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**The Three-headed Black Man: Analysis of a Ritual Text from the
Gto Collection (*Gto 'bum*)**

**Trojhlavý černý muž: analýza rituálního textu ze Sbírký rituálů
gto (*Gto 'bum*)**

2024

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Declaration:

I declare that I have completed this thesis independently, that I have properly cited all used sources and literature, and that the work has not been used within another higher education program or for obtaining another or the same degree.

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V Praze 1.8.2024

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Abstract

The thesis presents an analysis of the ritual text titled *Gto nag mgo gsum gyi cho ga bzhugs so* – “*The Black Gto of the Three-Headed One*” – from the *Gto 'bum* collection of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan religious traditions typically differentiate between Buddhist rituals, referred to as *cho ga*, and rituals associated with older, non-Buddhist traditions, known as *gto* rituals. *Gto* are rituals intended to liberate victims from hostile forces and are typically used to ward off harm or illnesses caused by demonic beings. The thesis explores the ritual's structure, narrative, and symbolic elements, focusing on the offering practices and the central figure of the three-headed demon effigy, which has been subdued by the Bodhisattva Manjushri to avert malevolent forces and protect the ritual's patron. Through a comparative approach, the thesis also examines a similar ritual from the Bon tradition, highlighting both commonalities and differences in practice. The examination of spirits and demons within the ritual, combined with the inclusion of Tibetan astrological and divinatory elements, characterizes the ritual's nature and situates it within the diverse and intricate landscape of Tibetan ritual practices. The thesis underscores the importance of rituals in Tibetan culture as mechanisms for maintaining social and spiritual balance and addressing various misfortunes encountered in life. The work includes a critical translation of the original Tibetan text, offering insights into the challenges and specific linguistic nuances of translating a Tibetan ritual text.

Keywords

Tibetan ritual, *gto* ritual, Nyingma, *nag po mgo gsum*, Three-headed black man

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce představuje analýzu rituálního textu s názvem *Gto nag mgo gsum gyi cho ga bzhugs so*, ze sbírky rituálů *Gto 'bum* tibetské buddhistické tradice Nyingma. Tibetské náboženské tradice rozlišují buddhistické rituály *cho ga* a rituály *gto*, které se vztahují k starším nebuddhistickým tradicím. *Gto* jsou rituály určené k osvobození oběti od nepřátelských sil a obvykle se používají k odvrácení újmy či nemocí způsobených démonickými bytostmi. Práce zkoumá strukturu rituálu, narativ a symbolické prvky, přičemž se zaměřuje na obětní praktiky a na ústřední postavu tříhlavé podobizny démona, která byla pokořena bódhisattvou Mandžušrím, aby odvrátil neštěstí způsobené démonickými silami a ochránil patrona rituálu. Prostřednictvím komparativního přístupu práce rovněž zkoumá podobný rituál z tradice Bon, přičemž poukazuje na společné rysy i rozdíly v praxi. Zkoumání božstev a démonů v rámci rituálu v kombinaci se začleněním tibetských astrologických a věšteckých prvků, charakterizuje a zasazuje rituál do rozmanitého a složitého prostředí tibetských rituálních praktik. Práce také podtrhuje význam rituálů v tibetské kultuře jako důležitého společenského i náboženského mechanismu. Práce obsahuje kritický překlad původního tibetského textu, který nabízí vhled do výzev a specifických jazykových nuancí při překladu tibetského rituálního textu.

Klíčová slova

tibetský rituál, *gto* rituál, Nyingma, *nag po mgo gsum*, Trojhlavý černý muž

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Notes on transliteration and transcription

The method of transliteration utilized throughout this thesis is the transliteration system developed by Turell Wylie – *A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription* (Wylie 1959). In some cases, The Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL)’s Extended Wylie Transliteration Scheme¹ is used. Tibetan transliterated terms are written in italics. Words absent in the original Tibetan text are inserted with square brackets for clarity of translation. Proper names in the ritual are transliterated according to the standard mentioned above with a capitalized first letter. Tibetan terms are always written in accordance with the stated transliteration norm.

¹ “Teaching THDL Extended Wylie,” The Tibetan and Himalayan Library, accessed July 25, 2024, <https://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/teachingewts.pdf>.

Introductory notes

Rituals have long been a fascinating significant cultural phenomenon for scholars. Across various civilizations, rituals serve as a window into the social, spiritual, and psychological frameworks that underpin human societies. In the context of Tibetan culture, rituals occupy an especially prominent place, weaving through the fabric of daily life, religious practices, and statecraft.

Despite the richness of this aspect of Tibetan culture, the study of Tibetan rituals has historically been underrepresented in academic discourse, often overshadowed by a focus on philosophical doctrines and textual analysis within Buddhist studies. However, this trend has changed in recent years, with an increasing number of scholars now recognizing the importance of ritual practices and dedicating their research to exploring these vital aspects of Tibetan culture.

This thesis is structured to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ritual – *The black gto of the Three-headed one* – beginning with an exploration of the broader context of the phenomena of rituals and then focusing on the specific context of Tibetan rituals, further narrowing it down to the type of rituals that this ritual text from the *Gto 'bum* collection belongs to. Following this contextual foundation, the thesis examines the various spirit and demon beings within the Tibetan pantheon, offering insights into their roles and significance within but also beyond the framework of the analyzed ritual text. The thesis then proceeds to an exploration of the ritual's structure, narrative, and symbolic elements, with particular attention to the offering practices and the use of astrological and divinatory elements.

A crucial aspect of the thesis is the translation of the original Tibetan ritual text, a task that necessitated continual reference to other sources of such practices and further theoretical information, as not all ritual practices and knowledge are explicitly revealed in the scriptures.

The narrative of the ritual unfolds as a dialogue between the three-headed demon and the Bodhisattva Manjushri, who commands the demon to reverse various forms of misfortune and to protect the ritual's patron. This dialogue is rich in symbolic language drawing on the deep well of Tibetan astrological and divinatory traditions. The ritual's structure, with its invocation of spirits, use of effigies, and recitation of mythical narratives, exemplifies the characteristic features of Tibetan ritual practices of this kind.

The work also includes a comparative analysis with similar rituals from the Bon tradition, highlighting both the shared elements and distinctive features of these practices. Through this

comparative lens, the thesis seeks to illuminate the nuances and variations within Tibetan ritual practices, contributing to a broader understanding of the cultural and religious significance of these rituals. The specific ritual analyzed in this thesis involves the creation and manipulation of an effigy representing a three-headed demon, born from an inauspicious union of trigrams, which is subsequently subdued and repurposed as a protective force.

Rituals: The Fluid Boundaries of Tradition and Theory

If there is one thing I take away from diving into the vast literature written on the theory of rituals, it is that the definitions seem endless and that a perfect one does not exist. This chapter will clearly not attempt to find one either, but it will try to bring us closer to the information that is available and regarded as reliable. Even though for a long time Tibet had been regarded as a secluded land, the religious and cultural practices of their civilization are not exempt from the influence of human nature and that is an undeniable link that binds all rituals.

As I have mentioned, there is not one single definition of rituals that could be generally used in all instances. But in case someone wants to achieve that degree of preciseness there are certain steps to be taken. Typically, to establish any kind of definition or generalization on a subject matter, it should have been studied in great detail, with exact methodology, encompassing the matter from many angles and sources of different origins – preferably of various languages, ideally having witnessed the actual event in person now or what is even better also some hundreds of years ago for comparison. As this task is beyond the usual scope of a single scholar, it might not be a terrible thing that modern scientific research has given us guidance in methodology and supported a multidisciplinary approach which is much needed when studying such a vast subject. So, what is a ritual? Why does it exist and what are its objectives and purposes? Are we part of them or are they part of us? These are only a few of the questions that need to be asked when one tries to define them.

According to Ronald L. Grimes, “Method, case, and theory are parts of a dynamic whole. Interacting, they constitute research. When we examine a case with an eye to the practices that produced it, we have begun to extract its method. When we employ a method, a theory is implied. When we put a theory to work on a case, a method is required. A method determines how rituals are or ought to be studied. Whereas a case tracks a specific ritual as practiced, a theory speaks of ritual in general – its forms, elements, and dynamics.” (Grimes 2014, 11) In popular language, a theory is largely perceived as something abstract that by definition does not always work. In scientific jargon it is a completely different story. A theory suggests concepts and procedures that are backed by tests, explanations, predictions, and public verification. All of this sounds very straightforward and categorical, but when considering that the subject is a ritual, it could raise an eyebrow or two. Even more so in the Tibetan cultural world, as traditions, customs, and religion can vary from community to community.

Attempts at developing a universal theory of ritual were challenged by Catherine Bell, who argued that the concept of ritual is a versatile sociocultural medium that intertwines tradition, exigency, and self-expression. Rituals are seen as crucial in establishing relationships between people and higher powers, with their effectiveness rooted in their ability to embody assumptions about one's place in a larger order. As ritual practices depend on particular social contexts and the arrangement of cultural knowledge, it is not possible to apply a uniform, universal set of descriptors or rules to its phenomena (Catherine Bell 2009, 15–16). Grimes, in a rather jesting tone, which I quite approve of, discusses the difficulties and debates surrounding the definition of rituals. He argues that while definitions can be important in certain contexts, they are often unnecessary in everyday life. He also critiques the tendency of scholars to either expand the term “ritual” to include almost any and all human activities or dismiss it as a mere academic construct. He suggests that scholars should be mindful of the history and function of the term, using it thoughtfully without resorting to overly simplistic or overly inclusive definitions (Grimes 2014, 186–88). Nevertheless, in a truly scholarly approach, Grimes gives us a neat little set of definitions constructed by other well-regarded academics, who have endeavored in the waters of ritual studies. Out of those I selected two to enrich this chapter of vague definitions. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, prominent in the field of religious studies assert that “religious rituals ... are those religious actions whose structural descriptions include a logical object and appeal to a culturally postulated superhuman agent's action somewhere within their overall structural description” (Lawson, McCauley 1990, as quoted in Grimes 2014, 189). Victor Turner, a distinguished anthropologist known for his work on symbols and rituals, considered “the term ritual to be more fittingly applied to forms of religious behavior associated with social transitions, while the term ‘ceremony’ has a closer bearing on religious behavior associated with social states, where politico-legal institutions also have greater importance; ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory” (Witter Turner 1967 as quoted in Grimes 2014, 189). Both these definitions seem to confirm the place of ritual practices in a religious setting, but it must be added that a ritual does not only have to be seen in such light. Considering a more “everyday” concept, a handshake could be regarded as a ritual too. What is absolutely clear so far, is that there is not one version of the right definition. There are several theories one could pick and choose from to aid their mission of ritual studies. All these theories are influenced by their creators, the place and time in history they were written in and that is exactly how one should view them – created by someone with a certain type of knowledge for a certain type of purpose.

The idea of a ritual has often been used to explain the roots of religions and their motivations or why humans have constructed these elaborate systems, which as we know has been an interest of Western scholars for a long time now. Rituals are a door to much more than religion. Ritual is an entrance into society, an opening into the way of thinking of people who were alive long before us. Ritual is a testament to beliefs, relationships, communities, and myths created and carried on by the people. It reflects the psyche of the past, present, and future as generations choose to continue or terminate their traditions. Some questions then naturally arise when thinking about rituals. What is their purpose in society and why do humans keep on doing them or why do they cease to practice? Do they change over time and adapt to current socio-cultural structures?

To conclude this short introduction, Bell's statement rings true when associating the term ritual with the one that was translated in this thesis. In unison with her statement, one could agree that, as a practice, rituals are not uniform and can differ widely depending on the context. They involve ritualization, a unique way of acting that serves specific purposes and to understand rituals, one must explore how different communities ritualize, what sets these actions apart from others, and when these rituals are effective (Catherine Bell 2009, 201).

Tibetan Ritual Practices: Origins, Contexts and Categorizations

Not very surprisingly, while reading up on Tibetan rituals I encountered two significant challenges: a lack of clear categorization and the presence of numerous, often conflicting definitions of how these rituals can be interpreted and organized.

However, it is hard to imagine an introduction more fitting to the topic of Tibetan rituals than the one written by José Ignacio Cabezón in *Tibetan ritual* – a title he edited a little over a decade ago now. What comes through his words as most striking is the undeniable evidence of rituals being omnipresent in the Tibetan cultural world. Ritual is not significant solely where one would expect it to be – if one thinks of ritual as a religious thing. It naturally traverses through all aspects of life. It is not exclusively present in places denoted by religion, but it is also abounding in the day-to-day life of lay people. Cabezón’s preface charmingly depicts how rituals permeate every aspect of Tibetan life. Whether it is the sound of a gong calling monks to prayer or the high-pitched clanging of a ritual bell, these practices are everywhere. He notes that even outside the monastery, it is common to hear recitations like *kha ’don* being uttered by people in everyday life. The scent of burning juniper incense, used both for household purification and as an offering to the gods, frequently fills the air. Ritual practices extend well beyond the confines of the monastery: monks chant mantras while seeking alms, discarded “thread-crosses” from ritual exorcisms lie abandoned, and remnants of tormas (Tib. *gtor ma*) from tantric ceremonies can often be found scattered around. It is not unusual to see elderly people quietly chanting mantras for the Dalai Lama’s long life, or others carrying rosaries, silently reciting their prayers (Cabezón 2010, 1–3).

Rituals deeply pervade the Tibetan cultural landscape, with common practices shared across the Tibetan world and many more specific to local traditions. As Cabezón nicely puts it: “All this is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg, for in addition to these largely pan-Tibetan ceremonial traditions, there are many local festivals with their own specific rites that may include everything from ritual dances to oracular displays” (Cabezón 2010, 3). This vibrant description distinctly depicts how rituals are an essential part of Tibetan reality. Hence, it is no surprise that what the Tibetan autochthonous ritual often revolves around is the everyday life of the common people. According to Karmay, it functions to create “social cohesion and moral obligation” among the members of the community. It also strengthens communal organization that centers around the cult of the local spirits connected with water, soil, rocks, and mountains (Karmay 2010, 54).

As well as rituals permeated monasteries and the day-to-day lives of people, they historically played a significant role in consolidating power as well. Notably under the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Tibetan statecraft was exceptionally intricate. The use of “war magic” and related rituals was not just a reflection of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s personal beliefs but a deliberate and strategic effort to consolidate political power. The Ganden Phodrang’s success in establishing long-term authority over Tibet was closely linked to its ability to wield cultural and religious symbols, particularly through the use of war magic as a form of propaganda (FitzHerbert 2018, 50–51).

While at first Buddhist studies used to overlook ritual as a worthy case of study, these tendencies have luckily changed dramatically in the past few decades. The earlier generations of scholars used to focus on the doctrines and the philosophy that the texts contained and less on ritual and other particularities of Buddhism. Fortunately, this attitude changed largely and today we have a rich number of publications and studies on various ritual topics which include more of what is lived in real life by the practicing Buddhists.²

In Tibet, a wide array of ritual practices has developed through the interconnection and merging of Buddhist and native Tibetan deities, spirits, and concepts. While the exchange of influences between these traditions is mutual, Buddhist ideas are the ones more distinctly visible, particularly due to the significant role that monks played in producing texts after the 11th century. This has made it difficult to clearly identify indigenous Tibetan beliefs within the Buddhist framework (Berounský 2023b, 213). A contribution to the indigenization of Indian Tantric Buddhism within Tibetan culture, focusing on how early Tibetan Buddhists adapted these practices through the integration of local myths and rituals was published by Cantwell and Mayer. Through analyzing manuscripts from Dunhuang they conclude that Tibetan religious practices were transformed by incorporating local deities and figures into Buddhist rituals. This indigenization process was central to the formation of the Nyingma tradition, with Padmasambhava playing a key role in converting indigenous deities into protectors of Buddhism (Cantwell and Mayer 2011, 289–312).

While the boundary between “indigenous” and “Buddhist” rituals may be somewhat blurry, it is generally accepted that Tibetan rituals fall into two main categories: those originating from

² For publications on Tibetan rituals see the title currently cited from: Cabezón, 2010 which includes contributions by many authors; or numerous works from Ramble, 2014, 2015 etc.; a title edited by Bufetrille, 2012; or Berounský, 2020, 2022, 2023a, 2023b, etc.

the Indian Buddhist tradition and those likely rooted in indigenous Tibetan practices. (Karmay 2010, 54). *Gto* rituals, which were once among the less widely studied categories of rituals in the Tibetan context would be regarded as the latter.³

There are notable differences that distinguish *gto* rituals from the “Buddhist” rituals, referred to by the Tibetan term *cho ga*, although both share elements of sympathetic magic.

Sympathetic magic refers to the belief that one can influence a person, event, or situation through an object or ritual that has a symbolic relationship with the target or corresponds with the spiritual entities or forces being addressed (FitzHerbert 2018, 72).

Cho ga typically refer to soteriological practices primarily focused on achieving enlightenment and are usually associated with elite, scholastic, male-monastic institutions (practices like empowerments and *sadhanas*). In contrast, pragmatic rituals are centered on addressing immediate, worldly concerns (Cabezón 2010, 18–22).

Gto rituals are of pragmatic nature and in the context of Tibetan Buddhism and Bonpo practices usually somehow connected to divination and astrological practices. *Cho ga* and *gto* are considered two distinct categories within the Tibetan ritual tradition.

Most scholars generally agree on regarding *gto* as ritual activities that are intended to eradicate negative forces and that usually they are applied to fend off harm or disease caused by various kinds of demons and spirits. However, there are a few nuances to the term *gto*. According to Lin, “Dieter Schuh relates *gto* to element divination (*'byung rtsis*)”, Giuseppe Tucci largely associates *gto* with exorcism and relying on the powers of wrathful deities which Namkhai Norbu agrees with substantially (Lin 2005, 107–25).

Rituals that *gto* share a common similarity in characteristics include the broad spectrum of practices such as *mdos*, *bla bslu*, *gtor rgyag*, or *glud gtor* – they are designed to expel or cleanse a negative force, often a spirit. The complexity of these practices varies widely, from a simple act like a single clap to elaborate sequences of ritual actions such as invocation, offering, visualization, and purification. These rituals can last anywhere from a few days to several months (Barnett 2012, 276).

³ For research on *gto* rituals see publications by Marcel Lalou 1958; Stein 1971; John Bellezza 2013 etc.

Gto rituals are often associated with the Bon tradition, however, they can also be found in other Buddhist traditions across Tibet. The ritual that is translated as part of this work belongs to a collection associated with the Nyingma sect. As previously stated, *gto* rituals focus on curing illnesses and addressing broader natural afflictions by appeasing the supernatural forces identified as the cause. The source of someone's misfortunes is typically identified through methods of divination. So, when negative outcomes are revealed through the use of element divination, a *gto* ritual may be recommended in severe cases as a remedy to calm or mislead the malevolent spirits causing the harm (Dagthon 1995, 11).

Divination is an integral part of certain Tibetan rituals. In Tibetan culture, people have historically turned to diviners, astrologers, or oracles for guidance, a practice as socially accepted as consulting a healer. This tradition, accessible to all social classes, has persisted for centuries and continues today, with only State Oracles reserved for government use (Maurer, Rossi, and Scheuermann 2019, vii). Astrology (divination) and medicine have always been interconnected in Tibet, both in theory and practice, as well as within institutional frameworks. Traditionally, these disciplines have been taught together in medical colleges, and even today, the study of astrology is a mandatory part of the curriculum for Tibetan doctors. Notably, the two primary Tibetan medical institutions located in Lhasa (Tibet) and Dharamsala (India) are named *Sman rtsis khang*, which translates to “Institute of Medicine and Astrology,” clearly indicating the connection between these two fields (Yoeli-Tlalim 2018, 430).

The variety of divination techniques in Tibetan culture that aim to breach the boundary between the ordinary world and a realm of hidden knowledge is quite rich. These techniques often involve elements of chance, such as using dice, sticks, pebbles, or knotted strings, which are seen as mediums through which divine or impersonal forces convey messages. The outcomes can be straightforward, like a yes or no answer, or complex, requiring interpretation through prior knowledge or manuals (Ramble 2019, 118). Gaining clarity about one’s future is not the sole objective of practicing divination. Divination serves another purpose – when used with the intention of selflessly helping others, it supports and deepens one’s journey on the Bodhisattva’s path (Mipham, Goldberg, and Dakpa 1990, 7–8). As will be apparent in the later chapter of this work, the symbolism of divination is heavily present in the translated ritual as well.

Another key aspect of the *gto* rituals is the recitation of an extensive narrative that tells the myth of the first successful performance of the ritual – as is also the case of the ritual translated in

this thesis. The effectiveness of the current ritual is ensured by this evocation of the original event because the present act is viewed as a reenactment of that first archetypal moment. This mythical reenactment is a crucial part, ensuring that the ritual will yield success. The first stage of the mythical narrative is referred to as *smrang*, it involves the recitation of a mythical tale, while the second, *yas*, involves making required ritual offerings, including a *glud* or ransom provided by the afflicted person (Karmay 1998, 246). As much as the mythical recitation is a fundamental part of *gto* rituals, Dotson states that it is not in fact unique to them as it is present in all sorts of Tibetan rituals (Dotson 2008, 43). However, the subject of translation – *The black gto of the Three-headed one* – incorporates the mythical narrative of the first ritual conducted as well.

The spirits and demons of *The black gto of the Three-headed one*

The ritual text titled *The black gto of the Three-headed one* contains numerous mentions of several harmful spirits and demons that the ritual practitioner is trying to divert from the sponsor of the rite. The general idea is that each category of spirits or demons is associated with a different form of misfortune, but their “agendas” seem to overlap from time to time. These blurry lines between categories of various spirits and demons seem to be the representation of a fluid categorization depending on contextual knowledge.

In his publication on Tibetan demonology, Bell writes that a common theme in interactions with Tibetan spirits is their generally unpredictable and violent nature. They are often held responsible for illnesses, seen as bringers of misfortune or karmic retribution, and can even cause death through acts of vengeance or by stealing a person’s soul. While anyone can be a target of such violence, it can also be subdued, controlled, or redirected by ritual specialists. Identifying and categorizing them in relation to each other despite numerous efforts still leaves some questions. To standardize their spirit taxonomies, such efforts must reflect the localized nature of religious beliefs and practices in Tibetan communities (Christopher Bell 2020, 1–3).

Among the categories of spirits and demons mentioned in the ritual are *bdud*, *dmu*, *'dre*, *btsan*, *sa bdag*, *klu* and *gza'*. I shall refer to them as spirits or demons interchangeably. The word demon seems to be fitting due to their malevolent nature, but the term spirit might better describe the somewhat intangible nature of these creatures. The following is a basic description of these beings. Most of these types of spirits and demons are associated with a certain type of color.

The *bdud* spirits as malevolent entities in Tibetan spiritual practice that actively obstruct rituals and efforts toward enlightenment. These spirits are typically depicted as black and are believed to have opposed Buddhist teachings in their former lives. They are closely associated with the Sanskrit term *Māra*, the deity symbolizing *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and death) who tried unsuccessfully to prevent the Buddha Śākyamuni from achieving enlightenment. In Tibetan literature, the term *bdud* is one of the closest equivalents to the concept of “demons,” alongside *gdon* and *'dre* (Christopher Bell 2020, 12). Certain types of *bdud* demons are believed to be the cause of holding back a person’s spirit in order to torture them while their life was supposed to be already over. There is a specific ritual known as *Chags gsum gtang ba*, which is designed to release a person from their influence (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 85–86).

The *dmu* spirits are rather mysterious and obscure, but they are regarded as ancient deities in Tibetan tradition. They are known for their extremely fierce and harmful nature, often being associated with causing dropsy and drought. They are also linked to one of the earliest clans in Tibetan history (Christopher Bell 2020, 14). *Dmu* are associated with the color brown or purple (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 299) and they are divided into two main groups, the *dmu chen* and *dmu phran*, the “great” and the “minor” *dmu* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 281).

The term *'dre* refers to a relatively common category of demonic spirits, which includes several subtypes. As Géza Bethlenfalvy explains, these malevolent *'dre* demons are divided into five groups: *za 'dre*, who cause food-related problems; *god 'dre*, responsible for various types of loss and bad luck; *gshed 'dre*, who act as executioners tormenting beings in Buddhist hells; *chu'dre*, who bring about water-related illnesses; and *gson'dre*, who are associated with material loss (Bethlenfalvy 2003, 28 as quoted in Bell 2020, 11-12).

Btsan spirits, similar to *rgyal po*, derive their name from the term “king” or “emperor,” reflecting their origins in the imperial era. They are indigenous Tibetan deities characterized by their warlike and wrathful nature, typically depicted in red. It is generally believed that these spirits are the restless entities of former monks who renounced their Buddhist vows. In his doctoral dissertation, Todd Gibson argues that these spirits represent a deification of the Tibetan imperial lineage, linking their fierce attributes to the authority and power of Tibet’s historical rulers (Christopher Bell 2020, 16).

The spirits called *gza'* are seen as representations of the planets, and they are connected to the Sanskrit term “graha.” A number of these deities have origins in Indian astrology, with Rāhula being the most prominent among them. As astrological calculations are a crucial part of various rituals, especially those related to the consecration of sites and important life events like births and weddings it is necessary to honor and sometimes appease these planetary deities during such occasions (Christopher Bell 2020, 16).

Another type of spirits mentioned in the ritual are the *sa bdag* spirits. The *sa bdag* are “a class of beings closely linked with the astrological influences of the *sme ba*, *spar kha* and lords of the earth.”⁴ The *sme ba dgu*, a diagram consisting of nine squares commonly used in Tibetan astrology and divination, is thought to represent the dwelling of nine *sa bdag* who govern different aspects of these fields (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 294).

⁴ <https://www.thlib.org/reference/dictionaries/tibetan-dictionary/translate.php> Accessed August 13, 2024.

Sa bdag are described as “earth lord” spirits within the Sino-Tibetan *'byung rtsis* (elemental divination) systems. They hold a vital role in chronomancy, which focuses on the prediction and interpretation of time-related events. The concept of *sa bdag* primarily originates from Chinese traditions, though it incorporates influences from Indian deities, whose iconography has been adapted within Tibetan practices. They are integral to *'byung rtsis* divination, because it demands precise understanding of their movements and the directions they occupy at specific times, due to the fact that their locations and movements are thought to have a profound influence on the world and on individual lives. The recording of *sa bdag* movements in *'byung rtsis* closely parallels, and may even be directly connected to, the tracking of planetary motion in traditional astrology (Bailey 2019, 129–30).

Locally *sa bdag* are sometimes interchanged for the concept of local deities connected to a particular valley, mountain, or region – as are *yul lha* (the literal meaning of *sa bdag* is “owner of the land”). In that case it is often necessary to appease these deities before constructing a building or planting crops on the land they inhabit. These spirits are the embodiment of indigenous Tibetan deities. It is also believed that a Tibetan’s soul falls under the authority of the *sa bdag*, or spirit of the land, where they were born (Christopher Bell 2020, 14). There is much more nuance to the categorization of these spirits, they belong to various subdivisions and form different types of “families” but for the purposes of this ritual, it is sufficient to recognize their basic key characteristics.

Another type of spirits to appease in the ritual are the *klu demons*. They are serpentine deities typically residing in rivers, lakes and underground realms. They are known for polluting water and obstructing construction of ditches and irrigation systems – structures connected to water. When angered, they can inflict leprosy on people. Common depictions influenced by Buddhism show them with a human upper body and a snake’s tail. However, earlier descriptions, such as in the biography of the founder of Bon, Shenrap Miwo, *klu* are portrayed with 360 spider-like limbs, poison dripping from its mouth and a single eye on its forehead. Tibetan medical texts also describe this class of spirits taking on various animal forms like spiders, scorpions and frogs (Christopher Bell 2020, 13).

The wrathful deity subduing the demon in the origin story of the ritual is *Gshin rje gshed po*. In our ritual text he is described as *Gshin rje gshed* the wrathful who has twenty-one heads in a likeness of a bull. He has forty-two stretched out hands carrying blazing weapons, and he is subduing all the eight directions with his eight feet.

He is the one who can challenge Yama (and in this case his son). *Gshin rje gshed po* or Yamāntaka, also known as the “Destroyer of Death” (literally “he who brings an end to death”) is closely linked with Bhairava “The Frightening One” and Vajrabhairava. As one of the most prominent tantric deities, he holds a significant place in Tibetan Buddhism. In the *Dge lugs* sect, Yamāntaka is one of the three primary *yi dams*. He is viewed as a fully enlightened buddha, always appearing in a wrathful form (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 1020). Both Yamāntaka and Vajrabhairava are considered to be wrathful manifestations of Manjushri.

Manjushri identifies the Three-headed one as the son of *Gshin rje* or “Lord of the Dead” – Sanskrit name Yama – the Hindu god of death and justice. Yama is also known in Tibetan as *Chos kyi rgyal po*, which translates to “king of religious law,” similar to the Sanskrit term *Dharmarāja*. He is described as the “ruler of all beings who were reborn in one of the cold or hot hells in order to expiate the sins committed in a previous existence” (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 82).

Tibetan astrology and divination

The black gto of the Three-headed one begins with a mythical narrative passage about the origins of the demon who is later subdued to “serve as the effigy” of the ritual. The myth recounts the “original sin” of the two trigrams. The ritual uses these figures in a personified way, but it is important to understand that the trigrams of the story are primarily an astrological category. The Tibetan term for the trigrams is *spar kha*, which probably originated in the Chinese term *ba gua*. The origin of these trigrams is commonly linked to the appearance of the golden turtle (Tib. *mahA gser gyi rus sbal*), which is also mentioned in the myth in relation to the emergence of the five elements.

In Tibetan language, divination, astrology, and time computation are referred to as *rtsis*. Basically, the “science of star calculations” encompasses the fields of astrology, astronomy and mathematics. It involves computing the positions of planets, creating calendars, predicting eclipses but also astrological calculations for personal horoscopes and the Tibetan almanac to determine auspicious and inauspicious days (Berzin 1987, 17–18).

There are two main distinctions in Tibetan astrology. Chinese astrology in many ways serves as the foundation for the Tibetan astrology of the elements, which is referred to as *nag rtsis*, while the other branch *skar rtsis* “white astrology” ultimately comes from the Indian Kālacakra system (Ramble 2013, 9). *Nag rtsis* literally means “black astrology” derived from the Tibetan *rgya nag* which means “black area” – the name for China. It is also referred to as *'byung rtsis* – the astrology of elements. Within this system, we encounter the cycle of sixty and twelve years, the five elements of Chinese tradition, the nine magic squares known as *sme ba*, and the eight trigrams (*spar kha*), which correspond to the *ba gua*, or trigrams, of the Yijing (I Ching) (Cornu 2002, 21). The Yijing had a significant impact on Tibetan religion and culture, particularly as a tool for divination. Tibetans adapted the Yijing to fit their own cultural context and integrated the concepts and symbols from Yijing divination into various Tibetan practices. However, viewing it primarily as a book of divination. For example, instead of using the traditional Chinese method of throwing forty-nine yarrow stalks to create hexagrams, Tibetans often preferred different techniques such as counting rods or tossing bronze coins (Ng 2019, 31–32).

The myth of the golden turtle and the origin of the eight trigrams

There are several stories that recount the first appearance of the golden turtle and the eight trigrams. This “cosmic turtle” has a significant place in both Buddhist and Bon tradition. The turtle, traditionally recognized as a symbol of longevity, also holds an important place in Chinese cosmogony. Using the turtle’s shell for divination has been a common practice since at least the Shang period (Kelényi 2002, 69–70).

Norbu recounts the legend of how the astrological system of trigrams is believed to have originated in China during the time of the first legendary sovereign as follows: Fu Hsui – the first emperor – received a gold-colored turtle whose markings inspired the development of the trigram and *sme ba* systems relating to the year-cycles and which were later refined by other rulers, including Confucius – also known in Tibet as Kong tse – who is recognized in Tibetan tradition as an emanation of Manjushri. It is believed that he developed various astrological calculations and *gto* rituals (Norbu 1995, 152).

The golden turtle plays a key role in both specific creation myths and in certain divination practices. According to Ramble in the Buddhist account influenced by the Hindu tradition, Manjushri kills a giant turtle with a golden arrow to use its shell as the foundation for the emerging world. In the Bonpo tradition, as explained in Lungtog Gyatso’s treatise, a form of Manjushri – Mawe Senge – emanates a golden turtle, which becomes the foundation for the creation of the world, including Mt. Meru. The turtle’s body parts correspond to various astrological elements – the head of the turtle was oriented towards the south and its tail towards the north. From its flesh, blood, warmth, and breath emerged the four elements. Furthermore, it gave rise to the twelve-year cycle. It produced the eight hexagrams, the nine magic numbers, the eight planets, and the twenty-eight constellations (Ramble 2013, 210). Similarly, Cornu describes the astrological myth of the golden turtle – as it appeared in Padmasambhava’s biography – when the universe was still in a state of chaos: Manjushri envisioned a giant golden turtle, which emerged from the primordial ocean, he shot a golden arrow into the turtle’s side and as it overturned and sank into the water, the blood and excrement that leaked into the ocean gave way to the rising of the fundamental elements. The newly formed world was established on the turtle’s flat belly, and the secrets of the future times were inscribed on its surface by Manjushri in a secret script (Cornu 2002, 30–31).

However, Duncan J. Poupard describes an interesting shift in the representation of this mythical golden turtle. This transformation happened as the turtle crossed from Han China into Tibetan and Naxi cultures. In some of the Dunhuang manuscripts it appears without its shell and in the Naxi tradition, the turtle is subsequently reimagined and appears as a golden frog as they incorporated it into their divination practices (Poupard 2018, 4–19). More on a similar observation of the turtle morphing into a frog is discussed by Yoeli-Tlalim, in an article about a divination image from a Dunhuang manuscript in which the animal looks like a cross between a frog and a turtle (Yoeli-Tlalim 2018, 433–34).

The eight trigrams – སྐར་ཁ་བརྒྱད། / *spar kha brgyad*



The black gto of the Three-headed one begins with the mythic narrative of Khon (ma) and Khen (po), the two oldest trigrams, “mentally coupling” and how of that inauspicious incestuous relationship a demon child was born. The ritual text also lists the rest of the trigram family and invokes the *Three-headed one* to avert the misfortune of their death. A short description of the trigram family listed in the ritual text, according to Philippe Cornu: **Li**⁵ ☲ represents the trigram of fire, embodying the qualities of attachment and passion as it clings to and consumes the flammable. This element is linked with perception and symbolizes fame, glory and brilliance, as well as associations with drought, arms and war. The bird is its associated animal, and the eye is its corresponding organ. Li is described as the younger daughter of the Sky and the Earth. **Khon** ☷ is the trigram of Earth, symbolizing protection, receptivity, abandon and new beginnings. It is associated with the cauldron, the vase, and the soil that is ready for fertilization by the sky. The cow is the animal connected to Khon, and the belly is its corresponding organ. Khon is considered the mother of the other trigrams. **Dwa** ☴, known in China as *Tui* or "The Lake," represents the trigram of metal. It is linked with pleasure, women and children, reflecting desires related to reproduction. Dwa is associated with the West and autumn, symbolizing

⁵ The Tibetan spelling of the trigram’s names has been adopted as that is the one used in the ritual text.

decline and death. The sheep is the animal related to Dwa, and the mouth is its corresponding organ. Dwa is the youngest daughter of the Earth and the Sky (Cornu 2002, 111). **Khen** ☰ represents the Sky. It embodies creative power, masculine energy, and strength. Symbolizing authority, it is associated with the ruler. The horse is its animal, and the head is its corresponding organ. Within the family of trigrams Khen is the father of the other trigrams. **Kham** ☵ represents Water, symbolizing inactivity and the risk of stagnation. While Water penetrates and nourishes, it can also lead to decay. Its symbols include wells, traps, and ditches, with ignorance as its associated negative emotion. The pig is its animal, and the ear is its organ. *Kham* is the younger son of the Sky and the Earth. **Gin** ☶ is the trigram of the mountain, representing stability and protection. Its symbols are the dog and the hand, connected to meditation and defense. Gin is the youngest son of the Sky and the Earth. **Zin** ☳ is associated with wood, symbolizing growth and movement. Represented by the dragon and the feet, it is known as the awakener due to its dynamic energy. Zin is the eldest son of the Earth and the Sky. **Zon** ☱ represents Wind, a gentle yet dispersive force. It is symbolized by the sheep and the thigh, reflecting its changeable nature. Zon is the eldest son of the Earth and the Sky (Cornu 2002, 112).

The twelve-year cycle and the sixty-year cycle

The ritual text *The black gto of the Three-headed one* pays significant attention to the twelve-year cycle represented by the twelve animal signs, each linked with specific attributes to avert the evil obstacles and associated with that particular year. The specific obstacles of each year are not explicitly detailed; however, the *Three-headed one* identifies the representatives associated with each year and calls upon them to ward off the detrimental events tied to their respective years. In the Chinese tradition the twelve-year cycle is listed as follows: the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog and pig. The ritual text follows this order as well.

In the sixty-year cycle each year is governed by one of the twelve animals. Each year is also associated with one of five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) where each element rules for two consecutive years, the first being a male year and the second a female year. Consequently, it takes sixty years for a specific combination, such as the wood-male rat year, to repeat (Berzin 1987, 21). Each of these year-cycles are accompanied by their own specific set of obstructions as well.

The black *gto* of the Three-headed One

The ritual text is a part of a collection of rituals associated with the Nyingma sect and titled *Gto 'bum: a collection of various gto and mdos rituals from the famed rediscovered teachings of the past*.⁶ The work is 581 pages long and it was published in 1978 in Thimpu (Bhutan) by Kunsang Topgay. The authorship statement of the pecha at the end reads that “many of these are from the visionary teachings and writings of *Karma chags med*.” The BDRC identification number of the scanned item is MW27411. The ritual is written in uchen script in a seven-syllable sentence structure.

Karma chags med was a Tibetan religious master who established the lineage of the Karma Chagme tulku in the 17th-century. Among his writings many rituals of indigenous or Bonpo traditions have been adapted to fit the Buddhist framework. Closer investigation of this collection would certainly prove fruitful in this area.

*Karma chags med*⁷ was born during a turbulent time marked by political and religious conflicts in central Tibet and the eastern region of Kham. This period witnessed the decline of the Karma Kagyu lineage, which suffered persecution and forced conversions at the hands of the Gelugpas and their Mongol allies. Born as *Dbang grags gsung* (“powerful speech”) in the Ngom Valley of Kham in 1613, his father was a renowned Nyingma scholar, and his mother is often described as a wisdom *ḍākinī*. He exhibited auspicious signs from a young age, took monastic vows at 22 and received his ordination name from the Sixth Shamarpa. Recognized as a learned scholar, *Karma chags med* devoted much of his life to solitary retreat while also teaching disciples. His act of offering a finger as a butter-lamp in honor of the Karmapa nearly led to his death from a subsequent infection. Notably, it was only in the final four years of *Karma chags med*'s life that relations between the Gelugpas and Kagyu sects started to improve. He was born during a time of significant sectarian conflict, and much of his religious work and teaching unfolded amidst violent clashes and changing power dynamics (Haynie 2007, 5-9).

⁶ གཏོ་འབུམ་མདོས་ཚོག་ཉེར་མཐོའི་རིགས་ཕྱོགས་གཅིག་ཏུ་བསྐྱེབས་པ་དགོས་འདོད་ཀྱིན་འབྱུང་ཞེས་བྱ་བ། *Gto 'bum mdos chog nyer mkho'i rigs phyogs gcig tu bsdebs pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung zhes bya ba*.

⁷ In English there are two biographies available on *Karma chags med*'s life. One is a translation by Alan Wallace of Gyatrul Rinpoche's books on *Karma chags med*'s synthesis of Mahāmudrā and *Rdzogs chen*, and the other one is Lama Jampel Zangpo's book on the *Pal yul Snying ma* lineage. A short biography is also available in the beginning of the *Mountain Dharma* volume, which was the focus of Eric Haynie's 2007 thesis – a source I referred to here.

The concept of effigies in Tibetan rituals

The central figure of the ritual is an effigy of a three-headed demon who was born out of an inauspicious relationship of the two oldest trigrams. The use of effigies as mimetic devices is a widespread cultural phenomenon, documented across various civilizations including Tibet, where they are used in rituals for healing, protection, and also harm.

In Tibet, archaeological discoveries suggest that illustrated effigies were used as early as the eleventh century. The earliest known examples of such effigies are anthropomorphic figures engraved on animal skulls. While effigies are mentioned in Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts from the 10th century, no similar illustrated figures have been found in those texts. The practice of using effigies in Tibetan rituals, both Buddhist and Bon-po, likely originated from much



Linga effigy. Item No. 53746
<https://www.himalayanart.org/items/53746>

older Indian traditions that were introduced to Tibet. References to these ritual effigies are plentiful in Indian Buddhist tantras and tantric commentaries, which began to be translated into Tibetan from the 8th century onward (Cuevas 2011, 74–75).

The use of effigies in rituals is grounded in the principle of sympathetic magic, where it is believed that objects or beings that resemble each other are connected through invisible bonds, and that connection allows one to influence the other even from a distance. Effigies in Tibetan rituals that are crafted to resemble an enemy, or figures drawn on paper that are infused with the power of a controlled deity or demon, are known as *ling ga*⁸. These effigies are widely used in Tibetan practices aimed at mimicking and manipulating adversaries, whether they are human or demonic (Cuevas 2011, 75).

The word *ling ga* is actually derived from the Sanskrit word *linga*, which traditionally refers to the phallus and symbolizes Śiva the Hindu god. The *ling ga* effigy, which can represent various demons or enemies to be destroyed during a rite of “liberation,” is usually either block-printed or hand-drawn, depending on what are the preferences of the monk’s community (Ramble 2021, 1034).

⁸ Tibetan words for effigies: རིང་ག། *ling ga* or གཟུགས་བརྟན། *gzugs brnyan*.

The different types of substitute ritual objects used in these types of practices include offering cakes made of various substances, usually butter and dough, called *gtor ma*. Another ritual object of this kind is a so-called thread-cross or *nam mkha'*. In Tibetan *nam mkha'* means sky. It is made of many multicolored threads that are woven around wooden sticks. Thread-crosses are supposed to ensnare the spirit or consciousness of the intended target in the ritual. Some thread-crosses can even be designed as large structures, standing 3 meters high – these too are intended to capture the spirits or demons that are being exorcised. The basic guidelines suggest that a thread-cross should be arranged with a triangular foundation (Cuevas 2011, 77).



The Three-Headed One of the Black Rituals, Nyingma Buddhist version of the ritual effigy in Nepal, 1995, photo by Charles Ramble.
<https://projecthimalayanart.rubinmuseum.org/essays/thread-crosses/>

Another common element of practice present in our ritual too is the throwing or hurling of *gtor ma*, the ritual cakes, which is called *gtor zor*. These ritual weapons are thrown at enemies to harm or repel them. *Gtor* comes from the word *gtor ma* but *zor* refers to any kind of ritual object that is being used as a weapon and thrown during the rite. This action is intended to paralyze or render the enemy unconscious (Cuevas 2011, 77–78).

The effigy of the Three-headed demon, the ransom and the offerings – a comparative approach

René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz gives an account of the ritual “The offering of the Three-headed one or *gtor nag rgyab* (the casting of the black *gtor ma*)” in his publication *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 514–17). He refers to it as a peculiar *glud* (ransom) rite practiced by Nyingma monks in order to take control of demonic beings that cause diseases and misfortune. How the ritual is conducted in his account is not very different from the one in our ritual text. As in our text, an emanation of Manjushri appears as he is the pivotal deity of the rite. He describes the preparation phase of the ritual which is rather detailed.

What our ritual text does not reveal is that the lower body of the three-headed demon which is red in color, takes the form of a coiled snake’s tail, in the Bonpo version of this ritual which

has been translated by Charles Ramble and made available on his website Kalpa Bon⁹, (although the translation online is not complete) the demon's effigy also features a monkey's tail.

The effigy's likeness can slightly vary in different versions, with subtle differences in the arrangement and depiction of its features depending on the specific ritual tradition or regional practice. These variations might include changes in the color, position, or even the type of heads represented, reflecting the varying interpretations within the ritual's context.

In our version of the ritual the middle head is a red head of a bull, the right head is a yellow head of a tiger, and the left head is a black head of a pig. A comparison of the placement and likeness of the effigy's heads with the Nyingma ritual described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz reveals slight changes. He recounts that the head in the middle is also a red head of a bull, the head on the left is a blue pig's head (shows a change in color) and the right head is a yellow tiger's head (this is the same); although he states that the middle and the left head can be occasionally reversed, and the head of the tiger could also be a head of a snake in certain cases.

In the Bonpo version, there are some notable variations in the effigy's body traits. In this version of the ritual, the effigy features a blue tiger's head on the right (yellow tiger in ours), a black pig's head on the left (this is the same), and a yellow bull's head in the center (change in color, ours is red).

The other bodily descriptors for the Three-headed seem to be similar – he has two hands holding a small *gtor ma* and a black upper and red lower body. Although Nebesky-Wojkowitz writes that the hands could also be stretched out and the fingers positioned in a specific mudra - that is not the case of our text. In the Bonpo version of the ritual the hands are holding a *gtor ma* with offerings of ephedra, mustard seed and a tally stick.

Our version mentions the use of ash (grey) but does not specify the type; however, Ramble's translation states that it should be ash from a cremated corpse, which is meant to be smeared over the body.

Our ritual also does not mention the inclusion of wings or the drawing of a *sme ba*¹⁰ on the back of the effigy. Furthermore, the Bonpo version reveals that a piece of paper with a mantra written on it is placed inside the effigy, a detail that is also absent from our text.

⁹ For details see <https://kalpa-bon.com/texts/mgo-gsum/srid-pa-gto-mgo-gsum> Accessed July 20, 2024.

¹⁰ Astrological sign.

Additional elements missing from our description include the feather of an owl (or a raven), which is meant to be placed behind the head, and the small butter lamps that are positioned on each of the effigy's heads. We also learn that small thread-crosses are placed on the sides of the heads, details that are absent from our text.¹¹ Our text does not mention these specifics but does incorporate the use of a thread-cross. It also directs to "build a Mt. Meru in a flat iron pan," yet provides no further details. According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, the pan should be filled with soil. The Bonpo version offers further clarification, specifying that the soil should be "a mix of earth from beneath the [house of a] blacksmith and the earth from ruined building,"¹² and that Mt. Sumeru should be constructed with two levels.

While our text never provides explicit instructions on how the ransom objects should be used or organized, Nebesky-Wojkowitz offers a rather detailed account of these procedures. Similarly, the ritual text of the Bonpo version, provides significantly more guidance compared to ours.

Following the enumeration of the various ritual objects and ransom effigies required for the rite, our text abruptly shifts to recounting the original myth of subduing the three-headed demon. The rest of the articles needed are listed as a tally of a male, a tally of a female, twenty-one *ngar glud*¹³, blood¹⁴ *chang gruel*, dung, various kinds of meat, bones, madder, fat, *grang kho*¹⁵, objects connected to *mi kha*¹⁶, grey ash, the 12-year cycle arrow, spindle and rgyang bu splints. Presumably after Mt. Sumeru is build inside the iron pan, the effigy of the Three-headed one is placed upon it with all the ritual objects around.

According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz the arrow and the spindle are laid on the left side of the effigy, there are small wooden swords painted red and, in some cases, even washed and inflated bowels around the pan. Further objects placed around the effigy are a small bag containing black radishes, onions, garlic, tea of inferior quality, and yeast for making beer (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, 515–16).

¹¹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, 515-517.

¹² <https://kalpa-bon.com/texts/mgo-gsum/srid-pa-gto-mgo-gsum> image number: 00061_0002r, Accessed July 25, 2024.

¹³ Ransom effigies.

¹⁴ Described to me as blood that has pure or good qualities, but further clarification is needed, the Tibetan term used is *khrag gi dbus dkyus*

¹⁵ Unfortunately, I could not find an acceptable explanation. We are probably dealing with an error in spelling.

¹⁶ Slander.

When comparing the Bonpo version to our ritual text, the Bonpo version provides a detailed account of the placement, nature, and purpose of most ritual objects. It also specifies the number of thread-crosses, *gtor mas*, splints, and *rgyang bu* required, offering more comprehensive guidance. The Bonpo version specifies that there should be eight precious *rgyang bu* for living beings in general. It also details the orientation of the splints representing the twelve months. The meat should be placed around in twelve cylindrical shaped molds, and there should be cups of blood to the right and left. All these details are missing from our version. I have not listed all the circumstances described in the Bonpo version. For further information, refer to the available sections of the translation on Charles Ramble's website.¹⁷

Nevertheless, our ritual text does specify the recipients of each offering: the arrow is the ransom offered to the *gza*' spirits. The spindle is the ransom offered to the *sman* spirits. The knife is the ransom offered to the *bdud* demons. The spear is the ransom offered to the *btsan* spirits. The thread-cross is the ransom offering of the mind. The *rgyang bu* is the ransom offering of the body. The *ting lo* cake is the ransom offering of the speech. The *'brang rgyas* is the ransom offering of the men. The *sman leb* medicinal tablets are the ransom offerings of the women. Some of these offerings were not mentioned in the initial passage of the text but are introduced later on. However, the text does not explicitly detail how the offerings should be arranged, leaving one to rely on prior knowledge acquired from other sources.

According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz specific parts of the Three-headed one's body counteract different malevolent forces; The black upper body, for instance, neutralizes the *bdud* demons—a feature that remains unchanged in our version. The black upper body is called upon to defeat the influence of *khram kha* of the black *bdud* demons.

While in our text the red lower part of the body is meant to counteract the red *btsan* demons, in Nebesky-Wojkowitz's account it is intended to avert illnesses and epidemics caused by the *ma mo*.

According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996, 515–17), the bull head is meant to defeat the *zor* (hurling *gtor ma* or ritual object). In the Bonpo version, the bull head is intended to overcome all great obstructions and despair. In our text, however, the middle bull head is tasked with diverting the epidemics (*yams kha*) from the upward place of the gods.

¹⁷ <https://kalpa-bon.com/texts/mgo-gsum/srid-pa-gto-mgo-gsum>

The serpent head is supposedly counteracting the *gnyan* – there is no mention of that in our text. In the Bonpo version the pig head is meant to divert all the demons of livestock while Nebesky-Wojkowitz states that it counteracts the evil influence of the *sa bdag* and *sa srin* demons. Our text narrates that the black pig head on the left diverts the plagues (*nad kha*) of the *sa bdag* spirits onto the enemies. According to NW *sa bdag* spirits are held in check by the coiled snake tail of the demon effigy.¹⁸

In conclusion, this examination of the central effigy in the ritual reveals notable differences between the traditions, with these nuances being highly context specific. The Bonpo text gives much more guidance on how the effigy should be composed which our text omits almost completely. Our ritual gives only a very short description of the main features of the body of the demon's effigy leaving the details of its construction unclear. Regarding the different parts of the effigy counteracting specific negative forces, the considerable variations raise questions about how these distinctive characteristics developed and what their underlying significance might be.

General notes on the Bonpo version *Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum* and the Nyingma version *Gto nag mgo gsum gyi cho ga bzhus so*

Overall, both texts follow a similar general structure, but the Bonpo version provides much more detailed descriptions of the preparations for the ritual effigies and offerings. The Bonpo version specifies the materials and components required for the creation of the effigies while our text just simply lists the objects needed without further clarification. The central theme is, of course, very similar in both texts. Both rituals involve the creation of a three-headed effigy, with the Bonpo text offering specific instructions on how it should be constructed. Additionally, both rituals incorporate mythological narratives that explain the origin of the three-headed figure and its significance, providing a deeper understanding of its role within the ritual context. These narratives serve to contextualize the ritual within a broader cosmological framework. The primary goal in both rituals is the repulsion of negative forces, harmful spirits, and obstacles. They aim to reverse misfortunes, diseases, and curses. All of which are listed throughout the ritual. One of the key distinctions between the rituals lies in the deity they pay homage to or rely on for resolving misfortunate events. In the Nyingma version, the homage is paid to Manjushri who embodies the practically oriented wisdom and intelligence, including

¹⁸ For all references to the Bonpo version see <https://kalpa-bon.com/texts/mgo-gsum/srid-pa-gto-mgo-gsum> and for all references to the ritual account of Nebesky-Wojkowitz see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, 515-517.

astrology – he is called upon to help subdue the demon. In the Bonpo version the central figure is Kong tse – a well-established figure in rituals dealing with astrology within the Bonpo tradition.

Kong tse is generally believed to be the Tibetan equivalent of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 B.C.). Kong tse is well-known in the monastic Bon tradition, he is regarded as a figure that in addition to being recognized as a source of knowledge on divination is also credited as the founder of *gto* rituals. This claim likely emerged in alignment with the Bonpo tradition, which ascribed various ritual texts for overcoming obstacles to *Kong tse 'phrul rgyal*. Bonpo texts describe Kong tse as having a mystical origin and being involved in various magical and astrological practices. His narrative includes being a king in a previous life and later becoming a disciple of the Bonpo founder, *Gshen rab* (Lin 2007, 128–29).

Kong Tse appears to have been introduced to Tibet around the 11th century CE, as noted in the earliest known hagiography of *Gshen rab*, titled *Mdo 'dus*. This assertion highlights how early Bonpo authors actively incorporated significant figures like Confucius into their writings, linking them to their tradition's founder (Gurung 2009, 257).

The narrative of the ritual

Our ritual is presented in the form of a dialogue, initially between the Three-headed One and the Bodhisattva Manjushri, who serves as the central deity of the ritual. This is followed by a dialogue between the ritual performer and the Three-headed One.

The beginning of the myth sets the stage for the later conversation. After the old woman, associated with the trigram *Khon*, was consumed by desire and called out to the old man, represented by the trigram *Khen*, they engaged in an inauspicious union. Nine months and ten days later, a frightening demon child was born, bearing no resemblance to either of his parents.

The dialogue begins when the old man, *Khen po*, became enraged and instructed the old woman, *Khon ma*, to wrap the demon child in her clothes and cast him into the depths of the ocean. Upon hearing this, the three-headed demon child, with his black upper body and red lower body, became furious and threatened his parents. He warned that if they attempted to destroy him, he would devour them along with the rest of their trigram family. Alarmed by these words, the old man *Khen po* called upon the Bodhisattva Manjushri to protect them from the demon child's malevolent intentions.

After this exchange, Manjushri arrived to subdue the demon child, which he accomplished by manifesting as the wrathful *Gshin rje gshed* (Yamāntaka – the “Lord of Death”). In this formidable form, he swallowed the demon child whole, trapping him in his stomach for three days.

During that time, he suffered from various afflictions, but after three days, *Gshin rje gshed* expelled him from his stomach. Weakened and subdued, the Three-headed One surrendered to *Gshin rje gshed* and vowed to carry out his bidding. At that point, *Gshin rje gshed* reinforced his dominance by threatening the demon once more, commanding him to follow Manjushri’s instructions and obey his every command.

From this point onward, the dialogue shifts to an exchange between the Three-headed one and Manjushri, as the demon seeks instructions on how to carry out the *gto* ritual.

The ritual then unfolds through a dynamic and almost playful exchange of questions and answers between the two beings. Manjushri, now in his own form, instructs the demon to avert various pernicious poisons, diseases, and the misfortunes associated with the unlucky obstacles of the years. The Three-headed One explains that to reverse all the misfortunes listed, nine specific items are required, including an additional type of offering not mentioned earlier in the ritual. He requests a tiger skin garment to serve as a ransom for both a male and a female, which was absent from the initial instructions. However, it is only clearly stated for the male offering that it needs to be a tiger skin garment, for the female offering the instructions are somewhat vague. Manjushri agrees and promises that if the demon successfully repels all the evil hindrances, he will be rewarded with the gift of the entire universe. Manjushri asks the Three-headed One again to divert the harm caused by the *bdud*, *btsan*, *gza’*, *dmu* and *klu* spirits towards the enemy. Following this request, the Three-headed One declares that in order to repel these malevolent spirits, he must first know their names. Manjushri then describes a golden palace where king *Brkos rje brang dkar* and queen *Bu mo bskos mkhan* hold tally sticks engraved with images of these spirits. He proceeds to enumerate the names of the spirits, providing the demon with the necessary knowledge to carry out the task.

For each class of demons, he lists three representatives and reveals their names to the Three-headed One. The representatives of the *bdud* are *Re ti ’gong g.yag*, *Nag po bkrag med* and *Spyi bdud yag dengs*. The representatives of the *btsan* spirits are *Agne rgyal po*, *Ya ba skya bdun* and *Skyes bu lung btsan*. The representatives of the *dmu* spirits *Dmu rje btsan po*, *Dmu rje gos sngon* and *Dmu btsan ’khor ba*. The representatives of the *gza’* spirits are *Gza’ ri btsan*

po, the second one is *Gza' rgod sngon po* and *Gza' sman rgyal mo*. Representatives of the *klu* spirits are the Naga kings *Gtsug na rin chen*, *Dga' po 'jog po* and Naga king *Dung skyong*.

Once the names of the spirits are revealed, the Three-headed One inquires about the specific ransoms intended for each class of spirits. Manjushri then provides a detailed enumeration: the arrow is for the *gza'* spirits, the spindle for the *sman* spirits, the spear for the *btsan* spirits, and so on.

Following that, the Three-headed one is lauded for undertaking this formidable quest to ward off all evils, and the trigram family, along with their entourage are invited to join.

From this point onward, the ritual performer directly addresses the Three-headed effigy. He offers the effigy blood, meat, and bones as substitutes to satisfy its wrathful cravings, previously mentioned at the start of the ritual when the demon's father threatened to cast him into the ocean. The performer also reminds the demon of the vow it made to Manjushri and strongly urges it to divert all misfortunes away from the ritual's patron, emphasizing the importance of the pledge he made when he was subdued.

Where should these misfortunes be redirected? The ritual performer instructs the Three-headed effigy to divert all the obstacles toward someone who shares a similar astrological profile, name, and lineage as the patron. Alternatively, they could be directed onto dogs, considered the lowest of creatures in this context.

The focus is then shifted to the trigram family, as following this part, the priest, or the individual conducting the ritual, presents the ransom for each trigram family member to the Three-headed One in order to avert their death.

After completing that section, the ritual text calls upon the figures associated with the twelve-year cycle¹⁹ to avert any obstacles. The structure here is repetitive, much like the earlier segment involving the naming of the demon representatives. Each year's representative is briefly described and tasked with averting the specific obstructions that arise within that year-cycle. The kings of these cycles are depicted with human bodies and heads corresponding to the animal of their respective year. For instance, in the Rat year, the king would have a human body and the head of a rat. This pattern is consistently followed for the remaining years.

¹⁹ This is one of the parts that is similar to the Bonpo version, but it still differs quite a bit from it as the individual representatives of the years are described in much more detail in the Bonpo version.

After completing the enumeration and invocation of the 12-year cycle, the ritual performer once again addresses the demon effigy imploring it to reverse the misfortunes of the three spheres of existence, the misfortunes afflicting the five elements, the discordant enemy relations of the trigrams and the ominous descent of the indisputable *bdud* demons. The exhaustive list of malicious occurrences to be averted continues with the *'dre demons*, opening the ways between the dead and the living, earthquakes, inauspicious combinations of relations between the trigrams, the diseases caused by the *klu* and *sa bdag*. Furthermore, this part focuses on averting the misfortunes of death of children and the general population decreasing. The performer calls for the cessation of hatred among the people, the neutralization of curses, dispelling of slander and the prevention of a thousand kinds of infectious diseases. He further asks for the grasping rope of the sky to not be cut, to halt the rising of the earth's tethering stake, he asks that the world's oceans do not dry up, he pleads to thwart the black darkness covering the eons, to prevent the sky from shaking and finally to reverse the subtle energy-winds that carry the karmic deeds.

The obstructions associated with each year of the twelve-year cycle are outlined somewhat vaguely in the following section. I describe them as vague because this part posed significant challenges during translation, indicating that further review and refinement are needed.

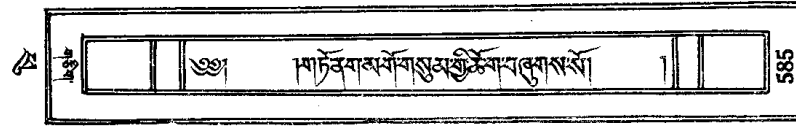
In the subsequent section, a series of inauspicious occurrences are enumerated that are not to be witnessed – events that must be avoided. The quite peculiar incidents to avert are stags clashing antlers, fish fighting, crows battling, vultures fighting in the sky, mice fighting in the ground, mountains crumbling, trees breaking, the earth collapsing and the sacred lake drying up – each symbolizing disruptions to the natural and spiritual order.

As the ritual approaches its conclusion, the text becomes somewhat repetitive, primarily listing additional misfortunes caused by the same spirits previously mentioned.

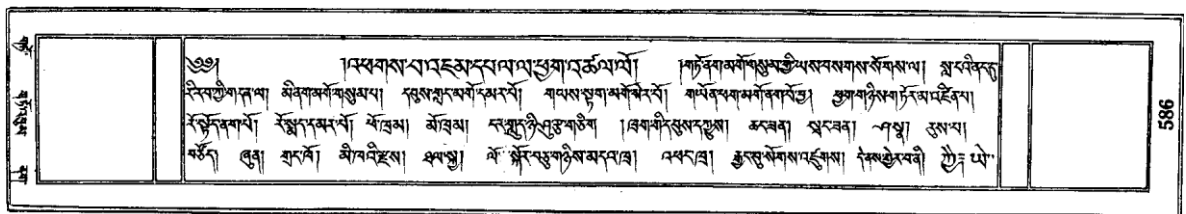
In the brief concluding section of the ritual, the performer enumerates the specific body parts that should ward off the corresponding obstructions or misfortunes. Following this, the ritualist instructs the throwing of the hurling *gtor ma* and the visualization of a protective circle. With these final actions, the ritual reaches its conclusion. Bhyo!

Translation of the ritual text - *Gto nag mgo gsum gyi cho ga bzhugs so*

This chapter will present the translation in detail and explore the numerous challenges and complexities encountered throughout the translation process.



The black *gto* ritual of the Three-headed one



“I pay homage to the noble Manjushri.” Regarding the black *gto* of the three heads and subduing harmful spirits, these ransom offerings are needed: build Mount Meru inside an iron pan, and on the throne of this excellent mountain, create a black man with three heads.²⁰ The middle head is a red head of a bull, the right head is a golden head of a tiger, the left head is a black head of a pig. [He is] holding a *gtor ma* with both hands.²¹ [His] upper body is black, and [his] lower body is red. [Further offerings needed are] a tally stick of a male, a tally stick of a female, twenty-one *ngar glud*,²² blood of good qualities,²³ *chang* gruel,²⁴ dung, various kinds of meat, bones, madder, fat, *grang kho*,²⁵ effigies connected to *mi kha*²⁶, grey ash, the 12-year cycle arrow, spindle, *rgyang bu* splints; set it up. Then, as for the chanting: Kyai!

²⁰ The description of the Three-headed one’s effigy follows.

²¹ The effigy itself is holding a smaller torma in its hands.

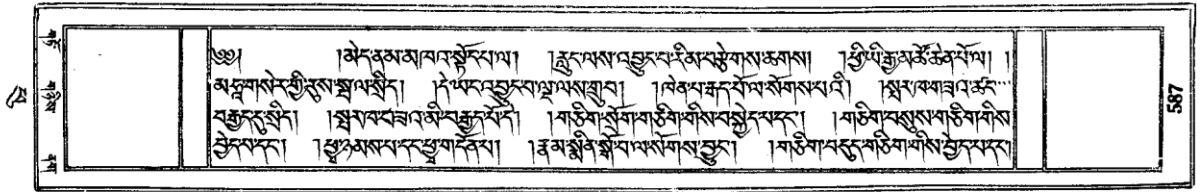
²² Bellezza notes in *Zhang Zhung. Foundations of Civilization in Tibet* (p.232) that *ngar mi* are effigies in human form that are used in various types of ransom rites (*glud*).

²³ ཁྲག་གི་དབུས་དཀྱུས་ / *khrag gi dbus dkyus*: Blood which has the attributes of good quality, accurate amount and right color. In modern terms, if we stretch it a little, we could say that a blood sample which shows good results after testing it. This term was explained to me by one of my teachers who consulted a Tibetan Nyingma monk in the Southern part of India.

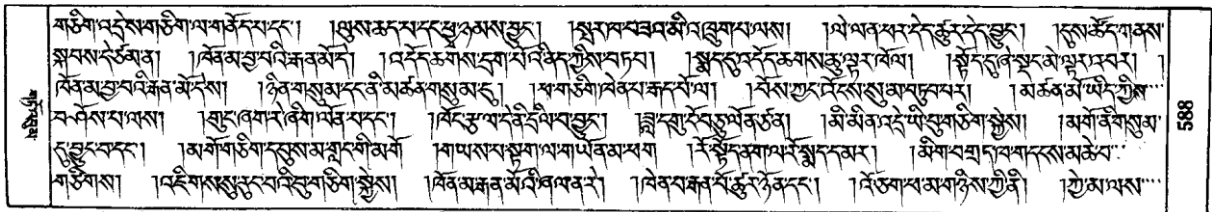
²⁴ Ransom effigy made of ཆང་ / *chang*.

²⁵ Unfortunately, I could not find an acceptable solution for the translation. We are probably dealing with a spelling error. Further investigation is needed.

²⁶ Slander.



In the void space of the sky, the wind element gradually emerged. In the great ocean of the world the golden turtle appeared, and the five elements were established with it.²⁷ The old man *Khen pa*²⁸ and all the eight trigrams (*spar kha brgyad*)²⁹ came into existence. That family of eight trigrams generated life out of one another. [They] mated with each other³⁰ and [as a result of that] the *phywa* (*auspiciousness*) was corrupted and harmed – calling forth karmic consequences. The *bdud* demons mated amongst themselves.



And one mixing with another brought about harm.³¹ The *lus*³² was punished and the deterioration of the *phywa*³³ occurred. The trigram family was in disharmony, they blamed and chased each other.³⁴ Approximately at that time, an old woman named *Khon ma*³⁵ appeared and a strong desire struck her like sickness. Like water, intense desire boiled in her lower parts. Like a flame catching fire, anger raged in her upper parts.³⁶ For three days and three nights, the old

²⁷ Earth, water, fire, air and space tib.: ས་ཆུ་མེ་རླུང་ནམ་མཁའ་ / *sa chu me rlung nam mkha'*

²⁸ Later on, referred to as: རྒྱལ་པ་ཁེན་པོ་ / *rgan pa khen po* “old man of the trigram Khen”

²⁹ In Chinese: ba gua / 八卦

³⁰ The verb བསུས་ / *bsus* is used here (meet, welcome) which is an indirect way of saying that they had relations among themselves (resulting in incestuous relationships).

³¹ Alternatively: The 'dre demons fought each other. But འདྲེས་ / 'dres is spelled with a ས་ / *sa* here and on the same page we have འདྲེ་ / 'dre spelled without a ས་ / *sa* which is the correct spelling when referring to the demon/spirit type.

³² The ལུས་ / *lus* or “body” is the energy of the bodily health. See Cornu, *Tibetan Astrology*, 87.

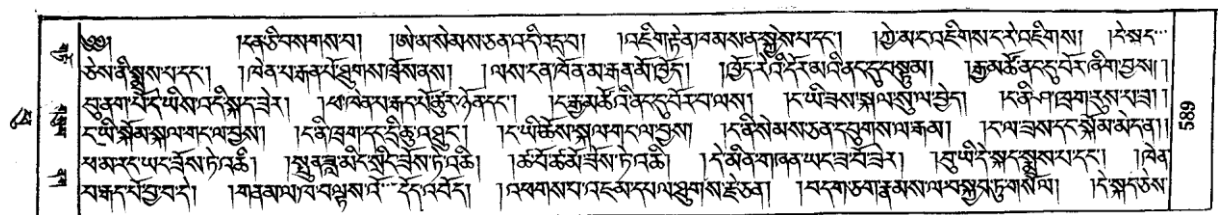
³³ ལྷ་ / *phywa* means auspiciousness, auspicious, individual's positive force, sign or divination.

³⁴ ལེ་ལན་པར་དེད་ཚུར་དེད་བྱུང་། / *le lan phar ded tshur ded byung* suggests there is action (blame or revenge) in an outward direction and (chasing) in an inward direction the meaning of which could be related to the quarrel mentioned before and general disturbance arising.

³⁵ “An elderly woman of the trigram Khon” is one of the eight trigrams.

³⁶ This part could also refer to the old man *Khen pa* as he is generally described as the angry one but in this context, the text seems to be still describing the desire and anger of *Khon ma*. In མྱིང་བའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། / *Srid pa'i*

woman *Khon ma* called out for *Khen pa*, the old man, but he did not come. [Then] one night they coupled in their minds. After several days, a powerful energy accumulated inside [the womb].³⁷ After nine months and ten days had passed, a child of a non-human 'dre demon was born. As for the head, it had three. The one in the middle was a head of a bull. The right one was a head of a tiger, and the left one was a head of a pig. Its upper body was black and the lower part of its body was red. With eyes wide open, a gaping mouth, and baring its teeth – a fearsome child was born. *Khon ma*, the old woman said to the old man *Khen pa*: “Listen! As for the both of us parents,” she sighed, “What terrible karma must we have accumulated for such a being to be born into this world! Ah, it terrifies me!”



The old man *Khen pa*'s mind became enraged, “You miserable old woman with bad karma! Wrap [that demon child] into your trousers and destroy it, throw it away into the ocean!”

Then the black son said these words, “Father, *Khen pa rgan po*, if you throw me into the depths of the ocean, then what I shall claim as my share of food will be flesh, blood and bone. As for my thirst, I will drink blood and urine. As for my share of dharma, I will crave³⁸ the breath of sentient beings. If there is no food or drinks for me, I will even eat my own parents. I will eat [my] siblings, bringing death upon [them]. I will eat [my] nephews and nieces,³⁹ bringing death upon [them]! Other than that, I will eat others as well!” those were the words of the demon son.

[Upon hearing this] the old man *Khen pa* looked to the sky and cried out in despair, “Alas! Noble and compassionate Manjushri, [we] beseech you to protect [us]!”

gto nag mgo gsum]: བེན་པ་རྗེད་པོ་ཐུགས་འཁྲུག་ནས། མ་ཞི་ལོན་མ་རྒྱན་མོ་ལ། ཡིད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུར་བ་བྱས་པ་ལ། / *khen pa rged po thugs 'khros nas / ma ni khon ma rgan mo la / yid kyi sbyor ba byas pa la*... see Kalpa-bon.com, “Srid pa gto mgo gsum” 3r.

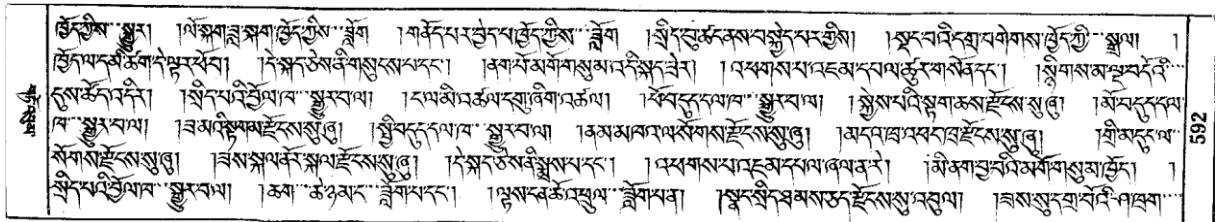
³⁷ ཁོང་རྒྱལ་དེ་ནི་དྲིལ་བ་བྱུང་། / *khong rtsal de ni dril ba byung* This sentence is probably referring to what happened inside of her body after the mental coupling – as in a “child” is being formed, powerful energy being accumulated and concentrated in the body/womb.

³⁸ There could be a mistake in the text. The original says རྒྱལ་ / *rgam* but it should probably be རྒྱལ་ / *rkam* as to desire something. In this case, he desires the breath (lives) of sentient beings.

³⁹ Alternatively, it could mean grandsons and granddaughters.

'Jigs byed chen po'⁴⁸ [then] commands the demon, “As for me, I am 'Jigs byed chen po the destroyer of death! Your heart's blood I possess!⁴⁹ I am the wrath that all three dimensions are afraid of. Do not go against my order! Listen to the word of the ever-youthful Manjushri!”⁵⁰ With these words, he departed into the sky.

[After that] the young Manjushri arrived standing and he spoke “As for you, the son of a non-human 'dre demon, the son of the evil *bdud* spirit, of the *bdud* kind, you [are] actually like *Gshin rje*, the lord of death. That middle head of yours is a head of a great jealous bull. The right head is a head of a prideful tiger. The left head is a head of a great ignorant pig. That black upper body of yours is like your angry father's. That red lower body of yours is like your lustful mother's. As for you, you are the embodiment of the five poisons.⁵¹ You, reverse the time of degeneration of the five impurities! Reverse the time of the spreading of the pernicious five poisons! Reverse all the *byol kha* (misfortunes)!⁵²



Reverse the hindrance of the unlucky years and reverse the hindrances of the unlucky months! Reverse all the harm [done]! Reverse the obstructions and let children be born! Liberate the obstacle of the hateful enemy!⁵³ Such commitment is entrusted to you.”

The Three-headed Black One spoke, “Noble Manjushri, listen! To reverse the time of spreading of the five corruptions, to reverse the misfortunes (*byol kha*), I need these nine things:⁵⁴ to reverse the harm of diseases (*dal kha*) caused by the *bdud* that befalls men, I will ask for a tiger skin garment; to reverse the harm of diseases (*dal kha*) caused by the *bdud* that befalls women,

⁴⁸ Yama.

⁴⁹ Meaning “I have the ability to kill you.” This phrase is commonly used when a wrathful deity is subduing a demon.

⁵⁰ The peaceful aspect of Manjushri.

⁵¹ Traditionally the five poisons in Buddhism are anger, jealousy, pride, ignorance, and attachment.

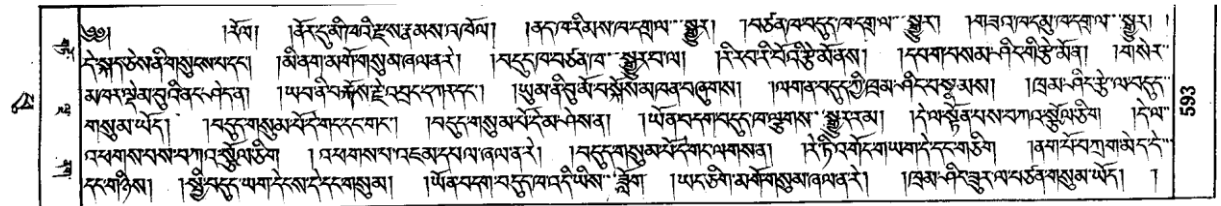
⁵² རྩོམ་ཁ་ / *byol kha* this term also appears in སྲིད་པའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། [*Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum*] where a possible translation is given by the author (Charles Ramble) as errors. After consulting Geshe Choekortsang we agreed on misfortunes or unfortunate occurrences, but it remains open. For comparison see Kalpa-bon.com, “*Srid pa gto mgo gsum*.”

⁵³ Liberate, save, as in destroy your enemy through the compassionate mind.

⁵⁴ ང་ལ་མི་འཚོལ་དགུ་ཞིག་འཚོལ་ / *nga la mi 'tshal dgu zhig 'tshal*.

I will ask for a female tiger [skin?]; to reverse the harm of diseases (*dal kha*) caused by the *bdud* that befall everything and all⁵⁵, I will ask for a thread-cross. I will ask for an arrow and spindle. I will ask for a weapon like a knife or spear, a portion of food, and a share of wealth!”

The Noble Manjushri replied, “You, the Three-headed One known as the Black Man, reverse the existence of misfortunes (*byol kha*)! Reverse the decline and great despair! If you reverse the evil signs of the inauspicious magical display, then I will reward you with the gift of the whole universe. As food [you will get] to enjoy the flesh and blood of the enemy.



Utilize the substances connected to gossip (*mi kha'i rdzas*) and transform them into wealth! Divert the plagues and infectious diseases onto our enemies! Reverse the obstructions of the *btsan* and *bdud* demons towards the enemies! Reverse the obstructions of the *gza'* and *dmu* spirits towards the enemy!”

The Three-headed Black One replied as follows, “In order to reverse the obstructions of the *bdud* and *btsan* demons [this will be needed]. On top of Mount Meru a wish-fulfilling tree on top of which [is] a fluttering golden palace.⁵⁶ Inside that palace reside the father-consort *Brkos rje brang dkar* and the mother-consort *Bu mo bskos mkhan* holding a tally stick of the *bdud* in hand.

At the top of that tally stick, there are three *bdud* demons. Without knowing the names of these three *bdud* demons, will they reverse harm⁵⁷ from the patron? Superior one, Noble Manjushri, please give [me] guidance with instructions!”

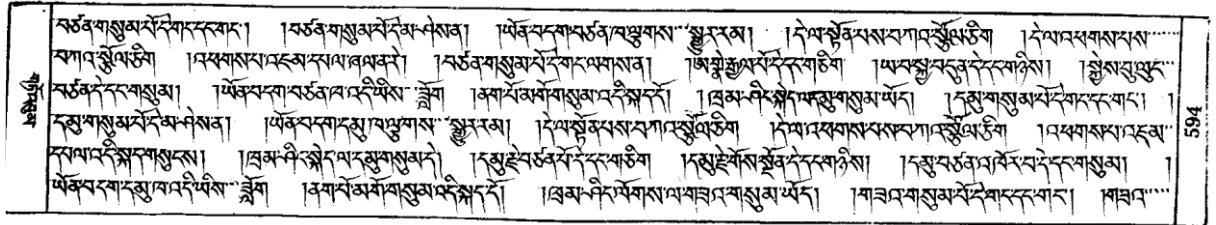
⁵⁵ First, he specified misfortunes that happen to men and women and the third category encompasses everyone and everything else.

⁵⁶ གསེར་མཐའ་ལྗོངས་བུ་འོ་ནང་ཤེད་ཀྱི། / *gser mkhar ldem bu'i nang shed na* Possible meaning: *ldem bu* is a word for a disease, in this context it does not make much sense; *ldem pa* means something unstable (as in moving or vibrating) or a riddle, enigma, parable, allegory; similarly, *ldem po* could be something crooked; *ldem* on its own could be a statue. Since the palace is placed on a tree, there might be some movement, it could be a metaphorical way of expressing its transient, hence mysterious nature.

⁵⁷ The sentence reads as follows: ཡོན་པདག་བདུད་ལ་ལྷག་ལ་ལྷག་ལ་ / *yon bdag bdud kha lcags .. sgyur ram*. In this context the *lcags* might be understood as some danger or harm, usually meaning iron, it can also denote any iron instruments or weapons.

Manjushri said, “As to who are these three *bdud* demons, the first one is *Re ti 'gong g.yag*, the second one is *Nag po bkrag med* and the third one is named *Spyi bdud yag dengs*. Divert the obstructions of the *bdud* away from the patron!”⁵⁸

The Three-headed One asks again, “On the side of the tally stick, there are three *btsan* spirits.



Without knowing the names of these three *btsan* demons, will they reverse harm⁵⁹ from the patron? Superior one, Noble Manjushri, please give [me] instructions!”

Manjushri answers, “As to who are these three *btsan* spirits, the first one is *Agne rgyal po*,⁶⁰ the second one is *Ya ba skya bdun*, and the third one is *Skyes bu lung btsan*. Divert the obstructions of *btsan* away from the patron!”

The Three-headed One asks, “In the middle of the tally stick, there are three *dmu* spirits. Without knowing the names of these three *dmu* spirits, will they reverse harm from the patron? Superior one, Noble Manjushri, please give [me] instructions!”

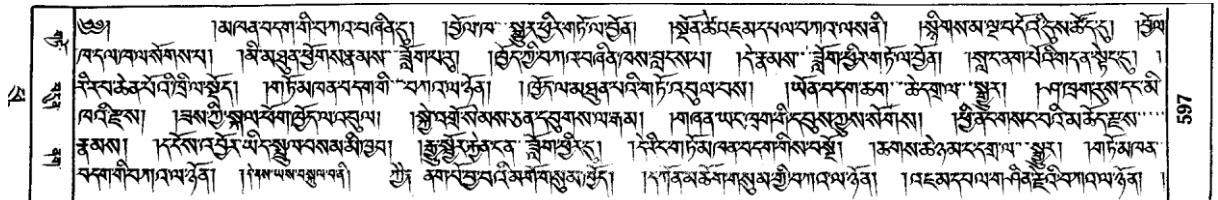
Manjushri answers, “As to who are these three *dmu* spirits in the middle of the tally stick, the first one is *Dmu rje btsan po*,⁶¹ the second one is *Dmu rje gos sngon*⁶² and the third one is *Dmu btsan 'khor ba*⁶³. Divert the obstructions of the *dmu* away from the patron!”

The Three-headed One asks, “On the front side of the tally stick, there are three *gza*’ spirits. Without knowing the names of these three *gza*’ spirits, will they reverse harm from the patron? Superior one, Noble Manjushri, please give [me] instructions!”

⁵⁸ He is asking these three demons to repel the harm that their kind could be causing the sponsor of the ritual.
⁵⁹ The sentence reads as follows: ཡོན་བདག་བདུད་ལ་རྒྱགས་...རྒྱུ་རམ་ / *yon bdag bdud kha lcags .. sgyur ram* In this context the *lcags* might be understood as some danger or harm, usually meaning iron, it can also denote any iron instruments or weapons.
⁶⁰ Agni is associated with the element of fire.
⁶¹ Translates as the powerful king.
⁶² Translates as a powerful *dmu* in blue garments.
⁶³ Translates as the one connected to cyclic existence.

The arrow is the ransom offered to the *gza*’ spirits. The spindle is the ransom offered to the *smān* spirits. The knife is the ransom offered to the *bdud* demons. The spear is the ransom offered to the *btsan* spirits. The thread-cross is the ransom offering of the mind. The *rgyang bu* is the ransom offering of the body. The *ting lo* cake is the ransom offering of the speech. The *’brang rgyas* is the ransom offering of the men. The *smān leb* medicinal tablets are the ransom offerings of the women.

“The promise to reverse the great decline of the patron. As for the praise for the Three-headed Black One for everything previously done, and as for the invitation, say these words: Kyai! You, the Three-headed Black one, to reverse the misfortunes of the world invite the eight trigrams dwelling on top of Mt. Meru along with their entourage, invite them to come here – the eight trigrams and the nine *sme*,⁷⁵ sixty-year cycle etc., many suns, moons planets and stars.”⁷⁶



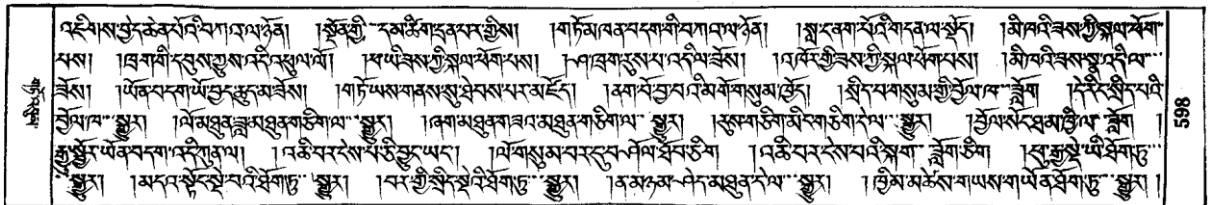
“As the performer of the *gto* ritual, my words shall be followed to repel the misfortunes (*byol kha*). As for the instructions given previously by the Noble Manjushri, in the time of spreading of the five poisons, to reverse the misfortunes (*byol kha*), the infectious diseases (*dal kha*) and such, to reverse the discordances, as you promised, act according to the commands!⁷⁷ To reverse all those, [this] *gto* ritual is performed!

On top of the black iron pan’s seat, seated on the great mountain’s throne, listen to the instructions given by me, the *gto* performer! To you, a suitable *gto* offering is made to divert the obstacle of great decline onto the enemies of the patron! As an offering of sustenance, I bestow upon you the flesh, blood, bone, and offerings of slander. [I offer you] the breath of all living sentient beings and even blood dough offerings; the outer, inner, and secret articles of sacrifice – real and obtained, imagined by the mind, and secret beyond thinking.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Another astrological category. Astrological diagrams.
⁷⁶ Or their cycles.
⁷⁷ Misspelling, instead of a genitive ལྷན་པོ་ / *kyi* it should be an agentive case.
⁷⁸ Denotes the material offerings that are present, offerings manifested by the mind and those that are inconceivable.

As the performer of the *gto*, I dedicate this ritual today to divert the adversity from the sponsor. Divert the great desire and despair onto the enemies! Listen to my words! Activate the offerings⁷⁹ (*yas*)! Kyai!

You, the Three-headed One known as the Black Man, listen to the words of the Three Jewels! Listen to the wrathful manifestation of Manjusri! Listen to 'Jigs byed chen po's words! Remember the promise you had given!



Listen to my words [the ritual performer's]! Sit on the black iron pan on the ground [you, the Three-headed One]! [Instead of] a portion of food of slander, blood is offered. [Instead of] a portion of food of your father, eat this meat, blood, and bones. [Instead of] a portion of food of surrounding people, eat these various kinds of slander (*mi kha*).⁸⁰ The possessions of the patron included – do not waste them! Let this *gto* ritual plant [its seed] in this place! You, the Three-headed One, known as the Black Man, reverse the misfortunes (*byol kha*) of the three spheres of existence! Divert the misfortunes (*byol kha*) today! Divert them towards [someone] with a similar year and similar month!⁸¹ Divert them towards someone [born] on a concordant day and a concordant week! Divert them towards someone with the same lineage and same name! Divert them to the lowest category of beings, dogs! Delay the day of death for this generous patron by three years, no matter what! Repel the obstacle of certain death! Divert it onto the hundred people of the upper valleys (*phu brgya*)!⁸² Divert it onto the thousand people of the lower

⁷⁹ ཡས་ / *yas* is a Bon term for offerings, could also be demons of a certain type.

⁸⁰ The meaning of this part could be interpreted in a way that suggests that these offerings are given to the Three-headed one instead of the slander, father, and relatives – the living. The words *instead of* are not actually conveyed here but referring to the beginning of the ritual text when the Three-headed One threatened to eat his parents and family it can be understood that the offerings given to him are instead of the aforementioned. The structure of the sentences is as follows: མི་ཁའི་ཟས་ཀྱི་སྐྱལ་ཕྱོག་པས་། གཤམ་གྱི་དབུས་ཀྱི་འདུལ་ལོ། བ་ཡི་ཟས་ཀྱི་སྐྱལ་ཕྱོག་པས་། གཤམ་གྱི་ཟས་པ་འདི་ལ་ཟོས། འཁོར་གྱི་ཟས་ཀྱི་སྐྱལ་ཕྱོག་པས་། མི་ཁའི་ཟས་སྐྱལ་འདི་ལ་། མེ་མེད་ལོ། / *mi kha'i zas kyi skal phog .. pas / khrag gi dbus kyus 'di 'phul lo / pha yi zas kyi skal phog pas / sha khrag rus pa 'di la zos / 'khor gyi zas kyi skal phog pas / mi kha'i zas sna 'di la .. zos*. The literal meaning is more like “a portion of food of your father that is meant for you, eat this meat, blood and bones.”

⁸¹ Divert them onto others who were born in the same year or month – compatible victims.

⁸² ཕུ་བྱེ་ཡི་ཕོག་ཏུ་། ལྷུར་ / *phu rgya sde yi thog tu ...sgyur*. There is probably a misspelling of the word hundred, should be བརྒྱ [brgya] not ལྷུ [rgya] as there seems to be a numeral connection between the lines. After the supposed hundred comes the number thousand and the next line mentions limitless.

valleys (*mda' thong*)! Divert it onto however many possible in between! Divert it onto the ones of similar age! Divert it onto neighbors left and right!

ལྔ	། འཇམ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་།	ལྔ། རྩམ་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།
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	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།
	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།	། ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་།

Now as for the diverting of the trigram's misfortunes. Kyai!

You, the Three-headed one known as the Black man, you are the son of the five poisons' composition. The five poisons are held in your mind. You are the five poisons spreading. Take the ransom of the old man *Khen pa*. Avert the misfortune of his death! Take the ransom of the old woman *Khon ma*. Avert the misfortune of her death! Accept the ransom of the son *Zon*.⁸³ Avert the misfortune of his death! Accept the ransom of the daughter *Zin*.⁸⁴ Avert the misfortune of her death. Accept the ransom of the son *Dwa*.⁸⁵ Avert the misfortune of his death! Accept the ransom of the daughter *Li*.⁸⁶ Avert the misfortune of her death! Accept the ransom of the nephew *Gin*.⁸⁷ Avert the misfortune of his death! Accept the ransom of the niece *Kham*.⁸⁸ Avert the misfortune of her death!

Then, avert the obstacles of the twelve-year cycle! Kyai!

The first year, the year of the Rat! [You] with a human body and a rat's head, holding a water-vessel in your hand!⁸⁹ Take the ransom of the year of the rat and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the rat!

As for the year of the ox, [you with] a human body and the head of an ox, carrying a [golden?] wheel⁹⁰ in your hand, take the ransom of the ox year, and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the ox!

⁸³ One of the eight trigrams, *Zon* represents air and is connected to the south-east.
⁸⁴ One of the eight trigrams, *Zin* represents wood and is connected to the east.
⁸⁵ One of the eight trigrams, *Dwa* represents iron and is connected the west.
⁸⁶ One of the eight trigrams, *Li* represents fire and is connected the south.
⁸⁷ One of the eight trigrams, *Gin* represents mountain and is connected the north-east.
⁸⁸ One of the eight trigrams, *Kham* represents water and is connected to the north.
⁸⁹ Describing the representative of each year cycle. Starting with the rat king – asking him to avert the misfortunes. A similar structure continues for the rest of the years of the twelve-year cycle. Each part addresses one of the years.
⁹⁰ Here we only have: “ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་” / *phyag na sa yi 'khor* but in a similar context in ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པ་ལོ་ལྷན་པ་ལྷན་པ་། [Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum] The ox year representative is carrying a golden wheel.

[golden?] wheel⁹², take the ransom of the sheep year and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the sheep!

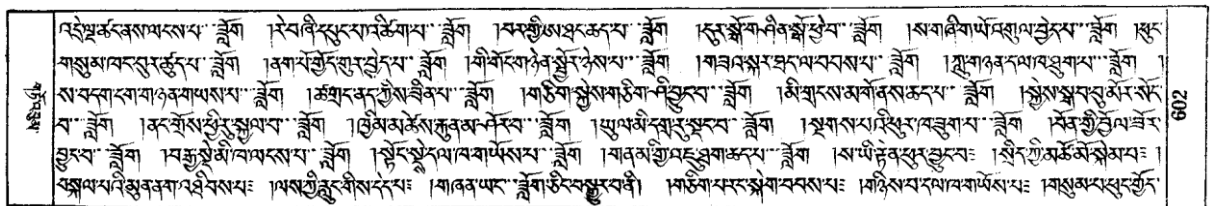
As for the year of the monkey, [you with] a human body and the head of a monkey, holding blazing meteoric iron in your hand, take the ransom of the monkey year and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the monkey!

As for the year of the bird, [you with] a human body and a head of a bird, carrying an iron wheel in your hand, take the ransom of the bird year and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the bird!

As for the year of the dog, [you with] a human body and a head of a dog, carrying a [golden?] wheel⁹³, take the ransom of the dog year and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the dog!

As for the year of the pig, [you with] a human body and the head of a pig, holding a water wheel in your hand, take the ransom of the pig year and avert the evil obstacles of the year of the pig!

Kyai! You, the Three-headed One known as the Black Man, reverse the misfortunes of the three spheres of existence! Reverse the misfortunes of the five elements! Reverse the discordant enemy relations of the trigrams! Reverse the descent of the indisputable *bdud* demons!



Reverse the rising of all the five 'dre!⁹⁴⁹⁵ [*re bzhi dpung pa 'tshig pa zlog*]⁹⁶ Reverse the weary of the in between! Avert the opening of the dead's tomb! Avert the base of the earth shaking!

⁹² Again, the sheep year representative in རྩིང་པའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། [*Srid pa 'i gto nag mgo gsum*] is holding a golden vase but here we only have “ཕྱག་ན་ས་ཡི་འཁོར་” / *phyag na sa yi 'khor*.

⁹³ Here again in རྩིང་པའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། [*Srid pa 'i gto nag mgo gsum*] in a similar context the representative of the dog year is described as wearing golden garments and being made from gold.

⁹⁴ འདྲེ་ལ། / *dre lnga* Also refer to types of astrological inauspicious relationships. Gyurme, *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings*, 107-108.

⁹⁵ With this sentence starts a quite obscure passage, where the meaning of the individual sentences seems to be connected, but a suitable cohesive translation was beyond my reach even after consulting several native speakers. To my knowledge, no parallel translation is available.

⁹⁶ This sentence remains unclear. རེ་བཞི་དབུང་པ་འཛིག་པ་རྩོག་། / *re bzhi dpung pa 'tshig pa zlog* could refer to some kind of an obstacle connected to the sixty-four ways of divination, but I could not find confirmation. (A word for word translation: reverse the malicious sixty-four armies?)

Prevent the three types of beings from entering the house!⁹⁷ [*nag po gyod gur byed pa ... zlog*]⁹⁸
 Avert the evil inauspicious relations of *Gi* and *Gong*!⁹⁹ Reverse the spreading descend of the
 planets and stars! Do not let us be afflicted with diseases caused by the *klu* and *gnyan* spirits!
 [*sa bdag ngag gnyan gyas pa .. zlog*]¹⁰⁰ Avert the diseases of hot and cold temperatures! Avert
 one dying when one is born! Avert the decrease of the population! Avert the spread of [only]
 women being born!¹⁰¹ Avert secrets¹⁰² being spread around! Do not let the neighbour's thief
 escape! Avert the hatred among our people!¹⁰³ Avert the curses of mantras! Divert the *byol zor*
 of *Bon*!¹⁰⁴ Avert the hundred kinds of slander!¹⁰⁵ Avert the thousand kinds of infectious
 diseases!¹⁰⁶ Do not let the grasping rope of the sky to be cut!¹⁰⁷ Reverse the rising of the earth's
 tethering stake! Avert the drying up of the world's oceans! Prevent the black darkness covering
 the eons! Reverse the subtle energy-winds that carry the karmic deeds!¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, as for averting and reversing [misfortunes]: first, avert one's own obstacles
 [befalling on them];¹⁰⁹ secondly, avert the spreading harm of infectious diseases, third, avert
 the occurrence of regrettable disasters;

⁹⁷ The meaning of this sentence remains unclear, ལུང་གསུམ་། / *phung gsum* could refer to some three disastrous things/ones or also the three groups of beings (noble, evil and those in between) connected to the aggregates of merit. འཕུང་འདྲེ། would be a disaster causing འདྲེ། demon.

⁹⁸ Sentence unclear. ནག་པོ་གྱོད་གུར་བྱེད་པ་.. ཟུག་། / *nag po khyod gur byed pa .. zlog*. Connection to a dispute or law? The word “tent” seems out of place and might be a misspelling.

⁹⁹ Assuming this is a misspelling of the trigrams *Gin* and *Khon*. The relationship pairing between these two parkas is considered inauspicious.

¹⁰⁰ Meaning is uncertain. Connected to the *sa bdag* spirits.

¹⁰¹ Which ultimately leads to a population decrease.

¹⁰² “Inner discussions being carried out.”

¹⁰³ Hatred among the countrymen – “hatred within the community” or “hatred among neighbors.” These expressions convey the idea of animosity within a smaller group rather than a large population.

¹⁰⁴ ལྷོས་ཟོར་། / *byol zor* Bon rituals to avert harm.

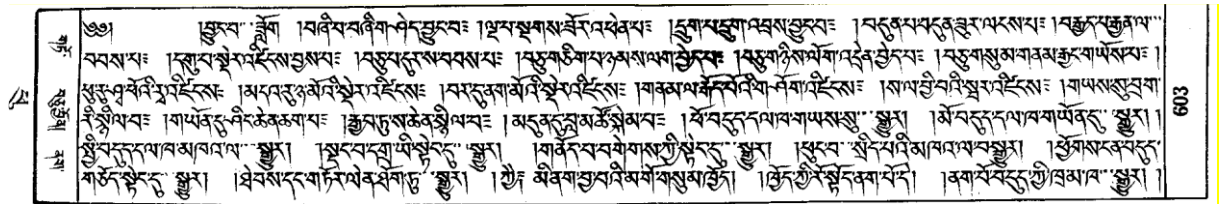
¹⁰⁵ The number hundred may also be used instead of many, nevertheless, whether it's “a hundred” or “many,” it is a lot.

¹⁰⁶ Similarly, here the number thousand may denote many.

¹⁰⁷ འཇུ་ཐག་། / *ju thag*

¹⁰⁸ “The inevitable force of the ripening effect of former deeds.”

¹⁰⁹ Probably means the obstacles of one's own year of birth. The following part will describe various inauspicious occurrences which are a result of divinations or astrological calculations.



fourth, repel the “fourth year harmer;”¹¹⁰ fifth, repel the sorcery cast [upon one]; sixth, repel the [harmful] results of the sixth [year]; seventh, repel the conflict of the seventh [year]; eighth, repel [*brgyan la babs pa* ..];¹¹¹ ninth, repel the one snatching with claws; tenth, repel the descend to the tomb;¹¹² eleventh, repel the hand of deterioration;¹¹³ twelfth, repel the corrupting influences; thirteenth, avert the sky shaking!

[Avert these occurrences:]

Stags in the upper valley clashing antlers, fish down below battling with their fins,¹¹⁴ crows (*nag mo*) fighting with claws in between,¹¹⁵ vultures fighting with wings in the sky, mice in the ground fighting with claws, to the right a mountain rock crumbling, to the left a mighty tree breaking, behind the earth collapsing, in the front a sacred lake¹¹⁶ drying up.

Divert the misfortune of diseases cast on men by the *bdud* to the right, divert the misfortune of diseases cast on women by the *bdud* to the left. Divert the misfortune of diseases inflicted by the *bdud* upon anyone. In addition, divert the anger onto the enemies, divert the harming

¹¹⁰ Charles Ramble describes a similar line appearing in སྲིད་པའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། [*Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum*] as “Fourth-year harmer” signifies a year that is inauspicious because it falls four years before or after one’s own year of birth. Such years are known respectively as the “upper fourth harmer” / *yar bzhi gshed* and the “lower fourth harmer” / *mar bzhi gshed*.”

¹¹¹ Parallel line in Ramble’s text: བརྒྱད་པ་བརྒྱད་པ་གཏོ་ནི། / *brgyad pa brgyad ngan gto'i*; translation given: may it repel the “Evil eight”. In the case of our text a mistake of misspelling the number eight seems unlikely: བརྒྱད་པ་བརྒྱུན་ལ་བབས་པ་..། / *brgyad pa brgyan la babs pa*. *Brgyan* could mean ornament, ornamented or even gamble or bet, with *babs* – falling into a gamble? Remains unclear.

¹¹² Repel the time of death?

¹¹³ Charles Ramble translated it as the “Clutch of Death.” See Kalpa-bon.com, “*Srid pa gto mgo gsum*.”

¹¹⁴ The text literally says claws, but fins seem more suitable for fish, alternatively could be meant as sharp teeth. The original also says “in the lower valley” which again for fish, “down below” seems like the better choice.

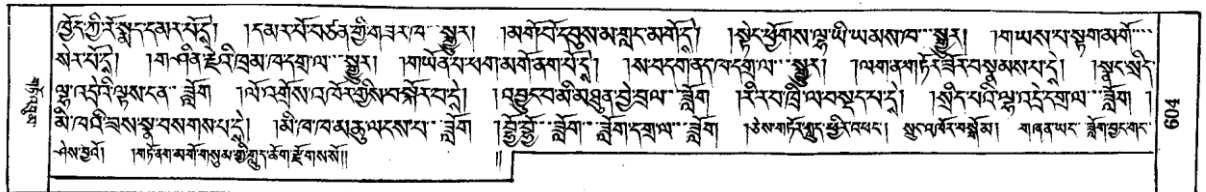
¹¹⁵ In སྲིད་པའི་གཏོ་ནག་མགོ་གསུམ། [*Srid pa'i gto nag mgo gsum*], 14v – བར་གྱི་བྱ་རོ་རྒྱུང་མྱེ། / *bar gyi bya ro rlung khye* it is clarified that *nag po* in our text could mean a bird (crow or a raven – *bya nag*), the two preceding sentences also have an identical meaning to the ones in our text. Alternatively, the translation of *nag mo* as women is possible but unlikely as it would break the animal theme. See Kalpa-bon.com, “*Srid pa gto mgo gsum*.”

¹¹⁶ ལྷ་མཚོ། / *bla mtsho* lake of the gods and spirits.

obstructions, divert the destruction into the space of the universe, divert the *bdud gcod*¹¹⁷ in the inauspicious direction, [*thebs dang gtor len thog tu .. sgyur*].¹¹⁸

Kyai! You the Three-headed one known as the Black man!

That black upper body of yours, the evil influence of *khram kha*¹¹⁹ of the black *bdud* demons... avert!



With that red lower body of yours, the *gzar kha*¹²⁰ of the red *btsan* spirits...divert! With that middle head of a bull, divert the epidemics (*yams kha*) of the upward place of deities of the gods! With that yellow tiger head on the right, divert *Gshin rje*'s harmful deceit (*khram kha*) upon the enemies! With that black pig head on the left, divert the plagues (*nad kha*) of the *sa bdag* spirits onto the enemies! With the throwing torma held in your hand, reverse the evil signs of the phenomenal world of gods and demons! By the turning of the year-cycles, reverse the dispersing of conflicting elements! By [one] sitting on the throne of Mount Meru, divert the spirits and demons of the phenomenal world onto the enemies! By the amassed various kinds of food of slander, avert the occurrence of slanderous disputes!

Bhyo Bhyo!

Reverse, reverse onto the enemies, reverse! Saying this, throw the ransom torma! Visualize the protection circle. And more, reverse, cleanse whatever is known!

The Three-headed one's *gto* ransom ritual is complete!

¹¹⁷ Ritual practice of “cutting off the demons.”

¹¹⁸ This part is unclear: རེབས་དང་གཏོར་ལེན་ཏུ་ཉག་ཏུ་...རྒྱུར། / *thebs dang gtor len thog tu .. sgyur*. *gtor len* is a synonym of *bya rog* a crow – as a crow is the bird that takes the torma offering.

¹¹⁹ ཁྲམ་ཀམ། / *khram kha* is a sort of a tally stick but mostly shaped like a board or a plate with carvings representing the demon. But in this context it means the evil misfortunes of “*khram kha* of a king-year” a similar context as *dal kha*, *byol kha*, etc., meaning harmful occurrences.

¹²⁰ Unclear, reverse the hook of the *btsan*?

Concluding notes

The ritual text of *Gto nag mgo gsum gyi cho ga bzhugs so* is translated and analyzed within the broader framework of Tibetan rituals in this thesis. This study has sought to delve into the textual and ritualistic complexities of the *Black Gto of the Three-Headed One*, while also offering a translation of this ritual text, which had not been previously explored. Through the analysis of the ritual's structure, symbolism, and narrative, several key insights have emerged.

The translation of the ritual offers a glimpse into the way these texts are crafted in the Tibetan language. The translation seeks to honor the specific linguistic nuances by not overly naturalizing the text, so it retains a sense of its original ethos, even if it might sound somewhat unfamiliar to an English speaker. Translating these types of texts presents significant challenges, particularly due to the use of abbreviations and the strict syllable count, which leaves little room for clarification. Consequently, understanding these texts often requires knowledge that extends beyond the words themselves, necessitating the consultation of additional sources to fully grasp their meaning. Throughout the translation process, numerous challenges have arisen due to the text's concise nature and the strict 7-syllable sentence structure, which necessitates abbreviations of words or phrases. Understanding certain terms proved particularly difficult, especially when dealing with specific astrological concepts and the more obscure aspects related to effigies.

The effigy of the three-headed demon, central to the ritual, serves as both a representation of the malevolent forces being subdued and a tool through which these forces can be manipulated and repurposed for the protection of the ritual's patron. In this way, it adheres to the traditional structure of rituals of this nature.

The ritual vividly reflects a syncretic religious landscape, where local deities, spirits and various astrological entities are seamlessly woven into a Buddhist framework. The examination of the spirits, demons, astrological and divinatory components mentioned in the ritual text provides a glimpse into the understanding of Tibetan demonology and cosmology. The categorization of spirits, each associated with different forms of misfortune, reflects a rich and complex spiritual taxonomy that has been a part of Tibetan cultural and religious practices for centuries. These spirits are not merely abstract entities but are deeply embedded in the cultural consciousness of Tibetan communities, influencing everything from medical practices to social cohesion.

The comparative analysis with a similar ritual from the Bon tradition has shed light on the nuances and variations within Tibetan ritual practices. While common elements exist, such as

the use of effigies and the invocation of local spirits, the differences in narrative details and ritual procedures highlight the rich diversity within Tibetan religious practices. A particularly significant and illustrative distinction is the invocation of Kong tse in the Bon ritual, contrasted with the invocation of Manjushri in the Nyingma ritual. However, even when comparing our ritual text to a version described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz, which belongs to the same Buddhist tradition – the Nyingma school – it becomes clear that slight variations can arise depending on the specific ritual tradition or regional practice, even within the same sect.

In reflecting on the integration of Bon practices into monastic Bon, it is worth considering the possibility that a more “pagan” or “indigenous” version may have existed, potentially serving as a source of inspiration for the Buddhist versions of this ritual. Certain cultural parallels do exist, such as those observed in the Naxi tradition, where Joseph Rock describes a version of a nine-headed black man¹²¹. Although it is plausible that Buddhist rituals may have drawn inspiration from earlier Bon practices, the extent of this influence remains uncertain. What does appear consistent, however, is the preservation of the core ritual elements, albeit in a more simplified form within the Buddhist context. Moreover, the charter myths associated with these rituals demonstrate a degree of flexibility, as seen in the shifts from figures like Kong tse to Manjushri or Yamāntaka.

In conclusion, this thesis has sought to shed light on the “Black Gto of the Three-Headed One” as a microcosm of Tibetan ritual practice. By analyzing the ritual text within its broader cultural and religious context, it has become clear that Tibetan rituals are not just religious ceremonies but are integral to the fabric of Tibetan life. They serve as mechanisms for coping with life’s uncertainties, for maintaining social and spiritual harmony, and for connecting with the broader spheres of existence.

The study of this ritual also contributes to a greater understanding of the ways in which Tibetan Buddhism has evolved over time, incorporating and adapting indigenous practices into its

¹²¹ Many of Joseph Rock’s photographs from his time spent with the Naxi people are available to view online through Harvard’s HOLLIS image database. Some of these photographs show a nine-headed effigy (demon) during a ritual ceremony at his house. For comparison the heads of the effigy are: serow, pig, bear (left); rabbit, donkey, ghost (center); ghost, crow, dog (right). See the photo here: https://images.hollis.harvard.edu/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=HVD_VIAolvwork123761&context=L&vid=HVD_IMAGES&search_scope=default_scope&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US Accessed August 13, 2024.

religious framework. This syncretism has allowed Tibetan Buddhism to remain vibrant and relevant, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of Tibetan spiritual life.

By providing an analysis of the "Black Gto of the Three-Headed One," this thesis adds to the existing knowledge on Tibetan rituals but also invites further exploration into the rich and diverse world of Tibetan spiritual practices. It underscores the need for continued research into the ways in which rituals function within Tibetan culture, not only as religious acts but as essential components of the Tibetan way of life.

Transliteration of the ritual text

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'phags pa 'jam dpal la phyag 'tshal lo / gto nag mgo gsum gyi yas bas gas sogs la / sla nga'i nang du ri rab kyi gdan la / mi nag mgo gsum pa / dbus glad mgo dmar po / gyal stag mgo ser bo / ga yon phag mgo nag bo bya / phyag gnyis gtor ma 'dzin pa / ro stod nag po / ro smod dmar po / pho khram / ngar glur nyi shu rtsa gcig / khrag gi dbus dkyus / chang zan / sbang zan / sha sna / rus pa / btsod / zhun / grang kho / mi kha'i rdzas / thal skya / lo skor bcu gnyis mda' khra / 'phang khra / rgyang bu sogs 'dzugs / de nas gyer ba ni / kyai /

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med nam mkha' stong pa la / rlung las 'byung ba rim brtsegs chags / phyi yi rgya mtsho chen po la / mha gser gyi rus sbal srid / de yang 'byung ba lnga las grub / khen pa rgad po la sogs pa'i / spar kha gza' tshang brgyad du srid / spar kha ba gza' mi brgyad po de / gcig srog gcig gis bskyed pa dang / gcig bsus gcig gis byed pa dang / phywa nyams pa dang phywa gdon pa / rnam smin sgo ba la sogs byung / gcig bdud gcig gis byed pa dang /

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gcig 'dres gcig la gnod pa dang / lus chad pa dang phywa nyams byung / spar kha bza' mi 'khrug pa las / le lan phar ded tshur ded byung / dus tshod gnas skabs de tsam na / khon ma bya ba'i rgan mo de / 'dod chags drag po'i nad kyis btab / smad du 'dod chags chu ltar khol / stod du zhe sdang me ltar 'bar / khon ma bya ba'i rgan mo des / nyin gsum dang ni mtshan gsum du / pha gcig khen pa rgad po la / bos kyang 'ongs su ma btub par / mtshan mo yid kyis .. bshos pa las / gung zhag re zhig lon pa dang / khong rtsal de ni dril ba byung / zla dgu ngo bcu lon tsan / mi min 'dre yi bu gcig skyes / mgo ni gsum du byung ba dang / mgo gcig dbus ma glang gi mgo / gyas ba stag la g.yon ma phag / ro stod nag la ro smad dmar / mig bgrad kha gdangs mchen ba gcigs / 'dzigs su rung ba'i bu gcig skyes / khon ma rgan mo'i zhal na re / khen ba rgan po tshur nyon dang / a'o cag pha ma gnyis kyi ni / kyai ma las ..

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ngan ci bas gas ba / e ma sems can 'di 'dra ba / 'jig rten khams na skyes ba dang / kyai ma nga 'jigs da re 'jigs / de skad ces ni smras pa dang / khen pa rgan po thugs khros nas / las ngan khon ma rgan mo khyod / khyod re'i dor ma'i nang du bstum / rgya mtsho nang du bor zhig byas / bu nag po de yis 'di skad zer / pha khen pa rgad po tshur nyon dang / nga rgya mtsho'i nang du bor ba las / nga yi zas skal su la byed / nga ni sha khrag rus ba za / nga yi skom skal

gang la byas / nga ni khrag dang dri chu thung / nga yi chos skal gang la byas / nga ni sems can
dbugs la rgam / nga la zas dang skom med na / pha ma rang yang zos te 'chi / spun zla ming
srid zos te 'chi / tsha bo tsha mo zos te chi / de min gzhan yang za bo zer / bu yi de skad smras
pa dang khen pa rgad po bya ba de / gnam la kha bltas 'o ..dod 'bod / 'phags pa 'jam dpal thugs
rje can / bdag cag rnams la bskyab tu gsol

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ni smras pa dang / skad cig de ni yud tsam la / 'phags pa 'jam dpal dngos su byon / 'phags
pa 'jam dpal zhal na re / kyee / mi min de ni 'dre yi bu / 'dre min de ni bdud kyi bu / bdud kyi
rigs la gshin rje'i bu / snying rje med pa'i las ngan po / h'um / nga ni thams cad 'dul ba yin /
nga ni gshin rje gshed po yin / ya ma h'um zhes brjod ba dang / gshin rje 'jigs byed glang mgo
can / dbu ni nyi shu rtsa gcig la / phyag ni bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis brkyangs / mtshon cha sna
tshogs 'bar ba bsname / zhabs brgyad phyogs mtshams brgyad du mnan / zhal nas ya ma h'um
phat sgrog / nag po mgo gsum hub kyis 'thung / zhal du 'jib kyi mid nas su / zhag gsum bar du
khong du bzhag / nad rigs tsha grang gnyis kyi mnan / de nas phyi ru thon nas ni / thang la
khrem gyi bor tsa na / brgyal dang de ni lhogs se lhog / 'dar dang de ni tshums se tshum / kho
yis de skad smras pa dang / 'jigs ..

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byed chen po nga la nyon / khyod kyi ci gsungs nga yis nyan / ci skad gsungs pa bdag gi bgyis
/ nag po mgo gsum de skad smras / 'jigs byed chen pos bka' stsal pa / nga ni gshin rje gshed po
yin / khyod kyi snying khrag ngal yod / nga ni stong gsum 'jigs byed yin / nga yi bka' las ma 'da'
bar / 'jam dpal gzhon nu'i bka' la nyon / de skad zer nas mkha' la gshegs / 'jam dpal gzhon nu
krong gis byon / 'phags pa 'jam dpal zhal na re / khyod ni mi min 'dre yi bu / khyod ni las ngan
bdud kyi bu / bdud kyi rigs la gshin rje dngos / khyod kyi mgo bo dbus ma de / phrag dog che
ba glang gi mgo / khyod kyi mgo bo gyas / pa ni / nga rgyal che ba stag gi mgo / khyod kyi
mgo bo gyon ma ni / gti mug che ba phag gi mgo / khyod kyi ro stod nag po de / zhe sdang che
ba pha yi rigs / khyod kyi ro smad dmar po de / 'dod chags che ba ma yi rigs / khyod ni dug
lnga 'dus pa'i bu / snyigs ma lnga bdo'i dus 'di ru / dug lnga gdug pa dar ba'i tshe / srid pa'i
byol kha .. khyod kyis sgyur reverse!

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lo skag zla skag khyod kyis .. zlog / gnod par byed pa khyod kyis .. zlog / srid bu tshang nas ba
skyed par gyis / sdang ba'i dgra pa bgegs khyod kyi .. sgral / khyod la dam tshig de ltar phob /
de skad ces ni gsungs pa dang / nag po mgo gsum 'di skad zer / 'phags pa 'jam dpal tshur gson

dang / snyigs ma lnga bdo'i .. dus tshod 'dir / srid pa'i byol kha .. sgyur ba la / nga la mi 'tshal
dgu zhig 'tshal / pho bdud dal kha .. sgyur ba la / skyes pa'i stag chas rdzongs su zhu / mo bdud
dal .. kha sgyur ba la / za ma'i stag ma rdzongs su zhu / spyi bdud dal kha .. sgyur ba la / nam
mkha' la sogs rdzongs su zhu / mda' khra 'phang khra rdzongs su zhu / gri mdung la .. sogs
rdzongs su zhu / zas skal nor skal rdzongs su zhu / de skad ces ni smras pa dang / 'phags pa 'jam
dpal zhal na re / mi nag bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / srid pa'i byol kha .. sgyur ba la / chag .. che
nyam nga .. zlog pa dang / ltas ngan cho 'phrul .. zlog pa na / snang srid thams cad rdzongs
su 'bul / zas su dgra bo'i sha khrag

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rol / nor du mi kha'i rdzas rnams 'khol / nad kha rims kha dgra la .. sgyur / btsan kha bdud kha
dgra la .. sgyur / gza' kha dmu kha dgra la .. sgyur / de skad ces ni gsungs pa dang / mi nag mgo
gsum zhal na re / bdud kha btsan kha sgyur ba la / ri rab ri bo'i rtse mo nas / dpag bsam shing
gi rtse mo na / gser mkhar ldem bu'i nang shed na / yab ni brkos rje brang dkar dang / yum ni
bu mo bskos mkhan bzhugs / lag na bdud kyi khram shing bsams / khram shing rtse la bdud
gsum yod / bdud gsum po de gang dang gang / bdud gsum po de ma shes na / yon bdag bdud
kha lcags .. sgyur ram / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig / de la 'phags pas bka' stsol cig / 'phags
pa 'jam dpal zhal na re / bdud gsum po de gang lags na / re ti 'gong g.yag de dang gcig / nag
po bkrag med de dang gnyis / spyi bdud yag dengs de dang gsum / yon bdag bdud kha 'di yis ..
zlog / yang cig mgo gsum zhal na re / khram shing zur la btsan gsum yod

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btsan gsum po de gang gang / btsan gsum po de ma shes na / yon bdag btsan kha lcags .. sgyur
ram / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig / de la 'phags pas .. bka' stsol cig / 'phags pa 'jam dpal zhal
na re / btsan gsum po de gang lags na / agne rgyal po de dang gcig / ya ba skya bdun de dang
gnyis / skyes bu lung .. btsan de dang gsum / yon bdag btsan kha 'di yis .. zlog / nag po mgo
gsum 'di skad do / khram shing sked la dmu gsum yod / dmu gsum po de gang dang gang / dmu
gsum po de ma shes na / yon bdag dmu kha lcags .. sgyur ram / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig /
de la 'phags pas bka' stsol cig / 'phags pa 'jam dpal 'di skad gsungs / khram shing sked la dmu
gsum de / dmu rje btsan po de dang gcig / dmu rje gos sngon de dang gnyis / dmu btsan 'khor
ba de dang gsum / yon bdag dmu kha 'di yis .. zlog / nag po mgo gsum 'di skad do / khram
shing logs la gza' gsum yod / gza' gsum po de gang dang gang gza' ..

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gsum po de ma shes na / yon bdag gza' kha lcags .. sgyur ram / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig / de la mkhyen rab bka' stsol cig / de la 'phags pas bka' stsol cig / 'phags pa 'jam dpal zhal na re / khram shing logs la gza' gsum de / gza' ri btsan po de dang gcig / gza' rgod sngon po dang gnyis / gza' sman rgyal mo de dang gsum / yon bdag gza' kha 'di yis zlog / nag po mgo gsum 'di skad smras / khram shing smad la klu gsum yod / klu gsum po de gang dang gang / klu gsum po de ma shes na / yon bdag klu kha lcags .. sgyur ram / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig / de la 'phags .. 5.line: pas bka' stsol cig / 'phags pa 'jam dpal zhal na re / khram shing smad kyi klu gsum de / gtsug na rin chen de dang gcig / dga' po 'jog po de dang gnyis / mtha' yas dung skyong de dang gsum / yon bdag klu kha 'di yis .. zlog / nag po mgo gsum 'di ltar smras / mda' khra si yi yul nas byung / 'phang khra su yi yul

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gri ni su yi yul nas byung / mdung ni su yi yul nas byung / nam mkha' ci yi glud du 'bul / rgyang bu ci yi glud du 'bul / ting lo ci yi glud du 'bul / 'brang rgyas ci yi glud du 'bul / sman leb ci yi glud 'bul / de la ston pas bka' stsol cig / mda' khra gza' yi glud du 'bul / 'phang khra sman gyi glud du 'bul / gri ni bdud kyi glud du 'bul / mdud ni btsan gyi glud du 'bul / nam mkha' sems kyi glud du 'bul / rgyang bu lus kyi glud du 'bul / ting lo ngag gi glud du 'bul / / 'brang rgyas pho yi .. glud du 'bul / sman leb mo yi glud du 'bul / zhes yon bdag gi chag .. che .. zlog par dam bca' 'o / yan chad sngon du song nas mgo gsum bstod pa spyen 'dren pa ni .. 'di skad do / kyee ; nag po bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / srid pa'i byol kha .. sgyur ba'i phyir / ri rab chen po'i steng phyogs na / spar kha brgyad sogs 'khor dang bcas / gnas 'dir spyen 'dren gtol byon / spar kha brgyad dang sme ba dgu / lo 'gros drug cu la sogs pa / nyi zla gza' skar mang po rnams / gto ..

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mkhan bdag gi bka' bzhin du / byol kha .. sgyur phyir gto la byon / sngon tshe 'jam dpal bka' las ni / snyigs ma lnga bdo'i dus tshod du / byol kha dal kha la sogs pa / mi mthun phyogs rnams .. zlog pa ru / khyod kyi bka' bzhin khas blangs pa / de rnams .. zlog phyir gto la byon / sla nga nag po'i gdan steng du / ri rib chen po'i khri la stod / gto mkhan bdag gi .. bka' la nyon / khyod la mthun pa'i gto 'bul bas / yon bdag chag .. che dgra la .. sgyur / sha khrag rus dang mi kha'i rdzas / zas kyi skal phog khyod la 'bul / skye 'gro sems can dbugs la rgam / gzhan yang khrag gi dbus kyus sogs / phyi nang gsang ba'i mchod rdzas .. rnams / dngos 'byor yid sprul bsam mi khyab / rgyu sbyor rkyen ngan .. zlog phyir du / de ring gto mkhan bdag gis bsngo / chags che nyam nga dgra la .. sgyur / gto mkhan .. bdag gi bka' la nyon / de nas yas

bskul ba ni / kyee / nag po bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / dkon mchog gsum gyi bka' la nyon / 'jam dpal gshin rje'i bka' la nyon /

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'jigs byed chen po'i bka' la nyon / sngon gyi .. dam tshig dran par gyis / gto mkhan bdag gi bka' la nyon / sla nga nag po'i gdan la stod / mi kha'i zas kyi skal phog .. pas / khrag gi dbus kyus 'di 'phul lo / pha yi zas kyi skal phog pas / sha khrag rus pa 'di la zos / 'khor gyi zas kyi skal phog pas / mi kha'i zas sna 'di la .. zos / yon bdag yo byad chud ma zos / gto yas gnas su thebs par mdzod / nag po bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / srid pa gsum gyi byol kha .. zlog / de ring srid pa'i byol kha ..sgyur / lo mthun zla mthun gcig la .. sgyur / zhag mthun gza' mthun gcig la .. sgyur / rus gcig ming gcig de la .. sgyur / byol song tha ma khyi la .. zlog / rgyu sbyor yon bdag 'di kun la / 'chi bar nges pa ci byung yang / lo gsum bar du bshol thob cig / 'chi bar nges ba'i skag ..zlog cig / phu rgya sde yi thog tu ..sgyur / mda' stong sde ba'i thog tu .. sgyur / bar gyi srid sde'i thog tu .. sgyur / na mnyam shed mthun de la .. sgyur / khyim mtshes gyas gyon thog tu .. sgyur

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de nas spar kha'i bzlog ba ni / kyee / nag po bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / khyod ni dug lnga 'dus pa'i bu / dug lnga de ni sems la bcangs / dug .. lnga rgyas ba'i phung po khyod / khen pa rgad po'i glud longs las / rgad po de yi shi skag .. zlog / khon ma rgyan mo'i glud longs las / rgyan mo de yi shi skag .. zlog // bu pho zon gyi glud longs las / bu pho de yi shi skag .. zlog / bu mo zin gyi glud longs las / bu mo de yi shi skag .. zlog / bu pho dwa yi glud longs las / bu pho chung ba'i shi skag .. zlog / bu mo li yi glud longs las / bu mo chung ba'i shi skag .. zlog / tsha po gin gyi glud longs las / tsha bo de yi shi skag .. zlog / tsha mo kham gyi glud longs las / tsha mo de yi shi skag .. zlog / de nas lo'i bzlog pa ni / kyee / lo gcig dang po byi ba'i lo / mi lus byi ba'i mgo bo can / phyag na chu yi rgyal pa bsnams / byi lo pa yi glud longs las / byi lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / ces 'gre 'o / lo gcig de ni glang gi lo / mi lus glang gi mgo bo can /

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phyag nas yi 'khor lo bsnams / glang lo pa yi glud longs las / glang lo pa li skag zlog cig / lo gcig de ni stag gi lo / mi lus stag gi mgo bo can / phyag na shing gi lo 'dab bsnams / stag lo pa yi glud longs las / stag lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / lo gcig de ni yos kyi lo / mi lus yos kyi mgo bo can / phyag na shing gi 'bras bu bsnams / yos lo pa yi glud longs las / yos lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / lo gcig de ni 'brug gi lo / mi lus 'brug gi mgo bo can / phyag nas yi 'khor lo bsnams / 'brug lo pa yi glud longs las / 'brug lo pa yi skag ..zlog cig / lo gcig de ni sbrul gyi lo / mi lus sbrul

gyi mgo bo can / phyag na me dbung 'bar ba bsnams / sbrul lo pa yi glud ongs las / sbrul lo pa
yi skag .. zlog cig / lo gcig de ni rta yi lo // mi lus rta yi mgo bo can / phyag na me yi 'khor lo
bsnams / rta lo pa yi glud longs las / rta lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / lo gcig de ni lug gi lo / mi lus
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lug gi mgo bo can / phyag na sa yi 'khor lo bsnams / lug lo pa yi glud longs las / lug lo pa yi
skag .. zlog cig / lo .. gcig de ni sprel gyi lo / mi lus sprel gyi mgo bo can / phyag nag nam / na
gnam lcags 'bar bsnams / sprel lo pa yi glud longs las / sprel lo pa yi skag ..zlog cig / lo gcig de
ni bya yi lo / mi lus bya yi mgo bo can / phyag na lcags kyi 'khor lo bsnams / bya lo pa yi glud
longs las / bya lo pa yi skag zlog cig / lo gcig de ni khyi yi lo / mi lus khyi yi mgo bo can /
phyag na sa yi 'khor lo bsnams / khyi lo pa yi glud longs las / khyi lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / lo
gcig de ni phag gi lo / mi lus phag gi mgo bo can / phyag na chu yi 'khor lo bsnams / phag lo
pa yi glud longs las / phag lo pa yi skag .. zlog cig / kyee / nag po bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod /
srid pa gsum gyi byol kha .. zlog / 'byung ba lnga yi byol kha .. zlog / spar kha mi mthun dgra
gshed .. zlog / rtsod bral bdud du babs pa zlog /

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'dre lnga tshang nas langs pa .. zlog / re bzhi dpung pa 'tshig pa .. zlog / bar gyi a thang chad
pa zlog / dur sgo gshin sgo phye ba .. zlog / sa gzhi gyo / gzhig yo 'gul byed pa .. zlog / phung
gsum khang bur tshud pa .. zlog / nag po khyod gur byed pa .. zlog / gi gong gnyen sbyor nyes
pa .. zlog / gza' skar thang la babs pa .. zlog / klu gnyan dal kha thug pa .. zlog / sa bdag ngag
gnyan g.yas pa .. zlog / tsha grang nad kyis zin pa .. zlog / gcig skyes gcig shi byung ba .. zlog
/ mi grangs mgo nas chad pa .. zlog / skyes sgab bu mor song ba .. zlog / nang gros phyi ru skyal
ba .. zlog / khyim mtshes rkun ma shor ba .. zlog / yul mi dgra ru sdang ba .. zlog / sngags ba'i
phur kha zug pa .. zlog / bon gyi byol zor byung ba .. zlog / brgya sde mi kha langs pa .. zlog /
stong sde dal kha gayos pa .. zlog / gnam gyi 'ju thag chad pa .. zlog / sa yi rten phur byung ba
(.. zlog) / srid kyi mtsho mo skem pa / bskal pa'i mun nag 'thibs pa / las kyi rlung gis ded pa
gzhan yang .. zlog cing ba sgyur ba ni / gcig pa rang skeg babs pa / gnyis ba dal kha g.yos pa /
gsum pa phung gyod byung ba .. zlog

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byung ba .. zlog / bzhi pa bzhi gshed byung ba / lnga pa sngags zor 'phen pa / drug pa drug 'bras
byung pa / bdun pa bdun zur langs pa / brgyad pa brgyan la babs pa / dgu pa sder 'dzings byas
pa / bcu pa dur sa babs pa / bcu gcig pa nyams lag byed pa / bcu gnyis log 'dren byed ba / bcu
gsum gnam rgyang gayos pa / phu ru shwa pho'i rwa 'dzings / mda' ru nya mo'i sder 'dzings /

bar du nag mo'i sder 'dzings / gnam la rgod po'i gshog 'dzings / sa la byi ba'i sbar 'dzings /
g.yas su brag ri snyil ba / g.yon du shing chen chag pa / rgyab tu sa chen snyil ba / mdun du bla
mtsho skem pa / pho bdud dal kha g.yas su .. sgyur / mo bdud dal kha g.yon du .. sgyur / spyi
bdud dal kha mkha' la .. sgyur / sdang/sngang ba dgra yi steng du .. sgyur / gnod ba bgegs kyi
steng du .. sgyur / phung ba .. srid pa'i mkha' la bsgyur / phyogs ngan bdud gcod steng du ..
sgyur / thebs dang gtor len thog tu .. sgyur / kyee / mi nag bya ba'i mgo gsum khyod / khyod
kyi ro stod nag po de / nag po bdud kyi khram kha .. sgyur

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khyod kyi ro smad dmar po de / dmar po btsan gyi gzar kha .. sgyur /mgo po dbus ma glang
mgo de / steng phyogs lha yi yams kha .. sgyur / g.yas pa stag mgo ser po de sa / gshin rje'i
khram kha dgra la .. sgyur / g.yon pa phag mgo nag po de / sa bdag nad kha dgra la .. sgyur /
lag na gtor zor bsnams pa de / snang srid lha 'dre'i ltas ngan .. zlog / lo 'gros 'khor gyis bskor
ba dre / 'byung ba mi mthun bye bral .. zlog / ri rab khri la bsdad pa dre / srid pa'i lha 'dre dgra
la .. zlog / mi kho'i zas sna bsags pa de / mi kha kha mchu langs pa .. zlog / bhyo bhyo .. zlog ..
zlog dgra la .. zlog / ces gtor glud phyir 'phang / srung 'khor bsgom / gzhan yang .. zlog byang
gang shes by'o / gto nag mgo gsum gyi glud chog rdzogs so /

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