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Special Issue
Indigenous Elements in Tibetan Religions

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Preface

Outsiders often tend to see Tibetans as strongly religious. The religious ideas of Tibetans are further generally considered to be dependent on Mahāyāna Buddhism combined with Tantric elements (so-called Vajrayāna) stemming from India.

Tibetans used to be mostly represented by the Buddhist clergy in the world outside Tibet and it holds true that for many centuries this highest stratum of Tibetan society saw Indian Buddhism as a primary source of their religion. India became the subject of veneration and was worshipped as a "holy land" (Tib. *'phags yul*). Buddhist clergy also enjoyed almost an exclusive position in the production of written texts.

Yet, such a general picture might be problematic. A number of scholars who are well acquainted with the daily life of Tibetans have pointed out that their seemingly strong religiosity can often be seen only on the surface. No doubt, the Mahāyāna and Tantra are present, indeed. But they often cover the rich inner processes characterized by the very eclectic and pragmatic attitudes of Tibetans.[1] In addition to the Indians, the Tibetans were not immune to influences from the other neighbouring countries of Central Asia and China. There are also elements of their religiosity which could be seen as autochthonous. Though one can make suppositions, such constituents of Tibetan religiosity are extremely difficult to analyze as such.

Some non-Indian traits are still present in Tibetan society on a variety of levels. This might concern some features even of the various disciplines falling under the label of Buddhism. Many non-Indian elements can be also discerned among the rather silent religious ideas of commoners.

Of particular interest is the Bon religion of Tibet. The most general problem connected with Bon is the diversity of the traditions covered under such a blanket term. On the one hand, there is an extensive ritual and doctrinal literature concerning the monastic tradition of Bon (the so-called "Eternal

1) For an in-depth study of a village community from the Himalayan region, which serves an excellent example see Ramble 2008.

Bon", Tib. *g.yung drung bon*) which in its meaning evidently follows the originally Indo-Buddhist ones. So far, the textual evidence indicates that such a monastic tradition of Bon, which represents the majority of the Bon religion nowadays, became organized and started to view itself as a distinctive religious system probably only from the 11th century onward. Its possible pre-11th century development remains hazy. This monastic tradition can be seen as an unorthodox sect of Tibetan Buddhism, but at the same time as distinct from other sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

On the other hand, even such a monastic tradition retains some elements and traits which are non-Indian and non-Buddhist. And even more, there are still some of the traditions called Bon in the bordering areas of ethnographical Tibet, which are carried often by village priests and which seem to have very little in common with monastic Bon. The pre-11th century non-Buddhist religion is also sometimes referred to as Bon and from the surviving documents from Dunhuang it is apparent enough that such a tradition is again fundamentally different from the current monastic Bon. There are also discrepancies in the various forms of self-understanding of the followers of Bon and in what Tibetans outside the tradition of Bon refer to when speaking about Bon.[2]

Leaving the Bon tradition aside, the clarity of the situation in Tibet is further complicated by the fact that none of the Buddhist sects in Tibet was totally immune to originally non-Buddhist practices, despite their frequent claim that they are followers and guardians of the pure Buddhist tradition of India. Some of the examples of originally non-Buddhist practices or their elements are dealt with in the present volume. In general, the situation is not very far from that of the monastic tradition of Bon.

In the light of such a confusing reality, even the terms Bon and Buddhism themselves prove to be misleading. Buddhism in Tibet (in Tibetan *chos*, a translation of the Indian word *dharma*) cannot be found in some pure form devoid of non-Indian elements. Bon (being a native term understood also as an alternative translation of the Indian word *dharma*) cannot be seen as non-Buddhist. Bon cannot be juxtaposed with Buddhism, having as it does in its present tradition so much in common with it. The intricacy of such terminological inconsistency has led even recently some scholars to retrieve the once condemned term Lamaism as a neutral designation for

2) For an older, but in many respects still relevant overview introducing Bon and its studies, see Kværne 2000. For a newer overview of what Bon might mean, see Samuel 2013.

Tibetan forms of Buddhism-inspired religions, but blended with other elements in general.[3]

Such a complicated and complex situation, further obscured by vague terminology, raises many questions. Tibetan Studies were partly evolving alongside Buddhology in the past. The claim of some Tibetan "Buddhist" masters that they were preserving Indic Buddhist tradition found some advocates among Indologically oriented Tibetologists. The search for indigenous elements in Tibetan religions deliberately questions such an approach. The search is carried out in the hope of obtaining a future fuller picture of Tibetan religiosity.

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The present special issue *Indigenous Elements in Tibetan Religions* offers the interested reader five texts on the given topic. The contributions do not give simple answers to the question of what is indigenous to Tibet. I am grateful to the authors for their illuminating research articles. The contributors are experienced and leading scholars, whose existing research qualifies them to deal with such a topic. No less gratitude should be expressed to the CHINET project based in Palacky University (Olomouc, Czech Republic) for funding of the workshop organised under the same title in February 2014, which has enabled some of us to discuss the topic within the tranquil beauty of the city of Olomouc.

With the first contribution by Charles Ramble one enters the bizarre world of *chimeras* – creatures composite of diverse parts. All the cases presented in the article through translations of extracts of the Tibetan texts; i.e. bat, camel, Three-Headed Black Man and a vampire Little Tiger-Bee, are mostly new and are revealing examples of a possibly indigenous imagination, which differs substantially from that associated with often composite Tantric deities.

Rob Mayer then brings an overview of his existing research done jointly with Cathy Cantwell and attempts to place it into the wider context. He traces back the rather intricate historical process of implementing indigenous elements into the Tantric teachings and the changes in attitudes towards Tantras during the post-Imperial period. He gives also vivid examples of the early process of indigenization of the Tantric teachings, such as the inclusion of

3) Although this term had once been discarded as anti-Tibetan (for the *locus classicus* see Lopez 1998), it has perhaps surprisingly found a new user in the form of outstanding Tibetan scholar S.G. Karmay (for example Karmay 2002, p. 65). It must be noted that in this case it has been done without any pejorative connotations. This is now followed for example by J.V. Bellezza (2013, p. 5, note 1).

Tibetan deities into them, incorporation of the narratives (*smrang* / *rabs*) known from the early non-Buddhist rituals in Tibet, etc.

My humble contribution deals with narratives concerning the origin of *g.yang* and *phya*, two concepts of "well-being" and "good fortune". A ritual of their summoning permeates the Tibetan societies both of monks and laymen. Through the example of similar ritual among Mongols it is pointed out that some background to the ritual might be shared with other Central Asian peoples. If Rob Mayer focuses on indigenization of originally Indian Tantras, in this paper examples of Buddhicization of the ritual are given.

Dan Martin deals with another ritual of Gold Drink (*gser bskyems*) which is a good candidate for indigenousness. His point of departure is an extract from some 900-year-old text dealing with the master Pa dam pa Sangs rgyas and containing a description of what should be indigenous ritual. Carefully examining the circumstances of the Gold Drink in Tibet from various angles, Dan Martin continues the search outside Tibet. An oath-swearing habit of drinking liquid mingled with gold among Mongols seems to be a promising direction for its further exploration and a sign of its larger Central Asian background.

Robi Vitali focuses on the Tibetan sources dealing with the original Tibetan tribes, namely the *rus mdzod* literature. His article points out their diverse background. More importantly, in the light of such diversity it reveals that to classify something as "indigenous" might be problematic from the very outset and the core of the process of the formation of Tibetan civilization.

What becomes apparent from this volume are the problems faced when searching for "indigenousness" in the case of Tibet. When dealing with such a notion in general, a good basic differentiation of its meanings is offered by Charles Ramble at the conclusion of his article in the present volume. It could be understood in its "strong" and "weak" sense. While the first option would mean that something is exclusively of home origin (and thus perhaps closer to what might be meant by *autochthonous*), the "weak" form of it would accept the combination of home-grown and imported. Most of the examples introduced in the present volume attest to such a "weak" form. This, however, does not make Tibetans the exception among most human societies. The general problems faced when searching for indigenousness specifically in Tibet are well introduced in the opening parts of Dan Martin's essay. Instead of repeating his words, I will restrict myself to a shortcut borrowed from the title of his article, which seems to me to characterize well all the contributions of this volume: "…indigenous, but not *simply* indigenous."

Daniel Berounský, editor

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Real and imaginary Tibetan chimeras and their special powers[1]

Charles Ramble, EPHE/CRCAO, Paris

Summary: Animals that transgress culturally-sanctioned taxonomic boundaries are often the object of special beliefs. Tibetan ritual texts, especially those of the so-called 'Lower Vehicles' of Bon, sometimes feature semi-divine animals that play an important role as protectors. These creatures, though natural, are perceived as concatenations of the body-parts of numerous other natural species, and may be understood as different varieties of chimera. The two examples considered here are the bat and the camel. In addition to real animals the literature also features imaginary creatures that exhibit the physical or behavioural characteristics of several natural species. Each of the animals that provides a component is presented as wielding a specific type of capability, and it is the concentration of these multiple capabilities that gives the chimera, whether real or imaginary, its extraordinary power. While the particular form that the cult of these chimeras takes may be indigenous to Tibet, the similarities they bear to the divinities of Tantric Buddhism may ultimately have led to the usurpation of their role and their marginalisation.

Introduction

All cultures have more or less elaborate schemes for the classification of animals, and animals that do not fall neatly into one category or other are often treated as strange or sacred. The culture of Linnaean taxonomy is no exception. The first specimen of a duck-billed platypus to reach the zoological establishment in Great Britain was long suspected to be the work of a forger. The sense of strangeness may also betray itself in taxonomic nomenclature, as in the case of the Indian nilgai. The nilgai, or blue bull, is an antelope – the largest in the world – but it does not look like one. It is blue-grey in colour, and though it does vaguely resemble a cow it has an elongated neck and is a good deal more fleet-footed. The scientific name for the animal is *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, which means 'Bull-elephant goat-camel'.

1) Part of the research leading to this article was carried out with the generous support of the Austrian Science Fund in the context of the project "Text, Art and Performance in Bon Ritual" (FWF-P24702).

More often, category-crossing animals are the object not so much of donnish wit as of fear and loathing – or reverence. The anthropological literature offers many examples of such creatures. The pioneering scholar in the field of anomalous animals was Mary Douglas, who began her investigations with a landmark article on animal symbolism among the Lele of the Kasai, and singled out the pangolin – a terrestrial creature that has fishlike scales, and gives birth to a single offspring, like humans – for special attention (Douglas 1957, esp. pp. 50–51). Most famous, perhaps, is her study of forbidden foods in the Bible (notably, the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus), which are mentioned in this work but much developed in subsequent studies. The impurity of certain animals, Douglas famously argued, derives from their anomalous character: the camel, the hare and the rock-badger are prohibited because they “chew the cud, but divide not the hoof”, whereas pigs have cloven hooves, but unlike bovids, are not ruminants. “The baboon, the scaly tail, the tortoise, and other animal anomalies are to the Lele as the camel, the hare and the rock-badger to the ancient Hebrews” (*ibid*., p. 50).

It may be the fascination with the idea of such categorical confusions that lies behind the drive to invent marvellous beasts, but whatever the case, such creatures are present in mythology everywhere. Tibetan attitudes towards anomalous and composite animals would surely be a rewarding field of investigation, and here I would like to consider the example of a number of chimeras – both real and imaginary – to see what tentative conclusions we might reach about Tibetan attitudes to categorical violations in the animal kingdom.

The Tantric Buddhist pantheon offers a vast array of divinities that combine anthropomorphic and theriomorphic features. However they may have evolved in Tibet, these forms originated in south or central Asia, and the fact they are now such a well-established feature of the iconographic landscape conceals the possibility that their arrival may not have gone unopposed. Ra lo tsā ba, one of the main vectors of the cult of Vajrabhairava in the eleventh century, reports that he was execrated because, his enemies said, “he received from a heretical lama called Bha-ro [the cult of] a divinity of the heretics with the head of a beast” (cited in Ramble 2010, p. 313).

If Ra Lo tsā ba’s critics were shocked by this bull-headed god, then it is likely to have been because of the Buddhist context, since there is ample evidence to suggest that animals played an important part in the metaphysical life of humans, especially in the realm of the afterlife. These imported tantric gods differ from the examples with which I shall be concerned here in a number of respects. The theriomorphic component rarely, if ever, exceeds the incorporation of more than one animal (though wings are a common enough

embellishment); secondly, however important their animal nature may have been at their origin, they have largely transcended this feature. Hayagrīva originated as a Central Asian horse god, but Tibetan Buddhism came to revere him as a form of Avalokiteśvara (van Gulik 2005 [1935]).

The Capable Bat

The first Tibetan chimera I would like to consider is the bat. Bats are rather obvious candidates for treatment as liminal, composite creatures, both because of their physiognomic features and also their behaviour, which includes crepuscular activity and the habit of hanging upside-down. For the Bonpos, the best-known appearance of the bat is in the fourteenth-century *gZi brjid*, where the creature emerges as the foremost avian at the conclusion of a lengthy conference of the birds. The bat also features in the Bonpo funerary cycle of the *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur* as one of a trio with a monkey and a badger, collectively known as the 'three blocker brothers' (*thub chod spun gsum*).[2]

The text that forms the basis of the present examination belongs to a corpus of Bonpo ritual texts from Amdo, collected and partly edited by Ngag dbang rgya mtsho of Lanzhou University.[3] The text concerning the bat is available to me in two forms. One is an *dbu can* transcription, with minor edits, by Ngag dbang rgya mtsho, and the other is a set of photographs of a manuscript taken by the same researcher. The first is entitled simply *Pha wang bzhugs so* and the second *rGon po pha 'am dbu bzhugs s+ho*. They will be referred to henceforth as *Pha wang* and *Pha 'am* respectively. Since the manuscript of the former is unavailable to me, I cannot of course vouch for the absence of 'silent' editing by the collector; it is clear, nevertheless, that the two texts are related, but that *Pha wang* has far fewer irregularities than *Pha 'am*, much of which is incomprehensible. For reasons of space, the text of *Pha 'am* will not be reproduced here.

2) Bellezza 2008, p. 381. On the same page, Bellezza provides a reference to another Bonpo work in which "the bat (and lark) act as emissaries for the ritual veneration of the original Tibetan clans" (*ibid*., p. 381, fn. 80).

3) Ngag dbang rgya mtsho made this material available to me via Samten Karmay, with a view to a collaborative study of *le'u* texts that is currently in progress. I am grateful to these two scholars for their generosity.

Fig. 1. Bat, from wooden print-block (*par shing*) owned by Lama Tshultrim of Lubrak, Nepal. Photo Kemi Tsewang.

Pha wang belongs to a branch of Bon in which the main exponents are the hereditary priests known as *le’u*.[4] It is worth pointing out that there is an unmistakable kinship between these *le’u* texts and the Dongba tradition of the Naxi. For the latter, the bat is the divine messenger. One of the *dto-mba* (Dongba) recitations discussed by Rock in his monumental study of Naxi ritual is entitled “^{1}Ha-^{2}yi-^{2}dzī-^{1}boa ^{1}ssu ^{1}k’v the Bat Invites the Nāgas”. Rock observes that ^{1}Ha-^{2}yi-^{2}dzī-^{1}boa “is apparently his name for bat in the

4) A number of articles on the subject of this sacerdotal class have been published by Ngag dbang rgya mtsho; see, for example, sNgon ’dzin Ngag dbang rgya mtsho 2006. An English translation of this work will appear in a future edition of this journal.

colloquial language is ²bi-¹boa, in Tibetan pha-wang…." (Rock 1952, p. 187). He adds that "There is little in this *ms*. which deals actually with the bat, except that a family was ill and the bat told them to invite five regional Nāgas and perform [the ritual called] ²Ssu ¹gv." (*ibid*., p. 187).

A Naxi pictographic text translated and analysed by Pan Anshi deals with the myth of the killing and dismemberment of a demon called Ssù. Among other things, the dismemberment provides the charter myth for competition over food resources between various wild species, but we are also told that "the messenger bat brought the flesh of the demon to the white gate of the Tibetan land" (Pan 1998, pp. 301–302). There is an episode in a Naxi myth, examined by Michael Oppitz in the same volume, in which the hero Dtô-mbà Shí-lô

> is visited by a messenger from earth, named L'a-wú-là-ssàw-zò. This figure is mentioned in many Naxi manuscripts as a transcendental go-between. He is said to live on the meat of the unicorn, to carry an ever-burning torch and a bag full of food that never empties, and to ride on a white horse in the company of a bat named Hà-yî-dzî-boâ-p'èr, mounted on a female garuḍa-bird. The bat, too, is a customary go-between in Naxi mythology. (Oppitz 1998, p. 314)

In Anthony Jackson's study of Naxi ritual texts, too, wherever the bat appears it is as a message-bearer between gods and humans (Jackson 1979). Since the mediatory role of bats features in the myths of numerous cultures it cannot alone be diagnostic of kinship between the *le'u* and the Naxi Dongba. Much more telling in this regard is the name of the bat. The Naxi name features the element Dzi, while *Pha wang* opens with the information that the protagonist is the offspring of the king of the (homophonous) rDzi. The word *rdzi* in Tibetan means 'herder' or 'keeper', but in the context it clearly denotes a people or a clan of some sort. In Naxi mythology, Dzi is a name (literally meaning 'people') associated with the inhabitants of the second of three heavens, personified by the figure of Dzi-la-ä-p'u (Jackson 1979, p. 215), and although the protagonist of *Pha wang*, Capable Bat, is invoked as a keeper and protector (*rdzi*) of various categories of wards – including brigands – it would be difficult to dismiss an association with a people called Dzi as a mere coincidence. In a narrative concerning Dzi-la-ä-p'u, there is even a bat named Dzi-boa-dzi-lv (Jackson 1979, p. 226).

Before turning to the translation, a few words should be said about the epithet of the bat in this text. In *Pha 'am* it is *rgon po* while *Pha wang* has *rgos po*. *rGon po* could be an error or an archaism for *mgon po* ('protector'), an allusion to the tutelary role of the bat. *rGos po* should probably be understood as

rgod po, usually meaning 'wild' or 'fierce'. While this seems to be an improbable sobriquet for the bat, *rgod po* also means 'clever' or 'capable', and it is this reading that seems most appropriate in the present context.

Since the text is relatively short, and Tibetan works dealing with the propitiation of bats are apparently rare, the work is translated in full. Although it is a good deal clearer than *Pha 'am, Pha wang* also contains numerous obscure terms and passages. The opening section – immediately following the birth of Capable Bat – is particularly confused, and the translation at this point is a loose interpretation based on the probable intention, deduced from the rest of the narrative, rather than an accurate rendering.

Hey! In the beginning, the rDzi king and the Ngad queen coupled, and had a son, Capable Bat. If both gods and people had [this bat], everything that was done but incorrectly related [would be related correctly]; if gods and people had this bat, all that was done but misunderstood might be accomplished according to their wishes. Word went around about the existence of Capable Bat. Capable Bat was caught in a net, and presented to Wise King Kongtse;[5] a creature of such great dexterity, but at the sight of it Kongtse was revolted. "The various bat-features of its body: with the five kinds of superior knowledge inside him he is very clever; his body has the five kinds of superior knowledge – there is not a single place about which there is nothing to say!"

Thus did Kongtse extol it. Capable Bat said, "Don't kill me, don't annihilate me! If you kill me I'll be a grey corpse. If you don't kill me, there will be five recompenses. My body has five fine qualities – propitiate Capable Bat! Propitiating me will have its benefits in time to come. If you don't propitiate Capable Bat, the sky and the earth will be turned upside-down; the black-haired humans will fall ill, and the cattle will die; rain will not fall from the sky, plants will not germinate on the earth, and the six kinds of grain will not grow; the flocks that you tend will not flourish, and strong sons will not be born; the rivers will not flow properly, and horses, kine and sheep will not increase. The protectors will not accompany you, and you will be unable to overcome armies, wild yaks, enemies and demons; there will be no more work of digging the earth and raising castles, and the dead shall not meet the gods. So, rather propitiate Capable Bat. As quickly as you can, offer Capable Bat cows, sheep and yaks, and the sweet essence of delicious ninefold nectar!"

Kongtse the King replied, "Creature, it is said that upon your body are five evil signs: you have the body of a man and the head of a rat; this is the first omen signifying that you ought not to have been born; you have the wings of a bird and the claws of a rat – the second omen signifying that you ought not to have been born; third, your avian body has the ears of a rat – the third omen etc.; fourth, your finely-veined wings have claws – the fourth omen *etc*.; fifth, your upper lip is cleft into two parts – the fifth omen *etc*.; sixth, your ears stand upright – the sixth omen *etc*.; seventh, you're

5) Concerning the significance of Wise King Kongtse in Bonpo works, see, *inter al*., Lin 2007.

small but eloquent – the seventh omen *etc*.; eighth, you have great knowledge and long ears – the eighth omen *etc*.; ninth, you have an animal form but you are endowed with human speech; and you have a little body but you're covered in wrinkles. Creature, you have all these ominous signs in full! You are the messenger between gods and humans; and you live among humans and gods."

Capable Bat replied: "My extraordinary body has nine great qualities – listen to me, O Wise King Kongtse! I have the wings of a bird because my father is the white-tailed eagle, and the body of a rat because my mother is the grey mole; that head […] you have, son of four mothers (?).[6] The claws on my wings are a sign of guidance out of the lower realms – that is what their quality is said to be. That I have a small body with many wrinkles is a sign of removing suffering – that is said to be its quality. My great eloquence is a sign of hospitable attendance – that is said to be its quality. That my upper lip is in two parts is a sign that I am endowed with method and wisdom – that is said to be its quality. That my ears stand upright is a sign of the suppression of the enemies in the phenomenal world – that is said to be their quality. That my ears stand firmly erect is a sign of the endurance of the established truth – that is said to be their quality. That I have the body of a beast is a sign that I host the five siblings.[7]

bSwo! As a son of the heavily-armed *ma sangs* spirits, my powers of suppression are such that I can conquer the nine levels; my powers of destruction are such that I can destroy an adamantine rock. My ability to steal is such that I can steal the ambrosia of immortality; there is none that I, the bat, cannot overcome in debate.[8] Propitiate me with gold and turquoise; when you make me offerings, offer me conch-white rice. Protect our patron; hold the sky-cord of this, his child; be the guardian of those who go raiding; draw various curses to the hateful enemy! Bat's upper lip is like a tooth of adamant. Repel the curses of Buddhist monks; propitiate Bat with gold and turquoise. Capable Bat is like the blue sky: repel thunderbolts and hail! Capable Bat, with eyes like the sun, repel the red levin! Bat's ears are like victory banners: repel *rgyal po* demons! Bat's teeth are like ritual stakes: repel the demons of the lord of death. The membrane of Bat's paws are like a golden spoon: repel the evil weapons of the demonic hosts! Bat's wings are like goblets (*nal ba* < *nal ze*?): repel the advancing demon-*btsan* of the demons! Bat's claws are like iron hooks: repel any of the demons' torturers that come. Bat's wings are like talons: propitiated Bat, repel greyness and baldness! The bones of Bat's wings are like the vulture's wings: propitiated Bat, repel the curses of Buddhist priests! Propitiated Bat, repel any illnesses that may come! Propitiatied Bat, repel epidemics! Propitiated Bat, repel diseases of cattle! Propitiated Bat, repel diseases of horses! Propitiated Bat, repel diseases of livestock! Propitiated Bat, repeal diseases of goats! Propitiated Bat, repel diseases of sheep! Propitiated Bat,

6) The meaning of *mang na stong ba* is obscure. In the corresponding passage, *Pha 'am* has *lo nad ltang pa'i ghoo' yod pa de / ma 1 bu la yad pa yin*.
7) The implication may be that Capable Bat can reconcile differences even among a group of quarreling siblings.
8) *Pha 'am* here reads: *'paṃ'aṃ shagis* (?) *mi thub mes.*

preserve our lives! Propitiated Bat, repel our various enemies! Propitiated Bat, repel various conflicts! Propitiated Bat, protect the land! Propitiated Bat, look after our guests! Propitiated Bat, look after our qualities! Propitiated Bat, with your qualities guard the protectors who travel abroad, the women who remain in the village, and the cattle and sheep that are taken to graze. Escort those who travel abroad and welcome those who come to us. Propitiate Bat with offerings of barley and rice! Propitiate Bat with the first-offering of nectar! Hey, Bat, face east and repel the maledictions of the Bonpo and Buddhist priests in the east. Repel all kinds of enemies and conflicts. Face south, Bat, and repel the maledictions of the Bonpo and Buddhist priests in the south. Face north, Bat, and repel the maledictions of the Bonpo and Buddhist priests in the north, and turn back all kinds of enemies and conflicts. Thanks to the benefits of propitiating you, Bat, with your upward gaze you repel thunderbolts and hail that come from above; look down, Bat, and repel the harm of the great serpent spirits, lords of the earth.

The divine judgment-stone of the world,[9] the yellow-headed white monkey of the world, and Capable Bat – these three are the judges of the world. Since you are the judge, act as the judge! We offer you presents and gifts in full – do not falter in your task! If our beneficent patron is unwell, cure him, and take care of the lives of his children. Nourish the enfeebled, and care for the lives of horses, yaks and sheep; and protect me, the *bon po*. The end.[10]

The Camel

The second chimeric animal to be considered here will be the camel, which features in a text devoted to a ritual known either as *gTo nag mgo gsum*, "the Three-headed One from the Black *gTo* Rites", or *Mi nag mgo gsum*, "the Three-headed Black Man". There are many variants of this ritual among both Buddhists and Bonpos, but the particular text referred to here is entitled *Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum bzhugs pa legs+hō*, "The Three-headed One from the Black *gTo* Rituals of the Phenomenal World", henceforth abbreviated as *mGo gsum*. The central figure of this ritual is the three-headed monster of the title, who will be given particular attention presently. The effigy, described as a *mdos* (though the ritual in which it is set is classified as a *gto*), is made of black clay and placed in a roasting pan, and surrounded by moulded dough images (*zan par*) of the sort that often feature in *mdos* constructions, such as the eight planets, the twelve years, the eight trigrams, the nine magic

9) Presumably a reference to the archaic (though still surviving) Tibetan custom of holding a rock when swearing an oath.

10) For the transliterated text, see Appendix, text 1.

Fig. 2. Camel, from wooden print-block (*par shing*) owned by Lama Tshultrim of Lubrak, Nepal. Photo Kemi Tsewang.

squares and so forth. In the present case, the list of items for incorporation includes an image of "the camel of the vampires of decline (*phung sri*)".[11] The composite nature of the camel is not unique to Tibetan perceptions: there is even an Anglo-American adage (attributed to a variety of sources) to the effect that a camel is "a horse designed by a committee". However, unlike the case of the bat, our text does not itemise the animals that have gone into the production of the camel, but states merely that "its body is the body of all animals".

As for this ill-omened camel of the vampires of decline: as for its origin, it originated in the five elements; as for where it came from, it came from the land of splendour; as for where it settled, it settled in the realm of the gods; its body is the body of all animals; as for its appearance, it has the appearance of an ominous, inauspicious body; as

11) Various meanings of the term *phung sri* have been proposed by different writers, but these do not concern us here.

Fig. 3. Lama Tshultrim of Lubrak prepares to make a dough print (*zan par*) of the camel (third image from left) for use in a performance of the Three-headed One from the Black Rituals (*gTo nag mgo gsum*).

for portents, there is nothing more portentous than this: it is the demon of degeneration that brings low the thrice-thousand worlds; the demon of downfall that destroys kingdoms – the mighty one that will bring an end to ill omens. Its energy is as great as that of the wrathful gods; its strident roar is (21v) as loud as the thunder; from its mouth spew forth a host of impurities, and its neck is hung with diverse adornments. A myriad offerings for the *’gong po* demons are loaded on its back. I pray you, repel all the various ill omens![12]

The ambivalence with which the text treats the camel is obvious. As in the case of the bat, its composite character is a part of its dire aspect that includes impurity and has the potential to wreak universal destruction; but it is this same power that is harnessed with a view to putting an end to our own enemies. Figure 2 shows a print-block (*par shing*) negative of the camel that is used in the performance of this ritual by Lama Tshultrim of Lubrak. Clearly

12) See Appendix, text 2.

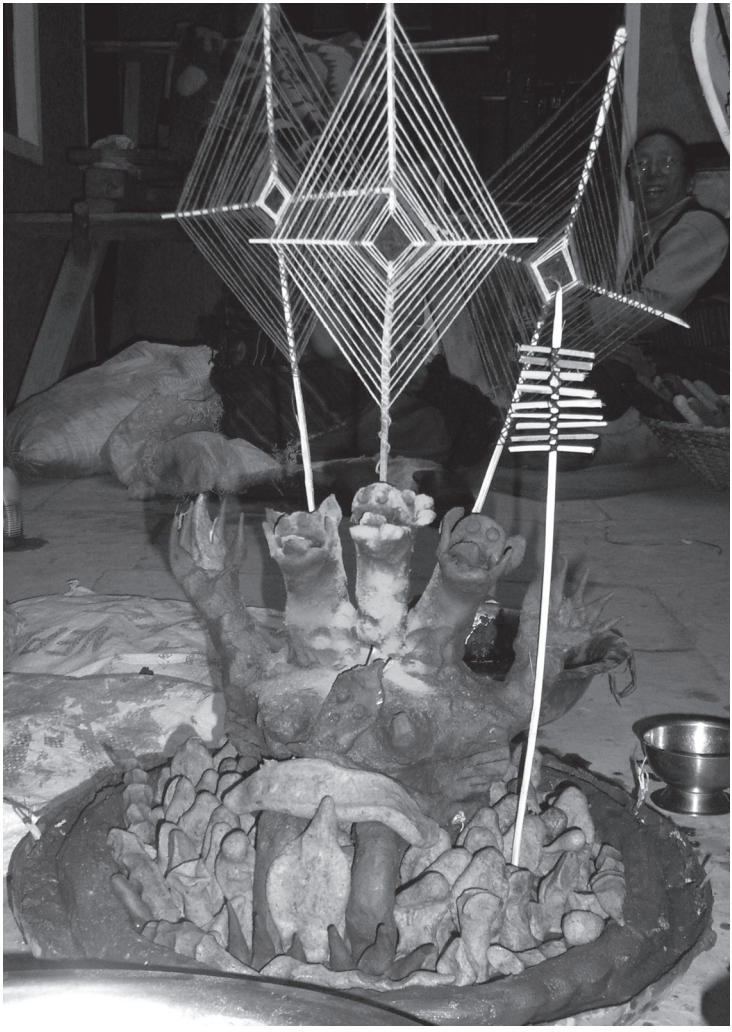

Fig. 4. Effigy of the Three-headed Black Man (*Mi nag mgo gsum*) under construction in Lubrak, Nepal.

visible in front of the camel's ears is a pair of horns. While we might be inclined to attribute this curious feature to the likelihood that the wood carver had never seen a camel, a more compelling explanation is provided

in a forthcoming article by Daniel Berounsky. The article features a narrative concerning a deer in the context of a ritual of ransom offering (*glud*). At one point the deer asks a priest about the origins of his antlers, and is told that he originally had none, and that he was given them by "the camel with a short lifespan" (*rnga mong tshe thung*) (Berounsky forthcoming).

While bats and camels are of course real flesh-and-blood creatures, it is possible to discern the same principle of combining the components of several creatures into a single entity in the case of imaginary monsters. A patient search through Buddhist and Bonpo ritual literature would probably yield further examples, but here I shall limit myself to two.

The Three-headed Black Man

The first is the central figure in the ritual that features the camel of the vampires of decline: the Three-headed Black Man. Since the text and performance of this ritual will form the subject of a separate study, the present article will deal only with the physical features of the monster and the significance attributed to them. The Old Man of the Sky (associated with the trigram Khen) and the Old Woman of the Earth (Khon) coupled, and:

> After nine months and ten days [there was born a creature] unlike either its father or its mother, with the body of a human and three heads. Its mother, the elderly Khon Woman, cursed it in these words: "It would seem that your two elderly parents incurred bad karma in a previous life, and that the fruit of that is now ripening. Alas, the like of such a creature has not been seen in the world! Oh, what an extraordinary thing – it terrifies me! This black man with three heads has iron talons, a gaping maw with bared teeth and eyes wide open in rage. This blue tiger's head to the right is made of anger; this yellow bull's head in the middle is lustful and stupid-looking; one of its heads is the head of an indolent pig. Its gaping maw, its bared fangs, its wide hate-filled eyes! The ring-fingers of its two hands are eager to kill, and its garuḍa-wings are ready to take flight. It has a belt of a poisonous snake wound around it, and the winding tail of a monkey; its talons, the claws of an ominous bird, are bared! If you would prevail, prevail over our hateful enemies, prevail over the harmful demons that obstruct us. Put our misfortunes into the skillet, and at the place where the ways meet at a crossroads, eat these ransoms and this gossip as your food!" With these words she took it to a crossroads. Whatever the Three-headed Black One met on the way it reduced to dust; it devoured people till their lands were emptied, so that the world with as many people as it has in it, was brought low, and the three worlds were emptied.[13]

13) See Appendix, text 3a.

But thanks to the intervention of (again) the Wise King Kongtse, the monster is induced to apply its powers against evil:

> May the tiger's head to the right transform the harm caused by *rgyal po* and *'gong po*; may the pig's head to the left transform all *byur* and demons of livestock-loss; may the bull's head in the middle transform all the great obstructions and all despair; may your wingbeats transform the *gdon* demons that soar in mid-air. Cast the torma-missile at our enemies with your ring-finger; with your tally-stick lay these hostile obstructions on the whipping-board. With the serpent belt that's tied around you, transform all harmful kinds of serpent-spirits; with your winding monkey's tail repel all calamities, illness and *gdon* demons; with those bared talons of the baleful bird, repel all hostile evil omens and inauspicious signs. Act today as the king who averts! Avert all ill omens and inauspicious signs, and the different kinds of human afflictions; dispel the hunger and thirst of the *preta*s; (6v) dispel illnesses of humans and cattle; repel [negative] circumstances and suffering.[14]

Little Tiger-Bee the Vampire God

In the narrative of *mGo gsum* we find a theme that featured in *Pha wang*: each of the features from different animals that it embodies has a specific power, which together serve to make their bearer a highly versatile and multifunctional defender. This concentration of powers is especially marked in the last of the chimeras to be considered here: Sri gsas bung ba stag chung: Little Tiger-Bee the Vampire God. Several versions of this text are available, but I shall refer exclusively to the one published by Samten Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano in the *The Call of the Blue Cuckoo* (Karmay and Nagano 2002, pp. 185–98). Since a near-complete French translation of the work has also been published by Samten Karmay (Karmay 2013), there is little point in presenting a full-length English rendering here, and I shall confine myself to examining the physical characteristics of Little Tiger-Bee and the powers they represent.

The narrative opens with an account of the forebears, the birth and the early development of the main figure before shifting to the ordinary human world. Here, two unattended children fall prey to a vampire, and priests are called to perform a ritual in which the predator is hunted down and destroyed by Little Tiger-Bee. The latter's father is the white eagle of the lCe lcan (lCe rgod dkar po) his mother the grey (*sngon po*) *dbyig dbal*, a name about which

14) See Appendix, text 3b.

I shall have more to say presently. The mother gives birth to a pea-sized egg which the parents bless and then take around various realms for benedictions by the resident divinities – the *dbal*, the *bdud*, the *dmu* and the *btsan* – before proceeding to solicit empowerments from the animal denizens of the different vertically-layered strata of the world, beginning with the snow lion on the glaciers and working downwards to the conch in the ocean, before concluding with the *gnyan* and the *klu*. The final blessing is provided by gShen rab mi bo. The egg eventually hatches out and a strange little creature emerges:

A body with tiger stripes
A head with the horns of the dancing wild yak
The wings of the white-tailed eagle
And the sharp teeth of the white snow lion;
A medicine bag of nectar
And a sharp [sting like a] spearhead;
A pleasant voice with a full range from loud to soft,
The hands of a *gnyan*
And the garb of a human *gshen* priest.[15]

The special merits of this complex inheritance become apparent later on when Little Tiger-Bee is unleashed against the vampire. His quarry tries to take refuge in the different realms and at each level of the world, but because Little Tiger-Bee has been empowered by the inhabitants of these territories he has the power and weaponry appropriate to each. The vampire is hunted from the top of the snow-mountains in stages into the underworld, until he is eventually brought to bay under the rock of the vampires, precisely where he had taken shelter after killing the two children.

Little Tiger-Bee struck it with his pointed spear[-like sting],
Gored it with his wild yak horns
Savaged it with his white snow-lion fangs
Battered it with the white eagle wings
Rent it with his claws of the striped Bengal tiger
And completely annihilated it with his copper mandibles.[16]

This presentation of four chimeras was prefaced with the remark that two were real animals and two were imaginary beings. Functionally – that is to say, as far as their role in rituals is concerned – the distinction is probably

15) See Appendix, text 3a.
16) See Appendix, text 3b.

meaningless. Animals, as the anthropological axiom has it, are 'good to think',[17] and it makes little difference whether the chimera is based on a real creature or not, since the significance of its composite character is of course not inherent but attributed. Bats do not talk, but it is also the case that Little Tiger-Bee is a less fantastic creature than he might at first appear to be. The version of the text cited here identifies him as a *bung ba*, whereas in another he appears as *'brong ma*, which Karmay convincingly suggests should be read as *sbrang ma*. According to Karmay, the two terms respectively mean *abeille* (bee) and *bourdon* (bumblebee): "from the iconographic description of the divinity which is quite terrifying in the text, I have chosen to translate the Tibetan term as 'bumblebee' rather than 'bee'" (2013, p. 722, fn. 8).[18]

While such a distinction between *bung ba* and *sbrang ma* may well be a regional nicety, Karmay is surely right that the Vampire God is something other than just a honeybee. In view of his fearsome characteristics, a more likely candidate than a bumblebee is probably the hornet, which delivers a more ferocious sting, and is a voracious predator on other insects, which it kills with its (conceivably) copper-coloured mandibles.

Little Tiger-Bee has a more narrowly-defined function than Capable Bat insofar as he specialises in the destruction of vampires, but the two share certain iconographic and behavioural features that suggest that they are variants of a single type. Apart from their incorporation of the physical characteristics of other animals, both are notable for their mastery of all levels of the vertically-tiered world, and their ability to liaise between zenith and nadir. There is also an intriguing suggestion of common parenthood. The opening lines of Capable Bat inform us that Bat was the offspring of the rDzi king and the Ngad queen. However, when explaining his powers to Kongtse, Bat mentions that he has the wings of a bird because his father is the white-tailed eagle, and the body of a rat because his mother is the grey mole. Little Tiger-Bee's father is the white eagle and his mother is described as *dbyig dbal sngon po*.[19] Karmay remarks that this creature "is clearly not the female of the eagle, but some other sort of unidentified bird" (2013, p. 723, fn. 10). It is worth considering the possibility that Little Tiger-Bee's mother is in fact not a bird at

17) As is well know, the adage is a distillation from Lévi-Strauss's remark that "species are chosen [as totems] not because they are 'good to eat', but because they are 'good to think'" (1962, p. 89).

18) "A partir de la description iconographique de la divinité qui est assez terrifiante dans le texte, j'ai choisi de traduire le terme tibétain par 'bourdon' plutôt que par 'abeille'".

19) *dByig* denotes a jewel, while *dbal* is a peculiarly Bonpo term with connotations of sharpness or heat.

all but some subterranean creature: the name dByi dbal sngon po is suspiciously similar to Byi long sngon po, the mother of Clever Bat, and it is at least conceivable that, before the attrition of textual transmission had taken its toll, the Vampire God's mother was none other than the grey mole herself.

I am not aware of the existence of any prescriptive text of the ritual for which this narrative provides the charter myth. Vampire subjugation (*sri mnan*) ritual texts are not uncommon, but most of those with which I am familiar differ from *Sri gsas* in one important respect: mastery of the different realms is not concentrated in a singe figure but apportioned out to the animals that inhabit them. When, during the recitation of the ritual narrative, the fugitive vampire tries to hide in a given location, the priest instructs the appropriate mammal or bird to go and flush it out. Logically, vampire subjugation rituals featuring Little Tiger-Bee are likely to have evolved from earlier forms in which creatures of the natural world are called on to carry out tasks that are, later on, allocated to a single composite figure. But why is it the earlier forms that have survived?

Indigeneity is a complex notion that has a strong and a weak sense. Examples of the former – institutions that have flourished *ab origine* in the places where they are celebrated – are probably rarer than we would imagine (cuckoo clocks were invented in the Black Forest and not – *pace* Orson Welles – in Switzerland, Scots clan tartans were a creation of the Victorian textile industry, and so forth) whereas the 'weak' form accepts a combination of homegrown and imported structure or content. The four chimeras we have seen are monstrous combinations of different animals, and three out of four of them (Little Tiger-Bee being the exception here) conform to the topos of anomalous animals to the extent that the sense of danger elicited by their monstrosity also evokes revulsion. In the case of Little Tiger-Bee, his composite nature is given an intriguing inflection: while he is eagle on his father's side and some identified creature – possibly mole – on his mother's, his multiple features are the result of the empowerments he receives while he is still in the egg. In terms of form, if not content, his trajectory is comparable to that of a tantric neophyte who develops spiritual and thaumaturgic powers by accumulating initiations. The Three-headed Black Man is classified as one of the *gto* rituals, which belong to the lowest of the Nine Ways of Bon; the camel is a minor player within this same ritual; if rituals featuring Little Tiger-Bee and Capable Bat are still performed, I am not aware of them. If these chimeras are marginal in modern Tibetan religious belief to the point of obsolescence, perhaps it is not because they are alien to Buddhism but, on the contrary, because they are *too similar* to tantric figures; the fact that

other monsters, such as the beast-headed god imported by Ra Lo tsā ba, could do all the things they could do, and more besides, may eventually have rendered them redundant.

Appendix: Transliterated Text of Tibetan Excerpts

1. Capable Bat

Note: Ngag dbang rgya mtsho's *dbu can* transcription of *Pha wang,* presented here in its entirety, includes occasional emendations; these are represented in the roman transliteration in round brackets, while my own suggestions for improved readings are given in square brackets. Emendations have been limited to passages in which the translation may not otherwise seem justified.

Kyai dang po rdzi'i rgyal po dang / ngad kyi rgyal mo gnyis 'tshol ('tshos) pa la / bu ni rgos po pha wang srid / lha myi gnyis la 'di yod na / chi byas thams cad log par bshad / lha mi gnyis la 'di yod na / chi byas thams cad log bsams pa grub / bsams (bsam) pa'i don rnams yid bzhin grub / pha wang rgos po yod pa zer / pha wang rgos po rtsags gis gzung / kong tse 'phrul rgyal phyag tu phul / yang rtsal che ba'i sems can cig / lta' na kong tse skyug re grog (bro) / lus la pha wang mtshan sna tshogs rnams / khog na shes pa sna lnga 'drin [sgrin] / lus la shes pa sna lnga yod / smras pa mis (min) sa gcig kyang med / gong tse zhes pa zhal nas stod (bstod) / pha wang rgos po zhal na re / nga ma bu ma bsad ma bcad do / bsad nas shi khog skya bo yin / nga ma bsad pa la gting (gtong) dang lnga yod / lus la yon tan sna lnga yod / pha wang rgos po brngan no skad / phyi ma brngan pa phan pa na / pha wang rgos po ma sngon (rngon) na / gnam sa gnyis kyang steng 'og 'gyur / 'gho (mgo) nag myi la na tsha yod / sems can phyugs la god kha yod / gnam las char chu 'bab mi nyan / sa le [la] rtsi gto (tog) 'khrung ('khrungs) mi nyan / 'brus phrug ('bru drug) lo tog skyes mi nyan / bso (gso) ba'i be lug 'phel mi nyan / dbang thang bu tsa skye mi nyan / tsha (chu) bo bzhung bzhin babs mi nyan / rta nor lug gsum 'phel mi nyan / mgon po grog dang spyod mi nyan / dmag g.yag dgra srang [srin?] 'dul thab (thabs) med / sa skos (rkos) mkhar las byas mi nyan / shi ba lha dang 'phrad mi nyan / de bas pha wang brngan no skad / 'phras gis byed lug g.yag gsum gis / bdud rtsi zhim dgu mngar bcud 'di / pha wang rgos po brngan 'tshal lo / gong tse rgyal bo 'di skad gsung / sems can khyod kyi lus steng la / ltas ngan sna lnga snang ba zer / mi lus bya yi mgo bo can / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan gcig / bya shog (gshog) byi ba'i sder mo can / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan gnyis / 'dab chags lus la 'chi bar na [byi ba rna?] / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan gsum / brdos phra bo shog (gshog) pa'i sder ma can / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan bzhi / yar chu shog re 'dug pa de / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan lnga / rna ba (28) hed gis 'dug pa de / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan drug / lus chung la kha rtsas [rtsal] che / mi skyes pa'i ltas ngan bdun / shes pa

che la rna ba ring / mi skyes pa’i ltas ngan brgyad / byol song lus la mi skad smras / mi skyes pa’i ltas ngan dgu / lus po chung la gnyer ma mong (mang) / ltas ngan rnam par sna tshogs de / sems can khyod las [la] tshang gnyis [nas] ’dug / lha mi gnyis gis (kyis) ’phrin pa byed / mi dang lha ru ’dug pa gnyis / de skad yin nas gsung pa de / pha wang rgos pa’i zhal na re / ya mtshan che ba’i lus po la / yon tan sna dgu yod pa yin / ’phrul rgyal kong tse nga la nyon / bye’i [bya] yi shog (gshog) pa ’dug pa de / pha thang dkar rgod po’i bu yin pa / bya’i [byi’i] lus por ’dug pa de / ma byi long sngon po bu yin pa / de’i yod tan de’i zer / mang na stong ba ’go bo de / ma bzhi bu la yod pa yin / de’i yod tan de’i zer / shog (gshog) pa sder mo yod pa de / ngan song gnas nas ’dren pa’i rtag (rtags) / de’i yod tan de’i zer / lus po chung la snying [gnyer] ma mang / nyon mongs sdug bsngal sel ba’i rtags / de’i yod [yon] tan de’i zer / kha chen [rtsal] che ba ’dug pa de / ’gron po gnyer las chags pa yin / de’i yod [yon] tan de’i zer / yar chu (mchu) shog re ’deg pa de / thabs dang shes rab ldan ba’i rtags / de’i yod tan de’i zer / rna ba hed gis ’dug pa de / snang srid dra [dgra] la rnon pa’i rtags / de’i yon tan de’i zer / rna ba sres tshug ’dug pa de / bden pa shag gi thub pa’i rtag (rtags) / de’i yod tan de’i zer / byon song lus po ’dug pa de / spun lnga ’gron po byed pa’i rtag / de’i yod tan de’i zer / bso ma sa nga [bswo / ma sangs] tshon che’i bu / bnon na sa bcu zil gyis gnon / bshig nas rdo rje brag kyang bzhig / skus nas ’chi med bdud rtsi skus / pha wang shag gi mi thub na [med] / brngan no gser dang g.yu’i brngan / mchod nas dung ’bras gis mchod / yon bdag ’di’i mgon skyabs mdzod / sri’u ’di’i dmu dag gzung gzung / jag ’gro rnams kyi rdzi’u gyi / sdang ba’i dgra la byad sna drong / pha wang yar chu (mchu) rdo rje so ba ’dra / bande byad kha phyir la zlog / brngan no gser dang g.yu’i brngan / pha wang rgos po dgung sngon ’dra / gnam gi thog ser yong ba zlog / pha wang spyan dmyig nyi ma ’dra / glog mdhar dmar po yong ’dra zlog / pha wang sna ni rgyal mtshan ’dra / rgyal bo (28) yod pa zlog / pha wang so ni rtsang phur ’dra / ’chi bdag bdud gi bar chad zlog / pha wang lag pags gser thur ’dra / bdud dmag gi phyag cha ngan pa zlog / pha wang shog (gshog) pa nal ba ’dra / bdud gis bdud btsan phros pa zlog / pha wang sder mo lcags kyu ’dra / bdud gis shan pa yong ba zlog / pha wang gshog pa sder mo ’dra / skya bo ral yul [yol] yong ba zlog / pha wang shog (gshog) ru rgod shog (shog) ’dra / pha wang brngan pa ban byad zlog / pha wang brngan pa bon byed (byad) zlog / pha wang brngan pa nad yong zlog / pha wang brngan pa rim yam (rims yams) zlog / pha wang brngan pa phyug nad zlog / pha wang brngan pa rta nad zlog / pha wang brngan pa nor nad zlog / pha wang brngan pa ra nad zlog / pha wang brngan pa lug nad zlog / pha wang brngan pas tshe srog ’tshos / pha wang brngan pa dgra sna sgyur / pha wang brngan pa gyod sna sgyur / pha wang brngan pa yul khams srung / pha wang brngan pa ’gron po ’tsho’ / pha wang brngan pa yon tan srung / pha wang brngan pa’i yon tan gis / ’gon po gses [byes] la ’gro ba dang / bud med yul du ’dug pa dang / be lug zan la skyong ba dang / pha ’gro rnams kyi skyel [skyel ma] gyis / tshur yong rnams kyi bsus ma gyis / brngan no gser dung g.yu’i brngan / mchod mchod nas dang ’bras kyis mchod / bdud rtsi phud gis brngan yon ’bul / kyair pha wang kha shar du bstan pa yi / shar phyogs ban byad bon byad zlog / dgra sna gyod sna yong ba zlog / pha wang brngan pa phyir la zlog / pha wang kha nub du bstan pa yi / nub phyogs ban byad bon byad zlog / pha wang kha byang du bstan

pa yi / byang phyogs ban byad bon byad zlog / dgra sna gyod sna yong ba zlog / pha wang brngan pa'i yon tan gyis / pha wang kha steng du bstan pa yi / steng phyogs gis thog ser yong ba zlog / pha wang kha 'og du bstan pa yi / sa bdag klu chen gnod pa zlog / srid pa'i gzu bo gsas rdo' dang / srid pa'i sprel dkar gser mgo dang / pha wang rgo po de dang gsum / de gsum srid pa'i gzu bo yin / gzu bo yin pas gzu mdzod cig / brngan yon tshangs ba khyed la 'bul / khyed kyi 'phrin las ma bcod cig / rgyu sbyor yon gyi bdag po'o / nad pa yod na gsos pa gyis / sri'u yod na tshe rdzi mdzod / (30) rgus [rgud] ma rnams kyi sur ma [gso ma] gyis / rta nor lug gsum tshe rdzi gyis / nga bon po bdag gis 'gon (mgon) skyobs mdzod / tshar ro /

2. The Camel

Note: In the transliterated passages 2, 3a and 3b, material in round brackets represents the expanded rendering of the contracted form that immediately precedes it. The texts have not been emended.

Kyai ltas ngan phung sri rnga mong 'dir / srid pa 'byung ba lnga la srid / yongs ni rngam gyi yul nas yongs / chags ni lha yi yul na chags / gzugs ni semn (sems can) kun gyis gzugs / 'dra ni ltas ngan than gzugs 'dra / than la 'di bas che ba med / stong gsum phung pa'i phung 'dre yin / rgyal khams brlag pa'i brlag 'dre yin / ltas ngan stong pa'i stob po che / ming yang phung sri rnga mong zer / mthu stobs rtsal ni khroo (khro bo) rnaṃs dang mnyams / 'ur sgra ngar skad naṃkha'i (nam mkha'i) (21v) 'brug dang mnyams / kha nas mi gtsang sno^gs (sna tshogs) 'thor / mgul du rgyan cha sna tshogs btags / rgyab tu 'gong yas sno^gs (sna tshogs) bkal / ltas ngan sno^gs (sna tshogs) bsgyur duol (du gsol) / (*mGo gsum* fols 21r–21v)

3. The Three-headed Black Man

a) zla dgu ngos bcu song ba dang / pha ma gnyis ka mi 'dra ba'i / milus (mi lus) nag po mgosuṃ (mgo gsum) pa / ma gcig khon ma rgan mo des / 'di skad ces ni dmod mo bor / / pha ma rgan rgon nged gnyis kyis / skye ba sngon ma las ngan byas pa 'dra / de'i 'brus ('bru 'bras) da ltar smin / kye ma semn (sems can) 'di 'dra ba / 'jigten ('jig rten) 'di na mthong ma nyung / e ma ya mtshan nga re 'jigs / mi nag mgo bo gsum pa 'dir / sder mo lcags kyis sder mo la / kha sdang mche gtsigs sdang mig bsgrad / g.yas kyi stag mgo sngon po 'di / zhe sdang sgyu las grub pa'i mgo / dbus kyi glang mgo ser po 'di / 'dodgs ('dod chags) che la sha rtsa glan / mgocig (mgo gcig) gti mug phagis (phag gis) mgo / kha sdang mche gtsigs sdang mig bsgrad / lagnyis (lag gnyis) srin lagsod [?] la rngam / khyung gi gshog brdab 'phur la khed / dug sbrul gdub pa'i sked reg can / spre'u'jug ma khyags ma 'khyug / than bya'i sder mo 'jigs pa bsgrad /

khyod che na sdang ba’i dgra la che / che ni gnod pa’i bgegs la che / byur mgo slang nga’i nang du ’jug / gnas ni rgya graṃ laṃ mdo’ ru / zasu (zas su) glud dang mi kha’i zos / de skad brjod nas laṃ mdor skyal / mi nag mgo bo gsum po ’di / ’phrad tshad thaṃd (thams cad) thal bar brlag / yul gyis mi rnaṃs zad par zos / de kyang mi tshad ’jigten (’jig rten) phung / srid pa gsum po stong la chad / (*mGo gsum* fols 3r–4r)

b) g.yas phyogs stagis (stag gis) mgo bo yis / rgyalo (rgyal po) ’gong po’i gnod pa bsgyur / g.yon phyogs phagis (phag gis) mgo bo yis / byur dang god kha thaṃd (thams cad) bsgyur / dbus kyis glang gis mgo bo yis / skeg chen nyaṃ nga thaṃd (thams cad) bsgyur / khyung gi gshog pa brdab pa yis / mkha’ la lding ba’i gdon rnams bsgyur / srin lag gtor zor dgra la rgyob // khram shing dgregs (dgra bgegs) khram la thob // sbrulyi (sbrul gyi) sked rag bcings pa des / klu rigs gdug pa thaṃd (thams cad) bsgyur / spre’u mjugs ma ’khyug pa yis / rjes ngan nad gdon thaṃd (thams cad) bsgyur / than bya’i sder mo bsgrad pa yis / than dang ltas ngan dgra la bsgyur / de ring bsgyur ba’i rgyalo (rgyal po) mdzod // than dang ltas ngan thaṃd (thams cad) bsgyur / mi nad sna tshogs khyod kyis bsgyur / yi dwags bkres skom khyod kyis bsgyur / mi nad phyugs nad khyed kyis| rkyen dang sdugngl (sdug bsngal) khyed kyis bsgyur // (*mGo gsum* fols 5v–6v)

4. Little Tiger-Bee

a) Lus po stag ris khro bo can / mgo bo gar gshog ’brong ru can / thang dkar rgod po’i gshog pa can / seng ge dkar mo’i dbal so can / bdud rtsi man gyi rkyal bu can / rno ngar dbal gyi mdung rtse can / che chung kun gyi skad snyan can / gnyan gyi lag pa can / gshen bon mi’i chas byad can / (Karmay and Nagano 2002, p. 185)

b) rNo ngar dbal gyi mdung gis rgyab / gar gshog ‘brong gi ru yis rdung / seng ge dkar mos so yis mur / thang dkar rgod pos gshog pas brlabs / rgya stag khra bo’i spar mos brad / zangs kyi mchu yis sbad kyis bcad / (Karmay and Nagano 2002, p. 188)

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Indigenous elements in Tibetan tantric religion

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Summary: This paper is an attempt at an overview of the still only partially understood topic of indigenous elements within Tibetan tantric religion, with particular focus on the underlying historical and cultural dynamics. Drawing on the research Cathy Cantwell and I have done together in recent years, and above all greatly indebted to the discoveries of many other scholars, it was inspired by the need to communicate the topic to non-specialist academic colleagues, on the one hand avoiding excessive technical obscurantism, but on the other hand utilising up to date research.

Tibetan culture is the world's most intensely tantric. All Tibetan religious traditions prize tantrism as their highest and most advanced form of religion, and there is no significant Tibetan religious tradition that is not primarily oriented towards tantrism.

Few other cultures can compare. In India for example, only some religions can properly be described as tantric, while in China, Korea and Japan, tantrism has historically been quite restricted, in part as a result of state policy. Many among the Theravāda cultures of Sri Lanka and South East Asia to this day maintain a largely hostile discourse regarding tantrism, despite the historical presence of tantric elements within those societies in the past, and even some probable residues in the present.

In its origins, tantrism was an Indian cultural product with complex and multifarious historical roots. Tantrism was of course not a specific religion in itself, but can rather be seen as a style of religiosity, or a religious tendency, emergent in medieval India. It is probably true to say that tantrism had its most substantial manifestations in the Śaiva religions of India, from where its ritual and iconographical influences spread through many other traditions, notably Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism, and Jainism. However, influences were undoubtedly mutual. For example, some of the most important types of Buddhist tantrism, the Mahāyoga, Yoginī, and Yoganiruttara tantras, absorbed a great many Śaiva ritual methods and iconographical features (Sanderson 2009, pp. 124–240). Yet it is equally true that one of the most prestigious of Śaiva tantric philosophies, the Kashmiri *Pratyabhijñā* system taught by Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, was quite explicitly dependent on Buddhist

philosophy, notably the Buddhist school of logicians founded by Dharmakīrti (Ratié 2010, pp. 437–478). In recent years, increasing numbers of scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the mutual borrowings between Śaivism and Buddhism were, in several respects, conscious, deliberate, and explicit.

Buddhist tantrism became arguably the most productive tantric tradition in India next to Śaivism. It eventually came to be known as Vajrayāna, the Indestructible Vehicle, and was usually seen as a further extension of Mahāyāna Buddhism, one that employed special skilful methods to enable the much more rapid achievement of enlightenment. This was the kind of Buddhism that became so influential in Tibet.

Indian society was often densely populated, and included many urban centres. It was highly cosmopolitan, and thoroughly plural. In terms of religion, Indian society has been characterised as 'polytropic'. The term was popularised by the anthropologist Michael Carrithers (Carrithers 2000), to describe the propensity amongst South Asian populations for individuals, families, and communities, to offer varying degrees of reverence to all or most of the differing religious traditions manifest within their environment, including those ostensibly quite other than their own. For example, persons born to Jain castes and families would quite naturally also offer varying degrees of reverence to local Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva deities or gurus as well as their own Jaina deities and gurus, if they encountered them in the course of their lives. And vice versa too, Hindus might offer reverence to Jain deities and gurus. In many cases, it can actually become difficult to classify ordinary South Asian people as belonging to any one particular religion, along the western exclusivist model. Polytropic tendencies were also reflected at the more formal level, with deities, temples, sacred places, and even passages of religious text, becoming shared by religious traditions to varying degrees.

A particular feature of much Indian religion, perhaps facilitated by polytropism, was its capacity for assimilating local religious forms to more universal canonical forms. For example, local deities specific to a particular region or village could become assimilated to the more universally accepted canonical deities found in Sanskrit scriptures. Local sacred places could likewise become identified with categories from classical Sanskrit texts. Thus a local deity might, for example, become identified as a specialised form of Śiva or Kālī, and its holy places developed as Śiva or Kālī sacred sites.

Indian tantrism, including the Buddhist Vajrayāna, was extremely prolific for several centuries in its output of sacred scriptural texts. On the whole we do not yet know in very much detail just how these anonymous scriptures attributed to the Buddhas actually appeared, nor exactly who produced

them. However, what we can already be certain of is that Indian Vajrayāna was highly productive of new scriptures for several centuries.

By contrast with India, Tibet was not densely populated, and had virtually no urban centres. It was neither so cosmopolitan, plural, nor religiously so varied, as India. Religious polytropy was not such a prominent feature in Tibet, and it could even be suggested that some countervailing tendencies were apparent. These included the closed exclusivity of indigenous local deity cults, the eventual emergence of a widespread shunning of Chinese Buddhism, and the universal requirement that Madhyamaka philosophy alone be regarded as the highest tenet. Of course Tibet was no cultural monolith, and many regions had their own local and historical variations. And even if some areas closer to Nepal, India and China might differ in religious attitudes to polytropy, perhaps reflecting those neighbouring cultures to varying degrees, nevertheless, on aggregate, we still think it is true to say that in Tibet, maintaining strict purity of lineage was a more predominant and evident cultural theme in regard to religion.

When Buddhist tantrism first entered Tibet from India, it initially brought with it some of its Indian cultural patterns. For the first few hundred years, especially from the 8th to the 11th centuries, very much in the spirit of Indian Vajrayāna, Tibetan Buddhists strove to localise and indigenise their new religion, to produce a tantric Buddhism that was specifically assimilated to Tibetan culture and geography. Indigenous deities were redefined as Buddhist protective deities, existing sacred sites co-opted for Buddhist usage, and Indian tantric ritual was subtly tweaked to better suit Tibetan cultural preferences (Cantwell and Mayer 2013).

While a quantity of Sanskrit tantric scriptures and commentaries were indeed translated into Tibetan in this early period, an even greater number of new ones were exuberantly compiled within Tibet. Although largely composed of recombinations of existing Indian textual and ritual modules, these were now newly put together within Tibet in a manner that better addressed Tibetan cultural expectations. This was achieved by accentuating different ritual emphases, and sometimes also by including a few indigenous ritual categories. To give an example, one of the most striking forms of indigenisation was the adoption of distinctively Tibetan styles of integrating narrative with ritual. Of course, ritual all over the world is accompanied by narrative, but in Tibet, a highly distinctive style of doing so had evolved, with its own technical language and conventions. Elements of this, still keeping its technical language, were now integrated into Buddhist tantrism (Cantwell and Mayer 2008a).

Such tantric scriptures, produced in Tibet with local adaptation but largely along the Indian model, are nowadays known as the rNying ma Tantras, or the Ancient Tantras. We do not yet know the degrees to which they were redacted by Indians working in a Tibetan environment, or by Tibetans working alone. The contributions of both Indians and Tibetans were necessary to produce such a literature, since it draws so massively and in such a detailed and complex manner on Indian tantric sources, yet can also localise them to Tibetan cultural conditions. Textual evidence can be found amongst the archaeologically recovered mainly 10th century Dunhuang texts. To give one example, PT44 mentions an important redaction of the *Vajrakīlaya* tantras by the Indian siddha Padmasambhava, when he integrates for the first time four indigenously Himalayan *bSe* goddesses into the Indian Buddhist *Vajrakīlaya* maṇḍala, to serve there as protectors. These Himalayan *bSe* goddesses then continue to appear within canonical rNying ma tantras, for example, they are referred to in Chapters 13, 15 and 19 of the important and influential *Phur pa bcu gnyis* (Mayer 1996, pp.128–132). According to PT44, Padmasambhava enacted their integration into the divine maṇḍala partly within a Himalayan geographical context while attended by his Tibetan and Nepali disciples. Of course, PT44 is primarily a ritual narrative, so its strictly historical value is unclear (Cantwell and Mayer 2008b, pp. 41–67). What is more clear is that in very general terms, the modes of adaptation to local conditions that the rNying ma tantras reveal, broadly resemble the modes of local adaptations found more widely within South Asian ritual literatures.

The political and social conditions under which the rNying ma tantras began to proliferate more widely were anything but normal. The great Tibetan Empire, a highly centralised regime that had dominated the Silk Road and defeated its neighbours for so long, collapsed irrevocably in the mid-ninth century, never to rise again. During the Empire, tantric teachings had been restricted and controlled by state policy, as in China. But with the collapse of the Empire and the ensuing anarchy and civil disorder, tantric teachings began to proliferate. It was from this period that numerous rNying ma tantras first come into our view. However we have little direct evidence of who propagated them, or how, because in this anarchic time, the historical record was substantially reduced, so that fewer surviving historical sources of the usual kind remain available for us to examine. It is interesting to observe that the Pāla Empire in North East India suffered a period of political instability at a similar time, likewise resulting in a lessening of state control over Buddhist affairs. As in Tibet, this Pāla period of instability also witnessed the first emergence of what were destined to become a seminal

tranche of Indian tantric Buddhist scriptures, including, for example, the *Hevajra*, the *Herukābhidhāna* (the main text for the *Cakrasaṃvara* system), and the *Catuṣpīṭha*.

It is important to note that for those who first compiled the rNying ma tantras, we think mainly between the 9th and 11th centuries, their Tibetan localisation seems far more likely to have been considered an asset, than a liability. We see this in early authors such as Rong zom (Wangchug 2002) and above all from the testimony of the early texts themselves. Using popular narratives still ubiquitous throughout the rNying ma liturgical tradition, Dunhuang texts like PT44 and PT307 describe the triumphant conversion and induction of named local indigenous deities into the Buddhist pantheon. As described above, these local deities soon featured within canonical rNying ma tantras and their associated rituals, often accompanied, in the style of indigenous Tibetan ritual, by the narratives (*smrang*, *rabs*) of their conversion and induction into Buddhism (Mayer 1996, pp.128–132, Cantwell and Mayer 2008a, 2013). Together with other incorporations of indigenous elements, such as the presence of the indigenously Tibetan *'go ba'i lha* within Chapter 9 of the Buddhist canonical *Phur pa bcu gnyis* (Mayer 1996, p. 132), or the increasingly widespread attachment of wings to the rNying ma forms of the Buddhist heruka,[1] this represented the successful grafting of the tree of tantric Buddhism onto the rootstock of Tibetan culture, and probably makes most sense if understood as the successful outcome of an often conscious and deliberate indigenising program. Moreover the continuous, ongoing production of ever new scriptures by the creative recombination (with a few additions) of existing ritual and textual modules into new permutations, was already the example set by the Indian tantric masters, who had themselves done exactly this for centuries. Nor did the Buddhist texts declare definitively that Indian soil was the only legitimate geographical ground of Dharma.

1) As far as I am aware, if winged Buddhist herukas were attested in India, they are yet to be reported by modern Indological scholarship. This could imply either that they did not exist in India at all, or that they were a minority tradition there. The fact that they became so ubiquitous in the rNying ma form of heruka that emerged in Tibet, might reflect a skilful Buddhist accommodation to local ritual preferences, since wings (along with most things avian) were very prominently featured within indigenous Tibetan ritual symbolism. Cathy Cantwell and I currently have a paper on this topic in press, examining it more specifically in terms of the indigenous binary categories of the Winged and the Fanged. The closest we have so far come to a possible Indian occurrence of a winged Buddhist heruka is a form of *Cakrasamvara* merged with *Garuḍa* as practiced in some Jo nang pa and dGe lugs circles; yet here the wings are not inherent to the heruka as in the rNying ma tradition, but only present because of heruka's merging with *Garuḍa* (thanks to Jeff Watt for referring us to this deity).

But by the end of the 12th century, the intellectual climate in Tibet changed significantly. From the late 10th century onwards, there had already been a two hundred year period of new translations of late Indian tantric scriptures previously unknown in Tibet (most notably, the above mentioned texts produced during the 9th century Pāla eclipse such as the *Hevajra* and *Herukābhidhāna*), and the establishment of new lineages promoting them. These new lineages liked to assert their novel styles, and their pure Indian origins, as selling points.

Then, with the accelerating decline of Buddhism in India at the end of the 12th century, the traumatic destruction of its great centres like Bodhgaya, and the flight of learned Indian Buddhist refugees to Tibet, new attitudes began to harden. The Tibetan quest for inspired indigenisation was increasingly displaced by a growing concern to preserve the now fast-disappearing Indian tradition exactly as it had been.

Thirdly, new criteria for scriptural orthodoxy began to predominate, criteria unheard of in India, but standard and officially enforced by the state in China; and with them began the anathematisation of any scriptural productions on Tibetan soil, whether past, present or future. For China in the guise of the Yuan or Mongol dynasty at that time took power in Tibet through its Tibetan allies, the learned lamas of Sa skya, who were already active promoters of the new Indian tantras, and at whose monastery several learned Indian refugees had gathered. The new criteria for scriptural orthodoxy required exclusively Indian origins, with no indigenous Tibetan admixtures or redactions whatsoever, not even the slightest. In many ways, these new criteria resonated with traditional Tibetan concerns for purity of lineage. Yet ironically, although enforced in the name of a purer Indian lineage, they were not actually very Indian in spirit, because India had always accepted polytropy, inter-religious intertextuality, and the ongoing production of new scriptures.

Since nearly all their most beloved and important tantras were redacted in Tibet, and therefore now vulnerable to being denounced as forgeries, the rNying ma tradition found itself under pressure. Any degree of visible Tibetan input to their scriptures became a potential embarrassment that could be exploited by opponents. And we can still see from two well-known rNying ma pa tantras which we shall here use as examples, how some of their indigenous elements have attracted redactorial anxiety over the centuries. Chapter 19 of the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* has a very long and important *mantroddhāra* (*sngags btu ba*) which, like other similar rNying ma examples, shows certain signs of Tibetan composition (Mayer 1996, pp. 132–147), a fact which was seized upon by anti-rNying ma polemicists (Sog-bzlog-pa 1975, p. 302). A *mantroddhāra*

is a standard Indic convention in which mantras are reduced to a simple code mainly consisting of the ascription of a fixed number to each series (*varga*) of the Sanskrit alphabet. To illustrate, the series *ka kha ga gha ṅa* is called 'the first', the series *ca cha ja jha ña* is called 'the second', and so on. Thus the letter *ka* is indicated by the statement 'the first of the first', while the letter *ña* is indicated by the statement 'the fifth of the second'. This system works excellently, as intended, to preserve intact the exact spelling and pronunciation of the mantras from the vagaries of scribal transmission over long periods of time. But in the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, the *mantroddhāra*, when decoded, does not yield Sanskrit as it should. Rather, it yields the corrupted phonetics typical of the very early renderings of Sanskrit into Tibetan, before a rationalised transliteration had been established: a sure sign that this *mantroddhāra* was composed in Tibet, using an old Tibetan manuscript as its basis (Mayer 1996, pp. 132–147). In response to the long standing polemical critique, many centuries later, the 18th century sDe dge re-edition of the rNying ma canon still felt the need to add a marginal note to the chapter, which implies, a little defensively, that although the *mantroddhāra* looks like it could still benefit from further investigation, it should be left as given (*sngags btu 'di la dpyad bya mang yang sor bzhag byas*) (Mayer 1996, p. 146).

In the year 1094, another rNying ma tantric scripture, the *Kīlaya Nirvāṇa Tantra,* had the dubious honour of being placed by the polemicist Pho brang Shi ba'i 'od at the very top of his list of heretical tantras to be be shunned (Karmay 1980, pp. 14–15 and 1998, pp. 135–6). The surviving text of that name has a passage in its Chapter 19 which is by now so scrambled in transmission that it has so far remained incomprehensible to the most learned lamas of any tradition. Yet it nevertheless might be mistaken as belonging to the indigenous Bon religion of Tibet rather than to Buddhism, because it appears to describe the rites and activities of the *gze ma* (Cantwell & Mayer 2007, pp. 27–28 and 196–203). The *gze ma* as a type of wrathful goddess are ubiquitous in the Bon tradition, found in numerous sources, yet quite unknown in Buddhism, and as far as we are currently aware, occur in no Buddhist scripture other than here. If the redactors of the *Kīlaya Nirvāṇa Tantra* had assumed that the *gze ma* were amongst the indigenous deities tamed by and incorporated into Buddhism, the redactors of other Buddhist tantras had not necessarily agreed with them. We surmise the chapter might have subsequently become garbled as a result of editorial or scribal hypercorrections, attempting to interpret or reinterpret the word *gze ma* in various different ways.

By the end of this period, right across the gamut of rNying ma tantric scriptures, colophons had appeared in considerable numbers, accompanied

by apologetic historiographical narratives, that tried belatedly to identify the numerous rNying ma tantras as unadulterated straight translations from Sanskrit originals with no Tibetan redaction. But this was perceived by rival scholars as an attempt at distracting attention away from the real truth of their actual redaction or compilation in Tibet.

One of the problems in this apologetic and defensive approach is that it entails the denial of what might well have been one of the major achievements in Tibetan history. Later Tibetans came to believe that there was a single towering achievement in the rNying ma period: the famous state-sponsored program that oversaw the translation of hundreds of Indian Buddhist monastic, doctrinal, philosophical, and exoteric sūtra scriptures into Tibetan, and the concomitant founding of many learned Buddhist institutions. Yet they came to distrust the other great rNying ma achievement that followed in subsequent decades, which was the successful localisation of esoteric Indian tantrism to Tibetan conditions, which facilitated the consequent conversion of the greater part of the Tibetan population to tantric Buddhism. The scores of anonymous rNying ma tantric scriptures, the many authored commentaries, and the ritual systems emerging from them, that made it possible, proved culturally so well adjusted, ritually so effective, and intellectually so coherent, that through their agency, an often sophisticated understanding of Buddhism seems to have been able to pervade through much of Tibetan society in a surprisingly short time.

In this adaptation, a tendency to systematise soteriological approaches became apparent, accompanied by a parallel tendency to soteriologise pragmatic magic. As is already apparent in the Dunhuang texts, overarching doxographical structures such as the Nine Vehicles (*theg pa dgu*), or universal ritual structures expressive of a doctrinal normalisation, such as the Three Concentrations (Tib. *gting 'dzin gsum*, Sans. *trisamādhi*), and perhaps also the Three Characteristics of the Continuum of the Path of Mahāyoga (*mtshan nyid gsum*), seem to have been applied across a range of otherwise diverse deity systems, introducing a degree of doctrinal uniformity across the ritual profusion. Rather ingeniously, complex Buddhist doctrine was at the same time enabled to penetrate agricultural village and pastoral encampment alike through an encoding of advanced Buddhist doctrines within pragmatic tantric ritual. Most fundamentally, the very capacity effectively to perform pragmatic magic and prognostication became defined as the natural outcome of the successful accomplishment of a Buddhist *yi dam* deity, which was at the same time the central soteriological method of tantric Buddhism, conferring wisdom and compassion. Thus pragmatic ritual magic per se was

constructed as the skilful means to benefit others through the powers conferred by Buddhist realisation.

Doctrinal penetration also occured within numerous particular, individual pragmatic rituals. For example, more than half of all the chapters of the Dunhuang commentary on the *Thabs zhags* tantra (from Chapter Eighteen all the way through to Chapter Forty), were dedicated specifically to the encoding of mainstream abstract Buddhist doctrines within a wide range of quotidian pragmatic rituals, so that the rehearsal of those doctrines was rendered inseperable from and integral to the performance of such rituals (Cantwell and Mayer 2012, pp. 78–82). A similar concern closely to integrate abstract Buddhist doctrine within pragmatic ritual is shown in the *Phur bu myang 'das*, a concern which is expressed in that text repeatedly and explicitly (Cantwell and Mayer 2007, pp. 22–31).

Such a concern explicitly to incorporate mainstream Buddhist view into pragmatic ritual magic perhaps occurs to a rather greater degree within these early rNying ma tantras than is generally found in the later *Yoganiruttara* tantras propogated in the *Phyi dar*. A parallel factor is that some influential early rNying ma Mahāyoga tantras, including the *Thabs zhags* and the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, retained slightly closer continuities with the earlier, more moderate strata of Yogatantra than did the more radically antinomian *Yoganiruttara* tantras produced almost contemporaneously in India during the Pāla decline. In this way, these sometimes Tibet-redacted rNying ma tantras remained more obviously congruent with orthodox Buddhist doctrine, and thus less in need of complex exegesis, than their contemporaneous Indic counterparts. By contrast, some of the *Yoganiruttara* tantras, for example the famous *Herukābhidhāna*, could through much of their content at face value appear barely Buddhist at all (Sanderson 2009), and paid less explicit, systematic attention to integrating pragmatic ritual with Buddhist doctrine.

The rNying ma style of seamlessly integrating advanced doctrinal meanings with quotidian pragmatic ritual, served also to reduce the degree of dumbing down of Buddhism entailed in its propagation amongst its main target audience, the hereditary tantric laity (Tib. *sngags pa*, Sans. *mantrin*). For example, as we find in the Dunhuang *Thabs zhags* manuscript and other early sources, the Mahāyāna doctrine of the Three Bodies of the Buddha (*trikāya*) was introduced as the sole point of departure for every Mahāyoga ritual, via the ubiquitous Three Concentrations. Advanced ideas such as Emptiness, the *dharmadhātu*, and Non-dual Wisdom, could likewise be woven into the very fabric of every kind of pragmatic magic. At the same time, as we will describe below, the target audience of hereditary tantric laity were

typically influential or even dominant members of their communities, frequently drawn from the power elites of grand aristocratic families, nomad chiefs, village headmen, and perhaps also priestly lineages, and such people typically commanded a higher degree of access to learning than most Tibetans. Indian tantrism does not seem to have had this calculated quality of fostering a high degree of tantric learning amidst a lay elite in quite the same way. These were remarkable rNying ma period Tibetan innovations, and as far as we are aware, no other Asian society achieved anything quite like it.

Perhaps the brilliance of this achievement is why the criticism of the rNying ma pa was only seldom deadly. Not even their worst enemies amongst the later neo-orthodoxy tried to completely deny that the rNying ma adaptation had supplied the historical bedrock of the entirety of later Tibetan Buddhist culture; and even their fiercest critics, including the Sa skya school, despite all their anti-indigenous rhetoric, continued to use a quantity of rNying ma tantra on a regular basis. Likewise, most of Tibetan Buddhism relied for many centuries (half of it still does!) on rNying ma institutional innovations in areas such as hereditary modes of religious authority. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Tibetan lamas to this day continue to feel embarrassment about scriptural texts that might have any degree of Tibetan creative input, however valuable. More often than not, they either seek to downplay the Tibetan component of such texts, or they deprecate them as apocryphal.

Associated with Tibetan Buddhism, and especially with the rNying ma school, are a number of advanced arts and sciences and other ancillary practices that are not directly soteriological, but which are believed to be capable of improving conditions for the practice of Buddhism, if correctly applied. Several of these seem to originate in the later Imperial period, perhaps even before the large scale triumph of Buddhism, and they show a distinctively international and syncretic nature (F. Meyer, in Parfionovitch, Dorje & Meyer 1992, p. 3). These include Tibetan medicine, 'Chinese astrology' (or *nag rtsi*), and a range of practices for the enhancement of good fortune and vitality, for example, those known as 'wind horse' or *rlung rta*. These systems can be very complex, and in some cases, notably medicine and astrology, their practitioners might require an advanced level of education. What is striking about them is that they often include a highly syncretic mix of international cultural elements. The medical tradition integrates Western, Indian, Chinese and indigenous medical elements, all of which becomes conceptually encompassed by the cult and doctrines of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Bhaiṣajyaguru, the blue Buddha of Healing (F. Meyer, in Parfionovitch, Dorje & Meyer 1992, p. 3). In Tibet, tantric rites were developed for this Buddha, associated with

the practice of medicine, and an important set of paracanonical medical tantras eventually appeared. In addition, a set of tantric practices were developed specifically for physicians. These, and much of the medical tradition, are often particularly associated with the rNying ma school.

Similarly, in the 'Wind Horse' and suchlike practices one finds Indian Buddhas and Bodhisattvas juxtaposed with Chinese trigrams alongside indigenous Tibetan categories such as the *sgra bla* deities (Berounsky 2004, bDud 'joms Rin po che 1979–85, Shen-Yu Lin 2005). Overlapping with the 'Wind Horse' are other practices for good fortune, vitality and prosperity, and especially in the rNying ma, some categories from these areas of indigenous Tibetan thinking became integrated into the Indian-derived longevity rites connected with Amitāyus, the Buddha of Limitless Life.

The Chinese Astrology or *Nag rtsi* primarily mixes Chinese with Tibetan ideas, and although it is described as 'Chinese astrology', the system is in fact quite unknown in China (Schuh 2013).

The syncretism shown in each of these complex systems is in contrast with the emphasis on purity of lineage found elsewhere in Tibetan religion. There have been relatively few examples of avowed syncretism in Tibetan religion. On the contrary, the famous *Ris med* or non sectarian movement in 19th century East Tibet was vehemently anti-syncretic and anti-eclectic, advocating mutual understanding and cooperation, but placing emphatic value on the preservation of purity of each separate lineage (Ringu 2007). A possible exception to the rule might be the New Bon or *Bon gsar* movement of the 18th century, which could be seen as a less covert syncretism between Buddhism and Bon.

No review of indigenous elements within Tibetan Tantric religion can be complete without a discussion of the Bon religion. If the rNying ma represented Indian Buddhism adapted to Tibetan conditions, the Bon represented indigenous Tibetan religion adapted to Buddhist conditions. Yet our understanding of Bon is by no means clear. Since it came to resemble Buddhism so very closely, some scholars deny it was ever an independent religion at all, and see it more as an artificial construction *ex nihilo* that followed the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, rather than as a survival from pre-Buddhist times with genuine continuities from the past. As ever, the truth is quite complex, and can best be understood by a consideration of the historical dynamics involved.

So let us start with a few words about indigenous Tibetan ritual. We don't have many surviving texts representing the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, and we have reason to suspect that some of its tradition was oral rather than

written. Our main textual sources are ancient manuscripts from Dunhuang in north west China, and those more recently found in the Gathang Bumpa in Lhobrag in South Tibet. Despite their comparative paucity, these few surviving texts are nevertheless sufficient to indicate that pre-Buddhist Tibet had a highly complex and reasonably consistent ritual tradition. Even if not monastically organised like Buddhism, it seems to have formed a coherent enough universe of practice and belief, rather like Brahmanic religion in India, or Ancient Greek religion. As we already mentioned, a notable feature of indigenous Tibetan ritual was its very particular signature style of integrating narrative and ritual.

We can also learn something from archaeology. Much of the Tibetan Empire's considerable surplus wealth seems to have been lavished on an extravagant funerary cult. Recent excavations reveal its vast scale, magnificent splendour, and conceptual sophistication. Guntram Hazod (2007, 2009, 2010, 2013) has so far charted around 380 burial fields in Central Tibet. Each of these fields can hold up to 800 individual tumuli in various shapes. In the royal burial fields at 'Phyong rgyas in Central Tibet, the tumuli are around 130 metres long, and elsewhere in Central Tibet, aristocratic tumuli are up to 70 metres long. Tao Tong's PhD from Tubingen (Tao Tong 2008) similarly estimated that there are over 10,000 more yet to be surveyed along the course of Central Tibet's Yarlung River system alone. Some tumuli can be so big that they are mistaken for naturally occurring hills. Chinese archeologists have now excavated some dozens of the many hundreds around Dulan and Ulan in far North Eastern Tibet. Even bigger than the royal tombs at 'Phyong rgyas, the largest are 160 metres long and 35 metres high, within massive enclosing walls of 350 metres by 280 metres. All had complex internal structures and most had auxiliary out-buildings. Two of the smallest tumuli retained a residue of their grave goods, which reveal a level of artistic and material culture every bit the equal of later, Buddhist Tibet, even at its very finest. Although from a comparatively minor tomb, Dulan's beautifully painted coffin panels show dignitaries from foreign lands, rituals, tents, music making, Sogdian-style dancing, hunting scenes, Chinese-style astrological symbols, abstract art forms, and so on. Written inventories of the originally multifarious grave goods are preserved on silken sheets (Heller 2013a, 2013b). The conception of these burials is extremely complex, and according to surviving textual sources, their execution and upkeep demanded a major logistical exercise spanning decades.

Like their counterparts in Central Asia and China, these grand Tibetan burial cults were also quite definitely sacrificial. The bones of hundreds of

animals were found neatly laid out in rows around the Dulan coffins, many of them ritually dismembered, very much as described in Tang Chinese accounts of Tibetan funerals (Bushell 1880, Xu Xingao 1996).

But imported Indian Buddhism reserved its very deepest contempt for blood sacrifice of any kind, and soon mounted an aggressive polemic against traditional burials. This culminated in some famous debates that figure prominently in traditional historiography (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000). The indigenous Bon and gShen priests lost the argument, and consequently, the followers of their traditions, by then politically vulnerable within a Tibet in which Buddhism was politically dominant, were forced to repudiate tumulus burial and its associated blood sacrifice.[2]

The politically enforced banning of the funerary tumulus cult was made irrevocable by the major economic collapse of the mid-ninth century. It was a pivotal moment in Tibetan history, a watershed. No longer did people go to worship at the tombs of their ancestors, and no longer were the various classes of traditional priesthoods employed to manage the great tumuli. This moment marked the beginning of an entirely new religious economy, in which prolific monastery and temple building were to displace prolific tumulus building, and in which Buddhist-model monks and lay tantric practitioners (whether Buddhist or Bon) were to displace the various classes of traditional priesthoods as the predominant form of religious specialist. The new Indian-inspired monasteries and temples came to be known generically as *dgon pa,* a term which encompasses both monastery and temple, and the Buddhist-model religious practitioners came to be known as lamas, a term which encompasses both monks and lay tantric practitioners.

It used to be thought that Buddhist monasticism and scholasticism simply disappeared in the chaotic conditions following the collapse of Empire, but more modern research suggests this narrative includes a degree of traditional historiographical hyperbole: we now know that the monastic Dharma colleges founded during empire persisted throughout the post-Imperial period, albeit on a more modest scale (Uebach 1990; Iuchi 2013), and moreover, religion continued to flourish in the east of Tibet. More prominent in this period were the lay tantric practitioners, who were often aristocratic and hereditary through the male line, and whose wealth, leisure and power could afford them

2) If Buddhism enjoyed a high degree of Imperial and elite support through much of the late Empire, the question still remains, when did Buddhism actually penetrate the wider Tibetan populations? This is a very complex question indeed, which no one has yet addressed systematically. My thanks to Guntram Hazod, Roberto Vitali, Sam van Schaik and Ulrike Roesler for their stimulating (and highly contrasting!) comments on this issue.

privileged access to the learning of the surviving dharma colleges. Known as *sngags pa* or *mantrin,* they were to a considerable extent a Tibetan innovation, for nothing quite like them is known from India. For several centuries, they were to supply a great deal of religious authority in Tibet, so that even communities of monks came under their control. From the start, their role was as much political as religious, since evidence suggests that some of the old martial aristocracy, along with other ambitious families, reinvented themselves as hereditary holders of tantric Buddhist lineages.

The perceived connection between holding a tantric Buddhist lineage and wielding political power is culturally understandable. From pre-Buddhist times, power and prosperity had often been seen as the gift of a type of powerful ancestral male mountain deity (*yul lha*, *gzhi bdag*). It was believed that the source of the political power of local chieftains derived from the special favour conferred by the local mountain deity upon one of his local human descendants; while the Emperor himself was related to and favoured by all the major mountain deities. In the early Buddhist period, there seems to have been a degree of shift from mountain deity to tantric Buddhist wrathful male deity or *heruka* as a source of power. Even better than depending on the mountain deity, or in addition to doing so, powerful people could now also claim as a source of authority the hereditary ownership of the secret initiatory rites of a wrathful tantric Buddhist *heruka*.

In short, the entire religious economy began to change, notably the manner in which the new religious professionals provided services to their laity, and were supported or served by them in turn. And since the *dgon pa* with its lamas had emerged so triumphantly as the most viable religious institutions throughout the region, the Bon po too, if they wanted to continue to participate fully in society and in religious life, had little option other than to build their own *dgon pa*s and fill them with their own lamas, both monks and hereditary *sngags pa*s.

Once the Bon po had for the first time in their history, *dgon pa*s filled with lamas, an acute need arose for rituals and texts for the newly emergent Bon po lamas to perform for their laity, since their previous ritual tradition, much of it probably orally transmitted, was not entirely suited to the new Lamaistic ritual economy. It was precisely to provide such texts and rituals within the Bon idiom that the Bon tantras seem to have been written, and they proliferated in tandem with the expansion of Bon po *dgon pa*s and lamas.

Some scholars have argued that the Bon tantras newly produced at this time were created *ex nihilo* entirely by copying Buddhist prototypes, in the period after the 11th century, and retained no continuities whatsoever with

the pre-Buddhist religion. Yet Bon literature is vast, and very little of it has been studied in depth, so that such conclusions remain inadequately tested. If we are to come to firm conclusions, we must first study many more Bon texts with very great care. For exactly these reasons, we recently subjected an important and lengthy early (probably 11th or 12th century) Bon tantra called the *Black Pillar* (*Ka ba nag po man ngag rtsa ba'i rgyud*) to a detailed examination, to see what it was made of.

Analysing the *Black Pillar* from the perspective of literary composition, we came to the conclusion that its manner of combining indigenous Tibetan with Indian Buddhist elements, suggested that pre-existing indigenous ritual structures had been disassembled into their component elements, and then these same indigenous component elements reassembled into entirely new structures that accorded with Buddhist tantric templates. Or, to use an architectural analogy, it seemed as though various indigenous buildings had been carefully disassembled, and their individual units of construction, such as pillars, doors, timbers, and stones, now reconstructed into a new edifice called the *Black Pillar*, that was closely modeled on tantric Buddhist architectural principles.

It is an interesting fact that if indexed by weight of numbers, a rather high proportion of the numerous deities in the *Black Pillar* are in fact indigenous to varying degrees. The *Black Pillar* describes exceptionally long lists of retinue deities around its main deity, more than most comparable tantras, and it is noteworthy that they are generally described as already enlightened, with no mention being made of any need to tame or convert them before they can take their places in the enlightened *maṇḍala*. Some of these retinue deities are independently witnessed in other very early textual sources that pre-date the pervasive dominance of Buddhism in Tibet, such as Tibetan Imperial Army administrative woodslips from Miran in Central Asia, which suggests their indigenous nature. Judging by the absence of similar deities in Indian texts, many of the other *Black Pillar* retinue deities also seem predominantly indigenous, both by name and by nature. Here we find categories which can occur also in the *gNag rabs* text from Gathang (*dGa' thang bum pa*) (which also shows only limited Buddhist influence, Bellezza 2013), such as the *gZe ma* goddesses, the many kinds of *Klu* deities, various classes of male and female *bDud* deities, and various classes of *bTsan* deities. In addition there are also the *Khra sPyang*, the Hawks and Wolves that play such a prominent ritual role, the *mTsho sman* or Lake Enchantresses, and so on. The list is actually quite long and complex, and since we will be producing it in full elsewhere, there is perhaps little point in going through it all here.

There are also numerous indigenous elements over and above the retinue deities: references to birds and feathers, eggs, landscape features, and so on and so forth.

Yet any calculation of how indigenous these deities actually are is greatly complicated by the propensity of Bon deities increasingly to begin to resemble Indian deities in appearance, as the Bon religion became increasingly Lamaised. Nevertheless, throughout this Lamaising process, Bon deities might still retain an older indigenous name, and varying degrees of original mythic identity. We think we might see this happening, for example, with the important category of *gZe ma* goddesses, who although appearing in non-Indic and indigenously Tibetan iconographical forms in the earlier texts from Gathang (circa 900–1100 CE), come to resemble a set of tantric Buddhist goddesses in the slightly later *Black Pillar.*

It should be noted that the *Black Pillar* placed these numerous groupings of probably indigenous retinue deities around a major central deity who was unmistakably a direct calque on a tantric Buddhist heruka deity, called Vajrakīla. Nevertheless, the indigenous retinue deities are still portrayed as primordially enlightened in precisely the Buddhist sense, like the main deity himself, which we find interesting.

In fact, many of the most important items in the *Black Pillar* are quite closely modelled on originally Indian tantric antecedents. These include its literary structure and conventions, the main central deities, many standard tantric ritual categories, and the central soteriological program. Its chapters describes various Indian-style maṇḍalas, and a central deity who now closely resembles Vajrakīla from the Buddhist *Guhyasamāja* cycle. While the Bon version of this deity still retains a name evocative of indigenous symbolism, *mKha' 'gying*, '*Hovering in the Sky',* his female consort is called *sTong khyab ma*, 'Pervasive Emptiness', a very Buddhist sounding name indeed. The main interlocutor of the tantra is *Thugs rje byams ma*, who resembles the Indian Goddess Tārā. Above all, the *Black Pillar* teaches the very same enlightenment and the very same ethics as do the rNying ma tantras, and it reflects the same ontology of the Three Buddha Bodies of *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*. It structures its visualisation meditations around the Three Concentrations (*gting nge 'dzin gsum*) shared with rNying ma Buddhism, and its central rite of forcible liberation (*sgrol ba*) is also modelled on Indian or rNying ma precedents, as are many subsidiary rituals.

It remains to be seen what will be found after more Bon tantras have been scrutinised. For now, all we can say with certainty is that at least one seminal Bon tantra contains both indigenous and imported Buddhist features.

Finally, we should mention briefly the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism, such as the Sa skya pa, the bKa' brgyud pa, the dGe lugs pa, the Jo nang pa, and so on. Unlike the rNying ma, it was much rarer for them to rely on major scriptural tantras that were not of completely Indic origins, straightforward translations from Sanskrit into Tibetan. The main exception would be when they were self-consciously using rNying ma pa ritual, which all of them did to varying degrees. So if we are to talk of indigenous Tibetan tantras, in the sense of scriptural tantras for major meditational deities written or compiled in Tibet, then we are largely talking about the rNying ma and Bon traditions, with comparatively fewer other exceptions.

Nevertheless, all of Tibetan Buddhism, not only the rNying ma and Bon, introduced major developments and new ways of doing tantrism that had been unknown in India. This might include adopting indigenous ritual elements in various ways. A notable example was the Tibetan cult of protector deities, who made up a vast and hugely varied pantheon that included numerous indigenous and local deities adopted as Buddhist protectors. Some were heavily assimilated to Indian tantric categories, and for some their indigenous nature might even have been partly invented traditions, developed to fill a conceptual niche, but many others do seem to have been more closely based on actual indigenous religious traditions.

Over and above that, all of Tibetan Buddhism introduced numerous developments and new ways of doing tantrism that had been unknown in India. The production of lengthy guru yoga *sādhana* texts or the widespread establishment of concatenated lines of reincarnated lamas are just two prominent examples amongst many available. But Buddhist developments of that kind that incorporate few if any indigenous ritual categories are not the subject of this paper.

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Tibetan myths on "good fortune" (*phya*) and "well-being" (*g.yang*)

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Summary: The paper focuses on mythical narrations associated with the ritual of summoning "good fortune" (*phya*) and "well-being" (*g.yang*). These myths stem from the non-Buddhist ritual tradition of Tibet. Firstly, their great variety inside the tradition of Bon attests to the heterogeneity of this religious tradition. Secondly, it reveals particular ways in which non-Buddhist ritual practice has been adapted in the case of its Buddhist versions. Although this ritual is originally non-Buddhist, one should assume that the concepts underlying it could have common features shared with peoples from the wider territory of Central Asia.[1]

Introduction

The ritual texts which will be touched upon in the present paper aim at bringing "good fortune" and "well-being". However, this pair of Tibetan expressions can be rendered in Western languages only approximately, since their semantic field is rather specific in the Tibetan context. The first of the Tibetan terms, *phya,* is often translated as "good fortune" or "good destiny". The question of its connection with the ancient Tibetan heavenly beings *phywa* remains unanswered. In a number of (later) texts it is apparent that *phya* is also associated with *tshe,* "life span/longevity", which is understood as a synonym.

It is often paired with another concept called *g.yang*, which could be rendered as "prosperity", "well-being". The texts speak often about *phya* of people and *g.yang* of cattle, *phya* being the "good fortune" of the people and the cattle representing their "well-being" (*g.yang*). But besides *g.yang* of people there could also be *g.yang* of food (spoken of as nourishing juices), *g.yang* of cloth (being the quality of warming up), *g.yang* of cattle, *g.yang* of a road, even *g.yang* of *phya* (cf. Ramble 2013). In a number of texts it appears as *rma g.yang*, *rma* being its opposite ("loss, unfavorable conditions", etc.) and thus this compound expression could be rendered as "measure of well-being". It has been repeatedly stressed that *g.yang* might be a loanword from the

1) There are a number of definitions of Central Asia. Here Central Asia is understood in a broader sense as including the Eastern Turkic and Mongolian peoples.

Chinese expression for sheep. Indeed, in the Dunhuang documents we find the expression *g.yang mo* designating sheep, but even in this single sentence in the Dunhuang documents it is mentioned together with *lug*, the more common expression for sheep in Tibetan. The distinction between these two designations for sheep in ancient Tibet remains unclear.

The *g.yang* is invited through the specific ritual usually designated *g.yang 'gug* (also *g.yang blan/len*), or *phya g.yang 'gug.* The important tool for the ritual is an arrow by which *g.yang* is invited via swirling or waving gestures accompanied by the exclamation *khu ye*! Other ritual implements regularly used include chang (*dmu yad*), barley grains and the so-called "cushion of *g.yang*" or literally "basis of *g.yang*" (*g.yang gzhi*), often the full skin of a sheep.

The ritual performances of "summoning good fortune and well-being" permeate Tibetan societies as a whole. They are common in the lay communities. This ritual, however, appears also among those performed by monks of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, including Bon.

It seems to be altogether absent from the Indic Buddhist texts. As mentioned above, references to "good fortune" (*phya*) and "well-being" (*g.yang*) do appear among non-Buddhist texts from Dunhuang; typically in the divination texts (PT 1047, PT 1051, PT 1052, PT 1060). The widespread presence of such a ritual reveals at the same time that the Tibetan societies are not entirely dominated by Buddhist values and that such non-Buddhist ritual continues to meet the actual requirements of Tibetans. The religious stress on good fortune and well-being might seem to clash with the rather ascetic requirements of the normative Buddhist teachings. Not only in case of Tibet did the Buddhist doctrine proved to be rather elastic and able to coexist with religious rites focused on worldly benefits.

The concepts underlying the ritual of "summoning good fortune and well-being" have already been the subject of a revealing article by S. G. Karmay (1998a). There exist also some case studies of the ritual providing additional information (cf. Ramble 2013). The present paper will not focus on the ritual itself, but on the frequent myths dealing with the origin of the *phya* and *g.yang* and the ritual associated with them. Before turning our attention to them, a few notes on the "indigenousness" of the ritual will be presented.

From what has been said so far, one would consider such a ritual to be indigenous to Tibetans. But the evidence for such a statement is still far from being clear.

A similar ritual is known in Mongolia too. It has its own Mongolian name *dallaga* (in Class. Mo. *dalalg-a*, in Buryat *dalga*), which is quite striking. For the originally Tibetan rituals Mongols often use loan words (conf. Mo.

serzhim for Tib. *gser skyems*). Instead of the Tibetan *g.yang*, the term *hi'sig* would be used in Mongolian for a similar concept. The Mongolian *hotog* (from the Turkic *qut*, "soul") implied probably some "gift received from the sky" and appears later in the designation of the reincarnated masters who are called *hutagt*. It seems that some of its meanings could be related to the Tibetan *phya*. In Mongolian *dallaga* rituals these two concepts are used as the Mongolian counterparts of the Tibetan terms. Besides the Buddhist milieu, where the ritual resembles the Tibetan version performed by monks, the *dallaga* ritual used to be performed also by shamans. It was accompanied by the sacrifice of a ram or goat. Parts of the sacrificed animal were placed into a bucket on the top of which an arrow was planted. The swirling movement of the whole bucket was supposed to invite prosperity, accompanied by the exclamation *a hurai*, which could be seen as a Mongolian version of the Tibetan exclamation *khu ye*.[2] As an illustration, one Buryat *dalga* song can be offered here as an example (Mikhailov 1987, pp. 137–8):[3]

From the high and spacious heaven,
Widely spread cradle of earth, *a hurai*!
From the shine of golden sun,
Shine of crescent, *a hurai*!
From the Prosperity of motherland,
And udders of the earth, *a hurai*!
From the clearness of flowing water,
Roots of growing grass, *a hurai*!
From the flame of burning fire,
Basement of four sacrificial stones, *a hurai*!
From the 99 western Lords (*han*),
Nine compassionate White Old Men, *a hurai!*
From the lobe skin of father Buha Noyon,
And womb of mother Budan Hatan, *a hurai*!
From the heart of a wealthy man,
Heart of hero, *a hurai*!
From the thumb of the accurate shot,
Tongue of clever man, *a hurai*!
Immeasurable Prosperity,
Unpronounceable happiness, *a hurai*!

2) For a description of the ritual performed by shaman among Buryats see Chimitdorjiev – Vanchikova 1995, pp. 66–67; Zhamtsarano 2001, pp. 67, 70, 261.
3) I am indebted to Veronika Zikmundová for the translation from Buryat and to J. Luvsandorji for comments on the meanings of the Mongolian expressions.

It is striking that as the location of *hi’sig* (resembling the Tibetan *g.yang*) the song isolates a particular feature of some phenomena (“clearness of water”, etc.) or part of beings or people (“thumb of the accurate shot”, “tongue of clever man”, etc.). This idea is not altogether foreign to Tibetans.

Whatever might be the case, it seems that the concept of *g.yang* could not be entirely foreign to Mongols. To consider the concept of *phya* and *g.yang* to be indigenous in Tibet might be problematic in such a light. To establish a connection with similar concepts from the broader region of Central Asia much more evidence should be presented. Here, it can only be concluded that the label *indigenous* might mean non-Buddhist, but it does not follow at the same time that it is *indigenous* in relation to something else. Such a term remains necessarily comparative (indigenous in relation to something) and could not be considered autonomous at all.

It is rather well-known that the old non-Buddhist Tibetan rituals employed narratives concerning some original event (*smrang*) or even a series of accounts (*rabs*) concerning original solving some particular problem through ritual means. Some of their examples survived among Dunhuang documents, others were quite recently found in the Gathang Bumpa stūpa and yet others are occasionally to be found among the various collections of Bonpo texts.

One should bear in mind that it would be risky to search for some urtext of a particular mythical account in the fluid environment of the early Tibetan societies.[4] What has survived to our day is just a witness from a particular time and its context is too often unknown to us.

Such mythical narrations have so far featured mostly in the opening parts of the ritual on “summoning good fortune and well-being”. This paper will focus on those I have come across. Those “Buddhist” ones are mostly to be found in the TBRC (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre) on-line collection and the Bonpo texts have been selected from the existing corpus of the so called “New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts”.[5] Most of them never seem

4) In this respect the text dealing with the untimely death of pregnant women (*rNel dri ’dul ba’i thabs*) from the Gathang Bumpa stūpa might be revealing. The text contains 14 narrative accounts concerning the semi-mythical death of a pregnant woman and the ritual means of dealing with the demons associated with the death. In the accounts 13 or 14 ritual specialists are named. It is also clear that their ritual methods of dealing with the untimely death of the pregnant woman differ greatly. When one of the methods proves to be unsatisfactory, another specialist is called to deal with the task using his own ritual (cf. Belleza 2013, pp. 130–166 ; Pa tshab Pa sangs dbang ’dus – Glang ru Nor bu tshe ring 2007, pp. 9–37).

5) The “New Collection of Katen Texts” is a large corpus of various Bonpo texts collected and published by Tempai Nyima, firstly in Lhasa (1998) and later also in other places. A tentative

to be discussed by scholars. However, this paper does not claim completeness at all.

While Robert Mayer attempts to track some Tantric ritual tradition being indigenized by inclusion of the charter myths in the present volume, this paper will consider some movement in the opposite direction. It will focus on ways of legitimizing non-Buddhist ritual and concepts associated with it in an environment permeated by Buddhist notions.

The deer-texts and a sheep

The most detailed myths concerning *g.yang* and *phya* are contained in several texts dealing with the origin of various ritual implements, which are described as produced from the body of a miraculous deer. The first known text of such a kind was made available by Samten Karmay (Karmay – Nagano 2002, pp. 35–90), an anonymous text entitled *Mu ye pra phud phya'i mthar thug* translated by Charles Ramble as *The Ultimate phya; the Celestial Head-Ornament* (Ramble 2013, p. 521).

Though this particular version contains a number of allusions to Buddhist concepts, these appear only marginally and do not influence the core content. The text expounds a myth describing the origin of the world and ancestral beings including Ya bla bdal drug (a being known also to several Dunhuang documents in varying orthography). He states that due to the activities of the demons *'dre* of *Ngam* people were deprived of a "base of good fortune" (*phya gzhi*) and cattle of their "well-being" (*g.yang*). A certain prince, sGam po, whose father is the god 'O lde gung rgyal related to *phywa* beings and whose mother comes from *dmu* beings, travels to the north of Mt. Meru to the crystal crag in order to secure *phya* and *g.yang*. He meets there a miraculous white deer with crystal antlers. Prince sGam po attempts to persuade the deer to leave his country in order to obtain *phya* and *g.yang* for the people and gods during their dialogue. The deer is reluctant to do so and even tries to escape, but sGam po catches him with his miraculous lasso. Following questions and explanations about the significance of the parts of the body of the deer, he is eventually led to Yab lha bdal drug. Here, from the body parts of the deer, a number of ritual implements are produced. Eventually, the text states that in the future the deer will become a sheep.

catalogue was edited by S. G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano (2001). The numbering of this catalogue will be used throughout this paper.

Two other texts with similar content were recently brought to light by Charles Ramble (2013), who compared them with the above-mentioned one. Interestingly, he witnessed the living tradition connected with them near Lubra (Klu brag) in Nepal. Focusing also on charter myths, but primarily on the parts dealing with dismemberment, Charles Ramble comes to the conclusion that despite a similar narrative line each of the texts is significantly different in terms of providing details. At the present stage of knowledge it is impossible to recover some original version from these three texts.

They seem to have something in common with another three texts, in which the miraculous deer is the main protagonist of the myth. Instead of the "summoning good fortune and well-being" ritual, these three texts concern the "ransom offering" ritual (*glud*, etc.) and the ritual guidance of the deer to heaven. The "ransom offering" ritual is sometimes connected with rituals concerning "summoning *g.yang*" which constitute the first step of the ritual in some texts (cf. *gShen rab rnam par rgyal ba'i g.yang skyabs*).[6]

The concept of *g.yang* is frequently associated with sheep. I can present here a brief mythical account, in which the "male and female sheep of creation" are butchered and their bones, eyes, blood and flesh changed into precious substances, which are subsequently offered as a means of pacification of the evil sources. Only then are several skins of animals, serving as the "basis of *g.yang*", offered for a similar purpose.

6) The first of them was dealt with by Karmay and Blondeau (1988–1995) and the deer figures there as a "ransom offering" (*glud*), which is used during the "thread-cross ritual" (*mdos*). The present author also pointed out other texts present in the voluminous volume of Bonpo Katen, which seems to be part of the "treasure revelation" from Amdo (Berounský, forthcoming). In both of these cases the texts typically contain a dialogue. In the first case it is between the deer and the demons of the world of existence, and in the second case between the priest Pha ba (sKu gshen Pha ba) and the deer. The latter text speaks about the antlers of the deer being received from a camel. This has been a quite frequent motif present in the tales in Mongolia, but even ancient rock paintings depicting camel with antlers can witnesses to the long existence of such a tradition there.

Recently, translation of the "deer text" has appeared in the Gathang Bumba stupa entitled *Sha ru shul ston rabs la sogs pa* by John V. Bellezza (2013). John V. Bellezza interprets the text as a dealing with a deer as a 'psychopomp'. This is not altogether clear. The text contains in fact a phrase which could indeed indicate such a role for the deer. It states that in the past the deer served as a "support of the soul-like principle" (*thugs rten*). But the text itself clearly describes the journey of the deer to his homeland at the thirteenth level of sky, where he meets with his brother and parents. John V. Bellezza's translation of one sentence of the text to mean that the deer suddenly returns to the land of humans is probably wrong and rather illogical in the given context.

This mythical account is to be found in the very interesting and extensive corpus of funeral ritual texts entitled *sNgags kyi mdo 'dur rin chen phreng ba mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo* (Katen, vol. 6). These texts are apparently of varying origin and provenance; among them appear some which might be of ancient origin. So far some of them have been dealt with by John V. Bellezza (Bellezza 2008). This particular text is entitled *g.Yang gzhi srid gshed dbang sdud sa bdag bcos pa* (Katen 6–75), which could be rendered as *Remedying the lords of soil and subjugating the "gshed" of creation by the "base of g.yang"*. The expression *gshed* is associated with malignant forces bringing death in this case (conf. Namkhai Norbu 1995, p. 97 ff.). Quite interestingly, in the text the "base of *g.yang*" (*g.yang gzhi*) does not serve the purpose of bringing some good fortune, but it is used in order to pacify the evil forces. A similar use of *g.yang gzhi* is contained in the text dealt by Norbu and as in the present case it is a part of a ritual pacifying *gshed*. It contains a brief myth in the opening parts (fol. 954):[7]

In the past, during the first eon,
A (*kha rag bu*?) son was carried away by demon *srin*,
For taking care of the human body his father and mother,
Invited Ra ljags skyid rgyal for *bon*,
He seized the upper place of earth (*sa ga dog*) as a "basis of funeral" (*'dur gzhi*),
But *sa bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* did not agree,
And caused lightning, hail and earthquake,
Ra ljags skyid rgyal performed *gto* ritual upwards,
And hunted the old male and female sheep of creation,
He even butchered the old male and female sheep of creation,
Their bones turned into the conch-shell and their eyes into turquoise,
Their blood turned into vermillion and their flesh into gold.

To the eastern *sa bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan*,
he offered **conch-shell**, bird feathers and ritual grains (*shel tshig*)…

The last verses are repeated almost verbatim for the rest of the cardinal directions. To the southern beings the turquoise is offered, to the western ones iron and to the northern ones copper. Then the varieties of animal skins

7) The Tibetan text reads (the spelling is not emended): sngon gyi bskal pa dang po la/ kha rag bu gcig srin gyis khyer/ yab yum gang gi mi sha gnyer/ ra ljag skyid rgyal bon du bkug/ sa ga dog steng 'dur gzhi bzung/ sa bdag klu gnyen de ma bzhed/ glog 'gyu thog ser sa g.yos sprugs/ ra ljags skyid rgyal gto yar byas/ srid pa rgan rgon lug yang btsal/ srid pa rgan rgon lug yang bshas/ rus pa dung dang mig la g.yu/ khrag la mtshal dang sha gser gyur/ shar phyogs sa bdag klu gnyan la/ dung dang bya spu shel tshig 'bul/…

are offered as “cushions of *g.yang*” in order to pacify the evil forces (fols. 955–958):[8]

He also spread the skin of **tiger** as a “cushion of *g.yang*” to the east…skin of **sheep** to the south…skin of **wild yak** to the west…skin of **caracal** (*gung*) to the north…skin of **dragon** to the sky…skin of **bear** (*dam=dom*) to the earth…

In the text the ritual specialist Ra ljags Skyid rgyal is mentioned. His name figures frequently in the text dealing with funeral rituals performed for pregnant women who meet an untimely death found in the Gathang Bumpa stūpa (*rNel ’dri dul ba’i thabs*, Pa tshab Pa sangs dbang ’dus – Glang ru Nor bu tshe ring, 2007; cf. Belleza 2013). The ritual is organized according to the cardinal points. This is also well-known to Indic texts, namely those containing tantric rituals. In this case only the motif of dismemberment in the proximity of a ritual dealing with *g.yang* is kept, in comparison with the myths concerning the deer.

Other texts of Eternal Bon

A number of versions describing the origin of *g.yang* appear in the Bonpo sources belonging to the so-called Eternal Bon. Typically, they combine some Buddhist notions with elements rooted in the Tibetan plateau. The rate of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements differs to a great extent and the ways they are employed are different as well.

One such example could serve a myth contained in a cycle of rituals associated with rNam par rgyal ba, who was considered to be an emanation of gShen rab mi bo in his subduing aspect.[9] The following narration appears in the anonymous text (*rNam par rgyal ba’i phya g.yang dmu zhags ’khyil ba*: fol. 4b):[10]

8) Tib. (the spelling is not emended): …yang stag spags g.yang gzhi shar du brdab…yang lug spags g.yang gzhi lho ru brdab…yang ’brong spags g.yang gzhi nub tu brdab…yang gung lpags g.yang gzhi byang du brtab…yang ’brug lpags g.yang gzhi gung du brdab…yang dam lpags g.yang gzhi sa la brdab…

9) For information on Nampar Gyalwa see Kværne 1995, pp. 33–34.

10) Tib.: kyai khu ye phya dang rma g.yang blan/ srid pa skos rje’i gtsug g.yang blan/ dang po g.yang bab dbyings nas bab/ yum chen ba ga’i klong nas bab/ dmu thag g.yang thag dgung du bres/ gnam gyi ’ju thag de la bya/ nam mkha’ lta bu kun la khyab/ rgya che dpang mtho gting zab g.yang/ dgung nas ’phur te sa bon tsam/ sa ma dog la g.yang du dril/.

Kyai! Khu ye! Be *phya* and *rma g.yang* summoned! Let *g.yang* be summoned from the crown of the head of the Lord – delegate of creation (*srid pa bskos rje*)!

When *g.yang* descended for the first time, it descended from space,
It descended from the womb (*ba ga*) of the Great Mother,
The *dmu* rope and *g.yang* rope were woven into the sky,
And the 'grasping rope' (*'ju thag*) of the sky was thus made,
As if the sky would permeate through everything,
The spacious, high, deep *g.yang*,
Flew from the sky like a seed,
And rolled down onto the earth.

The text states then that *g.yang* was taken by a Teacher (sTon pa, i. e. gShen rab mi bo) who stuck it to Mt. Meru (Ri rab), the sun and moon and the stars as an example of wisdom dispersing the darkness of ignorance. The text then names the divisions of Bon, the *gto* rituals the means of diagnosis (*dpyad)*, the law (*khrims*), the Four Youths (the disciples of gShen rab mi bo), the points of the compass, etc., as the places to which the *g.yang* descended.

In another text *Phyogs bzhi'i g.yang 'bod* (*Inviting g.yang from the Four Directions*), it is said that the *g.yang* originated in thought (*dgongs*). It came down through the rungs of the *dmu* ladder being seen by Bu mo dGongs sman dkar mo. The black-headed people (i.e. Tibetans) each received a portion of *g.yang*. Then the text enumerates the kings of the points of the compass, namely those of Zhang-zhung, India, land of Gesar and China. The text continues by inviting *g.yang* from the forts and the corresponding "little man" (*mi chung*) of the precious stones from the points of the compass.

Yet another text associates *phya* and *g.yang* with "warrior-deities" (*dgra bla*). It does not contain any myth concerning their origin. In the introductory parts it invites *g.yang* from the Meru (Ri rab), sun and moon, four continents, seven "joyous seas", etc. Besides "mothers of five elements" it mentions the main features of the universe according to Buddhist cosmology as a source of *g.yang*. Suddenly the text speaks about the fabulous land in which *g.yang* originated without the Buddhist elements. *g.Yang* should be summoned from the following (*Phya g.yang gi khu ye dang bkra shis chen mo*, fol. 2a):[11]

The golden mountain and turquoise valley of the *g.yang* of *phywa* are to the right,

11) TIb.: gser ri g.yu lung phya g.yang g.yas/ dung ri mchong lung gtsug g.yang g.yon/ shel brag 'od mtsho dmu g.yang dbus/…

The conch-shell mountain and agate valley of the *g.yang* of *gtsug* are to the left,
The crystal rock and luminous lake of *g.yang* of *dmu* are in the centre.

This extract alludes to the creation myth concerning Tibetans entitled *dBu nag mi’u ’dra chags* (*The origin of Black-Headed People*), where at a certain point the text explains the origin of beings named *phywa*, *gtsug* and *dmu* (cf. Karmay 1998a). Here their origin is connected also with their *g.yang*.

The following extract contains a similar connection with the above-mentioned myth. It mentions prince Thing ge (or mThing ge), who figures there as an ancestor of Tibetans. Other beings named there are also known from the myth concerning the origin of Tibetan emperors as it appears in the chronicle *rGya bod chos ’byung rgyas pa* (cf. Karmay 1998b) and, in a brief allusion lacking many details, in a text from Dunhuang (PT 1038). The extract reads (*g.Yang skyob kyi g.yang gtad*: fol. 4a):[12]

Kyai! During the past first eon,
[*phya* and *g.yang*] were entrusted to the Srid pa ye smon rgyal po,
And Chu lcam rgyal mo, the two,
By its virtue the knot of its basis was untied,
And both people and cattle prospered.

Later in that eon,
It was entrusted to the Lord of Phya – sTag cha ’al ’ol,
And ’Tsham za khyed khyun,
The life of bodies was prolonged,
And both people and cattle prospered,

Again, later in that eon,
It was entrusted during the life,
Of Lord of Phya Yab bla bdal drug,
And three Thang mo [wives],
They were possessing might, wealth and *’phan dar* (?), the three,

12) Tib.: kyai sngon gi bskal pa dang po la/ bsrid pa ye smon rgyal po dang/ chu lcam rgyal mo gnyis la gtad/ de’i yon tan gyis/ rmang gi mdud grol nas/ mi nor gnyis ka ’phel/ kalpa de yi ’og rol du/ phya rje stag cha ’al ’ol dang/ ’tshams za khyed khyun gnyis la gtad pas/ sku tshe ring zhing mi nor gnyis ka ’phel/ yang bskal pa de yi ’og rol du/ phya rje yab bla bdal drug dang/ thang mo gsum gyi sku ring la gtad pas/ btsan phyugs ’phan dar gsum dang ldan/ yang bskal pa de yi ’og rol du/ srid pa rgyal bu ’thing ge dang/ phya lcam dkar mo gnyis la gtad pas/ rgyal po yang mnga’ thang che zhing longs spyod ’phel/ yang kalpa de yi ’og rol du/ bod rje yab yum gnyis la gtad pas/ de yi yon tan gyis/ phywa skor de ni sga ra ra/ g.yang skor de ni kyi li li/ phya mtsho g.yang mtsho me re re// kyai srid pa la dpe blang nas…

Again, later in that eon,
It was entrusted to the prince of creation Thing ge,
And Phya lcam dkar mo,
The power and pleasures of the king were increasing,

Again, later in that eon,
It was entrusted to the Lord of Tibet and his wife,
By its virtue,
As for that *phya – ga ra ra*!
As for that *g.yang – kyi li li*!
The lake of *phya* and lake of *g.yang – me re re*!

Kyai! Following the example of that creation….

So far, it has been possible to see that the origin of *phya* and *g.yang* is connected with the sky or thought or associated with other origination myths concerning Tibetan people or Tibetan kings. The last versions are inspired by the older Tibetan myths.

But far the most frequent myths within the tradition of Eternal Bon are strongly under the tantric influence. There is not a single version of such a text, but several of them which follow a similar outline.

Most of these texts connect the ritual with the semi-historical sage Dran pa nam mkha' (Katen 107–025, 140–004, 149–011, 296–4). There are also others which associate it with mythical sage and deity sTag lha/bla me 'bar instead of him (Katen 119–027, 015–163, 007–012). One of the most detailed texts will be mentioned here as an example. It is the "treasure" text (*gter ma*) on 22 fols., which was revealed by gSang sngags gling pa (b. 1864) in the 19th century. It is entitled *Rnam thar g.yung drung gsang ba'i mdzod chen las/ tshe g.yang dpal kyi 'phrin las dbang bsgyur le'u* (Katen 296–4).

The text introduces Dran pa nam mkha' dwelling on Mt. Bya ri gtsug ldan in the form of Tantric sādhana, i.e. with his consort and being at the centre of a maṇḍala surrounded by various forms of himself in the points of the compass. Following the rather long description of the mandalically-arranged deities he states that he himself is the lord of the pleasures of *phya tshe* and *dmu yad*.

Then the text describes the envy of yakshas (*gnod sbyin*) from the northern direction. They attack Dran pa nam mkha' with his retinue, but their weapons fall powerlessly to the ground. A black cloud appears then with fierce deities headed by Khro bo gnam gyi lha rgod thog pa rje and his consort Srid pa'i rgyal mo. Through their union the whole world is filled by "juice of *tshe*

g.yang”. Yakshas are defeated and Dran pa nam mkha’ reveals the Teaching to them and they offer their life-essences (*srog snying*). Their eight leaders with their female partners (Vaiśravaṇa, Kubera, Dzambhala and others are named) become the Lords of wealth and *g.yang*.

The second part narrates, in a similarly tantric manner, the subjugation of the Lord of the Dead (gShin rje) in the southern direction, who becomes eventually Dra ba nag po, Dug ri nag po and ’Jigs byed. They become deities of “long life” (*tshe*).

This text is evidently inspired by the tantric narrations on the subjugation of Shiva in the Buddhist sources.

The “Buddhist” versions

There are four versions of such a myth concerning the origin of *phya* and *g.yang* which I have been able to come across so far. The so-called “Buddhist”[13] versions are mostly coherently organized according to principles typical of tantric texts.

The first two of them come from the milieu of the Nyingma school. They retain some elements frequent also in Bon po versions. The first text is ascribed to Padmasambhava and entitled *U rgyan padma ’byung gnas kyi mdzad pa’i tshe g.yang kha sprod bsdus pa* (*Brief facing the longevity and g.yang composed by Padmasambhava from Urgyan*). It was revealed as a “treasure” by rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405). This text is the only one, from those stemming from the Buddhist environment, which does not claim the origin of *g.yang* from India or the world seen through the lens of Indic Buddhist cosmology. In a not very elaborated way it connects the origin of *phya* and *g.yang* with the forts of heavenly beings *phywa* (which seem not to be distinguished from *phya* in the sense of “good fortune” in the text) and through such an allusion the text admits its older Tibetan inspiration. Only such Buddhist elements as “indestructible drop” (*mi gshigs pa’i thig le*), essential for tantric texts, or the category of “five substances pleasing the senses” (*’dod yon lnga*) have found their ways into the part dealing with its origin. The narration could not be

13) I follow here only the conventional distinction between Buddhism and Bon, which is very problematic. I use quotation marks here for this reason. Bon could also be understood as an unorthodox form of Buddhism and some features of Tibetan Buddhism are apparently similar to Bon.

taken as a developed myth. It mentions only in a simple way the source of *phya* and *g.yang* (fol. 2a):[14]

Kyai!
Lord of life-span (*tshe*), rise in life-span!
Lord of *g.yang*, rise in *g.yang*!

When *phya* appeared first, from where did it appear?
When *g.yang* appeared first, from where did it appear?

From the maroon fort of *phya* in some country,
Lord of *phya*, King bsKos mkhan,
Lady of *phya*, Queen of the Sun, the two,
[they] were made to face life (*tshe*) and *g.yang*.

Lustre in white is the life-span of people,
Condensing in grease is the *g.yang* of cattle,
The blazing light of facing life and *g.yang – lam se lam*,
As for circling around it, it winds up to the sky,
As for embracing (*'khyud*) it, the juices are embraced.
For people long life is desired,
For cattle *g.yang* is desired,
For food juices are desired,
For cloth warmth is desired.

When people have no life-span,
They are like a decayed tree,
When cattle have no *g.yang*,

14) Tib.: tshe yi bdag po tshe la bzhengs/ g.yang gi bdag po g.yang la bzhengs/ dang po phywa byung gang nas byung/ dang po g.yang byung gang nas byung/ yul gcig phywa mkhar smug po nas/ phywa rje bskos mkhan rgyal po dang/ phywa rje nyi ma rgyal mo gnyis/ tshe dang g.yang du kha sprod mdzad/ dkar la 'tsher ba mi yi tshe/ snum la dril ba nor gyi g.yang/ tshe g.yang kha sprod 'od 'bar lams se lam/ skor skor de ni mkha' la bskor/ 'khyud 'khyud de ni bcud la 'khyud/ mi la tshe cig 'tshal/ nor la g.yang cig 'tshal/ zas la bcud cig 'tshal/ gos la drod cig 'tshal/ mi la tshe med na/ shing sdong rul ba 'dra/ nor la g.yang med na/ la kha'i sha rkyang 'dra/ zas la bcud med na/ bra bo rul ba 'dra/ gos la drod med na/ shing bal skya bo 'dra/ de phyir mi la tshe g.yang blan/ phywa mkhar smug po'i yang rtse la/ srog mi shigs pa'i thig le bdog/ mi yi tshe cig de nas len/ phywa mkhar smug po'i shar phyogs nas/ 'dod yon lnga yi skyed mo tshal/ nor gyi g.yang cig de nas len/ phywa mkhar smug po'i lho phyogs nas/ ro mchog brgya ldan skyed mos tshal/ zas kyi bcud cig de nas len/ phywa mkhar smug po'i nub phyogs nas/ reg bya 'khyil ba'i skyed mos tshal/ gos kyi drod cig de nas len/ phywa mkhar smug po'i byang phyogs nas/ yid bzhin nor bu'i skyed mos tshal/ dgos 'dod lhun gyis 'grub pa'i phywa g.yang de nas len/.

They are [thin] as deer and wild asses (*rkyang*) of the high places,
When food does not have its nutritious juices,
It is like rotten buckwheat,
When cloth does not have its warmth,
It is like a greyish cotton plant,
Therefore, let life-span and *g.yang* be summoned to the people.

On the top of maroon fort of *phya*,
There is an "indestructible drop" (*mi shigs pa'i thig le*) of vitality (*srog*),
Let life-span be taken from there,
To the east of maroon fort of *phya*,
Is the grove generating five-fold valuables pleasing the senses (*'dod yon lnga*),
Let *g.yang* of cattle be taken from there,
To the south of maroon fort of *phya*,
Is the grove generating hundreds of excellent tastes,
Let juices of food be taken from there,
To the west of the maroon fort of *phya*,
Is the grove generating coiled-up tactile,
Let the warmth of cloth be taken from there,
To the north of the maroon fort of *phya*,
Is the grove producing wish-granting gems,
Let *phya* and *g.yang* of fulfillment of all desires be brought from there!

The text continues with a section naming various "supports" of *phya* and *g.yang* which are to be prepared; then *phya* and *g.yang* should be summoned into them. In the next section it lists goddesses holding the ritual vases of *phya* and *g.yang*. The following section contains an offering of a "golden drink" (*gser skyems*), but the text to be recited (*gyer*) speaks about the heavenly goddess holding "iron of *phywa*" (*phywa lcags*), from which both heavenly and earthly animals, namely sheep, goat, yak and oxen are created. The heavenly and the earthly animals then mate and the sheep of *g.yang*, goat of *g.yang*, yak of *g.yang* and ox of *g.yang* thus come into existence.

In the section where the instruction says that the ritual arrow should be taken, some allusion to the origin of *g.yang* again appears, this time from a six-winged vulture (fol. 11b):[15]

The name of the father, the sire of *g.yang*,

15) Tib.: g.yang gi pha dang yab kyi mtshan/ gser gyi bya rgod gshog drug pha/ gshog drug gnam la zings se zing/ g.yang gi ma dang yum gyi mtshan/ g.yu yi bya rgod gshog drug ma/ gshog drug sa la 'jol lo lo/ de gnyis srid dgu sprul ba las/ rin chen sgo nga dgu ru byung…

Is Father Golden Six-Winged Vulture,
The Six-Winged One [floated] to the sky – *zing se zing*!

The name of the mother, the mother of *g.yang*,
Is Mother Turquoise Six-Winged Vulture,
The Six-Winged One [desended] to the earth – *jo lo lo*!

From their union the nine precious eggs appear. A lady of corresponding precious material bursts out. The lady then summons the *g.yang* of nine particular countries. The concluding part of the text contains the ritual of "closing the gates of *g.yang*" in order to keep it safely.

This text is written in a very poetic style. Despite some links with other material and the coherent organisation of its elements, which might be inspired by tantric texts, it at the same time retains a number of features alien to Indic Buddhist texts.

Another remarkable text from the environment of the Nyingma school bears the title *Phya 'phrin nor bu mchog rgyal* (*Ritual on Phya, the Victorious Excellent Jewel)***.** It is extant in various redactions which differ mainly in the length of the instructions supplementing the main text. It is also a text which can be connected with a certain master, although he is presented as a treasured revealer of it. The text is believed to have been rediscovered by Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (1337–1409) near Zang zang ri and belongs to the so-called "Northern revelations" (*byang gter*). Some five editions of it are available to me, the shortest of which is on 16 folios in a large *pecha* (*dpe cha*) form and the full version with accompanying rituals and comments is on 28 folios of the same size.

The longest version mentions, in its instruction part, that the ritual can be performed over 7, 5 or 3 days.[16]

The content of the text is strongly influenced by Mahāyāna and tantric texts. It invokes mandalically-arranged crowds of deities around the palace of Vaiśravaṇa, the protector of the north and the Buddhist deity associated with wealth. The text is replete with simple lists of the deities of the entourage, etc.

16) It consists of the following steps: (first day) (i.) ransom offering for *phya* (*phya glud*), (ii.) closing the gate of *phya* / separation [from demons] (*phya sgo sdam pa/ mtshams bcas*), (other days) (iii.) exposition of the origin (*'byung khungs bshad pa*), (iv.) summoning *phya* and *g.yang* (*phya g.yang 'gugs pa*) (v.) concise praise of accomplishment (*dngos grub bsdu bsngags*), (vi.) request to remain long (*brtan bzhugs*), (vii.) prayers (*'dod gsol*). Some supplementary rituals, such as fumigating offerings (*bsang*), could be added at the conclusion of the ritual.

The longest part of the text represents the Exposition of the origin (*’byung khungs bshad pa*) in which the maṇḍala – palace of Vaiśravaṇa – with all his retinue is described in detail. Perhaps more than the actual content, the form of the description is interesting. This is revealed in the dialogue between Indra and Brahma (fol. 7a):[17]

Phywa khu ye!
During the first eon in the past,
Indra, the lord of the gods,
Saw the poor suffering of the beings,
And he addressed the following speech,
To the four-headed king Brahma:
“Listen, king Brahma!
I see in the future last eon,
Numberless sufferings of the six classes of beings,
Particularly in the dark place of Tibet,
The country of fierce demons *byung po, ’dre* and *srin*
…
I request you to reveal a means of remedying it.”

Phywa khu ye!
“Listen, Lord of Gods!
If you wish to remove the poor suffering,
There are instructions for subjugating the [world of] triple spheres,[18]
Known as Victorious Excellent Jewel,
[These were entrusted] in the past by Teacher Buddha,
To a chief and pious householder,
[The instructions] subjugate the elements,
Balance the four seasons,
And open treasures of all-desired,
Liberate from all diseases and suffering,

17) Tib.: phywa khu ye/ sngon gyi bskal pa’i dang po la/ lha yi dbang po brgya byin gyis/ ’gro ba dbul ba’i sdug bsngal gzigs/ tshangs pa’i rgyal po gdong bzhi la/ lha yi dbang pos ’di skad zhus/ tshangs pa’i rgyal po tshur gson dang/ ma ’ongs bskal pa’i tha ma la/ ’gro drug sdug bsngal grangs med gzigs/ khyad par bod yul mun pa’i gling/ ’byung po ’dre srin dregs pa’i yul/ (…) bso ba’i thabs shig bstan du gsol/ phywa khu ye/ lha yi dbang po tshur gson dang/ dbul ba’i sdug bsngal sel ’dod na/ sngon tshe ston pa sangs rgyas kyis/ khyim bdag dad pa’i dbang po la/ khams gsum dbang bsdud man ngag gis/ nor bu mchog rgyal zhes bya ba/ ’byung ba dbang du sdud pa dang/ nam zla dus bzhi cha snyoms nas/ ’dod dgu’i gter kha ’byed pa yin/ nad dang sdug bsngal kun las grol/ mtha’ yi dmag dpung bzlog pa yin/ ’di dang phrad pa shin du dkon/…

18) Tib. *khams gsum*, i.e. sphere of desire, sphere of form and formless sphere according to the Buddhist cosmology (*’dod khams*, *gzugs khams*, *gzugs med khams*).

Drive away the armies of the borderlands,
They are very rarely met.

It is solely in the form of a dialogue, which connects this text with the "deer-texts" on summoning *g.yang* mentioned above. Such a dialogic form also appears in other treasure revelations of Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (cf. Berounský 2009) and seems thus to be a frequent feature of the texts connected with the name of this prolific treasure-revealer.

The next interesting text is ascribed to the famous iron-bridge builder and tantric master Thang stong rgyal po (died 1485). He was well-known for his non-sectarian attitudes and relevance namely for the schools of Kagyu, Sakya and Nyingma. The existing hagiographies present him also as a propagator of the cult of Avalokiteśvara and his mantra *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*.[19] The actual version of the text allegedly composed by him and available to me is entitled *Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i rdo rje'i gsung g.yang 'gugs sbyin rlabs can* (*A vajra-speech of Mahāsiddha Thangtong Gyalpo summoning g.yang endowed with blessing*). This particular version was, however, written down in the 19th century by the Rime (*ris med*) master 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–1892) following the old draft of the ritual according to the colophon.

The introduction to the text forms a tantric *sādhana* during which the performer visualizes himself as Mahākaruṇika; a form of Avalokiteśvara. In front of him a form of Indra (Rin chen mang) is visualized with the retinue of gods, but mainly those associated with wealth: Vaiśravaṇa (rNam thos sras), Jambhala (Dzam bha la), Vasudhara (Lha mo Nor rgyun ma), etc. What follows then is an exposition concerning the origin of *g.yang* (fol. 3a) alluding to the well-known Buddhist myth about the origin of Tibetans from monkey and demoness:[20]

19) For the translation of his hagiography see Stearns 2007.

20) Tib.: kye/ dang po g.yang len gar srid na// sngon gyi bskal pa'i dang po la// kha ba can gyi rgyal po khams su// spyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa las// spre'u byang chub sems dpa' byung// jo mo sgrol ma'i sprul pa las// brag srin nag mo bya ba byung// de gnyis thabs shes 'phrad pa las// gdong dmar mi rnams thams cad byung// mi rnams phongs pas mnar ba las// spre'u'i rgyal po yar gshegs te// po tā la yi rtse mo na// spyan ras gzigs dbang bzhugs pa la// spre'u'i rgyal pos 'di skad zhus// kye ma las kyi 'bras bu smin// dpon sras mang po 'phel ba la/ dran pa gsal ba lha dang 'dra// gdug rtsub che ba lha min 'dra// gos med gcer bu dud 'gro 'dra// bkres skom sdug bsngal yi dwags 'dra// shin tu sdug bsngal dmyal ba 'dra// rigs drug sdug bsngal ngad pa tsha// 'di la las thabs ci zhig bya// de skad zhus pas bka' stsal pa// spre'u'i rgyal po legs par nyon// khyed kyi bu dang tsha bo rnams// gdong dmar srin po yin zer te// kha ba can gyi zhing khams su// byin gyis rlabs pa'i sprul pa yin// zas la 'bras bu sna tshogs zo/ skom du 'byung ba chu la 'thung// gos su lha yi na bza' gtod// skabs su

Kye!
Where did the summoning of *g.yang* originate first?
During the past first period of time,
In the Kingdom of Snow,
Appeared bodhisattva monkey,
From the miraculous manifestation of Avalokiteśvara.

From the miraculous manifestation of Lady Tārā,
Appeared Black rock-demoness *srin*.

From their skilful meeting,
Appeared all red-faced people.

Due to the torment of people by poverty,
The king monkey proceeded upwards,
To the peak of [Mt.] Potala,
And the monkey king pronounced,
The following speech to Avalokiteśvara dwelling there:

“Alas! The fruits of the deeds have ripened!
The many multiplied sons of the king,
Are of a clear mindfulness similar to gods,
Are of a great ferocity similar to asuras,
Are naked and without clothes similar to animals,
Are suffering from hunger and thirst similar to pretas,
Are suffering extremely similar to inhabitants of hells,
[They are] of strong suffering of the six classes of beings,
What should be done?”

To such a request he received the following answer:
“Listen, monkey king!
It is said that your sons and grandsons,
Are red-faced demons *srin*,
They are blessed miraculous offsprings,
In the field of Land of Snow,
Let them eat various fruits as a food!
Let them drink the element of water as their drink!
Let them be given godly robes as their clothing!

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g.yang ’gugs g.yang len bya// spyan ras gzigs kyis de skad gsungs// de nas spre’u’i rgyal po des// sngags ’chang rgyal po spyan drangs nas// lha gzhi dkar po’i gdan steng du// dkon mchog mchod pa rgya cher bshams// rgod sgro mda’ dar dkar po la// dngul dkar me long btags pas g.yab// khu ye brjod cing ’o dod pos// sngags ’chang ngag gi smra ’bod dang//…

And from time to time let them summon *g.yang*, let them accept *g.yang*!"
Thus was it said by Avalokiteśvara.

Then the monkey king,
Invited the king of mantra-holders.
Onto the godly white cushion,
Large offerings to [Triple] Gem were arranged,
Attaching a silver mirror to the white arrow with vulture feathers,
It was waved,
There came a great cry of *khu ye*,
And the mantra-holder recited his speech…

The text describes how the mantra-holder made the beams of light emanate to the upper sphere of gods, the lower sphere of *klu* and the middle sphere of *gnyan* and from there brought to Tibet *g.yang*. In a similar manner the beams of light emanated to the ten directions and surrounding countries of Tibet, bringing *g.yang* from them. The main part of the text (*dngos gzhi*) contains a typical list of beings and places from which the *g.yang* is to be summoned. Their hierarchy follows the Buddhist perspective, but such a list contains also deities of the body (*'go ba'i lha lnga*), "warrior deities" (*dgra lha*) and in the concluding part invites even *g.yang* from gShen rab mi bo and g.Yung drung Bon.

The last "Buddhist" text is an alleged extract from *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*, one of the most popular Mahāyāna texts in Central and Eastern Asia. It bears the title *'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po las g.yang skyabs* (*The refuge of g.yang from the king of mighty sūtras – The noble excellent golden light*) with the strange Indian title *Ārya-suvarṇa**sata**-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra-**huye*** (sic!). It is used in the Gelug school, but also in the Kagyu and Jonang ones. Printed copies from Kumbum monastery and Lhasa are at my disposal.

The text begins similarly to *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* and most of the Mahāyāna sūtras in general. There is the usual opening scene of Buddha dwelling on Mt. Gṛdhrakūta surrounded by an enormous number of buddhas, bodhisattvas, nāgas and other beings. He then addresses the gathering with the usual long speech which praises the teaching to be revealed and even threatens those who refuse to follow it.

Then suddenly Buddha continues with instructions on the ritual of summoning *g.yang*, describing ritual tools as arrows and "cushion of *g.yang*" into which all buddhas will arrive. Later the text describes the goddess Prajñāpāramitā holding a ritual vase with nectar and the so-called Buddhas of Five

Families, their female consorts, and a number of other beings who are asked to provide the refuge of *g.yang*. At a certain point in this text, the narration concerning the origin of *g.yang* and *phya* appears (fol. 19b):[21]

Then the four relatives of humankind,
Spread the white and unpolluted “base of *g.yang,*”
Upon the golden base of earth,
Into their hands the green (*sngon po*) *g.yang* barley was placed,
The Malva flowers were arranged and displayed,
Upon the base of *g.yang* and base of *phya*,
Both the white conch all-desired-yielding cow,
And precious butter-sheep,
Were placed aside and kept in its fold,
Phya of all people was taken from them,
All cattle earned their *g.yang*.

By the blessing of Triple Gem,
Those four relatives of humankind,
Became Cakravartin Kings,
Pleasures of the seven royal treasures (*rin chen sna bdun*),
Endowed by might the *phya* and *g.yang*,
On the Glorious mountain (dPal ri lhun po) in the northern direction,
Grew splendid elastic bamboo sprouts,
With seven joints, nine and thirteen joints,
These are the supports of Cakravartin’s *g.yang*,
With increase of pleasure,
The auspicious bamboo sprouts grew,
With the increase in Cakravartin’s pleasure,
Cakravartin’s *g.yang* soared,
Now, the three sprouts with vulture feathers,
Are the *phya* and *g.yang* of these donors…

21) Tib.: de nas mi rabs mched bzhi des// gser gyi sa gzhi’i steng du ni// g.yang gzhi dkar po dri med bting// phyag na g.yang nas sngon po bkod// me tog ha lo gcal du bkram// phywa gzhi g.yang gzhi’i steng du ni// ’dod ’jo dung gi ba dkar dang// rin chen mar gyi lu gu gnyis// ’phyong dang de ni rban ’dzin// mi rnams kun gyi phywa longs las// phyugs rnamm kun la g.yang khugs so// dkon mchog gsum gyi byin rlabs kyis// mi rabs mched bzhi chen po de// ’khor los sgyur ba’i rgyal por gyur// rin chen bdun la longs spyod pa’i// byin rlabs phywa dang g.yang gi stobs// byang phyogs spal ri lhun po la// dpal gyi sba smyug ldem pa skyed// tshigs bdun tshigs dgu bcu gsum pa// ’khor los sgyur ba’i g.yang rten lags// de ltar longs spyod rgyas pa yang// bkra shis sba smyug rgyas pa de// ’khor los sgyur ba’i g.yang phur byas// rgyal po longs spyod rgyas pa ltar// de ring snyug rgod tshigs gsum pa// yon bdag ’di yi phywa g.yang lags//…

The content of this apocryphal text clearly points to its origin in Tibet. But the circumstances and time of its composition remain unclear. This text has already been dealt with by Michael Walter (Walter 1994), who calls it a "supplement" to the *Suvarṇabhāsottama*-sūtra. It is very interesting to note that there exists a text with a similar title in the tradition of Bon entitled *gSer 'od nor bu 'od 'bar gyi mdo* (*Sūtra of a golden light of the gem of a blazing light*), which exists in a number of editions. M. Walter comes to the conclusion that despite the similarity in their titles, the content of this Bonpo text is very different from the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*. However, the last chapter of the Bonpo text is dedicated to the ritual of summoning *g.yang*. This part could frequently be found copied separately without the rest of the text and used evidently for the purpose of the performance of the ritual. It does not contain any exposition of the origin of *g.yang*, but it is styled as a speech of gShen rab mi bo containing a long list of deities and other beings, from whom the *g.yang* should be summoned.

Despite the difficulties with verifying it due to the lack of tools for dating this apocryphal text, it seems that the Buddhist version could be modelled after the existing Bonpo one.

4. Concluding remarks

In the Bonpo sources the *g.yang* is connected with a number of contexts. It features in rituals connected with *klu*, in other texts it is connected with *dgra bla*, and there are also texts dealing with *bse rag* demons, the mountain god (Mt Machen Pomra) and in some cases also with *khyim lha*. There is a text for a wedding ceremony, a funeral ritual and a ritual dedicated to *sa bdag* spirits. But even in Eternal Bon texts the most frequent connection is with Indic Vaiśravaṇa (or Nor lha, Dzam bha la, rNam thos sras, Kubera).

Moreover, summoning *g.yang* is frequently combined with other rituals. Most commonly it appears to be accompanied by a "ransom offering" (*glud*) offered to the demons at the beginning of the ritual. In some texts the beginning consists of a "poison removal" (*dug phyung*) ritual and still other texts combine it with "threat-cross rituals" (*mdos*, *nam mkha')* and "fumigation" (*bsang*).

In the light of such a great variety of contexts it is hardly possible to identify an original version. It can be stated that the texts containing the myth associating the ritual tools with a miraculous deer are by far the most detailed and coherent. Such a variety of texts, their content and contexts, reflects clearly the heterogeneous nature of what is called the Bon tradition.

It is quite remarkable that the myth concerning the origin of *phya* and *g.yang* found its place in the Buddhicized versions of the ritual, particular texts being used by all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The strategies employed in them seem to be rather clear. They connect the ritual with Buddha himself, with Vaiśravaṇa and Indic deities, or with a Buddhicized myth on the origin of Tibetans.

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The Gold Drink rite. Indigenous, but not *simply* indigenous

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Summary: The rite known in Tibetan as the Gold Drink (*gser-skyems*) is one that has hardly received sustained attention in earlier literature about Tibet, although brief mentions are many and some paragraphs have been written on it. The chief hypothesis of this essay is that it merits investigation as one of a number of rites and ritual objects wholly or largely indigenous to the Himalayan Plateau region, with the *proviso* that it may be indigenous to surrounding areas as well. Future studies will ideally take much more ethnographic and archaeological evidence into account.

I think we have arrived at a point in time in the history of Tibet Studies when it ought to be possible for us to reach some level of consensus about which particular items, practices and ideas are most likely to be indigenous to Tibet. The prospects for this seem much brighter in recent decades, especially given the vast amounts of Tibetan literature that have been made available to the world, first by refugees in India and in still more recent decades in Tibet itself. There are reasons to be optimistic, and perhaps it is time to make bolder, if still tentative, pronouncements in this area.[1] We need to stimulate our thought processes much more than we need the premature closures that often pass for conclusions.

An obvious way to begin identifying the indigenous would be to sift out those things that clearly came from India and see what remains. Of course there are problems with this that make the effort less simple than it may sound. For one thing, things do change in interesting ways when they cross cultural borders, sometimes almost beyond recognition. Roberto Vitali in this volume has also stressed that much of Tibetan culture results from clan

1) I would personally want to stress the importance of the work of John Bellezza for bringing greater attention to localized popular practices and archaeological artifacts as evidence for an archaic background that has permanently embedded itself in Tibetan culture. Although not everyone has realized it yet, his work with its still-uncommon approach and aims has fundamentally shifted the course and scope of Tibetan Studies. As for the amount of Tibetan literature now available, we might point out that as of the end of 2014, the Tibetan Buddhism Resource Center (TBRC) announced that they have scanned nearly ten million pages of Tibetan texts.

migrations that occurred in some cases *after* the introduction of Buddhism, and therefore cannot be regarded as indigenous in any strict sense. But I think we can leave these problematics aside for a while if it makes getting started easier for us. I would also point out that we have cultural complexes of our own we need to deal with since they can prove the most obdurate obstacles to progress. In particular there is the view of Tibet as an archive for otherwise possibly lost Indian literature with the sole task of preserving *pure* Indian Buddhism.[2] Among the Indologically inclined Tibetanists in particular, there has been, although this has started changing recently, a strong tendency to reject even the existence of Tibet-indigenous elements, or to react in horror when their existence can no longer be denied.

Ideally, after deciding against the likelihood of Indic origins, we need to take a further step and try to consider those same items, those that appear to rank very high on the scale of indigenous-ness, within a larger realm encompassing surrounding cultures – "from an *areal* perspective" to give a short label for this approach. Much like areal linguistics, this means looking beyond the supposed boundaries of a particular culture or language, or even at times redrawing or ignoring the lines on the maps. Here we will not do much in the way of eliminating the possibility of Indian sources, and more on the second step, of finding out if the indigenous item might be something more than that, one shared by surrounding cultures. Some may insist on determining if the cultural item can be explained by common ancestry or if it may have been exchanged later in the course of history. I think we can leave these questions aside, also, if answers are not forthcoming. They may not be answerable, or the answers may depend on other kinds of evidence emerging, in particular archaeological finds.

I take a lot of my inspiration from two essays and a recent book of Michael Walter,[3] and the introduction of one of his essays could have been the introduction to this one (Walter 1998). I should point out that I share with him a similar background in Inner Asian Studies at Indiana University, by no means implying that I could compare his much superior knowledge of that area with my own. Walter emphasizes two ritual acts that are shared not only within a larger *area* outside Tibet, but as sharing in a still-wider cultural complex that might be characterized as *pastoral*. These two practices are [1] *tshe-thar* or the practice of setting animals free and [2] divination by reading sheep shoulder bones cracked in the fire, known in the specialized language

2) For reflections along similar lines, I recommend Richards 1992.
3) Walter 1996 & 1998 being the articles, and Walter 2009 the book.

of divination as *scapulimancy* or, in Tibetan, *sog-pa'i mo*. In what follows we will abstain from dealing with these particular subjects any further. For now it should be made clear that I am being a follower and not a critic of my old friend Michael Walter in what follows, and hope only to extend discussion into further areas of the possibly indigenous, and the Gold Drink is just one of those areas that I hope to one day explore.

Eliminating the Indic is a task that may be deemed difficult enough that, once done to our satisfaction, we can imagine ourselves well on our way. However, we should, and I think must, still question how much Irano-Turkic-Mongolic-Sinitic connections should be brought into our considerations.[4] I think even if these two assignments present difficulties for us, it doesn't mean that making the effort is not worthwhile. We can and will leave these questions opened in some ways, but even if we only become more open to possibilities then that in itself may be good for us as well as useful for reframing the inquiry in fresh ways in the future.

As a point of departure and source of material for our discussion, we begin with a puzzling but anyway interesting episode in the life of Padampa Sangyé, who died in 1117 CE. This episode was presented several years ago at a conference in Düsseldorf.[5] In it, Padampa himself performs a rite in order to help a woman among his followers who was known to be especially susceptible to what we would nowadays want to call psychiatric disorders. The spirits thought to underlie her problem are called *btsan* spirits, although it is suggested that still other spirits might be involved. Here we find names of three of a well-attested early list of nine mountain gods.[6] This alone ought to alert us to the possibility we are dealing here with local Tibetan cultic practices.

4) Iranian connections will not be much in evidence here, although these have been a significant and recurrent theme in Tibetological studies. Observe, for instance, Stoddard 2009 and Templeman 2002 & unpublished, to give a few recent examples. Some parallels are quite obvious and as such were observed long ago by a Zoroastrian visitor to Darjeeling by the name of Jivanji Jamshedji Modi who wrote a number of articles (for example, Modi 1918). Some parallels that may not have been noticed before are similar items on the New Year's altar in Tibetan New Year (Lo-gsar) and Iranian New Year (Nowruz), in particular the young shoots of wheat or barley Iranians know as *sabzeh*, representing plant life in general. Note, too that I leave Southeast Asia (including the area of present-day Yunnan) out of consideration for now, and for no good reason. See Samuel 1994 for arguments that Tibetologists should be looking in that direction.

5) Martin 2013, especially pp. 174–179.

6) Karmay 1996 (and discussion in Martin 2013, p. 176 at note 45).

I see this passage as an extremely rare testimony to an actual performance of such rites in post-imperial but still pre-Mongol times.[7] And to our likely amazement the very best reference sources for trying to understand Padampa's ritual are the classic study by de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956/1993) and even more so writings of John Bellezza, particularly his book of 2005, an ethnography with plentiful interviews of western Tibetan spirit mediums and/or shamans. The passage follows, with the most relevant parts for our present purpose underlined.

One time Padampa said, "Yekhyen Daré, I have seen that Drogom has been injured by a lone ghost that prevents her attainment of Awakening (Bodhi). But you have not been granted the vision of how that might be so."

So right there he prepared on a piece of white felt an Expanded Chest (*'brang-rgyas*), divine barley, and a bundle of herbs and placed them on the left side.

On the right side he assembled a lammergeier's collarbone, a vulture feather arrow, a three-jointed willow wand, and a magic mirror.

Inside a tent of white cotton he made to smoke some *sal* tree resin incense. He bound to his head a turban of *sen* cloth. He stuck the grinding-stone into his long sash.

Taking the 'waving cloth', in his hand, he repeated the divine invocation (*lha-bdar*) three times for the spirits, the fierce and militant *tsen* (*btsan*) spirits who live in slate mountains and glacier mountains, including the Sku-lha Ge-sar, Gnyan-chen Thang-la, Snying-'brom Btsan-po, Gha-btsan Sum-cu, Zhang 'Bro-rje and still others.

But the ghost was still not seen… *Yekhyen just kept looking [?]*

Again Padampa spoke, "Since a ghost was in any case given to her, have a good look."

That said, he did the wrathful petition, filing the precious substances into the Golden Drink offering.

Again he did the divine invocation (*lha-bdar*). Yekhyen said, "It is not at all clear that hers is a death spirit (*shed-'dre*). What prevents her attaining Awakening is a blacksmith's tongs that does injury to her. How that is I have no idea."

After laughing at that for a long time, Padampa said, "You have clearly seen that the ghost that does not permit 'Bro-sgom to attain Awakening is the harm done to her by subject-object dichotomies – and this ghost does injury not only to her but to every person who desires Awakening. A person who is not free of ghosts is not happy."[8]

7) And the significance of this finding that something is pre-Mongol is already high, as it was indubitably during the Mongol period that Tibet became more open to foreign influences and borrowings, especially those coming from the Mongols themselves.

8) *Zhijé Collection* (V 215–216), with translation in Martin 2013, pp. 174–178. The same translation is given here without the original text, without the footnotes and without the acknowledgements for help in understanding it (for these, see Martin 2013). The full work was written down by Rten-ne, one of the main lineage holders transmitting Padampa's Zhijé tradition, sometime in the decades before or just after 1200 CE.

There is a lot to discuss here. The irony of this passage is that here we have a well-known Indian master presenting us with a list of indigenous elements, or at the very least items worthy of being investigated as such. For those interested in looking into of some of the other items not on our present agenda I recommend the footnotes in the published essay. The Expanded Chest (*'brang-rgyas*) near the beginning of the passage was the main subject of that essay. It was and in some places (particularly in Ladakh) still is used in a range of mostly domestic and life-cycle rituals. After collecting the scattered material and giving it many years of thought I am convinced it is an indigenous ritual offering that slipped into appropriate contexts as Buddhist rituals began to take hold.[9] I take Sakya Pandita's objection to it, given he was an excellent Sanskritist, as a good support for it being at least non-Indic if not indigenous. But at the same time I don't feel it is necessary to accept Sapan's position that its absence in new *tantra*s (*tantra*s translated after the turn of the 10th century) is an argument for their superiority. Even if complex polemical motives may surround discussions of it, the indigenous-ness of the Expanded Chest is unaffected by them. This has to do with *evaluations* of indigenous-ness, not the indigenous-ness itself. And, as I argued elsewhere, we have a range of such evaluations that Tibetans (and Indians resident in Tibet) have made during the last millennium.[10] Tibet did not have the unchanging unity of perspective that has so often been foisted upon him. If modern scholars insist on adhering to one or another of those perspectives, their much-touted objectivity will inevitably fail them.

Another subject we will avoid, even if we should not, is not explicitly mentioned in our quoted passage. There would be good reasons to talk about *bsangs* or burnt juniper offerings in tandem with the *Gold Drink*.[11] There are

9) I should add that the Expanded Chest may have changed its shape in some of those contexts. I think in particular of the Nyingma usages of something they know as *'brang-rgyas*, that looks quite different. This matter requires more attention than I have been able to give it. I must thank Rahel Tsering and Cathy Cantwell for discussions on this issue of distinctively Nyingma usage that persuaded me to change my thinking.

10) See the concluding part of Martin 2013.

11) For something brief and relatively easy to read on the rite of Juniper Burning, see the introduction and translated text in Mi-pham 1997. There is a Bon text translated in Namkhai Norbu 1995, and more in Ermakov 2010, pp. 400–403, 460–476. Juniper Burning is my translation of *bsangs*, although the etymological meaning of the word is something along the lines of *'purified, cleansed, cleared up'*. One may see the old translation from a Mongolian text in turn translated from Tibetan found in Serruys 1969, and for more such texts relative to Mongolia, but in Tibetan language, see Heller 1996. Both Juniper Burning and Gold Drink are featured in Ramble 1998. There is also a master's thesis, one I have not yet

contexts where it is clear that juniper *scent* offerings go together with drink and food offerings as a triad. Just as the drink offering is explicitly associated with *gold* (and yes, perhaps additional metals, as we will see), the food offering is associated with *turquoise*, as noticed in recent publications of Samten Karmay. In one of their most impressive usages, gold and turquoise may be placed in the mouth of the ritual officiant, the gold in the right cheek and the turquoise in the left. We often observe the pairing of gold and turquoise in early texts.[12]

Have a look at the Mkhas-pa Lde'u history's version of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet.

It was during Lha-tho-tho-ri-btsan's reign that signs of the holy Dharma made their appearance. About his reign it is said, "Not only did signs of the holy Dharma appear [here in Tibet], they say it had its actual beginning." This Emperor Lha-tho-tho-ri-gnyan-btsan was an emanation of either the Buddha Kāśyapa or the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Sa'i-snying-po). While he was residing in his palace (*sku-mkhar*) Yam-bu-bla-sgang, the scripture *Spang skong phyag rgya pa* made of gold and a four-tiered Chorten made of turquoise descended from the sky into his hands. He did not identify these with the exalted (or terrible; *gnyan-pa*) Dharma, but considered them only as things pleasing and beautiful, and for that reason made offerings of the golden drink and the blue turquoise. Over time the four symbolic marks of Buddha's word would also arrive.[13]

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seen (Sihlé 1993) devoted to Juniper Burning, but for present purposes I would most recommended Karmay 1987 and 1994.

12) Karmay 1987. An English translation is available in: Karmay 1998, pp. 310–339. See also Ramble 2012, p. 524, with its "gold spindle with turquoise whorl" (compare Karmay 2009: "gold spindle with its turquoise base"). Flowers made of gold and turquoise play a prominent role in a very old Tibetan cosmogony copied into a 13th-century history, Mkhas-pa Lde'u 1987, p. 228 (gold is the father, turquoise the mother). Notice in Karmay 2009, p. 74 "The gold cup and the turquoise plate…" The drinking vessel is made of gold and the food serving platter of turquoise. The respective connections of gold with divine drink and turquoise with divine food consistently features in many texts. On p. 82 of Karmay 2009, we find the Tibetan original, not quite as clear in the translation on p. 74, of an interesting statement that would seem to imply an understanding of *skyems* less in the sense of drink and more in the sense of what good things the liquid supplies to the body (perhaps bodily benefits including but going beyond its thirst-quenching qualities). Here, just as food has its nutritive property called *bcud*, drink has the property of *skyems*. I find the idea intriguing, at least, that *skyems* may mean something slightly more abstract than is normally conveyed by the word *drink*. We should note, too, that at times the term *gser-skyems* is applied to an offering using tea, while *g.yu-skyems* (or some other wording that employs the turquoise) is used for an offering drink using beer. I find this confusing, but have no more to say about it now.

13) Mkhas-pa Lde'u 1987, p. 249. I make use of my own translation of the complete text that is to be published before long. Notice here how the sky objects made of gold and turquoise are granted offerings of gold and turquoise. In a fuller account we ought to notice also that

There are scattered here and there in Tibetan literature a few very brief texts devoted to the *Gold Drink*, but the scarcity of literature should not be regarded as an indication of its lack of importance out in the world. In fact, practices performed on a daily basis are likely to be presumed known to all potential readers, and for this reason writing about them would be a waste of precious paper and ink. In such cases as this, the existence of artefacts can at times prove more significant than the text (or even occasionally overturn the evidence of the texts). A few of these texts have been translated.[14] They always seem to start by making the offering to either the Lamas in one case or the Three Precious and other high Buddhist objects of refuge, but they very quickly go on to address the more worldly spirits, the *eight classes of spirits* or the like, and name specific spirit beings, particularly the *btsan* spirits. And if there is a kind of dedication of the merits at the end, as there is in one case at least, we see that the dedication to the spread of Buddhism is followed by wishes for rain, harvests, absence of diseases of men and livestock, and freedom from attack by carnivores. In effect, these worldly goals are requested from worldly deities, but prefaced by homage to Buddhist divine beings and goals. I see this reframing as one of the more simple and effective ways an indigenous and pragmatic worldly practice could be Buddhacized (or is it Buddhism getting indigenized or both?).

The effort to understand the difficult Padampa passage motivated me to look further into the terminology of the *Gold Drink* and the objects associated

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the gold and turquoise drink and food offerings appear in the story as told in *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* and in *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (where there is an interesting comment by the author). By far the most significant thing we should point out here is that Gold Drink (*gser-skyems*) and the Blue Turquoise (*g.yu-sngon*) are named as offerings in the story of the same event as contained in a reputably 11th-century rediscovered text, the *Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989, p. 95. In a work that surfaced in the 12th century, as part of the prelude to the biography of Emperor Srong-btsan the Wise, we also find that Lha-tho-tho-ri made daily offerings of the Gold Drink and the Blue Turquoise. See *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum* 2007, p. 368. Noticing also the brief discussion in Ermakov 2010, pp. 464–465, we might say that the pairing of these two highly valued substances, gold and turquoise, is quite an old one, while the perhaps rather late accounts of the legendary ruler Lha-tho-tho-ri may at least assure us that their tellers believed both to be indigenous to Tibet.

14) The two examples I especially have in mind are Bellezza 2005, pp. 296–299, and the Gnubs-chen text placed on the internet. Serruys 1969, pp. 407–411 gives a brief Mongolian text with an English translation. A few other things were mentioned in an earlier note, but the translation literature in this field really doesn't amount to very much. Of more ethnographic studies, see especially de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956/1993, p. 401 where there is a full paragraph on the subject, although there are numerous more incidental mentions elsewhere in his book.

with it. The most ubiquitous of these objects, found on very many altars in both temples and homes, is the *gser skyems*, named after the rite itself, apparently. It consists of two metal objects: [1] a small shallow chalice-like metal object with its slender stem resting upon [2] a wide bowl-shaped object with its own built-in stand to support it. It is the latter object that catches the overflow when water is poured into the chalice. Also needed is a ritual pitcher.[15] But there is yet another item associated with this ritual, the filing rod containing gold (and other metals) that is filed into the drink. This object makes its appearance in the Padampa text in the words *rin-po-che brdar*.[16] I found photos of three examples of these filing rods offered for sale on the internet.[17] My point is that contemporary ethnographic evidence may help us confirm Padampa's ritual use of files and filing rods 900 years ago.

I found only two usages of the term *gser-skyems* in the Vienna database of the entire Tibetan Buddhist canon, the Kanjur and Tanjur. Both of these were in the Tanjur. I found the term *rin-po-che brdar-ba* only once, in a brief *dhāraṇī* type of text. I imagine these are likely to be deemed apocryphal in the sense of being put together in Tibet or possibly China. Or, if not apocryphal they could be regarded as 'cultural translations'. So the occurrence of these terms in canonical texts, in any case very rare, is not necessarily sufficient grounds for arguing their Indian origins, or so I would argue.

15) Kretschmar 2006 illustrates an example of a chalice used in Gold Drink ritual, while Bowers Museum 2003, pp. 108–109 illustrates a "Serkyem ewer".

16) The file proper would be the whetstone for knives (*dri bseg*, corrected to *gri bseg*) that Padampa had earlier stuck into his sash. However, I believe that expressions containing the word for precious substances in general (*rin-chen* or *rin-po-che*) can only be used for what I call the *filing rod*, meaning the object that is filed with the file, and not itself a file. Any term for the file used in this context ought to contain the variously-spelled syllable *seg*.

17) All three of these "files" (in fact they are the sources of the filings and not the agents of filing…) had already been sold, at prices ranging from 300 to 900 U.S. dollars. The advertisements were on a website called "potalagate", belonging to a retail store in Eugene, Oregon. Here they were called "Rinchen Darru". I have encountered the spellings *sag-gdar*, *sag-bdar*, *sag-brdar*, *se-gdar* and *seg-dar* (and *gser-dar* mentioned presently), but I believe all of these are references to the file itself, and not the object it files. The expression *rin-chen ḍaru* has also been noted (Gyatso 1979, p. 98), but I believe this, along with Rinchen Darru, can be explained as a Sanskritizing spelling formed on the basis of the pronunciation of *rin-chen brdar-ba*. Kretschmar 2006, in a brief but valuable entry on the Gold Drink, makes mention of the file (there spelling the Tibetan as *gser-dar*, which would only seem to mean 'gold silk'). The Gyatso essay just noticed also has it: "Gold, silver and precious stones are set in iron file, called Rin-chen Ḍaru and symbolically grated over the offering bowls. Traditional celebrants still follow this practice which I heard of from my preceptor."

Searching the Old Tibetan Documents Online (OTDO) database, I found only one use of *gser-skyems* in a passage I find perplexing.[18] The word *skyem[s]* alone occurs 42 times in Dunhuang documents. There is a mention in the *Old Tibetan Annals* for the year 682 CE discussed in a very recent article of Sam van Schaik (2013, p. 243). I haven't closely studied all the Dunhuang evidence, but many of the occurrences of *skyems* there have to do with *drinks* in general. You see it used with words meaning grain, fruit and honey, indicating the type of drink served, whether the drinks are being served to humans or nonhumans. By far the greater number of these occurrences are in texts associated with funerary rites, including the single occurrence of *gser-skyems*.[19] If these are all parallel expressions, then we ought to be forgiven if we understand the gold drink to be a drink made with gold, just as the grain, fruit and honey drinks are made of those respective substances. So, besides wondering how such a drink was made in this funerary context in those early days, I don't have any particular conclusions about the (near lack of) Dunhuang evidence as yet.[20]

18) I'm rather certain that *gser-skyems* occurs there as a ritual offering item, since the item immediately before it, *zhug-shang*, is known to be a combination of roasted and raw barley used in ritual offerings (hence, in my limited understanding at least, being the divine food offering, just as the Gold Drink is the divine drink offering). See Pelliot tibétain 1042, line 16, in OTDO database. This is quite a challenging text devoted to royal funerary rituals that has been studied several times. For what seems like a correct translation of this line, as far as I understand it, see Chu 1991, pp. 103–104. And note, too, that with a slightly different spelling, *zhug-shangs* appears in tandem with Gold Drink in another more recent text, one quoted in Haarh 1969, p. 320 (noticing yet another mention of Gold Drink on p. 354). Haarh doesn't offer any translations of the names of these ritual offerings, he simply transcribes them. Lord Shenrab, in his first visit to Tibet, taught Tibetans to make offerings of *zhugs-shangs* and *gser-skyems*. In light of this, they obviously could not be truly indigenous, even if by Bon's own chronological reckonings they would date back several millennia in the past. See Karmay 1972/2001, pp. 30, 218.

19) It isn't clear if this is the passage indicated by Gyatso 1979, p. 98 when he says, "The meaning of "Gser-skyems and of "G.yu-skyems" is divine food and drink, which are symbolized on plates and bowls with food by gold and turquoise ornaments as mentioned in a Tun Huang manuscript."

20) Walter 2009, p. 204 noted this lack of much evidence, and I recommend closely reading his discussion of the issue. To quote the beginning only, "Offering water to the *lha* may be a reference to the *gser skyems* rite, which became very widespread in the Phyi Dar but is not found in Old Tibetan documents from the Imperial Period. (It is found in PT1042, on which see below…)." I'm not inclined to make very strong judgements based on this near absence. In the first place, we would have to wonder if this practice is one that the writers of the Dunhuang texts would have ever considered worth describing. In the second place the Dunhuang texts are not the only texts that have survived from the imperial period, it's just that we haven't found ways to securely identify them, let alone agree on which ones

The evidence of a brief Dga'-thang chorten manuscript, said to date somewhere between the late 10th and the end of the 12th centuries, is of special significance, as it explicitly names the Gold Drink in its very title, while in its content it praises beer and gold first separately and then in their Gold Drink combination that is used in offering to the spirits "of the four continents of the world."[21]

We ought to clear up two possible objections to the local origins or ancientness (if not indigenousness) of the gold and drink combination. As some would have it this combination of the physical liquid and metallic elements could have been based on a literalist miscomprehension of the words. Objection 1: Isn't the word for Gold Drink just an honorific form? Dungkar Rinpoche makes this argument, although I am not sure if it holds much conviction. Objection 2: Isn't the word for Gold Drink just a calque of a Chinese expression? Berthold Laufer in his old but still much-consulted article on loan-words quotes from a source that thinks so.[22]

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they are. Not yet. In the case of the use of the file, we do have 800 or 900 year old evidence in the Padampa account – textual evidence of the ritual use of the artefact – so why would we have to insist on having 1,000 year old evidence? Walter 2009, p. 296 says that PT 1042, the only text that contains the expression *gser-skyems*, "is not Imperial-period". By this he means it isn't pre-842 CE, but rather dates from a time thereafter. As far as I'm concerned at the moment, that would make it old enough to retain its significance.

21) This text was reproduced and translated online in Bellezza 2011, and also featured in a footnote in Bellezza 2010, pp. 45–46, note 43, although it was first published (in Tibetan only) in Pa-tshab 2007, pp. 31–32, with facsimile at pp. 127–129. For more discussion of the Dga'-thang chorten manuscripts, see Karmay 2009 and Bellezza 2014, while noticing conference papers on these manuscripts by Samten Karmay in Paris and Oxford in 2008.

22) Laufer 1916/1987, pp. 444–446, and especially the footnote no. 6, with discussion about dictionary definitions. The source of the idea that there may be something Chinese about *gser-skyems* is the work of Skyogs-ston, the *Li shi'i gur khang*, a work composed in 1476 CE, or perhaps sixty years later. According to it, "*gser-zhal* meaning 'the royal face', *gser-yig-pa* for 'emissary', *gser-skyems* and so on appear to be Chinese expressions" (*rgyal po'i zhal la gser zhal dang / bang chen la gser yig pa dang / gser skyems sogs kyang rgya nag gi brdar snang zhing*). See Skyogs-ston 1982, p. 22 (this edition has the advantage of having an alphabetized glossary appended to it, although *gser-skyems* is not listed in it). That same work is also the evident basis of Dungkar Rinpoche 2002 in his similar yet different discussion: "It is said that it is a thing where gold is poured into beer, but this is not the case. Gold Drink has the meaning of [honorific] 'face drink'. The face of the king is called 'gold face' and edicts are called 'gold documents', so this word is similarly an honorific expression" (*'di la 'ga' zhig gis chang gi nang du gser blugs pa zhig yin zer ba yod kyang de ltar min / gser skyems ni zhal skyems zhes pa'i don te / rgyal po'i zhal la gser zhal dang / bka' yig la gser yig ces 'bod pa lta bu'i zhe sa'i tshig yin*). No actual Chinese expression is supplied in any of these sources just named, and this appears to be a problem. Both arguments would lead us to deny that the gold had anything to do with it originally, and that when real gold

It has always seemed puzzling what exactly the gold *has* to do with it, or *had* to do with it in the past… or with juxtapositions of 'gold' and 'drink' in other parts rest of the globe that may have seductive similarities, worthy of being noticed before being set aside.

It may be untrue or only partly true, but the Central American [Ecuadoran] Jivaro people are said to have forced Spaniards to drink molten gold as a fitting punishment for their gold craziness. There is some pictorial evidence for it that might seem to make the story convincing, except that the picture was made to illustrate the story.[23]

On the other side of the world, in an earlier era, there is that most famous incident when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai and forced his followers to drink water containing powder from their destroyed object of worship, their Golden Calf. For both the Spaniards and the Israelites the gold drinking was inflicted as a punishment, which makes it quite different from being an offering to please the divinities. For this reason it seems pointless to search for parallels in these and still other such cases of metallic gold somehow contained in drinks.[24]

But before leaving the subject, there is something that might be a little more germane: We have in the early 11th century Ibn Sina's *aurum potabile*, carrying with it the idea that drinking gold is good for you. He gives directions for preparing this drink in his widely influential *Kanun* (Bela 2006). I haven't recalled hearing of drinking gold in India, although I wouldn't be too surprised to find it there since South Asians have had a special fondness for *eating* gold in small amounts. Still, however good drinkable gold may or may not be for humans, in the Tibetan context it's a ritual drink offered to gods, not part of any health regimen intended for humans. For this reason we may wonder about its relevance to our discussion.

In this sense of marking a kind of communion with gods, if nothing else, Gold Drink might be compared to Indic *Soma* (Zoroastrian *Haoma*), clearly also a drink offering. Since I know of no convincing parallels, or at least no set of parallels, there seems no more reason to believe Tibetan Golden Drink has anything to do with the mysterious drink Soma, or at least no reason to favor the Indian connection over those with yet other ritual libation

is actually employed it is based on nothing more than a naive reading of the texts. On the other hand, it may at the same time seem like an elitist way of rationalizing away popular practices found embarrassing for one reason or another, and so I remain undecided.

23) Cummins 2002, especially the illustration on pp. 126–127.

24) Exodus, chapter 32. The account in the Qur'an, chapter 7 (verse 148 ff.), mentions neither the gold nor the punishing drink.

practices found in other parts of Eurasia.[25] Harry Falk states categorically, "libations are not part of Buddhist rituals". In any case, he sees libation practices (whether part of funerary ritual, marriage or other feasts) as a result of influences from the classical Graeco-Roman west.[26]

We do find remarkably close practices in more closely neighboring cultures, even if it is difficult to find literary sources for them of very impressive age. We should look at some clear examples.

> "Mangu Timor also sent a summons to Beka, who complained of Arghun Aka's inroad into his country, but who offered to join him if his safety was guaranteed. Mangu Timur swore to protect him in the usual method, viz, by drinking water in which gold was mingled, and gave him the ring on his finger, which was deemed the most solemn engagement."[27]

In recent days I've done a lot of reading and reflection around the idea that the Gold Drink is associated with wider areal ideas about oath drinks of friendship and fealty. This thinking was largely inspired by Mike Walter's footnote (I do not repeat his examples). One of the most intriguing parallels is found in traditional Georgian culture, where use is made of friendship oath drinks made by mixing in flakes of silver. The silver is the defining element of this Silver Drink, so although it is most likely to be vodka, it could be any beverage (Manning 2012, p. 192). We ought to learn more about this Georgian practice and see where comparison might lead us.

In the Turko-Mongolian realm at least there is plentiful evidence for drinks containing either blood[28] or gold used in a covenantal way. I don't know

25) For a brief discussion of such rituals in early China, Siberia and elsewhere, in particular libation rites that form a part of funerary rituals, see Schaik 2013, p. 243. For a comparative essay, focusing on the alcoholic drinks, see Chakrabarty 1994. Libation in general may be defined as "a ritual pouring out of a liquid offering to a deity", following Fisher 2007, p. 7. With this definition, the Gold Drink is most definitely an example of a libation rite.

26) Falk 2010, especially p. 105. I would emphasize that Falk never suggests that existence of such libations could be eliminated from the Central Asian realm, as his statement is restricted to South Asia prior to the turn of the second millennium. Furthermore, by libation he means only libations onto the ground, an altar or a tray. Of course libations into fire as well as various types of ritual anointments are indeed well known in Indian ritual from early times.

27) Howorth 1888/1968, p. 267. We should say that the event recorded here would have taken place shortly before Mangu Timur's (i.e., Möngke Temür of the Golden Horde) death in 1280.

28) To begin with it would be best to read Walter 2009, pp. 203–205 (note no. 20). In Tibetan literature we do find a significant number of times the expression *khrag-skyems* (152 times), meaning Blood Drink. It certainly occurs more often than Turquoise Drink or *g.yu-skyems*

enough about this yet, but it is said that Uighur blood oaths might involve "slicing the flesh above the heart to show sincerity, allowing blood to sanctify the pledge."[29] There are some intriguing references to oath drinks using gold in around late 13th century in neighboring cultures, but this may not be regarded as early enough to satisfy possible arguments for historical priority. Later still are some examples given by Henry Serruys in his interesting paragraph about an oath being carved into gold, with the scratched-off gold then rubbed into wine that various tribal leaders were made to drink (in *circa* 1425), along with mention of how Mongols in south China "drank gold dust in wine", and of Korean officers in 1405 making an agreement with the Jürched by "rubbing gold".[30] We could also observe that in recent centuries at least Mongols have preferred to use Tibetan borrowings for both the Gold Drink and the Juniper Burning: *serjim* and *sang*. The metallic-gold aspect of the drink could be indigenous to Tibet specifically or to a wider area, even while the general 'oath' culture to which it belongs may more surely fit with or even belong to the areal culture. Given the little precious evidence we have from the period prior to the Mongol advent, it is difficult to be sure, and more evidence is very likely to come along to change our thinking.

There may be a lot more to say on this, but now, just to sum up, it appears that the Gold Drink along with the Juniper Burning are among the better candidates for being Tibet-indigenous. Although not yet offering a conclusion on this point, it may be that similar rites existed in neighboring cultures that might equally be indigenous to *them*. An outdoor purificatory rite, burning primarily juniper, certainly existed in ancient Mesopotamia.[31] And, as we have seen, the association of gold with oath drinks is found in the wider

(26 times) / *g.yu-sngon* (43 times], but none of these can rival for frequency of usage the Gold Drink or *gser-skyems* (2,773 times). These results came from searching the TBRC etext repository.

29) Skaff 2012, p. 192, as part of a large section on "Oaths, Covenants and Pacts."

30) Serruys 1958, p. 291. Note Lane 2009, p. 84, "They swore allegiance to each other, 'drank gold' after the Mongol fashion…"

31) Wilson 1994, p. 36. We could also add that smoke of juniper berries was used for trance-induction in Siberia and elsewhere in Asia. I should have made use of Atwood 1996, but as the author himself points out, the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism took place with considerable violence and lack of compromise, giving shamanic-Buddhist relations there a very different dynamic from other Buddhacised countries. Mongols were in the position of eventually adopting from Tibet both the Juniper Burning and the Indic Homa rituals, finding ways to naturalize both. For Tibetanists the contrasting contexts, officiants and ritual procedures of the two 'fire rites' are quite obvious and impossible to ignore, so much so that it would hardly occur to us to look for anything they have in common beyond their employment of the fire element.

area of Central Asia. And drinks of oath and hospitality between humans may easily gain a covenantal significance in the relationship between humans and gods. If we want to make progress in answering these worthwhile questions about identifying the indigenous, Tibetologists will have to get accustomed to consulting colleagues in neighboring disciplines, the Mongolists, Turkologists, Iranologists and Sinologists (and *not* just the Indologists), in case we haven't been doing this already.

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"Indigenous" vis-à-vis "foreign": in the genesis of Tibet's ancestral culture

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Summary: This paper examines the pale signs found in the Tibetan literature concerning the genesis of Tibet's ancestral culture. It focuses on significant passages of the documents (collectively known as *rus mdzod*) dedicated to the various ancestral tribes that, in a probably long evolutive process, formed the Tibetan race. This analysis aims at establishing whether the cultural process that led these tribes introduce expressions of their own civilisation on the Tibetan highlands should be considered indigenous or foreign.

Rather than concentrating on any specific rituals or religious formulations to gauge whether or not they display indigenous traits, in this paper I shall attempt a macro-historical analysis of the pale traces preserved in the literature concerning the people behind the creation of Tibet's early culture, whose features remain for the most part unknown, and the processes engendered at the time.

There is a propensity in recent studies, especially those concerning archaeology, to establish a cultural divide between the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist phases during the ancient period (I mean before Srong btsan sgam po). This has led some scholars to consider most of what happened before this divide as indigenous and most of what happened after it as imported. It is well known that the Tibetan tradition assigns the introduction of Buddhism to the reign of lHa Tho tho ri (see almost every *chos 'byung*, for instance: *Nyang ral chos 'byung* p. 164 line 7 – p. 165 line 5; *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, p. 105, lines 11–20; *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, p. 249, line 11 – p. 250, line 14; *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*, p. 14, line 15 – p. 15, line 5), whereas some western scholars hold that this took place during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po (Stein 2010a), although only in a limited fashion, for in either case the concerns were eminently elitist.

The determination of as accurate a divide as possible is important for those who propound the idea that the introduction of Buddhism propelled Tibet from a situation marked by the prevalence of indigenous cultural traits into another one, characterised by the indelible influence exercised by foreign elements over the autochthonous way of life. This would have turned Tibet into a different country and civilisation, to a point of no return. I question whether this point of view, however applicable, should be embraced as wholeheartedly as it sometimes has been.

Is it reasonable to think, then, that the situation in Tibet was so inflexible that no expressions of indigenous culture were able to germinate after the Noble Religion was introduced on the plateau and took root, whenever this happened? Conversely, can one be sure that individual expressions of culture with no apparent Buddhist traits are – or were – perforce indigenous?

Even if I confine myself to the western side of the plateau, many areas of scholarly interest can be isolated that pertain to the issue at hand. I shall restrict myself to a few meaningful examples showcasing the state of affairs I have just indicated.

The Indus and the *Rig Veda*

The degree of access to the Tibetan plateau in Aryan times is one tantalising aspect of the early period. One indication is found in the *Rig Veda* (2, 15, 6), which says about Indra:

"By his might, he made the Indus flow to the north."

The Aryans therefore knew of the sources of the Indus – the river flows north before turning west towards La dwags and Kha che (see, for one, Strachey's map of Upper West Tibet) – which suggests that they had ventured as far as the Kailash Manasarovar region and may have left an unspecified influx of their culture along the upper reaches of the river. Their possible presence in the area leads to other major avenues of inquiry, such as the different approaches to the lakes in antiquity (from the north via La dwags; from the south via Garhwal or Kumaon; or from the west via Khu nu and Pi ti), and consequently to the question which of either Ma pham g.yu mtsho or La ngag mtsho should be considered the original holy lake – a question already being discussed in the Pāli literature, the *Purāṇa*-s and the Indian epics, for instance.

Gangs Ti se: Hindu, Bon po or Buddhist?

A related point is whether the veneration of Gangs Ti se as the quintessential mountain was the domain of the Hindu, Bon po or Buddhists.[1]

1) Myths whose intent seem to establish, on behalf of different creeds, the credentials of one or the other deity associated with the mountain are found in Hindu, Buddhist and Bon po

The assignment of the cult of the mountain to any of these major religions would be factional and thus limitative, as it would be to consider it, more broadly, as originally either indigenous or foreign.

The cult of the ibex

Ibexes and other figures are found on rock carvings in the four corners of the plateau – the graffiti of Ru thog being but the most famous (see, e.g., *Bod kyi brag brkos ri mo'i sgyu rtsal*, pp.65–71; Francfort-Klodzinski-Mascle 1990, p. 13; Chan 1994, pp. 979–982; *Ru thog Khyung rdong dkar po'i lo rgyus*, pp. 93–99). Commonly considered pre-Buddhist (even if some probably are not), they beg the question whether their cult should indeed be understood as indigenous, given that similar themes are virtually ubiquitous throughout Central Asia.

The *bya ru*

Zoomorphic headgear goes back to monarchs of times predating the Sassanid civilisation. It was used, for example, by Bactrian rulers of Greek origin. This is evinced by the coinage of both Sassanid and Bactrian kings.[2]

No depictions of the *bya ru* worn by Zhang zhung rulers and Bon po masters – or in some cases by Buddhists,[3] one instance being a disciple of rje btsun Mid la bZhad pa rdo rje (1040–1123) – are known to exist. Their

sources, involving such major gods as Indra, Vajrapāṇi, Kubera, Maheśvara, Rāvaṇa, bDe mchog or Ge rgod, but also minor ones, such as Ma tram Rudra.

2) Hellenistic coins depicting the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles (reigned ca. 171 BCE–160 BCE in present-day North Pakistan) show him wearing a headdress which is winged and has a pair a long, downward-pointing horns (Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 2, Chapter 4: "The Greek Conquest of Pakistan and the Revolt of Eucratides", type 149).

For examples of coins depicting Sassanid rulers, whose well known regalia included horned headgear, see, for instance, Paruk 1961, plates.

3) That the ancient nobility and not only religious masters wore the *bya ru* during the sPu rgyal dynasty (i.e. possibly outside Zhang zhung) is documented, for instance, in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p. 112, lines 8–10), which introduces a list of objects owned by the high ranking members of the sPu rgyal kingdom. One of them is associated with the *bya ru* ("As for the *nine great* and the *ten long* [signs of rank], sBas Che btsan bya ru can sNang bzher lha btsan owned the *ke ke ru* jewel and the tiger skin collar. This was the sign of his greatness").

Mar lung pa'i rnam thar (f. 62b, lines 2–5) says that lha bla ma Byang chub 'od (984–1078), member of the gSang 'dus transmission, was followed by one mchod gnas Cha ru ba

adoption by Bon po-s in Zhang zhung, in any event, is just one sign that people from the plateau shared a number of Indo-Iranic cultural traits.[4]

Bon po costumes

Sources, such as the various *Gling grags*, make a point to describe the paraphernalia of Bon po proponents assigned with the task of guarding the sPu rgyal Bod kings.[5]

Their flamboyant attire, which made lavish use of zoomorphic embellishments, reminds one of similar apparel among Siberian shamans, which may not, then, have been exclusive to this latter civilisation.

Bon po cosmopolitanism, as reflected in the g.Yung drung Bon sources

Signs that the Bon po were receptive to composite outside influences and that indeed their culture was part of a network of surrounding civilisations in the Indo-Iranic borderlands and beyond, towards the Tarim Basin, and, in the west, farther away from the extreme limits of the Tibetan plateau, at centres of civilisation, such as Balkh, appear often in g.Yung drung Bon sources.[6]

That this was the case did not go down well with some western scholars of the past (Stein 2010b; see Samten Karmay's opposite view in Karmay 1998), but

(i.e. Bya ru ba) as the next lineage holder. A disciple of rje btsun Mid la bZhad pa rdo rje (1040–1123) is called Ling gor Cha ru (sic for Bya ru) in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.493 line 4).

4) *Kun grol grags pa bstan 'byung* (p. 418, lines 2–3) credits the use of the *bya ru* to Bru zha gNam gsal sPyi rdol, who was the founder of the Bru clan and of Bon in Bru zha, and the personal teacher of the Bru zha king as well.

Kun grol grags pa (ibid., p. 42, lines 1–3) also mentions a Bon po master summoned by sPu lde gung rgyal to perform the funerary rites for his father Gri gum btsan po. This was g.Yas kyi Bon po bya ru can, an expert in the practice of *Dur phugs gsum brgya drug bcu*, who belonged to the ancient line of the Zhu g.yas clan.

Ya ngal gyi gdung rabs includes a golden *bya ru* among the paraphernalia worn by 'Tshe, bCho and Ya ngal (spelled so in the source), the *sku gshen*-s of gNya' khri btsan po (f.22a, line 5 – f.22b, line 1).

5) See, e.g., *Grags pa gling grags* (Text One) (p. 22, lines 4–5) with reference to Khri thobs nam brtsan granting insignia of greatness to the Bon po master Gyer zla med (p. 30, lines 3–6); or lHa Tho tho ri who thrice bestowed insignia of greatness upon the Zhang zhung Bon po Shel le mig dmar (ibid., p. 32, lines 2–5).

6) See passim within the biographies of gShen rab mi bo – from *gZer mig* to *gZi brjid* – and in almost every Bon po *bstan 'byung* that deals with the diffusion of its religion.

these sources do make the point that *gshen*-s were active in a cultural circuit that extended to neighbouring regions of the Indo-Iranic borderlands and the Tarim Basin. The existence of an expanded cultural sphere is confirmed by an early and authoritative Buddhist text, *The Inquiry of Vimalaprabha*, possibly translated from Khotanese into Tibetan,[7] which documents a close relationship between Khotan and territories of Upper West Tibet and the Western Himalaya in ancient times, possibly before the reign of lHa Tho tho ri.

The provenance of the Bon po *Tantra*-s

The Bon po literary tradition, recorded by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858–1934) in his *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod*, credits Li shu stag ring and two less well known proponents of the religion (Mu tsha bDag of the sTong and Ma tsha of the lDe Bon [po]) with a magical flight marking the introduction of their *Tantra*-s on Tibetan soil from the Indian North-West during proto-historical times.[8]

The books were loaded on flocks of *khrung khrung*, vultures and other birds (a veritable flying fleet) in the land of sTag gzig, the semi-mythical territory in North-West India. Flying across the western Himalaya, the black neck cranes and their winged companions brought these sacred scriptures to Zhang zhung.

Hence, the Tantric tradition of what is often defined as the pre-Buddhist religion would have been imported from India in much the same way as what happened subsequently during the two Buddhist diffusions.

7) *The Inquiry of Vimalaprabha*, where the relations between Khotan, the Land of Gold (Suvarnabhūmi) and Baltistan are based on common ethnos and cultural expressions of the same civilisation.

8) *Legs bshad rin po che gter mdzod* (p.154): "Secondly, to talk about [the diffusion of the Tantric texts] in detail, it has been in four [directions]. They were introduced in Zhang zhung, rGya gar, China and the land of Tibet.

As for the first (i.e. Zhang zhung), according to the *rnam thar*-s of Gyer mi, Mu tsha bDag of the sTong, Ma tsha of the lDe Bon and sNya Bon Li shu stag ring, these three, loaded outer, inner and innermost secret Bon [po] *Tantra*-s and [related] meditation cycles upon 120 birds, such as vultures and black neck cranes, and went to the land of Zhang zhung. Innumerable erudite *rig 'dzin* disseminated [the use of these texts] everywhere in the ten directions, and so Bon po teachings were diffused. Given all the inner and outer mental training [bestowed], they were firmly established in every holy place, and *siddha*-s, whose achievements are beyond human comprehension, came into existence. So it is said. According to *rGyud nyi sgron*, too, *'Bum* [and other] collections of texts, *gsas khang*-s, *lha khang*-s and *mchod rten*-s were diffused in the land of Zhang zhung before they were diffused in gTsang [and] dBus".

Bang so-s

The practice of mound burials known as *bang so* was not immune from foreign influences. Although the evidence is late – it perhaps dates to the post-ancestral period on the plateau[9] – burials of the noble and powerful under tumuli made of earth, wood and stone, and in full regalia, bear obvious analogy with Scythian *gurkan*-s, for instance. One may postulate from this manner of disposing of the dead the strong influence of West and Central Asian civilisations, with which ancient Tibet interacted.

One intriguing question concerns the features of the *bang so*-s in the style of the rMu/dMu, said in the literature to be from Zhang zhung and thus of possible Indo-Iranic origin, which were the precursors to the famous royal tombs of 'Phyong rgyas.[10]

Suvarnabhūmi and the western stretches of the Tibetan plateau

With Suvarnabhūmi and Ru thog one confronts a final paradox, which applies to historical times but could be representative of a situation that had already somewhat consolidated in earlier periods. Huei-ch'ao, the mid eighth century Korean pilgrim to India, says that, in his days, Suvarnabhūmi was Buddhist, whereas Tibet was not (Fuchs 1938, p. 443). On the one hand, the Buddhist tradition has it that, around that time, the preliminaries were taking place in Tibet for the introduction of their creed as the state religion of the land. Still, Huei-ch'ao says that Tibet was not Buddhist. On the other, in

9) As is well known, the practice is said to date from the end of the reign of Gri gum btsan po (*Tun-huang Chronicles*, Chapter One), and hence from proto-historical times. Given that the corpse of this *lha sras btsan po* was treated in a manner that was perforce human, having lost divine status, one cannot say, in the absence of evidence, that the practice of mound burials was used not only at that time but even earlier for common mortals of special rank, such as aristocrats. This, in any event, is suggested by the plethora of burial grounds and individual *bang so*-s in different areas of the plateau, where those who did not avail themselves of the luminous rope to return to their divine abode were laid to rest.

10) 'Jigs med gling pa (*gTam tshogs*, p. 287, lines 7–11) says that the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po's grandfather, sTag bu snya gzigs, was built according to specifications typical of the rMu/dMu, but no more than a few details are provided of its features, and no evidence is extant that would allow these characteristics to be ascertained on the basis of physical inspection. Whether one considers the rMu/dMu one of the *mi'u rigs*; the class of deities associated with Phywa and assigned a realm in sTag gzig by the Tun-huang literature (e.g. PT 126, 2); or else prominent gods in the Bon po religious system, their identity is peculiar enough to represent a compelling challenge for the archaeology of the plateau.

territories of Upper West Tibet, scattered cultural remains of Zhang zhung, considered by the Bon po as their stronghold, would have been Buddhist.

Ethnicity as a vehicle of cultural diffusion: phases in the formation of Tibet's early culture

The impression one gets from the above fragmentary and unsystematic cultural excursus is that Tibet was open to composite influences in antiquity, and so one should be cautious in passing hasty judgement and attaching labels to complex cultural expressions. This leads me to consider how the ethnic composition behind such a scenario, which seems to have forged the early features of Tibetan civilisation, by examining what the sources say about the whole plateau. The starting point of my argumentation is right where Tibetan historiography begins.

In order to do so, one needs to look into the *rus mdzod* literature, which are texts not easy to negotiate one's way through. The picture one gleans from the description how clans and subclans were variously articulated as they progressed is, in several cases, too variegated and contradictory to establish specific and consistent points of reference. Moreover, single *rus mdzod* texts document different phases in the process of diffusion of the ancestral tribes, so that the collective result, although valid per se and indicative of individual patterns of diffusion, does not allow for an overall synchronous view of the process. However, where clans are not identified, generic classifications are commonly included to stress a phenomenon of proliferation into more complex entities, and thus trends in ethnic distribution.

In a manner typical of this literary genre (at times vague and at other times detailed), the first step in the process of diffusion of the ancestral tribes on the plateau is tersely recorded in a passage of a *rus mdzod* that lacks a title. I shall call it *lDong rus mdzod*, given the amount of space it devotes to dealing, among the ancestral tribes of the north, with this group of people. The passage (ibid. f.11b = p. 196, lines 31–32) reads:

> In Bod there were the *che drug* ("the six great ones of Tibet", i.e. the *mi'u gdung drug*, the six ancestral tribes) who numbered (*mnyam pa*) twenty-four [subclans]. They were the *che btsun spel pa bzhi bcu rtsa brgyad* ("the forty-eight great noble ones who spread out [into the territories]").

In looking at the dynamics of the plateau being occupied by the peoples who seem to have been responsible for the ancestral features of Tibetan civilisation,

one cannot but notice the existence of two major poles of aggregation. One pole was situated along what I define as the “northern belt of territories” of the plateau, and the other was centred in the southern stretches.

The territories of the northern belt from east to west were, as is well known, Mi nyag, ’A zha’i yul, Sum yul and Zhang zhung. No less well known is the association of the proto-Tibetan tribes with these lands: the lDong with Mi nyag, the Se Khyung dBra with ’A zha’i yul, the sTong with Sum yul, and the rMa/sMra (also known as rMu/dMu)[11] with Zhang zhung.

I briefly deal with them before passing on to outline the tribes in the south of the plateau at the dawn of its civilisation.

What is evinced from these Tibetan sources, besides the obscurity and intricacy of the subject, is that the *mi’u rigs bzhi* or *mi’u gdung drug*, who populated the northern belt of the plateau, are considered by their authors to be not yet fully Tibetan. Ethnically, the proto-Tibetans were of remarkably different origin. There seem to have been different degrees of proximity to the later, fully fledged Tibetans among the *mi’u rigs*-s. Three among them were foreign ethnicities (see below).[12]

The Chinese documents, while differing in the identification of these peoples, share the same basic view that these populations were an embryo of the future well-established ethnicity.[13]

The Chinese perspective on the issue is limited, though, for it concerns tribes on the north-eastern side of the High Asian plateau – and the term High Asian should be stressed, for the plateau was not yet Tibetan.

11) The ancestral clan called rMu/dMu by the Bon po is considered by scholars to correspond to the sMra Zhang zhung of the *mi’u rigs*.

12) This is evinced from the association of the *mi’u rigs* with the geopolitical entities at the fringes of the plateau – Mi nyag in the Ordos region, ’A zha’i yul in the Sino-Tibetan marches and sTag gzig/Zhang zhung in the Indo-Iranic borderlands – that invariably appear in the *rus mdzod* literature and in texts which contain *rus mdzod*-oriented sections (*dBu nag mi’u ’dra chags*, *lDong rus mdzod*, *Khung chen po bzhi*, *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu*, *Rlangs kyi po ti se ru*, *rGya Bod yig tshang*, *sTag lung thang pa’i rnam thar*, *La dwags rgyal rabs*, *dPyid kyi rgyal mo glu dbyangs*, Sum pa mkhan po’s *dPag bsam ljon bzang* etc.).

13) See, for instance, the *Old T’ang Annals* (f.1a) in the translation by Paul Pelliot (1961, *p.* 1), where the K’yang are said, as is well known, to be the proto-Tibetans, and the deeds of their chieftain Fan-ni are mentioned briefly. Among secondary sources, one classic treatment on the Chinese assessment of early tribes on the plateau’s north-east is found in Stein’s *Tibetan Civilization* (1972, p. 29).

The diffusion of the lDong

The lDong Mi nyag belonged originally to the galaxy of populations orbiting around the Sino-Tibetan borderland and was associated with the Ordos region. The lDong's ancestral home was the land between Tibet and China, where the earliest of the three non-contemporary Mi nyag kingdoms was still located in historical times,[14] its territory being to the east/north-east of the Kokonor.

The lDong are, among the *mi'u rigs*, the one displaying the greatest division into clans. *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* (p.192, line 3 – p. 193, line 1) names the clans composing them as the Cog, Cog tse, Cog ro, 'Bro, Khyung po, Zla ba, 'Bring [yas], lHa lung, lHa rtse, Brang [ti], 'Gos, Khu na, Nya, Tshe spong, Lu nag, sNyi [ba], Pho yong and Thag bzang.

Their mobility is reflected in their complex patterns of migration. They spread out to the limits of the Tibetan plateau in the four directions (*lDong rus mdzod*, f. 13a = p. 197, lines 26–30):

In the east, the four divisions of the lDong dkar po control the border (*kha non*) of nag po rGya;
in the north, the four divisions of the lDong dmar po control the border of Thel mo Hor;
in the west, the four divisions of the lDong nag po control the border of Srin;[15]

14) This was the land taken over in 634 by Srong btsan sgam po at the beginning of his career (*Old T'ang Annals* in Pelliot 1961, pp.4–5). This territory should not be confused with Byang Mi nyag, the kingdom destroyed by Jing gir rgyal po (i.e. Chinggis Khan) in 1227, and Khams Mi nyag, created by refugees fleeing the latter kingdom after its downfall (see Vitali 2011).

rGyal rabs Bon gyi 'byung gnas, written in the 15th century like *rGod ldem can gyi rnam thar*, is a text that talks about three Mi yag: rGya Mi nyag in the area of Kan-chou; Byang Mi nyag or Si-hia; and Khams Mi nyag Rab sgang. The text (ibid., p. 88, lines 2–6) reads: "The Me nyag royal lineage is also called Me nyag rGyal rgod. As for its period, its creation was contemporary with the king of Bod, Glang dar ma. Its kingdom controlled [lands between] China, Bod and Hor, three in all. Some call his ruler rGya rje (the "lord of the rGya" rather than "of China"). It is believed that Ge sar, too, had to send gifts [to him]. As for its people, of the three [lands] – Shar Me nyag ("Mi nyag in the east", i.e. the Ordos), lHo Me nyag ("Mi nyag in the south", i.e. Khams Mi nyag Rab sgang) and Byang Me nyag ("Mi nyag in the north", i.e. Kan chou) – it is believed that this one (i.e. the one interacting with Ge sar) was inhabited by the Me nyag pa of Tsong kha in the north".

My translation is somewhat different from that by Stein (1951, p. 230 and 1959a, pp. 228–229). This classification into three Mi nyag is pertinent, although chronologically weak. Their identification is awkward because, in order to include the most ancient of the three (rGya Mi nyag of Kan chou), the text ends up calling it Byang Mi nyag ("Mi nyag of the north"), a definition commonly reserved for Si-hia which forcibly becomes Shar Mi nyag ("Mi nyag of the east").

15) The rigid structure of the four cardinal directions into which the lands of the lDong are classified contains controversial points: for one, the border of the land of the lDong nag

in the south, the four divisions of the lDong sngon po control the border of Khe le Nam (sic for Kha le Mon).[16]

Differing from *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* in several identifications, *rGya Bod yig tshang* provides a territorially imprecise idea of the wider regions into which the tribe expanded. It (ibid., p. 13, lines 11–16) writes:

There are Six Great Ones (*mche drug* sic for *che drug*) under the eldest brother lDong:
in *stod*, sPa tshab and ’Bring g.yas, two in all;
in *bar*, Ro ’dze and Rag shi, two in all; [and]
in *smad*, Mi nyag and Gyi than, two in all.
The Six Noble Ones (*btsun drug*) [must be added] to the divisions (*mtshan* sic for *tshan*) of the six great ones (*che drug*), as follows:
the mDo and Gling pa – two in all – [must be added] to (*’a* sic for *la*) the Bi ri;
the Phu pa and mDa’ pa – two in all – [must be added] to the Ro mdze (sic for Ro ’dze); [and]
the great and small (*che chung*) rGyas bsdus – two in all – [must be added] to the Gyi than.
Given the proliferation into great ones (*che* [*drug*]) and noble ones (*btsun* [*drug*]), [the lDong units] are twelve [in number].

In the immediately succeeding passage, part of the text concerning the lDong mentioned above, *lDong rus mdzod* (ibid., f.13a – f.13b = p. 197, line 31–40) goes a step further and identifies the various lands where subgroups of the tribe had settled. It adds references to important members of the tribe in an enumeration which spans centuries of Tibetan history. Allusions to them seem to be chiefly symbolical, but they contribute to pinpoint where the tribe had settled. The territories where the lDong spread out, enabling important members of the tribe to leave their mark, are listed as follows:

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po in the west defies identification. The land of Srin could be one of the many corruptions which mark the reliability of Francke’s transliteration of this text; otherwise it could refer to Srin yul in the west, the land named by Tibetan tradition as having been visited by Guru Padma upon leaving Tibet, but this interpretation seems to me rather preposterous.

16) This grouping sounds stereotypical inasmuch as one classification in *rGya Bod yig tshang*, namely the *nang gi mi’u rigs* (“internal ancestral tribes”) (ibid., p. 12, lines 9–10: “The four *nang gi mi’u rigs* (“internal tribes of the small men”) are Gi shang rGya, Gyim shang Hor, Kha le Mon and sPu rgyal Bod”), echoes the one in *lDong rus mdzod*, without, however, connecting these lands in the four directions to the lDong. The set of lands is similar, but Srin yul is replaced with Tibet. Indeed the latter is customarily considered the country of the *srin mo*-s and *srin po*-s.

sTod mNga' ris skor gsum, in particular the Pu hrang *rgyal po*;
dBus gTsang, in particular the Dwags po bKa' brgyud;
Zla yul in Khams, in particular Thang mar lGa lde;
rDza shod, in particular Khrom rje Ge sar;
Ri Mandala chos kyi pho brang, in particular Khrom rje btsan;
Byang Li chu dkar mo, in particular rGya tse dkar po;
rMa chen Pom ra, in particular Bi ri rGya Ngang ri dkar po; and
rTse skang (spelled so for rkang?), in particular Pro bo Mi byi pon mar.

These lines document, therefore, an advanced stage in the diffusion of the lDong on the plateau, well beyond the ancestral land where their various groups originally lived. The locations of the lDong subdivisions mentioned in these sources indicate that the *rus mdzod* literature I cite here does not focus on the initial phase of their presence on the plateau or its surroundings but on a subsequent one.

The diffusion of the Se Khyung dBra

Originally, the Se 'A zha confined themselves to a more northern geographical location in Central Asia before moving to the Tibetan North-East, where they incorporated Chinese cultural elements into their tradition.[17]

One can say with some confidence that the 'A zha migrated to Tibetan land as the last of the ancestral tribes. Their settling down in its north-eastern reaches where they established their capital near Kokonor's western shore,[18] cannot date to earlier than the beginning of the 4th century of the Common Era. This followed the migration of a splinter group of the Tu-yü-hun tribe, led by their eponymous chieftain (Molé 1970, pp. xii–xiii).[19]

17) *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* (p.194, lines 3–4) is not very helpful in its treatment of the Se Khyung dBra tribe of the 'A zha, which it calls the Se byung legs. *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* does not do more than mentioning its *bu bzhi*: Se Gong rgyal nang rje, 'Gro gang nyer ba Se, 'O gog btsan gsum Se and 'Og ma bde srong Se.

18) The capital of the 'A zha is said in the travelogue of the Indian monk Jinagupta (b.528) to have been, in 557, fifteen *li* west of mTsho sngon (see Kuwayama 1987, pp. 718–719). There is no evidence that it was moved elsewhere during the eighty some years before the defeat of the 'A zha at the hands of Srong btsan sgam po, followed in the next decade by their military annexation to sPu rgyal Bod. This location was dangerously close to the Chinese outposts in the Kokonor region and must have exposed the 'A zha to their attacks.

19) Given the commonly accepted notion among Tibetan historians of all periods that the *mi'u rigs* preceded the reign of gNya' khri btsan po by an unspecified but appreciably long passage of time, the appearance of the Se Khyung dBra on Tibetan soil creates difficulties

Members of the ’A zha tribes had already migrated west and settled in lands as far away as Zhang zhung at what should be considered to have been a late stage in Tibetan proto-history, but at an early one in terms of the presence of this group on the plateau (i.e. after the mid 4th century or thereabouts). *lDong rus mdzod* (f.14b = p. 198, lines 27–31) writes about them:

The *che drug* of the Seng (sic) Khyung dBra are Mar pa, Zhang zhung and Pu rang (these are the three Ra (spelled so for dBra) dkar divisions of *stod*);
the Kya gu, Khyung po and Gyu nye (these are the Ra (i.e. dBra) khra divisions of *bar*);
the Kho yang, Khos po and Kho bra (these are the three Ra (i.e. dBra) nag divisions of *smad*).
The dBra, owing to their power, became associated with Srog (?) [and] lHo [kha?] adjoining dBus.

The diffusion of the ’A zha is one case of the treatment in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p. 13, line 16 – p. 14, line 3) being substantially similar to that in *lDong rus mdzod*. As with the lDong, the classifications in both sources are here with reference to a phase in the migratory history of the ’A zha that was not the most ancient one in terms of their presence on the High Asian plateau and surroundings.

The *che drug* of the Se Khyung dBra are Zhang zhung and the Khyung po, altogether two, in *stod*;
Mar pa and sPu rang, altogether two, in *bar*;
Re khe and the Nyag le, altogether two, in *smad*.
The *btsun drug* of the *che drug* divisions are, as far as Kri is concerned (p.14), the rMe sha and rMe tshan, altogether two; as for the Brag tu, the Gu gu and rDor nye, altogether two; as for the Nyag le, the Kho bo and dBra, altogether two.
The *che btsun*, having spread around, are twelve [in number].

Given sPu rang’s association with *bar*, a break-up of the Se Khyung dBra through separate migrations to the western and eastern stretches of the plateau (Zhang zhung and Sum yul), starting from their land around Kokonor, must have taken place during this period, there being no concomitant presence of this *mi’u rigs* mentioned in these sources for the central regions.

in placing chronologically the earliest segment of the *lha sras btsan po* dynasty, that from gNya’ khri btsan po onwards – a topic I cannot discuss on this occasion. It is hardly imaginable in the light of the outline of Tibetan proto-history found in the sources that the other tribes came to the plateau at such a late stage. Hence it seems that the appearance of the *mi’u gdung drug* on the plateau was not synchronous.

The diffusion of the sTong

The sTong Sum pa were, of all the ancestral *mi'u rigs*, an indigenous tribe closest to the future Tibetan population, inasmuch as they ancestrally inhabited large tracts of eastern Tibet that comprised the region later known as Khams, along with territories beyond it (mainly towards the west, in what would eventually become Nag chu kha, and towards the south, in the direction of lJang yul).

The *che drug* of A lcags 'Bru constituting the sTong, in the view of *lDong rus mdzod* (ibid., f. 14a – f.14b = p. 198, lines 19–24), were composed of a number of obscure clans. The concluding line in the passages dedicated to them, however, is sufficiently precise to allow the ancestral land of the sTong to be identified:

In *stod*, the Yab la and Yab mdzod in Bod khri (?);
in *bar*, the Pang (sic for Bang) ri and Bang mdzod, altogether two;
in *smad*, the Ka ring and Gom ring in Rong po, who make up the *che drug*;
the Po tsha and Ring skyes, who, [being added to the former,] yield the *btsun brgyad*; and
the Nya re (sic for Nyag re) and sNgo phyi, who, [again being added,] yield the *rigs bcu*.
The 'Bru occupy the lands of the four mDo Khams.

Despite the obscurity of the groups composing this tribe, a comparative perusal of their treatment in *lDong rus mdzod* and *rGya Bod yig tshang* suggests that the sTong, too, were not immune from a process of migration to different areas of the plateau.

rGya Bod yig tshang (p. 14, lines 3–7) is consistent in using the same classification system for the sTong as it adopts for the lDong and the Se Khyung dBra. Their subgroups are again difficult to assess, but the text does vaguely hint at a process of diffusion of the sTong towards the various points of the compass beyond the borders of Khams, their original land:

In the east, the Kyi and Rong po, altogether two;
in the south, the Bhe and Ri tho, altogether two;
in *smad*, the 'Brom and Ngo kro, altogether two.
The *btsun drug* of the *che drug* divisions are the sPas, sPos and Tsha 'Phrom, three in all; the Zhug pas, sTong nye and Nye Gha, three in all.
The *che btsun*, having spread around, are twelve [in number].

bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu (p. 193, line 5 – p. 194, line 3) mentions more familiar clans as constituting the sTong:

Cog la Ram pa rje’s subjects were the dMra and dMar ba; The tsom snyal po rje’s subjects were the sNyal and sNyal dben; rTsang rje Thod dkar rje’s subjects were the rNgog and Khrog; and sNyags rje Thogs sgom rje’s subjects were theTog and sBas (also spelled dBa’s among other alternatives).

If one compares the lists found in *lDong rus mdzod* and *rGya Bod yig tshang*, the result is a typical case of minimal correspondence among sources, and this is one major reason why the *rus mdzod* literature is so difficult to deal with.

This state of affairs suggests that the diffusion of the sTong can be characterised in a manner different from that of the other *mi’u rigs*. The other ethnic groups, in moving to other regions of the plateau, continued a migratory process initiated before establishing themselves on the Tibetan highlands. The sTong, on the contrary, moved from land to land but were still being centred in Khams.

The diffusion of the sMra/rMa also known as the rMu/dMu

Did the diffusion pattern of the sMra Zhang zhung, said to have included people of Indo-Iranic stock,[20] follow a west-to-east trajectory? The *rus mdzod* literature does not provide enough information to verify this possibility, which, if true, would imply that the Indo-Iranic tribes were more localised than other ones on the plateau. But this was not so, as I will confirm below.

bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu (p.193, lines 4–5) enumerates the Ngam, sNubs, gZhung, ’Gar, dKar, sMon, sNyos (spelled so) and Nan lam as their constituent clans, while *lDong rus mdzod* (f.15a = p. 198, line 39 – p. 199,

20) Among several *bstan ’byung* focusing on the clans of Zhang zhung, I deal here with Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s *Legs bshad rin po che’i mdzod* (see a partial English translation of it in Karmay 1972). This source says that, of the six Bon po clans, two (the dMu and Bru) were from territories in the Indo-Iranic borderlands. The dMu gShen went from sTag gzig to Zhang zhung and then to gTsang (ibid., pp. 3–5); the Bru moved from U rgyan, Bru sha and Tho gar to Zhang zhung (ibid., pp. 6–7).

The others are said to be non-Zhang zhung pa. They were the Zhu, a subgroup of ’Bri g.yas, a branch of the sMug po lDong settled in *stod* (ibid., pp. 8–9); the sPa, who descended from the sky to rNam rgyal lha rtse and then went to Gangs Ti se (ibid., pp. 9–10); the Khyung po, who landed on the land of Zhang zhung Kha yug (the part of Gu ge to the immediate west of Preta pu ri) (ibid., p. 11). Finally, the ancestor of the rMe’u settled at Gangs Ti se and then at lHa ri gyang to, where he met gNya’ khri btsan po (ibid., pp. 10–11). The discrepancies with the *rus mdzod* classifications are evident.

line 4) describes them in different terms, ones making it difficult to identify their land:

The *che drug* of Mu tsha (spelled so) are the Che 'khor and Chung 'khor, who are related to the rMa;
Yul rta and 'Brog rta, two in all, who are related to the rTa rus;
the Yul pa and Byas pa, who are related to the rTsa Khrom – [all of] these make up the *che drug*.
The The gag and Ne gag, who are related to the lGa, make up the *btsun brgyad*.
The Tho ris and rDza ris make up the *rigs bcu*.
The lGa occupy the land of the four *dben pa* ("hermitages").

rGya Bod yig tshang (p.14, lines 7–12) echoes *lDong rus mdzod*, but with certain deviations:

The *che drug* of the rMu tsha lGa are Thos rus ("clan") and sTag rus ("clan"), altogether two, who are in *stod*;
the Bya can and Khrab can, who are in *stod*; the Bya rje and sPen thog, who are in *stod*.
The *btsun drug* of the *che drug* divisions are, as far as the lGa are concerned, the Byes pa and Yul pa, two in all;
as for the sTag rus, the Yul stag and 'Brog stag, two in all;
as for the dBas, the Che skor and Chung skor, two in all.
The *che btsun*, having spread around, are twelve [in number].

What these classifications fail to reveal is whether they apply to the tribe beyond its original area of habitation – that is, to an ancestral phase or a later one. They are of no use either when it comes to deciding whether the Zhang zhung pa are considered in these texts of the *rus mdzod* literature as dwelling both in the Indo-Iranic borderlands and/or the western regions of the High Asian plateau.

The diffusion of the "younger brothers" Wa and Zla

Again in the case of these two tribes, which became associated with the *mi'u rigs bzhi* to form the *mi'u gdung drug*, the evidence provided is that they moved to settle in a wide stretch of the plateau. In particular, they seem to have originally occupied the vast territory to the north of the rMa chu towards Tshal byi and the Lop nor. They were subsequently pushed to the fringes of the plateau and surrounding regions, and thus were the two historically more marginal tribes within the ethnic landscape of Tibet. *lDong rus mdzod*

(f.15a = p. 199, lines 5–14) reads as indicating that their migratory movement was first inward into the plateau and then back outward:

Concerning how both younger brothers (*nu bo*), Wa and Zla, settled down (*gnas lugs*), a dog attacked a deer, (f.15b) and a woman blamed them (*’khang lce gyis*, “gave a tongue-lashing”). Both Gong A bu were abused. “They must be banished from sPu rgyal Bod.” They moved to the border of rGya, Bod and Hor, these three. On the lower side, they controlled the border with nag po rGya. On the upper side, they controlled the border with Thel mo Hor”…. There were twenty-four divisions of 100,000 households at the corner in the waist of a mountain that resembled a camel. They occupied thirty-nine territories.[21]

A last point should be made about the *mi’u gdung drug* in general, namely the impossibility of approximating even tentatively when the settlement on the plateau by the ancestral tribes other than the Se ’A zha, about whom somewhat better historical evidence exists, took place. There are, in particular, no clues for dating when the lDong and rMu first appeared on the Tibetan plateau and how early the sTong became dwellers of Eastern Tibet.

Clans of the southern pole

The southern pole included Yar lung, Nyang and Kong po. The clans, individual members of which interacted with gNya’ khri btsan po upon his descent onto lHa ri gyang to (and so became the paternal clans of the *lha sras btsan po*), are first identified in *mkhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* (p. 237, line 15) as the lHo and gNyags (also spelled gNyegs), to which the Khu and sNubs, along with the So and sPo, are added in a subsequent passage (ibid. p. 242, lines 8–10).

21) *lDong rus mdzod* (f.15b = p. 199, lines 14–18) adds:

“They had a *pha* (“father”) *bla ma* like the sun, which is the canopy of the throne. The *ban* [*de*] were arrayed as ascetics (*bka thub* sic for *dka’ thub*) and monks (*gser thur* sic for *thub*). The *sngags pa* were like a great Khyung dancing. *Pha khu* (“fathers and uncles”) were like Ri rgyal lhun po (Sumeru). Mothers and maternal uncles (*ma sru*) were like a big frozen lake (*mtsho mo dar chen*). The youth were like an Indian red tiger. The children were like the children of the *lha* and the *klu*. The girls were like a *snyug phran* (sic for *snyug phreng*, “row of bamboo poles”) [hoisting] flags”.

Ibid. (f.15b = p. 199, lines 10–12):

“On the upper side, they fixed the taxation for sPu rgyal Bod. They issued orders to collect taxes. People said: “Let’s welcome them [with] a place for both Gong A bu. If we welcome them, there will be no sun when they come. If they [continue] coming, there is a possibility [that they will] occupy the area”.

Chapter Four of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (see lines 221–223 in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha*, p. 47), in which Khyung po sPung sad zu tse (the famous plenipotentiary from Zhang zhung) and Zhang sNang Pe'u zur 'bring po (a representative of the clans of the Yar lung area) each sings a song to remind the king of their achievements and curry his favour, confirms that the lHo and gNyags were local clans of Yar lung, and thus originally associated with the *lha sras btsan po* (also see MacDonald 1971, pp. 328–329).

The ethnic origin of the tribes in the south of the plateau (the lHo and gNyags/gNyegs in particular) is not clarified in the sources; only their territorial provenance. Should a southern ethnicity be considered probable in the absence of information otherwise? One point seems in any event to be logically defensible. The lHo and gNyags/gNyegs do not appear in the classifications of the tribes of the "northern belt of territories", and thus one should assume that their ethnic origin was different.[22]

One classification in dPal 'byor bzang po's *rGya Bod yig tshang* documents the existence of at least one tribe in the south-east of Central Tibet that did not, according to this source, belong to the *mi'u rigs*. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p. 12, lines 13–14) identifies the Mon race proper, Me nyag (at the border between China and Tibet) and rKong po (spelled so) as the three Mon pa ancestral tribes in Tibet.

This is an intriguing way of depicting Kong po,[23] a land often thought of in antiquity as one of the *lha bsras btsan po*'s cradles, with a political entity of its own and its own set of customs.[24]

One is thereby led to wonder whether the southern pole of lands on the plateau was characterised, like the northern belt of territories populated by the *mi'u gdung drug*, by a complex ethnic composition.

The issue of the identity of the original inhabitants of Kong po is a major bone of contention within the *mi'u rigs* literature. *rGya Bod yig tshang*

22) One of the group of texts going by the name of *Khungs chen po bzhi* (see Vitali 2003), entitled *sTong sde mi'i byung srid* ("the appearance of humanity in communities of 1,000"), includes the Khu and sPo among the lDong Mi nyag (Yo seb dGer gan, *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* p. 20 line 11), and the So kho (i.e. [Yar lung] So kha?) Nyags among the Sum pa (ibid. p. 20 line 18). Neither *lDong rus mdzod* nor *rGya Bod yig tshang* associate the lHo, gNyags/gNyegs, Khu, sNubs, So and sPo with the ancestral tribes of the northern belt of ancient Tibet.

23) The inclusion of Me nyag among the Mon pa is also peculiar, given that this land is commonly associated with the lDong.

24) For signs of cultural peculiarities in Kong po and contiguous Dwags po see the legend of 'Bro snyan lde ru's wife (*mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, p. 250, line 21 – p. 251, line 8; *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 169, line 22 – p. 170, line 15).

considers them to be Mon pa (see above); *Sems can gyi khog pa* (one of the *Khungs chen po bzhi*) would have them be Bod pa and part of the ancestral sPu tribe.[25]

This latter classification would require that the Mon pa origin, asserted in *rGya Bod yig tshang*, be interpreted in geographical terms rather than ethnic ones.[26]

One other case sheds some light on the ethnic conditions of southern Tibet at an early time. The remarkable articulation in *Sems can gyi khog pa* of the Bya, another tribe associated with the land which would subsequently be called lHo kha – similar to the way the *mi’u rigs* of the ancestral northern belt of lands are dealt with in other texts – seems to reflect the composite tribal reality of southern and south-eastern Tibet.[27]

Some of these clans have indeed been traditionally associated with lands which were part of the cradle of the *lha sras btsan po* dynasty in Yar lung.

Towards the achievement of a more culturally unified Tibet?

Further steps towards the integration of these foreign and local ethnicities are for the most part unknown. One of them is somewhat documented in PT 1287, where the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis* of the later sources, or else the *rgyal bran bcu bdun* catalogued in this text, are enumerated together with their rulers and ministers. These *rgyal phran* were located in dBus gTsang with the exception of one regional kingdom each in Zhang zhung and Sum yul.[28]

25) There are two classifications of the sPu in *Sems can gyi khog pa* (“the stomach of sentient beings”). One concerns *stod* and is composed of the rDzi mang co, lJo, rMe, Kong po and ’Bri (ibid., p. 6, lines 9–10); the other (under the spelling Pu) includes the sTong, So ru, Mon rdo, Phyag, Re mar, Tsing rje, gNang, rJe ’joms, Greg, Nyeg ma and rNgog (ibid., p. 6, lines 15–17). These represent one more case of deviation from the other *rus mdzod* documents.

26) Perhaps Mon pa identity is to be sought in clans originally occupying areas, such as Tsa ri and others farther south, which border on regions in the Himalayan range.

27) The Bya are said in *Sems can gyi khog pa* (*Bla dwags ’chi med gter*, p. 6, lines 12–15) as consisting of the ’Chims, Me nyag, ’Dar, lDog, Gu rim, Mu ne, Nyam nyag and Gel ba.

28) These circumstances repeated themselves for a long time to come – for history repeats itself – during the period from after the fall of the sPu rgyal dynasty to early *bstan pa phyi dar*. Tibet had one major kingdom at each of the two poles of the plateau – although different, of course, from those of antiquity – while it experienced fragmentation into principalities in the central regions.

The tribal affiliation of the ministers serving the various *rgyal bran* is invariably mentioned, this being a useful contribution to clarifying matters of present concern. PT 1287 (p. 67, 1 – p. 68, 7) reads as follows:

There is a *rgyal bran* (spelled so) in each land. Minor castles are located in each of them. The main [figures] among those who rule the *rgyal bran*-s and those who serve as *blon po*-s are:
Zhang zhung Dar pa'i rjo bo Lig snya shur, blon po Khyung po Ra sangs rje and sTong Lom ma tse, altogether two;
in Myang ro'i Pyed ka, rje rTsang rje'i Thod kar, blon po Su du and gNang, altogether two;
in yul gNubs gling gi dgu', rje gNubs rje'i Sris pa, blon po rMe'u and 'Gro, altogether two;
in yul Myang ro'i Sham po, rje Lo ngam Byi brom tsha, blon po Ngab myi and 'Bre, altogether two;
in yul sKyi ro'i ljang sngon, rje sKyi rje'i Mang po, blon po She'u and sPug, altogether two;
in yul Ngas po'i khra gsum, rje dGug khri'i Zing po rje, blon po mGar and mNyan, altogether two;
in yul dBye mo yul bzhi, rje dBye mo'i mKhar pa, blon po dBo and rTug, altogether two;
in yul 'O yul gyi spang ka, rje 'Ol rje'i Zin brang tsha, blon po rNgo and dBa's, altogether two;
in yul rNgegs yul gyi gru bzhi, rje rNgegs rje'i La brang, blon po Sas pa and Myang nad, altogether two;
in yul Klum ro'i ya gsum, rje Nam pa'i Bu gseng ti, blon po Myang and sPrang, altogether two;
in yul Sribs yul gyi Ral mo gong, rje Drang rje'i rNol nam, blon po Zhug tshams and dBrad, altogether two;
in yul rKong la Bre sna, rje rKong rje'i dKar po, blon po mGar pa and Pha drug, altogether two;
in Myang yul gyi rta gsum, rje Myang btsun Slang rgyal, blon po 'O ru and sPrags, altogether two;
in yul Dags kyi gru bzhi, rje Dags rgyal gyi sProg zin, blon po Pho gu and Pog rol, altogether two;
in yul mChims yul gyi dgu' yul, rje mChims rje'i Ne'u, blon po Dang and Ding di, altogether two;
in yul Sum yul gyi ya gsum, rje 'Bal lji rmang ru ti, blon po Rlang and Kam, altogether two;
in yul 'Brom mo snam gsum, rje Se re khri, blon po sKyang re gNag.

[There are] twelve *rgyal bran* plus Se re khri, which makes thirteen. Together with the twenty-four *blon po* there is sKyang re gnag, who makes twenty-five. Together with the twelve castles there is dBu lde dam pa, (p.68) which makes thirteen. Together

with the twelve *yul* there is Byang ka snam brgyad, which makes thirteen. Together with the nine *rgyal* there is the sNo (spelled rNgo in yul ’O yul gyi spang kar), which makes ten. Together with the nine *blon* there are the mChims, who are known as the tenth. As for the *ya yogs*, Rum, known as rKyen, was the *gnod byin* until [the time of] these [rulers, ministers, lands and castles]. *rGyal bran*-s and *blon po*-s came to exist in each ancient land in like manner. Of these rulers – the leaders of many people, each one a lord of great lands – nine great powerful rulers and wise ministers destroyed one another. [Though] reduced to a subject, ’O lde spu rgyal eventually obtained the [royal] helmet. As for punishment, wrathful deities meted out punishment. Regarding the subjects, [there was] a subject [who] deprived the ruler [of power].

PT 1287 provides meaningful examples of developments instrumental in the making of Tibetans and their culture. I comment on a few cases, all subsequent to the migrations of groups of people who were members of the *mi’u rigs*-s.

The text opens its treatment by documenting the presence in Zhang zhung of members originally belonging to the sTong tribe of Sum yul and the Se Khyung dBra tribe of the ’A zha. It adds the information that members of the Rlangs clan of the Se Khyung dBra were established in Sum yul gyi ya gsum. This shows that they had crossed into Khams, the land of the Sum pa, from their ancestral region near Kokonor.

The mGar clan of the Se Khyung dBra were people from the shore of mTsho sngon who, according to PT 1287, migrated to areas in and around the future dBu ru, in Ngas po’i khra gsum, a petty kingdom in the stretch of land seemingly between lower ’Phan yul and rKong po, in the south-eastern part of this *ru* (see Hazod 2009, pp. 172–173).

The case of sNubs gling gi dgu’ is typical. The lDong from Mi nyag were present in this land (the future g.Yas ru), sNubs gling gi dgu’ perhaps located north of gZhis ka rtse on the other side of the gTsang po. The lDong in sNubs gling shared the land with the rMe’u clan, originally from Zhang zhung, the land recognised as its own by the Bon po tradition. This indicates that the rMu from Zhang zhung had migrated east.

The sNubs were one of the clans originally associated with the region of Yar lung, having welcomed gNya’ khri btsan po upon his descent from lHa ri gyang to. Hence clans belonging to the southern stretch of lands, too, engaged in a process of migration. In their case, after moving to sNubs gling gi dgu’, they mingled with clans of the lDong, one of the ancestral tribes of the “northern belt”.

Once in sNubs gling gi dgu’, the sNubs found themselves in close proximity to the ’Bro (spelled ’Gro in PT 1287), who had g.Yas ru for their ancestral land (*mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* p. 186 lines 4–5). This ethnic situation meant that – only

apparently obvious – local groups had to accommodate newcomers. Indeed, one major historical feature of the four great ancestral tribes of the northern belt of territories on the plateau is that, on the one hand, they migrated and were assimilated by the people inhabiting the lands to which they transferred themselves. On the other, they in turn assimilated people belonging to other ethnicities in their lands. The phenomenon of forced migration should also be taken into consideration, so that ancestral ethnic groups in one territory may have not held it at a later time.

In another *rgyal bran* (Myang ro'i Sham po, which included Sham bu rtse, the hill on the rGyal rtse plain where rTse chen dgon pa was built during the late 14th century) (*Myang chos 'byung*, p. 92, lines 5–7), the 'Bre were an indigenous people and may have had to share their land with the Ngab myi, a perhaps not indigenous clan I have hardly found any mention of in the literature.

The dBo, who belonged to the Hor Dru gu Ge sar, were people from the northern areas of A mdo (as far as the Central Asian desert) who migrated to dBye mo yul bzhi, i.e. g.Ye, east of the Yar lung cradle of the future sPu rgyal dynasty.

The rNgo and dBa's (from g.Yar mo thang?), moved from this area in A mdo, which possibly extended north all the way to Central Asia, to future eastern dBu ru, in 'O yul gyi spang ka (possibly identical with the later 'Ol kha in dBus),[29] which they had not held before, and where they mixed with other inhabitants. Hence, subdivisions of the original tribes intermingled as they moved to different areas of Tibet.[30] This happened during an unspecified period, the length of which cannot be deduced from the material available at present. The early culture of Tibet was born in the wake of this phenomenon.

This means, for instance, that cultural traits proper to the Indo-Iranic world blended with ones proper to more internally situated Central Asia and China. The ethnic mingling, which reached an advanced stage throughout the regions of Tibet when the *rgyal bran* were in existence, was, again, asynchronous. I would imagine that the appearance in Zhang zhung of the

29) When approximately these *rgyal phran* existed is hard to say. As everyone knows, they are customarily assigned by the literature to the pre-gNya' khri btsan po period, but dating gNya' khri is no easy task in itself. Moreover, the sequence of rulers of the early sPu rgyal dynasty, as given in most sources, about which I have briefly expressed doubts above, seems not to match external evidence. This is an extremely complex issue, one that leaves me feeling uncomfortable with the dominant tradition.

30) The intermingling of the clans was so thorough that often in the *mi'u rigs* and *rus mdzod* literature known of at present the same clans appear in different sources as being affiliated to different ancestral tribes and territories.

sTong Sum pa from Khams at the other pole of the plateau was earlier than that of the Se Khyung dBra tribe of the 'A zha in the same region, for the reason adduced above.

Should the cultures of the Zhang zhung pa, 'A zha and Mi nyag pa of that period be considered embryonically Tibetan? And should, moreover, ethnicities, such as the Indo-Iranic people on the plateau or the Tu-yü-hun, be considered proto-Tibetan? Or was it their mingling that formed the basis for the creation of the Tibetan ethnos and culture?

If the latter is the case, one can hardly think that Tibetan culture – as much as it may have been original in antiquity, with traits for the most part unknown – was in the main primordially indigenous. The proverbial openness of Buddhist times to incorporating foreign cultural elements seems to have been an attitude adopted during a remarkably earlier phase in antiquity, when embryonic Tibetan cultures were present on the plateau.

The almost complete absence of information about ancient Tibet does not necessarily imply that the land was confined to limited local expressions; indeed there are signs that the scene was a composite and cosmopolitan one. It goes without saying, this being a minimum common denominator of all cultures, that many local idiosyncrasies have flourished in Tibet, a land characterised by the existence of numerous enclaves.

The process of ethnic integration had long been accomplished when the final act in the early history of Tibet took place. The old tribal order, marked by the existence of insular kingdoms, was wiped out. The annexation by sPu rgyal Bod of the kingdoms of the Sum yul, Mi nyag and Zhang zhung (followed by the takeover of the 'A zha) was accomplished after the *lha sras btsan po*-s had taken control of the tribal entities in the regions of Central Tibet. However, the earliest available texts on the dynastic history of Tibet, such as the *Tun-huang Chronicles* and *Annals*, the *Annals of the 'A zha Principality* and the T'ang period sources, down to the later ones, show that these kingdoms, on the verge of being conquered by sPu rgyal Bod, were able to preserve their own set of laws, customs and administrative system until then.

I am inclined to think that pockets of cultural insularity were the outcome of ancestral encounters in Tibet between "indigenous" and "foreign", or even between different expressions of "foreign". In other words, encounters between clans of different cultural extraction – even distant ones – seem to have forged one or the other variant of the indigenous culture. This implies that one should go one step back down the ladder that is the genesis of Tibet's ancestral civilisation and see whether, paradoxically, its set of indigenous features may have originated from disparate, non-indigenous elements, for

culture is almost invariably derivative. Did Tibetan culture become indigenous only after it was foreign?

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