

Bon and Naxi Manuscripts

Studies in Manuscript Cultures



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Volume 28

Bon and Naxi Manuscripts

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DE GRUYTER

The publication of this volume was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy – EXC 2176 'Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures' – project no. 390893796.

ISBN 978-3-11-077608-9

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-077647-8

ISSN 2365-9696

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110776478>



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Library of Congress Control Number: 2022949471

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

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Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Charles Ramble

Introduction

Until the 1960s, knowledge about Bon outside Tibet was based substantially on the translated writings of Tibetan Buddhist authors, who often misunderstood or misrepresented their subject.¹ This situation changed thanks mainly to a collaboration between David Snellgrove of the University of London, and Tenzin Namdak, a Bonpo² scholar-monk who had escaped to India via Nepal in 1960. The result of this collaboration was the landmark volume *The Nine Ways of Bon*,³ which consists of annotated translations of excerpts from a fourteenth-century Bonpo doctrinal work. For the first time, the Bonpos were represented to the outside world by their own scriptural tradition.

In fact Bon, as Per Kvaerne has pointed out, refers to three different things: first, the religion that prevailed in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh century (and about which very little is known); secondly, a wide range of cults across Tibet and the Himalayan middle hills that often feature spirit mediums; and finally, the systematised religion that developed in tandem with Tibetan Buddhism and includes a monastic tradition.⁴ This latter form, referred to as Yungdrung ('Eternal') Bon by its adherents, is the result of a rich convergence of religious traditions from diverse provenances, notably India, Central Asia, China and Tibet itself. The scriptural corpus of Bon is organised according to several traditional models, the best known of which is the 'nine-vehicle' framework, commonly referred to as the Nine Ways of Bon. Much of the substantial scriptural heritage of Bon is strongly influenced by Buddhism, to the degree that certain commentators regard it as just another Tibetan Buddhist school. However, a significant part of this corpus clearly relates to a religious system that has nothing to do with Buddhism. Whereas the 'higher' vehicles exhibit a clear kinship with the Indian Buddhist Tantric systems, the 'lower' ways are a compilation of rituals and narratives that appear to have indigenous roots.

The Bon literary corpus comprises several thousand volumes on a vast array of topics, often representing conflicting world views. For followers of Yungdrung Bon, the coherence of these disparate doctrines is derived from the belief that

¹ See, for example, Hoffmann 1950. An overview of Western-language studies of Bon up to end of the twentieth century is given in Kvaerne 2000.

² The term 'Bonpo' is the adjectival form of Bon, and also denotes a follower of the religion.

³ Snellgrove 1967.

⁴ Kvaerne 1995.

they are all teachings of the figure they consider to be the founder of their religion, Tönpa Shenrab (Ston pa Gshen rab). Most of the scholarly attention to Bon has been directed to the soteriological aspects of the religion, which are the most closely aligned to Buddhist thought. The most distinctive aspects of Bon, however, are to be found in the category of rituals known as *gto* (pronounced *tô*) and associated myths, an area of the religion that is barely represented in the monastic repertoire. Works of this genre are well known from the Dunhuang corpus – the earliest collection of Tibetan literature (seventh to eleventh centuries) that was discovered in a cave in Gansu, on the Silk Road, in the nineteenth century. Studies of these *gto* texts were pioneered by a number of scholars, among the most important of whom were Marcelle Lalou and Rolf Stein.⁵ Another collection from much the same period was recently discovered in Southern Tibet.⁶ This collection has featured in a publication by John Bellezza⁷ and in ongoing research by Daniel Berounský.⁸

Rolf Stein was the first to point out that close parallels are to be found between the Bonpo mythic narratives from Dunhuang and more recent works, such as the *Klu 'bum* ('Myriad Serpent-spirits') that is part of the *Bon Canon*.⁹ The range of this category of 'indigenous' ritual literature has recently been expanded considerably thanks to the recent discovery of extensive collections of Bon manuscripts in Gansu and Sichuan, China.¹⁰ The similarities that these texts bear to many aspects of the Dunhuang texts and canonical *gto* literature suggest that there was a wide distribution of these rituals and the beliefs with which they were associated, and that this system was fragmented and partially absorbed – and transformed – by the development of Buddhism and Yungdrung Bon. Recent research by Toni Huber has revealed the presence of a closely-related body of myths and complex of rituals preserved in manuscript form in the Eastern Himalaya.¹¹ His recently published *Source of Life*¹² shows the locally designated 'Bon' rituals in Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in relation to the local manuscript cultures of the region. He notes a degree of coherence between Bon, Naxi and Qiang ritual cultures, and proposes a series of hypotheses about possible ethnolinguistic con-

5 Lalou 1958; Stein 1971.

6 Pa tshab and Glang ru 2007.

7 Bellezza 2013.

8 See especially Berounský's contribution to the present volume.

9 *Klu 'bum WBV*.

10 For an English-language version of an overview of this material, see Ngondzin Ngawang Gyatso 2016.

11 Huber 2013.

12 Huber 2020.

nections in the past along the eastern Himalayas. Though little can be proven conclusively, there is a growing body of evidence to support these hypotheses.

The possibility of a connection between the rituals of the Naxi Dongba priests and those of the Bon religion of Tibet increasingly appears to be more than merely speculative. While it has long been accepted that the Naxi term Dongba is derived from the Tibetan Tönpa (*ston pa*), ‘teacher,’ and the name of the legendary founder of the Naxi religion, Dongba Shiluo, from that of Tönpa Shenrab (Ston pa Gshen rab), the quasi-mythical founder of Bon, evidence of more substantial links between these two traditions has proved to be elusive. In his landmark article ‘Du récit au rituel’¹³ Rolf Stein pointed to the similarity in structure between Naxi funeral ritual texts and the *Klu ’bum*, an important Bonpo work that may date from as early as the ninth century. Among the more compelling indications of a link between the Naxi Dongba and Tibetan Bon is a recent article, published in Chinese, by a Naxi scholar named He Jiquan.¹⁴ His study of a Naxi manuscript kept at the Harvard Yenching Library reveals that certain sequences of images are to be understood not for the concepts they represent but for their phonological value: the articulation of the Naxi terms for the objects depicted reproduces a series of well-known Tibetan mantras (magical formulae) of the Bon religion.

Furthermore, certain aspects of Naxi ritual themselves may elucidate mysteries surrounding Tibetan ritual. An example is to be seen in the case of an enigmatic reference relating to Tibetan royal burial practices in the seventh century. A fourteenth-century work informs us that provincial kings would send *lto nag* (pronounced *tonak*) to Central Tibet, and that these *lto nag* would lurk in the imperial tombs and attack passers-by. *Lto nag*, literally ‘black food’, is a Buddhist misspelling of the homophonous Bonpo term *gto nag*, ‘black rituals’. The Bonpo repertoire of *gto* rituals includes an exorcism called *Gto nag mgo gsum*, the ‘Three-Headed Man of the Black Rituals’, performed in culturally Tibetan areas of the Himalayan borderlands, in which an effigy with three animal heads is cast out of the community. Thanks to Joseph Rock’s research in Yunnan in the 1930s we know that, in a ritual of a similar name among the Naxi, the effigy they used was a substitute for a human: in short, it is in the ritual repertoire of the Naxi, in far-off Yunnan, that we find the link between a Central Tibetan imperial-period ‘scapegoat’ (more accurately, ‘ransom’) practice and a modern Bonpo exorcism.

Even taking into account the enormous scientific progress of the last few decades of Bon studies, as well as a significant increase of general interests in

¹³ Stein 1971.

¹⁴ For a discussion of this article, see Poupard 2020, 115–119.

Bon religion itself in recent years, the research on Bonpo literature (broadly defined) is still in its pioneering phase.¹⁵ The idea of focusing on Bon manuscripts has slowly been born from a collaboration over many years on Tibetan manuscripts and archival documents (unrelated to Bon) between Charles Ramble and Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, which has illustrated the benefit of a dual approach combining form and content. It has materialised thanks to the generous support of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, which made possible the organisation of the series of workshops devoted to Bon and Naxi manuscripts in the years 2016–2020.

The first two workshops, entitled ‘Bonpo Manuscript Culture: Towards a Definition of an Emerging Field (parts 1 and 2)’, organised in 2016 and 2017, were dedicated to existing Bon manuscript collections (some of the most important of which have been discovered only recently), and oriented to the Bon tradition itself, their possible interconnections with Naxi culture, as well as surveys of collections from all around the world. In 2018, the third workshop, entitled ‘Bon Manuscripts in Context’, initiated a discussion on how we might adopt a cross-disciplinary approach, develop our methodology and identify all possible tools that might allow us in the future to formulate a definition of ‘Bon manuscript culture.’ We first of all aimed to perceive manuscripts as complex entities that are both material objects and an essential component of ritual performance, which carry a scriptural content. This led to the fourth workshop, held in 2019, entitled ‘Manuscripts, Rituals, and Magic in the Bon Religion’, where we explored connections between manuscripts, their function, their form in the context of the Bon religion and ritual performance, and more generally the material forms encapsulating this entire range of features. The workshop ‘The Elusive Connection: Manuscripts and Rituals of the Bon and Naxi Traditions’, postponed until 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, focused specifically on the connection between Bon and Naxi manuscripts.

The aim of these early meetings was to create and to reinforce a network of scholars who are known for their work on Bon, and to discuss the subject of Bon manuscripts. The topics included the different collections of Bon and Naxi manuscripts, the concepts and history of both traditions, the science and technology of

¹⁵ In ‘Bon Bibliography’, compiled and published on 27 May 2020 (<https://sites.google.com/view/bonbiblio/home>; accessed on 10 September 2022), Dan Martin says that it might seem ironic to speak of Bon as a ‘little-known’ religion when we have a listing of around two thousand writings on the subject. However, it should be explained here that the large number of these bibliographic entries stand for works of repetitive polemic targeted at a few misunderstood topics. The greater part of Bon practice, history and literature is still unknown to the world.

book studies and its possible application to Bon and Naxi manuscripts, the relationship between text and illustrations, writing materials used in both traditions, and the historical and archaeological context of the manuscripts' places of origin. The present volume is composed of selected articles contributed by the participants at these workshops, specialists in different academic disciplines including philology, anthropology, art history, archaeology and codicology.

Manuscripts have been essential in supporting the efforts of Bon monks, nuns and hereditary priests to preserve their unique culture and rituals, and have also helped scholars elsewhere to understand not only the Bon religion but also the early cultural and intellectual history of Central Asia. Manuscripts account for the entire range of Bonpo scriptural production, from all the major canonical works such as the Bonpo Kanjur, or the so-called *The New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts*, to the collected writing of famous masters, and the plethora of ritual texts that unexpectedly came to light in many parts of the region during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. These manuscripts are of great importance for gaining new insights into largely unknown cultural developments on the Tibetan Plateau and their connections to other traditions present in the region.

Whereas xylographic printing has a long tradition in Tibet, its use was largely confined to Buddhist institutions. A few block-printing projects – including full sets of the Bonpo Canon – notwithstanding, Bon has always manifested a preference for handwritten books. These are distinguishable from Buddhist manuscripts in a number of respects, and indeed there is compelling evidence to suggest that Bon has developed a distinctive manuscript tradition that transcends regional and historical peculiarities. This is seen most conspicuously in the use of certain abbreviations, scripts and symbols that occur very rarely or not at all in Tibetan Buddhist texts.

Migration of codicological practices from Central Tibet to Amdo, and then from Amdo to the Naxi of Yunnan, would most likely have happened first in late eighth century and then several centuries later. Thus the Bonpo ritual manuscripts from Dunhuang studied by Sam van Schaik may shed some light on the distinct features which then could be adopted in other areas, as well as ritual practices.

The contributions by Sam van Schaik and Marc des Jardins present interesting examples of ritual compendiums. Although the books of spells under discussion are dated to different periods of time and were created in different regions, they share some textual and material features. The value of the Dunhuang manuscripts for our research comes from both their age (no later than the early eleventh century), and the fact that this manuscript cache was formed by a local community.

‘A Tibetan Book of Spells’ by Sam van Schaik discusses a Dunhuang manual of magic spells and invocations (IOL Tib J 401 at the British Library) in the form of a Tibetan booklet containing offering methods for divination, rainmaking and curing various medical ailments. Van Schaik points to a form that, while unusual for Tibetan manuscripts, is also used for medical compendia, and emphasises the similarities between the rituals outlined in this book of spells and those observed by anthropologists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Careful analyses of text, form, materials and historical context enable us to derive a great deal of information about the author of the work. He also suggests that we look for further similarities in this type of literature, stating that a particular ritual from this Dunhuang book of spells may find a later echo in the work of a Buddhist ritual practitioner, or a Bonpo, or in practices that cannot be easily assimilated to either tradition.

‘Magical recipes from the *Grimoire* of a Tibetan Bonpo priest’, by Marc des Jardins discusses the universality of the *grimoire* formula among religious specialists, as well as the uniqueness of this Bon manuscript content, since this genre is rarely presented in Western literature. Des Jardins discusses the content, function and the historical context of this Bonpo compendium of magical recipes, and the similarities it exhibits to Buddhist texts of the same genre. He emphasises how difficult it is to obtain or even copy such material from private collections, in spite of the current rise in interest in the scholarly world on esoterism and its place in religious institutions, ordained monastics and the priesthood in general.

A belief in magic is ubiquitous in Tibetan culture, and is deeply rooted in Bon tradition. The magical power of words and symbols is as widely diffused as the power of spirits, ghosts and mythical creatures. Belief in the power of words and rites as a fundamental and irreducible force is an important component of Bon belief. This insight has important implications for classic and contemporary debates over the nature of ‘magic,’ and its presence in rituals and the daily life of people. The material culture of the Bon tradition likewise seems to provide copious, tangible evidence of the vitality of belief in magic. In his contribution to this volume, ‘Notes on a Bonpo manual for the production of manuscript amulets’, Charles Ramble explores connections between hand-drawn amulets, their function, their form and application in the context of the Bon religion and ritual performance, and in general the material forms of these protective talismans. Most of the existing published work on Tibetan amulets deals with block-printed devices, and although sets of instructions for their manufacture do exist, illustrated manuals for creating hand-drawn amulets seem to be much more unusual. The short texts that make up the compilation discussed here have been assembled from a range of different manuscripts, and Ramble offers the tentative hypothesis that the collection may represent an intermediate phase in a project –

that was apparently never completed – to copy the contents of these disparate materials into a single work devoted to the topic of amulet production. The author further notes that the lamas of the Samling temple complex appear to have a preference for using hand-drawn images in rituals where other Bonpo and Buddhist communities would normally opt for the more convenient solution afforded by blockprints. This may reflect the historical general preference among Bonpos for manuscripts over printed texts.

The undeniable connection between manuscripts and rituals in the Bon tradition, as well as the Bon cult of the book, is discussed in Dan Martin's contribution 'Earth and wind, water and fire: book binding and preservation in pre-Mongol Bon ritual manuals for consecrations.' One of the primary aims of the ritual of consecration is to preserve the sacred object, not just as a physical object, but as a focus of continuing devotion. Martin reminds us that for at least the last thousand years, Bon had a cult of the book that was very similar to that found in the other traditions. In his opinion, however, what may distinguish Bon from Tibetan book culture in general are the explicit conservation aims, as well as a somewhat different set of book accessories. Martin suggests that when books achieve iconic status and are duly enshrined, every element that goes into their making is elevated along with them. With their exceptional emphasis on letters, papermaking and protective coverings, the Bon consecration manuals make these micro-level consecrations explicit as an integral part of the consecration process. Knowing these ways of thinking is of primary importance if we are to achieve any worthwhile understanding of the physical book and its material aspects in their cultural context.

The long-standing interest in Buddhism and the preservation of cultural heritage, combined with the more recent focus on the conservation of manuscript collections within Tibet and the Himalayas, has triggered a wave of interest in the codicological, historical and anthropological study of Tibetan book culture.¹⁶ However, Bon manuscripts have not yet been clearly identified as a distinct corpus, or formed the object of codicological and material studies. The following chapters, therefore, are among the first in a series of case studies on both the collections and individual artefacts of Bon tradition, studied from the perspective of art history, codicology and preservation.

In 'Preliminary remarks on the Drangsong collection of Bon manuscripts in Mustang, Nepal', Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Charles Ramble present their preliminary findings on a unique collection of manuscripts found in Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, Nepal, with a discussion of the historical background of

¹⁶ Helman-Ważny et al. 2021; Luczanits and Tythacott (eds) forthcoming.

the significance of these books as both sacred and material objects. In terms of its content, this collection, belonging to the Bon religion of Tibet, offers a window onto the nature of royal and what we may call ‘community’ religion in a Tibetan kingdom. The collection has been assembled from different parts of Tibet and the Himalaya over six centuries, and therefore offers a rich body of material that has been retrieved by material and codicological analyses. The results contribute to our understanding of book and papermaking traditions in the region, as well as social aspects of Tibetan manuscript production. These manuscripts were used in rituals for the protection and prosperity of the kingdom of Mustang, its subjects and members of the royal lineage. Knowledge of the materials and ritual practices involved in the creation of physical objects sheds light on the interaction between religion, patronage and political authority in Tibetan society.

At the cultural level, there is a significant gap between Western codes and practices in heritage conservation and the reality of what can be implemented in particular regions of Asia due to the diverse economic situation, extreme climatic conditions, and prevailing cultural attitudes. The materiality of written artefacts is usually secondary for local people in culturally Tibetan regions of Asia, and is often neglected when it comes to the preservation of their cultural heritage. In practice, conservation is understood as the replacement of an old object with a new one. In effect, then, the number of original objects is constantly dwindling. With the replacement of original books when they start showing signs of damage, and the restoration of wall paintings when the old painting layer is replaced with a new one, a great deal of historical and scholarly information is lost forever when seen from a European perspective. These cultural differences in the approach to preservation of written artefacts have become a topic of heated discussion in recent years, when more new discoveries of manuscripts and other works of art were revealed from the caves of the Himalayan region.

The material side of books, whether they are Bon, Buddhist or Dongba, is often overlooked in historical studies. Amy Heller’s article, which reports on the history of the discoveries of Bonpo manuscripts in the libraries of the Samling and Phijor (Byi cer) monasteries in Dolpo, is an illustration of the importance of taking this material aspect into account: by combining translations of the dedications of two *mthing shog* manuscripts with art-historical and codicological research, she retrieves important information about provenance. Her investigation opens the possibility of identifying a distinctive style of graphic representation in the illustrations and illuminations that accompany certain texts. Questions about iconography, style and techniques of painting provide an entry point to a wider area of investigation, since at this stage we cannot be sure whether these features are connected exclusively to Bon manuscripts or to regional Tibetan traditions of graphic illustration.

While contracted forms of words – in which two or more syllables are collapsed into a single syllabic space – are used in both traditions, Bonpo texts employ many contractions and abbreviations that are not found in Buddhist works. The same is true of numerous graphic symbols and scribal codes. This distinctiveness is not confined to formal features of the texts, but extends to a variety of grammatical forms.¹⁷ Why these should be confined to Bonpo texts is not yet known. One hypothesis – yet to be tested – is that certain regional forms that were originally used in both Buddhist and Bon works of the corresponding locality were lost in the former but preserved and dispersed in Bon literature owing to the prestige attributed to their provenance.

This topic is discussed in Henk Blezer's article, 'Toward a definition of local orthographies of Bon manuscripts', which presents preliminary observations about whether scribal and linguistic features of Bon texts can help to establish their provenance. For this investigation the author uses the digitised texts available in his research archive, which includes reproductions of a large number of Bon manuscripts from Menri Monastery, in Dolanji, India and the library of Samling Monastery in Dolpo, Nepal (and currently on loan to Dolanji). Blezer points to the possibility of a system or at least certain regularities in the apparent idiosyncrasies in orthography and abbreviations (*bsdus tshig* or *bskungs yig*), and suggests that these can be organised into groups of features to be then recorded in a systematic way. He comes to the conclusion that many of the particularities seem to relate to local conventions, and in the longer term may contribute to our understanding of the transmission history and regional (or temporal) provenance of Bon manuscripts. Such peculiarities are a feature of hand-written, not printed, texts: many Bonpo scriptures have been digitised for publication in the form of Western-style books or in Tibetan *pothi* (longbook) format. During the process, these traits are generally regarded as errors and are accordingly purged from the publications through 'silent' editing. The distinctive aspects of any manuscript – as an artefact that is a product of specific technologies and skills, as a platform for content, and as an essential component of ritual performance – should therefore be closely integrated into research on Bon and Naxi manuscripts.

The growing body of research on Bon and Naxi manuscript traditions has produced little evidence of a possible common ground that the two traditions may share. However, while irrefutable instances of Bon-Naxi connections may be rare, the possibility that such a link may exist has been reinforced by the discovery of ritual texts of a class of priests in Gansu and Sichuan known as *Leu* (Tib. *le'u*). This very large corpus of material – which continues to grow as new discov-

17 Tri Yungdrung 2015, esp. 196–217.

eries are made – contains texts that seem to provide a bridge between the archaic rituals of Central Tibetan Bon and those of the Naxi.¹⁸ Similarities may also be seen in mythic narratives and figures, iconography, or even practices of using the same materials and technologies.

In ‘An old Tibetan myth on retribution for killing the Nyen (*Gnyan stong*): Manuscripts scattered between Naxi, Tanguts, Eastern and Western Tibet’, Daniel Berounský touches on a fascinating, but very puzzling, topic of a certain non-Buddhist mytho-poetic tradition related to eastern Tibet. Such a tradition – or more correctly complex of traditions – is bound up with an interesting corpus of myths known as the Nyen Collection (*Gnyan ’bum*). He introduces eleven versions of the myths dealing with retribution (*stong*) for killing the Nyen (*gnyan*) by the original people of the Dong (Ldong) clan as they appear in four versions of the Nyen Collection (*Gnyan ’bum*), in one version of the Tö Collection (*Gtod ’bum*), in a version dealing with aquatic spirits, Lu (*klu*), found in Gathang Bumpa Stupa in South-Central Tibet, and in five Naxi manuscripts, one of them paraphrased in English by Joseph Rock. The number of surviving versions reveals that this myth was once well known in Central and East Tibet, and provides a link between Naxi myths, East Tibetan non-Buddhist traditions and also West Tibet, where two versions of the Nyen Collection have been found. The Tangut names of the Bon Kanjur version reveal also that the myth was probably once related to the Tangut people.

As noted above, the class of spirits known as the *klu*, along with the three other main types of divinities, namely the *gnyan*, *sa bdag*, and *gtod*, are all believed to dwell in the Tibetan natural environment, notably in water, trees, the earth and rocks. These categories of divinities all feature in Tibetan religious writing, and especially in Bon literature, where there are a number of texts related to each of them. The *Klu ’bum* may be the only Bonpo work recognised as such by Buddhists that the latter use in their monasteries. Versions of the text were the subject of early studies by Anton Schiefner and Berthold Laufer in the nineteenth century,¹⁹ but apart from a comparative study by Rolf Stein of some of the myths contained in this intriguing work,²⁰ very little research has been conducted on it. For the Bonpos, the most important version is the trilogy generally known as *Klu ’bum dkar nag khra gsum* – the White, Black and Variegated *Klu ’bum* – that is contained in the Bka’ section of the Bon canon, corresponding to the Buddhists’ Bka’ gyur. However, a work entitled *Klu ’bum* is also found in the supplementary

¹⁸ Ngondzin Ngawang Gyatso 2016; Ramble 2014.

¹⁹ Laufer 1898; Schiefner 1881.

²⁰ Stein 1971.

section of the canon (the Bka' rten), as one of the 'Four Collections' (*'Bum bzhi*), one of which, the Nyen Collection (*Gnyan 'bum*), features in Daniel Berounský's contribution. The Leu manuscripts from East Tibet, mentioned above, include a version of the Four Collections from the Phenchu ('Phan chu) area, and in her contribution to the present volume Bazhen Zeren undertakes a comparison of this manuscript version with that contained in the canon. The results of her enquiry suggest that the canonical text is based on an earlier recension that may have resembled the Phenchu version, but that underwent editing in order to bring it more clearly into line with the conventions and principles of Yungdrung Bon.

A copy of the *Klu 'bum* text from the Four Collections was made available to Bazhen Zeren thanks to the generosity of Ngondzin Ngawang Gyatso, the foremost pioneer of research on the Leu literature. In chapter 9, 'The *Lung yig* textual corpus: an overview of Leu manuscript collections from Phenchu, Amdo', Ngawang Gyatso presents the contents of the main private holdings of Leu texts from an area of East Tibet where he has conducted extensive research. While the rituals contained in these scriptures correspond broadly to those found in the 'lower' vehicles according to the mainstream 'nine-vehicle' classification of Bon literature, they also contain traces of religious practices that have been rejected by the monastic Bon establishment. In the area under consideration, the sanitisation of the Leu literature is recent enough – the process began in the early nineteenth century and has continued since then – that we know how the selective process was carried out and even the names of those who were responsible for it. As the author points out, the performative traditions of the Leu priests are now very much in decline, and while this itself may be a cause of regret among traditionalists and anyone who appreciates the sheer variety of Tibetan religious and literary traditions, the fate of the Leu manuscripts does offer a salutary example of how such local diversity might have been progressively reduced in the interest of conformist homogeneity at other periods of Tibetan history.

The study of the ritual texts of the Dongba priests of the Naxi, in Yunnan, is most closely associated with the Austro-American explorer and botanist Joseph Rock (1884–1962). Rock first went to Yunnan in 1922, and his subsequent book publications on the subject of Naxi religion and a number of high-profile articles in the *The National Geographic Magazine* assured his reputation in the West as the foremost specialist of Naxi religions, culture and literature. Rock's prominence in the field eclipsed most of the pioneering work that was carried out before him, a result that he himself actively sought by taking every opportunity to diminish the achievements of his predecessors. Michael Friedrich's contribution, 'Lost in Translation? A Brief History of the study of Dongba manuscripts from its beginnings to 1945', sets out to trace the little-known history of the acquisition of Dongba manuscripts for mainly Western collections, and of attempts to

translate their contents, from the first publication of a copy of such a manuscript in the nineteenth century up to the end of the Second World War. Throughout this period, debates concerning the nature of Dongba writing, its origins and its antiquity in relation to the syllabic Geba script also used by the Naxi, are seen to run in parallel with personal rivalries, the blatant commodification of Dongba manuscripts – resulting in their proliferation for the international market – and a neglect of early Chinese-language scholarship that is only now beginning to receive the attention it deserves.

One of the obstacles to meaningful comparisons between Tibetan Bon and Naxi belief systems is the paucity of translations of works from the latter corpus. The problem of ‘translation’ from texts consisting of mnemonic pictograms is a more general consideration that must feature in any discussion of Naxi materials, and one that is raised by Dan Petersen’s contribution, ‘A “key” to the Dongba script? A re-appraisal of a set of four Dongba manuscripts, held by the John Rylands Library’. On the basis of a set of four Dongba manuscripts and two unpublished translations held at the John Rylands Library, in Manchester, the article examines both the textual and material aspects of these manuscripts. We are fortunate that one of the four texts features a sublinear Chinese translation. As is well known, it has been possible in the past to reconstruct original Tibetan forms for the names of certain divinities and classes of beings in the Naxi corpus, but having to rely on the Chinese representation of these names makes the task especially challenging. The difficulties presented by the Chinese medium notwithstanding, the story that emerges is strikingly evocative of the world that we know from the earliest mythic narratives of the Tibetan Bonpos, with a cosmogonic account that documents the absence of natural phenomena and their subsequent presence, followed by the vicissitudes of a society where the interactions of different classes of praeternatural beings and animals may be the idiom for the conflicts and resolutions between neighbouring clans and tribes.

Besides being a record of history and religion, in its textual sphere, whether Bon or Naxi, these manuscripts are also material objects that form part of cultural world heritage, and it is this aspect of them that is considered in the chapter ‘Technical examination of paper in Naxi manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna in the context of the papermaking tradition in Yunnan Province, China’ by Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai. Naxi paper has been thought to be unique, with influence from, among other things, the papermaking traditions of the Tibetan community. But many questions remain when we consider this region with its complex history of interaction between various ethnic groups. Helman-Ważny and Cai present the results of analyses of paper and fibre in sixteen Naxi manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna in the context of paper production in Yunnan Province, China, a region inhabited primarily by Naxi commu-

nities. Examination of paper samples with both digital and optical microscopes have revealed the papermaking techniques and raw materials used. Identification of the raw materials and the way they correspond to the distribution of local plants and cultural habits provided clues about the possible regional origins of the paper.

Detailed comparative research on Bon and Naxi manuscripts, entailing a consideration of trade routes, collections, materials and technologies as well as the study of reading practices and ritual usage of texts, will help to shed further light on the manuscript cultures of the two traditions. We hope that this volume will offer new insights into the topic and help to consolidate this emerging field of study.

Acknowledgements

The research presented in this book has involved numerous people with a range of expertise over the course of several years. We would first of all like to thank the authors of the contributions for their commitment, enthusiasm and patience from the inception of the project up to its conclusion. All this would not have been possible without Michael Friedrich, for whose encouragement and constant support we are deeply grateful. We also wish to thank Olga and Dorota for their professionalism and responsiveness during technical production. Finally, our warmest thanks are due to Caroline Macé for her keen oversight of all editorial matters, for combining trenchant criticism with good humour, and for ensuring that the pace of the process never flagged.

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Sam van Schaik

A Tibetan Book of Spells

Abstract: Magical practices, such as bringing rain, repelling hail, and summoning and dispelling demons, are an important part of both Bonpo and Buddhist practice in Tibet and the Himalayan region. This chapter explores the connections between a tenth-century book of magic preserved among the Dunhuang cave manuscripts and anthropological observations of magical practices recorded in the late twentieth century. Taking some key examples from the Dunhuang manuscript, I explore how certain key points of similarity show a continuity with the repertoire of a Buddhist ritual practitioner, or a Bonpo, or in practices that cannot be easily assimilated to either tradition. I argue that it is important to point out such correspondences, even when they occur over nearly a millennium, and when the mechanism of their transmission is, as yet, unclear.

1 Introduction

Specialists in healing, divination and the propitiation of spirits are found in both the Buddhist and Bonpo traditions of Tibet. These specialists may be monastics or lay practitioners, and their specific association with Bonpo or Buddhist schools is perhaps less important than the repertoire of ritual services that they provide. Many of the rituals are shared across traditions, and are found in variant forms widely dispersed across the Tibetan cultural area. And though changed in the process of transmission over the centuries, they also date back to the early development of Tibetan Buddhism.

Some years ago, I published two brief notes on my website *earlytibet.com*. In the first ('A Tibetan Book of Spells', February 2009), I introduced a Tibetan booklet from Dunhuang offering methods for divination, rainmaking and curing various medical ailments. In the second ('Two Frogs, a Thousand Years Apart', September 2011), I looked at a single ritual from this book of spells, and pointed out several similarities with a ritual observed by Charles Ramble in Nepal.¹ Though aimed

¹ See 'A Tibetan Book of Spells', February 2009 (earlytibet.com/2009/02/19/a-tibetan-book-of-spells/), and 'Two Frogs, a Thousand Years Apart', September 2011 (<https://earlytibet.com/2011/09/23/two-frogs-a-thousand-years-apart/>). I would like to thank those who contributed to the discussion of this material in the comments' fields, especially Dan Martin and P eter-

at different ends, both rituals involve moulding an effigy of a frog, filling it with various ingredients, and at the end of the ritual, placing it next to a spring.

Since then, I have noted several other points where the rituals outlined in this book of spells (IOL Tib J 401 at the British Library) are strikingly similar to rituals observed by anthropologists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Although I originally felt that the great distance in space and time between the Dunhuang booklet and the records of modern practices meant that these observations could only remain curiosities, I now think that it is worth exploring them a little further.

There has not been much work on this kind of ritual manual in the recent history of Tibet. As Nicholas Sihlé has pointed out, studies of local ritual practices in the Tibetan cultural sphere have generally relied on observation and description, with much less attention to any textual basis for these practices. Often the texts have been regarded as ‘exogenous’ or detached from local practice.² While collections of texts for this kind of practice do exist, they have attracted little interest from scholars.³ As the examples that follow show, a particular ritual from this Dunhuang book of spells may find a later echo in the work of a Buddhist ritual practitioner, or a Bonpo, or in practices that cannot be easily assimilated to either tradition.

The value of the Dunhuang manuscripts has mainly been seen in terms of their age, naturally enough; less interest has been shown in the fact that this manuscript cache was formed by a local community. Despite the treasure-hunting that resulted in the dispersal of the manuscripts all over the world, there is an archaeological integrity to the collections, in that they have been generally kept separate from other manuscripts in the institutions in which they have ended up. Over the last two decades, the International Dunhuang Project has done much to bring these institutional collections together in an online resource (idp.bl.uk).

We are still some way from the time when we can compare this cache with those found in monasteries and stupas elsewhere. So at this stage, a comparison between the rituals found in the Dunhuang manuscripts and contemporary practices observed in communities in the Tibetan cultural sphere might offer us insights that we would not otherwise have access to. In time the picture will be

Dániel Szántó. More recently, I benefited from discussions of the Indic context of some of the rituals described here with Gergely Hidas and Gethin Rees.

² Sihlé 2009.

³ An exception is Shen-yu Lin’s (2005) work on the medical rituals known as *gto* collected by Mipham (1846–1912); the are several major printed collections of minor rituals, including the *Ba ri be’u bum* by Bari Lotsawa (1040–1111) and the *Las sna tshogs pa’i sngags kyi be’u bum* by Mipham. See Marc des Jardins contribution in the present volume.

clearer, the great gap in time will lessen as examples from the intermediate period come to light, and we will be able to make more sense of the continuities and changes in these rituals of daily life.

2 The booklet

The manuscript of the Dunhuang spellbook, IOL Tib J 401, is a codex, formed of bifolios stitched along the middle with thread. When opened out, the bifolios are the size of a small *pothi* (*dpe cha*) leaf (i.e. 8 × 38 cm).

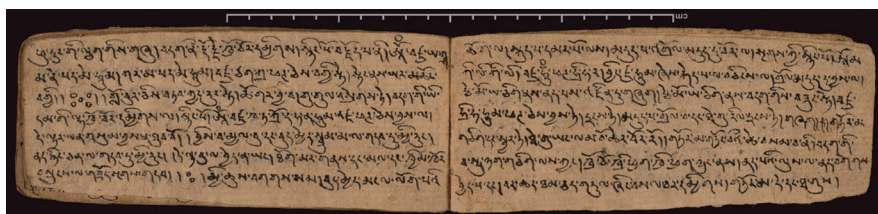


Fig. 1: The book of spells IOL Tib J 401.

The resulting long and thin folio size (8 × 19 cm) is unusual among the Dunhuang manuscripts; in fact no other codex manuscripts from Dunhuang are in this format, most pages being closer to square-shaped. As Agnieszka Helman-Ważny has pointed out, there is another Tibetan manuscript in the British Library with the same format. This manuscript is probably from the nineteenth century. This is also a compendium of texts, based in the ritual world of the Nyingma school, though less concerned with the quotidian aims of the texts in the Dunhuang spellbook. Helman-Ważny has also studied a Tibetan-Mongolian medical manuscript that has a similar long and thin format (9.5 × 22.4 cm), though in this case the binding is along the long top edge of the book.⁴

⁴ On the physical characteristics of IOL Tib J 401 and Or.15193 see Helman-Ważny 2014, 63–66; on the medical manuscript MEK 51761 (from the Ethnographic Museum in Krakow) see Helman-Ważny 2015, 339–342.

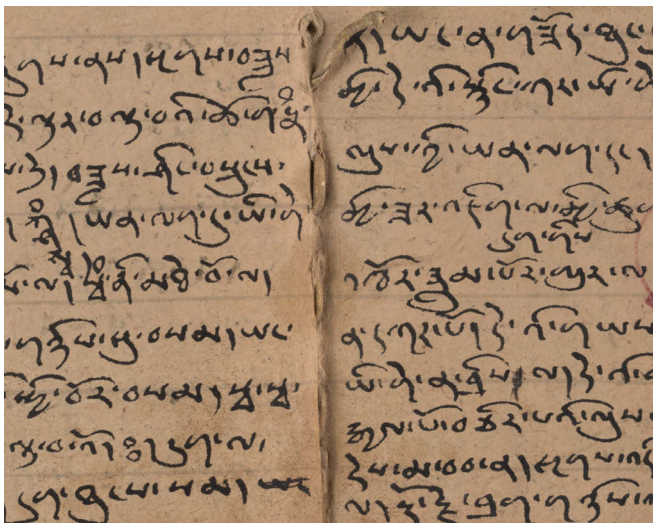


Fig. 2: Detail from the book of spells IOL Tib J 401.

As with some of the rituals in the Dunhuang spellbook, we are faced with a very long period of time between the date of the Dunhuang manuscript and the later Tibetan example. Nevertheless, we can speculate that the ‘folded *pothi*’ style of codex did occur in the intermediate period, if only because the *pothi* remained by far the most common format of paper folios in Tibet.

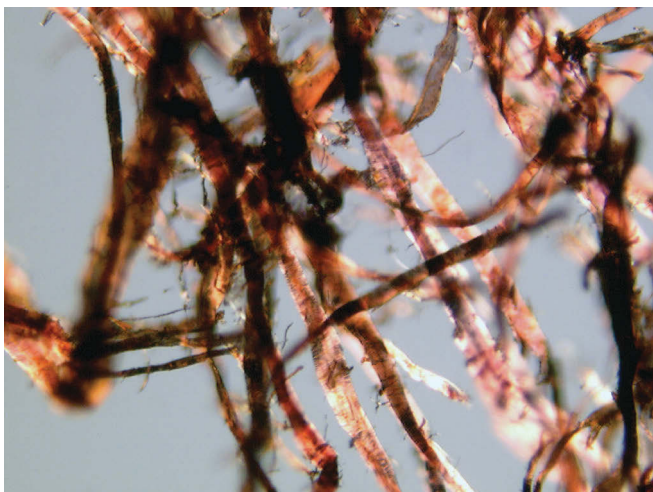


Fig. 3: Microscopic image of IOL Tib J 401 by Agnieszka Helman-Ważny.

The pages of the Dunhuang spellbook are composed of rag paper, a type of paper resulting from the recycling of textiles, sometimes along with old paper. The primary fibre type is *Boehmeria nivea* (ramie), and was made on a sieve, with laid lines showing four to five per centimetre. This type of paper is very common among the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts, and indicates that the manuscript was constructed and written locally.⁵

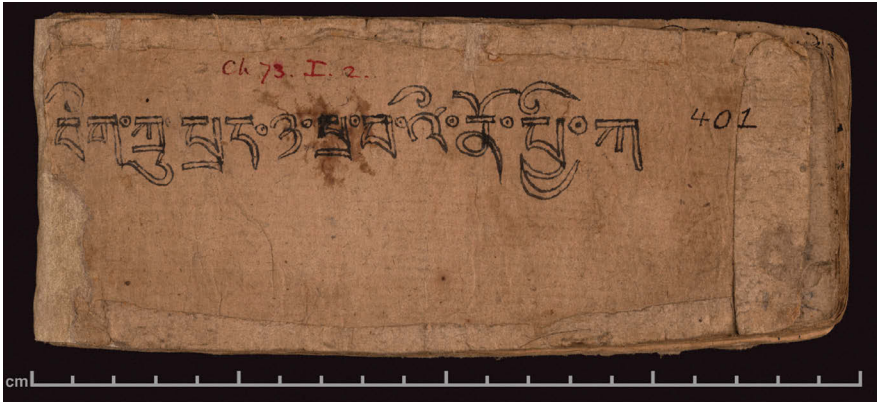


Fig. 4: The cover page of the book of spells IOL Tib J 401.

The cover of the book was written on in large, ‘outline’ style letters: ‘This is the ritual manual of Bhikṣu Prajñāprabhā’ (*big kru pad nya pra ba’i no pyi ka*). The term *no pyi ka* is unusual, though it does continue to be used in later Tibetan ritual literature. It appears (as *no-pi-ka*) in Sarat Chandra Das’s *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (1902), with the definition ‘n. of a religious service; propitiatory rite’. The word seems to be derived from the Sanskrit *sādhanaupayika*. Though the Tibetan *no pyi ka* breaks the Sanskrit word up in the wrong place (it is *sādhana + upāyikā*), it seems to derive its meaning from the whole Sanskrit term.⁶

⁵ Helman-Ważny and van Schaik 2013, 721–722, 735.

⁶ In his work on the *mahāyoga* manuscripts from Dunhuang, Kenneth Eastman (1983) suggested that *no pyi ka* should be translated as *sādhana*, noting a Tibeto-Sanskrit glossary in Pelliot tibétain 849, which glosses the term as *sgrub thabs*. We can also point to certain other Dunhuang manuscripts, including IOL Tib J 553 and 554, which are undoubtedly *sādhana*s and bear the title *no pyi ka*. Robert Mayer and Cathy Cantwell (2008, 152) suggest (with thanks to Matthew Kapstein) that the probable origin of *no pyi ka* is a Sanskrit term *sādhanaupayika*. This is based on the suggestion that this is the original Sanskrit term behind the Tibetan word *sgrub thabs*. Therefore *sādhana* = *sgrub*, while *aupāyika* = *thabs*. However, Péter-Dániel Szántó has pointed

In any case, this title on the front of the Dunhuang spellbook seems to have been written by the owner of the manuscript, to let everyone know that it was his own *no pyi ka* or ritual manual. This, and the nature of the contents of the manuscript, strongly suggest that it was used in the actual practice of the rituals it contains. The owner seems to be identified as a monk by the title *big kru*, if we are to read this as a rather mangled transliteration of Sanskrit *bhikṣu*. This title is not commonly used by Tibetan monks in Dunhuang or other early sources. Intriguingly, Charles Ramble writes of a ritual specialist who lived in the village of Tangkya in highland Nepal going by the title Bichuwa. Ramble mentions the similarity of this title to *bhikṣu*, but also the Nepali word for a ritualist, *bijuwā*.⁷

The same words (*big kru pad nya pra ba'i no pyi ka*) are written, in the same bold style in another manuscript, Pelliot tibétain 41, which is a concertina containing Vajrayāna ritual texts. Here the words are not written on the silk covers, but in the middle of the manuscript, in a gap left between two texts. This manuscript appears to be in a different handwriting style from the Dunhuang spellbook, and whether Prajñāprabhā wrote either of them, or was only their owner, is open to question. Because Pelliot tibétain 41 is incomplete, it is difficult to fully understand the texts it contains, but it is clear that the first text, which is on the recto of the manuscript, contains instructions for the ritual preparation of medicine (*smān*). Thus there is certainly a thematic overlap with the Dunhuang spellbook. In any case, the assertion of ownership of not only the manuscript but the rituals it contains (i.e. *no pyi ka*) is significant because we know that in other communities, a specialist may closely guard the secret of a specific ritual if it is not generally known, thereby maintaining his or her role as specialist.⁸

3 The rituals

I have already detailed the full contents and layout of the Dunhuang spellbook IOL Tib J 401 in the catalogue entry in *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang*. Here, I will focus on some of the key rituals with thematic links to contemporary ritual practices in the Tibetan cultural area.⁹

out that the titles of many tantric texts contain instances of the word *sādhānopayika* (as well as *maṅḍalopayika*); therefore the second part of the compound would be *upāyikā*, not *aupāpayika* (see comments in earlytibet.com/2009/02/19/a-tibetan-book-of-spells/).

⁷ Ramble 2008, 227–228.

⁸ See for example Ramble 2008, 177.

⁹ For the full catalogue entry, see Dalton and van Schaik 2006, 136–142.

3.1 Rituals of Bhṛkuṭī and Avalokiteśvara

The first ritual text written the right way up on the manuscript (5^r–11^v) is a series of rituals associated with the deity Bhṛkuṭī (written *'bur kur* in the Tibetan). The deity is also known as the Blazing Wrathful One (Khro bo rme brtsegs). She seems to originate in the *Purāṇa* literature (see for example *Matsya-purāṇa* 179.8), and in Tibetan Buddhism is often paired with Tārā as one of the consorts of Avalokiteśvara.

This is a long text, occupying five folios of the book. The ritual begins with the establishment of a four-cornered mandala, each side one cubit (*kru gang*) in length. The *vidyādhara* consecrates the mandala with ground flowers (*men tog*), and places a single vajra in the middle, or if one is not available, a white wand (*'dan dkar po*). A drawing of the deity is to be made, and the mantra as many times as possible. Then the *vidyādhara* lifts the vajra one cubit above the ground and recites aspiration and repentance prayers. When he praises with hymns (*bstod*), the deity herself arrives. The text states that the physical representation of the deity and the *vidyādhara*'s visualisation should be the same.

The individual rituals, too numerous to describe individually, include the following:

- Prophecy
- Subduing demons, people and animals
- Bringing forth water, and manipulating the flow of water
- Finding treasure
- Curing illnesses and insanity
- Bringing people together and attracting others

The collection of rituals focussing on Avalokiteśvara (16^r–21^r) is similar to the rituals of Bhṛkuṭī in that one deity is propitiated for a variety of ritual outcomes. This collection is more focussed than the earlier one on medical matters, and many of the rituals involve the preparation of medical ointments. As Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim has pointed out, the early Tibetan medical texts found in Dunhuang stand between the categories of 'medicine' and 'ritual', including treatments such as moxibustion, bloodletting and emetics, but also ritual activities such as the construction of effigies (*glud*).¹⁰ The same can be said of the medical rituals here.

The particular form of Avalokiteśvara propitiated in these rituals can be either the thousand-armed form, or Amoghapāṣa, both of which are found in other

¹⁰ Yoeli-Tlalim 2015.

tantric literature in the Dunhuang manuscripts.¹¹ Compendiums of brief rituals such as these bear a close resemblance to some of the canonical texts found in the dhāraṇī and kriya tantra sections of the Buddhist Kanjur. These include the *Amoghapāśadhāraṇīsūtra* and *Amoghapāśakalparāja*, and kriya tantra texts such as *Siddhaikavira*.

Further rituals include:

- Dispelling curses and other enmities.
- Warding off various kinds of spirit, including *gnod sbyin* (Skt *yākṣa*), *'dre*, *'byung po*, and *stag srin* (i.e. the tiger-headed *rakṣasa*)
- Protecting crops from insects.
- Medical cures including diseases of the eyes, poisonous bites, burns, headaches and fever.

The association of Avalokiteśvara with treatments including eye medicine has continued to the present.¹² In other cases the specifics of the rituals do not appear to be closely linked to Avalokiteśvara; instead we seem to have previously existing rituals that have been adapted to a Buddhist context by association with Avalokiteśvara. For example, the first ritual is to ward off the influence of the tiger-headed demon (*stag srin*). This involves burning the skull of a cat, and mixing this into pure earth (*sa gtsang ma*), then making the form of a cat. After invoking Avalokiteśvara, the model cat is to be cut up into 108 pieces while reciting *om hri ha hum phat svaha*.

The basic structure of this cat effigy ritual has continued through to the present day (without the specific association with Avalokiteśvara), as reported by anthropologists working among the Sherpas in Nepal. Both Sherry Ortner and Robert Paul described this ritual as part of larger ceremonies including funerals and the annual Dumje festival. In these ceremonies, the lay community construct 'a large effigy described variously as a cat, bermang, or a tiger, tak (*stag*), made of dough with a finely sculpted clay head, and painted with black and white stripes, for which charcoal and flour are used.'¹³

After several other ritual acts, including making offerings and dancing, the cat effigy is taken on the main road out of the village, and just beyond the village boundary, placed on the ground and cut to pieces by young men in ritual role of *peshangba* using their swords.¹⁴ While Paul refers to the effigy as a cat, Ortner

¹¹ For the full catalogue entry, see Dalton and van Schaik 2006, 136–142.

¹² See Czaja 2015.

¹³ Paul 1979, 281.

¹⁴ Ortner 1978, 93–94; Paul 1979, 281–282.

calls it a tiger. This may reflect the different interpretations of their informants; however, Paul writes that ‘according to lamas, also, the cat is more correctly a tiger, the term “cat” being only a vulgar misconception’.¹⁵ This cat/tiger multivalence is reflected in the ritual in IOL Tib J 401, in which the cat effigy is the means for dispelling the influence of a tiger-headed demon.

3.2 Curing insanity

The first set of rituals in the booklet are written upside down with respect to the other texts, and may have been written last rather than first. The opening ritual (fols 4^v–3^v) is a cure for insanity. Specifically, the ritual is introduced as a cure for a severe episode in someone afflicted with severe insanity. Perhaps this description refers to some kinds of seizure. A fire is made, and a mixture of iron, gold and copper filings prepared. Four people hold the four limbs of the insane person. The fire is stoked (*mye bo che bus*), and the filings are then scattered onto the person, and into the fire, while mantras invoking the *yākṣas* and *rakṣasas* are recited. This is repeated nine times.¹⁶

Then everyone waits through the three watches of the night. At the final watch, five phurbus are stabbed at the four limbs and head of the afflicted person. Finally, the text instructs the *vidyādhara* (i.e. the ritual master) to ‘bind them with the five kinds of thread, subdue them by pacing along their sides, strike them with the whips of your sleeves (*phu dung gi lcag*)’. Finally the *vidyādhara* visualises himself as *Vajrakhroda* and recites another mantra, which contains the syllables *vajra yaksha mane padme hum*. If the insanity strikes again later, the text advises a simpler ritual, burning fragrant resin (*gu gul*) in a fire, visualising a deity and reciting another mantra.

This ritual is similar in principle to some of the ‘shock treatments’ prescribed for insanity in Indian medical texts.¹⁷ Throwing the metal filings would create multi-coloured sparks and explosive sounds, creating a dramatic effect. The text itself indicates that this ritual is dangerous, stating that it is not to be performed on infants or pregnant women. More generally, this ritual clearly belongs to the

¹⁵ Paul 1979, 292.

¹⁶ Cantwell and Mayer (2008, 202) interpret the text as saying that the person is swung over the fire, but I am not sure this is correct.

¹⁷ See Wujastyk 2003.

category of *homa* (*sbyin sregs*), and as Cantwell and Mayer have pointed out, there is a connection with the Vajrakilaya ritual literature.¹⁸

A ritual practice with some similarities to this one is still practised for people afflicted with seizures. Larry Peters has described a ritual carried out by a ritual practitioner Mrs Dolkhar, also known by her title Abhi Lhamo, in which a case of seizures is addressed by using a fire altar, and stabbing the feet of the patient with a phurba. This practice is specifically directed towards expelling a hostile spirit, and such possession is not mentioned in the ritual in IOL Tib J 401 (perhaps surprisingly given the use of wrathful methods, mantras and symbolism). Moreover, the contemporary practitioner, Mrs Dolkhar, not only strikes the patient's extremities with the phurba but sucks on the end of it to remove impurities, a common practice among Tibetan and Mongolian shamanic healers. Despite these differences, both rituals are applied to a patient undergoing a seizure, and both feature the use of a fire altar and the stabbing of the extremities with a phurba.¹⁹

3.3 Diseases caused by *nāgas*

Following the ritual for insanity, and still in the same body of text that is written upside down, there are two rituals for illnesses associated with the *nāgas* (*klu*). The first is for men with 'obstructed waters' (*chus bgags*) or women with 'inverted wombs' (*mngal log*), the latter probably referring to a prolapsed uterus. The ritual involves the *vidyādhara* tying knots in a thread, around his waist, and handing it to the patient to hold. Compare the description of Palden Lhamo by René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz: 'The king of the *nāgas* is drawn around her waist as a girdle' (1996, 24).

Afterwards, this thread is wound around a shinbone and added to a *torma*, which is to be thrown into a road. The last element of the ritual – throwing of the shinbone wound with thread into a road – is also found in Tibetan rituals using a cross wound with thread (*mdos*). In the terms of later Bonpo medical rituals, the stick wound with thread is called *rgyang bu*, while the cross is called *nam mkha'*. In such rituals, as is the case here, the *mdos* are added to a *torma*.²⁰ The visualisation that is to be done when the shinbone wound with thread is cast away – as Cantwell and Mayer have pointed out – also contains elements found

¹⁸ Cantwell and Mayer 2008, 202.

¹⁹ For the account of this ritual, see Peters 2016, 91–92.

²⁰ On *mdos* see the detailed study in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 369–397; on the use of *nam mkha'* and *mdos* in a contemporary Bonpo medical ritual, see Millard 2015.

in Vajrakilaya rituals. The visualisation is that from every single pore of one's own body, a billion wrathful deities (*khro bo*) emerge, to overcome all hindrances and purify the illness.²¹

The second ritual in this section is for patients with aches and swellings caused by *nāgas*. The *vidyādhara* is to make a model of a frog out of barley flour. In a cavity in the barley frog made with a bamboo stick, an ointment is to be made, and applied to the point of the ache on the body of the patient. The visualisation is that Hayagriva Varuna appears with an entourage of black frog emanations, and destroys all illnesses. After this, the barley frog is examined for a prognosis:

Lift up the frog, and if a golden liquid emerges from under it, they will definitely recover. If it is merely moist, then they will recover before too long. If there is only meat with gluey flour, they will be purified by the end of the illness. It is not necessary to do the ritual again. If there is only gluey flour, break it up and do the ritual again.²²

After this, the frog is to be placed in front of a spring, and incense offerings made to it. A similar ritual has been described by Charles Ramble in a very different period and setting, by the lamas of Tshognam in highland Nepal:

The last, and perhaps most interesting, of the rites performed by Tshognam for Te is the annual rain-making ceremony. Tantric techniques for controlling the weather are nothing unusual in the Tibetan tradition: weather-makers were even employed by the Lhasa government to ensure rain at appropriate times and to keep hail off vulnerable sites. The technique used by the senior lama of Tshognam, however, does not belong to the usual Tibetan repertoire but was assimilated by his grandfather, 'Doctor Dandy', from the 'outsiders' religion' (*phyi pa'i chos*) – specifically, from Hinduism: he learned it, it is said, from a mendicant Indian pilgrim. The ritual is performed in the summer, with the intention of ensuring that the pastures are well watered and that the snow-melt that irrigates the buckwheat crop is supplemented with rain. The procedure, briefly, is as follows. Two hollow wax models of frogs are made. Through a hole in the back, the frogs are filled with various ingredients, including the excrement of a black dog and magical formulae written on slips of paper, and the holes are sealed with a wax lid. One of the frogs is stuffed into the mouth of one of the springs to the east of Te, and the other is burned at a three-way crossroads. The principle of this method is apparently to pollute the subterranean serpent-spirits and the sky gods, and induce them to wash away the contagion by producing water from the earth and the heavens.²³

²¹ Cantwell and Mayer 2008, 203.

²² IOL Tib J 401, 2v.3–5.

²³ Ramble 2008, 174. For the use of a dough frog in another ritual related to the *klu*, see Charles Ramble's contribution in the present volume.

Though it is impossible to trace the connection between these two rituals, separated by over a thousand years, the similarities between them are too many to be dismissed. Further research may turn up records of such rituals in the period in between the tenth and twentieth centuries.

3.4 *Prasena* divination

The major divination ritual in this book of spells (fols 11^v–14^v) is associated with the deity Garuda (here called *nam ka lding* and *bya rje khyung*). At the beginning Garuda is visualised sitting or kneeling on a white lotus growing in a lake. He is golden in colour, wearing gold earrings and bracelets, and a red girdle. His legs are black and his face is like the light of a fire, very striking in aspect (*cha lugs*). He is to be visualised with a moon at his heart for peaceful rituals, and a sun for wrathful ones.

The divination practice itself uses a mirror to invoke a vision for the purpose of divination. The ritual space is set up as a four-cornered mandala, and two mantras, one of eleven syllables and one of six syllables, are recited. In the preparatory practice, the *vidyādhara* and the mirror are ritually cleansed, and offerings are made to the mirror. A ‘pure’ (i.e. pre-pubescent) child is placed in front of the mirror and instructed to look into it. The *vidyādhara* then questions the child, and the answers to the questions will appear clearly (to the child) within the mirror.

The text goes on to provide variations on this relatively simple ritual, mainly replacing the mirror with another focus for the child medium. These are the surface of the *vidyādhara*’s thumbnail, which is coated with a lacquer; a skullcup filled with moist barley flour; a sword or white wand. What is seen in the mirror, or other object, is said to be anything in the three times, that is, from the past, present or future.

The text here in the Dunhuang spellbook contains the earliest surviving instructions on Tibetan *prasena* practice. This ritual is also discussed in Chinese Buddhist ritual literature (the Chinese term is *bo so ni*), though the name seems to originate with Prakrit. As Giacomella Orofino has shown in a detailed study of the practice, there are several references in the *Kālacakra tantra* and its associated literature to *pratisenā*, which is probably a Sanskritisation of the Prakrit *prasena*.²⁴

²⁴ Orofino 1994. See also Newman 1988, 133. On the Chinese *prasena* rituals and their precedents, see Strickmann 2002, 206–218. He identifies the *Subāhupariṣṭchā* as the main scriptural

The *prasena* ritual, often abbreviated to *pra* (and pronounced ‘tra’), has continued to be popular through to the present. As Orofino has pointed out, this ritual practice has an equally significant presence in both Buddhist and Bonpo traditions:

As appears from the *gZi brjid*, in the *Phya gshen theg pa*, the ‘Way of the *gshen* of Prediction’, the first of the nine vehicles of Bonpo tradition, we find the term *pra* used as a standard term for prognostics. In the *sNang gshen gyi theg pa*, the ‘Way of the *gshen* of the Visual World’, the second vehicle for placating and repelling the gods and the demons, mention is made of the *pra ltas gsal ba’i me long thabs*, the ‘method of the mirror of clear prognostics’ which, if one gazes with acute concentration, allows the vision of the spirits who harm other beings.²⁵

Lama Chime Radha has discussed various applications of this ritual in twentieth century Tibet, including its customary use in the identification of the rebirth of the Dalai Lamas. Lama Chime describes how the search for the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1933 involved a *prasena* divination at Lha mo bla mtsho, a lake near Lhasa. He also describes other uses of the practice, including a woman who wanted to know how many sons would be born to her, and a lama helping a group of Tibetans fleeing the Chinese to find a path to Assam. In these accounts, as well as the traditional mirror, and the sacred lake, the use of a thumbnail painted with lacquer (as in IOL Tib J 401) is mentioned. However, none of Lama Chime’s examples include the use of a child medium.²⁶

3.5 Rain rituals

There are two distinct rain rituals in the Dunhuang spellbook, which I will deal with together here. The first rain ritual comes in the Garuda section, after the *prasena* divination practice. In the ritual, the *vidyādhara* visualises a water mandala as a sphere, in which the syllable *na* is flanked by two *huṃ* syllables to the left and right. The *na* represents the king of the *nāgas*, and the two *huṃ* syllables transform into vajras, which come together and crush the body of the *nāga* king. Water then comes forth from the body of the *nāga*, and fills the world.

source for the *prasena* rituals; this text is also discussed in Orofino 1994, 614.

²⁵ Orofino 1994, 616.

²⁶ Chime Radha 1981. The divination practice including a child medium is still used by Tamang shamans in Nepal (oral communication from Charles Ramble, October 2020).

Visualising this, the *vidyādhara* recites the mantra *huṃ nāga huṃ*. This brings the rain.

To stop a great rain, the visualisation is of a red *huṃ* blazing with flames that are also *huṃ* syllables. This fire spreads and burns up the world. If the *vidyādhara* can see clouds, he should visualise them being on fire as well. After this, the *vidyādhara* summons and binds the *nāga* with *mudrās*. At the end of this ritual, the syllables *na* and *huṃ* should be written on wooden slips (*byang bu*) with a pen (*snyug po*) and stuck in the ground as appropriate – presumably in the same arrangement as in the water mandala described above.

We know that wooden sticks were used in rituals in early Tibet and Central Asia. Several of the wooden slips and four-sided sticks found at the Miran site in Central Asia, dating from the ninth century, were used for ritual purposes including funerals, propitiation of deities and divination.²⁷ At the end of this ritual, there is a further practice for ‘to ward off hailstones, and incidents of illness, fierce harmful spirits, and other destructive entities’. This involves visualizing a vajra mace (*tsher ma can*) with an angry head, with frowning wrathful eyes, which strikes the *nāgas*, dragons and demons and repels them all.

The second rain ritual in the manual is more complex than the first. The *vidyādhara* is instructed to set up a canopy or tent near a pool or clear spring. Inside, he creates a mandala with red ochre (*gtshag*), and draws or paints the *nāgas* of the four directions on cloth (*ras*) or paper (*shog shog*), as follows:

- East - white with five heads
- South - blue with nine heads
- West - red with seven heads
- North - green with eight heads

Then the mandala is to be ritually cleansed (*gtsang sbra*) with the five precious things, five seeds and five medicines.²⁸ The top portion of the food offerings (*smos*) is sprinkled for the *nāgas* and the protectors. Four arrows (*mda'*) are to be placed at the four corners of the mandala, and the mantra *na ga dzdza* is to be tied to the notch of each arrow. Once this is done, the ritual is performed.

The text then states that the *vidyādhara*'s cloak, monk's robe and crown are to be ‘made blue’. He is then to gaze towards the *Mahāmegha sūtra* and read the text constantly, while offering the tormas. The reference to ‘making blue’ is difficult to

²⁷ See van Schaik 2013, 241–249.

²⁸ On cleansing substances, see Bentor 1996, 110–111.

interpret, but actually occurs in the *Mahāmegha sūtra* itself: ‘a blue canopy and blue dress, blue banner and all the offering is to be made blue’.²⁹

Finally, the *nāgas* are summoned from the water. The *vidyādhara* visualises their presence, and rituals of offering and purification performed. The offerings are thrown into the water. Then the *vidyādhara* visualises a huge cloud coming from the mouth of the chief *nāga* and filling the sky, and rain pouring down, while reciting *hung na ga hung*. This is the end of the ritual, but further actions are suggested if rain does not fall. These include striking the effigies of the *nāgas* with a rod while reciting the *ki la ya* mantra, performing a fire ritual, and finally burning the effigies of the *nāgas*; the text concludes, ‘if that does not suffice, then it is impossible’.

This ritual bears some resemblance to the one in the *Mahāmegha sūtra* and the presence of the sutra itself in the ritual practice shows that this is not accidental. A series of more complex rainmaking rituals found in the *Vajratuṅḍasamayakalparāja* also contain many similarities with the ritual here. Another similar ritual is found in a text translated into Chinese in the sixth century, which has been recently studied by Ronald Davidson. This text (Taisho 1007) prescribes a similar set-up of mandala and *nāga* effigies, but lacks the instructions on visualisation, and is not as clearly linked to the *Mahāmegha sūtra*.³⁰ It does have similar instructions on what to do if the initial ritual is not effective.

Again, the rainmaking (and stopping rain and hail) rituals in IOL Tib J 401 are the earliest surviving detailed instructions on such practices in Tibetan. Bringing rain, and even more importantly in Tibet, preventing hail, continued to be staple rituals of Buddhist and Bonpo ritual specialists through to the present day. Accounts of rainmakers working in Tibet and in exile are evidence for the continuation of many aspects of the rituals described here – for example, the Nyingma lama Yeshe Dorje, who performed rituals for bringing rain and for stopping hail in Tibet and then for the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. He describes the necessity of locating a body of water to perform the ritual, and pitching a tent next to the water in which the ritual is carried out.³¹

A study of hail prevention rituals in northeast Skya rgya in northeast Amdo by Rdo rje don grub provides some interesting points of comparison with the first ritual above, in which the prevention of hail is mentioned. In the village tradition observed by Rdo rje don grub, hail prevention is a serious business which

²⁹ Translation in Bendall 1880, 309. I would like to thank Gergely Hidas for pointing this out to me, and for sharing his pre-publication work on the *Vajratuṅḍasamayakalparāja*.

³⁰ See Hidas 2019.

³¹ Woolf and Blanc 1994, 26–29.

is handled by members of a lineage of hail protectors (*ser srung*) who are funded by a hail prevention tax. This social situation has been described in many other settings in Tibet. While the exact nature of the ritual and implements used in Skya rgya differs from the ritual prescribed in the Dunhuang spellbook, one of the main hail prevention rituals is said to be based on the meditation on *bya rgyal khyung*, almost the same name by which Garuda is called in the Dunhuang spellbook (i.e. *bya rje khyung*).³²

3.6 A ritual for pregnant women

This ritual is for those who wish for a child from a childless woman (*bud med bu med pa*), and for the protection of a woman's life after giving birth. The ritual is performed in a mandala delimited with knives (*mtshon*) and five-coloured thread. On the eight and fourteenth days, she should take the eight vows of a lay devotee (*dge bsnyen ma*). Her body is to be cleaned and she is to be dressed in new clothes, ornamented with jewellery, and taken into the centre of the mandala. The *vidyādhara* should place mustard seeds on top of her head, and stay until midnight reciting aspirational prayers and confession, then knot the strings 108 times. The *vidyādhara* should recite the mantra and perform the *mudrās* of the great king of the *yakṣas*. Then he should write her name on paper and attach it to his clothes and those of the woman.

If the woman comes to harm, the *vidyādhara* should quickly grab a five-pointed vajra, and make offerings and perform recitations for seven days. A vivid visualisation is described here. From the realm of the four great kings come many infants who have died in the womb; the *vidyādhara* is to bind them and send them back. Then fulfilling their commitments, many goddesses come from the sky to protect the womb and place a child there. Any demons are thwarted by this. Like the fruit of the *ajakarṇa* (*a dza ka*), their head bursts into seven parts.³³ This visualisation draws on many aspects of Buddhist mythology; in particular, the account of Queen Maya's conception of the Buddha, which begins with her dreaming of being taken away by the four great kings.

The care of women in pregnancy and childbirth, and children before and after birth, are key human needs and are found across all traditions of Tibetan medical and ritual practice. In recent years this previously neglected area has been the subject of a dedicated study by Frances Garrett (2008), and Thubten

³² Rdo rje don grub 2012, 76.

³³ *Ajakarṇa* is a species of *Dipterocarpus* tree.

Sangay and Gavin Kilty (2011) have described a variety of rituals which cover the period from early pregnancy to late childhood.³⁴ The presence of this ritual in IOL Tib J 401 is important for our understanding of the social conditions in which it was used. In particular, it confirms that this book of rituals was intended to be used by monks working with lay communities, and not only in Buddhist monastic establishments.³⁵

In contemporary Tibet, a Buddhist monk is often called upon to carry out rituals during pregnancy and after the birth of a child. However I have not seen a detailed account of the rituals performed on the behalf of a pregnant woman. An anthropological account of Tibetan customs from conception through to childhood, Brown, Farwell and Nyerongsha (2008) mention only relatively generic rituals practised during the gestation period that do not seem to be specifically formulated for this purpose: the reading of sacred texts and giving out of blessed protective strings; the making and casting out of an effigy to counteract malign spirits; and consulting an oracle to answer questions about the unborn child.³⁶

4 Conclusion

Is there any more we can say about the owner of the Dunhuang book of spells, IOL Tib J 401? We know that he went by the Sanskritic name Prajñāprabhā. Taking into consideration the paper used in the construction of the manuscript, and the style of handwriting, it is likely that he was active in Dunhuang or one of the nearby towns at some point from the late ninth through to the mid-tenth century. Despite this location being far from the centre of Tibet, Prajñāprabhā was working in the idiom of Tibetan Buddhist ritual practice. His use of the title Bhikṣu (*big kru*) suggests that he was a monk, although as we have seen, the similar-sounding title Bichuwa is used by lay ritual specialists in highland Nepal. His status may have been something between monastic and lay, as is sometimes the case in smaller Buddhist communities.

The ritual repertoire of this book of spells is wide-ranging, but significantly omits funerary rituals – though these are found in other Dunhuang manuscripts.³⁷ In fact, what unites all of the rituals in the book is their focus on this life. They are

³⁴ See Garrett 2008, Sangay and Kilty 2011.

³⁵ On the archeological records of Buddhist monks carrying out rituals related to pregnancy with lay communities, see Rees and Yoneda 2013.

³⁶ Brown, Farwell and Nyerongsha 2008.

³⁷ See for example Stein 1970 and Imaeda 1981.

‘this-worldly’ rather than ‘other-worldly’. Not only funerary matters, but the soteriology of Buddhism too are absent here. This suggests that the book was written to answer the everyday this-worldly needs of a community, and perhaps that its owner Prajñāprabhā specialised in catering to these needs, filling a social role comparable to modern ritual specialists in the Tibetan cultural area.

The above comparisons that I have made with twentieth and twenty-first century ritual practices show that functions and many of the specific ritual forms of these practices continued to be in demand over the centuries. Yet this is only a foray into the area. These comparisons do not cover all of the anthropological literature, and even if they did, there are surely ritual practices that have not been recorded which may offer further correspondences. The modern ritual practices that I have discussed observed tend to be on the periphery of the Tibetan cultural area (such as northeast Amdo and highland Nepal), but I do not know whether any conclusion can be drawn from this other than that anthropologists have found it easier to work in these areas.

A fascinating question raised by the correspondences between the Dunhuang spellbook and modern ritual practice is how these rituals have been preserved for centuries through the mechanisms of oral transmission and manuscript copying, often by individual specialists based in small communities, in the absence of major institutional support and canonical transmission. Research into the genre of minor ritual compendia (*be'u bum*), such as the one compiled by Bari Lotsawa in the twelfth century, will help, and the printed collections of Bonpo transmissions, as will the discovery and study of more manuscript books of spells from both Buddhist and Bonpo traditions.

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J.F. Marc des Jardins

Magical Recipes from the *Grimoire* of a Tibetan Bonpo Priest

Abstract: The Tibetan *grimoire* is a genre of writing linked to the profession of Tibetan lamas, and one that, until now, has attracted little attention from scholars. One of the main difficulties with undertaking further research on such works has remained the proprietary aspect of closely guarded trade secrets of occult lore. A few samples of Tibetan Buddhist manuals of spells have been published, but no such collection has come down to us from the Bon tradition until now. This contribution analyses the content of such a collection of miscellaneous spells that once belonged to a late anonymous Bonpo master from eastern Tibet. The article seeks to discern the main concerns of the patrons in search of help from these religious practitioners, who offered magical solutions to problems of everyday life.

1 Introduction

Priests or lamas of the Tibetan Bon religion are above all else ritual specialists. Their trade is one which requires the performance, in a group or alone, of rites for a relatively well-defined range of desirable outcome determined by their sponsors and patrons. These aims are numerous but mostly gravitate around the needs for health, wealth, good fortune, the exorcism of noxious influences and against bad luck.

In order to cater to their clients' needs, Bonpos, throughout their history, have had to come up with rites that would satisfy them. These rites are vast in number and constitute the bulk of the Bon repertoire of ritual activities. These are subsumed under the category of *To* (*gto*). *To* rites are one of the four main practices of Bon, the others being divination (*mo*), astrological calculation (*rtsis*) and diagnosis of spiritual causes of illness or trouble (*dpyad*). It is not surprising to see many of these various practices disseminated widely in the Bon literature.¹ One wonders, too, if Bon rituals are not mostly *To* ritual in nature since the majority involve the propitiation and control of spiritual beings, with the end results clearly stated.

¹ Karmay 2010, 54.

The term *To* remains sufficiently complex due to the type of rituals that may be ascribed to it. Epstein, for example, understands *To Jü* (*gto bcos*) as being a ‘pragmatic’ form of magic which does not need spiritual agencies such as those that Buddhism (or Bon for that matter) would provide.² These rituals do not need the special spiritual aid that religion would bring, but work by themselves. He appears to understand the concept as a form of ‘natural’ magic, which works by bringing different elements together which will naturally provoke the desired response. He sees it as a mechanical process whereby if one would use a white stone to retrace the path taken by a black cat, for example, the bad luck would thus be removed without the help of any other agencies such as those offered by religion (*chos* or *bon*).³

For Tucci, the *To* rite is first a rite of exorcism where a personification of negative energies in the form of a human corpse (either drawn or moulded in roasted barley dough, a *torma* (*gtor ma*) or sacrificial cake) is symbolically killed and dismembered at the conclusion of the *To chen* (*gto chen*), the great *To* dance before the Tibetan New Year.⁴ He further distinguished four main rites which have the goal of saving oneself and the community from negative influences. Hence, he differentiates the four rites of the Cross-threads (*mdos*), Ransom (*glud*), Offerings to the gods above (*mdos yas*) and *To*.⁵ Although Tucci concedes that the first three rites are often all involved with the use of the Cross-thread structure, an artifice made of woven coloured threads strung between wooden sticks, he still distinguishes the *To* rite as being essentially a ritual for driving away evil using the throwing of *tormas* (*gtor bzlog*).⁶ In fact, all the above-mentioned rites have the same aims and what seems to make the *To* different for Tucci is its fierce (*drag po*) character that involves the agency of wrathful tutelary deities. It uses magical weapons, especially prepared sacrificial cakes, that are thrown in the direction determined (through divination and other means) to repel the harm. It is an offensive, an attack rite, whereas the others are defensive.⁷

Karmay (2010) and Norbu’s (1995) treatments follow a more traditional understanding of the genre. Karmay ascribes the *To* to rites that have mythical antecedents (*smrang* and *rabs*).⁸ That is, each rite first refers for its legitimacy and power to an account (however brief) which involved the very first performance

² Epstein 1977, 19 n. 2.

³ Epstein 1977, 12.

⁴ Tucci 1980, 155.

⁵ Tucci 1980, 176.

⁶ Tucci 1980, 177–180.

⁷ Tucci 1980, 180.

⁸ Karmay 2010, 55.

of the ritual. Norbu stipulates that the *To* rites are part of the Twelve Lore of Bon⁹ and that to each lore are attributed various myths such as the ‘*To* (Rites), Lore of the Proclamation (of the Origin)’ or ‘He Who Performs the *To* (Rites), Who Knows How to Proclaim (the Origin)’ (*smrang shes gto dgu*).¹⁰

The basis of the *To* is a myth which describes the origin of the world, existence, gods, demons and humans.¹¹ This involves some account of the first use of the rite, its motive and the details of its performances, the latter varying according to the types of spirits involved and the aims.

The lore of *To* comprises a wide variety of rites which propitiate and interact with the spiritual denizens of the heavens, the sky spirits, demons bound by oaths and spirits of the land, the underground and roaming spirits.¹² Humans’ activities affect a myriad of beings who demand payment for being disturbed. Thus, the *To* category was created to propitiate, to remove curses, maledictions and negativities coming from all kinds of non-humans and humans.¹³

(One can) perform the ‘*To* of the *mang* to drive away the nine Dre’ (*dre dgu bskyal ba’i smrang gto*), the ‘*To* for the Si, to suppress the ten Si’ (*sri bcu gnon pa’i sri gto*), the ‘*To* for dangers, to repel periodic misfortunes’ (*kag nyen bzlog pa’i nyen gto*) and the ‘astrological *To*, to harmonise the interdependence of existence’ (*rten ‘brel srid pa’i rtsis gto*). From among these four methods of *To* rites one must discern which is most suitable to subjugate (the negative entities).¹⁴

The expression ‘the nine *To* (*gto dgu*)’ is a generic expression which means ‘all rites.’ The number nine specifies multiplicity, not a number,¹⁵ although some sources claim that there are 360 different kinds of *To* rites,¹⁶ and that each of the latter requires a ‘proclamation’ (*smrang*) in order to open communication with the beings involved.¹⁷ Thus, ‘proclamation’ of the mythical account is an indispensable part of the *To*, despite hardly being recited in its entirety and usually just hinted at. This is a characteristic of Bon rites. But is it? The collection of miscellaneous rites which is addressed here contains many parts of *To* rites but is

9 Norbu 1995, 47.

10 Norbu 1995, 49.

11 Norbu 1995, 164.

12 Norbu 1995, 47–48.

13 Norbu 1995, 125.

14 *Gzi brjid* cited in Norbu 1995, 171.

15 Norbu 1995, 164.

16 Norbu 1995, 172.

17 Norbu 1995, 241–242 n. 76.

almost entirely devoid of any reference to myths and other narratives with the few exceptions found in titles (see for example fol. 150b).¹⁸

It is clear that many Bonpo lamas have collected methods and techniques of practical magic, which include medicinal concoctions, charms and amulets, spells and other characteristic methods. Many are appended to standard ritual cycles such as Wasé (*Dbal gsas*), Takla Mebar (*Stag la me 'bar*), Tamdrim (*Rta mgrin*) and others, while some are individual compositions which collect techniques and 'secrets' from various sources. Some are also transmitted from one generation to another and are to be found in family collections. This is not a unique trait among Bonpos since there are known collections of these recipe books penned by famous Buddhist hierarchs such as Bari Lotsawa (Ba ri lo tsā ba, 1040–1111), Mipam (Mi pham rnam rgyal, 1846–1912), and others. These are catalogued under the designation of Be'u bum (*be'u 'bum*; lit. *Calf Nipple*).¹⁹

The manuscript under consideration here belongs to a category known as 'beneficial speech' (*man ngag*). This literary class constitutes practical ritual instructions as opposed to *gdams ngag* (Skt. *upadeśa*) which consists in practical instructions for meditation, insight or yogic endeavour. Both kinds of treatise, Man ngag and Dam ngag, are geared towards individual teaching directly from master to disciple. Hence, these are often referred to as esoteric, oral or pith instructions and are typically not shared widely.²⁰

I have not encountered the descriptive term *be'u bum* in Bon sources. Man ngag is what is the most found and each booklet is attached to a ritual cycle. The Commentarial Canon (Bka' brten) of Bon contains roughly 218 Man ngag. A few examples will demonstrate the multiplicity of topics of these *précis* and the malleability of this genre.

Among these works we find the 'Three Part Instructions on the Severance rite' from the cycle of the *Very Seminal Tantra of the Heart of Kuntu Zangpo* (*Kun bzang thugs kyi yang thig rgyud las/gsang gcod man ngag rnam gsum*),²¹ written by Jiangchub Dorje Tsal (Byang chub rdo rje rtsal, b. 1705).²² It consists in practical directions on the Outer, Inner and Secret practices relating to the body, considerations (*rtog*) on spirits (*'byung po*) and the modes of gods and demons (*lha 'dre*) during the performance of the rite of Severance.²³ This rite is used extensively in

¹⁸ Fol. refers to the folio number of our manuscript. See below.

¹⁹ Cuevas 2009, 165–168.

²⁰ Kapstein 1996, 275–277; 284 n.1.

²¹ KT 145-13, 451–465.

²² Achard 2008, 53 n.196.

²³ KT 145-13, 452. Note that in all references to KT, the first figure refers to the volume, the second (after the hyphen) to the number of the work within the volume, and the last (after the comma) to the page numbers.

Tibet and consists in the offering of one's own body, speech and mind to gods and demons in order to conquer evils and personal propensities, annihilate karmic debts and other things. One remarkable feature of the Severance cycles in Bon is that they contain extensive ancillary rites which enable the practitioner to extend the ritual performance from self-development to rites for the mundane benefit of his/her patrons. Thus, there is the *Profound Rite of Severance of Kyema, the heart essence of the sky-goers, profound and secret* (*Zab gsang mkha' 'gro'i snying thig kyi kye ma'i zab gcod*, KT 037) of Sang nga ling pa (Gsang sngags gling pa, b. 1864). Besides its main ritual practice of Severance, it contains miscellanea for a Long Life ritual (KT 037-8, 167–176), protection (KT 037-7, 151–165), wealth increasing (KT 037-9, 177–191), war magic (KT 037-11, 199–205), fire offerings (KT 037-14, 245–253) and other rites.

A *Man ngag* which is self-explanatory is the *Instructions on rain making for universal benefit* (*Kun la phan pa'i char 'beb man ngag*).²⁴ This is an ancillary rite associated with another Severance cycle, that of the *Tantra on the Severance rite of the Secret Sky-goers* (*Mkha' 'gro gsang ba'i gcod rgyud*). It is an anonymous work which is tied to the Severance rites of Shardza Trashi Gyaltzen (Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan, 1859–1934) and may have been either written by him or could possibly represent oral instructions from him. The two volumes of the *Tantra on the Severance rite of the Secret Sky-goers* (KT 064–065) is another perfect illustration of the Severance corpus which mirrors in more expansive ways the various rituals with many added functions. It is illustrated with diagrams of charms and amulets which parallel the grimoire which we will be examining shortly.

Furthermore, there is the *Instructions on the methods of the all illuminating Loving Mother that protects from disease, prevents and causes rain to fall* (*Kun gsal byams ma'i nad srung char bkag char 'beb chu sgrub bcas kyi man ngag*).²⁵ It is a common protection rite involving the intervention of the Bon goddess Chamma (Byams ma), the Loving Mother, with the recitation of three different spells (*sngags*). The first²⁶ is to receive the protection of various feminine goddesses (*lha mo*), Manmo (*sman mo*) and Sky-goers and is recited using consecrated water from a vase for aspersion (*bkrus*). The second²⁷ controls gods and Sinpo demons (*lha dang srin*) using the fire Khyung (somewhat corresponding to the Indian garuda) and the fire element. The third²⁸ focuses on the chthonic

²⁴ KT 065-39, 691–697.

²⁵ KT 248-20, 529–536.

²⁶ KT 248-20, 531–532.

²⁷ KT 248-20, 533–534.

²⁸ KT 248-20, 534.

snake deities, the *klu* (corresponding to the Indian *nāga*). Thus, the three-tiered world (heaven, earth and underworld) is brought under one's control to avert calamities and sicknesses.

2 The grimoire of Nyima Gyaltzen

2.1 Description

In 2007 while conducting fieldwork research at the Bonpo monastery of Yeshé in Western Sichuan, I was able to photograph the photocopy of a manuscript which consists of a collection of magical recipes. Because the text in question was available to me only in its photocopied version, it is difficult to speculate on the physical characteristics of the original. Its size was roughly 19 cm wide by 9 cm, and it appears to have been similar to almanacs (*lo tho*) or other personalized books of spells that are meant to be carried on one's person. It is impossible to speculate on the type of paper (local production or commercially made paper). However, I suspect the original to have been written on locally made Tibetan paper for the simple fact that the Chinese paper that was current in Western China prior to 2000 was a very thin product easily susceptible to wear and tear. There are no evident signs of damage that I have witnessed. The format is also typically Tibetan as opposed to the traditional Chinese format that bound paper 'accordion' style.

This text has a hand-drawn seal with the name of Nyima Gyaltzen (Nyi margyal mtshan) (Figs 1–2, fols 149b, 217b), a common Tibetan name which was sported by several important lamas. Its exact identification remains problematic but need not detain us for now. The actual manuscript apparently no longer exists, having been destroyed by the author or compiler (who was also the scribe).²⁹ The reason I was given for this was that this particular text contained 'unethical' rites such as ritual killing (*bsad pa*), subjugation spells, control over elemental spirits and others. The owner thought that it was not a good thing to keep and he was now more interested in ontological salvation rather than the practice of magic. The present owner of this copy, who has asked to remain anonymous, was able to borrow the manuscript for one night only to consult it.

²⁹ It is not certain that Nyima Gyaltzen, alias Namkyap (Gnam skyabs), is the actual author of the grimoire or just the compiler. The exact provenance of the disparate elements composing this text points to either the spells have been taken from other collections of *To*, from different tantric cycles, or the recording of oral traditions.

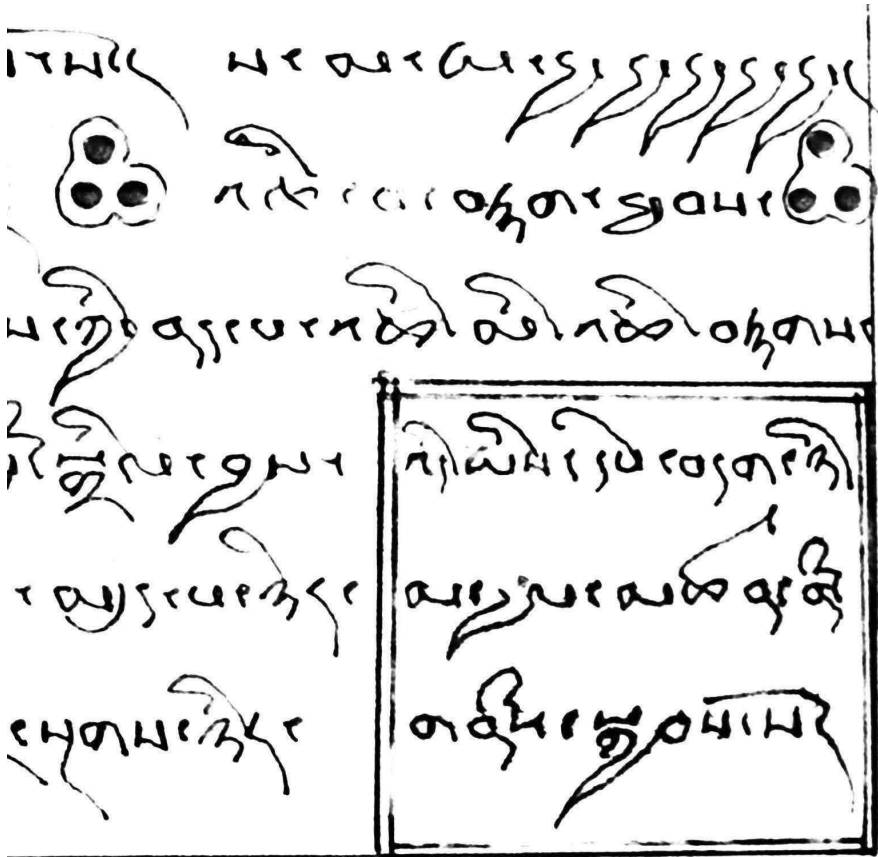


Fig. 1: Fol. 149b, inscription by the owner/compiler, 'This is my book Nyima Gyaltzen'.

It was then that he was able to make a photocopy of the work. The only sections missing are those specifically dealing with ritual killing which were taken out by the original owner before lending it.



Fig. 2: Fol. 217b, seal of Nyima Gyaltzen.

The compilation is entitled *The burning razor of pith instructions, secret instructions for precipitous dispatch (under) the seal of pledge, (under) the seal (of secrecy) (Man ngag spu gri gyi 'bar ba bka' rgya mas rdzongs (rdzong) 'phrang sa ma ya rgya rgya)*. It definitely suggests that this material was restricted in its usage and transmission and required secrecy, empowerments and training. It also points out to a usage by clerics or lamas for professional reasons. This is not unlike the suggestion that the compilers of magical recipes books were priests by trade in other parts of the world and in antiquity.³⁰

This collection consists of numbered 251 folios with fifteen missing (fols 28–43). The latter is due to the owner of the manuscript choosing not to share the ritual methods contained as stated above. There are 302 recipes covering a wide range of topics. Explanations on the manner of using these are not consistently addressed, suggesting that prior knowledge is required for the use of most of the recipes. This is consistent with the Buddhist *be'u bum* genre where prior knowl-

³⁰ Ritner 1993, 220–233.

edge of ritual methods, astrological calculation, divination and other activities is required.³¹

Each section is separated by a three-dot symbol (Fig. 3 below).



Fig. 3: Fol. 9b, A *Tha* and three-dot symbol.

The information contents under each range extends from the mere script of a mantra (fols 74, 98, 213) to more elaborate description of rites using a few folios. Other symbols are used such as stars with varying number of ‘arms’ as well as ornamental stacks representing the term *ithi* (Fig. 3, fol. 9b; Fig. 4, fol. 168), which is used in certain Bonpo texts to separate sections.

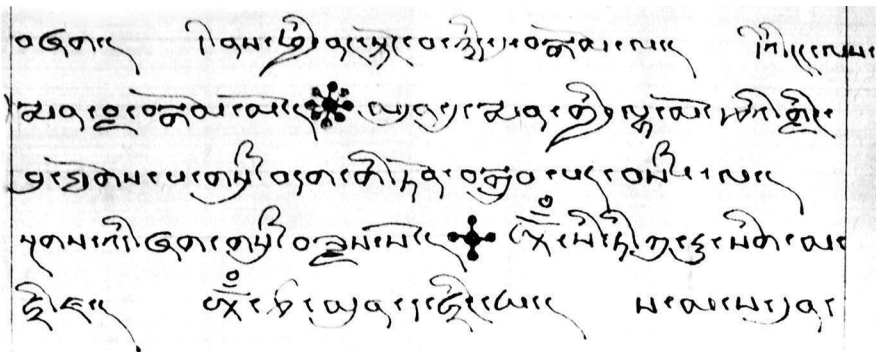


Fig. 4: Fol. 168, star figures with mantra.

Various drawings and representations of talismans that serve the rite’s functions are dispersed through the relevant text. Its internal organisation is haphazard, with the exception of the section on medicinal formulas which are grouped together (fols 116–132). The latter suggests that the section was ‘lifted’ together from one source or informant, but until we can produce further evidence, this has to remain a hypothesis.

³¹ Lin 2005, 111; Cuevas 2010, 167.

2.2 Function and nature of *grimoire* composition

Ritual *précis* such as the above-mentioned are traditionally transmitted from one generation of master to the next. However, many are just written or compiled from various sources. Rarely are the sources of the compilation mentioned. In the past, I have seen mention of ‘after the manner of Shes rab rgyal mtshan’ which indicates a ritual tradition ascribed to the figure who founded Menri (sman ri) monastery, in Central Tibet, in 1405.³² No sources are mentioned in this particular collection. This particular piece has been written by the same hand, as the handwriting demonstrates, and possibly over a good period of time ranging from a year to much more. This indicates a personal copy for the purpose of gathering disparate material for ready consultation and compiled over a long period of time. The vast amount of material gathered points to fulfilling a great many different objectives. What makes this compilation particularly interesting is its subject matter, which illustrates the concerns of the clients of the lamas.

The fact that the author’s hand-drawn seal is found in two different places in the manuscript suggests that the author came to a halt at some point in its compilation and added further material later. Names of authors are typically inserted at the very end of composition, sometimes accompanied with the reasons for the compilation as well as the time and location. Hence, fol. 149b (Fig. 1) finishes with a square *ex libris* which is inscribed with: ‘*dis (‘di’i) dpe bdag nyi ma rgyal mtshan nam gnams (gnam) skyabs so* / ‘The owner of this book is Nyi ma rgyal mtshan or (also called) Gnam skyabs’.³³

The second mention of the owner and compiler is on fol. 217b (Fig. 2), which closes a section of the book with his name and a drawing of a lotus flower, without any other comments. The compilation nevertheless continues with the last folio I numbered at 252b.

As previously stated, with the exception of the section for medicinal compounds, the topics of the recipes do not bear any systematic order throughout. Many alternatives exist for any topic and this is what points to a compilation of methods carried out over time. In surveying the subject of the various formulas and rites, I have organised the 302 recipes into fifteen categories. Although I have tried to arrange these from categories which receive the greatest number of entries to the least, there are many spells, formulas and rites which are still difficult to identify or that cross categories. The main topics are therefore: health; medici-

³² des Jardins 2012, 190.

³³ Many thanks to Samten Karmay for his help in sorting out the script correctly and for this translation.

nal preparations; eradication of poisons; against thieves and robbers; weather control; wealth and worldly success; propitiating or controlling gods, demons, and so forth.

3 Categories in the *grimoire* of Nyima Gyaltzen

Here are the categories devised with some formulas illustrative of the concerns and practical methods offered.

3.1 Health

We find methods for long life and fortune (fols 2, 12) recurring as a constant concern in Tibetan ritual. The rite of praying for ‘firm feet’ (*zhabs brtan*), that is, to request a spiritual master to remain among us for the benefit of all, became a genre in liturgical texts. It consists of poetic formulas requesting the master to continue to work for the welfare of others by remaining in his present incarnation, thus living long among us. Its narrative presupposes or takes into account that the master is sufficiently spiritually elevated as to be able to lengthen his life span by his mere spiritual abilities. As such, it has become a staple of Tibetan rituals and is embedded within shorter liturgical services as part of the Seven Limbs Prayer or as an independent text to be added in the appropriate section of a ritual or just to be repeated as a prayer for spiritual communion with one’s preceptor.³⁴ Long Life (*tshe ring*) rituals are almost universally included within Bonpo rituals. Such cycles as those mentioned above of the Severance practice or main Tantric cycles such as *Ma rgyud* or *Phur nag* contain individual sections dedicated to the Long Life ritual. These, as well as the very concise one in this Man ngag (fols 2–2b), use a vase in which the presence of deities is invoked with the use of petitions, visualisation and mantras. Presumably, the performer of such a rite will know what to do with it, as directions in more standard Long Life rites belonging to ritual cycles abound.

Another method relating to this topic is for strengthening the body (*lus kyi stobs rgyas thabs*, fol. 2b) which again involves the chanting of a special mantra with the ingestion of medicinal pills containing ingredients similar to what will be found in the later section on medicinal preparations.

³⁴ Cabezon 1996, 344–357.

Among common ailments treated with spells and medicinal ingredients we find recipes for enhancing memory (fol. 3), eyesight (fol. 4), against choking (fol. 6), mountain sickness (fol. 9b), preventing burns from hot metal (fol. 10), overcoming long sickness (fol. 14), sickness due to evil spirits (fol. 13), toothache (fol. 18), epilepsy (fol. 91), to destroy a tumour (fol. 140), against insomnia (fol. 19), breast sickness (fol. 22), to increase appetite (fol. 24), to stop bleeding (fol. 25), against the flu (fol. 25), cataracts and eye inflammation (fol. 25), against poisons (fol. 50), to activate lactation (fol. 24), against lice (fol. 50), to pacify children crying at night (fol. 62), against foot and mouth sores (fol. 62), deafness (fol. 65), and so forth.

3.2 Alchemical and medicinal preparations

A whole section of this Man ngag is focused on tables with names of herbs and minerals to be used as medicine or alchemy. Fols 118 to 132b are all filled with circles and diagrams with names of ingredients, many difficult to identify at this point. Thus most, for now, remain unidentified and the directions for their use are somewhat mysterious. Hence, we have a medicinal pill for mountain ascetics which recommend applications of hot and cold arura (*Terminalia chebula*). (fol. 116)

Many of the directions in this section are accompanied by diagrams and some magic squares (Fig. 5, fol. 119b) which may indicate two different things: one might have to do with indicating the relative proportions of each ingredient in relation to each other; and the other with prognostics, by identifying with the source of the sickness (according to the law of correspondences with the directions of the compass).

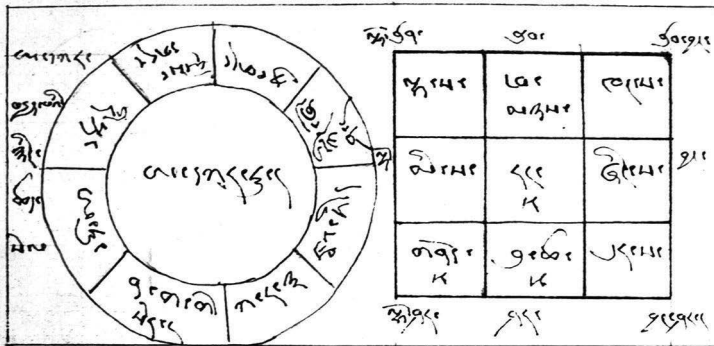


Fig. 5: Fol. 119b, medicinal ingredient chart.

However, at this point, without prior familiarity with Tibetan traditional medicine principle, its ingredients as well as the Tantric medicinal principles as expounded in its treatises, it is too soon to be able to positively identify the methods referred to in these cryptic directions. We find aloe (*Aquilaria allagocha*, *a dkar ru* [fol. 119] or *a ka ru* [fol. 122]), camphor (*khabur*, *gabur*, *ka bur*, fols 120, 121, 121b), *chirata* (a type of gentian, *Swertia chirata*, *tig ta*) and bamboo lime (*cu gang*) as the most common.

3.3 For wealth and success

Various methods for worldly success (fols 6b, 7, 7b, 8, 8b, 12, 13, 16), wealth (fols 13, 51, 192, etc.), and the accumulation of food (fol. 13), clothing and ornaments are exposed briefly. There is a method of the ‘*atsara*’³⁵ (*ācārya* or ritual master) to draw the circle for moving goods to the market place (fol. 92).

3.4 Against thieves and brigands

Thieves and robbers have always been a source for great concern on the desolate plains and circuitous mountain passes of Tibet. They were the sources of great distress not only to the Tibetan and Chinese traders but also to foreign travellers, such as the French explorers Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins (d. 1894) and later, Louis Liotard (d. 1940), who were both killed by Golok (mGo log) bandits.³⁶ Recipes in this category reflect the need for a general protection against bandits, robbers and thieves (fols 3b, 14, 89). Some associate the wandering Tsan (*btsan*) demons with thievery (fol. 90). Binding (fols 5, 17, 87b) thieves and finding them through visions, divination (fol. 88b) and the intervention of spirits are regular

³⁵ The word *atsara* is used in Tibet for a variety of characters, sometimes benign and at other times mischievous. It is usually understood as a Tibetan rendering of *ācārya* which refers to a ‘tantric master’ who can confer empowerments and train in Tantric teachings and practices. Karma Phuntsho in an article published in 2016 briefly hinted at the various portrayals of *atsara* in play, sacred dances and other cultural settings. However in Bon, there were three *atsara* who went travelling through Tibet searching for gold. In Bsam yas, they stole a heavy box they thought contained gold. Upon opening it while running away, they found Bon texts which they traded for food with a Bonpo called Mtha’ bzhi ‘phrul gas. Karmay 1972, 118–119.

³⁶ For the accounts see Grenard 1896, *passim*; Guibaut 1947, *passim*. See Shakya 2015 for a socio-political study of banditry in Tibet.

entries in this *grimoire*. Tutelary deities and protectors are invoked against raiders of one's livestock (fol. 14).

3.5 Food and enjoyment

Several entries focus on mantra for various food and beverage items such as mantras for beer (*chang*, fol. 18), yoghurt (fol. 18), protection against poisoned meat (fol. 200), for milk (fols 19, 22) and a *dhāraṇī* (a form of mantra) 'to avoid being deprived of daily pleasant meat' (fol. 20).

3.6 Oracles and divination

Methods are offered for making statues talk (fol. 10), for divination through visions (fol. 49), for lucid dreaming (fols 51, 89) and for general understanding and all-knowing wisdom (fols 167, 204).

3.7 Supernatural powers

Several entries refer to the power of swift-footedness (*rkang mgyogs*)³⁷(fols 46b, 47, 48). It is a power which enables one to travel by foot at great speed and is traditionally ascribed to the eight common accomplishments (*thun mong gi dngos grub bryad*) as opposed to uncommon accomplishments (*mchog gi dngos grub*) which are those of legendary saints. Hagiographies do mention this power (Snellgrove 2013, 174) and both Alexandra David-Néel and Anagarika Govinda claim to have witnessed this when travelling in Tibet.³⁸

Other powers which this *précis* offers to realise are those of being able to paralyse someone or something (fol. 61), power over the world in general (fols 86b, 87), the method for clairvoyance on sickness of the Lord of the cliff (Jo bo brag, also Jo bo A jo brag mtshan rgyal po, an unknown sage) (fols 251, 251b).

³⁷ Karmay 2007, 25; Achard 1999, 39.

³⁸ Govinda 1970, 80–83.

3.8 Protection

Here is a sample of spells and mantras with the overall protection against different types of dangers:

- fol. 10b: To tame wolf
- fol. 16b: *Dhāraṇī* for the overpowering of gods, demons and humans
- fol. 17: *Dhāraṇī* for the reversal of the misfortunes from frost and hail
- fol. 20: Mantra against injury (*'bugs pa*) by a dog
- fol. 20b: For protecting against diseases from the *klu*
- fol. 21: *Dhāraṇī* for liberation from the Intermediate State (*bar do*, between death and rebirth)
- fol. 21: *Dhāraṇī* for disempowering demonic spirits (*'dre gdon*) and devouring demons (*za 'dre*)
- fol. 21b: Method (*thab* for *thabs*) for the protection against harm from wild animals (*bcan zan* for *gcan gzan*)
- fol. 22b: *Dhāraṇī* for sentient beings to be free from the threat (*sdid* for *sdigs*) of heavy burdens
- fol. 24: To be written on the door lintel
- fol. 25: Mantra for protection against lightning
- fol. 50b: To get rid (*sgrub shigs*) of dogs
- fols 70 and 91: To destroy obstructions which cannot be perceived by humans

3.9 Drums

Drums are, with the flat bell (*gshang*), the ritual instrument *par excellence* of the Bonpo lamas. The legendary battle of Milarepa against the magic powers of the Bonpo priest who was able to fly sitting on his drum³⁹ is but an eloquent reminder of the inseparability of Bonpo priest and their central ritual instrument. This Man ngag therefore offers dedicated spells for their protection and the power of their sound. Besides the general protection of drums (fols 24, 25), there are spells for preventing them from burning (fol. 24) as well as several rites just for drums and their magical accomplishments (fol. 198).

³⁹ Tsangnyön Heruka 2010, 173.

3.10 Rites involving spiritual beings

The following share much with other sections but are dedicated to control or influence over spiritual beings. Hence, the main protectress of Bon, the goddess Sipa Gyalmo (Srid pa rgyal mo), is daily invoked by Bonpos for general protection but also for retaliation or the realisation of mundane objectives. Her mantra figures prominently on fol. 25, immediately followed protection against the Tsan (fol. 25b). The presence of these troublesome spirits recurs most often. They are roaming earthly spirits that are sometimes associated with bandit activities (fols 26, 90), and mantras for their control (fol. 25b), with other ritual supplements and alternative spells that are very much part of long and complex rites to subdue them (fol. 26). This is accompanied with reversal spells (fol. 27b) and protection of the body, speech and mind against their activities (fol. 49b) and against their 'graspings' (fol. 50). Other spirits that appear and among those inimical to humanity are the sons of the *Sin* (*srin*) demons who eat the body, and one is required to wear a protective amulet (Fig. 6) against them (fol. 54b). The *Sin* are conceived differently in Traditional Tibetan Medicine, but the overall consensus is that they eat the body or damage it, either from internal imbalance or external influence.⁴⁰

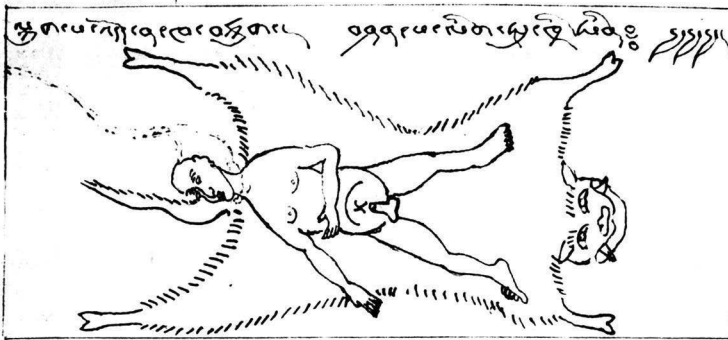


Fig. 6: Fol. 54b, talisman against *Sin* spirits.

The most ancient of hostile entities are the Masang (*ma sangs*), which were the first inhabitants of the Tibetan plateau. They were considered as resembling humans but different and old records mention the Nine Masang brothers ruling over Tibet. The perspective on antiquity is that the country was governed succes-

⁴⁰ Prost 2007, 45–52.

sively by different kinds of beings. First to rule were the black Nödjün (*gnod sbyin*), assimilated sometimes to the Indian *yakṣa*. These were then followed by the Dü (*bdud*), then the Sin (*srin*), the gods (*lha*), the *lu* (*klu*, seen above), the demons (*'dre*), and finally the Masang, to be supplanted again by the *lu* (*klu*) and eventually the humans.⁴¹ These Masang can be subdued as was the case of the protector bound by oaths (*dam can*) Dorje Legpa (Rdo rje legs pa), who was won over by the legendary tantrist Padmasambhava sometime during the eighth century.⁴² These Masang, however, could be friendly to humans and succour them in times of need, provided offerings and other entreaties were made properly. Fol. 94 is dedicated to instructions for seeking protection through the help of the whirling Masang against hail. Fols 115 and 115b (Figs 7 and 8) are magical drawings and spells to control the Masang.

Besides these old gods, there are the omnipresent Sky-goers (*mkha' 'gro ma*) which may have been introduced to Tibet through the importations of Buddhist Tantras. Fol. 60 gives instruction on how to seek assistance from them.

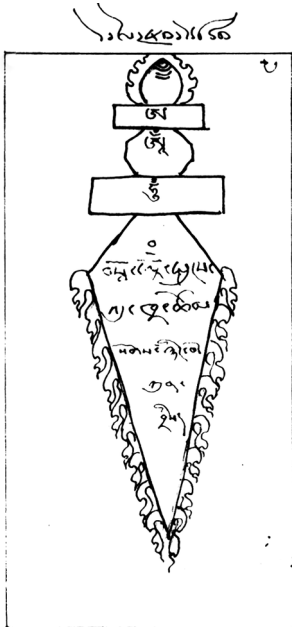


Fig. 7: Fol. 115, drawing to control the Masang.

⁴¹ Norbu 2009, 17–19.

⁴² Nebesky-Wojokowitz 1956, 154–159.

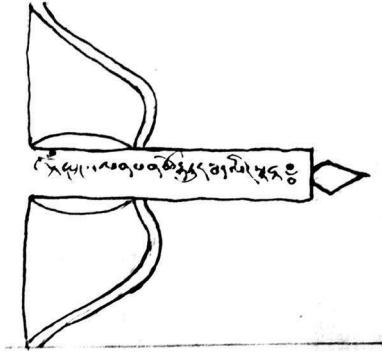


Fig. 8: Fol. 115b, drawing with mantra to control the Masang.

3.11 Love and influence

The following samples will illustrate eloquently this section:

- fol. 10b: Method to control males and females
- fol. 11: Mantras to be obeyed by all humans
- fol. 11b: Mantra for being loved by all
- fol. 12b: For one who wishes to be victorious generally (*phal lci (spyi) rgyal bar 'dod pa*)
- fol. 19b: A *dhāraṇī* whereby whatever one says goes directly to the [other's] heart (*gtam rmas tshad mying po ru 'gro ba'i le gzungs*)
- fol. 43b: For deception (*mgo 'khor*)
- fol. 49b: Method for body transformation (*lus bsgyur*)
- fol. 51b: Method to have friends fulfilling one's desires
- fol. 52: For universal love from all humans
- fol. 52b: Method to meet pleasant friends and have them stay over (*gang du sdod kyang grogs yi 'ong 'phrad thabs*)
- fol. 64: Method to unite male and female
- fol. 64: Method to bring a lotus under one's power (*pad ma dbang du sdu thabs*) (Presumably, controlling women for sex)
- fol. 65: The unfabricated (*mi byed pa*) mantra for making sentient beings not to flee (*mi bros*)
- fol. 68b: Method to conceive (*chags*) children

3.12 For spiritual benefits

In this section, the goal of the practices is beyond the mundane realm and seeks to purify one's negative karma, defilements and broken vows (fols 13, 13b, 16b). Other spells are for wisdom (*shes rab*) and Pristine Awareness (*ye shes*), an experiential form of knowledge. Furthermore, there is one recipe for the preparation of medicinal pills which will help for the transference of consciousness (*'pho ba*). The latter is a method to either guide a departed principle of consciousness (*bla*) through the Intermediate State (*bar do*) between death and rebirth or to have one's consciousness leave the body to visit other realms (fol. 244).

3.13 Killing and 'liberation'

As stated above, fols 28–43 are missing due to the original owner of the manuscript who did not want to show the rites for killing, otherwise referred to as rites for 'liberation' (*sgrol ba*). It is a polite euphemism which does not offend Buddhist sensibilities but is nevertheless found in Buddhist tantric rituals. Despite this section having been expunged, there are at least four rites which appear to have been devised just for that purpose. Fol. 46 has the simple expletive title 'for killing' (*gsod par byed*). Fol. 238b is a rite for thorough destruction. Fol. 53b contains two works 'for ensuring the death of one's enemies, without any doubt, by means of the instructions of the *atsara* (mendicant monk, sadhu, or *ācārya* for 'tantric master')' (*A tsa ra yis [yis] man sngags dgra bo 'chi bar the tsom [tshom] med*). It is actually a simple method using metal hooks and ritual pegs (*phur bu*) to kill someone.

3.14 Weather control

Weather control by the use of magic rites is a trademark of the Tantrists (*sngags pa*) in Tibet. There are entire communities of Tantrists in Reb gong and other parts of Amdo who specialize in this lore and have clients among the farmers to protect their crops from hail and drought.⁴³ Many of the spells, rites and drawings of this section have to do with the control of hail (*ser lam*, fols 17, 22, 94, 133, 135, 138, 206, 210, 218, 226, 234, 236b, 241b) (Fig. 9, fol. 236b).

⁴³ Yü 2015, 62–63.

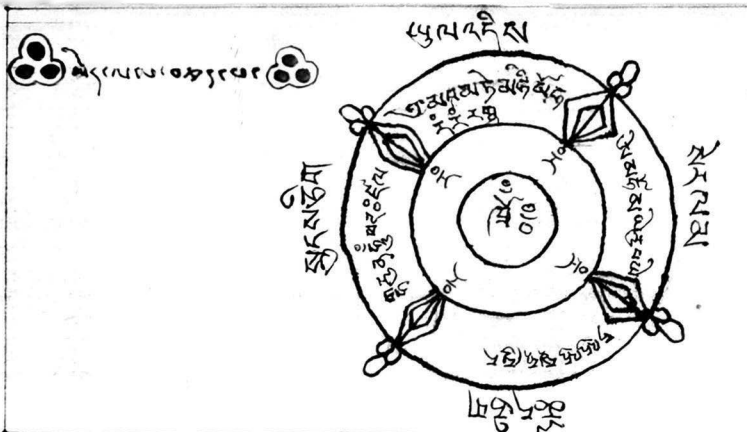


Fig. 9: Fol. 236b, magic circle to stop hail.

Besides this overt concern, bringing in timely rain is also well represented in this *précis*. (fols 66b, 67, 133b) Control of the Wind God (Fig. 10) and snow has several methods (fols 22, 117, 118, 194); the elimination of vermin believed to be carried by winds and the weather are related in the method on fol. 134b.



Fig. 10: Fol. 118, the Wind god carrying wind bag and sword.

3.15 Miscellanea

Lastly, ritual strategies that are difficult to place in prior categories have been provisionally entered in this section.

- fol. 3: Mantra for sentient beings to go like birds on water (?) (*chu la bya ltar du 'gro ba'i sngags*) consists in using a vase and recitation of a mantra
- fol. 5b: To prevent (*'chang*) a hunting dog from barking
- fol. 9b: Method for inscribing metal (?) (*lcags la ri mo bya*)
- fol. 11b: Mantra to illuminate at night
- fol. 18b: To cause a woman or animal no longer to yield milk (*bzhon mi ster*)
- fol. 19: Mantra for the hearth
- fol. 22b: *Dhāraṇī* to obtain a male body and avoid a bad reincarnation (*ngan song du mi skye ba'i pho lus thob pa'i thob pa*)
- fol. 23: *Dhāraṇī* to remedy a broken secret vow
- fol. 23: *Dhāraṇī* to purify hundreds of separate wrongdoings
- fol. 23: *Dhāraṇī* for all the excellent places of the three worlds
- fol. 23b: To immobilise time in all the three worlds
- fol. 23b: Mantra to alleviate the pain of expiation for the time of transmigration
- fol. 92: Method of the *atsara* (*ācārya* ‘tantric master’) to draw the circle of moving goods to the market place

All the above examples from all categories represent samples from the 302 methods offered in this collection.

4 The manner of performance of the *To* rites

The performance of most of these formulas requires prior knowledge of the ritual traditions of Bon. As mentioned above, for example, the practice of Long Life ritual is a very common one. Most Tantric cycles or ritual compendia contain directions for this and the procedure does not need to be restated in a personal recipe book. It is a standard rite practised regularly and as such is part of the basic training for lamas.

Bon possesses at least two main strands of rites: the first, the more ancient and notoriously Tibetan, are those requiring exchanges of substances or requiring sacrifices. The second is the more common, having become prevalent with the reformulations of Bon under the influence of Buddhism. It involves the use of a tutelary deity (*yi dam*), which is a characteristic mark of Tantrism.

Methods that involve the sacrifice of living victims such as birds, sheep, yaks, horses and so forth are nowadays found in the periphery of the Tibetan world. In the areas of Nepal, Mongolia and some parts of Yunnan and Sichuan can be found instances of the practices of Le'u or other non-canonical rituals.⁴⁴ Imperial Tibet (sixth to mid–ninth centuries) had Bon and Shen (*gshen*) priests who officiated at large sacrificial rites involving herds of the abovementioned animals.⁴⁵ Older Bon texts deal with sacrificial practices involving foxes, deer and other victims. A story usually accompanies this ritual action to legitimate its potency and performance as stated above.⁴⁶ Contemporary Bon, by contrast, does not perform bloody sacrifice. Buddhist apologists have repeatedly accused Bonpos of spilling blood for their gods. However, Bonpos in general advocate the use of substitutes in the form of sacrificial cakes shaped like the intended victims or some body parts. Needless to say, none of the recipes consulted so far requires the spilling of blood or the sacrifice of a life, despite containing life-taking magic (*bsad pa*).

The second method is the most likely to be used while intending to perform some of the methods of Nyima Gyaltzen. The main principle is to transform oneself into one's tutelary deity along a cycle such as Tagla Mebar (*stag la me 'bar*) (fols 14, 35, 150b, 170) and conduct the magical operation required, which may sometimes be as simple as reciting a single mantra.

As Lin rightly pointed out, the *To* rites, which use the recipes of our Man ngag, require recitations. It is in the recitation that efficiency in magic lies. The 'strength of truth' (*bden stobs/ bden brdar*) is the power behind the results (Lin 2005, 114). The former in Bon refer to the mythical antecedent, the mythical declaration (*smrang* and *rabs*) on which ritual performances rely to justify them as well as to render magic efficient. Prescribed recitations surrounding the practice are justified since the recipes represent mere 'bare bones' essentials which presumably require embellishment in order to render them potent with the results expected by the patrons.

5 Conclusions

The interest of this text resides in its uniqueness as a Bon manuscript. Although *To* rites can be found in some ritual compendia and among the various Man ngag

⁴⁴ Ramble 2015, 511–513; Ramble 2014, 15–28; Huber 2013, 281.

⁴⁵ Lalou 1953, 341–342.

⁴⁶ Berounsky 2015, 2 and *passim*.

dispersed in the canonical literature, it is the first time, to my knowledge, that such a Bonpo magical recipe collection has been presented in Western literature. Although the various methods it contains are not uncommon in some published Buddhist literature, as seen earlier, it is significant that the practice of the collection of magical recipes was also practiced among the Bonpo lamas. The sources of the 302 topics it contains remain unknown. However, Bonpos were known to use ritual methods and spells coming from a wide number of extraneous sources, some Buddhist, many probably oral and local as well as some from China.⁴⁷ This *Man ngag* is therefore a testimony of the syncretism of the Bonpo priesthood and it further points to the universality of the *grimoire* formula among religious specialists from antiquity to the present.

The study of *To* rites is only in its infancy in Tibetan Studies. One of the reasons has much to do with the difficulty in obtaining or copying such material from private collections. The other has to do with the current rise in interest in the scholarly world on esoterism and its place in religious institutions and among the ordained, the monastics and the priesthood in general.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Michael Kohs of the Centre for the study of Manuscript Cultures and Charles Ramble for their helpful reviews and comments.

Abbreviation

KT = *G.yung drung bon gyi bka' brten*, Lhasa: Sog sde sprul sku bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1998.

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⁴⁷ Karmay 1972, x–xl.

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Charles Ramble

Notes on a Bonpo Manual for the Production of Manuscript Amulets

Abstract: Amulets are widely used by Tibetans as a means of protecting people, animals and property from a range of general or specific hazards, including diseases, threats from the natural world such as predatory animals and adverse weather, and attacks by supernatural beings. For the most part such amulets are made from xylographic prints on paper, to which further details, such as appropriate magical formulae, may later be added by hand. Although the vast majority of amulets may be block-printed, amulets that are drawn and painted by hand are by no means unknown, and are in fact considered to be superior to the former category. Not infrequently, ritual texts contain illustrations of devices that are to be used in their performance, and some of these objects may be amulets, though compilations of instructions for producing these are relatively uncommon. This chapter presents one such compilation, a collection of excerpts from a diversity of Bonpo manuscripts, from Dolpo in Nepal, that have been combined to create a makeshift manual.

1 Introduction: previous work on Tibetan amulets

The first illustrated scholarly account of block-printed Tibetan amulets is probably an article by W.E. Carte that appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1840, under the title ‘Notice of amulets in use by the Trans-Himalayan Boodists’. In the opening lines the author explains how he found the items:

The accompanying scrolls were obtained by me at Rampoor (near Kotghur) in 1838, from some of the nomadic Tartars who visit that place for the purpose of traffic. The scrolls were enclosed in small copper cylindrical cases, with rings attached, and by means of a string worn around the neck, perhaps as amulets.¹

Carte was, however, unable to read them, and most of the article actually consists of erudite notes provided by the librarian of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal – none other than a certain ‘Csoma de Koros, *Esq.*’ – who identified them

¹ Carte 1840, 940.

as excerpts from Buddhist tantric works and assorted auspicious symbols. Reproductions and descriptions of amulets also appear in Emil Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet*.² A more substantial treatment of the form and use of such devices was published in L.A. Waddell's *Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, which devotes an entire chapter to 'Sacred symbols and charms'.³ Descriptions of amulets with a number of accompanying illustrations also appear in chapter 26, entitled 'Protection against evil', of Nebesky-Wojkowitz's *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*.⁴ Since then, apart from a number of relatively brief descriptive accounts in works on different aspects of Tibetan culture and in museum catalogues, the most extensive study is Nik Douglas' *Tibetan Tantric Charms and Amulets*.⁵ In addition to reproductions of 232 block-printed amulets that the author obtained from private collections and from monasteries and temples he visited in remote areas of highland Nepal, each one with an extensive and informative caption, the book contains a substantial introduction with valuable information about the possible history of the use of such amulets, their varieties and function, the material aspects of their production and the rituals associated with their manufacture and deployment. The examples that are reproduced are grouped into twenty-one categories based on form or function, but the author suggests that these may be reduced to four basic types:

1. Lines, columns or patterns of letters, verses or phrases, often without any specific translatable meaning, enclosed by varied outer forms. Such magical formulae are: (i) folded and worn as an amulet of protection; (ii) made into scrolls and placed inside all types of prayer wheels; (iii) inserted into religious images during rites of consecration; or (iv) rolled up and eaten as a medicine.
2. Auspicious symbols or designs with magical phrases, enclosed by varied outer forms. Such symbols are: (i) prominently displayed pasted on walls or ceilings or in shrine rooms; (ii) flown as prayer flags, printed on cloth or cast to the wind on paper; or (iii) occasionally worn as a protection, in particular for attracting good luck, wealth and happiness.
3. Amulets, usually for getting rid of malefic influences [...] They commonly consist of a central figurative of a person, animal or particular demon surrounded by magical phrases in precise patterns. Such amulets may also be entirely abstract in design [...] Some of these may be 'empowered' by a lama, folded, bound with colored threads and worn as a protection.

2 Schlagintweit 1863.

3 Waddell 1895, Chapter 15, 387–419.

4 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 503–537.

5 Douglas 1978.

4. *Mandalas*, visual representations of esoteric teachings, [that may be] (i) used as base structures on altars; (ii) placed visibly on the ceilings of monasteries and shrine rooms; (iii) used personally as meditation aids [...]; or (iv) [...] worn as a protective amulet.⁶

In spite of the functional differences that the author identifies, it is clear that all four categories have an apotropaic character; they may all be worn or otherwise used as protective amulets. And as far as their material aspect is concerned, most of the examples discussed above, from Carte in 1840 to Douglas in 1978, and even more recent publications, deal mainly with blockprints. An important study of Buddhist amulets that gives a particularly good idea of the extraordinary variety of these devices and the multiplicity of specific circumstances in which they are considered to provide protection or bestow power is Tadeusz Skorupski's *Tibetan Amulets*.⁷ The book consists of translated excerpts from two works contained in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (vol. 42), which was compiled in the nineteenth century by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899). Although the original text is not illustrated, the translated descriptions of the 109 amulets contained here are accompanied by line drawings made by the author's friend, Ngawang Drodul.

2 Manuscript amulets

One of the commonest blockprinted images in Tibetan ritual contexts is the *lingga* (*ling ga*), an effigy of a demon, usually bound hand and foot, that features as the object of exorcism. The *lingga* may represent a particular type of noxious spirit, but most commonly it is a generic demon that is printed on paper and given the particular identity required by the ritual by the addition of handwritten syllables according to textual prescription.

In 2018 I took part in the documentation of one such exorcistic ritual in the Bonpo temple complex of Samling, in Dolpo. During the preparations, when the time came to make the *lingga*, I was surprised to see that the lamas did not use a wooden printing block – the only method I had ever seen in other temples and monasteries for creating two-dimensional paper effigies. Instead, a young novice was given a sheet of paper and a stylus, with which he proceed to make a copy of another hand-drawn image that was kept in the temple as an example (Fig. 1).

⁶ Douglas 1978, ix–xi.

⁷ Skorupski 1983.



Fig. 1: A junior lama making a hand-drawn copy of a *lingga* for an exorcistic ritual (Samling, Dolpo, July 2018).⁸

This was all the more surprising since a great many of the prints that are reproduced in Douglas' work are from the temple in Samling. Nevertheless, the lama in charge of the proceedings felt that such a painstakingly produced image was superior to a mechanical reproduction. Two collections of Bonpo texts I have seen in the neighbouring district of Mustang also contain examples of protective amulets that are drawn and painted by hand, apparently as templates to be copied. In one case, in the village of Lubrak, the lamas now invariably use block-prints for the purpose, and the amulet that is kept in the community archive is an obsolete relic from bygone days. In the other case, the Drangsong household in the city of Lo Monthang, the manuscripts belonged to a family of Bonpo priests who died out in the late 1950s or early 1960s, and it is therefore not known if they ever made the transition to printing technology in a ritual context. Amulet pouches discovered in debris in caves in Mustang have been found to contain such hand-painted devices. According to Jeff Watt, the practice of drawing and painting amulets was largely supplanted by block-printing after the seventeenth

⁸ All photographs in this article were taken by Nick Yates and Kemi Tsewang.

century, so the fact that it continues to flourish in Samling today may be a rare survival of a relatively archaic tradition.⁹

A preference for using hand-drawn reproductions over blockprints implies that there should be clear instructions for producing the different images as the need arises. Samling library does indeed contain such a set of written prescriptions, and the remainder of this article will be devoted to presenting the main features of this collection. As unusual as it may be, the practice of hand-drawing amulets is by no means unique to the present case. Other collections of ritual texts that contain illustrations of ritual artefacts may also include templates for manuscript amulets: the example of the works examined by Tadeusz Skorupski has already been given, the *grimoire* discussed by Marc des Jardins in this volume offers a number of other instances, and I have seen others in villages and temples in Mustang and Dolpo. For the most part, however, these amulets appear in compilations where the illustrations refer to a range of ritual items, and tend to be rather simple, whereas the manual with which the present article is concerned is devoted exclusively to amulets, some of which are quite complex in terms of both graphic structure and textual content.

3 A collection of Bonpo amulet-making manuals from Dolpo, Nepal

Although the title of this article refers to it as a ‘manual’, the collection considered here is in fact a compilation of short extracts from several different works.¹⁰ It consists of roughly twenty different texts or other items ranging in length from single sheets of paper to sixteen folios, with over thirty illustrations. The texts are apparently self-contained items consisting one or more folios, or subsidiary texts belonging to larger works. The only thing they have in common is that they almost all contain illustrated instructions for drawing amulets. Since the volume and range of the material is too great to permit a presentation of all the items in the collection, I will select a number of examples that represent the variety of

⁹ Jeff Watt, personal communication, August 2009.

¹⁰ The collection was photographed in Samling, in Dolpo, in 2018 with the kind permission of the owner, Lama Sherab Tenzin. The trip to Samling and subsequent work on the manuscripts are part of a more general programme of research on Bon rituals that is generously funded by the Kalpa Group.

forms of the devices, the purpose for which they are intended and the procedure for producing and using them.

Most significantly, almost all the textual descriptions are accompanied by drawn or painted illustrations. The images are not full representations of the amulets described in the accompanying text, but small-scale reproductions. The graphic features of the amulets are usually shown in their entirety but the text is inserted only partially, to indicate to the maker where and how it should be positioned, while the full-length text is supplied on the adjacent folios. For the most part the texts are written in a large headless (*dbu med*) script, while the instructions are given in a smaller script. In a number of cases, mantras and other text to be inscribed on the amulets are written in headed (*dbu can*) script.

Two of the texts contained in the compilation are relatively short works that form part of a longer cycle entitled *Rin chen sgron ma 'khor ba dong sprug*, 'The Precious Lamp that Shakes Samsāra to the Depths'. The first of these works is entitled *Btag (Btags) chog 'khor lo*, 'Wheels that it is Sufficient to Attach [to Ensure Efficacy]', and the second is *Btag (Btags) chog 'khor lo'i lag len*, 'The Ritual Use of the Wheels that it is Sufficient to Attach'. The *Rin chen sgron ma* is one of the texts that make up the *Bka' rten* part of the Bonpo canon, of which it constitutes the whole of volume 175. According to the colophons of several of the component texts, it was received as an aural transmission by Blo ldan snying po (b. 1360).

The *Btags chog 'khor lo* contains instructions for drawing three amulets: the Amulet that it is Sufficient to Attach (*Btags chog 'khor lo*) itself, the Wheel of Long Life (*Tshe grub 'khor lo*) and the Wheel for Repulsion (*Bzlog pa'i 'khor lo*). Illustrations of these are provided at the end of the text, together with a fourth amulet for the repulsion of hail, for which instructions are given in the illustrated folio itself. The following summary of the contents will begin with a description of the general procedure to be observed, since this contains information concerning the material aspects of the manufacturing process. This will be followed by excerpts from instructions for drawing two of the amulets: the 'Wheel of Long Life' and the 'Wheel for Repulsion'.

At an auspicious date and time, the worthy individual should draw the Wheel that it is Sufficient to Attach as follows: ideally, to make the image you should use [pigments made of] precious substances, or failing that vermillion, or at the very least, pure Chinese ink. Fold it three times into a square, and perform the ritual for closing the doors to rebirth in the lower realms. Smear it with water containing a suspension of precious substances, and paint it with fragrant paints. Then recite the mantra of Rnam par rgyal ba,¹¹ and insert it into a tent of rainbow light of all five colours. Put on clean clothes, (fol. 1') and together

11 A manifestation of Gshen rab mi bo; see Kvaerne 1995, 33–34.

with ritual items of the bodhisattvas place the amulet-wheel on a bed of grain. Pray for the doors to rebirth in the lower realms to be closed and for obscurations to be purified in the buddha realm known as ‘the Glorious’. Pray that there should be no obstructions to your life, and for the attainment of realisation in the buddha realm of Manifest Joy; pray that you should have your heart’s desire in full, and for the achievement of extraordinary and ordinary aims in the buddha realm of the Accumulation of Good Qualities; choose the place where you wish to be born, and pray for the attainment of manifest buddhahood in the Realm of Great Bliss. It is important that you should be free of doubt or uncertainty. You should avoid impure things such as human flesh. Cover [the amulet] with a cloth of *shang shun* silk,¹² and perform recitations to consecrate it, and then, during the constellation of Pushya [in January/February] you should attach it around your neck. It will bring inconceivable benefits in this life, (fol. 2^v) and when the body and awareness are parting company [at the moment of death], if it is removed and [placed on] the crown of your head, it will result in liberation from fear on the path of the intermediate plane, and your body will produce rainbows and relics. In the next life, you will achieve full enlightenment in the three buddha bodies. Although the *Btags chog rin chen sgron ma* says that a recitation of the benefits would surpass comprehension, a few brief words may be said here. The Wheel of the Lotus, the supreme seat, will bring about the closing of the doors to rebirth in the lower realms and the purification of obscurations over a succession of lives. The magical Wheel that Wields Power will achieve mastery of the nine levels and dominance over the billion realms; the Wheel of the Victory Banner that Never Declines will enable the spontaneous achievement of the three buddha bodies with no decline in the past, present or future....¹³

12 The meaning of *shang shun* is unclear. It may be a scribal error for *sha shun*, ‘skin’, perhaps in reference to the softness of the material.

13 *btags chog rin chen sgron ma yis / lung dang man ngag bshad par phyag 'tshal lo / gang zhig skal ldan skyes bu yis / dus tshod tshes grangs bzang po la / btags chog 'khor lo 'dri bar bya / rab ni rin chen 'bring mtshal dkar / tha ma rgya snag dag gi bris / gsum lteb gru bzhir ldan par bya / ngan song sgo bcod sgrub pa bya / rin chen 'dus pa rtsi'i byugs / dri ngad ldan pa'i tshon gyi btab / rnam par rgyal ba'i snying po rtsal / gzha' tshon sna lnga'i gur du zhugs / dri ma med pa'i na bza' (fol. 1^v) gsol / byang chub sems pa'i sdzas dang sbrags / 'khor lo 'bru'i gdan la bzhag / dpal dang ldan pa'i zhing khams su / rigs drug skye sgo gcod pa dang / sdig sgrub sbyang pa'i smon lam btab / mngon par dga' ba'i zhing khams su / tshe la bar bcod med pa dang / rtogs pa shar ba'i smon lam btab / yon tan tshogs pa'i zhing khams su / ci 'dod phun sum tshogs pa dang / mchog thun rdzogs pa'i smon lam btab / bde ba can gyi zhing khams su / gang mos gnas sgo bsdam pa dang / mngon sangs rgyas pa'i smon lam btab / re dogs med pa gal che'o / mi gtsang sha chen spangs nas su / shang shun dar zab ras kyi g.yogs / bzlas mchog 'don la rab gnas bya / skar ma rgyal la mgul du btags / 'dir yang yon tan bsam las 'das / (fol. 2^v) bem rig bral dus spyi bor 'don / bar do 'jigs pa'i 'phrang las grol / phung po gzha' dang ring sel 'byung / phyi mar sku gsum rdzogs sangs thob / btags mchog rin chen sgron ma las / yon tan brjod na bsam las 'das / 'on kyang 'di sru zur smos tsam / gdan mchog pad ma'i 'khor lo yis / rigs drug skye sgo bcod pa dang / tshe rabs sdig sgrub dag par 'gyur / dbang bsgyur rdzu 'phrul 'khor lo yis / khams gsum sa dgu gnon pa dang / stong gsum dbang du 'dus par 'gyur / mi nub rgyal mtshan 'khor lo yis / sku gsum lhun gyis 'grub pa dang / dus gsum nub pa med par 'gyur / Note: the Tibetan text of translated passages given in the main text will normally be presented in footnotes, in roman font; italics will be used (as here) to represent the smaller script in which the instructions that accompany the recitations are written.*

The spiritual benefits to be obtained by wearing amulets of the five other auspicious symbols are then similarly enumerated. The instructions for the ‘Amulet that it is Sufficient to Attach’ contain a warning about the need for secrecy as well as the observation of certain other protocols:

There is no effort of meditative practice involved, but at the moment you affix the amulet that features in this teaching about the Amulet that it is Sufficient to Attach, you should perform offerings of consecrated food and tormas; (fol. 3^v) You should not do it openly but rather perform it in secret, since showing it to all and sundry will result in repercussions by inducing the annoyance of the hosts of dakinis. Accordingly, you should keep it secret from inferior people or those with wrong views; you may transmit it in full to worthy individuals with good karmic propensities who practice Bon with faith and reverence, and you should exercise judgment about how much you reveal and how much you keep secret.¹⁴

Detailed instructions for drawing each of the eight auspicious symbols that have been introduced earlier then follow.

3.1 The amulet of long life

The prescriptions for drawing the amulet wheels follow a similar series of steps in each case. The text first specifies the number of concentric circles that are to be drawn, and then, beginning at the centre and proceeding outwards, details the text and any other content that are to be inscribed in the spaces between successive circles. Two further spatial divisions that recur are *rtsibs* and *dpal kha*. The first of these refers to the spokes of wheel, but in these amulets a spoke is not simply a line radiating from the hub to the rim but has a form resembling a curly bracket { with the central protuberance pointing outwards. The number of spokes accordingly increases with the size of the successive rings. The other expression used is *dpal kha*, which in the present case denotes the spaces in the interstices between two adjacent spokes. The term will be translated here as ‘intermediate space’. The numbers preceding each of the steps have been added to help the reader to identify the place in the wheel where the text or other motifs are to be inserted, with reference to the accompanying diagram (Figs 2 and 3).

14 *sgom sgrub rtsol ba mi dgos par / btags pas chog pa'i gdams pa 'di / btag dus tshogs dang gtor ma bya* (fol. 3^v) *kun la mi bstan gsang la spyad / ga gar bstan na chad pa 'bebs / ma sring mkha' 'gro'i rko long gdams / de phyir rigs ngan dman pa dang / log lta can la gsang rgya btab / dad ldan mos 'dun bon la spyod / las phro skal pa ldan pa la / snyan rgyud man ngag tshang par byin / bston tshod sbas tshod mkhas par mdzod* / (fols 2^v–3^r).



Fig. 2: Amulet for ensuring long life.

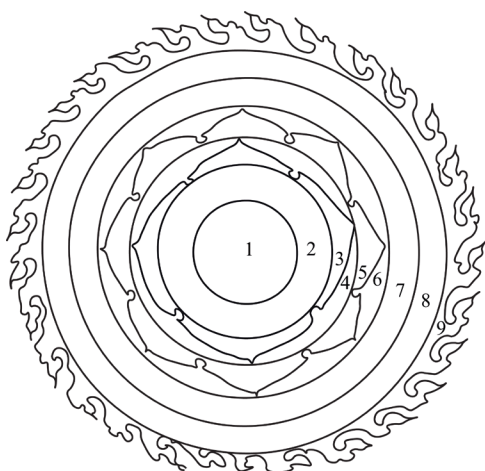


Fig. 3: Key to components of the amulet for ensuring long life (drawing by Olga Ważny).

Regarding the wheel for the Long-Life Protection ritual according to the *Rin chen sgron ma 'khor ba dong sprug*: draw six concentric circles.

1. In the middle write the syllable BRUM, and emanating from it the following formula: OM MA TRI MU YI SA LE 'DU / A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU / May the Buddha Gshen rab, the father and mother, protect and preserve me, and bestow on me the accomplishment of everlasting life.

2. In the circle outside that, write: A OM HUM RAM DZA SAD SA LE LHAN NE SANG NGE 'DU / MA MA SA LE LHAN NE KHRI LE 'DU / A MA SA LE (fol. 10*) LHANG NGE LHAN NE 'DU / OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE 'DU / May the hosts of luminous benign divinities protect and keep me; bestow on me the accomplishment of eternal life.

3. On the four spokes outside that, write: OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE 'DU / A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA NA SHRI DZA BRUM DU. Write this on all four [spokes].

4. In the intermediate spaces, write: Gshen rab Gto bu 'bum sras, protect and keep me. Bestow on me the accomplishment of eternal life. Gshen rab Yid kyi khye'u chung (Youth of [the] Mind), protect and keep me, and bestow on me the accomplishment of eternal life. (fol. 11^r) Gshen rab Sras bu rma lo, protect and keep me, and bestow on me the accomplishment of eternal life. Gshen rab Gsas bu g.yu lo, protect and keep me, and bestow on me the accomplishment of eternal life. Write this in all four intermediate spaces.

5. On the eight spokes outside that, write the following. OM, A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me. MA BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU / Protect me. TRI A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me. (Fol. 11^v) MU A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me. YE A BRUM TSHE BRU A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me. SA A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU / Protect me / LE A BRUM CHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me. 'DU A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU. Protect me.

6. Then in the intermediate spaces, write as follows: (*mantras on the last two lines*) (fol. 12^r): that is what you should write.

7. On the circle outside that, write: OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE 'DU / A BRUM TSHE BRUM A YU GNYA' NA SHRI DZA BRUM 'DU / 'Od dkar dpag med (Boundless White Light), god of long life, victorious father and mother, please bless me; enhance my life and prosperity; cause the glorious and famous doctrine (fol. 12^v) to flourish; the four groups of fierce wrathful ones, please remove from the four directions whatever might harm or impede our lives; may the seventy-two glorious protectors gather up the essence of our life and prosperity and bestow on us the accomplishment of long life, and preserve and protect us, the wearers [of this amulet]. This is what you should write.

8. Then outside that draw a circle of swastikas, and outside that a ring of left-leaning fire-mountains. This is how you should make a long-life disc as a protective amulet. Blessings.¹⁵

15 (1) *dbus su* brum las snying po ni / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du rgyal ba gshen rab yab yum gyis / bdag la srung zhing skyobs pa dang / g.yung drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / (2) de rgyab mu khyud la / a om hum ram dza / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / sad sa le lhan ne sang nge 'du / ma ma sa le lhan ne khri le 'du / a ma sa le (fol. 10^r) lhang nge lhan ne 'du / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / rnam snang zhi ba'i lha tshogs kyis /bdag la srung zhing bskyab pa dang / g.yung drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / (3) de rgyab rtsibs bzhi la / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / ces bzhi ka la bris / (4) dpal kha la / gshen rab gto bu 'bum sras kyis / bdag la srung zhing skyobs pa dang / g.yunga drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / gshen rab yid kyi khye'u chung gis / bdag la srung zhing skyobs pa dang / g.yung drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / (fol. 11^r) gshen rab sras bu rma lo yis / bdag la srung zhing skyobs pa dang / g.yung drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / gshen rab gsas bu g.yu lo

This is followed immediately by the instructions for drawing the next amulet.

3.2 The Wheel for Repulsion

The wheel for repulsion according to the *Rin chen sgron ma*. Draw six concentric circles. In the centre write the syllable BSWO and around it the following mantra: OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE 'DU / DRUNG MU TSA KRA RATNA MU MAR HRIM DZA /¹⁶

The procedure is broadly the same as in the preceding example, whereby passages of text are written in specified locations beginning at the centre, and moving outwards. However, the content of the text is of course different since the purpose is not specifically to obtain long life but to repel hostile forces, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

[In the outermost circle] write: OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE 'DU / DRUNG MU TSAKRA RAD NA MU MAR HRIM DZA BHYO BZLOG. Chief of the wrathful ones, king of repelling, mighty one who subdues all, repel all curses and afflictions that lie beyond the weapons of this disc, and repel evil sorcery. All hate-filled enemies and obstructive afflictions that beset me and

yis / bdag la srung zhing skyabs pa dang / g.yung drung tshe yi dngos grub gsol / *bzhi ka la bris* / (5) *'de rgyab rtsibs brgyad la* / om a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / ma a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / tri a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig (fol. 11^v) mu a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / ye a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / sa a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / le a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag bsrungs shig / 'du a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri dza brum 'du / bdag la bsrungs shig / (6) *dpal kha la* / om a yam ram mam brum nyi ri bha ra tram 'du / ma a yam ram mam kham brum nyi ri bha ra tram 'du / tri a yam ram mam kham brum nyi ri bha ra tri 'du (fol. 12^v) mu a yam ram mam kham / brum nyi ri gha ra tram 'du / ye a yam ram mam kham brum nyi ri bha ra tram 'du / sa a yam ram mam kham brum nyi ri bha ra tram 'du / le a yam ram mam kham brum nyi ri bha ra tram 'du / 'du a yam ram mam kham brum nyi bha ra trang du / *ces pa bris* / (7) *de rgyab mu khyud la* / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / a brum tshe brum a yu gnya' na shri brum 'du / 'od dkar dpag med tshe yi lha / rgal ba yab yum sras bcas kyis / bdag la byin gyis brlab tu gsol / tshe dang bdod nams 'phel ba dang / dpal grags bstan pa (fol. 12^v) dar rgyas mdzod / dbal gyi khro chen ru bzhi yis / phyogs bzhi tshe yi gnod pa dang / tshe'i bar bcod bsal du gsol / dpal mgon bdun cu rtsa gnyis kyis / mi tshe phya g.yang bcud bsdus la / tshe yi dngos grub stsal du gsol / 'chang ba po la srung skyobs mdzod / *ces pa bris* / (8) *de rgyab g.yung drung ra bas bskor / de rgyab me ri'i g.yon bskor bya / de ni bsrung ba tshe grub 'khor lo bya'o / dge'o* /

16 *rin chen sgron ma'i las kha bzlog pa'i 'khor lo ni / mu khyud rim pa drug tu bskor / dbus su bso la snying po'i bskor* / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / drung mu tsa kra ratna mu mar hrim dza / (fol. 12^v)

our beneficent patron – summon them, liberate them and do not let them abide here; by the blessings of truth of these *dhāraṇīs* and mantras, let this be quickly accomplished.¹⁷

Following the directions for the inscription of the mantras and other formulae along the circles, on the spokes and in the intermediate spaces, the sections ends with precise instructions concerning the positioning of the text that evoke its ‘oppositional’ function of the relevant formulae:

Outside this, ring it with a circle of swastikas, and beyond that encircle it with left-leaning fire-mountains. The tops of letters in text intended for protection should be towards the outside, and the text should run in a clockwise direction. The top of letters in text meant for repulsion should be oriented towards the inside, and the text should run in an anticlockwise direction.¹⁸

This reversal of direction can be seen clearly in the illustration (Fig. 4).

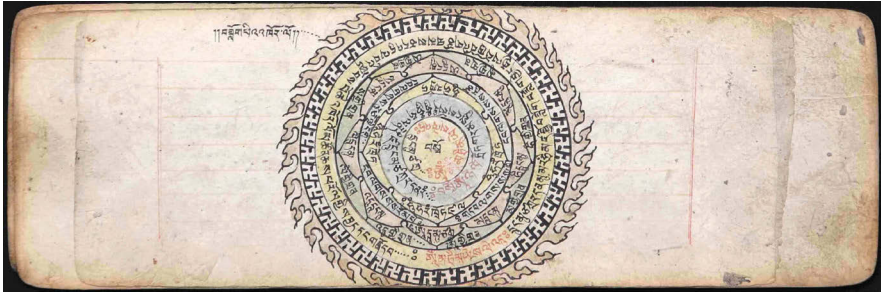


Fig. 4: Amulet for the repulsion of all categories of harmful agents.

17 *de rgyab mu khyud la / om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du / drung mu tsakra rad na mu mar hrim dza bhyo bzlog / bzlog byed rgyal po khro bo'i gtso / thams cad 'dul ba'i stobs po che / 'khor lo mtshon chas pha rol gyis / bya dang gnod pa bzlog par mdzod / sbod btong ngan pa bzlog tu gsol / bdag dang rgyu sbyor yon bdag la / sdang ba'i dgra dang gnod pa'i bgegs / bkug nas bsgral zhing mi gnas pa / bzungs sngags bden pa'i byin rlabs kyis / nyur du 'grub (fol. 15^v) par mdzad du gsol / (fols 15^r–15^v)*

18 *de rgyab g.yung drung ra bas bskor / de rgyab me ris g.yon bskor bya'o / srung ba'i yig mgo phyi ru bstan la g.yas bskor bya / bzlog pa'i yig 'go nang du bstan la g.yon bskor bya'o / (fol. 15^v)*

3.3 Ghosts, demons and forces of nature

A number of items deal with devices for protection from particular categories of harmful beings. One well-worn folio – suggesting, perhaps, that it saw frequent use – assures protection against ‘ghosts of the living’ (*gson 'dre*) through the invocation of the goddess *Srid pa'i rgyal mo* (Fig. 5). After prescribing the placement of the text on the concentric circles, the instructions specify that, on the outside of the circle, we should draw ‘an image of a demoness with a red body and wild tresses, with its four limbs bound with iron chains’.¹⁹ It goes on to list the various substances that should accompany the paper when (although this is not stated) it is stitched into its pouch. These include frankincense, asafoetida, sulphur and musk.

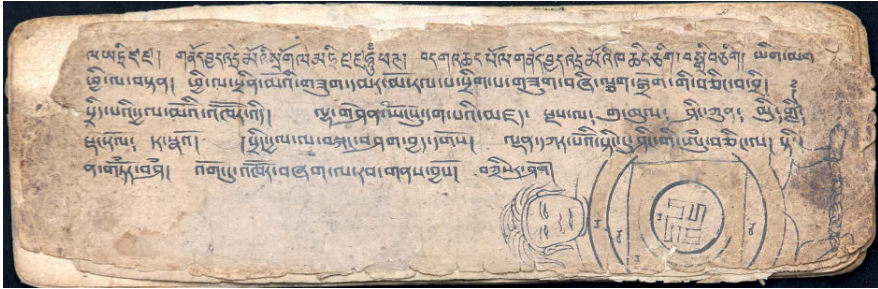


Fig. 5: Amulet for protection from ‘ghosts of the living’ (*gson 'dre*) (fol. number illegible, verso).

In certain cases the text is simple enough that it can fit entirely into the illustration: Fig. 6 shows an amulet that provides protection against a much-feared type of demon, called *chung sri*, the ‘vampire of the little ones’, that preys on young children (fol. *shog cig v*). Although the caption to this image, positioned to the upper right of it, specifies that this is a ‘wheel for the *chung sri*’, the *chung sri* is only one of six types of demons that are named in the red intermediate spaces between the spokes. The text in the top left of the folio specifies the colours that should be applied: Centre: yellow; spokes: yellow; the intermediate spaces: red; the water motif (*chu ris*): blue; the fire mountains: red; the surrounding: red.

¹⁹ *phyi la srin mo'i gzug dmar mo ral pa srig pa gzug bzhi lcag sgrog gi bcing ba bri* / (fol. number illegible, verso).

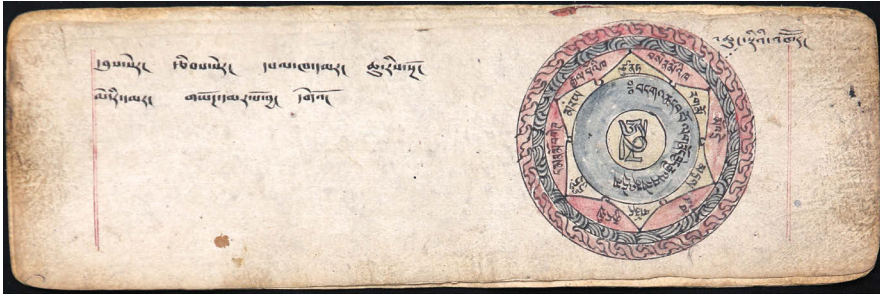


Fig. 6: Amulet for deterring *chung sri* and five other named classes of predatory demons (fol. *shog cig v.*).

3.4 Animals: prey, predators and protectors

It is not only humans that can benefit from the protection afforded by amulets. A collection of short biographies of Nyingmapa lamas belonging to the Rdo dmar pa family line recounts how a woman who found herself in mortal danger escaped with her life by appropriating an amulet attached to the family cow. Earlier in the day, her husband, 'Brug pa ring mo, had gone hunting and had accidentally fallen to his death from a cliff, but had come to life again as the type of demon known as *ro langs*, a 'rising corpse'.

As dusk gradually fell, Drukpa's wife lit a fire in the house. As she was preparing dinner Drukpa Ringmo appeared, with his hair hanging down and matted with blood. He sat in his usual place, keeping his eyes down as he could not bear to look around when the light from the fire was too strong. When the brightness of the fire diminished he looked around. His face was like the colour of blood and swollen, and too awful to look at. His terrified wife piled wood on the fire, and as it burned more brightly she fled from the house in fear. Near the door was a cow that was wearing a protective amulet that had been provided by the Rdo dmar pa Lama. The wife took this and affixed it to herself, and was sitting there when the revenant emerged from inside the house.²⁰

²⁰ de nas ngang tsam nas sa rub pa'i skabs su bza' zla khyim du me btang ste lto bzo ba'i skabs 'brug pa ring mo khrag ral nyi le bar yong nas nam rgyun sdod gnas su bsdad de me 'od che ba'i skabs su phar tshur blta mi bzod par gdong smad de sdod cing / me 'od chung ba'i skabs su phar blta tshur blta byed cing / gdong pa khrag mdog ltar rgyas shing blta mi bzod pa'i 'jigs tshul gyi rnam pa can du 'gyur 'gro ba bzhin byed pa la bza' zla 'jigs shing skrag ste me la shing mang tsam bcug nas me od rgyas pa'i skabs 'jigs skrag gi ngang nas phyir bros te sgo phyugs ba mo zhig yod pa de'i lus la rdo dmar pas gngang ba'i srung 'khor zhig yod pa de blangs de lus la btags nas bsdad skabs ro langs phyir thon yong... / (Brag sne Kun bzung chos 'phel 1996, 66).

The strategy worked, and her dead husband walked past her into the night to wreak havoc elsewhere.

The *sri* demons mentioned above are divided into numerous categories identified by their preferred prey. In addition to the *chung sri* there is another, known as *god sri*, ‘vampire of loss’, that preys on livestock. The Samling collection does not seem to have a template for an amulet against *god sri*. Such amulets do exist; however, they are not usually inscribed on paper but on a horse’s skull before being buried at a designated location. It is highly likely, therefore, that the text and any illustrations it might contain are kept separately in Samling from the collection of items that are intended to be reproduced on paper, cloth or – as we shall see presently – wood.²¹

The Samling collection does, however, contain at least one amulet that is intended specifically for the protection of animals. The short text, comprising just over one folio side, is entitled *Ye (yo) ma’i khyu srung gis (gi) ’khor lo*, ‘Wheel for the protection of herds of mares and foals’. The relatively simple device, illustrated on the verso of the folio, comprises ‘three concentric circles with the syllable HRI at the centre; [...] there should be four spokes, and four jewels in the intervening spaces’. As we have seen in the preceding examples, the text and the motifs that feature in the amulets bear some relevance to their intended function, the opaque character of the mantras notwithstanding. In this case, the jewels are likely to be a reference to the jewel-bearing horse that is such a ubiquitous Tibetan motif, while the protection is stated to be assured by Jambhala, one of the gods of wealth. Furthermore, the text itself contains short Tibetan injunctions such as *rta phyug spel zhig*, ‘Cause our horses and cattle to increase’, and several occurrences of the syllable *hrang*, the Zhangzhung word for ‘horse’.

Another wheel with a simple composition consisting of just two circles with the *nam bcu dbang ldan* monogram of the Kālacakra tantra at the centre is described simply as a ‘cattle protector’ (*phyug bsrung*, Fig. 7). The accompanying instructions, comprising just three short lines, state that the symbols should be painted on a wooden tablet and affixed to the door of a cattle pen; if drawn on paper, should be affixed to an arrow. It also states that displaying the monogram

²¹ For the text and translation of such a *god sri*-subjugation ritual, together with an illustration of the motif to be inscribed on the skull, see <http://www.kalpa-bon.com/texts/sri/god-sri-mnanpa> (accessed 29 November 2020). The illustration appears on fol. 5v. Images of a horse’s skull bearing such apotropaic motifs may be seen in Heller 1998, 89, fig. 13 and Tong 2008, 414, fig. 6.2.10–5. The skull depicted in these works was found in an imperial-period tomb at Dulan, but is likely to have been buried at this location as part of the ritual procedure long after the tomb itself was constructed and sealed.

on a building (*mkhar*, lit. castle), will overcome inauspicious geomantic indications (*sa pra phyogs ngan thub*).



Fig. 7: Amulet featuring the *nam bcu dbang ldan* monogram of the Kālacakra, used here as a device to protect cattle.

The principle of targeting certain harmful agents with customised amulets is not confined to meteorological phenomena (such as hail) or designated types of demons but applies also to natural predators. Wolves, which have always been the main threat to livestock throughout Tibet, feature in one of these amulets. The device belongs to a category that is described not as a ‘wheel’ (*’khor lo*) but as a ‘binding’ (*’ching*), the intention apparently being to immobilise the designated threat and neutralise its capacity to harm. In the present case, the amulet is described as a *spyang ’chings*, a ‘wolf-binding’. The instructions specify that one should draw an image of a wolf and surround it with lettering that includes mantras and the injunction ‘bind the muzzle of the noxious wolf’ (*spyang gdug pa can gyi kha’ ’chings shig*). The prescription goes on to state that one should ‘draw it with its muzzle bound and its four limbs chained to stupas in four directions’ (*kha dang rkang lags lcags thag gis skyigs mtshams bzhir mchod rten bzhi pris [bris]*). A cross and certain syllables should also be drawn on the wolf’s tongue. The collection also contains a single folio with a drawing that apparently represents this prescription (Fig. 8). On the side of the wolf are written the words *cad* (for *cang*, i.e. *spyang*) *khu’i kha ching*, ‘bind the wolf’s muzzle’.

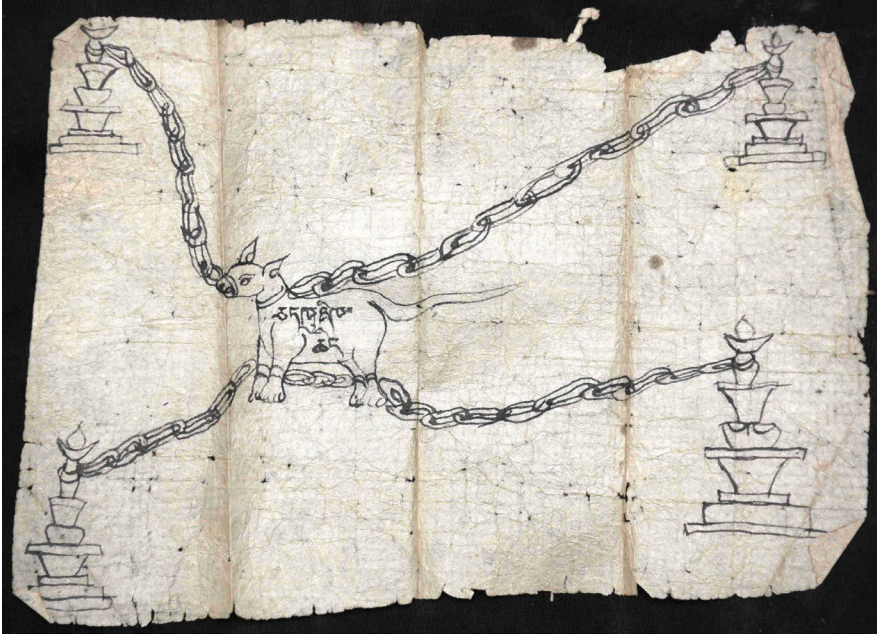


Fig. 8: Amulet for preventing wolves from biting.

A set of rather crudely-drawn devices is intended to ensure protection against three other animals that might raid human settlements. The first of these is a bear, featuring a rough drawing of the animal in question with its limbs chained and its muzzle bound (Fig. 9). Surrounding it is a circle of text written clockwise and featuring several repetitions of the formula *rakṣha na*, representing the Sanskrit or Nepali *rakṣaṇa*, meaning ‘defence’, or ‘protection’. In spite of the absence of intersyllabic dots (*tsheg*) and a number of spelling irregularities the meaning of the text is clear enough:

lo zan mche ba can dom gyi nod (gnod) pa thams cad bsrung shig (zhig) /
 ‘Protect us from all harm from bears with fangs that eat our crops’.

’chang ba po’i zhing ’di la dom gyi gnod pa byed pa thams cad rakṣhana na na na na /
 ‘Protection from all harm that might be caused by bears to this field, which belongs to the wearer [of this amulet]’.

It is not entirely clear from the formulation whether the amulet is to be attached to the owner or placed in or near the field itself, but the expression *’chang ba po* does rather suggest a human wearer. Along the side of the animal are written the

words *bha lu mu kha bamdha raksha*, which corresponds to the Nepali ‘Bind and protect [us] from the mouth of the bear’.²² The fact that this inscription, as well as other short passages in the surrounding text, are in Nepali, suggests that this amulet was either not made locally or was prepared for patrons in the middle hills of Nepal, where crop depredation by black bears is a serious problem.



Fig. 9: Amulet for deterring bears from crops.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the second amulet in this group, which is intended to protect crops against monkeys – animals that are not found in Upper Dolpo. Like the bear, the monkey – also apparently an animal with which the artist was not very familiar – is depicted bound with chains (Fig. 10).

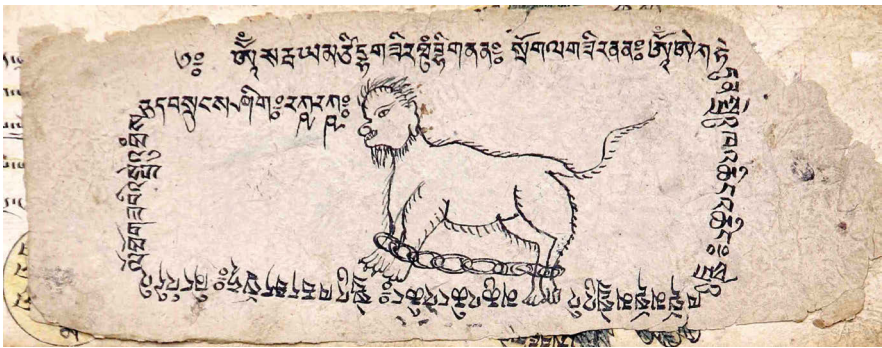


Fig. 10: Amulet for keeping monkeys away from crops.

²² The Nepali term *rakṣā-bandhan* itself denotes an amulet.

The third amulet is intended to deter birds that feed on crops, and features a bird with its legs and beak chained to two stupas (Fig. 11). The structure of the surrounding text in both cases is broadly similar to that of the bear, though monkeys and birds are of course named as the specific targets.

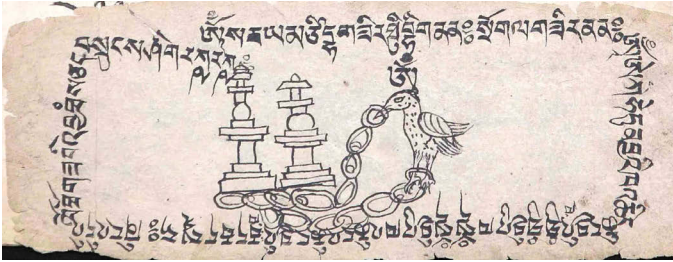


Fig. 11: Amulet for preventing flocks of birds from harming crops.

Animals appear in a number of amulets not as objects of repulsion but as agents of empowerment. One folio bears illustrations of amulets for the development of each of four particular forces that are combined in humans, the vital force (*srog*), body (*lus*), power or prosperity (*dbang thang*) and well-being (*rlung rta*). While the animals that usually represent these are, respectively, the mythical eagle (*khyung*), the tiger, the dragon and the lion, in the Samling set they feature a bird that may be a *khyung*, a peacock, a bovid (probably a yak) and a horse (Figs 12, 13). While the presence of the peacock is difficult to explain, in an article devoted to these four forces Samten Karmay points out that the lion came to replace the yak in this configuration, and that the latter is found in older Tibetan works and in Naxi depictions of the motif.²³



Fig. 12: Amulets to increase well-being, power, the body and the life-force.

²³ Karmay 1998, 418.

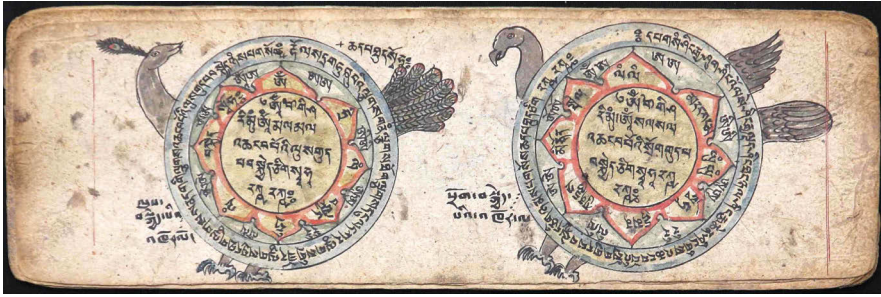


Fig. 13: Amulets to increase well-being, power, the body and the life-force.

The other example of an empowering animal that we may briefly consider here is the motif of a two-headed parrot (Fig. 14) that can endow mutes with the power of speech. According to the accompanying text, ‘This wheel that opens the mouths of those who are dumb’ contains syllables that have manifested from light emanating from the syllable *kham*. These syllables should be smeared with poisoned blood, and then the paper itself infused with the antidote to this poison. The amulet should be tied around the neck of the mute person, who should then also consume water containing a variety of medicinal substances.



Fig. 14: Amulet to endow mute people with the power of speech.

In addition to being a mythical animal associated with the vital force, the *khyung* also has the status of an important tantric divinity in Bon. A form of this divinity that has an especially prominent position in Samling is the Powerful Red Khyung (Dbal khyung dmar po). One of the texts in the collection gives relatively detailed instructions for creating the amulet of the divinity, which is intended to protect practitioners of this tantric cycle from harm that might be inflicted by a wide range of human and demonic powers. Precipitation is caused by the *klu* (corre-

sponding to the Indian *nāgas* in later Bon literature), who are the enemy of the *kyung*, and the text includes a ritual for preventing or stopping snow, rain and hail, that includes the use of a dough frog (a type of *klu*) into which a small scroll of mantras is to be inserted.²⁴ The text is followed by a partial illustration of the complex Red Khyung amulet described in the text (Fig. 15).

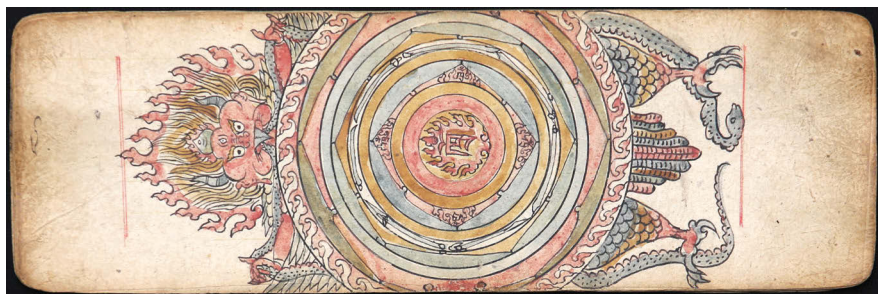


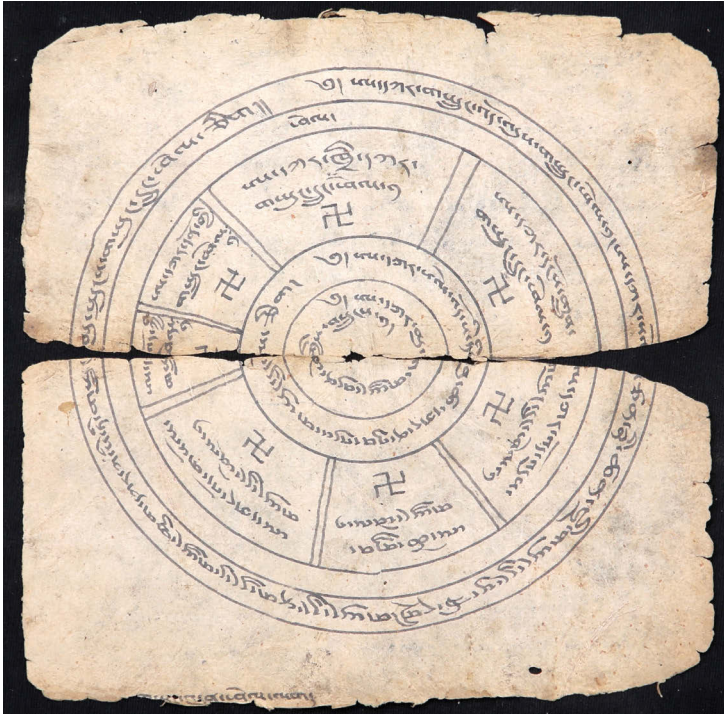
Fig. 15: Amulet of the Powerful Red Khyung (Dbal khung dmar po).

The collection contains amulets based on the tantric cycles of several other major Bonpo divinities, but for reasons of space, and in the interest of presenting a diversity of themes, they will not be considered here.

3.5 A ritual to enable conception

The final example to be considered here is a device that affords not protection but empowerment, in this case the ability of a woman to bear children. Identified as the ‘Wheel of the White Letter A that Brings Increase’, the amulet bestows on the wearer the benefits of seven different swastikas that are manifestations of the white letter A. The item is folded along a horizontal axis with the image of the wheel on one side and the main text on the other. The text begins in the lower half and continues from the top, as follows:

²⁴ For a discussion of rituals for the control of weather involving the use of effigies of frogs, see Sam van Schaik’s contribution to this volume.



Handwritten text in a script, likely Tamil, on aged paper. The text is arranged in several lines, with some characters appearing to be in a different script or dialect. The paper is torn and shows signs of age.

Handwritten text in a script, likely Tamil, on aged paper. The text is arranged in several lines, with some characters appearing to be in a different script or dialect. The paper is torn and shows signs of age.

Figs 16, 17a and 17b: Amulet to enable women to bear children (recto and verso; the text begins on the lower half of the sheet and continues on the upper part).

Homage to the gods, the blessed ones. As a means of increasing future generations of all those such as myself, and to enable those without sons to have sons, the 'Increase of the Seven Swastikas' is presented here. With one measure ('gri = 'bre?) of camphor, the six excellent [ingredients], conch-shell, bright vermilion and myrobalan, write the mantras for [obtaining] the accomplishments on the seven lotus-ended Swastikas of Increase, and after performing the consecration, tie it around [the woman's?] neck. At a pure moment between two months, place it on a bed of precious things. On a plate (*bder = sder*) draw the threefold motif of the sun, the moon and the stars, and place it so that it is facing the sky. At sunrise on the first day of the month, tie it around [the woman's] neck. The woman should face east. She will very soon bear sons. Even if she has been barren for nine years she will have a son. May this be of benefit for all future generations.

There is no need to recite the mantras – it is enough just to write them down. This is the Wheel of the White Letter A that Brings Increase. Write it down at the cusp between two months and attach it on the first day. Place it on top of barley and flowers. A DKAR SA LE (etc.).²⁵

4 Conclusion

The text considered here is a compilation from an assortment of manuscripts consisting of illustrated instructions for the production of amulets. In some cases, the texts are entire (albeit relatively short) works dedicated to the topic, whereas others comprise one or more folios, excerpted from larger works, and dealing with the production of amulets relating to the ritual cycle from which they were extracted. Although we do not know who the compiler of the collection was – presumably an ancestor of the owner, Lama Sherab Tenzin – the purpose of the exercise is likely to have been to concentrate manuscripts related to amulet-making in a single location for the sake of convenience, even if this may have meant, in certain cases, dismembering the parent text. We should also consider the possibility that this compilation was intended an intermediate step in a longer process. Archival collections in Mustang often contain single items consisting

²⁵ *bder gshegs lha la phyag 'tshal lo / bdag 'dra yongs su dag pa'i / phyi rabs rig rgyud phel ba dang / bu tsha med par yod par byed pa'i thabs / g.yung drung bdun phel btan par bya'o / ga bur bzang drug / dung dang mtshal dkar dang a ru ra 'gri {gi} gang gis / phel byed g.yung drung padma can / bdun la dngos grub sngags bkod la / rab gnas byas nas 'gul du btag go / zla 'tshams dag la rin chen bden na bzhag / bder la nyi zla skar 3 bris / nam mkha' la btan la bzhag / tshes 1 nyi shar 'gul du brtag / bu med kha ni shar du ston / de ni bu tsha myur du skye'o / lo dgu skam kyang bu yong 'gyur / phyi rab kun la phan thog shog / sngags bzlos mi (supra) gos bris pa'i mchog / a dkar phel byed kyi 'khor lo yin / zla 'tshams la bris la tshes 1 la rtag / nas dang me tog steng na blug / a dkar sa le...*

of transcriptions of short legal notices and memoranda covering an extended period. The purpose of these works is to preserve a record of proceedings that have been inscribed on a multiplicity of scraps of paper that are often then discarded. Copies of this sort can be confusing, since the impression of homogeneity created by the uniform handwriting and, quite often, the omission of dates, may mislead readers into thinking that they are dealing with a single event or a series of closely-related cases. It is possible that the collection with which we are dealing here was intended as the source material for a manual that the compiler had intended to make by copying the illustrations and the text in a single neat hand, with due stylistic harmonisation, before returning the folios to the sources from which they had been drawn. The result would have been something akin to an illustrated version of the two texts, considered above, that were incorporated by 'Jam mgon kong sprul into the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, whose consistency of style gives the impression of single authorship (as of course may well be the case). Even if there ever was such a hypothetical project – though to the best of my knowledge no such work exists – we are very fortunate that the source materials were not again dispersed to their rightful places, and we are able to enjoy the profusion of interests, literary styles, scribal hands and graphic inventiveness that have been condensed into this short but extraordinarily diverse compilation.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Christine Boedler for drawing my attention to Nik Douglas' *Tibetan Tantric Charms and Amulets*, and for kindly providing me with a copy of the work, at the outset of my investigations. Research on the Drangsong manuscript collection of Lo Monthang, which contains a number of manuscript amulets, is funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, through project no. 2018/30/M/HS3/00372, entitled *Protecting the kingdom with Tibetan manuscripts: codicological and historical analyses of the royal Drangsong collection from Mustang, Nepal* (PI Agnieszka Helman-Ważny).

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Dan Martin

Earth and Wind, Water and Fire: Book Binding and Preservation in pre-Mongol Bon Ritual Manuals for Consecrations

Abstract: Bon religious texts dating to more-or-less a thousand years ago do contain not only signs of a well developed ‘cult of the book’, but also some unexpectedly informative passages about the book making arts. This essay concentrates on ideas about bookbinding found in early Bon ritual literature on consecration of icons, including scriptural Volumes. These evidence a remarkable concern for book preservation, as well as a keen awareness of how each element of the binding is meant to protect the book from damage by a specific physical element. This bears comparison and contrast with closely contemporaneous evidence on book binding found in the consecration literature of Tibet’s predominating schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Even if not the very first, certainly one of the earliest and, as time would prove, by far the most widely influential of the treasure revealers for Bon tradition as a whole was Gshen chen Klu dga’ (d. 1035 CE), the *Great Shen*. It is recorded in what I regard as the most reliable of the early accounts that, after his scriptural findings in 1017 CE, he kept silent for a period of one twelve-year cycle about them and their teachings. In the same source we learn how one named Sbrags sto Ku ra had built a chorten and invited a physician named Zhang to consecrate it. During the course of the consecration (here using the word *zhal sro*), the Great Shen raised a question about what a chorten of Dharmakāya might be, insisting that there is nothing about a chorten that could apply to Dharmakāya. After this debate, an event that signaled his debut as a teacher, he gradually over the coming years allowed his excavated scriptures to be copied by others. Among his first followers was one named Cog lha G.yu skyid, who asked to see them all. Then Cog lha made a special request to make his own copy of the *Khams chen* scripture, and as things turned out constructed two copies, one for the Great Shen and one for himself. The one for himself was called the *Red Hundred-Thousand* (*’Bum dmar*), and the one he made for the Great Shen was called the *Royal Hundred-Thousand with Hardened Leather Book [Boards]* (*Bla ’bum bse gleg[s] can*). The last-mentioned is

the one that the Venerable Tenzin Namdak once told me that he had seen with his own eyes when he was still living in Tibet, prior to his escape to India.¹

A set of consecration texts is always included in the lists of the Great Shen's scriptural findings,² and we will say more about these shortly. What I would regard as a more problematic text on the life of the Great Shen's disciple Zhu yas Legs po (1002–1081 CE) has its own elaborate story about how the first copies of the scriptures were made by him soon after their discovery. In this version, the intent to make copies of the scriptures was there even before they were excavated. The Great Shen speaks to him in verse:

The teachings that belong to you
are currently under the ground.
In order to extract them from the soil
I need a load of axes and picks.
I need thirteen able-bodied men.
I need six loads of paper and ink.
I need a hundred scribes to copy them out.³

While quite detailed and dramatic, this story does not sit easily together with the other account that has the Great Shen doling out scriptural texts one or several at a time over a lengthy period, which is one of several reasons for my reservations. Disregarding that for now, our text goes on to say that sixty-five scribes worked for three months and five days. Their work was checked over three times, resulting in eighty-six volumes of scripture.⁴

In 1038, following the same source, he had a vision at the site of an ancient temple Zo bo Khyung slags that inspired him to build there. When the new temple was completed, he invited seven teachers to the consecration. Among them,

1 This summarizes information found in Martin 2001, 66–67, where complete references are to be found. Shenchen Luga I will go on to call the 'Great Shen', translating the first part of his name that is in its fuller form Gshen chen Klu dga'. Shen is the clan name. Sometimes he is called Gshen sgur, with reference to a postural anomaly of his due to some kind of accident. We might translate this as *Hunchback of the Shen Clan*.

2 See the study of these listings in Martin 2001, 239–261, and especially no. 5 on p. 244.

3 Martin 2001, 83.

4 For more discussion on the historical usefulness of the Zhu yas text, see Chapter Eight of Martin 2001, especially p. 86, and for the full quote, pp. 83–84. I often choose to capitalize the word Volume when it stands for Tibetan *glegs bam* as a holy object and icon-like representation of the speech-acts of a Buddha (*glegs bam* itself refer to the book as a whole, inclusive of the binding elements). On the importance of holy, blessing-bestowing objects in Tibet in general, see Martin 1994.

despite the chronological impossibility, was the Great Shen himself, who would have already died in 1035. Even more strangely, the guest list included the Bengali teacher Atiśa (d. 1054), who would only arrive in Tibet in 1042. Atiśa performed a special ritual called *Stong gsum snang srid g.yen bcos* ('Mending Divisiveness in the Phenomenal Triple Thousand [Universe]').⁵ It appears it was at that same meeting that Atiśa gave him names for his son Skyid po as well as his future grandson Jo thog.⁶ So, our main point here is just that consecration rituals are not only found among the Great Shen's textual discoveries, but they also play an important part in the associated biographical narratives.

It has been over 25 years since I first noticed some remarkable connections between these consecration texts of the Great Shen and the consecration text of Atiśa. Most impressive is the fact that in both we find the chorten topped by a finial formed by a pair of Birdhorns (*bya ru*), and the two Birdhorns are said to symbolize wisdom and means. It is most surprising to find Birdhorns in a non-Bon text, and I know of no other case of *bya ru* being used in them with the same meaning.⁷ These texts are begging to be compared in a major study, but for now we will limit ourselves to isolating and comparing particular passages about a particular subject: the items that together with the inscribed pages themselves form a sacred Volume (*glegs bam*). We will call these items the *accessories*, although by the end of this essay, we may find good reasons to call them *protectors* instead.

But first, a few observations about consecration and its literature in Tibet. Our Bon texts generally prefer the term *zhal bsro* in place of the much more familiar *rab gnas*. *Zhal [b]sro* literally means *face warming*, but I think *heart warming* is a more communicative rendering. We will not find this vocabulary difference so surprising when we learn that *zhal bsro* is the form known in Old Tibetan texts and inscriptions from the imperial period, while *rab gnas* is not locatable in them.⁸ Another related Bon term is *nang rdzong*, for the pre-consecration rite of

5 I believe this title indicates a kind of *mdos* ritual similar to what is known as *Stong gsum 'khrugs bcos*, but I am uncertain of it, and this requires research.

6 For the place of these persons in the Zhu family tree, consult the tables that follow p. 474 in Lhagyal 2000, at Table 3.

7 I have noted some non-Bon usages in Martin 2001, 63, n. 31, and see also p. 88; Martin 2013, 172. See Atiśa, *Sku dang gsung*, 514 and Gshen chen 1999c, 224. These Bon consecration texts were catalogued in Changngoba 2003, 137–141. Atiśa's consecration work itself is subject of Martin 2018, published without submitting any galley proofs for author's approval, and for this reason rife with editorial errors.

8 The term occurs in a Dunhuang cave inscription (in its past tense form, *zhal bsros*), as found in Imaeda 2007, 94, n. 4. A search of the OTDO did not find a single usage of the term *rab gnas*, although it may be important to point out that this excellent database, while quite successfully

depositing holy items that is usually called *rten gzhus*.⁹ So there are certain peculiarities like these to be found in the Bon literature. If we look at the general literature on consecration in pre-Mongol Tibet, what we find are perhaps four lengthy manuals or sets of manuals, apart from those of Bon. Of these, the Rong zom pa and Atiśa manuals date to around mid-eleventh century, while the Sakya master Grags pa rgyal mtshan's dates to the late twelfth (1147–1216 CE).¹⁰ We should also mention that there are a number of less lengthy manuals by Kagyü masters of the late twelfth century. Among them the most substantial are Phag mo gru pa's.¹¹ In terms of sheer volume, the Great Shen surpassed them all.

We can basically exclude the manuals of Rong zom pa and Phag mo gru pa for now, for even though they do mention that books are among the items that might be consecrated, they do not devote any passages of significant length to this subject. The remainder of this essay will be a presentation of a particular Bon consecration text passage on what might be called for reasons to be clarified the 'protective accessories', with comparison to passages on the same subject in the works of Atiśa and Grags pa rgyal mtshan, with some concluding remarks about their significance for Bon and Tibetan manuscriptology.¹²

excluding the Buddhist scriptural and commentarial texts that form the bulk of the Tibetan texts cached at Dunhuang, has as its main concentration secular documents and rituals related to royalty.

9 The term is in fact used by Phag mo gru pa in his late twelfth-century consecration text, but this is rather exceptional (see Phag mo gru pa 1507, fol. 112^v, line 2).

10 I primarily made use of the bilingual edition of Grags pa rgyal mtshan with Tibetan and English on facing pages, for which see Bentor 2015.

11 For an extensive bibliography of both Indian Buddhist and Tibetan consecration literature, see Bentor 1996. Since it is brief and no more than an outline, we omit the text of Lo chen Rin chen bzang po, even if it is frequently cited in the later literature. Atiśa's text was composed in Sanskrit at Vikramaśīla Monastery near the Ganges River. He translated it together with his Tibetan disciple in around 1040 and apparently took the only copy with him to Tibet, as I know of no indication that it had any influence in India, no surviving Indian manuscript fragments and so on. Two more Indic texts will be mentioned soon, but I cannot pretend to supply much coverage for the other Indic consecration literature, listed in detail in Bentor 1996, 349–353, although I did search for the main terms in online databases, and could not locate further relevant passages using this method.

12 As far as previous scholarship on the *protective accessories* is concerned, I would send interested readers first of all to Bentor 1996, 298–299 and 310–311. The binding elements as well as the types of bindings are treated in Helman-Ważny 2014, 52–75. For recent Tibetan-language literature, see Padma bkra shis 2013, 32–65, this being a chapter on the *binding items* (*sgril chas*). Another recently published book proved especially useful for myself, and I much recommend it, is Gyurme Dorje's translation of Jamgön Kongtrul (1813–1899 CE) (Dorje 2012, 245–272), the section subtitled 'Representations of Buddha Speech'. On the collections of Buddha-speech recep-

The Bon passage is extracted from the very end of the text entitled simply *Volume (Gleg[s] bam)*, because it is devoted to the consecration of Buddha-speech receptacles (*gsung rten*). After all, the chief icon of enlightened speech acts is the Volume complete in all its parts. It is part of a trilogy of texts for consecrating receptacles of Body, Speech and Mind.¹³ It has some difficulties even if I could consult with a few experts. James Canary is a professional bookbinder, preservationist and Tibetanist with long-cultivated interests in Tibetan bookbinding and papermaking practices, while Dagkar Namgyal Nyima is a former Bonpo monk and Geshé currently working in Bonn. The Geshé very kindly went over the points I was having difficulties with via Skype on the first day of the holiday of Losar. Although I noticed this passage a few decades ago, many of the technical terms, terms for the parts of the sacred Volume in particular, eluded my understanding. Today, with the expert help just mentioned, I can feel confident of making a reasonably acceptable translation.



spyan phyé ba'i rtin [~rten] la / cis kyang mi tshugs pa'i stobs chen po lnga ston ste / snying rje

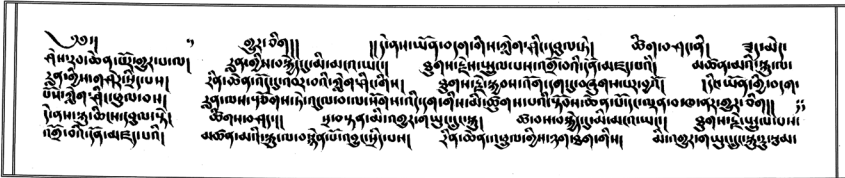
Here we show the five great strengths by which nothing at all can bring harm to the consecrated ('eye opened') receptacle.

tacles kept at Reting Monastery, many of them connected with Atiśa and his immediate disciples, see Iuchi 2016, 44–46, the section subtitled 'Sacred Objects of Speech'. For a study of books as sacred icons, see Diemberger 2012 in general and p. 11 specifically for mention of the items used in binding them.

¹³ I hesitate to insist that the main passage we will study actually dates to the 1017 rediscoveries because it occurs at the very end of the title after the excavator's colophon was already given, and it comes immediately before a copyist colophon that ought to date three generations later, perhaps already into the twelfth century (see the comments in Changngoba 2003, 139–140). For a translation of the excavator's colophon, evidently composed by his immediate disciple Zhu yas, see Martin 2001, 51–52.

time there has never been anything produced by the singular drop,¹⁵ it is still possible that they may be moved by the signs of the Body ‘with signs’ that serves the purposes of sentient beings with compassionate emanations, so they must be dissolved into the continuum of the singular drop. Here and now the patron says, ‘By performing the alignment, may [the book] be one that is possessed of the great power of invincibility that prevents it from being moved by air and so forth’.

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gyur cig /// de nas yon bdag gis kleg shing dbul te / tshig bshad ni / zad med shes rab chen por gyur pa la / rlan gyis bskyed du mi mnga' yang / thugs rjes sprul pas 'gro ba'i don mdzad pa'i / mtshan ma'i sku la rlan gyis gsher srid pas / rin chen 'od du 'bar ba'i kleg shing gis / thugs rje skyabs 'og dag du bzhugs par bya'o // ding yon gyi bdag pos kleg shing phul bas / rlan las rtsogs te 'dul ba la sogs 'di dag gis mi tshugs pa'i stobs chen po dang ldan pa kha nar gyur cig /// de nas sku chings dbul ste / tshigs bshad // sra bstan [-brtan] mi 'gyur g.yung drung sku / tsha bas bskyed du mi mnga' yang / thugs rje sprul pas 'gro ba'i don mdzad pa'i / mtshan ma'i sku la bsnyen po 'byung srid pas / rin chen 'phrul gyi nyag thag gis / mi 'gyur g.yung drung sku ru sbam

Then the patron offers the bookboards. The verses are:

In something that forms a great inexhaustible insight
there is no way that moisture can arise.

Yet in the Buddhabodies *with marks* that act for the benefit
of animate beings with compassionate emanations
it is possible that there could be wetness from moisture.

With bookboards blazing with the light of precious substances

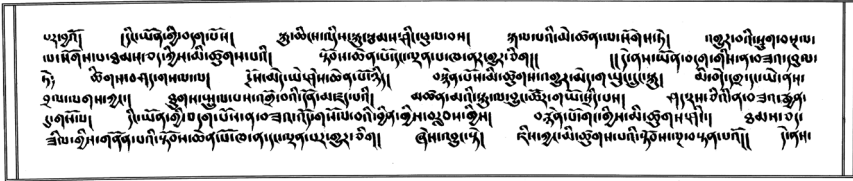
book perfectly align with each other so that not a single one sticks out, by making a shuffling motion with the hands and tapping the whole book on the table. For simplicity's sake, I translate this as 'neatly aligning' (the pages). Because the pages have edges that are deliberately roughened, they tend to cling together so that single pages are less likely to be lifted up and scattered by the wind. See below.

15 *Singular drop* is a literalistic translation of *thig le nyag gcig*, a Bon philosophical concept applied to the ultimate reality that is resolutely unitary such that nothing can ever actually be taken from or added to it. This is a central theme of the book translated in Klein and Wangyal 2006 where they in fact translate *thig le nyag gcig* as *unbounded wholeness*. As Namgyal Nyima pointed out, *thig le* can also bear the concept of *zero*.

[the book] is to dwell beneath the protection of compassion.
Here and now as the patron offers the bookboards, he says,
'May [this book] be one that is possessed of the great power of invincibility
from softening and so on from such things as moisture'.

Then is the offering of the binding strap. The verses:

In solid, stable unchanging *yungdrung* Body
there is no way that heat can arise,
yet in the Buddhbody *with marks* that act for the benefit
of animate beings with compassionate emanations it is possible.
So one must bind it up with the unchanging *yungdrung*
using the amazing guy rope (*nyag thag*) of precious substances.

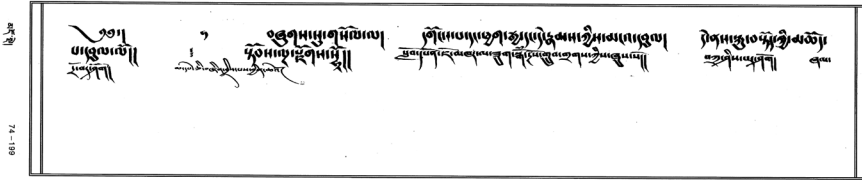


par bya'o // ding yon gyi bdag pos / sku chings 'dis sku sbams shing phul bas / skal pa'i me
tshan la sogs te / 'gyur ba'i sdrug bsngal la sogs pa thams cad kyis mi tshugs pa'i / stobs chen
po dang ldan pa kha nar gyur cig // // de nas yon bdag gis na bza' dbul te / tshigs bshad gsal
la / rngos med ye shes chen po nyid / bsnyen pos mi tshugs 'gyur med g.yung drung sku /
mi bde dgra dang ye nas bral lags kyang / thugs sprul pas 'gro ba'i don mdzad pa'i / mtshan
ma' sku la byung tshor g.yo srid pas / shad ras ci'i na bza' rgyan du gsol / ding yon gyi bdag
pos na bza' 'od gsol ba'i byin gyis brlabs gyis / brnyen po gang gis mi tshugs shing / thams
cad zil gyis gnon pa'i stobs chen po kha na dang ldan par gyur cig / zhes 'byung ste / jis
kyang mi tshugs pa'i stobs lnga bstan pa'o // de nas

Here and now the patron says, 'After binding it up with this binding strap and making an
offering of it,
may it be one that possesses the great power of invincibility
that is not harmed by anything, not by the suffering of change,
including the heat of the eon-ending fire'.
Then the patron offers the clothing,¹⁶
'In the great full knowledge without dimensions,
the unchanging *yungdrung* body imperious to harm,

16 *Na bza'* is a more honorific or literary term for what is more commonly known in modern Tibetan as *dpe thum* ('book wrapper') or *dpe ras* ('book cloth'), according to Namgyal Nyima.

there can hardly be any discomfort or opponents, yet in the body *with marks* that benefits beings through compassionate emanations, there may be commotions of “sensing” (*byung tshor*), so it may be ornamented by clothing of all kinds of soft combed fabrics’ (Just a guess!), Here and now the patron says, ‘By the blessing of putting on light as clothing, may it be without any injury and have the great strength that outshines all’. This has been the exposition on the five strengths by which nothing at all can bring harm.



bzhugs su gsol la / dgongs pa dang phyag rgya dang de rnam kyis mnga’ dbul / de nas sku bstod kyi mchod pa dbul lo // stobs lnga rdzogs s.hô // [small letters:] slob dpon jo mkhar la zug sgom rngos grub grags [-dngos grub grags] kyis zhus so // bkra shis par shog / zhal dro bar shog / ma dpe ci bzhin bris pas byin che’o /

Then request the divine figure to abide, perform the royal honours with contemplations, *mudrās* and those things [we have mentioned]. Then offer the offering of praise. This ends the five strengths. It was requested by Zug sgom Rngos grub grags in the presence of the teacher Jo mkhar. May it be auspicious! May it be consecrated (*zhal dro ba*). Being copied exactly from the mother copy, it bears great blessings.¹⁷

There are quite a number of things in this passage that beg for further study and interpretation.¹⁸ I do not venture an explanation of the shockingly unheard-of expression ‘pitiless bodhisattvas’, since this would require consultation with Bonpo lamas in order to avoid indulging in personal speculations. Even the syntax

¹⁷ Jo mkhar was grandson of Zhu yas Legs po, so this places us well into the twelfth century. See Lhagyal 2000, 454, where it says he later became known as Zhu sgom ’Khrul zhig, the first of two figures known by that name. Jo mkhar was a brother of the previously mentioned Jo thog. The *zhal dro ba* is just an unusual spelling for *zhal sro ba*. The two spellings are likely to be pronounced identically.

¹⁸ For example the intriguing fact that the verses for the binding strap contained in the manuals of Smṛtijñānakīrti and Grags pa rgyal mtshan share with the verse for the wrapping cloth in the Bon text the infrequent term *ye shes chen po*. Since apart from the (after all culturally ubiquitous) references to comfort and the sense of touch, and of course the names for some of the binding elements, we find no other specific correspondences in wording between the Bon and Chos sources that could suggest direct borrowing.

here is problematic, and the reading therefore unsure for still other reasons. Still, I take it as an alternative way of speaking about the five ‘accessories’ that are the main subject that follows, as they must militantly defend the book from the elements. We will largely limit ourselves to a discussion of what those five objects are.

- [1] The first item is the one I was initially most confused about. The simple and most surely correct conclusion is that *zhal bsum*¹⁹ refers to a bag or pouch with a closed mouth, perhaps one closed with a drawstring. Even if no elemental opposition is directly named here, since it protects from *dust* (and the karmic propensities symbolized by dust), the element in question must be *earth*.
- [2] The second item, strangely enough, is not an object but an action, named by a term that is also problematic. Usual meanings of *tshags* include sieves, sifters and stencils. So my translation as ‘neatly aligning’ is based on the advice of Namgyal Nyima, who says it refers to the practice of keeping all the pages neatly and evenly aligned with each other by tapping the bundle with the hands or on top of a flat surface. But why does this help against damage by air (or wind)? It is in fact part of Tibetan bookmaking art to roughen the edges of the loose leaves so that they tend to adhere with neighbouring pages. If the pages are stacked neatly, this helps the pages to stay in place when the wind is blowing.²⁰
- [3] It had never occurred to me that bookboards could provide defense against moisture damage until I asked the Tibetan book preservation specialist James

19 That it is a nominal, referring to an object, is clear on its first usage, where the patron performs the act of inserting the book into the *zhal [b]sum* (I take the past tense form to be more correct in this instance). Namgyal Nyima told me that the modern non-honorific form of this, *kha bsum* means a sack with its open end closed up, while the verb *[b]sum* itself means precisely the scrunching together of the open end of a bag or bag-like object (whether or not any type of fastener is used). I have never previously encountered the use of bags as a binding element, so I cannot say if this is a prescription that was ever followed, or if it may have fallen out of usage over the centuries. Note the word *dras* (~*gras*?) translated as *covers* in some verses of ‘Phags pa translated in Schaeffer 2009, 131: ‘Groups of artisans skilled in a variety of arts, / Covers and book boards, book straps, and wraps / Made complete and beautiful / To perfect the human mind.’ Note in the same book more references to the bookbinding elements on pp. 27, 30, and 133.

20 As Agnieszka Helman-Ważny pointed out to me in her editorial review, the roughened fibers may act as a filter or screen to discourage the entry of dust and insect pests. This understanding would allow us to take more seriously the ‘sieve’ and ‘filter’ meanings of the Tibetan word *tshags*. The painting of these same rough edges with colors, too, could have been done with the motive of repelling insects, as we find in Islamic bookmaking practices of recent centuries. See Couvrat Desvergues 2014.

Canary about it. I now wonder how I could have missed this before, but actually, the top board protects the pages from drips or precipitation from above, while the bottom board protects the pages from water that might pool on the surface below. For preservation purposes it is also important that pages, once moistened, should dry out quickly before mould has a chance to develop, which could explain why Tibetan books are not normally boxed, but left open on the sides.

- [4] Likewise I had never imagined that the bookstrap could preserve the written material in case of fire. Still, as James Canary informed me, if the pages are tightly strapped together and compressed, without any spaces left between them, it is entirely possible for books to escape a fire with nothing but singed edges, leaving the written area intact. Of course if the surrounding heat is too intense and long lasting, only a miracle can save them.
- [5] Finally, the clothing. Here again, no element is named, although the only one among the five elements not previously assigned would be the ether or space element. What we do find in the verses is an emphasis on the sense of touch. And elsewhere we do find cloth associated with, or even symbolic of, the sense of touch.²¹ However, the element most likely to be associated with touch is earth, and not space, or so it seems to me from what little I know.

Now I thought it is interesting to know that we could find four other relevant and roughly contemporary passages in consecration manuals that do not belong to Bon. Dating to mid-eleventh century is the first of them, one by Atiśa. I could make use of an unpublished draft translation made almost 30 years ago by Yael Bentor in consultation with two Tibetan Lamas. The work as a whole describes consecration in general terms, but this passage is more specific, telling us what is special about the consecration of sacred Volumes. This passage reads, according to my present understanding:

²¹ Beer 1999, 194 and 202: ‘Akshobhya represents consciousness as the faculty of touch, symbolised by the silk cloth’. In fact, in the consecration manuals of both *Smṛtijñānakīrti* and *Grags pa rgyal mtshan* – the latter is largely based on the former – the clothing offered to the book is also associated with the sense of touch and comfort. See Bentor 1996, 282, 297, 305 and 310. For the association of touch with the earth element in thirteenth-century Europe, see Mütterich 1955. For a fascinating discussion of the four (or five or six) element cosmology shared with Empedocles and its use in meditation practices of the Pāli Buddhist sources, see Anālayo 2020. To his article much could be added about element meditations in use within Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and these ought to be considered in any discussion of Buddhist physics and, more generally, ideas about materiality.

Books

As for the consecration of books, there are nine things [special for their consecration]:

1. Blessing such expressions of meaning as *birthless* and *deathless*.
2. Expressions of words.
3. Seed syllables.
4. Scriptures.
5. Blessing as the forty ancillary immeasurables.
6. Offering throne. 6. Binding boards.²²
7. Binding straps.
8. Cloth cover.
9. The seven levels of seals.²³

[For the consecration, generate the divine forms of] Prajñāpāramitā,
Great Mother, Sūtra section, Vinaya, Great Bodhi,
Tantra section, Vajradharma and so on.

If you know the appropriate ritual and divine form (*yi dam*) for these,
perform the specific one. If not, do the general ritual, or,
imagine the two truths in the forms of letters.

Of course, only 6a through 9, totaling five items, correspond to the book accessories. As for no. 9, the Tibetan Lamas insisted it meant ‘The seven punctuation marks’ without offering further information. At the time I found their explanation not at all intelligible. Much later on I was able to recognize in this phrase a clear reference to the ‘seven levels of seals’ applied to the original Volume of the Prajñāpāramitā (and notice that Prajñāpāramitā is mentioned immediately

22 How the nine items ought to be numbered isn’t sure, so for this reason the number ‘six’ was used twice by the translator. I am guessing that the throne and binding boards could be regarded as a single object. The meaning of the phrase ‘forty ancillary immeasurables’ is not clarified.

23 The phrase appears as *rgya rim pa bdun*, a clear echo of the Sūtra text. Conze (1968, 170–171), famously found the book sealed with seven seals in the Buddhist scripture uncannily similar to the one found in the Book of Revelations, and this is true enough. In the 8,000 Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, the sacred volume was ‘sealed with seven layers of seals’ (*rgya rim pa bdun gyis btab bo*). There is a Tibetan interpretation, found in a few dictionaries, of the seven seals as seven things that prevent texts from getting disturbed or mixed up. These start with the punctuation marks called *tshag* and *shad*, and end up with the label on the outside of the volume. There are yet other understandings of the *seven seals* that developed in the Zhijé and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism. This deserves a separate study since there is much to say about it. For now I would just add that I believe the connection of the seven seals with the Volume of the Prajñāpāramitā is one Atiśa very surely knew, while at the same time it may be too much to assume that an Indian like him would have had in mind such things as the *tshag* punctuation mark and the *bam po* divisions of manuscripts, as these were not known in India.

afterwards). Only recently I found out about what set of seven things the Lamas must have had in mind: it is clear that items 6 through 8 do correspond exactly to items in the Bon passage.

The other passage, by Grags pa rgyal mtshan, dates to the second half of the twelfth century, and is interesting because like the Bon text it devotes a verse to each of the accessories. Like Atiśa, and unlike the Bon text, it includes a *throne*, and that means a bookstand or *lectern*. It is very interesting that a source composed by an Indian underlies this passage and largely explains it, a Tanjur work by Smṛtijñānakīrti (fl. late tenth century CE).²⁴ Here is the passage by Grags pa rgyal mtshan:

Then make the enthronement offerings that are especially for books.
Here is the outline:

A throne, clothing, bookboards, and book strap.

First offer a throne.

‘This lion throne made of plentiful precious substances,
Covered with an assortment of captivating clothes,
By offering it to the supreme scripture, free of mental elaborations,
May beings find their seats on the *vajra* throne [of enlightenment].
Oṃ vajrāsana Āḥ Hūṃ Svāhā.’

Offer clothing.

‘This precious fine garment varicolored as a rainbow,
When touched is a cause of bliss,
I offer for purifying my mind,
May all be adorned with the best garment of patience.
Oṃ vajra-vastra Āḥ Hūṃ Svāhā.’

Offer the two bookboards.

‘Though the holy *dharmā* of the two becoming one is completely devoid of grasping,
By offering a cover, an omen like the sun and the moon,
Interconnected method and wisdom,
May people attain the union of all dualities.
Oṃ vajra-prajñā-upāya-advaya Āḥ Hūṃ Svāhā.’

²⁴ I could learn about the parallel by performing a search at TBRC (www.tbrc.org). The passage in question appears in a consecration work by Smṛtijñānakīrti 1994–2008, 34–35.

Then offer a book strap.

‘Even though it has been greatly expanded through multiplicity of elaborations,
The great enlightened wisdom (*ye shes chen po*) has one taste,
Likewise by offering the best article that transforms the book into a single entity,
May beings realize the great enlightened wisdom.
Oṃ vajra-pustaka-bandhāya Āḥ Hūṃ Svāhā.’

These are enthronement offerings for books.²⁵

These verses have some remarkable things in common, not least of all the use of a quite infrequent phrase here translated as ‘great enlightened wisdom’ (*ye shes chen po*), found in both. In the one it is used in the verse for the clothing, and in the other in the verse for the book strap.

When we compare all three pre-Mongol period examples, we see that the earliest, the Bon example, has two anomalous items, while Atiśa has one anomalous item. The Bon example lacks the throne of the other two examples.

Table 1: A chart for comparing the lists of binding elements.

Great Shen	Atiśa	Grags pa rgyal mtshan and Smṛtijñānakīrti
1. Bag (earth?)*	6a. Throne.	1. Throne.
2. Pages aligned (air).*	6b. Bookboards.	2. Clothing.
3. Bookboards (water).	7. Bookstrap.	3. Bookboards.
4. Bookstrap (fire).	8. Clothing.	4. Bookstrap.
5. Clothing.	9. Seven Seals.*	

For the time being I just call attention to these differences without coming to conclusions why they are there. I assume all three are in the order in which they would be offered to the book, and so must correspond to the order in which they would ordinarily be used even outside the ritual context. With this in mind, only the last one by Grags pa rgyal mtshan follows what I would regard as the originally correct order. The bookboards need to be added after the pages are wrapped in the cloth. If the cloth goes outside the bookboards then the water-repelling function of the bookboards will be in large degree lost. None of them mention

²⁵ Grags pa rgyal mtshan 1968, the translation by Bentor 2015, 158–161, with only inconsequential emendations and omitting the footnotes.

another book element that ought to be mentioned, which is the label flap extending out of the small end of the book, sometimes called the *gdong bkra* or *gdong dar*, unless Atiśa intended it to be one of the ‘seven levels of seals’, which seems doubtful. Is it possible the label flap was as yet unknown?²⁶

I think there are a few things of significance that we might say about what this evidence does tell us. It tells us that for at least the last thousand years (at the time of writing, 2017, it was exactly one millennium since the discovery of the texts), Bon had a cult of the book that was very similar to that found in the other schools. In all three cases (but especially clear in the Bon and Sakya examples), the accessories were the most important offerings given to books in the enthronement (*mnga’ dbul*) rite that forms a significant part of the larger consecration ritual. But one obvious aspect of all this stands out with abundant clarity in the Bon sources that can scarcely be seen in the others. The Great Shen’s text shows an awareness of the rationales for the use of these accessories. It shows that Bonpos in particular, as probably Tibetans in general, were in fact concerned about book preservation a thousand years ago.

Deserving of special comment, the reasons behind the strange expression for the protective binding accessories, ‘pitiless bodhisattvas’, I predict will still be pondered by literary critics far into the future. Is it irony, paradox, hyperbolic overstatement? Or is it plainly blunt prose telling us just how awful a bodhisattva can be? In the mean time we might muse about somehow comparable views of the cat as book protector that we find not in Tibet but in Chinese Buddhist monasteries, explored in an amusing unpublished essay by Hua Kaiqi.²⁷ The cat’s cruelty to rodents that might damage the scriptures did not go unnoticed by the monks. Noticeably absent from the classical Tibetan texts we used here is mention of a major source of book loss that seems to have been the greatest concern in China: warfare and the deliberate destruction and looting that go with it. The use of insect-repelling and insecticidal materials in books, another subject that goes unnoticed in them, would seem to evoke ethical concerns about killing similar to those that we find in Chinese sources about the cat.²⁸

²⁶ This question seems to be answered to some degree in Padma bkra shis 2013, 53, which says that in earlier centuries the title flap was not as it is today a separate object, but formed an integral part of the title page.

²⁷ Hua Kaiqi, ‘Cats and Chinese Buddhism’, an unpublished draft courtesy of the author dated 19 February 2020.

²⁸ On the use of insecticidal substances in the making of Tibetan paper, see Helman-Ważny 2014, 208–209. On some pre-modern Indian measures against book damage, particularly damage by insects, see Couvrat Desvergnès 2014 and literature cited there. On Chinese motives and meth-

So finally here is a thing or two that can be placed on the table setting Bon apart from general Tibetan book culture: the explicit conservation aims, as well as a somewhat different set of book accessories. If we had time I would set these special aspects in a wider context that might temper this picture of specialness, since I believe Bon and Chos ('Tibetan Buddhism') overall are quite similar in their cults of the book, with roots in the Prajñāpāramitā and *Khams brgyad* sections of their respective scriptural canons, and with their associated, seemingly kabbalistic letter mysticisms. I believe this kind of letter mysticism is historically grounded in prayer and devotion directed toward the holy book. When books achieve holy icon status, are enshrined as objects of veneration, every element that goes into their making is elevated along with them. With their exceptional emphasis on letters, papermaking and protective coverings, the Bon consecration manuals make these micro-level consecrations explicit as an integral part of the consecrating process. The very limited area that we've chosen to consider in this essay can only give some hints to those larger complexes of ritual-devotional thinking within which the holy book has been enmeshed.²⁹ Knowing these ways of thinking is of primary importance if we are to achieve any worthwhile understanding of the physical book or its material aspects.

In closing, I accept the risk of naively informing fully enlightened ones about something very elementary: one of the primary aims of the ritual of consecration is to preserve the sacred object, not just as a physical object, but as a focus of *continuing* devotion. As one of the consecration works of Phag mo gru pa says,

May this image abide for more than an eon,
for more than a hundred eons,
and be protected by all divinities from earth,
from water, from fire and from air.³⁰

At the same time, the elements that make up our worlds and our bodies from the beginning can prove destructive in the end. As Smṛtijñānakīrti says in his consecration text:

The master and the patron both
hold on to the seating throne of the image,

ods of book preservation, see for example Wang 1989, especially p. 27 and sources it mentions.

²⁹ An attempt is made to locate these wider complexes within the history of Indian Buddhist usages of the alphabet in Martin 2007.

³⁰ Phag mo gru pa (1507), I 221 verso line 4: *gang 'di sku gzugs bskal pa 'am / bskal pa brgya bas lhag gnas shing // sa dang chu dang me dang ni / rlung las lha mams kun gyis srungs.*

'May you, the Blessed One, remain here
 serving the needs of all sentient beings
 until the destruction of the eon
 by water, fire and wind.'³¹

In their efforts to conserve the holy book, I would say that the motive was not to preserve the *status quo* so much as thinking ahead to avert disaster or, failing that, at least to mitigate the inevitable. In this, at least, they demonstrated much practicality and concern for the material elements and their destructive potentials, even as those elements were being sanctified. The idea that thousand-year-old traditional methods could reveal to our post-modern world such a degree of self-consciously practiced wisdom is liable to be a source of wonder for our more hidebound modernists.

Acknowledgements

This essay is dedicated to the memory of the late Abbot of Menri Monastery (Sman ri Khri 'dzin), Sangyé Tenzin Jongdong (1927–2017). His comments on the subject of consecration back in 1989, occasioned by Yael Bentor's research on the subject, may be regarded as the ultimate cause of this essay. For last-minute help crucial for my understanding of the subject matter, I must thank James Canary (Bloomington) and Dagkar Namgyal Nyima (Bonn). I feel I should excuse myself for my too-frequent references to my own publications. This is a strategy to conserve space and energy by reducing the number of bibliographical references. If these have already been supplied previously in the works cited, I feel no need to repeat them. I am conscious I have neglected the general Indic consecration literature, and even the Indian Buddhist texts are considered only if they are directly contingent to the Tibetan texts that form the main focus of interest here. An important writing on Indian Buddhist consecration I would like to recommend is Mori Masa-

31 Smṛtijñānakīrti (1994–2008), 37: *slob dpon dang ni yon bdag gis // sku yi gdan khri nas bzung nas // ji srid sa chu me dang ni // rlung gi bskal par 'jig par du // sems can kun gyi don gyi phyir // bcom ldan khyod ni bzhugs par mdzod*. Compare Bentor 1996, 317 (and again on p. 320): '...and particularly, as long as these receptacles of Body, Speech and Mind are not destroyed by the harm of earth, water, fire and wind, acting immeasurably for the sake of sentient beings, may you firmly remain.' These lines are repeated in expanded form in the consecration work by Gling ras pa (1128–1188 CE), *Rab gnas kyi cho ga*, ed. 1985, 319 (I tacitly resolve abbreviated spellings): *de nas slob dpon dang yon bdag gnyis ka'i sku'i gdan khri nas bzung nas / me tog gi phring ba [-phreng ba] phul te gsol ba btab la / ji srid me dang chu dang ni / rlung gi skal pas 'jigs bar du / yon bdag bsod nams spel ba dang / sems can kun gyi don gyi phyir / ... de bzhin 'dir yang bzhugs su gsol*. This work by Gling ras pa is another fairly long consecration manual of the pre-Mongol era that should have been given more attention.

hide 2005. For a recent book on the Indian Buddhist cult of the sacred Volume, see Kim 2013.

Abbreviation

OTDO = Old Tibetan Documents Online, <<https://otdo.aa-ken.jp/>> (accessed on 29 September 2022).

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Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Charles Ramble

Preliminary Remarks on the Drangsong Collection of Bon Manuscripts in Mustang, Nepal

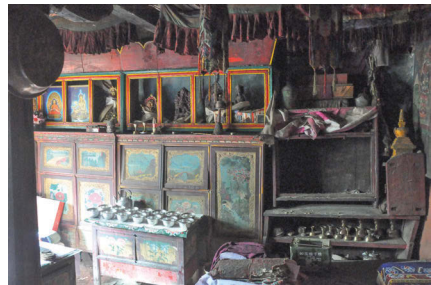
Abstract: This study presents preliminary observations of a collection of manuscripts from a private household in the town of Lo Monthang, in Mustang, Nepal. The manuscripts, which were used by generations of royal priests belonging to a family named Drangsong, contain for the most part ritual texts for the protection and prosperity of the kingdom of Mustang and its subjects. The collection of 280 manuscripts, assembled from different parts of Tibet and the Himalaya over six centuries, was subjected to codicological and text-historical research. The shuffled folios were first sorted into distinct texts that were numbered and photographed. Further analyses were then undertaken on the basis of images and notes taken *in situ*, as well as loose pieces of paper from the most damaged leaves identified within individual volumes. Knowledge of the materials and ritual practices involved in the creation of physical objects have been applied to better understand the textual, material and social aspects of this unknown, unique and endangered collection.

1 Background to the collection and scope of research

The aim of this research is to carry out a codicological and text-historical study of a unique collection of manuscripts belonging to the Bon religion of Tibet. The value of this collection is twofold: first, the collection was assembled from different parts of Tibet and the Himalaya over six centuries, and offers a rich body of material which can be retrieved by codicological analyses that contribute to our understanding of book and papermaking traditions in the region, as well as social aspects of Tibetan manuscript production; and secondly, in terms of its content, it offers a window onto some of the kinds of religious activities that were considered to be important for the rulers and their subjects in a Tibetan kingdom: these manuscripts were used in rituals for the protection and prosperity of the kingdom of Mustang, its people and members of royal lineage. Knowledge of the materials and ritual practices involved in the creation of physical objects enable us to

understand the interaction between religion, patronage and political authority in Tibetan society. The findings provide a historical background for the meaning of these books as both sacred and material entities.

The Drangsong collection of manuscripts is named after the family in whose house it is kept in the vicinity of the King's Palace in the town of Lo Monthang, the capital of the former kingdom of Lo (Mustang), in Nepal (Figs 1a and 1b). At present we have no conclusive documentation about the origins of the family, although members of later generations do appear in literature from a later period – notably, in the biography of a Bonpo monk from East Tibet who spent many years in Mustang and Dolpo (Fig. 2).



Figs 1a and 1b: The house where the Drangsong collection is stored, in Lo Monthang, to the left, and the place in the house where books are kept to the right.

According to an oral account given by the present occupant of the house, named Wangdü, the house came to be occupied in the mid-fifteenth century, during the reign of the second king, Agön Zangpo.¹ It is said that the progenitors of the Drangsong lineage in Lo Monthang were Bonpo lamas whom Agön Zangpo invited to occupy the house and to act as his domestic chaplains (*bla mchod*). It was this king who built the walled city with the palace and the two main temples, Thubchen and Jampa Lhaxhang, and according to the oral account, he had the adjacent land cultivated and invited people from the surrounding settlements to take up residence in the city. Those who accepted this invitation were allocated certain corvée duties: a number of households were required to plough and sow the king's fields, and three households had the task of harvesting them. These duties are said to have continued until they were abolished in the late 1950s. Twenty minutes' walk to the west of the city is a hill, now used as a cemetery, that

¹ For the history of Mustang in the fifteenth century see: Jackson 1976, 1978 and 1984; Vitali 2012.

bears the traces of extensive settlement, including portions of a perimeter wall and a large stupa. This is Jaragang, a former Bonpo community. A priestly family of that name continues to flourish in Lubrak, the only remaining Bonpo village in Mustang, situated to the south of the Muktinath Valley.²

The manuscripts have not been used since the priestly line ended in the 1950s or 60s. Successive generations of the lineage continued to serve the royal family until around 1960, when the last male member of the line, Pema Trinle, died, leaving no male heir. His priestly duties were assumed by a Buddhist astrologer generally remembered by his title *rtsis pa* ('astrologer'). Following his death, the role of chaplain passed to a medical practitioner of noble family named Trashi Chözang, who died in the 1990s, and was succeeded by his two sons, the layman Gyatso and the monk Tenzin. The kings of Mustang were Buddhists who were loyal supporters of the Sakyapa school of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the six centuries of their reign; however, the family were originally adherents of the Bon religion, and it is because of this archaic legacy that all the domestic and personal rituals of the royal family were derived from Bon and performed by hereditary Bon lamas.

The collection, consisting of some 280 different items with a total of 2,900 folios, cards, or individual sheets of paper, represents the ritual repertoire of the priests of the kings of Mustang.³ The first part of the work on this collection, which consisted of sorting shuffled folios into distinct texts, then numbering and photographing them, was performed in the field. For both the content and general physical appearance of the items, a table was drawn up comprising eleven columns: 1. Text number; 2. Text title (where present) in Wylie transliteration; 3. A brief summary of the item's contents; 4. Number of folios; 5. Format; 6. Size; 7. Type of paper based on papermaking technology and sieve print; 8. Number of paper layers; 9. Thickness of paper; 10. Surface treatment; 11. Sampling location (if precisely known).

Further analysis was subsequently carried out on the basis of the photographic documentation and paper micro-samples were taken *in situ*. The next step, which is now ongoing, is to create a catalogue with more detailed information about the content of each text.⁴ Each entry contains six subheadings: 1. Item number and filenames of the corresponding photographs; 2. Title in Tibetan and

² For an ethnographic and historical account of Lubrak, see Ramble 1984.

³ The manuscripts are being digitized and gradually added to our project website: 'Mustang Manuscripts: Documentation and Preservation' <http://mustang.uw.edu.pl/?page_id=9920&lang=en> (accessed on 8 Feb. 2021).

⁴ This part of the work is being done by Charles Ramble and Naljor Tsering, a doctoral student at the École pratique des Hautes Études in Paris.

transliteration; 3. Translation of title; 4. Transcription of colophon(s); 5. Translation of colophon(s); and 6. Remarks.

At the same time, on the basis of images and notes taken *in situ*, as well as the loose pieces of paper from the most damaged leaves identified within individual volumes, features such as format, layout and type of illustrations are being described, and manuscripts are grouped according to these characteristics. Detailed studies and laboratory analyses of paper samples are now being carried out in collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research at the University of Warsaw, using integrated methods such as microscopic fibre analysis, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), polynomial texture maps (RTI / PTM), and X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF).⁵

2 What we can learn from the textual content

Not all the items have colophons, but those that do sometimes have several: a main colophon at the end and other, usually briefer, entries at the end of certain sections of the texts. At the time of writing this article, a full list of catalogue entries has been drawn up and all the titles and colophons have been entered. Altogether there are over 300 colophons – more than the number of items in the collection. The translation and analysis of this material is currently in progress.⁶ Approximately a quarter of the total number have already been translated, making it possible to extract valuable information from these sources. ‘A brief fumigation ritual for the protective divinities of Bon’ (manuscript archived as vol. 4) may serve as an illustration of our descriptive method (Table 1).

Table 1: Example of table used to record basic data for each item in the collection.

1. Text number	V004
2. Text title (where present) in Tibetan	བོན་སྐྱོང་བསང་འདུས་[བསྐྱུས]།

⁵ The research on paper, ink and paints is being carried out by Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Barbara Wagner, with the assistance of Agata Szubartowska and Alicja Świącicka, students at the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Warsaw.

⁶ Items are progressively added to our project web site: ‘Mustang Manuscripts: Documentation and Preservation’ <http://mustang.uw.edu.pl/?page_id=7455&lang=en> (accessed on 8 Feb. 2021).

Table 1 (continued)

3. Text title (where present) in Wylie transliteration	<i>Bon skyong bsang 'dus [bsdus]/</i>
4. A brief summary of the item's contents	A collection of fumigation ritual texts
5. Number of folios	38 folios, bound at left, including cover
6. Item number and filenames of the corresponding photographs	V004_IMG_1076-1115
7. Translation of title	A brief fumigation ritual for the protective divinities of Bon.
8. Transcription of colophon	<i>Bon skyangs [skyong] bsang 'dus rdzogs so// dmu rgyal rnal 'byor nyi ma ming can gyis mdzad pa'o// bkra shis/</i>
9. Translation of colophon	Here ends the collection of fumigation texts for the protectors of Bon. This was composed by the one named dMu rgyal rNal 'byor nyi ma. Virtue.
10. Remarks	dMu rgyal rNal 'byor nyi ma is another name of the well-known scholar gShen Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (fourteenth century), from the gShen lineage in Central Tibet. He founded Ri rgyal Khri brtan nor bu rtse monastery in Tsang in 1360, when he was 30 years old.

For now, a few general observations based on translations of colophons may be made by way of preliminary conclusions:

- The texts that make up the collection were composed by authors in numerous locations, extending from Dolpo in the west to Gyalrong (Sichuan) in the east, over a period ranging from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries.
- In addition to the identity of the authors and the places in which they composed these texts, certain colophons add information about the scribe who made the particular copy, the location in which the copy was made, and the circumstances in which this took place.
- In several cases, the colophon provides the name of the copyist's master, sometimes a well-known figure, and the place of writing, thereby providing clues as to the date of writing and the location in which the paper and other materials may have been produced.
- Even at this preliminary stage of analysis a picture is emerging of a very wide network of Bonpo lamas extending over a vast territory and spanning many centuries. The most important Bon centres for Mustang in terms of geographical proximity were those in Dolpo, where members of the Drangsong lineage (whose actual name was Awa, Tib. 'A pha) had links with lamas from different locations in Pungmo, Samling and other places, belonging to several eminent priestly clans such as Yangal, Tretön and Ranag.

- The colophon of one text even provides information about the earliest members of the Drangsong family to be relevant to the kingdom of Lo. Oral tradition has it that the association between the lineage and the royal family began in the time of the second king, Agön Pal. However, the colophon of one text states that it was composed by a certain ‘Knowledge-holder of the Awa family named Khyimar’, who is described as being a contemporary of the first king, Amepal (see Fig. 2). The original text is not available but was copied at some unspecified point because – according to the copyist – the original had become blackened and unreadable.



Fig. 2: Text of a ritual for the propitiation of local divinities composed by Rigdzin Awa Khyimar, the royal chaplain during the time of the first king, Amepal (manuscript archived as Drangsong vol. 12). This text is a copy that was made by Drangsong Yungdrung because the original had become blackened and difficult to read.

3 Highlights of the Drangsong manuscripts: format, layout, and illustrations

The items in the collection range in size from a longbook of 566 folios down to single sheets of paper, such as protective amulets or short series of sacred formulae (mantras). This variety of formats and sizes can be explained by the specific functions of the particular manuscripts and the way in which they were used, the long period of time over which they were created, and the wide geographical range of their provenance.

The batches of manuscripts were wrapped together in cloth as mini-collections, rather than each one being protected by its own particular wrapping (*dpe*

ras). The original covers were not preserved. The content of these mini-collections wrapped together may point to the ownership or theme of particular sets of texts.

The *dpe cha*, consisting of rectangular unbound leaves, certainly became the dominant book format in Tibetan culture, and it is also the main format we found in the Drangsong collection (Figs 3–7).⁷ We counted 280 texts in loose-leaf format. They vary in size, layout and materials. Most common are manuscripts measuring 7–10 × 30–38 cm, which is smaller than the usual Tibetan manuscripts of *pothi* format, especially those containing canonical works.

Layout is dependent on the choice of format. Thus, in our sample – due to the smaller size of folios – the number of text lines was most often five or six, which is less than what is usual in large canonical manuscripts. The loose-leaf format tends to offset the text with large marked-off margins, particularly on the right and left sides, or sometimes by a full frame. Such full frames can be decorated in various ways. There is a group of manuscripts with thick-coloured frames, especially on title pages, as it is the case of manuscript no. 229 (Fig. 3). There is a series of manuscripts with similar frames and margins sketched in purple ink, as illustrated by manuscript no. 167 (Fig. 4).

The guidelines themselves can be in a diluted ink that is hardly visible, but may sometimes be very obvious. In other cases, the guidelines are nicked, that is, a straight shallow line made with a sharp tool. In our sample, margins and frames were most often marked with red, purple, or black ink, both weak and thick. Base lines are drawn in faint yellow or other-coloured paint. In some manuscripts the last folio consists of a ruled page without any text, which makes it easier to see how the page was prepared for writing.

A variety of graphs, such as the ‘head mark’ (*yig mgo*), are traditionally used in Tibetan manuscripts to begin the text. Head marks, which differ from text to text, are also used to indicate the start of a headline or the start of the first paragraph in a longer text.

A common head mark is *yig mgo mdun ma* ཡ, which is often multiplied or extended with further decorations (Figs 3, 5 and 6), such as the extension graph *sgab ma* ཤ. A head mark can be written alone, or can be followed by a couple of closing marks, notably one or two *shad*, e.g. ཡ||. Less common head marks, used

⁷ It is sometimes referred to as the *pothi* format, named after the Indian term for the model on which it was based. The Indian prototype is made out of palm leaves, and it is this form that the Tibetan longbook reproduces in paper. From its proliferation from the fifteenth century onward, wood-block printing or xylography cemented the *dpe cha* as the predominant format for the Tibetan book.

in Bonpo literature, are variations of *gter yig mgo*, such as truncated A ཨ, *um rnam bcaad ma* ཨུམ་རྣམ་བཤམ་, *um gter tshed ma* ཨུམ་གྲེན་མེད་མཎ་.

As far as the visual presentation of texts is concerned, it was possible to distinguish groups of texts characterised by the same features, such as yellow markings of words, red rubrics, red or blue diamond-shaped patches pasted onto the paper surface, almost certainly as place-marks, as is the case at the present day. They may, for example, indicate the point at which the lama should add an instrumental accompaniment with, say, drum, bell or cymbals.



Fig. 3: Text for the visualisation and worship of the tantric divinity Takla Membar. Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 229.



Fig. 4: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 167.



Fig. 5: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 200.

We often observed variations in the size of the script – for example, instructions in ritual manuals are invariably in a smaller script than that which is used for the sections to be chanted aloud, as seen in manuscript no. 160 (Fig. 6). Here the instructional part has been written in *'khyug ma tshugs*, and the litany in *tshugs thung*. The colophon of manuscript no. 202, evidently written by a scribe with limited training, uses a smaller script, a hybrid of *'khyug ma tshugs* and *tshugs ring*, with the characteristically long descenders of the latter (Fig. 7).

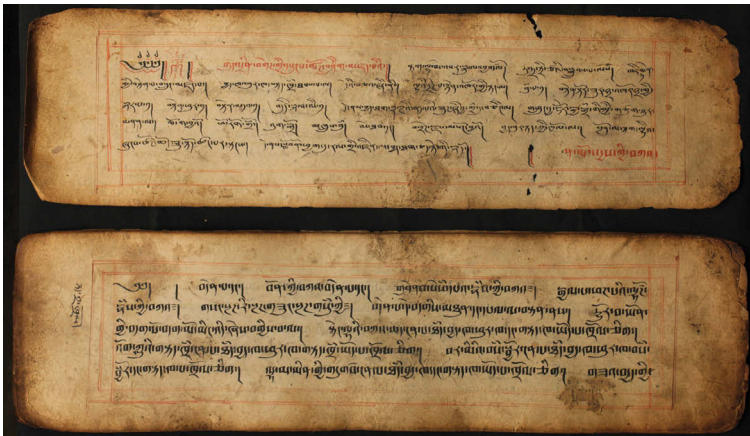


Fig. 6: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 160.



Fig. 7: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 202.

Despite the dominance of the longbook format, a significant number of ritual items had the form of bound books or single sheets of paper. Interestingly, the format of bound manuscripts, represented by 17 items,⁸ whether sewn at the top or to the left, usually measured 9–10 × 27–30 cm, which is very closed to the measurements of the loose-leaf format of the Drangsong collection. Manuscript no. 4, *A collection of fumigation ritual texts*, consists of rectangular leaves, possibly originally prepared for *pothi* loose-leaf format, then folded in half and sewn (Fig. 8). Manuscript no. 252 shows that a loose-leaf format was sometimes bound later (at the top in this case) (Fig. 9). The bound format probably better served the purpose of such manuscripts, since it would be easier to follow the text when leaves were fixed in their order. More often, however, the folios of the Drangsong manuscripts are folded at the longer edge and sewn at the top, as illustrated by the manuscripts archived as nos 3 and 5 (Figs 10 and 11). The manuscript archived as no. 5 has a textile cover that has been attached by stitching it to the paper leaf and wrapped inside (Fig. 11).



Fig. 8: Manuscript bound at the side containing 'A brief fumigation ritual for the protective divinities of Bon' (archived as manuscript no. 4).

⁸ These were manuscripts nos 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 54, 70, 73, 97, 252, and 267.



Fig. 9: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, item no. 252.

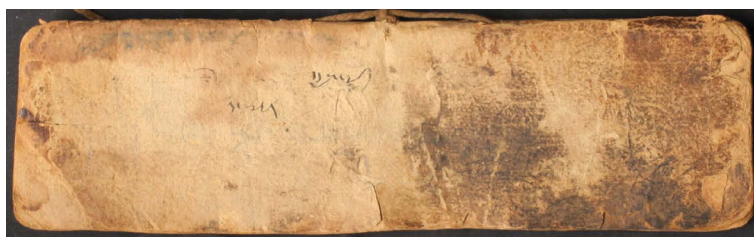


Fig. 10: Manuscript bound at the top (archived as manuscript no. 3).



Fig. 11: Manuscript bound at the top (archived as manuscript no. 5).

Nine manuscripts were in the form of single sheets bearing diagrams or a short text, two were *tsakalis*, and one was a set of ritual cards. Diagrams were usually a type of amulet with protective symbols prepared for specific occasions. The 'protective wheels' (*srung 'khor*) in Figs 12a–c are amulets that might be worn for personal protection or affixed to a door. The first two provide protection by means of mantras, and the third by means of auspicious symbols. The image in Fig. 12d seems to be a device for the repulsion of harm caused by apostate Buddhist monks.



Figs 12 a–d: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, item no. 37 (a); item no. 278 (b); item no. 17 (c); item no. 11 (d).

Tsakalis are known as ‘initiation cards’ precisely because they are used in initiation rituals (such as empowerment, ritual mandalas, transmission of teachings, substitutes for ceremonial items, visualisation aids and funerals) to empower neophytes into the particular domain of Buddhism or Bon that they represent (Fig. 13). Typically, the initiate is shown each of the cards in turn before being blessed by means of the officiant touching his or her head with the whole set. The subjects found in *tsakali* cover a range from main deities and protectors to their various power attributes and appropriate offerings.⁹



Fig. 13: Two of a set of *tsakalis*, cards used in tantric initiations. Drangsong collection, Lo Mon-thang, Upper Mustang, item no. 98.

⁹ Li 1995.

Five simple paper cut-outs representing *lu* (*klu*, serpent spirits), as seen in Fig. 14. These devices are used in rituals for the propitiation of the *lu*, usually to ensure rainfall.



Fig. 14: Simple representations of *lu* (serpent spirits) for use in propitiatory rites. Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, item no. 243.

4 Illustrations, ornaments and doodles

The leaves shown below, from manuscript no. 251, are a good example of illuminated pages when the paintings are planned as part of the layout of the book (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 251.

The back folio from manuscript no. 215 show examples of ornamental flourishes that are used at the beginning of texts (*yig mgo mdun ma*). The scribe has apparently used the available blank paper as a surface on which to practise his skills in drawing these motifs (Fig. 16). Many other manuscripts in the Drangsong collection feature such ornaments. As seen on the front page of manuscript no. 256 containing the sacred Bon formula *om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*, the outlined figure has a superfluous letter *sa* that has not been filled in, probably because the scribe subsequently noticed that he had duplicated it in error (Fig. 17).

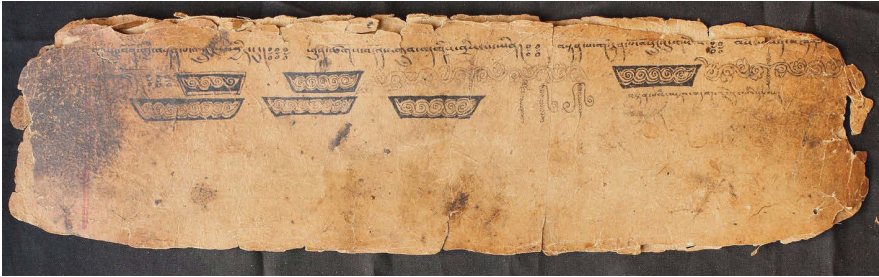


Fig. 16: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 215.



Fig. 17: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 256.

In the context of Tibetan books, ephemera such as doodles have been little studied to date. A few such examples contribute to our understanding of the histories of the manuscripts in which they appear: for example, they convey information about the users rather than the manuscript itself or the scribe, since these drawings were made long after the texts were originally created. They allow us to learn about the people who used and interacted with these old books. Drangsong manuscript no. 169 for example shows drawings representing effigies used in ransom rituals (Fig. 18), while manuscript no. 105 contains the sketches of various motifs

used in sacred art (Fig. 19), and manuscript no. 194 sketches illustrating different ritual gestures (*mudras*) (Fig. 20).



Fig. 18: Drawings representing effigies used in ransom rituals. Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 169.



Fig. 19: Sketches of various motifs used in sacred art. Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 105.



Fig. 20: Sketches illustrating different ritual gestures (*mudras*). Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 194.

5 Material study: paper and ink in the Drangsong manuscripts

The most important source materials for papermaking in Tibet were (and continue to be) the various plants of the Thymelaeaceae botanical family. However, exceptions to the use of these materials have been noted, and involve the use of both rare local products and also of industrial paper that was commercially available from the beginning of twentieth century. These materials are generally present as individual fibres of wool, cotton, or other unidentified substances, feather fragments, grass-type pulp and industrial wood pulp. Every new batch of papers from this region that we tested for fibre composition has helped to build a clearer picture of the history of paper.

While there is a suggestion that paper was available in the Zhangzhung polity of western Tibet, and that invitation letters from the Central Tibetan court to the Chinese imperial princess in the seventh century were on paper, the *Tang Annals* mention that in 648 the Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo requested paper, ink, and other writing utensils from the Chinese emperor.¹⁰ The identification of fibres of *Daphne* species in samples of Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang supports the view, affirmed by material analyses of extant manuscripts, that Tibetans were producing paper at least by the ninth century and that they used plants of the Thymelaeaceae family – which grow widely in the Himalayas – as raw material.¹¹ Tibetan paper was thus originally made from shrubs of these species (*shog shing*, ‘paper trees’, in Tibetan), which usually grow in valleys up to an altitude of 3,600m above sea level. Even higher above on the Tibetan plateau, the roots of the *Stellera chamaejasme* species (*re lcag pa* in Tibetan) were used for local paper production. The oldest samples of *Stellera* species used in Tibetan manuscripts have been identified in a manuscript from Central Tibet dated to the tenth century, and one from Western Tibet dated to the eleventh.¹² After the fifteenth century *Stellera* often came to be added to

¹⁰ Uebach 2008, 61.

¹¹ Helman-Wazny and van Schaik 2013, 738; Helman-Wazny 2016, 546–549.

¹² The earliest confirmed manuscript which contains *Stellera* fibres is dated to the late tenth century by C14 and textual evidence. This manuscript, discovered by Professor Pasang Wangdu of the Tibetan Academy of Social Science, was produced in the area of Samye monastery in Central Tibet: Wangdu 2016, 555; Helman-Wazny 2016, 549. Other manuscripts containing *Stellera* fibers originating from Tholing and possibly dated to the eleventh century were studied by Amy Heller (Heller 2016; Heller and Eng 2017). Another relatively early example of paper containing *Stellera* fibres is a sample provided by Amy Heller from one of the

Daphne and *Edgeworthia*, possibly for increasing the softness of *Daphne* paper to make it more absorbent and thus suitable for printing.¹³ When used alone, the *re lca g pa* root yields a particularly soft type of paper, which, owing to the texture of its fibres, is considered by Tibetan papermakers to be of lower quality than bark paper.

The fibres of Tibetan paper typically have a range of morphological properties, which can be detected during scientific examination by applying a combination of techniques. The samples of paper from Drangsong manuscripts are currently being examined, and the results will be published as separate case studies. The information presented in this chapter will therefore be confined to preliminary observations.

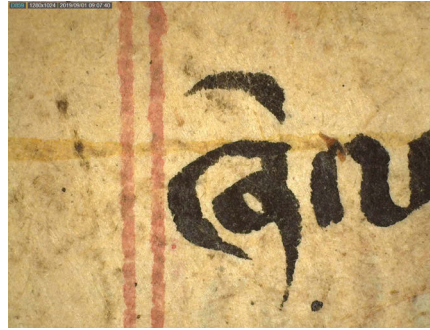
First, macroscopic observation was performed *in situ*, and macro photographs of details with macro lenses and Dino-Lite Digital Microscope were taken, illustrating the paper surface preparation, interaction between paper and ink, and paper structure observed with back-lighting. Even from these preliminary observations we were able to distinguish a group of manuscripts written on paper with primary white paint on the surface (Figs 21 and 22a–b).



Fig. 21: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 249.

Prajñāpāramitā manuscript volumes from Bicher monastery in Dolpo, western Nepal (Heller 2009).

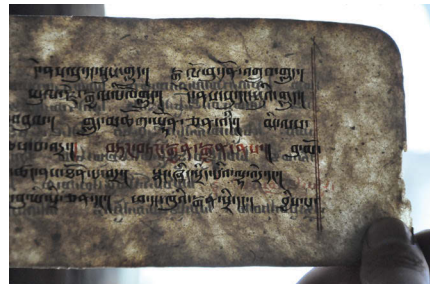
13 Helman-Ważny 2016, 552.



Figs 22a–b: Details of text fragments written on paper processed with white paint (Fig. 22a: item no. 27), and without this extra step of preparation photographed with Dino-Lite digital microscope (Fig. 22b: item no. 30).

The fact that there are different sizes and shapes of manuscript folios suggests that papermaking moulds may not have been standardised. However, we should be cautious about deducing the size of the moulds on which paper may have been made from the available folios, since sheets could of course be cut to the required format.

Both types of sieve print, notably woven and laid, were found in the Drangsong manuscripts (Figs 23a and 23b). Interestingly, there is a group of laid papers characterised by 12 laid lines within a space of 3 cm, and in some cases the chain line intervals are visible.



Figs 23a–b: Drangsong collection, Lo Monthang, Upper Mustang, manuscript no. 37.

The thickness of the paper, depending on how many layers of paper are glued together, ranges from 0.04 to 0.35 mm.¹⁴ The range of thicknesses measured within the same leaf is similar to that found in other collections of Tibetan manuscripts. The fibre distribution within the paper sheet makes it possible to categorise manuscripts according to the quality of the paper that was used in their production.

Paper analysis aims to undertake fibre identification¹⁵ to ascertain the raw materials used for paper production; the RTI / PTM technique was used to reveal visible damage and tool traces as signatures of surface processing; macroscopic observations were made to understand the technologies used during the production of these papers; XRF measurements were taken to detect other components that may have been added to paper during its production.

A catalogue of samples in MS Excel was created by Agata Szubartowska and Alicja Świącicka, students working in our project team. From among 273 manuscripts, 52 samples of manuscripts were selected for microscopic fibre analysis, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), polynomial texture maps (RTI / PTM), and X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF).

The qualitative analysis of the elemental composition of the paper was performed using the X-ray fluorescence spectrometry method. Most of the objects are homogeneous, and the main elements are: Ca, Fe, K, S, Cl and Si. The samples are differentiated by the presence of the appropriate secondary elements: Cu, P, Ti, Mn, Sr, As, Zn and Al.

From fifty-two selected samples, three are being analysed by mass spectrometry with inductive coupled plasma and laser micro-sampling (LA-ICP-MS). Further LA-ICP-MS tests and Raman spectroscopy of selected samples are also planned.

14 Thickness is measured in at least five different places per panel.

15 This is carried out by analysing collected specimens of paper using a transmitted light microscope with camera. The samples were prepared in a fine suspension of individual fibres, and placed on slides for observation at varying magnification from 50× up to 400× with both plain and polarised light. Attention was paid to stain colouring, morphology of fibres, and other elements of the pulp. Each of the samples was prepared as a solid preparation in Canada balsam (oleoresin consisting of a viscous yellowish to greenish liquid exuded by the *Abies balsamea*, balsam fir of North America). First, they were placed on a microscope slide, then a few drops of water were added to it, and they were carefully defibrated and spread with the help of preparation needles. The material was then covered with a coverslip, and left to dry. The next step was to open the coverslip and apply a drop of Canada balsam. The coverslip was replaced, and the slide pressed between the metal plate and the magnet was left until the Canada balsam had dried. For more details see: Szubartowska et al. 2021, 53–76.

Within the Thymelaeaceae family of plants, *Stellera chamaejasme* fibres are easily identifiable in paper samples, and can be clearly differentiated from *Daphne*, *Edgeworthia*, and *Wikstroemia* despite the fact that all plants belong to the Thymelaeaceae family. The latter three, however, are still not fully referenced and cannot be easily distinguished from one another. However, differences between the above Thymelaeaceae family plants and other plant species are obvious, so it is possible to distinguish particular types of raw materials. This ability to distinguish separate species in paper fibre makes fibre analysis a particularly helpful procedure for locating regional origin and sometimes for dating, especially when used in combination with other methods.¹⁶ When comparing the results of fibre analysis of manuscripts with the distribution of the same plant, we can obtain information about the possible region of a book's origin. The area suggested by plant distribution can be critically compared to other sources of information, such as textual content and manuscript format. In this way, we can learn whether all features originate from the same area (understood as a cultural context, country, or region) or not.

The results help in answering some questions about trade and import of paper and manuscripts in the Himalayas and Central Asia, even though much more research needs to be done to achieve higher precision for regional attribution. Here the goal is to characterise a larger sample of material from the Drangsong collection and pull all the results together for comparative study. Other aims were to learn about the relationship between raw materials used and properties of the resultant paper; to determine the origin of the paper by comparing fibre identification results with the local occurrence of the same plant; and to know more about fibrous materials used for papermaking in the past in order to trace the history of papermaking.

Other materials, such as ink and paints, will be identified in collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Archaeometric Research, Faculty of Chemistry, University of Warsaw. XRF (X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry) will be used for determination of major elemental composition, and RS (Raman spectroscopy) will provide information on molecular composition of chemical compounds. GC-MS (gas chromatography with mass spectroscopy) will help to identify the binding media used for the preparation of inks. The complementary use of these three methods for analysis of the same samples will allow for the reliable identification of their chemical composition.

The inks employed in Tibetan books and documents were manufactured by craftsmen according to diverse recipes. The compound is mixed with water imme-

¹⁶ Helman-Ważny and van Schaik 2013.

diately before use. Tibetan black ink (*snag tsha*) is most often composed of soot mixed with animal glue. In general, carbon-based inks are produced by a dispersion of soot or black carbon particles in a water-soluble binder. The soot that is used is generally derived from burning resinous wood (such as *Pinus roxburghii*, often used in Nepal, or *Pinus wallichiana* in Bhutan), butter in lamps, or other combustible substances. Most of the inks are black, but we also find red and occasionally other colours in Tibetan books, as well as inks prepared with precious minerals for special purposes. Coloured inks are made by pulverising the appropriate plant or mineral pigments with a mixture of glue, sometimes made by boiling yak hide and bones. Other organic components could be added, such as gum, honey, borax, or, for special purposes, unusual and extravagant materials, such as medicinal substances, drops of blood, or crematory ashes, that modified the ink's real or imagined properties according to need. Besides their organic compounds, inks may also contain distinctive trace elements.

6 Function, ritual use and cultural context

Many, if not most, of the manuscripts in the Drangsong collection are components of rituals concerned with providing protection, expelling physical or supernatural afflictions, and generating prosperity and well-being. These are the kinds of rituals for which there is understandably the greatest demand in daily life, and while they do not feature very prominently in the more salvation-oriented setting of monasteries, they are still widely practised by hereditary lamas in village communities (Figs 24–27).¹⁷

In view of the fact that manuscripts, and not merely the texts that they support, are an inalienable part of the Bon ritual tradition, a close study of the codicological and material aspects of the documents forms an important part of the Drangsong project. Preliminary examination suggests that, even though the texts in the collection may have been composed or copied in locations that are

¹⁷ As part of a long-term project in the framework of a collaboration between The Kalpa Group (Switzerland) and the Centre for Research on East Asian Civilisations (CRCAO, Paris), Charles Ramble has directed the production of video documentation of numerous rituals within these categories. The project has entailed photographing, transcribing and translating a large number of texts, mainly from South Mustang, relating to some of the rituals – part of a living tradition – that are to be found in the Drangsong collection. Descriptions of these rituals, along with presentation of the relevant texts and links to the corresponding ritual performances can be found on the website www.kalpa-bon.com (accessed on 8 Feb. 2021).

very distant from one another – possibly as far apart as eastern Tibet and Dolpo – they may form a community of scribal practices, orthographic conventions and other features that was maintained by Bonpo clerics. Certain exorcistic rituals require the use of paper, ink and styli made from special ingredients and according to precise dimensions. For example, in the instruction manual for the creation of the exorcistic drawing seen in Fig. 24, it is specified that the priest should use ‘poison paper’ measuring one span and four finger-widths; that the stylus, which should be of the same length as the height of the paper, should be made from an arrow that has killed a yeti or a bear, and that the ink should be made from a mixture of blood from a yeti (or bear) that has been killed with a sword, a poisoned mule and a rabid dog. It is likely that the manuscripts in the Drangsong collection contain such instructions, but since similar tantric texts are widely used by some Buddhist schools (especially the Nyingmapa), it remains to be determined whether some of these specifications are distinctive of Bonpo texts.

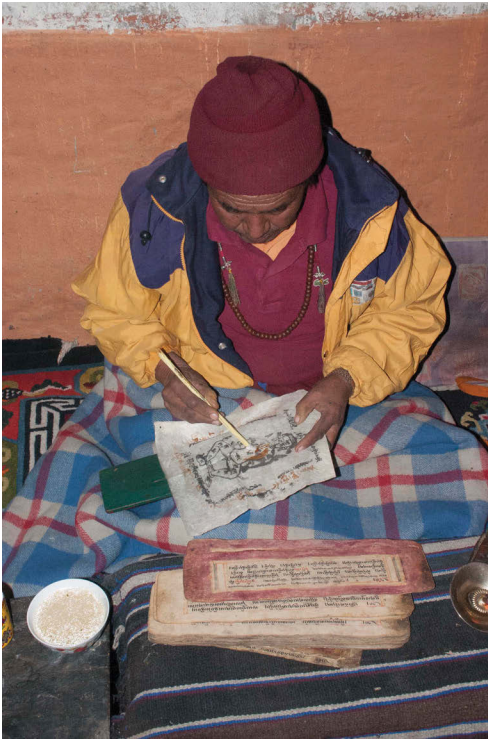


Fig. 24: Bon ritual being performed in Mustang.



Figs 25–27: Bon rituals being performed in Mustang and Dolpo.

7 Conclusions

The Bon manuscripts in the royal Drangsong collection constitute an information-dense repository of craftsmanship, history, and ideas spanning at least six centuries. At the project start we were fully aware that the success of our project on Drangsong manuscripts rested on a coincidence of a set of propitious circumstances. To begin with, it is extremely rare that such a large and unstudied collection of Tibetan manuscripts, especially those of the Bon religion and belonging to a royal lineage, should become available for research. Secondly, the performance of rituals based on such manuscripts is an endangered tradition that is transmitted not in monasteries but along lineages of hereditary lamas. Third, the geographical location of the field sites entails a certain risk. The difficulties of the trail and of working in an environment of cold and dust at high altitude offer ample possibility for equipment failure, and hence delays. However, we had not anticipated the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that we would need to face even more limitations. Despite the confinement measures, although with some adjustment to new rules, we have already been able to make the majority of the collection available online, and now catalogue descriptions, translations of titles and colophons, transliterations of selected works and the results of paper analysis are gradually being added to our website.

At the present stage of investigation it is not possible to identify obvious features of works contained in this collection that might distinguish them from Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts. Whatever the case, we hope that the interdisciplinary research carried out within this project will contribute to a better understanding of the Bon tradition, its manuscripts, and the cultural history of the region.

Acknowledgments

This research is funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, through project no. 2018/30/M/HS3/00372, entitled *Protecting the kingdom with Tibetan manuscripts: codicological and historical analyses of the royal Drangsong collection from Mustang, Nepal* (PI Agnieszka Helman-Ważny). The research is being carried out in partnership with Charles Ramble of the École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris.

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Amy Heller

Preliminary Remarks on Bonpo Manuscripts in Dolpo

Abstract: This article documents the history of the successive discoveries of Bonpo manuscripts in Dolpo stemming from David Snellgrove's assessment of the library of the Samling monastery in 1956 to the present description of a library of a private Bonpo householder in the vicinity of Phijor (Byi cer) visited in 2012. The manuscripts here are predominantly *Khams chen* and *Khams brgyad*, the Bonpo 'Perfection of Wisdom' texts. The dedications of two ancient manuscripts are studied here, both written on dark blue paper (*mthing shog*) with gold ink. According to these texts, both manuscripts specify their local production for Bonpo sanctuaries in the vicinity of Phijor village. One preface stipulates that the manuscript was made during the paramouncy of the Yatse (Ya rtse) kingdom over this region of Dolpo, corresponding to c. 1340–1354.

1 Introduction

The present research is inspired by the scholarship of David Snellgrove and Corneille Jest, who resided in Dolpo in 1960–1961. Snellgrove pursued his pioneering studies of Bonpo manuscripts in-situ in Namgung (Gnam gung) village, in Dechen Labrang (Bde chen bla brang); in tandem, Jest lived as resident ethnologist in Khagar Labrang (Mkha' mkhar bla brang), a hamlet of Tarap (Rta rab). Since it was an ox year, Jest accompanied a small group of Khagar men as they accomplished the pilgrimage to holy places of Dolpo, resulting in the compendium *Tales of the Turquoise*.¹ During their travels, Jest visited the Bonpo monastery of Samling (Bsam gtan gling) and two Buddhist sanctuaries of the nearby village of Phijor (Tibetan: Byi cher, Bicher; Nepali: Vijer). Snellgrove had preceded him there in 1956; in both villages Samling and Phijor, Snellgrove found many volumes of books and manuscripts. In Samling monastery, Snellgrove was led to the private chapel of the Samling lama, who showed him many ancient manuscripts.² Entering the Samling monastery, Snellgrove observed:

1 Jest 1975; Jest 1985; Jest 1993.

2 Snellgrove 1961, 114.

On the left there was a large collection of very dusty volumes, all wrapped in cloths and strapped up between heavy boards in the usual Tibetan manner. Since the frames were inadequate for their number, they were just piled one upon another. Here was a large collection of Bon literature such as I was unlikely to find again, but it would clearly be a formidable task to look through it.³

Snellgrove subsequently spent a month in the Samling monastery; with the help of the head lama he collected a number of interesting manuscripts which he studied in detail.⁴ In the Phijor sanctuary, Snellgrove merely described “a complete set of the Tibetan Buddhist canon and a fine gilt image of Maitreya.”⁵ He gave no indications of the dates of the volumes. When Jest visited the temple five years later, he was told by the custodian that the volumes of Kanjur and Tanjur had been printed in Lhasa with funds obtained due to a special tax exemption in the distant past:

In the valley of Karmarong, situated to the west, an epidemic of smallpox was raging and the king of the land of the West, Sonam De (Bsod nams lde) called the lama of Phijor in order to fight this calamity. The Lama organised a big kurim (*sku rim*) and the evil stopped of its own accord, outright! Thankful, the king told the lama to express a wish. Without hesitating, the lama asked for tax exemption for the four valleys of Dolpo, for 18 years. The wish was granted and with the money that would have been paid as tax, religious works, printed in Lhasa, could be bought.⁶

One may note that the chronology of the epidemic is not clear, but it took place at a time when printed books could be purchased in Lhasa, and therefore ostensibly not before the sixteenth century at the earliest.

This was all that had been published about the Phijor volumes until June 1999, when the Pritzker and Roncoroni families made a photographic safari in Dolpo.⁷ As connoisseurs of Tibetan and Himalayan art, they trekked from village to village, where they were shown the local treasures of ancient mural paintings, sculptures in clay or wood, thanngkas and manuscripts. When they reached Phijor, the Buddhist lama, Ven. Tenzin Gyaltzen (Bstan ’dzin rgyal mtshan), was outside waiting for them sitting in the sun, with a selection of illuminated manuscript

³ Snellgrove 1961, 115.

⁴ Snellgrove 1967, viii; Ramble and Kind 2003, 698–699.

⁵ Snellgrove 1961, 129.

⁶ Jest 1975, 361; Jest 1993, 69–70.

⁷ Klaus-Dieter Mathes of the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) micro-filmed some manuscripts from Samling and Phijor during missions in 1996, 1999 and 2000, described in his internal reports of the NGMPP; his research on certain manuscripts was first published in 2003 (personal communication December 2020).

leaves beside him. They immediately realised the potential time range of twelfth to thirteenth century or even earlier for some of the manuscript leaves. In order to discuss the contents of the library at length with the lama, they decided to hire a horse from him, which required him to accompany them throughout their month-long journey in Dolpo.

During the trek the lama expressed his dismay that the library was no longer accessible for the villagers. Due to thefts in nearby monasteries, the village committee had decided to construct a concrete brick wall blocking the entrance to the cella where the sacred volumes were stored on shelves surrounding a life-size statue of Buddha, the main icon of the temple. Sensitive to this situation, the Pritzker and Roncoroni families proposed an architectural renovation of the sanctuary to consolidate the structure and protect the books, accompanied by the creation of a village school and construction of a medical dispensary. The village committee unanimously approved this project. The lama estimated that there were approximately 200 volumes behind the wall. In May 2000, in order to inventory the contents of the library, a team comprising a Tibetologist and two photographers reached the village, whereupon the lama proceeded to demolish the cement brick wall. As the dust settled, the team realised that the description of Jest's informant was completely inaccurate. Instead of volumes of Buddhist texts printed in Lhasa, the initial count revealed over 600 volumes of Buddhist manuscripts comprising numerous texts, many with illuminations. The daunting task of creating a title list and measuring the volumes was to be accomplished inside eight days, when the helicopter was due to bring the team down to Kathmandu.

2 An inventory of the manuscripts

The intense schedule to complete the initial inventory was respected. It soon became clear that many of these were manuscripts locally produced in Dolpo. In particular, 61 volumes had dedication prefaces indicative of their local commission in Phijor or nearby villages as well as historical data such as the name of the king during whose reign the manuscript was made, or the name of the titular abbot at the time of the commission.⁸ In general the title pages were written in

⁸ See Heller 2001 for a brief summary of the library project, Heller 2007 and Heller 2009 for a selection of the Dolpo prefaces. See De Rossi Filibeck 2007 for similar prefaces in the manuscripts of Tabo monastery in Spiti, and Helman-Ważny and Ramble 2021, 204–222 for Bonpo dedications in Mustang.

gold ink on *mthing shog*, dark blue or black paper, with ornamental margins and elegant calligraphy. The dedication prefaces were sometimes written in gold ink on *mthing shog*, but more often written in black ink on buff coloured paper. The dedication prefaces were most frequent among volumes of the Prajñāpāramitā, which are meritoriously copied for the benefit of all sentient beings as well as the local population. In the Phijor Buddhist temple of Nesar (Gnas gsar), among the Prajñāpāramitā dedications, certain names among the groups of donors – such as Ston pa g.yung drung – reflect ostensibly Bonpo practitioners, who also participated in the villagers’ collective effort to produce merit.⁹ This reflects the long history of good collaboration and *bon voisinage* in Dolpo between Buddhists and Bonpo practitioners.¹⁰ No mention was found of the king Sonam De of Karma-rong, the benefactor of the volumes according to Jest’s informant; however, historical documents in the village traced the strong spiritual relationship linking the eleventh Phijor abbot Khenpo Jamyang (mKhan po ’Jam dbyangs) with Sonam De (Bsod nams lde) (r. c. 1330–1340), ruler of the kingdom in western Nepal known as Ya rtse or Dzumla in Tibetan, and Khaśa Malla in Nepali. Several dedication prefaces of Prajñāpāramitā volumes indicated that they were made in Phijor during the sovereignty of the Ya rtse kingdom, whether Sonam De or his son Pritivimalla, whose reign ended in 1354.

Due to the Phijor villagers’ interest in the local and regional history of their village which was partially elucidated by the study of the prefaces of the manuscripts in the library and local historical texts, I returned to Dolpo in 2012 to bring a copy of my book *Hidden Treasures of the Himalaya, Tibetan Manuscripts, Sculptures and Paintings of Dolpo* to present to the library of the Mugpo Rong school. At this time, Bonpo families requested me to visit their home and their private library in a nearby hamlet. The visit proved extremely worthwhile.

I was led into a small chapel where a large Bonpo sculpture graced the altar accompanied by the requisite offering bowls for water. On the shelves of the library, inside thick boards, many volumes were stacked. During my brief visit of a few hours, I could only roughly calculate that there were more than 100 volumes (see Fig. 1 and Appendix 2). The caretaker requested me to photograph a specific volume which he designated as particularly important. The elegant calligraphy of the first pages immediately indicated the commission of a manuscript of great

⁹ Heller 2009, 41 Preface to volume Lang 78. This was a manuscript produced during the reign of Mustang king Bkra shis mgon (d. 1489).

¹⁰ See Snellgrove 1961, 129–131; Snellgrove 1967, 4–5; and more recently Heller 2009, 35 for the local history of Bon and Buddhists in Phijor.

significance. In large scale raised gold letters, the start of the title *zhang zhung skad du*, ‘in the language of Zhangzhung’.



Fig. 1: Private library, general view of shelves, Phijor, 2014; photo by Chandra Gurung.



Fig. 2: Ornamental calligraphy leaves of a manuscript *Khams chen*, c. 22 × 60 cm, *mthing shog* blue paper with raised gesso and gold pigment, and red silk cloth cover for protection. Phijor, 2012; photo by Amy Heller.

The next volume also began with an ornamental leaf of dark blue paper, with the central panel again reading *Zhang zhung skad du*, ‘in the language of Zhangzhung,’ complemented by two brief dedications written in gold on both sides of the central panel (see Fig. 2). These two dedication verses succinctly indicate the title of the volume, which is a copy of the first volume of the *Khams chen* (the Bon ‘Perfection of Wisdom’). The *dbu can* (headed letters) of the handwriting is quite small in comparison with the letters of the central panel, in very large scale *dbu can*. Although the leaf looked ancient, there are no particular archaisms in the orthography or calligraphy. No chronological information is provided by the dedication verses. The names of several donors are inscribed in this first dedication. In particular, there is a member of the Ya ngal clan, whose ancestors were responsible for the foundation of Samling and who retain to the present day the hereditary role of principal lama of the Bonpo monastery of Samling and the Bonpo sanctuary in Phijor.¹¹ Also among the donors, there is the officiating lama named Byi cer mkhas btus lags,¹² indicating that he was someone living in Phijor.

The dedication consists of two sections, eight short verses to the left and six short verses to the right of the large-scale ornamental calligraphy.

Left: *ston pa ngo mtshar che / rgyal ba gshen rab lags drin can ngo mtsar che / ya ngal khus x yon lags yon bdag ngo mtshar che / dar ma sam (sic: bsam) grub lags rgyu sbyar ngo mtshar che / jo lcam rgyan ne lags*

The extraordinary teacher (who is) the extraordinarily kind lord Gshen rab, the extraordinarily generous donor Ya ngal khus, the extraordinarily rich donor Dar ma sam grub and his wife Rgyan ne.

Right: *bla mchod ngo mtshar che / byi cer mkhas btus lags / thugs dam ngo mtshar che / khams chen rgyas pa lags / shes bya ngo mtshar che / 'bur chen 'od 'bar lags /*

The extraordinary officiating lama Byi cer mkhas btus lags, the extraordinary personal commitment of commission of the volume entitled *Khams chen rgyas pa*, (which is) extraordinary knowledge. The scribe ('bur chen) was 'Od 'bar'.

Additional photography has revealed other dedication prefaces, one of which is studied here as it is exemplary in content, handwriting and indication of chronological data (Fig. 3). The dedication text is longer and more elaborate than the very succinct dedication discussed above (Fig. 2). The volume is a *Khams brgyad*

¹¹ Snellgrove 1992, 14; Ramble and Kind 2003, 698–699.

¹² Literally, his name means ‘the wise one of Byi cer’. The *Khams chen* is the longest of several versions of Bon ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ literature.

‘Perfection of Wisdom’ text. In many respects, the verses are strikingly similar in tone to the dedication prefaces of the ‘Perfection of Wisdom’, Prajñāpāramitā volumes conserved in the Phijor Buddhist sanctuary. There is a page of dark blue paper which is carefully ruled with double gold lines as margin, a protective cloth cover with tie-dye in blue, red and yellow has been stitched to the upper portion of the sheet of paper. The bottom portion of the page also has a decoration of additional small sections of blue paper. The dedication is written on a second leaf of blue paper which covers the ‘window’ of the lower page. This use of two sheets of the precious paper and gold enhances the beauty of the dedication, thus adding further merit to the donation of the volume. In terms of chronology, this dedication was ostensibly written during the first half of the fourteenth century, when this region of Dolpo was under the sovereignty of the Yatse kingdom.¹³ The handwriting is a clear *dbu can* script written in eight lines on the verso of the sheet of paper. No scribe is named. There is one archaism in orthography (the *da drag*, for example in *gyurd*). The initial punctuation (*mgo yig*) is stylized and elegant. The verses are brief, many have nine syllables which conveys a sense of rhythmic recitation which is difficult to maintain in translation. The proposed translation attempts to convey this idea of recitation, rather than seeking more literal tone.

Homage to the absolute nature of the Primordial Teacher, the Joyous teacher of unchanging pervasive Compassion.

Praise to the lamas of the lineage, the guides on the path to receive the wisdom of the ancestors.

As to the world, past and future phenomenal worlds came into existence from below and the inhabitants descended from the gods of clear light. May all the karma be accomplished in harmony with the world and its inhabitants.

Thinking of the countless families of sentient beings (here) underneath the wheel with eight spokes (which is) the turquoise blue sky, in this narrow space of the lotus of the immutable swastika, the power of the king of Yatse is the best.

This place of the spread of the doctrines of Everlasting Bon, in Phijor the land where the ten virtues reside, (there is) the Smra clan in the lineage of the Zhang zhung pha chen Khyung po, having great wealth due to their faith in virtuous karma.

¹³ One may note that among the Buddhist manuscripts of Phijor, the Yatse period corresponds to the first half of the fourteenth century. In the context of upper Dolpo, the royal line of Yatse ceased after the death of Pritivimalla in 1354, subsequently Phijor came under the authority of Mustang. See Heller 2009, 36–43.

A son was born to the donor Dbang dar and his brothers, they zealously commissioned many volumes, a wondrous deed of great significance!

With the (thought of) good qualities of those who died and with pride for the sake of this life and the hereafter, after veneration the mind itself is like a servant, even like a divine servant of the skies for the young boy and his family.¹⁴

By the strength of their faith, earnestly practising virtue, and imploring as had done the earlier ancestors of the family, may all beings achieve happiness.

By the example of this virtue, foremost on the part of the donors, may all the beings of the three worlds practice virtue!

Once all beings having quickly cleared away the darkness of ignorance, may all sentient beings obtain Enlightenment.¹⁵

(1) E ma ho / / thugs rje bdal khyab 'gyur med bde ba ston // ye nyid ston pa'i ngang la phyag 'tshal lo // // gong ma'i dgongs pa len cing 'og ma'i lam sna 'dren // // brgyud

(2) pa'i bla ma nmams la phyag 'tshal bstod // // snod ni mas srid phyi'i 'jig rten rtos / / nang bcud 'jig rten mas chad 'od gsal lha / / phyi nang snod bcud spyi mthun las las grub / / sems can

(3) rigs la bsam 'das grangs mang zhing / / 'khorlo rtsibs brgyad g.yu rgung (sic: dgung) sngon po'i 'og / / dog sa pad ma mi 'gyur g.yung drung steng / / nang nas mchog gyurd ya tshe rgyal po'i mnga' / g.yung drung bon

(4) gi bstan pa dar ba'i gnas / / dge bcu ldan pa'i bzhugs yul byi cer du / smra rigs zhang zhung khyung po'i rgyud / / dkor nor phyug cing dge ba'i las la dad / / yab la sras 'khrungs

(5) yon bdag dbang dar sku mched kyis / / brtson 'grus bskyed nas gsung rabs mang du bzhengs / / bsags pa don can mdzad pa ngo mtshar che // // 'dzangs gshin ldan pa'i yon tan mdzes se

(6) 'is / / phyi ma'i don dang (tshe, erased) 'di'i khyeng drags (sic: dregs) la / / dkon mchog mchod nas zhabs tog rjes yid rang / / nam mkha'i lha pran (sic: bran) lta bu'i bu chung sku mched kyang / / yab mes

(7) gong ma'i rjes su snyogs par mdzad / / dge la brtson cing dad pa'i shugs kyis ni / / 'gro ba bde la 'di phyi'i don grub shog // // dge ba 'dis mtshon yon mchod rtso byas

(8) nas / / 'khams gsum sems can rnam kyang dge spyod cing / / 'gro kun ma rig mun pa myur bsal nas // sems can ma lus sangs rgyas thob par shog // //

In contrast with the terminology of the very few dedication prefaces of this period among the Phijor Buddhist manuscripts, no specific ruler is named as sovereign. The Bon dedication merely reads 'under the rule (or power) of the Ya rtse king'. This dedication does however indicate a local provenance for this manuscript within the area of Phijor. The chronology of 1330–1350 conforms broadly to the

¹⁴ Here is a translation followed by a transliteration of the text found in original script in Appendix 1.

¹⁵ I thank Samten Karmay for his help with the translation of this dedication.

presumed period when Bon religion had firmly taken root in Dolpo, as well as the period of sovereignty of the Yatse kingdom over this region of Dolpo, although the extent of authority of the Yatse kingdom over Dolpo still remains to be determined.¹⁶ When Snellgrove studied the Samling texts, his principal concern was accurate understanding of the texts and their translation, while codicological aspects of the volumes, typology and provenance of the paper as well as historical aspects of the production of the manuscripts were not yet studied systematically. At present, the focus is different thanks notably to the pioneering research on material aspects of the manuscripts and paper of the western Himalayas by Agnieszka Helman-Ważny et al.¹⁷ Future research will thus be in a position to document more securely many aspects of the numerous local Bon texts remaining in Samling and in the vicinity of the village of Phijor.

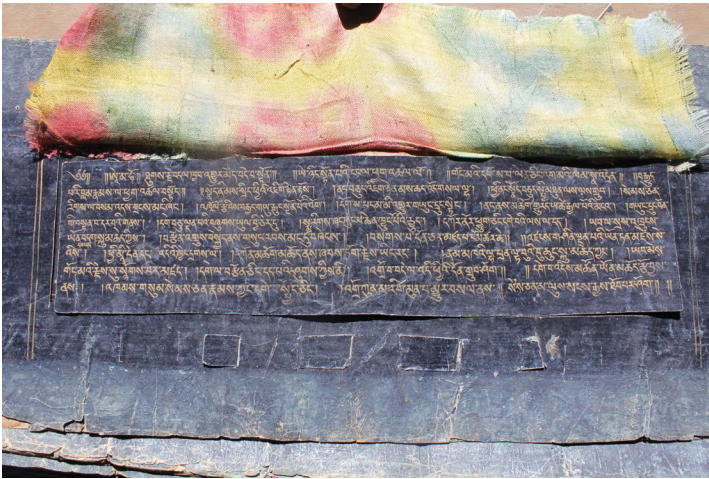


Fig. 3: Dedication leaf of a *Khams brygad* manuscript, blue paper, gold ink, Phijor, c. 22 × 65 cm, commissioned mid-fourteenth century.

Following my brief visit to the private library in 2012, additional photography has been possible thanks to Chandra B. Gurung, director of the Revival of Vijer Dolpo, a non-governmental organization responsible for the direction and administra-

¹⁶ Snellgrove 1961, 4–5; Heller 2009, 35. For example, there are no decrees or taxation documents. See Heimbel 2017, 328–329, 501.

¹⁷ Helman-Ważny 2014; Helman-Ważny and Ramble 2020.

tion of the local school and medical dispensary in Phijor. Thanks to his earlier photographic experience with the manuscripts of Nesar temple, the Phijor Buddhist sanctuary, he adopted the same protocol for the Bon manuscripts in this private library: each volume was photographed for title page(s), dedication page (if extant) followed by the first two or three leaves, and the conclusion leaf. In some cases, the volumes were lacking title pages, conclusion or dedications. That said, this protocol allows a brief examination of each volume; in some cases it has been possible to identify the texts.¹⁸ The renowned Bonpo scholar Samten Karmay has kindly reviewed these photographs and provided the title wherever possible in relation to the catalogue of Bon texts published by Per Kvaerne.¹⁹ There are copies of well known Bon texts, such as the *Khams brgyad*, the *Klu 'bum*, the *Snyan brgyud* as well as other texts which remain unidentified at present.

Similar to the manuscripts conserved in the Nesar temple in Phijor village, the Bon manuscripts demonstrate great care in calligraphy, spatial organisation and illustrations. The paper format of the majority of the Bon texts conforms to the size of the large pages, roughly 22–25 cm × 66–68 cm, typical of the Nesar Prajñāpāramitā manuscripts attributed to local Dolpo production of the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. Analysis by Helman-Ważny indicates that the paper was made from the local plants *Daphne/Edgeworthia* sp. fibres and *Stellera* sp.²⁰ The ink appears to be carbon-black and/or red ink for the buff-coloured leaves, while gold, silver and occasionally red are used on the dark blue *mthing shog* leaves. In terms of spatial organisation and layout, the majority of leaves have the text written in the central portion of the leaf with margins of varying width at right and at left, which also conforms to the Buddhist manuscript leaves. A few texts have illuminations at the two lateral margins, roughly 12 cm square, painted in bright colours. These may represent Bon deities as well as a few portraits of Bon teachers. On the whole, thanks to preservation in the dry climate of the high altitude of Dolpo, the colours remain brilliant and there is little deterioration of the pages. The dedications vary from very brief to three full pages in length, citing numerous names of local donors. In terms of chronology, the earliest dedication yet identified is the *Khams brgyad* dedication of figure 3, attributed to the period of Yatse sovereignty (Fig. 3). One may already indicate that the manuscript texts on the dedication leaves of the *Khams chen* and *Khams brgyad* volumes appear to date from approximately the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, similar to many of the volumes of manuscripts in the Phijor Bud-

18 This is a preliminary survey, as the volumes remain to be systematically inventoried.

19 Kvaerne 1974. See Appendix 2.

20 Helman-Ważny 2014, Fig. 66.

dhist temple. The main objective of commissioning copies of the sacred scriptures, both Buddhist and Bonpo, is consistently to procure well-being, good health and happiness for all sentient beings, with especial regard for the benefits of the good karma accrued for the inhabitants of Phijor, not forgetting their livestock as well as future generations, thanks to the generosity of the local donors.

Pending future research on Bon manuscripts still conserved in Dolpo, this brief report is conceived as an introduction, indicative of a long history of local production in upper Dolpo. The high quality of the manuscripts demonstrates the great spiritual devotion and the economic commitment by the local community in ancient times.

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Appendix 2: List of manuscripts in the Bonpo private library in the vicinity of Phijor

The list reads as follows with identification according to Kvaerne 1974. K and T stand for Kanjur and Tenjur respectively.

Item No.	Catalogue No.	Category/Title	Canonical Volume No.	Comments
1	9201-9224	Khams brgyad	K47	
2	9224-9277	Khams brgyad	K47	
3	9278-9284	Ritual (i) Rnam par rgyal ba		
4	9287-9201	Klu 'bum	K45	
5	9292-9293			Unidentified
6	9295-9296	Shes rab kyi bla na med par phyin pa'i snying po yongs su rdzogs pa'i mdo		Unidentified
7	9297-9305	Rdzogs chen gyi sngon 'gro phyag khrigs (khrid) pa		Unidentified
8	9306-9309	Man ngag rin po che khrid kyi 'chad thabs		Unidentified
9	9313-9315	Dge spyod yan lag gsum pa	K36	
10	9316-9318	Phyi ang gsang ba'i bon thams cad kyi gsang ba'i snying po gzungs kyi mdo		Unidentified
11	9319-9325	Snyan brgyud rin chen sgron gsal	T267	
12	9326-9328	Snyan brgyud smug gu	T264	
13	9329-9331	Rdzogs pa chen snyan brgyud rin po che nam mkha' 'phrul gyi mdzod chen	T272	
14	9332-9334	Klong rgyas kyi ting nge 'dzin gsal byed mkhas pa mi bzhis mdzad pa		Unidentified

Item No.	Catalogue No.	Category/Title	Canonical Volume No.	Comments
15	9335-9337	Shar phyogs/ Lha mo lha chen srid pa gshen rab stong la phyag 'tshal ba'i le'u		Unidentified
16	9338-9339			Unidentified
17	9340-9354	Me ri gsang ba 'khor lo'i rgyud Kham brgyad	K87	

Henk Blezer

Towards a Definition of Local Orthographies of Bon Manuscripts: A Pilot Study

Abstract: Tibetan manuscripts in general, and Bon manuscripts in particular, are often characterised by orthographic inconsistencies and multiple contracted forms (Tib. *bsdus tshig* or *bskungs yig*). While these features may be a nuisance to the reader, they deserve to be analysed more systematically: it is possible that these heterodox spellings and other scribal peculiarities, far from being random errors, may represent local writing conventions. On the basis of an extended study of facsimile reproductions of Bon manuscripts from Bsam gling monastery in Dolpo, Nepal, this chapter aims to explore the best way forward towards defining local orthographic styles and other codicological features. A major starting hypothesis to be tested is that ‘heterographies’ may help us to detect oral and written modes of transmission.

1 Introduction

Since the early nineties, together with several Bonpo Geshe and monks,¹ I have worked on a large number of facsimiles of Bon manuscripts, mostly published by Menri Monastery (Dolanji, India). Often these were published within the Library of Congress PL480 program². Many of these facsimiles are reproductions of manuscripts from the library of Bsam gling Monastery in Dolpo, Nepal, on loan to Dolanji. The regional provenance of the text, possibly of the manuscript, is usually indicated in the metadata of the facsimile publication, but the exact earlier migratory routes and provenance of the original manuscripts are yet to be established clearly. There seems to be some system or regularities to the apparent idiosyncrasies in orthography and abbreviation (or better ‘contrac-

¹ Amongst others, notably, Pönlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, Namgyal Nyima Dagkar, and Kalsang Norbu Gurung.

² Facsimile reproductions of Tibetan texts, mediated by E. Gene Smith within the frame of Public Law 480 (1954), based on an agreement between the United States and India, under the United States Food for Peace program. See <http://digitaldharma.com/cast/3/57> (accessed on 30 August 2022).

tions')³ deployed in these manuscripts. Occasionally, one can recognise different *dbu med* ('headless') writing styles and even personal hands (author, copyist) that are shared between manuscripts.⁴ An erudite informant from Dol po told me that many of the orthographic particularities observed in the manuscripts seem to relate to local conventions in Dol po rather than being indicative of poor spelling.⁵ While the Tibetan written language has been standardised at several periods, these standardisations remained limited. I annotated the major characteristics of the orthographic peculiarities that I observed by entering them into e-texts *ad litteram*,⁶ in non-emended text editions in Tibetan font (closest to diplomatic editions), and by duly recording in footnotes these presumed heterographies, which may in fact be local orthographies (both indeed often in plural), and I also suggest emendations (which therefore may occasionally be hyper-corrections), usually with the help of literate native speakers (usually Bonpo monks and scholars). These apparent orthographic peculiarities deserve to be looked into more systematically. This paper is intended as a first and indeed still very modest contribution, a pilot study of sorts, scouting the best way forward towards defining local orthographic styles of Bon manuscripts, based on the e-text files that have accumulated in my research archive. I shall report on discernible patterns and regularities but avoid commenting on common deviations from the rather obvious fiction of the currently preferred Lhasa Tibetan spelling. Editions in e-text of the most revealing manuscripts will be made available through the website *Rituals of the Bön Religion*.⁷ The choice of the facsimiles on which I have

3 In Tibetan called: *bsdus tshig* or *bskungs yig*, effectively serving both to save space and as a shorthand.

4 For issues related to the identification of Tibetan handwriting see for example Dalton et al. 2007 or Helman-Ważny and Ramble 2021, 32–34, 107–112. In recent years a number of helpful tools based on pattern recognition have been developed, including HAT 3 (Version 3.0.0) software developed by Hussein Mohammed at the CSMC (2020): <http://doi.org/10.25592/uhhfdm.902>; see also Mohammed et al. 2022.

5 Pönlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, who originally hails from Dol po (where the mentioned Bsam gling monastery is located), was able to identify some of the hands, particularly those related to his own family lineage, and point out elements of the specific *couleur locale* of Dol po spelling and style.

6 Where necessary, I designed and added customised letters to a commercial Robillard Tibetan font, in order to be able to represent unusual graphemes, exactly as they appear in the facsimiles, but then adjusted to the *dbu can* (cf. 'serif') Robillard Tibetan font style used (I used Fontographer, then developed by Altsys, now owned by FontLab Ltd.).

7 TibBon 5–7: <http://kalpa-bon.com/node/78>. TibBon 1, 2 and 4 are available as an appendix to the author's 1997 PhD thesis (Blezer 1997; see link in the bibliography) and follow a slightly different editorial policy: the original readings that have been emended in the main text were

based these editions is not random. They are part of miscellaneous collections of presumably oral or aural teaching transmissions from the so-called (*Zhang zhung sNyan rgyud* [*The*] *Aural Transmission [from Zhangzhung]*). Some variants diverge so widely that they appear to be variant manuscript transmissions in their own right, paraphrases loosely based the same teaching tradition, of which the primary mode of transmission in most cases originally may indeed have been oral. Those diverging variants highlight differences in rendering of the same or of a similar ‘text’, which in those cases comes closest to an orally transmitted teaching, not a manuscript. Another, larger and broader sample would be needed to achieve statistical significance. In the following, the facsimiles are listed with their metadata (as included in the facsimile publication), which often include tentative references to regional provenance.

1. **TibBon 1** (probably produced in A mdo): *Snyan brgyud bar do thos grol gsal sgron chen mo*, in *Zhi khro sgrub skor*, pp. 605–691, facsimile: Delhi 1967;
2. **TibBon 2** (probably A mdo): *Zhi khro bar do 'phrang grol gyi thos grol las byang bag chags rang grol*, in *dBang ldan zhu yi ring lugs kyi zhi khro'i sgrub skor*, Vol. II, pp. 249–330, facsimile: Dolanji 1975 (=I-Tib 75-903251, IASWR microfiche nur SB 774);
3. **TibBon 3** *Gsas mkhar rin po che spyi spungs zhi ba g.yung drung yongs su rdzogs pa'i 'phrin las*, Karmay (1977), 29.7, Zogai 614 (K.71);⁸
4. **TibBon 4** (from A mdo Shar pa): *Snyan rgyud thos grol bar do 'phrang sgron chen po* in *Bonpo Popular Canonical Texts*, pp. 321–429, facsimile: Dolanji 1974 (LTWA Acc.No. 808);
5. **TibBon 5** (from Bsam gling, Dol po): *Ma bcos gnyug ma'i don bstan pa'i gdams pa* and *Bar do 'od lnga ngos bzung ba'i man ngag*⁹ both in *Zhang zhung*

moved to the footnotes and numerous, unproblematic contractions have been silently resolved. For this paper, these early editions were revisited, and the original readings were reintroduced into the main text, but not the common contractions. TibBon 1–4 are different manuscript versions of one teaching, as are TibBon 6–7. All these editions, except TibBon 3 (incomplete), will also be available on the mentioned website. Research on these texts was facilitated by a 1997–2000 research fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

8 TibBon 3 is a slightly different version of TibBon 1, 2 and 4, but has not yet been fully entered into an e-text file and edited, and therefore is not included in this analysis.

9 According to the colophon, Yang ngal dpal bzang (thirteenth–fourteenth century CE) received the teaching from Slob dpon gYung drung rgyal mtshan. While the lineage is known, be it shrouded in a long and nebulous pre-history, the authors of both texts remain unknown (and no mention of a manuscript at the time). The dating of Yang ston dpal bzang remains insecure; the present dates are based on contextual cross-referencing. Yang ston dpal bzang is considered to be the author of the *Rdzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi rtsis byang themis yig rgyas pa*, an overview of historical sources on the *Zhang zhung sNyan rgyud* lineage masters. Based on

snyan rgyud kyi nam thar chen mo sogs dang brgyud phyag bcas kyi gsung pod, A collection of texts of the Bonpo *Žaṅ Žuṅ sÑan rgyud* precepts of *rDzogs chen practice*, reproduced from a manuscript from the Samling Monastery in Dolpo (north-western Nepal) by Yongs 'dzin sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin, pp. 335–344 and pp. 344–359, facsimile: Dolanji 1974;

6. **TibBon 6** (from Bsam gling, Dol po): *Bar do dus kyi sgron ma* in *Snyan rgyud rig pa gcer mthong*, Bon-po oral transmission precepts granted by Srid pa rgyal mo to Bon zig khyung nag (1103–1183),¹⁰ pp. 215–244, facsimile: Dolanji 1972;
7. **TibBon 7** ('from library in Dolanji'): *Bar do dus kyi sgron ma* in *Rare Bonpo Texts Belonging to the Abhidharma and sÑan rgyud rig pa gcer mthoṅ Cycles*, pp. 367–383, facsimile: Dolanji 1976.

TibBon 5–7 show the most numerous and most interesting variants. For those facsimiles, every orthographical peculiarity (or heterography) is marked and standardised readings are suggested in a footnote in the editions. To facilitate tracking, these footnotes numbers will additionally be referred to in footnotes to the sample Tibetan renderings below. Since the text of some of the manuscripts over time seem to have become corrupt to the point of becoming incomprehensible, occasionally, I also comment on an apparently corrupt passage or try to disentangle an obscure reading that would surely also puzzle other readers. The 'heterographies' will be juxtaposed to schoolbook 'orthographies', in Tibetan script.¹¹

2 What to look for?

The main point of this article is to evaluate, based on this non-random sample of Bon manuscripts,¹² whether recording apparent patterns of (mostly) orthographic

what lineage histories and colophons suggest and imply, he is usually dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE. Recent materials from the Mardzong cave in Mustang, analysed by Charles Ramble, put Yang ston dpal bzang in the fifteenth century, still flourishing in the later part of it (see Ramble in Helman-Ważny et al. 2018, 187 n. 169, 188 and 195–202).

10 See Achard 1998, 28–57. The colophon of TibBon 6 is difficult to parse at places: it was requested by an assistant (*do pa*) [of] A khol Bla ma at a temple called Mtha' bra(?) lding zhig, which is unknown to me.

11 Due to the nature of the graphemes, Wylie transliteration is not an option here.

12 These texts contain information that is relevant for understanding the early development of Bon ideas on intermediate states, such as between death and rebirth, which was the topic of previous research (see, e.g., Blezer 2009). I started digitizing these manuscripts from 1997

characteristics of Bon manuscripts, which I here should like to style ‘fingerprinting’, could contribute to our understanding of the transmission history and regional (or temporal) provenance of Bon manuscripts. ‘Fingerprinting’ could be complementary to more usual emic Tibetan scholarly and etic Tibetological resources, such as colophons, transmission histories (*brgyud rim*), records of teachings received (*gsan yig*) and other sources of metadata on textual transmission, such as data from informants, various genres of historical works, (auto) biographies etc, and also to etic Tibetological tools, such as content analysis, intertextuality, stemmatic analysis. Particularly intriguing is the prospect of having quantitative and qualitative data on local scribal and manuscript traditions that are ‘blind’, in the sense that that these data are not involved in traditional narratives on lineages and the like and thus appear without auctorial or researcher bias. This ‘fingerprinting’ may independently challenge or confirm some of the assumptions that are based on the mentioned emic and etic Tibetological resources. Aspects of textual transmissions that recommend themselves for closer analysis via these manuscripts are:

1. Frequency analyses: syllables, particles, words, phrases (obviously these frequencies mostly are independent of a manuscript or blockprint form in which a text is realised, and these analyses obviously recommend big data)
2. Phonetic peculiarities: these are ideal for pinning down regional features and a major starting hypothesis for this pilot study
3. Peculiarities in spelling: here one should distinguish dialectal or historical variants and plain errors
4. Abbreviations, *bsdus yig/tshig* or *bskungs yig*: frequency, types, typical irregularities; N.B.: the principle of economy may overrule phonetics here, as some of the examples will show: some prefer a shorter version above a orthographically correct one
5. Grammatical peculiarities
6. Palaeography and identification of hands

onward, over several research projects. Most of them I read carefully with the unstinting help of Menri Geshe Namgyal Nyima Dagkar, without whose learned assistance and keen eye I would not have been able to resolve many irregularities in spelling and corruptions in the texts. Pönlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, the head teacher of the Menri Shedra, has been invaluable in resolving remaining problems. I of course take full responsibility for the errors in interpretation and emendation but can claim little merit for the parts that are right. The following paragraph is complementary to the standard reference work on *Codicology, Paleography, and Orthography of Early Tibetan Documents* published by Dotson and Helman-Ważny 2016, fording later stages of Tibetan writing.

7. Page layout: number of lines, measurements of margins, frames, and other elements of the layout (examining paper types obviously would require liberal access to the originals)
8. Conventions for annotation, correction, and deletion

In this article I only shall consider items 2 through 5, all briefly and in varying levels of detail. For the relative frequencies of occurrences, the reader is referred to the text editions; but whenever a variant occurs more often than once, the number of occurrences appears in parentheses after the reference to the text location in the footnote. Several colleagues, such as Sam van Schaik, Brandon Dotson and one of the editors of this volume, Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, have been working on items 6 through 8 for quite some time, with excellent results; this pilot study intends to be complementary to their efforts, looking at other aspects (2 through 5) and slightly different time periods.¹³ Specifically for Buddhist sources, Michael Radich has opened the first-mentioned item as a fruitful avenue for research with TACL.¹⁴ To the best of my knowledge, for Tibetan sources this computer-assisted, quantitative and statistical approach is still in its infancy. However, digital resources, for instance at the BDRC¹⁵ and THL,¹⁶ are presently growing exponentially and have been accumulating data to a point where computer-assisted quantitative and statistical approaches may become viable and perhaps even recommended options to pursue in the near future; hence this pilot study. Access to big data is obviously a prerequisite and we may indeed have reached that critical point of mass where, purely from a quantitative point of view, statistical analyses seem to have become real options. But this will put demands on qualifying editions in electronic form, which still remains a bottleneck and a desideratum. For that reason, statistical computation falls outside the scope of this article, which has had to focus on a small and non-random selection of sufficiently qualified input. Recommendations for such future engagements and critical reflection on research strategies, however, are part of the goals of this pilot study.

13 E.g., Dotson and Helman-Ważny 2016 and Van Schaik 2007.

14 The TACL text analysis software suite, developed by Michael Radich and Jamie Norris, specifically designed for the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA), but adjustable for other corpora (see <https://pythonhosted.org/tacl/>; this website and all others quoted in this article were accessed on 30 August 2022).

15 See <https://www.tbrc.org/>.

16 See <http://www.thlib.org/>, with a wealth of digital scans, e-texts, OCR, outlines, various metadata, and the like.

2.1 Phonetic peculiarities: possibly regional features

Initially, the inquiry into phonetic peculiarities and irregularities seemed to hold great promise, particularly for coming to grips with the complex oral *cum* written traditions of Bon manuscripts. Variant readings suggestive of oral transmission and written variants seemed helpful for separating one mode from the other more clearly, and also promised tools for using dialect features to localise manuscripts in view of their lineage histories, as far as they are known. The oral-written divide was therefore a starting hypothesis for this pilot. As I shall argue below, however, these initial hopes may have been only partly warranted.

As is well known, older Bon texts are notoriously difficult to date and (particularly when they are very early) often have long and complex histories, with multiple revisions. Even texts that appear to have genuinely early origins may be available only in surprisingly recent recensions. Their early readings and origins hide behind opaque and incremental layers of sometimes up to a millennium of additions and revisions; not to mention the copying, not always very careful, by scribes, who often will silently emend texts according to their own linguistic abilities and understanding (a clear and clean text, up to the latest standards, is usually preferred over an old, original reading). There is plenty of information on transmission of teachings, but very little on copyists and manuscripts. Manuscripts and people move about and copyists, obviously, do not necessarily hail from the same region as the original author(s). Bonpo lineages also often could not afford prestigious, sponsored, standardised and proof-read wood-carved editions. If they did (for example, the wood-carved version of *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud* texts published by Lokesh Chandra and Tenzin Namdak, Delhi 1968), there are often indeed noticeable differences, resulting in higher-quality, proofed redactions. However, this is not always the case, as can be seen in the difference between the high quality of the blockprints of Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan's collected works in his own Teng chen dgon wood-carved edition and the edition that was later typeset in metal type in the People's Republic of China, which, according to the late Menri Abbot, Lung rtogs bstan pa'i nyi ma rin po che, involved barely literate lay people, often young girls, chatting and typesetting at the same time.

In any case, frequent renewal by copying of worn-out or damaged manuscripts often results in an increasingly opaque transmission, allows for intractable changes, and also invites alterations and corruptions. Indeed, a lower frequency of reproduction obviously also favours preservation of older readings

(such as, based on preliminary comparisons, I strongly suspect to be the case with the *textus receptus* of the Bon 'Bum bzhi vis-à-vis that of the *Rgyud bzhi*).¹⁷

An additional complicating factor is that producing, copying or multiplying manuscripts often involves reading out a text aloud, while others write the recited text down.¹⁸ Therefore, dialect peculiarities may be less indicative of the author or area of origin of a text than one might perhaps be inclined to assume at first. Markers of local language influences indeed could have entered the complex history of transmission of Bon manuscripts at various points. For instance, the texts used for this analysis, the provenance of which is identified as (possibly) A mdo, PRC, in fact show relatively few Eastern Tibetan linguistic influences compared to those that are associated with Dol po; and this study takes into account fluke occurrences due to writing mistakes (such as, possibly, omitting the Tibetan diacritics for vowels; see, for example, the first instance below, where the omissions of the 'g^{reng bu} ('e') and *gi gu* ('i') diacritics may be easily mistaken for different vowel renderings indicative of Eastern dialects).

- (A mdo?, TibBon 1¹⁹): ལྷ་བཞུག་ ལྷ་བཞུག་ (cf. Dol po TibBon 7, below)
- (A mdo?, TibBon 2²⁰): འོག་མེན་ འོག་མེན་ (this may also be due to writing conventions, such as the style of rendering of *gi gu* ("i") and 'g^{reng bu} ("e") diacritics?);
- (Dol po, TibBon 6): བང་ བངས་;²¹ cf. བང་ བོང་ (writing);²² ལྷ་བཞུག་;²³ ཡེད་ ཡེད་;²⁴ ཆ་ ཆེ་;²⁵ རྩ་མ་ རྩ་མ་ (writing?);²⁶ རེང་ རེང་ རེངས་;²⁷ བང་ བོང་;²⁸ ཆེས་ ཆོས་ འཆོས་ (writing?²⁹, also in TibBon 7);³⁰ ལྷ་ལྷ་;³¹

¹⁷ See Blezer 2007 and 2012 (which includes a sample textual comparison, see p. 143).

¹⁸ While this information was shared by several of my informants and is occasionally alluded to in secondary sources (e.g., Silk 1994, 14), I am not aware of any detailed studies that are available in publication. Schaeffer 2014, 22 discusses vocalising texts while proofreading.

¹⁹ See TibBon 1, note 9; henceforth TibBon1:9.

²⁰ TibBon2:37.

²¹ TibBon6:288.

²² TibBon6:7.

²³ TibBon6:495.

²⁴ TibBon6:530, 531 (2).

²⁵ TibBon6:532.

²⁶ TibBon6:173.

²⁷ TibBon6:430.

²⁸ TibBon6:7.

²⁹ TibBon6:105.

³⁰ TibBon7:115

³¹ TibBon6:371.

- (Dol po, TibBon 7): འདུས་པ་ འདས་པ་;³² མ་ཡངས་ མ་ཡངས་;³³ ལྷལ་ ལྷལ་ (?);³⁴ རག་བྱ་ རིག་བྱ་;³⁵ ལྷེ་རངས་ ལྷེ་རིང་ (cf. also A mdo, TibBon 1, above);³⁶ ཆ་རིགས་ ཆེ་རགས་;³⁷ ལྷག་པ་ ལྷག་པ་;³⁸ ལྷངས་པ་ ལྷང་པ་ (writing?);³⁹ ལྷོང་ ལྷོང་ (writing?).⁴⁰

2.2 Phonetic and spelling peculiarities: general features

During the workshop in Hamburg in March 2018, Sam van Schaik kindly pointed out to me that he has had to change his mind on what initially appeared to be oral features of irregularities in textual transmission.⁴¹ Apparently, even when copied by hand and without aural intermediaries, phonetic factors will still enter into the fray, because of the way in which the human brain processes language. Human language is typically first acquired through listening and vocalising, and we simply seem to be hard-wired that way. Also, when visually engaged in reading and writing, the auditory cortex is still involved (e.g., detectable in the motor activity, such as of the movement of the lips in silent reading).⁴² Phonetic mistakes, such as substitution with a phonetic equivalent (homophone) that is semantically different, are thus not necessarily indicative of oral transmission.

- (A mdo ?, TibBon 1 & 2): ལྷེ་རི་ ཅི་རིགས་;⁴³ (A mdo?, TibBon 2): ལྷོང་ ལྷོང་;⁴⁴

³² TibBon7:166.

³³ TibBon7:231, 246, 475, 921, 922 (5).

³⁴ TibBon7:253.

³⁵ TibBon7:296.

³⁶ TibBon7:541.

³⁷ TibBon7:708.

³⁸ TibBon7:885.

³⁹ TibBon7:418.

⁴⁰ TibBon7:346.

⁴¹ See, for example, the initial hypotheses and research set up in van Schaik 2007, 183–208.

⁴² See, for example, Perrone-Bertolotti et al. 2012.

⁴³ TibBon1:5, TibBon2:31.

⁴⁴ TibBon2:23.

- (Dol po, TibBon 5): འཕྲུལ་ འོ་པོར་;⁴⁵ ཚེན་ལོ་ ཚེན་པོ་;⁴⁶ ལྷོ་ མགོ་པོ་;⁴⁷ རེས་ རང་ (cf. TibBon 7 མགོ་ལོ་ མགོ་པོ་; ལྷོ་ལོ་ ལྷོ་པོ་)^{48,49} ཅེན་པོ་ བཅེན་པོ་;⁵⁰ སྲོད་པར་ བསྲོད་པར་;⁵¹ འབྲིས་པར་ འབྲིས་པར་;⁵²
- (Dol po, TibBon 6): འབྲུམས་ འཇམ་;⁵³ གཡར་ འབྲར་;⁵⁴ བཅད་ ལྷུད་;⁵⁵
- (Dol po, TibBon 7): ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་;⁵⁶ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་;⁵⁷ ལྷོད་ འབྲུད་;⁵⁸ ཚེན་ལོ་ འབྲེལ་;⁵⁹ འཕྲུལ་པར་ འཕྲུལ་པར་ (writing?);⁶⁰ འབྲུལ་ འབྲུལ་;⁶¹ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་;⁶² སྲོད་པར་ འབྲུལ་པར་;⁶³ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་;⁶⁴ སྲོད་ སྲོད་;⁶⁵ འབྲུལ་ འབྲུལ་;⁶⁶ འབྲུལ་ འབྲུལ་;⁶⁷ འབྲུལ་ འབྲུལ་;⁶⁸ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་;⁶⁹ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ འབྲུལ་;⁷⁰ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འབྲུལ་;⁷¹ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་;⁷² འབྲུལ་ འབྲུལ་;⁷³ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་.⁷⁴

45 TibBon5:20, 21 (2).

46 TibBon5:53.

47 TibBon5:294.

48 TibBon7:174 and TibBon7:454.

49 TibBon5:235.

50 TibBon5:286.

51 TibBon5:317.

52 TibBon5:405.

53 TibBon6:319.

54 TibBon6:479.

55 TibBon6:636.

56 TibBon7:3.

57 TibBon7:25.

58 TibBon7:51, 53, 882 (3)

59 TibBon7:179.

60 TibBon7:183.

61 TibBon7:234.

62 TibBon7:291.

63 TibBon7:298.

64 TibBon7:321.

65 TibBon7:334.

66 TibBon7:385, 399, 400, 401 (4).

67 TibBon7:469.

68 TibBon7:436.

69 TibBon7:437, 696 (2).

70 TibBon7:439.

71 TibBon7:648.

72 TibBon7:756, 828 (2).

73 TibBon7:831.

74 TibBon7:835.

2.3 Peculiarities in spelling: scribal ‘errors’

Many of the instances below, and above, may also not be so much structural features of language production and manuscript transmission as simply indicate that in family lineages and small monastic environments not all copyists/writers were highly literate. Some variants are clearly due to typical *dbu med* (‘headless’; cf. sans serif) reading/writing errors, such as confusing graphemes that look similar specifically in *dbu med*; or also elisions (that is, not rendering letters); and, very frequently, a different understanding or lack of knowledge of sandhi rules for particles.

- (A mdo?, TibBon 1): ལྷན་ བདུན་ (typical *dbu med* copying problem);⁷⁵
- (A mdo?, TibBon 2): རེགས་ རེས་ (elision);⁷⁶
- (A mdo, TibBon 4): ལྷན་ གཡོན་ (*dbu med* scribal problem; cf. TibBon 6: ལྷན་ ཡན་);⁷⁷
- (Dol po, TibBon 5): ལྷ་ ཅི་ (and vice versa TibBon 6);⁷⁸ ལྷ་ ཅི་ (TibBon 6);⁷⁹
- (Dol po, TibBon 6): ཀ་པ་ལ་ ཀང་ལག་;⁸⁰
- (Dol po, TibBon 7): དམིག་ མིང་ (da’o may be an *dbu med* copying problem: preceding *tsheg*);⁸¹ ཁྲིལ་ འཁྲིལ་;⁸²
- (For most of the samples): And indeed, following up on the last lemma, many *sngon* ‘jug and *yang* ‘jug consonants are dropped or, occasionally, also added;
- (For most of the samples): Ditto for superscripts;
- Also, note many switches between medial and surd consonants of the same class, occasionally including aspiration.

2.4 Peculiarities in spelling: idiomatic, ‘unclear status’, and scribal ‘peculiarities’?

In this category we find preferential spellings of technical terms (such as *rtog pa* vs *rtogs pa* below: i.e., dual and non-dual modes of understanding), which at

⁷⁵ TibBon1:12.

⁷⁶ TibBon2:28.

⁷⁷ TibBon4:57. TibBon6:405, 447

⁷⁸ TibBon5:56, 225, 236, 385 (4); TibBon6:405, 447, 484, 487, 505, 507, 508, 535, 537, 560, 621, 626, 629, 662, 677 (15). Vice versa, TibBon6:463, 467 (2).

⁷⁹ TibBon6:75, cf. 73 (1/2).

⁸⁰ TibBon6:271.

⁸¹ TibBon7:184.

⁸² TibBon7:377.

some point in Bon (*rdzogs chen*) literature assumed special meaning and were systematically distinguished,⁸³ but in later literature these technical terms may still appear confused (due to scribal inaccuracies). I have also included one entry to show the broad spread of ‘variant’ spellings, which, in the end, basically includes all possible spelling options in Tibetan (*tog pa* (*rtogs pa*), *stog pa* (*gtogs pa*)).

- (A mdo?, TibBon 2): མ་རྟོག་ མ་རྟོགས་ (later, technical *rdzogs chen* terminology)⁸⁴ cf. clearly erroneous spellings of the same, e.g. (Dol po, TibBon 6): མེ་སྟོག་པ་ མ་རྟོགས་པ་;⁸⁵
- Cf. also (Dol po, TibBon 7): རྟོག་པ་ རྟོགས་པ་;⁸⁶ སྟོག་པ་ གརྟོགས་པ་;⁸⁷

2.5 Peculiarities in spelling (also phonetic?): prescripts

Some of the alterations below are extremely frequent and occasionally appear almost at random. The second in the list, *sngon 'jug 'a* ↔ *ma*, is so common as to suggest a different preferred spelling (and also happens to appear very frequently in older Tibetan sources). In modern pronunciation, phonetically, they are roughly equivalent, but one may wonder whether, through time and space, they always were. We would need bigger data sets and would need to correlate those with metadata, such as time, region, scribe or scribal workshop and the like, in order to pursue this meaningfully. Here too, the biggest obstacle remains the need for non-emended and preferably tagged editions in electronic form, that, alas, are not customary practice for most colleagues, whether they be producing e-texts for their provisional private use or are involved in the production of e-texts at the major digital resource centres. Random distribution of variant spellings in extant Bon sources (which for organised Bon do not reach far beyond the tenth/eleventh century CE), barring any oral enclosures or preserved relics that give access to earlier linguistic phases, would argue against any high hopes for ever recovering the earliest Tibetan phonetic values of prescripts. However, later phonetic shifts, such as developments of tones and the weakening of pronunciation of prescripts, may be detectable. The data we have from Bon sources, particularly those that we

⁸³ I am not sure when precisely, but Menri Pönlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche informed me that he has not seen a clear distinction being made before the thirteenth century CE.

⁸⁴ TibBon2:1.

⁸⁵ TibBon6:540.

⁸⁶ TibBon7:535.

⁸⁷ TibBon7:572.

may presume to be early, deserve to be studied on a par with phonological transcriptions from Tangut and sources in Old Tibetan.⁸⁸ This would need to be done in collaboration with linguists. In any case, I would advise against dismissing the variance observed in this particular section as mere spelling errors.

- (Dol po, TibBon 5): *sngon ’jug ba* ↔ *ga* བདམས་པ་ བདམས་པ་ (cf. TibBon 7 དམ་པ་ བདམས་པ་)^{89,90} བཞིས་ བཞིས་;⁹¹ but also: བཙུག་ བཙུག་;⁹²
- ’a ↔ *ma* འཛོང་ མཐོང་;⁹³ འཁར་ མཁར་;⁹⁴ འཆིར་པ་ མཆིར་པ་;⁹⁵ འཁལ་མ་ མཁལ་མ་;⁹⁶ འཆེན་པ་ མཆེན་པ་;⁹⁷ but cf. འདུན་པ་ འདུན་པ་;⁹⁸ and cf. མེན་ འགོན་ མགོན་;⁹⁹
- *da’o* ↔ *sa-mgo* དཀོར་ མོར་ (TibBon 6);¹⁰⁰
- (Dol po, TibBon 6): *sngon ’jug ma* ↔ *ga* མཉུག་མ་ བཉུག་མ་.¹⁰¹

2.6 Peculiarities in spelling (also phonetic?): superscripts

As in the previous category, many of the alternative spellings of superscripts¹⁰² also deserve to be taken seriously for the study of their possible phonological values in Tibetan dialects and in historical linguistics, in view of older language phases, rather than to be dismissed as mere spelling errors.

- (Dol po, TibBon 5): *ra-mgo* ↔ *ga’o* ཉོད་ གཏོད་ (also in TibBon 7,¹⁰³ cf. also ཟུན་ གཏན་;¹⁰⁴ ཉི་ལྷག་ གཏི་ལྷག་;¹⁰⁵ and ཉི་ལྷག་ གཏི་ལྷག་)^{106,107} ཉེན་ ཉན་ གཏན་ (cf. vice versa,

⁸⁸ Cf. Tai 2008.

⁸⁹ TibBon7:560.

⁹⁰ TibBon5:1, 197, 363, 404, 417 (5).

⁹¹ TibBon5:4, 206 (2).

⁹² TibBon5:164.

⁹³ TibBon5:32, 366 (2).

⁹⁴ TibBon5:250.

⁹⁵ TibBon5:331.

⁹⁶ TibBon5:337.

⁹⁷ TibBon5:350.

⁹⁸ TibBon5:390.

⁹⁹ TibBon5:400.

¹⁰⁰ TibBon6:95.

¹⁰¹ TibBon6:440.

¹⁰² Meaning, superscribed letters (*mgo*: ‘head’) in Tibetan orthography.

¹⁰³ TibBon7:647, 935 (2).

¹⁰⁴ TibBon7:713.

¹⁰⁵ TibBon7:353.

¹⁰⁶ TibBon7:456.

¹⁰⁷ TibBon5:9.

- TibBon 6: གདན་པ་ བནན་པ་;¹⁰⁸ also: གདོད་ ཉོད་;¹⁰⁹ cf. also TibBon 7 ལྷོང་ གདོང་)¹¹⁰;¹¹¹ ལུག་ གཅུག་ (cf. TibBon 7 ལུན་ བཅན་);¹¹² ཉིང་ གདིང་;¹¹³
- ra-mgo ↔ da'o ཀའ་ དཀའ་;¹¹⁴
 - ra-mgo ↔ sa-mgo ལྷས་ ལྷས་ (TibBon 6, cf. TibBon7);¹¹⁵ ལྷལ་ བརྟལ་;¹¹⁶ ལྷོན་ ལོ་ ལྷོན་ ལོ་ (TibBon 7);¹¹⁷
 - (Dol po, TibBon 7): ལྷུ་མ་ཁན་ ལྷུ་མ་ལཁན་;¹¹⁸ but cf. ལྷོལ་མ་ ལྷོལ་མ་;¹¹⁹ ལྷས་ ལྷས་ (cf. TibBon 6);¹²⁰ ལྷ་ ལྷ་ (semantic);¹²¹ ལྷང་ ལྷོངས་;¹²² ལྷོངས་ ལྷོངས་;¹²³
 - Cf. (Dol po, TibBon 6)¹²⁴: sa-mgo ↔ ra-mgo བལྷན་པ་ བནན་པ་ (cf. TibBon 7 ལྷན་པ་ བནན་པ་;¹²⁵ cf. ལྷན་པ་ གདན་པ་)¹²⁶ and vice versa ལྷ་ ལྷ་;¹²⁷
 - (Dol po, TibBon 5): ra-mgo ↔ 'a ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་;¹²⁸
 - (ba+)ra-mgo ↔ aspiration *ming gzhi*; ལྷོ་མ་མར་ ལྷོགས་མར་ (A mdo, TibBon 2);¹²⁹ བལྷག་མ་ ལྷོག་མ་ ལྷོགས་མ་ (A mdo, TibBon 4);¹³⁰
 - Also to be noted are certain rarer exchanges of (other) superscripts, such as sa-mgo ↔ la-mgo བལྷོད་པ་ ལྷོག་པ་ (Dol po, TibBon6);¹³¹
 - Cf. (Dol po, TibBon 5): elision ལྷུགས་ ལྷུགས་ (not discussed separately, only mentioned as a class of elision).¹³²

108 TibBon6:220.

109 TibBon6:363.

110 TibBon7:328.

111 TibBon5:77.

112 TibBon5:191, 193, 195, 410, 415 (5).

113 TibBon5:330.

114 TibBon5:344.

115 TibBon6:58.

116 TibBon7:580.

117 TibBon7:619.

118 TibBon7:45.

119 TibBon7:57, 458, 653, 781 (4).

120 TibBon7:60.

121 TibBon7:112, 283 (2).

122 TibBon7:123.

123 TibBon7:140.

124 TibBon6:360.

125 TibBon7:34, 241, 446 (3).

126 TibBon7:713.

127 TibBon6:685.

128 TibBon5:29, 33, 266 (3).

129 TibBon2:20.

130 TibBon4:5.

131 TibBon6:273.

132 TibBon5:333.

2.7 Peculiarities in spelling (also phonetic?): final consonant

Perhaps the most remarkable part in this section concerns presumably archaic morphological features, which in some contexts (and usually only together with other such archaic features) are indicative of archaisms, for instance, the frequent appearance of a *rjes 'jug 'a*, a feature that is well-known from old Tibetan sources (such as from Dunhuang). Even in instances where the *rjes 'jug 'a* appears to be a feature that is not present in later spellings, it may also (instead) indicate regional (other) spelling preferences, possibly with phonetic value (which may once more caution against their usefulness as markers of antiquity by themselves). While, as mentioned, this particular feature is very prominent in Bon sources, it is not always clear whether these *rjes 'jug 'a* are always genuine heterographies pertaining to the locality of the manuscripts or whether they were perhaps crafted to make the text appear old.

- (Dol po, TibBon 5): *rjes 'jug 'a* (cf. Dunhuang) ཀལའ་ ཀལ་;¹³³ cf. ཀློ་ ཀལ་;¹³⁴ (cf. vice versa TibBon 7 ཏ་ ཏ་;¹³⁵ ཀལའ་མ་ ཀལའ་མ་;¹³⁶ གུད་ གུད་);¹³⁷ དགེའ་བ་ དགེའ་བ་;¹³⁸ དཔེའ་ དཔེའ་;¹³⁹ བདེའ་ བདེའ་;¹⁴⁰ དེའ་ དེའ་;¹⁴¹ མཚོའ་བ་ མཚོའ་བ་;¹⁴² but cf. also གཞལ་ གཞལ་ (cf. TibBon 7 ཞལ་ཚོན་ གཞལ་ཚོན་)^{143,144} བདེའ་ བདེའ་;¹⁴⁵
- Cf. also (Dol po, TibBon 5) འཁྲུག་ འཁྲུག་ (not discussed separately, only mentioned as a type of elision)¹⁴⁶
- See also other peculiarities, such as (also TibBon 7): མྲེ་ མྲེ་.¹⁴⁷

133 TibBon5:11.

134 TibBon5:40.

135 TibBon7:156.

136 TibBon7:187.

137 TibBon7:579.

138 TibBon5:107, 115, 377, 378, 379 (5).

139 TibBon5:402.

140 TibBon5:151, 153, 258, 297, 310, 314, 316, 359 (8).

141 TibBon5:110.

142 TibBon5:391.

143 TibBon7:47, 435 (2).

144 TibBon5:117.

145 TibBon5:300, 302 (2).

146 TibBon5:108, 112 (2).

147 TibBon7:614.

2.8 Peculiarities in spelling (perhaps also phonetic?): subjoined letters

This section may have similar value for (historical) linguistics and regional language developments as have the previous two. The alterations between *ha-btags* ↔ *sngon 'jug 'a* seem interesting for a possible assessment of (local) phonetical value of the *sngon 'jug 'a*, which may be realized not just as a prefixed nasal (which is the common value in later Tibetan), but as aspiration of a voiced plosive consonant. The *ya-btags* ↔ *sngon 'jug ga* and *rjes 'jug ga* conform to regular shorthand *bdsus yig* or *bskungs yig* conventions.

- (Dol po, TibBon 5): *ha-btags* ↔ *sngon 'jug 'a* ལྷག་ འགག་;¹⁴⁸
- ལྷགས་པའི་ འབབས་པའི་;¹⁴⁹ ལྷག་པ་ འབབ་པ་;¹⁵⁰ (see also TibBon 7 ལྷར་ འབར་)¹⁵¹
- *ha-btags* ↔ *sngon 'jug ma* ལྷོ་ མགོ་;¹⁵²
- *ya-btags* ↔ *sngon 'jug ga* ལྷིར་ གསེར་;¹⁵³ ལྷིན་ གཤེན་;¹⁵⁴ ལྷུངས་པ་ གསུངས་པ་;¹⁵⁵
- But also *rjes 'jug ga* ལྷ་ འག་;¹⁵⁶ ལྷོ་ ཆེག་;¹⁵⁷ མཚོ་ མཚོག་.¹⁵⁸

2.9 Abbreviations/Contractions

As is well known, a large number of *bdsus yig* or *bskungs yig* are used in Bon manuscripts, something that is particularly evident in TibBon 5, 6 and 7. Some are so numerous and common as effectively to replace the otherwise unabbreviated and ‘regular’ spelling (such as the ubiquitous final consonant ར་, for final གས་) and therefore defeat exhaustive annotation. There are many hand lists and reference works available for regular *bdsus yig* or *bskungs yig* and here I shall only mention some atypical, apparently deviating Bon examples (the extant hand lists notwithstanding, there would be merit in collecting them further from these and other Bon manuscripts, also with a view on taking stock of such peculiarities,

148 TibBon5:7.

149 TibBon5:78.

150 TibBon5:365.

151 TibBon7:689.

152 TibBon5:294 ; Cf. 349.

153 TibBon5:30; cf. *bdsus yig*.

154 TibBon5:189, 264, 282, 321, 324, 326 (6); cf. *bdsus yig*.

155 TibBon5:198; cf. *bdsus yig*.

156 TibBon5:104.

157 TibBon5:201.

158 TibBon5:259.

by way of further ‘fingerprinting’). Bon manuscripts generally exhibit a greater economy than the Buddhist manuscripts that I am familiar with, as seen in the copious use of contractions, with the elision of elements that are usually retained for secure identification (first item); but then there is also the use of elements that seem superfluous (second item) or even erroneous (third item); and there are miscellaneous oddities as well. Particularly intriguing is the last item: consistently, the superfluous vowel diacritic *gi gu* seems to be added only if there is a *rjes* ‘jug’ consonant present, with only one exception, in rather frequent occurrences; there seems to be a pattern here.

- (A mdo?, TibBon 2): ‘economy’: དངོས་, usually: དངོས་ དངོས་གྲུབ་;¹⁵⁹ འདོར་ འདོད་ འཁྲིར་;¹⁶⁰
- (A mdo, TibBon 4): ཞུང་ ཞུང་དོང་ (cf. *'dren pa*) ཞུང་དོང་;¹⁶¹ (Dol po, TibBon 5):
- (Dol po, TibBon 5): ཟླེད་ ཟླེའོད་ ཟླེད་ གཟུགས་མེད་ (see the ubiquitous use of ‘na log’ for ‘med’ here: ས་ མེད་)¹⁶²; ¹⁶³ གཟུའོད་ གཟུའོད་ བཟིད་ (is there a sense of phonetic equivalence between ‘ja’ and ‘bya’, thus erroneously retaining a *ya-btags*?);¹⁶⁴ ཞུང་པ་མེ་ ཞུང་མེ་མེ་ ཞུང་ཞུང་མེ་མེ་;¹⁶⁵
- (Dol po, TibBon 7): ལྷོ་མ་ ལྷོ་མ་གསུམ་;¹⁶⁶ རྗེང་འོད་ སེང་འོད་ སེང་གའོད་;¹⁶⁷ རལ་ གཉེས་ལས་;¹⁶⁸ ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་ (the numeral 2 here seems to be used for *sgra*?)¹⁶⁹
- economy: (Dol po, TibBon 5): འོན་བཞེན་ and¹⁷⁰ འོར་གཞེར་;¹⁷¹ cf. འོ་བཞེ་ and¹⁷² འོ་གཞེ་ (with only one exception for both).¹⁷³

159 TibBon2:24.

160 TibBon2:27.

161 TibBon4:62.

162 TibBon5:passim (64).

163 TibBon5:109.

164 TibBon5:119.

165 TibBon5:280.

166 TibBon7:198.

167 TibBon7:225.

168 TibBon7:299.

169 TibBon7:318.

170 TibBon5:121, 261, 254, 273 (4).

171 TibBon5:141, 156 (2).

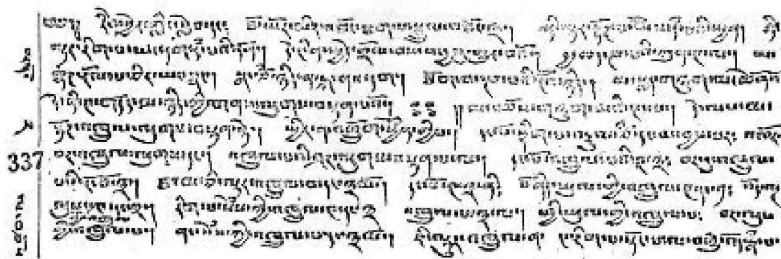
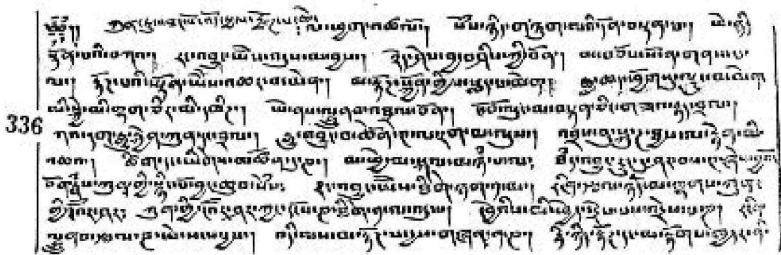
172 TibBon5:12.

173 TibBon5:17, 38, 44, 45, 50, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62, 96, 100, 102, 159, 179, 186, 199, 209, 213, 215, 216, 217, 218, 221, 222, 329, 358, 374, 384, 413, 414 (33).

2.10 Grammatical peculiarities

- Deviating or different use of particles, perhaps indicative of erosion of grammatical distinctions (e.g. genitive and ‘instrumental, agentive, or ergative’; almost at random; see the e-texts);
- Deviating use of the aspect of verbs (this is very frequent; see the editions).

Compare for example, the following brief passage from TibBon 5 in the facsimile (fols 336–337), in the edition (original readings), and with all variants normalised and short-hand contractions resolved (note the different conventions regarding the use of a final *tsheg* (inter-syllable dot) before the final *shad* caesura (‘period’); note also the greater economy of the original, in writing and in paper use:



Non-emended e-text, 336.7–337.4: བོན་རྣམས་ཀུན་གྱི་སྤོང་པོ་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་མཉམ་ རང་འབྲུང་ཡི་ཤེས་ཐོག་གི་
 ལེ་ཉག་ཀ་མ། རང་བཞིན་ཅུལ་ཉིང་མ་ཟགས་ཀུན་གྱིང་འཛེག་པ། ཀུན་གྱིང་འཛེག་པ་ཀྱང་དངོས་ཤིག་ལེ་ལ་འདུས།
 དབྱིངས་མི་ཕྱིང་གིས་པས་འདྲིས་པ་ཤ། རང་བཞིན་ལྷན་གྲུབ་ཅུལ་ཤི་སངས་རྒྱུས། འདྲི་ལས་མ་རྟོག་སངས་རྒྱུས་གཞན་ན་ཤ།
 རི་ཉིང་རྟོག་དང་མ་རྟོགས་ཁྱད་པར་ནི། །།༩༩།། རེན་ཆེན་གྱི་རྒྱུང་སྤོང་སྤོང་དང་། ཐོ་ཡོར་མི་ར་འཐོང་གསལ་ཕྱུལ་མ་ཐོང་འདྲ། འདྲི་
 ལྷར་རྟོག་པ་ཡི་ཤེས་དམ་པའི་རྒྱན། རི་ལྷར་རིག་པ་ཡང་དག་དམ་པའི་དོན། དེ་ལིན་གྱིད་གྲོལ་བས་སངས་རྒྱུས་སུ་གྱུར་བའོ།
 རྒྱ་ཆད་ཤི་པའི་ཀུན་ལོ་ལ། མ་རྟོག་པོ་པ་ཅེར་ཡང་སྤོང། སྤོང་ཅམ་ཉིང་ན་ཀུན་སངས། ཐོག་མ་ཤི་པའི་དོང་ཉིང་། མ་སྤོང་
 གཉལ་མ་ཆེན་འོ་དེ་ནི་ལ་གདོད་མ་ཉིང་གྱི་གནས་ལུགས་བསྟན་པའོ། །།

Normalised (Lhasa Tibetan): བོན་རྣམས་ཀུན་གྱི་སྤོང་པོ་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་མཉམ་ རང་འབྲུང་ཡི་ཤེས་ཐོག་གི་ཉག་
 ལེ་ཉག་ཀ་མ། རང་བཞིན་ཅུལ་ཉིང་མ་ཟགས་ཀུན་གྱིང་འཛེག་པ། ཀུན་གྱིང་འཛེག་པ་ཀྱང་དངོས་ཤིག་ལེ་གཉམ་ལ་འདུས།

དེའི་ཕྱི་མེ་ཕྱིད་སྲིས་པས་འདྲིས་པ་མེད། རང་བཞིན་ལྷན་གྲུབ་ཅུལ་མེད་ཡི་སངས་རྒྱལ། འདི་ལས་མ་རྟོགས་སངས་རྒྱལ་
གཞན་ན་མེད། འདི་ཉིད་རྟོགས་དང་མ་རྟོགས་བྱུང་པར་ནི་ །།³²།། རིན་ཆེན་གསེར་སྒྲིབ་སྤྲེལ་དང་། ཐོ་ཡོར་མིར་མ་བློང་ཐག་
པ་སྐྱུལ་མ་བློང་འདྲ། འདི་ལྟར་རྟོགས་པ་ཡི་ཤེས་དམ་པའི་རྟུན། འདི་ལྟར་རེག་པ་ཡང་དག་དམ་པའི་དོན། དེ་བཞིན་གཉིས་མེད་
སྐོལ་བས་སངས་རྒྱལ་སྲ་གྲུར་བའོ། རྒྱ་ཆད་མེད་པའི་ཀུན་གཞི་ལ། མ་འགགས་རྣམས་པ་ཅེར་ཡང་སྤང་། སྤང་ཅམ་ཉིད་ན་ཀུན་ས་ན་
ས་དག། ཐོག་མ་མེད་པའི་དོ་བོ་ཉིད། མ་སྤང་བཅུག་མ་ཆེན་པོ་དེ་ནི་གཞི་གདོད་མ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས་ལུགས་བཟུན་པའོ། །

3 Conclusions

Upon closer reflection, while the working hypothesis and hopes for pinning down oral and written modes of transmission based on examining peculiarities in orthography as found in Bon manuscripts may not have completely evaporated, they may have become a little fainter in the process of reporting and reflecting on these findings, since the matter of oral and written modes of transmission may be more convoluted than one might have presumed at first. Nonetheless, many of the deviating or alternative spellings and writing conventions still promise to provide useful data for historical linguistics of Tibetan and for our understanding of regional language developments.

The initial goal of evaluating the utility of morphological data in Bon manuscript traditions for ‘fingerprinting’ texts is complicated by the highly involved nature of the morphological variance, such as the entangled registers of oral and textual transmissions mentioned above: many of the variants need to be analysed on their own grounds, according to different ‘algorithms’ and ‘parameters’ (e.g., oral and/or written registers, old or new spelling, regional dialect differences, and scribal practices). Also, the very limited sample size, which moreover is far from random, is of course not amenable to any sweeping conclusions: one would need much bigger and also more diverse data sets. Moreover, the texts that are presently extant in our major repositories would require carefully planned tagging that retains and marks morphological peculiarities or rarities even when inputting texts. It stands to reason that most of the users of the mentioned repositories are primarily interested in matters of content. The considerable extra effort one would need to invest in preserving the exact readings of the original manuscript would only be relevant for that *rara avis* textual scholar who works on some type of text-edition or is involved in stemmatic analyses.

But even though such a big data project appears somewhat remote because of practical and technical difficulties, based on this pilot study I would argue that it is worth considering. The major caveat here is that one would have to convince

peers to start securing usable data sets for future analyses; no doubt a labour of love, both for the inputter and the advocate of the cause.

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Daniel Berounský

An Old Tibetan Myth on Retribution for Killing the Nyen (*Gnyan stong*): Manuscripts Scattered between Naxi, Tanguts, Eastern and Western Tibet

Abstract: This chapter introduces eleven versions of a myth that appear in both Tibetan and Naxi sources. The myth concerns the payment of retribution (*stong*) for killing a type of non-human being known as Nyen (*gnyan*) by members of a (human) Tibetan protoclan named Dong (Ldong). Six versions appear in Tibetan sources, and five in Naxi manuscripts. The Tibetan sources in question are the so-called Nyen Collection (*Gnyan 'bum*), of which four versions are available; the Tö Collection (*Gtod 'bum*), of which we have one version; and finally, a manuscript dealing with aquatic spirits Lu (*klu*) that was found in Gathang Bumpa Stupa, southern Tibet. One of the five Naxi versions was paraphrased in English by Joseph Rock in 1952. The fact that there are numerous surviving versions suggests that this myth was once well-known in eastern Tibet. It also provides a link between Naxi myths, East Tibetan non-Buddhist traditions, and West Tibet, where two versions of the Nyen Collection were found.

1 Introduction

The present paper touches upon a fascinating, but very puzzling, topic of a certain non-Buddhist mytho-poetic tradition related to eastern Tibet. This tradition is found in an interesting corpus of myths known as the Nyen Collection (*Gnyan 'bum*), which was the subject of an article by Samten G. Karmay¹ and two recent contributions by myself.² However, this lore apparently did not live in isolation: the surviving corpus of myths, which features in the three known versions of the Nyen Collection, is clearly not some ur-version that was immune to any changes: the extant versions bear signs of amendments, as well as additions and compilations from diverse sources. The Nyen Collection is related to three other large

1 Karmay 2010.

2 Berounsky 2016 and 2017.

corpora of texts: the Sadag Collection (*Sa bdag 'bum*), the Tö Collection (*Gtod 'bum*) and the Lu Collection (*Klu 'bum*). The four appear in the Bon canon as a quartet known as the Four Collections (*'Bum bzhi*).³ It has recently been established that the lore connected with the Nyen Collection is also to be found in a number of non-canonical works from eastern Tibet, specifically the Thewo (The bo), Zitsha Degu (Gzi rtsa sde dgu) and Drugchu (*'Brug chu*) regions of Amdo (in Sichuan and Gansu). These works represent the ritual repertoire of a class of priests known as *leu*, who practise a form of Bon that has been relatively little influenced by Buddhism. Facsimile reproductions of many of these manuscripts – often in barely intelligible Tibetan – have now been published in some 100 volumes, and further volumes of texts currently being prepared for publication.⁴ Moreover, through the published research by Toni Huber and consultations with him, it became clear that some features of the myths contained in the Nyen Collection are also present in the area of Arunachal Pradesh and eastern Bhutan.⁵ It seems that the content of these texts may also be shared by the Naxi and Primi people of present-day Sichuan province in the People's Republic of China.



Fig. 1: Two *leu* ritualists of Phenchu, Gendun (middle) and Sherab Dragpa (right), with Ngawang Gyatso; photo: author 2017.

³ For a discussion of the version of the *Klu 'bum* that constitutes one of the works in this quartet, see the contribution by Bazhen Zeren in this volume.

⁴ For an informative article in Tibetan see Blo gsal and Bkra shis tshes ring 2015. For information about the *le'u* tradition of Thewo in English see Ngawang Gyatso 2016. For the recently published ten volumes from Thewo see Tsering Thar and Ngawang Gyatso 2017; for sixty volumes see 'Brug thar 2003, for thirty volumes of manuscripts from Ldong khrom (identified erroneously as being from Mda' tshang) see 'Brug thar 2011. Some translations of the *le'u* texts by Charles Ramble and reproductions of the originals are also available on the website <http://kalpa-bon.com> (last accessed on 10 January 2018).

⁵ Huber 2013. The monumental two-volume outcome of Toni Huber's research appeared after the present chapter had been submitted for publication (see Huber 2020).

Given the existence of hundreds of barely-comprehensible ritual texts that have been made available recently, obtaining a comprehensive overview of such a vast corpus of oral and literary works related to the enormous variety of rituals would certainly be a challenging task.

Nevertheless, there is a certain promising starting point. The Nyen Collection contains a unique feature that is absent from the rest of the texts mentioned: the fact that names are frequently given both in Tibetan (*spu rgyal bod kyi skad du na*) and in ‘the language Nampa Dong’ (*nam pa ldong kyi skad du na*). This, together with the fact that Shenrab Miwo appears in these myths not as a divine Buddha-like figure but as a human specialist in ritual performances, distinguishes this particular collection of texts from those dedicated to the Sadag, Lu and Tö. Putting aside for now the problem of the identity of Nampa Dong (a name that seems to denote one of the tribes referred to as Qiang in the Chinese chronicles), the collection contains indications of apparent antiquity.⁶

The three versions of the Nyen Collection itself contain a rather large number of different myths. However, there is a single relatively long myth that is present in all three. This is rather rare, and it could suggest that this particular myth was well-known and constituted some important part of the ritual tradition connected with the Nyen. The myth contains a narration exposing the origin of the exaction of retribution for killing a Nyen (*gnyan stong*) by the early ancestors of the Dong (Ldong) clan. The myth is also interesting for a number of reasons apart from its central plot. For example, it features the famous mountain god Machen Pomra as one of its crucial characters, and it also recounts the original event that resulted in the Nyen becoming attached to trees, rocks, rivers and soil; the worship of the Nyen of stones, trees, waters and soil seems to be a pan-Tibetan tradition nowadays, and thus such an exposition of the origin of the tradition is clearly of some importance.

But the versions of this particular myth do not stop with the Nyen Collection. One of its versions appears also in the Tö Collection (*Gtod ’bum*). Despite its common plot, this version speaks not only about Nyen but also about the Sadag and Tö. This fact points to the rather ambiguous status of the Nyen as understood by this version: they are apparently beings who split into more categories of Tö and Sadag.

Joseph Rock’s two volumes of *Na-khi Nâga Cult* contain yet another version of the same myth recorded in the Naxi pictographic script, which was paraphrased by the author of the book with the aid of a Naxi ritualist.⁷ Another version in

⁶ Berounský 2017.

⁷ Rock 1952, 307–314.

pictographic script appears in a manuscript in the Harvard-Yenching collection.⁸ Moreover, three more Naxi versions of the same myth are to be found in the collections kept in Berlin.⁹ The core of the narration in these Naxi texts has been rather well preserved when compared with the Tibetan versions, but the fact that the myth is narrated in a pictographic script means that the identity of the main characters is uncertain. The fact that it primarily concerns the Nyen beings is not apparent from the Rock's English rendering of it, the identity of the mountain god Machen Pomra also remained hidden, and so forth.

Among the myths contained in the Nyen Collection of the Bon Canon there is a story in which the Wise Bat visits the dead Son of Nyen and reveals that he has produced a son. As a result, the Wise Bat leads the deceased Son of Nyen back to the world of the living and to his family. This story suggests both that the myth of the killing of the Nyen was once very well known, and also that the main body of the narration was subject to modification and embellishment.

Among the manuscripts found in Gathang Bumpa Stupa of southern Tibet appears a version of the myth which contains a very similar plot.¹⁰ These manuscripts are of uncertain date, but tentatively ascribed to the eleventh century or earlier.¹¹ In this case the conflict does not happen between the Nyen and original Dong people but between aquatic spirits (*klu*) and original people designated as Ma (Smra). It has not been recognised in either of the two studies of the myth that one of the main characters, called Maphodra (Rma pho 'bra), is none other than Machen Pomra (Rma chen pom ra) – a famous mountain god of eastern Tibet. Despite this narration having been incorporated into the series of myths (*rabs*) dealing with *byol* rituals (probably for averting bad omens, *ltas ngan*) in the regions of Central and West Tibet, the fact that Machen Pomra figures there as a main character increases the probability that the plot of this myth travelled from eastern Tibet to the locality of Gathang Bumpa Stupa in southern Tibet.

In sum, there are eleven versions of this myth available. Six of them are written in Tibetan and the other five are recorded in the Naxi pictographic script.

⁸ These are manuscripts B41 and B42. See https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/25/archival_objects/1183971 (last accessed on 9 August 2022).

⁹ See Janert 1977, 861. I am indebted to Michael Friedrich for pointing out these three versions kept in Berlin.

¹⁰ Pa tshab Pa sangs dbang 'dus and Glang ru Nor bu tshe ring 2007, Karmay 2009, Bellezza 2010.

¹¹ Karmay 2009.

2 The manuscripts

Table 1: A list of the manuscript versions.

Version A of Bon Kangjur (vol. 141, eighteenth chapter (*le'u*) entitled *Chapter on Reconciliation of People and Nyen* (*Mi dang gnyan bsdum pa'i le'u*, pp. 122–201). This is, however, formed by various narrations of apparently diverse backgrounds and the shorter story under the focus appears only on the pages 122–143, which, however continues with some extensions up to the page 180).

Version B of *Gtod 'bum* of Bon Kangyur (chapter entitled *Breaking the egg of Khyung /Khyung gi sgong nga bcag pa'i smrengs so/*, vol. 142, pp. 378–400).

Version C, addendum to a longer version without title (*Gnyan `bum*, Bon Kangyur, 141(316)–17, *le'u* 25, pp. 316–318).

Version D, *'Phen yul rgyas pa gnyan gyi 'bum*, found in Phenchu, introduced as *Yo chu'i gnyan stong*, fol. 29a–34a, In Tsering Thar and Ngawang Gyatso, eds, *Gna' rabs bon gyi dpe dkon bris ma*, vol. 3, Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang 2017, pp. 55–65.

Version E contained in *Nye lam sde bzhi* corpus of texts (New Bonpo Katen, 253–25, pp. 615–623, *le'u gnyis pa of Nye lam sde bzhi'i gnyan 'bum bzhugs pa'i dbus phyogs legs so*).

Versions F, G, H, I, J: Naxi manuscript *The Story of ¹Ddo-³ssaw-¹ngo-²t'u*. Library of Harvard-Yenching Institute B–41 (north of Li-chiang/Lijang), for translation see Rock 1952, 307–314 (**F**), Library of Harvard-Yenching Institute B–42 (west of Li-chiang/ Lijang) (**G**). Three versions kept in Berlin (**H, I, J**), for references to them see Janert 1977, 861.

Version K, untitled narration forming a part of *Byol rabs* cycle of myths found in Gathang Bumpa Stüpa, see Pa tshab Pa sangs dbang 'dus - Glang ru Nor bu tshe ring 2007, Karmay 2009, Bellezza 2010.

All eleven manuscripts listed above firstly exhibit a fair knowledge about this myth in very diverse areas and epochs. The actual origin of these manuscripts can be traced back only in certain cases and with only fragmentary information about them.

The largest number of manuscripts – versions A, B and C – appear in the Bon Kanjur. So far the only edition of the Kanjur available has its source in a manuscript from Walkhyung (Dbal khyung) monastery in Nyarong (Nyag rong). This manuscript Kanjur is in turn based on a manuscript edition of the Kanjur from Nagchukha (Nag chu kha).¹² The origin of the manuscript of both the Nyen and Tö Collections, where the three versions of the myth under consideration appear, is ascribed to a very remote event, which might have happened around the turn

¹² For a very informative account of this version of the Bon Kanjur, see Martin 2003.

of the tenth and eleventh centuries, since it is said to have occurred before the famous rediscovery of Bon scriptures by Shenchen Luga (Gshen chen klu dga') in 1017.¹³ It would thus represent one of the earliest textual 'treasures' (*gter*) of the Bon religion. The chronicle by Shardza Trashi Gyaltzen describes it in the following way:

Once when three hunters, Mar-pa 'Phen-bzang, etc., were digging at the root of a tree to get stones beside a lake called Shel-mtsho mu-le-hed in sPu-rangs, some charcoal emerged and on further digging three wooden boxes appeared. Having found many manuscripts in them they returned home and sold them to Shu-bon dGe-bsnyan. The manuscripts were the Klu-'bum dkar nag khra gsum in three volumes, and the Klu gnyan sa-bdag gtod-kyi 'bum together with its ancillary texts.¹⁴

This mention is from Shardza's Chronicle, which the author began to compose in 1922 and is repeated almost verbatim (but mentioning 'scrolls') in the Bon Chronicle by Pelden Tshultrim (Dpal ldan tshul khrim, 1902–1973), written even later in the twentieth century.¹⁵ This is, however, somehow corroborated by other relatively late, but still earlier chronicles and catalogues of the Bon Kanjur. For example, Yungdrung Tsultrim Wangdrag (G.yung drung tshul khrim dbang grags) states in his survey of Bon literature written over the years 1876 to 1880:

This is a fourfold collection on Lu, Nyen, Sadag and Tö, which the hunter Marpa Phenla Zong extracted¹⁶ from the surface of a rock near Mulehe lake of Purang, and which increased the accomplishment of Shubon Genyen...¹⁷

Another mention appears in the chronicle by Kundrol Dragpa (Kun sgrol grags pa), written in 1742:

13 Martin 2001.

14 Karmay 1972, 124.

15 One of its published versions states that the work was composed between the years 1964 and 1966, but the 1972 edition says that it was completed only in the year of publication, i.e. 1972. See Dpal tshul 1988, 318; Martin 1997, 190.

16 The name of the hunter is given as Mar pa 'phen la bzang in other sources; here *gzong* appears instead of *bzang*. It could therefore be understood that he extracted the scriptures 'with a chisel' (*gzong gis*).

17 *pu rang mu le he kyi mtsho 'gram brag kha nas khyi ra ba mar pa 'phen la gzong gis gter la thon pa shu bon dge bsnyen gyi dngos grub du spel ba'i klu gnyan sa bdag gtod bzhi'i 'bum bzhi yod pas/* (G.yung drung tshul khrim dbang grags, 301).

Mar pa 'phen la bzang po found several scrolls in the treasure cavern near the lake of Purang in the three wooden boxes with White, Black and Variegeted Lu Collection in eight parts together with the four-fold Collection of the four: Lu, Nyen, Sadag and Tö...¹⁸

There are more such references differing in minor details,¹⁹ but all of them are relatively late, coming mostly from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. I have not been able to identify any references with earlier dates closer to the events described. This event is, however, briefly listed in the chronicle by Paten Zangpo (Spa bstan Bzang po) – probably from the fifteenth century – stating that a hunter rediscovered ‘fierce mantras’ (*drag sngags*) and the *Klu 'bum khra bo* from the rock of Sheldrag (Shel brag) or Drag Gyabo (Brag rgya bo) of Purang.²⁰ According to the monastic Bon tradition it is apparent enough that the versions of the Nyen and Tö Collections that form part of the Bon Kanjur are considered to be identical to the text found by the hunters in western Tibet at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The question as to what forms the earlier basis for such statements remains open.

Since the content of the Nyen Collection also differs from the rest of the collections with the occurrence of the bilingual names given both in the language of Nampa Dong (Nam pa Ldong) and Tibetan, it is worth mentioning a rather interesting note in a chronicle from the beginning of the twentieth century. In the genre dealing with the treasure revelations of Bon scriptures, the discovery of the Fourfold Collections is followed by the discovery of ‘treasure’ (*gter*) by a certain Trotshang Druglha (Khro tshang 'Brug lha, born in 956?),²¹ who also lived in western Tibet around the same time. The text interestingly states first that his father was related to Nampa Dong, and secondly that he discovered a ritual text dedicated to Nyenje Gong Ngon (Gnyan rje gong sngon), with the full title *Outer sādhana of Nyenje Gong Ngon (Gnyan rje gong sngon gyi phyi sgrub)*. As we shall see later, Nyenje Gong Ngon figures in the myth under consideration, and a mountain with the same name is known in the area of Amchog (A mchog) of

18 *mar pa 'phen la bzang po yi/ pu rang mtsho 'gram ke'u tshang nas/ shing sgam gsum rnyed shog dril 'gar/ klu 'bum dkar nag khra gsum la/ dum bu bryad du 'phel bar byung/ klu gnyen (=gnyan) sa bdag gtod bzhi la/ 'bum bzhi cha lag bcas pa byung/ (Sangs rgyas bstan pa spyi yi 'byung khung, 310).*

19 See the notes about such references in the introduction to the Bon Kanjur Catalogue by Dan Martin. He also mentions a lineage of the masters who transmitted the texts (Martin, Kvaerne and Nagano 2003).

20 Spa bstan rgyal bzang 1991, 204.

21 The date of his birth is suggested by Dan Martin, who provides interesting details on him and his meeting with Milarepa and Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (see Martin 2001, 117).

contemporary Amdo, not far from the famous Labrang monastery. The mention of his connection with Nampa Dong is expressed in the following way:²²

Also, the earliest of all treasures was that of Khrotshang Druglha. He was a miraculous manifestation of Shen Tsheme Öden. He was born to his father Trotshang Sekhar Nyen, who was related to the family of Nampa Dong, and his mother Darza Dronma...²³

Although, again, this reference is very late – the chronicle was composed in 1917 – and the source for this information is not provided, it can still point to the fact that the early revelations of these texts occurred partly under the influence of the mythical and ritual tradition of Nampa Dong from eastern Tibet.²⁴

The Tö Collection (*Gtod 'bum*) contains a colophon. It mentions Wal Gyalwa Nang Nyiö (Dbal Rgyal ba Snang nyi 'od) as a master who 'practised the Word,' and passed it on to Tönpa Wang Chen (Ston pa dbang chen), from whom it spread in Nguldza Gang (Dngul rdza sgang) of Dokham (Mdo khams).²⁵ The identity of these masters is not clear. Nguldza Gang is a place name associated with Khyungpo Tengchen Ling monastery (Khyung po Steng chen gling, in present-day Chamdo prefecture) and there is a high probability that the colophon mentions this place.²⁶

Regarding the titles of the myths, that of version A could be rendered as *Reconciliation of People and Nyen*. The title of version B is *Breaking the egg of Garuda* (*Khyung gi sgo nga bcag pa*). This metaphorical title is explained inside the text, when the killing of the Son of Nyen is poetically rendered as 'killing the egg of Garuda.' However, it is interesting that version A contains a similar passage, in which it does not speak about Garuda (*khyung*), but a crane (*khruṅg khruṅg*). It says that 'by killing the Son of Nyen the egg of the crane was broken' (*Gnyan 'bum*, 141). The crane is the bird of the Nyen. Due to the fact that the manuscript is written in 'headless' (*dbu med*) script, using many contractions, the term for crane is often abbreviated as *khruṅg+ng*, which rather resembles the written form

22 Mkhas grub lung rtogs rgya mtsho 2010, 503–4.

23 *de yang gter kun gyi snga ba rje btsun khro tshang 'brug lha yin te/ khong gshen tshad med 'od ldan gyi sprul pa yin/ nam pa ldong gi rigs las mched pa'i yab khro tshang gsas mkhar gnyan dang/ yum dar bza' sgron ma gnyis su 'khrungs/.*

24 Berounsky 2017.

25 *Gtod 'bum*, 400: *rīn po che'i gtod 'bum 'di/ dbus rtsis chu gnyer mkhan na/ dbal rgyal ba snang nyi 'od kyi bka' bsgom nas/ ston pa dbang chen gyi mnos te/ mdo khams [d]ngul rdza sgang du spel ba rdzogs so/.*

26 For information about this monastery see Karmay, Nagano et al. 2003, 164–169.

of *khyung*. We may assume that in this case Garuda has come to replace the crane over the time.

Version D comes from a household in the Phenchu ('Phan chu) valley situated near the Thewo (The bo) valley of the border region of Amdo located along the border of Gansu and Sichuan provinces of the People's Republic of China. It was photographed by Ngawang Gyatso, a native of Thewo, and recently published in a ten-volume collection of reproductions of texts, most of them forming the lay tradition of *le'u* ritualists of the region.²⁷ The Nyen Collection also forms one part of the Fourfold Collection, as is the case of the Bon Kanjur version discussed above. While the Tö and Sadag Collections from Phenchu are abbreviated versions with almost the same wording as the Bon Kanjur versions, this is not the case of the Nyen Collection. The plots of the myths contained in it are sometimes similar, but the wording is very different and thus it clearly represents a different redaction of the Nyen Collection. Even an approximate age of the manuscript is impossible to establish.

It must be mentioned in this respect that the Bon chronicles repeatedly mention another discovery of the Nyen Collection, which occurred in Thewo and can be roughly dated to the eleventh or twelfth centuries. It is ascribed to a 'mad yogi' type of master, named mostly as Kyangphag Mula Drungmu (Skyang 'phags Mu la Drung mu), whose presence is still remembered in Thewo and Phenchu through the large number of miraculous imprints left by him (footprints, prints left by his urinating, imprints left by the hooves of his horse) and springs being conjured up miraculously.²⁸ What is remarkable is that in this case the Nyen Collection was not part of the Fourfold Collections. This rediscovery is mentioned in a large number of chronicles – even *Srid pa rgyud gyi kha byang* from 1310 mentions him – but in this case it does not list the Nyen Collection. The chronicle by Paten Gyalsang (Spa bstan Rgyal bzang) from the fifteenth century (1465?),²⁹ which is the earliest chronicle mentioning his rediscovery of the Nyen Collection, describes it in the following way:

Also, the miraculous manifestation of Kyangphag extracted [the following scriptures] from the White Vulture Rock: *G.yung drung chu 'bum, Gnyan 'bum brgyad dor, Lha 'bum, Rtsag dag yum kyi 'bum chen*. These were in thirty parts. (...) These spread among the lineages of the yogis of the east...³⁰

²⁷ Tsering Thar and Ngawang Gyatso 2017.

²⁸ Berounsky 2013.

²⁹ See Martin 1997, 78–79.

³⁰ *yang sprul sku spyang 'phags kyis/ bya rgod brag dkar nas/ g.yung drung chu 'bum/ gnyen (=gnyan) 'bum brgyad dor/ lha 'bum/ rtsag dag yum gyi 'bum chen nams la/ (...) shar pa mal 'byor*

We have no way of knowing whether this version of the Nyen Collection derives from the text rediscovered by Kyangphag. Given the similar geographical location, however, the possibility cannot be excluded.

The titles of this manuscript are quite confusing. The whole Nyen Collection bears the title *'Phen yul rgyas pa gnyan gyi 'bum*. The *'phen yul* mentioned here could be simply be the name of one of the four categories in the classification of the Bon doctrinal literature called the 'Four Bon portals and the Treasury as the Fifth' (*Bon sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*),³¹ usually known as *'phan yul* and representing for the most part a literature corresponding to the Buddhist 'Perfection of Wisdom' (*sher phyin*). These texts are mostly called *'bum*, which is also a category of the texts in the Bon Kanjur, and in some editions of the Kanjur it also includes the Nyen Collection. However, despite the high probability that this is what is meant, it is worth noting that this collection appeared in the valley of the 'Phan chu river, where 'Phan yul could also easily mean the 'land of 'Phan chu valley.'

The title of the myth is also confusing: *Yo chu'i gnyan stong*. While *gnyan stong* is clearly 'retribution for killing the Nyen', there are problems with *yo chu*. Given the number of spelling mistakes of the manuscript, it is probable that it should be understood as *yo bcos* 'restoring harmony.' It would then read *Retribution for killing the Nyen that restores harmony (Yo bcos kyi gnyan stong)*.

Version E represents a text from the extensive cycle of *Fourfold Direct Paths (Nye lam sde bzhi)* contained in the so-called *New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts*. The cycle forms the whole of volume 253, comprising 1067 pages, and it is introduced as the 'word' of Tönpa Shenrab Miwo (Ston pa Gshen rab mi bo). It contains various parts dealing with the Lu, Sadag, Nyen and Tö beings, but unlike the Fourfold Collection from the Bon Kanjur, it is heavily influenced by tantric practices. The whole cycle was rediscovered by a prolific 'treasure revealer' known as Ponse Khyung Gotsal (Dpon gsas Khyung rgod rtsal, born 1175)³² at Mt Kailash.

la brgyud de dar ro/ (Spa bstan rgyal bzang 1991, 242).

31 These are Dpon gsas, Chab nag, Chab dkar, 'Phan yul. The fifth Treasury is called 'Pure Summit' (*gtsang mtho thog*). For a classical study dealing with these categories see Snellgrove 1967, 16–19.

32 The date of his birth is given by Nyima Tendzin (Karmay 1972, 173, note 3). There are some sources that consider him to be identical with Rigdzin Godemcan (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can, 1337–1409), which is also stated as a matter of fact by Karmay (see above). This appears in the eighteenth century chronicle by Kun grol grags pa (1974, 329–336, 371–375), where his name is given as Ponse Khyung Thog or Ponse Khyung Thog Godempa (Dpon gsas khyung thog rgod ldem pa). But his surviving hagiography contains names of his contemporaries, which are in agreement with the suggested date of birth (1175), and since the dates of Rigdzin Godemcan are relatively well established, it makes it impossible for them to be the same person.

The text containing the myth under consideration has no colophon and is rather exceptional to the extent that tantric practices or notions are altogether absent from it. While in some of the texts it is stated that it was proclaimed by Shenrab Miwo and later concealed by Drenpa Namkha, two texts included in the cycle repeat almost verbatim the following phrases in their colophons:

This is a 'treasure' of Yilbon Khyung Gö (Dbyil bon khyung rgod) from the time of Shenrab Miwo, which was miraculously obtained from Mt Kailash (Ti tse gangs). He made a 'true copy' of it near Mapang Lake. Among the twenty yellowish texts on paper copied there was also this sutra reconciling the fourfold [beings]...³³

This particular version contained in *The New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts* has its first texts on the practice of the whole cycle written by Drotsun Muwerzhi ('Gro btsun Mu wer zhi), whose name would be translated from Zhangzhung into Tibetan as Yungdrung Gyaltsen (G.yung drung rgyal mtshan). He became abbot of Menri monastery in 1662³⁴ and the colophon says that the text was composed in Yungdrung Dechenling (G.yung drung bde chen gling) monastery during the fifth month of the earth ox year, which could be 1649, at the request of a certain mantra-holder Sewer (*sngags 'chang* Sad wer) from the Dong (Ldong) clan. It specifies that the place of composition was called Drakar Lung (Brag dkar lung),³⁵ which confirms that it is the place of the Lughug Yungdrung Dechenling (Klu phug G.yung drung bde chen gling) monastery in contemporary Drachen (Sbra chen) county, which at that time had a small community of tantric practitioners.³⁶ Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that this particular manuscript version stems from the seventeenth-century manuscript located at this place.

The Naxi pictographic manuscripts containing versions F and G are part of the Library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, which now provides online access to the manuscripts.³⁷ Versions H, I, and J are kept in Berlin.³⁸ Both of the first two manuscripts come from villages surrounding Lijang and were collected by Joseph

³³ Cf. Karmay and Nagano 2001, 1455, 1457. Tib.: *dbyil bon khyung rgod kyi/ gshen rab zhal bzhugs dus kyi gter/ ti tse gangs la dngos grub brnyes/ ma pang mthso 'gram zhal kyang bshus/ shog ser kha dras nyi shu la/ nye lam sde bzhi'i bcos mdo 'di yi zhal kyang bshus...*

³⁴ Martin 2001, 138, note 41.

³⁵ See *Nye lam sde bzhi'i yin thu gsal byed 'phrul gyi me long*, *The New Bon Katen Texts*, 253–1, 35–36. See also Karmay and Nagano 2001, 1450.

³⁶ See Karmay and Nagano 2003, 143–150.

³⁷ https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/25/archival_objects/1183971 (accessed on 9 August 2022).

³⁸ Janert 1977, 861.

Rock (1884–1962),³⁹ but the dates of their origin are unknown. Version F has been translated by Joseph Rock in his monumental work *The Na-khi Nâga Cult and Related Ceremonies*.⁴⁰ Since reading the Naxi script goes beyond my abilities, in what follows I will rely on Rock's rendering of version F. The title of the text is translated as 'To relate the story of ¹Ddo-³ssaw-¹ngo-²t'u'. It is this translation, made by Joseph Rock in cooperation with his informant priest, that is taken into account here. It must be stressed here that any English rendering of the pictographic script remains to some degree an interpretation. However, the plot of the story undoubtedly follows that of the versions recorded in Tibetan script remarkably closely. While the plot has been very well preserved in the pictographic script, the names of various beings and the names of the main characters of the story are mostly rendered only phonetically, and it seems that even Rock's informant and Naxi ritual specialist did not understand them well. These are undoubtedly of importance for understanding the myth.

The name of the main hero appearing in the title of the text as ¹Ddo-³ssaw-¹ngo-²t'u is clearly a phonetic rendering of Dongse Ngothur (Ldong sras Ngo thur/thung) of the Tibetan versions. Ngothur is the proper name and Dongse means 'son of the Dong clan.' The myth thus speaks about ancestors of the Dong clan, a clan which is listed among the five or six original clans of Tibetans.



Fig. 2: First folio of Naxi mss. B-42 with the Son of Dong Ngothur to the left; © Harvard-Yenching Institute.

³⁹ The manuscript F comes from ²Gyi-¹ts'ä-¹ndso of ²Boa-¹shi (or Pai-sha) north of Lijiang. The older inventory number is 5054. The older inventory number of the manuscript G is 1018, and it comes from ²Ghügh-¹k'o (Ch'ang shui) to the west of Lijiang (see Rock 1952, 307).

⁴⁰ Rock 1952, 307–314.

Also central character in the story, who is killed by the Son of Dong, is mentioned as Naga ³Nyi-²ssā-²kyo-¹lo. This is apparently Nyen-se (*Gnyan sras*), i.e. a ‘Son of Nyen.’

The whole myth thus speaks about the conflict between ancestors of the Dong clan and the Nyen beings. This information is missing in Rock’s translation of the story.

A puzzling feature of Joseph Rock’s work is his rendering of all the different classes of beings by the collective term *nāga*, which is his translation of the Naxi term ¹ssu. Although in a number of cases it apparently stands for the Tibetan term Lu (*klu*), which is the usual translation of the Sanskrit term *nāga*, denoting an underground Indian class of beings, unlike in the Tibetan tradition this term ¹ssu is applied also as a general term comprising the following divinities and spirits:

- i. Sadag — Tibetan: *sa bdag* — Naxi: ¹ssaw-³ndaw
- ii. Nyen — Tibetan: *gnyan* — Naxi: ²nyi
- iii. Tö — Tibetan: *gtod* — Naxi: ²dtü

This is rather confusing, since these beings named Lu, Sadag, Nyen and Tö are seen as a fourfold group of spirits by the relevant Tibetan texts. One of them apparently could take on characteristics of another from time to time, but there is no indication in the Tibetan texts that Sadag, Nyen and Tö should be a subclass of some more general group of Lu, i.e. *nāgas*. It means that in the light of the Tibetan texts, the title of the Rock’s work is misleading in that it purports to deal solely with the ‘Nāga Cult’ of the Naxi (*Na-khi*).

The Naxi term ¹ssu is puzzling indeed, since it does not correspond phonetically to Lu (i.e. Tibetan term used for *nāga*), nor to any of the other classes of beings. What seems to be the hypothetical original Tibetan equivalent of the Naxi term ¹ssu is the Tibetan expression *se* (*gsas*). This is known as a general category of divinities and spirits in the Bon religion, but also in the Old Tibetan texts from Dunhuang. This term has the general meaning ‘divinity,’ but is sometimes used as a synonym for, and in other cases as a specific category of gods distinct from what Tibetan texts call *lha*. The composite expression ‘se-nyen’ (*gsas gnyan*) is attested in Tibetan Bon texts. Its meaning is something like ‘Nyen divinity’ and this is in agreement with the general meaning of Naxi term ¹ssu. For some unknown reason it seems that among the Naxi it also came to be applied to the group of underground beings known as Lu (*klu*) in Tibetan, which in turn translates the Sanskrit term *nāga* of Indic Buddhist texts, but originally designated beings of non-Indic origin.

The title of the Rock’s book should thus more accurately refer not to the ‘Nāga Cult,’ but to ‘Naxi Cult of Se (*gsas*) Divinities’.

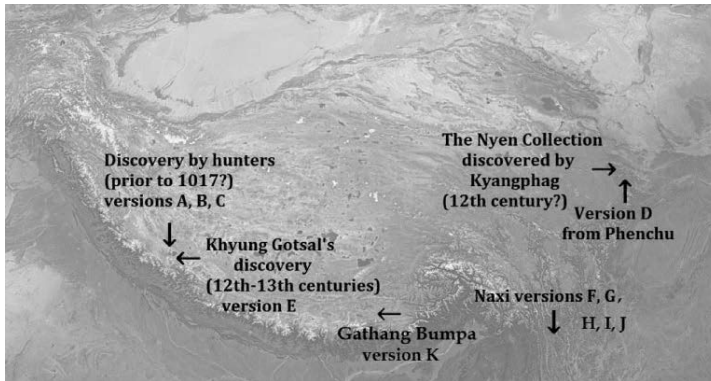


Fig. 3: Map with places of origin of the manuscripts; © author.

3 The plot of the narrative

The myth concerns the original events relating to the Nyen divinities and ancestors of the Dong clan. I will omit here the exceptional version K that deals with aquatic spirits (*klu*) rather than the Nyen, mainly because there are two available treatments of this version in English.⁴¹ One of its main messages is to refer to an original event resulting in the subsequent ritual treatment of the Nyen, which averts harm caused by Nyen to people following the accidental killing of a Nyen being. This central message is also accompanied by an explanation as to why Nyen beings, originally beings of the intermediate space, also became attached to lakes, rocks, woods and soil, and have been accompanying humans as a part of their natural environment since those primaeval times. The tradition that considers the Nyen to be beings of rocks, trees, lakes and soil is widespread across the Tibetan Plateau, and also appears in Tibetan medical texts. It has its explanation here. The last message of importance is the origin of the Dong clan and its division into eighteen groups according to two of the manuscript versions. All this is localised in a very regional setting which refers to the areas stretching from Yushu (Yu shul) and Mt Machen Pomra to the Thewo region bordering on China proper.

The myth in all its versions follows a remarkably similar plot, although the details differ greatly and also the particular wording is different. All the events can be divided into the following parts:

⁴¹ Karmay 2009; Bellezza 2010.

i. The creation of the Nyen, their offspring and the origin of the Dong people

The description in version A gives rather brief and confusing details, with some probable omissions and inconsistent orthography. Version B speaks briefly about various beings, and suddenly comes to the origin of the brother and sister of Dong, who are descendants of the Lord of people – Nampa Dong (Nom pa /=Nam pa/Ldong). It then mentions the Son and Daughter of the Nyen. Version E describes simply the land of Nyen, including the Nyen brother and sister with their water springs, cattle, and so forth, and then mentions briefly the parents of the Dong brother and sister. Version D (translated at the conclusion of the paper) speaks about the progenitors of the Nyen, but then mentions that the uncle of the Son of Dong is Lord of Nyen Gong Ngon (Gnyan rje Sgong sngon), which makes clear that Dong and Nyen are related. The Naxi version F simply mentions the origin of the Son of Nyen and Son of Dong at the beginning of the world. Unlike other versions, the Daughter of Dong is considered to be his wife and not a sister.⁴²

ii. A liaison between the Son of Nyen and the Daughter of Dong

Versions A, B and F are similar in the sense that in analogous phrases they describe how the Son of Dong went to the high pastures to herd yaks, and the sister (or wife in the case of version F) worked in the fields in the lower land. She was approached by the Son of Nyen according to all versions, although some of the versions (D, E) are somehow fragmented and do not explicitly mention a love affair between them. Version A has poetic parts containing a warning by the Father of Nyen to his sons about descending to earth, a subsequent description of the beauty of the Daughter of Dong following her meeting with the Son of Dong, a miraculous occurrence of cormorants and cranes that start to weed the field and other miraculous circumstances leading to a state of bliss. The Daughter of Dong is a descendant of gods (*lha*) according to this version, and we also learn that, in the meantime, demons are spreading through the Country of Nyen and the Country of Gods and People (*lha mi*). Version F contains details about tigers taking care of the herds, wild boar ploughing fields, and other signs that the world order is being reversed. In general, the texts contain poetic parts describing the deep affection of the couple for each other, leading them to forget about the rest of the world.

⁴² As a non-specialist in Naxi, I simply follow the rendering by Rock (1952). There is, however, some probability that the Naxi pictograph could mean also sister.

iii. The killing of the Son of Nyen by the Son of Dong, and the subsequent burial of the Son of Nyen

The Son of Dong is then made aware of the highly unusual circumstances surrounding his sister. According to version F it is a servant of the Daughter of Dong who comes to the Son of Dong informing him about the love affair, but according to version B it is a Wise Bat⁴³ who does so. Version D mentions a certain Tritse Chemang (Khri tse spyan mang) who informs the Son of Dong, and version E mentions only that ‘he was summoned to listen’, failing to mention to whom he was meant to listen. Version A omits this episode completely. According to all the versions, the Son of Dong then approaches the excited couple and the Son of Nyen miraculously transforms himself into a snake upon seeing the Son of Dong arrive. Unaware of its true identity, the Son of Dong then cuts the snake into many pieces with his sword. The Daughter of Dong then explains in tears that he has killed a Nyen. They then bury him under nine layers of earth. According to version A he is entrusted to the lord of the Sadag (*sa bdag*), according to version D the Daughter of Dong treads on the burial site (in order to pollute the place and to hide the corpse), according to version F she places her dirty clothes on the place, and version E says that she places her *grum cho* (?) on top of the place.

iv. Father Nyen’s search for his son, and the disclosure of the murder during a dice game

All versions contain similar verses describing the hopeless search by the father Nyen for his son at the edge of the sky and below the earth in a formulaic manner. He then gathers armies of Nyen and descends on the country of Dong. Some versions (A and B) also mention armies of Lu, Tö and Sadag. The next episode is not altogether clear. A scene during which two beings play dice appears in all the versions, and the Son of Dong joins them. Different versions mention different names of the dice players, but it is clear enough in all the versions that during the dice game the Son of Dong reveals that it was he who killed the Son of Nyen. The Father Nyen learns it, the Son of Dong escapes from the place and the armies of Nyen (or the Nyen together with the Lu, Sadag and Tö according to version B) pursue him. Version B (from the Tö Collection) is rather inconsistent in the sense that it speaks about the Lord of Tö (Gtod rje) chasing the Son of Dong, although it was the Son of Nyen (not Tö) who was killed even in this version; it is as if version B considered Lu, Sadag and Tö to be specific varieties of the more general category of Nyen.

⁴³ For myths dealing with Wise or Clever Bat (Pha wang sgam po/rgod po) see Huber 2013 and 2020; Ramble 2014; and Berounsky 2017.

v. Chasing the Son of Dong and the final ritual of reconciliation

The subsequent events contain very similar features and episodes, although each of the versions is specific. Each gives different details, and the order of the events is also arranged slightly differently.

According to versions D and B, the Son of Dong rides his white horse and meets two deer hunters who are *btsan* demons. He changes his clothes and leaves his horse there in order to confuse the pursuing armies of Nyen. However, after meeting the demons they learn about the ruse. According to Version B, the Lord of Tö (as opposed to the Lord of Nyen) cuts off the leg of one of the *btsan* and blinds the other in one eye. The armies then continue their pursuit of the Son of Dong.

According to version A, the Son of Dong miraculously transforms into a conch-shell deer with turquoise antlers, but in vain. The Son of Dong turns towards terrestrial divinities named Kula Dongdral (Sku bla Ldong bral/ Sku bla skyongs te ldong bra, etc.) and Kula Shampoje (Sku bla Bsham po bye); however, they do not help him. Only then does he escape to Machen Pomra. The meeting with seven men (not the two hunters) is described later.

According to version B the Son of Dong first seeks refuge with Kula Kyongte Dongdra (Sku bla skyongs te ldong bra, etc. – evidently the first divinity of version A), who fails to save him. Only then does he reach Machen Pomra (written as Rma bom bra), who is identified as his maternal uncle (as in version D). Version F, like versions D and E, mention first reaching Machen Pomra (written as ²Muàn³mi¹ddv²dzhi in the Naxi version).⁴⁴

An event explaining the presence of the Nyen in the soil, rocks, lakes and trees takes place on the way to Machen Pomra according to most of the versions. Version A mentions a terrestrial god (*yul sa*) Machen Pomra, who builds ‘castles’ (*mkhar*) in water, soil, rocks, trees and fire following the performance of a ‘divination’ (*phyä mkhan*) and ‘bon.’ The forts are ‘partly good and partly not good’ (*phyed bzang phyed ma bzang*). This is how the tradition of ritual offering of ‘forts’ originated according to the text. The Lu are then bound to the water, the Sadag become embedded in the soil, the Tö are fixed in the rocks and the Nyen become attached to trees.

⁴⁴ The written form is rather confusing, and Joseph Rock did not recognize that the text was referring to Machen Pomra. The name of Machen Pomra is mostly rendered as ²Muàn³mi²bpa²lo in Naxi according to Rock (1952, 132–133). The difference is in the last two syllables (¹ddv²dzhi), which are usually used as a phonetic rendering of Tibetan *rdo rje* (Skt. *vajra*), but could be used also as an equivalent for *gyung drung*, the swastika. Both of them represent something solid and, hypothetically, the expression *bom ra/ spom ra* may have been understood to have a similar meaning.

Version B says that the Son of Dong creates lakes from a mirror thrown behind him, and the Lu become immersed in them. This is how the association of Lu with lakes originated. Similarly, he uses a comb to raise mountains of earth to which Sadag become attached, and so forth.

Version D differs to the extent that it speaks only about Nyen of lakes, soil, rocks and trees and does not list any Lu, Sadag or Tö. Like the previous version it mentions a mirror and probably a golden finger-ring (*sor rubs* = *sor gdub*) and says that the Nyen became attached to water, soil, rocks and trees.

The Naxi version F contains a very brief part stating that the Tö ‘have gone to dwell on cliffs, the Lu into the water and the Nyen on trees.’ It is rather inconsistently mentioned just after the killing of the Son of Nyen by the Son of Dong.⁴⁵ This version F then has the Son of Dong escaping to Machen Pomra following the dice playing episode. At this moment, he spat and the spittle changed into the lakes, which separated him from the armies.⁴⁶ Then he pulled out a clump of hair that transformed into the trees, which again separated him from the armies. He then cast his fingernails behind him, and these changed into cliffs. One might have expected this to be the point at which the attachment of Lu, Nyen and Tö to lakes, woods and cliffs was established, but Rock’s rendering of the manuscript does not mention this.

Even the later events are not unanimously in agreement. Machen Pomra suddenly disappears according to version A, and quite strangely, the terrestrial divinity mentioned earlier as Kula Kyongte Dongdra (Sku bla Skyongs te Ldong ’bra), now named Lord of local divinities Gyongchen Dongdre (Yul sa’i rgyal po sgyogs chen ldong ’bras) appears in a dialog with the Lord of Nyen. A phrase repeated in various versions says ‘you are the Lord of terrestrial divinities, I am the Lord of Nyen.’ Later, the ‘heavenly priest’ Gong Ngon (Gnam gshen Gong sngon) appears as a main mediator of reconciliation. However, this version makes clear that Gods (*lha*), terrestrial divinities (*yul sa*), and Lu (*klu*), together with humans, stand against the Nyen in the conflict. The Son of Dong comes partly from gods and partly from the Nyen. The Son of Dong hides ‘at the heart’ of the Excellent Mountain. The Nyen cut off the shady side of the Excellent Mountain (Ri rab) and ‘cut into pieces’ (*bkrum*) a number of Lu and terrestrial divinities.

Version B contains the same phrase in the dialog between Machen Pomra and the Lord of Tö, saying that Machen Pomra is the Lord of terrestrial divinities (*yul sa*). Machen Pomra offers a ‘ransom offering’ of a dog (*khyi’i glud*) and a ‘ret-

⁴⁵ Rock 1952, 309.

⁴⁶ Rock 1952, 311.

tribution for killing.’ Following the agreement by Tö he invites Shenrab Miwo to perform the ritual.

Version D also has a phrase that describes Machen Pomra as the Lord of Terrestrial Divinities. Following the contest, when Machen Pomra cuts off the top of the Excellent Mountain (Ri rab), the Son of Dong travels to Lord of Nyen Gong Ngon, who is his maternal uncle. Gong Ngon competes with the Lord of Nyen (Gnyan rgan dar ba) and, following his victory in an archery contest, the ritual of reconciliation is performed.

Version E suddenly changes from the narrative style into a formulaic ritual text, which alludes to Machen Pomra saving the Son of Dong. Gong Ngon is also mentioned in the unclear parts.

The Naxi version F narrates that after the meeting Machen Pomra, the Son of Dong reaches the husband of his aunt, named ¹Mbbû³ch¹i²k¹wua¹ddü.⁴⁷ The retribution for killing the Son of Nyen is then negotiated.

vi. Continuation of the story

The most extensive versions, A and B, have relatively long concluding parts. Version B contains a rather large addendum (389–400). It speaks about Shenrab (Gshen rab) and his ritual during which the ‘ransom offering’ (*glud*) is made along with a ‘retribution for killing’ (*stong*), which are, however, considered insufficient. The text then narrates events connected with kings of Sumpa, Zhangzhung and eventually Minyag (Tangut) in a formulaic manner, which bring satisfaction to the Son and Daughter of Dong. Finally, the text states that it took fourteen years to fully resolve the problem. Eventually, the corpse of the Son of Nyen is retrieved, the Daughter of Dong washes it in ‘nine lustrations’ (*tshan dgu*) and applies ‘nine kinds of medicines.’ The Son of Nyen is brought back to life and given the name Nyen Dong Gongkar (Gnyan ldong mgon dkar, ‘White Protector of the Nyen and Dong’).

A much longer narration extends the main story of the myth of version A (138–180), and following that several other self-contained shorter myths featuring the same character of Son of Dong are added to the main body of the myth (180–202). The core story of the myth refers to what has until now been the regional setting of eastern Tibet, but the location is suddenly expanded to the whole world according to Buddhist cosmology in version A.

This extension contains parts dealing with the ritual reconciliation of the enmity (*mkhon*) between gods (along with the Dong people) and the Nyen. It

47 The Tibetan rendering of this name is uncertain. The first two syllables make no sense, but the two last (²k¹wua¹ddü) could hypothetically stand for Kula Dong (Sku bla ldong).

seems that this is a unique feature of this version in the sense that it sees the gods (*lha*) standing against the Nyen. It also appears in the parts where four continents of Buddhist cosmology surrounding Mt Meru are mentioned, and one wonders if this version does not represent an attempt to modify the local cosmologies (that are themselves probably already the result of an amalgamation) connected with Nyen, Lu, terrestrial divinities (*yul sa*), Kula (*sku bla*) with those based on Buddhist doctrines and represented by gods (*lha*), to which the terrestrial divinities (*yul sa*) and Lu (*klu*) are added.

The text does indeed suddenly narrate a number of episodes in which many Nyen are initially almost destroyed by ‘heavenly priests’ (*gnam gshen*), and subsequently tamed. It is then described in the formulaic phrases that their army enters the surrounding countries of Sumpa, Jang and Minyag, defeats enemies and brings satisfaction to the Son of Dong. They continue along the points of the compass and similarly destroy enemies of the four continents surrounding Mt Meru.

Then the Daughter of Dong is given to a Nyen, and she gives birth to numerous classes of Nyen. One of the subsequent episodes narrates the origin of the eighteen families of the Dong clan. Nyen asks the heavenly priest to change the name of the Son of Dong, who is named Pozi Dongbu (*Spo zi ldong bu*). He is given the name Yab Dong Chenpo (*Yab ldong chen po*, Great Father of Dong), and then marries a female water spirit, Lumo, named Crystal White Maiden (*Shel gyi mi mo dkar mo*), who is unable to produce offspring. Following a ritual performed by a priest, she gives birth to an undefined physical mass. The horns of a dragon are offered to it, and thanks to addition of the semen of ‘White Man’ (*Mi dkar po*) it develops bones. Then, they take a piece of tarnished gold, to which ambrosia and incense are applied so that it gains breath. Still, the offspring does not have a heart that ‘remembers’ (*dran*), and he does not have the ‘heart of a Nyen.’ They take a sheep’s heart from the heavenly Turquoise Lake and the earth’s golden heart, and he gains a heart that ‘remembers.’ He still does not speak, but the turquoise attached to the neck of Wise Bat touches his mouth, and he begins to speak. He does not know how to walk, but the necessary knowledge is given to him by the golden snake and the antelope. He then marries six wives, each of whom has three sons. And this is how the eighteen families of the Dong clan originated.

Another episode narrates a conflict between the planet Mars and the Nyen, and finally the Nyen become the ‘warrior gods’ (*sgra bla*) of the Dong clan.

It is revealed by the text itself that these parts represent a compilation from diverse sources and that several Nyen Collections once existed. In the conclusion of the story about the origin of the eighteen families of the Dong clan it is stated: ‘in *one of the traditions* of the Nyen Collections it is said that he fathered many sons...’ (*bu mang ba’i pha zhes gnyan ’bum rgyud cig las bshad do*).

4 Names of the main characters and places

One of the most difficult obstacles to understanding the myth outlined above is the style of writing in Tibetan, which in almost all cases of the manuscripts listed above (of which manuscripts C and E are more comprehensible) poses a number of difficulties stemming from the orthography and the number of contractions used in the ‘headless script’ of Tibetan (*dbu med*). An example of their abbreviated style can be seen in the following sentence of the manuscript version D:

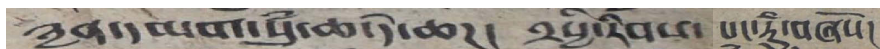


Fig. 4: Extract from manuscript version D.

ny+y+n dmag sum cha de chaT/ 2s+y+i ribs pang ru+o+m bzhos /

Corrected reading: *gnyan dmag gsum brya der chags/ gnyan gyis ri rab pang rum tu gshegs)*

Translation: *300 soldiers of Nyen appeared there. The Nyen proceeded to the height of the Most Excellent of Mountains.*

Such abbreviations are probably the result of the combination of attempts to save space on paper – a rare and expensive commodity –, an environment in which standardised orthography is not imposed, and the presence of remote dialects, which differ from the more familiar pronunciations of Tibetan.

These conventions of abbreviation could well be compared to the contemporary phenomenon of SMS text messages. A good example could be:⁴⁸

C u 2morow and plz b there

See you tomorrow and please be there.

Both of these examples use homophones that include numbers, graphemes and unorthodox spelling.

It is therefore not surprising that all the manuscripts also use several different orthographies for the place names and the main characters of the myth, not only in the entirety of the narration of the myth, but sometimes even within a single line of the manuscript.

In order to save place and reduce somehow a lengthy list of variant readings, the most usual names of the main characters of the particular versions of the myths will be given in Table 2.

⁴⁸ It is just a matter of chance that this example comes from Niger, since it might just as easily be from another part of the world (see Endong and Essoh 2015, 41).

Table 2: Main characters of the story according to the manuscripts.

Manuscript Versions	Father of Nyen	Son of Nyen	Son of Dong	Daughter of Dong	Ritualists invited	Name of the Dong land	Name of the land of Nyen
A	Gnyan gyi rgyal po	Gnyan gyi bu	Ldong Spong ngo thung/ Spo zi ldong bu	Ldong lcam skar mo/ dkar mo	Gnam gshen dgong sngon/ Rma bom bra	Thebs chu slang steng	Kho shu ya lde
B	Gnyan u ldong 'od po	Gnyan dang ro sna phyung (?)	Ldong sras Spo na go ro	Sring ldong lcam tse smad	Gshen rab	–	Pho ma yags steng
C	Gnyan rgan de ba	Gnyan sras	Ldong sras	Ldong lcam	Gnyan bon thang thang grol ba	–	–
D	Gnyan rgan dar ba	Gnyan sras 'phro ba	Ldong sras Spro thung	Yo lcam dkar mo	Gshen rab mi bo gnyer	Lteng yul skar ba	Pho ma gser steng
E	Gnyan rgan de ba	Gnyan gyi bu	Ldong sras Ngang tur	Ldong lcam	Gnyan bon thang thang grol ba/ Gshen rab mi bo	Ngo bzung	Pho ma g.ya steng
F and G	¹ Ssu- ³ mun- ² gkv- ¹ p'ër	³ Nyi- ² ssâ- ² kyo- ¹ lo	¹ Ddo- ³ ssaw- ¹ ngo- ² t'u	¹ Ddo- ³ dsho- ¹ khyü- ² ma	² Dto- ¹ mba ³ Shi- ² lo	–	–

Table 2 and the names used in the myths embody precious information about the context of the myth. It is interesting that the name of Po Nagoro (name of the Son of Dong) figures in the list of the ancestors of Dong clan.⁴⁹ Its name does not make much sense in Tibetan. It will be seen that his name is rather confusingly given as Pozi Lhungdul (Spo zi lhung rdul) in the Tangut language (see below). These features may reflect an origin among the people close to Tanguts.

The name of the father Nyen, whose son has been killed in the myth, is given as Nyen Gen Deva or Nyen Gen Darba (Gnyan rgan de ba/dar ba, i.e. 'Old Nyen Darba/Deba') in the mss. C, D, E. Even the Naxi name ¹Ssu-³mun-²gkv-¹p'ër contains indications that it refers to the Old Nyen (Gnyan rgan): the syllable ¹ssu designates 'divinity' (Tib. *gsas*), ³mun means 'old' and ²gkv-¹p'ër is 'white head'.⁵⁰ A mountain with the name Nyen Gen Darba is located close to the Thewo valley of the district of the same name. Quite remarkably, the nearest village that worships the mountain is called Dongbo (Ldong bo), a reference to the Dong clan within the name of the village.

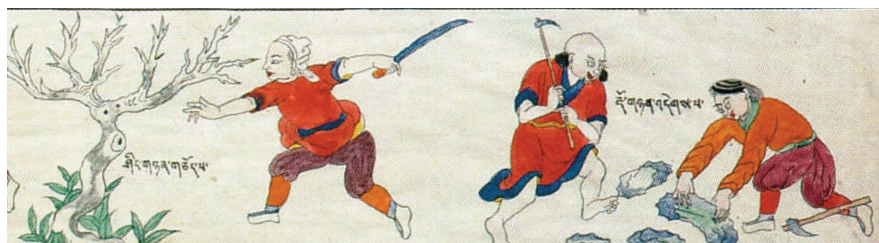


Fig. 5: Disturbing the Nyen of the tree and the stone, Tibetan Medical Paintings, plate 46, detail 2; © Serindia Publications.

This could be just a coincidence, since Tibetan place names recur in different locations, and one finds mountains, rocks and lakes with similar names across the Tibetan Plateau. But another hint giving some weight to such identification is the manuscript version A, which locates the Dong land in Thebchu (Theb chu). This name is in fact one of the old names of the river (The chu, Theb chu) that runs through the Thewo valley.⁵¹ There are therefore grounds for believing that this region is connected with the myth.

⁴⁹ For example, *Dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags* mentions him (Spo na 'go ro) as an ancestor of Dong clan (Karmay and Nagano 2002, 108).

⁵⁰ Rock 1952, 316, note 697.

⁵¹ Berounsky 2007.



Fig. 6: Nyen Gen Darba in Thewo; photo: author 2017.



Fig. 7: Nyen Gen Darba on the mural of Lhason Monastery, Thewo; photo: author 2017.

Another divinity mentioned in the myth is Nyenje Gong Ngon (Gnyan rje dgong/gong sngon). He figures as a heavenly priest in version A, but appears also as a maternal uncle of the Dong brother and sister in version D and appears also in versions E and C. A mountain of the same name is located not far from the Thewo and Phenchu regions in the higher pastures west of Thewo, close to the area now known as Amchog (A mchog).



Fig. 8: Typical landscape of Thewo region – The Nyen mountains near Khapalung (Kha pa lung); photo: author 2017.

Two other identifiable divinities are rather remote from the Thewo region. But Machen Pomra is frequently worshipped in Thewo and surrounding valleys. He is one of the main protectors of the Bon monasteries here, but even lay people worship him as their personal protective divinity and the lay ritual traditions present here (called *le'u*) are a testimony to the vitality of the cult of Machen Pomra here through the large number of surviving manuscripts dedicated to this divinity.



Fig. 9: Nyenje Gong Ngon as seen from Amchog; photo: author 2017.

Another divinity present in most of the manuscript versions is Kula Gyogchen Dongdra (Sku bla Skyogs/Sgyogs chen ldong bra).⁵² This divinity appears in the list of Thirteen Gurla (*mgur lha bcu gsum*) gods.⁵³ He is better known as Gatö Jowo (Sga stod jo bo) nowadays and his location is in the remote place of Yushu (Yu shul), on the border between Chumarleb (Chu dmar leb) and Trindu (Khri 'du) Counties, Qinghai Province, some 300km west of Mt Machen Pomra close to the place from which the Yellow River rises.

The identification of these mountain divinities enables one to locate the itinerary of the Son of Dong's flight from the armies of Nyen. It starts from the Thewo region and leads north-west to Machen Pomra and even to the west of it. This region is called 'homeland' (*pha zhing*) in version E, and we may deduce that this was the original place of the Dong clan.

⁵² The name is most commonly written as Sgyogs chen gdong ra in the later Tibetan texts.

⁵³ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 213; Karmay and Nagano 2003, 171.



Fig. 10: Statue of Machen Pomra in the Tsotshang Monastery (Gtso tshang dgon), Thewo; photo: author 2017.

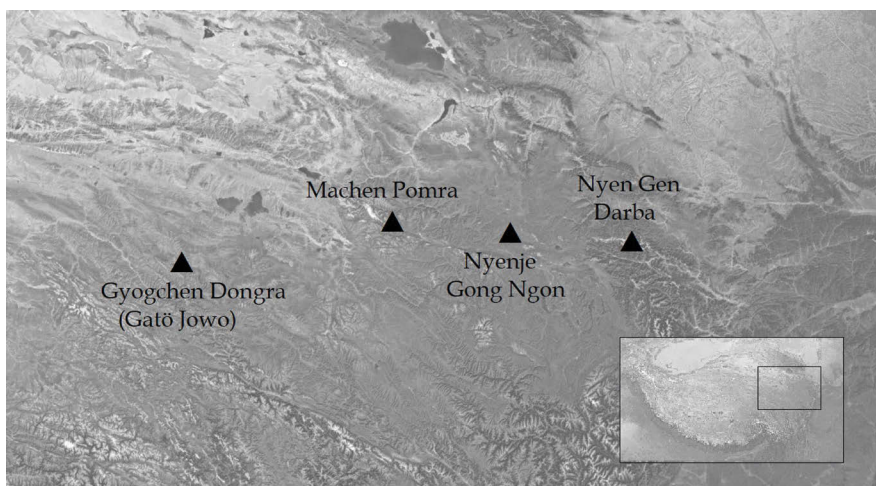


Fig. 11: Map of the mountain divinities appearing in the myth; © author.

Manuscript version A, a version of the Nyen Collection from the Bon Kanjur, contains rather surprising mentions of several names in both Tibetan and Minyag (Tangut) languages. It is the only text of this kind in the Nyen Collection. A number of other myths contained in the Collection give bilingual names in Tibetan and Nampa Dong (Nam pa Ldong), but never in Tangut. This makes the myth under consideration unique. The bilingual names are listed in Table 3.⁵⁴

Table 3: Tangut names according to version A.

Tibetan	Tangut	Translation
Spo zi ngo thung	Spo zi lhung rdul	(Name of the Son of Dong)
Ldong lcam dkar mo	Ye smre phrom	White Lady of Dong (name of the Daughter of Dong)
Mi yul rta g.yu can	Nar sgong phrom ze phrom	Land of People with horses and turquoises.
Gnam gyi bu sa'i bu/ 'greng dbu nag gi rje ru gshegs pa	Mur lta zur can khrung phrong zi khrus / phrong ni na ga za gzig ni tseng zi phrong zi	Son of sky, son of earth. The one who arrived as Lord of the black-headed upright (people).
Gnam sngon po'i bu g.yu 'od can/ sa gro mo'i bu mo gser gyi sgo nga mi (=me) 'bar ma	Mo na gzi gu phrom kug/ sprin zi thag zi/	Son of the blue sky with turquoise light. Daughter of the reddish-grey earth-blazing golden egg.
Yab ldong chen spo zi	Mo na zi'i phol khyo	Pozi, Great Father of Dong

Although some of the names seem to be rather confusing, and further analyses of them will require further research, it is nevertheless clear that the text considers its origin to be connected with the Tangut people. The Tangut kingdom (1038–1227) did not encompass the territories of the localities presented in this myth, but lay to the north of them. Nevertheless, Tanguts saw their origins in the region where the Yellow River rises, and this is the place of Mt Gyogchen Dongra mentioned in the myths.⁵⁵ It might be well the case that the myth reflects the tradition of a particular Dong clan that had settled in the Thewo region, but whose original homeland was in the Yushu area and who were related to the Tanguts.

⁵⁴ *Mi dang gnyan bsdum pa'i le'u*, 123, 174–175.

⁵⁵ See Kepping 1995.

5 Concluding remarks

The length of the particular versions of the myth presented in this paper and their corrupt nature has prevented detailed analyses and translations of each of them separately. However, even from the preliminary observations and summary analyses offered in this paper, it is possible to draw several conclusions.

First of all, this myth is a witness of a certain mytho-poetic tradition that made its appearance in western Tibet in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but with content that suggests an origin in eastern Tibet. Although some versions are rather blurred, the core of most of them refers to the places stretching between Thewo region up to the Machen Pomra range and the source of the Yellow River in Yushu. The names in the Tangut language present in version A could be taken as a sign of the proximity of the original Dong clan, whose mythical ancestors are the main characters of the myth, to the Tangut people. The Naxi versions further witness that much of their ritual traditions are based on the Tibetan originals: these are, specifically, the rituals dealing with beings called Nyen, Sadag, Tö and Lu, which were for some unknown reason or just incidentally collectively called 'ssu (Tib. *gsas*) and rendered as *nâga* by Joseph Rock. Such confusion concerning their identity contributes to significant misunderstandings of Naxi myths and rituals. This is also an area which clearly invites further research in the future, the case of the myth mentioned in this paper probably being just one example of more extensive relations between Naxi religious traditions and non-Buddhist eastern Tibetan lore.

Acknowledgments

The research on this article was supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (GACR), project no. 17–01246S, 'Nyen Collection (*Gnyan 'bum*) in the Old Tibetan Literary and Ritual Tradition'.

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Appendix: Retribution for killing the Nyen (examples and original texts)

1 Version D

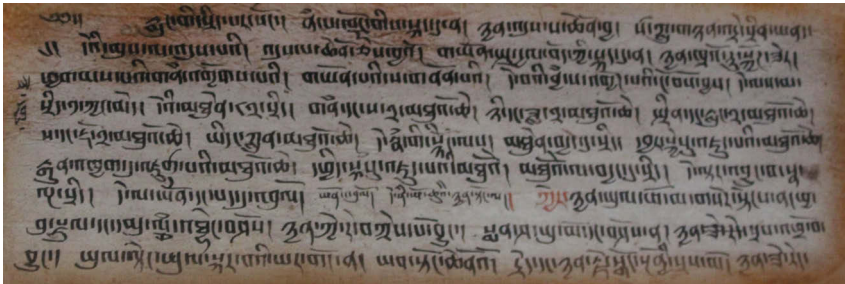


Fig. 12: Version D, fol. 29a.

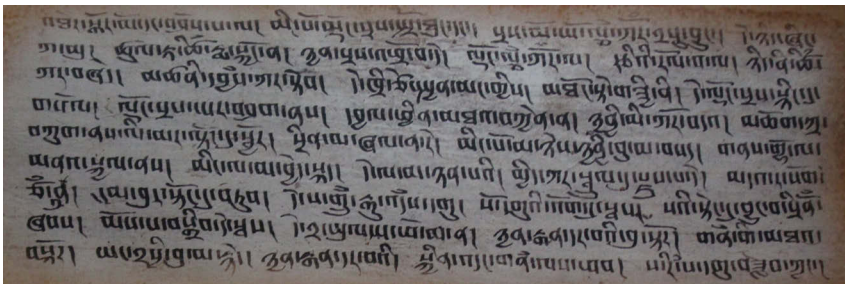


Fig. 13: Version D, fol. 29b.

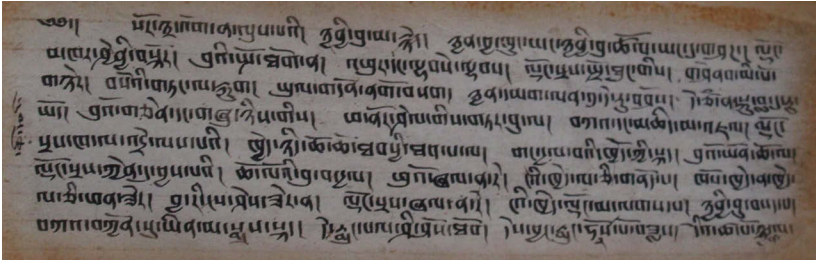


Fig. 14: Version D, fol. 30a.

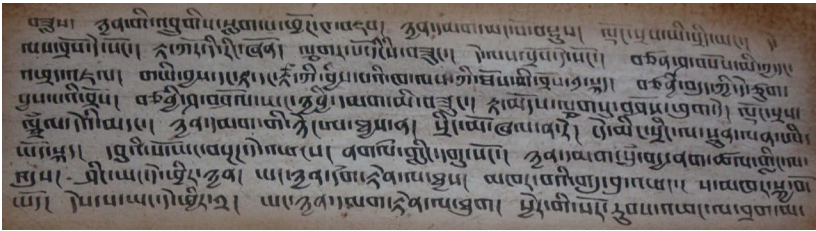


Fig. 15: Version D, fol. 30b.

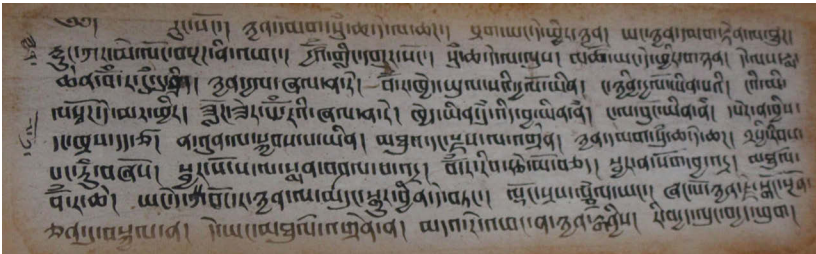


Fig. 16: Version D, fol. 31a.

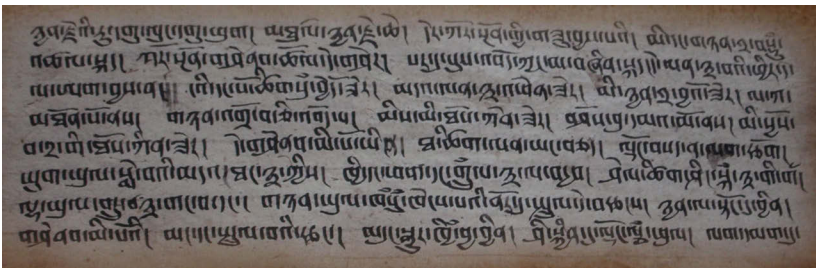


Fig. 17: Version D, fol. 31b.

[fol. 29a] kyer ny+y+n (gnyan) yul pho ma gser steng na phyha bu sdzul (rdzu 'phrul) dang dmu lcam th+he+ng (=thang nga?) bshos/ ny+y+n (gnyan) kye re bkres po byung/ sman sha yu mo dang bshos na/ ny+y+n (gnyan) ze red sras 'phro ba byung/ yul lteng yul skar ba'i yar gong na/ yab stong chen+o+'o (chen po 'o)/ red dang nya+y+n (gnyan) rje sgong sngon+y+i (sngon gyi) sras mo/ ny+y+n (gnyan) ze red [fol. 29b] 'theng skor mo dang bshos pa la/ ming po ldong sras spro thung dang/ sras mo yo lcam kar+m+o (dkar mo) 2+su (gnyis su) byung/

de nyid zhing ka mu/ tshul rta (=lta?) tshim rma skyong na/ ny+y+n (=gnyan) sras 'phro ba de/ ldong lcam kor (=dkar mo) la rtsi'i (=brtse'i) rol ba la/ nyid (=nyin) ni tshim kar bzhed/ mtshan+i (=mtshan ni) dbyams (=byams?) kar stob/ de khri tse spyang mang gyis/ mthong ste gzi+y (=gzigs pa) ni/ de ldong sras snying (=snyan) du gsol/ ldong sras yar bshag (=gshegs) nas/ dbyal phyin mtha' bkyen na/ ny+y+n+y+i (gnyan gyi) mi kor (=dkar po) bda'/ mchog kra (=rta?) bkug nas li mar ltong du sbyor/ srin ma (=sring mo) zhal na re/ ming po ma nyes ny+y+n+y+i (=gnyan gyi) bu ma bsad/ gnas g+ho (=mgo) la mna' skyal nas/ ming la ma byed skad/ de la ma nyan pa'i/ myid kar (mi dkar) sbrul du sdzu (rdzu) pa de/ mda' ra sog (=phog?) tsam 1 na/ dum bur stong du btub (=gtub)/

de sa grupu rgu 'dams dgu/ so (=sa) dgu'i 'og du sbas/ sa'i steng du byung ba srin+m+o (=sring mo'i) zhabs/ mos pa bsgribs de sbas/ de 2 (gnyis) yul sa pho ma na/ ny+y+n (=gnyan) rgan dar ba'i bu stor/ gnam gi mtha' bskor/ yang 2+s+y+i (gnyan gyis) bu ma rnyed/ ny+y+n (gnyan) rgan dar ba'i/ skyin 'dang gnam las phab/ sa rim pa dgu bzlab kyang/ [fol. 30a] sor 3 'og na lus pa'i/ ny+y+n+y+i (=gnyan gyi) bu ma rnyed/ ny+y+n (gnyan) bya khyung yang ny+y+n+y+i (gnyan gyi) bu tshol yang du gshags (=gshegs)/ ldong mkhar sh+y+e+n+y+i (=gshen gyi) bskor/ bu'i spo thog na/ 'phur dang lhabs+e (lhabs se) lhabs/ ldong sras spro thung gis/ gshen+b (gshen rab) mi po gnyer/ bso'i gtang la rkug (=bkug)/ yul gdon nag+o (nag po) bsag/ ny+y+n (=gnyan) dmag lan 1 de ru bshos (=bshegs)/ de tsam na sku bla du ru (=de ru) yod/ bu'o gcen dang gzhu (=gcung) nyis (=gnyis) gis/ pha nor shel gi gtar bu (=thar bu?) la bka' dang mchid ma 'jal/ ldong sras kha la 'dre las pa'i/ khyed nyid (gnyis?) cho cho thabs+y+i (=thabs kyi) thab (=thabs) pa la/ gang rgyal ba'i khyod (=khyer) kyi skad/ bu'o yon cho la ldong sras kyen (=rkyen?) du byas pa'i/ cho lo bu ba rgyal/ phu'o zhal na red/ nga'i khyed la ci gnod pa/ khos kyed (=khyer) na kyed la ci phan zer/ bla ri ngas shes zer na/ ldong sras zhal na re/ nga'i khyed ldong ma lags pa/ ny+y+n+i (gnyan gyi) bu bsad pa/ bka' bkyon su yin ma smras skad/ de rlung pal shi shos thob/ des byang rlung hos+r po bzlas/de'i tsha po ny+y+n (gnyan) la [fol. 30b] bzlas/ ny+y+n (gnyan) gi 'brugis ('brug gis) bsag pa phyogs 4 brdab/

ldong sras yi srid yang/ de las bros de song/ rta kor (=dkar po) di ring zhon/ lcag+r po (=lcag dkar po?) di+ngis (?) bzung/ de las pros (=bros) de song/ btsan sha bsos mi 2+y (=gnyis) dang 'phrad 'jal (=mjäl)/ g.yi (=g.yig) byas dang rta dang

rta+x⁵⁶ ki byi pa'i kha las ki thos gi bros 1 skad/ btsan+yi (=btsan gyi) bdud kyi
 de tsug byas pa'i bros/ btsan+y+i (btsan gyi) sha bshol yang ny+y+n+y+i (gnyan
 gyi) dmag mi bzung/ rta mdos lcags+u (lcags su) bshos phug (bshol phang?) de/
 ldong sras lcam+r+l (lcam dral) de'i mdang (=mdangs)/ ny+y+n (=gnyan) dmag
 gi nyeng (=rnyed) a th+y+s (=thug)⁵⁷ na/ sring mo zhal na re/ nged ming sring
 la sngun lan i yod skad/ dbu'i so yang bsngang (=sngangs) de 'phangs/ nag+l+l
 (=nag tshal) gling dgu (=du) song/ shing yang de phyr ny+y+n (gnyan)/ yang
 ny+y+n (gnyan) d+>+g (=sa bdag) rten la th+y+s (=thug)/ mkhar ba'i gdu bu
 'phang/ sa mkhar skya bo yod/ des sa yang de phyr 2 (=gnyan)/ yang ny+y+n
 (gnyan) dmag rten la thug/ s+yer (gser) gi sor rubs 'phang la brag ma [fol. 31a]
 rung (=ru?) song/ ny+y+n (gnyan) dmag sum cha (=sum brgya?) de la chags/ brag
 yang de phyr ny+y+n (gnyan)/ yang ny+y+n (gnyan) dmag rten la thud (=thugs)/
 rngung (=dngul) kar (=dkar) me long bsngang (=sngangs?) ni 'phang/ rgya+o+m+'
 (=rgya mtsho'i) gling dgur song/ sum cha (=brgya?) de la lus/ mtsho yang de phyr
 gnyan/ de las rma chen boṃ ra duṃ du sprin (=sbran)/ ny+y+n (gnyan) rgyal zhal
 na re/ boṃ ra khyed yul sa'i rgyalo (=rgyal po) yin/ nga ny+y+n+y (=gnyan gyi)
 rgyal po yin pa'i/ nga'i mi l+swogs (=la ...?gsod) de mar phyr/ zlogs zer poṃ ra'i
 zhal na re/ khyed yin duṃ 'di bya yin naṃ/ nga la bung+o (=bu yong? bu slong?)
 yin naṃ/ dper na byis (=byi) dang khra dad (=ded) tsa/ na 'un la skyabs pa yin/
 mthu' (=mthu) dang rdzas (=rtsal) la 'gren (=gran)/ ny+y+n (=gnyan) dmag sum
 cha (=sum brgya?) de chags/ 2s+y+i (gnyan gyis) ribs (=ri rab) pang (=dpang/
 spang?) ru+o+m (?) bzhos (=bshegs?)/ sbyar po sa la sman bshal pa 'dra/ boṃ ra
 rib (=ri rab) rtse mo bcad/ sbyar na sog bya (=so bya) 'dra/ mthul (mthu rtsal)
 boṃ ra che/ yang de k bong ra (=bom ra) ny+y+n (gnyan) la mdung (=mdangs?)
 sgyur byin de btang/ ldong sras lc+r+m+l (lcam dral) yang/ zhang po ny+y+n
 (gnyan) rje sgong sngon can du bskyal na/ de yang mthu+l (mthu rtsal) 'gren
 (=gran) na/ mda' re 'phang na ny+y+n (gnyan) rgan+y+i+s (rgan gyis)/ ri brgyad
 lung brgyad phug/ [fol. 31b] ny+y+n (gnyan) rje'i ru (=ri) dgu lung dgu phug/ der
 kor (=gong) sngon gyi gzu byas pa'i/ mi dang gnyan 2 bsduṃ 'tshal skad/ kor
 (=gong) sngon gshen+b (gshen rab) tshol de gshegs/

(29a) Hey! In the Nyen country Phoma Serteng,
 from the union of Dzutrul, the son of Cha [beings],
 and lady Mutheng-nga,
 appeared Nyen Kyere Trepo.

⁵⁶ It is apparently *rta* with a cross above it, but one would expect *lcags* ('iron') here.

⁵⁷ Although the emendation may be strange, *th+y+s* bears apparently meaning *thug* later in the text.

From [his] union with Mänsha Yumo,⁵⁸
appeared Troba, the Son of Nyen.

High up in the country of Tengyul Karba,
dwells Father Great Tong.
He coupled with the daughter of Gong Ngon, the Lord of Nyen,
[named] Nyen Zere Theng Gormo.
(29b) Older brother Trothung,⁵⁹ the Son of Dong,
and daughter Yocam Karmo, the two,
appeared [from their union].

And she, [Yocam Karmo] herself,
at the edge of the field,
at [the place called] Makyong,
was looking with satisfaction.
That Throba, the Son of Nyen,
[engaged] in love-play,
with [Yo]cham Karmo of Dong.
During the days, they satiated their strong desire,
during the nights, they consummated their love.

Thritse Chenmang,
seeing them and watching them,
reported all to the Son of Dong.
The Son of Dong proceeded there,
he came to the lady at the edge [of the field].
Chasing the white man of Nyen,
summoning an excellent bright [horse] (?),
he arrived at the copper slope of a mountain.⁶⁰
The younger sister said:
'Elder brother, do not punish him,
do not kill the Son of Nyen!'
Swearing an oath at the summit of that place,
she told her elder brother not to do that.
He did not listen to her.

⁵⁸ The name could be rendered as 'Hind of the deer of *smān* [beings].'

⁵⁹ He is mentioned also as Trothug or Pothog (Spro thug/Spo thog) later in the text.

⁶⁰ This part is not clear, and the translation is only tentative.

That white Nyen transformed into a snake.
As a row of assembled arrows,⁶¹
he cut him into thousand pieces.

At that place of full mutilation,
he was hidden below the nine [layers] of earth.
Sister's foot appeared on the top of that place,
deliberately polluted he was hidden.
These two,
caused the son of Old Nyen Darba to be lost
from the country (*yul sa*) Phoma [Serteng].

[His father] travelled around the edge of the sky,
but did not find his son.
The Old Nyen Darba,
made hail fall from the sky.
Though it loosened nine layers of earth (30a),
he did not find his son,
left below the top [of the place where the sister's] toes [had been].⁶²

Even the bird of Nyen, Khyung,
went again in search of the son of Nyen.
It roamed around the Dong castle of priests,
to the place where the Son [of Nyen] went,
it flew—*lhab se lhab*.

Trothug, the Son of Dong,
invited Shenrab Miwonyer to ease the situation.
The black demons Don (*gdon*) of that country gathered,
in a moment, the armies of Nyen arrived.

61 The translation is only tentative. The usual meaning of *mda' ra* is 'archery enclosure,' however, it seems to convey the image that the cut pieces of the body of snake resembled 'gathered arrows.'

62 The translation is tentative. The text explicitly mentions 'three toes' (*sor gsum*). The toes refer to the polluting act of stepping on the place by the feet of the sister. Number three has also a symbolic meaning as the 'top' of something, and this is what is probably meant here.

At that time, the Kula (*sku bla*) was present there.⁶³
 The elder son [of the Kula] and the younger one,⁶⁴
 met for discussion and talked,
 about [dividing] the father's crystal goods and riches.⁶⁵
 The Son of Dong, whose mouth was relying on demon Dre, said:
 'You two, play dice.
 Whoever wins will take [the riches].'
 The dice of the younger brother,
 was made favourable by the Son of Dong,⁶⁶
 the younger brother won the dice game.

The elder brother said:
 'What harm comes to you from me?
 Of what benefit for you is his taking [the riches]?
 Only the Soul-Mountain (*bla ri*) knows it with all certainty.'
 The Son of Dong said:
 'My affection towards you was not good,
 I have killed the Son of Nyen.'⁶⁷
 Do not tell anyone who is to be blamed for it.'⁶⁸

It reached the Wind, Palshisho,
 it was repeated to the northern Wind, Höpo,
 and his nephew repeated it to the Nyen.
 The threat of Nyen's dragons fell on the four directions,
 many armies of Nyen gathered.

63 Kula (*sku bla*) is an epithet of several terrestrial divinities in the text. It appears also in the name of Machen Pomra (Sku bla rma bom bra/pom ra/pom bra), but not exclusively. It is not clear which divinity is meant here. Version B (142) speaks about a certain Sku bla na re tsang and his sons.

64 The sons mentioned in the version B could be hypothetically taken as sons of Machen Pomra, since this mountain deity is frequently addressed simply as Kula (*sku bla*) in the myths of Nyen Collections.

65 Version B says that they argued about the division of the father's wealth.

66 Version B describes how the Son of Dong empowered the dice by spells.

67 Version B speaks about a 'bad omen of death' (*shi than*) present in the result of the game.

68 These verses speak about the demon (somehow related to the killing the Son of Nyen) who causes the Son of Dong to favour the younger brother, who gains the wealth of his father, the mountain divinity. This is contrary to common habit, since older brothers usually inherit property. The Son of Dong then realises that it was the killing of the Nyen which caused him to act in such a way.

However, the Son of Dong was able
to escape and flee away.
Riding a white horse,
holding a white whip,⁶⁹
escaping he fled away.

He met a deer of the demon Tsen,
and two men⁷⁰ hunting it.
Breathing heavily [he was told]:
‘[Leave] the horse and whip here.
Since they heard that childish talk, escape!’
Having done as he had been [told by] Tsen and Du he fled away.⁷¹
The two demons Tsen hunting deer were not taken by armies of Nyen,
those of appearance of the brother and sister of Dong,
the ransomed horse and whip were left there.

Being found by the armies of Nyen,
which were almost reaching them,
the Sister of Dong said:
‘Do we, brother and sister,
have something to be left in front of us?’⁷²
Being frightened he threw away a tooth of his head,
it reached the region of woods.
Three hundred troops of Nyen gathered in the woods,
and this is why the woods are Nyen.

69 The text reads *rta dkar po di ring zhon/ lcags (=lcag) dkar dungs si bzung/*. The meaning of the expressions *di ring* and *dungs si* is not clear and these are omitted in the translation. I am indebted to Charles Ramble for pointing out the possible meaning of *lcags* (= *lcag*, ‘whip’).

70 The number given in the original could mean also ‘seven.’ However, taking into consideration version B, which speaks about two demons, ‘two’ is taken here as probably the more correct reading.

71 The translation of this part is very tentative and it seems that part of the sentences are missing here. The general meaning has been reconstructed with the aid of version B, which is closest in these parts and more detailed. It speaks not about ‘white whip,’ but about ‘white cloth.’ Demons serve as a ransom offering (*ngar mi*), the horse and the cloth of the Son of Dong are intended to create the impression that he himself is present.

72 The text reads *sngun lan*, which literally means ‘in front—to react/answer.’

The troops of Nyen reached the ‘support’ of lords of soil.
The bracelet of bell metal was cast away,
it became a greyish castle of earth and stones,
and this is why the soil is Nyen.

Escaping to the bolder the golden ring⁷³ was cast away,
three hundred troops of Nyen became attached to it,
and this is why the boulders are Nyen.
The troops of Nyen reached their ‘support.’

Escaping to the region of lakes,
a silver mirror did they cast away,
three hundred [of troops] were left there,
and this is why the lakes are Nyen.

From there they continued to Machen Pomra [searching] for reconciliation.

The Lord of Nyen said:

‘Pomra, you are the lord of terrestrial divinities (*yul sa*),
I am the lord of Nyen.

And because of that murder by people,
drive back!’

Pomra said:

‘You, would it not do to be reconciled?
Has not the son [of Dong] come to me?
For example, when being chased by a hawk,
the mouse finds protection in the fog.
Let’s compete in power!’

Three hundred troops of Nyen appeared there,
they proceeded to the height of the Most Excellent of Mountains (*ri rab*).
Pomra cut the top of the Most Excellent of Mountains,
Pomra was stronger in power.⁷⁴
Granting a rooster (?) to Nyen,⁷⁵
Pomra conferred it on them.

⁷³ The translation is tentative, but it is probable that *sor rubs* might be an expression for ‘finger-ring.’ Probably *sor rubs* < *sor gdub*, ‘ring.’

⁷⁴ I am omitting here two sentences the meaning of which is not clear.

⁷⁵ The text reads *mdung bsgyur* (‘spear-averting’), which could mean *mdongs bsgyur* (‘appear-

ldong sras dang thog tis bsad zin/ der mi dang gnyan gnyis byed (=’byed)/ de nas rma pom ra yis/ mi dang gnyan gnyis par du/ shel tshig khri dkar stong nag gis/ mi dang gnyan gnyis bsdums so/ de’i yon tan gyis/ mi dang gnyan gnyis mjal/ de ring yang gnyan bya mtshams bu ’dis/ mi dang gnyan gnyis sprad do/ le’u yon bdag gis/ gnyan gyi ma bu sprad pas/ yon bdag gi gnyan ma bu yis/ ma bu rtag du sprad/ de nas gnyan rgan de ba yis/ gnyan bon thang thang grol ba gnyer/ gnyan gzhi dkar po bting/ bzang bya bcu gsum dang/ pha bong ljags sgom (=pha wang ljags sgam) dang gnyan po sprul skar la ’phrin pa [fol. 317] btang/ pha bang (=pha wang) yang gnyan yul yang nas chas/ pha bang ljags sgom (=ljags sgam) ste/ gnyan sras sbrul dkar gyi drung du phyin/ khye’u na re/ khyed kyi bu yis ng ’phen pa yin no zer/ gnyan sras zhal na re/ pha bang khyed kyi rdzun ma byed/ nga la gson dus su mu med pa la/ shi na bu gar byung skad pa dang/ pha bang zhal na re/ khod ldang (=ldong) lcam dang bshos pa’i bu ni/ mi khri ltong khyab bya ba yin/ de gnyan rgan de ba gnyis kyis/ nga pha bong (=pha wang) phrin pa btang ba yin pas/ da nga’i zla ru ’dug dgos skad/ gnyan chen sbrul dkar de/ pha ma lcags mkhyen (=pha wang ljags sgam) gyi khyid (=khrid) nas ’ongs/ pha zhal dang bu ngo phrad do/ de le’u yon bdag gi pha zhal dang ngo ’phrad do/

Then, salutation to the meeting of mother and son of Nyen!
 At the past place of the beginning,
 when the people and Nyen dwelled in their own respective countries,
 the son of Old Nyen Deva,
 Was with the passing of time killed by the Son of Dong,
 people and Nyen were divided.

Then, Ma[chen] Pomra,
 in between Nyen and humans,
 by ten thousand white and a thousand black scorched grains,
 reconciled [the dispute between] people and Nyen.

By the virtue of that,
 the humans and Nyen met.
 And even today this bird of Nyen—*mtshams bu* (?),
 makes humans and Nyen meet.
 By meeting mother and son,
 caused by the donors of *leu* (*le’u yon bdag*),⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Tib. *le’u*. It denotes a particular ritual tradition and it is a name both for the ritual specialists within such tradition and ritual. Traces of such a ritual tradition can be found in Thewo. See

the mother and son of the donors,
the mother and son meet forever!

Then, [for] the Old Nyen Deva,
the white basis of Nyen was spread,
by Nyenbon Thangthang Drolba Nyer.
He dispatched to the White Snake of Nyen (i.e. the Son of Nyen)
thirteen fine birds,
and the Bat with wise tongue as messengers.

Though the Bat
left the vast country of Nyen,
that Bat with wise tongue,
reached the [dead] Son of Nyen—the white snake.

The youth [Bat] said:
‘I was dispatched by your son.’
The Son of Nyen said:
‘You, Bat, do not lie!
When I was alive, I had no son.
Having died, how would my son appear?’
The Bat said:
‘The son from your union with the Daughter of Dong,
is named Mitri Tongkhyab (Mi khri stong khyab).
He and Old Nyen Deva, the two,
have sent me—the Bat—as a messenger.
Now, you must be my companion!’
That great Nyen—white snake—
was led by the Bat with wise tongue.
On their arrival, the faces of father and son met.
Similarly, the donors of *leu*,
make the faces of father and son meet.

Bazhen Zeren

A Newly-Discovered Manuscript of the Bonpo *Klu 'bum* and its Canonical Transformation

Abstract: Among the thousands of Tibetan manuscripts related to the Bon religion that have come to light in China's Gansu and Sichuan provinces in recent years is a work entitled *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum (PLB)*, the 'Extensive collection from Phenyul concerning the *klu*'. The text, which is a collection of myths and rituals relating to the *klu* spirits that are sometimes conflated with the Indic *nāga* (serpent spirits), is part of the repertoire of a class of Bon priests known as *le'u*. The importance of the Klu Collection to Tibetan religion is illustrated by the fact that it is the only Bon work that is also used by Buddhists. Apart from a few pioneering studies – two of them dating to the nineteenth century – very little research has been carried out on the Klu Collection. The *PLB* is one of two recensions of a hitherto unstudied version of the Collection, of which the other appears in the Bon Canon. This article focuses on the *PLB* manuscript recension. The manuscript contains a number of archaic and local codicological features, while an analysis of its contents suggests that it is an older version than that found in the Bon Canon, which contains quasi-Buddhist features that may have been introduced with a view to aligning it with 'monastic' Bon orthodoxy.

1 Introduction

The *klu* are often regarded as being equivalent to the Indic *nāgas* of South and South-east Asian, in much the same way that the Tibetan *khyung* is often identified with the Indic *garuḍa*. The *nāgas* are serpent spirits that occur widely throughout the region. Nebesky-Wojkowitz¹ proposes that the Tibetan *klu* were originally indigenous beings that were connected to and later merged with the Indian *nāgas* after the advent of Buddhism. While there is no evidence to suggest that the *klu* are derived directly from Indian beliefs, the current conception of these divinities in Tibet seems to be a fusion of Hindu, Indian Buddhist and indig-

1 Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, 29.

enous ideas.² Worship of the *klu* is widespread not only in Tibet proper, but can be found all over the wider Tibetan-speaking area. Many aspects of the form and behaviour of the *klu* that are found in Bonpo sources in particular are likely to represent indigenous ideas, but some of these works are clearly influenced by Indic beliefs concerning *nāgas*.

The best known source concerning the category of Tibetan *klu* is the three-volume *Klu 'bum dkar nag khra*, the 'White, Black and Variegated [volumes of the] Hundred thousand *klu*' (hereafter *Klu 'bum WBV*). This work contains a large number of myths describing how a peaceful world was destabilised because of conflict between the *klu* and other beings due to the offensive actions of the latter, and how a priest was able to dispel the disharmony and restore their relationship by performing an appropriate ritual. There have been a few pioneering studies of the *Klu 'bum*, notably by Anton Schiefner, Berthold Laufer, Marcelle Lalou and Rolf A. Stein. Schiefner's 1881 study offered a German translation of an abridged version of the first volume, and Laufer's work of 1898 the edited text and a German translation of a Buddhist version of the work. Lalou's and Stein's publications³ on the *Klu 'bum* have tended to consider general features of the text or to focus on certain episodes, while Stein in particular also examines continuities between the *Klu 'bum* on the one hand and comparable material in Dunhuang and Naxi manuscripts on the other.

While I was preparing my doctoral dissertation related to the *klu*, Ngag dbang rgya mtsho of Lanzhou University kindly provided me with photographs of a manuscript he had found in the The bo region of eastern Tibet entitled '*Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* (henceforth *PLB*).⁴ The text of this manuscript is quite different from the best-known three-volume *Klu 'bum* that appears in the Bon Canon,⁵ but it corresponds to part of another text, also entitled *Klu 'bum* (hereafter *BLB*, '*Bum bzhi'i klu 'bum*),⁶ that forms one of four collections ('*bum*) related to four

² Przuluski has suggested that the Chinese dragon and the India *nāga* are both local transformations of certain cultural ideas that were borrowed from prehistoric maritime populations; see Przuluski 1925 and 1938.

³ Lalou 1933 and 1938; Stein 1971; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c.

⁴ Daniel Berounský mentions another text related to the *gnyan*, entitled '*Phen yul rgyas pa gnyan gyi 'bum bzhugs s+ho*, 43 folios, manuscript photographed in Thewo (eastern Tibet) by Ngawang Gyatso. See Berounský 2017.

⁵ The first scholars to have carried out research on this work were Anton Schiefner (1881) and Berthold Laufer (1898). Subsequent research has been very limited, although some comparisons of its contents with Dunhuang and Naxi literature have been made by Rolf Stein.

⁶ The full title is *Rnam par dag pa'i 'bum bzhi las gtsang ma'i klu 'bum bzhugs so*. *Bon Canon*, vol. 139.

categories of divinities: *Klu 'bum*, *Gtod 'bum*, *Sa bdag 'bum* and *Gnyan 'bum*. Among these, the *Gnyan 'bum* has been discussed briefly in an article by Samten Karmay⁷ and more extensively in two subsequent articles by Daniel Berounský.⁸ The *Sa bdag 'bum* is the subject of a research project currently being pursued by Daniel Berounský and Marc des Jardins. The *Gtod 'bum* and the *Klu 'bum* of the Four Collections, however, have not been the subject of any previous research.

This article will give a general introduction to the newly-discovered *PLB*, highlighting some key ways in which it differs from the best-known text, the three-volume *Klu 'bum (Klu 'bum WBV)*,⁹ and a preliminary comparison with a canonical work that it resembles most closely.

The *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* is an incomplete text, consisting of 65 folios. There is no colophon, but there is a sentence at the beginning of the text stating 'thus says the [sacred] word'.¹⁰ The work is therefore presented as the teaching of Ston pa Gshen rab mi bo. The title is given as *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* on the first folio, but it is in fact always referred to as *Klu 'bum nag po'i yang snying* or *Klu 'bum nag po* throughout the text. In the canonical version of this work, *BLB*, we find that the title of this text is not always consistent either. The title, *Gtsang ma klu yi spang skong g.yung drung theg pa chen po'i mdo*, applies to the content of the first to the fourteenth chapters, after which it seems to end, since there is a colophon. In contrast with the first fourteen chapters, which repeat this title at the end of each chapter, the fifteenth chapter starts with a new title, *Klu 'bum nag po'i yang snying*,¹¹ and the remaining four chapters of this text repeat this new title with only minor variations.¹² It is these five chapters that correspond to the text of *PLB*.

In the present article, the first part of this canonical work will be referred to as *BLB1* and the second, which will be compared to *PLB*, as *BLB2*. Although the numbering of the chapters continues sequentially after *BLB1*, *BLB2* is an independent and complete text, with a new opening. The five chapters with which I shall be concerned here, numbered as chapters fifteen to nineteen, consist of

7 Karmay 2010.

8 Berounský 2016 and 2017.

9 The abbreviation *Klu 'bum WBV* will be used in this article to refer to the well-known three-volume collection known as the White, Black and Variegated (*dkar nag khra*) *Klu 'bum*.

10 *bka' gsungs ba 'di ni*.

11 See *BLB*, 205.

12 Chapters sixteen and seventeen give the title *Klu 'bum nag po*; see *BLB*, 212, 218. Chapter nineteen only uses the title *Klu 'bum*, see *BLB*, 338. One exception is that at the end of chapter eighteen the text returns to the first title, that of *Gtsang ma klu'i spang skong*, see *BLB*, 336.

136 pages in total; the colophon that follows chapter nineteen seems to belong to both *BLB1* and *BLB2*.

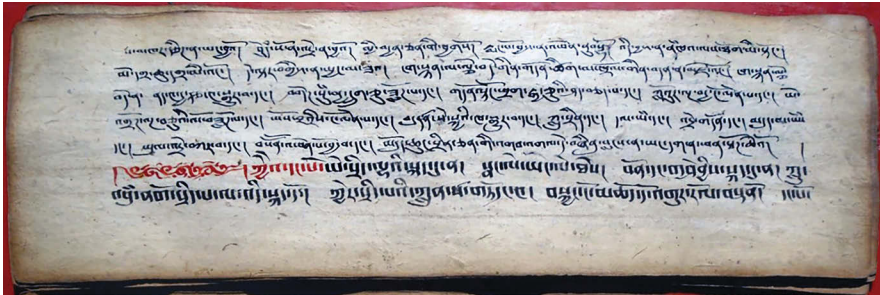


Fig. 1: 'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum; The bo, Gansu (photo: Ngag dbang rgya mtsho).

Although it is quite evident that *PLB* and *BLB2* are variants of the same text, there are nevertheless certain differences between the two in terms of orthography, grammar and codicological features. Both texts are written in a poetic form that is found in many other ritual texts. Zhangzhung terms for temple (*hos khang*), water (*skyin 'dangs*), fire (*dmар 'dangs*) and so forth also appear quite frequently in both texts. Both works contain many contracted forms, some of which are quite distinctive, especially in *PLB*, as in the case of the abbreviation for *sa bdag*.¹³ However, in *BLB2* there are fewer misspellings, the orthography used is more formal, and honorific forms appear with greater frequency. As shown in the introduction to the collection of the *Le'u* manuscripts,¹⁴ *PLB* is rich in archaic forms, such as *myi* for *mi*, *dmigs* for *mig*, and *g+ho* for *mgo*, as well as other heterodox spellings (see Fig. 2). The consonant *pa* is often replaced by the consonant *pha* as in the case of *dphung* for *dbung* (see Fig. 3). Moreover, many syllables end with a superabundant 'a. Numerals are often used to replace combinations of letters (see Fig. 4), and certain numerals, such as nine and ten, seem to be unique to *PLB* and other *le'u* texts (see Figs 5, 6).

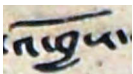


Fig. 2: The spelling 'phyos instead of the more conventional *bcos* (*PLB*).

¹³ This symbol appears in all the 'Phen yul texts and other *le'u* texts too.

¹⁴ See Tsering Thar and Ngawang Gyatso 2017.

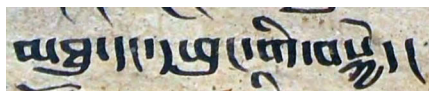


Fig. 3: The spelling *dphung* instead of the more conventional *dpung* (*PLB*).

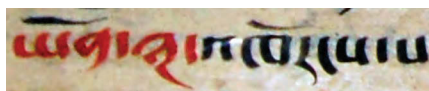


Fig. 4: The term *yon bdag* (in red), with the syllable *bdag* represented by a symbol resembling the numeral 3.

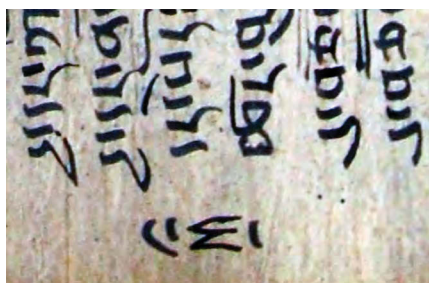


Fig. 5: Marginal folio number 59, with a distinctive symbol representing the figure 9.

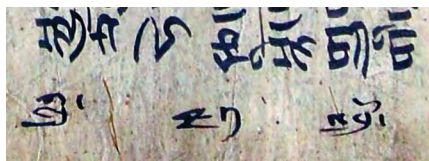


Fig. 6: Marginal folio number 11, with a symbol representing the figure 10 preceding the figure 1 between the syllables *klu* and *'bum* (*PLB*).

Secondly, the structure and content of the text are simpler and more systematic in *BLB2*. The contents of *PLB*, however, reveal many more flourishes. There are some very interesting parts in *PLB* which cannot be found in *BLB2*, such as a discussion of the distinction between the *klu* and *klu srin*, an incomplete myth about the messenger bird (*'phrin bya*), and a myth about medicine derived from deer.

2 The structure of the text

2.1 *Bam po* and chapters in *PLB* and *BLB2*

PLB is classified mainly by *bam po*, but it also gives some additional *bam po* and chapter numbers, which is quite confusing. For example, there are two subsections within *bam po* four, identified as both chapter ten and *bam po* four, and another subsection is simply named chapter twelve. However, it is quite obvious that only the second *bam po* four is in fact the real ending of this entire section. Later, *bam po* five is identified as both chapter fifteen and *bam po* five. What is more, the section after *bam po* six, which should logically be *bam po* seven, is in fact named chapter eighteen and *bam po* three. It is unclear how these chapter numbers (chapters ten, twelve, fifteen and eighteen) came to be enumerated. Furthermore, there are no *bam po* numbers for the last three sections, those concerning confession, offering medicine and prayer, as well as an incomplete myth about the messenger bird. However, it is not difficult to identify the beginning of each of these sections, because there is a small title sentence introducing it at the beginning of each part. I have therefore named these last three sections simply sections 1, 2 and 3. *BLB2* organises chapters fifteen to nineteen much more clearly, since they are clearly classified into five chapters, without, however, giving a specific *bam po* number.

2.2 The general content and structure of *PLB*

PLB first outlines the general structure of the text in a smaller script (this is not found at all in *BLB2*):

First conjure the *klu*, invite the *klu*, recite the mantra of the *klu*, distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, make the other *klu* offerings to the *klu* community, make the confession, offer medicine, then pray; it is thus that the ritual should be carried out.¹⁵

This step-by-step guide comprises three parts, which can also be considered the general setting of a ritual text: the preliminary part (*sngon 'gro*), which describes

¹⁵ *PLB*, fol. 1^v: *Dang po klu'i srid pa bya ba dang/ spyin+rs (sryan drangs) pa dang/ snyingo (snying po) bskyed pa dang/ klu dang klu srin dbye ba dang/ klu'i tshogs la klu yon 'bul ba dang/ bshags pa bya ba dang/ ding sman gsol ba dang/ smon lam btab pa dang/ de don bya ste/.*

the preparation of the ritual;¹⁶ the main section (*dnagos gzhi*), which comprises the invitation (*spyany 'dren*), the request to be seated (*bzhugs su gsol*), prostration (*phyag 'tshal*), confession (*sdig bshags*) and offering (*mchod 'bul*). The final part is the conclusion (*rjes bya*), which consists of a prayer for good fortune and long life. But some additional elements are also added, such as a means to distinguish differences between the *klu* and *klu srin*. *PLB* follows this step-by-step guide to the letter; moreover, it contains an extra, incomplete myth about the messengers of the *klu* at the end of the text.

However, the text refers not only to one simple ritual performance, but rather an anthology of myths inserted into these how-to guides for ritual performance. For example, *bam po* one covers the invitation of the *klu* and the request for them to be seated by making offerings and reciting the text, but it in fact starts with myths about cosmogony and the *klu*'s origins. Later in the text, the steps regarding prostration and making offerings to all the *klu*, a procedure which takes up 49 of the total 65 folios in the text,¹⁷ include a great number of additional myths. These myths usually comprise three sections: a myth about cosmogony which describes the beginning of the world; the origins of the *klu*, which introduces many different *klu* and their respective abilities; and a distinct ritual narrative which generally entails a story about the *klu* and a human, ending in an independent ritual performance.

In order to establish a clear distinction between these narrated rituals, as opposed to the rituals that are actually performed by the priest, I shall refer to these as 'myth-rituals'. By contrast, the sequence of rituals that are set out in the instructions that feature at the beginning of the text and at intervals throughout it, will be referred to as 'performance-rituals'. This is similar to the black and variegated volumes of the *Klu 'bum WBV*, where each chapter contains a myth with an accompanying ritual, though the focus of the myths and the ritual style are different between the *Klu 'bum* and *PLB*. The individual myth-rituals in *PLB* focus on the construction of the *klu*'s house and on making the different offerings, as well as a prayer for the priest to recite. These myth-rituals are independent of one another, because the context in which the construction of the *klu* house and the offering are described varies from myth to myth. We are made aware of the end of the myth subsection by the inclusion of a few phrases which have been added at the end, paying homage to the *klu*, which take the form of prostration and offerings. This brief description of the prostration and offering part of the ritual, located within the myth subsection is, however, not long enough to consti-

¹⁶ Information about the preparation for the ritual can be found at the beginning of both texts.

¹⁷ It runs from fol. 14^r to fol. 63^r.

tute a full guide to each step of the ritual. It therefore seems more likely that these steps have been inserted into the original myth subsection, rather than the myths being inserted into the steps of the ritual itself. The text could also be considered a collection of complete and independent myths, as we see in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, were there not these performance-ritual steps added in.

PLB gives a general instruction for ritual-making in small script after this step-by-step guide. This instruction does not pertain to the steps of the performance-ritual, but rather for the individual rituals contained within each myth. It discusses what kind of materials are to be used for constructing the house and making offerings, and also presents the various reasons why people should undertake this ritual, as well as the benefits to be derived from their performance. According to the work of Rolf Stein,¹⁸ the Dunhuang texts similarly show a series of myths with accompanying rituals, but Stein found that these texts do not give any specific ritual instructions at the beginning. *PLB* contains not only the ritual in the myth, but also an instruction at the beginning, though we will find that each individual ritual of each myth does not precisely follow the instructions given, since there are often slight differences in terms of the materials used or the order of making the offering houses.

3 Accounts of multiple *klu* in the mythic narrative of *PLB*

3.1 Origins of the *klu* and relations with humans

According to the step-by-step guide, *bam po* three to *bam po* 'three' (which should in fact be *bam po* seven) should refer to prostration and the offerings to the *klu*. These two parts occupy a good portion of the text, but the main content is taken up by a series of myths. As mentioned previously, they quite often include a myth about cosmogony, about the origin of the *klu* and also a myth-ritual. They invariably contain rich detail about the origin of the *klu* as well as their realms. In these myths, the *klu* do not appear naturally at the beginning of the world as in *Klu 'bum WBV*, but are born as the progeny of parents. Most *klu* are produced by Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo, who can transform into different things such as a mountain or a lake, a frog or a fish and so on. They can also

¹⁸ Stein 1971.

transform into the mountain-lake couple Ri rab lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo, as well as the king of *klu* 'Phags pa dung gi thor gtsug can and his queen Ye shes pa mo,¹⁹ sometimes with Gnod sbyin pa mo, Klu mkhar khri 'bum and Ye shes pa mo. All the *klu* produced are in fact different animals, although we do not see any cases of the *klu* as a marmot, an animal that is very common in *Klu 'bum WBV*. Instead, snakes appear quite regularly, as do frogs and fishes. One animal specific to this text is the ox. These rich myths describe the *klu* as being born from couples in a variety of locations, such as in the 'void', in the continent of Skal pa, in the sea, on the rocks and so forth. The text presents the magical powers and abilities of these *klu* in great detail, and these descriptions comprise the majority of the myths. In some cases, the serpent is described as breathing fire, which is similar to images found in Indian texts, according to Vogel.²⁰ The couple Sangs po and Chu lcam, in the guise of a frog and a fish, go to the continent of Skal pa, where they produce three oxen. Furthermore, these oxen are in this particular case connected with three of the five elements, being born as fire ox, wind ox and water ox, each with magical powers. More interestingly, some of the *klu* are first born as different precious eggs, which then transform into different animals.

With regard to the content of the myth-ritual, humans become diseased because they have angered the *klu* in some way, and so try to liberate themselves from these obstacles by performing the rituals, in order to appease the *klu*. However, the *klu* are not only angered by harmful human activity, but also simply because of the failure to make the requisite offerings to them. In the later myths, *klu* are disturbed by activities such as house-building (usually described as 'castle-building'). We can thus observe a development of the content from myth to myth in this text. In terms of the structure of the myth-ritual, it differs significantly from that contained within *Klu 'bum WBV*. First, the stories of encounters between the *klu* and humans only go into sparse detail, giving the reason for conflict in a few sentences only. Secondly, when people are beset by obstacles or diseases, in *PLB* they do not try to find other ways to extricate themselves from their difficult position, such as asking doctors for a diagnosis as in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, but instead go directly to the performance of the ritual, as suggested by Klu bon yang snying, whereas the role of priest is assumed by Ston pa gshen rab or Yid kyi khye'u chung in *Klu 'bum WBV*. Finally, the ritual performed in *PLB* contains a description of how to make a house for the *klu* by using different materials, as we have mentioned. However, there is no further mention of the story of the discus-

¹⁹ These names are often spelled variously, for example: *tsug* in 'Phags pa dung gi thor *tsug* can, *pa* or *ba* for Ye shes dpal mo.

²⁰ See Vogel 1926.

sion between the priest as mediator, the *klu* and people during the performance of the ritual, as we find in *Klu 'bum WBV*. At the end of the ritual in *PLB*, the priest makes a confession for all the activities of beings that might harm the *klu*, and recites prayers for the patron and himself.

3.2 The *klu* who originate in the 'void'

Five kinds of great *klu* are produced by the union of Sangs po (manifested as a golden mountain)²¹ and Chu lcam rgyal mo, manifested as a lake (*chu'i rgya mtsho*) in the dimension of emptiness (*stong pa'i dbyings*) or what I shall refer to as the 'void'. Their respective powers are described in great detail, for example, five kinds of the *klu* are the lord of five *ye 'dregs*,²² five *glo bur*,²³ five obstacles (*bar chad*), five *bkrags*, the five *yol*, the five *'dre* etc. These main terms relate to diseases that appear very frequently later in the text, and can in fact also be found in the opening of the section related to prostration and offerings to the *klu* which is *bam po* three:

First, in the language of Ye srid lha, *ma le snang le this*. In the language of Bon and Gshen: in this *Klu 'bum nag po yang snying*, there is the account of the coming into being of all the *klu* that are born (*srid pa*); the reversal of all *bkrags*; averting all diseases; the reversal of all *yol*; the dispelling of all *glo bur* and *ye 'dregs*, and the cutting off of all enemies.²⁴

These subjects in fact run through the entirety of the text, being mentioned in each story, but this myth, which is related to the five kinds of great *klu*, provides additional details. The text then insists that, no matter the nature or the creature, everything in this world depends on these five *klu*:

360 obstacles (*bgegs*), 404 diseases, 1080 demons, and the 52 great *'dre* are all ultimately the property (*rgyu phug*) of the *klu*.²⁵

²¹ It is a golden frog in *BLB2*.

²² The spelling of this term varies within this text: *ye 'dregs*, *ye 'grog*. No specific meaning is given here. But Karmay uses the translation 'infectious diseases' for the sentence 'ye 'dreg to human and animal'. See Karmay 2005 [1972], 352.

²³ This term is sometimes spelled *glo 'ur*.

²⁴ *PLB*, fol.14': *dang po ye srid lha'i skad du na/ ma le snang le this/ bon dang gshen gyi skad du na/ klu 'bum nag po yang snying la/ klu thams cad kyi srid pa dang/ bkrags thams cad bsgyur ba dang/ nad thams cad zlogs pa dang/ yol thams cad bsgyur ba dang/ glo bur ye 'dregs zlogs pa/ dgra thams cad bcad pa dang lnga'o/*.

²⁵ *PLB*, fol. 15': *bgegs sum rgya' drug cu' dang/ nad 4 brgya rtsa 4 dang/ gdon stong phrag rgya*

All these above-mentioned impediments are identified as the weapons of the *klu*. Furthermore, the beginning of the text seems to conclude that all diseases should be considered to be pertaining to the nine different diseases of the *klu* (*klu nad cho dgu*).²⁶ The text then starts a brief myth-ritual, wherein the people of the 'void' are unable to make regular offerings to the *klu*, which makes the king of the *klu* angry. This king then commands all the obstacles and diseases to be sent (*'gyed*) from each part of his body to humans. So, as soon as people discover the origin of their suffering, *Klu bon yang snying* is called in to offer the necessary rituals. The people gather all the materials required to perform the ritual, and once the offerings have been successfully made, they are liberated from the diseases and sufferings.

3.3 The three *klu* oxen

The setting of the second myth is the continent of *Skal pa* (*Skal pa gling*), where *Sangs po*, who in this tale is manifested as a conch-coloured frog, and *Chu lcam*, who is manifested as a turquoise-coloured fish, go one day. They give birth to three great oxen that are in fact *klu*.²⁷ Each is classified by one of three elements – wind, fire, and water. We therefore have the wind ox, the fire ox, and the water ox. But only two of the oxen are described in any detail: *PLB* starts with a description of the wind ox, but the order of presentation is a little different from that given in *BLB2*, which goes from fire to wind then water. The wind is said to be blue; hundreds of tornados blow from each of the ox's hairs, from its two nostrils comes the wind wheel, and the great sea is gathered from its eight feet. Different forms and wind energies are also manifested from its eyes and teeth. It also has the power to send forth disease. *PLB* then gives details concerning the different wind *klu*, such as distinguishing five castes of wind *klu*: royalty, aristocracy, Brahmin, servant and 'inferior'.

The other type is the water ox, that has the skin of a human (*chu glang mi'i shul* [*shun?*] *pa can*), which is able to manifest springs, rivers, the sea, rain, hailstones, snow and other water sources from its body:

bcu dang/ 'dre chen po lnga bcu gnyis ni/ klu de lnga'i rgyu phugs yin/.

26 *PLB*, fol. 16v: *de'i stong pa'i mi nams klu nad cho dgu na'o/ nad bzhi 4 brgya rtsa 4/ yol sum brgya drug cu lhung/ glo'ur mda' ltar 'phen/ ye 'dregs rta ltar rgyug/ bar chod rlung ltar 'tshubs/ zung ba glog ltar 'gyur/ bgegs sum brgya drug cu par na 'gro/ gdon stong phrag rgya cu reng rgyug byed/ nad 4 rgya rtsa 4 ngo ma zin/.*

27 On fol. 19^v, it is stated that there are three great winds, but it becomes clear later in the text that this is a spelling mistake.

Nine rivers of the *klu* are manifested from its internal organs, and flow to the Southern continent, and one *klu* lives in each of the eight rivers. They sleep in the lake of Gnam mtsho phyug mo, when they visit the sky. Their dwelling is Mal drol pal mtsho when they go to middle space, and it is Khri bshos rgya mtsho when they visit the land. At that time, the three seas were so full that they filled the whole universe. Three *klu* manifested from the water ox of the universe.²⁸

Three large bodies of water are named as the dwelling places of the *klu*: Gnam mtsho phyug mo (hereafter Gnam mtsho), Mal drol pal mtsho (hereafter Mal drol) and Khri bshos rgya mtsho.²⁹ We have already seen these three lakes in *BLB1*, when the dwelling-places of the *klu* are presented. They are three of well-known lakes in Tibetan culture, and the first two are considered two of the three holiest lakes in all of Tibet. Gnam mtsho is situated in the northwest of 'Dam gzhung county in Lhasa – the holy mountain Gnyan chen thang lha is to the south of this lake. Mal drol (*dros*) is usually equated with lake Ma pham, which is located near Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. Khri bshos (*shor*) rgya (*rgyal*) mtsho (*mo*) is known as Mtsho sngon po, which is situated in the north of A mdo.

Of the fire ox it is said that:

[it is a] fire³⁰ serpent with the chest of a frog. In its mouth (*mkhar* for *kha*) there is red hot fire; it fiercely emits fiery thunder and lightning.³¹

The *PLB* states that there are a hundred thousand fire oceans, fire mountains, fire trees, fire *klu*, fire frogs, fire serpents, and so on. What is more, all three elemental oxen are said to contain a variety of kinds of the *klu* within them, and the text gives specific terms, such as the five classes of the *klu*, and their hundreds of thousands

28 *PLB*, fol. 24^r: *nang ma bu dgu las/ klu'i rtsang po dgu ru babs/ de lho'i 'dzam bu gling du bab/ chu de dag gi nang na klu re re gnas/ klu de thang 1 gnam la nyal ba'i sa ni/ gnam mtsho phyug mo yin/ thang 1 par du nyal ba'i s ani mal drol par mtsho' yin/ thang 1 sa la nyal ba'i klu ni/ khri bshos chu'i rgya mtsh' yin/ de tsam na rgya mtsho de 3 lud pa yin/ stong khams chu'i phyag ma khad/ chu'I glang bu sprul ba las/ klu sman gzho' bu 3 du srid/ gnam sman kar mo de gnam mtsho' bdag tu bshags/ sems can khri dang bshos pa na/ khri bshos rgya mtsho 'o/ klu'i ko nor rtsis dang grangs med pa'i/ gnam mtsho phyug mo'o/ klu thams cad bzhugs pa'i sa lam yin pa'i/ mtsho rlungs dros pa dang/ chu'i glang po zhal 1 ma dros pa'i/ de'i phyr la klu mal dro'o/.*

29 These three lakes are mentioned in *BLB2* as one main lake only, and no mention is made of their being the three sleeping places of the *klu*.

30 *myi* may seem at first sight to be a spelling mistake for *mye*, but the terms for 'wind ox' and 'fire ox' are usually confused, with *rlung* for *glang* and *me* for *mi*, but this appears to be not so much a mistake in transcription as an intentional pun.

31 Fol. 22^r: *myi'i sbrul dang sbal ba bramng 'brm̄us can/ mye dbal dmar po mkhar nang na/ myi'i 'brug glog rnam tshul stong/.*

of manifestations; the different obstacles that we spoke of before in specific terms like demons, diseases and so on are mentioned as well, for example, the demon of the wind *klu*. But the obstacles are not listed very clearly or in the same order in each myth.

After the introduction to all three oxen, three brief myth-rituals are recounted, explaining that there are three persons suited to the three oxen, and that these persons must take responsibility for nourishing them:

The great fire ox is the *klu* that Sangs po 'bum khri³² nourishes, and the wind ox is the *klu* nourished by 'Bring zur yags pa. The one that dwells behind the constellation Nam so is the wind ox of the continent of Skal pa. The water ox is the *klu* that was nurtured by Rma de po na; all the [water ox] *klu* conceal (*rba*d for *sba*s) the eye of the moon, and sleep by the light (*sra*s for *gsa*l) of the moon; these are the water *klu* of the continent of Skal pa.³³

The three stories state in general terms that if these three individuals do not take care of these three oxen, that are in fact *klu* – for example if they do not prepare the housing and food for the *klu*³⁴ by giving offerings – then any activities they perform will bring harm to the *klu*. Here we notice the key rule that if people do not make offerings, the anger of the *klu* will be provoked. This is quite different from what is stated in *Klu 'bum WBV*, where the activity of people directly causes the *klu* distress. By way of explanation as to why the *klu* become so angry without the offerings of the people, the text gives a series of results:

If there is no offering to the *klu*, the great wind ox will not have a place to stay, no house to sleep in, no friends to play with. The female wind *klu* will have neither food to eat, nor water to drink.³⁵

It therefore seems that the life of the *klu* is wholly dependent on the offerings of humans. When a human goes anywhere to undertake an activity without first making an offering to that local *klu*, the local *klu* will strike back forcefully against

32 Sangs po 'bum khri has appeared as the parent of these three oxen, but here the name does not seem to denote the same figure.

33 PLB, fol. 25^v: *yang na me'i glang po che' / sangs po 'bum khri yis/ gso skyed byed pa'i klu'o/ yang rlung gi glang po ni/ 'bring zur yags pa gso skyed byed pa'i klu/ de skar ma nam so grib la nyal/ de skal pa rlung gi klu'o/ yang chu'u glang po de/ rma de po na gso skyed byed pa'i klu'o/ klu thams cad zla'i dmyig rba/d/ zla'i sras la nyal/ de skal pa chu'i klu'o/*

34 See fol. 26^v: *klu'i rge ba ma byas so/ klu'i khang ba ma phugs so/ klu'i bzhugs sa ma byas so/ klu yon du su ma phul lo/*

35 PLB, fol. 27^v: *klu la mchod pa ma phul na/ glang gig lang po che'o/ gzhugs na gnas med/ nyal na khyim med/ snyigs na mal sa med/ rtse ba'i rogs med/ rlung gi klu mo yang/ bza' na zas med/ bdung ba'i chu med/*

that human. The quality and character of the *klu* are shown again in great detail, in order to highlight their ferocity, and it is no coincidence that this description comes just before the story about how they send diseases to humans:

From the manifestation of the body of the water ox, five rivers issue from its right and left nostrils and run in the four directions and the centre. The medicine spring which comes from each of its tails runs in five directions. From its father and mother's mind emanations, it produces a conch-fish, a golden frog, a turquoise serpent, an ox of *bse*³⁶ and an iron rat – in total five.³⁷

These animals are then sent in the different directions to be their respective rulers. Once again a conch-frog is produced by the mind emanation:

A conch-frog, at that time, with warts of meteorite, is produced by the mind emanation. If it jumps into space, the sky and earth tremble; if it sleeps, it is in the centre of the great mountain which it also protects; the power of its anger causes the earth to tremble; the viciousness of its ego causes the rain of disease to fall. If it smiles, drought comes. If it cries there is torrential rain or heavy snow (*skyin 'dangs*), each time it is angered, a hailstorm descends as a great mass, and a black darkness gathers.³⁸

The text then continues with a number of other manifestations on which I shall not expand here. It is said that the *klu* send all these obstacles to humans only because they neglect to give offerings; however, if a human actively angers the *klu*, the latter react violently. That is the case in the story of Rma de po na, where he not only forgets to make an offering, but also acts to provoke the *klu*:

Rma de po na did not construct the house of the *klu*, but he cut a number of trees belonging to the *klu*. He did not act virtuously, but instead became the landowner of the *klu*. Without performing the earth-taming (*sa non*) ritual he took many of the *klu*'s stones.³⁹

36 'bse' in this case may refer either to a type of copper or a variety of stone.

37 PLB, fol. 30^v: *chu'i glang po yis/ sku'i sprul ba las/ shangs khungs g.yas g.yon las/ lu mi 'bab chu lnga/ phyogs 4 dbus dang lnga la bab/ rnga ma nyag re las/ chu mig sman myigs la/ phyogs 4 dbus lnga la babs/ yab yum thugs kyi sprul ba las/ dung gi nya mo de/ gser gi sbal ba dang/ g.yu' sbrul sngon po dang/ bse'i glang po dang/ lcags kyi byi ba lnga srid/.*

38 PLB, fol. 30^v: *yang thugs kyi sprul ba las/ dung gi sbal ba de tsaṃ na/ gnam lcags kyi kyang 'brum can/ mchongo bsang mi mchong do na/ par snang khams su mchod/ gnam sa gu lu lu/ ri rab dkyil na nyal/ ri rabs skyabs yang skyabs/ khros pa'i nga rgyal gis/ sa 4 'gur yang 'gur/ rgyala'i gdug pa'i/ nad kyi char ba 'beb/ rgad na then pa 'ong / ngus na skyin 'dangs 'bab/ lan re khros pa'i tshe/ ser ba khrom che 'bebs/ mu nag smug du 'khyil/.*

39 PLB, fol. 31^v: *Rma de po na yis/ klu khang ma phug par/ klu'i shing dgu gcod/ dge ba mdzad par/ klu'i gnas bdag bzung/ sa yang ma mnon par/ klu'i rdo dgu blangs/.*

This behaviour made the *klu* so angry that they sent great misery upon him: the whole universe was swept by water, the wind howled like flames, disease brought on the wind ensued like so many floods. These consequences seriously hurt people, and they all had to work on the offering ritual in order to be released from obstacles and diseases. The *klu* related to the ox here is not the only case mentioned in the *PLB*, and I shall discuss this further below.

3.4 The origin of *klu* from eggs

The third myth contained within *bam po* five is still related to Sangs po, who manifested as a golden mountain, and Chu lcam, who manifested as a turquoise fish.⁴⁰ Their offspring depend on factors such as which of the eight directions they are heading in, and which natural environment they copulate in. In this case, the couple produced nine conch eggs (*dung sgong*) and three precious eggs in the east and south respectively. It is from these eggs that the different colours of the animals which are in fact *klu* are produced, most frequently in the form of frogs, fish and serpents of different colours. They are described as possessing miraculous bodies and abilities, such as having golden or fire-flecked wings which can bring great winds, evaporate the sea and so on. We find similar motifs in Bon works such as the *Mdzod phug*,⁴¹ which recounts the origin of the universe from eggs, and the emergence of Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo, but it is quite rare to find mention of such themes in the *Klu 'bum WBV*. However, there are three chapters of the twenty additional chapters in the Dege version of *Klu 'bum WBV* which do discuss the origin of the *klu*, although it is not always the same eggs from which the *klu* originate. Some come from the eggs of a turtle, and some are even born from the eggs that appear from a wind which comes from a light at the beginning of the universe. These *klu*, which are introduced as the protagonists of each story, are not as numerous as in the *PLB*.

In the *PLB*, a golden lion, iron mouse and turquoise dragon are also included as being born from those eggs. Apart from the east and south, they come from the rest of the six directions and other natural environments too, such as the rocks and grass, lakes, snow mountains, space and the place of rakshasas (*srin*). The

⁴⁰ Here *BLB2* is the same as *PLB* in terms of the manifestation of Sangs po, but Chu lcam instead manifests as a turquoise lake.

⁴¹ The full title is *Srid pa'i mdzod phug kyi gzhung zhes bya ba bzhugs*, rediscovered by Gshen chen klu dga'. Dan Martin has worked on this text for a comparison with the *Abhidharma*. See Martin 2000.

couple give birth to a combination of different hybrid animals, such as one with a human body and tiger's head, one with a pig's body and monkey's head, a red snake with a pig's head, a golden ox with one horn and a snake's tail, and so on.

The couple also produce five oxen in the land of the *rakṣasas* (*srin*) as well as three in space (*bar snang*).⁴² In the latter case, it specifically lists the name of each ox in both the Tibetan language (*sku* [*spu*] *rgyal bod skad*) and also in the language of Nam pa ldong. The latter also appears as *nag po ldong skad* in *BLB2*, which seems to be a misspelling on the editor's part. A number of Daniel Berounský's articles related to the *Gnyan 'bum* mention this language. In the Bonpo works he examined, certain names are given in two forms, one said to be in 'the Spu rgyal language', for example, and the other in the language of Nam pa ldong.⁴³ Only the names of the *klu* are given in these different languages, but no more information is provided.

Apart from this, the diversity of the *klu*, such as the term 'the eight great *klu*', or 'the son and daughter of the *klu*' are also included, for example: a golden deer which is produced by the sacred couple on the ground has nine antlers; thousands of kinds of white *klu* pour forth from its white antlers, thousands of yellow *klu* from its yellow antlers, and so on. At the end, the parent couple go to a place related to water, such as a spring, lake or river. In cases where a number of *klu* were produced, some of their names are quite familiar to us as being the main representatives of *klu*, such as Rtsug na rin chen or 'Jog po, characters who feature in several well-known texts as two of the eight great *klu*.

As mentioned above, all the different types of *klu* are introduced here with a description of their special powers and their unimaginable abilities, and so most of them are able to bring a range of diseases, especially when they have been angered. Some of them are described as having the power to evaporate oceans; destroy the red sun with their wings; some can bring frost and storm winds; and the text also specifically indicates that a red human with an ox's head and snake's tail can bring leprosy or other infectious diseases. But the text also mentions some cures, such as the milk of a white cow,⁴⁴ which can bring release from disease, or allow the crippled to walk anew, for instance. It is even said that there is nothing that cannot be produced by these *klu*.⁴⁵

One myth-ritual is associated with this third myth. It concerns a human king called Shing le rgyu tse, who built a number of castles in different places

⁴² See *PLB*, fol. 35'.

⁴³ See Berounský 2017, 6.

⁴⁴ *PLB*, fol. 49': *dung gi pa mo*; *pa mo* is read here as *ba mo*.

⁴⁵ *PLB*, fol. 7': *klu de rnams la ma srid cig kyang med*.

without first having astrological and lunar calculations made (*gnam zla ma rtsis*). This caused the *klu* to experience disharmony and as a result, his castles were destroyed, and the king and his kingdom, spreading over the entire earth, were afflicted with obstacles and diseases as a result. The text then insists upon an intimate relationship between the *klu* and humans. It is said that when the king falls ill or encounters difficulties in the human realm, the same happens to the *klu* in theirs; however, when the appropriate rituals are performed, the illnesses or troubles of the *klu* are resolved, and those of the king are as well.⁴⁶ The text presents a connection between humans and the *klu* that seems to be more developed than the relationship found in other versions of the *Klu 'bum WBV*, in which the *klu* can cause humans trouble when they are displeased; in the present case, the suffering or well-being of the *klu* are directly mirrored in the human realm.

Another story related to the *klu* originating from eggs comes from *bam po* 'three' (which should be *bam po* seven) of the *PLB*. The *klu* couple Mkhar khri 'bum and Ye shes pa mo first produced thousands of precious eggs from which came a number of different types of *klu*, most of which relate to categories of divinity in both Bon and Buddhism, such as the *klu* divinities (*klu lha'i rigs*), lay practitioner (*dge snyen*) of the *klu*, the *bdud*, *btsan*, and Gshen of the *klu* and so forth. As in the myth mentioned above, this couple produced another five eggs, from these eggs appeared five *klu* with human bodies but heads of different creatures such as the lion, ox, serpent. From among these, the *klu* with a human body and dragon head seems to be related to the name of the *PLB*:

Once again the *klu* Mkhar ba and Ye shes pal mo manifested five conch eggs from which appeared a white person with a dragon head, claws of lightning, wings of cloud, and holding 1008 golden stupas. He lived in the centre of Mount Meru (*ri rab lhun po*), in the centre of a heap of *tsha tsha*. He played amid a thousand turquoise junipers. From his name (quality?),⁴⁷ *Klu 'bum nag po* and *Bram mdze tsha tsha* were produced.⁴⁸

As usual, a little more detail is included in the story concerning the couple Rgya rje mi btsan and 'Jang za ser mo, who send an ox to plough the fields without first carrying out the necessary astrological calculations, and, furthermore, kill many

⁴⁶ *PLB*, fol. 42^v: *phu ru klu sos na/ mdo' ru mi sos so/ phu ru klu dang na/*

⁴⁷ The meaning of this last sentence is far from clear, even though variations of this formulation recur for each of the successive *klu* that are born. The *BLB2* omits this entire section.

⁴⁸ *PLB*, fol. 56^v: *yang klu mkhar ba dang/ ye shes pa mo sprul ba la/ dung gi sgo nga lnga ru srid/ de rdol ba'i nang shed las/ dung gi mi po 'brug gi 'g+ho'o can/ glog gi sbal mo can/ sprin gi 'dab ma can/ phyag na gser gyi mchod rten stong rtsa bryad bsnams/ ri rab lhun po'i dkyil na bzhugs/ tsha tsha stong gi dkyil na bzhugs/ g.yu'i shugs pa stong la rol/ de'i mtshan nas klu 'bum nag po dang brem mdze tsha tsha skyes/.*

animals that belong to the *klu*, such as birds, tigers and so on. These activities are seen by the *klu* Zhon pa and make him displeased; he then gathers his assistants and other *klu* to prepare his revenge:

The *klu* of the ordained monk (*dge slong*) gathered the army of the *klu*. Fire, water, and wind were raised from the right and left nostrils of five ordained monks, which swept away the castle of Rgya rje mi btsan. Human disease broke out like a fire.⁴⁹

3.5 The various births of the *klu*

Bam po six contains the myth of the *klu* related to the couple Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsug can and Ye shes pa mo. Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsug can is the progeny of the union between Ri rabs lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo, a fact which is indicated at the beginning of the only story in *bam po* five, stating that Sangs po 'bum khri merged with Ri rab lhun po, whereas Chu lcam rgyal mo merged with the great sea in the story in *bam po* five mentioned above.⁵⁰ Ri rabs and Mtsho sman here therefore may in fact be Sangs po and Chu lcam, whom we have seen in all the above myths. According to *bam po* six, Ri rabs lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo produce a white person with the body of great mountain, who can jump to the summit of the mountain from the depths of the sea. His name is Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsugs can. His introduction takes up a number of folios of the text. The magical powers of his body are described in great detail, such as there being hundreds of frogs, serpents and fish on his feet, and other animals in each part of his body.

As each season changes, this *klu* moves to each of the four cardinal directions, where four different-coloured armies of *klu* surround him and wield control over the different diseases ('gyed). In the last and middle month of each season (*tha chung*, 'bring po), the *klu* goes to a different place to enjoy his dominion over the various woods and lakes

Apart from this *klu*, Dung gi 'phags pa thur tsugs can and Ye shes pa mo also give birth to five dragons, five oxen, five frogs and one turquoise cow (*g.yu yi'i pa mo*). All these animals are connected to the water, and it is said that rivers and lakes run from their mouths in all the different directions. The text shows only the directions in which these rivers run from the mouth of five different colours of

⁴⁹ PLB, fol. 57^v: *klu'i dge slong gi klu'i dmag bsdu so/ dge slong mi lnga'i/ shangs g.yas g.yon las/ me chu rlung 3 g.yos/ rgya rje mi btsan gyis/ yul mkhar ma la phyag so/ mi nad me ltar 'bar/*.

⁵⁰ PLB, fol. 40^v: *Sangs po 'bum khri ni ri rabs lhun po la 'dres/ chu lcam rgyal mo ni rgyal mtsho chen po rnam du 'gres/*.

dragons. But it gives more detail on the five oxen, who differ from the three oxen mentioned before, so that the end points of the rivers which flow from the mouths of these five oxen become thousands of cities of the *klu*, where the different *klu*, including animals, young and old *klu*, monks (*dge slong*) and meditators (*sgom pa*) of the *klu* live.

3.6 Medicine

Medicine is a recurring theme in PLB. It is sometimes related to the water which the *klu* own to benefit living beings, or otherwise it is sometimes related to some kind of nectar, or considered as an offering or remedy to heal all the hurt and harm done to the *klu*.

Among the many offspring of the union between *Dung gi 'phags pa thur tsugs can* and *Ye shes pa mo*, one cow is born, and interestingly, the magical abilities of this cow refer to medicine:

Once again, the king of the *klu 'Phags pa dung 'go* and *Ye shes pa mo* produced a turquoise-coloured cow; a river of nectar milk flows from its left nostril, a *klu* called *Bya ba* has a golden head,⁵¹ and the queen of medicine lives inside; she can transform all poison into medicine.⁵²

It is even said that every single part of this cow's body is in fact medicine. Furthermore, the medicine is said not only to be for the benefit of humans, but also for the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag* and so on.

⁵¹ In *BLB2*, the name is firstly written as *klu Byams pa* with a golden colour (*byams pa gser mdog can*), and furthermore, it indicates a certain *klu Byams pa* as being the king of medicine. Secondly, it indicates clearly that the *klu* lives in the river which flows from the left nostril of the cow. However, if we follow the *PLB*'s words, 'a turquoise-coloured cow; a river of nectar milk flows from its left nostril. In that middle lives a *klu* with a golden head and a sea of medicine, who turns all poison into medicine;' 'in that middle' may refer to either the organs of the cow or the inside of the nectar river itself. But given the content of the above text, that there is a different nectar river and that medicine flows from each body part of the cow, I prefer the translation 'the inside organs of the cow'. Secondly, *klu bya ba* seems to mean 'so-called *klu*', but I have retained it as the name of the *klu*, which could also be a misspelling. Third, here there are two people as opposed to one *klu*, and there is also a queen, details which differ from *BLB2*.

⁵² *PLB*, fol. 50^v: *da yang klu'i rgyal ba 'phags pa dung 'go dang/ ye shes pa mo che dang sprul ba la/ g.yu'i pa mo la/ gser gi thig le can/ shangs khung g.yas pa las/ bdu'd rtse 'o ma'i rtsang po 'bebs/ de'i nang shed las/ klu bya ba gser g+ho dang / sman gyi rgyal mo gnas/ dug thams cad sman du sgyur/*

A great number of medicines are listed in this text, and some of them are quite close to those remedies still used today in traditional Tibetan medicine; for example, there is a belief that white Chinese salt (*rgya tsha dkar po*) is good for the kidneys. One thing which is not clear, however, is whether the medicine helps to treat diseases that are sent by the *klu* and other divinities, or whether it directly benefits the *klu* themselves as an offering, since various diseases are often considered to be the property of the *klu* in this text. But if we consider the idea, mentioned above, that when the *klu* and humans are in harmony, humans naturally live peacefully, we may conclude that these medicines might not only be a gift or a remedy from these divinities but may also help in their own recovery.

Furthermore, the (unnumbered) second section of last part *PLB* refers specifically to the offering of medicine to the *klu*. This section even says that the *klu*'s prayer for all living beings is an expression of their satisfaction with the offering of medicine that has been made to them.⁵³ This section offers yet another interesting myth about the origin of the term '*rtsi sman*', which differs from the origin story involving the ox presented above. The myth may be summarized as follows: once upon a time, Lha rabs and Gnam sman kar mo had a son who was imprisoned inside a turquoise rock (*khri 'phangs*). He was unable to break out. At this time, the *khri 'phangs* was seen by a demon, who broke the rock and threw it into the sea. From then on, it became a kind of marine animal. Its eyes could see the whole of the sky and the earth, lead an antelope (*gtsos*), and hold ten golden containers. He threw the foam (*bkri/dri ma*) of the ocean into the containers and shook it three times. The oil floated to the top and the medicine sank down. He shook it a little more, and the contents were transformed into a deer. Someone shot the deer with an arrow and it fled to the land of Rgyab kar. The wounded deer lost one of its hairs, and spilt a drop of blood while it was escaping. From these there grew a tree with birds around it eating the leaves, and snakes living in it. This tree is the essence of sandalwood. Then the deer fled to the human realm, and the fallen hair and the drop of blood turned into a medicinal ingredient called *nyi 'od zho sha*.

3.7 The messengers of the *klu*

The last section of the text, covering three folios, starts with another myth which also seems to present the origin of the *klu*'s messengers, that are in fact birds. Their origin is related to the coupling of Gnam la rjes phyed and Sa la rtsi sbrang,

⁵³ The medicine offering part runs from fol. 63^v to fol. 64^v.

who produce six magical eggs, from which are born a number of different birds such as the water-fowl (*chu bya*) and waders (*'dam bya*), all of which are considered to be the messenger birds of the *klu*. The myth also contains an account of how the birds became the messengers of the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag*, *gtod* and *lha*. It refers to a couple called Srid pa rgya'u thing g+hi and Sgo mod mu btsan cung ma, who later changes her name to Skos pa tsam gi g.yu ljang. This couple invite Gshen rab mi bo to make a golden box (*sbram*); plant five golden wooden tablets (*rgyang'u*) in the four directions and the centre, and also apply various nectars to a golden ladle. Gshen rab mi bo then declares that he will appoint certain birds to act as messengers between different classes of beings, and especially between gods and humans (*lha mi 'phrin pa bya'*). The couple and Gshen rab mi bo then proceed to take turns to catch a bird and to decorate it, thus making the birds the messengers of the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag* and *gtod*.

Another noteworthy point is that in this section, Gshen rab mi bo is sometimes called Gshen rab Ston pa or father (*yab*) Gshen rab⁵⁴ and while he usually takes a main role, he only appears very occasionally in this particular text. The main priest in this text is instead named as Klu bon yang snying.

4 Ritual

4.1 Instructions for myth-rituals in *PLB*

As mentioned above, *PLB* not only gives a step-by-step guide for one performance-ritual throughout the text, but also presents instructions for a number of rituals within the myth, which I have called 'myth-rituals'. We have now seen each step of the performance-ritual in the analysis of this step-by-step guide, and the specific content of each of the *bam po*. I shall now focus on the myth-ritual instructions and how they relate to the performance. The rituals performed in *PLB* are not concerned with the making of a mandala, as in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, but rather the construction of a house of sorts (described as a palace) for the *klu*, with a number of different varieties of wood, and the making of abundant offerings – although, as we shall see, the mandala is one kind of symbol within the palace (*gzhal yas khang*) of the *klu*.

⁵⁴ Concerning the title of 'father' that is sometimes applied to Gshen rab, see Blezer 2008, 421 and n. 1, with further references.

There are three sections concerned with the ritual instructions in the *PLB*. It starts with a section entitled ‘when you perform the ritual for the *klu*’,⁵⁵ which describes exactly how a palace for the *klu* should be made.⁵⁶ It then indicates how one should begin the ritual performance: ‘First perform the generation of the thought of enlightenment, set a base for the divine offering, and have the patron perform the prostration’.

The second section starts with an indication that ‘after performing the ritual in this way’,⁵⁷ a new section of offering should continue, including the giving of different kinds of wood, different paintings on those pieces of wood, such as the mantras of the *klu*, as well as various sugar and milk offerings and so forth. However, the text states that these offerings should be taken to different places such as rocks, springs or mountains. It even specifies that a new juniper house be built, one for each of the four directions plus the centre. There are some obvious repetitions in terms of the offerings listed when compared with the first section. It seems that this later section should be followed after the ritual finishes as a way to manage all the offerings. However, *BLB2* not only contains a similar ritual instruction at the beginning of the text, but there is also an extra chapter at the end of the text, referring to a departure ceremony for each of the *klu* which is missing completely in *PLB*. It therefore remains unclear whether this second section of ritual instruction in *PLB* is indeed the end of the ritual, or whether it is just another procedure of performance in the course of ritual chanting.

The third section of this ritual instruction concerns the purpose for performing this ritual, such as healing a disease, building a temple and so on. Also mentioned are the qualities of the person reciting the text, as well as all the great benefits that derive from the performance of this ritual.

4.2 A comparison of the structure and content of the myth-ritual instructions in *PLB* and *BLB2*

BLB2 is organized in a totally different order from that shown in the instructions of *PLB*, in a number of distinct ways. It classifies the third section of the *PLB*, the

⁵⁵ *PLB*, fol. 1^v: *klu bcos byed pa'i dus su/*

⁵⁶ For example: ‘make the foundation base from *bong ra*, prepare a number of different kinds of wood and insert them in each direction of house, dig the stakes, decorate with the *tshar bu*, *shug thil*, bamboo in coloured cloth and silk, make a *klu* curtain with a bolt of silk. Set up the juniper *klu* house. Collect all the different sugars, medicine and milk as offerings [...]', and so on.

⁵⁷ *PLB*, fol. 2: *bcos pa 'di ltar na*.

part which contains the various reasons for performing the ritual and its ensuing benefits, as well as the qualities of the reciting priest, into three subsections: two subsections about the benefit of the reading of the text, and one subsection dedicated to the reasons for the performing of the ritual. These three subsections are inserted into the general explanation of the performance of the ritual. I will give the translation of this ritual instruction in full, and will then create a table for ease of comparison between each procedure of the instruction in the two texts.

The instructions of the *BLB2* first include a brief presentation of the benefits of this text, which constitutes one subsection of the third section of instruction in the *PLB*. It insists that by reading this text, all diseases relating to humans and cattle will not occur, hail and thunderbolts will not fall, the misfortune of serial deaths [in a family] will be ended, and so on.⁵⁸ It then briefly explains the preparation of the ritual: wrap (*bzlog* for *ldog*) a thousand sprigs of juniper (*shug ti'i* = *shug thil*) and attach [cloths of?] the five precious colours to a poplar or pine tree. This short preparatory part of the ritual does not correspond to the beginning of *PLB*, although some elements, such as the different sorts of wood mentioned here, can also be found in *PLB*. It then summarises in one sentence that we should 'arrange the requisites in the proper directions and make prostrations to the *klu*', but gives no details about further preparations. Furthermore, it is interrupted by the second subsection referring to the reason of the performance of the ritual:

Perform this ritual (lit. 'read this offering') if you [wish to] treat (*phyos* = *chos*) diseases of humans or of cattle; when you seize a town, build a castle, construct a *klu* house⁵⁹ or a temple (*gsas khang*), carry out irrigation (*chu rka 'dren*), lead troops or an army, or when this king raises the law.⁶⁰ If one builds (*'dram* = *bkram*, *'grem*...) a tomb, or holds a priestly gathering (*gshen rab tshogs pa*), digs the earth (*rgo* = *rko*) or performs a ceremony (*bsgrub pa zhengs pa*), intelligent persons (? *glo blor can*) recite it. There will be no lightning-bolts from the sky; there will be no outbreaks of fire or inundations.⁶¹

⁵⁸ These benefits are also presented at the end of the instructions in *PLB*.

⁵⁹ The *PLB* does not mention the building of a *klu* house, but instead speaks of a temple (*lha khang gser khang*) – this probably refers to the same construction.

⁶⁰ *'rgyal po 'di khrims bkyags na'*: The meaning of the Tibetan at this point is far from clear. In the corresponding passage, *PLB* has *rgyal po shing khril 'gyogs na*, which is probably intended to refer to the enthronement of a king.

⁶¹ *BLB2*, p. 209: *'bul 'di mi nad phyugs nad dam/ yul 'dzin mkhar brtsag gam/ klu khang gsas khang bzhengs pa dang/ chu rka 'dren byed pa dang/ dmag dang dra ma 'dren pa dang/ rgyal po 'di khrims bkyags na glog go/ dur 'gram pa dang/ gshen rab tshogs pa dang/ sa rgo ba dang/ bsgrub pa zhengs pa dang/ glob lor can de nmams kyis bton no/ gnam na thog mi 'bebs/ me dgra dang chu dgra mi 'ong ngo/.*

A correspondence for these reasons given for the performance of the ritual at the beginning of the second subsection can mostly be found in *PLB*, but for some elements, such as irrigation or leading the troops in particular (as opposed to priestly gatherings) *PLB* refers to the importance of the *bu med srin po tshol ba* (possibly a reference to the *sri mnan* ritual?) and the performance of the ritual against the *gshed* demons, *buedm̄ (bu med) so na 'dre na bya'o*, and so on.

After giving this reason for performing the ritual, the preparation of the ritual is introduced, so that two varieties of poplar,⁶² juniper and so on should be decorated and attached in the four cardinal directions and the centre. Five sharp stakes should then be planted. These same elements are found in the *PLB* as well, but with different decorations and different way to use the artefacts.

The terms for such diseases as, *bkrag, glo 'ur, ye drogs, yol* and so on, which can also be found in *PLB*, are repeated throughout both texts as being the afflictions brought by the *klu* in the myths which we have already discussed. However, the names of certain categories of demons in *BLB2* are replaced by a number of other terms in the *PLB*:

The *klu srin*, epidemics, the *'dre* and *gdon* demons, the *mdud ma yam* and village demons will be averted; there will be benefits for the living. If *'gab 'gal* of demonesses (*mdud mo?*) or child-stealing vampires should arise in that way, if this [ritual] is performed, it will be of great benefit.⁶³

After listing the benefits of the text in this third subsection, the ritual instructions resume. Moreover, *BLB2* gives far more detail on the preparation of the ritual offering, similar procedures and elements to which appear in *PLB*, in the the second section of the instructions related to taking those offerings to other places. *BLB2* ends its chapter 15 after this last detail of ritual procedure with another brief description of the benefits of the text, and instructions on how to read it carefully.

It is, however, hard to find a standard form of performance for this ritual by comparing these two texts, because they do contain numerous differences.

⁶² The text specifies *dbyar ba* and *ma gal*, which are likely to be different varieties of poplar. Fernand Meyer identifies the latter as *Debregeasia salcifolia* (Meyer 1988, 178).

⁶³ *PLB* fol. 2': *klu srin dang/ dal yam dang/ 'dre gdon dang/ mdu ma yam dang/ yul 'dre bkar ba dang/ bson po 'phen po bya ba dang/ mdud po chung srin can gi 'gab 'gal de bzhin blangs na yang dag na phan thogs che'o/*.

4.3 Ritual element lists according the section entitled ‘mantra’

There is, in addition, one further point to make: that each myth-ritual in both *PLB* and *BLB2* does not strictly follow these instructions; although they are all concerned with the construction of the *klu*'s house, there is quite a lot of variation in terms of the numbers and the categories of each element as well as the directions. Unlike the account of the performance of the ritual described in *Klu 'bum WBV*, both the performance-ritual and the myth-rituals described in the *PLB* are apparently not performed by *Ston pa gshen rab* but rather by *Klu bon yang snying*, who often appears as the representative of the *klu* in the other texts related to the *klu*. There is, however, no mention of this character in *BLB2*.

Both *PLB* and *BLB2* contain a section named the ‘mantra of the *klu*’ which presents the mantra associated with a particular *klu*, including the *klu* of the four directions plus the centre; the representative animals of the *klu* such as the ox, frog and tortoise, as well as the mantras of certain elements of the ritual. These ritual element lists are in fact almost identical to those of the myth-ritual, except for a few elements being omitted from this mantra.

4.4 Some prominent ritual materials in *PLB*

4.4.1 *bong ra*

According to the ritual instructions contained within *PLB*, the first step of the ritual is to make 108 *bong ra* out of red earth, and then to arrange each of them according to the four colours associated with the four directions (see below);⁶⁴ all these instructions are missing from *BLB2*. Later in the second section in *PLB*, we are instructed to place the red earth *pang bro* in the appropriate directions (*gong char*), while *BLB2* includes the same sentence but removes the term *pang bro*. It seems that the same term is here written in one of three different ways: *bong bra*, *pong bra*, *pang bro*, all of which seem to refer to the foundations of a house.

There are two myths related to the wind ox and the water ox, named 'Brong zur yags pa and Rma de po na respectively, who get into trouble because they fail to make offerings to the *klu*.⁶⁵ In the ritual undertaken by 'Brong zur yags pa, the seven *bong ra* are made with seven types of coloured earth (*sa mtshan* = *sa*

⁶⁴ 'As for the 108 *pang bre*, we must arrange 25 white ones to the east, 108 (*sic*) blue ones to the south, 108 black ones to the west, and 108 red ones to the north'.

⁶⁵ Fol. 31'.

tshon?), and in the next myth related to Rma de po na, five coloured *bong ra* are made from five different coloured types of earth, associated with the four cardinal directions plus the centre.⁶⁶ We should mention that the term *bong ra* is quite often replaced by the term *gsas phe'u* in *BLB2*.

There is yet another myth, this time related to king Shing le ru tse, who made the *klu* angry because of his construction of a castle. He instructs his people to perform the ritual,⁶⁷ and among the other offerings, it is said, ‘the king first made the *klu*’s house before constructing his temple; he first made the *bong ra* before he built the roof of the temple’.⁶⁸

The use or benefit of these materials is also not always the same in each tale. For example, the ritual described above relating to Rma de po na mentions the term *bong ra*, so that the twenty-five *bong ra* in one of the five colours are offered to the *klu* of the four cardinal directions and centre along with other offerings.

However, in the myth in which the king Rgya rje mi btsan harms the *klu* through his activities, the *dge slong* of the *klu* (*klu'i dge slong*) gathered the *klu* army to wreak revenge. The king asks Klu bon yang snying to perform the ritual, and among the ritual materials, there are five colours of *bong ra* included in order to placate the *dge slong* (*dge slong bcos*).⁶⁹ Just after the completion of this first ritual, Rgya rje mi btsan asks Gshen rab Ston pa and Klu bon dbyar snyan to perform the ritual again.⁷⁰ This second time, the five colours of *bong ra* are presented to be used for repelling curses from the five cardinal directions and the centre. Furthermore, it seems that the term *bong ra* is replaced by *tsha tsha* in some myths intended for a similar purpose.⁷¹

4.4.2 Wood

The four or five types of wood which have been mentioned in the ritual instructions, as well as in the section of performance-rituals dealing with the inviting and seating of the *klu*, are considered to be the ‘support’ of the five divinities:

⁶⁶ See fols. 28 and 31.

⁶⁷ This procedure and the material of this myth-ritual in *BLB2* is quite different from that of *PLB*. See *BLB2*, p. 320.

⁶⁸ Fol. 42^v: *rgyal po shing le rut se yis/lha khang ma phug par/ klu khang sngon du phug/ gsas steng ma. rtsegs par/ pong ra sngon du brtsigs/*.

⁶⁹ Fol. 59^r.

⁷⁰ Fol. 59^v.

⁷¹ Fol. 52^r.

Please be seated on the *dbyar bu* which is the wooden support of the *klu*, juniper which is the wooden support of the *sa bdag*, birch that of the *gnyan*, and the bundles of leaves (*mtshal bu = tshar bu?*) that of the *gtod*.⁷²

But then in the myth-rituals, we see a more frequent appearance of juniper, a versatile material which can be used for the construction of houses, as a support (*rten lnga*), which is ornamented by the five colours of cotton plants in the five directions, and can also be painted with animals such as the dragon.⁷³ Apart from this, the text uses the term ‘five kinds of wood’ to refer to the different varieties of wood, although it does not give a specific definition for this term. These five kinds of wood are nevertheless classified into the five colours: white, blue, black, red, and yellow, sometimes with dark brown. Certain animals, such as the deer, horse or serpent⁷⁴ are then painted on them to complete the offering:

Other offerings are made reference to, with terms such as ‘three white offerings’ and ‘three sweet offerings’, with the *PLB* even mentioning ‘three red offerings’ although no further description is given.

During the performance of the ritual, as previously mentioned, the text explains that each material is considered either to be an offering to the various spirits, the different kinds of *klu* in the different directions, or it can specifically reverse negative occurrences such as *ye 'dregs*,⁷⁵ obstacles (*bar chod*),⁷⁶ *bdud* and so on,⁷⁷ although each element represents a part of the total ritual.

4.5 *klu srin*

Bam po two of the *PLB* purports to distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, in the same way that the *klu sman* is a combination of both the *klu* and *sman* spirits, so here the *klu srin* looks for all intents and purposes to be a combination of *klu* and *srin*, although the text does not give a clear explanation of this term. In the *Klu 'bum WBV*, *klu srin* is considered to be one of three colours of the *klu*, namely white, black, and variegated, with both black and variegated being presented as

72 *PLB*, fol. 8^v: *klu'i brten shing dbyar bu lo bzang gshegs su gsol/ sa bdag rten shing bdud rtsi shugs pa 'di la gshegs su gsol/ gnyen gi rten shing stag pa 'di la gshegs su gsol/ gtod gi rten shing mtshal bu 'di la gshegs su gsol/*.

73 Fols 28^r, 42^r, and 58^r.

74 Fol. 42^r.

75 Fol. 28^r.

76 Fol. 16^r.

77 Fol. 59^r.

referring to harm or great anger. *Bam po* two contains a myth which relates to the birth of a *klu srin* by the union of a *srin* and a female *klu* (*klu lcam 'od dkar ma*). This *klu srin*, who had a goat's head with nine eyes, is malicious (*zhe sdang can*). In the myth, a man called Rag bsang rtsam⁷⁸ finds *Klu bon yang snying* to perform the ritual, but the reason for this is unclear, although it seems likely that he has harmed the *klu srin* while working in a field.⁷⁹ The ritual (*gto' dang dphyod du byas*) is performed in two ways by *Klu bon yang snying*. First, he offers several things which correspond to each part of the body of the *klu srin*:

For the (*klu srin*'s) head that has the form of a goat, he offers a female deer (*yang mo = yu mo*) as food. For the face (*gram pa*) of rock, he offers delicious litmus (*brag rtsi*). For his thorny beard, he offers *brag me snyig mi*. For the lower body which is *klu*, he offers medicinal milk. For the tail, which is a serpent, he offers five sorts of coloured earth.⁸⁰

But the text then says that if the *klu srin* does not accept this, we must perform the wrathful ritual instead, where all the offering materials mentioned above are changed to some kind of poison, such as rhododendron which acts as poison for the goat, musk as poison for the serpent and so forth. However, one should still makes offerings of items such as the *rta nag mdangs bu*, *glang nag mdangs bu* and the *mdangs bu* of other animals to represent wealth for the *klu srin*, and also diverts the *klu srin* to a place that is surrounded by the rocks, trees.⁸¹

We can thus see that this ritual is very different from other myth-rituals of this text, since neither those offerings which are pleasing to the *klu srin* nor those which are to be used for subjugating the *klu srin* are to be found anywhere in the myth-rituals. This might be one of the reasons why there is an insistence on not conflating the *klu* and *klu srin* at the end of this ritual. In the other myth-ritual, among the ritual components, the scorched grains (*shel tshig*),⁸² the flint and red ochre are shown to be useful in dismissing the *klu srin*.⁸³

78 His name is later changed to Rag sa sa rtsal.

79 From the Tibetan, *mi rag bsang rtsam gis/ so dang nam la gnod/*, it is not clear whether it is the person who upsets the *klu srin* or is harmed by the *klu srin* because of his field.

80 *PLB*, fol. 11': *mgo'o ra la byas pa de/ yang mo gzan gi mchod/ 'gram pa brag la byas pa de/ brag rtsi zhim du mchod/ tshe mi a tsham skyas pa de/ brag me snyug mi yon gi mchod/ ro smad klu la byas pa de/ rtsi sman 'o mas mchod/ 'jug ma sbrul la byas pa de/ sa mtshan sna lnga'i mchod/*

81 Fol. 12': *klu srin thur du bkar/ klu dang klu srin ma ldong 1/ byer'o bsal la la/ phang phang ye re re/*

82 See fol. 59': *shel tshig nag po dang/ shing zhog rdo zhog gis/ klu srin thur du bkar/*

83 See fol. 53': *mye rdo brag btshan gis/ klu srin 'byam bkor/*

5 Conclusion

Both the *PLB* and *BLB2* are collections of myths with their accompanying rituals. There is some doubt as to how exactly the two compositions are related: whether one is derived on the other, or if they are both based on an unknown earlier version – at this point I do not rule out any of these possibilities. The content of the *BLB2* appears to be a simplified and more systematic version of *PLB*, and the orthography, syntax and structure are also more standard. It is not clear whether it was because of this more orthodox character that it was selected above the *PLB* for inclusion in the Bon Canon, or whether the editing took place with a view to its inclusion.

There is, however, a diversity and richness in the extra myths included in the *PLB* that are not found in either *BLB* or any other versions of the *Klu 'bum*. In particular, *PLB* contains certain distinctive themes that apparently do not appear elsewhere, such as the different ritual performances that distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, and the myth related to the messengers of the *klu*. This latter myth introduces Ston pa Gshen rab (or Gshen rab Ston pa, father Gshen rab), who, despite being a principal character in other versions such as *Klu 'bum WBV*, appears here only on this occasion. The main priestly figure who features throughout the work is Klu bon yang snying, while Gshen rab makes an appearance at the very end of the text as the central character who transforms birds into messengers. Furthermore, Klu bon yang snying is not mentioned at all in the *BLB2*.

Like the much better-known *Klu 'bum WBV*, the *PLB* is largely made up of a great number of myths related to cosmogony, the origin of the *klu*, and accounts of interactions between the *klu* and other beings. While this structure is broadly similar to that of *Klu 'bum WBV*, the *PLB* does have distinctive features that distinguish it from all other versions. For example, one of the Bonpo cosmogonic ideas, that of oviparity, is found in the cosmogonic canonical work *Mdzod phug*, but becomes one of the main ideas related to the origins of the *klu* contained within the *PLB*, exemplified by the manifestation of the couple named Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo. Moreover, instead of indicating that the specific disease of leprosy is sent by the *klu* to humans, as is the case in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, *PLB* instead gives a more generic set of afflictions, that of '360 obstacles (*bgegs*), 404 diseases, 1080 demons, and the 52 great 'dre', among other things. As for the ritual performance, whereas the *Klu 'bum WBV* recounts the offering of a mandala to the *klu* by Ston pa Gshen rab, the *PLB* prescribes the construction of a house for the *klu*. While a house could of course be understood as a type of mandala, the text suggests a more secular type of construction more closely resembling a human habitation. While this seems to indicate that the *klu* propi-

tiation ritual found in *Klu 'bum WBV* shows the influence of tantric Buddhism on an earlier form of the ritual, it may of course also be the case that the 'house' that appears in *PLB* is a local derivative of the mandala of *Klu 'bum WBV*. The last distinctive feature of the *PLB* worth noting here is that it also gives an overarching 'umbrella' ritual instruction for these myth-rituals at the very beginning of the text. The presence of this introductory outline of the procedures to be followed distinguishes *PLB* both from the Dunhuang myth collection discussed by Rolf Stein, who remarks on the absence of such information, as well as from the *Klu 'bum WBV* itself.

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- Sa bdag dbang chen* = *Rnam par dag pa'i 'bum bzhi las sa bdag dbang chen gyi sgyur bcos te bam po gnyis pa'o'*, in *Bon Canon*, vol. 140.
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Ngöndzin Ngawang Gyatso

The *Lungyig* Texts of the Leu Scriptures from the Phenchu Area, in Amdo

Abstract: Within the past decade, a large number of Tibetan manuscripts related to the Bon religion have come to light in private collections in several locations in Sichuan and Gansu provinces. The manuscripts contain the texts of rituals performed by a class of priests known as Leu, and are therefore generally known as *leuyig*, ‘Leu scriptures’. Most of the rituals in these texts correspond to the contents of the so-called ‘lower vehicles’ of Yungdrung Bon, the monastic form of the religion that has significant similarities with Tibetan Buddhism. However, certain aspects of the Leu rituals are repudiated by the clerical authorities of Yungdrung Bon, since they entail practices such as animal sacrifice that the religion unequivocally rejects. This chapter presents an overview of a particular Leu textual corpus from Bozo, a community located in Sichuan province’s Dzorge country. The corpus is a quartet consisting of three manuscript volumes and one orally-transmitted text, dealing mainly with apotropaic rituals and the propitiation of various classes of worldly gods. Various factors, including the modification and even destruction of the texts by Bonpo clerics, have contributed to the decline of the Leu tradition.

1 Introduction

In the communities of Phenchu¹ and Thechu in Amdo there is, to this day, a long and unbroken tradition of Bon practitioners known variously as Anye Leu, Sipe Leu, Gönpö Leu and Lhadag Leu. These Leu have no assembly places such as temples, but perform rituals for clients in their houses, as village tantrists do. There was, however, an association of Leu, and when ceremonies were held in communities and districts they would gather to perform recitations and rituals. When monasteries were closed in the 1960s these meetings were discontinued. The Leu tradition is passed down from father to son, but some were also trained

¹ Phenchu township belongs to Dzorge county of eastern Amdo. The area traditionally called ‘Seven Divisions of Lowland Phenchu’ also includes Bozo, which has several of its own divisions. The Seven Divisions of Phenchu are: Akyi; Upper and Lower Bozo; Palkyi; Chöje; Guwa, and Zhangtse.

outside their families. According to their age, the Bozo Leu were referred to as ‘senior Leu and ‘junior Leu’, and some were called ‘assistant Leu’.

The ritual texts used by the Leu are known as *leuyig*. These Leu texts are different in content from the recitations and texts that are used in Bon monasteries. In terms of the Nine-Vehicle system and the Four Doors and the Treasury system, their content corresponds respectively to the Four Vehicles of Causal Bon² and Black Water Bon.³ There are some local variations in what Leu scriptures are called, the number of texts, and their content. In the area of Bozo in upper Phenchu they are referred to as either *leuyig* or *lungyig*. There are also texts in certain communities where the name is actually written as *lungyig*. The Tagkham⁴ *leuyig* known as *leu poti* consists of a single volume; the *leuyig* of the Leu of Gyanyag are called *dranggen*;⁵ and the Leu texts of Thewo are called *ngenyig*. The present study will examine the content of the texts from Bozo, which has been a Bonpo area since ancient times and has preserved an unbroken Leu tradition. The fact that there are Leu here who are experienced practitioners means that the conditions for research are ideal.

2 According to the classification of the Southern Treasures, the Four Vehicles or ‘Ways’ of Causal Bon are: the Way of the Shen of Prognostication; the Way of the Shen of the Visual World; the Way of the Shen of Illusion, and the Way of the Shen of Existence. In these categories the term Shen should be understood as ‘system’.

3 The system known as the Four Portals and the Treasure, Five in All, refers to: the Portal of Black Water Bon of the Phenomenal World; the Portal of the White Water of Fierce Tantras; the Portal of the Master Sage of Instructions and Precepts, and the Portal of Phenyl, the Vast Hundred Thousand (which contains teachings corresponding to the Buddhist *Prajñāpāramitā* [Perfection of Wisdom] literature), and the Pure Summit that Goes Everywhere. [Note by the editors: For an outline of these systems, see Snellgrove 1967, 8–21].

4 This refers to the eighteen villages that form a part of Rongchung Sigye.

5 The *dranggen* (Tib. *drang rgan*; sometimes also written *cang rgan*) are one of the class known as the Three Witnesses of the Sipa. A text entitled *Chang phud bdud rtsi chu rgyun* contains a passage in which the members of the *dranggen* are invoked as follows: ‘Father Tagcha Alöl; mother Tshemza Khyekhyü; son Drangkhen Munrum Karpo; Drangkhen of humans Mi Magöl; Drangkhen of wood Teu Mace (lit. ‘not cut with an axe’); Drangkhen of stone Jemadzog; Drangkhen of water Yuldu Mdrang; Tawa Mignon Drangkhen (relating to sight); Nyenpa Nasang Drangkhen (hearing); Drowa Lagyog Drangkhen; Nyabpa Lagring Drangkhen (snatching); Künshe Gyalwe Drangkhen (knowledge); Makhe Cede Drangkhen (speech); Ngamgi Drangkhen Nyida (the firmament); Barnang Drangkhen Drugkhyug (mid-air); Sayi Drangkhen Chulam (earth): you 360 Drangkhen, receive this nectarous tea and beer in your mouths’.

been going to Bozo over many years to carry out research on Leu texts, I have been able to establish that there are indeed four sets of texts, entitled *Lodzin*, *Zhagcigma*, *Ngenzhung* and *Selzhung*, although – as we shall see – not all are preserved in written form.⁸

2.1 The *Lodzen* [*Lodzin*] Leu text

There appears to be no written version of this text, which is recited orally in the local dialect. Since the text is recited by heart by the Leu, it is called *Lodzin*, meaning ‘memorisation’. In the local dialects of this area, any diacritical vowels following the root consonant in syllables that have *-n* or *-d* as the first suffix are dropped. For example, the word *dge ’dun*, which would be pronounced *gendün* in most Tibetan dialects, is pronounced *genden*, and *mchod rten* (normally *chörten*) is pronounced *cherten*. In accordance with this pattern, *blo ’dzin* is pronounced not *lodzin* but *lodzen*.

According to what the Leu themselves say, the main subjects of the *Lodzin* concerned taking refuge and making offerings to the protective divinities. There is no longer anyone in Bozo who can recite the *Lodzin*.

2.2 The *Zhagcigma*

The name of this text is pronounced *Zhagtsigma* in the local dialect. It derives its name, which means ‘one-day text’, from the fact that it has to be recited in the course of a single day. Fragments of this text are to be found in communities other than Bozo under titles other than *Zhagcigma*; in places such as Tagkham, for example, the corresponding text is called *Zizag*. According to a document written by Leu Gönpö⁹ that is now in the possession of Zöpa of Bozo, the *Zhagcigma* is a compilation of nineteen texts, the titles of which are as follows:¹⁰

1. *Bdud rtsi g.yu ’brang sman gyi mchod pa’i dga’ ston* (‘A feast of offerings of medicinal nectarous honey’)

I interviewed while carrying out fieldwork in Bozo in 2010.

8 Information based on the account of the senior Leu Waltrug of Tsasa village, whom I interviewed while carrying out fieldwork in Bozo in 2010.

9 Leu Gönpö, now deceased, was from Ozothang in Bozo. During the period of political transition he concealed the *Zhagcigma* as well as the texts of the *ngen* and *sel* rituals in order to preserve them.

10 The Tibetan titles of the texts are followed either by translations (given in inverted commas) or else, where the meaning of certain terms is uncertain, an indication of the likely topic.

2. *Srid pa rgyu yi bon la lha gsas gnyan po bskos pa'i gsas mkhar bzhengs pa* ('Raising a citadel for installing the awesome divinities of the Bon of the Sipa tradition')
3. *Klu'i gtor ma gtor ba'i cho ga* ('Ritual for the casting of tormas for the Lu')
4. *Klu'i 'gras bsdum* ('Reconciliation with/among the Lu')
5. *Klu'i mchod 'bul* ('Making offerings to the Lu')
6. *Shug mgon 'phrag sprod* ('Offering to *traglha* and *shuggön* [war gods]'[?])
7. *Yul sa gnyan brngan* ('Fumigation ritual for the territorial gods and Nyen')
8. *Mda' bstod* ('Praising the arrow')
9. *La btsan kha bstod lha gsas 'khor ba'i gter spungs* ('Extolling the Tsen divinities of the passes and heaping up treasures for the divine entourage')
10. *Bkrol ba* ('Releasing')
11. *'Khrug byed bya nag mgo dgu* ('The nine-headed black bird that causes conflict')
12. *'Khrug byed mi nag mgo dgu* ('The nine-headed black man that causes conflict')
13. *Thang gto gyod sgyur* ('The powerful ritual that repels quarrels')
14. *Dmigs sgyur* ('Repulsion of [unwelcome] attention?')
15. *'Khrug byed bya nag mgo dgu'i lam bstan* ('Showing the way to the nine-headed black bird that causes conflict')
16. *Gzhi btings* ('Laying down the base')
17. *G.yang 'bod rgu ra dgu khyud kyi khyi ka blu ba* (A ritual for summoning *yang*, the principle of prosperity and good fortune)
18. *'Khrug byed tshogs sgrogs* (A ritual for ending conflict?)
19. *Gyod sgyur bcas tshan pa bcu dgu tsam yod rung* ('[A ritual comprising] approximately nineteen sections for repelling quarrels')

A performance manual of the *Zhagcigma* lists a number of additional rituals: *Phywa khu ye*; ('Summoning the *cha*');¹¹ *Gsas mkhar* ('Citadel'); *Nang mtshams* ('[Closing] the inner boundary'); *Bon spyod sngon 'gro* ('Preliminary practices for Bon [ritual] activities'); *Phywa bzhengs* ('Raising the *cha*'); *Drang mkhan* (*drang-khen*: see above); *Klu gtor* ('Torma offerings for the Lu'); *Khyung nag srung 'bod* ('Inviting the protection of the black Khyung, the protector'); *Gshen rje bla blu* ('Redeeming the soul from the demons of death [*gshen* = *gshin*?]'); *Srung ma'i bla blu* ('Redeeming the soul by means of the protectors'); *Bdud kyi 'phran bsal* ('A minor purification ritual related to the Dü demons'); *Ta gtor* (a torma offer-

11 The term *cha* (*phya*) denotes an intangible quality that bestows the potential for health and prosperity; it is closely associated with the concept of *yang* (*g.yang*).

ing ritual); *Phyogs bzhi srung 'bod* ('Inviting protection from the four directions'); *Srung 'bod shog gcig* ('A single folio for the inviting protection'); *Bla bkra* ('Radiant soul'); *Stag lha'i srung 'bod* ('Inviting the protection of the divinity Taglha'); *G.yang 'bod* ('Calling the yang'); *Tshe g.yang* ('Ritual for [the increase of] life and yang'); *Tshe rdzi* ('The caretaker of life'); *Srung mkhar* ('Palace of the protectors'); *Srung 'jug* ('Placing the protectors'); *La nya* (?); *La chang* (offering of beer to be made on a pass?); *Rnga mong skyal* ('Accompanying the camel'); *Klu yi mchod 'bul* ('Making offerings to the Lu'); *'Khrug byed dmig pa* ('[Averting?] attention that causes conflict'); *Sgo dbye* ('Opening the door'); *Mnol bsang* ('Fumigation ritual for [the removal of] *nol* pollution); *Wa bsang* ('Fumigation with fox [flesh]');¹² *Rdo khrus dkar nag* ('Black and white stone lustration'); *Bar chod bdud kyi 'phrang bsal* ('Clearing the narrow trail of obstructive demons'); *La btsan kha bstod* ('Praise to the Tsen divinities on the passes'); *'Gram bsdum* ('Resolution of disputes').

The main subject of the *Zhagcigma* is to propitiate and make offerings to the gods and serpent spirits; to make *ngen* offerings to the place gods and the Nyen; to resolve conflicts and disputes; to recover souls and summon protective divinities; to call the *cha* and the *yang*; and to perform fumigation and lustration.

2.3 The *Ngenzhung*

There is a large component of *ngen* ritual texts in the Leu scriptures, and for this reason the latter are also referred to as *ngen* scriptures. As for the so called 'Leu ngen sel': the *ngen* ritual is in fact the main subject of the Leu texts. The *Ngen* texts of Bozo deal with the *Jadang* ritual. The term 'Jadang', which literally signifies a perch for birds to alight on, is a ritual for the propitiation of Nyen mountain gods; at the present time, the so-called 'Nyen Jakhyung' is to be understood as the Khyung, the mythic eagle that is sometimes conflated with the Indian *garuḍa*. In the Phenchu area, on the 11th day of the first summer month the *Ngen* ritual is performed in all the villages. A Khyung made of straw is taken up to a cairn, and the procedure is also therefore known as 'Accompanying the bird'. In Gyakha Rongkha to this day it is still customary to take a live rooster up to the cairn and to sacrifice it. The Tibetans of Dongtrom who live in Gyakha refer to the Khyung as the phoenix (Chinese 凤凰, *feng huang*),¹³ and the Nyen mountain

¹² Note from the editors: Concerning this ritual, see Berounský 2019. For a number of the other texts and rituals that are discussed in the present article, see also Berounský in press.

¹³ According to Chinese belief the phoenix was the king of the birds, and together with the dragon it is the emblem of the Chinese people. The term *feng* denotes 'male' and *huang* 'female',

is called ‘phoenix mountain’ (Ch. 凤凰山 *feng huang shan*). The phoenix features prominently in Chinese folk tales. There is a long folk story about the relationship between this bird and a snake that is told in villages. The Khyung symbolises the Nyen, and the snake symbolises the Lu. This is made clear in the text entitled ‘A fumigation ritual that recounts the transmission for the worship of the female Lu of the Nyen’ (*Gnyan gyi klu sman bsten pa’i cho rabs bsang yig*). There is some evidence that these have been influenced by Indian Vedic ideas. At the same time as the men used to ‘accompany the bird’, women would do the same for the Lu.

The *jadang* ritual has thirteen stages. The performative tradition of this ritual has fallen into decline, and there are no Leu who know how to perform it. The following is a brief outline of its contents:

1. *Bya rdang gzhi btings* (‘Laying out the base for the *jadang*’)
2. *Bya rdang gsas rdo* (‘The divine *jadang* stone’)
3. *Bya rdang ka ’dzug* (‘Setting up the *jadang* post’)
4. *Bya rdang brgyan bkod* (‘Decorating the *jadang*’)
5. *Mthu chen pong ra’i spyang ’dren* (‘Inviting the mighty [mountain divinity] Pongra [i.e. Pomra – see below]’)
6. *Pong ra’i lha bsgrubs dang spyang ’dren* (‘Propitiation and invitation of Pongra’)
7. *Mthu chen pong ri brngon gzhung* (‘Main text for the worship of the mighty Pongra’)¹⁴

and together they form an auspicious sign. A Chinese treatise on birds describes the phoenix as having its own head, the beak of the swallow, the neck of a snake, the back of a tortoise, and the tail of a fish; it has five different colours and stands about two metres high. A most exceptional bird, the phoenix drinks only dew and eats only bamboo shoots, and lands only on the thousand-year-old eucalyptus trees. The *Khyung chen ma’u bcu gsum* (‘The thirteen great Khyung, the mother and its chicks’) gives the following account about the origin of the Khyung: ‘The egg hatched, and from it there emerged an extraordinary bird; this wondrous creature was known as the royal Khyung bird. It had a head like a brandished thunderbolt; the upper mandible of its beak was like a decurved hook, and the lower mandible like a firmly-gripping meathook; it had a tongue like flashing red lightning, upper teeth like serried white snow mountains, eyes like the shining sun and moon, and lower teeth like the waxing moon; its right and left ears were like the southern clouds and its horns like sharp blades of meteorite; the wish-fulfilling gem it carried flashed with light. Its right wing was like a wheel, and its left wing like a row of swords; its rear claw was like a blazing wheel, and its middle claw like a curved meathook, and its outer claws like curved hooks; its tail was like a waving banner, its down feathers like the southern clouds massing, and its belly like a whirling vase. The neck of the Khyung was like the stem of the vase. The cry of the Khyung is full and clear, and its flight would take it to the summit of Mt Meru. When it alights, it abides in the invisible dimension; it can see to the depths of the ocean, and the range of its vision takes in the ten directions’. These two accounts suggest that the phoenix and the Khyung are in some respects similar.

¹⁴ In a number of Leu texts the term *brngan* and the name Pomra (Pom ra) appear respectively as *brngon* and Pongra (Pong ra).

8. *Wer ma dbus phyogs* ('Opening page of the Werma [war gods]')
9. *Rma rgyal pom ra'i bsang mchod* ('Fumigation offering to Magyal Pomra')
10. *Bya rdang gzhungs chen* ('Main text for the *jadang*')
11. *Bya rdang rtsi gsol* ('Offering nectar to the *jadang*')
12. *'Phang [Pha wang] brngon* ('Propitiating the bat')
13. *Sgron ma* ('The lamp')
14. *Sgo srungs* ('Guarding the door')
15. *Bya rdang bsang 'bul* ('Offering purifying smoke to the *jadang*')
16. *Bya rdang yon 'bul* ('Making offerings to the *jadang*')
17. *Dgra chos lug shug* ('Sheep-broker [from the ritual cycle] of making preparations for enemies')
18. *Bya rdang shing mi me la bsrags pa* ('Burning the wooden man of the *jadang* in the fire')
19. *De nas se rog rtsa gzugs* ('Ritual involving an effigy made of grass?')
20. *Leu dgra sgrub* ('Ritual against enemies performed by the Leu')
21. *Bya rdang srungs mkhar* ('The protector palace of the *jadang*')
22. *Dbang bskur dang gzes sprod* ('Bestowing blessings and...?')
23. *Bya rdang sgo dbye'* ('Opening the door of the *jadang*')
24. *Bya rdang bkrol ba* ('Releasing the *jadang*')



Fig. 3: Title folios of Leu texts from Gyanyag dealing with the propitiation of the Traglha gods (left) and the Khyung (right).

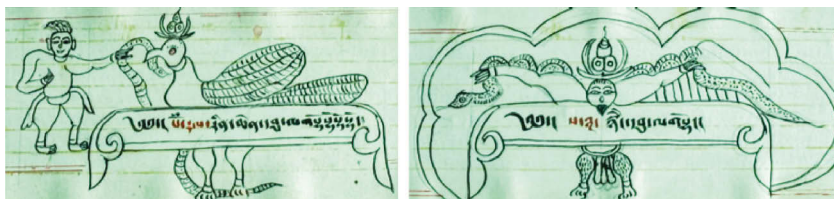


Fig. 4: Title folios of Leu texts from Gyanyag dealing with the propitiation of the divinity Pomral Rinchen (left) and the Sanyen divinities (right).



Fig. 5: Title folio of a Leu text from Gyanyag for the propitiation of the Khyung. The wide variety of representations of the Khyung later gave way to a form with certain standard features.



Fig. 6: A Khyung depicted in a mural at a retreat in Drublung.



Fig. 7: A *jadang* ceremony being performed by a Leu in Gyanyag, in Thewo. At the top of the construction is a single Khyung and below are four Khyung chicks.

As the name ‘Leu *ngen sel*’ suggests, the main task of the Leu is to perform *ngen* [and] *sel*. *Ngen* refers to the practice of pleasing the Nyen and other divinities by making offerings to them.

In the Phenchu area a *ngen* ritual has to be performed in spring. The altar on which the fumigation rite is conducted is in fact referred to as the ‘place for performing the *ngen*’ (*brngan byed sa*). The Leu texts contain a number of works related to *ngen* rituals, notably: *Mkhan bya’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* offering of the ‘artemisia-bird’ to the Nyen’); *Yul sa’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* for the Nyen of the territorial gods’); *Pom ra’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* for the Nyen of Pomra’); *Brngan mos rgyas bsdus* (‘The elaborate and restricted *ngen mo*’), as well as *Byardang* (see below), among others. In the Phenchu area *jadang* rituals used to be widespread, but nowadays they have fallen into abeyance.

2.4 The *Selzhung*

Sel denotes an elaborate ritual for cleaning that which is unclean, and purifying that which is polluted. As far as rituals for removing the types of pollution known as *me*, *mö* and *tsog* are concerned, village Leu perform a number of rituals that are known variously as *nalto*, *tsheto* and so forth. Even though rituals such as these were widely practised in the past, they have now been abandoned. *Sel* rituals are popularly referred to as *sil*, and *sel* texts also in fact use the form *sil*. Here is a brief outline of the contents of one of these:

1. *Sil gi mig pa* ('Visualisation for the *sel* ritual')
2. *Sil sa gcod pa* ('Delineating the site for a *sel* ritual')
3. *Sgron ma 'jug pa* ('Placing the lamp')
4. *G.yu 'brug rtsi gsol* ('Offering nectar to the turquoise dragon')
5. *Rgya mi 'phrang sel* (?)
6. *Sprel khra bshad pa* ('The explanation of the multicoloured monkey')
7. *A bo ya ngal* ('The ancestor Yangal')
8. *Mtshe lo drug bcu'i bgag sil* (A *sel* ritual for preventing misfortune associated with reaching the age of sixty)
9. *Dme' sil* ('A *sel* ritual for purifying the pollution from fratricide')
10. *Bkag sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing obstructions')
11. *Bya ma byil gis ster sil* ('A *sel* ritual involving the use of the flying squirrel')
12. *Nal sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing *nal* pollution')
13. *Rtsogs sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing the impurity of dirt')
14. *Rtsi rdo dkar po* ('The white reckoning stone')
15. *Khram btab* ('Reckoning involving a tally-stick')
16. *Me tog dang smon lam* ('Flowers and prayers')
17. *Sdor (brdar?) gi smon lam dang bzhi 'deng* ('Prayers for invocation and laying down a base [for the ritual]')
18. *Sa kar gi phyag 'tshal ba* ('Performance of prostrations to the white cow')¹⁵
19. *Sil gi rdor bsang* ('A category of fumigation ritual')
20. *Sdor gis bkra shis* ('A prayer for establishing the auspices')
21. *Sku sdod* ('Praise to the [divine] bodies')
22. *Mda' bstod* ('Praise to an arrow')
23. *Sel byed sgron ma* ('The lamp of purification by means of a *sel* ritual')
24. *Bya rdang spyang 'dren* ('Inviting the *jadang*')

¹⁵ Note by the editors: According to Daniel Berounský, who has another version of this list, *sa* may be a scribal error for *pa*, itself an error for *ba*, meaning 'cow'.

The popular ritual known as the ‘Widely-spreading black and white divine stones’ (*Dar che ba’i gsas rdo dkar nag gi cho ga*) also belongs to the *sel* class of rituals. This class also includes rituals known as *nalto*, *tsheto* and *meto* rituals—respectively for removing pollution from incest, from the birth of twins and from fratricide—that are performed in the Phenchu area.

3 The activities of the Leu

3.1 Soul-redemption and protector-calling rituals

In the Phenchu area, the main rituals performed by the Leu are soul-redemption¹⁶ and protector-calling rituals. On the 11th day of the second month, the Leu perform a soul-redemption at Nangchen, to provide protection for the souls of the householders. The text for the soul-redemption ritual that is performed by the Leu involves the use of the following texts: *Bla ’bod* (‘Soul-calling’); *Bla ’blu* (‘Soul-redemption’); *Gshen rje bla blu* (‘Redemption of souls from the demons of death’); *Srung ma bla blu* (‘Redeeming souls by means of the protective gods’); *Bla blu dmu thag dkar nag* (‘Redeeming souls with the red and black celestial cords’), and others. The tradition of soul-calling for the community is a very popular ritual.

Texts for protector-calling rituals¹⁷ include: *Khyung nag srung ’bod* (‘Calling the black Khyung as a protector’), *Pom ra’i srung ’bod* (‘Calling [the mountain god] Pomra as a protector’), *Stag lha’i srung ’bod* (‘Calling the god Taglha as a protector’) and *Bstan srung* (‘Protectors of the doctrine’), among others. After the performance of the ritual a protective cord is attached; for young children, a red protective cord is used. A passage from a folksong runs as follows:

chu bya klad dkar srung dmar can //

skud myi le’u su yin shod

White-headed water bird with the red protective [cord],

Tell, us, who is the cord man, the Leu?

¹⁶ Note by the editors: ‘Soul-redemption’ should be understood not in a soteriological sense but more literally as the ‘buying back’ of souls (Tib. *bla*) from demons that have captured them.

¹⁷ ‘Protector-calling’ subsumes a number of different procedures, including *Srung skud ’dags pa* (‘Attaching protective cords’), *Srung dmar skud rgyu* (‘The cord of the red protector’), *Ra srung* (‘Protection for goats’) and *G.yag srung* (‘Protection for yaks’).

We know from this that the ritual of the red protective cord is an activity involving the Leu.

The Leu also have the task of performing a ritual called *sungphü*, which involved offering horses, property and animals. The distinction between the *sungphü* and *tshethar* seems to have been lost at some point and the two were conflated. Since the *sungphü* ritual involved making offerings of horses, property and animals to the mountain Nyen, it had a very different purpose from the *tshethar*, which is actually a ritual for sparing the lives of animals that would otherwise have been slaughtered. The Leu are still solicited for naming children, and many of them give names like Kongtsekyab ('Protected by Kongtse'), Kongtsetsho ('Cared for by Kongtse') and Pomrakyab ('Protected by Pomra'). The main protectors of the Leu are Pomra and Kongtse, and even nowadays at family ceremonies they perform rituals for summoning the *cha* and the *yang*, and perform soul-redemption and other rituals during funerals.

3.2 The *ngen sel* ritual

The *ngen sel* is one of the main rituals performed by the Leu. *Ngen* refers to the ritual of offering smoke to the mountain Nyen. The shrine for the fumigation is called the *ngencasa* ('place for performing the *ngen*') or the *ngendö jogsä* ('place for putting the *dö* effigy for the *ngen*'). The springtime performance of the *ngen* and the autumn *to* are especially important ceremonies throughout the region. During the performance of the *ngen*, the men perform a ritual called 'Accompanying the bird' for the Nyen, while women perform the ritual called 'Accompanying the Lu'. The first of these involves the men transporting an effigy made of feathers and representing the Khyung to a cairn on a pass, while the second entails the women performing fumigation and other rituals for the benefit of the Lu. While they are doing this, the Leu perform various rituals, including the *nyendö* ('*Dö* effigy for the Nyen'), *Ludö* ('*Dö* effigy for the Lu'), *pangkong* and others. To take the example of a Tibetan from the Phenchu area, the Nyen and the Lu are the foundation of the house, and a pejorative way of referring to a newly built house is to say that it has no Nyen on top and no Lu below. Households have their respective Nyen and Lu, and propitiate them annually. In the case of Gangle village, in Phenchu area, the Nyen of the general area is Lhamug, and the Nyen of the village itself is Hamtsho. Apart from these, there are also Nyen in all the individual communities, and there are even individual households that have them. In the Phenchu area, there are many people who have names like Nyendrub, Nyenthär, Nyentsho, Lukyab, Lubum and Lumen. When I myself was a child, I was given the name Nyenkyab, 'Protected by the Nyen', but a Gelugpa monk later changed it to Ngawang Gyatso.

There are about twelve different *sel* rituals, and the performance of these is very important for the Leu.

4 *Sipe to* rituals

The *leu to* or *lung to* are rituals that are performed by the Leu. Popularly, these are also referred to as *tonag*, ‘black *to* rituals’. The types of *to* that are performed by the Leu are called *nalto*, *meto* and *tsheto*, among others (see above).

4.1 *Nalto* rituals in the event of incest

In Bozo, it is customary to act with modesty and discretion in the presence of one’s close kin. Pollution arising from sexual relations between close relatives is called *nal*, and the affliction that this engenders is *naldri*. *Naldri* results in physical and mental damage, and to prevent or treat these the Leu perform *to* rituals and *sel* purification. A person who has been affected by *nal* may not join other members of the household in worshipping local divinities at their cairn; nor may he do fumigation or carry arrows and spears. A rope is attached to the cairn of the territorial divinity, and he must remain at the other end of it. Once the *nalto* ritual has been performed, however, the person may again go to the cairn. The *nalto* ritual – which is now only rarely performed – is very elaborate and costly, involving commensurate offerings to the Leu.

4.2 *Tsheto* rituals in the event of the birth of twins

The birth of twins results in ‘twin affliction’ (*tshedri*), for which a Leu must perform a *tsheto* ritual to purify the defilement. For twin boys the ritual is known as a ‘white twin’ ritual, for twin girls a ‘black twin’ ritual, and for mixed-sex twins a ‘variegated twin’ ritual. It is popularly said that ‘white twins’ are like dewdrops on a blade of grass, whereas ‘black twins’ are like the roots of the sea buckthorn: ‘white twin’ affliction is easily got rid of, like moisture that evaporates as soon as the sun shines on it, whereas ‘black twin’ affliction is harder to remove, like the roots of the sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*), which are pervasive and tenacious.

4.3 *Meto* rituals following fratricide

Meto rituals are performed when there has been a close intrafamilial killing; the *me* pollution that is the result of fratricide is purified by means of a *meto* ritual. There are also related rituals that are referred to either as *phome monal* or *monal phome*.

5 The difference between Leu and Ngagpa

The distinction between Ngagpas (tantric priests) and Leu is not always very clear. Sometimes, the two categories are subsumed under the combined term ‘Leu Ngagpa’. In the Phenchu area, houses are sometimes designated as ‘Leu households’ and ‘Ngagpa households’. It is commonly said that ‘the Leu propitiate the gods, and the Ngagpas smite the demons’, suggesting that these two have different specialisations. The main ritual activities of the Leu are soul-redemption, protector-calling, *ngen* and *sel*, whereas tantrists perform secret tantric rituals and fierce rites for the subjugation of demons. Or, as a popular saying has it, ‘Making offerings to the gods on high is the task of the Leu; exercising law in the middle is the task of the Sipa; and crushing the heads of the Dre and Sin demons below is the task of the Ngagpas’. Sometimes, when distinguishing among Leu, people speak of Sipe Leu and Gönpo Leu, the latter being the Ngagpa. Alternatively, the Leu are sometimes referred to as Bonpo, and the Ngagpa as Bandhe, that is, Buddhists. Whatever the case, the tasks of the two are closely related, and they are also rather similar in appearance.

6 The decline of the Leu texts and the current state of the priesthood

6.1 The destruction of the Leu texts of Bozo

The Leu texts of Bozo have been substantially transformed over the course of time, and consequently differ from the texts found in places such as Thewo and Dongtrom. Features such as the mention of tutelary divinities (*yidam*) and meditative practice in the opening sections, as well as the dedication of merit and prayers at the end, are evidence of modification. Furthermore, the Yungdrung Bon works

*Skye sgo*¹⁸ and *Nor bu 'od 'bar*, as well other texts, have been inserted into the original manuscripts. According to a number of people whom I interviewed about this matter in Bozo, the Leu texts were ‘improved’ during the time of Cangtrul Namkha Gyaltsen (b. 1771), the author of an anti-sacrifice tract entitled *Gnam lcags 'khor lo* (‘The meteorite wheel’). He put an end to the practice of *martor*, the ‘red tormā’ offering, in both upper and lower Bozo, and instructed the Leu to recite *Skye sgo* every day. Anyone who did not complete the recitation would have to raise a flag near the monastery for the ‘closing of the doors to rebirth’.

Then it is said that a certain Yungdrung Nyima of Nyagnyin, in Bozo, reduced the four volumes of Leu texts to two by deleting the sections on animal sacrifice, but to date I have not been able to find these expurgated versions of the texts.

Later on, Tenzin Wangyal of the Khamatshang family in Dachen¹⁹ took offence at certain disparaging remarks about the Cang branch of the Khamatshang that the texts contained, and he accordingly had Leu texts from upper and lower Bozo gathered up and burned. Subsequently, there was a dispute between the monks of the monastery and the Leu. The Leu lost, and it was decided to discontinue the performance of their rituals. The Leu decreased in number, and the tradition declined even further. Later still, the lama of Shingphug, in Bozo, made an attempt to revitalise the Leu by having them perform soul-retrieval rituals, but times had changed by now, and the tradition had gone into a terminal decline. Now there are just three Leu left in Bozo; all are over eighty years of age, and since there are no young Leu the tradition is on the verge of disappearing.

The main reason for the monasteries’ proscription of the Leu is the conflict between the old and new religious traditions. The Leu are performers of the rituals of the Bon of the *Sipa* tradition, and since they perform animal sacrifices and transgress the monastic law of the ten virtues their sacrificial practices were terminated, and the rituals that were incompatible with the tenets of Yungdrung Bon were transformed. As a consequence of the milder and more aggressive reforms listed above – Cangtrul’s prohibition of the *martor* ceremony, and his compelling the Leu to recite the *Skye sgo*; Yungdrung Nyima’s reworking of the Leu texts; Khamatshang’s forcible immolation of the manuscripts – the *Sipa* system was absorbed into Yungdrung Bon and lost its distinctiveness.

The lamas’ prohibition of animal sacrifice may be regarded as a virtuous deed, but the result of proscribing that ancient custom has been to bring about

¹⁸ An abbreviation for *Ngan song skye sgo gcod pa*, ‘Closing the door to rebirth in the lower realms’, a canonical work of Yungdrung Bon.

¹⁹ Tenzin Wangyal was a lama of the Khamatshang family of Dachen. He was originally from Zungchu.

the end of a tradition. The contempt with which lamas and monks have treated the Leu tradition has resulted in the annihilation of an important part of Tibetan cultural heritage. The manuscripts themselves have been dispersed, and it is very difficult now to find any authentic sources.



Fig. 8: A wooden print block for ritual effigies used by the Leu.



Fig. 9: Takin horns used by Leu during rituals.



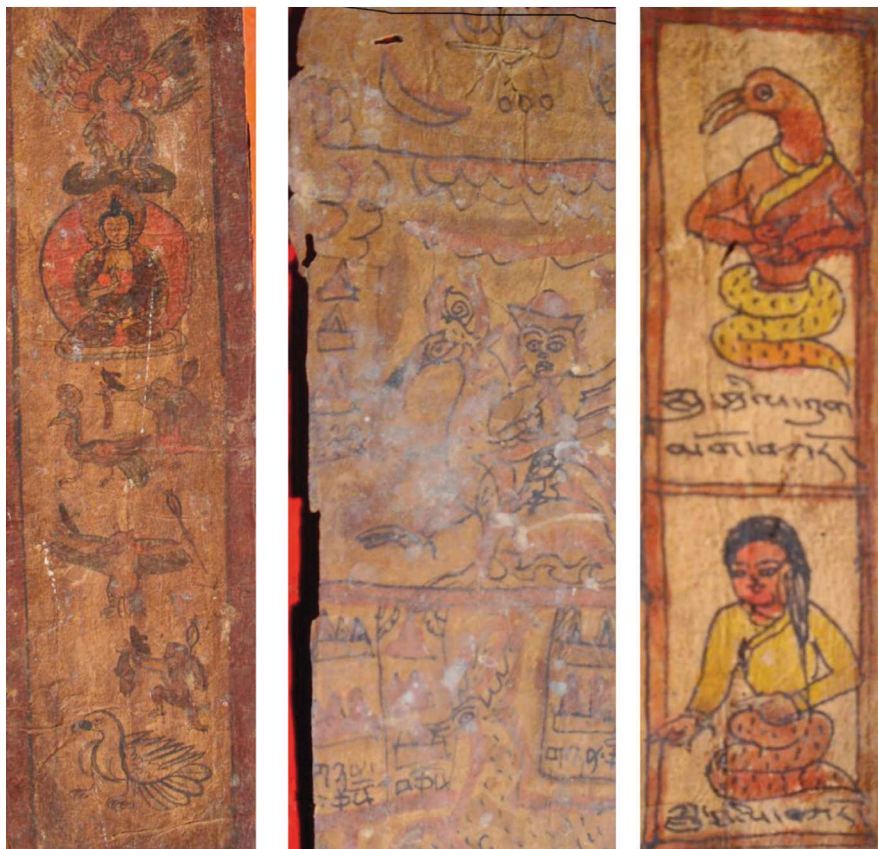
Fig. 10: Bearskin head-dress worn by Leu.



Fig. 11: Leu Waltrug (left) is a native of the Tsasa area of Bozo. Now in his eighties, he has been practising as a Leu since his youth. He can read both the headed and headless Tibetan scripts, and is fully trained in all Leu recitations and rituals.



Fig. 12: Hagö is a native of Nyagnyi, in Bozo. Now in his eighties, he was trained as a Leu from a young age. In 1998 he performed a soul-redemption and a protection-summoning ritual, but since then has not performed any Leu ceremonies.



Figs 13a, 13b, 13c: Examples of images in Leu manuscripts: a) The Khyung, Tönpa Shenrab, the White Monkey, the Wise Bat and the Vulture; b) Illustration of a ritual for the propitiation of the Nyen; c) Types of Lu.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following people for their help during my fieldwork: Chogtrul Khedrub Palzang; Tönpa Lhundrub of Cangtrultshang; Zöpa Gyatso of Jogar in Bozo; the research students Ngawangtsho and Lhamo Tshering, and the three Leu Waltrug, Hagö and Gendün. It is my hope that the present article, which would not have been possible without their valuable help and support, will be a small contribution to our understanding of ancestral Tibetan culture and contemporary traditions that are currently in decline.

This article, originally titled *Mdo smad 'phan chu rgyud kyi le'u yig (lung yig) zhib 'jug*, was translated from the Tibetan by Charles Ramble. Because of the large

number of Tibetan names and terms contained in this article, we have specially adapted the conventions that are used in the other chapters of this collection for the convenience of a non-specialist readership. Most Tibetan expressions are presented in a roughly phonetic form, although Wylie transliteration has been used for the titles of texts and for certain terms that are the subject of discussion. The orthographic rendering of all names and term is given in the Appendix.

The editors and translator are indebted to Daniel Berounský for his valuable comments on an earlier version of the English translation.

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Appendix: Orthographic rendering of Tibetan names and terms

Akyi	A skyid
Anye Leu	A myes le'u
Bozo	Bab bzo
Bandhe	<i>ban dhe</i>
Barnang Drangkhen Drugkhyug	Bar snang drang mkhan 'brug khyug
Cang Khamatshang	Spyang kha ma tshang
Cangtrul Namkha Gyaltsen	Spyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
Cangtrultshang	Spyang sprul tshang
Cangtshang Ritrö	Spyang tshang ri khrod
<i>cha</i>	<i>phy[w]a</i>
Chogtrul Khedrub Palzang	Mchog sprul Mkhas grub dpal bzang

Chöje	Chos rje
Cone	Co ne
Dachen	Mda' chen
Dachen Khamatshang	Mda' chen kha ma tshang
Dome	Mdo smad
Dongtrom	Ldong khrom
<i>dranggen</i>	<i>drang rgan</i>
Drangkhen Munrum Karpo	Drang mkhan mun rum dkar po
Dre	'dre
Drowa Lagyog	'Gro ba la 'gyogs
Drublung	Sgrub lung
Drublung Ngo Ritro	Sgrub lung ngo ri khrod
Gelugpa	Dge lugs pa
Gendün	Dge 'dun
Gönpo	Mgon po
Gönpo Leu	<i>mgon po le'u</i>
Guwa	Dgu ba
Gyakha Rongkha	Rgya kha rong kha
Gyalbön Thökar	Rgyal bon thod dkar
Gyanyag	Rgya nyag
Hagö	Ha rgod
Hamtsho	Ha mtsho
<i>jadang</i>	<i>bya rdang</i>
Jakhyung	<i>bya khyung</i>
Jemadzok	'Jas ma rdzogs
Jogar	Jo sgar
Khyung	<i>khyung</i>
Kongtse	Kong tse
Kongtsekyab	Kong tse skyabs
Kongtsetsho	Kong tse 'tsho
Kunshe Gyalwe	Kun shes rgyal ba'i
<i>labö</i>	<i>bla 'bod</i>
<i>lalu</i>	<i>bla blu</i>
<i>leuyig</i>	<i>le'u yig</i>
Lhadag Leu	<i>lha bdag le'u</i>
Lhamo Tshering	Lha mo tshe ring

Lhamug	Lha smug
Lodzin	<i>Blo 'dzin</i>
Lubum	<i>Klu 'bum</i>
Luchu	Klu chu
Luchung	Klu chung
Lukyap	Klu skyabs
Lumen	Klu sman
<i>lungyig</i>	<i>lung yig</i>
<i>me</i>	<i>dme</i>
<i>meto</i>	<i>dme gto</i>
Miyi Magöl	Mi'i ma bgol
<i>mö</i>	<i>dmod</i>
<i>monal</i>	<i>mo nal</i>
<i>naldri</i>	<i>nal dri</i>
<i>nalto</i>	<i>nal gto</i>
Ngagpa	<i>sngags pa</i>
Ngawangtsho	Ngag dbang 'tsho
<i>ngen</i>	brngan
<i>ngencasa</i>	<i>brngan bca' sa</i>
<i>ngendö jogsa</i>	<i>brngan mdos 'jog sa</i>
<i>ngenyig</i>	<i>brngan yig</i>
<i>Ngenzhung</i>	<i>Brngan gzhung</i>
<i>nol</i>	<i>mnol</i>
Nyagnyi	Nyag nyi
Nyabpa Lagring	Snyab pa lag ring
Nyendrub	Gnyan sgrub
Nyenkyab	Gnyan skyabs
Nyenpa Nasang	Gnyan pa rna sangs
Nyenthar	Gnyan thar
Nyentsho	Gnyan 'tsho
Ozothang	'O zo thang
Palkyi	Dpal skyid
<i>pangkong</i>	<i>pang kong</i>
Phenchu	'Phan chu
<i>phome</i>	<i>pho dme</i>
Pomra	Pom ra

Pomrakyab	Pom ra skyabs
Rongchung Sigye	Rong chung srid brgyad
Samdrub	Bsam grub
Sayi Drangkhren Chulam	Sa'i drang mkhan chu lam
<i>sekhar</i>	<i>gsas mkhar</i>
Selzhung	Sel gzhung
Shen	Gshen
Shenje Lalu	Gshen rje bla blu
Shenrab	Gshen rab
Shingphug	Shing phug
Sin	<i>srin</i>
Sipe Leu	<i>srid pa'i le'u</i>
<i>sipe to</i>	<i>srid pa'i gto</i>
<i>sungma lalü</i>	<i>srung ma bla blu</i>
<i>sungphü</i>	<i>srung phud</i>
Tagcha Alöl	Stag cha 'al 'ol
Tagkham	Stag khams
<i>Tawa Mignön</i>	<i>Lta ba mig rnon</i>
Tenzin Wangyal	Bstan 'dzin dbang rgyal
Teu Mace	Ste'u ma bcad
Thechu	The chu
Thewo	The bo
<i>to</i>	<i>gto</i>
<i>tonag</i>	<i>gto nag</i>
Tönpa Lhundrub	Ston pa lhun grub
Tsasa	Rtsa sa
<i>tshedri</i>	<i>mtshe dri</i>
Tshemza Khyekhyu	Tshem za khyad khyud
tshethar	tshe thar
<i>tsheto</i>	<i>mtshe gto</i>
<i>tsog</i>	<i>btsog</i>
Waltrug	Dbal phrug
<i>yang</i>	<i>g.yang</i>
<i>yidam</i>	<i>yi dam</i>
Yuldu Madrang	Yul du ma drang
<i>Zhagcigma</i>	<i>Zhag gcig ma</i>

Zhangtse

Zhang rtse

Zizag

Zi zag

Zöpa Gyatso

Bzod pa rgya mtsho

Michael Friedrich

Lost in Translation? A Brief History of the Study of Dongba Manuscripts from its Beginnings to 1945

Abstract: The study of Dongba manuscripts began in the late nineteenth century in the wake of missionary and colonial activities in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands. After the First World War, these manuscripts were increasingly traded as exotic artefacts, until in the 1930s scholarly efforts began to study them as remains and witnesses of a unique but moribund culture. This chapter attempts to reconstruct the history of Dongba manuscript studies up to the end of the Second World War. Special attention is given to the contributions of Naxi and Chinese scholars and their network, and to Joseph F. Rock who would later dominate Dongba studies in the West.

Introduction

The Naxi 納西 are one of the People's Republic of China's composite national minorities. Most of them live in the loop of the Yangzi (Golden Sand River, Jinshajiang 金沙江) in the North-western part of the province of Yunnan, some in adjacent areas in South-western Sichuan. The ethnic groups constituting the Naxi nationality speak 'Naish' languages classified as 'Qiangic' and belonging to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. According to a recent assessment, the linguistic situation is much more complex than previously thought, but here we are mainly concerned with the Naxi proper (approx. 270,000) who live in Yunnan province with Lijiang 麗江 as their centre. The matrilineal Na or Narua (approx. 40,000) need to be mentioned too; they are better known in the West under their Chinese name Mosuo (written 摩梭 today, but with many variants in older literature) and live to the east of the Naxi in Yongning 永寧 and around Lugu Lake 瀘沽湖 (see Fig. 1).¹ For simplicity's sake, in what follows 'Naxi' will be used for the Naxi proper and 'Mosuo' for the Na, although 'Mo-so', 'Mosso' and similar

¹ Michaud, Zhong and He 2017.

transliterations have been used in Chinese (often written 麽些)² and in Western literature for the Naxi until 1954, when the national minority was first created.³

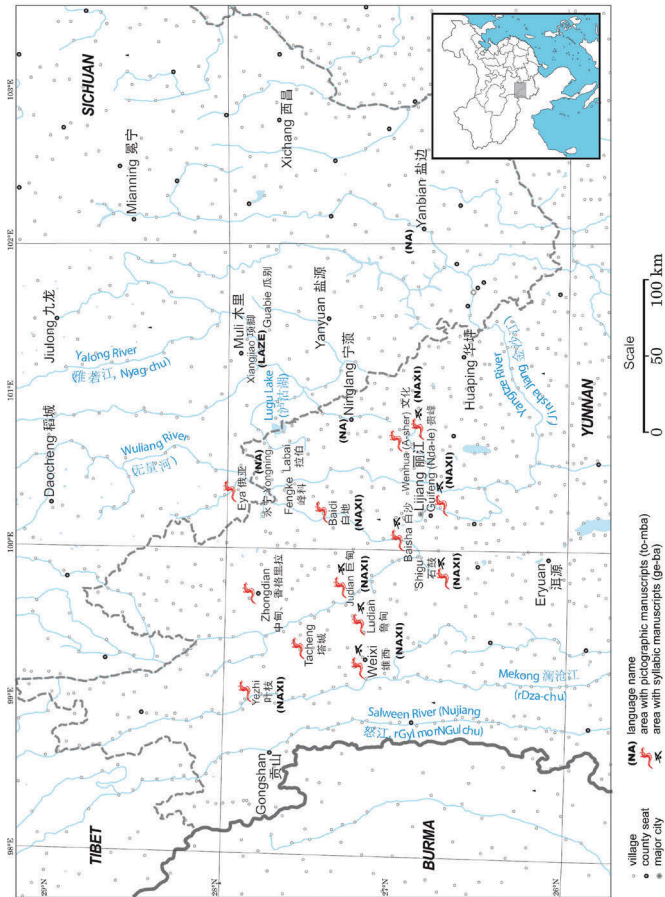


Fig. 1: Map of the area where Naish languages are spoken, with indications about writing systems (Alexis Michaud), Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0).

2 Lacouperie had already noted that the character nowadays mostly used for writing *xie* was also used for *suo*, see Lacouperie 1885, 454, n. 1 (= Lacouperie 1894, 40, n. 1); Cordier quotes this, but transliterates as 'Mo-sie', see Cordier 1908, 663. – For a survey of the different ways of writing Mosuo transmitted in literature see Fang Guoyu 2008. Today the characters are mostly read 'Moxie'.

3 For the Nationalities Identification Project of Yunnan see Mullaney 2011.

The origins of both the Naxi and the Mosuo are unknown,⁴ although many scholars believe they are related to the Qiang 羌 who appear in literary sources of ancient and medieval Chinese history.⁵ The region in the foothills of the Himalayas where Naxi and Mosuo live today was first subdued by the Mongols when Kublai Khan and his army passed through it on their way to conquer the Dali 大理 kingdom in 1253. Under the Ming (1368–1644), Lijiang became a powerful suzerain state (*tusi* 土司) ruled by the Mu 木 family, until it was fully integrated in the Qing empire after 1723.⁶ Only then did Chinese sources start reporting in more detail on the region and its multi-ethnic population.⁷ Today the Naxi proper are scattered over an area that is more or less coextensive with that of the former state of the Mu dynasty and speak a relatively homogenous ‘dialect’, while the other groups to the east are linguistically more diverse, parallel to the shifting centre of political power in that area.⁸

Large-scale manuscript production is only known from the Naxi,⁹ and more precisely from their higher-ranking ritual specialists or ‘priests’, the Dongba 東巴 (in earlier sources Duoba 多巴). They used two types of signs for producing manuscripts, called Dongba and Geba 哥巴 (in earlier sources 格巴) in Chinese. The origins of these two types are just as obscure as those of the Naxi ethnic group itself.¹⁰ Geba is a syllabographic system deriving some of its characters from the

4 Scientific studies have yielded differing results such as: the maternal lineages of the Mosuo are closest to those of the Naxi, their paternal lineages to those of the Yunnan Tibetans (mtDNA and Y chromosome variation, Wen et al. 2004); Tibetans and Mosuo are closest (Y-STR polymorphisms, Yang et al. 2004); the Mosuo have the closest genetic relationship with the Pumi (Premi, mtDNA, Lu et al. 2012).

5 Whether the Qiang-speaking part of the modern ‘national minority’ is related to those groups, is far from clear, see Wang 1999 on the ‘Qiang belt’ along the ‘mountainous fringes of the northern and eastern Tibetan Plateau’, an area including the places where Bon and Naxi manuscripts have been found. Other scholars have called this area an ‘ethnic corridor’, see Sun Hongkai 1990.

6 For an ‘ethno-history’ of the region see Mathieu 2003, the updated version in Mathieu 2011, again updated and with a focus on the relation with Bon, Mathieu 2015; for a summary of Mosuo history from a linguist’s perspective see Michaud 2017, 487–516.

7 The first gazetteer of Lijiang was published in 1743; an ethnography of Weixi followed in 1770 (Yu Qingyuan 1936); for the travel routes see the sources translated by Chavannes in Bacot 1913.

8 Michaud, Zhong and He 2017.

9 The Mosuo also had manuscripts, but only few are extant, see Song Zhaolin 2011a and 2011b, vol. 2, 220–245. It has been proposed that the characters used by the ritual specialists of the Na for the 28 lunar mansions are the ancestors of the Dongba script, see Xu 2016 and Xu 2017.

10 Li Jingsheng recorded six traditional myths about the origin of Dongba writing and then agreed with Fang Guoyu that there is no evidence for determining its age or originator, see Li Jingsheng 2016, 3–5. The discovery of petroglyphs in the Naxi areas has led some scholars to assume that they were the ancestors of Dongba characters, see Mathieu 2011, 83–86 and Michaud,

Nasu or Nuosu (Chin. Yi 彝, in earlier Western sources Lo-lo, in earlier Chinese ones Luoluo 猯猯 / 保保 / 羅羅, etc.), Tibetan and Chinese scripts, traditionally used for spells, the efficacy of which depends on the right enunciation. On a stele dated 1619, an inscription in Geba characters is found next to Tibetan and Chinese writing.¹¹ Manuscripts written with Geba characters are only found in the southern and central parts of the Naxi areas (see Fig. 1).

The great majority of the more than 30,000 extant manuscripts, however, contain Dongba characters, sometimes with additions in Geba, Tibetan or Chinese writing.¹² Only a few manuscripts older than the nineteenth century are known with some certainty, most of them dating to the latter half of the nineteenth century and to the first half of the twentieth century.¹³ In the late eighteenth century, an immigrant group from Yanyuan 鹽源 (Sichuan) in the East, calling themselves Malimasa (瑪麗瑪薩), came to Weixi 維西. They used a syllabic system of writing made up of about one hundred Dongba characters.¹⁴ It is similar to the one used by the Rek'ua (Chin. Ruoka 若喀, Ruanke 阮可 or Ruka 汝卡) who are located on the Northern side of the Golden Sand River. Just as many Mosuo, members of this small group living in Sichuan have been classified as belonging to the Mongol nationality, because they claimed descent from Kublai Khan's soldiers. Linguistically they are close to the Naxi, just as the Malimasa are.¹⁵

The nature of the Dongba characters, which have been regarded as 'pictographic' in the West or 'hieroglyphic' in Chinese (*xiangxing wenzi* 象形文字), has given rise to many erudite discussions which to a certain degree resemble those about the 'ideographic' nature of Chinese characters.¹⁶ Contemporary *opinio*

Zhong and He 2017, 154.

11 See Michaud, Zhong and He 2017, 155.

12 For the estimate see the catalogue of Guo Dalie 2003 (more than 20,000) and the incomplete list of Western holdings (more than 9,300) in Jackson 1979, 23 (reproduced in Yang Fuquan 2012, 462–463); for the collection of the Barcelona ethnological museum see Poupard *s.a.*; for the one of its Viennese counterparts, see the contribution of Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai in this volume.

13 For a discussion of the age of the so-called Dto-la manuscripts dated by Rock to the sixteenth century see Jackson 1979, 52–57; for a manuscript kept by the Library of Congress, dated to 1668 by Li Lincan see He Jiquan 2010.

14 See Michaud, Zhong and He 2017, 155; in the official linguistic survey of 1985, their language is classified as Na, see He and Jiang 1985, 107. A list of the 105 most frequently used Malimasa syllabograms is found in He and Jiang 1985, 128–129.

15 See Wellens 2010, 73 and 246, n. 11; also see Ge Agan 2008a, 54–59. For a survey of the present state of Rek'ua studies see Li Xiaoliang 2016.

16 For Chinese writing see DeFrancis 1984 and Friedrich 2003; see Deng Zhangying 2010 for a

communis in the West has it that Dongba characters were traditionally not used for recording the spoken language. They are regarded as ‘mnemonic notes’ of the Dongba priests who would have memorized their ritual chants anyway, thus only needing prompts for activating their mental texts.¹⁷ Whether the manuscripts were only meant to serve as prompt books for chanting, however, is far from clear. In addition to the ritual specialists’ books, there are some specimens of a mundane nature, such as contracts, minutes of Dongba meetings, account books, letters, medical manuscripts and song and dance notation. In the minutes of a 1933 meeting, a set of Dongba characters unambiguously represents *all* sounds of the spoken language including the particles and thus constitutes ‘true’ writing.¹⁸ It may well be that due to their mostly ephemeral nature most of these written artefacts have been lost, thus contributing to the impression that the ritualists’ use of the characters was the only one and exclusively linked to their rituals.

Dongba manuscripts are traditionally mined for their content by anthropologists, for relevant data by linguists and as evidence for the history of writing. The huge number of artefacts and the winding path of the century-long history of research pose problems which have only recently been taken into consideration more seriously, although most of them have been known for a long time. In order to avoid speculation on shaky grounds, methodological and conceptual impediments need to be discussed, especially if one wants to dig deeper into the relations between Dongba rituals and Bon rituals. According to established opinion, the word Dongba signifying both the ritualists and their writing is cognate with the Tibetan *ston pa* for teacher. The first teacher was Dongba Shiluo (< Ston pa Gshen rab, Chin. now mostly written 東巴什羅 with many variants in earlier scholarship) or Dingba Shiluo 丁巴什羅, the mythical founder of the Bon ‘religion’. Although many scholars adhere to this view first voiced by French travellers in the early twentieth century, some consider this figure to be a synthesis of the ancestors of the formerly independent Bon and Dongba traditions.¹⁹ Various

discussion of terms for the Dongba script.

17 See Michaud, Zhong and He 2017, 153, summarising a century of research. Consequently, Dongba writing is not mentioned in *The World’s Writing Systems*, and Geba only in passing in its introduction to the ‘Yi Script’, see Daniels and Bright 1996, 239. For a few specimens of contracts, recipes, petroglyphs and the wood-block printing of Dongba and Geba characters in the 1930s see Yang Fuquan 2012, 447–453, for dance notation, songs and other non-ritual content see Dongba wenhua yanjiusuo 2000.

18 See Jiang, He and Gu 2013.

19 For the latter see Ge Agan 2008b and Yang Zhengwen 2008b.

ways of writing this name in Chinese point to a great variety of pronouncing it, complicating a discussion that is not without political implications.²⁰

For convenience's sake, five periods may be distinguished in the history of Dongba manuscript studies:

- First, from 1867 when a copy of a Dongba manuscript first brought Dongba writing to the attention of European scholars through 1913 when Bacot published the first monograph on the 'Mo-so' including two French-Naxi glossaries, one including both Geba and Dongba characters;
- Second, from 1916, seeing the purchase of a cache of forty Dongba manuscripts by the John Rylands library to the 1930s and 1940s when Chinese and Naxi scholars took note of Westerners collecting and studying Dongba manuscripts, both working in close parallel to each other and leading to the publication of the first Chinese inventory of Dongba characters and a Naxi-Chinese dictionary using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and Geba in 1944/1945;
- Third, the first thirty years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, when on the one hand a few Western scholars continued to work with the manuscripts, while on the other Chinese scholarship on the Dongba was either highly politicised or completely banned;
- Fourth, from 1980, when the 'Dongba Culture Research Institute' was founded in Lijiang and Western researchers slowly allowed back into the Naxi areas, through to 2000 when the publication of the one-hundred volume series containing facsimiles of 897 Dongba manuscripts and translations of their 'texts' appeared;
- Finally, after the turn of the millennium scholarship on the Dongba manuscripts has grown exponentially. Besides utilising them in order to create a unique 'Dongba culture', scholarly interest in their manuscriptological features and their historical diversity is slowly gaining ground.

The present article will deal with the first two periods, covering the pre-history and the foundational period of Dongba manuscript studies up to the Second World War. The data collected and the methods developed during this time still inform today's research.

Since recent scholarship on the Naxi in general and concerning the Dongbas in particular is either published by authors writing Chinese or by scholars reading Chinese, all names and terms will be given in Chinese (Hanyu pinyin and traditional characters) unless marked otherwise. While in the West the offi-

²⁰ See Varutti 2014, 137–138.

cial romanisation of the Naxi language ('Naxi pinyin')²¹ is used by some scholars, authors writing Chinese usually prefer IPA with the Chao tone letters, including most of the Naxi. For reasons discussed below, consistency in transliterating Naxi is neither possible nor desirable when studying Dongba manuscripts produced before the 1950s.

The wealth of available published and archival materials is a blessing and a curse at the same time: missionary and (auto)biographic writings have too often been accepted without question, while scholarly works have rarely been examined with regard to their sources. In addition to the lack of linguistic uniformity and standardised transliteration systems, major problems are posed by the nature of the sources: concerning the period before 1949, research often has to rely on diaries, memoirs and much later recordings of oral sources, which at times contradict each other and have to be carefully checked in every single case. This especially pertains to dates which are notoriously unreliable, but also to names, since many Dongba have two or more names, besides Naxi and Chinese names a ritual one (*faming* 法名). Most Naxi use their Chinese names, but some preferred their own until very recently. The wars of the twentieth century, both worldwide and on Chinese soil, the bamboo curtain and also political persecution have led to ruptures within 'Dongba culture' that are difficult to assess but most probably graver than its proponents tend to admit.

A final note: the present author has no knowledge of the Naxi language. His linguistic expertise relevant to the present topic is limited to Literary and Modern Chinese.

1 From Auguste Desgodins (1867) to Jacques Bacot (1913): Missionaries, explorers, orientalists

Building on earlier engagements in Tibet, the Vatican established the Apostolic Vicariate of Lhasa in 1846 and entrusted its management to the Missions Étrangères de Paris (M.E.P.). In addition to 'Tibet proper', its territory later also included 'Chinese Tibet', that is, the various Tibetan polities in Sichuan and Yunnan, with Dartsedo (Chin. Tachienlu [Dajianlu] 打箭爐, today's Kangding 康定 in Sichuan) as episcopal headquarters. At the turn of the century, the non-sectarian Protestant China Inland Mission (C.I.M., founded in 1866) had their only

²¹ For Naxi pinyin see Hansen 1999, 51–52.

outpost in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands in Dartsedo,²² while the M.E.P. had established a network of mission stations along the major trade routes in the region. They included Yezhi 葉枝 and Weixi in the Mekong valley, the Western part of the Naxi areas, but not Lijiang, the centre in the East (see Fig. 2).²³ The M.E.P network provided the infrastructure of most ‘travellers’ well into the twentieth century, including famous British explorers like Thomas Thornhill Cooper (1839–1878), William Gill (1843–1882) and Edward Colborne Baber (1843–1890), who collected data and documented their experiences in travel reports and communications with learned societies. Together with letters from the missionaries, they provided for the first time detailed information on the geography, ethnography and complex political setup of the region with its Chinese officials, local chieftains and Tibetan lamas. Yunnan was a stronghold of bandits and a major producer of opium and would not change much in this respect, even after the Nationalists had established a more stable central government in 1927.

Interest in the region increased exponentially after the British and the French had extended the borders of their territories toward the north in the 1880s: in 1883 the French established their protectorate over Tonkin, hoping for a trade route with China that would bypass the treaty ports of China’s southern coastal provinces. Only two years later, in 1885, the British took Upper Burma and founded the Province of Burma in 1886. As a result, both the French protectorate and the British colony now had common borders with China – in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, which included the Naxi areas. Commercial and military interests of the rival powers led to an increasing number of exploratory missions to Yunnan. In 1909, Henry Rodolph Davies (1865–1950) published the non-confidential results of his voyages in the book *Yun-nan: The Link Between India and the Yangtze*. It was the most comprehensive source on the province, including its ethnic make-up, and became a major point of reference for all subsequent travellers.

²² For the C.I.M. stations see the map in Taylor 1902. Like many concepts, the term ‘Sino-Tibetan borderland’ is in dispute today, see Mortensen 2019, 116–117.

²³ See Michaud 2007 and Bray 2019.



Fig. 2: The principal M.E.P. mission stations in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, c. 1900 (Rémi Chaix and John Bray), Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

In 1885 the ‘versatile orientalist’²⁴ Terrien de Lacouperie (1844–1894) published an article on the ‘Beginnings of Writing Around Tibet’ in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, dealing with two Dongba manuscripts, with drawings of their first pages.²⁵ The first one was actually a hand-drawn copy of a Naxi manuscript made by the M.E.P. missionary Auguste Desgodins (1826–1913) in 1867 (see Fig. 3); the second was sent to the British Museum in 1877 by William Gill (1843–1882), who had acquired it in ‘Ku-deu’ (probably Guduwan 古渡灣 close to Judian 巨甸) when travelling with his guide and companion William Mesny (1842–1919), an adventurer and botanist who had been in the service of the Qing army, through western Sichuan and Tibet to Yunnan and Burma.²⁶

²⁴ This characterisation is by Laufer 1916, 275.

²⁵ Lacouperie 1885, 454–470 (= Lacouperie 1894, 40–56). The first pages of Desgodins’s manuscript were also published in Devéria 1886, 166, apparently from another hand-copy.

²⁶ For the ‘Mu-su’ at ‘Ku-deu or Chi-Tien’ see Gill 1880, 269–270; for the first description of the

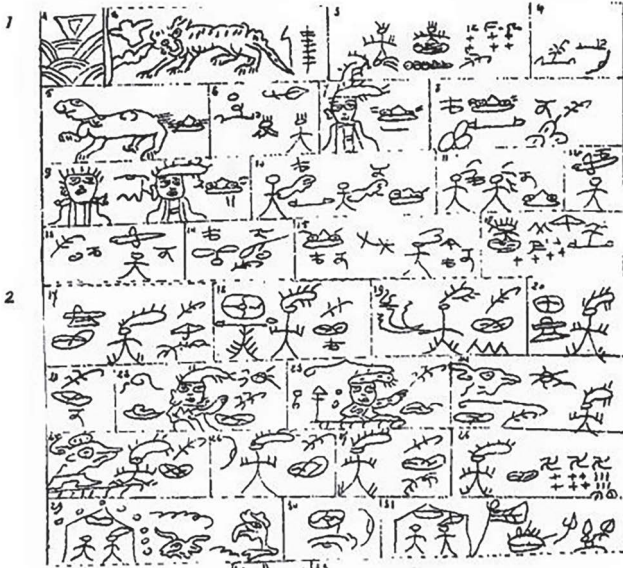


Fig. 3: Mo-so MS. (*Desgodins*) (Lacouperie 1894, Plate III).

Besides dealing with the history and ethnography of the ‘Mo-so or Na-shi’ and correctly assigning their language to the Tibeto-Burman family,²⁷ Lacouperie notes that the *Desgodins* manuscript was described as a ‘Hieroglyphic Book of Prayers from the Mountains between Burma and China’²⁸ and translates from a letter sent by Father *Desgodins* in 1882:

These hieroglyphics [...] are not, properly speaking, a writing, still less the current writing of the tribe. The sorcerers or *Tong-bas* [*Dongbas*] alone use it when invited by the people to recite these so-called prayers, accompanied with ceremonies and sacrifices, and also to put some spells on somebody, a speciality of their own. They alone know how to read them and understand their meaning; they alone are acquainted with the value of these signs, combined with the numbers of the dice and other implements of divination which they use in their witchcraft. Therefore these hieroglyphics are nothing else than signs more or less sym-

Gill manuscript see Yule 1880, 89–91. In the chapter ‘In the Footsteps of Captain Gill’ of his *From China to Hkamti Long*, the botanist and explorer Francis Kingdon-Ward (1885–1958) recorded that from ‘Chi-tien, a typical Mo-so village’ ‘the road to Wei-hsi branches off’, see Kingdon Ward 1924, 68.

²⁷ See the English-Mo-so word list in Lacouperie 1894, 51–52, which he had excerpted from the eight-language one published in *Desgodins* 1873.

²⁸ Lacouperie 1885, 460 (= Lacouperie 1984, 46).

bolical and arbitrary, known to a small number of initiated, who transmit their knowledge to their eldest son and successors in their profession of sorcerers. Such is the exact value of the Mo-so manuscripts; they are not a current and common writing; they are hardly a sacred writing in the limits indicated above.²⁹

Lacouperie comments on Desgodins's remarks as follows:

[...] they are extremely important for the general theory of writing, inasmuch as they do not pretend to show in that peculiar hieroglyphical writing any survival of former times. According to these views, should they prove correct, it was apparently made up for the purpose by the tombas [Dongbas] or medicine-men. This would explain, perhaps, the anomalous mixture of imperfect and bad imitations of ancient seal characters of China, pictorial figures of animals and men, bodies and their parts, with several Tibetan and Indian characters and Buddhist emblems. The superfetation and addition of the Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, and Buddhist signs are obvious, while the pictorial ground of the writing with peculiarities of its own is no less visible. The tails of animals, caps of men, etc., are modified according to the sentence; on the other hand, these occasional additions are also used independently. This feature deserves more attention than would be supposed; should we get a phonetic rendering and a translation of these texts those appendices might turn to be phonetic complements.³⁰

And he concludes:

Yet we cannot help thinking that this sacred writing embodies survivals of the pictorial stage of notation independent of synchronical dates and progresses elsewhere, which seems (within their limited area of self-progress) to be proper to all races of mankind, the white race with exceptions. The latter was more often satisfied with systems of notation more symbolical and conventional; simple combinations of dots and strokes, straight, curved or spiral lines, round and deep as cup-marks or angular and square, were sufficient for them, while the inferior races have always wanted, and have made a more material and eye-speaking system of notation. We may be sure that pictorial writings have crept up everywhere, though very few have survived in the struggle of civilizations; the long period required for their passing through the pictographic and ideographic phases was not allowed to them, and the untimely intrusion of an older and more perfected system, or another one better fitted to the surrounding circumstances, superseded them altogether.

[...] The only possible life for still-born writings of that description is that which lingers in obscure corners of superstition and witchcraft. We think that this Mo-so writing may be an instance of the fact, excepting the modifications introduced in the mean time for the purpose of those who use it. [...] On some of these charms [from Western Tibet] are drawn hieroglyphical signs, which are not without analogy with those of the MSS. drawn by the Mo-so sorcerers. [...] As the Mo-so have not taught the western Tibetans any more than they

²⁹ Lacouperie 1885, 461–462 (= Lacouperie 1984, 47–48).

³⁰ Lacouperie 1885, 461 (= Lacouperie 1984, 47).

did the eastern, from whom, on the contrary, they have learned so much, we must understand the ground of this writing to be of Tibetan origin of unknown date. The inference is plain and cannot be impugned.³¹

These short remarks set the stage for what was to come: 1) the characters were invented by the Dongbas; 2) their core elements are perhaps very old and have survived as a means to transmit esoteric knowledge from father to son; 3) they do not constitute true writing, but represent the most primitive of the stages leading to the alphabet; 4) certain elements of the characters may have a phonetic value which could only be known from ‘a phonetic rendering and a translation of these texts’.

The following years saw more and more Dongba manuscripts reaching Europe. In an addendum to a reprint of his 1885 article in his work *Beginnings of Writing in Central and Eastern Asia, or Notes on Embryo-Writings and Scripts* (1894), Lacouperie mentions a

bilingual Mosso manuscript of the Musée de Trocadéro in Paris, where it has been sent by a Missionary, Père Delavey. This MS. consists of 18 pages of writing; the four first are almost chiefly Mosso, the nine following are Mosso interlined with these unknown characters, and the five last pages do not contain any Mosso at all. These written characters, of which about two hundred different appear in the MS., consist of fragments, simplifications, or imitations of Chinese symbols.³²

This is apparently the first mention of the Geba script in a Western source.

In another addendum, he quoted the ‘Chinese General Geography of Yunnan, published in 1729’: ‘They have a writing solely pictorial: for a man they draw a man; for an object they draw the object, to make their writings.’ Lacouperie concludes ‘that these hieroglyphics had a more extensive use than that of magical purposes, the only one known to the missionary [Desgodins].’³³

31 Lacouperie 1885, 462–463 (= Lacouperie 1894, 48–49). For the ‘charms’, Lacouperie quotes Schlagintweit 1863 but does not give a page number; some superficial similarities to Dongba characters of some of the figures reproduced in the plates and the poor quality of the Desgodins copy may have prompted this assumption.

32 Lacouperie 1894, 183–184; Jean Marie Delavay (1834–1895), M.E.P. missionary, explorer and famous Botanist, worked in Yunnan in a missionary district including Lijiang since 1882.

33 Lacouperie 1894, 182; he had apparently wrongly dated the gazetteer and misunderstood the original entry which quotes an ethnographic report on the region of Weixi from 1770, see Yu Qingyuan 1936, 2 and Bacot 1913, 119, n.1. In Chinese the sentence reads: 有字，跡專象形，人則圖人，物則圖物，以為書契， see Yu Qingyuan 1936, 6, see the French translation in Bacot 1913, 122. The same author also reports on the bamboo stylus used for writing and its preparation, see Yu Qingyuan 1936, 16.

In 1898 Prince Henri d'Orléans (1867–1901) published the report on his recent travel from Hanoi to Calcutta via Yunnan. He included drawings of the first three pages of two of the manuscripts he had obtained in the North-western corner of the Naxi areas, in Yetché (Yezhi, see Fig. 1).³⁴ In the English translation of the prince's book which appeared in the same year, the relevant paragraph reads:

Mosso writing has no real existence as such. The wizards make and keep manuscript books filled with hieroglyphics; each page is divided into little partitions, horizontally from left to right, in which are inserted rough drawings of men, houses, animals' heads, and conventional signs for the sky, lightning, etc. I was enabled to carry away with me several of these books. The traveller Gill and the Abbé Desgodins had already taken specimens to Europe, but without a clue to their meaning. The magicians explained two of them to me. They were prayers beginning with the mention of the creation of the world, and ending by an enumeration of all the ills which menace man, which he can avoid if he is pious and gives gifts to the magicians. I have been able by collation to establish the identity of certain ideas with certain signs, although the wizards told me they had no alphabet, and that the hieroglyphs were handed on by oral tradition alone. It was interesting to light among an isolated people upon one of the first stages in the evolution of writing. Many of the Chinese characters were originally simply pictorial hieroglyphs; and had the Mossos developed instead of restricted their signs, we might perchance have seen in their sacred books the birth of letters for them also.³⁵

For the first time, drawings of a manuscript were accompanied by a 'key' with 'oral text', being transliterations and interlinear translations.³⁶ In addition, the complete manuscript pages were represented showing their visual organisation and conveying an approximate sense of their size.³⁷ Their presentation has not changed much since then: first a facsimile of the manuscript page is given, then the 'oral text', and finally a translation. The classification of the manuscripts' contents as 'prayers' would remain an exception, while the 'creation of the world' mentioned at their beginning would later become a topic of scholarly interest.

34 During the Bon and Naxi manuscripts workshop at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) of the University of Hamburg, 18–19 March 2022, Ewa Paśnik-Tułowicka reported that in 2018 the prince's 'Mosso manuscript no 1' was discovered at the library of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw.

35 D'Orléans 1898, 212; see also 216 for a manuscript gift of the local ruler and 215 for his dwelling: 'The walls exhibited a variety of patterns and Mosso hieroglyphs, all, as well as the mouldings, the design of the royal owner himself, whose more ordinary accomplishments and occupations embraced those of a goldsmith, merchant, and cider maker on a large scale.'

36 The 'literal translation' of a second manuscript, being a specimen from Tsekou (Cigu 茨姑), is not accompanied by an 'oral text'.

37 D'Orléans 1898, 448–455; on 456 the 'fragment of a Mosso manuscript' is reproduced.

One year earlier, the French vice-resident in Indochina Charles-Eudes Bonin (1865–1929) had presented a *Note sur un manuscrit Mosso* during the XIth International Congress of Orientalists in Paris, which was published 1898 in its proceedings. He had obtained the manuscript from ‘Keloua’ (probably Geliuwan 格六灣)³⁸ on the Eastern route through the valley of the Golden Sand River (see Fig. 6 below). Here, in the North of the Naxi areas, their priests, ‘les Tong-pa, en chinois “To-pa” 多巴 ou sorciers’, could only secretly transmit their rites because of the dominance of Tibetan lamas.³⁹

In addition, he described its material features, according to the paraphrase of Berthold Laufer (1916):

it is an album of oblong size, comprising twelve folios of very strong paper, the verso and recto of each leaf being inscribed, save the last page, which is decorated with designs of red flowers. The two sides of the first folio are occupied with representations of deities and objects of the cult. The ten following folios are covered with colored hieroglyphs peculiar to the writing of the *tong-ba*, and on each page distributed over three horizontal lines, each line being divided by vertical strokes into two or three sections. These form a series of rectangular enclosures, the characters of each quadrangle representing a phrase, so that the vertical lines assume the function of our punctuation.⁴⁰

The description as ‘album de forme oblongue’ for the first time addressed the form of Dongba books, which combines the oblong leaves of the pothi with a stitch binding on the left. Bonin believed his manuscript to date from a more ancient period of ‘Mosso’ history, since its characters did not show any additional elements taken from Lolo or Chinese writing, such as Lacouperie had mentioned. According to Bonin, nearly all characters, some with the help of colouring, directly represented the object which they signified, similar to the Egyptian and pre-Columbian hieroglyphs, the first stage of writing. This monogenetic view of the history of writing, already voiced by Lacouperie, dates back to the sixteenth century and would continue far into the twentieth century.⁴¹

In his *Note* Bonin provided a French ‘translation’ of the first six pages: ‘this translation was fixed under my eyes by my interpreter in Chinese characters corresponding to each of the sacred [!] hieroglyphs.’ According to Bonin it would be possible to translate the whole book, since the same characters frequently appeared throughout it. This interlinear character-for-character ‘translation’ had only one shortcoming: since the Dongba characters would only signify nouns, the

³⁸ According to Chavannes, see Bacot 1913, 149, n. 6.

³⁹ Bonin 1898, 4.

⁴⁰ Laufer 1916, 276.

⁴¹ See Friedrich 1996.

sentences thus lacking the verb, one would have to rely on conjectures for constructing the exact meaning of the phrases. Bonin's 'translation' is consequently not a continuous text but a word list with many question marks.⁴²

For the first time we have a description of the complicated translation process: first the Dongba 'translates' (Bonin does not say into which language), then an interpreter notes down Chinese characters for each of the Dongba ones, and finally these Chinese characters are translated into a European language (Bonin again being silent on who did the second translation). This method of translating with the help of an intermediary language, apparently in most cases Chinese, is still in use today. The problems caused by this practice are obvious: beside the high probability of losing or distorting content there is no way to reconstruct the relation of the source language to the written characters.

In his 1911 book *Les Royaumes des Neiges* Bonin added an appendix on the 'Mossos'.⁴³ He expanded the former short *Note* and extensively quoted an article by Jacques Bacot that had appeared shortly before in the same year. According to Bacot the Mossos have two writing systems which only the *tumbas* use, the one ideographic, the other syllabic. The former must be the older one, since 'ideographic characters always precede syllabic writing'. Bacot claimed to have studied both with 'tumbas', one in Yezhi, the other in Lijiang. In addition, he mentioned 'Bedjri', the holy place of the Mossos, where every 'sorcerer' wanted to go at least once in his lifetime. There was no sanctuary, just springs, a holy cave and limestone sinter terraces: 'La religion des Mossos n'est qu'un culte de la nature.'⁴⁴ At the end of his appendix Bonin mentions, perhaps for the first time, the relations between the religion of the Mossos and the 'sect of the *Bönpos* or *black lamas*':⁴⁵

Jacques Bacot (1877–1965) had travelled in the Sino-Tibetan border regions in 1907 and 1909 and had developed a keen interest in Tibetan religion. Before his career as an academic Tibetologist, he published the first monograph on the Naxi in 1913, *Les Mo-so. Ethnographie des Mo-so, leurs religions, leur langue et leur écriture*, including a reprint of a recent article on Chinese historical sources and a genealogy of the Mu dynasty by the eminent Sinologist Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918). In this genealogy, which is known in different versions today, the

⁴² Bonin 1898, 5–9; Laufer politely commented: 'It is difficult to form an opinion on the translation of the Mo-so ritual, as it is offered by M. Bonin' (Laufer 1916, 277).

⁴³ Bonin 1911, 281–296; in his bibliography Bonin refers the reader to Cordier's *Bibliotheca sinica*, but does not mention Cordier 1908 which is the first compilation of European reports on the Naxi, see Bonin 1911, 282.

⁴⁴ See Bonin 1911, 293–295 quoting Bacot 1911, 245–246.

⁴⁵ Bonin 1911, 295.

second king (thirteenth century CE) is credited with the ‘invention of writing for his country’. He is said to have been able to read Chinese characters at the age of seven and the writings of the various Man 蠻, i.e. the non-Chinese ethnic groups, and furthermore he understood the language of the animals.⁴⁶ Chavannes does not comment on this mythical account that later would give rise to learned discussions on the question which of the two scripts was invented by the king.⁴⁷

Bacot’s volume was to remain *the* reference work for Dongba studies, until Rock’s scholarly works started appearing from the late 1930s. From one of his manuscripts, reproduced in facsimile, Bacot translated the beginning of the ‘legend of Tumbashéra’, who was none other than ‘Çerabmibo of the Pönbos’. In this legend he found ‘manifest relations between Mo-so shamanism and Pöm-boïsme’. Instead of describing details of the ‘sorcery practices of the tumbas’, ‘which are the same in all magic with some variants without interest’, he just mentioned his Lijiang Dongba manipulating a red-hot ploughshare, then dancing in the flames while holding a pot with burning oil and sprinkling drips of fire on him with his hand. Bacot apparently did not know yet that the Dongba producing and using manuscripts were not identical to the ‘sorcerers’ who performed feats such as the fire ritual, but did not use books. His ‘tumba’ may have been one of those ritualists practising in both fields.⁴⁸

Concerning the vocabulary of the spoken language, Bacot notes that his transcriptions have to be taken with caution, as with all language not fixed by writing: ‘Car on ne peut appeler écriture, dans ce sens, les hieroglyphs et les caractères mo-so.’ He relied on a Mo-so who knew Tibetan, with the questions and answers controlled by a Tibetan who knew Mo-so. The pronunciation was not stable and varied from one to another, but he refrained from unifying the transcriptions and stuck to the way the words were dictated by his Yezhi Dongba. He found 5 percent Chinese and 8 percent Tibetan words, and 25 Xixia (Tangut) words. In addition, Bacot reports that the Mo-so language had five dialects: those of Lijiang, ‘Bedjri’ (Chin. Beidi 北地, today’s Baidi 白地, see Fig. 1), Weixi, Yezhi and of the ‘Tibetanized Mo-so’ in the North. The southern dialects were influenced by Chinese, and

⁴⁶ The part by Chavannes reproduces Chavannes 1912, 614, here Bacot 1913, 176.

⁴⁷ For the decisive sentence, the Chinese text has *zhi benfang wenzi* 制本方文字, with *zhi* actually not meaning inventing something from the scratch but rather constructing something from pre-existing materials (‘cut to size’), thus pointing to the Geba script which is understood to be constructed from Chinese, Lolo and other elements – if one wants to take this seriously.

⁴⁸ Bacot 1913, 16–22; these tasks were usually performed by another group of ritual specialists (sometimes called ‘shamans’, in Rock’s transliteration of the *llü-bu*) who did not use books, although in some cases a Dongba might acquire the qualification of the latter, see Jackson 1965, 57–58.

the northern ones by Tibetan, the one of Baidi being the ‘purest’ one.⁴⁹ Besides its geographical position on the Eastern route following the Jinshajiang, Baidi was the ‘holy place’ where the first Dongba Shiluo was supposed to have meditated in a cave.⁵⁰

VOCABULAIRE.

Français.	Mo-so.	Prononciation ou transcription différente, synonymes ou mots étrangers ¹⁾ .	Langue écrite.
à (datif)	kou; ko		
abeille	mha mé <i>mél-mère</i>	kioujé	
abimer	mago bi sé		koa
aboyer	leu	k'euneutsa	
abri	geu		
accompagner	djrintjé bié <i>avec-aller</i>		
accrocher	téhada		
accoucher (d'un fils)	zou chi		
— (d'une fille)	mi chi		
accuser	achou		gnion
acheter	ha	goudzé	
admirer	chi lubié		
adorer	tepa ben		
adroit	rjia		
afin, pour. (inf.)	tso		
agrafe	zeu		
aider	ââ khou kou		
aiguille	kou		ko
aile	dophi		
aigle	kondo		kon
aimer	baia	chi to ba	
ainé (frère)	ab(v)eu		
air	h'a	heu	ha
s'agenouiller			pha tso
à l'aise			bi
alcool, eau de vie	araki		je
aller	bié	beu hū, hū ze	beu; bu

1) Les mots de cette colonne sont empruntés aux vocabulaires publiés par Desgodins, Bonin, Madrolle, Johnston, d'Ollone.

Fig. 4: 'Vocabulaire' (Bacot 1913, 29).

⁴⁹ Bacot 1913, 27–28.

⁵⁰ A European traveller visiting the place in 1914 did not notice any 'holy place of the Moso', see Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 84–85 (Winstanley 1996, 39), but see Rock 1947, vol. 1, 265–268 for the sinter terraces, the 'sacred grotto' and the 'sacred spring'.

The vocabulary (see Fig. 4) is presented as a word list like those the missionaries had compiled. Following the alphabetical order of the French words, three columns provide first the ‘Mo-so’ equivalents, then different pronunciations, synonyms or foreign words, and finally equivalents from the ‘written language’. This term apparently refers to words of the ritual language used when chanting.

Then Bacot introduces the two types of script (see Fig. 5). The syllabic one consists of ancient and some modern Chinese characters, but rarely derived from the pictographic characters. In addition, there are some analogies with the Lolo characters.⁵¹ The ‘hieroglyphic writing’ comprises pictographic characters resembling animals or objects and ideographic characters for verbs or abstract ideas and in general the terms used in magic whose symbolism is rather obscure; both of them can be used as phonetics. Concerning the ‘texts in ideographic characters’, Bacot remarks that they are the more obscure ones: ‘Leur lecture est toujours un commentaire’. Certain passages seem to belong more to iconography than to writing, and the secondary use of them as phonetics adds an obscurity to writings perhaps intended to address the initiated and keep the content unintelligible to those who only know the ‘fixed characters’. On the following fifty pages Bacot collected characters of both types according to their meaning in French, including almost one hundred with ‘unknown transcription’ (transliteration).

Comparing the entries of both the vocabulary and the writing section, only seven of the nine French words on the first page of the latter list are matched by entries in the former. Five of them differ more or less in ‘transcription’, in a few cases evidently being different words (e.g. *koa* vs *mago bi sé*), and only two are identical. Bacot understands this as evidence for the presence of a ‘veritable written language’.⁵² In addition, he agrees with Lacouperie that these ‘hieroglyphic’ characters could be remnants of the writing of pre-Buddhist Tibetan shamans and that the charms discovered in Western Tibet might belong to a primitive stage of writing lost in Tibet and only preserved by the Mo-so.⁵³

⁵¹ Bacot here refers to the work of Henri d’Ollone (1868–1945) on ‘non-Chinese writing systems in China’ (*Écritures des peuples non chinois de la Chine*, Paris: Ernest Leroux 1912), presenting evidence collected during the latter’s expedition to the border regions of the Qing empire, 1906–1909, see Bacot 1913, 66.

⁵² Bacot 1913, 64.

⁵³ Bacot 1913, 64–67.

Signification.	Transcription.	Caractères idéographiques.	Caractères syllabiques.
abimer	Koa		
aboyer	leu		
accuser	gnion		
s'agenouiller	pha tso		
aigle, épervier	ken, ku, kou		
aiglon	ö		
aiguille	ko		
air	ha		
à l'aise	bi		

Fig. 5: 'Écriture' (Bacot 1913, 68).

In addition to ethnographic photos and photos of two inscriptions of the Mu rulers from the sixteenth century transcribed and translated by Chavannes, the volume contains facsimiles of sample pages of four Dongba manuscripts. The first one is written in Dongba and contains the legend of Dongba Shiluo partially translated by Bacot, the second one has spells written in Geba, with Chinese characters added by a different hand and transliterations in pencil by a third one.

For this manuscript Bacot provides the transliteration, an interlinear translation as well as a running text, with lacunae showing the limits of his understanding. The third one is written in Geba with Tibetan vowel signs, again with transliterations this time written with a pen, and the fourth contains a ‘glose indigène donnant les caractères idéographiques avec leurs correspondants syllabiques’. In this ‘indigenous glossary’, a hand that is probably the same as the one involved in the third manuscript has added French translations to most of the Dongba characters below and transliterations to their Geba ‘correspondences’ above (see Fig. 6). Together with information from his *Yezhi Dongba*, Bacot used this source for his dictionary.⁵⁴



Fig. 6: ‘L’enseignement supérieur de l’écriture est contenu dans ce livre’ (Bacot 1913, Pl. XXVII).

In 1916, almost fifty years after Desgodins had sent his hand-copy of a Dongba manuscript to Paris, a scholarly observer such as Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) summarized Bacot’s (and Chavannes’) achievements as follows:

He supposes that it [Dongba] is identical with the script which is said to have been in vogue among the Tibetan shamans prior to the seventh century. Forgotten in Tibet, it would have survived among the Mo-so, while its traces may still be recognized in certain pictorial charts employed by the Tibetans for purposes of magic. It is very likely that the realistic and partially conventionalized designs now serving the expression of ideas were in their origin religious symbols utilized in magic rites and devil exorcisms, or even purely ornamental motives. Certain it is that, in the same manner as the peculiar writing of the Lo-lo [Yi], the

⁵⁴ Bacot 1913, 66. The first pages of the second and the third of Bacot’s manuscripts had already been published in an appendix to Cordier 1908 (= Bacot 1913, Fig. 34 and 39), while a third one, here wrongly also attributed to Bacot, is actually manuscript no 1 in D’Orléans 1898, 448. On the earlier reproductions the transliterations are clearly visible, while on the later ones these do not show due their poorer quality.

pictographs of the Mo-so bear no relation to those of the Chinese and are entirely independent in their origin and development. The Chinese Chronicle of Li-kiang relates that Nien-pao A-tsung, the son of the ancestor of the Mo-so chiefs, invented a system of writing for his country in the twelfth century, but we are left in ignorance as to what this writing was.⁵⁵

Laufer was the first to observe material details of the manuscripts. A curator at the Field Museum had assessed the paper of the ‘Nichols Mo-so manuscript’, probably the first Dongba manuscript in the United States, as belonging to the family *Streblus asper*, whose bark was called *khoi* in Siam. Nichols had sent this manuscript, probably acquired in Weixi, in 1904. In addition, Laufer drew attention to the fact that the Nichols manuscript was written in black Chinese ink with a bamboo or wooden stylus like all others known, with the exception of the one using colours, which Bonin had described.⁵⁶

All accounts stated that the manuscripts were rare.⁵⁷ They were acquired by chance or presented as a gift. In addition, most of the travellers followed the Western route via Yezhi and Weixi parallel to the Mekong on their way to Dali and Yunnan-fu, thus moving along the margins of the Naxi areas. Bonin was apparently the first to have visited Lijiang, which did not lie on one of the two major routes connecting Yunnan-fu via Dali with Tibet and Sichuan through the valleys of the Mekong in the West and the Golden Sand River in the East.⁵⁸ Dongba writing was mainly studied as a specimen of an ‘ancient’ or ‘primitive’ stage in the development of writing, culminating in the invention of the alphabet.

Some striking inconsistencies, if not contradictions, can be observed in most of the accounts:

1. Dongba writing is not true writing, but consists of ‘hieroglyphic’ characters, representing a primitive stage in the evolution of writing lost in Tibet but surviving with the Dongba. The meaning of these signs is only known to the Dongba sorcerers who use them to orally transmit their esoteric knowledge from father to son. The signs have to be explained or commented on.

⁵⁵ Laufer 1916, 280.

⁵⁶ Laufer 1916, 276, 280–281; the article provides images of the first four pages of the Nichols manuscript. Laufer quotes a letter dated 20 September 1904: ‘My greatest treasure I enclose. It is a book in the Ton-ke, the original language of the Mo-so tribe, who now speak and write Tibetan. Books like this one are exceedingly rare and difficult to obtain. I consider myself fortunate in having secured this manuscript. Part of it I have been able to translate.’ (274)

⁵⁷ There may have been more Dongba manuscripts taken to Europe; Schubert mentions two brought from Yunnan in 1910 by a certain Heinrich Bachfeld, but adds that he had forgotten to note the source, see Schubert 1949, 120 and 140, n. 86.

⁵⁸ See Chavannes in Bacot 1913, 141–142.

2. The contents can be translated, but only with the help of a Dongba. To this end an intermediary is needed, apparently someone knowing Chinese or perhaps Tibetan.
3. The contents of the manuscripts mainly concern sorcery (or, according to Henri d'Orléans, prayers) and are related to Bon, but the longest 'translation' contains part of the biography of Dongba Shiluo. The sorcerers' witchcraft is only described once (Bacot), but – correctly – not linked to the manuscripts.

These inconsistencies were caused by long-distance scholarship on the one hand, on the other by certain preconceived ideas on the nature of writing (as visually representing spoken language) and the use of written artefacts (as transmitting texts). Bacot's observation that the difference between the words of the spoken language and those corresponding to the characters points to the existence of a 'veritable written language'⁵⁹ paved the way for the idea of a Dongba literature which would in turn fuel the manuscript trade.

2 From George Forrest (1916) to Li Lincan (1944): Botanists, linguists, art historians

In the same year that Laufer's note on the Nichols manuscript appeared, George Forrest sold more than forty 'Mo-So manuscripts' to the John Rylands Library in Manchester, a number by far exceeding the total of all others known at that time. Forrest was a botanist exploring the diversity of Yunnan's flora and had probably collected them during his recent journeys. He had first arrived in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands in 1904, even before Bonin and Bacot, and in the course of his seven expeditions became a regular visitor who knew his way around and where to recruit assistants.

In 1914 the botanist Heinrich Handel-Mazzetti (1882–1940), who led an expedition to Yunnan financed by the Austrian Academy of Sciences to Yunnan, met his fellow botanist George Forrest (1873–1932)⁶⁰ in Lijiang. In his travelogue, published in German in 1927, Handel-Mazzetti relates that Forrest invited him to the village where he lived, Ngulukö (Nguluke in the English translation, Chin. Xuesong cun 雪嵩村), 15 km north-north-west from Lijiang at the foot of the Jade Dragon Mountains (Yulong shan 玉龍山, see Fig. 7).

⁵⁹ Bacot 1913, 64.

⁶⁰ For Forrest see Mueggler 2011a, part I.

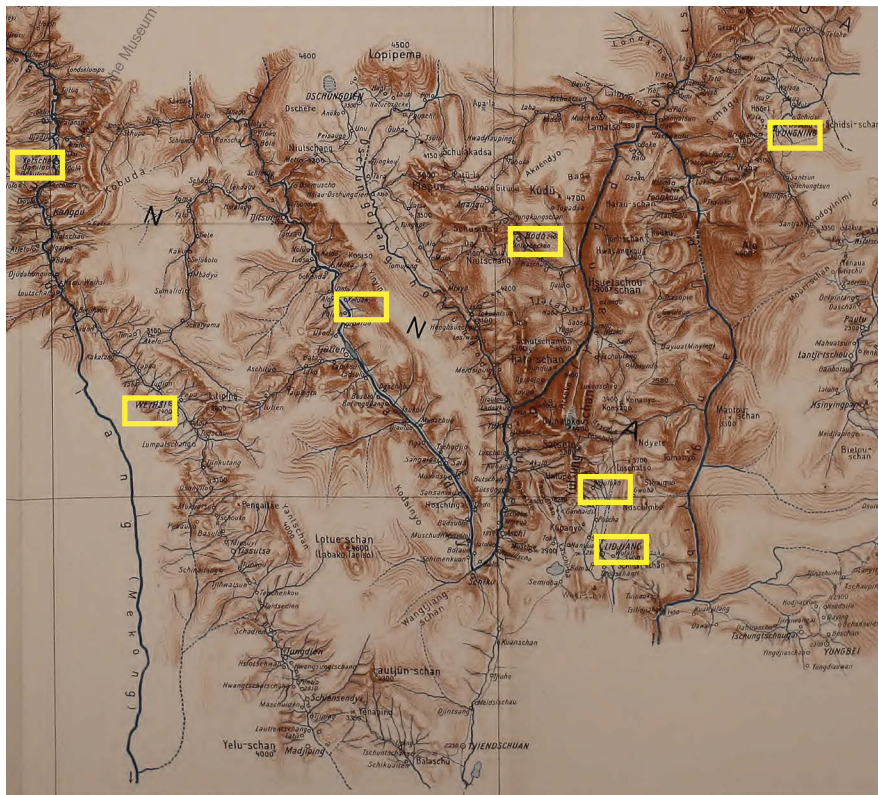


Fig. 7: Part of map of Northwest Yunnan and South Sichuan (Handel-Mazzetti 1919, 15).

Besides praising Forrest's hospitality and good advice, Handel-Mazzetti reports that the people from this village

consisted largely of 'botanists'; since 1904 Forrest had employed them as collectors, and many of them, owing to their intelligence, keenness, feeling for form and not least their knowledge of the mountains, had given outstanding service. They knew the various plants which grew there better than he did himself, so he told us. So it came about that every evening of my nine day stay in the village they thronged into my house, invited or uninvited, spread out their spoils in the yard and held what developed into a regular plant market.⁶¹

Since Ngulukō was the last village before the track led up into the mountains and because he did not like Lijiang, Handel-Mazzetti would always use the 'Botani-

⁶¹ Winstanley 1996, 34 (Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 72–73).

kerdorf'⁶² as his base camp, hiring the same guides and assistants as Forrest and some others recommended by Arie Kok (1883–1951), the Dutch missionary of the Pentecostal Missionary Union (P.M.U.) in Lijiang.⁶³ Handel-Mazzetti highly regarded their expertise and reliability and mentioned those of them he trusted most by name.⁶⁴ The infrastructure established by Forrest and his hospitality attracted further travellers, who arrived in growing numbers in Naxi territory after the completion of the Yunnan railway in 1910 had greatly facilitated travel from Hanoi to Yunnan-fu (today's Kunming). Handel-Mazzetti mentioned his compatriot Anton Karl Gebauer (1872–1942) whom he had met in Lijiang in 1914 after the latter's unsuccessful attempt to enter Tibet, and the members of the zoological mission of the American Museum of Natural History, led by Roy Chapman Andrews (1884–1960), whom he encountered in Ngulukö in 1916.⁶⁵ However, he missed the botanist Francis Kingdon Ward (later Kingdon-Ward, 1885–1958) who visited Lijiang for the first time in 1913.

In addition to the local flora and fauna, there were further exotic specimens to be found. Handel-Mazzetti observed: The 'Nahsi'

often had a small temple but in the village there was no real priest or medicine-man, though in many houses one found their books of magic spells written in strange hieroglyphic script. It was by no means obsolete and was still in use at that time; in 1915 Kok showed me an account for the construction of a house which a carpenter had written out for him in Naxi characters.⁶⁶

Although Handel-Mazzetti did not mention having acquired books himself in his travelogue, he and others must have done so: the ethnological museum in Vienna houses four Dongba manuscripts from him and ten from Gebauer.⁶⁷ The Naxi botanists had presumably helped them to collect books too. Contrary to what

⁶² Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 214 (Winstanley 1996, 102).

⁶³ The P.M.U. was founded in 1909 and followed the principles of the C.I.M., perhaps one of the reasons why some of the sources mention 'C.I.M. missionaries' in Lijiang when clearly referring to those of the P.M.U.

⁶⁴ Winstanley 1996, 102 (Handel-Mazzetti 1917, 214), see also Mueggler 2011a, 8–9 et passim and Mueggler 2012.

⁶⁵ Winstanley 1996, 33 and 127 (Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 71 and 264–265); also see Andrews and Andrews 1918, 113.

⁶⁶ Winstanley 1996, 34 (Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 73); the same author also reports having seen them on houses: 'The undersides of the roof tiles above my balcony were painted with their hieroglyphs — otherwise seldom seen except in their books of spells', see Winstanley 1996, 39 (Handel-Mazzetti 1927, 84–85). This observation is similar to the one of Prince d'Orléans, see n. 35.

⁶⁷ See the contribution of Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai in this volume.

earlier travellers had reported, there were many of these books to be found, and Forrest was apparently the first to realize that they could be sold for a good price to Western institutions and collectors.

Already after his second journey 1910, he had started inquiring about the value of the Dongba manuscripts. In a letter to Forrest dated 15 January 1912, Laurence Waddell (1854–1938) expresses his wish

to see the photos of your manuscripts [...] It would add to the series of hieroglyphics if you have elicited the native explanation of signs as did Prince Henri, as people & institutions acquiring such materials like to have a clue to its meaning & contents. Did you get the native interpretation of any of their characters and did you take a note of it at the time? These are important points.⁶⁸

Forrest had probably approached the surgeon, explorer and expert on, among others things, Tibetan and Indian Buddhism, because he was also known as a collector of antiquities such as Tibetan manuscripts. Forrest perhaps already contemplated the commercial value of the books. Four years later, while negotiating the price for his collection of Dongba manuscripts with Henry Guppy (1864–1948), the librarian of the John Rylands Library, Forrest thanked him for

your proposal to consider the purchasing of my collection of mss. In a previous communication I think I stated my wish for £100, at least, for the whole fifty. The translation would be included of course. That some [sic!] is my lowest price for the whole collection though, as I said, I should like more. The ms. represent fully 2 years search, a good deal of labour, and an expenditure of at least half the above amount, so you will understand I do not gain a great deal over the transaction. Of course I have little knowledge of the market value of them all I have to go on being the price received for more sold to the Foreign Office authorities and their eagerness to secure them.⁶⁹

A week later he accepted Guppy's offer, apparently of his 'lowest price' – the sum of 100 Pounds would be equivalent in purchasing power to almost 9,000 Pounds today.⁷⁰ In addition, he announced that he would despatch the manuscripts the next day and wrote: 'I shall include the key to the translation which I promised.' His cover letter to the parcel had a note: 'MSS & key'.⁷¹ Guppy published this

68 Gow 2013, 1.

69 Letter of 24 March 1916, see Gow 2013, 2; according to Jackson, Forrest sold seventeen manuscripts to the Foreign Office in 1916, see Jackson 1965, 143 and Jackson 1979, 23 (here: India Office (Commonwealth) Library).

70 See 'CPI Inflation Calculator' at <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1916?amount=100>, accessed on 16 August 2021.

71 Letters of 2 and 4 April 1916, see Gow 2013, 2.

new acquisition of ‘forty’ (!) manuscripts in the next issue of his *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* as being the ‘largest group in this particular script to be brought to Europe.’ Referring to Bacot’s characterisation of Dongba writing, he adds: ‘we attach considerable importance to an excellent key to one of the manuscripts, which Mr. Forrest was fortunately able to obtain, through the services of a Chinese scholar, who was familiar with the people and their language.’⁷² As usual in these cases no one bothered to mention the name of the ‘scholar’ who might have been none other than Forrest’s ‘Lao Chao’. The Naxi Zhao Chengzhang 趙成章 had served him as head of the local teams from 1906 and continued to do so almost until his death, having become a serious botanist himself. He apparently could read and write Chinese.⁷³ The ‘key’ consisted of a list of Dongba characters appearing in one of the manuscripts, to which Chinese glosses and their English translations were appended. It did not fulfill the expectations Forrest had aroused and was soon forgotten, although it provides one of the earliest testimonies of the practice of ‘translating’ Dongba ‘texts’.⁷⁴ In addition, Guppy noted that the ‘text of the translated manuscript is of a religious character, opening with a version of the creation story, and as far as we are able at present to judge, most of the others are of a similar type.’⁷⁵ This is the second time the ‘creation story’ is mentioned, something that would continue to stimulate Naxi studies for decades to come.

In 1920, Forrest followed the same procedure, bargaining with Guppy over another batch of ‘Mossoo’ manuscripts he had obtained during his fourth journey

72 Guppy 1916, 142.

73 See Mueggler 2011a, 1–14, 78, 89. For the education system in the Naxi areas see Hansen 1999, 25–60. Zhao Chengzhang’s hand on his maps appears similar to the one that wrote the Chinese text of Mo-So 9 and 93 of the John Rylands Library, especially on those maps reproduced in Mueggler 2011a, 4 and 10. Forrest’s transliterations on another map share features with the hand in a manuscript containing an English draft translation of the beginning of the Chinese text on Mo-So 93, held by the John Rylands Library (<https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~91~1~420757~160503?qvq=q:mo-so&mi=24&trs=48>), and are written with a pencil as well, see Mueggler 2011a, 12; on the Rylands website it is also assumed that Forrest was the scribe (although wrongly identifying the translated text as ‘Mossaobook No. 1’). Comparison with part of a letter signed by Forrest does not leave much doubt about this attribution being correct, see <https://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/14339> (accessed on 16 January 2022). Poupard 2018b, 99–101, seems to think that the translation was written by Scharten, but the hand is clearly different from the one in her letter. If the English pencil entries in the ‘key’ have also been written by Forrest, this must have occurred at a different time, since there are marked differences. However, without an in-depth analysis of the hands of *all* specimens of Chinese ‘translations’ including the ones held by the British Library (see below), any attribution must remain guesswork.

74 For a study of the ‘key’ and related manuscripts see Dan Petersen’s contribution to this volume.

75 Guppy 1916, 143.

1917–1919, starting with ‘over twenty of them all in fairly good presentation’ (4 October 1920). After sending forty of them on 21 October, four days later he offered ‘some others which though fragmentary you may wish included in the collection, some 16 in number’. In the same letter he mentioned that ‘yearly the MS are becoming scarcer & I had much difficulty in securing those I have sent you.’ The argument proved effective, and Forrest was immediately commissioned ‘to secure further ms – Mossou & Tibetan’ during his next journey.⁷⁶

Besides trading the manuscripts Forrest seems to have developed a genuine interest in them and acquired some for his own collection, which was sold to the John Rylands Library by his widow shortly after his death in 1932.⁷⁷ He had corresponded with the P.M.U. missionary Elise Scharten (1876–1965), the ‘Lady from Lijiang’, who, with the exception of some furloughs, continuously stayed there from shortly after her arrival in Yunnan-fu in 1912 until 1945. She had first learned Chinese, then Naxi and was involved in the editing of the first primer for writing Naxi published in 1914 as well as in the translation of religious texts.⁷⁸ Dated 21 November 1922, she sent ‘the two Mo-su books with translation’. One of these translations, done with her notorious type-writer, is kept by the John Rylands Library. Since the names of Naxi deities are romanised in a way close to the Wade-Giles system for transliterating Mandarin Chinese, it is safe to assume that her translation – one of the first of a Dongba ‘text’ into a European language – was once again done with the help of someone speaking or writing Chinese.⁷⁹ We do not know how the translations announced by Forrest to accompany the manuscripts sold in 1916 were meant to be undertaken, perhaps with the help of the nameless Chinese scholar.⁸⁰ They were, however, apparently never made or are lost. Scharten’s letter responding to the request by Forrest suggests that he turned

⁷⁶ Gow 2013, 2–3.

⁷⁷ Gow 2013, 3.

⁷⁸ Laan 1997, Poupard 2018b. In 1936 Scharten donated sixteen manuscripts to the ‘Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde’ in Leiden, one of them accompanied by her translation of the ‘Origin of Mankind’, see Poupard 2018b, 102–105.

⁷⁹ Digital images of Scharten’s letter (<https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~91~1~420756~160505?qvq=q:mo-so%20scharten&mi=0&trs=1>) and the translation of ‘The book to invite the spirit’ (<https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~91~1~420758~160501?qvq=q:mo-so%20forrest&mi=0&trs=47>) are available at the website of the John Rylands Library. Names such as ‘Hu-fa-shen’, ‘Sa-i-wa-teh’ and ‘K’ai-chi-to-chiu’ clearly reflect the Wade-Giles system, while using the German ‘-i’ of the Lessing-Othmer system instead of the ‘-ih’ of the former.

⁸⁰ Even if the translation mentioned in n. 73 was written by Forrest, there still remains the question of who translated the text, since ‘Forrest’s Chinese was rudimentary’, see Mueggeler 2011a, 78.

to the one person in Lijiang known for her linguistic skills, hoping to engage her in his project.

In 1922, during his fifth expedition of 1921–1923 to the borderlands, Forrest met his fellow botanist Rock in Dali. Rock would not only copy his business model but also by far surpass him as a dealer in manuscripts and was to become the foremost authority on ‘Na-khi’ manuscripts in the West. Later, Forrest must have cursed that day in 1922 when he had taken Rock to ‘his’ village Ngulukö and helped him to settle there, although he had taken an immediate dislike to him as a ‘blowhard Yankee upstart’.⁸¹ As long as Forrest lived, he tried to avoid him, and *vice versa*; the same held true for Kingdon Ward, who had left Lijiang after his last visit in 1922 and then diverted his activities to Assam and North Burma, after he found out that Rock had ‘stolen his men’ by paying them better wages while he himself was in the field.⁸²

Joseph Francis Rock (Chin. Luoke 駱克 or 洛克, 1884–1962) was an ingenious impostor, a man with many talents and a master of self-staging. The Austro-American had not even finished high school,⁸³ but was already well-known for his work on the Haiwai’ian flora, when he first entered Yunnan in 1922.⁸⁴ In the service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ‘Dr. Rock’ arrived from Burma where he had been sent to find a medicinal plant against leprosy, and now continued to search for ‘economic plants’.⁸⁵

Contrary to all other travellers before him, Rock took an interest in the ‘religious ceremonies’ of the ‘Nashi’. In his first article on the Naxi that appeared in 1924 in *The National Geographic Magazine* he describes in some detail two such ‘ceremonies’ he had witnessed at Ngulukö (using the German romanisation), one exorcism involving a group of ‘Tombas’, ‘shamanistic sorcerers’ or ‘priests’, with their chief performing more or less the same feats with fire as those briefly

81 Mueggler 2011a, 29–30, 159.

82 See Sutton 1974, 18.

83 See Paul Harris in Yoshinaga et al. 2012, 142; Sutton 1974 and others claim that he had finished secondary education at the famous Schottengymnasium in Vienna, but there is no evidence for this.

84 The essential biography is still Sutton 1974, for biographical literature on Rock see Walravens 2002, 27–33; see also Mueggler 2011b and Yoshinaga et al. 2012; for a list of archival sources see Walravens 1995, and for selections of Rock’s correspondence see Walravens 2002, Walravens 2007 and Taube 2009. Sutton already critically assessed the reliability of Rock’s own statements (see Sutton 1974, 103–120), but she was more interested in the man than his involvement in Naxi scholarship; for an anthropological approach see Mueggler 2011a, part II. A scholarly biography taking Chinese-language sources into full account is still a desideratum.

85 Mueggler 2011a, 28.

mentioned by Bacot. Rock invited the Dongbas to his house and had the ritual performed for him in order to take photos, some of which accompany this article and later publications. Just like Bacot, Rock apparently did not yet know that there were two groups of ritual specialists, with the ‘sorcerers’ who did not use books being responsible for offices such as the fire ritual. In addition, the article mentions the Dongbas’ books:

Among the Nashi there has survived a religious literature written in most peculiar pictographic symbols. The writing is undoubtedly of Tibetan origin and of an unknown date, resembling certain drawings in pre-Buddhistic religious books of the Bönpo sect. The Tombas alone are acquainted with this script, and they pass on their knowledge to their sons, for the office of the Nashi priesthood is an [sic!] hereditary one. There are, however, two forms of writing in use---the pictographic symbols and a character-writing resembling somewhat the Chinese---in fact, certain of these symbols are purely Chinese. I believe the latter form to be a later development, and the pictographic writing much the more primitive.⁸⁶

Two manuscript pages are reproduced, one in Dongba writing, one in Geba. The caption comments that the latter ‘is a combination resembling Chinese and ideographic characters which no Western scholar has as yet been able to decipher’.⁸⁷ These remarks clearly show that Rock already had some knowledge of the scholarly literature at that time. Also worth noting is a short ‘translation’ of one folio of a book about the ‘story of the Flood’. Rock first provides a romanisation of the text and then his translation, line 1 reads as follows: ‘*Nluo sse hhö dku dje*---Nluo and Ssë: Male and Female (corresponding to our Adam and Eve) came to live together’, and line 12: ‘*Ör pü pö nü dö*---ShiKia-fu appeared and taught the people to write these books’.⁸⁸ Rock announces a ‘technical article’ on the subject, but explains neither his idiosyncratic system of transliteration nor the way he obtained this ‘translation’. One of the many photos accompanying the article shows a Dongba reciting from a book, perhaps also staged for Rock. (see Fig. 8) The *Washington Post* reported on 29 June 1924, under the headline ‘Creation Picture Story in Manuscripts Brought Here from China by Explorer’, about Rock’s discovery of ‘religious books of Nashti [!] tribes’ that ‘tell version similar to that found in present Bible’.⁸⁹

86 Rock 1924, 489, 493.

87 Rock 1924, 493.

88 Rock 1924, 493, 498.

89 Walravens 2007, 22.



Fig. 8: New Year's Offering Performed by a Nashi Priest (Rock 1924, 492).

Shortly before Rock's article appeared, he had sold 69 'Moso manuscripts', 1 'Chung-chia' (Zhongjia 仲家, today Buyi 布依 for Bouyei or Zhuang 壯, probably the latter) manuscript and 8 bundles of Tibetan manuscripts to the Library of Congress. An appendix to the Librarian's report for the fiscal year 1923–1924 on Chinese manuscripts has the following:

Moso manuscripts have been brought to Europe and America before and have been made the subject of attentive study by scholars, but up to date barely a dozen manuscripts all told have reached western countries. Doctor Rock secured no fewer then [sic!] 69 manuscripts, by far the largest collection ever brought together outside of the Moso country. These manuscripts show the two methods of writing used by the Mosos; most of them are plainly pictographic, but some are written in a syllabic script. Some of the manuscripts combine both systems of writing.

The gem of the collection is a pictographic story of creation that Doctor Rock was able with the help of a Chinese interpreter to transcribe in Moso sounds and also translate in full. Without doubt this Moso creation myth will become an important document not only in

the study of the Moso language and literature, but also to students of the folklore of the aboriginal tribes of West China.⁹⁰

The report presented more facts than Rock's article: the second type of script is termed syllabic, and the translation was done with the help of a Chinese interpreter. The author of the appendix was Walter T. Swingle (1871–1952), a botanist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who had travelled in China 1918–1919 and brought back a huge number of Chinese gazetteers and books on botany for the Library of Congress. It is probable that Rock already knew him at that time, and that it was Swingle who had connected Rock to Harry Putnam (1861–1955), Librarian of Congress 1899–1939.⁹¹

Rock would always hire Naxi from Ngulukö for his expeditions, even for the one to Gansu 1925–1927, but mainly relying on younger ones than those Forrest had trained. He continued publishing in *The National Geographic Magazine*, but did not return to the topics of his 1924 article, although his book collecting continued on an even larger scale. A 'special file' of the Putnam Archives contains correspondence with Rock on 'Na-hsi pictographic manuscripts' (1927) and on the acquisition of '542 Na-hsi books for US\$ 1,000' by the Library of Congress in 1930.⁹² Clearly enough Rock had entered the manuscript trade almost immediately after having come to 'Naxi land' for the first time and thus became a direct competitor to Forrest in this respect too.

In an article from 1926 he acknowledged that Bacot and Handel-Mazzetti had already visited the region north-west to Lijiang, but immediately added that they had not penetrated it as deeply as he would.⁹³ In an earlier article Rock had staged himself as 'lone geographer' and the 'first white man'⁹⁴ in the region, surviving dangerous situations and visiting remote places, thus adding a second profession to his being a botanist. In 1952 Rock recalled that he and Forrest 'were about the only ones in Li-chiang',⁹⁵ omitting to mention the increasing number of foreigners visiting the Naxi areas and staying there. According to a much later and not completely reliable report, in those times locals called Lijiang 'foreigners' village' with up to forty long-time residents from abroad.⁹⁶ As early as 1926, H. Gordon

⁹⁰ Swingle 1924, 278.

⁹¹ In the 'Preface' to his *Encyclopedic Dictionary* Rock calls Swingle 'my good friend', see Rock 1963, xv; on Swingle see Bartlett 1952.

⁹² Walravens 1995, 214.

⁹³ Rock 1926, 135.

⁹⁴ Rock 1925, 346 and again in later articles.

⁹⁵ See Poupard 2018b, 98 and as always *cum grano salis* Andrews 1999, 54–56.

⁹⁶ See Gao Fuhua 2017.

Thompson (1878–1953), a surgeon and missionary who had been to Lijiang in 1923 together with the famous traveller George Edward Pereira (1865–1923), wrote in his travel report: ‘The valley of the Mekong [...] has been so frequently described that I will pass rapidly over this part of the journey.’⁹⁷ Two years later, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (1887–1944) and his brother Kermit, sons of the president, led a zoological expedition in search of the giant panda. Coming from Bhamo in Burma, they picked up a certain ‘Tsao, Forrest’s former servant’ in Dali, most probably Zhao Chengzhang.⁹⁸ In Lijiang they then met James Henry Andrews (1891–1967) in early 1929. In 1924, the Scotsman Andrews had succeeded the Dutchman Kok as head of the P.M.U. station in Lijiang.⁹⁹ Here the Roosevelts’ team was joined by Xuan Mingde 宣明德, the first native missionary in the P.M.U. station at Lijiang. He was liked by the Roosevelts because of his fluency in ‘many dialects’ and because he knew some English – ‘the only man we met in Likiang who could speak a word’.¹⁰⁰ The expedition met Rock in Yongning, where he liked to spend the cold season on the island in Lake Lugu.¹⁰¹ During this trip, Theodore also acquired a few Dongba manuscripts and a long picture scroll which would later arouse his son’s interest in the ‘hieroglyphic writing’ of the ‘Nashi’. Almost immediately after their return to the United States in the same year 1929, the brothers’ travelogue was published. It contained an episode recalling that Xuan Mingde, when hearing a hunter playing the Jew’s harp, said ‘That very bad thing’, ‘This country, same as everywhere’: when young lovers were to be married against their will, they would communicate with the help of that instrument and hang themselves at the top of a mountain. Hundreds had died that way.¹⁰² This custom

97 Thompson 1926, 4.

98 See Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 80 and Mueggler 2011a, 144.

99 Andrews 1999 is a confused and hagiographic account of his work in Lijiang by his son. The Roosevelts praised his untiring support; see Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 73–76. For the discontent between Andrews and the Dutch missionaries that finally led to the latter leaving the P.M.U. see Laan 1997, 348–351.

100 See Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 76 and 83–89; on Xuan Mingde see also Andrews 1999, 27 where he is called a ‘Tibetan Evangelist’, a title doubted by the Roosevelts who only call him Hsuen, see Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 108. According to his son Xuan Ke 宣科 (b. 1930), the P.M.U. had sent his father to the ‘Guiyang Theological Seminary’ 貴陽神學院, see Gao Fuhua 2017.

101 On Rock’s encounter with the Roosevelts see Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 83–89 and Sutton 1974, 192–195; as usual these accounts contradict each other on certain points such as the place where Rock met the Roosevelts and who had introduced Xuan to the Roosevelts. Xuan Ke whose memories are recorded in Gao Fuhua 2017 recalled what his father had told him, while Sutton draws her information from Rock’s diary which in this case is more trustworthy, since it is also confirmed by the Roosevelts’ travelogue.

102 Roosevelt and Roosevelt 1929, 216–217.

and the ritual to propitiate the souls of the dead would become one of the major topics in Dongba studies.

In 1916 Forrest had already mentioned the ‘Foreign Office authorities’ eagerness to secure more’ Dongba manuscripts of which he had apparently sold seventeen. This interest may have been motivated by the continuing dispute about the Sino-Burmese border after the McMahon Line had been established in 1914 by the Simla or Anglo-Tibetan Agreement. Forrest regularly spent time in Tengyue 騰越 (today’s Tengchong 騰衝), a merchant town on the Chinese side of the Sino-Burmese border and a British trading port, from where he dispatched plants and artefacts to the United Kingdom; ‘Foreign Office authorities’ may therefore refer to the consulate. In 1929, Stanley Wyatt-Smith (1887–1958), British Consul in Tengyue from 1927 to 1931, reported

that many Mo-so books were for sale. He was authorized by the Foreign Office and the India Office to arrange for the purchase and the translation of some them. One ceremony of fifty-five books was translated into Chinese but only partly into English [...]. In 1931, all translation stopped and a hurried purchase was made of 125 manuscripts since a mild inflation of prices (1d to 6d) had set in as a result of massive purchases by the American botanist J. F. Rock. [...] In 1934 the whole of the British consuls’s collection was neatly divided among the British Museum and the India Office – even to the extent of splitting both translation and originals into two separate and distinct halves.¹⁰³

Some of these manuscripts and the accompanying translations were acquired by the British Library in the same year (see Figs 9–11).¹⁰⁴



Fig. 9: Cover page of British Library manuscript Or.11417A (Poupard 2018a); public domain.

103 See Jackson 1979, 21, an earlier version of these events by the same author has some differences, reporting that a ‘dictionary of “hieroglyphs” had been compiled which would enable the manuscripts already collected to be translated, or so it was fondly hoped’, see Jackson 1965, 144.

104 See Jackson 1979, 23 and Poupard 2018a, where the English translations are attributed to Andrews. In a later publication, Poupard believed that Xuan Mingde took part in the translation project, see Poupard 2002, 137–138.

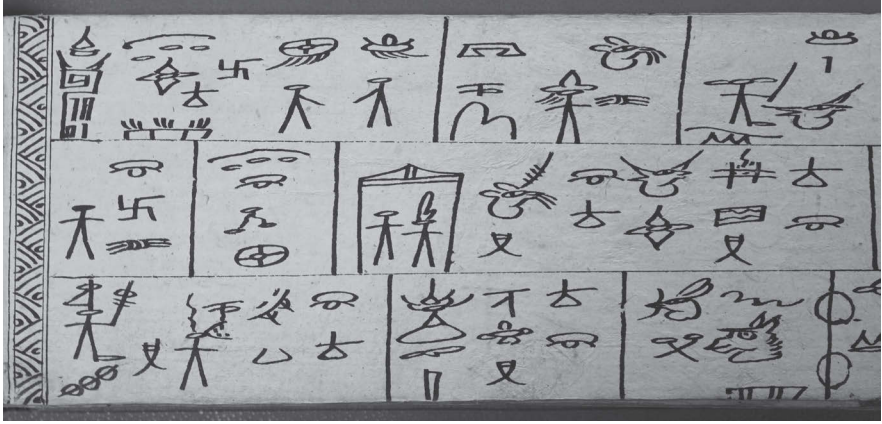


Fig. 10: Detail from the opening page of British Library Or.11417A (Poupard 2018a); public domain.

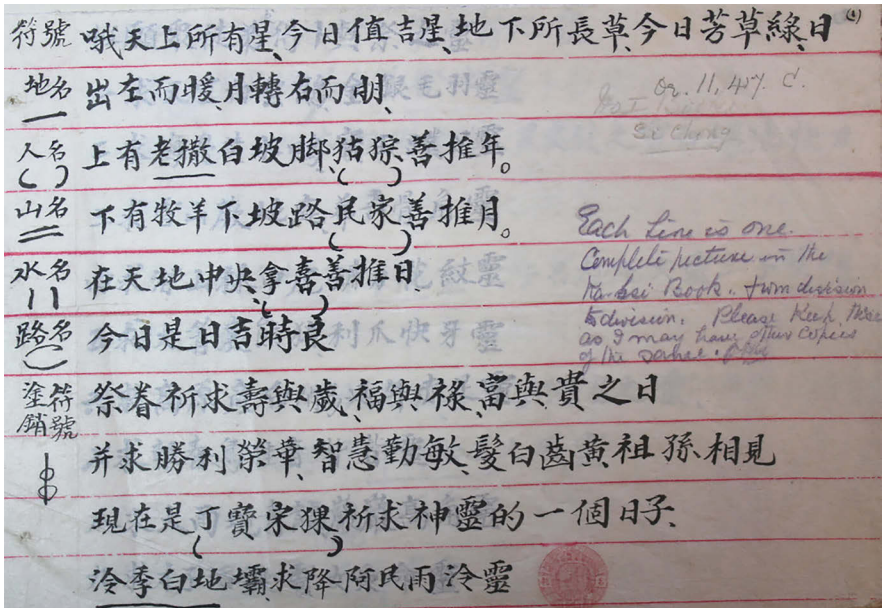


Fig. 11: Or.11417C, Chinese translation of Or.11417A (Poupard 2018a); public domain.

The Chinese translation of one of those texts displays an elaborated system of marks for different types of names and a deletion mark, the note written in

English is significant: ‘Each line [of the translation] is one complete picture in the Na-hsi Book, from division to division. Please keep these as I may have other copies of the same’ (see Fig. 11). The anonymous author considered each ‘division’ to be one *picture* in the manuscript, apparently being unfamiliar with the peculiar nature of Dongba writing. ‘Na-hsi’ faithfully represents the Chinese Naxi 拿喜, one of the early ways of writing the self-appellation of the group, as in the Chinese title of the 1914 P.M.U. primer: *Naxi chuxue* 拿喜初學.¹⁰⁵ We do not know who purchased the manuscripts and translated their contents, but it is safe to assume that Forrest’s network of Naxis and missionaries was involved. The fifty-five manuscripts for one ceremony were written by a Dongba by the name of Ā-dzhi or Dto-dzhi (Dongzhi 東知, b. 1814/1825)¹⁰⁶ a few kilometres west of Lijiang in the winter of 1867, in the same year Desgodins had sent his copy of a Dongba manuscript to Paris. According to Anthony Jackson, this unique set is ‘uniformly bound with orange covers edged with blue, the central titlepiece being flanked by two blue lozenges while on the back cover is given the sequence number of the books’ (see Fig. 9).¹⁰⁷ The above specimen shows that there was some variation.¹⁰⁸ Some of the fourteen manuscripts acquired by the Swedish Pentecostal missionaries Karl and Hanna Asp during their first stay at Tengyue, 1927 to 1933, show similar features.¹⁰⁹

In published sources Rock later recalled having returned to ‘Naxi land’ in 1930 ‘to devote my entire time to the study of the ¹Na-²khi Literature’,¹¹⁰ while his stay there, after his expedition to Gansu, from 1927 was ‘not to occupy himself with the study of the ¹Na-²khi written language’.¹¹¹ According to the reconstruction of an anthropologist, Rock converted to this study only in late 1929 because

105 See Li-Kiang Fu-Yin-T’ang 1914; its thirty lessons contain simple dialogues with Christian messages in Romanised Naxi in two fonts (one resembling handwriting), clearly meant for alphabetising the converts.

106 For the Chinese name and the earlier date of birth see Deng 2013, 144–157.

107 Jackson 1979, 297.

108 Further evidence is found in the manuscripts sold to the Harvard-Yenching Institute by Rock, see the coloured images in Zhongguo shehuikexue yuan minzuxue yu renleixue yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院民族學與人類學研究所, Lijiangshi Dongba wenhua yanjiuyuan 麗江東巴文化研究院 and Hafo-Yanjing xueshe 哈佛燕京學社 2011, vol. 1.

109 Together with Chinese translations and a notebook containing the English translation of one of these, Hanna Asp donated the manuscripts to the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm in 1946, see Poupard 2022, 141–142.

110 Rock 1948, 1.

111 Janert 1965, XVI; Rock is insinuating here that he stayed there all the time after 1930, while he actually continued travelling and even accepted assignments when needing money, see for example Sutton 1974, 214.

of the suicide of two Naxi girls in Ngulukö. After having seen the dead girls and learnt the reason for their suicide, namely that they were to be married against their will, he had the appropriate ritual re-enacted in his house in order to study it.¹¹² His first attempts to learn reading Dongba books having completely failed, he hired a Dongba for the first time to explain the meaning of all characters to him, obviously following Bacot's example. Shortly afterward he went to Washington, D.C. to obtain funding for a new expedition from the National Geographic Society. It was denied not only because the stock market had crashed, but also because Rock had only delivered half an article and two and a half thousand photos without captions in exchange for US\$68,000 the Society had paid him for his recent two journeys. In March 1931 he was back in Ngulukö on his own, where he was finally introduced to 'his' Dongba He Huating 和華亭 from Longpan 龍蟠 on the other side of the Jade Dragon Mountains, who would, according to Rock's later accounts, become his major medium. After initial discontent, Rock finally settled with He and some other Naxi in Yunnan-fu in 1932.¹¹³ Film footage from this year showing He Huating in action, probably performing in Rock's Kunming house, has been preserved.¹¹⁴ They soon established a routine, again involving at least one go-between who was never mentioned in subsequent publications:

First, He Huating copied each page of the pictographic text in his elegant hand. Then he recited the text for Rock to transcribe with the idiosyncratic orthography he invented for this purpose. Third, he dictated a summary translation of each line of the recited text in colloquial Naxi to Li Shichen or He Guangyi. Li or He translated this into Chinese, and Rock rendered their Chinese into elegant English. Fourth, the translation doubled back, plunging into the pictographs with blocs of text that mapped out each rubric.¹¹⁵

This was the beginning of Rock's third career as a scholar.

112 If this account, culled from Rock's diary by Mueggler, is accepted, then the date of 1928 for Rock's film footage of the ritual to propitiate the souls of suicides is probably wrong: a short film (*The Na-khi Hār-la-llü Dance for the propitiation of suicides*, 'Performed for this film, Na-khi village and people of Nv-lv-k'ö at the foot of the Li-chiang snowrange, Yunnan province, China') using this footage was co-produced by the Russian and Far Eastern Institute and the Department of Anthropology of the University of Washington in 1954, see <https://archive.org/details/WaSeUMCEMC48003DaKhiHarLaLluDances> (accessed on 1 May 2021).

113 Mueggler 2011a, 266–269.

114 *NA-KHI DANCES Performed by Ho Hua-t'ing, Na-khi dto-mba (shaman) from west of the Li-chiang snow range in Kunming, 1932*, see <https://archive.org/details/WaSeUMCEMC48002NaKhiDances> (accessed on 1 May 2021).

115 Mueggler 2011a, 273–274.

According to his own, albeit much later and perhaps incomplete testimony, Yang Zhonghong 楊仲鴻 (1903–1983) learnt by chance in 1933¹¹⁶ that He Huating was in Yunnan-fu assisting Rock in translating Dongba texts. Yang was a Naxi from Lijiang who had received a Chinese education and belonged to the upper stratum of Lijiang.¹¹⁷ A photo of the ‘Lijiang elites in 1929’ shows him in the company of Zhou Lin 周霖 (1902–1977), an elementary school teacher from a scholarly Naxi family, who would become one of the most influential Naxi painters and poets after 1949, Li Yaosan 李耀三, ‘poet, capitalist’ and – Xuan Mingde, the missionary. In the caption Yang is labelled as ‘editor of The Commercial Press’ in Shanghai.¹¹⁸ Like other educated Naxi, he had become director of an elementary school in Yunnan-fu in 1933. Again, according to his own statement he had encountered the name of Rock for the first time in 1929 when a Shanghai journal published a translation of the latter’s 1925 article on the ‘Muli kingdom’ in Sichuan, a de facto independent principality some 50 km north of Yongning.¹¹⁹ Angered by Rock’s depiction of an ‘independent kingdom’, Yang wrote a refutation for the same journal, trying to show that it had always been part of China. He used the opportunity of Rock having left to borrow about forty manuscripts from He Huating and have his wife copy their content. With the help of He Huating, who showed him his work for Rock, including a catalogue of Dongba manuscripts, he compiled the first-ever Naxi-Chinese dictionary. In three columns it provided 1,042 Dongba characters and the corresponding words written with Geba characters, followed by Chinese translations with traditional phonetic notation for the pronunciation of the words. The dictionary was arranged in eighteen categories similar to those of traditional Chinese encyclopaedias, beginning with heaven and earth and, after having dealt with the natural and social world, finishing with rituals and spirits; in addition, he translated a dozen texts.

In 1935 a relative suggested to Yang that he should send his works to an acquaintance in the Ministry of Education, who forwarded them to Academia Sinica and asked Yang to wait for a response which never came, although the eminent archaeologist and palaeographer Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (Tung Tso-pin, 1895–1963) later recalled having seen it in that year in Nanking. Shortly afterwards

116 In secondary literature, one often finds the date given as 1931 which is clearly a mistake copied from Dong Zuobin’s preface to Li Lincan’s dictionary which was first published in 1944, see Yu Suisheng 2008b, 371–372. For the preface see Li Lincan 1944, ‘*Mosuo xiangxing wenzi zidian xu*’ 麼些族象形文字字典序, 1 (= Li Lincan 2001, “‘*Naxizu xiangxing wenzi zidian*’ xu’ 《納西族象形文字字典》序, 4–5).

117 For educated Naxi becoming school teachers in their home land see Hansen 1999, 44.

118 See Niu Xiangkui 2021.

119 Rock 1925; for Muli and Rock’s visits there see Sutton 1974, 161–174.

war broke out, and Yang's manuscripts fell into oblivion. These works were never published; three of Yang's manuscripts are now kept at the National Library in Beijing.¹²⁰ In a text privately published in 1993, Zhou Shanfu 周善甫 (1914–1998) recalled Yang, himself and others including a Dongba retreating to the scenic Huating (!) monastery in the Western Hills of Kunming in 1933 for the purpose of compiling the dictionary. This account in itself is as convincing as Yang's own and only partially contradicts it, but it is difficult to verify too.¹²¹ Zhou was a Nazi artist who together with his elder brother Zhou Lin rose to fame during the 1940s, but unlike him suffered persecution after 1949, just like Yang himself, who was closely affiliated to people working for the Republican government.¹²² Without new evidence it will be impossible to reconstruct the genesis of the dictionary, but the case demonstrates the far-reaching effects of the Communists' victory.

In autumn 1933, at the same time when Yang Zhonghong was preparing his dictionary and translations with He Huating in Yunnan-fu, the Nazi Fang Guoyu 方國瑜 (1903–1983) returned to his native Lijiang. He had just graduated from the sinological department of Peking University where Liu Bannong 劉半農 (Liu Fu 劉復, 1891–1934), one of the many famous scholars teaching at that institution had shown him Bacot's work and told him that in the Nazi areas there were still Dongbas practising their arts. According to a very late statement Fang had obviously not been aware of this before, just as Yang learned this the same at approximately the same time. Together with the Nazi Zhou Rucheng 周汝誠 (1904–1985), a former elementary school teacher, and Yang Pinchao 楊品超, Fang invited the Dongba He Zongdao 和宗道 to explain the rituals, compile a catalogue of the 'scriptures' (*jingshu* 經書) with summaries and explain the book 'Origin of Mankind' (*Renlei lai yuan* 人類來源). Fang then asked three other Dongbas to fill in a card for each character, including its pronunciation and meanings,

120 There is little reliable information on Yang, probably because of his – after 1949 – unfavourable social background; the account is based on Niu Xiangkui 2021 (first published in 1991) which should be taken *cum grano salis*. It mainly follows an autobiography of Yang from 1950 dated back to 1949 (!) and an undated, probably also apologetic text on Rock and He Huating by Yang, which must have been written after 1956 since it uses simplified characters and Nazi instead of Mosuo; the first pages of the manuscripts kept by the family are reproduced in Niu Xiangkui 2021. In the second text Yang claimed that Rock first met He Huating in 1928, while Rock in his diary dates their first meeting to 1931, see Mueggler 2011a, 268.

For a description of the three manuscripts see Yu Suisheng 2008b and Yu Suisheng 2008c; two of the notebooks contain copies of the dictionary, the third one the catalogue. I am grateful to Max J. Fölster who reported the results of his examination of these works, adding details on the codicology and the present condition (personal communication 3 June 2021).

121 See Yu Suisheng 2008b, 372–374.

122 The 1991 biography jumps from 1935 to 1982, see Niu Xiangkui 2021.

finally inviting He Shigui 和士貴, a senior Dongba of more than seventy years, to proof-read and amend all that had been prepared. When returning to Peiping (as Beijing was called in those days) in June 1934, he brought with him a first draft of an inventory of the ‘pictographic’ characters of the ‘Mosuo’ as the Naxi were still called in Chinese. The following year, the famous revolutionary and philologist Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (Chang Ping-lin, 1868–1936) composed a preface in which he advised combining the study of Dongba characters with Chinese palaeography.¹²³ After studying phonetics with the famous linguists Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 (Y. R. Chao, 1892–1982) and Li Fanggui 李方桂 (Li Fang-kuei, 1902–1987) at the Academia Sinica in Nanking, he finished a first version in 1936, and this was reviewed by Dong Zuobin even before it was published.¹²⁴ This first version underwent two substantial revisions, accompanied by the praise and advice of many renowned scholars, before it was finally published in 1981 with the help of the Naxi scholar He Zhiwu 和志武 (1930–1995) who together with Zhou Rucheng had already been involved in the second revision in the 1960s; this was not published due to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution.¹²⁵ Disregarding later versions, at least seven persons were involved in the initial version beside Fang himself – a truly collective effort.

In his preface Fang mentioned an American named Luolunshi 羅倫士 (a way of writing ‘Lawrence’ in Chinese) who supposedly carried away his original draft as well as the cards with the lemmata, when leaving China due to the outbreak of the Pacific war. This story is difficult to verify, especially since the preface was dated to 1979, after the so-called Cultural Revolution, by a Communist cadre in the academic system. Fang’s inventory has been reprinted many times and is still one of the major references for the study of Dongba writing. The 1981 edition, however, must not be considered as representing the situation in the 1930s, as not only the anachronistic use of the ethnonym ‘Naxi’, of ‘Beijing’ for Peiping and other internal evidence show, but also the comparison with a summary of an earlier version. In 1944, Dong Zuobin mentioned having seen parts of Fang’s work in 1940 and provided its table of contents. Its four parts correspond structurally to the four parts of the later publication, but, according to the titles, with significant changes, among them the replacement of a chapter on religion by splitting the one on writing into two on Dongba and Geba characters respectively. While the publication has eighteen categories, the earlier version had two more. Dong also noted that Fang had included the pronunciation of each word according to

¹²³ A facsimile is reproduced in Fang and He 2005, *Bianyan* 弁言, 9–10.

¹²⁴ Zhang published his foreword as early as 1940, see Ge Agan 2008c, 255.

¹²⁵ Fang and He 2005, *Bianyan* 弁言, 1–5.

the conventions of the International Phonetic Association (IPA) together with its tone.¹²⁶

It is perhaps only a coincidence that at almost exactly the same time three men set out to accomplish the same task: Rock first, then unknowingly sharing 'his' Dongba with a Naxi elementary school teacher who tried to recover a tradition he did not know (or had only been aware of as something backward and primitive), and finally another Naxi, this time an academic who was made aware of this tradition by one of his teachers referring to the work of Bacot. Whether it is also a coincidence that there are quite a few correspondences between their works remains to be seen. It seems to be clear, however, that Yang's and Fang's interest in Dongba writing was triggered by the work of Bacot and the efforts of Rock. The simple fact that Yang knew Xuan Mingde connects him to Forrest's network and casts some doubt on his later account that he 'accidentally' learnt about Rock's efforts in Yunnan-fu. In addition, it is hard to imagine that Fang's work went unnoticed by the native members of the network who apparently accepted contracts from all sides and for different types of commodities.

After a series of misfortunes, Rock decided to leave Yunnan once and for all. According to his biographer, he had already fired his Dongba (He Huating?) in April 1933 'for improvising the books he did not know' and sent back to Lijiang for a replacement.¹²⁷ Having found a better one, he continued translating and writing, until suddenly deciding to return to Europe. Before coming back to Yunnan-fu only nine months later in June 1934,¹²⁸ he made himself known to scholars and editors, sometimes through the gift of a Dongba manuscript, and thus established the foundation for his later fame.¹²⁹ During that journey, he must also have met the German Tibetologist Johannes Schubert (1896–1976) whom he would ask for translations of Tibetan texts, until in 1956 Tucci rejected one of them which was scheduled to appear in Rock's work *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adja-*

126 See Dong Zuobin's preface in Li Lincan 1944, 'Mosuo xiangxing wenzi zidian xu' 摩些族象形文字字典序, 1 (= Li Lincan 2001, "Naxizu xiangxing wenzi zidian" xu' 《纳西族象形文字字典》序, 5). Just like Zhang's preface Dong's was already published in 1940, see Ge Agan 2008c, 255.

127 See Sutton 1974, 231.

128 See Sutton 1974, 233–244.

129 See *inter alia* Taube 2009 not only for Rock's correspondence with the Tibetologist Johannes Schubert; his present of a manuscript is mentioned in his letter of 17 May 1935, see Taube 2009, 23 and Schubert 1949, 141, n. 117.

cent Regions.¹³⁰ In addition, Rock offered his unique collection of Dongba manuscripts for sale.¹³¹

In the second half of the 1930s, Rock could reap the first fruits of his labour. In 1935 and 1936 he published three articles on Dongba manuscripts in the *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*, the academic outlet of the West China Union University in Chengdu established by English and North American Protestant missionary boards in 1914.¹³² Although utterly despising the missionaries in principle,¹³³ he apparently did not mind publishing his first scholarly works in a journal devoted to the work of ‘the explorer missionary’. In a curious address in the journal’s first issue covering the years 1922 and 1923, the society’s president had claimed: “‘Intelligence, initiative, character, courage and the divine spark of the human soul’ constitute practically the stock in trade of the explorer missionary.’ In addition, the president had proposed that the ‘Tibetans and the Tribes folk’ ‘may well constitute as it were a root nationality: are they, or are they not, a parent stock?’¹³⁴ The journal later published, among other things, David Crockett Graham’s (1884–1961) work on the Miao and the ideas of Thomas T. Torrance (1871–1959) on the Qiang being a lost tribe of Israel, sent as missionaries to Sichuan.¹³⁵ What might have appealed to Rock was the general attitude of the members of the society, many of whom did not like the Chinese and were in favour of the ethnic groups who were considered barbarians by them. During a visit in 1925, he had met and befriended some of them.¹³⁶ Against this backdrop, the topic of Rock’s first article might have particularly aroused the editors’ interest: ‘The Story of the Flood in the Literature of the Mo-so (Na-khi) Tribe’. It was perhaps the ‘technical article’, announced by the author in 1924.

130 For Rock’s letter of 7 July 1956 to Schubert informing him about the decision, see Taube 2009, 285; on Schubert’s career in East Germany see Walravens 2008.

131 Rock mentions having shown it to the linguist Ferdinand Lessing (1882–1961, professor at the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen and curator at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin) in his house in Yunnan-fu and, in vain, offered to sell it, see his letter of 31 July 1935 in Taube 2009, 25.

132 For the society and its journal see Zhou Shurong 2018. The *Journal* may be considered as Protestant answer to the Catholic *Anthropos* which was established in 1906 and published articles of M.E.P. Missionaries on Tonkin, Sichuan and Yunnan, see Michaud 2007, 141–152.

133 In an undated text on ‘Missionaries in West China’ Rock only exempts medical missionaries from his observation that ‘those in the extreme west belonged to the type called “Holy Roller”’. Nearly all of them were without any education, couldn’t compose a letter, but the Lord called them from their Alma Mater the dungcart to convert the heathen. [...]’, see Rock *s.a.*, 1. For his antipathy towards the Andrews family see Sutton 1974, 216.

134 Morse 1923, 5, 6.

135 McKhann and Waymann 2012, 201–203.

136 Sutton 1974, 91.

Just as in his first article on the Naxi, a topos familiar to a Western audience served to attract attention, but by 1935 Rock had abandoned any attempt to harmonize the Dongba myths with the Old Testament. After explaining the title *Ts'o mbër t'u* and emphasizing that all manuscripts were chanted 'at ceremonies only', he introduced his source as 'their genesis, for it tells of the creation of the world, the cause of the flood which was incest, and the marriage of the lone survivor after the flood with a celestial female, who became the parents of the human race'.¹³⁷ In this article Rock presented for the first time his system of transliterating Naxi, which is already close to its final stage, even though the tones are not given yet, and some diacritical marks would be replaced by other means for representing phonemes. While introducing the two types of writing, he airs for the first time the idea that the phonetic one may be more ancient than the pictographic:

The former strange as it may seem is the older, and the least known, very few *dto-mba* or sorcerers of to-day being able to read it, while all can read the pictographs. The latter has developed in the present home of the tribe, for the animals and plants etc. used as characters, are such as appear in the mountains of Li-chiang. The phonetic script was undoubtedly brought with them from their ancient home, the grasslands of northeastern Tibet, whence they started on their great migration south. Thus their written language has degenerated rather than developed. [...]

The Na-khi religious literature is of the greatest interest as it gives an idea of what the genuine pre-Buddhistic religion of Tibet the *Bon chos* or *Bon* religion consisted of, for it has survived in its purity in this tribe. The latter having come in contact with the later lamaism only in its new home, in the district of Li-chiang, and as late as the Ch'ien-lung period [Qian-long, r. 1735–1796] of the Ch'ing [Qing] dynasty.¹³⁸

He further stated that it 'was known the Na-khi possessed a written language', 'it was however not known that they possessed an extensive literature in manuscript form, the translation of which has occupied me for the last five years', and their literature 'is mainly a religious one'.¹³⁹ In addition, he announced a 'monograph on the Mo so or Na-khi' consisting of four or five volumes including 'a dictionary and phrase book of the two written languages, the pictographic and syllabic', the first of which would appear in spring 1936.¹⁴⁰

The translation is first accompanied by copious notes, often taking most of the space on a page, adducing again and again explanations of words, names

¹³⁷ Rock 1935, 66.

¹³⁸ Rock 1935, 65–66

¹³⁹ Rock 1935, 64.

¹⁴⁰ Rock 1935, 65–66.

or characters and digressions of diverse sorts. After five pages the author starts intervening in the narration, and after ten pages remarks: ‘The story is a long one and would cover many pages’.¹⁴¹ He finishes it off by summarizing the content and showing reproductions of four pages representing four types of manuscripts and finally hand-drawings of two pages of ‘the original manuscript’ with some explanations of ‘pictographic’ characters. The caption of one of the images reads: ‘In this type of text the characters act only as milestones in the sentence, much must be read into it which is not written’.¹⁴² In principle, Rock would follow this pattern in most of his later works, on the one hand lamenting the vagueness of the ‘pictographic manuscripts’ in varying diction, on the other resorting to summaries and paraphrases when the ‘religious texts’ were too long. It is impossible to reconstruct the original ‘text’ from this presentation. His first scholarly article is clearly written by a dilettante unfamiliar with the genre, but trying to make the product look genuine. In addition, this article already shows Rock’s tendency to present all information relatable to a given topic including much of little immediate relevance.

Some general remarks on the history of the Naxi are probably taken from Chavannes – with rare exceptions Rock never gives credit to previous scholarship. In this case, however, it is clear that Bacot’s work together with the translations of historical sources provided by Chavannes was a major source of inspiration for Rock, although he dismissed it as ‘foam’ in a letter dated 31 July 1935.¹⁴³ We know that he had the book with him, when he visited the descendant of the Mu family in 1931. Rock showed him its reproductions of the Mu genealogy and was in exchange given the opportunity to inspect the original and a second, different version.¹⁴⁴ His copy of Bacot’s work contained numerous notes to the character list (see Fig. 12).¹⁴⁵

The notes are not dated and were apparently added over a period of time, but must have been compiled in the course of his work with ‘my Tomba’ in the 1930s (see last line in Fig. 11). Besides providing English translations as well as additions and corrections and sometimes Chinese characters, Rock supplies equivalents in his own system of transliterating Naxi words with the numerals 1 in the

141 Rock 1935, 76.

142 Rock 1935, Plate IV.

143 ‘Das Buch von Bacot ist nur Schaum. Er kannte nicht Chinesisch und musste alles mit einem Dolmetscher machen, und das ist lange nicht der richtige Weg’, see Taube 2009, 25.

144 See Mueggler 2011a, 279.

145 I am grateful to Professor William G. Boltz for providing a scan of the dictionary part of Rock’s copy of Bacot’s work, which came to the library of the University of Washington in 1954, when Rock sold his private library to this institution.

that links them to similar books from Tibet to the Tai world, all of them using the pothi as more common book form.¹⁴⁶ The short article on the spell explains the ritual for killing someone, reproduces the syllables of the *Hoa-lü* and a page with the drawing of the prospective victim, surrounded by Tibetan characters. Rock does not forget to mention that he ‘had often enquired from the dto-mba, who assisted me for several years in the translating of their literature, if there was such a custom among the Na-khi’ which was ‘stoutly denied’ until shortly before his departure from Lijiang.¹⁴⁷

Rock must have known that publications in the *Journal of the West China Border Research Society* would hardly reach his preferred audience, namely scholars of various denominations and collectors of Asian art in the West. In 1937 he finally appeared on the stage of serious scholarship with three articles: in a contribution to the *Geographical Review* he revisited the Nichols manuscript which Laufer had described thirty-one years previously in the same journal; in *Artibus Asiae* he translated the story of the first Dongba ‘Shi-lo’ with copious notes on the iconography, and in the *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* ‘Studies in Na-khi Literature’ he reprinted the *Artibus Asiae* article with almost no changes (but this time the author’s name adorned with ‘F. R. G. S.’, that is Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, a title which he kept for some time) and added a second study of the pictorial scrolls on long strips of cloth called ‘¹Hä ²zhi ¹p’i’ in Rock’s romanisation used in funerary rituals.¹⁴⁸

Concerning the Nichols manuscript, Rock corrected the former identification of the paper as having been made from *Strebus asper* and stated that it was made from several species of the genera *Daphne* and *Wikstroemia*. He provided the Naxi title, a transliteration in his system including the tone marks at the places seen in his copy of Bacot’s work, a ‘literal translation’ and a ‘free translation’ of the four pages published by Laufer in 1916, lavishly adorned by ‘notes’. In one of them he warned the reader:

146 See Almogi 2011, 132 and Grabowsky 2011, 148–149; the article is Rock 1936a.

147 Rock 1936b, 53.

148 Rock 1937c; in the newly added part the author displays erudition and exchange with renowned scholars on the topic of the elephant with thirty-three heads, see Rock 1937c, 42–44. The reason for the parallel publication of the Dongba Shiluo article is probably Rock’s worry that *Artibus Asiae* would not accept it, leading him to activate his connection to the École française d’Extrême-Orient in Hanoi; for his continuous attempts since at least August 1935 to persuade Richard Hadl (1877–1944), the publisher of *Artibus Asiae*, see Taube 2009, 28, 47–50, 54, 55 *et passim*.

It may be remarked here that the *dto-mba* custom is actually to write only a very few words or characters. These serve more or less as prompters to the memory, and much more that is not written has to be read into the text. Furthermore, a single character appearing in a phrase may do duty three or four times; i.e. it is read that number of times. Consequently, unless one is familiar with the story – has learnt it by heart, indeed – it is impossible to read it no matter how accomplished a Nakhi scholar one may be.¹⁴⁹

In addition, he stated:

Nakkhi, or *Mo-so*, manuscripts are not so rare now as they were once thought to be, but complete sets of books are very rare. The *dto-mba*, or sorcerer, business is more or less on the wane, and the *dto-mbas* today are not so particular about the number of books they chant at a ceremony. The main objects nowadays are the slaughter of pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens and the feasting on them; the sooner the chanting is finished, the more time remains for eating. There are more than a hundred different kinds of ceremony, to each of which a certain number of books pertain. At some of the larger ceremonies, which sometimes last from five to seven days, as many as 150 different books have been chanted in a recognized sequence. Every one of the ceremonies has its special books that can be chanted only at that particular ceremony. Other books are common to all ceremonies, the texts only differing slightly; there are not many of these, however. I have been able during more than ten years' contact with the Nakhi to collect complete sets of manuscripts, all arranged according to the ceremony. Most of these ceremonies I have had performed for me, sometimes by as many as twelve *dto-mbas*. The greater part of this mass of literature I have been able to translate, and, while doing so, with the constant assistance of two *dto-mbas*, I have compiled a fairly complete dictionary of the written language of the Nakhi, comprising both the pictographic and syllabic types.¹⁵⁰

This lengthy introduction is remarkable. On the one hand, Rock needed to explain why formerly rare items had become readily available, which he did by pointing to the decline of Dongba rituals. On the other hand, he emphasised again, just as in most of his publications, the inaccessibility of the 'texts' which required a Dongba knowing them by heart. Since he had 'most of the ceremonies' performed for himself, the reader is assured of Rock's intimate knowledge of his topic. Thus having set the stage, he introduced his own work (ten years' contact with the Naxi, complete sets of manuscripts with the greater part translated, a fairly complete dictionary) and himself as *the* authority on things Naxi. His mention of two Dongbas 'constantly assisting' him deviates from his later emphasising 'his' Dongba as main source. He may have been referring to He Huating and the translator He Guangcheng. In addition to the translations and the dictionary,

149 Rock 1937a, 235.

150 Rock 1937a, 230.

Rock announced the publication of ‘a tragic and beautiful romance’: ‘One would hardly expect to find such language among a primitive and virile tribe like the Nakhi. Truly the poem may be looked upon as one of their great epics’.¹⁵¹ Like a story-teller who ends a session with an invitation to the next, Rock used to advertise future results of his study. This is one of the few publications of his mentioning previous research, probably because he was directly addressing Laufer’s summary of earlier scholarship.

The study devoted to ‘dto-mba Shi-lo’, the first Dongba, included the tone marks, albeit only in the upper left corner. Perhaps addressing himself to the readership of *Artibus Asiae*, Rock discussed images of the first Dongba some of which were provided at its end, as well as facsimiles of the first text ‘translated’. For this translation he provided a drawing of the first ‘rubric’ (as he called the divisions created by vertical strokes in the lines), a transliteration, an extensive explanation of characters and words and finally a ‘free translation’, but following established practice explained:

To transcribe and explain the entire book (manuscript) would lead us too far and therefore I shall simply give a translation of the text, indicating each page and rubric, so that the meaning of the original text can easily be recognized.¹⁵²

In his introduction Rock reiterated his idea that their ‘religion, if such it can be called, is the almost pure Bon Shamanism which has survived among them in a more or less unadulterated form. They never had any temples or lamaseries, neither in the Chinese or Tibetan sense of the word, and all their numerous ceremonies like those of the ancient Bon were and still are performed out in the open’.¹⁵³ As usual he recycled earlier material with more or less variation, for example the hypothesis that the phonetic script was older than the pictographic one:

A detailed account of the origin of the Na-khi writing, both phonetic and syllabic, I intend to give in other studies on this tribe, where their literature, religion, ceremonies, &c. will be fully discussed and explained. I have collected over four thousand Mo-so manuscripts which, arranged in sets, belong to about one hundred or more different ceremonies during which they are chanted in a certain sequence. Some of these ceremonies are very elaborate and may last from one hour to seven days. Many of them are no more performed and only few priests or dto-mbas remain who have a knowledge of these ceremonies, of the objects used, the sacrifices made, and the books chanted during their performance. I have exam-

151 Rock 1937a, 230.

152 Rock 1937b, 11 = Rock 1937c, 6.

153 Rock 1937b, 5 = Rock 1937c, 1.

ined all this literature during the last seven years and have translated hundreds of the most important manuscripts with the help of several priests, and later with one priest in particular who proved to be the most intelligent, and who, after a few years of translating, realized that he had learned a great deal about his own books and their contents.¹⁵⁴

Rock here repeats his idea of a system of approximately one hundred ‘ceremonies’ during which ‘manuscripts, arranged in sets’ are chanted. Megalomaniac as he does appear once in a while, he claims to have acquired more than four thousand of these books, examined ‘all this literature’ during the last seven years and translated ‘hundreds of the most important manuscripts’. It is evident that Rock continued to work with more than only ‘his’ Dongba who was so intelligent that he would even recognize Rock as his teacher; he would even take some of his Naxi along when travelling.¹⁵⁵ Rock would further develop this topos by reduction: since 1930 more than four thousand manuscripts, hundreds of translations and one Dongba. For the first time, he describes with more precision the structure of the ‘ceremonies’:

The priests, when performing a ceremony, recite the books at a given time or at given intervals, when they are not occupied with dancing or fighting sham battles with demons. The latter are always first invited to the ceremony, then fed, and finally driven out. When chanting these books, they very often have no clear understanding of the meaning, and simply recite from memory. Some they know by heart, especially the texts of such ceremonies as are still much in vogue viz: ²Har ³la - ¹liü ³k’ö for the propitiation of the spirits of suicides. The pictographs act more as prompters or milestones in a sentence or phrase, for much must be read into a paragraph which is not written, the pictographs simply helping to refresh the memory and recall the sentence.¹⁵⁶

In addition to the by-now familiar reference to the pictographs as prompts, ‘chanting’ is identified as one of three major activities of the Dongbas during a ritual beside dancing or fighting. In a letter written in the same year Rock went even further into detail, specifying that ‘almost all Moso books are written in metrics just as a poem, in verses. When they are chanted by the Tombas, each verse is accentuated with a gong and drumbeat, and at the end of a paragraph is especially emphasised by much drumming and gong beating.’¹⁵⁷ The relation of chanting to other components of a ritual is only uncovered later:

¹⁵⁴ Rock 1937b, 6, almost identical Rock 1937c, 2.

¹⁵⁵ In 1937, Rock was in Hanoi with He Zhihui 和志輝 (Ho Chi-hui), ‘my Na-khi writer and interpreter’, see Rock 1937c, 41 and Sutton 1974, 255. Once he had even taken two of his Naxi ‘boys’ to the United States, see Sutton 1974, 252 and Walravens 2007, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Rock 1937b, 6–7 = Rock 1937c, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Letter of 29 January 1936, see Taube 2009, 40; the translation is an attempt at rendering

It is the custom of the Na-khi *dto-mbas* before invoking the deity, spirit, or demon with which the particular manuscript deals, to first relate their origin. The version is not always the same, although in some it is more fully given than in others.¹⁵⁸

The books are clearly part of the rituals in which they are used, and deal with those agents the rituals are devoted to. The ‘genesis’ Rock had earlier ‘translated’ was thus not an independent literary text but necessary for the efficacy of the performance of which it is part. He now disclosed that there are different versions of those narrative parts, without however clarifying the reasons for this variation or describing its extent, except length. Having thus explained the existence of other versions of the story, he ‘translated’ an ‘abbreviated’ one from another ritual and proudly noted:

The copy in question is a particularly beautiful one. It is part of a set which like the book *ʒShi-lo ʒt'u ʒbbue* belonged to a *dto-mba* of the village of *ʒGhügh-k'o*, Ch'ang-shui 長水 in Chinese, a few li west of the city of Li-chiang in the county of La-sha or La-sha li 刺沙里. The *dto-mba*'s name is Yang Fu-kuang [Yang Fuguang] 楊福光 and I was able to buy his whole library. His father inherited the manuscripts from his ancestors, they were painstakingly written, and many of them handsomely illuminated. The son who inherited the office as well as the books, neither intelligent nor interested in the *dto-mba* business, cared little for the books. Just before I had purchased his books, over one hundred had been burned by accident, and the rats were beginning to eat the rest in the attic where they were being kept. No doubt all this made him desirous of disposing of the books, which in such more or less complete sets are most difficult to come by. As his manuscripts were well written and the texts most complete, they served in the major part as the basis for our translations.¹⁵⁹

Contrary to what Rock may have believed at the time when buying the library of Yang Fuguang, it was not complete anymore. The manuscripts purchased by Wyatt-Smith in 1931, including the set written by *Ä-dzhi*, had belonged to the same collection, and Rock obtained only a few manuscripts belonging to that ritual.¹⁶⁰

A footnote in this article relates to the ‘*llü-bbu*’ or ‘*sang-nyi*’:

Rock's awkward German.

158 Rock 1937b, 47 = Rock 1937c, 36.

159 Rock 1937b, 47 = Rock 1937c, 36.

160 See Jackson 1979, 297. For some of them, sold by Rock to the Harvard-Yenching Institute, see Rock 1952, vol. 2, 497–498 (three volumes: nos. 1904, 999, 1903) and, somewhat contradicting the statement before, 502 (same name of Dongba but with different place), 511 (no. 1020, date of colophon 1866) and 763 (no. 1011); Rock 1955, 161 (no. 1881). For a comprehensive approach to this corpus of manuscripts see Deng 2013, 14–157.

The ³Llū-¹bbu (²San-¹nyi is a derogatory term never used in their presence), are the genuine sorcerers in contradistinction to the ²dto-¹mba who are the priests. They are employed to enter into communication with souls of departed beings.

They are always depicted in the Mo-so manuscripts as females with flowing hair. The ³Llū-¹bbu are said to be followers of the sister of Chiang-tzu-ya 姜子牙 or Lü-shang 呂尚, the former was a Tuan-kung 端公 or Shaman or Shih-niang 師娘 or sorceress with flowing hair. The Na-khi protecting spirit of the ³Llū-¹bbu is the great Sa-don or ²Sa-²dto (he is none other than the great warrior Sa-tham of the Mo-so, but called Sa-tham by the Tibetans, with whom the famous Ge-sar fought many battles; Li-chiang is named after him thus by the Tibetans). He is the mountain god of the Li-chiang snow range called Yü-lung shan 玉龍山 or the Jade Dragon mountain. His brother ²A-¹wu-²wua who dwells in a cave on the western slopes of the snow range at T'ai-tzu tung [Taizi dong] 太子洞 is also a patron of the ³Llū-¹bbu and is invoked by them in their shamanistic rites. The ³Llū-¹bbu wear perforated paper flags stuck in their girdles on their back, and a blood red turban wound around their head. In ancient days they were all women, but now only male ³Llū-¹bbu practice their black art.¹⁶¹

This observation, accompanied by an image of such a 'genuine sorcerer', would be repeated by Rock himself and others, and give rise to many educated speculations about the relations of the two types of ritualists. The search for Dongba 'literature' has probably kept scholars from studying this tradition while it was still practised.¹⁶²

Two more articles by him came out in 1938 and 1939, before the war caused a gap of almost one decade. The first one appeared in the third issue of the journal *Monumenta Serica. Journal of Oriental Studies of the Catholic University of Peking* edited by missionaries and scholars from China and Europe in Peiping. The article was devoted to 'The Zher-khin tribe and their religious literature'. Rock had found some Rek'ua villages in the valley of the Wuliang river (無量河) before it joins the Golden Sand River and observed that the

'Zhër-khin, Hli-khin (Nda-pa) [= Mosuo] and Na-khi all believe in *dto-mba* Shi-lo as the founder of their religion; the Zhër-khin call him To-mba Shera, also To-mba Zhër-la, the Na-khi *dto-mba* Shi-lo and the Hli-khin Ti-mba Shera.'¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Rock 1937b, 16 = Rock 1937c, 10. Jiang Ziya or Lü Shang was a general helping the Zhou to overthrow the Shang in the eleventh century BCE and later entered the pantheon of what is usually termed Daoist religion. 'Tuan-kung' (*duangong*) is one of the appellations of the lower-ranking ritual specialists in Chinese and other traditions.

¹⁶² In a late article on 'shamanism', Rock provided some additional information, see Rock 1959, 796–801.

¹⁶³ Rock 1938, 174.

Furthermore, he claimed that their language was closer to Naxi than to Na (Hli-khin = Mosuo) and reported that they had ceremonies and books very similar to but fewer than those of the Naxi with ‘a modified written Na-khi language’,

yet they write their texts more fully, in fact every syllable is written, unlike the Li-chiang *dto-mbas* who use only few characters to express a whole paragraph, the symbols employed being mere milestones in a sentence to refresh the memory, much being therefore read into a sentence or paragraph which is not written.¹⁶⁴

The surprising fact that Dongba characters may be used just like any other writing system is dealt with in passing by Rock who was apparently more interested in the reduced portfolio of the ‘Zhěr-khin’ ritualists. He had noted that their books have four lines instead of three (as those of the Dongbas usually have) and provided a list with their ‘ceremonies’ as well as a catalogue of the books chanted at one of them, first giving the characters, then transliterations, and finally comments in his own style.

Rock’s last article, published before the end of the Second World War, contained the ‘Romance’ announced in the Laufer critique of 1937, ‘a tribal love story translated from Na-khi pictographic manuscripts, transcribed and annotated by J. F. Rock’. In 1939, it appeared in the *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* with the author not only adding ‘F. R. G. S.’ to his name as he had done in his first publication in this journal but also ‘Research Professor in Oriental Studies, University of Hawaii’ and ‘Membre Correspondant de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient’. After explaining the high number of suicides among young Naxi as being caused by the Chinese marriage system and a digression into ‘free love’ as still practised by the Mosuo (here ²Lü-²khi’, in earlier publications ‘Hli-khin’), Rock sketches the ‘ceremony’ for the propitiation of the souls of those having died unattended or by their own hand. A digression on the Jew’s harp as used by the Naxi for communication between boys and girls follows, after which Rock announces:

While this is not the place to describe the entire ²Här-²la-¹llü ceremony, which is reserved for a separate volume in which translations of all the books used will appear, it seems appropriate, before proceeding with [sic!] the actual romance of ²K’a-²mä-¹gyu-³mi-²gkyi, to give a description of the various wind spirits. These wind spirits were originally females who, in the dim past, had committed suicide and are now believed to entice girls to follow their example.¹⁶⁵

164 Rock 1938, 173–174.

165 Rock 1939, 13.

On page 19 of this article, its author approaches its topic and then, concerning the two manuscripts, notes:

The first twenty pages of the first volume are devoted to the ²lv [souls of suicides] in general who cannot be reborn, having committed ¹Yu-²vu [suicide together] in their last existence. The remainder deals with ²K'a-²mä-¹gyu-³mi-²gkyi who, we are told, was a bride and was given in marriage; rather than become the wife of a man for whom she does not care, she intends to commit suicide with her lover, a shepherd boy called ²Ndzi-²bö-¹yü-¹lä-¹p'er. He, however, is not so easily induced to join his sweetheart in death, and invents all kinds of excuses. [...]

She begs [the boyfriend of her lover] for forgiveness. A similar message she sends to her prospective parents-in-law. They, however, scorn her and send her offensive messages which finally drive her to suicide by hanging. Her lover, a shepherd, has lost a black cow and he searches the mountain side for it. In so doing, he reaches the highest alpine slopes at the foot of the limestone crags and there, hanging from a tree [...], he finds the body of his sweetheart. The dialogue which ensues is indeed beautiful. Her body is dead, but her soul speaks to him and tells him of the messages she had sent to him and finally gives him directions as to the disposal of her remains. It is a sad yet beautiful story.¹⁶⁶

On page 22 of the article, the title page of the first manuscript is explained, followed by a treatment of its pages 25 to 31; beginning on page 43 of the article the second book, with thirteen pages is presented, and on page 114 the reader is seen off with the final note: 'this finishes the romance'. Many pictures of landscapes, Dongba priests and ritual implements follow. The article concludes with one appendix dealing with a deity that Rock identifies with a Bon deity, and a second one presenting a cycle of love songs to be performed on the Jew's harp. Disregarding the pictures and the captions, Rock managed to fill 152 pages of a prestigious academic journal with a 'romance' completely detached from its ritual context. Because most of the space is given to excessive explanations of Dongba characters, an ordinary reader will never realise how 'beautiful' this story is. Rock used a tripartite schema for presenting the 'text': following a hand-copy of the original, first a 'transcription of text' in Rock's romanisation is given, then a 'translation', finally an 'explanation of text' meandering from character to character and whatever may have come into the minds of his Dongba or of Rock himself. Probably trying to arouse readers' interest by announcing a romance, his presentation in no respect lives up to this expectation; instead, it requires a very special devotion to peruse it from beginning to end. Even if Rock had added a complete translation instead of splitting the 'text' into the units he called rubrics, its repetitiveness and formulaic nature would have made it sufficiently clear that this was not a

¹⁶⁶ Rock 1939, 20.

literary romance, but part of a ritual. Rock's obsession with divining the 'pictographic' quality of the characters would persist, and most of what he published later would be just as difficult to digest.

While Rock was travelling and producing articles for learned journals, Chinese scholars, Naxi assistants and Dongba priests intensified their cooperation. In 1935, after assisting Fang Guoyu, Zhou Rucheng helped Tao Yunkui 陶雲達 (1904–1944), who had just returned from studying ethnology in Germany the previous year, to collect materials among local ethnic groups, among them Dongba manuscripts. As one result of his studies, Tao published a lengthy study on bone divination in 1938. It contained copiously annotated translations of the content of three manuscripts on this topic, probably the first published ones of Dongba 'texts' in Chinese, and included hand-copies of the manuscripts. Tao did not fail to acknowledge his partners: first He Shigui, the old Dongba who had already assisted Fang Guoyu, then the Dongba Asi 阿四 from Beidi (today's Baidi) who claimed to be a ninety-fifth generation disciple of Dongba Sale 東巴薩勒 (= Dongba Shiluo?) and Zhou Rucheng, at that time teaching at a primary school in Lijiang. Zhou acted as translator between the two Dongbas on the one hand, whom Tao also called 'sorcerers' (*wushi* 巫師) and Tao on the other, who sent the draft to Fang Guoyu for several rounds of checking before it was finally published. Tao used IPA notation for transliteration, but only for the titles and important terms, because it would have taken too much time to transcribe the whole 'texts', and these were not relevant to the topic.¹⁶⁷ This article was probably the first full treatment of Dongba 'scriptures' including 'translations' into Chinese.¹⁶⁸ It was also one of the first outputs of the ethnology division at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Academia Sinica which had been founded in 1928 in Nanking, the new capital of the Republic of China.

These were fateful years. In 1935 Rock had fled Yunnan-fu, fearing the Communist troops that were reported to be approaching the city on their Long March. In 1937, the Japanese had finally started their invasion of China proper and, by the end of the year, had taken Nanking, the capital of Republican China. Its government escaped to Chongqing in Sichuan, and three of the most prestigious universities of northern China merged into the National Southwest Associated University and relocated to Changsha. When the capital of Hunan had been captured by the

167 Tao 1938, 92–93; Tao uses the term *jingdian* 經典 ('classics') for the Dongba 'texts', which evokes textual traditions.

168 See Wang 2017, 107 on Tao's place in the history of Chinese anthropology and Yang Qingmei 2013 on the legacy of Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), race biologist and supervisor of his 1933 Berlin doctoral dissertation.

Japanese in 1938, the Southwest Associated University again relocated together with some of the most renowned Chinese scholars, this time to Yunnan-fu, just as businesses, industries and the military had done, thus changing the formerly parochial city into one of the major centres of the time. After Yunnan-fu had been hit by Japanese bombs in 1938, Rock moved his books and himself to Hanoi. Having obtained the title of Research Professor of the History, Geography, and Botany of China of the University of Hawaii at a stipend of US\$3,000 per year in exchange for his library, he spent the next one-and-a-half years at Dalat in Vietnam together with some of his Nazi assistants, until the Japanese appeared there too in mid-1940.¹⁶⁹ In Vietnam he first met Rolf Alfred Stein (1911–1999), the Sinologist and Tibetologist, who because of his Jewish background had fled Germany and for the same reason was not allowed to become a full member of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO) in Hanoi under the Vichy regime. Stein made a living as translator for the EFEO in Hanoi and others, among them Rock, helping him also with 'arranging my Mo-so dictionary'.¹⁷⁰ In 1940, when the latter returned to Lijiang, the Japanese installed a puppet regime under Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 (1883–1944) at the former capital Nanking, in consequence indirectly controlling important parts of East China in addition to the North-east under their direct rule. In that same year, two of Rock's book manuscripts were ready for printing but were later destroyed when the Japanese bombed Shanghai.¹⁷¹

Yunnan-fu thus became an important hub for supplies and one of the major stations on the 'Burma Road' which was built by the Chinese in 1937 and 1938 under extremely difficult conditions and with heavy loss of human life. It ran from the railhead Lashio in Eastern Burma to Kunming, connecting the wartime capital Chongqing with the British harbour of Rangoon. In 1942, it was cut off by the Japanese, and U.S. Army engineers constructed a Northern route known as 'Ledo/Stilwell Road'. At the same time, the U.S. Air Force took up flying supplies to China via the so-called Hump, an extremely dangerous air route crossing the Himalayas without any reliable navigation aids and called 'Skyway to Hell'

169 See Sutton 1974, 266–268.

170 For Rock's letters to Serge Elisséeff, director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, dated 11 May 1940 (from Dalat) and 7 July 1940 (from Manila), see Walravens 2002, 192 and 193. It is not known how he 'helped' Rock and what Stein translated, presumably Tibetan texts, but perhaps also Chinese ones such as the ten-volume work mentioned by Rock in a letter of 8 May 1939 from Dalat, see Taube 2009, 75. According to Rock's later accounts, they must have been lost together with other materials in 1944 (see below).

171 See Sutton 1974, 267–268. According to a letter from 23 November 1947, Rock learned enough Tibetan in the war years to translate texts in that language himself, sometimes with the help of a lama, see Taube 2009, 91.

by some.¹⁷² At Lijiang an airfield was opened for the Hump in late 1943 (see Fig. 13).¹⁷³ The local population had already seen airplanes before the war, with Rock causing quite an uproar when he landed there on a meadow with a chartered flight in 1936.¹⁷⁴ Handel-Mazzetti's 1919 map (see Fig. 7) had provided the most reliable topography of the region, but was not sufficient for pilots to safely fly over the mountains of the borderlands. In 1944, therefore, when Rock had escaped to Calcutta, he was asked to collate all available geographical information and to produce a more precise map.¹⁷⁵

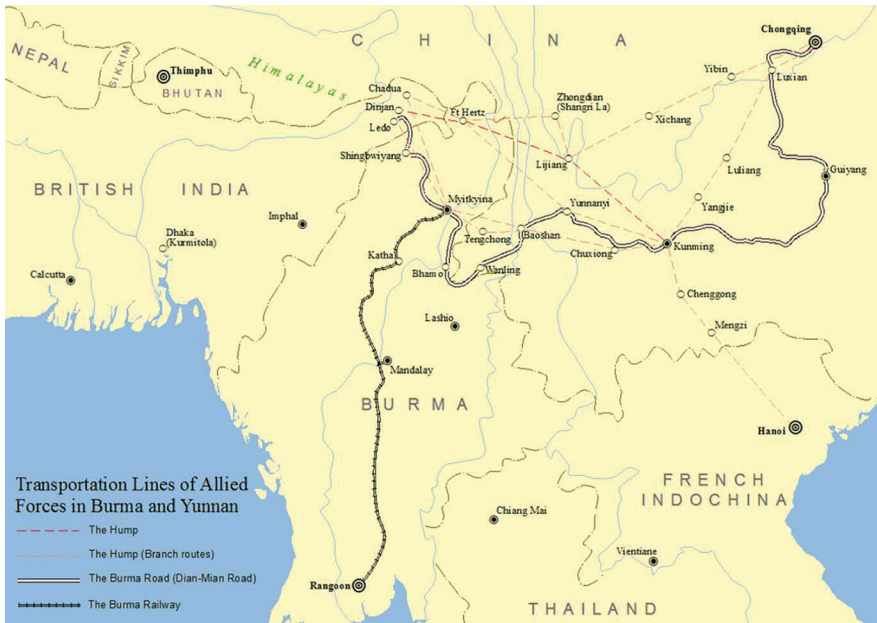


Fig. 13: Transportation Lines of Allied Forces in Burma and Yunnan Province of China During World War II (SY), Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0).

¹⁷² See Sutton 1974, 280.

¹⁷³ See 'India-China Division, Air Transport Command', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India-China_Division,_Air_Transport_Command, accessed on 18 September 2021, and Andrews 1999, 155–158.

¹⁷⁴ See Rock 1947, vol. 1, 272–274 and Sutton 1974, 281–282.

¹⁷⁵ See Wilson 2015.

In 1939, Quentin Roosevelt (1919–1948), grandson of the former president, visited the Naxi areas. After travelling to Gansu, he set out from Chongqing on the Burma Road in a Buick supplied by T. L. Soong, brother of Mme Chiang Kai-shek and financier of her husband. The Dongba funeral scroll his father had given to him as Christmas gift after his visit to South-west China had aroused his interest in the imagery of the Naxi, and the Harvard undergraduate had successfully collected funds for an expedition to obtain more artefacts, especially the funeral scrolls described by Rock in his 1937 article. ‘No Nashi manuscripts could be bought in the city of Li-kiang itself’,¹⁷⁶ but with the help of Andrews, the missionary who had become a friend of Quentin’s father during his visit to Lijiang in 1929 and some Naxi assistants he managed to buy more than 1,000 Dongba manuscripts in just ten days. In an article published in 1940, he not only recalled the V.I.P. reception he had received everywhere due to his elevated status, but also reported on the manuscript trade in his time, once the news of the arrival of a potential buyer had spread and after having already acquired about 200 books:

Four different *dtombas* visited us the next morning. The one we had commissioned to go out and buy for us returned with several books and a few Nashi paintings, but no scroll. We put him to work immediately sorting out 1000 or so books I had acquired by this time. Another priest arrived, with one of the long scrolls, a very good one, and we closed the deal quickly. [...] The third *dtomba* appeared with about 300 books, and we bought them after a short altercation about the price. This one also had a cymbal and four or five painted crowns he wanted to sell. Luck was certainly with me that day. The fourth priest [...] had brought his long scroll, but it was a very dilapidated and incomplete one, so we let it go.

That same afternoon the mission worker appeared with over 700 more books. [...] ¹⁷⁷

The scene appears very similar to the one Handel-Mazzetti had witnessed twenty-five years earlier when the Naxi came to sell their plants, the only difference being the goods traded. After Roosevelt had left China, he continued to correspond with Andrews who helped him to acquire more ‘Nashi books’. In a letter of 14 August 1940, however, Andrews drew attention to the expected arrival of Rock:

If you need a thousand more, just wire OK, and I will know and go ahead and get them, and anything else on the market. The reason for this rush is, I have heard that ROCK is on his way to Likiang from Honolulu. [...] Now, if he comes here, he will buy up all the books he

¹⁷⁶ Roosevelt 1940, 204.

¹⁷⁷ Roosevelt 1940, 208.

can put his men to buy, and the value of them will go up in price 200%. In fact, it will be hopeless to try and buy against him, and his men will see that no books are brought here.¹⁷⁸

With the help of Andrews, Roosevelt could acquire many more Dongba manuscripts and sold more than 2,000 of them to the Library of Congress in 1940 and 1945 for US\$3,000.¹⁷⁹ His 1941 undergraduate thesis ‘A Preliminary Study of the Nashi People: Their History, Religion, and Art’ was the first contribution in art history to the field of Dongba studies and heavily relied on the publications of Rock, comparing the iconography of Dongba artefacts to those of other Central Asian and South Asian cultures.¹⁸⁰ Rock would later, as always in case of potential competitors, belittle his contribution.¹⁸¹

In the late 1930s, He Siquan 和泗泉 (1885-?) and He Xuedao 和學道 (1890–1942) created an orthography for the writing of the Dongba characters, because ‘they lacked a rigorous graphic standard which is the reason for their backwardness when compared to the characters of other nationalities’. He Siquan hailed from a famous Dongba family in Lijiang prefecture and sold all sorts of paper goods from new year pictures to funeral money, using wood blocks carved by himself in his shop; he was one of the Dongba assisting Rock, Zhou Rucheng and others. In the preface to their inventory of Dongba and Geba characters He Siquan and his assistant emphasized the role of Chinese and foreign visitors who asked Dongbas to teach them their characters. While some cheated for money’s sake, others explained their characters, but their students were still asking for phonetic and orthographic standards. He Fengshu 和風書 (1877–1952), head of the Dongba assembly of Lijiang, had called the Dongbas for a general meeting and discussed this matter for more than two years. Finally, it was decided to collect characters, have a good hand copy made of all of them and finally print them as lithographs. The manuscripts written by the legendary Dongba Jiuzhila 玖知臘 were to serve as the orthographic standard. Jiuzhila was said to have lived under the Ming (1368–1644) in Baisha. Due to a lack of funds, in the end the printing was to be done with wood blocks and the whole enterprise entrusted to He Siquan and He Xuedao. A Chinese scholar reported seeing some prints of interlinear versions of pictorial and phonetic characters as early as 1940, but the book was still not finished when he left Lijiang in 1943. Two of the wooden blocks, probably carved by He Siquan in his own writing, have survived in the Museum of the City of Lijiang. Whether

178 Brauer and O’Conor 2011, 37.

179 See Brauer and O’Conor 2011, 43, n. 19.

180 See Brauer and O’Conor 2011, 37–42.

181 For his letters to the director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute of 21 October 1940 and 11 March 1946 see Walravens 2002, 208–209 and 269.

the idea of creating an orthography really goes back to the 1920s as some scholars have proposed, still awaits confirmation.¹⁸²

While young Roosevelt was sailing back to the United States, another man interested in art had come to the Naxi areas. Li Lincan 李霖燦 (Li Lin-ts'an, 1913–1999) 'roamed' there as a landscape painter after his graduation from the National Art College at Hangzhou. In summer 1939, he arrived in Kunming and was immediately enthralled by a Dongba manuscript he was shown. The famous writer Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988) who was teaching at the Southwest Associated University gave Li a translation of Rock's and told him about the beautiful landscape of Lijiang, whereupon Li made up his mind to go there. Zhou Rucheng introduced him to He Shigui, the old Dongba who had already assisted Fang Guoyu and Tao Yunkui and recited a story from one of his manuscripts for him. Zhou translated it, and Li decided to collect these stories and make them available to a larger audience. This episode, reminiscent of Fang Guoyu's 'conversion' to Dongba studies by Liu Bannong, was first published in 1984.¹⁸³

This was his first visit, and five more covering most of the Naxi territory were to follow until 1943, supported by friends and institutions and devoted to collecting artefacts and translating Dongba 'texts'. In 1941 he had found a position at the National Central Museum, that had relocated to Lizhuang 李莊 (Li Chuang) in Sichuan, and during his stays collected more than 1,200 manuscripts, at a time when Wan Sinian 萬斯年 (1908–1987) was doing the same. Wan stayed in Lijiang from July 1941 through to November 1942 and acquired approximately 4,000 Dongba manuscripts for the National Peiping Library which had also relocated to the South.¹⁸⁴

While trying to reconstruct the route the Naxi people had taken when migrating from the North, Li visited Beidi in 1942 where he met 'his' Dongba, He Cai 和才 (Ho Ts'ai, 1917–1956),¹⁸⁵ who was to become his 'reciter' (*fayin ren* 發音人) for the Dongba 'texts'. He Cai was the first Dongba to be given a position by a Chinese government institution at the Central Museum in 1943, thereby recognising the value of his contribution to Dongba studies. On the same trip Li later met Rock

182 Mu Chen 2012; since Mu consistently uses post-1954 language, his terminology is not followed here. See also Li Lincan 1984b, 46.

183 For the episode see Li Lincan 1984d, 285–287; for his claim that the 'stories' on the following one hundred pages were written down in 1939, see his note dated 1952 in Li Lincan 1984d, 388.

184 For the campaign of the Peiping Library to collect books and rubbings in the Southwest see Meng Hua 2015; Jackson must have mistaken the much more famous Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950) who was also involved in this endeavour for Wan Sinian, see Jackson 1989, 136.

185 Li Lincan 1984 was dedicated to He Cai, for a personal account of his cooperation with him, written in 1994, see Li Lincan 2015, 514–525; also see Yu Suisheng 2008d, 207–211.

in Yongning. Rock was staying on the island in Lugu Lake and showed him some of his publications, receiving due praise by Li as the one who had studied the Naxi for the longest time. Then he lived more than eight months in a village close to Ludian 魯甸 with the Dongba He Wenzhi 和文質 (1907–1951)¹⁸⁶ who assisted him in translating and summarising Dongba ‘classics’. In 1943 Li studied phonology with Zhang Kun 張琨 (Chang K’un, 1917–2017), a student of Li Fanggui’s, and then finished the draft of his *Mosuo xiangxing wenzi zidian* 麼些象形文字字典 (*A Dictionary of Mo-So Hieroglyphics*). In 1944, it was published as a lithographic print in five hundred copies by the Central Museum, copied on oil paper for the only stone available at Lizhuang by Li himself and accompanied by a foreword by Dong Zuobin, already mentioned above.¹⁸⁷ The list of persons Li Lincan mentions in his preface is long, and includes, among various celebrities and some Dongbas, Fang Guoyu and Zhou Rucheng, showing that out of the local infrastructure established by Forrest for plants *and* manuscripts there had evolved a Dongba studies network sharing advice and expertise.¹⁸⁸ Contrary to the Westerners, Chinese and Naxi scholars always mentioned their partners in scholarship in their publications; Li Lincan even mentioned He Cai and Zhang Kun on the book cover.

The Dongba dictionary lists 2,120 characters, first giving the IPA notation, then a Chinese translation followed by an explanation of the graph, then more or less copious notes on the graph and the word or words represented by it, its relation to other graphs and words and additional information on the region where it was found or on problems posed by the data (see Fig. 14).

As in Yang’s and Fang’s dictionaries, the characters are arranged in categories similar to those of traditional Chinese encyclopaedias, Li Lincan has eighteen such categories. Unlike his predecessors, however, he included two categories not related to content: no 13 for characters only used by the Rek’ua, and no 14 for those he found in two manuscripts used for writing Tibetan texts.¹⁸⁹ In addition to Chinese works, the references include Bacot’s book and five of Rock’s articles.

186 For the dates corrected according to the text of a colophon written by He Wenzhi, see Yu Suisheng 2008e, 350–352.

187 For the details of production see Jayne 1946, 27; for the English title see the English summary by Zeng Zhaoyue 曾昭燭 (Tseng Chao-yueh) in Li Lincan 1944, 201 (= Li Lincan 2001, 415); besides praising Li Lincan’s achievements, Dong used the Dongba evidence for comparison with the oracle bones inscriptions.


188 See the author’s preface in Li Lincan 1944, ‘Zixu’ 自序, 1–2 (= Li Lincan 2001, 23–25).




189 The original work has the old ethnonym Guzong 古宗, the modern edition has ‘Tibetan language’ (*Zangyu* 藏語), see Li Lincan 1944, 128 and Li Lincan 2001, 288.



Two indexes, one Chinese and one Naxi written in IPA, and an English summary complete the work.



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十七 多巴龍王類




歷些族之多巴在經典中稱為 [pyɪ mbvɪ] 其地位甚高且在龍王之上因而天地神人等輩各有其多巴  總集於此另作一類又以龍王各名附入之。



1901.  [toɪ mbaɪ] 多巴也歷些人之巫師巫師頭戴五佛冠之形在經典中原寫作  漸簡化作  其冠原有五瓣正而看只見三瓣也
[PYɪ mbvɪ] 多巴之古音也經典中錄多巴如此其地位在人神之間在鬼及龍王之上各神各龍王又各有其 [PYɪ mbvɪ] 也。
多巴自敘有三種。一曰 [ɽwɪ kvɪ PYɪ mbvɪ] 聰明能幹之多巴也。一曰 [laɪ ɪaɪ nɔɪ boɪ] 自食自足之多巴也。一曰 [laɪ tɕɔɪ ndaɪ huɪ] 懼前喪時用之。



1902.  [PYɪ] 多巴陰徑也  多巴口中出聲氣之形。





1903.  [Pɛɪ] 也  多巴噬鬼之形常見於逐鬼經典之末尾。




1904.  [tɕɔɪ] 逐鬼也  多巴以打鬼竹片等逐鬼之形狀下有一口字以注其音。

1905.  [nɔɪ] 刮除不潔之物也多巴法儀之一種見  的號字之解釋  多巴以逐鬼各物並一巴不潔之物懸于其上合而驅鬼之形或讀曰 [ɟɔɪ nɛɪ]。



1906.  [tɕɔɪ] 來也  多巴家誦經之形以一符頭注其音。




1907.  [pɔɪ maɪ pɔɪ] 結婚時塗 [ɽɔɪ] 之禮也歷些人結婚時由多巴向新婚夫婦前饋豆酥油一小片蓋賜福之意也  多巴手持酥油新婚夫婦下跪之形。

1908.  [pɔɪ] 女巫也  女巫巫打卦之形。  字云  而來打卦之祖師也。

1909. [pɔɪ] 巫也  上一字同象其披頭狀  下神之形或寫作  。

語言上稱巫者曰 [sɛɪ nɛɪ], [sɛɪ maɪ] 或 [sɛɪ pɔɪ]。

1910.  [ɽɪ nɔɪ suɪ beɪ ɟɔɪ] 神巫三弟兄也常坐於崖上以  注其前一音。

1911.  [toɪ mbaɪ sɔɪɽɪ ɽɔɪ] 多巴教主也以  字注其第三音近而假借也或將第三音讀為 [sɔɪ] 或將其形寫作  。

1912. [kaɪ bvɪ tɕɔɪ] 多巴教主之第一大弟子 三字注其名之三音。

1913. [naɪ bvɪ tɕɔɪ] 多巴教主之第二大弟子 三字注其名之三音。

Fig. 14: *Mosuo xiangxing wenzi zidian* 歷些象形文字字典 (*A Dictionary of Mo-So Hieroglyphics*) (Li Lincan 1944, 143). Category 17: 'Duoba [Dongba] and Dragon Kings'; no. 1901 has the character for doɪ mbaɪ which in the ancient language is pyɪ mbvɪ.

In his introduction Li Lincan reconstructs the history of the Naxi with the help of the Mu dynasty chronicles and sources from the Dongba manuscripts. According to him, the Naxi came from Sichuan, and after passing Muli and Yongning established themselves in Baidi and Lijiang. This route served as a backdrop for explaining the fact that east of Yongning there was no written tradition but an oral one in many ways resembling the written one of the Dongbas. Dongba writing was later invented in the Rek'ua (Ruoka) region in the lower Wuliang River area and, after crossing the Golden Sand River, fully developed in Baidi from where it further spread to Lijiang and beyond. The Dongba characters which Li usually

called ‘shape characters’ (*xingzi* 形字) were thus older than Geba writing (‘sound characters’, *yinzi* 音字), which was difficult to date and could only be found in the southern part of the Naxi areas from Lijiang to Weixi (see Fig.1). Due to its composite nature, as it integrated elements from different scripts including Chinese, Li tentatively suggested the integration of the Naxi territory into the Qing empire in the eighteenth century as a *terminus post quem*. All of the manuscripts of Dongba ‘classics’ (*jingdian* 經典) exclusively written in Geba of which he had only found a few specimens could be traced back to a Dongba named He Wenyu 和文裕 who lived in the late nineteenth century. According to oral tradition, He had been ridiculed by a local official for reading books with ‘ox heads and horse faces’ (*niutou mamian* 牛頭馬面) and decided to transcribe Dongba books into the syllabic script. This led Li to the conclusion that He Wenyu actually created the Geba script, a position he later corrected.¹⁹⁰ Compared to the space devoted to these historical ruminations, Li is very brief on the characters.

Concerning the ‘hieroglyphics’, he first provides examples of a change in meaning when a character is tilted or turned or manipulated in other ways, including the addition of dots or lines or the blackening of a shape. The second property expounded by him is the phonetic loan (rebus) used to write words usually written differently or words without a Dongba character with the same or a similar sound. He uses the character for ‘fire’ (mi┆) as an example: read as mi┆ it can mean ‘ripe’, ‘to forget’ or ‘girl, woman’, read as mi┆ it can mean ‘to hear’ (k'wa┆ mi┆) or ‘to hope’ (ba┆mi┆), finally it can mean ‘name’ (mi┆). In addition, the character can be used for further words with different pronunciations.¹⁹¹ Finally, he discussed two peculiar features of the ‘classics’ which were ‘just symbols arbitrarily jotted down by the Dongbas in order to help their memory, among them images and characters representing a whole sentence, but these are definitely not complete sentence constructions’. As Li acknowledged, this fact prohibited use of the dictionary for reading texts character by character as in standard works, but there was nothing one could do about it. The second of Li’s features had already been noted by Bacot: the use of ‘ancient’ language. He adduced three examples, adding that they were numerous:

¹⁹⁰ See Li Lincan 1944, ‘*Yinyan*’ 引言, IX–XV (= Li Lincan 2001, 36–47); in the introduction to his Geba dictionary Li proclaimed He Wenyu as creator of the syllabic script, see Li Lincan 2001, ‘*Xuyan*’ 序言, 428–429. For his reassessment see Li Lincan 1984c, 58–60.

¹⁹¹ See Li Lincan 1944, ‘*Yinyan*’ 引言, XX (= Li Lincan 2001, 52) and entry #1357 with even more readings.

	Li: ancient	spoken	Bacot: 'transcription'	written/spoken
Sun	biꞥ	ŋiꞥmeꞥ	hè, lè (93)	gnimé / oua gni; gni; meu (50)
Moon	leꞥ	heꞥmeꞥ;	gni (106)	hémétseu / [...] / lé (44) ¹⁹²
Man	ts'oꞥ	ɕiꞥ	chi (90)	chi; chidieu / chi (42)

Li concluded this part by summarising the status of the Dongba characters: they were right on the border between picture and script.¹⁹³

Regarding the Geba characters, he just mentioned their confusing variety on the one hand and their lack of tonal notation on the other, referring the reader to his forthcoming Geba dictionary. He also considered them, however, to mark an epochal progress. The 1945 Geba dictionary *Mosuo biaoyin wenzhi zidian* 麽些標音文字字典 is much shorter and arranged according to the syllables written in IPA and followed by the corresponding characters. Following sometimes more than a dozen variants for writing the same syllable, monosyllabic and polysyllabic words as well as composite ones are listed according to tones and provided with a brief translation or explanation. The data were taken from He Siqian's printed Dongba-Geba inventory, two 'classics' completely written in Geba and another inventory. In the introduction Li referred to his previous Dongba dictionary and repeated his assumption that Geba writing was later than the Dongba characters, thus contradicting Rock who held that the Geba characters were the older ones, and announced an article on this topic. In addition, Li Lincan elaborated some problems in the study of Geba: the high variability of the characters which might appear in thirty or forty different shapes and their polyphony, inasmuch as they were used for writing different sounds; the astonishing fact that some of the words written with Dongba characters contained syllables not to be found among the approximately 2,000 Geba characters collected by him; the problems caused by the absence of tone marks in the Geba characters; and finally the ornamental and meaningless elements which could be added on either side (imitating Chinese) or on top (imitating Tibetan).¹⁹⁴

Although Li considered the Dongba dictionary only as a draft for a future work that would meet the standards expected of a dictionary, it enjoys a huge popularity among Chinese-reading scholars up to the present day. This is easy

¹⁹² Bacot has a third category, 'variants, synonyms or foreign words', here: 'ch'limé; goudzou'.

¹⁹³ See Li Lincan 1994, 'Yinyan' 引言, XX–XXI (= Li Lincan 2001, 52–54). The first edition defines the three major tones of Naxi as ɿ (55), ɿ (33) and ɿ (11), see Li Lincan 1944, XXIV; according to later standard the modern edition replaces ɿ by 31, see Li Lincan 2001, 'Yinyan' 引言, 57. For a contemporary assessment of the ritual language see Michaud 2011, 97–100.

¹⁹⁴ See the preface to the Geba dictionary, Li Lincan 2001, 'Xuyan' 序言, 427–433.

to explain: the indexes allow the user to look up a character via its meaning in Chinese *and* the word or words written with it, that is using it as a true dictionary, which neither of the other two influential ones, namely Rock's (publ. in 1963 and 1972) and Fang's works (publ. in 1981), was equipped for. There have been critical remarks on Li Lincan's work, the most devastating made by the ever-malevolent Rock who, in letter from 1947, called it 'worthless' and suspected that 'they rushed it into print (it is a photographic reproduction of his manuscript) for fear I would get ahead of them'.¹⁹⁵ He must have had problems with reading the hand of Li who had written the model for the lithograph himself. Although there have been discussions on certain features of the dictionary by Chinese and Naxi scholars, it is still hailed as *the* breakthrough in the study of Dongba writing. In 1946, Wen You enthusiastically welcomed its appearance, not without nationalist pride:

The wealth of sources for 'A Dictionary of Mo-So Hieroglyphics' is really without precedent, the phonetic renderings below each character are reliable and by far surpass Rock's romanisations without understanding the principles of phonetics (e.g. the unintelligible gk, de [dt?]). With the publication of this book, the section on the [Dongba] characters in Bacot's book has become waste paper.¹⁹⁶

Wen You 聞宥 (1901–1985) was an archaeologist and linguist with many interests, who had taught in more than one university before joining the West China Union University in 1940, where he published in its *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*. In 1941 his article on the Dongba characters appeared in the new journal of the same Ethnology Section of the Academia Sinica that had supported Li Lincan's research in the same year. Wen set out with a literature review including most of what has been introduced in section 1 of the present article, and some of Rock's articles, including the latter's announcement of a four- or five-volume work on 'The History and Geography of the Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom' and dictionaries of Dongba and Geba characters. While acknowledging Rock's merits, Wen found fault with him in two regards: first, he was a botanist, not a linguist, therefore making mistakes when describing nasalisation phenomena and even inventing phonemes such as gk and dt. The second point was Rock's lack of expertise in Chinese palaeography, especially of the Shang oracle bone inscriptions, which prevented him from undertaking a systematic study of the characters. Instead, he explained each character individually, thus not only missing systematic aspects but in turn also impeding the individual character's analysis. However, Wen ends the introduction with modest remarks – he himself had just

¹⁹⁵ See Walravens 2002, 307, also see Taube 2009, 92.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted from *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報, 30, 1946.6 after Yang Zhengwen 2008a, 108.

started to study Dongba writing, and Rock's dictionary had not yet come out.¹⁹⁷ He expressed his gratitude to Fang Guoyu and Dong Zuobin, praising the former as an outstanding expert in this field.¹⁹⁸

The main part of Wen's article is devoted to a systematic analysis of the graphic and phonetic aspects of Dongba writing which he undertook in three sections. He first distinguished six types of characters: a) animal heads, b) what Laufer had called 'head-dress', namely additions to the heads of human figures representing 'all distinctions of sex, age, and class', c) depicting movements by additional lines 'near the performing parts, in great resemblance to the American Indian picture words', d) representing abstract meanings by symbols, e) adding or subtracting elements from a character or combining characters, f) polyphony, 'cognate ones, of course'. Even though Wen did not mention them, he clearly had in mind the 'Six Ways of Writing' (*liu shu* 六書), a traditional method of analysing Chinese characters, although the categories are not the same.¹⁹⁹

Building on the works of Bacot, Laufer and William Albert Mason (1855–1923),²⁰⁰ as well as ethnographic and linguistic data from various ethnic groups in Asia and America, Wen proceeded to discuss 'ideographic' Dongba characters of which he distinguished two basic types: *xiangyi* 象意 ('suggestive ideographs') and *huiyi* 會意 ('interpretative ideographs'). Using examples from the ancient Egyptian, Cuneiform and Chinese scripts, the 'suggestive ideographs' are classified into earlier ones (extension, = d) above) and later ones (combination of two or more shapes = e) above). The term *huiyi* refers to one of the Six Ways of Writing and also implies the combination of two or more characters. Here, Wen again distinguishes an earlier stage, when the meaning is created by 'connotation' and a later one when the combinations 'are made in an abstract way from the very start'. Contrary to the Chinese writing system, the 'interpretative ideographs' are rare in Dongba manuscripts, and the 'suggestive' ones are in fact still pictographs. Wen therefore predicts that the Dongba characters will not develop further, and that even if they are not abandoned, they will not reach the purely ideographic state, thus revealing that, compared to the Chinese writing system, the Dongba characters are inferior.

Besides being 'hieroglyphs', Dongba characters are employed as phonetics. Wen again describes their functioning with categories taken from the Six Ways of

197 Wen 1941, 97–100.

198 Wen 1941, 119.

199 Wen 1941, 100–105; the quotes here and in what follows are taken from the English summary Wen 1941, 120–124. For the *liu shu* see Boltz 2017.

200 *A History of the Art of Writing*, New York: Macmillan appeared in 1920.

Writing: *jiàjiè* 假借 ('borrowing') and *xíngshēng* 形聲 ('phonetic compounding'). While the former refers to the rebus principle, i.e. 'borrowing' a pictograph to refer to a homophonous word (in English 'eye' for 'I'), the latter is more complex. 'Phonetic compounding' dissects a character in two parts, one representing the sound ('phonetic'), the other the meaning ('signific'). Wen distinguishes five types of phonetics: 1) to the main character another one is added as phonetic, signifying the pronunciation of the word to be written with the 'compounded character'; 2) the same, but with the pronunciation of the phonetic only being close to the word to be written; 3) in bisyllabic words, the phonetic only represents one of the syllables; 4) two phonetics are added, each representing one of the syllables of a bisyllabic word; 5) the phonetic has different values in different words. Quoting the Swedish sinologist Bernhard Karlgren (1899–1978), Wen points out that types 3) to 5) are not found in the Chinese writing system. In addition, there are two types of significs: 1) the signific is a pictograph and the phonetic is only added 'as a safeguard of pronunciation'; 2) 'the signific has two or more meanings which are distinguished by the phonetics', such as the character for 'woman' to which phonetics are added to represent the words for 'mother' and 'daughter'. Wen noted that here the significs come first and phonetics are added later, while the Chinese writing system 'employ[s] pure phonograms first and the significs which denote a generic meaning are beyond doubt added later on'. In this way, they represent two classes, with the 'Mo-so' and the Egyptian cases belonging to the first and the Chinese and Vietnamese *Chú Nôm* to the second. The first is similar to the early 'interpretative ideographs' that differentiate meanings, while the second specifies the sounds.²⁰¹

The final section is devoted to the Geba characters. Mainly using evidence from Bacot's work, Wen argued against the theory that they were derived from the Dongba characters, which was laid out in an unpublished paper by Fang Guoyu, but also against Rock who had proposed that the Naxi had brought the Geba characters from their former home land in the North and the Dongba characters were invented in 'Naxi land', because they depicted many animals and plants found only there. His main arguments against the latter were: 1) clear evidence that the Geba inventory includes characters of the Yi (Lolo), Chinese and Tibetan scripts; 2) if some of the Dongba characters were invented in the Naxi areas, this did not mean that all of them were late, and Fang Guoyu had even reported himself having seen a Dongba inventing new ones; 3) if the Dongba characters were younger, their tendency toward phonetisation would not make sense. Besides the

201 Wen 1941, 106–112.

'phonetic compounds' Geba characters could be used to note the pronunciation, similar to the glossing of *kanji* with *kana* in Japan. In the end, Wen suggests:

The two scripts are of different origin and were in earlier times in use among different branches of the Mo-so people. When the latter came to their present country and the two scripts met, the hieroglyphic writing ceased to develop along the phonetizing line on which it had made a start. But owing to influences other than the linguistic ones, the hieroglyphic writing has come to be dominant, and the syllabic *kyra* [Geba] script almost obsolescent.²⁰²

Eighty years after the publication of Wen's article, scholarship has advanced in many respects and some of his terms and assumptions may not have stood the test of time,²⁰³ but the analysis of the type of characters called 'phonetic compound' by him was unsurpassed at his time and may still benefit contemporary debates on the nature of writing. His synthesis of Western linguistics and traditional Chinese palaeography allowed him to approach the Dongba characters in a systematic manner instead of the crude descriptions and single-character divinations in previous publications, including Rock's.

Summarizing the results of the second phase in the study of Dongba manuscripts, some general observations may be in order.

Sinicization and modernisation had eroded the fundamentals of Dongba practices, and sons often did not continue their fathers' profession. With Forrest probably having led the way even before the First World War, the commercial value of Dongba manuscripts along with further artefacts was discovered and more and more of them were offered for sale, presumably those originally used for 'obsolete ceremonies'.²⁰⁴ When Rock with his well-filled purse appeared on the scene, prices soared, certainly further prompting Dongba families like Yang Fuguang's to sell their books. Before the First World War, just a handful of Dongba manuscripts had reached Europe and the United States; by 1930 Rock had sold approximately 1,400 manuscripts to the Library of Congress, and after Nazi teachers and Chinese scholars had joined the collecting, more than 20,000 manuscripts had been acquired and distributed to institutions and private persons in China and the West at the end of the Second World War.

Unlike the missionaries, nobles and military officers from France, who dominated the first phase of Dongba studies, the botanists Forrest and Rock were self-made men with British and American passports, albeit with rather different backgrounds. While Forrest had to collect funds for his expeditions on a small

²⁰² Wen 1941, 124.

²⁰³ In addition, it is not always clear whether Wen refers to a spoken word or a written character.

²⁰⁴ See Jackson 1979, 171.

scale, Rock was an entrepreneur going for big money – and he needed a lot for his life-style.²⁰⁵ Competing for claims and reputation, Rock ousted Ward as early as 1924 by paying his Naxi assistants more. Besides collecting plants, Forrest had started buying and selling exotic artefacts including manuscripts, and Rock took over this business idea which eventually laid the foundation for his becoming the ‘father of Western Naxiology’. Both of them, however, would never have been able to acquire larger amounts of Dongba manuscripts without assistance by various groups of people.

In addition to the French missionaries of the M.E.P., the P.M.U station at Lijiang provided services to all foreigners passing through, and became more and more important for Westerners interested in Dongba manuscripts too. When absent, both Forrest and Rock left money at the station or sent it for paying their Naxi.²⁰⁶ The ‘botanists’ village’ Ngulukö was home to the network Forrest had established and whom he trusted so much that he let them go plant-hunting by themselves. Lao Chao served him during most of his seven expeditions and had become an experienced botanist himself. The manuscripts Forrest sold to the Rylands Library must have been acquired with the help of his Naxi assistants as well. After Rock had arrived in Ngulukö, he first relied on Forrest’s guides, but soon chose his own from the younger generation. Almost from the start, Rock had them not only collect plants but also manuscripts, keeping many for himself, but also selling growing numbers of them. Because of their linguistic competence and their intimate knowledge of the region, these assistants were the only ones who could provide access to plants, artefacts and people. This was even more important since the Dongbas were only found in villages outside Lijiang and usually did not speak Yunnan Mandarin which served as the *lingua franca* in most of the Naxi areas. Rock’s biographer notes that, contrary to Forrest, ‘he spoke both Chinese and the Nakhi dialect’,²⁰⁷ but this assessment, that was probably based on his diaries, does not specify the degree of his acquaintance with these languages. The account of how he arrived at his translations quoted above clearly shows that he still needed translation from colloquial Naxi into colloquial Chinese in the early 1930s.

After his ‘conversion’ to Naxi studies, Rock invited various Dongbas to recite their texts from the manuscripts and explain the texts’ meaning, including those of the individual characters. Although he later claimed to have relied almost

205 For his sixth expedition, Forrest collected fifty Pounds as salary and two-hundred Pounds for expenses, see Mueggler 2011a, 144; for Rock see above.

206 For Forrest see Mueggler 2011a, 143; for Rock Sutton 1974, 238.

207 Sutton 1974, 23.

exclusively on ‘his’ Dongba until the latter’s death, there is enough evidence showing that he employed different ones, sometimes even two at the same time, who were found for him by his assistants. Naxi and Dongbas were only hired for a certain time, so they would be available at others. Forrest’s Lao Chao first accompanied the Roosevelts, but left that expedition to meet Forrest when he returned to the Naxi areas. The same obviously held true for He Huating.

When in 1933 Yang Zhonghong started working on his dictionary in Yunnan-fu, He Huating apparently informed him in detail how Rock organised his study of Dongba manuscripts. Yang was connected to Xuan, the ‘Evangelist’ in Lijiang who in turn was close to the P.M.U. station and seems to have served as translator from time to time. It is not to be excluded that the Naxi catering to the foreigners knew much more about their respective employers’ activities than shows up in the published record. Forrest and Rock mention some Chinese names of Naxi assistants and Dongbas in their diaries, but it is difficult to identify them. In at least one case, namely Yang Fugang’s library, we know that family collections were sold in more than one batch.

While Yang worked in Yunnan-fu, Fang Guoyu had returned to his native Lijiang and established his own network, which would provide services to many of the Chinese scholars later active in the region, such as Tao Yunkui and Li Lincan. Thanks to his academic connections as an alumnus of Peking University and the early praise of luminaries like Dong Zuobin, Fang became *the* authority on Dongba manuscripts even before publishing his dictionary.

Growing awareness of the Southwest’s cultural diversity and its rich heritage led to the involvement of state institutions in the efforts of documenting it and preserving its rich heritage. Tao Yunkui was part of a project of the Ethnology Section of the Institute of History and Philology of the National Academy of Sciences. This Institute was founded in 1928 by the famous scholar Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950), who had studied in Berlin and tried to establish modern ‘historical science’ as he had experienced it in Germany. In order to study the national history of China, he initiated many projects for collecting primary sources, including all types of written artefacts and linguistic data, not only from Chinese ‘dialects’, but also from non-Chinese languages. In 1929 Fu moved the Institute from Nanking to Peiping. In 1934 he integrated the Ethnology Section there, and after the Japanese invasion relocated to the south, following the three northern universities. Naturally, then, its ethnology section concentrated on the region that was accessible, leading to Wan Sinian’s expedition to Lijiang.²⁰⁸ While these activities were undertaken by the Academia Sinica, Li Lincan worked first for the

208 See Wang 2000, 90–91.

College of Fine Arts in Hangzhou, then for the Central Museum. Although some of the manuscripts were re-distributed,²⁰⁹ many of them ended up in museums or in exotic departments of libraries, thus institutionally divorcing them by and large from research until recently.

Nationalist sentiment played an important role in the political struggles of the day. As early as 1929 the translator of the Roosevelt expedition had suspected Rock of illegal activities. In a report on this expedition in the Shanghai-based *The China Weekly Review*, Jack Theodore Young (1910–2000), son of a wealthy Hankow merchant, mentions their brief encounter with Rock in Yongning and then continues:

Dr. Rock, as the natives there call him, has been ‘exploring’ in Western China for quite a number of years and I believe he knows more about Yunnan than any other foreigner living. Thru the medium of rifles, shotguns, automatic pistols and ammunition, he became the best friend of the ‘King’ of Muli. Hence he has the special privilege of ‘exploring’ in the ‘King’s’ territory at will, and the natives look upon him as the ‘Prince’ from America. I may be mistaken, but I heard rumors that his work in Yunnan at present is far more than mere exploring. A careful investigation by the National Government should be made to establish the authenticity of his explorations. We don’t want to see any more Sir Charles Bells in Western China.²¹⁰

Even though the editor added a footnote saying that ‘Prof. Rock is a member of the faculty of Harvard University [...]’, and that it ‘is unlikely that Prof. Rock is engaged in any subversive activities’, Rock was hurt by this ‘piece of impudence by a Bolshevik youth’. The article led to a strong reprimand of Young by the editor of the *China Journal*, another English periodical published in Shanghai.²¹¹ Working for the Commercial Press in Shanghai at that time, Yang Zhonghong may thus have become aware of Rock’s activities, arousing his nationalist feelings. This was strong meat indeed: Charles Bell (1870–1945) had been British India’s Political Officer for Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet since 1908 and had become familiar with the thirteenth Dalai Lama. During negotiations for the Simla Convention in 1913 and 1914, he assisted the Tibetans in their claims to land occupied by China. The convention that resulted in the McMahon line was never signed by China and remained a constant obstacle in Sino-British relations. It probably was one of the

209 Numbers of Dongba manuscripts in the West vary; see for example Jackson 1963, Jackson 1979 and Jackson 1989; for the present distribution of Dongba manuscripts in Chinese collections see Guo Dalie 2003.

210 Young 1929, 198.

211 See Sutton 1974, 194–195 and 324, n. 14 and 17; the note appeared in the journal’s August issue, vol. XI.2, 94.

reasons why the British Consul in Tengyue had collected Dongba manuscripts, and it must have been known to the scholars studying the region. National pride apparently played a role too, when Li Lincan first presented his observations to a larger audience in 1940. After mentioning the Dongba manuscripts' precious content and his attempts to translate two of the 'classics', he stated that there were so many of them that it 'makes me believe that this is a promising task', and: 'although the foreigners have been allowed to take the lead, it is very problematic to do the work of China from a foreigner's perspective'.²¹² In consequence then, Wen You could declare Bacot's work to have become waste paper.

There were scholarly motives, of course. The discovery of another 'ancient' writing system after the excavation of late second millennium BCE oracle bone inscriptions triggered renewed consideration of the early history of writing. Different from the Europeans one generation earlier, Chinese scholars were naturally not trying to incorporate each type of script into the prevailing mono-linear genesis from pictures to alphabet. Instead, they wanted to understand the Dongba writing against the backdrop of what they knew about the evolution of the Chinese script. Yang, Fang and Li all arranged their character dictionaries according to categories modelled after the traditional Chinese encyclopaedias. There was no system available yet which would allow for arranging them according to purely graphical criteria like the ones developed for the Chinese writing system. Wen You proposed the first systematic way of analysing characters, based on both Western scholarship and Chinese philological tradition, adapting the traditional 'Six Ways of Writing' to the newly discovered script. In addition to the linguistic study of Naxi, thus, for scholars East and West the most fascinating topics were the Dongba characters and the manuscripts' content.

Almost at the same time as when Li Lincan's first dictionary was published, a Japanese torpedo hit the ship carrying most of Rock's belongings, among them 'translations' and a 'rough manuscript for his dictionary of the Naxi language'.²¹³ Rock was on his way back to the United States and would resume work later, but did not live to see the appearance of his dictionary. Even if only one out of four attempts to publish a dictionary succeeded before the end of the Second World War, Dongba studies had greatly advanced during the generation following Bacot. Triggered by his and Rock's works, Chinese and Naxi scholars discovered a tradition they had either not known before or regarded as 'barbarian'. In spite of considerable progress in understanding Dongba writings and rituals, however, inherited preconceptions continued to shape their study.

²¹² Li Zaizhong 2021, 180.

²¹³ See Sutton 1974, 282 and *passim* in Rock's works and correspondence.

Terms like ‘scriptures’, ‘classics’, ‘religious literature’, ‘written language’ imply a textual tradition similar to the ones modern readers would associate with them, whether Buddhist, Confucian or Marxist. With the exception of the trained ethnologist Tao Yunkui, who ‘translated’ three complete divination books, scholars and amateurs selected content they deemed interesting. To this end they had to neglect the ritual setting of the chanting and cut out parts attractive as narratives in their own right, such as ‘The Origin of Mankind’. Although the manuscripts are always related to ‘ceremonies’, their concrete place and function in a ritual remain shadowy. Rock had already observed that the origin myths were recited in order to invite the deities involved in a ritual and that they could vary in length, but he still treated these stories as independent literary texts. Even if there may have been similar myths orally transmitted outside of the Dongba performative context, they would have to be regarded as different in nature. Typical for this stance is the following statement of Li Lincan, again from the text already quoted above:

The classics as such have the rhythm of a poem, because they are sung, and at the time when they are sung, although it is during a very solemn ceremony, but because it is very moving to listen to the story, there is always a very large audience. Among their classics there is one telling an extremely sad story, whenever it is sung during the night, all youth, especially the girls will come and quietly listen, this sad story ends with the suicide of the female protagonist, there is no one in the audience who will not silently shed tears for her.²¹⁴

Since this occasion apparently was the performance of the ritual to propitiate the souls of young people who had committed suicide, there is reason to believe that the girls wept not only because of the poetic quality of the story, but also because of the dead girl they might have known.

The effort to conjure away the ‘dark’ side of the Naxi spirit world is also seen in the fact that the ‘sorcerers’ are hardly ever mentioned. Their existence is stated, but apparently no one had much interest in their activities. This may be related to the intellectual background of the pioneers in Dongba studies, who followed the botanists – again, with the exception of the ethnologist Tao Yunkui, they were linguists or art historians, but neither anthropologists nor trained philologists used to working with primary sources, although Li Lincan’s Dongba dictionary already provided a starting point for palaeographical and regional aspects by noting ‘ancient pronunciations’ (*guyin* 古音) and regional use of certain characters.

All reports agree on one point: the Dongba traditions were dying out, and there were fewer and fewer Dongbas who could understand what they recited. The

214 Li Zaizhong 2021, 178–279.

changing times had led to assemblies in Lijiang during which the Dongbas fixed prices for rituals and discussed standardisation of writing. The Dongba-Geba glossary printing project of the late 1930s has to be considered as an attempt to unify and modernise the Dongba traditions that were still active. At the same time, it was apparently conceived as a reaction to the outside world's interest in the manuscripts. From its very beginning, the study of Dongba manuscripts was driven by both commercial interests and intellectual curiosity. Western explorers, Nazi and Chinese scholars and their overlapping networks of local assistants tried to acquire as many manuscripts as possible, without always disclosing how much they knew about the others' activities.

3 Concluding Remarks

At the end of the war, a solid foundation for the scholarly study of Dongba manuscripts had been laid in China. Reconstruction and civil war, however, prevented academia from returning to normal life. Although banned from the Nazi region after 1949, Rock and Li Lincan continued their work, the former ascending to the throne of Western Nazi studies, the latter being isolated on Taiwan and his scholarly work rarely noticed by either Western scholars for linguistic reasons or Chinese scholars for political ones. Shortly after the Communists' victory on the Chinese mainland, Nazi ritual practices were forbidden. Although research on Dongba manuscripts continued in the People's Republic, few results were published. The only title giving a positive ring to what was otherwise considered as feudalistic superstition was 'literature', and thus a few collections of stories kept appearing. Only in the 1980s were works that had been completed in the 1960s published, many of them, such as Fang Guoyu's dictionary, probably undergoing further revisions. In 1981, the Academy of Social Sciences of Yunnan Province established the Dongba Culture Research Institute (*Dongba wenhua yanjiusuo* 東巴文化研究所) which is the major institution for research on the Nazi and on their scriptures, catering also to interested foreigners. It became one of the proponents of a 'Dongba culture' and was actively involved in having Lijiang added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1997. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Lijiang was a thriving tourist town where Dongba characters were used as a sort of local cultural brand ('magical hieroglyphs') and 'Dongba paper' was sold to visitors. In 2000, the luxury hundred-volume edition of 897 'ancient Dongba literary manuscripts' was completed. The 'Ancient Nazi Dongba Literature Manuscripts' were inscribed in the register of UNESCO Memory of the World in 2003, marking the

final transition from a heterogeneous ritual culture using manuscripts to a homogeneous literary corpus, accessible in Chinese translation.

The years following these achievements have witnessed an amazing upsurge of Dongba studies in China as well as an enormous increase of scholarly quality, resulting in the fact that the *lingua franca* of this field has become Chinese. In spite of these advances, however, a simple question has still not yet been answered convincingly: When the Dongbas had memorised their ritual texts and these mental texts were more important than what was written, why did they produce this astonishing number of manuscripts?

Acknowledgements

On 22–23 July 2013, the author had the opportunity to survey 102 manuscripts shelved as Mo-So, containing writing in Dongba and Geba characters in the reading room of the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Thanks to the support of Peter Pormann, Elisabeth Gow and the very kind and helpful staff of the library, this brief stay was effective and productive. I am grateful to all colleagues who have helped me with obtaining access to rare literature, in alphabetical order: William G. Boltz (University of Washington, Seattle), Nadine Bregler (CSMC, Hamburg), Max Fölster (Max Weber Foundation Beijing), Dan Petersen (CSMC, Hamburg), Zhijia Shen (East Asian Library of the University of Washington, Seattle), Irina Wandrey (CSMC, Hamburg). Special thanks to the editors of this volume and to Caroline Macé for their incredible patience.

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Dan Petersen

A ‘Key’ to the Dongba Script? A Re-Appraisal of a Set of Four Dongba Manuscripts, Held by the John Rylands Library

Abstract: From the end of the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, missionaries, botanists and adventurers travelled extensively in Lijiang and Naxi land in Yunnan, Southwest China. Some became fascinated by the Dongba manuscripts *en passant* and soon first attempts to ‘translate’ their contents were made. This study examines a set of four Dongba manuscripts and two unpublished translations held at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Material, form, content and the interrelation of these manuscripts is reconstructed. In addition, these manuscripts also reveal specific problems inherent in any attempt at translating the ‘texts’ contained in Dongba manuscripts.

Introduction

The John Rylands Library (JRL) in Manchester holds a collection of 135 Dongba manuscripts acquired from the Botanist George Forrest (1873–1932) and his widow, Harriet C. M. Wallace Traill (1877–1937). Three of these manuscripts, Mo-So 6, 9, and 93, were produced by copying the content of Mo-So 13 and adding to it, thus forming a set of four. As early as 1916, Henry Guppy, Keeper of Manuscripts at the JRL, had observed:

The manuscript referred to [Mo-So 13] was first transcribed and then furnished with an interlinear translation in Chinese characters [Mo-So 6]. A further transcript of both the Mo-So and the Chinese was afterwards made [Mo-So 93], to which was added an English translation of the Chinese version, thus providing us with a key [Mo-So 9] which may prove to be of great service when the other manuscripts in the collection come to be dealt with.¹

Almost fifty years later, in 1965, a note was added to Mo-So 6 by Francis Taylor (1910-2000), Guppy’s successor at the JRL. It refers to a letter from Anthony Jackson, a student who was studying the structure of Dongba rituals for his dissertation in Anthropology:

¹ Guppy 1916, 143.

Mo-So 6: see also 9 and 93

Contains the story about the Twelve Earthly Stems, i.e. the twelve components that go to make up part of the Chinese sexagenary cycle.

It is a copy of a Mo-So text (no 13, which is the original) to which a literal Chinese translation was added at the time of copying ([...] Mr. Anthony Jackson, see letter of 10/2/1965) F. Taylor 15th February 1965.²

In his letter of 10 February 1965, Jackson had further stated that

None of these mss. (6, 9 and 93) are Mo-So texts. MS. 93 is a Chinese copy of ms. 6 which itself is an interlineally glossed copy of a (presumably original) Mo-So text. MS. 9 is simply a compilation of the Mo-So pictographs and Chinese translations used in (the transcription? of) MS. 93. In other words it looks as if MS. 6 was compiled from some source and a literal Chinese translation added at the same time; MS. 9 is a working-book compiled for the production of MS. 93 which is a much better Chinese translation than MS. 6. Both MSS. 9 and 93 are written on Chinese paper it will be observed; MS. 6 had very coarse paper if I remember correctly.³

While Guppy had assumed the order of production to be Mo-So 13 (model), Mo-So 6 (copy with interlineal Chinese translation), Mo-So 93 (copy of Mo-So 6), Mo-So 9 (the ‘key’), Jackson apparently thought that Mo-So 9 (the ‘key’) was produced in order to improve the Chinese translation, resulting in Mo-So 93 as the last one. The shelf marks of the JRL do not provide clues here, since the present running numbers may not reflect the order of accession.⁴ And even if Mo-So 93 was not among the first ones sold to the JRL, Forrest might have simply kept it for himself.⁵

This set of manuscripts has been mentioned more than once in previous research, but an in-depth study is still a desideratum.⁶ Since they are the earliest material evidence for the difficulties encountered when ‘translating’ Dongba ‘texts’,⁷ a closer examination of their features as well as peculiarities of the ‘trans-

² Note on Mo-So 6. John Rylands Library, Manchester 1965. The reference to no. 13 is a later addition written with a different pen.

³ Letter of 10 February 1965, see Gow 2013.

⁴ In most manuscripts with numbers running up to Mo-So 20 capital letters on a small piece of wrapping paper denote the order, but Mo-So 1, Mo-So 14 and Mo-So 15 do not have these tags, perhaps because they have fallen off. Circular tags with jagged edges showing numbers of yet another system are found on e.g. Mo-So 123 and Mo-So 129 (both XI./24, perhaps referring to a set).

⁵ For early Dongba manuscript studies see the contribution by Michael Friedrich in this volume. ⁶ For example, see Li Lincan 1984, 105 and Poupard 2018, 99–101.

⁷ For the Geba-Dongba glossary with French phonetic glosses and translations reproduced in Bacot 1913, see the contribution by Michael Friedrich in this volume, Fig. 5.

lations' may shed new light on the principal limits of such an endeavour. A tentative translation of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6 is appended.

1 Material features

The four manuscripts come in the typical form of Dongba ritual manuscripts: oblong format resembling the Tibetan *pothi* with the ratio between height and width around 1 : 3, but in contrast to the former bound on the left. Some basic features are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Codicological features of the four manuscripts, retrieved from the website of the University of Manchester and examination.⁸

	Paper	Size (mm)	Binding	Folios (incl. covers)	Trimmed corners on the right	Remarks
Mo-So 13	Coarse, brown (laid)	84 × 270	Thread, brown; 7 holes	20	yes	Small piece of brown wrapping paper with 'N' on verso of front cover
Mo-So 6	Coarse, grey (laid)	110 × 300	Blue cord (original?); 4 holes	20	yes	Small piece of brown wrapping paper with 'F' on verso of front cover
Mo-So 93	Thin and smooth, light grey	105 × 250	Thread, light grey; 2 holes	21	no	Arabic folio numbers, partially covered by spine; last folio before back cover has only two lines of writing on the recto
Mo-So 9	Thin and smooth, light grey	110 × 255	Two slips of paper, 2 holes for each	11	no	Small piece of brown wrapping paper with 'J' on verso of front cover

⁸ See <https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/view/search?search=SUBMIT&q=Mo-So&-dateRangeStart=&dateRangeEnd=&QuickSearchA=QuickSearchA>, accessed on 14 January 2022.

Coarse paper similar to that of Mo-So 13 and Mo-So 6 is found in most Dongba manuscripts. Li Lincan, who studied and collected them during the 1940s, had reported that the Dongba mostly produced their own paper, but because of a lack of expertise were not able to create a pure white quality. Exposed to the sun and fumigated by smoke and incense, the paper often took the colour of ‘ancient bronze’.⁹ Without material analysis it is impossible to determine the components of the papers, but everything points in the same direction as the few studies undertaken so far: the basic materials are *Wikstroemia* and *Broussonetia papyrifera* (paper mulberry).¹⁰ From scrutiny of eight Dongba manuscripts it has been shown that the oblong format of the folios was produced by cutting larger sheets of paper into four or eight.¹¹ The trimming of corners is common in Dongba manuscripts and may have served the purpose of protecting these vulnerable parts from damage (see Fig. 1).¹²

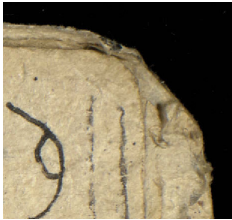


Fig. 1: Upper right corner of fol. 1^r of Mo-So 6.

There are no studies on the bindings of Dongba manuscripts. They greatly vary and range from ‘rough binding’ using paper twists (Mo-So 9) and simple ways of stitching (Mo-So 13) to that of the Chinese ‘thread-bound books’ with the stitches extending over the cut and the back (Mo-So 6).¹³ However, despite the different materials and sewing, stab-stitched binding technique was presumably used for all four manuscripts.¹⁴ The blue cord of Mo-So 6 is also found in Mo-So 18,

⁹ Li Lincan 1984, 427.

¹⁰ For plants used in papermaking, see the contribution of Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai in this volume.

¹¹ See Harder-Steinhäuser and Jayme 1963; see also the contribution of Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai in this volume for a recent technical examination.

¹² Trimmed corners have also been found in manuscripts from late first millennium Dunhuang, see Galambos 2020, 35.

¹³ For bindings of Chinese books see Helliwell 1998, see also Obi 2004, 29.

¹⁴ For more on stab-stitched binding, see Helman-Ważny et al. 2020: ‘A stab-stitched binding is

another manuscript held by the JRL, and may point to a common origin (see Figs 2 and 3).¹⁵ In the case of Mo-So 18, the blue-cord binding was clearly done at a late stage, in order to rebind an old manuscript that had lost its covers.

With the exception of Mo-So 93 (see below), it is not clear whether the leaves were bound before or after being written on.



Figs 2 and 3: Bindings of Mo-So 13 and Mo-So 6.

Mo-So 13 is clearly the oldest of the four manuscripts and appears to have been in actual use: the brittle paper has noticeably darkened, small pieces have already come loose (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Fol. 1' of Mo-So 13.

characterised by using a thread-stitch. There are many variations of it, depending on the book's size, the materials used and the local binding tradition. The common denominator, however, is that a thread is pulled through the stabbed holes in the book and wrapped around the "back" of it to produce a spine'.

15 Mo-So 18 is an old one, having been rebound and protected with new covers.

In some places cracks have emerged, and some characters are difficult to identify (Figs 4, 5 and 6). All these features are typical for old manuscripts that have been in use for a certain length of time.



Figs 5 and 6: Upper right corner and lower edge on fol. 1' of Mo-So 13.

Mo-So 6 (Fig. 7) is made of a similar type of paper but had apparently never been used in the traditional way and thus kept its original colour, just as the new covers of Mo-So 18 did.



Fig. 7: Fol. 1' of Mo-So 6.

The paper of Mo-So 93 and Mo-So 9, on the other hand, is thin and of lighter colour, typical for what is usually called 'mulberry paper', providing a much more suitable support for writing (see Fig. 8).



Fig. 8: fol. 1^r of Mo-So 93.

2 Visual Features

The front cover of Mo-So 9 is blank; the others have title cartouches adorned by a knot. Although the cartouche of Mo-So 13 is severely damaged, it is obvious that Mo-So 6 partially copied it, at the same time adding some Geba characters and a more elaborate design: the cartouche is red, decorated with a Chinese knot in yellow, red, and blue and waving strips in red and blue. Below, a Chinese title of the Dongba characters in the centre is provided: *Dizhi shier shu* 地支十二屬 'The Twelve Animals of the Earthly Branches'. Mo-So 93 in turn copied Mo-So 6, but was perhaps left unfinished, because the outline of the knot looks as if it had been prepared for being coloured (see Figs 9, 10, 11).

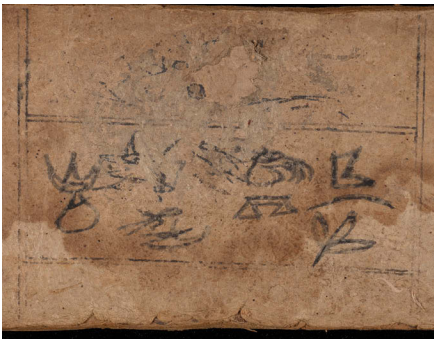


Fig. 9: Front cover of Mo-So 13.



Fig. 10: Front cover of Mo-So 6.

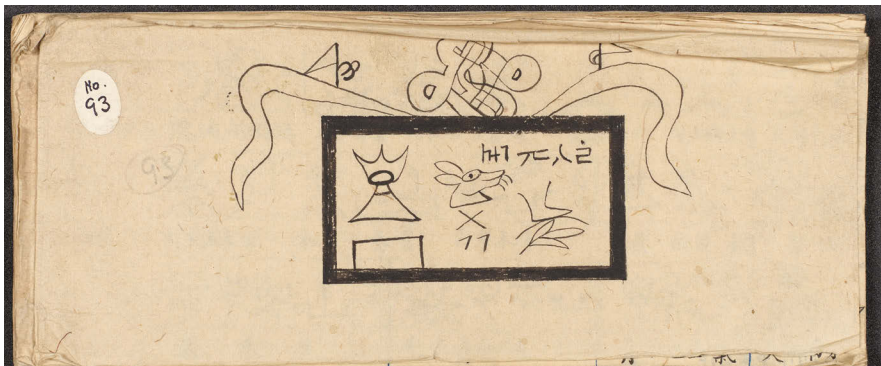


Fig. 11: Front cover of Mo-So 93.

The same impression is conveyed by the first written page of Mo-So 93: While the model lacks an image (see Fig. 8), Mo-So 6 has a coloured drawing of a standing figure at the left, probably representing a Dongba, perhaps the first teacher Dongba Shiluo. He is holding a golden bell in the right hand, showing the Karana mudra for repelling demons with the left hand, and wearing a hat made of fur, probably from the snow leopard, with pheasant feathers (Fig. 12).¹⁶

¹⁶ During the workshop 'Bonpo Manuscript Culture: Towards a Definition of an Emerging Field' in March 2016 hosted by the Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) in Hamburg, Charles Ramble suggested it may resemble the fur of a snow leopard. The pheasant feathers can be seen in Rock 1952, pt. I, plate xix.



Fig. 12: Illustration on fol. 1^r of Mo-So 6.

Mo-So 93 does not have the figure but instead a blank space at the same position, presumably left for filling in the drawing. Colours are also used in some other places, but apparently without any overall design.

In Mo-So 13, the ruling for the three lines, commonly used in ritual manuscripts, was done freehand and with the same instrument used for writing the characters. In Mo-So 6 and Mo-So 93, however, the ruling for the six lines alternately filled with Dongba and Chinese characters was done in a different way, probably with the help of a ruler and, at least in Mo-So 93, with another writing instrument, perhaps with a pencil. Thus, the latter two appear much more orderly. The vertical dividers, separating cola or verses, are precisely copied from Mo-So 13 to Mo-So 6, while Mo-So 93 has a different division with the dividers first executed in blue, perhaps with a pen, then with another instrument in black.¹⁷

¹⁷ Rock refers to the cells as 'rubrics': 'Each page is divided into three lines and each line into a number of rubrics, and each rubric contains a phrase rather than a single sentence', see Rock 1937, 6.



Fig. 13: Fol. 3^r of Mo-So 93.

Here not only the number of dividers is usually higher than in Mo-So 13 and Mo-So 6, but in some cases, they are clearly employed to facilitate the assignment of the Chinese 'translation' to the Dongba characters, as the 'step' design of some of them shows (see Fig. 13). Another unusual feature are Arabic folio numbers added on the top left corner on the recto pages except folio 1; since they are partially or wholly covered by the spine of the binding, it is not to be excluded that there are more exceptions. For the same reason, it is impossible to say without unbinding whether two-digit numbers were used. The execution of the numbers points to a scribe not trained in writing Arabic numerals (see Fig. 14).

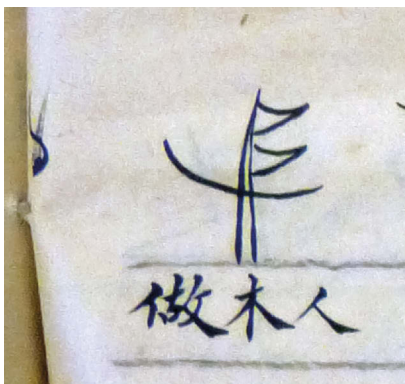


Fig. 14: Folio number '8' on Mo-So 93, fol. 18^r.

For Mo-So 9, a grid with seven cells in each of the three lines per page was created. The cells were alternately filled with a Dongba character and Chinese characters written with the same instrument. The English translations of the Chinese glosses were apparently not provided for in the original layout and were added later. Depending on the space available, they were written between the Chinese lines of one cell or even extending beyond the cell. This suggests that the English translation may not have been intended when writing the Chinese text (see Fig. 15).

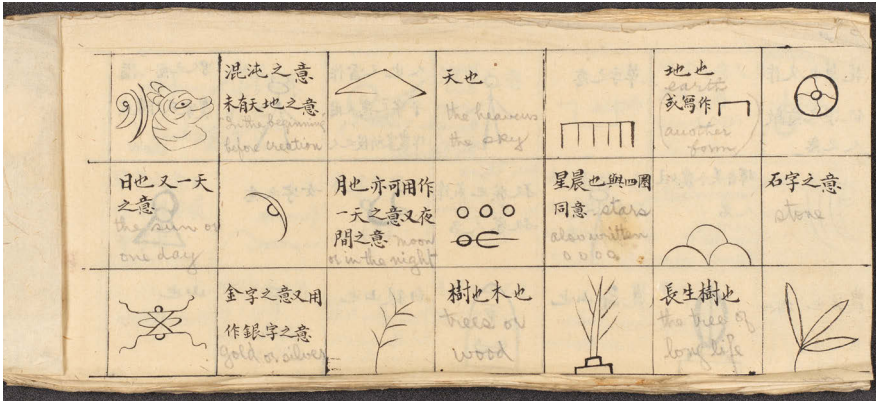


Fig. 15: Fol. 1' of Mo-So 9.

3 Writing

Mo-So 13 and Mo-So 6 were presumably written with a bamboo stylus, the traditional writing instrument of the Dongba. For the other two, it is not possible without further analysis to determine the instrument; it could as well be a brush. The hand of Mo-So 6 does not appear experienced or well-trained, while that of Mo-So 93 is more controlled and experienced; irregularities, however, may be caused by a scribe trained to write Chinese with a brush having to use a stylus. Mo-So 93 and Mo-So 9 are most probably written by the same neat and experienced hand which shares some features with that of Mo-So 6. In addition, Mo-So 9 contains English entries in pencil in the Chinese cells.

4 Mo-So 6: A copy of Mo-So 13 with an Interlineal Translation into Chinese

The Dongba characters of Mo-So 13 were exactly copied onto Mo-So 6, including layout features such as the dividers. The Chinese interlineal text, presumably the translation of a Dongba's recitation or explanation, is matched with the Dongba characters by leaving spaces which correspond more or less to the divisions (see Fig. 16). Due to some inconsistencies and 'mistakes' in the Chinese translation that could derive from someone who is unfamiliar with the Dongba characters and the content of the manuscript, it may be assumed that the two were written by different hands.

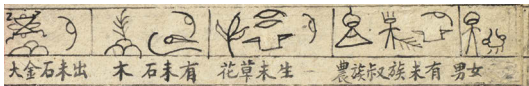


Fig. 16: Fol. 1 of Mo-So 6.

A mark derived from the Tibetan *yig mgo* (lit. letter initial) marks the beginning of a section in the Dongba 'text'.¹⁸ These 'heads' are coloured in blue and red (Fig. 15). A small circle repeatedly occurring in the Chinese text (Fig. 17) is a segmentation mark, in most cases corresponding to the 'heads' (see the introduction to the translation in Appendix III).



Fig. 17: Fol. 8 of Mo-So 6.

¹⁸ Li Lincan notes that locals call them 'character head' (*zitou* 字頭) and that it was adapted from the Tibetan 'character head', see Li Lincan 1944, 131 and Li Lincan 2001, 294. He refers to the Tibetan *yig mgo* ཡིག་མགོ་ (Tib. ཡིག་མགོ་) or *mgo yig*, that is used to mark 'the beginning of a text or of a page', see Tournadre and Dorje 2003, 406. It appears on fols 1¹, 6¹, 7³, 8³, 10¹ (without colouring), 11³ (only coloured in red), 12³, 13³ (only half of the mark coloured in blue), 14³, 15³.

When proper names appear in the Chinese text, they are mostly marked by a line at the top of the characters (in contrast to modern usage), but this was forgotten or only done partially in many cases. This may have resulted from uncertainty about what exactly names are, or simply from carelessness. The Chinese text shows traces of corrections and errors, pointing to the latter.¹⁹

5 Mo-So 93: A refined copy of Mo-So 6

Both the Dongba characters and the Chinese text of Mo-So 93 were copied from Mo-So 6, but with some telling changes. Although the Dongba characters were taken over in exactly the same distribution on the page, Mo-So 93 has more dividers. The intention seems to be to allow easier identification of which Dongba characters are represented by which part of the Chinese translation (see Figs 18 and 19).



Fig. 18: First two lines on fol. 1' of Mo-So 6.



Fig. 19: First two lines on fol. 1' of Mo-So 93.

In addition, the writing of Mo-So 93 is executed with a sense of proportion and harmony (see Fig. 20).

¹⁹ Names have not been completely overlined or it was completely left out in the following instances: fols 5⁴, 6⁶, 6², 10² and 4, 11², 12², 12⁴, 12⁴, 13², 18⁶.

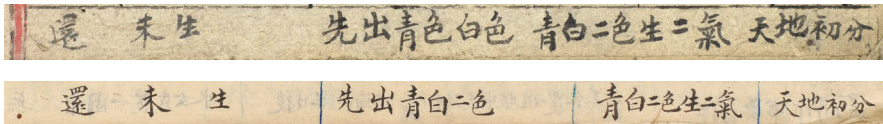


Fig. 20: Comparison of the Chinese text on fol. 1'6 of Mo-So 6/93.

Most notable is the correction of mistakes and the improvement of style. A few examples must suffice to document this effort:

Mo-So 93, fol. 8'6 correction

Mo-So 6: 九天天夜

Mo-So 93: 九天九夜

Translation 'Nine days and nine nights'

The mistaken repetition of *tian* 天 ('day') is corrected by writing *jiu* 九 ('nine') instead.

Mo-So 93, fol. 2'4–6: standard character, clarification

Mo-So 6: 生美令叔姊又游海边照見影

Mo-So 93: 生美令叔姊又游海邊照見形影

Translation 'And brought about Meilingshuzi who also went out roaming on the shore to gaze at his reflection.'

In this case, the cursive character *bian* 边 has been replaced by the standard one: 邊; furthermore, by adding the character 形 for *xing* to the one for *ying* 影 ('shadow, image, reflection'), the meaning is specified as referring to the shadow of Meilingshuzi.

Mo-So 93, fol. 3'4: intelligibility

Mo-So 6: 農叔兩家中間隔一天大河矣

Mo-So 93: 農叔兩家中間隔一極大之河

Translation 'An extremely large river separated the two families of Nong and Shu'

Here, unintelligible wording (一天大河) that perhaps betrays a trace of the original Naxi text has been changed into a meaningful phrase by replacing the character for *tian* 天 by the one for *ji* 極.

Mo-So 93 is apparently a clear copy of Mo-So 6, created by a scribe trained in writing decent Chinese. It had perhaps not been finished but was apparently

meant to show a neat-looking and stylistically acceptable Chinese text in close relation to the Dongba characters.

6 Mo-So 9: A Key to Dongba Manuscripts?

Mo-So 9 was obtained through 'the services of a Chinese scholar, who was familiar with the people and their language' and referred to as a key 'that may prove to be of great service when the other manuscripts in the collection come to be dealt with'.²⁰ The 'key' comprises nine folios with Dongba characters, Chinese and English glosses (Fig. 15). While the Dongba-Chinese parts were probably written in one go, the English translations of the Chinese glosses were clearly added later. It is the earliest tri-lingual Dongba character inventory known, containing 168 entries. It covers approximately only 58% of the content of Mo-So 6/93 and may thus have been unfinished, like the latter.²¹ The last entry ('the sign of the 12 Earthly Stems') corresponds to the Dongba title inside the cartouche of Mo-So 6.

In principle, the order of entries follows their appearance in Mo-So 13 and Mo-So 6, but there are many exceptions and inconsistencies (see Fig. 21). A striking example is the fact that the character for negations which already appears five times in the first line, in Mo-So 9 is given only on fol. 2^r. In most cases, there is no discernible reason for such irregularities. Just as Mo-So 93 was a clear copy of Mo-So 6, the scribe may have first produced a draft, perhaps on cards, which were in disorder when he wrote the glossary.



Fig. 21: Mo-So 6 with the order of characters as appearing in Mo-So 9, the 'key'.

²⁰ See Guppy 1916, 142 and 143.

²¹ At least 122 characters were not included in the glossary. In addition, there may still be some unrecognized compounds.

The very first Dongba character in Mo-So 6/93, the ‘head’ mark, only comes on fol. 1^o of Mo-So 9 as number 15 and is glossed here as 譯音美令農姐人名 ‘phonetic rendering: Meilingnongjie, personal name’. This clearly refers to the second occurrence of the ‘head’ in Mo-So 6/93 on fol. 6^o1, where the Chinese text does have this name. The scribe responsible for it probably faithfully represented the translation of the chanted text, not knowing that the ‘head’ was a graphic mark without any spoken equivalent (see Fig. 22).

The English translations of the Chinese glosses were done by someone not very familiar with Literary Chinese and traditional glossing techniques, probably due to superficial knowledge of the language and a lack of serious dictionaries. The above gloss for the ‘head’: ‘phonetic rendering, Meilingnongjie’ is translated as ‘Tseyinmeichin name of ancestor of Farmer clan’: ‘Tseyin (yiyin 譯音, ‘phonetic rendering’) is considered to be part of the name, the name Meilingnongjie is shortened to ‘meichin’, and the last two syllables are translated as if they were representing Chinese words for Farmer clan (*nongzu* 農族) (see Fig. 22). The author obviously mixed up the determinatives and the phonetic elements: *yi* 譯 is transliterated as ‘tse’ (*ze < ze* 擇 or 澤?), *ling* 令 as ‘chin’ (< *jin* 今?) and *jie* 姐 translated as ‘ancestor’ (< *zu* 祖?). Similar mistakes occur more often, for example in 神名韶阿瓦德 ‘name of a deity Shaoawade’, given as ‘chao a ping teh a god’,²² clearly mistaking *wa* 瓦 for *ping* 瓶.



Fig. 22: Fol. 1^o of Mo-So 9.

²² Mo-So 9, fol. 6^o.

Another example for unfamiliarity with traditional Chinese lexicography is a gloss on folio 5' of the Mo-So 9: 'the wood or bush people' for Chinese 木偶木人之意 ('wooden effigy, meaning a man made from wood').

The date of the pencil glosses is not known. Although the hand looks different from the one in Forrest's translation, it cannot be completely excluded that it was him.²³

7 A First Attempt to Translate Mo-So 6

The JRL holds an undated draft translation of the first part of the Chinese text. It was done by George Forrest, as a comparison with a letter signed by him shows.²⁴ Corrections have been made, and words have been crossed out. In addition, notes and alternative translations were added in parentheses. The translation breaks off after page six, corresponding to fol. 4' of Mo-So 13/93. This is precisely the place when the 'story' telling of the etiological myth is followed by the stereotypical formulas referring to ritual actions.

Some indications suggest that the text was translated without the help of the 'key', instead following the Chinese on Mo-So 6/93. The draft contains similar mistakes to those made by the scribe who had glossed Mo-So 9, but not the same ones. This suggests that the translation was done with the help of dictionaries and not the 'key'. In addition, the transliterations are different from those used in the latter, such as 'May-ling-nong-dsu' (美令農族) instead of 'Tseyinmeichin' (譯音美令). In one case the first syllable of a name was not perceived as such: 'Ti-dimo-ming' for Yushijimouming (于是戟某命). 'Ti' is probably to be understood as a mistaken reading of the character *shi* 是 (< *ti* 題?), showing a similar pattern to Mo-So 9.²⁵

²³ Mueggler describes a multi-layered translation process of Forrest and his assistant Zhao when working on their maps. He argues that the 'inconsistency' of the former's transliterations supports the botanist's 'discomfort with Chinese characters', see Mueggler 2011, 22–23. This and the fact that he used grey and blue pencil on the maps could support the idea that Forrest was working (perhaps together with Zhao) on the translation of the 'key' (grey pencil) and Mo-So 93 (vertical lines on first pages in blue pencil).

²⁴ See the contribution by Michael Friedrich in this volume, p. 294 n. 73.

²⁵ Different transliterations of names are still common, for examples see Appendix I.

8 A full translation of the Chinese text

On 16 March 1965, Anthony Jackson brought a typewritten translation of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6 to Francis Taylor.²⁶ It constitutes a significant improvement on Forrest's translation. Jackson chose the following visual organisation for the translation: the dividers are represented by a slash '/' or a line break. Line breaks in the Chinese text are indicated by a series of hyphens '-----'.

Despite some remaining misunderstandings, e.g. 'Peasant-clan' for Nongzu 農族, and open questions as manifest in alternative translations, e.g. '[...] produced the two breaths (powers?)', the Chinese text was finally translated in a full and already quite faithful version, but it was never published.

A comparison of Jackson's translation with Forrest's not only shows the advance in the understanding of the text, but also an increased attention to the visual organisation of the manuscript. Jackson may have sensed that this was one of the features relating the Chinese translation to the 'original'. The following comparison (Table 2) shows the features of the two translations and demonstrates the improvements made by Jackson that facilitate our understanding of the content and arrangement of the manuscript.

Table 2: The beginning of Forrest's and Jackson's translations of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6.

<i>Mossao book No 1</i> ²⁷	<i>Rylands Mo-Su MSS No. 6</i> ²⁸
Page 1. at the time of chaos, before heaven + earth were divided or the sun + moon gave light or the stars were manifest. Before forests grew on [?] around —? ere the Great-sea was full, or the gems of the earth were found, before timber or stone existed or flowers and grass had sprung into life. Before (farmers) existed or male and female were born ²⁹ In the beginning appeared	In the time of chaos/ before heaven and earth were parted/ before sun and moon gave their light/ before stars appeared On top of K'un-lun Mountain/ before the tree of longevity existed/ when the sea was not yet full ----- Before the big golden stone appeared ³⁰ Before trees and stones existed

²⁶ Note by Taylor on the first page of the typescript.

²⁷ *Draft translation* of Mossao book No. 1, Acc.+Book+XI+f.24b, The University of Manchester, England. The numbers appearing in the translation refer to the pages of Mo-So 6 (and 93).

²⁸ Typewriter translation with note from Francis Taylor: 'Brought by Mr. A. Jackson', March 16, 1965, see Gow 2013.

²⁹ The meaning of this vertical stroke is not clear.

³⁰ Before correction: 'Before the big gold and stone appeared'.

Table 2 (continued)

<i>Mossao book No 1</i> ²⁷	<i>Rylands Mo-Su MSS No. 6</i> ²⁸
the two colours green + white, these two colours produced two vapours. (2) heaven + (2) earth were then divided, heaven + earth begat the Great Spirit and afterwards begat <u>low-a-wa+de</u> , and then begat <u>Ti-di-mo-ming</u> along with <u>May-ling-nong-dsu</u> (or father agriculture). The farmers had a white heaven and earth, sun, moon + stars gave forth their light, mountains, rivers, + sea were green and white (i.e. clear). The fathers of agriculture travelled over the sea, and saw its aspect. In the night he desired a companion who would help him during the day. [...]	Before flowers and plants grew-Before the Peasant-clan and Shu-clan existed Men and women ----- were not yet born First appeared the blue colour and the white colour/ the blue and white colours produced the two breaths (powers?) Heaven and Earth began to part ³¹ Heaven and Earth gave birth to the Big God (Supreme God?)/ later on gave birth to Shao-a-wa-teh Again gave birth to Yü-shih-chi-mou-ming Afterwards gave birth to Mei-ling-nung-chieh/ The Peasant-clan's heaven and earth were both white (or clear) ----- Their sun, moon and stars were all bright Their mountains, rivers and seas were all clear/ Mei-ling-nung-chieh travelled to the sea-side and found his image (in the water)/ he wished to have a company in the night ----- He wished to have a working company in the morning

9 Conclusion: Lessons to be learned

In a nutshell, the four manuscripts and the two efforts at translation presented here exemplify the problems of translating Dongba 'texts'. Since these manuscripts stand at the threshold between a living tradition and its transformation into an object of commercial and scholarly interests, they allow a glimpse into a world already nearly gone when all ritual activities of the Dongba were banned after 1949.

³¹ Before correction: 'Heaven and Earth were then parted'.

We do not know why Mo-So 13 was selected for the bilingual version of Mo-So 6. Neither do we know who the ‘Chinese scholar’ was, who either translated the verbal performance of a Dongba directly into Chinese or relied on an interpreter first rendering the ritual language into colloquial Naxi. Whether the bilingual version of Mo-So 6 was commissioned by Forrest or produced by the unknown scholar for other reasons, will remain a mystery, like the reasons for producing the ‘clear copy’ contained in Mo-So 93 and the glossary of Mo-So 9. The stylistic refinement of the Chinese text of Mo-So 93 does not point to a European patron, but rather to an effort to address a Chinese-reading audience.

It is clear, however, that Forrest used Mo-So 6 and 93 for his partial draft translation. Jackson was certainly right in saying that Mo-So 6, 93 and 9 were not ‘Mo-So texts’, probably meaning that these manuscripts were not ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ in the sense that they were not used for ritual purposes, but were produced as tools for deciphering and understanding Dongba ‘texts’. Since these texts were primarily stored in the individual Dongba’s memory, translating them not only meant transferring a specific content into other languages, but also transforming a memorized text which would be recited whenever required, with a certain degree of variance, into a written, stable text. In principle, thus, there are five steps:

1. The verbal, ephemeral performance of a memorized text in the ritual language of the individual Dongba;
2. The ephemeral translation of this text into colloquial Naxi as spoken by the translator, usually being the Dongba himself;
3. The ephemeral translation of this text into spoken Chinese;
4. The recording of this text in written Chinese, and
5. The translation of this text into written English.

In some cases, steps 3 and 4 may have been enacted by the same person. Even twenty years after Forrest had sold his first batch of Dongba manuscripts to the JRL, when Joseph F. Rock (1884-1962) was working on his translations, the process was still much the same in principle:

First, [the Dongba] He Huating copied each page of the pictographic text in his elegant hand. Then he recited the text for Rock to transcribe with the idiosyncratic orthography he invented for this purpose. Third, he dictated a summary translation of each line of the recited text in colloquial Naxi to Li Shichen or He Guangyi. Li or He translated this into Chinese, and Rock rendered their Chinese into elegant English. Fourth, the translation doubled back, plunging into the pictographs with blocs of text that mapped out each rubric.³²

32 Mueggler 2011, 268.

The anonymous Chinese scholar, Forrest and Rock all tried to relate their stages of the translation to the 'original' version they assumed to be found in the manuscripts. The evident contradiction between assuming that the manuscripts contained the *primary* witnesses of texts and complaining about the nature of the 'hieroglyphic' or 'pictographic' script that did *not* record complete texts apparently failed to prompt methodological reflections. The primacy of the mental, unstable text is acknowledged and lamented by Rock on more than one occasion:

The pictographic writing of the ¹Na²khi is a mnemonic one; only one, two, or three syllables of a phrase consisting of eighteen or twenty or more are written, the rest has to be supplied from memory. The ²dto³mbas in ancient days were afraid that the common people would learn to read, should the entire text be written out, so they decided to write only a few syllables of each phrase; this has now acted as a boomerang, and much of what has to be read into a sentence has now been forgotten, and very few indeed are the ²dto³mbas who can read a text twice exactly the same. Sometimes they use a different phraseology but with the meaning being the same. Furthermore, if a ²dto³mba is confronted with a manuscript written by a ²dto³mba from another district, he will read it as he has been taught by his father, *i.e.*, he will remember the text of his book and read pictographs not occurring in the text, omitting such as are written, in other words: he will read from memory the particular copy of the manuscript he had left in his home, rather than the one put before him.³³

Before 1916, at the time when Mo-So 6, 93 and 9 were produced, there existed neither a standard Naxi language nor dictionaries of its varieties, not to mention the ritual language of the Dongba which was only understood by the Dongba, if at all. Since most of the active Dongba lived in villages away from the bustling town of Lijiang and spoke only their local variant of Naxi, interpreters were needed to translate the colloquial Naxi into Chinese, so-called Yunnan Mandarin, which in turn served as the source for translation into a European language – just as Bacot had already reported in 1913. As a rule, most of the Dongba characters could somehow be related to the translation texts, but without a Dongba or at least intimate knowledge of the ritual tradition it was close to impossible to 'translate' the manuscripts' content. The very idea of a key thus had to fail, because even knowledge of the possible words written by the characters would not allow 'reading' a 'text'. To take just the first divisions of Mo-So 13/6/93 as an example: using the 'key', the translation reads:

at the time of chaos heaven place not earth sun moon stars not Kuenlun Mountains not
[character not in 'key'] tree of long life not [character not in 'key'] sea not stone gold not

33 Rock 1948, 2–3.

tree stone not [character not in 'key'] flowers leaves place not Mr Farmer Mr Schoo not place
male female [character not in 'key'] elm [animal head] dwell [?] place not [...]

The recurring combination of 'place' and 'not' does not make sense; the 'key' is simply wrong here.³⁴ But even without mistakes, consequent application of the 'key' will result in an – incomplete – chain of semantic atoms which would require much more effort to be turned into a natural-language text than in the case of glossaries of spoken languages. The monotonous sequence of the characters most probably did not correspond to the actual performance of the Dongba, as the Chinese text of Mo-So 6 shows:

At the time of chaos, Heaven and Earth were not divided yet, sun and moon did not shine yet, the stars and celestial bodies had not made their appearances yet,| on Kunlun Mountain the Tree of Longevity was not there yet, the Great Ocean was not full and great yet, great metals and rocks had not appeared yet,| trees and stones did not exist yet,| flowers and plants did not grow yet,| Nongzu and Shuzu did not exist yet,| men and women were not born yet.|³⁵

Of course, the scribe could have 'improved' the enunciated version, but this again would only demonstrate that it is close to impossible to get beyond the written translation.

This first documented attempt to translate a Dongba text is revealing, because it not only allows us to reconstruct the translation process in some detail, but also provides clues to its inherent problems. Even more important, however, is the fact that it bears witness to the different degrees of variance involved and created by the very process: proper names in Naxi were difficult to identify and could be rendered in many different ways, depending on the pronunciation of the Dongba, the understanding of the translators and their individual ways of handling their writing systems. At the end of this process, the outcome may have differed from the original word as well as from transliterations undertaken by others, thus preventing identification of deities and places in different texts. On the other hand, these translation activities were always done in an artificial setting. Without the ritual actions many aspects of the texts would remain obscure. This may explain why the Chinese translation does not allow a clear distinction between the narrative part of the etiological myth and the one immediately referring to the performance.

³⁴ The character given as 'place' actually means t'v³³ 'to come forth', see Li Lincan 2001, 213–214, #1158.

³⁵ See Appendix III for a complete translation.

Acknowledgements

From 31 May to 1 June 2018, I was given the opportunity to access the Dongba manuscript collection in the Special Collections Reading Room of the John Rylands Library in Manchester. This was made possible through organizational and financial support by the Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg to which I would like to express my deepest appreciation. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Elizabeth Gow of John Rylands Library and the staff on-site for helping me in every possible way during my stay. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (CSMC) for her unwavering support. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Charles Ramble (École Pratique des Hautes Études) for his vital alterations and revisions of the translation. The contributions and suggestions made by the attendees of the Bon and Naxi workshops (2016-2019 and 2022) held at the CSMC, have been both invaluable and stimulating in the process.

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Appendix I: Names of Deities in Different Sources

Table 3: Comparison of transliterations from Ge Agan 2008, Li Lincan 1984, Li Lincan 2001, Rock 1963, Rock 1972, and Yang Shiguang 2008.

Mo-So 6	J. F. Rock	Others	Explanations
農族 Nongzu	¹ Ddu (Rock 1963, 54 and 277)	東主Dongzhu (Yang Shiguang 2008, 74)	Short form for Meiling-nongjie (see below)
叔族 Shuzu	² Müaŋ- ³ llü- ¹ ssu- ² ndzĩ (Rock 1972, 286)	術主Shuzhu (Yang Shiguang 2008, 74)	Short form for Meilings-huzi (see below)
韶啊瓦德 Shaoawade	¹ Ssaw- ² yi- ² wüa- ² de (Rock 1972, 21) and ² Na- ¹ dshi ¹ Ssaw- ² yi- ² wüa- ² de (Rock 1972, 15)	sa ³³ ru ⁵⁵ wε ³³ de ³³ and 薩利威登Saliweideng (Li Lincan 2001, 345)	'The supreme deity of the 1Na-2khi pantheon.' (Rock 1972, 21)
美令農姐 Meilingnongjie	² Müaŋ- ³ llü- ¹ ddu- ² ndzĩ (Rock 1963, 277)	米利東主Milidongzhu (Yang Shiguang 2008, 75) and 某利敦孜Mou-lidunzi (Li Lincan 1984, 115)	Milidongzhu is the one safeguarding the sun and moon. (Yang Shiguang 2008, 75)
美令叔子 Meilingshuzi	² Müaŋ- ³ llü- ¹ ssu- ² ndzĩ (Rock 1972, 286)	米利術主Milishuzhu (Yang Shiguang 2008, 75)	Milishuzhu, the black demon king in charge of the black sky and black earth. (Yang Shiguang 2008, 75)
處長戟某命 Chuzhangji-mouming	¹ Ts'u- ³ chwua ² gyi- ² muŋ (Rock 1963, 461), and ² Ts'u- ³ dzhwua- ² gyi- ² muŋ- 3mi (Rock 1937,)	tʂ'v ⁵⁵ tʂwa ³³ dʒi ³³ mo ³³ and 茨爪金姆 Cizhuajinmu (Li Lincan 2001, 348)	Meilingnongjie's wife. 'Female deity's name. [...] The first deity to open the land of the Dragon King.' (Li Lincan 2001, 348)

Table 3 (continued)

Mo-So 6	J. F. Rock	Others	Explanations
苟鏡毛 Goujingmao	² Müaṅ- ³ dta- ² gkü- ¹ zaw- ¹ na- ¹ muṅ (Rock 1972, 287)	ṣv ³¹ mi ⁵⁵ kuw ³³ za ³¹ na ³¹ mo ³³ and Shunügengraonamu 術女更饒那姆 (Li Lincan 2001, 322)	Meilingshuzi's wife. 'Name of demon'. (Li Lincan 2001, 322)
仲格 Zhongge	² Dtēr- ¹ gko (Rock 1972, 176–183)	多格 Duoge (Ge Agan 2008, 350)	'Protective tutelary spirits [...] There are 360 of them and they take precedence over the ² Yu- ¹ ma [...]' (Rock 1972, 176)
亞毛 Yamao	² Yu- ¹ ma (Rock 1972, 184–195)	優瑪 Youma (Yang Shiguang 2008, 76 and Ge Agan 2008, 350)	360 protective spirits (Rock 1972, 184)
於是鵝首 Yushieshou	¹ Yi- ³ shi- ² ō- ² zo (Rock 1972, 229)	¹ ṣw ⁵⁵ bo ³³ nḏo ³³ (Li Lincan 2001, 330)	The Dongba of Meiling- nongjie (Rock 1972, 229)

Appendix II: Comparison of Translations

In the table below, the translation by Joseph Rock of an etiological myth that is part of many 'texts' is juxtaposed with the one provided by the present author in Appendix III. It shows that Rock has included a considerable number of comments in his translation. Although this may have been done to help with the comprehension of the content, their lengthiness and many details detract from the translated text itself. Parts in italics are Rock's comments, while the translation is given in bold font.

Table 4: Comparison of Rock 1937, 14–15 and 'Translation of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6'.

J. F. Rock 1937, 14–15	Translation of Mo-So 6, fols 1'2–2'2
<p>[...] 3) ²Ha-¹ddü ³o-¹p'ër (Plate X) (the great god with the white bones), he caused to appear ²Ö-¹gko-²aw-¹gko (this deity is indicated by the Tibetan character ^ᠠᠠ, the Na-khi representation of the Tibetan character stands for the name of their perhaps supreme deity of which no pictures nor description exist in Na-khi manuscripts. The dto-mba are not very consistent, sometimes ²Ö-¹gko-²aw-¹gko is placed first and from him all other deities originated, sometimes, as in this case, ²Ha-¹ddü ³o-¹p'ër is placed first, and again the deity ¹Ssaw-²yi-²wua-²de, this latter deity is said to have meditated on ²Ö, or rather ^ᠠ in Tibetan [that is the first great cause], whereupon ²Ö-¹gko-²aw-¹gko became a reality). And from him came forth ¹Ssaw-²yi-²wua-²de, and from him ²Muan ⁻³llü-¹du-²ndzi the two latter caused to appear a white heaven and a white earth, 2nd line:</p>	<p>[...] Heaven and Earth brought forth the Supreme Deity, after that Shaoawade [moreover Yushijimou-ming,] and furthermore Meiling-nongjie. Nongzu possessed White Heaven and White Earth. Sun, moon and stars shone luminous. Mountains, rivers and lakes were clear and white. </p>
<p>1) a white sun, moon, stars and ¹zaw or planets, and there also came forth a white lake.</p>	
<p>2) One day ²Muan ⁻³llü-¹du-²ndzi¹ walked to ¹Du ³khü-¹p'ër, the white lake of Du (his own lake Du); there he saw his reflection in the water; in the evening he thought of a companion (a wife), and in the morning he thought of a son.</p>	<p>Meilingnongjie went out roaming on the shore to gaze at his reflection. At night he longed to have a partner,</p>
<p>3) He longed for a companion to help him in farming and in tending his flock of sheep (he can be seen working the land, and the grain is sprouting, the character for ²lv= stone or rock is used as a phonetic, and read in the third tone ³lv means a shepherd. The three last characters are: the upper a musk deer read ²lä, the second a pig read ¹bu, and the third fire read ²mi; all three serve as phonetics only and are read ²lä ¹bu ²mi meaning to wish for, long for as a companion).</p>	<p>during the daytime while working, he wanted to have a partner. </p>
<p>4) From ²Muan ⁻³llü-¹du-²ndzi's mouth came forth white foam, 3d line:</p>	
<p>1) from his eyes came forth tears (he wept), and his flesh turned blue and yellow, he gathered his tears and the foam from his mouth and threw them into the lake (this part is indicated in the last rubric of the second line).</p>	<p>Meilingnongjie had tears in his eyes, from his body flesh was released into the ocean.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

J. F. Rock 1937, 14–15	Translation of Mo-So 6, fols 1'2–2'2
2) After three nights something nice came gradually to the surface, and something bad went down.	
3) After three nights in the early morning, there came forth a brilliant water maid, scintillating and moving.	After three days a beautiful mermaid came about and had no one to give her a name.
4) There was no one to give her a name, so he called her ²Ts¹u-³dzhwua-²gyi-²mun-³mi. (<i>The word ³mi read in the third tone means simply female.</i>)	She named herself Chuzhangji-mouming.
5) The two then became one family, and there were born to them nine sons who dwelled in nine houses (<i>that is, they established nine households of their own</i>). Page 6, 1st line	Thereupon the two lived in the same house. During working, he had a partner and when he planned matters, he had a partner as well. Husband and wife prayed for raising nine sons and for establishing nine families. [...]'
1) Nine (<i>it should read seven</i>) daughters were born to them, and they dwelt in nine (<i>seven is correct</i>) lands (<i>daughters are given in marriage and become scattered, hence each one lived in a different place</i>). [...]'	

Appendix III: Translation of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6

Introduction

In Mo-So 6 and other Dongba manuscripts the Tibetan *yig mgo* 'initial' or 'head' letter appears frequently. The content of Mo-So 13 is divided into ten parts by them. In the Chinese text, a Chinese punctuation mark, was occasionally added, extending the *yig mgo* by four. After observation of the initials, three more are proposed (see Table 5, items 4, 5, and 9). The English translation in the Appendix was then arranged accordingly.

Table 5: Positions of the initials inside the Chinese and Dongba in 'Mo-So 6'.

	position	type
1	1'2–2'4	☺
2	2'4–2'4	0
3	2'4–3'4	0
4	3'4–5'2	x
5	5'2–6'2	x
6	6'2–7'2	☺
7	7'4–8'4	☺
8	8'4–9'4	☺0
9	9'4–10'2	x
10	10'2–11'4	☺0
11	11'4–12'4	☺0
12	12'4–13'4	☺0
13	13'4–14'4	☺0
14	14'4–15'4	☺0
15	15'4–16'4	☺0
16	16'4–17'6	0
17	17'6–19'2	0

However, the overall content can also be roughly divided into the following three sections:

1. Etiological myths of the Universe, Nong, Shu, the 'Fight Between Black and White'³⁶ (short), Twelve Earthly Branches and *shengxiao* 生肖.³⁷ (1–4)
2. Birth of Nong's sons in concordance with the *shengxiao*, their respective Twelve Earthly Branches, and successful defeat of the enemy. (5-16)
3. Offerings, creating effigies, end. (17)

³⁶ The myth that is nowadays called 'Fight Between Black and White' is only briefly alluded to in Mo-So 6. See Ge Agan 2008, 347–352 for a modern synopsis; for a 'complete' translation, see He Shicheng and He Limin 1989.

³⁷ The origin story of the positions of the *shengxiao* and their concordance with the Earthly Branches is also found in Li Lincan 1984, 114–117. Li quoted from *Shi er shengxiao chongke jingdian* 十二生肖冲剋經典 'Book About the Mutual Beneficial and Disadvantageous (Combinations) of the Twelve Shengxiao'. Whereas in his version Moulidunzi 某利敦孜 (in Mo-So 6 transliterated Meilingnongjie) assigns the positions, in Mo-So 6 this is done by Mingjubenma 名居本馬.

The twelve parts of the second section only differ in some details and in principle repeat the same Chinese text for each one of the twelve animals. Because of the prevailing interest in Dongba ‘literature’, the ritual context of Dongba ‘texts’ is often overlooked. The Chinese text of Mo-So 6 starts with the relevant myths and then proceeds to the ritual acts. It has passages that:

1. list the emergence of deities (Fol. 1^v2):

Heaven and Earth brought forth the Supreme Deity, after that Shaoawade| moreover Yushijimouming,| and furthermore Meilingnongjie. Nongzu possessed White Heaven and White Earth.|

2. deal with the assignment of positions (Fol. 4^v4–4^v6):

The Heavenly Deity Mingjubenma pointed with the hand and spoke:| You twelve animals that are conflicting need not argue. I assign separate positions to you:| Let Yin and Mao take position in the east,| let Si and Wu take position in the south, [...]

3. explain rituals (Fol. 5^v4–5^v6):

Rice, the Five Treasures, the Five Precious Objects, butter, cypress leaves were used. The ritual objects were taken, burned with fire, and sacrificed to Painengcai, Wonihong and Dounengxi. In front of the deities, they reported (their deeds).| Furthermore, nine sorts of wooden figures were used, and ten dough people with ox-heads were made. They were sent off on nine paths.

4. contain descriptions of ritual objects and the way they are made (Fol. 18^v6–18^v2):

All (of their) grains (are used) to build dough figures. Metal serves as the body. Pearls serve as the eyes. A red flag serves as the tongue. Conch shell serves as the teeth. Corals serve as the heart. The dough figures are able to laugh, the wooden figures can jump.

For the translation, ambiguities had to be resolved. For example, it is uncertain whether the descriptions of the last part (making various effigies and offerings to deities of the cardinal points) describe actions within the ritual or are mere descriptions. Moreover, there are several possibilities for the agents of certain acts. This was decided according to the consequential context: ‘Since the Shu Family was made to leave, the Nong Family only had their young son to leave and request Yushieshou to make invocations.’³⁸ It is implied in the first sequence

38 Fol. 5^v2-5^v4

that it must be the sons who request Yushieshou for aid. The sons were chosen as agents and added in parentheses. It can be assumed that after Yushieshou was successfully called, the subsequent invocations are performed by the family and the sons but now with the support of Yushieshou. For this, the passive voice was used. With the effigies that are made in this sequence, it may well be that the so-called 'Duo' demons (*duogui* 垛鬼) are exorcised.

To transfer the vertical dividers from the level of the Dongba, bars have been added to the translation: |.

Translation of the Chinese text of Mo-So 6

Front cover^r

The Twelve Animals³⁹ of the Earthly Branches

Front cover^v

Sticker that reads 'F', a previous signature mark glued onto the page.⁴⁰

Fols 1'2–2'4

At the time of chaos, Heaven and Earth were not divided yet, sun and moon did not shine yet, the stars and celestial bodies had not made their appearances yet,| on Kunlun Mountain the Tree of Longevity was not there yet, the Great Ocean was not full and great yet, great metals and rocks had not appeared yet,| trees and stones did not exist yet,| flowers and plants did not grow yet,| Nongzu and Shuzu did not exist yet,| men and women were not born yet.| At first, Black and White colour came about, the two colours Black and White were producing two (kinds of) Qi.| And Heaven and Earth initially split. Heaven and Earth brought forth the Supreme Deity, after that Shaoawade| moreover Yushijimouming,| and furthermore Meilingnongjie. Nongzu possessed White Heaven and White Earth.| Sun, moon and stars shone bright.| Mountains, rivers and lakes were clear and white.| Meilingnongjie went out roaming on the shore to gaze at his reflection. At night he longed to have a partner, during the daytime while working, he wanted to have a partner.| Meilingnongjie had tears in his eyes, from his body he released flesh into the ocean. After three days| a beautiful mermaid came about and had no one to give her a name. She named herself Chuzhangjimouming.| Thereupon the two lived in the same house. During working, he had a partner and when he planned matters, he had a partner as well.| Husband and wife prayed for raising nine sons

³⁹ Lit.: 'attributes' of the Earthly Branches, a technical term for the animals of the zodiac.

⁴⁰ It is probably a former inventory number of the manuscript. The letter 'F' is corresponding to today's no. 6 of the collection.

and for establishing nine families.| (And they prayed) for raising nine daughters and establishing nine families. O|

Fol. 2'4–2'4

Furthermore, it happened that Black colour turned into Black Heaven and Earth, into Black Sun, Black Moon, Black Stars, and Great Black Ocean.| And brought about Meilingshuzi who also went out roaming on the shore to gaze at his reflection. At night he longed to have a partner. In the early morning when getting up for work he wanted to have a partner.| Meilingshuzi also had tears in his eyes, and released flesh from his body into the ocean.| After three days another mermaid came about and named herself Goujingmao. The two started a family. During working he had a partner, when he planned matters, he had a partner. Husband and wife in this family wished to raise nine sons, establishing nine families. (And they wished for) bringing up nine daughters and establishing nine families.

Fols 2'4–3'4

O| Nongzu went to the Upper Region,| Shuzu went to the Lower Region.| Nongzu dwelled in the Upper Region| and Shuzu dwelled in the Lower Region.| White flowers grew in the Upper Region,| black flowers bloomed in the Lower Region.| The Nong dwelled in the Nong Region| and the Shu dwelled in the Shu Region, in that generation.| The Nong Family had good deeds in mind. The Shu Family had evil wishes in mind.| When the Nong Family raised livestock| the Shu Family wished to kill it| and when the Nong Family had drink and food| the Shu Family desired to take the food.| Everything the Nong Family brought about, the Shu Family desired to destroy.| The Shu Family did not come to the realm of the Nong Family.| The Nong Family cultivated good thoughts and performed virtuous deeds. (They) used butter, cypress leaves and five sorts of grain, reported their (deeds) to Heaven and sacrificed to it. The Heavenly Deities Zhongge and Yamao, 360 (of them) came down.| To the right side of the Kunlun Mountain, Heaven, Earth, sun, moon and stars, all were white. (Zhongge and Yamao) made the Nong Family dwell there.| On the left side of Kunlun Mountain, Heaven, Earth, sun, moon and stars were all black. The Shu Family was made to dwell there at this place.| Nong and Shu were commanded to separate their dwellings, (so far that even) birds could not reach each other.| An extremely large river separated the two families of Nong and Shu.|

Fols 3'4–5'2

Moreover, it is said: 'The water of the big river is long and wide. If someone can cross it, let him dwell on the first position of the Earthly Branches. Ox called out: "I can".| Ox waded across, Rat followed Ox and treacherously bit Ox's tail. In pain, Ox shook its tail.| Ox could not cross the stream, but Rat for its part could cross it. Hereafter Horse wished to wade through. Rat said: "Horse has a fire face, it must not take the second position| because Zi and Wu are conflicting".| After Rat, Ox went across, then Tiger, Hare, Dragon,| Serpent, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Chicken, Dog and Pig| could cross the river one after the other.| Zi and Wu are conflicting, Chou and Wei are conflicting, Yin and Shen are conflicting,| Mao and You are conflicting, Chen and Xu are conflicting, Si and Hai are conflicting.| The Heavenly Deity Mingjubenma pointed with the hand and spoke:| "You twelve animals that are conflicting need not argue. I assign separate positions to you:| Let Yin and Mao take position in the east,| let Si and Wu take position in the south, let Shen and You take position in the west,| let Hai and Zi take position in the north,| let Chen and Xu take position in Heaven,| let Chou and Wei take position on Earth."| The Twelve Animals of the Earthly Branches between Heaven and Earth came about that way.'

Fols 5'2–6'2

Meilingnongjie came about on the White Silver Mountain.| Chuzhangjimouming came about at the coast of the Black Ocean.| Husband and wife lived together| and raised a son; they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and month.| They went and looked at the Tree of Longevity: the leaves resembled the shape of a rat;| (they) wished to name (him) Rat. Black Horse and Rat fought over the position of Jupiter and came to the place of the Nong Family.| Since the Shu Family was made to leave, the Nong Family only had their young son to leave and request Yushieshou to make invocations. Rice, the Five Treasures, the Five Precious Objects, butter, cypress leaves were used. The ritual objects were taken, burned with fire, and sacrificed to Painengcai, Wonihong and Dounengxi. In front of the deities, they reported (their deeds).| Furthermore, nine sorts of wooden figures were used, and ten dough people with ox-heads were made. They were sent off on nine paths.| In the year of the Rat in front of Jupiter, wood from Bai [or Bo] was used to make human figures and they were sent off. Furthermore, rat and horse shaped (figures) were taken and sent off.| Yushieshou made invocations nine days and nine nights. The wives of the Nong Family prayed for seven days and seven nights, causing the destruction of the enemy family's walls and the drying-out of the pond. After that, the crowing of their roosters and the barking of their dogs were not heard anymore.| In the generation of Meilingnongjie, the

son was called Rat. Behind him fires from the South came and opposed him, all of them were finally suppressed. (There were) many descendants (that came hereafter), thus their mind was soothed, (and they were) prosperous. They loved that the water was far-reaching. Afterwards, on the day the Nong Family's grown-up son named Rat was married, behind his back fires came and those who opposed him were all suppressed. He hoped for his descendants to become prosperous, wealthy and strong. ○

Fols 6^v2–7^v2

Meilingnongjie continued to inhabit the White Silver Mountain and Chuzhangjiumouming continued to inhabit the shore of the Black Ocean. In the following year, they raised another son. Again, they did not know (the position of Jupiter) in that year and in that month. They looked at Tree of Longevity. In that year, the leaves resembled the shape of an ox; (they) named the son of Nong Ox. As Shuzi heard of it, he ordered a black sheep to (come) and be (the Nong Family's) enemy. Furthermore, the Nong Family requested Yushieshou to make invocations. Rice, the Five Treasures, the Five Precious Objects, nine sorts of wood were used, and made into the shape of men. Furthermore, (they) made ten dough figures and sent them off. In the year Chou, in front of Jupiter, the wood of the Yushu was used to build human figures. The Ox changed into the shape of a sheep and was sent off. Yushieshou made invocations for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures were tranquil and stopped on the clay hill. For seven days and nights the wives of the whole family sent curses to the enemy kingdom. Rooster and dog did not stay. (The curses) destroyed the enemy city. The son of Nong, (born in) the year Chou, had defeated the enemies behind him in advance. (The descendants) became wealthy and noble, lived a long life, and stayed healthy. Later on, the son of the year Chou got married, and he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. (The following descendants) were peaceful and lucky, and wished to be wealthy and powerful.

Fols 7^v4–8^v4

In the family of Meilingnongjie, they raised another son. They did not know (the position of Jupiter) in that year and in that month. Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a tiger; (they) named him Tiger. As Shujie heard of it, (he) ordered a red monkey to come, to be (the Nong Family's) enemy and go to the place of the Nong Family. Once again, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou (to make invocations). Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used. And nine sorts of wood were used to make nine figures of men, ten dough figures. The heads of oxen were

taken, and sent off on nine ways. In the year Yin, in front of Jupiter, the wooden figures were used. The Tiger changed into the shape of a monkey and was sent off. | Yushieshou made invocations nine days and nights, the wooden figures stopped on the mountain. The wives of the Nong Family sent curses for seven days and nights to the enemy territory. | (They) destroyed the embankment and the palace. Rooster and hound were not heard. | The son of Nong, (born in) the year Yin, did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. | (The descendants) lived peaceful and were auspicious, (they) became rich and strong. | Later on, the son of the year Yin got married. | Behind him, there were no enemies; they had been defeated in advance; | their heir flourished and became wealthy and noble.

Fols 8⁴–9⁴

O | In the family of Meilingnongjie they raised another son and they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and in that month. | They looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a hare; the Nong named him Hare. When the Shu heard (of what) the Nong were speaking (of), they ordered a black chicken to come and be (the Nong Family's) enemy. | Again, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used. And nine sorts of wood were taken and human figures were made out of it, ten dough figures and nine kinds of the heads from their livestock were made and sent off. | In the year Mao, in front of Jupiter, the wood of the Huangji was used to build wooden men. The Hare transformed into the shape of a chicken and was sent off. (They) wished to destroy the enemy's embankment and royal palace. Rooster and dog have not been heard. | The son of Nong, (born in) the year Mao, did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. The later generations thrived, flourished and became wealthy. | Later on, the son of Nong, (born in) the year Mao, got married, and he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. | (His) descendants flourished, and became wealthy and noble. |

Fols 9⁴–10²

In the Nong Family they raised another son and they looked at the Tree (of Longevity). The leaves resembled the shape of a dragon; (they) named him Dragon. As the Shu Family heard of it, they ordered a black dog to come and be (the Nong Family's) enemy (and go to) the Nong Family. | Furthermore, (the sons in the Nong Family) requested Yushieshou to make invocations. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used. | Then nine wooden figures, ten dough figures and heads of oxen were taken and sent off. | In the year Chen, in front of Jupiter,

Suancao was used to make figures of men. The Dragon changed into the shape of a dog and was sent off. Yushieshou prayed for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped on the clay hill. For seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses to the enemy kingdom and destroyed it. (That) caused (them) to no longer hear roosters and dogs. The son of Nong, (born in) the year Chen, had enemies behind him, who had been defeated in advance. (The descendants) were tranquil and lucky, wealthy, and noble. Later on, when the son of the year Chen got married, he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. (They) were prosperous, and (thus) the descendants became wealthy.

Fols 10'2–11'4

O| Meilingnongjie continued inhabiting the White Silver Mountain. | They raised another son and they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and in that month. | Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a serpent; | (they) named the son of Nong Serpent. When the Shu Family heard of it, they ordered a black pig to come and be (the Nong Family's) enemy. | Furthermore, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used, | nine wooden men, ten dough figures, and the heads of nine kinds of their livestock were used. In the year of the Serpent, in front of Jupiter, the wooden figures were used. The Serpent changed into the shape of a pig and was sent off. | (Yushieshou) prayed for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped ashore. For seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses to the enemy region. (That) destroyed the embankment and palace. Rooster and dog were not heard of. | The son of Nong, (born in) the year Si, had defeated (in advance) all those who became hostile behind him. (They) were prosperous, (thus) the descendants became wealthy and noble. | When the son of Nong, (born in) the year Si, got married, and he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. | The prosperous descendants were rich and noble. |

Fols 11'4–12'4

O In the Nong Family they raised another son | and again, they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and in that month. Once more, they looked at | the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a horse; (they) named him Horse. When the Shu Family heard of it, they ordered a black rat to come and be (the Nong Family's) enemy. Furthermore, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were

used.| Then, nine wooden figures were used and ten dough figures, nine heads of oxen were made and seen off. In front of Jupiter, in the year Wu, wooden figures were used. The Horse changed into the shape of a rat and was seen off.| Yushieshou prayed for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped ashore.| For seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses and destroyed the enemy kingdom. Rooster and hound were not seen nor heard.| The son of Nong, (born in) the year Wu, had enemies behind him, (but) all of them had been defeated (in advance). They were flourishing, (thus) they were prosperous and noble.| Later on, the son of Nong, (born in) the year (Si), got married, and he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. They were prosperous, (thus) the descendants became wealthy and noble and their minds peaceful.|

Fols 12^v4–13^v4

○ Meilingnongjie raised another son. They did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and that month. Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a sheep; (they) named their son Sheep. As the Shu Family heard of it, they ordered a black ox to come to their land and be hostile (against the Nong Family). Once again, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to make invocations. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used.| Nine wooden figures, ten dough figures with the heads of oxen were made and seen off.| In the year Wei, in front of Jupiter, wooden figures were made. The Sheep changed into a shape of an ox and was seen off.| Yushieshou made invocations nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped on the clay hill.| Seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses| and destroyed the enemy region. Rooster and dog were not heard. The son of Nong, (born in) the year Wei, enemies came behind him,| (but) all of them had been defeated (in advance). (Therefore) the descendants were prosperous.| Later on, the son of the year Wei got married; he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance.| They were prosperous, (thus) the descendants were wealthy and powerful.|

Fols 13^v4–14^v4

○ The Nong Family raised another son. Again, they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and that month.| Once more, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a monkey; they picked (his) name and called him Monkey.| When the Shu Family heard of it, once again, they ordered a black tiger to come to (the Nong Family's) sphere and be (their) enemy. Furthermore, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice,

the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects was used. And nine wooden figures, ten dough figures and nine sorts of dried heads of nine kinds of their livestock were made and seen off. In the year Shen, in front of Jupiter, the wooden figures were used. The Monkey changed into the shape of a tiger and was seen off. (Yushieshou) prayed for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped on the clay hill. Seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses and destroyed the enemy region. Rooster or dog were not heard. Behind the son of the Nong Family of the year Shen enemies (came), (but) all of them had been defeated in advance. Later on, the son of the year Shen got married, and did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. (They) were prosperous, thus the descendants were wealthy and noble.

Fols 14⁴–15⁴

○ In the family of Meilingnongjie they raised another son and they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and that month. Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shape of a chicken; (they) named him Chicken. As the Shu Family heard of that, they ordered a black hare to come and be (the Nong Family's) enemy. The (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to make invocations. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used, and nine sorts (of wood), nine (?), nine figures of men and ten dough figures, dried heads from livestock were used and seen off. In front of Jupiter, in the year You, the wooden figures were used. The Chicken changed into the shape of a hare and was seen off. Eshou prayed for nine days and nights. Seven days and seven nights (the wives of) the whole family sent curses and destroyed the enemy region. The wooden figures stopped at the coastline. Rooster and dog were not heard. The son of the year Hou did not have enemies behind him. All had been defeated (in advance). (They) were prosperous, thus the descendants became wealthy and noble. Later on, when the son of the year You got married, he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. (They) were prosperous, thus the descendants became wealthy and noble.

Fols 15⁴–16⁴

○ In the family of Meilingnongjie, another son was raised. They did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and that month. Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity. The leaves were shaped like a dog; (they) named him Dog. As the woman of Shu heard of what the Nong said, they ordered a black dragon to be (their) enemy. Furthermore, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used. And nine wooden figures and ten dough figures and nine kind of heads and horns

from their livestock were used and sent off. In the year Xu, in front of Jupiter, the wooden figures were used. The Dog changed into the shape of a dragon and was sent off. Eshou prayed for nine days and nine nights. The wooden figures stopped on the clay hill. Seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses and destroyed the enemy's embankment. Rooster or dog were not heard. The son of the year Xu, had defeated (in advance) all those who became hostile behind him. (There were) many descendants, thus the descendants became wealthy and noble. Later on, when the son of the year Xu got married, he did not have enemies behind him; they had been defeated in advance. (They) were prosperous, thus the descendants were wealthy and noble.

Fols 16'4–17'6

The Nong Family raised another son and they did not know (the position of) Jupiter in that year and that month. Again, they looked at the Tree of Longevity and the leaves resembled the shaped of a pig; (they) named him Pig. As the Shu Family heard of that, they ordered a black serpent to come and be (their) enemy. Furthermore, the (sons in the) Nong Family requested Yushieshou to pray. Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects were used. And nine wooden figures and ten dough figures and heads and horns of their livestock were used and sent off. The Pig changed into a serpent. Yushieshou prayed for nine days and nine nights. Seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses and destroyed the enemy region. The crow of the rooster and the barking of the dog were not heard.

Fols 17'6–19'2

○ White Deity of Eastern Wood, Dark Deity of Southern Fire, Black Deity of Western Gold, Yellow Deity of Northern Water, Central Earth Deity. (The sons in the Nong Family) requested (Yushieshou) to pray. (He prayed) for nine (days and nine nights). Rice, the Five Treasures and the Five Precious Objects, cypress leaves and butter, sacrifices of one kind of colour were used, and burned with fire. Painicai, Gaonengwu, Wonihou - in front of numerous deities, (they) made the offering and ended (it). The younger sons were ordered to take care of this. The year Zi, in front of Jupiter, wood of the Shuibai [or Shuibo] is used to make wooden figures. The year Chou in front of Jupiter, wood of the Yushu is used to make wooden figures. The year Yin wood of the Lingmu [or Lengmu] is used to make wooden figures. The year Mao, in front of Jupiter, wood of the Huangji is used to make wooden figures. The year Chen, in front of Jupiter, Suancao is used to make straw figures. The year Si, in front of Jupiter, wood of the Heici is used. The year Wu wood of the Tangerine is used to make wooden figures. The year

Wei, in front of Jupiter, wood of the Wutong is used to make wooden figures. | The year Shen, in front of Jupiter, Huangli is used (to make) wooden figures. | The year You, in front of Jupiter, grass from the Shoucao is used to make straw figures. | The year Xu, in front of Jupiter, Zhenzhu wood is used to make wooden figures. | In the year Hai, in front of Jupiter, the Gougecao is used to make straw figures. | (There are) Twelve Earthly Branches, (there are) twelve kinds of straw and wood figures, | places: (there are) Nine Regions, Seven Regions, Five Regions, Four Regions. All (of their) grains (are used) to build dough figures. Metal serves as the body. Pearls serve as the eyes. A red flag serves as the tongue. Conch shell serves as the teeth. Corals serve as the heart. The dough figures are able to laugh, the wooden figures can jump. They were sent off to the enemy region. | Yushieshou prayed for nine days and nine nights. | Seven days and seven nights the wives of the whole family sent curses to the enemy region. The enemy's rooster and dog were not heard. | The whole family of Meilingnongjie had enemies behind them; (they were) like flames. All of them were suppressed. From then, (there were) many descendants (that) came hereafter. They became wealthy, noble and their minds were soothed. The water flowed (until) the pond was filled. Everything had worked out according to their wishes. |

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Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Mengling Cai

Paper in Dongba Manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna

Abstract: This article presents the results of analyses of paper and fibre in sixteen Naxi manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna in the context of paper production in the northwestern part of China's Yunnan province, where the Naxi communities live. Understanding the material aspects of these manuscripts requires knowledge about the provenance of the paper, the technology of papermaking, and the raw materials that are used. Examination of paper samples with both digital and optical microscopes has revealed the papermaking techniques and raw materials that were involved. Identification of the raw materials and the way they correspond to the distribution of local plants and cultural habits provide clues to the possible regional origins of the paper.

1 Introduction: Paper and papermaking in the Naxi area

The Naxi are one of China's 55 officially recognised minorities, primarily inhabiting the highlands of today's Lijiang Naxi Autonomous Region in the northwestern part of Yunnan Province, China (Fig. 1).¹ The Naxi region located along the Jinsha river including its commercial centre of Lijiang is situated along the 'Southwest Silk Road', the traditional network of trade routes connecting China, Southeast Asia, Tibet and India.² As suggested by Chinese semi-official websites nowadays 'Dongba paper' has become part of tourism industry, presented as unique material, produced from special plants by craftsmen, who inherit their skills patrilineally over generations.³ While this would suggest a long tradition,

1 For the state of the art of research on languages of the Naxi subgroup of Sino-Tibetan in Chinese scholarship see Michaud, He and Zhong 2015; for the history of the study of Dongba manuscripts see the contribution of Michael Friedrich in this volume.

2 For the study of trade routes and exchange of goods including paper see Yang 2004.

3 This can be exemplified by 'The paper making of Dai and Naxi people' (2009), China Daily http://en.chinaculture.org/focus/focus/2010expo_en/2010-04/17/content_376648.htm (accessed on 3 May 2022).

numerous studies clearly show a loss of cultural practices and deprivation of natural resources due to both the turbulent history and rapid expansion of roads, markets, tourism and other infrastructure developments.⁴ It is why many questions remain as to just what kinds of raw materials and techniques were used before the Chinese Revolution of 1949, as well as how these various papermaking traditions have historically been absorbed into Naxi papermaking in a region with a complex history of interaction between various ethnic groups. This study seeks to address some of these questions through an examination of the actual makeup of paper from manuscripts in the Weltmuseum of Vienna.



Fig. 1: The location of Naxi area inhabiting the highlands of the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous Region in Yunnan Province, China.

⁴ After being listed as a World Heritage in 1997 Lijiang has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in China, and its heritage (including papermaking) has been commercialized for the purpose of maximizing benefits. In effect of this it is difficult to say how much of original papermaking tradition is preserved nowadays. For more on this topic see for example: Zhu 2016, 78–79, 85–87, 90–92; Yang et al. 2011, 334–342.

There are many hypotheses concerning the origins and development of papermaking in Naxi communities,⁵ as well as dating of manuscripts.⁶ It seems (based on the date of the earliest extant manuscripts) that papermaking has existed for at least three hundred years. This is also attested by records of family-run workshops making local paper which are known to have existed as early as the 1700s and expanded in the early nineteenth century.⁷ Despite uncertainty over whether these families of papermakers today are Naxi, it does imply the flourishing of local production at some point.⁸ Majority of Dongba manuscripts preserved had strong links to the religious tradition and rituals of the Naxi communities, while the papermaking tradition that is present today has been revived after a lapse from 1949 to the 1990s. Considering that, until recently, Naxi paper has not received much attention and since the Naxi people were not allowed to practice their religion after 1949, the main purpose of producing Naxi paper ceased to be valid. This suggests that whatever technology and skills have survived to this day may not be a continuation of the original Naxi papermaking tradition but rather a new adaptation to the tourist market.

Besides all above, papermaking being a seasonal activity, has not been only the occupation of the Naxi, but also that of other people seeking to make a living.⁹ This became especially apparent when papermaking was commercialised after 1949.¹⁰ In some remote villages located in mountainous areas, such as Kenbeigu Village (Daju Township, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province), villagers made paper in order to exchange it for food, money and other necessities, since Naxi paper sold

5 Li and Zhu 1999, 6; Chen 2004, 76.

6 The dating of the Naxi manuscripts remains questionable. Joseph Rock dated the earliest Naxi manuscript in his own collection to 1573 (Rock 1963, 44–45). This dating however was later contested by Anthony Jackson (see Jackson 1979, 52–57). Li Lincan refers to the manuscript dated to 1668 (presently in the collection of the Library of Congress) (Li 1984, 138). According to the catalogues of Naxi manuscripts preserved in the collections of the Beijing Library, Chinese History Museum, Museum of Minzu University of China and Museums of Yunnan Province these manuscripts have been dated to 1668 (Yan and Lin 2015, 129). Mueggler states that only a few Naxi books can be firmly dated with textual evidence, most of them to the nineteenth century. The earliest date on a manuscript about which scholars can roughly agree is 1703, see Mueggler 2011, 91. For the dating of Naxi manuscripts see also Michael Friedrich contribution to this volume.

7 Li 2003, 73.

8 As soon as traditional Naxi paper was promoted as a traditional craft and an attraction for tourists, more people, not necessarily of Naxi origin, began to produce it in the region. However, in many cases, the shift of papermaking from a sacred ritual to a livelihood activity has been accompanied by a loss of cultural meaning and symbolism of Dongba paper (Yang et al. 2011, 337).

9 Yang et al. 2011, 337.

10 Yang et al. 2011, 337.

better than other types of handmade paper.¹¹ In the early days of the People's Republic of China (around 1949), the Naxi religion was pushed underground, so papermaking was prohibited and all such activity was halted in Lijiang. Cultural restrictions continued until 1990s. Around 1991 Naxi papermaking was resumed,¹² but its revival was slow due to the introduction of machine-made paper which could be produced more quickly and at lower cost.

The reports referring to papermaking tradition before 1990s, as one by Ge Agan who is Dongba himself, are very rare, and it is why especially valuable.¹³ Ge reports that on 9 September 1990, while visiting Baidi 白地 (the 'holy' place of the Dongbas), he met the old Dongba Zhiben 治本 who told him that he had started to make paper again yesterday. Ge writes that according to his knowledge Zhiben was the first Dongba to make paper again after more than thirty years. The tools used by Zhiben (and reported by Ge) suggest that he produced laid type of paper using the mould with movable bamboo sieve.¹⁴ Zhiben used a tree bark called *adan'r* 阿丹儿, after having peeled it off, he would cook it for c. three hours. Then he would produce the pulp using a wooden hammer or a goose-egg stone and pour it into the vault, then spread it evenly within the bamboo sieve frame, then placed on the drying boards. He said that he could produce twenty sheets a day (c. 25 × 65 cm), but since he was busy with other agricultural work would make more than five sheets a day in average.

There are different kinds of paper that can be found in the area: 'Naxi paper' made of *Wikstroemia* plants from the Thymelaeaceae botanical family, and paper made from *Broussonetia papyrifera* (paper mulberry) belonging to the Moraceae botanical family.¹⁵ Paper mulberry is readily accessible at an altitude below 2500m on plains, hills and mountains across China,¹⁶ while most *Wikstroemia* plants are found mainly south of the Yangtze River and in southwest China (Fig. 2).¹⁷

¹¹ Yang et al. 2003, 88, Luo 2017, 146.

¹² Chen 2004, 72; Li 2003, 71.

¹³ On Dongba paper before 1990s, see: Ge 2008, 70. We are grateful to Michael Friedrich for bringing Ge Agan works to our attention, as well as for help with translation into English.

¹⁴ Zhiben used the following tools (Naxi terms in brackets, written with Chinese characters): *mucao* 木槽: wooden vat (*du* 督); *zhulianzi* 竹帘子: bamboo sieve [?, lit. curtain] (*dan'r* 丹儿); *lianzike* 帘子壳 bamboo papermaking mould [lit. bamboo sieve frame] (*dan'rzuo* 丹儿箬); *lianban* 晾版: drying boards (*seshiduo* 色士多); *muchui* 木槌: wooden hammer (*kedui* 课堆).

¹⁵ Interestingly, Yang et al. list paper mulberry, *Wikstroemia* and hemp as raw materials used for papermaking in southwestern China practiced by Naxi, Bai, Dai, Tibetan and Yi, but only *Wikstroemia* plants as traditional Naxi papermaking plants. See: Yang et al. 2011, 334–335.

¹⁶ He 2001, 122; Liu 2007, 88.

¹⁷ The locations marked in different colours are determined by the decimal latitude and longitude referring to the counties. The data on the areas where *Wikstroemia delavayi*



Fig. 2: Distribution of *Wikstroemia delavayi* (in blue), *Wikstroemia lichiangensis* (in yellow) and paper mulberry (in green) in China.

The rarest plants used for the production of Naxi paper are those from the *Wikstroemia* genus, specifically *Wikstroemia delavayi* and *Wikstroemia lichiangensis*, which are found only in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Tibet in China (Fig. 2).¹⁸ The bast of these plants is robust and the paper made from them has an eminently suitable surface for writing with hard bamboo pens. They are, moreover, poisonous.¹⁹ The

is to be found come from https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/search?basis_of_record=LIVING_SPECIMEN&basis_of_record=PRESERVED_SPECIMEN&country=CN&taxon_key=5523166, where *Wikstroemia lichiangensis* is to be found come from https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/search?basis_of_record=LIVING_SPECIMEN&basis_of_record=PRESERVED_SPECIMEN&country=CN&taxon_key=5524588 and where *Broussonetia papyrifera* is to be found come from https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/search?basis_of_record=LIVING_SPECIMEN&basis_of_record=PRESERVED_SPECIMEN&country=CN&taxon_key=5361944 (retrieved on 12 January 2019).

18 On *Wikstroemia delavayi* and its use for Dongba handmade paper see Yang et al 2007, 17, 21–24.

19 In fact, most species of the Thymelaeaceae family are poisonous and some are valuable ingredients for medicine. Touching the roots and barks of these plants may produce allergic reactions in people, but the paper made from them may contain little poison (the toxins are reduced during the papermaking process) and does no harm to people, although it remains resistant to insects.

paper is therefore more resistant to insect infestation and microbial destruction than many other types of paper, and it is also more durable.

Paper of the traditionally Naxi area is still mainly made in family-run workshops in the villages of Baidi²⁰ and Kenbeigu.²¹ The paper from Baidi (or ‘Baidi paper’) is made exclusively from *W. delavayi*, while additional materials such as hemp and *Gerbera delavayi* are added in the process of papermaking in Kenbeigu, with the proportion of *W. delavayi*, hemp and *Gerbera delavayi* being 32:2:1.²² In the town of Dayan (under the administration of Lijiang City, Yunnan Province), papermakers also use paper mulberry and bamboo as raw materials, and in the village of Zhonghe (in Yulong Naxi Autonomous County, Yunnan Province), paper mulberry, hemp and *Wikstroemia* plants are used in the papermaking process, the proportion being 7:2:1.

Nowadays the papermaking technique of the Naxi uniquely combines the movable-sieve (known for instance from the papermaking traditions of Han and Bai communities) with the floating-mould technique (known from traditional Tibetan papermaking). However, there remain the questions of 1) if this is indeed the case in older manuscripts and 2) if so, how these techniques came to be integrated historically, and how (i.e. in terms of raw materials, techniques/moulds). This article seeks to address these questions and is structured in the following way: material analyses; materials and methods; measurements; fibre analysis; techniques; fibre composition; and conclusion.

2 Material analysis of Naxi paper

Few tests concerning the material aspects of particular Naxi manuscripts have been conducted to date. The earliest microscopic examination of paper used in Naxi manuscripts was carried out in 1963 in Germany by M. Harders-Steinhäuser and G. Jayme.²³ The analysis included the visual features and fibre analyses of

20 Baidi village (Sanba Naxi Nationality Township, Shangri-La City, Deqing Prefecture) is located in 27° 30' N to 27° 28' N and 100° 01' E to 100° 05' E, the Northwest of Yunnan Province, roughly between the two cities Lijiang and Diqing.

21 Kenbeigu village (a highland Naxi community in the Baimai administrative village of Daju Township, Yulong Naxi Autonomous County, Lijiang City, Northwest Yunnan Province) is situated at 27°18.78' N and 100°18.21' E at an altitude of 2645 m in a temperate montane forest.

22 Chen 2004, 72; Li 2003, 72.

23 Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme 1963. We thank Dan Petersen for bringing this article to our attention.

paper from eight manuscripts from Westdeutsche Bibliothek, Marburg, made from a variety of plants such as *Wikstroemia*, paper mulberry, and bamboo identified in the title page of manuscript 8466 (Hs. or. 1517).²⁴ In general, the paper varied in thickness, sometimes consisting of several layers glued together. The surfaces of the paper also ranged from rough to smooth (after being polished with stones). Seven manuscripts used woven paper, while laid lines were observed in paper from manuscript 8239 (Hs. or. 544), indicating that bamboo sieves were used. According to M. Harders-Steinhäuser and G. Jayme, the Naxi mainly used the traditional floating-mould with cotton sieves. They also explained that paper mulberry had sap in its bark and that this natural glue may have given the paper optimum absorbency for ink, in contrast to paper made from *Wikstroemia*, which needed to be sized with starch or other substances before being written on in order for the ink to be retained.²⁵ Although this may not actually be the case, and still needs to be confirmed, the study provides a sound reference for us to conduct paper and fibre analyses on our samples.

Another related study was carried out in 2009 by Wang and Tan on paper samples from five manuscripts,²⁶ four of which were allegedly produced in the Qing dynasty (1644–1912). The fifth sample was of modern paper made in the town of Daju, Lijiang. This study identified *Edgeworthia*, which had not previously been mentioned in the literature, as one of the raw materials for Naxi paper, and *Wikstroemia*, as well as paper mulberry in the modern paper from Daju. All five samples of paper were made using the floating mould with movable bamboo sieves. The old paper was either calendered,²⁷ or powder was applied to the surface after it had been smoothed with stones, so that a smooth writing surface for hard bamboo pens was produced. No powder was applied to the modern paper.

Just as in the case of our predecessors, our research here, based on paper and fibre analyses, focuses on the material characteristic of Naxi manuscripts and, in a longer perspective, attempts to find out about the particular material aspects of Naxi manuscripts that may be associated with specific social, historical and geographical contexts before the mid-twentieth century.

²⁴ In fact, *Wikstroemia* fibres are undistinguishable under the microscope from *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia*, also of the Thymelaeaceae family, but the researchers considered the species of the Thymelaeaceae plant they examined to be *Wikstroemia* because the bast of *Wikstroemia* was used locally to make paper.

²⁵ Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme 1963.

²⁶ Wang and Tan 2009, 572–574.

²⁷ Calendering is a process in which cloth, paper, or the like, is smoothed, often by pressing between rotating cylinders, or in traditional production in Asia by wooden roll.

2.1 Materials and methods

Our sample of Naxi manuscripts comprises sixteen manuscripts currently housed in the Weltmuseum, Vienna (Fig. 3). They were donated to the museum by K. Anton Gebauer,²⁸ Heinrich Handel-Mazzetti,²⁹ Joseph Francis Charles Rock³⁰ and René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz³¹ between 1920 and 1961. Fifteen manuscripts belong to the East Asia collection curated by Dr Bettina Zorn and one belongs to the South Asia collection curated by Dr Christian Schicklgruber.

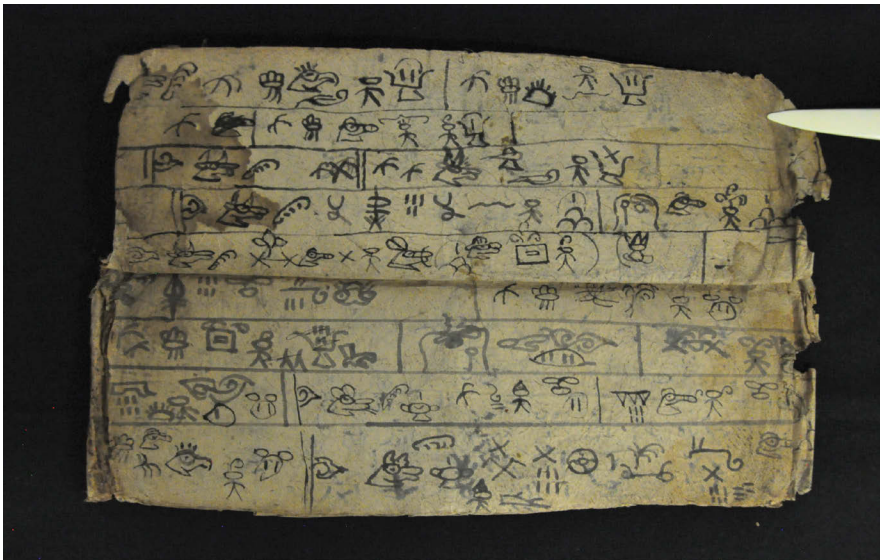


Fig. 3: Naxi manuscript 101508 in the collection of Weltmuseum.

Visual assessment was conducted during a three-day trip (23–25 January 2019) to the museum. General information and physical conditions of preservation, as well as visual and technological features of the manuscripts were recorded in

28 There are ten manuscripts in total. The inventory numbers are 101502, 101503, 101504, 101505, 101506, 101507, 101508, 101509, 101510, 101511.

29 There are four manuscripts in total. The inventory numbers are 117910, 117920, 117921, 128548.

30 There is one manuscript. The inventory number is 132264.

31 There is one manuscript. The inventory number is 140869. It was a gift from Joseph Francis Charles Rock.

documentation sheets, and samples of paper were collected for later fibre analysis.³²

2.1.1 Measurements *in situ*

The aspects of the manuscripts that were studied first are their technological and visual features. Consent was obtained from the conservator for where micro-samples were to be taken for fibre analysis, and these locations were then documented. As listed below, all possible measurements were conducted *in situ*. Information recorded for each manuscript consists of:

1. General information, such as their shelfmarks, date received, provenance, and the size and format of the manuscript.
2. The condition of the paper and the ink.
3. The scripts used and the colour of the ink.
4. The type and the thickness of the paper. Thickness was measured in five different places per sheet.
5. The type of sieve print of the paper, e.g. woven or laid. Measurements of laid lines in 3 cm and chain line intervals were taken where visible. The measurement of chain line intervals was taken only for distances that it was possible to measure, i.e. where chain lines were clearly visible.
6. The fibre distribution within the sheet and the texture of the paper.
7. Sampling for fibre identification.

2.1.2 Fibre analysis by microscope

The fibre analysis of Naxi manuscripts was conducted at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Culture at the University of Hamburg. An Olympus BX51 Transmitted-Reflected light microscope with polarised light was used for fibre identification. An Olympus UC30 camera and Olympus Stream Software were used for photographic documentation and image analysis separately. A range of magnification from 50× to 500× with both plain and polarised light was used.

The paper samples were immersed in distilled water in a small beaker and boiled for between 10 to 15 minutes. The water was decanted and the samples were drained. About 0.2g of paper pulp was placed on a microscopic slide and separated into a fine suspension of individual fibres. The fibres were then observed

³² On methods see Helman-Wazny 2016b, 131–132.

with water solution using polarised light. The selected samples were then stained with 2 drops of Herzberg staining reagents (zinc-chlorine-iodide) and observed through an optical microscope. The colour of the resulting stain depends on the lignin content of the fibre and helps to distinguish the species and morphological characteristics of the fibres, as well as other cells and elements in the paper pulp. The results were compared to reference samples collected earlier by the author and to available atlases.

The most important atlases we have used are *Fibre Atlas: Identification of Papermaking Fibres* by Marja-Sisko Ilvessalo-Pfäffli, published in 1995, and *Zhongguo zaozhi yuanliao xianwei texing ji xianwei tupu* [Papermaking Raw Materials of China: An Atlas of Micrographs and the Characteristics of Fibres] by Juhua Wang, published in 1999.³³ We also used the online database Khartasia,³⁴ which includes historical and technological information on raw materials and paper-making techniques used in the production of the books from Asia and Western artefacts made from Asian paper. General information about plants, such as botanical classification, distribution, cultivation and use, fibre dimensions, characteristics of the fibre morphology, etc. are contained in all three resources, while each has its strengths and deficiencies.

Ilvessalo-Pfäffli's descriptions of plants and fibres are the most accessible and are accompanied by a wealth of illustrations, but some plants, such as *Daphne* and *Stellera*, are not included in the book, and some are mixed (for example, *Wikstroemia canescens* is described together with *Edgeworthia papyrifera*, perhaps because of their similarity). Neither are there descriptions of the colours of stains left on the fibre by staining reagents, so the identification is focused solely on the fibre morphology of fresh plants rather than historical fibres from old books, which nevertheless serves as a sound reference for microscopic analyses with polarised light or digital microscope. Wang's book can be regarded as the earliest and most systematic fibre atlas of plant materials found in China, despite its main focus on machine-made paper and the lack of clarity in its descriptions of handmade paper. The research practice at the time the book was written meant that Wang only described the distribution of different species of plants within the PRC, and in places it is incorrect. For example, *Daphne* is missing from the book. Although *Edgeworthia papyrifera* and *Wikstroemia sikokiana* are illustrated separately, no comparison is made between them and they are not distinguished from each other. In the case of *Stellera chamaejasme* (spelt incorrectly in the book), the distinguishing features of the fibre are unclear.

³³ Ilvessalo-Pfäffli 1995 and Wang 1999.

³⁴ <http://khartasia-crcc.mnhn.fr/en>.

The database Khartasia provided us with a great deal of additional information on the plants and fibres, including illustrations of plants, their vernacular names in Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean and French, the areas where they were used for papermaking, and the processes and techniques involved. The fibre descriptions, however, are simple; there is usually only one image of each kind of fibre. The identification features and fibre images are sometimes missing, such as for *Daphne odora*. While the database provides general information about plants, it offers limited help in fibre identification.

Finally, we should note that the majority of fibre images in the three resources are from reference samples (laboratory-made pulp from identified plants), which illustrated different fibre morphology in samples made through boiling, beating and pounding. The deterioration over time would, however, also change the fibre morphology. In this case, samples collected earlier by Helman-Ważny, which were made through traditional papermaking processes, as well as fibre descriptions and images included in Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme's study and Jasper Trier's *Ancient Paper of Nepal* study prove to be of great assistance.³⁵ We should, however, continue to be critical, since there may also be mistakes in past studies. Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme,³⁶ for example, observed curved hair and vessel cells in paper mulberry pulp from the title page of one manuscript, neither of which has ever been reported in paper mulberry pulp according to fibre atlases.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Papermaking techniques

Generally, as mentioned in the introduction, there are two types of mould used in papermaking: the dipping mould and the floating mould. The floating mould is placed on the surface of the water and paper pulp is poured onto the sieve within the frame of the mould. With the dipping mould, however, the pulp is mixed with water before the mould is dipped into it. As a result, paper made with a floating mould is usually thicker, and the fibres are more unevenly distributed in the sheet of paper compared to paper made with a dipping mould. This is an important distinguishing feature between the different methods of papermaking.³⁷ In addition,

³⁵ Trier 1972; Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme 1963.

³⁶ Harders-Steinhäuser and Jayme 1963, 55.

³⁷ For more on papermaking technology see Hunter 1978; Pan 1979; Pan 1998; Tsien 1985.

a fixed sieve made of woven cotton, hemp or flax textile is often attached to the floating mould, while a movable sieve, made from bamboo, reed or another kind of grass, is attached to the dipping mould. The different sieves leave clearly different imprints on the paper. A textile sieve leaves woven patterns and a movable sieve leaves a pattern of laid lines (bamboo sieves leave regular laid lines; reed or other grass sieves leave irregular laid lines). The chain lines, being the impressions of stitches that tie the strips of bamboo, reed or other grass together, are sometimes visibly perpendicular to the laid lines.³⁸

Historically, however, the techniques used by the Naxi combines the floating mould (used widely by Tibetan communities and all across the Himalayas) with movable sieves (used for example by Han and Bai communities). Traditionally papermakers used floating type of mould; however instead of a thin wooden frame, wider planks were used for such papermaking moulds, resembling a box floating on water. This 'box' was then equipped with a movable sieve made of bamboo, which left the laid print preserved in the structure of paper, as we can see in some of the manuscripts examined. In such cases it is clear that we are dealing with a laid type of paper, but it is not always clear if the floating or dipping technique was used. If the sheet of paper is large enough it is possible to observe traces of pulp distribution and thereby to obtain further clues about technology used.

Table 1 (in appendix) (in appendix) shows a summary of paper features gleaned from the manuscripts examined in this study, including through microscopic examination. Observation of paper structure against the light showed that fibre was unevenly distributed in all the paper samples. This is probably the reason why the thickness measured at five points on a single sheet of paper varied so greatly, especially in manuscript 101510. It is clear that all the paper studied was made with a floating mould.

The sieve imprints sealed in the paper structure reveal that fifteen of the manuscripts used woven paper (Fig. 4). Manuscript 101507 was the only manuscript whose paper showed regular laid lines from a bamboo sieve, but there are no visible chain lines (Fig. 5). This means that paper in the majority of the manuscripts was made using a floating mould with fixed textile sieves, and only paper from 101507 was made using a floating mould with movable bamboo sieves.

³⁸ Helman-Ważny 2016b, 129–130.

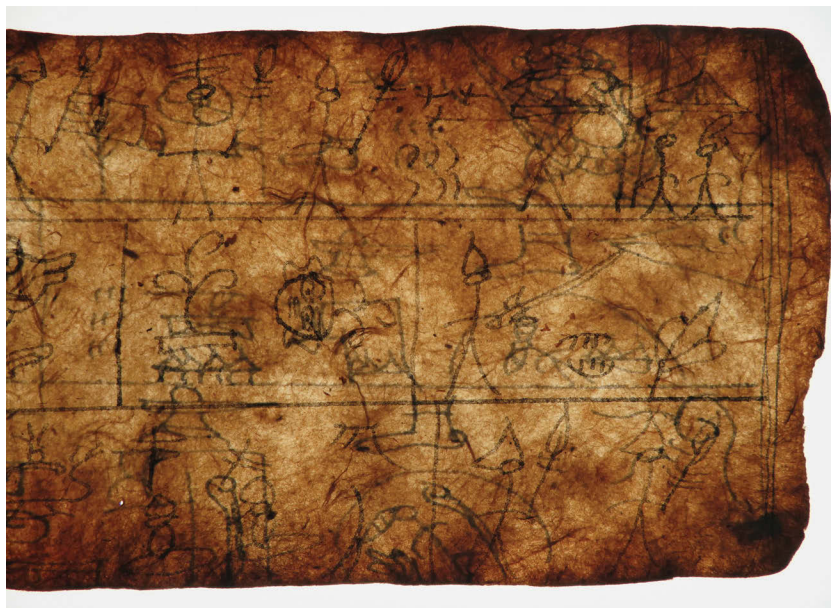


Fig. 4: Example of woven paper in manuscript 117920 when observed against light.



Fig. 5: Regular laid lines on the surface of the paper of Naxi manuscript 101507 are visible on the light table.

Our results indicate that the most of manuscripts from our sample were made with the use of traditional floating moulds with fixed sieves. This suggests that the floating-mould technique was used more often in the past, unless further paper analysis proves otherwise. Considering that the floating-mould technique with fixed sieves is the most primitive method of papermaking and that the dipping-mould technique with movable sieves is commonly perceived to have developed later, it would be unusual if the Naxi had first learned the dipping-mould technique, but chose to retain use of the floating mould, which was also a slower technique. It is uncertain whether the current floating mould with movable bamboo sieve of Naxi papermaking in fact represents an intermediate stage of development between the floating-mould technique and the dipping-mould technique, as proposed by Fan and Zhang;³⁹ it could be that the Naxi kept the original floating-mould technique to make their paper, and at some point exchanged the fixed textile-made sieves for movable sieves made of bamboo in order to increase productivity. If the results of our preliminary research are confirmed by further investigations it may therefore be more likely that the floating-mould technique used in traditional Tibetan papermaking was learnt by the Naxi before the dipping-mould technique.

3.2 Preparation for writing

Table 1 (in appendix) (in appendix) shows that fourteen manuscripts used paper comprising more than one glued layer. This is sometimes indicated by split edges. The exceptions are manuscripts 101505 and 117910, which used single-layered paper. The writing implements are also examined. More than half of the sixteen manuscripts are written with a brush, rather than the bamboo pen known to have been traditionally used by the Naxi.⁴⁰

Tibetan paper, which also has uneven thickness and a rough surface from the use of the floating mould, often also consists of multiple layers. In order to obtain a relatively smooth surface, Tibetan papermakers would glue several layers of paper together and finish the surface with additional substances, such as wheat or barley powder.⁴¹ On the other hand, hard and wide-cut bamboo pens were utilised in Tibetan areas and the thicker paper is less susceptible to abrasion

³⁹ Fan and Zhang 2009, 64.

⁴⁰ Scripts written with a bamboo pen are found in manuscripts 101502, 101506, 101508, 101509, 101510, 117920, 128548.

⁴¹ Helman-Ważny 2006, 8.

during writing. The same may be said of Naxi paper because the seven manuscripts which were probably written with point-cut bamboo pens all used multiple-layered paper, and the two manuscripts with single-layered paper, 101505 and 117910, were more likely written with a soft brush. Manuscript 101507, although it had three layers, has less thick paper (thickness of inner page: 0.16-0.25 mm), and there the brush was utilised instead of the bamboo pen.

Unlike Tibetan paper, whose surfaces are polished and sometimes treated with varying kinds of powder, Naxi paper is sometimes calendered or polished using wooden sticks or stones before it is written on. Although the signs of polishing are not clearly visible, the comparatively smooth surfaces of manuscripts 101504, 101505, 101507, 101509, 101511, 128548 may be a result of this process.

3.3 Fibre composition

Fibre analysis shows that seven samples are made of mixed fibres,⁴² while nine are homogeneous.⁴³ One species of the main raw materials recognised has varying fibre width and irregular thickness of the fibre walls. The broad central portion shown in Fig. 6 from 101503 illustrates the most characteristic feature of this fibre, placing it in the Thymelaeaceae family (Fig. 6). The ends of the fibre found in the sample from 117910 are usually pointed, blunt, spatulate, scalloped, or of other irregular shapes (Fig. 7). Dislocations and cross-markings are sometimes less obvious, and remains of parenchyma cells are common in the pulp. Examination under the microscope with polarised light reveals the morphology of the fibre to be *Daphne* or *Wikstroemia*. These species are so similar that we were unable to distinguish them. In total, ten samples analysed contain *Daphne*/*Wikstroemia*⁴⁴ and four are composed of *Daphne*/*Wikstroemia* mixed with a few *Stellera* fibres.⁴⁵ *Stellera* also belongs to the Thymelaeaceae family. Despite its similar features, it can be distinguished by its flabby, ribbon-like shape (Fig. 8, arrowheads). Sometimes the wavy fibre walls and much more irregular lumens also helped us distinguish *Stellera* fibres from *Daphne* or *Wikstroemia*.

⁴² Inventory numbers: 101502, 101504, 101505, 101507, 101511, 117921, 132264. Mixed fibres were also reported by Harders-Steinhäuser (1963).

⁴³ Inventory numbers: 101503, 101506, 101508, 101509, 101510, 117910, 117920, 128548, 140869.

⁴⁴ Inventory numbers: 101502, 101503, 101504, 101505, 101508, 101511, 117910, 117921, 132264, 140869.

⁴⁵ Inventory numbers: 101502, 101505, 101511, 117921.

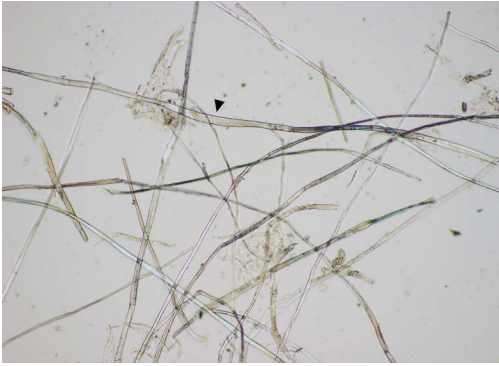


Fig. 6: *Daphne/Wikstroemia* fibres.



Fig. 7: *Daphne/Wikstroemia* fibres with the irregular shape of the fibre ends.



Fig. 8: *Stelleria* fibres with ribbon-like shape (arrowheads) from Naxi manuscript 101502.

Another major raw material is paper mulberry, which was identified in seven paper samples.⁴⁶ The fibres are often thick-walled, of varying width, but thin-walled, ribbon-like fibres (Fig. 9, arrowheads) have also been found in the samples. Frequent dislocations and cross-markings are visible and the fibre ends have various shapes, such as pointed, blunt, spatulate and forked. The most characteristic element of paper mulberry is the transparent membrane enveloping the whole fibre, which is clearly observed around the fibre ends from the sample of 117920 (Fig. 10). Parenchyma cells and square or diamond-shaped crystals have also been found.

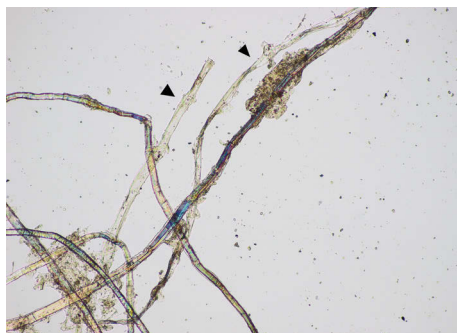


Fig. 9: Thin-walled, ribbon-like *Broussonetia* sp. (paper mulberry) fibres (arrowheads) and normal thick-walled fibres from Naxi manuscript 101510.



Fig. 10: *Broussonetia* sp. (paper mulberry) fibres with transparent membrane around the fibre ends (arrowheads) from Naxi manuscript 117920.

⁴⁶ Inventory numbers: 101504, 101506, 101507, 101509, 101510, 117920, 128548.

The above results confirm that *Daphne/Wikstroemia* plants and paper mulberry are the two main genera and species used as raw materials by the Naxi to make paper. Nine manuscripts mainly made of *Daphne/Wikstroemia* may have come from Baidi or Kenbeigu area, where *Wikstroemia* is the main raw material in papermaking, while six containing mainly paper mulberry may have come from other places where paper mulberry was used.

Wikstroemia, which belongs to the same family of plants as the main species of plants used in the Tibetan plateau such as *Stellera*, *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia*, was the primary raw material used by the Naxi. This plant was also widely distributed around the areas in Yunnan where the Naxi lived. Along with paper made from *Wikstroemia*, the Naxi utilised paper made from paper mulberry for the writing (the usage of this species of raw material was said to have been learnt from the Bai); this plant was found in seven samples. Despite hemp and *Gerbera delavayi* being mentioned by Chen Dengyu and Li Xiaocen as additional raw materials used by the Naxi in Kenbeigu and Zhonghe Village,⁴⁷ they have not been found in the samples from the sixteen manuscripts. Neither had *Stellera* been considered among the raw materials used by the Naxi in papermaking, but it is widely found in dry, sandy places at an altitude between 2600 and 4200 m in Yunnan Province.⁴⁸ It is a plant recognised for its properties in papermaking in Tibetan cultural regions, but possibly only used where other plant sources were unavailable, such as in regions on the Tibetan plateau. The Naxi might therefore have learned to use *Stellera* for papermaking through interaction with Tibetan peoples, while its distribution in Yunnan would provide the opportunity for using this plant for paper production. Only a small quantity of *Stellera* fibres, however, was found in each sample, suggesting that it was probably also used when the main raw materials were insufficient, as in areas of high altitude.

Of the sixteen manuscripts, the paper used in 132264 is different because a small quantity of wood fibres and associated cells were identified. The typical morphology of softwood fibres with some circle pits is shown in Fig. 11. The wide circle pits suggest that the paper was possibly made from pine pulp, but we were unsure of the exact species. It is also interesting that an associated element such as a vessel with a small tail was found, indicating that hardwood pulp might have been added (Fig. 12). It is therefore highly likely that the paper contained mixed wood pulp. The pulp seemed to have been highly processed because most of the

⁴⁷ Chen 2004, 72; Li 2003, 72.

⁴⁸ See Flora of China http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=200014523 (accessed 28 March 2022). For more information on *Stellera chamaejasme* plant and its distribution see: Boesi and Helman-Ważny 2020, 105–108 or Helman-Ważny 2016a, 177–178.

wood fibres and associated cells were distinctly damaged or broken (Fig. 13). The extent of deterioration of the fibres and degree of pulping during the papermaking process are subjectively rated according to the morphology of the fibres and associated cells. We regard eight manuscripts⁴⁹ as showing a high degree of deterioration or pulping because it was more difficult to find unbroken fibre ends or parenchyma cells, and there was swelling or fracturing in the middle of the fibres more frequently than in other samples. Manuscript 132264 falls into this category.



Fig. 11: Softwood fibre with small round pits stained with Herzberg from Naxi manuscript 132264 in 200× magnification observed in polarised light.

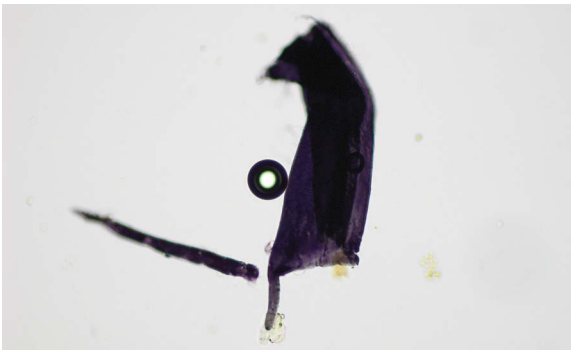


Fig. 12: Associated element like a vessel with a small tail from hardwood pulp from Naxi manuscript 132264 in 200× magnification.

⁴⁹ Inventory numbers: 101504, 101506, 101507, 101508, 101511, 117910, 132264, 140869.

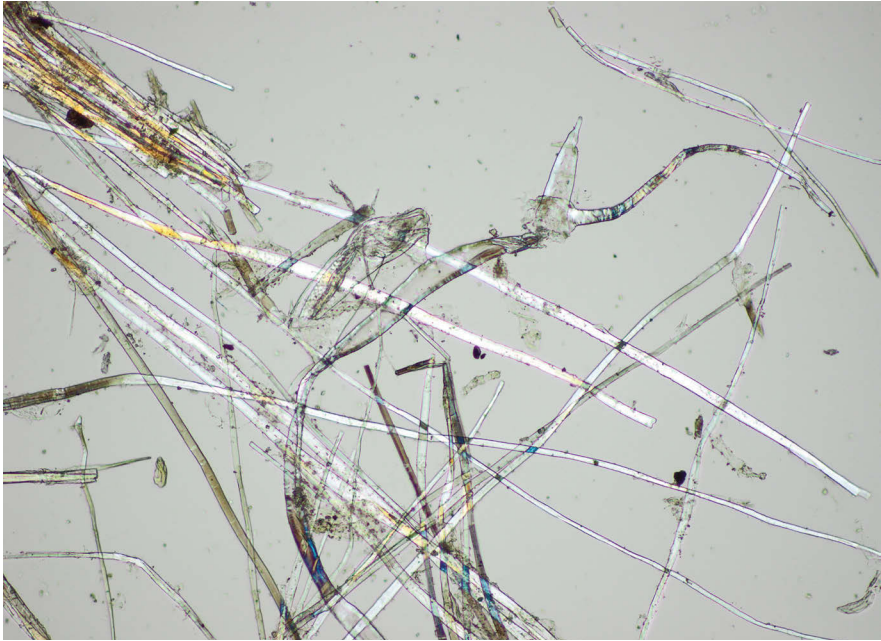


Fig. 13: Common broken fibres and associated cells from Naxi manuscript 132264 in 100× magnification observed in polarised light.

According to Hunter, wood pulp was not really used in papermaking in Europe until the mid-nineteenth century, but there are a few records regarding the introduction of wood pulp to China.⁵⁰ Wang conducted an analysis on the fibre in a piece of newspaper, *The Peking News*, dated to 1907, and identified the raw material as softwood.⁵¹ In her opinion, either the wood pulp or the paper was imported because wood pulp was not produced in China at that time. In the remote regions inhabited by the Naxi, where paper was produced on a small scale in family-run workshops, it may have been impossible for papermakers to use imported wood pulp at that time or to produce it themselves (which would have required sophisticated procedures); mixed wood pulp would be even less likely to have been used. Considering that the first foreigners came to the Naxi territory in the 1860s and after 1912 were quite common in Lijiang, the wood pulp could also have originated from recycled paper brought from overseas. Recycled paper pulp or pieces

⁵⁰ Hunter 1978, 315–376.

⁵¹ Wang 2006, 379.

of recycled paper containing both softwood and hardwood was therefore possibly mixed with *Daphne/Wikstroemia* during papermaking, which might have constituted a more economically viable method of papermaking for the Naxi. Since manuscript 132264 was donated to the museum by Rock after 1920, it could be produced contemporarily to Rock's presence in Naxi region.

4 Conclusion

Our samples reveal that fifteen manuscripts used paper made with the floating mould with fixed sieves; only one manuscript used paper made with the combined technique of the floating mould with moveable sieve. Thus, within our sample the former method, known to traditional Tibetan papermaking, was used more often. Paper from the majority of the manuscripts moreover comprised multiple layers glued together so as to achieve a relatively even, increased thickness suitable for writing with hard, point-cut bamboo pens. The same holds for Tibetan manuscripts, but the Tibetans usually used wide-cut bamboo pens to write. Six of the manuscripts also had a comparatively smooth surface, probably owing to the polishing or calendering.

The fibre analysis revealed that ten samples contained *Daphne/Wikstroemia* and seven contained *Broussonetia* (paper mulberry). The main raw materials might suggest the different geographical origins of the sixteen manuscripts. A presence of both *Wikstroemia* and *Broussonetia* suggests that both plants have been used by the Naxi, combining Tibetan papermaking techniques with local botanical resources (it belongs to the same family of plants as the raw materials used by the Tibetans), whereas using paper mulberry for papermaking is more likely to have been learned from other groups. Hemp and *Gerbera delavayi*, which are additional raw materials reported in present-day Kenbeigu and Zhonghe, have not been found in the samples. Some *Stellera* fibres, however, were mixed with *Daphne/Wikstroemia* in four samples. This species of plant has not been mentioned as being used by the Naxi in the scholarly literature. Naxi papermakers may have learned to use it from the Tibetans or used the recycled Tibetan paper as raw material. A small quantity of softwood fibres and hardwood vessel have also been identified in one sample. Considering the high cost and difficulty of access to mixed wood pulp, which was mostly imported at that time, as well as the extent of the deterioration of wood fibres or associated cells, it is highly likely that recycled paper pulp or pieces of recycled paper containing softwood and hardwood was added during the papermaking process. This remains to be confirmed by further investigation.

In this study, we have tried to analyse the material aspects of Naxi manuscripts from the perspectives of history, society and geography. On the basis of the results, we have discerned a variety of different raw materials and papermaking techniques, which may suggest connections and interactions between the papermaking traditions present in the Naxi region. Of course, the preliminary results of this article will need to be confirmed with further study. We hope that it will nevertheless provide a new perspective on the study of Naxi culture through the technologies and materials they used.

Acknowledgments

This research was carried out at the Cluster of Excellence ‘Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures’, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), and within the scope of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at Universität Hamburg. We also thank the curators and the conservators of the Weltmuseum for their permissions to study the collection, and their support during our research. We would especially like to acknowledge the help of Bettina Zorn and Christian Schicklgruber. We also thank Michael Friedrich, Zhenzhen Lu and Barend ter Haar for reading our manuscript and offering useful comments.

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Appendix: The characteristics of the paper in the Naxi manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna

Table 1: The characteristics of the paper in the Naxi manuscripts from the Weltmuseum in Vienna.

No.	Inventory number	Raw material	Degree of deterioration/ pulp [*]	Type of paper	Layers	Thickness (mm) ^{**} Cover	Inner page	Fibre distribution	Texture
1	101503	Homogeneous: Daphne/Wikstroemia	Medium	Woven	Ply	0.52-0.65	0.57-0.66	Uneven	Rough
2	101508	Homogeneous: Daphne/Wikstroemia	High	Woven	Ply	0.17-0.20	0.21-0.29	Uneven	Rough
3	117910	Homogeneous: Daphne/Wikstroemia	High	Woven	Single		0.17-0.21	Uneven	Rough
4	140869	Homogeneous: Daphne/Wikstroemia	High	Woven	Ply	0.28-0.35	0.24-0.30	Uneven	Rough
5	101506	Homogeneous: Paper mulberry	High	Woven	Ply	0.21-0.32	0.28-0.35	Uneven	Rough
6	101509	Homogeneous: Paper mulberry	Medium	Woven	Ply		0.31-0.46	Uneven	Smooth
7	101510	Homogeneous: Paper mulberry	Medium	Woven	Ply	0.65-1.02	0.63-1.02	Uneven	Rough
8	117920	Homogeneous: Paper mulberry	Medium	Woven	Ply	0.31-0.41	0.32-0.40	Uneven	Rough
9	128548	Homogeneous: Paper mulberry	Medium	Woven	Ply	0.32-0.44	0.36-0.54	Uneven	Smooth

Table 1 (continued).

No. Inventory number	Raw material	Degree of deterioration/ pulp [*]	Type of paper	Layers	Thickness (mm)**	Inner page distribution	Texture
10 101502	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, Stellera	Medium	Woven	Ply	0.30-0.36	0.32-0.46	Rough
11 101504	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, paper mulberry	High	Woven	Ply	0.44-0.52	0.26-0.39	Smooth
12 101505	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, Stellera	Medium	Woven	Single		0.16-0.25	Smooth
13 101511	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, Stellera	High	Woven	Ply	0.45-0.50	0.28-0.37	Smooth
14 117921	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, Stellera	Low	Woven	Ply	0.28-0.34	0.33-0.49	Rough
15 132264	Mixed: Daphne/Wikstroemia, softwood, hardwood	High	Woven	Ply	0.37-0.49	0.33-0.41	Rough
16 101507	Mixed: Paper mulberry, grass	High	Laid: 20 laid lines in 3 cm	Ply: 3 layers		0.16-0.25	Smooth

* The degree of deterioration/pulping was evaluated subjectively according to the frequency of occurrence of undamaged fibre ends and parenchyma cells remained as well as the swelling or fractures in the middle of fibres.

** Thicknesses were measured in five different places within one sheet and only the minimum and maximum values were given here.

Indexes

This volume contains two indexes. The first is an index of titles and the second a general index. Within each index, the headings are arranged in word-by-word order, ignoring diacritical marks, even if letters with and without those would count as different letters in the respective languages. The transliteration follows that in the volume. The primary aim was to assist the reader in finding names and terms of interest, rather than creating a concordance. This is also why terms that appear too frequently (e.g. 'Tibet', 'Naxi'), and would therefore be impractical as index headings, are omitted.

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