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lithomancy**

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***lDe'u 'phrul, the manifestation of
knowledge:***

***ethnophilological studies in Tibetan divination with
particular emphasis upon a common form of Bon
lithomancy***

Par ALEXANDER K. SMITH

Thèse de doctorat de littérature tibétaine

Sous la direction de M. CHARLES RAMBLE, Directeur d'études

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For Marion

Hodie mihi, cras tibi...



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Résumé de thèse en Français

Introduction générale

Il est souvent avancé que la pratique de la divination est et a toujours été présente, à différents niveaux, dans chaque société humaine (Annus 2010 ; Beattie 1964 ; Caquot and Leibovici 1968 ; Loewe and Blacker 1981 ; Peek 1991). George Murdock, par exemple, est allé jusqu'à inclure la divination dans les caractéristiques trouvées « dans chaque culture connue de l'histoire ou de l'ethnographie » (1945 :124). Jean-Pierre Vernant a quant à lui écrit que « la citation célèbre de Descartes sur 'le bon sens' s'appliquait tout autant à la divination, qui est la chose du monde la mieux partagée » (1992 : 303).

La sphère culturelle tibétaine ne fait certainement pas exception. La divination a été décrite par nombre d'auteurs comme étant un phénomène pan-tibétain (Chime Radha 1981 ; Ekvall 1963 ; Gerke 2011 ; Róna-Tas 1956). Cependant, malgré la prépondérance et la diversité des pratiques divinatoire dans les cultures tibétaines, on ne trouve pas de réflexion sur l'anthropologie de la divination dans les études tibétaines. Cette lacune disciplinaire demeure prononcée et je pense qu'elle restreint le développement d'un discours interdisciplinaire plus large sur le rituel tibétain. C'est avec ces question en tête que j'explore dans ma thèse un certain nombre d'aspects comparatifs de la divination au sens large. Du fait de l'étendue du sujet cependant, j'ai choisi de me limiter dans une large mesure à l'étude des pratiques divinatoires dans la tradition tibétaine Bon.

Le terme Bon a historiquement été utilisé pour parler d'une pluralité de concepts, qu'il est nécessaire de clarifier (voir section 2.3). En termes très généraux, le Bon pourrait être décrit comme une branche hétérodoxe du bouddhisme tibétain qui, d'après les récits émiques, revendique un héritage dépassant de loin les origines du bouddhisme indien. Pour plusieurs raisons, le Bon a toujours été traité avec dédain par les adeptes des autres traditions tibétaines, qui ont souvent critiqué les Bon po-s (les adeptes du Bon) comme des « extérieurs » (*phyi pa*), des « hérétiques »

(*mu stegs pa*), ou pire encore. En outre, les premières sources d'informations occidentales sur le Bon étant les sources tibétaines bouddhiques, les perceptions académiques anciennes de la culture Bon ont souvent été pareillement méprisantes.

Bien que j'envisage de couvrir une variété de pratiques divinatoires, je me concentre surtout dans ma thèse sur un type particulier de divination par les pierres pratiquée par les Bonpos tibétains. Cette forme de divination, parfois traduite par « Manifestation de Connaissance » (*lde'u 'phrul*), possède une tradition textuelle presque vierge qui, d'après les histoires Bon, remonte au 11^{ème} siècle. En plus de terrains effectués en divers lieux de l'Himachal Pradesh et de l'Uttaranchal Pradesh, ma présentation du *lde'u 'phrul* est enrichie de la traduction de plusieurs manuscrits sur la lithomancie encore jamais étudiés. Je me concentre notamment sur le *sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*, composé par Kun grol grags pa, un œcuméniste et historien du 18^{ème} siècle. Certains points de ce texte sont comparés à deux commentaires plus tardifs traitant de la lithomancie : (1) le *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me*, écrit par Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, premier précepteur du monastère de Yung drung gLing au Tibet Central (fondé en 1834) ; et le (2) *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron po*, version datant du 19^{ème} siècle d'un *gter ma* censé avoir été découvert au 11^{ème} siècle par le « découvreur de trésors » (*gter ston*) Khro tshang 'brug lha (voir section 4.1). Lors de l'utilisation de ces matériaux, j'adopte une approche herméneutique large, qui ne restreint pas la critique au manuscrit étudié mais cherche à incorporer les performances contemporaines de *lde'u 'phrul*, et en particulier la perspective unique du devin sur sa performance.

Dans le premier chapitre, je fournis une revue générale de la littérature sur le sujet, dans laquelle j'essaie de prendre en considération la représentation et l'étude de la divination tibétaine dans les recherches européennes et américaines, depuis la première apparition du mot *mo* dans une publication en langue occidentale jusqu'à nos jours. Après avoir esquissé les contours de la discipline telle qu'elle existe aujourd'hui, je continue en présentant certains des rôles qu'a jouée

l'étude de la divination dans les disciplines académiques parallèles. Je n'ambitionne pas dans cette section une histoire intellectuelle mais me concentre plutôt sur plusieurs leitmotifs théoriques développés dans l'anthropologie de la divination et plus particulièrement dans l'étude de la sorcellerie dans les sociétés africaines. L'objectif est de montrer la façon dont certaines difficultés interprétatives dans la littérature tibétologique ont été surmontées dans des publications ethnographiques plus générales, et de mettre en évidence les possibles directions que pourrait prendre à l'avenir la recherche sur les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines.

Le second chapitre est divisé en deux parties. Premièrement, dans les sections 2.1 et 2.2, je propose une introduction générale à la divination tibétaine. Celle-ci inclut une vue d'ensemble de la plupart des pratiques cléromantiques connues de la littérature ethnographique ainsi qu'une discussion des origines des différentes traditions divinatoires de la mytho-histoire bouddhique tibétaine. Deuxièmement, dans les sections 2.3 à 2.6, je fournis une introduction générale au Bon. Je me concentre en particulier sur l'historiographie Bon et sur les origines de la divination telles qu'elles sont représentées dans la tradition Bon. Le chapitre conclut par une exploration des rôles joués par la divination dans la taxonomie religieuse Bon, et inclut un court index des manuscrits divinatoires catalogués dans le *bka' brten*.

Dans les chapitres trois et quatre, je présente la divination *lde'u 'phrul*. Bien que la question des origines, de la performance et du symbolisme du *lde'u 'phrul* soit abordée dans le chapitre trois, je porte ici une attention particulière à la structure des pronostics divinatoires. Je montre que le *lde'u 'phrul* emploie un système numéraire quaternaire relativement simple, qui sert de base aux réponses que le devin peut apporter à ses clients. De ce point de vue, le *lde'u 'phrul* ressemble beaucoup aux autres formes de cléromantie tibétaine (par exemple la divination par le jet d'éléments mobiles, comme des lots, des dés, des pierres ou des os), et en particulier la divination tibétaine par les dés et la divination avec un rosaire. Cependant, l'interprétation des pronostics du *lde'u 'phrul* nécessite un système de médiation avec des atouts, ce qui dans une large mesure

implique des schémas astrologiques et cosmologiques plus larges. Sous cet angle, le *lde'u 'phrul* se distingue des autres formes de lithomancie documentées, et bien qu'il soit similaire à certaines formes de cléromantie, les pronostics divinatoires intègrent une représentation microcosmique de la société tibétaine au sens large ainsi que nombre schémas religieux et cosmologiques. Ces observations sont complétées par le chapitre quatre, qui contient une traduction complète d'un manuscrit de *lde'u 'phrul*, ainsi qu'un commentaire sur une grande diversité de pratiques rituelles liées.

Outre la présentation de certaines des caractéristiques les plus marquées et intéressantes du *lde'u 'phrul*, j'espère que mes remarques dans les chapitres trois et quatre serviront à démontrer que les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines se trouvent à un point critique de jonction, reliant de nombreux systèmes rituels ainsi que des structures sociales et économiques. J'ambitionne également de montrer que la divination est associée à l'expression (et, peut-être, à la validation) d'épistémologies traditionnelles qui, dans certains cas, peuvent être remises en question par la globalisation et ses effets sur les rites et l'utilisation des textes rituels dans les communautés en exil contemporaines. Avant de progresser plus avant dans ma discussion, cependant, il est utile de commencer par clarifier mon utilisation et mon acception du terme 'divination'.

Utilisation et acception du terme 'divination'

Le mot *divination* /,divə'nāʃən/, tel qu'il apparaît dans le moyen anglais *divinacioun* (XIV^e s.) et le vieux français *divination* (XIII^e s.), est dérivé du latin *divinatio* (n-), du verbe *divinare* « prédire ». Le latin *divinatio* semble avoir été utilisé pour la première fois par Cicéron dans son traité *De Divinatione*, où il sert à traduire le grec *mantiké*, qui, en grec, a un sens plus étroit qu'en latin (Barton 1994, Nissinen 2010, Stökl 2012, North 1986, Jacobs 2010).¹

Dans les écrits anthropologiques, la divination est souvent considérée comme étant une

¹ Pour l'étymologie de *mantiké*, voir Flacelière 1965:4-5; Flower 2008: 22-24.

forme de connaissance spécialisée, qui, comme l'écrit Akkinaso « couvre, ou au moins soutend, la religion, l'épistémologie, le mythe, l'histoire et le système cognitif d'un peuple » (1995 :236) (Abbink 1993 ; Abimbola 1976, 1977 ; Akkinaso 1995 ; Bascom 1969, 1980 ; Devisch 1985 ; Durkheim and Mauss 1967 ; Loewe and Blacker 1981 ; Peek 1991 ; Peel 1990 ; Turner 1974, 1975 ; Werbner 1989). En tant que forme de connaissance spécialisée, la divination est parfois caractérisée comme une forme de propriété intellectuelle strictement régulée (Akinnaso 1985, 1992, 1995 ; Harrison 1992) étroitement liée aux expressions de pouvoir et d'autorité (Akinnaso 1992 ; Barth 1990 ; Harrison 1992 ; Hoskins 1993), ainsi qu'à des discours de légitimation (Bourdieu 1991 ; Lyotard 1984). La divination est également représentée comme une façon de connaître et une entreprise épistémologique méthodique enracinés dans des complexes médico-magiques (Peek 1991 ; Winkelman and Peek 2004 ; Abbink 1993). En bref, la divination peut être considérée comme une forme de connaissance composite et spécialisée qui est incorporée, au minimum, dans les sphères sociales, économiques et politiques de l'expérience humaine (cf. Akkinaso 1995).

Afin de proposer une définition de travail de la divination, je ne peux guère faire mieux pour mes besoins que citer les excellentes remarques de van Binsbergen à ce sujet : « Au sein de tout domaine culturel plus ou moins démarqué dans le temps et l'espace, et doté de sens dans ce domaine, la divination pourrait être définie comme la collection entière des procédures vouées à l'acquisition d'une connaissance de nature surnaturelle ou du moins non accessible par des moyens habituels, comme ceux basés sur la perception sensorielle directe » (van Binsbergen 1995 :114) (cf. Beattie 1964 ; Devisch 1985 ; Peek 1991a).

Les classifications des divinations pratiquées dans le monde sont extrêmement diverses, et la valeur d'une méta-taxonomie pour la recherche ethnographique peut facilement être remise en question. Je n'ai donc pas l'intention d'entrer en profondeur dans une discussion classificatoire en termes étiques ; je vais cependant, dans les pages qui suivent, défendre une distinction entre ce que je nomme des formes de divination 'mécaniques' et 'inspirationnelles' (en adaptant Zeitlyn 1990,

1995), que je vois reflétées, grossièrement, dans la façon dont le *mo* ou le *mo rtsis* sont distingués des médiums dans les cultures tibétaines.

La divination inspirationnelle désigne les pratiques de divination qui dépendent complètement d'une relation entre le devin et différents types d'agents surnaturels ou divins, impliquant généralement une forme de 'possession' à travers laquelle la révélation est exprimée. Dans la sphère culturelle tibétaine, par exemple, les pronostics donnés par les médiums (les *lha pa* du Haut Tibet par exemple) ou les prophéties faites par des êtres semi-divins ou divins dans des récits quasi-historiques représentent tous deux des formes de divination inspirationnelles.

Inversement, la divination mécanique désigne les formes de divination qui utilisent un appareillage mécanique extérieur à l'opérateur qui, s'il est correctement interprété, constitue le moyen à travers lequel des vérités peuvent être exprimées ou grâce auquel un agent surnaturel peut être deviné. En termes généraux, la majorité des techniques divinatoires tibétaines peuvent être considérées comme des divination mécaniques car elles sont généralement des formes de cléromantie. Dans la mesure où je me focalise dans cette thèse sur la lithomancie (la divination par des galets ou pierres), qui est une forme de divination mécanique, la plupart de mes remarques ne doivent pas être interprétées comme caractérisant la prophétie ou les activités des médiums des cultures tibétaines (pour une discussion sur la divination inspirationnelle dans les cultures tibétaines, voir Bellezza 2005 ; Berglie 1989 ; Diemberger 2005 ; Havnevik 2010 ; Schenk 1993).

Il faut noter que des classifications binaires semblables ont été proposées par plusieurs auteurs travaillant sur le sujet de la divination (Beattie 1964 ; Devisch 1985 ; Vernant 1974 ; and Zeitlyn 1987, par exemple). De fait, Nissinen (2010) va jusqu'à faire remonter la distinction entre divination mécanique et inspirationnelle, ou 'technique' et 'non technique', au *Phèdre* de Platon (244a-245a) et à la distinction socratique de *mantiké* et de *techné* (cf. Barton 1994 ; North 1986). De plus, Jacobs (2010) soutient que cette distinction a été popularisée par Cicéron, qui propose, dans son traité *De Divinatione* (*De Div.* 1.1.1-13, 1.1.12), une délimitation entre des formes de

divination ‘artificielle’ et ‘naturelle’. Certains auteurs considèrent également qu’une telle dichotomie, qui privilégie la divination prophétique par rapport à la divination mécanique, apparaît dans la Bible des Hébreux, où la prophétie est définie comme un moyen légitime de révélation divine alors que d’autres formes de divination sont interdites (Leviticus 20 :6 ; Deuteronomy 18 :9-14 ; Isaiah 8 : 19) (cf. Nissinen 2010). À ma connaissance, une délimitation corrélée des pratiques mécaniques et inspirationnelles n’a jamais été expressément affirmée dans une discussion publiée des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines. À l’exception peut-être de Gerke (2011) et de Bellezza (2005), la plupart des auteurs qui traitent des médiums tibétains ou des formes de divination mécaniques ne font pas clairement la distinction entre ces deux types de pratiques (voir par exemple Berglie 1989 ; Diemberger 2005 ; Ekvall 1963 ; Orofino 1994).

Divination et Astrologie

Il est important de noter que les sciences astrologiques tibétaines sont traditionnellement divisées en deux systèmes : (1) le *nag rtsis* ou *’byung rtsis*, lié au *I Qing* chinois ; et (2) le *dkar rtsis*, que l’on considère généralement comme ayant pénétré au Tibet depuis l’Inde via la prolifération du *Kalacakra* (Schuh 1973 ; Te-min Tseng 2005 ; Gerke 2011 : 93-98). Il faut rappeler également que les récits Bon considèrent à la fois le *nag rtsis* et le *dkar rtsis* comme dérivés du Kalacakra, l’équivalent Bon se trouvant dans le quatrième volume du *gZi brjid* (cf. Ramble 2013). De manière générale cependant, le *dkar rtsis* désigne un corpus de calculs calendaires et d’astronomie, alors que le *nag rtsis*, comme l’écrit Gerke, n’est « pas de l’astrologie *per se*, mais une collection de techniques divinatoires basées sur les intervalles temporels et leurs déterminants, qui [constitue] la base des calculs calendaires » (Gerke 2011 : 94) (cf. Schuh 1972, 1973a). Par contraste, les pratiques divinatoires qui passent expressément par la médiation d’objet aléatoires se trouvent dans une catégorie taxonomique légèrement différente, le *mo rtsis*, ou, en abrégé, *mo*. Quoiqu’il en soit, divination et astrologie sont très liées, de sorte que sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho

par exemple, le Régent du Cinquième Dalai Lama, traite le *mo* et le *rtsis* comme un seul corpus de connaissance dans son fameux traité astrologique, the *Vaiūrya dkar po* (17 c.) (cf. Gerke 2011 : 93 ; Sangye Gyatso 1972 [1685]). Je me concentre pour ma part sur les différentes formes de cléromancie ; les systèmes de calcul astrologiques et les éléments classifiés comme *dkar rtsis* et *nag rtsis* sont traités comme une forme distincte, bien que proche, des techniques divinatoires cléromantiques caractéristiques du *mo rtsis* (voir section 1.3.1).

Étendue de la recherche sur le terrain

La recherche de terrain sur laquelle est fondé cette étude s'est déroulée lors de plusieurs voyages au cours des étés 2009 et 2010, ainsi que sur une période de huit mois, de janvier à août 2013. La plupart des rites divinatoires documentés pendant ces périodes ont été exécutés par le sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, précepteur du monastère de sMan ri dans le district de Sirmaur, H.P. Inde, avec qui j'ai passé huit mois en tout. Comme le sMan ri Slob dpon parle couramment anglais et tibétain, ce fut des périodes particulièrement fertiles, pendant lesquelles j'ai pu consulter régulièrement le sMan ri Slob dpon sur une variété de questions textuelles, et, grâce à sa générosité et à celle de sa clientèle locale, pu observer l'exécution du *lde'u 'phrul* à de nombreuses occasions.

Dans le projet doctoral d'origine présenté à l'EPHE, j'avais, en plus de l'étude du *lde'u 'phrul*, esquissé plusieurs buts de recherches supplémentaires. Le plus important était d'arriver à une vue d'ensemble de la divination telle qu'elle est accomplie dans de nombreuses communautés tibétophones en Inde et au Népal. Cependant, à cause d'une série d'ennuis de santé et à la difficulté d'apprendre simultanément le français et le tibétain, j'ai dû fortement revoir à la baisse l'étendue de mon projet. J'ai finalement dévoué six mois à l'étude et à l'observation générales de la divination dans des communautés situées dans la capitale indienne, Delhi, et dans l'Himachal Pradesh. Ceci inclut les colonies tibétaines de Majnukatilla (aussi appelée New Aruna Nagar Colony, Delhi), ainsi que certaines communautés établies à Bir (H.P), McLeod Ganj (H.P.), Tabo (H.P.), et Kaza (H.P.).

Bien que cet aspect particulier de ma recherche soit limité, je pense qu'il était nécessaire afin de me familiariser avec les multiples formes de divination, et, sans doute encore d'avantage, avec les défis linguistiques que pose l'apprentissage du tibétain parlé moderne.

Résumé du premier chapitre : revue de littérature

La divination tibétaine (*mo*) dans les publications scientifiques occidentales

Dans cette partie, je souhaite présenter les contributions à l'étude de la divination tibétaine publiées dans des langues européennes. En cherchant un point archimédien duquel partir, j'ai choisi de présenter ma revue de littérature de manière chronologique. Afin de clarifier certains des thèmes qui émergent d'une telle présentation, cette partie est suivie d'une discussion sur la relation entre les représentations de la divination tibétaine et certains discours théoriques plus larges dans les écrits anthropologiques. Par souci de concision, plusieurs contributions marginales à l'étude de la divination tibétaine ne seront pas discutées en détail. La plupart sont cependant cataloguées et décrit dans la partie 1.1.1.

À ma connaissance, le terme *mo* est apparu pour la première fois dans une publication en langue occidentale dans le dictionnaire tibétain-anglais datant de 1834 du linguiste et explorateur hongrois, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, publié à Calcutta. Le *mo* y est défini comme un nom(s) signifiant « sort », la forme verbale étant *mo 'debs par*, « tirer au sort ». Le terme *mo* apparaît aussi dans ce dictionnaire comme une partie des noms composés *mo ma*, « une femme devin » et *mo mkhan*, « un devin qui tire les sorts ».² Bien que la définition de Csoma de Kőrös soit référencée par Schiefner (1859) et Schlagintweit (1881), la première vraie discussion des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines paraît en 1895 avec la publication de *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, l'œuvre principale de L. Austine Waddell incluant un chapitre sur « Astrology and Divination ».

² *Mo ma* "a female diviner by lots" and *mo mkhan*, "a diviner by lots" (134)

Comme on le sait, Waddell (1895) considère que le bouddhisme tibétain est une corruption du bouddhisme indien dans lequel les figures monastiques peuvent maintenir leur autorité en « jouant sur la crédulité facile des gens », obtenant une condensation entre le pouvoir politique et les institutions monastiques (476). La discussion de Waddell sur la divination et l'astrologie, sans surprise, suit les mêmes lignes. La divination est considérée une sorte de « démonolâtrie effrénée » « nourrit avec zèle » par la classe monastique de façon telle que les laïcs sont presque entièrement dépendants des pratiques divinatoires pour la soumission et l'apaisement des forces démoniaques (450). Ainsi, Waddell affirme que la divination est l'un des pivots économiques du monachisme tibétain, et en fait, « le moyen de subsistance principal [des lamas] au dépend des laïcs » (450).

Si l'on laisse de côté l'orientation idéologique diffamante de l'œuvre de Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* fournit les premières remarques occidentales substantielles sur les techniques divinatoires existant au Tibet pré moderne. Non content d'évoquer l'existence de consultations divinatoires, Waddell écrit par exemple qu'il a assisté à des divinations faites avec des galets (464, 467-468), des dés (465, 470), des omoplates de mouton (465), des cartes (464, 465) et des rosaires (209-210, 465-66). De plus, il remarque que dans la plupart des cas, il est nécessaire que l'opérateur possède un texte pour effectuer la divination correctement. Notant la fréquence des manuels de divination, qu'il pense que « la plupart des familles possède », Waddell propose des traductions partielles de trois textes non nommés (465) : un manuel de divination avec un rosaire (466), un manuel de divination par les « décomptes de graines ou de galets par séries de dix, quinze ou vingt-et-un » (466-468) ; et un manuel de divination par les dés (471). Il s'agit là des premiers matériaux de divination tibétaine à paraître dans une publication en langue occidentale. Malheureusement, la qualité des traductions de Waddell laisse à désirer, et dans la mesure où il ne fournit pas de translittérations ou de références, ces textes n'ont que peu de valeur.

Dans la première moitié du 20ème siècle, Vilhelm Thomsen (1912), Berthold Laufer (1914), August Franke (1928), et Rolf Stein (1939) ont produit des études importantes de systèmes

divinatoires particuliers. Malgré le développement des études tibétaines dans l'entre-deux-guerres, la production littéraire sur les pratiques de divinations tibétaines sont peu nombreuses jusqu'à l'après-guerre. Hormis le court chapitre de René Nebesky-wojkowitz sur les pratiques de divination dans son livre *Oracles and Demons in Tibet* (1956), la première étude d'importance de l'après-guerre est l'article de F. W. Thomas, "Ancient Folk Literature of Tibet" (1957), souvent abrégé par AFL.

Dans AFL, Thomas (1957) propose un bref survol des publications dans lesquelles la divination tibétaine est présentée, après quoi il entreprend une critique de Thomsen (1912). Thomas note que Thomsen, dans sa traduction d'un manuscrit sur la divination en turc ancien provenant de Dunhuang, oublie d'interpréter les points, ou 'yeux' (Tib. *mig*) qui apparaissent avant chacun des pronostics du texte. C'est afin de combler cette lacune que Thomas cite les remarques de A. H. Francke (1928) sur les systèmes de dés indiens dans lesquels Francke affirme, en s'appuyant sur l'analyse de Weber (1868) sur le *Pāsaka-kevalī* et les récits de Lüder (1907) sur des jeux de dés indiens, que l'apparence de points similaires dans les documents sanskrits pourrait être interprété comme faisant référence à des séries de dés à quatre faces qui pourraient avoir été jeté trois fois pour obtenir un pronostic (Franke 1928 :143). Thomas étend ces remarques au milieu tibétain et affirme que le manuscrit turc n'est pas de nature bibliomantique, comme le prétend Thomsen, mais est plutôt un manuel de divination par les dés qui nécessite l'usage d'un dé à quatre faces.

Après sa critique de Thomsen, Thomas propose une brève discussion des origines possibles des systèmes de divination tibétaine. Thomas rejette tout d'abord l'hypothèse, proposée par Waddell (1895), que le *mo* est « fondamentalement une caractéristique Bon-po » (145 ; Waddell 1895 :465). Notant que la divination par les dés, par exemple, est d'une antiquité présumée et était connu dans l'Inde védique, Thomas affirme que la divination par les dés pourrait être entrée au Tibet dans une période pré bouddhique et s'être, avec le temps, « acclimatée... en milieu Bon-po » (115). Ce modèle diffusionniste expliquerait le caractère Bon-po de nombreux textes de divination

anciens et soutiendrait la thèse d'une origine indienne de la divination tibétaine. Bien que Thomas considère ce modèle comme possible, il est quelque peu problématisé par sa traduction des manuscrits IOL Stein 13 IV 3a et 73 VIII, que Thomas considère comme distinctement tibétains, témoignant de peu ou pas d'influences indienne, chinoise ou turque. Ainsi, les remarques de Thomas dans AFL tendent à être une des premières affirmations du fait que les environnements dans lesquels les pratiques de divination circulaient au Tibet ancien étaient divers et ouverts à de nombreuses traditions rituelles. C'est donc un projet problématique, au mieux, que de faire l'hypothèse d'une origine unique et partagée à toutes les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines. Ce sentiment est réitéré et élargi par bon nombre de chercheurs de la seconde moitié du 20^{ème} siècle.

Comme discuté dans la partie 1.1, il existe plusieurs ouvrages de référence dans la seconde moitié du 20^{ème} siècle qui catalysent un consensus scientifique général du fait qu'à l'époque du roi Srong bstan sgam po (627-649), les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines étaient déjà un « amalgame complexe de formes indiennes, chinoises et tibétaines » (Aris 1980 : 12). La nature hétérogène des manuscrits de divination trouvés à Dunhuang suggère en particulier un environnement dans lequel des formes indigènes de divination ont été hybridées par une série d'échanges et d'adaptations réciproques, qui coïncident avec la diffusion de pratiques divinatoires venant de Chine, d'Inde et d'Asie Centrale. Certains des contributeurs majeurs à ce débat, pour n'en mentionner que quelques uns, furent David Snellgrove (1968), Ariane Macdonald (1971), Dieter Schuh (1973a) et Carol Morgan (1987), ainsi que les auteurs du livre édité par Marc Kalinowski, *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, publié en français en 2004.

Nous éloignant de la question des origines, il est important de noter qu'il existe également un petit corpus de littérature ethnographique sur le sujet de la divination tibétaine. On aura peut-être remarqué que jusqu'à présent, hormis quelques rapports de première main fragmentaires sur les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines (David-Neel 1927, 1929 ; Tucci 1956 ; Waddell 1895), aucun auteur n'a encore abordé une performance de divination dans un contexte ethnographique. Cela a

sensiblement évolué en 1963, avec l'article souvent cité de Robert Ekvall, « Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society. » Bien qu'il soit problématique du fait de son orientation théorique (comme exposé ci-dessous), la contribution de Ekvall (1963) marque le premier commentaire systématique sur la divination tibétaine dans lequel on voit la pratique apparaître comme un phénomène rituel vivant et ayant une cohérence interne.

En plus de noter « l'incidence culturelle large... de la divination » dans les cultures tibétaines, Ekvall est le premier tibétaniste, à ma connaissance, à affirmer l'existence d'une certaine bipolarité de scepticisme et de croyance de ceux qui s'engagent dans des consultations divinatoires (32). Bien que Ekvall ne développe pas ce point, des observations similaires ont été faites par certains ethnographes travaillant sur les cultures africaines (Section 1.1.1). Ekvall mentionne en passant une grande diversité de formes différentes de divination, comprenant la divination par les dés (*sho mo*), la divination par des galets (*rde'u mo*), la divination par le chant (*glu mo*), la divination par un rosaire (*'phreng mo*), la scapulomancie (*sog mo*) ou encore la divination réalisée à l'aide d'une lampe à beurre. Il présente également une partie sur l'interprétation des présages, des signes et des rêves (34-36). Selon lui, la plupart de ces pratiques sont d'origine pré bouddhique, bien qu'elles ne soient pas nécessairement indigènes au Tibet. En s'appuyant sur Thomas (1957), Ekvall affirme que l'existence de manuels de divination complets du 9ème ou 10ème siècle qui sont un parallèle (voire une traduction directe) de documents d'origine chinoise ou turque plaide en faveur de diffusion(s) culturelle pré-bouddhiques (34).

Dans sa discussion de la performance de la divination, Ekvall (1963) esquisse également certaines des premières remarques théoriques portant sur les systèmes de divination tibétaine. En résumé, il affirme que l'impulsion qui « prédispose le Tibétain à chercher à être guidé ou rassuré par la divination » est enraciné dans « l'incertitude humaine universelle quant au futur » qui est magnifiée, au Tibet, par la rigueur et les dangers de l'environnement, que Ekvall décrit en détail (33). Il présente la nature comme étant « ennemie et catastrophique », une force « dévastatrice » qui

menace sans cesse de détruire toutes formes de subsistance matérielle (33). De plus, écrit-il, « les raids, les disputes et le banditisme rendent la vie précaire » ce qui complique la planification, même celle d'un pèlerinage (33). Dans cet environnement, sans les formes modernes « de moyens rassemblant et disséminant les informations », le Tibétain moyen est voué dans ses décisions quotidiennes à des outils divinatoires (34). Ainsi, Ekvall caractérise la fonction de la divination comme soulageant l'anxiété, et en l'absence de technologies modernes, comme facilitant le processus de décision (36) (cf. Lessing 1951 :246 ; Tucci 1970). Plusieurs commentaires contemporains sur la divination parviennent à de telles conclusions, particulièrement ceux portant sur les milieux africains ou européen pré modernes (Bascom 1941 ; Herskovitz 1938 ; Park 1963 ; Thomas 1971 ; Turner 1968), et ils président également aux remarques sur la divination que fait Evans-Pritchard (1937) dans *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*. Plusieurs ethnographies plus récentes ont cependant cherché à remettre en cause ces discours qui considèrent que la divination est contingente de l'hésitation sociale récurrente et de l'absence de technologies rassemblant les informations (Barton 1994 ; Tambiah 1985 ; Whyte 1997).

Après l'article d'Ekvall (1963) ; « Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society », et laissant de côté pour l'instant les publications déterminantes de Dieter Shuh dans les années 1970 (1972, 1973a, et 1973b)—qui sont présentées dans la section 1.1.2—la publication notable suivante est la contribution de Lama Chime Radha dans l'ouvrage de Loewe et Blacker (1981). Cette collection d'articles publiée dans *Oracles and Divination* de Loewe et Blacker (1981) marque un tournant dans l'étude générale des pratiques divinatoires. C'est, à ma connaissance, le second ouvrage dans lequel des spécialistes de plusieurs disciplines présentent leurs remarques sur les différentes formes de divination pratiquées au sein de leur milieu respectif (cf. Alder et Zempléni 1972 ; Annus 2010 ; Curry 2010 ; Peek 1991). Il est sans doute significatif que ce soit à Lama Chime Radha, l'ancien responsable de la section tibétaine de la British Library, que l'on ait demandé de produire un article sur la divination tibétaine en tant que sujet d'étude indépendant, au

même titre que les traditions divinatoires de Chine, du Japon, du Monde Classique, de Mésopotamie, d'Égypte, de l'Israël Antique et des cultures islamiques. À maints abords, la contribution de Chime Radha constitue le seul discours émique significatif à paraître dans une publication occidentale portant sur le sujet de la divination tibétaine en termes généraux.

L'article ouvre avec une discussion sur la prévalence de la divination dans les cultures tibétaines (3). Il note que bien qu'il n'y ait que peu de restrictions formelles sur ceux qui peuvent ou non pratiquer la divination, on préfère généralement les monastiques – et particulièrement les lamas réincarnés – à leurs équivalents, laïques non monastiques (5-6) L'auteur fait ensuite une série de brèves remarques sur les différentes formes de divination communes au milieu tibétain, particulièrement la divination avec un miroir (8-14), avec un rosaire (14-17), des dés (17-18), une lampe à beurre (19-21), ainsi que la divination à partir de chant d'oiseau (21-24). Chime Radha propose également un court passage théorique sur la divination tibétaine qui a eu une importance pour plusieurs ethnographes plus tardifs et qui fait écho à plusieurs discours anthropologiques plus larges sur les pratiques divinatoires.

En résumé, Chime Radha affirme que l'ambiguïté est une caractéristique centrale des pronostics divinatoires tibétains. D'après lui cependant, cette ambiguïté est intentionnellement ajoutée au pronostic par les devins eux-mêmes, « afin de minimiser la marge d'erreur » (7) Ceci est nécessaire, affirme-t-il, car la carrière d'un devin professionnel est un « moyen relativement incertain de gagner sa vie » et parce qu'une seule mauvaise prédiction pourrait « rapidement ternir la réputation » du devin (7). Ainsi, d'après Chime Radha, « un haut niveau de tact et de diplomatie », ainsi que l'aptitude à « exprimer... des prédictions avec un certain degré d'incertitude et d'inexactitude » sont des éléments que doit acquérir un devin à succès (7). Si l'on laisse de côté pour l'instant la question de l'intentionnalité—c'est à dire dans quelle mesure les devins altèrent effectivement leur pronostic—cette affirmation de l'ambiguïté comme caractéristique importante de la divination tibétaine est avancée dans les études tibétologiques postérieures (Gerke 2011 ; Smith

2015). L'ambiguïté est également considérée comme centrale au fonctionnement de la divination par plusieurs anthropologues travaillant sur l'Afrique et l'Asie de l'Est (Alder and Zempléni 1972 ; Binsburgen 1995 ; Evans-Pritchard 1937 ; Shaughnessy 2010 ; Werbner 1989 ; Whyte 1991 ; Zeitlyn 2001). Le problème de l'ambiguïté et son rôle dans la divination sera explorée en détails ci-dessous.

Après cet article de Chime Radha (1981), plusieurs études d'importance ont été publiées par Carol Morgan (1987), Graham Clarke (1990), Charles Ramble (1993, 1998), et Giacomela Orofino (1994). Dans la décennie suivante ont été publiées plusieurs études sur les pratiques oraculaires et géomantiques (surtout Bellezza 2005, Diemberger 2005, Mortensen 2003, Maurer 2009 et Stuchbury 1999), d'intérêt général pour l'étude de la divination tibétaine (voir section 2.1). En ce qui nous concerne cependant, la publication notable à suivre est celle de Brandon Dotson (2007), « Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire : The Role of Dice in the Legislation of Loans, Interest, Martial Law and Troop Conscription ».

Dans cet article, Dotson entreprend l'étude de IOL Tib J 740, un document légal en vieux tibétain inédit jusqu'alors, qui contient, en plus des matériaux légaux, un court manuel de divination. Il affirme que l'étude de ces deux documents permet de mieux comprendre l'histoire sociale de l'époque impériale, et en particulier la façon dont « les étrangers et leurs territoires étaient subjugués, [à l'instar] de leurs divinités territoriales » (3-4). L'incorporation de ces divinités dans les traditions légales et divinatoires mises en évidence par la lecture de Dotson de IOL Tib J 740 donne une idée de l'homogénéisation des croyances pré-impériales disparates et la « création d'un panthéon pan-tibétain de divinités créé par l'expansion de l'Empire Tibétain et sa centralisation administrative » (59). Bien que la perspective de l'article sur l'histoire sociale tibétaine soit très pertinente, il m'intéresse particulièrement du fait des commentaires de Dotson sur les pronostics proposés dans le document et la relation entre la divination et les procédures légales de l'époque impériale.

Dotson affirme, en citant Cassinelli and Ekvall (1969) ainsi que Henderson (1964), que l'utilisation de dés et d'autres objets aléatoires pour trancher des questions légales était répandu à l'époque pré moderne. Dans le cas du IOL Tib J 740, Dotson notes que les pronostics textuels (qui révèlent la volonté des dieux), ne correspondent pas à des questions légales spécifiques (2007 : 30-31). Il en conclut que le manuel de divination accessoire ajouté au manuscrit légal IOL Tib J 740 n'est probablement pas « une collection standardisée de pronostics (*mo*) édités depuis le centre par des officiels impériaux », mais plutôt un exemple de manuscrit de divination par les dés générique, utilisé pour prendre des décisions légales (30). Sur la base de l'étude de French (1995) sur la loi pré moderne, Dotson réitère l'affirmation de Ramble (1999) que (dans les décisions juridiques), « le recours aux dés n'était pas considéré comme une question de hasard mais était considéré comme révélateur de la volonté des dieux » (31). Dotson mentionne également l'utilisation de différents oracles pour justifier et faciliter la prise de décision officielle dans le monde tibétain. L'élection des abbés au monastère de sMan-ri au moyen de *rtags-ril* (Ramble 1993 ; Cech 1987) et la sélection des gardiens au monastère de Khra-'brug (Sorensen *et al* 2005) sont des exemples de la façon dont le recours à la divination était considéré comme une indication de la volonté des dieux (31).

À maints égards, Dotson aborde ce phénomène d'un point de vue fonctionnaliste. Il affirme que « cela ne fait pas grande différence d'attribuer l'agence d'une telle procédure aux dieux ou au hasard. Dans les deux cas, il s'agit d'un mécanisme par lequel des figures d'autorité légitiment leurs décisions en établissant l'agent hors d'eux-mêmes » (31-32). Bien que l'on pourrait facilement critiquer la position de Dotson comme réduisant des perspectives émiques en un modèle étique bidimensionnel des dimensions politiques du rituel tibétain, ses remarques correspondent à la tendance générale qui consiste à placer les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines dans un cadre strictement fonctionnaliste. Si l'on se rappelle les publications précédentes, on voit de manière répétée que les présentations des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines sont limitées aux 'fonctions' sociales de la divination. On les interprète généralement comme étant des techniques de

rassemblement de l'information (Ekvall 1963 ; Tucci 1970 ; Chime Radha 1981), ou des moyens permettant de faciliter la prise de décision par un transfert d'autorité (Ekvall 1963 ; Ramble 1993 ; Henderson 1964 ; French 1995). Par contraste, la divination tibétaine est rarement considérée comme faisant partie d'un déroulé médical et rituel de large envergure qui joue un rôle central dans l'économie du rituel tibétain (cf. Clarke 1990 ; Maurer 2009 ; Smith 2015 ; Waddell 1895). ce point de vue change de manière significative dans la prochaine étude prise en considération ici, *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths : Life-Span Concepts and Longevity Practices Among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India* de Barbara Gerke (2011).

Dans *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths*, Barbara Gerke explore la relation existant entre plusieurs concepts essentiels des pratiques de longévité tibétaines (principalement *tshe*, *srog*, *bla* et *rten 'brel*), et considère la pertinence ethnographique de ces concepts dans les complexes médico-rituels qui les englobe. Pour nous, l'aspect particulièrement important du travail de Gerke est qu'elle souligne souvent la difficulté à tracer des lignes étanches entre la divination (*mo*) et les traditions astrologiques, médicales et rituelles parallèles. La frontière entre la divination et l'astrologie, par exemple, est particulièrement poreuse. Gerke note que même dans certaines classifications émiques, par exemple celle du traité d'astrologie du 17^{ème} siècle de Sangyé Gyatso, le *Baidurya dkar po*, la divination et l'astrologie sont considérées comme ne formant qu'un seul corpus de connaissances (Sangye Gyatso 1972 [1685], ff29). Malgré les inter-relations et les frontières floues que l'on rencontre dans la présentation des traditions astrologiques et divinatoires, Gerke recommande l'utilisation de taxinomies heuristiques fixes, qu'elle organise selon des critères émiques (2011 : pp. 5, 93-94, 98). La construction (souvent problématique) et l'utilisation des taxinomies dans l'étude de la divination tibétaine sera discutée en détails ci-dessous.

Fondé sur son travail de terrain dans la région de Darjeling, *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths* est sans conteste l'introduction générale la plus détaillée des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines publiée à ce jour. De manière extrêmement résumée, à l'appui de plusieurs des

contributions à l'étude de la divination tibétaine précédentes (Chime Radha 1981, Ekvall 1963, Laufer 1914, Róna-Tas 1956, et Mortensen 2003), Gerke montre que le *mo* (dans ce cas, et pour utiliser ma terminologie, la divination mécanique) est « une pratique pan tibétaine qui n'est pas limitée à une profession ou une méthode spécifique » (100). Comme elle le remarque, « même les laïques apprennent à faire chez eux des *mo* avec rosaire simples afin de les guider dans leurs décisions quotidiennes » (100). Gerke note que l'une des fonctions primaires de la divination professionnelle est la sélection d'un rite ou d'une série de rites spécifiques considéré comme nécessaire au bien-être du client » (104). Ainsi, au contraire des divinations élémentaires non professionnelles, la pratique professionnelle de la divination est présentée comme intimement liée à « un groupe complexe de pratiques rituelles qui contrent les résultats négatifs » (104). Comme Clarke (1990) qui considère la relation intime entre la divination et les rites de longévité comme une forme de « capitalisme religieux » (Clarke 1990 : 182), Gerke note que les devins et les institutions monastiques sont, dans une certaine mesure, financièrement interdépendants :

Both reap rewards. The diviners provide the monastery with clients and detailed instructions on what kinds of practices to perform, and the monasteries provide the body of sophisticated religious practices. The client usually 'pays' for the [diviners'] services in the form of donations (104).

Outre ses remarques sur la relation compliquée entre la divination et les complexes médico-rituels, Gerke est également l'une des premières à parler de la structure textuelle des pronostics divinatoires tibétains. Dans le quatrième chapitre de *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths* (169-228), elle étudie plusieurs almanacs astrologiques contemporains distribués dans la communauté en exil ainsi qu'un

célèbre manuel de divination par les dés de dPal ldan lha mo récemment publié³. En comparant ces sources, l'une des premières observations de Gerke est que les prédictions proposées dans les compendia astrologiques sont rarement avérées. Considérant cela, elle se demande pourquoi, pendant son terrain, elle n'a que rarement rencontré des Tibétains exprimant des réserves sur l'efficacité des systèmes astrologiques et divinatoires existants (37). Elle en conclut que cela tend à montrer que l'interprétation des pronostics textuels sont, pour le divin ou l'astrologue, « plus une question de style et d'interprétation, où les acteurs sont relativement libres d'interpréter [...] les prédictions [textuelles] au sein de leur cadre cosmologique plus large, qui comprend le karma, le mérite, la bénédiction, les bons ou mauvais augures ainsi que les obstacles » (37). Dans le cas du *mo*, Gerke affirme qu'une caractéristique importante de cette flexibilité interprétative est la nature généralement vague ou poétique des réponses données par les manuels de divination. L'ambiguïté des pronostics divinatoires sert « à laisser de l'espace à l'interprétation intuitive du devin de la situation personnelle du client » (221). Une autre caractéristique importante cependant est que ce processus sert à impliquer le client dans la consultation divinatoire de telle sorte que « le client devient un agent actif dans la mise en forme de sa force vitale et de son espérance de vie » (221). C'est dans ce sens que Gerke considère que l'ambiguïté textuelle est une facette importante de la perception d'efficacité des pratiques divinatoires du monde tibétain. À maints égards, ce sentiment fait écho aux remarques de Chime Radha (1981) dans *Oracles and Divination* de Lowe and Blacker. Comme nous le verrons, l'ambiguïté est considérée comme centrale à l'efficacité de la divination par nombre d'anthropologues travaillant sur le monde africain et est-asiatique (Alder and Zempléni 1972 ; Binsburgen 1995 ; Evans-Pritchard 1937 ; Shaughnessy 2010 ; Werbner 1989 ; Whyte 1991 ; Zeitlyn 2001).

³ Yogini Kachö Gonpo. Manuscrit non daté. *dPal ldan lha mo'i blang dor gsal ba'i me long sho mig grangs ldan*. Collection personnelle de Jampel Kaldhen, Kalimpong.

Autres contributions notables à l'étude de la divination tibétaine

Il faut garder à l'esprit que les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines sont mentionnées dans de nombreuses publications qui n'ont pas été mentionnées plus haut, et je n'ai pas l'intention de fournir une présentation détaillée de chaque publication académique ou commerciale dans laquelle les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines sont mentionnées. Cela dit, pour plus d'informations sur le sujet, le lecteur pourra consulter les ouvrages suivants, présentés par ordre alphabétique : Bawden 1964 ; Bellezza 2005 ; Blondeau 1976 : 302-304 ; Diemberger 2005 ; Dorje 2008 ; Goldberg 2000 ; Kalinowski *et al* 2010 ; Maurer 2009 ; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 : 455-466 ; Róna Tas 1956 ; Samuel 1993 ; Stuchbury 1999 ; Tucci 1949, 1970 ; Walter 1995 ; et Vidyabhushana 1913. Il faut également noter que Namkhai Norbu parle du *lde'u 'phrul* ainsi que de plusieurs autres formes de divination dans deux de ses livres (1995 : 25-30, 2009 : 192-194). Bien que les travaux de Norbu constituent une contribution importante à l'étude et la représentation de la culture Bon, j'ai choisi d'exclure ses remarques sur la divination de ma présentation dans la section 1.1. du fait de leur nature majoritairement brève et marginale. J'intègre cependant les travaux de Norbu sur la divination dans ma discussion du *lde'u 'phrul* dans les chapitres trois et quatre. Enfin, il faut aussi noter que l'on trouve un court résumé des recherches fondatrices de Dieter Schuh sur le *nag rtsis* (1973a, 1973b, and 1972) dans ma section 1.1.1.1.

La divination dans la recherche européenne et américaine

Bien que je m'intéresse principalement aux contributions au champ des études tibétaines, il me semble impossible à ce stade de continuer sans d'abord reconnaître mes dettes aux études sur la divination ayant été avancées dans des discussions plus larges sur la théorie religieuse ou sociale. C'est avec ceci à l'esprit que j'aimerais proposer un survol des ouvrages qui ont influencé ma compréhension de la divination à un niveau théorique général. Je n'envisage pas de faire une histoire intellectuelle du sujet, mais je vais me focaliser sur plusieurs thèmes de l'anthropologie de la

divination telle qu'elle s'est développée, de manière générale, dans l'étude de la sorcellerie dans les sociétés africaines. Mes remarques suivent périodiquement les arguments développés dans Peek (1991a) et Devish (1985), qui ont tout deux publié des analyses brèves mais importantes des rôles joués par la divination dans le développement de la théorie anthropologique. J'espère que cette partie permettra de démontrer en quoi certaines difficultés interprétatives rencontrées dans la littérature tibétologique ont été surmontées dans l'écriture ethnographique plus large, et souligner certaines des directions que pourrait prendre la recherche sur les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines.

À maints égards, le premier traitement sérieux de la divination dans la recherche européenne et américaine a eu lieu en 1937, avec la publication de l'œuvre phare de Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. De nombreux autres anthropologues, comme Frazer, Malinowski et Radcliffe-Brown, ne mentionnent pas la divination, malgré quelques exceptions. Dans *Primitive Culture* (1871) par exemple, E. B. Tylor énumère différentes formes de divination, anciennes et contemporaines (1871 : 78-83). Pour lui cependant, les pratiques divinatoires ne sont guère plus que des survivances des jeux de chance primitifs qui ont « sombré dans une décadence méritée » ("fallen into merited decay", 78). Taylor caractérise la divination comme opérant un « appel au hasard » ou un « appel à l'ignorance », et ne dévoue que très peu d'espace à sa discussion de l'incidence presque globale des pratiques divinatoires (78). Dans une veine similaire, *The Sorcerer's of Dobu* de Rio Fortune (1932) propose une présentation ethnographique complète des rites divinatoires de Dobu (1932 : 154-167), ce qui mène Fortune à l'affirmation que la divination, en « s'en tenant à des explications non humaines » de l'infortune, est un essai « d'administrer la justice indigène aussi bien que possible en mettant l'investigation en avant » ("administer native justice as well as is possible... [by bringing] investigation to the fore", 165). Malgré cette remarque de perspective sociale, Fortune ne définit finalement la divination que comme « une méthode pour parvenir à un jugement sur l'inconnu au moyen d'une réflexion sur des preuves incomplètes » ("a method of arriving at a judgement of the unknown through a

consideration of incomplete evidence", 1931 : 174). D'autres exceptions notables apparaissent dans la littérature française contemporaine, avec les contributions à l'étude de la divination de Delachaux (1946), Giraule (1937), Giraule et Dierterlen (1945), Paulme (1937), Maupoil (1943) et Trautmann (1940).

En ce qui concerne *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937), l'une de ses caractéristiques importantes est que Evans-Pritchard cherchait à convaincre le lectorat européen que les croyances dans la sorcellerie Azande étaient consistantes, et, d'un point de vue émique, complètement rationnelles. Au lieu de verser dans les traditions intellectualistes contemporaines (dans la ligne de Marx, Durkheim et Lévy-Bruhl), qui tendent à parler de la persistance tenace de systèmes de croyance irrationnels dans les cultures primitives, Evans-Pritchard insiste plutôt sur la cohérence émique et propose, de manière générale, une exégèse fonctionnaliste des rites et croyances Azande. Dans ce contexte, la magie, les accusations de sorcellerie et la divination sont conçues comme des pratiques qui allègent les conditions difficiles pour le corps social. Les accusations de sorcellerie, par exemple, sont souvent présentées par Evans-Pritchard comme un « outil social à tout faire » ("all purpose social device") permettant de restreindre les comportements non charitables ou antisociaux, et qui en même temps permet d'exprimer sans mal les ressentiments and les traitant avec divers mécanismes rituels ou de simples discours de réconciliation (Gillies 1976 : xxiii). Sous cet angle, la divination joue un rôle essentiel dans le maintien et le rétablissement de l'ordre social. Renaat Devisch, dans ses *Perspectives on divination in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa* (1985), considère que les études qui insistent sur cette dimension sociale spécifique de la divination constituent un mode d'analyse structurel-fonctionnaliste particulièrement répandu dans l'anthropologie de la divination.

D'après Devisch, le mode d'analyse structurel-fonctionnaliste « porte une attention particulière au rôle de la divination dans le fonctionnement du groupe, et notamment dans le partage et l'exercice du pouvoir... en la considérant principalement comme un instrument pour

rétablir et consolider l'ordre social ("pays particular attention to the instrumental role of divination in the functioning of the group, especially in the distribution and exercise of power... seeing it mainly as an instrument for restoring or consolidating social order", 1985 : 62). Devisch affirme que les études structurelles-fonctionnalistes de la divination se rangent de manière générale dans deux catégories de théories : celle dérivée de la tradition de Evans-Pritchard, qui insiste sur « le processus divinatoire lui-même en tant que procédure de prise de décision, de légitimation et de proposition de consensus » ("divinatory process itself as a decision-making, legitimation, or consensus-offering procedure", 57) ; et celle qui est fermement ancrée dans la Manchester School of Social Anthropology (en particulier Max Gluckman, Victor Turner, Edmund Leach, Fredrik Barth et Clyde Mitchell) qui se concentrent « exclusivement sur la fonction de conservation [de la divination]... permettant de maintenir ou de rétablir l'ordre social et d'en assurer sa conformité avec les tendances culturelles ("exclusively on the conservative function [of divination]... [in] sustaining or restoring social order and ensuring conformity with cultural patterns", 57). Bien que ces filtres interprétatifs se distinguent de manière substantielle, on peut trouver un fil d'Ariane dans cette affirmation structurelle-fonctionnaliste dominante de la divination comme jouant un rôle primordial dans les affaires humaines en tant que pratique d'allègement du doute et de facilitation du processus de prise de décision. Cette caractérisation des pratiques divinatoires constitue à maints égards l'un des leitmotifs les plus influents et persistants de l'anthropologie de la divination.

La divination élimine l'anxiété et facilite la prise de décision

La caractérisation de la divination comme un rite visant à faciliter les processus de prise de décision individuelle et de groupe est l'un des thèmes majeurs des études structuro-fonctionnalistes de la divination. Ce motif se manifeste dans la recherche de différentes façons. Tout d'abord, certains auteurs se focalisent sur les aspects cathartiques des séances divinatoires, affirmant qu'en allégeant l'anxiété, la divination sert à réparer les ruptures sociales. Crawford (1967 :68), Park (1963 :199) et

Victor Turner (1975 :213, 227), déclarent par exemple que la divination peut disperser les anxiétés collectives et individuelles afin de promouvoir le renfort émotionnel et la solidarité de groupe. Turner (1968 : 51), surtout dans ses premiers travaux, note que la divination joue un rôle central dans la micro-politique Ndembu, compensant dans les faits le manque d'institution politique centralisée par la promotion de l'implication collective dans la résolution des conflits de groupe (cf. Devisch 1985 : 56-57). Cette fonction conservatrice de la divination, sa capacité à restaurer l'ordre social et à assurer la conformité avec les institutions établies est particulièrement soulignée par Middleton (1960 : 129-230 ; 238-250), qui affirme, dans son étude de la religion Lugbara, qu'une augmentation dans les requêtes divinatoires est symptomatique d'une augmentation des conflits sociaux, que les gens essayent de résoudre en utilisant des méthodes d'arbitrage traditionnelles. De tels arguments sont également avancés par plusieurs autres auteurs, comme Bohannon (1975 : 166), Gluckman (1965 ; 1972), Park (1963), Turner (1975) et Harwood (1970). Dans cette veine, la divination est vue comme une institution servant surtout à réparer les ruptures sociales et à consolider les institutions traditionnelles en amoindrissant les peurs exprimées par les individus et par le groupe.

Keith Thomas adopte une approche légèrement différente dans son étude véhémente sur la religion populaire dans l'Angleterre des 16^{ème} et 17^{ème} siècles, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971). Pour résumer, Thomas affirme que la fonction fondamentale de la divination est de déplacer la responsabilité du client vers un agent surnaturel (288). Ainsi, les aspects rituels de la consultation divinatoire sont considérés comme une aide pour que « les hommes focalisent leur attention et prennent conscience de leur situation » ("men to focus their attention and to take stock of their situation"), ce qui contribue à la prise de décision (175) (cf. Bascom 1941 : 45 ; Douglas 1966 : 63-64). En tant que telle, la divination sert, d'une part, à « guider les hommes dans leur décision lorsque d'autres agents leur [font défaut] » et, d'autre part, à alléger « l'anxiété en atténuant la sensation [humaine] d'impuissance » ("men to take decisions when other agencies [fail] them" ;

"anxiety by mitigating [human] feelings of helplessness", 228, 175). C'est également cette position que prend Moore (1957) dans son étude ethnographique de la scapulomancie chez les Naskapi du Labrador, où la divination est vue comme ayant la fonction supplémentaire d'empêcher la surchasse d'espèces spécifiques. De même, dans sa présentation souvent citée des pratiques divinatoires Yoruba, Park (1963) écrit que le devin "is able, in the public conscience, to remove the agency and responsibility for a decision from the actor himself, casting it upon the heavens where it lies beyond cavil and beyond reproach" (1963 : 196-197) (cf Alder and Zemléni 1972 : 208 ; Vernant 1992 : 304). En fournissant une sanction divine légitimatrice aux décisions politiques, la divination peut également aider au clivage des groupes sociaux (Park 1963 : 197, 236 ; Mclean and Soloman 1971 : 43). Pensé ainsi, le processus divinatoire, qu'il soit inter-subjectif ou orienté vers le groupe, constitue une technique permettant d'établir un consensus de fait » ("constitutes a technique for establishing an effective consensus") en ôtant le poids de la prise de décision des épaules des participants par l'utilisation d'une randomisation mécanique (Park 1963 : 199).

Les analyses structuro-fonctionnalistes qui empruntent de telles voies sont légion dans l'anthropologie de la divination, tant et si bien que les contributeurs de *African Divination Systems* dans Philip Peek (ed) (1991) ont écrit que l'étude de la divination s'était « perdue dans un mode presque exclusivement fonctionnaliste » (1991a : 2). Nombre d'auteurs demeurent néanmoins critiques de l'usage abusif et des tendances réductivistes de la compréhension de la divination d'un point de vue fonctionnaliste, c'est à dire qui se limitent généralement à son utilité sociale en tant que pratique légitimant les décisions et procurant un confort psychologique. Devisch (1985) et van Binsbergen et Schoffeelers (1985a) sont particulièrement critiques de l'orientation positiviste que prennent de nombreuses études structuro-fonctionnalistes de la divination. Ils jugent que l'échec de ces études à prendre en considération à la fois les biais épistémologiques des chercheurs (Devisch 1985 : 55-56) (cf. de Craemer 1976 ; Jules-Rosette 1975) et les rôles exprimés par l'observateur dans le travail ethnographique (van Binsbergen and Schoffeelers 1985 : 9-10) est une erreur de

recherche considérable. De plus, les approches structuro-fonctionnalistes, qui réifient la fonction conservatrice de la divination dans la consolidation de l'ordre social, ont été critiquées car elles ne parviennent pas à prendre en compte les problèmes des croyances and pratiques émiques (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985a : 16-18 ; Whyte 1997 ; Zeitlyn 1990, 1993 ; cf. Fardon, 1988), ainsi que la structuration sémantique des pronostics divinatoires (Devisch 1985 : 58). Comme nous le verrons plus loin (section 1.2.3), ces critiques forment le socle, dans la terminologie de Devisch, du mode d'analyse « internal-semiotic » ou sémantique, qui devient particulièrement prononcé dans les études qui suivent la publication de *African Divination Systems* (1991).

Divination et rationalité

Les chercheurs observent communément que lorsque les prédictions divinatoires ne se réalisent pas, la croyance générale dans l'efficacité de la divination n'est que rarement, voire jamais, remise en question (Crawford 1967). Dans l'un des passages les plus cités de *Magic, Oracles, and Witchcraft among the Azande* (1937), Evans-Pritchard exprime sa surprise à ce propos⁴. Pour de nombreux chercheurs, la persistance de la divination dans les milieux ethnographiques (malgré l'échec régulier des prédictions divinatoires) signifie que les approches traditionnelles, ou primitives, de la divination sont médiées par des systèmes intellectuels 'fermés', qui ne permettent pas en interne d'analyses déductives scientifiques (Evans-Pritchard 1937 ; Bascom 1941 ; Beattie 1964, 1967 ; Horton 1967) (cf. Marwick 1973 ; Jules-Rosette 1978). Evans-Pritchard (1937) insiste par exemple sur l'interdépendance dans les croyances Zandes entre la sorcellerie, la divination et la magie, qu'il considère comme « les trois côtés d'un triangle », un « réseau » dans lequel chaque groupe de croyance dépend des autres pour être légitime (176 ; 109) :

⁴ « And yet the Azande do not see that their oracles tell them nothing! Their blindness is not due to stupidity: they reason excellently in the idiom of their beliefs, but they cannot reason outside, or against, their beliefs because they have no other idiom in which to express their thoughts » (1937: 159).

All their beliefs hang together, and were a Zande to give up faith in witch-doctorhood he would have to surrender equally his belief in witchcraft and oracles (1937 : 109).

Dans la même veine, Mendosa (1978) note dans son étude de la religion Sisala :

Neither Sisala divination (*vugung*), nor any other aspect of Sisala religion, can be analysed in isolation from other parts of the total set of axiomatic values and institutions... because each institution forms an integral part of the total socio-religious system" (1978 : 35).

Présentée ainsi, la divination est considérée comme étant partie intégrante d'un système idéologique fermé dans lequel les croyances individuelles isolées ne peuvent pas être questionnées sans remettre complètement en question l'épistémologie d'un peuple.

William Bascom (1941), dans son livre souvent cité sur les techniques divinatoires Yoruba Ifa, explore plusieurs des points qui sous-tendent la nature auto-accomplissante de la croyance dans la divination. Bascom ne se contente pas de présenter la divination Ifa en tant que partie intégrante du système religieux Yoruba (1941 :44), mais note également que de manière générale, il y a peu d'opportunité de tester l'exactitude des prédictions Ifa (1941 : 44-45). Cela est du, en partie, à l'absence d'un mécanisme de contrôle pouvant attribuer les pronostics erronés à l'institution de la divination. Dans le cas de l'Ifa, par exemple, Bascom affirme que même lorsque l'infortune touche une personne qui a suivi de près le conseil de l'oracle, en l'absence de conditions de contrôle, les adhérents de la divination peuvent facilement affirmer que cela aurait été pire si les recommandations de l'oracle n'avaient pas été suivies (1941 :45). De même, plusieurs chercheurs comme Mendosa (1978 :44-48), Horton (1964 : 3-16, 1967 :171), Shaw (1991 :138-139), Thomas (1971 :244-247), Devisch (1985 :67) et Evans-Pritchard (1937 :155-158) affirment que des justifications peuvent toujours être données *ex post facto* pour expliquer l'échec des prétendues

capacités de pronostic de la divination. Dans les termes de Bascom, largement adoptés dans la littérature, ces explications *ex post facto* sont présentées comme des « alibis » fournis pour « couvrir des échecs inévitables » (1941 :45). Comme ces alibis sont enracinés dans un système épistémologique global qui accepte *a priori* la validité des pratiques divinatoires, les alibis de Bascom permettent que « la logique du processus de divination étant circulaire et auto-suffisant [...] le processus [divinatoire] continue indéfiniment, sans menace extérieure sérieuse » (Mendoza 1978 :45). Dans ce cadre, la divination n'est représentée que comme un processus d'explication intellectuel, dont les limites et échecs sont mitigés par l'utilisation d'alibis servant à renforcer un système intellectuel « fermé », construit sur un mode Poppérien.

Divination et dialogue

Sous l'influence du *linguistic turn* dans les sciences humaines, plusieurs publications plus récentes se focalisent sur les perspectives de dialogue de la divination. Ceci est particulièrement vrai pour les études caractéristiques du mode d'analyse sémiotique interne et sémantique de Rene Devisch qui, dans leurs configurations les plus récentes, insistent sur la relation discursive entre le client et le devin, et entre le devin et le texte divinatoire (voir en particulier Akinnaso 1995 ; Devisch 1985 ; Shaw 1985 ; Parkin 1979 ; Werbner 1989 ; Whyte 1991 ; Zeitlyn 1990, 2001). Plusieurs des contributeurs du volume déterminant de Phillip Peek, *African Divination Systems* (1991), insistent par exemple sur le travail d'interprétation collaboratif qui prend place pendant les séances divinatoires (Parkin 1991 ; Shaw 1991 et Whyte 1991). Dans ces articles, la divination est représentée comme un processus allant de l'ambiguïté à la clarté, ou, dans les termes de Parkin, du « chaos à l'ordre » (Parkin 1991). C'est le cas, d'une part, lorsque le devin interprète et contextualise un résultat tiré au hasard, transformant ainsi des parties de textes autrement incompréhensibles en pronostics spécifiques, et, d'autre part, lorsqu'il intervient dans une discussion thérapeutique avec le client, en clarifiant les questions, soucis, espoirs ou peurs du client,

se dirigeant en fait vers des actions qui peuvent résoudre les problèmes sous-jacents à la demande initiale du client. Ainsi, comme l'écrit Whyte, les formes mécaniques de divination incluent souvent « a three-way conversation, with the diviner mediating... between the client and the authoritative book » (Whyte 1991 :160).

Le mode d'analyse sémiotique-interne et sémantique, d'après Devisch :

focuses on how [divination] 'works,' not so much in the sense of its achieving something, but rather in the sense of how it works in itself, how social-cultural reality is always in the process of being brought about (1985 : 70-71).

Ici, la divination n'est pas considérée uniquement en termes d'utilité sociale, de fonction, ou de véracité objective. On insiste plutôt sur les techniques à travers lesquelles le devin, qui est parfois présenté comme un bricoleur (Peek 1991a ; Parkin 1979, 1991), interprète et contextualise les résultats tirés pour son ou sa cliente. David Zeitlyn compare par exemple le rôle du devin à celui d'un critique littéraire présentant un traité archaïque et interprétant certains passages d'une manière à replacer le problème dans un contexte social et moral [contemporain] (Zeitlyn 2001 :228). De même, Werbner a inventé l'expression de "poetics of divination" pour exprimer le "langage cryptique, condensé et hautement ambigu" dans lequel de nombreux pronostics divinatoires sont exprimés (Werbner 1989 :232) (cf. Annus 2010a ; Shaugnessy 2010). Dans ces cas, la divination est un processus de réduction dans lequel le devin retient une seule réponse d'une grande diversité de possibilités. Ce faisant, le devin travaille de concert avec le client, tous deux étant vus comme s'engageant dans un "processus de découverte qui va de l'obscurité à la certitude" (Whyte 1991 :170). Même dans certains cas célèbres, comme celui de Chilenga (voir Redmayne 1970), dans lequel un seul devin réunit un public divers multi-ethnique et multinational, le devin et le

client sont considérés comme collaborant en vue de créer un idiome partagé lors de la séance divinatoire (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985a ; Whyte 1991 ; Zeitlyn 1990, 1993, 2001).

Chapitre Deux : introduction à la divination tibétaine, ses récits d'origine et la tradition Bon

Brève introduction à la divination tibétaine

Dans l'imaginaire tibétain traditionnel, on considère que les humains sont sujets à une multitude d'influences, à la fois naturelles et surnaturelles, parmi lesquelles on compte les planètes et les étoiles, ainsi qu'une variété déconcertante de dieux, démons, demi-dieux ou esprits régionaux. D'une part, on croit que les relations entre cette myriade de forces, harmonieuses ou non, exercent un contrôle considérable sur les vies humaines individuelles et affectent le fonctionnement de la société au sens large. D'autre part, ces forces sont elles-mêmes influencées par différentes formes d'action rituelle, différant largement dans leur taille et leur sophistication, allant de l'offrande quotidienne de *bsang mchod*, par exemple, à la préparation de mandalas élaborés pour l'anniversaire de Dalai Lama. Dans ce cadre, la divination et l'astrologie constituent un mécanisme grâce auquel les individus peuvent avoir un aperçu de la nature et de la disposition des diverses forces élémentaire ou surnaturelles qui peuvent affecter leur vie.

Malgré une quantité croissante d'études spécialisées sur le sujet des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines, une variété de techniques divinatoires, dont la divination par le riz, le sel ou les coupures d'ongle, ainsi que l'interprétation des rêves et des formes de physiognomie tibétaines demeurent encore presque entièrement inconnues de la recherche académique occidentale. En tant que chercheur, je ne peux donc prétendre à une familiarité ethnographique et/ou textuelle avec chacune des formes de divination pratiquée dans les communautés parlant tibétain dans le monde. Plus précisément, étant donné la nature hétérogène des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines, une telle prétention serait presque certainement difficile à tenir. Comme tout système rituel complexe, les

pratiques divinatoires tibétaines sont souvent très composites, avec des éléments de différentes traditions divinatoires rassemblées sur de longues périodes de temps. Il existe néanmoins, sur la base des sources présentées dans le chapitre un, la possibilité de faire plusieurs généralisations sûres, plus particulièrement à propos des pratiques divinatoires sous forme textuelle.

Tout d'abord, l'exécution de la divination, particulièrement sous ses formes mécaniques appartenant au groupe du *mo* ou *mo rtsis*, a été décrite par plusieurs auteurs comme un phénomène pan-tibétain (Chime Radha 1981 ; Ekvall 1963 ; Gerke 2011 ; Róna-Tas 1956). Un survol rapide de la recherche révèle qu'il existe de nombreuses formes différentes de divination pratiquées dans les cultures tibétaines, passées et présentes (Chime Radha 1981 ; Ekvall 1963 ; Gerke 2011 ; Róna-Tas 1956). Plusieurs sont présentées dans Ekvall 1963 et Lama Chime Radha 1981, qui parlent d'une variété de techniques divinatoires, dont la divination par les dés, pierres, chants, rosaires, miroirs, flèches, lampes à beurre, et par la combustion d'omoplates de mouton. Plusieurs études ont également été publiées sur la divination par le chant d'oiseau, les motifs de vol aviaires et les augures (part. Laufer 1914, Thomas 1951, Morgan 1987, Mortensen 2003). À ce jour, la divination par les cordes et les nœuds (dont l'exécution du *ju thig*) demeure largement inexplorée, bien que des remarques superficielles apparaissent dans certaines publications (Tucci 1980 : 228). En outre, la sélection quasi-divinatoire de certains hiérarches par divers processus aléatoires, avec parfois la médiation de déités majeures et mineures, n'est pas totalement inconnue (Ramble 1993, 2008 ; Walsh 1906). L'élection de l'abbé du monastère de sMan ri Monastery et du Tuteur Junior du Dalai Lama par *rtags ril* par exemple sont les cas les plus connus d'élection par des processus aléatoires (Sherpa Tulku *et al* 1977 :68-69 ; Cech 1987 :112 ; cf. Calkowski 1993). D'autres formes de divination sont également attestées dans les textes de Dunhuang, où l'on trouve des manuscrits décrivant la divination par les pièces (IOL Tib J 741.1, IOL Tib J 741.2, IOL Tib J 742, IOL Tib J 744, PT 1055, PT 1056), la divination canine (P 3601), la divination par jet de cuir (IO 742) ainsi que de nombreuses autres pratiques divinatoires.

En termes très généraux, beaucoup de pratiques divinatoires rencontrées dans les cultures tibétaines peuvent être considérées comme des formes de cléromancie. Les divinations cléromantiques utilisent des éléments mobiles, comme les dés, les pierres, les tirages au sort, les cordes ou les runes, qui sont jetés par le devin afin de générer au hasard une forme, une série de symboles ou un signifiant numérique particulier. Le devin consulte ensuite une sorte de catalogue interprétatif, textuel ou mémorisé, afin de rendre intelligible le résultat du jet et générer une réponse à la demande du client. Dans le cas africain du *ng'ombu yakesekula* Ndembu par exemple, étudié en détail par Victor Turner (1975), le devin commence par placer vingt à trente objets dans un panier étroit et ouvert en haut. Il secoue ensuite le panier, mélangeant la distribution des objets et les plaçant en tas dont les trois ou quatre objets supérieurs sont examinés. Dans ce cas, le catalogue interprétatif peut être considéré comme enraciné dans la culture orale Ndembu dans la mesure où l'interprétation des éléments mobiles du *ng'ombu yakesekula* dépend de la mémorisation d'un corpus énorme de symboles strictement définis, qui sont communiqués oralement par le devin à son apprenti et non couchés par écrit (Turner 1975). Par contraste, certaines traditions cléromantiques comme le *I Ching* (Feuchstwang 1972) et divination *Ifa* des Yoruba (Abimbola 1976, 1977 ; Bascom 1941, 1969, 1980) sont expressément textuelles, alors que d'autres formes de cléromancie, comme la divination *lamuli* des Nyole (Whyte 1991) combinent des vers écrits et mémorisés (cf. Zeitlyn 2001).

Si l'on retourne à la sphère culturelle tibétaine, il faut noter que de nombreuses formes de divination cléromantique sont textuelles, c'est à dire qu'elles nécessitent la médiation d'un catalogue interprétatif écrit. Dans l'une des formes de divination par les dés beaucoup pratiquée dans les communautés tibétophones de l'Himachal Pradesh par exemple, le devin a besoin de trois dés à six faces ainsi que d'un manuel de divination, souvent lié à la déesse dPal ldan dmag zor rgyal mo. Après les rites et invocations prérequis, les dés sont jetés une fois, deux fois et plusieurs fois. À chaque fois, le jet donne un résultat numérique unique, généré au hasard et compris entre trois et

dix-huit. Un coup d'œil à la section des pronostics d'un des manuels de divination associé montre que le manuscrit est constitué de quinze parties, numérotées de trois à dix-huit, chacune d'entre elles étant sous-divisée en onze sous-parties, dont le sujet va des activités commerciales au voyages et à diverses questions de santé, spirituelles ou domestiques. Ainsi, on peut considérer que cette divination par les dés utilise un générateur de hasard mécanique (les trois dés à six faces) dont les résultats sont ensuite comparés avec un catalogue interprétatif écrit qui sert de ligne directrice au devin pour donner une réponse aux demandes du client.

Pendant mon terrain en Himachal Pradesh, les devins professionnels ou semi-professionnels sont appelés *mo pa*, *mo ma* (f.), *mo mkhyan*, *mo rgyab mkhyan* ou *mo rtsis pa*. J'ai souvent observé que les devins professionnels recevaient un paiement de leur clientèle sous la forme de donations monétaires ou en nature, et s'ils faisaient partie d'une communauté monastique ces donations étaient souvent redirigées vers les autorités monastiques ou, dans certains cas, prenaient la forme d'un mécénat par le client de rites spécifiques. Il est cependant important de noter que l'exécution d'une divination n'est pas limitée à une seule profession, sexe ou méthode (cf. Gerke 2011 : 100). Bien que les divinations des lamas réincarnés (*sprul sku*) ou de haut rang sont particulièrement recherchées, il est également commun que des laïcs fassent de simples divinations par un rosaire pour appuyer leurs prises de décision quotidiennes (cf. Gerke 2011 : 100 ; Chime Radha 1981 : 2-6). Ceci montre qu'il n'existe, en général, pas de restriction particulière sur qui peut ou non faire certaines pratiques divinatoire simples (Chime Radha 1981 : 6). Cela dit, il existe certaines divinations mécaniques, comme le *lde'u 'phrul* (section 3.3), qui nécessitent que le pratiquant s'engage dans une série de pratiques préliminaires rigoureuses, appelées *sngon 'gro*. Bien que les *sngon 'gro* ne soient pas homogènes, il est commun que les devins cultivent, par la méditation et la pratique rituelle quotidienne, une relation avec certaines divinités clairvoyantes (*mngon shes*) qui sont invoquées afin de garantir l'efficacité de la divination (voir section 3.4.1). Bien que les divinités associées à la divination diffèrent de pratique en pratique, dans les communautés en exil

contemporaines il est très commun que les protectrices dPal ldan lha mo, A chi chos skyi sgröl ma et Srid pa rgyal mo soient invoquées dans la partie essentielle des *sngon 'gro* qui fonde un certain nombre de pratiques cléromantiques.

La relation économique entre la divination et le rituel est à la fois complexe et malheureusement peu étudiée. Il est néanmoins fréquemment noté que la divination tibétaine est étroitement liée aux traditions rituelles et médicales qui la surplombent, et qu'elle joue un rôle central dans la régulation des économies rituelles. Comme nous le verrons, l'une des caractéristiques majeures des pronostics divinatoires tibétains est de recommander des rites très spécifiques, dont l'exécution correcte dépend souvent de l'intervention d'un spécialiste rituel. C'est pourquoi Gerke caractérise la relation entre la divination et le rituel (comme celle entre les devins et les communautés monastiques) comme étant de nature symbiotique :

Both reap rewards. [...] The diviners provide the monastery with clients and detailed instructions on what kind of practices to perform, and the monasteries provide the body of sophisticated religious practices. The client usually 'pays' for the [diviner's] services in the form of donations. (2011 : 104).

Clarke, dans son étude ethnographique du peuple Yolmo, considère que cette même dynamique est une forme de "capitalisme religieux" dans lequel la divination sert à soutenir financièrement les institutions hégémoniques, en échange de quoi la clientèle des devins reçoit du capital symbolique sous la forme de *bsod nams* et de *byin rlabs*, c'est à dire du mérite et de l'influence spirituelle (1990 :182). Bien que cette dynamique doive être davantage étudiée, j'ajouterais que la prolifération des technologies de communication a, dans le cas de l'Himachal Pradesh, singulièrement compliqué les modes de patronage traditionnels. Comme en effet les requêtes de divination sont de plus en plus souvent faites à distance par téléphone, le discours traditionnel entre

les devins et les communautés monastiques connaît une transformation que la recherche ethnographique n'a pas encore explorée.

Remarques sur l'historiographie bouddhique tibétaine et les origines de la divination

Durant le règne de Srong bstan sgam po (r. env. 627-649), les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines étaient un « amalgame complexe de formes indiennes, chinoises et tibétaines » (Aris 1980 : 12). La nature hétérogène des manuscrits découverts à Dunhuang suggère en particulier qu'il existait un environnement dans lequel les formes indigènes de divination été hybridées par des emprunts et adaptations réciproques, alors même que se diffusaient les pratiques divinatoires venues de Chine, d'Inde et d'Asie Centrale (Macdonald 1971 : 272-309 ; Kalinowski 2003). À cause de l'absence évidente de sources sur l'époque pré impériale, il est particulièrement difficile de postuler l'existence d'une origine unique, « pure », aux différentes formes de divination pratiquées dans les milieux tibétophones. Les présentations étiologiques de la divination tibétaine devraient donc considérer les pratiques individuelles au cas par cas, en s'appuyant sur une étude comparative des documents primaires et, lorsque c'est possible, sur les restes archéologiques, tout en évaluant les récits étiologiques indigènes.

Bien que les origines du *lde'u 'phrul* soient présentées dans la Section 3.3, je traite des origines mytho-historiques de la divination telles qu'elles sont représentées dans les écrits tibétains dans les sections 2.2.1. et 2.2.2., et ce afin de présenter la divination tibétaine de façon générale. Dans ces parties, je me focalise sur la notion de diffusion culturelle, et en particulier sur l'introduction des sciences géomantiques et astrologiques chinoises telle qu'elle est présentée dans la *vita* de Srong bstan sgam po, et sur l'introduction sous-entendue de techniques divinatoires indiennes, telle qu'elle est relatée dans les récits anciens du voyage de Padmasambhava au Tibet. Alors que ces récits sont bien connus, les récits Bon présentant l'introduction et l'usage de la divination ont été presque totalement ignorés de la recherche occidentale. C'est pourquoi je

présente, après une brève introduction de la religion Bon tibétaine (Sections 2.3-2.4), les origines de la divination telles qu'elles sont représentées dans la mytho-histoire Bon, en me concentrant en particulier sur le rôle de sTon pa gShen rab dans la diffusion des pratiques divinatoires tibétaines au Tibet. Par souci de concision cependant, je ne vais développer les sections 2.2.1 et 2.2.2 dans le présent résumé, mais je vais continuer avec la suite du chapitre deux, en commençant par une brève introduction de la tradition cléricale Bon.

Remarques générale sur la religion Bon

En termes très généraux, le terme « Bon », tel qu'il est communément utilisé dans présentations académiques occidentales, désigne au moins trois phénomènes religieux distincts (cf. Kvaerne 1995 : 9-10 ; Kvaerne and Thargyal 1993 : 9-10). Tout d'abord, le mot « Bon » est souvent utilisé pour désigner la religion tibétaine pré bouddhique (c'est à dire avant le 7^{ème} siècle), qui est imaginée de diverses façons. Certains des premiers tibétologues, comme par exemple Waddell (1895), Das (1881, 1900, 1902), and Bell (1931), ainsi que certains anthropologues et linguistes plus tardifs (Beyer 1992 : 7, 17 ; Hoffmann 1950, 1961 ; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1947, 1956 : 542 ; Funke 1969) considère le Bon pré bouddhique comme une forme de chamanisme, que l'on pourrait grossièrement identifier avec les traditions chamaniques d'Asie Central et Septentrionale contemporaines (voir section 2.3). Bien que des efforts aient été faits selon un mode néo-Tylorien pour reconstruire le Bon du Tibet ancien comme un « aborigène chamanique » à travers l'étude des pratiques religieuses villageoises contemporaines (David-Neel 1932 ; Bell 1931 ; Rock 1952), la viabilité de cette description des religions pré bouddhiques et/ou de la ou des religions impériales non-bouddhiques comme étant « Bon » a été fortement problématisée par la recherche postérieure (Jackson 1978b, 1979 ; Bjerken 2004 ; Bellezza 2005 ; Stein 1972 ; Kvaerne 1974, 1985, 1996). Dans certaines présentations anciennes de la religion tibétaine le Bon est également considéré comme étant la religion nationale pré bouddhique du Tibet (Hoffmann 1961) qui, dans plusieurs

publication académiques et commerciales, est représentée comme une force s'opposant diamétralement à la mission civilisatrice du bouddhisme tibétain (Jäschke 1881 ; Das 1881, 1900, 1902 ; David-Neel 1932 ; Kawaguchi 1909 ; Maraini 1952 ; Govinda 1966 ; Lalou 1952) (cf. Almond 1988 and Bjerken 2004). À quelques notables exceptions près cependant (Karmay 1983), et pour des raisons présentées plus loin (section 2.3), le consensus actuel des chercheurs est que les termes *bon* et *bon po* ne servaient pas, à l'époque impériale, à désigner une sorte de religion nationale organisée (voir en particulier Stein 1972, 1985, 1988 ; Beckwith 2012 ; Dotson 2008 ; Blezer 2008 ; van Schaik 2013).

Le terme « Bon » est également utilisé pour désigner une religion cléricale qui aurait apparu aux X^{ème} et XI^{ème} siècles, alors que se formaient les principales traditions du bouddhisme tibétain lors du *bstan pa phyi dar*, ou la « diffusion postérieure de la doctrine » au Tibet. Cette religion ressemble à maints égards au bouddhisme tibétain, ce qui a poussé certains chercheurs à considérer la tradition Bon tibétaine comme « quasi-bouddhiste » ou comme étant une forme hétérodoxe de bouddhisme tibétain (Snellgrove 1968 ; Samuel 1993 : 438). Certains auteurs cependant objectent à cette tendance, insistant sur le fait qu'il est nécessaire de considérer le Bon, comme le dit Per Kvaerne « comme une religion distincte, de la même façon peut-être que la religion Sikh est distincte de l'hindouisme et la foi Druze est distincte de l'Islam » ("as a distinct religion, in the same way, perhaps, that the Sikh religion is distinct from Hinduism or the Druze faith is distinct from Islam" ; Kvaerne 2005 : 13). Quoiqu'il en soit, les Bonpos eux-mêmes considèrent que leur religion date de bien avant l'introduction du bouddhisme indien ; elle s'apparente en fait à la religion pré bouddhique du Tibet et est représentée comme ayant survécu à deux persécutions organisées lors de l'époque impériale. Pour plusieurs raisons, dont des problèmes de chronologie historique, la religion Bon a souvent été traitée avec dédain par les bouddhistes tibétains (*chos pa-s*). Il n'est pas rare par exemple dans les écrits polémiques de voir les Bonpos critiqués comme étant des étrangers (*phyi pa*), des hérétiques (*mu stegs pa*), voire pire. Quoiqu'il en soit, en 1978, les

Bonpos tibétains ont été autorisés à avoir une représentation formelle au parlement de la Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), et en 1987, le Bon a été officiellement reconnu par le 14^{ème} Dalai Lama, qui a donné au 33^{ème} abbé du monastère de sMan ri, Lung rtogs bsTan pa'i nyi ma (n. 1929), le titre de *khri 'dzin*, ou « détenteur du trône », un titre traditionnellement réservé aux têtes des traditions bouddhiques tibétaines (cf. Cech 1987 ; Kvaerne et Thargyal 1993).

Enfin, le mot « Bon » est aussi parfois utilisé comme un nom descriptif qui désigne une large gamme de croyances religieuses locales ou villageoises répandues dans la sphère culturelle tibétaine, ce qui inclus sans s'y limiter différentes formes de divination, de médiumnité, de propitiation des divinités régionales et de représentations de l'âme (cf. Diemberger 1992, 1993 ; Ramble 2008 ; Holmberg 1984, 1989 ; Balicki 2008). Bien que ces pratiques n'est pas été le sujet de beaucoup de débat académique systématique, il faut noter que Geoffrey Samuel a récemment publié une excellente introduction à ce sujet, dans laquelle il passe en revue différentes traditions présentées comme Bon dans les contreforts de l'Himalaya, allant du Népal Central jusqu'au Sikkim et au Bhoutan, en passant par l'Arunachal Pradesh et le Kham Méridional (Samuel 2013 : 80-81). Il est important de se souvenir que lorsqu'il est défini ainsi, le Bon ne constitue pas une partie essentielle du bouddhisme ou du Bon dans sa forme monastique contemporaine (comme présenté précédemment). C'est pourquoi dans le présent travail, je vais suivre Stein (1972) et classer ces traditions « non-bouddhistes » ou « païennes » (Ramble 1998 : 124), ou encore cette « religion civile » (Ramble 2008) comme étant la « religion sans nom » du Tibet.

Il faut noter que dans ce qui suit, et sauf si cela est expressément mentionné, le terme “Bon” ne sera utilisé que dans le deuxième sens, c'est à dire comme désignant la religion Bon dans sa forme monastique contemporaine. Les tenants de cette religion sont appelés *bon po*, le mot *bon* ayant alors la même gamme d'usages que le mot *chos* (Skt. *dharma*) dans le bouddhisme tibétain. Dans les représentations religieuses Bon, la religion Bon est une religion universelle dans le sens où ses doctrines sont objectivement vraies et applicables à tous les êtres à toutes les époques (cf.

Kvaerne 1995 : 11). Bien que le Bon ressemble au bouddhisme à beaucoup d'égards, un observateur non averti notera cependant qu'il existe certaines différences subtiles mais caractéristiques qui distinguent la religion Bon des autres traditions bouddhiques tibétaines. De manière générale, cela va de l'organisation du canon Bon et de sa cosmologie unique à de nombreux aspects de la culture matérielle et de la pratique rituelle. Il est de notoriété commune, cependant, que la différence la plus prononcée entre le Bon et le bouddhisme soit la compréhension qu'a la tradition Bon de sa propre histoire sacrée, et en particulier de son fondateur, le bouddha sTon pa gShen rab mi bo che (dorénavant sTon pa gShen rab).

Bonpos dans la diaspora contemporaine

En termes numériques, les Bonpos ne constituent qu'une petite minorité de la population d'ethnie tibétaine totale. Il est pour l'instant impossible de donner une approximation du pourcentage relatif des Bonpos et des bouddhistes dans les communautés de la Région Autonome du Tibet (RAT) et la diaspora tibétaine hors du Tibet. On estime généralement cependant que les Bonpos constituent environ 1% de la population d'ethnie tibétaine vivant en exil (Cech 1987 : 1), ce qui ferait entre 18,000 et 19,000 personnes si l'on accepte les estimations données dans le recensement SIL 2009 (Lewis 2009). Quelle que soit l'utilité douteuse de ce chiffre, ce qui est clair c'est que pour de nombreux Bonpos, le centre spirituel et culturel actuel de la religion Bon est le monastère dPal gshen bstan sman ri gling Monastery, situé dans la colonie Bonpo de Dolanji (H.P., India).

Dolanji

La colonie Bonpo de Dolanji a été fondé en 1967. Le site se trouve à quinze kilomètres à l'ouest de Solan, au sud de Shimla dans les Shiwalik Hills du Bas Himalaya (voir annexe : *figure x*). La colonie porte plusieurs noms, dont les différentes utilisations ont été étudiées par Cech (1987). En bref, le nom tibétain de la colonie est Thob rgyal gsar pa (Nouvelle Thob rgyal), qui désigne la

vallée de Thob rgyal près du monastère de sMan ri au Tibet (Cech 1987, 2000). D'après Cech, « ce nom a été adopté dans l'espoir que la colonie deviendrait le domaine d'appui du nouveau monastère de sMan ri ("this name was adopted in the hope that the settlement would become the supporting estate of the new sMan ri monastery", 1987 : 154). Il est également appelé, toujours en tibétain, Solan gzhis chags (« la colonie de Solan »), un nom qui le localise géographiquement en Inde. De plus, certains Bonpos locaux utilisent une expression plus sectarienne en le nommant Bon po gzhis chags (« la colonie Bonpo »). Le titre administratif anglais officiel est « the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation ». Quoiqu'il en soit, on note généralement que le nom le plus utilisé par les non-Tibétains est Dolanji, le nom indien d'origine de la communauté vivant là avant la diaspora (Cech 1987 : 154-155).

Malgré le recensement complet de la région effectué par Cech entre 1985 et 1987 (Cech 1987, 2000), la population de Dolanji reste difficile à évaluer. Dans son étude, Cech remarque que la population est à son point culminant au moment de la nouvelle année tibétaine, où elle atteint à peu près quatre-cents, et à son plus bas en hiver lorsqu'elle descend à un peu plus de cinquante ("at its highest ebb at the time of the Tibetan New Year when it reaches approximately four hundred and at its lowest in the winter season when it falls to little over fifty" ; 1987 : 168). Cette estimation ne tient pas compte cependant des centaines de pèlerins Bon qui visitent régulièrement le village, gonflant artificiellement la population du camp. De plus, Cech a entrepris ses recherches juste avant la construction du Bon Children's Welfare Center (BCWC), un orphelinat et un pensionnat à but non lucratif fondé en 1989 par l'abbé actuel du monastère de sMan ri, S. S. sMan ri khri 'dzin Lung rtogs bstan pa'i rnyi ma Rin po che. Lors de l'année académique 2013, l'école comptait environ 350 enfant et 30 enseignant dans les dortoirs locaux. Ainsi, si l'on prend la BCWC en considération, je pense que l'on pourrait estimer la population entre 700 et 800 au maximum, et au minimum entre 300 et 400 enfants adultes.

Deux classifications des enseignements religieux Bon : le *sGo bzhi mdzod lnga* et le *Theg pa rim pa dgu*

Grâce, en grande partie, aux recherches de David Snellgrove (1967[8]) et Samten Karmay (1975), les tibétologues reconnaissent maintenant que la religion Bon utilise deux systèmes taxonomiques principaux pour classer le corpus des enseignements de sTon pa gShen rab : (1) le *sGo bzhi mdzod lnga*, « les quatre portes et le trésor, [qui font] cinq » ; et les (2) *theg pa rim pa dgu*, « les neuf véhicules ». Bien que ces deux classifications soient bien connues, il est nécessaire de les résumer brièvement ici.

Selon Karmay (1975 : 111-12), les *sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*, sans doute le moins connu des deux systèmes, divise les différents aspects philosophiques et rituels de la tradition Bon en cinq branches, comme suit :

Tableau 1: the *sGo bzhi mdzod long*

(1)	<i>chab dkar</i> (Eau Blanche)
(2)	<i>chab nag</i> (Eau Noire)
(3)	<i>'phan yul</i> (le Pays de 'Phan)
(4)	<i>dpon gsas</i> (le Guide)
(5)	<i>mtho thog</i> (le Sommet)

Globalement, la première catégorie, *chab dkar* (Eau Blanche), désigne un certain nombre de pratiques tantriques centrées sur l'utilisation de « mantras courroucés » (*drag sngags*) associées à plusieurs divinités de méditation (Reynolds 2006 : 9). La seconde catégorie, *chab nag* (Eau Noire), désigne une collection hétéroclite de rites apotropaïques et funéraires ainsi que des pratiques de divination. Le troisième groupe, *'phan yul* (la Vallée de 'Phan), est constitué d'enseignements

exotériques incluant des lois et voeux monastiques ainsi que les préceptes éthiques de base pour les pratiquants monastiques et laïques. La quatrième catégorie, *dpon gasas* (le Guide) incluse les instructions orales et écrites fondant le système méditatif et philosophique du *rDzogs chen*. Enfin, la cinquième catégorie, *mtho thog* (le Sommet), combine les sujets essentiels des quatre premiers groupes en une seule série d'enseignements. Comme l'écrit Karmay, le *mtho thog* « est décrit comme *spyi rgyugs*, ce qui signifie littéralement qu'il rentre généralement dans les quatre autres catégories » ("is described as *spyi rgyugs* which means literally that it generally runs into all the other four categories", 1975 : 112). Le deuxième système classificatoire, sans doute le plus connu, est celui des *theg pa rim pa dgu*, qui divise les enseignements de sTon pa gShen rab en neuf catégories, énumérées dans le tableau 2 ci-dessous.

Tableau 2: *theg pa rim pa dgu*

- | |
|---|
| (1) <i>Phya gshen theg pa</i> : divination, astrology, <i>got</i> rituals, and <i>dpyad</i> |
| (2) <i>sNang gshen gyi theg pa</i> : ransom rites and rites for suppressing demons. |
| (3) <i>'Phrul gshen theg pa</i> : destructive rites |
| (4) <i>Srid gshen theg pa</i> : funerary rites |
| (5) <i>dGe bsnyen theg pa</i> : Sutra level one |
| (6) <i>Drang srong theg pa</i> : Sutra level two |
| (7) <i>A dkar theg pa</i> : Tantra level one |
| (8) <i>Ye gshen theg pa</i> : Tantra level two |
| (9) <i>Bla med theg pa</i> : <i>rDzogs chen</i> |

Il faut noter que les « neuf véhicules » sont sous-divisés en trois groupes distincts. Dans cette

taxonomie secondaire, les quatre premiers groupes sont appelés « véhicule causal » (*rgyu'i theg pa*), les quatre suivants sont nommés « véhicule du fruit » (*'bras bu'i theg pa*). Ils sont suivis de la neuvième et dernière catégorie, le système de méditation du *rDzogs chen*. De manière générale, le véhicule causal est d'orientation moins sotériologique car sa pratique s'apparente à une variété de rites apotropaïques et de traditions divinatoires, médicales et astrologiques, ayant pour but la pacification des divinités locales et régionales et le maintien du bien-être. Par contraste, le véhicule du fruit est expressément sotériologique. Le pratiquant commence avec les soutras puis continue avec les tantras et culmine avec le *rDzogs chen*, le pinnacle de la tradition philosophique et méditative. Pour plus de détails sur le sujet, voir Snellgrove (1967) et pour une comparaison des neuf véhicules Bon et rNying ma, voir Samuel (2005 : 126-32) et Hoffmann (1961).

Brèves remarques sur la relation du *mo* avec le *rtsis*, *gto* et *dpyad*

Le lecteur remarquera dans le tableau 2 que la divination apparaît dans le premier des neuf véhicules, le *phya gshen theg pa*, ou « véhicule de la prédiction des *gshen* ». Il est généralement divisé en quatre pratiques : (1) *mo*, divination ; (2) *rtsis*, astrologie ; (3) *gto*, une classe de rituels et 4) *dpyad*, diagnostic. On considère souvent que les relations entre ces quatre concepts forment un aspect intégral de la tradition Bon tradition, en particulier en tant que partie d'un discours idéalisé sur les dynamiques sociales partagées par les communautés laïques et monastiques. Cela illustre également assez bien le rôle que la divination joue (au moins théoriquement) dans la religion Bon.

Pour résumer les relations entre *mo*, *rtsis*, *gto* et *dpyadi*, je ne peux que paraphraser la présentation du sujet faite par Karmay dans « General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon » (1975 : 140-142). En bref, si un individu tombe malade, s'il ne connaît pas la cause de sa maladie, il pourrait décider de consulter un devin. Le devin ferait alors une divination et consulterait un manuel de divination afin de déterminer la ou les causes de la maladie. L'exécution d'un ou d'une série de rites pouvant guérir la maladie du patient serait alors recommandée. Après la

divination, un astrologue pourrait être consulté afin de fixer une date favorable à l'exécution du rite en question. L'astrologue examine alors les éléments favorables et défavorables associés à l'étoile de naissance du patient afin de déterminer s'ils sont en conflit. En même temps, le patient devrait idéalement consulter un docteur, qui diagnostique toute affection physique et fournit potentiellement au patient des traitements médicaux secondaires. Dans cet exemple, parmi les quatre méthodes, *mo* et *rtsis* servent à maints égards à diagnostiquer l'affection, qu'elle soit physique, surnaturelle ou sociale et à postuler les moyens grâce auxquels l'affection peut être éliminée. *gTo* et *dpyad* sont les techniques rituelles et médicales efficaces pouvant effectivement résoudre le problème. Ainsi, la divination est considérée comme étant le questionnement initial qui catalyse et éclaire le processus rituel plus large.

En parlant de manière générale de l'exécution de divinations dans les communautés en exil, Gerke (2011 :4-5) affirme qu'en tant que chercheur il n'est pas toujours constructif de souligner les frontières entre les pratiques divinatoires et les rites qu'elles influencent. Comme noté précédemment, dans les milieux de culture tibétaine, la divination et l'astrologie se rejoignent souvent dans une large variété de rites apotropaïques et des pratiques médico-rituelles (cf. Gerke 2011 : 104). De plus, Gerke (2011 :16-17) note l'idée fautive, assez commune, que les traditions divinatoires, médicales et rituelles constituent l'une des parties d'un seul corpus homogène de pratiques. Dans le cas de la médecine tibétaine par exemple, Gerke affirme que les frontières constituant les pratiques médicales n'ont jamais été réellement tracées, et qu'il n'est donc pas possible de parler d'un système unifié (16). Une observation similaire pousse Pordié (2008 :4, 10-17) à utiliser le pluriel de *médecines tibétaines*, qu'il définit, dans leurs formes contemporaines globalisées, comme faisant partie d'une nouvelle forme néo-traditionnelle de médecine tibétaine avec un caractère urbain et institutionnel ("a newly emerging 'neo-traditional' form of Tibetan medicine with an urbanized and institutional character", Gerke 2011 : 16). Cependant, malgré la nature poreuse des traditions tibétaine divinatoires, médicales et rituelles, il faut noter que Gerke

présente finalement *mo*, *rtsis* et médecine tibétaine comme des phénomènes distincts bien que liés :

despite their interrelationships and blurred boundaries, each of these knowledge systems offers specialized practices and professional expertise concerning longevity" (2011 : 5).

Manuscrits de divination dans le canon Bon

De manière générale, le canon Bon est divisé en deux branches principales, les mêmes que dans les écoles bouddhiques tibétaines. La première section, le *bKa' 'gyur*, est constituée de textes considérés comme ayant été proclamés directement par le bouddha sTon pa gShen rab. Cependant, cela ne doit pas toujours être pris au pied de la lettre. Ainsi, un exemple souvent cité est celui du *mDo gZer mig*, qui, comme l'écrit Kvaerne « est la biographie, et non l'autobiographie, de sTon pa gShen rab. Comme elle contient néanmoins de nombreux sermons et prières prononcés par le Bouddha, elle est classifiée comme *bKa' ['gyur]* ("is the biography —not autobiography— of sTon pa gShen rab, but as it nevertheless contains numerous sermons and prayers uttered by the Buddha, it is classed as *bKa' ['gyur]*, 1974 : 23). La deuxième branche du canon est appelée *brTen 'gyur*, dont l'orthographe est différente de son homologue bouddhique (i.e. *bsTan 'gyur*). En bref, le *brTen 'gyur* est constitué d'une large variété de commentaires sur l'enseignement de sTon pa gShen rab. Par la combinaison de ces deux sections, le canon est souvent désigné avec le nom composé *bka' brten*. Ce terme est résumé ainsi par sGa ston Tshul khrim rgyal mtshan (14^{ème} s.) :

As it has been composed in dependence (*brten*) on the Word (*bka'*) of the Teacher, (it is called) 'That which depends on the Word' (*bka' rten*)" (Kvaerne 1974 : 23).

Le lecteur pourra consulter Kvaerne 1974 et 1971 pour une présentation complète de l'histoire du canon Bon, son contenu et ses complexités taxonomiques.

Comme mentionné dans les section 2.3 et 2.5, de nombreuses formes de divination de la tradition Bon retracent leur origine jusqu'au bouddha sTon pa gShen rab et en particulier sa codification mythique du *phyā gshen theg pa*. C'est pourquoi certaines pratiques divinatoire Bon ont une charte canonique manquante dans la plupart des traditions bouddhiques tibétaines (cf. Fiordalis 2014). Un coup d'œil au *dkar chag Bon* récemment publié par Dan Martin, Yasuhiko Nagano et Per Kvaerne (2001) révèle qu'il existe deux collections de textes divinatoires dans le *bKa' brten*, tous deux dans le *brTen 'gyur*. J'en fournis de brefs indexes dans la section 2.6 de ma thèse, avec les citations numériques fournies par Martin, Nagano et Kvaerne (2001). La première collection, généralement appelée *Zhang chung ju thig*, comprend trois textes sur la divination par des cordes à nœuds (i.e. *ju thig*), l'une d'entre elles contenant un commentaire mineur sur la divination par les pierres. La deuxième collection de textes est souvent désignée comme *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo* (une référence à l'incipit du manuscrit). Ce compendium contient des matériaux traitant d'une grande diversité de sujets allant de la divination à l'astrologie en passant par un de textes biographiques, historiques et cosmologiques. Par souci de concision, je n'ai inclus que les textes traitant directement de la divination et des pratiques associées.

Resumé du chapitre trois : la divination lDe'u 'phrul

Introduction générale

Le deuxième chapitre est une introduction générale à la divination tibétaine et à la religion Bon tibétaine. Dans les chapitre trois et quatre, je traite de l'exécution d'une seule forme de divination en détail. J'ai choisi de me focaliser sur une forme particulière de lithomancie nommée *lde'u 'phrul*, qui n'existe que dans la tradition tibétaine Bon. Dans le troisième chapitre, je présente les sources textuelles du *lde'u 'phrul* ainsi que la structure, les récits d'origine, les objets rituels et les divinités généralement associées à l'exécution de la divination. J'ai effectué la recherche sur le

terrain à la base de ma présentation lors de plusieurs voyages d'étude en Himachal Pradesh lors des étés 2009 et 2010, ainsi qu'au printemps-été 2013. La plupart des rituels de *lde'u 'phrul* observées alors ont été exécutés par le sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, abbé du monastère de sMan ri dans le district de Sirmaur, H. P., Inde (voir Sections 2.3.5 and 3.2). En plus de l'étude de terrain effectuée au monastère de sMan ri, ma présentation s'appuie sur trois documents primaires :

(1) *Le Mirroir illuminant la divination par les galets de sMra seng (sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*, dorénavant *MSeD*), attribué à Kun grol grags pa (n. 1700 AD), un célèbre oecuméniste et historien Bon ayant participé au mouvement non sectaire *ris med*. Le texte a sans doute été composé et imprimé au rGyal rong (dans l'actuel province du Sichuan de la RPC) à la mi-18^{ème} s. Il a récemment été réimprimé et publié par le monastère de sMan ri avec l'aide du regretté Gene Smith dans une série sur la littérature rituelle Bon. Ce manuscrit, sa publication et les problèmes concernant sa composition sont discutés en détails dans la section 4.1.

(2) *La Lampe illuminant la divination par les galets clairvoyante de sMra seng (sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron me*, dorénavant *MSeP*), attribuée à Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, premier abbé du monastère de g.Yung drung gLing, centre monastique Bon et école dialectique du Tibet Central fondé en 1834. D'après la taxonomie Bon, le *MSeP* est classé *brTen 'gyur* et se trouve dans la deuxième collection de textes divinatoires présentée au chapitre deux (référence n. W30498-142-1).

(3) *La Lampe illuminant la divination par les galets acérée, clairvoyante et magique de Ma sangs (Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron mei*, dorénavant *MSaP*). Ce manuscrit n'a pas de colophon. D'après mes informateurs, il s'agit d'une copie à la main d'un *gter ma* du 11^{ème} siècle attribué au *gter ston* Bon Khro tshang 'brug lha. Je pense en fait que ce manuscrit est

probablement une copie du *MSeP* faite au monastère de Samling au milieu du 19^{ème} s. puis préservée par le clan Yang ngal clan au Dolpo, Nepal.

La divination *lde'u 'phrul*

Comme mentionné plus haut, la divination que fait le sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma s'appelle *lde'u 'phrul*, ce que Namkhai Norbu (1995, 2009) a traduit par « manifestation de la connaissance » (manifestation of knowledge). C'est cette traduction que l'on trouve dans plusieurs dictionnaires en langue occidentale, mais il est important de noter que cette pratique est également connue sous d'autres noms. Tout d'abord, cette divination est parfois désignée par l'homonyme *rde'u 'phrul*, « magie par les galets », dont la différence n'est qu'une altération orthographique mineure. Ainsi, les deux expressions sont parfois confondues, que ce soit dans les textes divinatoires ou la conversation quotidienne. Cette divination est également appelée *rdel drug*, ou « six galets », bien que cette expression n'apparaissent que rarement et qu'elle ait une connotation très spécifique. Au monastère de sMan ri, cette divination est aussi souvent appelée *ma sang(s) rdel mo*, ou « divination par les galets de *Ma sang(s)* », de qui est sans doute une allusion à deux choses : (1) le lieu mythique où sTon pa gShen rab, le fondateur de la religion Bon, est censé avoir donné des enseignements sur la divination ; (2) une classe d'être semi-divin populaires dans la mythologie Bon. Cela pourrait aussi être plus simplement une référence à l'incipit de la deuxième collection des textes de divination du *brTen 'gyur* présentés dans la Section 2.6 (i.e. ref. n. W30498-142-1). Enfin, la divination est aussi parfois désignée par *sMra seng rdel mo*, « la divination de *sMra seng* », où le terme *sMra seng* probablement un abrégé de l'épithète *smra ba'i seng ge*, « lion de la parole », qui désigne le bodhisattva Mañjuśrī ainsi qu'une émanation de sTon pa gShen rab par laquelle il enseigne les quatre premiers véhicules de la religion Bon. Par simplicité et comme tous ces termes désignent la même pratique de *lde'u 'phrul*, c'est uniquement ce terme qui est utilisé dans le chapitre sur cette divination et ses matériaux auxiliaires.

De manière générale, on peut considérer que le *lde'u 'phrul* est une forme de divination lithomantique, c'est à dire une divination qui nécessite le jet de pierres ou de galets dans le but d'obtenir une lecture divinatoire. Dans ce sens, il a beaucoup en commun avec les formes de cléromancie tibétaine présentées dans les sections 1.1 et 2.1. Le *lDe'u 'phrul* est également une forme de divination textuelle. Ainsi, après la consultation divinatoire, le devin consulte généralement un corpus textuel fixe afin d'interpréter les formes apparues lors du jet.

En plus des textes requis, l'exécution du *lde'u 'phrul* nécessite que le devin possède un rosaire en cristal de 42 perles ou 42 galets blancs d'approximativement 1 cm de diamètre. Dans le cas des galets, plusieurs d'entre eux (en général soit deux, soit vingt-et-un) doivent être peints en noir. Cette "peinture noire" est en fait de fins traits dessinés sur l'objet, appelés des "yeux" (*mig*). Le devin a également besoin d'une nappe en feutre blanche d'à peu près 12 à 15 cm² sur lequel les galets sont jetés. La nappe est appelée *mo gzhi dkar po*, la "base (ou fondation) blanche de la divination". En plus des objets matériels utilisés lors du jet, le devin doit aussi avoir terminés un certain nombre de pratiques rituelles préliminaires (*sngon 'gro*). Bien que je ne l'ai pas étudié en détail, il est clair que les devins *lde'u 'phrul* doivent également avoir cultivé une relation avec plusieurs divinités qui sont invoquées pendant le rite divinatoire afin de garantir la véracité de la divination (voir Section 3.4.1). Les plus importantes sont sans doute les divinités *Phya bu g.yang dkar*, associée aux prophéties dans les mythologies Bon (voir Section 3.7.1), et *Srid pa rgyal mo*, l'une des protectrices principales de la tradition Bon, similaire à maints égards à la divinité bouddhique *dPal ldan lha mo*.

Récits d'origine du *lDe'u 'phrul*

Bien que les origines mytho-historiques du *lde'u 'phrul* ne soient pas consistantes dans ses nombreuses versions textuelles et orales, il est possible, en retournant brièvement aux trois manuscrits présentés ci-dessus, de présenter un récit en patchwork des origines de la divination

telles qu'elles sont explicitées dans les sources littéraires Bon. Le *MsaP* fait par exemple le récit suivant de la propagation de la divination au Tibet

À cette époque, l'Omniscient Bouddha gShen rab, a systématisé le *phya gshen theg pa* dans le grand lieu saint de 'Ol mo lung ring. Dans la terre fortunée de rNang ba g.yu rtsi, il a établi les trois-cents-soixante modes de divination. Elles ont été confiées à Legs rgyal Thang po.

de dus nam mkhyen rgyal ba gshen rab kyis/ gnas mchog 'ol mo lung ring chen du/ phya gshen theg pa gtan la phab/ phya yul rnang ba g.yu rtsi [du] / mo pra sum brgya drug chu gtan la phab/ legs rgyal thang po la gnyer du gtad/ (*MSaP* : Ff 5, lines 2-4).

Ceci est en fait une présentation traditionnelle de l'histoire du premier véhicule de la religion Bon, le *phya gshen theg pa*. Comme nous l'avons vu dans le deuxième chapitre, on considère traditionnellement que les aspects du *phya gshen theg pa* en lien avec la divination ont été transmis par sTon pa gShen rab à son disciple Legs rgyal Thang po alors que le premier visitait la forteresse de Bar po so brgyad dans le lieu mythique rNang ba g.yu rtsi (e.g. sNang ldan g.yu rtse). Il faut noter que dans certains récits, ces enseignements sont donnés à Legs rgyal thang po ainsi qu'à l'un des fils de sTon pa gShen rab, Kong tshe 'Phrul bu (Norbu 2009 : 213). Le texte déclare ensuite :

Au pays de Zhang Zhung, Srid pa ma sang 'Phrul rgyi rgyal po a systématisé la divination par les cordes. En Chine, il a systématisé l'hydromancie. Au pays de Ma sang, il a systématisé la divination par les galets. Au pays de Ye nyag, il a systématisé la scapulomancie. Parmi celles-ci, le *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me* est issu de la tradition du the Phya gshen, le premier des véhicules. Ceci est l'origine de la divination à la vue aiguë.

srid pa ma sang 'phrul rgyi rgyal po yis/ zhang zhung yul du ju thig gtan la phab/ rgya yi yul du chu zhags gtan la phab/ ma sang gyi yul du rdel mo gtan la phab/ ye nyag gi yul du sog mo gtan la phab/ de'i nang nas theg pa'i dang po phyas gshen rgyud las byung ba'i srid pa ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me 'di yin no/ de rno mthong mo yi byung tshul yin/ (*MSaP* : Ff 5, lines 4-7).

Ce passage commence par mentionner un personnage nommé *'phrul gyi rgyal po* qui, ayant reçu les enseignements de sTon pa gShen rab codifie ensuite des techniques divinatoires dans plusieurs royaumes, dont la divination par les galets dans le pays de Ma sang. Ce personnage, *'phrul gyi rgyal po*, le « roi magique », a été présenté par plusieurs chercheurs comme ressemblant au Confucius qui apparaît dans les mythologies tibétaine (Gurung 2009 ; Lin 2007 ; Karmay 1998d). Ainsi, en s'appropriant Confucius, les récits Bon justifient l'origine chinoise de certaines pratiques divinatoires tout en maintenant la prééminence de la tradition Bon. Malheureusement, le *MSaP* ne fournit pas davantage d'informations sur la transmission du *lde'u 'phrul*. Afin de pénétrer dans une ère plus historique, nous pouvons nous tourner vers le *MSeP*, qui propose le récit suivant de la codification et de la lignée de transmission du *lde'u 'phrul* :

Le grand Phya legs rgyal thang po a reçu de mKhyen pa sMra ba'i seng ge l'ensemble des enseignements [constituant] l'étape des visions clairvoyantes du véhicule causal, le *gshen* des *phyas*. En tant qu'émanation de la divine lignée *thugs kar*, [sMra ba'i seng ge] a transmis à Srid pa ye mkhyen 'phrul rgyal l'initiation des bénédictions qui clarifient les techniques divinatoires aiguës, clairvoyantes et secrètes. Ainsi, [les enseignements] ont été codifiés au pays de Ma sang gnyen et donnés à gNyen bon thang thang grol ba. Le grand Dran pa nam mkha' a ensuite reçu ses instructions et les a répandus dans la terre du Tibet. Lorsque ces enseignements florissants déclinerent au Tibet, le maître les a cachés comme *gter ma* à mDo

smad sTag rna. Ensuite, le grand rJe 'brug a exhumé le *gter ma* d'une falaise à sTag rna et l'a donné à A da lha sras et à l'indien Tam pa(?). Les enseignements ont été donnés par A da lha sras à lha rgyal et se sont ensuite répandus progressivement.

phya gshen rgyu yi theg sgo pra rtags mngon shes kyi rim pa 'di nyid / phya legs rgyal can gyi ston pa tham cad mkhyen pa smra ba'i seng ge la zhas ste thugs kar lha rabs kyi sprul pa lkog gyur mngon shes rno mthong pra rtags gsal ba'i byin gyi brlabs srid pa ye mkhyen 'phrul rgyal la dbang / des ma sang gnyen gyi yul du gtan la phab te gnyen bon thang thang grol ba la gnang / de la bla chen dran pa nam mkha' man ngag zhus na bod yul du 'phel / bod tu bstan pa 'phel 'grib kyi skabs gyir spungs nyid kyi mdo smad stag rna la gter du bzhag / physis su rje 'brug chen pos ze gyi stag rna nas gter zhal physis te [tam pa?] rgya gar dang a da lha sras gnyis la gnang / lha sras nas lha rgyal la brgyud de rim bzhin dar ro /
(MSeP : folio 5, line 6 - folio 6, line 6).

Ensuite le récit continue avec l'enseignement de sTon pa gShen rab, sous la forme de sMra ba'i seng ge, du contenu du *phya gshen theg pa* (c'est à dire des pratiques sur le *mo*, *rtsis*, *gto* et *dpyad*) à Legs rgyal thang po. Après la codification du *lde'u 'phrul* au pays de Ma sang gyen par notre personnage Confucéen, le 'Phrul gyi rgyal po, le passage expose la lignée de divination. On apprend que c'est Dran pa nam mkha', l'un des grands sages Bon, qui enterre finalement les enseignements à mDo smad sTag rna (dans le gTsang, au Tibet Central) lors d'une période de persécution. C'est alors rJe 'brug Khro tshang 'brug lha, un *gter ston* Bon célèbre, qui exhume les enseignements au début du 11ème siècle, ce qui nous mène alors à l'époque historique avec le récit de la suite de la propagation de la divination au Tibet. Bien que je n'aie trouvé aucune preuve des débuts du *lde'u 'phrul* au 11ème siècle, ces passages affirment clairement que d'après les récits Bon, le *lde'u 'phrul* revendique une lignée archaïque remontant au bouddha sTon pa gShen rab à

une époque préhistorique. Il n'existe malheureusement pas de source textuelle plus complète de la deuxième propagation de la divination, lors de la période historique. En ce qui nous concerne cependant, les récits du *MSeD*, *MsaP* et du *MSeP* seront utiles pour présenter certains aspects de l'exécution contemporaine de cette divination.

Structure du rite de *lde'u 'phrul*

Sauf dans le cas d'une requête téléphonique, les rites de *lde'u 'phrul* que j'ai observé se déroulent comme suit : d'abord, le client arrive et demande un entretien avec le Slob dpon. Le processus n'est pas plus complexe qu'un échange de salutations formelles et une requête que le Slob dpon fasse une lecture divinatoire. Ensuite, il est attendu que le client donne une petite offrande financière au monastère. Le don est accepté, quel que soit le montant. Le Slob dpon s'enquiert ensuite de la nature de la question du client. Ce questionnement peut durer jusqu'à ce que la nature spécifique de la question du client et son contexte soient complètement éclaircis. Après cette conversation, le jet est effectué.

Dans la Section 3.4.1, je présente les invocations généralement faites lors d'une exécution de *lde'u 'phrul*. En examinant plusieurs extraits textuels, je note que les invocations divinatoires suivent généralement une sorte de pente dégressive, en partant du macrocosme—les bouddhas, les bodhisattvas principaux et les divinités protectrice, etc.—jusqu'à un niveau de plus en plus microscopique. On trouve tout un horizon de personnages régionaux, locaux, mythologiques et parfois historiques à qui il est demandé d'être témoin de la divination et de garantir sa véracité. Il faut noter que les divinités n'accomplissent pas cette fonction du fait de leur proximité avec le rite. Au contraire, on considère que les divinités rassemblées se dissolvent physiquement dans les pierres de divinations, y transférant ainsi leur propre puissance prophétique. D'après le sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, ceci n'est pas une métaphore mais au contraire indique la visualisation que doit faire le devin. La descente des divinités est décrite brièvement dans l'un de nos textes

comme suit :

Toutes les divinités ainsi invoquées, emplissant l'espace en face [de soi], descendent de l'espace pur. En se fondant en lumière, elles se mêlent aux galets...

de ltar bdar ba'i lha tshogs thams cad mdun gi nam mkha' gang ba tsam dbying nas byon te/ 'od du zhu nas rde'u la thim pas/ (*MSaP* : f.12, line 7 - f.13, line 1).

Lors de l'exécution du rite de *lde'u 'phrul*, la dissolution des divinités dans les galets de divination se fait par une succession rapide de souffles sur les pierres après l'invocation. Cela marque la conclusion de l'invocation et le début du jet. Il faut noter que la diffusion des divinités assemblées dans les galets de divination indique que le devin ne prédit pas en utilisant ses propres capacités divinatoires. Au contraire, on considère que les divinités du *lde'u 'phrul* agissent directement à travers les pierres. Le Slob dpon lui-même insiste sur cette notion, en décrivant le processus et ses implications comme suit :

C'est leur [les divinités] pouvoir, pas le mien. Une pierre est une pierre, un tissu n'est qu'un tissu. Le plus important, c'est les divinités. Les gens me demandent toujours de faire des divinations et normalement je ne suis pas à même de décider ce qu'il faut faire. Les gens, vous savez, doutent sur ce qui est la bonne chose à faire. Ils n'arrivent pas à se décider eux-mêmes. Au lieu de ça, ils demandent aux lamas, mais un lama ne décide pas lui-même. Le lama demande aux divinités de lui montrer les résultats justes. Il demande aux divinités de divination de le rendre vrai, de faire la bonne divination... Lorsqu'un lama fait une divination avec le *rde' mo*, les réponses sont dans les pierres et les divinités les rendent vraies (communication personnelle avec Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, 30 septembre 2009).

Procédure de jet

Après que les galets ont été emplis de l'essence de l'hôte divin, le devin les jette. La méthode du jet est la suivante : le devin place les quarante-deux galets en une pile sur le tapis de feutre blanc. Les pierres sont divisées au hasard en trois piles, réparties horizontalement sur le haut du tapis. Ensuite, le devin enlève des pierres (exactement quatre à la fois) des trois piles jusqu'à ce qu'il n'y ait pas plus que quatre pierres par pile. Cela fait une rangée de trois piles contenant entre une et quatre pierres. Les autres pierres sont ensuite regroupées en un tas, puis à nouveau réparties au hasard en trois piles, cette fois réparties horizontalement sur le milieu du tapis. De nouveau on enlève quatre pierre à la fois, pour arriver à six piles (de un à quatre) disposées dans structure 2x3. Le processus est répété une troisième fois, pour arriver à neuf piles organisées en un carré 3x3, chaque pile contenant entre une et quatre pierres (voir image 3). Les pierres restantes sont ensuite écartées. Cette méthode de jet est résumée brièvement dans l'un de nos textes :

Il y a quarante-deux galets avec lesquels on fait un examen détaillé. Coupez les en trois groupes. Calculez les quatre en quatre. Elles sont jetées sur les neuf *ling tse*.

de nas so sor dpyad pas rde'u bzhi bcu tsa gnyis yod/ tsho gsum gcad la/ bzhi bzhir bgrangs/
ling rtse dgu ru bab pa yin/ (*MSeD* f.3).

Après le jet, le devin consulte un manuel de divination afin d'interpréter les différentes formes des pierres (voir section 3.6). De manière générale, le nombre de pierre dans chaque pile et sa place relative sur le tapis de feutre blanc sont combinées pour indiquer une série spécifique de symboles. Ces symboles faisant partie intégrante de l'interprétation que fait le devin du jet, il est important de parler du contenu symbolique de chacune des neuf piles de pierres, que j'appelle la « grille de

divination ».

La grille de divination

Les manuels de *lde'u 'phrul* contiennent plusieurs passages décrivant les caractéristiques définissant chacune des neuf sections de la grille de divination, matériellement représentées par les neuf piles de pierres formées pendant la procédure du jet. Surtout, chaque colonne de la grille porte un nom. En commençant par la gauche, la première colonne est appelée « Lieu des Divinités » (*lha sa*), la deuxième « Lieu de la Famille » (*khyim sa*) et la troisième « Lieu Extérieur » (*phyi sa*). Chacune de ces colonnes est associée à un système de valeurs. Le Lieu des Divinités représente la virilité. Le Lieu de la Famille la féminité et le foyer, et le Lieu Extérieur représente les malheurs potentiels les polluants physiques et métaphysiques ainsi qu'une multitude d'influences démoniaques.

Au-delà de la division en trois colonnes, chacune des rangées de la grille de divination porte aussi un titre. En bref et en partant du haut, elles sont appelées la « première » (*dang po*), « intermédiaire » (*bar mo* ou *'bring po*), et « dernière » (*tha ma*). Ainsi, la première section de la grille est nommée « le Premier Lieu des Divinités » (*lha sa dang po*), et celle en bas à droite « le Dernier Lieu Extérieur » (*phyi sa tha ma*), et ainsi de suite. Enfin, les trois sections du Lieu de la Famille portent des titres secondaires : la première est appelée la « Porte du Ciel » (*gnam sgo*), la deuxième le « Cœur de la Divination » (*mo snying*) et la troisième la « Porte de la Terre » (*sa sgo*). Ces titres sont illustrés dans le tableau 3 ci-dessous.

En plus des titres associés à chaque section de la grille de divination, chacune est également décrite comme possédant, ou peut-être incarnant, une série définie de symboles et de divinités. De manière générale, il y a une ou plusieurs divinités patronales ainsi que quatre attributs : (1) un élément ; (2) une direction ; (3) une couleur et (4) un chiffre. Ceci est résumé pour référence dans le tableau 3. Il faut noter que le nom des divinités patronales sont sujettes à des variations régionales

dans es témoins que j'ai examinés, alors que les autres signifiants (astrologiques, numéraux, etc.) semblent être consistants dans les différentes versions.

Tableau 3: la grille de divination

	IHa sa	Khyim sa	Phyi sa
Dang po	<p>rGra bla bya khyung pa</p> <p>lignée patrilinéale ; développement de la richesse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément vent - sud-est - quatre - verte 	<p>lCam mo g.yung drung mon</p> <p>lignée matrilinéale ; capacités de guérison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément feu - sud - neuf - rouge 	<p>Srin po skya rings khrag mig</p> <p>souffrance ; démons <i>bdud</i>, <i>srin</i>, <i>rgyal</i> et <i>gdon</i> ; ennemies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément terre - sud-ouest - deux - noir
Bar mo	<p>g.Ya' spang skyes gcig</p> <p>prouesse martiale ; hommes dans leur premier vigueur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément bois - est - trois - bleu 	<p>g.Ya' 'brum sil ma</p> <p>fertilité ; le foyer ; profession médicale ; femmes de tous âges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centre - cinq - jaune 	<p>Srin po phag zhon</p> <p>Problèmes avec la famille et les amis ; litiges juridiques ; propriété des ennemis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément métal - ouest - sept - rouge
Tha ma	<p>mNgon shes phyas bu g.yang dkar</p> <p>enfant masculin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément montagne - nord-est - huit - blanc 	<p>Gangs sman g.yu bun kangs chung</p> <p>serviteurs ; enfants ; féminins ; <i>phyas</i> du bétail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément eau - nord - un - blanc 	<p>Srin gyi khyi mo rna gsang</p> <p>obscurité ; peste ; voleurs et mendiants ; rumeurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - élément ciel - nord-ouest - six - blanc

Plusieurs choses apparaissent à l'examen de ce tableau. D'abord, chacune des sections de la grille 3x3 est classée en groupes verticaux et horizontaux. La première colonne, la *lha sa*, représente tous

les attributs masculins. La deuxième colonne, la *khyim sa*, représente les femmes, les serviteurs, le bétail et le foyer. La troisième, la *phyi sa*, représente la sphère des difficultés et influences démoniaques. Les trois rangées se rapportent aux colonnes en ajoutant une sorte de schéma temporel. La section du bas tend à désigner les enfants, celle du milieu les adultes et celle du haut les personnes âgées ainsi que la lignée paternelle et maternelle. En plus, chaque section est associée à un élément, une direction, un chiffre et une couleur qui, combinées, représentent les *sme ba* et *spar kha*, les neuf chiffres magiques et huit trigrammes constituant l'essence des systèmes astrologiques sino-tibétains. Ainsi, les manuscrits de *lde'u 'phrul* fournissent une sorte de taxonomie de l'expérience humaine inhérente au milieu qui les ont produits. Cette classification s'adresse aux hommes et aux femmes, aux jeunes et aux vieux, et traite une multitude de sujets, allant de la santé au voyage en passant par le bétail, les relations amoureuses, les litiges ou encore les activités démoniaques. Ces sujets sont corrélés à des éléments astrologiques et méthodes numérologiques, le tout pouvant être pris en considération après le jet.

L'interprétation des pronostics

Dans les sections 3.4 et 3.5, je montre que les pronostics du *lde'u 'phrul* sont exprimés par une combinaison des différentes sphères du microcosme (par ex. Tableau 3), dans lesquelles sont représentées la société tibétaine et les structures plus large du cosmos. En pratique, ce microcosme semble constituer une sorte de catalogue interprétatif dans lequel le devin peut lire sélectivement des pronostics d'ordre inférieur et des atouts (voir section 3.5). Considérée ainsi, le jet pourrait être considéré comme un "générateur aléatoire de récit" capable de produire, par la combinaison de taxonomies sociales, de symboles religieux, d'archétypes mythique, de divinités et de signifiants astrologiques, un nombre presque infini de récits.⁵ Le travail de devin consiste à comparer et contraster ces récits et en distiller une réponse spécifique à la question du client. Il nous reste donc

⁵ Sur le rôle des générateurs de récit dans la divination, voir Van Binsbergen 1995 et Park 1963.

à voir comment ceci est spécifiquement accompli par le devin. C'est avec ceci à l'esprit que dans la section suivante je présente deux études de cas ethnographiques qui constituent un essai préliminaire de compréhension des façons dont certains éléments textuels dissonants, comme les pronostics d'ordre inférieur et les atouts, sont combinés et interprétés dans l'exécution d'une divination. Bien que ces études de cas ne puissent être utilisées pour faire des généralisations sur l'exécution d'une divination, j'espère qu'ils fourniront au lecteur une compréhension suffisante des mécanismes présidant à l'interprétation des pronostics textuels de *lde'u 'phrul*.

Etude de cas 1 : interprétation d'une divination de voyage

Tôt un matin d'août 2009, alors que j'observais des divinations faites par le sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, un jeune moine est venu dans les appartements du Slob dpon avec une question pressante. La mère du moine, qui vivait dans l'état voisin d'Uttarakhand, souhaitait se rendre à Delhi en voiture avec plusieurs membres de sa famille. Il pensait que c'était potentiellement dangereux car les routes locales avaient été récemment endommagées par les fortes pluies et plusieurs glissements de terrain particulièrement destructeurs. Après avoir présenté la situation, le moine présenta une offrande financière d'environ cinquante roupies et fit une demande de divination pour sa mère, afin de savoir si elle arriverait ou non sans encombre. Le Slob dpon consentit promptement à la requête et, ayant accepté l'offrande du moine, commença à préparer les éléments matériels de la divination. Il commença par étendre le tapis de feutre blanc (*lha gzhi dkar po*) sur son bureau en tenant les galets de divination (*rdel mo*) dans sa main droite, tout en commençant à réciter une série d'invocations préliminaires. Celles-ci terminées, le Slob dpon disposa les pierres sur le tapis et fit la procédure de jet. La configuration des pierres qui en résulta est illustrée dans le tableau 4.

Tableau 4: résultats du jet

	<i>lha sa</i>	<i>khyim sa</i>	<i>phyi sa</i>
<i>dang po</i>
<i>bar ma</i>
<i>tha mar</i>

Après le jet, le Slob dpon écarta les autres pierres et consulta son manuel de divination afin d'interpréter les résultats. Alors qu'il consultait les différentes parties du texte, il sembla soucieux et demanda si la mère du moine était malade. Le moine répondit qu'elle était en bonne santé. Le Slob dpon demanda alors si elle avait des disputes avec des amis ou membres de sa famille dans sa communauté locale. Une fois encore, le moine répondit par la négative. Avec ces réponses, le Slob dpon retourna à son manuscrit. Il y eut un long silence alors que nous attendions la réponse finale. Après environ une minute, il posa son manuel et dit au moine que sa mère arriverait sans encombre à destination, ajoutant qu'elle aurait peut-être un certain retard à cause de la condition des routes. De plus, il insista sur la nécessité de protéger ses possessions et de réciter autant de prières que possible sur son rosaire afin d'éviter d'être malade pendant le voyage. Le jeune moine remercia le Slob dpon. Après un bref échange sur des questions monastiques privées, il quitta tranquillement la

pièce.

D'un point de vue analytique, cet exemple nous donne à la fois les résultats concrets d'un jet ainsi qu'un résumé du pronostic verbal final d'un devin. Il nous est donc possible de consulter le manuscrit concerné afin de répondre à deux questions : (1) comment des résultats majeurs et mineurs sont combinés et conciliés lors d'un jet ; (2) comment les pronostics textuels ont, dans ce cas, été adaptés par le devin afin de correspondre à la nature spécifique de la question du client. Par souci de concision, je ne reproduis pas ici chaque référence textuelle associée à ce jet mais me concentre seulement sur les sections directement pertinentes à la demande du client sur le voyage de sa mère. Dans le Premier Lieu de la Famille par exemple (le domaine des femmes âgées et de la lignée maternelle) se trouve le pronostic suivant :

Si le résultat est trois, le *lha* sera le compagnon. Le *yul lha* sera le compagnon, et ce qui est imaginé sera accompli. C'est un signe qu'une hostilité apparaîtra parmi les enfants.

sum bab lha yis sdong grogs byed / yul lhas grogs byed ci bsam 'grub / bu sring phyogs nas dgra ngo yod // (MSeD f.9 lines 1-2).

Cet extrait est relativement vague, mais l'orientation générale est clairement positive, avec l'exception évidente des questions concernant les enfants. Dans le cas de la mère du moine, cela suppose une réponse favorable. La réponse est cependant quelque peu compliquée par les deux passages suivants, apparaissant dans les Lieux Extérieurs premier et intermédiaire, respectivement (*phyi sa dang po, phyi sa bar ma*) :

Si le résultat est quatre, il n'y aura aucun ennemi ou *'dre*. Les voyages, le commerce et les activités intellectuelles seront obstruées.

bzhi bab dgra 'dre gang yang med / 'gron tshon blo don phyi dal che // (*MSeD* f.12 lines 5-6).

Si le résultat est un, les ennemis serrent les dents de haine (*mur [ba] du sdang*). Il y a autant d'ennemis de sa propre force. Les membres de la famille maternelle seront blessés par quelqu'un de même statut (*mthun phyogs*). Ce qui ne se produit pas habituellement se produira et on rencontrera ce que l'on ne rencontre pas habituellement pas.

gcig bab dgra bo mur du sdang / rang dang mnyam pa'i dra zho 'dug / zhang nye tshur mthun phogs kyis gdon / e 'ong 'ong la e 'phrad 'phrad // (*MSeD* f.13 lines 1-2).

À l'aune de ces passages, il est évident que les réponses du devin ne sont pas improvisées mais bien plutôt enracinées dans la lecture précise des pronostics textuels, dont la nature abstraite permet un degré d'élaboration permettant de répondre aux circonstances de la question initiale du client. D'après les résultats des Lieux Extérieurs premier et intermédiaire par exemple, les activités en lien avec le voyage connaîtront des retards, et, peut-être plus significativement, les membres féminins de la famille du client entreront en conflit avec un individu de même statut social. Cela pourrait expliquer la déclaration du Slob dpon sur l'état des routes ainsi que sa question sur les conflits possibles dans la communauté locale de la mère. La question de la santé de la mère, qui se trouve également de manière significative dans la divination, est plus difficile à expliquer. Plusieurs réponses sont possibles cependant si l'on examine les résultats majeurs associés à ce jet.

Si l'on s'en réfère de nouveau au tableau 4, on peut identifier quatre dispositions de pierres indiquant un résultat majeur. Comme elles sont relativement brèves et permettent d'illustrer les façons dont les pronostics peuvent être sélectionnés ou (sélectivement) ignorés, je propose ci-dessous la traduction de chacun des extraits concernés. La localisation respective de chaque

disposition des pierres sera indiquée en gras et le nombre de pierres entre parenthèse curvilignes {}.

1. Première rangée (*dang po*)

{334} Dix pierres ainsi disposées est le supérieur. C'est le lion qui a l'apparence de la grandeur. C'est le ligne du *lha*. Le pinnacle de l'excellence, plus haut que tous les cieux (*dgong*). Dans les divinations sur les maladies des personnes âgées, ceci est un résultat moyen. Pour tout autre jet cependant, c'est bon.

{334} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu rab yin te / seng ge gang la 'gying pa yin / lha ngo dgung bas mtho 'phra bzang / rgan rgen nad pa'i mo la 'bring / de man gang la btab kyang bzang / (*MSeD* f. 18 lines 2-3).

2. Rangée intermédiaire (*bar ma*)

{431} Si huit pierres sont ainsi disposées, que cela soit dans la section intermédiaire ou inférieure, c'est mauvais pour toutes les formes de *dgra phy*a et de *gros*s *phy*a. On sera trompé par l'être aimé. Faites de saints (*'phags pa*) *dgra brub* et *g.yang skyabs*.

{431} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad bab gyur na / bar dang tha ma gar bab kyang / dgra phya *gros*s *phy*a kun la ngan / snying dang 'dra ba'i mi yis slu / dgra brub g.yang skyabs 'phags pa 'don / (*MSeD* f. 21 liens 4-5) .

3. Diagonale descendant vers la droite

{333} Si trois trois sont ainsi disposés, c'est le sommet de l'excellence. C'est un présage de guerre contre les démons. C'est excellent pour les divination concernant les filles et les garçons. Si un individu est malade, il n'ira pas mieux (*rtsub 'dug pa*). Ceci étant, comptez

cent mille fois, cent mille fois le rosaire.

{333} gsum gsum sgrigs na rab du bzang / bdud kyi g.yul ngo bzlogs pa yin / bu tsha bu mo'i mo la bzang / nad pa yin na btsub 'dug pas / 'bum sde brgya stong tshar grags bya / (MSeD f. 27 line 5 - f. 28 line 1).

4. Colonne intermédiaire (*khyim sa*)

{333} Si des trois sont construits dans le Lieu de la Famille, les jeunes enfants vont augmenter, on trouvera nourriture et richesse. La vie humaine (*srog phya*) sera protégée par les divinités. C'est mauvais pour les divinations sur la santé. C'est le signe qu'une déchirure [dans] *l'arbre des divinités (lha shing)* apparaîtra.

{333} khyims sa gsum du gsum brtsegs na / bu tsha 'phel zas nor snyed / mi srod lha eis bzung ba yin / nad pa yin pa'i mo la ngan / la shor srub du ral ba'i ngo / (f.21 lines 3-4).

Lorsque l'on prend ces exemples en considération, la question du bien-être physique apparaît comme l'un des thèmes significatifs de la divination. Les extraits 1, 3 et 4 par exemple contiennent tous des passages avec un résultat négatif si la question du client concerne une maladie. Bien que certaines caractéristiques structurelles semblent avoir été ignorées (par exemple l'extrait 2 déclarant que le sujet sera trompé par l'être aimé), il semblerait que le thème de la maladie dérive de la lecture des résultats majeurs. Il me semble particulièrement pertinent que le Slob dpon recommande la récitation de prière si la mère tombe malade. Cela correspond précisément à l'extrait 3 qui recommande que le sujet « compte cent-mille fois » (*'bum sde brgya stong tshar grags bya*) en cas de maladie. Ceci étant, il semblerait que dans ce cas précis, le Slob dpon a sélectionné plusieurs thèmes de pronostics à partir d'une large quantité d'éléments narratifs modulaires générés de

manière aléatoire par la procédure du jet. Pour des lecteurs d'anthropologie occidentale, ce processus de distillation d'une seule réponse à partir d'un chaos fragmenté de plusieurs éléments aléatoires suggère peut-être un *bricolage*, une forme de « pensée mythique » telle que la conçoit et la décrit Lévi-Strauss.

Dans les recherches célèbres de Lévi-Strauss sur la pensée mythique, le bricoleur est décrit comme celui qui interroge une série limitée d'objet hétérogène afin de « comprendre ce que chacun d'eux pourrait "signifier", contribuant ainsi à définir un ensemble à réaliser » (Lévi-Strauss 1966 : 28). Reconstituée dans le cadre de la divination, l'acte créatif de bricolage est analogue au processus narratif (cf. Peek 1991a). David Parkin affirme par exemple que le rôle du devin est le mieux décrit par la façon dont des pronostics ordonnés sont distillés à partir des débris d'un groupe hétérogène de signifiants (Parkin 1991). Alors que la séance approche de sa conclusion, les « idées et métaphores embrouillées qui suggèrent différentes interprétations possibles laissent place à une mise en séquence ordonnée et à des interprétations plus limitées. Elles sont finalement recouvertes par la clarification sans ambiguïté des causes de la maladie et des matériaux nécessaires pour la guérir » ("jumbled ideas and metaphors that suggest various possible interpretations give way to their ordered sequencing and to more limited interpretations ; they are finally superseded by an unambiguous clarification of the causes of the sickness and the material needed to cure it", Parkin 1991 : 183). Ainsi, la créativité du devin-bricoleur s'exprime dans l'utilisation du devin de la symbolique divinatoire et, en particulier, par sa capacité à contextualiser par l'interprétation les différents récits mis en évidence par un jet.

Bien que le *bricolage* soit un outil heuristique utile, dans le cas du *lde'u 'phrul*, il faut noter que le devin n'est pas seul à interpréter le résultat du jet. Le client joue également un rôle proéminent. Comme on l'a vu dans la section 3.4, il est attendu qu'au début d'une séance de *lde'u 'phrul*, le client divulgue ouvertement tous les détails personnels relevant de la question qu'il ou elle pose au devin. De plus, comme on l'a vu dans l'exemple ci-dessus, le devin peut, après le jet,

poser une série de questions au client qui aident ostensiblement à la sélection et la re-signification des éléments narratifs individuels (cf. Mendosa 1978). Si j'adapte Susan Reynolds Whyte (1991) à mes besoins, cela place le devin de *lde'u 'phrul* dans une conversation à trois voix dans laquelle il ou elle est forcé à médier entre le client et le manuscrit faisant autorité. Face à ce type d'environnement discursif se posent plusieurs questions intéressantes, et particulièrement celle de l'intention autoriale contre l'utilisation ethnographique contemporaine. Dans quelle mesure, par exemple, est-ce que les devins d'écartent dans les faits de leurs textes pour fournir des réponses à leurs clients ? Et comment est-ce que des devins différents comprennent et interprètent des pronostics afin de les adapter à des paradigmes sociaux et éthiques changeants ? Certaines de ces questions sont adressées dans la seconde étude de cas (vois section 3.6.2) présente dans ma thèse.

Conclusion : biais méthodologiques et objectifs futurs de recherche

Le concept de « subjuncivity » développé par Whyte, et exploré dans la section 3.6.2, présente un point de départ pour penser une approche différente du mode d'analyse structuro-fonctionnaliste qui, comme on l'a montré dans la section 1.2., demeure une tendance théorique dominante de l'étude générale de la divination (Peek *et al* 1991 : 2). Si l'on garde le cas de la vieille femme en tête, les remarques de Whyte nous invitent à déplacer notre attention de la personne du devin à la relation du client au processus divinatoire. Il faut insister cependant sur le fait que pendant mon terrain de doctorat, j'ai souvent échoué à prendre en compte la perspective unique du client.

Lorsque j'ai commencé mon terrain en janvier 2013, j'étais très influencé par le travail de Victor Turner et en particulier par la discussion théorique du symbolisme divinatoire proposé dans le travail déterminant de Turner, *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (1975). Rétrospectivement, je pense que cela m'a incité à me focaliser sur les rôles que jouent les systèmes de symbole dans certaines formes de divination tibétaine. Ceci est particulièrement évident dans certaines parties du troisième chapitre. Pendant les deux premières années de mon doctorat, la

plupart de mes lectures initiales, traduction et terrains de recherche étaient menés avec l'idée de décoder et de contextualiser ce qui me semblait être les systèmes symboliques inhérents à l'exécution du *lde'u 'phrul*. Ce n'est qu'à la fin de mon terrain—grâce à de nombreuses conversations avec des spécialistes sur des formes multiples de divination—que j'ai pris conscience de la complexe nature discursive des consultations divinatoires et surtout de l'importance de l'étude de l'utilisation et de la perception des manuels de divination par les devins tibétains eux-mêmes. Mon oubli patent de la perspective du client et d'une analyse spécifique des aspects socio-discursifs du *lde'u 'phrul* me mènent au point suivant : pour conclure la section 3.6, j'aimerais donc prendre un moment pour présenter mes objectifs futurs de recherche.

Tout d'abord, le lecteur aura peut-être noté en lisant les différents extraits textuels présentés dans les sections 3.4 et 3.5 que de nombreux aspects pertinents pour un mode de vie moderne sont absent du cadre interprétatif du *lde'u 'phrul*. Ceci est particulièrement frappant si l'on prend en considération les manuels de *lde'u 'phrul* à l'aune des thèmes de l'exil et de la diaspora consécutifs aux événements de 1959. On ne trouve nulle mention, par exemple, des déménagements forcés ou de la perte de pouvoir générale des individus confrontés aux institutions nationales ou gouvernementales. On ne trouve pas non plus d'allusions aux expériences des travailleurs dans une société capitaliste, ni de la possibilité d'innovation technologique, sociale ou médicale. Ceci est du au fait que, comme dans de nombreuses formes de cléromancie tibétaine, aucun effort apparent n'a été fait pour réviser ou 'moderniser' le contenu des manuscrits de *lde'u 'phrul* malgré leur circulation continue dans les communautés Bon. L'absence générale de sujets contemporains dans les manuels de *lde'u 'phrul* pose une question intéressante : comment font exactement les devins pour donner des nouvelles significations à des pronostics divinatoires pré modernes afin de correspondre aux complexités sociales et éthiques des sociétés tibétaines modernes ?

Remarquant un phénomène similaire dans la divination par tablette du Nord-Est de Botswana, Wim van Binsbergen (1995) affirme que certaines techniques cléromantiques peuvent

survivre à une transformation sociale et technologique rapide justement grâce au fait que leurs catalogues interprétatifs n'essaient pas d'intégrer des thèmes modernes. Au lieu de se confronter directement à la modernité, ces formes de divination résolvent des questions sur des sujets contemporains en plaçant les questions du client dans un schéma cosmologique traditionnel permettant de réaffirmer plutôt que de confronter les valeurs épistémologiques pré modernes :

Departing from the negative modern experience the client is led back to the matter which allegedly either [sprang] from ancestral wrath... or can be reduced to the relatively manageable, personified scale of sorcery and counter-sorcery. The divination process," van Binsbergen continues, "confronts the irresolvable problems of the modern, inimical world by declaring them irrelevant or secondary, replacing them with other problems which, in a microcosm [in] which both the living and the dead [take] part, can be resolved by divination (1995 :125).

Il ne faut pas beaucoup d'imagination pour affirmer qu'un tel processus s'applique à l'exécution du *lde'u 'phrul*.

Dans la section 3.6, j'affirme que la procédure de jet du *lde'u 'phrul* peut être conçue comme un générateur aléatoire de récit pouvant produire un nombre presque infini d'histoires, l'une d'entre elles au moins pouvant être utilisée par le devin comme base pour concevoir le pronostic verbal final de la divination (cf. van Binsbergen 1995 : 124). Dans la section 3.6.1, je présente une étude de cas dans lequel j'essai d'illustrer le procédé par lequel le devin sélectionne des éléments narratifs individuels et leur donne une nouvelle signification afin de répondre à la nature spécifique de la question initiale du client. Sur la base de données ethnographiques et bibliographique, j'affirme que, dans le cas du *lde'u 'phrul*, les réponses du devin ne sont pas improvisées mais sont plutôt enracinées dans une lecture précise des pronostics textuels de la divination, dont la nature

abstraite permet une grande latitude d'élaboration *ex post facto*. La seconde étude de cas (non résumée ici), dans la section 3.6.2, donne ensuite un exemple de la façon dont de telles élaborations *post hoc*, ou "alibis" peuvent être identifiées dans l'exécution contemporaine de la divination. Je pense qu'à maints égards cette analyse peut être un outil heuristique utile dans la présentation des techniques interprétative déployées dans le *lde'u 'phrul*. Les observations que je propose dans les sections 3.4 à 3.6 ne font que gratter la surface des environnements discursifs complexes dans lesquels sont menés le *lde'u 'phrul* et d'autres formes de cléromancie.

L'une des plus uniques (et parfois troublantes) facettes de l'étude de la divination dans la sphère culturelle tibétaine est que la divination n'est pas une île. Comme nous l'avons vu à de nombreuses reprises dans les trois derniers chapitres, les pratiques divinatoires tibétaines sont souvent des phénomènes hautement composites et poreux, qui déteignent, au minimum, dans les sphères sociale, économique et politique de l'expérience humaine. Par conséquent, de nombreux aspects de la divination ne peuvent être étudiés de manière construction en les isolant des systèmes de croyance qui les surplombent et des institutions médico-rituelles qui nourrissent le discours partagé par le devin et sa clientèle. Ceci suggère que pour développer notre connaissance de la nature socio-discursive de la cléromancie tibétaine, les futurs chercheurs gagneraient à adopter une méthodologie holiste, qui s'efforce de combiner les données ethnographiques et bibliographiques afin de dresser la carte des relations entre la divination (et le devin) aux complexes traditions sociales, textuelles et épistémologiques dans lesquelles la divination joue un rôle significatif. Je recommande par exemple de suivre la direction de la "sociologie du texte" de D. F. McKenzie (McKenzie 1999). McKenzie tente d'étendre l'orientation théorique de la recherche bibliographique historique afin de considérer la culture entière comme du "texte". Comme l'écrit David Greetham dans son monumental *Textual Scholarship : An Introduction*, le travail McKenzie déplace le centre de la bibliographie historique du livre au sens strict (et particulièrement du livre "littéraire") à la considération de toutes les formes de communication d'une société" ("the center of

historical bibliography away from the book narrow conceived (and particularly the book of 'literature') towards a consideration of all forms of communication in a society", Greetham 1991 : 338-39). Ce type d'approche fournit au chercheur la latitude nécessaire pour présenter les aspects socio-discursifs de la divination tout en continuant à étudier la pertinence local et ethnographique des manuscrits de divination à la fois pour le devin et sa clientèle.

Le sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long

Après avoir présenté plusieurs aspects importants du rite divinatoire, je propose dans le quatrième chapitre une traduction intégrale d'un manuscrit de *lde'u 'phrul*. Par souci de concision, j'ai choisi de me concentrer sur le plus court, qui est aussi le plus ancien manuel de *lde'u 'phrul* actuellement à ma disposition : le *sMra sing rdel mo gsal ba'i me long* (abv. *MSeD*), une œuvre du début du 18^{ème} siècle attribuée à Kun grol grags pa 'ja' tshon snying po (b. 1700), un oecuméniste et historien Bon, particulièrement célèbre pour sa participation dans le mouvement *bon gsar ma*, ou « nouveau Bon » au rGyal rong (sur la vie de Kun grol grags pa, voir Achard 2005 ; Karmay 1998c, 2005). Le manuscrit a été édité récemment par Slob dpon bsTan 'dzin nam dag en collaboration avec le regretté Gene Smith, puis republié au monastère de sMan ri dans une collection sur la littérature rituelle du *bon gsar ma* (Namdak 1997). Comme cette réédition est le seul témoin du texte dont je dispose, il ne m'a pas été possible de construire un *apparatus criticus* tel que je l'avais proposé dans ma proposition initiale à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études. De plus, les lacunes générales dans l'étude analytique complète de la production textuelle au Tibet pré moderne rendent particulièrement difficile l'étude de l'histoire littéraire du *MSeD*. Il faut noter cependant que le colophon de l'édition de 1997 mentionne clairement que le manuscrit est considéré être un commentaire de Kun grol grags pa sur un manuel de divination plus ancien et dont le nom n'es pas donné.

Le manuscrit fait 38 folios en papier (265mm x 40mm), avec cinq ou six lignes par page de

vers de sept syllabes. La copie dont je dispose est écrit à l'encre noire dans un script en *dbu med* non ornementé. La taille et le style du script est consistant tout au long du manuscrit, avec de nombreux passages dans lesquels des instructions rituelles sont données au lecteur (elles sont généralement données dans un script en *'khyug yig* plus petit dans la littérature rituelle). Les différentes sections du manuscrit sont divisées de la même façon que les autres manuscrits dans la collection de 1997. Ainsi, les sous-sections sont indiquées par de simples *nyis shad* (double traits), et les plus grandes divisions ou têtes de chapitres sont indiquées par des *bzhi shad* (quadruple traits) plus ornementés. Des tableaux numériques illustrant les différents arrangements possibles des pierres pendant le jet ponctuent les chapitres.

Malheureusement, la date et le lieu exacts de la composition du *MseD* demeurent inconnus. D'après Slob pon bsTan 'dzin rNam dag, il fait partie d'une série de manuels rituels découverts à rGyal ri dgon dans le Kong po (Namdak 1997). Comme de nombreux autres manuscrits de la collection remontent au 19ème siècle cependant, cela n'indique pas forcément qu'il a été composé pendant le mandat de Kun grol grags pa au Kong po. Il est tout à fait possible, par exemple, qu'il ait été composé lors du pic de production littéraire de l'auteur au rGyal rong (1733 - c. 1766) puis le manuscrit apporté plus tard à rGyal ri dgon. Ceci dit, il est sans doute significatif que le texte soit composé dans un style hautement non sectaire. De nombreuses divinités Bon présentes dans d'autres manuscrits de *lde'u 'phrul* sont par exemple manifestement absentes du *MSeD* (dont les divinités présentées dans les sections 3.7.3 - 3.7.5). De plus, de nombreux autres marqueurs Bon traditionnels, comme les *khams chen* qui désignent l'équivalent Bon des soutras de la Prajnaparamita, ont été remplacés par leur homologue bouddhiste, ici le terme *khams yum*. Ces caractéristiques pourraient indiquer que le texte a été composé après l'arrivée de Kun grol grags pa au rGyal rong (c. 1733), qui coïncide avec sa brève mais formatrice relation avec Sangs rgyas gling pa (1705-1735), une figure marquante du mouvement *bon gsar ma* non sectaire. En l'absence de preuve manifeste cependant, cette datation du texte demeure pour l'instant hypothétique.

Par souci de concision, je réfère le lecteur à la section 4.4 de la thèse qui contient une traduction complète en anglais du texte.

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Map 1: Dolanji and sMan ri Monastery



Map 2: Himachal Pradesh with Detail Section



General Introduction

It is often argued that the practice of divination is and always has been present—on some level—in every human society (Annus 2010; Beattie 1964; Caquot and Leibovici 1968; Loewe and Blacker 1981; Peek 1991). George Murdock, for example, went as far as to include divination among the features found "in every culture known to history or ethnography" (1945: 124). And though the sentiment may be a little shop-worn, Jean-Pierre Vernant famously quipped that "Descarte's well-known dictum about 'good sense' could just as well be said of divination—that it is the most widely distributed commodity in the world" (1992: 303). The Tibetan cultural sphere is certainly no exception. Divination has been described by a number of authors as a pan-Tibetan phenomenon (Chime Radha 1981; Ekvall 1963; Gerke 2011; Róna-Tas 1956). Nonetheless, despite the preponderance and diversity of divinatory practices in Tibetan cultures, a reflexive Anthropology of Divination has not taken root under the aegis of Tibetan Studies. This disciplinary lacuna remains pronounced and, in my opinion, has restricted the development of the broader interdisciplinary discourse on Tibetan ritual. Keeping these issues in mind, in my thesis I will explore a number of comparative aspects of divination at large; however, due to the due to the breadth of the topic at hand, I have chosen to limit the majority of my thesis to a study of divination practices in the Tibetan Bon tradition.

The term Bon has historically been used to indicate a plurality of concepts, the disambiguation of which would require a thorough and lengthy explanation (see: section 2.3). To speak very generally, however, Bon may be provisionally described as a heterodox branch of Tibetan Buddhism that, according to emic narratives, lays claim to a legacy that long predates the origins of Indian Buddhism. For a number of reasons, Bon has historically been treated with dismissiveness by the followers of other Tibetan sects, who have frequently decried the Bonpos (the followers of Bon) as "outsiders" (*phyi pa*), "heretics" (*mu stegs pa*), or things considerably

worse. Furthermore, as the earliest Western information on Bon was derived from Tibetan Buddhist sources, early academic perceptions of Bon culture were often similarly dismissive.

Though I intend to survey a variety of divination practices, my thesis focuses upon a particular type of pebble divination performed by Tibetan Bonpos. This form of divination, which is known as "Manifestation of Knowledge" (*lde'u 'phrul*), possesses a nearly unstudied textual tradition that, according to Bon histories, originates in the eleventh century. In addition to fieldwork conducted in various locations in Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal Pradesh (see: General Introduction *iii*), my discussion of *lde' u 'phrul* is supplemented by the translation of a number of previously unstudied lithomantic manuscripts. Chiefly, I focus upon the *sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*, written by the 18th century ecumenicist and historian Kun grol grags pa. Certain aspects of this work will also be read against two later commentaries on the subject of lithomancy: (1) the *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me*, written by Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, the first preceptor of Yung drung gLing Monastery in Central Tibet (founded 1834); and (2) the *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron po*, a 19th century witness of an alleged 11th century *gter ma* discovery attributed to the Bon "treasure revealer" (*gter ston*) Khro tshang 'brug lha (see: section 3.1). In using these materials, I adopt a broad view of hermeneutics, which does not restrict criticism to the manuscripts that I study, but also seeks to incorporate the contemporary performance of *lDe'u 'phrul* and, in particular, the diviner's unique perspective on the performance of divination into my textual critique.

In Chapter One I provide a general literature review, which attempts to address the representation and study of Tibetan divination in European and American scholarship, ranging from the first appearance of the word *mo* in a Western language publication through to the present day. Having sketched the contours of the field as it exists today, I move on to discuss some of the roles played by the study of divination in parallel academic disciplines. In this section, I intend nothing as ambitious as an intellectual history, but instead focus upon several theoretical leitmotifs in the

anthropology of divination as it has been advanced, generally speaking, in the study of witchcraft and sorcery in African societies. This is meant to demonstrate how certain interpretive hurdles in Tibetological literature have been surmounted in broader ethnographic writing, as well as to highlight some of the avenues that future research into Tibetan divination practices might take.

Chapter Two is divided into two parts. First, in sections 2.1 through 2.2.2, I provide a general introduction to Tibetan divination. This includes a survey of the majority of the cleromantic practices known to ethnographic literature, as well as a discussion of the origins of various divinatory traditions in Tibetan Buddhist mytho-history. Second, in sections 2.3 through 2.5, I provide a general introduction to Bon. I focus in particular upon Bon historiography and the origins of divination as they are represented in the Bon tradition. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the roles played by divination in Bon religious taxonomies and includes a brief index of the divination manuscripts catalogued in the *bka' brten* (section 2.6).

In Chapters Three and Four, I move on to discuss *lde'u 'phrul* divination. Though I address the origins, performance, and symbolism of *lde'u 'phrul* in Chapter Three, I pay particular attention to the structure of the divination's prognostications. I show that *lde'u 'phrul* employs a relatively simple quaternary numeral system, which serves as the baseline from which a diviner is able to offer responses to his clients. In this respect, *lde'u 'phrul* bears much in common with other forms of Tibetan cleromancy (e.g. divinations that involve the casting of mobile elements, such as lots, dice, stones, or bones), particularly Tibetan dice divination and rosary divination. However, the distillation of *lde'u 'phrul*'s prognostics involves a mediating system of trumps, many of which incorporate broader astrological and cosmological schemas. In this respect, *lde'u 'phrul* stands apart from other documented forms of lithomancy and, though similar to certain forms of cleromancy, the divination's prognostications contain an imbedded microcosmic representation of both Tibetan society at large, as well as a number of broader religious and cosmological schemas. These observations are then supplemented by my fourth chapter, which includes a full translation of a

lde'u 'phrul manuscript, along with a commentary on a wide variety of related ritual practices.

In addition to articulating some of *lde'u 'phrul*'s more salient and interesting features, my hope is that my remarks in Chapters Three and Four will help to demonstrate that Tibetan divination practices sit at a critical juncture, mediating multiple ritual systems, as well as a number of social and economic structures. Additionally, I aim to show that divination is associated with the articulation (and, perhaps, validation) of traditional epistemologies which, in some cases, may have been called into question by the mediating forces of globalization and its effects upon the performance of rites and the usage of ritual texts in contemporary exile communities. Before proceeding too deeply into my discussion, however, I feel as though it will first be useful to articulate my usage and understanding of the term 'divination'.

My definition and usage of the term divination

The word *divination* /ˌdɪvəˈnɑːʃən/, as it appears in the Middle English *divinacioun* (14c.) and the Old French *divination* (13c.), is a derivative of the Latin *divinatio* (n-), from the verb *divinare* "to predict". The Latin *divinatio* appears to have been first coined by Cicero in his treatise *De Divinatione*, where it serves as a translation of the Greek term *mantiké*, which bears a narrower meaning in the Greek than one sees in Latinate usage (Barton 1994, Nissinen 2010, Stökl 2012, North 1986, Jacobs 2010).⁶

In anthropological literature, divination is widely discussed as a form of specialized knowledge that, as Akkinaso writes, "encompass[es], or at least underlies, a people's religion, epistemology, philosophy, myth, history and cognitive system" (1995: 236) (Abbink 1993; Abimbola 1976, 1977; Akkinaso 1995; Bascom 1969, 1980; Devisch 1985; Durkheim and Mauss 1967; Loewe and Blacker 1981; Peek 1991; Peel 1990; Turner 1974, 1975; Werbner 1989). As a form of specialized knowledge, divination is sometimes characterized as a strictly regulated form of

⁶ On the etymology of *mantiké*, see: Flacelière 1965: 4-5; Flower 2008: 22-24.

intellectual property (Akinnaso 1985, 1992, 1995; Harrison 1992) that is closely related to expressions of power and authority (Akinnaso 1992; Barth 1990; Harrison 1992; Hoskins 1993), as well as to discourses of legitimation (Bourdieu 1991; Lyotard 1984). Divination is also represented as a way of knowing, a methodical epistemic enterprise that is rooted in magico-medical complexes (Peek 1991; Winkelman and Peek 2004; Abbink 1993). In short, divination may be considered to be a composite, specialized form of knowledge that is embedded in, minimally speaking, the social, economic, and political spheres of human experience (cf. Akkinaso 1995).

In proposing a working definition of divination, for my purposes I can do little better than to cite van Binsbergen's excellent remarks on the subject: "Within any cultural domain more or less demarcated in time and space, and endowed with meaning within that domain, divination might be defined as the entire set of procedures intended to acquire knowledge which is of a supernatural nature or which is otherwise not available through everyday means such as are based upon direct sensory perception" (van Binsbergen 1995: 114) (cf. Beattie 1964; Devisch 1985; Peek 1991a).

The variable classifications of the types of divination practiced globally are extremely diverse and the value of meta-taxonomies to ethnographic inquiry could easily be called into question. As such, I do not intend to commit to a discussion of etic classifications in any depth; however, in the pages that follow, I will advocate a distinction between what I term 'mechanical' and 'inspirational' forms of divination (adapted from Zeitlyn 1990, 1995), which I see as reflected, in a relatively roughshod fashion, in the ways in which *mo* or *mo rtsis* is differentiated from spirit-mediumship in Tibetan cultures.

Inspirational divination here refers to divination practices that depend wholly upon a relationship expressed between the diviner and some form of supernatural or divine agency, typically involving a form of 'possession' as the medium through which revelation is expressed. Within the Tibetan cultural sphere, for example, the prognostics offered by spirit mediums (the *lha pa* of upper Tibet, for instance) and the prophecies given by semi-divine or divine beings in quasi-

historical narratives would both represent inspirational forms of divination. Conversely, mechanical divination refers to forms of divination that utilize mechanistic apparatuses external to the operator that, if correctly interpreted, serve as a medium through which truths may be articulated or supernatural agency may be divined. Broadly speaking, the majority of Tibetan divination techniques can be understood as forms of mechanical divination as they are, generally speaking, forms of cleromancy. As this thesis focuses upon lithomancy (divination by pebbles or stones), which is a form of mechanical divination, the majority of my remarks should not be taken as characteristic of prophecy or the activities of spirit-mediums in Tibetan cultures (for a discussion of revelatory divination in Tibetan cultures see: Bellezza 2005; Berglie 1989; Diemberger 2005; Havnevik 2010; Schenk 1993).

It is worth noting that similar binary classifications have been proposed by a number of authors writing on the subject of divination (Beattie 1964; Devisch 1985; Vernant 1974; and Zeitlyn 1987, for example). In fact, Nissinen (2010) goes as far as to trace the distinction between mechanical and inspirational, or 'technical' and 'nontechnical' divination to Plato's *Phaedrus* (244a-245a) and the Socratic discussion of *μαντική* and *τέχνη* (cf. Barton 1994; North 1986). Jacobs (2010), furthermore, argues that this distinction is popularized by Cicero, who argues for the delineation of 'artificial' and 'natural' forms of divination in his treatise *De Divinatione* (*De Div.* 1.1.1-13, 1.1.12). It has also been suggested that a comparable dichotomy privileging prophetic over mechanical divination can be found in the Hebrew Bible, where prophecy is characterized as a legitimate means of divine revelation while other forms of divination are forbidden (Leviticus 20: 6; Deuteronomy 18: 9-14; Isaiah 8: 19) (cf. Nissinen 2010). To the best of my knowledge, a correlated delineation of mechanistic and inspirational practices has never been expressly stated in a published discussion on Tibetan divination practices. With the exceptions, perhaps, of Gerke (2011) and Bellezza (2005), the majority of the authors who address both Tibetan spirit-mediumship and mechanical forms of divination do not distinguish between these practices in any

appreciable way (see, for example: Berglie 1989; Diemberger 2005; Ekvall 1963; Orofino 1994).

Divination and Astrology

It is important to note that the Tibetan astrological sciences are traditionally divided into two systems: (1) *nag rtsis* or *'byung rtsis*, which is related to the Chinese *I Qing*; and (2) *dkar rtsis*, which is considered to have entered into Tibet from India via the proliferation of the *Kālacakratantra* (Schuh 1973; Te-min Tseng 2005; Gerke 2011: 93-98). It also should be remembered that Bon narratives cast both *nag rtsis* and *dkar rtsis* as derivations of the Kālacakra, the Bon equivalent of which is found in the fourth volume of the *gZi brjid* (cf. Ramble 2013). Broadly speaking, however, *dkar rtsis* refers to a body of calendrical calculations and astronomy, while *nag rtsis*, as Gerke writes, is "not astrology *per se*, but a set of divination techniques based on temporal intervals and their determinants, which [form] the base of calendrical calculations" (Gerke 2011: 94) (cf. Schuh 1972, 1973a). By way of contrast, divination practices which rely expressly upon the mediation of aleatoric devices belong to a slightly different taxonomic order and are generally classified as *mo rtsis* or, more succinctly, as *mo*. Nevertheless, divination and astrology are closely interrelated; so much so, for example, that sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, the Regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama, treats *mo* and *rtsis* as a single body of knowledge in his penultimate astrological treatise, the *Vaiḍūrya dkar po* (17 c.) (cf. Gerke 2011: 93; Sangye Gyatso 1972 [1685]). For my purposes, as I will be focusing upon forms of cleromancy in the pages that follow, the astrological and elemental calculatory systems typified by *dkar rtsis* and *nag rtsis* will be treated as separate from—though closely related to—the cleromantic divinatory techniques characteristic of *mo rtsis* (see: section 1.3.1).

Scope of fieldwork

The fieldwork underlying this study was undertaken during a series of research trips over the summers of 2009 and 2010, as well as a period of eight months between January and August 2013.

The majority of the divinatory rites that I documented during these periods were performed by the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, the preceptor of sMan ri Monastery in Sirmaur District, H.P. India, with whom I spent a total of eight months. As the sMan ri Slob dpon speaks both excellent English and Central Tibetan, these were particularly fruitful periods, during which I was able to consult regularly with the sMan ri Slob dpon regarding a range of textual issues and, thanks to the generosity of both the sMan ri Slob dpon and his local clientele, I was able to observe the performance *lde'u 'phrul* on many different occasions (see: sections 3.1 through 3.3).

In addition to the study of *lde'u 'phrul*, the original doctoral project that I submitted to the EPHE outlined a number of additional research goals. Chief among these was a general survey of the forms of divination being performed in a large number of contemporary Tibetan speaking communities in both India and Nepal. Due to a series of physical setbacks, however, as well as the unexpected difficulty of learning both French and Central Tibetan, I was forced to dramatically decrease the scope of that project. In the end, I was only able to dedicate a period of six months to the general study and observation of divination in communities located in the National Capital Territory of Delhi and in Himachal Pradesh. These include the Tibetan colonies of Majnukatilla (aka. the New Aruna Nagar Colony, Delhi) and Bir (H.P.), as well as the settlements located in McLeod Ganj (H.P.), Tabo (H.P.), and Kaza (H.P.). Though this particular aspect of my research is limited in its scope, I feel as though it was necessary in order to familiarize myself with multiple forms of divination and, perhaps most importantly, with the linguistic challenges posed by learning modern spoken Tibetan.

Chapter One: Literature Review

"The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling: like that singular organic jewel of our seas, which grows brighter as one woman wears it and, worn by another, dulls and goes to dust. Facts are no more solid, coherent, round, and real than pearls are. But both are sensitive" (Leguin 2013 [1969]:1).

1.1 Tibetan divination (*mo*) in western academic publications

In this section, I will attempt to sketch the contours of my field of inquiry. In searching for an archimedean point from which to proceed, I have chosen to present the following review in a chronological fashion. In order to better articulate some of the themes that emerge from a chronological presentation, this section will be followed by a discussion of the relationship of representations of Tibetan divination to several broader theoretical discourses in anthropological literature. For the sake of space, a number of marginal contributions to the study of Tibetan divination will not be discussed at any length. Many of these are catalogued and outlined, however, in Section 1.1.1.

To the best of my knowledge, the term *mo* first appears in a Western language publication in the Hungarian linguist and explorer Alexander Csoma de Kőrös's 1834 Tibetan to English dictionary, published in Calcutta. Here, *mo* is defined as a noun (s-) meaning "lot," for which *mo 'debs par*, "to cast lots," is given as the verbal form. The term *mo* also appears in Csoma de Kőrös's dictionary as part of the compound nouns *mo ma*, "a female diviner by lots" and *mo mkhan*, "a diviner by lots" (134). Though Csoma de Kőrös's definition of *mo* is referenced by both Schiefner (1859) and Schlagintweit (1881), the first dedicated discussion of Tibetan divination practices appears in 1895 with the publication of L. Austine Waddell's major work, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, which includes a chapter on "Astrology and Divination".

As is well known, Waddell (1895) contends that Tibetan Buddhism is a corruption of Indian Buddhism in which, as Waddell writes, monastic figures are able to maintain their authority by

"playing upon the easy credulity of the people," effecting a near total condensation of political power in monastic institutions (476). Waddell's discussion of divination and astrology—perhaps unsurprisingly—runs along similar lines. Divination is cast as a form of "rampant demonolatriy" that has been "zealously fostered" by a monastic-class to such an extent that the laity is nearly entirely dependent upon divination practices for the coercion and appeasement of demonic forces (450). As such, Waddell contends that divination is one of the economic lynch-pins of Tibetan monasticism and, in point of fact, "the chief means of [the lamas'] livelihood at the expense of the laity" (450).

Leaving aside the much-maligned ideological orientation of Waddell's work, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* does offer the first substantive Western remarks on the divination techniques extant in pre-modern Tibet. Beyond discussing the prevalence of divinatory consultations, for example, Waddell recounts witnessing divinations performed with pebbles (464, 467-68), dice (465, 470), sheep scapulas (465), cards (464, 465), and rosaries (209-10, 465-66). Furthermore, he finds that the majority of these practices require that the operator possess a text in order to perform divination correctly. Noting the prevalence of divination manuals, which he feels "most families possess," Waddell provides partial translations of three unnamed texts (465): a rosary divination manual (466); a manual for divination by "counters of seeds or pebbles in sets of ten, fifteen, or twenty-one" (466-468); and a dice divination manual (471). These constitute the first Tibetan divination materials to appear in a Western language publication. Unfortunately, the quality of Waddell's translations is highly suspect and, given that he provides no transliterations or references, these texts have little value.

Following the discovery of the manuscript collections at Duhuang in 1900, many new sources for the study of divination came to light and a number of authors began to engage with divinatory literature as a source for the study of early Tibetan religious histories. In particular, the manuscripts provided from Cave Seventeen by Sir Aurel Stein catalyzed a series of speculative discourses on

the origins of Tibetan divination. Vilhelm Thomsen, a Danish philologist and Turkologist, was the first to publicly comment upon the divination materials procured from Dunhuang. In 1912 Thomsen (1912) published three Dunhuang documents written in Old-Turkish (the first materials from Dunhuang to appear in publication), which he argues are of probable Manichaean origin (196). In one of these manuscripts we find a brief passage that is divinatory in nature, which Thomsen characterizes in the following way:

The book consists of sixty-five short, unnumbered... paragraphs. Each of them is headed by a line composed of small, black circles filled with red and occurring in continually alternating combination, e.g. oo oo oo, oooo oooo oooo, oo o oo, etc.... Each paragraph contains a small story, or, strictly speaking, it describes quite shortly some or other simple situation or mode in which nature, and especially animals play a part. They may be compared more nearly to a series of small lyrical poems in prose. Almost every paragraph ends with a kind of ethical decision: 'This is good,' or 'This is evil,' or the like (192).

Thomsen appears to have puzzled over the function of these short paragraphs. Unfortunately, in his commentary he largely ignores the appearance of sets of repetitive pips in the text, which is a feature that strongly suggests to later scholarship (Franke 1928; Thomas 1957) the use of four-sided dice for the selection of prognostics—a conclusion with which I am wholly in accord. Rather than examining the repetitive nature of the pips, however, Thomsen focuses upon the narrative quality of the prognostics. Citing a fragmentary Christian treatise published by Le Coq (1909), Thomsen argues that the text at hand likely functioned as "a kind of moralizing reader," a book of quotidian morals that served a double purpose as a bibliomantic "fortune book" (192-193). That is to say, Thomsen feels as though the text is composed of a series of moralistic verses that could be selected at random by an oracle and used to provide responses to a potential patron. Given that each

prognostic is numbered in a fashion that could easily correspond with types of four-sided dice known to be used in Dunhuang (Franke 1928), this assertion may seem erroneous to contemporary readers. However, it should be kept in mind that bibliomancy is a well attested form of divination in the ancient and classical milieus (Annus 2010b; Reiner 1998), as well as in a variety of contemporary ethnographic environments and, as there is no evidence that dice divination texts were not used in a similar fashion in the multi-cultural context of 8th-9th century Dunhuang, Thomsen's conclusions cannot not be completely dismissed.

The next significant contribution to the study of Tibetan divination could be said to be Berthold Laufer's "Bird Divination among the Tibetans" (1914), which constitutes in many respects a response to and critique of M. J. Bacot's "La table des présages signifiés par l'éclaire", a short article published several months earlier in *Le Journal Asiatique*. Bacot's (1913) publication offers a translation of PT 3530 (recatalogued PT 1045), a Tibetan language divination document from Dunhuang, which he believes to be a series of verses on the interpretation of lightning as an omen; a notion of which Laufer is extremely (and justifiably) critical.

Undertaking a critique of Bacot's translation, Laufer contends that Bacot's assertion that PT 3530 addresses the subject of lightning omens is demonstrably false. Largely speaking, Laufer's argument revolves around the translation of the phrase *ngan zer na* (lit. "if evil speaks," perhaps more fluidly rendered "if evil words are spoken"), which repeatedly appears in PT 3530 as a protasis structuring the text's frequent conditional clauses. In "La table des présages signifiés par l'éclaire", Bacot erroneously renders the phrase *ngan zer na* as "a flash of lightning". He argues in favor of this translation citing the prevalence of similar lightning omen texts in both contemporaneous Tibet and Mongolia (1913: 445). Laufer, to the contrary, finds no evidence that such texts exist, or "that good or bad predictions are inferred in Tibet from the manner in which a flash of lightning strikes" (1914: 4). Returning to PT 3530, Laufer contends that *ngan zer na* can be much more accurately understood as a reference to the "unpleasant" or "unlucky" sounds that a

crow or raven might make, which mediates in favor of the manuscript's subject being divination by the calls and flight patterns of birds (3). This conclusion is maintained and advanced in later scholarship (Morgan 1987; Mortensen 2003).

Having established the subject of PT 3530 and corrected elements of Bacot's translation, Laufer busies himself with a discussion of the origins of Tibetan bird divination, which he believes to be derived from related traditions in India. Laufer makes the case for Indian origin through a comparative study of a second bird divination manual, titled *Kākajariti* (Tib. *Bya rog gi skad brtag par bya ba*. Tanjur, *mDo*, Vol. 123, Fol. 221 [Narthang edition]) (cf. Huth 1895), in which he feels "the Indian method of divining from the calls of the crow is briefly expounded" (7). Though there are substantive differences between the two texts, Laufer takes "the main subject of the two [to be] identical" and thus contends —not unproblematically— that the two documents are related (25). Thinking along these lines, as the *Kākajariti* likely predates PT 3530 (c.9th century), Laufer is able to contend that bird divination can be understood in terms of a cultural diffusion from India to Tibet (1914: 20) and, working off of Doré (1912), also as a diffusion from India to China (1914: 30). This conclusion, which makes an enormous and unsubstantiated leap from the particular to the general, is criticised by later scholarship (Morgan 1987); however, for our present purposes it is informative. Despite the extremely generic nature of the prognostics, which "could as well have been conceived in Greece or Rome," and despite the fact that that the two documents lack "any mythological detail" and "cannot be yoked to any definite religious system," Laufer's inclination is to force (possibly) parallel Sino-Tibetan divination traditions into an ontological model that favors the Indic origin of magical and ritual practices (23-24). In some respects, this echoes a broader tendency in early Tibetology, already seen in Waddell (1895), to cast Tibetan religions as degraded, contingent forms of Indian Buddhism that are of value only in so far as they shed light on bygone early Buddhist texts or beliefs.

Following Laufer's "Bird Divination Among the Tibetans", and perhaps because of the

disruptive impact of the events of 1914-1918, very little is published on the subject of Tibetan divination for several decades (cf. Franke 1928). One could say that the silence is broken by German-born, French Tibetologist Rolf Stein who, in 1939, published an article on pebble divination titled "Trente-trois fiches de divination tibétaines". Stein (1939) offers a translation of an untitled text that outlines the performance of divination by fifteen or twenty-one pebbles (all white, excepting one black pebble), which are cast upon a type of gaming board. Each section of this gaming board and the number of pebbles found therein can then be correlated with a numbered prognostic in the text. It should be noted that the method presented in Stein's document is nearly identical to that seen in the pebble divination fragment studied by Waddell (1895: 467-468). In light of later discourses on Tibetan divination, perhaps the most significant conclusion that Stein draws from the document at hand is that some forms of Tibetan divination can be discussed in terms of a game of chance. He writes,

L'emploi d'échiquiers dans la pratique de la divination suffit à suggérer un rapprochement avec les jeux de hasard à des et échiquier. Qu'il soit employé dans la divination ou pour le jeu, l'échiquiers correspond à une sorte d'échiquier du monde, c'est-à-dire à l'ensemble des classifications des choses, des êtres et des divinités qui représentent la conception du monde. De ce fait découle à la fois la possibilité de prévoir l'avenir et, surtout, d'exercer sur lui une action magique (298).

These remarks anticipate similar hypotheses regarding the aleatory nature of divination offered in later Tibetological scholarship (Ramble 1993; Dotson 2007); however, Stein is rarely (if ever) credited as the first scholar to have remarked upon the similarity of some forms of mechanical divination to games of chance in the Tibetan milieu. Additionally, Stein's remarks upon the correspondence of divinatory symbolism to social and/or cosmological microcosms are reiterated in

MacDonald (1971: 275-76) and Smith (2011), as well as being a well-attested theme in broader anthropological discourses on divination (Annus 2010b; Binsbergen 1995; Durkheim and Mauss 1903; Horton 1967; Tambiah 1985; Turner 1975; Vernant 1992).

After the publication of "Trente-trois fiches de divination tibétaines" there is another notable lull in Tibetological literary output. For our purposes, the first significant publication to follow these events is F. W. Thomas's well-known *Ancient Folk-Literature from North-Eastern Tibet* (1957), often abbreviated as AFL. In AFL, Thomas (1957) offers a brief overview of the extant publications in which Tibetan divination is discussed, following which he undertakes a critique of Thomsen (1912). Thomas notes that Thomsen, in his translation of the afore mentioned Old Turkish divination manuscript from Dunhuang, neglects to give an interpretation of the pips, or 'eyes' (Tib. *mig*) that appear before each of the text's prognostics. In order to bridge this lacuna, Thomas cites A. H. Franke's (1928) remarks on Indian dicing systems in which, drawing from Weber's (1868) analysis of the *Pāśaka-kevalī* and Lüder's(1907) account of early Indian dicing, Franke argues that the appearance of similar pips in Sanskrit documents can be understood to refer to sets of four-sided dice, which would have been cast three times in order to choose a prognostic (Franke 1928: 143). Thomas extends these remarks to the Tibetan milieu and argues that the Turkic manuscript is not bibliomantic in nature, as Thomsen contends, but rather is a dice divination manual that requires the use of four-sided dice.

Following his critique of Thomsen, Thomas offers a brief discussion of the possible origins of Tibetan divination systems. To begin with, Thomas rejects the hypothesis, propounded in Waddell (1895), that *mo* is "fundamentally of a Bon-po character" (145; Waddell 1895: 465). Noting that dice divination, for example, is of presumable antiquity and is known to have existed in Vedic India, Thomas argues that dice divination could have entered into Tibet in a pre-Buddhist period and, over time, "acclimatized... in a Bon-po milieu" (115). This diffusionist model would account for both the Bon character of many early divination texts as well as maintain the argument

for the Indic origin of Tibetan divination. Though Thomas treats this model as a possibility, it is somewhat problematized by his translation of IOL Mss. Stein 13 IV 3a and 73 VIII, which Thomas feels are distinctly Tibetan, showing little if any Indian, Chinese, or Turkic influences. As such, Thomas's remarks in AFL point towards an early admonition that the environments in which divination practices circulated in early Tibet were diverse and accepting of many different ritual traditions. Therefore, hypothesizing a singular, shared origin for all Tibetan divinatory practices could be seen as a problematic enterprise at best. As we will see, this sentiment is reiterated and expanded upon in later commentaries on both divination and astrology.

It may have been noticed that, up to this point, with the exception of several fragmentary first-hand reports of Tibetan divination practices (David-Neel 1927, 1932; Tucci 1956; Waddell 1895), no author has yet attempted to discuss the performance of divination in an ethnographic context. Significantly, this changes in 1963, with Robert Ekvall's frequently cited article, "Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society". Though problematic in its theoretical orientation (as discussed below), Ekvall's (1963) contribution marks the first systematic commentary on Tibetan divination in which we see the practice emerge as a living, internally consistent ritual phenomenon.

In addition to noting "the culture-wide incidence of... divination" in Tibetan cultures, to my knowledge Ekvall (1963) is the first Tibetanist to argue the existence of a certain bipolarity of skepticism and belief expressed by those engaged in divinatory consultations (32). Though Ekvall does not elaborate upon this point at any length, similar observations have been made by a number of ethnographers working in African cultures (Section 1.1.1). Ekvall also provides passing remarks on a wide range of different forms of divination, including dice divination (*sho mo*), pebble divination (*rde'u mo*), song divination (*glu mo*), rosary divination (*'phreng mo*), scapulimancy (*sog mo*), and butter lamp divination, as well as including a section on the interpretation of omens, portents, and dreams (34-36). In Ekvall's opinion, the majority of these practices are of pre-Buddhist origin, though are not necessarily indigenous to Tibet. Citing Thomas (1957), Ekvall

argues that the existence of complete divination manuals from the ninth and tenth centuries that parallel (or are direct translation of) documents of Chinese and Turkish origin mediates in favor of pre-Buddhist cultural diffusion(s) (34).

In discussing the performance of divination, Ekvall (1963) also drafts some of the first theoretical remarks on the subject of Tibetan divination systems. In brief, he argues that the impulse which "predisposes the Tibetan to seek guidance and assurance from divination" is rooted in a "universal human uncertainty with regard to the future" that is enhanced, in the case of Tibet, by the austerity and dangers of the landscape, which Ekvall goes to some lengths to describe (33). He casts nature as "inimical and catastrophic," a force "on the rampage" that perpetually threatens to destroy all forms of material subsistence (33). Additionally, "raiding, feuding, and banditry make life precarious," Ekvall writes, complicating "the making of all plans—even those of pilgrimage" (33). Living in this kind of environment, he argues, and lacking modern forms of "information gathering and disseminating media," the average Tibetan has no recourse for quotidian decision making beyond the tools of divination (34). In this sense, Ekvall characterizes the function of divination as one which elevates anxiety and, in the absence of modern technologies, facilitates the decision making process (36) (cf. Lessing 1951: 246; Tucci 1970). Similar conclusions are reached in a number of coeval commentaries on the subject of divination, particularly in the African and pre-modern European milieus (Bascom 194; Herskovitz 1938; Park 1963; Thomas 1971; Turner 1968) as well as being central to Evans-Pritchard's (1937) remarks on divination in *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*; however, a number of more recent ethnographies have sought to challenge discourses which cast divination as being contingent upon recurrent social hesitation and the absence of information gathering technologies (Barton 1994; Tambiah 1985; Whyte 1997).

Turning away from Ekvall for the time being, as far as we are concerned, the next notable contribution to the study of Tibetan divination can be located in Ariane Macdonald's (1971) comments on Imperial era divination practices in her well-known "Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétain

1286, 1287, 1038, 1047, et 1290". Though her chief interest in divination is in the utility of divinatory manuscripts as source documents for the construction of early Tibetan histories, Macdonald does offer some comparative remarks on Classical divinatory literature and theorizes upon the possible origins of several forms of divination. For our purposes, however, Macdonald's "Une lecture" is particularly valuable for its (brief) discussion of the cultural hybridity of Tibetan divination manuscripts. Macdonald's significant contributions to the contemporary understanding of early Tibetan religion will not be discussed at length. Also, for a critical study of Macdonald's sources and conclusions, as well as her remarks on *gtsug* and *gtsug lag*, see: Stein 1985.

In "Une lecture", Macdonald (1971) notes that many divination documents from Dunhuang display influences from a number of different cultures surrounding and/or predating the Tibetan empire. The three major cultural complexes to which Macdonald traces the majority of these influences are, perhaps not surprisingly, pre-Buddhist and Buddhist India (here she cites, in particular: PT 55, 351, 1045), China (IOL 742, PT 1055, 1056), and 'pre-Buddhist' Tibet, including Zhang-zhung (PT 1043, 1051, and IOL 740) (272-286). Additionally, Macdonald argues that some texts—PT 1047, for example, upon which Macdonald dwells at some length—display both an indigenous Tibetan character (286) as well as utilizing technical vocabularies translated from contemporaneous non-Tibetan milieus (272). As earlier commentaries on the origins of Tibetan divination traditions (cf. Waddell 1895; Thomsen 1912; Laufer 1914; Thomas 1957; Ekvall 1963) had tended towards an either/or paradigm—either China or India, either pre-Buddhist India or pre-Buddhist Tibet, and so forth—Macdonald's admonition that Imperial era divination manuscripts can betray multiple cultural influences marks a significant advance towards comprehending the complexities of divinatory literature. A similar notion of hybridity is also advanced in later scholarship, particularly regarding Tibetan medical and astrological traditions (Morgan 1987; Ramble 2013; Beckwith 1979).

As mentioned above, Macdonald (1971) is also one of the first authors to note the usage of

microcosms in Tibetan divinatory symbolism (cf Stein 1939: 298). Discussing PT 1047, she argues that different contemporaneous social classes are indicated by the various sections of the divination chart outlined in the manuscript (275-276). For example, Macdonald cites a prognostic (PT 1047 paragraph IV, 1.271) in which an individual is killed by a yak, impaled upon its horns, and then avenged by one of the victim's sisters. What is notable about this prognostic, Macdonald writes, is that it is found on a section of the board "qui s'adresse spécialement aux hommes ordinaires et aux méfaits que leurs ennemies et les démons peuvent leur infliger" (276). As one also finds prognostics referring to other social classes, including the emperor and his various ministers, Macdonald argues that certain Tibetan divination practices employ microcosmic representations of the hegemonic social and political order of the empire. What remains unclear, she feels, is whether these prognostics were intended to be chosen by the diviner her/himself based upon the client's social standing, or whether the prognostics were chosen using an aleatory process (275-276). As we will see, similar microcosms are deployed in *lde'u 'phrul's* symbolism (section 3.4.3) and have also been discussed as central features of many forms of divination outside the Tibetan cultural sphere (section 1.1).

Following Macdonald's (1971) "Une lecture" and leaving aside, for the time being, Dieter Schuh's watershed publications in the 1970s (1972, 1973a, and 1973b), which are discussed in section 1.1.2, the next notable publication could be said to be Lama Chime Radha's contribution to Loewe and Blacker (1981). The collection of articles published in Loewe and Blacker's (1981) *Oracles and Divination* marks a kind of watershed in the general study of divination practices. To my knowledge, it is the second publication in which specialists from multiple disciplines offer remarks on the forms of divination practiced within their respective milieus (cf. Alder and Zempléni 1972; Annus 2010; Curry 2010; Peek 1991). And it is perhaps significant that Lama Chime Radha, the former head of the British Library's Tibetan Section, was asked to contribute a chapter on Tibetan divination as an independent subject of inquiry alongside divinatory traditions in

China, Japan, the Classical World, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Ancient Israel, and in Islamic cultures. In many respects, Chime Radha's contribution marks the only significant emic discourse in a Western publication that addresses the subject of Tibetan divination in general terms.

Chime Radha's contribution to Lowe and Blacker (1981) opens with a discussion of the prevalence of divination in Tibetan cultures (3). He notes that, though there are very few formal restrictions governing who may or may not perform divination, monastic figures—particularly reincarnated lamas—are generally preferred over their non-monastic, lay counterparts (5-6). The author then presents a series of brief remarks on various forms of divination common to the Tibetan milieu, chiefly: mirror divination (8-14); rosary divination (14-17); dice divination (17-18); butter-lamp divination (19-21); and divination by bird call (21-24). Additionally, Chime Radha provides a short theoretical discussion of Tibetan divination that is of importance to some later ethnographers and which resonates with a number of broader anthropological discourses on divination practices.

In brief, Chime Radha argues that ambiguity is a central feature of Tibetan divinatory prognostics; however, he contends that this ambiguity is intentionally added to the prognostics by the diviners themselves "in order to minimise the possibility of error" (7). This is necessary, he contends, because the career of a professional diviner is a "somewhat insecure way of supporting oneself" and a single false prediction could lead to a diviner "quickly loos[ing] his reputation" (7). As such, Chime Radha writes that both a "high degree of tact and diplomacy," as well as a willingness "to express... predictions with some degree of ambiguity and inexactitude" are necessary elements of a successful diviner's repertoire (7). Leaving aside for the time being the question of intentionality—i.e. how far various diviners actually go in altering their prognostics—Chime Radha's assessment of ambiguity being an important feature of Tibetan divination is advanced in later Tibetological scholarship (Gerke 2011; Smith 2015). Additionally, ambiguity is discussed as central to the efficacy of divination by a number of anthropologists working in African and East-Asian milieus (Alder and Zempléni 1972; Binsbergen 1995; Evans-Pritchard 1937;

Shaughnessy 2010; Werbner 1989; Whyte 1991; Zeitlyn 2001). The issue of ambiguity and its role in divination will be explored at some length below (see: Section 1.1.1).

Turning away for the moment from Chime Radha (1981), perhaps the next notable contribution can be found in Carole Morgan's (1987) "La divination d'après les croassements des corbeaux dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang", which marks a significant return to earlier discourses on the origins of Tibetan divination. Morgan's article chiefly focuses upon P 3988 and P 3479, two texts found in the Pelliot Chinois de Dunhuang collection, both of which address divination by crow-calling. These materials are in many respects similar to PT 3530 (recatalogued 1045), which was studied by both J. Bacot (1913) and B. Laufer (1914); as seen above, Laufer's publication served to rectify a number of the errors made in Bacot's translation. Morgan notes that, at the time Laufer was writing, PT 3530 was the only known Dunhuang manuscript for the study of divination by crow-call. However, in the years following Laufer's publication, six additional manuscripts emerged: PT 1049, IO 746, IO 747, PT 3896, P 3479, and P 3988. Morgan contends that a study of the Chinese and Tibetan nomenclatures in these materials may serve to shed light on the origins of Tibetan divination.

Before moving on to a discussion of the Chinese and Tibetan language manuscripts, Morgan examines the symbolism of and earliest references to divination by crow-flight and crow-calling in Chinese literature. Though she finds evidence that crows were considered to be augurs as early as the Shang (c. BC 1600 - c. BC 1046) and Zhou (c. BC 1046 - c. BC 256) dynasties, Morgan notes that there is very little textual evidence suggesting that correlate practices continued into the Tang dynastic period (618-907AD) (1987: 56-57). This is not, she suggests, because divinatory practices necessarily declined under the Tang, but rather that the performance of astrology, divination, and astronomy—along with their associated texts and implements—were regulated (at least in theory) by an imperial monopoly (56-57) (cf. Yamamoto, Ikeda, and Okano 1978: 22-24, 124-128). For example, in P 3608 (ch. 9 and 14, columns 19-20), a fragment of a Tang legal code dated to the late

seventh century (57), one finds the following passage:

La possession de cartes du ciel, d'instruments ou de livres astronomiques, de diagrammes oraculaires, de livres de divination et de divination militaire, de calendriers des Sept Luminaires, d'écrites sur le *Taiyi* et le dieu du tonnerre, est interdite. Toute personne trouvée en possession (de tels livres ou instruments) sera condamnée à deux ans de travaux forcés. Ne sont autorisés que les appendices des Classiques et ceux du *Lunyu* (57).

Given regulations of this sort and, as Morgan argues, considering that the spirit of the law was certainly not unknown in Dunhuang, the large number of divination manuscripts retrieved from the Dunhuang area suggests that laws such as the one presented in the P 3608 fragment may not have been rigorously enforced (57).

Having completed her discussion of crow augury in pre-Tang dynasty sources, Morgan offers a series of comparative remarks on the Tibetan (PT 1049, IO 746, IO 747, PT 3896) and Chinese (P 3479, P 3988) language documents that come to light in the years following Laufer's (1914) "Bird Divination Among the Tibetans". In brief, Morgan notes that one of the most pronounced differences between the two groups of texts is that, in the Tibetan language sources, crows are depicted as divine emissaries who, through their flight patterns and songs, help to facilitate communication between humanity and the gods of the Tibetan pantheon (59). Furthermore, in the case of negative prognostics, the Tibetan language documents indicate specific offerings that are to be made depending upon the direction from which a crow call is heard, whereas the prognostics in Morgan's Chinese language documents do not indicate specific prophylactic rites (59-60). Though the two groups of texts share many similarities, these features suggest to Morgan the circulation of two autonomous bird divination systems in contemporary Dunhuang (64). She contends that this hypothesis is strengthened by a comparison of the temporal

nomenclature of the two texts.

Should it be proven that the temporal nomenclature in the Tibetan language documents is translated from the Chinese, Morgan argues, many questions regarding the relationship between the two divination systems and their origins would be resolved. With this in mind, she undertakes a brief comparative linguistic study of the materials in question. On the one hand, Morgan notes that, in the Chinese documents, each day is divided into two periods of twelve hours and the terminology used to denote the various periods of the day corresponds, in many respects, to earlier indigenous Chinese nomenclature (60-62). On the other hand, the Tibetan texts divide each day into two ten hour periods and, unlike Morgan's Chinese sources, the terminology signifying these periods is inconsistent. However, having consulted Yoshiro Imaeda, Morgan concludes that "la nomenclature tibétain est cohérente et très probablement propre au Tibet. Il ne saurait... être question d'une traduction du chinois, ni même du sanskrit" (62). In this sense, Morgan contends that the extant crow augury manuscripts from Dunhuang indicate the existence of two parallel divinatory systems, one indigenous to the Chinese milieu, the other indigenous to Tibet (64). It will be recalled that Laufer (1914) argues in favour of an Indic origin for Tibetan crow augury practices. The value of Morgan's findings directly contradict Laufer's hypothesis.

Following Morgan's (1987) "La divination", we move into the 1990s, a period which sees a substantial increase in Tibetological publications on the subject of divination. For our purposes, this begins with G. Clarke's (1990) *Ideas of Merit* (bsod-nams), *Virtue* (dge-ba), *Blessing* (byin-rlabs) and *Material Prosperity* (rten-'brel) in *Highland Nepal*, a brief but important ethnographic study of the Yolmo, or Helambu people. Leading up to Clarke (1990), one finds only fragmentary ethnographic remarks on the activities of and roles played by diviners in Tibetan communities (cf. Chime Radha 1981; David-Neel 1927, 1932; Ekvall 1963; Tucci 1950; Waddell 1895). Though Clarke does not discuss Yolmo divination practices at length, he provides a brief but important analysis of diviners and other ritual specialists in the villages of Yomo and Tarkhyeghyang. To my

knowledge, his remarks constitute the first discussion of professional diviners and divination *in loco* as a part of a larger medico-ritual complex common to the Tibetan milieu (cf. Gerke 2011).

In brief, Clarke's (1990) study focuses upon the relationship shared by *bsod nams*, *dge ba*, *byin rlabs*, and *rten 'brel*, as well as upon the ways in which these concepts manifest in the activities of both monastic and non-monastic ritual specialists. Though divination is peripheral to the above concepts, Clarke notes that divinatory consultations sometimes serve *inter alia* as a type of blessing (*byin rlabs*), an auspicious sanction for an endeavour before it is undertaken (178). In some ways this sentiment reflects the idea, seen earlier in Ekvall (1963), that divination serves to eliminate hesitation and facilitate decision making. Additionally, Clarke contends that divination serves in an economic sense to support hegemonic secular and monastic institutions, a process which he describes as a form of "religious capitalism" (182). Here, authoritative institutions and figures are seen as heavily subsidized by private donations. Clarke argues that these donations are maintained by religious belief and, at least in part, by the phenomenon of divination, which advises the giving of charitable donations (supporting both lay and monastic institutions) and ritual practices (often performed by monastic and non-monastic specialists) as prophylactic measures intended to avert misfortune (182). In turn, the diviner is supported by the local village, which offers him food, minor endowments of land, and small cash donations, all of which serve as "both a form of payment and an act of 'virtue' (*dge-ba*) for the donor and for the person in whose name it is given" (167). In this sense, Clarke characterizes the economic and political modes in which divination operates as part of a larger socio-economic framework in which religious concepts such as meritorious action (*bsod nams*) and blessings (*byin rlabs*) are translated into forms of social capital serving the self-interests of authoritative institutions.

The next contribution of note is perhaps Charles Ramble's (1993) "Rule by Play in Southern Mustang", first published in Ramble and Brauen (1993). In "Rule by Play" Ramble explores the process by which headmen are elected in the Nepalese village of Te. Analysing the quasi-

democratic structure of the electoral rite, Ramble concludes that despite the involvement of the majority of the village, "the selection of candidates is ultimately the result of chance" (295). Ramble notes that the use of such aleatory devices in selecting political hierarchs is not entirely unknown in the Tibetan milieu. The abbot of *sMan-ri* Monastery, for example, is chosen through a divinatory process known as 'name ball' (*rtags-ril* lit. "indicator ball") in which the names of all eligible candidates are placed within an urn and, following the requisite rituals and prayers, a single name is selected at random (Cech 1987: 112). These types of aleatory procedures, Ramble argues, are generally perceived as revealing the will of the gods (296). "In short," he writes, "the authority of aleatoric devices is supernatural: people roll the dice, or stir the bowl of names, but the gods decide the outcome" (297). Citing Huizinga (1955), Ramble argues that this deferral of authority in favour of divine judgment can be seen, in a Functionalist sense, as a necessary feature of the election of hierarchs in order to avoid both conflict and, put quite simply, "the bathos of selecting hierarchs by drawing names out of a pot" (298).

What is unique about the election of hierarchs in the village of Te, Ramble contends, is that, unlike many other aleatoric procedures in the Tibetan milieu, the villagers of Te "deny that there is any divine involvement" in the electoral rite (297). In lieu of divine authority, Ramble is forced to conclude "that it is the *game itself* which decides" the identity of the incoming hierarch (297). In other words, the rich complexity of the electoral process serves in the place of divine sanction. As he writes, "In Te... the necessary solemnity is achieved, and bathos avoided, not by the expedient of introducing a supernatural component into a simple game of chance but through the sheer complexity of the procedure itself" (298). Ramble's characterization here of divinatory rites as games of chance is echoed in several discussions of dicing in Tibetan cultures (Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969; Dotson 2007; French 1995). Furthermore, divination has been studied in terms of a game of chance by a number of authors in broader anthropological literature (Lessa and Vogt 1979; Peek 1991a).

Following Ramble (1993), for our purposes, the next contribution of note is Giacomella Orofino's (1994) "Divination with Mirrors: Observations on a Simile Found in the Kālacakra Literature". Broadly speaking, Orofino's remarks orbit around the *Sekoddeśa*, the largest fragment of the *Kālacakra-mūlatantra*, and Nāropā's commentary upon the *Sekoddeśa*, which outlines a number of divinatory procedures that Orofino takes to be characteristic of "Indian folk-magic" (619). She argues, using the quasi-historical narrative of Padmasambhava's journey to Tibet contained in the *sBa bzhed*, as well as etymologies proposed between the *gZi brjid* and the *Sekoddeśa*, that mirror divination (*pra mo*) can be understood as a diffusion model transmitted from India to Tibet. Though Orofino also provides a discussion of the philosophical justification underlying the possibility of foresight in Nāropā's commentary, for the purposes of this paper, we are chiefly concerned with her ontological and etymological remarks.

Orofino (1994) notes that the *Sekoddeśa* contains several passages which outline "the nature of the visionary manifestations that appear in the sky [...] to the yogin" (612). Nāropā's commentary upon the *Sekoddeśa* describes ways in which similar visualisations, which are capable of revealing the future, can be performed using a number of different techniques: "a mirror, a sword, a thumb, a lamp, the moon, the sun, a water basin, and the eyes" (612). Orofino pursues Nāropā's discussion of these practices at length and outlines the preliminary rites that are recommended, in contemporaneous Indian sources, for the performance of mirror divination (613-615). Noting that many preliminary rites entail the descent of deities into a prepared receptacle, Orofino characterizes Indian and Tibetan mirror divinations as shamanic in nature (615) (cf. Samuel 1993). The usage of the moniker 'shaman' in discussing Tibetan divination practices will be discussed below (sections 1.3.3). Additionally, she offers a possible etymology for the Tibetan term *pra* (which means "mirror" or, in some cases, "divination; prognostic; or omen"). In brief, citing a passage from the *sBa bzhed*, Orofino argues that the Tibetan *pra* is a contraction of *spra se na pa ta*, sometimes rendered *spra se na*, which corresponds to an earlier usage of the Sanskrit *prasenā*, which is "a term

of uncertain etymon" (616). Given that the offertory structure of Indian and Tibetan mirror divinations are similar and, taking into consideration her proposed etymology of the Tibetan term *pra*, Orofino contends that "we may recognise a transposition into a [Tibetan] Buddhist context of a divination ritual [i.e. mirror divination] which is also known in Indian folklore" (618). Though I am currently unable to validate Orofino's etymological remarks, it is worth noting that Frederick Smith (2006) offers a similar etymology, though Smith contends that Orofino is incorrect in asserting that *pratisenā* is a "hyper-Sanskritization of the word *prasenā*" (Orofino: 616).

In the decade following Orofino's "Divination with Mirrors: Observations on a Simile Found in the Kālacakra Literature," a number of studies have been published on Tibetan oracular and geomantic practices (chiefly, Bellezza 2005, Tseng 2005; Diemberger 2005, Mortensen 2003, Maurer 2009, and Stuchbury 1999). These are of general interest to the study of Tibetan divination; however, for our purposes, the next publication of note is Brandon Dotson's (2007) "Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire: The Role of Dice in the Legislation of Loans, Interest, Martial Law and Troop Conscription".

In "Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire", Dotson undertakes a study of IOL Tib J 740, a previously unpublished Old Tibetan legal document which contains a short dice divination manual supplementing the legal source materials. Dotson contends that a study of these two documents contributes to our understanding of Imperial Era social histories; in particular the process by which "foreign peoples and their territories were subjugated, [as were] their territorial divinities" (3-4). The incorporation of these deities into legal and divinatory traditions, evidenced by Dotson's reading of IOL Tib J 740, opens a window onto the homogenization of disparate pre-Imperial beliefs and "the creation of a pan-Tibetan pantheon of divinities called into existence by the Tibetan Empire's expansion and its administrative centralization" (59). Though the article's perspective on Tibetan social histories is extremely valuable, my interest in "Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire" lies chiefly in Dotson's comments on the prognostics offered in IOL Tib J 740

and the relationship between divination and Imperial Era legal procedures.

Citing Cassinelli and Ekvall (1969), as well as Henderson (1964), Dotson argues that the use of dice and other aleatory devices in deciding legal matters is widespread in the pre-modern period. In the case of IOL Tib J 740, Dotson notes that the textual prognostics (which reveal the will of the gods) do not cater to specific legal questions (2007: 30-31). Therefore, he contends that the ancillary divination manual attached to the IOL Tib J 740 legal manuscript is likely "not a standardized set of prognoses (*mo*) issued from the centre by imperial officials," but rather indicates the usage of a generic dice divination manuscript in order to reach legal decisions (30). Drawing from French's (1995) study of pre-modern law, Dotson reiterates Ramble's (1993) contention that (in the case of juridical rulings) "recourse to dice was not considered to be a matter of mere chance, but was believed to reveal the will of the gods" (31). Additionally, Dotson remarks upon the usage of various oracles in order to justify and facilitate official decision making in Tibetan milieus. The election of abbots at sMan-ri Monastery by *rtags-ril* (Ramble 1993; Cech 1987) and the selection of caretakers at Khra-'brug Monastery (Sorensen *et al* 2005) are given as examples of ways in which recourse to divination is seen to reflect the will of the gods (31).

In many respects, Dotson approaches the above phenomenon from a Functionalist position. He argues that "there is little difference whether one attributes the agency in such a procedure to the gods or to random chance. In either case, it is a mechanism through which figures of authority legitimate their decisions by means of placing agency outside of themselves" (31-32). Though Dotson's position here could easily be critiqued as flattening emic perspectives into a two-dimensional, etic model of the political dimensions of Tibetan ritual, his remarks fall in line with a general tendency to frame Tibetan divination practices within a strictly Functionalist framework. Thinking back to several earlier publications, we have repeatedly seen discussions of Tibetan divination practices that are limited to the social 'functions' of divination. These are generally glossed as information gathering techniques (Ekvall 1963; Tucci 1970; Chime Radha 1981) or as a

means of facilitating decision making through the deferral of authority (Ekvall 1963; Ramble 1993; Henderson 1964; French 1995). By comparison, Tibetan divination is very rarely discussed as part of a wide-ranging medical and ritual process that plays a central role in Tibetan ritual economies (cf. Clarke 1990; Maurer 2009; Smith 2015; Waddell 1895). This changes in a significant way with the next two works to be considered here: Charles Ramble's (2009) "Playing Dice with the Devil: Two Bonpo Soul-retrieval Texts and Their Interpretation in Mustang, Nepal" and Barbara Gerke's (2011) *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths: Life-Span Concepts and Longevity Practices Among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India*.

Charles Ramble's (2009) "Playing Dice with the Devil," first published in *East and West*, offers an ethnographic study of *bla 'gug*, or soul-retrieval practices in the Nepalese district of Mustang. Though Ramble is one of the few ethnographers to publish ethnographic data on *bla 'gug* rites (cf. Lessing 1951; Karmay 1998b), for our purposes, what is of primary importance is Ramble's interpretation of the use of aleatoric devices in ascertaining whether or not an individual's *bla* has successfully been recalled.

The Tibetan term *bla* is generally translated as "soul," though, as Karmay (1998b: 311-312) notes, it has various different meanings.⁷ Broadly speaking, the goal of *bla 'gug* rites is the recapturing of an individual's *bla*, which is widely believed to vacate the human body in response to extreme physical trauma or sudden, frightening events. In "Playing Dice with the Devil", Ramble explores the contemporary usage of *bla 'gug* manuscripts and their relationship to *bla 'gug* rites in Southern Mustang (Nepal). He notes that, following the rite to recall a subject's *bla*, two ancillary divinatory procedures are often performed in order to assess whether or not the subject's *bla* has returned (215-219). First, twelve stones—six black stones (*bdud rdo*, "demon stones") and six white

⁷ Karmay (1998c: 311) notes that the *Mahāvvyupatti* (*T* Vol.144, No.5832), a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary compiled in the early ninth century, offers *bla* as a translation of the Sanskrit *pati*, which means 'king,' 'lord,' or 'owner'. Additionally, the same work provides *bla* as a translation of 'superior' and 'from above' (*T* Vol.144, No.3704, 3710, 3690 [61], 3699 [30], 1509). It also bears mentioning that *bla* is not cognate with the Sanskrit term *ātman*, which is typically translated as *bdag*, "self" in Tibetan (Karmay 1998c: 311).

stones (*bla rdo*, "soul stones")—are placed into a cauldron. A ritual specialist then selects a stone at random. White stones suggest that the rite has been a success and black stones suggest that the rite has been a failure. Following this diagnostic procedure, the patient whose *bla* is in question must play a game of dice against the demons responsible for the loss of her or his *bla*. In order to do so, the patient sits across from a black demonic effigy and rolls a single die, a die is then also cast for the demon, the highest being the winner. Should the patient win three bouts, it is taken as an indication that the demons have released the patient's *bla* and the rite is considered to be a success. However, should the demon be victorious, it is taken as an indication that the *bla* has not returned and the entire rite must be performed again.

Having outlined both the structure of the *bla 'gug* rite and the above diagnostic procedures, Ramble provides a case study (215-218) in which, during the game of dice, the patient loses several bouts to the demonic effigy; however, rather than repeating the ritual in its entirety, the presiding lama declares that the dice may be rerolled, in this case resulting in a victory for the patient and the effective conclusion of the *bla 'gug* ceremony. Though Ramble cautions against "generalisations about the dialectic between text and performance in Tibetan ritual," he draws attention to several aspects of the above case study that are pertinent not just to the study of Tibetan divination, but also to broader ritual studies in the Tibetan milieu (218). Chiefly, he emphasizes the role played by the presiding lama as an interpreter of the relevant ritual text. As he writes,

"Where [the text] requires that thirteen of each item in a list of ritual accoutrements be made and incorporated into the ransom, Lama Tshultrim made only three. There is nothing in the text to indicate that such a reduction might be a viable option. There were also significant omissions in the performance: for example, the diagnostic exercise that the patient's 'soul-receptacle' be weighed before and after the soul-summoning was not performed; nor, at any point, were the sleeve full of grain and the leg of mutton ever placed under the patient's

armpit. Perhaps the most spectacular 'liberty' taken by Lama Tshultrim concerned the game of dice.... In fact, what the lama effectively did was to change the rules of the game in the patient's favour, by declaring that one winning throw out of six was good enough" (219).

Ramble's characterization of the malleability of Tibetan rites and the centrality of the presiding lama's textual interpretation to the efficacy of those rites finds a number of strong corollaries in general anthropological studies of divination (section: 1.2). Additionally, the idea that Tibetan rites are often composed of composite, sometimes interchangeable ceremonies is echoed in several broader studies of Tibetan ritual (Cabezón *et al* 2010). As very few contributions to the study of Tibetan divination focus upon divination practices *in loco* as part of an evolving ritual tradition, Ramble's (1999) remarks are some of the first to broach the complex textual and ritual dimensions displayed by divination practices in contemporary Tibetan milieus.

Moving away from Ramble's work, the next publication that bears fruit for our discourse is Barbara Gerke's (2011) *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths: Life-Span Concepts and Longevity Practices Among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India*. In *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths*, Barbara Gerke explores the relationship expressed between several concepts essential to Tibetan longevity practices (chiefly *tshe*, *srog*, *bla*, and *rten 'brel*), as well as focusing upon the ethnographic relevance of those concepts to overarching Tibetan medico-ritual complexes. For our purposes, what is particularly important about Gerke's work is that she frequently stresses the difficulty of drawing fixed boundaries between divination (*mo*) and parallel astrological, medical, and ritual traditions. The boundary between divination and astrology, for example, can be particularly porous. Gerke notes that even in some emic taxonomies, such as those presented in Sangye Gyatso's seventeenth-century astrological treatise, the *Baidurya dkar po*, divination and astrology are posited as a single body of knowledge (Sangye Gyatso 1972 [1685]). However, despite the interrelationships and blurred boundaries encountered in a discussion of astrological and

divinatory traditions, Gerke advocates the usage of fixed heuristic taxonomies, which she organizes along emic lines (2011: pp. 5, 93-94, 98).

Drawing from her ethnographic work in the Darjeeling Hills, Gerke's *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths* also offers arguably the most detailed general introduction to Tibetan divination practices that has been published to date. In extreme brief, citing a number of earlier contributions to the study of Tibetan divination (Chime Radha 1981, Ekvall 1963, Laufer 1914, Róna-Tas 1956, and Mortensen 2003), Gerke notes that *mo* (in this case, to use my terminology: mechanical divination) is "a pan-Tibetan practice that is not bound to a specific profession or method" (100). As she observes, "even lay people learn how to do simple rosary *mo* at home to guide their daily decision making" (100). Gerke notes that one of the primary functions of professional divination is the selection of a specific rite or series of rites that is deemed necessary to the client's well-being (104). In this sense, unlike elementary, non-professional divinatory castings, the professional performance of divination is presented as symbiotically linked to "a complex body of ritual practices that counteract negative outcomes" (104). Much like Clarke (1990), who glosses the symbiotic relationship shared by divination and longevity-rites as a form of "religious capitalism" (Clarke 1990: 182), Gerke notes that diviners and monastic institutions are, to a certain extent, financially interdependent. "Both reap rewards," she writes, "[t]he diviners provide the monastery with clients and detailed instructions on what kinds of practices to perform, and the monasteries provide the body of sophisticated religious practices. The client usually 'pays' for the [diviners'] services in the form of donations" (104).

In addition to her remarks on the complex interrelationship of divination and medico-ritual complexes, Gerke is also one of the first to discuss the textual structure of Tibetan divinatory prognostics. In the fourth chapter of *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths* (169-228), she studies several contemporary astrological almanacs distributed in the exile community, as well as a well-known,

recently published *dPal ldan lha mo* dice divination manual.⁸ Comparing these source materials, one of Gerke's first observations is that the predictions offered in astrological compendia do not often come true. Considering this, Gerke puzzles over the fact that, during her fieldwork, she rarely encountered Tibetans expressing reservations about the efficacy of the prevailing astrological and divinatory systems (37). She concludes that this data argues in favour of the interpretation of textual prognoses being, for the diviner and/or astrologer, "more a matter of style and interpretation, in which actors are quite free to interpret... [textual] predictions within their larger cosmological frameworks, involving karma, merit, blessing, (in)auspiciousness, as well as obstacles" (37). In the case of *mo*, Gerke argues that an important feature of this interpretive flexibility is the generally vague or poetic nature of the responses offered by divination manuals. The ambiguity of divinatory prognostics serves, she writes, "to leave space for the diviner's intuitive interpretation concerning the client's personal situation" (221); however, another important feature of this process is that it serves to draw the client into the divinatory consultation in such a way that "the client becomes an active agent in shaping his/her vital force and life-span" (221). In this sense, Gerke characterises textual ambiguity as an important facet of the perceived efficacy of divination practices in Tibetan milieus. In many respects, this sentiment echoes Chime Radha's (1981) remarks in Lowe and Blacker's *Oracles and Divination* and, as we will see below, ambiguity is discussed as being central to the efficacy of divination by a number of anthropologists working in African and East-Asian milieus (Alder and Zempléni 1972; Binsbergen 1995; Evans-Pritchard 1937; Shaughnessy 2010; Werbner 1989; Whyte 1991; Zeitlyn 2001).

1.1.1 Other notable contributions to the study of Tibetan divination

It should be remembered that Tibetan divination practices feature in a large number of publications that are not surveyed above. I do not intend to provide a detailed account of every academic and

⁸ Yogini Kachö Gonpo. No date (manuscript). *dPal ldan lha mo'i blang dor gsal ba'i me long sho mig grangs ldan*. Personal collection Jampel Kaldhen, Kalimpong.

commercial publication in which Tibetan divination practices are addressed. With that said, for further information on the subject, I would refer the reader to the following works, which are presented in alphabetical order: Bawden 1964; Bellezza 2005; Blondeau 1976: 302-04; Diemberger 2005; Dorje 2008; Goldberg 2000; Kalinowski *et al* 2010; Nishida 2011; Maurer 2009; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 455-66; Róna Tas 1956; Samuel 1993; Stuchbury 1999; Tucci 1949, 1970; Walter 1995; and Vidyabhushana 1913. It is also important to note that Namkhai Norbu discusses *lde'u 'phrul* in addition to several other forms of divination in two of his publications (1995: 25-30, 2009: 192-94). While Norbu's work represents an important contribution to the study and representation of Bon culture, I have chosen to exclude his remarks on divination from my discussion in Section 1.1 due, largely speaking, to their brief and parenthetical nature. I do, however, incorporate Norbu's work on divination into my discussion of *lde'u 'phrul* in my third and fourth chapters.

1.1.2 "Der Chinesische Steinkries"

One of the most significant publications that I have omitted from the main body of my literature review is Dieter Schuh's seminal work on *nag rtsis*, "Der Chinesische Steinkreis: Ein Beitrag Zur Kenntnis Der Sino-Tibetischen Divinationskalkulationen," which first appeared in print in 1973. I initially chose to omit "Der Chinesische Steinkries" from Section 1.1 as it focuses exclusively on the calculatory techniques characteristic of *nag rtsis* and/or *'byung rtsis*, as opposed to the cleromantic practices typical of *mo rtsis*.⁹ Nevertheless, I feel as though the first chapter of my thesis would be incomplete without at least addressing the advances made in Schuh's early work on Sino-Tibetan elemental divination (chiefly in 1973a, but also in 1972 and 1973b).

To begin with, Schuh's "Der chinesische Steinkreis" and, to a certain extent, his earlier "Über die Möglichkeit der Identifizierung tibetischer Jahresangaben anhand der *sMe-ba dgu*" (1972) are the first Western discourses to have emerged in the twentieth century that sought to

⁹ For a disambiguation of these terms, see: Introduction Section *ii*.

expand the scholarly understanding of the symbolism and mathematical orientation of *nag rtsis* in Tibetan milieus (cf. Gründwedel 1922; Tucci 1949; Hoffmann 1950). Along these lines, one of Schuh's most important contributions, while being parenthetical to his main discourse, is arguably the usage of the term Sino-tibetische Divinationskalkulationen, or 'Sino-Tibetan divinatory calculation' as a translation of *nag rtsis*, rather than the term 'astrology,' which is often used uncritically in academic circles (cf. Tseng 2005: 17). Additionally, as is well known, by working directly with indigenous scholars fluent in both the Tibetan language and the performance of *nag rtsis*, Schuh was perhaps the first to articulate the mathematical basis and relationship expressed between the numerous variables deployed in the performance of *nag rtsis* (e.g. the five elements: wood [*shing*], fire [*me*], earth [*sa*], iron [*lcags*], and water [*chu*] and their correlation in the *ma bu grogs dgra*, or 'mother, son, friend, enemy' cycle, as well as the incorporation of the *spar kha* and *sme ba* and other determinants such as *srog*, *lus*, *dbang thang*, and *klung rta* in a divinatory calculation). "Der Chinesische Steinkreis" is also one of the first works to demonstrate the extensive influence of Chinese divinatory techniques on Tibetan elemental divination (1973a: 882-83, 885), which Schuh takes to be indicative of "den kulturellen Einfluss, den China auf die tibetische Zivilisation und insbesondere auf die Verhaltens—und Denkweise des einfachen, nicht klerikalen Volkes ausgeübt hat" (1973a: 882-83). It is important to note that the issue of Chinese influence on Tibetan elemental divination is also treated at length by one of Dieter Schuh's students, Te-ming Tseng (2005), in his comprehensive study of *nag rtsis*, titled *Sino-tibetische Divinationskalkulation (Nag-rtsis): dargestellt anhand des Werkes dPag-bsam ljon-šin bon Blo-bzañ tshul-khrims rgya-mtsho*.

With the present thesis in mind, another point that bears mentioning is that Dieter Schuh is perhaps the first author to maintain that the symbolism used in Tibetan divination is, in some ways, different from that which appears in other forms of Tibetan ritual. Though the remark is made in passing, in "Der Chinesische Steinkreis," Schuh writes that many of the symbolic variables

involved in elemental divination (e.g. the five elements, the *sme ba* and *spar kha*, etc.) possess a dual-nature or "doppelte Natur" (1973: 883). This is seen in that many divinatory symbols can be interpreted individually, independent of their association with other symbolic referents, or they can be interpreted collectively, in which case the individual referents are dissolved into the much broader "Konstellation der determinanten" used by diviners in order to generate a response to their clients' queries (883). Unfortunately, the idea is not developed further in "Der Chinesische Steinkries," but it is interesting that Schuh's remarks closely parallel and, in some respects, preempt the groundbreaking analysis of the multi-referential nature of divinatory symbolism published in Victor Turner's *Revelation and Divination in Ndemu Ritual* (1975: 163-225). Though I do not intend to reproduce Turner's remarks in this section, it is important to note that the discussions of divinatory symbolism offered by both Dieter Schuh and Victor Turner were instrumental in the organization of my third chapter.

1.2 Divination in European and American scholarship

Though I wish to stress that my emphasis lies chiefly upon contributions to the field of Tibetan Studies, at this point I find it impossible to continue without first acknowledging my indebtedness to studies of divination that have been advanced in broader discussions of religion and social theory. With this in mind, I would like to take a moment to provide a brief overview of the literature that has influenced my understanding of divination on a general theoretical level. I intend nothing as ambitious as an intellectual history, but will instead focus upon several themes in the anthropology of divination as it has been advanced, generally speaking, in the study of witchcraft and sorcery in African societies. Here my remarks will periodically follow the arguments advanced in Peek (1991a) and Devish (1985), both of whom have published brief but important analyses of the roles played by divination in the development of anthropological theory. It is hoped that this section will help to demonstrate how certain interpretive hurdles encountered Tibetological

literature have been surmounted in broader ethnographic writing, as well as to highlight some of the avenues that future research into Tibetan divination practices might take.

In many respects, the first serious treatment of divination in European and American scholarship appears in 1937, with the publication of Evans-Pritchard's flagship work, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Many other early anthropologists, such as Frazer, Malinowski, and Radcliffe-Brown, do not address divination in any capacity, though there are a few exceptions. In *Primitive Culture* (1871), for example, E. B. Tylor lists a variety of forms of divination both ancient and contemporary (1871: 78-83); however, he sees divination practices as little more than survivals of primitive games of chance that have "fallen into merited decay" (78). As he characterises divination as operating by "an appeal to chance" or an "appeal to ignorance," Tylor devotes very little space to his discussion of the near global incidence of divination practices (78). In a similar vein, Rio Fortune's (1932) *The Sorcerer's of Dobu* offers a thorough ethnographic presentation of Dobu divination rites (1932: 154-67), the consideration of which leads Fortune to argue that divination, by "[falling] back on a non-human explanation" for misfortune, is an effort to "administer native justice as well as is possible... [by bringing] investigation to the fore" (165). Yet, despite this socially-oriented observation, Fortune ultimately defines divination as little more than "a method of arriving at a judgement of the unknown through a consideration of incomplete evidence" (1931: 174). Other notable exceptions can be found in some contemporaneous French literature, where Delachaux (1946), Griaule (1937), Giraule and Dierterlen (1945), Paulme (1937), Maupoil (1943), and Trautmann (1940) have all produced studies of divination.

Returning for the moment to *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937), an important feature of Evans-Pritchard's work is that he sought to convince European readership that Azande witchcraft beliefs were consistent and, from an emic perspective, entirely rational. Rather than leaning towards contemporaneous intellectualist traditions (in the line of Marx, Durkheim, and Lévy-Bruhl), which tended towards explanations of the tenacious persistence of irrational belief

systems in primitive cultures, Evans-Pritchard emphasizes emic consistency and maintains, largely speaking, functionalist exegeses of Azande rites and beliefs. In this context, magic, witchcraft accusations, and divination are all conceived of as practices that alleviate conditions inimical to the social body. Witchcraft accusations, for example, are often cast by Evans-Pritchard as an "all purpose social device" restraining uncharitable or anti-social behaviours and concurrently "bringing grudges harmlessly out into the open" where they can be resolved by various ritual mechanisms (i.e. the rubbing board oracle, the poison oracle, etc.) or through a simple reconciliatory discourse (Gillies 1976: xxiii). Seen in this light, divination plays an essential role in maintaining and restoring social order. Renaat Devisch, in his monumental *Perspectives on Divination in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa* (1985), characterizes studies that emphasize this particular social dimension of divination as forming a distinct structural-functionalist mode of analysis, which is particularly pervasive in the anthropology of divination.

According to Devisch, the structural-functionalist mode of analysis "pays particular attention to the instrumental role of divination in the functioning of the group, especially in the distribution and exercise of power... seeing it mainly as an instrument for restoring or consolidating social order" (1985: 62). Devisch argues that structural-functionalist studies of divination fall, broadly speaking, into two general bodies of theory: one derived from the tradition of Evans-Pritchard, which emphasizes the "divinatory process itself as a decision-making, legitimation, or consensus-offering procedure" (57); and the other rooted firmly in the Manchester School of Social Anthropology (in particular, Max Gluckman, Victor Turner, Edmund Leach, Fredrik Barth, and Clyde Mitchell), focusing "exclusively on the conservative function [of divination]... [in] sustaining or restoring social order and ensuring conformity with cultural patterns" (57). Though the two interpretive lenses differ in several substantive ways, an Ariadne's thread can be located in the pervasive structural-functionalist admonition that divination plays a primary function in human affairs as a practice that alleviates hesitation and eases the decision making process. This

characterization of divination practices forms, in many respects, one of the most influential and persistent leitmotifs in the anthropology of divination.

1.2.1 Divination eliminates anxiety and facilitates decision making

The characterization of divination as a rite which facilitates both individual and group decision-making processes is a major theme in structural-functionalist studies of divination. This particular motif manifests in the literature in a number different ways. To begin with, some authors focus upon the cathartic aspects of divinatory seances, arguing that by allaying anxiety, divination serves to repair social ruptures. Crawford (1967: 68), Park (1963:199), and Victor Turner (1975: 213, 227), for example, contend that divination is capable of diffusing both collective and individual anxieties in order to promote emotional reassurance and group solidarity. Turner (1968: 51), particularly in his early work, notes that divination plays a central role in Ndembu micro-politics, effectively compensating for the lack of a centralized political institution by promoting collective involvement in the resolution of group conflicts (cf. Devisch 1985: 56-57). This conservative function of divination, its ability to restore social order and ensure conformity with established institutions, is particularly pronounced in Middleton (1960: 129-230; 238-50), who argues in his study of Lugbara religion that an increase in divination requests is symptomatic of an increase in social conflicts, which people seek to resolve using traditional methods of arbitration. Similar arguments are advanced by a number of different authors, including Bohannon (1975: 166), Gluckman (1965; 1972), Park (1963), Turner (1975), and Harwood (1970). In this vein, divination is seen as an institution which serves primarily to repair social ruptures and to consolidate traditional institutions by minimizing the fears expressed by both individuals and the group.

A slightly different approach finds particular purchase in Keith Thomas's behemoth study of popular religion in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971). Broadly speaking, Thomas contends that the basic function of divination is to shift

responsibility away from the client and towards a supernatural agency (288). Here, the ritual aspects of the divinatory consultation are seen as helping "men to focus their attention and to take stock of their situation," which also contributes to the decision-making process (175) (cf. Bascom 1941: 45; Douglas 1966: 63-64). As such, divination serves, on the one hand, to guide "men to take decisions when other agencies [fail] them" and, on the other hand, to allay "anxiety by mitigating [human] feelings of helplessness" (228, 175). This position is advanced, for instance, in Moore's (1957) ethnographic study of scapulimancy among the Naskapi of Labrador, where divination is seen to have the additional function of preventing the over-hunting of particular types of game. Similarly, in his oft-cited discussion of Yoruba divination practices, Park (1963) writes that the diviner "is able, in the public conscience, to remove the agency and responsibility for a decision from the actor himself, casting it upon the heavens where it lies beyond cavil and beyond reproach" (1963: 196-97) (cf Alder and Zemléni 1972: 208; Vernant 1992: 304). By providing a legitimating, divine sanction for political decisions, divination can also aid in the cleavage of social groups (Park 1963: 197, 236; Mclean and Solomon 1971: 43). Imagined in this way, the divinatory process, whether inter-subjective or group-oriented, "constitutes a technique for establishing an effective consensus" by removing the burden of decision making from the shoulders of the participants through the use of mechanical randomization (Park 1963: 199).

Structural-functionalist analyses that proceed along these lines are exceedingly common in the anthropology of divination; so much so that the contributors to Philip Peek's (ed) *African Divination Systems* (1991) were led to write that the study of divination had "become lost in an almost exclusively functionalist mode" (1991a: 2). Nonetheless, a number of authors are critical of the over-usage and reductivistic tendencies of a functionalist lens which understands divination, broadly speaking, in terms of its social utility as a practice that legitimises decisions and provides psychological comfort. Devisch (1985) and van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers (1985a) are, in particular, highly critical of the positivist orientation of many structural-functionalist studies of

divination. They locate considerable research confounds in the failure of these studies to account for both the researchers' epistemological biases (Devisch 1985: 55-56) (cf. de Craemer 1976; Jules-Rosette 1975) and the roles expressed by the observer in ethnographic work (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985: 9-10). Additionally, due to its reification of divination's conservative function in consolidating social order, structural-functionalist critiques have been discussed as failing to address issues of emic belief and praxis (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985a: 16-18; Whyte 1997; Zeitlyn 1990, 1993; cf. Fardon, 1988), as well as the semantic patterning of divinatory prognostics (Devisch 1985: 58). As we will see below (section 1.2.3), these critiques form the basis of, in Devisch's terminology, the internal-semiotic or semantic mode of analysis, which becomes particularly pronounced in the literature in the years following the publication of *African Divination Systems* (1991).

1.2.2 Divination and rationality

It is commonly observed that, when divinatory predictions fail to come true, the general belief in the efficacy of divination is rarely if ever called into question (Crawford 1967). One of the most frequently cited passage from *Magic, Oracles, and Witchcraft among the Azande* (1937) expresses Evans-Pritchard's amazement at encountering this very fact.¹⁰ For a number of scholars, the persistence of divination in ethnographic milieus (despite the frequent failure of divinatory predictions) implies that traditional, or so-called primitive understandings of divination are mediated by 'closed' intellectual systems, which do not allow internally for deductive, scientific analyses (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Bascom 1941; Beattie 1964, 1967; Horton 1967) (cf. Marwick 1973; Jules-Rosette 1978). Evans-Pritchard (1937), for example, stresses the interdependence of Zande beliefs in witchcraft, divination, and magic, which he characterizes as "three sides to a

¹⁰ "And yet the Azande do not see that their oracles tell them nothing! Their blindness is not due to stupidity: they reason excellently in the idiom of their beliefs, but they cannot reason outside, or against, their beliefs because they have no other idiom in which to express their thoughts" (1937: 159).

triangle," a "web" in which each set of beliefs is dependent upon the other for legitimization (176; 109). "All their beliefs hang together," he writes, "and were a Zande to give up faith in witch-doctorhood he would have to surrender equally his belief in witchcraft and oracles" (1937: 109). In the same vein, in his study of Sisala religion, Mendosa (1978) notes that "neither Sisala divination (*vugung*), nor any other aspect of Sisala religion, can be analysed in isolation from other parts of the total set of axiomatic values and institutions... because each institution forms an integral part of the total socio-religious system" (1978: 35). Framed in this way, divination is considered to be an integral feature of a closed ideological system, within which individual, isolated beliefs cannot be questioned without casting doubt upon a people's epistemology in its entirety.

William Bascom (1941), in his frequently cited work on Yoruba Ifa divination techniques, explores several aspects underlying the self-cooperating nature of the belief in divination. In addition to presenting Ifa divination as an integral part of the Yoruba religious system (1941: 44), Bascom notes that, generally speaking, there is very little chance to test the accuracy of Ifa predictions (1941: 44-45). This is due, in some respects, to the lack of a feedback mechanism which is capable of attributing failed prognostics to the institution of divination itself. In the case of Ifa, for example, Bascom argues that, even when misfortune strikes those who closely follow the oracle's advice, in the absence of controlled conditions, the proponents of divination can easily contend that things would have been worse had the oracle's recommendations not been followed (1941: 45). In the same vein, a number of scholars, including Mendosa (1978: 44-48), Horton (1964: 3-16, 1967: 171), Shaw (1991: 138-39), Thomas (1971: 244-47), Devisch (1985: 67), and Evans-Pritchard (1937: 155-58), argue that any amount of explanations can be offered *ex post facto* in order to explain the failure of a divination's purported prognostic abilities. In Bascom's terminology, which has been widely adopted in the literature, these *ex post facto* explanations are discussed as "alibis" that are "provided to cover unmistakable failures" (1941: 45). As these alibis are rooted within an overarching epistemological system which accepts as *a priori* the validity of

divination practices, Bascom's alibis provide that "the logic of the divinatory process is circular and self-contained... [allowing] the [divinatory] process to continue indefinitely, without serious threats from the outside" (Mendoza 1978: 45). Within this framework, divination is represented in terms of an exclusively intellectual explanatory process, the limitations and failures of which are mitigated by the usage of alibis that serve to reinforce a 'closed' intellectual system, constructed along Popperian lines.¹¹

1.2.3 Divination and dialogue

Influenced by the so-called linguistic turn in the human sciences, a number of more contemporary publications focus on the dialogic aspects of divination. This is particularly true of studies characteristic of Rene Devisch's internal-semiotic and semantic mode of analysis, which, in recent configurations, emphasizes the discursive relationship expressed between both the client and the diviner, as well as between the diviner and the divination text (see, in particular: Akinnaso 1995; Devisch 1985; Shaw 1985; Parkin 1979; Werbner 1989; Whyte 1991; Zeitlyn 1990, 2001). Several of the contributors to Phillip Peek's watershed *African Divination Systems* (1991), for example, stress the interpretive and collaborative work that occurs during divinatory seances (Parkin 1991; Shaw 1991; and Whyte 1991). In these studies, divination is represented as proceeding from ambiguity to clarity or, in Parkin's terminology, from "chaos to order" (Parkin 1991). This is seen, on the one hand, as the diviner interprets and contextualizes a randomly selected result, transforming otherwise incomprehensible sections of text into case-specific prognostics; and, on the other hand, can be seen as the diviner mediates a therapeutic discussion with the client, clarifying the client's questions, concerns, hopes, fears, and so forth, ultimately settling upon a course of action that may resolve the issues underlying the client's initial query. In this sense, as Whyte writes, mechanical forms of divination often involve "a three-way conversation, with the diviner

¹¹ On Popper's understanding of open and closed intellectual systems, see: Popper 1945 [2006].

mediating... between the client and the authoritative book" (Whyte 1991: 160).

The internal-semiotic and semantic mode of analysis, according to Devisch, "focuses on how [divination] 'works,' not so much in the sense of its achieving something, but rather in the sense of how it works in itself, how social-cultural reality is always in the process of being brought about" (1985: 70-71). Here, divination is not approached directly in terms of its social utility, its function, or in terms its objective veracity. Rather, a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the techniques through which the diviner, who is sometimes presented as a *bricoleur* (Peek 1991a; Parkin 1979, 1991), interprets and contextualizes the results of a casting for her or his client. David Zeitlyn, for example, sees the role of the diviner as being analogous to that of an indigenous literary critic, mediating archaic treatise and working to interpret particular passages so as to "put the matter into a [contemporary] social and moral context" (Zeitlyn 2001: 228). In a similar sense, Werbner has coined the usage of the term 'the poetics of divination' to convey the "cryptic, condensed and highly ambiguous language" in which many divinatory prognostics are expressed (Werbner 1989: 232) (cf. Annus 2010a; Shaughnessy 2010). In these cases, the process of divination is one of reduction, in which the diviner works to distill a singular response from a wide range of possibilities. In doing so, the diviner works closely with the client, both of whom are seen as engaging "in a process of discovery which moves from obscurity to certainty" (Whyte 1991: 170). Even in celebrated cases like that of Chilenga (see: Redmayne 1970), where a single diviner draws a diverse multi-ethnic and multi-national audience, the diviner and client are understood to collaborate in order to create a shared idiom over the course of the divinatory seance (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985a; Whyte 1991; Zeitlyn 1990, 1993, 2001).

1.3 Definitions and usages of a few critical terms

1.3.1 Mo divination

To speak very broadly, the Tibetan nouns *mo*, *phyag mo*, and *mo rtsis*, along with common verbal forms such as *mo rgyab* and *mo bkyon*, may be understood as referring to a heterogeneous body of divination practices, largely (though not entirely) cleromantic in nature, which are widely practiced in Tibetan cultures. In many cases, these divinations are textually oriented (e.g. involve the use of an interpretive textual catalogue), though it is not uncommon to encounter illiterate diviners. The syllable *mo* has a number of other linguistic functions; however, limiting ourselves to its relationship to divination, *mo* also appears in a variety of noun phrases indicating specific forms of divination. For example: *sho mo* (dice divination), *'phreng mo* (rosary divination), *rdo mo* (rock divination), and *pra mo* (mirror divination). Speaking of the individuals who perform divination, over the course of my fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, diviners were consistently referred to as either *mo pa*, *mo ma* (f.), *mo mkhan*, *mo rgyab mkhan*, or *mo rtsis pa*. For further remarks on the general performance of divination in Tibetan cultures, see Chapter 2.

1.3.2 Ritual

A cursory survey of the literature in Ritual Studies and Anthropology reveals that the term *ritual* does not have a single, widely agreed-upon definition (Lewis 1980; Grimes 1982, 1990). In fact, one author compares the difficulty of drafting a single, all-encompassing definition of ritual to the perennial "search for the Holy Grail" (Grimes 1990: 12). Considering the ambiguity of the term, I believe that any working definition of ritual should be grounded in ethnographic research and serve as a heuristic tool, which can help to condense an anthropologist's theories. Nevertheless, at this point it may be instructive to provide a few brief remarks on the subject in order to clarify my usage of the term in the following pages.

To begin with, I follow Grimes (1982, 1990) and, broadly speaking, the sub-discipline of Ritual Criticism in drawing the following distinction between *rite* and *ritual*. I understand *rite* (adopted into Middle English [16c.] from the Latin noun *ritus*, meaning "ceremony, habit, or custom") to be a specific enactment of "a set of actions widely recognized by members of a culture" (Grimes 1990: 9). Rites may be differentiated in many respects from forms of quotidian behavior (though they may be everyday occurrences themselves) and are not necessarily religious in nature. Additionally, a rite is often part of a larger whole, which could be referred to as a ritual system or an overarching ritual tradition. I take *ritual* (from the Latin adjective *ritualis*, "that which pertains to a rite [*ritus*]") to refer, as Grimes writes, "to the general idea of which a rite is a specific instance" (1990: 10). In this sense, ritual serves as a conceptual category, which is formulated by scholars in order to discuss rites and those who perform them within a broader theoretical context.

Gilbert Lewis, in his seminal *The Day of Shining Red*, notes that *ritual* is also often used in anthropological parlance as an adjective of compromise, replacing the sometimes ideologically cumbersome terms *magical* and *religious*, or *magico-religious* (Lewis 1980: 10-11; also, see: Goody 1961: 142-64). I will attempt to avoid using *ritual* in this fashion. In many respects, I see the adjectives *magical* and *religious* as presupposing expressions of belief on part of the performer. A number of anthropologists, including Grimes (1990) and Lewis (1980), argue that there is no intrinsic connection between belief and ritual. As Grimes writes, "since there are rites that have nothing to do with religion ([e.g.] civil ceremonies) and religions that have little to do with mystical beings or powers ([e.g.] Zen Buddhism), building such qualifiers into a definition [of ritual] is a mistake" (1990: 12). Taking this into consideration, the usage of *ritual* in place of the adjectives *magical* and *religious* may obfuscate the discussion of specific rites, particularly when etic categories are imposed upon ethnographic milieus.

1.3.3 Shamanism

It has been noted by a number of scholars (Bellezza 2005; Hoffmann 1961; Lihua 1993; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; and Samuel 1993, 2005, to name just a few) that Tibetan religions demonstrate certain features in common with religious traditions in Central and North Asia commonly classified as *shamanistic* or *shamanic*. Tibetan divination practices, for example, are characterized as shamanistic in a number of recent publications (Orofino 1994: 615-16; Balikci 2008: 3; Samuel 2005: 119, 132) and the Bon religion has often been uncritically equated with Central and North Asian shamanism, in particular by early tibetologists, such as Waddell (1895), Das (1881, 1900, 1902), and Bell (1931), as well as by some later anthropologists and linguists (Beyer 1992: 7, 17; Hoffmann 1950, 1956; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1947, 1956: 542; Funke 1969). I do not intend to reproduce here, in miniature, the manifold discussions orbiting around the definition of the term *shamanism*¹²; however, as it still possesses a great deal of currency in the literature (cf. Bjerken 2002), it may be instructive to briefly outline my understanding of the term.

The English word *shaman* is adopted [17c.] from the German *shamane* and Russian *shaman*, which are originally offered as transliterations of the Tungus word *šaman*, meaning "someone who knows".¹³ Strictly speaking, a shaman, among Manchu-Tungusic or Nivkh speaking Central and Eastern Siberian peoples denotes a type of religious functionary who specialises in healing, apotropaic rites, and divination, as well as serving as a psychopomp, guiding and protecting the souls of the dead (Lewis 1984; Bellezza 2005: 20-22; Walter and Fridman 2004). In the following pages, I will use the term *shaman(ism)* in the above ethnolinguistic sense only, limiting its usage to "specific cultural features and worldview[s] characteristic of the Siberian-Artic complex" (Walter and Fridman 2004: xxii; cf. Bowie 2000: 194). In doing so, I follow Kehoe

¹² On the definition of Shamanism, see: Walter and Fridman *et al* 2004; also: Bourguignon 1967, 1974; Eliade 1951; Gilberg 1984; Hamayon 1993, 1998; Holmberg 1989; Hultkrantz 1973; Lewis 1981, 1989; Samuel 1990, 1993, 2005; Shirokogoroff 1935; Voigt 1984; Walsh 1989, 1990; Hoppál and Howard 1993.

¹³ For a brief discussion of the appropriation of the term and its earliest 17th century usage, see the introduction to Walter and Fridman 2004.

(2000) and Bellezza (2005), both of whom are weary of the term's overusage in academic discourses and characterize many of the comparative studies on the subject as oversimplifications of structural similarities embedded in different historical and cultural contexts; however, my restricted usage of *shamanism* is not meant to suggest that the term has no value as a general analytical concept.

As is well known, due in part to the commercial success of Mircea Elide's *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (1951), shamanism has come to be used as a general descriptive and analytical term for a disparate, pan-cultural body of religious (or 'spiritual') practices (Walter and Fridman *et al* 2004; also Holmberg 1989: 143-45; Hoppál 1992: 129-31). Additionally, a number of scholars, including Mumford (1989), Holmberg (1989), and Paul (1976) have attempted to resurrect the term in a more scientific context based upon ethnographic study. Geoffrey Samuel's discussion (1990, 1993, 2005) of Shamanic vs Clerical Buddhism, for example, serves as a particularly notable example of this effort. Though these studies are fruitful and informative, I believe that they rely too heavily upon *shamanism* as an anthropologically constructed concept and, in doing so, contribute to the abstraction and appropriation of the cultures to which the concept is indigenous.

Chapter Two: An introduction to Tibetan divination, its origin narratives, and the Bon tradition

"One of the guests drew the scattered cards to himself, leaving a large part of the table clear; but he did not gather them into a pack nor did he shuffle them; he took one card and placed it in front of himself. We all noted the resemblance between his face and the face on the card, and we thought that we understood that, with the card, he wanted to say 'I' and that he was preparing to tell his story"—Italo Calvino. *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*

2.1 A Brief Introduction to Tibetan Divination

In traditional Tibetan imaginaries, as is well known, human beings are considered to be subject to a host of influences, both natural and supernatural, among which are counted the planets and stars, as well as a dizzying variety of gods, demons, demi-gods, and regional spirits. On the one hand, the interrelationship of these myriad forces, whether harmonious or disharmonious, is believed to exert a considerable amount of control over individual human lives and to affect the functioning of society at large. On the other hand, these forces can themselves be influenced through various forms of ritual action, which differ dramatically in their scope and sophistication, ranging from daily *bsang mchod* offerings, for example, to the construction of elaborate mandalas in preparation for the birthday of the Dalai Lama. Within this framework, divination and astrology provide a mechanism through which individuals are able to gain insight into the nature and disposition of the various elemental or supernatural forces that could potentially affect their lives.

Despite the growing number of specialist studies on the subject of Tibetan divination practices, a variety of divinatory techniques, including divination by rice, salt, and fingernails, as well as the interpretation of dreams and forms of Tibetan physiognomy remain almost entirely unknown to Western academic literature. I therefore cannot claim to demonstrate ethnographic and/or textual familiarity with every form of divination practiced in Tibetan speaking communities globally. More to the point, given the heterogenous nature of Tibetan divination practices, any such claim would almost certainly be problematic to maintain. Like any complex ritual system, Tibetan

divination practices are often highly composite, displaying elements from different divinatory traditions which have been brought together over long periods of time. Nevertheless, building upon the sources surveyed in Chapter one, there is room for several guarded generalizations to be made, particularly when speaking about divination practices in their textual forms.

To begin with, the performance of divination, particularly forms of mechanical divination falling under the rubric of *mo* or *mo rtsis*, has been described by a number of authors as a pan-Tibetan phenomenon (Chime Radha 1981; Ekvall 1963; Gerke 2011; Róna-Tas 1956). A cursory survey of the literature reveals that there are many different forms of divination practiced in Tibetan cultures, both past and present (Chime Radha 1981; Ekvall 1963; Gerke 2011; Róna-Tas 1956). A number of these are outlined in Ekvall 1963 and Lama Chime Radha 1981, which discuss a variety of divinatory techniques, including divination by dice, stones, songs, rosaries, mirrors, arrows, butter-lamps, and the burning of sheep scapulas. Several studies have also been published on the subjects of divination by bird-call, aviary flight patterns, and augury (in particular: Laufer 1914, Thomas 1951, Morgan 1987, Mortensen 2003). At present, divination by ropes and strings (including the performance of *ju thig*) remains largely unstudied in Tibetan milieus, though some cursory remarks can be found in publication (Tucci 1980: 228). Furthermore, the quasi-divinatory selection of hierarchs through various aleatoric processes, sometimes involving the mediation of major and minor deities, is not entirely unknown (Ramble 1993, 2008; Walsh 1906). The election of the abbot of sMan ri Monastery and the Junior Tutor of the Dalai Lama by *rtags ril*, for example, are perhaps the most widely known examples of election through such aleatoric processes (Sherpa Tulku *et al* 1977: 68-69; Cech 1987: 112; cf. Calkowski 1993). Other forms of divination are also attested to in Dunhuang literature, where one finds manuscripts outlining coin divination (IOL Tib J 741.1, IOL Tib J 741.2, IOL Tib J 742, IOL Tib J 744, PT 1055, PT 1056), canine divination (P 3601), and divination by leather lots (IO 742), along with many other divinatory practices.

To speak very generally, many of the divination practices encountered in Tibetan cultures

can be understood as forms of cleromancy. Cleromantic divinations make use of mobile elements, such as dice, stones, lots, ropes, or runes, which are cast by the diviner in order to randomly generate a pattern, a set of symbols, or a particular numerical signifier. The diviner then refers to some type of an interpretive catalogue, either textual or memorized, in order to make intelligible the results of the casting and to generate a response to the client's query. For example, in the African case of Ndembu *ng'ombu yakesekula*, which is studied at length by Victor Turner (1975), the diviner begins by placing twenty to thirty objects into a shallow, open-topped basket. The basket is then shaken, randomizing the distribution of the objects and manoeuvring them into a heap from which the diviner examines the top three or four objects. In this instance, the interpretive catalogue could be said to be rooted in Ndembu oral culture, in that the interpretation of *ng'ombu yakesekula's* mobile elements depends upon the memorization of an enormous body of rigidly defined symbols, which are communicated orally from diviner to apprentice and not recorded in textual form (Turner 1975). By way of contrast, some cleromantic traditions like the *I Ching* (Feuchstwang 1972) and Yoruba *Ifá* divination (Abimbola 1976, 1977; Bascom 1941, 1969, 1980) are expressly textual, whereas other forms of cleromancy, like Nyole *lamuli* divination (Whyte 1991), combine both written and memorized verses (cf. Zeitlyn 2001).

Returning to the Tibetan cultural sphere, it is important to note that many forms of cleromantic divination are textually oriented, which is to say that they involve the mediation of an interpretive textual catalogue. For instance, in one form of dice divination widely practiced in Tibetan speaking communities in Himachal Pradesh, the diviner requires a set of three six-sided dice, as well as a divination manual affiliated, in many cases, with the goddess dPal ldan dmag zor rgyal mo. Following the prerequisite rites and invocations, the dice are cast once, twice, or several times. In each instance, the casting provides a single, randomly generated numerical result numbering three through eighteen. A cursory glance at the prognosticatory section of one associated

divination manual¹⁴ reveals that the manuscript is composed of fifteen sections, correspondingly numbered three through eighteen, each of which is further divided into a series of eleven sub-sections, the topics of which range from mercantile activities and travel to various health, spiritual, and domestic concerns. In this sense, the dice divination in question can be seen to make use of a mechanical randomness generator (i.e. the set of three six-sided dice), the results of which are then keyed into an interpretive textual catalogue that serves as a guideline from which the diviner is able to distill a response to the clients' queries.

As a point of reference, over the course of my fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, the professional or semi-professional diviners were referred to either as *mo pa*, *mo ma* (f.), *mo mkhyan*, *mo rgyab mkhyan*, or *mo rtsis pa*. I have often observed that professional diviners receive income in the form of monetary or material donations from their clientele and, should the diviner be a member of a monastic community, these donations are typically directed towards monastic authorities or, in some cases, can take the form of client sponsorship of specific rites. It is important to note, however, that the performance of divination is not bound to a single profession, gender, or method (cf. Gerke 2011: 100). While the divinations performed by reincarnated (*sprul sku*) or otherwise high ranking lamas are respected and particularly sought after, it is also common for lay people to perform simple rosary divinations to supplement their daily decision making processes (cf. Gerke 2011: 100; Chime Radha 1981: 2-6). This demonstrates that, broadly speaking, there are no particular restrictions governing who may or may not perform a number of elementary divination practices (Chime Radha 1981: 6). With that said, there are forms of mechanical divination, such as *lde'u 'phrul* (section 3.3), which require the practitioner to undertake a series of rigorous preliminary practices, known as *sngon 'gro*. Though *sngon 'gro* are certainly not homogeneous, it is common for diviners to cultivate, through meditation and daily ritual practice, a relationship with a variety of clairvoyant (*mngon shes*) deities, who are called upon in guaranteeing the divination's

¹⁴ Author unknown. 1997. *dPal ldan dmag zor rgyal mo'i sgo nas rno mthong sgrub tshul de'i 'grol bshad dang bcas pa zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Delhi: Bod gzhung shes rig dpar khang.

efficacy (see: section 3.4.1). Though the deities associated with divination are diverse and vary from practice to practice, in contemporary exile communities it is very common to find the protectresses dPal ldan lha mo, A chi chos skyi sgrol ma, and Srid pa rgyal mo variously propitiated as an essential element of the *sngon 'gro* underlying a number of cleromantic practices.

The economic relationship between divination and ritual is both complex and woefully understudied. Nevertheless, it is frequently noted that Tibetan divination is closely linked to overarching ritual and medical traditions and plays a central role in the regulation of ritual economies. As we will see below, one of the major features of Tibetan divinatory prognostics is the recommendation of highly specific series of rites, the correct performance of which often requires the intercession of a ritual specialist. For this reason, Gerke characterizes the relationship between divination and ritual (as well as between diviners and monastic communities) as one that is symbiotic in nature. "Both reap rewards," she writes, "[t]he diviners provide the monastery with clients and detailed instructions on what kind of practices to perform, and the monasteries provide the body of sophisticated religious practices. The client usually 'pays' for the [diviner's] services in the form of donations" (2011: 104). This same dynamic is characterized by Clarke, in his ethnographic study of the Yolmo people, as a form of "religious capitalism" in which divination serves to economically subsidize hegemonic institutions and, in return, the diviners' clientele receive types of symbolic capital in the form of *bsod nams* and *byin rlabs*, or meritorious action and religious blessing (1990: 182). Though this particular dynamic warrants a great deal of further study, I would add that the proliferation of mobile technologies has, in the case of Himachal Pradesh, significantly complicated traditional modes of divinatory patronage. As requests for divination are increasingly being made over great distances by telephone, the traditional discourse shared by diviners and monastic communities is currently undergoing a transformation that ethnographic research has not yet begun to address.

2.2 Remarks on Tibetan Buddhist historiography and the origins of divination

By the reign of Srong bstan sgam po (ruled c. 627-649), Tibetan divination practices were already "a complex amalgam of Indian, Chinese and Tibetan forms" (Aris 1980: 12). The heterogenous nature of the divination manuscripts recovered from Dunhuang suggests, in particular, an environment in which indigenous forms of divination are hybridized through a series of reciprocal borrowings and adaptations, which overlap with the diffusion of divination practices from China, India, and Inner Asia (Macdonald 1971: 272-309; Kalinowski 2003). Due to the obvious absence of pre-Imperial source materials, it is therefore particularly difficult to postulate a single, 'pure' origin for many forms of divination practiced in Tibetan speaking milieus. As a consequence, etiological discussions of Tibetan divination should address individual practices on a case-by-case basis, drawing from the comparative study of primary documents and—where possible—the archaeological record, as well as weighing indigenous etiological narratives.

The origins of *lde'u 'phrul* will be discussed elsewhere (section 3.3.2); however, by way of presenting Tibetan divination in some general terms, in this section, I would like to discuss the mytho-historical origins of divination as they are represented in the Tibetan literary record. Here, I will focus upon the theme of cultural diffusion; specifically, the introduction of the geomantic and astrological sciences from China as seen in the vita of Srong bstan sgam po, as well as the implied introduction of divinatory techniques from India as related in early accounts of Padmasambhava's journey to Tibet. While these narratives are well-known, Bon narratives outlining the introduction and usage of divination have been almost entirely overlooked by Western scholarship. This being the case, following a brief introduction to the Tibetan Bon religion (sections 2.3 through 2.4), I will also discuss the origins of divination as they are represented in Bon mytho-history, focusing in particular upon the roles of sTon pa gShen rab in diffusing divination practices throughout Tibet. I will begin, however, with the widely-studied (Buddhist) narrative of Weng chen kong jo (hereafter Kong jo), the Chinese wife of Srong bstan sgam po, and her role in taming the so-called 'Supine

Demoness,' the *srin mo gan rkyal du bsgyel ba*, an episode which plays a central role in the hagiographic tradition surrounding the king.

2.2.1 The *Ma ñi bka' bum* and the Chinese diffusion motif

In large part, King Srong bstan sgam po's vita cycle is formed by three sources which emerge between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries: (1) the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* (11th century); (2) the *Ma ñi bka' bum* (11th-12th centuries); and (3) the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (14th century). In many respects, this corpus provides a relatively consistent depiction of Srong bstan sgam po's reign, under which the Yar lung dynasty expands beyond Central Tibet through military conquest and political marriage, eventually growing to such an extent that the burgeoning Tibetan Empire poses a threat to the Chinese Tang dynasty and the neighbouring Nepalese kingdom (cf. Martin 2007). As related in the King's vita cycle, Srong bstan sgam po then uses the prospect of military intervention as leverage in arranging two royal marriages between himself and princesses from the Nepalese and Chinese courts respectively. Despite the protest of both princesses and, as related at length in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (ch. 13), a degree of political intrigue and skullduggery, Srong bstan sgam po is reluctantly given both brides along with lavish dowries, including two large statues of the Śākyamuni Buddha. In addition, as a parting gift, Princess Kong jo is given by her father, the Tang Chinese Emperor, a "divinatory chart in three hundred sections [divided according] to the Chinese sciences (*gtsug lag*)," which she brings with her to Tibet (*MKB fol 244*).¹⁵

Some time later, upon the Princess Kong jo's arrival in Lha sa, the wheels of the chariot transporting one of the statues of the Śākyamuni Buddha becomes stuck in the mud and, despite the efforts of the champions lHa dga' and Klu dga', it cannot be moved. In order to ascertain why this is the case, Kong jo performs a geomantic divination and, as related in the *Ma ñi bka' bum*, discovers

¹⁵ *rGya yi gtsug lag gab rtse sum brgya po* (f.122b). Also, the divinatory chart is referred to as "a striped scroll of trigrams in thirty-four sections," *par thang khra bo sum cu rtsa bzhi* (f. 121a). I am indebted to Aris 1980 for the translation of *par thang khra bo*.

that the Tibetan landscape is akin to an untamed demoness, a *srin mo*, which is hostile to the introduction of Buddhism.

In general, [Princess Kong jo] understood that this Snow Land Country was like a *srin mo* lying on her back. She understood that the Plain of Milk of Lha sa was a palace of the King of the *klu*. She understood that this lake in the Plane of Milk was the heart-blood of the *srin mo*. She understood that the three mountains surrounding the plain were the two breasts of the *srin mo* and her arterial life-line (*srog pa rtsa*). The eastern mountain promontory afflicted the west; the western afflicted the east; the southern afflicted the north; the northern afflicted the south.

spyir kha ba can gyi rgyal khams 'di srin mo gan rkyl du bsgyel ba 'dra ba zhig tu shes / lha sa 'o thang 'di klu'i rgyal po'i pho brang du shes / 'o thang gi mtsho 'di srin mo'i snying khrag tu shes / thang gi dkyil na ri ngos chad gsum 'dug pa de / srin mo'i nu ma gnyis srog pa rtsa dang gsum du shes / shar gyi ri sna nub tu jug / nub kyi ri sna shar du jug / lho'i ri sna byang du jug / byang gi ri sna lho ru jug pa de ni / (fol 258 [129b] lines 5-6)

Following the diagnostic elements of Kong jo's divination, her prognosis reveals that, should a Buddhist temple be built on the Plain of Milk, "the natural good qualities of Tibet would come forth and flourish" (*MKB* fol 260; cf. Aris 1980: 13). Further geomantic calculations reveal that a complex, concentric network of twelve temples must be built across the Tibetan landscape in order to pin down the limbs and joints of the demoness so that her destructive influence is tamed. Eventually, with the aid of additional geomantic calculations, the process of constructing both the Lha sa Jo khang and the ancillary temple network (the four *Ru gnon*, four *mTha' 'dul*, and four *Yang 'dul* temples) is completed. The endeavour is traditionally counted amongst the greatest of King

Srong bstan sgam po's 'civilizing' achievements, along with the creation of the Tibetan script and the introduction of Buddhism to the imperial court.

The *point d'appui* for the Supine Demoness myth is the *Ma ṅi bka' bum*, a heterogeneous group of texts attributed to Srong bstan sgam po, which are discovered as *gter ma* by three separate *gter stons* between the late-11th and 12th centuries. The myth itself and the textual tradition of which it is a part are already the subjects of an extensive academic discussion (see, in particular: Aris 1980; Bacot 1934-35; Blondeau 1984; Macdonald 1987; Sørensen 1994; Macdonald 1968/69; Kapstein 2000). Notably, a number of authors have stressed variable interpretations of the demoness narrative, often emphasizing the themes of Buddhist conversion and conquest or, in some cases, offering feminist critiques of the demoness's subjugation, whereby the taming of the demoness is taken as a mythic representation of patriarchal repression (Marko 1990; Gyatso 1989). The historicity of the ways in which geomantic techniques are used in the *Ma ṅi bka' bum* has also been called in to question (Stuchbury 1999; Martin 2007), in no small part due to the fact that the two modern schools of Feng Shui were not codified until the Song Dynasty (969-1279 CE), some three to four centuries after Srong bstan sgam po's death (cf. Feuchtwang 2002). Nevertheless, contemporary scholarship overwhelmingly affirms the Chinese origins of Tibetan geomancy (Martin 2007; Maurer 2009; Stuchbury 1999; Aris 1980: 20) and, as noted in the previous chapter, the extensive influence of Chinese elemental divination on Tibetan divinatory systems. In this light, Kong jo's journey to Tibet and her role in subjugating the Supine Demoness—in particular, the princess's usage of Chinese geomantic and astrological materials—could easily be presented as a mytho-historical narrativization of the diffusion of certain forms of divination from China at an early stage in the Tibetan Empire's formation.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Supine Demoness myth illustrates ways in which divinatory practices brought from China are linked, in the narrativization of Srong bstan sgam po's reign, to the centralization of Tibetan imperial authority and "the creation of royal

religious space as a basis for auspicious rule" (Martin 2007: 6) (cf. Macdonald 1987). This theme is particularly pronounced in the twelve-temple episode of the *Ma ni bka' bum* (MKB fol 259-275), in which, as Michael Aris notes, the network of temples called for in Kong jo's divinations is organized in terms of a Chinese geomantic schema which, notably, places the emperor and his court at the centre of a microcosmic representation of the universe (1980: 15-33). Aris's observation is, however, heavily indebted to Stein's work on old Tibet; in particular his frequently-cited remark that "the conquering and civilizing function of the first king, once he was established at the centre, [is] performed in accordance with Chinese ideas; in square concentric zones, each boxed in by the next and extending farther and farther from the centre" (Stein 1972: 39). It may be worth noting that an alternate reading of Srong bstan sgam po's twelve-temple episode is posited by Alexander Macdonald, who argues that King Aśoka's legendary construction of 84,000 sūpas also serves as a viable mytheme upon which later Tibetan accounts may have drawn in mythologizing the construction of temples during Srong bstan sgam po's reign (Macdonald 1987: 140-143). Nevertheless, whether one looks to India or China in unpacking the thematic elements of Srong bstan sgam po's hagiographical tradition, these episodes provide a narrative in which Chinese divination practices are brought to Tibet and, upon their appearance in Lha sa, are immediately put to work in the service of the state. Kong jo's initial geomantic reading rapidly spirals into a series of divinatory calculations oriented towards the prognostication of various ways in which indigenous forces can be tamed and imperial Buddhist temples constructed across the Tibetan Empire. Seen in the light of Srong bstan sgam po's other civilizing feats, divination here appears at the vanguard of the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet and, in the King's vita cycle, is closely wedded to the centralization (symbolically) of imperial authority.

2.2.2 The *sBa/dBa' bzhed* and the Indian diffusion motif

With the theme of cultural diffusion in mind, I would like to briefly turn the clock forward to the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan (c. 742-797), where one finds a parallel diffusion narrative in which divination practices are introduced to Tibet from India by the tantric master Padmasambhava. As is well known, in the *Pad ma bka'i thang* (14th century), Padmasambhava is portrayed as traveling widely throughout Tibet, teaching, performing miracles, and concealing a number of manuscripts, which emerge in later generations as important *gter ma* discoveries. However, aside from PT 44, a late-dynastic period text, the earliest account of the saint's journey to Tibet is the *sBa/dBa' bzhed*, which exists today in a plurality of different versions, the various witnesses of which date to periods between the 11th and 14th centuries (see: Stein 1961; Macdonald 1971: 283, 288-289, 370-371; Martin 1997; van der Kuijp 1984; Seyfort Ruegg 1989; Denwood 1990: 135-148; Sørensen 1994; and Wangdu and Diemberger 2000).¹⁶ In this corpus, Padmasambhava's role is considerably more modest than one sees in the saint's later hagiographical tradition, being limited to the domain of exorcism and the performance of water-related miracles (cf. Sørensen 1994: 4). Though Padmasambhava's mastery of divination is peripheral to the *sBa/dba' bzhed's* central narrative, divination practices are represented as playing an important role in taming indigenous deities hostile to the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet.

As related in the earliest extant version of the *sBa/dBa' bzhed* (cf. Wangdu and Diemberger 2000), shortly after the monk Śāntarakṣita's arrival in Tibet, a series of calamities occur, all of which coincide with Khri Srong lde btsan's conversion to Buddhism (*sBa bzhed* fol 8a5-7). "The 'Phang thang [palace] was flooded, the royal castle of lHa sa was struck by lightning and burnt down, great famine as well as epidemics of people and animals occurred" (Wangdu and Diemberger

¹⁶ The three best known of which are, perhaps, the following: (1) The *sBa bzhed zhabs brtags ma*, or '*The Supplemented Testament of sBa'* (mid-14th century), which is published in facimilie by Stein in 1961 and then re-issued in Dharamsala in 1968; (2) the *sBa bzhed*, a composit of three witnesses edited by Gonpo Gyaltsen (the earliest of which is dated by Sørensen [1994: 634] to the 12th century), published in Beijing in 1980; and (3) the *dBa' bzhe* (distinguished by the 'd' prefix), a recently discovered manuscript, published by Wangdu and Diemberger in 2000, which the authors date to the 11th century.

2000: 54). According to the manuscript, the king's ministers (*zhang blon*) ascribe these catastrophes to indigenous, non-Buddhist deities, who have been angered by Khri Srong lde btsan's patronage of the foreign religion. As a consequence, the king is forced to ask Śāntarakṣita to return to India in order to await a more auspicious time in which to propagate Buddhism in Tibet (*sBa bzhed* 8b1-6). After some time, however, the king is able to convince the ministers to accept Buddhist teachings. Śāntarakṣita is then invited back to Tibet, this time together with both Padmasambhava and a Nepalese architect-geomancer, who plays an important role in the construction of bSam yas Monastery (consecrated 779). In the narrative, Padmasambhava's primary role is the subjugation of indigenous deities who, once tamed and bound by oath, are given instruction on a variety of Buddhist doctrines. During the prelude to the construction of bSam yas Monastery, divination is depicted as one of the central means by which this is accomplished. For instance, shortly after Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet, we find the following episode:

That day the mKhan po (Padmasambhava) performed a mirror divination to *gZims mal ba nang chen* Seng mgo lHa lung 'tsho bzher gnyan legs and pronounced the names of all the gods and *nāga* which had caused the flood of 'Phang thang, the fire of the lHa sa castle, the epidemics among the people and cattle and the famines. Then calling the names and the clans of all the wicked [gods and *nāga*], these were summoned to the presence [of Padmasambhava]. They were transformed into human beings and severely threatened by Padmasambhava. With the help of a translator Ā tsā rya Bo dhi sa twa taught them in the Tibetan the doctrine of cause and effect and made the truth evident. Afterwards mKhan po Padmasambhava told [the king]: 'Henceforth, praise the holy doctrine as you like in the country of Tibet! The gods and *nāga* have been bound by oath but such a ritual for giving orders to the gods and *nāga* and binding them by oath must be performed twice more

(Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 55-56).¹⁷

Here, divination practices once again emerge at the vanguard of the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet; however, in this case, the passage depicts the diffusion of Indian Buddhist traditions rather than those introduced from China. Though the performance of divination in Padmasambhava's vita remains largely unstudied, when the above episode is read against the narrative of Chinese diffusion, a number of similarities come to the fore. In particular, Padmasambhava's usage of divination bears much in common with the manner in which geomantic techniques are employed by the Chinese princess Kong Jo in the subjugation of the Supine Demoness. In both cases, highly specialized divinatory techniques are brought to Tibet from neighbouring regions and, upon their arrival, are used to either subjugate or convert a variety of indigenous forces hostile to the proliferation of Buddhism. In doing so, divination practices also serve to consolidate imperial authority. As seen above, Srong bstan sgam po is represented as relying heavily upon geomantic calculations in establishing a complex network of Buddhist temples. Similarly, in the *sBa bzhed*, Padmasambhava's performance of mirror divination plays an essential role in clearing away the obstacles impeding Khri Srong lde btsan's construction of bSam yas Monastery. In each case, the performance of divination is the *point d'appui* for a state-sponsored ritual process, the goal of which is the pacification of indigenous deities so as to make Tibet amenable to the proliferation of Buddhism from India and China.

Speaking of Tibetan Buddhist historiography, it is perhaps not surprising to find that narratives of cultural diffusion figure so prominently in representations of Tibetan divination. It is commonplace that histories are often written to respond to a particular need to validate existing

¹⁷ Though I have endeavoured to provide my own translations of the majority of the Tibetan language materials presented in my thesis, the poor quality of the scans of the manuscript at my disposal combined with the problems posed by the script make it extremely difficult to offer a constructive reproduction of this passage. As such, I am referring the reader to Wangdu and Diemberger's excellent translation of the *sBa bzhed* (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000).

authoritative figures and institutions. Authors often strive to embed ideology in history and, as Spiegel writes, "thereby endow that ideology with the prestige and imprescriptible character that the past [is] able to confer [upon a later] society" (1997: 2). Vance (1973) argues that even the most putatively objective literary work—which is to say, one that aims to reproduce the world 'as it is'—will inevitably deploy certain ideologies that "must prevail in the minds of both artist and audience if the system of communication is to remain intact" (1973: 557; cf. Spiegel 1997: 5-6). With regard to Tibetan literary milieus, similar points are raised by Michael Aris in his introduction to Dan Martin's *Tibetan Histories*, published in 1997. Aris contends that many post-imperial histories, including the *sBa/dBa' bzhed* and the *Ma ñi bka' bum*, "were written from an exclusively Buddhist viewpoint to celebrate the past glories of clans and principalities, religious schools, cults and monasteries and the Tibetan state itself. The histories met, and continue to meet," he writes, "the urgent need for legitimising present conditions or aspirations through vigorous assertions of authority" (Martin 1997: 9; cf. Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 5). In this sense, the mytho-historical origins of Tibetan divination, as represented in the Tibetan Buddhist literary record, can be seen as part of the larger quasi-historical 'civilizing' narrative in which Buddhist traditions are introduced to Tibet from its neighbouring regions. However, it should be emphasized that Tibetan Buddhism has never been a static reproduction of Indian (or, for that matter, any other form of) Buddhism. As Kapstein writes, "Buddhism in Tibet developed through a sustained and subtle process, whereby the foreign religion achieved a decisive cultural hegemony but was at the same time, as conquerors always are, transformed by its own success" (2000: 15).

2.3 General Remarks on the Bon Religion

I will return to my discussion of divination and Tibetan mytho-history below (section 2.5); however, as I will be discussing the origins of divination as they are represented in Bon narratives, I feel as though it will be instructive to first offer a brief introduction to the Tibetan Bon religion.

Very broadly speaking, the term 'Bon'—as it is commonly used in Western academic discourses—can be seen to signify at least three separate religious phenomena (cf. Kvaerne 1995: 9-10; Kvaerne and Thargyal 1993: 9-10). To begin with, 'Bon' has often been used as a term to designate the pre-Buddhist (i.e. pre-7th century) religion of Tibet, which is imagined in a variety of different ways. A number of early tibetologists, for example, including Waddell (1895), Das (1881, 1900, 1902), and Bell (1931), as well as some later anthropologists and linguists (Beyer 1992: 7, 17; Hoffmann 1950, 1961; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1947, 1956: 542; Funke 1969) characterize pre-Buddhist Bon as a form of 'shamanism' roughly equatable to contemporaneous Central and North Asian shamanic traditions. While a number of efforts have been made along neo-Tyloorean lines to reconstruct Old Tibetan Bon as the "shamanism aborigene"¹⁸ through the study of contemporary village or 'folk' religious practices (David-Neel 1932; Bell 1931; Rock 1952), the viability of describing pre-Buddhist and/or non-Buddhist imperial religion(s) as 'Bon' is significantly problematised by later scholarship (Jackson 1978b, 1979; Bjerken 2004; Bellezza 2005; Stein 1972; Kvaerne 1974, 1985, 1996). In some early discussions of Tibetan religion, Bon is also characterized as the national pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet (Hoffmann 1961) which, in a number of academic and commercial publications, is portrayed as a force diametrically opposed to the *mission civilisatrice* of Tibetan Buddhism (Jäschke 1881; Das 1881, 1900, 1902; David-Neel 1932; Kawaguchi 1909; Maraini 1952; Govinda 1966; Lalou 1952) (cf. Almond 1988 and Bjerken 2004). With a few notable exceptions (Karmay 1983), however, contemporary scholarly consensus suggests that the terms 'bon' and 'bon po' do not, in the imperial period, serve to indicate anything resembling an organised, national religion (see, in particular: Stein 1972, 1985, 1988; Beckwith 2012; Dotson 2008; Blezer 2008; van Schaik 2013).

The term 'Bon' is also used to signify a clerical religion that appears to have emerged in the tenth and eleventh centuries concomitant with the formation of major Tibetan Buddhist sects during the *bstan pa phyi dar*, the so-called 'later spread of the doctrine' in Tibet. In many respects, this

¹⁸ David-Neel 1932: 36.

religion is similar to Tibetan Buddhism, which has led a number of scholars to classify the Tibetan Bon tradition as a 'quasi-Buddhist' or heterodox form of Tibetan Buddhism (Snellgrove 1968; Samuel 1993: 438); however, some authors have objected to this tendency, stressing that it is necessary to view Bon, as Per Kvaerne writes, "as a distinct religion, in the same way, perhaps, that the Sikh religion is distinct from Hinduism or the Druze faith is distinct from Islam" (Kvaerne 2005: 13). Either way, as we will see below, the Bonpos themselves maintain that their religion long pre-dates the inception of Indian Buddhism and is, in fact, identical to the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, which is portrayed as surviving two organized persecutions during the imperial period (see: section 2.3.2). For a number of reasons, the issue of historical precedence among them, the Bon religion has widely been treated with dismissiveness by Tibetan Buddhists (*chos pa-s*). In polemical literature, for example, it is not at all uncommon to see the Bonpos decried as outsiders (*phyi pa*), heretics (*mu stegs pa*), or things considerably worse. Nonetheless, in 1978, the Tibetan Bonpos were granted formal representation in the Parliament of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and, additionally, in 1987, Bon was officially recognized by the 14th Dalai Lama, who bestowed upon the thirty-third abbot of sMan ri monastery, Lung rtogs bsTan pa'i nyi ma (b. 1929), the title of *khri 'dzin*, or 'throne-bearer,' which is traditionally reserved for the heads of Tibetan Buddhist sects (cf. Cech 1987; Kvaerne and Thargyal 1993).

Finally, 'bon' is sometimes used as a descriptive noun to designate a wide range of local, village-based religious beliefs encountered in the Tibetan cultural sphere, which include but are not limited to forms of divination, spirit mediumship, the propitiation of regional deities, and conceptions of the soul (cf. Diemberger 1992, 1993; Ramble 2008; Holmberg 1984, 1989; Balikci 2008). Though these practices have not been the subject of a great deal of systematic scholarly debate, it is worth noting that Geoffrey Samuel has recently published an excellent introduction to the subject in which he surveys a variety of different traditions designated as bon that are encountered "in the Himalayan borderlands, ranging from Central Nepal through Sikkim to Bhutan,

and on into Arunachal Pradesh and Southern Kham" (Samuel 2013: 80-81). It is important to remember that, when used in this sense, *bon* does not form an essential part of Buddhism or Bon in its contemporary monastic form (as outlined above). With this in mind, for the purposes of the present paper, I will follow Stein (1972) in classifying these 'non-Buddhist,' 'pagan' (Ramble 1998: 124), or 'civil-religious' (Ramble 2008) traditions as part of the so-called 'nameless religion' of Tibet.

It should be noted that, in the pages that follow and unless expressly stated otherwise, the term 'Bon' will be used in the above *second* sense only, to refer to the Bon religion in its contemporary monastic form. Adherents of this religion are known as Bonpo, for whom the term Bon bears a similar range of meaning to that of the word *chos* (Skt. *dharma*) in Tibetan Buddhism. According to Bon religious conceptions, the Bon religion is a universal religion in the sense that its doctrines are objectively true and applicable to all sentient beings in all times (cf. Kvaerne 1995: 11). While Bon resembles Tibetan Buddhism in many respects, a casual observer may note that there are a number of subtle, yet characteristic differences which set the Bon religion apart from the major Tibetan Buddhist sects. Broadly speaking, these range widely from the organisation of the Bon cannon and its unique cosmology to numerous aspects of material culture and ritual praxis. It is commonplace, however, that the most pronounced difference between Bon and Buddhism is found in the Bon tradition's understanding of its own sacred history and, in particular, in the person of the religion's founder, the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab mi bo che (for whom the short form sTon pa gShen rab will be used below).

2.3.1 sTon pa gShen rab

The founder of the Bon religion is sTon pa gShen rab, a Buddha who, according to Bon religious conceptions (Namdak 1972, 1982; Karmay 1972, 1975, 2007a, 2007b), is believed to have been born thousands of years ago in the land of 'Ol mo lung ring, which is either contained within or, in

some cases, identified with the western frontier region of sTag gzig[s]. Though there is no emic consensus regarding the exact date of sTon pa gShen rab's birth, a number of well-known chronologies place the life of the religion's founder at some point in the Upper Palaeolithic period. For example, using Tshul khrim rgyal mtshan's *brTan rtsis bskal ldan dang 'dren*, Kvaerne (1990) calculates that sTon pa gShen rab's birth took place approximately 23,000 years ago (Kvaerne 1990: 153-54; cf. Bellezza 2010: 31). Equally fantastical dates are proposed by a number of Bon scholars, ranging, for instance, from sPre'u bstun Kun bzang lhun grub's suggestion that gShen rab's birth took place 13,500 years ago (Martin 2003: 75) to the well known chronology advanced in Mkhan chen Nyi ma bstan 'dzin's *bsTan rtsis*, which dates gShen rab's birth and death to the years 16,016 BCE and 7,816 BCE respectively (Kvaerne 1971: 220).¹⁹ Suffice it to say that, in Bon chronologies, sTon pa gShen rab's life is often placed in a remote pre-historical period which, as Kvaerne writes, "is so far removed from [our time] that it is beyond any meaningful historical context" (Kvaerne 2007: 83).

In large part, the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab's vita cycle is formed by three sources, which are catalogued in the collection of the Bon *bKa' 'gyur*: (1) the *mDo 'dus*; (2) the *mDo gzer myig*; and (3) the *mDo dri med gzi brjid*. The earliest of these three quasi-biographical accounts is the *mDo 'dus*, a *gter ma* text which consists of a single volume. According to Bon narratives, the *mDo 'dus* is considered to have been concealed by sNya chen li shu stag ring during the second imperial persecution of Bon (see: section 2.3.2) and then to have been rediscovered by the Bon *gter ston* Sad gu rin chen grags pa (Bellezza 2010: 31-32). In Samten Karmay's watershed *A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon* (1998a), Karmay dates the *mDo 'dus* to the 10th century, noting that its composition (or 'rediscovery') could still have taken place at an earlier date (1998a: 109-110). Though there is a degree of scholarly consensus on this point, it is important to note that some authors, including Dan Martin (2009: 45; 1999: 263), Dondup Lhagyal (2002: 379-

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of gShen rab's dates, see: Kvaerne 1971, 1990; Bellezza 2010; Karmay 1975a.

401), and Kalsang Norbu Gurung (Gurung 2011) have argued in favour of a later date, placing the manuscript's composition in the 11th century. For a succinct summary of these and other arguments regarding the manuscript's composition, I refer the reader to Kalsang Norbu Gurung 2011.

The second biographical account of sTon pa gShen rab's life is the *mDo gzer myig*, a *gter ma* text divided into eighteen chapters, usually in two volumes. The *mDo gzer myig* is considered to have been discovered at bSam yas khri thang dur khrod by the Bon *gter ston* Drang rje btsun pa gser mig (Karmay 1972: 4). Due, however, to both the methods of textual transmission and the inconsistent nature of the colophons provided in manuscript's witnesses, the composition of the *mDo gzer myig*, like that of the *mDo 'dus*, is notoriously problematic to date (Blezer 2012: 3). Citing Blondeau (1971: 33-48), Karmay (1975b, 1975a) has argued that sections of the *mDo gzer myig* may be traced back to the 11th century. And while many scholars follow Karmay's estimates, as Blezer writes, the textual evidence required to securely date the text "is far from compelling" (Blezer 2012: 3). As such, the dating of the *mDo gzer myig*'s original composition remains provisional. For more complete bibliographical information, I refer the reader here to Samten Karmay's *Treasury of Good Sayings* (1972: 4 fn1; 163 fn1).

The third account of sTon pa gShen rab's life is the twelve volume *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, which has recently been republished in modern book format. In Bon taxonomies, the *mDo dri med gzi brjid* is classified as 'oral transmission' (*snyan brgyud*), which is to say that it is considered to have been dictated to the *gter ston* in question by a sage or divinity. In this case, according to Bon accounts, the sage sTang chen dMu tsa gyer med, a disciple of Dran pa rnam mkha' (8th century), is believed to have transmitted the text in a vision to sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po (born 1360), who then compiled the manuscript in its present form in the late 14th century (Snellgrove 1968: 3-4; Bellezza 2010: 31-32; Karmay 1972: 4fn1, 1975: 110). To date, no comprehensive Western language translations of the *mDo dri med gzi brjid* have been undertaken, however, it is worth noting that a number of authors have published fragmentary translations of the text (see, in

particular: Snellgrove 1968; Bellezza 2005, 2010). The contents of the *mDo dri med gzi brjid* will be discussed at more length below (section 2.5).

2.3.2 The transmission of Bon in the pre-historical period and narratives of imperial persecution

In Bon mytho-history it is commonly asserted that, during a pre-historical epoch, the Bon religion was introduced into the western Tibetan kingdom of Zhang zhung by the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab, who traveled through Zhang zhung on his way to Kong po from the largely mythological land of 'Ol mo lung ring, which is considered to be located in the western frontier region of sTag gzig[s]. Having flourished in Zhang zhung, as well as in India and China, the Bon religion is then believed to have been widely disseminated in Tibet during the reign of gNya' khri btsan po, the first Tibetan king (Kvaerne 1974: 28-29). Having been adopted by the kings of old Tibet, Bon then flourishes for a period seven successive generations. This era comes to an abrupt end, however, during the reign of the eighth Tibetan king, Gri gum bstan po (c. 5th century), who is believed to have organized a persecution of Bon, forcing many Bonpos to leave Tibet. Indigenous narratives often trace the origins of the Bon *gter ma* tradition to this period during which, according to the Bon scholar Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (b. 1813), "the Five King-treasures and Four Minister-Treasures, as well as the 360 Profound Treasures, were hidden" (Kvaerne 1971: 46). In other words, the pith of the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab's teachings are considered to have been concealed during Gri gum bstan po's persecution and then to have emerged during the 'later propagation of Bon' (e.g. during the *bstan pa phyi dar*) as important *gter ma* discoveries.

Following the initial rise and decline of Bon in Tibet, Gri gum bstan po is killed by one of his ministers and, upon ascending to the throne, the king's son, sPu lde Gung rgyal, is believed to have ended the persecution of Bon (cf. Kvaerne 1974: 29). According to Bon narratives, this begins a second period during which the Bon religion flourishes in Tibet; however, during the reign of

Khri Srong lde btsan (742-797 AD), Bon is once again subjected to a state-sponsored persecution. Without entering into a discussion of the religious dynastic rivalries of the period, it is important to remember that a number of scholars, including Karmay (1972) and Kvaerne (1974, 1995, 1996), have convincingly argued that the narrative of the first persecution is a later fabrication, modelled upon the persecution of Bon during the reign of Kri srong lde btsan, as well as upon various *snga dar* motifs (Karmay 2007b; Martin 2009 p.11fn3; Blezer 2011: 216). As Blezer (2013) writes, in examining accounts of the first persecution, what one finds "is a persecution of Bön self-consciously visualized earlier, which, in obvious one-upmanship, eventually mimics the end of the Buddhist *snga dar* and boasts a much earlier *snga dar*" (2013: 139-140). Leaving aside for the moment the likely possibility that "later [Bon] historians have made two persecutions out of what was in fact only one" (Karmay 1972: xxxiii), Bon narratives maintain that, during Khri Srong lde btsan's reign, many Bonpos were forced to leave Tibet for a second time, once again concealing their sacred texts for later generations to discover.

As Karmay notes, in the late 8th century, the Bon religion enters into a period of relative obscurity, which ranges from the time of Khri Srong lde btsan's persecution to the rediscovery of Bon texts beginning in the 10th and 11th centuries (1975: 118). According to Bon chronologies, the first materials to be rediscovered following the second persecution are found entirely by chance in the year 913 CE, when a group of wandering beggars, hoping to steal gold from bSam yas monastery, accidentally uncovered a hidden cache of Bon manuscripts. Despite this and similar early textual discoveries, the so-called 'later propagation of Bon' is traditionally said to have begun significantly later, starting in the year 1017 CE, with a number of formative *gter ma* discoveries by the Bon *gter ston* gShen chen Klu dga' (995-1035) (cf. Kvaerne 1974; Karmay 1972). Though he was not the first individual to rediscover Bon texts, gShen chen Klu dga'-s discoveries are considered to have catalysed a series of important *gter ma* discoveries, which culminate in the formation and assembly of the Bon bsTan 'gyur as early as, perhaps, the mid-15th century (cf.

Kvaerne 1974: 39, 1996: 140). In this sense, the Bon textual tradition lays claim to a nearly unbroken lineage of profound antiquity which dates, according to Bon religious conceptions, from the Upper Palaeolithic or Mesolithic eras, through the persecutions of the imperial period, and on into the present day. It should be noted, however, that Bon claims regarding both the religion's pre-historical genesis and the antiquity of its textual tradition cannot be demonstrated on the basis of solid historical documentation.

2.3.3 Bonpos in the contemporary diaspora community

Numerically speaking, Bonpos form only small minority of the total ethnic Tibetan population. At the moment, it is impossible to approximate the relative percentage of Bonpos and Buddhists diffused throughout both the TAR and Tibetan diaspora communities outside of China. It is commonly estimated, however, that Bonpos comprise roughly 1% of the total number of ethnic Tibetans living in exile (Cech 1987: 1), a number that would range between 18,000 - 19,000, taking the population estimates provided in the SIL 2009 census at face value (Lewis 2009). Regardless of the questionable utility of that figure, what is clear is that, for many Bonpos, the current spiritual and cultural center of the Bon religion is dPal gshen bstan sman ri gling Monastery, which is located in the Bonpo settlement of Dolanji (H.P., India).

2.3.4 Dolanji

The Bonpo settlement in Dolanji was founded in 1967. The site itself is located fifteen kilometres west of Solan, south of Shimla in the Shiwalik Hills of the lower Himalayas (see: Map 2). The settlement is known by a number of different names, the various usages of which have been studied by Cech (1987). In short, the Tibetan name for the settlement is Thob rgyal gsar pa (New Thob rgyal), which refers to the Thob rgyal valley near sMan ri monastery in Tibet (Cech 1987, 2000). According to Cech, "this name was adopted in the hope that the settlement would become the

supporting estate of the new sMan ri monastery" (1987: 154). It is also known in Tibetan as Solan gzhis chags (the Solan Settlement), a name which locates it geographically in India. Additionally, some local Bonpos use a more sectarian idiom in calling it Bonpo gzhis chags (the Bonpo Settlement). The settlement's official English administrative title, however, is the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation. Nevertheless, it is commonly noted that the most pervasive name for the settlement used by non-Tibetan speakers is Dolanji, the original Indian name for the pre-diaspora, indigenous community (Cech 1987: 154-155).

Despite a thorough census of the region undertaken by Cech between 1985 and 1987 (Cech 1987, 2000), the population of Dolanji remains particularly difficult to gauge. In her survey, Cech notes that the population is "at its highest ebb at the time of the Tibetan New Year when it reaches approximately four hundred and at its lowest in the winter season when it falls to little over fifty" (1987: 168). This estimation fails, however, to account for the hundreds of Bon pilgrims who visit the village regularly, artificially swelling the settlement's population. Furthermore, Cech's research was undertaken immediately prior to the construction of the Bon Children's Welfare Center (BCWC), a non-profit orphanage and boarding school founded in 1989 by the current abbot of sMan ri Monastery, H. H. sMan ri khri 'dzin Lung rtogs bstan pa'i rnyi ma Rin po che. As of the 2013 academic year, the school supported approximately 350 children and 30 faculty in local dormitories. Thus, taking the BCWC into consideration, I would estimate the village's population to be, at any particular zenith, between 700 and 800 and, at its lowest points, between 300 and 400 children and adults.

2.3.5 sMan ri Monastery

The name sMan ri is perhaps best understood as an extension of sMan ri Monastery's pre-modern namesake. The 'Tibetan' sMan ri Monastery, which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, was founded in 1405 by mNyam med shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1416) in gTsang province. Until

its destruction, the monastery served as the spiritual and cultural center of the Bon religion (Cech 1987: 243). As the 'Indian' sMan ri is founded on the same monastic model, it may be helpful to briefly discuss the historical monastic complex and its relationship to the Bon community at large.

According to Cech, the institutional organization of the 'Tibetan' sMan ri was, in many respects, similar to that of contemporaneous Tibetan Buddhist monastic complexes (Cech 1987: 103). Take, for instance, the three leading dGe lugs pa monasteries in the region surrounding Lhasa: dGa' ldan, Se ra, and 'Bras spungs. As Cech notes, these institutions were structured in such a way as to provide "the facilities [necessary] for a dGe lugs pa monk from any part of Tibet to complete his monastic training and to pursue higher religious studies" (Cech 1987: 103). In the same fashion, Bonpo monks certainly came to sMan ri Monastery from different parts of Tibet in order to pursue their studies and receive guidance from the monastery's educated elite (Cech 1987: 103). In this capacity, sMan ri provided an educational and spiritual center, which could facilitate the education of monks from lesser monasteries. As these monks would then return to their villages following the completion of their education, the monastery also provided a quasi-centralized loci of Bon religious identity enabling some degree of communication with distant Bon cultural centers (Cech 1987: 103-104). Furthermore, serving as a center of Bon religious identity, the monastery attracted not only monks, but also laypeople who, despite potentially antagonistic regional affinities, would have come together into a single sectarian community (Cech 1987: 103-104). Taking this background into consideration, it is particularly poignant to note that the early Bon diaspora community would have chosen to rebuild sMan ri prior to the reconstruction of other monastic institutions.

The contemporary sMan ri Monastery, called dPal gshen bstan sman ri gling (sMan ri [of the] glorious gShen doctrine) by the local Tibetan community, is located less than one hundred meters from Dolanji (see: Map 1). The monastery was founded in 1969, roughly concurrently with the establishment of the nearby refugee community. Minimally speaking, it is currently composed

of 18 buildings, including three dormitories, two primary *lha khang*, a guesthouse, library, hospital, and a number of ancillary residencies and storage facilities. All told, these house and provide for roughly 150 adult monks and nearly 200 orphan boys, many of whom have been selected from the BCWC in order to receive a monastic education. Furthermore, sMan ri provides facilities for approximately 50 nuns who are housed two kilometres from the village at the Redna sMan gling Nunnery.

Along with Khri brten nor bu rtse Monastery, which is located in Kathmandu, sMan ri is (to my knowledge) one of only two Bon monastic centers to provide the facilities necessary for the achievement of a *dge shes* degree. Following the completion of the *dge shes* program, many of these monks return to their homes, reiterating the circulation of Bon ecclesiastical education in the pre-Communist Tibetan cultural sphere. As the monastery is also the seat of H. H. sMan ri khri 'dzin Lung rtogs bstan pa'i nyi ma Rin po che, the head of the Bon religion, it is perhaps no overstatement to say that the contemporary sMan ri plays a role similar to that of its pre-modern namesake. This is the case, Cech (1987) writes, "not only for the [Bonpos] in Dolanji and other places in India, but also for those in Dolpo, Mustang and Kathmandu in Nepal and for the large numbers of [Bonpos] who remained in Tibet" (243).

2.4 Two classifications of Bon religious teachings: the *sGo bzhi mdzod lnga* and *Theg pa rim pa dgu*

Thanks, in large part, to the work of David Snellgrove (1967[8]) and Samten Karmay (1975), it is now widely acknowledged by Tibetanists that the Bon religion makes use of two main taxonomic systems by which the body of sTon pa gShen rab-s teaching are classified: (1) the *sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*, "the four doors and treasury, five in all"; and (2) the *theg pa rim pa dgu*, "the nine vehicles (or nine ways)". Although these two classificatory systems are well-known, it is necessary to briefly summarize them here.

As related in Karmay (1975: 111-12), the *sGo bzhi mdzod lnga*, which is perhaps the lesser known of the two taxonomic systems, divides the various philosophical and ritual aspects of the Bon tradition into five different branches, which are as depicted in Table 1.

Broadly speaking, the first category, *chab dkar* (White water), signifies a number of Tantric practices, focusing on the use of the 'fierce mantras' (*drag sngags*) associated with a variety of meditation deities (Reynolds 2006: 9). The second category, *chab nag* (Black water), signifies a diverse collection of apotropaic and funerary rites, as well as divination practices. The third category, *'phan yul* (the Country of *'phan*), consists of exoteric teachings, including monastic laws, vows, and basic ethical precepts for both monks and lay practitioners. The fourth category, *dpon gsas* (the Guide), includes the oral and written instructions underlying the meditative and philosophical system of *rDzogs chen*. Finally, the fifth category, *mtho thog* (the Summit), combines essential materials from the first four categories into a single group of teachings. As Karmay writes, *mtho thog* "is described as *spyi rgyugs* which means literally that it generally runs into all the other four categories" (1975: 112).

Table 1: the *sGo bzhi mdzod lnga*

(1) <i>chab dkar</i> (White water)
(2) <i>chab nag</i> (Black water)
(3) <i>'phan yul</i> (the Country of <i>'phan</i>)
(4) <i>dpon gsas</i> (the Guide)
(5) <i>mtho thog</i> (the Summit)

The second and perhaps better known classificatory system, the *theg pa rim pa dgu*, divides sTon

pa gShen rab-s teachings into nine different categories, which are enumerated in Table 2.²⁰ It is important to note that, in addition to a division into nine categories of teachings, the 'nine ways' are further divided into three separate groups. In this secondary taxonomy, the first four categories are known as the Causal Vehicle (*rgyu'i theg pa*), while the latter four categories are known as the Fruitional Vehicle (*'bras bu'i theg pa*). These are then followed by the ninth and final category, the system of *rDzogs chen* meditation. Generally speaking, the Causal Vehicle is less soteriological in its orientation, as its practices pertain to a variety of apotropaic rites and divinatory, medical, and astrological traditions. In effect, the appeasement of local and regional deities, as well as a number of rites safeguarding physical well-being. By way of contrast, the Fruitional Vehicle is expressly soteriological. One begins with the Sutras, moves through the Tantras, and then culminates in *rDzogs chen*, the pinnacle of the philosophical and meditative tradition. For further reading on the subject, see Snellgrove (1967); and, for a comparison of both the Bon and rNying ma 'nine vehicles,' see Samuel (2005: 126-32) and Hoffmann (1961).

Table 2: the *theg pa rim pa dgu*

<p>(1) <i>Phya gshen theg pa</i>: divination, astrology, <i>gto</i> rituals, and <i>dpyad</i>.</p> <p>(2) <i>sNang gshen gyi theg pa</i>: ransom rites and rites for suppressing demons.</p> <p>(3) <i>'Phrul gshen theg pa</i>: destructive rites</p> <p>(4) <i>Srid gshen theg pa</i>: funerary rites</p> <p>(5) <i>dGe bsnyen theg pa</i>: Sutra level one</p> <p>(6) <i>Drang srong theg pa</i>: Sutra level two</p> <p>(7) <i>A dkar theg pa</i>: Tantra level one</p> <p>(8) <i>Ye gshen theg pa</i>: Tantra level two</p> <p>(9) <i>Bla med theg pa</i>: <i>rDzogs chen</i></p>
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²⁰ It is important to note that there are several regional variations of the *theg pa rim pa dgu*. On these, see: Karmay 2007 and Mimiaki and Karmay 2007.

2.4.1 Brief remarks on the relationship of *mo* to *rtsis*, *gto*, and *dpyad*

Referring to Table 2, the reader will note that divination appears in the first of the nine vehicles, the *phya gshen theg pa*, "the way of the *gshen* of prediction". Broadly speaking, the *phya gshen theg pa* is divided into four practices: (1) *mo*, divination; (2) *rtsis*, astrology; (3) *gto*, a class of rituals; and (4) *dpyad*, diagnosis. It is often said that the interrelationship of these four concepts is an integral aspect of the Bon tradition, in particular as part of an idealized discourse on the social dynamics shared by lay and monastic communities. It also illustrates quite well the role that divination plays (at least theoretically) in the Bon religion.

In summarizing the interrelationship between *mo*, *rtsis*, *gto*, and *dpyad* I can do no better than paraphrase the discussion of the subject offered in Karmay's "General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon" (1975: 140-142). In brief, should an individual fall ill, not knowing the cause of her or his illness, that person may choose to consult a diviner. The diviner would then perform a divination and consult a divination manual in order to determine the cause(s) of the illness in question. The performance of a rite or series of rites capable of stemming the patient's illness would then be recommended. Following the divination, an astrologer would be consulted in order to set a favourable date for the performance of the rites in question. The astrologer would also examine the favourable and adverse elements associated with the patient's birth star in order to determine if these have come into conflict. At the same time, the patient would ideally be referred to a doctor, who would diagnose any physical ailments and potentially provide the patient with ancillary medical treatments. Taking this as an example, within this four-fold method, *mo* and *rtsis* serve in many respects to diagnose an ailment, be it physical, supernatural, or social and then to postulate the means by which that ailment can be eliminated. *gTo* and *dpyad* then serve as the expedient ritual and medical techniques that actually resolve the ailment in question. In this sense, divination can be seen as the initial inquiry that catalyses and informs a broad-reaching ritual process.

Speaking more generally of the performance of divination in exile communities, Gerke (2011: 4-5) has argued that, as a researcher, it is not always constructive to stress the boundaries between divination practices and the rites that they inform. As previously noted, in Tibetan cultural milieus, divination and astrology often bleed together with a wide variety of apotropaic rites, as well as medico-ritual practices (cf. Gerke 2011: 104). Additionally, Gerke (2011: 16-17) notes the somewhat common misconception that Tibetan divinatory, medical, and ritual traditions form part of a single, homogenous body of practices. In the case of Tibetan medicine, for example, Gerke argues that the boundaries constituting medical practices have never fully been demarcated and, therefore, that "we cannot talk about a unified system" (16). A similar observation leads Pordié (2008: 4, 10-17) to use the plural form *Tibetan medicines* (rather than the singular), which he characterizes in their contemporary globalized forms as part of "a newly emerging 'neo-traditional' form of Tibetan medicine with an urbanized and institutional character" (Gerke 2011: 16). Nonetheless, despite the porous nature of Tibetan divinatory, medical, and ritual traditions, it should be noted that Gerke ultimately introduces *mo*, *rtsis*, and Tibetan medicine as separate, though interrelated phenomena, arguing that "despite their interrelationships and blurred boundaries, each of these knowledge systems offers specialized practices and professional expertise concerning longevity" (2011: 5).

2.5 The classification of divination and its origins in the Bon tradition: excerpts from the *gZi*

brjid

While Bon etiological narratives regarding the origins of divination are by no means homogeneous; it is important to note that many, if not all forms of divination in the Bon tradition trace their lineages back to the person of the religion's founder, the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab, who is believed to have instructed a number of his disciples directly in the performance of divination over the course of his various odyssean adventures. As related in the *mDo dri med gZi brjid*, the

formative event underlying the diffusion of divination practices from sTon pa gShen rab's native 'Ol mo lung ring to Tibet occurs during his time at the Bar po so brgyad castle in sNang ldan g.yu rtse, where sTon pa gShen rab codifies the *phya gshen theg pa*, the first of the so-called 'vehicles' of the Bon religion (see: section 2.4). In this episode, which I have translated below, sTon pa gShen rab enumerates, through discussion with his various interlocutors, both the role played by divination within the broader taxonomic system of the *theg pa rim pa dgu*, as well as the relationship between divination and a number of ritual and philosophical concepts. The reader will also note that the sTon pa gShen rab character outlines a number of ethical injunctions, which the diviner is expected to follow. The passage opens with sTon pa gShen rab living in the castle of Bar po so brgyad, where he first encounters and gives teachings to the various children of the *phya* prince, Legs rgyal thang po, to whom the *phya gshen theg pa* is entrusted. As related in the *mDo dri med gZi brjid*:

At that time, when the Prince sTon pa gshen rab was one year old, he was living together with rMa lo and g.Yu lo in the castle of Bar po so brgyad. At that time, on the heights (*yang thog*) of Mt. Ri rab, in the country of the *phya* [known as] sNang ldan g.yu rtse, in the castle of sTegs pa yang thog, there lived a *phya gshen* named Legs rgyal thang po, [who was] the son of Phya rje ring nam (*phya rje ring nam*).

All one-hundred children of the *phya* prince [Legs rgyal thang po] gathered and came to Bar po so brgyad Castle. They then gathered around sTon pa [gshen rab], making prostrations and presenting him with offerings. Phya gshen gtsug phud offered him a jewelled mandala (*rin po che'i ma dal*), [within which] was arrayed small piles of grain. Having done so, he entreated sTon pa [gshen rab] to speak, saying: "Sacred teacher, the lamp who protects and guides the welfare of sentient beings. Holy prince (*rgyal bu dam pa*), the venerable one praised by gods and men. The [teachings of] *g.Yung drung bon* are vast and innumerable. Reveal, from the

middle of your mind, the essence of the secret teachings (*man ngag*) to all of us, your humble servants (*'khor rnams*). Thus they made their request.

And then the Prince [sTon pa gshen rab] spoke with smiling countenance, saying: "Listen, Phya gshen gtsug phud and [all others in] the audience (*la sogs 'khor*). The time at which you have requested [the teachings] is fitting (*ran pa*). The [teachings of] *g.yung drung bon* are vast and innumerable, however, they may be summarized and broken down into nine vehicles. The activity (*spyod pa*) climbs up from below, while the view descends (*phab*) from above. Fundamentally, the essence of the doctrine can be distilled into one ultimate truth, which certainly is the true basis of reality, the infinity of the all compassionate mind.²¹ Nonetheless, the methods for the cultivation (*'dul thabs*) of sentient beings [may be] shown. Abiding (*jug*) by the *phya gshen theg pa*, the first of the vehicles, arouses the happiness of phenomenal existence and the joy and comfort of living beings".

Having reached 100 human years or one *gshen* year, [sTon pa gshen rab said:] "I will explain the [various] stages of the Bon portals beginning with the first vehicle, the *phya gshen*. Equitably (*drang por*) distinguish that which is harmful and beneficial by differentiating the good and bad omens. Gauge the precise extent [of conditions] honestly, without deceit, and truthfully, without falsehood.²² Cure illnesses, perform *'chi bslu*,²³ and cultivate wealth, prosperity (*g.yang*), and the life-force of humanity (*tshe*). [Should this be done,] the happiness and well-being of living beings will naturally flow forth in succession. [The value of] even one moment's benefit is beyond all reckoning. The happiness of all sentient beings is the

²¹ Admittedly, I struggled with the philosophical nature of the language in this particular passage and my translation is heavily indebted to Bellezza's rendering of the passage (Bellezza 2005).

²² This is another section where I have struggled with the language and, all things considered, I feel as though Bellezza's translation cannot constructively be improved upon. (*bden rdzun yo drang chag dang tshad la gzhal*).

²³ *'Chi bslu* are a class of 'ransom rites' intended to protect an individual from likely death.

culmination of Bon. Therefore, do whatever is necessary for their well-being and also provide for the benefit (*phyogs su btang*) of their body and life-force (*srog*). If one is not selfish, let an aspiration for the benefit of all sentient beings serve as one's foundation (*rtsa ba*). Keep this in the middle of your mind, Phya gshen gtsug phud!" So [sTon pa gshen rab] spoke.

To that, [Phya gshen gtsug phud] replied, saying: "Venerable prince sTon pa [gshen rab], the [teachings] of *g.yung drung bon* are vast and innumerable, however, it is said that they can be condensed into nine vehicles. In the lowest of the vehicles, the Bon portal of the *phya gshen*, there is a common section (*spyi yi sde*) and a special section (*sgos kyi bye brag*). How, precisely, are these enumerated? (386) What are the characteristics of their activities and the pursuits (*spyod dang 'jug pa*)? Finally, what are the qualities and benefits [of pursuing the *phya gshen theg pa*]? Certainly you will impart [these teachings] to me," he said.

Then sTon pa [gshen rab] spoke, saying: "Listen here, Phya gshen gtsug phud! The Bon portal of the *phya gshen theg pa* has two common sections: *gto* and *dpyad*. The special (*sgos*) section is divided into four categories: divination by omens and portents (*pra las mo*); astrological perception (*snang mthong mthong*); *gto* to cure diseases (*na gso gto*); and diagnostic techniques intended to avert death (*'chi bslu dpyad*). These four divisions must be known".

[He continued, saying:] "In the darkness of ignorance and cyclic existence (*'khrul 'khor*), the six classes of living beings are afflicted by disease and by a lack of understanding (*ma rig pa*). Making use of divination, examine the omens and portents, [both] positive and negative. Making use of astrological calculations, evaluate good and evil. Using *gto*, cure those who

have fallen ill and, making use of diagnostic techniques, heal those who are dying (*'chi bar 'gyur ba*). If there is a death caused by an individual's karma (*las kyis 'chi na*), both [*mo* and *dpyad*?] will fail. Even at that time, [should one make use of these techniques, the patient will be fine for three days. The virtue of this is beyond all reckoning. Keep this in the middle of your mind, *Phya gshen gtsug phud*". Thus spoke [sTon pa ashen rab].

Once again, [Legs rgyal thang po] asked, "Venerable Prince sTon pa gshen rab, you have said that *gto* and *dpyad* are enumerated in the common section, from which the four special parts are enumerated. The benefits to living beings notwithstanding,²⁴ I am unable to distinguish very much. How is divination enumerated? How is astrology enumerated How is *gto* enumerated? How is *dpyad* enumerated? [With regard to] the four techniques of *mo*, *rtsis*, *gto* and *dpyad*, firstly, which one comes at the beginning? Intermediately, what are the conditions [that bring about] a cure? And finally, (387) which one is last?"

Then, sTon pa [gshen rab] spoke, saying: "Listen here, Legs rgyal (*rgyal*) than po Divination, astrology, *gto*, and *dpyad*, in these four [practices] there is an explanation of the common section and an explanation of the special section. These two [demonstrate how] the common part is enumerated and [how] the special part is composed. Firstly, there are three hundred and sixty types of divination which are characteristic (*mtshan nyid*) of the forms of divination in the enumeration of the common section. There are 360 astrological methods of computation (*gab rtse*) that contain the essence of the astrology that reveals existence (*snang mthong rtsis*). There are 360 forms of *gto* that contain the essence of the *gto* which cures diseases. There are 21,000 forms of *dpyad* that contain the essence of the *dpyad* which averts death. This, certainly, is how the common section is enumerated. The special section is

²⁴ I am indebted to Vincent Bellezza for this translation of *'gro la phan pa de ltar te*.

composed [in the following way]. There are four types of divination: The *ju thig* (*ju thig*) of the manifestation of primordial existence; the prophecies of the *sgra bla* of primordial knowledge (*ye mkhyen sgra bla'i mngon shes*); the dreams of the primordial lords of aspiration (*ye rje smon pa'i rmi lam*); and the mantic directives of the *lha* of primordial power (*ye dbang lha yi bka' bab*). These four types [of divination] should be known!" (*gZi brjid* v.2: 384 line 7 - 387 line 12 [see 2.5.1 for transliterations]).

In the above passage, we see that the *mDo dri med gzi brjid* divides the *phya gshen theg pa* into four different categories: (1) *mo*, divination; (2) *rtsis*, astrology; (3) *gto*, a class of rituals; and (4) *dpyad*, diagnosis. Each of these categories is then delineated into a common section (*spyi yi sde*) and a special section (*sgos kyi bye brag*). In the case of divination, the common section consists of an abstracted group of 360 different divinatory methods, whereas the special section subdivides the body of Bon divination practices into four specific groups: (1) "the *ju thig* of the manifestation of primordial existence," which refers to rope divination (*ju thig*) and pebble divination (*lde'u 'phrul*); (2) "the prophecies of the *sgra bla* of primordial knowledge," which includes various forms of scrying (e.g. divination with mirrors or reflective surfaces) and cleromancy, including pebble divination (*lde'u 'phrul*), rosary divination (*'phreng mo*), and mirror divination (*pra mo*) (Norbu 1997: 189-99); (3) "the dream of the lords of primordial aspiration," which pertains to divination by dreams, as well as the interpretation of omens and portents; and (4) "the mantic directives of the *lha* of primordial power," which includes forms of spirit mediumship and inspiration divination.

It is worth noting that the above passage is illustrated in a series of 18th century *thang ka*s, currently held at the Musée Guimet in Paris, which are the subject of a brief article published by Per Kvaerne in 1986. In Plate 1 below, I reproduce a cross-section of *thang ka* N.2 from that series. The panel depicts Legs rgyal thang po and his retinue receiving instruction in the performance of divination from sTon pa gShen rab. I would draw the reader's attention, in particular, to the center

of the panel, where they will see an image of a cross-legged figure in red. This sitting figure is depicted as holding a set of *ju thig* divination chords. The figure is facing towards a small white mat, which is a representation of the *lha gzhi dkar po*, an object that plays a central role in the performance of *lde'u 'phrul*, as we will see in Chapter 3 (section 3.7.1).

Plate 1



2.5.1 Transliteration

(384) *rgyal bu ston pa gshen rab ni / dgung lo gcig bzhes nas / rma lo dang g.yu lo dang / mkhar bar po so brgyad du thabs gcig tu bzhugs te / de'i tshe ri rab ri'i yang thog nas / yul phyas yul snang ldan g.yu rtse ru / phya mkhar stegs pa yang thog nang nas / yab phya rje ring nas gyi sras po / phya gshen legs rgyal thang po zhes bya ba / phya sras kyi khye'u brgya tham pa dang 'grogs nas / mkhar bar po so brgyad du phebs so / de nas ston pa la bskor ba ni byas / lha phyag ni 'tshal / mchod pa ni phul nas / phya gshen gtsug phud kyis rin po che'i ma 'dal la / 'bri yi tshom bu bkod pa gcig phul nas / ston pa la gsol ba / ston pa'i sgron ma 'gro ba'i dpal dang mgon / rgfyal bu dam pa lha mi mchod 'os lags / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / thugs kyi dkyil nas man ngag bcud phyung la / bdag cag 'khor rnams kun la bstan du gsol / zhes gsol to / de la rgyal bu'i zhal 'dzum par mdzad de*

(385) *gsungs pa / nyon cig phyas gshen gtsug phud las sogs 'khor / zhus pa'i don la skabs la ran te phog / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / mdo ru bsdu na theg pa rim dgu 'dus / lta ba yas phub spyod pa mas yar 'dzeg / mthar ni don dam thig le gcig la bsdu / kun gzhi byang chub sems kyi klong du nges / 'on kyang sems can 'dul thabs bstan pa la / dang po phyas gshen theg pa'i sgo ru 'jug / 'gro la phan bde snang srid dga' ba bskyed / bdag kyong bon sgo rim pa 'chad tshul la / mi lo brgya lon gshen lo gcig lon nas / mi lo brgya lon gshen lo gcig lon nas / theg pa dang po phyas gshen 'chad par byed / skyon yon pra ltas nyes legs drang shan 'byed / bden rdzun yo drang chag dang tshad la gzhal / nad gso 'chi bslu tshe g.yang dpal gsum bskyed / 'gro la phan bde'i rim pa shugs kyi 'byung / dar tsam de yang yon tan bsam las 'das / sems can dga' ba bon gyi rab ma yin / de phyir gang la gang dga'i phan thog bya / lus srog yin kyang de'i phyogs su gtong / rang 'dod med na 'gro don de yin mod / sems bskyed rtsa ba chag gcig de la thug / phyas gshen gtsug phud thugs kyi dkyil du zhog / ces gsung so / de la yang gsol pa / rgyal bu ston pa lags / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / mdor bsdu theg pa rim dgu gsung pa'i / theg pa'i tha ma phyas gshen bon sgo las / spyi yi sde dang sgos kyi bye brag gi / rnam grangs nges par*

(386) *brjod na du mchis sam / spyod dang 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid ji ltar lags / tha ma don dang yon tan ji ltar lags / nes par bdag la bka' zhig stsal du gsol / ces zhus so / de la ston pas bka' stsal pa / non cig phyas gshen gtsug phud nyon / phyas gshen theg pa'i bon sgo la / spyi ru gto spyad gnyis yin te / sgos su rnam grangs bzhi ru bstan / pra ltas mo dang snang mthong rtsis / na gso gto dang 'chi bslu dpyad / rnam pa bzhi ru shes par bya / 'gro drug sems can ma rig pas / 'khrul 'khor mun pa'i smag rum na / ma rig nad kyi gdung ba la / bzang ngan pra ltas mo yis rtags / bzang ngan pra ltas mo yis rtags / legs nyes snang mthong rtsis kyi gzhal / na bar gyur na gto yi gso / 'chi bar gyur na dpyad kyi bcos / las kyi 'chad na gnyis ka sdug / kun rdzob re zhig bden pa tsam / dus la bab kyang gung gsum bde / de gyur yon tan bsam las 'das / phyas gshen gtsug phud dkyil du zhog / ces bka' stsal to / de la yang gsol ba / rgyal bu ston pa gshen rab lags / spyi ru gto dpyad rnam grangs*

*las /sgos su rnam grangs bzhi bzhi gsungs pas /'gro la phan pa de ltar te / da rung cung tsam shan
ma phyed / mo la rnam grangs du ru mchis / rtsis la rnam grangs du ru mchis / gto la rnam grangs
du ru mchis / dpyad la rnam grangs du ru mchis / mo rtsis gto dpyad rnam pa bzhi / dang po thog
mar gang gis lnga / bar du gso rkyen gang gis byed / tha ma*

(387) *las mtha' gang gis bsdu / de la ston pas bka' stsal pa / nyon cig legs rgyas thang po nyon / mo
rtsis gto dpyad bzhi po las / spyi ru bshad dang sgos kyi bshad / spyi ru rnam grangs bstan pa dang
/sgos su 'dus so 'dzin pa gnyis / thog mar spyi'i rnam grangs las / pra ltas mo'i mtshan nyid la / mo
pra sum brgyad drug cu mchis / snang mthong rtsis kyi mtshan nyid la / gab rtse brgya drug cu
mchis / na gso gto yi mtshan nyid la / gto thabs sum brgya drug mchis / 'chi bslu dpyad kyi mtshan
nyid la / dpyad thabs nyi khri gcig stong mchis / phyi ru bstan pa'i rnam grangs nges /sgos su
bsdus pa'i 'dus so la / mo la rnam pa bzhi yin te / ye srid 'phrul gyi cu thig dang / ye mkhyen sgra
bla'i mngon shes dang / ye rje smon pa'i rmi lam dang / ye dbang lha yi bka' bab dang / rnam pa
bzhi ru shes par bya /*

2.6 Divination manuscripts in the Bon canon²⁵

Broadly speaking, the Bon canon is divided into two main branches, corresponding to those of the Tibetan Buddhist schools. The first section, the *bKa' 'gyur*, is composed of texts that are considered to have been proclaimed directly by the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab himself; however, this should not always be taken in a literal sense. For instance, one frequently cited example is the *mDo gZer mig*, which, as Kvaerne writes, "is the biography—not autobiography—of sTon pa gShen rab, but as it nevertheless contains numerous sermons and prayers uttered by the Buddha, it is classed as *bKa' ['gyur]*" (1974: 23). The second branch of the canon is known as the *brTen 'gyur*, which is spelled differently from the corresponding canonical section in the literary traditions of other

²⁵ On the applicability of the term 'canon' to Tibetan milieus, see: Kapstein 2000: 121-123; Harrison 1996: 70-72; Kvaerne 1996.

Tibetan schools (i.e. *bsTan 'gyur*). In brief, the *brTen 'gyur* is composed of a wide variety of commentaries. Combining these two sections together, the canon is frequently described using the compound noun *bka' brten*; a term summarized by sGa ston Tshul khrim rgyal mtshan (14th c.) in the following way: "As it has been composed in dependence (*brten*) on the Word (*bka'*) of the Teacher, (it is called) 'That which depends on the Word' (*bka' rten*)" (Kvaerne 1974: 23). For a thorough discussion of the history of the Bon canon, its contents, and its taxonomic complexities, I refer the reader here to Kvaerne 1974 and 1971.

As noted above, many forms of divination in the Bon tradition trace their origins back to the Buddha sTon pa gShen rab and, in particular, to his mythic codification of the *phya gshen theg pa*. As a consequence, some Bon divination practices possess a canonical charter which is lacking in the case of the major Tibetan Buddhist sects (cf. Fiordalis 2014). A cursory survey of the recently published Bon *dkar chag* edited by Dan Martin, Yasuhiko Nagano, and Per Kvaerne (2001) reveals that there are two collections of divination texts in the *bKa' brten*, both classified as *brTen 'gyur*. I will provide short indexes of these below, along with the numeric citations provided by Martin, Nagano, and Kvaerne (2001). The first collection, which is commonly known as the *Zhang zhung ju thig*, contains three texts on the subject of divination by knotted ropes (i.e. *ju thig*), one of which includes a minor commentary on pebble divination. The second collection of texts is often referred to as the *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo* (a reference to the manuscript's *incipit*). This compendium contains materials on a wide variety of different subjects, which range from divination and astrology to an assortment of biographical, historical, and cosmological works. For the sake of expediency, I have only included texts that pertain directly to divination and its associated practices.

Collection 1 (W30498-068):

W30498-068-1: *Zhang zhung ju thig dkar chag* (pp. 1-2).

W30498-068-2: *ye srid 'phrul gyi ju thig gi mo bdar chung bnyer mkho khyer bde* (pp. 3-9).

This text offers a summary of the preliminary invocations and rites involved in performing *ju thig*. According to the colophon, the text is ascribed to Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (b. 1196²⁶), a scion of the Gshen family and, allegedly, the first member of the Gshen family to be ordained into the monastic order (Martin 2009: 75; see also: Karmay 1972: 110, 132).

W30498-068-3: *Zhang zhung ju thig gi mo mdud dang mo rdel ngos 'dzin mdor bsdus* (pp. 9-15).

This text is also attributed to Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. As the title suggests, this is a short treatise summarizing the interpretation of divination by pebbles and by knotted ropes (i.e. *ju thig*).

W30498-068-4: *ye srid 'phrul gyi ju thig mo mtsho srid pa'i sgron ma snang srid legs nyer kun gsal* (pp. 17-569).

Like the other manuscripts in the collection, this text is also attributed to Nam mkha' royal mtshan. Largely speaking, it is a lengthy compendium addressing the interpretation of divination by knotted ropes; however, the manuscript contains a number of remarks on

²⁶ For this date, which is not entirely unproblematic, see: Martin (2009: 75). As I understand the issue, the date of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan's birth may have to be amended by one sixty-year cycle.

astrological techniques, as well as a discussion of the ways in which these may be incorporated into the interpretation of a ju thig casting.

Collection 2 (W30498-142):

W30498-142-1: *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron ma* (pp. 1-70).

A text outlining the performance and interpretation of divination with pebbles, as well as the divination's preliminary rites and invocations. According to the colophon, the text is attributed to Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, the first Slob dpon of Yung drung gling monastery, founded in 1834. This particular text will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

W30498-142-2: *Ma sangs rdel mo'i ldel ro bor ba phyogs bsdus* (pp. 71-81).

A short text outlining the casting and interpretation of pebble divination. Unknown author. The reader should take note of the spelling of *ma sangs* in the title, which differs from the phonetically similar *smra seng* in text 1. The variable spelling of *smra/ma seng/sang[s]* will be discussed in section 3.3.

W30498-142-3: *rGyun khyer nyer mkho mdor 'dus ye srid 'phrul gyi ju thig* (pp. 83-196).

A commentary on the daily practices required for the effective performance of divination. According to the colophon, the text was written by sPa tshang bsTan pa 'brug grags pa (aka sPa ston g.yung drung bstan pa 'brug grags pa) (b. 1832), a scion of the sPa clan who was closely involved in the development of sPa tshang Monastery (sPa tshang dgon gYung drung

rab brtan gling), which was founded in 1847 in present day Nagchu prefecture PRC (cf. Nagano and Karmay 2003).

W30498-142-4: *bsTan srung g.yung drung dgra 'dul rtsal gyi rno mthong gsal ba'i sgron me* (pp. 197-219).

A collection of assorted divinatory invocations compiled by Hor btsun bsTan dzin Blo gros rgya mtsho (1889-1975²⁷). For biographical information, see: Kvaerne 1988.

W30498-142-6: *Srid pa'i rgyal mo'i sho mo bsdus pa* (pp. 221-244).

A manual concerning the performance of the dice divination associated with the protectress Srid pa'i rgyal mo. According to the colophon, the text was composed by the Indian rishi *shi' la nga wa dza*, with whom I am unfortunately unfamiliar.

W30498-142-7: *Yang zab ghu ru'i thugs sgrub las / rno mthong gsal byed me long* (pp. 245-293).

A manual concerning an assortment of cleromantic techniques, as well as the interpretation of various omens. The text is classified as a *gter ma* and, according to the *gter byang*, is attributed to the *gter ston* gSang sngags gling pa (b 1864²⁸), a disciple of Shar rdza bKra this rgyal mtshan (b. 1859), aka Shar rdza rin po che. The text was allegedly discovered in sNa chen Brag dkar yongs rdzogs.

W30498-142-8: *Srid pa rgyud kyi kha byang* (pp. 295-533).

²⁷ For Blo gros rgya mtsho's dates, see: Karmay's *Great Perfection* p. 73 ff 49

²⁸ for gSang sngags gling pa's dates, see: Karmay and Nagano 2003.

This is a redaction of the *Srid pa rgyud khyi kha byang chen mo*, a cosmological and historical treatise, which is attributed to the *gter ston* Khod po Blo gros thogs med, aka dBra rigs gyer thogs med (b. 1280/92²⁹). The text is classified as *gter ma* and was allegedly discovered at rTa gnyan pha bang bon mdzod. The *Srid pa rgyud kyi kha byang chen mo* is referenced in the work of a number of Western authors, including Snellgrove (1968: 15-7) and Stein (1988). Charles Manson, the current head (as of 2015) of the Tibetan section at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, has also written a short but informative entry on the subject that is freely available here: <http://yeshiuk.blogspot.fr/2012/02/srid-pa-rygud-manuscript-at-bodleian.html>. The manuscript has also been reproduced in a single volume, printed in 1976 by sMan ri Monastery with the help of the late Gene Smith.³⁰

W30498-142-9: *sngon 'gro cha bdun nyung 'thus mu tig 'phreng ba* (pp. 535- 538).

A short commentary on the preliminary practices required for the efficacious performance divination. Attributed, once again, to the Indian rishi *shi' la nga wa dza*.

W30498-142-16: *rten 'brel 'phrul gyi me long pra rtags gsal ba'i sgron ma* (pp. 617-654).

A treatise on mirror divination and the interpretation of omens, attributed to Kar ru Grub dbang stan 'dzin rin chen rgyal mtshan (b. 1801), who is perhaps best known as the nineteenth-century author of the *Gangs ti se dkar chag* (cf. Ramble 2008).

²⁹ For dBra rigs gyer thogs med's dates, see: Blezer, Henk 2013a.

³⁰ Tenzin Namdak. 1976. *Srid pa rgyud kyi kha byañ chen mo: A Bonpo cosmologico-historical work revealed by Khod-spo Blo-gros-thogs-med Reproduced from a rare manuscript from Western Nepal by Lopon Tenzin Namdak*. Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre: Dolanji, P. O. Ochghat (via Solan), H. P., 1976.

Chapter Three: *lde'u 'phrul* divination

Nor can the decline of divination be explained in terms of the growth of superior methods of prediction. The scientists of the seventeenth century devoted much effort to improving methods of weather-forecasting and this type of prognostication is no doubt now more advanced than it was. So is the prognosis of the outcome of a disease. But the prediction of future events is more difficult today than it ever was in the relatively static, custom-bound society of the past. There is a wider range of choices open to the individual and a more complex range of circumstances to take into account. The wonder is not that older systems of divination should have lasted so long, but that we should now feel it possible to do without them — Max Weber, *General Economic History*, p.265.

3.1 General Introduction

Chapter two is intended as a general introduction to Tibetan divination, as well as an introduction to the Tibetan Bon religion. In Chapters three and four I would like to move on to address the performance of a single form of divination in much greater detail. I have chosen to focus upon a particular form of lithomancy, known as *lde'u 'phrul*, which is unique to the Tibetan Bon tradition. In Chapter three, I will address *lde'u 'phrul* textual materials, as well as the structure of the divinatory rite, its origin narratives, and the ritual items and deities commonly associated with the divination's performance. The fieldwork underlying my discussion of *lde'u 'phrul* was undertaken during a series of research trips to Himachal Pradesh over the summers of 2009 and 2010, as well as the spring and summer of 2013 (see: General Introduction *iii*). The majority of the *lde'u 'phrul* rites that I observed during these periods were performed by the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, the preceptor of sMan ri Monastery in Sirmaur District, H. P., India (see: section 3.2). In addition to fieldwork conducted at sMan ri Monastery, my discussion of *lde'u 'phrul* will be drawn from three primary documents:

(1) *The Mirror which Illuminates the Pebble Divination of sMra seng (sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long* hereafter abbreviated *MSeD*), attributed to Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700 AD), a well known Bon ecumenicist and historian, who is also famous for his role in the nonsectarian *ris med* movement. The text was likely composed and printed in *rGyal rong* (in modern day Sichuan

Province of the PRC) in the mid 18th century. It has recently been reprinted and published by sMan ri Monastery with the help of the late Gene Smith as part of a series on Bon ritual literature. This manuscript, its publication, and issues pertaining to its authorship will be discussed at greater length in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

(2) *The Lamp which Illuminates the Clairvoyant Pebble Divination of sMra seng (sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron me* hereafter abbreviated as *MSeP*), attributed to Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, the first preceptor of g.Yung drung gling Monastery, a Bon monastic center and dialectical school in central Tibet, which was founded in 1834. According to Bon taxonomies, the *MSeP* is classified as *brTen 'gyur* and may be found in the second collection of divinatory texts outlined in Chapter 2 (reference n. W30498-142-1).

(3) *The Lamp which Illuminates the Sharp, Clairvoyant, Magic Pebble Divination of the Ma sangs (Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me* hereafter abbreviated as *MSaP*). This manuscript lacks a colophon. According to my informants, it is a handwritten copy of an 11th-century *gter ma* text attributed to the Bon *gter ston* Khro tshang 'brug lha; however, I suspect the manuscript to be a redaction of the *MSeP* that was composed at Samling Monastery in the mid- to late nineteenth century, then subsequently preserved by the Yang ngal clan in Dolpo, Nepal.

3.2 The sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma

For the duration of the fieldwork I conducted at sMan ri Monastery, my research was graciously accommodated by the monastery's head educator, the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma. The Slob dpon is a descendant of the well known Yang ston clan which, among other notable achievements, is recognized for its central role in the 11th century establishment and later patronage of bSam gtan bde chen gling (Samling Monastery) in Dolpo, Nepal (Karmay 2002: vii). The Yang ston lay claim to an impressive lineage, which no doubt aids the Slob dpon's credibility as a diviner. As the

following study treats *lde'u 'phrul* rites performed largely by the Slob dpon for his patrons, I feel as though it will be instructive to provide a brief survey of his career.

The Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma was born in 1962 in Tsar kha, Dol po. His monastic education began at the nearby mTshar rdzong phun tshogs gling Monastery, which was also founded by the Yang ston family. In 1979 the Slob dpon came to sMan ri to pursue a higher education in dialectics and scriptural studies. During his first year, the Slob dpon was introduced to *lde'u 'phrul* by the then sMan ri Slob dpon bsTan 'dzin rNam dag. In 1985, under the auspices of bsTan 'dzin rnam dag, 'Phrin las nyi ma undertook the requisite *sngon 'gro* practices and began his formal training in *lde'u 'phrul* divination. The training continued until the completion of his dge bshes degree in 1989. Following this achievement, the Slob dpon briefly returned to Dol po and began practicing *lde'u 'phrul* in a variety of formal settings. However, it was only following his election to the position of sMan ri Slob dpon in 1992 that he began administering divinatory readings to the community surrounding sMan ri Monastery. Since this time, concomitant with the attendant duties of his position, he has operated as the monastery's chief diviner. As such, the Slob dpon regularly performs divination for members of both the monastic and lay communities in the Bon settlement of Dolanji. While he has mastered a number of additional divinatory techniques, the Slob dpon chooses to perform *lde'u 'phrul* in the majority of these sessions.

3.3 *lde'u 'phrul* divination

As previously stated, the divination performed by the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma is known as *lde'u 'phrul*, which has been translated by Namkhai Norbu (1995, 2009) as 'manifestation of knowledge'. This translation appears in a number of Western language dictionaries; however, it is important to note that the practice is known by several other names. To begin with, the divination is sometimes designated with the phonetically similar spelling of *rde'u 'phrul*, 'magic pebbles,' which differs only due to a minor orthographic alteration. As such, the two are often conflated in both

divinatory literature and quotidian conversation. The divination is also sometimes referred to as *rdel drug*, or 'six stones,' though the moniker rarely appears in writing and carries a very specific connotation.³¹³² At sMan ri Monastery it is also quite common to hear the divination described as *ma sang(s) rdel mo*, 'the pebble divination of the *Ma sang(s)*'. This is likely a reference to one of two things: (1) a mythic location where sTon pa gShen rab, the founder of the Bon religion, is said to have conducted teachings on divination; or (2) a class of semi-divine beings popular in Bon mythology.³³ Conversely, this could quite simply be a reference to the *incipit* of the second collection of *brTen 'gyur* divination texts outlined in Section 2.6 (ref. n. W30498-142-1). Finally, the divination is sometimes rendered as *sMra seng rdel mo*, 'the divination of *sMra seng*'. Here, the term *sMra seng* is likely a foreshortening of the epithet *smra ba'i seng ge*, 'The Lion of Speech,' which serves as an appellation for the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, as well as for an emanation of sTon pa gShen rab in which he teaches the first four vehicles of the Bon religion. For the sake of simplicity and as each of these terms refers to an identical practice, the term *lde'u 'phrul* alone will be used in this chapter's discussion of the divination and its auxiliary materials.

Broadly speaking, *lde'u 'phrul* may be understood as a form of lithomantic divination, which is to say a form of divination that involves the casting of stones or pebbles in order to conduct a divinatory reading. In this respect, it shares much in common with the forms of Tibetan cleromancy

³¹ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Namkhai Norbu (1997) argues that the term *lde'u 'phrul* is sometimes rendered as *rdel drug* because of a phonetic similarity. He writes, "we can... assume that with the passing of time the pronunciation involuntarily changed and simplified, and [*rdel drug*] being easy to pronounce and simple to understand, those people who did not know the meaning of the word altered the original spelling, giving rise to the perpetuation of the mistake" (1997: 26-27). Upon reflection, the phonetic dissimilarity of these two terms combined with the usage of the term *rdel drug* in situ seems to indicate that Norbu's argument is a simplification. It is tempting to hypothesize that these two terms may reflect the homogenization of previously dissonant pebble divination practices. However, the matter clearly requires further study.

³² The term *rdel drug*, 'six stones,' appears in a very singular context in *lde'u 'phrul* manuscripts. The term frequently appears in prognostics which deal directly with specific configurations of six stones. For instance, in one of our manuscripts, we find the following passage: "1-3-2 six stones like this is highest. For whatever is cast, this is excellent" (1-3-2 'di 'dra'i rdel drug rab yin pa'i/ ci tab ci yi mo la bzang) (*MSeD* f14). This passage depicts the horizontal arrangement of three piles of stones numbering one, three, and two as representing a prognostic that supercedes the symbolic content of each individual pile in the horizontal row.

³³ Generally speaking, the *Ma sangs* are considered to be a class of *the'u rang* deities, which belong to the broader category of the *gNyan* (Nebesky wojkowitz 1956: 625). According to traditional narratives, the *Ma sangs* are considered to have ruled Tibet during the pre-historical period (Norbu 1997: 229).

discussed in section 2.1. *lDe'u 'phrul* is also a form of textually oriented divination. As such, following the divinatory consultation, the diviner generally refers to a fixed textual corpus in order to interpret the patterns formed during the casting procedure.

Aside from the requisite texts, *lde'u 'phrul* requires that the diviner possess either 42 beads from a crystal rosary or 42 white pebbles each measuring roughly 1cm in diameter. In the case of pebbles, a certain number of these—typically either 2 or 21—should be painted black. This 'painting black' is accomplished by drawing small pips on the objects, which are referred to as "eyes" (*mig*). In addition to these materials, the diviner also requires a white felt mat, roughly 12 to 15cm square, upon which the stones are cast. The mat itself is known as *mo gzhi dkar po*, "the white base (or foundation) of the divination" and, in certain instances, is also referred to as *lha gzhi dkar po*, "the divine white foundation". Beyond the physical objects used in a casting, the diviner must also complete a number of preliminary ritual practices (*sngon 'gro*). Though I have not studied these at length, it is clear that *lde'u 'phrul* diviners are expected to cultivate a relationship with a number of different deities, each of whom is invoked during the divinatory rite and asked to guarantee the divination's veracity (see: section 3.4.1). The most important of these are perhaps the deities *Phya bu g.yang dkar*, who is closely associated with prophecy in Bon mythologies (see: sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.3), and *Srid pa rgyal mo*, one of the primary protectresses of the Bon tradition and the analogue in many respects of the Buddhist figure *dPal ldan lha mo*.

3.3.1 A brief note on black and white dualistic imagery

Returning to the physical implements used in *lde'u 'phrul*, it may be instructive to briefly address the divination's incorporation of both black and white stones. According to the *sMan ri slod dpon*, the presence of both black and white objects in *lde'u 'phrul* is necessary in order to obtain an ideal balance between the negative and positive energies that are present during the divination's performance. With that said, it should be remembered that the appearance of black and white

dualistic imagery in divination is not unique to *lde'u 'phrul*. Similar binaries can be found in a variety of divination practices, including forms of dice divination and rock divination, as well as Sino-Tibetan elemental divination (*dkar rtsis*), where black and white stones are sometimes used in order to mark favourable and un-favourable correlations between a wide range of astrological and elemental signifiers (Schuh 1973a, 1973b; Tseng 2005). Leaving these structural similarities aside, it is tempting to read the presence of black and white dualism in *lde'u 'phrul* against comparable themes in Bon cosmogenic narratives which, as a number of scholars have suggested, could potentially betray significant Zoroastrian and other Near-Eastern influences (Karmay 1998a: 130-132; Kvaerne 1987; Hermanns 1965). It is important to stress, however, that *lde'u 'phrul*'s dualistic features could just as easily be related to the broader Sino-Tibetan divinatory complex or, for that matter, could have developed independently within a native Tibetan context. Given the lack of documentary evidence, the intriguing question of the origins of the binary symbolism evidenced in *lde'u 'phrul* must remain, for the time being, unanswered.

3.3.2 *lDe'u 'phrul* origin narratives

Though the mytho-historical origins of *lde'u 'phrul* are by no means consistent across their various textual and oral iterations, turning briefly to the three manuscripts outlined in section 3.1, it is possible to present a patchwork narrative of the divination's origins as they are represented in the Bon literary record. The *MSaP*, for example, offers the following account of the divination's propagation in Tibet.

At that time, the Omniscient Buddha gShen rab, in the great holy place of 'Ol mo lung ring, systematized the *phya gshen theg pa*. In the land of fortune [known as] rNang ba g.yu rtsi, he delineated the three hundred and sixty modes of divination. These were entrusted to Legs rgyal Thang po.

*de dus rnam mkhyen rgyal ba gshen rab kyis / gnas mchog 'ol mo lung ring chen du / phya
gshen theg pa gtan la phab / phya yul rnang ba g.yu rtsi [du] / mo pra sum brgya drug chu
gtan la phab / legs rgyal thang po la gnyer du gtad / (MSaP: fol 5, lines 2-4)*

This is, in effect, a traditional rendering of the history of the first vehicle of the Bon religion, the *phya gshen theg pa*. As seen in Chapter two (section 2.4), aspects of the *phya gshen theg pa* pertaining to divination are believed to have been transmitted by sTon pa gShen rab to a disciple named Legs rgyal Thang po while the former was living in the fortress of Bar po so brgyad in the mythic land of rNang ba g.yu rtsi (e.g. sNang ldan g.yu rtse). The passage continues:

In the land of Zhang Zhung, Srid pa ma sang 'Phrul rgyi rgyal po systematized rope divination. In the land of China he systematized hydromancy. In the land of Ma sang he systematized pebble divination. In the land of Ye nyag he systematized scapulimancy. Of all of these, this is the *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me*, which is refined from the tradition of the *Phya gshen*, the first of the vehicles. This is the origin of the sharp-sighted divination.

*srid pa ma sang 'phrul rgyi rgyal po yis / zhang zhung yul du ju thig gtan la phab / rgya yi yul
du chu zhags gtan la phab / ma sang gyi yul du rdel mo gtan la phab / ye nyag gi yul du sog
mo gtan la phab / de'i nang nas theg pa'i dang po phya gshen rgyud las byung ba'i srid
pa ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me 'di yin no / de rno mthong
mo yi byung tshul yin / (MSaP: fol 5, lines 4-7).*

Here the passage begins with a figure bearing the epithet *'phrul gyi rgyal po* who, having also

received teachings from sTon pa gShen rab, goes on to codify divinatory techniques in a number of different kingdoms, including pebble divination in the land of Ma sang. This figure, *'phrul gyi rgyal po*, the 'Magical King,' has been discussed by a number of scholars as being analogous to Confucius as he appears in Tibetan mythologies (Gurung 2009; Lin 2007; Karmay 1998d). In this sense, by claiming Confucius as 'one of their own,' so to speak, the Bon narrative accounts for the Chinese origin of certain divinatory practices, as well as maintaining the precedence of the Bon tradition. Unfortunately, the *MSaP* provides no further information on the transmission of *lde'u 'phrul*. In order to bring us into a more historical era, we will refer to the *MSeP*, which offers the following narrative of *lde'u 'phrul's* codification and lineage of transmission.

The great Phya legs rgyal thang po requested from mKhyen pa sMra ba'i seng ge the entirety of the teachings [which constitute] this stage of the clairvoyant omens from the causal vehicle, the *gshen* of the *phya*. As an emanation of the divine *thugs kar* lineage, [sMra ba'i seng ge] transmitted to Srid pa ye mkhyen 'phrul rgyal the empowerment for the blessings which clarify the sharp-sighted, clairvoyant, secret divination techniques. In this manner [the teachings] were codified in the land of Ma sang gnyen and they were given to gNyen bon thang thang grol ba. [He was then] asked for the instructions by the great Dran pa nam mkha', who spread the teachings in the land of Tibet. When the flourishing teachings were in decline in Tibet, the master hid them as *gter ma* in mDo smad sTag rna. Then the great rJe 'brug disinterred the *gter ma* from a cliff-side in sTag rna and it was given to both A da lha sras and the Indian, Tam pa(?). The teachings were transmitted by A da lha sras to lha rgyal and thus they gradually spread.

phya gshen Reggie yi theg sgo pra rtags mngon shes kyi rim pa 'di nyid / phya legs rgyal can gyi ston pa tham cad mkhyen pa smra ba'i seng ge la zhas ste thugs kar lha rabs kyi sprul pa

lkog gyur mngon shes rno mthong pra rtags gsal ba'i byin gyi brlabs srid pa ye mkhyen 'phrul rgyal la dbang / des ma sang gnyen gyi yul du gtan la phab te gnyen bon thang thang grol ba la gnang / de la bla chen dran pa nam mkha' man ngag zhus na bod yul du 'phel / bod tu bstan pa 'phel 'grib kyi skabs gyir spungs nyid kyis mdo smad stag rna la gter du bzhag / physis su rje 'brug chen pos ze gyi stag rna nas gter zhal physis te [tam pa?] rgya gar dang 'a da lha sras gnyis la gnang / lha sras nas lha rgyal la brgyud de rim bzhin dar ro / (MSeP: fol 5, line 6 - fol 6, line 6).

Here the narrative picks up after sTon pa gShen rab, who has taken the form of sMra ba'i seng ge, teaches the contents of the *phya gshen theg pa* (e.g. practices relating to *mo*, *rtsis*, *gto*, and *dpyad*) to Legs rgyal thang po. Following the codification of *lde'u 'phrul* in the land of Ma sang gyen³⁴ by our Confucius figure, the 'Phrul gyi rgyal po, the passage outlines the divination's lineage. We see that it is Dran pa nam mkha', one of the great Bon sages, who eventually buries the teachings in mDo smad sTag rna (in Tsang, Central Tibet) during a period of persecution. It is then rJe 'brug Khro tshang 'brug lha,³⁵ a well known Bon *gter ston*, who exhumes the teachings in the early 11th century, which brings us into the historical period with the account of the divination's later propagation in Tibet. Though I have found no physical evidence suggesting that *lde'u 'phrul's* origins stretch back to the 11th century, these passages make it clear that, according to Bon narratives, *lde'u 'phrul* lays claim to an archaic lineage that originates with the Buddha sTon pa

³⁴ *Des ma sang gnyen gyi yul du gtan la phab*. I believe that this is a reference to the domain of one of the so-called *ma-sang dgu*, or "nine Ma sang(s)," which refers to a group of nine mythological beings: the eight Ma sangs brothers and the deity g.Yang 'brung si le ma (aka g.Ya' 'brum si le ma). Taken together, the *ma sangs dgu* are a cadre of nonhuman beings that appear in Bon mythologies contemporary with or shortly before the appearance of mankind (Norbu 2009: 19). In this case, it would likely be a reference to either gNyan ma sangs g.Ya' spang skyes gcig, who appears in the divination grid discussed in section 3.4.3, or to his brother, gNyan ma sangs Ngan lam gtsang skyes.

³⁵ rJe 'brug chen po Khro tshang 'brug lha (956-1077) is an important Bon *gter ston* and, as recorded in the *Legs bshad rin po che'i mdzod phyogs ldan dga' ba'i char* (Karmay 1972), is considered to be a manifestation of the deity 'Od lha gsal 'bar (Karmay 1972: 109). He is perhaps best known for the three texts attributed to him within the Bon *gter-ma* category of Northern Textual Treasures (Karmay 1972: 109). These are: (1) *Khri lde dgongs grags sprul ba ni*; (2) *Drang srong lus la rdzul 'phul ca*; and (3) the *Khro tshang 'brug lha bya ba 'byung* (Karmay 1972: 109).

gShen rab in a prehistoric epoch. Unfortunately, there is no more complete literary record of the divination's later propagation in the historical period; however, for our purposes, the accounts offered in the *MSeD*, *MSaP*, *MSeP* will serve quite nicely as we move on to discuss aspects of the divination's contemporary performance.

3.3.3 Location

The sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma conducts the majority of his divinations from a small compound located on the upper floor of a three-tiered building overlooking the main square of sMan ri Monastery. All told, the compound consists of four rooms: two large apartments that serve as multi-purpose waiting areas, offices, and classrooms; a small kitchen; and an antechamber in which the Slob dpon grants personal audiences and performs divinations. This antechamber also serves as the Slob dpon's bed-chamber. The space is partitioned off from the adjoining rooms with a large curtain that remains drawn over the course of each *lde'u 'phrul* casting.

Plate 2: the sMan ri Slob dpon reviewing the results of a casting



In each casting that I have observed, the ritual space has been organized in the above fashion. The client, whether a monk or lay person, assumes a sitting or kneeling position in front of the Slob dpon, who is in an elevated position, facing the doorway. The divination is then conducted on the desk adjacent to the Slob dpon's seated position. Following the completion of the divinatory reading, the client departs through the doorway and a new client is then invited into the anti-chamber from the queue outside. This open door policy is maintained nearly every morning until midday.

3.3.4 Time of day

As a general rule, the sMan ri Slob dpon only performs divinations in the morning and refuses to do so after midday. There are, broadly speaking, two ways to view this temporal restriction. On the one hand, the sMan ri Slob dpon often teaches a number of courses in dialectics and philosophy during the afternoon and, when he is not involved in course work, he is frequently occupied with a variety of administrative duties. In this sense, receiving divinatory clients in the afternoon would be impractical and, not infrequently, exceedingly difficult for the Slob dpon himself. On the other hand, the times during which *lde'u 'phrul* may be performed are strictly defined in *lde'u 'phrul* texts. In the *MSaP*, for example, one finds the following passage advising against the performance of divination in the afternoon. The passage reads: "having performed divination in the morning, in the afternoon one will [not be able to] see virtue and sin" (*nga dro mo btab pas / phyi dro dge sdig mi mthong ba* [*MSaP* fol 7, line 6-7]). As such, there is also a strong textual precedent against the performance of divination in the afternoon and evening.

3.4 Outline of the *lde'u 'phrul* rite

With the exception of telephone requests, the *lde'u 'phrul* rites that I have observed proceed in the following fashion. To begin with, a client arrives and petitions the Slob dpon for an audience. The

process governing this petition is no more complex than an exchange of formal greetings and a request that the Slob dpon conduct a divinatory reading. Following this, the client is expected to produce a small monetary offering to the monastery.³⁶ Irrespective of the amount, this gift is accepted. The Slob dpon then inquires into the nature of the client's query. This questioning can proceed for some time until both the specific nature of the client's question and the circumstances surrounding it are completely divulged. When this conversation reaches its conclusion, the casting is performed.

3.4.1 Invocations

To begin a *lde'u 'phrul* casting, the Slob dpon first lays out the white felt mat between himself and his client. He then places the pebbles (the Slob dpon does not use crystals) in his right hand. While holding the stones elevated and reading from a divination text, the Slob dpon will recite a series of invocations that address a wide range of divinities. As these invocations appear to follow a similar structure, perhaps two examples will suffice to demonstrate their general character.

The Buddha of the three perfect bodies. The three jewels and the deities of the three roots. The three inner and outer secret *yi dam*³⁷. Come, all of you, to the *bka'*, the *bla ma*, and the root tantra. The glorious lords of the '*gur lha*³⁸ and the *brten ma*³⁹. You three: *Lha*, *klu*, and *gnod sbyin*.⁴⁰ The planets and the stars. The fierce *yul lha* and *gzhi bdag*.⁴¹ All of you be present now at the divination (*mo*) and the prognosis (*phya*).⁴² You all, lords, are wise. There

³⁶ Though this offering is typically a cash donation, I have also seen gifts of *rtsam pa*, fresh meat, literary publications, and canned food items.

³⁷ The *yi dam* are generally classified as tutelary deities.

³⁸ The '*gur lha* appear to be related to the *mgur lha bcu gsum*, a set of thirteen gods in the Bon pantheon.

³⁹ *brTen ma* (or *brTan ma*) denotes a group of twelve different goddesses. See: Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 372.

⁴⁰ The *lha* and the *klu* denote celestial divinities and nagas respectively. The *gnod sbyin* are analogous to the Sanskrit *yakṣa* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 620).

⁴¹ The *yul lha* and *gzhi bdag* are classes of local, territorial divinities. See: Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 387.

⁴² Here, *mo* translates simply as "the divination". In many cases, *phya* denotes "luck, fortune, or the propensity to

is nothing you do not know or do not see. In the case that you have time to consider me, please distinguish the good from the bad. Show in detail the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false. Conduct this sharp-sighted divination clearly.

*kon mchog gsum dang rtsa gsum lha / yid dam phyi nang gsang gsum dang / tsa rgyud bla ma
bka'ong dang / dpal mgon 'gur lha brten ma dang / lha klu gnod sbyin gza' skar dang / yul lha
gzhi bdag drag rtsal can e/ de ring mo dang phyi la bdar / khyed ni thams cad mkhyen pa'i
bdag / mi shes mi mthong gang yang med / bdag la gongs pa'i dus byung na /bzang ngan
gnyis kyis [-S2] la/ bden rdzun legs nyes sa sor ston/ rno mthong mo 'di gsal bar mdzod /
(MSeD: fol 437, lines 1-6).*

Lord who dwells inside the palace of the wind. Ye mkhyen 'phrul rgyal, by the invitation of the lords of the divination gods, please come! From the strata of luminous deities, you three: *lha*, *gar*, and *rten* please come! Thug dkar and sGra bla, from your precious self assembled fortress, please come! The assembly of the three hundred and sixty divination gods, come quickly! Be seated upon the divine white foundation (*lha gzhi dkar po*). I pay homage to you. I atone for my sins. I offer you gifts. Act as the divination gods who reveal divinations. Act as witnesses of both good and evil. Please bless these divination stones.

*rlung mkhar gyi nang na bzhugs pa'i rje / mo lha'i rgyal po spyen 'dren gyis / ye mkhyen
'phrul rgyal gshegs su sol / 'od gsal lha yi phreng nas/ lha gar rten gsum gshegs su sol / rang
bdus rin chen sku mkhar nas / thug kar sgra bla gshegs su sol / mo lha gsum bgya drug cu'i
tshogs / ma thog smyur bar gshegs su sol / lha gzhi dkar po'i gong 'dir bzhugs / phyag lo sdig*

fortune". In this passage, however, it seems to carry the same connotation as one sees in PT 1285 (Lalou 1957: 42, 66, 86, 137) and PT 1047 (Macdonald and Imaeda 1979: 331-349), where the term has been rendered as "prognosis" (Karmay 1998: 247). As such, the passage indicates a desire that the deities be present at the "divination" (*mo*) and the following pronouncement of the "prognosis" (*phyi*).

bshags [bdran] yon 'bul / rno mthong ston pa'i mo lha mdzod / bzang nagô ma nor gsal bar mdzod / legs nyes gnyis kyi dpang po mdzod / mo rdel 'di la byin gyis rlobs / (MSaP fol 4, lines 1-6)

In these two examples we see that a number of deities and natural forces are called upon by name to bear witness to the divination. Generally speaking, these invocations proceed along a kind of sliding scale, beginning with the macrocosm—with buddhas, the major bodhisattvas and protector divinities, and so forth. The invocations then become increasingly microcosmic in their scope. One finds a panorama of regional, local, mythological, and sometimes historical figures all asked to bear witness to the divination and to guarantee the divination's veracity. It is important to note that the divinities do not fulfil this function by virtue of their proximity to the rite. On the contrary, the assembled divinities are considered to physically dissolve into the divination stones and, by doing so, transfer their own prophetic powers to the stones. According to the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, this is not taken as a metaphor, but rather indicates a visualization that the diviner is expected to undertake. The deities' descent is described succinctly in one of our texts in the following fashion:

All of the gods who have been invoked like this, filling up the sky in front [of you], descend from pure space. Dissolving into light, they melt into the pebbles...

de ltar bdar ba'i lha tshogs thams cad mdun gi nam mkha' gang ba tsam dbying nas byon te / 'od du zhu nas rde'u la thim pas / (MSaP: fol.12, line 7 - fol.13, line 1).

In the performance of *lde'u 'phrul* rites, the dissolution of the deities into the divination stones is effected by a rapid succession of breaths that are blown upon the stones following the invocation.

This act marks the conclusion of the invocation and the beginning of the casting. It is worth noting that the diffusion of the assembled deities into the divination stones indicates that the diviner does not divine using his own prophetic abilities. On the contrary, the *lde'u 'phrul* deities are considered to act directly through the stones themselves. This notion is maintained by the Slob dpon, who describes the process and its implications in the following fashion:

It is their [the deities'] power, not my power. A stone is a stone. A cloth is just a cloth. The most important thing is the deities. People ask me for divination all the time and normally I couldn't decide what to do. The people, you know, have doubts about what is the correct thing to do. They couldn't decide for themselves. Instead they ask the *bla ma*-s, but, a *bla ma* does not decide himself. The *bla ma* asks the deities to show him the correct results. They ask the divination deities to make it true, to make the correct divination... When a *bla ma* does divination with the *rdel mo*, the answers are in the stones and the gods make them true (Personal communication from the Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma: September 30, 2009).

3.4.2 Casting Procedure

Now that the pebbles have been saturated by the essence of the divine host, the diviner casts the stones. The method of casting is as follows. The diviner places all forty-two pebbles in a single pile on the white felt mat. The stones are then divided at random into three piles, which are distributed horizontally across the top of the mat. Following this, the diviner will subtract stones (exactly four at a time) from the three piles until there are one to four stones remaining in each. This creates a horizontal row of three piles of stones numbering one to four. The remaining stones are then grouped together into a single pile. The stones are then once again randomly distributed into three piles, this time running horizontally across the center of the mat. The process of subtracting stones four at a time is repeated, yielding six piles of stones (numbering one to four) arranged in a 2x3

pattern. This process is repeated a third time, resulting in nine piles of stones organized into a 3x3 square in which each pile numbers one to four (see: Plate 3). The remaining stones are then set aside. This method of casting is outlined succinctly in one of our texts:

There are forty-two pebbles by which to conduct a detailed examination. Cut these into three sections. Calculate the four as four. They are cast upon the nine *ling tse*.⁴³

de nas so sor dpyad pas rde'u bzhi bcu tsa gnyis yod / tsho gsum gcad la / bzhi *bzhir bgrangs* /
ling rtse dgu ru bab pa yin / (MSeD fol 3)

Having completed the casting the diviner refers to a divination manual in order to interpret the various patterns formed by the stones (see: sections 3.5 and 3.6). Generally speaking, the number of stones in each pile and its relative location upon the white felt mat are taken together as an indication of a particular set of symbols. As these symbols are integral to the diviner's interpretation of the casting, it is important to discuss the symbolic content inherent to each of the nine piles of stones, which I will refer to as the 'divination grid' — a term that I have adopted from Gruber 2009.

3.4.3 The divination grid

lDe'u 'phrul manuals contain a series of passages that ascribe distinguishing characteristics to each of the divination grid's nine sections, which are physically represented by the nine piles of stones formed during the casting procedure. Most importantly, each vertical column of stones in the divination grid is given a title. Starting from the left side of the grid, the first vertical column is referred to as "the Gods' Place" (*lha sa*); the second vertical column is "the Family Place" (*khyim sa*); and the third vertical column is referred to as "the Outside Place" (*phyi sa*). Each of these

⁴³ *Ling tse* is generally rendered as "lattice". In this context, however, the term refers to the nine individual sections of the divination grid (see: Section 3.3.4).

columns is then ascribed a specific set of values. The Gods' Place is understood as representing masculinity. The Family Place represents femininity and the hearth, while the Outside Place is taken to represent possible misfortunes, physical and metaphysical pollutants, as well as a host of demonic influences.

Plate 3: the distribution of pebbles following a casting



Beyond a division into three vertical columns, each of the divination grid's horizontal rows is also ascribed a title. Simply put, beginning with the top row, these are referred to as the "first" (*dang po*), the "middle" (*bar ma* or *'bring po*), and the "last" or "lower" (*tha ma*). In this fashion, the upper left section of the grid is given the title "the First God's Place" (*lha sa dang po*), the bottom right section is "the Last Outside Place" (*phyi sa tha ma*), and so forth. Finally, the three vertical sections of the Family Place are given a set of secondary titles: the First Family Place is known as "the Sky Door" (*gnam sgo*); the Middle Family Place is "the Divination Heart" (*mo snying*); and the Last Family Place is "the Earth Door" (*sa sgo*).⁴⁴ These titles are illustrated below in Table 1.

In addition to the titles ascribed to each section of the divination grid, each of the grid's nine sections is also described as possessing or, perhaps, as embodying a fixed set of symbols and

⁴⁴ On the ritual significance of the "Sky Door" (*gnam sgo*) and "Earth Door" (*sa sgo*), see: Dollfus 1994.

deities. Generally, these consist of a patron deity (or patron deities) and four attributes: (1) an element; (2) a direction; (3) a colour; and (4) a number. Take, for instance, the central square of the *lha sa* column, the *lha sa bar ma*, which is introduced in one of our texts in the following way:

As for the master of the Middle Gods' Place, he is called g.Ya' spang skyes gcig. He is dPa' chen wer ma nyi nya. He has a lion's head and a lynx's ears. He has feet that are blades and wings that are small razors (*chu gri*). His feet are vortexes of wind. On his head he wears the great helmet of the sun. On his body, he wears the great armour of the stars. He rides upon the savage tiger of courage in the prime of its life. He resides in the fortress of Khro chu dmu lugs upon the peak of dMu ri de'u dkar. He is the commander of all the *sgra bla*.⁴⁵ He is surrounded by the myriad armies of the *wer ma*. They delight in *ku* and revel in *bswo*.⁴⁶ He is the *sgra bla* of young men in the prime of their lives... the eastern direction, the number three, sky blue, *zin*⁴⁷, and the wood element.

lha sa 'bring po'i bdag po ni / g.ya' spang rkyes gcig zer ba de / dpa'i chen wer ma nyi nya yin / seng ge'i mgo la dbyi yi rna / ral gri'i rkang la chu gri'i gshog / rkang pa rlung gi 'khor lo can / nyi ma'i rmog chen dbu la gsol / skar ma'i grab chen [-1S] la mnab / dpa'i bo stag rgod dar ma bcibs / dmu ri de'u dkar rtse mo yi / gro chu dmu lugs mkhar la bzhugs / sera bla yongs kyi dmag dpon yin / wer ma'i [-1S] dmag 'bum gyis bskor / ku la dga' zhing bswo la dgyes / skyes bu dar ma'i sgra bla yin / ... shar phyogs gsum mthing [zhen] shing khams / (MSaP fol 17-18).

⁴⁵ The *sgra bla*, or 'sound souls,' are a well known class of protector divinities.

⁴⁶ *Ku* and *bswo* are common onomatopoeic terms representing war-cries

⁴⁷ In this passage, the syllable indicating the relevant trigram is damaged and somewhat difficult to read. Based upon its location within the divination grid, however, the syllable is almost certainly *zin*, which is aligned with the wood element and the eastern direction (Cornu 2002: 112).

In this example, the Middle Gods' Place is first associated with a martial deity. Following the listing of the deity's attributes, the text ascribes five signifiers to the Middle Gods' Place: a direction (east), a number (three), a colour (blue), a trigram (*zin*), and an element (wood). Variations of these signifiers appear in each of the nine sections of the divination grid. Below, in section 3.7.2, I provide an excerpt from the *MSaP* which describes in detail the nine primary *lde'u 'phrul* deities along with their associated signifiers. As a point of reference, I have also summarised (or perhaps abstracted) this information below in the Table 3. It should be noted that the names of the presiding deities are subject to a degree regional variation in the witnesses that I have examined, although the other signifiers (i.e. astrological, numerical, etc.) appear to be consistent across their various iterations.

Looking at Table 3, several things immediately stand out. To begin with, each section of the 3x3 grid is classified into horizontal and vertical groups. The first vertical column, the *lha sa*, is taken to symbolise the totality of male attributes. The second vertical column, the *khyim sa*, represents women, servants, livestock, and the hearth. The third vertical column, the *phyi sa*, represents the sphere of misfortune and demonic influence. Relative to the vertical columns, the three horizontal rows provide a kind of temporal schema; the lower section tending to pertain to children, the middle section to adults, and the upper section to the elderly as well as to patrilineal and matrilineal ancestry. In addition to this, each of the nine sections is assigned an element, a direction, a number, and a colour. Taken together, these represent the *sme ba* and the *spar kha*, the nine magic numbers and the eight trigrams that form the pith of Sino-Tibetan astrological systems. In brief, *lde'u 'phrul* manuscripts provide a kind of taxonomy of human experience inherent to the milieu in which they are produced. This taxonomy addresses both men and women, young and old, as well as a diversity of subjects ranging from wealth, travel, and livestock to romance, legal disputes, and demonic activities. These are then correlated with astrological elements and numerological devices, all of which may be taken into consideration following the completion of a casting.

Table 3: the divination grid

	IHa sa	Khyim sa	Phyi sa
Dang po	<p>rGra bla bya khyung pa</p> <p>patrilineal ancestry; the generation of wealth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wind element - southeast - four - green 	<p>lCam mo g.yung drung mon</p> <p>matrilineal ancestry; healing abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fire element - south - nine - red 	<p>Srin po skya rings khrag mig</p> <p>suffering; <i>bdud</i>, <i>srin</i>, <i>rgyal</i>, and <i>gdon</i> demons; enemies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - earth element - southwest - two - black
Bar ma	<p>g.Ya' spang skyes gcig</p> <p>martial prowess; men in their physical prime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wood element - east - three - blue 	<p>g.Ya' 'brum sil ma</p> <p>child rearing; the hearth; the medical profession; women of all ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centre - five - yellow 	<p>Srin po phag zhon</p> <p>problems amongst relatives and friends; legal disputes; the property of enemies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - iron element - west - seven - red
Tha ma	<p>mNgon shes phya bu g.yang dkar</p> <p>male children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mountain element - northeast - eight - white 	<p>Gangs sman g.yu bun kangs chung</p> <p>servants; female children; the <i>phya</i> of livestock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - water element - north - one - white 	<p>Srin gyi khyi mo na gsang</p> <p>darkness; pestilence; thieves and beggars; gossip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sky element - northwest - six - white

3.5 *lde'u 'phrul* prognostics: major and minor results

Having completed a casting, a diviner will immediately consult a divination manual. The lion's share of *lde'u 'phrul* manuals are given over to what I have termed 'minor results'. These pertain to a single, specific section of the 3 x 3 square represented in Table 1 and offer a prognostic based upon the number of stones that appear therein. Generally speaking, these sections are composed of basic conditional statements, with a *protasis* (an "if x" clause) and an *apodosis* (the "then y" clause). For example, the following is a minor result from the *MSeD* that describes the results of a casting within the middle *khyim sa*.

With regard to the middle *khyim sa*, it is the place of women in their prime and the medicine bowl. It is the place of full and empty milk-pails. It is the place of the hearth and the treasury of livestock. It is the place of men and the divination-heart. If a one is cast here, it is a sign of companionship. Having heard good news, guests and helpers (*mgon*) will come. The lady of the house (*khyim bdag mo*) will be free from disease. If a two is cast here, the *bdud* will run off with the divination medicine (*mo sman*). This is a sign of sickness, of dispute, and of thieves. It is a sign that the sleeping place will be empty and the sick person unfulfilled. Recite myriad Sutra verses (*mdo 'bum*) [to placate] the *khyim mtshes 'dre*. Perform the victorious *nor sgrub*⁴⁸ and *g.yang skyabs*⁴⁹. If a three is cast, the curdled milk of *g.yang* is enclosed. This is excellent for all cattle and livestock. It is a sign that friends will come. It is good (*yag*) for making beer and ominous for yogurt. If a four is cast, it is a sign that four houses will be built. What will come? Who will be met? What will be achieved? It is a sign that whatsoever occurs, events will be delayed.

khyim sa bar ba 'di dag ni / bdud med dar ma sman phor ba / bzhon gyi zor ba gang ston sa /

⁴⁸ *nNor sgrub*: a wealth sadhana, rites to secure prosperity and wealth.

⁴⁹ *g.Yang skyabs*: sacrifices to secure prosperity.

*nor gyi bang mdzod thab ka'i sa / skeyes bu'i sa dang mo snying yin / 'di ru gcig bas grogs ngo
yin / gtam snyan thos shing 'gron mgon 'ong / khyims bdag mo nad med cing / gnyis bab mo
sman bdud kyis khyer nad dang kha 'chu rkun ma'i ngo / nad pa mal sa stong ba'i ngo /
khyims mtshes 'dre gdon mdo 'bum 'don / rnam rgyal nor sgrub g.yang skyabs bya / gsum bab
g.yang gi ru ma skyil / bud med nor phyugs kun la bzang / zho than chang yags grogs yang
ngo / bzhi bab khyims bzhi tshugs pa'i ngo / e 'ong e 'phod 'grub dang / gang yang phyi dal
che ba'i ngo / (MSeD fol 444, line 4 - fol 445, line 5).*

The passage begins with an introduction to the values symbolized by the middle *khyim sa*. In this case: women in their physical prime, the manufacture of medicines, milk production and consumption, and the welfare of livestock. We are then informed of the different events that will take place should a one, two, three or four be cast. Broadly speaking, one and three are positive, four is middling, and two is negative. In the case of a negative result, a series of prophylactic rites is recommended in order to avert misfortune. In the above example, the repeated recitation of Sutra verses to pacify a particular type of demon. Additionally, it may be noted that the results, though pertaining to specific criteria in a client's life, can be rather opaque. Take, for instance, the following abbreviated example from the *MSeD*.

If a one is cast here, *the sgra bla* and the *wer ma* are [one's] protection and refuge (*mgon skyab*). If offerings are given to the *wer ma*⁵⁰ and the *lha srung*⁵¹, the outlook will be positive. If a two falls here, the *bla ma* are delighted. Strike the leader with a question. It indicates ambrosia and the first great sin. Above all, this is bad for those born in a dragon year. They will be tossed and turned. Perform purification prayers and incense offerings. Also, perform a

⁵⁰ The *wer ma* are a class of warrior gods (see: Karmay 1998: 257; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 629).

⁵¹ The *lha srung* are a class of tutelary divinities.

tshe sgrub,⁵² a '*chi bslu*,⁵³ and subdue both the demons of bad death among men and women. [...] If a four is cast, the four *lha* are steadfast. This is a sign that paternal relatives will be prosperous. The *g.yang* is unimpaired while *srog* is stable. It is not necessary to perform a *gto* ritual for a full three years. If there is a sickness, however, it will last for a long period of time. The *phya* of commerce and of friendship will be strong.

*'di ru rdel gcig bab pa na / sgra bla wer ma'i mgon skyab byed / lha srung sgra bla mchod na
bzang / gnyis bab gyur na lha ma dga' / mi chen mdun zhu phog do yin / thog chen grib dang
rtsig gi ngo / lhag par 'brug lo pa la btsubs / bsang brngan rnam 'jam bskang bshags dang /
tshe sgrub 'chi bslu gri bo gri mo bkar / [...] bzhi bab lha gzhi thugs sa yin / pha tshan bzang
po yong ba'i ngo / g.yang ma nyams shing srog phyra brtan / lo gsum gong la gto mi dgos /
nad pa yin na nad yun ring / tshong phywa grogs phywa phyi dal che / (MSeD fol 438, line 2 -
fol 439, line 3).*

Though addressing precise, real-world criteria, the prognostications themselves are typically vague. The texts rarely qualify the manner in which an enterprise will succeed, though many positive prognostics offer ancillary forms of ritual action by which a client may secure the results of a favourable casting. As is the case in positive results, negative entries are very often abstract as well. In the above passage, for example, the incidence of two stones is particularly bad for individuals born in a dragon year; however, the nature of the impending misfortune is not addressed. Furthermore, in the case of negative, ostensibly undesirable results, textual prognostics are typically followed by highly specific lists of rites that the client may perform in order to stem any of the undesirable events outlined within the text. However, divination manuals typically describe the

⁵² *Tshe sgrub*: a long-life *sādhana*

⁵³ '*Chi slu*: A death deception rite. The term '*chi bslu* should be differentiated from *bla bslu*, although the purpose of both rituals is the avoidance of unnatural death (see, in particular: Kamray 1998b; Cabezon 2010).

nature of any current or pending misfortunes in vague terms, leaving a great deal of room for *ex post facto* elaborations on part of the diviner. The following excerpts, for example, are taken from the *MSeD*.

(411) Six stones arranged like this is a heart filled with regret. Debates and confrontations will arise with one's superiors. The people will be unsettled. A plague will spread. To avoid this, perform a great demon-burying rite (*dgra brub*). Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, this is bad. (141) Six stones arranged like this is misery. It is dogs, jackals, and wild leopards. Of the two, which will strike first: spears or arrows? A din of defamatory rumours, it is a sign of turmoil.⁵⁴ Perform as well as possible an enemy-burying rite (*dgra brub*) and an enemy-suppressing rite (*dgra mnan*). [This casting indicates] the malevolent influence of the *rgyal po* demons and the demons of bad death among women of the knife demons (*rgyal po gri mo*) and the *gdon* demons. Make a *rgyal mdos* offering and avert the *mo gri*. It is a sign that the sick person will not recover and die. Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, it is said that this is a moderate result. (222) Six stones arranged like this is lamentation. It is a sign of injury caused by the *btsan* and the *rgyal po* demons. [This casting indicates] the *gdon* [associated with] the fresh meats of wild game and perpetrators of incest. Perform a planet *mdos* rite in accordance with the planet that is responsible for the adverse circumstances (fol 451-452).

(411) 'di 'dra'i rdel drug snying 'gyod yin / rang bas che dang tsod pa 'byung / yul pa mi bde nad yams dar / zlog pa dgra brub stebs chen bya / ci la tab kyang ngan pa yin / (141) 'di 'dra'i

⁵⁴ I have taken great liberties with this passage. *kha sma 'ur zing 'byung ngo yin*. First of all, I have used the term '*ur zing*' twice: (1) "a din (*'ur zing*) of defamatory rumors (*kha sma*)"; and (2) "it is a sign (*ngo*) of turmoil (*'ur zing*)," or rendered literally, "it is a sign (*ngo*) that turmoil (*'ur zing*) will arise (*'byung*)". Nonetheless, it is a beautiful passage and I feel that it merits a slightly liberal treatment of the prose. With that said, the passage could also be rendered in a very different fashion. To begin with, '*ur zing*' may not be an attributive noun (i.e. a noun adjunct) and the phrase *kha sma 'ur zing* may not be a compound noun at all (as the seven syllable verse does not allow here for the associative particle *dang*). If this is the case, the passage would read something like: "It is a sign that defamatory rumors (*kha sma*) and unrest/turmoil (*'ur zing*) will arise (*'byung*)".

*rdel drug mya ngan yin / khyi dang spyang ku gung rgod yin / mda' dang mdung gnyis gang
snga yin / kha sma 'ur zing 'byung ngo yin / dgra brub dgra mnan gang drag sgrub / gdon du
rgyal po gri mo'i gdon / rgyal mdos 'bul zhing gri mo bkar / nad pa mi sos 'chi ngo yin / ci la
tab kyan g'bring du bshad / (222) 'di 'dra'i rdel drug ngu 'bod yin / btsan dang rgyal po'i gnod
ngo yin / bud med kha so mi sang dang / dme bo ri dwags sha rlon gdon / gza' rkyen gang yin
gza' mdos bya /*

If a one is cast here, it is a sign of companionship. Having heard good news, guests and helpers will come. The lady of the house will be free from disease. If a two is cast here, the *bdud* demons will run off with the divination medicine. This is a sign of sickness, of disputes, and of thieves. It is a sign that the sick-bed will be empty (ie. the patient will die) Recite myriad Sutra verses to placate the family-afflicting demon (*khyim mtshes 'dre*). Perform victorious wealth sadhanas (*nor sgrub*) and [perform rituals] to preserve prosperity (*g.yang skyabs*). If a three is cast, the curds of *g.yang* is enclosed. This is excellent for all cattle and livestock. It is a sign that friends will come. It is good for making beer and terrible for making yogurt. If a four is cast, it is a sign that four houses will be built. What will come? Who will be met? What will be achieved? It is a sign that whatsoever occurs, events will be delayed.

*'di ru gcig bab grogs ngo yin / gtam snyan thos shing 'gron mgon 'ong / khyim bdag mo nad
med cing / gnyis bab mo sman bdud kyis khyer / nad dang kha 'chu rkun ma'i ngo / nad pa
mal sa stong ba'i ngo / khyims mtshes 'dre gdon mdo 'bum 'don / rnam rgyal nor sgrub g.yang
skyabs bya / gsum bab g.yang gi ru ma skyil / bud med nor phyugs kun la bzang / zho than
chang yags grogs yang ngo / bzhi bab khyims bzhi tshugs pa'i ngo / e 'ong e 'phrod e 'grub
dang / gang yang phyi dal che ba'i ngo / (fol 444-445)*

Taking these examples as a baseline, we see that textual prognostics often open with relatively ambiguous statements, such as metaphors, similes, or references to folkloric fragments. Additionally, following their ambiguous opening lines, it appears that prognostics offer a series of brief, case-specific passages. In the fifth excerpt, for example, the appearance of three stones in a particular location is taken to be excellent for cattle and livestock, good for the manufacture of beer, but terrible for making yogurt. In each example, negative results are coupled with highly specific lists of rites intended to avert or to appease demonic forces.

Following an analysis of each individual section of the 3x3 grid, the remainder of *lde'u 'phrul* manuals are given over to what I term 'major' results (Smith 2015). These operate in many respects like a series of trumps, providing secondary and tertiary levels of interpretation that can supplement or annul minor responses. Broadly speaking, these trumps take two forms: (1) particular arrangements of stones running the length of the horizontal, vertical, or and diagonal axes or (2) complete castings, in which each pile of stones conforms to a specific number. As these prognostics tend to follow a similar format, perhaps two examples will suffice to give the reader an idea of their general character. The first passage offers a response outlining the appearance of three piles of stones in a horizontal row numbering three-two-three. The second passage indicates a configuration of stones spanning the entire 3x3 square.

3-2-3

[Should] eight stones be arranged like this, friends will be turned away. In the middle section, it is a sign that householders will fall ill. Request as many *tshe sgrub* and *tshe dbang*⁵⁵ as possible. One will be deceived by a loved one. If this is cast in the lower section, it is bad for cloven-hoofed animals. If one softly recites an all-conquering *dhāraṇī* (*rnam par 'jom pa*), this is good.

⁵⁵ *Tshe dbang*: a longevity empowerment.

3-2-3

'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs phyi ston / bar la khyims bdag na ngo yin/ tshe sgrub tshe dbang gang mang zhus / snying 'dra mi yis mgo g.yog 'byung / sma la bab na chung gsum dang / rmig pa kha brag can la ngan / tshe gzungs rnam 'jom 'don na bzang / (MSeD fol 455, lines 2-4).

1-2-3 / 1-1-2 / 1-2-1

This arrangement is known as the knife-fighting hero. It is a sign that wild yaks, fierce wolves, and dogs will do battle. There will be no enemies [threatening one's] *dgra phywa*. This is a sign that you yourself will achieve victory. If there is an illness, however, it will be difficult to heal. Whatever food and wealth is at hand should be abandoned.

1-2-3 / 1-1-2 / 1-2-1

'di la dpa'o gri 'thabs zer / khyi dang spyang rgod g.yag rgod gsum / la khar gcig ru 'dzing ngo yin / dgra phywa dag la dgra yod de / rgyal kha rang gis thob ngo yin / nad pa yin na sos dka' bas / zas nor ci yod spang bar bya / (MSeD fol. 467, line 6 - fol. 468, line 2).

The first passage offers a negative result based upon the appearance of a particular pattern of stones in the middle or lower horizontal row. As we have seen in previous examples, the passage is nonspecific as to the particular nature of the impending misfortune, but prescribes ritual techniques by which future difficulties may be averted. The second passage, which is considerably more positive, applies only in the case that each of the nine sections of the 3x3 square conforms to a specific series of numbers.

3.6 The interpretation of prognostics

In sections 3.4 and 3.5, I have attempted to show that *lde'u 'phrul* prognostics are expressed through the combination of the various sections of a microcosm (e.g. Table 3), within which one finds representations of both Tibetan society and the broader structures of the cosmos at large. In practice, this microcosm appears to serve as a type of interpretive catalogue against which the diviner may selectively read both the major and minor prognostics. Seen in this light, the casting procedure could be discussed as a 'random narrative generator' capable of producing—through the combination of social taxonomies, religious symbols, mythic figures, deities, and astrological signifiers—a nearly unlimited number of stories.⁵⁶ It is then the diviner's work to compare and contrast these various narratives and to distill from them a singular response to the client's query. What remains to be seen is how, specifically, this is accomplished by the diviner. With that in mind, in the following section, I would like to present two ethnographic case-studies, which represent a preliminary effort to understand some of the ways in which dissonant textual elements, such as the major and minor prognostics, can be combined and interpreted in the performance of divination. While these case-studies should not be used to infer global generalizations regarding the performance of divination, my hope is that they will suffice to provide my readers with a working understanding of the mechanics involved in the interpretation of *lde'u 'phrul* textual prognostics. As a point of reference, each ethnographic example will incorporate a brief analytical discussion making use of elements from the first three chapters.

3.6.1 Case study 1: interpreting a travel divination

Early one morning in August 2009, while I was observing divinations performed by the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, a young monk visited the Slob dpon's quarters with a pressing concern.

⁵⁶ On the role of narrative generators in divination, see: Van Binsbergen 1995 and Park 1963.

The monk's mother, who lived in the neighbouring state of Uttarakhand, was planning to travel to Delhi with several family members by car. This was potentially dangerous, he said, as the local roads had recently been damaged by heavy rains and a series of particularly destructive landslides. Having explained the situation, the monk produced a monetary offering of roughly fifty rupees and requested a divination on behalf of his mother, inquiring as to whether or not she would arrive safely. The Slob dpon quickly consented to the request and, having accepted the monk's offering, began to prepare the divination's physical materials. He first laid out the white wool mat (*lha gzhi dkar po*) on his desk and then, holding the divination stones (*rdel mo*) in his right hand, began to recite a series of preliminary invocations. Once these were completed, the Slob dpon laid the stones on the mat and performed the casting procedure. This resulted in the configuration of stones illustrated below in Table 4.

Having completed the casting, the Slob dpon set the remaining stones aside and referred to his divination manual in order to interpret the results. As he consulted the relevant sections of text, he grew visibly concerned and asked if the monk's mother were physically ill. The monk replied, saying that she was in good health. The Slob dpon then asked if she were currently involved in any kind of dispute with friends or family members in her local community. Once again, the young monk responded in the negative. With these questions answered, the Slob dpon returned to his manuscript. There was a long silence as we waited for his final response. After roughly one minute, he laid the divination manual aside and told the monk that his mother would arrive safely at her destination; however, he added that she might be significantly delayed owing to the condition of the roads. Furthermore, he stressed that the woman take care to protect her belongings and advised that she recite as many prayers as possible on her rosary so as to avoid becoming ill during the trip. The young monk then thanked the Slob dpon and, following a brief conversation about a private monastic matter, quietly left the room.

Table 4: the material results of the casting

	<i>lha sa</i>	<i>khyim sa</i>	<i>phyi sa</i>
<i>dang po</i>	•••	•••	••••
<i>bar ma</i>	••••	•••	•
<i>tha mar</i>	•	•••	•••

From an analytical standpoint, this example provides us with both the material results of a casting, as well as a summary of the diviner's final verbal prognosis. As such, we can now consult the relevant manuscript ourselves in order to begin to assess two particular questions: (1) how major and minor results are combined and reconciled in a casting; and (2) how the textual prognostics have, in this case, been adapted by the diviner in order to suit the specific nature of the client's request. For the sake of brevity, I will not reproduce each textual referent associated with the casting, but instead will focus only on sections that are directly relevant to the client's query regarding his mother's voyage. In the "first family place" (*khyim sa dang po*), for instance, which is the domain of elderly women and matrilineal ancestry, we find the following prognostic:

If a three is cast, the *lha* will be one's companions. The *yul lha* will be one's companions and, whatsoever you imagine, it will be achieved. It is a sign that there will be enmity amongst one's siblings.

*sum bab lha yis sdong grogs byed / yul lhas grogs byed ci bsam 'grub / bu sring phyogs nas
dgra ngo yod // (MSeD fol 9 lines 1-2).*

This excerpt is relatively vague, but clearly positive in its general orientation, with the obvious exception of questions pertaining to a subject's siblings. In the case of the monk's mother, this would imply a favourable result; however, the issue is somewhat complicated by the following two passages, which appear in the first and middle "enemy place" respectively (*phyi sa dang po, phyi sa bar ma*):

If a four is cast, then there will be no enemies or *'dre* whatsoever. Travel, commerce, and intellectual activities will be hindered.

bzhi bab dgra 'dre gang yang med / 'gron tshong blo don phyi dal che // (MSeD fol 12 lines 5-6)

If a one is cast, enemies will gnash their teeth in hatred (*mur [ba] du sdang*). There will be enemies who are equal to one's strength. Maternal relatives will be harmed by someone of equal social standing (*methun phyogs*). That which would not usually come about will come about and that which would not usually be met will be met.

*gcig bab dgra bo mur du sdang / rang dang mnyam pa'i dra zho 'dug / zhang nye tshur methun
phyogs kyis gdon / e 'ong 'ong la e 'phrad 'phrad // (MSeD fol 13 lines 1-2).*

In light of these passages, it appears as though the diviner's response in the above example is not

improvised, but rather is rooted in a close reading of the textual prognostics, the abstract nature of which allows for a degree of elaboration in order to cater to the specifics of the client's initial question. The results from the first and middle "enemy place," for instance, state that activities related to travel will be delayed and, perhaps most tellingly, also indicate that the client's female relatives will come into conflict with an individual of equal social standing. This could potentially explain both the Slob dpon's statement concerning the condition of the roads, as well as his question regarding the possibility of social conflicts in the mother's local community. The issue of the mother's health, which also figures significantly in the divination, is somewhat more difficult to explain. Several possible answers emerge, however, if we examine the major results associated with the casting.

Returning to the results indicated in Table 2, we can locate four separate arrangements of stones indicative of a major result. As these sections are relatively brief and help to illustrate ways in which prognostics may be selected or (selectively) ignored, I will provide translations of each excerpt in the space below. The respective location of each arrangement of stones will be marked in bold and the number of stones will be indicated in {} curled brackets.

1. The upper horizontal row (*dang po*)

{334} Ten stones arranged like this is the highest. It is the lion who struts majestically on the snow-mountains. It is a sign of the *lha*. The pinnacle of excellence, higher than all the heavens (*dgung*). In divinations concerning illnesses amongst the elderly this is a mediocre result. Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, this is good.

{334} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu rab yin te / seng ge gang la 'gying pa yin / lha ngo dgung bas mtho 'phra bzang / rgan rgon nad pa'i mo la 'bring / de man gang la btab kyang bzang / (MSeD fol 18 lines 2-3).

2. The middle horizontal row (*bar ma*)

{431} If eight stones happen to be cast like this—whether it is cast in the middle or lower section—it is bad for all forms of *dgra phy*a and *grogs phy*a. One will be deceived by a loved one. Perform exalted (*'phags pa*) enemy-burial (*dgra brub*) and fortune-protection (*g.yang skyabs*) rites.

{431} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad bab gyur na / bar dang tha ma gar bab kyang / dgra phy a grogs phy a kun la ngan / snying dang 'dra ba'i mi yis slu / dgra brub g.yang skyabs 'phags pa 'don / (MSeD fol 21 lines 4-5)

3. The downwards right diagonal

{333} If three threes are arranged like this, it is the height of excellence. It is an omen that a conflict (*g.yul ngo*) with demons has been averted (*bzlog*). This is excellent for divinations concerning girls and boys. If an individual is ill, he or she will not improve (*rtsub 'dug pa*). That being the case, count out (*grang*) one hundred thousand, one hundred thousand rosaries.

{333} gsum gsum sgrigs na rab du bzang / bdud kyi g.yul ngo bzlogs pa yin / bu tsha bu mo'i mo la bzang / nad pa yin na btsub 'dug pas / 'bum sde brgya stong tshar grags bya / (MSeD fol 27 line 5 - fol 28 line 1)

4. The middle vertical row (*khyim sa*)

{333} If threes are built in the three *khyim sa*, young children will flourish. Food and wealth will be acquired. Human life (*mi srog*) will be protected by the *lha*. This is bad in divinations concerning illness. It is a sign that a crack [in the] *lha tree* (*lha shing*) will be ripped [open].

{333} khyims sa gsum du gsum brtsegs na / bu tsha 'phel zas nor [S-1] snyed / mi srod lha yis
 bzung ba yin / nad pa yin pa'i mo la ngan / la shor srub du ral ba'i ngo / (fol 31 lines 3-4)

Looking at these examples, the issue of physical well-being emerges as a significant theme in the divination. The excerpts numbered 1, 3, and 4, for example, each contain passages indicating a negative result should the client's query pertain to an illness. While certain structural features appear to have been ignored—such as excerpt n.2 stating that the subject will be deceived by a loved one—it appears as though the theme of illness may have been adapted from a close reading of the major results. This is particularly convincing, I feel, in that the Slob dpon recommends the recitation of prayers should the monk's mother fall ill. This corresponds closely to excerpt n.3, which recommends that the subject "count out one-hundred thousand, one hundred-thousand rosaries" (*'bum sde brgya stong tshar grags bya*) in the case of an illness. Taking this as a baseline, it would appear that, in this particular case, the Slob dpon has selected several prognostic themes from a large pool of modular narrative elements, which are randomly generated by the casting procedure. To readers coming from the Western tradition of Anthropology, this process, the distillation of a single response from the fragmented chaos of a number of random elements, may suggest the activity of *bricolage*, the form of 'mythic thought' as conceived and discussed by Lévi-Strauss.

The *bricoleur*, in Lévi-Strauss's well-known study of mythical thought, is characterized as interrogating a limited, heterogenous set of objects in order "to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to materialize" (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 18). Reconceived as divination, the creative act of *bricolage* is analogous to a narrative process (cf. Peek 1991a). David Parkin, for example, argues that the diviner's role is best expressed in the way in which ordered prognostics are distilled from the debris of a heterogenous group of

signifiers (Parkin 1991). As a seance draws to its conclusion, "jumbled ideas and metaphors that suggest various possible interpretations give way to their ordered sequencing and to more limited interpretations; they are finally superseded by an unambiguous clarification of the causes of the sickness and the material needed to cure it" (Parkin 1991: 183). In this sense, the creativity of the diviner-as-*bricoleur* is expressed through the diviner's engagement with divinatory symbolism and, in particular, by her or his ability to contextualize through interpretation the various narratives brought to the fore during a casting.

While *bricolage* is a useful heuristic device, in the case of *lde'u 'phrul*, it is important to stress that the diviner does not work alone in interpreting the results of a casting. The client also plays a prominent role. As we saw in section 3.4, at the beginning of a *lde'u 'phrul* session, the client is expected to openly divulge all of the personal details relevant to the questions that s/he will pose to the diviner. Additionally, as seen in the above example, after the the casting procedure is completed, the diviner is free to ask the client a series of follow-up questions which, ostensibly speaking, aid in the selection and re-signification of individual narrative elements (cf. Mendosa 1978). To adapt Susan Reynolds Whyte (1991) to my purposes, this places the *lde'u 'phrul* diviner in a three-way conversation, in which s/he is forced to mediate between the client and the authoritative manuscript. Encountering this type of discursive environment raises a number of interesting questions, chief among which is, perhaps, the issue of authorial intention versus contemporary ethnographic usage. How far, for example, do diviners actually diverge from their texts in offering responses to their clients? And how, for that matter, do different diviners understand and interpret textual prognostics in order to adapt them to changing social and ethical paradigms? I will return to these questions in the chapter's conclusion. First, however, I would like to move on to present a second case-study, which sheds a degree of light on the perceived efficacy of *lde'u 'phrul* in Bon communities.

3.6.2 Case study 2: the insomniac's son

One morning in July 2009, while I was taking coffee with the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, a novice monk approached the Slob dpon's quarters as a supplicant. The monk had received a telephone call from an elderly woman in Tibet requesting that the Slob dpon perform a divination to diagnose the causes underlying her chronic insomnia. For weeks, the monk explained, the woman had had difficult sleeping and, on several occasions, had been plagued by disturbing nightmares. Due to the remote area in which she lived, it was difficult for her to find either medical care or a reliable specialist in divination whom she could consult. Despite the fact that the woman was unable to provide any form of payment, the Slob dpon consented to the request and began to prepare the divination's physical materials. After completing the casting, he conferred with the associated divination manual and stated that her condition, which was caused by the influence of *'dre*, could be alleviated by the performance of a specific series of rites and a concomitant change in the woman's diet.⁵⁷ After further consulting the manual, he added that, if these activities were to prove ineffective, the woman should consider rearranging her bedchamber so as to sleep in a different location. The monk then thanked the Slob dpon and, promising to relay the information to the elderly woman, quickly left to make way for other clients and petitioners.

At the time, I did not give a second thought to the monk's request. By 2009, with the proliferation of mobile technologies at sMan ri monastery, it was commonplace for monks to ask for divinations on behalf of their family and friends half a world away. Several days later, however, the Slob dpon informed me that the divination had been a great success. Not only had the woman's case of insomnia ostensibly been cured, he told me, but the divination had also saved her son's life. Two days after the monk's request, at roughly the same time as the woman was performing the

⁵⁷ It is particularly unfortunate that, in this case, I neglected to record the specific rites and dietary changes recommended by the Slob dpon for the alleviation of the elderly woman's insomnia. Furthermore, when I observed this particular incident, the sMan ri Slob dpon had not yet given me permission to photograph or otherwise record the material results of *lde'u 'phrul* casting. As a consequence, I cannot speak to the exact numerical results generated, in this case, by the casting procedure.

recommended series of rites, her son was apparently working as part of a construction crew building a large brick and concrete house. During a work-break, the head of the construction crew asked the son to go fetch some kind of ladder or stool from outside and, immediately after he left the premises, the roof collapsed, killing everyone still inside. The woman's family attributed the son's survival to the series of rites recommended by the Slob dpon and, shortly afterwards, telephoned the monk at the monastery to convey their gratitude. As I was told, over the following days, the elderly woman was able to return to sleeping regularly.

Years later, while living at sMan ri Monastery in 2013, I happened to ask the sMan ri Slob dpon whether or not he believed that *mo rtsis* 'worked,' leaving the question open to interpretation. During my doctoral fieldwork, I had grown accustomed to encountering a degree of scepticism regarding divination practices expressed by highly educated monastics, many of whom couched the efficacy of divination in terms of an expedient decision-making technique, or as a form of 'skill in means' (*thabs*), reifying lay commitments to more imperative soteriological practices. As such, I was surprised (perhaps unduly) when the Slob dpon replied, in a matter of fact way, "yes, of course it works," citing the above account as an example of how divination can be seen to do so. "That was a very good case," he said. "The divination worked because it showed clearly what rituals to do and it showed that there was very little time. So the mother did the rituals quickly, otherwise the son would have died. Then, after all this happened, she had no problems sleeping. No more bad dreams".

Returning briefly to the subject of prognostic structure, in section 3.5 we saw that, in the case of negative, ostensibly undesirable results, *lde'u 'phrul* manuals typically offer lists of highly specific rites that a client may perform in order to stem any of the undesirable events outlined within the text. However, divination manuals only vaguely describe the nature of any current or pending misfortunes, leaving a great deal of room for *ex post facto* elaborations on part of the diviner. A number of authors have discussed this ambiguous element of prognostic structure as a

central feature underlying the perceived efficacy of divination practices in Tibetan speaking milieus (Chime Radha 1981; Gerke 2011; Smith 2014). Barbara Gerke, for example, argues that prognostic ambiguity leaves "space for the personal interpretation and spiritual intuition of the lama," as well as serving to draw the client into the interpretive process (2011: 221). Similar structures, coupling an ambiguous negative portent with a highly specific series of apotropaic rites, have also been discussed in broader anthropological studies as contributing to the self-corroborating nature of the belief in divination (see: Mendosa 1978: 44-48; Horton 1964: 3-16, 1967: 171; Shaw 1991: 138-39; Thomas 1971: 244-47; Evans-Pritchard 1937: 155-58). In William Bascom's terminology, which has been widely adopted in the literature, these *post hoc* explanations are discussed as "alibis" that are "provided to cover unmistakable failures" (1941: 45). As these alibis are rooted within an overarching epistemological system that accepts as *a priori* the validity of divination practices, Bascom's alibis provide that "the logic of the divinatory process is circular and self-contained... [allowing] the process to continue indefinitely, without serious threats from the outside" (Mendosa 1978: 45).

Adopting this hermeneutic, it would be easy to attribute the perceived efficacy of the divination in the case of the elderly woman to similar *post hoc* elaborations. The prognostic initially offered by the Slob dpon, for example, makes no mention of the client's son and proscribes rituals directed only towards the root causes underlying the client's chronic insomnia. By all appearances, it is the coterminality of the building's collapse with the completion of the rituals recommended by the diviner which suggests that the divination could have played a role in saving the life of the client's son. In this sense, the contention that the divination was successful follows, at least in part, a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* line of argumentation. Of course, a similar objection could be raised as well regarding the purported curing of the elderly woman's insomnia; however, I believe that framing the case-study in terms of a positivist logical paradigm neglects an essential feature of the divination's performance.

In my experience, divination practices in the Tibetan cultural sphere hold no magical guarantee of efficacy for their practitioners. It is commonly observed by both client and diviner alike that prognostics sometimes (if not often) fail to come true (cf. Gerke 2011: 37, 221; Ekvall 1963: 32). In this sense, if we attempt to understand divination entirely in terms of its epistemological value, it becomes difficult to account for the persistence of divination practices in any culture let alone in Tibetan speaking communities. In broader discourses on religion and social theory, many authors fall back to Bascom's alibis or parallel discussion of the self-corroborating nature of prognostics as a means of accounting for the persistence of the belief in divination despite any number of demonstrable failures (see, in particular: Mendosa 1978; Thomas 1971 244-47; Evans-Pritchard 1937: 155-58). What is frequently ignored in these studies, however, is that, minimally speaking, divination *does* catalyse forms of actions. In her watershed *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda* (1997), Susan Reynolds Whyte argues that divination places the client in a 'subjunctive' mode, in which the client becomes an active participant in reconciling issues related to suffering, anxiety, and loss. Through the discursive, therapeutic dimensions of the divinatory consultation (cf. Peek and Winkelman 1997), as well as the medical and ritual treatments outlined in the divination's prognostics, the client is equipped with a set of socially sanctioned tools with which to act against the forces that had previously been acting upon her or him with impunity. Seen in this light, Tibetan divination practices emerge as closely wedded to overarching ritual and medical traditions.

3.6.3 Chapter Conclusion: Methodological biases and future research goals

Whyte's understanding of 'subjunctivity' provides us with a thought provoking departure from the Structural-Functionalist mode of analysis which, as characterised in section 1.2, remains a dominant theoretical trend in the general study of divination (Peek *et al* 1991: 2). With the case of the elderly woman in mind, Whyte's remarks also invite us to shift our emphasis away from the

person of the diviner and to look much more deeply into the client's relationship to the divinatory process. It is important to stress, however, that during my doctoral fieldwork I often failed to take the client's unique perspective into account.

When I began my doctoral fieldwork in January of 2013, I had been greatly influenced by the work of Victor Turner and, in particular, by the theoretical discussion of divinatory symbolism advanced in Turner's watershed *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (1975). Retrospectively, I believe that this led me to focus on the roles played by systems of symbols in certain forms of Tibetan divination. This is particularly evident, I feel, in sections of my third chapter. During the first two years of my PhD, the majority of my preliminary readings, translations, and field research were all conducted with an eye towards decoding and contextualising what I felt were the symbol systems inherent in the performance of *lde'u 'phrul*. It was only towards the end of my fieldwork—thanks to numerous conversations with specialists in multiple forms of divination—that I became aware of the complex, discursive nature of divinatory consultations and, perhaps most importantly, of the value of studying the usage and perception of divination manuals by Tibetan diviners themselves. My conspicuous omission of both the client's perspective and a dedicated analysis of the social-discursive aspects of *lde'u 'phrul* brings me to my next point. By way of concluding section 3.6, I would like to take a moment to discuss some of my future research goals.

To begin with, in reading the various textual excerpts presented in sections 3.4 and 3.5, it may have been noted that many aspects relevant to modern life are absent from *lde'u 'phrul*'s interpretive framework. This is most strikingly apparent if one considers the content of *lde'u 'phrul* manuals in relation to the themes of exile and diaspora following the events of 1959. There is no mention, for example, of forced relocations or of the general powerlessness of individuals confronted with state and governmental institutions. Nor, for that matter, is there any allusion to workers' experiences under Capitalism, or the possibility of technological, social, or medical

innovation. This is due to the fact that, as is the case with many forms of Tibetan cleromancy, no apparent effort has been made to revise or 'modernise' the content of *lde'u 'phrul* manuscripts despite their continued circulation in Bon communities. The general absence of contemporary subject matter in *lde'u 'phrul* manuals raises an interesting question: how, specifically, do diviners work to re-signify pre-modern textual prognostics in order to suit the social and ethical complexities of life in modern Tibetan societies?

Noting a similar phenomenon in North Eastern Botswanan tablet divination, Wim van Binsbergen (1995) has argued that some cleromantic techniques are able to survive periods of rapid social and technological transformation precisely because their interpretive catalogues do not attempt to incorporate modern themes. Rather than confronting modernity directly, these forms of divination resolve questions regarding contemporary subject matter by placing the clients' queries within a traditional cosmological schema, which serves to re-affirm—rather than challenge—pre-modern epistemological values. As he writes, "departing from the negative modern experience the client is led back to the matter which allegedly either [sprang] from ancestral wrath... or can be reduced to the relatively manageable, personified scale of sorcery and counter-sorcery. The divination process," van Binsbergen continues, "confronts the irresolvable problems of the modern, inimical world by declaring them irrelevant or secondary, replacing them with other problems which, in a microcosm [in] which both the living and the dead [take] part, can be resolved by divination" (1995: 125). It requires no stretch of the imagination to argue that a similar process could be at work in the performance of *lde'u 'phrul*.

In section 3.6, I argue that *lde'u 'phrul*'s casting procedure can be understood as a random narrative generator, capable of producing a nearly unlimited number of stories; stories at least one of which the diviner will be able to use as a baseline for crafting the divination's final verbal prognostic (cf. van Binsbergen 1995: 124). In section 3.6.1, I provide a case study that attempts to illustrate the process through which the diviner selects individual narrative elements from this

schema and re-signifies them so as to address the specific nature of the client's initial question. Examining both ethnographic and bibliographic data, I assert that, in the case of *lde'u 'phrul*, the diviner's responses are not improvised, but rather are rooted in a close reading of the divination's textual prognostics, the abstract nature of which allows for high degree of *ex post facto* elaboration. The second case study, found in section 3.6.2, then provides an example of how similar *post hoc* elaborations, or 'alibis' can be located in the divination's contemporary performance. In many respects, I believe that this analysis serves as a useful heuristic in discussing the interpretive techniques deployed in *lde'u 'phrul*; however, the (very limited) observations that I offer in sections 3.4 through 3.6 only scratch at the surface of the complex discursive environments in which *lde'u 'phrul* and other forms of Tibetan cleromancy are conducted.

One of the most unique (and often perplexing) facets of studying divination in the Tibetan cultural sphere is that divination is not an island. As we have seen numerous times over the course of the last three chapters, Tibetan divination practices are often highly composite and porous phenomena, which bleed into, minimally speaking, the social, economic, and political spheres of human experience. As a consequence, many aspects of divination cannot be constructively studied in isolation from the overarching systems of belief and medico-ritual institutions that inform the discourses shared by the diviner and her/his clientele. In order to advance our understanding of the social-discursive nature of Tibetan cleromancy, this suggests that future researchers would benefit from adopting a holistic methodology that seeks to combine both ethnographic and bibliographic data in order to chart the relationship of divination (and of the diviner) to the complex social, textual, and epistemological traditions in which divination practices play a significant role. For my part, I would recommend something along the lines of D. F. McKenzie's 'sociology of the text' (McKenzie 1999), which attempts to expand the theoretical orientation of historical bibliographic research so as to view an entire culture as 'text'. As David Greetham writes in his monumental *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*, McKenzie's work shifts "the center of historical bibliography

away from the book narrow conceived (and particularly the book of 'literature') towards a consideration of all forms of communication in a society" (Greetham 1991: 338-39). This type of approach would allow researchers the latitude required to discuss the social-discursive aspects of divination, while simultaneously continuing to study the local, ethnographic relevance of divination manuscripts to both diviners and their clientele.

3.7 Cosmogenic narratives and the gods of divination

3.7.1 The divination mat and the origin myth of the first sheep

As we have already seen, *lde'u 'phrul* diviners cast a specific number of pebbles on the surface of a white wool mat, which is approximately twelve to fifteen centimetres square. The mat itself is known as *mo gzhi dkar po*, 'the white base (or foundation) of the divination' and, in certain instances, is also referred to as *lha gzhi dkar po*, 'the divine white foundation'. *lDe'u 'phrul* manuals do not provide any information on how, specifically, the wool should be obtained and, furthermore, do not offer any explanation by way of mythological precedent for the necessity of casting the pebbles upon a sheep's wool base. On several occasions during my fieldwork, however, the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma explained that the usage of sheep wool in *lde'u 'phrul* should be understood in relation to the performance of *ju thig*, a form of rope divination that makes extensive use of wool in fashioning its divination chords. Having noted that the cosmogenic narratives (*smrang*) outlined in a number of *ju thig* manuals were not helpful in articulating the importance of sheep's wool, the sMan ri Slob dpon directed me to a particular episode in the *mDo dri med gZi brjid* (*Cha* section, chapter 4). The passage in question, which has also been briefly discussed by Tucci (1970: 234-235) and Karmay (1975: 142-144), pertains to the primordial conflict between being (*ye*) and non-being (*ngam*), represented by the divinities Ye rje sMon pa (aka Khri rgyal khug pa) and Ngam rje rTsol po (aka Med 'bum nag po) respectively, as well as the mediation of these

forces through the prophetic abilities of the deity Phya bu g.yang dkar (aka Phya'u g.yang dkar). Though this episode does not necessarily illuminate the general usage of sheep's wool in Bon rituals, it does provide one plausible mythic precedent for the use of wool in the aleatoric practices affiliated with the *phya gshen theg pa* (see: Section 3.3).

The episode, which I have translated below, begins with a kind of armistice between the gods (*lha*) and demons (*bdud*), during which time a miraculous tree begins to grow on the frontier between the respective territories of being (*ye*) and non-being (*ngam*). In order to ascertain who will be victorious in the brewing conflict between *ye* and *ngam*, the clairvoyant (*mngon shes*) deity Phya bu g.yang dkar rides a sheep (*g.yang mo*) to the peak of the Mountain of Existence and, ostensibly speaking, performs divination using a set of *ju thig* cords fashioned from the wool of the first sheep, Lug lha ba bal chen. In the *mDo dri med gZi brjid* (439 line 4 - 444 line 11), this is depicted as an inaugural event, the primordial divinatory act that establishes divinatory knowledge in the world. Seen in this light, insofar as this episode serves as an origin myth for *ju thig*, it would appear that sheep's wool, when used as a divinatory aid, may be associated with the clairvoyant deity Phya bu g.yang dkar, as well as with the mythological inception of divination as a viable prophetic tool.⁵⁸

I.

Long ago, when (*na*) Ye and Ngam (*ngam*) were on friendly terms (*'khrug pa ma*), in the age of the Srid pa cam cam,⁵⁹ a tree [began to] grow on the border between Ye and Ngam. Its leaves were made of fine silk (*zab*). Its fruits were made of precious jewels and gold. Its sap was made of golden nectar. Its bark was made of life-protecting raiments. Its thorns were

⁵⁸ It is also worth noting that sheep's wool—in particular white sheep's wool—appears to be a common feature in apotropaic and divinatory rites throughout the broader Himalayan region, as well as in many Central Asian cultures. That said, it is important to emphasize that structural similarities such as these never imply a genetic relationship between ostensibly homogenous ritual traditions.

⁵⁹ The meaning of *srid pa cam cam* is currently unclear to me; however, it could perhaps be a reference to the *srid pa'i lcam dral bco brgyad*, a set of eighteen divine syblings who, according to Norbu (2009: 53-60), are cast as the forebears of mankind in the *Srid pa'i mdzod phug*.

made of dangerous weapons and its flowers were a marvellous sight (*ltad mo*).

Who was able to interpret (*dpyad ma zhog*) the meaning of these [phenomena]? A *phy*a prince, *Phya bu g.yang dkar*,⁶⁰ interpreted them. He had come mounted upon a sheep (*g.yang mo*), bearing a white-feathered *lha* arrow in his hand. He went to the peak of *Yod ri rdel dkar*, "the white pebble mountain of existence," and performed a divination (*dpyad*) at the tree. Having done so, he saw that there would be a dispute between the teachings of the *lha* and the teachings of the *bdud*. Quarrels would arise between *Ye* and *Ngam* (*ngam*) and there would be both intermittent (*dus kyi*) victories and intermittent defeats. A conflict would arise between the forces of being (*yod*) and non-being (*med*) respectively; ultimately, however, he foresaw victory for Being and defeat for Non-Being. He proclaimed this prophecy from the peak of the three realms of existence.⁶¹ All of Being and Non-being came to hear him and, as a consequence, the two forces went to war. The *phy*a prince *phy*a *bu g.yang dkar* was thus named *mngon shes kyi phy*a *bu g.yang dkar*, or "*phy*a *bu g.yang dkar*, he who is endowed with clairvoyance".

Phya bu g.yang dkar, who was greater than all, did this [e.g. performed divination] for both enemies and friends. He correctly examined (*dpyad*) the trigrams (*spar kha*) and accurately predicted (*thig pa*) both the past (*snga ltas*) and the future (*phyi ltas*). [His techniques] were better than representing truth and falsehood in the palm of one's hand. They were greater than all [other] forms of divination (*rno mthong kun*) and were superior to [the techniques] of all female diviners. All of the treatises (*gtan tshigs*) on calculation in the kingdoms [of the world]

⁶⁰ It is important to note that this figure's name has been changed slightly from *phy*a'u *g.yang dkar*, which appears in the text, to the cognate *phy*a *bu g.yang dkar*.

⁶¹ The three realms (*srid pa gsum*) mentioned in this passage are equivalent to the three levels of existence as imagined in a common cosmological schema that divides the universe into three vertical sections: (1) an under-earth, typified by the *klu*; (2) the earth, typified by human beings and animals; and (3) the sky, typified by the *lha*.

are derived from this event.

In what way, however, was the sheep born? In the distant past, for the great benefit of living, sentient beings, the god Srid pa ye smon rgyal po wished for an object that would fulfil man's (*mi bu*) need for precious stones and jewels. He searched from amongst gold, turquoise, and the five kinds of precious stones; however, [none of these were able] to satisfy the wants and needs [of man], as the objects (*sems med*) for which he wished were [seen by man] as being worthless and [were treated] similarly to dirt and to the rocks of the soil. [Seeing this], he asked his consort, Chu lcam rgyal mo, "how is it that the needs [of humanity] can be met?" She replied, saying: "in order to achieve that which you desire, you [must] travel to the peak of Yod ri rdel dkar and bring together the essence (*snying po 'byung ba'i bcud bsdus*) of the heavens (*gnam mkha'*), the sky (*bar snang*), and the earth (*sa gzhi*). That which you wish for will be achieved".

Taking the advice of his consort, Srid pa ye smon pa sought out thirteen various kinds of dissonant (*mi 'phrod*) substances. First, sky, which is essence of curd on the verge of becoming yogurt. Second, earth, which is the essence of gold and silver. Third, water, which is the essence of the froth of the sea. Fourth, fire, which is the essence of the steam of bodily heat. Fifth, wind, which is the essence of a fragrant breeze (*ngad kyi zer ma'*). Sixth, a budding wing-feather (*the'u gshog*) of a lord of the *khyung*. Seventh, a banner crafted from the skin of a black antelope. Eighth, an agate gem (*mchong bu*) from the hands of a *good sbyin*. Ninth, the tongue of a wise bat (*sgam khyer pha bang*). Tenth, [an amount of] molten flesh the colour of a blacksmith's charcoal (*mgar gyi sol mdog*). Eleventh, the semen of a divine prince (*lha bu*). Twelfth, the womb-blood of a *srin* woman. And last, [Srid pa ye smon pa] covered [all of these substances] with a white cloud and, from the peak of Yod ri del

dkar, the god manifested as a gillying steed (*gyi ling*) with a white face. He then made a wish, saying: "I am the lord of all of phenomenal existence. For the general welfare and prosperity of mankind, I desire an animal (*nor*) that is like me. If it should be kept, it will be wondrous. And if it should be sold, [its value] will be diffused (*'brim*). May it [provide] food for eating and may it slake thirst (*skom pa'i btung*). May it [provide] wool for clothing and wealth for accumulation. May the curd of *g.yang* mature!" Thus he made his wish. Having done so, after three nights, on the morning of the fourth day, [Srid pa ye smon rgyal po] heard (*grag pa*) a sound [echoing from] the peak of Yod ri del dkar, which went "tong tong" (*tong tong*⁶²) and that had never before been heard. He looked and saw the following: a living creature, the perfect size, which corresponded to the sheep of the phenomenal world (*srid pa lug*). Its head was like that of a wild deer. Its legs were like those of common domestic animals (*g.yung dwags*). Its fur resembled the southern clouds and it had a melodious voice.

If you are suffering, a sheep will make you merry (*nyam dga' ba*). If it is examined, a sheep will be beautiful and appealing. If you keep it, a sheep is ready money (*smar ba*) and, if it is sold, its [worth] will be diffused (*'brim pa*) amongst [other] men. [A sheep] is of great price and value. Its yogurt provides life-sustaining nourishment and its fur provides [wool] for clothing. [The sheep] appeared as a creature that would increase both *phya* and *g.yang*.

Having arisen in harmony with a wish of Ye rje smon pa, the Lord of Primordial Aspiration, the sheep was called *rin po che'i rkang 'gros lug*, or "sheep, the precious animal". Even so, in what manner was this [e.g. the creation of the sheep] accomplished? First, sky, which is the essence of curd on the verge of becoming yogurt, became the mind that thinks. Second, earth, which is the essence of gold and silver, became the soil that produces (*bskyed byed*). Third,

⁶² *Tong tong* indicates the ringing of a bell attached to an animals neck, which, in the case of this particular myth, appears to have manifested along with the primordial sheep as part of Srid pa ye rje smon pa's wish.

water, which is the essence of the froth of the sea, became the blood that binds. Fourth, fire, which is the essence of the steam of bodily heat, became the bodily heat that conduces maturation. Fifth, wind, which is the essence of a fragrant breeze (*ngad kyi zer ma*), became the breath that lifts. Sixth, the banner crafted from the skin of a black antelope became the [sheep's] rightward-twisting (*ldem pa g.yas 'khyil*) heavenly horn (*gnam ru*). Seventh, the budding wing feather (*the'u shog*) of a lord of the *khyung* became [the sheep's] symmetrically opposed ears (*snyan pa rnam ldem pa*). Eighth, the agate gem (*mchong bu*) from the hands of a gNod sbyin became the variegated, agate-like eyes with which [the sheep] sees. Ninth, the tongue of the wise bat (*sgam khyer pha bang*) became [the sheep's] wonderful voice, which says "baa" "baa" (*'ba' ba*). Tenth, the molten flesh the colour of a blacksmith's charcoal (*mgar gyi sol mdog*) became the iron wheel of [the sheep's] hooves. Eleventh and twelfth, the white semen [of the divine prince] and the red [womb-blood of the *srin* woman] became the [sheep's] curd, which is nourishing and abundant (red *len 'phel chen*). And last, the windswept (*'bal le ba*) white clouds became the [sheep's] wholesome and plentiful wool.

Having attained this [form] from the [combination of] the thirteen various harmonious substances, [the sheep] came to be the source of nourishment for mankind and man received [from the sheep] all that he wished for and as much as he desired (*gang 'dod ci 'dod*). All of the treatises (*gtan tshigs*) on the deeds (*bya ba*) of precious domestic animals (*rin chen rkang 'gros*) are derived from this event (439 line 4 - 442 line 11).

II.

The *ju thig*, which was known as *shar ba rkyen drug*, appeared from the shoulder-wool of the sheep Lug lha ba bal chen. It could not be tied down (*phur pa rgyag*), however, and blew away (*song ba*). It [first reached] the peak of the wish-fulfilling tree (*dpag bsam shing*) and,

falling from [on high], it fell into a nest (*ra*) of a lord of the *khyung*. Yet again, however, it could not be tied down and blew away. It [circled] the summits of the seven mountains surrounding the world and, in the middle of these, it fell upon [the head] of Ma btsun 'phrul mo. Yet again, however, it could not be tied down and blew away. It then fell upon the great Tortoise [who supports] the golden ground [of the world]. Once again, however, it could not be tied down and blew away. [Finally, it returned] to the peak of Yod ri del dkar, where it fell upon the sheep gYang lha ba bal chen. [From this wool] were fashioned six knots, the nooses (*mgo*) of which were called *mkhar drug*, or "the six castles". The god Ye rje smon pa named this heap of knots *gur chen*, "the great pavilion," and laid it upon the divine white base (*lha gzhi dkar po*).

After Kun shes drang mkhan had taken [the ju thig cords] as a witness, Phya bu g.yang dkar made use [of them] in his diagnoses (*dpyad*). As a consequence, he was able to accurately calculate (*thib pa*) the aeons (*bskal pa*) and the periods of arising, existing, destruction, and emptiness inherent to samsaric existence (*srid chags gnas 'jig stong*), as well as to predict the past, the future, and the present, [including] the duration of human lifespans (*tshe rabs*). He was [also able] to measure the changing (*'gyur ldog*) of the elements and to calculate [both] good and evil and virtues and faults (443 line 17 - 444 line 11).

For our purposes, this passage is of interest for several reasons. To begin with, as noted above, the narrative links the origins of divination to the generation of the primordial sheep (Lug lha ba bal chen) from a wish made by the god Ye rje smon pa, as well as articulating the central role played by the god Phya bu g.yang dkar in the mythological inception of divination as a viable means of prophecy. In both cases, the miraculous wool of the primordial sheep is of central importance and serves, in a narrative capacity, as a kind of Ariadne's thread, linking the two dissonant episodes in

the text. In the first section, divination also emerges as a catalyst causing the opposed forces of Being (*ye*) and Non-Being (*ngam*) to go to war. In this sense, Phya bu g.yang dkar's performance of divination could be read against cosmogonies in the Bon tradition, which share similar themes of duality and opposition. It is also worth noting that, in the second section, the newly created *shar ba rkyen drug* divination cords land (briefly) upon the head of a character named Ma btsun 'phrul mo. In his groundbreaking "Shenrab's Ancestors and Family Members," Kalsang Norbu Gurung notes that Ma btsun 'phrul mo is a minor figure in the *mDo 'dus*, where she appears as one of sTon pa gShen rab's female ancestors in the Phya lineage (2009: 14). This is interesting because, in the Bon tradition, divination practices are often associated with the Phya (as opposed to the dMu) clan.⁶³ Bearing that in mind, this episode provides a previously unstudied account in which that particular association (e.g. between the Phya lineage and the origins of divination) is made explicit.

3.7.2 Transliteration

I.

*sngon ye dam 'khrug pa ma langs nas / srid pa cam cam gnas dus su / ye dang ngam gyi so
mtshams nas / 'bras men ljon men shing gcig skyes / lo ma dar dang zab las grub / 'bras bu
rin chen gser las grub / khu ba bdud rtsi gser las grub / shun pa srog skyobs gos las grub /
tsher ma gdug pa mtshon las grub / dal la gdug pa dri las grub / me tog ngo mtshar ltad
dmod grub / de la gang gis dpyad ma zhog / de ltar phya sras phya'u g.yang dkar de / g.yang
mo lug gis rta la bcibs / yod ri del dkar gyi rtse la byon / shel la dpyad dpyad dpyad btang
bas / lha bdud bstan pa rtsod pa dang / ye dam 'khrug pa ldang ba dang / dus kyis pham rgyal
'byung ba dang / yod med so sor rtsod pa dang / yod la rgyal kha lha ba dang / med la pham
kha 'byung bar rig / de srid pa gsum gyi rtse la bsgrags / stong yod med gnyis kyi tshor bar
byung / de nas ye dang ngam gnyis 'khrug / phya sras phya'u g.yang dkar la / mngon shes kyi*

⁶³ The Phya and the dMu being the two lineages from which sTon pa gShen rab is descended in the figure's vita cycle.

*phya'u g.yang dkar btag / phya'u g.yang dkar kun las che / dgra dang zun dang gnyis ka
mdzad / da mo la legs spar dpyad pa la / snga ltang phyi ltang thig pa la / bden rdzun lag tu
bkram pa dang / rno*

*(440) mthong kun la bshad pa dang / mo ma kun las che ba dang / rgyal khams kun la rtsi
ba'i gtan tshigs de nas byung ngo / da srid pa srid srid lug la srid / lug la ci ltar srid pa na /
sngon srid pa ye smon rgyal po de / skye 'gro sems can don ched du / mi bu nor bu rin chen la
/ nor bu dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i rdzas shig 'dod / der dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i rdzas btsal pas /
gser g.yu rin chen sna lnga las / dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i rgyu med kyang / de las bsam pa'i sems
med kyang / sems med nor de sa rdo 'dra / sa rdo phrod du rdzas nges pa la / snying po med
pa'i nor yin pas / nam dgos ci 'dod ga la 'byung / de la smon pa'i bsam pa la / chu lcam rgyal
mo'i zhal na re / smon pa'i ci bsam 'grub pa la / dgos 'dod nor zhig 'e 'grub bsam / nam mkha'
bar snang sa gzhi yi / snying po 'byung ba'i bcud bsdus la / yod ri del dkar gyi rtse la byon /
gang 'dod smon pa 'grub ste mchis / zhes zer ba la / srid pa ye rje smon pa yis / mi 'phrod
rdzas sna bcu gsum btsal / gnam zho khad ki ru ma dang / sa dngul gser gyi snying po dang /
chu bcud rgya mtsho'i lbu ba dang / me bcud drod kyi rlangs pa dang / rlung bcud ngar gyi
zer ma dang / spyi rje bya khyung gi thel shog dang / khri snyan sal le'i ru dar dang / gnod
sbyin lag gi 'chong bu dang / sgam khyer pha bang gi smra lce dang / zhun chen 'gur gyi so
dog dang / lha bu thabs kyi thig le dang / srin za mngal gyi rag ta dang / sprin dkar*

*(441) thel gyi nang du btums / yod ri del dkar gyi rtse mo nas / gyi ling kha dkar gyi kha la
snang / de la ye rje smon lam btab / bdag srid pa kun gyi rje bo yin / mi bu rin chen dkor nor
la / rang dang 'dra ba'i nor zhig 'dod / bzhag na mtshar la btsong na 'brims / gso bsnyan nya
ra dbang po gsal / za ba'i zas dang skom pa'i btung / gon pa'i gos dang bsags pa'i nor /
g.yang gi ru ma smin par shog / ces zer nas zhal nas smon pas / zhag gsum dros bzhi'i nang*

*par / yod ri del dkar gyi rtse la snga nas ma thos pa'i skad snyan tong tong zhig grags pa / de
srid pa ye smon rgyal po'i gzigs pas / srid pa lugs dang mthun pa'i sems can che chung tshad
du ran pa / mgo ni ri dags 'dra ba / suga pa g.yung dags 'dra ba / spu ni lho sprin 'dra ba /
skad ni snyan la gdung ba mthong na nyams dga' ba / dpyad na yid du 'ong ba / bzhag na
dmar ba / btsong na mi la 'brims pa / gong dang rin thang che ba / zho la gsos su 'byung ba /
spu la gos su 'byung ba / phya g.yang 'phel kha zhig snang zhing / ye rje smon lam lugs dang
mthun par ru byung bas / rin po che'i rkang 'gros lug zhes bya bar btags so / de yang ci ltar
du grub na / gnam zho khad kyi ru ma las / bsam pa sems kyi rgyu ru grub / sa dngul gser gyi
snying po las / bskyed cing sa yi rgyu ru grub / chu bcud rgya mtsho'i lbu ba las / sdud byed
khrag gi rgyu ru grub / me bcud dros kyi rlang pa las / smin byed drod kyi rgyu ru grub /
rlung bcud ngad kyi*

*(442) zer ma las / degs byed dbugs kyi rgyu ru grub / ' khri snyan sal le'i ru dar la / gnam ru
ldems pa g.yas 'khyil du grub bo / spyi rje khyung gi thel shog las / snyan pa rnam ldems pa
ru grub bo / gnod sbyin lag gi mchong bu las / gzigs pa'i mchong spyen khra bo grub bo /
sgam chen pha bang gi smra lce las / 'ba' ba'i smra lce mgrin bzang du grub bo / zhun chen
'gar gyi so rdog las / rmig pa lcags kyi 'khor lo ru grub bo / thabs shes thig le dkar dmar las /
srid len 'phel chen gyi ru ma ru grub bo / sprin dkar theg ce bha le las / srid bal 'bal le 'bol
bzang du grub bo / de ltar mthun pa'i rdzas sna bcu gsum las grub cing / 'gro ba mi yi gsos su
gyur pa / gang 'dod ci 'dod yon tan byung ba / rin chen rkang 'gros bya ba'i gtan tshigs de las
byung ngo / (439 line 4 - 442 line 11)*

II.

*lug lha ba bal chen sog bal la / ju thig shar ba skya drug byung / de ma chags phur te song ba
la / dpag bsam shing gi rtse mo nas / spyi rje khyung gi ra la babs / der yang ma chags phur*

de song ba la / ri bdun kha khyer bar ba yi / ma btsun 'phrul mo'i steng du babs / der yang ma

(444) chags phur te song / dbang chen gser gyi sa gzhi yi / ma ha rus rbal sten du babs / der yang ma chags phur te song / yod ri del dkar gyi rtse mo na / g.yang lha ba bal chen gyi steng du babs / mdud sgo drug la mkhar drug bcas / ye rje smon pa'i ming btags pas / de ding ding spangs pa gur chen bya / de lha gzhi dkar po'i steng du btag / kun shes drang mkhan gyi dpang bzung nas / phya'u g.yang dkar gyis dpyad btang pas / da bskal srid chags gnas 'jin stong dang / tshes rabs snga phyi da lta dang / 'byung ba dus kyi 'gyur ldog dang / skyon yon legs nyes chags tshad dang / srid pa rtsa dkar 'phel 'grub dang / na shi dur gsum gui dpyad lugs dang / dgra bzhi dur gsum gyi dpyad rnams thig / (443 line 17 - 444 line 11)

3.7.3 The divination gods: excerpts from the MSaP

The various deities and attributes ascribed to the divination grid are particularly well articulated in the *MSaP*. As both these deities and the divinatory and astrological signifiers to which they are ascribed are central to the divination's performance, I would like to provide a translation of the relevant section from the MS, which I believe warrants quotation in full.

3.7.4 Translation

(xvi) As for the sovereign of the first *lha sa*, [he is] sGra bla bya khyung pa. He is the *sgra bla* of the two: void and both being and non-being. As for his father, he is gNyan rje gong sngon.⁶⁴ As for his mother, she is 'Brug rgyal sman gcig. Their excellent son is the manifested *lha* who is the lord of all, Khyung nag g.yu yi ral pa can. He soars in the space of the sky of the primordial condition. He

⁶⁴ gNyan rje gong sngon is one of the *mgur lha*, a class of hunting deity. With the slight variant spellings of sNyan brjid gong sngon or gNyan rje gung sngon, this could also indicate a vulcan deity indigenous to the Amdo (*A mdo*) region (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1998: 215; Rino, 2008: 185-86 fn 479). According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, gNyan rje gong sngon is one of "a number of local deities, who apparently are the personification of mountains" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996: 214).

is adorned with the crown jewel, the wish fulfilling gem. (xvii) He is the lord of the entire phenomenal world, which is his domain. He is the *grol phug(?)* of all the *sgra bla*. [The first *lha sa*] is a place of protection and refuge (*mgon skyabs*) for the *sgra bla* of patrilineal ancestors. It is the place of male lineages and the *lha srung*⁶⁵ of the four castes (*rigs gzhi*). It is the place of the patron (*le'u*) and the protective arrow. It is the seat of the dominion of the *bon* and *gshen*. It is the location of the *rten gsum*,⁶⁶ the temple, the fortress, and the royal seat of the chief priest (*bla dpon*). It is the place of the hoary-headed elder ancestors (*pha khu myes rabs mgo se*). The Southeast, the number four, the colour green, and the wind element.

As for the sovereign of the middle *lha sa*. He is known as g.Ya' spang skyes gcig. He is dPa' chen wer ma nyi nya. He has a lion's head with lynx's ears (*dbyi yi sna*), feet in the form of swords, and wings like small knives.⁶⁷ His feet are vortexes of wind. On his head, he wears the great helmet of the sun and, on his body, he wears the great breastplate of the stars. He rides an untamed (*rgod*), heroic tiger in the prime of its life. (xviii) He lives in the palace of Khro chu dmu lugs upon the peak of Mu ri de'u dkar. He is the commanding general (*dmag dpon*) of all the *sgra bla*. He is surrounded by one-hundred thousand fearsome warriors of the *wer ma*. They delight at *ku* and they revel at *bswo*.⁶⁸ He is the *sgra bla* of men in their physical prime. [The middle *lha sa* is] the place of patrilineal siblings (*pha spun*) and of that which is good and bad. It is also known as the place of youthful stallions (*rta pho dar ma*), of men, and of the head of the family. The eastern direction, the number three, dark blue, the *zin* trigram, and the wood element.

As for the sovereign of the final *lha sa*, he is called rDo rta gro chus. He is mNgon shes phyu bu g.yang dkar. He wears a cloak made from *chu gtan rtsi ber(?)*. In his hand he bears an

⁶⁵ The *lha srung* are considered to be tutelary and guardian deities.

⁶⁶ The *rten gsum*, the three supports, are generally construed as being 'body,' 'speech,' and 'mind'.

⁶⁷ Several of these passages are, in the Tibetan, taken directly from the gZi brjid vol. Kha, chapter eight, *sNang gshen theg pa'i mdo*, f. 579. Chiefly the passages relating to the deity's facial features and armaments: *seng ge'i mgo la dbyi yi sna / ... ral gri rkang la chu gri gshog*. Concurrently, as Karmay notes, 'Ju mi pham also offers a description of the deity that, like mine, does not feature an elephant's trunk, as well as several passages which are identical to my own description of the deity.

⁶⁸ *Ku* and *bswo* are onomonopoetic warcries.

illuminating lamp which is fastened to a white feathered *lha* arrow. He rides a mount, which is is the *g.yang dkar lug*.⁶⁹ He resides in a magical fortress at the base of the amazing tree, which is the pinnacle of the white mountain of existence (*yod*). (xix) [The final *lha sa*] is the water of existence (*srid kyi chab*) and the verdant doorway meadow (*sgo 'gram ne'u gseng*).⁷⁰ It is the place in which lambs, calves, small foals (*rte'u chung*), and children (*byis pa*) graze, gallop, and are loved.⁷¹ [The final *lha sa*] is an enclosure for friends and *rma g.yang*(?). It is the lesser storehouse of wealth and the minor location of men. It is also known as the location of memory (*gzhen*) and of [the condition of] roads (*rkang ldan*). The northeastern direction, the colour white, the number eight, the trigram *gin*, and the mountain element.

As for the sovereign of the great *khim sa*, she is lCam mo g.yung drung dgung sman. She rides a white crane as a mount, as well as a turquoise, conch, cuckoo bird. In her hand she holds a white, silver mirror. Residing in a five-coloured tent of rainbow light, she clearly shows all good and evil. [The first *khyim sa*] is the place of matrilineal lineages (*mo rgyud*), of the *mgron lha*,⁷² and the *sman mo*.^{73 74} It is the location of maternal grandmothers, of women, and of the female generation (*rgan rabs*). The upper Sky Door (*yar gyi gnam sgo*) is the first location of the medicine bowl (*sman phor*) which [nourishes] invalids [who are lost on the] marching road in the snow and rain and in the hail and thunder. The Southern direction, the number nine, the colour red, the *khon* trigram, and the earth element.

⁶⁹ The *g.yang dkar lug*, "the good-fortune white (good) sheep". According to Chabros (1992:183) and Hermanns (1949: 86), the *g.yang dkar lug* is a creature invoked in a number of rituals related to the accumulation of good-fortune.

⁷⁰ When reading these headings, keep in mind that the 'doorway' to which *sgo 'gram ne'u gseng* refers is the lower *khyim sa*, which is commonly referred to as the earth door, or *sa sgo*.

⁷¹ Due to a number of scribal inconsistencies, this passage is particularly difficult to read. I have attempted to reconstruct omitted and damaged syllables using sections from both the *MSeP* and the *MSeD*. The original passage reads: *sgo 'gram ne'u seng srid kyi chab / byis [S-1] rte'u chung be'u lu gu'i / brtsi sa dkyu sa gzas sa yin / (MSaP fol xix l.1)*.

⁷² According to Kornman (2015: 210), the *mgron lha* are gods of feasts and banquets.

⁷³ *sMan mo* may refer to the four *sman mo* sisters, who are popularly believed to be guardian deities of Lake Kokonor in Qinghai. Also, according to Matthieu Ricard, the *sman mo* are also guardians (*gter srung*) of the rTa phag yid bzhin nor bu, a 17th century gTer ma discovery attributed to 'Ja' tshon snin po (1585-1656) (Ricard 2001).

⁷⁴ There is an omitted syllable in this line (*mgron lha sman mo rgyud sa*), which I have taken to indicate that the fourth syllable "mo" is meant to be doubled.

As for the sovereign of the middle *khyim sa*, she is known as g.Ya' 'brum sil ma. (xx) She is the child-caring, mother-goddess (*ma lha*) of propagation (*'phel byed*). Adorned in a precious gown of white silk, she brandishes a ball of thread in her hand in which *g.yang* condenses. She is mounted upon a mare, the divination-horse (*mo rta*), whose coat is as white as conch. [Its] golden bridle and turquoise halter jingle [as she rides], *si li li*.⁷⁵ She resides upon the peak of a three-sided crystal mountain. She is the mother-goddess (*ma lha*) of all women. The [middle *khyim sa*] is the holding-place (*'dzin sa*) of the hearth and the treasury of the *g.yang* of food. It is the location of the *chang tshang*⁷⁶ and of the essence of [both] curd and butter. It is the location of women in their prime and of *g.yu gdung*⁷⁷. A place of repose for the ill and the center of the vital life-force (*srog*). The middle divination place is the basis for the examination of right and wrong and of the life-force of women (*mo yi srog*). The concentration of the four directions, the number five, and the colour yellow.

As for the sovereign of the final *khyim sa*, she is Gangs sman *g.yu bun gangs chung*. The manifestation of the siblings of the eastern *sman*,⁷⁸ she [serves as] the guardian of the inner and outer portals. [The final *khyim sa*] is the location of servants and young girls. It is the place of slaves (*bran*) and of scrawny dogs at the door (*rkang phran sgo khyi*). [The final *khyim sa*] is the threshold of foreign lands, (xxi) the household treasury, and the *phya*⁷⁹ of [both] sheep and cattle. The base of women and the support (*zo zhabs*) of *g.yang*. The lower earth door is the seat of the patient (*nad pa*).⁸⁰ The northern direction, the colour white, the number one, the *kham* trigram, and

⁷⁵ *Si li li* is an onomonopoetic indicator of sound.

⁷⁶ *Chang tshang*: either a tavern or the storehouse in which *chang* is kept.

⁷⁷ I have been unable to identify the term *g.yu gdung*; however it appears in the passage above as an epithet for women in their physical prime. Professor Ramble has suggested to me that either "turquoise lineage" or "turquoise beam" (in which case men in their physical prime would be "the pillar") could serve as provisional translations? With that said, one simple solution could be that *g.yu gdung* is not a noun-phrase at all, in which case the passage would simply read "it is the location of women in their prime, of turquoise, and of *gdung* (e.g. progeny, affection, and devotion)".

⁷⁸ The phrase *sman shar bu mo* is a likely misspelling for *sman sha yu mo*, which appears as the title of one of the sections of the divination grid as represented in the *MSeP* (see: Section 3.1).

⁷⁹ This line is a curiosity in that *phya* is a term generally designated for humans, while *g.yang* tends to be associated with animals. Here, in the line "the *phya* of sheep and cattle," these traditional associations have been reversed.

⁸⁰ I have struggled with this line and my proposed translation is incomplete. The original passage reads: *mas kyi sa sgo*

the water element.

As for the sovereign of the first *phyi sa*, he is Srin po skya rings khrag mig. Murmured curses and misery [emanate] from the magical illusions (*cho 'phrul*) of the black lord of *ngam*, *di ri ri*.⁸¹ His body is adorned in a goat-skin robe and, in his hand, he wields an iron saw. With regard to his domain (*gnas*), he resides in the land of enemies. He is surrounded by *bdud* and *srin po*. [The first *phyi sa*] is the location of high mountain passes (*la kha mthon po*) and of the morning. It is the place of great armies, foreign lands, and formidable enemies (*dgra chen*). The location of the guardians of the four cardinal directions (*phyogs kyi srung ma*), of maternal uncles, and relatives. [The first *phyi sa*] is the major (*gong ma*) location of foreigners and enemies. It is [also] the location of the *btsan*, the *rgyal po*, and the *gdon*. The southwest, the number two, the colour black, the *khon* trigram, and the earth element.

(xxii) As for the sovereign of the middle *phyi sa*, he is known as Srin po phag zhon, the laughing king of the *srin* (*rgyal po ha ha*). The terrifying three radiances with nine eyes in his forehead. If [Srin po phag zhon] takes the form (*brdzus*) of a *lha*, [the middle *phyi sa*] is the primary location of friends. [At that time] it is the location of kinsmen, of male companions, and of *tsha zhang*.⁸² If [Srin po phag zhon] has transformed into a *srin*, [the middle *phyi sa*] is the location of legal disputes. The middle place of enemies is [also] the location of the property and residence of one's foes. It is the border between the mountains and plains (*ri thang mtshams*) and the pale eastern road, which takes half a day [to complete] on foot. The western direction, the number seven, the colour red, the *dwa* trigram, and the iron element.

As for the sovereign of the final *phyi sa*, she is Srin gyi khyi mo rna gsang. She is the iron-headed black bitch of *ngam*. She is the mistress (*bdag mo*) of disease, and the queen of epidemics

nad pa yi / stan rmang gto lam yas kyi sgo /

81 *Di ri ri* is a tri-syllabic indicator of sound indicating, in this case, a mumuring or whispering sound.

82 *Tsha zhang*: the term can serve as a diad, indicating "uncles and nephews"; however, it may also operate as a term on its own, meaning "son-in-law" or "father-in-law," "bride-receiver" or "bride-giver".

(*ma yam*)⁸³. [The final *khyim sa*] is the place where the three valleys converge (*lung gsum mdo*)⁸⁴ and it is the coast-line (*chu 'gram*). It is the outer threshold and the place of female guests (*mo mgon*). The place of beggars, of the immoral (*ma rabs*), and of thieves. It is the evening place of neighbours and of household friends (*grong rogs*). It is the location of gossip, of *mo 'dre*, and of *gdon*. The Northwest, the number six, the colour white, the *khen* trigram, and the sky element. The final *dgra sa* is the threshold.

(xxiii) Thus concludes the examination of the nine recognized ones (*ngos bzung dgu*).

3.7.5 Tibetan Transliteration

(xvi) *lha sa dang po 'i bdag po ni / sgra bla bya khyung [S-1] pa de / stong yod med gnyis kyi sgra bla yin / yab ni gnyan rje rgang sngon yin / yum ni 'brug rgyal sman gcig yin / sras mchog spyi rje sprul pa 'i lha / khyung nag g.yu yi ral pa can / ye dbyings nam mkha 'i dbyings*

(xvii) *na lding / spyi gtsug yid bzhin nor bus brgyan / zil gnon srid pa kun gyi rje / sgra bla kun gyi grol phug yin / pha myes sgra bla 'i mgon skyob sa / rigs bzhi lha srung pho rgyud sa / le 'u dang ni srung mda 'i sa / bon gshen chab srid gdan sa yin / rten gsum lha khang sku mkhar sa / bla dpon che khag rgyal gyi sa / pha khu myes rgan mgo se 'i sa / sku gshen pha ba yon khur sa / lho shar bzhi ljang zon rlung khams / lha sa 'bring po 'i bdag po ni / g.ya' spang skyes gcig zer ba de / dpa' chen wer ma nyi nya yin / seng ge 'i mgo la dbyi yi rna / ral gri 'i rkang la chu gri 'i gshog / rkang pa rlung gi 'khor lo can / nyi ma 'i rmog chen dbu la gsol / skar ma 'i khrab chen sku la mnab / dpa' bo stag rgod dar ma bcibs / dmu ri*

⁸³ I am indebted to Charles Ramble for this translation of *ma yams*.

⁸⁴ My impression is that the three major vertical regions in the catography of the divination grid (i.e. the *lha sa*, the *khyim sa*, and the *phyi sa*) are here described as three valleys which converge in the final *phyi sa*; in effect, the three valleys terminate at the outer threshold (*tha ma phyi*), which is also described as being the by banks of a river or ocean (*chu 'gram*).

(xviii) *de'u dkar rtse mo yi / khro chu dmu lugs mkhar la bzhugs / sgra bla yongs kyi dmag dpon yin / wer ma'i gnyan dmag 'bum gyis bskor / ku la dga' zhing bswo la dgyes / skyes bu dar ma'i sgra bla yin / gtso po blo 'dzin pha spun sa / blo cha pho chus yag nyes sa / gza' dpon sa ste mi pho dang / rta pho dar ma'i sa yang zer / shar phyogs sum mthing tshin shing zhams / lha sa tha ma'i bdag po ni / rdo rta gro chus[ng] zer ba ste / mngon shes phyas bu g.yang dkar yin / chu gtan rtsi ber na bza' gsol / phyag na lha mda' sgro dkar la / gsal ba'i sgron me btags pa bsname / g.yang dkar lug gi rta la zhon / yod ri de'i dkar rtse mo yi / ya mtshan shing gi rtsa ba na / 'dzang pa 'phrul gyi mkhar na bzhugs / byes kyi bang ra gzhi yi ni /*

(xix) *sgo 'gram ne'u gseng srid kyi chab / byis sba rte'u chung be'u lu gu'i / brtsi sa dkyu sa gzas sa yin / grogs dang rma g.yang ra ba yin / nor gyi bang mdzod pho sa chung / rkang phran gzhon gyi sa yang zer / byang shar brgyad dkar gin ri khams / khyim sa che ba'i bdag po ni / lcam mo g.yung drung dgung sman yin / g.yu bya khu byug dung bya ni / khrung khrung dkar mo rta ru zhon / phyag na dngu dkar me long 'dzin / 'ja' tshon 'od lnga'i gur la bzhugs / bzang ngan thams chad gsal bar ston / mkhro lha sman mo rgyud sa⁸⁵ / ma phyi bud med rgan rab sa / yar gyi gnam sgo thog ser dang / kha char 'grim lam nad pa yi / sman phor ma sa dang po yin / lho phogs dgu dmar li me khams / khyim sa 'bring po'i bdag po ni / g.ya' 'brum sil ma bya ba de / 'phel*

(xx) *byed ma lha bu rdzi yin / dar dkar na bza' rin chen brgyan / phyag na gru gu g.yang 'khyil bsname / dung sha dkar mo rta ru zhon / gser srab g.yu mthur si li li / shel ri zur gsum rtse la gnas / bud med rnams kyi ma lha yin / zas g.yang bang mdzod thab 'dzin sa / chang tshang zho mar bcud kyi sa / g.yu gdung bud med dar ma'i sa / nad pa'i nyal sa srog gi dkyil / mo sa 'bring po mo yi srog / legs nyes dpyad kyi gzhi ma ste / gling gzhi 'dus so lnga ser po / khyim sa tha ma'i bdag po ni / gsang sman g.yu bun gangs chung yin / sman shar bu mo spun bdun sprul / phyi nang sgo yi bdag*

⁸⁵ There is an omitted syllable in this line, which I have taken to indicate that the fourth syllable mo is meant to be doubled.

*ru bsrung / bu mo chung dang bran g.yog sa / bran dang rkang phran sgo khyi'i sa / zhing sa byes
kyi sgo them sa /*

*(xxi) khyim kyi bang mdzod phyugs lug phya / g.yang gi zo zhabs mo yi gdan / mas kyi sa sgo nad
pa yi / stan rmang gto lam yas kyi sgo / byang phyogs gcig dkar khams chu khams /// phyi sa dang
po'i bdag po ni / srin po skya rings khrag mig yin / ngam rje nag po'i cho 'phrul las / mya ngan
dmod pa di ri ri / ra yi slag pa lus la gyon / lcags kyi sog le lag na thogs / gnas ni dgra yi yul na
gnas / bdud dang srin pos 'khor du bskor / snga dro la kha mton po'i sa / dmag chen byes chen dgra
chen sa / gnyan dang zhang phyogs srung mo'i sa / byes sa dgra sa gong ma yin / btsan dang rgyal
po gdon gyi sa / lho nub gnyis nag khon sa khams /// phyi sa 'bring po'i*

*(xxii) bdag po ni / srin po phag zhon zhes bya ba / srin gyi rgyal po ha ha yin / dpal bar mig dgu
gdangs gsum 'jigs / lha ru brdzus na rogs kyi dngos / tsha zhang shag po gnyen gyi sa / srin du gyur
na gyod kyi sa / dgra sa 'bring po dgra'i khyim gzhis / la rked yang na ri thang mtshams / nyin
phyed rkang thang skya shar lam / nub phyogs bdun dmar da lcags khams / phyi sa tha ma'i bdag
po ni / srin gyi khyi mo rna gsang de / ngam gyi khyi nag lcags mgo yin / ma yam rgyal mo nad
bdag mo / lung gsum mdo dang chu 'gram sa / sgo them phyi ma mo mgron sa / rkun ma ma rab
sprang po'i sa / khyim mtshes grong rogs phyi dro'i sa / mi kha mo 'dre mo gdon sa / byang nub
drug dkar khen gnam khams / dgra sa tha ma sgo them*

(xxiii) sa / ngos bzung dgu yi dpyad tshar ro /

Chapter 4: Translation and transliteration

A dispersed fragment, reaching us by chance of an obscure shadowy world that can be reconstructed to our own history only by an arbitrary act. That culture has been destroyed. To respect its residue of unintelligibility that resists any attempt at analysis does not mean succumbing to a foolish fascination for the exotic and incomprehensible. It is simply taking note of a historical mutilation of which, in a certain sense, we ourselves are the victims. "Nothing that has taken place should be lost to history," wrote Walter Benjamin. "Not only to redeem humanity does the past belong in its entirety." Redeemed and thus liberated — Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (xxvi).

4.1 Introduction to the *sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*

Having addressed several important aspects of the divinatory rite, in this chapter I would like to move on to present a full translation of a *lde'u 'phrul* manuscript. For the sake of brevity, I have chosen to focus on the shortest and also, coincidentally, the oldest of the *lde'u 'phrul* manuals currently available to me: the *sMra sing rdel mo gsal ba'i me long* (abv. *MSeD*), an early to mid-18th century work attributed to Kun grol grags pa 'ja' tshon snying po (b. 1700), a Bon ecumenicist and historian, who is particularly well-known for his role in the *bon gсар ma*, or 'New Bon' tradition in rGyal rong (on Kun grol grags pa's life, see: Achard 2005; Karmay 1998c, 2005). The MS was recently edited by Slob dpon bsTan 'dzin rnam dag, in collaboration with the late Gene Smith, and reprinted at sMan ri Monastery as part of a collection on *bon gсар ma* ritual literature (Namdak 1997). As this reprint is the only witness of the MS at my disposal, it has not been possible to construct an *apparatus criticus* as I had originally intended (see: Appendix section *iii*). Additionally, the general lack of a comprehensive analytical survey of textual production in pre-modern Tibet has made it exceedingly difficult to study the bibliographic history of the *MSeD*. It should be noted, however, that the colophon of the 1997 reprint makes it clear that the MS is considered to be a commentary written by Kun grol grags pa on an earlier divination manual, which the scribe leaves unnamed.

The MS is composed of 38 paper folia (265mm x 40mm), divided into five or six lines per writing block with a consistent seven syllable verse. The copy at my disposal is written in an

unornamental *dbu med* script using black ink. The size and style of the script is consistent throughout the MS, including the numerous passages in which ritual instructions are given to the reader (which are commonly produced in a smaller *'khyug yig* script in ritual literature). The various sections of the MS are divided in the same fashion as the other MSS in the 1997 collection. Typically, sub-sections are indicated by plain *nyis shad* (double strokes), with larger divisions and section headings indicated by relatively ornamental *bzhi shad*. These are frequently punctuated by numerical charts illustrating the various possible arrangements of stones formed during the casting.

Unfortunately, the exact date and location of the *MSeD*'s composition is still unclear. According to Slob pon bsTan 'dzin rNam dag, the MS is one of a series of ritual manuals which were recovered from rGyal ri dgon in Kong po (Namdak 1997). As many of the other MSS in the collection date to the 19th century, however, this does not necessarily indicate that the *MSeD* was composed during Kun grol grags pa's tenure in Kong po. It is entirely possible, for example, that the MS was composed at the height the author's literary output in rGyal rong (1733 - c. 1766⁸⁶) and then brought, in manuscript form, to rGyal ri dgon at a later date. With that said, it is perhaps important that the MS displays a highly non-sectarian tone. Many of the Bon deities evidenced in other *lde'u 'phrul* manuscripts are, for instance, conspicuously absent in the *MSeD* (including the deities discussed in sections 3.4.3 and 3.7.3). Additionally, a number of traditional Bon markers, such as *kham chen*, which signifies the Bon equivalent of the Prajnaparamita Sutra, have been replaced with their Buddhist counterparts; in this particular case, the term *kham yum*. These features may suggest that the MS was composed following Kun grol grags pa's arrival in rGyal rong (c. 1733), which coincides with his brief but formative relationship with Sangs rgyas gling pa (1705-1735), a preeminent figure in the anti-sectarian *bon gsar ma* movement. As there is no physical evidence upon which to date the manuscript, however, this hypothesis must remain

⁸⁶ It should be added that both Jean Luc Achard (2005: 6 n.17) and Per Kvaerne (1990: 157) suggest that this date may have to be amended to 1742, accepting that Kun grol grags pa's famous *Catalogue* of the *Bonpo Kanjur* may have actually been completed in 1751.

provisional.

4.2 Transliteration guidelines

It is important to note that, in large part, the transliterated text below is offered without any attempt to amend orthographic irregularities. In this regard, I follow Ramble's guidelines (2012) in presenting my proposed alterations to the Tibetan MS in brackets within the attached English language translation. Additionally, I have chosen to transliterate *bsdus yig* contractions in their full, un-contracted forms; however, unorthodox spellings within *bsdus yig* have been amended in the transliteration. As a point of reference, I have also adopted the following conventions, several of which are taken directly from Ramble's (2012: 19-20) general guidelines:

* The normal *shad* is represented by the oblique (/) stroke, while *gnyis shad* are represented by two oblique (//) strokes. Ornamental page breaks and *bzhi sad* will be represented by four oblique (///) strokes. Similarly, the broken *shad* that corresponds to a 'ditto' mark is signified by a vertical (|) line.

* [1] indicates the number of letters (or stacks) that are illegible.

* [±1S] indicates approximately the number of syllables that are illegible.

* {} indicate brackets used to emphasize both section headings and to highlight numerical charts. The numbers inside each numerical chart will be represented inside the brackets in their corresponding locations.

As the reader will see, one of the characteristic features of the divinatory genre is the coupling of deities together with long lists of prophylactic and apotropaic rites. Due to the fact that these sections are often highly repetitive, I have chosen to provide explanations of ritual terminology in the notes to my translation; however, these concepts will only be addressed the first time that the

corresponding Tibetan terms appear in the MS.

4.3 Translation of MS

(ii) Homage to *Jam pa'i dbyang*.⁸⁷ The clear, clairvoyant mirror will be explained. First of all, with regard to the *dmu gab phyi ma*,⁸⁸ clear away the *dmu gab* which obscures perception and the truth of the three jewels. Suppress pollution of the hearth (*thab gzhob*), enmity (*'khon*), and impurity. Clear away the thick, gloomy mist (*bying smugs 'thibs*) which presses down [upon your head]. Clear it away with this great tree. Clear it away with salt and with this fragrant grass. Clear it away with these pebbles, great and small. Clear it away with this earth-poison and Wolfsbane.⁸⁹ Avoid the divination thieves, moral wrongdoing, and that which is unseen by the sharp [sighted] divination. With regard to the divinatory invocations:

(iii) The Buddha of three perfect bodies.⁹⁰ The three jewels (*dkon mchog*) and the *rtsa gsum lha*. The three inner and outer secret *yi dam*. Come, all of you, to the *bka'*, the *bla ma*, and the root tantra. The glorious lords [of the] *'gur lha* [and the] *brten ma*. You three: *lha*, *klu*, and *gnod sbyin*. The planets and the stars. The fierce *yul lha* and *gzhi bdag*. All of you be present now at the *mo* and the *phya*.⁹¹ You all, lords, are wise. There is nothing that you do not see or do not know. If there happens to be time, please distinguish the good from the bad. Reveal the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false respectively (*so sor*). Conduct this sharp-sighted divination clearly.

⁸⁷ 'Jam dbyang mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, a renown figure in the 19th century non-sectarian *ri me* movement. The fact that a 19th century figure is invoked in the opening lines of the text certainly indicates that the MS has been through redactional hands; however, as this is the only witness of the MS at my disposal, when and by whom the text was reworked remains unclear.

⁸⁸ *dMu gab* indicates a spell or torpor which is intended to induce forgetfulness, torpidity, ignorance, and other deleterious mental effects. For the use of *dmu gab* in the Ge sar epic, see Lama Jabb's recent and quite excellent work on Tibetan poetry (2015: 66, 86).

⁸⁹ Wolfsbane, known as *Actonitum* in its scientific classification, is a poisonous flowering plant, the genus of which belongs to the family *Ranunculaceae*.

⁹⁰ *sKu gsum rdzogs pa'i gsang rgyas* (*sangs rgyas*). The three buddha bodies, the three *kayas trikāya*: the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakāya*, and the *nirmānakāya*.

⁹¹ Here, *mo* simply translates as "the divination". In many cases, *phya* denotes "luck, fortune, or the propensity towards fortune". In this passage, however, it seems to carry the same connotation as one sees in PT 1285 (Lalou 1957: 42, 66, 86, 137) and PT 1047 (Macdonald and Imaeda 1979: 331-349), where the term has been rendered as "prognosis" (Karmay 1998: 247). As such, the passage seems to indicate a desire that the deities be present at the "divination" (*mo*) and the ancillary provision of "prognoses" (*phya*).

There are forty-two stones with which to conduct a detailed examination. Cut these into three sections. Calculate as four the four. Cast them upon the nine *ling tse*.⁹²

With regard to the first *lha sa*, (iv) it is the place of men, grandfathers, and the *sgra lha* deities. The place of old men (*rgan po*) and of both Bon and Buddhist *lde'u* (*lde'u*). The place of the fortress, the temple, and the *gtsug lag*.⁹³ The place of fathers, paternal uncles, divine yaks (*lha g.yag*), and stallions. The seat of the dragon year. The eyes of the divination and its peak. If a one is cast here: it refers to the lords of the *wer ma* and the *sgra bla*. If offerings are given to the *wer ma* and the *lha srung*, the outlook will be positive. If a two falls here, the *lha ma* are delighted. Strike the leader (*mi chen*) with a question. It is a sign of the elixir (*rtsi*) and the first great sin. Above all, this is bad for those born in the dragon year.⁹⁴ They will be tossed and turned (*tshubs*). Offer *bskang bshags*.⁹⁵ Perform *bsang brngan*⁹⁶ and *rnam 'jam*.⁹⁷ Also perform a *tshe sgrub*,⁹⁸ a *'chi slu*,⁹⁹ and subdue the demons of bad death among both males and females. If a three is cast, the *lha* will act as one's assistant. This is the portal into the inner divine companion. With respect to the noble individuals (*ya rabs*), a friend will be present in person. For whichever divination is cast, this is good. (v) If a four is cast, the four *lha* are steadfast. This is a sign that paternal relatives will be prosperous. *gYang* will be unimpaired while *srog phya* will be stable.¹⁰⁰ It will not be necessary to

⁹² *Ling rtse* is generally rendered as "lattice". In this context, however, the term refers to the nine individual sections of the divination grid.

⁹³ Leaving aside Macdonald's famous discussion of *gtsug lag* (1971), the term is often rendered as 'sciences' in the sense of the literary science, astrological sciences, and so forth. In this context, however, the Sman ri Slob dpon feels as though the term is meant to indicate *gtsug lag khang*, a chief monastic temple, or shrine room.

⁹⁴ I have altered this passage to suit the tone of my English translation. Rendered literally, the Tibetan passage, *lhag par 'drug lo pa la tshubs*, would mean "above all, those born in the dragon year will be battled, tossed about".

⁹⁵ *bsKang bshags*: purification prayers

⁹⁶ *bSang brngan*: fumigation offerings

⁹⁷ *rNam 'jam*: I have been unable to identify this term.

⁹⁸ *Tshe sgrub*: a long life sadhana (Sanskrit *āyuhśādhana*).

⁹⁹ *'Chi slu*: a death deception rite.

¹⁰⁰ Karmay (1998, 2002) proposes the translation of 'quintessence of fortune' for the term *g.yang* and notes that *g.yang* can be combined with other terms to symbolize their essence (2012:1). *Phya* is often closely associated with *g.yang* and, as Karmay notes, has two general meanings: (1) prognosis and (2) vital force or life. When *phya* appears together with *g.yang*, as in the above passage, it is often in this second sense. Additionally, in many cases, *phya* is closely related to humans, while *g.yang* is related to animals; however, this opposition does not always hold (Ramble 2012: 1-2). As such, the above passage indicates that the casting is excellent for *g.yang* and for *srog phya*, the vital life-force of human beings.

perform a *gto* for a full three years. If there is a sickness, it will last for a long time. In divinations concerning business, income, and earnings this is strong.¹⁰¹

With regard to the middle *lha sa*, it is the place of men in their prime, of powerful memory, and of the principal deity. It is the place where excellence and and poor memory are indicated. It is the place of yaks, *mdzo*, horses, and stallions. It is the hare-tiger year. If a one is cast, the *lha* are exalted (*lha ngo mtho*). The *srog* is unhindered.¹⁰² Whatever divination is cast, this is excellent. If a two is cast, it is bad for adults in their prime. It is a sign of defilements and armies. It is a sign of blood. It is a sign of conflict, of eight broken doors, and of death. (vi) Long-lasting diseases will not be cured. It is a sign that one's heart will be empty and one will be ill. The *rgyal po'i gdon* will [emerge] from a nearby place.¹⁰³ The *gdon* [which afflicts] red materials [will spread] from the East. Recite a *tshe gzung*¹⁰⁴ and [perform] a '*chi slu* and a *dgra brub*¹⁰⁵. Immediately perform a *rim gro*¹⁰⁶ and (*dang*) construct a *rgyal mdos*.¹⁰⁷ If a three is cast, it is a high, exulted (*ngo so*) place of birth. This is good for *blo phywa* and one's thoughts will be carefree.¹⁰⁸ One will discover wealth. Whatever the casting, this is a positive sign. If a four is cast, it is excellent in divination concerning *srog*. One's home and community (*khang sgrom*) will be immutable. This is a sign that guests and refugees will be delayed. If one has been sick for a long time, one will not die. One will not suffer death by one's enemies or the *gdon*.

With respect to the final *lha sa*, it is the place of boys, wealth, and horses. It is the annual

¹⁰¹ The Tibetan in this passage was at first somewhat obscure. This is the Slob dpon's translation. It has been pointed out to me that the line *phyi dal che* is roughly equivalent to the verb '*gyang ba*, which indicates that the subject will be extended or postponed. In this case, Slob dpon feels as though the general connotation is that *tshongs phywa* and *grogs phywa* will be extended and, therefore, that this is a positive result.

¹⁰² *Srog*: human life-force. On *srog* as a general concept, see: Gerke 2011.

¹⁰³ This passage indicates the polluting or generally malevolent influence of the *rgyal po* demons. The *rgyal po*, in this context, are roughly equivalent to the *btsan*. It is perhaps worth noting that, in Bon mythologies, Nyi pang sad, a former king of Zhang zhung, is considered to be the leader of the *rgyal po*.

¹⁰⁴ *Tshe gzung*s: dhāraṇī for long-life.

¹⁰⁵ *dGra brub*: ritual for burying hostile forces.

¹⁰⁶ *Rim gro*: healing rites.

¹⁰⁷ *rGyal mdos*: the ritual construction of a thread cross for the *rgyal po* divinities/demons.

¹⁰⁸ *Blo phywa* indicates *phywa* of strength and intelligence. In the above passage, as the subject's *blo phywa* is strong, intellectual activities will be able to proceed unimpeded and the subject's thoughts will be carefree.

seat of those born in the ox-year. If a one is cast here, it is a sign of repentance (*skyes [bzang] ba'i ngo*). (vii) Horses and livestock will flourish. Important friends will be victorious in commerce.... That which would normally not come about will come about. This is good. If a two is cast here, it is bad in divinations concerning enemies and *srog*. The child-killing demon will be furious. It is a sign that the peg tying down one's horses and livestock will come loose. [One will encounter] great enemies and thieves. Appeal (*bya*) to the *sgra bla*. If there is an illness, the *srin bu gdon*¹⁰⁹ will be nearby. Furthermore, from the north-eastern direction a red-skinned woman will lay out *spyang nag*.¹¹⁰ Repair a damaged road and recite a *tshe gzungs*. Make offerings to the poor, perform a *g.yang sgrub*,¹¹¹ and recite passages from the *gser 'od*.¹¹² This is particularly bad for those born in the ox year. If a three is cast, it is the power (*brtsan*) of the *lha* guardian arrow. This is excellent for divinations concerning small boys and young horses. What is lost will be found and what is pursued will be caught. Whatever divination is cast, this is a good sign. It is particularly good in divinations concerning *srog*, intellectual pursuits (*blo*), the client's principal question (*don phywa*¹¹³), and so forth. If a four is cast, (viii) it is a sign that the fortress and the country will be seized. This is an omen of familial infighting (*pha spun nang 'khrug*). This is excellent for *srog phywa* and there will be no external enemies. Guests returning home will be delayed.

With regard to the first *khyim sa*, it is the sky-door, the *mo lha*, and the *mo sman*. It is the place of maternal grandmothers and of venerable, elderly women. It is also the place of human life (*mi srog*), of the tea-churn, and of wealth. It is the resting place of those born in the horse-snake year. If a one is cast here, the *lha* and *zhing skyong* will be your companions (*sdong grogs*). This is

¹⁰⁹ *Srin bu gdon*: the child-killing gdon. More exactly, it is the *gdon* of the *srin bu*, which is a raksha, a savage ghost or spirit.

¹¹⁰ According to Norbu (1997: 260 n.21), it was customarily considered inauspicious for a bride to join her future husband while carrying "black utensils" (*spyad nag*). The presence of such an object was considered to be an evil omen.

¹¹¹ *g.Yang sgrub*: a calling in of blessings. A rite of propitiation and prosperity.

¹¹² *gSer 'od*: the sutra of *gser 'od dam pa*, the Golden Light Sutra. The passage asks the patient to recite passages from the Golden Light Sutra as a means of cultivating merit and averting possible misfortune.

¹¹³ *Don phywa*: strictly speaking, this translates as "important activities"; however, after observing the divination performed, I feel as though *don phywa* more accurately represents the specific question posed by the client to the diviner at the opening of the seance.

excellent in that one's children, horses, and wealth will increase. It is said that rain and snow will be scarce. It is excellent in divinations concerning medicine (*sman phywa*). If a two is cast, the *lha mo* will be stolen away. This is bad for the lineage of elderly women. It is a sign that conflicts or legal disputes will arise concerning one's siblings. This is an ill omen for those born in the horse-snake year. Either neighbours or *'dre* will emerge from the South. Negativity will follow you everywhere.¹¹⁴ (ix) Suppress the *mo 'dre* by performing a *bsang* [*mchod*] and a *chab khrus*.¹¹⁵ Close the sky door and give offerings to the *btsan*.¹¹⁶ It is said that rain and snow will come and one will meet both men and *sman*.¹¹⁷ If a three is cast, the *lha* will be one's companions. The *yul lha* will be one's companions and, whatsoever you imagine, it will be achieved. It is a sign that enmity will arise amongst one's children. If a four is cast, this is excellent for elderly women. It is a sign that cattle will be afflicted by 'empty heart' [disease]. Avert the *'gong po*, establish the *g.yang rten*.¹¹⁸ Perform as many *nor gzungs*¹¹⁹ and *bri 'don* as possible.

With regard to the middle *khyim sa*, it is the place of women in their prime and the medicine bowl. It is the place of full and empty milk-pails. It is the place of the hearth and the treasury of livestock. It is the place of men and the divination-heart. If a one is cast here, it is a sign of companionship. Having heard good news, guests and helpers (*mgon*) will come. The lady of the house (*khyim bdag mo*) will be free from disease. If a two is cast here, the *bdud* will run off with the divination medicine (*mo sman*). (x) This is a sign of thieves, of dispute, and of sickness. It is a sign that the sleeping place will be empty and the sick person unfulfilled. Recite myriad Sutra verses (*mdo 'bum*) [to placate] the demons of the neighbours (*khyim mtshes 'dre*). Perform the victorious

¹¹⁴ *sKyas sna bag sna bza' spyod gdon*. *sKyas sna*, *bag sna*, and *spyod gdon* are, according to Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, three different types of negativity that are particularly pervasive and not rooted to a specific location, meaning that they will follow an individual even in he or she were to travel.

¹¹⁵ *bSang mchod* is a water purification rite and *chab khrus* indicates a purification liturgy

¹¹⁶ On the result of a two, the sky door is open, which means that various types of pollution and demons can enter. One must perform various rituals to close the sky door in order to prevent this.

¹¹⁷ In this case, *sman* does not indicate medicine, but rather a class of female divinities worshipped in some folk traditions.

¹¹⁸ In this passage I believe *g.yang rtan* signifies *g.yang rten*, as in the *g.yang rten gyi bum pa*, the auspicious pot where ritual items related to the *g.yang* are kept.

¹¹⁹ *Nor gzungs*: indicates the recitation of mantras for the cultivation of wealth and prosperity.

*nor sgrub*¹²⁰ and *g.yang skyabs*¹²¹. If a three is cast, the curdled milk of *g.yang* is enclosed. This is excellent for all cattle and livestock. It is a sign that friends will come. It is good (*yag*) for making beer and ominous for yogurt. If a four is cast, it is a sign that four houses will be built. What will come? Who will be met? What will be achieved? It is a sign that whatsoever occurs, events will be delayed.

With respect to the final *khyim sa*, it is the place of servants (*bran*), enemies, soldiers, mice, and swine. It is the place of brides, daughters, and livestock. It is the road-year of both swine and mice. It is the small treasury (*bang mdzod*) of wealth. If a one is cast here, it is a sign of the superior (*dam pa*) threshold¹²². The enclosure will be filled by horses, sheep (*lug*), and livestock. The *dmu thag* of livestock is extended. If a two is cast here, (xi) it is a sign of the children's threshold. Due to a decline in the *g.yang* of wealth, wealth will be lost. Should there be a lawsuit or legal dispute, this is an ill omen. In divinations concerning *gdon phywa*,¹²³ [this indicates] childlessness (*rabs chad*), *mo 'dre*, and the pollution of food, which arises from low-caste hands. Close the earth-door and repair a damaged road. Perform a *g.yang sgrub*, a *chu sbyin*, and *god mnan*.¹²⁴ If a three is cast here, one's store of food and wealth will increase. This is excellent should one enter into a new friendship. If a four is cast here, it is an omen of legal disputes and obscurity. These may occur; however, the outcome will be fair.¹²⁵ Guests and helpers will be delayed. This is excellent for livestock and for girls. Guests will not enter through the solid inner-doorway.¹²⁶

With regard to the first *phyi sa*, it is the place of enemies, thieves, *rgyal po*, and *'dre mo*. It

¹²⁰ *Nor sgrub*: a wealth *sādhana*, rites to secure prosperity and wealth.

¹²¹ *g.Yang skyabs*: sacrifices to secure prosperity.

¹²² *sGo them dam pa*, "the superior threshold". The final *khyim sa* is known as the earth door, which is also one of the two main threshold spaces. So, in this case, the threshold refers to the final *khyim sa* itself.

¹²³ *gDon phywa*: indicates divinations concerning the influence of *gdon*.

¹²⁴ *Chu sbyin*: water offerings; *god mnan*: a ritual for crushing demons responsible for loss of livestock, usually through an epidemic.

¹²⁵ I should note that this is the Slob dpon's reading of the passage.

¹²⁶ The solid inner doorway here refers, I believe, to the lower *khyim sa*, which is both the earth door and the Inner Threshold. If the door is closed, it is firm. Demons and negativity cannot enter, which is good; however, this can also be undesirable in that the client is also closed off to guests and other external influences, both negative and positive.

is the annual seat of those born in the sheep-year. If a one is cast here, it is a sign that enemies and *'dre* will come. Great foes and thieves will arise. One will be harmed by the *btsan* and the *rgyal po*. (xii) Above all, this is excellent for those born in the sheep year. Make offerings to the *btsan* and to the *rgyal po*. Perform a *rim gro* and a *g.yag dgra chos*¹²⁷. It is a sign of the arrival of guests, a physician, and both great Buddhist and great Bon priests. If a two is cast, one will be hindered by assembled enemies and *'dre*. It is a sign of good tidings and love (*sha tsha*). It is said that this is a bad sign for those born in the sheep year. If there is a sickness, the *gdon* which comes from the south-west will [pollute?] one's black kitchen utensils (*spyang nag*). If a three is cast, it is a sign of friendship. Whatever is cast, this is mediocre. This is good for those born in the sheep year. If a four is cast, then there will be no enemies or *'dre* whatsoever. Travel, commerce, and intellectual activities will be hindered.

With regard to the middle *phyi sa*, it is middle place of families, male companions, and of enemies. (xiii) It is the annual seat of those born in the bird monkey year. If a one is cast, enemies will gnash their teeth in hatred (*mur [ba] du sdang*). There will be enemies who are equal to one's strength. Maternal relatives will be harmed by someone of equal social standing. That which would not usually come about will come about and that which would not usually be met will be met. If a two is cast, the legal disputes initiated by one's enemies (*dgra phyogs*) will be brought to an end. There will be no enemies. One will be greatly relaxed and have reason for great pride. This is excellent in divinations concerning intellectual activities (*blo phya*) and for the client's principal question (*don phya*). Should one make use of an empty container, the *gdon* which arises from the west will afflict the sick.¹²⁸ This is bad if one is born in the bird-monkey year. If a three is cast, livestock will be defiled (*ngan*) by an angry enemy. If the [casting in the] *lha sa* is good, this is a

¹²⁷ *dGra chos*: an enemy suppressing liturgy. A *g.yag dgra chos* is, I believe, a liturgy aimed at suppressing or controlling malign forces that may affect one's livestock.

¹²⁸ This is as curious passage. My translation is almost certainly too literal. After speaking with the sMan ri Slob dpon, however, I've decided to stand by the English translation offered above. Apparently, the passage does serve as a kind of warning against leaving empty containers near the bodies of the ill, lest malignant forces take root inside of the containers and hamper the patient's recovery.

sign of friendship. If the [casting in the] *lha sa* is bad, friendships will be lost. Due to certain offences (*nyes pa*) and *gdon phywa*, make apologies (*bshags pa*), offer confessions, and eat raw meats (*sha dmar*). If one is sick, death is possible. Change your sleeping place and surrender some of your possessions. If a four is cast, (xiv) this is excellent in divinations concerning intellectual activities (*blo phywa*), business (*tshongs phywa*), and for the client's principal question (*don phywa*). As there will be no *gdon* or *dgra*, this is excellent in divinations concerning *srog*.

With regard to the final *phyi sa*, it is the place of brothers and sisters, of armies, of slaves, and of servants. It is the place of insolent foes and of thieves. It is the outer threshold. It is the annual seat of those born in the dog year. If a one is cast, it is the technique of divine commerce (*lha 'dre'i nyo tshong stabs*). It is a sign that both enemies and thieves will come. *gDon* [will spread] from guests, refugees (*mgon*), and dogs. Perform a *dgra mnan*. Make *gtor zlog*¹²⁹ offerings and enclose (*bskar*) the *mo 'dre*. This is good for women born in the female-dog year. If a two is cast here, *dgra* and legal disputes will be completely suppressed. This is excellent in divinations concerning intellectual activities and for the client's principal question. If a three is cast, it is known as the *'dre snying mang*.¹³⁰ It is a sign that an illness will spread (*nad 'byams*), afflicting both livestock and the infirm (*mi nad*). If a four is cast, no harm will come from the *dgra*. This is excellent. If a meeting might be proposed, do not go to the meeting. If someone [is planning] to come, it is a sign that they will not come.

(xv) Six stones arranged [horizontally] across the top like this: {132} Six stones like this is unsurpassable. Whatever divination is cast, this is excellent. An elderly person rests in the sun. {312} Six stones like this is the head of excellence. This is excellent for those entering into the innermost *lha* village. {123} Six stones like this is the lost companion. If [the divination concerns] guests or assistants, it is a sign of loss or theft. Make fumigation offerings and remunerations

¹²⁹ *gTor zlog*: exorcist rites implying *gtor ma*.

¹³⁰ *'Dre snying mang* would indicate something along the lines of "the very bad heart". According to the *sMan ri Slob dpon*, this means that one's mind is unfocused. It is a reference to a weak mind relative to the *lha snying*, which is a strong, focused mind.

(*brngan*) for the displeased *lha*. If it is a divination for the *khyim phya*, perform a *g.yang 'gug*. Propitiate the *sa bdag*, till the soil [to remove a] stone, and recite from the *rdo glog*.¹³¹ Whatever is cast, it is an average result. {321} Six stones like this is average. There is a chance of sickness and legal troubles. If there is a sickness, it will be due to the influence of the *klu*. One must perform a *dgra brub* and a *kha 'gyod*¹³². {213} Six stones like this is average verging on poor (*'bring smad*). As the *lha* are displeased, perform *bskang gsol*.¹³³ (xvi) It is a sign of impurity and pollution, make ablutions and perform fumigation offerings. A friend has departed, [carrying fortune with him]. One must perform a *g.yang 'gug*. The *rgyal po'i gdon* [will spread] from the East.

{231} Six stones like this is a misunderstanding (*go log*). In light of the *yul lhas'* anger, perform *bsang mchod*. Due to the presence of enemies, subdue the *dgra sri*. If there is a sickness, it is [due to] the *rgyal po'i gdon*.¹³⁴ Perform a *rgyu drag*¹³⁵ and a *shing rgyal mdos*. It is said that this casting is average to poor in the lower two [horizontal] rows. If the casting is poor [in the lower two rows], a sick person's condition will worsen. The *klu*, the *btsan*, and wild animals will take hold. Cutting the *shing gnyan*, the guardian spirit (*srung ma*) will wander far afield. {114} Six stones arranged like this is a content heart (*snying dga' [ba]*). As a sign of the *lha* is it higher than conch; as a sign of humans, it is redder than the *btsan*. It is a gathering of the dogs, horses, and men [of] Zhang Zhung into a single divine row (*gsas gral*). Whatever divination is cast, this is good.

(xvii) {411} Six stones arranged like this is a heart [filled with] regret (*snying 'gyod [pa]*). Debates and confrontations will arise with one's superiors. The people will be unsettled. A plague will spread. To avert this, perform a great *dgra brub*. Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, this is bad. {141} Six stones arranged like this is misery. It is dogs, jackals, and wild leopards. [Of the] two, which [will strike] first: spears or arrows? A din of defamatory rumours (*kha sma*), it is a sign of

¹³¹ This refers to a text with which I am, unfortunately, unfamiliar.

¹³² I am unable to translate the term *kha 'gyod*; however, it is worth noting that it is a term of some antiquity, appearing, for example, in PT 1047, line 363.

¹³³ *bsKang gsol*: a mending and petition ritual.

¹³⁴ The pollution caused by the Red King. Purged by Red King rituals (*sMan ri Slob dpon*).

¹³⁵ *rGyu drag*: a wrathful rite associated with Padmasambhava.

turmoil.¹³⁶ Perform as well as possible a *dgra brub* and a *dgra mnan*.¹³⁷ It is the malevolent influence of the *rgyal po* and the *gri mo*.¹³⁸ Make a *rgyal mdos* offering and divert (*bskar*) the *mo gri*. It is a sign that a sick person will fail to recover and die. Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, it is said that this is a moderate result. {222} Six stones arranged like this is a lamentation. It is a sign of injury caused by the *btsan* and the *rgyal po*. It is the *gdon* of fresh meat, wild animals, perpetrators of incest, and unattractive women (*bud med kha so mi gsang [ba]*). (xviii) Whichever star underlies [the relevant misfortune must be identified] and [exorcised] with a *mdos*. It is a sign of snow and rain; regret (*kha 'gyod*) and slander (*kha smra*).

{Now an explanation of the upper section divided into ten stones.} {334} Ten stones arranged like this is the highest. It is the lion who bears the semblance of greatness. As a sign of the *lha*, it is the pinnacle of excellence, higher than the heavens (*dgong*). In divinations concerning illnesses amongst the elderly this is a mediocre result. Nonetheless, for whatever is cast, this is good. {433} Ten stones arranged like this is a poisonous serpent. The jewel of *kLu rgyal gTsug na*¹³⁹ is stolen by the white garuda. Even if one was rich in the past, it will come [to pass that] one will be poor. For whatever is cast, this is quite mediocre. {343} Ten stones arranged like this is a soaring garuda. Whatever comes, it is said that it will come swiftly as a bird. [Even if you believe

¹³⁶ I have taken great liberties with this passage. *kha sma 'ur zing 'byung ngo yin*. First of all, I have used the term '*ur zing*' twice: (1) "a din (*'ur zing*) of humiliated voices (*kha sma*)"; and (2) "it is a sign (*ngo*) of turmoil (*'ur zing*)," or rendered literally, "it is a sign (*ngo*) that turmoil (*'ur zing*) will arise (*'byung*)". Nonetheless, it is a beautiful passage and I feel that it merits a slightly more poetic treatment of the prose. With that said, the passage could also be rendered in a very different fashion. To begin with, '*ur zing*' may not be an attributive noun (ie. a noun adjunct) and the phrase *kha sma 'ur zing* may not be a compound noun at all (as the seven syllable verse does not here allow for the associative particle *dang*). If this is the case, the passage would read something like: "It is a sign that humiliated voices (*kha sma*) and unrest/turmoil (*'ur zing*) will arise (*'byung*)".

¹³⁷ *dGra mnan*: a demon suppressing liturgy.

¹³⁸ I have made significant alterations to this passage. *gDon du rgyal po gri mo'i gdon*: I have rendered the *la don* particle following the first syllable as a substitute for the associative particle *dang*.

¹³⁹ According to Ohnuma (2012), *rGyal gtsug na* is a Tibetan language rendering of the Sanskrit figure Mañicūḍa, a mythological Chinese king who, in the *Lokānandanāṭaka*, appears with a jewel embedded in his head. Over the course of the narrative, one of King Mañicūḍa's nemeses, the King Dusprasaha, makes several attempts to steal the jewel in order to cure a plague that is ravaging his own kingdom. This may indicate that the *rgyal gtsug na'i nor bu*, the jewel of King Mañicūḍa described in the MSeD, is associated with supernatural healing abilities.

that something cannot be accomplished], it is said that anything is possible. (xix) The conch *bya ru* is planted in the yellow stupa of gold.¹⁴⁰ This is particularly good for *srid phya*.

{442} Ten stones arranged like this is a flying spire. This is excellent in divinations concerning the power of Buddhist and Bon priests. Should men [march] to war, this is excellent. If an individual is ill, he will require *dbang chen*.¹⁴¹ Though [the mould] for the golden statue [has been] poured, [proper] ears will not form. {244} Ten stones arranged like this is a black mouth.¹⁴² One will be separated from their protective divinities (*skyob pa'i mgon*). Perform as many *grib khrus* and *mnol bsang* as possible.¹⁴³ Furthermore, as many *tshogs* [*kyi mchod pa*] and *skang ba* as possible.¹⁴⁴ Guests will not arrive on time. For whatever is cast, this is bad. {424} Ten stones arranged like this is a *ske stong*.¹⁴⁵ If the divination concerns war or thievery, this is an omen of blood. Perform purificatory rites for those slain by a weapons. It is an omen of sorrow and polluted foods (*mnol btsog*).¹⁴⁶ (xx) Make powerful offerings to the *khyim lha* and the '*phrag lha*.¹⁴⁷ With regard to ten stones cast [horizontally across] the top row like this, though not across the middle or lower sections: recite mantras from the *rNam 'jom*,¹⁴⁸ perform ablutions, and *mnol bsang*. [Should these not be effective], if one must succeed [in an undertaking], make powerful offerings to the *khyim lha* and to the '*phrag lha*.

Thus concludes [the explanation] of ten stones cast [horizontally across] the upper section.

{Now, the explanation of eight stones appearing in the middle or lower sections} {332} If eight

¹⁴⁰ While *bya ru can* may refer to the so-called *bya ru can* kings (see: Vitali, Roberto 2008), in this context the term refers to the two horns that often rise out of the peak of certain types of Bon stupas.

¹⁴¹ *dBang chen*: tantric empowerments.

¹⁴² According to the sMan ri Slob dpon, "black mouth" or *kha nag po* is an unlucky omen.

¹⁴³ *Grib khrus* cleansing rites to remove the effects of *grib*; *mnol bsang* indicate rites that serve to purify contaminations.

¹⁴⁴ *Tshogs kyi mchod pa*: these equivalent to *ganapuja*, or feast offerings; *skang ba*: expiatory sacrifices.

¹⁴⁵ In human anatomy, a *sKe stong* indicates a region of the neck called the sternal head, which is the English language term for the minor depression between the two sternocleidomastoid muscles in the neck, directly above the sternum.

¹⁴⁶ This translation was suggested to me by the sMan ri Slob dpon.

¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify the meaning of '*phrag lha*.

¹⁴⁸ Professor Ramble has informed me that *rnam 'jom* may be a reference to a collection of rituals called *rNam 'joms sgrub bsnyen*, which is a compilation in vol. 213 of the *bKa' rten* (Text no. 13).

stones come to fall like this, it is a teaching within friendship¹⁴⁹. Regardless of whether it is the middle or the lower section, concerning *grogs phyra* and *don phyra*, all of one's desires will be fulfilled. {233} Eight stones arranged like this is a teaching from outside of friendship¹⁵⁰. If cast in the middle section, it is a sign of the '*gong po*. An adult will be seized by disease. Perform a *tshe sgrub*, a '*chi slu*, and a '*gong bkar*.¹⁵¹ Perform a *spar kha'i gto bcos* and repair a damaged road. (xxi) If it is cast in the lower section, it is a sign that a friend will be lost.¹⁵² On behalf of the offended party and the *klu*, make offerings to the *klu*. This is bad for all forms of *don phyra* and *blo phyra*. {323} Eight stones arranged like this is a teaching outside of friendship. In the middle section, it is a sign that householders (*khyim bdag*) will fall ill. Say as many *tshe sgrub* and *tshe dbang* as possible. One will be deceived by a loved one. If this is cast in the lower section, it is bad for cloven-hoofed animals. If one softly recites a *tshe gzungs*, this is good. {431} If eight stones happen to be cast like this—whether it is cast in the middle or the lower section—it is bad for all forms of *dgra phyra* and *grogs phyra*. One will be deceived by a beloved individual. Perform exalted (*phags pa*) *dgra brub* and *g.yang skyabs*. {134} Eight stones cast like this is a retrieved *g.yang*. If it is cast in the middle section, in divinations concerning female householders, people, and children this is excellent.

(xxii) If it is cast in the lower section, wealth will increase. {341} Eight stones arranged like this is a teaching within friendship. If cast in the middle section, it is the utmost satisfaction of female householders and adults. If cast in the lower section, it is excellent for little children. {143} Eight stones arranged like this is a friend received. One enters into a new friendship. This is good. That which is asked about will come to pass (*yong ba*). This is excellent in all divination

¹⁴⁹ This term *grogs kha nang du ston pa* recurs frequently in the text. I have provisionally translated the phrase as a 'teaching within friendship'; however, its meaning and relevance in the MS is still unclear to me.

¹⁵⁰ "A teaching outside of friendship," or a *grogs phyi bstan [pa]*, is clearly presented in opposition to *grogs kha nang du ston pa*; however, as with the previous section heading, this passage is unclear.

¹⁵¹ '*Gong bkar*: a rite to drive out '*gong po* demons; a type of exorcism.

¹⁵² According to the sMan ri Slob dpon, in this passage a friend is lost because the *klu* have been offended or slighted. As a consequence, it is important to undertake various ritual propitiations of the *klu*, which are outlined in the following line.

concerning intellectual activities (*blo phywa*) and for the client's primary question (*don phywa*). Whether this is cast in the middle or the lower section, it is equally excellent (*'dra 'dra dge*). {422} Eight stones arranged like this is entering (*rgyu ba*) into friendship. Adverse legal decisions will be reversed. If this is cast in the lower section, it is a sign of wealth. Lost possessions will certainly be regained. {314} With regard to eight stones being arranged across the middle section in this fashion, the mountain of friendship will be to one's right. This is excellent.

{134} (xxiii) With regard to eight stones arranged across the lower section in this fashion: it is excellent in issues concerning friendship. In the middle section, it indicates a meeting with adult friends. In the lower section, it is excellent for high-quality horses. {413} This arrangement of eight, cast across the middle section, is an excellent omen of friendship. It is a sign that whatsoever is said to come will come to pass. If the divination concerns an illness, it is caused by *thab gzhob gdon*.¹⁵³ To purify this *gdon*, it is necessary to perform a *thab gdon gto*. In both the lower and middle sections, it is excellent. In the lower section, [however], it is bad for the birth of children (*srid phya*)¹⁵⁴. {224} Eight stones arranged like this is an outer friend lost. One's attentions will be divided (*blo tse gnyis*). Goals will not be met. If the upper and lower rows are good, it is fairly-positive. If they are bad, it is a divination of the very worst [kind] (*mo ngan kun gyi mtha'*). Perform a *skang zlog*, a *dmар zlog*, and read from sacred texts. (xxiv) If cast in the lower section. The enraged *klu* will undermine (*log*) an unfortunate invalid. It is a sign of blood. Should [the divination] concern *mkhal sked nad*¹⁵⁵ it is a sign that [the patient] will recover. Recite from the *Klu 'bum* and *rNag mo stod 'bum*.¹⁵⁶

{242} Eight stones arranged like this is an omen outside of friendship (*grogs phyir ngo*).

¹⁵³ *Thabs gzhob gdon*: according to the Slob dpon, this indicates a type of pollution that spreads when an item is boiled incorrectly in the kitchen, leaving a bad smell which lingers around the stove. This type of pollution may cause illness by virtue of upsetting the deities of the kitchen and thus needs to be properly purified.

¹⁵⁴ On *srid phya* in general, see: Tucci 1970: 204.

¹⁵⁵ *mkhal sked nad*: lumbago, a common musculoskeletal disorder.

¹⁵⁶ The manuscript reads *rNag mo stong 'bum*, which is almost certainly a misreading of *stod 'bum*. I would like to thank Professor Ramble for pointing out that the *sTod 'bum* is one of the "Four 'Bum," the other three being the *Klu 'bum*, *gNyan 'bum* and *Sa bdag 'bum*. The *Klu 'bum*, on the other hand, is better known and indicates a Bon scripture intended to aid against the influence of the *klu* (see: Stein 1971; Kvaerne 1991; Laufer 1898; Schiefner 1880).

Whether cast in the middle or lower sections, it is bad. There will be disputes and spiteful rumours. Perform *dgra mnan*, *gyod mnan*, and *gnad 'gro*.¹⁵⁷ If there is an illness, it is [due to] the *ro mnol gdon*.¹⁵⁸ This is the conclusion of arrangements of eight stones in the lower and middle sections. From here on will be a discussion of [horizontal] arrangements of four stones. First of all, {211} Four stones arranged like this is the wrong path. If the divination concerns an adult male, this is bad. If one has departed, one will never arrive. If cast in the lower section, this is bad for one's wealth. Perform a *mdo* ritual [for the propitiation] of the harmful *mo 'dre*. Recite the *sher snying*,¹⁵⁹ myriad counter-spells (*bzlog*), and a collection of dhāraṇī (*gzungs*). {112}. Four stones arranged like this is the path of friendship. (xxv) A sword cleaves the enemy's head. This is excellent. It is a sign that one will come to quickly achieve one's goal. This is excellent should one keep draught animals.¹⁶⁰ With respect to the middle and lower sections, this is excellent.

{121} Four stones arranged like this is a secret. With regard to *lha*, *'dre*, and humans, as well as quarrels (*brtsod*), lay people's places (*ser chags*¹⁶¹), womankind, and hand barley (*phyag nas*): this is a sign of defamatory rumors and talk (*gtam gleng*). If the divination concerns *grogs phya*, a companion will not be found. Recite as many Sutra verses and *dgra zlog* as possible.¹⁶² {444} With regard to three sets of four arranged like this: if this is cast in the middle section, it is the golden middle. The upper sky door is covered (*ma phye*) and, as the lower earth door is also closed, the enemy's head is concealed by black yak's hair (*re ba*). If there is an ill person, it is a sign that they will die. {444}(xxvi) If there is a casting like this across the lower section, it is a garland of turquoise. This is good. It is the secure iron door-brace of the three doors. There will be no misfortune and wealth will increase.¹⁶³ Should a guest be coming, they will arrive shortly. If there is

¹⁵⁷ *Gyod mnan*: I believe that this is a rite meant to suppress legal conflict. The *gnad 'gro* rite is unfamiliar to me.

¹⁵⁸ *Ro mnol gdon* would indicate the ritual cleansing of pollution (*mnol*) derived from contact with corpses (*ro*).

¹⁵⁹ *Sher shing*: the heart sutra.

¹⁶⁰ The passage reads *phyugs sge nang du tshu pas bzang*. I would like to thank Professor Ramble for point out that *phyugs sge* is almost certainly a misspelling for *phyugs sgo*.

¹⁶¹ This rendering of *ser chags* was proposed by the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma.

¹⁶² *dGra zlog*: appears to indicate rites directed towards the repulsing enemies.

¹⁶³ It is important to note that I have omitted the following line: *phar 'gro mi 'dzom shul sdod mo*.

an illness, it will remain severe. To cure an illness, one will require powerful medicine and formidable aid. Suppress (*bskar*) the *mo 'dre gdon*. It is a sign of the blue horse,¹⁶⁴ snow, and rain. Nonetheless, if this is cast in any other section— upper or middle — it is good.

[Thus] is demonstrated the explanation of the fruits of the three-fold casting system [in the] the upper, middle, and lower sections. {444/444} A casting like this is a changeless fortified realm. The foundation is very stable. Travellers will take a long time to arrive. In divinations concerning illness, [this indicates] the influence (*gdon*) of the *rgyal po* and the *'dre mo*.

(xxvii) Now, an explanation of the good and bad [results] enumerated in the diagonals. {111} [down to right] If a series of ones come to fall into an arrangement like this, one will enter into a *phyi grogs*.¹⁶⁵ This is good. This is particularly excellent for children (*bu*) and adolescents (*mi dar ma*). {222 [down to right]} If there is an arrangement of twos like this, it is exceedingly bad. One will fall into the hands of *gShin rje*.¹⁶⁶ This is excellent for one's nemeses. Nine poisonous snakes enter into the nest of *bya khyung dkar po*.¹⁶⁷ However, perform *bsang* [*mchod*], a *brngan* [*chog*], *go bsang*,¹⁶⁸ *dbang* [*chen*], *tshe sgrub*, and *tshe thar*.¹⁶⁹ Prepare a feast for twenty-five children. {333 [down to right]} If three threes are arranged like this, it is the height of excellence. It is an omen of the war against the demons. This is excellent for divinations concerning girls and boys. If an individual is ill, he or she will not improve.¹⁷⁰ That being the case, count out one hundred thousand rosaries.

(xxviii) {444 [down to right]} Having cast an arrangement of the fours like this, the *bla srog* of men will be lost (*bor*). Tidings (*lon*) [arrive] from the hands of demons. This is excellent. If there

¹⁶⁴ *rTa sngon* [*po*], 'Blue Horse'. According to the *sMan ri Slob dpon*, this is an omen indicating that a much desired object will be obtained.

¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately, I am still unsure of the meaning of *phyi grogs*.

¹⁶⁶ *gShin rje rgyal po*: equivalent to Yama, the Lord of Death.

¹⁶⁷ This figure, *bya khyung dkar po* or the 'white *khyung* bird,' may be a reference to the *pho lha* of the Chawa clan, which hails from Khumbu in Northeastern Nepal (Macdonald 1996; Karmay and Sagant 1997: 263-65).

¹⁶⁸ According to the *sMan ri Slob dpon*, *go bsang* indicates a type of rite performed to protect an individual against harm from physical weapons.

¹⁶⁹ *Tshe thar*: releasing animals as a form of meritorious action.

¹⁷⁰ "Will not improve" is a rather loose translation of *ritsub 'dug pa*. More literally rendered, this would indicate that the subject will stay bad, harsh, poor, or unpleasant.

is an illness, [however], it will go badly. If one administers cooked medicines, this is said to be an effective cure. Do this, recite a collection of *gzungs*, and offer *bskang bshags*.¹⁷¹ Make an amount of *'byung bzhi'i gtor ma*¹⁷² equivalent to the subject's age. {111 [up to the right]} If a series of ones is arranged like this, it is bad omen for whatever divination is cast. Recite a number of *tshe mdo*¹⁷³ from the *kham chen* equivalent to the subject's age. {222 [up to right]} In the case of a series of twos, it will not be necessary to perform a *gto* ceremony. It is a turn in the tide of the battle between existence and non-existence, brought about by the *rgyal mtshan*. The *lus tshogs* of foes and demons will be broken. This is excellent. It is bad, [however], in divinations concerning the departure of men and horses. It is a sign that saddles will break and horses will die. If there is an ill-person, the administration of medicine will be of aid. Perform an amount of rites from the *Kham chen* equivalent to the subject's age.¹⁷⁴ This is bad in divinations concerning girls.

(xxix) The spindle is whirled (*phang gsir ba*) by the girls themselves. This is the very bad for those who have three children. Perform a great deal of *bsang mchod* and *tshe sgrub*, [as well as] making many *chu gtor*.¹⁷⁵ {333 [up to right]} If three threes are cast in an arrangement like this, having cast well, one enters an excellent enclosure. In divinations concerning *'khor ba spang pa*,¹⁷⁶ this is good. [However], if one hopes to accomplish worldly things (*'jig rten bya ba*) such as [setting a] marriage, [resolving issues related to] the homestead, or vanquishing one's foes (*dgra 'dul*), this is bad. {444 [up to right]} If there is an arrangement of fours like this, it is mediocre. In divinations concerning *log chags*, this is exceedingly bad. Recite from scripture, perform *tshe sgrub* and *'chi slu*, as well as making myriad *gtor ma*, *chu gtor*, and *tshwa tshwa*.¹⁷⁷ {111 [vertical]} If a wall of ones is cast in the three *lha sa*, it is the reservoir of the *lha*. This is excellent. Guests will

¹⁷¹ *bsKang bshags*: indicates a confession offered (traditionally) as part of a feast offering.

¹⁷² *'Byung bzhi'i gtor ma*: *gtor ma* of the four elements (i.e. earth, water, fire, and wind).

¹⁷³ *Tshe mdo* indicates elements of the Amitayus sutra.

¹⁷⁴ The term *Kham yum*, which is typically rendered in Bon as *kham chen*, indicates the Prajñāpāramitā Sutras in Bon. The appearance of the Buddhist term *kham yum* once again reveals the *bon gsar ma* nature of this redaction.

¹⁷⁵ *Chu gtor*: water tormas.

¹⁷⁶ *'Khor ba spung pa* indicates the abandonment of *samsāra*.

¹⁷⁷ *Tshwa tshwa* or *tswa tswa* are small clay images of stupas stamped from a mold.

arrive and the sick will recover. If it is cast in the *phyi sa*, it is good. In the upper *phyi sa*, [however], there may be an illness.

{222 [vertical]} (xxx) If twos are built in the the three *lha sa*, it is a golden pillar. This is bad (*ngan*) for teachers, mothers, uncles, and the elderly. The *ma tshe*¹⁷⁸ will be impaired (*mi bde*). Enemies will make their preparations. It is an omen of conflict and infighting. It is a sign that a corpse will be held by the upper-arm.¹⁷⁹ If cast in the *phyi sa*, there will be no grave errors (*skyon chen [po]*). Perform sufficient *tshe thar* and *skyabs gsol [ba]*.¹⁸⁰ Do not mix great virtue and sin {333 [vertical]} If threes are built in the three *lha sa*, one enters into the innermost *lha* gorge. This is excellent. It is an omen that one will go [from being] poor [to being] rich. In divinations concerning holding the fortress and the homeland, this is excellent. {444 [vertical]} If fours are built in the three *lha sa*, it is excellent for all of one's possessions (*nor*). Construct a *bra tshang*¹⁸¹ upon the royal rock. It is an sign that many [of one's] maternal relatives will flourish. Whatever is meant to be accomplished will be met accordingly. {111 [vertical]} If such an arrangement of ones is built in the three *khyim sa*, it is tumult, fear, and terror (*sngangs*). (xxxi) It is a sign that one's horse will arrive. Perform a *dgra brub*, a *dgra mnan*, and a *mi kha bkar*.¹⁸² This is good, being somewhat strong in the *lha sa*. If it appears in the *phyi sa*, [however], it is exceedingly bad.

{222 [vertical]} If twos are built in the three *khyim sa*, it is a turquoise *gdugs ma chags pa*.¹⁸³ If the divination concerns young girls or adults, this is bad. {333 [vertical]} If threes are built in the three *khyim sa*, young children will flourish. Food and wealth will be acquired. Human life (*srog phya*) will be protected by the *lha*. This is bad, [however], in divinations concerning illness. It

¹⁷⁸ The term *ma tshe* is still unknown to me.

¹⁷⁹ According to the Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, taking hold of a recently deceased corpse by the upper arm is an omen of conflict.

¹⁸⁰ *sKyabs gsol ba*: asking for refuge or protection.

¹⁸¹ According to the sMan ri Slob dpon, a *bra tshang* is a hawk's nest. Constructing a bird's nest in such a place means that the nest cannot be destroyed. This is a good sign.

¹⁸² *Mi kha bkar*: a rite to defend its subject from slander.

¹⁸³ *gDugs ma chags pa* is literally a 'parasol of non-attachment'; however, I am uncertain as to what this might symbolize in the above passage.

is a sign that a crack [in the] *lha shing* (*lha shing*) will be ripped [open].¹⁸⁴ {444 [vertical]} If fours are built in the three *khyim sa*, this is excellent in divinations concerning the protection of the fortress and the homeland (*yul mkhar bzung* [*ba*]). Guests will not come. There will be a delay. In divinations concerning wealth and poverty, this indicates that one will acquire wealth (*longs spyod*). {111 [vertical]} If ones are built in the three *phyi sa*, it is a sign of tombs, a sign of *gdon*, and a sign on enemies. A *ku co*¹⁸⁵ will rise up from [one's] home and from [one's] neighbours. Perform as many *srung zlog drag po*¹⁸⁶ as possible. {222 [vertical]}

(xxxii) If twos are built in the three *phyi sa*, there will be no enemies and no legal disputes. This is excellent. In divinations concerning quarrels or debates, this is excellent. {333 [vertical]} If threes are built in the three *phyi sa*, it is bad for whatever is cast. It is a sign that that illnesses and epidemics will strike. These [will afflict] brothers, sisters, and varieties of *g.yang*. Recite a *tshe 'gug*. Perform a *g.yang skyob* and a *bsang mchod*. Recite myriad *klu 'bum* and make donations. {444 [vertical]} If fours are built in the three *phyi sa*, business interests (*tshong phya*) will be hindered and guests will be delayed.¹⁸⁷ The four great mountains are at your back.¹⁸⁸ It is an omen of thievery and warfare. Should the *bya ra* [*ba*]¹⁸⁹ have departed, exercise caution. It is an omen of death. An omen of sickness and the four great diseases. Should one perform a large *rim 'gro*, it will alter the result. Make *tshwa tshwa*, *chu gtor*, and *nya grogs*¹⁹⁰. {111-114-114} This is the white, black, and variegated *brgya sbyin*.¹⁹¹ For whatever divination is cast, this is negative.

(xxxiii) {111-141-141} This is known as the four directions. The homeland and the fortress

¹⁸⁴ This is a very difficult and perplexing passage. First of all, I have taken some liberties in changing *la sor* to *bla shing*. This would make *bla shing srub* a hole, fissure, or crack in a *bla* tree — the tree of life, or soul tree associated with an individual's longevity.

¹⁸⁵ A *ku co* is a cry, a clamor, or a tumult. It is also slanderous words. In the passage *yul dang khyim mtshes ku co 'byung*, home/homeland and neighbors are in the Absolutive case, however, the seven-syllable verse would not allow here for any grammatical particles modifying either of the nouns.

¹⁸⁶ *Srung zlog drag po*: these are wrathful rites intended as protection against enemies.

¹⁸⁷ *Tshong phya 'gron phya phyi dal che*. I've offered a somewhat liberal translation of this passage above. More literally, the passage quite simply indicates that *tshong phya* and *'gron phya* will both be delayed.

¹⁸⁸ This is an omen denoting length or duration. It indicates that an event will take a very long time to come to pass.

¹⁸⁹ A *bya ra* [*ba*] is a sentinel, guardian, spy, or watcher. Also, it is an overseer and an epithet for the king of the *sa bdag*.

¹⁹⁰ *Nya grogs*: to offer food to fish as an act of merit.

¹⁹¹ *brGya byin* is a Tibetan rendering of the deity Indra.

will be lost to the enemy. If this comes about, it is a sign that [one will be] swept away by water. This is bad in divinations concerning adults. Perform myriad *bskal bzang* and recite from scripture. {111-444-444} With regard to this [arrangement], it is brGya byin dkar po. In the time of one's mother and father, was an oath broken? Or has one trodden (*bshag*) upon an ancient tomb? Perform a *gtor ma snang brgyad* and a *'khrugs bcos*.¹⁹² This white, black, and multi-variegated brGya byi. As this is a sign of *'bying ba*,¹⁹³ of *gdon*, and of *dgra*, the living have gone to the realm of the Lord of the Dead. It is a sign of a destructive foe and a destroyed ally. Though serious illnesses are [currently] absent, they will come [in the future]. Quickly strive to perform a *rim gro*. Make an offering of *nya grogs* in salt water. It is cast at the beginning and at the end of a *bskal pa*. {123-112-121} This arrangement is known as the knife-fighting hero (*dpa' bo gri 'thabs*). (xxxiv) It is a sign that wild yaks, feral wolves, and dogs will fight [with their horns] (*ru 'dzing*). There are enemies to the *dgra phywa*. This is a sign that victory in and of itself will be achieved. If there is an illness, it will be difficult to overcome. Whatever food and wealth is at hand should be abandoned.

{442-431-332} With regard to [an arrangement like] this, it is a sign that [one will] take (*zhon*) lay-devotee vows (*dge bsnyen [gyi sdom pa]*). If there is an illness, it will be severe. Thieves will contend with guests. Should the divination concern women or the birth of Bonpos, it is excellent. [Make] offerings [to the] *dgra phywa* and the *sgra bla* [and one] will be successful [in one's undertakings]. In each casting [appearing] within the nine *ling rtse*, [one will see] a long-lasting positive [result]. (page break) If a set of twos is cast, it is a survivor (*shul sdod*). If three threes are cast, rather than [it] being [an] extremely good [casting], [one must perform] the *dkar chos* which actualizes (*rnyed*) food and wealth. The *ma byas [pa]*¹⁹⁴ will be lost to the enemy. (page break) If four fours are cast, the homeland and the fortress will be seized. (page break) Now, the analysis of the middle *lha sa* and *phyi sa*, as well as the meaning of the divination of the *grogs phyi*.

¹⁹² I am unclear as to what specific rites *gtor ma snang brgyad* and *'khrugs bcos* are meant to signify.

¹⁹³ *'Bying ba* may be rendered "to sink down, to be swallowed up, or immersed," as well as "to lose consciousness, to grow languid or faint".

¹⁹⁴ I am unclear as to what *ma byas [pa]* signifies.

(xxxv) In the case of one and three, it is excellent for the client's various principal questions (*don phywa*). (page break) In the case of a two, legal cases will be lost. (page break) In the case of three and four, good friends will be delayed. Hail will fall at the threshold.

[With regard to] the two final *lha sa* and *phyi sa*, if a one is cast, it is a sign that a guest will arrive. If a three or four is cast in this place, it is a sign of slander (*kha smra*) and delays. If a one and three [are cast] in the thresholds,¹⁹⁵ this is excellent for the various forms of *don phywa* and *tshogs phya*. If hail falls, this is bad for the various forms of *don phywa* and *tshogs phya*.

[The following are the] places [where] [what has been] lost will be found or not found. An analysis of [these] three: the middle *phyi sa*, the lower *phyi sa*, and the lower *lha sa*. Should a one and a three be cast in [any two of] these, one will finish pursuing and find [that which had been] lost. If a one is cast [in the middle *phyi sa*] and [there is also] a one in [one of the two] lower sections, it is a sign that one will find food and wealth which had been lost. (page break) If twos or fours are cast [in this fashion], [food and wealth] will not be found.

(xxxvi) If a one and a three are cast in the [middle and lower] *phyi sa*, it is a sign that *gdon* and enemy-guests will come. This is excellent in divinations concerning the recovery of lost things. (page break) Now, the *tshe* of the *rgyal po bab pa*.¹⁹⁶ If [the casting] happens to be good in the *khyim sa* and the *lha sa*, [one will] run out of food, wealth, friendship, and so forth. If hail falls, [things will go] badly due to an error (*nyes pa*). This is [a] good [result], [however], for both *grogs phywa* and *dgra phya*. In particular, there will be no thieves. If a three (*gsum*) or four is cast in this location, it is a sign that things will not be found and [guests] will not arrive. One will be extremely busy.¹⁹⁷ (page break) If a one is cast, it is all together the minister. (page break) If a two is cast, it is all together hail. One requires the protection of the *ser srung* and the *rgyal po*. (page break) If a

¹⁹⁵ The thresholds indicate the upper and lower *khyim sa*, which are known as the earth door (*sa sgo*) and sky door (*gnam sgo*) respectively (see: Section 3.4.3).

¹⁹⁶ The *rgyal po bab pa* indicates the ultimate trump in the divination (see: Section 3.5).

¹⁹⁷ Above I have offered a rough translation of the Tibetan *phar 'gro tshur 'ong shul sdod yong*. This particular rendering was suggested by the Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma. Literally, the passage reads something like "one will ever be going, ever be coming, and ever at home". In other words, never static and beset with obligations.

three is cast, it is all together the *rgyal po*. If there is an illness, one will [come to] know the *rgyal po*.¹⁹⁸ (page break)

[To see whether or not] goals will be accomplished, [whether or not] that which was lost may later be recovered, and [whether or not] guests will arrive — [to see all these things], view the threshold middle *phyi sa*.¹⁹⁹ [To see whether or not] the *dgra phyra* will be victorious, (page break) observe (*blta*) the lower *phyi sa* and *lha sa*. (xxxvii) (page break) For those who dwell at home, check the middle *khyim sa*. (page break) [Whether or not] Great enemies and great robbers will come: [this] is shown in the first *phyi sa*. Thieves [can be] seen in the final *phyi sa*. The causes of disease, both great and small, [may be seen in] the threshold.²⁰⁰ [Whether or not] the *rim gro lha* is high or low [is indicated by] a three in the first *lha sa* or *phyi sa*. Whether or not property is damaged [may be seen in] the threshold.²⁰¹ The *lha sa* is good for [understanding types of] *gzhi phyra*.²⁰² If the *lha sa* is good, one must [still] check the threshold [Earth Door]. [For] sickness, life, death, and medicine check the *phor*.²⁰³ Should *blo phyra*, *don phyra*, *mgron phyra* be excellent in the *lha sa*, one must [still] consult the lower *phyi sa*.

In this sense, by the study of divination and *dpyad*, the light and dark of the divination may be understood. Generally speaking, with regard to these *lde'u*, the more often one performs divination, the more and more clear [such things] will become. With respect to [the work at hand], this is the most extraordinary of all the divinatory techniques derived from the tradition of '*Jam dpal gzhon nur*'.²⁰⁴ (xxxviii) Though the leaves of language were many and thick [in the original text], the essential pith [of the practice] is [here] summarized by Kun grol grags [pa]. Well met!

¹⁹⁸ I am unclear as to the meaning of this passage. Perhaps this is a reference to the *rgyal po* demons, in which case this indicate be a particularly negative result.

¹⁹⁹ This passage indicates that all of the preceeding information may be found by referencing the casting in the middle *phyi sa* without actually engaging in a full interpretation of the casting.

²⁰⁰ In this particular case, "the threshold" is meant to indicate the earth door (*sa sgo*), otherwise known as the lower *khyim sa*.

²⁰¹ Once again, "the threshold" indicates the earth door, found in the lower *khyim sa*.

²⁰² The exact definition of *gzhi phyra* is still unclear to me.

²⁰³ In this passage, I believe that *phor* is meant to indicate a section of the *ling rtse*, or divination grid; however, I am unclear as to which particular section *phor* signifies.

²⁰⁴ '*Jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa* is a Tibetan rendering of the Bodhisatva Mañjuśrī kumara bhuta.

(chart).

4.4 Transliteration

(ii) // 'jam pa'i dbyangs la phyag 'tshal lo / mngon shes gsal ba'i me long bstan / dang po dmu gab phyi e / kon mchog gsum gyi bden pa dang / mi mthong sgrib pa'i dmu gab phyis / thab gzhon 'khon dang mi gtsang lnon / bying smugs 'thib kyis gnan pa phyis / shing chen sdong po 'di yis phyis / tsha chen 'jag ma 'di yis phyis / rde chen rde'u 'di yis phyis / sa dug bong nga 'di yis phyis / rno ba mo yi mi mthong ba / sdig pa mo rkun mar la gzur ro / de nas mo bdar byas ba ni / sku gsum rdzogs pa'i sangs

(iii) rgyas dang / kon mchog gsum dang rtsa gsum lha / yid dam phyi nang gsang gsum dang/ tsa rgyud bla ma bka'ong dang / dpal mgon 'gur lha brten ma dang / lha klu gnod sbyin gza' skar dang / yul lha gzhi bdag drag rtsal can / de ring mo dang phya la bdar / khyed ni thams cad mkhyen pa'i bdag / mi shes mi mthong gang yang med / bdag la dgongs pa'i dus byung na / bzang ngan gnyis kyis gshan byed la / bden rdzun legs nyes sa sor ston / rno mthong mo 'di gsal bar mdzod / de nas so sor dpyad pas rde'u bzhi btsu rtsa gnyis yod / tsho gsum bcad la / bzhi bzhir bgrangs / ling tse dgu rus bab pa yin // lha sa dang po 'di dag ni / pha

(iv) phyes mtshus dang sgra lha'i sa / ban bon rde'u rgen po'i sa / gtsug lag lha khang sku mkhar sa / seb dang lha g.yya pha khu'i sa / 'brug lo pa yi lo mal yin / mo yi mig dang rtse mo yin // 'di ru rdel gcig bab pa na / sgra bla wer ma'i mgon skyabs byed / lha srung sgra bla mchod na bzang // gnyis bab gyur na lha ma dga' / mi chen mdun zhu phog do yin / thog chen grib dang rtsi gi ngo / lhag par 'brug lo pa la bcubs / bsang brngan nam 'jam bskang bshags dang / tshe sgrub 'chi slu gri bo gri mo bkar // gsum bab lha yis sdang grogs byed / lha grogs pug su chud sa yin / ya rab la ni grogs ngo yod / ci btab ci'i mo la bzang /

(v) // bzhi bab lha gzhi tshugs sa yin / pha tshan bzang po yong ba'i ngo / g.yang ma nyams shing srog phywa brtan / lo gsum gong la gto mi dgos / nad pa yin na nad yun ring / tshong phywa grogs phywa phyi *dal che* // lha sa bar ma 'di dag ni / gtso bo blo 'dzin bzang po dang / skyes pa dar ma'i sa yin pa'i / blo 'dzin yag nyes blta sa yin / pho chen rta dang mdzo g.yag sa / stag yos lo sa'i lo lam yin / 'di ru gcig bab lha ngo mtho / srog la bar ched med pa yin / ci btab ci yi mo la bzang // gnyis bab skyes sa dar mar ngan / grib dang dmag ngo khrag ngo yin / [S-1] shi sga chag gyed 'khrugs ngo / nad sa

(vi) yun ring den mi 'grub / snying stong yong ngo nad pa la / nye ba'i phyogs su nas rgyal po'i gdon / shar nas rdzas dmar byung ba'i gdon / dgra brub 'chi slu tshe gzungs 'den / rgyal mdos [dang] rim gro drog bya // gsum bab skyes sa ngo po mtho / blo phywa blo bde lha'i blo / nor rdzas khro mar po rnyed dang / gang la btab kyang bzang ba bshad // bzhi bab yul dang khang sbra la / 'pho 'gyur med cid srog phywar bzang / 'gron mgon phyi dal che ba'i ngo / nad pa yun ring srog skyon med / dgra dang gdon gyi 'chi ba med // lnga sa tha ma 'di dag ni / rta nor bu tsha chugs rigs sa / glang lo pa yi lo mal yin / 'di ru rdel gcig bab yod na // [S-3] skyes [bzang] ba'i ngo / rta dang nor la

(vii) 'phel ka 'byung / grogs ngo che zhing tshogs las rgyal / bar bo rnyed cing kha gsal lon / ye 'ong 'ong zhing ci la bzang // // gnyis bab srog phywa dgra phywar ngan / sbu dag la chung sri sdang / rta nor rtod phur bud pa'i ngo / dgra rgun ngo che dgra bla bya / nad pa rang phyogs sri bu gdon / yang na byang shar 'tshams phyor nas mo rigs sha dmar spyad nag sgren / lam 'phrang bcos shing tshe gzungs 'don / gser 'do gyung sgrub sprang 'gyed bya / khyed par glang lo pa la ngan // gsum bab srung mda' lha yi brtsan / bu rta chung rigs mo la bzang / stor ba rnyed la bdas pa zin / srog phywa don phywa blo phywa srog / ci btab ci'i mo la bzang // bzhi bab yul mkhar

(viii) zin pa'i ngo / pha spun nang 'khrug 'ong ngo yod / phyi yi dgra med srog phyar bzang / tshur

'ong 'gron po phyi dar che // khim sa dang po 'di ga ni / mo lha mo sman gnam sgo dang / ma phyi rgan rabs mo rigs sa / nor sa dong mo mi srog kyang yin / rta sbrul lo pa'i lo mal yin / gcig bab lha sa sdang grogs byed / ma tud mkhro' 'khor zhing skyong / bu rta nor 'phel ci la bzang / kha char dkon zer sman phyar bzang // gnyis bab lha mo 'phrog 'byung / ma phyi rgan rigs dag la ngan / bu sring phyog nas gyod yong ngo / khyed par rta sbrul lo sa [S-1] / khyim mtshe 'dre 'am lho phyogs nas / skyas sna bag sna bza' spyod gdon / bsang

(ix) dang byab khros mo 'dre bkar / gnam sgo gcod cing btsan mchod bya / kha char yong zer sman mi 'phrod // gsum bab lha yis sdong grogs byed / yul lhas grogs byed ci bsam 'grub / bu sring phyogs nas dgra ngo yod // bzhi bab mo rigs rgan la bzang / nor la snying stong 'ong ba'i ngo / 'gong po bkar zhing g.yang rtan btsugs / nor gzungs bri 'don ci mang bya // khyim sa bar ma 'di dag ni / bud med dar ma sman phor ba / bzhon gyi zo ba gang stong sa / nor gyi bang mdzod thab ka'i sa / skyes bu'i sa dang mo snying yin // 'di ru gcig bab grogs ngo yin / gtam snyan thos shing 'gron mgon 'ong / khyims bdag mo ma nad med cing // gnyis bab mo sman bdud kyis khyer

(x) nad dang kha 'chu rkun ma'i ngo / nad pa mal sa stong ba'i ngo / khyims mtshes 'dre gdon mdo 'bum 'don / nam rgyal nor sgrub g.yang skyabs bya // gsum bab g.yang gi ru ma skyil / bud med nor phyugs kun la bzang / zho than chang yags grogs yang ngo // bzhi bab khyims bzhi tshugs pa'i ngo / e 'ong e 'phod e 'grub dang / | gang yang phyi dal che ba'i ngo // khyims sa tha ma 'di dag ni / byi phag dmag pa gran g.yog sa / nor dang bu mo mna' ma'i sa / byi phag gnyis gyi lo lam yin / nor kyi bong mdzod chung ba yin // gcig bab sgo them dam pa'i ngo / rta nor lung gis ra ba gang / nor gyi dmu thag then pa yin // gnyis bab

(xi) sgo thim byis pa'i ngo / nor g.yang nyams pas nor god che / gyod dang kha mchu 'ong bas ngan / gdon phya rab chad mo 'dre dang / ma rab lag nas zas kyi gdon / sa sgo bcad cing lam 'phrang

bcos / g.yang sgrub chu sbyin god mnan bya / gsum bab gyur na zas nor 'phel / phyi grogs nang du tshud pa bzang // bzhi bab grib dang kha mchu'i ngo / e 'ong 'gron mgon phyi dal che / nor dang bu med rnams la bzang / nang gi sgo dam mgron mi yong // phyi sa dang po 'di dag ni / dgra rkun rgyal po 'dre mo sa / lug lo pa yi lo mal yin // gcig bab dgra 'dre yong ngo ste / mi chen dgra dang rkun ma 'byung / btsan dang rgyal po byad kyis

(xii) bdag / zhang po'i phyogs nas zas gyi sgren / lhag par lug lo pa la bzang / rim gro btsan dang rgyal po mchod / g.yag dgra chos gnad thon bya / 'gron phyir ban bon mi chen dang / sman pa yin na slebs pa'i ngo // gnyis bab dgra 'dre sdogs pas mnon / sha tshang gtam snyan yong ba'i ngo / lug lo pa la ngan pa bshad / nad pa yin na lho nub nas / rdzas nag spyad nag yong ba'i gdon // gsum bab grogs ngo phyi la shor / ci la btab kyang 'bring [S-1]] yin / lug lo pa la bzang ba'o // bzhi bab dgra 'dre gang yang med / 'gron tshong blo don phyi dal che // phyi sa bar ma 'di dag ni / pha spun shag po dgra 'bring sa / bya sprel

(xiii) lo pa'i lo mal yin // gcig bab dgra bo mur du sdang / rang dang mnyam pa'i dra bzho 'dug / zhang nye tshur mthun phogs kyis gdon / e 'ong 'ong la e 'phrad 'phrad // gnyis bab dgra phyogs gyod kyis zin / dgra med blo bde 'gying pas chog / blo phya don phya mo la bzang / nad pa dag la nub phyogs nas / snod stong spyad na 'ong ba'i gdon / bya sprel lo ba yin na ngan // gsum bab dgra sdang nor la ngan / rang sa bzang na grogs ngo yin / rang sa ngan na grogs shor yin / gdon phya nyes pas bshags pa bya / shar dmar zas 'chags dgi gdon / nad pa yin na ngan pa srid / nyal sa spo zhing nor chid btong // bzhi bab blo

(xiv) don tshongs phya la / dgra gdon med pas srogs phyar bzang // phyi sa tha ma 'di dag ni / bu sring dmag sa bran g.yog sa / dgra'o ma rab rkun ma'i sa / sgo them phyi ma / khyi lo pa yi lo mal yin // gcig bab lha 'dre'i nyo tshong stabs / dgra dang rkun mo 'ong ba'i ngo / 'gron mgon khyi khrid

rgyud nas gdon / gtor zlog dgra mnan mo 'dre bkar / khyi mo pa yi mo la bzang // gnyis bab dgra
 gyod rkang pas mnan / blo phyas don phyas gang la bzang / gsum bab 'dre snying mang la zhes / mi
 nad phyugs la nad 'byung ngo // bzhi bab dgra gdon med pas bzang / e 'phrad zer na mi 'phrad do / e
 'ong zer nas mi 'ong ngo /

(xv) stod kyi rde drug 'di lta ste / {132} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug rab yin pa'i / ci tab ci yi mo la bzang /
 rgan kyis nyi ma 'de ba yod / {312} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug rab kyi 'go / lha grong phugs su tshud pa'i
 bzang {123} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug grogs shor yin / 'gron mgon yin na bor stor ngo / lha ma dga' ba'i
 bsang brngan khyog / khyims phyas yin na g.yang 'gug bya / sa bdag sa rko rdo glog 'don / ci la btab
 kyang 'bring stod yin / {321} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug 'bring stong yin / na tsha kha mchu yong dog yod /
 nad pa yin klu'i gdon / khyims sar kha 'gyod dgra brub dgos / {213} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug 'bring smad
 yin / lha ma dga' bas bskang

(xvi) gsol dang / mi gtsang mnol ngo khros bsang bya / grogs phyi song bas g.yang 'gug dgos / nyi
 ma shar nas rgyal po'i gdon / {231} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug go log yin / yul lha 'khros pas bsang mchod
 bya / dgra ngo yod pas dgra sri mnan / nad pa yin na rgyal po'i gdon / gyu drag bsgrub shing rgyal
 mdos bya / skad smad gnyis bzang cung zad drag / ngan na nad pa mthur yugs yin / klu btsan ri
 dwags blang pa'am / shing gnyan bcad cing srung ma 'khyams / {114} 'dri 'dra'i rdel drug snying
 dga' yin / lha ngo dung bas mtho ba yin / mi ngo btsan bas dmar ba yin / zhang zhung mi rta khyi
 dang gsum / gsas gral gcig tu 'dzoms pa yin / ci btab ci'i mo la bzang /

(xvii) {411} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug snying 'gyod yin / rang bas che dang tsod pa 'byung / yul pa mi bde
 nad yams dar / zlog pa dgra brub stebs chen bya / ci la tab kyang ngan pa yin / {141} 'di 'dra'i rdel
 drug mya ngan yin / khyi dang spyang ku gung rgod yin / mda' dang mdung gnyis gang snga yin /
 kha sma 'ur zing 'byung ngo yin / dgra brub dgra mnan gang drag sgrub / gdon du rgyal po gri mo'i

gdon / rgyal mdos 'bul zhing gri mo bkar / nad pa mi sos 'chi ngo yin / ci la tab kyang 'bring du
 bshad / {222} 'di 'dra'i rdel drug ngu 'bod yin / btsan dang rgyal po'i gnod ngo yin / bud med kha so
 mi sang dang / dme bo ri dwags

(xviii) sha rlon gdon / gza' rkyen gang yin gza' mdos bya / kha smra kha 'gyod kha char ngo // {stod
 kyi rdel bcu bshad pa 'ong} {334} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu rab yin te / seng ge gang la 'gying pa yin / lha
 ngo dgung bas mtho 'phra bzang / rgan rgen nad pa'i mo la 'bring / de man gang la btab kyang
 bzang / {433} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu dug sbrul yin / klu rgyal gtsug na'i nor bu de / bya khyung dkar pos
 'phrog pa yin / de sngon phyug kyang de dbul 'ong / ci la btab kyang 'bring tsam yin / {343} 'di dra'i
 rdel bcu khyung lding yin / e 'ong zer na bya bas mgyogs / e thub zer na gang yang thub / gser gyi
 mchod rten ser po la /

(xix) dung gi bya ru gtsugs pa yin / khyad par srid phyag dag la bzang / {442} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu dbal
 phur yin / ban bon mthu byed mo la bzang / skyes pa dmag la chas na bzang / nad pa yin na dbang
 chen bca' / gser sku blugs pas rna mi 'grub / {244} 'dri dra'i rdel bcu kha nag yin / skyob pa'i mgon
 dang bral ba yin / tshogs dang bskang ba gang mang dang / wa bsang mnol bsang grib khros bya /
 'gron po dus la mi sleb ste / ci la btab kyang ngan pa yin / {424} 'di 'dra'i rdel bcu ske stong yin /
 dmag jag 'gro na dmar ngo yin / gri kha mtshon sgyur dgra lha stod / grib dang mnol

(xx) mnol btsog mya ngan ngo / khyims lha mchod cing 'phrag lha btsan / 'di 'dra' stod kyi rde'u bcu
 ni / sked smad gnyis gnyis la mi 'bab nges / rnam 'jom gzungs khros mnol bsang bya / don phyag mi
 'grub sgrub dgos na / khyim lha mchod cing 'phrag lha btsan / 'di ni stod kyi rdel bcu' / {de nas bar
 mtha'i rdel brgyad bshad} {332} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad bab gyud na / grogs kha nang du bstan pa yin
 / bar dang mtha' ma gar bab kyang / grogs phyag don phyag ci bsam 'grub / {233} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad
 grogs phyi bstan / bar du bab na 'gong po'i ngo / skyes pa dar ma nad kyis zin / 'gong bkar 'chi slu

tsho sgrub bya / spar kha'i gto bcos lam 'phrang bcos / snying nor dgra la shor

(xxi) shar dogs yong / smad du bab na grogs shor ngo / klu dang 'gras pas klu mchod bya / blo phya don phya kun la ngan / {323} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs phyi ston / bar la khyims bdag na ngo yin / tshe sgrub tshe bang gang mang zhus / snying 'dra mi yis mgo g.yog 'byung / smad la bab na chung gsum dang / rmig pa kha brag can la ngan / tshe gzungs rnam 'jom 'don na bzang {431} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad bab gyur na / bar dang tha ma gar bab kyang / dgra phya grogs phya kun la ngan / snying dang 'dra ba'i mi yis slu / dgra brub g.yang skyabs 'phags pa 'don / {134} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad g.yang khyug yin / bar du bab na skyes pa dang / byis pa khyims bdag mo la

(xxii) bzang / smad la bab na nor phyug 'phel / {341} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs nang bstan²⁰⁵ / bar du bab na skyes ba dang / khyims bdag mo yi ngo so mtho / tha mar bab na dod ba'i sa / bu tsha chung rigs dag la bzang / {143} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs len yin / phyi grogs nang du tshud pas bzang / e 'ong zer na yong ba'i ngo / blo phya don phya kun la bzang / bar mtha' gar bab 'dra ste dge / {422} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs nang rgyu / dgra gyod ldog pa'i 'og tu non / tha mar bab na nor phyug kyis / spu rtags yod pa phyi shor ngo / nor shor skyon med 'grub pa'o / {314} 'di 'dra'i sked gyi rdel brgyad ni / grogs ri g.yas su spungs pa bzang / {134}

(xxiii) 'di 'dra'i smad kyi rdel brgyad ni / grogs kha nang du phyogs te bzang / sked du skyes pa grogs dang 'phrad / smad du mdo ba rta la bzang / {413} brgyad 'di sked bab grogs ngo bzang / skyes pa byams tshud mi dam tshud / ye 'ong zer na yong ba'i ngo / nad pa'i mo la thabs gzhobs gdon / de la thabs gdon gto bca' dgos / sked smad gnyis kar gang bab bzang / smad du byis pa'i srid phyar ngan {224} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs phyi shor / blo tse gnyis don 'go mi 'grub / stod smad bzang na cung zad drag / ngan na mo ngan rkun gyi mtha' / gsung rab dmar zlog skang zlog bya /

²⁰⁵ 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad rgrogs [kha] nang [du] bstan

tha mar bab na klu khros pas

(xxiv) nad pa skyag log dmar khrag ngo / mkhal sked nad ni sos ngo yod / rnag mo stong 'bum klu 'bum sgrogs / {242} 'di 'dra'i rdel brgyad grogs phyir ngo / stod smad gang du bab kyang ngan / kha mchu gtam log 'byung ngo yin / mdo dang kha mchu nag po 'don / dgra mnan gyod mnan gnad 'gro bya / nad pa yin na ro mnol gdon / sked dang smad gyi rdel brgyad rdzogs so /gang zhig rde'u bzhi bab tshun / {211} 'di 'dra'i rdel bzhi lam log yin / skyes pa dar ma'i mo la ngan / byes su song na phyir mi slebs / smad du bab na nor la ngan / mo 'dre gdon pa'i rdzas mdos bya / sher snying khri bzlog gzungs 'dus 'don / {112} 'di 'dra'i rdel bzhi grogs lam yin /

(xxv) ral gris dgra mgo bshag pas bzang / don 'grub myur du slebs pa'i ngo / phyugs sge nang du tshu pas bzang / bar mtha' gang la khang bzang / khyed par rkun ma dog pa med / {[1]21} 'di 'dra'i rdel bzhi kha tham yin / lha 'dre mi gsum gshag kha brtsod / ser chags mo rigs phyag nas ni / kha sma gtam gling lags pa'i ngo / grogs phar bab na grogs mi rnyed / mdo bzlog dgra bzlog gang mang bya / {444} 'di 'dra'i bzhi gsum [S-2] ni / bar du bab na gser sked yin / yar gyi nam sgo ma phye zhing / mar gyi sa sgo ma phye bas / dgra mgo re bas btums pa yin / nad pa yin na shi ba'i ngo / {444} smad du 'di 'dra bab gyur

(xxvi) na / gyu yi do shal yin te bzang / sgo gsum lcags kyi 'dan bu brtsan / god kha med cing nor phyug 'phel / phar 'gro mi 'dzom shul sdod mo / tshur 'ong 'gron mgron po ltar slebs / de ltar bar la ma slebs na / zhag bzhi'i bar la sleb ngo yin / nad pa yin ngan 'dug pa'i / sman dang rim gro stobs chen dgos / mo 'dre gdon pa'i mo 'dre dkar / rta sngon can dang kha char ngo / gzhan dag gang la btab kyang bzang / de rnams stod smad bar gsum gyi / bab lugs 'bras bshad bstan pa'o / {444/444} 'di 'dra'i yul mkhar 'pho 'chug med / ci btab bzhi brling phri dal che / nad phyar gyal po 'dre mo'i gdon / rim gro brtson na srog skyen

(xxvii) med / de nas zur sgrong bzang ngan bshad / {111 [down to right]} 'di 'dra'i gcig sgrigs bab gyur na / phyi grogs nang du tshud pas bzang / khyed par bu med dar ma bzang / {222 [down to right]} gnyis kyi sgigs na shin ru ngan / mi bla gshin rje'i lag du shor / phas rgol las la bzang ba ste / bya khyung dkar po'i tshang nad du / dug sbrul mgo dgu zhugs pa yin / 'on kyang bsang brngan go bsang bya / dbang dang che sgrub tshe thar btang ba bya / byis pa nyer lngar stod mo gtong / {333 [down to right]} gsum gsum sgrigs na rab du bzang / bdud kyi g.yul ngo bzlogs pa yin / bu tsha bu mo'i mo la bzang / nad pa yin na bsub 'dug pas / 'bum sde brgya stong tshar grags

(xxviii) bya / {444 [down to right]} bzhi bzhi dag du sgrigs gyur nas / mi'i bla srog bor ba de / bdud gyi lag nas lon te bzang / nad pa yin na ngan 'dug pa'i / sman bcos byas na bzang ba bshad / tshogs dang bskang bshags gzungs 'dus 'don / 'byu bzhi'i gtor ma lo grangs bya / {111 [up to the right]} 'di 'dra'i tshur la gcig sgrigs na / ci btab ci yi mo la ngan / khams chen tshe mdo lo grangs 'don / {222 [up to the right]} gnyis gnyis sgrigs na gto mi dgos / brgya byin 'bar ba'i rgyal mtshan gyis / | lha men g.yul ngo zlog pa yin / dgra 'dre'i lus tshogs gzhiig ste bzang/ bu rta byes 'gro'i mo la ngan / rta shi sga chag ong ngo yin / nad pa yin na sman byas bzang / khams yum kha spro lo grags dang / bu mo'i mo la

(xxix) ngan pa ste / bu mo rang gis 'phang gis bas / chung gsu ma la rab ngan pa'i / kham yum kha spro lo grangs dang / tshe sgrub cu gtor bsang 'bum bya / {333 [up to right]} gsum gsum sgrigs nas bab gyur na / rab tu byung nas dge skor zhugs / 'khor ba spang pa'i mo la bzang / de man khyims zung dgra 'dul sogs / 'jig rten bya ba bsgrub na ngan / {444 [up to right]} bzhi bzhi sgrigs na 'bring yin te / log chags mo la shin du ngan / 'bum dang tshe sgrub 'chi slu dang / tshwa tshwa chu gtor 'bum gtor bya / {111 [vertical]} lha sa gsum du gcig rtsig na / lha yi rdzing bu yin pas bzang / mgron po yong la nad pa sos / phyi sa dma' na ci la bzang / mtho na mi nad 'ong / {222 [vertical]}

(xxx) lha sa gsum du gnyig brtsig na / gser gyi ka ba chags pa yin / slob dpon ma khu rgan la dan / ma tshe mi bde dgra shoms byed / 'khrugs pa dme ro long ngo yin / ro khyur dpung pas 'dzin ngo yin / phyi sa dma' na skyon chen med / skyobs gsol tshe thar dar chog dang/ sdig dang ma 'dres dge chen bya / {333 [vertical]} lha sa gsum du gsum brtsig na / lha grog phugs su chud pas bzang / dbul po phyug po 'gro ngo yin / yul mkhar 'dzin pa'i mo la bzang / {444 [vertical]} lha sa gsum du bzhi brtsigs na / sngar yong mi nor kun la bzang / brtsan po brag la bra tshang bca' / ma tshan mang po 'phel ngo yin / bsgrub bya gang la phyi dal che / {111 [vertical]} khyims sa gsum du gcig brtsigs na / skrags sngang 'ur zing

(xxxii) rang rta rang tug byed ngo yin / dgra brum dgra mnan mi kha bkar / lha sa bzang na cung zad drag / phyi sa dar na shun tu ngan / {222 [vertical]} khyims sa gsum du gnyis brtsegs na / g.yu'i gdugs ma chags pa ste / bud med dar ma'i mo la ngan {333 [vertical]} khyims sa gsum du gsum brtsegs na / bu tsha 'phel zas nor snyed / mi srog lha yis bzung ba yin / nad pa yin pa'i mo la ngan / la shor srub du ral ba'i ngo / {444 [vertical]} khyims sa gsum bzhi brtsig na / yul mkhar bzung pa'i mo la bzang / 'gron po mi yong phyi dal che / phyug po dbul du 'gro ba dang / dbul po'i mo la long spyod rnyed / {111 [vertical]} phyi sa gsum du gcig brtsigs / dgra ngo gdon ngo dur gyi ngo / yul dang khyim mtshes ku co 'byung / srung zlog drag po ci thub bya / {222 [vertical]}

(xxxiii) phyi sa gsum du ba nyis brtsigs na / dgra gyod med de shin du bzang / khyed par phas rgol mo la bzang / {333 [vertical]} phyi sa gsum du gsum brtsigs na / ci la btab kyang ngan pa ste / nad dang yams khyis phog ngo yin / g.yang rnams bu sring phyogs su song / klu dang sa bdag sjas nag gdon / bsang dang g.yang skyabs tshe 'gug 'don / klu 'bum 'don zhing mang 'gyed bya / {444 [vertical]} phyi sa gsum du bzhi rtsigs na / tshong phya 'gron phya chi dal che / la chen bzhi yi phar gyab na / dmag jag gdeng chen rkun ngo yin / bya ra song na gzabs par gyis / shi ngo nad ngo nad

gzhi che / rim 'gro che nad 'gyur yang srid / tshwa tshwa chu gtor nya grogs sbyin / {111-114-114}
brgya sbyin dkar nag khra gsum 'di / ci la bab kyang ngan pa yin /

(xxxiii) {111-141-141} 'di la gling bzhi [S-2] zer / yul mkhar dgra la shor dwogs yong / yong na
chu yis 'khyer ba'i ngo / skyes pa dar ma'i mo la ngan / 'bum dang bskal bzang bri 'don bya {111-
444-444} 'di ni brgya byin dkar po ste / pha ma'i ring la mna' zos sam / yang na dur snying bshag
pa'm / gtor ma snang brgyad 'khrugs bcos bya / brgya byin dkar nag khra gsum 'di / dgra gdon byin
che'i ngo yin gyi / gson po gshin rje'i yul du phyin / dgra phung zun brlag 'ong ba'i ngo / na tsha
drag po med kyang 'ong / rim gro drag po myur du 'bad / sa tshwa chu gtor nya grogs sbyin / bskal
pa chags 'jig 'ong dus 'bab / {123-112-121} 'di la dpa'o gri 'thabs zer / khyi dang spyang rgod g.yag
rgod gsum /

(xxxiv) la khar gcig ru 'dzing ngo yin / dgra phywa dag la dgra yod de / rgyal kha rang gis thob ngo
yin / nad pa yin na sos dka' bas / zas nor ci yod spang bar bya {442-431-332} 'di ni dge bsnyen dar
zhog te / nad pa'i mo la nad gzhi che / 'gron po mkhon 'dzing rkun ma'i ngo / byan rte bon po skyes
pa dang / bu med dag gi mo la bzang / dgra phywa sgra bla mched pa rgyal / ling rtse dgu ru yod pa
la / re re babs na bzang yun ring // // gnyis gnyis bab na shul sdod yod / gsum gsum bab na bzang
che bas / zas nor snyed kyi dkar chos bya / ma byas dgra la shor dogs yod // // bzhi bzhi bab na yul
mkhar zin // // da ni grogs phyi'i mo don la / phyi sa lha sa bar mar dpyad / phyi sar

(xxxv) gsum dang gcig byung na / don phywa dag la bzang bar shes // // gnyis bab kha gyod don mi
'grub // // gsum bzhi grogs che phyi dal che / sgo them ser ba bab pa dang / lha sa phyi sa tha mal
gnyis / gcig bab mgron po yong ngo yin / de'i gnas su gsum bzhi bab / mgyogs pa mi 'ong kha
smra'i ngo / sgo them gcig dang gsum bab na / don phywa tshong phywa dag la bzang / ser ba bab na
tshong phywa dang / don phywa dag la ngan pa'o / bor ba rnyed dang mi rnyed sa / lha sa phyi sa

tha ma dang / phyi sa bar ma gsum la dpyad / de gsum gnas su gcig gsum bab / stor ba rnyed la
 bdas pa zin / tha ma gcig dang gcig bab na / bor ba'i nor zas rnyed pa yin // // gnyis nbzhi bab na
 rnyed mi 'gyur /

(xxxvi) phywi sar gsum dang gcig bab na / gdon dang mgron po dgra yong ngo / stor ba rnyed pa'i
 mo la bzang // // de la rgyal po bab pa'i tshe / rang sa khyim sa bzang gyur na / zas nor grogs sogs
 nang du chud / ser ba bab na nyes pas ngan / dgra phywa grogs phywa gnyis la bzang / khyad par
 rkun ma med pa yin / de yi gnas su sa gzhi bab / mi tshod mi 'ong mi rnyed ngo / phar 'gro tshur
 'ong shul sdod yong // // gcig bab thams cad blon po yin // // gnyis bab thams cad ser ba yin / ser
 srung rgyal po [S-2] dgos // // gsum bab thams cad rgyal po yin / nad pa yin na rgyal po'i shes // //
 don phywa don de 'grub mi 'grub / bor ba e rnyed phyi 'bring lta / mgron phywa mgron po yong mi
 yong /phyi sa bar ma sgo them blta / dgra phywa dag las rgyal mi rgyal // // lha sa phyi pa tha

(xxxvii) tha mar blta // // gzhi phywa khyim sa 'bring po gtso // // dgra chen jag chen yong mi yong /
 phyi sa dang po dag gis shes / rkun ma phyi sa tha mar blta / nad gzhi che chung sgo them dang /
 blo phywa blo 'dzin dag gis gsal / rim gro lha ngo mtho mi mtho / lha sa phyi sa dang po gsum / god
 kha e yong sgo them yin / gzhi phywa dag la rang sa bzang / rang sa bzang yang sgo them dgos / nad
 pa shi gson sman phor gtso / blo phywa don phywa mgron phywa la / rang sa bzang zhing phyi dma'
 dgos/ de la mo yi nyin srib zer / nyin srib mo len dpyad pas shes / lar ni rde'u 'di dag ni / btab
 grangs mang zhing [S-1] rno 'gro / 'di ni 'jam dpal gzhon nu'i lung / mo sra gzhan

(xxxviii) las khyadar 'phags / tshig gi lo ma mang bdog kyang / don 'bras bsrus don kun grol grags /
 dge 'ong / (chart).

General Conclusion: an interdisciplinary approach to Tibetan divination

In 2014, the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities organized a two-day workshop at Erlangen University titled *Divination in Tibet and Mongolia: Past and Present*. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first scholarly conference specifically dedicated to the subject of Tibetan divination. In addition to myself and several other junior researchers, the participants included a number of established scholars, including Per Kvaerne, Charles Ramble, Dieter Schuh, Donatella Rossi, Dan Martin, and Petra Maurer. Thanks, in large part, to the labour of Hannah Havnevik and Donatella Rossi, a second gathering was then convened in 2016 as a panel of the *14th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* in Bergen, Norway. Following the *IATS* panel, a researcher at Erlangen University, Rolf Scheuermann, has begun to organize a roundtable discussion on Tibetan divination for the *18th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, which will take place in 2017 in Toronto, Canada. The success of these symposia and the enthusiasm they have generated are illustrations of a growing interest in the study of divination within the Tibetological community.

More than any other comparable period of time in the twentieth century, the last ten to fifteen years have witnessed an increase in the volume of publications discussing the performance of divination in Tibetan speaking communities. While traditional bibliographic research has been advanced in several publications (Ai Nishida 2011; Kalinowski *et al* 2010; Dotson 2007; Wangdu and Diemberger 2000), the diversity of subject matter addressed by recent scholarship has also increased. Pioneering studies of the activities of oracles in both Upper Tibet and in modern exile communities have been published, for example, by Vincent Bellezza (2005) and Hildegard Diemberger (2005) respectively. The perceived efficacy of divinatory consultations has also been queried in a number of publications, including Erik Mortensen's doctoral thesis (2003) and his recent contribution to the *IATS panel* on Tibetan divination, as well as in several of my own articles (Smith 2013, 2014, 2017). Additionally, Dieter Schuh's groundbreaking work on elemental

divination and astrology (1973a, 1973b, and 1972) has been expanded upon in numerous publications (see, in particular: Tseng 2005, Maurer 2009, Dorjé 2008, Ramble 2013), opening the door for non-specialists to begin to study forms of *nag rtsis* and *dkar rtsis* in a more critical fashion. In my opinion, however, the most important contribution to the study of Tibetan divination that has been published in the last decade is Barbara Gerke's watershed *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths* (2011), in which the author not only provides an extensive commentary on the performance of divination in Tibetan ethno-medicine, but also successfully incorporates a significant body of theory taken from ethnographic studies of divination in contemporary African societies. In doing so, Gerke is arguably the first scholar to link the emergent theoretical discourse surrounding divination in Tibetan cultures to the Anthropology of Divination (Peek 1991b) as it has been advanced, in particular, in African Area Studies (see: Section 1.1.1).

Despite growing interest in the study of Tibetan divination, it is important to note that we, in Tibetan Studies, still lack a credible general introduction to the performance of divination in Tibetan speaking communities. This disciplinary lacuna remains pronounced and, in my opinion, has restricted the development of the broader scholarly discourse on Tibetan ritual. In many respects, my thesis was undertaken as a preliminary effort to respond to this problem by compiling data that made it possible to discuss divination in an inter- or multidisciplinary context. This project has largely determined the overall structure of my thesis, which has taken the form of a series of introductions to a variety of difficult but closely related topics. Section 1.1, for example, provides a literature review that addresses the representation and study of Tibetan divination in European and American scholarship. This is supplemented by Section 1.2, which expands these remarks to include a brief analytical survey of the study of divination in the broader anthropological literature. Though Section 1.2 is by no means exhaustive in its scope, by linking these two sections in my discourse, I hope to lay the groundwork required for future scholarship to produce a critical genealogy of Tibetan divination that is capable of responding to the research on divination practices

emerging from parallel academic disciplines.

Similarly, the second and third chapters investigate various methodological aspects of the study of divination in Tibetan cultures. Sections 2.1 through 2.2.2, for instance, offer a brief introduction to Tibetan divination. This includes a survey of the majority of the cleromantic practices known to ethnographic literature, as well as a discussion of the origins of various divinatory traditions in Tibetan Buddhist mythology. My remarks would be incomplete, however, without also addressing the Bon tradition, which, to the best of my knowledge, provides us with the only comprehensive indigenous taxonomy of the forms of divination encountered in a pre-modern Tibetan community. As such, sections 2.3 through 2.6 offer an introduction to Bon, focusing in particular upon Bon historiography and the origins of divination as they are represented in Bon textual sources. By compiling this data, I have attempted to provide a broad, textually-based introduction to Tibetan divination that highlights the importance of studying both ethnographic literature and indigenous etiological narratives. By way of contrast, the value of working closely with diviners in contemporary ethnographic environments is then explored in Chapter Three.

The third chapter addressed the performance of a single form of divination in much greater detail. Due to its physical accessibility and the rich diversity of its symbolism, I chose to focus upon a particular form of lithomancy, known as *lde'u 'phrul*, which is unique to the Tibetan Bon tradition. In my study of *lde'u 'phrul*, I adopted a broad view of hermeneutics, which did not restrict analysis to the documents that I translated, but also sought to incorporate the contemporary performance of divination and, in particular, the diviner's unique perspective as a ritual specialist into my textual critique. It is important to note, however, that when I began my doctoral fieldwork in January of 2013, I had been greatly influenced by the work of Victor Turner and, in particular, by the theoretical discussion of divinatory symbolism advanced in Turner's *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (1975). In retrospect, I believe that this led me to focus on the roles played by systems of symbols in certain forms of Tibetan divination. Nevertheless, over the course of my

second and third chapters, I have attempted to stress the complex, discursive nature of divinatory consultations and, perhaps most importantly, the value of studying the usage and interpretation of divination manuals by Tibetan diviners themselves.

As we have seen numerous times over the course of the last five chapters, Tibetan divination practices are often highly composite and porous phenomena, which bleed into, minimally speaking, the social, economic, and political spheres of human experience. For a researcher, this poses a number of methodological problems, making it difficult to study the performance of divination constructively without first accounting for the unique nature of the subject matter. Keeping this in mind, if we are to move towards a more comprehensive interdisciplinary understanding of Tibetan divination, researchers will be required to expand their disciplinary horizons and to adopt a holistic methodology that combines both ethnographic and bibliographic data in order to chart the relationship of divination (and of the diviner) to the complex social, textual, and epistemological traditions in which divination practices play a significant role. I see this being accomplished in several different ways.

To begin with, the cleromantic texts typical of *mo* or *mo rtsis* provide researchers with a number of opportunities. As noted in section 3.6.3, despite the frequent redaction of divination manuscripts in both pre-modern and contemporary communities, in many cases, no apparent effort is made to revise or modernize the content of textual prognostics. On the one hand, this provides researchers with a very reliable chain of witnesses that, in the hands of a textual critic, can be put in the service of constructing comprehensive *apparatus critici*. I feel as though the *dPal ldan dmag zor rgyal mo'i sho mo* and the *A phyi chos kyi sgrol ma'i sho mo* would be particularly fruitful subjects for this kind of investigation, as multiple witnesses of both manuscripts are readily available in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, as well as existing in online databases. On the other hand, the content of divinatory prognostics also provides us with a unique tool for the construction of Tibetan social histories.

It comes as no surprise that pre-modern divination manuals are, in large part, written by monastics and educated scribes. What is unique about divinatory literature, however, is that rather than being composed entirely for usage by ritual specialists, the prognostic sections of divination manuscripts are also written to respond to questions posed by the diviners' clientele. As a consequence, divination manuals provide us with a kind of window onto the quotidian hopes, fears, and anxieties common to the social milieus in which the manuscripts are composed. While this is briefly discussed by both Ariane Macdonald (1971) and Brandon Dotson (2007), to date there has been very little scholarly interest in the comparative study of post-11th century divination manuscripts and, as a consequence, the historical value of these documents may have been neglected. As many older divination manuals are being retired in contemporary exile communities in favour of modern, mass-produced publications, this particular genre of historical research is of paramount importance.

Leaving aside the historical value of divinatory literature, a great deal of further research is also required on the usage of divination manuscripts in ethnographic environments. In particular, as emphasized in the third chapter, the abstract nature of many textual prognoses raises a number of pressing questions, chief among which is, perhaps, the issue of authorial intention versus contemporary ethnographic usage. How far, for example, do diviners actually diverge from their texts in offering responses to their clients? And how, for that matter, do different diviners understand and interpret textual prognostics in order to adapt them to changing social and ethical paradigms? In the case of *lde'u 'phrul*, I attempted to address these questions in sections 3.6-3.6.3.

In brief, section 3.6 argued that *lde'u 'phrul*'s casting procedure can be understood as a random narrative generator, capable of producing a nearly unlimited number of stories; stories at least one of which the diviner will be able to use as a baseline for crafting the divination's final verbal prognostic (cf. van Binsbergen 1995: 124). Section 3.6.1 provided a case study that attempts to illustrate the process through which the diviner selects individual narrative elements from this

schema and re-signifies them so as to address the specific nature of the client's initial question. Examining both ethnographic and bibliographic data, I suggested that, in the case of *lde'u 'phrul*, the diviner's responses are not improvised, but rather are rooted in a close reading of the divination's textual prognostics, the abstract nature of which allows for high degree of *ex post facto* elaboration. The second case study, presented in section 3.6.2 then provided an example of how similar *pos hoc* elaborations, or 'alibis,' can be located in the divination's contemporary performance. That said, the analytical aspects of the third chapter are limited to the performance of *lde'u 'phrul* by a single diviner working under controlled conditions. In order to expand our understanding of the social-discursive aspects of Tibetan divination, scholars will be required first to engage with multiple forms of divinatory literature in order to translate the prognosticatory sections common to cleromantic manuscripts. Once this is accomplished, it will be possible to critically study the strategies used in the interpretation of divinatory prognostics, as well as the relationship expressed between diviner and client in multiple different forms of divination.

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Appendix i: Doctoral Proposal 2011

1.3.1 General Introduction

My proposed topic of study is the field of Tibetan divination, which is a vast and still largely unexplored area of research. Despite the existence of a number of studies on the subject of Tibetan divination (Thomas 1957; Macdonald 1971; Ramble 1993, 2008; Walter 1995; Wang Yao 1997; Mortensen 2006; Dotson 2007; to name a few), the prevalence and diversity of divinatory practices in the Tibetan cultural sphere is still grossly underrepresented. In my proposed doctoral project I intend to explore several comparative aspects of divination at large; however, due to the breadth of the topic at hand, I have chosen to limit the focus of my thesis to a study of divinatory practices in the Bon tradition.

1.3.2 The Bön tradition

The term Bon has historically been used to indicate a plurality of concepts, the disambiguation of which would require a thorough and lengthy explanation. To speak very generally, however, Bon is perhaps best described as a heterodox branch of Tibetan Buddhism that, according to Bon historical narratives, lays claim to a legacy that long predates the origins of Indian Buddhism. For a number of reasons, Bon has traditionally been treated with dismissiveness by the followers of other Tibetan sects, who have frequently decried the Bonpos (followers of Bon) as "outsiders" (*phyi pa*), "heretics" (*mu stegs pa*), or worse. Furthermore, as the earliest Western information on Bön was derived from Tibetan Buddhist sources, early academic perceptions of Bon culture were often similarly dismissive.

In addition to the emergent nature of Bon Studies, the Bon religion is of particular interest to me because of its wide-ranging acceptance of divinatory practices. It is commonplace to find divination treated with a measure of scepticism—if not doubt—by the intellectualist traditions that tend increasingly to dominate monastic discourse in the Tibetan Buddhist sphere. However, due in large part to the canonical and well-respected nature of divination texts in Bon communities, the study of Tibetan divination would be especially furthered by a critical understanding of the ritual and textual dimensions of Bon divinatory techniques.

1.3.3 Statement of Intent

Rather than survey all of the extant forms Bon divination, I am interested in focusing upon a particular type of lithomancy (pebble divination) popular in the Bon cultural sphere. This form of divination, which is known as "Manifestation of Knowledge" (*lde'u 'phrul*), possesses an entirely unstudied textual tradition that, gauging from the earliest available sources, originates in the eleventh century. Considering the non-eccumenical and regionally specific nature of most Tibetan divinatory literature, when seen from a diachronic perspective, texts outlining the performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge" display a surprising degree of homogeneity and consistency. As such, I propose that a philological analysis of this genre will provide a previously unattainable degree of clarity with regard to the evolution and dissemination of divinatory practices, symbolism, and mythology throughout the Bon tradition.

In addition to the textual heritage of Bon lithomancy, I am interested in the confluence of rite and text within the Bon ritual milieu. The study of "Manifestation of Knowledge" provides an ideal example of a divinatory tradition present in both lay and monastic environments and, furthermore, one which possesses both oral and textual traditions. However, it is also an art that is

beginning to disappear in response to diasporic pressures. Though this trend is often lamented in certain Bon circles, it is clear that there is an increasingly urgent need to document the performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge"—as well as similar divinatory practices—and to study their emergent state of transformation.

1.3.4 Objectives / Goals

While pursuing my proposed doctoral project, I will first conduct translations of a number of previously unstudied lithomantic texts. Chiefly, I will focus upon the *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me zhe bya ba bzhugs pa legs po*, an 11th century "treasure text" (*gter ma*) attributed to the Bon "treasure revealer" (*gter ston*) rJe 'brug chen po Khro tshang 'brug lha. This work will then be read against several later commentaries on the subject of "Manifestation of Knowledge" and rope- divination (*ju thig*). Foremost among these will be the *sMra sing rdel mo gsal ba'i me long bzhugs po* and the *zhang zhung gi ju thig bsdus pa ma phya drug 'phrul gyi lde mig*, both written by the 18th century ecumenicist and historian Kun grol grags pa. Once these translations are completed, I hope to locate the above texts within the broader field of Bon divination by translating excerpts from two sources: first, the life works of the non-sectarian (*ris med*) scholar 'Jam mgon 'ju mi pham (1846-1912); and second, certain commentaries by the 19th-century Bonpo scholar Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, the 17th hierarch of sKyang tshang monastery.

The goal of my translation project is three-fold. First, I intend to preserve and document a number of primary texts characteristic of the Bon lithomantic genre, as well as several of the most influential commentaries written on the subject of divination. It is hoped that this will provide a diachronic perspective on the breadth and diversity of Bon divinatory literature. Second, I will conduct a philological study of the materials at hand. As divination texts often contain misspellings and a large number regionally specific terms, I will also construct an *apparatus criticus* based on

various witnesses of the same text, where available, that will enable non-specialists to approach and critically study the genre. Third, I will undertake a comparative study of the symbolism and mythology commonly deployed in Bon lithomantic literature. Drawing from the above texts, I hope to chart the evolution of Bon divinatory myths and symbols and attempt to account for their homogenization in the contemporary performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge".

In addition to the outlined translation project, I believe that it will be necessary to conduct an extensive period of fieldwork examining the performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge" in contemporary Bon communities. There are a number of reasons underlying the need for such field research. To begin with, it is important to note that the textual transmission of "Manifestation of Knowledge" is accompanied by a parallel oral tradition that has not yet been documented. Furthermore, no degree of textual mastery is capable of representing the unwritten ceremonies that accompany the performance of a divination. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the divination's practical performance necessitates working closely with a specialist in order to assess the behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes of both the diviner and his clientèle. Finally, Tibetan divination texts are notoriously difficult to read. For example, one commonly finds scribal errors, obscure vocabulary, and lengthy sections written in coded language or extended metaphor. In order to mediate these difficulties, it will be necessary to work closely with a diviner in order to establish how these texts are understood by native practitioners of divination.

My time in the field will be divided between four locations. First, I will return to sMan ri monastery in Himachal Pradesh, where I undertook four months of graduate research into the performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge" in 2009. With the consent of the monastery's head educator, the sMan ri Slob dpon 'Phrin las nyi ma, I will continue to observe the performance of "Manifestation of Knowledge" in the monastic community and receive further instruction in its practical performance. While in India, I would also like to visit the Bon Dialectical School in Vārāṇasī, which is located in Uttar Pradesh. Though I have not visited the school itself, I have been

in contact with several Bon monks in Vārāṇasī who are training as lithomantic diviners. I have also been able to locate communities in Dolpo (northern Nepal) and Amdo (eastern Tibet) where lithomancy is performed. As such, I would like to visit each region and survey the forms of lithomancy being practiced and collect their associated texts.

***lDe'u 'phrul*, la manifestation de la connaissance : étude ethno-philologique sur la divination tibétaine avec un intérêt particulier pour une forme commune de la lithomancy Bon**

Bien que j'envisage de couvrir une variété de pratiques divinatoires, je me concentre surtout dans ma thèse sur un type particulier de divination par les pierres pratiquée par les Bonpos tibétains. Cette forme de divination, parfois traduite par « Manifestation de Connaissance » (*lde'u 'phrul*), possède une tradition textuelle presque vierge qui, d'après les histoires Bon, remonte au 11^{ème} siècle. En plus de terrains effectués en divers lieux de l'Himachal Pradesh et de l'Uttaranchal Pradesh, ma présentation du *lde'u 'phrul* est enrichie de la traduction de plusieurs manuscrits sur la lithomancie encore jamais étudiés. Je me concentre notamment sur le *sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*, composé par Kun grol grags pa, un œcuméniste et historien du 18^{ème} siècle. Certains points de ce texte sont comparés à deux commentaires plus tardifs traitant de la lithomancie : (1) le *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me*, écrit par Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, premier précepteur du monastère de Yung drung gLing au Tibet Central ; et le (2) *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron po*, version datant du 19^{ème} siècle d'un *gter ma* censé avoir été découvert au 11^{ème} siècle par le « découvreur de trésors » (*gter ston*) Khro tshang 'brug lha. Lors de l'utilisation de ces matériaux, j'adopte une approche herméneutique large, qui ne restreint pas la critique au manuscrit étudié mais cherche à incorporer les performances contemporaines de *lde'u 'phrul*, et en particulier la perspective unique du devin sur sa performance.

***lDe'u 'phrul*, the manifestation of knowledge: ethnophilological studies in Tibetan divination with particular emphasis upon a common form of Bon lithomancy**

Though I intend to survey a variety of divination practices, my thesis focuses upon a particular type of pebble divination performed by Tibetan Bonpos. This form of divination, which is known as "Manifestation of Knowledge" (*lde'u 'phrul*), possesses a nearly unstudied textual tradition that, according to Bon histories, originates in the eleventh century. In addition to fieldwork conducted in various locations in Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal Pradesh, my discussion of *lde'u 'phrul* is supplemented by the translation of a number of previously unstudied lithomantic manuscripts. Chiefly, I focus upon the *sMra seng rdel mo gsal ba'i me long*, written by the 18th century ecumenicist and historian Kun grol grags pa. Certain aspects of this work will also be read against two later commentaries on the subject of lithomancy: (1) the *Ma sangs 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes rno gsal gyi sgron me*, written by Slob dpon mKhas grub Lung rtogs rgya mtsho, the first preceptor of Yung drung gLing Monastery in Central Tibet; and (2) the *sMra seng 'phrul gyi rdel mo mngon shes gsal ba'i sgron po*, a 19th century witness of an alleged 11th century *gter ma* discovery attributed to the Bon "treasure revealer" (*gter ston*) Khro tshang 'brug lha. In using these materials, I adopt a broad view of hermeneutics, which does not restrict criticism to the manuscripts that I study, but also seeks to incorporate the contemporary performance of *lDe'u 'phrul* and, in particular, the diviner's unique perspective on the performance of divination into my textual critique.

Mots-clés :

Divination; Études tibétaines; Études des pratiques rituelles; Littérature tibétaine; Anthropologie du Tibet et de l'Himalaya; Histoire et philologie tibétaines; Anthropologie.

Keywords :

Divination; Tibetan Studies; Ritual Studies; Tibetan Literature; The Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalayas; Tibetan history and philology; Anthropology.