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Revue d’Études Tibétaines
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Lin Shen-Yu
Pehar : A Historical Survey

Guillaume Jacques
Notes complémentaires sur les verbes à alternance ‘dr/-br- en tibétain

John Vincent Bellezza
gShen-rab Myi-bo, His life and times according to Tibet’s earliest literary sources

Josep Lluís Alay
The Forty Magical Letters — A 19th c. AD Manuscript from Hor on Bon po Scripts

Jean-Luc Achard
Mesmerizing with the Useless ? A book-review inquiry into the ability to properly reprint older worthy material

Sommaire des anciens numéros
Pehar: A Historical Survey

Lin Shen-Yu

The Tibetan state oracle of gNas chung has undoubtedly played a central role in the political history of Tibet since the seventeenth century. In séances, the gNas chung oracle conveyed messages from Pehar and from Pehar's deputy, which have usually been taken into consideration in the decision-making by the Dalai Lamas and Tibetan government officials. Questions typically being posed to Pehar include guidance in seeking the new Dalai Lama, administrative policies of the Tibetan government, health conditions of the high-ranking government officials, judgments of lawsuits, etc. Pehar's prophecies and advice have played a relatively important role in the history of Tibet.

Pehar's counsel has been significant enough to have influenced Tibetan politics, in which Buddhist monks are central figures.

According to the Tibetan tradition, Pehar resided originally in bSam yas, the first Tibetan Buddhist temple. During the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) Pehar moved to gNas chung, a small temple not far from 'Bras spungs monastery and became the state guardian deity of Tibet. The spirit medium of gNas chung henceforth began to pass messages from Pehar and became the state oracle of Tibet. In 1959 when the fourteenth Dalai Lama (bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 1935-1984) took refuge in India, the twelfth gNas chung oracle (Blö bzang 'jigs med, 1930-1984) followed him to Dharamsala, and later continued his duty in India until 1984. His successor Thub bstan dngos drub (1958-) serves as the spirit medium of Pehar and Pehar’s deputy today in India.

The activities of the gNas chung oracle and the cult of Pehar demonstrate particularly well that various religious beliefs have been amalgamated harmoniously in Tibet. The communication between supernatural beings and human beings by spirit mediums in séance is commonly regarded as

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1 In Tibetan literature “Pehar” is also written as “dPe kar, Pe dkar, sPe dkar, dPe dkar, Be dkar, dPe har ra, Pe ha ra”, etc.; see René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Dèities (Gravenhage: Mouton, 1956), p. 96. It is said that because Pehar’s energy is too strong for the spirit medium to bear, normally Pehar’s ministers—rDo rje grags ldan and Shing bya can—act in séance as Pehar’s representatives; see John F. Avedon, In Exile from the Land of Snows (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 197, 202.


4 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, p. 449. For the prophecies to the Tibetan political affairs passed by the oracles since the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, see René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, “Das tibetische Staatsorakel”, Archiv für Völkerkunde, 3 (1948), pp. 147-149; René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, pp. 449-454. There are at least five allegations concerning the reason and processess of Pehar’s moving from bSam yas to gNas chung; see René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, pp. 104-107.

belonging to practices of sorcery. Instead of being considered as heresy, this obviously non-Buddhist practice is acknowledged and valued in Tibet by the government and social summit, the hard-core of which are Buddhist monks. The recognition of the cult of Pehar and its application in the state politics by the Tibetan Buddhist monks might seem very perplexing, yet the séance of the gNas chung oracle is anyhow the most fascinating scene to the common spectators. So far, most scholars have focused their attention on the activities of the gNas chung oracle, which has been repeatedly described in detail in many field study reports. Scanty studies have examined the descriptions pertaining to Pehar in the Tibetan literature. For an in depth understanding of the historical background to this notable religious phenomenon, it is necessary to rely upon writings. On the basis of the Tibetan historical and religious literature, this article will analyze the accounts pertaining to Pehar that are currently available to the author and investigate the changing role of Pehar in the history of Tibet.

**Depictions in earlier literature**

According to the Tibetan tradition, Pehar became the state guardian deity at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The time when Pehar was recruited as one of the Buddhist deities was undoubtedly earlier. It was generally interpreted in the tradition that Pehar, having been tamed by Padmasambhava, was bound by oath to protect the Dharma. The emergence of this legend will be discussed below in more detail. Some might be curious about the identity of Pehar before Pehar was included in the Buddhist pantheon. Narrations regarding Pehar’s previous disposition can be found in the Tibetan literature as early as the eleventh century. It is stated in the biography of the great translator Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) that when Rin chen bzang po went to Pu rang, he saw a monk meditating on a straw seat, who was worshipped by local inhabitants. Having examined the monk for a while, the master knew that the monk was a manifestation of Pehar. After a month of meditation Rin chen bzang po came to the monk again and pointed to him with his finger. The head of the monk fell on the ground and his body disappeared. Since then, the great translator was honored by the local people. The aim of this account was to provide a picture of the religious practices of Rin chen bzang po and his ability and experience related to exorcisms. The Pehar illustrated in the biography manifested himself as a misleading monk, and belonged apparently to the category of demons and spirits.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) This biography was possibly completed in 1060. For related accounts on Pehar in the
Descriptions of Pehar are found also in some later literature. For example, the abbot of 'Bri gung monastery dBon po Shes rab 'byung gnas (1187-1241) mentioned in his work dGongs gcig yig cha (1235) the stories of "Four Children of Pehar" (pe har bu bzhi), in which four people had their own distinctive philosophical view, are depicted. Meanwhile, Pehar played a significant role in the development of their views. The first was a woman who was in sorrow from losing her husband. After she had wept bitterly for a long time, Pehar appeared in the sky and explained to her the view "thoughts and external objects are not interconnected," along with the fact that grief and yearning can not bring her husband back. Having reflected upon it for a period of time, the woman accepted this view and preached it to others. Several people became her followers afterward. In the second case, Pehar appeared in front of a female practitioner as a bird, which pecked a snake to death. A leave fell upon the corpse of the snake, which then disappeared. Owing to this manifestation, the thought: "that which is slain is by nature nonexistent" arose in the mind of the female practitioner. Later on she had many followers as well. The views of the last two of the "four Children of Pehar" are: "results do not come from causes" and "attaining the celestial life means understanding that there is no virtue or sin". Taking these four stories as examples, Shes rab 'byung gnas warned the readers of the "impure lineages". These four views were in fact already mentioned earlier in Chos 'byung me tog smi nyi po sbrang rtsi'i bcud, a work composed at the end of the twelfth century by the rNying ma pa treasure discoverer (gter ston) Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1136-1204). Nyi ma 'od zer introduced in his Chos 'byung the "Six Dark Yogis" (rnal 'byor nag po drug), in which the four groups of people described above were included. Having described all of them, Nyi ma 'od zer pointed out that these "Six Dark Yogis" were regarded by followers of the New Translations as "popular beliefs" (rdol chos). It is noticeable that in Nyang ral chos 'byung the "Six dark Yogis" were not associated with Pehar or any other spirits.

While explaining unorthodox traditions, dGongs gcig yig cha included one more story: a Buddhist monk regularly attended the group teaching of a master. Pehar descended from the sky, stopped the monk and requested the monk to listen to his teaching while claiming that in this way the monk could be led up to the sky. Later on, Pehar was subdued by the master.

The above cited stories echo the historical background of the time in which they were told. The literatures in which the stories are included were completed at the beginning of the time when Buddhism regained its foothold in Tibet since the eleventh century. During this initial period there were not only diverse teachings inside of Buddhism from various traditions,
but also other lineages of popular beliefs outside of Buddhism. Pehar’s roles in the above cited stories are various: Pehar appeared as a monk, descended from the sky, transformed into a bird, and inspired the person of interest by way of talking directly to her/him, or performing singular acts. The people and events in the stories might not be real, but the effect of the narratives is to intensify the mystery of Pehar’s identity as a spirit/supernatural being. Pehar seemingly represents a certain supernatural power which is capable of transforming itself and misleading practitioners. Pehar in these stories has become a symbol of “impure lineages”, "unorthodox traditions", "popular beliefs", and even "non-Buddhist mystic powers". The "non-Buddhist mystic powers" were precisely the objects that Buddhist scholars at that time, who were engaged in establishing the firm foothold of Buddhism, must distinguish, identify and eventually refute.

Around the same period of time another trend of dealing with existing “heretical” beliefs appeared unobtrusively in the Tibetan Buddhist treasure literature (gter ma). In the Life Story of Padmasambhava (sLob dpon padma ’byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos ’byung nor bu’i phreng ba, also called Gu ru’ bka’ thang zangs gling ma le’u zhe gcig pa), a text revealed by Nyang ral Nyi ma’ od zer (1136–1204), Pehar was portrayed in a very different way. In the twentieth chapter of this work, King Khri srong lde brtsan asked Padmasambhava about who would be the Dharma protector to guard the temple bSam yas. Padmasambhava’s reply and the king’s response to the master’s answer are:

"Alas, great king,
The times will get worse and worse ..., At such a time, the warrior spirit King Pekar is needed as the guardian of the temples. He now resides in the land of Hor, Your Majesty, give the decree for war and conquer the Gomdra district of Bhata Hor. He will come here, giving chase to the valuables. Then I shall appoint him as temple guardian."

King Trison g Deutsen then prepared for war and defeated the district of Bha ta Hor. After that, the one known as King Shingja Chen, as Dūpo Yabje Nagpo, and as King Pekar of the warrior spirits arrived, chasing after the valuables. His right brigade was one hundred warriors dressed in tiger skins. His left brigade was one hundred arhat monks. ... Master Padma then gave his command and bound King Pekar under oath. At Pekar Temple, he established a shrine and appointed Pekar as the temple guardian of glorious Samye and of the whole temple complex.

This text, Zangs gling ma, is the earliest work that I could find in which Pehar was associated with the first Tibetan Buddhist temple bSam yas and had become a guardian of Buddhism. In Zangs gling ma Pehar was the king of the warrior spirits, came from Bha ta Hor and was bound by Padmasambhava

10 Kunsang translated "Hor" to "Mongolia". I shall discuss the location of “Hor” later.
11 "Bha ta Hor" was translated by Kunsang as “Bhata Mongolia”.
12 See the previous note.
under oath. Pehar was bestowed with a Buddhist identity which, as we shall see later, was afterward adopted by many Tibetan authors in formulating their own works.

This new aspect of Pehar was also found in Padma bka’ thang, which was excavated by Ö rgyan gling pa (1323-?) in 1352.14 This famous gter ma text belongs to the many gter ma texts that portray the life story and deeds of Padmasambhava. Pehar appeared in Padma bka’ thang at least twice; one is in the sixty third chapter, in which the background of Pehar’s becoming the guardian of the temple bSam yas was explicated. When King Khri srong lde brtsan discussed with Šāntarakīita and Padmasambhava who would be a suitable guardian of bSam yas, it is stated that:

The great acharya Padma said:
"The royal [house] will have an emanation with an evil face [in the future]. The fight between Yum brtan and ‘Od srungs, which makes in the mind all kinds of evil wishes and hostilities, will appear. The demonic emanation at that time, after he had caused harm will, when time had passed over one hundred and ten generations, become King gNam the’u dkar po at the land of Hor. All Tibet will be under the power of Hor. The tutelary deities (pho lha) of Hor are enlightened heaven gods. As for [their] king Shing bya can, if we, after we have invited him [to Tibet], entrust [the temple bSam yas] to him, the temple will not be destroyed. If the meditation center of Bha ta Hor is conquered, Pehar will follow behind the property [of the meditation center] to come. I will build a receptacle (rten) [for Pehar] in Pe kar sanctuary.”

Thence [the king] makes war against Bha ta [Hor] and its meditation center was destroyed. Following much food and wealth, [Pehar] has come [to Tibet]. Owing to [Pehar's arrival], some became insane, others fell down in a fit. Thence Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna built a receptacle (rten) of the king [Pehar] in Pe kar sanctuary.15

The narration is in essence similar to that of Zangs gling ma. However, compared with Zangs gling ma, Padma bka’ thang explains more intelligibly about Pehar’s background, Pehar’s connection with Hor, and the reason why Pehar, also called ”Shing bya can”, is suitable to become the guardian deity of bSam yas. The ”emanation with an evil face” suggests apparently the last

15 slob dpon chen po padma’i zhal snga nas / rje la zhal ngo bdud kyi sprul pa ’byung/ thugs la gdon gsol mi ’tsam sna sthsogs byed/ yum brtan ’od srungs zhes bya ’khrugs pa ’byung/ de tsho ’dre yi sprul pas glogs rgyed nas/ gzung rabs brgya dang bcu lhag srong tsa na hor yul gnam the’u dkar po/i rgyal po ’ong/ bod kham thams cad hor gyi mnga/ ’og ’jug/ hor gyi pho lha gnams la byang chub yin/ rgyal po shing bya can ni sngan drangs nas/ de la gti zla gtsug lag khang mi ’jig/ bha ta hor gyi sngo gra bcom pa na/ pe kar ka ca’i phyi la’ brangs nas ’ong/ nga yis pe kar gling du rten ’dzugs gsungs/ de nas bha tar dmag brgyab sgom gra bcom/ zas nor mang po drangs nas ’ong/ pa las/ la snyor bcug la la’ boq tu bcug/ de nas u rgyan pad ma’ byung gnas kyi/ pe kar gling du rgyal po/i rten bsums te. See U rgyan gling pa, Padma bka’ thang (Si khron: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987), pp. 384-385. For Chinese translation, see Ujian Linba Lianhuasheng Dashi Bensheng Zhuan, trans. by Luozhu Jiacuo Edong Wala洛珠加措、俄東瓦拉 (Chinghai青海: Chinghai Renmin Chuban She青海人民出版社, 1994), pp. 421-422.
king of the Tibetan empire Glang dar ma (803-842), who was regarded as a harmful, evil being to Tibet. His rebirth in the land Bha ta Hor provides a proper explanation for the tension between Tibet and Bha ta Hor in the narration.

The 104th chapter of *Padma bka’ thang* gives further details about how Pehar was subdued by Padmasambhava. It is depicted that Pehar, who intended to test Padmasambhava, dressed himself as a layman, and went to the master’s room with a big retinue. They dropped a big stone on the head of the master, who subsequently fell unconscious for a while. After Padmasambhava regained consciousness, he caught Pehar in meditative absorption (*ting nge ’dzin*). Padmasambhava asked the layman who he was. Pehar replied that he was the “son of mara” (*bdud kyi bu*) and requested an alliance with Padmasambhava. The master asked Pehar in return whether he dared protect Buddhism. Pehar answered: “In the future, if the temples and shrines of all Tibet were entrusted to me, I will dare protect the Buddhist teaching. If they were not entrusted to me, I will make harm, I will transgress against the rules, and I will reverse.”

Thence Padmasambhava entrusted the temples and shrines which would be built by future generations and the “receptacles” (*rten*) of body, speech and mind to Pehar. Pehar accepted this obligation. The master recited 108 subjugating *mantras* and asked Pehar: “If you transgress against the rules, what will happen? If you make harm and if you reverse, what will happen?” The reply of the great layman reveals Pehar’s evil nature. In short, when Pehar makes harm, a practitioner will come across all kinds of problems with regard to his wife, children, land, house, livestock, property, friends, relatives, servants, and benefactors; when Pehar transgresses against the rules, a practitioner will encounter diversified mental hindrances while practicing deity yoga, sinking in meditative absorption, reciting *mantras*, performing approaching practices, etc.; when Pehar reverses, he will let everything develop to the contrary as expected concerning the body, life force, merit, fortune, family, possessions, food, friends and relatives, retinue, favorable conditions, and achievement of a practitioner.

One is able to capture the original disposition of Pehar from a sketch of the potential disasters which could happen, if Pehar were offended. Even though he had agreed to act as a guardian of Buddhist teaching, Pehar still retains his potential for annoying living beings in every respect. The dreadful, original traits of the "Buddhist" Pehar are definitely dissimilar to the characteristics of the transforming and misleading abilities of Pehar as described in the earlier text like *dGongs gcig yig cha*, although both can be deemed "negative". Pehar has become a Buddhist deity of marked individuality in *Padma bka’ thang*.

About two hundred years after *Padma bka’ thang* was excavated, delineations on Pehar analogous to that in the Biography of Rin chen bzang po can still be found. While introducing Bya Dul ’dzin (1091-1166) in ‘*Brug pa’i chos byung*, Padma dkar po (1527-1592) wrote that Bya Dul ’dzin

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established a monastery in Zul phu. In the monastery, Pehar transformed into a young monk who violated discipline when there was an opportunity. Yet every time that he acted against regulations, other people saw nothing but a robe decorated with fur. Pehar appears in this story in the form of a monk and plays the role of confusing and misleading people. This image of Pehar, although having certain connections with Buddhism, is far different from that of being a Buddhist guardian.

In summary, already in the second half of the eleventh century, Pehar had appeared in Tibetan literature and was connected with popular beliefs in which descriptions about his dispositions were nearly all negative. In some literature between the second half of the eleventh and the middle of the thirteenth centuries, Pehar was portrayed as having the power of transformation, often applied to either mislead other people or cover his behavior in violating discipline. The various roles of Pehar depicted in these earlier literatures have somehow close connections with practitioners or monks. Pehar almost became a representation of "impure lineages", "unorthodox traditions", "popular beliefs", and even "non-Buddhist mystic powers". No later than the early thirteenth century, Pehar was associated with Buddhism as a Buddhist guardian. In the Buddhist gter ma literature before the middle of the fourteenth century, Pehar had acquired fairly distinctive traits. Compared with the other literature which merely contains negative descriptions of Pehar, Padma bka’ thang bestowed a double-sided character upon Pehar: a harmful, evil "son of māra" who has the virtue of a Buddhist patron.

Depictions by the scholars before the Fifth Dalai Lama

Before being recruited in the Buddhist pantheon, Pehar appeared, as discussed above, in some literature as a representative of "unorthodox traditions”. Pehar acquired his Buddhist identity very likely in the Buddhist gter ma literature no later than the early thirteenth century. Has this identity changed since then and how did it develop in later on? According to the tradition, Pehar was promoted as a state guardian deity at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Before exploring the attitude of Tibetan scholars toward Pehar, let's first look at the descriptions of Pehar in the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Annals of Tibet (rgyal rabs dpyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs, 1643):

The Abbot [Shantarakshita], the Master [Padmasambhava], and the Dharma [King Khri stong lde brtsan] discussed [the candidate of] the guardian of the [bSam yas] temple. To Pehar, who had appeared following the properties from the meditation center of Bha ta Hor that was destroyed by the military of the [Dharma] King, was entrusted [the duty of] protecting the properties [of bSam yas temple].

19 /de nas gtsug lag khang gi srung mar mkhan slo chos gsum bka’ bgyos te/ rgyal po’i dma’ gyis bha ta hor gyi sgom grwa bcom pa’i ka ca’i rjes su dpe har ’brangs te byung bar dkor srung bcu’. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, rGyal rabs dPyid kyi rgyal ma’i glu dbyangs (The Tibetan & Himalayan Digital Library, http://old.thdl.org/xml/showEssay.php?xml=/collections/history/texts/5th_dl_history_text.xml&m=all). My understanding of this
The statement of this passage is basically consistent with the narrations in the above mentioned gter ma texts: Pehar was appointed at the time of the Tibetan king Khri srong lde brtsan (742-797) as the guardian of the first Tibetan temple bSam yas. Nevertheless, only very few Tibetan historians who were active before the Fifth Dalai Lama referred to the name “Pehar” while depicting the construction work of bSam yas temple in their writings. The majority of the well-known Tibetan historical texts composed before the Fifth Dalai Lama, including dba’ bzhed, sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba (1283)21, Bu ston chos ’byung (1322/1347)22, Deb ther dmar po (1346)23, rGya bod yig tshang chen mo (1434)24, Deb ther sngon po (1478)25, and Deb ther dmar po gsar ma (1538)26, did not mention the appointment of Pehar as the guardian of bSam yas at all in the paragraphs concerning the erection of the bSam yas temple. This fact, though truly a bit unexpected, seems to imply that before the seventeenth century Pehar had not yet become an important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, so that most of the authors of the historical literature did not pay serious attention to him in any way.

Nonetheless, certain depictions in two of the works cited above, sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba and rGya bod yig tshang chen mo, may relate to Pehar. The paragraph illustrating the construction work of bSam yas temple in sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba cited each name of the twelve sections of the temple, among which the last one was called “rin chen dbyig ’jin spe dkar gling” (Precious treasure enmeshed sPe dkar sanctuary). It is stated that this section was built particularly for the purpose of storing treasury. The designation “spe dkar” in its name may correspond to Pehar. However, the related paragraph did not refer to Pehar as a Dharma protector. In rGya bod yig tshang chen mo it is stated that one of the northern sections of the four directions of bSam yas temple is called “dpe dkar skor mdzod gling” (dPe
Pehar: A Historical Survey

dkar sanctuary. The "dPe dkar" here may also correspond to Pehar. Nonetheless, Pehar was not noted as a guardian in the related paragraph, either. Beside these two works, none of the other works cited above bothered to describe details of the sections of bSam yas temple. No textual supports are found indicating a relationship between bSam yas temple and the guardian deity Pehar.

Among the abovementioned texts, the narration in dBa’ bzhes is worth mentioning. In its earliest version, the best of our knowledge, no description of Pehar could be found in the text passage describing the construction of the bSam yas temple. Nevertheless, the account in a later version which is acknowledged to have been finished in the fourteenth century, i.e. sBa’ bzhes, is very different. This version, while introducing bSam yas temple, includes a detailed description of the internal arrangement and the designation of each section. The last section of the three north-locating sections is called “dkor mdzod dpe har gling” (Chest for temple property, dPe har sanctuary) and the Dharma protector of this section is "chos skyong dpe har". The different treatments between both versions indicate that the association of Pehar and bSam yas temple was in all probability a later development.

Aside from the above mentioned known historical literatures, two other texts, lDe’u chos ’byung (Chos ’byung chen mo bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, ca. 1230-1240) and rGya bod kyi chos ’byung rgyas pa (later than 1261), contain narrations about Pehar similar to the fourteenth-century-sBa’ bzhes. lDe’u Jo Sras wrote in his work lDe’u chos ’byung that one section in bSam yas temple was called "dbyig mdzod dpe kar gling" (Treasure-chest, dPe kar sanctuary), the function of which was to collect temple property (skor bsags). The chief protector dPe har was assigned to look after the treasury gathered in this section, mkhas pa lDe’u stated in his work rGya bod kyi chos ’byung rgyas pa that one section of the bSam yas temple is called "dkor mdzod dpe

28 Namely the version translated by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger in 2000. The earliest possible date of this version is around the eleventh century, see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger trans., dBa’ bzhes, The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet, p. XIV.


30 Samten Karmay argued that the cult of Pehar, very similar to that of nowadays, was appeared already around 1000. See Samten G. Karmay, “The Man and the Ox: a Ritual for Offering the glud”, in The Arrow and the Spindle (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998), p. 360. On the basis of the dates of both versions mentioned here (see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger trans., dBa’ bzhes, The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha’s Doctrine to Tibet, p. 1), Karmay’s argument is unlikely to be testified.


32 Read "dkor".

33 lDe’u Jo Sras, Chos ’byung chen mo bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan lde’u jo sras kyi mdzad pa (IHa sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrung khang, 1987), pp. 123, 129.
dkar gling" (Chest for temple property, dPe dkar sanctuary), the protector of which is "dpe dkar".\textsuperscript{34} Both IDe'u cho{s} 'byung and rGya bod kyi cho{s} 'byung rgyas pa affirmed that Pehar was the protector of the section where the treasury was accumulated in the bSam yas temple. The similarity of the allegations regarding Pehar in both texts, which is very different from that in the most other historical literature, implies a possible related textual tradition, with which sBa bzhed could have a connection. Nevertheless, from the fact that both IDe'u cho{s} 'byung and rGya bod kyi cho{s} 'byung rgyas pa were not included in well-known literatures by recognized Tibetan scholars,\textsuperscript{35} one can assume that this textual tradition was not regarded as "mainstream" in the Tibetan historical literature.

In addition to all of the abovementioned texts, the historical writings finished before the Fifth Dalai Lama that mentioned the guardian Pehar and his origins, include rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long (1368) and Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston (1545-1564). In rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long where the construction of the bSam yas temple was depicted, the name of the last section of the north-locating three sections was referred to as "pe dkar dkor mdzod gling" (Pe dkar sanctuary, Chest for temple property). Moreover, the character of Pehar was delineated as follows:

As Protector of the [Buddhist] Teaching for the entire [bSam-yas] temple [-complex], the Teacher [Padmasambhava] commissioned the Great Master of Life, Pehar, the Great Devotee of the Gods [coming from] Za hor, the Great General of the Demons controlling [all] the Eight Classes of Spirits pertaining to the visible World of Phenomena [a figure so terrifying that he is capable of] taking [away] the breath of all the living ones. A receptacle [of Pehar] was installed in the Pe-dkar [=Pe-har]-gling.\textsuperscript{36}

The description in rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long shares the same basis with the abovementioned IDe'u cho{s} 'byung, rGya bod kyi cho{s} 'byung rgyas pa, and sBa bzhed. They all started off with the arrangement of the temple, providing information on the designation, interior equipment and the name of the guardian deities of each section. Yet there are still differences between rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long and the other three writings. rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long not only referred to the name Pehar, but also described Pehar's position and distinctive features in more details.

As for Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, having described the construction work and the arrangement of bSam yas temple, dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba

\textsuperscript{34} mKhas pa IDe'u, rGya bod kyi cho{s} 'byung rgyas pa (Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), pp. 353-354.

\textsuperscript{35} Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "Dating the Two Lde'u Chronicles of Buddhism in India and Tibet", pp. 469-471.

When it was discussed who is suitable to be the chief guardian of Buddha’s teaching (spyi yi bka’ srung),
The second Buddha Padma[sambhava] said:
“The royal [house] will have an emanation with an evil face [in the future].
The holy Dharma will be caused to perish. As a result, the imperial rules will collapse.
At that time the Hor [land ruled] by the emanation of gNam the dkar po
will govern Tibet and cause sufferings.
So if the tutelary deity (pho lha) of Hor, Shing bya can,
an enlightened heaven god, was entrusted as a guardian,
none will be able to destroy [bSam yas]. Therefore, we shall summon him.”
In the Bi har sanctuary a receptacle (rten) of the king [Shing bya can] was built.
The troops of [the minister] Ta ra klu gong and others
destroyed the meditation center of Hor and carried away many receptacles (rten).
The Great [Master of] Uṣṇīṣa manifestations bodily as Vajrapani.
After he has been employed as a servant of the great king Vaishravana,
he invoked all the troops of the Yaksha spirits
to summon King Bi har—
a lay devotee of heavenly beings, a great commander of mara-demons,
who governs the eight classes of gods and spirits and who can take away the
breath of living beings—together with his servants.
[Padmasambhava] bound him under oath and entrusted him with the wheel of Dharma.37

mKhas pa’i dga’ ston portrayed Pehar with very similar wordings to rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long as “a lay devotee of heavenly beings, a great commander of mara-demons, who governs the eight classes of gods and spirits and who can take away the breath of living beings”. Compared to all of the abovementioned historical works in which Pehar is included, mKhas pa’i dga’ ston provides much more detailed accounts on this Dharma protector, especially on how he had come to Tibet and became a Dharma protector. It is worth mentioning that its framework of the description on Pehar is basically consistent with that in the abovementioned Buddhist gter ma literature.

The delineations of rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long and mKhas pa’i dga’ ston on Pehar are noticeably different from those of many traditional writings contributing to the history of the development of Buddhism in Tibet,
including those "mainstream" historical literatures. The differences possibly resulted from both authors' ways of approaching the materials that were available at their times of composition. The sources utilized by rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long were said to have contained the writings dealing with early history of Tibet that have already been discovered at the author's time, including gter ma texts, and oral traditions. mkhas pa'i dga' ston is well-known for making use of sources that were not available to our time. The peculiarity of rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long and mkhas pa'i dga' ston suggests that accounts on Pehar may be preserved in sources not belonging to the "mainstream" tradition and might to some extent also involve oral tradition and folklore.

The above depictions of Pehar clearly show that Padmasambhava played a crucial role on Pehar being appointed as the guardian of bSam yas temple. Both Zangs gling ma and Padma bka' thang belong to gter ma literature portraying the life story of Padmasambhava, have related Pehar to Padmasambhava. mkhas pa'i dga' ston's descriptions on Pehar follow similar pattern to those in Zangs gling ma and Padma bka' thang. Since the excavations of both gter ma texts were earlier, it is not impossible that dPa'bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba took the narrations concerning Pehar in gter ma texts into account. The Tibetan gter ma texts, the authenticity of which has always been a controversial subject among Tibetan scholars, frequently include narrations that are not found in the ordinary Tibetan literature. That accounts on Pehar are found in the gter ma texts and appear only in the historical writings that possibly have a connection with gter ma texts can support the assumption that a Buddhist identity was bestowed upon Pehar by the Buddhist gter ma literature. Moreover, before having become one of the most important Dharma protectors of Tibetan Buddhism, Pehar was actually overlooked by most of the authors of the common Tibetan historical literature.

Zangs gling ma, Padma bka' thang, rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long, and mkhas pa'i dga' ston are in agreement regarding categorizing Pehar among spirits of foreign origin. While rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long claimed that Pehar came from Za hor, mkhas pa'i dga' ston stated that Pehar was from Hor. According to Zangs gling ma and Padma bka' thang, the "Hor" denotes very likely "Bha ta Hor". The origin of Pehar will be discussed below in more detail. Based on the descriptions of the construction of bSam yas temple in the literatures cited above, a conclusion can be drawn up to this point: although no later than the early thirteenth century did the idea of correlating Pehar with Buddhism become visible, the identity of Pehar as a Dharma protector of Buddhism was not generally recognized before the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, namely before the seventeenth century. Only a small number of Tibetan literatures has certified Pehar's crucial role in the first Tibetan Buddhist temple bSam yas and his relationship with Tibetan Buddhism. These descriptions of Pehar differed from that demonstrated in the earlier

38 Suonan Jianzan索南堅贊, Xizang Wangtong Ji西藏王統記, p. 2.
Pehar: A Historical Survey

In literatures, Pehar was frequently regarded as a representation of "impure tradition", "popular belief", or even "non-Buddhist mystic power". It is reasonable to presume that, before being exalted as a Buddhist guardian, Pehar could not have been a mere cipher among the many Tibetan demons and spirits.

*Depictions by the Fifth Dalai Lama and the scholars after him*

Before the Fifth Dalai Lama, some texts have depicted Pehar as a Dharma protector of Bṣam yas temple. However, they were not the majority and most often outside of "mainstream" historical literature. From the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama there was a discernible change of Pehar's position in Tibetan Buddhism. It was already mentioned above that the Fifth Dalai Lama referred to Pehar in the Annals written by him, that Pehar was invited to Tibet at the time of the Tibetan king Khri srong lde brtsan to become the guardian of the first Tibetan temple in Bṣam yas. This statement was nothing new, since it had already appeared in some texts, as discussed before. In addition to this account, the Fifth Dalai Lama put forth his personal opinions on Pehar's background:

The Abbot [Shantarakshita], the Master [Padmasambhava], and the Dharma [King Khri srong lde brtsan] discussed about [the candidate of] the guardian of the [Bṣam yas] temple. To Pehar, who had appeared following the properties from the meditation center of Bha ta Hor that was destroyed by the military of the [Dharma] King, was entrusted [the duty of] protecting the properties [of Bṣam yas temple]. Some said that in accordance with the [invitation by] sending messengers and letters by the three [personages]: the Abbot, the Master, and the Dharma King, a Buddha [statue] made of turquoise, a mask made of tanned leather, and the princely descent of Za hor Dharmapāla have taken a lead. Following them, dPe har arrived [at Tibet]. This statement can cause disastrous great harm to the living beings by making them crazy and lose their senses and so on. With regard to this statement, it appears to correspond in sequence to [another] statement that [dPe har] fled to the land of Bha ta Hor because the Master pushed him to the breaking point.41

Three statements regarding Pehar's coming to/escaping from Tibet are included in this paragraph. The Fifth Dalai Lama considered the second statement to be seriously harmful to the mind of all sentient beings, which suggests that he strongly rejected this statement. The main difference between the first and the second statements concerns how and from where Pehar had come to Tibet. Since the Fifth Dalai Lama supported the first

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41 [de nas gtsug lag khang gi srung mar mkhan slob chos gsun bka’ byros tel rgyal po’i dma’ gis bha ta hor gyi gsun grwa bcom pa’i ka ca’ai rjes su dpe har ’brangs te byung bar dkar srung bcom/’ga’ zhig tu mkhan slob chos gsun gyis pho nya’ phrin yig mngags pa lhar/ g.yu’i thu’b pa bse ’bag za hor rgyal rig’gs dharma pd la rna’ms kyis sna drangs pa’i rjes la dpe har byon par bshad pa ’di skye ’gro rna’ms la smyo ’bo’g sogs ’tshe ba che drags par/ slob dpod gyis ar la gti’ad pas bha ta hor gyi yul du bros par bshad pa dang go rin’ ’grig par mngon no/]. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya msho, rGyal rabs dPyi’ad kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs (The Tibetan & Himalayan Digital Library, http://old.thdl.org/xml/showEssay.php?xml=/collections/history/texts/5th_dl_history_text.xml&m=all). My understanding is not totally in agreement with Liu Liqian’s; compare Wushi Dalai Lama五世達賴喇嘛, Xizang Wang Chen 西藏王臣記 p. 44.
statement, this means that he held that Pehar had come chasing after the valuables from Bha ta Hor instead of following Dharmapāla, the princely descent of Za hor. The Fifth Dalai Lama’s allegation is consistent with those illustrated in Zangs gling ma and Padma bka’ thang; in other words, it agreed with what was passed on in the gter ma tradition, but not in agreement with the viewpoint presented by rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long, that Pehar came from Za hor. As for the third statement regarding Pehar’s escaping from Tibet, the Fifth Dalai Lama merely asserted that the sequence of the events claimed in the second and the third statements seemed to be acceptable. The biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama helps to clarify this vague argument. In this work the statement that Pe kar came to Tibet from Za hor of India was clearly rejected: “If one admits that the hermitage of Pekar was in India, one would contradict the story of the image of rNam thos sras in the country of lJang.” Then the story about Vaishravana, the God of Wealth (rNam thos sras) was told, and Pehar and Dharmapāla were included in the story:

Then the great ācārya evoked rNam thos sras with his eight horsemen and actually showed them to the king and the ministers and gave him orders ... ... With such a numberless army he (the prince Mu rugs btsan po) plundered China, Hor and Gru gu. The king Pe kar was afraid and fled away changing his body into that of a vulture. But a gNod sbyin hit him with an arrow on his wing; so he fell down and was caught by rNam thos sras and led to bSam yas. ... Since Pe kar caused by magic madness and epidemics, the great ācārya compelled him to fly away ... Be it as it may, the Abbot, the ācārya and the king agreed in sending a messenger in order to invite Dharmapāla of the royal lineage of Za hor, so that he might come from his hermitage of Hor. Pe kar was very affectionate to him: he therefore took a self-made image of the ascetic made of turquoise, a mask called se ’bag and a lion of rock crystal and said: “You are invited as a guardian of bSam yas; I as a god will go with you, a man.” So he went to bSam yas riding a wooden bird.  

Although some points in it contradict the narrations in the Annals, this paragraph, which is full of legendary atmosphere, clarifies the sequence problem mentioned above. Pehar was previously summoned to Tibet. However, due to his tremendous viciousness, Padmasambhava compelled him to leave. Later he accompanied Dharmapāla of Za hor to arrive at Tibet again. Pehar’s twice arriving at Tibet was narrated in another place of the Annals where Pehar was brought up a second time as the guardian of the bSam yas temple:

Pe dkar has been summoned by the great Master in meditative absorption and came to Tibet once. But he appeared as excessively ferocious. Later the three [personages]: the Abbot, the Master and the Dharma [King], sent a messenger to Za hor. The king Dharmapāla, together with a naturally formed Buddha [statue] of turquoise, a face image [namely] a mask made of tanned leather, a mount [namely] a crystal lion, has taken the lead, Pe kar also rode on a wooden bird adorned with jewels. Thus the god and the man arrived at Tibet. The great Master placed a vajra at the crown of [Pehar’s] head and proclaimed the oaths.  

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43 slob dpon chen pos tings rje ’dzin ggis pe dkar bkyis nas lan cig bod du’ ons kyang ha cang gsal rtsiub che bar byung zhiug / slar mkhan slob chos gsum ggis za hor du pho rnyi mngag nas rgyal po dharma pa la’i gyu’i thub pa rang byon/ zhal brnyan bse’ bug chibs shel gyi seng ge dang bcal te
According to this paragraph, Pehar was originally an evil spirit and came to Tibet once, before accompanying the Za hor king Dharmapāla to Tibet later. It is thus comprehensible that the key point of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s abovementioned rejection in the second statement is on the argument of Pehar’s accompanying Dharmapāla from Za hor. In his perspective, Pehar was from Bha ta Hor and before being converted to become a protector of Buddhist teaching, Pehar had been subjugated by Padmasambhava.

Tibetan scholars’ opinions on the question about from where Pehar had come are observable in two lines, either from Za hor or from Bha ta Hor. Where are Za hor and Bha ta Hor actually located? Tibetan scholars generally hold that Za hor is located in India. However, scholars from different religious traditions have inconsistent views regarding its exact location. The dGe lugs pa scholars believe that Za hor is the birth place of Atiśa (982-1054), about the district of Vikrampur in eastern Bengal. The Fifth Dalai Lama placed Za hor in Bengal in the east of Bodhgaya. The rNying ma pa and bKa’ brgyud pa scholars on the other hand deem that the location of Za hor is in the vicinity of Udḍiyāna, the place where Padmasambhava originated, in the north. Regardless where in India Za hor was exactly locates, the Fifth Dalai Lama refuted that Pehar came from India in the south, but rather declared that Pehar came from Bha ta Hor. Some Tibetans were of the opinion that Bha ta Hor was in a corner region of China. Modern western scholars have pointed out that Bha ta Hor refers to some nomadic tribe located near Lake Baikal, which is in the Siberia region to the north of Tibet.

About 100 years after the Fifth Dalai Lama, the famous dGe lugs pa scholar and reincarnated Lama Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor (1704-1788) wrote in his work ’Phags yul rgya nag chen po bod dang sog yul du dam pa’i chos ‘byung ishul dpag bsam ljon bzang (1748) about the construction of the bSsam yas temple and stated that after the construction work was completed, in “dkor mdzod dpe har gling” (Chest for temple property, dPe har sanctuary) treasures were placed and Pehar was entrusted as a “nor bdag” (custodian of riches). In addition, Ye shes dpal ’byor mentioned a statement concerning Dharmapāla and Pe dkar. There were two Dharmapālas according to this statement. The first one was in the direct line of the family lineage of the Za hor king Dza’i bu: they were in sequence Indrabhuti, sna drangs pas pe kar yang rin po ches spras pa’i shing bya la zhom nas lha mi rnam s red du byon/ slob dpon chen pos spyi hor rdo rje bzhag ste dam tshig bsgrags/. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, rGyal rabs dPhyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu dbyangs (The Tibetan & Himalayan Digital Library, http://old.thdl.org/xml/showEssay.php?xml=/collections/history/texts/5th_dl_history_text.xml&m=all). See also Giuseppe Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 643. For Chinese translation, see Wushi Dalai Lama五世達賴喇嘛, Xizang Wang Chen 西藏王臣記, p. 107.

The argument that Pehar originated from Bha ta Hor was confirmed by the regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama, see Sangs-Rgyas rGya-mTSHo, Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama, trans. by Zahiruddin Ahmad (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1999), p. 253.

Western scholars’ opinions to this question are also very diverse. Some regard Za hor as Mandi, others equate Za hor with Sabhar in eastern Bengal. For related discussion, see Giuseppe Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 734.

See note 48.

Giuseppe Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 736.
Shakraprate, gTszug lag khang 'dzin, Dharmarāja, and Dharmapāla. This Dharmapāla moved from Bengal to China and stayed in the meditation center of Bha ta Hor, which is in the corner region of China. The second Dharmapāla originated from this emigrant lineage. A man who brought a naturally appeared Buddha statue of turquoise, three masks made of tanned leather and three crystal lions and King Pe dkar who came following valuables and riding on a wooden bird were also from this lineage. Ye shes dpal 'byor commented that this statement is doubtful. This interesting statement, indicating the location of Bha ta Hor as inside of China, demonstrated the expanding contents of the story about the connection between Dharmapāla and Pehar. Regarding the question about where Pehar had come from, Ye shes dpal 'byor claimed that Pehar was from Yu gur:

Some said that the Abbot, the Master, and the King have sent a messenger and requested from Bha ta [Hor] a Buddha [statue] of turquoise and so on. Afterwards one of the kings of ghosts—white, black, yellow and the rest—of Yu gur came to Tibet and was entrusted as the custodian of religious property. Concerning this statement, it is true. This [king of ghosts] is renowned as “Pehar”—the corrupted words of Bi hā ra—or “Pe dkar”.

This passage has an additional statement which refers to the place where the Tibetan messenger has gone being Bha ta Hor instead of Za hor, a great difference from the statements in the Annals of the Fifth Dalai Lama. In addition, this statement has brought up new notions concerning from where and how Pehar had come to Tibet, and these were validated by Ye shes dpal 'byor. Although Ye shes dpal 'byor agreed that Pehar was commissioned as a foreign protector to be the custodian of the treasury of bSam yas temple, he held that Pehar was not from Bha ta Hor, but rather from Yu gur in central Asia. His point of view had something in common with that of the Fifth Dalai Lama. They both held that Pehar came from the north, not from the south, a seeming differentiation between Pehar's origin and the origin of Buddhism, which might suggest that although having become an important protector of Buddhist teaching, Pehar originally had in fact nothing to do with India, the place of origin of Buddhism.

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48 de yang kha cīg gis thog mar slob dpon pad nas klu rgyal zur phud bha pa dkor bdag du bsokos tshe klu des dnya rigs klu tsha rgyal po hu zhes pa hor yul du yod pa de bsokos zhus pas rgyal po la slob dpon guis nang smas gnyan bu phyur dar la bris de de buaung nang bsnap bcas hor mi rnam gis yul du sen gna sngon gyi za hor rgyal po dza i bu rgyud kyi rigs rim par in dra bha ti dang shakra pra te dang gtsang lag khang 'dzin dang dha rma rā dza dang dha rma pa la zhes pa hyung ba'i phyi ma de bhang ga la nas rgya nag tu byon te nag gru phyogs kyi bha ta hor gyi sgyon graw gravg las pas bsgnyu pa'i dha rma pa la phyi ma zhi g dang gu'i thub pa rang byon bse gsum shel gsum gsum khyer 'ong ba'i mi dang nor rdzas kyi rjes sgs 'brangs nas shing bya zhon 'ongs pa'i rgyal po pe dkar yin la dharma pa la de'i bsgnyu dang sang yar khungs 'khyod rkyar yod zer yang de som nyi'i gzi yin zhing. See Sumpa Khan-po Yeçe Pal Jor, Pag Sam Jon Zang, 2 vols. Part II History of Tibet from Early Times to 1745 A.D., ed. by Sarat Chandra Das (Calcutta: Presidency Jail Press, 1908), p. 172. For Chinese translation, see Songba Kanbu Yixi Banjue松巴堪布·益希班覺, Ruyi Baoshu Shi如意寶樹史, trans. by Pu Wencheng & Cairang prevention, She甘肅民族出版社, 1994), p. 292.

49 'gan zhi gis mcham slob rgyal gsum gsum gsum phyi rnal ston ste bha ta nas gsum 'thub sogs gdan drangs pa'i rjes su gur gur gyi 'dre rgyal dkar nag ser sogs yul pa'i dang gi gcig bod du 'ong ba de dkor bdag la bsoks zer ba ni bden zhung de la ba bka' ba nas ba rgyud chos pa de 'ong ba de dkor bdag la bsoks zer ba ni bden zhung de la ba bka' ba nas ba rgyud chos pa de. See Sumpa Khan-po Yeçe Pal Jor, Pag Sam Jon Zang, p. 172. For Chinese translation, see Songba Kanbu Yixi Banjue松巴堪布·益希班覺, Ruyi Baoshu Shi如意寶樹史, p. 293.
After the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, scholars continuously composed writings about Pehar. The contents of these writings are mostly related to rituals. Apart from some rNying ma pa authors, most of the works were completed by dGe lugs pa scholars, including regents, reincarnated lamas, and abbots etc; most of them were eminent and influential personages in Tibetan politics and society. Their identities and writings revealed the special relationship between Pehar and the dGe lugs pa government, which indicated at the same time that Pehar’s having become a popular object of worship in Tibet has a strong connection with the support of the dGe lugs pas.

The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ye shes dpal ‘byor, and most of the scholars who composed rituals related to Pehar belonged to the dGe lugs pa school. Their descriptions regarding Pehar are alike: Pehar was a protector of Buddhist teaching who was commissioned to be the guardian of bSam yas temple at the time when King Khri srong lde brtsan constructed the first Buddhist temple in Tibet. These statements clearly diverged from the accounts in earlier literature discussed above; however, it spread widely later and became known to the majority of the Tibetan people.

Concluding Remarks

Since Tibet was under the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama around the seventeenth century, the guardian deity Pehar has occupied a particular position in the Tibetan politics. Pehar’s prophecies have influenced important policies of the Tibetan government as well as the development of Tibetan history. However, according to the descriptions in the Tibetan literature, this guardian deity who has played a significant role in the reins of the dGe lugs pa government had originally no relationship with Tibetan Buddhism.

Narrations about Pehar were found in the Tibetan literature as early as the second half of the eleventh century. This date is about the same time as the Tibetan Dun-huang documents, the earliest (thus far) datable Tibetan

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50 The database of TBRC (The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center) includes several Tibetan literatures that are related to Pehar. They are listed in chronological order with author’s name and title as follows: Padma ’phrin las (1641-1717, important scholar of rNying ma pa school, student of the Fifth Dalai Lama): Pe har gyi dkor mlos zin bris; Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653-1705, regent and student of the Fifth Dalai Lama): gNas chung pe har leog gi dkar chag sa gsum g.yo ba’i nga ra; lCang skya Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717-1786, the third lCang skya Ho thog thu): Pe har sku lnga’i gtor ‘bul; Ngag dbangchos ’phel (1760-1839; dGa’ ldan khri 1822-1828): Pe har gyi thugs dam bskang ba’i rim pa bha skang; bTan pa’i mgon po (1760-1810, student of Rol pa’i rdo rje and Ngag dbangchos ’phel, important dGe lugs pa incarnation and the first rTa tshag regent of Tibet): Pe har sogs sku lnga’i gsal mchod; Ngag dbang dpal ldan (1797-?, important dGe lugs pa teacher): Pe har chos skyong la gser skyems ’bul ba’i cho ga; Jam dbyangs ’phrin las (beginning of the 19th century ?:): Pe har sku lnga’i gsal mchod; ’Jam dpal bstan pa’i dngos grub (1876-1922, the fourth Gar dbang incarnation): Pe har sku lnga’i gtor brol gi bca’ bsgrigs zin bris; Ngag dbang dpal btsan (1879-1941, lineage holder of the Ka thog tradition of rNying ma pa): Pe har gyi gsal mchod; Ngag dbang blo btsan don grub (birth 19th cent.); Pe har gyi gsa’ nas gtor brol bya tshul; Ngag dbang ye shes thub bstan (birth 19 cent.): Pe har sku lnga’i thugs rten.

Accounts of Pehar in earlier literature have demonstrated a completely different picture of Pehar from that which was drawn in later writings composed by Buddhist historians. Between the second half of the eleventh and the middle of the thirteenth centuries, Pehar was portrayed in some literature as having the power of transformation and playing the role of misleading people, especially practitioners, so that Pehar can be regarded as a representation of "impure lineages", "unorthodox traditions", "popular beliefs", and even "non-Buddhist mystic powers". Around the same time or maybe sometime later, Pehar acquired a new image in the Tibetan gter ma literature. Zangs gling ma has associated Pehar with the first Tibetan Buddhist temple bSam yas. Pehar was bound under oath by Padmasambhava to be the temple guardian. Padma bka’ thang gives more details about Pehar’s temperament and relationship with Buddhism. Pehar has an instinct to harm living beings. Owing to the magic power of Padmasambhava, Pehar was converted into a guardian of the first Tibetan Buddhist temple bSam yas and was bound under oath to protect Buddhist teachings. Although having become a Buddhist guardian, this spirit with an evil nature could cause terrible harm when being offended. Pehar’s evil characteristics are also described in the religious literature called “rgyal mdos”, in which Pehar is regarded as the leader of the rgyal po-demons. Pehar could bring epidemics, cause insanity and other illness as retaliation to the imposed insult. When this happens, a ritual object named “rgyal mdos” must be made and certain rituals must be executed in order to pacify Pehar and thereby eliminate disasters.

Before the Fifth Dalai Lama’s rule in the seventeenth century, Pehar was actually not acknowledged by the Tibetan intellectuals as an important protector of Tibetan Buddhism. Not many historical writings have depicted Pehar as a guardian deity of bSam yas. The small number of historical literatures that have referred to Pehar while delineating the construction of the first Tibetan Buddhist temple bSam yas either belonged outside the “mainstream” tradition or are renowned for utilizing special sources as reference materials. With the Fifth Dalai Lama’s coming to power, Pehar’s role changed significantly. In his writings the Fifth Dalai Lama not only affirmed Pehar’s identity as a protective deity of Buddhism, but also remarked on how Pehar had come to Tibet. At the same time, the state oracle gNas chung had begun to convey messages from Pehar. After the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, many important figures who played key roles in the political and social fields of Tibet successively composed various ritual-texts for praising Pehar as a Buddhist protector, while Pehar has repeatedly given crucial advice to the questions raised by the Dalai Lamas or the government officials. The fact that Pehar had become an object of popular worship in Tibet apparently has a close connection with the promotion and support of the dGe lugs pa school. From being described as a representative of unorthodox, non-Buddhist, popular beliefs and completely repudiated by Buddhist scholars, to becoming the most important guardian deity of Tibetan Buddhism with frequent influence on the decision-making of the

53 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, p. 96.
Tibetan government, Pehar has played an extraordinary role in the Tibetan literature as well as in the history of Tibet. The processes of Pehar's role-change manifest the flexibility and adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism in accepting folk beliefs in spirits. It is exactly this inclusiveness developed during the dissemination of Buddhist teaching that has allowed Buddhism to demonstrate its versatility in the Tibetan culture.

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Budun Dashi布頓大師

Caiba Gongge Duoji蔡巴貢噶多吉

Dacang Zongba Banjue Sangbu達倉宗巴・班覺桑布

dPa’ bo gtsug lag ’phreng ba

dPal ’byor bzang po
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※
Notes complémentaires sur les verbes à alternance ‘dr- / br en tibétain

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Le verbe « écrire » en tibétain ancien présente une alternance d’initiales très particulière, que Hill [2005] a mise en évidence sur la base d’une analyse des textes, et qui avait échappé aux travaux antérieurs sur la morphologie du verbe tibétain tels que Li [1933] et Coblin [1976]. Le paradigme donné par les dictionnaires : présent ‘bri passé bris, futur bri et impératif bris n’est pas valide pour le tibétain ancien. Le paradigme originel, comme l’a montré Hill, différait de celui-ci par deux formes : le présent était ‘dri au lieu de ‘bri, et l’impératif ris au lieu de bris. La racine de ce verbe était originellement √RI :

- *N-ri > ’dri
- *b-ri-s > bris
- *b-ri > bri
- *ri-s > ris

Par la suite, le préfixe du passé b– a été réanalysé comme partie de la racine,¹ ce qui a généré le paradigme observé en tibétain classique :

- /N-bri/ ‘bri
- /b-bri-s/ bris
- /b-bri/ bri
- /bri-s/ bris


Le paradigme de « tromper » cité dans Zhang [1993] est le suivant : ‘drid brid brid brid brid. C’est de tout ce dictionnaire, le seul verbe pour lequel l’alternance ‘dr– / br– est préservée ; la forme analogiquement refaite ‘brid est toutefois elle aussi attestée dans le même dictionnaire. Le paradigme théoriquement attendu pour une racine √RID serait le suivant :

- *N-rid > ’drid
- *b-rid-s > brid
- *b-rid > brid

¹ Hill interprète le changement orthographique comme le résultat de la confusion phonologique entre les groupes br– et dr– en tibétain plus tardif.

Ce travail a été écrit durant mon séjour comme chercheur invité au Research Center for Linguistic Typology à l’université La Trobe à Melbourne.

Par conséquent, la seule forme artificielle du paradigme est celle de l’impératif, forme qui doit être pauvrement attestée dans les textes pour un verbe de ce type. Malheureusement, ce verbe ne semble pas attesté dans le corpus en tibétain ancien, et la vérification de ces données est difficile.

Le second verbe « creuser » est en fait attesté par deux paradigmes distincts : bru brus ´bru brus et ´dru drus ´dru drus. Des formes de présent à suffixe –d ´brud et ´drud sont également attestées. Ce verbe s’emploie soit dans le sens de « creuser un trou » soit dans celui, plus abstrait, de « révéler ». Si l’on admet que ce verbe, comme « écrire » et « tromper » avait pour racine originelle √RU, le paradigme attendu serait le suivant :

- *N-ru-d, *N-ru > ´dru
- *b-ru-s > brus
- *b-ru > bru
- *ru-s > *rus

De toutes ces formes, seul l’impératif *rus n’est pas attesté à ma connaissance. Le paradigme ´dru drus ´dru drus du dictionnaire tibétain-chinois est analogiquement formé sur le présent attendu ´dru, tandis que ´bru brus ´bru brus est formé à partir du passé brus. La forme du futur bru n’est pas mentionnée dans ce dictionnaire, mais l’est dans Jäschke [1881], et l’on en trouve des exemples en tibétain ancien (PT1238, ligne 228, PT1194, ligne 32).

Le verbe « couper, raser » a le paradigme ´breg bregs ´breg bregs dans le dictionnaire tibétain-chinois. Jäschke mentionne un impératif inattendu brog(s). Les deux sources s’accordent sur l’existence d’une autre orthographe ´dreg pour le présent. Si cette orthographe reflète réellement une forme du tibétain ancien, alors la racine de ce verbe doit être √REG, et son paradigme originel :

- *N-reg > ´dreg
- *b-reg-s > bregs
- *b-reg > breg
- *reg-s > *regs

Le verbe « gratter » a pour paradigme ´brad brad dbrad brod dans Zhang [1993], mais Jäschke mentionne la forme ´drad. Pour une racine √RAD, le paradigme attendu serait :

- *N-rad > ´drad
- *b-rad-s > brad
- *b-rad > brad
- *rod-s > *rod

Les formes ´brad, dbrad ainsi que l’impératif brod sont donc analogiques. On s’attendrait à trouver un impératif *rod dans les textes anciens mais cette forme ne semble pas attestée. On peut noter que les cognats de ce verbe dans d’autres langues n’ont pas d’occlusive bilabiale. C’est le cas par exemple du japhug rˠʈi « écrire » (Jacques 2008).
Les verbes à alternance ‘dr- / br-

Les paradigmes en r– de ce type appartiennent en fait à la même catégorie que les verbes à initiale l– tels que ldugs « verser » ou ldud « donner à boire » :

**Table 1 : Verbes à initiale l–**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verser</th>
<th>donner à boire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>présent</td>
<td>Ldugs</td>
<td>Ldud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passé</td>
<td>Blugs</td>
<td>Blud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>futur</td>
<td>Blug</td>
<td>Blud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impératif</td>
<td>Blug(s)</td>
<td>Blud</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On remarque que dans ces deux paradigmes tirés de Jäschke, les formes de l’impératif ne sont pas celles que l’on attendrait, à savoir *lugs et *lud, et ont elles aussi été refaites par analogie.

Ce travail montre que le paradigme du verbe « écrire » analysé par Hill [2005] n’est en rien isolé parmi les verbes tibétains, mais qu’il s’inscrit dans une classe de verbes qui présentaient le même type d’alternance en tibétain ancien. La quasi-totalité des formes non-analogiques que nous supposons sont attestées dans les sources lexicographiques et les textes, à l’exception des formes de l’impératif qui sont difficiles à mettre en évidence. Cette classe de verbe se distingue des verbes à vraie initiale ’br- tels que √NBRAN ’brang ’brangs « suivre», des verbes à initiale br- tels que √BRIM ’brim brims « distribuer » et des verbes à initiale r– décrits par Li [1959] qui n’ont pas de préfixes b– de passé.

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★
gShen-rab Myi-bo

His life and times according to Tibet’s earliest literary sources

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gShen-rab mi-bo-che the Buddha
and gShen-rab myi-bo the archetypal priest

he founder of the g.Yung-drung or ‘Eternal’ Bon religion is sTon-pa gshen-rab, a Buddha or Sangs-rgyas reckoned to have lived thousands of years ago. Also commonly known as gShen-rab mi-bo-che, his life is thought to have long preceded the historical Buddha of India, Šakyamuni (6th century BCE). Depending on the way in which gShen-rab mi-bo-che’s life is dated in traditional chronologies known as bstan-rtsis, he was born as much as 23,000 years ago. Such an early periodization places this holy personage in the Upper Paleolithic, a remote age in which big game hunting and plant gathering dominated wherever Homo sapiens had spread.

The earliest major literary works to chronicle the life and times of gShen-rab mi-bo-che the Buddha are mDo-'dus and mDo gzer mig, texts which probably...
date to the 11th century CE. These biographical works are surpassed in scope and size by the 14th century CE mDo dri med gzi brjuid, which was recently republished in Tibet in 12 bound volumes. These Eternal (Swastika) Bon biographical works, as well as a host of other Bon ritual and philosophical literature, chiefly portray sTon-pa gShen-rab as an omniscient figure whose main mission was to show humanity the path to enlightenment. This he accomplished by subduing unruly spirits and by teaching a battery of moral, philosophical and esoteric practices.

The earliest mention of a personality called gShen-rab myi-bo (an earlier orthographic rendering of the name gShen-rab mi-bo-che) is found in ritual literature written in the early historic period (circa 650 to 1000 CE). Consisting of archaic funerary (bdur/duur) and ransom (glud) rites, these Old Tibetan language texts belong to early historic religious traditions, the institutional and economic foundations of which are still very obscure. There are two sources for these archaic ritual texts: the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa manuscripts. As is well known, the highly extensive Dunhuang collections were found on the edge of the Gobi desert 100 years ago by Paul Pelliot and Aurel Stein, among the greatest discoveries in the annals of Tibetology. The cache of dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa texts was recovered in 2006 during the reconstruction of a mchod-rten in the southern Tibetan region of Lho-kha.

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3 mDo’-dus is believed to have been concealed by sNya-chen Li-shu stag-ring (8th century CE) and rediscovered at bSam-yas mchod-rten dmar-po by Sad-gu rin-chen grags-pa. mDo gser mig was rediscovered at bSam-yas lho-phyoqs khri-thang dur-khrod by Drang-rje bsun-pa gser-mig, probably in the 11th century CE. For more complete bibliographic information, see Karmay 1972, p. 4 (fn. 1), 163 (fn. 1). For an analysis of textual evidence pointing to either the 10th or 11th century CE composition of these two texts, and the ‘Byung khung kyi mdo as their possible source, see Blezer forthcoming.

4 Traditionally attributed to sTang-chen dmu-tsha gyer-med (8th century CE), and rediscovered by sPhul-skur Blo-ldan snying-po (born 1360 CE). It has been republished by Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang: Lhasa, 2000.

5 Also gShen-rab kyi myi-bo/gShen-rab kyi myi-bo. Shen-rab(s) means either best/excellent (rab) priest (gshen) or refers to the gshen priestly lineage (Classical Tibetan = gshen-rabs). Myi-bo/mi-bo-che denotes a holy or highly prestigious man, with the addition of che (great) in the more modern cognominal form, a semantic redundancy. According to Pasar et al. (2008: 182), mi-bo means ‘lord of men, ‘best of men’. I want to heartily thank Yasuhiko Nagano for kindly making available to me a copy of this work (A Lexicon of Zhangzhung and Bonpo Terms), as well as for other volumes in his Bon studies series.

6 This collection of texts was published in 2007 as facsimiles with accompanying transcriptions in the dbu-can script under the title Gtam shul dga’ thang ‘bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed pa’i bon rgyi gna dpe bdam bsgrigs (eds. Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-du’ dus (Pasang Wangdui) and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring): Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang, 2007. According to the introduction to this book (pp. 1–8), when local people undertook to rebuild a mchod-rten in mTsho-smad county known as dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa, they discovered a cache of folios still preserved inside the ruined structure. The authors write that the discovered texts fall into two main categories: Buddhist examples written circa 1100 CE and a smaller body of Bon ritual and medical texts probably dating to the later period of the sPhu-rgyal bsan-po rulers. On grammatical and paleographic grounds, but without giving details, the editors observe that these Bon ritual texts are comparable to certain Dunhuang manuscripts. As the dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa manuscripts can be divided into two distinct types, the authors believe that the mchod-rten enshrining them was renovated more than once. The editors report that the Bon
The Dunhuang and dGa’-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts furnish telling details about the activities of gShen-rab myi-bo. These sources depict him in a very different manner from how he is framed in Eternal Bon literature. Absolutely no reference to gShen-rab myi-bo’s status as an omnipotent and all-knowing Buddha is noted in Old Tibetan literature. Rather, the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts place him in the mold of a priest, the guardian of ritual methods to safeguard the living and aid the dead. In the archaic ritual texts, gShen-rab myi-bo serves as a cultural icon, a laudable and highly influential personality of considerable antiquity, the memory of which must have been passed down to succeeding generations as an oral tradition. In his guise as a prototypic ritualist, gShen-rab myi-bo does not often act unilaterally and it conveys no assertion of omniscience. Rather, he is one of several priests working cooperatively with the support of special deities. In some instances, there is essential ritual work he is unable to perform on his own, so he must seek the assistance of other priests and patron deities. Although the nebulous time-frame and mythic activities associated with gShen-rab myi-bo in Old Tibetan literature militate against the historical validation of his life, the mere mortal status accorded to him in these accounts has a ring of authenticity. At the heart of the Old Tibetan legends potentially lies a real man, one who assumed an ever grander social aura with the passage of time. Like trees, legends build up gradually as more and more extravagant lore is accreted to their core. In contrast, it is difficult to entertain a real-life personality behind the gShen-rab mi-bo-che of the Eternal Bon documents. The man of the archaic rituals was squarely replaced by a god-like being, which rises head and shoulders above all others. gShen-rab mi-bo-che is an individual qualitatively different from other men. No one can excel him in any field and none can resist his commands. Emerging as a Buddha in the eyes of his followers by the 11th century CE, gShen-rab mi-bo-che came to be seen as infallible, not like ordinary men that must contend with limits to their intelligence and capabilities. From a modern rationalist angle, gShen-rab mi-bo-che’s sheer perfection and incredible supernatural powers and knowledge are not easily reconciled with the concept of an individual who once actually walked on the earth. Clearly, his divine aura is played out in the religious arena.

In the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang, the primary ritual function of gShen-rab myi-bo is to psychologically prepare the dead for the afterlife.

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7 texts among them are the earliest Tibetan literature ever published in Tibet. It is also noted that the dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa was desecrated in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (ibid.: 239).

I take an unabashedly euhemeristic stance here; aware that gShen-rab myi-bo viewed either as fact or fiction are equally unsupportable positions with the evidence at hand. Stein (2003: 598, 599) discounts a real-life identity for gShen-rab myi-bo, considering him instead to be a mythic or legendary figure. Conversely, Karmay (1998: 111) opines that he may have been an actual person of Tibetan origin who lived before the 7th century CE. Stein (ibid.) finds this assertion improbable, stating in reference to PT 1289, that this is a ritual and not a historical text. Yet, ritual and history are often intertwined in the Tibetan literary tradition, somewhat diminishing Stein’s argument.
This reconditioning of the deceased’s consciousness principles\textsuperscript{8} was considered especially crucial when death was caused by violent circumstances. The Dunhuang proclamations of ritual origins (\textit{smrang}) describe the carrying out of several different types of ritual activities by gShen-rab myi-bo in order to achieve this rehabilitation. As historical precedents and models of exemplary ritual conduct, the \textit{smrang} were indispensable parts of the ancient funeral. Given as public recitations, they prefaced the actual archaic funerary rites to sanction and empower their practice. The \textit{smrang} also functioned to elevate the cultural status of the officiating priests.

In the dGa’-thang ’bum-pa manuscripts, the activities of gShen-rab myi-bo are found in two narratives of ritual origins. These \textit{smrang} detail the rescue of a human luminary and a divine progenitor of the Tibetan kings through the performance of a special type of ransom offering or \textit{glud} known as \textit{byol}. The two aforesaid \textit{smrang} of the \textit{byol-rabs} text have the virtue of furnishing considerably more biographical information about gShen-rab myi-bo than do the Dunhuang manuscripts, expanding his occupational specialization beyond funerary rites to embrace rituals of benefit to the living. He is recorded as having participated in ancient ransom rituals, which acted as the prototype for analogous performances conducted in the period in which the text was written.

The existence of older and newer bodies of literature concerning gShen-rab myi-bo/gShen-rab mi-bo-che suggests that as Buddhism came to dominate the religious convictions and conceptions of Tibetans, the spiritual role of gShen-rab was modified accordingly.\textsuperscript{9} The historical details surrounding this biographical reengineering are virtually non-existent. Buddhist writers had little reason to dwell on the formation of Eternal Bon theology and Eternal Bon had good cause to suppress the memory of the transformation of their central personality. However, despite the very different perspectives in the Old Tibetan manuscripts and Eternal Bon materials, in both, gShen-rab’s evolving savior activities reflect profound changes in the cultural makeup of Tibet.

In the \textit{smrang} of the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang ’bum-pa manuscripts, it is explicitly stated that these narratives of ritual origins are set in ‘ancient times’. Nevertheless, the timeline involved in these professions cannot be determined with any degree of precision. What can be safely asserted is that the authors of these \textit{smrang} believed that the events and personalities described therein took place in an earlier age, that is, before the texts were written down, circa 650–1000 CE. They are tales of a prehistoric past, which unfold before the develop-

\textsuperscript{8} According to Eternal Bon funerary literature preserving older cultural materials, the human consciousness (including self-awareness and basic mental faculties) is a bipartite phenomenon consisting of a \textit{bla} and \textit{yid} or a \textit{bka’} and \textit{thugs}. See Bellezza 2008, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{9} As Stein (2003: 598) observes, circa the 11\textsuperscript{th} century CE, when Eternal Bon authors chose the name of their founder, they did so in pursuance of a preexisting tradition.
gShen-rab myi-bo as the guardian of the dead in the archaic funerary texts of Dunhuang

The first historical occurrences of gShen-rab myi-bo can be traced to the Dunhuang manuscripts, in his seminal role as an archetypal funerary priest. His ritual activities are recorded in five different texts: PT 1068, PT 1134, PT 1136, PT...
In this section of the paper, I review specific references to gShen-rab myi-bo in these manuscripts. The Dunhuang manuscripts under consideration contain abstruse grammatical constructions and lore that pose formidable philological challenges to their comprehension. Difficulties in language are compounded by the poor physical condition of certain parts of these texts. The grammatical and orthographical structures of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts under review are somewhat more old fashioned than those of the dGa’-thang ’bum-pa byol-rabs text. Obsolete grammatical structures in Dunhuang funerary literature are particularly noticeable in verb morphology and case forms. If written in the 8th or 9th century CE, these archaic manuscripts may predate the byol-rabs of dGa’-thang ’bum-pa by two or more centuries.

In one smrang or origin tale of PT 1134 (Ins. 48–66), mention is made of the fathers (pha) or venerable priests Dur-shen rma-da, gShen-rabs myi-bo and...
sKar-shen (gshen) thi’u-bzhug. In this narrative of funerary ritual origins, gShen-rab is not distinguished in any special way from his priestly counterparts; he is merely one of a trio of ritualists.¹⁴ These archetypal priests in no uncertain terms announce to the *pyugs spos ma nye du* (the beloved kindred horse on which the deceased’s consciousness principles are mounted) that death has occurred. This passage is found right after the deceased and his relatives (*gnyen-dulun*) meet for the last time and three words of the doctrine are spoken to the departed.¹⁵ Very potent metaphors are used by the three funerary priests to get their message across: “You are dead. The lord is dead, you are no more. Chipped, the turquoise is chipped, so it is no more. The degenerated son, yes, yes, sixth member of an original lineage of 18 funerary specialists. He is said to have been active in the *gshen* country of Hos kyi ljang-tshal (Verdant Grove of the Hos). The *gshen* Mu-cho Idem-drug, ‘Dur-gshen rma-da and a third figure named Khu-byug (Cuckoo) are recorded as receiving the funerary teachings directly from sTon-pa [gShen-rab] himself. Another funerary text of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, *Mu cho’i khrom ‘dur chen mo las lha bon gshen gsum gyer bzhengs* (anonymous), states that of all the 100,000 gshen who received the *gdos* (beneficial rites of many kinds) and *dpyad* teachings from the Bon founder, it was ‘Dur-gshen rma-da who was actually tantamount to gShen-rab himself (*gShen-rab nyid dang geig mod*) as a funerary practitioner. This text observes that ‘Dur-gshen rma-da is descended from a group of nine divine funerary gshen brothers described as power gods (*dlugs-lha*). As part of the tale of origins, the divine parents and grandparents of this *gshen* brotherhood are enumerated. 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 (*smyang-sgo*). To his inner circle of *gshen* he revealed all the teachings: the use of the wing instrument, soul rescue, the destruction of predatory demons, the cleansing of disease, and all other ritual specifications. In another text of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur entitled *‘Dur gsas lha sron sbrul shing spyan drangs pa* (anonymous), ‘Dur-gshen rma-da appears as an apotheosized figure invoked to defeat the *gshed* demons of death. He is referred to as a *sri-bon*, a class of ritualists specializing in eliminating the harm caused to the living and dead by the *sri* (and *srin*), a homicidal group of spirits. ‘Dur-gshen rma-da’s ritual dance of the tiger’s gait (*stag-gros*) and the lion’s manner of movement (*seng stobs-geid*) suppressed the *gshed* demons. According to this biographical account, ‘Dur-gshen rma-da wore headgear that sported turquoise bird horns, as do the special *gsas* and *gar* funerary deities of the *Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur.* Blezer (2008: 421, 424), reflecting earlier scholarly speculation on the matter, suggests that (pha) gShen-rab kyi myi-bo is not the proper name of an individual but rather a priestly title. He further opines (ibid.: 425) that it was Eternal Bon that created an individual out of this generic sacerdotal class during the bsTan-pa phyi-dar. The narrative content of the Dunhuang texts that mention gShen-rab myi-bo, however, unambiguously present him as an individual engaged in specific ritual activities (cf. Stein 2003: 597–600). As we shall see, gShen-rab myi-bo is also very much depicted as a person in the dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa text. In his work, Blezer (ibid.) resorts to polemics of a decidedly personal nature regarding my recent book (2008). I find this polemical approach unhelpful in furthering Bon studies and decline in this paper from addressing his various allegations.

¹⁴ “The teaching of three spoken words is sweet to the ear.” (bsTand (C.T. = bstan) pa rgyag tshīg (C.T. = tshig) sum ni rgar (= rgar, C.T. = mgar) mnyend (C.T. = snyan) /). This important archaic cultural tradition of saying three special words to the deceased is attested in the opening lines of the Eternal Bon funerary text rTa gsum bzhus so (New Collection of Bon bka’-brten, Klong rgyas sgrub skor, vol. 274, nos. 463-468): “Today, you magical equid (gor-bu), when we bequeath you as the Patrimony (rdo-rngs) of the dead one (gshin), we praise you with three words from our mouths (de ring sprod pa’i rgor bu khyod / gshin la rdo-rngs su rdo-rngs (= bzhizangs) tsam na / zhal nas bstod ma tshigs (= tshig) gsum gyis (= bygi’i) /).” See Bellerzza 2008, p. 456.

¹⁵ “Pan This O.T. term is the precursor of the C.T. verb ‘phan-pa (injured/spoiled/damaged).
he is dead. The crane egg, yes, it is cracked. The sharp\textsuperscript{17} bow, yes, it is broken."\textsuperscript{18} PT 1134 goes on to state that through the efforts of Dur-gshen rma-da-na (sic) and gShen-rab myi-bo, the deceased or lord was able to bypass the infernal land of the dead and reach the ordered position of the expansive heights,\textsuperscript{19} thereby attaining the afterlife.

In the funerary manuscript PT 1068 (Ins. 87–96), we read that the brother of sKyi-nam nyag-cig-ma, a girl who died in very tragic circumstances, invited gShen-rab myi-bo and two other funerary priests, Dur-shen gyi rma-da and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, to provide the dp Yad (diagnostic) procedures for her funeral. The brother, sKyi-phuyg ‘jon-pa, had enlisted their ritual services in order to rehabilitate his sister’s corpse and mind. The three ritualists advise the brother to travel to a distant land and procure a special female hybrid yak, which will be used to carry sKyi-nam nyag-cig-ma’s consciousness principles to the afterlife. The words of the three funerary priests can be paraphrased as follows:

‘Do you have the remedy,\textsuperscript{20} do you have the \{bon gpyad (= dp Yad\}) for my sister sKyi-nam nyag-cig’s hair standing on end in the sky and lice eggs falling down, do you know?\textsuperscript{21} The fathers Dur-shen gyi rma-da, gShen-rab myi-bo and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, these three, replied, ‘We gshen have the ritual remedy (bong = bon), we have the dp Yad, we have the means to rehabilitate (sos) the dead, those who are no more.\textsuperscript{22} For the hair standing on end in the sky, you can milk the mDzo-mo drama-ma of the sri n ford\textsuperscript{23} and daub the fresh lumps of butter. Brother sKyi-phuyg ‘jon-pa, you go there to mDzo-mo dram-ma’s Yul-ggod khyer gyi ‘bri-mo srang, where the two yaks Glang khye-bo ru-gar and Sa sral-mo mated and have had the offspring of the season.’

PT 1136 (Ins. 30–60) contains a smrang describing a funeral in which two colts were used as the do-ma, the psychopomp horses that transport the consciousness principles of the dead to the afterlife. In this tale the deceased is a princess (tsun) named Lady (lCam) Lho-rgyal byang-mo, who hailed from the headwaters region of the river country (yul-chab kyi ya-bgo) of southwestern Tibet.

\textsuperscript{17} rNo. This well-known metaphor describes sharp-edged weapons such as the sword and arrow.

\textsuperscript{18} Op. cit., Ins. 61, 62: khyed gyang (= kyang) grongs rje grongs gis mued grugs g.yu grugs gis myed na ‘pan gi ni bu grongso khrung khru (C.T. = khrung khrung) ni srong rdold / mo’i ni gzhu chag gis…

\textsuperscript{19} rle gral n mto (C.T. = mtho) yang sles.

\textsuperscript{20} [gThod] ji mchis. Contextually, this appears to convey the asking for a remedy or method.

\textsuperscript{21} This is an abbreviated translation of the last clause in the sentence, which also includes \{bon la [ga byad] ci mchis (?)\}.

\textsuperscript{22} This restoration refers to the refurbishment of the consciousness of the deceased so that he or she can rest easily and relinquish attachments to the world of the living. Sos or gso-ba does not refer to the reanimation of corpses. For a clarification of this term, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 399, 400, 538, 540. A seminal theme in the Mu-cho’i khrum’dur is the need to ease the suffering of the deceased in order that the rites of liberation can be successfully concluded. This sentence in the text is followed by: lan shing ni [cheru gthang] cha gar ni ring (du brtsid) ‘tshal ggis /, the meaning of which is highly obscure.

\textsuperscript{23} The name mDzo-mo dram-ma is etymologically related to the ‘brog-pa term ’bri-mo/mdzo-mo grus-ma/drus-ma (a female yak/female yak hybrid that has calved in the current year).
Given the name of her father rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag, we might expect this headwaters location to be that of the Yar-lung/Yar-chab rtsang-po/gtsang-po, a river whose principal source is Byea-ma g.yung-drung. rTsang refers to either a clan, tribal and/or geographic designation.\(^{24}\) lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo commit-

\(^{24}\) In reference to PT 1136, Blezer (2008: 431, 451) argues that rTsang in the name rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag refers to the rTsang-chen region, one of the territories mentioned in Dunhuang documents, and that this region may have extended all the way from Central Tibet to Gangs ti-se and mTsho ma-pang/ma-pham. This expansive localization of rTsang echoes the view held by Thomas (1957: Geographic Introduction, p. 11). In line with his opinion on the extent of rTsang, Blezer (ibid.: 425) maintains that the seven occurrences of gShen-rab myi-bo in the Dunhuang manuscripts have nothing to do with Zhang Zhung, but as I shall show here his view of the territorial scope of rTsang-chen is unwarranted. Even if we take rTsang in the name rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag as having geographic connotations (which it most probably does), it may well refer to the eponymous river and not the province, especially when we consider that the story is set in a very distant period of time (see infra, fn. 29). According to a chapter found in Chos’-byung literature entitled “Section on Law and State”, Zhang Zhung was sufficiently puissant to have its own administrative chief (kho-dpon; Dotson 2009: 38, 50). The Old Tibetan Annals state that along with the Four Horns of Tibet, the Sumpa Horn and areas in eastern Tibet, Zhang Zhung had the distinction of being divided into stong-sde, civil and military administrative units of the Tibetan empire (ibid.: 39). That Zhang Zhung was considered a significantly-sized territory in imperial times is also indicated in the famous Chos’-byung works mkhas pa’i dga’ ston and mkhas pa’i lde’u, which divide it into upper and lower halves, each consisting of five stong-sde (consisting of 1000 residential camps or households each; Bellezza 2008: 271; forthcoming-c, Vitali 1996: 433 (fn. 722). Zhang Zhung as an extensive polity is underlined by the inclusion of Gu-ge, a large region in itself, which constituted just one of the five stong-sde of lower Zhang Zhung. In fact, these five territorial divisions of Zhang Zhung include Yar-htsang/Yar-tshang, which I take to refer to the headwaters region of the gTsang-po river (cf. Vitali 2006: 433), squarely placing it within the compass of Zhang Zhung. Another of these stong-sde, sPyi-gtang, may also be placed in the gTsang-po headwaters region (ibid.). For the possible correspondence of Yar-htsang with Yang-rtsang of the Old Tibetan documents from Mazar Tagh, see Denwood 2008, p. 10. Furthermore, one of the five stong-sde of upper Zhang Zhung is Ba-ga stong-bu chung, which appears to be the Sum-pa’i stong-bu chung of Eternal Bon sources. This is a location in what is now Bri-ru county (Bellezza 2008: 271; forthcoming-c; cf. Sørensen et al. 2007: 259, fn. 741), extending the administrative scope of Zhang Zhung 350 km farther east than my typological studies of ancient monuments would indicate fell directly under its cultural remit. Using references to Tibetan and Chinese sources, Denwood (2008: 10–12) equates the five stong-sde of upper Zhang Zhung with the “Changhang Corridor”, a region he hypothesizes sustained itself through long-distance trade in high value goods. On the approximate borders of Zhang Zhung stod and smad, see Hazod’s cartographic survey (2009: 168, 169).

Given the localization data as set forth above, the position taken by Macdonald (1971: 264) in her study of PT 1136, that yul-chab kyi ya-bgo is an expression designating Zhang Zhung is not uncalled for, even if this area was just part of its territory. The localization of yul-chab kyi ya-bgo in southwestern Tibet and its association with Zhang Zhung is confirmed in PT 1060 (see infra, fn. 149). Vitali (2008: 413) uses the occurrence of the word hos to place the same PT 1136 narrative in Zhang Zhung as well. The name of the patriarch rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag includes hos, a term in Eternal Bon that is closely linked to Zhang Zhung and other western realms. In any case, it is imprudent to include Ti-se and mTsho ma-pang in the rTsang province, for as Vitali (ibid.: passim) shows in his work on the royal geographic parameters of Zhang Zhung, they are very much central to it (cf. Norbu 2009: 19). In Eternal Bon sources, Ti-se and mTsho ma-pang are consistently seen as an integral part of Zhang Zhung (its soul mountain and soul lake), a telling attribution in recognition of antecedent tradition. The 14th century CE text Khro bo dbang chen ngo mtskhar fixes the [southeastern] border between Zhang Zhung and Tibet (Bod) in the vicinity of gTsang kha-rag, which encompasses the well-known mountain rTsang-lha phu-dar/gTsang-lha phu-dar (Bellezza forthcoming-c; 2008: 271).
ted suicide distraught over her betrothal to the lord of Gu-ge. Her father rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and brother sMra zing-skyes informed the father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo that the girl had killed herself bound to a black hair rope. They requested that gShen-rab kyi myi-bo untie the rope, so he called for divine aid in the form of sacred animals:

<Ins. 52–55> The father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo said, ‘I cannot untie the black hair rope, Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo can untie it.’ Well then, although

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gTsang-lha phu-dar is located in the range of mountains dividing the Yar-chab gtsang-po and Ra-kha gtsang-po river systems, approximately 25 km southwest of Zang-zang, which is now in Ngam-ring county (approximately 86° 30” E. longitude). The precision of the Khro text in delineating a critical paleocultural watershed is demonstrated in the areal distribution of funerary pillar monuments (erected in the prehistoric epoch and perhaps as late as the early historic period); those characteristic of Upper Tibet extend down the Yar-lung gtsang-po valley nearly as far east as gTsang-lha phu-dar (ibid.). This constitutes incontrovertible physical evidence that the western Tibetan upland belonged to an integral paleocultural order with monumental (and by extension, ideological) traits distinct from the cultural complexion of Central Tibet. The sui generis funerary pillar monuments of the Tibetan upland are not found downstream of gTsang-lha phu-dar in gTsang. Central Tibet possesses its own characteristic ensemble of prehistoric and early historic funerary monuments. This archaeological evidence accords nicely with Denwood’s hypothesis (based on Tibetan and Chinese sources) that lower Zhang Zhung extended down the gTsang-po valley as far east as the borders of Gung-thang (2008: 12). We can conclude from the above analysis that the toponym Zhang Zhung as used in Tibetan literature came to denote much of the Upper Tibetan paleocultural zone, if not its entirety. This does not necessarily signify that the ancient highlanders used this name to designate their homeland. We simply do not know how they may have referred to it. As we shall see, there is considerable textual evidence indicating that some if not the entire Byang-thang was known as sMra-yul thang-brgyad in early historic times.

Yet, even areas downstream of gTsang-lha phu-dar in what became known as Las-stod byang may have once come under Zhang Zhung jurisdiction (Hazod 2009: 171, 172, 190). ITJ 1284 reports that the famous minister [Khyung-po spung-sad] zu-tse conquered the principality of To-yo chas-la, which he offered along with Byang gi Zhang Zhung to Khri srong-rtsan (alias ongodb-sran sgam-po; ibid.). Nevertheless, the hallmark pillar types of the Tibetan upland have not been documented in Byang, indicating that this region had a significantly different paleocultural makeup than areas west of Sa-dga’. Ascertaining the precise cultural, political and geographic features of the old rTsang province would greatly benefit from the scientific excavation of tombs in Ngam-ring, Lha-rtsse and other areas that fell under its purview.

The nightingale (C.T. = ‘jol-mo) as a divine messenger and ally of the gshen ritualists. The avian identity of Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo is confirmed in an illuminated funerary manuscript in the interconnected card format consisting of some 40 color illustrations on paper, each of which has an accompanying text in the Tibetan language. I have translated this document, which was kindly made available by the art collector Moke Mokotoff (New York City). It will form the basis of a paper on the archaic funerary traditions of Tibet, a work in progress. On the basis of its paleographic characteristics, lexical archaisms and grammatical structure, this incomplete funerary manuscript can be dated to circa 1000–1250 CE. This has been confirmed through the chronometric testing of a fragment of the manuscript containing one of its standard polychrome illustrations: AMS analysis, sample no. Beta-272516; conventional radiocarbon age: 960 +/- 40 BP (years before present); 2 Sigma calibrated result (95% probability): Cal 1010 to 1170 CE; intercept of radiocarbon age with calibration curve Cal 1040 CE. It should be noted that its grammatical structure in general is somewhat more modern than that of the Dunhuang funerary texts or the dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa ritual text under study. The illuminated manuscript contains a funerary rite dedicated to women. It is primarily concerned with protecting the deceased and her surviving kith and kin from harm thought to
he sent Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg\(^{26}\) to call Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo, he could not bring Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo, so he sent sKyin-po ru-thog rje (Lord Male Ibex Surmounted Horns)\(^{27}\) to call Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo. He emanate from the condition of death. This is accomplished through the invocation of a series of deities and divine animals. These figures can be divided into five main groups: 1) little birds, 2) jeweled deer protectors, 3) ste‘u deities with analogous ritual structures, 4) lbe‘u deities emanating from jeweled hail, and 5) special deities of the smrang. Among the little bird series is a pentad of forest birds that includes Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo. He is one of four bird Helpers born from an iron egg, which are led by a vulture. In the illustration accompanying the text the leader is depicted as a much larger bird than his four underlings. This type of vulture is referred to as gang-ka, which must be identical to or closely related to sacred bearded vulture, a bird that in Eternal Bon ritual traditions is known as bya-gshen rgod-po. The text of the card under scrutiny reads as follows: “The iron egg opened in the forest [and from it appeared] the little birds of the forest ke-ke (magpie?), khu-long (pheasant) zer-mong (?), and bya-gshen ‘jon-mo (nightingale) who lead the way in the forest. They are the superior equipment.* They are the little bird defender-protectors of the long-beaked gang-ka who appear in the southern forest. He controls the forest. They are his little bird rosary (flock) who benefit. Act as the little bird protector-defenders that do not disperse in the forest.” \(lcags\ srong\ nags\ la\ rdol\ /\ nags\ bye‘u\ ke\ ke\ dang\ /\ khu\ long\ zer\ mong\ dang\ /\ bya\ gshen\ ‘jon\ mo\ des\ (+/\ )\ nags\ la\ shul\ yang\ ‘dren\ /\ dkor\ yi\ dam\ pa\ lags\ (+/\ )\ bye‘u\ mgon\ srungs\ ma\ ni\ /\ lho\ ga\ nags\ mtshal\ (C.T. = tshal)\ nes\ (nas)\ /\ gang\ ka\ mchu\ rings\ (C.T. = ring)\ byang\ /\ shing\ khams\ dbang\ du\ sgyur\ /\ sman\ yi\ bye‘u\ ‘phring\ (C.T. = ‘phreng)\ nans\ /\ shing\ la\ myi\ (C.T. = mi)\ byer\ ba‘i\ (+/\ )\ bye‘u\ mgon\ srungs\ ma\ mdzod\ /\ /\ (nags\ la\ shul\ yang\ ‘dren\ /\ dkor\ yi\ dam\ pa\ lags\ /\ …sman\ yi\ bye‘u\ ‘phring\ nans\ /\ shing\ la\ myi\ byer\ ba‘i\ bye‘u\ mgon\ srungs\ ma\ mdzod\ /\ /\ ). The last line of the passage is somewhat enigmatic. It suggests that the forest birds must work in unison doing their part in liberating the deceased from the dangers lurking in the intermediate space (bar-sa). * dKor yi dam-pa. The mandatory presents and accompanying ritual procedures offered to the deceased and surviving relatives. See dKor/kor in PT 1042 (Bellezza 2008: 452, fn. 309). In the Klbu ‘bum nag po, a horse as valuable property (dkor) becomes the companion of the deceased (ibid.: 482, 484). In PT 1040, Ins. 100, 109, we find thang-ba‘i dKor, sacrificial funerary gifts of some kind (on thang, see fn. 244). The word dam-pa here has the connotation of ‘essential’, ‘indispensable’, ‘superior’, or ‘excellent’, rather than its more common meaning, ‘holy’. The leader of Bya-gshen ‘jon-mo and his three feathered friends, the vulture, are species of birds with much significance in ancient Tibetan myths and rituals. According to Eternal Bon documents, the adepts of yore had the ability to manifest as vultures, the ‘king of the birds’. The use of vulture feather headaddresses, robes and horns (crests) is also attested in these texts. Arrows with vulture feathers are used as tabernacles (khor) for various Eternal Bon deities, and native gods such as the werma manifest in the form of vultures. In origins tales about the soul stone (bla-rdo srid-rabs) and ritual wing instrument (gshag-rabs) found in the Mu-cho‘i khrum-dur, the vulture is cited as one of the three most important receptacles for the soul (Bellezza 2008: 413–417, 432–435). In the gshag-rabs, the vulture, along with a (precious) stone and juniper tree, serves as the protector of the soul of a divine human named smRa-mi dran-pa after his death. PT 1194 provides a smrang explaining how vulture wings came to be used in funerals to guide and protect the deceased (ibid.: 506–510).

\(^{26}\) A divine bird intermediary, most probably in the form of a species of pheasant. In Eternal Bon tradition, there are 13 species of bird messengers between humans and the deities (bya-bon ‘phrin-pa bceu-bsun). A divine animal messenger in the form of an ibex. The illuminated funerary manuscript (see supra, fn. 25) has this to say about this creature: “From the jewel cervid habitat is the long horn male ibex and the female beautiful movement ibex and also the kid ibex with the beautiful gait,” these three. Their hair and wool are excellent clothes. Their yogurt cleanses diseases of the body. They are the attendants/messengers that can run very far. They can go wherever as fast as they think it. We offer this superior equipment (2x).” yang rin cen (C.T. = chen) sha slungs nes (C.T. = nas) / sKyin po’ (C.T. = sKyin-po) ru rings (C.T. = ring) dang / sKyin mo stabs sdog dang / sKyin ba yang stabs sdog sum (C.T. = gsun) / sPus bal na bza’i mchog / zho yis sku snyun ‘byang / pho
The black hair robe was untied from the neck of Lady Lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun. Her face took on a bright white complexion and she reposed as if smiling.

The funeral preparations could now proceed and in due course the colts were used to ritually whisk the departed princess to the afterlife. The account ends by stating, “In ancient times it was beneficial, now it is also beneficial. In ancient times it was meritorious, now it is also meritorious.”

Similarly worded declamations of antiquity are made in smrang of other Dunhuang funerary manuscripts (and in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and dGa'-thang bum-pa texts). These smrang are placed in an early or even primordial mythic setting. While the activities and personalities described in PT 1136 cannot be historicized with any degree of assurance, for the early historic period author(s) and users of PT 1136, the tale of the plight of Lady Lho-rgyal byang-mo was conceived of as belonging to an epoch that unfolded long before the text was written, as epitomized by the use of the word gna’ or ‘ancient’ to qualify it. The PT 1136 narrative was perceived as relaying happenings of a prehistoric character, people and events that preceded the author(s) and users by hundreds if not thousands of years. A clear parallel with the smrang of Eternal Bon texts can be drawn here, for many of these are also attributed to the mists of prehistory.

Despite their mythic and legendary flavor, the smrang of PT 1136 and related Dunhuang archaic funerary manuscripts are not strictly ahistorical in nature. They are early historic (probably more accurately dated to the imperial period) accounts written to link antecedent funerary traditions with the cultural milieu of the authors and users. That is to say, they encapsulate prehistoric cultural traditions, as they were understood by certain early historic authors. Given the chronological propinquity of the PT 1136 smrang to the pre-7th century CE period, I do not believe its prehistoric attribution was entirely contrived, but that, in fact, it captured antecedent funerary traditions to a greater or lesser degree. Such smrang were an integral part of an extensive, complex and long-

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28 In the text, skyin po has been crossed out as it is unneeded in the sentence.

29 ...gna’ phun 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.”
standing Tibetan tradition, not an ad hoc embellishment, however they may have been altered or added to by their early historic period authors. Moreover, temporal continuity in funerary traditions is suggested by burial tumuli exhibiting cognate architectural traits, in which prominent Tibetan clans and royal figures of prehistoric and early historic Central Tibet appear to have been interred.\(^{30}\) Burial mounds of similar construction straddling the prehistoric and early historic divide are probably emblematic of the abstract cultural affinity between these two periods. Nevertheless, it cannot yet be determined with how much fidelity the Dunhuang \textit{smrang} actually retain pre-7th century CE funerary traditions. Exigencies of time and place may well have impelled their authors to significantly modify or distort these narratives to suit their own purposes. A codification or standardization of the archaic funerary materials is recognizable, particularly in formulaic geographic lists. As I have pointed out (2008), this was probably undertaken to cater to the needs of the Tibetan empire and its administrative apparatus.\(^{31}\) This ‘national’ mandate may have acted as a powerful force for tinkering with inherited prehistoric funerary traditions.

The most extensive tale explaining the origin of the funerary ritual transport horses (\textit{do-ma}) still in existence makes up the bulk of ITJ 731.\(^{32}\) This \textit{smrang} is also set in early times, in both heavenly realms and pastoral Tibet. It concerns three equid brothers, the youngest of which became the first riding horse of Tibet. At the death of his master, rMa-bu ldam-shar, this loyal horse named Khu rmang-dar was specially caparisoned to be the \textit{do-ma}. The funeral was conducted by gShen-rabs myi-bo and Dur-gshen rma-dad (\textit{sic}). Among the ritual procedures mentioned is the establishment of the \textit{rgyal} and \textit{se}, fundamental components of the tomb architecture. With the successful completion of the funeral, the deceased is able to ford the infernal river of the dead, and thus reach the joyous afterworld. The last part of the text reads:

<Ins. 122–130> The good turquoise was chipped. The lord died, he died from...\(^{33}\) The chipped turquoise is chipped from the head. The decayed

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\(^{30}\) A recent survey of the Central Tibetan burial mounds has been made by Hazod (2009: 175–192). More survey work is now underway by a team of Sino-Tibetan researchers.

\(^{31}\) In a similar light, Dotson (2008: 44, 45) observes that the ritual traditions of the \textit{bon-po} priests as recorded in Dunhuang literature may represent the invention from more localized traditions of an imperial period pan-Tibetan religious jurisdiction. Dotson (2007: 59) further comments that ITJ 740 reveals the formation of an imperial pantheon for prognoses, which must have developed through the Tibetan empire’s political expansion and administrative consolidation. I hold that the existence of a pan-Tibetan priestly tradition or corps in the imperial period, if it actually existed, presupposes overarching institutional structures governing the activities and conduct of its members. Occupational hierarchies, common administrative structures and collective organizational patterns can all be imagined in such a scenario. Such an institutional basis is given expression in Eternal Bon accounts of the ancient ‘du-gnas (religious assembly centers). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 283, 284, 290–292; Uebach 1999. This is not to imply that a pan-Tibetan sacerdotal institution reflected the presence of a monolithic religious tradition in the imperial period per se, but it does suggest that the empire’s religious affairs were marked by a high degree of ecclesiastic and ideological coherence.

\(^{32}\) This text is examined in Stein 1971, pp. 485–491; Bellezza 2008, pp. 529–537.

\(^{33}\) One or two syllables are effaced from this line.
(dphan) lord perished and was sadly lost; he was no more, so the fathers 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-rtsen was laid down. For the cherished do-ma they [erected turquoise horns on] the youngest brother Khu rmang-dar, he who would cross the ford. The ordered position of the lord was high... In ancient times, it was perfectly accomplished. 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.Operating in tandem with human and divine animal allies, gShen-rab myi-bo makes only fleeting appearances in the Dunhuang manuscripts. Despite his

34 One syllable may be missing from this line.
35 This is followed by a description of a funerary procedure concerning the earth and sky. It contains one or two illegible syllables.
36 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).
37 There are missing and illegible words here. The transcription of ITJ 731r supplied in Old Tibetan Documents Online (http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp/), reads: ‘is chab gang ni la ru [bgyi] [...]. The complete sentence would then translate: “For the cherished do-ma the youngest brother Khu rmang-dar, was [made] as the chab-gang [...], he who would cross the ford.”
38 The rest of this line is blighted by missing words; it has something to do with a ritual equivalency. Based in part on the transcription of the text in Old Tibetan Documents Online (http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp/), the words in question appear to read: brang rtsi’ gda mnabs mthungs mnyams dang ni mnyamsa / gn’a i pul pyungo da ’i ni la bsags / de (+ ring) sang lla na phyugs spo ma nyedu do ma snying dgas khyed rmams khyang da de dang ’dra de dang [...] gyis / chab grang (= gang) ni la ru mdzod chig yang ba ni rab du sbogs shig /

39 gNa ‘i ni pul-pyung (C.T. = phul-byung) ngo. Literally: ‘over the water’, a reference to the ability of the do-ma to magically transport the deceased to the afterlife. In the archaic funerary rites of Dunhuang literature, chab-gang is a stock expression, indicating the ritual efficacy and magical power of the do-ma. In the Eternal Bon funerary tradition, chab-gang refers to various presents given by the next of kin to the deceased to aid his/her passage across the river of the dead (gshin-chu) or more generally, to help effect liberation. For more information about chab-gang, see Bellezza 2008, passim.
40 This sentence is the incomplete rendering of the last two lines of the excerpt of the text.
critical role in these accounts, given their cursory nature, relatively little can be gleaned about the professional activities of this pivotal personality. Only with the recent discovery of the dGa’-thang ’bum-pa byol-rabs text has a fuller picture of gShen-rab myi-bo become possible. This Old Tibetan text appears to show that gShen-rab myi-bo played a mainstream role in archaic religious traditions. As seen from the perspective of the early historic individuals who venerated him, gShen-rab myi-bo emerges as perhaps the most important legendary figure of prehistoric Tibet.

The discovery of the byol-rabs in Central Tibet demonstrates that the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang were not isolated geographic occurrences. They were part and parcel of early historic religious traditions that spread far and wide, their places of deposit being more an accident of history than any indication of their original provenance. While the economic and institutional basis of these religious traditions is virtually unknown, the remarkable narrative and philosophical coherence of the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang ’bum-pa materials indicates that they were historically and culturally well-rooted in the affairs of ancient Tibet. This anchorage seems to reflect the existence of a pervasive folk religion, but one that may have been overlain by a variety of organized institutional structures.

The byol-rabs of dGa’-thang ’bum-pa occupies 13 folios of a volume of ritual texts that is 23 folios in length. The volume is in the booklet format, as are certain Dunhuang manuscripts. The first eight folios of this volume are concerned with the origin tales of several other rituals of an obscure nature. These are excluded from the analysis and discussion that follows as they bear little thematic relevance to the byol-rabs. The last two folios of the volume are devoted to the origins of golden beer libations (gser-skyems). The byol-rabs and

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42 A facsimile of the text under the name gNag rabs zhes bya ba has been reproduced in full in Gnam shul dga’ thang ’bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed pa’i bon gyi gna’ dpe blds gsgrigs (pp. 85-130). This book also includes a dbu-can transcription of the text (pp. 1-32). The numbers used in this paper to designate various parts of the byol-rabs conform to the numbering system employed in dGa’ thang ’bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed pa. Annotations to the text are found in the footnotes. A standardized positioning of the bloig-shad and nyis-shad are employed in the transliteration; no attempt has been made to mimic their relative placements between lines. The shad are used in a grammatically non-standard way in the text. In this study, I endeavor to highlight every O.T. verb and ritual object, both those with C.T. cognates as well as those with no apparent C.T. counterpart. I also make note of C.T. verbs that are used in the byol-rabs somewhat differently than their standard lexical forms.

43 I have translated this text in full. It is dedicated to extolling the parentage and qualities of beer (chang) and gold. The beginning of the text reads (no. 43, ins. 1–4): “In the origins tale of the gser-skyems, the grandfather of beer is called gNam’-khun ding-ba. The grandmother of beer is called Sa-khun ding-ba. The name of the father, the patriarch, is Lha-chu rnam-ga. The name of the mother, the matriarch, is rMu-chu ding-ba. The sons of their coupling in the season were the nine begotten beer brothers. They are the combined essence of grain, the most excellent of all foods.” The origins of gold are given as follows (no. 44, ins. 1–4): “The grandfather of gold is dGar-po shel-le dun and the grandmother of gold is Bye-ma bdal-dro (Uniform Warm Sand). The name of the father, the patriarch, is bZang-shod gser-po chen. The name of the mother, the matriarch, is sTong gyi spyi btud-ma. The son of the mating of these two in the season is small (pretty) gold, pure gold (sa-le sbram), he that is stable and heavy (brling la lti) so he can infiltrate everywhere (gur yang phyogs-ris thub). He that is soft and malleable (mo’yen la des) so he is compatible with all other things (kun dang nthun bar shes).” From these smrang we
gsersk are clearly separate from the first part of the volume and from each other. They each begin on a new folio underscoring their distinct literary and ritual identities. All the texts in this volume are anonymous, the product of a tradition of considerable but indeterminate length.

The byol-rabs was written with a more even hand than many of the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang. The script used in the byol-rabs appears to be a direct precursor of the various dbu-med yi-ge that developed after 1000 CE. With it we see the attenuation of the heads of some letters, anticipating the creation of the distinctive headless scripts. The byol-rabs letters are inscribed in a consistent manner indicating that they were the handiwork of a single scribe. The language employed is clearly Old Tibetan with its telltale verb morphology, case forms, orthography, and obsolete vocabulary. However, its grammatical structure and orthography appear to be slightly more 'modern' than texts such as PT 1068, PT 1134 and PT 1136. Along with its less florid calligraphy, this suggests that the byol-rabs somewhat postdates these Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. The archaic nature of the grammar and narrative content of the text, however, seems to signal that it was composed before the bsTan-pa phyi-dar and the emergence of the Eternal Bon textual tradition. Thus, provisionally, the byol-rabs can be dated to the aftermath of the Tibetan empire, circa 850 to 1000 CE. The various smrang of the byol-rabs contain references to Yabbla bdal-drug, Lha-bo lha-sras and gShen-rab myi-bo, personages that first make their debut in the Tibetan literature of Dunhuang. For this reason as well as the character of the ransom rites presented in the text (for example, their reliance on animal sacrifice), I am inclined to see its smrang as having been known in the imperial period, even if they were not written down until sometime later.

In Classical Tibetan the verb 'byol-ba (byol is the past tense and imperative form) denotes 'to escape', 'to avoid' or 'to step aside'. According to the manner in which the term byol is used in the byol-rabs text, it has three areas of signification:

1. Byol is a type of glud ritual. It shares the same underlying philosophical basis as other ancient ransom rituals. The name of this ritual indicates a method of freeing one caught up in a web of misfortune and is etymologically related to its usage as a verb.
2. Byol-[po] is a kind of demon as well as the pernicious affliction caused by it (this sense of the word is also found in PT 126, ln. 31).

can see that gold and beer have divine male personifications. These ritual substances are gods in their own right, an intrinsic nature that makes them ideal offerings to all manner of divinities. In the final part of the gsersk text, the two are written about together as a prelude to the actual offering of libations: "When beer and gold are combined their color is brighter than the sun and moon. They are more magnificent and beautiful than Ri-rab. They are more splendid than the earth. They are also more profound then the ocean. [To whom] are they offered and presented? They are offered and presented to the mighty lha and dre (C.T. = 'dre) of the four continents. Please accept this golden libation. Do not be capricious and angry. The golden libation origins tale is completed."

(chang dang gserskyems kyi rabs rdzogs so //)
3. *Byol* is a verb meaning ‘to repulse’ ‘to cast away’ or ‘to escape’. As noted, this sense of the word has been preserved in Classical Tibetan.

The *byol-rabs* contains six different origin tales of the *byol* ritual. Taken together they furnish a comprehensive geographic, historical and technical exposition of the *byol* performances. The *byol* ritual is designed to buy the freedom of humans and gods who find themselves in the clutches of treacherous demons. Through bribery, material exchange, and coercion, evil spirits are made to relinquish their hold on a victim. The substitution of something of equal value for the life of an individual stricken by harm is the basis of all *glud* rituals.44 This principle of reciprocity permeates the philosophy of many Tibetan rituals in both the ancient and modern contexts.45

The first proclamation of ritual origins is a narrative that is entitled or described as “In the chapter of the heart ransom rite *byol-po* and *ltas-ngan* and propagation of the *bdud* (*byol po snying glud dang / ltas-ngan dang / bdud rgyas pa’i le’u la; 17:1–23:8*). Literally, ‘bad omens’, the *ltas-ngan* are a class of demons that personify evil signs and portents. The *ltas-ngan* as harbingers of misfortune have remained an active part of Tibetan demonology to this day. The *byol-po* however are now an obscure class of evil beings. In the *byol-rabs* the *bdud* are depicted as a somewhat ambivalent class of spirits, one turned dangerous due to adverse circumstances rather than any inherent malevolence toward humans.46

The first *smrang* of the *byol-rabs* relates how the divine progenitor of the Tibetan kings, Yab-bla bdal-drug came under sustained attack by the *ltas-ngan* and *bdud* demons.47 In order to save his life, Yab-bla bdal-drug enlisted the help

44 The Bon historical text *bsGrags pa gling grags* records that the royal priests (*sku-gshen*) saved the life of Mu-khrī btsan-po through a ritual regimen that included all the major remedial procedures of Bon. In addition to the *glud*, these included aublations (*khrus*), fumigation with aromatic substances (*bsang*), purificatory rites (*sdi*), apologies to the Bon protective and lineage deities (*gyod*), offerings for their fulfillment (*biskang*), atonement exercises (*bskags*), and restorative rites (*gto*). See Bellezza 208, pp. 220, 221

45 This underlying theme in Tibetan rituals as well as the mythic precedents of the *glud* is examined in Karmay 1998, pp. 339–379. In Eternal Bon, the *glud* and related *mdos* rites are part of the second vehicle of teachings, sNang-gshen theg-pa. Significant studies of the *glud* are also made in Snellgrove 1967, 77–97; Namkhai Norbu 1995, pp. 77–86; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 359–362.

46 For a discussion of the ancient identity of the *bdud* according to Eternal Bon documents, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 279–287. For *bdud* in the rNying-ma tradition, see Blondeau 2008, pp. 204–206.

of four gshen versed in the glud. Each of these figures officiates over his own ransom ritual. Among them is gShen-rab myi-bo, whose ritual entails the sacrifice of a specially marked sheep. In the text, it is gShen-rab myi-bo who has the distinction of consummating the byol rituals with his personal performance. His ritual activities are directly credited with rescuing Yab-bla bdal-drug. Although it is never explicitly stated in the text, this function seems to confer on gShen-rab myi-bo a higher level of prestige than that enjoyed by his three colleagues.

The mythic importance of the origins narrative under scrutiny cannot be overstated, for the very existence of the line of Tibetan kings was insured by those who preserved the life of its most famous progenitor, Yab-bla bdal-drug. As a consequence of the byol rituals carried out by the four priests, the foundation of the Tibetan state became possible according to the traditional view of history. This could only have accorded the highest honors on these ancestral priests, elevating them to the position of cultural heroes, at least for those who wrote and used the byol-rabs. Moreover, a ransom ritual worthy of a divine ancestor of the Tibetan kings was surely good enough for others. There could hardly have been a better way for the author(s) to legitimize its practice and raise the social standing of the priests responsible for its propagation.

The byol-rabs begins by introducing its two major antagonists, the king of the bad omens (ltas-ngan gyi rgyal-po), Gang-par ge-ber (often simply referred to as Bad Omen), and the king of the bdud, She-le ru-tshe (alias bDud). She-le ru-tshe sends a bird minister (bya-blon) to set up a meeting on top of a pass with Gang-par ge-ber, an individual he holds in great esteem. The king of the ltas-ngan is described as wearing a robe (slag) of bird feathers, common attire for supernatural beings and priestly personages in the archaic cultural traditions of Tibet, including its rock art. True to his awesome reputation, when the king of the bad omens appears for his encounter with She-le ru-tshe, the entire sky and earth was obscured by his gaping jaws:

<17:1–7> The bdud She-le ru-tshe stays above the 13 layers of the sky. The king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber, stays below the nine layers of the earth. What mount does the king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber, ride? He rides a copper musk deer with three legs and three heads. From high above the sky the king of the bdud She-le ru-tshe said, ‘below the nine layers of the earth there is no one greater or mightier (btsan-ba) than him, king of the ltas-ngan.’ bDud (She-le ru-tshe) said to the bird minister with the crest (pub-shud), ‘you go on top of the bdud pass Yor-mo and meet the bdud and Bad Omen.’ The bird minister, having eaten the bad omen food and messenger food, a yellow golden halter was placed on (mthur) him.

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48 'Go (C.T. = mgo).
49 gSal. It appears that gsal is an O.T. inflected form of the verb gsol-ba (in this context: ‘to consume’, ‘to eat’), and can be glossed ‘eaten’ or ‘had consumed’. Thus far, I have not located other examples of the word gsal being used in this manner in Old Tibetan literature.
The bird minister told to the ear of Bad Omen, on what mount does Bad Omen ride? He rides a copper mule with red legs on which there are nine eyes of sparkling iron. Bad Omen said, ‘B Dud, you come up here. I myself will come down there.’ The king of the ltas-ngan, for the bad omen message, put a striped brocade robe on the bird minister with the crest. What does the king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber, wear on his body? He wears various bad omen manifestations and a robe of various types of bird feathers on his body. Coming down, the king of the ltas-ngan’s upper jaw engulfed the sky and his lower jaw engulfed the earth. His right eye turned towards the white sunny mountain. He left eye turned towards the black shady mountain. He stayed like that.

She-le ru tshe, the king of the bthed, proved no match for Gang-par ge-ber and when confronted by him he quickly capitulated. With his new ally, the king of

50 _I.e._ gave the message he was delivering.
51 _gShags._ This is either a variant spelling or an O.T. inflected form of the C.T. verb _gshegs_ (to depart).
53 _Yan-kal_ (C.T. = _ya-mgal_. Cf. _yan-kal/_yan-gal_ (upper jaw) in PT 1039, _passim_.
54 _Man-kal_ (C.T. = _ma-mgal_. Cf. _man-kal/_man-gal_ (lower jaw) in PT 1039, _passim_.
55 The predicate in this sentence is the O.T. term _bshal_, which in this context appears to mean ‘engulfed’ or ‘covered’. In PT 1289 (lns. r3-12 to v1-05, v3-01 to v3-03), the several occurrences of _bshal_/bshald have the connotation of ‘to lead’, as in the leading of a female hybrid yak (_mdzo-mo_) with a line.
56 The O.T. verb _bshal_ is again used here. In this context it can be glossed as ‘opened’/‘turned’/‘raised’/‘moved’.
the bad omens trained his savage intent upon Yab-bla bdal-drug. The ancestor of the Tibetan kings found himself surrounded by a horseman of the bdud and a soldier of the ltas-rgan:

<18:5 to 19:2> The king of the bdud [She-le ru-tshe] also manifested in the manner of Bad Omen and went in the appearance of Bad Omen. What mount was he riding on? He was riding on an iron deer with three legs and three heads. Wearing the bdud clothing ban-mo bun-mo (?) on his body, he came up, he went above the bdud pass Yor-mo. There the bDud and Bad Omen met. Upon seeing the king of the ltas-rgan, the king of the bdud suddenly panicked and fainted. Later, when the king of the bdud revived (bgryal-sangs), he said, ‘bDud could not challenge Bad Omen. There was no one bDud could not challenge. There was nothing I could not do and no one I could not subjugate. 57 There is nowhere that the (honeyed) rain (sbrang-char) of the sky does not reach. It seems that there is no one greater and more powerful below the blue sky and above the grayish brown earth than the king of the ltas-rgan, Gang-par ge-ber. As I the bdud could not challenge Bad Omen, you lead us Bad Omen. I the bdud shall come wherever you go.’

bdud kyi rgyal po yang ltas ngan gyi tshul ltar sprul de ltas ngan la ltar gshags ste // chibs su ci bcībs na // lcags kyi sha ba rkang gsum ’go gsum ba cīg bcībs // bdud gos ban mo bun mo sku la gsol nas / yas kyis gshags na // bdud la yor mo’i gong du bdud dang ltas ngan mjāl na / bdud kyi rgyal pos / ltas ngan rgyal po mthong nas // bdud yed kyis sngangs nas // bṛgyal de bzhugs na / de nas bdud kyi rgyal po // / bṛgyal sangs nas / bdud kyis ltas ngan la ma thub // / bdud kyis ma thub pa yang myed / byas shīng kha ma bcags pa yang myed / gnam gyi sbrang char gyis ma phog pa yang myed / gnam sngon po ‘og sa dro bo’i steng na // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber las che zhing btsan ba ma mchis pa dra’ // / bdud kyis ltas ngan la ma thub kyis // ltas ngan khyod kyis nsa drongs shīg bdud ngas khyod gar gro bar ’ong gyis bcīys na //

<19:3–6> Saying that, the king of the ltas-rgan replied, ‘above the firmament on the apex of the sky, bDud and Bad Omen became allied against Yab-bla bdal-drug. We shall take the tribute (dpya blang) of three years. We shall take the three sleeping59 hearts.’ Thus he spoke, so outside the residence of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug a horseman60

57 ’To subjugate’/’to defeat’/’to best’ is the reconstructed meaning of the phrase kha-ma bcags-pa (literally: ’to break the mouth’).
58 Dro-bo (C.T. = gro-bo). A color parallelism is intended in the sentence, thus dro-bo cannot mean ‘warm’ in this context.
59 rNal (C.T. = rest, composedness) is the semantic equivalent of nyal.
60 rGya = rkyā. See Bellezza 2008, p. 528 (fn. 609), for instances of rkyā (horseman; in Dunhuang materials rkyā also denotes a unit of agricultural land for taxation purposes). Also see rkyā-bros (to escape on horseback; Pasar et al. 2008: 13). The best known bdud horsemen are the Rol-po
circled. A horseman of the bdud circled. Behind the [house] a soldier was stationed. A soldier of the ltas-ngan was stationed.

ltas ngan rgyal po’i zhal na re // gnam gyi ya bla rgung gyi ya stengs na / rje yab bla bdal drug la / bdud dang ltas ngan bsdongs la // lo gsum gyi dpa y blang / snying gsum gyi rnal blang / de skad bgyis pa la / rje yab bla bdal drug la // khyi m phyi na rgya cig ‘khor / bdud kyi rkyas cig ‘khor // ltas phyi na rmag cig bab / ltas ngan gnyi rmag cig bab //

His life in imminent danger, two bon-mo or female priests conduct a divination (mo) and a class of beneficial rites known as gto on behalf of Yab-bdal-drug. In this context, the gto, like the mo, is an initial diagnostic or divinatory procedure that may have included astrological calculations. The priestesses determine that four gshen, those who specialize in the glud ritual must be invited. Yab-bdal-drug is recorded as compensating them with livestock and providing gold for their ritual performances. He also puts up a boy as the ‘small’ (nice or pleasing) collateral. The nature of this security or pledge made on the part of Yab-bdal-drug is unclear. This appears to have been some kind of good will gesture or sign of earnestness on his part:

<19:6 to 20:1> The bon-mo of the sky sDing-nga sding-lom and the bon-mo of the earth ‘Byo-ra ‘byor-jong, these two, with 42 little crystal stones of divination, did the gto and mo as bDud and Bad Omen arrived. [The bon-mo said], ‘four gshen should be invited. It is good to send four glud [makers]. The bdud-bon Dreng-nag chu-lcags, the thar-bon Dru-skyl, the glud-bon Ngag-snyan and gShen-rab myi-bo, these four.’ These four gshen were invited by Yab-bdal-drug. For the gift he gave a cow, and for the ritual constituents (yas) he offered gold. As the nice collateral, a boy was kept.

gnam gyi bon mo sding nga sding lom dang / sa ’i bon mo ‘byo ra ‘byor ‘jong gnyis kyis / shel kyi mo rde’u bzhis bu rtsa gnyis la / gto dang mo bgyis na / bdud dang ltas ngan bab / gshen bzhis spyan drang ‘tshal / glud bzhis gtang bar bzang / bdud bon dreng nag chu

rkyag-bdun/Rol-pa skyag-bdun, a group of fierce spirits that have been inducted into the Lamaist pantheon. The murder of two hapless hunters by these horsemen is recounted in the ancient ritual text Klu ’bum nag po (ibid.: 482–485). For a detailed description of these semi-divine beings taken from both Eternal Bon and Buddhist texts, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 287–302.

rMag (C.T. = dmag).

Bab. This could also be translated as ‘deployed’/’placed’.

According to a work originally written in Chinese, bon-mo (che-mou) functioned as the mouthpiece of spirits and were involved in the sacrifice of animals, making offerings to the lha, ’dre and srimo, and appeasing the klu (Stein 2003: 594). For the gto as a diverse class of rites, see Norbu 2009, pp. 188, 189; Dotson 2008, p. 43 (after Lin Shen-yu).

gTe’u (C.T. = gta’-ma).

As in the ritual constituent (yas) Ephedra in bon (the ritual performance and its underlying philosophical and historical context; ITJ 734r, In. 3r98): bon kyi ni' yas mishe /.
lcags dang / thar bon dру skyol dang // glud bon ngag snyan dang / gshen rab myi bo bzhī / yab bla bdal drug gyis / gshen bzhī sphyan drangs so / / rnga ndu ba phul / yas su gser drangs so / / gte'u du bu bzhag nas /

The text now proceeds to describe the ritual undertakings of the four gshen summoned, beginning with Dreng-nag chu-lcags/Dreng-nga dreng-khug. Described as a bdud-bon, a priest who propitiates the bdud, this figure is either identical or closely related to the bdud-bon Kha-ta greng-yug of Eternal Bon. Kha-ta greng-yug is described as clad in a black cloak, wielding an ax (the weapon of choice for the bdud) and riding a dark brown horse of the lda (a major bdud lineage). The byol-rabs furnishes a synopsis of Dreng-nga dreng-khug’s propitiation of She-le ru-tshe and his retinue of bdud. In the performance, two main ritual instruments are noted: an ornamented arrow and a sacrificial sheep. Satisfied with what had been offered them, the bdud release Yab-bla bdal-drug from their scourge. This freeing of his body is amply conveyed in the text through the use of two metaphors:

<20:1-7> Then the bdud-bon Dreng-nga dreng-khug (sic) tied the dark blue silk cloth of the bdud to the bdud arrow with the black nock. On the arrow shaft of three joints he tied a [sheep] skin with an ornamental border (dra’-chags). On the black sheep of the bdud with the white

66 Kha-ta greng-yug and the origins of the god Mi-bdud are presented in Dra ba nag po lda zor bsgrub. See Bellezza 2005, pp. 283–287. In this text, set in very early times after the birth of Mi-bdud, the bdud-bon Kha-ta greng-yug is documented ritually preparing for war against his archenemy, Hor-dzum mul-sam-pa lag-rings. This entailed the slaughter of a black sheep of the bdud with a white forehead (bdud-lug nag-po spyi-dkar) and a special type of bay yak. The deity propitiated by Kha-ta greng-yug was Mi-bdud ‘byams-pa khrag-mgo, the central god of the bdud-bon tradition and an important Eternal Bon protector. In the Eternal Bon funerary cycle known as the Mu-chö’i khrom-‘dur, a description of a prototypic bdud-bon practitioner is given. In the guise of a bdud himself, he subdues the demonic agents of death. For good measure, in this Classical Tibetan account with its Buddhist-style doctrinal orientation, the bdud-bon named Chu-lcags rgyal-ba discourses on or explains [the doctrine] in a compassionate manner (snying-rgie bzhad) to the bdud: “bswo! You bDud-bon Chu-lcags rgyal-ba have a black body color that emits bright light. You possess tremendous force and mighty skill and are extremely powerful. Subduing the world of the bdud, you teach them compassionately. You are the gshen who conquers the world of the bdud. Destroy to dust the bdud and sri killers (gshed). Accomplish the activities unhindered and quickly. It is time for your wishes to be fulfilled. It is time for the departed dead one to be [guided to salvation]. (bswo bdud bon chu lcags rgyal ba ni / sku mdog nag la ’od zer ’phros / drang shugs stobs ldan mithu rtsal can / bdud kham s’du zhih snying rie bzhad / bdud kham bka’ bsgyur bu’i gshen / bdud dang sri gshed rdul du rlog / ma thog (= thogs) myur du phrin las pad / khed kyi thugs dam dus la bab / gshe’ dus grong pa’i dus la bab /). See SNgags gyi mo’i ’dur rin chen ‘phreng ba nu chu’i khrom dur chen mo las mtshan bon g.yen sde’ sdu la, anonymous (New Collection of Bon bka’-brten, vol. 6, nos. 1007–1070), nos. 1018, Ln. 4 to 1019, Ln. 1.

67 In the reengineering of ancient religious history by Eternal Bon, it is gShen-rab who is supposed to have opposed the bloody immolations of the bdud-bon. For example, this abolition is described in the Srīd pa sphyi mdos (Norbu 2009: 79, fn. 7, 89).
bdud bon dreng nga dreng khug gyis // bdud mda' ltong nag la // bdud dar mthing nag btags // mda' rgyud tshigs gsum la // dpags bu dra' chags btags // bdud lug nag po spyi gar la // bdud mtshe kha nag ba 'bri g.yas la btags // bdud dung khyil nag ni // ba 'bri g.yon la btags // ras kyi phrag sgye bkal de // bdud bon dreng nga dreng khug gyis // srod la bsgyer bsgyer nas // tho ras glud du btang // glud su la phul na // bdud kyi rgyal po // she le ru tshe dang // blon po snya lde ngag rtsan dang // bdud kyi jo bo ri che 'gong nyag dang // nag po

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68 mTshe. A primary ritual substance in the archaic funerary traditions of PT 1136 and the Mu-
cho'i khrom-dur. Ephedra, often ritually used with mustard seeds and barleycorn, is a
584. Ephedra has been discovered deposited in ancient tombs throughout much of Inner Asia,
one of numerous transcultural funerary traditions in the region (for some of these cultural
linkages, see ibid). For example, along the southern tier of East Turkestan, the Swedish
archaeologist Bergman discovered Ephedra pedicels strewn in several coffins in conjunction
with arrows and grains of wheat and millet. He notes that in the Nan-shan region, Tibetans
add Ephedra to funerary pyres as a kind of fumigant. See, op cit. Bergman 1939, pp. 70–73, 87.
One of the three brothers of Tibet’s first king, gNya'khri btsan-po was called mTshe-mi
(Ephedra man). He was a sku-gshen or bon-po class priest. For lore about mTshe-mi, see
156. For the use of Ephedra in an archaic glud ritual, see Thomas 1957, Texts, Translations and
Notes, pp. 56, 57; Stein 1971, p. 507.

69 ‘Flank’ or ‘haunch’ is a conjectural reading for the term ba’-bri.

70 bsGyer. This is an O.T. past tense verb for ‘to chant’. Compare with what appears to be a more
archaic form of the same verb in PT 1136, bsgyir. See Bellezza 2008, p. 529, fn. 620.

71 The name of this well-known bdud in various sources is given as Re-ti ‘gong-yag/Re-ste mgo-
yag/Re-ste ‘gong-nyag (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 255, 259, 274, 287, 288). In one Buddhist
source this spirit is said to be the brother of the wrathful goddess Remati (Ducci 1949: 219). A
vivid description of Re-te mgo-yag (sic) is found in a mdo ritual of the rin’gyud ma’i rgyud ’bum
(Blondeau 2008: 231). This fearsome king of the bdud rides a black horse and throws a black
lasso. Re-sde mgo-g-yag (sic), as the bdud ruler of one of ten prehistoric Tibetan kingdoms, is
noted in mKhas pa lde’u (Bellezza 2008: 280; Norbu 2009: 17).

72 For information on this bdud see Blondeau 2008, pp. 205, 231; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp.
268, 281. This dull black killer rides a black horse, brandishes a black lasso, and has a black
beard and black breath.

73 Literally, the ‘One of Misfortune/Evil/Injury’.

74 sNyil (C.T. = snyi’/rnui). For the use of snares to capture funerary ritual transport horses in PT
1136, see Bellezza 2008, p. 527.

75 gDos (C.T. = gdol).
bkrag med dang / nyes po dang / mthongs po dang / de rnams kyi phyag du phul na // rje yab bla bdal phrug ni / bdud lag nas blus so // bya mgul nas snyī bkrol / sha rkang las gdoes bcad do //

The next gshen mentioned in the text is Dru-skyol, whose name is prefixed by thar-bon, designating that he is a priest who liberates through a group of rituals known as thar. In one of the origin tales of the Mu-cho’i khor-m’dur, the thar-bon Gru-skyol (C.T. rendering of his name), along with gShen-rab, is credited with being one of the 18 original funerary priests (’dur-gshen; Bellezza 2008: 378). In the Eternal Bon historical text bsGrags pa gling grags, Thar-bon grub-skyol (sic) and another sku-gshen known as Co-mi carried out glud and gto rites to free Tibet’s second king, Mu-khri btsan-po, from grievous injury caused by the demigods (ibid.: 220, 221). In the byol-rabs, Dru-skyol’s ritual activities are specifically directed towards the btsan, another common group of ambivalent spirits. Among the objects in his ritual armory is brocade in the characteristic red color of the btsan. A fine bull yak constitutes the animal used in the thar offerings (its fate is not specified in the text). Dru-skyol’s labors conclude with an affirmation that the exchange between the two sides was equal (mnyam gyis brie), leading to a successful outcome for Yab-bla bdal-drug. The benefits thus accrued are stated to have taken place in ancient times:

<20:7 to 21:4> Also, the thar-bon Dru-skyol erected the white thar tent (sbra). A white silk curtain was drawn. A tent of brocade was erected. A thar felt with a striped border was spread out. He collected all kinds of the thar ritual constituents. An arrow shaft with three joints and the ritual presents (yon) were distributed to the [patron deities of the] thar: an arrow, bam (?) and rope, these three; red-colored brocade; a purplish khar-thabs; a prized bull (sham-po) yak of the thar; and a bow were arranged in an orderly manner. He chanted and chanted throughout the night and at dawn he sent the glud. For one third, yes, of the night, for one fourth, yes, of the middle of the night, it was offered into the hands of the three btsan. The btsan became pleased. The exchange between them was equal and it was accepted [by the btsan]. In ancient times, the benefit was like that benefit.

76 Za-bug (C.T. = za’og) gyi gur.
77 Cho-rgu (‘all kinds’, ‘nine kinds’). See infra, fns. 91, 205.
78 Possibly, this clause can be better translated: “three bunches (bam-[chugs]) of arrows, [each of which was tied with] a rope.”
79 dMar-ntshon (C.T.= dmar-tshon).
80 C.T. = mkhar-thabs (a model house or castle designed for spirits to reside in during Bon ritual performances).
81 skryogs-dgar (= mchog-dgar). See text infra, no. 39, In. 7. For an occurrence of mchog-gar (sic) in ITJ 731r, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 536, 537.
82 Dral du mngar (C.T. = dgar).
83 This is the import of the line: rgung gyi ni bzhi ‘brum (na) /
84 gNya’ phan de ltar phan no /.
The third gshen to work on behalf of Yab-bla bdl-drug was the glud-bon Ngag-snyan (Melodious Speech). This specialist in glud rituals mainly appeased bdud class demons. Ngag-snyan’s performance is actually credited with winning back the soul of Yab-bla bdl-drug:

<21:5 to 22:2> Also, what glud was sent by the glud-bon Ngag-snyan: a golden spindle with a bright turquoise drop-spindle wheel\(^{85}\) and a turquoise spindle with a bright golden drop-spindle wheel, [and] a living chough, the bird of the bdud, on which a large golden bell was tied. The glud-bon Ngag-snyan chanted and chanted throughout the night and at dawn it was offered as the glud. It was offered, yes, to whom was it offered? To the three sisters of\(^ {86}\) rJe-btsun, yes, Pho-ba; rGya-btsun, yes, rMang-ba; g.Yu-btsun nga-ra; these three: A-ma yamo, one; Rab-ma de-shor, two; Sho-ma myi-bdag btsun-mo,\(^ {87}\) these three. It was offered in the hands of the three sisters and three brothers. It was offered in the hands of the younger brother bDud-bzangs ste-‘tsher-ba and the elder sister rGu-ri za’i-phwa sangs-ma. It was offered in the hand of Ma-gdon bdud dram-pa. The soul\(^ {88}\) of the lord Yab-bla bdl-drug was exchanged for the glud. The benefits were like that.

yang glud bon ngag snyan gyis / glud du ci btang na’ / gser gyi mo ’phang la // g.yu ’i mong lo gsal // g.yu ’i mo ’phang la / gser gyi mong lo gsal // bdud bya skyung kha gson ma la / gser gyi dril chen btags // glud bon ngag snyan gyis // srod la bsgyer bsgyer nas // tho ras glud du phul // phul ba ni su la phul // rje btsun ni pho ba dang // rgya btsun ni rman ba dang // g.yu btsun nga ra gsum gyis // srin mo lcam gsum na’ // A ma ya mo gcig / rab mā de shor gnyis // sho ma myi bdag btsun mor gsum // lcam dral gsum gyi phyag du phul // mying po bdud zangs ste ‘tsher ba dang // srin mo rgu ri za’i phwa sangs ma’i phyag du phul // ma gdon bdud dram pa’i

\(^{85}\) Mong-lo (C.T. synonym = ’phang-lo).

\(^{86}\) Gyis = gyi.

\(^{87}\) The text incorrectly reads: btsun-mor.

\(^{88}\) Brla (C.T. = brla). sKu’i-brla (sku’i-bla) occurs in ITJ 734r and brla-na (bla-ma) in PT 1285. For the spelling brla, also see para iii of a soul invocation text in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur (Bellezza 2008: 619).
The fourth and final ritual performance is carried out by gShen-rab myi-bo. He is attributed with carrying out the byol itself, a subclass of glud rituals. This entailed the elaborate packaging of a heart that came from a sacrificial sheep of the thar ritual group. By exchanging this specially prepared sheep heart for that of Yab bla bdal-drug, the god’s life was spared. To my knowledge, the byol-rabs is the only Old Tibetan text that directly implicates gShen-rab myi-bo in the ritual sacrifice of an animal.\(^9\)

\(<22:2-8>\) Also, gShen-rab sent a byol from his body. He mercifully\(^8\) caught a thar sheep. Above the bdud pass Yor-mo he [collected] all the various aspects\(^1\) of the byol and removed the heart from the body cavity of the thar sheep Ya-gangs. It was wrapped up in the dark blue cloth of the bdud. As its outer ornament, silk and brocade. As its inner ornament, gold and turquoise. To exchange the beating human heart and beating sheep heart, the beating sheep heart was put\(^1\) inside a white cloth folded over nine times.\(^2\) It was pursued,\(^4\) it was pursued

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\(^9\) Chos 'byung me tog snying po, by Nyang-ral nyi-ma'i 'od-zer (12\textsuperscript{th} century CE), states that a guer-bon (an ancient class of rituals and practitioners) glud in the country of sTag-gzig (in this account, localized in northern Pakistan), with its reliance on animal sacrifices, was not in conformance to the teachings of sTon-pa [gshen-rab]. This Buddhist historical reference indicates that by the 12\textsuperscript{th} century CE, Eternal Bon had re-emerged as the religion we know today by repudiating the slaughter of animals commonplace in archaic religious rites. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 233-235. The glud rituals of Eternal Bon and Buddhists are still charged with the symbolism of animal sacrifice. In particular, the plant and mineral substances used to make the ngar-mi or effigy of the patient treated in the glud is described in the liturgies as forms of blood and flesh (Karmay 1998: 345-348; Norbu 1995: 84-86; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 361). The dpal-bo (spirit-mediums) of the Sikkimese Lhopos in Tingchim village have oral texts known as bon, which were used to induce a state of trance, in order that they could reach the bon paradise where the ancestors and deities reside. Among the bon recitations is one recounting the activities of Yum-ma-chen ’dus-gsum sangs-rgyas, who is supposed to have been the daughter of gShen-rab. This daughter is said to have been empowered by all the deities of Tibet through the sacrificial offering of a mythical animal. A king of Yar-lung enlisted Yum-ma-chen’s help in ridding his kingdom of malefic entities. With the aid of her deities she catches and kills an animal with the head of a pig, the body of an onager and the voice of a goat. Through the decapitation of this creature all the deities of Tibet (Bod-lha rnam-dgu) are summoned and fumigated. The tail, legs, ribs, liver, lungs, blood, kidneys, intestines, and waste material of the immolated animal are offered to a variety of spirits. For this tale and background on the bon recitations of the Lhopos, see op. cit. Balikci 2008, pp. 353, 354. Balikci (ibid.; 374, 375) hypothesizes that residents of Tingchim village may have migrated to their present homeland from Yar-lung before the people of Mi-nyag arrived in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century CE, taking their bon oral traditions along with them.

\(^8\) Yang-ngas (C.T. = ya-nga). This word can also be translated as ‘compassionately’, ‘pitiably’.

\(^1\) Cho-sna-rgu (‘all the various kinds’, ‘nine kinds’). See infra, fn. 205.

\(^2\) gSal. This appears to be an O.T. inflected form of the verb goil (in this context: ‘was put into’, ‘wrapped’).

\(^3\) This is the probable reading for dar kar (C.T. = dkar gyi rgyu (C.T. = dgu) ldong. The O.T. verb ldong appears to be etymologically related the C.T. term ldong (blinded) as kind of concealing or shrouding.

\(^4\) gDas (C.T. = bdas).
by whom? It was pursued by the growling wolves of the bdud. It was seen by the bdud and it looked like a golden pestle that was decorated and [well] placed. As Yab-bla and the bdud became happy, the beating human heart of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug was exchanged for the sheep heart. That was the benefit.

The text continues to describe sacrificial rites presumably carried out by gShen-rab myi-bo. The significance and symbolism behind these ritual operations is hard to assess, as much of the tradition has been blotted out of the Tibetan collective memory (peripheral regions perhaps notwithstanding). In addition to the sheep, the flesh of the argali (gnyan-sha), which is magically empowered by Ephedra and mustard seeds, is mentioned. Through these flesh offerings the life of Yab-bla bdal-drug was rescued, ransomed or purchased (blus). In describing this exchange between the protagonist and his various enemies, the nape of the neck (ltag) is used as a metaphor for Yab-bla bdal-drug’s life and that of the sacrificial animals. After the ritual butchering is completed, the meat and barley cakes known as zan were used to construct a khar-thabs, a ritual domicile for habitation by the demons:

<22:8 to 23.4> Also, the flesh of the back of the neck of the argali was dangled here and dangled there. From the door of dreng (?) the nape of the neck of the sheep was cast (byol) through the door. Incantations were said on Ephedra and mustard (nyungs) seeds on the back of the neck flesh of the argali. Rescued by the glas (ritual fare) and glud. By the nape of the neck of the sheep, the nape of the man was rescued. The byol flesh forearm, grunting here and grunting there, grunting like a wild yak, was sent. By the byol flesh haunch: whose haunch was this haunch? It was cast off as the right haunch of the enemy. It was cast away to the enemies and obstructors.

95 bdud kyi spyang ngar ‘das (C.T. = bdas) /. This sentence is not well constructed, casting some doubt on its actual meaning.
96 Phas dreng ut tshus dreng na /. In this context, ‘dangled’ seems the most appropriate gloss for the word dreng. This appears to be an O.T. verb form closely related to ‘grengs’ (placed upright).
97 Gra (C.T. = dgra).
98 Gra’ (C.T. = dgra).
of the ribs and that side of the ribs was cast away from the spine (rtsib gyi gung). The medicinal flesh rump and bdud barley cake khar-thabs, fashioned (btod) with, yes, four doors of the byol, were put inside the lho-skur and mon-skur.101

yang gnyan sha ltag pa de / phas dreng ní tshus dreng na / dreng gyi sgo mo las / lug kyi ltag pa sgo mo las byol / gnyan sha ltag pa la mtshe dang nyungs kyis bsnags / / glas dang glud kyis blus / / lus kyi ltag pa’is / / myi ’i ltag pa blus / / byol sha lag ngr la / phas ngr tshus ngr na / ’brong ltar ngr la byol / / byol sha dpung pa ‘is / dpung ní tshus dpung na / gra dpung g.yas la byol / gra’ dang bgags la byol / / phar rtsib tshur rtisb na rtsib gyi gung ru las byol / / sman sha bzhug do dang / bdud zan khar thabs la / / byol gyi ni sgo bzhi btod / lho skur mon skur nang du gsal / /

It is gShen-rab myi-bo who has the honor of finalizing the ritual recovery of the divine sire Yab-bla bdal-drug. As is customary in contemporary glu rituals, the byol ensemble of offerings was deposited at a major crossroads. To consummate the expulsion of the demons, gShen-rab myi-bo shoots a special arrow at the byol and casts magically empowered Ephedra and mustard seeds. These exorcistic procedures still find expression in Bodic glu rituals carried out today:

<23:4–8> gShen-rab myi-bo displayed mystic hand signals (phyag-rgya). He cast away (bor) the byol at the main crossroads. In ancient times whose byol was it? It was the byol of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug. Also, removing an arrow from the quiver when looking at the vane (sgro), it is the vane of Ephedra. When looking at the arrow point, yes, it is the arrow point of wood. The byol does not like the arrow point. Incantations were said on Ephedra and mustard seeds (yungs) and they were thrown at the residing five ’dre of the body and five enemies. Thus, in ancient times the byol was like that. Yab-bla bdal-drug was rescued from his illness by the byol. [Once again] he was sleeping and mating.

99 bGags (C.T. = bgegs)
100 sMan-sha bzhug-dao. Rather than ‘medicinal’ sman here could also denote ‘beneficial’. Another possibility: sman = dman, an O.T. term related closely in meaning to dma’ (lower).
101 Apparently, these are types of ritual vessels or baskets. See Bellezza 2008, p. 329 (fn. 374) for a similar occurrence. Lho-skur, mon-skur and the rgya-skur are noted in ITJ 734r, ln. 4r157, as part of an offerings regime in a not unlike ritual performance.
102 Shul kyi khri mdo. I am treating khri here to mean ‘seat’, as in a major or centrally-placed crossroads (shul kyi mdo). It is also possible, however, that khri is related to the khri-zhi, a word that is supposed to be the Zhang Zhung equivalent of ’gro-ba (to go, to walk; Pasar et al. 2008: 26).
103 Me-bshed (C.T. = mc-bzhes).
104 ‘Rescued’ or ‘recovered’ seems the most appropriate gloss here for the word shos-pa. Shos-pa appears to be closely related to the C.T. term bshol (‘canceled’, ‘refunded’, ‘rescinded’).
The tale of Yab bla bdal drug’s ritual rescue by gShen rab myi-bo and his three associates is followed by five more smrang, each of which unfolds in a different part of Tibet. These regions include rKong-po, Bal-yul (in gTsang), Yar-lung, sKyi-yul (in dBus), and finally sMra-yul thang-brgyad (in Upper Tibet). Together the five regions selected for the byol narratives represent the geographical core and cultural heartland of imperial Tibet. While different languages may have once been spoken and different customs followed in these constituent regions, they are depicted as sharing the same ritual idiom undergirded by a common religious, cultural and social ground. The wide geographic compass of the origin tales demonstrates the universal reach of the byol ritual, insomuch as the author(s) and users of the text were concerned. This welding of disparate corners of Tibet in a single ritual system would have proven useful in the cultural integration of the Plateau in the time of the empire and even in its aftermath. Accordingly, practitioners of the byol and related rituals must have seen themselves as being accorded a pan-Tibetan socio-religious standing, significantly elevating their stature.

The first of these geographic-based smrang takes place in Myi-yul rkyi-mthing (23:8 to 25:7). Known as Myi-yul skyi-mthing in the smrang of ITJ 731r, this storied land has been identified with a location in rKong-po by Karmay (1998: 211–227). Myi-yul skyi-mthing is best known for its association with the descent of Tibet’s first king, gNyā’-khrī btsan-po.105 The byol-rabs origins tale proceeds to describe a disaster in the form of a livestock epidemic, with horses, yaks, sheep, goats, and pigs contracting diseases peculiar to their species. The inclusion of

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105 Myi-yul skyi-mthing also has a much larger geographic compass as a metaphorical expression for the land of humans (myi-yul). I will demonstrate this in a forthcoming paper featuring a pha-rabs text of considerable historical importance, which I have translated. In ITJ 731r, Myi-yul skyi-mthing may well refer to the earth as a whole or the realm of human beings rather than merely a location in rKong-po. In this Dunhuang text, there are two instances of Myi-yul skyi-mthing being directly prefixed to sMra-yul thag-rgyad (variant spelling of the more frequently occurring sMra-yul thang-brgyad, see infra, the introduction to the final origins tale in the byol-rabs text). This syntax indicates that Myi-yul skyi-mthing is a larger geographic entity than sMra-yul thag-rgyad, the latter falling within it. As sMra-yul thag-rgyad/thang-brgyad appears to be a location in Upper Tibet, the events described in ITJ 731r, concerning the first funerary ritual transport horse’s (do-ma) relationship with its owner rMa-bu ldam-shad, may have transpired in the highlands of western or northern Tibet, not rKong-po. From an archaeological perspective, the origins of the do-ma riding horse in Upper Tibet or northeastern Tibet, regions in closer communication with the Eurasian steppes, is sounder than its placement in the forested valleys of rKong-po. For a cultural historical analysis of ITJ 731r, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 544–553. Also see Stein 1971, pp. 485–491.
swine and a sacrificial cock in this smrang seems to reflect its eastern Tibetan setting. Another terrible omen described in the text is the spectacle of wild animals locked in mortal combat. The text then goes on to boldly state that the demons in the form of bad omens were banished by the byol:

<23:8 to 24:3> The origin tale of the ltas-ngan, the origin tale of repulsing the ltas-ngan: There in the country, of residences (khab), doors (livestock?) and leaders (btsan), these three, the disasters (sdīg) of the ltas-ngan appeared. The horses contracted (byung) drug-phrum. The cattle (gnag) contracted tshe-ma. The sheep contracted ro-gal. The goats contracted zangs-lan. The pigs contracted skar-mdā'. From the sky appeared the stone of the epidemic. Deep cracks appeared on the earth. The vultures fought with their claws. The stags fought with their antlers. The male musk deer fought with their tusks. The fish fought with their tails. For the habitations and livestock these were bad signs. How could these ltas-ngan be repulsed (bzlog)? The ltas-ngan were repulsed by the byol.

ltas ngan gyi rabs la // ltas ngan bzlog pa'i rabs la // khab sgo btsan sum ‘dīr ltas ngan yul sdīg byung // rta la drug phrum byung / gnag la tshe ma byung // lug la ro gal byung // ra la zangs lan byung // phag la skar mda’ byung // gnam las dal rdo byung // sa la gting drum byung // bya rgod sder ‘dzings byung // sha pho ru ‘dzings byung / gla pho mche ‘dzings byung / nya mo rnga ‘dzings byung // khab sgo mtshungs su ngan na // ltas ngan cis bzlog na // ltas ngan byol gyis bzlog //

The story now jumps to the lord of Myi-yul rkyi-mthing, Myi-rab ru-cho, a Tibetan progenitor or venerable ancestor. He is witness to the bad omen of a pair of vultures fighting, which had been sent by the bdud and ltas-ngan demons. After both vultures die, Myi-rab ru-cho flings their corpses off the top of his castle. This has no effect on his steed Khug-khug but it causes his colt ‘Phywo-phywo to take flight. ‘Phywo-phywo flies across mountains and valleys all the way to the desert of rGya thang-myed. The flight of the colt underscores the great danger that Myi-rab ru-cho faces from the bdud and ltas-ngan. In order to be released from their curse, Mus-dpal phrogs-rol, a bon-po specializing in the byol, is called in. In the Mu-cho’i khrom-dur, Mus-pa ’phrul-rol (sic) is described as a sri-bon (a priest specializing in countering the harm caused by the sri demons; Bellezza 2008: 471). In the byol-rabs this bon-po is said to have come from the apex of the sky (gnam-rgung), a reference to his mythical celestial residence as well as his extremely high socio-religious status. Mus-dpal phrogs-rol’s byol includes two hybrid yaks mounts that appear to be models or figurines, rather than actual animals. As for actual animals, there is a sheep of the bdud and a cock in the ritual performance. The arrow, an important ritual

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106 Drum (C.T. = grum).
107 This sentence is the imprecise signification of the line: khab sgo mtshungs su ngan (na) /.
implement, is also a part of the byol ensemble, as are decorated long sticks (shing-rings) empowered with the incantations of the bon and gshen. These sticks may be related to the rgyang-bu and pho-tong/pho-gdong, objects that commonly feature in glud and mdos rituals. The magical activation of the ritual instruments through the incantations of the gshen and bon said in tandem epitomizes the complementarity that exists between these two types of priests throughout the byol-rabs text. The text goes on to tell us that once the byol was commended to the bdud and ltas-ngan, Myi-rab ru-cho was benefited:

<24:3 to 25:2> The name of the country, yes, is Myi-yul rkyi-mthiṅ: who was the lord staying there? The lord Myi-rab ru-cho stayed there. What kind of bad omens did the ltas-ngan and bdud send to Myi-rab ru-cho? They sent the vultures that fight with their claws. Early one morning the Dreng,\textsuperscript{109} Myi-rab ru-cho went to the peak of the castle [and saw] his iron mount Khug-khug and his copper colt\textsuperscript{110} 'Phywo-phwo, these two, which were tethered (brtod) in a turquoise meadow (gsing). On the peak of the castle, seeing the corpses of the two vultures that had fought with their claws, the lord said, ‘oh no, what happened here?’\textsuperscript{111} Then with his staff of white copper\textsuperscript{112} he hit (brgyab) the corpses of the vultures that had fought. Casting them off his castle into the turquoise meadow,\textsuperscript{113} his iron mount Khug-khug, brave and tame,\textsuperscript{114} was not spooked.\textsuperscript{115} The copper colt 'Phywo-phyo of little\textsuperscript{116} bravery and docility was spooked, thus it cut across the peaks of three mountains. It cut across the folds of three valleys. Like rolling felt, it came to the great sands, the country of rGya thang-myed.

\textsuperscript{108}The complementarity between the gshen and bon-[po] is the subject of a paper by Dotson (2008). He observes that these two classes of priests were identical or nearly so, because they performed the same sets of healing, divinatory and funerary rites. My analysis of Dunhuang and Eternal Bon materials certainly bears this observation out. The subscription of the gshen and bon to the same ritual traditions disproves an earlier Tibetological hypothesis that holds they existed in fundamental opposition to one another. This is not to say there was not professional competition between the various non-Buddhist priests in the early Tibetan setting, but it did not stem from major sectarian or ideological divisions.

\textsuperscript{109}\textit{Dreng} (C.T. = 'greng) either signifies ‘that which stands upright’ as an epithet for humans, or it is the name of a clan (‘Grenq). For reference to the ‘Grenq clan of southern Tibet, see Sørensen et al. 2005, p. 224 (fn. 10).

\textsuperscript{110}sTe (C.T. = rte'u). This is probably an elision of ste (‘Phywo-phyo).

\textsuperscript{111}These spoken words represent the rough meaning of the line: ‘dl ci brla ci bshan gsung (nas) /

\textsuperscript{112}bs'e'ltam-kar (C.T. = bse yi ldan-dkar). See Bellezza 2005, p. 182, para ii.

\textsuperscript{113}Ne'u-sing (C.T. = na-gsing).

\textsuperscript{114}‘Brave and tame’ is the general import of the line: rdal dang sed che (ste) /

\textsuperscript{115}Ma-drogs (C.T. = ma-'drog).

\textsuperscript{116}Khungs = chung.
<25:2–7> The human Mi-yi-rab ru-cho was nearly had by the lta-s-ngan and bdud. The bon-po of the byol, Mus-dpal phrogs-rol, was invited from the apex of the sky to perform (btab) the divination (mo) and make the prognosis,\(^{117}\) [for it was shown that] nothing else could aid him, except the aid of the byol. What byol [was presented] to the lta-s-ngan? A golden hybrid yak (rtol-po) mounted by a turquoise man, a turquoise hybrid yak mounted by a golden man, a black sheep of the bdud with a white face, a black-breasted rooster,\(^{118}\) an arrow with three joints, and long sticks with white ornaments on which three words of the father (gshen) spells and three words of the bon spells were cast (btab). It was sent (btang) as the byol of the lta-s-ngan and bdud. The human Mi-yi-rab ru-cho was luckily benefited [by the byol]. For those humans who have the byol [performed] they will be luckily benefited.

dreng myi rab ru cho ni lta-s-ngan dang / bdud kyis 'tschal ma khad / mo btab phywa klags na / 'di cis yang myi thub byol gyis thub / byol gyi bon po mus dpal phrogs rol / gnam rgung nas gnyer de / lta-s-ngan ci las byol na / gser gyi rtol po la / g.yu 'i myi bskyon ba dang / g.yu 'i rtol po la / gser gyi myi bskyon ba dang / bdud lug nag po spyi gar dang / bya mtshal bu brang gnag dang / mda' rgyud tshigs gsum dang / shing rings rgyan dkar la / pha sngags tshigs gsum dang / bon sngags tshigs gsum btang ste / lta-s-ngan bdud kyis byol de btang / dreng myi rab ru cho la phan de bsod do / myi su la byol ba la / phan de bsod do /

The second geographic-based byol origins tale is set in Bal-yul, a location in the eastern portion of gTsang (25:8 to 26:6). The central character of the narrative, Bal-lce rmang-ru-ti", resides in the castle of Kha-rag with its nine doors. It appears that Bal refers to his country, while lCe is his clan, once a prominent genealogical grouping in Central Tibet. This ostensible lord or king is beset by the bad omen of deer fighting with their horns (ru 'dzings shig) and by marauding bdud. It is made amply clear that lCe rmang ru-ti"s (sic) is in mortal danger when the text states that he is surrounded by the gshed (gshed kyis 'khor), the agent of death. Unnamed practitioners perform the dual divinatory (mo) and

\(^{117}\) Phywa-klag. In the archaic funerary texts of the Dunhuang manuscripts we find the orthographic construction pyla-bklags.

\(^{118}\) Bya mtshal-bu (C.T. = bya mtsha'-lu).
prognosticatory (phya) rites, and it is decided that a byol must be carried out in order to liberate the victim from the demons. The ensemble of offerings in this ritual includes the obligatory Ephedra, mustard seeds, beer, and barley cakes. It appears that the srin, a class of semi-divine telluric beings, were implicated in the dangers confronting Bal-lce rmang-ru-tǐ, for the byol features four types of srin livestock. These were either ritually sacrificed or banished, but the text is silent on this point. The favorite (snying-rag) clothes and possessions of Bal-lce rmang-ru-tǐ noted in the text were most probably used to produce the ngar-mi or zhal, an effigy of the victim used in the ritual exchange.

The text states that the byol had the intended effect of saving the life of the protagonist. The account also informs us that there are three grades of byol: greater (che), lesser (chung) and smallest (yang-chung). It is in the greater byol that real animals and other prized objects are used. The lesser byol is made with facsimiles, but this in no way diminishes its efficacy. This tripartite system of classification seems to reflect socio-economic conditions in the time in which the byol-rabs was written as much as it does variations in praxis:

<25:8 to 26:4> Also, from where does a byol origin tale come from? In Bal-yul Lang-thang, in the 'Bal (sic) castle of Kha-rag sgo-rгу, lived Bal-lce rmang-ru-tǐ. What bad omens were sent to him by the bdud? Stags fighting with their horns were sent in front of the gate of the castle. The back of lCe rmang-ru-tǐ’s [castle] was surrounded by the bdud. His forehead was circled by an agent of death (gshed). He was surrounded by the gshed of bad omens. Performing the mo and making the phya, [it was decided] that it was better [to make] a byol for the lhas-ngan. It was better to be rescued (blu) from the descending bdud. What byol was made for the byol? An oxen and a male hybrid yak of the srin, and a horse and mule of the srin [were made] as the byol. The byol [was made] from a platter full of the barley cakes of the byol, and a pitcher full of beer (chang) of the byol, mustard seeds and Ephedra on which incantations were said, favorite clothes, and favorite possessions.

119 The gZi brjūd states that ransom offerings in the mdos rites must be better than the actual objects they represent (Snellgrove 1967: 87). This prescription shows that the glud and byol, whatever their material status, provided they are executed properly, are effective therapeutic measures.

120 Bal-yul lang-tang/leng-tang is noted in PT 1040 (ln. 106) and PT 1285 (ln. r144). This is a region situated on the northwest side of g.Yar-brog g.yu-mtsho (Hazod 2009: 172). For the Bal toponym, also see Sørensen et al. 2007, pp. 125 (fn. 254), 169 (fn. 422). The name of the castle, Kha-rag, points to the same general vicinity. In the contemporary context, Kha-rag is the name of a side valley on the south side of the gTsang-po, in sNa-dkar-rtse County (ibid.: 120 (fn. 221), 417, 674 (fn. 7)). This Kha-rag should not be confused with the eponymous region in rTsang-stod.

121 Both sha-pho and sha-mo are indicated in the text, the syllable ma being subscribed in a different hand under the syllable pho (25:9). This interpolation is entirely unnecessary and the reading ‘stags’ is the appropriate one.

122 Phyo = phya.
Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines


<26:4–6> lCe rmang-ru-tf was luckily benefited. The great byol [is made] with actual things. The lesser byol is [made] from substitutes (gsob). The extremely small byol is [made] with cloth. Whatever is obtained (phrad) early is used early in the byol. Whatever is obtained later is used later in the byol. The byol is directed towards the hating enemy, The byol is directed towards the harmful obstacles (gnod-pa’i bgags).

The third geographically designated byol-rabs unfolds in Yar-khyim sog-kha and pertains to an ancestral figure known as gShang-spo yo-rgyal-ba (26:6 to 27:5). The evil portent of the bdud he beheld was musk deer clashing in a narrow defile. Again, through the execution of the mo in tandem with the phya by unknown priests/priestesses, it was determined that a byol had to be made. For this purpose, Mus-dpal phrog-rol (sic), the byol specialist credited with aiding Myi-rab ru-cho of Myi-yul rkyi-mthing, was summoned from the sky. The text goes on to specify typical offering substances of the byol before digressing to present the parentage of an exceptional ape or langur (spra) named sNya-bo lag-ring, alias sPra-myi zin-thang-po. Although he is unable to communicate with humans, this divine ally of Mus-dpal phrog-rol was able to directly

123 rNgos (C.T. = dngos).
124 sDang-ba’i gra’ (dgra).
125 The Yar-lung region. The history and culture of this region are surveyed in detail in Gyalbo et al. 2000; Sørensen et al. 2005. Nowadays, Yar-lung sog-kha (sic) refers specifically to a site with the ruins of ancient tower structures, which according to the local oral tradition, were first erected before the time of King Srong-btsan sgam-po (Gyalbo et al. 2000: 11, 206–208). For mention of Yar-lung sog-kha in Dunhuang catalogues of principalities, see Lalou 1965, pp. 203, 204, 215ff.
126 gNam nas ’kug (C.T. = bkug).
gShen-rab myi-bo 65

communicate with the bdud. Precisely, what actions he carried out during the byol ritual are not noted, but his presence was instrumental in its success.127

<26:6–9> Also from where did the byol origins come? In the country of Yar-khyim sogs-kha, gShang spo-yo rgyal-ba was sent what bad omen? Male musk deer fighting with tusks in between tightly joined rock formations.128 sPu-yug rgyal-ba (sic) was stricken by illness.129 Performing130 the mo and making the phya,131 [it was determined] that this was caused by the bad omens of the bdud. Nothing could aid him except the aid of the byol.132

yang byol rabs gcig ga las byung na’ / yul yar khyim sogs kha na / / gshang spo yo rgyal ba la / / ltas ngan či btang na / / gla po so ’dzings cig / / brags dang ra bar byung na / / spu yug rgyal ba snyin kyis zin ste / / mo bdab phyo klags na / ’di bdud kyi ltas ngan byung / / čis yang myi thub byol gyis thub / /

<26:9 to 27:5> Mus-dpal phrog-rol (sic) was summoned133 from the sky. A platter full of byol cakes and seven pedicels (nyag) of byol Ephedra – the name of the father and patriarch of the ape sNy-a-bo lag-ring was sTangs kyi ’o-yug rgyal-ba [and] his mother was Byi-shi za’i gnam-mtha’ ’khor – an arrow with three joints, an arrow, bam (?), and thags (cord or woolen cloth), these three, a long stick with white ornaments, and the ape Myi-zin thang-po (sic) repulsed [the bad omens of the bdud]. The ape Myi-bzhin thang-po (sic) could not communicate with humans134 but he could communicate with the bdud. In ancient times, the benefit was like that benefit. Now, if the human can ransom, the bdud can rescind135 [their bad omens]. If the humans can repulse, the lhas-ngan are repulsed.

mus dpal phrog rol gnam nas ’kug // byol zan sder gang dang / byol mtshe nyag bdun dang // spra snyo bo lag rings kyi / pha dang yab kyi mtshan // stangs kyi ’o yug rgyal ba lags // ma byi shi za ’i gnam mtha’ ’khor / / mda’ rgyud tshigs gsum dang / mda’ bam thags gsum dang / shing rings rgyan dkar dang // spra myi zin thang po bzlog / spra myi bzin thang po yang // / myi dang bda’ myi mjal bar // bdud

127 A foundational ritual role for the monkey in a triad that includes the badger and bat (geol-chung na-ro bu-tsa/khu-tsa) is also found in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur. As in the byol-rabs, these divine creatures or zoomorphic ritual instruments are employed to pacify or dispel evil spirits. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 380–382, 390, 405.
128 Brags (C.T. = brag).
129 sNyin (C.T. = snyun) kyis zin.
130 bdab = btab.
131 phya = phya.
132 či yang myi thub byol gyis thub / .
133 ’Kug (C.T. = bkug)
134 Myi (C.T. = mi) dang bda’ (C.T. = brda’) myi (C.T. = mi) mjal bar / .
135 Shol (C.T. = bshol).
The fourth byol-rabs specifying a geographic location transpires in the dBus region of sKyi-yul la-mo ’jing-sngon (27:5 to 29:1). More recently this region was known as sKyi(d)-shod. The antagonists in this tale are the king of the ltas-ngan Gang-par ge-ber and five bdud horsemen known as ram-pa. In conjunction with an inauspicious nine-headed wolf, four bdud, each associated with a different-colored precious substance, appear from their walled-in spheres to attack the protagonist of the story, rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po na-ra. In Tibetan ritual traditions, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, gods and demons of the cardinal directions are often assigned four different colors, while a fifth color represents the center. After the mo and phywa (sic) are conducted to pinpoint the hazard, the bon-po of the byol ritual Mus-dpal phrogs-rol is once again called for help. The metaphors used to describe the predicament of rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po nga-ra (sic) as well as the objects featured in the byol are of the same type found in the byol-rabs we have already examined. Likewise, this sKyi-yul origins tale is set in the distant past:

<27:5 to 28:3> From where did a byol origin tale come from? In the country sKyi-yul la-mo ’jing-sngon there lived a lord. There lived (bzhugs) a certain rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po na-ra. The five horsemen bdud ram-pa asked (zhus-pa) the king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber, ‘what bad omens should we send’ The king of the ltas-ngan said, ‘an iron wolf with nine heads is to be sent as the bad omen.’ It fell at the gate of sKyi-yul la-ma ’jing-sngon (sic). As one head was howling (ngus-pa), the mouths of the nine heads opened. From these in a downward direction the five horsemen bdud re-pa were sent to come. From [the yard] with nine walls and nine ridgelines (rgu-ra rgyud) of conch, the white bdud man with a white horse appeared. From [the yard] with nine walls and nine ridgelines of turquoise, the blue horseman with a blue horse appeared. From [the yard] with nine walls and nine ridgelines of copper, the red horseman with the red horse appeared. From [the yard] with nine walls and ridgelines of gold, the yellow horseman with the yellow horse appeared. The five horsemen bdud rim-pa (sic) came and were on the earth.

Divided into two parts, the lower region by variant spellings features in the smrang of funerary texts in the Mu-cho’i khrom-dur and Dunhuang collections. For sKyi-ro lchang-sngon/sKyi-ro ljang-sngon in the archaic funerary tradition, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 472 (fn. 375), 522, 538, 539. Also see PT 1285 (In. 100), PT 1286 (In. 10) and ITJ 734r (In. 8r316). For the identification of sKyi-lcang with lCang in lower sKyid-shod and La-mo with upper sKyid-shod, see Sørensen et al. 2005, pp. 220, 230; Sørensen et al. 2007, pp. 17–27; Hazod 2009, p. 172. See also Thomas 1957, “General Introduction”, p. 11; Lalou 1965, pp. 201, 202, 215ff.
bdud ram pa rkya lnga 'is // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber la // ltas ngan du ci btang zhus pa la // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po'i zhal na re // lcags kyi spyang po 'go rgu bo zhig // ltas ngan du btang ba dang // skyi yul la ma 'jing sngon gyi sgo ru bas ste // 'go gcig nas ngus pas // 'go rgu kha nas byung ste // de 'i phyi na mar // bdud re pa rkya inga btang ste 'ongs so // dung gyi rgu ra rgu rgyud nas // bdud myi dkar rta dkar byung // g.yu 'i rgu ra rgu rgyud nas // rkya myi sngo rta sngo byung // zangs kyi rgu ra rgyud nas // rkya myi dmar rta dmar byung // gser gyi rgu ra rgu rgyud nas // rkya myi ser rta ser byung // bdud rîm pa rkya lnga yang sa la lhags de gshags //

<28:3 to 29:1> rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po nga-ra was almost taken like a bird in a trap by the five horsemen bdud ram-pa. He was nearly snatched like a bird in a tshed (a type of snare or trap). Performing the mo and doing the phywa (sic), [it was determined] that it was better he be rescued from the bdud that had descended. It was better [to send] the byol against the bad omens. It was better to repulse the disasters of the country. Inviting the bon-po of the byol Mus-dpal phrogs-rol, a plate full of byol cakes, one pod (rkang) of byol mustard seeds, one pedicel of byol Ephedra,\(^{137}\) one pitcher full of byol beer, thousands of long sticks, rgya-rings ol 'ol (?), and stong-ri phywa-phywa (?) were offered to the five horsemen bdud ram-pa. Nothing could [pacify] the bdud and ltas-ngan except the byol. The bdud and ltas-ngan exchanged the man for the byol, that byol. Nothing could repulse them except the byol. The benefit of ancient times luckily benefited like that.\(^{138}\)

rmag btsun gyi rgyal po nga ra yang / bdud ram pa rgya lngas bya ltar gtor gyis blangs ma khad / nya ltar tshed kyis bcus ma khad / mo btab phywa klags na / bdud bab blu bar bzang / ltas ngan byol bar bzang / yul sdi g bzlog par bzang / byol gyi bon po mus dpal phrogs rol gnyer nas / byol zan sder gang dang / byol nyungs rkang cig dang / byol mtshe nyag cig dang / byol chang skyogs gang dang / shing rings stong cho dang / rgya rings 'ol 'ol dang / stong ri phywa phywa dang / bdud ram pa rkya lnga la phul ba la / bdud dang ltas ngan byol de / byol de / myi dang byol du brjes / cís yang myi zlogs / byol gyis zlogs / gna' phan de ltar phan de bsod do //

The sixth and final origins tale in the byol-rabs text also has definite geographic underpinnings (29: 2 to 42: 8). It takes place in sMra-yul thang-brgyad (Land of sMra Eight Plains). This is a major location somewhere in Upper Tibet, in the

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\(^{137}\) Byol nyungs rkang cig dang / byol mtshe nyag cig (dang) /. This same offerings formula is found in PT 1060, Ins. 5, 7, 60, 69: mtshe-mo nyag cig / yungs-mo sgangs (sic) cig /.

\(^{138}\) gNa' phan de ltar phan de bsod do /.
It is one of a number of locations mentioned in the Dunhuang catalogues of principalities. The pastoral associations of sMra-yul thang-brgyad are emphasized by the occupation of the sMra patriarch and matriarch’s son, sMra then-pa, a horse herder in the upper part of a valley. sMra as a common noun refers to a type of primal man, as in the smra mt gshen gsum, three types of prototypical humans (cf. Norbu 2009: 42, fn. 43). This signification of the word smra is closely related to the term smrang as a designation for narratives dealing with phenomena characterized as primal or antecedental. The smrang were designed to be proclaimed before the ritual they describe was performed. The saying or telling of the smrang is itself etymologically linked with the verb smra (to utter, to tell). sMra also denotes an ethnic or tribal group connected to Zhang Zhung.

The Eternal Bon religion views Zhang Zhung as a fountainhead of their traditions (cf. Stein 1959: 51), reflecting Upper Tibet’s paleocultural importance in the archaeological record.

As in the final byol-rabs narrative, a smrang for a bumblebee god known as Sri-gyas bong-ba stag-chung found in an eponymous funerary text is also set in

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139 In ITJ 739 (lns. 14r1, 14r2), sMra-yul thags-brgyad (sic) appears to share a border with Dru-gu (Turkic lands): “Dru-gu, yes, along that margin, at sMra-yul, yes, Thags-brgyad” (smra yul ni thags brgyad na / dru gu ni mtha’ bskor ba /).

140 For a tabulation of territories in PT 1060, PT 1285, PT 1286, PT 1290, see Lalou 1965. For the lists of territories in two later histories (as well as PT 1287), see Norbu 2009, pp. 143–145. Dotson (2009: 37, 38) notes that these formulaic lists of place names have much overlap with toponyms found in Dunhuang historical texts such as the Old Tibetan Annals and Old Tibetan Chronicle.

141 Lung gi ya pu (C.T. = phu).

142 For this ethnonym and toponym and its association with Zhang Zhung in clan compendium (rus-mdzod) and historical literature such as gDung rabs padma dkar po’i phreng ba, Pha rabs mtshong ba kun gsal and La dwags rgyal rabs, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 (after Waddell), p. 311 (fn. 125); Stein 1959, pp. 4, 51, 54, 71; Vitali 2003, pp. 40–45, 60; Bellezza 2005, pp. 204, 205; 2008, pp. 260 (fn. 168), 369, 476, 518; Tashi Tsering 2008, pp. 73–77. In reference to sMra-yul thang-brgyad/thag-rgyad in PT 1136 and PT 1285, Stein (2003: 602) suggests that smra simply means man as in the [bilingual] expression smra-mi, disregarding its ethnic and geographic connotations as surveyed by him earlier (1959). Stein grappled with the difficulties in discerning how the epithets sMra, sBra and dMu correspond to Zhang Zhung and with the nature of the territoriality they express (ibid.: 51, 52, 54).

143 For comprehensive surveys of archaic cultural monuments and rock art in Upper Tibet see, for example, Bellezza forthcoming-a; forthcoming-b; forthcoming-c; 2008; 2002-a; 2002-b; 2001; 2000, 1999; 1997-a; 1997-b. The identification of much of Upper Tibet with Zhang Zhung in Eternal Bon sources does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants of Upper Tibet before, during, or in the aftermath of the imperial period actually called their homeland Zhang Zhung. As I have already observed, we do not know how the indigenes of Upper Tibet may have referred to their territory in antiquity. Commenting on PT 1285 and its lists of gshen and bon practitioners, Blezer (2008: 431, 432) identifies the upper reaches of the rTsang-po river as an important ancient religious center, stating that it may have been “the actual historical proto-heartland of ‘Bon’”. Generally speaking, this is the implication that should be drawn from the textual evidence.
Mra-yul thang-brgyad.\textsuperscript{144} In this origins tale, there is a castle called sMra-mkhar ldem-pa in which the father rMa-rje btsun-po and the mother sMra-za ’brang-chung resided. The text records that this father was a deer hunter and the mother a collector of gro (Potentilla anserina), economic activities commonly but not exclusively associated with the Tibetan upland. Likewise, in a Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur smrang about the homicidal sri demons set in sMra-yul thang-brgyad, a major figure in the tale is sMra-rje btsan-po, a deer hunter.\textsuperscript{145} Ancient deer hunting is very well attested in the rock art record of Upper Tibet. The pastoral character of sMra-yul thang-brgyad is also referred to in another smrang about the sri, where the female protagonist, Klu-za ye-mo btsun, is described as a herder of sheep.\textsuperscript{146} The sri responsible for her murder flees to Kha-la rtsang-stod (a location in upper gTsang)\textsuperscript{147} and to Yar-yul sog-ka before being summoned back to sMra-yul thang-brgyad by the gshen-bon and dbal-bon Gong-rum.

In PT 1136 we meet sMra-myi (Man of sMra), who along with his bosom friend rMa-myi de, hails from dGa’-yul byang-nams (Northern Joyous Land). sMra-myi is killed while hunting wild yaks in Byang-brog snam-stod, an Upper Tibetan locale.\textsuperscript{148} While dGa’-yul in the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur and Srid pa’i mdzod

\textsuperscript{144} For information on this text see Bellezza 2008, pp. 475–477. After the sMra couple’s son and daughter are slain by a sri demon, the gto, dpyad and sri-khung rites were performed by gShen-rab myi-bo and Sri-bon dmu-’phen be’u-ra.

\textsuperscript{145} This smrang is examined in \textit{ibid.}, pp. 469–471.

\textsuperscript{146} For this smrang, see \textit{ibid.}, pp. 471, 472.

\textsuperscript{147} Kha-la/Kha-rag gtsang-stod of Eternal Bon sources constituted the western border of imperial g.Yas-ru. It appears to have encompassed La-stod byang and other areas in present-day Lharto and Ngam-ring counties. For this geographic identification, see Hazod 2009, p. 170; Sørensen et al. 2007, p. 674 (fn. 7); Bellezza forthcoming-c.

\textsuperscript{148} This first do-ma origins tale in PT 1136 is examined in Bellezza 2008, pp. 517–522; Stein 1971, pp. 501, 502. Another location, Byang-kha snam-brgyad, also features in the narratives of the archaic funerary texts of Dunhuang, underscoring the importance of uninhabited northern regions to early historic period religious mythology. In the Klu ’bum nag po, Byang-kha snam-brgyad (sic) is the place in which deer, antelope and blue sheep are hunted (Bellezza 2008: 485; cf. Stein 2003: 602). As Stein (\textit{ibid.}) notes, in PT 1060 Byang-ka mam-brgyad (sic) is connected to the Turkic country Drugu (see also Bellezza 2008, p. 524). However, rather than Turkic lands proper, a location in the Tibetan uplands seems to be indicated here (\textit{ibid.}). Dotson (2009b) observes that Byang-ka mam-brgyad in PT 1286 and other catalogues is generally considered synonymous with the Byang-thang. In the Klu ’bum nag po and other Dunhuang texts, this toponym with its eight sections does indeed seem to refer to part or all of the Byang-thang, a vast land that lends itself to be partitioned in such a way by its meridian ranges. In the Klu ’bum nag po narrative noted above, Tshangs-pa is prefixed to the names of the protagonists, a clan or tribal designation that, given the common meaning of the word (i.e. purified, cleansed), suggests an identification with the upper Yar-chab gtsang-po river valley more than it does the province of rTsang’/gTsang per se. In this regard, it must also be noted that Tshangs-kha is one of the nine gods of Zhang Zhung, according to the rGyud bsd yki chos ’byung (Bellezza 2008: 300, fn. 295). In any event, a hunting expedition to a distant Turkic territory is not in keeping with the storyline in the Klu ’bum nag po narrative. Antelope, blue sheep (and deer in early times) are very plentiful in the Byang-thang, obviating the need to travel further north into the Turkic hinterland, which has far fewer numbers of the quarry sought after. A similar land, Byang-kha sna-brgyad, is noted in PT 1068 as a place for hunting deer and antelope (\textit{ibid.}: 538, 539). Moreover, in Byang-kha sna-brgyad, the hunter in the Klu
phug is a metaphorical paradisiacal realm, its placement in the north implies a venatic or pastoral character. The geographic association of the sMra tribe or clan with Upper Tibet rather than the northeastern highlands of the Tibetan Plateau is confirmed by the second smrang in PT 1136, which speaks of sMa-bu zing-ba’i zǐng-skyes/sMra-bond gyi zing-skies/sMra-bon zing-ba’i zing-skyes, the son of rTsang ho-de’i hos-bdag and gShen-za’i gyi myed-ma. As we have seen, this family resided in the 'headwaters of the river country', a location probably along the upper reaches of the gTsang-po river (see supra, fn. 24). Finally, it is again worth citing the sMra-yul thag-rgyad (sic) of ITJ 731r, a location in which the equestrian arts originated according to this text. This equestrian mythology is culturally and archaeologically consonant with the highland identity of sMra-yul.

The final origins tale in the byol-rabs, which is set in sMra-yul thang-brgyad, has as one of its most important characters a man named sMra then-pa, and is by far the longest smrang in the byol-rabs text. The sheer length of the story (it is as long as the other five smrang combined) mirrors the formative nature of the sMra tribe and country in the origin tales of the archaic funerary rituals of the Dunhuang manuscripts and Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur. The role accorded the sMra in this literature underlines the importance of Upper Tibet as a cultural wellspring, a widely held perception in Eternal Bon-po historiography, which is certainly borne out by archaeological findings in the region. This is not to say that Upper Tibet was the only foundation of Tibetan civilization, to the contrary, it was one of several constituent regions spread across the Tibetan Plateau, which contributed to the cultural-scape of imperial period Tibet. The composite geographic nature of imperial period cultural traditions is well illustrated by the territorial scope of funerary transport horses in PT 1060. These do-ma are associated with 12 different Tibetan principalities, as well as Drugu (Dru-gu/Gru-gu) in the Turkic lands north of Tibet. PT 1060 places the headwaters country (yul-chab gyi ya-bgo) in southwestern Tibet as part of Zhang Chung, confirming the localization assigned the second origins tale in PT 1136 (see supra, fn. 24).129

129 bhum nag po, Tshangs-pa rab-’byor, met a srin and the group of seven fierce horsemen known as bDud rol-po skya-bdon, which are very much part of the native pantheon of Tibet. In ITJ 731r, Byang-ka smam-brgyad is the homeland of a wild yak, confirming that this is indeed a location in the Tibetan uplands (see ibid.: 534, 536; Stein 1971: 486). In the first of the two smrang of PT 1136, Byang-ka smam-brgyad is either identical to Byang-’brog smam-stod or on the way to it. Byang-’brog smam-stod, a northern wilderness for hunting is highly suggestive of the northern Byang-thang. Stein (1959: 54 (fn. 151); 2003: 602) also notes the correspondence between Byang-’brog smam-stod and Byang-ka smam-brgyad in PT 1136 and PT 1289. As noted above, the first PT 1136 funerary ritual origins narrative concerns two friends rMa-myi btsun-po and sMra-myi ste (a hunter), sMra being indicative of an Upper Tibetan (Zhang Chung) location. Although it is often associated with the rMa-chu river and the rMa-chen spom-ra mountain, even the ethnonym rMa has Zhang Chung connotations. For the rMa Zhang Chung as one of four northern tribes, see Vitali 2003, p. 54. For the use of rma as a Zhang Chung term in monosyllabic and compound forms, see Martin 2001-b; Dagkar 2003

For an analysis of the do-ma (psychopomp horses) tradition in PT 1060, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 522–524. Among these 13 territories is the ‘headwaters of the river country’ (yul-chab gyi ya-bgo), which is closely associated with the legendary castle Khyung-lung rNgul-mkhar (in PT 1060 the country of Kha-la stsaṅ-stod and its rTsang lord, lha, servant, and horse have no
The formative role played by Upper Tibet as a generator or incubator of important Tibetan cultural traditions, as implied in the Old Tibetan documents and manifested in Eternal Bon texts, must be understood in a very broad chronological context. The deep-rooted nature of the ensemble of archaic residential and ceremonial monuments in Upper Tibet and the absence of foreign epigraphy for the protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE–630 CE), indicate that the Tibetan highland was not open to major cultural intrusions during this era. As I have considered earlier (2008), based on the morphology and chronology of the characteristic funerary pillar monuments of Upper Tibet, the era of intensive cultural interchange with north Inner Asia appears to predate the protohistoric period. The ubiquity and uniformity of the Upper Tibetan sui generis residential structures (all-stone corbelled edifices) and funerary pillars (walled-in pillars and arrays of pillars appended to temple-tombs) of the protohistoric period reveal a land and people that enjoyed a stable and enduring cultural bedrock. In part, this perdurability was a function of geography, for no land is as high as Upper Tibet. Exacerbated by Late Holocene climate degradation, its forbidding environment must have prevented whatever foreign cultural inputs there were from materially affecting the monumental assemblage of the region. It was in an insulated environment such as this that abstract cultural traditions could also be nurtured and propagated. In contrast, the northeastern Tibetan Plateau, which is in closer proximity to the Silk Road,
was buffeted by a host of cultural forces over time. The portion of the Plateau known to the Tibetans as A-zha had a strong Turco-Mongolian makeup, while the ancient region of Mi-nyag was conterminous to the Gansu Corridor, a region of extremely high cultural interactivity, recalling other major Eurasian cross-roads such as the Panjab and Balkh. While significant cultural and social innovations are likely to have reached Tibet from the northeast in the protohistoric period (this was certainly the case in the imperial period), its innate cultural dynamism may have dissuaded imperial period Tibetans from seeing this region as the prime source of critical ritual traditions. The same may be observed for the southeastern regions of the Tibetan Plateau: the presence of many different ethnic and linguistic groups may have rendered it unsuitable as a fountainhead of Tibetan culture, at least as far as imperial period Tibetan religionists were concerned. How different for Upper Tibet, a cultural sanctuary of sorts; its ritual practices were accorded a key place in the early historic period. The same can generally be observed for Central Tibet (rTsong to rKong-po). Its ancestral cultural traditions were lent much weight in Old Tibetan documents. Nonetheless, it was Upper Tibet and its pastoral and venatic way of life that appears to have been most influential in the formation and codification of imperial period non-Buddhist ritual traditions.

This last smrang in the byol-rabs text begins by introducing the parents and two siblings of sMra-yul thang-brgyad. It then turns to the parentage of another key character in the story, Klu-rab bzang-to-re, who belongs to the klu lineage either as a human being or water spirit. As in other smrang, these characters are elite figures, rulers or ancestral celebrities of considerable merit. The daughter of the sMra, sMra-lcam si-le-ma, and the son of the klu, Klu-rab bzang-to-re, fall deeply in love and begin to spend all their time together. In the course of agricultural activities, byur, demonic obstacles in the form of pigeons and choughs, fell upon the loving pair. The byur commonly manifest in the form of disasters and serious misfortunes, as they do in this story.¹⁵⁰

<29:2–5> From where did a byol origins tale come? In sMra-yul thang-brgyad the father and patriarch called by the name of sMra-rgan thang-po and the mother and matriarch called by the name of sMra-bdag btsun-mo. The son of the season of their coupling was the brother (mying-po) and male sibling (dral-po) called sMra then-pa, and the sister (sring-mo) and female sibling (lcam-mo) was called sMra-lcam si-le-ma. The brother and male sibling herded horses and took care of the

¹⁵⁰ The byur as a misfortune-causing agent and its association with demonic entities such as the bdud, gdon, 'dre, yi-dags, and 'gong-po is recorded in PT 1051, ln. 48; PT 1283, ln. 459; ITJ 739, Ins. 12v01, 14v09, 16r04. For the occurrence in the divination text PT 1051, see Bellezza 2005, p. 349 (fn. 24). In ITJ 730, ln. 25, byur is associated with evil and disease; and in PT 126, ln 094, with the pernicious contamination (mnol) of the lha. In the Eternal Bon texts Nyi sgron and gZer mig, the byur is one of the 11 types of earth g.yen, an important system of classification of spirits (Norbu 2009: 85).
steeds in the upper part of a valley. The sister and female sibling

byol rabs cig ga las byung na' // smra yul thang brgyad na / pha dang yab kyi mtshan // smra rgan thang pos bgyi // ma dang yum gyi mtshan // smra bdag btsun mos bgyi // bshos dang nams kyi sras / mying po dral po ba / smra then bas bgyi / sring mo lcamin ni / smra lcamin si le mas bgyi bo / mying po dral po ni lung gi ya pu na / rta 'tsho rmang skyong na // sring mo lcamo ba / smra lcamin si le ma /

<29:5 to 30:1> In the klu castle of rTse-rgu'i khri-po the father was named Klu-rje btsan-po and the mother and matriarch was named rDog-za g.yas-mo btsun. These two mated and the son of the season was Klu-rab bzang-to-re. He was born as the male issue and there was no one better than him. He and sMra-lcam sil-le-ma were in love.  At the edge of a blue (verdant) meadow they spread out a white felt of byam (love?). On the water they cast some unspoiled offerings. Doing that, they mated. When the time came to dip water, rain was falling from above. When the time came to weed, 100 pigeons and 100 choughs were the byur.

Word of sMra-lcam si-le-ma and Klu-rab bzang-to-re’s relationship reaches the sMra son, sMra then-ba, through a herdswoman. Apparently, on account of her love affair, sMra-lcam si-le-ma neglects her work of weeding and watering.


\[152\] sTangs-pho. This obscure O.T. term can probably also be glossed ‘scion’. The term *stang* denotes a husband (Bellezza 2008: 327 (fn. 364); Pasar et al. 2008: 95).

\[153\] skyes-bu (young man) na-chung (young woman) bgyis. This literally means, ‘did as a young man and young woman’.

\[154\] Myi rul de chab gang la ru bor /. An alternative reading of this line is, ‘Unspoiled things were given as presents.’ Chab-gang (‘over the water’) denotes the presents and ritual instruments that aid the deceased in his/her passage over the river of the dead (see supra, fn. 40). In the byol-rabs, perhaps this term alludes to a rite performed by couples so that after death they would be reunited in the afterworld.

\[155\] Zhing mchis-pa la / bshos zhing ra… /. This second line concludes with the words: snga dor bdon nī, which is of unknown import.

\[156\] Chab-bcu (to collect water by dipping a ladle).

\[157\] Nyur ma-yur = Yur ma-yur (see no. 30, ln. 3 of the text).
sMra then-ba becomes deeply resentful of his sister and goes to confront her paramour. Perhaps he was so antagonistic towards the liaison of sMra-lcam si-le-ma and Klu-rab bzang-to-re because they belonged to different tribes, but the text is mute on this subject. When sMra then-ba arrives he slays Klu-rab bzang-to-re with his sword. Despite being mortally wounded, Klu-rab bzang-to-re is able to retaliate by hurling a metallic thunderbolt at sMra then-ba. Not wanting to lose her brother as well, sMra-lcam si-le-ma intervenes by magically shielding sMra then-ba. Her brother saved, sMra-lcam si-le-ma proceeds to bury Klu-rab bzang-to-re in a deep pit:

A herdswoman of cattle looked and saw sMra-lcam si-le-ma and Klu-rab bzang-to-re, these two. All the day these two did not take their eyes off each other. All night they did not pass beyond the edge of the felt. In the daytime [sMra-lcam si-le-ma] did not weed (yur ma-yur). In the nighttime she did not collect (myi-gtong) water. [The herdswoman] told [sMra-lcam si-le-ma’s] brother [all these things]. From then on, the familial affection (mdza’s-dug) between them was spoiled in hatred (sdang ’phra-ma). sMra then-ba went to see Klu-rab bzang-to-re and sMra-lcam si-le-ma. He took the sword lom rked chod and struck [Klu-rab bzang-to-re], cutting him asunder at the waist. He was killed (bkum-mo).

Klu-rab bzang-to-re made a thunderbolt fall from the sky. It appeared as an iron pestle as large as a six to seven year old yak (g.yag-drus). sMra-lcam lcam si-le ma (sic) threw a me-long rgya-long filled with water at sMra then-ba. That was placed right on top of sMra then-ba’s head. That [iron pestle] hit there. Its [magic power] was

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158 Phyug gyi bo-mo (C.T. = phyugs gyi bu-mo).
159 This sentence is the imprecise translation of the line: nyin zhin spyan gyi zur myi dre /. The meaning of the verb dre is unclear.
160 mTshan zhin byam phyin mtha’ myi dre /. As the meaning of the verb dre is in question, the actual reading of this sentence may differ somewhat from that given in the translation. The next line of the text has something to do with the couple making love: bshos zhin ra snga la /. Ral gyi dre (C.T. = ral-gri).
161 The name of the sword includes the phrase ‘waist-cutter’.
162 This probably denotes some kind of shiny round basin used in ritual activities.
163 bKang (C.T. = khengs, derived from gang)
neutralized and he was saved. sMra-lcam si-le-ma cast (performed) the chab-gang [rite] for the klu. She dug a hole layer by layer nine spans deep [and placed] the corpse (spur) of Klu-rab bzang-to-re [in it].

klu rab bzang to res // gnam nas thog babs ste / lcags kyi gtun bu g.yag drus tsam cig byung / smra then ba la ‘phangs na / smra lcam lcam si le mas // me long rgya long chab kyis bkang / de yang / smra then ba’i // spyi bor bzhag pa la // de la phog ste / de la rdugs de thar ro // smra lcam si le mas / klu la chab gang bor de // klu rab bzang to re’i spur nī // dong ’dom rgu rim du gsal de //

Heartsick with worry, the Klu patriarch, Klu-rje zing-brtsan, is recorded as waiting an entire month for his son Klu-rab bzang-to-re to return, before going to look for him. An entire year passes in a blur, but the grieving Klu-rje zing-brtsan is unable to locate his son. Extremely distraught, he unleashes a deluge and an inferno, as he leaves no stone unturned in the search for Klu-rab bzang-to-re:

<30:8 to 31:3> Klu-rje zing-brtsan (sic) waited for his son day after day for a month but he did not come. The klu lord said, ‘the father has become old as the son is lost (stor-ro).’ Saying, ‘woe unto me, I am heartsick,’ he put a worn out hat on top of his head and took a white copper staff in his hand. The path of a year he cut (passed) in a month. The path of a month he passed (bcad) in a day. Although he searched for his son, he did not find him. He [made] a torrent fall from the sky. He made a conflagration blaze (g.yos) from the earth. He also passed through the nine layers of the earth (sa rim-rgu) but did not find his son.

klu rje zing brtsan nī / bu zhag bsdad zlar ma byon // klu rje’i zhal na re / pha rgas na bu stor ro / / za ma snying re na gsung nas / / zhwa rul glad la bgos nas / bse’i ldan dkar lag na thogs nas / lo lam zlar bcad / zla lam zhag du bcad // bu btsal yang ma rnyed do // skyin

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165 rDugs. This O.T. word is etymologically related to C.T. terms such as thabs-sdugs (declined abilities).
166 The O.T. verb gsal is employed here; its action determinable by the context of the sentence.
167 Za ma snying re na. sNyin re-na can also be translated as ‘very sad’, ‘despondent’, ‘forlorn’, ‘inconsolable’, ‘downcast’, or ‘miserable’. Za-ma is an O.T. word (forms of which appear to be used in certain contemporary Tibetan dialects) that denotes something to the effect of ‘I, myself’.
168 sKyin-dang. The meaning and variant spellings of this word are discussed in Daqkar 2003, pp. 39, 113, 114. See Stein (1971: 545, 546) for a discussion on sKyin-dang and rman-dang and their association with calamities. See also PT 1285, ins. v32, v33, for a torrent falling/not falling from the sky (sKyin-dang gnam las babs / myi ’bab).
169 rMan-dang (C.T. = rma-’dang). This word is noted in Daqkar 2003, p. 113. In PT 1285, ins. v32, v33 (rMan-dang chu ngu sa las myi g.yos) and ITJ 731r, ln. r39 (rMan-dang g.yos kyi ’og), we find very similar applications of the term.
170 bZlog. ‘Passed through’ appears to be the contextual meaning of this O.T. verb.
The story now focuses on the murderer sMra then-ba. At the site of the evil deed he meets a lha and a srin, a pair who appear to be guardians of the life-force. These divine figures sit on the same felt that the ill-fated couple made love on. Through potent proverbs these two forthrightly condemn sMra then-ba’s actions, and he is made to face a tribunal of lha and srin. The accused pleads his case by stating he did not kill Klu-rab bzang-to-re for personal gain. Although it is not elaborated in the text, sMra then-ba relies on the defense that his was an honor killing, a form of homicide far less grave than murder committed in the course of a robbery. In any case, sMra then-ba owns up to his crime. Also present at the hearing was Klu-rje Zin-brtsan (sic), who was not at all pleased by this admission. The Klu patriarch and sMra son begin to fight but it is broken up by the chief lha, Lha-btsan bas dang-rje. Interestingly, the text notes that the custom of intervening in conflicts between rival parties began with this incident. This dpe-srol or historical precedent for an established practice, once again drives home that for the authors of the byol-rabs, the constituent origin tales were set in distant times. Thanks to Lha-btsan bas dang-rje, sMra then-ba once again avoids being killed. Not to be denied his revenge, Klu-rje zin-brtsan resorts to various magical means to apprehend the killer of his son, but they prove ineffective:

<31:3–9> sMra then-ba with his palms joined,171 sat in front of Lha-btsan bas dang-rje and Srin-brtsan rgu-bo-kha, these two,172 who were at the edge of the meadow on the spread out white felt of byam. [They said], ‘By your many rash deeds173 you destroyed your own life. By many deeds the horse breaks the golden saddle.174 The river of many actions cuts175 a broad swathe of ground.’ [sMra then-ba] went in front of the united176 lha and srin. Lha-btsan bas dang-rje said, ‘You sMra then-ba are devious (sgyu-che) and dissembling (’phrul-drag). If you are actually that devious and dissembling, we the united lha and srin shall rule against (zhal che chod) you.’ That was said. Smra then-ba replied, ‘If I did it for criminal gain that would be fine,177 but it was not like that. Klu-rab bzang-to-re, the son of the klu Zing-brtsan, was killed by me.’ Thus he spoke.

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171 This clause is the possible meaning of lag pa sor bka’d pa.
172 These binary figures are described performing rgyi ’i sreg la brgyas (ste) / . This has something to do with an action made to the life-force of humans; perhaps its augmentation.
174 sGo = sga.
175 bKag = bkas.
176 rGya-ba / brgya-ba. This word has the connotation of ‘united’ or ‘all together’, as in the textual phrase, lha srin rgya-ba.
177 This clause is the approximate meaning of the line: sgyu-lta (C.T. = rgyu-lta) yongs yang che / .
lha btsan bas dang rje dang / srin btsan rgu bo kha gnyis kyi / myi i srog la brgyas ste // gsing ma sngo mtha’ ru // byam bu dkar bzing nas // lag pa sor bkod pa’ti drung du bsdad na / smra then ba yang bya ba mangs pas / rang gyi srid phung // rta bya ba mangs pas gser gyi sgo chag chu bya ba mangs pas / dog mo’i gzhung bkag ste // lha srin brgya ba’ti drung du byon / lha btsan bas dang rje ’i zhal na re // smra then ba khyod / sgyu che la ‘phrul drag zer na // de ltar sgyu che ‘phrul drag na // nged lha srin rgya ba’ti zhal che chod bgyis na // smra then ba’ti zhal nas // sgyu lta yongs yang che / de ltar ma lags de / klu rab bzang to re // klu zing brtsan gyi bu yang / ngas bsad na / de skad bgyis pa la //

<k32:1–9> Klu-rje Zin-brtсан (sic) said, ‘You, the evil doer, finished178 my son’, so Klu-rje btsan-ba (sic) and sMra then-ba fought. Lha-btsan bas dang-rje broke up179 these two. The [custom] of breaking up a fight began then. [Lha-btsan bas dang-rje] held Klu-rje zin-brtsans and sMra then-ba escaped. Klu-rje zin-brtsan threw a magical mirror bearing visions and a magical white conch mirror, these two, [at sMra then-ba]. What magically appeared in that magical mirror bearing visions and the magical white conch mirror? A magical armored man (myi-zhub) and armored horse (rta-zhub),180 these two, magically appeared. sMra then-ba also had great magical power.181 sMra then-ba sensed that [these armored figures were coming at him]. sMra then-ba magically appeared as two doe. Sometimes [the doe] were behind [the armored figures]. Sometimes [the doe] were in front of them. [The Doe] escaped ahead,182 so the armored man let them go. Klu-rje btsan-ba came there. He asked where183 sMra then-ba was. The armored man replied, ‘sMra then-ba did not come.’184 He said, ‘Two doe came.’ Klu-rje btsan-ba retorted, ‘You are like one with completely useless magical power.’185 Thus he spoke.

klu rje zin brtsan gyi zhal nas // las ngan ba khyod nga’i bu thong bo gsung nas // klu rje zin btsan ba dang // smra then ba ‘thabs te // lha btsan bas dang rje dang // de gnyis shugs mo bshugs de // shugs mo de nas byung ngo // klu rje zin brtsan bzung // smra then ba bros / klu rje zin brtsan gyis / ‘phrul kyi me long snang long de / ‘phrul kyi

178 Thong-bo. In some Kham and Hor dialects thong describes an activity done or finished.
179 This is the contextual meaning of shugs mo bshugs. The C.T. equivalent of this expression is not immediately apparent to me.
180 An armored horse (rta-zhub) along with its man of iron rider as swift as the wind and lightning, as part of a series of offerings, is found in PT 126, Ins. 133, 136.
181 rDzu-phrul (= rdzu-phrul) che.
182 This clause is the rough translation of: snga la dros (C.T. = bros) de bgyis (pas) /.
183 Grar = gar.
184 Yung ngo = ma yung ngo.
185 This sentence is the general import of the line: rdzu ‘phrul ma rus pa khyod gra’ (C.T. = ‘dra) ba yin no /. 
dung long dkar po gnyis ‘phangs pa la // ‘phrul kyi me long snang long de dang // dung long dkar po de / cir ru brdzus na // ‘phrul kyi myi zhub rta zhub gnyis su brdzus de // smra then ba yang rdzu phrul che ste // smra then bas tshor de // smra then ba shi ba yu mo gnyis su rdzus ste // re shig phyi nas dro’ // re shig sngun nas dro zhing // snga la dros de bgyis pas // myi zhub gyis yang btang ste // klu rje btsan ba der byon de // smra then ba’i grar bgyis na // myi zhub gyi mchid nas // smra then ba ni yung ngo // sha ba yu mo gnyis la yung ngo bgyis na // klu rje btsan ba’i zhal nas // rdzu ‘phrul ma rus pa khyod gra’ ba yin no // zhes gsungs ste /

The narrative continues to describe the hot pursuit of sMra then-ba by a formidable apparition, a man girt for battle, but Klu-rje btsan-ba’s magic is countered at every turn. sMra then-ba’s main stratagem is to take the form of doe, yaks and tigers, fooling the armored man in every instance. sMra then-ba finally finds shelter in the great castle of rMa pho’bra, the seat of the lha of Me-nyag. Me-nyag (Mi-nyag), described as a northern land (byang-phyogs), presumably refers to an ancient region in the extreme northeastern corner of the Tibetan Plateau, extending east of mTsho-sngon (Kokonor) and north almost as far as the Ordo. Despite Klu-rje btsan-ba unleashing a terrific attack on the Me-nyag castle, Byang-ka dmar-mo, it withstands the onslaught. Consequently, sMra then-ba flees to the castle of gNam-gsas phyi-rum, a god who is described as the lha of bon in the west (nub phyogs na bon gyi lha). The word bon here denotes the body of non-Buddhist ritual traditions, leaving aside any broader connotations it might have had for the author(s) of the text. Given the localization of gNam-gsas phyi-rum in the west and the inclusion of gsas in his name, the lexical equivalent of lha (rendered in the Zhang Zhung language as sad), it appears that sMra then-ba sought refuge on the opposite end of the Tibetan Plateau. The great physical distances involved in the flight of sMra then-ba, help lend the narrative its epic quality.

Klu-rje btsan-ba with his klu army attacked the ‘castle’ (which may have been a tent) of gNam-gsas phyi-rum with a salvo of world-shattering proportions. Next, the text concentrates on the appearance of gNam-gsas phyi-rum, an awe-inspiring divine warrior clad in tiger skins and iron. His blazing glory is of such tremendous intensity that Klu-rje btsan-ba and his klu army succumbs to it:

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186 For this localization, see Stein 1959, pp. 2, 33, 69, 70, 75. This Mi-nyag of the Sino-Tibetan marches is distinguished from the eponymous region centered in Lha-sgang and rTa’u in eastern Khams. In PT 1283, the term byang-phyogs is used to refer to the countries of Hor and Dru-gu.

187 The word gsas and sad and their various compound forms are presented in the lexicons of Dagkar 2003; Martin 2001-b; Haarh 1968; Pasar et al. 2008. The same or similar deity, gNam-gsas dbyings-rum, is found in a 13th century good fortune summoning text compiled byBru-ston rgyal-ba as one of the gods of the cardinal directions, which serves as the basis for good fortune capabilities (gyang; Bellezza 2005: 456–458). Another related god is gNam-gsas khyung-rum, who appears in an apotropaic ritual of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur (Bellezza 2008: 446). gNam-gsas is one of five gsas gods connected to Tibetan royal bloodlines (Karmay 1998: 47).
Also, [Klu-rje btsan-ba] sent the [armored man] ahead. sMra then-ba also sensed that. He magically appeared as two six to seven year old yaks. These were fighting up ahead and when seen by the armored man, the doe looked like demons. There were just two yaks. Klu-rje btsan-ba came there and said, ‘where are the doe?’ The armored man replied, ‘The doe and yaks, these two, are fighting. Klu-rje btsan-ba saying, ‘that is them’, dispatched (’phangs) the [armored man] in front of the two six to seven year old yaks. sMra then-ba sensed that. He magically appeared as two tigers that were fighting. sMra then-ba escaped to the northern castle of the lha of Me-nyag, rMa pho-’bra, [which had] four sides, four gateways in the sides and doors of bse, and was as high in the sky almost as far as an arrow can reach.

<33:1–7> Also, [Klu-rje btsan-ba] sent the [armored man] ahead. sMra then-ba also sensed that. He magically appeared as two six to seven year old yaks. These were fighting up ahead and when seen by the armored man, the doe looked like demons. There were just two yaks. Klu-rje btsan-ba came there and said, ‘where are the doe?’ The armored man replied, ‘The doe and yaks, these two, are fighting. Klu-rje btsan-ba saying, ‘that is them’, dispatched (’phangs) the [armored man] in front of the two six to seven year old yaks. sMra then-ba sensed that. He magically appeared as two tigers that were fighting. sMra then-ba escaped to the northern castle of the lha of Me-nyag, rMa pho-’bra, [which had] four sides, four gateways in the sides and doors of bse, and was as high in the sky almost as far as an arrow can reach.

<33:7 to 34:3> Klu-rje btsan-ba ordered (bka’-gsal) that the lha of Me-nyag, rMa pho-’bra (sic), remove sMra then-ba. Dispatching hundreds of armored men and armored horses of bse, Klu-rje btsan-ba became enraged. He let fall a torrent from the sky. He ignited a conflagration on earth. [The castle] Byang-ka dmar-mo nearly (ma-khad) collapsed from the summit and nearly collapsed from the foundation, [but] he could not defeat rMa pho-’bra (sic). Thereafter, the lha of bon in the west, gNam-gsas phyi-rum’s castle: the four sides were the sides of iron, the eaves were the three eaves of turquoise, the roof was the three roofs of silk, and the doors were the doors of conch. [sMra then-ba] escaped inside that [castle]. Klu-rje btsan-ba led the klu army. They appeared at the gateway of [the castle of] gNam-gsas. He let fall a torrent from [the sky] and he ignited a conflagration from the earth.

188 This is the rough meaning of the line: yang sngun du ’phangs ste /.

189 ’Dri = (= ’dre). It is also possible but less likely that ’dri = ’bri (female yaks).

190 Probably a white copper or some other kind of lustrous white metal, but certainly not rhinoceros hide in this context.

191 This part of the sentence is the general signification of the line: gNam la mda’ rgyang gyis myi lcebs (= ltsebs) pa’i nang du bros de /.

192 Gyis = gyi.
Moreover, gNam-gnas phyi-rum’s [head was covered] all around in tiger skins, so many\(^{193}\) tiger skins. He was with a tiger-skin helmet. [His body was clad] all around in iron, so much iron. He was with a phu-nu\(^{194}\) of iron. He wore\(^{195}\) a ber-chen (greatcoat) of iron. In his right hand he held up a chain lasso\(^{196}\) 990 spans long. If looked up at he was a blazing fire, lams se lams.\(^{197}\) If looked down upon he was glowing embers, rums se rums.\(^{198}\) The light of the fire, lams se lams. The light of the fire struck the klu and water. The klu and water dried up. They could not submerge (ma-nub) even half the castle. The lha-gnas of bon, gNam-gnas phyi-rum, was victorious. Klu-rje btsan-ba was bested and defeated.

gnam gsas phyi rum yang // gor stag shing du stag // stag kyi rmog zhu can // gor lcags shing du lcags // lcags kyi phu nu can // lcags kyi ber chen bsNams // phyag ma g.yas gong na // lcags kyi dril zhags ’dom rgu brgya rgu bcu bsNams // thog du yar ltas na me ’bar lams se lams // drung mar bltas na’ // ’dag ma rums se rums // me ’od lams se lams // me ’od klu dang chu la phog ste // klu dang chu skams ste / mkhar gyi phyed ma nub // bon gyi lha gsas / gnam gsas phyi rum rgyal de // klu rje btsan ba zhan de ’pham //

Defeated in battle, Klu-rje btsan-ba is compelled to find redress for the murder of his son through adjudication. The lha rule that sMra then-ba must pay 770,000 srang as the blood money (stong), an impossibly huge amount.\(^{199}\) In 18\(^{th}\) to 20\(^{th}\)

\(^{193}\) Shing du (C.T. = shin du).

\(^{194}\) A type of armor. This word may possibly be related to phu-tal (copper and iron), a word thought to be of Zhang Zhung origin (Pasar et al. 2008: 150).

\(^{195}\) bsNams = mnab (wore).

\(^{196}\) lCags kyi dril-zhags. It is not clear that dril (bu) refers to a bell here. A dril-zhags lasso is also wielded by the fierce btsan protector Hur-pa and by ’Dzin-pa zhags-thog bdud (bDud Catcher Holder of the Lasso), one of four wrathful horsemen known as Rol-po rkyi-bzhi (Bellezza 2005: 216, 300).

\(^{197}\) Lams se lams is a non-lexical poetic flourish that conveys the extremely bright quality of a blazing fire.

\(^{198}\) Rums se rums conveys the turbulent motion of red hot coals.

\(^{199}\) This is 77 times more than the blood money given as compensation for the slaying of the highest status ministers of the Tibetan empire. In PT 1071, a text that stipulates legal measures
century Tibet, the *srang* was a unit of currency with a set value in silver or gold. Nonetheless, the identity and intrinsic value of the *srang* in the prehistoric or early historic context is unclear. As in more recent times, the *srang* of early times may have been in the form of silver or gold bullion. Ancient forms of currency may also have encompassed cowry shells (*mgron-bu*), patterned agates (*gsi*) or perforated laminae (*byang-bu*), among other things. The guilty party is clearly exasperated by this judgment and he exclaims that not only is it more money than all humans hold, it even exceeds the potential increase of all livestock.

sMra then-ba, unable to pay the wergild levied against him, must face the wrath of Klu-rje btsan-ba once more. This time the klu king is allied with the king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber, and a host of *bdud*. Another class of demons is also introduced into the story, the *yi-dags*. In the Buddhist cultural setting, the *yi-dags* (C.T. = *yi-tuangs*), hungry ghosts or ghouls, are one of the six orders of living beings (*g-ro-ba rigs-drug*). In the non-Buddhist cultural context, the *yi-dags* are a pernicious class of demons of grotesque appearance. The narrative explains that the custom of fielding (large) armies began with this event, setting the historical precedent for the military craft of Tibet. In this state of affairs, sMra then-ba’s life is in great mortal danger, of that there is no question:

\[<34:8 to 35:1>\text{The lha acted as the witnesses (gzu) and arbitrators (dpang). For the blood money for the murder of Klu-rje bzang-to-re, it was decided that Klu-rje btsan-ba was to receive 770,000 *srang*. That was the judgment rendered (zhal che bcad).}^{201}\text{[sMra then-ba said],} \\
\text{‘770,000 *srang* – even the wealth of all humans}^{202}\text{is not enough (myi-lang). Even the fecundity of all domestic animals is insufficient (myi-khor). I am unable to pay’ That he said.}\\
\text{lha’is gzu dang dpang bgyis ste} // klu rje btsan ba la // klu rab bzang to re bsad pa’i stong du // srang bdun khri bdun ‘bum / gsol cig par bcad nas // zhal che bcad nas su // srang bdun khri bdun ‘bum ni // dreng myi ’i nor gyis yang myi lang ngo // dud phyugs kyi ’phel kyis yang myi khor ro // ’jal myi nus so bgyis pa la //

in the event of hunting accidents, payment of 20 to 10,000 *srang* in blood money (*myi-stong*) are levied on hunters who inadvertently kill another member of the hunt. The amount of the fine is dependent on the relative social status of the perpetrators and victims. Fines for injuring someone with an arrow while hunting are generally half that of manslaughter. PT 1071 also specifies that 50 to 500 *srang* be paid out to those who have fallen under a yak. For an analysis of PT 1071, see Richardson 1998, pp. 151–158; Dotson 2007, pp. 10, 11. ITJ 753 records a fine of two *srang* levied on the accomplices of a thief (Dotson 2007: 14, 15).

\[^{200}\text{For *srang* as a unit of currency and unit of measurement, see Bertsch 2002, pp. 3–5.}\]

\[^{201}\text{Richardson (1998: 165, fn. 48) notes that bcad/gcad is the O.T. cognate of chad (penalty, punishment, fine), as in chad-pas gcod-pa (to punish).}\]

\[^{202}\text{Dreng-myi (C.T. = ’grang-mi); literally: ‘bipedal humans’.}\]
<35:1–4>Klu-rje btsan-ba, heartbroken and anguished, fielded an army of klu. He also fielded the army of the king of the ltas-ngan, Gang-par ge-ber. He also fielded the 13 yab-bla bdud-po of the upper valley and the 12 ma-bla bcud-po of the lower valley, and each and every kind of yi-dags. [The custom of] fielding an army began then. sMra then-ba was like a little bird nearly taken in a gtor. He was like a fish nearly snatched in a tshed.

klu rje btsan ba thugs chad brang gam nas // klu rmag bzlog ste / ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber gyi rmag yang bzlog // phu ya bla bdud po bcu gsum dang // mda’ma bla bcud mo bcu gnyis dang // yi dags cho ma cho rgu bzlog ste // rmag bzlog pa de nas byung ngo // smra then ba zhig bya ltar gtor gyis blangs ma khad // nya ltar tshed kyis bceu ma khad //

In desperation, sMra then-ba turns to gShen-rab myi-bo to save him from his enemies. sMra then-ba asks this venerable priest of the gshen lineage (called ‘father’ (pha) as a term of respect for his high priestly position) if he has the four types of prerequisite rites. gShen-rab myi-bo replies that he does indeed possess these therapeutic measures. As a first step, ablutions (mtshan = tshan) to the lha must be made. The tshan is a class of rites that relies on methods of lustration, which acts as a prelude to other ritual exertions. The tshan is carried out to purify the defilement of deities caused by human actions, thereby reestablishing a concord between both parties. The text also intimates another essential preliminary practice, that of fumigation. This fundamental ritual

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203 bzlog. This O.T. term must be etymologically related to the C.T. term ldog, a verb used to describe the coiling or uncoiling of a rope. Thus in this context, bzlog can be defined as a rolling out or a deployment in a military sense.

204 These are spirits of the bdud and bcud (chad) classes, which are closely related to the ya-bdud (demons of the sky) and ma-bdud (demons of the earth; cf. Pasar et al. 2008: 179, 230, 231). For a description of the 13 ya-bdud and ma-bdud taken from a classification of spirits in the rNying ma’i rdug ’bum, see Blondeau 2008, pp. 204, 205, 230–234. See also Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 277. The ya-bdud and ma-bdud are invoked by Mi-la-ras-pa in a healing ritual (Stein 2003: 605). Many occurrences of the ya-bdud are found in PT 1047. In this text they are closely associated with the btsan/ltshan, dri (C.T. = ‘dre), te’u-rang (C.T. = the’u-rang), sri, and gdon demons.

205 Cho-ma cho-rgu. This means something to the effect of ‘each and every kind’, ‘each and every one’, ‘each manner of’. For the occurrence of this expression in PT 1068, see Bellezza 2008, p. 540. This is precisely how the term is used in PT 1039 as well. For example, see ln. 20: pha-byad cho-ma cho-dgu (each and every kind of father demon); ln. 31: sa-byad cho-ma cho-dgu (each and every kind of earth demon) The C.T. equivalent cha-ma-cho means ‘this and that one’.

206 A kind of snare or trap. In PT 1136, we find the word ’gor (to hunt, to trap): g.yag-shor ‘brong-gor (Bellezza 2008: 520, Stein 2003: 602).

207 Contextually, a kind of net, trap or hook.

208 In addition to signifying reverence and admiration for those called ‘father’, pha may also have had ancestral and corporate connotations: father as the tribal/community patriarch or sire in a symbolic sense and father as the temporal/spiritual head of the tribe/community.

209 There are two major types of tshan: tshan-dkar (uses substances such as water and milk) and tshan-dmar (uses substances such as blood). Tshan rites are studied in Norbu 1995, pp. 112–124, Karmay 1998, pp. 389–412.
operation is conducted for the purification and propitiation of the deities using aromatic substances (bsang-gsol):

<35:4–7> sMra then-ba asked father gShen-rab myi-bo, ‘Do you have the gto and dpyad? Do you have the mo and mtshungs?210 gShen-rab said, ‘I, the man (myi kho-bo), have the gto and dpyad. I have the mo and mtshungs to do. ‘Let us make ablutions to the lha. Let us collect the beautiful firewood and iron.’211

smra then ba’i mchid nas // pha gshen rab myi bo la // gto dang dpyad bgyis sam // mo dang mtshungs bgyis sam // gshen rab zhal na re // myi kho bo lo // gto dang dpyad mchis // mo dang mtshungs bgyis nas mchis ste // lha la mtshan gsal ’tshal // zhugs shing mtshar pa lcag dgum ’tshal /

After gShen-rab myi-bo announces that preparations for the preliminary ritual exercises must be put in place, the narrative digresses to proclaim the parentage of the god Lha-bo lha-sras. Lha-bo lha-sras is described as being a holy or great man (myi-pho) intelligent or accomplished even when young (chung du bsgam). Lha-bo lha-sras (Lha Person Son of the Lha), a god of the phya lineage and an ancestral figure, belongs to the otherworld (Bellezza 2008: 451). In ITJ 734r, a glud ritual text, this god is referred to utilizing a more old-fashioned orthography: rje (the lord) Bla-bo bla-sras (Soul Person Son of the Soul; ibid.: 436, 437). In ITJ 734r, this figure acts as a divine officiant who summons the good fortune capability (g.yang), using mustard seeds and Ephedra.212 Upon

210 Literally: ‘equivalence’. This term refers to the glud class of rituals and related practices. The gZi brjid states that the glud is the exchange of two things of equal value carried out within the context of the beneficial rite of equivalence (mtshungs-gto; Snellgrove 1967: 77).

211 Zhugs shing mtshar pa lcag (C.T. = lcags) dgum (C.T. = mtshal, vermilion). Firewood is a metaphor for incense and red-colored iron for the fire-maker. The placement of tshan and bsang rites at the beginning of the Eternal Bon ritual regimen is noted in Bellezza 2005, p. 175. Needless to say, in Tibetan studies much has been written about the practice of offering of incense and fumigation. Karmay’s (1998: 380–412) landmark study on the subject is of course requisite reading.

212 For mention of Bla-bo bla-sras in ITJ 734r, also see Ins. 88, 100. In the divination text ITJ 740, Lha-bo lha-sras delivers prognoses, along with other prominent deities such as Thang-lha yab-zhur, ‘O-de gung-rgyal, Yar-lha sham-po, and Sha-med gangs-dkar [now commonly known as Jo-mo gangs dkar]; see Dotson 2007: 22–25. Dotson (ibid.) also notes that in the Buddhist histories mkhas pa’i dga’ ston and mkhas pa lde’u, Lha-bo lha-sras is associated with the descent of King gNya’-khris btsan-po from heaven to earth. Reference to the same god, Lha-sras lha-bo-che, is made in the illuminated funerary manuscript (see supra, fn. 25). The illumination accompanying the text depicts Lha-sras lha-bo and his consort Lha-za gang-cig-ma suspended above a range of seven mountains. The god holds a feather or cloth-like object in each of his hands, the weapon of the dbal. The two figures are plainly but elegantly attired. The text below the drawing reads, “In the country Sa-le ljon above is the castle of the rock formation sMon-lam and the conch white swirling lake. In between the lake and the rock formation is Lha-sras lha-bo che [and] Lha-za gang-cig ma when she came to benefit. The castle of the lhe’u (‘little lha’) and fortress of the sman is that of the general, lord of the sgra-bla [Lha-sras lha-bo che], the fortress of the sman, the fortress of the sgra-bla. In his hand he [holds the weapon] of the dbal. He subdues the gzed, btsan and epidemics of violent death. Also, we call [to be blessed with]
formally introducing Lha-bo lha-sras in the language of the smrang, the narrative moves to a journey undertaken by gShen-rab myi-bo on a swift stallion of the gsas. That his horse is possessed of a divinity underscores this priest’s high and holy status. gShen-rab myi-bo goes to an unspecified place to seek the assistance of Lha-bo lha-sras. gShen-rab myi-bo is described as attired in a long gown and carrying a drum and flat bell (gshang), ritual instruments that became stock in trade for the Eternal Bon-po. The drum and gshang of gShen-rab myi-bo each have their own special name or description. This ancient tradition extended to the personal weapons of kings and warriors, which were given specialized titles as well.\textsuperscript{213}

\textless 35:7 to 36:1\textgreater  According to the speech\textsuperscript{214} of the lha, the son of the mighty father and mighty patriarch 'Ol-sha-bsan;\textsuperscript{215} the noble mother and noble matriarch, the son of the noble woman, the son of Chab-ma nyi-lon btsun, was the holy man, intelligent even when young, Lha-bo lha-sras, intelligent even when young. The stallion was swift even when young. Lag-pa’i mthing-ge ning-ge-ba was swift even when young. gShen-rab-myi-bo mounted a saddle on the brownish horse

\textsuperscript{213} For some examples of this tradition, see Vitali 1996, p. 124; Bellezza 2008, p. 342. See also supra, fn. 162.

\textsuperscript{214} bKal = bka’.

\textsuperscript{215} This figure is the same as ‘Ol-la sha-bzan of the ‘Ol-pu dag-dang locality, one of the nine lha-dgu (sha-bla) protectors of local chiefs and the Tibetan kings) in ITJ 734r. See Thomas 1957: Texts, Translations and Notes, p. 76; Karmay 1998, pp. 436, 437. According to the Can Inga, ‘Ol-lha sha-zan (sic) is one of the two names for ‘O-de gung-rgyal after his descent to earth, the father of nine great regional mountain gods (Karmay 1998: 297). According to Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru, ‘O-de gung-rgyal was one of the four divine forebears of human beings (Bellezza 2008: 351). The name of Lha-bo lha-sras’s father as well as the geographic signposts given in the byol-rabs (see text, 36:1–9) indicates that this god also originated in the ‘Ol-kha region.
gShen-rab myi-bo

with a white face of the gsas. He wore a long ral-ga (gown) of silk. He carried the large drum döng-chen döng-drag on his back. He placed the gshang khri-lo with the sweet sound on his side.  

lha ’i bkal na / pha btsan yab btsan na / ’o la sha btsan gyi sras / ma btsun yum btsun / btsun btsun gyi sras / chaamburg ma nyi lon btsun gyi sras // myi pho chung du bsgam / lha bo lha sras chung du bsgam / rta po chung la mgyogs / lag pa’i mthing ge ning ge ba chung la mgyogs // gshen rab myi bo’i gsas rta dro bzhur ni gsas bstad de // dar gyi ra’i ral ga rin ge gsal // rnga döng chen döng drags rgyab la khur // gshang khri-lo skad snyan mchan du gsal //

In order to take up the invitation extended to him by gShen-rab myi-bo, Lha-bo lha-sras and his horse must travel through the sands. I am of the opinion that this mention of sands is metaphorical in nature, an allusion to the wasteland that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. As noted, Lha-bo lha-sras does indeed have a role to play in the archaic funerary rites; he is a companion and guardian of the dead. After the sands, enroute to his rendezvous with gShen-rab myi-bo, this god passes through four places, the name of each of which begins with ‘Ol. This prefix suggests that Lha-bo lha-sras’s journey transpired in the ‘Ol-kha region of southern Tibet. The word sGam prefixed to his name seems to reinforce this geographic placement, for the mountain [Dwags-lha] sgam-po is in the same general vicinity. When the two finally meet, gShen-rab myi-bo bends down to make prostrations (phyag-ma-du bshis btsal) to Lha-bo lha-sras, something his Eternal Bon counterpart would never deign to do. gShen-rab myi-bo tells the god about the murder of Klu-rab bzang to-re by sMra then-ba, the subsequent arbitration by the lha, and how the manslayer refused to pay the blood money. Using a series of vivid similes,

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216 In Eternal Bon documents, the gshang of sTon-pa gShen-rab is referred to as khri-lo gnam-grags (Pasar et al. 2008: 27). PT 1289 (Ins. v3-11, v3-12), a manuscript containing a snyang for the funerary ritual transport female hybrid yak (mdzo-mo), describes the funerary priest gShen-rab at the very end of the extant text: “He came suddenly.” gShen-rabs kyi myi-bo came suddenly. He held the gshang great bell in his left hand. He held the wing the-rä ther-bu in his right hand. He [made] the funeral rites (bdur) for the dead (shñ) [and] searched for the lost [soul(s)?]. The dead human[s] (myi-gshin) by the gshen...twenty-seven…” (pha pha se gshogs na gshen rabs kyi myi bo pha se gshogs / gshang dril chen na phyag ma g.yon na snams / gshog the ra ther bu ni phyag ma g.yas na snams / shñ ni bdur lag ni tshol / myi-gshin ni gshen khyis [...] pha’ na [...] nyi shu’ ritsa bdun...). *‘Suddenly’ is a conjectural reading for pha-se. This translation also seems to best suit the occurrence of the same word in the Klu ‘bum nag po. Formerly, I rendered it ‘queer-looking’ (see Bellezza 2008: 485, para. iv).


217 For the localization of Dags-lha sgam-po, see Hazod 2009, p. 173; Sørensen et al. 2007, p. 259 (fn. 741).
gShen-rab myi-bo also recounts how Mra then-ba was almost killed by Klu-rab btsan-ba. Then gShen-rab myi-bo requests the assistance of Lha-bo lha-sras in instituting protective measures for sMra then-ba:

<36:1–9> Also, Lha-bo was invited, he was invited through the sands. He crossed, he crossed over the sands. [His horse] trotted, it trotted over the sands. That intelligent Lha-bo lha-[sras] stayed in 'Ol-phu g.yang-gang, then in 'Ol-phug rga, then in 'Ol kyi spang-bzang. gShen-rab myi-bo made prostrations [to Lha-bo lha-sras]. The intelligent Lha-bo lha-sras said, 'Father gShen-rab myi-bo where are you going?' These words having been spoken, gShen-rab myi-bo replied, ‘In sMra-yul thang-brgyad, sMra then-ba killed Klu-rab bzang to-re, so all the lha acted as the arbitrators. For the blood money of the klu, 770,000 srang was decided. sMra then-ba could not accept that. Klu-rab btsan-ba was allied with the ltas-ngan, bdud and yi-dags. sMra then-ba was nearly taken like a bird in a gtor. He was nearly snatched like a fish in a tshed. He was nearly seized like a sheep by the scruff of the neck. Intelligent Lha-bo lha-sras please come to advise (bka’-gsal). Please come to strike the iron on the beautiful firewood.' [gShen-rab myi-bo] thus requested.

\[lha bo drongs yang bye la drongs // 'gam yang bye la 'am // bdur yang bye la bdur // brgyugs yang bye la brgyugs // 'ol phu g.yang gang na // 'ol phu lung rings na // 'ol phug rga dang 'ol kyi spang bzangs na // sgam lha bo lhas de na bzhus de // gshen rab myi bos phyag ma dud kyis bsal // sle ba 'ong gyis blangs ste // bsgam lha bo lha sras zhal nas // pha gshen rab myi bo gar ru gshags // de skad bgyis pa la // gshen rab zhal na re // smra yul thang brgyad na // smra then ba 'is // klu rab bzang to re bsd pas // lha rgus gzu dpang bgyis ste // klu'i stong du // srang bdun 'bum // bdun khri sra ma nyag 'bum cīg / phab ste // smra then ba ma nyan de // klu rab btsan ba 'is // ltas ngan dang // bdud dang // yi bdags dang bsdongs ste // smra then ba bya ltar gtor gyis blangs ma khod // nya ltar tshed kyis bcus ma khod // lug ltar gnyas nas bzung ma khod // bsgam lha bo

\[Drongs\] (C.T. = drangs).
\['Gam\] (C.T. = bgam).
\[‘Am\] = ‘gam.

218 In PT 1285, ‘Ol-phu dga’-dang (sic) is the place where ‘Ol-rje zin-brang tragically attempts to arrange the marriage of his daughter ‘Ol-za lham-bu (Dotson 2008: 47). According to Hazod (2009: 173), toponyms such as ‘Ol-phu dga’-dang/dga’-thang/rga-dang and ‘Ol-phu kyi spang-bzangs (sic) appear to be situated in upper ‘Ol-kha. Also see Karmay 1998, p. 437. These toponyms also recall ‘Ol-mo lung-ring, a mythical land of Eternal Bon, generally placed north and west of Tibet.

222 The next line in the text reads: sle ba ‘ong gyis blangs ste /. Its general import is that gShen-rab made a demonstration of respect to Lha-bo lha-sras.

223 Also, as compensation, the text adds: sra-ma nyag 'bum (100,000 strands of sra-ma?).

224 gNya (C.T. = gnya)
Lha-bo lha-sras and gShen-rab myi-bo commence to perform the initiatory gto and dpyad rites, but they are unable to complete them. Lha-bo lha-sras advises that(152,828),(418,896)

225 Here the word dpyad is used as the verb: dpyad du dpyad.

226 This second half of the sentence is the incomplete import of the lines: do tshor do ma tshor / dpyad kyi do tshor do tshor /.

227 Nas = na.
The father Mus-dpal phrog-rol said, ‘It is ordered by Lha-bo lha-sras. It is better if I come’, he said. He rode the white horse of the lha. A white dog of the gsas followed him. From the sky he was conveyed down to earth by the celestial cord. He arrived in the country of ‘Ol-phu rgu. Lha-bo lha-sras, Mus-dpal phrog-rol and gsShen-rab myi-bo performed the glo in the evening and performed the dpyad in the morning.

As a ritual substitute for the 770,000 srang, the glud or byol primarily relies on three types of animals: a langur, sheep and bird. Various ornaments and clothes also make up the ransom offering. No ordinary offerings, these ritual embellishments manifest as hybrid yaks and horses, recapitulating the tremendous efficacy of even modest objects in the byol. A number of ritual objects are named but the identity of some of them has been forgotten. What is clear is that these and the more familiar ritual objects listed were offered to various troublesome spirits, namely the yi-dags (hungry ghosts) and bdud:

As the blood money and glud: the langur Myi-bo lag-ring (Human Long Hand), the sheep of the bdud Yor-ba, the white bird Tho-lo. On the right ba-brī, a red spear of bse was bound. On the left ba-brī, a blue turquoise snake was tied. These were ornamented with nine types of good silk and, colored brocade, the tenth. The flight of the ornaments was like a man sallying forth to battle. Each bamboo arrow manifested as a hybrid yak and horse with loads. Each banner (’phan) with bird feathers manifested as a hybrid yak and horse with a load. Each snges (anterior?) banner manifested as the leader of each hybrid yak and horse. Each felt banner manifested as a youth herding from behind.

Note:
228 Logs = legs.
229 Kyi (C.T. = kyi).
230 rMu-dag (C.T. = dmud-thag).
231 This is the contextual meaning of the O.T. verb tshor.
232 Mar-bo (C.T. = dmar-po).
233 sBrud (C.T. = sbrul).
234 Chas (C.T. = bcas).
235 sPul = sprul.
mar bo btags // ba 'brt g.yom pa la / g.yu sbrud sngon po btags //
bzang dar sna cho rgu za bug mtshon dang bcus brgyan de // rgyan
phur phur de / skyes pa rmag la cha pa dra' // mda’ rgyud smyug
ma re re nī // mdzo rta re re khad dang chas par sprul // bya spu
dang 'phan dang chas pa nī / mdzo rta re re khad dang chas par sprul
// snges 'phan re re nī // mdzo rta re re sna khrid par spul // phyin
'phan re re nī // skyes phran re re phyi na ded par sprul //

<38:6 to 39:1> In each tshags-phur237 hundreds of dmar-srang238 were
placed, thousands239 of shing-rings (long sticks), bṛgya-ris 'ol-'ol (?), and
stong-rings phyo-phyo (?), which manifested as the country of the yi-
dags, places, castles, people, wealth, and livestock. These [offerings]
were apportioned in thousands [of parts]. An arrow with brocade was
offered to the hundreds of male demons (bdud-pho), sGag-po. The
golden spindle with the turquoise drop-spindle wheel was offered to the
yi-dags female gatekeepers. Golden libations (gser-mngon) with the
good mouth240 and turquoise libations tshig-pa (?), these two, were
offered as the manifested possessions of all kinds of yi-bdags (sic).
Milk241 with the beautiful face (appearance) and mustard seeds with
the good hull (rgang), the secret and essence [food] of the yi-dags, were
offered as libations [to the yi-dags].

tshags phur re re la / dmar srang brgyar bcad // shing rings stong cho
dang / bṛgya rī 'ol 'ol dang / stong rings phyo phyo ni / yi dags yul
dang / sa dang / mkhar dang / myi dang / nor dang phyugs su sprul
de // stong du bcad / mda’ za bug ma nī / bdud pho bṛgya sgang po
rnams la phul // / gser 'phang g.yom lo nī / yi dags sgo mo rnams la 'bul
lo / gser mngon kha bzangs dang // g.yom mngon tshig pa gnyis // yi
dags cho rgu'i / dkor dad du sprul de phul / dkar mo bzhin bzangs
dang // yungs mo rgang bzangs nī // yi dags kyi ḍgang dang bcud
dang / skyes su gsd bas //

In the conduct of the byol ritual a female ritualist or bon-mo is mentioned by
name. Called Shib-pa gshen-'brang, she is responsible for a series of offerings
being transformed into large numbers of goats and sheep. This symbolic or

237 Apparently, this is some kind of ritual container.
238 This appears to be a unit of currency. In a document from Miran, a man purchases a Chinese
bondservant (bran) from a monk for three dmar-srang. ITJ 1374 records a sale in which two
brothers sell their sister into marriage to a man for seven dmar-srang. All four parties in this
contract are Chinese. Takeuchi hypothesizes that dmar-srang may have been a string of copper
coins. For these Old Tibetan references, see Dotson 2009, p. 68, after Takeuchi 1995. In PT
1297.3, Ins. 5-7, five dmar-srang are agreed upon for the purchase of a horse. According to
Christoph Cüppers of the Lumbini International Research Institute (in personal
communication), the dmar-srang appears to be related to the smar-gser (gold) gyi srang, which
during the time of the gTsang rulers was equivalent to 96 khal of grain.
239 sTong-cho = stong-tsho.
240 Kha-bzang. This refers to the libation being laced with bits of gold.
241 dKar-mo. This term can also refer to a sheep, but that is not how it is used here.
magical transformation forms a major part of the blood money (stong-ri), the substitute payment made in lieu of the 770,000 srang. The text informs us that this event was the historical precedent for both the glud ritual and the custom of blood money, once again highlighting the exceptional significance of the narrative. The practices of making glud and paying blood money retained a prominent place in the culture of Tibet until recent times:

<39:2–5> Then the bon-mo of the earth Shib-pa gshen-’brang with the remaining offerings and libations, apportioned one after another, manifested them as 770 tan sheep. A basket (slo-ma) full of the feathers of the bya-bang manifested as seven herds of blue (perse) female goats. The blood money of death was cut (paid) like that. The blood money of murder (bsad-pa’i stong) of the klu was completed by sMra then-ba. The glud of the father bon-[po] and also blood money (stong-ri) began and existed then.

Alas, even though the ltas-ngan and bdud demons partook of all that was offered to them, their ire was not fully appeased. They send an evil portent in the form of an ox-stag to sMra then-ba, but he is able to slay it with his bow and arrow. He displays the flesh of this slain creature in strategic locations, ostensibly to repel the demons plaguing him. Yet there were still more demons to contend with in the form of ’dre, vexatious beings common in Tibetan demonology. On account of the ’dre, sMra then-ba is once again extremely hard-pressed. It is Mus-dpal phrog-rol who performs the gto and dpyad, determining that the ’dre need their share of the byol barley cakes, beer, Ephedra, and other choice things. It is stated that Mus-dpal phrog-rol chants and makes spells to Khrab ’bum-bye mun la ’bar. Apparently, this is the name given to the entire offering ensemble of the byol ritual performance. Mus-dpal phrog-rol succeeds in luring all the afflicting demons into this ritual edifice, in order that gShen-rab myi-bo can shoot it with his bow and arrow. This has the effect of causing the evil spirits to disperse and again seek out sMra then-ba, who must appeal to Mus-dpal phrog-rol to save his life:

242 This is the general import of the line: lhag dang zhon lus pa ni /.
243 The bya-wang, one of 13 messenger birds in the Dri med gzi brjid. It is a bluish and white pheasant found in places such as sTeng-chen.
244 sTong-thang. The O.T. word thang has to do with death. Thang-khrims are prescribed funerary activities and thang-sha is a funerary sacrificial meat offering (Bellezza 2008: 381, 405, 435, 452, 470, 471).
A time came when the ltas-ngan, bdud and each and every kind of yi-dags even though they had eaten, were not sated with the miraculous wealth and viands. The ltas-ngan and bdud sent what bad omens to sMra then-ba? They sent an ox with tiger stripes and a stag head with antlers of ten points fixed on it. sMra then-ba sensed that. He placed the arrow and drew the bow (mchog-gar). With the arrow he shot the ox with the tiger stripes, killing it. One portion of its flesh was hung (bskal) on the white sunny mountain. One portion of its flesh was sent (bskyal) to the black shady mountain. One portion of its flesh was sent to the middle of the river.

Then, the sunny demons, the shady demons, the upper valley demons, the lower valley demons, the misfortune-causing (phung) demons, and the water demons, and each and every kind of [of demon], appeared. There was no place for sMra then-ba to dwell among humans. There was no stake for him to tie his cattle. He invited the father Mus-dpal phrog-rol to do the gto and dpyad. The sunny demons, shady demons, water demons and other various orders [of demons) were assembled. They raucously agreed that they needed the byol, so a dish full of barley cakes of the byol, a pitcher full of beer of the byol, one pedicel of Ephedra of the byol, and favorite wealth was given out. The favorite speech was uttered.

dre (C.T. = 'dre).

De bcas g.yos pas byol byyi tshal ba // byol zan sder gan gang dang // byol chang skyogs

245 mChog gar dra' bkug lu mar ldong sbyar. The spelling li-mar (arrow) also occurs in Bon ritual texts.

246 The fundamental opposition of the sunny (gdags) and shady (sribs/srib) sides of mountains and other things is a recurring theme in Old Tibetan literature. For a discussion of the related term nyin (sunny) and srib as a binary system of classification in the construction of toponyms, see Chayet 2008. Also see Dotson 2008, pp. 48, 49.

247 Dre (C.T. = 'dre).

248 De bcas g.yos pas byol byyi tshal ba(s) /.
gang dang // byol mtshe nyag gcig dang / nor snying rag sgor phyung cig // gtam snying rag khar 'byin no //

<40:6 to 41:3> [Mus-dpal phrog-rol] chanting and chanting and casting spells and spells on Khrab 'bum-byun-mun-la 'bar, threw it away in the lower valley. The sunny demons, shady demons, water demons, and other orders [of demons] assembled at Khrab brgya-byun la 'bar (sic). gShen-rab myi-bo, placing an arrow, drew a bow with an arrow point (mda st'e'u-kha) as large as the scapula of a goat. He shot it at Khrab brgya-byen mun la 'bar, so the sunny demons, shady demons and water demons dispersed and returned. They were assembled around sMra then-ba, thus he was nearly taken like a bird in a gtor. He was nearly snatched like a fish in a tshed. He invited the father Mus-dpal phrog-rol from the sky.

khrab 'bum bye mun la 'bar la // bsgye bsgyer bsngag bsngag nas // lung gyi ma mda'r bor de btang na // khrab brgya bye mun la 'bar la / gdags dre srgb dre / chu dre sna tshogs 'dus nas gda' // gshen rab myi bo 'is / mcho gar dra' bkug / lu mar ldong sbyar nas // mda' ste'u kha ra sogs tsam cig / khrab brgya bye mun la 'bar la brgyab pas / gdags dre srgb dre chu dre bas slar la gyed de // smra then ba la 'dus nas / smra then ba bya ltar gtor gyis blangs ma khad // nya ltar tshed kyis bcus ma khad / pha mus dpal phrog rol gnam nas gnyer ste //

The text now enumerates more byol objects offered to the itas-ngan (and other demons). These ransom offerings were deposited at a crossroads and are discovered by a noble hunter. The hunter proceeds to take the valuable ritual offerings he finds. The demons react very badly and attempt to take his life through a wild yak attack. It appears, however, that the hunter was also rescued by a subsequent byol offering, the consummating ritual performance of the narrative. This last byol consists of more chanting and the casting of spells as empowering devices. This time the offerings ensemble, which is placed in a multitude of copper containers, is deposited in a river that runs through a gorge or past a large boulder beside a crossroads.249 Even today, glud offerings are deposited at crossroads; this text setting the example for such a practice. The water rushing past the rock formation pushes the copper containers into the current, and this causes the figurines of a man herding an ox, fundamental parts of the byol offerings, to be lost to the water.250 The ‘death’ of this man and ox represents a ritual slaughter (bsad-pa), the sacrifice that finally satiates the demons’ thirst for human blood:

249 On the downstream function in expelling rituals, see Dotson 2008.
<41:3–8> What byol [was offered] to the ltas-ntag? The byol [offered] was the favorite wealth. The turquoise mtsho-ru lu-gu, the little (pretty) gold, pure gold, byol was sent. In the top of the valley, the only son of the wealthy was hunting deer (sha-shor) and hunting antelope (rgo-drim). At the crossroads of three paths he came across the turquoise mtsho-ro lu-gu and pretty gold, sa-le sbram. He took what he had found, so by the ltas-ntag and bdud, the only son of the wealthy was nearly taken like bird in a gtor. He was nearly snatched like a fish in a tshed. As the only son of the wealthy was befallen by bad omens and byol, the man was taken on the right horn of the northern [wild] yak sKar-ba. His horse was taken on the left horn. They nearly perished (nongs ma-khad).

ltas ngan ci las byol na // nor snying rag las byol // g.yu mtsho ro lu gu dang / gser chung sa le sbram la byol de btang / phyug gyi bu cig pa lung gyi ya ru / sha shor rgo-drim mchis na / lam gyi indo sum na / g.yu mtsho ru lu gu dang / gser chung sa le sbram dang phrad de mjal / de ‘tshal de mchis na / lta ngan dang bdud kyis / phyug kyi bu cig po / bya ltar gtor gysis blangs ma khad / nya ltar tshed kyis bcus ma khad / phyug gyi bu cig po la / lta ngan byol bab nas / byung g.yag skar ba’i rwa g.yas bas / myi blangs / rwa g.yon pas rta blangs de / nong ma khad na //

<42:1–4> The byol [was made] with the objects of preference (bag-chags) of the ltas-ntag and bdud. The bon-po and zor-byol [placed] the objects of desire of the ltas-ntag and bdud into hundreds and thousands of copper containers (zangs), altogether with those of the yi-dags. The [priests] chanted and chanted and said spells and spells. Then they cast out [the containers] at the crossroads of four paths, where the river and rock formation meet. The copper containers were pushed away by the rock formation, the ox was pushed away by the copper containers, and

251 *Sa-le sbram, sBram-bu* = unwrought gold (Das 1902: 943), while *sa-le* is reported to be the Zhang Zhung equivalent of *gsal-ba* (bright, clear, lucid; Pasar et al. 2008: 270). Therefore, perhaps ‘bright gold’ instead of ‘pure gold’ might be more fitting here. For the mythic origin of gold, see supra, fn. 43.

252 These terms for the hunting of deer and antelope (dgo-drim) are found in PT 1040 and PT 1289, as noted in Stein 2003, pp. 600, 602. See variant spellings *sha-shor* and *dgo-drem* in PT 1068 and sha-shord in PT 1134 (Bellezza 2008: 511, 539; Stein 2003: 602).

253 For *mtsho-ro* / *mtsho-rog* (sic) as a synonym for turquoise, See Bellezza 2008, pp. 35, 419, 450; 2005, p. 350 (fn. 27). This term is also represented in PT 1051, ln. 11; PT 1052, ln. v006; ITJ 738 3v004; ITJ 739, Ins. 02r10, 11v05. This word is supposed to be of Zhang Zhung origin (cf. Pasar et al. 2008: 211). *mTsho-ro* is semantically related g.yu-mtsho (turquoise lake).

254 The transcription of the text incorrectly transcribes in both instances of its occurrence *rwa* as *rba* (Glam shul da’g ‘thang ‘bum pa ché nas goar du rayed, no. 41, ln. 8). The wild yak sKar-ba is also found in ITJ 731r. In this Dunhuang manuscript, sKar-ba, who refuses to share his pasture with a horse, gores it to death. The slain horse is the older brother of the first funerary ritual transport equid or do-ma. See Bellezza 2008, p. 534, 535. Also see Stein 1971, pp. 486, 487.

256 A ritualist specializing in removing the byol afflictions.
the man was pushed away by the ox, thus the man257 herding the ox died (gum-mo) there in the river.

ltas ngan bdud kyi bag chags kyis byol // bon dang zor byol gyis / zangs brgya ma stong ma la / lta* ngan dang bdud kyi bag chags dang / yi dags chas pa’i spyi der // bsnyer bsnyer bsngag bsngag nas // lam gyi bzhi mdo r bye bu bstan / / brag dang chu phrad de / brag gyis zangs phul / zangs kyis glang phul nas / glang gyis myi phul bas // / myi ’dron po glang ded yang chab du gum mo //

The narrative is concluded by reaffirming the value of the byol, stating that it was the only thing that could possibly help sMra then-ba. It is also unambiguous in declaring that the story occurred in the distant past; for the early historic period ritualists this was crucial in establishing the integrity and authenticity of the smrang:

<42:4–6> In ancient times the byol benefited in that way. Once when sMra then-ba was captured by the klu, lta* ngan, bdud, and each and every kind of yi-dags, nothing could aid him except aid by the byol. He was benefited by the glud. In ancient times it was of benefit to sMra then-ba.

byol gna’ de ltar phan no // smra then ba zhig // klu dang lta* ngan dang // / bdud dang yi dags cho ma cho rgu su / bzung ba yang / cis yang ma thub byol gyis thub // / glud kyis ‘phan no / gna’ smra then ba la phan no //

In the last instance, the text skips to a byol ritual made in the period of its composition or use. It notes a current client, which rather than the proper name of an individual appears to be a generic appellation for patients in general or a class of men.258 The power and efficacy of the byol is reiterated one last time, before the text ends with the three prototypic words recited by the bon priests:

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257 Myi ’dron-po (C.T. = mgron-po). mGron-po refers to a person or deity that is the object of invocation (Das 1902: 288).

258 Thomas (1957: Texts, Translations and Notes, pp. 53–55), commenting on ITJ 734r, considers rMa-bu mchön-rgyal/mching-rgyal (sic) to have been a real historical figure, and equates him with Mi-chen, a ruler of the T’ang-chang kingdom who lived sometime after 500 CE. Stein (1971: 497, 503, 504) and Dotson (2008: 45) take a much different view, seeing the rMa-bu mching-rgyal of ITJ 734r and PT 1285 as denoting an epithet for the patient for which the recitation of the text is being made. In PT 1285 and ITJ 734r as well as the byol-rabs text, rMa-bu mching-rgyal occurs in the present tense as the current successor to the smrang narrative. On ITJ 734r, also see Bellezza 2008, p. 437. A contemporary context for rMa-bu mching-rgyal in the wake of an attestation of the ancient nature of a funerary ritual is also found in PT 1039, ln. 26. This narrative framework in four different Old Tibetan texts leads me to concur with the position taken by Stein and Dotson as outlined above, discounting Thomas’s historical hypothesis regarding the identity of rMa-bu mching-rgyal.
Now, the man smra-bu mchis-rgyal has been befallen by bad omens. When the byol contacts the river, the river becomes dry. When the byol contacts the wood, the wood is broken. When the byol contacts the flying bird, it falls down. When the byol contacts the stone, it cracks. By the bon spells, three words of incantations are recited.

da myi smra bu mchis rgyal la ltas ngan bab na / byol da chu phrad na chu skams so / shing dang phrad na 'chag go / byol dang bya 'phur ba phrad na lhung ngo / rdo dang phrad na 'gas so / sngags bon sngags tshigs gsum bzlas so //

Conclusion

As we have seen, the byol-rabs in its two longest narratives establishes gShen-rab myi-bo as one of the first and most important practitioners of the byol class of glud rituals. He is depicted among several prototypic priests and divinities responsible for instituting the practice of the byol for the well-being of human beings and gods. gShen-rab’s function as an archetypal priest and ancestral hero in the dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa text is corroborated by the smrang narratives in the archaic funerary manuscripts of Dunhuang discussed in this paper.

The identity of gShen-rab myi-bo as an archetypal priest in Old Tibetan literature has enormous implications for the development of Tibetan culture and religion, for it demonstrates that in the early historic period he was not thought of as a Buddha figure. Although the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa biographical materials are limited in scope, they preserve enough of the ritual practices and ethos of early historic religious traditions to conclude that they do not merely ignore another side of gShen-rab as a Buddha. For their authors and users, such a figure very probably did not exist. The nature of the rituals described and the manner in which they are carried out (for instance, the presence of animal sacrifice and gShen-rab’s reliance on deities), the evolved character of the dress and other material cultural supports, and the highly developed hagiography of the gods and priests cited, supply convincing evidence that Old Tibetan literature had in mind just what is presented, an indigenous sacrificial priest, not a Buddha in the Indic mold.

What does such a revelation possibly signify for the Eternal Bon religion, which has been faithfully preserving its omniscient Buddha characterization of gShen-rab myi-bo for 1000 years? The textual evidence indicating that the gShen-rab myi-bo of the Old Tibetan documents was a priest and not a Buddha may possibly lead its adherents to reappraise their historical and doctrinal stance. Nevertheless, Eternal Bon is no stranger to criticism of its doctrinal legitimacy and historical perspective coming from fellow Tibetans. More recently, foreign scholars and practitioners of other religions have also critically

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259 ’Chag (C.T. = chag).
260 Below the last line of the text six lines of mantras are written; these are read by the ritualists for the slaughter of the demons. See text, no. 45, Ins. 5, 6.
analyzed gShen-rab’s posture in Eternal Bon sources. The last millennium in Tibet has been riven by sectarian struggles for power and domination, sweeping up Eternal Bon as both perpetrator and victim. In these rivalries, which have a distinctively political underbelly, Eternal Bon has often found itself in an underdog position. Representing just 10 to 15% of the total Tibetan population, the Bon-po have labored relentlessly to counteract their minority status and further their influence in the great clearing house of Tibetan religion.

To interpret Old Tibetan texts as claiming that gShen-rab myi-bo was not a Buddha strikes at the very core of the Eternal Bon identity. For the traditionalists who whole-heartedly accept the hagiographic accounts of gShen-rab mi-bo-che in Eternal Bon literature as the basis of their faith, the Dunhuang and dGa’-thang ‘bum-pa materials will perforce be viewed as irrelevant, false or heretical. Understandably, there will be Eternal Bon scholars who will vociferously counter the view that gShen-rab was exclusively an archetypal priest in his earliest form. These defenders of the traditional position have two major polemical strategies at their disposal: 1. to call into question the authenticity and authority of the Old Tibetan documents, and 2. to deny that their gShen-rab mi-bo is represented in them. Eternal Bon scholars might argue that the Old Tibetan manuscripts were written by a heterodoxic Bon sect or perhaps even by Buddhists in order to discredit them. The reasoning may go, therefore, that the Old Tibetan documents are not an accurate rendering of their religion in the early historic period. Yet, there are no extant Old Tibetan documents vindicating the Eternal Bon view of gShen-rab as a Buddha. The documents now available to us paint an intricate picture of religion during and somewhat after the Tibetan imperium, replete with intimate knowledge of ritual procedures and the philosophical basis that underlies them. What’s more, the origin myths are framed in consistent, unambiguous epic language, hinting that they were part of a well-established mainstream tradition, not the voice of a marginal or renegade group of religionists.

Alternatively, Eternal Bon savants might attempt to show that the personage called gShen-rab myi-bo in the Old Tibetan documents refers to an entirely different individual than the eponymous figure in their tradition. This position will also be difficult to defend, however, because in the Old Tibetan texts gShen-rab myi-bo appears with his colleagues Dur-shen rma-da Thar-bon dru-skyol, and Mus-dpal phrogs-rol, all of which fulfill similar roles in the ritual traditions of Eternal Bon. It is simply not plausible that all four men are alter-egos, sharing the same name but not the same identity.

Given these fundamental weaknesses in a polemical bulwark against the depiction of gShen-rab in the Old Tibetan texts, it is possible that religious scholarship on the matter will increasingly support the idea that they furnish the most accurate and complete picture of the historical or legendary personality known as gShen-rab myi-bo. I hasten to add that any such reevaluation is likely to be a very complicated and problem-fraught process that will take many years to complete. Naturally, there will be huge resistance to any

\footnote{For example, Snellgrove (1967: 15, fn. 1) very plainly states that the tale of gShen-rab is a deliberate fabrication modeled on the Buddha Sākyamuni.}
movement in the orthodox position of Eternal Bon, as matters of faith and belief are often impervious to change. But crucial doctrinal innovation must come if the Old Tibetan documents are indeed accepted as the most valuable source for assessing the early identity of gShen-rab myi-bo.

Eternal Bon could simply hold its ground intellectually, shrugging off yet another assault on its integrity and authority. However, in the increasingly secularized and transparent world of the 21st century, such an insular approach may not be feasible or even desirable. Be that as it may, ultimately Eternal Bon can come out of the debate as to the historical reality of its founder in a much stronger institutional position than they find themselves in today. In the final analysis, the emergence of a new and more powerful Eternal Bon religion will hinge upon it making two major admissions: 1. that the historical Śākyamuni Buddha is the cornerstone persona of all Tibetan religious sects, and 2. that Eternal Bon has best safeguarded the older Tibetan heritage while adopting the Buddhist patrimony of India.

If gShen-rab myi-bo, the ancestral priest, was re-imagined as a Buddha after the 10th century CE, we must ask ourselves why. This was not part of some grand scheme to deceive; to the contrary, it was part of a systematic attempt to interpret ancient traditions by framing them in the predominant ideological framework forged by Buddhism. It can be cogently argued that preexisting personalities such as gShen-rab myi-bo and their ritual and magical activities were wedded to a Buddhist ethos in order that they might live on in a Tibet where religion and ideology were undergoing radical change. Those still calling themselves Bon-po attempted to conserve early historic and older vestigial customs, practices and lineages by stamping a Buddhist philosophical imprint upon them. For all those who valued and still value the native Tibetan cultural legacy this must be seen as a most laudable endeavor.

There is also the other side of the coin concerning the degree to which the Buddhists, beginning with the rNying-ma sect, absorbed non-Buddhist traditions for basically the same reason: to contend with and honor antecedent cultural traditions while holding fast to the Buddhist zeitgeist. In practice, Tibetan Buddhists continued to embrace many indigenous traditions by conferring a Buddhist rationale and dictum upon them, scarcely acknowledging their historical roots.

During the course of the present century, the day of reckoning may come when both Eternal Bon and Tibetan Buddhism are compelled to fully and openly disclose their huge cultural debt to an earlier fund of Tibetan tradition. This can only come about if all Tibetan sects readily acknowledge that they are more or less syncretistic affairs, born out of an ancient cultural crucible filled with ideas and personalities of Indic origins. In this regard, it is Eternal Bon that has done the most to preserve and propagate old Tibetan traditions over the last millennia, for which it deserves much more credit from Tibetans in general.

In the 21st century, with its unparalleled threats to the cultural integrity of vulnerable peoples, those like the Tibetans must strive to gain a fuller and more objective picture of who they are and where they come from. In this critical endeavor, Eternal Bon as a stalwart guardian of tradition will prove invaluable,
potentially affording it a place in the religious and intellectual life of Tibetans much greater than it enjoys today.

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gShen-rab myi-bo


The *Byol-rabs* Text

No. 17

No. 18
Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines

No. 25

No. 26
No. 39

No. 40
gShen-rab myi-bo

No. 43

No. 44
Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

No. 45

No. 46
The Forty Magical Letters
A 19th c. AD Manuscript from Hor on Bon po Scripts

by Josep Lluís Alay
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Introduction

In recent years there has been an increasing number of publications regarding the cultural history of the ancient kingdom of Zhangzhung and its relevance to Himalayan and Tibetan culture in general and Bon religion in particular. Especially significant among them are the studies (carried out outside and inside Tibet) of the still too obscure Zhangzhung language, such as dictionaries and vocabularies. However, there is still a remarkable lack of published research about Zhangzhung scripts and other Bon related scripts, such as the ones supposedly attributed to ancient countries like sTag gzigs or Bru sha. The intention of this paper is to briefly discuss this relatively unknown aspect of Zhangzhung culture by describing and transliterating a manuscript recently discovered in Tibet.

Discovery, general description and physical condition

The manuscript, entitled ‘Phrul gyi yi ge bzhi bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me, was composed in the 19th c. AD as a sort of manual for seven Bon po scripts. According to the Bon tradition, those scripts were created throughout history to express the archetypal Forty Magical Letters (arisen from the “five seed heroic letters”: ōṃ raṃ srūṃ khaṃ yaṃ) revealed by sTon pa gshen rab in ‘Ol mo gling.

This study is based on a black and white photocopy found in Lhasa in 2009. The whereabouts of the original manuscript were unknown at the time of the finding and remain unknown at present. The quality of the photocopy is far from optimal but sufficient to carry out a reliable study of its content. The copy contained a total of eight unfolded pages, three of them numbered and five without a trace of pagination.

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1 I wish to thank Dan Martin for his comments and assistance to complete this study; Samdrup for his precious advices and fruitful discussions on the content of the manuscript; Henk Blezer, for his initial interest in the manuscript and for his reading of the colophon; and Jean-Luc Achard for his comments and support for its publication in RET.


3 An image of folio 1 was published in Alay (2009).

The first challenge was therefore to establish the original order and number of folios in order to transliterate and fully understand the content. An examination on the content of the text suggested that the copy contained four complete folios (1ab, 2ab, 3ab and 5?ab). Folio 5?ab (without any visible number) is the last one of the manuscript since it contains the colophon. We cannot be entirely certain of its numbering, although the content of the text seems to indicate that only one folio 4 is missing, as will be discussed later in this paper.

The manuscript makes use of symbolic words for page numbers. The first folio is zla ba, the second one is mig and the third one rtse mo. The last folio is not numbered but the margin location where the number/symbol would have been is occupied by an added correction to the main text in that page: dbang sogs grangs ldan gong.4

Contents

The manuscript can be divided into the following parts: 1. Title (1a); 2. Invocation (1b, 2a); 3. Offering verses (2b); 4. Scripts and Forty Magical Letters (2b-5?a); 5. Concluding prayer (5?a); and 6. Colophon (5?a-5?b). We will discuss below their most important aspects.

Title and invocation

The title (folio 1a) and the text corresponding to the starting exhortation (folios 1b-2a) to the Bon Bodies are written both in Zhangzhung and Tibetan languages using Tibetan scripts. Furthermore, the title is also written in sTag gzigs spungs so che ba script and the supplication in both sTag gzigs spungs so che ba and sTag gzigs spungs so chung ba, obviously giving sTag gzigs scripts some preeminence over other Bon po scripts mentioned in the manuscript. On the other hand, these initial lines provide an interesting Zhangzhung-Tibetan vocabulary to the reader.5

Folios 1 and 2 offer a prolific display of designs and symbolism, which is interesting to examine in more detail. Although the photocopy was in black and white, the drawings are clear enough to enable a fairly accurate description. Folio 1 clearly displays a white conch in the left margin of the title, whilst on the right the drawing is more difficult to identify; but could

4 “Before ldan: dbang sogs grangs”. The correction obviously transgresses the poetic measure of the verse.

5 Zhangzhung (Tibetan) pair equivalents derived from the title and the exhortation are as follows (folios 1a-2a): rgyu ra shel (‘phrul), gu ge (yi ge), bing cu (bzhi bcu), wer spungs (rgyal bstan), khir (gsal ba), ne ting (sgron me), da dod ci (zes bya ba’o); ri drod (rang bzhiin), dod min (skye med), he khyab (khyab gdal), gyer nu wang (bon gyi sku); ti sku (mkhyen brtse), ha ra (ye shes), nga drug (nga [ldan]), slig tso wang (rdzogs pa’i sku); ye dul (gang ’dul), skye tsu (’dren pa), ka khir (kun mkhyen), da dod wang (sprul pa’i sku); rko sun (sku gsum), mu sangs (sangs rgyas), gling ti? (mchog des), de snar brum (bde legs stsol). The Zhangzhung term gling ti (mchog des) is not found in any dictionary and the combination <ghi> is very uncommon. The grammar treatise brDa sprod srid pa’i gsrvon me by Khyung sprul rin po che [Khyung sprul rin po che (2004) p. 178] has sle ye for Tibetan mchog des.
be either a second conch or more likely the parasol usually attached to the _bkra shis rtags bgyad_ design. This second interpretation seems to be corroborated by the _bkra shis rtags bgyad_ displayed in the center of folio 2a and where the parasol is the only missing symbol.

In the left margin of folio 1b a jewel and a scripture are supported by the lotus, whereas the right side is filled by the sword of wisdom. Finally folio 2a lacks any central image but shows two on the sides. This folio seems to represent the five senses with a water jar (smell), a _gtor ma_ (taste) and a butter lamp (sight) on the right side. Objects on the left side are indiscernible, although a musical instrument and a piece of cloth are likely options for representing the senses of hearing and touch.

The Forty Magical Letters and the scripts to express them

The body of the text (folios 2b-5b) was written in the Tibetan script known as _yig chung_ or _khams yig_, very popular among Bon po scribes, and numerous _skung yig_ or _bskungs yig_ or "concealed letters" were also included; some of which add a certain level of difficulty for the reader.7

After mentioning the Forty Magical Letters as the root of all words used for the spreading of Bon teachings, the manuscript speaks of seven scripts to express those magical letters which were transmitted by sTon pa gshen rab to humans. The lands of these scripts are enumerated as: _sTag gzigs_, Bru sha, Zhangzhung and Tibet. And the corresponding seven scripts are the main topic of the manuscript, which can be considered as a Manual for teaching and learning those scripts. Unfortunately, two of them are presumably in the missing folio 4 and the Tibetan script is just mentioned in folio 5a.

Nevertheless, a complete series of characters is given for the _sTag gzigs spungs so che ba_ and _sTag gzigs spungs so chung ba_ scripts;8 and a partial series for the _Bru sha_ script since the folio where this series should have continued is missing (folio 4). All script series follow the same pattern with an upper line in the script in question and a lower line with a _dbu can_ Tibetan script equivalent9:

\[
\text{ka kha ga nga ca cha ja nya ta tha da na pa pha ba ma tsa tsha wa zha za 'a ya ra la shu sa ha a / ki ku ke ko kam kya kra kla lka lka ska / oni}
\]

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6 For a complete dictionary of _skung yig_ terms, see Shes rab (2003). However a few _skung yig_ used in the manuscript could not be found in the dictionary.

7 They have been indicated through hyphenation in the transliteration. _skung yig_ in the manuscript are used for the following Tibetan and Zhangzhung terms: _rnam dag_, _shes rab_, _ye shes_, _mkyen brtsa’i_, _blo gros_, _stag gzigs_, _’bral med_, _gshen rab_, _sens can_, _rnam mkyen_, _nyon mong_, _dug lnga_, _zhang zhung_, _stag gzig_, _spungs so_, _btag gis_, _sgron mer_, _yul bzhin_, _snar ro_, _’jig rten_, _g_yung drung_ and _bde chen._


9 Only the very last part of the series _kla rka lka ska / oni_ is missing (in folio 4).
Brief but interesting descriptions and explanations are provided for both sTag gzigs spungs so che ba and sTag gzigs spungs so chung ba scripts.\textsuperscript{10} The former is considered to be the main script, since it was the first to be established in the sacred land of sTag gzigs,\textsuperscript{11} Ol mo gling, the origin of Bon. The text goes on to explain that the script ”was put into letters (gu ger)\textsuperscript{12} by Gling gshen Mu la\textsuperscript{13} in sKu bla rmog mtho in accordance with the prophecy of Tshe dbang”.\textsuperscript{14} According to the author, ”Kun grol grags pa\textsuperscript{15} systematized the sTag gzigs spungs so chung ba script and Khro bon Mu la wang ya\textsuperscript{16} wrote it into letters (gu ger).” Without any further explanation, the Bru sha script is displayed next but incomplete since as mentioned before folio 4 is missing.

Although, we can only guess which scripts were displayed next, certain indications can help us. Folio 5?a mentions Tibetan as the last script (without having displayed the series as expected), which leaves only three missing scripts. Seeing the size of the other script series we can suppose that these unknown scripts would have fitted into one single folio, and can thus deduce that there is probably only one missing folio (number four) in the manuscript. But which could have been those three scripts?

The missing scripts were presumably linked to Zhangzhung (according to the initially mentioned territories), which leaves us with two clear candidates and one more disputed one. There is not much room left for doubt that two of the Zhangzhung scripts were sMar chen and sMar chung,\textsuperscript{17} unanimously mentioned in all sources as the standard scripts in the ancient Bon po kingdom. The third one also associated to Zhangzhung according to

\textsuperscript{10} Indian Scripts in Tibet (1982) pp. 59-60 gives a nearly identical description, but in dbu med style, of these three scripts including the entire series of characters. See Kun bzang blo gros where f. 137 shows the entire sTag gzigs spungs so che ba script.

\textsuperscript{11} The text indistinctly makes use of sTag gzigs or sTag gzig.

\textsuperscript{12} The author uses the Zhangzhung word gu ge for Tibetan yi ge combined with the Tibetan postposition -r.

\textsuperscript{13} Gling gshen Mu la (Gling gshen nam mkha’) is mentioned in several Bon po works such as Shar rdza bkras shis rgyal mtsan’s Legs bshad rin po che. See Karmay (1972) p. 179: ”(The oral tradition of Gling gshen Mu la Thogs med) Texts were passed on orally to Gling gshen Mu la Thogs med by sTong rgyung (mThu chen). They were the gSer ’od nor bu ’od bar, the cycle of the Char ’bebs klu sgrub, the sGra bla rgyal mo, etc.”

\textsuperscript{14} The famous Bon po master Tshe dbang rig ’dzin, son of Dran pa nam mkha’ (8th c. AD).

\textsuperscript{15} Born in Khams in 1700, he was the compiler of the first catalogue of the Bon po Canon, see Martin, Kvaerne, Nagano (2003), p. 7, and Rossi (1999), p. 32. A study of a thangka derived from his Compendium for the Contemplation on Peaceful and Wrathful Deities can be found in Blezer (2007) pp. 180-207, which also includes a possible portrait of him. His date of death is not clear, but Blezer (2007) suggests between 1766 and 1779. See also Karmay (1972) p. 185: ”(The discovery of Rig ’dzin Kun grol grags pa) The textual discovery of Kun grol grags pa consisted of...”. For a complete study of his lineage and especially his fourth incarnation in the 19th c, see Achard (2004), p. xii.

\textsuperscript{16} He could be one of the disciples of Kun grol grags pa and the elder brother of the Khro chen king Kun dga’ nor bu. He took a great part in the engraving of the bka’ ’gyur under the direction of Kun grol grags pa. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for this information.

\textsuperscript{17} Indian Scripts in Tibet (1982) pp. 59-60 includes both Zhangzhung scripts: sMar chen and sMar chung. The entire script of sMar chen is shown on the first page of Zhu yi Rnal ’byor Nyi ma grags pa (1965) and in Kun bzang blo gros, f. 137. There is also a brief remark on Zhangzhung scripts in Dagkar Namgyal Nyima (2003), p. 22.
The Forty Magical Letters

123

some authors such as bsTan ‘dzin rnam dag could have been the Drag yig script with a long history in Tibet.18

Just after naming Tibetan as the last script and before the concluding prayer (folio 5?a), we find an exceedingly interesting remark regarding the spread of Bon and the role played by the Forty Magical Letters. After mentioning the existence of seven scripts (yig rigs ’phags nor) to teach Bon, the manuscript gives a description of the magical letters.

According to these lines, the Forty Magical Letters are formed by thirty consonants (ka kha ga nga ca cha ja nyā ta tha da na pa pha ba ma tsa tsha dza wa zha za ’a ya ra la sha sa ha a) and ten additional letters.19 The latter have been the object of much discussion among Bon po scholars.20 The manuscript clearly defines eight of them: four vowels, dang thog (or mgo yig),21 isheg,22 shad23 and klad kor.24 The text adds two more letters without mentioning them, but they are associated to the four vowels and altogether form the so called six son vowels (dbyangs yig bu drug), in contrast with the well known thirty mother consonants (gsal byed ma yig sum cu). A fragment from mKha’ gro rin chen ’phreng rgyud25 establishes those six son letters as the upper vowels (na ro, gu gi, ’greng bu) and the lower vowels (ra sta, ya sta, zhab[s] kyu) with an obvious positional criteria of the “son” with respect to the “mother”. Consequently, the two additional letters in our manuscript could only be the ra btags26 and ya btags27. The same conclusion can be drawn from Khyung sprul Rin po che’s brDa sprod srid pa’i sgron me28 treatise (written in the beginning of the 20th c. AD and based on various Bon po scriptures)29 that the additional letters30 were ra btags and ya btags.

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19 de yang gsal byed ma yig sum cu la / dbyangs yig bu drug dang thog tshig (> isheg) shad dga / klad kor bstan pa ’phrul yig bsahi bca’i grangs / (folio 5?a).
20 Dran pa nam mkha’s commentary on the mDzod phug already mentions the ’phrul chen yi ge bsahi bca, Cf. Dran pa nam mkha’, f. 7a / p. 13 (thanks to Dan Martin for this hint), and most of the Bon po grammatical treatises (and commentaries), such as the brDa sprod nyi shu bdun pa speak of Forty Magical Letters, see brDa dag sgra sbyor gyi skor, pp. 1-9.
21 Corresponding to kSha in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
22 Corresponding to a in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
23 Corresponding to Shto in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
24 Corresponding to am in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
25 yi ge’i ma ni sum cu o’ / yi ge’i bu ni drug tu bstan / na ro gug ’greng steng bu gsum / ’og gi bu gsum bstan pa ni / ra sta ya sta zhab[s] kyu gsum / Cf. rDzo sgrugs chen ye khri mkha’ sel, p. 49 and b’sam ‘grub nyi ma and bsTan ‘dzin brug grags (1989) p. 50.
26 Corresponding to bhi in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
27 Corresponding to nhing in Zhangzhung language. See note 29.
29 Khyung sprul rin po che mentions Ma rgyud tantras and gZi brjid among the many different sources he used for composing his own treatise. Khyung sprul rin po che (2004) pp. 179-181.
30 Khyung sprul rin po che describes the origin of the Forty Magical Letters as taught by sTon pa gshen rab. They originated from the ‘five seed heroic letters’ (’dpa’ bo ’bru lnga las spres pa’i / ’phrul yig tcho yig bsahi bca’i byung /); and can be classified in various ways,
Author and date

The colophon (folios 5?ab) reveals the authorship and other details related to the composition of our manuscript. It was written by a certain Drung mu wer zhi (g.Yung drung rgyal mtshan)31 at the behest of his teacher She tsu wer ya (bSod nams dbang Idan) and was based on the works composed by Nyi ma bstan ‘dzin dbang gi rgyal po.32 Drung mu wer zhi wrote it in g.Yung drung bde chen gling Monastery, better known as Klu phug Monastery, located in present sBra chen county (Nag chu prefecture, T.A.R),33 and which, at the time of composition of this manuscript, was the spiritual and political center of the Bon po nomadic kingdom of the Thirty-nine Hor Tribes.

The colophon also establishes the moon’s waxing face of the third month (nag pa zla ba’i zhi phyogs) of the female fire pig year (me mo phag) as the date of composition, corresponding to 1887. The year of composition is also given in Tibetan as the twenty-first year of the rang byung cycle (thams cad ‘dul) and in Sanskrit as the equivalent sarjavit. Finally, the year is mentioned in Zhangzhung (’tsho ba) and Chinese (ting ja’i).34

Concluding remarks

The ‘Phrul gyi yi ge bzhi bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me probably represents one of the few examples of a manual composed to teach and learn the various Bon po traditional scripts (sTag gzigs, Bru sha, Zhangzhung and Tibetan) as well as to keep alive the mystical concept of the Forty Magical Letters taught by sTon pa gshen rab himself in the temporal and spatial

which Khyung sprul rin po che extensively develops. One classification divides them into five groups (space, fire, earth letters, water and wind) of eight letters each (…dpa’ bo yi / / ‘bru lnga ḍṃ ram srum khamb yam / / lnga las spros pa’i ‘byung chen tshul / / ḍṃ las nam mkha’i yi ge ni / / kSha ka kha ga nga ha a / / jam ste ‘bru bgyad byung ba yin / / de bzhin ram las me ḍṃ bgyad / / e ca cha ya nya ra bhi / / Shṭa bgyad srum las sa ḍṃ bgyad / / o ta tha da na la sa / / mhing shing khamb las chu yi g bgyad / / a pa pha ba ma za’ a’ / / a: byung yam las lung ying ni / / i tsa tsha dza wa ya sha / / zha bgyad srid de byung khungs rtogs / / …) [Khyung sprul rin po che (2004) p. 179]. The equivalence for the ten additional letters is given as follows: / kSha ni / / ‘go’ dren a: ni tsheg / / Shṭa ni shad de bhi ra sta / / mhing ni ya sta i gi gu / / u ni zhab kuy e’greng bu / / o ni na ro am klad kor / [Khyung sprul rin po che (2004) p. 181]. This key passage clarifies the two letters not mentioned in the manuscript (ya sta and ra sta). A similar analysis can be found for the Forty Magical Letters in Nam mkha’i nor bu (1996) pp. 96-107.

31 This is such a common name in Bon po communities that it is very difficult to identify the author. Achard (2004), p. xxii, 21, etc. mentions several monks called Drung mu wer zhi related to bDe chen gling pa in the 19th c. but none of them seems to fit the biography of the author of the manuscript.

32 Nyi ma bstan ‘dzin (1813-1875) was the Twenty-second sMan ri khrī’ ‘dzin, compiler of the second catalogue of the Bon po Canon and prolific author; see Martin, Kvaerne, Nagano (2003), p. 10, Rossi (1999) p. 32 and Achard (2004) p. 248. He was also the author of the grammar treatise entitled bod skad brda dag gi rtsa tshig ‘bel gtam nyi’ od gzhon nu, see brDa dag sgra sbyor gyi skor, pp. 251-260.


34 Chinese: dinghai.
primordial origin of Bon. At the time of writing these lines, this manual of Bon po scripts written in 1887 and hence its uniqueness and relevance, since it can be considered as one of the oldest dated compositions of its kind.

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‘Phrul gyi yi ge bzhi bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me

Folio 1a: zla ba

rgyu ra shel gu ge bing cu wer spungs khir zhi ne ting da dod ci lhan / /
‘phrul gyi yi ge bzhi bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me zhes bya ba’o / /

Folio 1b

ru drod dod min he khyab gyer mu wang /
rang bzhin skye med khyab gdal bon gyi sku / /

ti sku ha ra nga drug slig tso wang /
mkhyan brts’i ye shes inga ldan rdzogs pa’i sku / /

Folio 2a: mig
ye dul skye tsa ku khir da dod wang /
gang ’dul ‘dren pa kun mkhyen sprul pa’i sku //

rko sum mu sangs ghing ti de smar brum /
sku gsum sangs rgyas mchog des bde legs stsol //

Folio 2b

rnam-dag35 dbyings la dbyings rol ye-shes la /
thabs mchog srid pa srid gsum kun bskyed gzhi /
shes-rab phul ldan phul phyung mkhyen-rtse’i bdag
lha gshen srid gsum srid bzhi’i mgon der ’dud //
gsal gsal blo-gros gter ’chang smra ba’i seng /
des des mkhas par mng a’ bsn yems gdung sob [> ‘tshob] mchog
mang mang sTag-gzigs Zhang Bod lo pan sogs /
yang yang bral-med snying gi ze brur rol /
rgyal gsung phrul ngag bden pa bon gyi sgra /
sgra bsgyur lo pan mkhas pa’i zhal gyi lung /
lung rig ’dzin rnamds dga’ ston phags nor grangs /
grangs mang rgyal bstan gsal sgron dir god spro //
zhes mchod par brjod pa’i tshig phreng snyan jeg glu dbyangs kyi mdun
bsus te /
’phrul chen yig ’bru bzhis bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me zhes bya ba ste/
mdo la Sangs po ’bum khri sTon pa gshen-rab kyis /
sems-can bkrid phyir khri dang ’bum du bris /
khya dp rnam-mkhyen gShen-rab mi bo de nyid kyi /
thugs gsgang ba ye-shes kyi lag la byung /
gsung ja yi rgyun lam nas drang zhing /
’gro ba bkrid drang gi thabs su ngen-mongs pa brgyad khri bzhis stong la
ltos te /
bon gyi sgo mo brgyad khri bzhis stong /
blo rim pa dgu la ltos te /
bon theg pa rim dgu /
rgyu dug-Inga la ltos te /
bon sgo bzhis

Folio 3a: rtse mo

mdzod lnga /
nyon-mongs dug gsum la ltos te /
bon sde snod gsum /
rig pa dang [ma]36 rig pa gnyis la ltos te /
bon drang don dang nges don gnyis la sogs gsungs pa’o /

35 The use of skung yig in the ms. is indicated by hyphenation in this transliteration.
36 Added as a correction in dbu can.
de rnam don gyi mdo rtsa sgra rig pa ming tshig kun gyi rtsa ba ‘phrul chen yig ‘brubzhi bcu ‘di nyid ‘chad pa la don bdun te /
de yang sTag-gzigs Bru sha Zhang-zhung Bod la sogs yul phyogs rer yi ge rer byung ba /
de yi dang po sTag-gzigs kyi spungs so che ba’i ka dpe ni /

ka kha ga nga ca cha ja nya ta tha da na pa pha ba ma tsa tsha dza wa zha za
‘a ya ra la sha sa ha a /
ki ku ke ko kaṃ kya kra kla rka lka ska /
on

bon gyi byung gnas sTag-gzig ‘Ol mo gling /
sangs rgyas zhing gyur de yi yig rigs gtso /
spungs-so che ba ‘di [ni] Tshe-dbang gis /
lung bstan ci [> ji] bzhin sKu bla rmog mtho ru /
Gling gshen Mu la bdag-gis gu ger btabs /
dge bas rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron-mer shog
sa ma yā /
rgya rgya rgya :
zhes spungs-so che ba de skabs

Folio 3b

dang po’o / /
gnyis pa sTag-gzig gi spungs-so chung ba ni /

ka kha ga nga ca cha ja nya ta tha da na pa pha ba ma tsa tsha dza wa zha za
‘a ya ra la sha sa ha a /
ki ku ke ko kaṃ kya kra kla rka lka ska /
on

sTag-gzig spungs so che ba gtson bzhag nas /
Kun grul grags pa’i dpal gyi [> gyis] khog dbub cing Khro bon Mu la wang
ya’i [> yas] gu ger bris /
spungs-so chung ba ‘di yang shes bya’i gzhiri rig gnas mkhan por byas na
bstan pa’i sgron /
yid-bzhin blo sbyang thugs la nges bcag ‘tshal /
mu tsug smar-ro / /
zhes spungs-so chung ba ste /
skabs gnyis pa’o / /
gsum pa Bru sha’i yul gyi yi ge’i ka dpe ni / /

ka kha ga nga ca cha ja nya ta tha da na pa pha ba ma tsa tsha dza wa zha za
‘a ya ra la sha sa ha a /
ki ku ke ko kaṃ kya kra

Folio 4: missing
Folio 5?a: folio number is not indicated

ni gong du song zhing gzhane nrams kyang go sla’o /
zhes Bod yig gi sa bcad ste skabs sden pa’o / /
gang zhig mos pa’i nyer drangs snang ba’i ngor /
dMu rgyal sras gyi thabs thugs ma ‘gag sgor
’jig-rten kham kun dpe rtse gsum spel zhing /
yig rigs ‘phags nor grangs ‘di ngo mtshar bon /
de yang gsal byed ma yig sum cu la /
dbyangs yig bu drug dang thog tshig [> tshug] shad dgu /
klad kor bsnan pa ‘phrul yig bzhi bcu’i grangs /
rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me ‘di ‘god tshal /
‘di bris dge tshogs tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho ru /
ths [b]sam grub bgrod bgrod med gnas phyin nas /
‘dren mchog bla med med pa [dbang sogs grangs]37 ldan dngos /
ye-shes lnga rdzogs rdzogs ldan gsal du smon / /
ces pa ‘phrul gyi yi ge bzhis bcu rgyal bstan gsal ba’i sgron me zhes bya ba
‘phags nor bdun ldan ‘di ni rang cag gi slob dpon She tsu wang ya’i gsung
rgyun gzhie byas /
lung rig bon gyi spyan ldan /
smra dbang mkha’i chen Nyi ma bstan ‘dzin dbang gi rgyal pos gsung
brtso ms mzag pa nrams legs cha blangs de / thos chung gis Drung mu ser
zhi ‘bod pa bdag gis legs sbyar sam kri ta yi skad du sbar dza’i / zhang-
zhung brda yi skad du ‘tsho ba / ma ha tsi na’i skad du ting ja’i / bstod ‘brel
bod kyi skad du thams cad ‘dul zhies / dbang thang

Folio 5?b

bstun pa’i me mo phag lo’i nag po zla ba’i zhi phyogs su ‘dus sde chen po g,Yung-drung bde-cheng gling du rig gnas ‘thor bu nrams bla’i ko [> go]
skabs bde ba’i phyir du phyogs gcig tu bris pa /
dge des kun [phan] rgyal ba’i bstan pa rin po che phyogs dus kun tu dar
zhing rgyas pa’i rgyu ru gyur cig
mu tsug smar ro / /

37 Added in the left margin as dbang sogs grangs ldan gong.
Mesmerizing with the Useless?
A book-review inquiry into the ability to properly reprint older worthy material

by Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS, CRCAO)

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1290), Nyams rgyud rgyal ba’i phyag khris, Sangs rgyas g.yung drung bon gyi dpe tshogs, Si khor mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Triten Norbutse Library, 2008, 140 pp. Edited by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung & Ponlob Tshangpa Tendzin.

1. The art of reprinting Bon texts

Here is certainly no doubt that access to new editions of Tibetan works is often interesting, either for the linguist or the historian, and even more for the translator or the individual involved in the study of such works. However, in certain cases, one can question the validity of some recent editions, in particular when they are done in a rather careless mode. Such editions are not respectful of the tradition and not even of the buyers of the reprint, which brings up the question of what lies behind such publications. With the volume being reviewed here, this question is clearly not an irrelevant one. I have to say that when it comes to the Bonpo tradition, the policy of reprints has always been problematic since its inception in the mid-1960s.

All my thanks go to Marianne Ginalski, Vivien & Michael Hunt for their suggestions and corrections.

This is not a generalization and only applies to a very few examples that came into my hands in the recent years, starting with the edition of the rGyal ba’i phyag khris, which is being reviewed in these pages.

Raising money for reprinting Bonpo works was not an easy task at the time since the Tibetan population in the growing exile community was not always favorable to Bon, to say the least. However, the Bonpos were somehow able to collect funds to start the publication of several important works. Among the earliest reprints done under the guidance of Lopön Sangye Tenzin, Geshe Samten Gyeltsen (Karmay), and Lopön Tenzin Namdak were the Tibetan Ža Ža Dictionary (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, Delhi, 1965, in book form), the A Tri Thun-Tsham Cho-Na Don Cha-Lak che Shuk So (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, Delhi, 1967, in book form too), the sNyam rgyud rgyal ba’i phyag khris, ib., ca. 1966, in dpe cha style), etc. The first “official” publication of the Bon community in exile was probably (this has to be checked) the Gangs can bod kyi brda sprod dpag bsam ljon pa’i snye ma, published by Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, Kalimpong, 1960 (in a dpe cha comprising 78 folios). Earlier in the 1950s (and thus before exile), Khyung sprul ’Jigs med rdo rje (1897-1955) had started to reprint in Delhi numerous works composed by Shardza Rinpoche. The Delhi prints are probably to be counted as among the first actual Bon publications prepared in India by Bonpos themselves (again before the exile) and they

manuscripts (rarely xylographic prints)\(^3\) either brought directly from Tibet or, more frequently, borrowed from Bonpo monasteries in Dolpo (Samling, etc.). Of course, then, it was imperative to issue practically any material\(^4\) in order to have the Bon tradition known by its own texts and be somehow saved from oblivion, as well as to distribute reprints of Bon works in order to make them available to the Western world. Since there was no Western Bon Sangha at the time, the “Western world” aimed at was mainly made up of a few (a very few actually) Tibetologists working either directly on Bon (such as S.G. Karmay and P. Kvaerne) or on related fields (R.A. Stein, A-M. Blondeau, etc.).\(^5\) However, the state of the original mss on which these reprints were based is mainly the reason why so little had been done on Bon at the time. Except for the reprints of some xylographic prints (such as those carefully prepared in Tibet by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin, 1912-1978)\(^6\) and a few other examples, the reproduced mss were full of mistakes, weird spelling, etc., to the extent that one could find for example the same personal name spelt in five different ways on a single folio. Add to this the endemic confusion of genitive, causative, instrumental, dative and ablative cases (kyi/kyis, pa'ipas, lalas, etc.) plus dramatic license with regard to rules of classical written Tibetan and you have a rather lively picture of the state of affairs.

During that time and for about 15 years, there was a somewhat irregular production of Bon works published in Dolanji and covering all facets of Bon history, culture, language and religious practices.\(^7\) The publishers of these materials are sincerely to be thanked for providing access to a wide range of fields of study associated with Bon to an unprecedented scale since accessing Bon texts was rather difficult prior to this reprint policy. Since then, by the late 1980’s, thanks to the activities of Tibetans in Tibet a considerable amount of works have become available, including the then no-longer legendary Bonpo Kanjur and Tengyur, and several sets of Collected

\(^3\) The *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* was among the earliest examples of Bon xylographic works that were reprinted in exile. Its publication in the *Satapātaka Series* (vol. 73, New Delhi, 1968) was made possible owing to a print that Lopön Tenzin Namdak was able to keep with him during exile, together with other xylographic works prepared by his master Lopön Sangye Tenzin, as well as the relics of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415); see note 6 below.

\(^4\) By this, I do not mean that the reprinted material was not of quality. On the contrary, this reprint policy made available numerous texts which were totally unknown outside Tibet. And the quality of the choices for reprint was also paired with the variety of works that were then reprinted (historical, philosophical, tantric, etc.).


\(^6\) According to Lopön Tenzin Namdak (personal communication, Paris, 1999), Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin prepared xylographic editions of the five following sets of works: 1. *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, 2. *sNyam rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khris*, 3. *rDzoogs chen Nam mkha’ phrul ma’do*, 4. *rDzoogs chen Ye khris mtha’ sel*, and 5. *Srid pa’i Mazod phyug*. The first three cycles have been reprinted by the Bonpo Foundation. The Ye khris version exists in the form of photocopies of one original print in the possession of Lopön Rinpoche. At the time of writing this paper, I have no information regarding the fate of the prints of the fifth text.

\(^7\) On these works, see S.G. Karmay, *A Catalogue of Bon po Publications*, Toyo Bunko, 1977, passim.
Mesmerizing with the Useless?  135

Works (gsung 'bum), such as those of bDe chen gling pa (1833-1893),\(^8\) Shar rdza Rinpoche (1859-1934),\(^9\) dBras Ston pan dita (sKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1897-1959)\(^10\) and a few others. While these Collected Works have been carefully edited and published, the editions of the Kanjur and Tengyur are far from satisfactory and by this I do not refer to the antagonism brought forward by Yongdzin Tendzin Namdak Rinpoche regarding Eternal Bon or New Bon editions of these collections, but to the rather disappointing state of the reproduced manuscripts.

2. The Practice Manuals of the Zhang zhung snyan rgyud

The cycle of teachings which is being reviewed here has been available to us in both a manuscript version known after the first title of the collection — sNyan rgyud kyi sngon ‘gro rim pa rnams (published in 1966) — and a xylographic edition prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin in Tibet and reprinted in Dolanji in 1974.\(^11\) There are of course small variants between the two versions but nothing really dramatic.

This cycle is generally known as the Phyag khrid or Bru rgyal ba'i phyag khrid, to distinguish it from another cycle similarly abbreviated as Phyag khrid (see below). It is regarded as the most important manual for the practice of the Zhang zhung snyan rgyud (hereafter ZZNG) teachings. For many people, it is approached as the only manual of the ZZNG. This is a misconception. In fact one can list as many as five manuals, two being individual texts, while the last three are cycles or collection of texts.\(^12\)

The first actual practice text of the ZZNG is the mNyam bzhag sgom pa'i lag len which is included in most editions of the root-texts of the ZZNG.\(^13\) It is furthermore considered as a practice manual for the first sub-cycle of the ZZNG, the Phyig lta ba spyi gcod. It is different from the other manuals since it is considered to be a written transcription of the oral teachings transmitted by Tapihritsa to sNang bzher lod po, and not a composition based on already existing material, as in the case of the four other manuals (which are in all evidence later works). According to the tradition, the redaction of this text would go back to the imperial period, although it is impossible to prove or to contradict such an assertion. The proto-colophon of the text says laconically: zhes sprul pa'i sku yis gyer spungs chen po la gsungs sol\(^14\) — “This was enunciated by the Emanation Body to the great Gyer spungs”, the Emanation Body being Tapihritsa (the 25th lineage holder of the ZZNG) and Gyer spungs being his disciple, Gu rub sNang bzher lod po.

The second practice manual is that of the Byang chub sems kyi gnad drug,\(^15\) an important work styled as an offshoot of the sGron ma drug gi gdams pa, the

\(^8\) On the bDe chen gling pa tradition, see Achard, Bon po Hidden Treasures, Brill, 2004.
\(^12\) Only no. 3 and 5 of the list are actually considered as “real” ZZNG practice manuals by the tradition.
\(^13\) See the translation of this text in Achard, La Pratique Méditative de l’Accès à l’Égalité, Khyung-mkhar, privately published, 1996. Inger Olson has also prepared a complete study and an English translation of this text in her doctoral research.
root-text of the second sub-cycle of the ZZNG, the Nang man ngag dmar khrid. However, this text is clearly a composition and not an oral transmission. The tradition attributes it to Yang ston chen po, a.k.a. Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan (11th century) but this is a mistake. In its own colophon, the text is attributed to Ya ngal Gong khra pa chen po. This means that the author was from the Ya ngal clan, therefore a Yang ston for sure, and that he spent time in Gong khra, a sanctuary close to Zhwa lu. If we look at the biographies of the ZZNG lineage masters, one can clearly deduce that this Gong khra pa chen po was actually Dam pa ‘Bum rje ‘od, the eldest son of Yang ston chen po. Further elements from the Nyams rgyud collection corroborate this identification. For instance, the colophon of the Nyams rgyud text entitled Lus kyi gos dang ‘dra ba’i gdam pa states: / rje kun ‘dul gyi gsung las/ yang ston shes rab ‘rgyal mtshan gyis zhus/ de la sras yang ston gong khra bas/de la gcung po klu brag pas/. Because of the presence of the gcung po Klu brag pa, the previous son (Yang ston gong khra ba) listed in the transmission is clearly the elder son of Yang ston chen po, namely Dam pa ‘Bum rje ‘od. As stated, it is obvious that the text is an offshoot of the sGron ma drug but it is also clear that its contents and structure have influenced the more complex works known as Phyag khrid, as one shall see now.

The third practice manual is that known as the Zhang ston phyag khrid, Zhang ston Rinpoche being here Zhang ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan. I will describe this one elsewhere. As far as I know, it has not been reprinted yet.

The fourth practice manual is the collection known as the sNyan rgyud rtsa khrid mun sel shel phreng, compiled by Rang grol Bla ma rgyal mtshan in the 14th century. It is an important set of relatively short works which covers the entire path of Dzogchen, including dark retreats (mun mtshmas) and channels and wind practices (rtsa rlung), among other things. It is clearly based on works belonging to the third section of the Nyams rgyud collections, namely the Nyams rgyud thor bu. In a certain sense, it can be considered as an explicit Nyams rgyud manual.

The fifth practice manual — the one being reviewed here — is the famed Bru rgyal ba’i phyag khrid, compiled, as its title indicates, by Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1290) at the end of his life. As shown below with the final colophon, the cycle is undated. However, the first chapter (dealing with the biographies) is dated of a Rat year (byi lo) which may either be 1264 (Bru rGyal ba is probably too young at that time), 1276 or 1288. See Achard, Les Instructions du Vainqueur Eternel, vol. II, p. 51 n. 1.

The compilers of the version that is being reviewed have not even bothered to reproduce this text which was carefully edited by Lopon Sangye Tenzin in Tibet. They have bypassed the text, probably because it was not already electronically inputted, like the rest of the collection (widely available in Tibet in electronic form). This clearly demonstrates the lack of accuracy and the carelessness with which the compilers have treated the original material. On the other hand, since they had several electronically inputted works which do not bear any direct relation with the Phyag khrid, they have not hesitated in integrating

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2. the preliminary practices (sngon ‘gro) in the sNyan rgyud kyi sngon ‘gro rim pa rnam, also known as the Bon spyo dgu rim;
3. the main practice (dngos gzhi) in the Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi khris rim lag len, also known as the Zab mo gnad kyi gdam pa dngos gzhi;
4. the instruction on the View (ita ba, corresponding to khregs chod) in the gZhi rang ngo spras pa gcer mthong lta ba’i khris;
5. the instruction on Meditation (sgom pa, corresponding to thod rgal) in the Lam nyams su len pa’od gsal sgom pa’i khris;
6. the instruction on Conduct (spyo dpa, corresponding to various kinds of integrations) in the rKyen lam du slong ba rtsal sbyong spyo dpa’i khris; and
7. the instruction on the Fruit (’bras bu, corresponding to the way Enlightenment is obtained and how it manifests) in the ’Bras bu rang sa bzung ba sku gsum dam thag bcad pa’i khris.

At the end of text no. 7 comes the following colophon, clearly indicating that the collection originally stopped at that point:

This means that all texts included after the 7th one in all available editions are additions which did not make part of the original cycle, as elaborated by Bru rGyal ba. The author himself was one of the most important masters of the Bon tradition in the second part of the 13th century. His various commentaries on Sutras, Tantras and on Dzogchen cycles are still used to this day, starting with the present manual of ZZNG practice. This importance is not pointed out in the preface made by the editors, nor is there barely any information regarding him in that preface.

3. The author of the Phyag khris

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung was the main disciple of Yang ston gDan sa pa, an eminent accomplished scholar of g.Yas ru dben sa kha and the lineage

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20 Both expressions khregs chod and thod rgal are not used in the context of the ZZNG, except thod rgal which appears in the “standard” non-dzogchen context of categorizing students into rim gyis pa, thod rgal ba, and cig car ba. Otherwise, the practice of thod rgal is defined as that of Clear-Light (’od gsal) in this cycle. This is quite common in earlier Bon Dzogchen works. Even though it has antecedents in both Eternal Bon and New Bon traditions, starting at least with the rDzogs chen gser skar byTan gnyis gling pa, the use of the classical expressions khregs chod and thod rgal became quite regular with various works redacted by Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700).


22 This was clearly noted by Samten Karmay in his Catalogue of Bon po publications, p. 109.
holder of the sNyan rgyud and of the single transmission (gcig brgyud) of the Nyams rgyud set of teachings. It is directly from him that rGyal ba g.yung drung recorded the biographies of the lineage masters included in the first chapter of his compilation.

Bru had a rather short but intense life (he passed away at the age of only 48). He spent most of his early life visiting the Bon monasteries of dBus and gTsang, meeting with important Zhang zhung snyan rgyud masters such as rTogs ldan Dad pa shes rab and ‘Gro mgon ‘Dul ba rin po che. He even met some direct disciples of the great Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mthshan but his main connection to this lineage of teachings was made through the blessings of Yang ston gDan sa pa.

rGyal ba g.yung drung then spent a certain part of his life wandering on the high plateaus of the sTod region, living in isolated hermitages, without settling in a particular place. He is said to have had visions of Dran pa nam mkha’ and Tshe dbang rig ’dzin, “8th century figures who played a decisive role in the constitution of newly discovered Bon teachings throughout Tibet. Through some of these visions, he received specific instructions on channels and winds (rtsa rlung), and owing to the time he spent performing the related yogic practices, his experiences improved to such an extent that he then never regressed from these.

Later in life, he went back to his root-master, Yang ston gDan sa pa, and received from him the single transmission (gcig brgyud) of the Experiential Transmission (Nyams rgyud), as well as all the related instructions.

The line of transmission passing through gDan sa pa represents one of the single transmission lineage but Bru rGyal ba received similar teachings from two other lines (the second one also passing through gDan sa pa):

1. Yang ston Dam pa ’Bum rje — ’Khrul med zhig po — dPon gsas Khyung rgod rtsal — dByil ston Nam mkha’ bsod nams — rTogs ldan Dad pa shes rab — Bru rGyal ba ; and

2. ’Khrul med zhig po — rTogs ldan Nyag sgom ri pa — Sum ldan Rong sgom — Phyogs med sGom sde pa — ri khrod pa Shes rab Tshul khrims — mKhas grub Zhang ston — Yang ston gDan sa pa — Bru rGyal ba.23

4. The Triten Norbutse edition

Let us be fair and honest with the potential buyer of the edition being reviewed: it is anything but a professional product. Of course, it has a nice layout and cover but this is not a result so difficult to achieve. A more difficult task, evidently, for the editors appears to be to check the originals and make sure the work is complete. But, the first thing that is shocking when one has the book in hand is its title: Nyams rgyud rgyal ba’i phyag khrid. Despite the numerous occasions during which Yongdzin Rinpoche stated that the Nyams rgyud has only three sub-cycles and that the Phyag khrid belongs to the sNyan rgyud, some (fortunately not all) of the younger generation of Bon lamas tend to systematically style this cycle as belonging to the Experiential Transmission. There is actually no reason at all for this and the mistake could have been easily avoided with a better knowledge of how

the collections are constituted. There are indeed several works describing the contents of the Nyams rgyud and sNyan rgyud collections. We can for example check what is probably the earliest work of this nature in Yang ston dpal bzang’s rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi rtsis byang thams yig rgyas pa which was written in *1289 (sa glang). In this text, the three subcycles of the Nyams rgyud are clearly described and one can also see that the Phyag khrid is not included among these works. Similarly, if we look at one more recent work, in the way Shardza Rinpoche (1859-1934) describes the Nyams rgyud collection in his Treasury of Space and Awareness (dByings rig mdzod, I, Chamdo ed., pp. 62-63), we can clearly see that the Phyag khrid is in no way part of the Experiential Transmission. Furthermore, if we look carefully into the Phyag khrid itself and check its sources, we can also easily see that Bru rGyal ba’s compilation quotes mainly works from the sNyan rgyud or canonical texts (such as the ‘Bum), as well as individuals such as Bla chen (Dran pa nam mkha’), but very few quotes from the Nyams rgyud.24 In addition, a quick look at the beginning of the chapter containing the instructions on how to perform the preliminaries (sngon ‘gro, and which serves as an introduction to the whole compilation) shows that in the author’s mind the Phyag khrid belongs to the sNyan rgyud exclusively:

(…) these instructions on the Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection from Zhang zhung are enunciated according to four (divisions): 1. the outer general sections on the View, 2. the inner essential instructions on the Precepts, 3. the secret vision of Awareness in its nakedness, and 4. the innermost secret identification of the Natural State.25

This is the standard way of classifying the works belonging to the sNyan rgyud, not to the Nyams rgyud.26 So why is this mistake so frequently repeated by a few lamas of the younger generation? One wonders if this has anything to do with marketing and the deliberate intent to interest an uneducated (in terms of rDzogs chen) audience that is likely to be more attracted by anything styled “experiential”. It is also not surprising to note here that these are the same people who constantly use incorrect expressions such as the “three heart mantras” for the three essence [mantras] (snying po rnam gsum) or the “six lokas” for the six gatis (rigs drug), etc.

The next thing that raises questions is the use of illustrations at the start of the book. The first illustration comes from a modern thangka depicting sTon pa gshen rab. A thangka of gShen lha ‘od dkar — the central figure of the sNyan rgyud daily preliminaries — or Kun tu bzang po might have been

24 See for example the sNyan rgyud chen mo quoted p. 47 of the Triten Norbutse edition, which is actually not to be found in the sNyan rgyud rgyas bshad chen mo (included in the Zhang zhung snyan rgyud bon skor, Dolanji, 1974, pp. 31-146), as one might expect, but in the Lha sgom srungs pa’i man ngag (p. 533). Quotes from another Nyams rgyud text — the Lha khrid —, appearing on pp. 36, 41, etc. of the Triten Norbute edition are not to be found in the actual Nyams rgyud text entitled Man ngag lha khrid, op. cit., pp. 443-456.


26 On the standard and unusual classifications of the texts belonging to the sNyan rgyud, see Achard, La Structure du Zhangzhung Nyengyül, Khyung-Lung, 2006.
more appropriate. The second illustration depicts Srid pa’i rgyal mo: again, if a picture of a Protector was needed here, Nyi pang sad or sMan mo (or both) would have been preferable. But if we look at the other books published in the same collection, one realizes that these are exactly the same pictures — sTon pa gshen rab and Srid pa’i rgyal mo — which are used throughout in all volumes, no matter their subject. The choice is thus not very meaningful and it is a pity because Nyi pang sad and sMan mo are not so frequently represented. This would have been an enriching occasion that the editors chose not to fulfill.

The preface of this volume (pp. 1-2) contains the regular “advertising” material describing the high level of rDzogs chen teachings, its importance for reaching Buddhahood in a single lifetime, etc. This is ironic because the compilers have treated the material with a carelessness which does not comply with the attention and carefulness such religious texts should deserve. But the irony goes even further, since this reprint edition is, according to the preface (p. 2) aimed at those who want to dedicate their life to these teachings by practicing them in retreat, but also at those who study rDzogs chen from a more academic perspective. In reality, for both categories of people, the edition is of no use at all since it lacks two of the main chapters of the collection.

The first text that is lacking in this edition is the Lo rgyus (text no. 1 in the structure given above). One should note though that it is lacking in all other editions of the Phyag khrid except that carefully prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin in Tibet before 1959 and reproduced in Dolanji in 1974. The text is also to be found in the dBal khyung bka’ ‘gyur, in vol. 33, pp. 223-261, under the title of Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus. This is one of the early — although not the earliest — example of texts describing the life-stories of the sNyän rgyud lineage masters. It is obvious that it has been influenced by earlier works by Yang ston shes rab rgyal mtshan28 and that it has itself influenced the later work by sPa ston.29

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27 I borrow this rather “cynical” characterization of the compilers’ style from Patrick Carré’s oral and ironic description of this aspect of classical prefaces in canonical commentaries.

28 To whom are credited large, medium and short biographies of the lineage holders. See Yang ston dpal bzung, op. cit., p. 14.

29 See sPa ston’s Bla ma bryud pa’i rnam thar, passsim. Bru rGyal ba’s text is organized as follows:

// I-b. The Meditative Transmission of the Mind Heroes (sems dpa’i), covering the lives of the Six Transcending gShens, the Six gShens of the Six Principles, the Nine gShens of the Nine Oral Instructions, and the Four gShens with the Tiaras./ I-c. The Transmission of Knowledge Holders (with the life of sNang bzher lod po).

II. The Short Transmission: II-a. The lives of Tapihritsa and sNang bzher lod po./ II-b. the reason why the Short Transmission was maintained./ II-c. The Diffusion and Spread of the Short Transmission:

i. The six lineage holders from Zhang zhung (rGyal gzigs gzas chung, dMu Tso ge, dMu Tso stang, dMu Shod khram, dMu Gyal ba blo gros, and dPon chen bstan po)./ II
ii. The six lineage holders from Tibet (Lhun grub mu thur, gShen rgyal lha rtse, Lom ting sgom chen, dNgos grub rgyal mtshan, ‘Or sgom Kun ‘dul).
iii. The six lineage holders of the Canonical Transmission (Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Yang ston Dam pa ‘bum rje ‘od, rTogs ldan dbon po, Yang ston gDan sa pa, and Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung).
The second work that is lacking is the *Lam nyams su len pa ’od gsal sgom pa’i khrid rim* which is the central text for the highest practices of rDzogs chen. It is actually a development of the teachings given in the last part of the third chapter concerned with the practice of Clear-Light (’od gsal). Since the work is missing in the edition being reviewed, it might be interesting to give its structure here, according to Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin’s edition:

\[
gnyis pa lam nyams su blang ba ’od gsal sgom pa’i khrid
\]

1. sgom tshul lam gyi rim pa brkyang thabs
2. sgom byed blo yi dri ma bsal lugs
   2-1. phyi mi dang mi min gyi bar chod
   2-2. nang ’du ba nad kyi bar chod
   2-3. gsang ba bsgom pa nyams kyi bar chod
3. bsgoms pas nyams dang ’od gsal ’char tshul
   3-1. shar ba’i snang ba byung tshul
       3-1-1. phyi’i snang ba mthong tshul
       3-1-2. nang gi nyams myong bskyed tshul
   3-2. goms pa’i snang ba ‘phel tshul
       3-2-1. snang ba ‘phel ba’i tshul
           a. phyi ltar [’phel tshul]
           b. nang [ltar ‘phel tshul]
       3-2-2. snang ba mched pa’i tshul
           a. untitled [= phyi ltar mched tshul]
           b. untitled [= nang ltar mched tshul]
   3-2-3. snang ba rgyas pa’i tshul
       a. untitled [= phyi ltar rgyas tshul]
       b. untitled [= nang ltar rgyas tshul]
   3-2-4. snang ba rdzogs pa’i tshul
       a. untitled [= phyi ltar rdzogs tshul]
       b. untitled [= nang ltar rdzogs tshul]
   3-2-5. snang ba mthar thug pa’i shar tshul
       a. untitled [= snang ba mthar thug pa phyi ltar shar tshul]
       b. untitled [= snang ba mthar thug pa nang ltar shar tshul]
3-3. de dag gi lam gyi rim pa dang sbyar ba

Anybody who has worked on Bon texts of rDzogs chen will acknowledge that, with its detailed description of the five Visions (*snang ba lnga*), this work is of crucial importance for the practice and study of the whole cycle. Its description of the five Visions is specific to the system of the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* which is slightly different from the “standard” presentation in four visions (*snang ba bzhi*). In his *Treasury of Space and Awareness* (*dByings rig mdzod*, II, Chamdo ed., pp. 326-327), Shardza Rinpoche explains that the system in four visions is generally associated with the diurnal practice of *Thod rgal* (namely the Visions of the Day, *nyin snang*), and he implies that the system in five visions is linked to the Visions of the Night (*mtshan snang*) corresponding to dark retreats (*mun mtshams*). If that is obviously true for works such as the *Six Essential Points of the Pure and Perfect Mind* (*Byang chub sems kyi gnad drug*), explaining the practice in terms of four or five visions

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actually does not really imply any difference in terms of the Fruit: these are simply two different ways of explaining the progression of the visionary developments arising during the practice.

Therefore, given the crucial importance these two texts have for the tradition, any professional work made for reprinting this collection would have at least added a note as to why these two texts are lacking. I suggest that the first one is lacking out of laziness (being too long to input electronically) and that the second one was simply forgotten, during the time the various electronic files were compiled for the print. Someone familiar with such a material would have noticed the absence of these two works. I am convinced that Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin would certainly have never authorized the dissemination of such a reprint, precisely because of the absence of these two key works and certainly also because it contains some material which is unrelated to the original composition made by Bru rGyal ba.

5. A legitimate question

One must seriously and legitimately question the necessity of having such material so carelessly reprinted. Even though the first two editions have been out of print for decades, the recent reprint of the Bon gyi brten ‘gyur chen mo includes a reproduction of the manuscript version in vol. 138 and the 1974 reprint of the xylographic edition prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin is still widely used and photocopied. Another edition recently published in Kathmandu (in book form, Nyams (sic!) rgyud rgyal ba’i phyag khrid, published by mKhan po bsTan ‘dzin dar rgyas, Kathmandu, 2002) might be of better use since, even though it reprints the Bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar from sPa ston’s version rather than the original first chapter by Bru rGyal ba, it does contain all the other original works of the Phyag khrid plus extra material. So if the Triten Norbutse edition was not printed just for making money, it appears barely of any practical use for monks, practitioners, and academic scholars alike.

6. Conclusion

It should not be difficult to take into account the advice of the elders of the tradition when reprinting classical works (especially when they have the experience of Lopön Tenzin Namdak or HH Menri Tridzin in this field). Tibetan editors can certainly comply with the rules (or at least some of the rules) necessary to critically edit a text, as can be witnessed by, for example, the “critical” edition of the Buddhist Kanjur by a specialized bureau of editors in Chengdu. But it seems that many of them simply have works inputted electronically, laid out in a given format (book form or pecha) and then simply sent to the press. There is no editing process at all in this approach and, if not distributed for free, it is certain that it is not done for anything else than profit, in particular when reprinted works are available from previous (recent and better) editions. It is very important that Bon pos be more careful about reprinting or re-editing older material, because examples like the one discussed in this book-review are detrimental to the
tradition in every respect. Such a counter-example might show that Bon pos are quite careless with their material and ready to sell it no matter what. Simply reprinting a text without editing it might still be a good idea, like Bon pos used to do, starting from the 1960s down to the late 1980s, because it makes rare manuscripts available to Tibetologists or translators in their original form. But carelessly reprinted books are of no interest at all and, I insist, detrimental to the tradition.

Unfortunately I doubt that the concerned editors will ever comply with the editing rules such as those recently established by Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer for editing traditional works from the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum (in their recent publications) but they could at least enrich their reprint with a preface or introduction written with competent skills, mentioning the source of the reprints, material on the author, an analytical description of the contents, a bibliography, etc., all this carefully and professionally produced so as to avoid the deplorable defects mentioned above. Nothing of this was done in this edition which readers are more than welcome to avoid.
Revue d’Études Tibétaines

Déjà parus

Numéro 1 — Octobre 2002
Pierre Arènes

Jean-Luc Achard
— “La Base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen”, p. 44-60.

Numéro 2 — Avril 2003 — Numéro spécial Lha srin sde brgyad
Pascale Dollfus
“De quelques histoires de klu et de btsan”, p. 4-39.

Françoise Pommaret

Samten Karmay

Brigitte Steinmann
“Les Lha srin sde brgyad et le problème de leur catégorisation — Une interprétation”, p. 81-91.

Numéro 3 — Juin 2003
Anne Chayet
“A propos des toponymes de l’épopée de Gesar”, p. 4-29.

Brigitte Steinmann

Jean-Luc Achard
“Rig ’dzin Tshe dbang mchog grub (1761-1829) et la constitution du rNying ma rgyud ‘bum de sDe dge”, p. 43-89.

Numéro 4 — Octobre 2003
Pierre Arènes
“De l’utilité de l’herméneutique des Tantra bouddhiques à propos d’un exposé de l’appareil des “Sept Ornaments” par un doxologue
écrut dge lugs pa dBal mang dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (1764-1863)”, p. 4-60.

Dan Martin

Jean-Luc Achard

Numéro 5 — Avril 2004

Brigitte Steinmann
“The Lost Paradise of the Tamang shaman — Origins and Fall”, p. 4-34.

Anne Chayet

Jean-Luc Achard
“bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480-1535) et la Révélation du Yang tig ye shes mthong grol”, p. 57-96.

Numéro 6 — Octobre 2004

Zeff Bjerken

Françoise Pommaret
“Rituels aux divinités locales de Kheng ‘Bu li (Bhoutan central)”, p. 60-77.

Nathan Hill

Numéro 7 — Avril 2005

Cathy Cantwell

Françoise Robin
“Tagore et le Tibet”, p. 22-40.

Santiago Lazcano

Jean-Luc Achard
“Le mode d’émergence du Réel — les manifestations de la Base (gzhi snang) selon les conceptions de la Grande Perfection”, p. 64-96.
Numéro 8 — Octobre 2005

**Ester Bianchi**
“Sādhana della divinità solitaria Yamântaka-Vajrabhairava — Traduzione e glossario della version cinese di Nenghai (Parte I)”, p. 4-39.

**Daniel Scheiddeger**
“Lamps in the Leaping Over”, p. 40-64.

**Oriol Aguillar**

**Ferran Mestanza**
“La première somme philosophique du bouddhisme tibétain. Origines littéraires, philosophiques et mythologiques des “Neuf étatpes de la Voie” (theg pa rim pa dgu)”, p. 84-103.

Numéro 9 — Décembre 2005

**Anne Chayet**
“Pour servir à la numérisation des manuscrits tibétains de Dunhuang conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale : un fichier de Jacques Bacot et autres documents”, p. 4-105.

Numéro 10 — Avril 2006

**Ester Bianchi**
Sādhana della divinità solitaria Yamântaka-Vajrabhairava — Traduzione e glossario della version cinese di Nenghai (Parte II), pp. 4-43.

**Bryan Cuevas**
Some Reflections on the Periodization of Tibetan History, pp. 44-55

**Cathy Cantwell & Rob Mayer**
Two Proposals for Critically Editing the Texts of the rNying ma’i rGyud ’bum, pp. 56-70

**Anne Chayet**
Pour servir à la numérisation des manuscrits tibétains de Dunhuang conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale : II. Un fichier de Marcelle Lalou, pp. 71-88

**Nathan W. Hill**
The Old Tibetan Chronicle — Chapter I, pp. 89-101

Numéro 11 — Juin 2006 — The sGang steng-b rNying ma’i rGyud ’bum manuscript from Bhutan

**Cathy Cantwell & Rob Mayer**
Introduction, pp. 4-15.

**Cathy Cantwell, Rob Mayer, Michael Kowalewky & Jean-Luc Achard**
The Catalogue section, pp. 16-141.
Numéro 12 — Mars 2007
Guillaume Jacques
Le nom des nakṣatrāṇi en tibétain, pp. 4-10.
Oriol Aguillar
La Roca Blanca de Lhang lhang — Un santuario en Nyag rong, pp. 11-23
Daniel Scheiddeger
Different Sets of Channels in the Instructions Series of Rdzogs chen, pp. 24-38
Brigitte Steinmann
De la cosmologie tibétaine au mythe de l’Etat — Historiographie myingmapa tamang (Népal), pp. 39-70.
Thubten Gyalcen Lama
— Book List of Tibetan History for Tamang Study, pp. 103-105.
Shen-yu Lin
The Tibetan Image of Confucius, pp. 105-129.

Numéro 13 — Février 2008
Guillaume Jacques
Deux noms tangoutes dans une légende tibétaine, pp. 4-10.
Etienne Bock
Coiffe de paṇḍit, pp. 11-43.
Richard W. Whitecross
Jean-Luc Achard
L’irruption de la nescience — la notion d’errance samsāriques dans le rdDzogs chen, pp. 75-108.

Numéro 14 — Octobre 2008 — Tibetan Studies in Honor of Samten G. Karmay — Part I. Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Studies — Edited by Françoise Pommaret and Jean-Luc Achard
Préface
Françoise Pommaret, pp. iii-v.
David Snellgrove
How Samten came to Europe, pp. 1-6.
Françoise Pommaret
Dan Martin

Helga Uebach
From Red Tally to Yellow Paper — The official introduction of paper in Tibetan administration in 744/745, pp. 57-69.

Anne Chayet
A propos de l’usage des termes “nyin” et “srib” dans le mDo smad chos ’byung, pp. 71-79.

Janet Gyatso
Spelling Mistakes, Philology, and Feminist Criticism: Women and Boys in Tibetan Medicine, pp. 81-98.

Yasuhiko Nagano
A preliminary note to the Gyarong color terms, pp. 99-106.

Amy Heller

Lara Maconi

Tashi Tsering
sMar khams ’bom rnam snang ngam/ lha ‘dus rnam snang gi skor la cung zad gleng ba, pp. 157-195


Anne-Marie Blondeau
— Contribution à l’étude des huit classes de dieux-démons (lha srin sde brgyud), p. 197

Tenzin Samphel
Les bKa’ brgyud — Sources canoniques et tradition de Nyang ral Nyi ma’od zer, pp. 251-274.

Matthew Kapstein
The Sun of the Heart and the Bai-ro-rgyud-bum, pp. 275-288.

Cathy Cantwell & Rob Mayer
Enduring myths: smrang, rabs and ritual in the Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava, pp. 289-312.

Kunzang Choden
The Malevolent Spirits of sTang Valley (Bumthang) — A Bhutanese account, pp. 313-330.

Peter Schwieger
Tuvinian images of demons from Tibet, pp. 331-336.

Hildegard Diemberger
The Buddhist princess and the woolly turban: non-Buddhist others in a 15th century biography, pp. 337-356.

**Tandin Dorji**
The Cult of Radrap (Ra dgra), “nep” of Wangdue Phodrang (Bhutan), pp. 357-369.

**Donatella Rossi**
mKha’ ‘gro dbang mo’i rnam thar, The Biography of the gTer ston ma bDe chen chos kyi dbang mo (1868-1927?), pp. 371-378.

**Roberto Vitali**
A tentative classification of the bya ru can kings of Zhang zhung, pp. 379-419.

**Henk Blezer**
sTon pa gShen rab : six Marriages and many more funerals, pp. 421-480.

**Charles Ramble**
A nineteenth-century Bonpo pilgrim in Western Tibet and Nepal: Episodes from the life of dKar ru grub dbang bsTan’dzin rin chen, pp. 481-501

**Jean-Luc Achard**

**Tsering Thar**
Bonpo Tantrics in Kokonor Area, pp. 533-552.

---

**Numéro 16 — Avril 2009**

**Ratka Jurkovic**
Prayer to Ta pi hri tsa — A short exposition of the Base, the Path and the Fruit in Bon Dzogchen teachings, pp. 4-42.

**Daniel Scheidegger**
The First Four Themes of Klong chen pa’s Tshig don bcu gcig pa, pp. 43-74.

**Hiroyuki Suzuki**
Deux remarques à propos du développement du rabtags en tibétain parlé, p. 75-82.

*Compte-rendu*

**Fabienne Jagou**

*Annonces de parution*, p. 95.

---

**Numéro 17 — Octobre 2009**

**Fabienne Jagou**

**Henk Blezer**
A Preliminary Report on Investigations into (Bon nyid) ’Od gsal and
Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

Zhi khro bar do in Earlier Zhang zhung sNyan rgyud and sNyan rgyud Literature, p. 21-50.

Karen Liljenberg

Kurt Keutzer & Kevin O'Neill

Numéro 18 — Avril 2010

Dan Martin
Zhangzhung dictionary, p. 5-253.

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