

The Unhappy Bride and Her Lament

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It is often claimed that certain texts or genres emerged from oral traditions.¹ This assertion is particularly prominent in relation to written epic, as in the case of hypotheses concerning the textualization of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* under the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus in the 6th century B.C.E (cf. e.g. Jensen 2000: 65–66). Oral origins are often posited for historical, liturgical, and a host of other genre of written texts. Drawing on such putative Merkmale as formulae, text-internal references to performative traditions, analogies with living traditions, and so on, one can imaginatively reconstruct the oral traditions that gave rise to textual artefacts like divination manuals, funerary and healing liturgies, or epic. This sort of imaginative exercise is not pointless or without its merits. However, the origins and oral transmissions of written traditions can never be definitively proved, and they remain only hypothetical, if fascinating scenarios. Another method, which draws on a growing body of recent research into oral traditions and in particular into the textualization of oral traditions, is to focus instead on various scenes and motifs as traditional modes of expression that constitute, simply put, a register in which traditional meanings are conveyed. Generally considered to be the result of the interaction of textuality and orality, these scenes and motifs are individual coefficients of meaning that often allude to a larger tradition on which performers, writers, editors, and compilers may draw. In what follows I will illustrate how such principles are at work in the earliest extant Tibetan historical narrative, the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, and in early Tibetan ritual texts by focusing on the episode of Sad mar kar.

The sister of Srong brtsan sgam po (d. 649) and wife of the Zhang zhung king Lig myi rhya, Sad mar kar is remembered as playing a pivotal role in the conquest of Zhang zhung in the mid-640s when her coded instructions, in symbol and in song, exhorted

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her brother to invade her husband's kingdom. She is accordingly presented as an instrumental figure in the conquest of Zhang chung, and is a forerunner or even a model for another treacherous out-of-favor junior queen, Lady Gu rub Snang gron legs mo, whose betrayal is the reason for Zhang chung's (re)conquest by Khri Srong lde brtsan (742–c.800) in the narrative of the *Bon ma nub pa'i gtan tshigs* (Blezer 2010: 32–33).² I shall approach the episode of Sad mar kar as a 'matrimonial narrative trope' drawn from Tibetan narrative traditions that also inform ritual liturgies and divination texts. In doing so, I shall illustrate how this narrative form encodes traditional meanings that might otherwise be lost outside the context of the original imagined audience. I shall also briefly reflect on this 'imagined audience,' and its relevance to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle's* expression of a 'national' consciousness.

Orality, Literacy, and Traditionality in Tibet

Before introducing the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and describing what I mean by the 'matrimonial narrative trope,' it may be helpful to restate the obvious about orality and literacy in Tibet. In doing so, I also supply theoretical grounding for my own approach. 'The obvious,' as I see it, is that there has been and continues to be an extended interaction between the oral and the written in traditional Tibetan modes of knowledge production and transmission. Traditional monastic education emphasizes memorization and recitation, and the oral transmission of religious traditions.³ Textual transmission is often accompanied by an oral "reading empowerment" (*lung*), and the most prized transmissions are often exclusively aural. Some texts are composed for chanting or for oral/aural consumption, and scholastic writing is infused by the oral modes of knowledge transmission that inform it. Written compositions such as *nam thar* – referred to variously as hagiography, (auto)biography, or, perhaps less problematically, life writing – are sometimes performed orally, with all the variations based on narrator and audience that such retelling customarily entails.⁴ Outside of the

² In the *Legs bshad mdzod* this junior queen is known as Snang bza' Sgron legs; see Karmay (1972: 86–87). For a discussion of the narratives of the two conquests of Zhang chung and their permutations, see Blezer (2010). Blezer points out the similarity between Sad mar kar and Gu rub za: their husbands favor other wives over them, they assist the Tibetan conquest of Zhang chung, and they supply coded information to the Tibetan emperor. Gu rub za, it should be pointed out, is not imbricated within a "matrimonial narrative trope," on which see below.

³ See Dreyfus (2003), Cabezon (1994), Klein (1994). Among other notable works that consider the relationship between the oral and the written in Tibet, see also Aziz (1985), FitzHerbert (2009), and van Schaik (2007: 186–91).

⁴ Gyatso (1998: 282, note 17) records a fascinating synthesis of life writing and inspired bardic composition in which Tulku Riglo, who believed himself to be a reincarnation of Jigme Lingpa, improvised oral tellings "from memory" of

monastery, we find textualized oratory and oratorical texts in both the bardic tradition of Gesar and the performance of *mollas*, which are narratives foundational to a given community.⁵

These examples of intercourse between oral and written productions problematize any perceived opposition between oral and written modes of expression and lead us to question the relevance of these categories. In fact, there has been over the past few decades a trend away from attempting to identify features of written texts as “oral,” and accompanying proposals for alternative, less problematic categories. Wulf Oesterreicher, for example, prefers the language of immediacy and distance, and writes that “[p]henomena of orality in poetic or literary texts...do not reflect spontaneous or natural language but functionalize select features of linguistic immediacy” (Oesterreicher 1997: 206). Lauri Honko describes majority of epics (i.e., *Mahābhārata*, *Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *Gesar*) not as oral, but as “tradition-oriented,” by which he means that epic registers have been internalized by performers, scribes, and editors, who have moulded, if not created, these epics (Honko 2000: 7). “Linguistic immediacy,” “epic registers,” and traditional registers are not solely the province of singers and performers. A traditional register, along with its storylines and motifs, constitutes a “pool of tradition” on which writers, editors, and compilers may also draw. Honko describes a “pool of tradition” as follows:

We cannot postulate a well-arranged library of earlier performed oral texts in the mind of the individual but rather a ‘pool’ of generic rules, storylines, mental images of epic events, linguistically preprocessed descriptions of repeatable scenes, sets of established terms and attributes, phrases and formulas, which every performer may utilize in an imaginative way, vary and reorganize according to the needs and potentials present at a new performance. (Honko 2000: 18)

Fluency in such a register is what one might call traditional literacy, and John Miles Foley describes its characteristic mode of expression as “traditional referentiality,” his

the latter’s autobiography, *Dancing Moon in the Water* (*Chu zla’i gar mkhan*), at Rdo Grub chen Monastery in the mid-twentieth century.

⁵ For an account of how the illiterate bard Bsam grub gave a telling that reproduced almost verbatim an episode in a blockprint of the Gesar epic that was then in circulation, see FitzHerbert (2009: 179–82). On *mollas*, see Aziz (1985) and Jackson (1984: 84–86). Of course there are countless other such oral traditions in the Tibetan cultural area, such as the *lo rgyus* from Brag g.yab in Khams documented by Peter Schwieger; see Schwieger (2002).

avored term for the recurrence of scenes, motifs, and patterns which are “idiomatic signals” or “*sema*” (Foley 2010: 111). These signals encode meanings that are familiar to a traditional(ly literate) audience, and often allusively reference larger traditions known to the audience. For Foley, traditional referentiality works “like a language, only moreso,” in that a traditional register encodes units of meaning that “resonate with substantial ‘extra’ associations” (Foley 1999: 44). Understanding traditional referentiality, or becoming traditionally literate, we read a traditional text on its own terms and in its own idiom rather than imposing on it our own lexicon and thereby overlooking or misconstruing its contents. Foley illustrates how this is done through his ‘*apparatus fabulosus*,’ which glosses the “*sema*” in a section of book 23 of the *Odyssey* (Foley 1999: 241–62). From a philological perspective, one might say that this is simply good philology. On the other hand, these observations about traditionality have emerged from work on oral traditions, that is, from work that once emphasized the oral more than the traditional. After introducing the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, I approach the matrimonial narrative trope as an element drawn from an early Tibetan pool of tradition that also embraced ritual texts and divination documents, and I point out exactly how its traditional referentiality enriches our understanding of the Sad mar kar episode in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

The Old Tibetan Chronicle and its Songs

The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* is the earliest extant Tibetan narrative history of the Tibetan Empire (c. 600—c.850 C.E.). It was probably edited and compiled shortly after the fall of the empire in the mid-ninth century, though this dating is disputed. What is not disputed, however, is that its contents focus on events spanning the seventh century up until the mid-eighth century. From a bird’s eye view, the *Chronicle* is made up of three main elements: genealogies, eulogies, and narratives with song. As for genealogies, there is one of emperors and one of chief councillors. The latter is anecdotal, and contains vignettes of the councillors’ characters and careers. The royal genealogy resembles more a list in which the emperors are linked as father to son, and where mothers are mentioned for the first three emperors and then, after a hiatus of several generations, for the more recent emperors. Eulogies recount the deeds of Tibetan emperors in a formulaic manner (e.g., conquering in the four directions while promoting law and order and good customs domestically) that is also found in royal

pillar inscriptions from the late-eighth and early ninth centuries. It is around the eulogies that the compilers and editors of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* organized its contents into a chronological format following the reigns of the emperors (Uray 1992). The narratives with songs constitute the core of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. Three main narrative events are spotlighted, each with different protagonists:

1) the conquest of Ngas po and its aftermath in the early-to-mid-7th century (Pelliot tibétain 1287,⁶ ll. 118–327; Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946: 132–49);

2) the conquest of Zhang zhung in the mid-7th century (Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 398–455; Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946: 155–61); and

3) the conflict between Khri 'Dus srong and the Mgar clan at the end of the 7th century (Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 456–536 and ll. 328–337; Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946: 161–70; 149–50)

There is also an episode concerning the alliance between Tibet and 'Jang (pre-Nanzhao Kingdom) during the reign of Khri Lde gtsug brtsan (704—c.754), but this consists of little more than a song, albeit an important one for understanding the possible use of these songs in court life. The tale of Dri gum btsan po, an aetiological myth of Tibetan kingship, fits somewhat uneasily into the category of narratives with song, as its songs are short and composed in a different meter to the six-syllable form used throughout the *Chronicle*.

The heroic songs of the *Chronicle* are what most set it apart from other contemporary Tibetan historical or quasi-historical works. They occupy an important place as some of the earliest extant examples of Tibetan poetry or song.⁷ There are songs of conquest, proud songs sung in competition, chiding songs, and laments. The singers are emperors, councillors, generals, and princesses. The *Chronicle* uses two clear terms for the songs: *klu/glu* and *mgur*. A third term, *mchid*, means speech, and is used in a context where someone is inspired to “take to speech,” in what is often clearly song.

⁶ Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts are cited according to their shelfmarks. Those marked “Pelliot tibétain” are held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. “IOL Tib” abbreviates “India Office Library, Tibetan,” and these documents are housed in the British Library in London. The combination of letter and number following “IOL Tib” constitutes the full shelfmark.

⁷ The most complete study of the songs remains Don grub rgyal (1997), where they are each translated into modern Tibetan. Uray (1972) is also a superb study, with a detailed discussion of the poetics of the songs and their use of homophones and double entendres.

In later tradition, the term *glu* indicates song in general, and *mgur* is a term used for songs of realization in a religious context, such as the famous *Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (Jackson 1996: 372–74). There is a similar distinction in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, where *mgur* are sung by royalty, and *mchid* and *klu/glu* are sung by non-royals. Previous typologies of the *Chronicle*'s songs have tended to overlook the fact that the term *mgur* is used only for those songs sung by royals, and they have tended to draw a distinction between *glu* and *mchid* by characterizing the latter as “songs of provocation and dispute” (Ellingson 1979: 68–69). The term *mchid blangs pa* means, “to take to speech,” and the noun *mchid* is commonly used for speech and communication. Its semantic range obviously includes song, however, and the themes of the *Chronicle*'s *glu* and *mchid blangs pa* overlap such that both embrace praise on the one hand and chastisement on the other. The only singers of *mgur* in the *Chronicle* are Sha khyi/ Emperor Spu de gung rgyal, Emperor Khri Srong brtsan, Princess Sad mar kar, Emperor Khri 'Dus srong, and Emperor Khri Lde gtsug brtsan. The honorific/non-honorific distinction between *mgur* on the one hand and *glu* and *mchid blangs pa* on the other is evident in the songs exchanged between Khri Srong brtsan and Councillor Dba's Dbyi tshab prior to their reciprocal oaths of loyalty, and those exchanged between this same ruler and his chief councillor Mgar Stong rtsan at a banquet celebrating their victory over Zhang zhung. In the earlier episode, Khri Srong brtsan and Dba's Dbyi tshab exchange songs as a prelude to the reciprocal oaths that this emperor and his councillors swear with this councillor and his kinsmen. The emperor's song is a *mgur*, and the councillor's song is a *mchid blangs pa*. In the later setting of the victory banquet, the emperor sings a *mgur* that incorporates almost all of the verses of his earlier song with Dba's Dbyi tshab, and then Mgar Stong rtsan replies with his own song, referred to as a *klu*. Dba's Dbyi tshab's *mchid blang pa* and Mgar Stong rtsan's *glu* both express the ideals of mutual loyalty between ruler and subject, and this thematic unity partly explains their use of the same verse:

The lord — when he gives an order,
 Always – an eternal realm.
 The bird, when it shelters in its wings,
 The chicks – they are radiantly warm.

rje 'Is ni bka' stsal na
 gzha' ma ni yun kyi srid /
 / bya 'Is ni zhu pub na
 la pyi ni gdangs su dro (Pelliot tibétain 1287, l. 272; and – with minor
 differences – ll. 440–41)⁸

The presence of such overlapping verses, along with the songs' recurrent imagery, prompted Géza Uray to refer to the *Chronicle's* songs as a “song cycle” (Uray 1972). The above metaphor of the bird and her chicks, along with those of the tiger, the yak, the horse and rider, and the arrow, is found in other of the *Chronicle's* songs. This creates a cross-referentiality in the imagery of the songs in which motifs can be repeated and developed, or where the original reference point of an image or metaphor may also be playfully inverted. Similar, and even longer verbatim repetitions are common in epic, as when Agamemnon repeats parts of his speech of *Iliad* 2.110–41 at 9.17–28. For some, like John Brockington in his analysis of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, such

⁸ These paired couplets have posed difficulties for translators and commentators. Bacot translates, “Quand le roi ordonne,/ Ce n'est que le temps de l'arc-en-ciel./ Quand c'est l'oiseau qui demande,/ [Le glacier] La pyi finirait par fondre”; Bacot *et al.* 1940-1946: 145. Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang translates, “Tsenpo, your precise command/ We will ever implement./ Like the bird spreading the arc of its wings,/ The sun in warm on the roost across the pass”; Drikung 2011: 194. Fortunately, we have the benefit not only of finding the verses twice in the *Chronicle*, with one helpful variation, but we also have recourse to the same verse in a dice divination text where the language is somewhat clearer. Looking first at text-internal parallels, the only important difference is that in the verse's appearance at ll. 440–41, *gzha' ma* is replaced with *gzha' pyl*. Btsan lha (1997: 779) glosses the latter with “small” or “1” (*phran dang nga rang*), Gnya' gong (1995, 371, n. 6) glosses *gzha' ma* with *gsha' ma*, meaning “righteousness,” and Don grub rgyal (1997 [1984]: 592, n. 104) suggests that it may be a term for “subjects” (*'bangs*). None of these readings seem likely. A similar phrase is found in the divination text IOL Tib J 739, 8r1: *gzha phyir ni 'gum myi srid*. The term *gzha* or *gzha'* is often followed by the words “long” (*ring*; Pelliot tibétain 1134, ll. 7, 10; IOL Tib J 731, recto l. 131) and “length” (*ring thung*; Pelliot tibétain 1042, l. 137; Pelliot tibétain 1134, ll. 31, 151, 228). The term *gzha / gzha'* would seem to mean “duration,” and by extension “always.” It may be related to the term *zha / zhar* found often in oaths, e.g., *nam nam zha zhar* (“always and forever”). On the other hand, one also finds it paired with *gsang* (“secret”), so it is likely that this contextual translation of *gzha / gzha'* with “duration” and “always” does not capture its full semantic range, and it should be taken as provisional. The second couplet poses greater problems. Don grub rgyal (1997 [1984]: 593–93, nn. 105, 106) states that *zhu* is the figure of a bird extending its wings in a dome shape, and that a *la pyi* might be a baby bird, and translates the couplet as giving an image of a bird keeping its chicks warm under its wings (Ibid: 386). Huang and Ma (2000: 223, n. 20) agree that *la pyi* is a baby bird. In the parallel couplet in the dice divination text IOL Tib J 740, as we shall see below, the language is clearer: “when the bird shelters [them] in its breast, the chicks (*lan phyl*) are always warm” (*bya'Is khab sgob na lan phyl gtandu droste*; IOL Tib J 740, l. 25). The parallel with *khab sgob* Here *sgob* is a form of the verb *sgab* “to cover,” or “spread over”; Hill (2010: 63; cf. *'gebs* on p. 49). In the same fashion as *khebs* “a cover” derives from *'gebs* “to cover,” I take *khab* to be a noun derived from the verb *sgab*, meaning a place of shelter, and here indicating the downy warmth under the mother bird's wings. The image fits fairly well with Don grub rgyal's interpretation of *zhu pub*. The reading of *la pyi / lan phyl* is admittedly contextual; one could assume that by *pyi* one should understand *byi'u / bye'u*.

repetitions, along with other forms of parallelism, are indices of orality (2000: 201). Others, such as Oesterreicher, Honko, and Foley, would counter that such features as formulae, repetition, parallelism, and deixis are not necessarily hallmarks of orality or even imitations of oral forms, but simply reflect a particular, traditional register of expression.

The poetic and formal features of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*'s songs certainly trade on parallelism. The above verse, for example, consists of parallel couplets. In the scroll itself the songs are not marked out by different pagesetting, but we can also discern triplets and longer 'stanzas.' Lines within a stanza are linked through a poetics of repetition. The most common is epistrophe, (the repetition of words or syllables at the end of the line), which should not be confused with rhyme. Other common features are anaphora (the repetition of words or syllables at the beginning of the line), and anastrophe (starting a line with the word or phrase that ended the preceding line). All of these features may be found in later Tibetan traditions of poetry and song, and have been well documented in the case of the Gesar epic.⁹

The songs also employ parallelism at a basic structural level in that a 'line' is comprised of two feet or hemistichs of three syllables each. The defining feature within the line is the normative use of the isolation particle *ni* – essentially a topicalizer – as the third syllable at the end of the first foot. This term is often left untranslated, or translated variously with "oh," "yes," "as for," or simply with the dash "-." These formal restrictions mark the songs off as a heightened register of speech that complements their conservative use of traditional images and formulae.

This type of six-syllable meter is not unique to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. Among other places, we find six-syllable verse in some of the prognoses in Old Tibetan dice divination texts. When a prognosis comes from the mouth a deity, often the words of the god or goddess will be rendered in this meter, though this is not always the case across the many dice divination texts from Dunhuang.¹⁰ This oracular prognosis will sometimes be followed by a prose explanation that specifies whether it is good or bad regarding health, travel, friendship, fortune, enemies, hunting, and so forth, and what one should do to avert the dangers of a bad prognosis. Here is an example of a dice divination prognosis in six-syllable meter, arrived at through a roll of a 3 – 2 – 2 combination of three 4-sided dice :

⁹ For a good example of anastrophe in Gesar, which Yang Enhong sees as an aid to memorization, see Yang (2001: 311).

¹⁰ This meter renders the speech of gods, for example, in the Old Tibetan divination texts Pelliot tibétain 1051, Pelliot tibétain 1052, IOL Tib J 738, IOL Tib J 739, and no doubt others.

Oh! From the mouth of the snow-mountain god (*gangs lha*):

“Upon the soft, peaceful grasslands,
An antelope calf, at the grasslands’ edge;
[It is] the sacred possession of the *mu sman* goddess.
It roams the meadows and grasslands;
It is joyful, and hunters make no shouts.”

This prognosis is the prognosis of Lha shing pad mo. If you’ve cast it for household fortune or life-force fortune, the sacred gods support and protect you. If you’ve cast it for enemy fortune, there shall be no enemy. If you’ve cast it for livelihood fortune, livelihood will be provided. If you’ve cast it for a specific matter, it shall be accomplished. This prognosis is good for whatsoever you have cast it.

@@@ / @@ / @@ /

kye gangs lha nI zhal na re /

/ spang snar nI g.yel gong na /

/ gtsos bu nI snar mtha’ ya

mu sman nI gnyan gyI dkor /

/ ne’u sIng nI spang la yan /

/ dgyes te nI kus ma gdab /

/ mo ’di nI lha shIng pad mo’i mo la bab ste // khyIm phyang dang srog phyang la
btab na lha dpal ’che ste ’go // dgra phyang la btab na / dgra myed srId phyang la
btab na srId phyin // don gnyer na grub // ’dron po la btab na ’ong // mo
’di ci la btab kyang bzang //; IOL Tib J 738, ll. 1v82-85.

The use of this poetic form of trisyllabic hemistichs to render the speech of gods is suggestive when considering the register of the *Chronicle*’s songs. The singers, writers, editors, and/or compilers of the *Chronicle* dramatized the songs of heroes, traitors, emperors, and princesses with a form that was also – in some cases, at least – appropriate to the speech of gods. Following Oesterreicher, Honko, and others, we might see this not necessarily as evidence that both divination prognoses and the songs of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* have a direct oral heritage, but rather as an indication that this form of expression in six-syllable meter constituted a register for heightened or marked speech. Foley also makes the point that such a traditional register “acts as a

selective brake on linguistic change within its domain” (1999: 75). This includes both archaisms and “analogical adaptations or extensions based on archaisms” (1999: 75). This is certainly relevant to the ‘archaic’ language of the *Chronicle* as found, for example, in its songs and oaths. The observation further problematizes any attempt at textual stratigraphy that might try to separate bona fide archaisms from stylized or retrospective archaisms. As for the form, without giving precedence either to divination or chronicle epic in terms of the direction of influence or borrowing, we might also observe that the use of this meter in the *Chronicle* could be a self-consciously archaizing form, that is, a register that was chosen as appropriate for rendering the songs of the heroes of yore.

The *Old Tibetan Chronicle*’s Pool of Tradition and the Matrimonial Narrative Trope

Returning to Lauri Honko’s concept of the pool of tradition, we can observe that the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*’s pool is a very wide one that accommodates not only Tibetan royal edicts and divination manuals, but also Indian epic, Chinese narratives, and Tibetan ritual narratives. In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*’s telling of the myth of Dri gum btsan po, for example, the myth’s hero, Ngar la skyes, is introduced as the infant sole survivor of a massacre, who will grow up to avenge this, or at least to restore balance. Besides the fact that this is a recurring motif in Indian literature, and one also found in the Gesar epic,¹¹ Ngar la skyes’ words to his mother are almost exactly the same as those of another would-be avenger in the Old Tibetan adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Old Tibetan Chronicle:

The Rhya clan kill all of the Bkrag clan save for one pregnant woman, who flees to her natal land. Her small son, Ngar la skyes, asks of his mother, “If every man in every case has a lord, where is my lord? If every man in every case has a father, where is my father?” He implored her: ‘Tell me!’” (*myI gang bya gang la rjo bo yod na nga ’i rjo bo gar re / myi gang bya gang la / pha yod na nga ’i pha ga re zhes zer to / nga la ston chig ces;*

¹¹ It relates, for example, to Gur dkar’s young son by Drug mo, whose destiny to defeat Gesar is thwarted when Gesar’s protective deities kill the boy (David-Neel & Yongden 1987 [1931]: 204).

Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 28–29; Bacot *et al.* 1940–1946: 125). He then recovers the deceased emperor’s corpse and helps to restore his heir to the throne.

Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa*:

The god Vaiśravaṇa kills Yagśakore and all the demons, sparing only Yagśakore’s son, Malhyapanta, who survives in a sack. When he grows up, he thinks, “All neighbors in the land have parents and relatives. Where are my parents and relatives?” (*yul myl khyim tse thams cad la // pha ma dang gnyen bzhes yod na // bdag gyl pha ma dang / gnyen gdun* (Read ’dun) *ga re snyam nas*; Pelliot tibétain 981, ll. 23–24; de Jong 1989: 6). He then vows to take revenge on the gods.

There are other instances in which the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* has drawn on Indian epic, and the myth of Dri gum btsan po and the *Rāmāyaṇa* have enjoyed a close relationship over the centuries such that later iterations of each tradition bear witness to reciprocal influence.¹²

The appropriation of Chinese historical narrative in the fourth chapter of the *Chronicle* is achieved on a far greater scale than the use of Indian epic motifs in the tale of Dri gum btsan po. Here an episode, originally from the *Shiji*, is adapted for the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* such that characters and places from Warring-States China are replaced with those of mid-seventh-century Tibet (Takeuchi 1985). The dialogue remains largely faithful to the original Chinese, but the setting and some of the dynamics are considerably altered. It is thus not a wholesale borrowing but more of an appropriation or repurposing.

There are numerous examples of cases where the language found in the *Chronicle* is similar to or nearly identical with that found in divination texts and ritual texts. I shall confine myself to one example before moving on to an exposition of the matrimonial narrative trope. The paired couplets treated above, which were sung by

¹² On how the story of a sole survivor of a battle or genocide participates in an Indian motif of royalty that informs Tibetan mythologies of the origins of the Tibetan kings, see Karmay (1998: 303–05) and Dotson (2011: 90). Besides the motif of the person enclosed in a cask and cast into the waters, which is nearly as ubiquitous as that of the predestined child avenger (cf. Kapstein 2003: 784, note 106 and Dotson 2011: 90), one could also point to the apparent allusion to “breaking the thigh” at Chr. i, which Zeisler (2011a: 188–89) argues is a reference to Bhima’s act of unprincipled revenge against Duryodhana. In later versions of the Dri gum myth, the motif of Ru las skyes’ birth (a moving vapor of blood is placed in a horn and given milk until it grows into the child hero, for example, in the *Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston* version) echoes the similarly miraculous birth of the Kauravas from a huge blob, divided into 100 pieces, and hatched in individual pots. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has likewise had a strong influence on the Tibetan Gesar epic, on which see Stein (1959: 522–23; 526–27; 575–77).

both Dba's Dbyi tshab and Mgar Stong rtsan, are found with some modifications in a dice divination prognosis. In the songs, they appear as follows:

The lord – when he gives an order,
 Always – an eternal realm.
 The bird, when it shelters in its wings,
 The chicks – they are radiantly warm.

rje 'Is ni bka' stsal na
 gzha' ma ni yun kyi srid /
 / bya 'Is ni zhu pub na
 la pyi ni gdangs su dro (Pelliot tibétain 1287, l. 272; and – with minor
 differences – ll. 440–41)

In the divination text IOL Tib J 740/1, we find the following prognosis – the result of a 4 – 3 – 4 dice roll – come from the mouth of the mountain god Thang l[h]a ya bzhur:

[When] the god gives an order,
 Listen always and ever!
 When the bird shelters [them] in her breast,
 The chicks are always warm.

lhas bka' stsal pa
 gzha ma yundu nyondu nyon cig /
 bya'Is khab sgob na
 lan phyI gtandu droste (IOL Tib J 740, ll. 24–25)¹³

Aside from the fact that this prognosis does not use the six-syllable meter, there is only one key difference: it is the god, and not the emperor, who makes the order. Here the relationship between god and man is depicted in the same way as that between lord and subject, a very fertile analogy that is found throughout Tibetan literature.

This is a very brief introduction, in broad brushstrokes, to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle's* pool of tradition. One could easily focus on any given image or trope and analyze it in greater detail.¹⁴ Here I shall spotlight the matrimonial narrative trope and

¹³ For comments, see above, footnote 8.

¹⁴ To cite one example, I give a full treatment of the hunting trope, also found in the Sad mar kar episode, in Dotson (2013).

consider its expression both in ritual narratives and in the Sad mar kar episode of the *Chronicle*. The matrimonial narrative trope is most clearly expressed in ritual liturgies, where it presages the misfortune and/or death of one of the story's protagonists. Like the hunting trope, it appears as a formulaic preliminary to the ritual action that will follow, namely, the invitation of ritual specialists, the procurement of all of the necessary implements for the rite, and/or the successful diagnosis and performance of the healing rite or funeral. A typical storyline would be as follows. King X and Queen Y have a daughter, Z, who they wish to marry off. After considering a variable number of unsuccessful suitors, they marry her to King V, to whose land Z goes. Z is unhappy there, and calamity, illness, or death ensue. This can happen in any number of ways. For example, Z can poison her father, she can kill herself, or her husband can go hunting and be killed by demonic forces. There are other options. The key point is that the marriage inexorably leads into an illness or death which then requires the intervention of *gshen* or *bon* priests – (arche)typically, *Gshen rabs myi bo* and/or *Dur gshen rma da (na)*, who make a diagnosis and perform a rite. Often the rite is then related to the present with a formula, e.g., “what was beneficial in ancient times shall also be beneficial now. What was successful in ancient times shall be successful now” (*gna' phan da yang phan gna' gsod da yang bsod*; Pelliot tibétain 1136, l. 60).¹⁵

The matrimonial narrative trope, like the hunting trope, is in a sense a narrative formality to harming or killing off a character in a ritual antecedent tale so that they may then be healed or their funeral be performed. Its appearance immediately advertises imminent danger and/or death. This trope is widespread in Old Tibetan ritual literature (e.g., Pelliot tibétain 1040, Pelliot tibétain 1285, IOL Tib J 734), and in later ritual texts.¹⁶ The matrimonial narrative trope is expressed clearly in the ritual narrative of the unhappy marriage of Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun in the ritual text Pelliot tibétain 1136 and in the Sad mar kar episode in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, which both Uray and Macdonald related to the former tale. In each case, a noble lady marries the king of Zhang zhung, and is unhappy. In each case, the unhappy wife sings a lament. For Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun, this precedes her suicide. For Sad mar kar, the lament precedes her coded instructions that implore her brother, Srong brtsan sgam po, to invade her husband's realm. For ease of reference, I present the overlapping passages, beginning with the unhappy marriage of Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun:

¹⁵ For further background on such ritual liturgies, see Dotson (2008).

¹⁶ Stein provides the most thorough study of these ritual liturgies, in which he refers to “paradigmes d'accident,” among which are included what I refer to as the matrimonial narrative trope (1971: 502–06).

'o na lcam lho rgyal byang mo tsun zhig / / yul chab kyi ya bgor / rje gu ge
 rkang phran dang gnyen dang gdumdubgyiste / rje gu ge rkang phran gyi
 gnye bo myi brgya rkya brgya zhig yas se byung na / / lcam lho rgyal byang
 mo tsun gyi mchid nas / /
 yul kha la r[ts]ang stod ni bkrod ching shul ring la / /
 zhang zhung gu ge rkang phran ni 'dris shing sdang /
 nya gro ni bcha zhing kha
 'is gsung nas / rtsidag gnag gis 'gegs ste de ru nongs na' (Pelliot tibétain 1136,
 ll. 46–49)

And then sister Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun was to unite in marriage with and as
 affine with Lord Gu ge Rkang phran in the land of Chab kyi ya bgo (“The
 Upper Head of the River [Gtsang po]”).¹⁷ When Lord Gu ge Rkang phran’s
 groomsmen came from above [with] one hundred men and one hundred
 horsemen,¹⁸ sister Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun said,
 “Traversing the land of Kha la Rtsang stod, it is distant.
 Accustoming oneself to Zhang zhung Gu ge rkang phran, he is loathesome.
 Fish and wheat, when chewed, are bitter.”

¹⁷ By the principle of the use of appositional synonyms or “noun pairs” in ritual language, e.g., “father and patriarch” (*pha dang yab*), “horse and equid” (*rta dang rmang*), *gdum* in the phrase *gnyen dang gdum du bgyis* must be a synonym of *gnyen* (“affine”). I relate it to the verb *'dum ba*, which means “to reconcile,” and assume that the bride/marriage is the nominalized, agreed-upon thing. I shall contextualize the use of noun pairs and appositional synonym phrases within the register of ritual language in greater detail elsewhere.

The name Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun is prefixed with *lcam*, which, rather than being the royal title “lady,” is the kinship term “sister”: it refers back to when she is introduced in the narrative as the daughter of Rtsang Ho de'i hos bdag and sister of Smra bon Zing ba'i zing skyes (variant: Sma bu Zing ba'i zing skyes); Pelliot tibétain 1136, ll. 30–32.

¹⁸ The term *yas* means “from above,” as in the phrase *char pa yas bab*, “rain fell from above.” Zeisler relates *se in yas se* to “the morpheme **-su/*-so*,” which was “applied to location adverbs.” She writes that the “geminated spelling (*yas.se*) might reflect an unclear syllable boundary and might thus indicate that the vowel was already about to be lost”; Zeisler (2011b: 284). This reading problematizes *rkya*, which, in an administrative context, is a taxable land unit; see Iwao (2009). Zeisler proposes to resolve this by suggesting that *rkyang* (“wild ass”) is intended. In fact, Bellezza already solved this problem in his translation of this passage by pointing out that *rkya* means “horseman”; Bellezza (2008: 528, n. 609; 2010: 50–51, n. 60). Bellezza supports his argument by citing compounds such as *dmag rkya* (“cavalry”) and *rkya dgu* (“nine horsemen”), and further relates this meaning of the word *rkya* to the Rol po rkya bdun, a famous group of seven mounted deities. To this we can add *rkya pa* or *rkya mi* as a synonym and variant, respectively, for *skya mi*, meaning “rider,” and the word *rkya rags*, which also means “horseman”; Zhang (1998: 98). The duplication in *myi brgya rkya brgya* could also be a type of hyperbaton that yields the compound *myi rkya*, of which there would be one hundred. This would be the inverse of the compound *rkya myi*, however, so I do not read it as a hyperbaton. It is also possible to read *myi brgya* and *rkya brgya* in apposition, as Bellezza does; (2008: 528).

So saying, she strangled herself with a black yak-hair cord and there she died.¹⁹

Chr. xi, Song of Princess Sad mar kar:

rgyal 'di 'i ring la / / zhang zhung lte bu / / gnyen gyi yang do / / 'thab kyI
yang skal te / / zhang zhung bdag du' / / btsan mo sad mar kar / / lig myi
rhya la chab srid la gshegs so / / snga na shud ke za rtsal thing shags mchis
ste / / btsan mo dang ni myi bnal bar / / lig myi rhya la shud ke za rtsal ting
shags gnang ste / / btsan mo yang lig myi rhya 'i so nam dang bu srid myi
mdzad ching log / shIg na bzhugs par /; Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 398–401.

During the reign of this king, concerning Zhang zhung, they were paired [with Tibet] as affinal relatives, but also as rivals in conflict.

Princess (Btsan mo) Sad mar kar went on a political mission [of marriage] to Lig myi rhya in order to rule Zhang zhung.²⁰ At first, Lady Rtsal thing shags of

¹⁹ Bellezza (2008: 528) first identified the correct reading of *rtsidag* as *rtsid thag*, something that previous scholars, perhaps paying undue deference to Old Tibetan syllable margins, unfortunately missed.

²⁰ The meaning of *bdag du* in the phrase / *zhang zhung bdag du' / / btsan mo sad mar kar / / lig myi rhya la chab srid la gshegs so* presents problems. Previous translators, including Bacot and Toussaint (Bacot, *et al.* 1940-1946: 155) and Macdonald (1971: 262) translated it as if it read *btsan mo sad mar kar / zhang zhung bdag lig myi rhya la chab srid la gshegs so*. If we ignore the phrase *zhang zhung bdag du'*, then Sad mar kar goes on a “political mission” to Lig myi rhya; we already have her ‘destination,’ namely her intended husband, Lig myi rhya. He could conceivably be in apposition with “to/as the ruler of Zhang zhung,” but the word order would be odd. Elsewhere in the *Chronicle*, he is referred to as “king” (*rgyal po*) of Zhang zhung. One solution, which I have opted for above, is to read *zhang zhung bdag du'* as adverbially qualifying Sad mar kar’s political mission to Lig myi rhya: she is going as ruler of Zhang zhung. Discussing this with colleagues – particularly, it must be said, Tibetan colleagues –, I have been struck by the extent to which they see this translation as a radical proposition, and the lengths to which they will go to try to revise or gloss this sentence. I shall therefore dwell on the matter briefly here, but rather than going into the cultural and gender politics that might lie behind some objections, I shall focus instead on what may be a stronger code of persuasion in this instance, namely grammar. In translating this passage, one must keep in mind the normative use of the terminative and allative particles in Old Tibetan, as discussed in some detail by Nathan Hill. Among the terminative’s most common uses, it appears with verbs of motion, and it is used adverbially; the allative often marks people and sentient beings, and it is not used for locations or movement (2011: 35, 15). One notes that the structure of the sentence agrees fairly well with that which Hill describes for the use of the phrase “to go on campaign” (*chab srid la gshegs*) in the Old Tibetan Annals: “(person)-ABS (starting place)-nas (ethnicity)-la-chab-srid-la (ending place)-TRM gšegs” (2011: 11). If one assumes that the “starting place” is omitted and the “ending place” has moved to the beginning of the sentence, one could argue that Sad mar kar goes “to” (du) a place called Zhang zhung Bdag. Since bdag is not a place name, one must “massage” it into another word, and thus misread bdag as “Bar ga” or some such word that better resembles a plausible place name within Zhang zhung. Unfortunately for such an argument, the word is clearly written bdag. Even assuming serious transmission errors, there is only a very slim chance that such an intervention could be correct. An obvious solution is that the terminative du in *zhang zhung bdag du* describes Sad mar kar’s role in the same fashion as *bag mar* in the phrase *bag mar gshegs* “went as bride,” or in the

the Shud ke [clan] being there, [Lig myi rhya] did not sleep with the princess [Sad mar kar], and she granted Lig myi rhya [leave to sleep with] Lady Rtsal thing shags of the Shud ke [clan]. The princess then would not attend to Lig myi rhya's matters or to bearing a son, and remained apart.

This state of affairs comes to the attention of Sad mar kar's brother the emperor, and he sends an envoy demanding that she get on with the important business of producing an heir so that she not become a source of conflict between Zhang zhung and Tibet. Sad mar kar entertains her brother's envoy on the banks of Lake Ma phang, and sings him four songs, each of a different character. The first is a lament, two quatrains of which overlap with Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun's pre-suicide lament. Here Sad mar kar uses double entendres to appear to be praising Zhang zhung when in fact she is reviling it. Here I excerpt only the part of the lament that overlaps with that of Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun, and convey the double entendre by italicizing the polyvalent words and placing the *sous-entendu* meaning in parentheses alongside.

. . . bran gyi nI skal pog pa /
 / gu ge nI rkang pran zhig /
 'khol du nI ma tho 'am /
 / gu ge nI bdris shing sdang /

similar uses of rgyal por “as king” and blon por “as minister” described by Hill (2011: 30–32, 35). Sad mar kar goes “as lord of Zhang zhung,” and the inclusion of the place name here accounts for its omission as the “ending place” within the “chab srid la gshegs construction.” This also makes explicit what is often left implicit in the phrase chab srid la gshegs, particularly in its matrimonial context: Tibetan princesses sent to foreign kingdoms or vassals, often as “treaty princesses,” could and in fact did exercise real political power; Stein (1973: 413, n.5); Dotson (2009: 35–36). In this case Sad mar kar's marriage also represents an agreement by Zhang zhung to submit to Tibet as its vassal. As we see from how the narrative unfolds, this state of affairs is rejected by Lig myi rhya, and Tibet is forced to press its point through its military, rather than by marital diplomacy. One objection to this interpretation is that Sad mar kar's tasks of keeping house and conceiving an heir do not seem to fit the role of “ruling” Zhang zhung. On the other hand, giving birth to a half-Tibetan heir was a central part of her mission, just as it was for Princess Khri bangs among the 'a zha from her arrival there in 689–690 and just as it was for Princess Khri mo stengs in Dags po from her arrival “to conduct politics” there in 688–689. Sad mar kar is in a sense a (literary) corollary to these great female rulers on the Tibetan plateau, and also to Empress Khri ma lod and Empress Wu. For more on these examples and for the key political role played by Tibet's princesses through dynastic marriage to foreign royals, including a discussion of the polyvalent phrase *chab srid la gshegs*, see Dotson (2009: 31–37).

/ zas kyI ni skal pog pa /
 nya dang ni gro mchis te /
 'tshal du ni ma tho 'aM
 nya gro ni bcha' zhing kha' / (Pelliot tibétain 1287, ll. 409–11).

The share of bondservants allotted to me

Is Gu ge rkang pran.

To have them as servants, is it not *lofty*? (is it not *scorn*?)

Acquainted with Gu ge, it is *sincere*. (it is *loathsome*.)

The share of food allotted to me

Is fish and wheat.

To be given this, is it not *lofty*? (is it not *scorn*?)

Fish and wheat, when chewed, are *bitter*.²¹

After her songs, Srong brtsan sgam po's messenger requests a written message from her, but she refuses. She tells him, "I am pleased that the emperor my brother is well. As for what the emperor has commanded, I remain capable of facing either death or punishment" (*btsan pos bka' stsal pa ni / gum chad gnyis / rngo ji thog gis 'tshal zhing mchis so /*; Pelliot tibétain 1287, l. 426). She then gives him a sealed yak hat, inside of which she has hidden several pieces of turquoise. Srong brtsan sgam po, hearing his messenger's account of the songs, and examining the objects that his sister has sent him, understands their import and successfully conquers Zhang chung. We hear nothing more of Sad mar kar.

The nearly identical *mis en scène* and similar use of formulaic expressions demonstrate that these two episodes are both expressions of the matrimonial narrative trope, a common ritual narrative that presages and precedes the death or illness of one of the protagonists, and leads into the rites performed for him or her. The similar lament further links the situation of each woman. After Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun sings her lament, she kills herself. Sad mar kar sings nearly the same lament, and her doing

²¹ On this translation of *ma tho 'am*, see Uray (1972: 9). The songs of Sad mar kar are full of double entendres, since she is transmitting a secret meaning to her brother. Thus *tho* "scorn" may be – depending on dialect – a homophone for *mtho* "high, lofty," allowing Sad mar kar to appear to praise Zhang chung to her Zhang chung audience while seeming to debase it to her Tibetan audience. Similarly, *sdang* means "hated," and the homophone *dang* means "pure." The intended double entendre with *kha* "bitter" escapes me, and it may be that in the final line she is revealing her scorn for what it is. Similar use of homophony and wordplay animate other songs in the *Chronicle*.

so signals that she too will soon die, whether as a consequence of her plot being discovered, or preemptively by her own hand.

We find a truncated version of the same lament in a divination prognosis, where it is a terrible augur: “...the wife despises her husband. Acquainted with Gu ge, it is coarse. Fish and barley meal when chewed are bitter.” (*khab bdag sdang / gu ge ni 'dris shing gyong / nya bag ni bcas shing kha'*; IOL Tib J 739, 11 verso, ll. 2–3). The prognosis is said to be so bad that one must perform rituals in order to avert its malignant influence.²² An even briefer version of the same lament may also be implicated in the suicide of Tha nga Pung mo tang in the matrimonial narrative in the “Tale of the *rgyal byin*.” After the deaths of two successive husbands, due in part to what seem to be the nefarious powers of her bride wealth, Tha nga Pung mo tang sings a lament concerning her current, monkey-faced husband: “No matter what Monkey-Faced Thang ba does, I despise him.” Tha nga Pung mo tang then commits suicide by strangulation.²³ The expression of a similar formula elsewhere suggests that the relationship between the Sad mar kar episode and the tale of Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun is not necessarily one of intertextuality or direct allusion, but a case where each narrative draws on a common pool of tradition that contains a matrimonial narrative and a (suicidal) lament.²⁴ More specifically, it is a case of the singer(s), author(s), editor(s), and compiler(s) of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* making apt choices in order to dramatize Sad mar kar’s plight through their narrative framing of her role.

We find similar motifs in rejections of offers of marriage within a ritual narrative from Dga’ thang ’bum pa that also makes use of the matrimonial narrative trope. Thang ba rmu thang from the land of Rmu seeks a bride in the land of Rgya. The lady Rgya za Shangs kar rebuffs him by insulting the lord of Rmu, his land, his horses,

²² The entire prognosis is as follows: @@@/ @/ @@/ kye lung nas phar bltas na / nas 'bras ni yul myi gnyan / sku 'khrungs ni za skar chung / khyi ma btsugs ni / khab bdag sdang / gu ge ni 'dris shing gyong / nya bag ni bcas shing kh'a / ngo 'hre ched po yod pas / ngo yogs gi cho ga gyis shig / gsum yul rdzogs (IOL Tib J 739 11 recto, l. 11 – 11 verso, l. 4).

²³ Her lament: *spra zhal thang ba'i la cang mchis ji yang mchis na gdang la* (PT 1040, ll. 91–92). I have glossed *gdang* with *sdang*. Her suicide is more straightforward: *'geg ste nong so*; l. 100.

²⁴ For Uray (1972: 35–36), authorial agency for this allusion lies with Sad mar kar, who uses this trope in order to hide “her individual complaint in the enlarged poetic paraphrase. . . of the words of Gu-ge Rkang-phran’s bride.” Macdonald (1971: 264) is less committal on the issue of influence, preferring a view that is similar to my own in so far as she understands Sad mar kar’s lament within the context of a literary or folkloric theme: “[u]ne des reproches exprimés par Sad-mar-kar appartient donc apparemment au thème folklorique ou littéraire préexistant de la mal-mariée, appliqué peut-être spécialement aux mariages contractés dans les provinces de l’ouest.” Of course one cannot rule out Uray’s assertion about an intertextual (or metaperformative) relationship between these two tales, and, it should be added, Uray’s opinion is not necessarily in conflict with my assertion that both are informed by a matrimonial narrative trope drawn from a larger pool of tradition.

and so forth, e.g., “as for the meager servants of Rmu, there are none more difficult to control.”²⁵ Rejected, Thang ba rmu thang moves on to the next princess, the ill-fated match that precedes the inevitable crisis, and its resolution through ritual. While we do not find perfect parallels of the lament form here, we can note a thematic unity between the lament and the rejection. It is also of a piece with (or an inversion of) marriage songs, where, early on in the proceedings the prospective bride and her family customarily denigrate the groom’s land, and demand to be persuaded with fine words before assenting to the proposal.²⁶

Were one ignorant of these markers of traditional referentiality in the Sad mar kar episode, one could likely work out some, but not all, of the meaning of her predicament and her lament. For example, one might reason that Sad mar kar, having failed in her apparent mission to conceive a half-Tibetan heir to the Zhang zhung throne, now promotes “plan B,” an invasion that will likely precipitate her death, which she might pre-empt by suicide. One could also cite the bravado of her response to her brother’s command. In addition, her final song may employ funerary imagery, but if so this is thickly veiled.²⁷ Still, those unversed in the idiom of this trope would find such a reading to be a reach, and could insist, for example, that the princess merely complains about life in a foreign land. Appreciating the meaning of Sad mar kar’s lament and her imbrication within a matrimonial narrative trope, not only can we authoritatively settle such speculative arguments, but we can experience the narrative closer to the way in which it was intended.

The comparative opacity of this passage, when divorced from its traditional referentiality, makes for an interesting comparison with a much more famous epic lament, which I mention here to further demonstrate the principle of traditional

²⁵ *Rmu khol rag pa la bkol rka ma mchIs so; Rnel dri ’dul ba’i thabs* 20, l. 1; Pa tshab and Glang ru, eds. 2007: 44, 151. The passage is paraphrased in Bellezza 2013: 151.

²⁶ See, for example, Karmay and Nagano, eds. 2002: 217–18.

²⁷ The last lines of her final song are among the most difficult to translate: *yar gyi ni bye ma la / lhan lhan ni ’gros mo ’di // skyi ’i ni pur thabsu / za dur ni btab kyang rung*; Pelliot tibétain 1287, 423–24. Bacot translated “Et sur le sable d’été/ Voici réunis le pas./ Pour gratter l’envers d’une peau,/ Il faut la férir du râcloir” Bacot, *et al.* (1940-1946: 158). Uray (1972: 35) translates: “In the upper valley of Skyi at dusk the chopsticks can be pinned (already into food).” Most recently, Drikung Kyapgon Chetsang translated “This traveler toiling up/ The sandy slope above/ May place the funeral food/ Before this canyon corpse”; Drikung (2011: 252). The latter funerary image comes from the word *dur*, meaning “tomb,” and we know that there was a custom in early Tibet of placing food in the tomb for the deceased. It is criticized, for example, in the *’Phrul kyi byig shus phyi ma la bstan pa’i mdo* in Pelliot tibétain 126: “One places good food in the tomb. Though it may consist of provisions for a thousand years, [the dead] are powerless to eat it, and so it is always leftovers” (*kha zas bzang po dur du bcugs // lo stong bar kyi brgyags yod kyang // za ba’i dbang myed yun du lus*; Pelliot tibétain 126, ll. 20–22).

referentiality and because it draws on the work of a leading scholar in the field. I refer to John Miles Foley's analysis of Andromache's preemptive lament for her husband Hektor in *Iliad* 6: 407–32. There Andromache delivers “a formal lament, a specific and recognizable subgenre that according to epic convention confronts the reality of a loved one's actual death.” Only rather than addressing a corpse, she speaks directly to her still-living husband (Foley 1999: 188–93). Those ignorant of the traditional reference point of a formal lament would still understand that Andromache speaks to her husband as though he has already fallen. The form in which it comes communicates to a traditional(ly literate) audience an additional pathos. Sad mar kar's lament, and her imbrication within a matrimonial narrative trope, conveys her impending demise in a way that is not otherwise transparent. Grasping the traditional referentiality of her situation and her lament, we not only access a deeper and more visceral, allusive meaning in this scene, but we more clearly comprehend her plight.

Reflections

The *Old Tibetan Chronicle's* deployment of the matrimonial narrative trope in its telling of the Sad mar kar episode clues us in to how the narrative was intended to be received by a traditional audience, and how the *Chronicle* imagined this audience. Imagining an audience is a key aspect of the way in which a work of art, literature, performance, or historical narrative fashions a community, invites participation in a given subjectivity, and, in turn, forges a collective memory.²⁸ The subjectivity that the *Chronicle* invites has its own heroic, royalist ideology, but its codes of persuasion are rooted in traditional forms like the matrimonial narrative trope. The *Old Tibetan Chronicle's* encoding of a ‘national’ consciousness through traditional forms constitutes one of the key functions of narrative history.²⁹ In this essay I have refrained from opening up the can of worms marked “genre” (e.g., epic, chronicle, history, chronicle epic), but of course its forging of a ‘national’ memory and its creative refiguration of events through traditional narrative forms is relevant to the question of genre. One other point that I have not addressed, but which will inevitably be asked, is whether or not the Sad mar kar

²⁸ I draw here on Hayden White's comments on ‘ideology’: “...the ideological element in art, literature, or historiography consists of the projection of the kind of subjectivity that its viewers or readers must take on in order to experience it as art, literature, or historiography. . . . Historiography is, by its very nature, the representational practice best suited to the production of the ‘law-abiding’ citizen” (White 1987: 86–87).

²⁹ For similar reflections in the context of early Sri Lankan historiography, e.g., the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *Mahāvāṃsa*, and their putative sources, see Bechert (1978: 8).

episode, and by extension other episodes in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, reflect historical events. I shall not address the question directly, since the main point of this paper is not an assessment of the historical authenticity of Sad mar kar or of the conquest(s) of Zhang zhung. Instead I shall only make the fairly obvious point that Sad mar kar's imbrication within a matrimonial narrative trope is not, by itself, grounds for doubting that she existed. Historical figures are and always have been cast as characters within narratives whose trajectories are already in motion. The existence of a Tibetan princess named Sad mar kar should be confirmed or denied based on the usual evidence-based grounds, for example, her presence or absence in other sources. Leaving the matter of historical authenticity aside, and focusing instead on the history of narrative and the history of memory, we can turn to the traditional literary qualities of the Sad mar kar episode in particular and the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* in general, and examine how these were put to use in inviting its audience into a shared 'national' memory and subjectivity. It is this feature that makes the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* such a fascinating text and a forerunner to later Tibetan religious narratives and their articulation of a new identity for Tibet, whether Buddhist or Bon po.

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