Towards a History of Spiti: Some Comments on the Question of Clans from the Perspective of Social Anthropology

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he state of research on clans in the Spiti Valley is far from developed. This is evident from the fact that so far no published work exists that deals specifically with this topic. Only in a small amount of older and a few recent works clans are mentioned, however, with various different usages of the term clan and usually not by taking into account the local Tibetan language context, that is, the terminology used in Spiti in oral and written forms. The issue of clans is a research question which is relevant for the understanding of local communities in Spiti at different historical periods, in particular from the perspective of social anthropology. It is the aim of this paper to discuss preliminary results of ongoing research on this topic and to draw attention to hitherto little used, unknown, or unavailable research materials. The present paper therefore has the character of an interim report but does not represent a systematic study.¹

Due to the limited space and with respect to relevant but so far little used sources, as well as new material that became recently available, the chronological focus in this contribution is on two historical periods, the mid-19th to late 20th century period and the period around and before the late 10th century. Wherever it is relevant comparative information from adjacent areas is included. This reflects the fact that Spiti was part of the West Tibetan kingdom

¹ See also Jonathan Samuels' (2017) article "Are we legend? Reconsidering clan in Tibet" for a recent discussion of the state of research on the theme of clan and related concepts in Tibetan Studies and for advocacy of "a more anthropologically-informed interrogation of Tibetan historical literature" (*ibid*.: 310).

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from the late 10th century onward and in later periods belonged to the kingdoms of Guge, Ladakh, and Purig respectively,² and that to the best of our knowledge the Tibetan-speaking populations of the Spiti Valley had throughout most of their history considerable and extensive interrelationships with communities in neighbouring areas, such as Upper Kinnaur in the south, the Rongchung valley in the south-east, Zanskar and Ladakh in the northwest, and Chumurti and further areas along the Indus valley in the north-east, across and also despite political and administrative borders.

Clans in Spiti: Mid-19th to Late 20th century

From the 1840s onward, British officials such as Captain W. C. Hay, James Lyall and others, started to collect information on local administrative and taxation systems and to some degree also showed interest in the social organization of Spiti.³ Probably the earliest reference to clans in the area is contained in the *Gazetteer of the Kangra District* (1883–1884b; see below). This information was gathered during the time when Spiti belonged to British India, a period which lasted from 1846–1947.⁴

Sometime between July 1899 and 1904, in the course of investigations on Tibetan dialects, August Hermann Francke recorded some information on this research topic in the Indus valley in Ladakh where he collected, for example, the names of *pha spun* or "father-brother-ships" in Khalatse.⁵ During a research trip through Spiti in July-August 1909—in the course of an expedition to Kinnaur, Spiti, and areas of Ladakh in order to document and investigate the archaeological and artistic remains of the ancient Buddhist culture of these territories for which he was employed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), he "made enquiries into the Tibetan system of clans, as it is represented in Spiti."⁶

Around twenty years after Francke, and most probably initiated

² See Petech 1977: 49ff, Jahoda 2009, Schuh 2016a: 15, Schuh 2016b: 1.

³ See, for example, Hay 1851, Harcourt 1871, Lyall 1874.

⁴ See, for example, Jahoda 2015: 111ff.

⁵ See Francke 1907: 364–365. Francke was stationed at the mission of the Moravian Church (*Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*) at Khalatse from July 1, 1899, until 1904 and again from June 20, 1905 until 1906. See Chapter "A. Biographisches zu A. H. Francke und Theodora Francke" in Walravens and Taube (1992: 17).

⁶ Francke 1914: 47.

by him, Joseph Gergan,⁷ whose family was of Central Tibetan descendant,⁸ and who was a Moravian missionary like Francke, started to collect respective names of 'clans' in Spiti and other areas of historical Western Tibet, such as Lahaul, Zanskar, etc. There is a long list of such names (referred to as *pha spad*) from Spiti (*sPyi ti*) as well as of *pha tshan* from Lahaul (*Gar zha*), *pha spun* from Lower Ladakh (Bla dwags gsham) and Zanskar (Zangs dkar) which is kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Manuscript Department, among Francke's papers. The existence of this list is not mentioned in the comprehensive bibliographic work by Walravens and Taube (1992) among the textual materials collected by Francke-a huge number of manuscripts, wood-prints, documents etc. kept among his papers in libraries and archives in Berlin, Herrnhut, Leipzig and London.⁹ The list was 'discovered' by the present author during archival research in Berlin in 2005. The author of this list is clearly and without any doubt Joseph Gergan as is evident from the following note accompanying the list (see also below, Fig. 1 and 2):

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Further, we know that Gergan went to Spiti at least two times, in 1921 and again in 1924 together with H. Lee Shuttleworth, at that time Assistant Commissioner in Kulu. Shuttleworth's *History of Spiti*, an unpublished manuscript which is kept in the British Library,¹⁰ contains some notes on Francke's—less on Gergan's—earlier findings (see below).¹¹

⁷ Joseph Gergan corresponds to the Tibetan Yo seb dGe rgan. His personal name was bSod nams Tshe brtan. His full name in written Tibetan was bSod nams Tshe brtan Yo seb dGe rgan (see dGe rgan 1976: title page).

⁸ Cf. Guyon Le Bouffy 2012: 18f. See also the account of a meeting of the Moravian missionary August Wilhelm Heyde with Gergan's father in 1875 in Hundar in Ladakh (quoted in Walravens and Taube 1992: 225).

⁹ See Walravens and Taube 1992: 93–108, 109–131, 141–155.

¹⁰ Based on letters by H. Hargreaves (Officiating Director General of Archaeology in India, Shimla) to Shuttleworth in July and October 1930 (see BL, OIOC, MssEur.D722/25) as well as internal evidence in Shuttleworth's manuscript (*ibid*.), Shuttleworth may have been working on this manuscript since the late

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Fig. 1 — Note by Joseph Gergan accompanying the list of pha spad and pha spun in Spiti, Lower Ladakh, Lahaul and Zanskar (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Manuscript Department, Francke papers)

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Fig. 2 — List of 79 pha spad in Spiti collected by Gergan (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Manuscript Department, Francke papers)

1920s and was still working on it around 1932. On Shuttleworth's *History of Spiti* and his collaboration with Gergan, see Laurent 2017 in the present volume.

¹¹ See also Jahoda 2007 for additional information on the 'collaborative network' constituted by Francke, Gergan, and Shuttleworth.

The information contained in Gergan's posthumously published work *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* [*Eternal Treasure of Royal Genealogies of Ladakh*],¹² for which the list mentioned above seems to have been collected, constitutes a good point of departure for a discussion of clans in Spiti as well as of the Tibetan term *rigs rus* and the local variant names, such as *pha spad* etc., from a comparative, regional, and historical perspective.¹³

Gergan uses the expression *rigs rus* for kinship groups which are defined as tracing their descent patrilineally from a common ancestor.¹⁴ He correlates the terminology commonly used in Spiti with that used in Ladakh at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Gergan, *rigs rus pa* (members of this type of kinship group) were called *pha spun* by the people in Ladakh, *rus pa* by people in Rong and sTod, and *pha spad* or *pha rus* by the population in Spiti. The lineages (*rgyud pa*) of five particular *rus* were most numerously represented in Spiti. Their names are given as *Blon chen pa*, *Tum bō ba pa*, *Nil 'gro ba pa*, *gNam ru pa*, and *rGyan shing pa*.¹⁵

Gergan cites a list from *lHa nyi ma gdung brgyud*, a historical source, with names of other patrilineal descent groups (*rus*) in Spiti and concludes that there were more than 36 *rus*—at an unspecified time one should add. It is unclear which historical period this text—unavailable to me—refers to. According to the list (compiled by Gergan on a long strip of paper), however, the number of *pha spad* in Spiti was 79, the number of *pha tshan* in Lahaul was 15, the number of *pha spun* in Lower Ladakh 8 and in Zanskar 39, in total 141. The names include the five before-mentioned and many others (see Fig. 2 and Appendix).

What else is known about these *rus* apart from the fact that they are patrilineal descent groups? According to the information to be found in gazetteers from the late 19th and early 20th centuries where *rus* was mostly translated as 'clan' but interestingly also as 'tribe', these groups are invariably described as exogamous and non-local units: "A Cháhzang will marry a Cháhzang, but having regard to relationship; this is, they will not intermarry within the same clan

¹² See dGe rgan 1976: 324–325.

¹³ See also De Rossi Filibeck's (2002) study of Gergan's chapter on *rigs rus* which is useful but not entirely clear in the terminology related to *rus* or clan.

¹⁴ dGe rgan 1976: 324.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.: 325.2–3.

(rus or haddi)."16

The 1899 edition of this work also includes names of *rus* (*pa*) ("*rú-wa*") which partly accord with those given by Gergan:

"Though caste is almost unknown in Spiti there are tribal divisions or clans, a few of the more important of which are the following: (1) Nandu, (2) Gyazhingpa, (3) Khyungpo, (4) Lonchhenpa, (5) Henir, and (6) Nyekpa. Marriage is forbidden within the tribe, but one tribe intermarries freely with another. A woman on marrying is considered to belong to her husband's tribe, and the children of both sexes are of the tribe of the father. The tribes (rú-wa) are not local: members of each may be found in any village."¹⁷

This quotation clearly demonstrates that membership of the *rus* is exclusively inherited through the father, for sons as well as daughters.¹⁸ This corresponds to the concept underlying the Tibetan reckoning of kinship according to which the quality transmitted by the man is expressed by the idea of bone (*rus*) and that by the woman with the ideas of flesh (*sha*) or blood (*khrag*).¹⁹

Patrilocal residence usually means that after marriage the woman moves into the house of her husband or his father, i.e. of the head of the household in his family. The concomitant change in 'clan membership' cannot, however, refer to *rus*, since this quality is immutable but to membership of a group that is defined also by criteria of residence rather than only descent. This is evidenced by comparable material of more recent date from Zanskar, where it is expressed terminologically by the differentiation between *rus* (*pa*) and *pha spun*. There *rus* denotes descent from a single male ancestor. All children, sons and daughters, belong through birth to the *rus pa* of their father. A daughter who gets married to a man (who belongs—necessarily—to another *rus pa*) and who moves to the

¹⁶ Gazetteer of the Kangra District 1883–1884b: 120.

¹⁷ Gazetteer of the Kangra District 1899: 93.

¹⁸ To this extent, from the point of view of transmitting the quality of *rus*, the woman does not have to belong to the same social stratum since the children's membership of the *rus* is in any case transmitted by the man.

¹⁹ Cf. the characterisation of the Tibetan descent groups by Rolf Stein: "The patrilineal stock (*brgyud*) constituting the clan (*rus*) descended from a common ancestor, is exogamous: a clan member cannot marry within his own clan. This kind of relationship is called 'bone' (*rus*), whereas that through women, by marriage, is called 'flesh' (*sha*)." (Stein 1972: 94).

bridegroom's parents after the wedding keeps her *rus pa* but loses membership to the *pha spun* group of her father²⁰ (which means that she joins the *pha spun*-group of her husband).

According to this system the *pha spun* in Zanskar are "patrilineal clans" or "a cluster of families whose male members believe themselves to be the progeny of a single male ancestor and which worships a special clan god (*pha-lha*)."²¹ So we have to differentiate between *rus* or *rus pa* and *pha spun* or *pha spad* as in Spiti.

By applying ethno-sociological concepts as defined, for example, by George Peter Murdock in *Social Structure* (1949), to quote one of the classic works of the social anthropological discipline, the groups in Zanskar described by the term *pha spun* may be characterised as clans, while *rus* corresponds to the concept of sib. Murdock defined a clan as a kind of "compromise kin group" insofar as it "is based upon both a rule of residence and a rule of descent". It combines "a unilocal rule of residence with a consistent unilinear rule of descent" and effects "a compromise whereby some affinal relatives are

²⁰ Cf. Dargay and Dargyay 1980: 93.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 113. In a later publication, Eva K. Dargyay summarizies her findings in this form: "The people of Zanskar are organized in lineages which they call *rus pa* ('bones'). [...] The term *rus pa* identifies a number of families which are related by male kinship. In other words, only those families that can trace back their origin to a common male ancestor belong to the same *rus pa*. The mother's kinship is in this context insignificant. Children obtain by birth their father's *rus pa* for the rest of their lives. [...] Besides the *rus pa*, another category exists for defining kinship known as *pha spun*, which can be translated as 'father-brotherhood.' The *pha spun* is used to identify the male members of one *rus pa plus their wives* [my emphasis; CJ], who by virtue of the rules of exogamy belong to a different *rus pa*. These rules imply that a woman when married will become a member of her husband's *pha spun* but will remain a member of her father's *rus pa*." (Dargyay 1988: 127).

Dargyay's ethnographic account (based on research in the late 1970s) as well as related social anthropological terminology is confirmed by Kim Gutschow's fieldwork in Zanskar between 1991 and 2001: "Those individuals who share the same bone [*rus*] share a common patrilineal ancestor, real or fictive. A subset of those who share the same bone are those who also share a guardian deity [*pha'i lha*], known as the "father's relatives" (*pha'i spun*). This group or patriclan provides its members with a shared status and offers assistance at times of death and birth, when the household members are polluted. When women marry, they sever their ties to their natal household by giving up their affiliation to their father's guardian deity and patriclan, but retain their father's bone." (Gutschow 2004: 70).

included and some consanguinal kinsmen excluded."²² According to this definition *pha spun / pha spad* correspond to clans. A sib, on the other hand, is defined as "Two or more lineages related by a common, mythical ancestor."²³ Murdock defined this kin group as opposed to the clan as being based purely on descent: A sib consists of all descendants tracing their descent patrilineally from a common ancestor. Membership does not change through marriage. According to this definition *rus* correspond to sibs.

In addition there is the question of subunits of sibs (or *rus*). Sibs usually include several lineages. Lineages are characterized by Murdock through their accurate and reliable genealogy,²⁴ whereas that of sibs would be often inaccurate or inconsistent.²⁵ In this sense, in our context the term (*b*)*rgyud pa* (from *brgyud*) can be seen as a subcategory of (*rigs*) *rus*, in that it denotes *local* lineages and their members tracing their descent patrilineally from a common ancestor (*rus* / *rigs rus* / *pha rus* in Gergan's usage).

When describing present-day circumstances relating to these matters in Tabo in Spiti, local informants make exclusive use of the term *brgyud* to refer to local patrilineages of limited genealogical range. Patrilineages or patri-sibs that extend further back or are more comprehensive in the sense of *rus*, or clans in the sense of *pha spun / pha rus* etc. are, at least in Tabo, accordingly no longer represented or hardly even known of. One informant differentiates between six family groups of this kind, each of which constitutes a separate descent group or *brgyud*. According to the semantic range of this term a number of very different concepts—for example, of blood relationship or residence—can be associated with *brgyud*, for example "those who have parted from the main house" or "group of

²² Murdock 1949: 66. He notes that in contrast to his definition British anthropologists used 'clan' for "any unilinear consanguineal kin group of the type which we [...] have termed the 'sib'" (*ibid*.: 67).

²³ Schusky 1965: 79; cf. also Murdock 1949: 67.

²⁴ "A consanguineal kin group produced by either rule of unilinear descent is technically known as a *lineage* when it includes only persons who can actually trace their common relationship through a specific series of remembered genealogical links in the prevailing line of descent" (Murdock 1949: 46; my emphasis).

²⁵ "When the members of a consanguineal kin group acknowledge a traditional bond of common descent in the paternal or maternal line, but are unable always to trace the actual genealogical connections between individuals, the group is called a *sib*" (Murdock 1949: 47).

nearest relatives."²⁶ Marital relationships between members of this patrilineal *brgyud* are completely out of the question. Of the *brgyud* distinguished in Tabo there is only one whose name can be possibly associated with historical data (*ser brgyud*, identical with *khyi ser pa*?).

Research by Martin Brauen conducted in the 1970s in Ladakh showed that the function and increasingly also the composition of the *pha spun* groups or clans has changed in many respects. He arrived at the assessment that the *pha spun* groups he found there should be understood as "cultic corporations" and as members of households that are more or less near each other and who form a group on account of certain rights and duties, on account of the cult of a common ancestral protective deity (*pha lha*) and on account of the ownership of a joint hearth for cremation (*spur khang*).²⁷

The conditions obtaining in various regions of Tibetan culture described by several authors thus allow the conclusion that the groups known as *pha spun* or *pha spad* in areas of *mNga' ris skor gsum*, that is, 'Historical Western Tibet' (including Ladakh, Zanskar and Spiti) were based historically on exogamous, patrilineal lineages (*brgyud*) tracing their descent from a common ancestor, and which were additionally linked by common residence, a common ancestral deity (*pha lha*) and a cult of the dead.²⁸

²⁶ Jahoda 2015: 177.

²⁷ See Brauen 1980: 23. Cf. also Gutschow's observation regarding Ladakh where according to her view "the idiom of bone [*rus*] has become defunct and the *pha spun* is an assembly of households who join or leave at will" (Gutschow 2004: 70). See also Dargyay and Dargyay (1980: 93) who made a similar observation already in 1978–79.

²⁸ The latter is in agreement with Francke's observation in Spiti that "every *phaspun*-ship has to look after the cremation of their dead, and monuments in commemoration of the dead, *mchod-rten* or *mani* walls, are generally erected by the whole *pha-spun*-ship of a certain village, and the name of the particular *phaspun*-ship is found on the votive tablets of such monuments" (Francke 1914: 48). I wish to thank Yannick Laurent for drawing my attention to this statement by Francke.

In a contribution to *Drogpa Namgyal, ein Tibeterleben* (1940), a book on the fictitious life of a native male Ladakhi, by the Moravian missionary Samuel Heinrich Ribbach, Josef (Joseph) Gergan, based on his own observations and on interviews with local experts (among others monks and astrologers), describes in some detail the cult of the dead and funeral rites in Ladakh. The Tibetan version of his essay (which is not available to me) seems to date from the 1930s while the information contained therein may at least partly relate to the 1920s and perhaps even before. Gergan stresses in particular the social function and importance of

Clan Names and History

On the relationship between clan names, history and locality, Francke expresses the view that "The historical interest of these clan names lies in the fact that they are often local names, *viz.*, they indicate the locality from which a certain clan has immigrated into Western Tibet."²⁹ He was able, however, to substantiate this hypothesis only for a few individual cases in Ladakh.³⁰ According to this, two "*pha spun*-ships" of Khalatse comprising 16 families were found to be of Gilgit origin. This hypothesis does not seem to work for most *pha spun* in Ladakh nor the majority of *pha spad* in Spiti. (The name does not indicate per se their place of origin.)

Francke hypothesized that in some cases the Tibetan names of *pha spad* in Spiti testified "to the presence of Tibetans in Spiti in early times, while they also suggest the presence of settlers from Kulū. The following four names are decidedly Tibetan: (1) *rGya-zhing-pa*, large field owners, (2) *Khyung-po*, 'Garuḍa-men,' a name which was very common during the pre-Buddhist times of Tibet, (3) *bLon-chen-pa*, 'great ministers,' the men of this clan are doubtless the descendants of some early Tibetan official of Spiti, (4) *sNyegs-pa*, this is a word which is found in the names of the earliest Tibetan records.³¹ Two of

the pha spun: "Wenn eine erwachsene [...] Person stirbt, werden erstens die Paspun (Sippenglieder [members of the sib; my emphasis]), zweitens die Lamas, dritten die Onpos (dbon-po, Wahrsager) auf alle Fälle benötigt. Obgleich man ursprünglich nur die Glieder des väterlichen Geschlechtes Paspun nannte, so nennt man in Ladak jetzt alle diejenigen Glieder der Sippe Paspun, die einen gemeinsamen Schutzgott (p'a-lha) verehren. Außer den Paspun darf keine Person die Leiche berühren (und selbst die Paspun nur dann, wenn es die magischen Zeichen gestatten; das Berühren der Leiche macht unrein)." (Gergan 1940: 213). Additonal information on the pha spun is given by Ribbach (seemingly based on his observations as missionary in Lahaul and Ladakh between 1892 and 1913): "Bei allen wichtigen Ereignissen innerhalb der Familie und Sippe, wie Geburt, Heirat, Todesfall, treten die P'aspun zusammen zu gemeinsamem Handeln und gegenseitiger Hilfeleistung; sie sind verpflichtet, sich untereinander in jeder Weise zu unterstützen. Ihre Beziehungen sind durch strenges Gesetz und Ritual geregelt." (Ribbach 1940: 237). According to Gutschow, in Zanskar "women are [...] excluded from the central rites of death. Only men of the clan (pha spun)" and monks are in charge of these rites (Gutschow 2004: 210).

²⁹ Francke 1914: 48.

³⁰ See Francke 1907: 362–367.

³¹ By "earliest Tibetan records" Francke (1914: 48) seems to refer to "The Chronicles of Ladakh" (*La dwags rgyal rabs*) and his translation thereof (Francke 1910;

the names, given in the Gazetteer, do not appear to be Tibetan: *Henir* and *Nandu. Henir* signifies probably the Hensi caste of Kuļū; *Nandu* I cannot explain."³²

Speculations of this kind appear also in Shuttleworth's *History of Spiti*. In this work, he tried to explain some names as originating from a certain religious or 'racial' aspect. For example, he related the name of one *rus pa*, "sa-chu-nyi-pa [underlined in original], earthwater-sun one", to their original Bon worship and "sna-che-pa [underlined in original], large nose one", "to the preeminent [or: prominent; reading unclear] nose, which one may still observe in the Malāna people in Kūlu and which is typically non-Mongoloid."³³

It is also stated by Shuttleworth that these two names were the names of Bedas' *rus pa*. This would imply that not only the majority population in Spiti and other areas of historical Western Tibet was organised in this or in a similar way but also minority and caste groups. Francke's findings in Khalatse where Mon, Bheda and others did not belong to any "*pha spun*-ship" do not support this. More research is necessary to clarify these issues.³⁴

Of relevance for the history of Spiti and research in this regard is the fact that, as Francke put it, "The individuality of a Tibetan is fixed by three names: (1) by his personal name, (2) by his house name, (3) by his clan name. The latter is the name of the *pha-spun*-ship ('father brothership') to which he belongs."³⁵

Through which system of names do the people in Spiti identify themselves nowadays? I am concerned here only with the way this is done within the local Tibetan-speaking society (and not vis-à-vis other members of the wider Indian society—which is another interesting topic but would lead too far in this context).

First, individuals often have more than one personal name. They have a Tibetan name that is given to them by a monk, for example,

reference to sNyegs *ibid*. on page 411). The name sNyegs (variant spellings sNyags, gNyags, rNgegs) appears also in the *IDe'u* chronicles and other sources (see Hazod 2013: 102) and even earlier in the *Old Tibetan Annals* (see Dotson 2009: 95, *passim*).

³² Francke 1914: 47–48.

³³ BL, OIOC, Papers of Henry Shuttleworth, shelfmark MssEur.D722/25.

³⁴ According to Gutschow (2004: 272), at least Zanskar provides good opportunities for research on the historicity of clan and other names: "The clan names, place names, and names of village deities offer tantalizing historical evidence which has been ignored by most scholars until now."

³⁵ Francke 1914: 47.

Blo bzang Nyi ma. In addition, at least in the late 20th century, children received personal names by their school teachers when they went to school. So Blo bzang Nyima, for example, became Rajinder Bodh.

Second, house names, as stated by Francke, are also used in order to identify individuals—in fact quite a lot, both in oral and written contexts. It occurs not seldom that the head of a household is referred to only by a house name which might be preceded by the village name, for example, Mane Gongma (Upper House in Mane village) or Sumra Yogma (Lower House in Sumra village), where two incarnations of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po were found in the first half of the 20th century.

These findings are also confirmed by a number of written sources from the second half of the 20th century some of which I studied in my dissertation on the socio-economic organization of Tabo in lower Spiti valley.³⁶

In one source, *Dus mchod kyi yig tho* or *ITa po mgon gyi bon tho bskod pa* [Register of Dues of ITa po (Tabo) Monastery] from the second half of the 20th century, many people, usually the household heads, are often identified by the name of their village, house name and personal name (Fig. 3), sometimes only by the name of the village and house name, sometimes by village name and their personal names (Fig. 4).

There do not seem to appear any clan names in these records which speaks for itself. As mentioned before, for example, people in Tabo are aware of local lineages (*brgyud*) some of which may historically be related to *rus* or *pha spad* but they do not seem to be of any relevance in the context of tax registers or other documents I came across.

Most recent examples of donors as they are identified in inscriptions on prayer wheels outside the monastic compound also show that only village and personal names appear, sometimes in addition also the household (*nang tshang*) as reference unit. There is no trace of a clan name (see Figs. 5a, 5b, 6 and 7).

If we look at local Tibetan sources in Tabo from the 19th century, for example, inscriptions in the monastery, we find that people are referred to and refer to themselves in terms of rank. There were a number of *no no* families. Under the dominion of the kingdom of

³⁶ See Jahoda 2015 for a revised and shortened English version.

Ladakh the no no even possessed royal rank (rgyal rigs).

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Fig. 3 — 'System of names' (village / house / personal name): La ri Gang (Gong [ma]) Tshe ring chos 'phel (left) and [La ri] Yog ('Og) ma bSod nam bu khrid (right), in Dus mchod kyi yig tho or ITa po mgon gyi bon tho bskod pa [Register of Dues of ITa po (Tabo) Monastery], second half 20th century (photo: Christian Jahoda, 2000)



Fig. 4 — 'System of names' (village / house / personal name): gSum rags (Sumra) Yog ('Og) ma (top) and Na'a thang Tshe tan (brtan) Don grub (bottom), in Dus mchod kyi yig tho or ITa po mgon gyi bon tho bskod pa [Register of Dues of ITa po (Tabo) Monastery], second half 20th century (photo: Christian Jahoda, 2000)



Fig. 5a — Prayer wheels with names of donors, Tabo (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)



Fig. 5b — Name of donor (village / personal name) on prayer wheel (La ri [Lari] Kun bzang chos sgron) (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)



Fig. 6 — Name of donors (village / personal names / household) on prayer wheel (rTa pho [Tabo] rab brtan dang sGrol ma tshe ring nang tshang) (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)



Fig. 7 — Name of donor (village / personal name) on prayer wheel (Ka dza [Kaza] Tshe ring sTobs rgyas) (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)

'Paper Inscription 1' lists the representatives of the most distinguished families according to rank: after the *no no* of "Kyid-gling" comes a "rGyu-pa'i *no-no*" (*no no* of rGyu) and a "Tshu-rub *no-no*" (*no no* of Tshu rub).³⁷

'Paper Inscription 2' announces the donation to the monastery at Tabo of an annual yield from fields by a certain Ngag dbang blo gros from Li pa (today: Lippa) village in Upper Kinnaur. Again only village and personal name are given, no clan name appears or was considered important in this context to be recorded.³⁸

Clans in Spiti: Before the Late 10th Century

If we look at earlier inscriptions in Tabo monastery, from the late 10th and early 11th century (that is, in the Entry Hall [*sgo khang*]), we find that monks were identified by a combination of three names or

³⁷ See Christian Luczanits' photo 1994_93/14 in the Western Himalaya Archive Vienna; see also De Rossi Filibeck 1999: 192–193 and *ibid*.: pls. 21–24.

³⁸ See Christian Luczanits' photo 1994_88/32 in the Western Himalaya Archive Vienna; see also De Rossi Filibeck 1999: 199–201 and *ibid*.: pl. 25.

designations: first clan name, second religious function or title and third personal religious name. Lay persons were identified by clan name or royal descent and personal name (see, for example, Fig. 8 and 9). There are more than 10 names that seem to refer to clans (see below for my reasons to characterize them in this way): for example, sNel wer/'or, rHugs wer/'or, Mo lo / Mol wer, Mang wer/'er/'or, Rum (wer), Mag pi tsa; in addition: Nyi ma, Grang la?, Mu drung yar, gZi ma(l), sNyam wer, and some more that are difficult to read. It is not clear in all cases that the first part really is a clan name. For example, we find also a Bod dge slong Tshul khrims blo gros, Bod for Tibet (differentiated from mNga' ris).³⁹



Fig. 8 — 'System of names' in the case of Buddhist monks (clan name / religious function or title / personal religious name): sNyel 'or dge slong Grags pa bshes gnyen (inscription panel, top right), late 10th century inscriptions, Tabo monastery (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)

³⁹ Yannick Laurent (personal communication, July 2017) refers to donors portrayed by the entrance door on the northeast wall of the Assembly Hall (*'du khang*) at Tabo. In these paintings which date from the Renovation Phase in the late 1030s (finished in 1042) the monk Möpa Sonam Drak (*mos pa bsod nams grags*) is identified as a native of the district of *lCog la (lcog la'i sde)*, whilst a physician (*sman pa*) sitting to his right, whose name is partly illegible, is said to come from the district of Guge (*gu ge'i sde*). For the texts of these captions, see Luczanits 1999: 122. The reason for this different (territorial instead of clan-wise) reference system may be the existence of five "Thousand-districts" (*stong sde*) in Lower Zhang zhung already during the time of the Yar lung dynasty and therefore the continued and/or revived predominance of a territorial over a clan-based reference system at least in certain areas of the West Tibetan kingdom. *Gug ge* and *Gu cog / Cog la* are named as two of these five "Thousand-districts" in Tibetan sources (see Vitali 1996: 433, Dotson 2006: 189f., Dotson 2012: 184).



Fig. 9 — 'System of names' in the case of lay persons (clan name or royal descent / personal name): lha sras 'Jig rten mgon (inscription panel, top centre), lha lcam 'Od phro (inscripton panel, top right), late 10th century inscriptions, Tabo monastery (photo: Christiane Kalantari, 2009)

Christian Luczanits was among the first to study these inscriptions and he published a fine edition of them (see Luczanits 1999). Luczanits suggested that the first part of the persons' name related to clan or place of origin. Some of the names, for example, Hrugs wer, the clan to which the great translator Rin chen bzang po belonged, also appear in other written sources. In the biography of Rin chen bzang po it is stated that he was a Hrugs wer ba, a member of the Hrugs wer clan from Khwa tse in Gu ge. In terms of rigs (which stands for rigs rus, that is, patrilineal descent) it is said he belonged to the gshen lineage of g.Yu sgra in Khā tse [mKhar rtse, etc.]: rigs ni khā tse g.yu sgra'i gshen rgyud (Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po 56.4). The forefathers of this lineage belonged to one of the 13 patrilineal ancestral groups (pha sgo bcu gsum) who resided there. Members of some of the clans mentioned in Tabo also appear in paintings in Tholing⁴⁰ and in colophons of texts produced in the area around the same time in the early 11th century.

In 2011 Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* ["Royal Genealogy of the Solar Lineage"] was published which contains a chapter on the history of mNga' ris including an account

⁴⁰ See Heller 2010.

of Zhang zhung.⁴¹ This text helps to shed new light on the early history of Western Tibet including Spiti before the foundation of the West Tibetan kingdom in the early 10th century, in particular also on some of these clans mentioned in the inscriptions at Tabo.⁴² According to this account Gu ge was dominated at one time (which refers perhaps to the 8th/9th century) by descendants of the 'Five Zhang zhung Siblings' (*Zhang zhung mched Inga*), that is to say, five populations groups referred to by him as *rus* who are named as *Mang wer, Mol wer, sKyin wer, Hrugs wer* and *Rum wer*. They are said to have descended from prominent ancestors whose lineages (*rigs*) go back to the time of a king Ru pi ni⁴³ in India.⁴⁴

Grags pa rgyal mtshan also reports that the country or territory (that is, residence area) of the Mang wer ba was Phyi dbang, Gle los sgyung and Sang mkhar, that of the sKyin wer ba was Sribs kyi lha rtse, that of the Hrugs wer ba were mKhar, bDu and Khyung rtse.⁴⁵ These are areas and localities to the north and south of the upper Sutlej River, perhaps also including Upper Kinnaur and Spiti. So we see that there is a connection between these descent groups and certain localities.

The gods (named or categorised as *gye ged*) worshipped by these population groups can be described as ancestral clan gods.

At one time the leaders of these clans (*rus*) acted as ministers under the sNya shur king, the name of the Zhang zhung dynasty,⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.: 429–430.

⁴¹ See Gu ge Pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011; see also Utruk Tsering and Jahoda, forthcoming.

⁴² It must be mentioned that Grags pa rgyal mtshan wrote his account in the second half of the 15th century. Being a native of Western Tibet we can assume that it was based on material available to him reaching back to earlier times. According to his biography (see Gu ge Tshe ring rGyal po, forthcoming; see also Heimbel 2014: 64–71), he was born in the female Wood Sheep year 1415 in the area of sGyu in present-day Spiti. His family line was sKyi nor (identical with sKyin wer?), belonging to one of the five Zhang zhung *rus*. His paternal ancestors were even venerated as being related to the Sun lineage (*nyi ma'i* [...] *gdung rgyud*).

⁴³ The king Ru pi ni mentioned by Grags pa rgyal mtshan seems to be identical with king Rūpati (Ru la skyes, etc.) or Ru pi ti who appears as progenitor of the Tibetan royal line in various post-11th century historiographical Tibetan sources all of which seem to be based on the *Višeşastavaţīkā* (*Khyad par du 'phags pa'i bstod pa'i rgya cher shad pa*) by Prajñāvarman (Shes rab go cha). This text was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po (958–1055).

⁴⁴ See Gu ge Pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 429.

⁴⁶ Perhaps also the clan name of the royal family (see Dotson 2009: 89, n. 156).

and subjugated areas like Pu hrangs. It is the seeming conjunction of these three aspects—joint residence, joint cult of ancestral gods, and joint political function—which leads me to consider these population groups (*rus*) as clans rather than kinship groups tracing their descent patrilineally from a common ancestor without much further relationships.⁴⁷

Brief Conclusion

With regard to the question of clans, one can find kinship groups designated as *rus* and patrilineal lineages or *brgyud* existing in the late 10th and early 11th century. Grags pa rgyal mtshan's account gives an idea of the origin and earlier history of some of these groups. We see that in this early phase in West Tibetan and Spiti history, at least in the understanding of a 15th-century author, *rus* designated groups who were regarded as having descended from common ancestors and who were related to certain residence areas. We can also assume that they were exogamous. They shared common ancestral gods. On the basis of the information currently available and the general state of research, the origins of these population groups are difficult to assess.

From at least the 10th century onward not all the clans present in the wider area around Spiti were of local origin. From this time onward we also find members of the 'Bro, Pa tshab and Cog ro clans who were of Tibetan origin and seem to have migrated to mNga' ris in the 10th century. Vitali expressed the view that the gZim mal (referred to by him somewhat vaguely as community) "whose name seems to document a non-Tibetan origin" migrated to Spiti during the early rule of Byang chub 'od, that is, around 1040.⁴⁸

Based on the very limited amount of comparative material, I tend to assume that the 'concept of clans' as represented by respective Tibetan terminologies as such does not seem to have changed fundamentally in Spiti and other areas of historical Western Tibet over a long period of time if we take patrilineal descent from a common ancestor, unilocal rule of residence and cult of a common

⁴⁷ Following Murdock (1949: 69), "it should be emphasized that a clan does not result automatically from the coexistence of compatible rules of residence and descent. [...] The ethnographer must observe evidences of organization, collective activities, or group functions before he can characterize them as a clan."

⁴⁸ Vitali 1996: 308–309.

ancestral protective deity (*pha lha*) as essential criteria. In addition this includes that *brgyud* refers to local patrilineal lineages of limited genealogical range within the kinship groups referred to as *rus* or *pha spun*. The problem remains of course that, with the exception of the Hrugs wer clan, we do not have much information on the later developments of the 'clans' recorded for the late 10th/early 11th century, and that we have nearly no information on the 79 names of *pha spad* in Spiti compiled by Gergan. ⁴⁹ Also the documents photographed by Dieter Schuh recently in Spiti do not seem to shed light on these names.⁵⁰

What did change in fact over the course of centuries, most probably starting with the foundation of Buddhist monasteries, is the general system of organization of the local societies and more generally the socio-economic realities which increasingly appeared to be of the kind in which the household represented the fundamental unit of reference in the social sphere and the fundamental unit of taxation in the economic sphere. As a result, the patrilineal kinship groups' real significance must have declined so that it became relatively small in the present (in varying degrees in different areas). In the case of newly-established households, in which monogamy and neo-local nuclear families constitute the determinant pattern, their significance seems to be nearly non-existent. A lot more research in particular on the full socio-political realities and not just the 'contexts' of the respective terminologies and accounts relating to different areas and periods is necessary to confirm the validity of this

⁴⁹ Recent research by Yannick Laurent (2017) revealed that a mani stone inscription from Dangkhar in Spiti (copied in 1918 by Henry Lee Shuttleworth on paper, preserved among his collection of unpublished works at the British Library) names one Ga ga Tshe ring bkra shis whose noble ancestry is of the lineage of the Par ca ministers (yab mes khung tsun par ca blon gyi rgyud) (see ibid.: Fig. 2, p. 240). It may well be that this lineage is the same as Gergan's no. 12 (pa cha pa) and/or 18 (bar sha pa) in his list of Spiti pha spad. This inscription is dated through internal evidence by Yannick Laurent (reference to King Seng ge rnam rgyal, c. 1590–1642) to the last decade of this king's life. The reference to the noble forefathers in connection with the lineage of the Par ca ministers indicates a certain chronological distance of at least two or three generations between the time of the production of the *mani* stone inscription and the noble ancestry of the lineage of the Par ca ministers. This would bring this lineage-together with historical information on the lineage of the donatrix (ibid.: 241)-in terms of its chronological horizon into the 15th century (if not even earlier). I wish to thank Yannick Laurent for drawing my intention to this archival document.

⁵⁰ See Schuh 2016b.

view and also to significantly improve our state of knowledge and understanding of 'clans' in Tibet.

Abbreviations

BL, OIOC British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection

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APPENDIX

Joseph Gergan's list of 79 *pha spad* in Spiti (*sPyi ti*), 15 *pha tshan* in Lahaul (*Gar zha*), 8 *pha spun* in Lower Ladakh (*Bla dwags gsham*) and 39 *pha spun* in Zanskar (*Zangs dkar*)⁵¹

^ૡ શું જેતે જ સું જેતે છે. આ સું જે સું

⁵¹ I wish to thank Julia DiFranco (formerly Schastok) for the original typescript of the complete list in Tibetan and Utruk Tsering for checking the spelling.

To the right of *pha spad* no. 1 to 21 is added vertically the following note:

सिंग् ब्रा ब्रा क्या के क्या के प्रवा के प्रति के प्रति के का प्रति के का
สัป สิ่งารับลรารราสุราทุธิพารับทุสุพาร์ณิพูญาณฑาเลราสุรายีทุพารบพิส
२२ मॅलारुकाया [यार्नेलाया]

⁵² Underlined in original.

⁵³ Also the reading *tsal ldar pa* seems possible.

⁵⁴ xxx = unreadable/erased letters. The first seems to have a *gi gu* on top, therefore the reading *hi rib pa* may be possible. In the present, Hirrip is the politically correct form of addressing and referring to professional and lower caste musicians who are also found in Ladakh, Lahaul and Kinnaur.

$$24$$
 $8 = x^{4} \cdot 8 = x^{4} \cdot 8$

⁵⁵ ICang lo can is the name of one cave site in Khartse valley (see Tshe ring rgyal po and Papa-Kalantari 2009). ⁵⁶ Underlined in original.

$$4^{\circ}$$
 $7^{\eta} \times \tilde{5}^{\eta}$
 4°
 $4^{\circ} \times \tilde{5}^{57} \cdot \zeta \eta \cdot \eta$
 4°
 $3^{\circ} \times \tilde{5}^{57} \cdot \zeta \eta \cdot \eta$
 4°
 $3^{\circ} \times \tilde{5}^{57} \cdot \zeta \eta \cdot \eta$
 4°
 $3^{\circ} \times \tilde{5}^{\circ} \cdot \pi \eta$
 4°
 $4^{\circ} \times \tilde{5}^{\circ} \pi \eta$

- ⁵⁷ Also the reading *tso* seems possible.
 ⁵⁸ Reading of *pra* uncertain (also *pa* seems possible).
 ⁵⁹ Underlined in original.
- ⁶⁰ Beda?
- ⁶¹ Unclear superscript/sign above *sa*.
 ⁶² Underlined in original.



⁶³ Underlined in original.

$$(i)$$
 $\eta \otimes_{3} a_{1} + \sum_{i=1}^{64} [3a_{1} + a_{1} + a_{1}]$
 $j \circ \circ_{3} + \sum_{i=1}^{64} [i]$
 $j \circ \circ_{4} + \sum_{i=1}^{64} [i]$

⁶⁴ This name could refer to Hirrip.

⁶⁵ Perhaps identical with Nil 'gro'a in Spiti (no. 4)?
⁶⁶ Perhaps identical with the lHa pa mentioned by Schuh (1983: 231–233)?

$$12 \leq \frac{1}{2} \leq \frac{1}{2}$$

*

⁶⁷ Reading of *bra* uncertain; *bwa* seems also possible.

⁶⁸ Perhaps identical with the sKya pa mentioned by Francke 1926: 153 (see also Vitali 1996: 192)?

⁶⁹ This name appears also in an account by Eva K. Dargyay (1988: 130) as sGyi ri mda' pa (variant spellings sKyi ri mda' pa and Ha ri ni da').

⁷⁰ Related to present-day Hirrip in Spiti?

⁷¹ Related to present-day Hirrip in Spiti?

⁷² The remark *rus gcig go* refers to *ka ma pa* and *ldong po pa*.

⁷³ Possibly the Gu ge *blon po* Zhang rung was a member of this clan as suggested by Vitali (1996: 52, 108, 192).