

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON SOME TIBETAN
"SPIRIT MEDIUMS" IN NEPAL¹

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Some of the most interesting recent studies on Buddhism concern the relationship between the "normative" Buddhism of the texts and the "practical" Buddhism among the people.² M. E. Spiro sees Buddhism as comprising three separate but interlocking systems. He calls the three systems nibbanic, kammatic and apotropaic Buddhism. The first two are soteriological systems, the first normative, the other nonnormative. The third system, apotropaic Buddhism, is a nonsoteriological system mainly concerned with protection from danger.³ I think that the activities of the Tibetan spirit-medium (*dpa' bo*) may be seen as examples of apotropaic Buddhism. By this I do not mean to indicate that their practices are "magical" as opposed to the "religious" practices of the lamas or of pious layman. I simply want to stress the central theme in their work: the curing of the sick and the counteraction of harmful forces.

In this paper I intend to make a preliminary summary of material collected in Nepal during 1970 and 1971. It concerns four *dpa' bo* living in a settlement for Tibetan refugees. The word *dpa' bo* (literally "hero"; pronounced "pa-wo") has been interpreted to mean "medium"⁴ or "sorcerer".⁵ I do not, however, use these terms here, as they have unwanted connotations. The word *dpa' bo* might better be interpreted as "spirit-medium," taking the word in the meaning outlined by R. Firth.⁶ Firth distinguishes spirit possession, spirit mediumship, and shamanism. In spirit mediumship he stresses the communicative aspect of the possession to distinguish it from spirit possession. In the latter, the behaviour of the possessed is primarily regarded as the bodily expression of spirit manifestation.⁷ The line between spirit mediumship and shamanism is not so clearly drawn by Firth. In this connection it may be as well to

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1. I would like to thank Mr. Ulf Drobin for many valuable comments and criticisms. I must also thank Mr. Donald Burton for revising my English.
 2. Gombrich 1971; Spiro 1970; Tambiah 1970.
 3. Spiro 1970: 12.
 4. Stein 1972: 188.
 5. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 425.
 6. Firth 1959: 141; Firth 1969: x f.
 7. Firth 1969: xi.

say a few words about "Tibetan shamanism." Several authors have discussed this problem.⁸ The opinions of these scholars differ, but they all point out various phenomena as examples of shamanism or of shamanistic traits in Tibetan religion. Central to their discussions are "spirit-mediums" of various types. A different view is held by M. Eliade and others, who do not consider possession as typical of shamanism in the strict sense of the concept. Eliade writes that "the specific element of shamanism is not the embodiment of 'spirits' by the shaman, but the ecstasy induced by his ascent to the sky or descent to the underworld."⁹ This view of shamanism, however, seems too narrow, as possession occurs together with "soul-flight" also among North Asiatic shamans. A. Hultkrantz has proposed an extension of the meaning of the term shaman. He writes that a shaman is "a practitioner who, with the help of spirits, cures the sick or reveals hidden things etc. while being in an ecstasy."¹⁰ Using such a wide definition one might speak of "Tibetan shamanism" in connection with the *dpa' bo*. Many phenomenological parallels could easily be shown between North Asiatic shamanism and ritual possession among the Tibetans. Without concealing the phenomenological resemblances and the possible historical connections it is nevertheless evident that the use of the term "Tibetan shamanism" is a question of the breadth of the definition given to the concept shamanism.

The *dpa' bo* were perhaps the most active religious functionaries in the settlement. Even more than the local lama they came into contact with the intimate and personal problems of the villagers. Their séances were popular and spectacular events where people gathered and met the gods face to face. On these occasions the reality of the supernatural world was convincingly shown to the spectators. I think it safe to say that the *dpa' bo* acted in the centre of the religious life of the village.

Very little information on Tibetan "spirit-mediums" of the *dpa' bo* type is to be gained from a study of the literature on Tibetan religion.¹¹ More is known about the Lepcha *dpa' bo*,¹² who however seem to be dissimilar to the Tibetan variety. Most material on Tibetan 'spirit-mediums' concerns the high-ranking "oracles" possessed by gods with high statuses in the pantheon hierarchy. As will be evident, the *dpa' bo* differ from these "oracles." It is obvious that the different phenomena of ritual possession in Tibetan culture are manifold, historically as well as functionally.

8. Hoffmann 1950: 205 f. Hoffmann 1967: 126 f.; Hoffmann 1972; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 538-553; Rock 1959: 806—817; Schroder 1955.

9. Eliade 1964: 499.

10. Hultkrantz 1967: 32 f.

11. David-Neel 1930: 297 ff.; David-Neel 1965: 36 f.; NebeskyWojkowitz 1956: 427 f.; Stein 1959: 332, 405 note 34.

12. Gorer 1967: 216; Morris 1938: 213; Siiger 1967: 167 f.

During my fieldwork in India and Nepal I was in contact with eleven "spirit-mediums" and was able to attend séances with six of them. In my thesis I shall give a full treatment of my material. In this paper I intend to concentrate on four *dpa' bo*. The settlement or village in which they lived was inhabited by about 400 people. There was a handicraft centre where many earned their living. Others worked as porters or earned a livelihood from the occasional jobs available. In the village there was a small monastery, to which belonged a lama, a few monks and about ten child novices. This was a *bka' rgyud pa* monastery, rather poor and the building not yet completed. Most of the boys spent the nights in the homes of their parents. In the village there also lived a *sngags pa* (tantric yogin). He was an old man, called upon mainly to exorcise demons from houses when somebody in the household had fallen ill. The activities of the *dpa' bo*, the lama, and the *sngags pa* partly overlapped as they were asked to help in the same kinds of situations : someone was ill, someone was struck by misfortune, etc. I do not think, however, that it would be correct to regard them as competitors. As they used different methods for healing the sick or bringing good luck, they are rather regarded as complementary to each other. Furthermore, they were specialists in different kinds of maladies.

All the four *dpa' bo* were laymen. When not officiating at séances they lived quite ordinary lives.

1. Wangchuk (*dBang phyug*).

He was the oldest of the four, about forty years of age; he was married and had one son. The family was mainly supported by the wife's work at the handicraft centre. Wangchuk himself was a rather weak man and suffered from T. B. Nevertheless he worked as a porter whenever the opportunity was offered. He was born in eastern Tibet, but had spent a long time as a pilgrim in the western parts of the country.

2. Sechur (*Sri gcod*).

He was about thirty-two years old, married and had one child living with him. He was born in the north-eastern part of Tibet. He, too, worked as a porter.

3. Nyima (*Nyi ma*).

He was twenty-six years old and not married. He lived with his father, his younger sister and two younger brothers. He was occupied at the handicraft centre as a carpet weaver. He had been a *dpa' bo* for a rather short time, was not yet fully established, and consequently not often asked to perform. He was born in northern Tibet.

4. Rigdzen (*Rig 'dzin*).

He was a boy, chosen to be a *dpa' bo*. He was born near Lake Nam Tso in the middle of the fifties. His father was dead and he was living with his mother. He was just passing through the period of testing (as described below, p. 90-92) during my stay in the village.

I collected my information mainly in two ways. Firstly, in interviews and conversations with the *dpa' bo*, with the help of an interpreter. Secondly and perhaps more rewardingly, by making tape recordings of complete séances and afterwards listening to the tapes together with the *dpa' bo* whose seance had been recorded. On these occasion everything heard from the tapes (much was impossible to hear owing to the noise from the drum and the *gshang*) was written down in Tibetan by interpreter, who most of the time was Rigdzen. The *dpa' bo* then commented on the text and gave explanations of difficult passages whenever he could. I recorded altogether eight séances, six of which I was able to discuss with the *dpa' bo* concerned. Sometimes there were obvious contradictions between what the *dpa' bo* said when possessed and what he had said in his normal state. According to my informants there was no doubt about what was to be most trusted: during the séance it was the god who spoke, not the *dpa' bo*. During the séances the possessed *dpa' bo* were able to give much more information concerning the gods, various ritual practices, etc than in their normal state.

THE RECRUITING OF THE *dpa' bo*.

The father of Wangchuk was a *dpa' bo*, but according to his son not a good one. His mother's father was a *dpa' bo*, too, and it was to him that Wangchuk owed most of his knowledge. Wangchuk was preceded by eight *dpa' bo* in his family line, one in each generation. He himself was the ninth and he was convinced that his son would be the tenth.

Sechur's father was a *dpa' bo*.

Nyima's father's brother was a *dpa' bo*, as was also his mother's brother who was living in exile in India.

Rigdzen's father was a *dpa' bo* and so was his mother's father. His mother's brother, now living in Dolpo in Nepal, was also a *dpa' bo*. Rigdzen would eventually become the fifteenth *dpa' bo* in his family line.

Thus it is quite clear that the hereditary transmission of the office was very important—a long line of *dpa' bo* in the family was taken as a guarantee of the trustworthiness of performing *dpa' bo*. It was, however, not enough to have a *dpa' bo* heritage. If a person was to become a *dpa' bo* this had to be confirmed by election or a call from the gods.

Wangchuk was about ten years old when the gods revealed themselves to him for the first time. He was herding sheep when he suddenly saw wonderful divine beings. He felt an irresistible desire to follow them, and this he did without knowing where he went. Later he woke from his trance in an unknown place. The experience was repeated and continued for about three years. When he was thirteen he consulted

a lama. The latter understood the situation and made him pass some tests. After this he was able to start practising as a *dpa'bo*.

When Sechur was fifteen years old his head became "empty." He wandered about not knowing what he did. Then he saw remarkable things no one else saw: gods, demons, strange animals, etc. He did not understand what was happening to him and went on several pilgrimages. But nothing helped. Finally, he went to another *dpa'bo*, who identified the beings who had revealed themselves to him. After this he could set up as a *dpa'bo*.

Before becoming a *dpa'bo* Nyima was a *sgrung pa*, a bard, who can usually recite the epic of Gesar.¹³ When Nyima was about thirteen he had some strange experiences. He was visited while asleep by a man who sang the whole Gesar epic to him. It was just like a dream, but yet not a dream. The man was all dressed in white and his head was of silver and gold. This being visited him every night for two years. So when Nyima was fifteen years old he could sing the whole epic by heart. Then about one year later the call came to become a *dpa'bo*. He saw gods riding on horses and when they urged him to accompany them he complied. He was just like a "madman" (Tib. *smyon pa*). But it was not until many years later that he he could pass the necessary tests and receive a blessing from a lama. After which he could set up as a *dpa'bo*. Usually he performed only when asked by close friends or when his own family needed help.

For Rigdzen the period of call from the gods was not yet over when I was staying in the village. This had been going on for quite some time, and it was rather disturbing for himself and those about him. He was often irritated and angry for no reason. He walked in his sleep, did not eat for days, and so forth. He saw the gods, blue and red figures. He followed them and when he returned to his senses found himself in unexpected places far from his home. During my stay Rigdzen was being tested by Wangchuk and I will give an account of this below.

As demonstrated here the phenomenon of divine election is rather homogeneous. This part of a *dpa'bo* career was often quite embarrassing to him. His difficulties came to an end after the tests, i. e. after the identification of the supernatural beings involved. The *dpa'bo*, however, retained his ability to see gods and demons outside the context of the séances. Wangchuk stressed that the age of thirteen years was the age at which all good *dpa'bo* received their election. Interesting parallels to the importance attached to the age of thirteen are to be found in the legends of the old Tibetan kings,¹⁴ as

13. The literature on the epic and the bard is copious, but Stein 1959 is the only exhaustive study.

14. Haarh 1969: 333 f. Tucci 1955: 198 f.

well as in the legend of the founder of *Bon* as it is given in the *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*.¹⁵

TESTS

After receiving the call from the gods the *dpa' bo*-to-be must be tested. This is necessary to establish the exact identity of the gods (or demons) the candidate sees or is visited by. The test, which can be arranged in many different ways, must be conducted by someone who is himself able to see the supernatural beings, i.e. by a lama, a *sngags pa* or by another *dpa' bo*.

Wangchuk was tested by a lama in a procedure more or less identical with one he himself used when testing Rigdzen.

Sechur refused to tell me anything about the tests he had passed.

Nyima had been tested both by both Sechur and Wangchuk. During my stay he performed once when they were both present in order to control his descriptions of the gods.

As I was in a position to attend one of the séances in which Rigdzen was tested, I intend to give a full account of what took place. The séance was held on the evening of the fifteenth day in the second Tibetan month (as calculated by Wangchuk). No particular preparations had been made, but Rigdzen had carefully avoided meat and *chang* (beer) that day. This he did in order, as he said, not to evoke the wrath of the gods. The first part of the séance proceeded as usual: the altar was arranged by Wangchuk, after which he sang the invocations to the gods, inviting them to come to the place. After the invocations, during the customary short pause, Wangchuk tied a white ribbon around the fourth finger of Rigdzen's left hand and a red one around the fourth finger of the right. Rigdzen himself tied a piece of white cloth around his head, being careful to form it into a beak-like top in front.

In order to make it easier to understand the following procedure mention must here be made of the way in which the possession is thought to take place. The possessing god is thought to enter the body through certain "channels" (Tib. *rtsa*). One of these "channels" has its opening in the fourth finger of the left hand, another in the fourth finger of the right. Through the first, the "channel" in the left hand, the possessing god enters if he is a *lha* (*lha* is a class of gods), and through the "channel" in the right hand, if he is a *btsan* or *klu* (again classes of gods to be explained below, p. 104). When the fingers are tied the possession cannot take place, and only the "light" (Tib. *'od gzer*) of the gods can enter. One can then see the gods clearly if the "channels" are clean.

15. *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long* fol. 410.

After the brief interval Wangchuk sang a short song, put his head-dress (Tib. *rigs lnga*) and let himself be possessed by the god who was to carry out the task of the evening. In this case it was *Thang lha'i thang sräs mchor bo*. Wangchuk was now drumming very fast and Rigdzen, who was sitting cross-legged close to me on a bench on Wangchuk's right, started to tremble and then to shake. As the intensity of the drumming increased Rigdzen's shaking became more and more vehement. The possessing god then asked, through the mouth of Wangchuk, why he had been called and he was told the reason. Wangchuk now took a handful of rice, blew in it, and threw it at Rigdzen, who was shanking, snorting and hissing violently. Wangchuk knelt, took the bundle of feathers from the altar (see below) and waved it to and fro in front of Rigdzen's face. Then there was a period of violent drumming, during which Rigdzen jumped and swayed on his seat.

Wangchuk then asked Rigdzen to tell what he saw in the *phyi gling* (one of the mirrors on the altar, the one in which the *lha* stay during the seance). Rigdzen now sang, as it seemed with the utmost difficulty, snorting and grunting between the words. He was barely able to press the words out of his mouth. In spite of repeated urgings from Wangchuk, Rigdzen was soon unable to articulate any more; he could only groan. Wangchuk then leaned forward and untied Rigdzen's left-hand finger. He then sat down again and began to describe the *lha* in the *phyi gling*. After this he once more resumed his violent drumming and Rigdzen again started to shake. Rigdzen now had to tell what he saw in the *bar gling* (the mirror in which the members of the *bstan* class stay during the seance). He tried hard but without much success. Wangchuk now took off the red ribbon on Rigdzen's right hand. Rigdzen seemed completely unaware of what was happening around him. Then, for the third time, Wangchuk resumed his drumming and Rigdzen immediately started to shake and jump. Wangchuk took the white and the red ribbons from the altar where he had put them, blew on them, and then tied them again on the fourth finger of each of Rigdzen's hands. Rigdzen was now sitting with his head hanging down and leaning to one side. He was completely motionless. Wangchuk sang for a long time, then threw rice at Rigdzen, who slowly came to. He looked around him, took off his head-cloth, stood up and stepped outside on unsteady legs as Wangchuk began the final part of the seance. After the seance Rigdzen told me that when Wangchuk was drumming the pain in his arms and shoulders was almost unbearable and made it very difficult to sing. During the seance his “consciousness” (Tib *rnam shes*) had been in his body all the time. That was why he could remember, though dimly, what had happened. The outcome of the test this time was that Rigdzen was to wait some time and then try again.

The test, as has already been mentioned, aims at establishing the identity and nature of the beings the *dpa' bo* candidate sees. But even if the candidate passes the tests and receives blessings from a lama he is not completely safe from evil-minded

demons, who never tire of trying to sneak into his altar-mirrors or even into his body in order to disturb the séance. According to my informants there are three classes of *dpa'bo*: the good, the mediocre and the bad. It is of course important to know to which of these classes a *dpa'po* belongs. When living in Tibet the young *dpa'bo* had to go on pilgrimage to the mountain of *Targo*.¹⁶ On this pilgrimage he was to find out to what class he actually belonged. *Targo*, together with Lake *Dangra*,¹⁷ plays a very important role for the *dpa'bo*. *Targo* is the seat of a group of *btsan*, members of which often possess the *dpa'bo*. In this mountain there is a cave in which *Padma 'byung gnas* (Padmasambhava) is said once to have meditated and it is to this particular cave that the *dpa'bo* must go. Inside the cave there are three stones: one for the *dpa'bo* to sit on, one for incense and one, somewhat higher, for the altar. In this cave the *dpa'bo* was to invoke the gods. A bad *dpa'bo* was bound to die during the performance. His blood would stream out through his nostrils. Afterwards his bodily remains could be found outside the cave and his head-dress and other belongings inside, attached to a string. A mediocre *dpa'bo*, on the other hand, would survive and could leave the place without anything happening. A good *dpa'bo*, finally, would not only survive, but on leaving the cave would find treasures (Tib. *gter*) of some kinds: a drum, a *gshang*, medicine, etc.

But there exist also several methods with which practically anyone can test a *dpa'bo*. Here I will just mention one which was considered very funny by my informants. The demons who are most often suspected to take up their abode in the *dpa'bo* are the *the'urang*.¹⁸ As these demons are very fond of food, they are said to leave the body of the *dpa'bo* immediately if a plate of food is placed nearby. If the *dpa'bo* is possessed by one of the *the'urang* he will suddenly and unexpectedly come to himself again.

TRAINING

The lama who tested Wangchuk also taught him how to test prospective *dpa'bo* in his turn. One important activity of the *dpa'bo* is the healing of illness by sucking the object or substance causing the illness out of the patient's body. This Wangchuk learned how to do from his maternal grandfather. The grandfather made a small figure of "dough" (Tib. *spags*, i. e. *rtsam pa*, roast-flour, mixed with water or tea) in the semblance of a human being into which he put a piece of meat. Wangchuk then succeeded in sucking out the piece of meat when possessed.

16. On *Targo*, see Hedin 1909: 1ff.; Roerich 1931: 427 ff.

17. On *Dangra*, see the references in note 16. (Mt. *Targo* and Lake *Dangra* are located in Western Tibet and were probably the locus of *dpa'bo* legends and activities primarily in reference to that region).

18. On the *the'urang* see Blondeau 1971: 93 ff. 109; Tucci 1970: 185-239.



Figure 1.

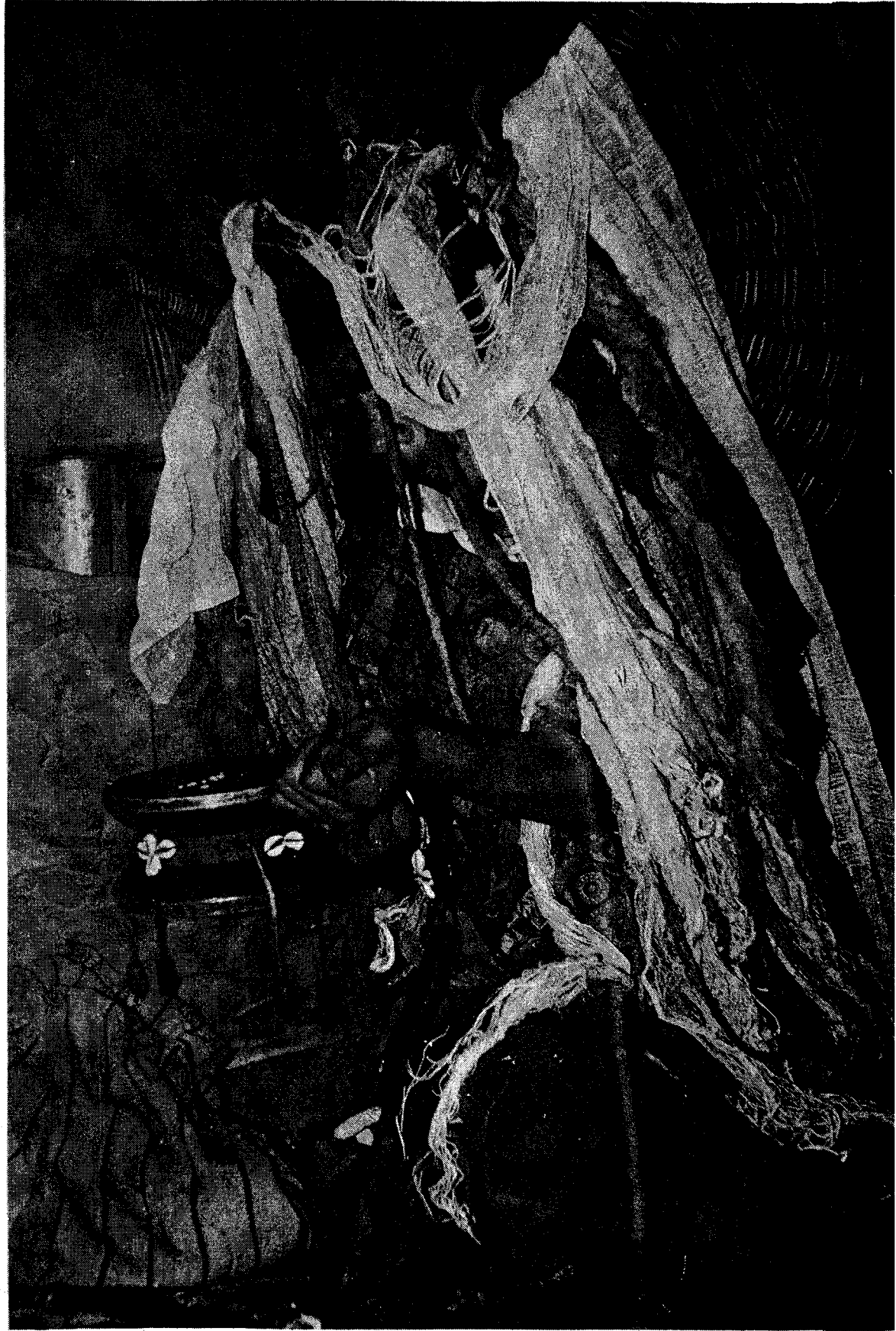


Figure 2.

Sechur said that the only occasion on which he ever received any instruction was when he was told the names of the gods he had seen.

Nyima had been instructed by both Sechur and Wangchuk, but I could not obtain any details of their training.

Rigzen had not yet received proper instructions .

During one of the seances with Nyima the possessing god said that there were four subjects a good *dpa' bo* ought to know: he must know about the "channels" (Tib. *rtsa*) in the body through which the possessing god enters and he must know how to describe the appearances of the gods. Both these subjects can be learned from a lama as well as from a *dpa' bo*. Further, he must know how to cure illness by sucking and he must know how to invoke the proper supernatural beings for this procedure (as will be described below p., 97-98, it is zoomorphic beings who possess the *dpa' bo* and make the sucking-out of illness possible). The last two subjects can only be learned from another *dpa' bo*.

It is considered very important for a young *dpa' bo* to choose a wise and honest *dpa' bo* as a teacher (Tib. *dge rgan*). If the teacher is dishonest there is a possibility that he will steal gods from his pupil.

Theoretically the *dpa' bo* is independent of the lama's authority. Nevertheless, all the *dpa' bo* thought it necessary to have a lama's blessing for their work as a *dpa' bo*. It would be a most interesting task to investigate the relationship between the lamas and the *dpa' bo* in detail. One of my informants told me that his native district in Tibet was seldom visited by lamas, and on this account the local *dpa' bo* might sometimes, when possessed, act as a lama.

THE PARAPHERNALIA OF THE *dpa' bo*.

At the beginning of every seance the *dpa' bo* sets up a small altar. Wangchuk's way of going about this may be taken as an example. He built it in front of the house-altar; ideally the *dpa' bo* should have the altars on his right side when performing. Wangchuk started by forming a swastika (Tib. *g. yung drung*) of rice on the table or shelf that was to serve as a base for the altar. He then filled two bowls with *spags* and one with rice. The contents of these bowls were then given a cone-like form. The three bowls were put on the *g. yung drung*—the one with rice was placed to the left. In the *spags*-cone in the bowl in the middle he then put his big mirror, and behind this he planted a small stick usually three small pictures¹⁹ fastened to it. These pictures depicted *mGon po phyag drug* (the six-armed Mahakala), *Guru drag po* (a manifestation

19. The Tibetan word for such a picture was pronounced *tsagle* by my informants: according to A. Waymen it is written *tsa ka li* (Wayman 1973: 56 f.).

of Padmasambhava), and *Sa skya gong ma*.²⁰ Then one stick with pictures of *U rgyan rin po che* (Padmasambhava) and *Karmapa* were put in the left bowl and one stick with a picture of *dpal ldan lha mo* in the right. In front of these bowls he then placed three smaller ones containing tea (to the right), milk (in the middle), and water (to the left). Some smaller ritual items were then placed around the maller bowls: a bundle of white feathers, two white shells and one spoon. Finally, a white scarf (Tib. *kha btags*) was stretched over the picture-sticks and an oil-lamp and some incense-sticks were lit just before the chanting of the invocations. The mirror (or mirrors) that the *dpa' bo* places on the altar is considered the most important part of his paraphernalia. During the seance the gods are present through their reflections in the mirror. The *dpa' bo* say that the gods stay in the mirror, and they are able to describe exactly the way the gods place themselves when they have arrived after the invocations. They stand in two lines converging backwards, with the leader of the class in the front of the line to the right. Interestingly enough, the mirror is always called *gling*, "world." The mirror is so important because if it is not placed on the altar, the gods will not have a place to stay and will consequently not come. Although one mirror is enough, the *dpa' bo* ought to have three: one for each class of deity. The three mirrors are called *phyi gling*, *bar gling*, and *nang gling*. If the *dpa' bo*, as is most often the case, has only one mirror, it thought to be divided into three different concentric circles. As mentioned above, the *lha* atay in the *phyi gling*, the *btsan* in the *bar gling* and the *klu* in the *nang gling*. Instead of a mirror a *dpa' bo* might use, I was told, a knife for the same purpose. This he can do, for instance, when travelling and thus not able to take his whole equipment with him.

Wangchuk, Sechur and Nyima used the same kind of drum, the damaru, shaped like an hour-glass. It was made of wood, preferably sandal-wood.²¹ The drum is held in the right hand. In his left hand the *dpa' bo* held a *gshang*, a flat bell.²² Instead of the damaru he could have the big drum (Tib. *rnga chen*), which is beaten with a curved drumstick. In Tibet Wangchuk had always used the big drum. The drum is important because its sound is thought to reach the deities and make them come more willingly. In the séances it is sometimes said that "at first sound from the drum, the *lha* will come like slowly falling snow; at the second sound from the drum, the *btsan* will come like a hail-storm; at the third sound from the drum, the *klu* will come like

20. The head of the *Sa skya Pa* according to my informants.

They were not able to give. Further information

21. For a description of this type of drum, see, for instance, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 399.

22. For a picture of a *gshang*, see Karmay 1972, fig: VII.

whirling snow-flakes." 23

Wangchuk also used another musical instrument, a horn which (Tib. *rkang gling*) he blew three times during the invocations to greet the three classes of deities arriving.

Important in healing séances was the small figurine in the semblance of a human being (Tib. *mi lpags g.yang gzhi*) used by Wangchuk. It was made of leather with black stones as eyes and bird-claws attached to its hands and feet. How it was used will be described below.

The bundle of feathers has already been mentioned. It was always placed on the altar, but not very often used. It was only put to its real use in séances arranged in specific situations for the expulsion of demons. Such a séance was arranged at the request of families who had lost a child. Its central part consisted of the cutting off of a string made from nine threads. For the cutting the feather-bundle was used, the feathers of which were supposed to come from the *thang dkar* birds. 24 The cutting of the string was thought to prevent further misfortunes befalling the family.

Another important part of the *dpa' bo* paraphernalia was the head-dress (Tib. *rigs lnga*). This was donned just a few moments before the possession took place, and this was the sign that the god was now acting through the *dpa' bo*. The *rigs lnga* is a five-lobed crown which is fastened to the head with strings. On the lobes are painted pictures, said to represent five *mkha' gro ma* (dakini), but in fact depicting the five buddhas known schematically to many scholars as "dhyani-buddhas." In front of the outermost lobe at each side there are two "wings" attached to the strings. These "wings" are fan-shaped and painted in the colours of the rainbow. Each is decorated with two eyes, the eyes of the *khyung*-bird according to my informants. In front of these wings the so-called *snyan dar* hangs down at each side. The *snyan dar* consists of two big bundles of multi-coloured ribbons fastened together with a short string. The string is stretched over the *rigs lnga* and the bundles are consequently hanging down on each side in front of the *dpa'bo's* shoulders. The *rigs lnga* could not be put on until the *dpa' bo* had wrapped a piece of red cloth around his head.

At the end of every séance, during the "*rigs lnga* game", the *dpa' bo* makes a show of swinging and jerking his head in all possible ways to show that the headgear will

23. In Tibetan: (the words with uncertain orthography are preceded by *) "*dar skad dang Po gtang la sa/lha dmag la kha 'bab' dra yod/dar skad de gnyis gtang la sa/ btsan dmag la ser *khang 'dril ba ltar/dar skad la gsum va stang sa la/klu dmag la bu yug tshub 'dra yod'*". (*dar* was the colloquial pronunciation of *damaru*, drum). (See also figs. 1,3,4,5 and 6).

24. From the description my informants gave of the *thang dkar* birds, they seem to seem to be eagles (cf. Stein 1956: 392) rather than vultures (of Nebesky-Wokjowitz 1956: 488).

not fall off until he wants it to it is thought of as guarded and kept on his head by one or two *mkha' gro ma*. Finally, is it held that during and right after the seance the *rigs lnga* brings luck. During the "*rigs lnga* game," for instance, it might happen that people will go to the *dpa' bo* and try to put their heads under the flapping "wings" of his headgear; or that after the séance and before the *dpa' bo* had put the *rigs lnga* away, people will ask him to touch their heads with it and say a few words intended to bring luck.

Importance was also attached to the falling-off of the *rigs lnga*. If it came off very slowly and stayed on the on the back of the *dpa' bo* with the "wings" over his shoulders this was considered to be very lucky (Fig. 1) But if it came off fast and fell to the ground it was considered a very bad sign for the *dpa' bo* or, according to the direction in which fell off and other circumstances, for the people who had asked for the séance.

ACTIVITIES

During the séance it is not the *dpa' bo* who acts, but the god by which he is possessed. This is the only source of the *dpa' bo*' authority and the only reason why people come to him for help. Apart from the seance he has no religious authority whatsoever. Theoretically he has no responsibility for what happens during the possession, and he claims that he does not remember anything afterwards. In practice, however the *dpa' bo* is of course responsible for the correctness of his invocation of the gods, and he is also supposed to see that no demons sneak into his mirror or into his body. So, after all, no distinct line is drawn in this respect between the unpossessed and the possessed *dpa' bo*.

The *dpa' bo* have a foundation myth. According to my informants, it was *Guru rin po che* who invited the first *dpa'bo* to come to Tibet from neighboring regions so that they could cure the illnesses afflicting the Tibetans at that time. He invited four *dpa' bo* to come, one from each of the four cardinal points, hence they called *Phyogs* (of *Zur*) *bzhi dpa' rab bzhi bo*. Everything the present-day *dpa-bo* can to do when possessed can be done because of the archetypical acts of these four primeval *dpa' bo*, and they were often referred to at the séances.

The narrative about the four mythic *dpa' bo* stresses the main activity of the Tibetan "spirit-mediums" today, the curing of illness. The *dpa' bo* can cure in many ways, but the method most often used was to suck out from the body of the patient the object or substance causing the illness. Nevertheless not all illnesses can be cured in this way: in one of Wangchuk's séances the possessing god said that only *gza'*, *lhog pa*, and *khyi symon* could be cured in this way. Neither Wangchuk nor any other informant was after the seance able to give any further information on *gza'* except that it was an illness. According to Jaschke's dictionary the word is used for

epilepsy.²⁵ Concerning *lhog*, the information was more specific: there are three kinds of *lhog*; *me sa*, and *chu lhog* (i. e. fire, earth, and water *lhog*) caused by different kinds of worms. These worms make crater-like sores in the skin of the afflicted person. *Khyi smyon*, literally means "mad dog," but here it is used for the "poisoning" resulting from the bite of a dog suffering from rabies. The "poison" is in the first stage of this illness thought to be evenly distributed in the whole body. After some days it will gather in one of the bitten person's shoulders and take the shape of a small dog. If the "poison" is not sucked out in time, it will kill the victim.²⁶ As it often happened that people were bitten by dogs who had or were thought to have rabies, the *dpa' bo* were frequently asked to cure the condition. As an example I will take one of Wangchuk's séances, which was arranged to cure an elderly couple.

The invocations were sung as usual (see below p. 100), the possession duly took place, after which Wangchuk answered some questions posed by a participant and then began the healing. One of the bitten persons, the old man, sat down on the floor in front of Wangchuk, who was sitting cross-legged on a bench. Wangchuk hit the man over the head with the *mi lpags g. yang gzhi* three times. This he did, as was explained to me in order to chase away demons and evil spirits.

The possessing deity then decided which of the possible remedial animals was to come. It was a wild dog this time: *Thang lha'i khyi rgod rag pa*. The old man undressed to the waist, turned his back on Wangchuk and placed a small piece of red cloth on his left shoulder. Wangchuk now jerked the drum violently and soon started to bark and to howl, to sniff in the air like a dog and to bare his teeth threateningly. He then put the one side of his drum against the piece of red cloth on the man's shoulder and sucked noisily at the other side of the drum. This was repeated three times. He then made movements with the drum over the man's back as if to gather the "poisonous" substance into one place. He sucked three times more and spat into a small bowl of water. Everyone present now leaned or stepped forward to see better. To me it seemed as if small grey and green particles were rapidly dissolving in the water. There was then some discussion among the onlookers about the result. The old man moved aside and the other bitten person, the old woman, took his place. Wangchuk again started the violent drumming and a minute later assumed the look of a fierce wild dog, howling and showing his teeth. The same procedure was repeated, but now he sucked only three times. In the meantime the bowl had been refilled with fresh water and when he spat out this time, I again saw grey and green

25. Jaschke 1965 (reprint from 1881): 492.

26. For alternative treatments of rabies, see Unkrig 1952. Compare also Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 367 f.

smoke in the water just as if coloured particles were dissolving. The bowl was again closely inspected by all present. The same possessing god as at the beginning replaced the dog and gave a detailed explanation of the procedure and its result.

The cured couple thanked the god very respectfully and humbly and left. Although this healing séance was rather typical, different methods may be employed. It sometimes happened that the possessing animal did not suck out the illness but instead tore it out with its claws. Over the area of the patient's body where the illness was thought to be located a piece of red cloth was placed, as usual. The animal having entered the *dpa' bo*, then, with frightening speed and ferocity, grabbed the cloth and stuffed it into his mouth. He chewed the cloth for a short while, took it out and then spat out what he had taken from the patient's body. After the ceremony, the patient's body was examined for claw-marks.

From the four *dpa' bo* together information about twenty remedial animals could be obtained: wild dogs, wolves, bears, wild yaks, birds, etc. Furthermore three members of the highest class of the gods, the *lha*, appeared at healing séances. Those were the *smān pas*, the "physicians," who controlled the healing process. Also other deities who guarded the patient's body during the healing were present.

Besides healing, the *dpa' bo* could do many other things. Of these, only a few will be mentioned here. Often the *dpa' bo* was asked to predict the future: the outcome of an illness, the prospects of a projected journey, etc. The possessing god could sometimes answer questions directly, and in such cases he let a group of *lha* called the *mngon shes* check the correctness of his answers. Usually, however, the possessed *dpa' bo* used a kind of drum divination called *rtsis*.²⁷ The *rtsis* procedure was checked by the *rtsis pa*, three members of the *lha*-class, and carried out as follows. After the usual invocations the deity entered the *dpa' bo* and was told about the problem which he was asked to solve. The *dpa' bo* then put his double-drum on the altar or on a table in front of him and placed a few grains of rice on the drumskin. He started to sing with the *gshang* tinkling loudly in his left hand but did not touch the drum. The song explained what was going to happen: if the rice moved towards the altar it was considered a positive answer, if, however, it moved in the opposite direction, the situation was serious and adequate measures were to be taken. Alternately it was held that if the rice started to rotate clockwise the predictions were good, and if counter clockwise they were bad. The movements of the grains were very apparent, something which many have been effected by sound-vibrations. Everyone watched carefully and then told the god what they saw, whereupon the god explained the meaning.

27. *rTsis* usually means something like "astrology" or "astrological calculation". while *mo* is the usual word for divination. Compare Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 455.

Sechur performed the *rtsis* differently: he dropped the rice from his left hand onto the drumskin (he held the drum in his right hand) and from the pattern formed by the grains he read the future (Fig. 2).

Some words must also be said of the *bla 'khug*, the "calling of the *bla*, the soul." This ceremony, according to my informants, might be performed in a way differing from those described by earlier authors.²⁸ One diagnosis of illness is that the *bla*, the "soul", has left the body. This may be due to the fact that the patient has been frightened by a wild animal or that a demon has stolen the *bla*. Loss of the *bla* makes a person weak and apathetic to recover. The patient has to get his "soul" back. This ceremony is called *bla 'khug*, "soul-calling", and may be performed by a *dpa' bo* or a lama. During my stay in the village I met one case of "soul-loss" in a young girl who was the sister of Nyima. She had no appetite, did not talk and most of the time she was found lying on the ground in her family's house. The healing ceremony arranged for her took the following form. When possessed, the *dpa' bo* took three objects, one small turquoise, one coral bead and one small shell which he put in a ball of *spags*. The ball was then thrown away with a sling. A bowl was now filled with water mixed with milk, and a scarf (Tib. *kha btags*) was stretched over the bowl as a cover. The girl suffering from "soul-loss" had to put her hands into the bowl in order to find the thrown-away objects. I was told that if she could find all of them, her *bla* would return, but if she could only find one or two of them, the *dpa' bo* would be possessed by a very wrathful deity who would help to locate the missing object or objects. During the séance the three objects were obviously thought to be identical with her *bla*. The séance was successful, I was told, and after a few days the girl seemed to have recovered completely.

TRANCE

In this section I will give a more detailed description and analysis of a *dpa' bo* performance and also will try to give an idea experiences of the *dpa' bo* during the séance.

In order to make the possession possible, the *dpa' bo* must send away his "consciousness" (Tib. *rnam shes*). The sending away of the *rnam shes* must take place precisely at the moment before the possession, as the time in between is considered to be very dangerous for the *dpa' bo*. Many demons will try to take the opportunity of entering the "empty" body. The *rnam shes* is sent to a deity residing on the altar. Wangchuk had *Pad ma 'byung gnas* (i. e. Padmasambhava) as the guardian of his *rnam shes*, while Nyima had *Mkha' 'gro Ye shes mtsho rgyal* as the guardian of his. Under no circumstances may the *rnam shes* remain in the body during the possession. In this

28. Lessing 1951; Tucci 1970: 210 f.

case the *dpa' bo* becomes "half god, half man", as it is called, and what he says and does during the *séance* is not to be trusted. The *rnam shes* leaves the body through one of the "channels" (Tib. *rtsa*) in the body, viz. the one called *dbu ma*, which, according to my informants, leads from the top of the skull to a point in the centre of the chest. At the same point enter two other *rtsa*, the *rkyang ma*, which begins in the fourth finger of the right hand, and the *ro ma*, which begins in the fourth finger of the left hand. As has been mentioned above, the possessing god enters the *dpa' bo* through one of these *rtsa*. Different classes of the gods enter through different *rtsa*. To each of these *rtsa* belong special deities who during the *séance* keep the *rtsa* clean. They are called "cleaners of the *rtsa*-road" (Tib. *rtsa lam sang mkha*). Other deities guard the openings into the *rtsa* and are called "*rtsa*-masters" (Tib. *rtsa bdag*) and they are inherited by one *dpa' bo* from another. From other contexts well-known gods, as for instance *Nyan chen Thang lha*²⁹ the mountain-god, may have such a specialized function. Other deities are also present during the *séance* to guard specific parts of the *dpa' bo*'s body. There may be different gods on different occasions for this purpose.

As a typical example of how a *séance* might be structured I will choose the above mentioned one concerning the old couple bitten by a mad dog.

This *séance* took place on the 16th of January 1971 in the home of Wangchuk (this was an exception, usually the *séances* were held in the home of the patient). I was alone with Wangchuk when he arranged his altar. He kept his paraphernalia behind the ordinary house-altar when he was not using it. At 5:45 p. m. he started and the arrangements took about him half an hour. Then he smoked a cigarette and after that read a few short prayers (among them the "refuge formula"). Soon he started to sing the invocations to the accompaniment of the drum and the *gshang*. He mentioned a large number of deities by name, inviting them to come to the place. He then described in some detail important places to which pilgrimages were made in the area around *Gangs rin po che* (i. e. Kailāsh). This went on for about twenty minutes, and it was 6:45 p. m. by the time the invocations were finished and all the deities had reached the mirrors on the altar.

After a short break of about three minutes during which he wrapped a piece of red cloth around his head and picked up his headgear and held it in front of him at arm's length. He recited the names of the *mkha' 'gro ma* believed to stay on the lobes of the *rigs lnga* and put it on his head, fastening it with two pairs of strings. When he then took up the song again, he jerked his drum faster and faster. His body started to sway to and fro and, as he sat there cross-legged, his whole body soon started to shake and jump. Suddenly he leapt onto the floor and began to dance to the accompaniment of a pulsating, very fast drum rhythm. He jumped up

29. See, for instance, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 205 ff.

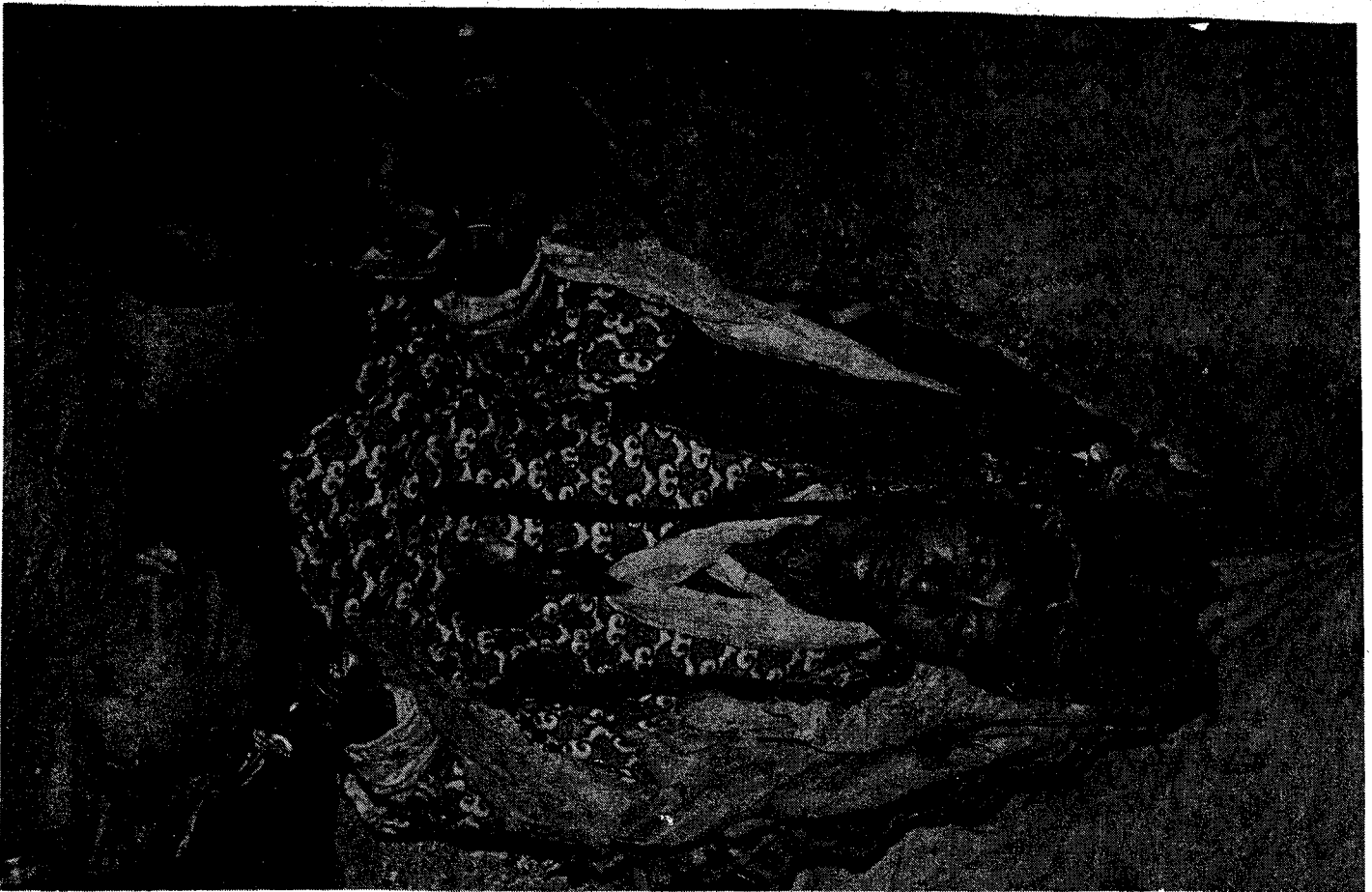


Figure 3.



Figure 4.

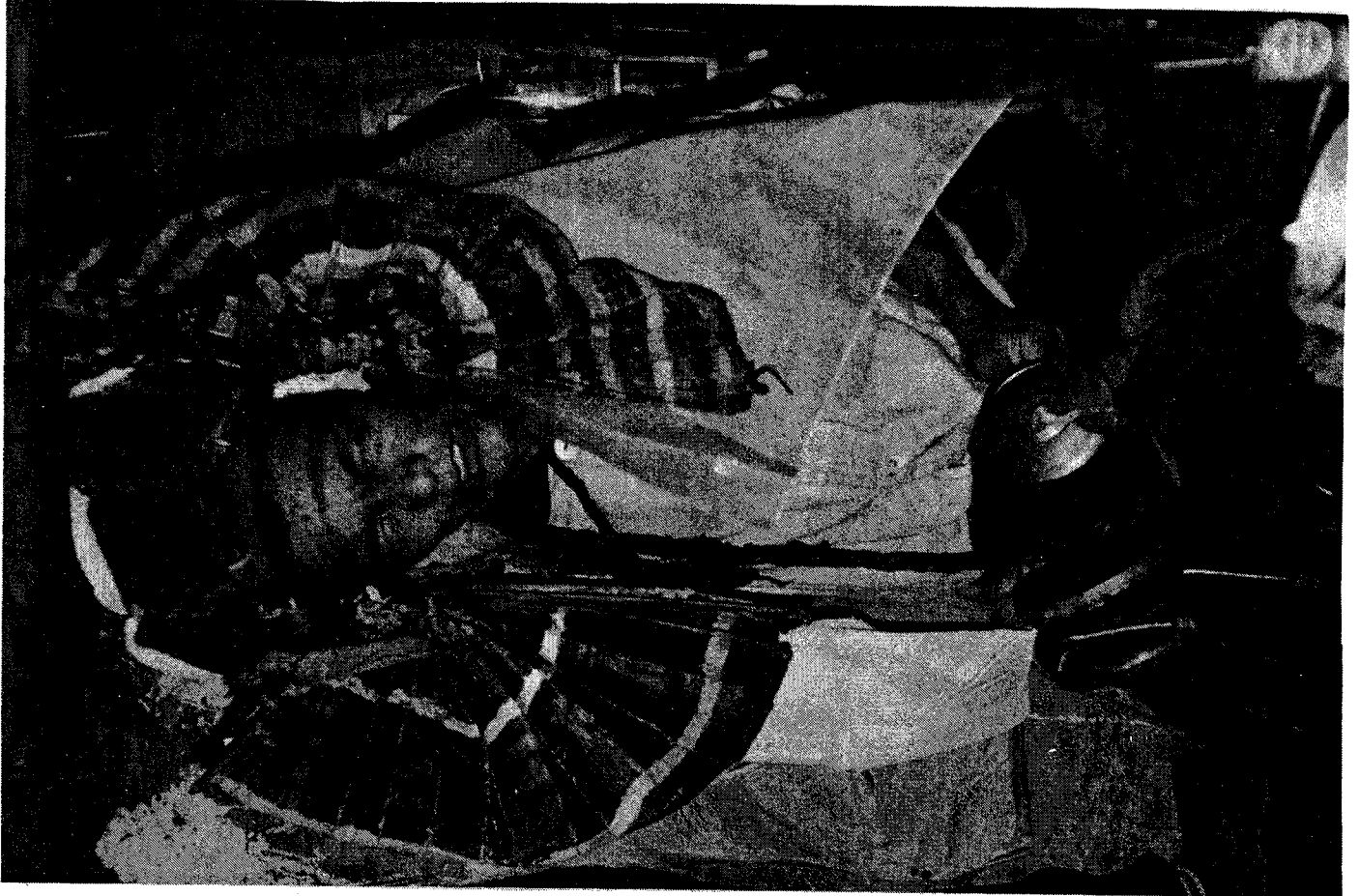


Figure 5.



Figure 6.

on the bed-bench again and danced there with his face towards the altar. Then he sat down, now possessed, and the deity asked why he had been called (Figs. 3,4). It was *gNyan chen Thang lha dkar po* who spoke. At 7:01 p. m. the god was told about his tasks for the evening. Before the séance I had got permission to put a few questions to the deity and these were now asked by the intermediary of the evening.³⁰ The answers followed immediately, without the need for the *rtsis*-procedure. The curing part started at 7:17 p. m. As has been described above, the wild dog *Thang lha'i khyi rgod rag pa* possessed the *dpa'bo* and sucked out the "poison" from the bitten couple. The healing process was finished by 7:40 p. m. Now Wangchuk started to sing about the primeval four *dpa'bo* and their deeds. Suddenly he angrily jumped out onto the floor. Some people had irritated the god by looking in through a hole in the wall. However, he soon calmed down and the time had now come for the deities to leave. He again sang the names of many gods and tea was offered to each of them. The *lha* left the place riding on *thang dkar*-birds and Wangchuk asked the gods to throw down feathers plucked from the birds as they flew away. A violent drumming commenced and Wangchuk was highly agitated, his body shaking and swaying. Rather soon, a rain of small white feathers fell down from somewhere under the dark ceiling. The onlookers now began a wild chase after the feathers, trying to catch them before they reached the floor. Such feathers were considered to bring luck. A few persons in the audience were skeptical, though not openly so. One of them said to me afterwards that Wangchuk certainly must have had the feathers hidden somewhere on the *rigs Inga*. If this was the case they were thrown up into the air through the violent shaking of the head that immediately preceded the rain of feathers. At 8:17 p. m. Wangchuk started the "*rigs Inga* game." As the "game" went on, with Wangchuk vehemently swinging and shaking, the *rigs Inga* slowly slipped backwards. Finally, it fell off and remained around his neck with the wings resting on his shoulders. Wangchuk quickly put a piece of grey cloth over his face, snapped his fingers and sank backwards against the wall. It was now 8:30 p. m. After a few moments rest he uncovered his face and started to collect his things. During the "*rigs Inga* game" most of the audience left, only a few remaining. Wangchuk's wife served cooked rice and he also had some. He looked weak and exhausted as he asked about what had happened during the séance.

All the séances I attended were held indoors in the evening, although Wangchuk said that he could perform at any time in the day and at any place. The length of the séances varied, and those I attended lasted from an hour and a half to more than four hours. The time for singing the invocations varied between 18 and 27 minutes (for Wangchuk between 19 and 22 minutes). The reason for the great variations in length between one séance and another was not so much the variety of the problems posed

30. This séance was one of the first I attended in the village. The questions, which were put in order to justify my presence, concerned personal matters.

at each séance, but rather the fact that the *dpa'bo* could make the concluding part, the "*rigs lnga* game," longer or shorter.

When asked what they felt at the onset of the possession the *dpa'bo* found it very hard to describe exactly what they saw and felt. During the invocations, as mentioned above, the deities reach their respective mirrors (or part of a mirror) on the altar. The *dpa'bo* sees them arrive and place themselves according to class and rank. This ability to see the gods is not restricted to the *dpa'bo*; also lamas and *sngags pa* have it. When the actual possession is going to take place Wangchuk sees what he describes as something like a rotating wheel with all the colours of the rainbow. It is very beautiful and very bright. When the god enters the *rtsa* his body feels big and as if it were filled with gas. After that he does not remember anything.

Sechur said that he saw a fire glowing in many colours. The fire grows bigger and bigger and comes nearer and nearer until it enters his body and everything becomes black. He remembers no more of the séance until it ends. Then everything happens in the reverse order.

Nyima said that when singing the invocations he saw stars sparkling in the mirrors on the altar. Then the mirrors grow bigger and bigger and the people around him become smaller and smaller, while their eyes shine brightly and their voices become thinner and thinner.

After the séances the *dpa'bo* usually recovers a few minutes after the *rigs lnga* has fallen off. Wangchuk and Nyima said that they did not feel anything in particular afterwards, but Sechur said that his arms and shoulders ached because the powerful *rnam shes* of the possessing deity had penetrated his *rtsa*.

The change in the ritual status of the *dpa'bo* during the séance is marked by the putting on of the *rigs lnga*, but the actual possession seems to take place shortly afterwards, when the *dpa'bo* jumps onto the floor and dances. According to Wangchuk there are different kinds of dances: the dance of the lion, the dance of the elephant, of the *mkha' gro ma*, etc. Wangchuk and Nyima dance for a very short while on the floor and then jump back onto the bed-bench where the deity usually introduced itself and asked why it had been called. Nyima would do something extraordinary at this stage, for instance throw glowing coal from the fire-place at the onlookers. Sechur usually danced a little longer on the floor with widely outstretched arms as if flying, chirping like a small bird. Then he used to kneel in front of the intermediary. Often the possessing god is very irritated and angry at the beginning of the séance and makes scornful comments on the ignorance of the onlookers who cannot solve their own problems but have to call on him for help. Usually he calls them by a stereotyped formula, "you bazaar-loafers, you meat-eaters and black-heads!"³¹ When the

31. In Tibetan: *khrom pa sha zan mgo nag*.

deity has introduced himself the task must be set without delay. In most cases the clients have asked someone well in advance to act as an intermediary between them and the god. The intermediary must always be a man. The role of intermediary is not sought after, and sometimes there may be long discussions even during the invocations about who is going to fill it. The intermediary does not usually receive any payment, but he is invited to share the food that is served after the séance. He has various tasks to perform: to offer tea to the gods, to place a *kha btags* over the *rigs lnga* in order to greet the deity when the latter introduces himself, to talk humbly with the god, to make respectful and grateful exclamations when the deity is explaining something, to throw rice at the *dpa' bo* if the possessing god is too angry and violent, and most important, to interpret what the god has said if this is difficult to hear or to understand.

An important aspect of the séance is what might be called the theatrical aspect, the *dpa' bo*'s dramatic presentation. In theory, as has already been stressed, the authenticity of the *dpa' bo* is proved by tests. In practice, however, the authenticity of the *dpa' bo* is proved by the success of his performances. To the core of behaviour typical of the séance other features were added, which were not strictly required. Thus Nyima played with fire, Wangchuk let feathers fall, etc. These doings were not essential parts of the ritual, but were nevertheless carried out to "make a good show." This was doubtless due to the *dpa' bo*'s constant need to prove the reality of the possession and the power of his gods.

At the end of the séance the deities leave the place, one by one, in strict order. While they are leaving, the *dpa' po* plays the "*rigs lnga* game" until, finally, the *mkha' 'gro ma* release the strings and the *rigs lnga* falls. At that very moment the *rnam shes* returns to the *dpa' bo* who becomes himself again.

The audience should also be mentioned. At every séance I witnessed there were more people present than really belonged to the house or to the immediate neighbourhood. In spite of the relative frequency of the séances (towards the end of the Tibetan year one séance every evening) there were always many onlookers. They usually dropped in during the invocations and left after the *dpa' bo* had accomplished his task. There was always a relaxed atmosphere in the room—sometimes too relaxed and noisy, which provoked angry remarks from the deity. It is probable that many in the audience experienced the séance as a kind of entertainment, as it was the only diversion offered the villagers after the day's work.

PANTHEON

The pantheon of the *dpa'bo* is divided into three classes: the *lha*, the *btsan* and the *klu*. They are often called "the upper *lha*, the middle *btsan* and the lower

klu".³² The groups are too well known to need any commentary here. Within the three classes further subdivisions are made. The *lha* class, which consists of eighty gods, is divided into several groups according to function and speciality. There are, for instance, the *rtsis pa*, the *mngon she*, the *smam pa*, the *sgrup thob* (i. e. siddhas), etc. The *btsan* class, on the other hand, is grouped according to different mountains to which the *btsan* belong. One important group among the *btsan* belongs to the *Targo* mountain, another belongs to the *Thang lha* mountains, etc. The *btsan* are 36 in number and have lots of servants and soldiers in their retinues. The *klu* finally, are a much larger group led by *Klu chen gTsug na rin chen* and divided into groups according to their association with different lakes.

The *lha* have the highest status among the *dpa' bo*'s deities, but nevertheless the *btsan* are the most important. It is significant that the *dpa' bo*, when possessed talks about himself in stereotyped phrases, such as the *btsan po*, the "mighty" or as the *dmar po* the "red one," all designations indicating the *btsan* class. At all the séances I attended a *btsan* always possessed the *dpa' bo*, never a *lha* or a *klu*, although I was told that this might happen.

The usual way in which a *dpa' bo* acquires his deities is by inheritance, or he receives them as gifts from an older *dpa' bo*.

A question which is unfortunately very difficult to answer is the extent to which the pantheon of the *dpa' bo* is exclusive to them and the extent to which the deities exist in the folk religion. As Tibetan folk religion is not very well known, the answer must depend upon further research.

Finally, some remarks may be made on the social position and psychological make-up of the *dpa' bo*. Economically, as well as socially, they gained very little from their spirit-mediumship. Psychologically, the *dpa' bo* whom I met with outside the séances showed no deviations from what might be called normality. Nor did they, in their ordinary lives, demonstrate maladjustment and social dissatisfaction more than others in the village. There seem to be no grounds for regarding their spirit-mediumship as solely a compensation for their subordinate social position. I do not think it is possible to explain any traditional religious behaviour as a result of the need of maladjusted individuals for compensation.³³

The greater part of what is known about other forms of ritual possession in Tibet concerns the high-ranking "spirit-mediums" often called "oracles" (Tib. *chos skyong*,

32. Cf. Hoffmann 1950: 139.

33. For an explanation of this kind see, for instance, Lewis 1971: 176 et passim. Cf. Douglas 1973: 24 for a critique.

chos rje, sku rten pa, etc).³⁴ Although much has been written about the performances of the "state oracle" and others, very little is known about their training, how the possessing deity enters the body, what they experience, etc. The lack of relevant data makes comparisons with the material presented here difficult. One is practically limited to comparisons between trance performances from a more general point of view. The underlying scheme seems to be identical: invocation—possession—the god as is asked for help—the god leaves and the "spirit—medium" has some kind of collapse. A few observations may be made. The "oracle" does not sing the invocations himself, which the *dpa' bo* always does. Furthermore, the initial phase of the possession is more violent and is connected with greater motor agitation among the "oracles" than among the *dpa' bo*. Moreover, the "oracle" seems to be in a much deeper trance than the *dpa' bo*. This is of course hard to measure, but the different ways of behaving during the séances, the *dpa' bo* with agility and motor control, the "oracle" under great physical strain and with the need for one or more assistants to keep him under control, indicate a difference in the depth of the trance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

M. Goldstein has written in an article that "the literature on Tibetan society suffers from chronic religious indigestion."³⁵ One may perhaps paraphrase this and say that the literature on Tibetan religion suffers from chronic "lamaistic" indigestion, but by this I simply mean that the study of Tibetan folk religion has been neglected. Until further research is carried out many interesting questions concerning the *dpa' bo* must be left unanswered.

Buddhism may be defined in many ways: from historical and from theological viewpoints, but also from a functional point of view. In the latter case one must consider all the religious beliefs and practices in the area conventionally called Buddhist. From this point of view the beliefs and activities of the *dpa, bo* may be seen as examples of apotropaic Buddhism. That Tibetan religion comprises different systems of different origins and age is obvious, and further research might clarify their interaction.

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34. Chapman 1938: 316 ff; Govinda 1966: 179-191; Hanbury-Tracy 194: 60—68
Harrer 1953: 203—206; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 409—454; Rock 1959: 806-87;
Schafer 1950: 153-165.

35. Goldstein 1971: 521.

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