Straddling the Millennial Divide

A case study of persistence and change in the Tibetan ritual tradition based on the Gnag rabs of Gathang Bumpa and Eternal Bon documents, circa 900–1100 CE

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The Gnag rabs of Gathang Bumpa

Introduction

The main focus of this paper is a remarkably diverse ancient ritual text called Gnag rabs zhes bya ba (So Styled the Origins Tales of the Intended Retaliation). This rare and complete circa 10th century CE document contains a series of invocations and techniques for destroying enemies. This untitled text was assigned its name by the Tibetan team of scholars who first studied it after its chance discovery in the Lho-kha region. In 2006, Gnag rabs (abbr.) and several other Old Tibetan ritual texts were recovered from the Dga’-thang bum-pa (Gathang Bumpa) religious monument (mchod-rten) during its reconstruction by local devotees. Facsimiles as well as transcriptions of these texts were published in 2007.2 Much credit is due the chief editors of this volume, Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-‘dus and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring, for having so quickly made these highly valuable sources for the study of early Tibetan culture and religion available to others.

Gnag rabs traces the origins of eliminating enemies through the use of violent ritual means.3 It features instructions to ritualists in the

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3 For the facsimile of this text, see Gtam shul dga’ thang ‘bum pa che, pp. 85–100; for the transcription, ibid., pp. 1–12. My translation of the Gnag rabs and the Eternal Bon documents of this study were made in consultation with Dge-bshes Smon-
proper methods of slaughtering imimical forces. There is no
mistaking the strident and brutal tone of this store of allied rituals,
for they have one main purpose in mind: killing the enemy. This is
readily communicated through graphic descriptions of the brute
force wrought by helping spirits of the rituals, many of which
reoccur in *Gnag rabs* as a standard refrain.

The Old Tibetan term *gnag-pa*, as illustrated by its application in
the text, is best glossed as ‘retaliation intended against enemies’, be
they of human or supernatural origin. One Classical Tibetan word
derived from this term is *brnags* (past tense) / *brnag* (present tense),
which means ‘to cogitate’, ‘to ponder’, ‘to reflect’ or ‘to harbor [in
the mind]’. Thus, the current lexical usage of *brnags* carries only one
part of the meaning of *gnag-pa* as expressed in the *Gnag rabs*. While
*gnag-pa* also describes a process of cognition, it is one accompanied
by a definite desire for redress or revenge. To fully appreciate the
semantic range of this ritual term, it is necessary to present another
closely related Old Tibetan word: *gnag* (black; Classical Tibetan =
*nag*), as in the expression *sems nag-po* (black-hearted, evil-
intentioned, sinful).

*Gnag rabs* is an exceptionally important document, as it furnishes
material for understanding the formation of the Tibetan ritual
tradition in the period before the Lamaist religions (G.yung-drung
Bon and Buddhism) achieved dominance over the religious
landscape of Tibet. Thus its ritual structure, pantheon of helping
spirits and underlying philosophical orientation contrast with those
adopted by Lamaism.4 The *Gnag rabs* dates to a period when the

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4 For a review of the fundamental differences characterizing archaic and Lamaist
ritual structures, see Karmay 1998, pp. 288–290; Karmay 2010, pp. 54–56;
Cantwell and Mayer 2008a, pp. 292–294. For a general discussion of ritual in
establishment of Buddhism was already well underway, so it cannot be termed pre-Buddhist in any chronological sense. Nonetheless, it appears to have been largely founded on preexisting cultural and religious traditions that circulated around Tibet, which do not owe their existence to Buddhism. I employ the term ‘archaic’ to broadly designate these traditions and to set them apart from Lamaism and its Buddhist underpinnings.

Gnag rabs, however, is not a cultural fossil; it bears the marks of interaction with Buddhist ritual structures emerging at the time it was composed. Although materials of Buddhist origin are nominal and of marginal significance in the text, Gnag rabs can be viewed as a fledging stage in the great Lamaist project to systematically amalgamate archaic religious traditions to those coming from India, which was mostly completed by the 11th century CE. The first and most conspicuous concession to Lamaism in Gnag rabs is the third line of the text, part of its introduction: “In the Dharma Language of India” (Rgya-gar chos kyi skad du /). This is direct reference to Sanskrit, the main liturgical language in which Buddhist teachings were introduced to Tibet during the imperial period (circa 650–850 CE). This is resounding acknowledgment on the part of the Gnag rabs author(s) of the ascendant religion. Nevertheless, Buddhist traditions openly propagated in the text are isolated to the use of magical spells (some syllables of which have a Sanskrit phonological quality) and mention of three of the ‘five mental poisons’ of ignorance (dug-linga).

With so little overt Buddhist content it is curious that India’s noble religion was even mentioned by name in Gnag rabs. It appears that the author(s) and users of the text wanted to optimize the position of their work in the Tibetan religious milieu of that time. Presumably, by invoking Buddhism the text attempted to co-opt or reflect this religion’s growing legitimacy and influence in Tibet. The Gnag rabs’ relatively copious usage of spells is derived from the Indian ritual tradition of mystic formulae (dhrānti).5 Clearly, the perceived power of magical spells coming from India was recognized and welcome by the author(s) and performers of the text. Archaic ritual texts from Dunhuang rely very little on spells and

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5 Buddhist handbooks of spells written in Tibetan may well predate Gnag rabs. For example, one such book of spells from Dunhuang composed for a variety of ritual purposes (including the pacification of malicious people and subjugation of demons), composed circa the 9th or 10th century CE, was discovered in Dunhuang. For a review of this work, see van Schaik 2009.
incantations.\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Gnag rabs}, then, might be viewed as a first tentative step in non-Buddhist ritualists adopting aspects of the tantracism that would become an essential part of G.yung-drung (Eternal) Bon. Similarly, reference to the afflicted mental conditions of anger, pride and envy indicates that adherents of older ritual traditions were beginning to accept Buddhist ideas pertaining to the etiology of misfortune in the human condition.

\textit{Gnag rabs} has very specific practical and rather modest aims: eradicating enemies such as thieves and those who threaten the personal protective deities.\textsuperscript{7} No provision is made for furthering sectarian and institutional objectives, nor does the text enshrine articles of faith or the profession of a certain belief system or philosophy. In this regard, \textit{Gnag rabs} is typical of Old Tibetan ritual literature. The wider cultural and religious background in which this literature was set was taken for granted and did not merit a written exposition or any kind of advocacy beyond its purported efficacy in ancient times. The contrast with the Classical Tibetan ritual literature of Lamaism is self-evident; it is replete with sectarian endorsements and the Vajray\=ana view (lta-ba) of things.

\textit{Gnag rabs} boasts a large armory of tutelary deities and ritual procedures for realizing its objectives. The language employed is particularly vehement and violent in character. No attempt was made to soften the cruel tone of the text with noble sentiments, as is often found in Lamaist ritual literature. Like other Old Tibetan ritual texts in general, \textit{Gnag rabs} is a highly utilitarian affair. That enemies (both spiritual and mortal) threaten the ritualists and their beneficiaries is reason in itself for the harsh actions taken against

\textsuperscript{6} However, the use of spells is found in the \textit{Byol rabs} ritual text of Gathang Bumpa: “three words of the father (gshen) spells and three words of the bon spells were cast” (pha sngags tshigs gsum dang / bon sngags tshigs gsum btab). See Bellezza 2010, p. 62; also see \textit{idid.}, pp. 90, 92, 93, 95. For the use of spells in two other texts of the Gathang Bumpa collection, \textit{Rnel drí ’dul ba’i thabs sogs} and \textit{Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa}, see Bellezza 2013a, pp. 155, 175, 192, 252. Although the spells cited in these three texts occur within an indigenous narrative context, the inspiration for their use may have in part come from Indic tradition. If so, this could explain why older archaic funerary texts from Dunhuang hardly resort to such ritual provisions.

\textsuperscript{7} For a general survey of destructive magic rites, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 481–502. For an account of ritual measures taken against sorcery and the ire of deities found in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century CE Eternal Bon text \textit{Gzi brj\=id}, see Norbu 1995, pp. 125–132. In this account (\textit{ibid.}, 125) four types of sorcery are noted: 1) \textit{byad-ka} (use of spells), 2) \textit{phur-ka} (use of a ritual dagger), 3) \textit{rbo\=d-gtong} (use of one’s personal protective deities), and 4) \textit{mnan-gtad} (use of baleful objects that are buried). All four types of sorcery listed above are represented in the narratives and ritual performances of \textit{Gnag rabs}.
them. Murder is justified by killing, attack by assault, threats by provocation, and so forth.

As Gnag rabs is comprised of various destructive magic practices conducted to repulse and slay enemies, it presages the full formation of the Lamaist cult of protective deities. In the text, all divinities whether they are elemental spirits, such as the klu and btsan, or tutelary deities cited by name and endowed with a relatively complex iconography are presented as of equal ritual worth and utility. This contrasts with Lamaist texts and their complex hierarchical schemes, which tend to minimize the power and functions of the elemental spirits while extolling the virtues of special tutelary deities attached to the various sects. The presentation of the status of deities in Gnag rabs belongs to an era in the development of Tibetan religion predating full acceptance of the notion of worldly (lesser) and otherworldly (greater) deities.

The ritual activities of Gnag rabs are presented in an abbreviated manner, presupposing much specialized and practical knowledge as a prerequisite to their comprehension and execution. This suggests that the text was utilized exclusively by members of the priestly class, the gshen and bon, the two types of priests noted in it. In fact, the gshen and bon are the sacerdotal pillars of many Old Tibetan ritual documents. They were both the ancestral and contemporaneous propagators and defenders of a complex ritual system, which includes funerary, curative and destructive rites. This ritual system is sometimes referred to in Old Tibetan texts, directly or indirectly, as bon.

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8 As regards all-purpose magic rites in the Buddhist text Be'u bum, Cuevas (2010: 170) notes that their efficacy is primarily attributed to the laws of sympathy and the system of correlations, explaining one Tibetan term for magic: las-sbyor (correspondent action). The same observation is valid for the magic of Gnag rabs: it is seen as operating through correspondent actions and objects carried out and deployed by the ritualists.

9 Soteriology in Old Tibetan (O.T.) funerary literature is closely bound to the concept of parallel worlds of the living and the dead. On the other hand, Lamaist soteriology is based on the attainment of liberation from the world, which is seen as inherently fraught with ignorance and its bitter fruits, pain and suffering. On soteriology in the Tibetan archaic funerary tradition, see Bellezza 2008.

10 For a summary of the signification of the term bon in Old Tibetan ritual literature, see Bellezza 2013a, p. 232. Van Schaik (2013) assesses the meaning of the word bon / bon-po in the wooden-slips of Miran and other Old Tibetan documents. It is worthwhile to note that the gshen and bon of Old Tibetan literature are not unlike the contemporary bon and lha-bon of the Himalaya, religious functionaries that Samuel (2013) calls ‘invoker-priests’, those involved in animal sacrifice. Parallels in practice between these ritualists a thousand years removed from one another is no mere coincidence. Nevertheless, while historical and cultural continuities are certainly indicated in the Tibetan-Himalayan
This *bon* is best defined as a significant part of, if not the sum total, of archaic ritual traditions; those that developed or were redeveloped indigenously in Tibet. This body of traditions contains ideological, procedural and material elements that are in no way dependent on Buddhist thought or practice. The origins of ritual traditions associated with the term *bon* or *bon-po* are ascribed to native Tibetan figures of ancient and primordial times, not to the Buddha or other omniscient gods and saints. Although Eternal Bon has preserved Old Tibetan shades of meaning connected to the word *bon*, it has done so in a religious context that owes much to Buddhism. Eternal Bon and the indigenous or archaic *bon* are indeed part of a historical continuum, however, they cannot be viewed as designating the one and same religion. They do not.11

*Gnang rabs* belongs to a ritual genre of Tibetan literature written in a form of the Old Tibetan language, which appears to constitute an intermediate stage in its literary development. In previous studies of other ritual texts of Gathang Bumpa, I attribute their composition to circa 850–1000 CE. This estimate of age is based on an appraisal of the grammatical, paleographic and lexical characteristics of the literature.12 This chronological attribution is also derived from a preliminary evaluation of the linguistic development of Old Tibetan and the transition to Classical Tibetan as pertains to a group of funerary texts.13

*Gnang rabs* is one of three ritual texts borne in a single booklet, all of which appear to have been written by the same hand. The other two texts are *Byol rabs* and *Gser skyems gyi rabs*.14 There are three other booklets comprising the early documents of the Gathang Bumpa collection (later Buddhists texts were also recovered from the same *mchod-rten*), which have been assigned the titles *Rnel dtri ’dul sacerdotal tradition*, to posit these in a rigorous manner would require a great deal of research and analysis.

11 Stein (2010), Snellgrove (1967) and Kvarne (1995; 2009) all make this point clearly.

12 See Bellezza 2010, p. 46; 2013a, pp. 117–120, 177–180. Karmay (2009: 63) also recognizes that the early ritual texts of Gathang Bumpa predate the 11th century CE.

13 See Bellezza 2013a. Also see Bellezza 2008; 2010. Old Tibetan ritual texts generally exhibit higher frequencies of the rdzogs-tshig than their Classical Tibetan (C.T.) counterparts. The rdzogs-tshig is a final syllable derived from the last letter of the proceeding word and ending in o (sna-ro), which designates the completion of a thought or action (e.g., bsrid do, bsam mo). In C.T. literature, the use of the rdzogs-tshig is more restricted to marking the end of a section of text or chapter.

14 These texts are the subject of in-depth treatment in Bellezza 2010; 2011.
ba’i thabs sogs, Sha ru shul ston gyi rabs and Sman dpyad.\textsuperscript{15} Based on the paleography and format of the folios, I have observed that the booklet containing the Byol rabs may somewhat postdate the other three Old Tibetan booklets of the Gathang Bumpa collection.\textsuperscript{16} A study of the contents of Gnag rabs bound in the same booklet as the Byol rabs seems to support this observation, for it is the only Old Tibetan text of Gathang Bumpa to manifest religious materials directly inspired by Buddhism. Weighing this evidence together encourages me to now assign a 10th century CE date to Gnag rabs and to the other texts of the same booklet. Nevertheless, the establishment of precise dates for the Gathang Bumpa manuscripts will only come with further codicological study and analysis.

The folios of Gnag rabs are squarer than the most common dpe-cha format, following an old custom of bookmaking in Tibet. Each folio has between nine and eleven lines of text. The calligraphy is a form of dbu-can (letters with heads) but with the heads minimized and the strokes of the characters rounded, anticipating the fully evolved dbu-med (headless letters) handwriting that developed at a somewhat later date. To my knowledge, no study of the paper, ink or binding used to produce the Gnag rabs has yet been undertaken.\textsuperscript{17}

In this study, the narrative and ritual components of Gnag rabs are divided into eight interrelated sections as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Section I: Destructive magic rituals using a variety of personal protective spirits (1.1–3.6)\textsuperscript{18}
  \item Section II: The theogony, iconography and ritual exploitation of the nine zi-ma sisters (3.6–6.9)
  \item Section III: Destructive magic rituals connected to the btsan and bdud spirits (6.10–7.7)
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{15} All the aforementioned Gathang Bumpa texts have been published together in the Gtam shul dga’ thang ’bum pa che volume. The funerary texts Rnel drī ‘dul ba’i thabs sogs and Sha ru shul ston gyi rabs are studied in detail in Bellezza 2013a. I am not aware of any published study of the third booklet, a therapeutic tract.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 117, 118.

\textsuperscript{17} Microscopic study of paper fibers from Dunhuang texts has determined that Thymelaeaceae family plants such as Daphne or Edgeworthia sp. were used in paper making in Tibet during the imperial and post-imperial periods. For this study, see Helman-Waży and van Schaik 2012. It would be useful to subject documents of the Gathang Bumpa collection to such an analysis to ascertain whether the composition of the paper matches that made in Tibet and used in the production of documents bound for Dunhuang.

\textsuperscript{18} Folio 1, line 1 to folio 3, line 6. This system of abbreviation is used throughout this paper. The numerical designations follow those in Gtam shul dga’ thang ’bum pa che.
Section IV: More elaborate destructive magic ritual using receptacles for the soul (7.7–9.1)

Section V: The theogony, iconography and activities of a sisterhood of seven goddesses (9.1–11.1)

Section VI: Narrative and ritual elements mostly associated with the divinity and demon of birth (11.1–15.2)

Section VII: Ritual protection from the g.yen spirits (15.2–15.7)

Section VIII: Concluding remarks and recommendations concerning the rituals of the text (15.8–16.1)

Section I

The first section of Gnag rabs gets right down to the business of ritually killing enemies without furnishing a rationale or justification. Section I invokes a variety of personal protective deities entrusted with the slaughter of unspecified enemies.

On thematic, narrative and grammatical grounds, this first section of the text can be divided into nine paragraphs:

Ia: Setting loose the destructive power of the klu water spirits with spells

Ib: Execution of the enemy by the klu through the use of a tablet and effigy

Ic: Visualization and deployment of a nine-headed wolf

Id: Description and commands to the tutelary god Rgod-gsas kham-pa

Ie: Genealogy, description and commands to the tutelary goddess Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo

If: Description of the destructive power of the crow helping spirit

Ig: The sequestration of the pho-lha (god of males)

Ih: Genealogy, offerings, and a command to the gra-bla (warrior god)

II: Genealogy, and a command to the gra’-dpa’ (related class of warrior spirits)

Paragraph Ia (1.1–1.3)

The text begins its assault on enemies by calling upon the wrath of the klu, the ubiquitous class of Tibetan water spirits. Although they
eventually came to be assimilated to the nāga of Indic tradition, the klu and klu-mo are of indigenous origins and appear to long predate the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. They play a prominent role in many kinds of ritual and narrative traditions as both ally and opponent (elemental spirits often have ambivalent personalities). The klu are important wealth and fertility bestowing spirits, and are frequently propitiated through the use of vases filled with offerings of medicines and other precious substances. They are common albeit minor supernatural figures in the various curative rites of Tibetan spirit-mediums. Conversely, when angered the klu are implicated in skin diseases and a loss of wealth and good fortune. The klu are also ancestral figures particularly for women.

In Gnag rabs, the klu are dispatched with the clear aim of doing grievous harm to those considered enemies. This sending of the klu to do the bidding of the ritualists is articulated using the word gtad, which in this context means ‘to set upon’, ‘to incite’, ‘to unleash’ or ‘to attack’. There is little elaboration or ceremonial dross: the klu go about their work with only the casting of a few spells (sngags). These incantations are designed to call, empower and depute the klu in order that they subjugate the enemy. For good measure, more extensive ritual provisions follow in Section I of the text. Nevertheless, the ritualists appear to be on such familiar terms with the water spirits that little exertion is required on their part. In Classical Tibetan ritual texts, a more extensive preamble almost always precedes the signaling and dispatching of deities, especially at the very beginning of a performance:

In the language of Spu-rgyal Tibet, it is so styled salt and blood.\(^{19}\)

In the Dharma language of India, it is so styled origins tales of the intended retribution (gnag-pa’i rabs). The spells of inciting the klu:\(^{20}\)

Thus spoken [the klu] are incited.

\[
\text{spu rgyal bod kyi skad du} // \text{tsha khrag zhes bya’} \ (\text{C.T. = bya}) // \text{rgya gar chos kyi skad du} / \text{gnag pa’i rabs zhes bya’o} \ (\text{C.T. = bya}) // \text{klu la gtad pa’i sngags la} // \text{mog shang} / \text{rum yang} / \text{spa tshum} / \text{thil phor me re} / \text{sibs kha na dul dul} // \text{byas de brjod la gtad do} //
\]

\(^{19}\) This title of the text ‘in the language of imperial Tibet’ (spu-rgyal bod skad du) is a metaphor endorsing the great effectiveness of the ritual dispensations described throughout its length. It appears to communicate that, as when salt is added to a wound there is much pain, the ritual activities have an unfailingly palpable effect on the enemies to which they are directed.

\(^{20}\) For these five lines of spells, see transliteration. The wording of these spells of subjugation suggests that they were recited in a dark enclosed space over a vessel containing ritual ingredients.
The first section of *Gnag rabs* also relies on two other major methods of slaughter: the writing on a tablet and the making of effigies. Both types of objects when properly deployed are believed to imprison the soul (*bla*) or vital principle (*srog*) of the enemy. Tablets and effigies are still used in Tibetan destructive magic rites to this day (known as ransom rites, *glud*). The tablets are called *byang-[bu]* and were probably made of wood or hardened animal skin (as they still are today). Typically, the name and clan of the offending agent is written on the tablet. It may also include a drawing or symbolic diagram of the enemy.\(^{21}\) The sculpted effigy of the enemy, simply known as the ‘form’ or ‘body’ (*gzugs*), is made with edible ingredients. These likenesses of foes in the Tibetan ritual tradition are often called *ling-ga*.\(^{22}\) Interestingly, the simulacra employed in this section of *Gnag rabs*, the *chu-srin* (a crocodiloid creature) and *sbrul* (snake), are considered chthonic creatures, as are the *klu* themselves. This suggests that the enemy the text has in mind is of a terrestrial or subterranean character. After the effigies are set up the ritualists go around them nine times while intoning spells (as written in paragraph Ia) and making wrathful hand gestures:

\[Klu\], from the gums, uproot the teeth [of the enemy] with your knife (sharp) spread\(^{23}\) claws\(^{24}\) Set forth (*gzhug*) [the name and likeness] of the enemy on a tablet. *[Klu*], tear out their fingernails from the roots, and take [the enemy] from the sides and pull out [their organs] from the roots. To slaughter the enemy:\(^{25}\) meal of small black peas and the milk of the red cow and white female goat are mixed together (*sbrus*) to fashion the form of a *chu-srin* and the form of a black snake with nine heads. The curse (*rmod*) is


\(^{23}\) *Sul*. This word literally means ‘ravine’ or ‘furrow’. It is used to vividly impart that the metaphorical claws of the *klu* are arrayed like a series of ravines on a mountainside or like a row of furrows in a field.

\(^{24}\) Although this sentence ends in *gsol* (to ask, to beseech) I present it and several other sentences ending in the same way in the text in the imperative form. This seems to be more in keeping with the forthright spirit of the ritual.

\(^{25}\) *Gra’* (also in text: *gra*). This spelling gives the word a softer pronunciation (as still spoken in the dialect of ‘Bri-ru) than the Classical Tibetan *dgra*. 
put upon the form of the enemy. It is circumambulated nine times.

\[\text{sen mo dri} (\text{C.T.} = \text{gri}) \text{ sul nas} / \text{so rnyil rtsa nas byung (C.T.} = \text{phyung}) / \text{du gsol lo} / \text{dra'} (\text{C.T.} = \text{dgra}) \text{ bo byang du gzhug (C.T.} = \text{jug}) \text{ pa dang} / \text{sen mo rtsa nas byung (C.T.} = \text{phyung}) \text{ ba dang} / \text{mchan lan rtsa nas byung (C.T.} = \text{phyung}) \text{ ba dang} / \text{gra'} (\text{C.T.} = \text{dgra}) \text{ bo gsad (C.T.} = \text{bsad}) \text{ pa ning (= ni)} / \text{srang chung gyi phye la} / \text{ba dmar mo dang} / \text{ra dkar mo'i 'o ma dang sbrus la} / \text{chu srin gyi gzugs dang} / \text{brul nag po 'go (C.T.} = \text{mgo}) \text{ rgu (C.T.} = \text{dgu}) \text{ bo'i gzugs byas la} / \text{gra'} (\text{C.T.} = \text{dgra}) \text{ bo'i gzugs (C.T.} = \text{gzugs}) \text{ la rmod (C.T.} = \text{dmod}) \text{ btsugs la} / \text{lan rgur bo rkor (C.T.} = \text{skor}) \text{ la gzhag (C.T.} = \text{bzhag}) \text{ go} / \]

**Paragraph Ic (1.6–1.9)**

Now that the *klu* have been directed against the enemy and the culprit captured in the effigies made for that purpose, the text instructs the ritualists to visualize themselves as an enemy-destroying animal of fantastic appearance. This is an effulgent wolf with nine heads and nine legs who with its formidable powers seizes and slays the enemy.\(^{26}\) This imagined or manifested wolf is made of iron, a metal commonly associated with dark colors, wrathfulness and prodigious power. Iron occurs in similar contexts throughout the text, as it does in many other ritual documents. This personification of zoomorphic spirits has archaic origins, as chronicled in many literary and oral traditions of Tibet. However, visualization of multi-headed wrathful deities is also part of tantric tradition, calling into question the cultural sources of the iron wolf god. It may therefore have evolved as a syncretic figure:

Thereafter, visualize yourself as an iron wolf with nine heads and nine legs. With your tongue emitting many iron hooks, like the spreading radiance of the sun and moon, tear out the heart of the enemy! With your fur like a whirlwind of tongues of fire and arrayed claws,\(^{27}\) the sprung claws of copper with eight points, tear

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\(^{26}\) A nine-headed inauspicious wolf is mentioned in *Byol rabs*, a text found in the same booklet as *Gnag rabs* (Bellezza 2010: 66). There are infernal varieties of the same creature in the Gathang Bumpa funerary text *Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs* (Bellezza 2013a: pp. 121, 125). There are also remedial spirits in the form of nine-headed wolves among the spirit-mediums (*lha-pa*) of Upper Tibet (Bellezza 2005: 105, 153).

\(^{27}\) *Sder-mong*. This term shows that the claws form a parallel array, as when a wolf is about to spring into action. Compare with *so-mang* (comb), the different vowel
out the heart of the enemy! With your arms possessed of wings and iron claws like flaming hooks and a beak like the raised battleaxe (gra-sta) with the removed heart of the enemy, bring my enemy here!

de nas rang nyid lcags kyi spyang po (C.T. = khu) 'go (C.T. = mgo) rgu (C.T. = dgu) bor la / lag pa rgu (C.T. = dgu) po gcig du bsams la // lce lcags skyu mang por 'phro ba / / nyis (C.T. = nyi) zla'zer 'ltar 'phro / / gra (C.T. = dgra) bo'i snying phyung cig / / spu thog gi me\textsuperscript{28} lce rlung gysis bskor pa dra' / / sder mong zangs kyi sder mo lce (= rise) brgyad 'phen / / gra' (C.T. = dgra) bo'i snying phyung cig / / lag pa du kyi gshog pa can / / sder mo lcags skyu 'bar ba 'dra' (C.T. = 'dra) / / mchu snying byin gra (C.T. = dgra) sta 'phyar (C.T. = phyar) ba 'gra (C.T = 'dra) / / bdag kyi gra (C.T. = dgra) bo khrid la shog / /

Paragraph Id (2.1–2.5)

Thus far, the ritual for executing enemies has been based on two major facilities: the wrath of the water spirits and the ritualist transformed into a fierce and grotesque animal. The next part of the performance introduces a third means of dispatching inimical forces, the tutelary deity (yi-dam). This particular god of celestial origins belongs to the gsas class, which is analogous to the better known lha. The close relationship between these two classes of gods can be traced to the Dunhuang manuscripts.\textsuperscript{29}

The text furnishes a vibrant description of the gsas Rgod-gsas kham-pa (Tawny Wild / Brave / Savage God). He is enrobed in an overcoat of vulture skin and feathers (bya-rgod slag-pa), a form of dress worn by many ancient deities and sages of the Eternal Bon tradition.\textsuperscript{30} As with tantric yi-dam of Eternal Bon, such as Ge-khod and Lha-rgod thog-pa, Rgod-gsas kham-pa controls the movements of the heavenly bodies. Nevertheless, no attempt was made by the

\textsuperscript{28} In the transcript of the text furnished in \textit{Gtam shul dga’ thang ’bum pa che}, this word is mistranscribed as \textit{mi}. In general though, the transcribing of texts in this work was accomplished with a high degree of accuracy.

\textsuperscript{29} As in the Eternal Bon tradition, the lha and gsas gods are paired with one another in the Dunhuang texts ITJ 734 (nine lha, nine gsas; lha masters (dag, C.T. = bdag), gsas masters) and Pt 1194 (lha and gsas), as well as in \textit{Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs} (the two lha and gsas). For more information on the entwined lha and gsas, see Bellezza 2008; 2010; 2013a.

\textsuperscript{30} Also, in the Gathang Bumpa text \textit{Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs}, two ancestral funerary ritual figures, Brgyu-she-lcags and Zhang-zhung mu-lto-ba, are attired in vulture greatcoats (Bellezza 2013a: 173, 174).
author to incorporate clearly defined iconographic and conceptual elements derived from Buddhism into his personality. In *Gnag rabs*, Rgod-gsas kham-pa is presented as just one locus of ritual power and legitimacy. In the Lamaist religions, the *yi-dam* takes precedence over other spirits and mystic empowerments; these being seen as derived (directly or indirectly) from the tutelary deity associated with the ritual being practiced. Such Lamaist *yi-dam* are considered to be representations of the nature of reality itself (*chos-nyid* / *bon-nyid*). The appearance and functions assigned tutelary deities in *Gnag rabs* underscore the nominal influence of Indic religion in the text:

Now, Rgod-gsas kham-pa, bring the enemy and thief here! What clothes does [Rgod-gsas kham-pa] wear on his body? He wears a greatcoat of the vulture. On his head he wears a striped tiger-skin hat. He has the braided (*tshom tshom*) beard (*smang-ra*) of the tiger. His copper body hair (*ba-spu*) gently sways (*zhwa la la*). From his mouth sparking (*tsha tsha*) iron is emitted. He holds a red battle mallet (*thu-lum*) in his hands. The shifting of his eyes overturns the sky and earth. The snapping of his fingers (*se-ol brdabs*) turns the sun, moon, planets and stars of the heavens upside down upon the plain. The stomping of his feet agitates the lake of the earth from its depths. With fingernails and claws along with other [weapons] trophies (*rtags*), bring the heart and [organs of] the sides of the body [of the enemy] here!

\[da nī rgod gśas kham (C.T. = kḥams) pa 'is // gra (C.T. = dgra) dang rkun ma khrid la shog // sku la cī gsol na // bya rgod slag pa gsol //\]

31 Like many other Tibetan deities, Rgod-gsas kham-pa survived the historical transition from the archaic to the Lamaist religious setting. He belongs to a group of four Eternal Bon gods known as Gsas-chen ru-bzhi (Pasar Tsultrîm Tenzin, et al., p. 279). In a 13th century CE Eternal Bon ritual text attributed to Bru-ston rgyal-ba, Rgod-gsas kham-pa is one of four gods of the cardinal directions responsible for originating the support or receptacle (*rten*) used in augmenting the good fortune potential (*g.yang*) of individuals (Bellezza 2005: 458). In the Eternal Bon funerary tradition known as the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, Rgod-gsas kham-pa (*sic*) is one of the main gods who defeats demons that interfere with the liberation of the deceased from the intermediate state (*bar-do*) or intermediate place (*bar-sa*; Bellezza 2008: 446). Both of these ritual contexts (pacific and wrathful) citing Rgod-gsas kham-pa have a strong indigenous character with scant Lamaist intrusion. This is readily understandable in light of *Gnag rabs* and the god’s archaic religious identity.

32 A *gsas* god in *Byol rabs*, Gnam-gsas phyi-rum (probably identical with Gnam-gsas dbyings-rum of Eternal Bon), is also clad in tiger-skin headgear (Bellezza 2010: 78–80). The mythic origins of the tiger-skin hat, as a sign of great bravery (*che-rtags*), is recounted in the Eternal Bon text *G.yung drung bon gyi rgyud ‘bum* (see Bellezza 2008: 229). It is one of many types of headgear said to have been worn by the ancient gshen priests (*ibid.*, 239).
Paragraph Ie (2.5–2.8)

Gnag rabs continues by introducing a female deity in ornithic form, who also wrecks destruction on enemies. Her name is Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo (Beak of Magical Power Great Tormentor Female). The text does not specify any offerings to entice her to carry out her mission. This suggests that Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo, like Rgod-gyas kham-pa, is a tutelary deity on intimate terms with ritualists of the text. Such deities may have formed a bedrock of protection and action in certain Old Tibetan ritual traditions.

The text supplies a short account of Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo’s parentage. This type of genealogy is an integral part of Old Tibetan and Eternal Bon ‘proclamations of origins’ (smrang), which often preface ritual activities. Smrang, as historical or mythic professions, are designed to legitimize and promote ritual praxis, furnishing a customary and conceptual basis for their discharge. By temporally positioning and advertising their lines of transmission through human and divine luminaries, smrang endorse ritual efficacy in the most direct of ways (in this case the destruction of adversaries):

Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo: The name of her father and patriarch was Skal-pa’i gdug-pa-can (He of the Savage Epoch). The name of her mother and matriarch was Srî-pa’i gor-bye-dma. The daughter of their mating and seasonal activity, Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo, was born (bltam). With her file [beak] she files away at the enemy. With her file beak she files away at its heart. Bring the heart and [organs] taken from the side of the body [of the enemy] as well as its fangs along with other [body part] trophies here!

mthu mchu sdîgs (C.T. = sdig) chen mo // pha dang yab kyî mtshan skal (C.T. = bskal) pa’î gdug pa can // ma dang yun gyi mtshan // srîd pa’î gor’ byed ma // bshos dang nams kyî sras // mthu mchu sgîgs

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33 For a discussion of the structure and vocabulary of this type of genealogy, see Bellezza 2013a, p. 134 (n. 181).
The next textual passage is dedicated to the thaumaturgic crow, which by its placement in the ritual progression appears to be in the retinue of the tutelary deity Mthu-mchu sdigs-chen-mo. In a description of the prowess of the crow there is reference to the white sunny mountain (gdags-ri) and black shady mountain (srib-ri). Applied to a variety of deities, demons and priests, this formula is well known in Old Tibetan ritual literature. In the cultural context of Gnag rabs, the binary nature of white sunny and black shady mountains presupposes a cosmological wholeness or universality demonstrating the tremendous ritual effectiveness of the crow. This interpretation is supported by dualism in archaic Tibetan cosmogonies and their preoccupation with parallel white (positive) and black (negative) realms of existence:

The beating (brdabs) right wing of the black crow of iron collapses the sunny white mountain. The beating of the left wing of the crow [collapses the shady black mountain]. The crow is commissioned with the casting of these spells.

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34 The binary nature of sunny white and shady black topography has also been preserved in the sacred geographic tradition. A particularly spectacular example is the thirteen or eighteen nyin la do-chen (sunny great headlands and islands) and the thirteen or eighteen srib la gdong-chen (shady great mountain faces) of Gnam-mtsho. See Bellezza 1997, pp. 120–123.

35 Mngag. This important operative term can also be defined as ‘to dispatch’, ‘to delegate’, ‘to order’, or ‘to entrust’.

36 Bdab (C.T. = btab). When used to denote the pronouncing of a spell, this Old Tibetan verb has been frequently replaced by the word bzlas, as is also found in this text.

37 For these three lines of spells, see the transliteration.

38 This entire grammatical line was omitted from the text. The parallelism of the passage allows it to be reinstated confidently. For a discussion of this formula, see Chayet 2008; Dotson 2008, pp. 48, 49; Bellezza 2010, p. 91.
Next, the ritual turns to the *pho-lha* (god of males), another important protector against harm and evil. The *pho-lha* is still very much part of the Tibetan cultural environment, the counterpart to the *mo-lha* (goddess of females). By virtue of being found in the archaic cultural setting of an Old Tibetan text buttresses the commonly held view among Tibetans that the *pho-lha* is of pre-Buddhist origins. Thus far, however, I have not unearthed explicit references to the *pho-lha* in the Dunhuang manuscripts. This spirit is intimately related to those it guides and guards, with the right armpit being his bodily seat. The *pho-lha* can either be in generic form or endowed with a specific name and appearance, depending on family tradition. Generally speaking, they are resplendent white deities in the form of a noble or ancestral male figure. Given its paternal associations, the *pho-lha* is also called *A-pha’i lha* (god of the father) in Upper Tibet. The draped arrow is the most common object of supplication for the *pho-lha* and the receptacle or support (*rten*) for this god on the household altar.\(^{39}\)

*Gnag rabs* cautions the ritualist to keep the *pho-lha*, referred to as the ‘object of reliance’ (*rgyab-rten*), well away. This is an allusion to the still expressed belief that personal protectors are limpid spirits that must not be sullied by household activities such as cooking and childbirth, for this is thought to anger or weaken them. Although *pho-lha* are bodily connected to males their chief residence lies in the natural environment, holy trees and mountains being common abodes.\(^{40}\) Thus the *pho-lha* are believed to exercise their power from afar or from on high. The text begins with an example (*dpe*) of counterpoise citing human beings:

Also, the male and female, these two, do not resemble each other, [thus] the methods of placing apart (*dgar-ba*) the object of reliance of the male: *pho-lha* do not be nearby!

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\(^{39}\) Tucci (1980: 188) describes a tabernacle for this class of deity called *pho-lha mkhar* or *gsas-mkhar*, which was installed on or near the roof. Also see Tucci 1966, p. 188. In Upper Tibet, when a *pho-lha* (male protective deity) is implicated in creating disturbances for an individual, he may patronize a spirit-medium. In the trance ceremony the possessing deity will typically conduct a *lha-gsol* (propitiation and offerings) ritual. The patient is made to offer white-colored livestock with superior qualities to the *pho-lha*, which are then set free to live the remainder of their lives unmolested. For general information on the *pho-lha*, see Stein 1972, pp. 222, 223; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 327. For *pho-lha* lore and ritual practices, see Bellezza 2005; 2008.

\(^{40}\) On personal spirits having dual residences on the body and in the environment, cf. Stein 1972, p. 227.
After the \textit{pho-lha}, the \textit{gra-bla} / \textit{gra'-bla} (C.T. = \textit{dgra-lha} / \textit{sgra-bla}: warrior spirits) are invoked, another popular genre of deities invested with apotropaic faculties. Divination texts of the Dunhuang manuscripts (Pt 1043, Pt 1047, Pt 1051, ITJ 738) constitute the oldest literary references to the \textit{dgra-bla (sic)}, where their advent signals a positive prognosis.\footnote{Also see Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 267; Stein 2003, p. 605. On the \textit{dgra-lha} more generally, consult, for example, Waddell 1895, p. 375; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Stein 1972, pp. 222, 223. For the \textit{sgra-bla} in the Eternal Bon ritual tradition, see Snellgrove 1967; Gibson 1985; Norbu 1995; Clemente 1994; Bellezza 2005; 2008. On \textit{sgra-bla} in archaic funerary ritual performances, see Bellezza 2013a; 2008. For the cult of the \textit{dgra-lha} in the liturgies of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, see Bellezza 2005; 2013b.} The \textit{dgra-lha} is closely related to the \textit{pho-lha}, and to the \textit{phugs-lha} (household protector), \textit{rus-lha} (clan god) and \textit{yul-lha} (territorial god). The \textit{dgra-lha} belongs to a well-known pentad of personal gods called ‘\textit{go-ba’i lha-lnga}.\footnote{The \textit{mo-lha} (god of females), \textit{pho-lha} (god of males), \textit{thab-lha} (god of the hearth), \textit{zhang-lha} (god of the maternal uncle) and \textit{dgra-lha} (god [against] the enemy). For a description of this divine group, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 327, 328.} The \textit{gra-bla} of \textit{Gnag rabs} includes one in the form of the divine white yak, a zoomorphic warrior spirit still propitiated by Tibetans. Called G.yag-gsas dkar-po (White Gsas Yak), his parentage and his offspring are named in the text.\footnote{G.yag-gsas dkar-po is the equivalent of the \textit{sgra-bla} Lha-g.yag dkar-po (White Yak of the Lha), the clan god of the ‘Gru. For this zoomorphic deity, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 403–408. Note the transposition of \textit{lha} and \textit{gsas} in the respective names of these gods, which is more indicative of the fluid syntax concerning modifiers (especially in Old Tibetan) than it is of semantic variability. As a cosmogonic spirit (Srid kyi g.yag-po dkar-po, ‘White Yak of Existence’), see Tucci 1980, pp. 219, 220. On the mythic origins of divine yaks and cattle in the funerary text Pt 1068, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 540, 541. For divine yaks, female and male (\textit{lha’-bris} zal-mo and \textit{lha-g.yag sham-po}), as offering objects in Pt 126, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 341, 342.} As with the \textit{pho-lha}, in order to execute their protective role unhindered, the \textit{gra-bla} are requested to keep a safe distance from the polluting influences of human activities:

The name of the father and patriarch of that G.yag-gsas dkar-po was Khri-rje rol-po thang\footnote{In an origins myth of \textit{Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru} describing the divine descent of the six major clans of Tibet (Bod mi’u gdung-drug), one of the major cosmogonic gods is called Khri-rje thang-snyan (Bellezza 2008: 350–352). Although they are} and the name of his mother and
matriarch was Khri-bdag btsun-mo, these two. The son of their mating and seasonal activity, was the boy G.yag-sras dkar-po. His boy was G.ya-rba dmar-po-can. Do not stay nearby on this side! The living creature (kye-bo) ox will gore (brdungs) you.\textsuperscript{45} Mightily,\textsuperscript{46} again and again, we make offerings. We offer to you with a pair of dkar-mo\textsuperscript{47} and one ban of libations.\textsuperscript{48} Gra-bla do not stay nearby!

Paragraph II (3.4–3.6)

The final portion of the first ritual to eradicate enemies is devoted to the gra’-dpa’ (‘enemy hero’), another type of dgra-lha. Dgra-lha often carry the epithet ‘hero’ in Classical Tibetan literature, as they do here. The text provides a short smran of the gra’-dpa’. Being stalwart allies of human beings, it is of paramount concern that these spirits remain uncontaminated:

Gra’-dpa’ do not stay nearby! The name of the father and patriarch of the gra-dpa’\textsuperscript{50} was Lhe’u-rje zin-dags\textsuperscript{51} and [the mother was]

both generative gods with similar names, a close functional relationship between Khri-rje thang-snyan and Khri-rje rol-po thang is uncertain.

\textsuperscript{45} In Tibetan folklore and common practice, oxen and yaks are said to be inherently opposed to each other and must reside separately. This metaphor is used to drive home the message to the gra-bla that their well-being is endangered by ordinary human activities.

\textsuperscript{46} Gnyan kyis. This indicates that the offerings are of much importance and made with a strong sense of commitment and urgency.

\textsuperscript{47} White rice and white barley meal or other grains in this context, not white ewes.

\textsuperscript{48} A ban is a unit of measure for beer. It is still used today in Hor and Khams, where one ban is equivalent to the amount of beer made from nine measures (bre) of grain. As is customary, the libations (gsers-skyems) cited in the text is almost certainly beer.

\textsuperscript{49} The particle sa added to re (C.T. = red) is a lyrical flourish (tshigs-rgyan), as still spoken in dialects of Nag-chu, Hor and Khams.

\textsuperscript{50} Sic. The text has gra-dpal and this might possibly be a valid alternative name of the gra’-dpa’. In any case, in C.T. texts, we find dpal-mgon, an epithet for classes of minor protective deities.

\textsuperscript{51} The deity Lhe’u-rje zin-dags / zin-tags, as the mouthpiece of positive prognoses, is found in the Dunhuang manuscripts Pt 1046B and ITJ 740. Also see Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), pp. 150 (n. 50), 176, 177. Stein (ibid., 176) equates this god with
Section II

Section II of *Gnag rabs* is given over to the nine *zi-ma*, ferocious goddess who defend the interests of their supplicants with much vigor. Generally known as the nine *gze-ma* in Eternal Bon, this ennead of goddesses has retained an important place in the ritual architecture of that religion. There are however major differences in the identity and iconography of the *zi-ma* and *gze-ma*, reflecting the great transition from archaic to Lamaist religious traditions. These momentous changes, as reflected in this sisterhood of goddesses, are explored in depth in Part Two of this paper.

As with the spelling *gra* / *gra’* for enemy, the rendering *zi-ma* may reflect a localized pronunciation as spoken by the author(s), as much as being representative of Old Tibetan orthography. Like in Section I of *Gnag rabs*, these goddesses do away with enemies in the most pitiless of fashions. In this text they are coldblooded killers pure and simple, whatever other functions they might have once had.

The structure of Section II of *Gnag rabs*, as demonstrated by its thematic, narrative and grammatical qualities, can be outlined as follows:

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Le’u-rje zing-po of Pt 1043. On the signification of the term *lhe’u* (‘little god’), see Bellezza 2013a, p. 17.

*Gze-ma* seems to mean ‘swift females’, a reference to their rapid response to ritual entreaties to destroy enemies (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 312). However, in the Eternal Bon text *Sgra’ grel*, this group of nine goddesses is called *gzi-ma* (Norbu 2009: 56 [n. 81]). This spelling variant is of course closer to the rendering in *Gnag rabs*. Since the completion of this paper, the distinguished scholar Samten G. Karmay (2013) has published independently a translation of the portion of *Gnag rabs* pertaining to the nine *zi-ma* goddesses, briefly comparing its contents with Eternal Bon materials. As a side note, Karmay’s characterization of the manuscript as, “....so full of spelling errors, omissions, incoherence and inconsistencies that it might just be nothing but an old faulty copy”, is not particularly helpful. The abstruse nature of the *Gnag rabs* manuscript stems largely from its linguistic structure, archaic cultural orientation and the brevity of the various ritual operations, not from defects in composition.
The origins myth of the nine zi-ma begins by first announcing an alternative name for this sisterhood: byad-gsas ('enemy god'). This is an epithet that refers to their ability to vanquish enemies. The zi-ma are of the dbal in nature, a term that connotes such qualities as great wrath, conflagrative intensity and extreme sharpness. These goddesses were the offspring of three lha-rgod brothers. The word rgod denotes the wildness, bravery or raw power of these gods. Their mother was the famous goddess Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal (Celestial Grandmother Queen of the Heavens), who in the Eternal Bon tradition is tantamount to the greatest protectress, Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo (Queen of Existence). It appears that Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal had entered into a polyandrous relationship; perhaps with each lha-rgod as the sire of three zi-ma sisters. These powerful deities coupled in Lha-yul gung-dang (Country of the Gods Vault of the Heavens), the storied celestial sphere. Augmenting the heavenly nature of their genesis, the mother and father of the nine zi-ma mated amidst thunder and lightning. Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal goes on to declaim the same basic admonition articulated in Section I of the text: humans and gods are not to reside in the same place (gdan), nor are

53 Probably the oldest literary reference to Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal-mo (sic) is found in ITJ 731v, where in the celestial world she receives a young girl savagely pursued by homicidal demons. For this tale, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 514–517. Also see Thomas 1957 pp. 16–19, 29–32. In Eternal Bon, Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal is primarily a cosmogonic and good fortune-bestowing goddess, who is sometimes identified with sacred lakes such as Gnam-mtsho, Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho and Mapang g.yu-mtsho. In Eternal Bon cosmogonies, she is the senior-most member of the ‘Nine Females of Existence’ (Srid-pa mo-dgu) and the ancestress of living beings and deities (Norbu 1995: 166; Norbu 2009: 40, 41, 50, 53, 56; Stein 1972: 242). For Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal (Mo-btsun gung-rgyal / Spu-yul mo-btsun gung-rgyal) as the progenitor of both the the’u-brang (a group of ancestral spirits) and King gNyā’-khri btsan-po, see Haarh 1969, pp. 221–226, 230; Tucci 1949, p. 733. Also, see Tucci 1980; p. 219; Stein 2010 (Antiqua V), p. 261. For numerous other references to this goddess, see Bellezza 1997; 2005; 2008.

54 For a description of Lha-yul gung-thang taken from Ti se’i dkar chag, see Norbu 2009, p. 28. Also, see Haarh 1969, pp. 141, 221, 231. In ITJ 731r, Lha-yul gung-dang (sic) is one of the heavenly countries in which the maternal ancestor of the do-ma (psychopomp horse) lived. See Bellezza 2008, pp 530, 533; also see Haarh 1969, p. 223.
they to consort (bshos) with one another. If they were to mix in such ways the existence of both would suffer:

A gnag-pa origins tale: Also, the ones known as the byad-gsas nine sisters. The ones further known as the dbal zi-ma of the nine eggs. In Lha-yul gung-dang, the three lha-rgod brothers sought (btsal) a wife and mate. It was Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal. Gnam-phyi announced, ‘no one is larger or more mighty than me. The humans and progeny of the lha are not to stay in the same spot and mate/consort. The sons of the dragon and khyung are not to be in competition (dran kyi do) with one another.’ The progeny of their mating between the thunder and the lightning appeared (bsrid) as the nine white eggs as large as all the bones (rus kyi ‘go) of a yak [piled together].

The text now proceeds to describe the appearance and activities of the first and eldest zi-ma sister. As with all the group, she appeared from an egg that hatched in the most awe-inspiring ways. This dragon-headed goddess is portrayed as a ruthless killer of enemies. In the last portion of the passage, the ritualists are instructed to visualize (bsam) the body and ‘soul foundation’ (brla-bzhi, C.T. = bla-gzhi) of the enemy as being summoned to the ritual venue. The brla-bzhi refers either to a mystic location in the body or to the external vessel of the brla (C.T. = bla, the animating aspect of consciousness and seat of the personality). These receptacles are typically in the form of an arrow (males), spindle (females) and precious stones. This tabernacular object is usually erected on an altar but it is transportable should its owner travel:

The [first] dbal zi-ma egg opened by the sound of the roaring dragon. [From it appeared the one] with the body of the human and the head of the dragon. She possessed wings of the
scimitar (chu-dri). She possessed feet of the sword (ral-gri). With her flashing (bar-ba) nine [upper] and nine [lower] fangs of iron, the eighteen, she consumes the flesh of the enemies ljibs se ljibs.\textsuperscript{55} She drinks the blood of the enemies rngubs se rngubs.\textsuperscript{56} She agitates (krug) the royal realm (rgyal-mkham) of the enemy. By the striking arms (wings) of the scimitar she cuts the seven lineages of the enemy.\textsuperscript{57} By stomping her sword feet, she cuts from the root and soul the heart organ of the enemy. The spells for that are...\textsuperscript{58} It is thus spoken. The soul foundation and the human body [of the enemy] are visualized as coming [to the ritual venue].

of dispatching enemies has already been established in the preceding paragraph:

Another zi-ma of the dbal egg opened from the sound of the roaring klu. [From it appeared the one] with the body of the human and having the mane of the dragon. She possessed the wings of the scimitar. With her flashing nine [upper] and nine [lower] fangs of conch, the eighteen, she consumes the flesh and blood of the enemies ljibs se ljibs. She drinks the blood of the enemies rngubs se rngubs. She successively\(^{59}\) takes into her mouth (zhal du bstobs) the fresh heart blood of the enemy. She has bulging eyes. She stamps with her feet. The spells are recited.\(^{60}\)

\[\text{yang dbal gyi zi ma sgong (C.T. = sgo nga)} \text{ gcig nǐ } / / \text{ klu ngur ba’i sgra las brtol (C.T. = brdol) } / / \text{ myi (C.T. = mi) ‘i lus po la ‘brug kyi ral pa can / chu dri’i (C.T. = gri’i) gshog pa can (+ /)} \text{ dung gyi (C.T. = gi) mche ba rgu (C.T. = dgu) guyis bcwo (C.T. = bco) brgyad ‘bar bas } / / \text{ gra (C.T. = dgra) bo’i sha za’ (C.T. = za) ljibs se ljibs } / / \text{ gra’ (C.T. = dgra) bo’i khrag ‘thung rngubs se rngubs } / / \text{ gra’ (C.T. = dgra) bo’i snying khrag rlon pa la } / / \text{ tsho tsho byed cing zhal du bstobs (C.T. = stob) } / / \text{ myig (C.T. = mig) grad do } / / \text{ rkang pa brdabs (C.T. = rdeb) so sngags bzlas so / O/}\]

Paragraph IIId (4.10–5.3)

The third zi-ma goddess is black in color, of the dbal in nature, and dressed in a tiger-skin greatcoat (stag kyi slag-pa), as were many sages of prehistoric and protohistoric Tibet, according to Eternal Bon sources. She brandishes the circle of the sky (gnam gyi ‘khor-lo), an instrument symbolizing sovereignty over the heavens.\(^{61}\) Not only does this zi-ma slay enemies, she is ordered too overthrow their ancestral spirits (mtshun) associated with the tomb (dur).\(^{62}\) There can be no greater harm done to an adversary than this action. With the establishment of the doctrine of transmigration in Lamaist religion, such imagery alluding to an afterlife disappears in Classical Tibetan ritual literature. This order to attack the mtshun is one of a number of commands given to the zi-ma in the text:

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\(^{59}\) Tsho tsho byed. This phrase denotes that one portion after another of food is taken up by the goddess.

\(^{60}\) As above in the transliteration of paragraph IIb.

\(^{61}\) For an illustration of a god (Gshen-rgyal le’u-mgon rje) holding the discs of the sky and earth in a circa 11th century CE funerary text, see Bellezza 2013a, p. 108.

Another zi-ma egg of the dbal opened from the sound of the queen of winter.\(^{63}\) [From it appeared] the black human of \textit{dbal} with the scimitar fangs. Her red copper hair\(^{64}\) \textit{shed de shad}.\(^{65}\) On her body she wears a tiger-skin greatcoat. Around her waist a sash (\textit{skarags}) is tied. In her hand she holds the circle of the sky. Upset the \textit{mtshun} of the tomb of the enemies! Also, with her scimitar fangs she files (chews) to consume the flesh of the enemies \textit{ljibs se ljibs}. She drinks the blood of the enemies \textit{rngubs se rngubs}.

\begin{verbatim}
yang dbal gyi zi ma sgong (C.T. = sgo nga) cig (C.T. = gcig) ni // rgun (C.T. = dgun) gyi rgyal mo'i sgra las brtl (C.T. = brdol) // dbal gyi myi (C.T. = mi) nag po la / chu dri'i (C.T. = gri'i) mche ba can / zangs sra (C.T. = skra) damar po shed de shad / stag kyì slag pa sku la gsol / / sbrul kyì ska (C.T. = sked) rag (C.T. = rags) rked la bcings / / gnam gyi 'khor lo phyag na msnams (= bsnams) // gra' (C.T. = dgra) bo'i dur gyi mtshun khrugs cig / chu dri'i (C.T. = gri'i) mche ba bdar pas yang / gra (C.T. = dgra) bo'i sha za ljibs se ljibs / / gra (C.T. = dgra) bo'i khrag 'thung rngubs se rngubs / O /
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{Paragraph IIe (5.3–5.6)}

The fourth \textit{zi-ma} figure is red in color and appeared from a castle with a skylight (\textit{gnam-sgo}), a symbol of her link to the heavens. This \textit{zi-ma} is the leader of the \textit{the'u-brang} (C.T. = \textit{the'u-rang}), a well-known ancient class of demons and demigods.\(^{66}\) She, too, is a willing killer of foes:

Another \textit{zi-ma} egg of the \textit{dbal} opened in the \textit{dbal} castle with the skylight. From inside it [appeared] the red woman of the \textit{dbal} with the iron mane brushing (\textit{bshal}) the ground,\(^{67}\) with the flayed tiger

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\(^{63}\) \textit{Rgun} (C.T. = \textit{dgun}) gyi rgyal mo'i sgra. This appears to signify the howling sound of a strong winter wind.

\(^{64}\) \textit{Sra} (C.T. = \textit{skra}). The O.T. spelling of hair in the text corresponds to its pronunciation in the Hor dialects. When seen in aggregate, the words of Hor dialects reflecting O.T. spellings is persuasive evidence for this regional idiom having preserved an archaic phonology.

\(^{65}\) This trisyllabic indicator conveys that her hair is long, flowing and windblown.


\(^{67}\) This meaning of the polysemous O.T. verb \textit{bshal} is established through the context of the sentence. For other possible glosses of \textit{bshal}, see Bellezza 2010, p. 49 (n. 55, 56); 2013a, p. 155 (n. 248).
skin carried over her shoulder. She leads the nine *the’u-brang* brother servants. Snatch (*phrogs*) [the organs] torn from the taken flanks of the enemies!

\[
yang\text{ dbal gyi } zi\text{ ma } songo (\text{C.T. } = sgo\text{ nga})\text{ geig } n\text{ n } / /\text{ dbal mkhar } gnam\text{ sgo } can\text{ } n\text{ brtol} (\text{C.T. } = brdol) / /\text{ de } \text{’}i\text{ } nang\text{ na } / /\text{ dbal gyi } miyi bo (\text{C.T. } = mi)\text{ dmar po la } / /\text{ lcags kyi } ral\text{ pa sa la bshad } / /\text{ stag kyi } gyang bzhi (\text{C.T. } = ghzi)\text{ phrag la } g zad / /\text{ the’u } \text{brang} (\text{C.T. } = rang)\text{ } spin\text{ } rgu (\text{C.T. } = dgu)\text{ } ‘bangs su } khrid / /\text{ gra’ (C.T. } = dgra\text{) } bo’i\text{ } mchan \text{ lan} (\text{C.T. } = len)\text{ } nas\text{ } phyung\text{ } phrogs\text{ } cig O /\]

Paragraph II (5.6–5.7)

The fifth *zi-ma* goddess is said to emerge from the egg of the *dbal* (as do all her sisters), that implacable destructive and consuming force. This wolf-headed figure appears from the starry band (*gzhung*) of the Milky Way (*Rgu-tshigs*), underscoring the celestial origins of the *zi-ma*. In Eternal Bon and Buddhism, it is understood that invoking deities in destructive magic rites is done in order to eradicate demonic entities and keep them from harming the doctrine and its followers. These enemies often carry the epithet of ‘heretic’ (*lta-log-*)

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68 This carrying of something over the shoulder is denoted by the phrase *phrag la g zad*. This expression is still used in Hor dialects. The C.T. equivalent is *phrag la khur*.

69 According to an Eternal Bon text describing the origins of the drum, the primordial *gshe*n Gsang-ba ‘dus-pa is said to have hung the tail or streamer of his drum (*rnga-ma*) from the Milky Way (*Rgu-tshigs skya-mo*; Bellezza 2008: 425).

70 Moreover, in the destructive magical rites of Lamaism, the consciousness principle of the enemy is ‘liberated’ (*sgrol*) in the *chos-dbyings* or *bon-dbyings* (sphere of reality; cf. Tucci 1980: 186). The idealism of orthodox Buddhism and Eternal Bon notwithstanding, practitioners of Lamaism appear to not infrequently indulge in black magic. For example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956: 481) writes, “The *sngags pa* and the magicians of the “black Bon” are renowned for their knowledge of “black magic”, and they are said to derive a considerable income from performing ceremonies for customers who desire for one or another reason the misfortune or even death of some enemy.” Tucci (1980: 186) reports that spells were used against personal enemies and in war by famous Buddhist masters. Perhaps the most celebrated case of sorcery involves the 11th century CE saint Mi-la ras-pa, after he and his immediate family suffered grievously at the hands of their own kinfolk. Mi-la-ras-pa took revenge against them using black magic, slaughtering many people. For an account of this episode in the life of Mi-la-ras-pa taken from a text written by Rgyal thang-ba bde-chan rdo-rje in the 13th century CE, see Tiso 2010, pp. 173–178. In this biography, Mi-la ras-pa learns his trade from sorcerers belonging to both the Buddhist and Eternal Bon religions. Cantwell (1997) notes that Buddhist *sgrol-ba* rites, which originated in India, were sometimes used to slay actual human enemies (*dgra-bo*). Cantwell (ibid.) discusses the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna views on such killings and how they are justified by the need to protect others or even to benefit the enemy themselves...
pa), ‘oath-breaker’ (dam-nyams) or ‘enemy of religion’ (ru-tra). The adversary here, however, is referred to as the ‘enemy man’ (dra-bo’i myi), suggesting that the rituals contain herein were used against human beings. In Lamaism, resorting to ritual means to murder people is ordinarily considered very sinful. In any but the most extraordinary of circumstances, this would amount to sorcery, an illegitimate practice. The Gnag rabs does not appear to have such scruples. It seems to belong to a morality reflected in archaic customs and traditions, whereby the slaying of one’s enemy could be justified on certain grounds as reciprocity for the commission of heinous acts. In this instance, the demise of enemies is brought about by forcefully separating them from their personal protective spirit.\(^\text{71}\)

Another dbal zi-ma egg opened from the middle of the Milky Way. [From it appeared the one] with the human body and having the head of the wolf. She possessed arms of the scimitar. She possessed wings of the sword. Separate the enemy man from his lha:

\[
\text{yang dbal gyi zi ma sgon} (\text{C.T.} = \text{sgo nga}) \text{ gcig n} / / \text{rgu tshigs gzhung las brol} (\text{C.T.} = \text{brdol}) / / \text{myi} (\text{C.T.} = \text{mi}) \text{ ‘i lus po la spyang khu’i ‘go} (\text{C.T.} = \text{mgo}) \text{ bo can} / \text{chu drü’i} (\text{C.T.} = \text{gri’i}) \text{ lag pa can} / / \text{ral gyi’i} (= \text{gri’i}) \text{ gshog pa can} / / \text{gra} (\text{C.T.} = \text{dgra}) \text{ bo’i myi} (\text{C.T.} = \text{mi}) \text{ dang lhar phrol cig} / / \\
\]

**Paragraph IIg (5.6–5.10)**

The sixth zi-ma egg cracked open from the roar of a conflagration. This tiger-headed goddess is bestowed with a name in the text, the only member of the group to be so endowed. She is also referred to by the epithet pho-nya-ma, with means a female attendant or messenger. The text persuades the goddess to believe that the flesh of the enemy is more desirable than zan, cakes made of parched barley meal:

\[ \text{(i.e., to prevent them from acquiring more negative karma). Zorin (forthcoming: 125–128), in addition to delineating the compassionate motive, stresses that the legitimate use of fierce tantric rites (such as those designed to slay or render insane) in Buddhism is limited to the initiated, those who have achieved a high degree of spiritual development.} \]

\[ \text{71 The loss of the pho-lha, mo-lha or another intimate guardian deity is still believed to have very serious repercussions. On the grave implications of the loss of the protective spirit in an archaic funerary ritual text of the Gathang Bumpa collection, see Bellezza 2013a, pp. 143–145.} \]
Another *dbal zi-ma* egg opened from the sound of the blaze. [From it appeared the one] with the body of the human and having the head of the tiger. The name and appellation bestowed upon her was Byad-gsas sha-zan-bo (Meat-Eater Enemy Gsas). The flesh of the enemy is more delicious than *zan*. Female attendant, reach out to eat (*mnabs*) the [enemy], consuming it bite after bite! The blood of the enemy is more delicious (*shǐm*) than beer. The leg bone marrow (*lha-rkang*) of the enemy is more delicious than butter.

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**Paragraph IIh (5.10–6.2)**

The egg of the seventh *zǐ-ma* goddess hatched through the beating and ringing (*krol*) of a drum (*rnga*) and flat-bell (*gshang*), ancient musical instruments that have retained much significance in Eternal Bon. A reference to the drum and flat-bell of the archetypal *gshen* priest *Gshen-rab myi-bo* is found in another text of the Gathang Bumpa collection. Like many of the Zhang-zhung priests and kings of yore, this goddess with the horned eagle head (*khyung*) and black bear body (*dom*) wears a crown of bird horns (*bya-ru*). The fabled *bya-ru* in Eternal Bon literature was the province of kings, high priests and gods of the dead while in the archaic funerary tradition it was erected on the heads of horses that ritually transported the dead to the afterlife. The seventh *zǐ-ma* goddess is also associated with the Milky Way, which is indicative of her extremely high status and prowess. Her battle cry is *bso* (C.T. = *bswo*), a word with which many

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72 *Kham kham*. The sense of this word has been ascertained through context and by comparison to an expression in the Hor dialect: *khem khan zo*, which exhorts someone to keep on eating.

73 Also *bla-rkang*, a ritual support of the soul (Tucci 1980: 191).

74 See Bellezza 2010, pp. 84, 85. The *gshang* of *Gshen-rabs kyi myi-bo* (*sic*) is also mentioned in Pt 1289 (*ibid.*, 85 [n. 216]). According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak (in personal communication), the copper alloy *gshang* was first produced in Zhang-zhung. He states that Zhang-zhung examples are much flatter than those made later in eastern Tibet. While there are indeed *gshang* of ‘Zhang-zhung style’ of significant age, their precise periodization remains to be formulated.
ritual operations are initiated. Of ancient origins, its occurrence in Gnag rabs indicates an Old Tibetan etymology:

Another dbal zǐ-ma egg opened from the thumping and tolling sound of the drum and flat-bell. [From it appeared the one] with the body of the black bear and having the head of the khyung. The bird horns on top of her head are as [high] as the Milky Way of the heavens. Eat as your barley cakes the flesh and bones of the enemies! [Set upon] the stealers of the males and the abusers of females [calling out] bso!

Paragraph IIIi (6.2–6.5)

The eighth zi-ma goddess of eight ravenous mouths is closely associated with that most powerful and ferocious of birds, the mythical khyung.76 Her killing range is one thousand dpag-tshad or roughly seven thousand kilometers, vividly illustrating her formidable powers. She is commanded to kidnap the children of the enemy and to cut all of their lineages, effectively eradicating them from the face of the earth. The text mentions seven lineages: seven lines of descent or seven households being a common numerical arrangement in Tibetan myths relating the foundation of regions and clans:

From [another] dbal zǐ-ma egg: The wings of the extremely fierce khyung, the flapping of the khyung, is the [mark] of its swiftness.77 She has eight gaping (gdengs) mouths of insatiability (chog myi

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75 This word also appears to be represented in the first line of Pt 239, exalting the ring-gur, a kind of funerary tent. In Classical Tibetan, bswo is often used to invoke all manner of deities, especially those of lower ranking.

76 The terrific and vengeful nature of the khyung in Gnag rabs carried over into tantric traditions recorded in the Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum, as part of ritual structures associated with Mahāyoga. A study of references to the khyung in the Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum, including its source in enlightened gods such as the Buddha and Phyag-na rdo-rje, has been made by Hillis 2002. Hillis (ibid., 331) opines that the Mahāyoga of the Rnying-ma-pa drew on indigenous as well as Indic concepts and motifs in its presentation of the khyung.

77 This rapidity is the conjectural connotation of the expression sbrul-rlung. Snakes are commonly conceived by Tibetans to be able to move at great speed especially under the cover of vegetation.
Straddling the Millennial Divide

shes). Her fangs arrive at a distance of one thousand dpag-tshad. When dispatched at midnight (nam gyi gung), the lha of the enemy is made deeply afraid (sgangs). Snatch the child of the enemy from his side! Consume as much as (tshun-chad) [all] seven lineages of the enemy!

dbal zǐ ma sgong (C.T. = sgo nga) geig la / rngam chen khyung gyi gshog pa la / / sbrul rung khyung gyi g.yab mos ‘debs // / chog myi (C.T. = mi) shes kyi zhal brgyad gdengs (C.T. = gdangs) // / mche ba dpag tshad stong slebs ma / / nam gyi gung la mngags pa’i tshe // / gra (C.T. = dgra) bo’i lha sngangs par byed // / gra’ (C.T. = dgra) bo’i mchan nas bu phrogs cǐg // / gra’ (C.T. = dgra) bo’i bdun rgyud tshun chad / zas su gsol //

Paragraph IIj (6.5–6.8)

The ninth and final zi-ma is called the ‘accessory’, ‘associate’ or ‘accomplice’ (phyag-brnyan, C.T. equivalent = phyag-rogs) of the eighth member of the sororal group. This goddess goes in the four cardinal directions in pursuit of enemies. Among her servants are the nine glog-srīn, carnivorous spirits associated with the destructive power of lightning:

Her ally is the [one] with the phung-srīn body and the head of the scorpion. From the east she is dispatched [by the eighth zi-ma] to run to the west. From the west she is dispatched to run to the north. From the north she is dispatched to run to the south. With her four feet [she treads] upon the top of the summit (kha la rtse) of the four sovereigns [of the World Mountain]. In the night (nub-mo), the middle of the night (rgung gyi dbus), she orders (bka’-mdzad) the phywa. She leads the glog-srīn nine brothers servants (’bangs). Also, for their enjoyment (gyes) they savor (gyes) the flesh

78 One dpag-tshad is equal to eight rgyang-grag. One rgyang-grag is equal to five hundred spans. See op. cit. Blo-gros rab-gsal, 2010, p. 227; Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo 2002, p. 1275. Therefore one dpag-tshad is roughly seven kilometers in length.
79 The phung-srīn / dphung-srīn is also mentioned in the Dunhuang divination texts Pt 1043 (lns. 32, 49, 79, 82) and IT] 740 (ln. 186), where they figure in prognoses of a wrathful or negative nature. Also see Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), p. 268. In Eternal Bon and Buddhism, there is the closely related phung-sri, a demon of utter destruction, disaster and doom. On this Lamaist demon, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 302, 393, 517, 518; Norbu 1995, p. 175; Stein 2010 (Antiqua III), p. 268; Huo Wei 2009, p. 44.
80 A famous class of ancestral gods somewhat akin to the lha. See, for example, Stein 2010; Haarh 1969.
of the enemies. Also, for the taking (mnabs) they reach out (mnabs) for the flesh of the enemy.

\[
de \ 'i \ phyag \ brnyan \ ni \ // \ phung \ srin \ lus \ la \ sdig \ pa \ 'i \ 'go \ (C.T. = mgo) / / \ shar \ nas \ mngags \ la \ nub \ du \ rgyug \ // \ nub \ nas \ mngags \ nas \ (= \ na) \ byang \ du \ rgyug \ / / \ byang \ nas \ mngags \ na \ lho \ ru \ rgyug \ / / \ rkang \ pa \ bzhi \ ni \ rgyal \ po \ bzhi \ 'i \ kha \ la \ rtse \ / / \ nub \ mo \ rlung \ (C.T. = dgung) \ gyi \ (C.T. = gi) \ dbus \ na \ / \ phywa \ dang \ bka' \ mdzad \ / / \ glog \ srin \ spun \ rgu \ (C.T. = dgu) \ 'bangs \ su \ khrid \ / / \ gyes \ (C.T. = dgyes) \ yang \ gra' \ (C.T. = dgra) \ bo' \ i \ sha \ la \ gyes \ (C.T. = dgyes) \ / / \ mnabs \ (C.T. = brnab) \ yang \ gra \ (C.T. = dgra) \ bo' \ i \ sha \ la \ mnabs \ (C.T. = brnabs) / / \]

Paragraph Ilk (6.8–6.9)

In this final stage of the ritual the entire circle of zi-ma spirits is released against the enemy who threatens bon. The word bon here refers to the practices and practitioners of Gnag rabs and other archaic ritual traditions to a greater or lesser extent. This Old Tibetan usage of the word bon is represented in other texts of Gathang Bumpa and those of Dunhuang. As I have explained in previous publications, in the archaic ritual context, this term should not be construed as denoting the doctrinal and institutional basis of a monolithic religion such as Eternal Bon, which succeeded it. In the text the ritual priests are also called the ‘fathers’ (pha), a title of endearment and respect. Their benefactors and acolytes are styled the big brothers (pho-bo) and younger brothers (nu-bo).

The text makes an appeal for aid on behalf of the patrilineage of the ritualists, which is homely in tone. In the last line the zi-ma goddesses are invited to the ritual venue. While certainly due them, in this section of the text they are not singled out for offerings:

Tonight (do-mod), on the last day of the month (gnam-gong), search for the enemies opposing bon. Search for the competitors of the fathers. That the big brothers and younger brothers do not go wrong, bring [these enemies] here without expending an entire month! Summoned by their names: [the nine zi-ma] are invited (spyan-drang).

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81 See pha-bon in paragraph Vlc. In the Dunhuang documents (Pt 1134, Pt 1136, ITJ 731v), Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Klu 'bum nag-po, the agnomen pha (father) is primarily (but not exclusively) appended to the names of two funerary priests: Dur-gshen rma-da and Gshen-rab myi-bo (Bellezza 2008: 379, 381–383, 480, 512, 528, 529, 537; 2013a: 216, 217). In addition to conferring dignity and authority on the bon and gshen priests, this word appears to call attention to the ancestral or precedential nature of the priesthood in the origins tales; those ritualists reading and using them are regarded as spiritual sons.
Section III

The third section of Gnag rabs capitalizes on the murderous tendencies of the btsan and bdud, two common classes of elemental spirits. Most of the ritual proceedings involve specific btsan figures, who exhibit the same gusto for meat eating as do other deities of Gnag rabs.

This shorter ritual can be divided into three parts:

IIIa: Rallying the btsan and bdud to action

IIIb: Allotting the body parts of the enemy to the btsan of the four cardinal directions

IIIc: The deputation of the btsan Btsan thar-che-re

Although called an origins tale (rabs), no history of this ritual is provided in the text. Rabs here is probably better understood as the [ritual] pedigree, one no doubt involving an ‘ancient’ source. The btsan and bdud as well as two other famous classes of elemental spirits, the gnyan and sri, are told that enemies are hampering their affairs. This is obviously done to provoke the spirits to retaliate against the adversaries of the ritualists. This is made perfectly clear when the text states that these enemies have intruded upon the big brothers (gcan), probably a reference to the senior holders or priests of such ritual traditions. In the conventional mode, the ritualists entice their spirit allies with the flesh and blood of the enemies:

The origins tale of entrusting the btsan and bdud with the enemies:
These enemies imprecate82 the bdud. They interfere (lag-rings) with the btsan. They insult the btsan. They interfere with the gnyan. They insult the sri. They interfere with the big brothers. The flesh of those enemies is greatly edible. There is much blood to drink.

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82 Khas-ches. The C.T. equivalent is kha-dma’ ‘bebs (to implicate, to insult).
Paragraph IIIb (7.1–7.6)

With the elemental spirits adequately aroused, the second part of the ritual turns to the btsan minions of the four compass points. Three of these deities have zoomorphic traits. The btsan of the west has a head and body of different creatures just like the seventh zi-ma goddess with her black bear body and khyung head. Deities of composite zoomorphic form flourish in Eternal Bon, their grotesque iconography greatly elaborated upon in ritual texts. Like the first, fifth and sixth zi-ma goddess, the btsan of the east and of the north have human bodies and animal heads, anticipating future iconographic developments. In Classical Tibetan ritual literature among the most famous animal-headed deities belong to the zhi-khro cycle of the Rnying-ma funerary ritual tradition. As always, the helping deities are given the flesh of the enemies to devour:

Btsan of the sunset (west) with the body of the aquatic bird and having the head of the dragon, in your hand, receive the offered (dbul) head and right arm of this enemy! The btsan of the south, the iron man with an iron horse, and with the copper armor and.

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83 The oldest known figures in Tibet depicted with human bodies and animal heads or masks are found in the prehistoric rock art of Stod and the Byang-thang. These figures may variously represent priestly, heroic, mythic or supernatural entities. For dramatic images belonging to this genre of rock art, dated to the protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE to 600 CE), see Bellezza 2013c.

84 For a description of these deities, see Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 141–146; Blezer 1997, pp. 39–66. According to Blezer (ibid., 39, 40), the zhi-khro of the bar-do (postmortem state of existence) can probably be traced to the Gsang-ba snying-po (Guhyagarbha), a tantra that Tibetan tradition indicates was orally transmitted through Vimalamitra in the 8th century CE). As such, the Indian originals should predate the 8th century CE. An imperial-period Buddhist source such as Gsang-ba snying-po likewise may possibly have had an influence on the animal-headed deities of Gnas rabs, their fundamental native character, by virtue of belonging to indigenous classes of elemental spirits (dbal, btsan, etc.), notwithstanding. If so, this demonstrates that the infiltration of Indic traditions into the zoomorphic representation of Tibetan deities predates Rnying-ma bar-do literature.

85 A metaphorical term for armor is used here: 'tsher. That 'tsher refers to a protective covering is seen, for example, in the words dgun-'tsher (winter
helmet, in your hand, receive the offered two arms and one leg\textsuperscript{86} of the enemy! The \textit{btsan} of the east, the man of crystal with the head of the tiger, in your hand, receive the offered heart organ and five organs\textsuperscript{87} of the enemy! The \textit{btsan} of the north, with the body of the man and the head of the dog, in your hand, receive the offered twelve joints,\textsuperscript{88} along with the head of the enemy, these thirteen.


\textbf{Paragraph IIIc (7.6–7.7)}

The third and final part of Section III is devoted to the enemy-apprehending qualities of the nocturnal \textit{btsan} Btsan thar-che-re. The text states that engaging in such ritual effort will not be in vain:

\textit{Thereafter, Btsan thar-che-re, before and after midnight, if he knows\textsuperscript{89} the enemy, he will be sent in that direction. Doing in that way your efforts will not be wasted.}

\textit{de nas btsan thar che re dang / nam phar phyed tshur phyed na / / gra’ (C.T. = dgra) bo cha yod na phyogs der gtang / de ltar byas na chud myi (C.T. = mi) za ’o / O/}

\textsuperscript{86}Sha-gzugs gsum. As a term for the butchered parts of a yak, this expression is still commonly found in the dialects of Hor and among the A-pha hor of the Byang-thang: sha-gzugs gcig (one leg of yak), sha-gzugs gnyis (two legs of yak), sha-gzugs gsum (three legs of yak), and sha-gzugs bzhi (four legs of yak).

\textsuperscript{87}Smad-lnga: lungs, liver, kidney, stomach, and spleen.

\textsuperscript{88}Lhu bcu-gnyis: ankles, knees, hips, wrists, elbows, and shoulders.

\textsuperscript{89}Cha-yod. This word meaning ‘to understand or ‘to know’ is found in the dialects of Dol-po and a large portion of the Byang-thang. In the Spu-rgyal bod dialect of Hor, it is rendered cha-rgyas. Also, more formally, cha-yod rgyus-yod (ha-go-ba).
Section IV

Sections I, II and III invoke a large variety of deities, enticing them with the flesh and blood of enemies for their consumption. In Section IV, the assault on enemies is consummated through more elaborate ritual methods. These ritual measures were probably conceived as being executed with the assistance of any and all of the helping deities previously called upon in Gnag rabs. In practice, however, officiants are likely to have relied on those they felt would be most effective and those with whom they had the most affinity. The prime aim of this ritual is to first capture and then slaughter or otherwise render the enemy innocuous. Some notable procedural and conceptual differences notwithstanding, this type of destructive magical rite is still practiced in Lamaism.

Section IV can be divided into five interrelated parts:

IVa: The use of a wing, tablet and receptacle to capture the soul of the enemy
IVb: Four winged attendants who harry the enemy
IVc: The subjugation of the enemy
IVd: The dividing and conquering of enemies
IVe: Proclaiming the benefits of the ritual

Paragraph IVa (7.7–8.1)

The main implement in this ritual is the wing of the crow, the awe-inspiring power of which is described in paragraph I. A main function of the bird wing in the archaic tradition is to signal the soul. The use of a black wing in Gnag rabs signifies baneful ritual actions.90 The ritualists are instructed to paint the right side of their face with blood. The type of blood is not specified; it could possibly be that of a sacrificial animal or that of the enemy. The custom of painting the face with blood was not retained in Lamaist ritual practice, presumably because it was a salient reminder of the sacrificial rites regularly featured in archaic ritual literature. While the right half of the face is covered in blood, the left side is tinted red with sre-mog, an herb still used to impart a red color to votive cakes (gtor-ma). This application of a blood substitute may have been a concession to the Buddhist ethic that was engulfing Tibet at the time Gnag rabs was

written. ‘Red-faced Ones’ (gdong-dmar-can) was an imperial period epithet for Tibetans, referring to the practice of painting the face red (with red ochre?), a mark of kingship and the warrior. Among female pastoralists in Upper Tibet, the practice of applying a dark red lotion made from whey on the face continues to the present day.

As in paragraph Ib, a tablet is used as one instrument for capturing the soul of the enemy. A special enclosure (sri-khung) and soul stone (brla-rdo) are also employed for this purpose in the ritual. The sri-khung consists of a pit in which various objects are deposited; it is used to ritually slay demons and other malefic forces. The object deployed in conjunction with sri-khung in the text is the ‘soul stone’ (brla-rdo), a rock used to enshrine the animating force of an individual for custodial purposes, as well as for ritual functions in which the anima of a patient or victim is required. In addition to these ritual tools, spells, and a mixture of seeds, herbs, and grains are used to defeat the enemies. Among the ingredients in this mixture is ephedra (mtshe) and mustard seeds (nyungs-dkar), exorcistic agents paired in various archaic ritual contexts.

The wing of the crow is clenched. The right side of the face is painted with blood and the left side of the face is painted with sremog. The right hair [braid] is opened. The name of the enemy is written on a tablet. The male and female children grasp their black clothing, waving it and focusing their attention (thugs bab-bo) [on the enemy]. The soul stone of the enemy is also placed in the mouth of the sri-khung. If the spells are cast without error [the enemy] is not lost. The attendants are sent to the enemy and spells

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91 On the use of the sri-khung in the funerary ritual context, see Bellezza 2013a, p. 164; 2008, pp. 470–473, 484.
93 For the joint use of ephedra and mustard seeds (often with bird wings) in the funerary and ransom rituals of Old Tibetan and Eternal Bon texts, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 376, 379, 381, 382, 402, 410, 437, 523 (n. 584); 2010, p. 53 (n. 68), 57, 58, 63, 67, 83; 2013a, p. 44 (n. 65). On the ritual usage of ephedra, also see Karmay 1998, pp. 387, 388; Thomas 1957, Texts, Translations and Notes, pp. 56, 57; Stein 1971, pp. 507–509.
94 Bshig. This verb is still used in the dialects of the eastern Byang-thang and Hor to denote the untying of braids.
95 These male and female children (bu sring) probably belonged either to the ritualists or the benefactors, the purity of youth needed in this particular ritual operation.
are cast on the wing. In a sack of black brocade and black silk, ephedra, mustard seeds, glas-gangs, and white barley [meal] are mixed together (gsal). It is [then] scattered in the four directions and four intermediate directions.

Paragraph IVb (8.2–8.3)

The text proceeds to introduce four different colored attendants (phyag-brnyan) of the cardinal directions. This quadpartite arrangement of deities is a common scheme in both indigenous and Indic ritual traditions (and more broadly worldwide). The quartet of spirits noted in the text help subdue enemies with their wings:

The attendant of the realm of black in the west, [the attendant] of the realm of white in the east, [the attendant] of the realm of green in the south, [and the attendant] of the realm of red in the north: with their wings they beat down (brdab) upon the mouth of the sri-khung.

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### Notes

96 Za-bug (C.T. = za-'og). ‘Brocade’ is rendered za-bog and zab in an illuminated funerary manuscript, as za-'ug-ma in Knel drī 'dul ba’i thabs sogs, while the same spelling (za-bug) is found in Shā ru shul ston rabs (Bellezza 2013a: 79, 113, 207). These latter two sources are funerary texts of Gathang Bumpa already noted. The spellings za-bog, za-'ug and za-bug reflect pronunciations of the word as would be spoken in Tibetan dialects of peripheral regions.

97 A medicinal root (C.T. = gla-sgang).
Paragraph IVc (8.3–8.7)

The text furnishes more details about the ritual procedures to be instituted. In order to make the soul stone effective, the likeness of the enemy must be drawn on it. The performer of the ritual is instructed to collect earth near his client’s abode, presumably to be deposited with the rest of the deadly ritual construction at the conclusion of the performance. The ritual weapon is the crow wing, which is brandished on the chest of the priest while hand gestures are made and spells intoned. This wing is envisioned as claws made of celestial metal (gnam-lcags), a commonplace material and attribute in the Tibetan ritual tradition. This extremely hard, lustrous iron is popularly conceived of as having demon-suppressing qualities. The presiding deity in this ritual sequence is merely referred to as the ‘emanation’ (sprul-pa). This may be the zi-ma goddess with the phung-srin body of paragraph III, or other spirits already invoked in the text:

The body of [the enemy] is drawn on the receptible soul stone and its soul is called. Seven steps [from the beneficiary’s house] are taken and earth is collected. Also, from your own home seven steps are taken presenting yourself facing east. With the base (gding) of the [crow] wing on the chest, it is stood upright with its tip displayed in the sky. The emanation sets upon (bsbad) [the enemy]. The wing is visualized as meteoric iron claws (spar-mo). The arrayed tips[98] [of the claws] are visualized as piercing (gzong) and driving (’phen). The spells to incite are uttered [while] waving the wing,[99] The fists (khu-tshur) are clenched (bcang). The spells are accurately and thoroughly (zhib du) pronounced.

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98 The phrase ‘your own home’ (rang... khyim) actually refers to the home of the beneficiary of the ritual, not the home of the priests conducting the ritual. This is made clear in the last paragraph of Gnag rabs. See paragraph VIII.
99 Rtses-mong. On this word conveying that the tips of the claws are arrayed in a row, also see paragraph Ic.
100 One line of spells is provided in the text. See the transliteration.
Paragraph IVd (8.7–8.11)

Once again Gnas rabs gives us an indication that its baneful rites were indeed used against mortal opponents. Special ritual provisions for separating ‘two men’ are given, thus eliminating their combined power. These entail the use of bird clavicles, a tablet and the wing of the crow all bundled together. This ritual construction is buried at a road junction with the recitation of incantations:

If two men come acting as the enemy towards you yourself, the methods of separating (bral-ba) the two are: The right clavicle (dang-ru) of the crow and the left clavicle of the owl, these two, [are required].101 The name and clan [of the enemy] are written on a tablet. [The collarbones are placed] back to back (rgyab-sprad) against that tablet, and together with (bcang-sprag) the wing of the black small crow (’khar) are bound (bcings) and buried (gnan) at the junction of three roads. These heart syllables (snying-po) are spoken:102 They are recited (bzlas) either one hundred and eight or one thousand and eight times.103 [With these] it is buried.104

bdag la myi gnyis gra’ (C.T. = dgra) byed du ’ong (C.T. = yong) na / de gnyis bral (C.T. = phral) ba’i thabs la / bya rog dang ru g.yas pa dang / ’ug pa’i dang ru g.yon pa gnyis / mying (C.T. = ming) rus byang bu la bris la / byang bu rgyab sprad de / ’gkhar (= ’khar, C.T. = khwa-la) nag kyis (= gi) gshog pa dang bcang sprag (C.T. = sbrag) du bcings la / / lam gsum gyi mdor gnan (C.T. = mnan) / snying po ’di brjod do / / Om dza’ / ma ta si’i / kha ra hung de / brgya rtsa brgyad dam / slong rtsa brgyad bzas (= bzlas) la / / brub bo / /

Paragraph IVe (8.11–9.1)

The text affirms that the enemies thus separated will not be able to rejoin forces for an aeon. This seems to suggest that this sorcery was

101 In popular Tibetan conception, these two birds are always antagonistic to one another. In a funerary ritual to win back the soul of a dead woman from the ’dre performed by Pha dam-pa sangs-rgyas (died 1105 CE), a composite ritual structure including the clavicle of a lammergeyer was employed (Martin forthcoming).

102 For the three lines of spells, see the transliteration. These spells begin with Om and have other phonetic traits of Sanskrit dhāraṇī as well, indicating Indic religious influences. Reference to the ‘essence mantras’ (snying-po) also recalls Buddhist tantric practice.

103 The numbers chosen for the amount of mantras is clearly another feature of Indic religious tradition.

104 Brup-bo. This word also denotes the sealing and complete sequestration of the ritual construction.
wielded against a collective enemy such as bandits or an army. The
text declares that the power of the ritualists’ lha (personal protectors)
is enhanced. This also indicates that the enemies spoken of in the text
are of supernatural origins. In conclusion, the text informs users that
palpable signs of their success against enemies will become visible:

There cannot exist a friendship (mdza’) between these two enemies
for an epoch (skal-pa). The magical power of the [protecting] lha is
increased (bskyed). Visible signs are dispersed (gye) in the four
directions [from the site of ritual burial].

gra (C.T. = dgra) bo de gnyis skal (C.T. = bskal) par mdza’ myi (C.T. =
mi) srid do / / lha mthu bskyed (C.T. = skyed) do / / mgon kha bzhīr
gye (C.T. = gyes) ’o / / O/

Section V

The fifth ritual of Gnag rabs centers around seven goddesses who
annihilate foemen. This section of the text also includes the
parentage and brother of the divine septet. In this performance some
of the figures are endowed with names. These appellations are not
unlike those given to certain female spirits belonging to the vast
retinues of the great patronal goddesses Dpal-ldan lha-mo
(Buddhist) and Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo (Eternal Bon). Two of the
goddesses in this section of Gnag rabs have a head and body of
different animals (paragraphs Vg and Vh). As noted, this grafting of
one animal head on the body of another finds full expression in
Lamaist religion, an example of tantric iconography. While deities of
composite zoomorphic composition may have been known in the
archaic religious and mythological traditions of Tibet, the creation of
sets of these figures bears the mark of an emerging tantracism
among those maintaining a non-Buddhist religious affiliation. As we
shall see, the ritual also exhibits iconographic, mythic and material
elements of archaic religious traditions.

Section V can be divided into eight parts:

Va: The parents of the divine sisters and the traits and
activities of their elder brother

Vb–Vh: A description of the appearance and activities of the
seven goddesses
Paragraph Va (9.1–9.6)

The parents of the seven goddesses in Section V have names best attributed to cosmogonic or theogonic traditions. They are styled 'lord' (rje) and 'lady' (btsun), as are many divine and royal couples in Tibetan mythology. Their son, Stong-phrag bdud-'dul-bo, the subjugator of the bdud, has hair that spirals upwards (gyen du 'khyil), an attribute inherited by tutelary gods of Eternal Bon (found also in Buddhist tradition). On the whole, the attributes of this god and his retinue appear to be of archaic cultural origins. In his left hand he grasps the seven ‘hawks of the mind’ (yid kyi khra), a name signifying that these birds can fly as fast as the mind can conceive something:

In a gnag-pa origins tale the father is Rdzu-'phrul 'od-ldan rje and the mother is Thog-za' dpal-mo btsun. The son of their mating and seasonal activity was the big brother (mying-po), the elder brother\textsuperscript{105} Stong-phrag bdud-'dul-bo. The tree-leaf (lcang-lo) hair on his head curls upwards. He has ninety thousand fingers on his hand layered nine-fold.\textsuperscript{106} As the right hand implement,\textsuperscript{107} he holds an extremely sharp (stong-chod) copper sword of magical power. As the left hand implement, he holds the seven hawks of the mind. With your extremely sharp magical sword of copper that cuts, cut! By the seven hawks of the mind [the enemy] is captured and not lost. His accessories that capture (zungs), the seven dogs of crystal, are set loose.\textsuperscript{108} For their food they eat the flesh of the enemy. For their thirst they drink the blood of the enemy. For his (Stong-phrag bdud-'dul-bo) wood (fuel), he feeds ('bud) [the fire] the bones of the enemy.

\textsuperscript{105} Dral-po-ba. This is an O.T. construction of a type that was retained in the prosody of Classical Tibetan. In poetry and lyrical ritual verses structured around a set number of syllables per line, if an additional syllable is required, it can be added to words in conformance with grammatical and metrical conventions. This is called a ‘supplemental word particle’ (tshig-lhad). Thus, the C.T. dral-po (big brother) would become dral-po-ba. Also see ra-rdzi (goatherd) rendered ra-rdzi-ba (Bellezza 2005, p. 195 [paragraph x]).

\textsuperscript{106} Brtsags (C.T. = rtseg) can be glossed ‘to layer’ ‘to pile up’, ‘to superimpose’. The pronunciation of the O.T. spelling of this word has been retained in the Hor dialects.

\textsuperscript{107} Phyag-le. The C.T. equivalent is phyag-mtshan.

\textsuperscript{108} 'Gyed. This verb also means ‘to order’, ‘to command’, ‘to set forth’.
Paragraph Vb (9.6–9.8)

This paragraph is dedicated to the eldest sister of the seven goddesses and her helper. Other goddesses of the septet also have attendants that do their bidding. The elder goddess, Thog-za dpa’-mo thang, controls the ‘sky kings’ (gnam-rgyal) and ‘earth kings’ (sa-rgyal), archaic epithets of deities of which little is known:

His sister (sring-mo), the sister (lcam-mo) Thog-za dpa’-mo thang, holds pincers (gze-ma) of copper in her hand that grasp precisely (gzi-chod). She holds the accessory that captures, Ma-byams rgyal-mo, who is is set loose upon [the enemy]. She leads one hundred thousand bye-ma servants (g.yog). She sets loose the thirteen sky king attendants. She sends the thirteen earth king attendants. With one thousand blazes she incinerates\(^{109}\) the eight enemies.

Paragraph Vc (9.8–10.1)

The second goddess in the sisterhood is He-ma’i shing spre’u, who appears to have the head or body of an ape. The tree trunk (sdong-po) she carries may possibly be that of the uprooted soul tree or clan emblem of the enemies. She approaches the dying (shi-ka) but suddenly turns away. This seems to signify that she does not render assistance to enemies at the time of their death, leaving them stranded in the postmortem hell. The helpers of He-ma’i shing spre’u are called the ‘thirteen queens’ (rgyal-mo bcu-gsum), an archaic group of spirits of unknown composition:

\(^{109}\) Srag (C.T. = sreg). The pronunciation of the O.T. spelling of this word has been retained in the Hor dialects.
The younger sister coming after her\textsuperscript{110} is He-ma’ǐ shing spre’u ‘go-
ma. Gifted (byin) a tree trunk, she carries it over her shoulder. Walking towards the dying [enemy] she suddenly turns around and leaves (thod-chen gtong). Her accessories that capture, the thirteen queens, are set loose. She leads the one thousand lha armies servants. She brandishes many different types of malicious weapons. She decapitates the enemies and thieves above chest.\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{quote}
‘on kyi gcung mo ba’ (C.T. = ba) / he ma’ǐ spre’u (C.T. = spreł) ‘go
(C.T. = mgo) ma / sdong po byin (C.T. = sbyin) zhing phrag la gzod (=
gzad) / / shi kha ’grim zhing thod chen gtong / / phyag brnyan zungs
par rgyal mo bcu gsum ’gyed / / lha dpung stong phrag g.yag du khrid
/ / phyag na gdug pa’i mtshon mtshon cha sna rgu (C.T. = dgu) bsams
/ gra’ (C.T. = dgra) dang rkun ma’ǐ brang ze zhi gsum gcod par byed
//
\end{quote}

\textit{Paragraph Vd (10.1–10.4)}

The third sister is not mentioned by name. She wears a hat of the blue yak on her head. Yaks with bluish fur are commonly associated with the klu and klu-mo. After citing this goddess and her attendant, a number of commands are given to them:

The next younger sister is the amazing (yam-mtshan) and marvelous (rmad) lady of blue who wears the hat of the blue yak on her head. Her attendant that captures carries the red copper khrol-tshags.\textsuperscript{112} Drop (gtigs) seven drops (thigs) of the blood of the body cavity of the enemy in it! Tear out the middle [teeth] of his/her thirty-two teeth! Chop into pieces (dum-bur gtong), separating (’brel) [the enemy] from its body! Put into your mouth the flesh and bones that are separating!

\begin{quote}
‘on kyi gcung mo ba’ (C.T. = ba) // yam (C.T. = ya) mtshan rmad kyi
bud med sngon mo la // g.yag zhu sngon mo dbu la gzol // phyag
brnyan zungs (C.T. = bzung) par / zangs kyi khrol tshags damar mo
khyer // gra’ (C.T. = dgra) ’i khong khrag thigs bdun gtigs la shog / so
sum bcu rtsa gnyis dbus nas phyung la shog // ’go (C.T. = mgo) lus
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{110} ‘On kyi gcung-mo-ba’. In the Spu-rgyal bod dialect of Hor, ‘on denotes a person or thing that comes after someone else or some other thing has first arrived; e.g. ‘on kho rtsib (Lhasa dialect = slebs) gda’ / (He/she arrived after [that one]). This is precisely how the word is used in Gnag rabs. ‘On is etymologically related to ‘on-kyang (furthermore).

\textsuperscript{111} This is the general import of the line: Gra’ (C.T. = dgra) dang rkun ma’ǐ brang ze zhi gsum gcod par byed //.

\textsuperscript{112} A strainer for blood, a ritual implement not used in Lamaist religions. This word is related to ja-tshags (tea strainer).\
\end{footnotes}
Paragraph Ve (10.4–10.6)

The fourth sister has a name associated with telluric spirits (Great Holder of the Earth) and resides in a castle made of clavicles. However, so big and powerful is she that the stars of the Big Dipper (Smre-bdun) spin around her head.\footnote{For lore about the Big Dipper as a geographical marker contained in another ritual text of the Gathang Bumpa collection, see Bellezza 2013a, p. 208.}

The next younger sister is called Sa-‘dzin chen-mo. She resides inside Mkhar dang-ru lag-pa. The stars of the Big Dipper revolve around the top of her head. The accessory who captures, Sṛṅ-zungs sto-bo shol-cig, is set loose. The enemies are suddenly (glo-bur) made dead.

Paragraph Vf (10.6–10.7)

The fifth sister is a srin spirit and her helper is a female ape with nine heads. She too dispatches the enemy in savage ways:

The next younger sister is called Sṛṅ-byīn de-ma. Her accessory who captures, the female ape with nine heads, is set loose. She cuts with her fingernails the ripped out (byīn) heart of the enemy.

Paragraph Vg (10.7–10.9)

The sixth divine sister has a name (if we read Rig-‘dzin for Rigs-‘dzin) and a fantastic zoomorphic guise that recalls Lamaist tantric deities. However, her epithet, ‘She that also Surveils the Enemy’
(Gyim kyang gra’), retains the unabashed directness of the archaic tradition. Indeed, this epithet suggests that the word rigs (C.T. = rig) in her appellation pertains to perception more than knowledge, diminishing it would seem any Lamaist influence:

The attendant of the northern direction is Rigs-'dzin rgyal-mo with the snake body and lion head. She possesses the wings of the dragon. She is thus called Gyim kyang gra’. Drop (gtigs) seven drops (thigs) of the blood of the removed (dren) heart of the body cavity of the enemy [into the blood strainer]!

Paragraph Vh (10.9–11.1)

The seventh and final sister is the ‘holder of the ocean’ (rgya-mtsho 'dzin), a grand epithet. This goddess is also called ‘She that Continually Surveils the Enemy’ (Gyim-gyim gra’). After killing the enemy she sends its life-force, soul and flesh to three different types of spirits for their consumption:

The attendant of the southern direction is the attendant of Rgya-mtsho 'dzin (Holder of the Ocean) with the body of the tiger and the head of the snake. She is thus called Gyim-gyim gra’. Pull out the heart from the body cavity of the enemy! The life-force of the enemy is sent to the bdud. Its soul is sent to Gshìn-rje smrigs-pa. Its flesh is sent to the sрин-po.114

114 This king of the underworld spirits, Gshìn-rje smrigs-pa (sic), is noted in an Eternal Bon funerary ritual text dedicated to the psychopomp horse. See Bellezza 2008, p. 457.
Section VI

This is the single longest section of Gnag rabs. It constitutes an elaboration of many of the narrative and ritual constructs already introduced in the text. Although Section VI is marked by a combination of fairly disparate origins myths and ritual practices, it is dominated by a single theme: the innate deity and demon that are simultaneously born with each person. The storyline is rather obscure and the textual progression not very coherent, but this does not detract from its great cultural value. To my knowledge, no other Old Tibetan literary source lavishes as much attention on the divine and demonic entities intrinsically associated with the birth of each individual. Nor am I aware of Classical Tibetan sources that dwell on this religious theme in as much detail as Gnag rabs.115

Section VI has been divided into twelve parts, which can be summarized as follows:

VIa: The parents and birth of Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po
VIb: The appearance of the archetypal natal god and demon of humans
Vlc: The dbal-gshen La-brag gar-bu ‘i skyol and the theft of seven horses
VId: The pursuit of the horse thief and initial ritual measures against him
VIe: The dbal-gshen conjures his spirit helper, destroying the horse thief
VIf: Instructions for separating the enemy from his protective spirit
V Ig: Further instructions for permanently divesting the enemy’s guardian spirit
VIh: Ritual for summoning the natal dre (sic) demon
VIi: Ritual means for reconciling the innate dre demon
VIj: Ritual means for subduing the enemy
VIk: Commissioning deities at night for the defeat of the enemy
VIl: The ritual slaughter of the enemy in the morning

115 The theme of a lha and ’dre born at the same time as each human is represented in Tibetan archaic eschatological tradition. See Bellezza 2008, p. 365; 2013a, pp. 144, 145. Also, see Tucci 1980, pp. 194, 195; Evans-Wentz 1927, pp. 35, 36, 165, 166. In Eternal Bon, these spirit entities became assimilated to the concepts of karma and innate understanding and ignorance (Karmay 1998: 132; Snellgrove 1967: 117, 259 [n. 37]). As regards archaic tradition, Karmay (ibid.) observes that the natal lha and ’dre, as opposing forces, were seen as responsible for positive and negative human actions. His observations on the ancient functions of the innate lha and ’dre are confirmed in this section of Gnag rabs.
Paragraph VIa (11.1–11.3)

This section of *Gnag rabs* opens by stating its ritual function, which is to force the innate personal protector of the enemy to abandon his charge. The text then launches into a *smrang* set in very ancient times, which describes the origins of the inherent *lha* and *dre* that accompanies all human beings. It begins by giving the parentage of a boy named Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po (King of Wisdom). Although this semi-divine figure has a name reminiscent of epithet’s conferred on the high gods of Lamaism, he belonged to the *srin* lineage, as did his mother, suggesting that the text is recounting a matrilineal tradition:

Another part of the gnag-pa: The separation of the enemy and its protector: At Snang-yul phyod, inside Snang-mkhar rtse-rgu (Shining Castle Nine Peaks), the name of the father and patriarch was Lord Drang-nam skyol-po and the mother was Srīn-Za’ 'phrul-mo chen. The son of their mating and seasonal activity, the son of the *srin*, Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po, was born.

*yang gnag pa rnam gcig la // gra (C.T. = dgra) bo srungs (C.T. = srung) ma dang bral (C.T. = phral) ba la // snang yul phyod kyi nang na // snang mkhar rtse rgu'i (C.T. = dgu'i) nang na // pha dang yab kyi mtshan / rje drang nam skyol po dang // ma srīn za' 'phrul mo chen // bshos dang nams kyi sras // srīn gyi bu ye shes kyi rgyal por bltam mo //*

Paragraph VIb (11.3–11.7)

The origins myth states that Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po was of a good birth (*sky-e-ma yags*). There are no negative connotations associated with him being of the *srin*, as is often found in Lamaist tradition where *srin* are mostly demonic in nature. Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po appears to have been so named because of his ability to master the speech of humans at a very young age. This child had a dual nature in that he possessed a mind that intrinsically belonged to both humans and *lha*. The human mind (*sems*) was characterized by anger (*zhe-sdang*), pride (*nga-rgyal*) and envy (*phrag-dog*). The text employs the term (*sems*) rather than *thugs* or *yid* of other Old Tibetan ritual documents to describe the mind or cognitive principle, as well as citing three

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116 On funerary priests being the nephews (*tsha/*tsha*) of the *srin* (a matrilineal deity) in Pt 1134 see, Bellezza 2008, p. 384; 2013a, pp. 168 (n. 291), 224, 225, 231.

117 On the *srin* and their inherent opposition to the *lha* in Lamaist tradition, see Karmay 2003, pp. 75–77.
of the ‘five poisons’ (dug-lnga) or root causes of human suffering in Lamaism. This is cogent evidence of how Gnag rabs came under direct influence of Buddhist thought (unlike other Old Tibetan ritual texts of Gathang Bumpa).\footnote{118} When not in his human mode, Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po generated or produced (bskyed) a lha. The text unambiguously informs us that along with this lha a dre (sic) was born (skyes). The narrative implies that as humans are poisoned by affactive emotions and thoughts, a dre accompanies them throughout life. This understanding is in conformity with Lamaist concepts of the intrinsic lha and ’dre (see fn. 115). The natal lha of Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po was called La-gur-bya dgar-bo, his ‘life-force support’ (srog-rten) god. On the other hand, his natal dre, Kha-'dar mar-po, is the inherent cause of sin:

He was a boy of good birth. His speech was equal (bnyam) to that of humans. When small he perfected knowledge. The body brought forth of the father and mother was the first (infant’s) body (gong gyi lus), with which he perfected speech. When not generating speech, he generated the lha. Generating the mind of humans, he produced anger, pride and envy. When not generating the speech of humans, he generated a lha. The name of this lha was that styled La-gur-bya dgar-po of the life-force support. When a lha is born, a dre is born. The name of the dre was the boy of inner sin, that known as Kha-'dar mar-po. They are born at the same time as humans.

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

\footnote{118} This reference to the dug-lnga within a largely archaic narrative context is a hallmark of ritual literature of circa 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} century CE authorship, as seen in the Klu-'bum, Mu-cho’i khrom-'dur and Mu ye pra phud phywa'i mthur thug, etc.
Paragraph VIc (11.7–12.2)

Now that the origins of the intrinsic positive and negative spiritual forces buffeting human beings have been recorded, the text turns to the *dbal-gshen* La-brag gar-bu’i skyol. The *dbal-gshen* are those priests who propitiate and exploit the *dbal* class of wrathful deities and control the *dbal* ritual traditions.\(^{119}\) It appears that La-brag gar-bu’i skyol was the priest of Lord Drang-nam skyol-po (the father of Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po), but nowhere is this made explicit in the text. La-brag gar-bu’i skyol had authority over nine *lha-shing*, trees of great age and importance such as sacred junipers that are used as tabernacles for deities and as external supports for the soul (*bla-gnas*). This priest also controlled nine *lha-chab*, rivers or other bodies of water that enshrine deities and the souls of the living. This trope of divine trees and waters establishes the exalted standing of La-brag gar-bu’i skyol, for he is the controller of instruments through which sacerdotal power is manifested. This priest is said to have overseen seven ‘horses of the mind of the gshen’ (*gshen gyi yid kyi rta*). This phrase refers to the great speed and efficacy of the horses in carrying out tasks assigned them by the *dbal-gshen*.\(^{120}\) These horses roamed freely in a rich pasture until one night they were discovered missing by the ‘father bon’ (*pha-bon*). In the narrative it is not clear who this figure is. It seems to refer to the archetypal sire Drang-nam skyol-po (father of Ye-shes kyi rgyal-po):

Inside G.yung-drung gyi dpal-mkhar rtse-rgu (Nine-Peaked Castle of Magnificence of the Swastika) stayed the *dbal-gshen* La-brag gar-bu’i skyol. What did he exercise control over? The nine paired (*dor*) *lha-shing*. The nine miraculous *lha-chab*. He exercised control over them. What belongings did he have control over? He had control over the seven horses of the mind of the *gshen*. The unbound horses (*rta-yan*) moved freely in a broad area.\(^{121}\) In the

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\(^{119}\) According to Eternal Bon tradition, *dbal-gshen* / *dbal-bon* such as Gsang-ba ’dus-pa, Stag-la me’bar and Mu-cho Idem-drug were tantric ritualists of very ancient times. The *dbal-bon* were specialized in funerary rituals as well. For various examples, see Bellezza 2008; 2013a. The *dbal-bon* also appear in other Old Tibetan ritual texts. In Pt 1285, the *bal-bon* (*sic*) Rum / Rom-po performs the *gto* and *dpyad* rites to cure disease (cf. Stein 2010 [Antiqua V], p. 259). In the Gathang Bumpa text *Sha ru shul ston rabs*, the *dbal-bon* Rum-po collaborates with other priests to conduct a funerary ritual (Bellezza 2013a: 203, 204).

\(^{120}\) In Pt 1134, as applied to horses, we find the expression *yid-mgyogs* (fast as thought). See *ibid.*, pp. 168 (n. 291), 225.

\(^{121}\) In the Eternal Bon Rdzogs-chen tradition, *kha-yan chen-po* describes the quality of the mind distinguished by total openness, ease and contentment. In the dialects of the A-pha hor and Hor, the word *yan-pa* denotes the action of livestock roaming freely.
Paragraph VIId (12.2–12.5)

The next morning a figure called Gshĭn-khri thang-brgyad (apparently the horse keeper) followed the footprints of the missing horses, which led him to those of a man as well, confirming that the horses had been stolen. On behalf of the father bon (Lord Drang-nam skyol-po?), the dbal-gshen La-brag gar-bu’i skyol commenced a destructive magic ritual, which entailed removing earth from the footprint of the thief.122

Early the next morning at dawn,123 Gshĭn-khri thang-brgyad went to pursue124 the hoofprints of the horses, the hoofprints of the steeds. In the midmorning (nyi-ma ’dros) he spotted a footprint of a man. At noon (nyi-ma phyed) he spotted a horse hoofprint. The gshen [La-brag gar-bu ‘i skyol] said, the father’s [horses] have been stolen. The enemy has risen up against the bon. At Ze’u-smyug bye’u-glīng, [La-brag gar-bu ‘i skyol] took [earth] from the footprint of the man. He recited the spells upon it. They were spoken thus:125 That speech was made as [earth from the footprint] was twice taken from the east, south, west and north.

sang nam nangs rgung (C.T. = dgung) sangs na // gshĭn khri thang brgyad ni // rta rjes rmang rjes gcod du gshags // nyi ma dros tsam na // nyi ’i rjes cig byung // nyi ma phye tsam na rta ’i rjes cig byung

122 A destructive magic ritual with structural similarities to this one including the use of earth from the footprint of the enemy is described in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 488–490. This sorcery is dependent on a Buddhist god, the four-armed Mgon-po (ibid.).
123 This is the general import of the grammatical line: sang nam nangs rgung (C.T. = dgung) sangs na //.
124 Gcod. In Hor dialects such as Spu-rgyal bod, this term is used to denote the action of following a trail of footprints: rjes-gcod.
125 For these three lines of spells see the transliteration.
Paragraph VIe (12.6–12.8)

The ritual continues in a castle or temple (gsas-mkhar), bringing about the demise of the thief with the aid of a zoomorphic spirit helper. Here, once again, the enemy appears to be a human being, not a demonic impediment to religious practice. The text informs us that the dbal-gshen La-brag gar-bu 'i skyol forged a pact (chad do byas)\(^\text{126}\) with a lion-headed khyung. Unlike the oaths of Lamaism with their profession of a higher good, this one is purely utilitarian in nature: the helping spirit is rewarded with a feast in return for prying away the protective spirit of the thief. This is done in conjunction with a hawk spirit. The two commands or requests at the end of this paragraph mark the transition from the smrang to the actual ritual performed by users of the text.

At that time, the owner of the body (La-brag gar-bu 'i skyol), in the middle (kyil) of the gsas-mkhar Brgya-khri bzhi-stong,\(^\text{127}\) the residing occupant (snying-bo), visualized [the protector of the ritual]. The protector was the winged khyung bird having the head of the lion with whom he made a pact. [The gshen] offered all kinds of food to the [protector]. Great carnivorous (zan) hawk protector, work allied [with the khyung]! Now, the enemy and his protector separate!

\(^{126}\) The C.T. equivalent is more or less: *Kha-chad byas-pa* (to enter into a pact, to avow).

\(^{127}\) In Eternal Bon sources: Brgyad-khri bzhi-stong.
Paragraph VI\(f\) (12.9–13.1)

The text continues with ritual instructions for cleaving the lha protector from the enemy, an unequivocal sign of victory. Although it is not explicitly stated, this spirit is the successor to the horse thief’s personal protector in the above origins tale. The ritual measures taken are derived from those carried out by the dbal-gshen La-brag gar-bu ’i skyol. A black tent with a birch pole is erected for this purpose. Inside the tent the ritualists sit facing the altar on which ’brang-rgyas (a type of gtor-ma or edible sculpture),\(^{128}\) beer, barley cakes (zan), and barley meal have been placed. These barley cakes are made with water rather than butter. Poor tasting gtor-ma, etc. are still customarily offered to ’dre and other adversarial spirits:

For the friend of that very same [enemy] who has come: The striated (srubs) birch is cut by striking\(^{129}\) with the sharp iron (ax). The black tent is erected [with this birch pole]. In front of [the ritualists’] forehead, the ’brang-rgyas of which half are white and half are black, undepleted (ma-nyams) first offering of beer, barley cakes with water, barley meal (bye) cakes with barley meal, and barley meal [with] water are made.

\[
de\text{ dang grogs de ’ong (C.T. = yong) ba la } / \text{ shing stag pa’i srubs su } / \text{ rno lcags gar kyis bcad de } / \text{ gur nag po phub la } / \text{ dpral gyi gdong sngur (C.T. = sngun) du } / \text{ ’brang rgyas phyed dkar phyed gnam (C.T. = nag) dang } / \text{ chang phud ma nyams pa dang } / \text{ chu zan dang } / \text{ bye (C.T. = phye) gyis bye (C.T. = phye) zan } / \text{ bye (C.T. = phye) chu bya /}
\]

Paragraph VI\(g\) (13.1–13.4)

The estranged personal lha of the enemy must now be dealt with in order that it does not reattach itself to its owner. The ritualists symbolically remove it from the tent while clapping and snapping their hands, a sign of contempt for and subjugation of the spirit protector of the enemy. In a procession, the guardian deity of the enemy is banished far from the sphere of the ritualists and their

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\(^{128}\) The use of ’brang-rgyas in rituals colored by indigenous traditions and carried out by Buddhist masters of the 11\(^{th}\) to 13\(^{th}\) centuries CE is studied in Martin forthcoming. I put forward that ’brang-rgyas literally means something to the effect of ‘spacious abode’, in cognizance of the ease or facility in which this object can accommodate the spiritual entities of rituals.

\(^{129}\) [Khro-bo’i] gar. This figure of speech for the striking of the ax alludes to a highly energetic dance form. In Eternal Bon, khro-bo’i gar is one of the gar gyi nyams dgu, the nine styles of dancing (gar-stabs). For this classification, see Blo-gros rab-gsal, 2010, p. 50.
clients, a process executed through the raising of a pillar or pile of stones (*mtho*) and the scattering (*gtor*) of edible offerings. The *mtho* (C.T. = *tho*) is a register or marker used to record a solemn action such as the taking of an oath, the issuing of a decree, or the discharge of a momentous ritual act as is the case here.\textsuperscript{130} To ensure that the enemy *lha* cannot return to his owner or cause harm to the priests, the road back to its abode is ritually barricaded with noxious water and meat:

At that time, supplicating (*ltar-zhing*) your own protector, the protector and female attendants are being unleashed [on the enemy]. Thereafter, his (the enemy’s) *lha* is carried away (*bskyal*) [from the tent] followed by (*phyi-bzhin*) [the officiants] snapping their fingers and clapping [repeatedly].\textsuperscript{131} With a distance of seven steps taken, the *mtho* is erected (*gzugs*). The [*lha* of the enemy] is pushed far away. Jaggery, rock sugar, different types of sweets, and grain beer are scattered. The road is cut (*gcad*) with poisonous water and many types of meat.

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

Paragraph VIh (13.4–13.6)

The text now returns to the internal adversary of each person, the natal *dre*. The *lha* (intrinsic agent of auspiciousness) and *bdud* (intrinsic agent of inauspiciousness) are definitively separated through a ritual that includes an effigy of the natal *dre*, meat and blood offerings. This ritual ensemble is designed to summon the innate *dre* to the venue of practice:

\textsuperscript{130} Also see Bellezza 2013a, pp. 225, 226. In the Gathang Bumpa manuscripts *Rnel drī ’dul ba’i thabs sogs* and *Sha ru shul ston rabs, mtho* are erected to subdue spirit foes (ibid., pp. 148, 204).

\textsuperscript{131} In the text this snapping of the fingers (*se-gol*) and clapping of the hands (*thal-mo brdebs*) is denoted by *se-lcag*, a term still used in the Eternal Bon liturgical tradition.
At this time, the lha and bdud are cut from the root: In an upright (kha-gyen) black cauldron (slug-ma) is the black gshin-chad,\textsuperscript{132} in which a dre [effigy] is grasped by the neck. It is mixed (sbyar) with the black meat of the brown bear, and [with] the khras-sha\textsuperscript{133} of that brown bear (dred-mo) it is put [inside the cauldron]. The name of the enemy is cast out (phyung) to land upon the meat [inside the cauldron], and that dre of the earth [born] at the same time comes.

\textit{Paragraph VIi (13.6–14.1)}

Now that the natal dre has been summoned, this spirit is ritually acted upon to reconcile it with its human associate. This is accomplished through presenting the dre with lavish food offerings. The dre is also given the ‘profound instructions of the swastika gshen’ (g.yung-drung gshen gyi man-ngag),\textsuperscript{134} exhorting it to be a cooperative partner. These are not moral teachings per se as found in the Lamaist religions, but practical guidelines probably in the form of a series of injunctions. The next step in the ritual is directed against the ‘enemy’, which may possibly be the natal dre itself but more probably its ally. This enemy is disparaged by being compared to the size of an ant. As this enemy is the natal dre or a closely related spirit entity, it is not eradicated but only tamed. The priests attempt to assuage the dre probably by partially releasing it from ritual thralldom. The text however adds an admonition, warning this enemy that should it prove uncooperative, it will be pushed down to wander blindly. The dre is threatened with retribution: savory food

\textsuperscript{132} An unidentified ritual construction used to take punitive action against an enemy. It may possibly be related to the sri-khung, a structure used to imprison noxious spirits.

\textsuperscript{133} This appears to be identical or similar to khrag-sha, a food preparation of Hor and the eastern Byang-thang. It consists of blood collected from the neck of yaks in the summertime, which is mixed with butter, parched barley meal, dried yak blood and salt. These ingredients are allowed to set for a little while before being boiled.

\textsuperscript{134} A similar use of ‘swastika’ to define a body of religious teachings (Buddhist in this case) is found in a probable imperial period-text, IOL Tib J 1746: g.yung drung gyi chos. See op. cit., van Schaik forthcoming. In the context of Gnag rabs, man-ngag can also mean ‘essential teachings’ or ‘advice’.
offerings mixed with ‘three types of poison’ (dug sna gsum). The three poisons are rice beer (‘bras-chang), barley beer (‘bru-chang), and legume beer (sran-chang). It is thought by Tibetans that when these three alcoholic beverages are mixed together they cause a severe form of intoxication:

At that time, the dre born at the same time as yourself is made agreeable, and that [dre] is served all kinds of foods. The profound teachings of the swastika gshen are given (bcug): The enemy, as large as an ant (grog-ma), come here! That body of [the enemy] be conciliated (dum du gsol)! [If you do not befriend me] downward blindly (thur du long) your feet [will go]! Whichever gshen you act as an enemy towards, you will suffer retribution (la yogs bdar). The method for suffering retribution is nine (many) types of delicious food mixed with three types of poison gifted [to the enemy].

de tsam na / bdag dang lhan cig skyes pa’t dre (C.T. = ‘dre) cha don byas la / de ci’i zhal zas gsol lo / g.yung drung gshen gyi man ngag bcug la / / gra (C.T. = dgra) bo’i grog ma tsam cig yod pa der shog cig / / des phung po dum (C.T. = sdum) du sol (= gsol) cig / / rkang pa thur du long cig / gshen gang la gra (C.T. = dgra) byed pa la / la yogs bdar ro / la yogs bdar ba’t thabs ni / / zhal zas zhim rgu (C.T. = dgu) dang / / dug sna gsum sbyar la sbyin no / /

Paragraph VIj (14.1–14.4)

The transition between this paragraph and the last one is not very smooth and the object of the offensive measures employed is somewhat ambiguous. The harsher nature of the punitive ritual actions indicates that this paragraph and the two that follow in this section of Gnag rabs are focused on a more pernicious opponent than the natal dre. Nevertheless, the aim is still the personal well being of the ritualists or those for whom the ritual is being discharged. This paragraph begins with the ‘secret time arrow’ (gsang-ba’i dus mda’), the receptacle for the protective personal deities of males. It is

135 Cha-don. The C.T. equivalent is kha-cad.
136 The counterpart for females is the ‘time spindle’ (dus-‘phang). These ritual objects were established at birth and were enshrined on the family altar when the owner was in residence. According to the Mu-cho’i khrom-‘dur, at the time of death they constituted one of the seven ‘soul circles’ (bla-’khor) or soul signs (bla-rtags), which were used to contain and protect the soul of the deceased during the evocation rites. The word ‘time’ appended to the arrow and spindle indicates that this holy object was maintained for the entire length of an individual’s lifespan. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 407, 426, 428, 429. Also see Bellezza 2013a, p. 239.
located in the most sheltered and cleanest part of the home. The text briefly describes this tabernacle, saying that good articles of the gsas gods (gsas-cha bzang) are placed together with it. This ritual structure probably consisted of a tray of grain, in which the draped time arrow was erected possibly along with sacred stones, one or more copper alloy ritual mirrors (me-long), animal figurines, and other items. The text seems to mention the time arrow tabernacle because its proper maintenance was believed essential if an individual was to experience good fortune. There would be no point in carrying out aggressive exorcistic actions otherwise, for they would be in vain.

The ritual described in this paragraph consists of installing the skulls of three birds-of-prey and an arrow in a deep hole dug in the vicinity of the ritual venue. The text states that these objects must be deposited precisely on time (dus gdab). This implies that elaborate and very careful ritual functions were involved, the text only providing a review of the major procedures. For example, the skulls may have had the name or likeness of the enemy drawn on them. This use of skulls in destructive magic is reminiscent of the sri-gnon, a well-known rite for eliminating harm wrought by homicidal demons. Like the gnag-pa, the sri-gnon is of ancient origins.\footnote{On archaeological evidence for the antiquity of the sri-gnon rite, see Bellezza 2008, p. 394 (n. 123); Huo Wei 2009; Heller 2006, p. 268.}

The secret time arrow is in your own house in the divine (high) position. Good articles of the gsas are nicely arranged (bstar) with it. Then from your own home\footnote{The phrase ‘your own home’ (rang gyi khyim) here and above refers to the abode of the beneficiaries of the ritual, not the ritualists themselves. This is made clear in the very last paragraph of Gnag rabs. See paragraph VIII.} go a distance of seven steps and dig a deep hole.\footnote{This line includes the phrase mtshul-pa gang, which is of unknown meaning.} On its east side the skull (thod-pa) of the khra hor-pa\footnote{The largest species of hawk found in Tibet.} is placed. On its west side the skull of an owl (srin-bya) is placed exactly on time.\footnote{La dus gdab. This could also be translated as ‘buried exactly on time’.} On its south side the skull of the magpie (skyugs-pa) is placed exactly on time. On its north side the owl arrow\footnote{Mda’ ‘ug-pa-ma. This is probably an arrow fledged with owl feathers.} is placed exactly on time.

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}
With the ritual structure in place for slaying the enemy, the officiants proceed to invoke their tutelary deity, the human flesh-eating Khri rgyal-ba. He is unleashed to insure the successful completion of the ritual. Also aiding the priests is a three-headed black snake, a youthful child (skyes-phran gzhon-nu) bdud, and a btsan named Re-btsan phyag-gda'-bo. The white hearth god (thab-lha) and hearth goddess (thab-sman) are also called upon to eradicate the unnamed enemy. Reliance upon the hearth deities indicates that the intended enemy was one affecting the integrity of the personal or household deities:

At midnight, Khri rgyal-ba, he with the brown hair curling upwards and who holds an iron hook in his hand, is set loose. After midnight in the early hours, a coiled black snake with three mouths is the eater of human flesh. The youthful child bdud is set loose [to protect]. At the very first light of day (nam-chung dang-mo), the killer (gshed) of all the twitching mouths (the demons), Re-btsan phyag-gda'-bo, was served 'glog meat. Since ancient times he was the killer of enemies. Still he is the killer of enemies. He has been so commissioned. The white hearth god has been so commissioned The white hearth goddess has been so commissioned. Separate (phrol) from the root, the arms and legs (sug) and heart and lungs [of the enemy]!


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143 As Tucci notes (1980: 188), the thab-lha resides in the hearth, the hub of the household.

144 Nam phyed na / shul kyī mdo na / / . This is around 2:30 AM.

145 Glang (ox) meat?
Paragraph VII (14.8–15.2)

In addition to the slaughter of the enemy by the tutelary spirits specified in the last paragraph, it is put to death through animal sacrifice. The flesh and blood of an ox and horse appear to be cooked in a large vessel. This is the last ritual procedure in this section of Gnag rabs:

When the sun first rises, the liver of the black ox and the blood and flesh of the horse with the black chest (byang-gnag) are kneaded together (sor mor sbyar), [set in the] four directions [of the vessel], and cooked (bstso) in the dbal of the enemy.\(^{146}\) Now, exactly at the appointed time without deviation (ma-yo), cook the contents of the dbal three times. The [enemy] is slaughtered like that.\(^{147}\)

\[\text{nyi ma rtse tsam na byung na / glang nag po'i mchin pa dang / rta byang gnag (C.T. = nag) kyi sha khrag dang / sor mor sbyar de / / gra' (C.T. = dgra) dbal phyog bzhir bstso (C.T. = btso) / / da ci dus btab pa las ma yo (C.T. = g.yo) gcig / / dpal (= dbal) lan gsum bstso (C.T. = btso) / / de ltar bsad nas (= do) /}\]

\(^{146}\) This appears to refer to a vessel not unlike the dbal-zangs, which is used for preparing the dbal-chu, a liquid used in Eternal Bon purificatory rites.

\(^{147}\) The ritual structure of the Gnag rabs (especially Section VI) is reflected in contemporary religious practices of the sngags-pa (lay priests) of the village of Chos-'khor in Glo-smad, Nepal. In Autumn, sri-gnon (suppressing the sri) and lha-mchod (propitiating the protective deities) rituals are performed in tandem. As in Gnag rabs, the sri-gnon of Glo-smad is practiced at night and includes a metal pan with effigies, which are bombarded with poisonous substances in order to separate the enemies from their protective deities before they are slain. Moreover, the effigies are buried at the junction of three roads and the hole is ritually sealed. As in the Gnag rabs, this ritual is conducted to eliminate both demons and mortal enemies. The morning after the sri-gnon the lha-mchod is performed, which includes fumigation, gtor-ma (sacrificial cakes) offerings to the household gods, and renewal of the shrines for the pho-lha and tshe-lha (god of long life). For these twin rituals of Glo-smad, see op. cit. Sihlé 2000. Not only are the actual activities of the Glo-smad and Gnag rabs performances comparable, so is the twining of a very violent ritual with a pacific type dedicated to personal gods of the household. This indicates that the sngags-pa of Glo-smad have preserved ritual elements of considerable antiquity, which are fundamentally non-Buddhist in origin. The hereditary nature of their profession appears to be the mechanism by which this conservation of an archaic tradition was effected. Interestingly, Sihlé (ibid., 202, 203) observes that while monastic rites have made huge inroads into the village of Chos-'khor, they are not seen as fully complementary as the twin rituals of the sngags-pa.
Section VII

This, the penultimate section of Gnag rabs, is dedicated to protecting people from the predations of the classes of spirits known as g.yen. This is accomplished through ritual implements, offerings and a special tutelary deity. In addition to animal parts, the flesh and blood of human beings is used to appease the offending spirits.

Section VII has two main parts:

VIIa: Narrative of an ancestral priest of the g.yen and their ritual subjugation

VIIb: Substitute meat offerings given to the g.yen

Paragraph VIIa (15.2–15.6)

The semi-divine group of elemental spirits known as g.yen are customarily divided into thirty-three classes (g.yen-khams sum-curtsa-gsum), which reside in the upper, middle and lower realms of existence.148 The name of the priest specialized in the ritual for the g.yen, Srin-pa’i ’phrul-gshen (Priest of Magical Power of the Srin), seems unattested in other sources. Perhaps the text really intended his name to be Srid-pa’i ’phrul-gshen (Priest of Magical Power of Existence). Like the third vehicle of Eternal Bon teachings (’Phrul-gshen theg-pa), his focus is ireful ritual techniques. The cord (rmu-dag, C.T. = dmu-thag) connecting his life (tshe) and life-force (srog) to the celestial realm of the rmu gods was protected by a jeweled wall (rin-po-che’i ra-ba). By analogy this indicates that august personages such as the lineage of priests who wrote and used Gnag rabs also possessed a celestial cord.149 These ritualists warded off harmful

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148 On the general composition of the g.yen, see Norbu 1995, p. 252 (n. 2); Norbu 2009, p. 81. On the role of the g.yen in the funerary rituals of the Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur, see Bellezza 2008. On the celestial g.yen in ITJ 731r and the two funerary manuscripts of Gathang Bumpa, see Bellezza 2013a.

149 The Mu-cho’i khrom-’dur indicates that the mythic dmu-thag was the birthright of commoners as well. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 392, 405; 2013a, p. 144 (n. 218). The dmu-thag, represented by a multicolored cord, was essential in life-cycle rituals such as birth and marriage, where it was attached to the sinciput to symbolize humanity’s divine and celestial links (Karmay 1998: 252). Tucci (1949: 714, 734) interprets reference in the dkar-chag of Bsam-yas (attributed to the minister Mgar) to the tombs of the Tibetan kings being made according to the Rmu-lugs (tradition / lineage of the Rmu [sic]) to indicate that Rmu were the chief class of priests or clan in charge of funerary rituals, which included regulation of the dmu-thag and dmu-skas (stairs of the dmu). As a major lineage of cosmogonic figures and archetypal ritualists, the Dmu were indeed important funerary specialists, nevertheless, their functions were paralleled by that other important
g.yen with a dagger (phur-pa) and incantations,\textsuperscript{150} safe in the knowledge that their vital energy was harbored in the ‘life-force wooden pillar’ (srog-shing). Thus all their desires were fulfilled. For helping the priests and their beneficiaries in this manner, Srin-pa’i ‘phrul-gshen is entreated according to the words spoken in this paragraph:

The methods of keeping the g.yen that are opposed to yourself from rising (ldang): At the swastika gsas-mkhar of the miraculous swastika was Srin-pa’i ‘phrul-gshen, he of great magical power and mesmerizing ferocity. The rmu-dag of the gshen was surrounded by a jeweled wall. By the phur-pa of the swastika\textsuperscript{151} and the srog-shing of the gshen, the lha is supported by the phyag-bam.\textsuperscript{152} Whatever g.yen are in opposition to yourself, the spells of purification.\textsuperscript{153} These are thus spoken. Do not harm (sdīg) [with] the harm [afflicting] the gshen! Any wishes [the beneficiaries] have are fulfilled (drub-po). This is the supplication to the miraculous son of the gtsug-lag.\textsuperscript{154}

rang la g.yen myi (C.T. = mi) ldang ba’i thabs la // g.yung drung ‘phrul kyi gsas mkhar na / sрин po’i ‘phrul gshen ni // mthu che la ‘phrul drag / gshen gyi rmu (C.T. = dmu) dag (C.T. = thag) ni rin po che’i ra bar bskor // yung (= g.yung) drung gyi phur pa la / / gshen gyi srog shing gyis // lha phyag bam la brten // bdag la g.yen ci mchis

prototypic lineage, the Phywa (C.T. = Phya). For example, the ‘father of the dead’ ‘Gon-bstun phywa, belonged to the Phwya tradition or lineage (Bellezza 2013a: 168).\textsuperscript{150}

The phur-pa has much currency as a Lamaist ritual instrument. Its use can be traced to Buddhist Mahāyoga texts discovered in Dunhuang and dedicated to the eponymous god Phur-pa. In one such tantric text, Tib J 331, a destructive magic rite features the stabbing of an effigy in order to ritually slay or liberate it (sgrol-ba; Cantwell and Mayer 2010: 74). Also, for a phur-pa stabbing ritual in Tib J 447, see Cantwell and Mayer 2008b, pp. 199–201. The important place of the god Phur-pa and the phur-pa dagger in Tibetan religion since no later than the 10\textsuperscript{th} century CE may have informed the inclusion of the ritual dagger in the Gnag rabs. In the absence of definitive documentary evidence, however, other cultural and textual sources may also be indicated.\textsuperscript{151} G.yung-drung gyi phur-pa. The use of the word ‘swastika’ to describe the dagger distinguishes it as a seminal ritual implement and designates a non-Buddhist identity in this textual context.

Probably a type of tabernacle for the personal deities. This term is etymologically related to glegs-bam, which can refer to a tiny encased scripture worn on the body or head as an amulet.\textsuperscript{152}

For the five lines of spells, see the transliteration.

The O.T. gtsug-lag denotes ritual techniques and the understanding and skill behind their execution. As a C.T. term, gtsug-lag denotes religious customs and traditions more generally. For a more complete definition of gtsug-lag and its political and legal applications, see Stein 2003. ‘Miraculous son’ (‘phrul gyi bu) refers to the specific ritual practices of the gnag-pa, an offshoot of the gtsug-lag.\textsuperscript{154}
The first half of this ritual sequence is centered on invoking the tutelary god, the second half on a special gift used to placate the enemy. This ransom ritual calls for human flesh and blood but makes no mention of how these were obtained. This corporeal conferment is given in lieu of the victim targeted by the g.yen. The text instructs the ritualists to use the flesh and blood from an individual not belonging to one’s own clan (rus myi gcig-pa). For those who believe that human sacrifice was practiced in ancient Tibet, the resorting to human flesh and blood in Gnag rabs might be used to justify their position. In my view, however, human flesh and blood cited in the text constitutes a kind of trophy or prize possibly procured from enemies fallen in battle. Be that as it may, the placement of human flesh and blood offerings at the end of Gnag rabs suggests that this was seen as the ultimate ritualistic statement.

As the final ritual act in Gnag rabs, human and animal meat offerings are cast away and along with them the troubles caused by their intended recipient. Before proclaiming the rituals of Gnag rabs completed (rdzogs), the text states that it is to be chanted (bsgyer). It is understood that this recitation is to be made precisely as is written:

The flesh and blood belonging to another clan, the chest skin (dpags) of the rgya-byab and the brain of the sparrow (mthil); these are mixed together [in] the bright bowl (zhal-bur) of banded agate (phra-men) [and cast away]. That is chanted. It is finished.

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155 This O.T. past tense verb has persisted in the present tense gyer of Eternal Bon and has retained the same semantic scope. It conveys not merely the act of chanting but the entire contents of what is chanted. Thus gyer as a noun has become a synonym for the full collection of Eternal Bon teachings as well as for the nature of reality itself.

156 A type of pheasant.
Gnag rabs concludes with advice to the ritualists. The text explains that the methods it advocates may not bear full results immediately and serves to reassure practitioners that this is not problematic, for the enemy is now firmly in their grip. The text conveys that signs beheld internally (pra-rtags), showing that these harm-inducing entities have been extirpated, will appear within three years. If for some reason these signs do not appear in that amount of time, the text advises the ritualists to simply forget about the enemy. Presumably, if the enemy is not causing problems after such a long time one need not worry about it. While this seems to be eminently practical counsel, it is out of tune with analogous Lamaist rituals, which are more apt to trumpet their undeviating efficacy.

The text reminds its users to enthusiastically supplicate the tutelary deities, the various lha-gsas of the ritual (and others to whom they may be bound). Likewise, the instruments used in their propitiation (gsas-cha) and the ritual gear (ya-stags, C.T. = yas-stags) must be well maintained and skillfully deployed. This is done to ensure that the enemies are well and truly annihilated. Assuming a paternal tone the text exhorts the ritualists to act with caution (gzab ’tshal lo). In the last instance, the text announces that the provisions for the gnag-pa and origins tales of the nine zi-ma goddesses are completed. By singling out the zi-ma, the text highlights their salience among the many other deities of the ritual performances:

If you grip [the enemy as shown above] it is impossible for it to slip away (’chor). In three months [the signs] will surely come to you. If they do not appear like that, they will surely come in three years. If they do not come like that, in the course of things forget (rjed) the enemy. It is not appropriate to do [this ritual] in your own home. The lha-gsas is fervently propitiated (drag du bdar) and the gsas articles are assiduously prepared. The ritual articles are assembled. If you do not quickly [kill the enemy] it will transpire that misfortune (rkyen) will come to you. Proceed with caution. The gnag-pa provisions and the origins tales of the nine zi-ma eggs are finished.

Also on folio no. 16, two lines of handwriting were scrawled at a later date perpendicular to the actual text. These later lines accompany a crude mandala (dkyil-'khor). Although the invasive position of the handwriting demonstrates that it was composed after the original text was made, its paleographic and orthographic traits indicate that it is of significant antiquity. These supplemental lines of text and the mandala were made by an individual called Zhang. This seems to be reference either to his clan name or his Zhang-zhung homeland. The opening part of Zhang’s lines read: bag-ma she; this may possibly designate the name or function of the mandala:

Make the established bag-ma she, the mandala (rkyil-'khor). Made from the tradition. Drawn by the noble Zhang.

bag ma she ste rkyil (C.T. = dkyil) ’khor de bzheng su gsol / gsol (= srol)

The depicted mandala was rather roughly drawn in an idiosyncratic manner. Its creation must have been inspired by Lamaist practice of Indian origin of making mandalas for the deities of rituals. It may have functioned as magical diagram for validating and bringing to fruition the various rituals enumerated in Gnag rabs.

In consonance with tantric tradition, each of the four outer sides of the mandala carry a different symbol and syllable. These may represent the four continents (gling-bzhi), four orders of deities (rigs-bzhi) and/or the four modes of activities (’phrin-las bzhi). They are as follows:

East: half circle (zla-gam) and the syllable bsra’
South: triangle (zur-gsum) and the syllable tsar
West: circle (zlum-po) and the syllable can
North: square (gru-bzhi) and the syllable tung

On each corner of the outer square of the mandala two triangles were drawn, which might possibly represent mountains. The sacred syllable Om’ of Indic tradition is in the inner circle of the mandala.
Comparative Eternal Bon ritual materials

Introduction

In the second part of this paper systematic comparisons will be drawn between a cognate ritual tradition of the Gnag rabs and Eternal Bon documents, in order to better illustrate fundamental differences between the archaic and Lamaist religions of Tibet. Section II of the Gnag rabs presented the nine zi-ma sisters. While other deities noted in this text have diminished in importance or have entirely disappeared from Lamaism, the nine zi-ma (rendered gze-ma / gzi-ma in Classical Tibetan) retain a prominent place in the Eternal Bon religion. These goddesses have been elevated to the level of tantric protectors. So highly regarded are they that they appear for all to see in the Eternal Bon monastic dances (‘cham) held annually.

Undertaking a comparative exercise provides excellent insight into how Eternal Bon expurgated concepts and activities that could not be reconciled with its Buddhist-inspired ethics, doctrines and practices. When older traditions such as the iconography and basic protective functions of the nine gze-ma could be conserved, they were reinterpreted to fit within the philosophical and moral superstructure of Lamaism. This recreation of the archaic ritual tradition by Eternal Bon permitted the gze-ma to survive, albeit nominally, in a religious, political and economic environment dominated by Buddhist thought and institutions. We might expect

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157 For an overview of the Eternal Bon tradition of the nine gze-ma, protectors of the religion (bon-srung / bon-skyon), see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 312. For a summary of two closely related enneads of Eternal Bon goddesses, the gyad-ma dgu and byin-te dgu, as well as reference to other dbal deities, see ibid., pp. 313–317. Also see Haarh 1969, p. 225. Blezer (2000: 121) discusses the fierce nature of the gze-ma dgu and other dbal-mo. He (ibid., 125, 126, 162) provides a list of the gze-ma, gyad-mo and byin-te from the text Snyan brgyud bar do thos grol gsal gtron chen mo, as well as another listing. The appearance and attributes of the gze-ma goddesses in these two texts are comparable to those presented in this paper.

158 Instructions for performing the ‘cham of these nine goddesses is found in Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa bzhugs (nos. 677–695), a chapter in the text Gsas mkhar rin po che spyi spungs khro bo dbang chen ngo mtshar rgyas pa’i gzhung gi phrin las bzhugs* (nos. 40–695; discovered by Gshen-chen klu-dga’ (Gshen-sgur klu-dga’), born 996 CE), no. 694, in the volume Zhi kho phrin las (nos. 1–994), vol. 235 of New Collection of the Bon bka’-brten (canonical commentaries and appended literature), published by Bstan-pa’i ngyi-ma, Lhasa, 1998. On the practice of the ‘cham featuring gze-ma goddesses, also see Karmay 2013, pp. 19, 20.

* This text contains four main branches of funerary ritual traditions: pho-’dur (for males), mo-’dur (for females), chung-’dur (for children), gri-’dur (for those who die through accidental or violent means).
that Gshen-chen klu-dga’ and other Eternal Bon authors were under immense sociopolitical pressure to carry out this purging of the archaic tradition. Their own leanings towards Buddhist-inspired morality, tenets and mysticism must have also played a role in transforming the ancient. Seen from this perspective, the reconfiguration of the preexisting pantheon of spirits and system of rituals was but one facet of the civilizational makeover of Tibet.

The induction of the gze-ma goddess into the Eternal Bon pantheon can be traced as per tradition to the early 11th century CE and the ‘discovery’ of a ‘revealed text’ (gter-ma) by the great ‘treasure revealer’ (gter-ston) Gshen-chen klu-dga’ (996–1035 CE). Eternal Bon dogma holds that he extracted this text from its hiding place and merely made a copy, being faithful to its wording and subject matter.159 Ostensibly, this is the text that has been faithfully copied and reproduced by the Bon-po to this day. Nevertheless, the discovery of an archaic tradition of zi-ma goddesses in the Gathang Bumpa collection casts doubt on the claim that the Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa is an ancient text rediscovered by of Gshen-chen klu-dga’. It appears that Gshen-chen klu-dga’ was the chief architect of the Eternal Bon tradition of the nine gze-ma, a man who disregarded older ritual materials deemed inappropriate, distasteful or disconcerting.160 That Gshen-chen klu-dga’ or his contemporaries were indeed the author(s) of Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa is demonstrated by its paleographic and grammatical composition. It was written in Classical Tibetan using scripts still prevailing in Eternal Bon documents.

Only a century or so seem to separate the composing of the Gnag rabs (circa 10th century CE) and the text of Gshen-chen klu-dga’ (first half of the 11th century CE). Although they were probably written

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159 Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa. The colophon (no. 695) of this text reads: “Written by the hand of Gshen-rgrur (sic) as was written [in the mother text (ma-dpe)]” (gshen rgrur gyis phyag bris ci bzhin bris pa lags so). For a general survey of Eternal Bon literature, including the origins and significance of gter-ma texts, see Kvaerne 1974.

160 While this appears to be the case with the gze-ma tradition, this is not necessarily true of other texts Gshen-chen klu-dga’ may have found. As Martin observes (2001: 209, 210), this gter-ston is attributed with revealing a wide range of texts catering to a variety of Eternal Bon practitioners, and it is conceivable that some of them may have been excavated by him. Nevertheless, Gshen-chen klu-dga’ is at the center of an enduring controversy regarding the scriptural validity of the literature he was responsible for ‘discovering’. Martin (ibid., 41–43, 196, 197) traces this controversy to the mid-13th century CE and the ‘Bri-gung-pa figures Rdo-rje shes-rab and ‘Jig-rten mgon-po, who accused Gshen-chen klu-dga’ of using Buddhist scriptures to compose those he claims to have found.
within a fairly short time of one another, they reveal very different approaches to understanding and exploiting the nine gze-ma. Gshen-chen klu-dga’ must have been aware of the archaic tradition of zi-ma goddesses circulating around in texts such as Gnag rabs and possibly in the oral tradition as well. Otherwise, he or his associates would hardly have been able to write about them in Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa. However, Gshen-chen klu-dga’ avoids all reference to the archaic zi-ma and their rather straightforward nature, brutal disposition and proclivity for receiving animal sacrifices. It appears, therefore, that he was not only intent on revamping the doctrinal framework supporting these goddesses but doing so in a manner that would help suppress or obliterate awkward bits of the archaic tradition.

As do other Eternal Bon authors, Gshen-chen klu-dga’ connected the nine gze-ma to the three major tutelary gods (yi-dam) of the religion, calling them the attendants (pho-nya) of Dbal-gsas rngam-pa.161 As we saw in Section IIg of Gnag rabs, the zi-ma are also referred to as attendants (using the Old Tibetan feminine form: pho-nya-ma). Nonetheless, there are fundamental differences in these two accounts of the same sisterhood of goddesses, reflecting the respective conceptual and procedural principles of the archaic and Lamaist religions. In Gnag rabs, the nine zi-ma are the attendants of the ritualists, alluding to the archaic concept of personal ownership or ritual control of deities (lha-bdag),162 a tradition that persists among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. Also in the Gnag rabs, these goddesses have a physical origin in the divine firmament (Lha-yul gung-thang), born through the coupling (bshos) of three brave lha brothers and the ancestress Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal. Gshen-chen klu-dga’ does not address the source of the gze-ma, but in none of the Eternal Bon texts used in this study is it attributed to the ordinary biological action of two beings mating. Like Tibetan Buddhist ones, Eternal Bon deities of higher ranking have much more abstract origins, rising above the prosaic act of copulation.

As with other Eternal Bon authors who succeeded him, Gshen-chen klu-dga’ does more or less conform to the basic iconography of the zi-ma goddesses of Gnag rabs. He also recognizes their appearance from eggs and their central apotropaic function. This is however where the similarities between the archaic and Lamaist enneads of goddesses end. Gshen-chen klu-dga’ composed his

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161 Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa, no. 680. The three tutelary gods are ‘Jigs-byed dbal-gsas rngam-pa (body), Mi-zad lha-rgod thog-pa (speech) and Thugs-rje mkha’-gying khro-bo (also known as Khro-bo dbang-chen, mind).

162 For more on the ownership of spirits in the archaic ritual context, see Bellezza 2013a, pp. 22, 23.
account of *gze-ma* as a *smon-lam*, a style of devotional prayer borrowed directly from Buddhism. This prayer forms one component of a tantric *sadhāna*, which are typically performed by the class of Eternal Bon ritualists styled *sgrub-gshen*. His account of the *gze-ma* includes prostrations to them, signifying their full doctrinal transformation into otherworldly (*'jig-rten las 'das-pa*) tantric goddesses. The structure and tone Gshen-chen klu-dga’ used for the first *gze-ma* sister carries on throughout the rest of the *smon-lam*. In keeping with the dignified and reserved tenor of the text, no mention of the sororal order of birth is made. Rather they are each given a proper name, as part of efforts to create a standardized coterie of goddesses. The storied Indic syllable *Om’* opens the passage:

*Om’*. At the *gsas-mkhar* of the sound of the glory spreading throughout visible existence, an [egg] hatched from the sound of the dragon king of sound. From it appeared the blue human body with the head of the dragon. The appearance of this lady with the body (*sku-lus*) of inexhaustible qualities is a sign of the manifestation of the sound of speech of [Ston-pa] gshen-rab. *Om’*. From his sound, may her manifestation be realized. The attached head of the dragon king of sound is a sign of her agitating the royal realm [of the enemies]. *Om’*. May this agitating be realized. Her blue-colored body, which has the fundamental nature of turquoise, is a sign of her abiding power over the sky. *Om’*. May her abiding power be realized. The waving of the *chu-srin* arm in her right [hand] and crying out loudly is a sound of her rapid conquering of enemies and obstructers. *Om’*. May her conquering of them be realized. Her iron fangs together with the *dbal* is a sign of her consuming the flesh of the enemy through filing. *Om’*. May her consuming of their flesh be realized. *Om’*. We prostrate to you ‘Brug-lcam kun-grags ma (Dragon Lady Glorious Everywhere).

*Om’* snang srid kun grags sgra yi gsas mkhar na / sgra rgyal ‘brug gi sgra las gcig brdol pa / mi lus sngon mo ‘brug gi mgo can byung / sku lus mi bzad mi mor byung ba ni gshen rab gsung gi sgra las sprul pa’i rtags / Om’

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163 See *Gze ma dgu rtags kyi bsgrub pa*, nos. 680, ln. 6 to 681, ln. 4. This style of description carries on for the remaining eight *gze-ma* (nos. 681–688). The text then provides an elaborate etymology for the name *gze-ma* derived from tantric and Rdzogs-chen traditions, which is entirely contrived (nos. 688–693). In the etymology of Gshen-chen klu-dga’, the two syllables of the name form an inseparable pair. For example, *gze* = *thabs* (method), *ma* = *shes-rab* (wisdom); *gze* = *mkha’* (empty quality of space), *ma* = *klong* (the expanse or vastness of space); *gze* = *ye-shes* (primordial wisdom), *ma* = *dbyings* (sphere of emptiness); *gze* = *bras-bu* (fruit of activities), *ma* = *rgyud* (cause of activities). The text also features a *bskul-pa* (invoking and dispatching of deities ritual) with a strong Eternal Bon doctrinal and piestic overlay, calling the *gze-ma* by the epithet *giso-mo* (female chiefs), a word of O.T. origins (nos. 693, 694).
Seemingly within decades of the prayer for attainment through the gze-ma of Gshen-chen klu-dga’ appearing, another gter-ma dedicated to these goddesses was reportedly discovered in Bhutan by Khu-tsha zla-’od (born 1024 CE).164 In this text, the Dbal-mo nyer-bdun are said to be manifestations of Thugs-rje mkha’-’gying khro-bo,165 the Eternal Bon yi-dam of the mind. The text of Khu-tsha zla-’od was composed as a funerary bskul-pa (ritual for invoking and dispatching deities) for the gze-ma, with the purpose of separating the dead (shi) who die through accidental or violent means from the agent of death (gshed), in order to defeat these bringers of death and to summon the

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164 Gsang phur nag po’i ‘phrin las kyi dbu phyogs bzhugs pa dge, nos. 63–162, in Khro bo dbang chen gyi gshed ’dur dang gsang phur nag po’i ‘phrin las ‘gug bsgral gnas ‘dren skor gyi gsung pod, vol. 176, of the New Collection of the Bon bka’-brten, published by Bstan-pa’i nyi-ma, Lhasa, 1998. This volume is attributed to the great treasure [finder] (gter-chen) Khu-tsha zla-’od (born 1024 CE), discovered in Spa-gro, transmitted in succession to Gshen-ston nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan (born 1360 CE), and especially propagated by the thirty-nine tsho (divisions) of Hor (located in Steng-chen, Sbra-chen, ’Bri-ru, and Snyan-rong). The divine treasure protector (gter-bdag) of the text is Yum-sras sde-lnga (the goddess of Gnam-mtsho and four of her male mountain acolytes). The text was obtained in Dol-po and first printed in Delhi under the auspices of Lopon Tenzin Namdak. According to Eternal Bon tradition, it was first practiced by Stong-rgyung mthu-chen when he performed the funerary rites for King Gri-gum btsan-po. For biographical information on the gter-ston Khu-tsha zla-’od, whose lifetime Rnying-ma sources place in the 12th century CE, see Cantwell and Mayer forthcoming. On the gze-ma in the Phur-pa tradition (Ka-ba nag-po) of Eternal Bon, also see ibid.

165 The Dbal-mo nyer-bdun (nyer-brgyad with Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo, their spiritual mother) include the Gze-ma dgu (the senior or elder group), Gyad-mo dgu, and the Byin-te dgu. These twenty-seven goddesses are classed as dbal-mo, tantric goddesses of great power and wealth, who serve as protectors (srung-ma) of intermediate ranking (otherworldly) of the Bon doctrine (bstan-pa). Also called the twenty-seven sbar-mo, they originated ultimately as the mind emanation of Ston-pa gshen-rab. Their primary function is to weigh the good and evil activities of sentient beings and act accordingly. A benevolent character and diligence as helpmates are their predominant qualities. On the twenty-seven sbar-mo goddesses, see Dbal gsas rngam pa’i las rim, nos. 127, Lns. 1–5 (bibliography of text in fn. 172).
spirit of the dead to the ritual venue for the valedictory ritual operations to follow.\footnote{Gsang phur nag po'i 'phrin las, nos. 143, ln. 4 to 145, ln. 2.}

The text of Khu-tsha zla-'od is in an abbreviated form, as the gze-ma are one among many classes of deities used in Eternal Bon funerary performances. \textit{Gnag rabs} does not assign a funerary function to this divine sisterhood, but it is hinted at in the text for He-ma'i shing spre'u, one of a group of seven goddesses (see paragraph Vc). The bskul-pa of Khu-tsha zla-'od begins by introducing the nine gze-ma before describing the eldest sister. As in the \textit{Gnag rabs} and smon-lam of Gshen-chen klu-dga', this goddess is associated with the dragon. While also destroying enemies, the eldest sister does so by capturing the yid and sems, more abstract consciousness principles in this context than the soul (bla) of the \textit{Gnag rabs}:

\begin{quote}
Bswo! The female workers of Gtso-mchog mkha’-'gying,\footnote{For a description of Khro-bo gtsa-mchog mkha’-'gying taken from a text said to have been discovered by Gshen-chen klu-dga’, see Kværne 1995, pp. 75–77.} the nine gze-ma, go to work! Among these sisters (phu-mo), the oldest sister (gcan-mo) is Dbal gyi gze-ma 'brug-mgo-ma (Female Dragon-headed Gze-ma of the Dbal). She is blue in color and holds aloft the flayed skin of the chu-srin. Summon the yid and sems of the enemy! Defeat and reduce them to dust!\footnote{Gsang phur nag po'i 'phrin las, no. 143, Ins. 4, 5.}

\begin{verbatim}
bswo gtsa mchog mkha’ ‘gying las mkhan mo / gze ma dgu po las la chos / nang gi phu mo gcan mo ni dbal gyi gze ma ‘brug mgo ma / sngon mo chu srin g.yang gzhi ‘phyar / dgra bo’i yid sems khug la shog / dbang du bsdus la rdul du rlog / dbal gyi gze ma sbrul gyi mgo / ljang nag khyung gi g.yang gzhi ‘phyar / dgra bgegs yid sems khug la shog / dbang bsdus rdul du rlog /
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

The text continues in this manner with the other eight members of the gze-ma sisterhood. As with the text of Gshen-chen klu-dga’, each of the goddesses has been given a particular animal head and other attributes (their identities match in the two texts). In \textit{Gnag rabs}, the descriptions of the zi-ma, while generally corresponding in terms of the animals cited, is more loosely structured. Only five members of the group have animal heads, while other goddesses seem to have human heads. The Eternal Bon authors took this rather amorphous iconographic tradition and imposed a rigorous order upon it. The resulting iconography bears much similarity to that of the Rnying-ma zhi-khro deities, which appear to have developed in the same
period. The main attributes of the nine gze-ma of Khu-tsha zla-’od are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement in the Sisterhood</th>
<th>Head Type</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Primary Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td>dragon</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>holds aloft the flayed skin of the chu-srin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second</td>
<td>snake</td>
<td>dark green</td>
<td>holds aloft the flayed skin of the khyung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third</td>
<td>chough</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>brandishes a copper sbar-[shad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>throws the noose of the dbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fifth</td>
<td>brown bear</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>throws a tho-lum towards the sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sixth</td>
<td>wolf</td>
<td>dark red</td>
<td>waves the wing of a hawk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seventh</td>
<td>tiger</td>
<td>reddish brown</td>
<td>blows the conflagration of the dbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eighth</td>
<td>khyung</td>
<td>yellow green</td>
<td>holds a black khram-bam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninth</td>
<td>chu-srin</td>
<td>dark blue</td>
<td>fans an epochal wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Well over a century after Gshen-chen klu-dga’ and Khu-tsha zla-’od disseminated their texts for the nine gze-ma, another celebrated Eternal Bon gter-ston also made his contribution. This was Khyung-rgod rtsal (born 1175 CE, according to the Eternal Bon tradition), who is supposed to have discovered an 8th century CE work written

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169 Blezer (2000) undertakes to compare the Dbal-mo gnyer-bdun with the Rnying-ma Dbang-phyug-ma (wrathful yogini or ma-mo of Indian Buddhist and Hindu origins), both of which occupy similar positions in the zhi-khro mandalas. Blezer (ibid., 137, 138) concludes that the Eternal Bon zhi-khro mandala is probably derived from that of the Rnying-ma-pa. However, unlike their Eternal Bon counterparts, the twenty-eight Dbang-phyug-ma are not directly connected to myths of origins (ibid., 123).

170 A kind of celestial metal stone.

171 A corpse with an X cut across it.
by the famous saint Dran-pa nam-mkha’. Here we have direct confirmation that the texts of the Eternal Bon gze-ma allegedly date to imperial times, which is only implied in the other two examples we have examined. This chronological attribution is of course apocryphal, as Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text is written in Classical Tibetan, not in the Old Tibetan language of the early historic period (its Lamaist content notwithstanding). It does however preserve the theogony and spirit of the nine gze-ma sisters in Gnag rabs with more fidelity than the works of Gshen-chen klu-dga’ and Khu-tsha zla’-od. This is somewhat curious because it was written in a period more distant from the archaic religious era than its counterparts. This seems to indicate that Khyung-rgod rtsal was more of a traditionalist than either Gshen-chen klu-dga’ or Khu-tsha zla’-od. It may also be that he required more ritual killing power than his predecessors, so he maintained the graphically violent language of the archaic tradition. Whatever his nostalgic or pragmatic proclivities, the wide spectrum of texts attributed to the finder Khyung-rgod rtsal show that he was in fact a profound Eternal Bon thinker and practitioner.

The significant doctrinal differences presented in the gze-ma texts of Khyung-rgod rtsal and those of the two earlier authors, apart from any personal motives represented, may reveal a glimmer of the process involved in the formation of Eternal Bon. If so much can be read into the gze-ma traditions of the respective authors, it suggests that this religion in the early centuries of the second millennium CE may not have been quite the great monolithic entity portrayed in more recent Eternal Bon literature.

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172 Spyi spungs skor gsum gyi yang bcud rtsod pa bzlag pa’i ‘khor lo dbal gsas rmgam pa’i las rim bzhugs so, in Dbal Gsas Las Rim Gyi Sgrub pa Dan Las Tshogs Beas, nos. 69–186. A collection of Bonpo ritual texts for the propitiation of the tutelary Dbal-gsas, rediscovered from their place of concealment by Khyun-rgod-rtsal, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre (Ochghat, India), 1973. According to the front-piece, it was reproduced by Mkhas-grub rgya-mtsho from a manuscript brought by the late G.yung-drung-gling mkhan rin-po-che from a monastery in Dolpo (northwestern Nepal). The text is attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha’ (8th century CE). The treasure finder was Sprul-sku mnyam-med dbyi-lston (Khyung-rgod rtsal), born circa 1175 CE (according to Eternal Bon tradition). The place this treasure was taken from (gter len-sa) is named Rgyung-rsbr brag, and the treasure protector (gter-srung) was Yum-sras sde-lnga. According to Eternal Bon reckonings, the ultimate source of this text was the gshen ‘Chi-med gtsug-phud (a name of Ston-pa gshen-rab when disseminating tantric teachings). This tantric tradition is known as Ting-mur g.yu-rtses’i bsnyen-sgrub rtsa-ba’i rgyud.

173 However, this is not as unusual as it might seem. Ritual texts preserving older lore and vocabulary are sometimes composed or compiled at a later date than more conventional Lamaist variants of the same subject. It seems to mostly depend on the motivations of individual authors (and on the availability of scriptural sources). See Bellezza 2005, p. 40.
The nine gze-ma are just one component of Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text, Dbal gsas rngam-pa’i las rim. This work contains a full set of tantric ritual practices dedicated to the yi-dam of the body, Dbal-gsas rgnam-pa.174 These include dispelling evil forces from the ritual mandala (’gegs-bskrad), generation of the deity (bskyed-rim), visualization of deity (rdzogs-rim), invitation (spyan-’dren), prostrations (phyag-‘tshal), confession (bzhags-pa), medicine offerings (sman-mchod), prayers and many other offerings (mchod-pa), mantra recitation (’dzab), praises (sku-bstod), and signs of attainment (rtags-grub, which includes a description of the deities), etc.

According to Dbal gsas rngam-pa’i las rim, the Dbal-mo nyer-bdun are emanations of Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo and Lha-rgod thog-pa. In this text, the Lha-rgod mched-gsum of the archaic tradition have metamorphosed into the Eternal Bon tutelary god of speech. In Eternal Bon, Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo is considered tantamount to Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal, but she is endowed with a much wider set of functions, many of which are tantric in nature. Eternal Bon doctrine espouses that Lha-rgod thog-pa and Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo have the same essential nature, which is the ‘nature of the mind itself’ (sens-nyid) or the ‘natural state of the mind’ (gnas-lugs). Their many emanations such as the nine gze-ma have the same essential nature.

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174 This god and his mate are depicted in the florid iconography typical of tantric tradition. He has nine heads and eighteen arms, and is midnight blue in color (mthing-nag; a sign of his complete perfection). He has a main right head that is white, a main left head that is red, a lower middle head of the lion, a lower right head of the tiger, a lower left head of the leopard, an upper middle head of the khyung, an upper right head of the dragon, and an upper left head of the chu-srin. Dbal-gsas rngam-pa’s yellow-red mane curls upwards (ral-pa dmar-ser gyen du’ khyi; symbolizing that his activities are exalted to the highest degree: dbu-’phang mtho). His two middle arms hold a dbal-phur dagger at the chest (punctures samsara from the root). His other eight right and eight left hands have different implements (generally speaking, these embody the qualities of his essential character [ngo-bo]). Dbal-gsas rngam-pa has four legs, and wears a fresh skin over his back and a tiger-skin loincloth (stag-sham). All his attributes are used to subdue the anger (she-sdang), lust (’dod-chags), pride (nga-rgyal), envy (phrag-dog), and ignorance (ma-rig) of sentient beings. See Dbal gsas rngam-pa’i las rim, nos. 100, 101. Dbal-gsas rngam-pa’s consort is Rngam-mo yum-chen dbyings kyi mtshan drug-ma (Six Names of the Raging Woman Great Mother in Space, a composite of six key goddesses: Sa-trig Er-sangs, Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal, Bzang-bza’i ring-btsun, Thugs-rje byams-ma, Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo, Mkha’-la gduc-mo). She is dark green in color (liang-nag) with one head, two arms and two legs. In her right hand is the sky-earth container (gnam-sa’i ga’u; signifies her dominion over existence) and in her left hand is a vase full of nectar (bdud-rtsis bum-pa; used to nourish and reduce the suffering of sentient beings). The sun and moon are bound to the top of her head (also symbolizes dominion over existence). See Dbal gsas rngam-pa’i las rim, nos. 104–107. For a more extensive description of Dbal-gsas rngam-pa, see Kværne 1995, pp. 77–80.
In tantric practice, Lha-rgod thog-pa is the yab (method, thabs) and Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo is the yum (wisdom, shes-rab), prerequisites to enlightenment. Such tantric conceptions behind Lha-rgod thog-pa and Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo are a far cry from the notion of a celestial couple who produced the gze-ma goddesses in Gnag rabs. In that text, Gnam-phyi gung-rgyal is a matriarch of the heavens who gave birth to nine eggs and whose main function is to insure that the lha and humans maintain their respective spheres of existence.

Indeed, Khyung-rgod rtsal created a complex doctrinal and ritual edifice around the gze-ma goddesses, none of which existed in the archaic ritual tradition. This intricacy extends to the appearances of Lha-rgod thog-pa and Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo. While certain individual elements such as found among celestial imagery and zoomorphic objects may be attributable to indigenous Tibetan culture, taken as a whole this is clearly an iconography of tantric persuasion. Deeply buried is the wild lha sire of space.175 According to the text, the Dbal-mo nyer-bdun belong to the extensive retinue of Lha-rgod thog-pa, once again skirting the procreative powers so crucial to the origins myths of archaic rituals. This super god of sorts is the master of the elemental spirits and is seen as having a far more august pedigree and abilities than them. In Eternal Bon, the physical universe was no longer viewed as of sufficient marvel in itself to explain the nature of divinity. As with Tibetan Buddhism, the focus had shifted to mental phenomena beyond the pale of empirical ratification. Nevertheless, like the older native gods, Lha-rgod thog-pa is the great vanquisher of enemies. As pain, sickness and death remain part of the human condition, so did the etiology of demonic misfortune, but now couched in the doctrine of Lamaism with its stress on karma and religious devotion.

According to Khyung-rgod rtsal, Lha-rgod thog-pa is an emanation of the speech of Ston-pa Gshen-rab.176 His residence is called Thog-‘brug bar-snang sgra yi gsas-mkhar (Gsas-mkhar of the Sound of the Thunder Dragon of the Intermediate Space). This god is sky blue (mthon) in color and has four heads, eight arms, and four legs. His middle head is sky blue, his right head white, his left head

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175 Eternal Bon widely recognizes that tantric deities such as Yum-sras of Gnam-mtsho or Mi-dbud of Nam-ra have more primitive forms as elemental spirits. These ‘lesser’ forms are viewed as either an anachronism originating from the remote epoch before the appearance of Ston-pa gshen-rab, or as subsidiary facets of a tantric godhead. For example, a convoluted doctrinal apparatus is employed to explain the elemental and tantric forms of the tutelary god of beneficial qualities (yon-tan), Ge-khod. On Ge-khod, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 300–303.

176 For a description of this god, see Dbal gsas rnam pa’i las rim., nos. 108–110; for that of his consort, see nos. 110–112.
red, and his upper head is red in color. Over his upper body (sku-stod) he wears the great skin (lpags-chen) of the sky demons (gnam-bdud), and on his lower body (sku-smad) leopard and caracal skins. His sash is of fiery lightning. The eight planets (gza’-brgyad) are bound around the top of his head. His topknot (thor-gtsug) is crowned with the sun and moon. Lha-rgod thog-pa’s earrings are of dragons and he has a snake necklace. His feet are ornamented with the twenty-eight constellations (rgyu-skar). In his right hands are the sword (ral-gri), spear (mdung), battle-hammer (tho-ba), and battleaxe (sta-re), which cut, pierce, pound, and defeat respectively. In his left hands are the lasso (zhags-pa), iron chain (lcags-sgrog), pincers (gzem-a), and trident (kha-rtse), which bind, shackle, catch, and stab respectively. Lha-rgod thog-pa deputes the one hundred thousand brave lha of the sky (gnam gyi lha-rgod) from his body. He treads upon four gnam-bdud. By his side are the goddesses (lha-mo) of the four seasons. The attendants he dispatches (mngag) are the nine dbal-mo, the nine gyad-mo and the nine thang-mo, alternative names for the Dbal-mo nyer-bdun. The body hair (ba-spu) of Lha-rgod thog-pa emits sparks of molten meteoric iron (gnam-lcags), which frighten (skrag) the sa-bdag, klu and gnyan. From his earlobes are broadcast the great sound of the dragon. By his squinched nose an epochal black wind hurricane is released. With the click of his tongue he cowers the mighty (btsan) and haughty ones (dregs-pa). With his stout and extremely powerful body he moves towards the enemy. With his voice he terrorizes the haughty ones. With his mind he quickly summons all [the enemies].

The consort of Lha-rgod thog-pa is called Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo ’gran gyi zla-med-ma (Incomparable Queen of Existence), a tantric goddess par excellence. Her residence is Srid-gsum dbang-du bsdud-pa’i gsas-mkhar (Gsas-mkhar of She Who Has Conquered the Three Realms of Existence). Her glory spreads throughout phenomenal existence (snang-srid kun-grags). She is the greatest power in existence (srid-pa’i dbang-mo che). Her great magical power (mthu) and prowess (rtsal) is wondrous (rmad) and cannot be contested by others. She is the miraculous supreme defender,

177 A class of demons that causes bad weather and other negativities originating from the sky.
178 Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Ra-hu-la (a lunar node).
179 For another description of Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo, a goddess made prominent by Gshen-chen klu-dga’, taken from the text Ma mo ’dus pa’i yang snying gi rgyud, see Kværne 1995, pp. 107, 108.
180 Srid-gsum denotes either the vertically oriented worlds of lha, humans and klu (an indigenous tradition), or to the desire realm (’dod-pa’i srid-pa), form realm (gzugs kyi srid-pa) and formless realm (gzugs-med-pa’i srid-pa; an Indic tradition).
possessing great methods (thabs-chen) and beneficence (thugs-rje). She is the best of the sgra-bla of the three realms of excellence: brave, skillful and powerful. Her hundred heads terrorize [all negativities] in visible existence. Her one thousand hands possess miraculous methods and great strength (stobs-chen). She holds the marvelous (ya-mtshan) manifestations of armaments (mtshon-cha) in her one thousand hands. From the vastness of the womb of the great mother she dispatches (‘gyed) the one hundred thousand wrathful females (khro-mo) of activities. She acts as the glorious defender (dpal-mgon) of all living beings. When her raging anger (khros shing ’tshigsp- pa) knows no bounds (nan-ltar), an assembly of ninety thousand carnivorous spar-ma of the dbal are unleashed. The costume of her miraculous body is of unending varieties. In the evening she is dressed in black clothes and ornaments, at midnight in blue clothes and ornaments, before the first light of the day she is attired in white, at dawn in yellow, at noon in red, and around sunset she dons brownish red clothes and ornaments.

Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text also describes the nine gze-ma in detail. It begins by conferring a tantric mantle upon their existence, accounting for the appearance of the nine eggs:

Bswø! Lha-rgod thog-pa of the sky of inexhaustible [miraculous qualities] and the incomparable Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo, by their methods of inseparability within the sound of the intermediate space (between heaven and earth), made manifest, thus the twenty-seven eggs of dbal appeared. They are the female attendants of the mind of Dbal-gsas rgnam-pa. The first of the nine eggs of the dbal opened. The nine gze-ma eggs of the dbal of inexhaustible [miraculous qualities] appeared.

bswo mi zad gnam gyi lha rgod thog pa dang / srid pa’i rgyal mo ’gran gyi zla med ma / bar snang sgra yi nang du gnyis med thabs kyis rol pas / dbal gyi sgo nga nyi shu risa bdun byung / dbal ggas rgyam pa pho nga mo / dbal gyi sgo nga dang po dgu brdol pa / mi bzad dbal gyi gze ma mgo (= sgo) (+ nga) dgu byung /

As with all texts for the zi-ma / gze-ma we have examined, the first goddess described is that of the dragon. Her iconography and basic homicidal tendencies appear to have been taken by Khyung-rgod rtsal’s directly from the archaic tradition, not from the texts of

181 Bha-ga’i klong; signifies the emptiness of all phenomena.
182 Yum-chen; signifies the essential nature of the mind.
183 See Dbal ggas rgyam pa’i las rim, nos. 127, ln. 5 to 135, ln. 2.
184 Rol-pa (rol-la). This word can also mean that they played or united, a roundabout way to say that they joined in a spiritual manner, not carnally.
Gshen-chen klu-dga’ and Khu-tsha zla-’od with their more sanitized versions of the murderous propensities of the goddesses. Nevertheless, these three Eternal Bon texts are closer to one another in composition than they are to the Gnaṅ rabs, for they each bind the gze-ma to a religious oath of historic dimensions. By doing so, they strove to create dutiful spirit allies with a strong sectarian bent from the erstwhile utilitarian and widely accessible goddesses of the archaic tradition. Also, as with the other Lamaist texts, Khyung-rgod rtsal imposed a regimen on the older tradition, providing systematic descriptions and appellations for each of the nine gze-ma.

Although Khyung-rgod rtsal recognizes the inherent violence of the nine gze-ma, he dwells less on their gruesome acts than does the Gnaṅ rabs. Furthermore, his writing is decidedly less expressive and colorful than the Gnaṅ rabs. Not only was the doctrinal identity of the gze-ma changed to fit the exigencies of Eternal Bon doctrine, but in doing so, none of its authors could quite attain the literary vitality of the Old Tibetan text. Khyung-rgod rtsal presents the dragon-headed goddess as follows:

From the sound of dragon, the king of sound, in expansive space [imbued with] the beneficent mind [of their mother and father], the mandala of space, one egg opened. [She was] ’Brug-lcam dar-ma kun-grags-ma ((Dragon Lady in the Prime of Her Life Glorious Everywhere). She has a blue human body with the head of the dragon. In her hand she is waving (g.yab) the arm of the chu-srin and crying out loudly (’od dod ’bod). Her fangs of iron together with the dbal are sharpened with bso. As you were set loose with the sound of the voice of the excellent gshen, bring the sound and speech of the oath-breaker ([dam]-nyams) here! Also, upset all the royal places of the enemy! From the manifestation of the mind of Gshen-rab came Stag-la me-’bar of ancient times, he who administered [the oath] from the sound of his speech, thus accordingly you are the oath-holder (tha-tshig can) of [the Bon] he had practiced. Do not let it lapse (ma-’da’); you are entrusted with the [four] activities! Conquer and reduce to dust the hating enemies and harming obstructers. Summon them from afar and quickly slaughter them.

185 That the mystic syllable bso in this context is a sharpening agent is confirmed in the text Khro bo dbang chen, p. 370 (see fn. 193 for bibliographic details).
186 His speech is a kind of mandala. The bodily locations for the administration of the religious oath by the mythic priest Stag-la me-’bar vary with each of the nine goddesses. For a description of the sage-deity Stag-la me-’bar taken from an Eternal Bon text written in 1669 CE, see Kværne 1995, 117, 118.
187 ‘Phrin-las-bzhi, the four modalities of activity exercised by deities (pacific, expanding, empowering and wrathful).
As the structure and tone of the accounts of the other eight goddesses is the same as above, only salient variations in Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text are summarized below. Readers are encouraged to make their own comparisons with Gnag rabs to pinpoint the specific analogies and contrasts between these two accounts.

Second gze-ma

Agent of the hatching: Sound of the epochal wind (bskal-rlung).
Residence: Gsas-mkhar of the black epochal wind hurricane (’tshubs-ma).
Name: Sbrul-lcam ’khril-byed gdug-pa-mo (Snake Lady that Coils Cruel Woman).
Appearance: Dark green body human body with the head of a snake.
Emblematic activities: She sharpens her fangs of conch. She waves (rlobs = rlabs) a khyung wing overhead in the castle (sphere) of the intermediate space.
Actions commanded: Pull out (drongs) tongue organ of the senses of the oath-breaker! Pull out from its root the heart (tisi-ta) of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Tongue of Stag-la me-’bar.

Third gze-ma

Agent of the hatching: Sound of the ge-ta\textsuperscript{188} bdud.
Residence: Gsas-mkhar of the master of the death (’chi-bdag), the bdud that takes the life-force.
Name: Bdud-lcam rma-lo srog-bdag-mo.
Appearance: Black human body with the head of a chough (skyung-ka).

\textsuperscript{188} A type of bdud. There are four ge-ta in the retinue of the king of the bdud (Tucci 1949: 718).
Emblematic activities: She sharpens the great dagger (*phur-chen*) of meteoric iron. She brandishes (*gdeng*) the copper *spar-shad* in a manner to hold the enemy.

Actions commanded: Cut the back of the neck of the oath-breaker! Pull out from the base, the eyes and life-force of the enemy and obstructor!

Place of the administered oath: Back of the neck of Stag-la me-'bar.

Fourth *gze-ma*
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the extremely powerful (*rtsal-chen*) lion.
Residence: *Gsas-mkhar* of the very splendorous (*byin-chen*) Ri-rgyal lhun-po (the world mountain).
Name: Seng-lcam dar-ma gya-nom stabs-mo-che.
Appearance: White human body with the head of a lion. She wears a red coiled vermillion turban on her head.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens the bird horns of iron.
Actions commanded: Come here quickly with the body of the oath-breaker! Sow the seeds of disease in the country of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Upper body of Stag-la me-'bar.

Fifth *gze-ma*
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the sky portal (*gnam-sgo* *dbal-khang*) (house of *dbal* deities and practitioners).
Residence: *Gsas-mkhar* of the sky portal house of the *dbal*.
Name: Mi-mo za-byed rdzu-'phrul-chen (Great Miraculous Lady Eater).
Appearance: Red human body with the head of a brown bear. Her shaking (*sprug*) mane falls over her shoulders.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens the meteoric iron sword (*ral-kyu*).
Actions commanded: Bring the heart of the oath-breaker here! Separate the child from the side of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Center of the mind of Stag-la me-'bar.

Sixth *gze-ma*
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the middle of the Milky Way (*Dgu-tshigs*).

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189 A weapon in the form of eagle claws.
Residence: Gsas-mkhar of the line traced across space (thig-'dren nam-kha’) sgrom-dar (?).
Name: Srin-mo za-byed ’jigs-pa’i spyang-ku bzhin (Srin-mo Eater Terrific Wolf Face).
Appearance: Dark red human body with the head of a wolf. She dispatches attendants with her hawk wings.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens the fangs of molten bronze.
Actions commanded: Pull off the skin on the back of the enemy starting from the head and come! Separate the bones and flesh of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Vertebrae in the middle of the back of Stag-la me-’bar.

Seventh gze-ma
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the blazing epochal conflagration (me-dpung).
Residence: Gsas-mkhar of the scorching, blazing conflagration.
Name: Stag-lcam ’bring-mthing kha-rngam sha-zan-ma.
Appearance: Reddish brown human body with the head of a tiger. She beats with the flayed skin of the brown bear and hangs it over her shoulders.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens the scimitar of her hand.
Actions commanded: Quickly pull out the body warmth of the enemy and come! Consume as your food the red flesh and blood of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Terminus (pit of the stomach) warmth of Stag-la me-’bar.

Eighth gze-ma
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the great flapping of [the wings of] the khyung.
Residence: Gsas-mkhar of the sound of the magical drum and flat bell.
Name: Khyung-lcam rlabs-chen legs-mos skor.
Appearance: Yellow-green human body with the head of a khyung. She dispatches the nine males (pho) and nine females (mo) concealed behind her.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens her miraculous fangs.
Actions commanded: Deafen the ears, deafening the enemy! Consume as your food the household of the enemy!
Place of the administered oath: Ears of Stag-la me-’bar.

Ninth gze-ma
Agent of the hatching: Sound of the swirling ocean.
Residence: *Gsas-mkhar* of the broad currents of the ocean.
Name: Klu-mo mi-bskyod kha-rngam gdug-po-mo (Unmoving Female Water Spirit Fierce Mouth Cruel Female).
Appearance: Blue-green human body with the head of a *chu-srin*. Through her fanning of the magical wind, [the wind] throughout the three worlds is agitated.
Emblematic activity: She sharpens her fangs of crystal.
Actions commanded: Bring the body cavity blood and nerves of the enemy through sucking! Make the *lha* of the lap of the enemy afraid!
Place of the administered oath: Subtle energy channels of Stag-la me-'bar.

Khyung-rgod rtsal also provides a short *bskul-pa* in typical Lamaist form. As with his descriptions of the nine *gze-ma*, this ritual is primarily concerned with the sectarian identity and activities of these goddesses. Hardly present are the practical aims of the *Gnag rabs* to eliminate palpable enemies imperiling the person and property of the priests and their benefactors. In its place are high-minded religious sentiments:

*Bso!* Nine *gze-ma* of the *dbal* with inexhaustible [good qualities] that hold fast [enemies]. Come with the activities of the oath (dam-tshig) that was pledged. Come with the activities of the emanations of the beneficent mind. Come with activities of destroying the enemy force. Come with the activities of quelling the *bdud* force. Come with the activities of protecting on behalf on the [Eternal Bon] doctrine. Come possessing the miraculous methods [of subduing the enemies]. Come with your roaring sound and its [accoutrements]. Come away with the sharp-edged weapons and their *dbal*.

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190 See *Dbal gsas rngam pa’i las rim* no. 135, Ins. 3–4.
191 Used here in its ordinary sense as a word of invocation and declamation.
192 This is followed by the mantras of Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo recited along with mudras, ten lines in total. See *ibid.*, no. 135, ln. 5 to 136, ln. 3. The spells recited here are longer and more complex than those of the *Gnag rabs*. Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text represents a mature stage in development of mystic formulae for use in tantric rituals of protective deities. These spells are designed to empower and reinforce the commands of the *bskul-pa*. The incantations of Khyung-rgod rtsal’s text are mainly attributed in Bon to the Zhang-zhung language, but they are probably somewhat Sanskritized.
The final step in the recreation of the gze-ma goddesses was made in the late 14th century CE by the famed Eternal Bon scholar Skyabs-ston rin-chen ’od-zer. He composed a commentary (‘grel-bshad) about the nine gze-ma, which elaborates at length upon the doctrinal framework in which these goddesses have been inserted. Skyabs-ston rin-chen ’od-zer’s work fully develops the qualities and functions of the nine gze-ma in the Eternal Bon tantric tradition, constituting the final act in their recasting as Lamaist-style deities. Their qualities are stated to be expressed in both samsara (’khor) and in the liberated state (thar), a stock Vajrayāna trope. According to Skyabs-ston rin-chen ’od-zer, the fundamental identity of the nine gze-ma has three main facets: the primordial wisdom female (ma-mo; accounts for their fundamental nature as the mind itself), the female of miracles (accounts for their grotesque physical appearance), and the female of activities (accounts for their full range of defeating and slaughtering functions):

The eggs of existence and the nine females are based upon the ancient lineage of the primordial wisdom (ye-shes) ma-mo. They are based upon the form of the ma-mo of miracles (rdzu-’phrul). Their precisely executed great strength (stobs la gzer) is that of the ma-mo of activities (las).

srid pa’i sgo nga dang mo dgu ni sngon ye shes kyi ma mo’i rgyud la brten no / rdzu ’phrul gyi ma mo’i sku la brten / las kyi ma mo stobs la gzer /

Conclusion

In addition to investigating the Gnag rabs text of Gathang Bumpa, this paper explores the historical continuation of its ritual motifs and activities in the Eternal Bon religion, particularly those connected to


194 See ibid., p. 388.

195 Ma-mo are female divinities of a wrathful nature associated with natural phenomena and the feminine principle in tantric tradition. On the Buddhist tantric underpinnings of the ma-mo, see Blondeau 2002.

196 See Khro bo dbang chen ngo mtshar rgyas pa, p. 364.
the ennead of goddesses known as zi-ma / gze-ma. This case study demonstrates how the archaic ritual traditions of Gnag rabs were modified and adapted to the ethical and doctrinal demands of Lamaist religion. Although superficial aspects revolving around the iconography and wrathful functions of the gze-ma goddesses were largely preserved, the origins attributed to these personalities and the rationale for their propitiation were systematically altered.

This kind of textual reengineering appears to have been widely applied to the archaic ritual tradition to bring about the innovations that define Lamaist praxis to this day. The process of retaining nominal features of indigenous tradition while simultaneously transforming its intellectual foundation is also discernable in funerary and curative rituals, and in the narrative origins of the priest / buddha Gshen-rab mi-bo. This resetting of the ritual dynamic can be tracked through the gto (beneficial rites), dpyad (diagnostic rites) mo (divinatory rites) and phya (prognosticatory rites), mainstays of archaic and Eternal Bon therapeutic practice.

Generally speaking, Lamaist ritual texts are sectarian affairs preoccupied with defending specific ideological and institutional interests. They go to great lengths to highlight the value of the principles they foster and the need for protecting them from opponents. Lamaist rituals, like other genres of its literary tradition, promote a code of personal conduct exemplified by the Buddha archetype. Thus sanguinary rites were proscribed and a more equanimous view of enemies was idealized. Archaic ritual documents such as Gnag rabs conspicuously lack this sermonic and pietistic approach to the practice of rituals. Rather they are executed solely for pragmatic reasons; the very fact of there being an enemy or a threat is seen as sufficient justification for their performance.

While Lamaist texts of destructive magic have inherited the mercenary intent of actions and rewards propagated in Old Tibetan ritual literature, they do so within a theological superstructure that provides a lofty rationale for the violence meted out. That a greater good is being served mitigates the inherent harshness of the extirpation of enemies. This is often framed in the ennobling rhetoric of the holy dharma being threatened by heretics, the welfare of sentient beings, or some other well intended cause. The attribution of chivalrous motivations to aggressive ritual responses in Lamaism is readily understandable, for it is founded on the ethic of ‘all-encompassing compassion’ (snying-rje) and the ‘ten virtues’ (dge-ba bcu).

No such dignified pretext, however, was required in Gnag rabs or any other text of the archaic ritual tradition I have studied. They display a candidness both in their underlying motivations and
outward goals. Here violence against foes is sanctioned for practical reasons concerning human health and well-being. *Gnag rabs* and other archaic ritual texts stress the nature of relations between the executors of rituals and their beneficiaries and other human beings and entities. Rather than moral cultivation as an end in itself, the establishment of an accord between oneself and other people, animals and spirits is the means by which personal happiness is achieved.

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