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INTRODUCTION

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It was in 2000 when I made a short visit to sMan-ri Monastery in Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India, that Lopon 'Phrin-las nyi-ma, the head teacher of the monastery, kindly showed me several manuscripts of his own collection which he thought would interest me. He was right. These manuscripts were of particular interest in that they were in good condition, mostly complete, and have never been published before. I immediately realised that the ritual texts the manuscripts contained were of ancient origin and that I had seen them nowhere else.

Among the manuscripts I have chosen two (Texts 1 and 2 in the present volume) to have xerox copies of them made. To my knowledge these ritual texts are extant only in this monastery and the manuscripts are unique copies of the texts.

The Lopon is a descendant of the most revered Yang-ston family in Dolpo. The family had established a monastery in the eleventh century and maintained it throughout the ages. The monastery is commonly known as Samling, an abridged form of its full name bSam-gtan bde-chen-gling. Elsewhere I pointed out that the library of Samling Monastery became the major source of Bonpo publications for the Tibetan refugees in India in the 1970s (Karmay 1977, i-v) after the wanton destruction of monasteries and their libraries in Tibet by the barbaric Red Guards during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

With these two manuscripts to which I added seven other texts, I proposed to my colleague Professor Yasuhiko Nagano to make an anthology of rare and ancient texts on myths and rituals and publish them in the programme of the Bon Culture Research Project which he started in 1997. He readily accepted it.

The other texts in the present volume came to my notice as I worked on the theme of myths and rituals in Tibetan culture over a long period. As time went by they came to make a group of nine. It is satisfactory the fact they are all complete, but they are mostly anonymous and full of spelling errors. In many places passages are so incoherent that no correction is possible.

No other copies of these texts seem to exist. At any rate, I have not found any. It has therefore not been possible to follow the traditional way of making a critical edition by comparing several copies of one text at the same time. Hence, the solution that I have adopted is as follows: the texts are fully edited and computerised for print so that there will be no difficulties in reading them for those who are reasonably well versed in Tibetan. Moreover, the original manuscripts are also reproduced following each edited text except that of Text 4 in the same volume with cross references so

that the critical philologist who may not be content with the edited version can also consult the original.

In the following pages I shall present each manuscript of the nine texts with a brief account of their content and state from where they originate. There will be neither translation nor full summary of the works. These were not intended. The main purpose of the present anthology is just to provide rare and early texts of the Bon tradition that are least influenced by Buddhist concepts and terminology so that it may encourage for future research. A number of my Buddhist compatriots have also often expressed the wish to read Bonpo works that are genuinely indigenous, but such works have rarely been available.

These manuscripts are in fact extraordinarily rich in indigenous vocabulary and lyrical in their literary form. Half a century ago, Mlle Marcelle Lalou (1953: 2) already remarked on this question in the following words: “....des étonnants passages des textes mythologiques Bon où se déchaîne un prodigieux lyrisme de fond et de forme.” (...the astonishing passages of texts of Bon mythology where a prodigious lyricism in both the form and the substance is unleashed). Lalou’s remark is concerned with the myths in Tibetan manuscripts on Bon from Dunhuang, but it is no less applicable to the texts presented in this volume. As will be pointed out when dealing with each work, there is a very close parallel of literary genre to that of Dunhuang manuscripts.

Moreover, in these works, we also perceive the role of the secular beliefs held by laymen in society in the ethos of the early Bon tradition. The beliefs manifest themselves in the exposition of myths in which birds, deer, bees as well as various spirits and local deities have an important place. Another important theme in the myths is the role played by a cosmic egg which only the Bon tradition in Tibet features in its cosmology. The fact that these texts are preserved within the context of the Bon religion further indicates that the later organized Bon religion known as gYung-drung Bon has maintained the early tradition of literary composition as well as secular beliefs of the Imperial period (7th-9th centuries). In other words, the assertion that the Bon religion never existed before the eleventh century or it was cut off from the early Bon tradition is totally misleading to say the least.

Text 1

It is concerned with the ritual for purification. Elsewhere I have already taken up this study as it forms an important part of the early beliefs but little had been written about it (Karmay 1998: No. 21). The text is written alternately in verses with five or seven syllables and meant to be intoned. It has no colophon.

The particular interest of this text is that it deals with the purificatory ritual known as *sel* as is clear from its title: *Mi’u rigs bzhi lha sel*, ‘Purification of the

deities of the Four Clans of the Little Man'. In the *gZi brjid*, four types of *gzhung*, 'lore' are given and described as belonging to a classification of the Bon doctrines known as the 'Black Waters' (*chab nag*). One of the four *gzhung* is called *Srid pa mi' u rgyud kyi gzhung* which is translated as "the lore of the original human stream of existence" (Snellgrove 1967, 44, 9). Text 1 obviously bears a relation to this 'lore', if not the basic text. The *sel* purificatory ritual is considered extremely important and the texts dealing with it can sometimes be found in unexpected places such as the Potala Palace.

In 1999 I was in Lhasa during a research mission and had the opportunity to see a small exhibition of artefacts in the Potala Palace. There I noted three large volumes of manuscripts in the *poti* form one of which was open displaying the folios 1b and 2a written beautifully in gold on the black background. On each end of the folio there were the symbolical drawings of the ten syllables of the Kalacakra mantra presented as the flower of a plant, and the bottom of the folio presents three sections each containing a line written in what is known as *wartu* characters, all in gold. Pieces of yellow and blue silk are attached to the top part of the folio as its dust cover in very much the traditional way. I could easily read the folio 1b. It was about Bonpo mythology connected with the *sel*, *phyu* and *g-yang* rituals. Judging from the first folio, these manuscripts certainly contain texts that I have not seen anywhere else. I was somewhat astonished to see the extent to which Buddhist ornamentation was lavished on a Bonpo text. I wondered if the manuscripts were made under the instructions of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) who, as is known, was deeply interested in Bon religion and regarded it as indispensable for the well-being of Tibet.

A colour photograph of these manuscripts as they were displayed in the exhibition can be viewed in the book called *The Potala Holy Palace in the Snow Land*, published by China Travel and Tourism Press in 1996, p. 175.

The term *mi'u* in the title refers to the Tibetan people as a race. In Text 3 as will be seen, the term is preceded by *dbu nag* 'black head' hence the 'Little black-headed man' on account of this race having black hair. In Text 1, the origin myth of the Tibetan people is said to have four clans: 1. sMar Zhang zhung, 2. sTong Sum pa, 3. lDong Me nyag, 4. Se A zha, but in other versions of the myth there are six as is the case of Text 3. The purificatory ritual is therefore dedicated to the deities of these four clans. What is peculiar in the myth of procreation of these four clans is the importance of the role played by an unidentified bird, the golden Pud-de. In another myth, five birds, a bat (considered as a bird), a crane, a parrot, a lark and a cuckoo are sent as messengers in order to invite deities of the four clans from the thirteenth stage of the heavens. As soon as the deities hear the call of the birds, they descend to the altar and listen to the invocation of the officiants who wear white turbans and drink *chang*, the Tibetan ale, while they perform the ritual. One of the ritual objects they use in such a ritual is the arrow decorated with pieces of cloth in five or nine

different colours. The principal deities that are invoked as in the case of Text 2 and 9 are the deities known as the ‘five deities of the head’ (*mgo ba’i lha lnga*), deities that one inherits from parents and one’s own family.

In the purificatory ritual two kinds of pollution are considered that need to be dealt with by means of performing the *sel* purificatory ritual: the *mnol*, violation of environments hence upsetting the spirits believed to dwell there, and the *sme*, fratricide, engendering impurities that causes rejection by one’s ancestral deities. To overcome these transgressions by man the ritual uses the *tshan*, ‘sanctified water’ to cleanse the *mnol* and the *bsang*, fumigation by burning juniper leaves.

The text is written in alternate verses with five or seven syllables. It is the verse with five syllables that is the more prevalent in the text.

Text 2

This text deals with the ritual known as *g-yang* ‘gug, the ‘summoning of the quintessence of fortune’. It is composed in verses with seven syllables throughout the text and remains anonymous.

The term *g-yang* in Tibetan culture expresses an abstract notion that is difficult to render satisfactorily. It refers to the essential part of something, but non-material and in an transcendent sense. Various objects described as *rten*, literally ‘support’ are kept to symbolise it in one’s house and its preservation is regarded as important as its safety is fragile. The *gZi brjid*, has the following line, *mchod cha phyra rten g-yang rten bshams*, and translates as ‘Prepare the devices for the rite, the implements and talismans’ (Snellgrove 1967: 34, 24). R. A. Stein (1957: 15) discusses the origin of the term *g-yang* and suggests its meaning as ‘chance’, ‘oracle’ and ‘divination’. These definitions do not quite fit into the context of the *yang*-‘gug ritual texts. As we shall see, the two terms, *phyra* and *g-yang* occur very often in a combined form: *phyra g-yang*.

First of all, there is considerable confusion in Tibetan texts in general concerning the orthography of the term *phyra*. I have already pointed out that in early Tibetan manuscripts such as those from Dunhuang, a clear distinction is made between *phyra* and *phywa* (Karmay 1998: 247, n. 9). The term *phywa* designates a class of deities whereas *phyra* without the *wa zur* has two main meanings: when it is combined with the term *g-yang*, it has the connotation of ‘life’ and in fact often occurs with the term *tshe* as in *phyra tshe*, but the overriding meaning of this term is ‘prognosis’. This distinction seems to have been totally forgotten in later writings and in the present manuscript copy of Text 2 the two spellings simply alternate without any apparent distinction being made between them. The term *g-yang* stands for ‘quintessence’ of something, e.g. *rta g-yang*. The ‘*g-yang* of horse’ is not the horse itself, but the ‘super horse’ so to speak.

Text 2 as a ritual text is extremely important in that it contains an origin myth of the *g-yang* with a white deer as its principal character. Here the deer speaks the 'human language' (*mi skad*) and cooperates in creating various ritual implements from the different parts of its body that are needed in the ritual. The *g-yang* ritual tradition goes back a long way to the dawn of Tibetan civilisation. It is already attested in Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang (Spanien, Imaeda 1979: Pelliot tibétain [hereafter PT] 1047).

Text 3

This text was referred to by R. A. Stein (1959a: 436). It was Helmut Hoffmann who let Stein have a xerox copy and I had a xerox copy made from Stein's copy. Later I made a translation into French of the part that deals with the origin myth of the Tibetan people as a race (Karmay 1998: No. 17). This is one of the only two texts among the nine in the present volume that has a colophon. It is attributed to the Emperor Khri Srong-lde-btsan (742-797), but in the text there is a reference to Kublai Khan. It therefore cannot pre-date the thirteenth century. The manuscript had 34 folios, but the folio 11b was missing, and it appears that the manuscript also suffered some damage as a number of folios are replaced by different hands, but otherwise it is intact. It is in verses with seven syllables all through the text. I have come across no other copy of this text. It seems that the manuscript copy is unique outside Tibet, and neither Hoffmann nor Stein has ever seen fit to publish it.

Of particular interest is that Text 3 treats the Bon religion and Buddhism on an equal footing so to speak. No partial opinion is expressed on either religious tradition. In its approach to the subject there is only one other work that comes to mind, the *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* which is a Buddhist work, but has adopted a similar procedure (Delhi 1969, Satapitaka series, Vol. LXXVIII). In other words, the author of Text 3 has adopted a non-partisan attitude in presenting the views of both Bon and Buddhism concerning cosmology and origin myths of the Tibetan people. Such an approach is a rarity among Tibetan authors.

The text is entitled *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, the 'Appearance of the Little Black Headed-man'. It first deals with the world and its origin myth according to Bon and Buddhist traditions which then leads to the exposition of the origin myth of the Tibetan people and the multiplication of the clans and the places where they eventually settled. This part dealing with the clan names is normally known as *rus mdzod*, the 'treasury of clan names' in Tibetan literature.

The overall impression the text gives is of something recorded from an oral tradition rather than a real composition. It has no clear divisions or sections although the subjects are presented in a more or less orderly manner. It is embedded with the terms of a local dialect of the Khams province. What is peculiar about this text is

that it refers in the story of the clans, to the Tibetans, the Mongols and the Chinese as being ‘brothers’. This further shows that the text was written down during the Mongol period in Tibet. Another unusual aspect of this text is that it relates the origin myth of the four animals, garuda, dragon, lion, and tiger associated with the mountain cult in Tibet. To this day I have seen no other text in which this myth is told (*cf.* Karmay 1998: No.22).

Text 4

This text is an excerpt from the thirteenth Buddhist historical work by mKhas-pa lDe'u (pp. 227-38), hereafter referred to as *lDe'u chos 'byung*. In Tibetan historiography, a group of five texts on the history of the Tibetan Imperial period are often given the collective title *Can lnga*, the ‘Five Can’, but their existence has never been attested. In an article (Karmay 1998: No. 16) I made an attempt to discuss the significance of the texts called ‘*Can lnga*’ and questioned whether they had ever existed. My discussion was mainly based on two historical works: the *sBa bzhed* (Stein 1961) which enumerates the titles of the texts and the *chos 'byung* by Nyang-ral which gives each title with a brief description of its content (pp. 496-98) seemingly as sources for his historical work, but since none of the five had come to light, my pessimism concerning their existence persisted. Nevertheless, the *chos 'byung* of Nyang-ral sheds light on an important point: one of the five texts is entitled *Yo ga lha dge can* in the *sBa bzhed*. This title, which is already itself extremely obscure in meaning, is further complicated by the word *yo ga*. The presence of this word in the title has puzzled several scholars. However, the *chos 'byung* of Nyang-ral has the form of *yi ge* instead of *yo ga*: it reads *Bon po'i yi ge lha dge (gyes) can*, “the Book of the Bonpo concerning the separation (of man) from the gods”. The spelling error of the *sBa bzhed* suggests that it was a chronic mistake. It continued to be copied in Tibetan historiography including the *lDe'u chos 'byung*.

However, in 1987 the *lDe'u chos 'byung* was published in Lhasa and I came to think that this work in all probability contained the text entitled *Bon po'i yi ge lha gyes can* in its entirety. Since then the question whether this text ever existed has resolved itself and I made a rough translation of it (1998: No. 18), but when my translation was published I was unable to provide the Tibetan text itself to go with the translation due to restrictions of length.

I have therefore included in the present volume only a computerised version of the excerpt since it has already been published. It deals primarily with the origin myth of gNya'-khri btsan-po, the first Tibetan king and I must emphasise that it is the only work so far available—apart from the Dunhuang manuscript (PT 1286, III-IV)—giving what seems to be a detailed version of the myth and presented as belonging to the Bon tradition. With this version we can now see how sketchy is the version of

the myth expounded in the Dunhuang document.

Text 5

It was in 1983 while doing fieldwork on the ritual called the ‘Call of the soul’ (Karmay 1998: No.19) in sMan-ri Monastery in Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India, that my colleague, the Abbot Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i nyi-ma, drew my attention to a manuscript concerned with the ritual normally known as *mdos*. I was amazed to see the singularity of this text.

The manuscript has 15 folios. It is divided into four sections and has a colophon (15b) where the author’s name is given as Sangs-po khrin-khod. The author states that the ritual tradition contained in the text was handed down from the time of gCe-’od, the great gShen. At present practically nothing is known about these personages, but to all appearances the work is of ancient origin. The way in which the lines of verses are composed certainly attests its antiquity. The prosody has either four, five or six syllables per line of verse and this format is maintained throughout the text except the parts containing instructions which are in prose. By far the greater part of the text is in verses with six syllables. The style of this lyric writing was common in poetry during the imperial period of Tibetan history. What is known as the songs in the old Chronicle among the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang are all composed in the same prosodic structure of verse with six syllables (e.g. Spanien, Imaeda 1979: PT 1287, IV, 221-29, hereafter: The Chronicle). The line of verse is broken in the middle by a particle usually *ni*. It runs as follows:

spyān ’dren ni su ’dren na/

spyān ’dren ni gshen rab ’dren/ (3b).

Invitation, yes, who is to be invited?

Invitation, yes, gShen-rab is to be invited!

However, the caesura can also be a different grammatical particle according to the circumstances of the subject, for example,

ya gzhi la gangs ri chags/

stan dkar ni lings se lings/ (7b)

Up the land, yes, is the snow mountain,

A white mat, yes, is spread, *lings se lings*.

The second line here ends in onomatopoeic words, *lings se lings* which hint that the object described is in motion. Onomatopoeic words are often used in the text under discussion.

For example, the verses in The Chronicle (l. 221):

mon ka'i ni stag chig pa/

stag gum ni zu tses bkum/

In Mon-ka, oh yes, the lonely tiger,

It is Zu-tse, yes him, who killed it.

dgung la ni gnyi shar ba/

dro dro ni sa la dro/ (The Chronicle, l. 98)

In the heavens, yes, rises the sun

It is warm, yes, it warms the earth.

Text 6

The title of this text is *Sri gsas bung ba stag chung*, 'The anti-sri deity (who has the form of) a bee with the tiger motif'. It has eight folios and is anonymous. It is written alternately in verses with five or seven syllables. The text is found in the volume of *Khro bo dbang chen gyi gshed 'dur dang gsang phur nag po'i 'phrin las 'gug sgral gnas 'dren skor* (Tsultrim Tashi, Delhi 1983, No. 35, pp. 691-704), and is concerned with the myth of a deity who is in the form of a bee with the pattern of a tiger skin on its body. The term *gsas* normally means deity in the Bonpo literature and *sri gsas* in the title therefore signifies the deity who is antagonistic to the *sri* spirit. D. L. Snellgrove (1967: 44,29) translates the term *sri* by 'vampire' and the *gZi brjid* gives ten types of *sri*. In the present case, it is the *chung sri*, believed to be responsible for infant deaths. A detailed study of a Buddhist funeral rite for the infant deaths citing the subjugation of the *chung sri* is made by Anne-Marie Blondeau (1997).

The myth of the *sri gsas* in Text 6 is set in four stages: first, there is a couple with two children who are seemingly happy with the condition in which they live; second, trouble begins: in the absence of the parents, the children are led to death by the *chung sri*; third, a Bonpo is consulted; fourth, the Bonpo executes a rite invoking the *sri gsas* deity who after a tremendous chase finally catches the *chung sri* and subjugates it by which act he generates the birth of a new baby to the parents.

This plot is a recurring theme in the rituals involving the *bon* or *gshen* priests in Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang and in later literature such as the *Klu 'bum*. These are analysed in a general way by R. A. Stein (1966-1970, 1971).

Text 7

This is a short work and is drawn from a collection of ritual texts published

under the title of *gTo phran* (Dolanji 1973, No. 14, pp. 312-315). I have already made a rough translation of this text into French and coupled it with a transliterated version of the text (Karmay 1998, No. 20).

The text is composed in verses with five or seven syllables and is intended to be chanted. It contains the ritual of the *glud* ransom and narrates the legend known as *glud rabs*, 'narration of the ritual ransom'. The main reason for its inclusion here is that the legend it contains is based on an ancient myth narrated in a Tibetan manuscript from Dunhuang (Lalou 1959: PT 1285, ll. 116-145).

The myth is set in a place called *gTang-bzang* in China.

In Text 7 a couple is harassed by all kinds of spirits and becomes ill whereas in PT 1285 a chieftain is poisoned. In both cases the Bon priest Leg-tang rmang-po is invited to cure the illnesses. It is interesting to note how a later author could turn the ancient mythical account into his own ritual context while keeping faithfully to the gist of the myth or even borrowing the lyric verses word by word.

Here is an example of passages drawn from both the text and the Dunhuang manuscript:

*a na na'i nam ma long/
a chu chu'i mun ma rub/
rgya bon leg tang rmang po spyang drangs nas/
gto dang dpyad bgyis pas/
nad kyi nos yang zin
srin gyi sde yang rig/ (p. 313)*

(During the night they were so ill, they cried): "*a na na*, will the day ever come?"

(During the day they were so cold, they cried): "*a chu chu*, will the night ever come?"

So the priest Leg-tang rmang-po was invited,

He performed the rite and diagnosis,

He identified the malady.

He discovered which type of spirits (was implicated).

The passage of the PT 1285, l. 136-17:

*nu nu nam mi nangs/
cu cu nyin myi nub/...
bon po la mchu shig/
leg tang rmang ba la mchu shig/
mo btab pya klags na/
snyun gyi zo yang mtshal/
skran gyi lde yang rig/*

The priest Leg-tang rmang-po is an important personage in the later Bon tradition as one of the six learned men from the six countries. He is presented as the scholar from China (cf. *mDo gZer mig*, Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang 1991, p. 811).

Text 8

This text is the first chapter of the *sKyung mo mda' khyer gyi rgyud*, 'The treatise of the chough carrying away the arrow'. The treatise is found in a collection of manuscripts from Dolpo reproduced and published under the title of *sPyi spungs rin po che a dkar gsang sngags kyi bka' srung drwa ba nag po'i rgyud skor* (Dolanji 1974, No. 25). No indication is given as to its author. It begins in prose and gradually shifts alternately between verses with seven and five syllables.

It is concerned with the origin myth of a Bon protective deity called Drwa-ba nag-po. The myth begins with the creation of the world which then leads to an account of the origins of various beings. In the process of creation several kings appear and one of these is the king of Li (Khotan). It is the legend of his search for a wife. After many difficulties he comes across a woman by chance, but she is described as being the daughter of the wind suggesting the precarious circumstance of their union. Nevertheless, they bring a baby boy into the world. In a dreadful family quarrel the child is, however, accidentally killed, but he is miraculously brought back to life by a *phywa* deity through the performance of a Bon ritual. The parents are pleased and give him his share of their property. When about to leave in order to settle down by himself he is designated as a protector of the Bon religion whereupon he is empowered with magic gifts by various deities and given the name Yang-ni-wer.

This legend throws light on the significance of several cultural elements in Tibetan secular culture, particularly that of the arrow and the spindle, more explicitly than any other source that I have ever come across.

It is interesting to note that the name Yang-ni-wer here is given to the son of the king of Li (Khotan). The name is known to R. A. Stein (1959b: 24) who sees the possibility of its foreign origin. This is indeed possible, but the way the legend is told, in my view, is of Tibetan. However, it seems that the legend is borrowed from another source and fitted in the present context.

Text 9

The text is entitled *Ming sring dpal bgos dang lha 'dog*, 'The share of the wealth between the brother and the sister and the entrusting of the bride and the bridegroom to the deities'. As is clear from this somewhat long title, the text deals with a

ritual for marriage and is in two sections. In the first section, the origin myth of the marriage ritual is narrated and the second section is devoted to the marriage ritual properly speaking. The origin myth in this text is fundamentally the same as that of Text 7 which as we noted goes back to the Imperial period of Tibetan history. Here, in the heavens, a couple with a son and a daughter lives. A man asks the couple for the hand of their daughter, who is a goddess, and this is followed by a long dialogue between the two families. The myth then takes up the question of sharing the wealth of the parents between the brother and the sister. Here the question of a marriage portion is clearly implied.

The ritual which is contained in the second section is mainly devoted to the well-being of the society in which the bride and bridegroom live and to putting them into the care of what are known as the 'Five deities of the head' to which we had already referred. The arrow and the spindle are again indispensable ritual items and so are gold and turquoise as well as the cords of the *dmu* and *g-yang* in this ceremony.

The text is composed in lines of verses with seven syllables throughout except the parts containing instructions which are in prose. It is anonymous. The way it is composed, has a certain archaic and secular charm and is totally free from any Buddhist influence.

In an article I already used a part of this text and made a translation of it in order to show the existence of such an indigenous and secular ritual (Karmay 1998: no. 8, 147-53).

I should like to express my gratitude to Ven. Tenpa Yungdrung and his colleagues who put a lot of effort into typing the texts on computer at Tritan Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu.

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