


Smra myi ste btsun po and Rma myi de btsun po: A Trial Translation of an Indigenous Tibetan Funeral Narrative, The First Part of PT 1136¹

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he paper of Rolf A. Stein commemorating Marcelle Lalou was published in 1971. It focused on indigenous funeral narratives recorded in Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts.² According to Stein, these accounts guaranteed the efficacy of funerals. Many accounts of funerals could be collected or generated to serve this purpose. The narratives were composed in a standard format (accident → death → pursuit of remedies → funeral). The plots varied widely, but the final elements (funeral) were almost identical.

Stein's 1971 paper has stimulated numerous researchers, albeit sometimes indirectly. In recent years, it has particularly encouraged scholars to discuss the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in the intermediate period, around the 10th century. In 2008, C. Cantwell and R. Mayer examined Buddhist ritual texts of the intermediate period. Padmasambhava appears in these texts, which evince the adoption of Buddhicization strategies to introduce Tibetan Buddhist narratives akin to indigenous ritual narratives into Indian Buddhist rituals. In an argument mooted in 2013 and slightly revised, expanded, and republished in 2016, B. Dotson contend that some indigenous ritual texts resembled catalogues of ritual precedents. Many of these writings guaranteed the validity of funeral rites. The *Zas gtaḍ kyi lo rgyus*, a later Buddhist text, lists the destruction of small kingdoms that were opposed to the Yar lung kingdom predating the Tibetan empire because these realms practised indigenous funeral rites. This strategy was employed to represent the detrimental nature of indigenous funeral rites as a certainty.

Indigenous ritual narratives functioned significantly in the Buddhicization of the intermediate period. However, the contents of

¹ This paper is an expanded version of a paper that I recently published in Japanese. See Ishikawa 2018.

² These accounts include considerable archetypal elements of funeral rituals of the Bon religion, an ethnic Tibetan religion of the later period. However, I clearly distinguish the ancient indigenous religion from the Bon religion because their doctrines are substantially and essentially different.

indigenous ritual narratives remain obscure to us today. The elucidation of such unclear aspects and an increase in the contemporary understanding of this genre of narratives are undoubtedly necessary. It would illuminate the issue of Buddhicization and clarify the reality of indigenous Tibetan religions.

My contribution to this volume is the provisional translation of a narrative from the funeral ritual texts Stein examined in his 1971 article. This narrative is untitled but equates to “the first” (*le premier*) of Pelliot tibétain (henceforth PT) 1136 in Stein’s 1971 paper.³ For descriptive convenience, my translation is named “Smra myi ste btsun po and Rma myi de btsun po” after the names of the protagonists. My translation is based on the transliteration of the manuscript on Old Tibetan Documents Online (OTDO: <http://otdo.aa-ken.jp>). However, it also references the graphic data obtained from Gallica (<https://gallica.bnf.fr>), an electronic library operated by the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The major obstacle to translating such ritual narratives is their specialized terminology, which is distinct from that of Classical Tibetan literature. Some terms require explication beyond the frame of annotation. I therefore begin this paper with an effort to ascertain the meanings of certain difficult terms. I then present the translation and finally discuss the two mysterious protagonists.

1. *Rgyal thag brgyad, se gru bzhi, and bse'i cho rol*

The first part of PT 1136 includes a description of the preparation of a funeral for Smra myi ste btsun po. I focus on a couplet in this account (ll. 18–19): “*rgyal thag brgyad* were constructed at the border.⁴ *Se gru bzhi* were built in the valley”. (*rgyal [thag?] brgyad ni bas la bchas / se gru bzhi ni lung du brtsigs*). Similar couplets are common in other Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts on indigenous funerals, but the two terms of *rgyal thag brgyad* and *se gru bzhi* are not found in later Tibetan literature. A longer couplet in PT 1068 (ll. 114–16) can be used as a key for the interpretation of the two words despite the fact that this task involves the understanding of another unknown word *'brum*: *'brum du ni se btsugs /*

³ The top and bottom portions of PT 1136 are torn. To be accurate, this narrative is not the first account because it follows the end of another narrative whose principal part is not available. However, I follow Stein’s recognition of this narrative as “the first” (*le premier*), see Stein 1971: 501–502.

⁴ Considering that this quotation is a couplet, *bchas* must resemble *brtsigs* in meaning. Thus, the former is not a variant of *bcas* meaning ‘together with’, or ‘having’ as an adjective but means ‘to make’, ‘to prepare’, or ‘to construct’ as a past form of the verb *'cha' ba*.

se 'brum bzhi bcas / / rgyal thag brgyad ni 'bres / shing gdang bzhi ni btsugs.

I will first discuss the meaning of *'brum*. Lalou attempted a reading of this word in her French translation of PT 1042, a manual containing directives for royal funerals of the Tibetan Empire. She presumed, on the basis of another sentence in PT 1068 (l.73), “*sgo 'brum du bsu ston na ma bsu*” (in OTDO, “*sgo 'brum du bsu ston na ma [bsus?]*”),⁵ that *'brum* was equivalent to *'gram*, which meant ‘near’ in Classical Tibetan. If the English translation follows her interpretation, the statement could be translated as: “When [she] was to meet [him] in front of the gate, [she] didn’t meet [him]”.⁶ Her interpretation certainly fits some contexts in Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts, while an opposite reading is more apt for others. For example, the correspondence of the first four syllables to the latter four is clear in the statement: *gnam gi pha mtha dgung gi pha 'brum* (PT 1040, l. 35). Here, the translation “the end of the sky, the edge of the heaven” seems more appropriate. Besides, this couplet is found in PT 1134, ll. 16, 23–24, 47–48, 86–87, and IOL Tib J 731, verso, l. 70. Since *'brum* means ‘boundary’ or ‘border’ regardless of the distance perspective, it may plausibly be used in the form of *sgo 'brum*, ‘gate boundary’ or *pha 'brum*, ‘edge’.

Taking this meaning of *'brum* into consideration, the translation of the problematic couplet in PT 1068 (ll. 114–16) can be read as: “*se* was constructed as the border (*'brum*) and the four edges of *se* (*se 'brum bzhi*) were built, *rgyal thag brgyad* were stretched and four wooden poles were built”.

This understanding of the meaning of *'brum* allows us to progress the discussion to the meaning of *se*. It may immediately be noted that the phrase “four edges of *se*” (*se 'brum bzhi*) in PT 1068 corresponds to the *se gru bzhi* in the first part of PT 1136. Since *gru bzhi* means ‘four angles’, or ‘four corners’, *se gru bzhi* may signify “the four angles of *se*”. Present-day dictionaries define *se* as a variant of *bse*. The contemporary lexical understanding of the term *bse* deems it to be an abbreviation for *bse ko* ‘tanned leather’, *bse shing* ‘tree from which lacquer is produced’ or *bse ru* ‘horn of rhinoceros’. Each of these items may be literally interpreted as *'bse* leather’, *'bse* tree’, and *'bse* horn’. The words thus evince a common term *bse*. Stein believed that *bse* denoted a semi-precious stone in the literature related to indigenous funerals from Dunhuang.⁷ Even so, immortality and immutability may be deduced to represent attributes common to all these items. It is pertinent to recall at this juncture that the first chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* describes the tomb of King Spu de gung rgyal, who established the Yar lung kingdom, as Grang mo gnam bse’, or the

⁵ See Lalou 1952: 350, n. 3.

⁶ See Stein 1971: 521–24 for the plot of this narrative.

⁷ See Stein 1971: 495 and 501.

“cold place, heavenly *bse'*.”⁸ Since *bse'* may be read as a variant of *bse*, the inference that the grave was called *bse'* because of its immutability becomes plausible. The tomb of Spu de gung rgyal remains undiscovered but was probably built on Mount Gyang tho in the Kong po district. However, the successive kings were laid to rest in the Yar lung Valley, and their tombs are visible even now. Large tombs are shaped as squares or trapezoids with flat tops, regardless of their location. The famous 'Phyong rgyas royal tombs in the upper reaches of the Yar lung Valley, or their predecessors near the Btsan thang village in the lower reaches of the valley, evince the same form.⁹ The phrase “four edges of *se*” or “four angles of *se*” must reference this type of tomb. Tombs were constructed in the valleys (*lung*) and denoted the boundary (*brum*) between the world of the living and the realm of the dead; hence, this identification is apt to the context of both PT 1136 and PT 1068.

The remaining undetermined phrase is *rgyal thag brgyad*. In this construct, *rgyal* can mean *rgyal po* or ‘king’ as a common noun. In the same manner, *thag* can signify *thag pa* or ‘rope’, and *brgyad* can denote the cardinal number, ‘eight’. The phrase can thus be translated as “eight king-ropes” because, in Tibetan, the cardinal number modifies the preceding phrase as an adjective. It has been noted that PT 1068 mentions the installation of four poles, probably to hang the eight king-ropes, and PT 1136 states that the eight king-ropes were placed on the border (*bas*), or in the grave area. Unfortunately, it is difficult to identify this object in the absence of any archaeological discoveries related to eight king-ropes, and estimating the type of article that is indicated is problematic. However, since there were four poles for hanging ropes and eight ropes, it is possible that two ropes were hung on each pole. Perhaps one pole was installed at the centre of each of the four sides of a tomb, and two ropes were stretched separately from each of the poles to the ends of one side, that is, to the corners of the tomb. Among the notes on funeral offerings described in the funeral manual, PT 1042, are the following prescriptions: “For the calculation of slaughtered sheep,¹⁰ four sheep in the four angles of *se* [and] four sheep in eight king-ropes do not count [as slaughtered sheep]. *Skyibs* and *mtshal ma[r]*” (ll. 91–93: *bshan lug brtsI ba*

⁸ See PT 1287, ll. 61–62; Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint Gustave 1940: 100 and 128.

⁹ I recently wrote a paper in Japanese about such grave systems. See Ishikawa 2019: 60–58 (pages in reverse order).

¹⁰ Present-day dictionaries include a noun *bshan pa*, defined as ‘slaughterer’. I regard *bshan lug* as *bshan pa'i lug* or “slaughtered sheep”, because I assume that the word existed as a verb at that time.

¹¹ Both of these two terms denote the special sacrificial sheep for the funeral, sent out as companions of the dead in PT 1042, l. 138, where the term “*mtshal mar*” appears instead of “*mtshal ma*”. Since *mtshal* means ‘cinnabar sand’ and is thought to mean sheep coated with cinnabar sand, the accurate spelling is “*mtshal mar*”, in which the second syllable is an abbreviation of *dmar po*, or ‘red’. *Skyibs* means ‘evacuation

ni / se gru bzhi la / lug bzhi / / rgyal thag brgyad la lug bzhi / / 'di rnams ni grangs la ma gtogso / / skyibs tang / mtshal / ma ni grangs la gtogso). The directives appear to iterate that sacrificial sheep, such as *skyibs* and *mtshal mar* that go to paradise with the dead, should be counted while other sacrificial sheep should not. Despite the specification of eight ropes, four sheep are believed to have been sacrificed at the eight king-ropes. This specification appears to reflect the dedication of sheep to each of the four poles from which the ropes were hung.

As an aside, *bse* is seen in another couplet in the PT 1136 narrative to which this article is devoted. This may be cited as an exemplar of Stein's postulation of *bse* as signifying a semi-precious stone: "[The foal] was placed in the *cho rol* of *bse'* and tied with the *dmu*-stake of azurite" (l. 23: *bse'i cho rol du ni bcug / mthing gi dmu rtod kyis bsgrogs*). The repetitive form of the indigenous funeral narrative duplicates phrases of the same structure that are synonymous or almost equivalent. Thus, if one phrase is understood, then the other may be surmised. Since *bse* corresponds to azurite (*mthing*), it certainly denotes a precious stone. However, *cho rol* corresponds to the *dmu*-stake, and Stein reads *cho rol* as an "an enclosure" (*un enclos*). His interpretation seems to be generally accurate. *Cho rol* may be seen as an abbreviation of *cho 'phrul rol ba* or the 'exercise of magic'. The *dmu*-stake of the corresponding phrase can hence imply a magical item. *Dmu* is a cliché pertaining to extremely mysterious phenomena in Tibetan myths and legends. In Dunhuang literature, PT 126 Part 2 mentions the immutable country of *Dmu*, isolated from other regions, and alludes to the king of *Dmu*.¹² In PT 1134, the god of heaven 'Gun tsun phyva cannot catch the two horses Dang mgyogs and Yid mgyogs but the king of *Dmu* captures them using his lasso.¹³ It is reasonable to conceive of *cho rol*, a phrase corresponding to a powerful magical stake imbued with a formidable grip, as a powerful magic fence or mystical barrier.

How can *bse* be identified as a precious stone? The beginning of the story of PT 1040 describes a situation in which a princess travels to *Dmu's* country to be married. Among the gifts presented to *Dmu*, the family of the bridegroom, are items such as "[a] golden egg [and] eggs of *g.yu*,¹⁴ *bse*, and conch shell" (ll. 9–10: *gser gi sga mo g.yu bse dung gi sga*

centres', or those who receive a request for help. PT 239 recto describes the *skyibs* sheep in detail. See the translations in Stein 1970; Chu Junjie 1990; Ishikawa 2010; and Nishida 2019.

¹² See Stein 1959: 62, 64; Ishikawa 2000; Ishikawa 2001.

¹³ See Stein 1971: 495.

¹⁴ *G.yu* is a precious stone accorded the highest value in Tibetan society. In pronunciation, it is a word that is related to the Chinese word *yu* 玉, or 'jade'. However, present-day dictionaries allude to it as 'turquoise' and it appears to have been defined as lapis lazuli in ancient times. It seems that *g.yu* was deemed a particularly

mo). The funeral manual PT 1042 also lists “gold, *g.yu*, *bse*, and conch shell” (l. 10: *gser g.yu bse dung*) as offerings. Gold, *g.yu*, and conch shells are treasures favoured by Tibetans even today; it is thus possible that *bse* is also a similar type of treasure. While it may not necessarily denote a mineral, it could represent a valued item that signifies immortality like the conch shell. Scrutiny of ‘Gun tsun phyva’s above-mentioned attempts to capture the horses in PT 1134 (ll. 102–108) taking this point of view into account yields the following narrative:

After a while, at the end of the sky, at the edge of the heaven,¹⁵ there was a large rock of *g.yu* about the size of one yak. [Horses] drank water at the fountain of *g.yu* on the other side of the large rock of *g.yu* about the size of one yak. *Mang lag* of *bse* was laid on the shore of the fountain of *g.yu*, and some rock salt of treasure was scattered. When the elder brother *Dang mgyogs* and the younger brother *Yid mgyogs* were drinking water at the fountain of *g.yu* and licking some rock salt of treasure, they hit *mang lag* [of] *bse*, and they were tied up. After being tied up to the far parts [of their body],¹⁶ [they] took off the *mang lag* and fled scatteringly.

Perhaps ‘Gun tsun phyva had previously set *mang lag* of *bse* as traps. *Mang lag* appears to denote ‘many branches’. It is possible that the *bse* bears many branches that intertwine with the creatures they touch. The above-mentioned mystical barrier of *bse* could depend on such forces. Since there are branched parts, it is tempting to think that the *bse* that forms the mystical barrier is *bse shing*, or the ‘lacquer tree’. However, it is difficult to imagine that lacquer trees would appear in the context of the precious stones listed in the above quote. It is known that Tibetans have treasured immortal items, including marine products such as conch shells, since time immemorial. Such an object—immortal in value, loved by Tibetans, a marine product like the conch shell, but with branched parts—is easily conceivable. The “*mang lag* of *bse*” could very possibly denote coral skeletons. Corals do not in reality intertwine with objects they touch, but it would not be strange for them to appear as such mysterious articles in the mythical realm.

Tibet must have been an intersection of multiple cultures across Eurasia since its prehistoric times, because of its location at the crossroads of

high grade of the blue precious stone. See Laufer 1913: 20–21; Schafer 1963: 230–31, n. 88; Ishikawa 2008: 182, n. 6.

¹⁵ *Bram*, a variant of *'brum*, appears in this couplet, which is an example of the cliché described above.

¹⁶ Although *rgyang* is a noun denoting ‘distance’ in the current lexicon, I believe that it was used as an adverb in the case of this Dunhuang Tibetan text, and I interpret it as “to the far parts”.

Eurasia. According to E.H. Schafer, the Chinese people regarded coral skeletons as evocations of the jewel trees of Penglai 蓬萊 and Kunlun 崑崙 or of the dwelling places of *xian* 仙, the immortal hermits.¹⁷ The scene in the quote set out above is also akin to the *xian* world, and the Chinese visualization of corals seems strongly reflected. However, the belief of Tibetans in the immortality of corals is likely to be older than the influx of such an envisioning from China. The Himalayan region lay on the ocean floor in ancient times, and it is thus enriched with mountain corals. Perhaps Tibetans were long amazed at the fact that corals, precious marine products from foreign countries, could also be found as fossils in their area.

However, the word that signifies 'coral' in present-day dictionaries is *byi ru* or *byu ru*. *Byi* and *byu* both mean 'mouse' and *ru* denotes 'horn', thus the literal translation is "horn of the mouse". The term probably alluded to porcupine (*byi thur*) needles. These compound words could have evolved to become allusions to corals because of the apparent similarity between porcupine needles and coral skeletons. The OTDO database, encompassing the principal texts of ancient indigenous religions, does not document the use of *byi ru* or *byu ru* to mean coral, even though Tibetan people are known to treasure this marine material. It cannot be determined whether corals were originally called *bse* and later became termed *byi ru* or *byu ru*, or whether corals were called *bse* in the texts of ancient indigenous religions because of their belief in the material's immortality. However, it may be asserted that numerous instances exist in this genre in which *bse* means 'coral'.

2. Transliteration

(7) \$ /:/ yul dga' yul byang rnam na smra myi ste btsun po dang rma myi de btsun po gnyis shig mchisna / / 'o na smra myi ste (8) btshun po snying du yang rma myi de [btsun po] las sdug ma mchis / rma myi de [btsun po]'i snying du yang smra myi ste btsun po las sdug (9) ma mchiste myi sdug gnyis ni shag rag bgyis gchig shi ni gchig gis bdur bar bgyis gchig rlag ni (10) gchig gis btshal bar bgyisna / / 'o na re shig re shigna smra myi ste btshun po zhig byang 'brog snam stod du (11) g.yag shor 'brong 'gor du gshegsna / 'brong ba myi gshed gyis smra myi ste btshun po zhig myi rta gdum du bldugste (12) bkrongs kyis ma mchisno / / re shig [re? shig?] na rma myi de btsun po zhig ro bsdad ni zhag du ma byond (13) zhag bsdad ni slar slar ma byond / [slar bsdad] / ni lor ma byon lo bsdad ni snying du ma byon nas / rma myi de btshun (14) pho zhig byang ka snam brgyad du smra myi ste btshun po zhig [tsha]l du byon na smra myi ste btshun po ni 'brong bu myi (15) gshed

¹⁷ See Schafer 1963: 246.

kyis myi dri ru bkrongs kyispur ma mchis // dang [tsha]l nas thugs chad ro ru chad brang [gam?] gdingsu (16) gam thugs gnag chad kyis byams stang gi ngo mo ['tshald?] spun mchi 'khor gyis ni lta l[as?] [ldog?] dkar (17) [myi] gzigs du myi ngu na mchi ma khrag gis nguste / rma myi de'i chen pos / smra myi ste btshun [po'i? spur?] shig [snaM? ste?] (18) rma myi de'i btsun po'i mchid nas / smra myi ste btsun po 'od shid du [gtang?] ['tshal?] [brang?] du gzugs 'tshal gsung ste rgyal [thag?] brgyad ni (19) bas la bchas / se gru bzhi ni lung du brtsigs / gdan byang gdan khod mo ni gdan du bting / gram mching gram sngon mo ni phabsu bkhröM // 'o na do [ma] (20) ma mchis snying dags ma mchis nas // rma myi de'i btshun po zhig do ma tsholdu mchis snying dags tshol du mchisna / yul sre ga rte'u lung na (21) rta pha yab kyi mtshan na / gser rta'I gser ma ron dang ma g.yu rta'i g.yu ma ron gnyis rta gnyis 'tshos kyi bu rmang gnyis 'thams kyi (22) bu lo'i dusu rte'u bal bu mtshog rum zhig byung ste / rte'u ma pyi 'brang ba las / rma myi de'i btsun pos / mang zhags 'brenng gis bzung ste / skyes (23) mthu che ni mthu 'is drangs ste / bse'i cho rol du ni bcug / mthing gi dmu rtod kyis bsgrogs nas / pyugs spo mnye du ma / smra myi ste btsun po dang (24) myi ngan bu gnyis myi sdug gnyis ni shag rag bgyiste gchig shi ni gchig gIs bdur bar bgyis na / smra myi ste btshun po ni rman te ni grongs / (25) sdug ste ni rlag na / shid bgyir 'brang gzugsu / do ma ma mchis snying dags ma mchisna // pyugs smo ma khyod kyis chab gang lar bgyi 'tshal (26) yang ba rab du spogs 'tshal zhes mchi nas // yul dga' yul byang rnam[s]u [rte?] 'u bal bu khri de bzhud nas / mying dang btshan btags pa' (27) ser ngang 'ger btags nas 'tshal te mchis nas bres rta bres skyal mo skyil mor stsald nas / 'bras kyi lchang pa ni gsan bu ram nyug (28) cu ni blod nas / pum phum ni dar gyis bchings / dbu la bya ru khyung ru ni btsugs / rngog ma ni gsham du bkye / sogs shun sge'u gong ni / khabsu (29) bkab / mjug mani slungsu stsald te chab gang ni lar btab yang 'ba' [rab] du spagste / phan te bsod do //

3. Translation

There were two [people] called Smra myi ste btsun po and Rma myi de btsun po in Byang rnam, the land of joy. No one was more beautiful than Rma myi de btsun po in Smra myi ste btsun po's heart. No one was more beautiful than Smra myi ste btsun po in Rma myi de btsun po's heart. The two beautiful people made a friendship alliance.¹⁸ [According

¹⁸ I follow Stein in translating *shag rag* (l. 9) as “alliance of friendship” (*alliance d'amitié*), see Stein 1971: 494 and 501. According to him, it is a term frequently used to describe the relationship between dragons and human beings in the *Klu 'bum* Bon scripture. It may be a compound word formed from *shag po*, ‘ally’, and *rag pa*, a variant of *rogs pa*, ‘friend’. If the noun *rogs pa* was also used as a verb, its future tense and past tense are likely to be *rag*, considering the general tendency of the inflectional forms of Tibetan transitive verbs. See Yamaguchi 2002: 98–102.

to this accord] if one died, the other would hold a funeral; if one was devastated, the other would perform a ritual.

One day, Smra myi ste btsun po went to the northern wilderness Snam stod to hunt wild yaks. The wild yak, Myi gshed (meaning 'human slaughter'), turned Smra myi ste btsun po into nothingness by crushing and killing both the human and his horse. Rma myi de btsun po waited for a while, but [Smra myi ste btsun po] did not come back that day. [he] still did not return even after a day [had passed]. [Rma myi de btsun po waited longer],¹⁹ but [Smra myi ste btsun po] did not come back in a year. [he] did not appear on the day [of his disappearance] even after one year [had passed].²⁰ When Rma myi de btsun po went to the northern wilderness Snam bryad in search of Smra myi ste btsun po,²¹ [he found that] Smra myi ste btsun po had been killed by Myi gshed, the wild yak's son, before [he could] utter a word,²² [and that] there was nothing [that could be called] remains [of him]. After [searching]²³ for him, Rma myi de btsun po's heart was disturbed. [He was] disordered [in his mind] because of the corpse. [Rma myi de btsun po] was upset in [his] chest.²⁴ [He was] upset because of the scattered things (i.e. the pieces of the human and horse bodies). [He] was gloomy and disturbed, looking for the face of

¹⁹ Using an image of the manuscript on the Gallica website, these illegible letters are identifiable when compared with the images of "*slar*" and "*bsdad*" that appear in the same line. That is, they should be "*slar bsdad*".

²⁰ The word *snying* is used instead of *zhag*, 'day' in this sentence. So, this *snying* is equal to *nyi*, which does not mean 'heart' but 'day'. The examples of *snying* meaning 'day' are often found in indigenous funeral narratives in Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts.

²¹ In the OTDO text, the word translated by me as "search" is described as "[-]l" (l. 14), meaning that the first letter is illegible. The colour of the letters is light and hard to read, but when I scrutinize their images on Gallica, I can read "*tshal*", or 'search' in English, and this sense suits the context quite well.

²² In the OTDO, this phrase is "*myi dri nu*" (l. 15), but its image on Gallica can be read as "*myi dri ru*".

²³ In the OTDO text, this syllable is "[-]l" (l. 15), meaning that the first letter is illegible. Observing its image on Gallica, a small crevice is noted that makes it difficult to read, but as in note 21, I shall read "[*tsha*]" from its context.

²⁴ I translate "*brang gam*" (l. 15) as "upset in [his] chest", because *brang*, 'chest' and '*gam pa*, 'to threaten', are included in some dictionaries today. Jäschke's dictionary 1881: 94, col. 2 includes '*gem pa*, 'to kill', which can be considered to denote a verb with the same origin as '*gam pa*. Examples offered in the dictionary to elucidate the meaning of '*gem pa* include *klad pa* 'gems pa, 'to surprise'. Since *klad pa* means 'head', *klad pa* 'gems pa can be literally translated as "to kill head" and is similar to *brang gam*.

[his] beloved companion.²⁵ The brother was so tearful²⁶ that he could not see [it],²⁷ even though it was difficult to get [that beloved face] out of [his mind's] sight (?).²⁸ When the human cried, [his] tears flowed as blood, and Rma myi de btsun po²⁹ took the remains of Smra myi ste btsun po. And Rma myi de btsun po said, "[I] hope that Smra myi ste btsun po will be sent to the light-funeral. [I] will look for a body as [his] companion". Eight king-ropes were constructed at the border. The four angles of immortality were built in the valley.³⁰ The rugs, Byang gdan khod mo,³¹ were laid as rugs, and the stones, Mching gram sngon mo,³² were spread³³ as falling objects.

Well, there was no sacrificial horse; there was no favourite horse.³⁴ Rma myi de btsun po went to find a sacrificial horse. [He] went to look

²⁵ In the classical and modern Tibetan language, *stang* alone does not usually mean 'companionship'. However, *stangs dpyal*, 'couple', can be confirmed in present-day dictionaries, such as the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* 1985: 1100, col. 1.

²⁶ "Mchi 'khor" (l. 16) means "mchi ma'khor", or "tears overflow". For the interpretation of this phrase, we can refer to "dga' spro'i mchi ma 'khor ba", or "the tears of joy overflow" under the entry of *mchi ma* in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* 1985: 845, col. 2.

²⁷ It is "[mya?] gzig du" (l.17) in the text of OTDO, but I found an extremely faint trace of the vowel symbol -i on "mya" in the image on Gallica. I thus read "[mya?]" as "myi".

²⁸ It is "lta l[-] d[u?]g dkar" (l.16) in the OTDO text and it is difficult to decipher "l[-]" even when the actual manuscript image distributed by Gallica is inspected. However, it is possible that "l[-]" could be read as "las". I shall thus read "lta l[-] d[u?]g dkar" as "lta las ldog dkar".

²⁹ The OTDO text reads this phrase as "smra myi ste btsun [-] chen pos" (l. 17). When I checked the image on Gallica, the line "smra myi ste btsun po" was crossed out, and it was continued as "rma myi de'i chen pos". The spelling is a little different, but I am certain that it is Rma myi de btsun po. The text seems to be copied, not heard, because the mistake of substituting "de btsun pos" for "de'i chen pos" is probably due to the visual similarity between the two-character strings.

³⁰ I have already analyzed this cliché in indigenous funeral narratives in Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts in the first section.

³¹ In the narratives of this genre, ritual offerings and tools are often accorded proper names even if they are inanimate. This name means "comfortable northern rug".

³² In Jäschke's dictionary, 1881: 169, col. 2, *mching bu* or '*ching bu* is 'glass jewel' in English. And the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* regards it as a middle rank of light-weighting mottled jewels. If Mching gram sngon mo are blue, glassy, and not very valuable gems, they are probably blue jaspers.

³³ I regarded *bkhrom* as a variant of *bkram*, the past tense form of '*grem pa*).

³⁴ The text of OTDO is "do ma mchis snying dags ma mchis" (ll. 19–20). It is a couplet that repeats the same content, as usual. One syllable is omitted in the first half, as is evident from the fact that the first half has three syllables and the second half has four syllables. It would be "do [ma] ma mchis snying dags ma mchis" if the first syllable was supplemented. l. 19 ends with "do" and l. 20 begins with "ma mchis". Thus, the copyist probably intended to write "do ma" at the end of l. 19. The omission of the one syllable also suggests that this text is not the product of a listening transcription; it is, rather, a visual copy of the text. As in Stein 1971: 485, *do ma* and *snying bdag* are names for sacrificial animals.

for a favourite horse.

[In] the land of Sre ga rte'u lung,³⁵ [lived] a father of horse, *gser rta' i gser ma ron*,³⁶ and a mother [horse], *g.yu rta'i g.yu ma ron*.³⁷ In time, a baby made³⁸ by the two horses, a baby held by the two horses, a foal, *bal bu mtshog rum*,³⁹ was born. The foal followed behind his mother, but Rma myi de btsun po caught him with a rope with many loops. The power of the human was so strong that the horse was taken away and was placed in a mystical barrier of coral and tied with the *dmu*-stake of azurite.⁴⁰ [Rma myi de btsun po] said "Noble domestic animal, close relative,⁴¹ the two of [us], Smra myi ste btsun po and humble me, the two [of us] beautiful [friends], made a friendship alliance: if one died, the other would hold a funeral. Smra myi ste btsun po was hurt and died. [We agreed that] if one was destroyed despite being beautiful, the other would perform a ritual. There is no sacrificial horse [for the funeral]. There is no favourite horse [for it]. Therefore, noble domestic animal,⁴² I ask you to exercise [your] courage on the passes.⁴³ I ask you to make [your] jump with lightness over the shallows".⁴⁴ In Byang rnam, the land of joy, the foal *bal bu khri de* departed.⁴⁵ [Rma myi de btsun po] gave [the foal] the name "Ser ngang 'ger".⁴⁶ As for [his] tub, full mangers were given [to

³⁵ The English equivalent of *sre* is 'mottled'. *Ga* can be considered a corruption of the abbreviation of *kha dog*, 'colour'. Since the meaning of *rte'u* is 'foal', and *lung* is 'valley', it seems that Sre ga rte'u lung would mean "valley of the mottled foal".

³⁶ The term could signify "gold of the golden horse". The syllable *ron* that appears at the end of this name is often used as the last syllable of horse names in Dunhuang manuscripts. It may be a word related to *rod*, or 'looks', in contemporary dictionaries, but represents an equivalent of the Japanese suffix *maru* 丸 for names of human child, dogs, horses, etc.

³⁷ This could mean "g.yu of the g.yu horse", as in the previous note. See note 14 for *g.yu*.

³⁸ *tshos* (l. 21) is the past tense form of *tsho ba*, which is considered by Stein to belong to a group of verbs meaning "create", "procreate", "be", "become", "live", "nurture", and "heal", see Stein 1973. In this instance, it means "procreate".

³⁹ Considering that *bal bu* is likely equal to *snam bu*, textile made from wool, and *mtshog* can be a variant of *mtshogs*, or 'similar', and *rum* signifies 'carpet', this term perhaps means "carpet similar to wool fabric".

⁴⁰ This couplet is discussed in the first section.

⁴¹ *Spo mnye du ma* (l. 23) is what is referred to as *spo ma nye du* in other funeral texts, and this term is used especially when talking to sacrificial animals. See Stein 1971: 485, n. 14.

⁴² *Smo ma* (l. 25) could be a variant of *spo ma*. See the previous note.

⁴³ *Chab gang* (l. 25) is an honorific form of *chu gang*, 'courage', and is one of the terms indicating the abilities of sacrificial animals.

⁴⁴ *Yang ba* (l. 26), 'lightness', like the *chab gang* in the previous note, is a word that indicates the ability of a sacrificial animal.

⁴⁵ The second half of the foal's name has been replaced with *khri de*.

⁴⁶ The OTDO text states "*ser ngang 'ger btags nas*" (l. 27). Normally, the verb *btags*, or 'named', requires a particle at end of its complement. However, here *-r* at the end of the complement 'ger does not seem to be a particle. If *ser*, *ngang* and 'ger are

him],⁴⁷ and [the human and the horse] listened to the weeping willows of rice,⁴⁸ and molasses⁴⁹ were poured. The mane on the top of [his] head⁵⁰ was tied with silk, and the horns of the bird, the horns of the phoenix, were attached to [his] head,⁵¹ and the mane on [his] neck was combed down. A fine *Sogs-shun*-saddle (?) covered [the horse] like a mansion, and [his] tail was made like the wind.

[His] courage was exercised on the passes. [His] light-footed jumps were performed over the shallows.⁵² It is profitable and auspicious.

4. *The Twin Relationship between Smra myi ste btsun po and Rma myi de btsun po*

The two individuals are depicted as lovers or as a couple. Since the role of *Smra myi ste btsun po* performed the role of hunting and the role of *Rma myi de btsun po* is depicted as being homebound, the former seems like a husband and the latter is akin to a wife.

However, their remarkably similar names are not suited to the construal of such a relationship. *Smra myi ste btsun po*, “Human, that is, pure person” and *Rma myi de btsun po*, “The human, pure person”,

abbreviations of *ser po*, ‘yellow’, *ngang pa*, ‘light-bay horse’ and *ger ma*, ‘red copper’ respectively, *ser ngang ger* could be an abbreviation of *ser po’i ngang ba ger ma*, “yellowish light-bay horse with red copper colour”.

⁴⁷ *skyal mo skyil mor* (l. 27) seems to be an adverb made by transforming and repeating a verb *skyil ba*, ‘retain’. Such adverbs are illustrated in Yamaguchi 2002: 71–72.

⁴⁸ The OTDO text states “*bras kyi lcang pa ni gsan ca*” (l. 27). However, an observation of the image on Gallica ultimately yields the sense that a writing error at the end was erased with a vertical strikethrough. Thus, *ca* at the end should be erased in this sentence. I think that this sentence signifies that there were plenty of ears of weeping rice grass in mangers, and the human and the horse heard them blowing in the wind and making noise.

⁴⁹ *Bu ram nyug cu* (ll. 27–28) is translated literally as “raw sugar-coating liquid”. Tibet is not a sugar-producing region, but sugarcane is a special product in the neighbouring Yunnan and in areas south of the Himalayas. It thus seems that the statement envisions molasses brought in from those areas.

⁵⁰ *Pum phum* (l. 28) may be a variant of *phum phum*, the meanings of which are “posterior” and “anus” in Jäschke’s dictionary 1881: 344, col. 1. However, after the description that *phum phum* was tied with silk, our text shifts to the description of attaching horns, and then the styling of the mane is described, so the meaning listed in the Tibetan-Tibetan dictionary, *Dag yig gsar bsgrigs* 1979: 489, col. 2. “The name of the long hair that hangs down from the top of the horse’s head” (*rta’i thod par mar’phyung pa’i spu ring po’i ming*) would be more appropriate than Jäschke’s in this context.

⁵¹ The OTDO text states “*dbul*” (l. 28). However, it is highly possible that a dot was forgotten between the letter *ba* and the letter *la*. If we read it as “*dbu la*”, it makes sense.

⁵² The OTDO text states “[*bab?*]” (l. 29). However, this term is probably *rab*, ‘shallow’, because it is a word in the fixed phrase we saw earlier.

approximate the same name in both sound and meaning.⁵³ Uttered in the current Lhasa dialect, the two names sound the same. S. van Schaik studied transcription errors in Dunhuang Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts, and found that the Tibetan of the Dunhuang manuscripts of the 10th century had already tended toward the modern pronunciation.⁵⁴ This finding indicates that the two names may have been homophones even at the time of the telling of this narrative. The suffixes at the ends of both their names are *po*. In the case of a person's name, the suffix is usually *po* for men and *mo* for women. For example, *btsun mo* generally means 'queen'. Thus, the narrative probably involves the two men.

In fact, when the text is subjected to close scrutiny, both protagonists appear to be men. Rma myi de btsun po is described as a *spun*, or 'brother' (l. 16) when Rma myi de btsun po looks for Smra myi ste btsun po's face at the scene where the latter was killed. Rma myi de btsun po, who explains their situation to the sacrificial foal, also alludes to *bu gnyis*, or "two children" (l. 24), suggesting that they are twins, a fact that would also explain their similar names.

I would now like to reflect on their place of residence, Byang rnam, the land of joy (*dga' yul*). In indigenous funeral narratives, the land of joy (*dga' yul*) usually denotes the paradise of the dead. In this case, however, it is clearly a land of the living and suggests an earthly paradise. Since there are only two human characters who appear in this narrative, it may be a paradise inhabited by only two people. While *byang* is a noun meaning 'north', it is also a past form of the verb '*byang ba*, 'to clean', and *rnams* is a plural suffix. Thus, Byang rnam can mean "clean people" and serve as a reminder of the innocent world of a primordial era. The fact that the paradise of the dead is given the same name in other indigenous funeral narratives may also imply that the paradise of the dead is a place where the ancestors lived, a primordial world.

This myth may suggest that the world emerged when the twins first appeared in the primordial and that the funeral and land of the dead ancestors were born from the death of one of the twins. I can present one analogy from Japanese mythology.⁵⁵

To summarize, two twin gods, Izanagi and Izanami, appeared when the world was created. Many gods were born from their sexual procreation, but Izanami was burned to death when the god of fire was born. Izanami was buried, but Izanagi went to the afterlife to meet her. As soon as Izanagi saw Izanami's rotting body, he fled back to this world and blocked the way to the other world with a huge rock, so that no

⁵³ For a discussion of the fact that *smra* and *rma* both mean 'human', see Stein 1971: 488–89, n. 26.

⁵⁴ See van Schaik 2007.

⁵⁵ See *Nihon shoki*, jō: 88–111.

one could go back and forth between this world and the next.

Although the types of accidents are quite different, both myths have the appearance of twins in the creation and the sudden death of one of them in common. This eventuality leads to the first burial and the beginning of the other world. It is likely that many such analogies can be collected, since twin gods can be found in many myths around the world. However, “Smra myi ste btsun po and Rma myi de btsun po” are unique because these twins are not male and female siblings, but brothers. When the first persons or ancestors appear in myths, it is usually to show that their descendants multiplied from that union as with Izanagi and Izanami. In the present context, the presentation of male couples must render procreation impossible.

This narrative is the only extant account of the two protagonists, and there is not enough material to achieve a more comprehensive knowledge of them. However, it is worth recognizing this text as an unusual case of the myth of the first human beings in the primordial world, a set of twins who inhabited a joyous, paradise-like earthly realm.

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