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gShen-rab Myi-bo

His life and times according to Tibet's earliest literary sources¹

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

The founder of the g.Yung-drung or 'Eternal' Bon religion is sTon-pa gshen-rab, a Buddha or Sangs-rgyas reckoned to have lived thousands of years ago. Also commonly known as gShen-rab mi-bo-che, his life is thought to have long preceded the historical Buddha of India, Śākyamuni (6th century BCE). Depending on the way in which gShen-rab mi-bo-che's life is dated in traditional chronologies known as *bstan-rtsis*, he was born as much as 23,000 years ago.² Such an early periodization places this holy personage in the Upper Paleolithic, a remote age in which big game hunting and plant gathering dominated wherever Homo sapiens had spread.

The earliest major literary works to chronicle the life and times of gShen-rab mi-bo-che the Buddha are *mDo-'dus* and *mDo gzer mig*, texts which probably

¹ Translations of the Tibetan texts in this paper were made in consultation with Yungdrung Tenzin of sTeng-chen, a Tibetan scholar of exceptional philological aptitude, with whom I have worked for more than a decade. I am also most grateful to Pasang Wangdui and Don-drup Lhagyal of the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences (Lhasa) for furnishing me with high quality digital images of the *byol-rabs* text. Furthermore, I must thank Geshe Changru Tritsuk Namdak Nyima of Tritten Norbutse (Kathmandu) for his input regarding my reading of PT 1068. I am indebted to Brandon Dotson (Oxford University) for perusing a draft of the paper, offering valuable advice, and for kindly making several articles available to me. Per Sørensen (Universität Leipzig) and Guntram Hazod (Hummelberg) also offered expert advice that helped to improve the quality of this paper. Sally Walkerman, Lisa Dhamija and Peter Kingsley provided editorial comment, for which I am most thankful. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to the staff of the website *Old Tibetan Documents Online* (<http://otdo.aa.tufts.ac.jp/>), a wonderful facility for students of the Old Tibetan language.

² Using the *brTan rtsis bskal ldan dang 'dren* composed in 1804 by Tshul-khrims rgyal-mtshan, Kværne (1990: 153, 154) calculates that gShen-rab was born approximately 23,000 years ago. Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin (born 1813) as elaborated by Lopön Tenzin Namdak places the birth of gShen-rab some 18,000 years back, while sPre'u-bstun kun-bzang lhun-grub determines that this event took place approximately 13,500 years ago (Martin 2003: 75). Relying on other g.Yung-drung Bon sources, Namkhai Norbu (1995: 156–158) ascertains that the birth of gShen-rab mi-bo occurred in 1917 BCE. For a synopsis of Buddha gShen-rab mi-bo's life-story, see Karmay 1998, pp. 108–113; 1972, pp. xvii–xxi; 2005, pp. 139–210; Kværne 1995, pp. 17–21; Stein 1972, pp. 242–245; Martin 2001-a, pp. 30–39. A detailed study of Eternal Bon sources pertinent to the development of the sTon-pa gShen-rab legend is forthcoming in Blezer's 'Three Pillars of Bon' project (see Blezer 2008 for announcement).

date to the 11th century CE.³ These biographical works are surpassed in scope and size by the 14th century CE *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, which was recently republished in Tibet in 12 bound volumes.⁴ These Eternal (Swastika) Bon biographical works, as well as a host of other Bon ritual and philosophical literature, chiefly portray sTon-pa gShen-rab as an omniscient figure whose main mission was to show humanity the path to enlightenment. This he accomplished by subduing unruly spirits and by teaching a battery of moral, philosophical and esoteric practices.

The earliest mention of a personality called gShen-rab myi-bo (an earlier orthographic rendering of the name gShen-rab mi-bo-che) is found in ritual literature written in the early historic period (circa 650 to 1000 CE).⁵ Consisting of archaic funerary (*bdur/dur*) and ransom (*glud*) rites, these Old Tibetan language texts belong to early historic religious traditions, the institutional and economic foundations of which are still very obscure. There are two sources for these archaic ritual texts: the Dunhuang and dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts. As is well known, the highly extensive Dunhuang collections were found on the edge of the Gobi desert 100 years ago by Paul Pelliot and Aurel Stein, among the greatest discoveries in the annals of Tibetology. The cache of dGa'-thang 'bum-pa texts was recovered in 2006 during the reconstruction of a *mchod-rten* in the southern Tibetan region of Lho-kha.⁶

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

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

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

⁶ This collection of texts was published in 2007 as facsimiles with accompanying transcriptions in the *dbu-can* script under the title *Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed pa'i bon gyi gna' dpe bdams bsgrigs* (eds. Pa-tshab pa-sangs dbang-'dus (Pasang Wangdud) and Glang-ru nor-bu tshe-ring): Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang, 2007. According to the introduction to this book (pp. 1–8), when local people undertook to rebuild a *mchod-rten* in mTsho-smad county known as dGa'-thang 'bum-pa, they discovered a cache of folios still preserved inside the ruined structure. The authors write that the discovered texts fall into two main categories: Buddhist examples written circa 1100 CE and a smaller body of Bon ritual and medical texts probably dating to the later period of the sPu-rgyal btsan-po rulers. On grammatical and paleographic grounds, but without giving details, the editors observe that these Bon ritual texts are comparable to certain Dunhuang manuscripts. As the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts can be divided into two distinct types, the authors believe that the *mchod-rten* enshrining them was renovated more than once. The editors report that the Bon

The Dunhuang and dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts furnish telling details about the activities of gShen-rab myi-bo. These sources depict him in a very different manner from how he is framed in Eternal Bon literature. Absolutely no reference to gShen-rab myi-bo's status as an omnipotent and all-knowing Buddha is noted in Old Tibetan literature. Rather, the Dunhuang and dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts place him in the mold of a priest, the guardian of ritual methods to safeguard the living and aid the dead. In the archaic ritual texts, gShen-rab myi-bo serves as a cultural icon, a laudable and highly influential personality of considerable antiquity, the memory of which must have been passed down to succeeding generations as an oral tradition. In his guise as a prototypic ritualist, gShen-rab myi-bo does not often act unilaterally and it conveys no assertion of omniscience. Rather, he is one of several priests working cooperatively with the support of special deities. In some instances, there is essential ritual work he is unable to perform on his own, so he must seek the assistance of other priests and patron deities. Although the nebulous time-frame and mythic activities associated with gShen-rab myi-bo in Old Tibetan literature militate against the historical validation of his life, the mere mortal status accorded to him in these accounts has a ring of authenticity. At the heart of the Old Tibetan legends potentially lies a real man, one who assumed an ever grander social aura with the passage of time. Like trees, legends build up gradually as more and more extravagant lore is accreted to their core.⁷

In contrast, it is difficult to entertain a real-life personality behind the gShen-rab mi-bo-che of the Eternal Bon documents. The man of the archaic rituals was squarely replaced by a god-like being, which rises head and shoulders above all others. gShen-rab mi-bo-che is an individual qualitatively different from other men. No one can excel him in any field and none can resist his commands. Emerging as a Buddha in the eyes of his followers by the 11th century CE, gShen-rab mi-bo-che came to be seen as infallible, not like ordinary men that must contend with limits to their intelligence and capabilities. From a modern rationalist angle, gShen-rab mi-bo-che's sheer perfection and incredible supernatural powers and knowledge are not easily reconciled with the concept of an individual who once actually walked on the earth. Clearly, his divine aura is played out in the religious arena.

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

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

⁷ I take an unabashedly euhemeristic stance here; aware that gShen-rab myi-bo viewed either as fact or fiction are equally unsupportable positions with the evidence at hand. Stein (2003: 598, 599) discounts a real-life identity for gShen-rab myi-bo, considering him instead to be a mythic or legendary figure. Conversely, Karmay (1998: 111) opines that he may have been an actual person of Tibetan origin who lived before the 7th century CE. Stein (*ibid.*) finds this assertion improbable, stating in reference to PT 1289, that this is a ritual and not a historical text. Yet, ritual and history are often intertwined in the Tibetan literary tradition, somewhat diminishing Stein's argument.

This reconditioning of the deceased's consciousness principles⁸ was considered especially crucial when death was caused by violent circumstances. The Dunhuang proclamations of ritual origins (*smrang*) describe the carrying out of several different types of ritual activities by gShen-rab myi-bo in order to achieve this rehabilitation. As historical precedents and models of exemplary ritual conduct, the *smrang* were indispensable parts of the ancient funeral. Given as public recitations, they prefaced the actual archaic funerary rites to sanction and empower their practice. The *smrang* also functioned to elevate the cultural status of the officiating priests.

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

The existence of older and newer bodies of literature concerning gShen-rab myi-bo/gShen-rab mi-bo-che suggests that as Buddhism came to dominate the religious convictions and conceptions of Tibetans, the spiritual role of gShen-rab was modified accordingly.⁹ The historical details surrounding this biographical reengineering are virtually non-existent. Buddhist writers had little reason to dwell on the formation of Eternal Bon theology and Eternal Bon had good cause to suppress the memory of the transformation of their central personality. However, despite the very different perspectives in the Old Tibetan manuscripts and Eternal Bon materials, in both, gShen-rab myi-bo fulfils a soteriological role. In the early historic literature of Dunhuang and dGa'-thang 'bum-pa, he frees the dead through the correct performance of the funerary rites and he saves the living through the ransom rites. In Eternal Bon tradition, he liberates through a regimen of moral and philosophical imperatives. First as an accomplished ritualist and then as an enlightened master, gShen-rab's evolving savior activities reflect profound changes in the cultural makeup of Tibet.

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

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

⁹ As Stein (2003: 598) observes, circa the 11th century CE, when Eternal Bon authors chose the name of their founder, they did so in pursuance of a preexisting tradition.

ment of the Tibetan system of writing in the 7th century CE. This early historic literature preserves one of the finest windows into how the cultural prehistory of Tibet was once imagined.

The portrayal of gShen-rab myi-bo in the Dunhuang and dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscripts alludes to a fundamental doctrinal difference between the archaic religious traditions and Lamaist Eternal Bon. Eternal Bon is founded on a 'historic model of origins', as it is endowed with definite temporal and geographic underpinnings. Religious beginnings, identity and authority are unambiguously ascribed to gShen-rab mi-bo-che of 'Ol-mo lung-ring.¹⁰ Conversely, archaic religious traditions, as depicted in the early historic documents, appear to have been founded on what might be termed a 'bardic model of origins', one that minimizes the significance of a single personality, time period and locale as the exclusive wellspring of its existence. This seems to indicate that the archaic religious traditions were not as narrowly defined institutionally as Eternal Bon with its strong sectarian groundwork. Rather, the archaic religious traditions appear to represent a Tibetan cultural patrimony with very wide temporal and geographical roots. As I have written earlier (2008), I tend to see the archaic ritual origins myths as part of a socio-political bid to weld the various tribes of the Tibetan Plateau into a single polity held together by a shared cultural idiom. The development of an intellectual and aspirational common ground, the extant Old Tibetan ritual texts representing just one element of that, could only have been a project of massive proportions during the time of the *bstan-po*'s empire.

gShen-rab myi-bo as the guardian of the dead in the archaic funerary texts of Dunhuang¹¹

The first historical occurrences of gShen-rab myi-bo can be traced to the Dunhuang manuscripts, in his seminal role as an archetypal funerary priest. His ritual activities are recorded in five different texts: PT 1068, PT 1134, PT 1136, PT

¹⁰ Many vestiges of archaic funerary traditions amalgamated to Buddhist-inspired philosophical tenets and practices are found in a collection of Eternal Bon texts known as the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (Multitude of Funerary Rites* of Mu-cho [ldem-drug]), which began to be compiled circa 1000 CE. Early historic period mythic, procedural and philosophical elements were faithfully gathered up by the authors of Eternal Bon texts and incorporated into the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur mostly by unknown authors. The first text in this collection (*Mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen 'phreng gzhung gi le'u*, by gSang-sngags grags-pa, New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, vol. 6, nos. 1-73), sets out the legendary history of the Bon funerary tradition, detailing its source, transmission and tangible benefits. The first four lineage-holders of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur are divine figures who occupy various heavenly realms. The fifth lineage-holder was the great founder of the systematized Bon religion, sTon-pa gshen-rab, who represents the divide between the divine (celestial) and human (terrestrial) holders of the funerary lineage. The Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur is studied in Bellezza 2008.

* Classical Tibetan = 'dur.

¹¹ Notations used in paper: C.T. = Classical Tibetan, O.T. = Old Tibetan, words bracketed by {} = uncertain reading, {...} = one or more illegible syllables, i = the reverse letter i, [] = interpolation, + = addition to text.

1289, and ITJ 731r.¹² In this section of the paper, I review specific references to gShen-rab myi-bo in these manuscripts.

The Dunhuang manuscripts under consideration contain abstruse grammatical constructions and lore that pose formidable philological challenges to their comprehension. Difficulties in language are compounded by the poor physical condition of certain parts of these texts. The grammatical and orthographical structures of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts under review are somewhat more old fashioned than those of the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa *byol-rabs* text. Obsolete grammatical structures in Dunhuang funerary literature are particularly noticeable in verb morphology and case forms. If written in the 8th or 9th century CE, these archaic manuscripts may predate the *byol-rabs* of dGa'-thang 'bum-pa by two or more centuries.

In one *smrang* or origin tale of PT 1134 (lns. 48–66), mention is made of the fathers (*pha*) or venerable priests Dur-shen rma-da,¹³ gShen-rabs myi-bo and

¹² With the exception of PT 1289, the texts enumerated were the object of an in-depth study I carried out (2008). These funerary manuscripts of the Pelliot tibétains (Paris) and India Office Library (London) collections can be broadly dated circa 650 to 1000 CE. As part of a recent trend in Tibetology, some scholars place these texts in a more restrictive timeframe, claiming they cannot be older than the 9th or 10th century CE. An extreme and not well supported position is taken by Walter (2009), who maintains that archaic funerary texts such as PT 1042 were composed nearly as late as the bsTan-pa phyi-dar (circa 1000 CE) and have little or no relevance to imperial period burial practices. While the dating of the Dunhuang funerary texts remains largely a matter of educated opinion, PT 1068, PT 1134 and PT 1136 in particular may be authentic imperial period documents, composed between the second half of the 7th century and the middle of the 9th century CE. Only systematic codicological and paleographical study corroborated by archaeometric data will finally put to rest the debate surrounding the age of the Dunhuang funerary manuscripts. That is to say, a survey of text-internal features (grammar, orthography, calligraphy, format of document, type of paper, etc.) linked to the scientific study of the texts as physical objects (qualitative analysis of paper, ink, binding materials, etc.) is required to conclusively answer questions pertaining to chronology. With this proviso in mind, I tender the following observations that suggest an imperial period date for the manuscripts under consideration. Although it may not be warranted to compare different genres of Dunhuang literature, as each has retained peculiar literary characteristics, PT 1136 does exhibit a paleography reminiscent of the Old Tibetan Chronicle (PT 1287), a text that can probably be dated to circa the mid 9th century CE. Moreover, the narrative content of PT 1068, PT 1134 and PT 1136 betrays no Buddhist influences, indicating that they are representative of religious traditions that circulated in Tibetan regions as a countervailing cultural force. In my opinion, these alternative religious traditions are likely to have been part of a cultural schema that existed in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism. The period between the fall of the Tibetan empire and the bsTan-pa phyi-dar seems to be represented in a genre of Dunhuang funerary manuscripts with distinctive Buddhist concepts and polemical content, texts such as PT 126, PT 239 and ITJ 504. In my view, the transition from purely non-Buddhist to Buddhist cultural forms in Dunhuang funerary literature reflects a historical progression, not merely concurrent trends in the development of literary genres and religious traditions. A transitional stage for certain Dunhuang literature has also been postulated by Cantwell and Mayer (2008), regarding a class of Buddhist tantras, which they refer to as the Intermediate period (circa 850–1000 CE). According to Cantwell and Mayer (*ibid.*), these tantric texts (PT 44 and PT 307) were subject to an indigenizing process, whereby the appended myths of origins in content and form came to resemble the non-Buddhist *smrang* or *dpe-srol* structure of native Tibetan myths.

¹³ In the g.Yung-drung funerary Bon text *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las rin chen 'phreng gzhung gi le'u* (by gSang-sngags grags-pa), the funerary priest 'Dur-gshen rma-da (C.T. spelling) is the

sKar-shen (gshen) thi'u-bzhug. In this narrative of funerary ritual origins, gShen-rab is not distinguished in any special way from his priestly counterparts; he is merely one of a trio of ritualists.¹⁴ These archetypal priests in no uncertain terms announce to the *pyugs spos ma nye du* (the beloved kindred horse on which the deceased's consciousness principles are mounted) that death has occurred. This passage is found right after the deceased and his relatives (*gnyen-bdun*) meet for the last time and three words of the doctrine are spoken to the departed.¹⁵ Very potent metaphors are used by the three funerary priests to get their message across: "You are dead. The lord is dead, you are no more. Chipped, the turquoise is chipped, so it is no more. The degenerated¹⁶ son, yes,

sixth member of an original lineage of 18 funerary specialists. He is said to have been active in the *gshen* country of Hos kyi ljang-tshal (Verdant Grove of the Hos). The *gshen* Mu-cho ldem-drug, 'Dur-gshen rma-da and a third figure named Khu-byug (Cuckoo) are recorded as receiving the funerary teachings directly from sTon-pa [gShen-rab] himself. Another funerary text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, *Mu cho'i khrom 'dur chen mo las lha bon gshen gsum gyel bzhangs* (anonymous), states that of all the 100,000 *gshen* who received the *gto* (beneficial rites of many kinds) and *dpyad* teachings from the Bon founder, it was 'Dur-gshen rma-da who was actually tantamount to gShen-rab himself (*gShen-rab nyid dang gcig mod*) as a funerary practitioner. This text observes that 'Dur-gshen rma-da is descended from a group of nine divine funerary *gshen* brothers described as power gods (*dbang-lha*). As part of the tale of origins, the divine parents and grandparents of this *gshen* brotherhood are enumerated. While his brothers go off to various celestial and terrestrial realms, rMa-da stayed behind to be the king of the *bon* and *gshen* priests, and the supervisor (*gnyer-dpon*) of the 100,000 portals of proclamation teachings (*smrang-sgo*). To his inner circle of *gshen* he revealed all the teachings: the use of the wing instrument, soul rescue, the destruction of predatory demons, the cleansing of disease, and all other ritual specifications. In another text of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur entitled '*Dur gzas lha srung bskul shing spyen drangs pa* (anonymous), 'Dur-gshen rma-da appears as an apotheosized figure invoked to defeat the *gshed* demons of death. He is referred to as a *sri-bon*, a class of ritualists specializing in eliminating the harm caused to the living and dead by the *sri* (and *srin*), a homicidal group of spirits. 'Dur-gshen rma-da's ritual dance of the tiger's gait (*stag-gros*) and the lion's manner of movement (*seng stobs-gcod*) suppressed the *gshed* demons. According to this biographical account, 'Dur-gshen rma-da wore headgear that sported turquoise bird horns, as do the special *gzas* and *gar* funerary deities of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur.

¹⁴ Blezer (2008: 421, 424), reflecting earlier scholarly speculation on the matter, suggests that (*pha*) gShen-rab kyi myi-bo is not the proper name of an individual but rather a priestly title. He further opines (*ibid.*: 425) that it was Eternal Bon that created an individual out of this generic sacerdotal class during the bsTan-pa phyi-dar. The narrative content of the Dunhuang texts that mention gShen-rab myi-bo, however, unambiguously present him as an individual engaged in specific ritual activities (cf. Stein 2003: 597–600). As we shall see, gShen-rab myi-bo is also very much depicted as a person in the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa text. In his work, Blezer (*ibid.*) resorts to polemics of a decidedly personal nature regarding my recent book (2008). I find this polemical approach unhelpful in furthering Bon studies and decline in this paper from addressing his various allegations.

¹⁵ "The teaching of three spoken words is sweet to the ear." (*bsTand* (C.T. = *bstan*) *pa ngag tsig* (C.T. = *tshig*) *sum ni rgar* (= *rngar*, C.T. = *mngar*) *mnyend* (C.T. = *snyan*) /). This important archaic cultural tradition of saying three special words to the deceased is attested in the opening lines of the Eternal Bon funerary text *rTa gtad bzhuqs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka'-brten*, *Klong rgyas sgrub skor*, vol. 274, nos. 463–468): "Today, you magical equid (*gor-bu*), when we bequeath you as the patrimony (*rdzongs*) of the dead one (*gshin*), we praise you with three words from our mouths (*de ring sprul pa'i gor bu khyod* / *gshin la rdzongs su rdzong* (= *brdzongs*) *tsam na* / *zhal nas bstod ra tshigs* (= *tshig*) *gsum gyis* (= *bgyis*) /). See Bellezza 2008, p. 456.

¹⁶ 'Pan This O.T. term is the precursor of the C.T. verb '*phan-pa* (injured/spoiled/damaged).

he is dead. The crane egg, yes, it is cracked. The sharp¹⁷ bow, yes, it is broken.”¹⁸ PT 1134 goes on to state that through the efforts of Dur-gshen rma-da-na (*sic*) and gShen-rab myi-bo, the deceased or lord was able to bypass the infernal land of the dead and reach the ordered position of the expansive heights,¹⁹ thereby attaining the afterlife.

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

'Do you have the remedy,²⁰ do you have the {*bon gpyad* (= *dpyad*)} for my sister sKyī-nam nyag-cig's hair standing on end in the sky and lice eggs falling down, do you know?'²¹ The fathers Dur-shen gyi rma-da, gShen-rab myi-bo and gShen-tsha lung-sgra, these three, replied, 'We *gshen* have the ritual remedy (*bong* = *bon*), we have the *dpyad*, we have the means to rehabilitate (*sos*) the dead, those who are no more.²² For the hair standing on end in the sky, you can milk the mDzo-mo drama of the *srin* ford²³ and daub the fresh lumps of butter. Brother sKyī-phyug 'jon-pa, you go there to mDzo-mo dram-ma's Yul-rgod khyer gyi 'bri-mo srang, where the two yaks Glang khye-bo ru-gar and Sa sral-mo mated and have had the offspring of the season.'

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

¹⁷ *rNo*. This well-known metaphor describes sharp-edged weapons such as the sword and arrow.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, lns. 61, 62: *khyed gyang* (= *kyang*) *grongs rje grongs gis myed grugs g.yu grugs gis myed na 'pan gi ni bu grongso khrung khru* (C.T. = *khrung khrung*) *ni sgong rdold / rno'i ni gzhu chag gis...*

¹⁹ *rje gral ni mto* (C.T. = *mtho*) *yang slebs*.

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

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

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

²³ The name mDzo-mo dram-ma is etymologically related to the 'brog-pa term 'bri-mo/mdzo-mo *grus-ma/drus-ma* (a female yak / female yak hybrid that has calved in the current year).

Given the name of her father rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag, we might expect this headwaters location to be that of the Yar-lung/Yar-chab rtsang-po/gtsang-po, a river whose principal source is Bye-ma g.yung-drung. rTsang refers to either a clan, tribal and/or geographic designation.²⁴ lCam lho-rgyal byang-mo commit-

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

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

ted suicide distraught over her betrothal to the lord of Gu-ge. Her father rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and brother sMra-bon zing-skyes informed the father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo that the girl had killed herself bound to a black hair rope. They requested that gShen-rab kyi myi-bo untie the rope, so he called for divine aid in the form of sacred animals:

<Ins. 52–55> The father gShen-rab kyi myi-bo said, 'I cannot untie the black hair rope, Bya-gshen 'jon-mo²⁵ can untie it.' Well then, although

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

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

²⁵ The nightingale (C.T. = 'jol-mo) as a divine messenger and ally of the *gshen* ritualists. The avian identity of Bya-gshen 'jon-mo is confirmed in an illuminated funerary manuscript in the interconnected card format consisting of some 40 color illustrations on paper, each of which has an accompanying text in the Tibetan language. I have translated this document, which was kindly made available by the art collector Moke Mokotoff (New York City). It will form the basis of a paper on the archaic funerary traditions of Tibet, a work in progress. On the basis of its paleographic characteristics, lexical archaisms and grammatical structure, this incomplete funerary manuscript can be dated to circa 1000–1250 CE. This has been confirmed through the chronometric testing of a fragment of the manuscript containing one of its standard polychrome illustrations: AMS analysis, sample no. Beta-272516; conventional radiocarbon age: 960 +/- 40 BP (years before present); 2 Sigma calibrated result (95% probability): Cal 1010 to 1170 CE; intercept of radiocarbon age with calibration curve Cal 1040 CE. It should be noted that its grammatical structure in general is somewhat more modern than that of the Dunhuang funerary texts or the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa ritual text under study. The illuminated manuscript contains a funerary rite dedicated to women. It is primarily concerned with protecting the deceased and her surviving kith and kin from harm thought to

he sent Bya-bon bang-pa thang-reg²⁶ to call Bya-gshen 'jon-mo, he could not bring Bya-gshen 'jon-mo, so he sent sKyin-po ru-thog rje (Lord Male Ibex Surmounted Horns)²⁷ to call Bya-gshen 'jon-mo. He

emanate from the condition of death. This is accomplished through the invocation of a series of deities and divine animals. These figures can be divided into five main groups: 1) little birds, 2) jeweled deer protectors, 3) *ste'u* deities with analogous ritual structures, 4) *lhe'u* deities emanating from jeweled hail, and 5) special deities of the *smrang*. Among the little bird series is a pentad of forest birds that includes Bya-gshen 'jon-mo. He is one of four bird helpers born from an iron egg, which are led by a vulture. In the illustration accompanying the text the leader is depicted as a much larger bird than his four underlings. This type of vulture is referred to as *gang-ka*, which must be identical to or closely related to sacred bearded vulture, a bird that in Eternal Bon ritual traditions is known as *bya-gshen rgod-po*. The text of the card under scrutiny reads as follows: "The iron egg opened in the forest [and from it appeared] the little birds of the forest *ke-ke* (magpie?), *khu-long* (pheasant) *zer-mong* (?), and *bya-gshen 'jon-mo* (nightingale) who lead the way in the forest. They are the superior equipage.* They are the little bird defender-protectors of the long-beaked *gang-ka* who appeared in the southern forest. He controls the forest. They are his little bird rosary (flock) who benefit. Act as the little bird protector-defenders that do not disperse in the forest." (*lcags sgong nags la rdol / nags bye'u ke ke dang / khu long zer mong dang / bya gshen 'jon mo des (+ /) nags la shul yang 'dren / dkor yi dam pa lags / (+ /) bye'u mgon srungs ma ni / lho ga nags mtshal* (C.T. = *tshal*) *nes (nas) / gang ka mchu rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *byung / shing khams dbang du sgyur / sman yi bye'u 'phring* (C.T. = *'phreng*) *rnams / shing la myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *byer ba'i (+ /) bye'u mgon srungs ma mdzod //*) (*nags la shul yang 'dren / dkor yi dam pa lags / ...sman yi bye'u 'phring nams / shing la myi byer ba'i bye'u mgon srungs ma mdzod //*). The last line of the passage is somewhat enigmatic. It suggests that the forest birds must work in unison doing their part in liberating the deceased from the dangers lurking in the intermediate space (*bar-sa*).

* *dKor yi dam-pa*. The mandatory presents and accompanying ritual procedures offered to the deceased and surviving relatives. See *dkor/kor* in PT 1042 (Bellezza 2008: 452, fn. 309). In the *Klu 'bum nag po*, a horse as valuable property (*dkor*) becomes the companion of the deceased (*ibid.*: 482, 484). In PT 1040, lns. 100, 109, we find *thang-ba'i dkor*, sacrificial funerary gifts of some kind (on *thang*, see fn. 244). The word *dam-pa* here has the connotation of 'essential', 'indispensable', 'superior', or 'excellent', rather than its more common meaning, 'holy'.

The leader of Bya-gshen 'jon-mo and his three feathered friends, the vulture, are species of birds with much significance in ancient Tibetan myths and rituals. According to Eternal Bon documents, the adepts of yore had the ability to manifest as vultures, the 'king of the birds'. The use of vulture feather headdresses, robes and horns (crests) is also attested in these texts. Arrows with vulture feathers are used as tabernacles (*rten*) for various Eternal Bon deities, and native gods such as the *wer-ma* manifest in the form of vultures. In origins tales about the soul stone (*bla-rdo srid-rabs*) and ritual wing instrument (*gshog-rabs*) found in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur, the vulture is cited as one of the three most important receptacles for the soul (Bellezza 2008: 413–417, 432–435). In the *gshog-rabs*, the vulture, along with a (precious) stone and juniper tree, serves as the protector of the soul of a divine human named sMra-mi dran-pa after his death. PT 1194 provides a *smrang* explaining how vulture wings came to be used in funerals to guide and protect the deceased (*ibid.*: 506–510).

²⁶ A divine bird intermediary, most probably in the form of a species of pheasant. In Eternal Bon tradition, there are 13 species of bird messengers between humans and the deities (*bya-bon 'phrin-pa bcu-bsum*).

²⁷ A divine animal messenger in the form of an ibex. The illuminated funerary manuscript (see *supra*, fn. 25) has this to say about this creature: "From the jewel cervid habitat is the long horn male ibex and the female beautiful movement ibex and also the kid ibex with the beautiful gait,* these three. Their hair and wool are excellent clothes. Their yogurt cleanses diseases of the body. They are the attendants/messengers that can run very far. They can go wherever as fast as they think it. We offer this superior equipage (2x)." *yang rin cen* (C.T. = *chen*) *sha slungs nes* (C.T. = *nas*) / *skyin po'* (C.T. = *skyin-po*) *ru rings* (C.T. = *ring*) *dang / skyin mo stabs sdug dang / skyin bu yang stabs sdug sum* (C.T. = *gsum*) / *spu bal na bza' mchog / zho yis sku snyun 'byang / pho*

brought Bya-gshen 'jon-mo... <Ins. 56, 58> The black hair robe was untied from the neck of Lady Lho-rgyal byang-mo tsun. Her face took on a bright white complexion and she reposed as if smiling.

pha gshen rabs gyi myi bo'i zhal nas / rtsidag gnag po ni dkrol myi 'tshal / bya gshen 'jon mos dgrol 'tshal zhes gsung nas 'o na bya gshen 'jon mo zhig skyin po²⁸ bya bon bang pa thang reg chig gnyer du btang na yang bya gshen 'jon mo ma khugs nas // skyin po ru thog rje zhig bya gshen 'jon mo gnyer du btang na / bya gshen 'jon mo zhi khugste mchis... lcam lho rgyal byang mo tsun gyi mgul nas / rtsi (= rtsid) dag gnag chig grol ching mchiste / zhal mdangs dkar ni sla re 'od de zhal dang bzhad pa lta zhing bzhugs nas / /

The funeral preparations could now proceed and in due course the colts were used to ritually whisk the departed princess to the afterlife. The account ends by stating, "In ancient times it was beneficial, now it is also beneficial. In ancient times it was meritorious, now it is also meritorious."²⁹ Similarly worded declamations of antiquity are made in *smrang* of other Dunhuang funerary manuscripts (and in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and dGa'-thang bum-pa texts). These *smrang* are placed in an early or even primordial mythic setting. While the activities and personalities described in PT 1136 cannot be historicized with any degree of assurance, for the early historic period author(s) and users of PT 1136, the tale of the plight of Lady Lho-rgyal byang-mo was conceived of as belonging to an epoch that unfolded long before the text was written, as epitomized by the use of the word *gna'* or 'ancient' to qualify it. The PT 1136 narrative was perceived as relaying happenings of a prehistoric character, people and events that preceded the author(s) and users by hundreds if not thousands of years. A clear parallel with the *smrang* of Eternal Bon texts can be drawn here, for many of these are also attributed to the mists of prehistory.

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

nya ring rgyug byed / gar gshags (C.T. = *gshegs*) *bsams* (C.T. = *bsam*) *bas 'khor / dkor yi* (C.T. = *gyi*) *dam par 'bul //*.

* This can also be translated as: 'prancing' or 'legs gracefully folded underneath the body'.

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

²⁹ ...*gna' phan da yang phan gna' bsod da yang bsodo* /. Rather than a simple statement, this conclusion to the text may express a wish, but this is less likely given its grammatical arrangement. In an aspirant format it would read: "As it was beneficial in ancient times, may [the *do-ma*] also be beneficial at this time. As it was meritorious in ancient times, may [the *do-ma*] also be meritorious at this time."

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

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

<Ins. 122–130> The good turquoise was chipped. The lord died, he died from...³³ The chipped turquoise is chipped from the head. The decayed

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

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

³² This text is examined in Stein 1971, pp. 485–491; Bellezza 2008, pp. 529–537.

³³ One or two syllables are effaced from this line.

(*dphan*) lord perished and was sadly lost; he was no more,³⁴ so the fathers *gShen-rabs myi-bo* and *Dur-gshen rma-dad* established the *rgyal* in concealment. They made the {*se*} in the valley. They made the *gshin ste nyer-bu* (?). The mattress wild yak *bang-rten* was laid down.³⁵ For the cherished *do-ma*³⁶ they {erected turquoise horns on} the youngest brother *Khu rmang-dar*,³⁷ he who would cross the ford. The ordered position of the lord was high...³⁸ In ancient times, it was perfectly accomplished.³⁹ Now we have collected [the ritual constituents]. To-day, you *phyugs spo ma nyedu*, the cherished *do-ma*, be the *chab-gang*⁴⁰ and cross the shallow ford.⁴¹

g.yu ni bzang grugs rje grongs ni {...} las grongs g.yu grugs ni dbu las grugs /
rje dphan te ni nongs sdug ste ni rlag gis {...} myed nas // pha gshen rabs myi
bo dang dur gshen rma dad bas la ni rgyal skos lung du (+ ni se) bchas/ste
gshin ste nyer bu ni bchas rtan bang rtan khod mo ni bkhod de bzang ni se la ba
{...} sa ni gnam du dngar te // do ma snying dgas su nu khu rmang dar {g.yu yi
ru btsugs}{...} ba ni rab du sbogste // rje gral ni mtho gnyer brang rtsi ni {...}
mtshungs mnyams dang ni mnyamso // gna 'i ni pul pyungo da 'i ni la bsagso
// de (+ ring) sang lda na phyugs spo ma nyedu do ma snying dgas khyed
rmams khyang da de dang 'dra de dang {...} gyis / chab gang (= gang) ni la ru
mdzod chig yang ba ni rab du sbogs shig /

gShen-rab myi-bo as the protector of the living in the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa manuscript

Operating in tandem with human and divine animal allies, *gShen-rab myi-bo* makes only fleeting appearances in the Dunhuang manuscripts. Despite his

³⁴ One syllable may be missing from this line.

³⁵ This is followed by a description of a funerary procedure concerning the earth and sky. It contains one or two illegible syllables.

³⁶ Thomas mistakenly treats *do-ma snying-dgas* as the proper name of a deceased person who is being told the story. See Thomas 1957, *Texts, Translations, and Notes*, pp. 1, 28 (n. 7).

³⁷ There are missing and illegible words here. The transcription of ITJ 731r supplied in *Old Tibetan Documents Online* (<http://otdo.aa.tufts.ac.jp/>), reads: 'is *chab gang ni la ru* {bgyi} {...}. The complete sentence would then translate: "For the cherished *do-ma* the youngest brother *Khu rmang-dar*, was {made} as the *chab-gang* {...}, he who would cross the ford."

³⁸ The rest of this line is blighted by missing words; it has something to do with a ritual equivalency. Based in part on the transcription of the text in *Old Tibetan Documents Online* (<http://otdo.aa.tufts.ac.jp/>), the words in question appear to read: *brang rtsi gda mnabs mtshungs* {...} *mtshungs mnyams dang ni mnyamso* /.

³⁹ *gNa 'i ni pul-pyung* (C.T. = *phul-byung*) ngo.

⁴⁰ Literally: 'over the water', a reference to the ability of the *do-ma* to magically transport the deceased to the afterlife. In the archaic funerary rites of Dunhuang literature, *chab-gang* is a stock expression, indicating the ritual efficacy and magical power of the *do-ma*. In the Eternal Bon funerary tradition, *chab-gang* refers to various presents given by the next of kin to the deceased to aid his/her passage across the river of the dead (*gshin-chu*) or more generally, to help effect liberation. For more information about *chab-gang*, see Bellezza 2008, *passim*.

⁴¹ This sentence is the incomplete rendering of the last two lines of the excerpt of the text.

critical role in these accounts, given their cursory nature, relatively little can be gleaned about the professional activities of this pivotal personality. Only with the recent discovery of the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa *byol-rabs* text has a fuller picture of gShen-rab myi-bo become possible. This Old Tibetan text appears to show that gShen-rab myi-bo played a mainstream role in archaic religious traditions. As seen from the perspective of the early historic individuals who venerated him, gShen-rab myi-bo emerges as perhaps the most important legendary figure of prehistoric Tibet.

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

The *byol-rabs* of dGa'-thang 'bum-pa occupies 13 folios of a volume of ritual texts that is 23 folios in length.⁴² The volume is in the booklet format, as are certain Dunhuang manuscripts. The first eight folios of this volume are concerned with the origin tales of several other rituals of an obscure nature. These are excluded from the analysis and discussion that follows as they bear little thematic relevance to the *byol-rabs*. The last two folios of the volume are devoted to the origins of golden beer libations (*gser-skyems*).⁴³ The *byol-rabs* and

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

⁴³ I have translated this text in full. It is dedicated to extolling the parentage and qualities of beer (*chang*) and gold. The beginning of the text reads (no. 43, lns. 1–4): “In the origins tale of the *gser-skyems*, the grandfather of beer is called gNam-khun dñg-ba. The grandmother of beer is called Sa-khun dñg-ba. The name of the father, the patriarch, is Lha-chu rñgam-ba. The name of the mother, the matriarch, is rMu-chu dñg-ba. The sons of their coupling in the season were the nine begotten beer brothers. They are the combined essence of grain, the most excellent of all foods.” The origins of gold are given as follows (no. 44, lns. 1–4): “The grandfather of gold is dGar-po shel-le dung and the grandmother of gold is Bye-ma bdal-dro (Uniform Warm Sand). The name of the father, the patriarch, is bZang-shod gser-po chen. The name of the mother, the matriarch, is sTong gyi spyi btud-ma. The son of the mating of these two in the season is small (pretty) gold, pure gold (*sa-le sbram*), he that is stable and heavy (*brlñg la lji*) so he can infiltrate everywhere (*gar yang phyogs-ris thub*). He that is soft and malleable (*mnyen la des*) so he is compatible with all other things (*kun dang mthun bar shes*).” From these *smrang* we

gser-skyems kyi rabs are clearly separate from the first part of the volume and from each other. They each begin on a new folio underscoring their distinct literary and ritual identities. All the texts in this volume are anonymous, the product of a tradition of considerable but indeterminate length.

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

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

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

can see that gold and beer have divine male personifications. These ritual substances are gods in their own right, an intrinsic nature that makes them ideal offerings to all manner of divinities. In the final part of the *gser-skyems kyi rabs* text, the two are written about together as a prelude to the actual offering of libations: "When beer and gold are combined their color is brighter than the sun and moon. They are more magnificent and beautiful than Ri-rab. They are more splendid than the earth. They are also more profound than the ocean. [To whom] are they offered and presented? They are offered and presented to the mighty *lha* and *dre* (C.T. = '*dre*') of the four continents. Please accept this golden libation. Do not be capricious and angry. The golden libation origins tale is completed." (*chang dang gser du sbyar pas su / gnyi zla bas ni mdog yang gsal // ri rab bas ni lhun yang bstug / sa gzhi bas ni byin yang che // rgya mtsho bas ni gting yang zab / 'di dbul zhing bsngo ba ni / 'dzam bu gling bzhi'i / lha dre gnyan po la dbul zhing bsngo bo // gser skyems 'di bzhes la / ma nyo (= yo) ma mthur cig / gser skyems kyi rabs rdzogs so //*).

3. *Byol* is a verb meaning ‘to repulse’ ‘to cast away’ or ‘to escape’. As noted, this sense of the word has been preserved in Classical Tibetan.

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

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

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

⁴⁴ The Bon historical text *bsGrags pa gling grags* records that the royal priests (*sku-gshen*) saved the life of Mu-khri btsan-po through a ritual regimen that included all the major remedial procedures of Bon. In addition to the *glud*, these included ablutions (*khirus*), fumigation with aromatic substances (*bsang*), purificatory rites (*sel*), apologies to the Bon protective and lineage deities (*gyod*), offerings for their fulfillment (*bskang*), atonement exercises (*bshags*), and restorative rites (*gto*). See Bellezza 2008, pp. 220, 221.

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

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

⁴⁷ Among the earliest references to this royal ancestral deity are found in the 9th century CE rKong-po pillar inscription and in PT 1286. In both of these sources, Yab-bla bdal-drug/Ya-bla bdag-drug, a *phywa* lineage god, is the direct forebear of Tibet’s first king, Nya-khri btsan-po/lDe-nyag khri btsan-po (C.T. = gNya’-khri btsan-po). For these readings, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 397, 398 (fn. 193); Richardson 1954, pp. 159–162; Richardson 1998, p. 124; Haarh 1969, p. 311. For Yab-bla bdag-drug as the appointer of the grazing lands of the horse and wild yak in ITJ 731r, see Thomas 1957, *Texts, Translations and Notes*, p. 24; Stein 1971, pp. 486, 487; Bellezza 2008, pp. 530, 534. Extensive theogonies related to the progenerative role of Yab-bla bdal-drug in the foundation of the Tibetan dynasty, taken from various sources, are studied in Bellezza 2005, pp. 395–403; Bellezza 2008, pp. 272–276, 350–352; Haarh 1969, pp. 224, 255, 258–262, 317, 318; Karmay 1998, pp. 116, 126–131, 178 (fn. 31), 250, 260–274, 294–303, 367.

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

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

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

<17:1–7> The *bdud* *She-le ru-tshe* stays above the 13 layers of the sky. The king of the *ltas-ngan*, *Gang-par ge-ber*, stays below the nine layers of the earth. What mount does the king of the *ltas-ngan*, *Gang-par ge-ber*, ride? He rides a copper musk deer with three legs and three heads.⁴⁸ From high above the sky the king of the *bdud* *She-le ru-tshe* said, 'below the nine layers of the earth there is no one greater or mightier (*btsan-ba*) than him, king of the *ltas-ngan*.' *bDud* (*She-le ru-tshe*) said to the bird minister with the crest (*pub-shud*), 'you go on top of the *bdud* pass *Yor-mo* and meet the *bdud* and *Bad Omen*.' The bird minister, having eaten⁴⁹ the bad omen food and messenger food, a yellow golden halter was placed on (*mthur*) him.

⁴⁸ 'Go (C.T. = *mgo*).

⁴⁹ *gSal*. It appears that *gSal* is an O.T. inflected form of the verb *gsol-ba* (in this context: 'to consume', 'to eat'), and can be glossed 'eaten' or 'had consumed'. Thus far, I have not located other examples of the word *gSal* being used in this manner in Old Tibetan literature.

gnam rīm pa bcu gsum gyi steng na // bdud she le ru tshe bzhugs //
 sa rīm pa rgu'i 'og na // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po // gang par ge ber
 bzhugs ste // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber gyis // chībs su cī
 bcībs na // zangs kyi gla ba rkang pa sum 'og gsum ba cīg bcībs nas
 // gnam gyi ya bla nas // bdud kyī rgyal po she le ru tshe'i zhal na re
 // sa rīm pa rgu'i og na // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po // gang par ge ber
 las che zhīng btsan ba med zer / na / bya blon pub shud song la /
 bdud la yor ma'i gong du // bdud dang ltas ngan mjal gsungs // bya
 blon than zan phrin zan gsal nas // gser mthur ser mo mthur /

<17:7 to 18:5> The bird minister told to the ear of Bad Omen,⁵⁰ on what mount does Bad Omen ride? He rides a copper mule with red legs on which there are nine eyes of sparking iron.' Bad Omen said, 'bDud, you come up here.⁵¹ I myself will come down there.' The king of the *ltas-ngan*, for the bad omen message, put a striped brocade robe⁵² on the bird minister with the crest. What does the king of the *ltas-ngan*, Gang-par ge-ber, wear on his body? He wears various bad omen manifestations and a robe of various types of bird feathers on his body. Coming down, the king of the *ltas-ngan*'s upper jaw⁵³ engulfed the sky and his lower jaw⁵⁴ engulfed the earth.⁵⁵ His right eye turned⁵⁶ towards the white sunny mountain. He left eye turned towards the black shady mountain. He stayed like that.

bya blon gyis ltas ngan snyan du zhus // ltas ngan gyis chibs su ci
 bcibs na / zangs kyi dre'u rta / rkang dmar la // lcags kyi tsha tsha
 myig rgu can cīg bcibs // ltas ngan rgyal po'i zhal nas // bdud yas
 gshags cig // bdag mas mchi bo / ltas ngan gyi rgyal po 'is / bya blon
 pub shud la // than dang phrin ngan du / zab bslag khra bo bskon no
 // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber gyis // sku la cī gsol na /
 ltas ngan sprul pa sna tshogs dang / bya spu sna tshogs kyi slag pa
 sku la gsol de // mas mchis na / ltas ngan gyi rgyal pos yan kal gnam
 la bshal // man kal sa la bshal // myig g.yas pa gdags ri dkar la bshal
 // myig g.yon pa sribs ri gnag la bshal de // de ltar bsdad pa la //

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

⁵⁰ I.e. gave the message he was delivering.

⁵¹ *gShags*. This is either a variant spelling or an O.T. inflected form of the C.T. verb *gshegs* (to depart).

⁵² *Zab-slag* (C.T. = *za-'og-slag*) *khra-bo*.

⁵³ *Yan-kal* (C.T. = *ya-mgal*). Cf. *yan-kal/yan-gal* (upper jaw) in PT 1039, *passim*.

⁵⁴ *Man-kal* (C.T. = *ma-mgal*). Cf. *man-kal/man-gal* (lower jaw) in PT 1039, *passim*.

⁵⁵ The predicate in this sentence is the O.T. term *bshal*, which in this context appears to mean 'engulfed' or 'covered'. In PT 1289 (lms. r3-12 to v1-05, v3-01 to v3-03), the several occurrences of *bshal/bshald* have the connotation of 'to lead', as in the leading of a female hybrid yak (*mdzo-mo*) with a line.

⁵⁶ The O.T. verb *bshal* is again used here. In this context it can be glossed as 'opened'/'turned'/'raised'/'moved'.

the bad omens trained his savage intent upon Yab-bla bdal-drug. The ancestor of the Tibetan kings found himself surrounded by a horseman of the *bdud* and a soldier of the *ltas-ngan*:

<18:5 to 19:2> The king of the *bdud* [She-le ru-tshe] also manifested in the manner of Bad Omen and went in the appearance of Bad Omen. What mount was he riding on? He was riding on an iron deer with three legs and three heads. Wearing the *bdud* clothing *ban-mo bun-mo* (?) on his body, he came up, he went above the *bdud* pass Yor-mo. There the bDud and Bad Omen met. Upon seeing the king of the *ltas-ngan*, the king of the *bdud* suddenly panicked and fainted. Later, when the king of the *bdud* revived (*brgyal-sangs*), he said, 'bDud could not challenge Bad Omen. There was no one bDud could not challenge. There was nothing I could not do and no one I could not subjugate.⁵⁷ There is nowhere that the (honeyed) rain (*sbrang-char*) of the sky does not reach. It seems that there is no one greater and more powerful below the blue sky and above the grayish brown⁵⁸ earth than the king of the *ltas-ngan*, Gang-par ge-ber. As I the *bdud* could not challenge Bad Omen, you lead us Bad Omen. I the *bdud* shall come wherever you go.'

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

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

⁵⁷ 'To subjugate' / 'to defeat' / 'to best' is the reconstructed meaning of the phrase *kha-ma bcags-pa* (literally: 'to break the mouth').

⁵⁸ *Dro-bo* (C.T. = *gro-bo*). A color parallelism is intended in the sentence, thus *dro-bo* cannot mean 'warm' in this context.

⁵⁹ *rNal* (C.T. = rest, composedness) is the semantic equivalent of *nyal*.

⁶⁰ *rGya* = *rkya*. See Bellezza 2008, p. 528 (fn. 609), for instances of *rkya* (horseman; in Dunhuang materials *rkya* also denotes a unit of agricultural land for taxation purposes). Also see *rkya-bros* (to escape on horseback; Pasar *et al.* 2008: 13). The best known *bdud* horsemen are the Rol-po

circled. A horseman of the *bdud* circled. Behind the [house] a soldier⁶¹ was stationed.⁶² A soldier of the *ltas-ngan* was stationed.

ltas ngan rgyal po'i zhal na re // gnam gyi ya bla rgung gyi ya stengs
na / rje yab bla bdal drug la / bdud dang ltas ngan bsdongs la // lo
gsum gyi dpaya blang / snying gsum gyi rnal blang / de skad bgyis pa
la / rje yab bla bdal drug la // khyim phyi na rgya cig 'khor / bdud
kyi rkya cig 'khor // ltag phyi na rmag cig bab / ltas ngan gyi rmag
cig bab //

His life in imminent danger, two *bon-mo* or female priests conduct a divination (*mo*) and a class of beneficial rites known as *gto* on behalf of Yab-bla bdal-drug.⁶³ In this context, the *gto*, like the *mo*, is an initial diagnostic or divinatory procedure that may have included astrological calculations. The priestesses determine that four *gshen*, those who specialize in the *glud* ritual must be invited. Yab-bla bdal-drug is recorded as compensating them with livestock and providing gold for their ritual performances. He also puts up a boy as the 'small' (nice or pleasing) collateral.⁶⁴ The nature of this security or pledge made on the part of Yab-bla bdal-drug is unclear. This appears to have been some kind of good will gesture or sign of earnestness on his part:

<19:6 to 20:1> The *bon-mo* of the sky sDing-nga sd̄ng-lom and the *bon-mo* of the earth 'Byo-ra 'byor-'jong, these two, with 42 little crystal stones of divination, did the *gto* and *mo* as bDud and Bad Omen arrived. [The *bon-mo* said], 'four *gshen* should be invited. It is good to send four *glud* [makers]. The *bdud-bon* Dreng-nag chu-lcags, the *thar-bon* Dru-skyol, the *glud-bon* Ngag-snyan and gShen-rab myi-bo, these four.' These four *gshen* were invited by Yab-bla bdal-drug. For the gift he gave a cow, and for the ritual constituents (*yas*)⁶⁵ he offered gold. As the nice collateral, a boy was kept.

gnam gyi bon mo sd̄ng nga sd̄ng lom dang / sa 'i bon mo 'byo ra
'byor 'jong gnyis kyi // shel kyi mo rde'u bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis la //
gto dang mo bgyis na / bdud dang ltas ngan bab // gshen bzhi spyang
drang 'tshal / glud bzhi gtang bar bzang // bdud bon dreng nag chu

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

⁶¹ *rMag* (C.T. = *dmag*).

⁶² *Bab*. This could also be translated as 'deployed'/'placed'.

⁶³ According to a work originally written in Chinese, *bon-mo* (*che-mou*) functioned as the mouthpiece of spirits and were involved in the sacrifice of animals, making offerings to the *lha*, 'dre and *srin-mo*, and appeasing the *klu* (Stein 2003: 594). For the *gto* as a diverse class of rites, see Norbu 2009, pp. 188, 189; Dotson 2008, p. 43 (after Lin Shen-yu).

⁶⁴ *gTe'u* (C.T. = *gta'-ma*).

⁶⁵ As in the ritual constituent (*yas*) Ephedra in *bon* (the ritual performance and its underlying philosophical and historical context; ITJ 734r, ln. 3r98): *bon kyi n̄ yas mtshe* /.

lcags dang / thar bon dru skyol dang // glud bon ngag snyan dang /
 gshen rab myi bo bzhi / yab bla bdal drug gyis / gshen bzhi spyen
 drangs so // rngan du ba phul / yas su gser drangs so // gte'u du bu
 bzhang nas /

The text now proceeds to describe the ritual undertakings of the four *gshen* summoned, beginning with Dreng-nag chu-lcags/Dreng-nga dreng-khug. Described as a *bdud-bon*, a priest who propitiates the *bdud*, this figure is either identical or closely related to the *bdud-bon* Kha-ta greng-yug of Eternal Bon. Kha-ta greng-yug is described as clad in a black cloak, wielding an ax (the weapon of choice for the *bdud*) and riding a dark brown horse of the *lda* (a major *bdud* lineage).⁶⁶ The *byol-rabs* furnishes a synopsis of Dreng-nga dreng-khug's propitiation of She-le ru-tshe and his retinue of *bdud*. In the performance, two main ritual instruments are noted: an ornamented arrow and a sacrificial sheep.⁶⁷ Satisfied with what had been offered them, the *bdud* release Yab-bla bdal-drug from their scourge. This freeing of his body is amply conveyed in the text through the use of two metaphors:

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

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

⁶⁷ In the reengineering of ancient religious history by Eternal Bon, it is *gShen-rab* who is supposed to have opposed the bloody immolations of the *bdud-bon*. For example, this abolition is described in the *Srid pa spyi mdos* (Norbu 2009: 79, fn. 7, 89).

forehead (*spyi-gar*) he tied black mouth Ephedra⁶⁸ of the *bdud* to its right flank.⁶⁹ A black spiraling conch was tied to the left flank. A saddle bag of cotton (*ras kyi phrag-sgye*) was loaded on it. The *bdud-bon* Drengnga dreng-khug chanted and chanted⁷⁰ throughout the night, and at dawn he sent the *glud* to whomever the *glud* was offered. These were offered to the hands of the king of the *bdud* She-le ru-tshe, his minister sNya-lde ngag-rtsan, the *bdud* brother Ri-che 'gong-nyag,⁷¹ Nag-po bkrag-med,⁷² [and the orders of the *bdud*] Nyes-po⁷³ and mThongs-po. So, Yab-bla bdal-phrug (*sic*) was rescued from the hands of the *bdud*. The snare⁷⁴ was untied from the neck of the bird. The trap⁷⁵ was cut off the leg of the deer.

bdud bon dreng nga dreng khug gyis // bdud mda' ltong nag la //
bdud dar mth̃ng nag btags / mda' rgyud tshigs gsum la / dpags bu
dra' chags btags // bdud lug nag po spyi gar la // bdud mtshe kha
nag ba 'br̃i g.yas la btags // bdud dung khyil nag ñ / ba 'br̃i g.yon la
btags // ras kyi phrag sgye bkal de / bdud bon dreng nga dreng khug
gyis // srod la bsgyer bsgyer nas // tho ras glud du btang // glud su
la phul na // bdud kyi rgyal po / she le ru tshe dang / blon po snya
lde ngag rtsan dang / bdud kyi jo bo ri che 'gong nyag dang / nag po

⁶⁸ *mTshe*. A primary ritual substance in the archaic funerary traditions of PT 1136 and the Mu-cho'i khrom'-dur. Ephedra, often ritually used with mustard seeds and barleycorn, is a signaling and exorcistic agent. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 376, 379, 381, 382, 402, 410, 437, 523 (fn. 584). Ephedra has been discovered deposited in ancient tombs throughout much of Inner Asia, one of a number of transcultural funerary traditions in the region (for some of these cultural linkages, see *ibid.*). For example, along the southern tier of East Turkestan, the Swedish archaeologist Bergman discovered Ephedra pedicels strewn in several coffins in conjunction with arrows and grains of wheat and millet. He notes that in the Nan-shan region, Tibetans add Ephedra to funerary pyres as a kind of fumigant. See, *op cit.* Bergman 1939, pp. 70–73, 87. One of the three brothers of Tibet's first king, gNya'-khri btsan-po was called mTshe-mi (Ephedra man). He was a *sku-gshen* or *bon-po* class priest. For lore about mTshe-mi, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 274–278; Karmay 1998, pp. 385–388; Sørensen *et al.* 2005, pp. 57 (fn. 68), 155, 156. For the use of Ephedra in an archaic *glud* ritual, see Thomas 1957, *Texts, Translations and Notes*, pp. 56, 57; Stein 1971, p. 507.

⁶⁹ 'Flank' or 'haunch' is a conjectural reading for the term *ba-'bri*.

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

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

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

⁷³ Literally, the 'One of Misfortune/Evil/Injury'.

⁷⁴ *sNyī* (C.T. = *snyi/rnyi*). For the use of snares to capture funerary ritual transport horses in PT 1136, see Bellezza 2008, p. 527.

⁷⁵ *gDos* (C.T. = *gdol*).

bkrag med dang / nyes po dang / mthongs po dang / de rnams kyi
 phyag du phul na // rje yab bla bdal phrug ñ / bdud lag nas blus so
 // bya mgul nas snyī bkrol / sha rkang las gdos bcad do //

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

<20:7 to 21:4> Also, the *thar-bon* Dru-skyol erected the white *thar* tent (*sbra*). A white silk curtain was drawn. A tent of brocade⁷⁶ was erected. A *thar* felt with a striped border was spread out. He collected all kinds⁷⁷ of the *thar* ritual constituents. An arrow shaft with three joints and the ritual presents (*yon*) were distributed to the [patron deities of the] *thar*: an arrow, *bam* (?) and rope, these three;⁷⁸ red-colored⁷⁹ brocade; a purplish *khar-thabs*;⁸⁰ a prized bull (*sham-po*) yak of the *thar*; and a bow⁸¹ were arranged in an orderly manner.⁸² He chanted and chanted throughout the night and at dawn he sent the *glud*. For one third, yes, of the night, for one fourth, yes, of the middle of the night,⁸³ it was offered into the hands of the three *btsan*. The *btsan* became pleased. The exchange between them was equal and it was accepted [by the *btsan*]. In ancient times, the benefit was like that benefit.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ *Za-bug* (C.T. = *za-'og*) *gyi gur*.

⁷⁷ *Cho-rgu* ('all kinds', 'nine kinds'). See *infra*, fns. 91, 205.

⁷⁸ Possibly, this clause can be better translated: "three bunches (*bam*-[*chags*]) of arrows, [each of which was tied with] a rope."

⁷⁹ *drMar-mtshon* (C.T. = *dmar-tshon*).

⁸⁰ C.T. = *mkhar-thabs* (a model house or castle designed for spirits to reside in during Bon ritual performances).

⁸¹ *sKhyogs-dgar* (= *mchog-dgar*). See text *infra*, no. 39, ln. 7. For an occurrence of *mchog-gar* (*sic*) in ITJ 731r, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 536, 537.

⁸² *Dral du mngar* (C.T. = *dngar*).

⁸³ This is the import of the line: *rgung gyi ni bzhi 'brum (na) /*.

⁸⁴ *gNya' phan de ltar phan no /*.

yang thar bon dru skyol gyis // thar sbra dkar mo phub // dar dkar
 yol ba bres // za bug gyi gur phub // thar phying gong bkra' bting //
 thar yas cho rgu bsags / mda' rgyud tshigs gsum dang // thar la nī
 yon du bkye // mda' bam thags gsum dang // drmar mtshon za bug
 dang / smug mtshon khar thabs dang / thar g.yag gsham po dang /
 skhyogs dgar nī dral du mngar // srod la nī bsgyer bsgyer nas // tho
 ras glud du gtang / nam gyi ni sum cha na / rgung gyi ni bzhi 'brum
 na / btsan gsum phyag du phul / btsan sum thugs gyes ste / mnyam
 gnyis brje ru gnang ngo / gna' phan de ltar phan no /

The third *gshen* to work on behalf of Yab-bla bdal-drug was the *glud-bon* Ngag-snyan (Melodious Speech). This specialist in *glud* rituals mainly appeased *bdud* class demons. Ngag-snyan's performance is actually credited with winning back the soul of Yab-bla bdal-drug:

<21:5 to 22:2> Also, what *glud* was sent by the *glud-bon* Ngag-snyan: a golden spindle with a bright turquoise drop-spindle wheel⁸⁵ and a turquoise spindle with a bright golden drop-spindle wheel, [and] a living chough, the bird of the *bdud*, on which a large golden bell was tied. The *glud-bon* Ngag-snyan chanted and chanted throughout the night and at dawn it was offered as the *glud*. It was offered, yes, to whom was it offered? To the three sisters of⁸⁶ rJe-btsun, yes, Pho-ba; rGya-btsun, yes, rMang-ba; g.Yu-btsun nga-ra; these three: A-ma ya-mo, one; Rab-mā de-shor, two; Sho-ma myi-bdag btsun-mo,⁸⁷ these three. It was offered in the hands of the three sisters and three brothers. It was offered in the hands of the younger brother bDud-bzangs ste-'tsher-ba and the elder sister rGu-ri za'i-phwa sangs-ma. It was offered in the hand of Ma-gdon bdud dram-pa. The soul⁸⁸ of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug was exchanged for the *glud*. The benefits were like that.

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

⁸⁵ *Mong-lo* (C.T. synonym = 'phang-lo).

⁸⁶ *Gyis* = *gyi*.

⁸⁷ The text incorrectly reads: btsun-mor.

⁸⁸ *Brla* (C.T. = *bla*). *sKu'i-brla* (*sku'i-bla*) occurs in ITJ 734r and *brla-ma* (*bla-ma*) in PT 1285. For the spelling *brla*, also see para iii of a soul invocation text in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (Bellezza 2008: 619).

phyag du phul // rje yab bla bdal drug kyi brla dang glud du brjes de
/ de ltar phan no /

The fourth and final ritual performance is carried out by gShen-rab myi-bo. He is attributed with carrying out the *byol* itself, a subclass of *glud* rituals. This entailed the elaborate packaging of a heart that came from a sacrificial sheep of the *thar* ritual group. By exchanging this specially prepared sheep heart for that of Yab-bla bdal-drug, the god's life was spared. To my knowledge, the *byol-rabs* is the only Old Tibetan text that directly implicates gShen-rab myi-bo in the ritual sacrifice of an animal:⁸⁹

<22:2–8> Also, gShen-rab sent a *byol* from his body. He mercifully⁹⁰ caught a *thar* sheep. Above the *bdud* pass Yor-mo he [collected] all the various aspects⁹¹ of the *byol* and removed the heart from the body cavity of the *thar* sheep Ya-gangs. It was wrapped up in the dark blue cloth of the *bdud*. As its outer ornament, silk and brocade. As its inner ornament, gold and turquoise. To exchange the beating human heart and beating sheep heart, the beating sheep heart was put⁹² inside a white cloth folded over nine times.⁹³ It was pursued,⁹⁴ it was pursued

⁸⁹ *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*, by Nyang-ral nyi-ma'i 'od-zer (12th century CE), states that a *gyer-bon* (an ancient class of rituals and practitioners) *glud* in the country of sTag-gzig (in this account, localized in northern Pakistan), with its reliance on animal sacrifices, was not in conformance to the teachings of sTon-pa [gshen-rab]. This Buddhist historical reference indicates that by the 12th century CE, Eternal Bon had re-emerged as the religion we know today by repudiating the slaughter of animals commonplace in archaic religious rites. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 233–235. The *glud* rituals of Eternal Bon and Buddhists are still charged with the symbolism of animal sacrifice. In particular, the plant and mineral substances used to make the *ngar-mi* or effigy of the patient treated in the *glud* is described in the liturgies as forms of blood and flesh (Karmay 1998: 345–348; Norbu 1995: 84–86; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 361). The *dpa'-bo* (spirit-mediums) of the Sikkimese Lhopos in Tingchim village have oral texts known as *bon*, which were used to induce a state of trance, in order that they could reach the *bon* paradise where the ancestors and deities reside. Among the *bon* recitations is one recounting the activities of Yum-ma-chen 'dus-gsum sangs-rgyas, who is supposed to have been the daughter of gShen-rab. This daughter is said to have been empowered by all the deities of Tibet through the sacrificial offering of a mythical animal. A king of Yar-lung enlisted Yum-ma-chen's help in ridding his kingdom of malefic entities. With the aid of her deities she catches and kills an animal with the head of a pig, the body of an onager and the voice of a goat. Through the decapitation of this creature all the deities of Tibet (Bod-lha rnam-dgu) are summoned and fumigated. The tail, legs, ribs, liver, lungs, blood, kidneys, intestines, and waste material of the immolated animal are offered to a variety of spirits. For this tale and background on the *bon* recitations of the Lhopos, see *op. cit.* Balikci 2008, pp. 353, 354. Balikci (*ibid.*: 374, 375) hypothesizes that residents of Tingchim village may have migrated to their present homeland from Yar-lung before the people of Mi-nyag arrived in the 13th century CE, taking their *bon* oral traditions along with them.

⁹⁰ *Yang-ngas* (C.T. = *ya-nga*). This word can also be translated as 'compassionately', 'pitifully'.

⁹¹ *Cho-sna-rgu* ('all the various kinds', 'nine kinds'). See *infra*, fn. 205.

⁹² *gSal*. This appears to be an O.T. inflected form of the verb *gsol* (in this context: 'was put into', 'wrapped').

⁹³ This is the probable reading for *dar kar* (C.T. = *dkar*) *gyi rgu* (C.T. = *dgu*) *ldong*. The O.T. verb *ldong* appears to be etymologically related the C.T. term *ldong* (blinded) as kind of concealing or shrouding.

⁹⁴ *gDas* (C.T. = *bdas*).

by whom? It was pursued by the growling wolves of the *bdud*.⁹⁵ It was seen by the *bdud* and it looked like a golden pestle that was decorated and [well] placed. As Yab-bla and the *bdud* became happy, the beating human heart of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug was exchanged for the sheep heart. That was the benefit.

yang gshen rab myi bo 'is // sku las byol cig gtang ba dang / thar lug
yang ngas bzung / bdud la yor mo'i gong du / byol cha sna rgu dang
// thar lug ya gangs kyi khong nas snying phyung ste // bdud dar
mth̃ng nag du dril de // phyi 'i rgyan du dar dang zab / nang gyi
rgyan du gser dang g.yu // myi snying 'phar ba dang / lug snying
'phar ba brje ru // lug snying 'phar ba n̄ dar kar gyi rgu ldong gyi
nang du gsal // gdas ma su la gdas na / bdud kyi spyang ngar 'das //
bdud kyi gzig pa la / gser gyi gtun bu rgyan du bcug pa dra' // yab
bla bdud mnyes nas / rje yab bla bdal drug gyi / myi snying 'phar ba
dang // lug snying du brjes de phan no //

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

<22:8 to 23.4> Also, the flesh of the back of the neck of the argali was dangled here and dangled there.⁹⁶ From the door of *dreng* (?) the nape of the neck of the sheep was cast (*byol*) through the door. Incantations were said on Ephedra and mustard (*nyungs*) seeds on the back of the neck flesh of the argali. Rescued by the *glas* (ritual fare) and *glud*. By the nape of the neck of the sheep, the nape of the neck of the man was rescued. The *byol* flesh forearm, grunting here and grunting there, grunting like a wild yak, was sent. By the *byol* flesh haunch: whose haunch was this haunch? It was cast off as the right haunch of the enemy.⁹⁷ It was cast away to the enemies⁹⁸ and obstructors.⁹⁹ This side

⁹⁵ *bdud kyi spyang ngar 'das* (C.T. = *bdas*) /. This sentence is not well constructed, casting some doubt on its actual meaning.

⁹⁶ *Phas dreng n̄ tshus dreng na* /. In this context, 'dangled' seems the most appropriate gloss for the word *dreng*. This appears to be an O.T. verb form closely related to *'grengs* (placed upright).

⁹⁷ *Gra* (C.T. = *dgra*).

⁹⁸ *Gra'* (C.T. = *dgra*).

of the ribs and that side of the ribs was cast away from the spine (*rtsib gyi gung*). The medicinal flesh rump¹⁰⁰ and *bdud* barley cake *khar-thabs*, fashioned (*btod*) with, yes, four doors of the *byol*, were put inside the *lho-skur* and *mon-skur*.¹⁰¹

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

It is gShen-rab myi-bo who has the honor of finalizing the ritual recovery of the divine sire Yab-bla bdal-drug. As is customary in contemporary *glud* rituals, the *byol* ensemble of offerings was deposited at a major crossroads¹⁰². To consummate the expulsion of the demons, gShen-rab myi-bo shoots a special arrow at the *byol* and casts magically empowered Ephedra and mustard seeds. These exorcistic procedures still find expression in Bodic *glud* rituals carried out today:

<23:4–8> gShen-rab myi-bo displayed mystic hand signals (*phyag-rgya*). He cast away (*bor*) the *byol* at the main crossroads. In ancient times whose *byol* was it? It was the *byol* of the lord Yab-bla bdal-drug. Also, removing an arrow from the quiver when looking at the vane (*sgro*), it is the vane of Ephedra. When looking at the arrow point, yes, it is the arrow point of wood. The *byol* does not like¹⁰³ the arrow point. Incantations were said on Ephedra and mustard seeds (*yungs*) and they were thrown at the residing five 'dre of the body and five enemies. Thus, in ancient times the *byol* was like that. Yab-bla bdal-drug was rescued¹⁰⁴ from his illness by the *byol*. [Once again] he was sleeping and mating.

⁹⁹ *bGags* (C.T. = *bgegs*)

¹⁰⁰ *sMan-sha bzhug-do*. Rather than 'medicinal' *sman* here could also denote 'beneficial'. Another possibility: *sman* = *dman*, an O.T. term related closely in meaning to *dma*' (lower).

¹⁰¹ Apparently, these are types of ritual vessels or baskets. See Bellezza 2008, p. 329 (fn. 374) for a similar occurrence. *Lho-skur*, *mon-skur* and the *rgya-skur* are noted in ITJ 734r, ln. 4r157, as part of an offerings regime in a not unlike ritual performance.

¹⁰² *Shul kyī khri mdo*. I am treating *khri* here to mean 'seat', as in a major or centrally-placed crossroads (*shul kyī mdo*). It is also possible, however, that *khri* is related to the *khri-zhi*, a word that is supposed to be the Zhang Zhung equivalent of 'gro-ba (to go, to walk; Pasar *et al.* 2008: 26).

¹⁰³ *Me-bshed* (C.T. = *me-bzhed*).

¹⁰⁴ 'Rescued' or 'recovered' seems the most appropriate gloss here for the word *shos-pa*. *Shos-pa* appears to be closely related to the C.T. term *bshol* ('canceled', 'refunded', 'rescinded').

gshen rab myi bo 'is phyag rgya 'ol gyis btab // shul kyi khri mdor
 byol de bor / gna' su 'i byol na / rje yab bla bdal drug kyi byol //
 yang ral nas mda' cig phyung nas // sgro bltas nĩ mtshe'i sgro /
 mde'u bltas nĩ shing gyi mde'u / mde'u la nĩ byol me bshed // mtshe
 dang yungs kyis bsngags // lus kyi dre lnga dang / gra' lnga sdod pa
 la 'phangs na // gna' de ltar byol lo / yab bla bdal drug nĩ // snyung
 snyung shos pa 'i byol / gzims gzims bshos pa lags //

The tale of Yab-bla bdal-drug's ritual rescue by gShen-rab myi-bo and his three associates is followed by five more *smrang*, each of which unfolds in a different part of Tibet. These regions include rKong-po, Bal-yul (in gTsang), Yar-lung, sKyi-yul (in dBus), and finally sMra-yul thang-brgyad (in Upper Tibet). Together the five regions selected for the *byol* narratives represent the geographical core and cultural heartland of imperial Tibet. While different languages may have once been spoken and different customs followed in these constituent regions, they are depicted as sharing the same ritual idiom undergirded by a common religious, cultural and social ground. The wide geographic compass of the origin tales demonstrates the universal reach of the *byol* ritual, insomuch as the author(s) and users of the text were concerned. This welding of disparate corners of Tibet in a single ritual system would have proven useful in the cultural integration of the Plateau in the time of the empire and even in its aftermath. Accordingly, practitioners of the *byol* and related rituals must have seen themselves as being accorded a pan-Tibetan socio-religious standing, significantly elevating their stature.

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

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

swine and a sacrificial cock in this *smrang* seems to reflect its eastern Tibetan setting. Another terrible omen described in the text is the spectacle of wild animals locked in mortal combat. The text then goes on to boldly state that the demons in the form of bad omens were banished by the *byol*:

<23:8 to 24:3> The origin tale of the *ltas-ngan*, the origin tale of repulsing the *ltas-ngan*: There in the country, of residences (*khab*), doors (livestock?) and leaders (*btsan*), these three, the disasters (*sd̄ig*) of the *ltas-ngan* appeared. The horses contracted (*byung*) *drug-phrum*. The cattle (*gnag*) contracted *tshe-ma*. The sheep contracted *ro-gal*. The goats contracted *zangs-lan*. The pigs contracted *skar-mda'*. From the sky appeared the stone of the epidemic. Deep cracks¹⁰⁶ appeared on the earth. The vultures fought with their claws. The stags fought with their antlers. The male musk deer fought with their tusks. The fish fought with their tails. For the habitations and livestock these were bad signs.¹⁰⁷ How could these *ltas-ngan* be repulsed (*bzlog*)? The *ltas-ngan* were repulsed by the *byol*.

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

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

¹⁰⁶ *Drum* (C.T. = *grum*).

¹⁰⁷ This sentence is the imprecise signification of the line: *khab sgo mtshungs su ngan (na) /*.

implement, is also a part of the *byol* ensemble, as are decorated long sticks (*shing-rings*) empowered with the incantations of the *bon* and *gshen*. These sticks may be related to the *rgyang-bu* and *pho-tong / pho-gdong*, objects that commonly feature in *glud* and *mdos* rituals. The magical activation of the ritual instruments through the incantations of the *gshen* and *bon* said in tandem epitomizes the complementarity that exists between these two types of priests throughout the *byol-rabs* text.¹⁰⁸ The text goes on to tell us that once the *byol* was commended to the *bdud* and *ltas-ngan*, Myi-rab ru-cho was benefited:

<24:3 to 25:2> The name of the country, yes, is Myi-yul rkyi-mthñg: who was the lord staying there? The lord Myi-rab ru-cho stayed there. What kind of bad omens did the *ltas-ngan* and *bdud* send to Myi-rab ru-cho? They sent the vultures that fight with their claws. Early one morning the Dreng¹⁰⁹ Myi-rab ru-cho went to the peak of the castle [and saw] his iron mount Khug-khug and his copper colt¹¹⁰ 'Phywo-phwo, these two, which were tethered (*brtod*) in a turquoise meadow (*gsing*). On the peak of the castle, seeing the corpses of the two vultures that had fought with their claws, the lord said, 'oh no, what happened here?'¹¹¹ Then with his staff of white copper¹¹² he hit (*brgyab*) the corpses of the vultures that had fought. Casting them off his castle into the turquoise meadow,¹¹³ his iron mount Khug-khug, brave and tame,¹¹⁴ was not spooked.¹¹⁵ The copper colt 'Phywo-phywo of little¹¹⁶ bravery and docility was spooked, thus it cut across the peaks of three mountains. It cut across the folds of three valleys. Like rolling felt, it came to the great sands, the country of rGya thang-myed.

yul gyi mying ba ñ myi yul rkyi mthñg na / / rje ru su bzhugs na / rje
myi rab ru cho bzhugs / myi rab ru cho la ltas ngan dang / bdud kyis
su / / ltas ngan ci btang na / / rgod po sder 'dzings btang / / sang gyi
nam nangs na / dreng myi rab ru cho zhig / / mkhar gyi rtse la gshags
na / chibs lcags ste khug khug dang / zangs ste 'phywo phywo gnyis

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

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

¹¹⁰ *sTe* (C.T. = *rte'u*). This is probably an elision of *ste'* (*ste* 'Phywo-phywo).

¹¹¹ These spoken words represent the rough meaning of the line: 'dñ ci brla ci bshan gsung (nas) /.

¹¹² *bSe'i ltan-kar* (C.T. = *bse yi ldan-dkar*). See Bellezza 2005, p. 182, para ii.

¹¹³ *Ne'u-sing* (C.T. = *na-gsing*).

¹¹⁴ 'Brave and tame' is the general import of the line: *rdal dang sed che (ste)* /.

¹¹⁵ *Ma-drogs* (C.T. = *ma-'drog*).

¹¹⁶ *Khungs* = *chung*.

/ g.yu 'i gsing la brtod de / de gzigs su bzhud bzhud na / rgod po
sder 'dzings kyi ro dang mkhar gyi rtse la mjal na / rje 'i zhal na re /
'dī ci brla ci bshan gsungs nas // bse'i ltan kar gyis rgod po sder
'dzings kyi ro la brgyab // mkhar gyi phyi rol du bor na / g.yu 'i ne'u
sing la / chibs ste khug khug nī // rdal dang sed che ste / ma drogs so
// zangs ste 'phywo phywo ni / rdal dang sed khungs ste drogss na
// rī gsum gyi rtse bcad // lung gsum gyi sul bcad // bye che phying
ltar drīl nas // rgya thang myed kyi yul du mchis /

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

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

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

¹¹⁷ *Phywa-klag*. In the archaic funerary texts of the Dunhuang manuscripts we find the orthographic construction *pya-bklags*.

¹¹⁸ *Bya mtshal-bu* (C.T. = *bya mtsha'-lu*).

prognosticatory (*phyä*) rites, and it is decided that a *byol* must be carried out in order to liberate the victim from the demons. The ensemble of offerings in this ritual includes the obligatory Ephedra, mustard seeds, beer, and barley cakes. It appears that the *srin*, a class of semi-divine telluric beings, were implicated in the dangers confronting Bal-lce rmang-ru-tŭ, for the *byol* features four types of *srin* livestock. These were either ritually sacrificed or banished, but the text is silent on this point. The favorite (*snying-rag*) clothes and possessions of Bal-lce rmang-ru-tŭ noted in the text were most probably used to produce the *ngar-mi* or *zhal*, an effigy of the victim used in the ritual exchange.

The text states that the *byol* had the intended effect of saving the life of the protagonist. The account also informs us that there are three grades of *byol*: greater (*che*), lesser (*chung*) and smallest (*yang-chung*). It is in the greater *byol* that real animals and other prized objects are used. The lesser *byol* is made with facsimiles, but this in no way diminishes its efficacy.¹¹⁹ This tripartite system of classification seems to reflect socio-economic conditions in the time in which the *byol-rabs* was written as much as it does variations in praxis:

<25:8 to 26:4> Also, from where does a *byol* origin tale come from? In Bal-yul Lang-thang, in the 'Bal (*sic*) castle of Kha-rag sgo-rgu, lived Bal-lce rmang-ru-tŭ.¹²⁰ What bad omens were sent to him by the *bdud*? Stags¹²¹ fighting with their horns were sent in front of the gate of the castle. The back of lce rmang-ru-tŭ's [castle] was surrounded by the *bdud*. His forehead was circled by an agent of death (*gshed*). He was surrounded by the *gshed* of bad omens. Performing the *mo* and making the *phyä*,¹²² [it was decided] that it was better [to make] a *byol* for the *ltas-ngan*. It was better to be rescued (*blu*) from the descending *bdud*. What *byol* was made for the *byol*? An oxen and a male hybrid yak of the *srin*, and a horse and mule of the *srin* [were made] as the *byol*. The *byol* [was made] from a platter full of the barley cakes of the *byol*, and a pitcher full of beer (*chang*) of the *byol*, mustard seeds and Ephedra on which incantations were said, favorite clothes, and favorite possessions.

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

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

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

¹²² *Phyo* = *phyä*.

yang byol rabs gcig ga las byung na // bal yul lang thang na // 'bal mkhar kha rag sgo rgu na / bal lce rmang ru t̃i bzhugs ste // de la bdud kyis ltas ngan ci btang na // sha pho ru 'dzings shig / mkhar gyi sgo khar btang la // lce rmang ru ti la ltag phyi bdud kyis 'khor / dpral snga na gshed cig 'khor / ltas ngan gshed kyis 'khor // mo btab phyi klags na / ltas ngan byol bar bzang // bdud bab blu bar bzang / byol ba ci la byol // s̃rin glang mdzo po dang / s̃rin rta dre'u la byol / byol zan sder gang dang / byol chang skyogs gang dang // nyungs dang mtshe la bsngags ste // gos snying rag dang / nor snying rag las byol na //

<26:4–6> lCe rmang-ru-t̃i was luckily benefited. The great *byol* [is made] with actual¹²³ [things]. The lesser *byol* is [made] from substitutes (*gsob*). The extremely small *byol* is [made] with cloth. Whatever is obtained (*phrad*) early is used early in the *byol*. Whatever is obtained later is used later in the *byol*. The *byol* is directed towards the hating enemy.¹²⁴ The *byol* is directed towards the harmful obstacles (*gnod-pa'i bgags*).

lce rmang ru t̃i la phan de bsod do // che ste r̃ngos la byol / chung ste gsob las byol // yang chung ras la byol / snga phrad snga la byol / phyi phrad phyi la byol // sdang ba'i gra' la byol / gnod pa'i bgags la byol //

The third geographically designated *byol-rabs* unfolds in Yar-khyim sogs-kha¹²⁵ and pertains to an ancestral figure known as gShang-spo yo-rgyal-ba (26:6 to 27:5). The evil portent of the *bdud* he beheld was musk deer clashing in a narrow defile. Again, through the execution of the *mo* in tandem with the *phyi* by unknown priests/priestesses, it was determined that a *byol* had to be made. For this purpose, Mus-dpal phrog-rol (*sic*), the *byol* specialist credited with aiding Myi-rab ru-cho of Myi-yul rkyi-mth̃ng, was summoned from the sky.¹²⁶ The text goes on to specify typical offering substances of the *byol* before digressing to present the parentage of an exceptional ape or langur (*spra*) named sNya-bo lag-ring, alias sPra-myi zin-thang-po. Although he is unable to communicate with humans, this divine ally of Mus-dpal phrog-rol was able to directly

¹²³ *r̃ngos* (C.T. = *dn̄gos*).

¹²⁴ *sDang-ba'i gra'* (*dḡra*).

¹²⁵ The Yar-lung region. The history and culture of this region are surveyed in detail in Gyalbo *et al.* 2000; Sørensen *et al.* 2005. Nowadays, Yar-lung sog-kha (*sic*) refers specifically to a site with the ruins of ancient tower structures, which according to the local oral tradition, were first erected before the time of King Srong-btsan sgam-po (Gyalbo *et al.* 2000: 11, 206–208). For mention of Yar-lung sogs-kha in Dunhuang catalogues of principalities, see Lalou 1965, pp. 203, 204, 215ff.

¹²⁶ *gNam nas 'kug* (C.T. = *bkug*).

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

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

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

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

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

¹²⁷ A foundational ritual role for the monkey in a triad that includes the badger and bat (*gcol-chung na-ro bu-tsa / khu-tsa*) is also found in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. As in the *byol-rabs*, these divine creatures or zoomorphic ritual instruments are employed to pacify or dispel evil spirits. See Bellezza 2008, pp. 380–382, 390, 405.

¹²⁸ *Brags* (C.T. = *brag*).

¹²⁹ *sNyin* (C.T. = *snyun*) *kyis zin*.

¹³⁰ *bDab* = *btab*.

¹³¹ *Phyo* = *phya*.

¹³² *Cǐ yang myi thub byol gyis thub /*.

¹³³ *'Kug* (C.T. = *bkug*)

¹³⁴ *Myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *dang bda'* (C.T. = *brda'*) *myi* (C.T. = *mi*) *mjal bar /*.

¹³⁵ *Shol* (C.T. = *bshol*).

dang yang bda' mjal lo // gna' phan de ltar phan // da myis blu phod
na / bdud kyis shol bar phod // myis zlog phod na ltas ngan bzlog ste
mchi bo //

The fourth *byol-rabs* specifying a geographic location transpires in the dBus region of sKyī-yul la-mo 'jing-sngon (27:5 to 29:1). More recently this region was known as sKyī(d)-shod.¹³⁶ The antagonists in this tale are the king of the *ltas-ngan* Gang-par ge-ber and five *bdud* horsemen known as *ram-pa*. In conjunction with an inauspicious nine-headed wolf, four *bdud*, each associated with a different-colored precious substance, appear from their walled-in spheres to attack the protagonist of the story, rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po na-ra. In Tibetan ritual traditions, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, gods and demons of the cardinal directions are often assigned four different colors, while a fifth color represents the center. After the *mo* and *phywa* (*sic*) are conducted to pinpoint the hazard, the *bon-po* of the *byol* ritual Mus-dpal phrogs-rol is once again called for help. The metaphors used to describe the predicament of rMag-btsun gyi rgyal-po nga-ra (*sic*) as well as the objects featured in the *byol* are of the same type found in the *byol-rabs* we have already examined. Likewise, this sKyī-yul origins tale is set in the distant past:

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

byol rabs cig ga las byung na // yul skyi yul la mo 'jing sngon na //
rje ru su bzhugs na // rmag bstun gyi rgyal po na ra shig bzhugs //

¹³⁶ Divided into two parts, the lower region by variant spellings features in the *smrang* of funerary texts in the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur and Dunhuang collections. For sKyī-ro lchang-sngon/sKyī-ro ljang-sngon in the archaic funerary tradition, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 472 (fn. 375), 522, 538, 539. Also see PT 1285 (ln. 100), PT 1286 (ln. 10) and ITJ 734r (ln. 8r316). For the identification of sKyī-lchang with lCang in lower sKyid-shod and La-mo with upper sKyid-shod, see Sørensen *et al.* 2005, pp. 220, 230; Sørensen *et al.* 2007, pp. 17–27; Hazod 2009, p. 172. See also Thomas 1957, "General Introduction", p. 11; Lalou 1965, pp. 201, 202, 215ff.

bdud ram pa rkya lnga 'is // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po gang par ge ber la
 // ltas ngan du ci btang zhus pa la // ltas ngan gyi rgyal po'i zhal na
 re // lcags kyi spyang po 'go rgu bo zhig // ltas ngan du btang ba
 dang // skyi yul la ma 'jing sngon gyi sgo ru babs ste // 'go gcig nas
 ngus pas // 'go rgu kha nas byung ste // de 'i phyi na mar / bdud re
 pa rkya lnga btang ste 'ongs so // dung gyi rgu ra rgu rgyud nas //
 bdud myi dkar rta dkar byung // g.yu 'i rgu ra rgu rgyud nas // rkya
 myi sngo rta sngo byung // zangs kyi rgu ra rgyud nas // rkya myi
 dmar rta dmar byung // gser gyi rgu ra rgu rgyud nas // rkya myi ser
 rta ser byung / bdud rġm pa rkya lnga yang sa la lhags de gshags //

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

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

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

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

¹³⁸ *gNa' phan de ltar phan de bsod do /*.

region now known as the Byang-thang.¹³⁹ It is one of a number of locations mentioned in the Dunhuang catalogues of principalities.¹⁴⁰ The pastoral associations of sMra-yul thang-brgyad are emphasized by the occupation of the sMra patriarch and matriarch's son, sMra then-pa, a horse herder in the upper part of a valley.¹⁴¹ *sMra* as a common noun refers to a type of primal man, as in the *smra mi gshen gsum*, three types of prototypical humans (cf. Norbu 2009: 42, fn. 43). This signification of the word *smra* is closely related to the term *smrang* as a designation for narratives dealing with phenomena characterized as primal or antecedental. The *smrang* were designed to be proclaimed before the ritual they describe was performed. The saying or telling of the *smrang* is itself etymologically linked with the verb *smra* (to utter, to tell). *sMra* also denotes an ethnic or tribal group connected to Zhang Zhung.¹⁴² The Eternal Bon religion views Zhang Zhung as a fountainhead of their traditions (cf. Stein 1959: 51), reflecting Upper Tibet's paleocultural importance in the archaeological record.¹⁴³ The two main applications for the noun sMra/*smra*, therefore, are likely to be interconnected, for both have precedential connotations.

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

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

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

¹⁴¹ *Lung gi ya pu* (C.T. = *phu*).

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

¹⁴³ For comprehensive surveys of archaic cultural monuments and rock art in Upper Tibet see, for example, Bellezza forthcoming-a; forthcoming-b; forthcoming-c; 2008; 2002-a; 2002-b; 2001; 2000, 1999; 1997-a; 1997-b. The identification of much of Upper Tibet with Zhang Zhung in Eternal Bon sources does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants of Upper Tibet before, during, or in the aftermath of the imperial period actually called their homeland Zhang Zhung. As I have already observed, we do not know how the indigenes of Upper Tibet may have referred to their territory in antiquity. Commenting on PT 1285 and its lists of *gshen* and *bon* practitioners, Blezer (2008: 431, 432) identifies the upper reaches of the rTsang-po river as an important ancient religious center, stating that it may have been "the actual historical proto-heartland of 'Bon'". Generally speaking, this is the implication that should be drawn from the textual evidence.

Mra-yul thang-brgyad.¹⁴⁴ In this origins tale, there is a castle called sMra-mkhar ldem-pa in which the father rMa-rje btsun-po and the mother sMra-za 'brang-chung resided. The text records that this father was a deer hunter and the mother a collector of *gro* (*Potentilla anserina*), economic activities commonly but not exclusively associated with the Tibetan upland. Likewise, in a Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur *smrang* about the homicidal *sri* demons set in sMra-yul thang-brgyad, a major figure in the tale is sMra-rje btsan-po, a deer hunter.¹⁴⁵ Ancient deer hunting is very well attested in the rock art record of Upper Tibet. The pastoral character of sMra-yul thang-brgyad is also referred to in another *smrang* about the *sri*, where the female protagonist, Klu-za ye-mo btsun, is described as a herder of sheep.¹⁴⁶ The *sri* responsible for her murder flees to Kha-la rtsang-stod (a location in upper gTsang)¹⁴⁷ and to Yar-yul sogs-ka before being summoned back to sMra-yul thang-brgyad by the *gshen-bon* and *dbal-bon* Gong-rum.

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

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

¹⁴⁵ This *smrang* is examined in *ibid.*, pp. 469–471.

¹⁴⁶ For this *smrang*, see *ibid.*, pp. 471, 472.

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

¹⁴⁸ This first *do-ma* origins tale in PT 1136 is examined in Bellezza 2008, pp. 517–522; Stein 1971, pp. 501, 502. Another location, Byang-kha snam-brgyad, also features in the narratives of the archaic funerary texts of Dunhuang, underscoring the importance of uninhabited northern regions to early historic period religious mythology. In the *Klu 'bum nag po*, Byang-kha sna-brgyad (*sic*) is the place in which deer, antelope and blue sheep are hunted (Bellezza 2008: 485; cf. Stein 2003: 602). As Stein (*ibid.*) notes, in PT 1060 Byang-ka rnam-brgyad (*sic*) is connected to the Turkic country Drugu (see also Bellezza 2008, p. 524). However, rather than Turkic lands proper, a location in the Tibetan uplands seems to be indicated here (*ibid.*). Dotson (2009b) observes that Byang-ka rnam-brgyad in PT 1286 and other catalogues is generally considered synonymous with the Byang-thang. In the *Klu 'bum nag po* and other Dunhuang texts, this toponym with its eight sections does indeed seem to refer to part or all of the Byang-thang, a vast land that lends itself to be partitioned in such a way by its meridian ranges. In the *Klu 'bum nag po* narrative noted above, Tshangs-pa is prefixed to the names of the protagonists, a clan or tribal designation that, given the common meaning of the word (i.e. purified, cleansed), suggests an identification with the upper Yar-chab gtsang-po river valley more than it does the province of rTsang/gTsang per se. In this regard, it must also be noted that Tshangs-lha is one of the nine gods of Zhang Zhung, according to the *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung* (Bellezza 2008: 300, fn. 295). In any event, a hunting expedition to a distant Turkic territory is not in keeping with the storyline in the *Klu 'bum nag po* narrative. Antelope, blue sheep (and deer in early times) are very plentiful in the Byang-thang, obviating the need to travel further north into the Turkic hinterland, which has far fewer numbers of the quarry sought after. A similar land, Byang-ka snam-bzhī, is noted in PT 1068 as a place for hunting deer and antelope (*ibid.*: 538, 539). Moreover, in Byang-kha sna-brgyad, the hunter in the *Klu*

phug is a metaphorical paradisiacal realm, its placement in the north implies a venatic or pastoral character. The geographic association of the sMra tribe or clan with Upper Tibet rather than the northeastern highlands of the Tibetan Plateau is confirmed by the second *smrang* in PT 1136, which speaks of sMa-bu zing-ba'i zing-skyes/sMra-bond gyi zing-pa zing-skyes/sMra-bon zing-ba'i zing-skyes, the son of rTsang ho-de'i hos-bdag and gShen-za'i gyi myed-ma. As we have seen, this family resided in the 'headwaters of the river country', a location probably along the upper reaches of the gTsang-po river (see *supra*, fn. 24). Finally, it is again worth citing the sMra-yul thag-rgyad (*sic*) of ITJ 731r, a location in which the equestrian arts originated according to this text. This equestrian mythology is culturally and archaeologically consonant with the highland identity of sMra-yul.

The final origins tale in the *byol-rabs*, which is set in *sMra-yul thang-brgyad*, has as one of its most important characters a man named sMra then-pa, and is by far the longest *smrang* in the *byol-rabs* text. The sheer length of the story (it is as long as the other five *smrang* combined) mirrors the formative nature of the sMra tribe and country in the origin tales of the archaic funerary rituals of the Dunhuang manuscripts and Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur. The role accorded the sMra in this literature underlines the importance of Upper Tibet as a cultural wellspring, a widely held perception in Eternal Bon-po historiography, which is certainly borne out by archaeological findings in the region. This is not to say that Upper Tibet was the only foundation of Tibetan civilization, to the contrary, it was one of several constituent regions spread across the Tibetan Plateau, which contributed to the cultural-scape of imperial period Tibet. The composite geographic nature of imperial period cultural traditions is well illustrated by the territorial scope of funerary transport horses in PT 1060. These *do-ma* are associated with 12 different Tibetan principalities, as well as Drugu (Dru-gu/Gru-gu) in the Turkic lands north of Tibet. PT 1060 places the headwaters country (*yul-chab gyi ya-bgo*) in southwestern Tibet as part of Zhang Zhung, confirming the localization assigned the second origins tale in PT 1136 (see *supra*, fn. 24).¹⁴⁹

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

¹⁴⁹ For an analysis of the *do-ma* (psychopomp horses) tradition in PT 1060, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 522–524. Among these 13 territories is the 'headwaters of the river country' (*yul-chab gyi ya-bgo*), which is closely associated with the legendary castle Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar (in PT 1060 the country of Kha-la stsang-stod and its rTsang lord, *lha*, servant, and horse have no

The formative role played by Upper Tibet as a generator or incubator of important Tibetan cultural traditions, as implied in the Old Tibetan documents and manifested in Eternal Bon texts, must be understood in a very broad chronological context. The deep-rooted nature of the ensemble of archaic residential and ceremonial monuments in Upper Tibet and the absence of foreign epigraphy for the protohistoric period (circa 100 BCE–630 CE), indicate that the Tibetan highland was not open to major cultural intrusions during this era. As I have considered earlier (2008), based on the morphology and chronology of the characteristic funerary pillar monuments of Upper Tibet, the era of intensive cultural interchange with north Inner Asia appears to predate the protohistoric period. The ubiquity and uniformity of the Upper Tibetan *sui generis* residential structures (all-stone corbelled edifices) and funerary pillars (walled-in pillars and arrays of pillars appended to temple-tombs) of the protohistoric period reveal a land and people that enjoyed a stable and enduring cultural bedrock. In part, this perdurability was a function of geography, for no land is as high as Upper Tibet. Exacerbated by Late Holocene climate degradation, its forbidding environment must have prevented whatever foreign cultural inputs there were from materially affecting the monumental assemblage of the region. It was in an insulated environment such as this that abstract cultural traditions could also be nurtured and propagated. In contrast, the northeastern Tibetan Plateau, which is in closer proximity to the Silk Road,

direct connection to this headwaters region). The headwaters region of southwestern Tibet potentially encompasses the headwaters of the four rivers (Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej and Karnali) that arise in southwestern Tibet, all within 150 km of the fabled Mount Ti-se. It extends as far east as rTa-mchog kha-'babs and the rTa-mchog gtsang-po and as far west as the so-called Glang-chen kha-'babs, sacred springs near present-day gDan-chu dgon-pa. These springs are situated not 30 km from ruins known as mKhar-gdong, a site identified in Eternal Bon sources as those of Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar/dngul-mkhar (the merits of this identification are discussed in Bellezza 2002, pp. 37–39; and in more detail in forthcoming-c). In PT 1060, this castle and its king, Lig-snya-shur, are associated with [Zhang Zhung] Gu-ge, a well-known badlands region of western Tibet, which begins immediately west of the strategically important mKhar-gdong site. In this account of the *do-ma* of the headwaters of the river country, two Zhang Zhung gods (*lha*) are mentioned by name, Mu-rgyung and sTang-rgyung, alluding to a territorial link between the headwaters of southwestern Tibet and Zhang Zhung. An allusion to Zhang Zhung is also made by the inclusion of King Lig-snya-shur in the account (in 644/645 CE, a Lig-snya-shur, king of Zhang Zhung, was defeated by King Khri srong-rtsan, see Dotson 2009, p. 82; Uray 1972, 35, 41). The association of *yul-chab gyi ya-bgo* with Zhang Zhung was first noted by Lalou (1965: 190, 204). See also Stein 1971, p. 492 (fn. 37). Furthermore, the headwaters of the river country is the first and longest of the *do-ma* accounts in PT 1060, and the text itself notes that it sets the precedent for the *do-ma* lineages that follows. This state of affairs implies a cultural paramountcy for Upper Tibet, as regards the crucial funerary tradition of *do-ma*. 'Headwaters of the river country', as the source of a major river, appears to be a metaphor for the primary geographic origin or vector of ritual transmission of the *do-ma* tradition. Zhang Zhung is the first territory mentioned in the catalogues of PT 1286 and PT 1290, while sMra-yul thag-brgyad (*sic*) holds this honor in the first list of PT 1285 and dMu in the second list of this text (Lalou 1965: 215). For the efferent-afferent and male-female dichotomies reflected in the pair *chab gyi ya-bgo* and *chab gyi ma-gshug* ('lower tail of the river') of the PT 1285 and PT 1060 catalogues, see Dotson 2008, pp. 56–60, Stein 1971, p. 492 (fn. 37). The mythic origin of the four rivers arising in southwestern Tibet, according to an Old Tibetan source, is studied in a forthcoming paper on archaic funerary traditions. See Bellezza forthcoming-d.

was buffeted by a host of cultural forces over time. The portion of the Plateau known to the Tibetans as A-zha had a strong Turco-Mongolian makeup, while the ancient region of Mi-nyag was conterminous to the Gansu Corridor, a region of extremely high cultural interactivity, recalling other major Eurasian cross-roads such as the Panjab and Balkh. While significant cultural and social innovations are likely to have reached Tibet from the northeast in the protohistoric period (this was certainly the case in the imperial period), its innate cultural dynamism may have dissuaded imperial period Tibetans from seeing this region as the prime source of critical ritual traditions. The same may be observed for the southeastern regions of the Tibetan Plateau: the presence of many different ethnic and linguistic groups may have rendered it unsuitable as a fountainhead of Tibetan culture, at least as far as imperial period Tibetan religionists were concerned. How different for Upper Tibet, a cultural sanctuary of sorts; its ritual practices were accorded a key place in the early historic period. The same can generally be observed for Central Tibet (rTsang to rKong-po). Its ancestral cultural traditions were lent much weight in Old Tibetan documents. Nonetheless, it was Upper Tibet and its pastoral and venatic way of life that appears to have been most influential in the formation and codification of imperial period non-Buddhist ritual traditions.

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

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

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

steeds¹⁵¹ in the upper part of a valley. The sister and female sibling sMra-lcam si-le-ma.

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

<29:5 to 30:1> In the *klu* castle of rTse-rgu'i khri-po the father was named Klu-rje btsan-po and the mother and matriarch was named rDog-za g.yas-mo btsun. These two mated and the son of the season was Klu-rab bzang-to-re. He was born as the male issue¹⁵² and there was no one better than him. He and sMra-lcam sil-ma (*sic*), these two, fell in love.¹⁵³ At the edge of a blue (verdant) meadow they spread out a white felt of *byam* (love?). On the water they cast some unspoiled [offerings].¹⁵⁴ Doing that, they mated.¹⁵⁵ When the time came to dip water,¹⁵⁶ rain was falling from above. When the time came to weed,¹⁵⁷ 100 pigeons and 100 choughs were the *byur*.

klu mkhar rtse rgu'i khri po na // yab klu rje btsan ba dang // ma
dang yum smos na / rdog za g.yas mo btsun gnyis / bshos dang nams
kyi sras / klu rab bzang to re // stangs pho cig skyes pa la / de las
bzang ma mchis / smra lcam sil ma gnyis / skyes bu na chung bgyis
// gsing ma sngo mtha' ru // byam phying dkar bting nas / myi rul
de chab gang la ru bor // zhing mchis pa la // bshos zhing ra snga
dor bdun ni // chab bcu ran na / char pa yas se bab // nyur ma yur
ran na / phug ron brgya dang / skyung kha brgyas byur yang lags //

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

¹⁵¹ rTa 'tsho rmang skyong. On the word *rmang*, see Thomas 1957, Text IA, pp. 9–16; 20–28; Bellezza 2008, p. 521 (fn. 567). On the Tibeto-Burman linguistic origins of *rmang*, see Coblin 1974.

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

¹⁵³ *sKyes-bu* (young man) *na-chung* (young woman) *bgysis*. This literally means, 'did as a young man and young woman'.

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

¹⁵⁵ *Zhing mchis-pa la / bshos zhing ra...* /. This second line concludes with the words: *snga dor bdun ni*, which is of unknown import.

¹⁵⁶ *Chab-bcu* (to collect water by dipping a ladle).

¹⁵⁷ *Nyur ma-yur* = *Yur ma-yur* (see no. 30, ln. 3 of the text).

sMra then-ba becomes deeply resentful of his sister and goes to confront her paramour. Perhaps he was so antagonistic towards the liaison of sMra-lcam si-le-ma and Klu-rab bzang-to-re because they belonged to different tribes, but the text is mute on this subject. When sMra then-ba arrives he slays Klu-rab bzang-to-re with his sword. Despite being mortally wounded, Klu-rab bzang-to-re is able to retaliate by hurling a metallic thunderbolt at sMra then-ba. Not wanting to lose her brother as well, sMra-lcam si-le-ma intervenes by magically shielding sMra then-ba. Her brother saved, sMra-lcam si-le-ma proceeds to bury Klu-rab bzang-to-re in a deep pit:

<30:1–5> A herdsman of cattle¹⁵⁸ looked and saw sMra-lcam si-le-ma and Klu-rab bzang-to-re, these two. All the day these two did not take their eyes off each other.¹⁵⁹ All night they did not pass beyond the edge of the felt.¹⁶⁰ In the daytime [sMra-lcam si-le-ma] did not weed (*yur ma-yur*). In the nighttime she did not collect (*myi-gtong*) water. [The herdsman] told [sMra-lcam si-le-ma's] brother [all these things]. From then on, the familial affection (*mdza'-sdug*) between them was spoiled in hatred (*sdang 'phra-ma*). sMra then-ba went to see Klu-rab bzang-to-re and sMra-lcam si-le-ma. He took the sword¹⁶¹ *lom rked chod*¹⁶² and struck [Klu-rab bzang-to-re], cutting him asunder at the waist. He was killed (*bkum-mo*).

phyug gyi bo mos bltas de gzigs pa las // smra lcam si le ma dang //
 klu rab bzang to re gnyis // nyin zhing spyang gyi zur myi dre //
 mtshan zhing byam phyang mtha' myi dre // bshos zhing ra snga la
 // nyin zhing yur ma yur // mtshan zhing chab myi gtong // mying
 po'i snyan du zhus // mdza' sdug gi bar du / sdang 'phra ma de nas
 byung / smra then ba yang / klu rab bzang to re dang // smra lcam si
 le ma'i drung du mchis de // ral gyi dre lom rked chod brgyab ste //
 rked pa bcad de bkum mo //

<30:5–8> Klu-rab bzang-to-re made a thunderbolt fall from the sky. It appeared as an iron pestle as large as a six to seven year old yak (*g.yag-drus*). sMra-lcam lcam si-le ma (*sic*) threw a *me-long rgya-long*¹⁶³ filled¹⁶⁴ with water at sMra then-ba. That was placed right on top of sMra then-ba's head. That [iron pestle] hit there. Its [magic power] was

¹⁵⁸ *Phyug gyi bo-mo* (C.T. = *phyugs gyi bu-mo*).

¹⁵⁹ This sentence is the imprecise translation of the line: *nyin zhing spyang gyi zur myi dre /*. The meaning of the verb *dre* is unclear.

¹⁶⁰ *mtshan zhing byam phyang mtha' myi dre /*. As the meaning of the verb *dre* is in question, the actual reading of this sentence may differ somewhat from that given in the translation. The next line of the text has something to do with the couple making love: *bshos zhing ra snga la /*.

¹⁶¹ *Ral gyi dre* (C.T. = *ral-gri*).

¹⁶² The name of the sword includes the phrase 'waist-cutter'.

¹⁶³ This probably denotes some kind of shiny round basin used in ritual activities.

¹⁶⁴ *bKang* (C.T. = *khengs*, derived from *gang*)

neutralized¹⁶⁵ and he was saved. sMra-lcam si-le-ma cast (performed) the *chab-gang* [rite] for the *klu*. She dug¹⁶⁶ a hole layer by layer nine spans deep [and placed] the corpse (*spur*) of Klu-rab bzang-to-re [in it].

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

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

<30:8 to 31:3> Klu-rje zing-brtsan (*sic*) waited for his son day after day for a month but he did not come. The *klu* lord said, 'the father has become old as the son is lost (*stor-ro*).' Saying, 'woe unto me, I am heartsick',¹⁶⁷ he put a worn out hat on top of his head and took a white copper staff in his hand. The path of a year he cut (passed) in a month. The path of a month he passed (*bcad*) in a day. Although he searched for his son, he did not find him. He [made] a torrent¹⁶⁸ fall from the sky. He made a conflagration¹⁶⁹ blaze (*g.yos*) from the earth. He also passed through¹⁷⁰ the nine layers of the earth (*sa rġm-rgu*) but did not find his son.

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

¹⁶⁵ *rDugs*. This O.T. word is etymologically related to C.T. terms such as *thabs-sdugs* (declined abilities).

¹⁶⁶ The O.T. verb *gsal* is employed here; its action determinable by the context of the sentence.

¹⁶⁷ *Za ma snying re na*. sNying *re-na* can also be translated as 'very sad', 'despondent', 'forlorn', 'inconsolable', 'downcast', or 'miserable'. *Za-ma* is an O.T. word (forms of which appear to be used in certain contemporary Tibetan dialects) that denotes something to the effect of 'I, myself'.

¹⁶⁸ *sKyin-dang*. The meaning and variant spellings of this word are discussed in Dagkar 2003, pp. 39, 113, 114. See Stein (1971: 545, 546) for a discussion on *skyin-dang* and *rman-dang* and their association with calamities. See also PT 1285, lns. v32, v33, for a torrent falling/not falling from the sky (*skyin-dang gnam las babs / myi 'bab*).

¹⁶⁹ *rMan-dang* (C.T. = *rma-dang*). This word is noted in Dagkar 2003, p. 113. In PT 1285, lns. v32, v33 (*rman-dang chu ngu sa las myi g.yos*) and ITJ 731r, ln. r39 (*rman-dang g.yos kyi 'og*), we find very similar applications of the term.

¹⁷⁰ *bZlog*. 'Passed through' appears to be the contextual meaning of this O.T. verb.

dang gnam las bab // rman dang sa las g.yos // sa rŋm rgu bzlog yang
bu ma rnyed do //

The story now focuses on the murderer sMr̄a then-ba. At the site of the evil deed he meets a *lha* and a *srin*, a pair who appear to be guardians of the life-force. These divine figures sit on the same felt that the ill-fated couple made love on. Through potent proverbs these two forthrightly condemn sMr̄a then-ba's actions, and he is made to face a tribunal of *lha* and *srin*. The accused pleads his case by stating he did not kill Klu-rab bzang-to-re for personal gain. Although it is not elaborated in the text, sMr̄a then-ba relies on the defense that his was an honor killing, a form of homicide far less grave than murder committed in the course of a robbery. In any case, sMr̄a then-ba owns up to his crime. Also present at the hearing was Klu-rje Zin-brtsan (*sic*), who was not at all pleased by this admission. The Klu patriarch and sMr̄a son begin to fight but it is broken up by the chief *lha*, Lha-btsan bas dang-rje. Interestingly, the text notes that the custom of intervening in conflicts between rival parties began with this incident. This *dpe-srol* or historical precedent for an established practice, once again drives home that for the authors of the *byol-rabs*, the constituent origin tales were set in distant times. Thanks to Lha-btsan bas dang-rje, sMr̄a then-ba once again avoids being killed. Not to be denied his revenge, Klu-rje zin-brtsan resorts to various magical means to apprehend the killer of his son, but they prove ineffective:

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

¹⁷¹ This clause is the possible meaning of *lag pa sor bkod pa*.

¹⁷² These binary figures are described performing *myi 'i srog la brgyas (ste)* /. This has something to do with an action made to the life-force of humans; perhaps its augmentation.

¹⁷³ *Yang bya-ba mangs-pa* (C.T. = *mang-po*).

¹⁷⁴ *sGo* = *sga*.

¹⁷⁵ *bKag* = *bkas*.

¹⁷⁶ *rGya-ba/brgya-ba*. This word has the connotation of 'united' or 'all together', as in the textual phrase, *lha srŋn rgya-ba*.

¹⁷⁷ This clause is the approximate meaning of the line: *sgyu-lta* (C.T. = *rgyu-lta*) *yongs yang che* /.

lha btsan bas dang rje dang / sr̄in btsan rgu bo kha gnyis kyis / myi 'i
 srog la brgyas ste // gs̄ing ma sngo mtha' ru // byam bu dkar bting
 nas // lag pa sor bkod pa'i drung du bsdad na / smra then ba yang
 bya ba mangs pas / rang gyi srid phung // rta bya ba mangs pas gser
 gyi sgo chag chu bya ba mangs pas / dog mo'i gzhung bkag ste // lha
 sr̄in brgya ba'i drung du byon / lha btsan bas dang rje 'i zhal na re //
 smra then ba khyod / sgyu che la 'phrul drag zer na // de ltar sgyu
 che 'phrul drag na // nged lha sr̄in rgya ba'i zhal che chod bgyis na //
 smra then ba'i zhal nas // sgyu lta yongs yang che / de ltar ma lags de
 / klu rab bzang to re // klu zing brtsan gyi bu yang / ngas bsad na /
 de skad bgyis pa la //

<32:1–9> Klu-rje Zin-brtsan (*sic*) said, 'You, the evil doer, finished¹⁷⁸ my son', so Klu-rje btsan-ba (*sic*) and sMra then-ba fought. Lha-btsan bas dang-rje broke up¹⁷⁹ these two. The [custom] of breaking up a fight began then. [Lha-btsan bas dang-rje] held Klu-rje zin-brtsan and sMra then-ba escaped. Klu-rje zin-brtsan threw a magical mirror bearing visions and a magical white conch mirror, these two, [at sMra then-ba]. What magically appeared in that magical mirror bearing visions and the magical white conch mirror? A magical armored man (*myi-zhub*) and armored horse (*rta-zhub*),¹⁸⁰ these two, magically appeared. sMra then-ba also had great magical power.¹⁸¹ sMra then-ba sensed that [these armored figures were coming at him]. sMra then-ba magically appeared as two doe. Sometimes [the doe] were behind [the armored figures]. Sometimes [the doe] were in front of them. [The doe] escaped ahead,¹⁸² so the armored man let them go. Klu-rje btsan-ba came there. He asked where¹⁸³ sMra then-ba was. The armored man replied, 'sMra then-ba did not come.'¹⁸⁴ He said, 'Two doe came.' Klu-rje btsan-ba retorted, 'You are like one with completely useless magical power.'¹⁸⁵ Thus he spoke.

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

¹⁷⁸ *Thong-bo*. In some Kham and Hor dialects *thong* describes an activity done or finished.

¹⁷⁹ This is the contextual meaning of *shugs mo bshugs*. The C.T. equivalent of this expression is not immediately apparent to me.

¹⁸⁰ An armored horse (*rta-zhub*) along with its man of iron rider as swift as the wind and lightning, as part of a series of offerings, is found in PT 126, lns. 133, 136.

¹⁸¹ *rDzu-phrul* (= *rdzu-'phrul*) *che*.

¹⁸² This clause is the rough translation of: *snga la dros* (C.T. = *bros*) *de bgyis* (*pas*) /.

¹⁸³ *Grar* = *gar*.

¹⁸⁴ *Yung ngo* = *ma yung ngo*.

¹⁸⁵ This sentence is the general import of the line: *rdzu 'phrul ma rus pa khyod gra'* (C.T. = '*dra*) *ba yin no* /.

dung long dkar po gnyis 'phangs pa la // 'phrul kyi me long snang
 long de dang // dung long dkar po de / cir ru brdzus na // 'phrul kyi
 myi zhub rta zhub gnyis su brdzus de // smra then ba yang rdzu
 phrul che ste // smra then bas tshor de // smra then ba sha ba yu mo
 gnyis su rdzus ste // re shig phyi nas dro' // re shig sngun nas dro
 zhing // snga la dros de bgyis pas // myi zhub gyis yang btang ste //
 klu rje btsan ba der byon de // smra then ba'i gar bgyis na // myi
 zhub gyi mchid nas // smra then ba ni yung ngo // sha ba yu mo
 gnyis la yung ngo bgyis na // klu rje btsan ba'i zhal nas // rdzu
 'phrul ma rus pa khyod gra' ba yin no // zhes gsungs ste /

The narrative continues to describe the hot pursuit of sMra then-ba by a formidable apparition, a man girt for battle, but Klu-rje btsan-ba's magic is countered at every turn. sMra then-ba's main stratagem is to take the form of doe, yaks and tigers, fooling the armored man in every instance. sMra then-ba finally finds shelter in the great castle of rMa pho-'bra, the seat of the *lha* of Me-nyag. Me-nyag (Mi-nyag), described as a northern land (*byang-phyogs*), presumably refers to an ancient region in the extreme northeastern corner of the Tibetan Plateau, extending east of mTsho-sngon (Kokonor) and north almost as far as the Ordos.¹⁸⁶ Despite Klu-rje btsan-ba unleashing a terrific attack on the Me-nyag castle, Byang-ka dmar-mo, it withstands the onslaught. Consequently, sMra then-ba flees to the castle of gNam-gsas phyi-rum, a god who is described as the *lha* of *bon* in the west (*nub phyogs na bon gyi lha*). The word *bon* here denotes the body of non-Buddhist ritual traditions, leaving aside any broader connotations it might have had for the author(s) of the text. Given the localization of gNam-gsas phyi-rum in the west and the inclusion of *gsas* in his name, the lexical equivalent of *lha* (rendered in the Zhang Zhung language as *sad*),¹⁸⁷ it appears that sMra then-ba sought refuge on the opposite end of the Tibetan Plateau. The great physical distances involved in the flight of sMra then-ba, help lend the narrative its epic quality.

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

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

¹⁸⁷ The word *gsas* and *sad* and their various compound forms are presented in the lexicons of Dagkar 2003; Martin 2001-b; Haarh 1968; Pasar *et al.* 2008. The same or similar deity, gNam-gsas dbyings-rum, is found in a 13th century good fortune summoning text compiled by Bruston rgyal-ba as one of the gods of the cardinal directions, which serves as the basis for good fortune capabilities (*g.yang*; Bellezza 2005: 456–458). Another related god is gNam-gsas khyung-rum, who appears in an apotropaic ritual of the Mu-cho'i khrom-'dur (Bellezza 2008: 446). gNam-gsas is one of five *gsas* gods connected to Tibetan royal bloodlines (Karmay 1998: 47).

<33:1-7> Also, [Klu-rje btsan-ba] sent the [armored man] ahead.¹⁸⁸ sMra then-ba also sensed that. He magically appeared as two six to seven year old yaks. These were fighting up ahead and when seen by the armored man, the doe looked like demons.¹⁸⁹ There were just two yaks. Klu-rje btsan-ba came there and said, 'where are the doe?' The armored man replied, 'The doe and yaks, these two, are fighting. Klu-rje btsan-ba saying, 'that is them', dispatched (*'phangs*) the [armored man] in front of the two six to seven year old yaks. sMra then-ba sensed that. He magically appeared as two tigers that were fighting. sMra then-ba escaped to the northern castle of the *lha* of Me-nyag, rMa pho-'bra, [which had] four sides, four gateways in the sides and doors of *bse*,¹⁹⁰ and was as high in the sky almost as far as an arrow can reach.¹⁹¹

yang sngun du 'phangs ste // yang smra then bas tshor de // g.yag drus gnyis su brdzus de // sngun du 'thab cing mchis na // myi zhub kyis bltas na // sha ba yu mo ni 'dri dra' na / g.yag gnyis gda' na // klu rje btsan ba de ru byon nas // sha ba yu mo gar re gsung ste // myi zhub mchid nas / sha ba yu mo dang g.yag gnyis 'thab cing mchis na // klu rje btsan ba yang de kho na yin no gsung ste // g.yag drus gnyis sngun du 'phangs na' // smra then bas tshor de // stag gnyis su brdzus de // 'thab cing mchis na // smra then bas ni / byang phyogs kyis me nyag kyis lha // rma pho 'bra mkhar logs bzhi / byad kyis logs sgo bzhi / bse'i sgo // gnam la mda' rgyang gyis myi lcebs pa'i nang du bros de // mchis na' //

<33:7 to 34:3> Klu-rje btsan-ba ordered (*bka'-gsal*) that the *lha* of Me-nyag, rMa pho-bra (*sic*), remove sMra then-ba. Dispatching hundreds of armored men and armored horses of *bse*, Klu-rje btsan-ba became enraged. He let fall a torrent from the sky. He ignited a conflagration on earth. [The castle] Byang-ka dmar-mo nearly (*ma-khad*) collapsed from the summit and nearly collapsed from the foundation, [but] he could not defeat rMa pho-'bra (*sic*). Thereafter, the *lha* of *bon* in the west, gNam-gsas phyi-rum's¹⁹² castle: the four sides were the sides of iron, the eaves were the three eaves of turquoise, the roof was the three roofs of silk, and the doors were the doors of conch. [sMra then-ba] escaped inside that [castle]. Klu-rje btsan-ba led the *klu* army. They appeared at the gateway of [the castle of] gNam-gsas. He let fall a torrent from [the sky] and he ignited a conflagration from the earth.

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

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

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

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

¹⁹² *Gyis* = *gyi*.

klu rje btsan ba 'is / me nyag kyi lha rma pho bra la // smra then ba
 phyung zhig par bka' gsal // bse 'i myi zhub brta zhub brgyas //
 bskyal bas / klu rje btsan ba khros de / skyin dang gnam las phab //
 rma 'dang sa las g.yos // byang ka dmar mo rtse nas 'gyel ma khad //
 rmang nas 'gyel ma khad // rma pho 'bra ma thub ste // de nas nub
 phyogs na bon gyi lha gnam gsas phyi rum gyis // mkhar logs bzhi
 lcags gyi logs // bad gsum g.yu'i bad // thog gsum ni dar gyi thog //
 sgo dung gyi sgo / de 'i nang du bros de // klu rje btsan ba 'is / klu
 rmag drangs de // gnam gsas kyi sgor lhags de // skyin dang bab pa
 las / rman dang sa las byung ba la //

<34:3–8> Moreover, gNam-gsas phyi-rum's [head was covered] all
 around in tiger skins, so many¹⁹³ tiger skins. He was with a tiger-skin
 helmet. [His body was clad] all around in iron, so much iron. He was
 with a *phu-nu*¹⁹⁴ of iron. He wore¹⁹⁵ a *ber-chen* (greatcoat) of iron. In his
 right hand he held up a chain lasso¹⁹⁶ 990 spans long. If looked up at he
 was a blazing fire, *lams se lams*.¹⁹⁷ If looked down upon he was glowing
 embers, *rums se rums*.¹⁹⁸ The light of the fire, *lams se lams*. The light of
 the fire struck the *klu* and water. The *klu* and water dried up. They
 could not submerge (*ma-nub*) even half the castle. The *lha-gsas* of *bon*,
 gNam-gsas phyi-rum, was victorious. Klu-rje btsan-ba was bested and
 defeated.

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

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

¹⁹³ *Shing du* (C.T. = *shin du*).

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

¹⁹⁵ *bsNams* = *mnab* (wore).

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

¹⁹⁷ *Lams se lams* is a non-lexical poetic flourish that conveys the extremely bright quality of a
 blazing fire.

¹⁹⁸ *Rums se rums* conveys the turbulent motion of red hot coals.

¹⁹⁹ This is 77 times more than the blood money given as compensation for the slaying of the
 highest status ministers of the Tibetan empire. In PT 1071, a text that stipulates legal measures

century Tibet, the *srang* was a unit of currency with a set value in silver or gold.²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the identity and intrinsic value of the *srang* in the prehistoric or early historic context is unclear. As in more recent times, the *srang* of early times may have been in the form of silver or gold bullion. Ancient forms of currency may also have encompassed cowry shells (*mgron-bu*), patterned agates (*gzi*) or perforated laminae (*byang-bu*), among other things. The guilty party is clearly exasperated by this judgment and he exclaims that not only is it more money than all humans hold, it even exceeds the potential increase of all livestock.

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

<34:8 to 35:1>The *lha* acted as the witnesses (*gzu*) and arbitrators (*dpang*). For the blood money for the murder of Klu-rab bzang-to-re, it was decided that Klu-rje btsan-ba was to receive 770,000 *srang*. That was the judgment rendered (*zhal che bcad*).²⁰¹ [sMra then-ba said], '770,000 *srang* – even the wealth of all humans²⁰² is not enough (*myi-lang*). Even the fecundity of all domestic animals is insufficient (*myi-khor*). I am unable to pay' That he said.

lha'is gzu dang dpang bgyis ste // klu rje btsan ba la // klu rab bzang
to re bsad pa'i stong du // srang bdun khri bdun 'bum / gsol cig par
bcad nas // zhal che bcad nas su // srang bdun khri bdun 'bum ni //
dreng myi 'i nor gyis yang myi lang ngo // dud phyugs kyi 'phel kyis
yang myi khor ro // 'jal myi nus so bgyis pa la //

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

²⁰⁰ For *srang* as a unit of currency and unit of measurement, see Bertsch 2002, pp. 3–5.

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

²⁰² *Dreng-myi* (C.T. = *'grang-mi*); literally: 'bipedal humans'.

<35:1–4>Klu-rje btsan-ba, heartbroken and anguished, fielded²⁰³ an army of *klu*. He also fielded the army of the king of the *ltas-ngan*, Gang-par ge-ber. He also fielded the 13 *yab-bla bdud-po* of the upper valley and the 12 *ma-bla bcud-po* of the lower valley,²⁰⁴ and each and every kind²⁰⁵ of *yi-dags*. [The custom of] fielding an army began then. sMra then-ba was like a little bird nearly taken in a *gtor*.²⁰⁶ He was like a fish nearly snatched in a *tshed*.²⁰⁷

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

In desperation, sMra then-ba turns to gShen-rab myi-bo to save him from his enemies. sMra then-ba asks this venerable priest of the *gshen* lineage (called 'father' (*pha*) as a term of respect for his high priestly position)²⁰⁸ if he has the four types of prerequisite rites. gShen-rab myi-bo replies that he does indeed possess these therapeutic measures. As a first step, ablutions (*mtshan* = *tshan*) to the *lha* must be made. The *tshan* is a class of rites that relies on methods of lustration, which acts as a prelude to other ritual exertions. The *tshan* is carried out to purify the defilement of deities caused by human actions, thereby reestablishing a concord between both parties.²⁰⁹ The text also intimates another essential preliminary practice, that of fumigation. This fundamental ritual

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰⁹ There are two major types of *tshan*: *tshan-dkar* (uses substances such as water and milk) and *tshan-dmar* (uses substances such as blood). *Tshan* rites are studied in Norbu 1995, pp. 112–124, Karmay 1998, pp. 389–412.

operation is conducted for the purification and propitiation of the deities using aromatic substances (*bsang-gsol*):

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

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

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

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

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

²¹² For mention of Bla-bo bla-sras in ITJ 734r, also see lns. 88, 100. In the divination text ITJ 740, Lha-bo lha-sras delivers prognoses, along with other prominent deities such as Thang-lha ya-bzhur, 'O-de gung-rgyal, Yar-lha sham-po, and Sha-med gangs-dkar [now commonly known as Jo-mo gangs-dkar]; see Dotson 2007: 22–25). Dotson (*ibid.*) also notes that in the Buddhist histories *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* and *mKhas pa lde'u*, Lha-bo lha-sras is associated with the descent of King gNya'-khri btsan-po from heaven to earth. Reference to the same god, Lha-sras lha-bo-che, is made in the illuminated funerary manuscript (see *supra*, fn. 25). The illumination accompanying the text depicts Lha-sras lha-bo and his consort Lha-za gang-cig-ma suspended above a range of seven mountains. The god holds a feather or cloth-like object in each of his hands, the weapon of the *dbal*. The two figures are plainly but elegantly attired. The text below the drawing reads, “In the country Sa-le ljon above is the castle of the rock formation sMon-lam and the conch white swirling lake. In between the lake and the rock formation is Lha-sras lha-bo che [and] Lha-za gang-cig ma when she came to benefit. The castle of the *lhe'u* ('little *lha'*) and fortress of the *sman* is that of the general, lord of the *sgra-bla* [Lha-sras lha-bo che], the fortress of the *sman*, the fortress of the *sgra-bla*. In his hand he {holds the weapon} of the *dbal*. He subdues the *gzed*, *btsan* and epidemics of violent death. Also, we call [to be blessed with]

formally introducing Lha-bo lha-sras in the language of the *smrang*, the narrative moves to a journey undertaken by gShen-rab myi-bo on a swift stallion of the *gsas*. That his horse is possessed of a divinity underscores this priest's high and holy status. gShen-rab myi-bo goes to an unspecified place to seek the assistance of Lha-bo lha-sras. gShen-rab myi-bo is described as attired in a long gown and carrying a drum and flat bell (*gshang*), ritual instruments that became stock in trade for the Eternal Bon-po. The *drum* and *gshang* of gShen-rab myi-bo each have their own special name or description. This ancient tradition extended to the personal weapons of kings and warriors, which were given specialized titles as well.²¹³

<35:7 to 36:1> According to the speech²¹⁴ of the *lha*, the son of the mighty father and mighty patriarch 'O-la sha-btsan;²¹⁵ the noble mother and noble matriarch, the son of the noble woman, the son of Chab-ma nyi-lon btsun, was the holy man, intelligent even when young, Lha-bo lha-sras, intelligent even when young. The stallion was swift even when young, Lag-pa'i mthŋng-ge nŋng-ge-ba was swift even when young. gShen-rab myi-bo mounted a saddle on the brownish horse

males {...}. We bestow this fortress of the *sgra-bla* upon him." (*yul sa le ljon stingsu* (C.T. = *steng su*) / *smon lam brag kyi mkhar / dung mtsho dkar mo 'khyil / mtsho dang brag bar du / lha sras lha bo che / lha za gang cig ma sman du gshags pa'i tshe* (C.T. = *tshe*) / *lhe'u mkhar sman rdzong ni / dmag dpo{n} sgra bla'i rje / sman rdzong sgra bla'i rdzong / phyag na dbal {mtshon bsngams /} gzed btsan g.yam dri 'dul / {...} pho smos kyang (+ /) sgra bla'i rdzong dang sprad /*).

A detailed account of Lha-bo lha-sras's activities is found in an Eternal Bon text attributed to King Khri-srong lde-btsan (8th century CE), the *Mu ye pra phud phy'a'i* (C.T. = *phywa'i*) *mtsur thug*. It contains the origin myth for the *rten* (support) of the *phywa* and *g.yang* good fortune capabilities. Lha-bo lha-sras, known as Lha-sras sgam-po / Phywa-sras sgam-po in this text, at the behest of the cosmogonic god Srid-pa sangs-po and under the guidance of the goddess gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, goes to an island situated on the north side of the world mountain Rirab lhun-po to obtain the deer Dung-sha shel-ru can (Crystal Horned Conch Deer). This deer will serve as the foundation for the *phywa* and *g.yang* of humans and deities. Eventually Lha-sras sgam-po is able to capture the deer and convince the animal that it must accompany him back to the country of the Phywa gods. In the *Mu ye pra phud phy'a'i mthur thug*, the father of Lha-sras sgam-po is 'O-de gung-rgyal and his mother Phywa-lcam lo-ma. The four-sided swastika rock formation (island) in the middle of an upwelling turquoise lake in the north to which Lha-sras sgam-po traveled, short of being a purely allegorical attestation, alludes to one of the islands of Upper Tibet. In any case, the proliferation of cervid rock art in Upper Tibet indicates that deer played a key role in the economic and cultural life of the region. For a translation and analysis of the *Mu ye pra phud phy'a'i mthur thug* origin myth, see Bellezza 2005, pp. 472–479.

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

²¹⁴ *bKal* = *bka'*.

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

with a white face of the *gsas*. He wore a long *ral-ga* (gown) of silk. He carried the large drum *dñg-chen dñg-drag* on his back. He placed the *gshang khri-lo* with the sweet sound on his side.²¹⁶

lha 'i bkal na / pha btsan yab btsan na // 'o la sha btsan gyi sras //
 ma btsun yum btsun / btsun btsun gyi sras // chab ma nyi lon btsun
 gyi sras // myi pho chung du bsgam / lha bo lha sras chung du bsgam
 / rta po chung la mgyogs / lag pa'i mthñg ge nñg ge ba chung la
 mgyogs // gshen rab myi bo'i gsas rta dro bzbur nñ gsas bstad de //
 dar gyi ral ga rñg la gsol // rnga dñg chen dñg drags rgyab la khur
 // gshang khri lo skad snyan mchan du gsal //

In order to take up the invitation extended to him by gShen-rab myi-bo, Lha-bo lha-sras and his horse must travel through the sands. I am of the opinion that this mention of sands is metaphorical in nature, an allusion to the wasteland that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. As noted, Lha-bo lha-sras does indeed have a role to play in the archaic funerary rites; he is a companion and guardian of the dead. After the sands, enroute to his rendezvous with gShen-rab myi-bo, this god passes through four places, the name of each of which begins with 'Ol. This prefix suggests that Lha-bo lha-sras's journey transpired in the 'Ol-kha region of southern Tibet. The word sGam prefixed to his name seems to reinforce this geographic placement, for the mountain [Dwags-lha] sgam-po is in the same general vicinity.²¹⁷ When the two finally meet, gShen-rab myi-bo bends down to make prostrations (*phyag-ma-dud kyis btsal*) to Lha-bo lha-sras, something his Eternal Bon counterpart would never deign to do. gShen-rab myi-bo tells the god about the murder of Klu-rab bzang to-re by sMra then-ba, the subsequent arbitration by the *lha*, and how the manslayer refused to pay the blood money. Using a series of vivid similes,

²¹⁶ In Eternal Bon documents, the *gshang* of sTon-pa gShen-rab is referred to as *khri-lo gnam-grags* (Pasar *et al.* 2008: 27). PT 1289 (lms. v3-11, v3-12), a manuscript containing a *smrang* for the funerary ritual transport female hybrid yak (*mdzo-mo*), describes the funerary priest gShen-rab at the very end of the extant text: "He came suddenly.* gShen-rabs kyi myi-bo came suddenly. He held the *gshang* great bell in his left hand. He held the wing *the-ra ther-bu* in his right hand. He [made] the funeral rites (*bdur*) for the dead (*shñ*) [and] searched for the lost [soul(s)?]. The dead human[s] (*myñ-gshñ*) by the *gshen*...twenty-seven..." (*pha pha se gshegs na gshen rabs kyi myñ bo pha se gshegs / gshang dril chen na phyag ma g.yon na snams / gshog the ra ther bu nñ phyag ma g.yas na snams / shñ ni bdur rlag ni tshol / myñ gshñ ni gshen kyis {...} pha' na {...} nyñ shu' rtsa bdun...*).

* 'Suddenly' is a conjectural reading for *pha-se*. This translation also seems to best suit the occurrence of the same word in the *Klu 'bum nag po*. Formerly, I rendered it 'queer-looking' (see Bellezza 2008: 485, para. iv).

Although Stein (2003: 599) translates *gshog* of the above passage as 'feather', it actually refers to the bird wing of liberation, a prototypic ritual instrument of the archaic funerary rites. For descriptions and analyses of the bird wing tool, see Bellezza 2008, pp. 376, 379, 381–383, 386, 388, 395, 407, 419–421, 425, 429–435, 506–510. In the *Klu 'bum nag po*, an elder son gTo-gshen mgon-po, receives the archetypal flat bell *gshang phro-ma dril-chen* from his father for the performance of the funerary rites (*ibid.*: 480, 481).

²¹⁷ For the localization of Dags-lha sgam-po, see Hazod 2009, p. 173; Sørensen *et al.* 2007, p. 259 (fn. 741).

gShen-rab myi-bo also recounts how *Mra then-ba* was almost killed by *Klu-rab btsan-ba*. Then gShen-rab myi-bo requests the assistance of *Lha-bo lha-sras* in instituting protective measures for *sMra then-ba*:

<36:1–9> Also, *Lha-bo* was invited, he was invited²¹⁸ through the sands. He crossed,²¹⁹ he crossed²²⁰ over the sands. [His horse] trotted, it trotted over the sands. Also, [his horse] galloped, it galloped over the sands. That intelligent *Lha-bo lha-[sras]* stayed in 'Ol-phu g.yang-gang, then in 'Ol-phu lung-rings, then in 'Ol-phug rga, then in 'Ol kyi spang-bzang.²²¹ gShen-rab myi-bo made prostrations [to *Lha-bo lha-sras*].²²² The intelligent *Lha-bo lha-sras* said, 'Father gShen-rab myi-bo where are you going?' These words having been spoken, gShen-rab myi-bo replied, 'In *sMra-yul thang-brgyad*, *sMra then-ba* killed *Klu-rab bzang to-re*, so all the *lha* acted as the arbitrators. For the blood money of the *klu*, 770,000 *srang*²²³ was decided. *sMra then-ba* could not accept that. *Klu-rab btsan-ba* was allied with the *ltas-ngan*, *bdud* and *yi-dags*. *sMra then-ba* was nearly taken like a bird in a *gtor*. He was nearly snatched like a fish in a *tshed*. He was nearly seized like a sheep by the scruff of the neck.²²⁴ Intelligent *Lha-bo lha-sras* please come to advise (*bka'-gsal*). Please come to strike the iron on the beautiful firewood.' [gShen-rab myi-bo] thus requested.

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

²¹⁸ *Drongs* (C.T. = *drangs*).

²¹⁹ 'Gam (C.T. = *bgam*).

²²⁰ 'Am = 'gam.

²²¹ In PT 1285, 'Ol-phu dga'-dang (*sic*) is the place where 'Ol-rje zin-brang tragically attempts to arrange the marriage of his daughter 'Ol-za lham-bu (Dotson 2008: 47). According to Hazod (2009: 173), toponyms such as 'Ol-phu dga'-dang/dga'-thang/rga-dang and 'Ol-phu kyi spang-bzangs (*sic*) appear to be situated in upper 'Ol-kha. Also see Karmay 1998, p. 437. These toponyms also recall 'Ol-mo lung-ring, a mythical land of Eternal Bon, generally placed north and west of Tibet.

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

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

²²⁴ *gNya* (C.T. = *gnya'*)

lha sras la bka' gsal du gshags // zhugs shing mtshar lcag rdebs su
gshags // de skad zhus pa dang //

Lha-bo lha-sras and gShen-rab myi-bo commence to perform the initiatory *gto* and *dpyad* rites, but they are unable to complete them. Lha-bo lha-sras advises that they invite no other than Mus-dpal phrog-rol bya-ba from his celestial abode, so a messenger (*phrīn-pa*) is sent for the purpose. After hearing the messenger out, Mus-dpal phrog-rol decides to comply with the request. The text indicates that the messenger, rji-dang skye ched-po, beckoned three *gshen* from the sky, so it appears that Mus-dpal phrog-rol bya-ba may have had two companions, but nothing is said about them in the text. In order to reach the earth, he rides a divine white horse and uses the same type of celestial cord that Tibet's first king g.Nya-khri btsan-po is supposed to have relied on. Thus gShen-rab myi-bo has two supernatural comrades to aid him in his worthy efforts. With Mus-dpal phrog-rol among their numbers, Lha-bo lha-sras and gShen-rab myi-bo are able to complete the *gto* and *dpyad*:

<36:10 to 37:6> The intelligent Lha-bo lha-sras and gShen-rab myi-bo erected (*btsugs*) the *gto* in the morning. In the evening they performed²²⁵ the *dpyad*, but they could not complete the *dpyad*.²²⁶ The intelligent Lha-bo lha-sras said, 'Mus-dpal phrog-rol bya-ba, the *bon-po* of the sky, of great magical power and tremendous prowess, is skilled in the *gto* and is keenly knowledgeable in the *dpyad*.' As the bringer of tidings and messenger, [Lha-bo lha-sras sent] rji-dang skye ched-po. Lha-bo lha-sras asked [the messenger to relay to Mus-dpal phrog-rol bya-ba]: 'in²²⁷ sMra-yul thang-brgyad, sMra then-ba was opposed to each and every kind of *ltas-ngan* and each and every kind of *yi-dags* of Klu-rje btsan-ba. He was like a bird nearly taken in a *gtor*. He was like a fish nearly snatched in a *tshed*. Please make the *gto* and *dpyad*. Three *gshen* please come from the sky.' Thus he spoke these words.

bsgam lha bo lha sras dang // gshen rab myi bo 'is / nang gsum gto ru
btsugs // nub gsum dpyad du dpyad nas // do tshor do ma tshor /
dpyad kyi do tshor do tshor // bsgam lha bo lha sras kyi zhal nas //
gnam gyi bon po mus dpal phrog rol bya ba dang // sgyu che 'phrul
drag ste // gto mkhas la dpyad rno // than dang phrīn pa ru / rdzi
dang skye ched po la // lha bo lha sras zhal nas // smra yul thang
brgyad nas / smra then ba la // klu rje btsan ba'i ltas ngan cho ma cho
rgu dang // yī dags cho ma cho rgu // bya ltar gtor gyis blangs ma
khad // nya ltar tshed kyis bcus ma khad // gto dang dpyad bgyi
'tshal // gshen gsum gnam las gshegs su gsol / de skad bgyis pa la //

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

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

²²⁷ *Nas* = *na*.

<37:6–9> The father Mus-dpal phrog-rol said, 'It is ordered by Lha-bo lha-sras. It is better²²⁸ if I come', he said. He rode the white horse of the *lha*. A white dog²²⁹ of the *gsas* followed him. From the sky he was conveyed down to earth by the celestial cord.²³⁰ He arrived in the country of 'Ol-phu rgu. Lha-bo lha-sras, Mus-dpal phrog-rol and gShen-rab myi-bo performed²³¹ the *gto* in the evening and performed the *dpyad* in the morning.

pha mus dpal phrog rol zhal nas // lha bo lha sras kyis bka' gsal // logs yang mchi 'is skad // lha rta dkar po cibs // gsas kyis dkar po phyi na 'brang // gnam nas sa ru rmu dag drangs de // yul 'ol phu rgu dang du mchis ste // lha bo lha sras dang / mus dpal phrog rol dang // gshen rab myi bo dang / nub gsum gto 'is tshor // nang gsum dpyad kyis tshor //

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

<38:1–6> As the blood money and *glud*: the langur Myi-bo lag-ring (Human Long Hand), the sheep of the *bdud* Yor-ba, the white bird Tho-lo. On the right *ba-'brī*,²³² a red²³³ spear of *bse* was bound. On the left *ba-'brī*, a blue turquoise snake²³⁴ was tied. These were ornamented with nine types of good silk and, colored brocade, the tenth. The flight of the ornaments was like a man sallying forth to battle. Each bamboo arrow manifested as a hybrid yak and horse with²³⁵ loads. Each banner (*'phan*) with bird feathers manifested as a hybrid yak and horse with a load. Each *snges* (anterior?) banner manifested²³⁶ as the leader of each hybrid yak and horse. Each felt banner manifested as a youth herding from behind.

stong dang glud du nī // spra myi bo lag rings dang // bdud lug yor ba dang // byad dkar tho lo dang / ba 'brī g.yas pa la // bse mdung

²²⁸ *Logs* = *legs*.

²²⁹ *Kyi* (C.T. = *khyi*).

²³⁰ *rMu-dag* (C.T. = *dmu-thag*).

²³¹ This is the contextual meaning of the O.T. verb *tshor*.

²³² This word denotes either a ritual construction or a type of ritual cattle.

²³³ *Mar-bo* (C.T. = *dmar-po*).

²³⁴ *sBrud* (C.T. = *sbrul*).

²³⁵ *Chas* (C.T. = *bcas*).

²³⁶ *sPul* = *sprul*.

mar bo btags // ba 'brī g.yon pa la / g.yu sbrud sngon po bdags //
 bzang dar sna cho rgu za bug mtshon dang bcus brgyan de // rgyan
 phur phur de / skyes pa rmag la chas pa dra' // mda' rgyud smyug
 ma re re ni // mdzo rta re re khal dang chas par sprul // bya spu
 dang 'phan dang chas pa ni / mdzo rta re re khal dang chas par sprul
 // sngē 'phan re re ni / mdzo rta re re sna khrid par pul // phyng
 'phan re re ni // skyes phran re re phyi na ded par sprul //

<38:6 to 39:1> In each *tshags-phur*²³⁷ hundreds of *dmar-srang*²³⁸ were placed, thousands²³⁹ of *shing-rings* (long sticks), *brgya-ris* 'ol-'ol (?), and *stong-rings* *phyo-phyo* (?), which manifested as the country of the *yi-dags*, places, castles, people, wealth, and livestock. These [offerings] were apportioned in thousands [of parts]. An arrow with brocade was offered to the hundreds of male demons (*bdud-pho*), sGag-po. The golden spindle with the turquoise drop-spindle wheel was offered to the *yi-dags* female gatekeepers. Golden libations (*gser-mngon*) with the good mouth²⁴⁰ and turquoise libations *tshig-pa* (?), these two, were offered as the manifested possessions of all kinds of *yi-bdags* (*sic*). Milk²⁴¹ with the beautiful face (appearance) and mustard seeds with the good hull (*rgang*), the secret and essence [food] of the *yi-dags*, were offered as libations [to the *yi-dags*].

tshags phur re re la / dmar srang brgyar bcad // shing rings stong cho
 dang / brgya ri 'ol 'ol dang / stong rings phyo phyo ni / yi dags yul
 dang / sa dang / mkhar dang / myi dang / nor dang phyugs su sprul
 de // stong du bcad / mda' za bug ma ni / bdud pho brgya sgag po
 rnams la phul // gser 'phang g.yu lo ni / yi dags sgo mo rnams la 'bul
 lo / gser mngon kha bzangs dang // g.yu mngon tshig pa gnyis // yi
 dags cho rgu'i / dkar dad du sprul de phul / dkar mo bzhin bzangs
 dang // yungs mo rgang bzangs ni // yi dags kyi gsang dang bcud
 dang / skyems su gsol bas //

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

²³⁷ Apparently, this is some kind of ritual container.

²³⁸ This appears to be a unit of currency. In a document from Miran, a man purchases a Chinese bondservant (*bran*) from a monk for three *dmar-srang*. ITJ 1374 records a sale in which two brothers sell their sister into marriage to a man for seven *dmar-srang*. All four parties in this contract are Chinese. Takeuchi hypothesizes that *dmar-srang* may have been a string of copper coins. For these Old Tibetan references, see Dotson 2009, p. 68, after Takeuchi 1995. In PT 1297.3, lns. 5–7, five *dmar-srang* are agreed upon for the purchase of a horse. According to Christoph Cüppers of the Lumbini International Research Institute (in personal communication), the *dmar-srang* appears to be related to the *smar-gser* (gold) *gyi srang*, which during the time of the gTsang rulers was equivalent to 96 *khal* of grain.

²³⁹ *sTong-cho* = *stong-tsho*.

²⁴⁰ *Kha-bzang*. This refers to the libation being laced with bits of gold.

²⁴¹ *dKar-mo*. This term can also refer to a sheep, but that is not how it is used here.

magical transformation forms a major part of the blood money (*stong-ri*), the substitute payment made in lieu of the 770,000 *srang*. The text informs us that this event was the historical precedent for both the *glud* ritual and the custom of blood money, once again highlighting the exceptional significance of the narrative. The practices of making *glud* and paying blood money retained a prominent place in the culture of Tibet until recent times:

<39:2–5> Then the *bon-mo* of the earth Shib-pa gshen-'brang with the remaining offerings²⁴² and libations, apportioned one after another, manifested them as 770 tan sheep. A basket (*slo-ma*) full of the feathers of the *bya-bang*²⁴³ manifested as seven herds of blue (perse) female goats. The blood money of death²⁴⁴ was cut (paid) like that. The blood money of murder (*bsad-pa'i stong*) of the *klu* was completed by sMrä then-ba. The *glud* of the father *bon-[po]* and also blood money (*stong-ri*) began and existed then.

lhag dang zhon lus pa ni // sa 'i bon mo shib pa gshen 'brang / rims
kyi dpog mgnon cha gcig la // lug dro mo bdun brgya bdun cur sprul
lo // bya bang gyi spu slo ma gang la // ra sngon mo khyu bdun du
sprul lo stong thang de ltar bcad do // smra then bas klu bsad pa'i
stong khor ro // pha bon gyi glud yang / stong ri yang de nas byung
zhing bsrid do //

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

²⁴² This is the general import of the line: *lhag dang zhon lus pa ni* /.

²⁴³ The *bya-wang*, one of 13 messenger birds in the *Dri med gzi brjid*. It is a bluish and white pheasant found in places such as sTeng-chen.

²⁴⁴ *sTong-thang*. The O.T. word *thang* has to do with death. *Thang-khrims* are prescribed funerary activities and *thang-sha* is a funerary sacrificial meat offering (Bellezza 2008: 381, 405, 435, 452, 470, 471).

<39:5 to 40:1> A time came when the *ltas-ngan*, *bdud* and each and every kind of *yi-dags* even though they had eaten, were not sated with the miraculous wealth and viands. The *ltas-ngan* and *bdud* sent what bad omens to sMra then-ba? They sent an ox with tiger stripes and a stag head with antlers of ten points fixed on it. sMra then-ba sensed that. He placed the arrow and drew the bow (*mchog-gar*).²⁴⁵ With the arrow he shot the ox with the tiger stripes, killing it. One portion of its flesh was hung (*bskal*) on the white sunny mountain. One portion of its flesh was sent (*bskyal*) to the black shady mountain.²⁴⁶ One portion of its flesh was sent to the middle of the river.

re shīg re shig na // rdzu 'phrul gyi nor zas kyis // ltas ngan dang
bdud dang / yī dags cho ma cho rgu'i zos yang ma 'drangs so // ltas
ngan dang bdud kyīs / smra then ba la / ltas ngan du ci btang na //
glang stag rī la sha pho bcu ru'i 'go btags pa cig btang na // smra then
bas tshor de // mchog gar dra' bkug lu mar ldong sbyar de // glang
stag ri la mda bgyab ste bsad nas // sha gzugs gcig gdags ri dkar la
bskal lo // sha gzugs gcig sribs ri gnag la bskyal // sha zug gcig
chab kyī gzhung la bskyal na //

<40:1–5> Then, the sunny demons,²⁴⁷ the shady demons, the upper valley demons, the lower valley demons, the misfortune-causing (*phung*) demons, and the water demons, and each and every kind of [of demon], appeared. There was no place for sMra then-ba to dwell among humans. There was no stake for him to tie his cattle. He invited the father Mus-dpal phrog-rol to do the *gto* and *dpyad*. The sunny demons, shady demons, water demons and other various orders [of demons] were assembled. They raucously agreed that they needed the *byol*,²⁴⁸ so a dish full of barley cakes of the *byol*, a pitcher full of beer of the *byol*, one pedicel of Ephedra of the *byol*, and favorite wealth was given out. The favorite speech was uttered.

de la gdags dre dang / sribs dre dang / phu dre dang // mda' dre
dang / phung dre dang / chu dre dang cho ma cho rgu byung ste //
smra then ba zhiḡ // myi 'dug yul yang myed / ba gdags phur yang
med // pha mus dpal phrog rol gnyer nas // gto dang dpyad bgyis na
// gdags dre srib dre chu dre sna tshogs 'dus ste // de bcas g.yos pas
byol bgyi 'tshal bas // byol zan sder gang dang / byol chang skyogs

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

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

²⁴⁷ *Dre* (C.T. = 'dre).

²⁴⁸ *De bcas g.yos pas byol bgyi 'tshal ba(s) /*.

gang dang // byol mtshe nyag gcig dang / nor snying rag sgor
phyung cig // gtam snying rag khar 'byin no //

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

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

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

²⁴⁹ On the downstream function in expelling rituals, see Dotson 2008.

²⁵⁰ The customary usage of a man and ox figurine in *glud* rituals is discussed in Karmay 1998, pp. 366–371.

<41:3–8> What *byol* [was offered] to the *ltas-ngan*? The *byol* [offered] was the favorite wealth. The turquoise *mtsho-ro lu-gu*, the little (pretty) gold, pure gold;²⁵¹ that *byol* was sent. In the top of the valley, the only son of the wealthy was hunting deer (*sha-shor*) and hunting antelope (*rgo-'drim*).²⁵² At the crossroads of three paths he came across the turquoise *mtsho-ro lu-gu*²⁵³ and pretty gold, *sa-le sbram*. He took what he had found, so by the *ltas-ngan* and *bdud*, the only son of the wealthy was nearly taken like bird in a *gtor*. He was nearly snatched like a fish in a *tshed*. As the only son of the wealthy was befallen by bad omens and *byol*, the man was taken on the right horn²⁵⁴ of the northern [wild] yak sKar-ba.²⁵⁵ His horse was taken on the left horn. They nearly perished (*nongs ma-khad*).

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

<42:1–4> The *byol* [was made] with the objects of preference (*bag-chags*) of the *ltas-ngan* and *bdud*. The *bon-po* and *zor-byol*²⁵⁶ [placed] the objects of desire of the *ltas-ngan* and *bdud* into hundreds and thousands of copper containers (*zangs*), altogether with those of the *yi-dags*. The [priests] chanted and chanted and said spells and spells. Then they cast out [the containers] at the crossroads of four paths, where the river and rock formation meet. The copper containers were pushed away by the rock formation, the ox was pushed away by the copper containers, and

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

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

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

²⁵⁴ The transcription of the text incorrectly transcribes in both instances of its occurrence *rwa* as *rba* (*Gtam shul dga' thang 'bum pa che nas gsar du rnyed*, no. 41, ln. 8).

²⁵⁵ The wild yak sKar-ba is also found in ITJ 731r. In this Dunhuang manuscript, sKar-ba, who refuses to share his pasture with a horse, gores it to death. The slain horse is the older brother of the first funerary ritual transport equid or *do-ma*. See Bellezza 2008, p. 534, 535. Also see Stein 1971, pp. 486, 487.

²⁵⁶ A ritualist specializing in removing the *byol* afflictions.

the man was pushed away by the ox, thus the man²⁵⁷ herding the ox died (*gum-mo*) there in the river.

ltas ngan bdud kyis bag chags kyis byol // bon dang zor byol gyis /
zangs brgya ma stong ma la / ltas ngan dang bdud kyis bag chags dang
/ yi dags chas pa'i spyi der // bsgyer bsgyer bsngag bsngag nas //
lam gyi bzhi mdor bor de btang na // brag dang chu phrad de / brag
gyis zangs phul / zangs kyis glang phul nas / glang gyis myi phul bas
// myi 'dron po glang ded yang chab du gum mo //

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

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

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

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

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

²⁵⁸ Thomas (1957: *Texts, Translations and Notes*, pp. 53–55), commenting on ITJ 734r, considers rMa-bu mchin-rgyal/mching-rgyal (*sic*) to have been a real historical figure, and equates him with Mi-chen, a ruler of the T'ang-chang kingdom who lived sometime after 500 CE. Stein (1971: 497, 503, 504) and Dotson (2008: 45) take a much different view, seeing the rMa-bu mching-rgyal of ITJ 734r and PT 1285 as denoting an epithet for the patient for which the recitation of the text is being made. In PT 1285 and ITJ 734r as well as the *byol-rabs* text, rMa-bu mching-rgyal occurs in the present tense as the current successor to the *smrang* narrative. On ITJ 734r, also see Bellezza 2008, p. 437. A contemporary context for rMa-bu mching-rgyal in the wake of an attestation of the ancient nature of a funerary ritual is also found in PT 1039, ln. 26. This narrative framework in four different Old Tibetan texts leads me to concur with the position taken by Stein and Dotson as outlined above, discounting Thomas's historical hypothesis regarding the identity of rMa-bu mching-rgyal.

<42:6–8> Now, the man sMra-bu mchis-rgyal has been befallen by bad omens. When the *byol* contacts the river, the river becomes dry. When the *byol* contacts the wood, the wood is broken.²⁵⁹ When the *byol* contacts the flying bird, it falls down. When the *byol* contacts the stone, it cracks. By the *bon* spells, three words of incantations are recited.²⁶⁰

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

²⁵⁹ 'Chag (C.T. = *chag*).

²⁶⁰ Below the last line of the text six lines of mantras are written; these are read by the ritualists for the slaughter of the demons. See text, no. 45, lns. 5, 6.

analyzed gShen-rab's posture in Eternal Bon sources.²⁶¹ The last millennium in Tibet has been riven by sectarian struggles for power and domination, sweeping up Eternal Bon as both perpetrator and victim. In these rivalries, which have a distinctively political underbelly, Eternal Bon has often found itself in an underdog position. Representing just 10 to 15% of the total Tibetan population, the Bon-po have labored relentlessly to counteract their minority status and further their influence in the great clearing house of Tibetan religion.

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

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

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

²⁶¹ For example, Snellgrove (1967: 15, fn. 1) very plainly states that the tale of gShen-rab is a deliberate fabrication modeled on the Buddha Śākyamuni.

movement in the orthodox position of Eternal Bon, as matters of faith and belief are often impervious to change. But crucial doctrinal innovation must come if the Old Tibetan documents are indeed accepted as the most valuable source for assessing the early identity of gShen-rab myi-bo.

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

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

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

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

In the 21st century, with its unparalleled threats to the cultural integrity of vulnerable peoples, those like the Tibetans must strive to gain a fuller and more objective picture of who they are and where they come from. In this critical endeavor, Eternal Bon as a stalwart guardian of tradition will prove invaluable,

potentially affording it a place in the religious and intellectual life of Tibetans much greater than it enjoys today.

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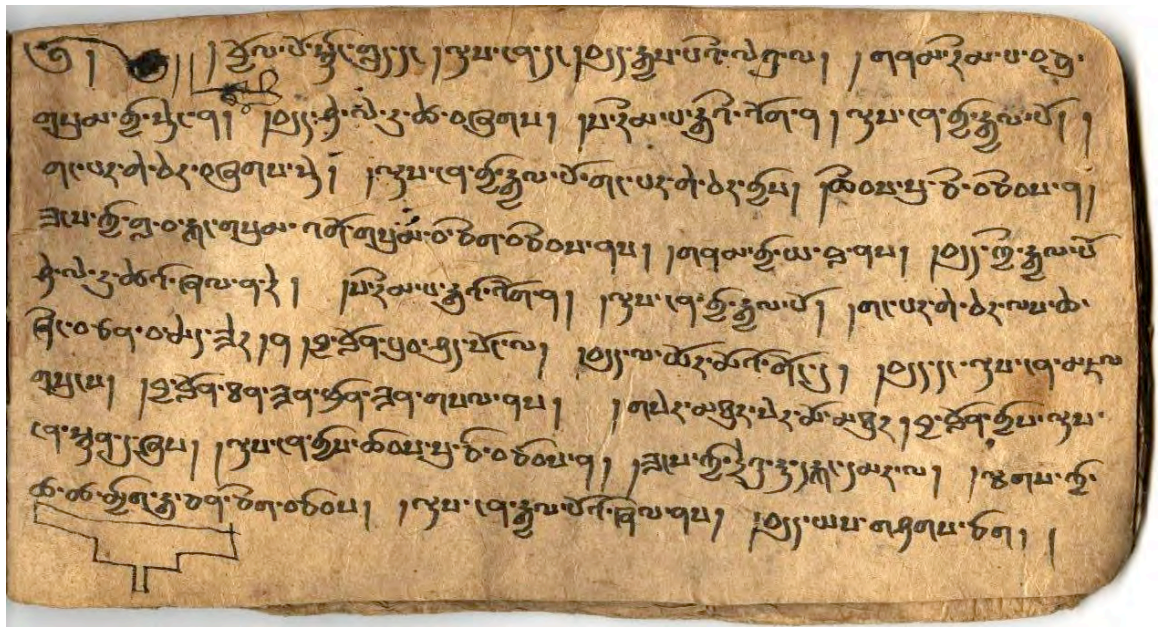
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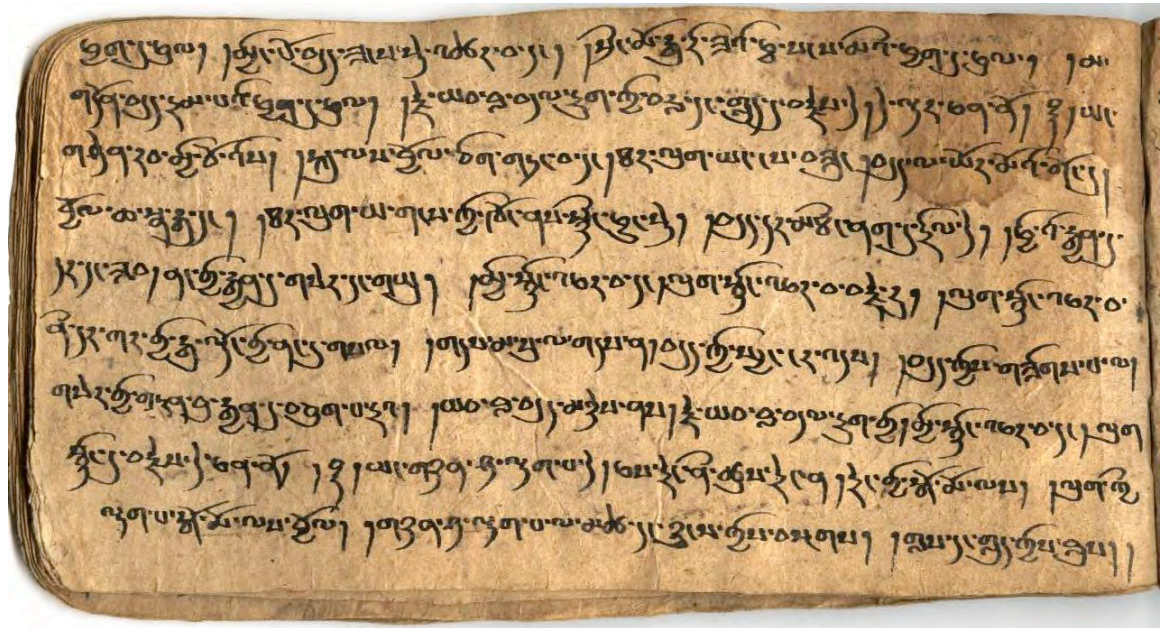
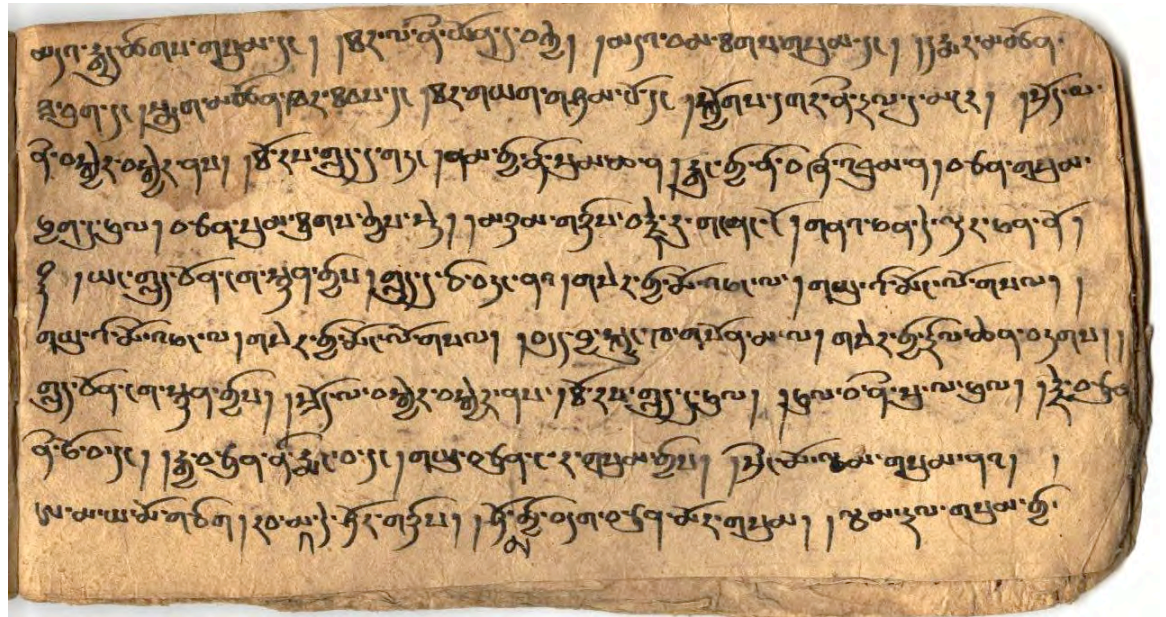
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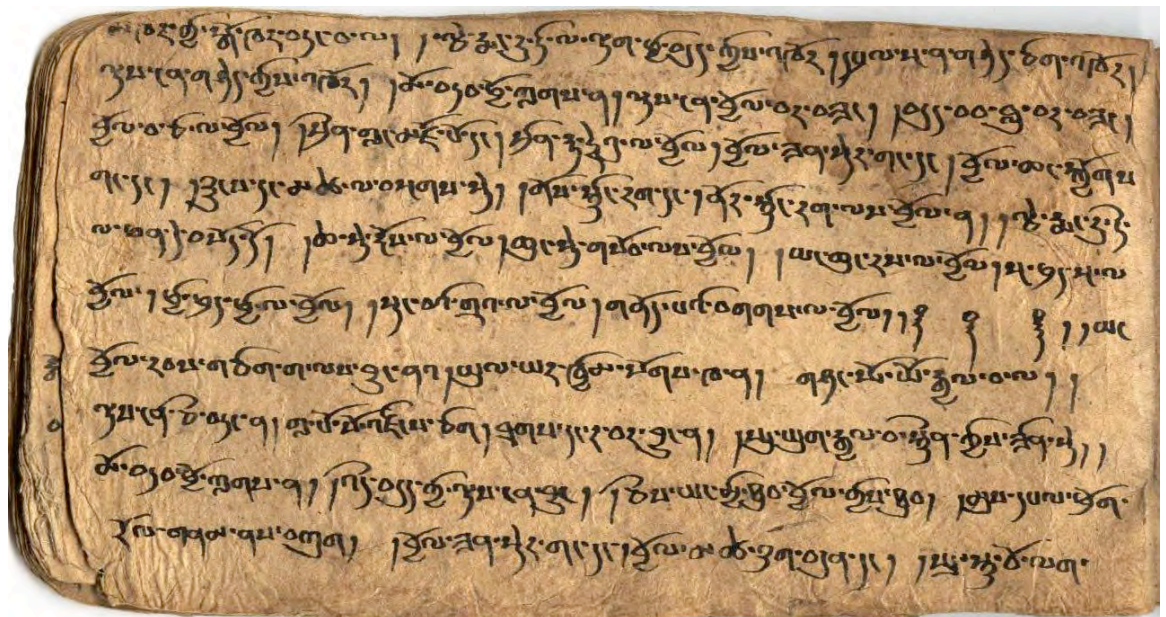
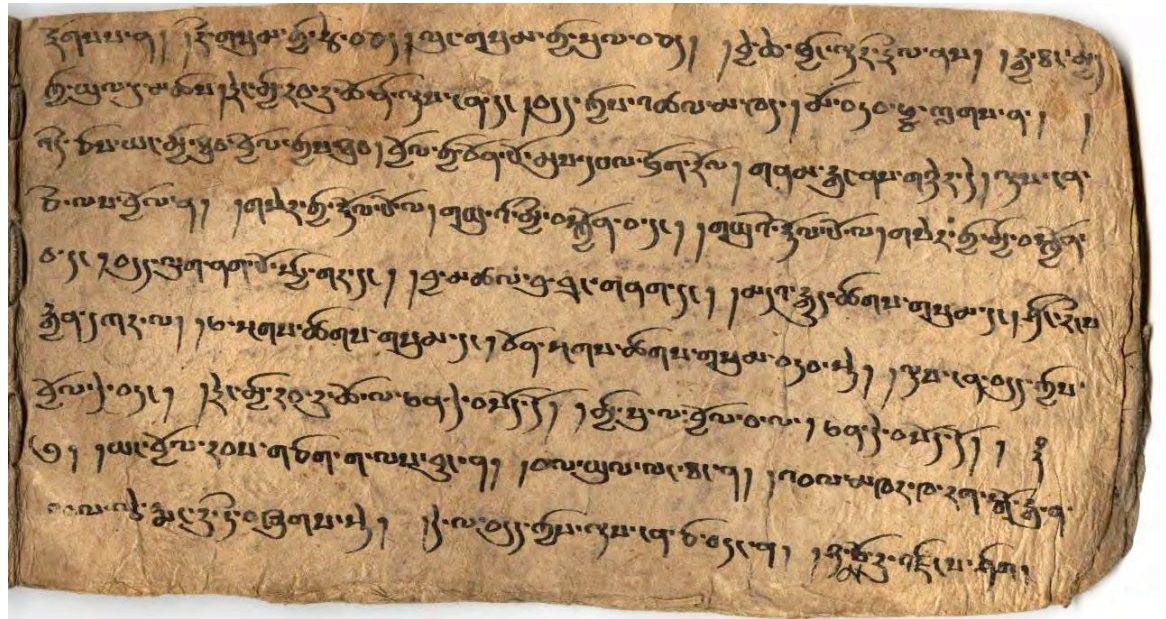
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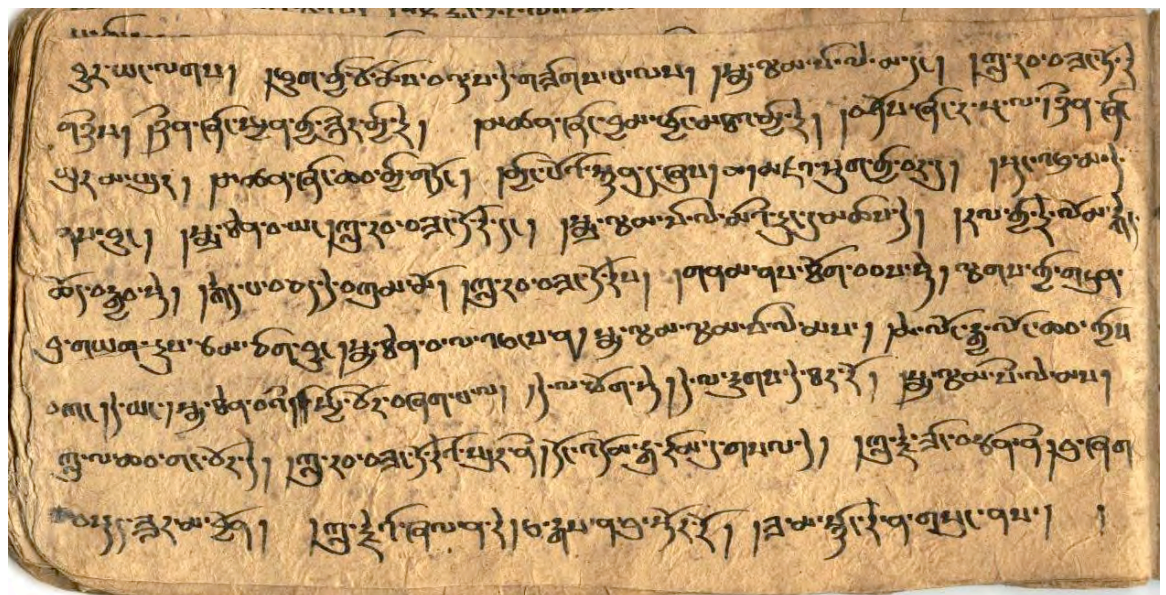
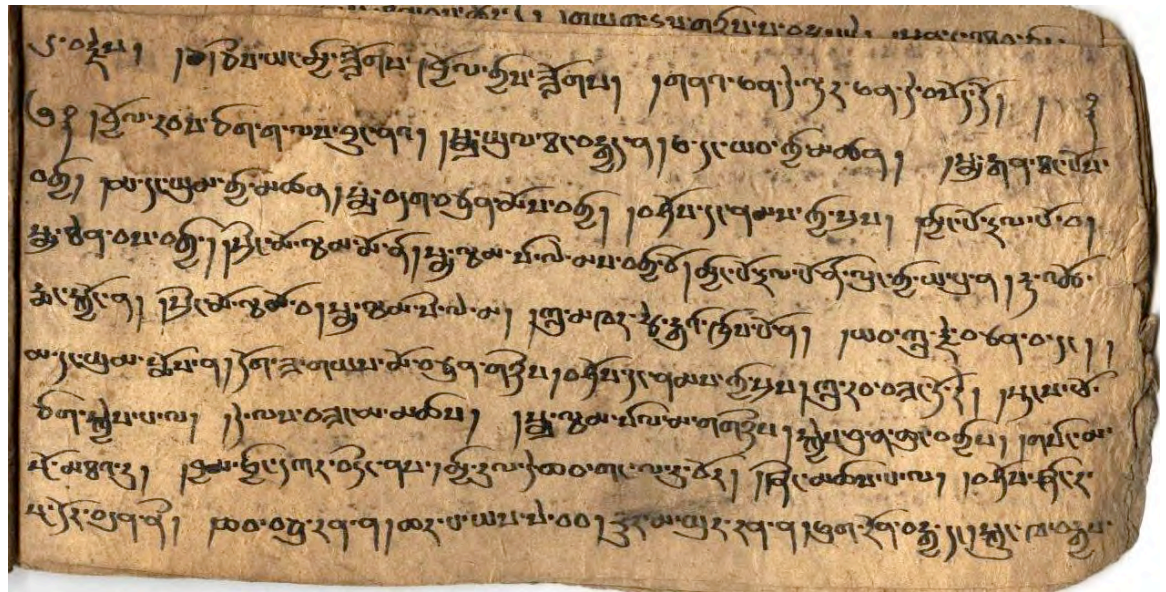


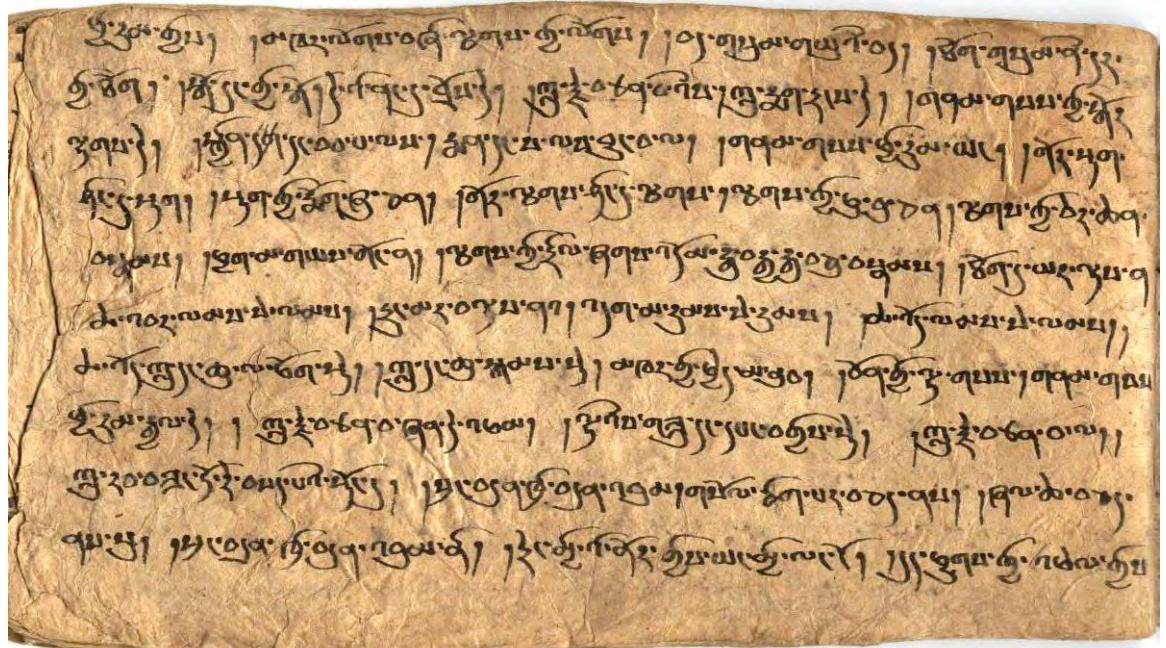
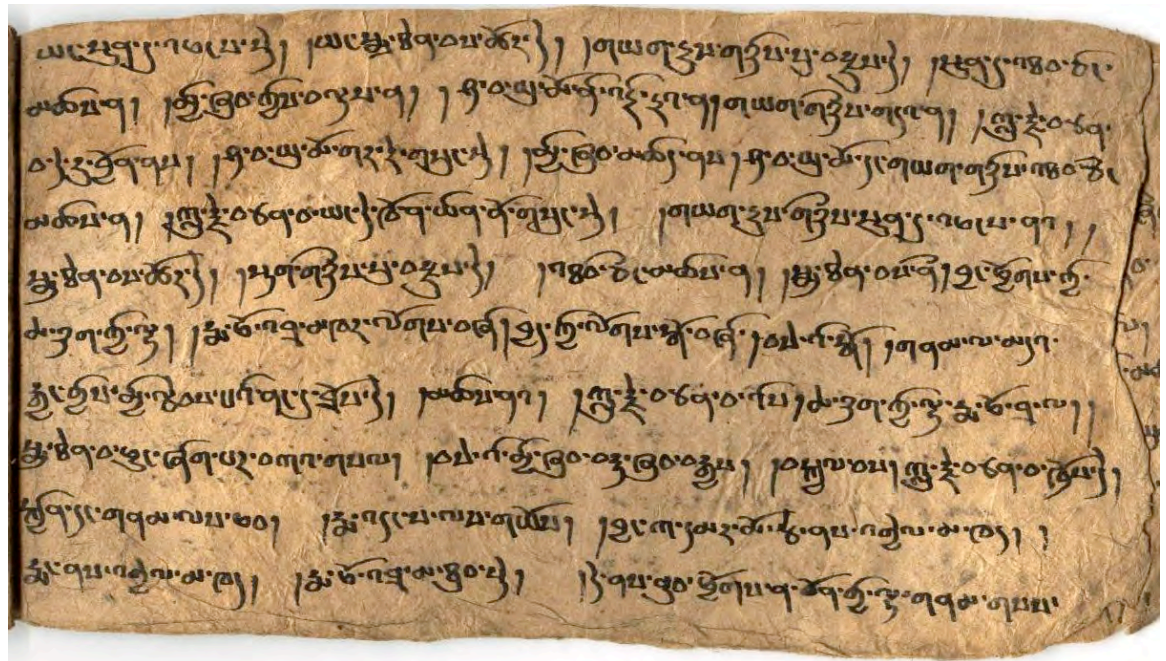
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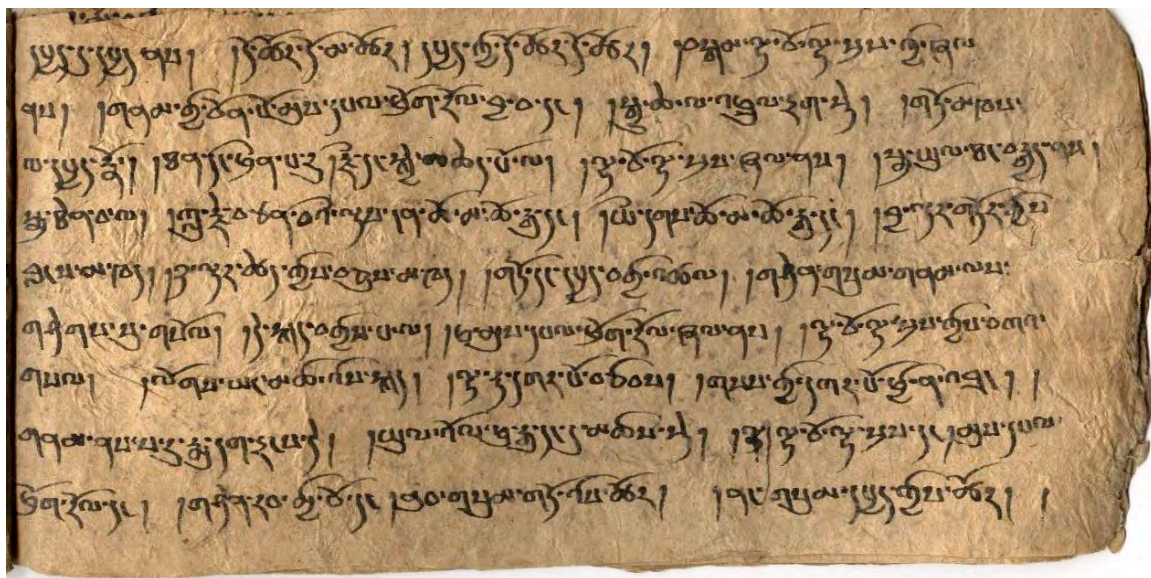




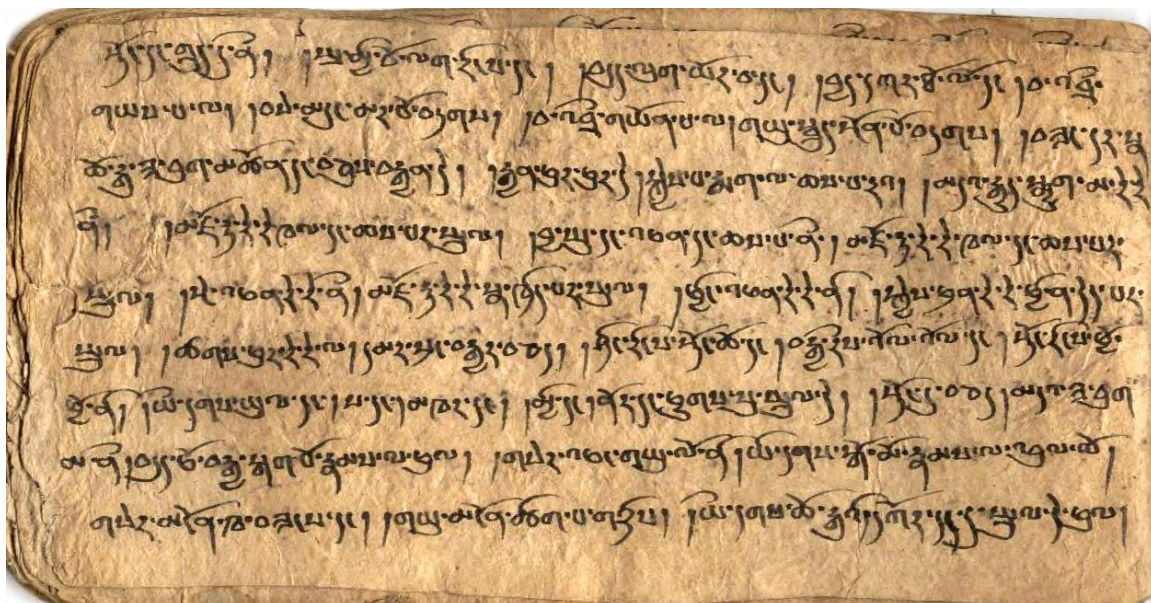




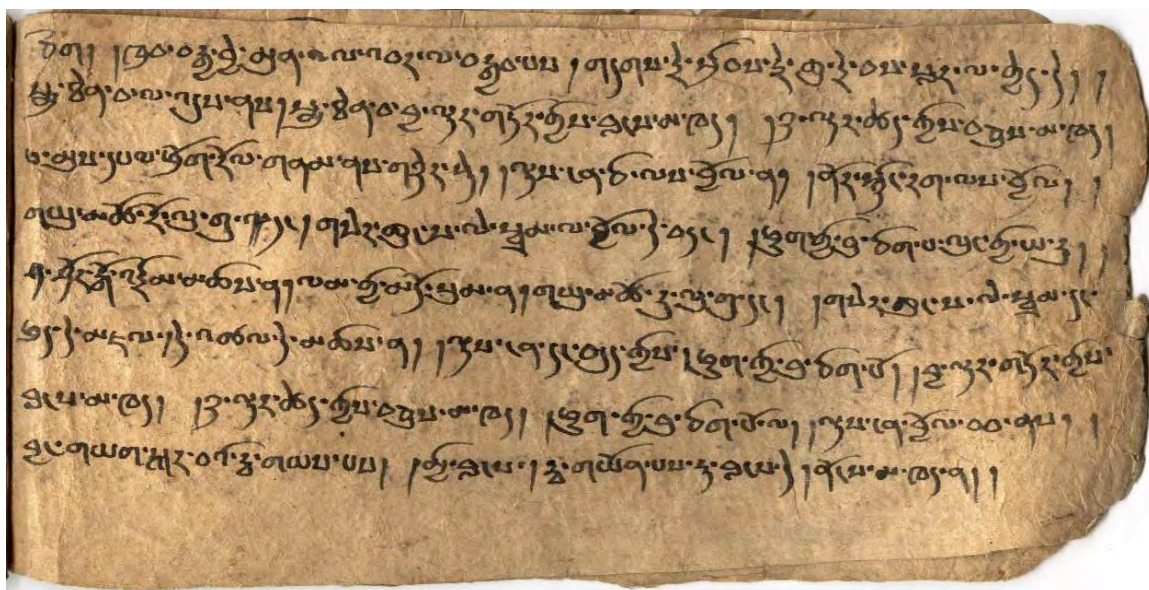
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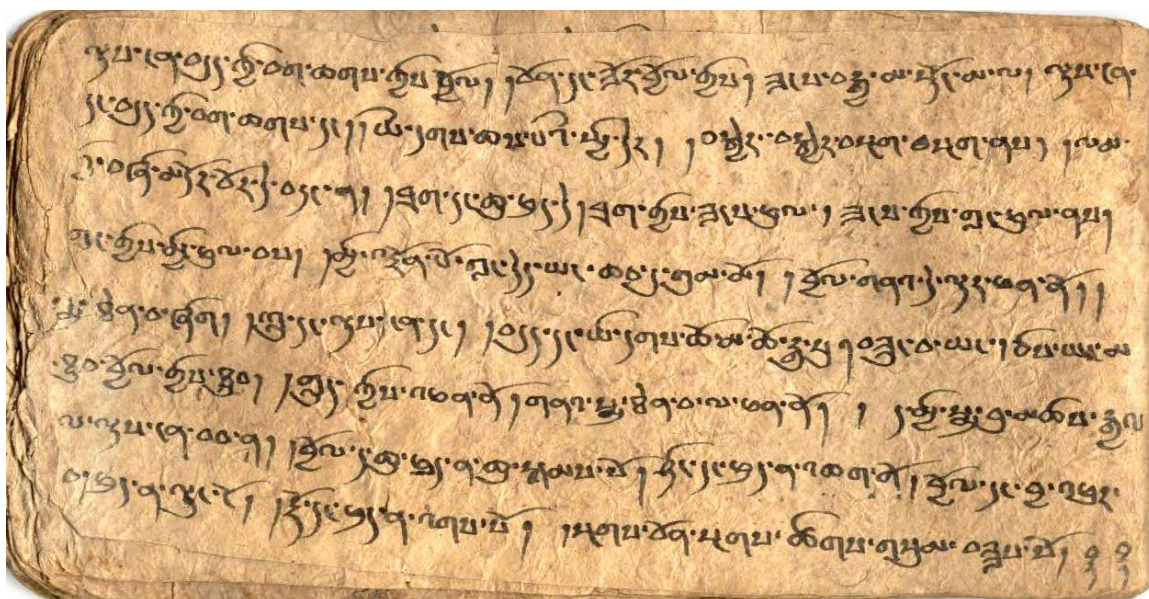
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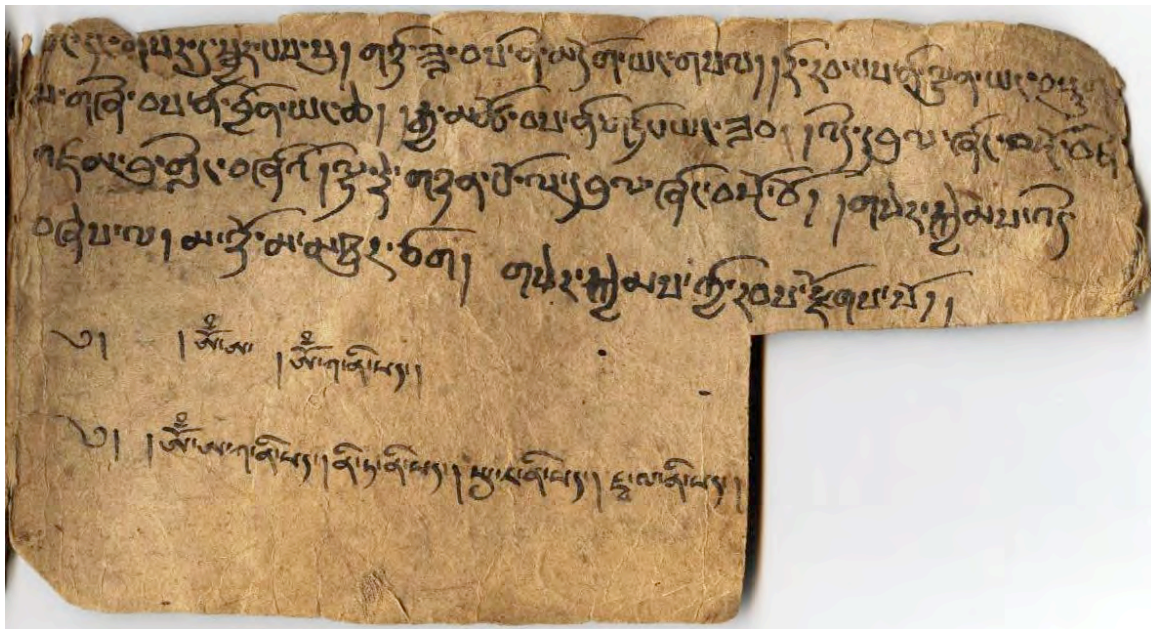
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