long-Stone), he who summons souls."¹⁸⁷ While this deity is a landform and not a manmade monument, the phrase indicates that the soul-attracting qualities of *rdo-ring* (in this case a naturally occurring stone pillar) were part of the cultural lore of Upper Tibet. In Bon conceptions, the god rDo-ring dmar-po is in charge of summoning the souls of enemies of the religion so that they can be ritually executed. This inducement function of the deity closely corresponds with the use of the long-stone receptacle in the *bla-rdo srid-rabs*. This bit of lore may possibly confirm that the mortuary pillars of Upper Tibet were employed in soul evocation rites. The use of a prominent landform to summon souls may also suggest that the mountains and escarpments forming the western backdrop to many Upper Tibetan funerary sites played an essential role in the eschatological beliefs of the builders.

The text also seems to document another ancient Tibetan custom, that of wrapping the *bla-rdo* in wool and other coverings and suspending them from parasols for use by the living. After the purification of the corpse and the lustration of the *bla-rdo*, the soul of the deceased is summoned into a long-stone, which serves as a type of guardian (para. viii). The mind of the deceased bound to the long-stone pillar, he is now receptive to a pathway of communication being opened between him and his relatives. The text ends with reference to the soul long-stone as the receptacle of the *bla* of the deceased, and the last staging point for its ascent to the new existence (para. ix). It is stated that the *bla* bound to the *rdo-ring* is accompanied by both its mind (*thugs*) and corpse (*spur*).¹⁸⁸ This would seem to suggest that burial took place in the proximity of the long-stones:

- i) Then to recite the origin tale (*srid* [*rabs*]) of the *bla-rdo*, wrap the *bla-rdo* in wool and say, like this: Now, deteriorated (*nyams*) and defunct (*nong/nongs*) dead person (*gshin-bu*),

¹⁸⁷ *Bla 'khyams 'gug byed rdo ring dmar po.../*. See dMag dpon *bskul pa* (no. 103) in *dBal gsas sngags sgrub me phur khyung stag dang / bon skyong rgyas bskul bcas bzhus /* (published by rGya-mtsho nor-bu, 2005), no. 103, ln. 3. This text was obtained as an oral transmission from sPrul-sku blo-ldan snying-po (born 1360 CE) from the Zhang-zhung adept dMu-tsha gyer-med. The mountain residence of dMag-dpon is in Hor-pa township, 'Brong-pa county (Gro-shod).

¹⁸⁸ Templeman (in press-a) relates the Tibetan *spur* (corpse) to the Iranian phrase *spur xān* (house of perfection) on the grounds that the bones of the *btsan-po* remaining after the decomposition of the corpse could be thought to constitute its pure essence, radiating their majesty over the land.

- owner of the corpse (*ro*), you are at the *bla-rdo* of many humans.¹⁸⁹ To install the soul and mind into the stone, it is essential to proclaim (*brjod*) the origin tale of the *bla-rdo*.
- ii) In the beginning, from the lofty and pristine country of the *lha* [the *sri* lady] came down to earth to supplement the source of humans. She appeared upon the swastika happy rock formation. When she looked upward she saw the high pristine country of the *lha*. When she looked downward she surveyed the verdure of *sale* (a naturally-occurring grain). She said, “Here is a boulder (*pha-bong*).” And so the rock formation also replied in human language, “Yes, there is.” On the rock formation are also the souls of sentient beings (*sems-can*).
 - iii) The lady *sri* cut the peak of the swastika rock formation with a very sharp-edged *dbal* [instrument], and at this gold nugget (*gser-rdo*) stone (*gor-mo*) and turquoise stone she also tied¹⁹⁰ the souls of the brother and sister, progeny of the *lha*. Moreover, it was made into the stone on the right.¹⁹¹ During their lifetimes it was the support of the *phywa* and *g.yang*. At their death it was the support of the soul and mind (*thugs*).
 - iv) At this stone preserve the mind of the soul person (*bla-bo*). [The *sri* lady] went to the border of existence (*yod*) and non-existence (*med*). She met the stone, tree and bird, these three. The tree was made the substitute of the male. In that way it became called ‘juniper’. The stone was made the substitute of the female. In that way it became called ‘stone’. The vulture was made the substitute of the elder brother.¹⁹² In that way it became called ‘vulture’. These three were the progeny (*bu*) of the sky and earth of existence.
 - v) One night, this [*sri* lady] slept [near the three of them] and [in the morning] woke up. She plaintively cried out loudly and was heard by the cuckoo, crane and deer. In that way the signs of purity were kept [for posterity]. Her tears dropped right on the tree and stone, thus originating the red heartwood (*khug-snying*) of the juniper and the rind of the stone. Moreover, at death the soul-stone and head-tree will benefit [others].
 - vi) Thereafter, from the verdure of *sale* she went to supplement the human source of existence.¹⁹³ She obtained a human birth on the earth. She remembered the human brother. She also spread the human lineages on the earth. She also kept the precedents (*dpe*)¹⁹⁴ of the funeral rituals (*dur*) of the dead (*shi-ba*).
 - vii) At the deteriorated one of impermanent benefit (the occasion of death), the relatives and friends (*nye-drung*) and servants (*bran-g.yog*)¹⁹⁵ were affectionately called and assembled. The *gto-pa* (ritual specialist) said, “For tying this soul to the support, it is essential that

¹⁸⁹ This is the rough meaning of the poorly composed last clause of the sentence.

¹⁹⁰ *bsKor*. This word is still used in the Hor and Khams dialects to refer to dogs that are tied to a stake or on a leash.

¹⁹¹ The meaning of this sentence is highly ambiguous. It may possibly have something to do with the spatial arrangement of the personal protectors of humans.

¹⁹² This origin myth accounts for why *shug-pa* (juniper) and *rgod-po* (vulture) have male endings while *gor-mo* (stone) has a female ending. I suspect that in ancient times such origin myths, as part of the great oral tradition, illuminated the etymologies of many terms. Unfortunately, few of these have survived and many Tibetan etymologies are shrouded in mystery.

¹⁹³ *Srid-pa'i mi-khung*s. This means that the *sri* lady commenced to augment the original stock of humans.

¹⁹⁴ Namely, the soul-enshrining tree, stone and vulture.

¹⁹⁵ According to Róna Tas (1955: 261–263), *bran* were the lower strata of imperial period Tibetan society, which included artisans, soldiers and farmers.

- there is a soul long-stone (*rdo-ring*) support.” He thus said. When not dead (*ma-grong*) [the deceased] firmly held the golden nugget stone and turquoise stone, which were wrapped in sheep (*g.yang*) wool and cloth,¹⁹⁶ and suspended from the tall wooden [handle] of a parasol with tassels.
- viii) The corpse (*spur*) was also purified and cleansed of attachments. Ablutions (*khrus*) and lustral liquid (*tshan*) were sprinkled on the *bla-rdo*. This soul [of the deceased] was called and summoned into the right soul long-stone support, which was appointed to guard its mind. The brothers and sisters also remembered the humans.¹⁹⁷ The soul and mind (*bka' thugs*) actually came around the support. The relatives and friends affectionately met [the dead person]. The sisters and brothers of existence were cleansed of evil propensities.
- ix) Now also, you deteriorated and defunct dead person, your soul in the ascent, accompanied by the corpse and accompanied by the mind, is bound to the soul long-stone, so now come to the mind and soul support (*bka' thugs rten*). That is a summary of the origin tale of the *bla-rdo*.

6.3 Evocation Rites for the Soul of the Deceased

A critical portion of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral is the calling of the soul of the deceased to the ritual venue. It is only then that the soul and mind of the departed one can take up residence in the receptacles created for that purpose. A reading for the evocation of the soul is found in the text *Middle Length Calling of the Soul*.¹⁹⁸ This text exhibits a mixture of archaic and Buddhist eschatological conceptions, a juxtaposition of diverse cultural elements. In the beginning of this eloquent recitation, the deceased is reminded that his clan originally descended from the *lha* and that he is a cousin of the *gnyan* (para. i). These kinds of beliefs are part of the Tibetan archaic cultural horizon makeup; they exist in the ancient cosmogonies and ritual declarations and persist in more recent folkloric conceptions. These elegiac lines of the text spell out that the deceased was born as an ordinary human from noble genealogical beginnings, recounting the descent from the celestial sphere to the mundane earth that characterizes the indigenous Tibetan etiologic myths. Death and its suffering is attributed to the *bdud* and *gshed* demons, another traditional belief of considerable antiquity (para. ii). This is followed by reference to the *rgyu-drug* (*'gro-ba rigs-drug*), the six realms (Sanskrit: *gāti*) of existence according to Buddhist doctrine. It is also stated that the deceased goes to the realm he deserves according to his past deeds, which is unmistakably a reference to the doctrine of karma (*las*).

In the text, the officiants declare that they will save the deceased from *na-rag*, a word for hell of Sanskrit origin (para. iii) occurring widely in Indic religious traditions.¹⁹⁹ The postmortem state is framed in dualistic terms of life, light and existence (*yod*) versus death, darkness and non-existence (*med*). This is a common Bon cosmological convention in which two opposing universes

¹⁹⁶ The identity of a third material mentioned, *mdo-ro*, is not known.

¹⁹⁷ As it stands in the text, this sentence is ambiguous and probably grammatically faulty.

¹⁹⁸ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las* (From the Great Funeral Ritual *Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts*) *bla 'bod 'bring po bzhugs swo* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 851–859). This text is anonymous. Tibetan Text III-11, pp. 619–621.

¹⁹⁹ An early description of the various hells (*naraka*) and the intolerable pain their denizens undergo is preserved in Canto XII of *Mākaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (circa fourth century CE). For a translation of this account, see Pargiter 1904, pp. 71–74.

exist side by side. Now begins the actual evocation of the soul, which is framed in the prosody of indigenous compositions (paras. iv–vi). The verses are at once evocative and compelling, a fine tribute to the native literary tradition of Tibet. Those lines depicting the calling of the soul each terminate in a trisyllabic indicator of form, movement or sound, a defining characteristic of old Tibetan poetry in both its oral and literary forms. Vivid alliterative conveyors of meaning, trisyllabic indicators commonly occur in Bon ritual literature, the propitiation of mountain gods and in the utterances of the bards.²⁰⁰ The evocations specifically mention the soul sheep (*bla-lug*), a salient feature of the archaic funerary rites, as well as other animals that have persistently captured the imagination of Tibetans. The calling of the soul (*bla-'bod*) takes on highly attractive visual, auditory and olfactory forms, which are designed to prove irresistible to the lost soul of the deceased. In a clear-cut interpolation of Buddhist-style doctrine, the text commences to describe the suffering that would befall the deceased in each of the six realms of existence should he fail to heed the call of the ritualists (para. vii). These characterizations of the gods, titans, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings are in keeping with Buddhist cosmology and mythology. The ritual structure of the text suggests that this paragraph may have been inserted at a later date. The explicit operational and thematic continuity that exists between paras. vi and viii supports such a supposition.

Now that the deceased knows the terrible fate that would surely befall him should he continue to wander around the intermediate state, he is earnestly summoned to the funeral venue by a ritualist (para. viii). The funerary priests are recorded as sparing no pains in bringing the deceased before them. The deceased is heartily encouraged to take up residence in the soul stone (*bla-rdo*) provided for him. The enticement of the deceased continues, and he is made to know that at his funeral all kinds of delectable offerings are dedicated to him, and that this is the place where he can again meet his loved ones (para. ix). In addition to the enchanting people and things awaiting the dead at the paradise-like funeral venue, he is told that at the helmet with the bird feather plume (*rmog-mo bya-phod*) erected for him, he will meet the *pha-lha* (*pho-lha*) and *sgra-bla* (para. x). It is certainly notable that these two popular types of personal protective deities extend their support even when he is deceased. This is also borne out in the usage of the draped arrow and spindle, tabernacles for such divinities, as soul circles (*bla-'khor*) of the deceased's consciousness principles. The participation of these privy deities in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur may furnish evidence that Tibetan spirit-mediums (*lha-pa*, *dpa'-bo*) were at one time employed as psychopomps (they are also believed to have worn such helmets). The *pho-lha* and *sgra-bla*, two traditional mainstays of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet, actively participate in healing and divinatory rites still popular to this day. The thanatological dimension of these deities as touched upon in this soul evocation text, however, has vanished with time.²⁰¹

After all these ritual persuasions, the text concludes with the head juniper (*dbu-shug*), that miraculous pillar or ladder by which the deceased ascends to liberation (paras. xi, xii). The roots of this highly desirable model of the world tree penetrate the bottom of the ocean abyss while the

²⁰⁰ For numerous references to trisyllabic indicators in Bon and Buddhist ritual literature, see Bellezza 2005a, *passim*.

²⁰¹ It is reported that in the Tuoba area of dKar-mdzes, a monk is partly asphyxiated to allow him to be possessed by the soul of the deceased. During the possession, the medium makes predictions and addresses the family of the deceased. See Rinchen Losel 1996, pp. 169, 170. Although the details given in this ethnographic account are far too thin to say anything definite about the origins of such a tradition, it may prove to have some bearing on the historical scope of Tibetan spirit-mediumship in the cult of death. In this context, it is also worth mentioning an account of a trance ceremony in which attendees asked the elderly *dpa'-mo* (female spirit-medium) questions about their dead relatives (Diemberger 2005: 115).

heavenly bodies revolve around its canopy. This juniper is also recorded as being the *rgyang* tree of the living. The meaning of *rgyang* is elusive; it could possibly be related to a wealth-enhancing function. Along with the wing and *nam-mkha'* (thread-cross), the juniper (which bridges the dichotomous universe) is the receptacle to which the deceased's body, speech and mind have been summoned:

- i) *E!* Tonight in the turquoise heavens of existence, deceased son of man, cousin of the *gnyan*, *E!* Behold with your sense of sight. Listen with your sense of hearing. Remember by the power of your mind that in the beginning you descended from the *lha*, so your clan (*gdung-rus*) is noble. Intermediately, you appeared as the mighty one (*gnyan*), so your engendering lineage (*ske-rgyud*) is high. Lastly, you were born in a commoner caste (*rmang*) in the society of humans.
- ii) Currently, your personal body, which was borrowed [from the five elements], is impermanent and was lost for many bad reasons. Your personal body was destroyed by the *bdud*. Your *bka'* and *thugs* circle around the red *gshed* of violent death. Your very *bla* and *yid* as large as a honeybee, by the good and bad consequences of your activities in the previous life, follow the path of which of the six realms you most deserve.
- iii) At this time, your loving ones have invited the *gri-bon*²⁰² for assistance. I the funerary *gshen* of magnificence and greatness, I the funerary *bon*, manage the *shid* methods and '*dur* methods. When the soul and mind are not in the ordered position, son of noble birth, son of the great paternal clan, your soul (*bka'*) is called from the middle of the sky and your mind (*thugs*) is protected in the realm of space (*bar-s nang gling*). Your soul hastens towards the hell realms. Listen to me, son of a king. Pay attention to me, son of noble birth. Raise your head up at the margin of existence (life) and non-existence (death). Show us your face at the margin of light and shadows. At the margin of the dead (*shi*) and living (*gson*), look with your eyes towards us.
- iv) The funerary *gshen*'s calling of the soul in space is a lovely melodious sound *si li li*.²⁰³ The call of the soul of this soul sheep is a secret sound and summoning voice *thang se tang*.²⁰⁴ The call of the soul of this soul horse is a neighing sound *khriks se khrig*.²⁰⁵ The call of the soul of this wing is the wing with decorations *lhabs se lhab*.²⁰⁶ The call of the soul of this soul turquoise (*bla-g.yu*) is the color of this turquoise (*mtsho-rog*) *lhabs se lhab*.²⁰⁷ The call of the soul of this soul stone is the blazing agate color *lhabs se lhab*.²⁰⁸ The call of the soul of the meat and cheesecake (*thud*) is this pleasant aroma *thu lu lu*.²⁰⁹ The call of the soul of the tea and beer is the pleasant vapor *phyu ru ru*.²¹⁰ That is why [you should] come to this meat, cheesecake, tea, and beer, you deceased son of man, cousin of the *gnyan*. We call you

²⁰² A priest specializing in rites for those who died from accidental or violent causes.

²⁰³ *Si li li* is onomatopoeia for beautiful sounds.

²⁰⁴ *Thang se tang* is onomatopoeia for the bleating of a sheep.

²⁰⁵ *Khriks se khrig* in this context is used to convey the sound of a horse's neighing but this may not be very good usage. The trisyllabic indicator *si li li* is more appropriate for depicting the high-pitched sound of a horse.

²⁰⁶ *Lhabs se lhab* portrays the waving movement of the wing.

²⁰⁷ *Lhabs se lhab* in this context seems to convey a sparkling color.

²⁰⁸ *Lhabs se lhab* here portrays the flickering of flames.

²⁰⁹ *Thu lu lu* describes the wafting of a scent.

²¹⁰ *Phyu ru ru* depicts the movement of a vapor or mist swirling upwards.

by this drumbeat, the calling sound of the drumbeat 'u ru ru.²¹¹ The call of the soul of this *gshang* sound is the calling sound of the large flat-bell (*sil-snyan*) *si li li*.²¹² That is why [you should] come and listen to the beat of the drum and the melodious sound of the *gshang*.

- v) Come like a lammergeyer (*thang-dkar*) with extended wings and feathers searching for a nest on the heights of the peak of the white rock formation in the upper reaches. Come running and gamboling in a rolling manner like a doe (*yu-mo*) missing her fawn (*she'u*) in the rhododendron glade.²¹³ Come springing and running in a rolling manner like a vermilion tigress and her cub searching for a lair in the forest realm of cane and bamboo. Come quickly floating and gliding like the darting golden fish and her fry in the waters of the ocean. Come here quickly without delay. You deceased son of man, cousin of the *gnyan*, come here and listen to the drumbeat.

- vi) When called, the female yak (*sra-le 'bri-mo*)²¹⁴ comes to the sound of the female owners. When called, the *gdung-cha ngor-mo gdong-re* (a type of ewe?) comes to the sound of the loving females. Even though these are animals they listen to the calling. You, king of sentient beings, man, do not be heedless when called. Come under the protection of this wing. Come to the smoke of this turquoise juniper.

- vii) Do not let your soul wander in the country of hell. The great suffering of heat and cold never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay! Do not let your soul wander in the country of the famished ghosts (*yi-dwags*). The great suffering of hunger and thirst never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay! Do not let your soul wander in the country of the animals (*byol-song*). The great suffering of stupidity never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay! Do not let your soul wander around the country of humans (*mi-yul gnas*). The great suffering of being mired in the unceasing pursuit of desires never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay! Do not let your soul wander around the country of the titans (*lha-min*). The great suffering of fighting never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay! Do not let your soul wander around the realm of the gods (*lha-khams gnas*). The great suffering of discovering the futility of the carefree pursuit of pleasure never ends [there]. That is why: come here without delay!

- viii) Do not let your soul wander around the country of the *gshed* of death. Come quickly to this calling place! The holy country of affection here is blissful. Come under the protection of this wing. Make your foundation (*rten*) this soul stone. Do not let your soul be in the hands of the *gshed* demon that was born at the same time [as you]. Tonight, on the best day of existence, listen, precious deceased one: I the great powerful *dbal-bon* of existence have called you [until] my voice is hoarse. I have looked at you [until] my eyes are blind. I have signaled you [until] my shoulders ache.

- ix) Current deceased one of this noble clan, listen to me, the *dbal-bon* of existence. You are the pitiable one who has departed from life. Come to the sound of the *dbal-bon*. Do not let your

²¹¹ 'U ru ru is onomatopoeia for a thundering sound.

²¹² *Si li li* here depicts the ringing sound of bells.

²¹³ This glade or meadow (*spang*) seems to be characterized by the unknown word *ra-brur*.

²¹⁴ *Sra-le* may be the Zhang-zhung term for 'bri. Interestingly, this is the same type of female yak mentioned in PT. 1068 ('*bri sral-mo*), the ancestress of the female yak hybrid (*mdzo-mo*) that transports deceased women to the afterlife (see p. 540). In the text now under consideration, this female yak is also characterized by the unknown word *tha-le*.

ears be deaf. Do not let your mind (*sems*) be filled with darkness. Do not let your seeing eyes be blind. The place of your residence here is blissful. The wise old fathers and paternal uncles here are good.²¹⁵ The youth of existence here are brave. The mothers and sisters here are loving. The blissful desired things here are enjoyable.²¹⁶ The hanging banners here are of a beautiful variegated color. The assembled personal castle here is [fully] erected. Here is the non-existent epoch.²¹⁷ Here are the nine existent paradises.

- x) Come fast, quickly, very rapidly, for thirst-quenching tea and beer are swirling like an ocean, and hunger-satisfying meat and cheesecake are amassed like a mountain. If you do not recognize the *pha-lha* and *sgra-bla*, come looking at the effulgent bird feather helmet. If you do not recognize the very good friends, come looking at the left and right yokes.²¹⁸ If you do not recognize the son and brother-in-law, come looking at the bamboo arrow (*nyag-phran*) and bow. If you do not recognize the attending servants, come looking at the subservient in foot and hand. Raise up your head at the margin of existence and non-existence. Raise up your head at the margin of sunlight and shade. Raise up your head at the margin of *phur-ma* (?). Human soul, appear in the ordered position of the living.
- xi) In the beginning, by the sign of perfect accomplishment²¹⁹ of the excellent *gshen*,²²⁰ there grew a blue turquoise juniper. Its crown of existence is sharp and hardy. Its root penetrates the depths of the ocean. Its branches reach all four worlds. Nectar drips from each needle. At its root is the swirling nectar of consummation. At its crown the sun, moon and stars, these three, circle around. On the branches of the *bse* (white copper?) and conch trunk grows the fruit of perfection.
- xii) When the excellent *gshen* were alive, this great precious juniper was a *rgyang* tree. When the excellent *gshen* died it was the head juniper. Tonight, deceased dead one, please stay at this great protector head juniper. Make the head juniper, *nam-mkha'* and wing, these three, the support of the deceased's body, speech and mind.

The evocation of the soul in the Mu-cho 'i khrom- 'dur is always an energetic and emotive affair in which great persuasion is used. As a matter of comparison, I will furnish another soul-calling (*bla-'bod*) recitation.²²¹ It begins with a reference to the round of rebirths, a cornerstone of Buddhist eschatological doctrine. The main points of attraction for the deceased are not only the presence of his relations, but that each of them is bearing delicious edibles for him. As we have already seen, the object of this adulation is to get the consciousness principles of the deceased to enter the body, speech and mind supports that have been laid out for him:

²¹⁵ This line ends with *pha*, which is never used as an adjective. To complete the meaning of the sentence I have substituted *bzang*.

²¹⁶ This sentence inappropriately ends with *re*. This seems to complete the indication of an enjoyable state in this syntactic context.

²¹⁷ *Ma chags-pa'i bskal*. A time and place like the unformed primordium.

²¹⁸ *gNya'-yor*. This seems to denote a yoke but the significance of the sentence is not clear.

²¹⁹ *Grub-rtags*. This refers to a miraculous transformation.

²²⁰ *gShen-rab*. Given the spelling, this could also denote the founder of Bon but that is less likely.

²²¹ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho 'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng ba 'i las gzhung nyin bon bzhugs so*, attributed to the legendary prehistoric funerary priest Mu-cho (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 251–295), nos. 281, ln. 1 to 282, ln. 4. Tibetan Text III-12, pp. 621.

- i) Because you hoped that which is impermanent will be permanent, you performed the activities of suffering of cyclical existence, so now you wander about the six realms of cyclical existence. Come here, do not hold that there is permanence. Come to the speech of the calling *bon-po*. If you do not come to my voice, the beings of the six realms will torment (*gcod-sbyang byed*) you. Come here, so I can arrange for your blissful [state]. That is why [you should] come to the calling voice. Come to the lovely voice of the *mi-rgyab* (the relatives?). Come to the loud speech of the *bon*. Come to the loud sound of the drum and *gshang*.
- ii) Here is this white cheesecake (*mtHUD*) of the father's savings (*bsags-pa*). Here is this parched barley meal butter cake (*zan-mar*) of the mother's savings. Here is this nicely arranged barley meal and butter preparation (*phye-mar*) of the sister. Here is this nicely presented barley porridge (*skyo-ma*) of the aunt. Here is this nicely presented seared meat (*sha-gsur*) of the maternal uncle.
- iii) Come to the aroma of the white *phye-mar*. Come to the aroma of the seared meat. Come to the aroma of the black tea. Come to the *dri-ma* clothing, the support of the mind. Come to the body support of the yellow gold *zhal* (effigy of deceased). Come to the mind (speech) support of the ashen *mtshan-byang* (vital data tablet of deceased). Come quickly to the three supports. Come to the interminable great powerful compassion. Come to the sound of the truthful miraculous speech. Come to the speech of the teachings of sTon-pa.

6.4 The Ritual Usage of the Soul and Mind Receptacles of the Deceased

The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur sets out an elaborate ritual pattern of receptacles for the soul and mind of the deceased. This underlines one of the philosophical cornerstones of Bon thanatopsis: the momentousness of first containing the consciousness principles of the deceased and then guiding them to salvation. In the soteriology embodied in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the attainment of the new existence depends heavily on the ritualist competently guiding the deceased. Past deeds committed during one's lifetime are also crucial to liberation. In the archaic funerary tradition, however, the mechanism by which lifetime actions influence the outcome after death appears to be qualitatively different from Buddhist conceptions of morality. Rather than an all-encompassing impersonal force called karma, postulated upon an overarching web of cause and effect, the upholding of one's social bonds in life seems to have been the prime determinant of ethical behavior. In the archaic funerary tradition, the way to a better existence was not so much blocked by a negative causal chain of impulses and activities created during one's life as it was by outstanding debts owed to other members of society. Even though there is no critical mention of this great contrast in the literature, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur vividly depicts the cultural and philosophical gulf that exists between the Buddhist doctrine of transmigration and a permanent heavenly existence. In my view, there were stark differences in beliefs associated with moral conduct between the Tibetan Buddhists and their predecessors, and these must have played a formative role in the way in which the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur traditions historically developed and adapted.²²²

²²² According to Tucci, the theory and practices connected to the *bar-do* indicate Indian, Iranian and shamanistic influences, which were adapted to a Buddhist eschatological superstructure. He cites the sojourn of the soul in the neighborhood of the tomb, the torment of the soul in the intermediate state, and the multiplicity of vital principles as having their bases in shamanism. See Tucci 1980, pp. 195, 196. Cuevas cogently argues in favor of historical linkages between imperial period funerary traditions and the prolonged postmortem tradition of the Bon-po and Buddhists.

Detailed coverage of the types and applications of the soul and mind receptacles is found in the text *The sKyod-pa of the Seven Parts of the Soul Circle of the Deceased*.²²³ *sKyod-pa* is a ritual stage that occurs near the end of the funeral when the presiding deities return to their residences. An invitation is extended to them to come again at the behest of the ritualists when needed. This stage of the funeral corresponds with the release of the soul from the supports and its guidance to heaven by the priests. The extract below begins after the *phang-chal'phang-cha* (offerings associated with the people and possessions to which the deceased is attached) have been presented to him (para. i). The text makes known that the soul receptacles, called soul circles (*bla-'khor*), are essential if the deceased is to reach the dGa'-yul (para. ii). The deceased is entreated to once and for all leave the world behind as well as the temporary comfort of the soul circles. In this text, seven types of soul circle pairs are described: 1) *nam-mkha'* (usually a thread cross), 2) *mtshan-byang* (name tablet), 3) *bla-rdo* (soul stone), 4) *sur-dkar* (rhododendron) and *snyug-rgod* (new bamboo), 5) *dri-ma* (clothes that belonged to the deceased), 6) *mda'* (arrow) and *'phang* (spindle), and 7) *shug-pa* (juniper tree). These soul circles are avowed to have originated in the beginning of time (para. iii). The text affirms they are used in the present funeral ritual and destroyed once the deceased is liberated. This continuity of tradition is averred to exist for all time between the binary elements of the cosmos, the sky (*gnam*) and earth (*sa*). This epic depiction invests the soul circles with cosmological significance, an important appliance for the sanction of Bon rituals.

The metaphor for the *nam-mkha'* is a bright lamp (*sgron-me 'od*), for it reveals the path of liberation through the murky darkness of the intermediate existence (paras. iv, v). Interestingly, the text explains that the *nam-mkha'*, a soul receptacle in the likeness of the deceased, can communicate with the ritualist and *lha* allies of the funeral. In this ritual sequence both pairs of ancient consciousness principles (*bka'/thugs* and *bla/yid*) are noted in concert, as well as their Buddhist unitary counterpart, the *rnam-shes*. This is a good example of how the fundamental syncretism of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur hinges upon the interchangeability of indigenous and Buddhist terminology. There is no recourse in this body of literature to critical discussions of these substitutions; it is taken as implicit that they mean the same thing. This is symptomatic of the Buddhicization of the archaic funerary traditions as a collective enterprise pursued by successive generations of Bon ritualists.

To achieve liberation, the deceased is advised to reside in the expansive space of mind (*sems kyi klong du yangs*), the pure state of the natural awareness (para. vi). This permits the seams of the state of mind and state of *bon* to be joined (*'brel*), thereby allowing the deceased to arrive in the dGa'-yul. The seams (*mu*) referred to are the intangible edges of space, which can be likened to

He holds that tantric models of the *bar-do* derived from *abhidharma* doctrine were assimilated to archaic ritual and cosmological doctrines, which culminated in the codification of rNying-ma-pa and bKa'-brgyud-pa tantric systems in the 11th century CE. Through the expiatory rites of the *Bar do thos grol* and *Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol*, the living can affect the fate of the deceased. Cuevas views this belief as a holdover of ancient Tibetan tradition. He also maintains that the guidance of the dead in the *bar-do* has its foundation in the old rituals and themes of *bla-'gugs* (soul guiding), *bla-'bod* (soul calling), *bla-glud* (soul ransoming), *bla-'khyams-pa* (soul wandering), etc. He characterizes the Tibetan notion of a soul as only superficially veiled by Indo-Tibetan concepts. Cuevas goes on to observe that despite numerous Sanskrit references to the *antarābhava*, no actual liturgy comparable to the *Bar do thos grol* seems to have existed in India. He further sees the *bar-do* image of a perilous narrow passageway (*'phrang-lam*) as echoing earlier Tibetan beliefs concerning the vulnerability of the soul. See Cuevas 2003, pp. 30, 32, 36, 55, 67, 224 (n. 40).

²²³ , *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las* (*From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts*) *tshé 'das kyi bla 'khor cha bdun skyed (= skyod) pa bzhuks so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 783–794). No authorship or colophon is found in the text. Tibetan Text III-13, pp. 621–623.

where the space inside a vessel comes into contact with the ambient space outside. This mystic demarcation has no tangible basis of imputation in the physical world. The state of mind (*sems-nyid*) is the individuated natural mind of the deceased, while the state of *bon* (*bon-nyid*) is the universal or non-individuated mind. The *bon-nyid* is what might be termed the intrinsic reality. Embedded in the philosophical sublimity of such concepts is the dGa'-yul, which we can see as a metaphor for enlightenment (*sems-bskyed*). This dGa'-yul is either a sophisticated alternative to the ancestral paradise or an ontological elaboration of its makeup.²²⁴ Be that as it may, there is an ultimate destiny for the deceased in our text, as opposed to an endless cycle of rebirth. These passages related to the nature of the mind and the final destiny of the deceased accompany the description of each of the soul circles in the text.

The text now moves to the second of the soul circles, the *gdung-rdo* (corpse stones), which work in tandem with the other soul stones (paras. vii, viii). There are six types of *gdung-rdo*, representing the elements of the six purified essential constituents (*rgyu*) of a human being (flesh, blood, bones, warmth, breath, and mind). We are informed that the *gdung-rdo* rid the deceased of attachment to his corpse (*phung-po*) and permit its burial. The *gdung-rdo* also free the deceased from the diseased state of his corpse, as well as from the *sri* and *bdud* demons of the tomb (*dur*) that try to prevent him from reaching his new existence.

The *dri-ma* soul circle is described as the mind receptacle (*thugs-rten*) of the deceased (paras. x, xi). Through the potent agency of smell, this soul circle (which is placed below the others in funerals) helps the deceased come to terms with his past life and with those who were part of it. The powerful sensations invoked in the deceased by the odors of his life are harnessed by the ritualists to steady his mind in preparation for liberation or entry into the afterlife. The rhododendron and bamboo soul circles are specifically for the *mtshun* (paras. xii, xiii). These two soul circles enable the deceased to join the deified ancestors as one of their own kind. The *mtshun* act as his personal and genealogical guardians in the passage from the intermediate state to the Elysian afterlife. As with the *dri-ma*, the bamboo and rhododendron also serve to establish a connection between the deceased (whose mind is now stabilized) and his living relations, allowing them to see him off on the ultimate journey. The text unambiguously holds that the soul circles benefit both the living and dead. These soul circles facilitate the creation of a safe and structured nexus where the three types of existence (living, intermediate and ancestral) can meet, mingle and pay their respects to one another. The most transitory and precarious of these three ontological categories is that of the intermediate state or place. The erection of the soul circles insures that this dangerous and inherently unstable form of existence is quickly and smoothly transcended.

²²⁴ This is a rDzogs-chen-colored view of the ultimate state of being. While it is clear that rDzogs-chen was more or less part of the imperial period Buddhist traditions of Tibet (see Karmay 1998, pp. 94–101), it has not been conclusively demonstrated that Subcontinental personalities such as Gu-ru rin-po-che and Vairocana were the exclusive historical source of rDzogs-chen teachings. Bon-po claims about the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud tradition of rDzogs-chen reaching deep into prehistory are equally unverifiable. An analysis of the extremely complex historical matters related to the origins of rDzogs-chen is well beyond the scope of this work. This would indubitably prove a formidable study in itself. For preliminary attempts in this direction, see Reynolds 1996, pp. 225–227; Esler 2005. These studies conclude it is indeed plausible that rDzogs-chen was introduced to Zhang-zhung before it was propagated in a later wave of tradition by Buddhist masters (Vairocana, Vimalamitra, Gu-ru rin-po-che, etc.). This position is primarily predicated on: 1) the hypothesis that the sources of rDzogs-chen teachings, O-rgyan and Zhang-zhung, were conterminous or overlapping territories; and 2) a common identity for dGa'-rab rdo-rje (the originator of the rNying-ma rDzogs-chen tradition) and Zhang-zhung dga'-rab (the 13th member of the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud).

The head juniper (*dbu-shug*) soul circle is a kind of protective cover for the deceased, a point where the *lha* and *gsas* allies can manifest and aid him in the great existential transition (paras. xiv, xv). The foliage, sap and fruit of the head juniper also provide for all the needs of the deceased, positively quenching his longings. The text indicates that the head juniper is erected pointing away from the head of the deceased as a kind of marker of the way forward. The head juniper functions as a miraculous pillar (*ka-ba*), linking the previous terrestrial existence with the celestial existence of the dGa'-yul.

The last sets of soul circle are the arrow and spindle, Tibetan emblems of males and females, respectively (paras. xvi, xvii). They are customarily modified in the funerary literature by the adjective 'time' (*dus*), as these objects possess value throughout the lifecycle. The text declares that at the time of birth one of them is made the protection support (*srung-rten*) of each person. This is an allusion to the common practice of enshrining these objects to serve as supports for personal protective deities. Like the soul stone, their efficacy extends beyond death to the bounds of the afterlife. The text also portrays the arrow as the symbol of male virility and the weapon of hunting and war (lyrically referred to as 'the capture of male tigers'). This unashamed martial voicing, characteristic of ancient Tibetan culture, is at variance with conventional expressions of Buddhist piety. The glorification of the hunt and the bold depiction of combat in which the bow and arrow are employed also form a key motif in Upper Tibetan rock art. The protective and good fortune functions of the arrow are normally discharged by the *pho-lha* (protective deity of males, who takes up residence on the specially draped arrow known as *mda'-dar*).²²⁵ In the same fashion, the *mo-lha* (protective deity of females) is associated with the spindle. These two objects can also function as receptacles for the *srog-lha* (deity of the life-force), *yul-lha* (territorial deity), *skyes-lha* (birthplace deity), *dgra-lha* (warrior deity), and *phugs-lha* (household protective deity). In death, the text specifies three functions for the arrow and spindle: 1) to summon the consciousness principles of the deceased to the funeral venue; 2) to facilitate the *cu-gang/ju-gang*, the presents of food, beverages and clothing offered by relatives and associates to the deceased; and 3) to act as the beacon of the way (*shul-mtshon*) to the perfected state (*grub-pa*) of the afterlife.

The *bla-'khor* text ends with the call to put away the hand-tool wing and to burn the soul-circles. The deceased has now gone on to his heavenly reward:

- i) *He!*²²⁶ Here at the treasury of the funeral of the dead person (*'phang-btsun*), firstly, if there is no soul circle (*bla-'khor*), there is no receptacle for summoning the soul and mind (*bka'-thugs*); so on the previous day of existence, we established the soul circle receptacle. Now the activities of the *phang-cha* are completed. Now it is essential to separate the soul and soul circle. The soul circle of the conditional symbol²²⁷ is absolutely needed to reach the dGa'-yul (Joyous Land).
- ii) That is why, dead one of the deceased, it is now time for you to proceed to the dGa'-yul, so do not fix your soul to this soul circle. Do not be attached to this *'phang-cha*. Do not miss these relatives.²²⁸ Do not desire the symbolic constituents. The symbolic constituents are known as the seven symbolic soul circle sets:

²²⁵ For multiple ritual uses of the *mda'-dar*, consult Bellezza 2005a.

²²⁶ A word to call the attention of all present at the funeral, including ritualists, surviving members, the guardian deities, and the deceased.

²²⁷ *Kun-rdzobs mtshan-ma*. This indicates that the *bla-'khor* are temporary and made of disposable materials.

²²⁸ This is followed by a sentence the meaning of which is not clear.

The beacon for the way, the *nam-mkha'* with rainbow designs;
 The beige speech receptacle, the *mtshan-byang*;
 The flying jewel soul stones;
 The body support rhododendron and unused bamboo;
 The mind support, the *dri-ma* clothes;
 The veritable symbols of the time arrow and time spindle;
 And the miraculous tree of long flexible head juniper, these seven.

- iii) These are the seven sets of soul circles. In the beginning, they appeared in the interstice (*bag*) between sky and earth. Intermediately, we established them in the interstice between sky and earth. Lastly, we obliterate them in the interstice between sky and earth.
- iv) The *nam-mkha'* is the bright lamp that illuminates darkness. It is formed with the radiance of the five elements. It is with the hue of the five wisdoms.²²⁹ The *nam-mkha'* prototype (*dpe*) is the model of brightness. Its signification is to be the bright light of the deceased. By the blessings and noble qualities of the mind of the funerary *gshen*, it has many sundry miracles, and [the *nam-mkha'*] substitute figure [of the deceased] can speak. It has a golden face and turquoise eyebrows (*smin-'khyug*).²³⁰ It has a silver face and golden eyebrows. It has a conch [white] face and silver eyebrows. It has a silk face and a banner of vermilion. It also communicates and converses with the lord (presiding deities). It also haggles with the wrath-making *bdud*. It has possessions with essence.²³¹ It also conveys things and victuals to the lord (the deceased).
- v) For making a face [to substitute] for the lost luster of the defunct and deteriorated one of the dead, on the previous day the *nam-mkha'* with rainbow designs was established from the purity of the radiant elements. By the good funerary lamp *nam-mkha'*, the *bka'* and *thugs*, the *bla* and *yid* of the deceased are purified from the borders of the five poisons²³² of darkness. His consciousness (*rnam-shes*) is freed from inside the total darkness (*khri-mun*). The great benefits and merits of the *nam-mkha'* are such as these.
- vi) Now the activities of the *nam-mkha'* are completed. Soul and mind of you the dead one, do not be bound to the symbolic constituents. The *nam-mkha'* of the symbolic constituents is moved to the bounds of emptiness, which is without qualities. Also, soul and mind of you, the deceased person, be in the expanse of the space of the mind²³³ which is without a receptacle (*rten*). The seams of the state of mind and state of *bon* are joined, so you may arrive at the sphere of the dGa'-yul.
- vii) Additionally, there is this bouncing jewel *gdung-rdo*. This ruined corpse of the deceased, connected by destiny to the kinfolk (*nye-tshig*), was formed from the materials of breath, warmth, blood and flesh. Moreover, [there are] the five (six) jewels. The gold is the earth,

²²⁹ The five wisdoms (*ye-shes lnga*), a Buddhist concept, are: *stong-nyid ye-shes* (wisdom of the emptiness of all phenomena), *me-long ye-shes* (wisdom of the pure reflection of all phenomena), *mnyam-nyid ye-shes* (wisdom of impartiality), *sor-rtsoqs ye-shes* (wisdom of discrimination), and *bya-grub ye-shes* (wisdom activity of perfected accomplishment).

²³⁰ It is not certain whether the *nam-mkha'* depicted an actual face or if this is simply a poetical description.

²³¹ This sentence also includes the word *skong-'grub*, whose meaning is not clear.

²³² *Dug-lnga: nga-rgyal* (pride), *'dod-chags* (lust), *zhe-sdang* (anger, hatred), *phrag-dog* (envy), *gti-mug* (nescience, stupefaction).

²³³ *Sems kyi klong*. This is the pure state of the natural mind.

it is formed as flesh. The crystal is the water, it is formed as blood. The iron is the stone, it is formed as bones. The copper is the wind, it is formed as breath. The banded agate is the fire, it is formed as warmth. The turquoise is the castle, it is formed as the mind.

- viii) These *gdung-rdo* of the five perfected jewels are for the definitive burial (*nan gyis mnan*) in the tomb (*dur*) and the cleansing of the corpse's mental imprints;²³⁴ the removal of disease and the cleansing of illness for the purpose of joining of the body and consciousness. On the previous day they were established at the *dur-cha gling*.²³⁵ The funeral concerning these *gdung-rdo* of the *bka'* and *thugs*, the *bla* and *vid* of the deceased is well done, so the inclination of the defunct and deteriorated deceased one in the intermediate state (*bar-do*) to the corpse is purified by itself, and the inclination to the body cleansed. The distress of miserable diseases is pacified. [The deceased] is freed from the obstructions (*gag*) of the *bdud* and *sri* of the tomb. [The deceased] is placed under the protection of the mighty *gsas* stone. The great benefit and merit of the *gdung-rdo* are such as these.
- ix) Now the activities of the soul stone are completed, so mind of you, the dead one, do not be bound to the symbolic constituents. This soul stone of the symbolic constituents is moved to the country of emptiness, which is without qualities. The soul and mind of you, the dead one, is cast into the space of the mind, which is without a receptacle. The seams of the state of mind and the state of *bon* are joined, so may you arrive at the sphere of the dGa'-yul.
- x) Now also this mind receptacle *dri-ma* clothing, on the previous day at the funeral of the deceased, was for the dead one to remember the surviving family and friends (*rogs rogs*). The *dri-ma* clothing of the previous [life] is erected at the base of the soul circles of the *gshen*. By constructing the *dri-ma* soul circle, all earlier and later imprints of the previous [life] are recollected through the clothes of the *dri-ma*. The deceased of the intermediate state [who believes] his mind (*vid*) has a body, misses his scents and eats scents. As [the deceased] misses its scents it circles around the scents. By its circling of the *dri-ma* receptacle, the living (*gson*) smell the [former] scent of the dead one (*gshin*) and the dead one smells the scent of the living. Also, the dead one (*shi*) through mental imprints [of scents] is reminded of the living.
- xi) The *bka'* and *thugs*, the *bla* and *vid* of the expired one come around the clothes of the *dri-ma*. By the benefit and merit of the *dri-ma* soul circle, all mental imprints of earlier times in the previous [life] are perceived clearly without obscuration, and the *bka'* and *thugs* are guided into the ordered position (*gral*) of the funerary *gsas*. The great benefits and merits of the *dri-ma* clothes are such as these.²³⁶
- xii) The receptacle of the *mtshun* (divine ancestors) is rhododendron with bamboo. By the establishment of a soul *srod* (receptacle?) of the *mtshun* on the altar (*gzhi*) on which the funeral ritual ('*dur-shid*) is performed, the deceased is reminded that the [offerings] of *cu-gang* and the repaying of kindness are done because, when he was alive and not dead, he amassed the possessions of wealth, took care of his children and raised his grandchildren.

²³⁴ *Bag-chags*. In this context, this word refers to the Tibetan belief that the deceased is still attached to his body, as if in a dream.

²³⁵ The tomb and/or venue for the mortuary rites.

²³⁶ Now follows the same liturgical content as found in paras. vi and ix (relating to the final send-off of the deceased), with the substitution of *dri-ma* for the *nam-mkha'* or *gdung-rdo*.

- [The deceased] also recognizes the sign of the *mtshun* and distinguishes between the lucky ones and the childless. By the unused bamboo of three joints [the deceased] realizes the [pure] body, speech and mind, these three.
- xiii) The funeral of the brave (*rgod*) soul and mind of the deceased is well done, so all the evil miseries of his hereditary lineage (*mi-rabs rgyud*) are pressed down by the feet of the *mtshun* guardian. Both the dead and living happily recognize each other. Afterwards [the deceased becomes] a *mtshun* [and the living] obtain the swastika of good luck.²³⁷ The [new] *mtshun* left for and arrived at the sphere of the dGa'-yul land. The great benefits and merits of the *mtshun* are such as these.²³⁸
- xiv) Also this sky ornament (*'phru*) tree, long head juniper, on the previous day was erected in the direction of the head of the dead one (*'phang*). This never-old (evergreen) nectarous juniper is erected in the direction of the head of the dead one. It is the canopy (*'phru*) for the rain and protector from the wind. The turquoise juniper manifestation has leaves of swastika silken cloth. Its nectarous fruit is gold and turquoise. Its sap is the libation beverage of consummation (*dnegos-grub*). From it appear the inexhaustible possessions of all desires.
- xv) The soul and mind, the consciousness of the dead one, takes refuge (*skyabs*) at the head juniper at the well-done funeral ritual. Outside the swastika tent house juniper, by the noble mind qualities of the protector *lha* and *gsas*, the wrath of the *bdud* is subdued, while inside good fortune nectar (*dmu-yad*) rains down. It is the never-old stringent protection (*bsrung du brtsan*) of that which is never pounded down by the *bdud* of the tomb and the *sri* of the tomb.²³⁹
- xvi) Also this time arrow and spindle soul sign (*bla-rtags*) on the previous day was erected as the support of the *chab-gang* in the direction of the head of the deceased. The arrow is the soul sign of the male. The spindle is the soul sign of the female. Also when the deceased was alive, the arrow and spindle had different values [according to sex]. At first, when born from the mother, the arrow and spindle were made the protection support. Then when [the deceased was] a youth in the prime of life, male tigers (*skyes-pa stag*) were captured and wild yaks hunted. Bravery was increased through the arrow.²⁴⁰ When the noble woman is on her way to be married, she needs the spindle and yarn as the apportionment of prosperity.²⁴¹ Then, at the transitions (*'gros*) of autumn and spring, the appointment of time was also fixed with the arrow and spindle.²⁴²
- xvii) Now at the funeral of the dead one, through the time arrow and time spindle, the evil-doer [demons] are subjugated. The *bka'* and *thugs*, the *bla* and *yid* of the deceased at the

²³⁷ The swastika (*g.yung-drung*) portrays that this good luck is to be stable and enduring.

²³⁸ Again, at this juncture in the liturgy, we find the same content for sending off the deceased as in paragraphs vi and ix.

²³⁹ As with all the *bla-'khor* in the text, this is followed by the liturgical content relating to the final send off of the deceased, as found in paragraphs vi and ix.

²⁴⁰ Two words for arrow are found here: *mda'* and *drum*.

²⁴¹ This sentence shows that these two objects serve as supports for the good fortune capability (*g.yang*) of females and the household.

²⁴² This sentence seems to indicate that the arrow is emblematic of the autumn hunting season and the spindle emblematic of the spring spinning season.

well-done funeral ritual of the time arrow and time spindle, the summoning of the *bka'* and *thugs* and *bla* on the previous day; these were summoned through the effect of the time arrow and time spindle. Also, intermediately, the funerary inheritance (*rdzongs*) of *ju-gang* is passed on through the effect of the time arrow and time spindle. Lastly, the beacon of the way (*shul-mtshon*) of the perfected state (*grub-pa*) is shown through the effect of the time arrow and time spindle. That is why the great benefit and merit of both the time arrow and time spindle are such as these.²⁴³

- xviii) Recite in this manner to individually separate (*so sor dbye*) the soul from the soul circle. Show the *bla*, *yid*, and *sems*, these three, the path to the sphere of the dGa'-yul. The soul circles are duly burnt. Then the hand-tool wing is put away.

6.5 The Ritual Application of the Hand-tool Wing

The chief apotropaic and signaling instrument of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary tradition is the bird's wing. The ritual use and function of the bird's wing is detailed in an untitled text of the collection.²⁴⁴ The wing was mounted on a handle and equipped with streamers and other sacred signs. At the onset, the wing liturgy declares that without the wing there is no way to integrate the *bla* and *thugs* of the deceased (para. i). After death, in order for the deceased to obtain the salvation of dGa'-yul, the *bla* and *thugs* should not stray in different directions. Presumably, this embodies an ancient belief concerning personal well-being in which the two principles of consciousness (soul and mind) were seen as intertwined and mutually supporting. The wing is called the 'wing fortress' (*gshog-rdzong*) as it is considered a very powerful instrument, indispensable in winning salvation for the deceased. It would seem that the wing is a metaphor for the power of flight, and symbolizes the consciousness principles of the deceased being winged away to the celestial hereafter.²⁴⁵ The text then briefly states the religious lineage of the wing, linking it to sTon-pa gShen-rab and the present ritual context.

According to the text, each of the 12 categories of deceased persons warrants the use of a different species of bird's wing (paras. ii–iv). These categories possibly illustrate the social rungs found in ancient Tibetan society:

Male priests (*gshen*)
 Highly respected elders (*bkra-rgan*)
 Royalty (*rgyal-rabs*)
 Chieftains (*gtso-bo*)
 Warriors (*dgra-'dul dpa'-bo*)
 The rich (*mdzod-ldan*)

²⁴³ This is followed by the same content regarding the send-off of the deceased to the dGa'-yul as in paras. vi and ix.

²⁴⁴ Anonymous (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brien*, vol. 6, nos. 195–200), nos. 197, ln. 3 to 200, ln. 4. Tibetan Text III-14, pp. 623, 624.

²⁴⁵ Such beliefs probably persisted in Tibet for centuries after the early historic period. The 14th century CE travel account of Friar Odoric reports that when raptors carried away hunks of the flesh of dismembered corpses in burial rites, Tibetans believed that the deceased was being transferred to paradise (Martin 1996: 356). The antiquity of this eschatological theme in the Indic cultural setting is corroborated by the *Rgveda*. According to this text, the soul leaves the body at the time of death and travels to the heavens by chariot or wings. The Vedas contain no clear evidence of a belief in transmigration, and refer to both cremation and earth burial. See Keith 1925b, pp. 403–406, 417–424, 626–629.

Those of special distinction (*kha-drag 'phen-pa*)
 Wives (*dbyel-mo*)
 Female religious practitioners (*bon-mo*)²⁴⁶
 Female allies/relatives (*lhe'u dang sman*)
 Monks and nuns (*rab-chung pho-mo*)
 The impoverished or base (*ngan*)

If the sequence in this listing was composed to reflect a prevailing hierarchical social structure (and this is not at all certain), it provides us with interesting insights into the values and composition of old Tibetan society. The position of the [Buddhist] monks and nuns in the penultimate position would seem to relegate them to a minor or low status role (just above the indigent). I expect that this presentation is much in the line of a Bon aspirational pretense, and could have come about only after the abolition of Bon by King Khri-srong lde'u-btsan and the ordination of monks by the Indian mKhan-chen bho-dhi satwa. Both of these events occurred in the last quarter of the eighth century CE. With the emergence of Lamaist (ecclesiastic and clerical) Bon at the end of the tenth century CE, the ordination of monks along Buddhist lines gradually became the norm. The demotion of monks to a place below women and next to the poor may argue in favor of this text being composed before the domination of monasticism, circa the 12th century CE. It is also worth commenting on the placement of venerable elders (*bkra-rgan*) near the top of the occupational list, even above royalty and chieftains. Again, working under the premise that a social ranking is implied in the text, it would seem to show how vital constituent entities (clans, tribes, regions) were to the old societal order. The high degree of social independence suggested here would seem to support the existence of a confederated or regionalized polity in late and/or post-imperial times.

The text stipulates that the wing (from one of 12 species of birds), which is embellished with sacred signs, is raised (*bzhengs*) at the beginning of the funeral (paras. ii–iv). Five of these birds belong to classes of elemental spirits, accentuating the role these primitive divinities played in ancient eschatological processes. Mentioned are the *klu*, *lha*, *gnyan*, *srin*, and *'dre*, ancestral figures and protectors of the living. As is customary, the text invokes the ancient pedigree of this potent ritual instrument to demonstrate the historical and religious legitimacy of the text (the *smrang*) (para. v). It is stated that the wing conquers the hell world of the *gshin-rje* demons, and signals the *lha* and *gsas* allies of the funeral (para. vi). This is in keeping with the twin apotropaic and fortune-bestowing functions of most Bon readings and ritual objects. Mention is made of the river of the *gshin-rje*, that Stygian body of water dividing hell from the Elysian paradise.²⁴⁷ We learn that the wing instrument is mounted on a handle, and is actually used to contain the consciousness principles of the deceased and his guardian deities.

By raising the divine wing, the armies of *lha* allies are marshaled; these will battle all demonic entities that threaten the well-being of the ritualists (para. vii). This underlines the delicate and

²⁴⁶ These female practitioners can be traced to the imperial period. PT. 990 mentions both *bon-po* and *bon-mo*. In IOL 220, the *bon-mo* are mentioned in a Buddhist polemic as exhorting people to sacrifice animals and make offerings to the *lha-'dre*, gods of the earth and *srin-mo*. The *bon-mo* are also recorded as uttering prophecies. See Stein 2003a, pp. 585, 593, 594, 610 (n. 25). This IOL 220 reference portrays the *bon-mo* priestesses as guardians of the old religious traditions.

²⁴⁷ Compare this mythic theme with the Iranian Cinvat bridge, which spans the river of hell that the virtuous may cross but the damned are plunged into (Tucci 1980: 195). The watercourse of the *gshin-rje* also recalls the Vaitaranī of Indian mythology, the putrid river dividing the dead from salvation. The Vaitaranī is crossed with the aid of an eponymous cow, which is comparable to the Tibetan usage of livestock for the same general purposes.

perilous nature of the funerary rites upon which the prosperity of the living and dead hangs in balance. The text states that the wing extricates the wandering mind of the deceased from the hell of the *gshin-rje* and bars its return to such a terrible existence (para. viii). It is also the wing that opens the way to the afterlife, which is referred to here as the pure land (*gtsang-sa*). This term stresses the idealized geographic nature of conceptions related to the archaic paradise. Moreover, it is the wing that decisively separates the mutually antagonistic realms of the living and the dead. Once this is safely accomplished, the deceased and his surviving relations can enter into contact with one another, the last step in the ritual performance before the departed one attains the consummation of his new heavenly existence:

- i) Now raise the hand-instrument wing! If the wing fortress instrument is not raised there is no method to join the soul and mind of the deceased (*grongs-pa*). That is why it is essential to raise the wing. In the beginning, this great protector soul wing manifestation emanated from the mind of gShen-rab. Intermediately, it was held by the nine *gshen* lineages. Presently, it is raised as the *gshen* instrument of the funeral ritual ('dur).
- ii) At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the Hos *gshen* practitioners,²⁴⁸ raise the miraculous *khyung* wing of the firmament. At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the deceased venerable elders (*bkra-rgan*), raise the flexible lammergeyer (*thang-dkar rgod*) wing. At the beginning of the funeral ritual of honored members of the lineage of kings, raise the long blue *dgongs* (pheasant?) wing. At the beginning of the funeral ritual of commended (*yig-tshangs*) chieftains, raise the time-holder²⁴⁹ crane (*kh rung-kh rung*) wing.
- iii) At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the heroic conquerors of enemies, raise the eagle (*glag-mo*) wing with the white medial band.²⁵⁰ At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the wealthy ones, raise the wing of the bird of the *klu* with the white neck.²⁵¹ At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the mighty and able ones, raise the wing of the grouse (*gong-mo*), the bird of the *lha*. At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the noble female consorts, raise the wing of the chough (*skyung-ka*), the bird of the *gnyan*.
- iv) At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the female Bon meditators, raise the wing of the melodious cuckoo (*khu-byug*). At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the women allies, raise the wing of the small tan²⁵² lark (*lcog*). At the beginning of the funeral ritual of monks and nuns, raise the wing of the raven (*pho-rog*). At the beginning of the funeral ritual of the expired poor (*gshin-ngan dus-chad*), raise the wing of the bird of the *srin* (the owl) [and] the bird of the 'dre.²⁵³
- v) At the beginning of the funeral ritual of this passed away one (*tshe-'das*), raise the black wing with streamers (*mdzod-ldan*). Now this black wing with streamers and holy signs (*bka'-rtags*) of miraculous syllables was in ancient times also raised for summoning the deceased [in] the intermediate state (*bar-do*) by sTon-pa, the *lha* and the *gshen*.

²⁴⁸ gShen-rab(s). As noted, in old Bon texts this could also mean the excellent *gshen*.

²⁴⁹ 'Dus-'dzin. This refers to the cyclical seasonal migration of the crane.

²⁵⁰ Literally: *mkhal-dkar* (white kidney [feathers]). This expression was also used by the great late spirit-medium (*lha-pa*) Pho-bo lha-dbang to refer to the tail feathers of an eagle (Bellezza 2005a: 137 (n. 127)).

²⁵¹ This refers to an aquatic species, perhaps the duck.

²⁵² In the text: *grog-mo*. This can possibly be read as *gro-mo* (tan).

²⁵³ A reference to the *sreg-pa*, a quail or partridge.

- vi) Its force panics the world of hell (dmyal-ba'i 'jig). Its power breaks the soul chest²⁵⁴ of the gshin-rje. Its tip presses down the happy mountain. Its bottom closes the law door²⁵⁵ of the lower realms. Its middle pounds the turbulent river of the gshin-rje²⁵⁶. The soul of the poor one (ngan-pa, the deceased) also circles below its shadow. The central portion has a trunk-neck (handle). This wing, owner of the soul and mind, is a holy sign of the powerful funerary gshen. It is erected as the support of the advent of the lha and gsas.
- vii) The actual meaning (nges-pa'i don) of this very black wing with streamers is shown: it is a constituent of the assembling of the gsas hero-multitude of the funeral. When the wing fortress is waved in the hand the many lha armies quickly assemble. You assembled lha army multitude, do not let the famished ghosts and obstructors pound us down, we the gto-bo, bon and lamas. Positively protect without harming.
- viii) When the wing instrument with a miraculous bridge²⁵⁷ is waved in the hell realms, this wandering soul and mind (bka' thugs) of the deceased, which wanders around the realm of the intermediate state, is summoned by the waving of the swastika wing bridge. That is why the soul wing has beneficial qualities. When the instrument of the funeral is raised, the wing opens the divine portal of the living (gson). The wing closes the door of the tomb of the dead (shi-ba). The wing guides the defunct and deteriorated one to the pure land (gtsang-sa). The wing happily introduces the living and dead to each other. The wing opens the path of swastika consummation. The great benefit and merit of the wing is like this.

6.6 The Mythic Origins of the Hand-tool Wing

The fascinating origin myth (rabs) of the hand-tool wing is recounted in another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur cycle entitled *Origin Tale of the Wing*²⁵⁸. The protagonist in the story is a human-like divinity named sMra-mi dran-pa who came down to earth and anointed a small stone called *ab-bla bdal-drug* (the divine ancestor of the Tibetan kings) (para. i). Although the text does not give any indications, it would appear that rather than being sMra-mi's, this was actually the soul stone of *ab-bla bdal-drug*. From the three prototypical soul receptacles – the tree, stone and vulture – manifested the wife of sMra-mi, a female gnyan named **I ags-za** (para. ii). The text

²⁵⁴ bKa'-sgrom. According to Tibetan folklore, this is the trunk in which the gshin-je store the names of those who will die.

²⁵⁵ Khrim-sgo. This is a metaphor for the very strict conditions that prevail in the lower realms (ngan-song).

²⁵⁶ The next sentence of the text has something to do with the debating or disputing power of the side of the wing. It is not included in the translation.

²⁵⁷ am rd u'-phrul. This is a metaphorical bridge that spans the obstructions and dangers faced by the deceased in his transition to the afterlife or rebirth.

²⁵⁸ gShog rab (rabs) (ew Collection of on bka'-brten, vol. 6, nos. 213–216). No author or colophon is provided. Tibetan Text III-15, pp. 624, 625. In the text s gags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen phreng ba g hung gi nyin bon le'u gnyis pa'o (ew Collection of on bka'-brten, vol. 6, nos. 341–379, no colophon), nos. 354, ln. 2 to 362, ln. 1, there is also a wing ritual recitation and srid-rabs. The origin tale of this more Lamaism-influenced liturgy reads as follows (354, ln. 5 to 355, ln. 3): “Firstly, [the wing] is an emanation of the enlightened form that came from the womb of the realm of emptiness. It appeared from the succession of the five elements. In the pristine five elements a precious egg came into being. From the manifestation of the benevolent mind, the vulture of manifestation came into being from inside the opened egg. Its body was clad in miraculous feathers and skin. It flew about in the realm of space.* It glided through the wind 'u ru ru. The castle (air stream) of the bird kyi li li. It landed on the peak of the dbal mountain. Such is the source of the bird.

* The meaning of the next line in the text is ambiguous: rd i dral de ni sha ra ra.

enumerates the nine holy objects that served as her dowry (rdongs), which have an important function in the ritual. Ordinary household items and ornaments used by women comprise this dowry.

After sMra-mi died a btsan abducted his soul, and his wife and sons persuaded the stone, uniper tree and vulture to act as the protector of his soul (para. iii). As sMra-mi had shown these soul receptacles much kindness when he was alive, his family was repaid (blang) the debt that they owed him. This is a fine example of the principle of reciprocity on which the ancient Tibetan social contract appears to have been founded. In this way, the soul enshrining objects and major constituents of the wing instrument came into being. There is also a reference to a vulture (byar-god) and tortoise (rus-sbal) being killed by an angry lha, but the significance of this passage to the main theme of the origin tale is unclear. Both of these animals have a sacred status in Tibetan culture and are traditionally perceived as being powerful and protective. This allusion might illustrate that the vulture and turtle soul objects or guardians () meet the same mortal fate as humans, and that by their deaths the deceased was assisted in his postmortem passage.

The wife and sons of sMra-mi invited the gshen and bon priests to conduct the funerary ritual (para. iv). The priests responded by preparing the hand-tool wing with a vulture wing and the objects that formed the dowry of lags-za. Once it was properly constituted, the wing was miraculously empowered by the funerary priests. Through their mental powers, the priests then summoned the congregations of mounted lha from the four cardinal directions and from above and below (para. v). These six different-colored divine cavalry belong to the orders (rigs) of the swastika (gyung-drung), circle ('khor-lo), jewel (rin-chen), lotus (pad-ma), activity (phrin-las), and the fundamental reality or essence of all phenomena (bhin). The characteristic colors and symbolism of this grouping stand in contrast to the better-known 'phrin-las bhi tantric plan of the cardinal directions.²⁵⁹ It is through these six orders of lha that the various instrumentalities of the hand-tool wing were empowered.

The wing origin text spells out the illustrious function of each material component of the wing. These are derived from both archaic and prevailing funerary traditions (para. vi). These objects and functions are articulated in such a way that a high degree of syncretism is indicated. The most salient native quality of the wing in the ritual is that its handle serves as a pillar or foundation (brten-shing) between earth and sky. The list of wing ornaments here varies considerably from that given in para. ii, and most of their attributed powers are described through the philosophical lens of Buddhism. This is made patently clear when the text is compared with the origin tale of the wing in PT. 1194 (see pp. 506–510). Sympathetically speaking, when ritualists read aloud such an explanation of the value and functions of the wing, it helps empower the one that they are using.

The ritualists make known that their sole aim is to ensure the well-being of the deceased (para. vii). This forms the requiescat component of the origin tale. It is written that the successful usage of the wing in the funeral of sMra-mi constituted the ancient prototype or archetypal structure of existence (srid-pa'i sngon gyi dpe). In other words, this ritual is modeled on primordial religious directives, the highest form of authority in the archaic traditions of Bon. The origin of the wing text concludes with the ritualists calling the soul and mind of the deceased with the wing

²⁵⁹ These are the modalities of the activities of deities and the manner in which they are worshipped. This cornerstone of both Bon and Buddhist religious practice includes the following categories: east – pacific (hi-ba), south – expanding (rgyas-pa), west – empowering (dbang-po), and north – wrathful (drag-po).

(para. viii). The consciousness principles are exhorted to appear in an ordered position (gral). This refers to the need of the soul and mind of the deceased to be stable and compliant with the instructions of the funerary priests:

- i) E Please raise the hand-tool wing. If the wing instrument is not raised, the living and dead cannot communicate with each other (brda mi mjal). How did the wing tool come into existence? In the first epoch of ancient times, when the one called sMra-mi dran-pa came down from the sky to the earth, he went on top of the golden mountain as large as a thumb. He met a stone as large as a die (cho-lo). He thought that one day he would need this,²⁶⁰ so he dropped a droplet of nectar on it and placed it back. The stone was called ab-bla bdal-drug.
- ii) On top of this boulder grew a turquoise uniper. A vulture landed on top of the tree. The vulture drooled and its spittle (kha-chu) dripped right on the tree and stone. From the tree, stone and bird, these three, manifested lha-mo lags-za ma-mo ldem. A sewing needle, a thread and a lci-mo (), these three; a conch, a banded agate and a mirror, these six; lung,²⁶¹ lambskin and cloth, these nine; these are the nine types of wealth, possessions, articles, and instruments. They were the dowry of g yan-lcam lags-za (sic). She then went to be the wife of sMra-mi dran-pa. The sons of their union were the [one and] only four brothers.
- iii) During the course of that epoch, the vulture caught a tortoise. The tortoise cried out, which angered the lha of the sky. By this fault the bird and tortoise were broken (killed). When Dran-pa died his soul was taken by a btsan. From the household of the dead one, that [dead] man had been very kind to the bird and stone. [The dead one] had administered nectar and medicine to them. [The household] took back the kindness of the tree, stone and bird, these three. The tree was called the head uniper, protector of the soul. The mighty white stone with nectar was called the great protector soul stone mind support.
- iv) The wife and sons, the bereaved,²⁶² invited the funerary gshen from above. The bon said, “It is essential to have a hand-tool wing.” Thus he spoke. The right wing of the vulture was reverently placed in the hands of the bon and gshen. They attached it to cane and bamboo.²⁶³ Also the nine types of articles were made the ornaments of the wing. The lha and teacher made miraculous manifestations. They also empowered the wing.²⁶⁴
- v) They emanated the manifestations of the mind:
The 100 white men and white horses, the lha of the swastika order, who conferred the power of the wing.
The 100 yellow men and yellow horses, the lha of the circle order, who conferred the power of the cane and bamboo.

²⁶⁰ This is the general import of this poorly written clause.

²⁶¹ Probably *Sapindus mukorossi*, a herb that grows in eastern Tibet below 3600 meters. It is used for diseases caused by the gnyan as well as for other conditions. See d a'-ba'i rdo-r e 1995, pp. 155, 156.

²⁶² This is the approximate meaning of this garbled clause.

²⁶³ This attachment is expressed in the text by the figure of speech *rta la bskyon* (the mounting [of something] on horseback).

²⁶⁴ In the text *Rin chen phreng ba g hung gi nyin bon le'u gnyis pa'o*, this wing is described thus (no. 355, lns. 4–6), “The vulture wing of manifestation has excellent qualities. It is a sign of the unchanging *bon-nyid* (reality as it is). It subdues the lha and 'dre of visible existence. It is a sign of the definitive cutting of the chain of death and rebirth. It is the miraculous wing of love. It positively suppresses hell (*na-rag dmyal*).

- The 100 blue men and blue horses, the *lha* of the jewel order, who conferred the power of the needle.
- The 100 red men and red horses, the *lha* of the lotus order, who conferred the power of the cloth.
- The 100 black men and black horses, the *lha* of the activity order, who conferred the power of the woman (the wife of sMra-mi dran-pa).
- The 100 ashen men and ashen horses, the *lha* of the essence of all phenomena, who conferred the power of the thread.
- vi) The cane and bamboo are the tree supports of the sky and earth. The wing is the benevolent mind great protector. The needle is the guide of the types of knowledge (*shes-rab sna*). The thread is the thoroughfare of the purified and perfected state (*byang-chub*). The woman is the one of skillful means (*thabs*) who sees one off. The cloth is the bridge of compassion (*snying-rje*). The lambskin is the dress of impartiality (*btang-snyoms*). The mirror is the bright light of knowledge (*shes-rab 'od-gsal*). The jewel is the essence of meditation (*bsam-gtan*). The *long-tang* (?) is the lamp of vision (*spyang-brten sgron*). The soul support is the support of the faultless mind (*'khrul-med thugs*). The wing has many kinds of syllables that edify (*rten-'breI*).²⁶⁵
- vii) Come with the force of the powerful miracle. Come with the power of the funerary *gshen*'s blessings. By the blessings of the force of the wing, the soul chest (*bla-sgroms*) of the *bdud* was destroyed. The soul and mind of sMra-mi dran-pa came under the protection of the wing. This is the ancient *dpe* of existence.
- viii) The noble man is dead (*grongs-pa*). We shall dispatch the *lha* on behalf of the soul (*bka'*) and [conduct] the wing funeral on behalf of the mind (*thugs*). Do not let go of the ordered position of your soul. Do not be ashamed of the ordered position of the mind. Definitely come here, soul and mind of the deceased. The origin tale of the raised wing is completed.

6.7 The Skin-bag Protector of the Deceased

Although it was not cited in the overview of the funeral presented in the *Fourth Chapter Explicating the Three General Appointments of the Thang-khrims*, another important ritual implement of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is known as the *gshin-sgro*. The *gshin-sgro* is an airtight and odor-proof bag made of leather and filled with grain. The type of leather defines the bag's particular use. This object is part of the archaic funerary tradition, and its usage may not have survived in the Bon funerary rites currently practiced in Tibet. The origin and use of the *gshin-sgro* are related in the text *Origin Tale of the gShin-sgro in which the gSas Stone is Kept*.²⁶⁶ The *gshin-sgro* functions

²⁶⁵ The ornamentation of the wing in *Rin chen phreng ba gzhung gi nyin bon le'u gnyis pa'o* is described as follows (no. 357, lns. 4–6): “This is the flexible (*ldan = ldem*) *khyung* wing of manifestation mounted on a new flexible bamboo axis/handle (*rta*). A red banner of the soul (*bla-dar dmar-po'i ba-dan*) is bound to it. It displays the sign of the wing ornaments of power: a mirror, the sound of the conch and a bright-striped tiger victory banner (*rgyal-mtshan*).” Also we read (no. 360, lns. 3, 4): “The heavy iron arrow point of the ligature, and the mirror and sound of the conch-resplendent road, are bound as the sign of the wing ornaments of power. The five heroic golden syllables and the bright-striped tiger victory banner are bound as the ornaments of the soul-summoning wing of the funerary ritual.”

²⁶⁶ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba las (From the Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Text) / gshin sgro srid rab (= rabs) dang nang du gses (= gsas) rdo* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6 nos. 201–204). No author is given. Tibetan Text III-16, pp. 625, 626.

as a grain-filled container for the consciousness principles of the deceased, once the priests have successfully brought them to the funeral venue. At the funeral the deceased remains under the auspices of the **lha** allies of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, who have taken up residence with him in the **gshin-sgro**. The hermetic qualities of this leather bag protect the dead from negative influences carried on the wind and through the agency of scents.

The text begins with a proclamation that the **gshin-sgro** is needed as the house of the **lha** allies (para. i). It is also declared that the **gshin-sgro** is required as the support (**rten**) of the sky and earth. This conventional grandiose representation serves to exalt the origin and prestige of the **gshin-sgro**. Then the text informs us that the sky and earth are also the supports of the **gshin-sgro** (para. ii). The initiation of the ritual at the intersection of sky and earth sets old traditions apart from later conceptions of ritual being initiated in the sphere of emptiness (**stong-pa'i ngang**). This is a state without an imputed physical basis (not to be confused with the undifferentiated primordium, devoid of qualities, of the ancient cosmogonies: **dang-po ye med stong-pa**). The **gshin-sgro** origin myth records that the sky and earth were created by a sky-maker boy (**dgung-mkhan bu-pha**) and earth-maker girl (**dog-mkhan bu-mo**) respectively. The presence of divine children in the narrative is another hallmark of the Bon cosmogonic tradition (**srid-rabs**) not encountered in Buddhism.²⁶⁷ The text also notes an object called the **gsas** stone (**gsas-rdo**), which is placed on the **gshin-sgro**. The **gsas** stone acts as the support for the divine allies of the funeral. Once the mythic precedent and value of the **gshin-sgro** are articulated, the text commands the deceased to take up residence in this secure shelter (para. iii). Rather than the **bka'** and **thugs** or **bla** and **yid**, the consciousness principle here is **rnam-shes**, which is probably a more recent modification of the liturgy inspired by Indic religious thought. The safety of the **gshin-sgro** is described using the metaphor of the rainbow house (**g ha'-tshon khang**). In Tibetan notions, rainbows are commonly associated with divine realms and the awe-inspiring appearance of the gods.

The remainder of the text provides an explanation for how the skin-bag instrument came to be used. It is referred to as a **gshin-sgro** because the animal skins from which the first ones were made were wrested from various kinds of demons (paras. iv–viii). These accounts have the effect of reasserting the superiority of the Bon funerary system as an exorcistic apparatus. The deer **gshin-sgro** was made from the deer hide of **ngam**, the dark, evil half of existence, and is said to protect against the demons of this realm (para. iv). The deer from which it was fabricated was slain by the white conch canine of Ye-rje smon-pa, the primordial god of the virtuous, photic side of existence (**smon**). The wild yak **gshin-sgro** was made from an evil wild yak (para. v), a demoniacal theme that runs through Bon and Ge-sar epic literature. The first tiger-skin **gshin-sgro** was fabricated from a bellicose tiger and it protects against the **g ed**, an elemental spirit of the earth **g yen** class (like the **gshin-rje**) (para. vi).²⁶⁸ This tiger skin was obtained through the aid of a composite class of deities known as **gar-gsas**.

Both the **gar** and **gsas** deities mentioned in the **gshin-sgro** rite are documented in an elaborate ransom ritual (**glud**) that makes up the bulk of the main part of the Dunhuang manuscript IOL 734²⁶⁹ The specific liturgical structures and ritual operations in which they occur, however, are obscure. For instance, we read in what appears to be part of a funeral for a man called rMa-bu mching-rgyal that three **gshen bon** and the god rJe bla-bo bla-sras (Lord Soul Person Son

²⁶⁷ For two other examples of divine children in seminal mythic roles, see p. 310; Bellezza 2005a, pp. 452, 452 (n. 104).

²⁶⁸ For a list of the 33 orders of **g yen**, see Norbu 1995, p. 252 (n. 2).

²⁶⁹ Thomas (1957: Texts, Translations, Notes, p. 56 (n. 5)) incorrectly speculates that **gar** might denote an army commander in the three occurrences of the word in this text.

of the Soul) participated.²⁷⁰ They carried out the work of summoning the *g.yang* (good fortune capability) with the aid of ephedra. In a nocturnal rite, enneads of deities (the allies of the deceased and funerary priests?) and what seems to be a divine aspect of ephedra were invoked. As we saw in *Chapter of the Jewel Rosary Primary Scripture*, Mu-cho ldem-drug brandished the bird wing and cast ephedra in order to obtain divine assistance (see p. 379, para. x):

Now, for this man rMa-bu mching-rgyal, the invitation [of the priests] in the mornings²⁷¹ and to summon (*blan*) the *g.yang* in the daytime (*nyin-sum*): when Lha-bon 'phrang-zu, g.Yang-bon theg-leg, Pya-bon khyu-ra, and rJe bla-bo bla-sras summon the *g.yang* by using seven seeds of soul ephedra (*bla-mtshe*) *srad-po*²⁷² in the daytime, the *g.yang* will come. The invitation of the *sku-bla* in the nights and the worship²⁷³ in the nights: when you worship in the nights, you should worship the nine lords (*rje-dgu*), the nine *gar*, the nine *lha*, the nine *gsas*, the nine fathers (*pha-dgu*), the nine *bon*, and rJe his-sten chen-po and mTshe his-po his-bdag (a special deity of ephedra?).

In our Mu-cho 'i khrom-'dur text, the hide of the *gshin* became the *gshin-sgro* (also called *gshed-sgro*) proper (para. vii). This is said to have occurred after gShen-rab summoned the *lha* and *gsas* to help the *gshen* in their struggle against the demons (para. vii). In addition to sheltering the consciousness principles of the deceased, the *gshed-sgro* is also recorded as being used to incarcerate and slay the demons of death. The recitation concludes in the present tense by reiterating the functions of the *gshin-sgro* in the concurrent funerary ritual (para. viii). Positioned near the head of the deceased and armed with the soul stone, it protects the departed from harm and rehabilitates his consciousness, in anticipation of his deliverance:

- i) *He!* Today, on the best day of existence,²⁷⁴ at the start of this treasury of funeral rituals (*shid-'dur*), for whatever is chanted and whatever is performed, it is essential to erect a *gshin-sgro*, the house of the *lha*. We will articulate the history of the *gshin-sgro*, the house of the *lha*. Scattered grain (*smran-ma*)²⁷⁵ is needed for the seat of the *gsas* stone. For the *gshin-sgro* a container of the *smran-ma* is needed. The *gshin-sgro* is needed as the sky and earth support.

²⁷⁰ See IOL 734, lns. 163–167: *da myi rma bu mching rgyal 'di nang sum sku ru spyon / nyin sum g.yang du blan* (mod. = *len*) *na / lha bon 'phrang zu g.yang bon theg leg pya bon khyu ra rje bla bo bla sras / bla mtshe srاد po bru bdu dang nyin sum g.yang du blan na g.yang yang yon (= yong) / nub sum sku bla ru spyon nub gsum nyan du 'dzugs na / rje dgu gar dgu dang lha dgu gsas dgu dang pha dgu bon dgu dang rje his sten chen po dang / mtshe his po his bdag dang nub sum nyan 'dzugs na nyan kyang tshugs /*. This passage is followed by the construction of soul (*rla*) receptacles including the *rlan* (= *rla*) *mkhar* (soul castle), soul home (*rla-khyim*), sinuous soul road (*rla-lam sgya-sgyo*), and the setting up of a soul house (*rla-khang*) (see lns. 167, 168). The spelling *brla* (soul) is found in a text on the evocation of the soul. See para. iii, p. 619.

²⁷¹ *Nang-sum*. *Sum* is a poetic amplification of the word 'morning' (*nam*) or a general pluralizer, rather than literally meaning 'three'.

²⁷² This word is either an unknown quality or a type of ephedra.

²⁷³ *Nyan du 'dzugs*. This expression appears in the main IOL 734 text repeatedly. It refers not merely to the erection of supports or gifts for the deities but to the attendance or care of them as well. This expression is probably similar in meaning to *bskul-pa*, the ritual structure of signaling, invoking and offering to deities. As such, I have settled upon the word 'worship' for my translation.

²⁷⁴ *Srid-pa 'i gnam-gong*. This conventional ritual line illustrates that this liturgy is being conducted at the most auspicious time possible.

²⁷⁵ This denotes the pure grain (usually barleycorn) that is scattered on altars (*gzhi*) as the ground of offering. This spread grain serves as the substructure for the construction of the offerings ensemble in many types of Bon and Buddhist rituals. *sMran-ma* is etymologically related to *smrang* (ritual precedent).

- ii) We will articulate the origin tale (*srid-pa*) of the sky and earth support object. In ancient times, the sky was erected above by the sky-maker boy. The erected turquoise sky was spread out above. The earth was laid down by the earth-maker girl. The laid-down golden earth was spread out below. The turquoise sky and golden earth are both the foundation (*rten-sa*) of the *gshin-sgro*. The erected sky of existence was well set up. The carpeted earth of the rock formation was well laid out. The erected sky of existence is the castle of the *lha*. The laid-down earth of the rock formation is the residence of the *gsas*. The sky and earth of the *lha* and *gsas* are both the foundation of the *gshin-sgro*. The *gshin-sgro* is the windproof house of the *lha*. The *gsas* stone is erected in the white *lha* house.
- iii) You are the [dead] venerable elder (*bkra-rgyal*) (*sic*), the expired one (*tshe-'das*). Rise up securely²⁷⁶ under the protection of this *gsas* stone. Your consciousness (*rnam-shes*) ripens²⁷⁷ inside the *gshin-sgro*. Your soul and mind stay in the rainbow house.
- iv) Also, how did the odor-proof (*rdzi-thub*) deer *gshin-sgro* come into existence? In the beginning, existence (*ye*) and non-existence (*ngam*) were not in harmony. The black man of *ngam* manifested as a deer. He went to spy on the country of the *smon*. He was perceived by Ye-rje *smon-pa* (Primordial Lord Benediction). He set loose the white conch dog of the *smon*. It slew the deer [manifestation] at the border of *ye* and *ngam*. The hide of the deer was skinned and made into the deer *sgro*. The three existence *bdud* of *ngam* were defeated by the deer *sgro*. The odor-proof deer *sgro* came to exist in this way.
- v) Also, how did the violent death-proof (*gri-thub*) wild yak *sgro* come into existence? The *bdud* yak of existence fought every day. The *bdud* yak was slain by the primordial omniscient *sgra-bla*. The hide of the *bdud* yak was skinned and made into the wild yak *sgro*. Also, it was named the violent death-proof wild yak *sgro*. The origin tale of the wild yak *sgro* is like that.
- vi) Also, how did the *gzed*-proof tiger *sgro* come into existence? The *brag-mas* (?) water tiger fought every day. By the power of the *gar* and *gsas*, the water tiger was slain. The hide of the tiger, the water tiger, was made into the *sgro*. By the tiger *sgro* both the *cho* (?) and *'dre* were defeated. Also it was named the *gzed*-proof tiger *sgro*. The origin tale of the tiger *sgro* is like that.
- vii) Also, how did the windproof (*rlung-thub*) *gshin-sgro* come into existence? The *gshen* and *bdud* fought with each other. *gShen-rab mi-bo* called the *lha* and *gsas*. By the power of the *lha* and *gsas* the *gshin-rje* was defeated. The hide of the *gshin-rje* was skinned and made into the *gshed-sgro*. The black *bdud* lord *sNgon-sgug* (Waits in Advance)²⁷⁸ manifested as a blustery *ngam* wind. The black *ngam* wind [was put] inside the *gshed-sgro* and slain. Also it was named the windproof *gshed-sgro*. The origin tale of the *gshin-sgro* is like that.

²⁷⁶ *'Phru*. This is the contextual meaning of this word as a verb. This grammatical form of the word appears to be an archaic usage.

²⁷⁷ *sMin*. This refers to the refurbishment of the deceased's consciousness or soul after the completion of various rites to eliminate the fear and other afflictions it faces.

²⁷⁸ It is called this because the *bdud* demons are thought to be constantly waiting to capture the souls of the living and newly dead.

- viii) Today erect the *gshin-sgro* in the direction of the head of the deceased. The *bdud* [that took] the life of the deceased, the *bdud* of death, is defeated and suppressed by the windproof *gshin-sgro*. Upon the windproof *gshin-sgro*, filled with barleycorn, erect a very hard *gsas* stone. Today you dead person (*grong-pa*), the deceased, are miraculously protected by the white soul stone. You are protected by the *bkra-bon* (funerary priests) and the *mtshun* (ancestral deities) of the deceased. Your soul and mind ripen inside the *gshin-sgro*. Do not be afraid, the *gsas* stone stays beside you. Do not panic, the funerary *gshen* chants near you. Stay inside the windproof *gshin-sgro*. These are the *gshin-sgro*, wild yak *sgro*, yak *sgro*, tiger *sgro*, and leopard *sgro*.

6.8 The Mythic Origins and Deployment of the Demon-slaying Flayed Animal Skins

Another set of apotropaic ritual objects of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funeral are the skins of sacrificial animals. They are used to conquer demons that would otherwise interfere with the passage of the deceased to paradise. These demons are of two types: those that caused the death of the departed one and those of a savage chthonic extraction. This is another example of the prolific use of wild animal parts in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, an integral part of many archaic cultural horizon ritual traditions. The carnivores and birds needed for the execution of the funerary rituals must have been obtained primarily through hunting and trapping. The origins and ritual usage of flayed animal skins (*g.yang-gzhi*) are chronicled in *Sa-bdag Reparation Conquest with the Flayed Skin of the Life-Cutter gShed*.²⁷⁹ The text begins with the *srid-rabs* (origin tale), where we again encounter that funerary *gshen* of yore Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal (para. i). The text relates that in setting up the funerary altar on the earth, he met resistance from commonplace elemental spirits (*sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan*). The natural disasters that they unleashed, however, were counteracted by the *gto* (beneficial rites) of Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal (of which the beating of the flayed skins is one).

The text documents the appeasement of the elemental spirits with the use of a flayed sheep, obtained through an archetypal sacrifice carried out by primal elders (para. ii). The various parts of the sheep acted as precious offerings. The equation of the butchered sheep parts with highly desirable substances underscores the value and auspiciousness of this immolation. This aspect of the recitation positively confirms that animal sacrifice was part of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, as do the *Klu 'bum* and Dunhuang manuscripts.²⁸⁰ The flayed skin ritual of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, nonetheless, only provides a prototypic or idealized (some Bon apologists might argue metaphorical) version of what was probably a funerary custom with diverse expressions (based on socioeconomic differences, regional cultural variations, situational considerations, etc.). The slaughter of sheep in particular reflects a funerary custom prevalent in Inner Asia (but not limited to that region) from the Neolithic onwards, which is revealed by numerous funerary excavations throughout the region. The stipulated function of the sacrificial sheep, to defeat harm-engendering spirits, would seem to parallel its ritual usage in many other Inner Asian cultures.

²⁷⁹ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las (Fom the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts) g.yang gzhi srid (= sri) gshed dbang sdud sa bdag bcos pa bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, nos. 953–959). Anonymous. Tibetan Text III-17, pp. 626, 627.

²⁸⁰ Likewise among the Nakhi. In the text entitled *Dead Life Offering Terminate, Be Gone!*, we read: "For you deceased, a sound sheep has been killed and given to you; let your hand take hold of the rope of the sheep; you have been given its blood to drink and the wool has been given into your hand. For breakfast you can eat much or little, so go now and act! This was the ancient custom." This text was used by the Nakhi after a sheep or ox had been slaughtered with the purpose of closing the various negative gateways of the dead. See Rock 1955, pp. 141, 142.

This Bon textual account furnishes independent support for the archaeological hypothesis that the bones of sheep and other ungulates found in Inner Asian tombs were part of sacrifices carried out to placate spirits associated with death.²⁸¹ Our text also notes that bird feathers, *shel-tshig* (parched barleycorn representing sundry animal forms) and precious substances were offered to the tellurian spirits of the four directions. The Bon-po aver that bird feathers (*bya-spu*) and *shel-tshig* are two kinds of offerings that have been used in Tibet since early times, a claim that seems plausible given their elementary nature and regular occurrence in rituals traditionally attributed to the prehistoric epoch.

The text prescribes the use of a flayed tiger skin, which defeats the demons of the east (para. iii). Other flayed animal skins accomplish the same function for demons from the other three cardinal directions (paras. iv–vi). In the ritual, the eastern leaders of the *sa-bdag*, *gnyan* and *klu* are offered bird feathers and *shel-tshig*, as are the same classes of spirits of the other three cardinal directions. These still common orders of environment-bound deities are seen as necessary in neutralizing the malignant spirits, who attempt to keep the deceased in their grasp now that they have succeeded in causing his demise. This essential function of the *sa-bdag*, *gnyan* and *klu* in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur has a corollary among the living, insuring their well-being and prosperity. The contemporary spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet ally themselves to the *sa-bdag*, *gnyan* and *klu*, and one can only wonder whether such mediums had a place in archaic cultural horizon funerals as well. If parallels to north Inner Asian shamanism can be drawn, it must have been so. In prevailing Bon funerary traditions, this vital role of common numina of the sky, earth and water is minimized.

The text now proceeds to describe how the flayed skin of a sheep is used to subdue the demons of the south (para. iv), the flayed skin of a wild yak for the demons of the west (para. v), and the flayed skin of a caracal for the evil beings of the north (para. vi). Like the tiger pelt, each of these skins is held to possess the divine power of the animal it comes from, for use in besting the demons. In each of these paragraphs the proper names of the chiefs of the *sa-bdag* and *gnyan* are also given. Each of them has an army of 100,000 helpers whose onslaught proves irresistible to the ghouls of death. Furthermore, the text prescribes that a flayed dragon skin is beaten in the center to defeat sky-dwelling demons, and a flayed bear skin to defeat the *srin*. In the final paragraph of the liturgy, the ritualists triumphantly reiterate that with the flayed animal skins they have vanquished all of the homicidal spirits that would meddle in the funeral:

- i) *bSō!* In the first epoch of ancient times, a son of Kha-rag (a region in gTsang or Zhang-zhung) was abducted by a *srin*. His father and mother commenced to take their revenge (*mi-sha*).²⁸² They summoned Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal as the *bon*. An altar of the funeral ritual was established on the earth, [so] the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* were unhappy. [They sent] lightning strikes, thunderbolts, hail, and earthquakes. Ra-ljag skyid-rgyal made the superior *gto*.

²⁸¹ From a Buddhist perspective, the sacrifice of animals in religious rites is a sinful act. The sacrifices of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur nevertheless are part of a different cultural and geographical milieu and should be viewed as such. There is a huge body of archaeological, textual and ethnographic evidence that suggests or demonstrates that animals had an exceptionally high status in archaic cultural horizon Tibet. They did not appear to have been perceived as inherently inferior to humans, but rather as beings with theanthropic qualities. The reliance on livestock in the archaic funerary tradition to effect the final liberation of the deceased certainly bears this out.

²⁸² Literally, 'human flesh'. The composition of this word indicates that the taking of revenge entails causing calamitous bodily harm.

- ii) The old man and woman²⁸³ of existence found a sheep. The old man and woman of existence butchered the sheep. Its bones became conch, its eyes²⁸⁴ turquoise, its blood vermilion, and its flesh gold. We offer conch, bird feathers and *shel-tshig* to the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* of the east. We offer turquoise, bird feathers and *shel-tshig* to the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* of the south. We offer iron, bird feathers and *shel-tshig* to the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* of the west. We offer copper, bird feathers and *shel-tshig* to the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* of the north.
- iii) Also we beat the flayed tiger skin [on the ground] in the east. The man-eating tigress of the east, the eastern *bdud* and eastern *btsan* are defeated by the flayed skin. Do not let manifest the ferocity of the *dri-za* of the east. Mi-dkar seng-mgo can (White Man with the Lion Head), the *sa-bdag* of the east, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *sa-bdag*. We offer you bird feathers and *shel-tshig*. 'Thor-ba khri-sangs, the *gnyan* of the east, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *gnyan* realms. We offer you bird feathers and *shel-tshig*. The white great kingly type *klu* of the east is surrounded by a circle of 1000 *klu* armies. We offer you feathers and *shel-tshig*. Do not be hostile. Do not be petrified.²⁸⁵ Do not be timid. Be the companion power of us, the *gshen-po*. Be the supporter of these benefactors (*yon-bdag*).
- iv) Also we beat the flayed sheep skin [on the ground] in the south. The southern *bdud* and southern *btsan* are defeated by the flayed skin. The southern earth *bdud* and earth *sri* are defeated by the flayed skin. Do not let manifest the ferocity of the *gshin-rje* of the south. Mi-sngon 'brug-mgo can (Blue Man with the Dragon Head), the *sa-bdag* of the south, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *sa-bdag*.²⁸⁶ Pho-ma g.yu-rtse, the *gnyan* of the south, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *gnyan* armies. The mighty minister type *klu* of the south is surrounded by a circle of 1000 *klu* realms.
- v) Also we beat the flayed wild yak skin [on the ground] in the west. The yak of the west gores the *gri* and *sri*, and the western *bdud* and western *btsan* are defeated by the flayed skin. The western earth *bdud* and earth *sri* are defeated by the flayed skin. Do not let manifest the ferocity of the *klu-bdud* of the west. Mi-nag stag-mgo can (Black Man with the Tiger Head), the *sa-bdag* of the west, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *sa-bdag*. Su-dup lcags-rtse, the *gnyan* of the west, is surrounded by a circle of 1000 *gnyan* realms. gNyen-rmang rigs-nag, the *klu* of the west, is surrounded by a circle of 1000 *klu* armies.
- vi) Also we beat the flayed clouded leopard skin [on the ground] in the north. The northern *bdud* and northern *btsan* are defeated by the flayed skin. Do not let rise up the *gnod-sbyin* of the north. Mi-dmar phag-mgo can (Red Man with the Boar Head), the *sa-bdag* of the north, is surrounded by a circle of 100,000 *sa-bdag*. sKy'i-'dang 'tshal-rtse, the *gnyan* of the north, is surrounded by a circle of 1000 *gnyan* realms.
- vii) Also we beat the flayed dragon skin [on the ground] in the center. The white bird of the sky with fangs of the north is defeated by the flayed skin. Do not be petrified, *klu-srin* of the blue-black sky. Also, we beat the flayed bear skin on the earth. The earth *srin* with the red eyes is defeated by the flayed [bear] skin. Do not rise, up earth *bdud* and earth *srin*.

²⁸³ *rGan-rgon* could also mean old people in general, rather than referring to gender.

²⁸⁴ The text has *mig* (eyes) but *rmig* (hoofs) may actually be intended here.

²⁸⁵ *Ma-bsngangs*. Thus ordered so that the spirits can be successfully propitiated.

²⁸⁶ In the text, the offerings (bird feathers and *shel-tshig*) and commands are precisely the same for the southern, western and northern contingents of deities (paras. iv–vi). For reasons of brevity, I have omitted them from the translation.

- viii) Tonight we beat the flayed skin upon the *sri* and *gshed*. The consumer *'dre* who caused the death of the deceased is defeated by the flayed skin. The earth *bdud* and earth *'dre* are defeated by the flayed skin. The *gshed* of death and the earth *'dre* with the red mouth are defeated by the flayed skin. The savage *lha-srin sde-brgyad* are defeated by the flayed skin. *bSō!* We are defeating! This is the beaten flayed skin of the funeral ritual (*'dur*).

6.9 The Mythic Origins and Ritual Application of the Bird Horns

An intriguing ritual feature of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is the use of 'bird horns' by both the funerary priests and their divine allies. These so-called horns appear in part to have been the crests or tufts found on the head of some birds. It also seems likely that helmets with horns or the likeness of horns were used by the Tibetan priests of early times (see pp. 213, 215, 220, 221, 228, 229, 239). The origins and funerary application of the bird horns are found in another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection, *Chant of the Origin Tale of the Bird Horn Head Ornament*.²⁸⁷ This text in its entirety can be ascribed to the archaic funerary tradition. The cultural background and the significance of its respective aspects are no longer well understood by Bon clerics.

The text begins with an interesting reference to a mundane or folk form of religious expression known as *rdol-bon* (para. i). Contrary to the way this word (*brdol*) has been used by the Buddhists (defined as emergent *bon*, outbreak *bon* or revealed *bon*), in the Bon funerary tradition it is not regarded as the original or primordial Bon religion. The reference to a folk tradition presupposes that this liturgy and its practitioners belonged to a higher or more elite religious tradition. I suspect that this distinction was a historical fact in the imperial period, with an exclusive *bon* (a codified religious tradition) of those connected to the centers of power and wealth such as the royal priests (*sku-gshen*), and a *bon* comprised of a heterogeneous mixture of religious traditions and practices in the popular domain. Conceivably, such a division of popular and elite forms of religious expression may even have been part of the protohistoric period. This is not to say that religion in ancient Tibet was irrevocably split on socioeconomic grounds, but that the various factions and groups had accustomed modes of framing their beliefs, rituals and traditions. Social differences may have been formalized in a legal system wherein conduct, dress, and cultic affiliation were regulated in accordance with the status of an individual (this is hinted at in PT. 1071). Unfortunately, we do not yet have the literary or scientific means at our disposal to assess such historical scenarios. What can be affirmed is that the archaic assemblage of monuments in Upper Tibet suggests yawning distinctions in the ancient social order, between those who resided in substantial permanent edifices and those who dwelt in temporary shelters such as the black yak-hair tent (*sbra-nag*). Social divisions can also be inferred from burial monuments, with the most prestigious individuals being interred in necropoli, while the final resting place of lower members of society was in much more humble tombs (or they were not interred at all). Such overall patterns of residency and burial would appear to be the physical manifestations of an elaborate spectrum of social customs and strictures, permeating archaic cultural horizon society.

In our Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text, the bird horns (*bya-ru*) are traced to two obscure conjoined primal forces or beings, the *dbal* and *lce*, as well as the primordium (*ye*) and moisture (*ngad*) (para. ii). The product of these generative agencies was eight *dbal* eggs from which eight animals

²⁸⁷ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las* (From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts) *dbu rgyan bya ru'i lo rgyus smrang gyer* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 223–231). Anonymous. Tibetan Text III-18, pp. 628, 629.

with horns appeared. The text, however, records only six divine animals, all of which are birds. The text also provides an alternative theogony: from the five *dbal* eggs of the elements appeared nominative horned gods, intrinsically endowed to defeat the demons of death (para. iii). In this ritual sequence the fifth figure is not mentioned by name, but it may possibly be a white sky elephant, a divine ally of the *gshen* (para. iv). In any event, this pachyderm figure appears to be an apotheosized celestial or meteorological phenomenon. Its description possibly conjures up the image of the Milky Way (rGu-tshig skya-mo).

Associated with the five *dbal* manifestations is a primal deity called Ye-yod dbang-chen (Great Powerful Primordial Existence), who appears to be the father of the gods, demons and humans (para. v). This archetypal *gshen* is portrayed holding the Bon ritual implements of choice, a drum and *gshang* (flat bell). These musical instruments are recorded as being ornamented in accordance with tradition (*lugs kyis brgyan*). This refers to the jewels, streamers and handles that form the accoutrements of the drum and *gshang*. Ye-yod dbang-chen also has a *khyung* horn and a dragon horn on his head, which function to subdue the tellurian '*dre*, *srin* and *klu*.²⁸⁸ Although it is not explicitly stated in the text, this god would seem to be the chief *lha* ally or patron of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

The text now moves to other beings with evil-suppressing horns: the *khyung*, dragon, *lha*, and horse (para. vi). The power of these horns is vibrantly described as being unmatched in the universe. Ye-yod dbang-chen is again acknowledged as the prototypical *gshen*. He is described as holding the wheels or circles (*'khor-lo*) of sky and earth, signifying sovereignty over all existence. The text also cites three octads of deities, including the *sgra-bla* of the sky and *sgra-bla* of the earth (para. vii). This is further evidence of the importance of this class of Bon deity to the funerary tradition (see pp. 418, 421, para. x). The *sgra-bla* is also the main type of divinity associated with the Bon tradition of spirit-mediumship (*ye-dbang lha yi bka'-babs*). Given this functional association, it is again worth considering that those possessed by the gods (*lha-pa*, *dpa'-bo*, *lha-mo*, *klu-mo*) in ancient times may also have functioned as psychopomps, as was common in many Inner Asian shamanic cultures. The third octad noted includes those of great speed (*mgyogs-pa*) who lead dogs, a grouping of which we know nothing. Numinous dogs appear in the retinue of mountain gods and other types of protective deities. Canines are also known in the eschatological mythologies of various Indo-European peoples.

The text proceeds to portray the funerary *gsas* (gods) of the four directions, who, given their relative placement in the ritual, appear to be subsidiary to the central god Ye-yod dbang-chen (paras. viii, ix). The cruciform spatial arrangement of deities in the compass points is common to Bon and Buddhism in sundry doctrinal settings.²⁸⁹ The cardinal directions are ordinarily associated with the '*phrin-las bzhi*, the four characteristic activities and traits of deities. There is no recourse, however, to the '*phrin-las* schema in this text. Each of the four gods is described as being encircled by clouds, indicating they are atmospherical divinities like other *dbal* and *gsas* divinities (such as those of the Ge-khod and Me-ri cycles) we have already examined. Each of the four *gsas* of the compass points defeats the *bdud* and *btsan* obstructors of his quarter. The other function of the *gsas* gods is to cover

²⁸⁸ In the context of horned funerary deities it is well worth mentioning Zur-ra rwa-skyes (Zur-ra Horn Growth), the protector and ancestral spirit of the *lha-bon* priests of mKhan-pa lung. The *lha-bon* believe that their *bla* returns to Zur-ra rwa-skyes at the time of death. See Diemberger 1996, 223, 225.

²⁸⁹ In what appears to be another ancient tradition, the '*brog-pa* of mNga'-ris carry out the *lcog-bzhi dar-rgyas* ritual at Lo-gsar and on other special occasions. This entails the appeasement of the *yul-lha*, *gzhi-bdag* or *dgra-lha* of the four corners of the tent and the four quarters of surrounding landforms. Offerings of incense and livestock are given.

(*sgrib*) the lookers and listeners of each quarter. It would appear that this cloaking or obscuring conveys the neutralizing of the evil forces that could interfere with the funeral and the transit of the deceased through the intermediate zone. In the text the four *gsas* arise through the agency of four unnamed horned gods of different precious substances, who hold ensigns or regimental banners (*rumtshon*). The horns, standards, characteristic substances, and celestial aspect of these spirit hosts of the *gsas* suggest that they are *sgra-bla* or closely related supernatural beings.

With the completion of the theogony of the bird horns and their divine holders, the balance of the text turns to their earthly representatives, the *gshen* ritualists. According to the ritual, the *gshen* wear two horns on their heads; these are slayers of demons and the billet of deities (paras. x, xi). These assertions appear to refer to an ancient custom of wearing sacred horned headgear. The archaic rock art record of Upper Tibet may supply supporting evidence, as a number of anthropomorphous figures are depicted with sharp protrusions on their heads that could represent horns (alternatively, feathers or rays). In fact, the shamans and priests of a number of Himalayan and Inner Asian peoples still use headgear with horns or horn-like extensions.²⁹⁰ The horns of the *gshen* are likened to various demon-slaying weapons. This type of conception has survived to the present day in Upper Tibet in rites connected to the release of divine livestock (see p. 454, fn. 314). These horns defeat those attempting to harm the deceased. The horns of the priests are also shown to be the place where the multitude of *lha* and *gsas* allies of the funeral congregate. The horns, sometimes likened to birds or precious substances, are connected to the empyreal imagery of the clouds, wind, sun, and moon. This reflects the celestial quality of the bird horns and the deities associated with them. As we have seen, the centrality of the heavens in the pantheon and ritual practices of Bon is one of the great religious inheritances that distinguishes it from the *locus mentes* of Buddhist operations.

In conclusion, the ritual asserts the apotropaic and divine characteristics of the bird horns, which slay all demons to both right and left (para. xii). The text repeats two aspirations recurring throughout the literature of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur: the wish that the living and the dead are definitively and irreversibly separated, and the wish that the deceased finds his salvation in the hereafter. These aspirations encapsulate the motivation behind Bon funerary thought and practice. The last sentence of the text enunciates the aspiration that the deceased will be comfortably ensconced in the paradise known as the 'blissful land' (*bde-ba'i sa*). This is yet another Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur reference to the nonpareil geographic metaphors with which the afterlife was equated:

- i) How did the source (*skye-rgyud*) of the bird horns come into existence? If there are no bird horns on their head, it is like the ordinary hornless male ungulate (*yu-bo*). If there is no *lha* of power on the body, it is like the ordinary *bon* of the folk tradition (*rdol-bon*).
- ii) In the beginning, how did the bird horns come into existence? The [conjoined] *lce* and *dbal* manifested the *dbal* mountain mTsho-'dzin (Ocean Holder). From the manifestation of the primordium and moisture appeared the eight eggs of the *dbal*. From inside the hatched eggs appeared the eight horns (horned animals) without hoofs. One was the horn [pair] of

²⁹⁰ The oldest type of Gurung (Tamu) priest, the *pachyu*, wears a cap (*rhal-bu*) with the horn of a mountain goat in the middle surrounded by pheasant feathers in tandem with a turban (Gurung 2003: 218). Headgear with horns and antlers were widespread in most Siberian tribes from ancient times. The antlered hat used by the Nanai shamans symbolized the relationship between them and their ancestral spirits. See Smoljak 1984, p. 247. The deer antlers on the headgear of a Siberian shaman represented the number of spirits he could command; each tine was a container for a single spirit (Devlet 2001: 51; after Smoljak 1991).

exemplification (*dpe la byas*). It landed on the head of the *khyung*, the king of birds. One of the eight was the horn [pair] of manifestation. It landed on the head of the owl, the bird *gshen*. One [pair] landed on the head of the pigeon,²⁹¹ the renunciate *gshen*. One [pair] landed on the head of the bird of the tomb.²⁹² One [pair] landed on the head of the blue *mche-ru* (?). One [pair] landed on the head of the *mdzod-ru* (?), the *gsas* (divinity) of skillful means. In the beginning, the horns of existence came into being in that way.

- iii) Alternatively, [it is said that] from the essence of the five elements there appeared the five eggs of the *dbal*. From inside these eggs there was: dBal-chen bla-'dzin (Great dBal Soul Holder), the foundation of that which defeats the roving *sri* (life-cutter) *btsan*; dBal gyi glang-chen (Elephant of the dBal), the foundation of that which defeats the evil *sri* of the ten planets; dBal-g.yag dkar-po (White dBal Yak), the foundation of that which defeats the bellicose *sri* of violent death (*gri*);²⁹³ and mThu-chen de yi thug-pa, the foundation of that which defeats the itinerant *sri*.
- iv) The white sky elephant caparisoned in the dress of masses of clouds accompanies the army of the great planets and stars. He has the miraculous army of the *lha*. Today, come with your power as the supporter of our *gshen* community.
- v) Also, prior to the above [tale of the five eggs of the elements], from fire appeared wind and then the *dbal* horns appeared. From the vapor and warmth that manifested on earth appeared a man of the primordial manifestation.²⁹⁴ He was empowered (*dbang-bskur*) by the five *dbal* manifestations, so Ye-yod dbang-chen of the *gshen* was the son of the excellent *gshen* manifestation. He was the great powerful one of primordial existence.²⁹⁵ He had great power over all the *lha*, 'dre and humans, these three. The right horn of Ye-yod dbang-chen is the dragon horn. It is the horn of subduing the bad omen (*than*) *sri* and bad omen 'dre. His left horn is the horn of the *khyung*. By his dragon horn, *khyung* claws and *dbal* rays, the *klu* and *srin* of the ocean are defeated and conquered. The sign that defeats the black *klu* and *srin* is his holding of the bird horn and the subduing of the *srin-po*. The drum and *gshang* in his hands are ornamented in accordance with tradition. Today, come as the friend of our *gshen* community.
- vi) The horn [pair] that grows on the bird is the *khyung* horn. [The *khyung*] presses down the peak of Ri-rab of tangible existence (*snang-srid*). The horn [pair] growing on the carnivore is the horn [pair] of the dragon. [The dragon] differentiates the summer and winter seasons. [The dragon's] roar resounds all over the three worlds (*khams-gsum*). The horn [pair] that

²⁹¹ 'Ong-ba. The common Tibetan word for pigeon is *phug-ron* but in some contemporary dialects it is also called 'ong-gu.

²⁹² *Dur-bya*. This bird is described by the unknown word *shag-pa* (it could have to do with stones or gravel). Tomb birds figure in the toponymic tradition of Upper Tibet: Bya-do nam-mkha' do (Bird Headland Space Headland) at gNam-mtsho is better known as Bya-dur (Tomb Bird). Bya-dur is also the name of a Bon-po enclave in Sa-dga'.

²⁹³ In a Bon text dedicated to the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha found in *dBal phur nag po 'i gter srung drug gi bskul pa* (attributed to the eighth century CE practitioners Pha-ba khri-snyan and sTong-rgyung mthu-chen), the cause of death is personified in male (*gri-bo*) and female (*gri-mo*) forms. In his emanation as a crystal wild yak, Thang-lha is attributed with the power to destroy these demons, thus preserving the lives of his supplicants. See Bellezza 2005a, pp. 180, 181, para. iv.

²⁹⁴ The text actually has *ye nas sprul* (from primordial time's manifestation) but this construction does not fit well here, so I have modified it to *ye sprul*.

²⁹⁵ I have omitted *nas* as in the above footnote.

grows on the *lha* is the *dor-mu*²⁹⁶ lion [pair]. [The lion] acts as the king of visible existence. The horse with the horn [pair] growing on it is the *gyi-ling*²⁹⁷ horse. [The *gyi-ling*] ranges above all other animals with manes.²⁹⁸ The man with the horn [pair] growing on [his head] is the *gshen* Ye-yod dbang-chen. He holds the wheels of both the sky and earth.

- vii) *Kye kye!* Although there are eight tongue holders (those who can speak?) in the sky, *sgra-bla* Hor-mu comes first. Although there are eight horn holders on earth, *sgra-bla* of the great dragon comes first. Although there are eight of great speed that lead dogs, dragon of the roaring sound comes first.
- viii) *bSwō! bSwō!* Over there in the direction of the rising sun is the white noble man²⁹⁹ of conch with one pair of conch horns growing on his head. In his hand he holds an ensign of conch. Masses of [conch] clouds circle around (*go ro ro*) his head. He is the foundation of the advent of Gar-gsas btsan-po. He defeats and expels the eastern *bdud* and eastern *btsan*. He also covers the lookers and listeners of the east. His name is Shar-gshen dung-ru dung-dkar (Conch Horns Eastern gShen of White Conch). Also, over there in the southern direction is the holy blue man of turquoise with a pair of turquoise horns growing on his head. In his hand he holds an ensign of turquoise. Masses of turquoise clouds circle around him. He is the foundation of the advent of gNam-gsas khyung-rum (Sky God Khyung Womb). He defeats and expels the southern *bdud* and southern *btsan*. He also covers the lookers and listeners of the south. Also, his name is g.Yu-ru dung-sngon (Turquoise Horns Blue Conch).
- ix) Also, in the direction of the setting sun over there is the blue holy man of banded agate with a pair of banded agate horns growing on his head. In his hand he holds an ensign of banded agate. Masses of banded agate clouds circle around him. He is the foundation of the advent of gSas-rje rmang-mgon. He defeats and expels the western *bdud* and western *btsan*. He also covers the lookers and listeners of the west. His name is mChong-ru dud-mtshon (Banded Agate Horns Smoke Signal). Also, over there in the northern direction is the red holy man of copper with a pair of copper horns growing on his head. Masses of copper clouds circle around him. In his hand he holds an ensign of red copper. He is the foundation of the advent of rGod-gsas khams-pa. He defeats and expels the northern *bdud* and northern *btsan*. He also covers the lookers and listeners of the north. His name is Zangs-ru dud-dmar (Copper Horns Red Smoke).
- x) The *gshen-po* says: My right horn is the horn of the wind. My left horn is the horn of clouds. Between my two horns of wind and clouds, the *bdud* of violent death emptiness are utterly destroyed. My right horn is the horn of the dragon. My left horn is the horn of the *khyung*. Between my two horns of the dragon and *khyung*, the *bdud* of the sky and *btsan* of violent

²⁹⁶ A term for the horned lion or griffin like those found in Iranic and Scythic traditions. See p. 549.

²⁹⁷ A synonym for 'horse'. This word may have a Zhang-zhung etymology.

²⁹⁸ In a Buddhicized Bon funerary liturgy, animals such as the ones found in this paragraph have had their functions altered in conformance to Buddhism's philosophical preoccupation with intellectual abstractions. The divine yak is equated with knowledge (*rig-pa*), the stallion is the spontaneously existing mind itself (*rang-'byung sems-nyid*), the divine sheep is wisdom (*ye-shes*), the *khyung* is [right] view (*lta-ba*), the turquoise dragon is the king of meditation (*sgom-pa*), and the great lion is the king of practice (*spyod-pa*) (Kværne 1985: 18; 1997: 497, 498; Brauen 1978: 59).

²⁹⁹ *Mi-pho*. This is a honorific word for man; thus my rendering, 'noble man'.

- death are utterly destroyed. My right horn is the horn of the sword.³⁰⁰ My left horn is the horn of the scimitar. Between my two horns of the sword and scimitar, the *bdud* of violent death Ha-la is cut to pieces. My right horn is the horn of the *lcags-kyu*.³⁰¹ My left horn is the horn of the *sha-zung*.³⁰² Between the *lcags-kyu* and *sha-zung*, the wolf *bdud* of violent death is cut to pieces. All the *g.yen* of violent death are eliminated [by my horns].
- xi) My right horn is the horn of the *dgra-sta* (battleaxe). My left horn is the horn of the sickle. Between the ax and sickle [horns], the nine types of *sri-gshed* are cut to pieces. My right horn is the horn of the vulture. My left horn is the horn of the eagle. Between both vulture and eagle [horns], the meat-eating *srin-po* are utterly destroyed. My right horn is the receptacle of gold. Furthermore, at the tip of the yellow gold horn gather the many *lha-gsas* [destroyers] of violent death. My left horn is the receptacle of turquoise. Furthermore, at the tip of the blue turquoise horn the *'thor-gsas* and *bdar-gsas* also gather like clouds. My right horn is the receptacle of the sun. Furthermore, at the tip of the spiraling sun horn gather the many congregations of funerary *gsas*. My left horn is the receptacle of the moon. Furthermore, at the tip of the moon horn lasso gather the 100,000 men and 100,000 horses of the *lha-gsas*.
- xii) The butting once of my right horn also cuts the life-force of the nine types of sky *bdud*. The butting once of my left horn utterly destroys the nine types of earth *bdud*. My right and left bird horns are the support of the *lha*. I am not daunted by the *bdud* and *btsan*.³⁰³ I can dispute the *bdud* and carnivore [demons]. May the door of the tomb of the dead that is ajar³⁰⁴ be closed. May the divine door of the living be opened upwards. May the living be lucky. May it also be good in the aftermath of your death. May this deceased one himself be guided to the realm of heaven (*mtho-ris*). May he repose in the 'land of bliss' (*bde-ba'i sa*).

6.10 The Funerary Gifts for the Journey Beyond

The funerary bestowals (*gtad-g.yar*: literally, 'given and lent' or 'offered as a loan') are presented to the deceased as gifts and provisions for the afterlife. They represent the full range of material objects that living members of society depend on for sustenance, religious observances, economic well-being, and social prestige. By their material inclusiveness, the *gtad-g.yar* seem to reflect the belief in a parallel hereafter, a world of the dead conceived of as being like the one occupied by the living. In this heaven (*mtho-ris*) the inhabitants have recourse to the same work and domestic activities, physical environment and frame of cultural references that they experienced whilst

³⁰⁰ The sword here is a metaphor for horns. Such imagery equating horns with weapons is part of the invocations for the gifting of sacred livestock to the elemental spirits in Upper Tibet. For instance, in bSe-'khor, when red ochre is being applied to the horns, the *'brog-pa* declare: "File [sharp] the arrow and spear of the red copper horn on the right. File [away] the mouth of the enemy. File [away] all who are malevolent. File [away] all who harbor grudges. Don't file, don't file purplish agate horn on the left. Don't file [away] neighbors, relatives and friends" (*g.yas kyi zangs rwa dmar mo de mda' mdung brdar dgra yi kha brdar / snying na ba tshang ma brdar / brang tsha ba tshang ma brdar (zhes) / g.yon gyi mchong rwa smug mo mi brdar ro mi brdar ro khyim mtshes gnyen nye grogs sogs mi brdar ro (zhes) /*). For the Tibetan text, see Gu-ge tshe-ring rgyal-po 2005, p. 292.

³⁰¹ A hook mounted on a handle.

³⁰² A hook attached to a chain.

³⁰³ The meaning of the next line in the text is not clear. It has something to do with the *sri* and carnivores. It is not included in the translation.

³⁰⁴ *sGo-lam*. This is a metaphor for the intermediate state or place of existence.

alive. The deceased is sent to the afterlife by the living, symbolically supplied with everything he needs for the new existence.³⁰⁵ This must have been seen as helping to insure the smooth passage of the deceased through the intermediate existence and his continued contentment in the afterlife. In early times, the *gtad-g.yar* probably included literal forms of many of the things required by the deceased in the afterlife. The actual extent and nature of the funerary bestowals must have varied considerably in accordance with the socioeconomic status, cultural background and gender of the deceased. This variability should certainly be reflected in the burial customs of ancient Tibet, many of which are still shrouded in mystery.

A detailed list of the *gtad-g.yar* are found in a text devoted to their ritual dispensation.³⁰⁶ A perusal of this list of funerary bestowals demonstrates that it reflects the character of old Tibetan society (pastoral, agrarian and martial) with a good degree of fidelity. The *gtad-g.yar* are listed as follows:

- 1) Residence: (*mkhar*) castle (fig. 373). Traditionally, the castle is the highest-status residence in Tibet. It has martial and elite social overtones.
- 2) Agriculture: *zhing-kha* (fields), *thang-lcags* (plow), *tog-tse* (pick), *khyem* (shovel), and *zor-ba* (sickle). The importance of the agrarian way of life in Tibet is clearly illustrated in this set of items.
- 3) Fire and water: *me-rdo* (flint stone), *me-lcags* (iron striker), *me-stag* (sparks), *'bud-shing* (firewood), and *chu* (water). These are essential in harnessing fire, on which the Tibetan subsistence economy depended.
- 4) Foodstuffs: *bshos-bu* (a type of edible cake for offering to deities), *chang* (beer), *dkar-gsum* (yogurt, butter and milk), fruit (*shing-thog*), *mngar-gsum* (jaggery, rock sugar and honey), *rgun-'brum* (raisins), and *mkhur-ba* (cakes and breads) (fig. 374). This list of delicacies represents those consumables that Tibetans traditionally hold in high favor.
- 5) Apparel: *gos* (clothing), *sked-rag* (sash), *zhwa-mo* (hat), *lham* (footwear), and *rma-bya'i gdugs* (parasol of peacock feathers). This list is unremarkable save for the peacock-feather parasol. This object has an important ceremonial function and is used to mark special social events and personages of high rank. The other items noted in this group are utilitarian.
- 6) Ritual objects: *mar-me* (butter lamp), *spos* (incense), *tshan-chab* (purificatory water), *me-tog* (flowers), and *phor-pa* (vessel) (fig. 375). This group of *gtad-g.yar* represents the fundamental objects needed for ritual performances involving the propitiation and purification of the deities.

³⁰⁵ In Bodic eschatological conceptions, the value of gift-giving for the afterlife is summed up frankly in a Nakhi funerary text entitled *To Seize the Muen-t'u* (*Funerary Wand*): "You are to go to your grandparents, you have been given everything to take with you: wine, food, bacon and lean meat, white and black sugar, a fast horse to ride, a pack animal, also a sheep and cow to drive, also a bow and arrow..." For this text see Rock 1955, p. 189.

³⁰⁶ *sKabs chog gtad yar* (= *g.yar*) *gyi rgyab yig zhes bya ba bzhugs* (*This Title Called the Ritual Appertaining to the Funerary Bestowals*) in *Klong rgyas sgrub skor* (a volume of various types of religious observances) (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 274, nos. 445–461). I provide a list of all the *gtad-g.yar* cited in this text in sequential order. Despite this work being located in another volume of the Bon *bka'-brten* from that devoted entirely to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, its content illustrates that it is part of the same funerary tradition.



Fig. 373. A ritual illustration (tσα-ka-li) of the castle gtad-g.yar used in the funerary rituals of sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji

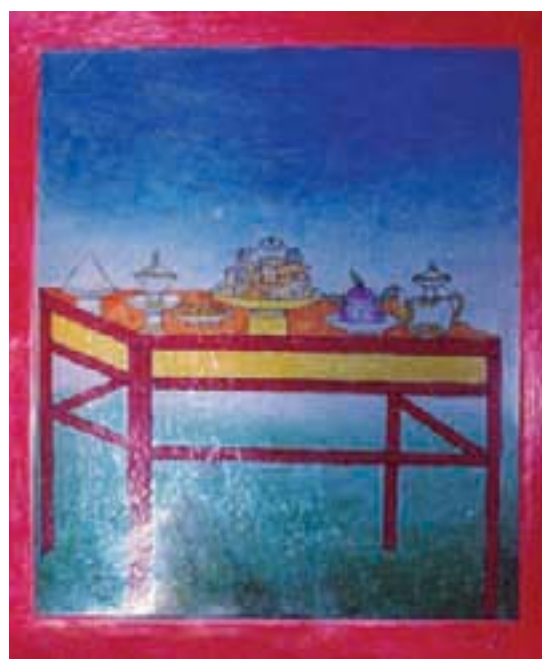


Fig. 374. A depiction of the food and beverages gtad-g.yar, sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji



Fig. 375. An illustration of the ritual objects gtad-g.yar, sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji



Fig. 376. A depiction of the horse gtad-g.yar, sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji

- 7) Transportation: *rta* (horse), *sga* (saddle), *yob* (stirrups), *srab* (bridle), and *mthur* (halter) (fig. 376). The riding horse with its essential trappings traditionally served vital economic and social functions.
- 8) Domestic animals: *lug* (sheep), *g.yag* (yaks) and *sgo-khyi* (guard dogs) (fig. 377). Livestock and the dogs that watch over them are the underpinning of the pastoral way of life in Tibet. In conjunction with agriculture, this typifies the mixed production economy of Tibet.
- 9) Objects of war: *khrab* (armor), *phub* (shield), *rmog* (helmet), *'khor-gsum* (bow, arrow and sword) (fig. 378). This class of *gtad-g.yar* alludes to the force of arms as an instrument of enterprise and assertiveness in old Tibetan society.
- 10) Ornamentation: *ga'u* (box for relics and other religious objects), *mtsho-ro* (turquoise), *gzi* (patterned agates), and *mchong* (banded agates) (fig. 378). Important forms of personal ornamentation, talismanic protection and objects of social status make up this group of funerary bestowals. A typical Tibetan's wealth was largely determined by the possession of these cultural emblems and commodities, as well as livestock.
- 11) Household goods: *slang-nga* (cauldron), *zangs-sder* (copper platter), *phor-gzhong* (basin), *dar-zab* (silk cloth), *'phang* (spindle), *me-long* (mirror), and *sgrom-bu* (chest). This group of *gtad-g.yar* contains domestic objects often associated with females in Tibetan society. As with a man's armaments and horses, a woman's wealth was measured in terms of such possessions.³⁰⁷
- 12) Special animals: *'brug-rta* (dragon horse?), excellent *khyung*, *stag-khyi* and *gzig-khyi* (dogs with markings and colorations resembling the tiger and leopard, or alternatively indicative of the dogs being brave and fierce), *dung-seng* (conch lion), *lha g.yag dkar-po* (white yak of the *lha*), and [*lha*] *lug* [*dkar-po*] (white sheep of the *lha*). This list of *gtad-g.yar* illustrates the prominent social and religious roles that sacred animals had in old Tibetan society. These awe-inspiring creatures are of the species and colorings typical of the zoomorphic *dgra-lha*, *pho-lha* and *yul-lha*. We can therefore assume that they represented personal and clan identifiers and protectors, and accompanied the deceased to the afterlife.³⁰⁸ Clearly, this kind of eternalistic belief is not at all compatible with a Buddhist understanding of impermanence. Divine animals aiding the deceased in the afterlife are also not in keeping with a strict interpretation of the doctrine of karma. Consequently, elemental deities have long since stopped bridging the gulf between life and death in the eschatological traditions of much of the Tibetan cultural world.

³⁰⁷ Among the Inner Asian Scythians, funerary gender distinctions are evident in the kinds of grave goods discovered. Various types of weapons were the protective instruments of deceased males, while mirrors, combs, needles, and knives had apotropaic functions for women. See Konstantinov and Tsybiktarov 2002, p. 90. The artifacts recovered from ancient Turk graves in many ways mirror the *gtad-g.yar* objects of the Bon funerary tradition. Turk burials are dominated by weapons and horse tackle (swords, knives, bows and arrows, quivers, bits, bridles, stirrups), but clothes, belts, ornaments, spades, and hatchets are also known (Pletneva 1981: 36–39).

³⁰⁸ Comparative data from ancient Inner Asian cultures suggests that these divine animal figures once had a genealogical origination function. For instance, theriomorphic ancestors (in the form of wolves, deer, etc.) were acknowledged by the Turks, Mongols and Kitans (Francke 1990: 406). This is also suggested by the role played by sacred animals in Tibetan *rus-mdzod* and *pha-rabs* literature.

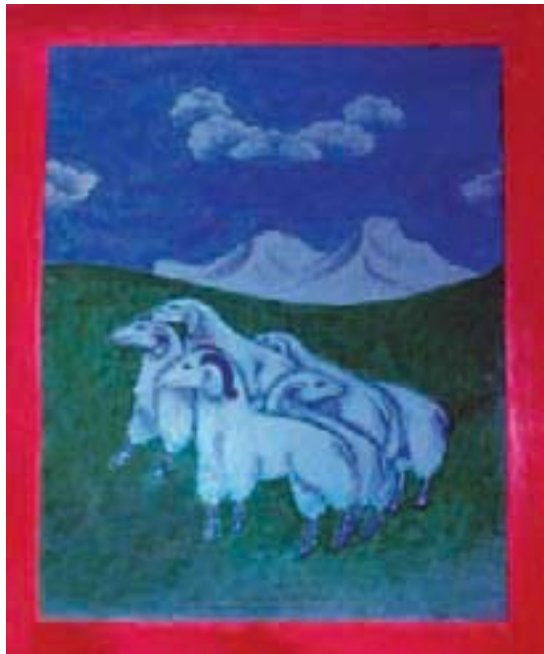


Fig. 377. An illustration of the sheep *gtad-g.yar*, *sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji*



Fig. 378. An illustration of the ornaments and weapons *gtad-g.yar*, *sMan-ri monastery, Dolanji*

- 13) Deities: Lha-dbang brgya-byin (Indra) [as the deceased's] maternal uncle and Lha-bo lha-sras (Lha Person Son of the Lha). In Buddhist conceptions, Lha-dbang brgya-byin is the leader of the 33 heavens above the world mountain, the highest of which leads to liberation (see p. 478). Lha-bo lha-sras, a *phyä* lineage figure, is likely to represent the prototypic ancestral god. He appears in the text as the deceased's bosom friend (*shag-rogs*). This god is probably identical to rJe bla-bo bla-sras of IOL 734 (see pp. 436, 437). In later Tibetan literature, we have many instances of the word *bla* being rendered *lha*, as part of an orthographic and semantic shift. This *gtad-g.yar* grouping indicates that the deceased was escorted to heaven by two powerful divinities, members of an Indic (Indra) lineage and a Tibetan (*phyä*) lineage. This is a syncretistic funerary element in which two mythological streams belonging to different religious traditions have merged. There is no historical indication, however, how and when this syncretism occurred. Indra, the chief of the Vedic gods, may possibly have been known to the Tibetans in the prehistoric epoch, as Bon tradition would have us believe. The nature of prehistoric contacts between the peoples of the Subcontinent and the Tibetan Plateau, nevertheless, remains extremely obscure. Conversely, the introduction of Indra may instead have occurred in the historic epoch with the widespread assimilation of Indic religious mythology. In the *gtad-g.yar* text, Lha-dbang brgya-byin and Lha-bo lha-sras fulfil an intimate function as members of the deceased's new family. Their role is also utilitarian in helping to ensure the well-being and happiness of the deceased, like these celestial deities do for the living.
- 14) Retainers: male and female champions as servants (*'bangs gyad-chen pho mo*). These figures are likely to represent a class of minor divinities. For example, *gyad* are found in the retinues of mountain deities such as rTa-rgo.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ The tradition of *gtad-g.yar* appears to have been part of the commemorative funeral ritual of PT. 1042 (Ins. 100–104) as well. This text notes that those objects permitted to be offered (*gtad*) are first purified (*bdud-gcod*: literally,

6.11 The Funerary Horse Vehicle for the Afterlife

Although it was not specified in the overview of the Bon funeral provided in the *Fourth Chapter Explicating the Three General Appointments of the Thang-khrims*, a conspicuous feature of the archaic funerary tradition is the use of the horse, which functioned as the mount of the deceased. As we have seen, a horse is one of the *gtad-g.yar* or funerary bestowals presented to the departed one. As part of the ancient cultural setting, a particular procedure may have existed to select or breed horses with superior physical traits, which were then the recipient of exceptional treatment (the origin tales of good fortune attraction and funerary animals seem to suggest this). Furthermore, based on the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature, we can surmise that at the time of the funeral this horse was bedecked with fancy trappings as well as various ritual objects. In some type of ceremony (probably a hitching of the horse and/or an orchestrated run across the countryside), the details of which have vanished, the flying of the horse to the edge of the lofty dGa'-yul was simulated. Once it was determined (through various mystic signs?) that the funerary horse had accomplished its mission of delivering the deceased to the threshold of salvation, it was watered and fed. As a living thing, the horse bearing the dead could not itself enter the dGa'-yul, which lay across the untraversable divide of life and death (unless it was killed). The resting of the funerary horse was followed by a ritual to remove all its finery with the effect of decisively preventing a return of the dead one to the animate world.

Known as the *do-ma* or *rta-gtad* (literally: horse offering), a text explaining the origins of this ritual and its applications has remarkably endured in Bon literature.³¹⁰ The text usually refers to the *do-ma* as a *gor-bu* (equid) because the onager (*rkyang*) is called its brother (para. i).³¹¹ The paternal lineage of the *do-ma* is said to be of the wind type (*rlung la rigs*) and its maternal extraction of the lake type (*mtsho-rigs*), a variant of the pervasive Tibetan mythic theme of a father sky and mother water. As I have repeatedly shown in earlier works, the union of the atmosphere or mountains and water, emblems of the upper and lower realms of existence, as the generative source of life, has been preserved in the oral traditions of Upper Tibet. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur kinship mythology of the *do-ma* is directly attributable to the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the *do-ma* etiologic myth of PT. 1136, its father and mother are the magical horses of the rock formation and lake dyad (see pp. 525–527). In the origin myth of IOL 731 verso, the horse and *rkyang* also share the same type

'*bdud cut*'). These offerings appear to be given to the deceased and to the *phyag-tshang* (the funerary attendants who may have made up the necropolitan community?) but the total number of recipients is not clear. Those things offered (*gtad*) have many correspondences with the *gtad-g.yar* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, and are recorded as being sent on (*gtang du mchi'o*) either as essential things (*ril*) or to a mountain (*ri la*) (depending on the correct reading of the text). They include clothing (*na-bza*), the equipment of males (*skyes-kor*), various types of weapons (*mtshon-cha sna-tshogs*), traveling gear (*byes-cha*), equipment for making a fire (*zhugs-cha*), things offered by close friends (*thugs-rog pos phul-pa'*), the game of *go* (*dmyig-mangs*), musical instruments (*rol-mo cha*), things that are always indispensable ('*phral du ma-mchis su mi-rung ba'i dkor*), various types of tools (*cha sna-tshogs*), foodstuffs (*bshos* and *zhal-zas*), beverages (*skyems*), and bedding (*mal-pa'i cha*). Cultural vestiges of the *gtad-g.yar* tradition remain in the modern funerary liturgy of the Bon-po, concerning the offerings of scents made to the deceased by his closest friends and kinfolk: "The scent of the burnt offerings of the bosom friends (*shag-rog rogs-po*), the food of the male clan members (*pha-spun*) and relatives (*nye-ba*), and the food lovingly offered by the maternal uncle" (*shag rog rogs pa'i dri gsur dang / pha spun nye ba'i zas dang / gdung nas bsngos pa zhang po'i zas /*).

³¹⁰ See *rTa gtad bzhugs so*, in *Klong rgyas sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 274, nos. 463–468). Tibetan Text III-19, pp. 629–631. The literary style and liturgical content (including mention of Mu-cho I dem-drug) of this text demonstrates that it belongs to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur cycle. The thematic reorganization of the New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten* to reflect the various categories of religious literature has not yet been undertaken.

³¹¹ It is reported that *rkyang* foals reared by domesticated mares can be tamed. It is said that a Bhotia man of Garbyang had three *rkyang* that could be used for light work and easy riding. See Sherring 1906, p. 292.

of parentage (see pp. 529–537). As we shall see, this genealogical relationship harkens back to the legendary time in which the riding of horses began, an extremely important indicator of the antiquity of the do-ma tradition. As with many other ancient *do-ma* rituals and historical depictions of early royal convocations, the recitation begins with three sacred words (tshig-gsum) uttered by the gshen bon officiants. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur rta-gtad text affirms that the deceased received an inheritance or patrimony (rd ongs) for the afterlife, the do-ma being part of it. It is declared that the horse and yaks were destined to be enemies (las kyi dgra), a well-known traditional theme based upon yaks goring horses when they are made to share the same pasture (para. ii). On the other hand, the symbiotic relationship between horses and humans is characterized as one of siblings (spun). We will return at length to these twin themes in our examination of I 731 verso. In the rta-gtad ritual the funerary horse is depicted as having horns and wings, its prime symbolic traits. These features represent the horse's link with the heavens and its special power of celestial flight. Based on textual indications (and supported by cross-cultural archaeological comparison), it is likely that in ancient times the terms 'horn' (ru) and 'wing' (gshog) were also used to denote ritual components of the caparisoned horse.

In the text, the do-ma is distinguished as an extraordinary type of horse with special faculties for rescuing the deceased from the perils of the postmortem existence (para. iii). Undoubtedly, such beliefs reflect the extremely high status of the riding horse in the Tibetan archaic cultural milieu and its role as the vehicle par excellence of the dead. In keeping with its prized status, the do-ma's main anatomical parts are lavishly praised as having marvelous qualities, which clear the way to paradise for the deceased. The outfitting of the horse is vibrantly described in the text, and the bird horns are categorically referred to as something that is erected on its head (para. iv). Based on Scytho-Siberian horse interments at Pazyryk (sixth to fourth century CE), we might expect that these objects quite literally looked like horns. Perhaps the closest surviving objects in the Tibetan cultural universe of later times were the 'phru and gtsug-thor, types of head ornaments worn by religious practitioners and military figures. These headwear finials symbolized the invincibility of the boundless heights and were worn to demonstrate martial prowess and social prestige, and as bridges to the uranic protective deities (such as the dgra-lha).

The great attention paid to the saddle in the text is not surprising, as this is where the deceased is mounted on his final journey upwards. It is decorated with a khyung, dragon, yak, tiger, and lion, which are likely to represent protective funerary deities like the sgra-bla. A description of the goose-like movement of the (metal) stirrups is also provided, probably indicating that this ritual of the do-ma with its particular mix of material cultural components, originated no earlier than the sixth century CE.³¹² After all the provisions of the departed one have been loaded on the do-ma,

³¹² The invention of iron stirrups was a major equestrian technological breakthrough, for they aid a rider to stand on a horse and use weapons. Wooden stirrups are found in Korean and Japanese burials of the second half of the fourth century and the fifth century CE (Kyzlasov 1973: 28, 29; Ambroz 1973: 83). In a biography about the Chinese general Liu Sung, he is recorded as receiving a stirrup in 477 CE as a sign to initiate combat (Kyzlasov 1973: 29, after K. A. Wittfogel and Fêng Hsia-shéng). Byzantine references to stirrups first appear with the Avars at the end of the fifth century CE and beginning of the sixth century CE (Ambroz 1973: 81). According to Ovchinnikova (1990: 105), stirrups appeared in Central Asia in a rudimentary form in the fourth century CE. The Turk iron stirrups of the sixth to ninth century CE represent a high level of technological advancement (Ovchinnikova 1990: 105; Pletneva 1981: 36–39). Kirgiz burials of the Chaatas epoch (sixth to ninth century CE) contain much horse equipment, including iron stirrups (Nesterov 1990: 59–61). Beginning in the sixth or seventh century CE, iron stirrups appear in Altaian burials as well (Ovchinnikova 1990: 107). On the other hand, Vasyutin (1994: 56, 66) dates the first Altaian stirrups (from sites such as Kudyrge) to the fifth or sixth century CE. I would expect that these early Turk stirrups are probably technologically and temporally related to the appearance of iron stirrups in Tibet. Such a critical strategic technological innovation

his consciousness principles are introduced to the horse (para. v). The deceased is then counseled on what the different types of *do-ma* look like in a bid to acquaint his consciousness principles with the liberating mount. This is carried out using vivid color-recognition similes that I would consider are of substantial age. They are poetically structured, using an elegant form of symmetry that is characteristic of indigenous prosody: ...*ci 'dra ma shes na* (if you don't know what [...] looks like) / ...*'dra* (it is like [...]) /. The ritual goes on to praise the horse and simultaneously reassure the deceased that the *do-ma* will successfully carry him through the grim land of the *gshin* demons (para. vi). The bursting of the thralldom of the *gshin-rje* is vividly described here.

The text plainly cautions the deceased that while the *do-ma* is for his use, he should not take the good fortune (*g.yang*) of the horses with him (para. vii). In Tibetan indigenous reckonings, the *g.yang*, or capability that enables any type of goodness or prosperity to flourish, is a fluid force that must be protected, conserved and augmented. That is why the text includes an admonishment to the deceased not to remove the well-being associated with the horse from the world of the living. The practice of retaining the *g.yang* of the livestock used to transport the deceased has its precedent in PT. 1042.³¹³ In this funeral ritual of royal proportions, it is recorded that horses, sheep and yaks were among the groups of sacrificial animals specially selected and sequestered in order that the *g.yang* be properly conserved.³¹⁴ We read:

would not have escaped the Tibetans during their imperial expansion into Central Asia and their campaigns against the Turks.

³¹³ *Op. cit.*, lns. 54, 55: *sku gshen kha gtsang gnyis la / gcig gis / chibs / las gcig bcad de / g.yang rtar bgrang / dkar mo dang / g.yag las gcig bcad de / don por / bgrang / sku gshen gcig gi dkor las sna gcig bcade / phugs nor du bgrang /*.

³¹⁴ The preservation and augmentation of the *g.yang* by livestock is a theme that still plays a prominent role in the pastoral communities of Upper Tibet. An excellent account of pre-modern ritual practices involved with this tradition in the g.Yag-pa region is given by bSod-nams rdo-rje 1992 (pp. 108, 109). I quote:

“In former times, each family had a support of descent for the *phugs-lha* (god of the household), *pho-lha* (god of males), *yul-lha* (territorial deity), and *spyi-lha*. * These were the *lha-rta* as well as the male *zhol* and female *zhol* (*lha-g.yag* and *lha-'bri*), *don-po* and *don-mo* (*lha-lug*) and *btsan-ra*. For example, for the support of the descent of the *spyi-lha* (universal deity) *mgon-po*, that known as *spu-ya*, a stud (*pha-phyugs*) or an all-black yak was used. For Thang-lha, a *don-po* sheep with a white face was used. For the *yul-lha* Don-grub grags-pa, a tan *lha-rta* and a silver-tipped black (*bre-bo*) yak *zhol-po* were used. For example, for the *pho-lha*, the clan called sTag had a blue yak support of descent and so forth for their *pho-lha* g.Yu-lung. Accordingly, for each of the *lha-g.yag* and *lha-lug* as well as the *btsan-ra*, the support of descent had different-colored fur.

Initially, during their propitiation, incense was burnt in an incense brazier (*bsang-khri*) and *bso bso* called out. Then white tail [-hair] was dyed red; it was [then] known as *rna-cha*. Cotton cloth of five colors was hung on the right and left ears, mane and tail of the *lha-phyugs* (livestock of the *lha*). When it was suspended on the ears they had to say, ‘Accept this ornamentation (*rgyan bzhes*)! Accept this ornamentation!’ Afterwards, when applying ochre on the back of those animals they would exclaim, ‘Mount (*chib-bo*)! Mount!’ When ochre was applied on the horns they would say:

‘Sharpen (*brdar-ro*)! Sharpen the right copper horn.

The cutter robber of our saddles,

The schemer thieves of the night,

The established armies who target us,

The potential enemy plotters,

Those whose speech is softer than milk but whose mind is rougher than a thorn:

Sharpen! Sharpen!’

When applying ochre to the left horn it was said in this way:

‘Left horn of purplish agate: Love (*byam-mo*)! Love! Give love to the kinfolk. Give love to the sworn friends. Give love to the friendly neighbors.’

Thereafter, the mark of stability of butter was applied and it was said:

‘May the life of us humans be stable and long-lasting (*brten-no*).

May the capability of good fortune (*g.yang*) of the livestock be stable and long-lasting.

One of two *sku-gshen* with individualized roles (*kha-gtsang*) separated³¹⁵ one [horse] from [the group of horses] and counted³¹⁶ it as the horse of the *g.yang*. He separated one each of the ewes (*dkar-mo*) and yaks and counted them among the *don-po* (divine sheep). The other *sku-gshen* separated one example from [each type among] the wealth and counted it as the *phugs-nor*.³¹⁷

The *rta-gtad* ritual now advances to the instructions directed at the funerary horse (para. viii). Deployed earlier in the funeral with the *gshin-sgro*, the *gsas* stone guardian is now used with the *do-ma*. The *do-ma* is advised to act as the arbiter (*gzu-dpang*) between the living and dead. This is expedited by the exaltation of its lead (*mda'*) and bridle (*srab*) through the beseeching of hoary divine figures. In the next ritual sequence, the deceased is entreated to join the *mtshun* in the ancestral dGa'-yul above (para. ix). Now, having delivered its rider to the threshold of the dGa'-yul, the *do-ma* is rewarded with fodder and shelter (para. x). As an additional award, it appears that the *do-ma* retains the *gsas-rdo* to serve as its personal guardian.

The text now expounds the companion ritual for removing the horse trappings. From what has been written, we can ascertain that rather than actually depositing the deceased in the dGa'-yul, the *do-ma* only took him across the bounds of the intermediate dimension, the land of the dead (*gshin-yul*) country of space (*dbyings kyi yul*) (para. xi). The text unequivocally states that if the magical ornaments are not taken off the *do-ma*, the deceased would reattach himself to the living (with disastrous results). The *rta-gtad* ritual now proceeds to divulge the significance of some of the ritual paraphernalia associated with the *do-ma* and why it is crucial to remove it (para. xii). We learn that the turquoise bird horns are a sign of the horse flying in space, and that the bright turquoise acts as a lamp in the murkiness of the postmortem existence (*gshin-yul mun-pa*). It is asserted that the bridle, halter and saddle help the deceased on his way to the afterlife, but once the ride ends these must be removed if he is to complete the journey (para. xiii). This undressing of the *do-ma* could possibly be a relatively late ritual invention, for none of the Dunhuang manuscripts speak of it. This would be explained if the *do-ma* of the imperial period were sacrificed so that they could accompany the deceased to the afterlife (there is no direct textual indication of this, however). As part of the reversal of the habiliments, the legs, mane and tail of the *do-ma* are first unbound (paras. xiv, xv). The text explains why it is essential for that which was affixed to the *do-ma* in the first part of the ritual now to be unbound. The destiny of the deceased is dependent on the correct execution of these ritual procedures, furnishing us with a picture of the extremely delicate and serious nature of such funerary performances. The grave

May the essence of foods be stable and long-lasting.

May our luck and domination be stable and long-lasting.'

Then on the ears, mouth, front legs, and rear legs, as well as on the hoofs, the mark of stability of butter was applied, and so in this way it was said:

'Join our ears to pleasing speech. Join our mouths to food. Join our hands to wealth.'

Immediately upon the completion of these activities, the victory prayer was made. The livestock were then driven to the mountains."

* A class of divinities that includes powerful Buddhist protectors and mountain divinities (such as gNyan-chen thang-lha, Gangs-dkar ti-se and A-myes rma-chen spom-ra), whose broad territorial reach extends over lesser *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag*.

³¹⁵ *bCad*. This verb is still used by 'brog-pa to describe the separating of individual animals from a herd.

³¹⁶ *bGrang*. In this context, rather than used simply as an accounting term, this word has the sense of 'to keep' or 'to save'.

³¹⁷ Literally, 'innermost wealth'. This refers to the essential or vital wealth of a household, which is ritually enshrined in a special receptacle. Traditionally, jewels and other precious sanctified objects were stored in a *g.yang-sgam* (chest of good fortune), *g.yang-khug* (sack of good fortune) or *gter-bum* (treasure vase).

consequences believed to result from not disestablishing the living and the dead help to account for the preservation of funerary transport rituals in the Bon religion of the second millennium CE.³¹⁸ The *rta-gtad* concludes with an affirmation of the benefit of stripping down the horse and a wish that all attendant good qualities be realized:

- i) *Kye kye!* Today, you magical equid (*gor-bu*), when we bequeath you as the patrimony³¹⁹ of the dead one (*gshin*), we praise you with three words from our mouths.³²⁰ You [deceased], listen once to the speech of the *gshen*. If we investigate (*gsher*) your paternity (*pha-khung*s), it is the wind type. If we investigate your maternity (*ma-khung*s), it is the lake type. If we investigate your fraternity (*spun-khung*s), it is the onager type.
- ii) The horse and the yak, these two, were destined to be enemies. The horse and humans, these two, were destined to be siblings. The highly cherished equid is the beloved friend (*snying gi grogs*). The pearl- and crystal-horned [one] was destined to be the horse. The body of the horse has the wings of the *khyung*. When we bequeath this attractive equid with the wings of the *khyung* as the inheritance, when we *gshen-bon* chant the *smrang*,³²¹ its maternity (*'brang*) is not equated with the ordinary horse and its paternity (*cho*) is not equated with the ordinary horse.
- iii) It possesses miracles, [the power of] prophecy (*mngon-shes*) and great prowess. Shaking its mane it opens the path of liberation (*thar-lam*). Waving its tail it cleanses the lower realms.³²² Pounding its four hoofs it slays the *sri* and *gshed*. When its four legs are free it reaches the dGa'-yul. Such a magical equid as this one has a sound longer than the length of a river.³²³ Its back is harder than white copper.³²⁴ Its hoofs are harder than iron.³²⁵ Its wings are longer than the continuous river and road. Its speed is faster than miraculous lightning. You are such an equid manifestation.

³¹⁸ In a vertical pit grave of the Guolimu site, in the Dulan region of Qinghai, a male and female couple believed to have belonged to the Tibetan-Tuyuhun aristocracy were buried with the complete skeleton of a horse and camel on either side. The burial is attributed to no later than the T'ang dynasty (618–907 CE). This burial, and another one excavated at Guolimu, both contained a wooden saddle and a wooden figurine of a bird. It is thought that the sacrificed horse and camel acted as the spiritual guides of the deceased on their ascent to a western paradise, and connections to Bon religious traditions are postulated. See China Heritage Project, 2005. The discovery of potential afterlife transport livestock on the northeastern fringes of the Tibetan Plateau could possibly establish a geographic conduit through which similar funerary customs circulated between the steppes and the hinterlands of the Tibetan Plateau, in and before the imperial period. In any event, the mortuary sites of Dulan exhibit extremely cosmopolitan influences, indicating that this region had far-ranging cultural and economic contacts. Evidence from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur may suggest that the bird figurines of Guolimu functioned as receptacles for the consciousness principles of the deceased during their final release.

³¹⁹ *rDzongs*. This word has two basic meanings: 1) gifts given to one who has died as his bequest, and 2) the dowry of a bride.

³²⁰ This archaic cultural tradition of saying three special words to the deceased is attested in PT. 1134 (ln. 59): "The teaching of three spoken words is sweet to the ear" (*bsTand* (mod. = *bstan*) *pa ngag tsig* (mod. = *tshig*) *sum ni rgar* (= *rnar*) *mnyend* (mod. = *snyan*) /).

³²¹ In this ritual setting, the origin and lineage tale of the *do-ma*.

³²² *Ngan-song*: *dud-'gro* (animals), *yi-dwags* (ghouls) and *dmyal-ba* (hell beings).

³²³ *Chu-bo'i gzhung bas ring*. This describes the sustained neighing of the horse, which is likened to the incessant rumble of a river.

³²⁴ Both the Zhang-zhung and Tibetan terms for a metal resembling whitish copper are used: *le-'phrom bse*.

³²⁵ The Zhang-zhung and Tibetan words are used in conjunction: *zom-shang lcags*.

- iv) When we bestow the inheritance of the dead one, turquoise-colored bird horns are erected on its head. A golden bridle and turquoise halter are placed on it. A soft silk saddle mat (*dar stan-li*) is spread on its back. Its tail is braided. Its mane is tied with silk cloth. A golden saddle sitting high is attached to it. A *khyung* and dragon are drawn on the acacia (*seng-lding*) pommel. A yak, tiger and lion are drawn on the back of the saddle. Its saddle rug (*An-'jog*) and great stirrups have the waddle of a goose (*ngang-ma 'gros*). It has three rings (*A-lang*) in front and three rings at the back, these six. There are four hitching straps (*sha-dag*) on the right and four on the left, these eight. It is pleasing to all beings, attractive and beautiful. The custom of the ornaments of the *do-ma* is clear.
- v) The clothes and hat [of the deceased] are tied to it. His victuals (*gsol-ting*) and foodstuffs (*brgyag-phye*) are loaded on its back. His *bla*, *yid* and *sems*, these three, are presented to the horse. Those are called the *bla* and *yid* riding the horse. You [the deceased] receive this recognized (*ngo-shes*) equid. The face of the human lord is red [but] we provide you with a white-faced horse. If you [the deceased] do not know what white looks like, white is like sunrise on the snow mountain. If you do not know what red looks like, red is like the blaze in the meadow. If you do not know what black looks like, black is like the chough alighting from the nest. If you do not know what stripes look like, they look like the tiger rearing up from its lair. There are innumerable types of hair but the equids that we give to you today, we give to you, have many [acceptable] colors of hair.³²⁶
- vi) When you go through the light gray plain of the *gshin*, traversing the black country of the *gshin*, moving miraculously, you roll up the light gray *gshin* plain like felt.³²⁷ gShin-rje smrig-pa³²⁸ cries out like a fox (a coward). The red rock formation of the *gshin* breaks like an egg. The mouth of gShin-rje is sewn [shut] like the seam in the seat of the pants ('*dom*).
- vii) At this time, a magical equid such as this we give to you, noble man (*mi-btsun*). You [the deceased] receive this recognized equid. The face of the human lord (the deceased) is red [but] we provide you with a white-faced horse. Without erring, use this recognized one. Leave for the children and grandchildren the *g.yang* (good fortune capability) of the horse. We do not give the *g.yang* to the dead one, we take it back.³²⁹ Let the *dpon-gsas* (high priest)

³²⁶ In the archaic funerary tradition, certain colors of livestock could not be offered (*gtad*) to the deceased as they were believed to be the property of the *g.yen-dgu* spirits (in this context, probably protective funerary deities). Lalou (1953: 341, 355) confuses the nine *g.yen* with the contraindicated livestock. In the *mdad-shid* (entombment rites) recorded in PT. 1042 (lms. 85–88), it states: “The hairs which are not suitable to be offered (*gtad*) to the deceased (*gshin*) are those of the black horse *lhing-nag*,* a horse of variegated color, an all-black yak, a bay-colored [yak], a bay-colored yak hybrid, a [yak] with horns bending backwards (*ltag-re ru-pur*), a white yak, and an off-white (*thal-kar*) [yak]. These are very much at the disposal (*mnga'-dbang*) of the various *g.yen-dgu* and others. Even if they are offered to the [deceased] they cannot be used† and are not beneficial (*myi-sman*)” (*gshin la gtad du myi rung ba'i spu la / rta nag po lhing nag / rta khra bo / g.yag rog po kham pa / mdzo kham pa dang rtag (= ltag) re ru pur / g.yag dkar po thal kar / 'di rnams g.yen dgu las stsogs te mnga' dbang so sor chis (= che) pas / gtad kyang mtshar myi btub ste / myi sman no /*).

* *Lhing-nag* is a black horse. *Lhing* is etymologically related to the word *gyi-ling* (racehorse).

† *mTshar*. This is either an old, dialectal or corrupt form of the verb *'ishal* (to receive, to enjoy, to use).

³²⁷ *gShin-thang skya-mo phying ltar dril /*. This metaphor shows that the *do-ma* moves quickly and easily across the realm of the *gshin*.

³²⁸ A king of the *gshin*. For a description of the iconography of gShin-rje, the Lord of Death (Yama), see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 82–87.

³²⁹ This theme of taking back the good fortune (*g.yang-len*) is found in a Bon ritual for the *sgra-bla*. In this performance the officiants symbolically retain the elements of good fortune. See Bellezza 2005a, pp. 403–405.

- be rich and strong. Let there be good for the living³³⁰ after your death. Do not permit the sons and grandsons to be idiots. Do not compete with the *bdud* in dice.³³¹
- viii) Entrust this *gsas* stone as the witness (*dpang-po*).³³² Act as the arbiter between the living and the dead. Let the surviving members (*gson-po*) be rich and strong. Whose horse bridle and lead was it in ancient times? Ah, it was the lead and bridle of Ye-smon rgyal-po (King of Primordial Aspiration).³³³ Today, whose bridle and lead is it? Ah, it is the bridle and lead of this dead one (*grongs-ba*). Now, whose bridle and lead is it? Ah, it is the bridle and lead of Prince Theng-ge.³³⁴
- ix) You [the deceased] skilfully pass to the dGa'-yul. Skilfully pass to the great *mtshun* country above. [You] should arrive in the superior place of the ancestors (*yab-myes*). Today, you noble *mtshun* man, you noble man, stay there happily.
- x) Under the protection of our *lha*, under our Bon *gshen*, we provide the feed for the equid searching for fodder (*gzan*). We take off its saddle, dry its perspiration and remove its saddle and halter. The mighty *gsas* stone will be the keeper who takes care of it. Look here in the black yak-hair tent (*sbra*), the small black yak-hair tent (*sbrel*), the cloth tent (*gur*), and the house at these offerings without distraction and without diversion. The horse bestowals are completed.
- xi) Now, to remove the ornaments say as follows: You steed, the equid onager thoroughbred (*rkyang-shes*), come with your magical ornaments. You showed [the deceased] the land of the dead country of space. Now if we do not remove the ornaments of the equid we fear that the dead one (*gshin*) will again attach himself to us. As Mu-cho ldem-drug removed the magical decorations and ornaments from the great galloping thoroughbred (*cang-shes*) equid, [the deceased] reached the first position³³⁵ of the excellent victorious *gshen*. If the ornaments are not taken off the equid, [the deceased] cannot go to the heavenly place (*mtho-ris gnas*).
- xii) On the previous day, erecting the horns of the bird was a sign of flying in space (*dbyings*) like a bird.³³⁶ Now if the bird horns are not removed, the equid follows the flying bird. That is why the bird horns are taken off the head [of the *do-ma*]. On the previous day, if the colored

³³⁰ *gSon*. Specifically refers to the surviving members of the deceased's family and circle of friends.

³³¹ This line seems to indicate that if such a wager was made, the soul of the deceased would be in danger of being lost to the *bdud*.

³³² This line seems to be the first in this paragraph of exhortations addressed to the *do-ma*. The *gsas-rdo* (deity stone) is the receptacle for the divine guardian and escort of the *do-ma* on its journey through the various places of the dead.

³³³ Srid-pa ye-smon rgyal-po, the primeval celestial god of Bon, is the progenitor of the Phywa, dMu and gTsug proto-lineages (Bellezza 2005a: 394, 395, 397).

³³⁴ Prince mThing-ge (*sic*) was one of three celestial brothers, dMu lineage figures that gave rise to the Tibetan and Hor (Mongolian) races. See pp. 350, 352. Dagkar (2003: 17) gives the Hor lineages as dMu, Shag, Hos, dPo, rGya, and gNyan. This mention of Prince mThing-ge is an arousing allusion to the deceased's ascension into the world of the heavenly ancestors.

³³⁵ *Sa dang-po* (also: first ground/place). Apparently, a primordial or primary realm where the *gshen* who have passed away reside.

³³⁶ Here and in the following sentences beginning with 'on the previous day' and 'now', I have opted to simplify the syntax so that the predicates read unconditionally rather than with negations that express the absolute utility and inevitability of the actions taken. In the text as it stands, we have grammatical constructions such as *mi btsug rgyus* (to not but erect), *mi len rgyus* (to not but remove), etc.

- turquoise was not set up, the path of the darkness, the country of the dead could not be opened. Now if the turquoise is not removed, the brightness of the turquoise is brighter than the rays of the sun. That is why the colored turquoise is removed from the forehead (*dpral*).
- xiii) On the previous day we installed the golden bridle and turquoise halter [on the *do-ma*], which we needed as the mount of the handsome Bon victorious lord (the deceased). Now, if the bridle and halter are not removed, [the deceased] cannot find the direction to go in. That is why we remove the golden bridle from its head. On the previous day, if we did not set up the golden saddle, it could not support the hands and feet of the lord. Now, if the golden saddle is not taken off, the back is obscured by the beautiful saddle.³³⁷ That is why we remove the golden saddle from its back.
- xiv) On the previous day, if we did not bind [its legs] with *bse* ties,³³⁸ we feared that the bucking horse's legs could have broken. Today, if we do not untie the *bse* ties, it cannot move its legs. That is why we untie the *bse* ties. On the previous day the mane was tied with silk cloth. The silk that was fastened to its mane was a sign that it had beautiful ornaments. Now, if the mane is not untied, it is a sign that the mane is like a soaring bird. That is why we untie that which we fastened to its mane.
- xv) On the previous day, if we did not tie its tail, we feared its tail was miserly.³³⁹ Now, to loosen its tail, the ornaments of the equid are dismantled and doubts dispelled so that [the deceased] reaches the first position of the excellent victorious *gshen*. The great benefits of removing the ornaments are like that. May such beneficial qualities as these materialize. The removal of the ornaments is completed.

6.12 The Funerary Sheep Guide to the Afterlife

Another very important *gtad-g.yar* or funerary present for the deceased is the sheep mount (*chibs-lug*).³⁴⁰ It is identical with the almost homophonous (especially in certain Khams and Hor dialects) *skyibs-lug* of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. As demonstrated in a companion text,³⁴¹ the ritual functions of the *chibs-lug* are close to those of the *do-ma*. By the time these livestock funerary conveyance rituals were written down in their present form, it seems likely that they had been relegated to a relatively minor role in the Bon funeral. Even in a vestigial form, however, their existence is a particularly vivid example of the survival of ancient rites in the systematized Bon religion. If the sequence presented in the Bon *gtad-g.yar* texts correctly reflects ancient funerary practices, the *do-ma* was offered before the *chibs-lug*, which served as the guide blazing the path for the deceased in his passage by horse to the afterlife.

Having herded and protected the flocks of sheep during their lifetime, humans can expect similar treatment from these animals at their death, an example of the old principle of reciprocity that

³³⁷ This is the rough meaning of this ambiguously written line.

³³⁸ *bSe-sgrogs*. This either refers to a leather thong or a metal chain of *bse*.

³³⁹ This is an awkward and somewhat ambiguous sentence.

³⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the funerary ritual usage of caprids can be traced a very long way back in Central Asia. In the cave of Teshtik-Tash, overlooking the valley of Surkhan Darya in Uzbekistan, a Neanderthal burial of a child was discovered surrounded by six pairs of Siberian goat horns (Allchin 1992: 84).

³⁴¹ *Lug gtad bzhugs so*, in *Klong rgyas sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 274, nos. 469–472). Tibetan Text III-20, pp. 631, 632.

transcends the existential divide between life and death. This Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text announces that the *chibs-lug* with its burden of a lamp (a bright turquoise?) leads the deceased across the hellish land of the *gshin* (para. i). The sheep mount is described with the word *mer-ba*, which in the Dunhuang manuscripts is rendered *mar-ba*.³⁴² I am of the opinion that *mar-ba* may be etymologically related to butter (*mar*), one of the substances with which the funerary sheep was ornamented as a sign of its exceptional value to the deceased. An etymological connection to the word *smar/rmar* (something very precious, auspicious or beneficial) is also probably indicated (see p. 502, fn. 490).

In addition to the *chibs-lug*, the text mentions two other types of sheep that must have had identical or allied functions: the 'sheep of the way' and the 'sheep that leads' (para. ii). Reference is made to crosses (*khram*) on the funerary sheep's horns that prevent the *gshin-rje* from making a similar mark, consigning the deceased to an existence in damnation. It is still commonly believed by Tibetans that, before someone dies, the Lord of Death (*gShin-rje*) marks a cross on a tablet to signal the impending death. The use of *khram* and ochre (*btsag*) in rituals in which special sheep and other livestock are offered to the *yul-lha* and other elemental protectors is still attested in the Byang-thang (Bellezza 1997a; 2005a). In the contemporary ritual, these specially marked animals (like the *lha-lug* and *lha-g.yag*) are dedicated to the protection and good fortune of individual 'brog-pa families and clans. The value of such ritual dispensations for the dead, however, has passed away with time and the Buddhicization of Tibetan culture. The *lug-gtad* ritual proceeds to tell us that when the sheep mount has been equipped with a lamp, crosses, vermilion, and butter, provisions for the deceased's final journey are loaded on its back (para. iii). Of particular interest is the ritual object known as the small *tho* (*tho-chung*). *Tho* are funerary constructions that appear to have been erected near tomb sites (see pp. 492–495). The *lug-gtad* reference to the *tho* seems to indicate that it functioned as a kind of marker, registering the final fate of the deceased. It seems to have heralded the deceased's transition from a potentially dangerous being (*gshin*) to an ancestral deity (*mtshun*).

Once the sheep is ornamented and burdened in this fashion, the text asserts that the *chibs-lug* is no ordinary animal but one with an extraordinary pedigree (para. iv). As in the *do-ma* ritual, both the maternity and paternity of the funerary sheep are declared. The sheep is now amply praised as having the power of the hosts of *lha* and *gsas*, dominance over the universe, and the capability to surmount the obstacles of the *gshin* land and demons (para. v). This ritual exaltation of an animal has no Buddhist counterpart, and is reminiscent of the imagery surrounding the Ge-khod gods (see pp. 307–316). In Buddhism, such great powers of liberation lie solely with mental processes that unfold in the *bar-do*. The invoking of the *yul-sa* demonstrates that the territorial deities also played a role in the ancient funeral, probably as protectors and escorts of the deceased.³⁴³ This Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur reference shows that the *yul-sa/yul-lha* did not only have an ubiquitous role in the society of the living, but they participated in the postmortem experience as well. This type of eschatological tradition could not be easily harmonized with Buddhist thinking and practices as they came to dominate Tibet, leading to the curtailment of the soteriological functions with which the environment-bound pantheon was endued. The participation of the *yul-lha* in funerals long past could be seen as further circumstantial evidence that the spirit-mediums (*lha-pa* and *dpa'-bo*), who heavily rely on this class of divinity, once served as psychopomps.

³⁴² See PT. 1134, lns. 190–195, p. 503.

³⁴³ These functions are confirmed by a tradition surrounding Jo-bo gtsug-sa, a *yul-lha* of Dol-po, who is believed to retrieve the souls of those who die outside their homeland (Hazod 1996: 95, 96).

Bypassing the hell-bound road and boundary river of the *gshin*, the *chibs-lug* guides the deceased to the plains of dGa'-yul, the celestial realm of the *mtshun* ancestral deities (para. vi). For the deceased, secure in the awesome power of the funerary sheep, the intermediate place (*bar-sa*) is blissful and expansive, rather than a tenuous dimension fraught with peril. Although the narrative of origins (*smrang*) that must have once accompanied this *lug-gtad* ritual does not seem to have survived in Bon literature, the invitation extended to the funerary *gshen* rMa-da (the sixth generation holder of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur) demonstrates that one certainly existed (para. vii). Legendary 'dur-*gshen* of antiquity such as rMa-da are thought to have usually begun their ritual labors with an attestation of mythic origins. This was an endorsement of historical legitimacy and efficacy, and a reminder that its transmission to the present day was done in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Bon tradition. In this *lug-gtad* ritual, the secure seats of the consciousness principles of the deceased are objects we are already familiar with from earlier stages of the funeral, when the soul and mind were enticed to desist from wandering around the dismal intermediate zone. These are the head juniper, *nam-mkha'* and soul stone. It is stated that the errant soul of the deceased is introduced to the protection of the mountain (*bla 'khyams ri bo'i skyabs dang sprad*), another example of the place of mountains in the guidance of souls. This eschatological function of mountains is probably related to the cult of the *lha-ri* (divine mountains) and/or a montane aspect of the dGa'-yul.³⁴⁴ We might expect, therefore, that the placement of most funerary sites in Upper Tibet at the foot of mountains and escarpments was an expression of their role in commending the souls of the deceased to the afterlife.

The theme of the intermediate dimension of existence as a terrific place is now taken up in the text (para. viii). It is also avouched, however, that the *chibs-lug* prevails through all the dangers facing the deceased. The reference to the encountering of weapons seems to indicate that even though the deceased relives past terrors (associated with death), the funerary sheep has the ability to relieve them. Finally, the deceased is enjoined not to take the good fortune (*g.yang*) of the sheep with him to the afterlife (para. ix), a critical matter in maintaining the homeostasis between the twin worlds of the living and the dead. As with the good fortune of the horse, the vital power of the

³⁴⁴ A *yul-lha* of Dol-po, Gangs-chen rol-pa, a black horse rider, is considered the robber of souls. He has a number of servants who carry stolen souls back up his mountain in baskets. These servants are considered the souls of the dead who could not be rescued by the lamas. See Hazod 1996, p. 95. The mythic vestiges of an archaic montane afterlife seem to be indicated in such a tradition. This is supported by ethnographic data collected further afield among the Tamangs. The guardians and ancestral spirits (*lente*) of their *bon-po* priests are thought to live in a high Himalayan heaven called *bas-yul* (Holmberg 1989: 88). The concept of a montane sanctuary and the literal nature of travel undertaken by the consciousness principles is further elucidated by the highly revealing utterances of the *lha-pa* Karma rig-'dzin whilst in trance (see Bellezza 2005, pp. 154–169, for background information on this Byang-thang luminary). This oral tradition recognizes the importance of elemental spirits and ancestral mountain gods in eschatological processes. In a trance ceremony convened on May 17, 2004, Karma rig-'dzin pronounced the fate of the consciousness (*rnam-shes*) in the *bar-do*, in keeping with archaic beliefs concerning the final passage of the dead. These words were spoken by the spirit-medium under the presiding god sTag-lung bdud-btsan dmar-po, as part of the petitioning of the deities of the trance sequence (*bka'-lung*), in which clients ask their questions to the embodied divinities: “Well then, when the body lender (Karma rig-'dzin) goes to the *bar-do*, like all of you when going by motor vehicle, a way is needed. When the body lender's consciousness goes to the *bar-do*, it goes to the upper realm of the *lha*, or it goes to the realm of the *btsan*, or it goes to the *klu*, or it goes to Thang-lha, or it goes to rMa-rgyal (A-myes rma-chen spom-ra) or it goes to Gangs-ri (Tise), or it goes to Zangs-ri (mountains of the Rol-pa skya-bdun and 'Bar-ba spun-bdun groups of *btsan*), and wherever it goes, it needs a path, right? Ah, the complete explanation of these paths I leave aside today” (*da de nas lus g.yar bar do la 'gro dus yin na / khyed rang tsho mo ʔa la 'gro ba nang bzhin lam 'gag zhig dgos red pa / lus g.yar gi rnam shes de bar do la 'gro dus / yar lha khams la 'gro 'am / btsan khams la 'gro 'am / klu la 'gro 'am / thang lha la 'gro 'am / rma rgyal la 'gro 'am / gangs ri la 'gro 'am / zangs ri la 'gro 'am / de ga ris 'gro na sa de la lam zhig dgos red ba / 'o de'i lam 'gag de'i bshad pa tshang ma de ring g.yug l*).

g.yang must remain in the world of the living if the living are to prosper. The *g.yang* surrounding wild animals and livestock are considered especially important. This is borne out in various good-fortune summoning rituals (*g.yang-gugs*) still carried out in the Tibetan highlands.³⁴⁵ Finally, the ritual reminds the deceased that the *chibs-lug* is charged with his trek to the other side of existence:

- i) *Kye!* This intelligent mind³⁴⁶ [of you, the deceased], although today we have bequeathed (*gtad*) the *do-ma* horse as your mount (*chibs*), as your needed share, we still have not bequeathed the sheep as your mount. Now, let us bequeath this sheep as your mount. Why is it needed by you? The great sheep is very necessary on the path of the *gshin*. When this sheep mount *mer-ba*, which carries a lamp, passes through the path of the *gshin*, it is tantamount to the great swastika sheep. It is the great sheep with good qualities.
- ii) The sheep is endowed with all manner of necessities (*dgos-ched*). When we bequeath the sheep mount (*chibs-lug*), the road sheep (*lam-lug*) and the lead sheep (*snel-lug*), these three, these are the inheritance of the dead one.³⁴⁷ When a lamp is placed on its horns, it is the sign of the illuminating of the darkness of the dead one's (*gshin*) obscurations. The crosses marked on its horns are the sign that the *gshin-rje* cannot mark their crosses. The knot tied

³⁴⁵ The *g.yang* of both wild and domestic animals is a crucial aspect of the philosophy of well-being in the culture of Upper Tibet. For example, in mNga'-ris when the shearing of livestock takes place, the first portions of the wool (*bal*) of the blue sheep of the *klu*, as well as that of the hair (*le-na*) of the light orange (*ngang-dkar*) goat of the *lha*, and the first portion of the downy undercoat (*khu-lu*) of the golden brown (*kham-pa*) yak of the *btsan*, are placed on a *mda'-dar* and the following prayer is made: "May the blue *g.yang* sheep spread like the stars of space. May the white *g.yang* goats be equal to the height of the snow mountain. May the golden brown *g.yang* yaks spread like the proliferation of *spang-rgyan* ('meadow ornament') flowers" (*g.yang lug sngon mo nam mkha'i skar ltar 'phel bar shog / g.yang ra dkar mo gang ri'i dpangs dang myam par shog / g.yang g.yag kham pa spang rgyan me tog 'char bzhin 'phel bar shog.../*). See Gu-ge tshe-ring rgyal-po 2005, p. 304. The *g.yang* of the flesh of wild animals ritual is also part of the Upper Tibetan hunting cults. I would consider that this ritual is of significant antiquity (given the nature of its unique vocabulary). The *g.yang* of flesh was summoned in order that the hunting parties would be successful in their quest for game. In Norbsam (p. 148), the special invocations that accompanied this good fortune attraction in A-mdo county are recorded:

"In particular, when hunting wild yaks, the custom known as 'calling the flesh' (*sha-'bod*) goes like this:
 'Be here (*khug-cig*)!
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *Ar-mo lte-dkar* (wild yak with white belly),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *'brong rdza lham-nag* (wild yak of talus with black hoofs),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *rwa zhu yon rmig-pa bya-sder* (a type of argali?),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *ga-shog* (= *gar-gshog*) *ga-ba rwa-ring* (wild yak with a long belly fringe, a white face and long horns),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *nag-shog bre-mo khu-'du* (?),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *rkyang-ma 'khris-can* (a type of onager),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *gtsod-mo gur-chen* (a type of female antelope),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *rna g.yag rgya 'dan* (a large male blue sheep),
 Flesh *g.yang* of the *go-bo cog-'du* (a type of gazelle), and so forth.
 We summon the flesh *g.yang* of existence here ninefold.'

They call out in this way and hold the gall bladder of a wild yak in their hands, saying: 'Byang myi-ba wa-shi rgan-po, Srog-bdag ya-shi dmar-po and Ri-shi A-stag klu-mo, we offer this for your consumption.' Having said this they offer the gall bladder of the wild yak to the sky."

³⁴⁶ *Thug-par sgom-po*. This phrase could also be translated as 'fully accomplished mind'. It pertains to the purified state of the mind of the deceased, which has been readied for its consummate passage to the afterlife.

³⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the connecting line is missing in the text.

in its wool is the sign that the *gshin-rje* cannot make the wool calculation.³⁴⁸ The vermilion applied to its face is the sign of unlocking the *tha-ram* of the *btsan*.³⁴⁹

- iii) The application of butter to its horns is the sign that the heart of the *mtshun* is softer than butter.³⁵⁰ This vermilion mark placed on its tail is the sign of destroying the records (*phyag-sbal*) of the *bdud*. The kinds of food loaded on its back are the sign of all the great types of benefits and merits. The making of the small *tho* of the sheep mount is the sign of the expansion of the *mtshun* group by the sheep. The libation put in its mouth is the sign of the provision of fire, water and medicine.
- iv) That is why the great sheep with a lineage³⁵¹ was explained by the proclamation of the *gshen-bon* who blew incantations on its wool. [Therefore,] its paternity (*cho*) is not the same as ordinary sheep and its maternity (*'brang*) is not equated with ordinary sheep.
- v) Blinding sparks (*dbal gyi tsha tsha*) spread from its horns. Fulminating lightning (*dbal gyi glog*) discharges from its tongue. On each strand of hair of the sheep there are 100,000 *lha* armies and 10,000 *gsas* armies. By the flap of its ears, the planets and stars of the firmament (*nam-mkha'*) fall down. By the hair shaking on its head, the earth quakes and the *yul-sa* are summoned. By its bleating three times, the soul fortress (*bla-rdzong*) of the *bdud* and *gshin-rje* is destroyed. The way of the *gshin* is opened by the sheep.
- vi) [The deceased and the sheep] go to the blissful expansive intermediate place (*bar-sa*). [The sheep] subjugates and makes cover the king of the *gshin-rje*. There is no obstruction of the hell (*dmyal-ba*) of the *gshin-rje*. By the sheep, [the deceased] passes to the plains of dGa'yul. By the sheep, [the deceased] passes to the great country of the *mtshun* high above. By the sheep, [the deceased] passes beyond the light gray road of the *gshin*. By the sheep, [the deceased] passes beyond the full river of the *gshin*. Even though there is a hot sun behind.³⁵²
- vii) We ourselves will invite 'Dur-gsas rma [da]. This tradition (*lugs*) I make the *bon* of subjugation. The soul is called by the sons and grandsons [and] greeted by the loving speech of the female relatives. The smoke of the incense shows the way of the ascent. [The deceased] is introduced to the protection of the head juniper and *nam-mkha'*. The soul stone is wrapped in silk cloth. The stringed and angled *nam-mkha'* is made in the midst [of the funeral venue]. The wandering soul is introduced to the protection of the mountain. These are the good qualities of the sheep.
- viii) It is called from afar as the wealth and as the *sku* (protective deity?) [of the deceased]. Even though fear of the enemy arises in you (the deceased), the sheep is mightier than the castle at the borderlands (*sa-mtha'*). Even though a cold wind appears for you, the sheep goes under the protection of the mountain. Even though weapons appear on your body, the sheep is mightier than armor and shield. Even though weapons and disease appear for you, the

³⁴⁸ *rTsis-bal*. This is carried out by the hell beings in anticipation of a death and the seizure of the soul.

³⁴⁹ The unlocking of the *tha-ram* (a triangular enclosure used to imprison souls) seems to indicate that the *btsan* can serve as allies of the deceased, as they customarily can for the living.

³⁵⁰ A metaphor for a very good and kind-hearted quality.

³⁵¹ *rGyud-ldan lug-po*. This phrase conveys the nobility and great value of the funerary sheep.

³⁵² Unfortunately, the connecting line providing an object in the sentence is absent in the text.

sheep is more beneficial than medicine and nectar. That is the reason why the sheep is greatly beneficial to you.

- ix) Even though we bestow the sheep as your mount, leave the *g.yang* of the sheep for the sons and grandsons. The great swastika sheep is entrusted as the arbiter (*gzud-pang*) between the living and the dead. Look here, your mind undistracted and undiverted. The sheep bestowal is finished.

6.13 The Divine Allies of the Funeral

As we have seen, in *Chant of the Origin Tale of the Bird Horn Head Ornament* (subsection 6.9), the primary deity and patron of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur appears to be a figure called Ye-yod-dbang-chen, who is closely associated with the *dbal* class of deities. Similarly, in the text *Calling Down the Violent Death gSas of the gShed*,³⁵³ the primal deity is known as Ye-yod dbal-srid. These two gods of the ancient Bon funeral ritual are either closely related or identical to one another. This text is devoted to the *gri-gsas*, the class of *dbal* gods who destroy the demons who cause violent death. Their power and modes of activity are expounded throughout the various liturgies in this text as the vanquishing counterpoint to the demons of death. This *gri-gsas la dbab pa* (calling down the funerary gods) text goes to great lengths to explicate funerary demonology in all its aspects, providing comprehensive treatment of the pantheon, iconography and malignancy of the demons. In doing so, the text also provides appropriate measures against all those who would harm the deceased.

The ethos of this tradition of soteriological deities is utterly different from that found in Buddhist-derived eschatological concepts. By recognizing the intrinsic reality (*chos-nyid/bon-nyid*) of which the *zhi-khro* deities mandala is but a projection, a Bon or Buddhist adept extricates himself from the round of rebirths. By contrast, in the archaic funerary tradition the help of the *gri-gsas* gods is enlisted by the ritualists through a special regimen of offerings and invocations, irrespective of the mental state of the deceased. These deities are invited to the side of the departed so that they can engage in combat with the demonic entities that block the way to the hereafter. The *zhi-khro* deities as they developed in Tibet may in part owe their existence to the antecedent *gri-gsas* gods. In particular, the zoomorphism of *zhi-khro* deities could possibly be historically related to the archaic funerary gods.

The excerpt from *Calling Down the Violent Death gSas of the gShed* that I have selected for translation features the origin myth of the divine funerary allies, a review of their exorcistic capabilities and a recitation used to conquer the demons of death. These themes are representative of the *gri-gsas la dbab pa* text as a whole. Our excerpt begins with the origin tale of the *gri-gsas*: Ye-yod dbal-srid, the father of the *dbal*, and his consort Ye-bdag skos-btsun, the appointer of existence, mated and produced nine eggs of different precious substances (para. i). Incubated on the dyadic rock of the *gto* and the lake of the *dpyad*, the two rudiments of funerary ritual dispensation, the eggs of the *dbal* were attended by various primordial deities (para. ii). Even when still inside their eggs, the fierce deities vowed to defeat the evil beings responsible for death. From the hatched eggs, the world of the *dbal* and the nine *dbal* gods themselves appeared (para. iii). As in other Bon cosmogonies, the various parts of the egg gave rise to both the physical

³⁵³ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las* (From the Great Funeral Ritual Multitude of Mu-cho Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Ritual Texts) *gri gsas gshed la dbab pa bzugs pa lags so* (New Collection of Bon bka'-brien, vol. 6, nos. 533–574), nos. 536, ln. 3 to 542, ln. 2. Tibetan Text III-21, pp. 632–634.

environment and the gods themselves (see pp. 349–355). The *dbal* appeared in their new world with *khyung*, lions, thunder, lightning, and blazing fire, the agents by which their terrific power is exercised. The zoomorphic minions, magical prowess and martial aspect of this group of nine *dbal* gods are forcefully described through alliterative sound ornaments (*sgra-rgyan*) consisting of three syllables each. These trisyllabic indicators of activity, sound and appearance belong to Tibet's native prosody and invest the lines of the text with great vibrancy (paras. iii, iv). The funerary *dbal* possess iconographic characteristics common to the Bon *yul-lha* and *sgra-bla*. Issuing from the same wellspring of indigenous religious tradition, these various classes of Bon deities are customarily depicted controlling savage elemental forces and with fierce carnivores in train.

Like the gods of the four quarters in *Chant of the Origin Tale of the Bird Horn Head Ornament*, the nine *dbal* or *gri-gsas* are described as the holders of horns (para. v). As we have seen, horns are equated with ferocious weapons against which the malevolent spirits of death prove no match.³⁵⁴ According to the text, in ancient times the *gri-gsas* (also called *sri-gsas*) were nine prototypical *gshen* who were favored with yaks, sheep, *phud* (first food and beverage offerings), light, gold, and libations (para. vi). Along with fumigation, these types of presents form the cornerstone of the Bon offering regimen for homebred Tibetan deities in general. The text employs sharp language to describe how, won over by these coveted offerings, the *gri-gsas* subdue the various orders of demons, disrupting the transit of the deceased to his final resting place (para. vii). Now that the origin of the funerary gods has been proclaimed (*smrang*), offerings made to them (*mchod-pa 'bul*), and their praises sung (*bstod-pa*), the ritual moves to the invocation of the *lha* and *gsas* allies (para. viii). They are petitioned to aid the *gshen* officiants in conquering the evil orders of *g.yen*.

Confident of success thanks to these divine comrades of the funeral, the ritualists speak in the first or third person and assert their power over all the demons with much bravura (para. ix). The text then introduces another god in the liturgy: Lha-drag *gsas-rgyas lce-dbal* (para. x). This figure appears to be the chief of all the *dbal* and *lce* of the funeral ritual, a composite entity embodying the theogonic basis of all the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur deities. With the word *bswo*, the text continues to invoke the divine subjugators of violent death (para. xi). The use of *bswo* not only calls and commands the deities to action, but acts as a verbal offering to them as well. As is well known, *bswo* is a standard ejaculation of the native liturgical tradition in both its oral and literary modes. The text explicitly states that the *sgra-bla* of the *dbal* are the *gri-gsas*. Warrior gods protecting and enriching the lives of their petitioners, the *sgra-bla* carry out the same role for the departed, underscoring their customary position at the margin of all cosmological dualities (light and dark, existence and non-existence, positive and negative, etc.). The text boasts that all the demons of death are defeated by divine forces of the same constituent makeup: the *gri-gsas* for the *bdud* and *gri*, and the sacred foundry for the iron weapons of death (para. xii). This illustrates the homeopathic principle central to Bon conceptions about the way in which deities and divine tools eliminate disease and misfortune caused by closely related entities. At the conclusion of this first reading in the *gri-gsas la dbab pa* text, it cites the cutting of horns, wings and tree roots, as well

³⁵⁴ In the Gu-ge lho-smad of pre-modern times there was a special class of powerful religious practitioners known as *jo-ba*, the most prominent of whom was the *jo-ba* of Ri (they ritually guarded against natural disasters, and protected the Gu-ge royal family and their successors, the *rdzong-dpon*, from harm). There was a rite called *sri-gnon*, which was normally made every three years to prevent natural disasters from occurring. In this *sri-gnon*, the Ri *jo-ba* wore a black crown (*rigs-linga*), a black gown (*phod-ka*), and painted black snakes on his nose and cheeks. In his right hand he wielded a horse-head dagger (*phur-pa*) and in the left an antelope horn half a span in length. One of the purposes of this antelope horn was to write spells (*sngags*) on a *gtor-ma*, which was placed above a specially sealed cavity containing the effigy of evil (*ling-ka*) imprisoned in a dog or sheep skull. See Gu-ge tshe-ring rgyal-po 2005, pp. 167–170.

as the collapse of mountains, as metaphorical devices, which demonstrate that the life-forces and souls of the *gri* demons of violent death have been irrevocably destroyed:

- i) At the country, the country, the *dbal* country high above, above the castle of Kha-le 'od, the father of the *dbal*, Ye-yod dbal-srid (Primordial Existence dBal Existence), and the mother of the *dbal*, Ye-bdag skos-btsun (Primordial Mistress Noble Woman Who Appoints) mated, and in that time begot progeny. Nine wrathful eggs of the *dbal* appeared. The nine eggs of miraculous jewels were the conch egg, gold egg and turquoise egg, these three; the banded agate egg, pearl egg and vermilion egg, these six; the copper egg and iron egg, these two bringing to eight; and the egg of epochal resplendence, these nine.
- ii) On the nine marvelous eggs of the *dbal* were beautifully clear miraculous letters. They landed on the *gto* rock formation and *dpyad* lake. The monarch, the miraculous *gto* king, bathed them in ablutions and smudged them with incense. The Srid and sKos³⁵⁵ conferred the magnificence and blessings of their power on them. They were given the sanctification of the *lha* and *gsas*. [From] inside the nine eggs of the amazing *dbal* came all manner of sounds. The sound of thunder, lightning strikes and the sound of naturally arising letters appeared on their own. They promised to defeat the nine *g.yen* of violent death. Their power was developed by their father's glorifying of them. They were blessed by their mother's sanctioning of them.
- iii) The eggs of the *dbal* hatched. The eggshells were the manifestation countries of the *dbal*. The integuments were the miraculous rock formations of the *dbal*. The egg whites were the marvelous lakes of the *dbal*. The yolk of the jewel *dbal* eggs became the nine *gri-gsas* (violent death gods) horn-holder brothers. Above the nine miraculous *dbal* brothers dive 100 iron *khyung*. One hundred conch lions jump on their shoulders. On each of their bird horns of *dbal* there is thunder on the right side 'u ru ru,³⁵⁶ lightning on the left side *kham se kham*,³⁵⁷ and on the tips *dbal* fire *lhams se lham*.³⁵⁸
- iv) The jewel armor of each of [the *dbal*] is radiant with a blazing mass of fire and rays from which sparks of the *gsas* spread out. They depute the attendants of destiny of the past [life], the nine iron hawks of the swift *gsas*. From behind they lead those known as the rear protectors, the nine *dbal* tigers of savagery.³⁵⁹ On each of their wrathful *dbal* spears, which they respectively hold aloft, is the victory sign, the *dbal* banner. Each bow of the strongmen of the *dbal* shoots thunderbolt arrows *sha ra ra*.³⁶⁰ On each of their celestial iron³⁶¹ thunderbolt swords is zigzagging *dbal* lightning. From the mouths of the angry nine *dbal* comes the wrathful *thun*³⁶² spells *ri li li*.³⁶³

³⁵⁵ Along with Phya/Phywa, a celebrated cosmogonic triad of deities: Phywa-rje ring-dkar, the protector and witness of all sentient beings; Srid-rje 'brang-dkar, he who gave rise to the various beings; and sKos-rje drang-dkar, he who appoints and delegates the functions of the various living beings. For their description, see Norbu 1996, pp. 166, 274 (n. 11); and Karmay 1998, pp. 128, 129, 179 (n. 31).

³⁵⁶ Onomatopoeia for a thunderous sound.

³⁵⁷ This *sgra-rgyan* (sound ornament) of three syllables conveys a blindingly bright light.

³⁵⁸ This trisyllabic indicator captures the ever-shifting movement of flames.

³⁵⁹ This line contains the word *yam-pa*, which seems to describe the tiger. Its signification is unknown.

³⁶⁰ *Sha ra ra* indicates that the arrows are flying one after another directly into their targets.

³⁶¹ *gNam-icags*. A type of primordial metal said to have fallen from the heavens. For more information on this rare ancient material, see Bellezza 2005a, pp. 177, 178.

³⁶² A magical missile made from various types of materials. It is used to destroy noxious forces and beings. For further information, see Bellezza 2005a, Part Five, section vii.

³⁶³ This sound ornament is used to indicate the spinning motion of spheres.

- v) The roaring sound of the nine *gsas* terrifies the nine *g.yen*, demons (*bdud*) of violent death. The swaggering movement of the feet of the nine strongmen (*gyad*) suppresses the realm of violent death of the nine places. They each assume a share of the activities of defeating the nine *g.yen* demons of violent death, as the apportionment of the activities of the nine *dbal*. The name and appellation given to them is nine *gri-gsas* horn-holder brothers (*ru-thogs mched*).
- vi) During ancient times whose *lha* and *gsas* were these? The nine *gshen* of the conquerors of the *g.yen-khams* were praised with yaks and offered sheep. They were offered *phud* and illuminated by light. They were exalted with gold and respected with [offerings of] libations. Today, the *sri-gsas* are called to protect [and stay above] the head. Circle around the figures of the happy *dbal-bon*.
- vii) On account of this, the nine *gshen* of the lineage are very powerful when directed against the *gri* (demons of violent death), fierce and full of *dbal* wrath. When directed against the *btsan*, their commands are irresistible (*bka're btsan*). When directed against the *gri* and *bgegs*, (obstructor demons) they defeat them, rendering them docile like a horse tangled in a rope. When directed against the savage ones (*rngam*), they break them into submission like the kicker onager. When directed against the *btsan* and *g.yen*, the wild *btsan* and wild *g.yen* are disciplined in their dwelling-place.
- viii) *bSwo!* Tonight, in the middle of the turquoise sky,³⁶⁴ the *lha* and *gsas* of all the *gshen* of the lineage, *gri-gsas* and *dbal-gsas* with your power, and nine *gri-gsas* horn-holder brothers, come as the *lha* and *gsas* of us the *gshen-po*. Please bestow upon us the power of the splendid *dbal*. Let fall the benisons of the *gsas* of power and blessings. Please hold us in the benevolent embrace of your mind so we can subdue the *g.yen-khams*. Please bless us so we can subdue the realm of violent death.
- ix) We have obtained the power of the mighty and wrathful. That is why I, the great powerful *dbal-bon*, am fearless when defeating the orders of the *gri*. When I tame the savage ones none can be jealous. However I chant I am fearless. Whatever I do there is no jealousy. I am the great powerful *dbal-bon* of existence.
- x) Let fall the rain of the boundless *smrang* multitude of the sharp-edged tooth³⁶⁵ of truthfulness of Lha-drag *gsas-rgyas* lce-*dbal*. Utterly destroy the *gri-sri* of death. Lha-drag *gsas-rgyas* lce-*dbal*, the *gto* master, cuts forever the chain of death. Never let the [demons] appear again and cut the chain of death. Go to the *sri* and *gshed* of death, *bSwo!* *bswo!* We subdue!
- xi) *bSwo!* Also, rise *gri-gsas* and *dbal gsas*. The *sgra-bla* of the *dbal* are the *gri-gsas*. *sGra-bla* of the *dbal*, the *gri-gsas*, *bswo!* The protector of Bon are the *dbal-gsas*. Protector of Bon, the *dbal-gsas*, *bswo!* The regulator of the *gshen* are the swift ones (*mgyogs-pa*). Regulator of the *gshen*, the swift *gsas*, *bswo!*
- xii) To subdue the mighty *bdud* and *gri*: the mighty *gri-gsas dbal*, *bswo!* To cut the sharp-pointed hard iron: infernal blazing foundry of the blacksmith, *bswo!* To cut the horns of the 100 *gri* of death: great carnivorous *gri-gsas dbal*, *bswo!* To cut the wings of the 100 savage

³⁶⁴ Turquoise poetically portrays that the skies are clear.

³⁶⁵ *Ngar-so*. This metaphor demonstrates that the ritualist's speech is mighty and wrathful.

birds: strong *gsas* bird of the *dbal*, *bswo*! To cut from the root the tree of the *gri*: great sharp-edged meat cleaver *dbal*, *bswo*! To collapse from the peak the rock formation of the *gri*: decisively penetrating and overpowering thunderbolts of the *dbal*, *bswo*!

I will now provide a summary of the *smrang* (ritual proclamation) of the second reading in *Calling Down the Violent Death gSas of the gShed*, to further illustrate the origins and iconography of the *gri-gsas* protective gods of the Bon funerary tradition.³⁶⁶ This account features three *dbal* brothers born from eggs, who are described using typical zoomorphic imagery. Their father and mother are another set of primordial deities, the originators of the *bdud* and *btsan*. These parents of the divine allies of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are either closely related or identical to Ye-yod *dbal-srid* and Ye-bdag skos-btsun, funerary progenitors we have already considered. The origin myth of these funerary gods can be summed up as follows:

bSwo! High above the country, the country of the *dbal*, from the peak of the effulgent castle, the father was the great *dbal* patriarch Ye-yod rgyal-po (King of Positive Primal Existence), the father of the *bdud*. The mother was the *dbal* matriarch Ye-bdag btsun-mo (Noble Woman Primal Mistress), the mother of the *btsan*. They mated and produced three *dbal* manifestation eggs. From these eggs appeared three very strange and mighty sons. They have *khyung* and dragon helmets with flexible *khyung* horns. They are mounted on a lion, tiger and dragon. They are the three *dbal* brothers. During ancient times, they were the *lha* and *gsas* of the *gri-bon* Ra-ljags skyi-rgyal. This funerary priest, one of the 18 original lineage holders of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, made offerings of yaks, sheep, gold, turquoise, and conch to them. He erected the *mdung-dar* (spear with flag) of the *sgra-bla* and played the drum and *gshang* for them. That is why he was highly effective in the performance of the ritual to defeat the *gri* (demons of violent death).

6.14 The Mythic Origins and Destruction of the *gShed* Demons of Death

In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur the personifications of the cause of death, the misery experienced in the postmortem state, and the obstacles that prevent the deceased from attaining salvation are known as the *gshed/gshed-po/gshed-ma*. It seems, based on this fundamental Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary theme, that before the Buddhist doctrine of karma gained hold in Tibet, death was mainly attributed to demonic entities. The *gshed* are represented by various types of malevolent beings, each with its own origins, iconography and forms of malignancy. One of the best known of these is the *sri* (and the closely associated *srin*), which are still feared as a particularly baleful kind of spirit implicated in grievous harm and death. The *sri* are considered so dangerous by Tibetans that not only are individual deaths attributed to them but also a string of deaths affecting a single family or an entire community. This evil nature is in great contrast to the mother goddess *sri* of the *bla-rdo* tradition, which as discussed appears to belong to a primitive substratum of Tibetan civilization. The *gshed* also take the form of the *bdud* and the spirits in the intricate demonology set forth in several texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

The ubiquity of the *gshed* and their damaging activities are graphically expounded in *Subjugation of the gShed Requested by the Three Brothers of the Human Lineage*, a text belonging to another

³⁶⁶ See nos. 542, ln. 2 to 545, ln. 2. This origin tale is followed by a ritual of the same type and content as detailed above in the first portion of the text. The latter part of the text describes other sets of demon-destroying deities, which are also born from eggs.

Bon funerary cycle.³⁶⁷ The horrors unleashed by these demons are ample justification for the funerary priests dealing with them in the harshest possible terms:

Then, in the time of the separation of the body (*bem*) and mind (*rig*), the [*gshed*] accompanies the discriminatory awareness (*rig-pa*) and consciousness (*rnam-shes*) [of the deceased] like a body and its shadow. It blocks [the deceased] from the front and does not let him go to heaven (*mtho-ris*). [The deceased] is covered by darkness and buffeted by fierce winds. [The *gshed*] beats [the deceased's] right and left cheeks. It beats [the deceased's] feet, hands and head. It blocks [the deceased] from the front and pulls him from behind. It pushes [the deceased] into the three lower realms (*ngan-song*). It guides [the deceased] there from the front and pushes him from behind. If [the deceased] tarries it hits him and if he goes it steers him. [The *gshed*] pulls him from below and presses him down from above. In the morning it drinks the blood and eats the flesh [of the deceased]. In the evening it also drinks the blood and eats the flesh [of the deceased]. It plunders offerings of food and clothes made by the surviving members (*gson-po*) as well as the virtues [of the deceased]. It piles sins on [the deceased]. The *gshed* of death acts like that.

Origin tales of the *sri* are found in the text *The Downing of the Female gShed Killer Sky gShed from the Jewel Rosary Tantric Funeral Texts*.³⁶⁸ I have elected to provide a fairly loose translation of these origin myths to streamline the prose. I do, however, maintain the tone of language and grammatical structure of the passages in my translations. The first etiologic myth begins with the two birds of the *srin*, the parents of the *sri* (para. i). As this account of parentage demonstrates, the *srin* and *sri* are closely related in both etymological and functional senses. Nine *sri*, the embodiment of all human and equine misfortune, suffering and death are born to the *srin*. The *sri* are described as (the killers) of the *smra* (divine prototypical human beings), demonstrating their fundamental position in the human condition. The text focuses on the middle sister, the *mo-sri*, and details her mate and children (the *the'u-mo*) (para. ii). These 'little female *the*' are related to the well-known *the'u-rang* demons. The text informs us that this *mo-sri* and her children have been the source of death for females since the beginning of time.

The text now moves to a legendary couple of ancient times who lived in sMra-yul (probably a northwestern pastoral region of Tibet) (para. iii). They begot a daughter named sMra-lcam (sMra Woman) who went to be the wife of sMra-rje (sMra Lord). Interestingly, the wife's but not the husband's parentage is given in the text, hinting at a matrilineal social structure. Eager to enjoy her husband's company, the newlywed sMra-lcam went to search for her husband who had gone off deer hunting. On the way she met a silver frog who warned her of impending doom should she go ahead. This good frog recalls a similar character in an origin tale of the *sgra-bla* of the six

³⁶⁷ See *Mi rabs mched gsum gyis zhus pa'i gshed 'dur*. This text is part of a funerary volume of 548 folios known as *gSang phur* or, in long form, as *Khro bo dbang chen gyi gshed 'dur dang gsang phur nag po'i 'phrin las 'gug bsgral gnas 'dren skor gyi gsung pod* (*The Volume Appertaining to the gShed Subjugation of Khro-bo dbang-chen (Wrathful Great Power)* and the Activities of gSang-phur nag-po (Black Secret Dagger)* Evocation, Slaughter and Guidance*. New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 176, nos. 765–806), nos. 768, ln. 3 to 769, ln. 1. Tibetan Text III-22, pp. This text begins by providing the tale of origins of various *gshed* demons. It then notes that the *gshed* take the breath (*dbugs-bläng*), cut the life-force (*srog-gcod*) and pilfer the luster of the complexion (*mdangs kyang rlams*), thus causing death.

* Bon *yi-dam* deities.

³⁶⁸ *sNgags kyi mdo 'dun* (= 'dur) *rin chen 'phreng ba las mo gshed bsad pa gnam gshed sa la phab pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 1111–1130), nos. 1112, ln. 2 to 1115, ln. 2. As with the majority of texts in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, no author or colophon is given. Tibetan Text III-23, pp.

proto-clans (Bod mi'u gdung-drug), which is found in the Bon cosmogonic text *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags* (Karmay 1998: 271–273; Bellezza 2005a: 405–411). sMra-lcam did not listen to the sound advice of the frog, however, and was killed by Srin-mo rkun (Srin-mo Thief). sMra-rje's search for his wife was aided by the silver frog who informed him of the whereabouts of her corpse (para. iv).

With bags of gold dust, sMra-rje invited the *bon-po* Gong-rum (one of the original members of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur lineage) to perform the funerary sacrifice (of a sheep) (para. v). The explicit affirmation of the value of animal sacrifice in winning the favor of deities and appeasing the *sri* stands in stark contrast to Buddhist and later Bon concepts of propriety and utility. Through the occurrence of animal sacrifice, this account can be assigned to the archaic funerary tradition and cultural sources not postdating the aftermath of the imperial period. In fact, we find a similar origin tale of the *sri* in IOL 731 recto (see pp. 514–517). As with the archetypal sheep immolation for the good fortune of the deceased in *Sa-bdag Reparation Conquest with the Flayed Skin of the Life-Cutter gShed* (see pp. 439–441), this instance of animal sacrifice indicates that such funerary practices were a regular part of the archaic funerary milieu in Tibet. Of this there can be little doubt, for they are presented as an integral part of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur in both the apotropaic and fortune-bestowing modes of ritual disbursement. These sacrificial meat offerings known as *thang-sha* were designed to secure the assistance of the deities who conquer the demons of death. They are recorded as being presented to the *lha*, *gnyan* and *klu*, those elemental spirits of the three vertical realms of existence (*srid-pa'i gsum*) that are given so much prominence in archaic cultural horizon traditions. These three classes of deities have long been the object of offerings that served to muster their aid in warding off misfortune of every kind. *The Downing of the Female gShed Killer Sky gShed* also states that the meat offerings are essential in luring the *sri* to a specially built cavity (*sri-khung*) used in its ritual subjugation and slaughter:

- i) Both the father, the sky *srin* Ci-mi mu-rdzogs, and the mother *srin*, Bya-ma dgu-rdzogs, made a nest under the rock of the *bdud*. The two *srin* birds coupled and produced nine eggs of the *srin*. The eggs were incubated with human flesh and horse blood. From inside the nine hatched eggs appeared the nine *sri* of the *smra*. Born were rGan-sri mgo-skya (Sri of Elders Ashen Head), gZhon-sri dar-ma (Sri of Youth Prime Age), Mo-sri dar-ma (Sri of Females Prime Age), Chung-sri mo-sri (Sri of Children, Sri of Females), dBul-po'i med-sri (Sri of Poverty), Dar-sri (Sri of Prime Age), gShed-sri (Sri of Unnatural Death), God-sri (Sri of Livestock), and Phung-sri (Sri of Misfortune).
- ii) The middle one of the nine, the *mo-sri*, mated with Brag-the rgya-bo and begot seven savage female sisters, the *the'u-mo*. The *the'u-mo* and their mother and father are the *gshed* of all females. Since the beginning of existence until the present they are the great *sri* of all females.
- iii) During the course of that epoch, the country was sMra-yul thang-brgyad. The father was sMrang-bon zing-ba shig and he coupled with sMra-bdag btsun-mo. They begot sMra-lcam mi-mo thang. She went to be the wife (*khab*) of sMra-rje btsan-po. They thought to have a son. The husband went off hunting deer. The wife did not get a night to beget (*srid*) for a month. The wife went to search for her husband. She met a silver frog. The frog said to her, "Do not go ahead from here. If you go it will not be good." sMra-lcam went ahead. sMra-lcam mi-mo was killed by Srin-mo mi-rkun (Female Srin Thief of Humans).
- iv) The husband returned home. His wife was not at home. He went to search for his wife lCam mi-mo. He met the silver frog and asked it, "Have you seen my woman?" The silver frog

replied, “Your sMra-lcam mi-mo was killed by Srin-mo rkun on the pass of the *bdud*, Yang-mo'i khe-shod.” Upon reaching the *bdud* pass Yor-po, he saw the corpse (*spur*) of his wife.

- v) The husband then returned home. He invited the *gshen-bon* and *dbal-bon* Gong-rum.³⁶⁹ [The *bon-po*] loaded gold dust on a grain [transport] sheep (*'bral-lug*). He cried out and apportioned the funerary meat sacrifice (*thang-sha*). The head was the funerary meat sacrifice given over to the five *lha*. The nine vertebrae of the front of the body were the funerary meat sacrifice given over to the *gnyan*. The five vertebrae of the rear of the body were the funerary meat sacrifice given over to the *klu*. The *bdud* Srin-mo rkun was summoned by the power of the desired funerary meat sacrifice. It was summoned deep inside a *sri* cavity. The funerary meat sacrifice slaughter of the *sri* existed in that way. The female *gshed* of the deceased one was summoned by the power of the funerary meat sacrifice.

The Downing of the Female gShed Killer Sky gShed continues to detail the origin of another *gshed* in the form of a *mo-sri*.³⁷⁰ This etiologic tale is also set in the distant past in sMra-yul (para. i). The protagonist of the story, a young shepherdess, is slaughtered by a *mo-sri* who belongs to the *bdud* class of demons. The funeral ritual was convened by two *bon-po* who excavated a deep hole in the ground (*sri-khung*) in order to contain the murderous *sri* (para. ii). This rite entailed the erection of imprisoning pickets and meat offerings (from a special sacrificial animal). It appears that a doe was also sacrificed in the *sri-khung* rite, as its skin was needed to create an effigy of the soul of the *gshed* (perhaps at one time deer were tamed or domesticated in Tibet?). Another component of the *sri-khung* rite was the firing of an arrow, ostensibly a subjugating action. Despite this elaborate ritual conferment, the *mo-sri* escaped to a location in rTsang (gTsang) (para. iii). Undeterred, the ritualists paid the *lha* of rTsang, Byed-yug, and the mountain god of Yar-yul sogs-ka, Yar-lha sham-po, to block the demoness's escape. The *mo-sri* was then forcibly returned to sMra-yul and decapitated with the ax of the *gshed*:

- i) Also, how did the slaughter of the female *gshed* come into being? In the country of sMra-yul thang-brgyad, the father sMra-rje de-bo bshigs and the mother Klu-za ye-mo btsun begot a son, sMra-bu thang-brgya. In one year, Klu-za yang-mo btsun (*sic*) went to tend a flock of sheep. She slept on a large boulder. The *mo-sri* g.Ya'-bdud sngon-mo (Blue bDud of the Slates) put her hand into [Klu-za's] mouth and ripped out her heart.
- ii) Afterwards, both the husband and son invited the *gshen-bon* and *dbal-bon* Gong-rum and the *sri-bon* Mus-pa 'phrul-rol. Beneath the ground they dug a deep cavity for the *sri* and *gshed*. They then erected nine iron pickets (*ritsang*). They presented odorous burnt offerings [of meat]. They made a bitch and female wild dog *lda-'bras*.³⁷¹ On the skin of a bad omen doe they drew the *byang-bu* (a likeness) of the soul of the *gshed*. They hung it on the side of the *lda*. The son pulled the celestial iron bow taut and shot the magic copper arrow. The *mo-sri* escaped. She escaped to Kha-la rtsang-stod.

³⁶⁹ The great funerary *gshen* rMa-da, who received the *'dur* and *shid* methods from sTon-pa *gshen-rab*, is recorded as teaching the slaughter of the *sri* and the defeat of carnivore [demons] to the *dbal-bon* Gong-rum and three of his peers. See *Lha bon gshen gsum gyer*, para. vii, p. 386.

³⁷⁰ See nos. 1115, ln. 2 to 1116, ln. 6. Tibetan Text III-24, p. 635. Here too, I present a fairly loose translation of these passages.

³⁷¹ Effigies of animals that are used to summon the *sri* and *gshed*. Among the contemporary Bon-po of sTeng-chen, they are made of grass. An assistant of the officiant holds them in one hand while walking around the funeral venue. With the other hand he beats a flayed animal skin on the ground.

- iii) [The *bon-po*] offered gold dust to the *lha*. The one called Byed-yug, the *lha* of rTsang, blocked the path of escape of the *mo-sri*. Then [the *mo-sri*] escaped to Yar-yul sogs-ka and the one called Yar-lha sham-po blocked the path of escape. Once more she was summoned at sMra-yul thang-brgyad. She was made to go in the shadow of the *lda-'bras*.³⁷² The *mo-sri* was cut down deep from the root by the great sharp-edged ax of the *gshed*. She was killed by separating her head and body.

Let us examine another account of the *sri-khung* rite in *The Downing of the Female gShed Killer Sky gShed*, which is also set in early times.³⁷³ The first name of the father and son of the stricken family indicate that they were leading clan members or rulers of the country of rTsang/gTsang. In this tale, a *sri-bon* called Mi-mu performs the *sri-khung* rite at the behest of the husband and son of the victim (para. i). Instead of the hide of a doe, a *khram-shing*³⁷⁴ is used to incarcerate the soul of a *mo-sri* who is known by various names. Once the demoness of death is dispatched by the priests wielding ritual weapons, the *sri-khung* is sealed with nine (animal) skulls (para. ii). The use of animal skulls to imprison and slaughter various kinds of *sri* is still part of contemporary exorcistic rites carried out by lamas, *sngags-pa* and *lha-pa*:

- i) At gTsang-yul dbyi-gar, the father was rTsang-rje dbu-gar, the mother was Mo-btsun mchid-na, and the son was gTsang-sras dan-bu rung. During the course of that epoch, the one called rTsang-srin the-yan put its hand in the mouth of the one called Mo-btsun mchi-ma (*sic*) and pulled out her heart. Mo-sri the'u escaped. Both the father and son invited the *gshen-bon* and *dbal-bon*, and the *sri-bon* Mi-mu da-spa 'phrul-rol. They dug a deep *sri* cavity inside the ground. On a *khram-shing* of female willow wood they made [a figure] to capture the soul of gTsang-srin the'u. It was drawn with the blood of a slain dog. The soul of the *mo-sri* human killer was captured.
- ii) rTsang-srin the'u attached herself to the shadow of the *lda-'bras* and the heart of the *mo-sri* was penetrated by the arrow of destiny. Her lineage was severed by the ax and sickle. She was slain inside the deep *sri* cavity. The door of the *sri* [cavity] was sealed with nine skulls. The *mo-sri* was annihilated.

In yet another origin tale chronicled in the text *The Downing of the Female gShed Killer Sky gShed*, the 18 *sri* killers are noted collectively.³⁷⁵ As with the other narrations we have examined in this

³⁷² This sentence is part of two lines in the text, a portion of which does not have a clear meaning and is not included in the translation.

³⁷³ See nos. 1116, ln. 6 to 1118, ln. 1. Tibetan Text III-25, p. 635.

³⁷⁴ A board marked with crosshatches carried by various deities and used in destructive magic rituals. For further information, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 358, 359. In a bilingual Mongolian-Tibetan funerary text, the *khram* is given to the *ngar-mi* effigy and used to record the deceased's sins (Sárkózi 1987: 122–125).

³⁷⁵ See nos. 1123, ln. 3 to 1124, ln. 3. Tibetan Text III-26, p. 636. In addition to the four origin tales of the birth and destruction of the *gshed* I present in translation, the text contains several more short narratives about how individual women were killed by the *gshed* and *sri/srin*, as well as accounts about specific lineages of these homicidal fiends. Most importantly, each of these tales recounts the manner in which the demons were slaughtered in the *sri-khung* rite, furnishing precedents for its ritual practice. I will briefly review a few of these stories of violent death, not least of all to highlight the wide geographic scope of the *sri-khung* rite. One of these myths takes place in the country of sKyī-ro ljang-sngon, in dBus (nos. 1118, ln. 1 to 1119, ln. 3). The protagonists are an unnamed father (an inattentive copyist forgot a line), the mother gNyan-za lo-mo ma-btsun and their son Dar skyes-bu dar-ma. While riding an amazing magical stallion, the property of the family, the mother cried out on the red rock formation of sKyī. She was murdered by the *sri* of sKyī, Zhar-ba nag-po, by being thrown from her horse. The next tale recounts the origins of gNam-srin thog-pa and Sa-srin nu-le ma (nos. 1119, ln. 3 to 1120, ln. 3). Their two children, Shum-pha gru-pa rkang-ring and

text, the genealogy of the *sri* is given as a prelude to their ritual slaughter. Knowledge of the origins and parentage of the homicidal demons endows the ritualists with the means to eliminate them. In this account, a dyadic copper mountain and iron lake give rise to a yak and ox of like substances. These demonic livestock initiate a process of crossbreeding that leads to the appearance of the 18 *sri*. These 18 fiends are destroyed by a golden-headed *gnam-bon* wielding a meteoric iron sword. The *gnam-bon* was an ancient class of priests who traced their ancestry to the sky and were involved in ritual performances with a celestial dimension. The priest's head of gold suggests that he either wore a golden helmet or had light-colored hair:

In ancient times there grew nine trees in shady, not sunny [places], which coupled with a black lake under the shadow of the moon. Thereafter, the swirling vapor of the *srin* was born. Also, their lineage is cut from the base. A copper mountain and iron lake mated and begot both a copper ox and an iron yak. These two sinners mated and begot a butting black yak of the *bdud*. It mated with a copper mare (*rgod-ma*) and a nine-headed *gshed-po* was born. It had nine heads and bared fangs. It mated with Ngom 'gar-bu ma-mo and the 18 *sri* of violent death brothers and sisters were born. The one called Srin-mo mgo-dgu (Nine-Headed Female Srin) stayed in the country of Thugs-kar. By the celestial iron (*gnam-lcags*) hand-tool sword of the golden-headed *gnam-bon*, the head of the *srin-po* was severed. The 18 *sri* of violent death fell from the sky to earth and were slain.

The apprehension and execution of the *gshed* plays a pivotal role in the deceased's bid to leave the frightening confines of the postmortem existence and find his way to liberation. It is for this reason that great attention is paid to the various liturgical aspects of the *gshed* killing rituals in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and other Bon funerary materials. Provision for the extermination of the killer *gshed*, composed in a frank and unequivocal fashion, is found in another text from Mu-cho's funerary collection entitled *The Three Brothers of the Human Lineage Wrathful Conquerors of the gShed*.³⁷⁶ This graphic slaughter ritual unambiguously spells out the only acceptable fate for the *gshed*:

- i) Then grip the ax of the *gshed*: *bSō, bsō!* I am the wrathful excellent *gshed*-subduing person. For splitting the oath-breaker *gshed-po*, the material of the hard great-edged ax of the *gshed* is very hard wrought celestial iron forged by a very powerful blacksmith (*mgar-ba*). It is

Shul-song lag-ring, mated and produced the male and female *sri* of Myang-yul shing-nag. In the country of Ma-grus grub-shod, the father sTong kyi skar-ma and the mother dByal-mo rigs-bzang had a son and daughter named sKar-ma sras-ljon and sKar-ma lcam-cig (nos. 1120, ln. 3 to 1121, ln. 4). While the father was away hunting deer, the son looking after sheep and the daughter fetching water, the *srin* of Byang, De-ba se-ser, slew the mother, dByal-mo rigs-bzang. The clan/tribal name of the father (sTong), the presence of a *srin* of Byang (a northern region), and a place name belonging to the Shod grouping indicate that this story transpired in Sum-pa. The next account in the text is also set in the Tibetan uplands (nos. 1121, ln. 4 to 1123, ln. 2). It concerns sTong gi sgom-le'u, who took Ne'u tse rigs as his wife. While he was away hunting deer (*sha-bshor*) and hunting gazelle or antelope (*go-'grem*)* at Phyi-'brog rgyab-gang, his wife was murdered by a *brag-srin* named rGya-bo. When sTong gi sgom-le'u returned from his hunting trip his wife was not to be found. He discovered her corpse inside a beige cave. He invited the *gshen-bon* dBal-bon gang-rum and all the *sri-bon* to perform the *sri-khung* rite.

* For an explanation of this archaic Tibetan term, see p. 539, fn. 676.

³⁷⁶ See *Mi rab (= rabs) mched gsum khro bo'i gshed 'dul* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 1131–1163), no. 1143, lns. 1–4, and nos. 1144, ln. 5 to 1145, ln. 2. The colophon reads: "Zhang-zhung revealed treasure text (*gter-ma*) of the Srid-gshen Bon tradition. The hand-tool of sTag-la me-'bar is completed. This is the speech of sTon-pa gshen-rab [transmitted to] Srid-gshen gtsug-phud." Tibetan Text III-27, p. 636.

tempered with the blood of the *srin-mo*. Its handle is made of wrathful wood.³⁷⁷ Strike this on the head of the oath-breaker *gshed-po*. Split him from head to heels. Quickly slay the oath-breaker *gshed-po*.

- ii) Then hold the sickle: *bSō, bsō!* I am the wrathful excellent *gshed*-subduing person. For cutting from the root the oath-breaker *gshed-po*, the wrathful hard sickle of the *gshed* is made from the material of celestial iron thunderbolts. It is wrought, it is forged by the thunderbolt master blacksmith. It is tempered with the blood of the *srin-po*. It is inserted in the handle of the very strong black thorn [wood]. The rivets of *dbal* celestial iron are installed. It is offered to the hand of the subduing *gshed* butcher. Reduce to pieces and dust the chest, limbs, joints, and intervening structures of the oath-breaker *gshed*.

In this same text, the legendary history of the *gshed* killing ritual is comprehensively reviewed.³⁷⁸ This account is framed in the words of the Bon founder sTon-pa gshen-rab, who outlines the instruments and signification of the various components of the ritual of *gshed* annihilation. He explains to his unnamed disciples that humans are haunted by the *gshed* wherever they go (para. i). A reference by sTon-pa to oaths and sorcery perpetually binding humans implies that the evil forces which usher in mortality are inescapable. sTon-pa tells his disciples that the *gshed* are geographically unconstrained and all-inclusive in their search for victims. sTon-pa instructs his followers to prepare for battle, don their armor and take up arms against the *gshed*. The text then neatly lays out the ritual armaments needed by the priestly warriors for the capture and destruction of these homicidal demons (paras. ii, iii). In the order spoken by sTon-pa they include the snare (*zhags-pa*), skin bag (*gshed-sgro*), hammer (*tho-ba*), ax (*sta*), sword (*gri*), sickle (*zor-ba*), and flayed skin (*g.yang-gzhi*).

sTon-pa proceeds to list the ritual objects required by the attending deities and ritualists (para. iii). Among the exorcistic allotments spelled out by the founder of Bon are altars for the *lha* and *'dre* to contest and debate with one another (*pham-rgyal rtsod-pa*) (para. iv). These good and evil spirits appear to wrangle over the fate of the deceased in a debate overseen by the ritualists. sTon-pa also notes that different pieces of meat figure in the death of the *gshed*. The text, however, does not make direct mention of animal sacrifice. Such an association would be seen by modern Bon-po as disrespectful and inaccurate. Yet there is no escaping the fact that animal sacrifice is an integral part of the archaic funerary tradition, which was seen as fit for inclusion in the Bon canon and commentaries. It also appears that an officiant or presiding deity known as a *sngags-pa* had recourse to beer, referred to in the text in the traditional manner as 'hero's beer' (*dpa'-bo chang*). sTon-pa concludes his explication of the *gshed* slaughter ritual by noting that they, the ritualists, need libation offerings (*gser-skyems*) to give to the *yul-sa* and *gzhi-bdag*. As with virtually all Bon religious rituals of a utilitarian persuasion, these territorial deities always seem to play a part to a greater or lesser degree. The funeral venue must be rented from them and their friendship and cooperation won:

- i) sTon-pa spoke in these words: *bSō, bsō!* Three brothers of the human lineage listen, and please rise up, mighty witnesses.³⁷⁹ [People] are never free from oaths (*dam*) and witchcraft (*gtad*). [For subduing] this wretched oath-breaker *gshed-po*, the methods of performance are executed in accordance with the primary causes and secondary causes.³⁸⁰ This evil-doing

³⁷⁷ Such as yellow barberry (*skyer-ba*).

³⁷⁸ See nos. 1149, ln. 6 to 1152, ln. 4. Tibetan Text III-28, pp. 636, 637.

³⁷⁹ *Drangs-mkhan gnyan-po*. This refers to the deities participating in the ritual.

³⁸⁰ *rGyu*: the inherent evil nature of the *gshed-po*. *rKyen*: the current evil actions of the *gshed-po*.

oath-breaker *gshed-po* accompanies and befriends all [demons]. It covers all directions and the eight intermediate points.³⁸¹

- ii) This [*gshed*] accompanies indiscriminately, accompanying whomever. This [*gshed*] goes indiscriminately, going wherever. It goes in all four cardinal directions and the eight intermediate points. Firstly, we need to search for it. We must not loose it after finding it. We need to kill it without loosing it. Firstly, we need to go and search for it. We need to wear armor on the body. We need sharp weapons in the hand. We need an attendant who captures when in pursuit. After capture we need a snare to prevent its escape. We need a *gshed-sgro* so that it does not escape. We need a hammer to strike it.
- iii) We need an ax of the *gshed* to split it from head to heel. We need a sword of the *gshed* to separate its head and body. We need a sickle to cut it from the root. We need a flayed skin to butcher it. We need a *gtor-ma* to fulfill the *yi-dam*. For offering to the swift attendants and workers we need an ocean of blood [in a] copper vessel. We need a body support for the *lha-gsas dbal*. We need divine gifts (*lha-yon*) for the *bon* and *gshen*. For the suppression of tangible existence by our magnificence, we need a carpet of precious threads underneath us. For the condemnation of the *gshed* we need a turban to bind on the head. For the butchering of the *gshed* we need a hard sword that slaughters the *gshed*.
- iv) For cutting the *gshed-po* from the root we need the wide sleeves of the *sngags*.³⁸² For not poisoning the *lha* we need a cover for these *gtor-ma*. For the debate between the *lha* and *'dre* we also need both an altar for the *lha* and an altar for the *'dre*. For the activities of I, the dagger striker, we need a joint of *gshed* meat to strike the dagger on.³⁸³ We need a black tail to wave at the *gshed*. For collecting the *bla*, *yid* and *sems* of the *gshed*, these three, we need a left leg of the *gshed* meat.
- v) For offering into the mouth of the *lha* it is explained that the *ling-lpags*³⁸⁴ and leather thong (*brenng*) are needed. For enhancing the magnificent appearance of the *sngags-pa* it is explained that the hero's beer is needed. For offering to the *yul-sa* and *gzhi-bdag* we need the nectarous golden libation offering. These words of sTon-pa were the conferred teaching.

To complete this exposition of the *gshed* slaughter rituals, I will provide a review of a manuscript describing the activities of a bumblebee funerary deity.³⁸⁵ Although this text is not part of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection of the Bon *bka'-brten*, it comes from to the same wellspring of archaic funerary traditions. Like many other destroyers of the *gshed*, this bumblebee named Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung (Sri-gsas Little Tiger Bumblebee), belongs to the *dbal* lineage of Bon wrathful deities and practitioners. The same god is recorded as helping a little girl whose

³⁸¹ This is followed by two lines of faulty grammatical composition pertaining to the search and capture of the *gshed-po*. They are not included in the translation.

³⁸² This refers to the secret hand signals made inside the sleeves of a robe for exorcistic purposes.

³⁸³ This is followed by a line that expounds upon use of the ritual dagger (*phur-pa*). Its precise meaning is unclear and it is not included in the translation.

³⁸⁴ This appears to be an object made from the skin of a slaughtered animal that is used as a ransom offering.

³⁸⁵ See *Sri gsas bong ba* stag chung* (8 fols., no author or finder recorded) (*The Call of the Blue Cuckoo. An Anthology of Nine Bonpo Texts on Myths and Rituals*, text 6), pp. 185–189; and *Khro bo dbang chen gyi gshed 'dur dang gsang phur nag po'i 'phrin las 'gug bsgral gnas 'dren skor gyi gsung pod* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 176, nos. 691–703).

* Modern equivalent: *bung-ba* (bumblebee).

family has fallen victim to a *sri* in IOL 731 recto (see pp.). His special function is to apprehend and kill the *chung-sri*, the malevolent beings responsible for the death of children. Rather than furnishing an etiologic myth for the *chung-sri*, the Bon text colorfully specifies the origin of Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung and how he came to be so powerful. He is empowered by a lioness, wild yak, *khyung*, vulture, tiger, *sa-bdag*, *klu*, and *gnyan*, all of which we are already familiar with in their Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur roles as divine heroic characters. Once the bumblebee divinity is fully empowered, his awesome capabilities are recounted in the text.

The text now turns to an ancient earthly setting in no other than sMra-yul, the locus of so many ancient myths of origin. The fact that the father goes off to hunt deer and the mother to collect *gro* (*Potentilla anserina*) strongly suggests that this country is located in the Tibetan uplands. Furthermore, sMra is a classic appellation of the Zhang-zhung country and tribe. While the parents are away hunting and foraging, their two beloved children are murdered by a *chung-sri*. After the burial of the children, a funeral rite is performed by Zang-ste mong-thung, Sri-bon dmu-'phen be'u-ra, and gShen-rab mi-bo, who in this story does not occupy a place that greatly distinguishes him from his priestly associates. They rather appear to be archetypal peers, which as we have seen, also seems to be the case in Dunhuang manuscript citations of gShen-rab myi-bo. As in other *gshed* destruction ritual accounts we have examined, the one performed here is predicated on the capture of the soul of the *gshed* and its imprisonment in a hole in the ground. The text then returns to the killing prowess of Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung in some detail. It concludes with the happy news that the couple of sMra-yul gave birth to another son in the following year. The Sri-gsas bong-ba stag-chung text can be summed up as follows:

In the country of the *dbal* yak, *dbal* mountain and *dbal* lake, the father dBal-lce sgong-dkar and the mother dByig-dbal sngon-mo tended an iron egg as large as a pea. This egg traveled to various places to receive empowerments (*dbang-skur*). At Kha-'og it received the empowerment of *dbal-so*.³⁸⁶ It received empowerments from bDud-rje khyab-pa, dMu-rje bdud-rje btsan-pa and bTsan-rje 'phro-ba. On the summit of Ti-se gangs-dkar it received the empowerment of the white lioness. It went to the blue slates and received the empowerment of the *gar-gshog 'brong*.³⁸⁷ It rose above the red rock and received an empowerment from the king of the birds, the vulture. It went within a forest and received an empowerment from the big striped tiger. It went inside the ocean and received an empowerment from Chu-rje dung (Lord Water Conch). It went to the country of the mighty *sa-bdag* and received an empowerment from the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan*. It also went before the *gshen* practitioners. It went to the country of the *dbal* and by the blessing of the father lCe-rgod dkar-po and the mother dByi-dbal sngon-mo, the iron egg as big as a pea rose above the white rock formation.

From the egg a wonderful animal appeared. He had tiger stripes on his body, the horns of the wild yak on his head, the wings of the vulture, the fangs (*dbal-so*) of the white lioness, the pouch (*rkyal-bu*) of medicinal nectar, and the fierce spear head. He gave himself the name Sri-sras (= Sri-gsas) bong-nga (*sic*). In the text this bumblebee also lists the various empowerments he received.³⁸⁸ He adds that he has the empowerment of gNam-phyi gung-rgyal. Sri-gsas bong-nga also notes that he is more savage (*khro-gtum*) than the *bdud*, more wrathful³⁸⁹ than the *dmu* and more angry than the *btsan*. He further states that he is the great son of Bon, that he received the

³⁸⁶ This is probably a martial ritual procedure pertaining to a sharp spear point.

³⁸⁷ A fine wild yak specimen with an extremely long belly fringe.

³⁸⁸ Such as, "I received the empowerment of the white lion so I have fangs in my mouth."

³⁸⁹ *Khro-tshigs* (= *khro-tshig*).

empowerment of gShen-rab mi-pho, and that is why he displays the manner of a *gshen*. Sri-gsas bong-nga subdued the kidnapper *chung-sri*. He was appointed the *lha-gsas* by sTon-pa gshen-rab and Sri-bon mus-pa pha-re.

In the country of sMra-yul thang-brgyad, in the castle of sMra-mkhar ldem-pa, the father was rMa-rje btsun-po and the mother sMra-za 'brang-chung. The son of their union was sMra-sras ljon-pa skyes. Their daughter was sMra-lcam btsun-mo ran. The two children smiled and wandered about while their father was deer hunting. The mother sKyid-za 'brang-khug³⁹⁰ gave the children a gold ring, a silver mirror and a conch shell bracelet. With a bag over her shoulder and a digging stick (*mkhar-bu*), she set out to the place where three valleys meet to collect *gro*. In the morning the brother and sister played with the gold ring, silver mirror and conch bracelet.³⁹¹ In the afternoon the children became irritable and called for their mother but their mother did not hear them. The crying of the children, however, was heard by a *sri*. The text now goes on to provide the names and country of the *sri* demon. He was called Zang-ste mong-thung, a small copper man who lives under the boulder of the *sri*. He brutally killed the two children and ran back to his boulder. That night the parents returned to find their children dead. They wailed loudly. They buried the children's corpses in the ground (*bu'i spur de sa dang dog la mnan te bzhag l*).

The parents met the *bon-po* of the sky, Kho-ra khod-chung, the 'stopper of death'.³⁹² He did a divination and reported that the two children were eaten the day before by Zang-ste mong-thung, who hid under the kidnapping boulder. The *bon-po* said that they must now take their revenge on the *sri*. The *gto* and *dpyad* were performed by gShen-rab mi-bo and Sri-bon dmu-'phen be'u-ra. They dug a triangular hole for the *sri* and erected a picket around it. In the hole they placed the *bla-byang*.³⁹³ Sri-bon be'u ra invoked the *lha-gsas*, and bound the soul tablet (*bla-byang*) of the *chung-sri* with a leather cord. He beat the soul tablet on the ground, causing the *sri* and his *bla* to separate. He thus conquered the *chung-sri* and destroyed its soul and mind.

The text proceeds to describe slaughter of the *sri* demon in more detail. The divine bumblebee *sri* Sri-gsas bong-nga chased the evil *sri* among the various places in which he had received empowerments. The *sri-gsas* drove the demonic *sri* from place to place until the demon finally arrived back at his lair under a boulder. Sri-gsas bong-nga then threw a golden *thu-lum* (a kind of magical missile), rendering the demon unconscious. He then stabbed the *chung-sri* with his horns of the wild yak, bit him with his fangs of the white lioness, whipped him with his wings of the lammergeyer, and mauled him with his claws of the tiger, thus killing Zang-ste mong-thung. The good bumblebee offered the dead *chung-sri* to the *lha* and ate its heart. In that way, the parents took revenge on the killer of their children. The text concludes by informing us that in the next year, the parents gave birth to a new son named sMra-gsas 'phrul-bu.

³⁹⁰ Name as in text. sKyid is a well-known clan associated with the sKyid/sKyid-chu region.

³⁹¹ *gDug-gu* (= *gDub-bu*).

³⁹² *Shi gab gcod*. This refers to the prevention of further death and misfortune among surviving family members.

³⁹³ A tablet with the name, clan and likeness of the *sri* demon that is used to capture its soul.

6.15 Salvation and the dGa'-yul Paradise

The only Bon description of the dGa'-yul (Joyous Country) that has come to my attention is found in a commentary on the famous Bon cosmological text *Srid pa'i mdzod phug*.³⁹⁴ The *Srid pa'i mdzod phug* root text begins by describing the origins of the physical universe and the formation of the world mountain Ri-rgyal from the elements. The commentary devoted to this cosmological sequence details what lies above Ri-rgyal, reinforcing the montane and ethereal character of the dGa'-yul. This textual account makes no mention of the dGa'-yul as an afterlife or ancestral realm. It does nonetheless depict the dGa'-yul as a geographic paradise with limpid water and mountains and abundant crops and vegetation. The joyous or salutary nature of dGa'-yul is confirmed by synonyms used to describe paradise in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature such as *gtsang-sa* (pure land), *bde-ba'i sa* (blissful land) and *mtho-ris* (heaven). As indicated by the funerary bestowals (*gtad-g.yar*) we have examined, this final resting place was envisioned as an idealized form of the world of the living, containing parallel physical and social structures.³⁹⁵ Interestingly, the folk belief that the deceased in the world beyond maintains the same appearance he had whilst alive continues to persist in Tibet (Tucci 1980: 199).

Kværne (1985: 7) observes that the dGa'-yul of the archaic tradition came to be conceived by the Tibetans as tantamount to a better rebirth in the Buddhist cosmological realm of the gods. Indeed, the dGa'-yul of the *Srid pa'i mdzod phug* does have a close mythological association with the Ri-rab (the world mountain) Buddhist Ālaka paradise of Vajrapāni, a heavenly realm, which features in PT. 239 and *Bar do thos grol*.³⁹⁶ Evans-Wentz (1927: 62) provides us with more lore regarding this syncretistic paradise: above Ri-rab are the 33 heavens ruled by Indra; the highest heaven ('og-min) is the access point to nirvana and is presided over by Kun-tu bzang-po, the primordial Buddha. The eschatological conceptions behind these outward similarities between the archaic cultural horizon and Buddhist paradises are, however, very different. In the prevailing Bon and Buddhist funerary systems, ritual exercises are carried out not to insure a permanent placement for the deceased in the ancestral afterlife, but to deliver him from the endless round of birth and death (cf. *ibid.*: 8). In a further amalgamation of funerary tradition, the *gZi brjid* equates the deliverance of the deceased to the *bde-ba'i gnas* (holy sphere of bliss) with the attainment of the *dgra-bcom* (*arhat*) stage of spiritual development (Snellgrove 1967: 122, 123). This *bde-ba'i gnas* is the more abstract Buddhist-influenced counterpart to the literal *bde-ba'i sa* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

In the *Srid pa'i mdzod phug* commentary, dGa'-yul is the dwelling place of the chief Vedic god Indra, who is equated with the native Tibetan cosmogonic deity Yab-bla bdal-drug. This

³⁹⁴ See the commentary *bDen pa bon gyi mdzod sgo sgra 'grel 'phrul gyi lde mig* by Dran-pa nam-mkha' (found alongside the root text (*rtsa-bal/gzhung*) *Srid pa'i mdzod phugs kyi rtsa 'grel*, pp. 1–239), p. 49, lns. 7 to 19. Tibetan Text III-29, p. 637.

³⁹⁵ In his groundbreaking work *A Death Ritual of the Tibetan Bonpos*, Kværne (1985: 7) briefly discusses imperial period funerary traditions. He notes that the way to the 'land of joy' (*dga'-yul*) was long and difficult and dependent on the correct performance of the funerary rites. He further comments that the sacrifice of animals served as a ransom to malignant spirits, and that in the 'land of joy' the dead apparently required the various objects they had used in their daily lives. With the subsequent publication of the Bon *bka'* and *bka'-brten* collections, we now know, however, the assertion made by Kværne that the Tibetans had more or less forgotten such ancient beliefs by the 11th century CE (*ibid.*: 8) is not warranted. As we have seen, the ancient funerary traditions sketched by Kværne in his 1985 work are an integral part of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur; the Bon-po having seen it appropriate to preserve and propagate them in their systematized literature.

³⁹⁶ For information on the Ālaka, see Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 189, 189 (n. 4); Cuevas 2003, p. 37.

assimilative correspondence may have originated with the development of syncretistic doctrinal mechanisms in the imperial period, as Indic religious ideas gradually infiltrated pre-existing Tibetan cultural structures. It will be recalled that, in the enumeration of the *gtad-g.yar*, Indra is one of the gods who escorts the deceased to the dGa'-yul, as does the native deity Lha-bo lha-sras. In the commentary on the *Srid pa'i mdzod phug*, the full name of the paradise is given as 'Northern Joyous Land Reaching the Lha of Joyfulness' (rGa-yul byang-rnams rga-ldan gyi lha la snyog-pa).³⁹⁷ The idealized land from which the primal funerary transport horses originated in PT. 1136 also has a boreal orientation. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that other northern utopia that developed in later historic times, the famed Sham-bha-la.³⁹⁸ The dGa'-yul of the commentary is described as follows:

- i) In the center of that known as the good house of the king of the *lha* is he who controls the precious gems, he who is known as Lha'i dbang-po brgya-byin (Indra). He is also called Yab-bla bdal-drug.³⁹⁹ There exists his stronghold castle of the life-force (*srog*), which is known as rNam-par rgyal-ba'i khang-bzang (Good House of Complete Victory). It is also known as Phywa yi srog-mkhar g.yu-rtse (Turquoise Peak Life-Force Castle of the Phywa). Ri-rgyal is higher than the earth. The life-force castle is higher, higher than Ri-rgyal.
- ii) [In accordance with the root text] there are the mountains of the *phywa*, *rgyal*, *gnod-sbyin*, and *bdud*. There exist the four *cog*⁴⁰⁰ in the four intermediate directions of Ri-rab. On the black mountain of the northeast resides bDud shor-ba gzhon-nu (Youthful bDud Hunter).⁴⁰¹ In the northwest is the mountain at which 'Khor-ba gting-nag, the son of Rlung-lha bdab-chen (Wind Lha Great Wings), resides. In the southwest resides sKo-ba byed-skyen, the son of Phywa kha-rje thang-po. In the southeast is the place at which 'Od las skyes (Born from Light), the son of the great king Nyi-pang sad,⁴⁰² resides.
- iii) *Spreading Mountains, Water, Earth, Herbs, and Trees* (the root text) says that at such an abode the mountains are very high so the land is very pure. The waters are cool so they are rejuvenating for all. From the earth, the crops ripen and the herbs and trees thrive, so [this abode] has perfected things. It is known as Northern Joyous Land Reaching the Lha of Joyfulness.

³⁹⁷ rGa-yul (= dGa'-yul), rGa-ldan (= dGa'-ldan). rGa may be an older spelling for dGa'. In PT. 1136, we find the analogous dGa'-yul byang-nams/dGa'-yul byang-rnam. See pp. 518, 520.

³⁹⁸ In Tibetan popular culture Ge-sar, the world ruler, redeemer and cultural hero, will come from Sham-bha-la in the north (cf. Hummel 1998: viii, 9). Within this widespread belief are echoes of a promised land mythology at variance with orthodox Buddhist soteriology. As such, Sham-bha-la may at least in part owe its existence to eschatological elements set forth in the archaic funerary tradition.

³⁹⁹ For general information on this cosmogonic deity, see Haahr 1969; Bellezza 2005a.

⁴⁰⁰ Tabernacles on the summit of Ri-rab, which are perhaps in the shape of natural rock battlements. Also spelled *lcog*.

⁴⁰¹ *Shor-ba* = hunter. General synonyms include *rngon-pa* (hunters of all types), *khyi ra-ba* (hunter with hounds) and *lings-pa* (herd killer).

⁴⁰² The king of the *sad* (*lha*). Nyi-pang sad is a white deity who protects the Zhang-zhung snyan-brgyud tradition of rDzogs-chen. See p. 325, fn. 359.

7 The Archaic Funerary Traditions of the *Klu 'bum nag po*

7.1 Textual References to the *Klu* and Tombs

A rich source of archaic funerary traditions has been preserved in *Klu 'bum nag po*, one of a group of three ritual texts concerning the cult of the *klu* spirits collectively known as *Klu 'bum*. Unlike the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection, where many Buddhist-inspired ideas and practices have seeped into the funeral rituals, *Klu 'bum nag po* exhibits little promotion of Indic tradition. The funerary materials in this text primarily deal with myths, rituals and material objects that developed prior to the 11th century CE.

There is a *Klu 'bum nag po* narrative that unfolds without the benefit of the figures 'Dur-gshen rma-da, Mu-cho ldem-drug and gShen-rab mi-bo, which of course play a leading role in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.⁴⁰³ Both literary sources, however, record a Srid-gshen system of funerary ritual tradition, demonstrating that they are closely related in a doctrinal sense. While the origin tale of the *sri* progenetrix in *The White Soul Stone Introduction to the Soul Stone Wool or Support* is likely to have preserved a stream of archaic funerary tradition at variance with what is usually encountered in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Dunhuang manuscripts, there is no real indication of this in *Klu 'bum nag po*. This *Klu 'bum* text, nevertheless, furnishes a more elementary account of ritual origins in more old-fashioned language, suggesting that it may have been composed before the etiologic myths of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

The tale begins with the name of the *Klu 'bum nag po* in the Zhang-zhung, Sum-pa and Tibetan languages, a common way of prefacing ancient ritual narratives in the Bon tradition (para. i). Similarly, in IOL 731 recto, a funerary narrative begins with the name of the patriarch in both the Tibetan and Nam languages (see p. 515). In *Klu 'bum nag po*, the personages known as Srid-gshen mgon-po/gTo-gshen mgon-po and dBang-gshen yang-dag are recorded as having received the foundations of Bon ritual practice, the *gto* and *dpyad*, from their father gShen-dbang gi rdo-rje (rdo-rje is most likely a later editorial emendation) (para. ii). gTo-gshen-mgon-po was also given the funerary tradition by his father (the two youngest brothers are not mentioned by name in the text). In order to carry out the funerary rites, gShen-dbang gi rdo-rje conferred a magical or archetypal drum, *gshang* and conch upon him (para. iii). Special terminology is attached to these ritual implements, as it is to weapons, part of an inborn Tibetan tradition of which little is now known (see p. 342). The text goes on to describe in colorful terms how gTo-gshen-mgon-po commenced the death rites for all beings of the universe:

- i) In the language of Zhang-zhung: *du pu ka ye pha ta 'dra*. In the language of Sum-pa: *thol lo ma zhi*. In the language of Tibet it is known as the pure *Klu 'bum nag po*, the sutra (*mdo*) of the great swastika vehicle. In the square plains *gshen* country, in the shimmering castle of the *gshen*, the father and patriarch was named, he was gShen-dbang gi rdo-rje. The mother and matriarch was named: she was dMu btsun-za'i bzang-mo.
- ii) These two coupled and the sons of the season appeared as the four brother *gshen* sons. The eldest brother (*phu-bo*) *gshen-po* was Srid-gshen mgon-po. The next younger brother was

⁴⁰³ See *Klu 'bum nag po*, vol. 3 (*ga*), Delhi edition (same as Dolanji text), nos. 64, ln. 1 to 65, ln. 1. For bibliographic data see, p. 482, fn. 407. Tibetan Text III-30, pp. 637, 638.

dBang-gshen yang-dag. The father conferred the *gto* and *dpyad* upon them. He gave the funerary traditions to gTo-gshen mgon-po. To the younger brother, dBang-gshen yang-dag, he taught the essential ritual performances.

- iii) As a share of his wealth the father gave the excellent *gshen* eldest brother (*thu-bo*) the drum *bo-lo gnam-grags*,⁴⁰⁴ the *gshang phro-ma dril-chen*, [and] the conch *par-po pha brdung*, so gTo-gshen mgon-po [performed] the funerary rituals for the dead: all the wretched (*nyon-mongs*) sentient beings. Also he searched for that which was lost. From the high divine ritual components downwards and upwards from the low *mun-po rna-bon*,⁴⁰⁵ all were put under the *gshen*. From the high *khyung* downwards and upwards from the low *chad-kha chung* (a species of bird?), he subjugated [all] by the wing. From the high lion downwards and upwards from the low fox and *sbre* (marten), he offered [carnivores to the deities and the deceased]. From the high herbivore (*dud-'gro*) great wild yak and upwards from the low sheep of existence, he offered [herbivores to the deities and the deceased].⁴⁰⁶

As in the origin myths of the *gshed* slaughter rituals of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *Klu 'bum nag po* provides an account of how a hapless figure was murdered by demons in the distant past. It also describes the ritual provisions made for his salvation. Furthermore, *Klu 'bum nag po* furnishes a detailed picture of the emergency measures that were taken in an attempt to save this mortally wounded individual. This account is of considerable historical and ethnomedical value.

The ritual underpinnings of the funeral described in *Klu 'bum nag po* closely correspond with those in the Mu cho'i khrom-'dur. Clearly, these traditions are derived from the same broad cultural and historical sources. There are, however, significant elaborations of these funerary traditions in *Klu 'bum nag po* not found in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. For one thing, *Klu 'bum nag po* furnishes biographical data about Mu-cho not found in his namesake collection of funerary texts. This fact, as well as the scattering of funerary texts throughout the Bon canon and commentaries, emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the extant archaic funerary materials. Some or perhaps even most of the archaic funerary tradition (especially regarding regional funerary customs, mortuary rites and tomb construction) must have been lost. This is underlined by the extensive ritual vocabulary used in *Klu 'bum nag po* with little or no additional comment, presupposing large reservoirs of tradition well beyond the bounds of the surviving textual records.

⁴⁰⁴ This is either a special type of drum or the name of a specific drum. The same holds true for the untranslated modifying phrases associated with the other two musical instruments in the sentence.

⁴⁰⁵ This may possibly refer to objects used in the subterranean realms.

⁴⁰⁶ The text goes on to describe the vicissitudes faced by gTo-gshen mgon-po (nos. 65, ln. 2 to 66, ln. 3). The theme of the transformation of spirits into animal and human forms dominates the narrative: gTo-gshen mgon-po thought to search for a place in which to engage in meditation. He rode a turquoise dragon of the swastika and came to Lha'i 'dun-bar. Once when he was meditating, the king of the *bgegs* (obstructors) manifested as a youth and came to interrupt his meditation (*mtshams brdol du 'ong*), but was unable to. Afterwards, dMu-bdud manifested as a sparrow (*mchil-pa*) and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. Then after sunrise, a *dmu* manifested as a red wild dog (*'phar-ba*) and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. In the midday a *rog-se skye-bo* (?) riding a white horse came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. Just before midnight the queen of the *bdud* manifested as the cow of the *srin* and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. At midnight a *mkha'-'gro* manifested as a copper [red] bitch and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. After midnight a *dam srid* (= *sri*) manifested as a striped bitch and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. When the cock cried, a *klu* manifested as a *rko-rkang* (a species of bird?) and came to interrupt his meditation, but was unable to. After this episode, gTo-gshen mgon-po earned the ire of the *klu* by misplacing various monuments.

The translation I provide below is taken from two different copies of *Klu-'bum nag po*, which vary considerably in their exposition of the funeral and the events that both precede and follow it.⁴⁰⁷ The account begins with an account of the Tshangs-pa family of early times and their place of residence (paras. i, ii).⁴⁰⁸ With his coming of age, the eldest son Tshangs-pa rab-'byor/Tshangs-par rab-'byor/Tshangs-chen rab-'byor acquired a special horse as his patrimony (*[pha] phog*). Intent on fulfilling his adult responsibilities, he went on a long hunting excursion to the north of Tibet to hunt wild ungulates such as deer (*sha*), blue sheep (*rna*) and gazelle (para. iii).⁴⁰⁹ Presumably, such an undertaking was part of a male's passage to adulthood in ancient Tibet. Certainly, the rock art of the Byang-thang and sTod glorifies hunting, and the prowess and bravery of hunters is stressed. This *Klu 'bum* reference to deer in northern Tibet is ecologically noteworthy because this ungulate is now extinct throughout the region (save for the periphery). Nevertheless, the existence of deer was a fact borne out by the frequent depiction of this animal in the rock art of Upper Tibet and the occasional unearthing of deer skeletons in the Byang-thang.

While searching for game Rab-'byor befriended a male *srin*, who is portrayed as having a strange character (para. iv). Misfortune struck the pair when they were confronted by seven bellicose *bdud* horsemen. This is the well-known Upper Tibetan group of *bdud-btsan* called Rol-pa/Rol-po skya-bdun/rkya-bdun (para. v).⁴¹⁰ With little provocation, the *bdud* rol-po skya-bdun killed the *srin* and critically wounded Rab-'byor. When Rab-'byor returned home to his family, they were extremely distraught by what had befallen him (para. vi). He then told them what had happened and requested that a physician be called (paras. vi, vii). A learned physician was summoned by a younger brother, and the doctor commenced to make a diagnosis and carry out various medical procedures (para. viii). The dressing for the wound came from the fresh skin of a sheep. The prognosis given was not very hopeful. For his medical services the doctor was paid with a sheep. Three days later the physician returned to discover that the wound was not healing (para. ix). He applied a different type of dressing, relying on the mild antiseptic and analgesic properties of poplar. Five days on, the doctor visited Rab-'byor again and was dismayed by his condition. At sunrise on the following day the patient was no better (para. x). After a month the physician performed an emergency operation to remove the pus (*rnag*) from the suppurating wound, but to no avail, and Rab-'byor passed away.

The *Klu 'bum* account now moves to the preparations made for his grand funeral (para. xi). An unnamed learned ritualist (*gtsug-lag*) is recorded as conducting the *gto* and *dpyad*. The *dpyad* refers here to a divination conducted to determine what evil forces were afflicting the deceased and the best time for the funeral. The *gto* denotes the selection of funeral rites that are to be performed. Among the initial funerary activities is the deposit of the corpse in what appears to have been a special reliquary or coffin (*ldang khur-ring*). The *gshen* funerary priests are then called in by the family of Rab-'byor (para. xii). The text states that they serve to accomplish the twin objectives of the funerary ritual (as amply conveyed in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur): to benefit the deceased and to protect the living from the misfortune attendant in death.

⁴⁰⁷ These texts are: 1) *Klu 'bum nag po* (*bka'* text), (*bka'* vol. 100, nos. 1–240, published by Kun-grol lha-sras mi-pham nam-rgyal in Chengdu, Sichuan, 1996); and *Gtsang Ma Klu 'Bum Chen Mo: A reproduction of a manuscript copy based upon the Tāranātha tradition of the famed Bonpo recitational classic*, vol. iv, *Klu 'Bum Nag Po* (Dolanji text) (Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre: Dolanji, 1977). Hereafter these are referred to as the *bka'* and Dolanji text.

⁴⁰⁸ The first 12 paragraphs of my translation are from the *bka'* text, nos. 32, ln. 5 to 39, ln. 4. See Tibetan Text III-31, pp. 638, 639.

⁴⁰⁹ *rGol/dgo*. Rather than the gazelle, this may denote the Tibetan antelope. See p. 539, fn. 676.

⁴¹⁰ This group of fierce spirits is given extensive coverage in Bellezza 2005a.

After the funeral was announced by the priests Mu-co (*sic*) and rGal-gshen, the first sacrifice of a sheep of the *srin* was made. This is an indication that a *srin/sri* was held responsible for the death of Rab-'byor. *Klu 'bum nag po* then lists the objects and animals needed for the funeral (paras. xii, xiii). These include a *ltos* yak and a *ltos* horse. The signification of the word *ltos* has been lost. It would appear to be closely related to *gtad*, those animals given to fulfil the desires of the deceased so that he does not covet the wealth of his living relatives. As we have seen, the *gtad* horse and sheep also serve as the mount and guide, respectively, for the deceased on his way to dGa'-yul. If the *ltos* livestock indeed correspond with the *gtad* animals, it does not appear that they were sacrificed. There is no indication in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur that the *gtad* vehicles were killed, as this would not seem in keeping with their august function and consequent ritual demobilization. On the other hand, the *gshed* sheep and *gshed* goat were sacrificed to propitiate the divine allies and defeat the demonic causes of death.

The occurrence of the word *dri* in several contexts in the text is not enigmatic. This is an alternative spelling for *gri*, those ritual personnel, deities, objects, and procedures associated with neutralizing the evils associated with violent death. The same letter transposition is commonly found in the name of King Gri-gum/Dri-gum. The provision of a wing, clothes, horns, sacrificial animals, ritual objects (*yas*), and other things for the priest known as the *dri-bon* indicates that *dri* (*gri*) refers to a large cross-section of the funeral activities. The *dri-bon* is recorded as overseeing the ritual slaughter of animals, which indicates that the *dri* livestock mentioned in the text met such a fate. The *Klu 'bum* now moves to the actual burial, a commemorative funerary event held one year after the death of Rab-'byor, which entailed the making of various astrological calculations (para. xiv).

Klu 'bum nag po temporarily leaves the funerary narrative to focus attention on the king and queen of the *klu* multitude (para. xv). Klu-rgyal commanded his son to release the hosts of *klu*, which were then appointed (*bskos*) masters (*bdag*) of all the various kinds of natural environments as well as of manmade shrines (paras. xx–xvii). This material may represent a later textual emendation. The text then resumes the narrative of the funeral, detailing the astrological calculations made for the burial ceremony (para. xviii). It was also determined that the next of kin would encounter no more problems resulting from the death of Rab-'byor. The funeral activities connected to burial involved the sacrifice of more livestock and the brewing of beer. In addition to the *dri-bon*, the 'dur-gshen also participated in this phase of the funeral (para. xix). It is written that these funerary activities lasted for days. One of the rites performed was the beating of a (flayed) skin on/above the *se*. As we have learned, the striking of the flayed skins (*g.yang-gzhi*) of sacrificial animals on the ground is part of a special rite to eliminate demonic forces that impinge upon the deceased's passage to the next world. In the *Klu 'bum*, the *se* denotes the grave or superstructure of the tomb, as it does in funerary rites of the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, however, the *se* appears to have evolved into a construction that was erected in a ritual, which functioned to protect the deceased from demonic intrusions as he is reunited with his ancestors.

The erection of the first *tho* (marker) by a military man is now chronicled. This placing of the *tho* above one of the *klu* progeny described earlier in the text would prove to have disastrous consequences for Mu-cho, as we will later see. The erection of rows of small quadrat ceremonial structures, identified as *tho* by Lopön Tenzin Namdak, are documented at archaic cultural horizon funerary sites such as Khyi-nag 'bubs (F-3) and rTsi-rtsid mon-ra'i thang-kha (D-125). The text says that what appears to have been the door of the tomb was built on the house of the king of the *klu* (para. xx). As part of the burial rites, articles of clothing that belonged to the deceased and special livestock were deposited near the tomb, probably as ransom offerings to take back the

consciousness principles from the demons. The deposited goat and sheep are called *bzhengs* in the text, which may mean ‘the established basis’ for a *glud* ritual (the ransom offering being the sacrificial animals themselves) carried out on behalf of the deceased. Another activity recorded in the text is the circumambulation of the *tho* by one or more men in full military regalia, weapons held aloft. The *dri-bon-po* (and the rest of the funerary party?) are recorded as passing some distance through the *tho*. The verb used in this passage is *bshags*, which refers to passing through spaces between a series of objects, as in walking between rows of grain or falling snow. The use of this verb, therefore, suggests that many *tho* were erected in rows. We are at once also reminded of the quadrate arrays of standing stones appended to temple-tombs, one of the defining ceremonial monument types of prehistoric (and possibly imperial period) Upper Tibet (see Part I, subsection 6.1c). The placement of arrays of pillars as ritual structures at funerary sites might well be what is intended in the *Klu ’bum*, but independent verification is lacking. Even if the *tho* noted in para. xx are synonymous with Upper Tibetan mortuary stones of one type or another, alternative kinds of *tho* are mentioned in paras. xiii and xxi, some or all of which must represent different types of funerary structures. For example, a wooden *tho* is described as being placed on a mountain (or the tomb in a metaphorical sense), as are many currently existing stone *tho* of the *la-btsas/la-rdzas* (cairns) class (para. xiii).

Further provocation of the *klu* at the funeral unfortunately resulted from the burning of polluting objects (*gnur*) and the suppression of the *sri* killer of the deceased in a cavity dug in the earth (*sri-khung* rite) at the last *tho*. I have already duly noted that immediately east of some quadrate arrays of pillars and tombs in Upper Tibet, small square structures formed from slabs placed edgewise into the ground are found (see p. 84). The ritual function of these structures is not yet clear, but correlation with the *sri-khung* may prove warranted. The final paragraph of this *Klu ’bum nag po* excerpt pertains to the payments received by the various participants in the funeral of Rab-’byor (para. xxi). The *gtsug-lag* demanded the blood of a sheep, while Mu-co ldem-drug took the *do-ma* (the horse used to ritually transport the deceased to the edge of heaven). It appears that the *do-ma*, a turquoise horse, was the same animal that Rab-’byor inherited from his parents. In other words, the most precious property of the deceased became his postmortem companion. The *dri-bon* merited the *dri* livestock and other types of animals, and the soldier(s) received the armor used in the funerary ritual. The last ritual act attested in this portion of the *Klu ’bum* is that of the *khram* being swept away. This *khram* probably refers to crosses with an apotropaic function drawn on the ground or on tablets at the tomb site:

- i) This is from the pure [text] known as *Klu ’bum*. At one time there lived the one known as Tshangs-pa ri-de rgyal-ba. For his wife (*khab*) and mate (*dbyal*) he married Klu-za rang-btsun. Thereafter six sons were born: the eldest son was Tshangs-par rab-’byor. Junior to him was the one called Tshangs-pa ’dus-kyi.⁴¹¹ Junior to him was Tshangs-pa brgya-byin. Junior to him was the one called Tshangs dpal-gyi. Junior to him was the one called Tshangs-pa legs-pa. Junior to him was the one called Tshangs-pa ’dus-kyis.
- ii) Their father discovered the castle called Srid-pa’i ’dus-po mkhar (Assembling of Existence Castle) in that country and land called Srid-pa’i thang-zangs (Copper Plain of Existence). In that [castle] the father, mother and sons were very contented. Thereafter, from his father and mother, the elder son Tshangs-pa rab-’byor inherited as his property (*dkor*) a turquoise horse with a turquoise mane. He rode the turquoise horse with the turquoise mane as his mount.

⁴¹¹ Dolanji text (no. 2, ln. 4): Tshangs-pa kun-’dul.

- iii) Thus it was said that if one never repays the kindness (*lan-ma lon*) of the father and mother, even one's birth is devoid of benefit. Tshangs-pa rab-'byor said he would repay the kindness of both his mother and father. He loaded the cargo (*khal*) of a year's provisions (*rgyags*) on the defender horse with the turquoise mane. He hung a month's provisions on the rear of the horse. He went to the eight northern regions (*byang-kha sna-brgyad*) to hunt deer and bring to bay gazelles. He did not see deer or gazelles until he came upon a trail of the deer and a trail of the blue sheep.
- iv) On the trail of the deer and the trail of the blue sheep there was a queer-looking (*pha-se*) man, but this was not a man. It was a queer-looking *srin*. It was the *srin* man Ba-pha.⁴¹² The fat⁴¹³ *srin* said, "Tshangs-chen rab-'byor, to which place are you going?" Tshangs-chen rab-'byor replied, "I came here to hunt deer and blue sheep." Thus he spoke. The [two] said, "We two men shall become close friends."
- v) The two men became close friends (*sha-rag rogs-po*) there. They went towards the eight northern regions to hunt deer and blue sheep. They did not see any deer or blue sheep, but they met the bDud rol-po skya-bdun. The bDud rol-po skya-bdun pronounced, "Even those who are big and mighty (*bstan*) do not block (*ma-bkum*) our throughway." The fat *srin* retorted, "Even those who are big and mighty do not block the way of a *srin*." Due to their arrogance they disagreed. They did not hesitate to fight.⁴¹⁴ Placing the nocks of their arrows,⁴¹⁵ the seven *bdud* horsemen drew their bows (*mchog-gar*), killing the *srin* there. By the arrow⁴¹⁶ they shot Tshangs-pa rab-'byor on the left side.⁴¹⁷
- vi) He returned to his home. The father and mother upon [seeing] their son wept loudly. The five younger brothers also wept. They wept loudly. The son Tshangs-chen rab-'byor said, "Do not cry, father and mother, and also do not cry, my five younger brothers. At Sha-la gong-gsum (Three Heights Deer Pass), I the poor boy (*ngan-bu*) went to hunt deer and blue sheep, but there were no deer and no blue sheep. However, I met a fat *srin* and we became close friends."
- vii) "There were deer and blue sheep on the lofty red northern pass. On the northern red pass we encountered the bDud rol-po skya-bdun. The *bdud* said in these words, 'Even those who are big and mighty do not block the way of the *bdud*'. The *srin* said, 'Even those who are big and mighty do not block the way of the *srin*'. Due to their arrogance those two disagreed. Without any compunction against fighting, they placed the nocks of their arrows and drew their bows. The bDud rol-po skya-bdun killed (*bkum-mo*) the fat *srin*. Then they shot me with an arrow. Father, mother and younger brothers, do not cry; call a learned physician (*sman-pa*)."
- viii) A younger brother invited a peerless physician who examined [the patient]. The physician thus spoke: "The pulse and urine test (*rtsa chu khams*) indicate that, as the arrow point has

⁴¹² In the Dolanji text (no. 4, ln. 1), this line reads: *srin mer-ba bas-se* (= *phas-se*) *gda'o* /. This is either a description of the *srin* or his proper name (Fat Queer-Looking Srin).

⁴¹³ *Mer-ba*. This word means 'filled to the brim' or 'overflowing' as applied to bodies of water. In this context, it seems to denote the ample size of the *srin*. It could also be part of his proper name.

⁴¹⁴ This is the approximate meaning of the poorly constructed sentence: 'Thab dang mnol (= *mnong*) gyis med.

⁴¹⁵ *Lu-mar*. In Bon literature the more common spelling of this archaic word for an arrow is *li-mar*. For an occurrence in the *gZi brjid*, see Bellezza 2005a, p. 350 (n. 28).

⁴¹⁶ *mDa' dang drum*. It is not known if this expression refers to a specific type of arrow.

⁴¹⁷ Dolanji text (no. 4, ln. 6): *Bla'i* (= *brla'i*) *g.yon ngos su* (on the left thigh).

penetrated the bone marrow,⁴¹⁸ maybe he can be saved, maybe he will die.” He said, “He is half alive and half dead.” Then the physician expelled the congealed blood. A sheep was slaughtered and [the injury] was covered with its wet skin and a poultice of grain (*'bras kyi lums*). [The doctor] then said, “Do not open it for three nights.” The physician was then paid a sheep for the road.

- ix) The physician returned in three days, and opening [the dressing] and examining [the patient], he saw that the wound had not healed. The physician said, “[I must] bind the injury (*ril dang shul*).”⁴¹⁹ He twice wrapped a cloth around the wound.⁴²⁰ On the gaping wound, which was as large as an arrow point (*mde'u*), he placed moistened poplar (*lcang-ma*). After five nights the physician returned. He examined the pulse and urine and both were bad.
- x) After sunrise, he examined the wound, but it had not improved. The physician said, “Even without examining the wound, [I can feel that] the pulse and urine are correspondingly worse.”⁴²¹ As the pulse is bad, [the patient] is deteriorating (*thu*).” Then, after one month, he examined [the patient] again. Dislodging the arrow point, he easily removed it. The opening of the wound [was still so large] as to be able to accommodate an arrow point. With thread he adeptly sewed the [wound] shut. Then the physician also inserted an arrow point and there was cylindrical bone marrow (*rkang nur-nur-po*) like grease. Although he inserted a grain stalk tube (*sog-mo'i sbu-gu*) into the hollow of the leg bone, as it was filled with pus, [the patient] died (*gum*). Then the physician returned to his home.
- xi) The father, mother and younger brothers decided to do a big burial ritual.⁴²² The corpse (*spur*) as large as a wild yak was transported and concealed in a deep cavity.⁴²³ Then the father, mother and younger brothers decided to do a long-duration burial ritual. The erudite one, maker of the burial rite (*'das gtong-ba'i gtsug-lag-mkhan*), made the *gto* and *dpyad*. The erudite one (*gtsug-lag mkhan*) arranged the *gto* and *dpyad* and ordained⁴²⁴ a large flat meadow [as the funeral ritual site].

⁴¹⁸ The Dolanji text (no. 4, ln. 6) notes that the arrow point also became bent (*mda'-rtse khrums*).

⁴¹⁹ This line is followed by a sentence whose meaning is not clear. It has something to do with applying a dressing to the gaping wound (*sul na phyi de'u yang btang l*).

⁴²⁰ This sentence is the general import of: *thog tu men dri* dril / rma thog tu yang men dris /*.

* *Men-dri* (*men-dre*) is a type of cloth, probably of undyed cotton.

⁴²¹ Dolanji text (no. 7, ln. 1): A different and inferior line, stating that the urine and pulse [analysis] were different.

⁴²² *'Das-shid* (PT. 1042: *mdad-shid*). This appears to refer to the entire cluster of rites connected to the entombment of the deceased. Thomas (1934: 261), in a list of places of residence, glosses *mdad*: ‘monument’.

⁴²³ Dolanji text (no. 7, ln. 4): “They dug and then concealed (buried) the corpse in the *ldang khur-ring* as a large as a wild yak.” (*dpur* (= *spur*) *'brong tsam yang ldang khur ring du bskos* (= *brkos nas bas l*). This is the correct reading, although the sentence structure implies that the corpse itself was as large as a wild yak. The *ldang khur-ring* is a coffin, probably of the *lding-khang* type, which is noted in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (see p. 401, fn. 144). Of relevance here is the *ring-sgrom* (a casket for burial or for the storage of the corpse during the funeral) noted in PT. 1042, ln. 89. A functional connection to the *ring-khang/ring-gur* is also indicated. Haahr (1969: 360) equates *ring* with *spur/dpur* (corpse). See also Stein 1970, p. 170. It is reported that in royal Tibetan mortuary practices, the *ring-khang* was a mortuary chamber where the corpse of the king was placed for up to two years to decompose, probably to allow for the construction of the tomb. Corpses deposited in the *ring-khang* may have undergone some exsiccation or mummification. Afterwards, the corpse was dismembered and placed in a copper container (*zangs kyi ga'u*). See Hoffman 1961, p. 24; Richardson 1963, p. 76; Haahr 1969, p. 360; Templeman: in press-a. In the contemporary cultural context, children who die before their first birthday in sNyan-rong are inhumed in a special open-air building (*dur-khrod lha-khang*) where they are left to naturally decompose.

⁴²⁴ *bKum*. This verb form must be grammatically related to the archaic *khums* (the availability of something for usage, such as a physical object).

- xii) To cut the great obstructions facing the surviving members⁴²⁵ and to greatly benefit (*thang-che*) the deceased, they then requested the *gshen* of existence.⁴²⁶ They carefully listened to⁴²⁷ the *bon-po* of existence Mu-co ldem-drug and rGal-gshen the'u-yug.⁴²⁸ The [*bon-po*] loudly announced [the funeral] three times. At the onset, for the primary sacrifice (*bshas kyi dang-po*), a brown female sheep of the *srin* was slaughtered (*bshas*). A reddish-brown sheep, a striped mat (*phyar-gzhi khra*),⁴²⁹ vermilion, wool, an arrow, *g.yag-chags* (a type of yak?), bamboo, a *ltos* yak, a *ltos* horse, a sheep, a goat, a female yak, and *mon-ce* (?)...⁴³⁰
- xiii) a cow,⁴³¹ and earth of three paths.⁴³² Then as the *dri-gto* (funeral rites to liberate the murdered one) are very powerful; for the soldier(s) – a sheep, a batch of beer, an ax, a hatchet, a wooden marker (*tho*) on the miraculously risen mountain of existence,⁴³³ as well as a *dri* horse, a *dri* yak, a *dri* sheep, a *dri* goat, a *gshed* goat, and a *gshed* sheep. For the *dri-bon* – a wing, *gtsang-ba* (purification?), clothes, a *stan-lto* (a type of mattress?), a deer horn, a yak horn, ritual emblems (*yas-rtags*), and all [animals] for slaughter were sent.
- xiv) In the next year, [the family] decided to do a funeral ritual. They invited the erudite ritualist (*gtsug-lag*), the mirror of the sky. The star, planet, direction, and month were calculated. Then the *gto* and *dpyad* of existence were conducted. The '*dur-gshen* was invited.
- xv) The father and patriarch of the *klu* named Klu-rgyal ngar gyi rje (King Klu Lord of Ferocity) and the mother and matriarch named Klu-bdag ngur gyi btsun (Noble Woman of Klu Mistress Duck), these two, coupled and begot a *drod*⁴³⁴ son. The father Klu-rgyal ngar spoke, saying to his son and scion, “Open the stomach.” It opened and so appeared an inconceivable amount of *klu*. The father appointed them [to] the country and land. He appointed some⁴³⁵ [the masters] of the nine branches of the ocean. He appointed some the masters of the meandering rivers. He appointed some the masters of the various-sized and -shaped still springs (*chu-mig ltang-lteng*). He appointed some the masters of the various-sized

⁴²⁵ Dolanji text (no. 7, ln. 6): *gson la kag med par bcaad* (to cut so that the surviving members did not face obstacles).

⁴²⁶ *Srid-pa'i gshen la zhus so*. The Dolanji text (no. 8, ln. 1) follows with: “[The family] in a [formal] proposal requested the *bon-po* of existence Mu-cho ldem-drug and rGal-gshen the'u yug, so they accepted. They were then given beverages to drink by [the family]. [The family] asked about butchering” (*srid pa'i bon po mu cho ldem drug dang / rgal gshen the'u yug la zhus pas / bkas kyang gnang ngo / de nas zhu skems (= skyems) 'gur (= mgul) du gton (= bton) nas / bshas kyi thad zhus bas l*).

⁴²⁷ *Ga na gnyan (= nyan)*. This *bka'* text reading is faulty. This should read (Dolanji text, no. 8, ln. 2): *gshen gnyan pas* (as the *gshen* are mighty).

⁴²⁸ This is followed by two lines in the text: *smyug ma gsum dang* (a bamboo of three [joints] and) / *glas dang g.ya' kha re la dang l*. These two lines seem to have something to do with the instruments used to announce the funeral.

⁴²⁹ Such mats are made on a back-strap loom.

⁴³⁰ This series constitutes the articles for the funeral ritual, with no break between it and the next sequence of objects. These are specified in the Dolanji text (nos. 8, ln. 4 to 9, ln. 6) as part of an additional passage. This supplementary passage constitutes paras. xiii to xv of the translation. Tibetan Text III-32, pp. 639, 640.

⁴³¹ *Ba*. This is followed by *gong gsum gyi dpyid ma dang*, which has something to do with a type of stone (?) three heights.

⁴³² This is followed by the line: *ltos bya ba dang l*. This has something to do with an examination.

⁴³³ This is followed by *rngos-shig*, an unknown object.

⁴³⁴ *Drod* indicates that the son did not have limbs and/or had a round or egg-shaped torso.

⁴³⁵ *Cha-cig*. This can also be read in the singular (someone); the appointment of just one *klu* to each geographic entity mentioned in the text.

and -shaped flowing springs (*chu-mig tsag-tzog*). He appointed some the masters of the verdant meadows. Some [were appointed the masters of] the peak of Ri-rab and...⁴³⁶

- xvi) He appointed some the masters of the rock summits, white snow mountains, blue slate [mountains], and thick forests. He appointed [some] the masters of the arrow feather⁴³⁷ small formations (*brag-bu*) of the north. He appointed [some] the masters of the various-sized and -shaped (*thag-thug*) boulders and various-sized and -shaped (*tsag-tzog*) hills.⁴³⁸ He appointed some the masters of the arched eyebrow northern bluffs and the meandering springs.
- xvii) He appointed some the masters of the various-sized and -shaped level (*ltang-lteng*) ponds and parcels of moist grasslands. He appointed some the masters of irrigation weirs (*rka*) and small irrigation channels (*yur-bu*). He appointed some the masters of the fixed *mchod-rten* and *sā-tsha* [shrines] shaped like helmet finials (*gtsug-tor*). He appointed some the masters of dried earth and uneven terrain (*sa shang-shong*). He appointed some the masters who stay at pools of spring water (*'bri-mig*) and soft resilient earth. He appointed some the masters who stay at landslides.⁴³⁹
- xviii) Then on behalf of Tshangs-chen rab-'byor, the erudite ritualist (*gtsug-lag-mkhan*) said, “*Di gcug gdog pas* (?) is of the horse year. There are no other obstacles to the lives of the father, mother and younger brothers.” The victuals for the deceased (*gshin-zan*) were in accordance with his desires. The father, mother and younger brothers were fond of the dead person (*shi-ba*). Beer [was made] from boiled dry grains (*skam-po*). Livestock were slaughtered for meat. The erudite ritualist arranged the Chinese astrological calculation (*gab-tshe*) of *sbun-po* (?), and calculated that the month [for burial] was the second month of winter (*zla-'bring*),⁴⁴⁰ the star was Khnums, and the planet [day] was Saturn; the direction was west, the direction was white,⁴⁴¹ the *rlung-rta* was bright white (highly auspicious).

⁴³⁶ This is the juncture where the Dolanji and *bka'* texts converge, although there is some overlap in the geographic sequence. For the transliteration of paras. xvi and xvii, see Tibetan Text III-33, p. 640.

⁴³⁷ *mDa' sgro*. A metaphor for thin, jagged rock formations that are vertically oriented.

⁴³⁸ *sGung-pa*. ‘Hill’ is the probable meaning of this word.

⁴³⁹ This long sequence of geographic locations ends in *gnas-so*, indicating that these are the places where the deities are to reside as a result of their appointments. In the Dolanji text this line is succeeded by an additional passage (nos. 10, ln. 5 to no. 11, ln. 4), which comprises paras. xviii and xix of the translation. There is some overlap in the narrative between paras. xix and xx, but as they are worded differently, I have retained both versions in my translation. See Tibetan Text III-34, p. 640.

⁴⁴⁰ In addition to astrological calculations (*rtsis*), seasonal proscriptions were also a part of archaic funerary rituals. For instance, in PT. 1042 (lns. 83–85), the text warns: “If the *mdad-shid* (the entombment rites) are celebrated in the ten days after the 23rd day of the last month of autumn and before the third day of the first month of winter, they coincide (*la bab*) with the end of the season (*nam*). If the *mdad* is celebrated [at this time] it is not beneficial (*myi-smān*) to the deceased (*'da's-pa*), and it would be harmful (*dngo-sdig*) to the surviving family members (*slad-ma*) as well” (*ston sla (= zla) tha chungs (= chung) tshes nyi shu gsum phan chad dang / dgun sla (= zla) ra ba tshes gsum tshun chad / zhag bcu la mdad shid btang na / nam gyi mtha' la bab ste / mdad btang na / 'da's pa la yang myi sman / slad ma la yang dngo sdig / du mchi'o /*). This proscription against the performance of the *mdad-shid* at the demarcation of the light and dark halves of the year (a time of cosmological flux) suggests that the tomb functioned as a calendric marker of the way to the heavens. In Upper Tibet, the calendric function of certain funerary structures is likely to be indicated by their careful alignment in the cardinal directions. The inherent cosmological uncertainties associated with the winter solstice are an underlying theme in the Bodic bSod-nams lo-sar and Dardic Nau Roz observances of the New Year.

⁴⁴¹ West probably refers to the direction of the burial in relation to the residence of the deceased and/or the funeral ritual venue. The white direction (*phyogs-dkar*) must be a general indication of the auspicious outcome of the funeral.

- xix) Also, the various 'dur-gshen performed the funeral ritual for many days. The 'dur-gshen and dri-bo (dri-bon-po) [made] a good funeral.⁴⁴² They burnt the polluting object (*gnur*), and the erudite ritualist beat a skin on/above the *se* (tomb) above the *kha-the'u* (a type of *tho*?) of the king of the *klu*. In front of the *se*, the soldier(s) (*dmag-pa*) placed the first *tho* (marker) above the son of the *klu*.⁴⁴³
- xx) The first erudite ritualist built the *se yi sgo* (the door of the tomb?) on the little *tho* house (*khang-tho'u*) of the king of the *klu*. High, high above the *klu*, the soldier(s) beat [a skin]. Boiling and roasting, they roasted [meat] above the lord of the *klu* Thob-rtsal (Extremely Powerful). *Dri-ma* (articles of clothing that belonged to the deceased), *bzhengs-lug* (a type of sheep), and *bzhengs-ra* (a type of goat) were placed beside the tomb [by] the father, mother and younger brothers. The soldier(s) put on armor and circled the *tho* with his/their weapons held aloft. The *dri-bon-po* burnt the polluting object (probably roasted meat) and then removed it [from the fire]. They passed a distance through the *tho*, and at the last *tho* they dug in the earth⁴⁴⁴ and pressed down the *sri*.⁴⁴⁵
- xxi) Then the erudite ritualist spoke, "I made the *tho* at first, so I need the sheep blood." Then the 'dur-gshen and *bon-po* of existence Mu-co ldem-drug spoke, "As I first gave this turquoise horse with the turquoise mane as the *do-ma*, this therefore is my portion." So saying he took it. The *dri-bon* took the *dri* horse, *dri yak*, *sto-tho*,⁴⁴⁶ and yak *tho*.⁴⁴⁷ The soldier(s) asserted that he/they forestalled evil, so he/they took and wore the armor of the ritual emblems (*yas-stags*). After seven nights, in the morning, the *khram* was brushed away.

Although the funeral of Rab-'byor ends here, the way in which it was performed proves to have grave ramifications for the ritualists. This is elaborated upon in the next portion of *Klu 'bum nag po*, which I will furnish in a paraphrased form.⁴⁴⁸ This account vividly depicts the dangerous side of the *klu*, which was elicited through the pollution and excavation of their habitats, in pursuance of the various funerary procedures. The wording and contents of this portion of *Klu 'bum nag po* lead me to believe that it is a more recent (post-tenth century CE) textual interpolation. I base my view on the way in which Bon *bodhisattvas* and sTon-pa gshen-rab, as an all-powerful and omniscient Buddha-like figure, are woven into the tale. It may be that this account was authored in part to create a historical interface between the archaic funerary specialist Mu-cho ldem-drug and the systematized Bon religion. In any event, the subordinate position of Mu-cho vis-à-vis gShen-

⁴⁴² This is succeeded by a line of unknown significance: *Ya gca ba dang /*.

⁴⁴³ The *bka'* narrative is resumed in paras. xx and xxi. See Tibetan Text III-35, pp. 640, 641.

⁴⁴⁴ *Sa-brkos*. The text actually reads: *sa-bskor*. If that is the correct reading it seems to indicate that the ritualists circled the *tho*.

⁴⁴⁵ In the Dolanji text (no. 11, ln. 6) we read instead: "The *dri-bon-po* burnt the polluting object (*gnur*) and then removed it (?), and arranged (*bshams*) it some distance from the *tho* (or less likely: arranged the *tho* some distance apart. He/They erected/braced (*bskyor*)* the *se*. Then at the last *tho* the *sri* was pressed down" (*dri bon pos gnur bsregs nas blangs / mtho (= tho) dang rgyang rgal nas bshams nas / se bskyor nas / tho tha (mod. = mtha') ma (= la) sri gnan nas /*).

* If the verb *bskor* is actually intended here (and this seems likely) it means that the ritualists circled the tomb.

⁴⁴⁶ Probably the equivalent of *rtol*, the product of a hybrid yak crossed with a pure yak. Instead, the Dolanji text (no. 12, lns. 2–3) has *stag-tho* (literally, small tiger).

⁴⁴⁷ *g.Yag-tho* (literally, small yak) as well as *sto-tho/stag-tho* may denote special types of *tho* (markers), or even hammers, rather than animals themselves.

⁴⁴⁸ See Dolanji text, nos. 17, ln. 3 to 18, ln. 5.

rab stands in contrast to the nature of priestly associations in the Dunhuang manuscripts. This *Klu 'bum* account unfolds as follows:

After one year, the king of the *klu* Wang-te'u⁴⁴⁹ became very angry. He manifested as a scorpion and entered the nose of the learned funeral ritualist (*gtsug-lag-mkhan*). His nose became flat, both his arms paralyzed and his face contorted. His body was weakened. The erudite ritualist made an astrological calculation (*gab-tshe*) and saw the cause of his illness (the funeral had been conducted on the abode of the king of the *klu*).⁴⁵⁰ He invited sTon-pa gshen-rab and his *g.yung-drung sems-dpa'* (*bodhisattvas*). sTon-pa built a great mandala and made many offerings to the *klu*. By the blessing of sTon-pa's mantras the *klu* actually came to the mandala. The *klu* king told sTon-pa that a *mched gru-bzhi*,⁴⁵¹ heaped earth and a *du-gad bya-ba* (?) had been put on top of him. The *klu* king said that these actions were all perpetrated by the erudite ritualist and that bad contamination from the deceased's clothing (*dri-ma ngan-pa*) had been washed upon him. This is why he had manifested as a scorpion and entered the ritualist's right nostril. The *klu* king admitted to sending the bad diseases.

The *klu* king told sTon-pa and the great *g.yung-drung sems-dpa'* that it was not his fault as the *gtsug-lag-mkhan* did many heinous things near him. The *klu* pleaded that he should not release the ritualist from the diseases. sTon-pa and the *g.yung-drung sems-dpa'* made it clear that no one refuses the commands of sTon-pa. They said that if someone rejects the orders of sTon-pa they will go to hell. They added that if the king of the *klu* listened to the speech of sTon-pa he would achieve liberation some day. They also said to the king of the *klu*, Wang-te'u, to let the *gtsug-lag-mkhan* continually read the *Klu yi gsung rabs* (*Klu 'bum*) and make offerings to him. sTon-pa then observed that if Tshangs-chen rab-'byor was still alive he could heal him, but that he was destined to die. Then in front of sTon-pa, the king of the *klu* healed the *gtsug-lag-mkhan* for a period of one year. After one year the 'king of scholars' ritualist died.

The next passage in the *Klu 'bum* is about the soldier(s) (*dmag-pa*). It is established that the cause of his diseases was the beating of the animal skin at the first *tho* (*tho-mgor*), which angered the *klu*. His channels swelled, he lost his right arm and suffered from other afflictions as well. The soldier(s) appealed to sTon-pa and the *g.yung-drung sems-dpa'* for help. They told him that he had beaten the skin at the *klu* abode and had excavated with a pick. The soldier(s) died.

The next victim who had participated in the funeral was Mu-cho ldem-drug. The king of the *klu* manifested as a frog and entered the 'dur-gshen Mu-cho ldem-drug's body, causing him to lose his speech. His body became very painful, his hand contracted leprosy,⁴⁵² his nose became flat, and he suffered from paralysis. Mu-cho ldem-drug made the *gto* and *dpyad* (analeptic and divinatory rites) but there was no benefit. sTon-pa then manifested as a small boy. Mu-co ldem-drug explained what had happened to him and appealed for his help. He asked sTon-pa why he had gotten these diseases and was told that it was preordained.

⁴⁴⁹ *bKa'* text: Beng-ste'u.

⁴⁵⁰ According to a *sa-dpyad* (land reconnaissance) text that specifies burial locations, the correct siting of tombs is supposed to have benefits for the living relatives. See Templeman: in press-b.

⁴⁵¹ A structure with four sides. This is probably the equivalent of the *se-mo gru-bzhi*, the quadrate tomb or tomb superstructure (cf. Stein 2003a: 601, 602). According to Stein (1970: 176 (n. 4)), the *gru-bzhi* is an epithet that refers to the tomb border, which perhaps is in the form of a ditch. In Upper Tibet, this delimitation is often marked by a quadrate stone enclosure marking the site of the grave.

⁴⁵² The Zhang-zhung word for leprosy is used: *tsi-tsi dzwa*. The belief that the *sa-bdag* cause leprosy in those who disturb the ground persists in eastern and northeastern Tibet (Ekvall 1964: 80).

Klu 'bum nag po now proceeds to give an explanation of the specific causes of Mu-cho ldem-drug's afflictions.⁴⁵³ In divulging the cause of all his maladies, the text provides an excellent résumé of archaic funerary activities. The ritual structures so outlined were briefly considered by Stein (2003a) in his valuable contribution to the role of the *bon-po* in the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the text, these funerary tasks are cited by sTon-pa to pinpoint the causes of the suffering inflicted on the participants in Rab-'byor's funeral. He repeatedly pronounces that all of these activities were carried out to negative effect or contraindicated (*gnas su ma phyin-pa*):

- i) Yid kyi khye'u-chung⁴⁵⁴ spoke, saying, "Listen to me, *bon-po* of existence Mu-cho ldem-drug. Firstly, the wing was contraindicated. Then the *shid-rabs* (prescribed sequence of funeral ritual activities) was contraindicated. Then the *se-sgo*⁴⁵⁵ was contraindicated. Then the edible and potable offerings were contraindicated.⁴⁵⁶ Then the *skyibs-lug* (funerary sheep guide) was contraindicated. Then the *spur-khab*⁴⁵⁷ was contraindicated. Then the *tsha-log*⁴⁵⁸ was contraindicated. Then the *tho*⁴⁵⁹ was contraindicated. The *dri* bird and *dri* horse were contraindicated. The *dri* sheep and *dri* yak were contraindicated. Then the *lam-ston*⁴⁶⁰ was contraindicated."
- ii) *Dri-bon-po* Mu-cho ldem-drug spoke, "Yid kyi khye'u-chung, what are you saying? Firstly, what evidence is there that my activities were contraindicated?" Yid kyi khye'u-chung said, "*Bon-po* of existence, Mu-cho ldem-drug, please listen to me. First, the long flexible [bamboo?] and short flexible [bamboo?] were contraindicated; because of this contamination you contracted a disease of the hair. Due to the contamination of the contraindicated wing you contracted a mental disease.⁴⁶¹ As the livestock were contaminated, you cannot use livestock.

⁴⁵³ This translation comes from the Dolanji text, nos. 18, ln. 5 to 20, ln. 6. The *bka'* text has the same account (nos. 45, ln. 1 to 46, ln. 7). See Tibetan Text III-36, pp. 641.

⁴⁵⁴ The manifestation of sTon-pa in the form of a small boy.

⁴⁵⁵ The door of the tomb or a ritual opening in the tomb superstructure. This identification is supported by Stein 2003a, p. 605.

⁴⁵⁶ In the *bka'* text this is followed by a line that seems to state that then the funerary sheep (*don*) was contraindicated (*de nas don la gnas su ma phyin pa yin*). Alternatively, *don la* may be a misspelling of *do-ma*; in that case, a funerary transport horse is the subject.

⁴⁵⁷ *bKa'* text (no. 45, ln. 3): *sbur* (= *spur*) *khang*. This appears to denote the actual burial chamber. In later historic period culture, *spur-khang* refers to the cremation kiln and *spur-sgan* is the funerary sedan chair (Brauen 1982: 319, 324; Skorupski 1982: 375). The two mortuaries in which members of the Sa-skyia 'Khon lineage were cremated are also known as *spur-khang* (Wylie 1964–1965: 238).

⁴⁵⁸ *bKa'* text: *tshe-log*. As indicated further on in the account, both of these spellings appear to be incorrect. They should read: *tshar-slog* (lambskin robe).

⁴⁵⁹ Here I have corrected *mtho* to *tho*, as found in the *bka'* text. According to Tibetan tradition, in ancient times, when people became close friends they erected a *tho* as a physical sign of their alliance. In the modern sense, a *tho* is a list or note to serve as a reminder or to make something clear. A *tho* therefore is a sign of stability and surety.

⁴⁶⁰ Objects for showing the deceased the way. In the archaic funerary traditions of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, white cloths, lamps and *dmu* cords are used by ritualists to literally show the way to dGa'-yul. In prevailing Bon funerary rituals, the *lam-ston* or *lam-bstan* is the act of instructing or reminding the deceased about the true nature of mind (*sems-nyid*) and the ten directions leading to liberation (*thar-lam*). This is done so that the deceased does not remain attached to his previous existence or family.

⁴⁶¹ In the *bka'* text (no. 46, lns. 1–3) this is followed by a poorly constructed line that seems to say: "By the contamination of the contraindicated mortuary ritual (*shi-rabs*), you must affirm to all sentient beings that they are your big brothers." This appears to mean that the eminent funerary priest Mu-cho ldem-drug must humble himself in front of others. The text continues, "As the *se* portal was contraindicated, you do not have a right to stay at home. Although you had gone to the city, you do not even have a right to stay in the plain (setting of the story or funeral ritual)" (*shi rabs*

By the contamination of the contraindicated *do-ma* you cannot ride on a horse and [have to] ride on a donkey. By the contamination of the contraindicated *skyibs-lug*, at present you cannot use sheep.”

- iii) “By the contamination of the contraindicated *dbur-khab* (*spur-khang*), at present you cannot walk properly. By the contamination of the contraindicated lamb-skin robe (*tshar-slog*), whenever you have occasion to be cold, there is no one to cover you with the lamb-skin robe. By the contamination of the contraindicated *tho*, at present you are holding a staff (sign of a beggar). By the contamination of the *dri* horse, *dri* sheep and *dri* yak, at present, you do not have a right to use horses, sheep and cattle. By the contamination of the contraindicated first food offerings (*zas-phud*), at present you are begging, holding a ladle. By the contamination of the contraindicated *lam-ston*, at present you do not have a base⁴⁶² and are wandering. By the contamination of the contraindicated *snug-shan* (a ritual instrument made from a thin shaft of bamboo?) you have now contracted leprosy. We must cleanse these contaminations,” said [sTon-pa].

7.2 The Identification of the *Tho*

Let us return to those curious funerary ritual objects known as *tho*. The words *tho*, *lha-tho* and *tho-yar* all describe sacred stone constructions in the popular tradition. In their simplest form, they are nothing more than piles of stones, such as those placed on the tops of passes. More elaborate forms are represented by sacrificial stone altars and shrines.⁴⁶³ The most senior Bon scholar Lopön Tenzin Namdak has suggested that both the funerary pillars (*rdo-ring*) and a class of small quadrate masonry ritual structures of Upper Tibet are in fact the *tho* of the Bon archaic funerary tradition.⁴⁶⁴ As we know, standing stones were widely raised in the vicinity of tombs (isolated pillars, stelae erected inside a quadrate enclosure, and arrays of stelae appended to temple-tombs) in Upper Tibet. Moreover, in the oral tradition of the region, these standing stones are sometimes referred to as Mon-*tho*.

If the Upper Tibetan paleocultural environment is the correct geographic context for the funerary tradition of *tho* in the texts, it would certainly indicate a prehistoric origin for this aspect of the archaic funerary tradition. As with the *rdo-ring* (long-stone) of the *bla-rdo* (soul stone) origins tale, however, the literary references to the *tho* contain tantalizing but rather obscure material (from an archaeological perspective). It does not seem that the *rdo-ring* of the soul and the *tho* markers refer to the same type of funerary structure. The *rdo-ring* of the soul functioned as a receptacle for the consciousness principles of the deceased during the evocation rites, and no direct connection to the ancestral deities is noted in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The placement of the *tho* at the culmination of the funeral ritual in the *Klu 'bum*, and their association with the *mtshun* in the *lug-gtad* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur rather suggest that they had a different function. I am inclined to see these *tho* as having been erected primarily to mark the creation of new ancestral deities (see pp. 460, 463, para. iii). That is to say, the *tho* possibly functioned as memorial structures facilitating and/or

gnas su ma phyin pa'i sgrub pa yin (= yis) / de ltar sems can yangs su jo bo zer ba yin / se sgo gnas su ma phyin pas da lta khyim du 'dug pa'i dbang med par yin / grong khyer la 'gro yang thang la 'dug dbang med pa yin /

⁴⁶² [You] do not have a base' (*sa med du*) is an interpolation taken from the *bka'* text.

⁴⁶³ According to the Tibetan oral tradition, there was an ancient custom of erecting *tho* when parties swore an oath, which is termed *mna'-skal tho-btsug* ('share of the oath, erection of the *tho*').

⁴⁶⁴ In sustained personal communication.

announcing the deceased's passage to the hereafter. Yet this still does not address the question of whether the *tho* were permanent structures (fixed stones) or if they were raised only at the time of the funeral performance and then dismantled or destroyed. The texts are mute on this subject.

The *tho* as a type of substantial funerary structure is also mentioned in the Bon history *bsGrags pa gling grags*.⁴⁶⁵ This brief account is located in an area of the text pertaining to the miraculous activities of various *bon-po* during the youth of King Gri-rum btsan-po. In addition to the wing ritual instrument, this passage notes that 13 crows alighted on the *gri-tho*. I suspect that these birds functioned as receptacles for the consciousness principles of the deceased, and perhaps as vehicles for the ascent of the soul and mind to the afterlife: "By Ral-ljags bon-po 'od-cag 'brug 13 crows landed on the tips of the 13 *gri-tho*.⁴⁶⁶ By the wing, he could cut the *gshed-po* and the violent death (*gri*) iron [weapons]." The *gri-tho* is also mentioned in a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text composed for use when the *gshen-bon* traveled to perform funerals.⁴⁶⁷ The relevant passage reads: "*Gri-bon* Rog-po thugs-dkar, go forth from dBal-mkhar khyung-ri khyung-rdzong. Erect the *gri-tho* and cut the chain of violent death (*gri*)."⁴⁶⁸ Another reference to funerary *tho* is found in *rGyal po bka' thang*, in a description of the necropolitan society that resided at the tomb of King Srong-btsan sgam-po.⁴⁶⁸ This reference suggests that certain *tho* were erected on a permanent basis. The text explains that if people, horses and other livestock came around the *tho* of the *bang-so*, they were captured and had to remain at the necropolis for the duration of their lives as tomb guardians. It would appear that these funerary *tho* delimited the royal burial complex, existing as a circumscribing physical feature.

In eight unnumbered pages at the rear of his *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po*, Lopön Tenzin Namdak provides drawings of *tho*, which he suggests resemble those [structures] found in both upper and lower Zhang-zhung, particularly like those [he saw] at gNam-mtsho and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho. In this work, Lopön Tenzin Namdak reports that many traces of these diverse structures are still visible and must be connected to the ancient history of the region. Since the publication of *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po*, the Most Venerable Tenzin Namdak has related the *tho* to the various funerary sites that I have documented. Still, it is not certain what types of *tho* these represent or how the literary references can be specifically applied to the elucidation of the Upper Tibetan archaeological record. That the *tho* are thought to have had multifarious functions complicates matters further. Although this seems likely, new sources of corroboratory data will have to be marshalled before it can be proven that the *tho* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and *Klu 'bum* are represented among the funerary pillars of Upper Tibet.

In *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po*, Lopön Tenzin Namdak lists the *tho* found in an old scroll, which he notes belongs to mKhas-mchog rdo-rje of Khu-nu. Generally, the *tho* are recorded there as being

⁴⁶⁵ See *bsGrags pa gling grags*, attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha' (sNyan-rong ms), fol. 27a, lns. 4, 5: *ral lags* bon po 'od cag 'brug gis / gri tho bcu gsum gyi rtse mo na / pho rog bcu bab pa dang / gshed po dang gri lcag (= lcags) gshog pas gcod nus /*.

* Ral-ljags (Ra-ljag) appears to be a clan name.

⁴⁶⁶ In a bird divination text of the Pelliot collection, it states: "The raven is the bird of the heavens" (*po-roq ni dgung gi bya /*). See Lauffer 1987, p. 33.

⁴⁶⁷ See *gShen bon rang yul nas chas pa'i chas thabs* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 83–92), no. 86, lns. 1, 2. In this same text, among a list of ancient funerary practitioners, the *'dul-gshen* Khu-byug gsung-snyan is asked to purify the intermediate zone between life and death (no. 85, lns. 3, 4). He is recorded as coming from Shel gyi rdo-ring bra-slag. While the crystal long-stone or pillar mentioned as part of this place name may denote a natural formation, it is certainly another reference to *rdo-ring* in the funerary literature.

⁴⁶⁸ *bKa' thang sde lnga* (Dgah-ldan-phun-tshogs-glin (= gling) edition), nos. 182, ln. 5 to 184, ln. 2.

the support or tabernacle of deities, cosmological symbols, chroniclers of political dispensations, and integral components of sundry Bon ritual systems (including apotropaic and fortune-bestowing instruments). According to the illustrations published by Tenzin Namdak, most of the *tho* appear to have been built of masonry blocks (they are usually arrayed in rows). The construction of the *tho* noted in this manuscript, therefore, is different from the long slabs of rock that compose the pillar sites of Upper Tibet.⁴⁶⁹

More promising comparative archaeological data is presented by the small quadrate masonry structures built in rows at some Upper Tibetan funerary sites (these are often aligned in the cardinal directions). These constructions resemble some of the *tho* of the old Khu-nu manuscript in the *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po*. These *tho* of the text are also arrayed in linear configurations. Such structures furnish possible evidence that *tho* were indeed constructed in the prehistoric epoch, as the Bon-po allege. Among the best examples are those found at the necropolis of Khyi-nag 'bubs (F-3), in gZhung-pa ma-mtshan (dated circa third to fifth century CE). Eighteen of these masonry structures are concentrated in two rows immediately northwest of a tall temple-tomb, forming an integrated architectural and ritual complex (figs. 379, 380). These ceremonial structures are made of uncut pieces of limestone embedded in the ground to form superficial dispersions, which cover around 1 m² and rise no more than 30 cm above the current surface. They may have supported small superstructures but they are now usually only one vertical masonry course in height. These arrays probably functioned as funerary ritual devices, perhaps with metaphorical attributions not unlike those of the *tho* listed below. In sequential order, the *tho* listed in *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po* are as follows:

- 1) *Tho-rdo'i bsang* (appears to be a type of brazier)
- 2) *gNyen* (= *gNyan gyi tho bzhi* (four *tho* of the *gnyan*))
- 3) *Tho yi dgos 'beng-pas lnga* (?)
- 4) *Sangs kyi tho-linga* (five *tho* of the [*ma*] *sangs*?)
- 5) *Lha-tho rnam-gsum* (three *tho* of the *lha*)
- 6) *'Byung-ba'i tho-linga* (five *tho* of the elements)
- 7) *Yas kyi tho-drug* (six *tho* of the upper [realm])
- 8) *Mas kyi tho-bdun* (seven *tho* of the lower [realm])
- 9) *Khrims kyi tho-dgu* (nine *tho* of the law); these are arrayed in a circle
- 10) *Srid-pa'i tho-dgu* (nine *tho* of existence); these are arrayed in a quadrilateral fashion
- 11) *'Gar-ma ta'i tho-gsum* (?)
- 12) *dKar-tho rnam-gsum* (three *tho* of whiteness)
- 13) *Bon gyi tho-gsum* (three *tho* of *bon*)
- 14) *bGegs kyi tho-brgyad* (eight *tho* of obstructions)
- 15) *Bris pa'i tho-linga* (five *tho* of those who draw/writers)
- 16) *Byur gyi tho-linga* (five *tho* of misfortune)
- 17) *rGyal-chen rigs-bzhi tho* (*tho* of the monarchs of the four quarters)⁴⁷⁰
- 18) *Ma-ba'i tho-brgyad* (?)
- 19) *Khom-tshogs tho-bdun* (?)

⁴⁶⁹ It has been brought to my attention by Dan Martin, however, that in a 13th century CE manuscript (containing material that can be dated to the 11th century CE) belonging to the *Zhi byed* collection, 'Bri-gung 'jig-rten mgon-po (1143–1217 CE) notes that a *tho* looks like a human from a distance, but that as you approach it you realize that it is a monolith (*rdo-ring*). This anecdote is used by 'Jig-rten mgon-po as a metaphor for clearing up religious misconceptions.

⁴⁷⁰ They are: east – Yul-'khor srung; south – 'Phags skyes-po; west – sPyan mi-bzang; and north – rNam-thos-sras.



Fig. 379. A row of minor quadrate structures, *rTsi-rtsid mon-ra'i thang-kha* (D-125)

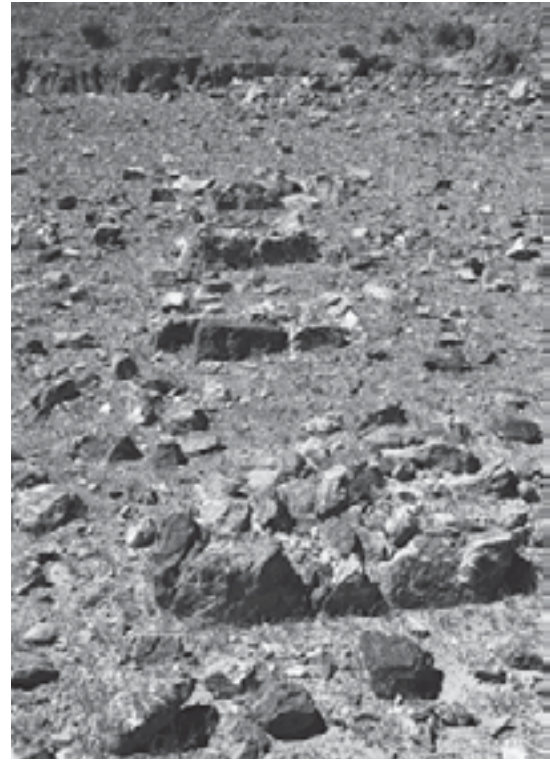


Fig. 380. A row of minor quadrate structures, *Khyi-nag 'bubs* (F-3)

- 20) *Lha la 'bul gyi tho-drug* (six *tho* of offering to the *lha*)
- 21) *g.Yas kyi tho-rten dgu* (nine *tho* supports of the right)
- 22) *g.Yon gyi tho-rten dgu* (nine *tho* supports of the left)
- 23) *Tho-mo che dang mjal-lo* (the great *tho-mo* that beholds); in the accompanying illustration this is a shrine with a tree or plant growing out of the top
- 24) *bKra-shis tho-gsum* (three *tho* of good luck)
- 25) *Tsher-shing ldem-pa* (flexible thorn-wood); this is illustrated as a simple two-tiered structure with vegetation growing out of the top
- 26) *gNam la ma reg-pa'i tho-dgu* (nine *tho* that do not touch the sky); the name suggests that these *tho* may have been built underground
- 27) *Sa la ma reg pa'i tho-gsum* (three *tho* that do not touch the earth); these *tho* may have been built on top of mountains

8 The Archaic Funerary Traditions of the Dunhuang Manuscripts

8.1 The Historical and Cultural Relationship between the Dunhuang Manuscripts and Later Bon Sources

The Dunhuang manuscripts include several texts that are entirely devoted to archaic funerary myths and practices (PT. 1042, 1060, 1068, 1134, 1136, 1194; IOL 731 recto and 731 verso, etc.) and texts that refer to archaic funerary traditions interspersed with Buddhist polemics (PT. 126, 239, etc.). These Dunhuang ritual documents (probably written down between the eighth and tenth century CE)⁴⁷¹ cover a wide range of funerary traditions related to exorcistic rites, conveyance of the deceased's consciousness principles, and burial customs, many of which have direct correspondences to the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur texts and *Klu 'bum*. The Dunhuang manuscripts, however, contain obscure vocabulary and passages that are not easily correlated with later Bon sources. These Old Tibetan linguistic sources also exhibit archaic grammatical and syntactical features that are not well understood, making translation a painstaking process at best and impossible at worst. Compounding difficulties of comprehension is the fact that the Dunhuang texts are fragmentary in nature; they by no means represent an integral corpus of funerary tradition. They are merely sundry surviving elements of what must have been a vast and intricate assortment of origin tales, funeral rites and burial procedures. While there is much overlap in the materials spanned by the three major sources of archaic funerary rites (Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *Klu 'bum nag po* and the Dunhuang manuscripts), they have each preserved exclusive strands of tradition. This in itself suggests how diverse early Tibetan funerary culture was. Moreover, the traditions presented in the Dunhuang manuscripts often have an interrupted or abbreviated form, taking for granted that the intended readers already possessed knowledge that gave them a context.

A thorough understanding (as much as is still possible) of the Bon funerary sources has proven indispensable in the production of accurate and integral translations of the Dunhuang materials. The continuity in background beliefs, ritual practices, technical vocabulary, and literary modes of presentation exhibited by later Bon texts provides the hermeneutical template needed to fathom the obsolete linguistic structures and ritual substance of the Dunhuang manuscripts. In essence, I was able to work backwards in literary time, beginning by addressing the more familiar linguistic

⁴⁷¹ Thomas (1957: Introduction, p. vii) observes that most Central Asian territories had been abandoned by the Tibetans by the end of the ninth century CE, and all of them had before the end of the tenth century CE. Given the longstanding Tibetan cultural presence in the region, perhaps a somewhat later date for the authorship of certain Dunhuang documents must also be entertained. As regards the funerary texts composed in Old Tibetan, it can be unequivocally stated that they represent the writings of a highly developed and long-evolved language. Their authors were fully conversant with ancient Tibetan, before the rise of Classical Tibetan or as part of a countervailing cultural expression during the development of Classical Tibetan. The very sophisticated grammatical and poetical structures exhibited by these texts demonstrate how rich the Tibetan language was before the Buddhist era. This correlates with the archaeological and cultural evidences we have been exploring in this work. Given the unique morphological, syntactical and lexical characteristics of the Dunhuang funerary documents, I believe that Old Tibetan was probably already many centuries old by the imperial period. The linguistic changes exhibited in Bon ritual works composed between the 11th and 19th centuries CE are qualitatively smaller in scope than the linguistic differences between the Old Tibetan funerary texts and those of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, written after circa 1000 CE. While the age of a language cannot be assessed through rates of linguistic mutation alone (rates of change vary according to a complex set of historical factors), this is one obvious avenue of research that demands attention. Hopefully, as more and more translations of Old Tibetan Dunhuang texts become available, this will aid their study as linguistic relics by those specialized in the historical development of languages.

signposts of Bon literature before tackling the arcane intricacies of the Dunhuang funerary texts. Despite this quite novel philological approach to interpretation, a significant portion of the archaic funerary tradition as chronicled in the Dunhuang manuscripts remains opaque to me.⁴⁷² In this work, I concentrate on excerpts from the texts that most readily lend themselves to analysis and translation. This avoids undue conjectural reconstruction and highly speculative discourse, from which I believe little would be gained.

As we have seen, there are many correspondences between the mythology, philosophy and praxis of the Dunhuang manuscripts and the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and *Klu 'bum*. These commonalities in funerary tradition are incontrovertible evidence that the Bon-po of the turn of the 11th century CE (or later) had direct access, through oral and/or literary channels, to the cultural concepts and practices documented in the Dunhuang funerary texts, written probably one to three centuries earlier. This crucial historical matter did not escape the attention of one of the twentieth century's greatest Tibetologists, R. A. Stein. In one of his seminal works (2003a: 597–608), Stein observed that the characteristics of the *bon-po* and *gshen* of the Dunhuang manuscripts are also preserved in the ritual narratives of Bon texts. Moreover, based on the funerary content of the *Klu 'bum nag po*, he noted that Bon authors must have had access to comparable or even identical manuscripts to those found in the Dunhuang collection (*ibid.*: 608). As a result, Stein came to the important conclusion that there was no break in the Tibetan funerary tradition between the Dunhuang manuscripts and later Bon sources (*ibid.*: 597, 598; 2003b: 570). I would, nevertheless, call into question Stein's opinion that cases of uninterrupted oral transmissions of these materials must have been rare (*ibid.*: 608). The Tibetan proclivity for prodigious feats of memorization in the arena of mythology and religion may have made oral vectors of transmission not as uncommon as

⁴⁷² I have not undertaken to translate all that remains of PT. 1042 precisely for this reason. This text describes an elaborate burial ritual, the organization and wording of which has only limited correspondence to the surviving Bon funerary corpus. The extant portion of PT. 1042 (part of it is missing) was translated in a pioneering work by Lalou (1953), certainly no mean feat. As pointed out by Stein (1970: 156), however, this translation is protracted and confused. Stein, in the same work, notes that the Dunhuang manuscripts are often poorly organized, and in some cases, contain interpolated or inverted paragraphs. Stein also observes that individual passages are sometimes corrupted or otherwise disordered, and the language highly obscure. These practical problems certainly hampered the ability of Lalou to provide a wholly sound translation of PT. 1042. A more refined outline of the ritual activities described in this text is found in Chu Junjie 1991, pp. 95–123. In his important work, Haarh (1969) provides a sequence of the ritual procedures in PT. 1042, an enumeration of the various funerary motifs that is not always accurate (pp. 368–370). By his own admission this description of a 'royal funeral' is sketchy and reduced so that the significance he accords each ritual procedure may be out of proportion (p. 378). There are, however, other problems with his analysis of PT. 1042. For example, he renders *ring gi zhal* as 'meal for the corpse' and *thugs gi zhal* as 'meal for the potential essence of the dead' (p. 368), unaware that these are in fact likenesses or effigies of the deceased, which were used to enshrine and stabilize the consciousness principles during the evocation rites. More serious is his insistence that the royal funeral was designed to create an existence for the king within the confines of the tomb (p. 367). Haarh goes so far as to state that the object of the Bon funerary system was to restrain the dead in their tombs (p. 367). According to Haarh, in the ancient eschatological conception, the deceased king in his tomb returned to the womb (*rum*) origin and dwelt among the chthonic dead (p. 378). As we shall continue to see, such suppositions are contradicted by all available Tibetan archaic funerary materials. The idea of a celestial afterlife, however, did not escape Haarh's attention, for he points out that the expression used for the deceased *btsan-po*, *dgung du gshegs* (went to the heavens), may have indicated an ascent to heaven or a return to the celestial *lha* (pp. 366, 452 (n. 112)). Nevertheless, so firm was his belief in an underworld final destination that he forthrightly negates his own observation by claiming that the funerary traditions of PT. 1042 and *rGyal po bka' thang*, "...left no room for the Bonpo ideas of Heaven." It must be noted that even though it is not represented in extant Tibetan funerary literature, the chthonic afterlife Haarh subscribed to may well have been a reality in an earlier or alternative Bodhic cultural milieu. Ethnographic data encourage such speculation. For example, the southern Gurungs believe that the dead join their ancestors in a closed eschatological cycle, which links the dead with the womb of the earth, a primal source of fertility (Mumford 1990: 191, 192).

he supposed. Sadly, Stein's perspicacious analysis of the religious interconnections between the Dunhuang and Bon funerary traditions went largely unrecognized in the field of Tibetology for an entire generation. As a case in point, even the Bon studies luminary Per Kværne (1985: 8–10) asserts that the funerary beliefs and practices of the *bon-po* priests of the imperial period were fundamentally different from those of the organized religion of Bon, which appeared some 200 years later. Kværne maintains that, by the 11th century CE, most of the ancient traditions had been more or less forgotten through a process of Buddhicization. It must be said that when Kværne was writing about such issues in the 1980s, the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection was still unknown to academic specialists. Kværne was basing his argument on the syncretistic funeral rituals of the *gZer mig*, such as that for the mythic King gTo-bu dod-de.

Without question, the Bon-po of later times did indeed preserve many early historic period funerary customs, mythic motifs and philosophical ideas in their literature as part of an analogous ritual substructure. Moreover, this conservation of tradition occurred frequently, not merely as a few vestigial or symbolic survivals. As a prelude to this study of the pertinent Dunhuang texts, I shall review the main areas of concurrence between the archaic funerary traditions of the Dunhuang manuscripts, Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and *Klu 'bum nag po*. Correspondences occur between at least two of these sources in the following areas:

I. *Cosmogonic and lineage correspondences*

- 1) The occurrence of 'Dur-gshen rma-da and gShen-rab mi (myi) bo as major priestly figures in the funerary proclamations of ritual origins (*smrang*)
- 2) The occurrence of various *smra* (a proto-human or early human tribe) personalities and *hos* (a group of early religious practitioners and traditions) in the *smrang* (proclamation of origins)
- 3) The use of the *smrang* as an instrument to evince the aptness and effectiveness of funerary rituals even in the most adverse circumstances
- 4) The dissemination of the funerary traditions, based on the *gto* (beneficial rites), *dpyad* (investigative rites) and *shid* (funerary ritual procedures)
- 5) The reference to people as 'son of the *lha*' (*lha-bu/lha'i-bu*), presupposing a genealogical connection between the divinities and human beings

II. *Eschatological correspondences*

- 1) The *gshed*, *sri* and *srin* as demonic personifications of death and the cause of misery in the postmortem state
- 2) The demon-killing god Bong-ba stag-chung
- 3) The geographic setting (gTsang and Upper Tibet) and general murder plots of the *srin/sri* origin tales
- 4) The use of geographic imagery (rivers, plains, and mountains) to describe the transitional postmortem 'land of the dead'
- 5) The urgency of properly guiding the dead into the ordered position (*gral*) so that they may achieve liberation
- 6) The belief in a boreal afterlife and/or wellspring of funerary traditions associated with dGa'-yul

III. *Ritual structural correspondences*

- 1) The performance of funerary rituals under the auspices of the religious law of prescribed procedures (*thang-khrims*)
- 2) The concept of *bon* as the entire spectrum of rituals and the philosophical and symbolic systems that lie behind them

- 3) The role of 'dur-bon/dur-bon-po and gshen as the ritual officiants
- 4) The localization of the funerary traditions in rKong-po, dBus, gTsang and Upper Tibet
- 5) The ritual archetype of first pronouncing three words to the deceased
- 6) The elimination of the mental suffering and pallor of the deceased through special mortuary rites
- 7) The participation of the *lha*, *gsas* and *gar* as divine allies of the officiants and the deceased
- 8) The proffering of libations (*skyems/skyem*), sacrificial cakes (*gtor-ma*) and specially marked livestock as offerings to the deceased
- 9) The employment of thread-crosses (*nam-ka/nam-kha*), effigies (*zhal*) and tents (*gur*) as receptacles for the deceased's consciousness principles
- 10) The use of light as a beacon for the deceased in his transit across the intermediate state
- 11) The deployment of the hand-tool raptor wing to guide the deceased to the hereafter
- 12) The wielding of spears, axes and sickles as apotropaic instruments
- 13) The beating of flayed skins as weapons against the demonic agents of death
- 14) The use of *glud* (ransom offerings) to recover the mind of the deceased
- 15) The erection of the *se/se-mo* as part of the rites that send off the deceased to his new existence
- 16) The *do-ma* ritual conveying the deceased to the hereafter (in this ritual horses were specially caparisoned and bird horns erected on their heads; the genetic relationship between the horse and *rkyang* (equids) is a focus of the *do-ma smrang*)
- 17) The *skyibs-lug/chibs-lug* ritual guiding the deceased to paradise (in this ritual funerary sheep referred to as *mar-ba/mer-ba* (the precious one?) are specially ornamented).
- 18) The retaining of the *g.yang* (capability for the attainment of good fortune) or essential qualities of funerary offerings for the benefit of the living
- 19) References to burial in tombs

8.2 Buddhist Contestation and the Sheep Guide of the Deceased

I will begin the Dunhuang translations with PT. 239, a funerary narrative preserving a Buddhist polemic against Bon funerary practices. The passage I first present contains words and phrases that are not well understood.⁴⁷³ My translation should therefore be seen as fairly free and somewhat tentative in composition. This passage concerns the discharge of various funerary procedures that seem to be of a cosmopolitan makeup. Most notably, the text states that the participants in the funeral relied (*brten*) on the Triple Gems (Sang-rgyas, Chos and dGe-'dun) as their *lha* (divine prototype). It would appear that by the time this text was written (ninth or tenth century CE?) the process of replacing the old Tibetan funerary deities with the Buddha, his doctrine and religious community was already well underway:⁴⁷⁴

For the purification of the suffering of longing (*yid la gcags pa'i mya ngan*) of the relatives [and the deceased], a *smrang* flag was made.⁴⁷⁵ It was copied from the *rgya-*

⁴⁷³ *Op. cit.*, fol. 21, lns. 1–4. See Tibetan Text III-37, p. 641.

⁴⁷⁴ With this text in mind, Kapstein (2000: 8–10) holds that from the tenth century CE, Tibetan funerary rites came under Indian influence with the importation of Buddhist teachings and esoteric lore. I would qualify his view by stating that this process of Buddhicization could have begun considerably earlier, for as Stein (1970: 158) notes, PT. 239 may have been written well before the tenth century CE.

⁴⁷⁵ In this context, the *smrang-dar* appears to be a banner proclaiming the historical legitimacy and efficacy of the funerary tradition.

khang dar-rgyas.⁴⁷⁶ It served as the ornament of the funeral ritual (*shid*) of urgent activity, the ornament of the black yak hair cloth (*re-nag*) [tent] *se-ma shen* (a ritual object of the *se* class). The good *ring-gur*⁴⁷⁷ with the ornament is kept like this. They relied on the *lha* of the dKon-mchog gsum (Triple Gems). They bestowed the alms (*sbyin*) purposefully, not frivolously, the wealth, the good *rgya* flag.

The next few lines of PT. 239 endorse the view that through purifying with limpid, divine incense (*lha-spos gtsang-mas bsang*) and reciting mighty divine mantras (*lha-sngags gnyen* (= *gnyan*) *pos bsngags-pa*), the deceased avoids the full fury of hell. PT. 239 concludes by extolling the benefit of the living sheep and of refraining from its slaughter, a major theme of the text.⁴⁷⁸ The text expresses the wish that the goodness meted out to the living sheep will lead to a superior rebirth for the deceased. PT. 239 pays special attention to the funerary sheep of the archaic tradition, arguing that it is not a reliable guide for the deceased.⁴⁷⁹ In tandem with this attack on the indigenous Tibetan funerary tradition, the text abhors the sacrifice of sheep and exalts the value of such animals remaining alive. The account begins with outlining the archaic funerary rites concerning the *skyibs-lug*, the sheep that conveys the deceased to the afterlife (para. i).⁴⁸⁰ These rites are characterized as black (unvirtuous, negative) and are further portrayed as essentially useless. The sacred status of the sheep in the old rites is squarely called into question in PT. 239, wherein it is portrayed as an ordinary animal. As this text makes clear, the divinity of animals upon which the *skyibs-lug* ritual is predicated, a fundamental theme in native Tibetan religious traditions, contravenes the mundane status accorded animals in Buddhism. For one thing, it is stated that the sheep is not needed to cut the rock formation (*brag 'dral*), a reference to one of the geographic

⁴⁷⁶ 'Spreading silk of the big house' (?). I am quick to point out that rGya here may possibly have a very different meaning from big or great. What seems to be a related term (rendered phonetically as *gya-kui*) denotes a white banner 6 or 7 m in length, which is used to show the path of liberation to the soul in Gurung funerary rites (Mumford 1990: 182).

⁴⁷⁷ This appears to have been some kind of canopy that was erected over the coffin and/or receptacles for the deceased's consciousness principles. According to Stein (1970: 170), the *ring-gur* (tent of the body) was perhaps a dais or catafalque. Stein notes that the *ring-gur* must have been made from silk. He adds that in imperial times silk was imported from China for use in palatial Tibetan homes. See *ibid.*, p. 170. In PT. 1042, lns. 40, 41, we read: "Minor *phangs bon-po** brought the *ring* (corpse), *ring-gur* (tent of the mortal remains?) and *zhal* (a soul effigy of the deceased) and went to the portal of the *se*" (*phangs bon po chu* (= *chung*) *ngus* / *ring dang ring gur dang* / *zhal gyi spyen drangs te* / *se'i sgor gshes nas* /).

* A type of funerary specialist. This term is closely related to *phangs-btsun*, a word meaning 'the deceased' in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Also of comparative note is the term *phang-chal* / *phang-cha*, offerings associated with the people and possessions that the deceased was fond of.

⁴⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, fols. 36, ln. 1 to 37, ln. 3.

⁴⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, fols. 27, ln. 4 to 29, ln. 4. See Tibetan Text III-38, p. 642. Much of this excerpt, with some conspicuous (and unannotated) omissions, is translated in Lalou 1953, p. 357 (n. 3). A penetrating analysis of PT. 239 and IOL 504 (which shares some of the same ritual and philosophical content) is found in Stein 1970. As Stein has pointed out, these texts have preserved *bon-po* funerary rites from a Buddhist philosophical perspective and ecclesiastical environment (*ibid.*: 157). Macdonald (1971: 373–375) also notes that this material represents a Buddhist adaptation of indigenous ideas related to death. The age of PT. 239, like other Dunhuang funerary manuscripts, is still debatable.

⁴⁸⁰ According to Lalou (1953: 357 (n.3)), *skyibs-lug* literally means 'sheep of the shelter' or 'sheep of the crypt'. Haahr (1969: 376) concurs with this signification and adds that the *skyibs-lug* was sacrificed at the funeral to serve as a guide for the deceased, in the 'world of the dead'. Despite the orthography, I suspect that the somewhat homophonic *skyibs* and *chibs* (mount) of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur may be semantically related. Stein (1970: 182 (n. 35)) nonetheless cautions that this epithet remains undefined. He correctly understood that the *skyibs-lug* functioned as a psychopomp, which forged a path for the deceased, crossing rock formations, lakes and rivers (*ibid.*: 169). Likewise, Macdonald (1971: 373–375) ascertained that the horse, sheep and yak were the animal guides of the *gshin-yul*. She mistook this *gshin-yul*, however, for the 'pays divin des morts', rather than the infernal transitional realm it is.

barriers of the postmortem realm. This passage culminates with the metaphor of the inability to fire an arrow with one hand, further illustrating the worthlessness of the *skyibs-lug* as a guide to the deceased.

The text now turns to Buddhism, which is characterized as white (virtuous, positive) and which does not indulge in sheep (animal) sacrifice (para. ii). In stating what Buddhism does not do to sheep, the text implicitly refers to archaic practices associated with the slaughter of sheep and the appeasement of the *srin* and *'dre* spirits. From what the text says, it would appear that in addition to providing meat offerings, the skin, bones and main organs of the sacrificial sheep were put to special ritual uses. As in the flayed animal skin rite of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, used to defeat the *gshed* demons of death, the various parts of the immolated sheep in PT. 239 appear to serve as precious offerings. Likewise, in one of the origin myths of the *mo-sri* we have reviewed, specified sheep parts are used as offerings for the *lha*, *gnyan* and *klu*, and to lure the demons of death to the place where they will be ritually slaughtered:

- i) *sKyibs-lug snga-pā*:⁴⁸¹ The tradition (*gzhung*) of the black man. The customs (*lugs*) of the black funerary ritual (*shid*). The ritual articles of offering (*yas*) of *bon*, the proclamation of preferences (*'dod-smrang*).⁴⁸² According to the tale (*rabs*) of the preference for the odor of burned food (*gsur*) of the *'dre*, it is mentioned that the sheep is better than the human and that the sheep is more powerful than the human, but [in actuality] every sentient being (*sems-can*) is guided by their own karma, so they do not also need to be guided (*lam-drang*) by sheep. Also, they do not need the sheep for cutting the rock formation. Moreover, the sheep cannot act as the guide (*lam-mkhan*). Moreover, the sheep cannot give directions (*blo-byed*). Moreover, bereft of a hand, one is unable to shoot an arrow.
- ii) By trusting the essential truth (*nges-don*), the traditions of the white *lha-chos* (Buddhist teachings), the customs of the white (virtuous) men, the religion (*chos*) of the white *shid*; because of this reliance on white Buddhist teachings (*lha-chos*), the cold iron hand⁴⁸³ is not put into the body [of the sheep]. The warm visceral blood is not removed. The five main organs⁴⁸⁴ are not snatched. The [sheep] skin is not hung on the shoulders. The white bones are not pulverized (*rtungs*) in the mortar (*gtun*). The red flesh is not boiled in the copper vessel

⁴⁸¹ *sNga-pā* means 'he who goes first'. This refers to the *skyibs-lug*'s function as a guide.

⁴⁸² Karmay (1998: 160) translates this sentence as: "The Bon (religion) is the archetypal myth of rituals which require ritual objects of offering." In my opinion, he has read too much into his rendering of this line. While his definition of *smrang* as the 'archetypal myth of rituals' is in keeping with the usual subject of the prefatory proclamations, the direct object is *'dod* (preference). The other clause of the sentence '*bon yas*' conveys a separate thought, referring to the offering articles used by the *bon-po* priests and/or the ritual traditions known as *bon*. This line refers to the intertwined abstract and material components of archaic ritual performances. The word '*bon*' here does not denote an organized religion, like the g.Yung-drung Bon of the later period. While the systematized Bon religion does indeed largely rest upon *bon*, defined as the sum total of the early ritual, cosmological and metaphysical teachings, this doctrinal *bon* of the imperial period or its aftermath should not be confused or equated with the various institutional, economic and ecclesiastic developments of the later religion. Although this distinction is critical in understanding the import of the line under scrutiny, it does not at all detract from Karmay's insightful thesis of unbroken historical connections between antecedent native religious traditions and the Bon religion that emerged after the late tenth century CE. Stein's observation that *smrang* (solemn proclamations) were characterized by lamentations and ululation (1970: 170, 179 (n. 23)), is somewhat puzzling.

⁴⁸³ *ICags-lag grang-mo*. This is a metaphor for a metal slaughtering implement.

⁴⁸⁴ *Don-snying smad-lnga*. They include the heart (*snying*), liver (*mchin-pa*), spleen (*mtsher-pa*), kidneys (*mkhal-ma*), and lungs (*glo-ba*).

(*zangs*). As per the custom of the heavenly humans,⁴⁸⁵ the activities of the *'dre* are not done. The activities of the *srin* are not done, so the living eyes look about (*rīg rīg*). The ears, the living ears, flap (*dab dab*). The bones, the living bones, go round and round.⁴⁸⁶

PT. 126 also champions Buddhist doctrines and morality (such as the perceived evil of eating meat and drinking alcohol) within a funerary frame of reference. In one passage concerned with Buddhist teachings on the impermanence of human existence, the archaic custom of depositing foodstuffs and personal effects in tombs is touched upon. This polemic directly targets the old beliefs regarding the permanence of human existence and the eternalistic nature of the afterlife. The text seems to mock the great care lavished on the dead in the old rites, stating in no uncertain terms that they are futile. In contrast, in the archaic cultural traditions the corpse was closely tied to beliefs concerning the embodiment of the soul (*bla-gnas*) and the well-being of the deceased. We can read this passage as part of a systematic attempt in the text to ridicule as inferior all aspects of Tibetan culture that were at odds with Buddhism and with those who sought to propagate the new religion:

There is no benefit in attiring the dead in good clothing and ornaments (*gshin-cha bzang-po*). Good edibles (*kha-zas*) are put in the tomb (*dur*) [with you]. Even if you have provisions (*brgyags*) for one thousand years, you are powerless (*dbang-myed*) to eat them, and it will endure for long (*yun du lus*).⁴⁸⁷

The *skyibs-lug*, the sheep that guided the deceased across the obstacles of the intermediate zone, was an indispensable part of the archaic funerary tradition. We have already appraised the great value attached to this animal in the *lug-gtad* ritual, which was preserved as part of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The relevant Dunhuang manuscripts not only confirm the role of the *skyibs-lug* (*chibs-lug*) expounded in the later Bon sources, but provide additional bits of lore as well. PT. 1042 elaborates upon the ornamentation of the *skyibs-lug* in what must have been its use in funerals for high-status individuals.⁴⁸⁸ This text relates that the right horn (*rwa*) of the *skyibs-lug* was wrapped in gold *kh rin* (foil?) and the left horn in silver *kh rin*. The eyebrows (*smyin*) were fashioned from (covered with?) turquoise and the hoofs (*rmyig*) were fashioned from iron. In PT. 1134, the *skyibs-lug* is graphically described as the guide of the deceased across the high ground and rivers of the provisional postmortem existence.⁴⁸⁹ The deceased is accompanied by the livestock he will need in his new heavenly existence. The funerary sheep is requested: “*sKyibs-lug mar-ba*,⁴⁹⁰ as you

⁴⁸⁵ *mTho-res myis*. They are so-called because human life belongs to the upper half of the Buddhist cycle of transmigration.

⁴⁸⁶ *Kyil kyil* (round and round) conveys the articulated movement of the skeleton inside the body of the living sheep.

⁴⁸⁷ PT. 126 (first text), lns. 19–22: *gshin cha* (mod. = *chas*) *bzang po bgos myi phan / kha zas bzang po dur du bcugs / lo stong bar kyī brgyags yod kyang / za ba'i dbang myed yun du las /*.

⁴⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, lns. 105–108. Lalou (1953: 357) presents the same account.

⁴⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, lns. 127–129: *mtho la rkal* (mod. = *rgal*) *gyang* (mod. = *kyang*) *myi phyugs mnyam/du skyibs lug mar bas/drong shig / dam (= dma') rab 'bog gyang* (mod. = *kyang*) *myi phyugs mnyan (= mnyam) du skyibs lug mar bas drong shig /*.

⁴⁹⁰ As already noted (see p. 460), the word *mar-ba* appears to be an epithet indicating that the *skyibs-lug* is very precious, probably as a result of being anointed with butter, a custom well documented in apotropaic and fortune-bestowing rituals where sheep are offered to the various personal and territorial deities. *Mar/smar* in the Zhang-zhung language literally means gold, but this word is also used to refer to highly auspicious occurrences and precious things. For example, in the traditional Zhang-zhung closing for texts, *mu tsug smar ro* (roughly equivalent to *sarba mangalam*), *smar* has the connotation of auspiciousness or happiness. In the dialect of Dol-po, *mar/smar* is used to describe very beneficial happenings. In Bon texts, *smar-pa* has been defined as ‘complete and pure’ and *smar* as ‘good’ (Dagkar

traverse the high pass, guide [the deceased] man and his livestock together. *sKyibs-lug mar-ba*, as you cross the ford below, guide [the deceased] man and his livestock together.”

Unlike the Buddhist polemical content of PT. 126 and PT. 239, PT. 1134 deals exclusively with indigenous funerary traditions. In terms of calligraphy, grammar and syntax, it is written in an older style than the Buddhist polemical funerary texts. This linguistic distinction entails the divide between so-called Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan.⁴⁹¹ In an excerpt from PT. 1134, the ability of the *skyibs-lug* to surmount the various geographic barriers of the intermediate realm is eloquently stated.⁴⁹² The text refers to the *skyibs-lug* as the mother and father of the departed one. This portrays the deceased’s irremediable isolation from his family and society, and illustrates that he now has recourse only to the guidance of the sheep. The passage ends with an exhortation to the deceased to take good care of his *skyibs-lug*. Although there is no suggestion of this in the Mucho’i khrom-’dur, this is likely an indication that the sheep was ritually slaughtered so that it could accompany the deceased in the hereafter:

- i) There is no [other] path. To find the way through the rock formation, the *skyibs-lug* white-headed (*gwa*) with butter on its haunches (*dpung*)⁴⁹³ cuts the rock formation with its horns and pushes the mountain with its haunches. [If the deceased] desires a ford in a lake without a ford, it will sweep across.⁴⁹⁴ You *spo ma nye du*⁴⁹⁵ are kindly (*snga-grin*) in the land of the dead (*gshin-yul*), ’Bram-dang.⁴⁹⁶
- ii) The living livestock (*phyugs-gson*) and the deceased human (*gshin-myi*), the living and the dead, you two, are lord (the human) and servant (the sheep). You, *skyibs-lug mar-ba*, are the father of he who has no father [and] the mother of he who has no mother. You, the [deceased] person, (*myi*) feed it (*son chig*), even if it is just fed (*swan*) two mouthfuls of herbs (*rtsi-kham*). You, the [deceased] person, water it (*lud chig*), even if it is just a sip (*rngubs gyis blud*) of water.

8.3 The Apotropaic Functions of Animal Sacrifice

In the first of two *smrang* narratives in PT. 1068, a brother provides the sacrificial offerings needed to rehabilitate the corpse of his dead sister, and as afterlife provisions (Ins. 1–60). Unfortunately,

2003: 314). Stein (1970: 162, 163) treats *mar-ba* as a proper name, but this is not at all likely.

⁴⁹¹ Stein (1970: 158) aptly comments that the Dunhuang manuscripts represent the intersection between the ancient and classical Tibetan languages.

⁴⁹² *Op. cit.*, Ins. 190–195. See Tibetan Text III-39, p. 642.

⁴⁹³ Rather than a description, *grwa* (= *gwa*) *dpung mar* could possibly be a proper name.

⁴⁹⁴ This movement across the lake is described as *pyo pyo*, which most likely conveys the action of animals such as sheep and dogs swimming.

⁴⁹⁵ The signification of this epithet is not completely clear. It indicates the *skyibs-lugs* (and *do-ma*) are the beloved gift of the relatives to the deceased. See p. 521, fn. 570. This is supported by Stein (1970: 183, 184 (n. 47)), where he relates *spo ma nye du* to the modern *gnyen-’dun* (relatives), as well as to *snying-dags/thugs-dags* (= *snying-dgas/thugs-dgas*) (‘dear one’).

⁴⁹⁶ This enigmatic postmortem realm may possibly be related (in an etymological and mythological sense) to Mount Burundan of the Byansi of Dharchula. This is one of a series of physical obstacles between Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho and Khyung-lung that the dead must contend with. After Mount Burundan, the dead have to ford the Mujuratha River in order to reach the final cluster of destinations, Khyung-lung Guipatu. This information on the funerary beliefs of the Byansi came from Mikio Miyamoto (in personal communication), an anthropologist working in the Himalayan borderlands. See p. 523, fn. 580.

an indeterminate portion of the first part of the narrative is missing. Like other Dunhuang funerary proclamations of origins, this story of ritual slaughter is intended to establish the historical legitimacy and efficacy of the various death rites. As we have seen in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *smrang* preface each of the ritual exercises in the funerary texts as a kind of empowering gesture. As Stein (1970: 156, 157) made known, it was mandatory that the mythic precedent be chanted or recited as a prelude to the actual execution of a ritual.

The extant tale concerns a queen, Bya-za thin-tsun, and her noble nephew (*tsha-bo*), known as Lhe'u btsan-po. The nephew appeared at a spring where Bya-za thin-tsun's servant was collecting water. The servant asked Lhe'u btsan-po to wait, and returned home to inform her mistress that a visitor was on his way. Bya-za thin-tsun told the servant that this was her nephew and instructed her to invite him home. The servant beckoned Lhe'u btsan-po to come. The *bon-po* carried out an incense ceremony (*gsang* (= *bsang*)...*bdab*) (?), and various people are recorded as making prostrations (*phyag-tshal*) in sets of 100. Bya-za thin's brother (nephew), 'the son of a human man, looked like a son of the *lha*' (*myi'i myi bu lha'i sras ltu* (= *lta-bu shig*). She wanted to put him on a golden throne (*gser gyi khri*), but he was feeling anxious.⁴⁹⁷ Bya-za thin-tsun asked her nephew not to be anxious but to go up [on the throne]. She put him on the throne. He was feted with meat (*sha*) and beer (*chang*) in the day, and treated to dancing (*bro*) and singing (*glu*) in the night.

After three years, in the fourth year (*lo gsum snying dang bzhi lo*) of his stay with his aunt, Lhe'u btsan-po thought that it was better to go back to attend to his [dead] sister. Bya-za thin-tsun understood his wish and gave him permission to return back. She provided him with many provisions (*brgyags*), including parched barley meal (*phye*), butter oil (*dmar-bzhus*), a golden instrument for piercing {*pho-smying*} (mod. = *pho-snyung*), a cloth lead line (*sna-dags*), and a golden nose ring for bovines (*snyal-chu*). A golden bird is described (*gser-bya*) as part of a ritual action to be performed, but the fabric of the text is heavily damaged here. The Queen offered her nephew advice on how to get a golden female hybrid yak (*mdzo-mo*), and how to pierce its nose with the golden instrument, insert the ring and lead it away with the line. The nephew was to obtain one drop of the *mdzo-mo* milk, not more. He had to keep this drop in a vessel by his side. He was to make an offering in the sky (*gnam du pus* (mod. = *phud*)) among a number of other ritual procedures. Lhe'u btsan-po would have to travel a long distance over a high pass and other specified locations in order to reach his sister's corpse. He had to daub (*skud*) butter no larger than a louse egg (*sro ma tsam*) on his sister's hair. In the night Lhe'u btsan-po was to quarter the female hybrid yak. Parts of the butchered animal were to become the share of Queen Bya-za and the brother and sister. The carcass was to be quartered and decapitated for placement in the sister's tomb (*sha lhu-bzhi go* (= *mgo*) *stsogs sring-mo'i dur du chug*). The four quarters, head and five organs of [another *mdzo-mo*] carcass were to be deposited as the sister's headrest (*mgo brang smad lnga ni sring-mo'i sngas su chug*). As we have seen in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the headrest (*sngas*) constitutes an apotropaic funerary rite (see pp. 400, 408, para. xxii).

Finally, Lhe'u btsan-po was sent on his mission. He arrived at his sister's corpse and took butter no larger than a louse egg, yet this oil was enough to cover all her hair, which stood on end like bristles. The brother melted the fat of a deer (*sha-ba'i tshil-bu*) again and again and anointed the body [of his sister], dispelling (?) the lice (*sha-ba'i tshil-bu* (mod. = *tshil-lu*) *yang la yang bzhus pa lus la bskusna shig ni gun* {*dar*} *song*). This passage describes the use of specially prepared unguents designed to restore the corpse to the state of the body before death. According to the Mu-

⁴⁹⁷ 'rTsig. The semantic field of the modern equivalent 'tshigs ('to be angry', 'to scorch') is somewhat different.

cho'i khrom-'dur, restorative substances are necessary so that the consciousness of the deceased is not troubled by the condition of his corpse. The repeated melting of deer fat is a rendering process used in the production of the unguent. As we have seen, the deer also features in other archaic funerary rituals. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, a bag made of deer hide functions as an apotropaic instrument, sheltering the consciousness principles of the deceased, and the skin of a doe is used in *gshed* destruction rites (see pp. 436, 438 (para. iv), 471).

The excerpt presented here in translation begins with the brother inviting famed funerary priests ('*dur-gshen/dur-gshen*) of yore to attend his sister.⁴⁹⁸ Among these priests is no other than Dur-gshen rma-da, one of the main lineage holders of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur funerary rituals. This Dunhuang account describes the butchering of female hybrid yaks, carried out to provide offerings for both the participants in the funeral ritual and the deceased sister herself. The cuts of hybrid yak meat deposited in the tomb appear to have constituted the rations offered to the sister for her new existence.⁴⁹⁹ The significance of offering some of the yak meat to a hawk (*khra*) is not clear. Based on general themes in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, the rock art record of Upper Tibet and ethnographic sources, I suspect that this bird of prey was one of the creatures responsible for conveying the dead girl's consciousness principles to the heavens or may have functioned as one of the gifts for the afterlife.

The butchered animal parts are then likened to sacred substances, emphasizing their value in redeeming the deceased (para. ii). As we know, this is precisely the way in which animal sacrifice is portrayed in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text *Sa-bdag Reparation Conquest with the Flayed Skin of the Life-Cutter*, in which an old man and woman of primal times butcher a sheep (see pp. 439, 441, para. ii). This was carried out to provide precious offerings to those taking part in the funeral, and to banish the demons who tried to block the path of salvation for the deceased. The bones of this sacrificial sheep became conch (in a miraculous and poetical transformation), while its eyes became turquoise, its blood vermilion, and its flesh gold. The semantic tone and selection of metaphors in this Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur tale are directly attributable to the cultural historical environment of the PT. 1068 excerpt under inspection. The Dunhuang account ends with the narrator expressing a wish that the current performance of the ritual is as beneficial (*phan*) and meritorious (*bsod*) as it was in ancient times.⁵⁰⁰

- i) The brother invited (*gnyer*) 'Dur-gshen rma-da, rTsang-shen snyal-ngag and gShen-tsha lung-sgra. They made the funeral (*shid*) and erected the *brang*⁵⁰¹ of the sister. They slaughtered (*bsad*) female hybrid yaks (*mdzo-mo*). The four quarters of flesh (*lhu bzhi*)⁵⁰² and a head were thrown as bird food as the hawk's catch. The brother took four quarters and a head as his

⁴⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, Ins. 53–60. See Tibetan Text III-40, p. 642.

⁴⁹⁹ In the *T'ung tien* completed in 801 by Tu Yu, it reports that at the funeral of a Yang-t'ung (Zhang-zhung) chieftain many cows, sheep and mares were sacrificed and buried. The same work says that divination was used to augur the location of secret caves used for burial. See Haahr 1969, pp. 345, 347.

⁵⁰⁰ In Bellezza 2005a, p. 43 (n. 42), I carefully consider the historical implications of this last line of the excerpt, reaching the conclusion that it cannot be used alone to establish the existence of this funerary narrative or any of its respective elements in the prehistoric epoch. To conclude this study, in Section 9 I shall return to the critical question of the cultural sources and periodization of the Tibetan archaic funerary traditions, utilizing ethnographic and archaeological data.

⁵⁰¹ This word refers to the part of the funeral connected to the burial rites.

⁵⁰² This line includes the word *scogs* (= *stsogs*), which seems to be a pluralizer.

snying-lan.⁵⁰³ Four quarters and a head were placed in the tomb (*dur*) of the sister.⁵⁰⁴ A head (*mgo*), carcass (*brang*) and five main organs (*smad-lnga*) were placed by the sister's side.⁵⁰⁵

- ii) The blood was the blood of vermilion (*mtshal*). The bones were the bones of conch (*dung*). The hoofs were the hoofs of iron (*lcags*). The ears were the ears of gold (*gser*). The eyes were the eyes of *spug* (a kind of gem). As it was beneficial in ancient times, now it is also beneficial. As it was meritorious in ancient times, now it is also meritorious.⁵⁰⁶

8.4 The Mythic Origins of the Bird Wing Liberator

It will be remembered that in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur there are two texts dedicated to the origin tale (*srid-rabs*) of the bird wing hand-tool (*bya-gshog phyag-cha*). A different account of the origin of the bird wing, that powerful ritual implement used as a weapon to dispel demons that attack the dead and as a viaduct for the regulation of their consciousness principles, is found in PT. 1194.⁵⁰⁷ These surviving versions of the same mythic theme give us an inkling of the abundance of myths, recitations and practices that must have once surrounded the use of bird wings in the archaic funerary tradition.⁵⁰⁸ Curiously, in the PT. 1194 narrative the obtainment process goes wrong at first, producing right wing products that are ritually unusable. This is finally rectified and the left wings are duly ornamented and empowered with a variety of objects, so that they can be used by Dur-gshen rma-da.

This Dunhuang *srid-rabs* begins by naming the lineage of primordial lammergeyers responsible for endowing humanity with the hand-tool wing (para. i). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the vulture is never referred to by name. PT. 1194 proceeds to describe how three lammergeyers were snared by a troublesome patriarch (para. ii). The white, black and yellow lammergeyers cited in the text represent either the original family of the species or their progeny. The patriarch tried to make the central portion of the right wings of the vultures the respondent of death (*gshin-than*) but it was to no avail (para. iii). He then attempted to do the same with the bottom part of the vultures' wings but also had no luck (para. iv). The patriarch then consulted with a ritualist (probably Dur-gshen rma-da), who informed him that the top portion of the right wings could be used as bird

⁵⁰³ *sNying-lan* perhaps refers to the brother's share of multiple butchered animals as his sentimental take, but its precise signification is not known.

⁵⁰⁴ It does not appear, however, that the remains of sacrificed carnivores were normally used as offerings deposited in tombs. PT. 1042 (Ins. 88, 89) states: "That which are not suitable (*myi-rung*) to put in the tomb are carnivores (*gcan-zan*), so the carnivorous are not suitable" (*dur du stsald du myi rung ba'lla gcan zan gcan du gyur te myi rung l*).

⁵⁰⁵ In order to obtain this reading, I have corrected *mchun* to *mchan* (the side of a person's torso). The next part of the line contains a few words that are not fully legible (*gshen, kyi pyugso?*) and the phrase: *gzha gsung gyi* (?). Roughly, the line seems to say, "[these offerings] are the favorite of the brother, which the *gshen* thoroughly searched for; they are your friends and livestock forever (*tshe-rabs*)."

⁵⁰⁶ ...*gna' phan na da yang phano gna' bsod na da yang bsod do l*. This conclusion could also be intended to express an aspiration, but this is less likely given its grammatical structure: "May it now also be beneficial as it was beneficial in ancient times. May it now also be meritorious as it was meritorious in ancient times."

⁵⁰⁷ *Op. cit.*, Ins. 37–55. See Tibetan Text III-41, pp. 642, 643.

⁵⁰⁸ In the context of various ritual activities, including the offering of a libation known as *mjal-skyems*, PT. 1042 (Ins. 47, 48) also makes reference to these wings: "The various *sku-gshen mjol bon-po* waved* the fluttering wing of the various *do-ma* and livestock (*rkang-'gros*)" (*sku gshem (= gshen) mjol bon po rnams/kyis l do ma las stsogs te rkang'gros kyi rnams gshog yugs kyis gdab l*).

* *gDab*. This word is currently used to describe animals cleaning themselves through shaking, or the shaking out of clothing.

horns and *khyung* horns. ‘Horns’ (*ru*) is used here as a metaphor for the vulture feathers (*rgod kyi ldem ’phru*), which are part of another important apotropaic funerary ritual. In the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur bird horns text, these ‘horns’ are an attribute of the patron deities and officiants of the funeral. As we have seen, the *lha* and *gsas* divinities play a vitally important role in this ritual. The participation of the *lha* and *gsas* is also noted in this PT. 1194 excerpt, but a text devoted to the bird horn ritual does not appear to have survived in the Dunhuang collections.

In the PT. 1194 narrative, the left wings of the vultures were finally appointed as the hand-tool bird wing (para. v). According to the text, each wing was magically energized with nine objects (paras. v and vi). These objects are listed with reference to the paths of precious stones (agate, *spug* and *gzi*), recalling the words of the spirit-medium Karma rig-’dzin that at the time of death the consciousness requires a physical path (*lam-’gag*) on the journey to the sacred mountains and the realm of the elemental spirits (see p. 461, fn. 344). The Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur hand-tool wing ritual presents two lists of the nine ornaments, which contain only two objects in common (banded agate and needle) with the Dunhuang text.⁵⁰⁹

More crucially, the significance of each of the ornaments in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur hand-tool wing ritual is expressed within a Buddhist philosophical and terminological schema that stresses the psychological and moral dimensions of liberation. On the other hand, PT. 1194 depicts the nine wing embellishments as instrumental in forging a physical pathway to heaven. This is an extremely edifying example of how early historic period funerary traditions came to be tampered with by the later Bon-po, in an effort to conform to Buddhist sentiments and teachings. The underlying mythic and procedural elements of the hand-tool wing funerary tradition remained more or less constant, permitting the g.Yung-drung Bon-po to rightfully claim that they are the custodians of the ancient Tibetan funerary traditions. Nevertheless, the rationale or doctrinal basis for their preservation and practice was substantially altered. It would appear that, in this way, large swathes of the map of early Tibetan ritual culture were adapted to the Buddhist landscape of later centuries. This emendatory process can be characterized as a re-engineering or reformulation of pre-existing cultural expressions.

The table below compares the hand-tool wing ornaments and the qualities ascribed to them in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur and Dunhuang texts. The categorical differences in substance and meaning exhibited by the two literary sources reveal specifically how the Lamaist Bon-po revamped the funerary tradition.

Mu-cho’i text wing ornament	Mu-cho’i text corresponding attribute	PT. 1194 wing ornament	Pelliot 1194 corresponding attribute
needle (<i>khab</i>)	types of knowledge (<i>shes-rab sna</i>)	ligature or leather thong (<i>rgyus</i>)	continuous path (<i>lam-rgyun</i>)
thread (<i>skud-pa</i>)	purified and perfected state (<i>byang-chub</i>)	incense (<i>spos</i>)	way of the path (<i>shul-lam</i>)

⁵⁰⁹ In Upper Tibet it is widely reported that banded agates (*mchong*) and patterned agates (*gzi*) are sometimes found in opened tombs. Indications from the bird wing liturgies are that these precious stones may have served a soteriological function in the burial rites of the region.

woman (<i>lcam-mo</i>)	skillful means (<i>thabs</i>)	[luminous] torch (<i>sgron-shing</i>)	a flickering flame [illuminating the path] (<i>bar ni lam lam</i>)
silk cloth (<i>dar</i>)	compassion (<i>snying-rje</i>)	needle (<i>khab</i>)	[the invulnerable path of the] iron stairs (<i>skas lcags</i>)
lambskin (<i>tshar-bu</i>)	equanimity (<i>btang-snyoms</i>)	<i>god-gad</i> <i>bya-rdzungs</i> (a type of clasp?)	dispels the clouds in the vault of the sky (<i>gnam mthongs sprin gyi go sald</i>)
mirror (<i>me- long</i>)	wisdom (<i>shes-rab</i>)	vermilion (<i>mtshal</i>)	a flickering flame [illuminating the path] (<i>bar ni lam lam</i>)
jewel (<i>nor-bu</i>)	meditation (<i>bsam-gtan</i>)	agate (<i>mchong</i>)	the unobstructed path of the hole in the agate (<i>chong gi dmyig na zang zang</i>)
<i>long-tang</i> (?)	ground of vision (<i>spyan-brten</i>)	<i>spug</i> (a type of gemstone)	the meandering path [through all possible routes] (<i>lam ni khyud khyud</i>)
		patterned agate (<i>gzi</i>)	the [bright] path of the patterned agate (<i>gzi lam</i>)

PT. 1194 declares that the power of the *lha* and *gsas* was very great (*nus-mthu yang che*), and that Dur-gshen rma-da was the source of all the funerary rites (para. vii). There is no mention of gShen-rab myi-bo in the text. Unlike the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the manuscript does not specify the deities' functions, but they probably were also apotropaic and fortune-bestowing in character. It is significant that both the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Dunhuang funerary manuscripts depict Dur-gshen rma-da as an ancestral (father) figure of the distant past, upon which the funerary system depended. This mythic apparatus is employed to sanction the continued practice of the tradition in both historical settings (early historic period and post-tenth century CE). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the mythic arena for such funerary rites is set in a distant past that unfolded long before the Tibetan imperium. In the absence of hermeneutic evidence to the contrary, it appears that the cognate mythology of the Dunhuang texts was likewise intended to represent a remote period of time. We can take this to mean that such Dunhuang funerary mythology is positioned in a prehistoric temporal framework that formed the precedent for the Bon mythos of later times (we shall return to matters concerning the periodization of Dunhuang funerary motifs in the last section of Part III).

At the conclusion of the hand-tool wing origins tale, PT. 1194 instructs the readers to perform the series of [funerary] traditions (*lugs-rabs bgyi'o*) now that the origins have been set forth. The pronouncement of the origins and transmission of a ritual practice (*smrang*) before its actual performance remains a hallmark of the archaic ritual traditions conserved by the Bon-po to date:

- i) The respondent (*than*) of death, the respondent, was made with what? To say the name of the father, yes, of the vulture, it was the one rGod-po thang-yag. To say the name of the mother of the vulture, it was the one rGod-mo thang-ro ldem-yag. Their son was the one rGod-pur rmang rno-rnon.
- ii) A mischief-making (*bya-ba than-ngar*) father set up a *gsnyi gstsang*⁵¹⁰ bird snare (*bya-snyi*), and the *gstsang myi gstsang*⁵¹¹ was placed underneath (concealed). He placed the decayed corpse of a dog⁵¹² above the bird snare and he set up (*bres*) the *gstsang*. The white lammergeyer, the black lammergeyer and the yellow lammergeyer, these three, were killed (*bkum*) there.
- iii) [The father] took the medial portions (*gung-ru*) of the vultures' right wings [but] they were not appropriate (*ma-rung*) to be the respondent of death, the respondent's respondent. [The central portions of the wings] disappeared into the sky,⁵¹³ they were no more. The wings were not usable (*'om-ma nyan-no*).
- iv) [The father] took (*blangs*) the bottom portions (*'og-ru*) of the vultures' right wings and said, "Let us make them the respondent of death", but they were not appropriate to be the respondent of death. They went away as the wings of the *lha*; they were no more. Afterwards he said, "Will these [top] portions of the wings be appropriate for the respondent of death?" [The ritualist replied,] "They may not be appropriate for the respondent of death, but they will be acceptable (*'ong-'ong*) as the bird horns and *khyung* horns on top of the *gsas* [ritualist?]. These were the wings of the *lha* and *gsas*."
- v) The medial portions of the vultures' left wing were made the respondent and messenger (*prin*) between the living and dead humans. A ligature⁵¹⁴ was tied on the wings, the road of the continuous way [of the dead] *breng breng*.⁵¹⁵ Incense was tied on the wings; incense shows the throughway (*shul-lam*). A luminous torch⁵¹⁶ was tied on the edge of the wings *bye bar ni lam lam*.⁵¹⁷ A needle was tied on the wings, the iron stairs, the stairs, towering⁵¹⁸ in the sky.

⁵¹⁰ Probably describes a type of snare.

⁵¹¹ An accoutrement of the snare. In the contemporary venatic context, *rtsang* are the sharp wooden stakes used in traps and snares to immobilize game.

⁵¹² This line possibly begins with *smyo* and *khyi* and one other syllable that may refer to a *khyi-smyon* (rabid dog).

⁵¹³ *gNam du yar*. This disappearance into the heavens of objects and deities not central to the unfolding of mythic narratives is found as the denouement in other ancient literary contexts as well. In a *pha-rabs* text, this is expressed: *nam-mkha' la 'phur la thal lo* (flew away into space). See Bellezza 2005a, p. 203, para. i.

⁵¹⁴ Alternatively, *rgyus* could denote a leather thong.

⁵¹⁵ *Breng breng* describes the appearance or qualities of a rope or long road, which is continuous and stretches out in a linear fashion.

⁵¹⁶ *sGron-shing* denotes a torch made from pieces of coniferous wood that are full of pitch. In the text, the torch is probably preceded by three nearly illegible syllables that are best rendered: *sner snang-ma*. *sNer* is the edge of the wing and *snang-ma* describes the luminosity of the torch.

⁵¹⁷ *Bye bar ni lam lam* describes the burning of a fire. *Lam-lam* conveys the flickering or shifting action of a flame. This expression indicates that the torch illuminates the way.

⁵¹⁸ *Zang zang*. This poetic term is often used in ritual literature to capture the quality of great height in sacred mountains. The iron stairs (*skas-lcags*) symbolize an unbroken and unassailable pathway to the hereafter.

- vi) A *god-gad bya-rdzungs*⁵¹⁹ was tied on the wings; it clears up the clouds in the expanse of the sky. Vermilion was tied on the wings.⁵²⁰ An agate was tied on the wings, the agate path, the path directly through the hole (*dmyig*) of the agate.⁵²¹ A *spug* was tied on the wings; the path of the *spug*, the path is meandering (*khyud khyud*).⁵²² A *gzi* was tied on the wings; the path of the *gzi*.⁵²³
- vii) The power of the *lha-gsas* was very great. The *smo-ma nye-ma*⁵²⁴ respondent and messenger was made with the vultures. The *gshen* elucidated the history of the throughway [to the heavens]. There is no one who did not have the funeral rites (*bdur*) [done] by the father Dur-gshen rma-da. Also, there is no one that the lofty birds did not pass over or tread over.⁵²⁵ Speaking thus, perform the succession of [funerary] traditions.

8.5 Conceptions Pertaining to Infelicity and Salvation

PT. 1134 provides an account of a funeral closely matching the imagery and vocabulary of the intermediate realm of the postmortem state, as elucidated in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.⁵²⁶ The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur literature makes it clear that, unless the ritualists succeed in harnessing and directing the consciousness principles of the deceased, he has no chance of attaining liberation. Likewise, the same fundamental ritual theme is depicted in this Dunhuang excerpt. Such eschatological beliefs can therefore be securely attributed to the archaic cultural horizon.

The Dunhuang tale begins by giving the parentage and names of a mythic or primordial man who died in a horse-riding accident (para. i). His funeral goes terribly wrong because it was not performed in the manner prescribed by Dur-gshen rma-da (para. ii). The *se-mo* (the *se* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, an ensemble of ritual objects erected at the burial site, as well as the tomb itself), could not launch the deceased to the hereafter. Their passing over/through [the land of the dead] was wrong (*bgrod nong*). The going-over function of the tomb delimitation, referred to by the epithet *gru-bzhi*, was also wrong. As a result, the deceased's 'ordered position did not reach the heights' (*gral ni mto ma-lebs*). As we know from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, this would thwart the deceased from entering the celestial paradise or achieving any other form of liberation. Like the soul circles and hand-tool wing origin texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, PT. 1134 employs the technical term *gral* (ordered position) to convey that the orderly or properly regulated placement

⁵¹⁹ This appears to be some type of clasp.

⁵²⁰ This vermilion (*mtshal*) has a fiery quality as described by the next phrase in the text: *bye bar ni lam lam* (see p. 509, fn. 517). This appears to be a metaphor for the way in which vermilion illuminates the path.

⁵²¹ The word *zang zang* in this sentence suggests that the hole is for sighting, that it is directly open, and that from it there is an unobstructed view (of the heavens).

⁵²² This line seems to indicate that the *spug* has the power to guide the deceased through all the possible routes to heaven.

⁵²³ The path of the *gzi* is described by the word '*ol 'ol*, a luminescent quality (?).

⁵²⁴ This unknown term seems to describe a quality of the vulture wings, related to their presentation by relatives of the deceased.

⁵²⁵ *mTho bya 'is ma bgoms ma bchags* (= '*chags*) *kyang gcig myed do* (the *a-chung* in '*is* is not legible in the text). This line seems to portray the indispensable role that the celestial birds play in the deceased reaching his heavenly reward.

⁵²⁶ *Op. cit.*, lns 23–35, 37–39. I have not included the intervening lines of the text in the translation as they remain largely incomprehensible to me. See Tibetan Text III-42, pp. 643, 644.

of the deceased's consciousness principles (probably the *bka'* and *thugs*) could not be instituted. This guidance of the consciousness principles, however, does not appear to be elaborated upon in the Dunhuang manuscripts I have had the opportunity to inspect.

PT. 1134 tells us that in an attempt to aid the deceased man, Dur-gshen rma-da beat the precious (*mar-ba*) *gshin-sgrog* with his long-handled sword (*gshin-sgrog mar-ba ni gri yu-rings gyis brabs*) (para. iii). This appears to have been an exorcistic procedure by which harmful forces afflicting the dead were eradicated by the cutting of a line (binding the corpse?). This ritual is reminiscent of the beating of flayed animal skins (*g.yang-gzhi*), which are used to defeat meddlesome demons in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Despite the deployment of the *gshin-sgrog* rite, the deceased was left marooned with his ritual supports and could not cross the three heights of the dead (*gshin-ma gong gsum/ma-rgald l*). Consequently, he could not pass through the precious [sheep] land of the dead (*gshin-yul mar-ba ma-bgrod*). In PT. 1134, as recorded in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the deceased must successfully escape from the land of the *gshin*, a hellish realm, if he is to find salvation. The text states, however, that the deceased could not cross the ford of the *gshin* and could not traverse the wide pass of the *gshin* (*gshin-rab ma-rgald gshin-la yang ma-rgald l*) (para. iv).⁵²⁷ The geographic obstacles presented here have the river and plains of the *gshin-rje* as their Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur analogue. Likewise, this river of the dead can be bridged only by the correct performance of the Bon funerary rituals. As a result, the wooden *se-mo* and square were left behind (*lus sa re*). This is a metaphor unambiguously showing that the deceased was left stranded in the hellish land of the demons of death:

- i) At the end of the sky and the '*brum* (apex?) of the heavens (*dgung*), the name of the father and patriarch was Ding-ding dings gyi rje.⁵²⁸ The mother and matriarch was Ge-ngur ngur-ngur mo-btsun. The son of their nocturnal union was gDags dre'u-rje btshan-ma. While going to hunt wild yak and deer at 'Broq dbye-b-na lteng-gsum, atop the rock formation of gNam-brag lding-brag (Sky Rock Soaring Rock), he became distracted (*yeng*) on horseback [and fell down]. gDags dre'u-rje btshan-ba perished (*grongs*) in this accident (*dri*) and was no more.
- ii) The yellow-orange cast (*ser-ngang ge*) *do-ma*, the *snying-dgas* (the cherished one), [reappeared].⁵²⁹ They (makers of the funeral) had not listened to the advice (*bstan-drung*) of the father Dur-gshen rma-da.⁵³⁰ They had not listened to the words of teaching (*bstan-pa ngag*) of the elder. Before the warm spring sun could set, the *se-mo* went over wrongly. The square (*gru-bzhi*) went over wrongly; the deceased (*gshin*) went over wrongly [due to] the

⁵²⁷ In a bilingual Mongolian-Tibetan funerary liturgy for the definitive separation of the living from the dead, sets of mountain passes must also be traversed in order for the deceased to be extricated from the postmortem realm: "Now traverse the nine passes of sand. Now traverse the white snow mountain passes" (*bye ma'i la dgu da rgol zhig l gangs la dkar po da rgyol (= rgol) zhig l*). For the text, see Sárkózi 1987, pp. 131, 134. Sárkózi (*ibid.*: 120) observes that this text (*gSon gshin lag 'brel bcad pa'i thabs*) either represents the introduction of Bon funerary tradition into Mongolia, or the systemization of not widely divergent ancient Mongolian funerary beliefs and practices.

⁵²⁸ Sky High Lord of the Sky? *Ding/dings* is the Zhang-zhung word for *gnam* (sky).

⁵²⁹ *sNying-dgas* appears to be related to the modern terms *snying-dga'* and *thugs-dgyes* (joyousness, cheerfulness), but with a slightly different lexical twist. *sNying-dgas* is the object of love and affection, the one held in great esteem, as specifically applied to the *do-ma*.

⁵³⁰ The meaning of this sentence is partly unknown: ...*pa dur gshen rma da nas bstan drung ni ma mnyan/galna drung ma dagste l*.

living relatives (*nyer-bu*).⁵³¹ The lord's ordered placement did not reach the height. The flesh was not clothed/painted.⁵³²

- iii) Although the [deceased] was honored, he was not grateful.⁵³³ [The deceased] was carried (*bkur*) on a horse for not a long time. The *se-mo* remained behind between gZha-ring dung (a place name?). The square did remain behind. Other people watched the spectacle (*ltad-mo ni myis blta/*). Other people laughed at the hilarity (*gad-mo ni/myis bgad*). The father Dur-gshen rma-da showed the precious [sheep] path of the dead. He beat the precious *gshin-sgrog* with his long-handled sword. In accordance with the three words of the father *gshen*'s speech, he said, "[The deceased] could not cross the three heights of the dead. He could not traverse the precious [sheep] land of the dead."
- iv) "[The deceased] could not cross the ford, the ford of the dead (*gshin*); and also he could not traverse the wide pass of the dead. The *se-mo* remained behind, it was no more. Although it could not be made happy like [the *do-ma*] Ser-gang-'ge.⁵³⁴ The passing over of the *se-mo* was wrong. The passing over of the square was wrong. The wooden *se-mo* was left behind. The square was left behind."

After the above account, PT. 1134 (Ins. 48–66) records a high-status funeral performed by the mighty (*drag*) funerary (*gshin*) *gshen*, Dur-shen rma-rda-na, Glan-shen dril-bu and lDe'u-shen rmun-bu. This performance is closely related to the one we have just examined. Sandwiched between these two accounts, amid an analogous funerary narrative, is mention of the *chab gyi ya-bgo* (river of the upper headwaters) (Ins. 39, 40). This should refer to the rTa-mchog gtsang-po, the higher reaches of the Yar-lung gtsang-po (see p. 522), furnishing an Upper Tibetan setting for burial rites that is either directly or indirectly related to the three funerary priests now under consideration. The *gto* and *dpyad* were made by these personalities with the aid of the mighty *bon gshin-gsas*, the divine funerary allies who protect the deceased from harm during his postmortem passage. In this context, *bon* describes the lineage and/or ritual system to which these deities belong. Further along in the text, gShen-rab myi-bo and another funerary priest are mentioned in conjunction with other funerary ritual procedures. In this narrative gShen-rab is not specially distinguished from his priestly counterparts. The text describes burial rites framed by a series of instructions. Much of the special terminology used, however, is no longer comprehensible. The passage relates that a *rgyal-sgo*⁵³⁵ must be concealed (*bas la ni rgyal-sgo shig*) (?) and a *se* (a burial structure) made in the valley (*lung ni ni se bchaste* (mod. = *bcas ste*)). On each of the four sides of the tomb enclosure (*se gru-bzhi*), four trees or poles (*shing-dong* (mod. = *shing-sdong*)) with four flying birds (*bya kyī bzhi spord* (mod. = *bya kyī bzhi spor*)), were erected.⁵³⁶ On the *se* a flag (*dar*) and tamarisk (*'om-bu*) were also kept. A number of unknown elements of the tomb

⁵³¹ This second part of the sentence is the import of the passage: *gru bzhi ni bgrod nong ste/gshin ste / nyer bu bgrod nong ste /*. The specific action of the relatives, however, is not apparent.

⁵³² This is the possible meaning of the line: *sha tshi gda' ma mnabs /*.

⁵³³ *Ngo myi 'do*. Alternatively, 'the surviving members were not grateful/pleased'.

⁵³⁴ Rather than being a proper name, *ser-gang* (*ngang*) 'ge could possibly describe the *do-ma*. The syntax, including the object of this sentence, is uncertain.

⁵³⁵ According to Haahr (1969: 370), the door leading to the burial chamber.

⁵³⁶ Among the Domra Bhotia of Uttaranchal, the day after a cremation is carried out, one of the bone fragments left behind is enshrined in a tin or iron box and buried. Afterwards, four sticks are erected on the four sides of the burial, and red, white and yellow threads are strung between them. At the end of the funeral, half of the bone fragment is interred in a lofty locale, and the other half taken to a sacred place such as Ti-se or Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho. See Sherring 1906, pp. 124, 125. It appears that this quadruplex funerary demarcation of the Bhotia is culturally and historically related to the erection of poles in the four quarters of a tomb noted in PT. 1134.

superstructure, such as the *pur-ke*, *mur-ke*, iron *khu-khu*, copper *pyo-pyo*, and *mgyogs* (beams?), are also documented.

The ritual activities in this part of PT. 1134 continue to be highly obscure (as is most of the text). It provides only a résumé of funerary activities with no further comment or description, compounding difficulties in comprehension. It avers that the four *shed* (mod. = *gshed*) are sent away to the sky (*shed bzhi ni gnam las bkye*). There is then the erection of the mind tent (*thugs-sbra*) at the ‘joyous house of the way of the mind’ (*thugs shul ni dga’ brang*), and the spreading out of the wild yak mattress (see p. 409, fn. 171). Inside the *se ’brum* (= *gru*) *bzhi* (tomb) are iron *ku-ku* (*sic*) and copper *pyo-pyo* (likenesses of birds?). A black dress of *dme* (defilement) is worn by the body of the deceased (*dme gos nag-po ni sku la/mnabs l*) inside this tomb. The holding in the hand of [the deceased] of a type of banner (*dar gyi pag-tse*) (?) is stipulated. The text also stipulates that a supple rawhide bridle and lead are to be grasped [by the deceased?] (*srab mda’ sha bring mnyen-mo ni bzung*). These symbolic actions signal that the expired one is about to be whisked off to the afterlife by the funerary transport animals. The deceased and his relatives (*gnyen-bdun*) then meet for the last time, and three words of the doctrine that are sweet to the ear are spoken to him (see p. 456, fn. 320). Dur-shen rma-nga (= rma-da), gShen-rabs (gShen-rab) myi-bo and sKar-shen thi’u-bzhug tell the *pyug spos ma nye du* (the kindred funerary transport livestock) that the deceased has perished. The metaphors of a chipped [soul] turquoise (*g.yu-grugs*), cracked crane egg (*khruung-khru ni sgong rdold*) and broken sharp [weapon] bow (*rno’i ni gzhu chag*) are given in the text to dramatically express his demise. These are followed by the enigmatic line, “Look at the outer door” (*pyi-sgo ni gzigs shig*). Perhaps this is an exhortation to the departed one to look out towards his salvation. A goat chest (*ra-skrom*), sheep chest (*lug-sgrom*) and the precious chest of the dead (*gshin sgrom mar-ba*) are also noted before the deceased passes along the heights and crosses the wide ford of the dead. These chests probably function in the same manner as the *gshin-sgro* (secure receptacles of the deceased’s consciousness principles) of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur. Due to the fathers Dur-gshen rma-da-na and gShen-rab myi-bo, the tomb and its ritual superstructure (*se-mo gru-bzhi*) finally passed over well (*bgrod legs*). The verb *bgrod* is used here metaphorically to show that the deceased had passed over/through the land of the dead. As a result, the lord (the deceased) reached the ordered position of the expansive heights (*rje gral ni mto yang slebs*).

IOL 734 describes a victim near death’s door as a prelude to the highly elaborate *glud* ritual, which makes up the bulk of the text. In this poetical account the outcome of death is connected to the sky and mountains, alluding to an empyreal afterlife.⁵³⁷ As we have just seen in PT. 1134, liberation of the deceased is predicated on his ability to reach these heights:

The deathly circumstances (*grongs-ltang*) were that he was about to become the owner of the square grave pit (*khung gru-bzhi*). The sound of his life⁵³⁸ *byang byong* was about to disappear into the heavens (*gnam-dgung*). The sound of his death *tham thum* was about to wrap around the side of the snow mountain (*gangs-’gram*).

⁵³⁷ *Op. cit.*, lns. 43–45: *grongs ltang khung gru bzhi’i bdag du gshegs / bshos skad {byang} byong gnam dgung du yar ma khad / grongs skad tham thum ni gang* (mod. = *gangs*) *’gram du ’dril ma khad* /. Where readings of IOL 734 are questionable, I have checked my facsimile copy of the text against the transliteration in Thomas 1957, Chapter IV, pp. 61–76.

⁵³⁸ *bShos*. The use of this word to mean ‘life’ or the ‘vital force’ (as embodied in the voice) is a conjectural reading. I derive this gloss from the sacrificial cakes known as *bshos-bu*, which can serve as receptacles for the life-force of deities, and from the semantic structure of the passage.

The Dunhuang manuscript IOL 731 recto, is an interlinear text written between rows of Chinese characters (interlined horizontally). IOL 731 recto begins with an enumeration of the failure of various funerary procedures that is difficult to understand.⁵³⁹ This first part of the text includes mention of 100 blue divine horses that were interconnected (*brgyus*) by a *mang-lag* (hitching line?) like the gathering of pigeons at a rock formation (*phug-ron brag la 'dus ko lta*). Despite this, the *shid* of the father could not be made. Other procedures for the *shid* and *'brang* funerary rituals also failed. These included the offering of 100 white sheep, 100 black sheep, 100 blue sheep, and 100 tan sheep to the hand of the father. They were all, however, unsuitable to be used as the *skyibs lug* or *ma-ba* (= *mar-ba*). The text appears to say that even though they were milked, they were not suitable as the *mar-ba* (*zho bzhos kyang skyo ma-ba* (= *mar-ba*) *rgyal du ma-rung*). It also appears that the wool of these sheep was offered to the hand of the mother rTsang-bdag (Mistress of rTsang), who spun yarn (*bkal bkal*), braided strings (*bzhu bzhu*), strung the warp (*bran bran*) and wove (*bdag bdag*) a coarse woolen cloth (*sgye-ma*). Despite all these efforts, the father's funeral could still not be completed.

The text now moves to the harrowing origin tale (*srid-rabs*) of the *srin*, the demonic agent of violent death.⁵⁴⁰ The story is incomplete, however, and it is impossible to know how much further the narrative originally extended. As with many other *smrang* in the Dunhuang and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur sources, the origin tale begins by announcing the names of the protagonists and their parentage (para. i). The tale of murder and deceit that follows has a particularly horrific character, even by the standards of the other *sri/srin-rabs* we have examined. The dread and fear that the man-eating *sri/srin* demons still evoke in Tibetans is thus readily understandable from a historical perspective.

After murdering the shepherd patriarch, the *srin* Nag-pa dgu-lcogs/Nag-pa dgu-lcog goes on to assume his physical form in order to take advantage of the shepherd's wife (para. ii). Not satisfied with his past diablerie, the *srin* dissembles so that he can kill and eat the eldest daughter (para. iii). Fortunately, humankind was not without its divine allies, the one here being Bong-bu stag-cung (Small Tiger Bumblebee), the exterminator of the *sri* we are already familiar with from a Bon funerary text (para. iv) (see pp. 475–477). Bong-bu stag-cung tells the middle sister Tseng 'gi rbag-zhin that her father and elder sister have been devoured by the lord of the *srin*, and warns that he is about to prey on her as well. The middle sister and the bumblebee deity become close friends (para. v). The bond they form is illustrated by the girl presenting special ornaments, a bell and crown, to Bong-bu stag-cung. This underscores the relationship that lies at the heart of exchanges between humanity and divinities in native Tibetan conceptions. As with offerings of incense, edibles and so forth, humans possess the ability to purify and fulfil the wishes of their deities in a pact of mutual empowerment.

Leaving Bong-bu stag-cung in charge of her sheep, the middle sister returns home (para. vi). She explains to her mother the dreadful events that have taken place, but as might be expected, the mother is incredulous. When the mother learns that she has indeed slept (*brnal*, illicit sex)

⁵³⁹ For my translation, I have relied on a photocopy of a microfilm image of the text that I obtained at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University. I have rendered the text in a free but grammatically sound manner. For the Thomas (1957) translation and transliteration, see pp. 16–19, 29–32. Although his translation and philological analysis are of a high standard of scholarship, Thomas demonstrates no knowledge of the ritual function of this text as an origin tale for the demonic agents of death. Moreover, he treats IOL 731 verso and IOL 731 recto as containing an interrelated narrative, when in actuality they represent two distinct parts of the archaic funerary tradition, each with its own narrative.

⁵⁴⁰ For the text of this tale, see Tibetan Text III-43, pp. 644, 645.

with the *srin*, she leaves for his country (para. vii). The choice to go into exile appears to have been forced on the mother, either because she betrayed her husband or because she broke a taboo against consorting with fiends. The text now states that the middle sister's name is changed, ostensibly to protect her from the *srin* (para. viii). This passage seems to account for the common Tibetan custom of changing the name of a small child as part of ritual efforts to save it from the grasp of demons. Further help appears in the form of lammergeyers, those majestic birds of the celestial realm (a mythic association that can be traced to no later than the aftermath of the Tibetan imperium, as the narrative makes clear). Having reached the edge of the heavens, the middle sister meets the divine grandmother gNam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo, hoary with age (para. ix). In the Bon origin tale of Bong-ba stag-chung, gNam-phyi gung-rgyal is one of the deities from which the bumblebee received empowerments. This goddess has remained a prominent member of the Bon pantheon although she has assumed a tantricized form (see p. 331. fn. 382):

- i) In the language of rGyal-nam,⁵⁴¹ the name of the father and patriarch was lTong-de'u myi-ku. In the language of sPu-rgyal Tibet: Glong-myig long-na bya-glong gi lgo. He and the noble mother (*rje-ma*) and matriarch with the name Ma-bzhugs ste'i ngar 'byam mated and the children of the season, three daughters (*bo-mo lcam*), were born. The eldest daughter (*gcen-mo*) was Tseng 'gi rba-ga. The middle daughter (*'bring-mo*) was Tseng 'gi rbag-zhin. The youngest daughter (*tha-cungs*) was Tseng 'gi rba-ga.
- ii) The father, Lha-ltong de-yi mye-kro (*sic*),⁵⁴² went to take care of the sheep. The *srin* lord Nag-pa dgu-lcogs from the *srin* country of Nag-pa dgu-sul,⁵⁴³ riding the mule horse of the *srin*, came there. He ate the fresh flesh and drank the fresh blood of the father lTong-de mye-ku, and wore his fresh skin. [The *srin*] drove (*ded*) the sheep to [lTong-de's] dwelling and home (*khab dang brang*) and remained there. He slept with bZhagste ngar 'byam (*sic*).

⁵⁴¹ Thomas (1957: Introduction, pp. 2–4) believes that this text was composed in the Nam language, which he links with the Nan-shan region of the Sino-Tibetan marches. While I would not dismiss his painstaking geographical analysis out of hand, strong doubts must be cast upon it (see p. 531, fn. 627). It has to be pointed out that numerous Bon ritual texts open in a similar manner to this one, by furnishing a title or primary theme in one or more extinct languages (Zhang-zhung, Sum-pa and Me-nyag being other common examples). In Bon tradition, these multilingual openings are not so much intended to pinpoint the geographic origin of a ritual as they are to demonstrate its broad territorial application (thus its high religious stature). In any event, IOL 731 recto also cites Central Tibet in the next sentence, rendering any attempt at localization inconclusive. I hold that the systematized Bon ritual tradition of later historic times was the product of this codification of religious traditions on a Plateau-wide level, and that this was initiated in the imperial period.

⁵⁴² Variant spellings of place names and personal names are commonplace in the non-Buddhist ritual texts of the Dunhuang collections. I partly ascribe this phenomenon to: 1) the evolving nature of the Tibetan orthographic tradition in the imperial period, and 2) the authors' unfamiliarity with the spelling conventions of the times. I do believe, however, that there is another factor at play, involving the rendering in written form of old oral traditions in which etymological and phonetic questions concerning personal and place names had arisen. As a matter of course, and without critical notation, authors constructed appellations in a variety of ways to account for these ambiguities. The use of variant place and personal names is also frequently encountered in the archaic ritual narratives of Bon texts.

⁵⁴³ Thomas (1957: Texts, Translations, and Notes, pp. 6, 7) makes the claim that dGu-sul is an actual place in the Sino-Tibetan marches, an unlikely prospect in my opinion. Yamaguchi (1970: 122 (n. 102)) identifies Srin-yul/Nag-pa dgu-sul (citing PT. 1069 and PT. 1285) with mChims-phu, a location near bSam-yas. It is true that, in the Twelve Principalities tradition, dGu-sul is part of a place name in mChims-yul, in Central Tibet (see p. 281), but it is not certain that this localization is intended in IOL 731 recto. dGu-sul is also encountered in Bon texts that relate the origin myths of the *sri* and *srin*; these provide no indication of actual geographic bearings. If the country of mChims-yul is actually intended, it may suggest that the *sri/srin* were part of its female clan mythology in early times.

- iii) Early on the morning of the next day (*nang-nam nangsdgung sangs*) [the *srin*] said to the mother, “I cannot watch the sheep, send (*thong shig*) our daughter Tseng ’gi rba-ga to take care of the sheep.” Tseng ’gi rba-ga went to take care of the sheep. [The *srin*] ate her fresh flesh and drank her fresh blood, and chopped up (*gtub*) her organs (*don-snying*). [The *srin*] returned to Ngar ’byam and said, “Today, darling (*rma-sman-drags*), I have bagged a small musk deer (*gla’u*). I have brought these organs as Ngar-’byan’s (*sic*) share (*skal*) of the meat.” The mother asked about the whereabouts of Tseng ’gi rba-ga. [The *srin*] replied, “I don’t know where she is. The little one spent a long time away. The girl spent a long time on the mountain. I have business to attend to, send Tseng ’gi rbag-zhin (the middle daughter).”
- iv) Tseng gi rbag-zhin went to take care of the sheep. She met [the one called] Cho-pyi cog-zu in the language of rGyal nam-pa [and], in the language of sPu-rgyal bod (Tibet), Bong-bu stag-cung (Small Tiger Bumblebee)⁵⁴⁴ of the meadow (*na-spang*). Bong-bu stag-cung of the meadow said, “Yesterday, the *srin* lord Nag-pa dgu-lcogs from the *srin* country Nag-pa dgu-sul, riding the mule of the *srin*, ate the fresh flesh and drank the fresh blood of your father lTong-de mye-kro (*sic*) and [wore] his fresh skin. He [also] ate the fresh flesh of your elder sister (*pho-mo*) Tseng ’gi rba-ga and ate her fresh flesh and wore her fresh skin. You too are about to (*ma-khad*) have your fresh flesh eaten and about to have your fresh skin worn.”
- v) Bong-bu stag-cung of the meadow and the girl became bosom friends (*shag-rag*). They entered into a solemn oath (*mna’ mtho-dam*). She put⁵⁴⁵ the *nam-ti go-cog* (a type of crown) on Bong-bu stag-cung (*sic*) of the meadow. She hung a heart of the yak (describes the shape) bell on the neck of Bong-bu stag-cung. The *nam-ti go-cog* shook (*cog cog*). The heart of the yak bell rung (*khrol khrol*).
- vi) Tseng ’gi rba-ga fled to her home. She told her mother bZhag-ste ngar ’byams (*sic*), “I the poor girl met Bong-bu stag-cung of the meadow. Our father sTong-te mye-kru (*sic*) had his fresh flesh eaten and his fresh skin worn by the *srin* Nag-pa dgu-lcog. Also, the fresh flesh of my elder sister Tseng ’gi rba-ga was eaten and her fresh skin worn. I the poor girl made bosom friends with Bong-bu stag-cung of the meadow. We took an oath. I suspended a yak heart bell on Bong-bu stag-cung, and I the poor one put a *nam-ti go-cog* on him. I let him herd the sheep (*lug ’tsho*) and tend and look after the sheep (*g.yang skyong skyong*). I the poor girl fled.”
- vii) In her motherland, the mother said, “It cannot be like that (*’di lta chos-myed*)! Tonight (*mod-nam sros*) we shall check. You hide in the back.” That night (*nub-nam sros*) when they looked, everything the daughter had said was true, as the *srin* was eating the fresh flesh and wearing the fresh skin. The mother said, “I copulated with the *srin*. I will go to the country of the *srin*.”
- viii) In the language of rGyal nam-pa: Kha phya rma bya’i rma li bye’u rma bye’u gi thing tshun. In the language of sPu-rgyal Tibet: [The daughter’s] name was changed to Khab yo-bya’i ’dab-bkra. She was put inside the cave of the meadow and kept there. So then, at one time, both a white lammergeyer and a black lammergeyer suddenly appeared (*ya-se byung*). [The girl] grasped the tail of the white lammergeyer and went to the edge of the sky and beyond the heavens.

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas (1957: Texts, Translations, and Notes, p. 30) mistranslates *bong-bu* as ‘ass’. Although this is the classical spelling for the ass, it is clearly incorrect in this context.

⁵⁴⁵ *Skon/bSkon* (mod. present tense = *skon*). This verb is used for the action of putting on something, such as a hat or socks.

- ix) Inside the earthen cave Tir-ba was grandmother (*phyi-byi*) gNam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo.⁵⁴⁶ The skin of her eyes covered her nose. The wrinkles of her nose covered her mouth. The wrinkles of her mouth covered her chin.⁵⁴⁷

8.6 The Mythic Origins and Ritual Application of the Funerary Horse and Yak Vehicles

PT. 1136 contains two different funerary narratives about the procurement and ritual usage of the *do-ma*, the horse mount of the deceased's consciousness principles. This textual material is highly significant because it furnishes a mythic precedent for the *do-ma* rite, something that is absent from the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur cycle. We might conclude that texts appear in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur as much because they were available to the compilers as due to editorial considerations. The sheer size of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur collection is a tribute to the diligence of those who first compiled or redacted it. It is by no means a complete corpus of archaic funerary traditions, but rather a miscellany of surviving cultural relics and later Buddhist style additions. Those textual accounts unique to either the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur or Dunhuang literature enrich the scope and diversity of the archaic funerary traditions that have come down to us. As a whole, these various myths, doctrines and rites exhibit a high degree of thematic interrelatedness.

The first PT. 1136 account contains a *srid-rabs* or *dpe* (prototypical ritual performance) regarding the *do-ma*.⁵⁴⁸ As in other *do-ma* origin myths of the Dunhuang manuscripts we will study, there is no indication given as to the precise period in which the narrative is supposed to have occurred. These accounts, nonetheless, do have the flavor and substance of ancient tales handed down over many generations, which eventually came to be recorded in texts deposited in the caves of Dunhuang. I base this observation on the archetypal nature of Bon *srid-rabs* literature and the ways in which it is thought to be 'ancient'. However, hermeneutic studies alone cannot provide the evidence needed to verify a prehistoric dating, as they do not furnish the chronological benchmarks that would permit us to accurately gauge their antiquity. As we shall see, however, when archaeological evidence is added to their analysis, more definite chronological signposts appear.

The two protagonists of the first PT. 1136 account are bosom friends, one of whom is killed in a hunting accident. The survivor arranges for the funeral of his friend, which requires him to

⁵⁴⁶ Thomas mistranslates *phyi-byi* as 'marmot' and *gnam-phyi* as 'sky marmot'. He also writes that gNam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo was a human personality, rather than the goddess she is. See Thomas 1957: Texts, Translations, and Notes, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁷ The story continues with the middle sister telling the goddess gNam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo what had befallen her and how she escaped by grasping the tail of a white lammergeyer. gNam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo provides Tseng 'gi rba-ga with instructions concerning places to go and things to do in order to win her salvation (?). The girl must go ahead over nine passes and cross over nine fords ('*di nas par bzhud la dgu ni 'das rab dgu ni 'bos*). She then seems to arrive in a place in which obscure ritual activities ensue. The text is broken here, the remainder of it being lost.

⁵⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, lns. 7–29. See Tibetan Text III-44, pp. 645, 646. The *dpe* (legendary model, mythic prototype) is still a viable part of Gurung funerary rites. For example, the Ghyabrē priests chant the *dpe* about how wealth is lost when the harmony between the living and the dead is disturbed. This takes place during the ritual guidance of the soul to the afterworld. See Mumford 1990, p. 183. According to Pignède (1966: 342, 343), the *dpe* are Gurung mythical histories whose object is to confirm the validity and efficacy of rituals. Pignède notes that the *dpe* is also the mythic precedent of a ritual, and expresses the aspiration that its performance may be as successful as it was in ancient times. These are precisely the functions and expressions of the *dpe* and *smrang* in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition. A number of Gurung funerary *dpe* are discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 367–411.

capture a *do-ma*. The *smrang* narrative then details the exceptional treatment meted out to this vital ritual animal. The second account in PT. 1136 graphically describes how a herding family managed to capture two special colts for use as *do-ma*.⁵⁴⁹ The second half of this latter account documents the use of these *do-ma* in the funeral of a rTsang princess who committed suicide. Reliance on the *do-ma* rite, even when the most abject circumstances surround the death, affirms the great value and efficacy of such funerary ritual assignments. This confirmation of usefulness (conceptions of karma notwithstanding) remains the *raison d'être* for the performance of funerary rituals in the Bon religion to the present day.

The existence of the dGa'-yul as an afterlife or ancestral paradise does not appear to be explicitly mentioned in the Dunhuang manuscripts. Nevertheless, the abode of the protagonists in the first narrative of PT. 1136, sMra-myi and rMa-myi, is dGa'-yul byang-nams, the name of the celestial paradise described in the commentary to *Srid pa'i mdzod phug* (para. i). This is no mere coincidence and seems to indicate that the *do-ma* originate from a supernatural sphere, rather than a mundane place on earth. An ethereal or primordial source claimed for Bon doctrines and ritual structures is the norm in the post-tenth century CE religion. It would appear, then, that the two protagonists of the story were deified ancestral humans living in a boreal utopia. Misfortune struck only when one of them left dGa'-yul byang-nams to hunt wild yaks in a 'northern wilderness', which appears to be terrestrial (para. ii). The paradisiacal quality of dGa'-yul byang-rnam (*sic*) is reinforced by it being the source of the *do-ma* needed for the funeral of sMra-myi (para. vii). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the fountainhead of all funerary tradition is sTon-pa gshen-rab and his divine forebears and human successors. As the source of the *do-ma*, dGa'-yul would appear to fulfill this same progenerative function in certain funerary traditions of the early historic period. If so, this raises many intriguing questions about the nature of the eschatological and cosmological beliefs held by ancient Tibetans.

The two protagonists of the first account in PT. 1136 include a sMra man (sMra-myi) and a rMa man (rMa-myi) (para. i). Their names are rendered in a variety of spellings throughout the course of the narrative. rMa is both an important clan name and a class of deities closely identified with the *lha*.⁵⁵⁰ Both the sMra and rMa are clans or tribes that figure in many Bon accounts of ritual origins. As a generic class of beings, the *smra* are primordial or ancestral human beings, and this is the role they have in the lineage texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.⁵⁵¹ As we have seen, the cosmogonic role of sMra figures is also attested in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. They include sMra-mi dran-pa, a divinity of the hand-tool wing origin tale, who sanctifies a soul stone for Yab-bla bdal-drug, a prime ancestral deity of the Tibetan kings. In the myths about the origins of exorcistic rites deployed against the *sri* demons, couples such as sMra-rje btsan-po and sMra-lcam mi-mo or sMra-sras ljon-pa and sMra-lcam btsun-mo appear as hapless victims. Similarly, the sMra personalities in the *do-ma srid-rabs* of PT. 1136 are ancestral figures to whom ritual origins are ascribed. The sMra clan is closely tied to Zhang-zhung, and indeed the text tells us that sMra-myi and rMa-myi hailed from the north. This geographic placement and other textual evidence in this study of PT. 1136 suggests that the tradition of the *do-ma* was known in Zhang-zhung and rTsang (and, by extension, other interrelated archaic funerary rites). A localization in the pastoral

⁵⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, lns. 30–60. See Tibetan Text III-45, pp. 646, 647.

⁵⁵⁰ The rMa as an epithet of Zhang-zhung in the *mi'u rigs* tradition of proto-clans occurs in *rus mdzod* literature (Vitali 2003b: 53–57). rMa has also come to be a prominent ethnonym of the A-myes rma-chen region.

⁵⁵¹ In *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru*, the cosmogonic couple Sang-po'i 'bum-khri and Chu-lcag rgyal-mo produce the three brothers of the sMra-mi lineage, the progenitors of the human race (see p. 351, para. ii). For other occurrences of *smra* deities and the sMra proto-clan of Zhang-zhung in Bon ritual and clan literature, see Bellezza 2005a; Vitali 2003b.

regions of Upper Tibet validates the broad geographic scope of the funerary traditions given in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and other Bon literature, which encompasses Nyang, sKyi, Yar-lung, gTsang, and Zhang-zhung. This geographic purview across the breadth of Upper and Central Tibet appears to be the product of imperial period cultural developments, the codification of funerary literature among them. We know that the funerary archaeological record of Tibet is characterized by significant cultural and regional variability. The disparate assemblages of early monuments argue strongly in favor of their having been part of separate funerary traditions in Upper and Central Tibet prior to the imperial period (and probably during as well). As a result, I see much of the organization of content in the surviving archaic funerary traditions as being representative of imperial period redactions and reformulations. These would have occurred as part of manifold efforts to integrate the various Bodic regions of the empire into a single polity.

In the first narrative of PT. 1136, the two protagonists are called bosom friends (*shag-rag*) (para. ii). This term (spelled slightly differently: *shag-rogs*) is used in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur to refer to the relationship between the deceased and two gods (Indra and a *phywa* deity) in a funerary bestowals (*gtad-g.yar*) text (see p. 451). sMra-myi was killed in Byang-'brog snam-stod (a Byang-thang locale), apparently after being gored by a *gshed* in the form of a wild yak. Here we have positive confirmation that, like so many other pillars of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *gshed* personification of death is a bequest of the archaic funerary tradition. After waiting in vain for years, rMa-myi went to search for his lost friend and found his corpse (para. iii). In their bereavement rMa-myi and unnamed associates performed the funeral, the material details of which are obscure (para. iv). The *do-ma* was missing, however, and rMa-myi went to search for one (para. v). The text then furnishes the parentage of the *do-ma* colt (*rte-u*).

With a lasso, rMa-myi succeeds in capturing the colt and, in an address directed to the horse, he explains the sad story of his friend's death and how he needs a *do-ma* to properly perform the funeral ritual (*shid*) (para. vi). The colt is to eventually take sMra-myi over the water (*chab-gang*) after death, furnishing the precedent for the *chab-gang/cu-gang* rite recorded in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Literally meaning 'over the water', the *chab-gang* evolved into a host of presents offered to the dead to see him through the postmortem gloom to the afterlife.⁵⁵² As PT. 1136 (as well as IOL 731 verso and PT. 1068) establishes, '*chab-gang*' originally included the *do-ma*. The colt is led away to a stable and fed choice foods and drink (para. vii). It is then caparisoned for its function as the *do-ma*, which includes the decoration of its hair, the mounting of a small saddle, and the erection of the horns of the *khyung* on its head (*dbu la...khyung ru btsugs*). This corroborates the early historic period antiquity of these ritual activities, which are documented in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur as well. In PT. 1136, the *do-ma* is recorded as being a *chab-gang*, one of those presents offered to the deceased by his friends and next of kin. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *do-ma* is a *gtad-g.yar* (funerary bestowal), but the import is the same in that this horse serves as a precious present for the departed. The story ends with a declaration of the value of the *do-ma*, which in later Bon literature is usually expressed in terms of an aspiration:

⁵⁵² The expression *chab-gsol* (literally: drink water) found in Tibetan literature means 'to be killed'. For example, in *g.Yung drung bon gyi bstan 'byung phyogs bsdu*, by dPal-tshul (Bog-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun khang, Lhasa, 1988), King Khri-srong lde-btsan, addressing a grand assembly of *gshen*, threatens, "Will you become Buddhists or will you be killed" (*khyed rnams chos la zhugs sam chab gsol [lam].../*). *Chab-gsol* is popularly thought to refer to the custom of causing the demise of someone by forcing them to swallow vast quantities of water. I think it rather more likely, however, its 'is killed' etymology stems from the funerary myth of crossing the river of the dead, thus to someone who has died or is about to die.

- i) In the country of dGa'-yul byang-rnams (Northern Joyous Lands), there was sMra-myi ste btsun-po and rMa-myi de btsun-po, these two. Well then, in the heart of sMra-myi ste btsun-po, there was no one more lovable than rMa-myi de. Also in the heart of rMa-myi de there was no one more lovable than sMra-myi ste btsun-po.
- ii) The two loving men became bosom friends (*shag-rag*). They pledged that if one of them died the other would make his funeral (*bdur*). They pledged that if one of them was lost (*rlag*) the other would search (*btshal*) for him. Well then, one time sMra-myi ste btsun-po went to Byang-'brog snam-stod (Northern Wilderness Upper Section) to hunt yaks, to hunt⁵⁵³ wild yaks. The wild yak human killer (*myi-gshed*) cut to pieces⁵⁵⁴ the man sMra-myi ste btsun-po and his horse, killing them; they were no more.
- iii) At that time, rMa-myi de btsun-po waited through the day [but sMra-myi ste] did not return the entire day. He waited one day after another [but sMra-myi ste] did not return. He waited month after month [but sMra-myi ste] did not come for a year. He waited for years [but sMra-myi ste] never came, so rMa-myi de btsun-po went to Byang-ka snam-brgyad (*sic*)⁵⁵⁵ to search⁵⁵⁶ for sMra-myi ste btsun-po. He then encountered⁵⁵⁷ the corpse of sMra-myi ste btsun-po, who had been violently slain (*myi dri-ru bkrongs*) by the human killer wild yak. As a result, he was extremely grief-stricken (*thugs-chad ro-ru chad*) and deeply afflicted with heartache.⁵⁵⁸ He was in mourning.⁵⁵⁹
- iv) There is no question that they⁵⁶⁰ cried,⁵⁶¹ they cried profusely!⁵⁶² rMa-myi de btsun-po speaking, said, "Let us offer the *shid* (funerary rites) and erect the '*brang* (burial procedures) to this sMra-myi de btsun-po." They concealed (*bas la bchas*) the eight *rgyal-thag*.⁵⁶³ They

⁵⁵³ 'Gor. This word is unknown to me but, given the context, it must mean to hunt or trap.

⁵⁵⁴ *gDum du bltang*. The modern grammatical equivalent of the expression is *dum bur btangs* (to forcefully break into pieces; to dismember).

⁵⁵⁵ Only the letters *sna* and *rgyad* are legible in my copy of the text. *sNam brgyad* appears to be the most appropriate choice for this lacuna.

⁵⁵⁶ Almost certainly, *'tshol* (search) is the correct word choice here, but the fabric of the text is damaged at this point.

⁵⁵⁷ The letters *mja* have been added through storyline context to form the word *mjal*, as they are missing from the text.

⁵⁵⁸ *Brang-gam* (heartache) is a reconstructed reading, as this word is obscured in the text.

⁵⁵⁹ The probable meaning of *thugs gnag chad*. The remainder of this line has a number of illegible words and is not included in the translation. Its general import seems to be that rMa-myi de went to find the relatives of sMra-myi ste.

⁵⁶⁰ I have elected to use the third person pronoun here and in succeeding lines, as the funeral must have been a collective endeavor.

⁵⁶¹ *Ngu myi ngu na*. This type of grammatical construction is still used in sTeng-chen and Hor-speaking regions of northern Tibet as a kind of exclamation. This expresses that an activity (in this case crying) occurred without a doubt. For clarification, I will provide a couple of examples from the vernacular: *Mang mi mang na / grangs ka mi thebs le gda' /* (There is no question that there were many: they were uncountable!); also: *Za mi za zlo lis / ha las pa zos song /* (You do not have to ask if he ate or not, you would be taken aback by how much he ate!).

⁵⁶² *mChi ma khrag gis nguste* (literally, cried tears of blood). The next line in the text has a number of obscured words. It appears to read: *rMa myi de 'i chen pos / smra myi ste btsun po 'i spur shig sni ste /*. This seems to indicate that the great rMa-myi de transported or arranged for the disposal of sMra-myi ste btsun po's corpse.

⁵⁶³ According to Stein (2003a: 601, 602), an epithet for the tomb. In the '*brog-pa* culture of Upper Tibet, the *rgyal-thag* is the flat yak-hair rope that circumscribes the middle portion of the black yak-hair tent (*sbra-nag*). It is commonly said to be called the 'royal rope' because, like a king in his kingdom, it is the prime stabilizing structure. The *rgyal-thag* is divided into upper (*gong-ma*) and lower sections (*'og-ma*) on each of the four walls, making a total of eight sections. In the cosmology of the tent, the *rgyal-thag*, a medial structure, is the demarcation between the earth and sky planes

built the square *se* in the valley. As the carpet, they laid down the northern carpet wild yak (*khod-mo*) carpet. The river bank scattering,⁵⁶⁴ the blue agate river bank scattering, was spread⁵⁶⁵ on the *phangs*.

- v) Well then, they did not have the *do-ma*, they did not have the *snying-gas*,⁵⁶⁶ so rMa-myi de'i btshun-po went to search for the *do-ma*. He went to search for the *snying-dgas* (the cherished one). At the country of Sre-ga rte'u-lung (Sre-ga Colt Valley), the name of the father and patriarch was gSer-ma-ron, the golden horse, and the mother was g.Yu-ma-ron, the turquoise horse, these two. The son of the coupling (*'tshos*) of both horses, the son of those two steeds⁵⁶⁷ in embrace (*gnyis-'thams*) was the colt (*rte'u*) Bal-bu mchog-rum,⁵⁶⁸ who appeared in the following year.
- vi) The colt following after his mother was caught by rMa-myi de'i btsun-po's rawhide⁵⁶⁹ lasso (*mang-zhags*). By the force of a powerful man (*skyes mthu-che*) he was led away. He was put in the *cho-rol* (holding pen?) of white copper (*bse*). He was tied by the dark blue tether (*rtod*) of the *dmu*. [rMa-myi de] said to *pyugs spo ma nye du ma*,⁵⁷⁰ "sMra-myi ste btsun-po [and I], we two poor men, we two miserable men, became bosom friends. We pledged that if one of us died the other would make the funeral (*bdur*). Unluckily (*rman-te*), rMra-myi ste btsun-po died. Sadly, he was lost, but there was no *do-ma* and there was no *snying-dgas* for making the funeral (*shid*) and erecting the *'brang*. We will make you the *pyugs smo ma* (mother livestock?), the one who can go over the river (*chab-gang*), the one who can cross the shallow ford."
- vii) [rMa myi-de] led the colt Bal-bu from the country of dGa'-yul byang-rnam. He bestowed the name and appellation of Ser-ngang 'ger upon him.⁵⁷¹ Then he kept him in the horse stable (*bres rta bres*) sKyol-ma skyol-mo (a proper name?). He fed him grain sprouts (*'bras kyi*

of the home. I hold that the *rgyal-thag* of the *'brog-pa* is closely related to the *rgyal-thag* of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. Rather than the tomb itself, the *rgyal-thag* probably formed its ritual and spatial delimitation, joining the upper and lower realms of the cosmos harmoniously together into an integral whole. The *rgyal-thag*, as the prime supporting structure of the living (the tent) and the dead (the tomb), appears to be the archetypal architectural symbol of the human life-cycle. One might surmise that early tombs were modeled on the architecture of the *sbra-nag*. This is suggested by the *thugs-gur* (tent of the mind) and *bla-gur* (tent of the soul) archaic funerary ritual objects, and by the *ring-gur* ('tent of the body', a mortuary structure) (see pp. 400, 409, 500).

⁵⁶⁴ *Gram (pa)* refers to things such as stones that are thickly spread out, such as are found on a river bank. The object of this poetic line, *phangs*, could denote either *spangs* (a meadow) or *pang* (the lap).

⁵⁶⁵ The text appears to have *bkhram* (mod. = *bkram*, to spread), but this word is not fully legible.

⁵⁶⁶ *sNying-gas (snying-dgas)* (dear one) is an epithet for *do-ma*. The negative *ma* is missing in the first 'did [not] have' (*ma mchis*), an oversight of the writer, as indicated by the parallelism of the succeeding clauses in the sentence.

⁵⁶⁷ *rMang*. Conforming to the gloss given for this word in Thomas 1957, I have opted to translate it as 'steed'. It is used in the Dunhuang *do-ma* texts to refer to both male and female horses. *rMang* probably shares an etymology with *dmangs*, meaning commoner, base, etc. This word appears to be related in meaning to *dud-'gro* (animal/beast) specifically, as a term for the horse. As with the use of *pha dang yab* (father and patriarch) and *ma dang yum* (mother and matriarch) in various *smrang* of Bon literature, the iteration of *rta* and *rmang* is a versicular flourish.

⁵⁶⁸ This is probably not a proper name but rather a description. I have decided, however, to treat it as a proper name because it does not readily lend itself to translation.

⁵⁶⁹ *'Bring*. In spoken and written forms of Tibetan this is usually rendered *breng (pa)*.

⁵⁷⁰ *Pyugs spo ma nye du ma* forms a separate line in the text. Although grammatically ambiguous, it must refer to the figure being addressed. This term probably illustrates that the *do-ma* is the livestock that has become a surrogate relative of the deceased on his journey to the afterlife. See p. 503, fn. 495.

⁵⁷¹ The name of the *do-ma* suggests that its color was yellow or orange, like a Tibetan duck.

lcang-pa). He watered him with a sweet solution of turnips (*bu-ram nyug-cu*). He tied the poll and mane (*phum-phum*) with a cloth. He erected the bird horns, the *khyung* horns, on top of [the colt's] head. He let his mane hang down freely.⁵⁷² He covered his back with the covering of a saddle cloth⁵⁷³ and a small saddle (*sge'u*). He let his tail hang down freely. [The colt Bal-bu] went over the water (*chab-gang*) and crossed⁵⁷⁴ the shallow ford. It was beneficial and meritorious.

The second *do-ma srid-rabs* in PT. 1136 begins with the naming of a shepherd family whose residence is given as the 'upper headwaters of the river country' (*yul-chab gyi ya-bgo*) (para. i).⁵⁷⁵ The name of the patriarch's homeland and his clan or tribal name, rTsang, indicate a western Tibetan localization, probably somewhere along the rTa-mchog gtsang-po (the upper reaches of the Yar-lung gtsang-po). The daughter of the rTsang patriarch is betrothed to the lord of Gu-ge, who appears to come from afar, which seems to indicate that in this case, *yul-chab gyi ya-bgo* refers to a location a significant distance east of Gu-ge.

In another Dunhuang manuscript, PT. 1060, the names, descriptions and activities of *do-ma* associated with 13 regional kings are specified (Ins. 61–100). An examination of these locations contributes valuable geographic and historical information to our understanding of Tibetan archaic funerary culture.⁵⁷⁶ For our purposes, the most important of these passages is the first one, which concerns the *do-ma* of the sovereign of Zhang-zhung, King Lig-snya-shur.⁵⁷⁷ He hailed from the *yul chab gyi ya-bgo*, just like the rTsang patriarch of PT. 1136. We might infer, therefore, that the 'upper headwaters of the river country' denotes a rather long stretch of the Yar-lung gtsang-po. The narrative declaims the male and female lineages of the horses of the Zhang-zhung king, his minister and subjects. As in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur *rta-gtad* text, the terms *cho* and '*brang* are genealogical signifiers of patrilineal and matrilineal sources, respectively (although on its own '*brang* is sometimes used to denote paternity). This proclamation of the Zhang-zhung *do-ma* is very possibly set in the seventh century CE but it has precedential implications.⁵⁷⁸ That is to say,

⁵⁷² *bKye*. This verb means to spread, to send, to dispatch, or to unleash, but here (*sham du bkye*) it can be defined as 'let hang down freely'.

⁵⁷³ *Sogs-shun*. *Sogs* are the shoulders of a horse and *shun* is a skin, peel or tarpaulin.

⁵⁷⁴ *Spags* (= *spogs/sbogs*). The modern equivalent of this verb is '*bog*'.

⁵⁷⁵ An outline of this second PT 1136 narrative was sketched by Macdonald 1971, pp. 264, 265.

⁵⁷⁶ In PT. 1060 there are five categories (country, castle, king, ministers, and horses) for each of 13 entries, with a number of absences and discrepancies in the tally. The 13 countries enumerated in the text are: Chab gyi ya-bgo, Kha-la stsang-stod, sKy-i-ro ljang-sngon, dBye-mo yul-dug, rNgegs-yul se-mo gru-bzhi, mChims-yul dgu-sul, Lho-ga lang-drug, sTod-ro lung-gsum, Mang-yul (= Myang-yul) shing-nag, rKong-yul bre-snar, Byang-ka' snam-brgyad, Chab gyi ma-gzhug, and sTod kyi {se} mo gri (Ins. 63–96). This list includes regions across the Tibetan plateau from rKong-po in the east to the headwaters of the Brahmaputra (rTa-mchog gtsang-po). This wide geographic purview supports my basic premise that, in the imperial period, funerary traditions had assumed a pan-Tibetan character.

⁵⁷⁷ PT. 1060, *op. cit.*, Ins. 63, 64: *yul chab gyi ya bgo / mkhar khyung lung rngul mkhar/gyi nang na rgyal lig snya shur / blon po ni khyung po dang ro rtsang rje / khol gu ge dang gug lhog gyi rta 'i cho dang 'brang du ma bthub* (mod. = *gtubs*) *ma bcad*...

⁵⁷⁸ A seventh century CE periodization is indicated if the King Lig-snya-shur referred to here was the last king of Zhang-zhung. Indeed, Uray (1972b: 35 (n. 88)) equates Lig-snya-shur/Lig-sna-shur with Lig-myi-rhya. Uray (*ibid.*: 41, 42) notes that in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (written by dPa'-bo gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba), Lig-snya-shur, lord of *yul-chab gyi ya-bgo*, had two councilors, Khyung-po ra-sangs rje and sTong-lam rma-rce/Ra-rcañ rje. Khyung-po ra-sangs rje and Khyung-po spung-sad zu-tse may refer to the same individual, with *ra-sangs rje* possibly being a term for a councilor (minister) in the Zhang-zhung language (*ibid.*: 41, 42). Ra-sangs is, in fact, a well-known Zhang-zhung clan name. For numerous occurrences in the Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud *Bla ma'i rnam thar*, see Reynolds 2005, *passim*. The *Old Tibet Chronicle* holds that the Tibetan campaign against Lig-myi-rhya was successful in 644 or 645 CE (Uray 1972b: 35, 41).

the lineages of the *do-ma* are likely to have extended much further back in time. The terms *cho* and *'brang* refer to successive generations, not merely to the current generation.⁵⁷⁹ Whatever the intended chronological import of the origins of the *do-ma*, this passage does make perfectly clear that the *do-ma* (and allied funerary traditions) were part of the Zhang-zhung cultural sphere. Three Zhang-zhung locales are mentioned by name: Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar,⁵⁸⁰ Gu-ge and Gug-lchog.⁵⁸¹

The uncut and unsevered *cho* (male lineage) and *'brang* (female lineage) of the horses of the country of the headwaters: inside the castle of Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar, the king, Lġg-snya-shur; the minister, Khyung-po dang-ro rtsang-rje;⁵⁸² the servants, [the people of] Gu-ge and Gug-lchog.

According to Bon-po tradition, the rGyung-dgu was a group of mountain deities in prehistoric Zhang-zhung (see p. 334). As with the *yul-lha* and *sgra-bla* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, two members of this class of deities played a role in the ancient funerary traditions, strengthening their cultural association with Zhang-zhung. Pertaining to the repaying of the kindness shown them, PT. 1060 (lns. 70, 71) reads in part: "The *lha* of Zhang-zhung, Mu-rgyung and sTang-rgyung...".⁵⁸³ This line is part of an account of the mutually beneficial relationship that the horses and people of Zhang-zhung enjoyed.⁵⁸⁴

It is also argued, however, that Lġg-myi-rhya (Lig-mi-rgya) lived in the time of Khri-srong lde-btsan (born circa 742 CE). For one discussion of this well-known historical contention, see Karmay 1998, pp. 114–116.

⁵⁷⁹ In PT. 1060, lns. 65, 66 we find: *brgya* (100) *dong* (1000) *re tham ba 'i cho dang 'brang du/ma bthub* (uncut *ma bcaad* (unsevered)... While the precise signification of this phrase is unclear, it does demonstrate that the male and female horse lineages were characterized by large multiples and a noteworthy degree of continuity.

⁵⁸⁰ Khyung-lung is the ultimate resting place of the dead for the Byansi of Dharchula. In an evocation of the soul ritual, more than 50 places are mentioned between Dharchula and Khyung-lung. The deceased is aided by a yak or cow that accompanies him on the long journey to the afterlife. Among the last of these places on the postmortem route are Lake Manasarovar and the place of trade (rGya nyi-ma?). Once reaching Khyung-lung, the soul of the deceased must pass through the Guipatu – nine valleys, mountains or levels on the way to paradise. Demons and geographic barriers including rivers are met en route. In the sixth stage of the journey, the deceased is welcomed by his ancestors. In the ninth or final stage, the deceased throws three walnuts to his ancestors. As they rush to collect them he takes one of the chairs in which they had sat, thus joining their company. This information was obtained (in personal communication) from the anthropologist Mikio Miyamoto.

⁵⁸¹ I believe that Gug-lchog is probably the region of Cog-la, or the portion of Cog-la that falls in Gu-ge. Vitali (1996: 167) notes that Cog-la, a region encompassing Pi-ti and Rong-chung, straddles both sides of the Shib-pe la.

⁵⁸² PT. 1286, ln. 0007: Khyung-po ra-sangs rje.

⁵⁸³ sTang-rgyung is the name of a well-known flat-topped peak in eastern Nag-tshang (gZhung-smad township). To the north of sTang-rgyung is the mountain Gyer-rgyung. In Bon doctrinal traditions, Mu-rgyung has come to be equated with the original aeon of goodness and the cause of primordial existence (cf. Dagkar 2003: 287, 288). Bon sources also hint at the divine identity of this figure, who is found paired with the lake (goddess), Ting-nam mur-zang (Aquatic Klu-mo). For example, in *Ya ngal gyi gdung rabs*, there is a theogonic progression concerning the Sangs-rgyas (Buddhas) in which Mu-rgyung combined with Ting-nam mur-bzang plays a part (p. 4). Resting upon Lake Ting-nam mur-bzang was a golden lotus of one thousand petals. Then a turquoise swastika was beautifully revealed. Thereafter, the *lha* of *gnas-gtsang* (highest and purest realm) pronounced that this was the bsKal-pa bzang-po (Good Epoch).

⁵⁸⁴ The precise concepts and signification of the passage related to the horses of Zhang-zhung are extremely difficult to understand (lns. 65–73). It appears that the horse lineages may have had fish (*nya-mo*) and frog (*sbal*) (*klu*) characteristics. The text poetically describes the herbs of the mountain and the water of the valley that the horses had to consume, as well as their wandering about an oblong meadow and the folds of valleys, as part of the kindness shown them by humans. In turn, the horses generated qualities extremely beneficial to the fathers (*byin*, splendor), mothers (*rgyang-stig?*) and sons (*g.yag*, good fortune?) [in life and death]. The gathering up of the horses' manes and tails, a measure of ephedra (*mshes*) and a measure of *yungs-mo* (probably mustard seeds) are mentioned as major constituent

Still pointing west, PT. 1060, like PT. 1136, also touches upon a tale of origins for the *do-ma* of rTsang:⁵⁸⁵

Inside the castle of rTsang gyi dngo of the country Kha-la stsang-stod, the *lha*, rTsang la 'i bye'u (Little Bird of rTsang Pass/Hill?); the lord, rTsang-rje'i phywa'; the minister, Pu-du dang gnang; the servant, rTsang-kol re'u-rdzi (rTsang Servant Kid Keeper); the horse, rTsang-rta dglo-long legs-pa'.

Intriguingly, PT. 1060 extends the tradition of the *do-ma* to the Turkic lands (Drugu) north of sTod.⁵⁸⁶ The cultural and historical significance of this passage is, however, difficult to assess. It would appear to either confirm that the early Turks independently used horses in funerary rites to transport the deceased to the afterlife (see p. 556), or that this custom was introduced by the Tibetans during their imperial period expansion into Central Asia.⁵⁸⁷ In any event, the *do-ma* origin tale of Drugu confirms the existence of the Tibetan (or Tibetan-like) tradition of equine funerary rites in a north Inner Asian cultural context. A locale in proximity to the Tibetan uplands, on the north slope of the Kunlun range, may be indicated by the place name Byang-ka snam-brgyad. At least some of the names cited in this passage are of Turkic linguistic origin, verifying that the tradition of *do-ma* extended north beyond the Plateau:

Inside the castle of Shu-ba' leg of the country of Byang-ka' snam-brgyad, the *lha* of Drugu: Yol, Reg-rgyal hir-kin and Dan-kan; the ministers, Dun-rgyus and A-ma-ca'; the servants, Nag-drug and A-ma-ca'; the horses, Hol-tsun and Thog-bya-rmad.

In Ne'u pañḍi-ta's history of the Tibetan kings and Buddhism, there is likewise a reference to funerary rites having been carried out near the Iranic and/or Turkic borderlands.⁵⁸⁸ This is likely to represent a protohistoric projection of Tibetan cultural influence to the northwest and/or a long-established Inner Asian legacy related to various death cults. This account is set in the time of 'O-ste spu-rgyal (sPu-lde gung-rgyal), Tibet's ninth king:

parts of the *do-ma* rites. As we have seen in the ritual texts of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and PT. 1136, the tail and mane of funerary horses were accorded special treatment, and mustard seeds and ephedra were primary ritual agents. The text asserts that by the silver [bowl] of libations (*skyems*), the gods of Zhang-zhung, Mu-rgyung and sTang-rgyung are disposed to pay back the love given them. The king and ministers are repaid with the same love they have shown, thus they become very pleased. The account ends by stating that the storyline is the same for all the kings mentioned below in the text. In PT. 1060, Zhang-zhung serves as the flagship location for the *do-ma* tradition. The placement of the Khyung-lung headwaters country at the beginning of a list of 13 principalities, and the much more detailed treatment afforded it in the text, indicates that this region had a formative ritual function. This rests well with other textual evidences we have examined that ascribe the origins of the archaic funerary tradition to Zhang-zhung.

⁵⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, lns. 74, 75: *yul kha la stsang stod rtsang gyi dngo mkhar gyi nang na' / lha rtsang la 'i bye'u / rje rtsang rje 'i phywa' / blon po pu {du} dang gnang / khol rtsang kol re'u rdzi / rta rtsang rta dglo long legs pa' /*.

⁵⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, lns. 90–92: *yul byang ka' snam brgyad mkhar shu ba' leg gyi nang na' / drugu 'i lha yol {dang} reg rgyal hir kin dang dan kan / blon po dun rgyus dang A ma ca' / khol nag drug dang (# dang) A ma ca' / rta hal tsun dang thog bya rmad /*.

⁵⁸⁷ Thomas (1931: 821, 822), through his examination of the occurrence of the ethnonym Dru-gu in the wooden slips of Mīrān and Mazār Tāgh, came to the conclusion that this term very likely denoted the Uighurs. Thomas (*ibid.*: 825, 826) also subscribes to the theory that 'Dru-gu' may have originally meant the Turfān region before its conquest by the Uighurs as well as tribes of the Tien Shan.

⁵⁸⁸ See *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* by Ne'u pañḍi-ta grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros (late 13th century CE), p. 5: *...sog po dang / stag gzig gi sa mshams / yul ghurna parna zhes bya ba na / mu steg bye brag pa las / gar pa 'i snang bon po gshogs po che bya ba gcig byung ste / gson gyi lha gsol / gshin gyi 'dre 'dul /*.

On the border of Sog-po and sTag-gzig, in the country known as Ghurna parna, there was the *bye-brag*⁵⁸⁹ heretic *snang* [*gshen*] *bon-po* of strength, called gShogs-po che (Great Wings), who propitiated the *lha* of the living and subjugated the *'dre* of the dead.

Returning to the second account in PT. 1136, the narrative moves to a boy servant of the rTsang patriarch (rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag), who spied two marvelous horses while herding goats (para. ii). One of these horses was a blue aquatic water horse (*chu-rta sngon-po*). Tales of aquatic horses and other livestock dwelling in the big lakes of Upper Tibet are still part of the sacred geography of the region.⁵⁹⁰ After watching for some time the aquatic horse and his mate, the horse of the *srin*, with their two offspring, the boy servant went to inform rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and his son sMra-bon about them (para. iii). Questioning the veracity of what their servant told them, the rTsang patriarch and his son went to see for themselves and discovered that it was true (para. iv). Intent on capturing the horses the father and son made four traps using goat hair. After setting out their traps, they drove the aquatic horse and horse of the *srin* into them, but both animals were able to break free (para. v). Their two colts were not as lucky, however, and were snared by the traps (para. vi). The colts were confined and endowed with names that included the word 'bird', presumably because of the power of flight ascribed to the *do-ma*. The connection of these colts to the celestial *dmu* deities is intimated by their being tied with the tether of the *dmu* (*dmu-rtod*). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur text explicating the three funerary appointments (*skos-gsum*), it appears that four *dmu* cords (*thag*) are used to establish a secure link between the deceased and his protective deities (see pp. 392, 405, para. viii).

The text now leaves the story of how the *do-ma* were obtained and describes the funeral in which they were used. The victim is no other than lCam lho-rgyal, the daughter of the rTsang patriarch, who her parents betrothed to the lord of Gu-ge (para. vii). One of the things this princess objected to was the fish diet of Gu-ge. Likewise, in one of her PT. 1287 (*Old Tibetan Chronicle*) lamentations, Queen Sar-mar-kar, the Tibetan wife of the Zhang-zhung king Lig-myi-rhya, bitterly complains about the fish fare of Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar (Uray 1972a: 10). From such references, we might conclude that fish once formed a staple of the Upper Tibetan diet. Some of the lakes and rivers of the region are undeniably plentiful sources of scaleless carp. Distraught over the prospect of her marriage to the lord of Gu-ge, the ill-fated lCam lho-rgyal hanged herself when his wedding party came to receive her. lCam lho-rgyal's father and brother discovered her death after she failed to wake up for both breakfast and dinner (para. viii).

The father and brother first requested gShen-rab kyi myi-bo to help them untie the noose but he said he could not help, and recommended that they enlist the help of another priest (paras. viii, ix). This brief appearance of gShen-rab in the narrative of PT. 1136 does not match how we might expect the founder of one of the world's great religions to be depicted. Rather, we appear to be dealing with the nebulous origins of amorphous religious traditions of a prehistoric character. In the Dunhuang manuscripts gShen-rab is presented as a cultural hero (a father of the funerary tradition). He is one of several paradigmatic personalities in the *'dur* ritual apportionments.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁹ Types of Indian religion originating in the period before Buddhism. They possess a doctrine of eternalism and a belief in an essential self. See Dung-dkar 2002, pp. 1489, 1490.

⁵⁹⁰ Some of these myths set at gNam-mtsho and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho, taken from both oral and textual sources, are found in Bellezza 1997a, *passim*.

⁵⁹¹ The portrayal of gShen-rab myi-bo in the Dunhuang manuscripts may possibly epitomize a fundamental difference between the archaic religious traditions and the prevailing religions (Lamaism) of Tibet. While the textual evidence is

It was Bya-gshen 'jon-mo who performed a ritual in which the *bdud* of death were exorcized, thereby allowing him to remove the noose (paras. x, xi). It is not clear whether the goats and sheep figuring in this ritual were sacrificed or not. The text says that the white complexion of lCam lho-rgyal was restored as a result. This can only be an allusion to the reconditioning of the corpse and its consciousness principles, as also described in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (see p. 399). The twin funeral rituals of the *shid* and *'brang* were then able to take place. As part of these activities, the text returns to the two captured horses offered by the father and brother as the *do-ma* of the deceased girl (para. xii).⁵⁹²

PT. 1136 concludes with a statement that the benefit and merit of the *do-ma* in a contemporary funeral performance is equal to that in ancient times (*gna*'). The word 'ancient' is used here to describe the chronological setting of the *do-ma srid-rabs*, and seems to signify a time long before the text was written:

- i) In the river country of the upper headwaters (*yul-chab kyi ya-bgo*), rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and the mother named gShen-za'i gyi myed-ma mated, and the timely⁵⁹³ offspring were the brother named sMa-bu zing-ba'i zing-skyes and the sister called lCam lho-rgyal gyi byang-mo tsun. Well then, at that time, what possessions and livestock did both rTsang ho'i hos-bdag (*sic*) and sMra-bond gyi zing-pa zing-skyes (*sic*) have? They had seven goats, seven paired.⁵⁹⁴
- ii) Well then, a small child (*khye 'u*) was their goat herder and paired [kid] herder. Taking care of five goats he wandered⁵⁹⁵ around the meadow. Wearing a *re-slag*,⁵⁹⁶ he came and went in the shadows (*drib*). He was in the upper valley taking care of the goats and taking care of the paired [kids]. Well then, at one time, from deep within the red rock formation in the upper

thin and certainly not conclusive, it seems quite telling all the same. It can be observed that the two Lamaist religions were founded on a 'historic model of divine manifestation', as they are endowed with temporal and geographic underpinnings. Religious origins, identity and authority are ascribed to a personality revealed in a specific time and place (sTon-pa gshen-rab of 'Ol-mo lung-ring and the Buddha of Sa-skya). Conversely, the archaic religious traditions appear to have been founded on a 'primeval model of divine manifestation', one that minimizes the significance of a single personality, time period or locale as the exclusive wellspring of its existence. As we have seen, the old proto-clans of Tibet each issued from a line of deities that can be traced back to the primordium or a primal state of non-existence. This seems to suggest that ancient religious traditions were propagated by diverse lineages of adepts and practitioners, each invested with their own social prerogatives and spiritual dominions. This pattern of religious origination and organization would not per se require a singular human founder or theophany for its legitimization. We might therefore consider that Tibetan archaic religious traditions developed from longstanding cultural prototypes. By avoiding the loss of the consciousness principles through obscurations (*grib*) and demonic attack (*gdon*) whilst alive, and the hindrances of the grim land of the *gshin-rje* after death, an individual was believed to assume a divine status in the afterlife. In this paradise the dead were linked to their ancestors and, ultimately, to the etiologic deities of their respective genealogical lineages. In brief, it appears that ancient Tibetans believed they descended from the gods in an intrinsic patrimony and were to be reunited with them via their ancestors after death, in what might be termed a 'closed teleological cycle' (this would appear to be the signification of the Old Tibetan cosmological term *rum*).

⁵⁹² PT. 1042 (ln. 36) makes reference to both small and large *do-ma*.

⁵⁹³ *Nams*. This word seems to indicate that the children came at the correct time and season. However, it could also mean that the children were born through nocturnal activities.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ra-bdun cha-bdun*. This appears to indicate that there were in fact seven female goats with kids, making a total of 14 animals.

⁵⁹⁵ *Nyug*. This can also mean 'to scuttle'.

⁵⁹⁶ The first syllable of this word is obscured in the text. It could alternatively read: *ra-slag* (a goat-skin robe), instead of a hair robe (*re-slag*).

- valley appeared a striped mare of the *srin*. From the lower valley country appeared a blue aquatic horse.
- iii) The child (*bu*) and steed of both horses' union, the child of the embrace of these two, {rTe'u} bal-bu mchog-rum,⁵⁹⁷ appeared in the [correct] season of the following year.⁵⁹⁸ The colt was following behind his mother. The son of the steed was trailing behind his mother. In next year's season, [the two] Bal-bu mchog-rum colts appeared.⁵⁹⁹ Every day the four horses, the four steeds, were eating the grass of the sunny white [side of the] mountain and drinking the water of the shady black [side of the] mountain.⁶⁰⁰ Well then, at one time the small boy goat keeper, the paired [kid] keeper, offered to the ear of the master (*jo-bo*) rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and to sMra-bon zing-ba zing-skyes (*sic*) a repetition of what has just been told.
- iv) The master rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and sMra-bon zing-ba'i zing-skyes (*sic*) said, "Well then, is what this small child [said] true or false?" They went to see the horses. All that the small child goat keeper had said was true. rTsang hos-bdag (*sic*) and rMa-bu zing-ba'i zing-skyes (*sic*) returned [home]. They removed [hair] from the seven goats, the seven paired [kids]. They made four *ra-snyi thing-ka lag*⁶⁰¹ of the horse *kog-tshe* (?) and of the steed *kog-tshe*.
- v) They erected [the snare] in the horse country.⁶⁰² They cried out (*khus-btab*) from the upper valley and waved (*g.yab-bor*) from the lower valley.⁶⁰³ The horses turned, the steeds turned, towards the *ra-snyi thing-ka lags*. The blue aquatic horse was captured (*zun*), but pulling once, he pulled free, snapping the *ra-snyi thing-ka lag*. He escaped ('*bros*) deep inside the lake at the bottom of the valley. The striped mare of the *srin* was captured, [but] pulling once she pulled free, snapping the *ra-snyi thing-ka lag*. She escaped deep inside the red rock formation in the upper valley.
- vi) Well then, the two Bal-bu colts were captured. Even though they pulled once, pulled twice, pulled thrice, the *ra-snyi thing-ka lag* did not snap (*ma-chad*). The colts were not freed (*ma-shor*). They were caught there. Both rTsang hos-de'i hos-bdag and sMra-bon gyi zing-pa (*sic*) put them in the *chol-rol* (holding pen?) of white copper (*bse*). They tied (*brtod*) them with the dark blue tether of the *dmu*. They accorded them names and appellations. The older

⁵⁹⁷ This is not a proper name per se.

⁵⁹⁸ This clause of the sentence also includes the words *sla'i man du*, the meaning of which is not apparent.

⁵⁹⁹ Some words in this sentence are obscured, thus its complete import is not evident. As a result, the sentence I provide in translation is abbreviated.

⁶⁰⁰ The word 'sunny' (*gdags*) is not legible but there can be no doubt that this is the correct reading because of its parallelism with 'shady' (*sribs*).

⁶⁰¹ A type of snare that apparently was made of goat hair.

⁶⁰² This is the incomplete meaning of *rta gling khyad khyud ljad ljod du btsugste /*. Perhaps *khyad khyud ljad ljod* conveys 'here and there in sundry places'.

⁶⁰³ In the Byang-thang, north of 33° N. lat., leg traps called *sgog-rtse* are still used in the same general fashion as described in the PT. 1136. During their spring migration northwards, antelope are driven into these traps with the aid of stone barriers called *dze-kha* (sp.?). Similar stone barriers are found in circumpolar regions and other areas of Asia. This information on trapping came from Toni Huber and Joseph L. Fox, specialists in Tibetan hunting techniques, in personal communication.

- one⁶⁰⁴ was accorded [the name] bKral-bya.⁶⁰⁵ The younger one (*bo*) was accorded [the name] gNag-dom bya (Black Bear Bird?). They made them their livestock and possessions.⁶⁰⁶
- vii) Well then, [her parents] elected to betroth⁶⁰⁷ lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun to the lord of the people⁶⁰⁸ of Gu-ge, in the river country of the upper headwaters. The 100 men, the 100 horsemen⁶⁰⁹ of the bridegroom's receiving party,⁶¹⁰ the subjects of the lord of Gu-ge, suddenly appeared. lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun said, "The country Kha-la stsang-stod⁶¹¹ is far away⁶¹² in the distance. The more familiar the subjects (*rkang-phran*) of Zhang-zhung Gu-ge become, the worse they become." Saying, "The more you chew their food, fish, the more bitter it becomes,"⁶¹³ she hanged ('*geg*) herself by the neck with a black hair rope (*rtsis-dag gnag*).
- viii) Well then, although the father rTsang de hos-bdag (*sic*) and sMra-bon zing-skyes requested (*gsol*) her to wake up for breakfast (*nang gi dro*), she did not wake up. Although they asked⁶¹⁴ her to wake up for supper (*nub kyi 'on*),⁶¹⁵ she did not wake up. The face of lCam lho-rgyal gyi byang-mo tsun became dark. The end of the black hair rope was dangling (*nar zhing mchis*) from her neck. The father rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and the brother sMra-bon zing-skyes informed the father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo, "My [daughter], the wretched man's daughter, lCam lho-rgyal gyi byang-mo tshun, died (*gum*) bound ('*gegs*) by a black hair rope." He requested, "Now please untie the black hair rope."

⁶⁰⁴ *Pho*. This word is etymologically related to *phu-nu* (brothers), and is the lexical equivalent of *phu-bo* (older brother).

⁶⁰⁵ This name is not very legible in the text. Alternatively, it could possibly read bKra-la-bya. I am inclined to see this name as meaning something to the effect of 'bird of the dead'. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *bkra-rgan/bkra-rgyal* is used to refer to deceased elders of high social standing.

⁶⁰⁶ ...*dKor dang dagsu bgyiso l*. If livestock (*g.yung-dwags*) is meant in this sentence, the modern spelling of the word *dags* is *dwags*. It is also possible that the word *bdag* was intended. In that case the sentence would read: "They owned them as their possessions."

⁶⁰⁷ *gNyen dang gdam du bgyiste*. *gDam-kha* = a preference or an election. *gNyen-grig* = to be related by marriage.

⁶⁰⁸ *rKang-phran* (constituent feet) apparently denotes the people, subjects or tribal constituents of Gu-ge. Alternatively, Gu-ge *rkang-phran* could refer to the name of the country, but this is far less likely. Uray (1972a: 9, 10) in his passing reference to this text treats *rKang-phran* as the proper name of the king of Gu-ge, but this is highly implausible.

⁶⁰⁹ Uray (1972a: 9), in his brief mention of this text, treats *myi brgya rkya brgya* as a proper name but this cannot be correct. The reiterative enunciation of men and their horses is an ancient literary device employed to put emphasis on a subject. In this case, the stress is on the awe-inspiring qualities of the envoys. For example, *mi-dkar rta-dkar* (white men [with] white horses) vividly refers to a group of gNyan-chen thang-lha deities in the *gsol-kha* tradition. Although I have speculated that *rkya* might be the lexical equivalent of *rje* (lord) or *btsan* (see Bellezza 2005a: 287 (n. 349)), as this Dunhuang text illustrates, it is actually an Old Tibetan word meaning 'horseman'. For other occurrences in Tibetan texts, see *rkya-dgu* (nine horsemen) and *dmag-rkya* (cavalry) in Bellezza 2005a, pp. 62, 65 (para. ix), 267, 275 (para. ix). *rKya* must be etymologically related to the word *rkyang* (onager).

⁶¹⁰ *gNye-bo* (mod. = *gnyen-po*), the groom's receiving party.

⁶¹¹ sTsang-stod is not fully legible in the text but I have added it due to its occurrence in PT. 1060, ln. 74.

⁶¹² *bGrod-ching*. This must be the equivalent of *bgrod-ring*.

⁶¹³ *Kha 'is*. This could also mean 'more smelly'.

⁶¹⁴ *Zlos-na* (asked) is obscured in text and is a contextual reading.

⁶¹⁵ Equivalent of *nub kyi gong* (supper). In the Khams dialect supper is referred to as *dgong-thung*.

- ix) The father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo said, “I cannot untie the black hair rope, Bya-gshen⁶¹⁶ ’jon-mo can untie it.” Well then, although they sent Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg to call⁶¹⁷ Bya-gshen ’jon-mo, he could not bring Bya-gshen ’jon-mo, so they sent sKyin-po ru-thog rje (Lord Male Ibex Surmounted Horns)⁶¹⁸ to call Bya-gshen ’jon-mo. He brought Bya-gshen ’jon-mo.
- x) Then the black sheep of binding and the *rgya-bo*⁶¹⁹ goat of binding were interconnected along (*rgyus su brgyus*) [the rope] by Bya-gshen ’jon-mo. For three nights the *bon-gshen* chanted⁶²⁰ the sacred rituals (*bon*). On the dawn of the following day, on the black sheep of binding and the *rgya-bo* goats of binding [they put] the nine *bdud* (all the evils tormenting the deceased), and the *bdud* were banished.
- xi) The black hair robe was untied from the neck of lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo. Her face took on a bright white complexion and she reposed as if smiling. The father rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag said let us convene the *shid* and erect the *’brang*. Then they concealed the eight *rgyal-thag*. They built the square *se* in the valley.
- xii) For the *do-ma* the father employed bKral-bya. For his sister the brother employed Dom-bya.⁶²¹ [The *do-ma*] was beneficial and meritorious. In ancient times it was beneficial, now it is also beneficial. In ancient times it was meritorious, now it is also meritorious.⁶²²

The most important and extensive tale explaining the origin of the *do-ma* comprises the lion’s share of the text IOL 731 verso.⁶²³ This *smrang* is also set in ancient times, in both numinous realms and pastoral northern or northeastern Tibet. The mythic account opens by stating that it is

⁶¹⁶ Bird *gshen* still form part of the Bon tradition. For example, *bya-gshen rgod-po* is an appellation for the sacred bird, the bearded vulture. The *bya-bon* is a type of pheasant found in eastern Tibet, one of 13 species of bird messengers between humans and the deities (*bya-bon ’phrin-pa bcu-bsum*).

⁶¹⁷ *gNyer* (to call, to invite). Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg may actually refer to a divine bird messenger.

⁶¹⁸ The name of this figure seems to reinforce the Upper Tibetan orientation of the narrative. The ibex (*Capra sibirica*) (*skyin*) is a wild ungulate of La-dwags, sPi-ti, sBal-ti, the Hindu Kush, Mongolia, and other highland regions of Inner Asia.

⁶¹⁹ *rGya-bo* describes a goat (or dog) with a brown body and light brown or golden brown coloring around edges of the eyes and ears and on the legs.

⁶²⁰ *bsGyird*. Old Tibetan past tense of the better-known verb form: *gyer*.

⁶²¹ This passage includes the words *ba chu gcig*, whose meaning is unknown.

⁶²² ...*gna’phan da yang phan gna’bsod da yang bsodo* /. Rather than a simple statement, this conclusion to the text may express a wish, but this is less likely given its grammatical arrangement. In an aspirant format it would read: “As it was beneficial in ancient times, may [the *do-ma*] also be beneficial at this time. As it was meritorious in ancient times, may [the *do-ma*] also be meritorious at this time.”

⁶²³ I am grateful to the Bodleian Library for allowing me to photocopy a microfilm facsimile of the text. For the Thomas (1957) transliteration and translation of this manuscript, see ch. IA, pp. 9–16, 20–28. In his work Thomas, a scholar of tremendous philological knowledge, presents a linguistic and historical analysis of the text with skill and precision. He was, nevertheless, unaware of the basic fact that the bulk of IOL 731 verso is an etiologic myth for the horse funerary vehicles known as *do-ma*. Thomas was under the impression that it was composed as a kind of allegory about relations between animals (*ibid.*, p. 1). His inability to comprehend the ritual significance of the text, as well as various difficulties related to its religious and cultural elements, led to his translation being riddled with errors of a lexical, grammatical and syntactical nature. This is underlined by his insistence that the text was written in interwoven sections of prose and verse (explained on *ibid.*, p. 8). This *smrang* is in fact composed in a homogeneous narrative style (with many poetical features) throughout. I will not enter into a critical discussion about all the places I believe Thomas went wrong in his translation and analysis of IOL 731 verso, but encourage readers to make their own comparative study of our respective efforts.

the precedent for the species separation of the onager and horse (para. i).⁶²⁴ This harkens back to the origin of the riding horse, furnishing clues that are relevant to an assessment of the antiquity of the archaic funerary traditions. It was in early Iron Age north Inner Asia that the technological development of the bridle and saddle occurred. We will return to this crucial matter in due course. In the customary manner, the text proclaims the name of the horse parents who breed a celestial mare.⁶²⁵ Here we have explicit confirmation that the prototypic *do-ma* (such as the one that came from dGa'-yul byang-rnam) originated in the heavens.

However, there was no food or water in the sky realm for the mare (para. i), so she descended to the country of rJi-lung dang-ba (para. ii). After mating here she descended to Lha-yul gung-dang (Country of the Lha Vault of the Heavens) and was acquired by a goddess named Lha-za gung-tshun. This goddess kept the horse in a *sa-khyim khang-mo*, which appears to be some type of earthen structure used to corral livestock and/or accommodate humans. Despite Lha-za affording the mare the best care possible, this undomesticated horse proved very uncooperative and was begrudgingly set loose (para. iii). The mare returned to rJi-lung dang-ba and again mated with rJi phyar-phyur (para. iv). Although the mare is recorded as having 'descended' (*bab*) to this country, we should take this just to signify her arrival. The offspring of the horse pair were three brothers: the eldest was an unidentified equid, the middle brother a *rkyang*, and the youngest brother a horse. Due to a shortage of fodder and water, the three brothers proceeded to different countries (paras. iv–vi).

Later, in the country of Byang-ka snam-brgyad, the eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-byam/pyam encountered the father (archetypal) wild yak sKar-ba (para. vi). sKar-ba announced to the equid that in this year and in the previous one, the *pya* (*phya*) deity Yab-bla bdag-drug had given the horse the high pastures, and cattle and yaks the northern areas. I am inclined to see reference to the 'high pastures' (*'brog*) as signifying the southern tier of Upper Tibet, and the northern areas (*byang-ba'i rigs*) as a geographic designate of the northern tier. The eldest equid agreed that their respective territories had been appointed by the *phya* god in the fashion described by the wild yak, but was quick to suggest a means of accommodation (para. vii). The wild yak sKar-ba would have none of this compromise and without hesitation slew Yid kyi gdang-pyam (para. viii). The

⁶²⁴ The origin tale I have translated begins on ln. 38 of the manuscript and extends to the end of the incomplete text. See Tibetan Text III-46, pp. 647–650. Lines 25–38 of the manuscript provide some details of the funeral of which the etiologic myth of the *do-ma* forms a complementary part (the very first part of IOL 731 verso is devoted to largely unrelated matters). Announcing the death of an individual, the text exhorts the readers to deploy the *do-ma* (lns. 32–34): "The *dpan-ten** lord is dead. The crane bird egg is cracked open, the good turquoise is chipped, and the temper (*ngar*) of the sword,† has disappeared. The lord, yes, of this clan is dead. The best (*phud*) of that overhead‡ is defunct. Now, today, let us make this cherished (*snying-dgas*) *do-ma* the one who goes over the water (*chab-gang*, a gift for the deceased's salvation), the *phyugs spo ma nye du*" (...*dpan ten rje grongs bya khrung khrung na sgong rdol to bzang ste ni g.yu grugs so / rno'i ni ngar yal rus kyi ni rjes grongs glad gyi ni phud nyams / phyugs spo ma nye du / do ma snying dgas da di ring chab gang laru bgyi 'tshal* /).

* This word appears to specify the destroyed or degenerated condition of the deceased. It is related to the current verb form *'phan-pa*. Thomas (1957: pp. 8, 22) mistook this word as the proper name of a king.

† *rNo* (literally, sharp-edged). This is usually an epithet for the sword but it can also refer to other weapons as well.

‡ *Glad* (mod. = *klad*). This is used to designate those deserving of respect or deference, viewed as being situated above the crown of the head. This sense of the word has prevailed to the present day.

⁶²⁵ Stein (1970: 184 (n. 47)) notes that in such rites the horse is glorified by the mention of its name and clan. He sees the *do-ma* as a favorite war horse of the dead. This is a likely historical scenario, given indications found in a *Klu 'bum* account we have examined (see pp. 484, 489, paras. ii, xxi).

youngest brother Khug-ron rmang-dar and the middle onager brother rKyang-ron rngog-bkra went to search for their sibling, only to find him dead (para. ix).

Khug-ron, outraged at the murder of their brother, called for revenge (*sha*) (para. x). He made known that if the ‘revenge of the nape of the neck is not carried out by the front of the neck’, there would be no way to repay the kindness of the older brother. Phrased *ltag sha mjing gis ma gnyer bas*, this is a *dpe* (illustration) of a fundamental social convention, one that reveals the unswerving reciprocity that constituted the bedrock of the ancient Tibetan custom of retributive justice. The back of the neck (*ltag*) is symbolic of the dead brother, or the cause for revenge, and the front of the neck (*mjing*) is the two surviving brothers, those that avenge (for more examples of reciprocative justice, see pp. 220–223, 397, 398). rKyang-ron was not convinced they would be able to kill the wild yak and announced he would return to his own country (para. xi). Deeply struck by his brother’s craven behavior, Khug-ron disowned him on the spot⁶²⁶ and announced that he would head to the country of Myi-yul (Country of Humans) skyi-mthing (para. xii).⁶²⁷ This celebrated locale in Kong-po may have been favored for the first encounter between man and horse because of its associations with the descent of King gNya’-khri btsan-po, investing it with a formative mythic aura. The assertion that Kong-po was the place where Tibetans first rode horses should probably not be taken literally but rather as an attempt to localize a seminal cultural development in the mythic royal heartland. The riding of horses in Tibet is more likely to have originated in pastoral regions closer to the Central Asian steppes, before filtering down to the southern valleys.

Stung by his younger brother’s words, rKyang-ron pronounces a malediction upon him that grievous injuries would result from his exposure to the bridle bit, saddle and saddle straps (para. xiii). Khug-ron in turn casts his own imprecation on the middle brother (para. xiv). Even though there would be no humans to ride the *rkyang*, he would suffer from being ridden by stellar deities, from poisonous herbs, and as the quarry of hunters. The text of these anathemas eloquently sums up the respective conditions of the horse and onager, which are still largely valid to this day. More vitally, the narrative provides us with the mythic origin of the domesticated (riding) horse in Myi-yul skyi-mthing, a momentous event that changed the course of Tibetan history and that of all Eurasia. The gradual development of the technology required for mounting and controlling horses in Inner Asia can be traced to the early Iron Age Scythians. It was possibly in this same general timeframe (roughly 1500 years before the writing of the text) that the bridle and saddle were introduced to Tibet. Our myth attributes the domestication process to fantastic events that occurred within the Tibetan context, but this could well overlie the diffusion of this pivotal technology into Tibet in a remote period (as discussed in Section 9).

⁶²⁶ The extreme sense of honor and duty connected to the act of revenge persisted in pastoral regions until the Communist period. For example, in sNyan-rong it used to be said: “When a man’s price (revenge) is not taken after his murder, one dies a dog’s death afterwards” (*mi rin mi shi’i rjes ma song / khyi shi’i rjes song l*).

⁶²⁷ Thomas translates sKyī-mthing as the ‘Plateau of sKyī’ and misidentifies it with Hsi-chih, which he characterizes as the original home of the Ch’iang tribes. According to Thomas, IOL 731 verso is set in the sKyī kingdom, which he equates with the T’ang-chang kingdom of the Sino-Tibetan marches. He claims that this text has preserved linguistic characteristics of the prehistoric languages of this region such as Nam. See Thomas 1957, Introduction, pp. ix, 2–4. As in the case of IOL 731 recto, I have to take exception with Thomas’s insistence that these texts belonged to Sino-Tibetan cultures of the northeastern fringe of the Plateau. They are very much Tibetan (linguistically and geographically), and may well have been written in Central Tibet before being carried afield to Dunhuang. Field research carried out by Karmay (1998: 211–227) establishes that Mi-yul skyi-mthing is located in Kong-po, near the confluence of the Yar-lung gtsang-po and Nyang-chu. This location is associated with the myth of the descent of gNya’-khri btsan-po to Tibet, and what appears to be a burial tumulus was discovered there by Karmay.

rGyang-ron rmgog-bkhra (*sic*) is recorded as going to 'Brog-phyi ldang-ka-gsum, a country with fodder but no water (para. xv). This may refer to a place in the northern wastelands of the Byang-thang. Khug-ron went on to Myi-yul skyi-mthing, where he met the human rMa-bu ldam-shar, who lived in an earthen castle. Khug-ron told his tale of woe to the man and offered to serve him during his lifetime as well as when he died (para. xvi). The horse and man entered into a solemn oath binding them together, and enjoining the horse to serve humans in both life and death (para. xvii). This marks the crucial occasion when rider and horse were first joined. The texts tells us that, mounted upon the horse, rMa-bu ldam-shad struck an imposing pose with his tiger-skin quiver (*stag-ral*) and leopard-skin bow case (*gzig-ral*). These objects have been the great emblems of the Tibetan warrior since time immemorial.⁶²⁸

rMa-bu ldam-shad and Khug-ron then commenced to avenge the death of Yid kyi gdang-pyam. The horse requested that the man cover his face, for he was too ashamed (*ngo-tsha*) to lay eyes on his brother rGyang-ron (para. xviii). We can well envision an ancient stricture in which there was nothing more shameful than cowardice. The pair traveled to Byang-kha snam-brgyad and met up with the wild yak sKar-ba. With his bow and arrow, rMa-bu slew the wild yak (para. xix). Apparently, Khug-ron was shaking from fear all the while. This seems to illustrate another vital point: the ability of humanity to provide horses with protection from predatory animals. The horse and man therefore mutually empower each other, the essence of their bond as the origin tale would have it. Khug-ron reveled in the slaughter of the wild yak and flaunted his trophies before his older brother rKyang-ron (para. xx). Among these was a clump of the wild yak's tail, which was affixed to his mane. Nowadays, the tail hair of domestic yaks is employed to decorate horses but the use of the wild variant as a badge of bravery is in keeping with the spirit of this tradition.⁶²⁹

Khug-ron's revenge having been gained and time having run its course, rMa-bu dies (para. xxi). His death is attributed to the *bdud* and *sri*, those demonic agents still believed to be responsible for mortality. The metaphor of a chipped turquoise is presented as representing death (para. xxii). This is no other than the soul turquoise (*bla-g.yu*). As we have seen, it is a soul receptacle that functions both to protect the living and as a special vessel during the evocation of the soul at the time of death. In Tibetan folklore, a soul turquoise once damaged or discolored is a harbinger of illness and death. The text states that the legendary *gshen* gShen-rabs myi-bo and Dur-gshen rma-dad (*sic*) carried out those funerary ritual requisites of concealing the *rgyal* and making the *se* in a valley.

IOL 731 verso proceeds to briefly describe the original *do-ma* rite (para. xxiii). It appears that Khug-ron as the cherished one (*snying-dgas*), the *do-ma*, had turquoise horns erected on his head,

⁶²⁸ Thomas (1933: 386) notes that in the wooden slips of Eastern Turkestan *stag* refers to a soldier, and perhaps specifically to a brave one or an officer. In Bon literature, *stag-shar* are heroic males and *stag-chas sna-dgu* are all the costumes and armaments that customarily belong to men (Bellezza 2005a: 233 (n.185), 409).

⁶²⁹ A funerary address of reduced size but containing the seminal mythic elements of IOL 731 verso has been preserved by the Nakhi in a text entitled *Horse Take Away, Go!*. At the funerals of deceased chieftains, the officiating priest addresses sacrificial horses, recounting the story of how in ancient times a horse was killed by a yak and its young left as an orphan to come into the service of humans. The text explains that the yak was killed to avenge the death of the horse, and his tail fastened to the neck of the horse. It states that the horse served as a pack and riding animal and as the mount of the soul in death. The text also records that the horse carried the deceased over nine mountains and seven large bodies of water. Food, wine and other offerings for the deceased were also carried by this horse. See Rock 1955, pp. 8, 148–151. The use of the Nakhi funerary horse to carry the provisions of the dead across the geographic barriers of the intermediate zone is a good indication that such a custom existed in ancient Tibet as well.

but the fabric of the text is damaged, making a definitive reading here difficult. Through the deployment of the *do-ma*, the ordered position of the lord [rMa-bu ldam-shad] was made high (*rje gral ni mtho gnyer*). As we have seen, this is a ritual formula indicating that the consciousness principles of the deceased attained the position of loftiness required for liberation or entry into the afterworld. Now that the *smrang* has been enunciated, the text concludes with reference to the concurrent funeral. This funeral ceremony of the early historic period is again prefaced by epitomizing the mythic precedent: “In ancient times it was perfectly accomplished.”⁶³⁰ Finally, the *do-ma* or *phyugs spo ma nye du* (probably signifying the surrogate relative of the deceased in the form of livestock) is requested to be the *chab-gang* (funerary conferment for travel over the river of the dead) that crosses the shallow ford (*yang-ba ni rab du sbog*) of the *gshin* netherworld, enabling the deceased to win salvation:

- i) The way in which horse and *rkyang* were separated.⁶³¹ The father, the patriarch of the horse, was named the father Khar-ta 'i yal-ba, and the mother was gSang-ta'i pyod-ma. They coupled and the daughter of the [spring] season, rTa-za lung-brang gyi bya-ma ron, was born.⁶³² The horse [daughter] resided, she resided in the sky (*gnam*). The steed [daughter] resided, she resided⁶³³ in the heavens (*dgung*). There was no food fit (*ran*) for the wide (idle) mouth (*kha-yangs*). There was no water fit for the idle throat (*mgrñs-yangs*).
- ii) The horse [daughter] descended; she descended from the sky. The steed [daughter] descended; she descended from the heavens. Where did she descend? She descended into the country of rJi-lung dang-ba. She mated (*'tshos*) with rJi-ba phyar-phyur. She descended into Lha-yul gung-dang. Whose property was she? She descended as the property and preference of Lha-za gung-tshun. She was kept (*stsald*) inside a *sa-khyim khang-mo*.
- iii) [Lha-za gung-tshun] presented (*stsald*) her with unripe grain (*'bras kyi lchang-pa*). She served⁶³⁴ her blue *ngar* (barley?) meal. She served⁶³⁵ her the sweet extract of turnips (*buram nyung-chu*). She made [the horse] her property and preference. The horse was highly antagonistic (*log-pa che*). The steed was highly insolent.⁶³⁶ When it was appropriate to ride⁶³⁷ rTa-za lug-'brang gñ bye-ma ron (*sic*) in the morning, she was unable to ride her. When it was appropriate to catch [the horse] in the evening, she was unable to catch her. Lha-za gung-mo tsun was angered (*bkyon*), so she took out (*pyung*) [the horse] from the interior the *sa-khyim pug-mo* and banished (*bskrad*) her.
- iv) Where did [the horse] land (*bab*)? She landed inside the country of rJi-lung dang-ba. She met and mated with rJi phyar-phyur, and the children of the [spring] season, the three brother horses, the three brother steeds were born. The eldest brother (*phu-bo gchen-po*) was Yid

⁶³⁰ *Gna 'i ni pul pyung* (mod. = *phul byung*) ngo...

⁶³¹ This is succeeded by two lines that I have omitted from the translation because they remain largely opaque to me.

⁶³² *lDam* (mod. = *bltams*).

⁶³³ Read: *bzhu[gs]*.

⁶³⁴ *bsGams*. This verb (to offer dry foods for consumption) is closely related to *'gams*, a verb form used nowadays to describe the eating of dry foods such as *rtsam-pa*.

⁶³⁵ *Blud*. This verb is used to denote the serving of liquids for consumption.

⁶³⁶ *mkhris-pa che*. The word *mkhris-pa* (gall) is used here much as it is in colloquial English to refer to audacious or impudent behavior. This signification, however, appears to have been lost in modern Tibetan.

⁶³⁷ *Glan*. This verb (mod. = *slan*) is now used in northern and eastern Tibetan dialects to describe, for example, the pressing of dung (*lci-ba*) patties on walls. Here it must mean to ride, to mount or to be seated on.

- kyi gdangs-pyam. The middle brother (*nu-bo 'bring-po*) was called rKyang-ron rngog-bkra. The youngest brother (*nu-bo tha-chung*) was called Khug-ron gyi rmang-dar. In the country of rJi-lung dang-ba there was no [food] fit for the idle mouth. There was no water for the idle throat.
- v) The eldest brother⁶³⁸ came to the country of Byang-ka snam-brgyad. There he enjoyed water for the idle mouth. There he enjoyed herbs for the idle throat. In the country of Pyi-'brog brgyad-gong, rKyang-ron rngog-bkra enjoyed herbs for his idle mouth. He enjoyed water for his idle throat. In the country of 'Brog-pyi gdang-sum, Khug-ron rmang-dar enjoyed the beautiful herbs in clumps (*pang-pung*) in the high pastures ('*brog*). He drank the water of the marshes.⁶³⁹
- vi) Then, at one time, in the country of Byang-ka snam-brgyad, the eldest brother (*pu*) Yid kyi gdang-byam and the father wild yak sKar-ba met each other, so the wild yak sKar-ba said, "Last year and the year before, high above the sky and high above the heavens, the lord Yab-bla bdag-drug of the mGon-tshun pya⁶⁴⁰ designated the high pastures as the country of the horse and the northern areas as the country of yak cattle (*ba'i-rigs*)." [The yak also] said to the eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam, "Where are you going?"
- vii) The eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam replied, "Ya-bla bdag-drug of the mGon-tshun phywa designated the high pastures as the country of the horse; that is true. The country of the yak is the north; that is true. Today, at this time, let the horse and yak not fight each other. [If I,] the horse comes earlier, I shall eat the grass and you the yak who comes later shall drink the water. [If you,] the yak comes earlier, you shall eat the grass and [I] the horse who comes later shall drink the water." Thus he spoke.
- viii) The wild yak sKar-ba was not agreeable.⁶⁴¹ With his right horn the wild yak picked up [the horse] from its rear. With his left horn he dangled (*bzar*) the horse. The eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam was killed there. [The horse's] flesh was eaten by the bird *rhal rhal*.⁶⁴² His blood was drunk by the earth *cib cib*.⁶⁴³ His bones were crushed by the *gle* (wolf?)⁶⁴⁴ *khrum krum*.⁶⁴⁵ The hair on his head was taken by the breeze *ban ban*.⁶⁴⁶ The eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam was killed there.
- ix) Sometime after there was the neighing of the horse *tsher tsher*,⁶⁴⁷ the neighing of the steed *tsher tsher*, of both the younger brothers rKyang-ron rngog-bkra and Khug-ron rmang-dar, [but] there was no speech of the eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam. Both Khug-ron rmang-dar and rKyang-ron rngog-bkra went to the country of Byang-ka snam-brgyad to search for their missing eldest brother. They did not meet with the living (*bshos*) face of the eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam. They met with his defunct corpse.

⁶³⁸ *Pu-bo gchen-po* (mod. = *phu-bo gcen-po*).

⁶³⁹ *Bre-mo ne'u-kol* is some type of marsh or wet pastureland. *Ne'u-seng* are marshy grasslands.

⁶⁴⁰ mGon-tshun pya/mGon-tshun phywa is a *phywa* tribe (mGon-btsun phywa) mentioned in Bon literature. This divine grouping is identical to the mGo-gsum tsha of the *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* cosmogony (see p. 351, para. iii).

⁶⁴¹ *Ma-bgrings*. This is the equivalent of the Classical Tibetan *ma-rangs* (not agreeable) or has a similar semantic value.

⁶⁴² *rHal rhal* is onomatopoeia for the sounds carnivores make while eating.

⁶⁴³ *Cib cib* depicts a slurping sound.

⁶⁴⁴ Thomas (1957: ch. 1, p. 24 (n. 3)) believes rather that a bear is intended here.

⁶⁴⁵ *Khrum krum* portrays a crunching sound.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ban ban* conveys the action of dispersing or scattering.

⁶⁴⁷ *Tsher tsher* denotes a high-pitched sound.

- x) And so the youngest brother Khug-ron rmang-dar said, “If we the younger brothers do not take revenge (*sha*) for the eldest brother, [and] if the revenge of the nape of the neck is not carried out by the front of the neck, we cannot cut the heart of the hated one, and we cannot repay (*lan*) [our eldest brother’s] love. That would be tragic because he loved us.⁶⁴⁸ If we do not drink into our bodies the blood of the [wild yak] corpse and the revenge of the nape of the neck is not carried out by the front of the neck....⁶⁴⁹ We the younger brothers will avenge the eldest brother. The revenge of Yid kyi gdang-pyam will be carried out by Khug-ron rmang-dar and rKyang-ron rngog-bkra. We will cut the heart of the hated one. We will cut the heart of the wild yak sKar-ba. We will repay his love. We will repay the eldest brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam.” Thus he spoke.
- xi) rKyang-ron rngog-bkra replied, “Even though our older brother Yid kyi gdang-pyam was such a swift horse and powerful steed, he was not able to stand against the wild yak sKar-ba. Even when both you and I chase [the yak] we cannot reach him, and when we run away we cannot escape. If we challenge him we are not able, so the younger brothers cannot avenge the eldest brother and cannot drink [the wild yak’s] blood into our bodies.” Thus he said. “I will proceed to the country of ’Brog-phyi ldang-gsum and eat the herbs of the idle mouth and drink the water of the idle throat.” Thus he spoke.
- xii) The youngest brother Khug-ron rmang-dar replied, “Younger brother rKyang-ron rngog-bkra, you are a horse of almost no worth whatsoever (*chab gang chung*), you are a steed of almost no worth whatsoever. Henceforth from today, while alive, we will separate our countries. When dead, we will separate our tombs.” Thus he said. “I will go to the country of Myi-yul skyi-mthing.” Thus he said.
- xiii) The older brother rKyang-ron rngog-bkhra (*sic*) said, “You, younger brother Khug-ron rmang-dar, are going to the country of Myi-yul skyi-mthing to befriend (*bsen-bgyis*) the human, so once next year may you, the horse, get sores⁶⁵⁰ all around your mouth by the insertion of the bridle [bit] in your mouth (*srab gyis srabste*). May you be wounded (*sgal byung shig*) by the placement of the saddle on your back. May your heart degenerate in your body by the pressure of the saddle strap on your sides (*glo glos mnan te*).” Thus he spoke.
- xiv) The younger brother Khug-ron rmang-dar replied, “Elder brother rKyang-ron rngog-bkra, when you come to the country of Pyi-’brog ltang-gsum, even though there is no human to ride you, may you be ridden by the *g.yen* of the stars.⁶⁵¹ Even though there is no human [to

⁶⁴⁸ *gDung du snying re*. Alternatively, the phrase could mean ‘we loved him’ or ‘we loved each other’.

⁶⁴⁹ The implication of this failure to take revenge is specified in the line: *bas skom kha ru skams na ’di ji nongs /*. This has something to do with the shame that would befall the surviving brothers.

⁶⁵⁰ *Shu-bab* (mod. = *shu-ba*). These are lesions, eruptions or abscesses usually caused by disease.

⁶⁵¹ *sKar-ma g.yen*, a class of celestial deities. There are other references to horses in the Dunhuang manuscripts that underline the deification of uranic phenomena. A horse mount of the *lha* of the stars with the markings of a fawn (*she ’u-ris*), as well as specially marked and colored horses of the *lha* of the sun, the *lha* of the moon and the *lha* of the rainbow are recorded in PT. 1060. Horses of the *dmu*, *srin*, *bdud*, *klu*, *gnyan*, and *sman* are also enumerated in the first part of this manuscript. The horses stipulated in the text cannot serve as *do-ma* because they belong to deities. As we have seen in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, in order for the dead to cross the postmortem gloom they had to win the aid of elemental spirits. This was accomplished by presenting certain types of horses to them. For descriptions of the PT. 1060 horses, see Bellezza 2005a, p. 468 (n. 154). The next clause of our text has to do with being scorched/irritated (*tshig*) by something related to *hya-’bras* (lesions or sores?). It is not included in the translation.

- insert] the bridle [bit], may lesions all around your mouth automatically appear through 'brog-rtsi pyor-ba (a poisonous herb?). Even though there is no human to pursue you, may swift hounds chase you (*mgvogs sha-khyis snyogs shig*). Though there is no human to catch you, may you be shot by the swift [arrow of] the great bow."⁶⁵² Thus he said.
- xv) The older brother rGyang-ron rngog-bkhra went to 'Brog-phyi ldang-ka-gsum. There were herbs to enjoy for the idle mouth [but] there was no water for the idle throat. The younger brother Khug-ron rmang-dar went to the country of Myi-yul skyi-mthing smra-yul thag-rgyad. He went near (*gan du mchi*) the human rMa-bu ldam-shar, who was in the earthen castle, the light gray castle.
- xvi) The horse rMang-dar said, "Presently, at this time, I the horse have had a misfortune (*nyam-nyes*) that is unbearable (*theg gyis myed*) even for me, the steed. You, man rMa-bu ldam-shad, would you like to go over the water (*chab-gang*) or not? Would you like to cross the shallow ford or not? If you want me to go over the water and cross the shallow ford, from today henceforth I will carry you for your 100-year-or-more lifespan (*bshos-tshe*). When you perish and become the owner of the *bdun-bam* (corpse?), I will help/respect you as the lord."⁶⁵³ Thus he said.
- xvii) Both the man rMa-bu ldam-shad and the horse rMang-dar made a dry (solid or strong) pledge (*tha-tshigs*).⁶⁵⁴ They made a promise, they made a pledge.⁶⁵⁵ During life [the horse] respected him.⁶⁵⁶ The horse Khug-ron rmang-dar was mounted by the man rMa-bu ldam-shar. The tiger-skin quiver at his waist and leopard-skin bow case at his waist were long and glorious. He rode on the horse.⁶⁵⁷ They left for the country of Phyi-'brog rgyad.⁶⁵⁸
- xviii) The younger brother Khug-ron rmang-dar said, "{When we go there}⁶⁵⁹ cover (*khob*) the face of me, the horse, cover the face of me, the steed, because I am ashamed of rGyang-ron rngog-bkhra." Thus he said. The man rMa-bu ldam-shad covered (*bkhab*) the face of the horse, he covered (*bkab*) the face of the steed. They went to the country of Byang-kha snam-brgyad. They encountered the father wild yak sKar-ba there.
- xix) The man rMa-bu ldam-shad...⁶⁶⁰ He untied the bow⁶⁶¹ from the rear of the horse. At first, he went as close as he could to the wild yak sKar-ba, he went close (*thud thud*).⁶⁶² In pursuit,

⁶⁵² *Mgvogs gzhi khyen gyis/ pongs shig*. In Classical Tibetan, *mgvogs gzhu chen gyis 'phongs shig*.

⁶⁵³ This sentence is a rough translation of the line: *Nongs tshe bdun bam kyi bdag du gshegsna ni rje gdabo /*.

⁶⁵⁴ The next line in the text has to do with the making of an oath (*mna'-bchad*) and the saddling of the horse. It is not included in the translation.

⁶⁵⁵ This sentence is completed with the untranslated phrase *gnyī dro thab mo gor te /*. It appears to invoke the warm sun and the round hearth as metaphors for the unchanging and perfected nature of the pledge entered into by man and horse.

⁶⁵⁶ This is followed by the clause: *nongsna ni rdzi gdab phar bgyiste /*. This translates roughly as, "when he perishes [the horse] serves as his keeper."

⁶⁵⁷ This sentence is the general but incomplete meaning of the line: *rTa bo ni brang mnan de /*.

⁶⁵⁸ This line contains the word *gosu*, which is unknown to me.

⁶⁵⁹ These brackets designate reconstructed readings of illegible syllables near the right margin of the manuscript.

⁶⁶⁰ The continuation this sentence, *khu lo ni sbyangs gyis mdzad* (plus one or two effaced syllables at the margin of the manuscript), is unclear to me: perhaps it has something to do with the preparation of the arrow.

⁶⁶¹ The text has one or two missing syllables followed by *darka*. I think these should read: *mchog-dkar* (bow).

⁶⁶² This is followed by one or two missing syllables at the margin of the manuscript.

the younger brother was shaking.⁶⁶³ The man rMa-bu ldan-shar drew his bow and aimed his arrow.⁶⁶⁴ The wild yak sKar-ba was killed (*bkhum*) there.

- xx) The younger brother Khug-ron rmang {dar} said, “I have taken revenge for the beloved eldest brother. I have taken revenge for the beloved Yid ke gdang-phyam. I have cut the heart of the hated wild yak sKyar-ba (*sic*). I have cut the heart of the hated one. The revenge of the eldest brother was taken by the youngest brother. I have drunk the blood of the [wild yak’s] corpse in my body. The revenge of the nape of the neck was carried out by the front of the neck. Now, hack up (*gshogs*) the flesh of the yak into joints (*lhu*). Clip (*dros*) the hide of the yak into strips. Tie a {clump} of the tail on the mane of me, the horse. Now, to show off (*ngom-gdab*) to the older brother, rGyang-ron rngog-bgra (*sic*), I will flaunt [these yak trophies].” Thus he said.
- xxi) The man rMa-bu ldam-shad cleaved the yak flesh into joints and clipped the yak hide into strips. He suspended a clump (*ban-chig*) of the tail on the horse Khug-ro rmang-dar’s (*sic*) mane. He cut the heart of the hated one and took revenge for the beloved one. They returned to the country of Myi-yul skyi-mthing smra-yul thag-rgyad. Sometime later, the *bdu*{*d*} from the sky {descended} on the {man rMa-bu ldam} shad and cut {his life-force}. The *sri* rose up from the earth. The thong (*sgrogs*) was untied by the *srin* and the decayed (*dpan-te*) lord perished.⁶⁶⁵
- xxii) The good turquoise was chipped. The lord died, he died from...⁶⁶⁶ The chipped turquoise is chipped from the head. The decayed (*dphan*) lord perished and was sadly lost; he was no more,⁶⁶⁷ so the father gShen-rabs myi-bo and Dur-gshen rma-dad established the *rgyal* in concealment. They made the {*se*} in the valley. They made the *gshin ste nyer-bu* (?). The mattress wild yak *bang-rten* was laid down.⁶⁶⁸
- xxiii) For the cherished *do-ma*⁶⁶⁹ they {erected the turquoise horns on} the youngest brother Khu rmang-dar (*sic*)...⁶⁷⁰ he who would cross the ford. The ordered position of the lord was high...⁶⁷¹ In ancient times, it was perfectly accomplished.⁶⁷² Now we have collected [the ritual constituents]. Today, you *phyugs spo ma nyedu*, the cherished *do-ma*, be the *chab-gang* and cross the shallow ford.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶³ *Breng breng*. This appears to depict the horse quivering. One or two syllables are missing from this line.

⁶⁶⁴ *mChog-gar ni dra bkhug glu d{mar ni} ldang bzar*. In the Classical Tibetan of Bon texts, the equivalent phrase is *mChog-dkar gra bkug dang / li mar ltang bzar* (or *sbyar*) /. Here this is followed by an obscure passage indicating that rMa-bu did something (shot?) from the right side and something appeared on the left side. He then did some action on the left side causing something to appear on the right side.

⁶⁶⁵ Two or three syllables are missing from this sentence, thus my translation is incomplete.

⁶⁶⁶ One or two syllables are effaced from this line.

⁶⁶⁷ One syllable may be missing from this line.

⁶⁶⁸ This is followed by a description of a funerary procedure concerning the earth and sky. It contains one or two illegible syllables and is not included here.

⁶⁶⁹ Thomas mistakenly treats *do-ma snying-dgas* as the proper name of a deceased person who is being told the story. See Thomas 1957: Texts, Translations, and Notes, pp. 1, 28 (n. 7).

⁶⁷⁰ There are syllables missing here.

⁶⁷¹ The rest of this line is blighted by missing words; it has something to do with an equivalency.

⁶⁷² *Pul-pyung* (mod. = *phul-byung*)

⁶⁷³ This sentence is the incomplete rendering of the last two complete lines of the text.

As we have seen, the *do-ma* or funerary transport horse for the afterlife figures prominently in the Dunhuang funerary ritual texts. The *do-ma* appears to have been used mostly for the male deceased. In the archaic funerary tradition, the horse is closely aligned with war and hunting, activities largely in the male domain. As detailed in the second narrative of PT. 1068 (lns. 61–131), the carrier of the female dead was the *mdzo-mo* (female hybrid yak), the source of dairy products. I will provide a close reading of this text, noting words and passages that are difficult to parse, rather than provide a translation per se. In my account of the text, I endeavor to stay as true to the grammatical structure and tone of the story as possible. This narrative is a *smrang* recounting the origin of the *mdzo-mo*, which assisted women over the river that divides the postmortem existence from the afterlife. This *smrang* asserts the value of the funerary transport yak even in the most tragic circumstances surrounding a death, demonstrating its universal ritual utility.

The setting of the myth is sKyi-ro lchang-sngon of ancient times, which is almost certainly the country of lCang in the sKyi(d)-chu valley south of Lhasa. The royal couple of this region, sKyi-rje rmang-po and sKyi-bdagi btsun-po (= mo),⁶⁷⁴ had a son and daughter. The queen died prematurely, leaving her children, sKyi-pyugi 'jon-ba and sKyi-nam nyag-cig-ma, in the care of a wicked stepmother. The siblings were starving, so the brother went to Byang-ka snam-bzhī (a Byang-thang region) to hunt. When he returned he found that his sister had died in a pigsty in the most terrible of conditions. Milking 100 female yaks and 100 female sheep, he tried to use their butter for an unguent that would restore his sister's corpse to its undistressed condition. He also tried bone marrow from various wild ungulates. All his attempts were unsuccessful. The great torment afflicting the sister is epitomized by sKyi-nam nyag-cig-ma's hair standing straight up, and an infestation of lice.

The brother invited gShen-rab myi-bo, Dur-shen gyi rma-da and gShen-tsha lung-sgra to provide *dpyad* (prognosticative) and *sos* (restorative) remedial procedures for sKyi-nam nyag-cig-ma's funeral. It is not clear, however, in what place they met. In Bon sources, gShen-rab is usually connected to Upper Tibet and more distant western lands. He did, nevertheless, make a celebrated foray to Kong-po in order to retrieve his stolen horses. This narrative seems to confirm that ancient Upper Tibet and Central Tibet shared elements of their funerary cultures in common. The *gshen* advised sKyi-phyug 'jon-pa to go to the country of a prototypic bovine pair, the parents of an elder brother *lha-mdzo* (divine male hybrid yak), a younger brother domestic yak or yak hybrid and a female yak. The activities of the two brothers are outlined in the text. The major difference between them is that the *lha-mdzo* resides high above human society while the younger brother serves human beings. The sister, a female yak or yak hybrid, mated with a wild yak and produced a *mdzo-mo* called mDzo-mo drang-ma, who was captured by sKyi-phyug 'jon-pa and taken back to his country sKyi-ro lchang-sngon. mDzo-mo drang-ma provided the butter needed for the unguent that would return his dead sister's hair to its normal state and rid her corpse of lice, thus effecting her renovation.

The brother requested that mDzo-mo drang-ma act as the *chab-gang* (literally, over the water; the funerary conferment) that would cross the river of the dead. The text also mentions a number of mortuary structures pertaining to the tomb and its ritual delineation. mDzo-mo drang-ma was ornamented with colorful pieces of cloth, her horns and hoofs likened to precious substances,

⁶⁷⁴ This king and his homeland also figure in the the *do-ma* lineages of PT. 1060 (lns. 76, 77): “The country was sKyi-ro ljang-sngon. Inside the castle sKyi-mkhar jo-yo sngon-'bu'i was the *lha* sKyiibs-la bya-mangs. The lord was sKyi-rje rmang-po. [The ministerial clans were] Shu'u and sPug. The horse was sKyi-rta skya-ma lan-kar.”

and she was led with a cloth line. On the day of the funeral, when sKyī-nam nyag-cig-ma's consciousness principles were to be conducted to the hereafter, a great many people gathered, which remained us of the naming of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur as the 'funerary rituals of the multitude' (see p. 367). Dur-shen rma-da appointed mDzo-mo drang-ma to go over the water and cross the ford of the dead, thus ensuring the deceased sister's deliverance. The text concludes in familiar fashion, with a declaration that the merit and benefit of the funerary transport hybrid yak in the present funeral is equal to that it had in ancient times.

The myth of the livestock escort of deceased women unfolds as follows: In the sKyī-ro lchang-sngon country, sKyī-rje rmang-po and sGyi (= sKyī) bdagi btsun-mo coupled, and the offspring of the season (*nams gyi sras*) were the son (*mying-po dral-po*) sKyī-pyugi 'jon-ba and the daughter (*sring-mo lcham-mo*) sKyī-nam nyag-cig-ma. While living there (*bzhugs bzhugs*), the mother died (*grongs*) when still young (*gzhon*). As sKyī-bdag btsun-mo died in her youth, and was no more, sKyī-rje rmang-po'i took a haughty (*dregs*) woman⁶⁷⁵ to be his wife (*khab*) and mate (*dbyal*). So, the two [sKyī] pyugi 'jon-pa and sKyī-nam nyag-cig-ma did not have breakfasts (*nang gyi bza-ma*) and did not have suppers (*nub gyi bag-ma*), thus the brother went to (*bzhud*) Byang-ka snam-bzhī (Four Northern Areas) to trap deer (*sha-bshor*) and hunt gazelles.⁶⁷⁶

The sister was hatefully (*sdang*) treated by the stepmother (*ma-yar*) and put to work (*lasu*) looking after (*tshor*) the pigs. The hair on her head stood on end in the sky (*gnam du yer*),⁶⁷⁷ and lice eggs (*sro-shig*) dropped (*zug*) into her lap (*pung*, mod. = *pang*). Her place was down below (*ma-mda*) in the waste, the pig waste (*phag-brun*). The sister sKyī-nam nyag-cig perished, she was no more (*nongs gyis ma mchis*). When the brother returned from Byang-ga snam-bzhi with his share of deer and his share of gazelle,⁶⁷⁸ he thought (*snyon*, mod. = *snyam*) that his sister sKyī-nam nyag-cig would receive (*bsu*) him on the top (*ltang*, mod. = *steng*) of the pass, but she did not receive him. He thought that she would receive him at the edge (*tshums*, mod. = *mtshams*) of the ford, but she did not receive (*bsus*) him. He thought that she would receive him at the outer gate, beside the door, but she did not receive him.

[The brother] asked, "Where did my sister go, where did sKyī-nam nyag-cig go?" The hateful stepmother replied, "I made her work looking after the pigs, she continually looks after the pigs." He asked his neighbor (*khyim-tses*, mod. = *khyim-mtshes*), gDang-g.yag. He said, "On the previous days (*khar nyin snga*) she was looking after the pigs. Today (*di-ring*, mod. = *de-ring*), I cannot say where she went." Then the brother went to the lower place and searched (*btsal*) inside the pig pen/waste (*phag-brung*). His sister sKyī-nam nyag-cig's hair stood on end in the sky and lice eggs fell down (*lhags*, mod. = *lung*) to the ground. He saw that she had died there (*grongs shing bzhug-pa*). The brother was overcome with heartache. The brother became insensible with heartache. His heartache reached the depth of his being.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁵ This woman is also described by the words {*lta*} *gang rags*, which are of unclear meaning.

⁶⁷⁶ *dGo-'drem* ('to hunt gazelles'). In Bon texts, *dgo-'grem/go-'grem*. *dGo* would appear to be the Old Tibetan word for gazelle (*Procapra picticaudata*) (*dgo-ba*), but I think it possible that the Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*) (*gtsod/btso*) is really intended here. I base my supposition on the conspicuous absence of the word *gtsod* from the old hunting tales we have been examining, and the well-known fact that Tibetans relish the meat of the antelope but avoid eating gazelles.

⁶⁷⁷ Next in the text, her hair is possibly compared with the bristles of a pig and her food to pig milk (*phag la zho myi* {'go} *phag la bal myi bal de rab*), but the full import of this passage is unclear.

⁶⁷⁸ *Sha nying la nying bkal dgo nying la nying bkal*. This line has to do with the brother's trophies as his share (*bkal*, mod. = *skal*) of the hunted animals, but its precise meaning is unknown.

⁶⁷⁹ The preceding three lines are the free rendering of the passage: ...*ming-po dra* (+ *l*) *po ni thugs chad brang*

He gathered up (*bsdu*) his stricken (*gdo*, = *god*) sister and took her. Her hair stood on end in the sky. He milked (*zho-bzhos*) 100 female yaks (*'bri*), 100 mother yaks.⁶⁸⁰ He took the fresh lumps of butter (*mar-drum sad* (= *sde*) and daubed them (*skud-bgyis*) on her head and combed (*bskus-bshad*) [the sister's hair] head, but to no avail (*ma phan de*). He milked 100 sheep (*lug*), 100 ewes (*g.yang*). He took the fresh lumps of butter and daubed them on her head and also combed her head with this oil to settle [her hair], but to no avail. Her hair stood on end in the sky and lice eggs dropped into her lap. Just as before, he took the bone marrow (*rgang*, mod. = *rkang*) of nine types of wild ungulates (*ri-dags cho-ma-cho dgu*)⁶⁸¹ and also daubed her [hair] with the oil {, but to no avail}. Her hair {stood} on end in the sky.

The brother invited the fathers gShen-rab myi-bo, Dur-shen gyi rma-da and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, these three. He inquired, "Do you have the remedy (?),⁶⁸² do you have the {*bon gpyad* (= *dpyad*)} for my sister sKyi-nam nyag-cig's hair standing on end in the sky and lice eggs falling down, do you know?"⁶⁸³ The fathers Dur-shen gyi rma-da, gShen-rab myi-bo and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, these three, replied, "We *gshen* have the *bong* (= *bon*) remedy (?), we have the *dpyad*, we have the means to rehabilitate (*sos*) the dead, those who are no more.⁶⁸⁴ For the hair standing on end in the sky, you can milk the mDzo-mo dram-ma (*sic*) of the *srin* ford⁶⁸⁵ and daub the fresh lumps of butter. Brother sKyi-phyug 'jon-pa, you go there to mDzo-mo dram-ma's Yul-rgod khyer gyi 'bri-mo srang, where the two Glang khye-bo ru-gar and Sa sral-mo mated and have had the offspring of the season."

sKyi-phyug 'jon-pa went to the female yak plain of Yul-rgod khyer. There [he found] the brothers that arose from the union of Glang khe-bo ru-gar and the mother⁶⁸⁶ 'Bri sral-mo. The elder brother (*phu-bo gcen-po*), the *lha-mdzo* (divine yak hybrid) was born.⁶⁸⁷ He stayed together (*bsris*, mod. = *bsres*) with the yaks that are not saddled (*sgas ma-bor*) and whose noses are not pierced (*ma-btsugs*) by wood, He lived on the upper flanks (*mgur*, mod. = *mgul*) of Lha kha-po gangs-rgyal. He was not suitable to be the companion of the ill-fated below.⁶⁸⁸ The younger brother (*nu-bo gcung-po*) carried (*'gel*) the deer, and carried the gazelle [trophies] in the north. In the countryside he carried the soil and carried the stones (*rto*, mod. = *rdo*). He was the livestock (*dkor-chen*), property of the king. His great value was the cost of a stallion (*rin-chen ni rta-po rin*). On the long road (*lam-rings*, mod. = *ring*) with its great burden (*khur-cen*, mod. = *khur-chen*) and led by the horse, he made the ground quake (*bgur*, mod. = *bsgul*). He was suitable as the companion of the ill-fated below.

'gamsde / thugs chad kyi ni ro {ru} chad brang gam gyi ni gdingsu gam nas /.

⁶⁸⁰ *Sal*. This word is closely related to the pastoral term *sel-chung* (the mother of a yak calf).

⁶⁸¹ The signification of the modern form of *cho-ma-cho*, *cha-ma-cho*, has evolved in a somewhat different direction than the way it is used here in PT. 1068. In a modern setting it would mean 'this or that one'.

⁶⁸² {*gThod*} *ji mchis*. Contextually, this appears to convey asking for a remedy or method.

⁶⁸³ This is an abbreviated translation of the last clause in the sentence, which also includes {*bon*} *la* {*ga byad*} *ci mchis* (?).

⁶⁸⁴ This sentence is followed by: *lan shing ni* {*char gzod la*} *cha gar ni ring* {*rtsa brtsid*} *'tshal gyis /*, the meaning of which is highly obscure.

⁶⁸⁵ mDzo-mo dram-ma is etymologically related to the modern *'bri-mo/mdzo-mo grus-ma/drus-ma* (a female yak/female yak hybrid that has calved in the current year).

⁶⁸⁶ This is followed by the word *sadu*, which is of unknown meaning.

⁶⁸⁷ This is followed by *thang* {*gar*} *du skyes ru tshugs*, which appears to describe the divine yak's activities.

⁶⁸⁸ *rMa* (mod. = *dma*) *nyam nyis* (mod. = *nyes*). This refers to human beings who are prone to suffering and misfortune and who customarily live in the zone below mountain summits.

Their sister appeared as the ashen-faced, oblong-bodied female [yak] (*kha bre-mo gzhung-snar-mo*). She mated with the patriarch 'Brong-bu ru-gser (Yellowish Wild Yak) in the season, and they stayed [together]. sKyī-phugi 'jon-po flung (*bdabs*) the lasso, the flexible (*mnyen*, mod. = *mnyan*) rawhide lasso.⁶⁸⁹ He led her away (*khrid-bzhud*). The son of the union of the father 'Brong-bu ru-gser and the mother mDzo-mo drang-ma, the son, followed behind and was led away. Arriving in the country of sKyī-ro lchang-sngon, he milked mDzo-mo drang-ma. With the fresh lumps of butter, he daubed the butter on his [sister's] head and combed [her hair]. The hair standing on end in the sky naturally fell into place (*lhan ches*, mod. = *gyis*). The lice eggs also fell to the ground and dispersed (*byer*).

The brother said, “[The butter from] milking you mDzo-mo drang-ma, has been augured (*ltas*) suitable to daub on [my sister's] head.⁶⁹⁰ You, be the *pyugs* {*spo*} *ma nye du*, the one who goes over the water (*chab-gang*), the one who can cross (*spogs*) the shallow ford.”⁶⁹¹ Thus he said. Beside the concealed *rgyal bsgos* (= *sgo*), the *se* was erected. The *se* 'brum (= *gru*) *bzhi* was made. The *rgyal-thag brgyad* was joined ('*bres*, mod. = *sbrel*). The four beams (*gdang*, mod. = *gdung*) (?) were erected. The four {*bya-dgyigs*} (?) were interconnected (*star*). The sister's mDzo-mo drang-ma was ornamented with the good flags of many colors (*dar sna chon* (mod. = *tshon dgus*). The good horns were the turquoise horns. The good hooves were the iron hooves. The nose ring (*snyal-chu*) was made from gold. She was led with the cloth lead (*sna-dag*).

On that day, at the ordered position of the mind (*thugs-gral*) observance (*stong-chen*), the assembly of kinfolk, the assembly of loved ones, the assembly of the great, the assembly of the small, the assembly of the many, and the assembly of the few came inside for the spectacle (*ltad-mo*) of [the sister] attaining the pre-eminent ordered position (*gral-gang*). At dusk on that evening,⁶⁹² the *se* 'brum (= *gru*) *bzhi* (tomb/tomb enclosure) passed over. The *rgyal-thag* was activated (*gzigs*) (?).

The father Dur-shen rma-da [said], “From today onwards, you be the *mdzo-mo* of the ford of the *srin*,⁶⁹³ the one who can go over the water, the one who can cross the shallow ford. You provide the lumps of butter (*dmar-drus*) to daub on the head. Inside, the dark blue little livestock keeper (*rdzi'u-chung*) milks you in the morning, and in the evening you are even more full than before, and in the morning you are even more full than before.” The brother performed (*bthang*, mod. = *btang*) the sister's funeral. The funeral (*shid*) of sKyī-nam nyag-cig was made by sKyī-phyug 'jon-ba.⁶⁹⁴ [This ritual] is now as beneficial as this mDzo-mo drang-ma of the {female *srin*} ford of the dead (*gshin*) was beneficial in ancient times. It is now also as meritorious as it was

⁶⁸⁹ This is followed by a passage of unclear meaning (*gnam du* {*rgal gyang*} *ma bdang* (mod. = *btang*) *saru lcol gyang ma bdang sde*). It may read to the effect of: “The [*mdzo-mo*] crossing the sky could not get away and crouching/circling on the earth she also could not get away.”

⁶⁹⁰ This sentence also includes the phrase: *theb le rgyan du rung ba*, which has something to do with the utility of the butter application.

⁶⁹¹ *Yang ba ram* (= *yang ba rab*).

⁶⁹² *Do mdo* (= *mod*) *nam sros dgung-rmos* (*dgong-mo*).

⁶⁹³ Preceding *srin-rab* (ford of the *srin*) is the word *bskyer*, which is unknown to me. It may denote some type of wrathful quality or action.

⁶⁹⁴ The text now has: {*sring*} *mdzo drang ma* {*bsriste*} *phande bsod* {*nad*} *ltar bsodo* / *di ring sang* {...} *na rdzi bgra bo bgra rgyal dang snam btsun mo 'di la yang mying mnyes*. This seems in part to convey that mDzo drang-ma was of benefit, thus on the day of his sister's funeral the brother became happy. Perhaps bGra-bo bgra-rgyal is a proper name.

{meritorious} in ancient times.⁶⁹⁵

The ubiquitous presence of the archetypal funerary priests gShen-rab and rMa-da in the Dunhuang manuscripts and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur demonstrates how these two literary corpora are inextricably tied together through a common mythos. This body of origination lore has served as the fountainhead of transmission and practice of the Tibetan funerary tradition for no less than 11 or 12 centuries. It is nothing short of remarkable that the cultural memory of gShen-rab and rMa-da proved compelling enough to make the great cultural leap from the Tibet of the sPu-rgyal btsan-po to the Tibet of Buddhist supremacy. The philosophical, narrative and ritual continuity between the religious traditions of the early historic period and systematized Bon is now fully self-evident. The survival of the funerary myths and practices demonstrates the perdurable nature of this very important facet of Tibetan culture. It also illustrates that Bon is indeed the privileged carrier of cultural anachronisms down to the present day, in a way that Tibetan Buddhism is not. When the lineal funerary tradition is viewed in tandem with the many other archaisms encapsulated in Bon funerary literature (as well as other Bon sources), we begin to appreciate how this religion differs fundamentally from Tibetan Buddhism. The Bon religion, as the repository of ancient non-Buddhist traditions, has always been acknowledged as such in the indigenous historiographic tradition and among the Tibetan population at large.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ *gShin gyi {srin-za} rabs gyi mdzo-mo drang-ma 'di yang gna' phan na da yang phan gna' {bsod na} da yang bsod.* This may also be phrased: "May it also be as beneficial now as this mDzo-mo drang-ma of the {female *srin*} ford of the dead was beneficial in ancient times. May it also be as meritorious now as it was {meritorious} in ancient times." This is followed by the line: *ngo shes mi bdag gyis long shig*, which seems to be a command to those who use the text themselves to accept and recognize its narrative. The last existing line of the text is fragmentary. The aim of the text having been realized, it is doubtful that it went on much longer originally.

⁶⁹⁶ This fact has nevertheless been overlooked by certain Tibetologists, who have labored to view Bon solely as a variant or an adaptive form of Buddhism. As so much is shared in common by Tibet's two main religions, it is not difficult to see how this perception might have been propagated by those who have not delved into the voluminous literature of Bon in sufficient detail. For a balanced description of the nature of Bon, see Kværne 1995, pp. 9–23. For an analysis of anti-Bon polemics, refer to Martin 2001.

9 Associative Archaeological and Ethnographic Materials

9.1 Questions Concerning the Historical Continuity Exhibited by Tibetan Funerary Traditions

In order to plumb the historical significance of the Tibetan archaic funerary traditions in greater depth, it becomes necessary to use archaeological and ethnographic sources of information. The application of data from these disciplines permits the contextualization of Tibetan funerary beliefs, customs and practices in a much wider temporal and spatial frame of reference. As I have discussed, indications from the texts alone cannot be used to establish a historical origin predating the imperial period for any of the funerary beliefs, customs or practices contained therein. A historical analysis of these texts based on archaeological and ethnographic data does, however, give a clearer picture of the antiquity of the archaic funerary tradition. On the basis of the materials presented in this **Section**, I argue that a prehistoric context for certain fundamental aspects of the Tibetan funerary universe constitutes the most plausible temporality.⁶⁹⁷ I will present my thesis by elucidating the relationships that Tibetan funerary traditions have with neighboring cultures, past and present.

In order to establish that a cultural phenomenon significantly precedes its documentation in a certain textual or observable anthropological setting, an unbroken chronological chain of progression leading up to it must be demonstrated. This entails positing direct links through time and space, which connect more recent cultural facts with older identical or related forms. Without chronologically controlled historical and archaeological sources of information to serve as benchmarks, the gold standard of proof is unattainable. When working with ancient cultural phenomena where there is little recourse to documentary and scientific verification, the dating of these materials must perforce remain hypothetical. With this in mind, I present this explication of the antiquity of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, not as an indisputable historical truth but as a persuasive argument pointing in a direction that subsequent inquiry should find fruitful.

A word on the nature of the historical continuity that may characterize Tibetan prehistoric and imperial period cultural phenomena is in order. In the sphere of the archaic funerary tradition, as well as other Tibetan ritual systems, there are two basic ways in which continuity over long spans of time can potentially manifest itself: as relics and as reformulations. A 'relic' is a specific custom, practice or belief that reappears in a later literary or ethnographic medium in an identical form. A 'reformulation' is an adaptation of a custom, practice or belief to a later religious and cultural environment, in which certain elements undergo modification of their explicit content or cognitive backdrop. As I have already observed (Bellezza 2005a: 44 (n. 42)), there are three major types of historical progression in which ritual relics and reformulations may occur:

⁶⁹⁷ The antiquity demonstrated by the Dunhuang funerary texts did not escape the attention of R. A. Stein. Stein believed that many of the religious conceptions behind the funerary legends and rituals are indigenous and preceded the development of the Bon religion. As he saw it, these funerary traditions were adopted by the *bon-po* priests from an earlier religious milieu. Stein maintained that the Bon religion is partly of foreign origin, as its own tradition states. See Stein 1970, p. 168. While I would concur that Bon is a composite of various types of religious traditions emanating from different chronological and geographic sources, I see no compelling reason to disassociate the word *bon* from the religions of the prehistoric epoch. This may be just a matter of semantics but, nevertheless, my stance is one in conformance with the traditional historical understanding of the Tibetans themselves, who have long perceived the prehistoric religions of Tibet as being a *bon* of one kind or another (the religion of gShen-rab, *lha-bon*, *gnam-bon*, *bdud-bon*, *rdol-bon*, *bon-nag*, etc.).

1) continuity in specific ritual practices and readings; 2) continuity in the symbolic and linguistic universes that invest ritual traditions with meaning; and 3) continuity in the social, economic and physical environments in which ritual traditions operate. In the arena of Tibetan archaic funerary traditions, continuity between the prehistoric epoch and early historic period potentially assumes all three forms of expression (literal, abstract and environmental).

Prehistoric ritual procedures and recitations may in some cases have been transferred *in toto* to the imperial period, to be recorded in the Dunhuang documents and eventually in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Preservation of prehistoric funerary rituals, however, may have entailed a considerable degree of reformulation, in accordance with the times and exigencies in which they were written down. The creation of a single Plateau-wide polity in the Tibetan empire period was probably the impetus behind the revision of older funerary rituals, to give them a uniform or pan-Tibetan character. The survival of antecedent symbolic elements and linguistic structures associated with the funerary rituals is indicated since, without this intellectual framework, there would have been little point in conserving the rituals in written form. The continued cultural significance of prehistoric funerary rites by virtue of their affective and religious potency must stand behind any historical carryover into the imperial period. The manner in which funerary symbolism was retained or modified in early historic times, nevertheless, is not at all evident. Aside from the transfer of early ritual objects and practices (and the beliefs that animated them) into the imperial period, broader environmental and ethnic questions must also be factored into any discussion of antiquity. In this respect, we can speak in terms of the continuity of diffuse forms of funerary tradition from the proto-tribal confederations to the singular Tibetan state of the historic dynastic period. Unquestionably, the epoch of burial in tombs and the mortuary culture associated with different types of necropoli straddled the transition from prehistoric to early historic times. Continuity in certain funerary traditions as an underlying ideological construct can therefore be assumed. Questions about the degree of specificity in the funerary traditions prevailing over time remain to be addressed. These will occupy this final portion of Part III.

9.2 Archaeological Evidence Supporting the Antiquity of Tibetan Funerary Traditions

In IOL 731 verso, a text dominated by an origin tale about the horse vehicle of the dead, the mythic precedent of the riding horse's separation from the wild onager is colorfully recounted. As in other *smrang* of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Dunhuang manuscripts we have examined, this story is set in a period predating the time in which the text was written. This is made eminently clear in para. xxiii (p. 537) of the text where, regarding the salvation of the deceased, it states, "In ancient times it was perfectly accomplished" (*gna 'i ni pul pyung ngo*). This 'ancient' setting of the etiologic myths is again stressed in PT. 1136, where a statement of benefit and merit at the termination of the *do-ma* rite expresses its equivalence to those carried out in ancient times (see p. 529, para. xii). This same statement referring to the merit and benefit of ancient times is made at the end of the funerary sacrifice of a female hybrid yak and at the conclusion of the funerary transport ritual in PT. 1068 (see p. 541). While no elaborate origin tale is found in the *rta-gtad* text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the first text of this death rituals collection *Chapter of the Jewel Rosary Scripture* makes it plain that the Bon funerary tradition was in place as an integral ritual and philosophical system well before the time of Tibet's eighth king, Gri-gum btsan-po. In fact, in all three texts detailing the origins of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, its source is ascribed to primal times. While these legendary and symbolic attributions alone cannot be used to construct a historical argument, they do evince the perception of antiquity that has surrounded Tibetan funerary traditions since

early historic times. Beyond the obvious approbative and pietistic functions such attestations had, I believe allusions to a very real antiquity lie behind the mythological elaborations.⁶⁹⁸ Texts such as PT. 1068, PT. 1136 and IOL 731 verso, on the basis of their Old Tibetan chirographic, orthographic and linguistic structures, may have been composed as early as the first half of the eighth century CE (and no later than the turn of the second millennium CE). Yet the narratives contained in these three manuscripts are characterized as ancient. In an attempt to discern the true age of these narratives, I will first concentrate on IOL 731 verso and the motif of the introduction of the riding horse.

As I have noted, the riding horse myth in IOL 731 verso may relate to the development of the equestrian arts in Inner Asia in the first half of the first millennium BCE. In one geographic center of genesis, the manufacture of copper alloy horse harnesses originated with the Scythians of the Altai; they can be traced in the archaeological record of that region to the late Bronze Age. The relatively rapid and widespread diffusion of mounted riders throughout north Inner Asia is not likely to have bypassed Tibet, which has geographic points of access to the steppes in both the northeast and northwest corners of the Plateau. Pre-existing cultural affinities between the two regions of Inner Asia may also have facilitated the transmission of equestrian technology. In due course, the riding horse changed the cultural complexion and strategic balance of the peoples of Eurasia. Horse riding allowed comprehensive trade relations to develop and the diversification of cultural intercourse, fostering contacts between the Altai, Central Asia, India, and China. The mythological reference to the first riding horse of the Tibetans in IOL 731 verso may well have a chronological correlation with the introduction of the bridle and saddle to Tibet. My recent discovery of an elaborate cupreous bridle argues for such a technological innovation having arisen in Tibet in the same time, or not too much after its florescence in the Altai and other regions of north Inner Asia.

Let us first consider the north Inner Asian archaeological evidence. It is theorized that horse riding was fully mastered near the end of the Bronze Age, as evidenced by the occurrence of bone and rod-shaped cheekpieces in archaeological contexts (Bokovenko 2000: 304). For example, a bone or horn *psalion* (but no bit) was discovered in a cattle-breeding Karasuk culture (middle second millennium BCE) site in south Siberia (Okladnikov 1990: 85). With the appearance of the Scythic tribes in the early first millennium BCE, horse bridles together with their bronze accessories gradually developed in association with the rise of nomadic herding/pastoral nomadism, which rapidly spread from the Urals to Mongolia (Bokovenko 2000: 304).⁶⁹⁹ This early and middle first millennium BCE period coincides with the development of a military-sacerdotal aristocracy and complex funerary rites by the Sayano-Altai Scythians. Bokovenko (*ibid.*: 304, 305) discerns three stages in the development of Inner Asian riding harnesses:

- 1) Early stage of development (middle to end of second millennium BCE).

⁶⁹⁸ This appears to be the general position taken by Stein as well. Based on texts such as IOL 504 and PT. 239, Stein (1970: 168) argues that conceptions pertaining to the funerary legends and rituals were indigenous and preceded the rise of the systematized Bon religion.

⁶⁹⁹ Archaeological references to Iron Age Inner Asian horse riding technological innovations are found in Bellezza 2002a, pp. 131, 132 (n. 22). Inner Asian Scythian horse harnessing became canonical in the search for optimal solutions. An analysis of horse bridle motifs indicates that the horse cult, sun and stag played an important role in the old Siberian funerary tradition. This is reflected in classical sources about the Saka and Massagetae. See Bokovenko 2000, pp. 305, 306.

- 2) Arzhan or early Scythian stage (ninth to seventh century BCE). The manufacture of bridle bits and cheekpieces is marked by technological improvement and much more variability. Due to heightened mobility, which fostered intercultural contacts, new and improved types disseminated quickly across the steppes.
- 3) Pazyryk or late Scythian stage (seventh to fourth century BCE). Saddles and harnesses became more complex and diverse. In this stage the headstall straps that connect the bits to the cheekpieces are inserted into ring-shaped terminals, which improved the manageability of the horse. This basic design continued until the Middle Ages.

In the summer of 2003, while walking the lanes of old Lhasa, I was approached by a man offering to sell an ancient horse bridle. I was at once struck by the importance of this artifact and made provision for its purchase and subsequent donation to the Tibetan Provincial Museum. According to the seller, it had been recovered from a looted grave in Nag-chu. The style and design characteristics of this object seem to support his allegation. The bridle assembly is remarkable for its technological advancement, and shares physical parallels to bridles produced by the Inner Asian Scythians. Moreover, its supposed funerary context appears to put it in close functional congruity with the many Scythian bridle components discovered in *kurgans* (barrows). The Nag-chu-attributed bridle is also noteworthy for its excellent state of preservation and the intact state of its various parts. This bridle consists of 35 constituent components, which can be divided into nine typological groupings (figs. 381, 382):

- 1) Two copper alloy plates of a yellowish cast (*li-ser*) with a slightly curved cross-section (12 cm x 6 or 7 cm). These appear to have been part of the headstall assembly or phalera ornamentation. At the top of each plate there is an aperture to accommodate an interlinking bridle cord. On the center of this channel is a small round boss with a beaded outer edge surrounding a plain inner disk. Just below the boss, an embossed linear design consisting of tiny contiguous squares extends to the edges of the plate, where it ends in two short vertical bars.
- 2) Eighteen rectangular coverlids of a whitish copper alloy (*li-dkar*) for the bridle cord. The leather bridle cord⁷⁰⁰ was encased in matching copper alloy coverlids or sleeves, each around 3 cm in length. These pieces have a large central opening to accommodate the line that joined them together. The back of each coverlid also contains a large perforation. On the front of each coverlid is a boss consisting of two concentric circles.
- 3) One rectangular coverlid with a prominent raised disk that is concave in the middle. Otherwise this component is of the same design and alloy as the other 18 coverlids. Almost certainly the original bridle assemblage would have had matching units.
- 4) One coverlid of the same design and alloy, except that it has an additional joint set at a right angle to accommodate the bridle cord. In keeping with the symmetry of the bridle assemblage, there must have been at least one other T-shaped unit.
- 5) Four circular sockets, around 2.5 cm in diameter. Each of these copper alloy components has three extended mouths, presumably used for the attachment of the reins to the headstall. They have the same type of circular boss on one side as the rectangular coverlids.
- 6) Four Y-shaped copper alloy joints, approximately 4 cm in length. Two of these components were linked to the cheekpieces. The function of the other two is not clear (they may have belonged to another bridle). On one side, the Y-shaped joints are decorated by a central embossed line of contiguous squares.

⁷⁰⁰ A tiny fragment of a leather thong was still embedded in the bridle assembly at the time of purchase. Unfortunately, it did not withstand the laboratory pre-treatment process required for AMS analysis.



Fig. 381. Ancient Tibetan bridle components, strung together by the finder

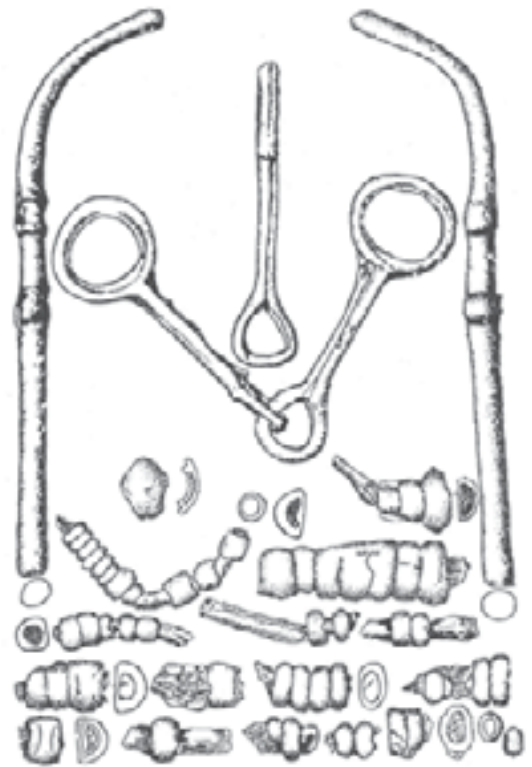


Fig. 383. Altaian Scythian bridle components (after Kiryushin 2003 et al., p. 201, fig. 33)

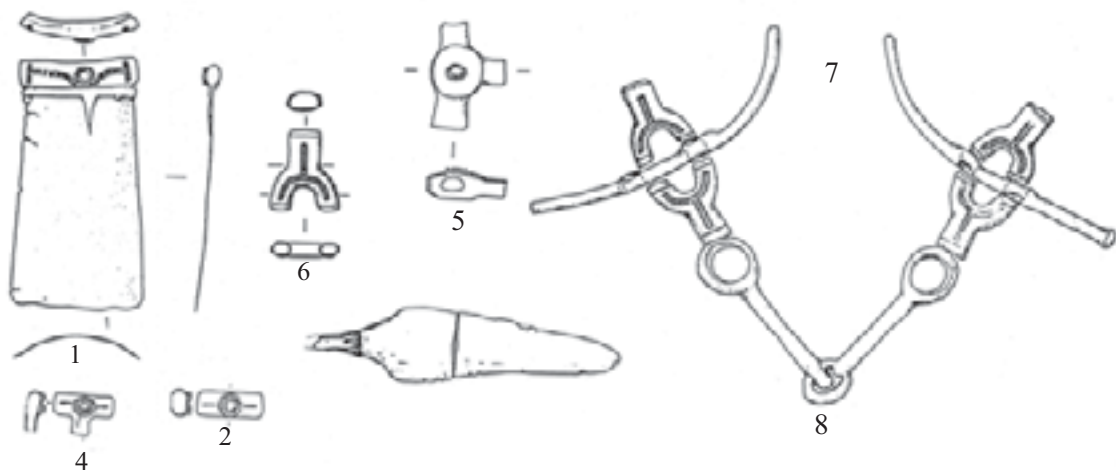


Fig. 382. Various components of the Tibetan bridle, and a spearhead obtained in the same purchase. Groupings 3 and 9 are not illustrated here

- 7) Two copper curved cheekpieces, approximately 15 cm in length, with two holes for attachment to the Y-shaped joints.
- 8) A copper two-piece bit, approximately 9 cm in length. Each part consists of two terminal rings of different size connected by a bar. The two pieces of the bit are interconnected through the set of smaller terminal rings.
- 9) A small copper alloy tube with no embellishments.

In consultation with Russian archaeologists at the State Hermitage Museum and Institute of History of Material Culture (Saint Petersburg), I have ascertained that the Nag-chu bridle is comparable to the Arzhan and Pazyryk types in terms of its technological and stylistic development. As the terminal rings of the Nag-chu specimen are not broadened, using Inner Asian Scythian typology it would be dated to the end of the seventh century BCE.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, a gold coverlid for a bridle cord recovered in the Arzhan I barrow exhibits a double circle relief design similar to the bosses found on the Nag-chu bridle, further strengthening the design affinities between the two classes of bridles. It must be pointed out that it is not likely the Nag-chu bridle was an import from a Scythic culture, for it exhibits a number of unique morphological features not found in bridles to the north. The large twin ornamental plates have no known counterpart in the Scythic world, and the various bridle joints and coverlids of the Nag-chu bridle are highly distinctive and representative of a class of bridles unknown in other regions of Inner Asia (fig. 383).⁷⁰² The Nag-chu bridle has not yet undergone metallurgical analysis but, given the apparent scarcity of tin in Tibet and the color and cast of the metal, the copper alloy components may not be made of a true bronze.⁷⁰³ The sheer technological sophistication of the Nag-chu bridle could signify that it was manufactured at a later date. Despite the technical and design compatibility with Scythian bridles, the typological evolution of bits in Tibet is far from clear; therefore, establishing a periodization using this criterion alone could prove unwarranted. With so little archaeological data to go on, we must consider the possibility that the Nag-chu bridle betokens a design anachronism that was propagated by the Tibetans centuries after the demise of the Scythic cultures. Nevertheless, this sidesteps the question of where such a bridle was made in the first place. While the general conceptual and manufacture characteristics of the Nag-chu bridle are those of Iron Age Inner Asian cultures, its unique traits indicate a Tibet provenance. Given the place of its purported discovery, manufacture in Upper Tibet is suggested. We do know that the bridles of the various Turkic groups of the middle of the first millennium CE are much more rudimentary in design than the Tibetan and Scythic specimens under analysis. It is not yet known, however, whether such elaborate bridles were manufactured in imperial Tibet.

The discovery of just one undated bridle in Tibet without a firm provenance cannot furnish us with definite indications about the emergence of a Tibetan horse riding culture in the Iron Age and the concomitant appearance of the *do-ma* ritual. There is, nonetheless, another shred of archaeological

⁷⁰¹ For a technical discussion of this typology, see Bokovenko 2000. The opinion of Feng Hao recorded in Wangdu (2005: 209 (n. 6)), has it that the Nag-chu bridle is a Tibetan artifact comparable with Chinese bridles of the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States (475–221 BCE) periods.

⁷⁰² For examples of Inner Asian Scythian bridles comparable with the Nag-chu specimen and its serried bronze coverlids, see Bokovenko 2000, p. 309, fig. 3; Kiryushin 2003 *et al.*, p. 201 (fig. 33). The bronze coverlids of these Scythic examples are generally spherical or ellipsoidal in shape and often unornamented. Also, compare the Nag-chu bit and cheekpieces with three photos in Rudenko 1960, tab. xxiii.

⁷⁰³ Metallurgical analyses of Tibetan Buddhist statuary and ritual objects have shown that most copper alloys (*li*) made in Tibet in the historic period contain significant quantities of zinc and only trace amounts of tin (Craddock 1981; Lo Bue 1981; Schroeder 1981: 49–53). Objects of the heterogenous class of artifacts known as *thog-lcags*, however, can contain appreciable quantities of tin (John 2006: 216–226).

evidence that encourages us to seek the source of the myths and rites of the *do-ma* ritual in the early Iron Age context.⁷⁰⁴ This has to do with the erection of models of ungulate horns, and avian features on the heads of horses, which were used in Inner Asian Scythian funerary rites. This custom is well attested in the Pazyryk phase of burials in the middle third of the first millennium BCE.⁷⁰⁵ Until it re-emerges in the literary world of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, I have not located reference to this distinctive burial tradition in subsequent cultures (Tashtyk, Hun, Turk). If indeed there is no demonstrable historico-cultural line of transmission from the Scythic cultures to the imperial period Tibetans through intermediate groups, an Iron Age attribution for the Tibetan tradition of *do-ma* is certainly indicated. The implication of such a historical backdrop is that Tibet preserved Iron Age animal transport rituals for the deceased, continuing their practice in funerals until the imperial period. This would have entailed a chain of ritual activity for over a millennium in which core features of the funerary tradition remained intact, presupposing far-ranging eschatological and procedural continuity in one or more regions of the Plateau.

As a prelude to comparative analysis, let us investigate the Sayano-Altai Scythian tradition of funerary horses. Almost all of these Scythian *kurgans* contain horse burials, which is indicative of the ritual importance of this animal species. Of particular interest to us is the manner in which these horses were outfitted, which included the use of facsimiles of horns placed on the poll, and special treatment of the mane and tail. One of the best-preserved pairs of headdresses for horses was discovered in kurgan I at Pazyryk (fig. 384).⁷⁰⁶ They are made of a felt-like material with leather coverings. The masks consist of a thick leather layer that was sewn and a thin layer of leather that was glued. One headdress is surmounted by thick leather stag horns that are nearly life-size. At the end of the tines, tufts of horse hair dyed red were attached. The second mask is also from kurgan I and of the same shape. On top of its head, between the horns, is a struggle scene involving a horned griffin and a tiger.⁷⁰⁷ Another mask with stag horns for a horse's head and a mane cover made of leather was discovered in kurgan V. The mask consists of a thick leather

⁷⁰⁴ The role of horses in the funerary observances of the Eurasian steppes can ultimately be traced to their domestication in the late fourth millennium to early third millennium BCE. This is indicated by the ritual burial of horse heads and legs as well as horse images in art. See Kuzmina 1998, pp. 82, 83.

⁷⁰⁵ The use of such horns persisted in Inner Asia until the late Scythian period. In 1998, the remains of 13 frozen horses were discovered in kurgan II at the Berel site in eastern Kazakhstan (Altai). One of these horses (sacrificed between circa 330 and 270 BCE) wore a pair of wooden horns modeled on those of the ibex. From this discovery it is hypothesized that the Scythians may have believed their dead were conveyed to the afterlife on those of the back of wild ungulates. Zoomorphic depictions on wooden bands decorating the horses included those of a cervid, griffin, sheep, and horned lion. See Samashev and Francfort 2002. As we have seen, all of these types of animals are represented in Tibetan archaic funerary rituals (if we allow the *khyung* to take the place of the griffin). At the Scythic Tuketa site in the Altai, two sets of large wooden horns, which may have been assembled on horses interred in a *kurgan*, were also discovered (Jacobson 1993: 58, 59, after Rudenko 1960).

⁷⁰⁶ For a description of these headdresses, see Rudenko 1953, pp. 214–219; for photographs, *ibid.*, pl. LXXI, fig. 1 (horse mask with deer horns), no. 2 (horned griffin mask). All of the Pazyryk headdresses under discussion are exhibited at the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. Images of them and other artifacts from Pazyryk have been posted on the worldwide web. See State Hermitage Museum. Artistic reconstructions of the kurgan I headdresses and horses are found in Rolle 1989, pls. 3, 4.

⁷⁰⁷ These combat scenes are variously interpreted as depicting the struggle between good and evil or life and death. They have also been seen to be totemic representations of rival social and tribal factions. Using Indo-Iranian mythology as a tool of analysis, it has also been put forward that combat scenes symbolize the reappearance of heliacal constellations associated with spring, the triumph of light over darkness, and fertility over infertility (Kuzmina 2002, 156, 157). From a Tibetan funerary perspective, we might speculate that such animal fighting motifs represent the epic battle between the demons of death (tiger) and the divine allies of the deceased (griffin) for the soul of the deceased.



Fig. 384. Funerary horse ritual objects from Pazyryk (kurgan I), State Hermitage Museum

inner layer with an outer layer of well-tanned thin leather that was dyed red.⁷⁰⁸ There are holes for the horse's eyes and nostrils, and ear coverings sewn to the mask. Otherwise, the headdress covered the entire head of the horse except for an opening around the mouth. On top of the mask is a wooden deer head with leather horns and ears. It was attached to the headdress with thongs. According to Rudenko (1953: 226, 227), these headdresses for horses were probably used in funeral processions. He observes that they must have had a special ceremonial function, because only certain horses in the interments have them.⁷⁰⁹ Rudenko also notes that they appear to have been used quite heavily, as they have various breakages. For him these indications of heavy wear seem to show that they were not used just in funerals.⁷¹⁰ Rudenko adds that the Assyrians of the same period had headdresses for horses, but these were different in form and there is no obvious connection between them. In addition to the horse masks, special leather coverlets were used to constrain the tail and mane of the funerary horses (*ibid.*: 220, 227). Funerary horses in Pazyryk are also found with knotted tails (Konstantinov and Tsybiktarov 2002: 91) and carefully trimmed manes (Bokovenko 2000: 305).

It is widely agreed by archaeologists that the funerary horses of the Scythians were envisioned as flying creatures and solar symbols with manifold Indo-European mythic counterparts. Bird

⁷⁰⁸ See Rudenko 1953, pl. LXXII, no. 4. In the same work there are a number of other photographs of funerary horse decorations from Pazyryk that are of special interest to us. Pl. LXXII, fig. 3 depicts a deer head of wood with leather horns. It is part of a horse mask recovered from kurgan V. Pl. LXXII, fig. 5 shows a horse mask in the form of a billy goat from kurgan II. Two mane covers made of leather and felt are illustrated on p. 220, fig. 135. For photographs of two leather tail coverings, see p. 227, fig. 140.

⁷⁰⁹ K. A. Chugunov, an archaeologist at the State Hermitage Museum, reports (in personal communication) that DNA analysis of the Arzhan horses and the fact that they have different types of harnesses in the barrows (ninth to eighth century BCE) suggests that they came from different regions, and were brought to the burials as tribute from different tribal groupings. The 'king' buried in Arzhan appears to have been the deified head of a tribal confederation. Bokovenko (2000: 305) likewise believes that the ten horses interred in kurgan I at Pazyryk, which have various markings on their ears, probably represent different patterns of ownership that were tied to subordinate patriarchs, who presented them as gifts to the dead chieftain.

⁷¹⁰ According to Jacobson (1993: 36), despite the wear found on some of the Pazyryk bridle components, their delicacy indicates that they could not have endured regular usage.

and griffin representations placed on the top of horse masks and on *psalia* are common in Inner Asian Scythian burials.⁷¹¹ Mythological comparisons between the horse and the bird have been widespread and persistent in Eurasia, and the winged horse is an archetype in Indo-European languages as well (Semenov 2001: 179). Flying horse iconography was common to the Sakians, Central Asians, Iranians, Medians, Khets, and Greeks (*ibid.*: 181). Kuzmina (1977; 2002) places the flying horse of Scythians squarely in an Indo-Iranian mythological context, citing Avestan, Rgvedic and Narts epic literature. Kuzmina (2002: 155) maintains that the ritual dressing of the Scythian horse as a stag can be traced to the *Rgveda* and the sacrifice of a horse with golden antlers. This is contradicted by Francfort (1999: 308, 314, 315), however, who contends that the horse masks of Pazyryk, Altaian figurines of horned horses, and petroglyphs interpreted as horned horses in Kazakhstan and the Altai do not well suit Indo-Aryan theoretical interpretations, but may be attributable to a ‘shamanistic substrate’.⁷¹² Francfort’s hypothesis best fits the evident links shared by the funerary horses of the Tibetans and Scythians. The so-called substrate he posits emerges as a common Inner Asian Iron Age cultural bequest of considerable ritual and material sophistication. Francfort (1999: 314, 315) and Fialko (2003: 169, 170) hold that funerary horses were used by the Scythians to transport the dead to the otherworld. Fialko theorizes that, once sacrificed, these horses were thought of as making their way with the dead to the hereafter.⁷¹³ Similarly, Nesterov (1990: 53, 71) observes that the funerary horses of the ancient Turks may have functioned to transport the deceased to the otherworld and to serve him there. Nesterov surmises that these horses were killed in the belief that this would prevent the deceased from returning to the world of the living.

While we cannot determine from Tibetan literary evidence whether the *do-ma* was sacrificed,⁷¹⁴ we have established that it functioned to transport the deceased across the land of the *gshin* demons, thereby insuring his deliverance to the celestial hereafter. Presupposing a prehistoric origin for this mythology, it buttresses the arguments that the funerary horses of the Scythians and Turks also served as transport vehicles for the dead. The most remarkable parallel between the Altaian Scythians and the Tibetans is the use of horned headgear on their funerary horses. The archaeological record and Tibetan texts attest to the significance of this custom in the Scythic and Bodic contexts, respectively. The correspondences between the Altaian archaeological record

⁷¹¹ For illustrated examples of this type of ornithomorphous imagery, see Rudenko 1953, pl. LXXII, figs. 1, 2 (two wooden bird heads); Samashev and Mylnikov 2004, pp. 26–29 (from Scythian barrow XI of the Berel burial ground in the Kazakh Altai: wooden *psalion* with horned griffin motif); Polosmak 2001, pp. 78, 79 (Ukok burial site in Altai, horned griffin *psalion* made of wood), p. 88, figs. 65, 89 (horned griffin made of wood, part of horse harness decorations from Ak-Alaha V burial site in the Altai). It appears that a crested eagle fashioned from painted leather adorned one of the headdresses found at Pazyryk (Jacobson 1993: 68, after Gryaznov 1950). In a *kurgan* of Kosh-Pei, in Tuva, a gold plaque in the Scythian animal style (7 cm x 4 cm) depicts a winged horse with its legs folded under its body. A winged and horned horse of a similar type was found in Tuva necropolis Aymyrlyg 31. Ovyur 3 (a Tuvan petroglyphic site) depicts horned and winged animals that may be horses. See Semenov 2001, p. 181. A photograph of the Kosh-Pei horse appears in Kilunovskaya and Semenov 1995, fig. 49. Kubarev (1981: 93) writes that winged horses are encountered in the petroglyphs of Minusinsk, Central Asia and the Altai.

⁷¹² Francfort (1999: 314, 315) notes that horns are symbols of power and rebirth for the shamanistic peoples of Eurasia and the Americas. Similarly, Jacobson (1987: 2) adheres to the premise that ancient Siberian rather than Indo-European belief systems underpinned Scytho-Siberian symbolism.

⁷¹³ Kuzmina (2003: 63, 64) likens the funerary horse sacrifices of the Inner Asian Scythians to the offering of horses at royal funerals by the ancient Iranians and Vedic Aryans. In the *Rgveda*, the horse acts as a mediator between the world of humans and the world of the deities. The horse was supplicated in order that it would bring the dead to the heaven of Varuṇa and then on to the ancestral paradise, a place of eternal meadows and pastures.

⁷¹⁴ Tibetan horse sacrifices, however, are known from the archaeological record. For example, in sNe-gdong county two sacrificial horse pits were discovered near a tomb in 1984 (Chu Junjie 1991: 140). Also, see p. 114, fn. 117.

and Tibetan literary sources are indicative of funerary cultures interrelated through antecedent (possibly derived from a wellspring of early Indo-European and/or Indo-Iranian traditions) and/or direct transferral (through contacts between the respective groups) phenomena. In both the Altaian Scythian and Tibetan traditions, the funerary horses are ornamented with horns mounted on the head (stag and griffin horns versus the ‘bird horns’ of the Tibetans), bridles and saddles. Moreover, the manes and tails of both types of funerary horses were singled out for special treatment. The horned lion or griffin also figures in the Inner Asian funerary traditions of both civilizations. Called the *dor-mu* in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, it is one of several types of horned animals mentioned in a ritual for destroying evil forces that attempt to harm the deceased (see pp. 443–447).⁷¹⁵

Whatever the precise ethnohistorical mechanisms that account for the caparisoning of funerary horses in a similar manner (as well as cognate funerary monuments), it is evident that the Tibetan cultural variant was active no less than 1200 years after the Pazyryk burials. This appears to be a stunning example of a cultural activity that survived in the Tibetan environment long after it perished in the Eurasian steppes. As we have seen, this same long-term cultural perdurability from the Iron Age onwards appears to be represented in the ancient tombs and residences of Upper Tibet. For example, animal bones and artifacts recovered from Dung-dkar Phyi-dbang burials (probably dating to the second half of the first millennium BCE) are also correlative to the archaic funerary traditions of the Tibetan literary record (see pp. 114, 115).

Tibetan literary references to the *do-ma* rites and other funerary traditions may prove to have powerful ramifications for the assessment of Inner Asian Scythian funerary evidence. In order to open the way to further discussion, I will propose areas in which the respective funerary horse practices may have ideologically resembled one another. Using the Tibetan *do-ma* tradition as a touchstone, the following types of hypotheses can be formulated regarding the Scythian horse burials:

- 1) These horses were sacral figures and magical vehicles that were used to deliver the deceased to a celestial afterlife.
- 2) The afterlife was primarily conceived of as having physical qualities and living conditions like those found on earth. This empyreal paradise was the domain of the ancestors or manes, which were introduced to the deceased by the transport horses.
- 3) The journey between life and death was fraught with perils and was conceived of using geographic metaphors such as rivers and mountains.
- 4) The funerary transport horses were given to the deceased by his relatives and associates as a special gift that would see him through to salvation.
- 5) The erection of horns, the placement of saddles and bridles, and the manipulation of the tails and mane all functioned as various kinds of apotropaic instruments to surmount demonic obstacles the deceased would encounter on his way to the afterlife.
- 6) The proclamation of the mythic origins of the funerary transport horses formed a key part of the burial rites. The source of these horses was traced back to a primordial or celestial sphere.

⁷¹⁵ Francfort (2003: 206, 207) considers the horned lion, a figurative element in the horse trappings of Pazyryk burials, as reproducing the Achaemenid horned lion motif.

- 7) The funerary rituals concerning the heavenly transport horses were carried out by a special class of priests analogous to the *'dur-gshen* who themselves may have worn horned headdresses.⁷¹⁶

There are other parallels between the funerary traditions of the Scythians and the ancient Tibetans. Much of the material regarding Scythian abstract culture that I present below remains hypothetical but, as we shall see, comparison with the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition may shed some new light. Systematic Indo-European and Indo-Iranian mythological studies, applied to iconic and semantic forms of data, have emerged as a preferred methodological tool for interpreting Scythian archaeological evidence. The many likenesses shared by the Scythic and Tibetan funerary traditions, however, may demand some revision of the interpretive tools currently being developed by steppe archaeologists. This is an exceedingly complex topic demanding specialized study beyond the bounds of the current work, so I will limit myself here to citing the well-known fact that the Inner Asian Scythian cultures straddled the great ethnic divide between the Europoid and Mongoloid peoples. As shown in Part I, in the formative period of their ethnic and cultural development Tibetans may have both absorbed Indo-European traits and circulated aspects of their heritage beyond the Plateau. Until more detailed information on the nature of burial in Tibet (particularly in the uplands) is available, we will not be able to judge the full extent of the cultural interplay between Inner Asian Scythian and Tibetan burial traditions.

In addition to the horned horses of Tibetan and Altaian Scythian funerary traditions, the presence of other cognate customs and practices in prehistoric north Inner Asian cultures raises the question of where these originated. Material aspects of the *do-ma* tradition, ritual reconstruction of the corpse, the use of soul effigies, apotropaic rites, and the belief in a posthumous intermediate state, all of which are found in Tibet and other Inner Asian cultures, encourage us to consider carefully the geographic breadth and chronological depth of these funerary customs. Both individually and as a composite, these various facets of ancient Inner Asian culture reinforce a prehistoric antiquity for the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition.

Ancient north Inner Asian burial rites, like those of the Tibetans, were highly complex with diverse ritual activities. It is theorized that the Altaian Scythians widely believed the dead posed a risk to the living, and that their burial rites were primarily designed to obviate this danger (Konstantinov and Tsybiktarov 2002: 88, 89). Likewise, the Tibetan funerary rites had two main functions: 1) to protect the living from the dead, and 2) aid the deceased in the passage to the next world. It is thought that before *kurgans* could be built, the burial site was demarcated for protective purposes, as the first step in the creation of the burial structure; this perimeter was then transformed into a stone enclosure (*ibid.*: 88). From the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur we know that the funeral venue

⁷¹⁶ As is well known, Tibetan Bon and popular culture is permeated with a cosmological belief in a trichotomous universe (*srid-pa gsum*). The three tiers of Tibetan existence include the upper world (*steng*), middle world (*bar*) and lower world (*'og*). Although this arrangement is not explicitly mentioned in the Tibetan funerary tradition, there is reference to the great funerary god Ye-yod dbang-chen having power over the beings of the three cosmic domains: the *lha*, *'dre* and humans (see p. 445, para. v). An analogous system of reckoning the cosmos, prevalent in the cultures of north Inner Asia, has been used by archaeologists to postulate a similar system in the mortuary customs of the Scythians. The belief in a tripartite universe is thought to have been incorporated in the deceased's clothing. Headgear (often with eagles and winged horses) symbolized the upper world. Garments of the torso (often decorated with images of panthers) were symbols of the middle world. Presumably boots, ornamented with foil stripes, were lower-world representations. See Konstantinov and Tsybiktarov 2002, p. 89. The same claim has been made for horsegear found in the interments. It is hypothesized that the iconography of the decorated horse reflected the tripartite division of the cosmos: upper world – stag horns, masks and bird ornaments; terrestrial world – pommel, saddle, and saddle mat (often shows ungulates being attacked by felines); and lower world – fish hanging from the saddle. See Bokovenko 2000, p. 305.

had to be ritually designated and borrowed from the various chthonic spirits. The use of the epithet 'square' (*gru-bzhi*) in the *Klu 'bum nag po* and Dunhuang manuscripts suggests a demarcation of the burial site as well.

Kilunovskaya (2001: 131) notes that the old Siberian belief in a soul double (*sur* or *tul*), one part of which survives to give birth to a new man, might possibly explain the appearance of effigies of the dead in the form of masks, dolls, stone sculptures, and wooden pillars in Scythian burials. Semenov (1994: 135, 136) believes that a ritual twin (effigy) symbolically replaced the dead person in Scytho-Siberian interments, and that in cremations this could be the temporary abode of soul of the deceased. Kubarev (1984: 78) reports that special stones were deposited in ritual enclosures at Turk cemeteries (fifth to seventh century CE), the most precious of which were white in color. Kubarev (*ibid.*: 80) speculates that these stones might have been thought to contain the deceased's soul, a belief that has a parallel in more recent Turkic shamanism. Vadetskaya (1999: 22) reports that human effigies of wood, papier-mâché and other soft materials around 1 m in height are found in Tashtyk culture tombs (first century BCE to seventh century CE). She adds that some tombs contain only effigies but most have effigies and human remains (*ibid.*: 49). Vadetskaya (*ibid.*: 185, 186) hypothesizes that these effigies, which appear to be the likenesses of the dead, were made to accompany the dead to the next world.⁷¹⁷ Additionally, wooden tablets

⁷¹⁷ Vadetskaya (1999: 185, 186) relates these effigies to the custom of funerary chaperons prevalent in China, and comments that this may explain the origin of the Tashtyk effigies. These Chinese temple guardian creatures of antiquity are called *zhenmushou*. In the Sui and T'ang periods they were fierce composite creatures set up in pairs in upper class tombs, along with other figures. These wrathful guardians were thought to frighten away evil spirits and were assembled in the tomb for that purpose. The statues were believed to accompany the occupant into the afterlife. One illustrated specimen has deer-like horns and a crest on top of its ferocious head. See Baker 1996, pp. 50–54; Linrothe and Watt, p. 211, cat. no. 48. It is theorized that the *zhenmushou* may be representations of earth spirits (Fong 1991: 86, 87). Likewise, in some Han dynasty tombs, grotesque figures with prominent antlers and elongated tongues, sometimes holding snakes, are encountered. They were also thought to be protective objects that prevented evil influences from entering the tombs. Additionally, in Han burials, sheep and goat heads were used for good luck. According to Han beliefs, at the time of death the body separated from two non-corporeal elements known as *p'o* (which animated the body) and *hun* (which thought and experienced). When properly assisted, it was the *hun* that made its way to the afterlife. These two components remain a part of Chinese folk tradition to the present day. See Loewe 1986, pp. 718, 719, 723. The conception of a dualistic soul arose in China before the middle of the sixth century BCE and reached a definitive state of development by the second century BCE. It appears that according to Han beliefs, while the *hun* went to heaven, the *p'o* was destined for the underworld. Moreover, it appears that the souls of the dead did not persist indefinitely but gradually dissolved into the primal *ch'i*, losing their individual identities. See Ying-Shih Yu 1987, pp. 370, 374, 375, 379, 380, 385, 386. The parallel between the bipartite Chinese *p'o* and *hun* and the Tibetan *bla* and *yid* or *bka'* and *thugs* is self-evident. I am inclined to see this common eschatological motif as reflecting highly remote ethnohistorical links between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples. These should be seen in the context of the widespread diffusion of Sino-Tibetan languages across eastern Asia since deep antiquity. The Chinese eschatological tradition founded on the fundamental separation of the two souls at death, their placement in a *yin-yang* cosmological framework, and their eventual extinguishment seem to indicate that there was no direct transfer of soul beliefs between the Han dynastic Chinese and the prehistoric Tibetans. In 2002, the Chinese archaeologist Xu Xinguo discovered painted coffin panels in a tomb at the Guolimu site, in the Dulan region of Qinghai. It is thought that the male and female buried in this rectangular pit grave were members of the Tibetan-Tuyuhun royalty, and date to the T'ang dynasty (618–907 CE) or somewhat earlier. Among the motifs on the coffin panels are four divine beasts likened to Chinese guardians of the cardinal directions known as *sishen*. They are, however, arrayed only at the head and foot of the coffin, and not in the compass points typical of Chinese tradition. On the basis of the floral borders surrounding the four funerary beasts, Xu Xinguo attributes this manner of alignment to 'more western influences'. See China Heritage Project, 2005. The creatures on the coffin panels include dragon, bird and tiger, sacred animals represented in the exorcistic rituals of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. Given the probable ethnicity of the tomb occupants, the choice of animals and the style of the floral decorations, eschatological interconnections to the archaic Tibetan funerary tradition are strongly suggested.

are regularly found in Tashtyk crypts (this form of burial began in the fifth century CE). These tablets are mostly broken, are generally from 45 cm to 60 cm in length (maximum: 1.1 m), and are carved with three main motifs: animals, battle scenes and war booty (*ibid.*: 87, 109–113). As we know, the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition is replete with effigies and other objects used to contain the soul/mind of the deceased. Moreover, these consciousness principles come in pairs: *yid* and *bla*, *bka'* and *thugs*. The Tibetan texts also tell us that the soul receptacles come in the form of stones (*bla-rdo*), tablets (*byang-bu*), pillars (*rdo-ring*), and effigies (*zhal*). The variety of Tibetan supports in the literary tradition reflects the broad range of funerary objects discovered in other regions and cultures of Inner Asia. The production of effigies in Inner Asia exhibits an unbroken chronological progression from the Scythians to the Tashtyk and Turk cultures, the last of which were contemporaneous with the imperial period Tibetans. These material and historical factors bespeak more than superficial similarities between the Tibetan effigies and those of the north. If explicit functional connections are actually indicated, it would demonstrate that at least some of the Inner Asian Scythian, Tashtyk and Turk effigies were used to enshrine the souls of the dead during evocation rites. In Tibet, the rituals to call the soul were designed to expedite the journey of the deceased to the afterlife. The breakage of tablets and effigies deposited in tombs finds resonance in the old Tibetan practice of destroying or dismantling the soul supports (*bla-rtan*) once they had served their purpose.⁷¹⁸ Kubarev (1984: 75) reports that, in or near Turk ritual enclosures, fires were made for purification rites and to burn clothing belonging to the deceased. Again, from a Tibetan angle, we might conclude that these articles of clothing were used by virtue of their scent, to attract the deceased to his funeral, and were burnt with his passing to the next world.

A curious discovery from an Altaian Scythian *kurgan* is a woolen cloth fragment with an appliqué conjoined sun and moon (Rudenko 1960, pl. CXIX). The yellow conjoined sun and moon symbol is on a red ground. It is of the same design and typical color scheme as the Tibetan *nyi-zla*, in which a solar disc is cradled in a crescent moon. The function of this Inner Asian Scythian attribute is not known with any assurance, but it is clear that it was seen fit for inclusion in a burial. Aside from their well-known connotations in tantra, the sun and moon appear in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur in association with the *lha*- and *gsas*-attracting capabilities of the horned headgear of the funeral (see p.).

According to the contemporaneous account of Herodotus among the Scythians the next of kin held banquets in which the deceased was offered a portion of all that was set out for a period of 40 days.⁷¹⁹ During these intermediate 40 days (burial took place afterwards), the deceased took a voyage to the other world (in the prevailing Tibetan funerary traditions, the intermediate state lasts for a period of 49 days). Herodotus recounted that this voyage only could be made in winter, or if the body was embalmed. The deceased traveled to the world of the ancestors, which was considered to be a voyage to the sun and union with the solar deities. The analogies with the Tibetan archaic funerary system are self-evident: a period of existence between life and death and reunion

⁷¹⁸ Similar funerary ritual receptacles for the soul were also known in ancient China. From pre-Han times, the Chinese had wooden soul tablets called *zhong*, which were set up near the coffin during the time of mourning, as the temporary resting place of the deceased. These tablets were inscribed with the name and rank of the deceased. Subsequently, more permanent soul tablets, called *shenzhu*, came to be displayed on the ancestral family altar. In the Han and Warring States periods cloth funerary banners, called *mingjing*, marked the *hun* soul of the departed. Used in the entombment of those of high status, the *mingjing* bore the name and rank of the deceased and were suspended on bamboo poles. They were used throughout the funeral before being buried with the coffin. See Wong 2004, p. 29; Ying-Shih Yu 1987, p. 369. Funerary ritual flags are also noted in the Dunhuang manuscripts (see pp.).

⁷¹⁹ For this summary of Herodotus' writings, I have relied on Rawlinson 1942, p. 252; Bessonova 1983, pp. 61, 62.

with one's ancestors in the world beyond. Although direct historico-cultural links between these concepts cannot be confirmed with the evidence at hand, Herodotus's account does establish a 2500-year-old precedent for a prominent aspect of Tibetan thanatology. Semenov (1994: 135, 136) contends that the ancient noblemen of Sayano-Altai were mainly buried in autumn, as determined by an analysis of their *kurgans*. He also hypothesizes that the Scythian new year began in autumn (*ibid.*: 136). An autumn-winter annual divide in conjunction with burial rites is the subject of a special proscription in PT. 1042 (see p. 488, fn. 440). While the diffusive agents that account for these manifold philosophical and ritual affinities to Tibetan tradition remain highly obscure, we may well be dealing with interrelated features of a pan-Inner Asian funerary heritage. These are most likely to have arisen as the product of Iron Age associations (trade, war, pilgrimage, etc.) and/or deeply submerged paleocultural factors.⁷²⁰

As we know, in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur head tree junipers were ritually erected during the reclamation and guidance of the deceased's consciousness principles. Evergreen trees were also used in the funerary rites of the ancient Turks, and functional correspondences with Tibetan practices may be indicated. These possible cultural interconnections dovetail with parallels in the morphology and spatial orientation of Turk and Upper Tibetan slab-wall enclosures and standing stones. In the eastern Altai, coniferous tree trunks and roots (up to 50 cm in diameter) are found in some of the Turk funerary ritual enclosures.⁷²¹ It is thought that these trees were erected as cult instruments reflective of the world tree (this is precisely the function of the juniper tree in the soul calling ritual of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, see p. 421, paras. xi, xii). It is also hypothesized that the trees may have been the last resting place of the deceased Turks in the funeral and were possibly used to provide ritual guidance. These trees appear to have been erected only temporarily. Horse bones are found in the vicinity (mostly phalanges, mandibles and teeth) and this could indicate that the trees figured in Turk horse sacrifices.

One more aspect of recorded Tibetan funerary culture deserves attention from an archaeological perspective: the ritual reconstruction of the corpse. In one mythic precedent in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, these restorative rites were so successful that a reanimation of the corpse took place (see p. 399). In the *T'ung tien* completed in 801 by Tu Yu, there is a description of the funeral of a Yang-t'ung (Zhang-zhung) chief.⁷²² His organs were replaced by precious materials such as gold, jade and pearls. A nose of gold and teeth of silver were also made for him. Chinese sources such as the Sui Annals mention that the corpse of the queen of the Nü-kuo (Sum-pa?), and others of rank, was dismembered and deposited in metal vessels (Haarh 1969: 347, 348). Ritual dismemberment may also have been practiced in Tibetan royal burials, and in those of Upper Tibet entailing the use of mountaintop depositories. Likewise, there is some evidence to indicate that ritual dismemberment was carried out by the Inner Asian Scythians, and parts of the body were buried in different areas of the *kurgans* (Konstantinov and Tsybiktarov 2002: p. 88). In Pazyryk, mummification was the norm

⁷²⁰ What then are the ultimate origins of this broad range of funerary traditions? At this juncture, there is little way of knowing. Nevertheless, for the sake of stimulating further discussion, I propose that at least some of the funerary phenomena we have been examining are rooted in Stone Age cultural traditions. I put forward that reliance on funerary transport livestock was related to a Neolithic usage of wild ungulates (deer, onagers, wild yaks, etc.) for the same purposes. I also speculate that the taming (the probable precursor to domestication) of animals such as cattle, horses and deer may have occurred across Inner Asia, not so much out of economic necessity as with the motive of better conveying the consciousness principles of the dead to the hereafter.

⁷²¹ The account of Turk funerary practices in this paragraph is from Kubarev 1984, p. 70.

⁷²² This T'ang account of Zhang-zhung mortuary customs comes from Bushell 1880, p. 527 (n. 9); Haarh 1969, pp. 345, 347; Chu Jinjie 1991, pp. 133.

and missing parts of the body were replaced with artificial parts (*ibid.*: 88). In the Tagar culture burials of the Minusinsk basin, all soft tissues were removed and replaced with artificial materials, possibly to transport the deceased from the world to the realm of cultural icons, thus rendering him innocuous (*ibid.*: 88, 89). According to Kuzmin and Varlamov (1988: 146–148), in these Tagar culture burials (seventh to fourth century BCE) soft tissues were replaced with artificial materials such as clay, grass and wood, which must have had a protective function. In the Tashtyk culture, the complex preparation of the corpse entailed mummification and the use of substitute parts made of clay and plaster (Vadetskaya 1999: 154–160). The extent of corpse refurbishment and remodeling in the Tibetan archaic mortuary traditions remains to be ascertained.

9.3 The Geographic and Chronological Scope of Tibetan Funerary Traditions from an Ethnographic Perspective

Besides the archaeological record of Inner Asia, today's cultures of Siberia, the Himalaya and other neighboring locations provide rich sources of comparative materials through which historical and ritual aspects of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition can be analyzed. I believe that, while these broad commonalities in funerary customs and practices throughout the Himalaya and Inner Asia may in certain cases be coincidental, their widespread and persistent distribution suggests that there are intercultural links. The nature of this cultural and/or ethnical causality is hardly determinable, as most agents of acculturation have disappeared or are no longer recognizable with the passage of time. Provisionally, these links can be attributed to the movements of humanity and ideas across the greater region, beginning no later than the Iron Age. The manner in which common funerary themes have embedded themselves in the substrate of so many disparate cultures is not easily explained without presupposing longstanding integrative historico-cultural processes at work.

One might even posit links that are much more remote in time and place to explain similarities in the funerary traditions of Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet, and the Himalaya. While I do not disregard the viewpoint that early Indo-European mythology and civilization may have played a formative role in the development of the Tibetan funerary tradition and other aspects of Plateau civilization, it is not my intention here to initiate a cross-cultural mythological study drawing far and wide from across Eurasia. My aim in making comparisons between the Tibetan funerary tradition and ethnographic phenomena from nearby regions is to clarify the immediate geographic and operative scope of what appear to be common linkages. I contend that at least some of the parallels existing in the different funerary traditions can be attributed to a complex array of interrelated ethnohistorical processes. These were not merely a matter of give and take that can be graphed in a linear fashion over time and space, but a whirlpool of dynamic factors that ebbed and flowed throughout the course of history. Therefore, I do not think it wise to posit a single wellspring of ancient funerary tradition, be it Tibet or any other part of Inner Asia. Nor do I believe analogues in tradition to be necessarily interrelated and directly attributable to another culture. It may be permissible to speak of major centers of diffusion – Scythic Inner Asia, prehistoric and early historic Tibet among them – which influenced the funerary development of adjoining regions, but not of a one-way avenue of cultural transmission. Other vectors of dissemination from so-called peripheral regions to larger seats of power and culture may also be indicated.

I shall tender an inclusive chronological model (prehistoric, early historic, late historic) of the possible radiation of Tibetan archaic funerary tradition to other cultures and the introduction of foreign mortuary practices to Tibet. According to the quasi-historical references we have examined,

early Bon spread to virtually all adjoining regions (India, Central Asia, China, etc.) in prehistoric times. While there is certainly a mythical overlay to this literature, the spread of Tibetan funerary culture beyond the Plateau during the prehistoric epoch remains a viable scenario. The revolutionary social and technological changes and great migrations of people across Eurasia during the first millennium BCE, and the first few centuries of the first millennium CE, could well have resulted in threads of Tibetan funerary tradition being woven into the fabric of diverse cultures. Foreign cultural infusions into the Tibetan funerary tradition of the prehistoric era may also have transpired. The existence of cognate funerary monuments in Upper Tibet and other regions of Inner Asia supports such a diffusion of funerary culture. The Dunhuang documents establish that, during the imperium, a coherent and sophisticated Tibetan funerary tradition already existed, one that had connections to its neighbors in the north and northwest. Clearly the exercise of imperial period military might in contiguous territories acted as an impetus on the movement of populations, intensive social interaction and the circulation of ideas. This is the period in which the introduction of Tibetan funerary customs into the Himalaya and Turco-Mongolian Central Asia may have been most vibrant. Likewise, far-reaching imperial Tibet would have been a magnet pulling exogenous cultural elements into the substance of its funerary traditions. In the second millennium CE, with the advance of Lamaism, the transfer of Tibetan funerary culture to the Himalaya, Mongolia and southern Siberia is far better documented. Along with more orthodox Lamaist practices, Bon and Buddhist death rituals are likely to have inadvertently (or otherwise) integrated archaic concepts and practices in regions to which they spread.

The following correlation of Tibetan funerary traditions with those from proximate cultures is designed to provide a cross-section of affinitive characteristics. It is by no means an exhaustive comparative exercise. That would require the launching of specialized study and the systematic examination of historical and anthropological data over a wide geographic purview. A thorough investigative effort would, however, significantly contribute to our understanding of the nature and distribution of cognate funerary traditions in Inner Asia and the Himalaya. The synopsis provided here is merely a prelude to this kind of comprehensive historical and anthropological inquiry. Although limited in scope, even this preliminary comparison of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition with that of contiguous regions demonstrates numerous functional correspondences.

The Turco-Mongolian peoples of southern Siberia and the Altai share funerary leitmotifs that are close to those encountered in Tibet. Many of the customs and practices pertaining to burial traditions, however, died out or waned during Soviet domination, diminishing the amount of data available for comparative study. Nonetheless, the ritual structures surviving in contemporary cultures or in the academic record are sufficient in themselves to speak of a remarkable degree of correspondence between the funerary praxis and eschatological beliefs of Siberia and Tibet. For instance, it has been shown that the two main functions of shamans in Tuvan burial rites are to guide the soul to the otherworld and protect relatives from the harm that emanates from the deceased (Dyakonova 1975: 42). These are the twin pillars of the Tibetan funerary tradition as well.⁷²³ Tuvans believe that the deceased is able to cause the death of others in his family, as well as the demise of cattle (*ibid.*: 42). In the Altai, the soul (*sunezi*) is thought to wander after death and to be potentially dangerous to the living (*ibid.*: 47). Buryat, Yakut and Altaian relatives of the deceased scrupulously observe their funerary rites so as not to provoke harm (Kosarev 2003: 100,

⁷²³ The pervasive belief that the deceased poses a threat to those left behind appears to be related to the general misfortune that causes and/or follows death. Through extreme grief, pernicious contagious diseases and negative circumstances (such as war, strife and famine), the survivors seem to be at greater risk than usual after the loss of one or more of their family members.

101). The deceased as a dangerous force that must be reckoned with and appeased is also part of Tibetan tradition. This appears to have led to the punctilious performance of funeral rituals such as those conscientiously preserved in Bon literature.

Although there are Lamaist influences in the burial rites of Tuva, an early 20th century account says that relatives of the deceased sacrificed a sheep and called for a shaman (Dyakonova 1975: 42). This shaman cooked the mutton and reassured the deceased that he would be well fed and taken care of, and persuaded him of the fact of his passing (*ibid.*: 42). These same themes of sheep sacrifice, convincing the deceased of his demise and meticulous ritual care appear in the Tibetan tradition too. Generally, meat, wine, tea, and grain are given to the deceased in a ritual meal in Tuva (*ibid.*: 42), reflecting the selection of victuals and beverages in the Tibetan tradition. In Tuva, there is a tripartite soul-like entity: breath, mind/thought and the *sunezin* (*ibid.*: 45). In the Tibetan tradition, the consciousness principles are also divided into two or three interrelated parts.⁷²⁴ Among Altaian people there was a belief that the soul of the deceased remained in the world of the living for 40 days before moving to the realm of the dead (*ibid.*: 46). A different term than the word for death was used for this first stage of death, and it was thought that during this intermediate period the dead could communicate with the living through a shaman (*ibid.*: 46). Siberian peoples, as a general theme, hold that passage to the otherworld is fraught with dangers, arduous and long (Kosarev 2003: 98). In order to help the dead on their journey, Buryats, Yakuts, Altaians, and cattle breeders farther north would sacrifice a horse and place it in the grave as transport for the departed one (*ibid.*: 99). This stark division between the postmortem state and the final destination of the dead is entrenched in the Tibetan tradition, and many ritual practices are predicated upon it. As with the Siberian shamans, the *'dur-gshen* are thought to have had the ability to communicate with the dead during the intermediate state. Likewise, the motif of a perilous passage to the next life, the need for animal sacrifices to be carried out and the horse as a magic vehicle also find expression in the Tibetan funerary tradition.

In Tuva, the dead were thought to reside in a parallel existence, still following the pursuits they had in life. During the funeral, objects of the world of the living were offered so that the deceased could use them in the afterlife, which was called 'Northern Edge' (Dyakonova 1975: 43, 44). The southern Altaians believe that the soul (*sune*) leaves the body at death as a vapor and goes to the otherworld, where it is called the *uzü* (*ibid.*: 48). It is thought that if the *sune* was to remain in close proximity to the living it could harm or kill them (*ibid.*: 48). Generally speaking, the shaman must exhort the deceased to make his way to the land of the dead and not to return to the world of the living (Kosarev 2003: 101). The Altaian Telengit dead were guided by a shaman to the land of the dead called Ada-Enezi, where the departed were believed to reside in perpetuity (Dyakonova 1975: 48). The Tuvans call the land of the dead Songkyzyg (Northern Country), while the Kachins and Sagay refer to it as Uzüt-yer (Land of the Dead) (*ibid.*: 49). It is usually underground, but it can also be a place in the north or west, or between heaven and earth in some shamanic cultures (*ibid.*: 49). The Tibetan dGa'-yul is an analogous afterlife situated in the north. In the Tibetan archaic tradition, the deceased is also the recipient of presents that will be symbolically used in the hereafter. As in Siberian shamanic cultures, the deceased in Tibet is dependent on a funerary ritualist to show him the route to paradise.

⁷²⁴ Similarly, in Ch'in and Han times, individuals were thought to possess two non-material elements in addition to the body component: *p'o* (a vital animating force) and *hun* (instrument of experiencing and intellectual activity). It was believed that at the time of death these three elements separated. If properly assisted, the *hun* made its way to paradise (which varied in conception). The *p'o* and *hun* could also remain in the world and avenge harm suffered during life. Symbols and talismans were used to convey the *hun* to the afterlife. The *p'o* and *hun* still exist in Chinese folk tradition. The *p'o* as the so-called life-soul is thought to dwell in the grave. See Loewe 1986, pp. 718, 719.; p. 554, fn. 717.

In the conterminous Himalaya ranges, the various Bodic cultures not only share a common eschatological groundwork with the Tibetan funerary tradition, they hold many ritual procedures in common as well. There are no less than 250 distinctive languages and cultures in the Great Himalaya. A systematic comparison and analysis of the funerary traditions of a broad spectrum of these groups with those of Tibet could prove highly useful in reconstructing the likely historical sources of funerary mythology and the developmental patterns of ritual practice. Certainly Tibetan funerary traditions played a seminal role in the cultures of the high Himalaya, but cognate funerary customs in non-Tibetan speaking groups are little researched. In my extensive travels around the Himalaya and Transhimalaya I have found that belief in the need for the deceased to be guided to the next world and for the living to be protected from the dead among the Bodic, Kiranti and Dardic peoples. These fundamental funerary themes, combined with more specific ritual practices over a diverse culture-scape, suggest that any diffusion of funerary traditions began in a distant era. Observable convergences in Himalayan cultures that are not directly attributable to the major religions may provide the strongest evidence of a relationship with the Tibetan archaic death cult.

In the funerary rites (Gwan) of the Bhotia of Uttaranchal, yaks, goats and sheep are used to guide the dead to the hereafter.⁷²⁵ The Domra Bhotia attach the clothing of the deceased to a yak (*ya*) (*g.yag?*) and a white cloth (*am lugara*) is fastened to its horns on the first day of a funeral. The *ya* is taken to where a bone fragment of the deceased has been symbolically buried in a small casket. The casket and *ya* are then brought to the house of the deceased in a procession. During the postmortem observances, a funerary priest called the *seyaktza* instructs the dead (*shimi*) on which paths to follow and what dangers to avoid in order to reach heaven.⁷²⁶ On the fourth day of the Gwan, the clothing of the deceased is removed from an effigy and placed on the *ya*, which is driven away by villagers to a distant place, accompanied by a man. In Chaudans the *ya* is then allowed to roam freely in the mountains, but other Bhotia groups slaughter it and eat the flesh. The parallel function of the *ya* of the Bhotia and the *do-ma* and *skyibs-lug* of the Tibetan tradition, as also indicated by other parallels in their funerary practices already touched upon, is attributable to cultural and historical links. The nature and timeline of these bonds, however, are highly obscure. I think the establishment of these archaic funerary traditions in the Kumaon Himalaya is likely to have occurred before the *bstan-pa phyi-dar* (perhaps even much earlier). I do not see much if any likelihood of such transfers after the conversion of Gu-ge and sPu-rang to Buddhism circa 1000 CE.

One of the most prominent ritual procedures, used by widely distributed Himalayan peoples, is the magical guidance of the soul with a white strip of cloth, torches, and ladders or steps. These methods are all attested in the Dunhuang manuscripts and the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. For example, among the Shawkas (a Bhotia group) of Uttarakhand, the sisters and daughters of the deceased cover their heads with a plain white cotton or woolen cloth while the other end is tied to the bier (Sharma 2000: 119, 120). Called *dam lugra/amlurga*, this is supposed to guide the departed soul on his journey to the heaven (*ibid.*: 119, 120). Other Bhotia groups call this white cloth *am lugara* (*am* = 'the way' and *lugara* = 'cloth') (Sherring 1906: 123). Non-Buddhist funerals of the Gurungs use the *gya-kui*, a piece of cloth 6 or 7 m long, tied to a post called the *alā*, which is carried on the head of the wife receiving affines during the funeral procession (Mumford 1990: 182). It is said to be white because this shows the soul the way to the land of the ancestors and gods (*ibid.*: 182). Taking any of the other three paths open to the soul would cause

⁷²⁵ The description of Bhotia funerary customs in this paragraph comes from Sherring 1906, pp. 127–131.

⁷²⁶ Tibetan = *shi-mi*. The term *seyaktza* is etymologically related to *se* (a class of funerary rites) and *Se-bon* (funerary Bon) of the Tibetan archaic cultural horizon.

it to wander confused among the *btsan* (red), *bdud* (black) and *klu* (yellow) (*ibid.*: 182).⁷²⁷ The *mun* shamans of the Lepchas commune with the soul of the dead, providing torches and ladders to help him find his way to the afterlife (Gorer 1967: 357). Funeral palanquins of the Lahoul Spiti Buddhists are placed in an upright position around the cremation pyre and have the marks of a staircase on them, which is believed to aid the departed soul on the climb to heaven (Sharma 2000: 123). When a Thakali funeral procession arrives at the cremation grounds, a lama walks in front of the bier with a *kha-btags* tied to it in order to lead the deceased to heaven (Vinding 1982: 302). In the Bon-po village of Klu-brag in Glo, a white scarf around 2 m long, called a *lam-ston*, is dragged along the ground to show the deceased the way to the cremation grounds (and to salvation) (Ramble 1982: 337). Likewise, in the procession to the burial or cremation grounds, Magar funeral bearers carry a white cloth attached to nine sticks, which guides the dead to the otherworld (Oppitz 1982: 387, 388). The use of a white cloth (*lam-bstan*) to lead the deceased is also employed by the Tamang and Shar-pa (Lo Bue 2005: 11).

Other ritual methods to conduct the soul on its journey to the hereafter in Himalayan cultures also have some relation to the Tibetan literary tradition. For example, a dance called *phasyal syowa* is performed around the corpse by the *ūmce*, the chief householder lama of a Thakali village, in order to separate the soul from the corpse so that it can go to heaven (Vinding 1982: 301). A ritual dance is used for the same purpose in Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur rituals (see pp. 387, 388, 394, 406). In lower Kinnaur, after the cremation rite, a special stew called *thuning* is placed on the roof of the house to be conveyed to the departed soul (Sharma 2000: 124). It is believed that crows and other birds will transport this stew and various breads to the deceased. As we know, birds and bird wings and feathers as conveyors of the soul, are also present in Tibetan funerary tradition. The *mun* shamans of the Lepchas call upon ancestral deities, and an ox is sacrificed to placate demons plaguing the soul of the deceased (Gorer 1967: 357). Many such animal sacrifices are found in the funerary rites of Himalayan peoples. Similar rites are also documented in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Dunhuang documents. It is reported that among Gurungs *byang-bu* with the names and images of the dead are replacing the use of traditional effigies for summoning the soul of the deceased (Gurung 2003: 216, 217). Under Lamaist influence, this same trend is observable among the Tibetans.

I will now focus on a small handful of peoples in order to illustrate specific aspects of funerals that are culturally related to the Tibetan tradition. I begin with the Nakhi, a people of the southeastern fringes of the Tibetan Plateau who have retained many old Bon customs and traditions. Historical interconnections to the archaic funerary traditions of Tibetan literature are definitely indicated. Nevertheless, the time period and manner in which these developed remain difficult to assess and require further study. The practice of a special Nakhi ritual in winter, long after death, bears some resemblance to the ritual periodization of PT. 1042.

The Nakhi ('Jang-rigs/'Jang-pa) place fruit, tea leaves and coins wrapped in red paper in a person's mouth just before death.⁷²⁸ Family members then exhort the deceased to follow his paternal and maternal clan ancestors to their heavenly abode. In the event death was accidental, special assistance of the ritualist (*gto-pa*) is needed to perform the '*khyar 'dre'i gsol-kha*, a ritual designed to keep the deceased from ghostly doings. The place of the Nakhi dead is the domain of the ancestors, known as *lha-yul*. A ritual called *rnam-shes spor-ba* is held three years after death to definitively elevate the deceased to the abode of the ancestors. Its purpose is to make certain that the deceased has taken his rightful place among the ancestors. This ritual is carried out in a

⁷²⁷ The white direction as the preferred one in a funeral is mentioned in the *Klu 'bum*; see para. xviii, p.

⁷²⁸ The information on the Nakhi in this paragraph is derived from Lhag-pa tshes-ring 2003, pp. 267, 268, 275, 276.

high location by the *gto-pa* and lasts three or four days. The *rnam-shes spor-ba* must be made at the beginning of any winter month. This ritual includes the use of a wooden effigy, installed on a stepped shrine for the ancestors.

A horse was once offered to each Nakhi deceased of high rank as his funerary mount.⁷²⁹ In ancient times the Nakhi sacrificed this horse, and all presents such as cups were broken before being sent with the spirit of the deceased. The *dtomba (gto-pa)* chanted the origin of the horse as part of this ritual. At present, the Nakhi deceased are still escorted to the abode of ancestors, a sky-bound realm, where they reside with the 33 realms of good gods. The deceased has to surmount the hell realm in order to emerge in the sphere of the gods, where he is believed to meet with his parents and grandparents. In the funeral the deceased is exhorted to go to the land of parents and grandparents, which corresponds with the 33 realms of the gods.⁷³⁰ The road of the deceased is then ritually closed to prevent his return to the world of the living. The deceased is counseled on what might befall him on the long journey to where the progenitors dwell. This ancestral paradise is described as an alpine region or grasslands. During the funeral rites, an elaborate description of the way to heaven is given employing familiar geographic terms.

Many of these components of Nakhi death practices indicate a strong affinity with early historic Tibetan traditions. In particular, the use of a horse to whisk away the dead to the ancestral hereafter is a feature linked to the archaic funerary customs in the Tibetan literary sources. The use of effigies by the Nakhi in order to ensure the passage of the soul to a heaven known as the *lha-yul* (country of the gods) is an eschatological element closely related to similar practices recorded in the Tibetan texts (such as the realm of the 33 orders of deities). The apotropaic features of the Nakhi funerals are also similar in that their aim is to bring about the separation of the living and the dead. A conspicuous contrast, however, is the presence of a litany of places that lie on the road to heaven. No such listing of localized geographic lore is provided in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur or Dunhuang manuscripts. I read this as evidence supporting my supposition that the funeral rituals described in the texts were tailored for use across Tibet, with little regard for regional differences from the imperial period onward. Before this homogenization of the funerary traditions of Tibet, they are likely to have exhibited significant geographic and cultural variations. These too may have included litanies of place names tailored to localized conceptions of heaven, just as we find in the Nakhi and the Bhotia cultures of Uttaranchal. The Nakhi celestial afterlife as the realm of the 33 orders of deities was probably derived from analogous Bon or Indo-Iranian cosmological concepts. This tradition may be an example of direct borrowing between cultures.

The Gurungs (Tamu) have also retained archaic funerary traditions that appear to have emanated from the same cultural fountainhead as their Tibetan counterparts. They have preserved a high proportion of archaic funerary practices and Lamaist intervention has only more recently had a strong impact. As in the Tibetan system, guiding the deceased to the next world of the ancestors and protecting the living from the dead serve as the *priori* for Gurung funerary practices. The retrieval of the soul from chthonic demons is also evident, as well as various apotropaic rites. Exorcistic procedures are conducted with the use of weapons and through an esoteric dance, just as they are in the Tibetan texts.

⁷²⁹ All data on the Nakhi in this paragraph are from Rock 1955.

⁷³⁰ The Nakhi believe that at the time of death the *ssu* (life-force god of people and deities; also regulates the growth of animals and crops) and the soul pass together to the abode of the deceased ancestors (Yang Fuquan 1998: 189, 190). In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the *sgra-bla* and *yul-lha*, protectors of the life-force, are guardians in the intermediate state after death.

The Gurung funerary rites can be conducted by any of the three classes of Gurung priests (or Buddhist lamas), depending on availability and preference.⁷³¹ One of these classes is the *klehpre*, a Gurung priest who wears a long black gown with long sleeves and the *rigs-linga* headdress of tantric Buddhism. In the funerary specialist role, the *klehpre*'s main function is to drive away evil spirits and restore the well-being of the living. The Gurungs believe that the life breath is abducted by the demons of the underworld and must be retrieved in order to send the deceased to the land of the ancestors. The *pachyu*⁷³² ritualist performs a soul retrieval ritual with the assistance of the deity Serpi Thini, and she is compensated by the sacrifice of a goat. During the funeral procession the ritual called *khui teba* is performed to open the door of the underworld. It consists of participants throwing a spear with a tassel at a plank of wood on the ground, starting with the eldest son of the deceased, until someone hits it. The *pachyu* and *klehpre* dance around the bier counterclockwise beating drums and cymbals to ward away evil influences. First in the funeral procession are several people who carry a white cloth around 3 m in length to show the way to the deceased. The son or eldest member of the family of the deceased also shoots an arrow in each of the four directions to snatch back the soul from the ruler of the dead (cf. Pignède 1966: 370, 378). At a later date, a ritual is held to guide the soul to the land of the ancestors, and afterwards a ceremony to restore the good fortune of the living is convened. The ancestral place is known as *lanasa*.⁷³³ The *klehpre* sends the soul there after disposing of the soul effigy and sacrificing a chicken to prevent the deceased from returning to the land of the living.

The Gurung funerary tradition warrants closer scrutiny by virtue of its many correspondences to Tibetan archaic rituals.⁷³⁴ The Gurung funeral includes the use of a long pole called *alā*, which is described as the pillar of the world, linking the clan of the upper world Kle with the clan of the underworld Khro.⁷³⁵ It is set beside the house when the corpse is being prepared and is carried upright in the procession to the cremation grounds (the soul of the deceased is believed to ride on top of it). The preparation and use of the *alā* is the responsibility of the patriline of the deceased.⁷³⁶ In the past, the Gurungs sacrificed a goat to be the companion of the soul (*pla*) during the mystic journey of the *ghyabrē* (*klehpre*) priest to the underworld. Gurung male next of kin still take turns aiming arrows at the corpse, symbolizing the conferment of weapons of protection to the deceased for use on his journey to the afterlife. After the disposal of the corpse, the *paju* (*pachyu*) must release the wandering soul from the demonic agent that caused its death. This is followed by the *pai* rite, which is carried out by the *ghyabrē* and could take place months after death. It has two parts: exchanges between the living and the dead, and the guidance of the soul by the *ghyabrē* to the land of death.

⁷³¹ The data on Gurung funerary practices in this paragraph originate with Gurung 2003, pp. 221, 225–236.

⁷³² Tibetan = *pha-chos* or *pha-jo*.

⁷³³ Tibetan = *bla dmyal-sa* (?).

⁷³⁴ The data in this and the next paragraph are derived from Mumford 1990, pp. 182–193. It must be noted that Mumford 1990 presents a case study limited to the Gurungs of the Marsyangdi valley, while Gurung 2003 furnishes a more generalized picture of the Gurung funerary tradition.

⁷³⁵ Kle may be the equivalent of the nearly homophonous *klad*, a Tibetan term that refers to the overhead direction, which has the connotations of being honorable and glorious. 'Khro' appears to be etymologically related to the Tibetan word *khro-ba*, which now denotes wrathful or angry characteristics. Its use as the name of the Gurung underworld may indicate that, in ancient times, its signification encompassed other powerful divine qualities as well.

⁷³⁶ The *alā* is made differently for men and women. The two types contain symbols of the male (turban and arrow) and female (headscarf and shuttle), respectively. For a description of the *alā*, see Pignède 1966, pp. 365–367. In the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the arrow and spindle constitute the gender-specific symbols of the funeral.

Pigeons are employed to enshrine the soul of the deceased. The *ghyabrē* is said to bring these birds up with him from the underworld. While in the underworld, the shaman priest exchanges food with the deceased so that he relinquishes his claim to the wealth of the surviving relatives.⁷³⁷ A long string is tied to a pigeon's neck and the other end is tied to the soul effigy, so that the soul of the departed one can pass to it.⁷³⁸ The pigeon is released after being passed around by members of the patriline clan. Releasing the bird is thought to guard the wealth of the patriline from the deceased, and to ensure that he will pass to the land of the dead. A sheep was formerly sacrificed in this ritual.⁷³⁹ The next stage of the Gurung funeral is the deliverance of the soul to the ancestral heaven. Many local geographic place names are invoked as the soul is led to the land of the dead (as in the Nakhi funeral). The correct steering of the dead is thought to be along the white path. The final destination is the Oblē rock dome, which once drew Gurungs from wherever they happened to settle in Nepal. Located in the Marsyangdi valley, the top of the Oblē dome is regarded as the entry point to Sa yi gompa,⁷⁴⁰ the realm of the ancestors. The funerary chant continues to name places, suggesting that Tibet is somehow symbolically reached. Some departed souls may also reach Mu yi gompa,⁷⁴¹ the land of the gods. Once delivered to the next world, the *ghyabrē* magically transforms himself into a vulture to prevent the deceased from following him back to the world of the living.⁷⁴² Additionally, the Gurungs have Khrō nasa,⁷⁴³ a paradisiacal earth womb and source of fertility. In contrast, the Oblē dome is the ancestral world above. It is the *ghyabrē*, however, as the sacerdotal supporter of Ghale clan nobles who promotes sky (*mu*) ancestral origins as superior. On the other hand, *paju* legends emphasize the reciprocity between upper world and underworld origins. For the *ghyabrē* this equal exchange also occurs, but with the addition of a hegemonic vertical direction.

In general, Gurung funerary practices appear to contain an autochthonous kernel of tradition upon which ancient Tibetan cultural sources were layered. Given the striking mythic, ritual and procedural affinities between their respective archaic funerary traditions, direct cultural links are certainly indicated between the two geographic groups. These are probably based on a diffusion of funerary tradition between the Plateau and cis-Himalayan regions of Nepal that occurred no later than the early historic period (perhaps through the migration of a Tibetan vanguard south across the Himalaya). There seems little historical likelihood of a widespread Transhimalayan interchange of archaic funerary traditions during the period of Buddhist dominance. It is possible that this transfer was effected in a rudimentary or incomplete form even as early as protohistoric

⁷³⁷ This occurs as part of a *dpe* in which the deceased is asked to leave behind what belongs to the living and take what belongs to the dead. The wish that the ancestors of the priests escort the soul of the deceased to the afterlife accompanies this request. In the last stage of the funerary ritual, edible sculptures are offered to the deceased by his relatives, and once again he is asked not to take the good luck and long-life capability of his household. See Pignède 1966, pp. 375–377, 404.

⁷³⁸ A description of the Gurung soul effigy (*plah*) and the *dpe* that accompanies its making is found in Pignède 1966, pp. 370–374. In this *dpe*, the *plah* is said to have spoken, eaten and walked about. It seems likely that the *bla-rten* of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition was assigned the same miraculous qualities, as this is where the deceased was supposed to have temporarily resided.

⁷³⁹ A ram or ewe, depending on the sex of the deceased, appears to have constituted a sacrificial exchange, carried out in order that the dead did not remove the *cha* (Tibetan: *phywa*) from the living. This sheep, called a *koh*, was believed to open the road to the afterlife for the Gurung dead by repulsing evil spirits. See Pignède 1966, pp. 380, 381, 405. This type of animal sacrifice closely corresponds to that described in the texts of the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition.

⁷⁴⁰ In Tibetan: *sa yi dgon-pa* (far-off place of the earth).

⁷⁴¹ In Tibetan: *dmu yi dgon-pa* (far-off place of the sky).

⁷⁴² It is also thought that the primeval *pucu* (*pachyu*) transformed themselves into vultures (Pignède 1966: 411). The same magical metamorphosis is connected to the Tibetan *bon-po*, *gshen-po* and *lha-pa* of ancient times.

⁷⁴³ Tibetan: *khro dmyal-sa* (?).

times. The geographic position of the Gurung lands south of Upper Tibet may implicate Zhangzhung as an agent of funerary cultural transference in both a territorial and a cultural sense. These ideas remain conjectural with the information now available, but they surely deserve further attention.

It is also worth raising various other considerations, such as of whether the Gurung ritual pole known as *alā* has a historical link with the head juniper of the Tibetans. The Tibetan parallel to the ritual use of weapons by the Gurungs is the deployment of the bow and arrow as both an exorcistic instrument and a gift that accompanies the deceased to the hereafter. While the sacrifice of animals fulfilled a similar purpose in the archaic funerary rites of the Tibetans, there is no indication in the texts that the *'dur-gshen* undertook a shamanic journey to the underworld in order to save the soul of the deceased. As we have seen, there is circumstantial evidence supporting the hypothesis that spirit-mediums and trance states were indeed part of ancient Tibetan death rituals, but documentary proof is still lacking. The retention of the good fortune associated with the living, a seminal theme in the Tibetan literary tradition, is found in other Himalayan regions too.⁷⁴⁴ Like the Gurungs, the Tibetans may have once sacrificed sheep in their *g.yang-gugs* funerary rituals. Although most of the soul effigies mentioned in Tibetan funerary texts are inanimate objects, birds do appear as enigmatic ritual players, and perhaps these were once used in a similar manner as in Gurung rituals.⁷⁴⁵ The archaic funerary tradition of the Tibetan texts makes ample provision for the ritual conduct of the consciousness principles to the ancestral other world, but it is completely shorn of specific geographical signposts such as those that exist in the Gurung tradition. The dGa'-yul was a celestial world, not part of the underworld or the middle world of the living. It is therefore best equated with the Gurung Mu yi gompa.

The tellurian Gurung spheres of the dead have correspondences to the Siberian or Himalayan terrestrial paradises of the so-called shamanistic cultures, and are perhaps holdovers from an earlier cultural formation. It is reasonable to speculate that, before Tibetan funerary tradition was modified (and codified) in the early historic period, regional versions of the afterlife equated with local mountains or even lakes may have dominated. In the archaic funerary tradition of Tibetan literature, these types of more tangible next worlds are dimly recognized in veiled or indirect language: witness the original horse country of the dGa'-yul, its northern location (PT. 1136, *Srid pa'i mdzod phug*), its description as a plain and its connection to the protective qualities of mountains (Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur *lug-gtad*). There are also terrestrial metaphors for the afterlife in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur: *bde-ba'i sa* (the blissful land of the bird horns ritual) and *gtsang-sa* (the pure land of the bird wing ritual). These kinds of analogies indicate that many of the

⁷⁴⁴ For example, the Lahouli of Himachal Pradesh carry out a postmortem *g.yang-gugs* ritual with the aim of preserving the prosperity of the deceased's household. A draped arrow (*mda'-dar*) and jewelry are used. These objects are kept aside before the funeral procession begins, to retain the prosperity of the community. See Sharma 2000, pp. 145, 146.

⁷⁴⁵ Mumford believes that the initial rites of the Gurung death cult described above probably arose from Bon funerary traditions as documented in PT. 1042. Tibetan archaic funerary practices in general are the most plausible source for many of the Gurung customs under examination. Mumford, however, sees the final stage of the Gurung funeral, the guiding of the soul to Sa yi gompa of the Oblē mountain dome (final resting place of the deceased), as originating in Siberian shamanism. See Mumford 1990, pp. 186, 192. While ancient forms of Siberian religion may be inherent in the guidance of the deceased to the ancestral hereafter, this theme is also well represented among the Tibetans and Nakhi. No need to reach so far afield to explain the journey of the soul – the Tibetan Plateau is geographically and culturally much more accessible. I think it likely that the Gurung custom of soul conveyance is directly attributable (in a historico-cultural sense) to analogous Tibetan funerary rites. Resemblances to Siberian practices, on the other hand, constitute a more diffuse and chronologically remote Inner Asian bequest.

funerary traditions we have been dealing with represent highly complex cultural interchanges that lie beyond the pale of historicized deconstruction. There can be little doubt that prevailing notions concerning heaven reflect myriad cultural and historical developments over a great length of time.

The death rituals of the Thakali of the Kali Gandaki are performed by the *dhom* priests, who do not go into trance.⁷⁴⁶ Just after a death occurs, the relations go up to the roof of the house and ask those who have taken the soul to return it. This request is addressed especially to the deceased's ancestors (*khe-mom*). Subsequently, a *g.yang-khug* ritual is performed by the *chenī* (Buddhist householder priest, who is a patriline relation) with a large drum, capacious copper vessel, *mda'-dar*, and the leg of a goat, etc. Then comes the *g.yang tiwa*,⁷⁴⁷ a ritual to ensure that the *g.yang* does not leave the surviving members of the household. After the Lamaist *'pho-ba* is made, householder lamas again perform a ritual to ensure that the deceased does not carry away the *g.yang* with him. Instruments to remove the *g.yang* from the deceased include cypress branches, the leg of a goat and the *mda'-dar*. On the third evening after the cremation, the *mhāng rāhwa* rite is performed to capture the *mhāng*, the spirit that killed the deceased. It includes the playing of drums and bells, and the waving of a white cloth on the roof of the deceased's house in order to summon his soul. A tray with bone, hair and a piece of the deceased's clothing, as well as grain, is also used. The tray is returned inside after a soul evocation rite, and the contents are placed in a clay pot with various grains, oil and sesame seeds. Cypress branches are also put inside the clay vessel, to the accompaniment of a song explaining to the deceased that he is now dead, and that these objects serve as the various parts of his body. The singers are women paternally related to the deceased. The *mhāng* is captured by using four dough figures and a trap placed at the entrance to the house. It is wounded by striking the dough figure containing the demon with an ax, a hammer, an arrow, and other small weapons, before it is finally killed with a *phur-pa*. Most of this figure is placed in a bull horn or a dog skull and buried where three roads meet, away from the village. Four days after the cremation, friends of the deceased shoot arrows at a plank of wood on which the image of the *mhāng* has been drawn; this is the final act of slaughter. The plank is then smashed and burnt. According to traditional Thakali beliefs, there is a permanent soul and life after death, not the Buddhist cycle of endless rebirth. The Thakali heaven is called Sangs-rgyas. It is located in the sky and is where the ancestors live and where most people are said go after death.

The importance of preserving the good fortune capability (*g.yang*) for the living in Thakali culture is the same as in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, having spread beyond the Bodish-speaking groups of the Himalaya to the Se-speaking Thakali. The Thakali evocation of the soul and their methods to rid it of the death-causing demon also have much in common with Tibetan tradition. The use of clay pots to contain soul-attracting ingredients, however, is not encountered in Tibetan literature. It would appear to be a regional adaptation of the Tibetan soul effigy tradition, or perhaps a more ancient form of the soul receptacle rituals. The *mhāng* demon of death and the ritual methods of the Thakalis to catch and kill it are comparable to the Tibetan *sri*-slaying rites in which *lingga* are used. The eschatological parallels that exist between the Thakali and old Tibetan beliefs concerning the soul and afterlife need no additional comment. The name of the Thakali heaven, Sangs-rgyas (Utterly Purified State), is possibly supportive evidence for the Bon claim that this word was part of the Tibetan religious vocabulary long before it was adopted by the Buddhists to denote the Buddha.

⁷⁴⁶ The material in this paragraph on the Thakali of Syāng village comes from Vinding 1982, pp. 292, 294, 296, 299, 300, 301, 304–311, 313, 314.

⁷⁴⁷ In Tibetan: *g.yang 'khrīd-ba* (to bring the good fortune capability [to the living]) (?).

It is reported that the Bon-po of the Kali Gandaki (Se) hold a ceremony called *gsur* (burnt offerings) three days after a death, in which a female relative goes to the roof of the house of the deceased and beseeches him to come.⁷⁴⁸ This rite is named after the roasted barley that is offered to the departed one. It includes a large earthenware vessel decorated and filled with objects. The selection of objects depends upon the sex of the deceased. It is suspended from the rafters of the deceased's house, and various foods and juniper incense are offered. This jar is called *thugs-sa* (place of the mind), and it is believed to be where the expired one's consciousness (*rnam-shes*) comes to fulfil itself and to secure guidance through the *bar-do*. Three or four weeks after death, on an astrologically appropriate day, a ceremony is held to transfer the *rnam-shes* from the *thugs-sa* to a print called the *sbyang-par* (purification picture). The jar is then taken out of the village and thrown away. At the end of the *bar-do* period the *sbyang-par* is burnt in a rite to expiate sin. The *rnam-shes* then goes either to heaven, enlightenment, or takes a rebirth.

Roasted barley (*shel-tshig*) is also an important ritual offering in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition. The *thugs-sa*, which the Mustang Bon-po use in common with the Thakalis, is a type of consciousness receptacle not mentioned in the funerary texts. Instead we find various other *thugs-rten* (mind supports), which are also indicative of ancient ontological concepts. In the juxtaposition of the *thugs-sa* (literally: mind place) and *sbyang-par*, we have an instance of an older rite being grafted onto a more modern one with widespread currency in the Tibetan Lamaist world. This type of syncretism occurred in sundry ways over the centuries, as Buddhist ideas and practices became increasingly dominant on the Plateau and in conterminous regions. As in the Bon texts we have been studying, in Klu-brag three eschatological options are opened to the deceased, once again revealing the doctrinal gulf that exists between ancient practices and Lamaist doctrine.

Lama bonpo is the Thangmi term for a funerary officiant, while other religious functionaries are called *guru*.⁷⁴⁹ Thangmi dead were once buried but cremation is now the norm.⁷⁵⁰ Below the cremation grounds, a hole is dug by the corpse bearers with an inverted hoe, and unhusked roasted rice (*layo*) is offered over the hole. This hole is filled with thorny plants to discourage the deceased from returning after the cremation. Thangmi chants focus on commending the spirit of the deceased to the underworld, the abode of ancestors. Flags are placed at the head and foot of the cremation ground where the corpse is laid. In chants called *sikitip*, the *guru* tells the deceased not to send the demon that killed him to the living. The various food offerings serve to conduct the deceased's spirit away from the living. Some days or months after the cremation rites, a chicken embodying the spirit of the dead is thrown to its death, definitively sending the deceased away from the land of the living.

The use of the term *bonpo* by the Thangmi (also by the Gurungs and Tamangs) is in itself telling, and hints at a cultural legacy that is closely related to Tibetan archaic cultural horizon traditions. The apotropaic rite in which a hole is dug in the ground recalls the Tibetan *sri-khung* rite, and is perhaps evidence for the Thangmi and early Tibetan cultural tapestries having shared threads. As with other Bodic and Kiranti groups, the Thangmi are preoccupied with ritually severing the dead from the living in order to maintain the viability of the latter.

⁷⁴⁸ This paragraph on the funerary practices of the village of Klu-brag is taken from Ramble 1982, pp. 339–341.

⁷⁴⁹ This paragraph on the Thangmi of the middle hills of Nepal is from the work of Shneiderman 2002.

⁷⁵⁰ It is reported that for the Limbus, burial is still the preferred means of disposal. The Rai also practice burial in tombs in which a bow and arrow, *khukri*, jar of wine, and other objects are deposited. See Sharma 2000, pp. 124, 125.

A Kulunge Rai shaman undertakes a mystic journey to purify the soul of the deceased before it is conveyed to its final destination through an ascent to the great rock known as Pomlalong.⁷⁵¹ This formation is located amidst the Kulunge Rai settlements. After the soul is deposited in Pomlalong, it is exorcised by a shaman with a bow and arrow to prevent it from returning to the world of the living. Death spells entry into the kingdom of the ancestors and transformation into a tutelary entity of the Kulunge Rai. The *mop/selewa* is primarily a Kulunge Rai healer who is also responsible for the death rites of those who died an accidental or violent death. Those who die tragically are thought to be a threat to their family and friends who, as a result, are beset by all sorts of sicknesses. In a funeral rite featuring expulsion and exorcism, the soul of the deceased is evoked, enthralled and guided to the afterworld by the *mop*, who accompanies it to the lowest or furthest point on the western horizon.

The object of the Lepcha death rites reiterates the themes we are now familiar with: to avert the possibility of the demon of death claiming another victim, and the thorough banishment of the deceased so he cannot return to the world of the living.⁷⁵² A return of the deceased is considered a palpable threat. The dead are thought to usually live in Rumlyang, a parallel immortal happy existence, similar to life here on earth. It is the *mun* shamans who conduct the soul to Rumlyang, where it is reborn to dwell among the ancestors.

Even in these descriptions of the funerals of the Rai and Lepchas, groups that are only distantly related to the Tibetans, certain elements resembling Tibetan archaic funerary concepts and practices are still discernable. It is surely possible that some of these are manifestations of primary Tibeto-Burman ethnogenetic connections extending back to the Iron Age and beyond. Such an ethnohistorical hypothesis in the area of funerary culture, however, is hard to develop and defend with the limited linguistic and ethnographic evidence now available for analysis. Can it be established, for example, that the Lepcha word for the afterlife, Rumlyang, is etymologically related to the Tibetan word *rum*, which refers to the womb in both a biological and cosmological sense? It is not my intention here to suggest etymologies *ex nihilo* but to call attention to an area of research that demands deliberation: the comparative linguistic study of Himalayan funerary vocabularies. This is yet another frontier that lies ahead on the long road of scholarship, if we are to better understand the antiquity of the Tibetan funerary traditions and their manifold relationships with adjoining territories. As this study amply demonstrates, archaic funerary beliefs, customs and practices hold great promise for further augmenting our understanding of the ethnoarchaeology of Upper Tibet.

⁷⁵¹ This paragraph on the Rai of far eastern Nepal comes from the scholarship of Nicoletti 2004.

⁷⁵² This paragraph on the Lepchas of Sikkim was drawn from Gorer 1967, 345–360.