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The *mKha' klong gsang mdos*: some questions on ritual structure and cosmology

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Introduction

In the Tibetan Buddhist world – Tibet itself and the Himalayan areas from Ladakh to Bhutan – *mdos* rituals are very common and often practised. They are performed either as private exorcisms, when problems occur in a family, or as public ceremonies held annually (sometimes only once every twelve years) for the protection of the ruler, if there is one, and of the whole community. Thanks to their popularity, these rituals are well documented, both in the literature and ethnographic data.

This does not appear to be the case in the Bonpo tradition. The literature provides some names of *mdos* rituals, but at present few of these rituals are known in written form. In fact, I would say that, to my knowledge, collections of *mdos*, gathered together in volumes, do not exist, such as those published among the Buddhists. (On the other hand, there are collections of *gto* – *gTo phran*, cited in Karmay 1998, no. 20: 343-347 and 372-374 – but, further on in this paper, we shall see the ambiguity that remains for me in the definition of the terms *gto/mdos*.) One finds the same scarcity when it comes to the performance of *mdos*, although I cannot say, at present, if this is due to a lack of observations in the field, or because these rituals do not really play an important role in the Bonpo tradition. Nevertheless, for many Buddhist, as well as Bonpo, scholars, the origin of *mdos* rituals must be sought in Bon, although they are unable to cite a convincing source in support of their assertion. This assertion, moreover, is apparently contradicted by the *mdos* whose first performance is attributed to the Buddha Śākyamuni, to Nāgārjuna, etc. – in the same way that sTon-pa gShen-rab and other Bonpo masters are credited with the first performance of the Bonpo *mdos* that I am aware of up to now.

These latter rituals amount to three. Two of them (*Shwa ba ru rgyas*, studied by Blondeau and Karmay 1988, and *Srid pa'i spyi mdos* presented in d'ell Angelo 1986; see also Namkhai Norbu 1981, Karmay 1998, no. 20: 346-347) are short texts, characterised by an archaic poetic style and very developed mythical narratives. In fact, both were discovered in the 11th century by the same *gter ston*, gNyan-'theng re-ngan alias gNyan-ston Shes-rab rdo-rje (see Karmay 1972: 313). The third ritual is the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* which was the subject, under this title, of a publication gathering together a huge collection of thirty-five texts

(Karmay 1977: no. 30). Compared to the two rituals of gNyan-'theng re-ngan, it is obviously more developed, but above all, it lies within a very different, elaborate doctrinal framework, with extensive developments concerning doctrine, cosmology, meditation, etc. On the other hand, it presents only short fragments of myths. If one can apply to the Bonpo *mdos* the same typology as their Buddhist counterparts, I would say that the two *gter ma* of gNyan-'theng re-ngan are probably intended to be performed for private purposes, while the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* has a social function, as it is celebrated by the monastic community in the assembly hall (*'du khang*) of the monastery.

Indeed, one of the interesting things about this ritual is that it is regularly performed by the New sMan-ri in Dolanji (India). Unfortunately, I was unable to do the fieldwork I intended to do in 1999, and this article, therefore, will be limited to textual analysis; moreover, this analysis lacks explanations that I would have been able to obtain if I had been among scholars and performers of the ritual, at the monastery. However, thanks to the generosity of Yoshiro Imaeda, who attended the Dolanji ritual in 1976 and 1978, I will illustrate my article with a few photographs that he took then. We can also find a few pieces of ethnographic information in Krystyna Cech's unpublished thesis (1987: 238-240). K. Cech confirms that the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* is performed every year by the monks for the well-being of the village lay people, in the fifth month of the Tibetan calendar (June-July). The ceremony lasts three days, following two days of preparations. The villagers participate in the preparations but they attend only the third day of the ritual itself, when it is concluded outside the assembly hall. The expenses for the ritual are paid by a tax levied on the villagers by the Bonpo Foundation, which sponsors the ritual. K. Cech emphasises that this is the only occasion of the year where the Bonpo Foundation plays this role, which clearly shows the importance of this celebration for the community. Unfortunately, she does not describe the ritual or provide any more information, as this was not the main topic of her work, except for the following: *mKha' klong gsang mdos* is a collective name for the performance of four rituals, *Khro bo gtso mchog*, the *mdos* of the same deity (the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* itself?), *rNam par [rNam rgyal] stong mchod* and *gDugs dkar stong zlog (pa)*. It must be noted that these titles do not appear in the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection. But for the time being, I must leave aside the question of which texts of this Collection are actually used for the performance of the ritual, and that of the date of its performance in the fifth month (and not at the end of the year, as one could expect, from comparison with other examples among the Buddhists, and among the Bonpos, at Lubra: see Charles Ramble's contribution in this volume). Is this celebration linked in some way with another lay festival, held in the fifth month: that is, the changing of the ceremonial arrows at the shrines of the protective deities (*Glang bzhi rgya pa [rgyal]*, Cech 1987: 214-215)? I can only add that the performance of this ritual in Dolanji is not an innovation of exile: S. Karmay remembers that it was performed in Amdo. The late *dpon slob* of sMan-ri,

Sangs-rgyas bstan-'dzin, confirms the annual performance of the ritual in a brief note of instructions that he drew up for the performance of the ritual; these instructions appear as the first text of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection (*mKha' klong gsang ba'i mdos kyi bca' thabs gsal ba'i sgron ma*: 3). Nowadays, it is still performed occasionally in Tibet if disasters occur (information provided by Mona Schrempf during this Symposium).

I now come to the subject set out in the title of this article, and I will examine the following: first, the place of the *mdos* in the doctrinal system of Bon; then the ritual structure of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos*, as it appears in the texts of the Collection; finally, the underlying cosmology behind the symbolic construction of the *mdos*. It is perhaps useful at this point to remind ourselves of one of the principal differences between the *mdos* and the *glud*, “ransom ritual”: the *mdos* is a small-scale replica of the universe, filled with all the sentient beings and everything else (mineral, vegetable, etc.) that it contains; the *mdos* is then mentally transposed into a real universe to serve first as an offering to the deities, then as ransom given to the harmful entities. (Regarding the *glud*, see Karmay 1998, no. 20; for a preliminary study of the *mdos*, see Blondeau 1990b).

1. The place of *mdos* rituals in the doctrinal system of Bon

In spite of the overabundance of apotropaic rituals in Tibetan religion, it is rare to find a systematic presentation and, for the Bonpos, the only one I know of is that of the *gZi brjid* which I will use here through the extracts published by D.L. Snellgrove (1967). According to the *gZi brjid*, the *mdos* rituals belong to the second Way, *sNang gshen theg pa* (“The way of the gShen of the visual world”). This Way is divided into four types of practice, linked to the four “Portals” (in the doctrinal classification of *Bon sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*). The third of these types is “the 'Phan-yul portal of ransom” (*'Phan yul glud kyi sgo*), which concerns, as one can deduce from its name, rites of ransom, defined as follows: performing the equivalence exorcism (? *mtshung gto*) of exchanging two equal things (*mnyam gnyis brje ba'i mtshung gto*; this notion of parity between the “ransomed” and the ransom has been clearly brought to light in Karmay 1998, no. 20).

Here, we immediately come up against the problem of terminology when we try to define the *mdos*, because in the first Way (*Phya gshen theg pa*, “The way of the gShen of prediction”) to which the *gto* belong, we find virtually the same category: “the ‘Exchange’ Rite of transposing two equal things” (*mnyam gnyis bsor ba'i brje gto*, Snellgrove 1967: 24-25). Explained further along in the text (Snellgrove 1967: 36-37), this *gto* is shown to be a *mdos*. Moreover, among the four types of *gto*, the second is called *mdos cha rten 'brel brdeg gto*, translated by Snellgrove (1967: 25) as “the ‘Striking’ Rite using a combination of devices” (“devices” being his usual translation of *mdos*). I must confess that I do not

understand what this *gto* is about, but my aim here is to show how uncertain and, probably, artificial the classifications are.

Let us return to the *glud* of the second Way. They are said to be of three kinds: for men, women and children (*pho glud*, *mo glud*, *chung glud*). For each, ten *mdos* are listed, followed by various others; summed up, the *mdos* number 360 (a figure probably linked to the number of days in the year). As for the *mdos* themselves, they are also of three kinds: outer, inner and secret. In fact, all three seem necessary for the performance of the ritual, since the outer *mdos* is the collection of objects gathered or made for the ritual (thread-crosses, arrows, etc.: *phyi mdos sog khrig lag len rdzas*); the inner *mdos* is made up of the ransom, the incantation (*gyer*) and the archetypal narrative (*smrang*); the secret “consists of meditation and the things of thought” (*gsang mdos ting 'dzin dgongs pa'i rdzas*, Snellgrove 1967: 84-85. I understand: “consists of *samādhi*, the item of thought”). Later, we find a confirmation of the definition of the *mdos* that I have given above: when one performs the ritual, one must take as the model the universe and everything it contains, living beings and inanimate things; and all these components of the *mdos* must be more beautiful than their model in reality (Snellgrove 1967: 86-87). One initial observation: as far as the conception of the *mdos* is concerned, there is no difference between the Buddhists and the Bonpos.

According to the *gZi brjid* typology, the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* belongs to the third type mentioned, “secret”, which fits with the omnipresent instructions that one finds there on the meditation; it must be noted, however, that its name does not appear in the *gZi brjid*. For its part, the basic text in the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection (text no. 7, see below) indicates that although it was said that this ritual belonged to the *sNang gshen theg pa*, in the secret sense (*gsang don*) it belongs to the *A dkar theg pa* (regarding which, see Kvaerne 1973).

2. The ritual structure of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos*

The *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection has been carefully described by S.G. Karmay (1977, no. 30) and there is no need to go back over his analysis here. In his *Catalogue*, S.G. Karmay classifies this ritual in the *sgrub thabs* (*sādhana*) section, and not among the “worldly rituals” as one could expect. No doubt this is because it is one of the nine ritual acts linked to the sPyi-spungs tantric cycle (cf. the title itself, the Preface, the *bCa' thabs* written by Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin (p. 2), and the first lines of the *gZhung chen*). Thus, from the outset, we are directed to Dran-pa nam-mkha', who was prominent in the transmission of this cycle, and to the first *gter ston* in the lineage of rMa, rMa-ston Srol-'dzin (or Srid-'dzin, born in 1092 according to Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin's Chronology; see, among others, Karmay 1972: 45 n. 2; regarding the lineage of rMa, Blondeau 1990a). It is, therefore, not surprising to see that the basic text of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* (*gZhung chen*,

text no. 7) is a *gter ma* discovered by the grandson of Srol-'dzin, rMa Shes-rab seng-ge (late 12th - early 13th century), complemented by the discoveries of his disciple 'Or-sgom phug-pa (texts nos. 25-35). In fact, these latter texts seem to complete the missing parts of the *gZhung chen*, set out in the list of contents of the work (*gZhung chen*: 119); they detail parts of the ritual and are not of great interest from the perspective of this article. Instead, I will use text no. 3: "The section on the category of *mdos* in general" (*mDos rigs spyi'i mchong Rin chen 'phreng ba*), which is very clear and detailed concerning the ritual structure.

The very brief colophon gives another title: "The section on the general *mdos* of the created world [with] the four continents" (*Gling bzhi srid pa'i spyi mdos kyi cha lag*). Initially, this title casts doubt on the text's belonging to the *mKha' klong gsang mdos*, though its relationship with the basic text of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* is evident. Be that as it may, although the wording is not particularly clear, it seems that this title applies only to the second section of the text (*smad mchong*), while it is the first section that is called *mDos mchong rin chen 'phreng ba* (the title given to the whole of the text by the compiler of the Collection); the colophon points out that this first part is common to all *mdos* and can be performed following any basic text (*mdos gzhung*), while the second part (*Gling bzhi...*) is used for special occasions (which are not specified). The first interesting thing about this text, therefore, is that it provides a general "manual" for the performance of Bonpo *mdos*. It includes neither the author's name nor that of the *gter ston*, but S.G. Karmay (1977: 37) thinks that it is a *gter ma* of rMa Sher-seng or of 'Or-sgom phug-pa, which reinforces its significance.

Analysis

The text begins with prostrations before the *nirmāṇakāya* Khro-rgyal who subdues all the arrogant *lha srin*. Instructions then follow, recommending each practitioner to use the basic text that he is used to, for the performance of the general preliminaries: delimiting the ritual area, taking Refuge, producing the Thought of Enlightenment, offerings and praise to the *yi dam*, exhorting the protective deities, entrusting to them the tasks to be carried out, scattering the first offering (*phud*). Then the main body of the text, divided into two sections (*mchong*), begins.

I. First section (*stod mchong*)

It consists of twelve parts:

I. 1. Mentally creating the door of the *mdos* (*mdos sgo bskye[d] pa*)

Above the five elements, symbolised by the syllables A, YAṂ, RAṂ, MAṂ, KHAṂ, one visualises the syllable BRUṂ. This merges into light, which

transforms to become the base of the *mdos*. On it, one imagines the *mdos*: the Excellent Mountain (Ri-rab, Sumeru) at the centre, surrounded by the four continents with eight small continents and, at the borders, a copper wall¹). It is made of all sorts of precious materials. The seven gold mountain ranges gleam with light; they are separated by seven “tasty” oceans (*rol ba'i mtsho*). Sun, moon and stars emit their rays, which fill the whole universe. Gathered together are harvests and fruit from three incalculable *kalpa*, all kinds of favourable circumstances (*rkyen*) that exist in the three worlds, all the elixir-beings (*bcud*) created in the space; the five-colour tree symbols (*rgyang bu*), sparkling with rainbow rays, the male images (*pho tong*) dressed as warriors, the female images (*mo tong*) with cheerful attitudes, dressed as brides: the ransoms of the body standing like the Counsellors of the maternal clan (*zhang blon*) drawn up in ranks; the multicoloured arrow and the multicoloured spindle, beautiful and delightful; the plumage of birds with beautiful wings, and balls of wool, voluminous as banks of southern clouds; species of birds with beautiful wings that glide through space; the carnivores with multicoloured coats of fur, that walk at the corners of the *mdos*; the wild animals (*ri dwags*) with beautiful faces, that stand on the sides, and the domestic animals with glossy coats in their place. The eight auspicious signs shine with light, the seven precious jewels emit rays.

In all the cardinal and intermediate directions of this Excellent Mountain (Ri-rab), young boys and girls, divine children, present in their hands all kinds of offerings (in sets of three): gold, silver and copper; turquoise, coral and pearls; tea, silk and brocade; helmet, armour and weapons; dye, molasses and *lkag* (?); horse, cattle and sheep; the three white foods and the three sweet foods; flesh, blood and bone; territory, field and house (? *yul zhing bang khang*); medicinal plants, grains and flowers, etc.

All the shapes, all the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the sensations of touch, adornments of the *mdos*, one offers them in transforming them mentally: in inconceivable number, they fill the three chiliocosms. One offers (*phul ba*) them to the male and female *gdon bgegs* who pursue their debtors for vengeance (*lan chags*). Then, their harmful spirit is appeased and they no longer think of doing harm. Also, the beings that wish to receive the ransom (*glud yas*) obtain all the treasures they desire: they stop doing evil and do good. This is what one imagines.

I. 2. Consecration of the *mdos* (*mdos byin gyi[s] brlab pa*)

The officiant identifies himself with the *yi dam* (Khro-chen) and proclaims:

“*bsa!* I am the divine body of the Wisdom plane! I am the wrathful Thought of the Three Bodies. My immortal Wisdom blazes. From my flaming body emanate rays of light, whence come the syllables RAM, YAM, MAM, GAM; these emit fire, air (*rlung*), water of the Wisdom plane, which purifies [the offerings] by burning them, dispersing them, washing them. All the

impurities, faults and blemishes are purified and become perfection, beauty, rapture, adornment.”

From the rays that come from the heart of Khro-chen emanate six syllables: these are the seed-syllables of the five elements and of Ri-rab; they are consecrated as the seed-syllables of the Heroes (*dpa' bo*).

“A is the element space: may the *nam mkha'*, *rgyang bu* (tree symbols), *shing ris* (small painted boards), arrows, spindles, silk hangings, effigies, white ransoms for the body be consecrated as the element space!”

The other elements are dealt with similarly, only changing the syllable and the colour: YAM, air, green; RAM, fire, red; MAM, water, blue; KHAM, earth, yellow.

“BRUM is Ri-rab, the palace of Bon: may this *mdos*, perfection of desirable objects and wealth, *mdos* of the five Wisdoms, become all that one desires!”

I. 3. Pouring a libation, requesting the deities to act as arbiters and witnesses (*gser skyems gtor zhing gzu' dpang gsol ba*)

The officiant invokes Gang[s]-chen srid-rje 'Brang-dkar, Ma-ha phywa-rje Ring-dkar, and bsKos-pa bskos-rje Grang-dkar (three lords of the *phywa srid skos gsum* deities: Karmay 1975: 192. Below, they appear to belong to the bsKos category, regarding which, see Karmay 1998, no. 17). This sequence is very short, but serves to summon these deities, who will play a role later on in the ritual (part I. 10).

I. 4. Asking the deities to listen ('o *snyan byas te*)

The peaceful and wrathful *yi dam*, the Protectors of Bon (*bon skyong srung ma*), the powerful Eight categories of gods and demons (*lha srin sde brgyad*), are requested not to be absent-minded, but attentive, and to listen. Even if the offerings made to them are small, the benediction of the *yi dam* is not.

I. 5. Binding the *bgegs* under oath (*dam bgegs te*)

The officiant speaks to the harmful entities and reminds them of previous occasions when Masters, in the past, subdued them and bound them under oath:

“In the time of the first *kalpa*, the great gShen gSang-ba 'dus-pa bound the nine *g-yen lha 'dre* under oath in the nine places of secret realisation. Since they gave him their life essence (mantra) and made promises, may they not break them, and may they undertake [the actions that the officiant orders them to do].

The powerful protector sTag-la me-'bar bound the arrogant *bgegs srin* under oath at dBal-gyi brag-phug rin [= rong]-chen. Since they gave him their . . . At Do-ring of gNam-mtsho phyug-mo, sTong-rgyung mthu-chen of Zhang-zhung bound the *lha srin sde brgyad* under oath. Since they gave him their . . .

At Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar, that excellent place, Bla-chen Dran-pa nam-mkha' bound the harmful *bgags* under oath. Since they gave him their . . .”

The officiant continues, proclaiming that he belongs to the oral lineage of these Masters, while the present cohort of very harmful *'dre, gdon, 'byung po* are of the same line as those of the past. They have been bound under oath to the commands of these Masters: may they not break their oath; may they take this great *mdos* with the assembled things and the ransom; may they obey and may they protect the beings in accordance with their promise.

I. 6. Explaining the origin of the *mdos* (*mdos kyi byung khung bshad ste*)

The officiant starts to sing:

“Oh! first, there was nothing;

At the very beginning of the created world

The five elements appeared one after another.

As elixir-beings (*bcud*), the three: gods, men and *gshen* were created;

The domain of existence (*yod khams*) spread the happiness of the created world.

The domain of non-existence (*med khams*) engendered harmful thoughts of unhappiness,

The three: *'dre, srin* and *byur* demonstrated their covetousness (? *za kha*),

The era of sickness, famines and weapons was bred.

To defeat them by appropriate means,

In the primeval times there was the order given by the *Sugata*,

In the median times, there was the order given by the lineage of the *Vidyādhara*,

At present, there is the order that I, the *mantrin* (*sngags 'chang*), that I give.

That is why I am going to explain the origin of the *mdos*.”

Then follows the evocation, in a few lines, of four mythical precedents, introduced by the same refrain: “The appearance of the *mdos*, from where did it appear? (*mdos byung gang nas byung*)”. First, the *gdon* did king Mi-rab ru-cho harm, and he was about to die; (the text is incomplete, as it does not indicate who healed him, nor the *mdos* that was made). Then, king Mu-khri btsan-po was seized by a serious illness; the great *gShen* Nam-mkha' snang-mdog arranged the great *mKha' klong gsang ba'i mdos*: the king was saved. Next, a disease was sent by the *sa bdag klu* (and?) *gnyan* to king *gNam-ri blon-btsan* (*sic*: slon-btsan); he called for *sTong-rgyung mthu-chen*, who performed the *Srid pa spyi'i bzlog mdos*: the king was saved. Then, the disturbed *yul lha* put up obstacles against king *Khri-srung sde-btsan* (*Khri-srong lde-btsan*); he sent for Bla-chen Dran-pa (*nam-mkha'*), who made the great *mdos sNang srid zhi bde*: the king was saved.

Similarly now, the *mantrin* has been invited by the rich patron and he has arranged the *mdos*, filled with all the desirable things: may all the owners (those

designated as the final recipients) of the *mdos* (*mdos bdag*) consider these desirable things and ward off catastrophes and terrifying situations.

I. 7. Invocation of the Truth (*bden pa bdar ste*)

The truth of the following is called to witness: the Word of the *Sugata* of the three times, the benediction of the peaceful and wrathful *yi dam*, the magic power of the Protectors of Bon, the three kinds of mantras (outer, inner and secret), the lineage of the *Vidyādhara dpon gsas*. There is no one who does not obey the Word of Truth, in the same way that there is no one who does not drink water, no one who is not terrified by deadly weapons, nothing that stops the proclamation of the true archetypal narrative (*smrang*). May all categories of beings, from the summit of the created world to the hells, who pursue their debtors for vengeance (*lan chags*), gather at the *mdos* and not disobey the order of the *yi dam* gods.

I. 8. Being, oneself, identified with dBal-gsas and filled with his divine pride, one oppresses [the gods and demons of this world] (*bdag nyid dbal gsas nga gyal gyis [b]skyed zil gyis gnon pa*)

Here we have the classic process of mental evocation of the deity (*bskyed rim*): one evokes dBal-gsas rNgam-pa Khro-rgyal mkha'-'gying-kha, who resides in the palace of the sphere of the "quick" (?) Reality (*Bon nyid myur gyi dbyings kyi gzhal yas khang*). He is of human height, he has nine heads and eighteen arms, his body is dark blue. His heads on the right side are white, those on the left are red and the heads in the middle are dark blue and black; on the right, a tiger head, on the left a leopard head, at the centre a lion head. His chignon is adorned with a dragon of turquoise, *chu srin* and *khyung*. His red-yellow hair stands on end. From his eyes lightning flashes, from his ears, the roll of thunder, from his nose, whirlwinds, from his mouth, streams of blood. His tongue shoots red flashes of lightning and sparks of fire. At the top of his head glides the great *khyung* of the created world (description of the attributes he holds in his eighteen hands). He is accompanied by hundreds of thousands of wrathful deities who let out frightening screams (one can compare this description with the one in Kvaerne 1990).

The officiant offers prostrations and praise to the Wisdom-Body: he beseeches it to crush, with its magnificence, the *lha 'dre* of the created world; may it place them under its power and force them to obey. The sequence ends with a mantra (*bsō ṁ a thun nye lo yo thun spungso thad do thun/ a ma ma ha la raṁ ja thun bhyo thun bhyo*) and the offering of the first offering.

I. 9. Offering [the first offering] of the *mdos* to those who are not its owners, one asks them to leave (*mdos la mi dbang pa mchod cing gshegs su gsol*)

One arranges yak, white sheep, the human effigy (*ngar mi*), *bshos bu*, the multicoloured arrow to which are attached balls of silk and balls of wool, and offers the first offering and a libation to the minor entities who are not to be the recipients of the *mdos*: the mass of slaves (*bran*), serfs (*g-yog*) and subjects (*'bangs*). The officiant tells them in detail what he is offering them: gold, silver, turquoise, grain, *ngar mi* ... ; he praises these offerings: nothing is better or whiter than the silver, nothing is more expensive than the gold, nothing is brighter than the turquoise ... He orders them to return, each to his own home, not to hang around the *mdos*, not to damage it.

I. 10. Installation (?) of the bsKos deities (*bskos btab ste*)

The three bsKos deities to whom a libation has been offered (I. 3.) are invoked. The text adds a few pieces of information about these little-known deities to that provided in the article by S.G. Karmay (1998, no. 17): they are the “jurists” (*khirms bdag*) who distinguish the true from the false, the arbiters (*gzū bo*) who distinguish the underhanded from the upright, the *dam can* who protect the doctrine; they have been established as the “chosen ones” (*skos*) of the *phyā* (gods?) of the created world (*srid pa phywa*); from the title of I. 3., we can infer that they go to arbitrate the exchange of the ransom against the “ransomed” and to be guarantors of parity in this exchange. They are invited to take the first offering that has been offered to them and so obtain their share of the ransoms and of the objects of the offering (*yas*). May they issue their orders and may there be none of the *lha srin sde brgyad* who do not listen to them and do not obey them.

One presents them with all the objects assembled on the *mdos*, classified as male, corresponding to Means (*thabs*), on the right, and female, corresponding to Knowledge (*shes rab*), on the left:

– male, on the right: birds, carnivores, wild and domestic animals, aquatic animals, small painted boards (*shing ris*); those things whose nature is Means: the thread-crosses (*nam mkha'*), the small boards painted with male images (*pho tong* = *pho gtong/gdong*), the multicoloured arrow, the *gtor ma*, the *amṛta*, the *bha ling* (? *bali*?);

– female, on the left: the tree symbols (*rgyang bu*), the multicoloured spindle, the small boards painted with female images (*mo tong*), blood (*rakta*), the *ting lo* and *theb kyu*, whose nature is Knowledge.

All these objects being offered to them without making a distinction between them, may they take them all equally, without differentiation in either taking or leaving. The invocation ends with the usual exhortation not to disobey the orders of Che-mchog Khro-bo, to satisfy themselves each according to his desires and to ward off grievous events and obstacles.

I. 11. Entry into the central part (of the ritual: *gzhung la 'jug(s)*): offering each of the ransom objects (*yas glud*), praising it and explaining its qualities in

elaborate terms (*rgyas pa yon tan dang sbyar la yas glud rnams so sor bstod cing 'bul ba*)

The officiant begins to sing a song of archaic poetic style. He addresses the entities who are the owners of the *mdos*, and all the cohorts of *lha srin sde brgyad* whom he has invited: may they listen, and look at the *mdos* with all the objects of offering that have been assembled there. He begins by praising the *mdos* in general: first, it has cost the efforts of the donor-patron and the *gshen* priest; then, it has been consecrated and arranged in a pure way; great quantities of objects and produce have been amassed as objects of offering. He details again the universe-*mdos*, as he did at the beginning of the ritual, and he concludes: “I offer you as ransom this great *mdos* of the created world, with its adornments”.

Next, he offers, one by one, the following things, explaining their origin, sometimes their etymology, and praising them: *nam mkha'*, *rgyang bu*, small painted boards (*shing ris*), *pho tong*, *mo tong*, arrow, spindle, winged beings, beasts of prey, wild animals, domestic animals, aquatic animals, precious things.

I. 12. Transposition of the effigy, ransom for the man (*ngar mi bsngo ste*)

The officiant describes and praises the effigy, declaring it more beautiful than the man for whom it will serve as ransom:

“Oh! Upon this great beautiful *mdos*, endowed with ornaments,
Of more beautiful appearance than the man, it is the object of offering *par excellence*.

Man made of five kinds of cereals,

He has teeth of cowrie shell and a coral tongue,

His eyes are made of *lang thang* (a medicinal plant), his nose made of a stick of incense (?),

His hair ... (? *zer mang skra la mu tig glud*).

Praise to his royal radiance of white mustard! (?)

His clothes are made of precious brocade,

His right arm is made of gold, his left arm of turquoise,

His right leg of iron, his left leg of copper.

He is made in the likeness of the donor-patron (*yon bdag 'dra ba'i gzugs su byas*).

The five senses, he has all of them,

The twelve *ayatana* (*skye mched*) of the sensory system, he has all of them,

Consciousness (*rnam par shes pa*), he has it;

Body and limbs, he has them.

For a physique more beautiful than the man, nothing is better than his body!

More expert at walking than the man, nothing is more beautiful than his gait!

Such a *ngar mi* ransom of the body, which combines perfectly all the wealth and things that satisfy the senses,

I offer it as an ornament of the *mdos* of the created world,

I offer it as ransom for this rich patron.
 May the resentment due to unpaid debts be appeased!”
 At the end of this song, the text only adds:
 “As one goes along, he installs each thing in its place. End of the first section of the general *mdos*”.

II. Second section (*smad mchong*)

This section is composed of ten parts, which, in fact, concern the actions that bring the ritual to an end.

II. 1. Opening the doors (*sgo dbye [ba]*)

The four guardian-goddesses of the doors (*sgo ma*) – which face the four cardinal directions – of the Ri-rab *mdos* (Sumeru-*mdos*) are invoked so that they open the doors with their magic keys:

- to the east, at the door of the earth, solid earth, sNang-gsal-sgron;
- to the north, at the door of the air, *li mun*, 'Deb-byed-ma;
- to the west, at the door of fire, *tshang[s] stang*, 'Od-du-gsal;
- to the south, at the door of water, *ting ngam* (= *nam*), bDud-rtsi-sgrubs.

(For these synonyms, or epithets, of the elements, see Karmay 1972: Glossary.)

They are requested, after having opened the doors, to facilitate the passage into the defiles and to guide the *mdos*.

II. 2. Turning the *mdos* round and showing the ransom-*mdos* [to the numina] (*mdos zhal phyir sgyur la/ mdos glud ngo(s) bstan [pa]*)

The *lha srin sde brgyad* are summoned and invoked: may they take this *mdos* (another listing of what it comprises) without the officiant committing an error in the giving or they in the taking. May they obey the orders of Che-mchog dBal-gsas. The world is impermanent, it has no substance (? *rgyu*): may they take their own bodies as an example (of impermanence). May they do no harm to others. May they ward off great misfortune and fright. May they leave in the state of what is useful, of happiness and love. Saying this, one shows them “the face” of the *mdos*.

II. 3. Giving [the *mdos*], as provisions for the journey, sprinkling it with grain and libations (*rdzongs btab ste 'bru dang gser skyems bran [pa]*)

The officiant announces that he gives this ransom-*mdos* as provisions for the journey to the different categories of *bgegs* (each part of the *mdos* and what it contains are again detailed). In return, may the *bgegs* push back all evil spells, accidents and catastrophes.

II. 4. Keeping the “good fortune” of the wealth (*longs spyod kyī g-yang len pa*)

The officiant lists all that he has not sent with the *mdos*, so as to keep the *g-yang*: the *g-yang* of longevity (*tshé g-yang*), which resides in the supports (images or *gtor ma*?) of the gods; the permanent objects of offering (? *rtan rdzas*; misspelling of *rtén rdzas*, support-objects of the gods?); the support objects of offering of the commitment (*dam rdzas*) of the Protectors (*srung ma*); the five weapons (*'khor ba'i go mtshon*: sword, spear . . .) of the warrior gods (*sgra bla*); the domestic livestock (a list of which is provided); the three white foods, the three sweet..., which belong to the *gter g-yang* (“good fortune” of the treasures); the *g-yang* of the heroism (*dpa' g-yang*) of the “Black headed” (Tibetans); the *rma g-yang* (?) which condenses them all.

The officiant concludes:

“I wave the white ritual arrow (*mda' dar*); I offer the first offering of the turquoise libation. I request you to reside here, without absent-mindedness. *phyá khum ye brum 'du*”.

Saying these words, he waves the *mda' dar* and offers the first offering. (We recognise here the elements of the rite of calling “good fortune”, *g-yang 'gug*.)

II. 5. Clearing the way for the *mdos* (*mdos lam bsal ba*)

Now, the *mdos* is given, the ransom shared out: may the guardian-goddesses of the doors open them and clear the way in the narrow defiles. May the entities that reside on the path take the libation offered and draw aside. The numina similarly exhorted are: gNam-sman dkar-mo and the small gods (*lha bran*) [at the centre] of space; the male and female *dri za* (Skr. *gandharva*) to the east; the *grul bum* (Skr. *kumbhaṇḍa*), males, females and children, to the south; the powerful *klu*, males, females and children, to the west; the *gnod sbyin* (Skr. *yakṣa*), males, females and children, to the north. If they do not comply, their children will be threatened with hell.

II. 6. Explanation of the way while moving the *mdos* (*mdos spyod [= bskyod] cing lam bshad pa*)

The officiant proclaims that he moves the *mdos* in the four directions: in each, he loads it on a different wild animal (*ri dwags*), charged with carrying it:

- to the east, he loads it on a big *rog po* (?) which takes the *mdos* to the land of the *dri za*;
- to the north, on a White-mouth *skyes* (= *rkyang*?), which takes it to the land of the *gnod sbyin*;
- to the west, on a wild yak (*'brong*), which takes it to the land of the *klu*;
- to the south, on a *rgya go ra* (?), which takes it to the land of the *gshin rje* (and not of the *grul bum* in accordance with the list of II. 5.).

May they carry the *mdos* without deviating from their route, nor turning back, and may they bring it to its destination.

This part ends with a gloss: “Then, one turns the *mdos* towards the path”.

II. 7. Moving the *mdos* towards its destination and showing the way for its ingestion (? *gnas su spyod* [= *b skyod*] *cing za lam bstan pa*)

This part consists of a long poetic song which presents difficulties of comprehension and vocabulary. It first presents four new entities charged with showing the way for the *mdos* in the four directions:

- towards the east, the large *g-yu bun* (?) of glaciers that sits astride a black iron bird and is surrounded by one hundred thousand *byang sman* (*sman mo* goddesses of the north?);
 - towards the south, the indigo *g-yu bun* (? *mthing gi g-yu bun*) that sits astride an indigo bird and is surrounded by one hundred thousand *spang sman* (goddesses of the pasture?);
 - towards the west, the copper *g-yu bun* that sits astride a black bird made of *bse* and is surrounded by one hundred thousand *klu sman*;
 - towards the north, the *byang sman* (an error, meant to be *g-yu bun*?) that sits astride a gold bird and is surrounded by one hundred thousand *byang sman*.
- Then follow imprecations against demons (*dam sri*, *bgegs*, *sri*) and against the hateful *lha srin sde brgyad*: may they not remain there any longer and return to their own residence.

Next, a new description of the *Ri-rab-mdos* comes up, emphasized by onomatopoeic or descriptive words, then, in the same style, the description of how the *mdos*, the *yas*, *yas thag*, *'dre* and *gdon*, and the ransom for the body (*sku glud*) move off.

The places where the *mdos* will actually be carried and left at the conclusion of the ritual, seem to be described by the following passage:

“*mdos* and ransom, to go, they go to the summit of *Ri-rab*.

Very solid, not very solid, the mountain is solid:

This is why they are taken to the summit of *Ri-rab* (i.e., a mountain).

And also, *mdos* and ransom, to go, they go to the junction of three valleys.

Walking much, walking little, one passes there:

This is why they are taken to the junction of [three] deserted roads.

And also, *mdos* and ransom, to go, they go into the plain of a large river.

Drinking much, drinking little, one drinks water:

This is why they are taken into the plain of a large river.”

The song ends on some new imprecations against the *bgegs* and the order given to the *lha srin sde brgyad* to take, without fighting over them, all the amassed offerings and to let go of their resentment against the donor-patron.

II. 8. Offering the *mdos* to those who take it away (*mdos len ma 'bul ba*)

This, in fact, is the offering of the *mdos* to its recipients, those who are the owners (*mdos bdag*) designated in II. 6., through the medium of a girl representative of each category: to the east, the *dri za* and their entourage (the text

is probably incorrect); to the north, the *gnod sbyin* daughter “With the beautiful complexion”; to the west, the *klu* daughter “With the beautiful finery”; to the south, the *gshin rje* daughter “With the beautiful radiance”. It is also offered to the categories of *bgegs* who damage the holy mountain-places (*gnas ri*).

For each, the same refrain is taken up: “You, *bgegs* who do harm in such direction, I offer you this *mdos* and these objects of offering from the created world. Cancel the debt and end your resentment, calm your harmful spirit and stop the evil that you do. Please leave contented.”

II. 9. Showing the way for the *mdos* (*mdos lam bstan pa*)

This part could seem to be a repeat of II. 6. In fact, it points out those who appear to be the ultimate recipients of the *mdos* and who, surprisingly, are the great Hindu gods (to which is added a Tibetan god?), presented here as the rulers of the four continents – called “paradise” (*zhing khams*) – and of Sumeru. The text gives no explanation for the inclusion of these gods in the ritual. Are we to assume that they are treated separately, as superior gods, in the *lha* category of the *lha srin sde brgyad*? We find these same gods among the recipients of the *mdos* in one of the Buddhist *Gling bzhi spyi mdos* (see the fourth text below), but reigning, in a manner that is much more vague, over “half the sky” in each direction. The question of possible contacts between Tibet and Hindu India crops up more and more frequently, and would merit thorough research. Coming back to our text, it describes these gods in this way:

“Oh! Now, I pray you to show the way for the *mdos*!

Show the way to the east of Ri-rab;

[There], in the Lus-'phag-po paradise,

IHa-chen Mahādeva

Exercises his power over one hundred thousand *kṣatriya* (*rgyal rigs*),

He takes pleasure with the daughters of the *kṣatriya*.

Towards him, who is the god of nine hundred *log 'dren* (Skr. *gaṇapati*, masters of wealth),

I pray you to show the way for the *mdos*!

And also, to show the way for the *mdos*, show it to the north;

[There], in the sGra-mi-snyan paradise,

The king of the gods, Khyab-'jug (Viṣṇu)

Exercises his power over an entourage of Brahmins,

He takes pleasure with the daughters of the Brahmins.

Towards him, who is the god of eight large planets,

I pray you to show the way for the *mdos*!

And also, to show the way for the *mdos*, show it to the west;

[There], in the Ba-glang-spyod paradise,

The king of the gods, Tshangs-pa (Brahmā)

Exercises his power over one hundred thousand *śūdra* (*dmangs rigs*),

He takes pleasure with the daughters of the *śūdra*.
 As he is the god of almost the whole world,
 Towards him, show the way for the *mdos*!
 And also, to show the way for the *mdos*, show it to the south;
 [There], in the Jambudvīpa world,
 The king of the gods, Thang-sprin
 Exercises his power over the seigniorial caste (*rje rigs*),
 He takes pleasure with the girls of the seigniorial caste.
 Towards him, who is the god of lightning and hail,
 I pray you to show the way for the *mdos*!
 And also, I pray you to show the way for the *mdos* to the centre, Ri-rab:
 At the summit of Ri-rab lhun-po,
 The Chief (*mi po*) dBang-phyug chen-po (Maheśvara)
 Exercises his power over the six categories of beings.
 Since he is the Chief of the world,
 Towards him, show the way for the *mdos*!
 And also, to show the way for the *mdos*, where is it shown to?
 Beyond the three chiliocosms,
 Towards the unlimited borders of the universe,
 Show the way for the *mdos*, go there!"

After one last exhortation to the *bgegs* to satisfy themselves and to go back home, one imagines that all leave. Then one takes the *mdos* on the path.

II. 10. Explaining the impermanence of the *mdos* (*mdos la mi rtag pa bshad [pa]*)

This song begins with statements on the impermanent nature of all things: one must not, therefore, feel either fear or desire. The *mdos* is impermanent in its totality. There then follows a long list of impermanent things, combined in pairs (blood and water, flesh and earth, breath and air, humid heat and fire, hair and wood, bone and stone... man and animal): although it is not said, one could think that these are the elements of the universe-*mdos*, as the song ends by again taking up the same wording as for the impermanence of the *mdos*.

(End of the second section and colophon.)

I underlined, at the outset, the considerable difference between the two *mdos* rituals discovered by gNyan-'theng re-ngan (although one of them bears the same title of *Srid pa'i spyi mdos*) and the one I have analysed here. This one, indeed, presents several striking features: first of all, the universe of which the *mdos* is a reproduction does not belong to the Bonpo cosmology – touched upon only in one short mythical narrative – but to the Buddhist/Hindu cosmology. I will come back to this later. Secondly, its structure does not differ from that of a Buddhist *mdos*. Thirdly, the omnipresence of the *lha srin sde brgyad* classification clearly points to

a Buddhist influence. This obviously raises the recurrent question of the borrowing from one tradition by another. This is why it has seemed interesting to me to try to find out if, in the Buddhist tradition, there are any *mdos* rituals that have one of the titles provided by the Bonpo ritual: *mDos mchong rin chen phreng ba*, or *Gling bzhi srid pa'i spyi mdos*, in order to compare them.

No ritual by either of these names is found in the various collections of Buddhist *mdos* published to date, although they contain a good number of rituals for pacifying the *sde brgyad*. On the other hand, we find in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (vol. phi, no. 67) four short texts (the longest being twelve folios, the shortest being one folio) which include *Gling bzhi spyi mdos* in their title, plus one which is a development of a *Gling bzhi srid pa spyi mdos*.

The first, *mKha' 'gro gling bzhi srid pa'i spyi mdos* (phi, text 1, 12 f), is taken from the *Thugs sgrub yang snying 'dus pa* cycle, a *gter ma* discovered by Ratna gling-pa (14th century). The *yi dam* is dBang-chen (Maheśvara) and the *mdos* is addressed to the *mKha' 'gro ma* of the mundane plane. As for the detail of its performance, it is quite different from the Bonpo ritual.

The second (phi, text 2, 4 f) consists of a few notes (*zin bris*), written by Rāga-sya, on the *Gling bzhi spyi mdos* discovered by Ratna gling-pa, which is said to be, itself, an abstract of the same ritual discovered by Ra-shag gter-son²). These notes provide some precise information about the preparations for the ritual and about its performance.

The third (phi, text 6, 13 f) bears the title: *gTsug lag snang srid spyi skong gi mdos chog*. The author, unnamed, says that in a dream, he received some explanations and complementary instructions on a *Gling bzhi srid pa spyi mdos*. Although inserted into a Buddhist framework, the text bears some evidence of Bonpo influence; for instance, the Truth is called to witness in these words: *'gyur med g-yung drung phywa'i bden pa*. . . Nevertheless, the ritual is very different from that of the Bonpos.

The fourth, *Gling bzhi spyi mdos* (phi, text 8, 7 f), is taken from the *bDe gshegs yongs 'dus* cycle, a *gter ma* discovered by Klong-gsal snying-po (17th century). The *yi dam* is Che-mchog He-ru-ka; the main entities for whom the *mdos* is intended are the *ma mo*, then the lords of various categories of numina, including the Hindu gods as mentioned above. This ritual is supplemented by the fifth text (phi, text 9, 1 f), which summarises the process of the ritual acts (*las 'grigs*) as explained orally by dBon-po O-rgyan rnam-grol of Kaḥ-thog.

Although these rituals have very little in common with the Bonpo ritual, other than their title, they keep some of the Bonpo flavour and, in this respect, it is interesting to note that Kong-sprul places them with other *mdos* discovered by some *gter ston* well known for their “ambivalence”.

Finally, the best parallel can be found in the *gTer chos* of mChog-gyur gling-pa (1829-1870), where there is a *Srid pa'i spyi mdos* (14 f) written by mChog-gyur

gling-pa as auxiliary text to his *gter ma* cycle, the *Bla ma'i thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel*. I will briefly compare this ritual with the Bonpo ritual.

The difference in length between the two texts is obvious at first glance. As is common with the Buddhist *mdos* texts, the ritual of mChog-gyur gling-pa is a simple aide-mémoire; that is to say, it contains only general descriptions, with little detail, and no mythical narrative, which characterises the Bonpo ritual. Moreover, the initiator of the ritual is obviously different: for mChog-gyur gling-pa, as written in his preamble to the ritual, it is Padmasambhava in his Thod-phreng-rtsal form who performed this *mdos* for the first time, and said to perform it to appease the *lha srin sde brgyad*.

After this very short preamble, the ritual itself is classically divided into three parts: the preliminaries (*sngon 'gro*), the central part (*dngos gzhi*) and the final ritual acts (*rjes kyi bya ba*), followed by a statement on the usefulness and the benefits of this ritual.

The preliminaries break down into:

– the making of the *mdos*. This amounts to reproducing the universe in dough: one builds a platform with four stepped levels; around it are arranged the mountain ranges, the oceans, the continents, etc. Each category of the *lha srin sde brgyad* is represented by a *gter ma* placed on the first step or terrace of Sumeru, each in the direction that corresponds to it. The description continues with the list of representations of living beings, the usual objects and ingredients, and the human effigy.

– propitiation of the *yi dam*. One can make his *sādhana* in a way that is elaborate, average or small, but it must always be complete.

– consecration of the *mdos*. With the syllables RAM, YAM, KHAM, one purifies all things by burning and dispersing them (the Bonpo used the five elements): they become the Void. From the syllable BHRUM, appearing from the Void, a perfectly made palace of jewels forms. From SVĀ HĀ all the wealth and desirable things appear. One consecrates them with OM Ā HŪM. Other mantras follow, accompanied by *mudrā* which transform the objects into inexhaustible wealth, into *amṭa*, etc.

The central part (*dngos gzhi*) consists of:

– the invitation to the *lha srin sde brgyad*. May they not break their previous promises, may they obey and come.

– putting the *lha srin* under oath. The officiant imagines that he places the *vajra* of divine pride on their head, that he pours the *amṭa* into their mouth and that he drives into their heart the *vajra* commitments that are difficult to contravene. A mantra follows.

– satisfying the gods and the *lha srin* with the offering of the *mdos*. The *mdos* is offered successively to the following: the Lama, the *yi dam*, the *Triratna*, the *dPa'*

bo, *ḍākinī* and *chos skyong*, the *gnod sbyin*, the gods of wealth and the masters of the treasures; then to each category of the *lha srin sde brgyad*. The officiant first praises the Sumeru-*mdos* and what it contains, then he briefly describes each of the *lha srin*, his residence. . . ; he ends by asking him to be satisfied with what he has been given.

– the transposition of the ransom for the man. The officiant speaks to the *sde brgyad* and praises the effigy; he describes what it is composed of, transposing each element into precious material; it is more beautiful and rich than the real man. May the *sde brgyad* subdue their resentment, may they be appeased and produce the Thought of Enlightenment; may they perform only propitious actions and may they not break their promises.

Final ritual acts are four in number:

– clearing the way. There is only one short indication: “clearing the way by offering a libation”.

– showing the way. Each of the objects of the *mdos* and the offerings are offered after having been consecrated by the six mantras and the six *mudrā*. In the officiant’s recitation, he repeats that he is showing the way, but no precise destination is indicated: he shows the way in the four cardinal directions and the intermediate directions, there where the *'byung po* are gathered. Now it is time to leave; may they not remain here and no longer do harm. “Otherwise, I, Thod-phreng-rtsal (says the officiant), I will reduce you to ashes.”

– turning the *mdos*. The text describes in a very concise way what one does with the *mdos*, according to which of the four ritual acts (appeasement, augmentation....) one has performed.

– final rites. Listing of a series of protection rites when one comes back after having left the *mdos*.

This brief analysis allows us to state that the structure of the ritual is identical in the two *mdos*, the Bonpo and the Buddhist, and that the erection of the universe-*mdos* also originates in the *sādhana* techniques. However, some striking differences in the developments of this structure do not, perhaps, stand out very clearly: these are, in the Buddhist ritual, the prevalence of the mantras accompanied by the description of the *mudrā*, the very stereotyped nature of the celebrant’s invocation and the difference in attitude towards the *sde brgyad*. Regarding the latter, the officiant, identified with the *yi dam*, exercises the same authority over them, but the Buddhist treats them as inferior demons, in an aloof manner, roughly, with threats; for the Bonpo, they seem to be part of a family circle, with formidable power, that he treats more like gods than like demons (though, sometimes, he threatens them). Even the creation of the universe, which is based, obviously, on the same cosmology, presents the same basic and stereotyped

character in the Buddhist ritual. By contrast, the Bonpo ritual appears lavish and dynamic.

As recalled at the beginning of this article, the real origin of the *mdos* is not known. The least that one can say at this point is that whatever their origin might be – Buddhist or Bonpo – as far as these rituals and their performance are concerned, there are not two distinct traditions. I will go further in the concluding questions and hypothesis, but I come now to the question of cosmology.

3. The underlying cosmology of the symbolic construction of the *mdos*

We have already noted in the preceding text that the cosmology is Indo-Buddhist. Here, for a more detailed examination, I will use the basic text of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection, the *gter ma* found by rMa-ston Shes-rab seng-ge: the *mKha' klong mdos bskang[s] kyi gzhung chen*. According to the table of contents provided at the beginning (119), the text is composed of twelve parts; the last two are missing but the text is apparently completed by the discoveries of 'Or-sgom phug-pa (see Karmay 1977, no. 30: texts 26-28 and 32). The colophon clearly attributes the discovery to rMa Sher-seng and gives the lineage of transmission, starting with 'Or-sgom phug-pa (I have not been able to identify the four other disciples who then successively received the transmission; the last, Khams-sgom drang-srong, is undoubtedly the final editor because the colophon ends with: And I, Khams-sgom drang-srong, I have asked for [the transmission] with the good of the beings in mind. . .”).

The greater part of the *gZhung chen* concerns the ritual performance of the *mdos*, but the text begins with a cosmogony that is very interesting because it combines Bonpo and Buddhist (or Indian) theories.

The first part sets out the characteristics of Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo. Here, unlike the common tradition (according to the *mDzod phug*, see Karmay 1975: 191-196, 200), Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo is the primordial deity: she is identified with the primordial state (the *Bon sku?*), luminous, without form or colour, or activity; she remains, from the beginnings, in the Great Expanse that covers everything (*khyab brdal*), in the state of great equanimity; she has taken form from the Great Expanse (*khyab brdal srid pa'i rgyal mo'i sku ru grub*).

The second part explains the process of the creation of the universe: the receptacle-world and the beings that are its elixir (*snod bcud*). This creation proceeds from five luminous rays emanating from Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, without her leaving the undifferentiated state of the Sphere [of the Absolute]. From the diffusion and retraction of the luminous white ray, empty space (*nam mkha' stong ldan*) appears. From the diffusion and retraction of the light blue ray, the circle of wind appears, etc. To better bring out how closely this process of creation follows the one described in the *Abhidharmakośa*, I compare, in the table below, the data

provided by the two texts (for the *Abhidharmakośa*, I use the translation by La Vallée Poussin: basic text and commentary, and extracts from the *Lokaprajñāptiśāstra*). It should be noted as well that the Bonpo text is often incorrect, as is the set of manuscripts that make up the *mKha' klong gsang mdos* Collection.

*mKha' klong gsang mdos**Abhidharmakośa*

From the white ray: empty space

From the light blue ray: the circle of wind supported by the double [diamond?] *vajra*. Its thickness is 1,600,000 [*yojana*], its width, immeasurable.

The circle of wind, supported by space.
Ditto

From the red ray: a red, octagonal mountain of fire. Its height is 920,000 *yojana*, its width, 1,220,000.

(Missing)

From the blue ray: an expanse of water. Its depth is 620,000 *yojana*; (its dimensions of width are missing).

The circle of water.
1,120,000 *yojana*; then 800,000, the rest [320,000] becoming the golden earth.

From the yellow ray: the golden earth. The thickness is 1,120,000 plus 320,000 (? the calculation is uncertain). (No dimensions of width)

Circle of water and golden earth; each has a width of 1,203,450 *yojana*.

Above, the precious *Ri-rab* appears. It measures 2 times 80,000 *yojana*: 80,000 to the bottom of the water, where it touches the golden earth; 80,000 above, rising in four steps. Its vital axis (*srog shing*) totally pierces the earth. Its side to the east is made of conch; to the north, gold; to the west, copper; to the south, turquoise.

Ditto

Gold, silver, lapis lazuli and crystal.

Its summit is made of the five precious materials,
its base is gold and square; square, it looks like dice stacked up.

(Details missing)

On the exterior, in succession, 7 mountains:

gNya'-shing-'dzin (Yugamdhāra),
bShol-mda'-'dzin (Īṣādhara), Seng-ldeng-'dzin
(Khadiraka), (b)lTa(r)-na-sdug (Sudarśana),
rTa-na-[can] (Aśva-karṇa), rNam-'dud
(Vinataka), Mu-khyud-'dzin (Nimimdhara).

Ditto (and in the same order).
Like Sumeru, they rest on the golden earth. Nimimdhara is the outside ring of this circle of 7 mountain-walls.
They are made of gold, and Cakravāḍa is made of iron.

Between the 7 mountain ranges, 7 oceans

(*mtsho*): Klu-rgyal ro[l]-mtsho, Glang-po rab-'bog, bDud-rtsi-ro, rDul-med-gangs, Ko-rang-gsal, sByor-nyos byed-chang, Ro[l]-mo lnga-ldan.

Inside the mountains, the Sita, whose water is endowed with 8 qualities. . .
(The size of the oceans is given, but not their names.)

[The continents: 4 large and 8 small]:

to the east, Lus-'phags (Pūrva-videha), in the shape of a half-moon;
the small continent to its right: Lus-'dra (Lus, Deha), to its left: Khrus-'phags, both of the same colour and shape as the large continent.

(Begin with the Jambudvīpa)
Ditto
Deha (Lus) and Videha (Lus-'phags).
(For each, shape and dimensions; not the colour. Whether on the left or the right is not specified. The same for the other continents.)

[to the north], sGra-mi-snyan (Uttarakuru), square, green;
small continent to its right: sGra-mi-snyan

Ditto

(Kuru), to its left: sGra-mi-zla (Kaurava), Kaurava (sGra-mi-snyan-gyi zla-ba).
of the same colour and shape as the large continent.

[to the west], Ba-lang-spyod (Apara-godāniya), Ditto
round, red;
small continent to the right: Lam-mchog-'gro Śāṭha (gYo-ldan) and
[ba] (Uttaramantriṇa) Uttaramantriṇa
to the left: Srin-po-tshal (?), (Lam-mchog-'gro).
of the same colour and shape. . .

[to the south], 'Dzam-bu-gling (Jambudvīpa), in Ditto
the shape of a shoulder blade, blue;
small continent to the right: gYo-ldan (Śāṭha), Cāmara (rNga-yab) and
to the left: sNga-pa-bzhan (rNga-yab-gzhan, Avara-cāmara
Avara-cāmara), in the shape of a shoulder blade (rNga-yab-can).
and the colour turquoise.

The Bonpo *gZhung chen* continues, listing the stars, the vegetables, etc., all issuing from Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo. Then it goes on to the creation of the elixir-beings, also issuing from the emanation-retraction of the rays emitted by Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo:

- the white ray produces the gods: gods without form and luminous gods, gods of the domain of forms, gods of the domain of desire, the lHa-rabs then-dgu of the created world, the nine gods that reside in the median space, the nine that live on the earth. These gods originated from the Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo state;
- the green ray produces the *lha srin sde brgyad* of the *g-yen khams*: the upper *g-yen*, the *g-yen* of the middle, the *g-yen* of the earth (cf. Snellgrove 1967: *g-yen/dbyen* = *lha ma yin*);
- the yellow ray produces the men, men of the four continents and men of the small continents: the inconceivable number of human races and the three, man, *smra* (?) and *gshen*;
- the blue ray produces the kingdom of the four classes of animals: birds that fly in the sky, beasts of prey that roam in the middle, wild animals that live in the mountains, and all the kinds of livestock for the men, plus all the kinds of animals;
- the red ray produces all the kinds of *yi dwags* (*preta*): *yi dwags* that have an outer and inner shadow (?), those that have the shadow of those that have a shadow, those that have a circle of fiery tongues, etc.;
- the black ray produces the hells: the sixteen hells, hot and cold, Nyi-tshe, Nye-'khor, etc.

In this way, all the elixir-beings came from the Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo state and filled the universe.

Then the text comes back to Bonpo concepts: some beings liked existence, they wanted growth and development. It was like the rising of the sun at dawn. They naturally liked happiness, stability and increasing virtue. Lacking negative and terrifying character, they did not like suppressing. They venerated the (pure) white gods and the Phy[w]a, Srid and sKos deities. As for the doctrine of the three – man, *smra*, *rgyal* (*gshen*, above) – it spread widely. Other beings did not like existence, liked suppressing, did not like growth, liked making [the world] deserted (empty). They liked the twilight, creating obstacles and they did not like increasing virtue. They liked non-existence, terror, passions and blemishes. They did not have the doctrine that teaches the fundamental causes of the created world and liked to destroy.

It is in such a world that the Masters (*ston pa*) appeared successively. The Doctrine was progressively preached and assembled. The beings were happy in their misfortune; their longevity and their time was determined by their karma.

It is in this way that all the phenomena and the totality of the receptacle-world and of the elixir-beings were produced by the Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo state.

We find ourselves, therefore, faced with a combination, or juxtaposition, of Buddhist and Bonpo cosmologies. For those elements that are in parallel with the *Abhidharmakośa*, we must take note of some details in the Bonpo text that are intriguing because they are not found in the *Abhidharmakośa*, nor in the extracts from the *Lokaprajñāptiśāstra* translated by La Vallée Poussin; for example, these texts do not give the names of the oceans that surround Sumeru, the various classes of *yi dwags*. . . Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has been kind enough to point out to me (personal communication of 20 April 1999) that in the *Lokaprajñāptiśāstra* in Tibetan (Tohoku 4086), the seven mountains that surround Sumeru cut the ocean into seven seas which take the name of the mountain that delimits it: the Īśādhara sea (gShol-mda' 'dzin-gyi rol-mtsho), etc. We note that the Bonpo *gZhung chen* appears to follow, here, another tradition which remains to be found.

The contributions of D. Martin and K. Mimaki in this volume offer a much more systematic study of the Bonpo cosmology and I do not want to pursue this subject further. In conclusion, I would just like to raise a few questions and present a hypothesis.

The relationship between the Bonpo and Buddhist *mdos* rituals seems obvious; when we consider to what extent the process of construction and of the offering of the *mdos* are similar to the offering of the *maṇḍala* (*maṇḍal phul ba*), I wonder if these rituals are not the product of a Buddhist elaboration and appropriation of the ancient ransom rites, well documented in the Dunhuang manuscripts. If this is the case, we must conclude that the Bonpos have borrowed them from the Buddhists. Of course, this hypothesis does not account for the numerous mythical narratives

that fill the Bonpo *mdos* and which are very limited in the Buddhist *mdos*. We must bear in mind, however, the imprecision of the terms defining the categories of rituals, notably *mdos*, *glud* and *gto*, because, if we find apparently few *mdos* rituals among the Bonpos, there is, on the other hand, an abundance of *gto*, of which many are rites of ransom (*glud*), themselves inheritors, undoubtedly, of the same pre-Buddhist ransom rites; and we know that the Bonpo ritual literature has preserved the origin myths and the archaic style of their telling much better than the Buddhist ritual literature.

Be that as it may, if I pursue this hypothesis, and for as much as the scarcity of Bonpo *mdos* may be confirmed, attention must be drawn to the personality of the discoverers of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos*: in fact, they belong to this lineage of rMa and to this ambivalent (Bonpo and Buddhist) tradition known as *bsGrags-pa Bon-lugs* by the Buddhists (Blondeau 1990a). Even gNyan-'theng re-ngan, who does not belong to this lineage, must be linked, in one way or another, to the Buddhists, since it is said that he died of leprosy contracted for having transformed some of his *gter ma* into Buddhist texts (Karmay 1972: 312). Would these *gter ston* have been able to adapt the Buddhist *mdos* to the Bonpo tradition? If this was the case, we must also ask ourselves about the role that they could have played in the adoption of the theories of the *Abhidharma* by the Bonpos. They are linked principally to the tradition of transmission of the teachings of Dran-pa nam-mkha'. In particular, it is the son of rMa-ston Srol-'dzin, rMa lCam-me, who discovered the Commentary of the *mDzod phug* attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha'. Even if the *mDzod phug* already contains passages borrowed from the *Abhidharmakośa* (see D. Martin), it presents a tradition foreign to Buddhism which we can regard as a Bonpo cosmology; a tradition that seems to me erased in the Commentary attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha', in favour of comments entirely in keeping with the Buddhist *Abhidharma*.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

- 1) According to Indian cosmology, the outer mountain circle, *cakravāda*, is made of iron. It is worthy to note that in Zhang-zhung language, *zangs* means “iron” (Haarh 1968); however in other parts of the text, we find *lcags* for “iron” and *zangs* for “copper”, so that it seems unlikely to retain the Zhang-zhung terminology in this unique occurrence.
- 2) Himself an “ambivalent” *gter ston*, specialist of *mdos* rituals, he discovered among his Buddhist *gter ma* the *Ma mo gling bzhi'i mdos*, and among his Bonpo *gter ma*, more

than one hundred thousand *mdos* of the created world (? *srid pa'i 'bum dgu mdos*), according to Kong-sprul's *gTer ston brgya rtsa*: 128.

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mKha' klong gsang mdos Collection: see *gSas mkhar rin po che...*

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Plate 1 The assembly hall of the New sMan ri (Dolanji, India), where the *mdos* will be erected.
(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)



Plate 2 Construction of the *mdos*: wooden frame serving as a structure for Ri rab. (Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)



Plate 3 The complete *mdos*. (Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)



Plate 4 Basis of the *mdos*. (Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)



Plate 5 Summit of the *mdos*, with tri-dimensional *nam mkha'*.

(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

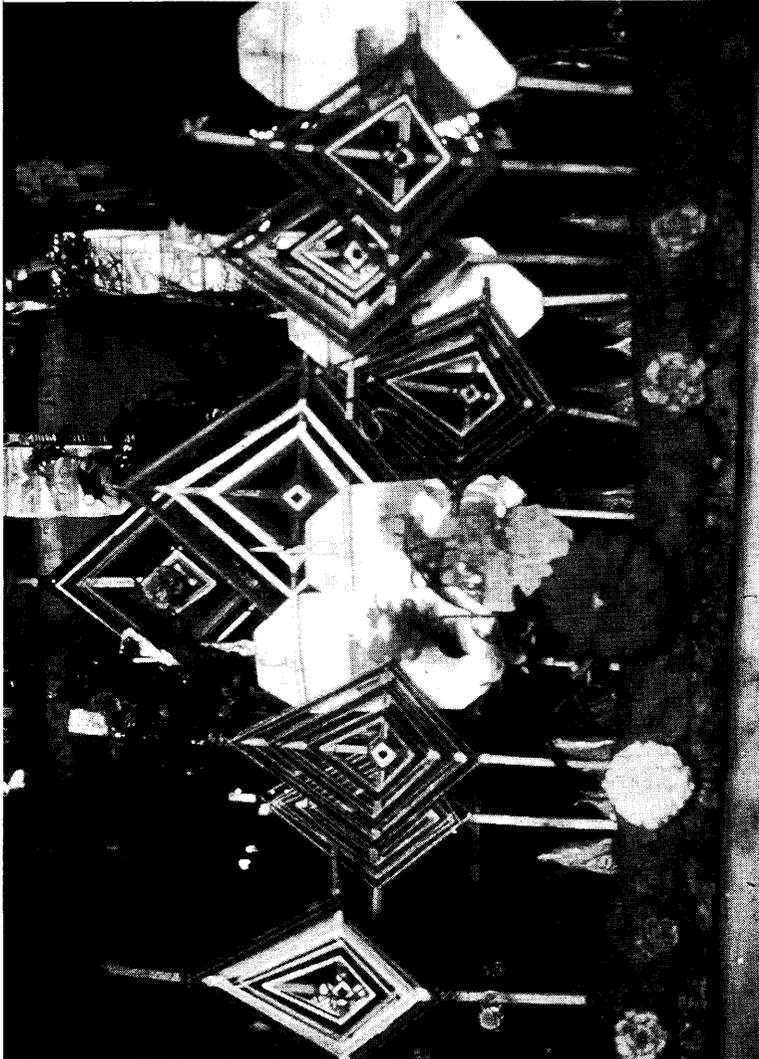


Plate 6 Details of the *mkha' klong gsang mdos: nam mkha'* and *shing ris*.
(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)



Plate 7 Details of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos*: *nam mkha'* and *shing ris*.

(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

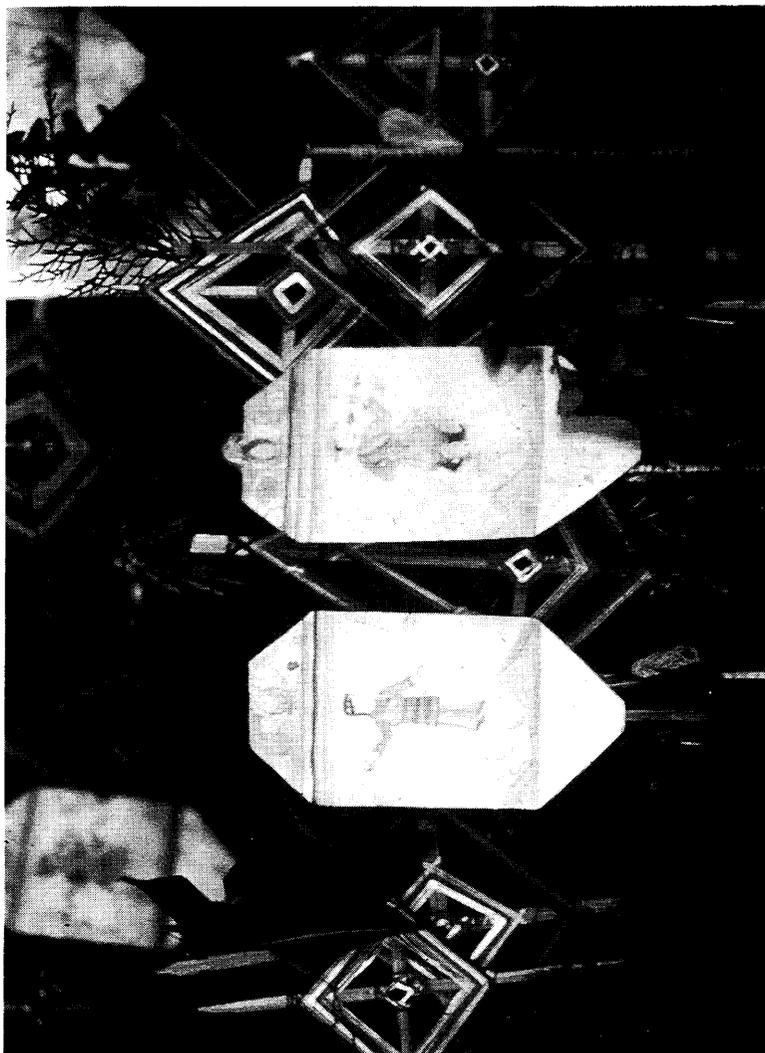


Plate 8 Details of the *mKha' klong gsang mdos: nam mkha'*, *pho tong* and *mo tong*.
(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

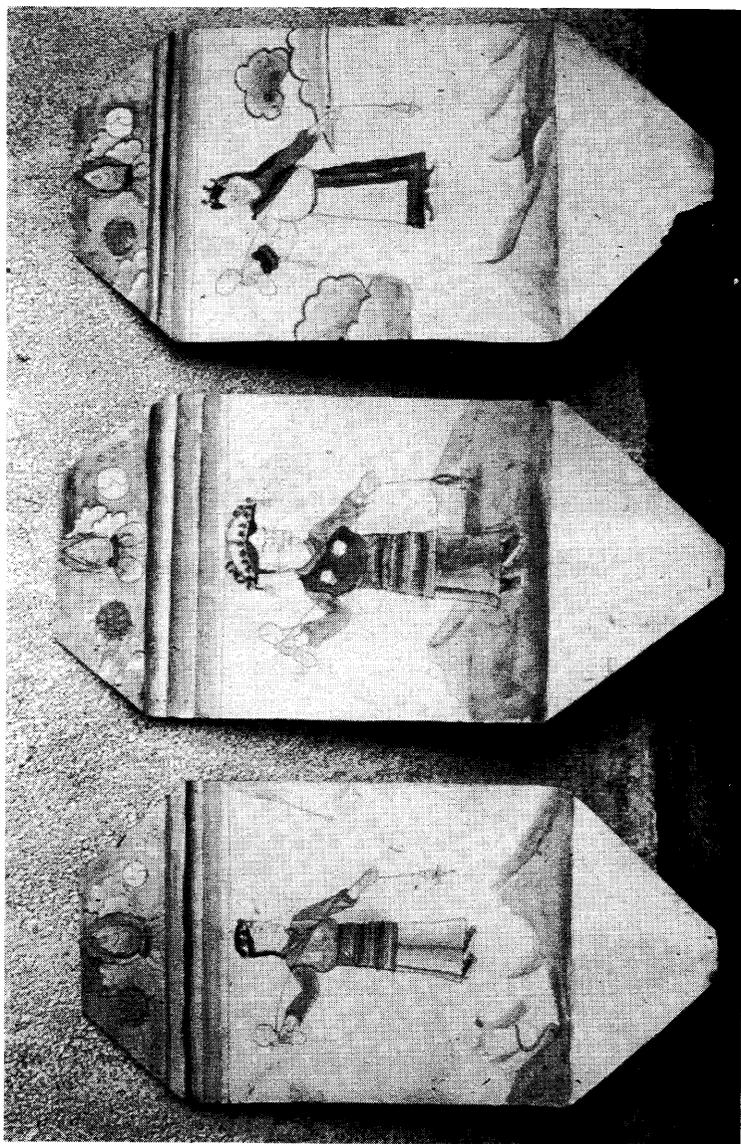


Plate 9 Various *mo tong*. (Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

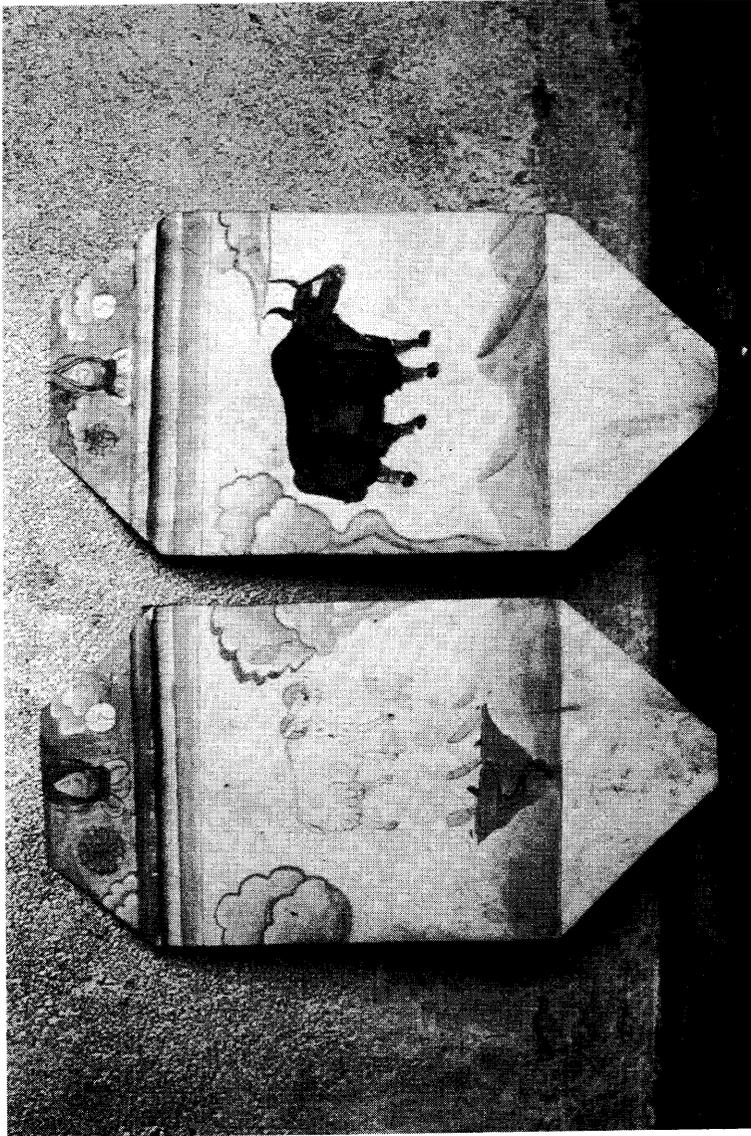


Plate 10 *shing ris* symbolizing offerings of yak and sheep. (Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

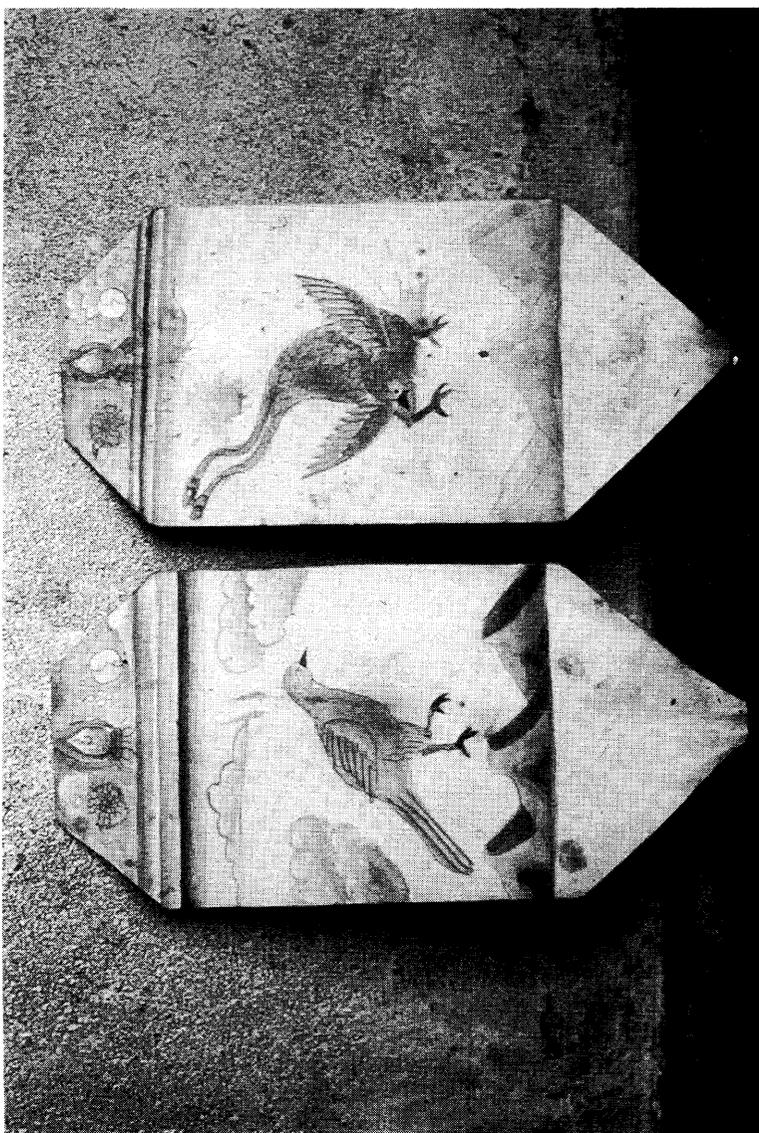


Plate 11 *shing ris* symbolizing offerings of the species of birds.
(Photographed by Y. Imaeda, 1976/1978)

