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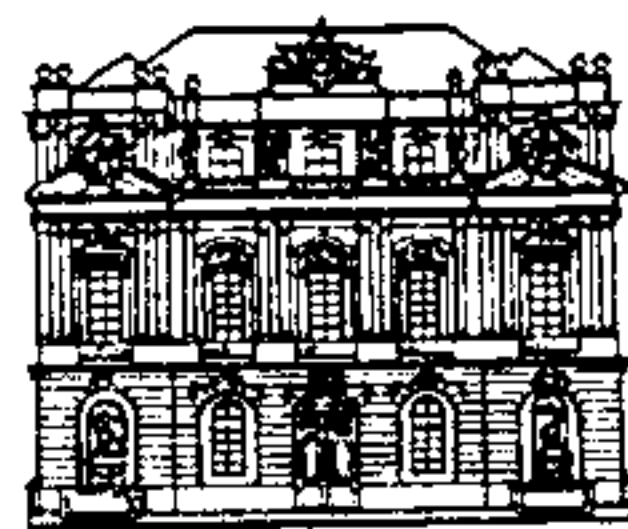
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# HOUSEHOLDER LAMAS AND THE PERSISTENCE OF TRADITION: ANIMAL SACRIFICE IN HIMALAYAN BUDDHIST COMMUNITIES

by

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## **Introduction: Trans-Himalayan encounters**

Through historical contacts with Tibetans, many of Nepal's ethnic groups adopted a household-based form of Buddhism and adapted it to fit within already established religious systems. For the most part, these groups affiliated themselves with the Rnying-ma-pa or 'Brug-pa Bka'-rgyud-pa schools. Reasons for adopting teachings from these particular schools are probably based as much on historical factors as on doctrinal preference.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there could be an economic dimension to the affiliation. Due to resource constraints, many Himalayan communities may have been unable to build, supply, and maintain large populations of celibate monks.<sup>2</sup> Yet without monasteries, how could Buddhism gain a foothold?

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<sup>1</sup> Political events certainly relate to southward Tibetan migrations and the spread of Buddhism into Himalayan areas. It is probable that the 17th century Mongol – Dge-lugs-pa alliance provided an incentive for Rnying-ma practitioners to seek shelter elsewhere. This connection is evident in Rnying-ma prophesies contained within *sbas-yul* ('hidden land') literature discovered in the 14th century by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru-can. All the major *sbas-yul* are situated in the Himalaya, south of Tibet's population centers. *Sbas-yul* prophesies specify the invasion of foreign armies, including Turks (Du-ru-ka), Mongols (Hor and Sog), and Chinese (Rgya) as a sign to search for hidden lands. For example, in the 16th century the "Mongol Repeller" (Sog-bzlog-pa) Blo-gros Rgyal-mtshan cited a prophesy instructing practitioners to flee to Skyid-mo-lung, a *sbas-yul* situated in Nepal near Ku-tang, in order to escape the invading Mongols (*Sog-bzlog*: 16b). Current residents of Sprog village in Ku-tang claim that their ancestor Khyung-po Dkar-po came to the region while searching for the hidden land (Dobremez 1976: 92). The facts that Ku-tang is situated adjacent to the *sbas-yul* Skyid-mo-lung, and that 18th century Ku-tang lamas (*Padma Don-grub*: 16b, *Padma Dbang-'dus*: 16b) professed affiliation with the Byang-gter school founded by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru-can, together indicate that the spread of Buddhism into the area is related to Rnying-ma-pa conceptions of sacred geography. Also, there is a connection between *sbas-yul* prophesies and the journey of Nyi-zla Klong-gsal to Yol-mo and Glang-'phrang (Langtang) in the late 17th century, a topic that will be discussed below. These are just two examples of a general Rnying-ma-pa outlook, whereby southward migrations were considered to be an appropriate response to Mongol incursions. Connecting the past with current perceptions, evidence for hidden land searches that resulted in new settlements was uncovered by Bacot (1912) and Bailey (1957: 33-41). Bacot came across some deserted villages in eastern Tibet around the turn of this century. According to informants, the residents had fled the Chinese army of Chao Erh-feng and gone in search of the *sbas-yul* Padma Bkod. In 1912, Bailey encountered a group of Tibetans living in the high jungles of Assam. They were the remnants of a large wave of *sbas-yul* seekers, most of whom had either died or returned to Tibet. The concept of hidden refuges remains a provocative metaphor among contemporary Himalayan inhabitants, as shown by the *sbas-yul* searches that followed the political upheaval in 1959 (see Brauen-Dolma 1985, see also Levine 1988: 260). The connection between political events, *sbas-yul* prophesies, and migrational patterns could partially explain why border peoples were heavily influenced by Rnying-ma teachings, specifically the "Northern Treasure" (Byang-gter) school of Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru-can.

<sup>2</sup> Such a hypothesis is not controversial in a Himalayan context. Fürer-Haimendorf speculated that the introduction of potatoes into Khumbu during the 19th century resulted in sufficient surplus to support a community of celibate monks. Before that time, economic subsistence prevented the rise of monasticism (1964: 10). Ortner (1989) linked the 20th century rise of Sherpa monasticism with an influx of capital from both trans-Himalayan trade and wage labor earnings from British Darjeeling. Holmberg (1989: 176) also advanced the argument that state extractions of surpluses precluded the establishment of celibate institutions in the Ankhu Khola region. Despite the plausibility of these hypotheses, they remain unsubstantiated.

Celibate monasteries in Nepal are almost always situated north of the alpine watershed in areas traditionally conceived of, by Tibetans at least, as lying within the cultural boundaries of Tibet.<sup>3</sup> At the lower elevations, populated by peoples who are linguistically related to Tibetans (eg. Tamangs, Gurungs), monasticism rarely took hold. However, Buddhism not only entered the latter communities, but became firmly entrenched alongside other religious traditions. It is probable that the Rnying-ma and Bka'-rgyud legacy of permitting individuals to act in the dual capacity of householder and lama was ideally suited to areas where economic conditions restricted the foundation of monastic communities. Instead of monks, the foci of ritual activities in such communities are householder lamas.<sup>4</sup> In many cases, such lamas perform the duties of an agriculturalist, herder, and trader; in addition, they can be the spiritual heads of their communities through the patrilineal control over temples. Their spiritual duties include, but are not limited to, agricultural rituals and the performance of death ceremonies. Householder lamas are the norm rather than the exception throughout many Himalayan Buddhist communities.

Several scholars have expressed the view that Buddhism, in the process of becoming the preeminent religion of Tibet, absorbed elements of pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices (Stein 1962: 191, Tucci 1980: 163-164). This view is supported in Tibetan literature such as the *Lha-'dre Bka'-thang*, discovered by O-rgyan Gling-pa in 1347 (see Blondeau 1971), which recounts Padmasambhava's transformation of non-Buddhist deities into defenders of Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> A story centering on the tension between Tibetan sacrificers and Buddhists who desired to abolish the practice during the imperial period is also related (*Padma bka'i thang-yig*: 200a-203a). The text demonstrates that Tibetans interpret the exploits of Padmasambhava to include the attempt to prohibit the use of slain animals in a ritual setting.

Providing blood offerings to potentially malevolent forces is a practice seemingly at odds with Buddhism. Nevertheless, animal sacrifices have endured in "Buddhist" communities ex-

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<sup>3</sup> The Tibetan celibate monasteries in Kathmandu are mainly of recent origin, and somewhat of a historical anomaly brought on by the influx of refugees after 1959.

<sup>4</sup> I will refer to these lamas as "householder lamas" instead of village lamas or married lamas since their connection with the household, including land tenure rights and obligations, is a better terminological reference to their social position. Since several categories of Rnying-ma-pa lamas can marry and maintain households, an important distinction needs to be made. In southern Tibet, non-celibate lamas come under the headings of *sngags-pa* and *ser-khyim-pa* (Aziz 1978). There is both a religious and a social distinction between these two groups. *Sngags-pa* are tantric practitioners who are important links in the temporal chain of lineal transmissions. In addition, they have high social status that includes the right to own land (Aziz 1978). *Ser-khyim-pa* on the other hand are more like ritual functionaries. They form small, primarily endogamous communities of practitioners, and perform communal ceremonies as well as agricultural and household rites upon request. *Ser-khyim-pa* are considered to have *mi-ser* social status in Tibet. This is important since it means that they have usufruct rights to land only. In addition, they place far less emphasis on their biological descent lineage (and by extension their spiritual descent lineage) in comparison to *sngags-pa* lamas for whom such matters are of paramount concern. Clarke (1980b, 1985) has provided detailed descriptions of the socio-economic system associated with temple-based 'priestly householders', and of the socio-religious differences between householder lamas and monks in Yolmo. Among Gurungs and Tamangs, householder lamas are simply referred to as *lama*, a term that can even be used by outsiders to describe the entire ethnic community (eg. the Lamas of Yol-mo). In a sense, they combine the characteristics of *sngags-pa* and *ser-khyim-pa*. Unilineal descent is vital for the perpetuation of the lama lineage and its concomitant landholdings. However, they did not achieve the same levels of esoteric tantric training as *sngags-pa* in Tibet. In this paper, householder lama refers to non-celibate Himalayan practitioners whose prestige is local, who have few connections with monastic centers, and who are neither lineage holders (*rig-dzin*), major incarnations (*sprul-sku*), nor treasure discoverers (*gter-ston*).

<sup>5</sup> The process of absorbing local protective deities into the Buddhist pantheon was observed in Zanskar (Dargyay 1988). The two cited cases involved the transformation of household-based *pho-lha* into divinities worshipped in a monastic context.



isting at the periphery of the Tibetan world.<sup>6</sup> The main arguments of this paper are that the practice of animal sacrifice could be retained in areas where Buddhism was present, albeit in a non-monastic form, and that the retention of such practices in Himalayan Buddhist communities was facilitated by the nature of household-based Buddhist practice which was simultaneously conservative (resistant to altering recognized means of propitiation) and symbiotic (able to coexist with other practices in a cohesive system).

Being far removed from the spiritual centers of Tibet and lacking the resources to maintain monastic institutions, Buddhist transformations were only partial in Himalayan communities. Lamas assumed some of the spiritual obligations, but by no means obtained a monopoly on ritual duties. As the following examples demonstrate, ideological conflict became manifest when Tibetans who were affiliated with more conventional traditions encountered Buddhist communities wherein animal sacrifices were performed.

### Example #1: Nyi-zla Klong-gsal<sup>7</sup>

The following passage is from a short biography of Rig-'dzin Nyi-zla Klong-gsal:

"At the upper region of the market town Gnya'-nang, the northern door of the *sbas-yul* (hidden land) Padma Tshal, while going to Phur-po Bya-khyung, at the foot of the mountain which resembles an imposing elephant, there is an especially good cave. In thoughts which converged at dawn of the morning when I stayed there, reddish people appeared wearing black clothing bound by black turbans and by girdles of variegated heavy cloth. Nowadays, they are the treasure protectors of the six hidden lands, the treasure places of Padmasambhava. Because I dismissed animal sacrifices (*dmar-mchod*) and moral defilements among them, they said: 'We thank you for the purification which you effected through performing golden libations (*gser-skyems*) and other offerings. We invite you to a great feast.' After saying this, they tried it" (*Gcod-yul*: 72a-72b).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A full enumeration of animal sacrifice in Nepal and Tibet is beyond the scope of this paper. For sacrificial rites in imperial Tibet, see Lalou (1952). Hoffmann (1961: 72-73) speculated that *gtor-ma* were used as substitute offerings from the *phyi-dar* (10th C.E.) onwards. Yet the spread of Buddhism south of the Himalaya did not require the demise of sacrificial rites. When Tibetans and Lepchas of Sikkim first formed a pact of friendship in the 17th century, the rites of recognition involved an animal sacrifice (Nakane 1966: 217). Despite the subsequent rise of Buddhism, Lepchas did not discard their sacrificial practices (see Gorer 1984, and Siiger 1967). Other Buddhists who continue to offer sacrifices include the residents of the upper Arun Valley (Diemberger 1993: 61, Fürer-Haimendorf 1988: 112-114). Paul speculated that Sherpa animal sacrifices were still practiced last century (1982: 98), although no concrete evidence was provided to support his assertion. Gurungs (Pignéde 1962) and Tamangs (Höfer 1981, Holmberg 1989, Steinmann 1987), who have been subjected to centuries of Buddhist influence, still offer sacrifices. In most cases cited above, as long as Buddhist lamas refrained from killing, ideological confrontations could be avoided. Instances of sacrificial rites where lamas are present or perform parallel duties are found among Lepchas (Gorer 1984: 232), Gurungs (Pignéde 1962: 376-377), Rais (Gaenszle 1993: 121), and Tamangs (Holmberg 1989: 223-224). Nevertheless, there is often overt tension between lamas and sacrificial agents. Even in the Newari urban centers Buddhist householder priests (Vajrācāryas) made sacrificial offerings until recently (Gellner 1992). Although they have given up the practice themselves, Vajrācāryas still officiate at rites where animals are ritually slaughtered. For a recent review of anthropological theories dealing with animal sacrifice, and how such theories apply in Nepal, see Oppitz (1993).

<sup>7</sup> A Rnying-ma-pa lama, also known as 'Ja-lus Snang-stong Rang-grol, who died in 1695 (Ehrhard n.d.: 3). He was from Lhun-grub Sgang in upper Spu-rang, western Tibet (*Gcod-yul*: 60b).

<sup>8</sup> *Gnya'-nang tshong-'dus-kyi phu Sbas-yul Padma-tshal-gyi byang-sgo gangs-ri phur-po bya-khyung-gyi tsa-ba-na / ri glang-chen 'gyings-pa 'dra-ba'i mdun-na phug-pa shin-tu yag-pa-cig 'dug-par / der bzhugs-pa'i tho-rangs khatugs nyams-su mi smug-po gos nag-po'i ber-gyon dang thod nag-pos bcings / za-'og kra-bo'i skye-rags bcings-pa-zhig byung-nas / der Rig-'dzin Padma'i gter-gnas sbas-yul drug skor-ba'i gter-bsrung yin / khul-'dir mi-mams-kyi*

Prior to this episode, Nyi-zla Klong-gsal went to Gu-ge where he found a war in progress (*Gcod-yul*: 62b-63a), which must correspond with the Tibet-Ladakh war that began in 1679 (Petech 1988: 27). Following the above quoted passage, he described his opening of a hidden land in Glang-'phrang (Langtang) during the 8th month of a monkey year. Since Nyi-zla Klong-gsal died in 1695, the monkey year in question must be 1680 or 1692. Thus, Nyi-zla Klong-gsal's encounter with the animal sacrificers probably occurred in or before 1692.

Based on topographical references, the identification of the locale where this event transpired can be fixed within limits. Nyi-zla Klong-gsal alluded to the upper valley (*phu*) of Gnya'-nang, which corresponds with a valley rising to the northwest of the market town near the head of which is located a mountain called Phur-po Bya-khyung (spelled Phurbi Chyachu on some modern maps). As for the mountain resembling an imposing elephant (*glang-chen 'gyings-pa 'dra-ba*), its identification is unclear, although there is a mountain to the north of Phur-po Bya-khyung labelled Langshisha Ri on modern maps. This may be what Nyi-zla Klong-gsal was referring to, a conjecture bolstered by the fact that he also situated his position with reference to the northern entrance to Padma Tshal, a *sbas-yul* situated in Yol-mo. According to a road guide (*lam-yig*), one approaches Padma Tshal from the north via Zla-kham Gnam-sgo (*Sbas Padma Tshal*: 2b). Zla-kham Gnam-sgo can be identified as Gnam-sgo Zla-gam, a *sbas-yul* situated in the Glang-'phrang Valley (*Nam-sgo Zla-gam*: 3r-4r, see also Ehrhard n.d.). Based on these references, Nyi-zla Klong-gsal must have been in the highlands between Yol-mo and Glang-'phrang. According to modern maps, there is a trail connecting Glang-'phrang with Yol-mo at the upper reaches of the Larkhe Khola. This is probably where the event took place. Immediately afterwards, Nyi-zla Klong-gsal went to Stag-phug (*Gcod-yul*: 72b), a well-known site in Yol-mo where Mi-la Ras-pa meditated.

No ethnonym was given for the people Nyi-Zla Klong-gsal encountered. The current inhabitants of the villages immediately south of the identified area are Tamang (see Frank 1974: 69-71 and Jest 1985). Since Nyi-Zla Klong-gsal was travelling southward toward the hidden land of Padma Tshal, and since the guide to Padma Tshal specifies that the northern door must be entered during the summer (*Sbas Padma Tshal*: 2b), it is possible that Nyi-zla Klong-gsal encountered shepherds who had taken their flocks to the highlands for grazing. From the passage we know that these people were probably not Tibetan, were receptive to Buddhism, and had the custom of sacrificing animals. So far, the evidence suggests that they were Tamang (or ancestors of those who are currently called Tamang), the ethnic group that is currently found to the south of where the event transpired, and hence would be most likely to use these particular highlands for grazing. Evidence also suggests that Tamangs inhabited these same areas more than 200 years ago. For example, in 1748 Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi 'Byung-gnas encountered the "Snyi-shang lama called Thang-skam Lama" in Bod-grong (Lewis and Jamspal 1988), which was somewhere between the Bhote Kosi and Balephi Khola on the trade route connecting Kathmandu with Gnya'-nang. Snyi-shang, in this context, is the equivalent of Tamang or their predecessors.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the oldest temple in Yol-mo was founded by Sngags-'chang

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*dmar-mchod dang dme-grib btang-bar khyed-kyi bsangs gser-skyems-kyis bsangs-ba thugs-rje-che / da khyed-la mgron zab-po zhu-ba yin zer-ba dang nyams sad /*

<sup>9</sup> Snyi-shang, as a geographical term, is attested in the writings of Mi-la Ras-pa and refers to the upper Marsyangdi Valley in Nepal (Aufschnaiter 1976: 181). The modern ethnic appellation Snyi-shang derives from the geographical term. However, Snyi-shang also appears in another geographic context in the biographies of Gtsang-smyon He-ru-ka and Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi 'Byung-gnas (see Lewis and Jamspal 1988), where it is clearly used as an ethnonym. While returning to Tibet from Nepal, Gtsang-smyon He-ru-ka stayed for several years at Sman-lung Chu-bar to the southeast of Gnya'-nang. While there: "Acting as servants of the Lord (i.e., Gtsang-smyon He-ru-ka) when they ar-



Shākya Bzang-po in the late 17th century (Clarke 1980a). It is reasonable to assume that the temple was not founded in a vacuum, but rather in an area where there already existed the requisite population to support such an endeavor. Although Shākya Bzang-po himself was a Tibetan, judging from the current ethnic composition of Yol-mo it is probable that most of the population were Tamang. This means that the people who inhabited the areas downstream of where Nyi-zla Klong-gsal encountered sacrificers were Tamangs, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that the sacrificers themselves were Tamang shepherds.

### Example #2: Padma Dbang-'dus<sup>10</sup>

Padma Dbang-'dus made the following comments about religious practices in Ku-tang during the 1730s:

"All practice was heretical (*mu-stegs-pa*). In the mountains all the wild animals<sup>11</sup> were killed. In the valleys all the goats and sheep together were given over to the realm of the knife.

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rived (at his residence), the followers of the Northern Treasure (Byang-gter) school, the Snyi-shang people, lords of the east and west, and Rong-pas made many religious services and offerings at all spaces between the roads" (*Gtsang-smyon*: 97b). (*rje-yi chags phyi-bgyis ta [sic: rje-yi phyag-phyi byed bgyid te] phebs tshe / bla byar [sic: byang]-pa-sogs Snyi-shang-rnams dang jo-bo shar-nub-sogs Rong-pa-rnams-kyis lam-bar thams-cad-du bsnyan-bkur dang 'bul-ba mang-du byas shing phyag-'tshal shing . . .*). Since Snyi-shang is cited in conjunction with Rong-pa, a common appellation for many of Nepal's inhabitants, it is clear that the former also has ethnic connotations. Snyi-shang people were also found in the Trisuli Valley to the south of Skyid-grong by Gtsang-smyon (*Gtsang-smyon*: 96a).

Moving 200 years forward in time, the biography of Si-tu Panchen is less ambiguous in its usage of the term Snyi-shang. While enroute from Gnya'-nang to Kathmandu, the biography states: "Then (they) stayed at a place called Spag-spor, a town populated by Bal-po (Newars) and Mang-'gar (Magars) . . . Travelling to a town called Si-pa, after written orders from the Newar King arrived, Mang-'gar and Snyi-shang, men of the road, carried our provisions" (*Ta'i Si-tu*: 57a). (*de-nas Spag-spor grags-pa Bal-po dang Mang-'gar sna-tshogs yod-pa'i grong-zhig-tu bzhuks / . . . de-nas Si-pa zhes-pa'i grong-du phebs Bal-po rgyal-po'i bka'-shog phebs-nas sku-ches-rnams Mang-'gar dang Snyi-shang-sogs lam-bar-gyi skye-bo-rnams-kyis bskyal /*). Si-pa, according to the itinerary compiled by Kirkpatrick in 1792 (1986: 315), was the third stage of travel between Kathmandu and Gnya'-nang. The above quotes occur in a completely different geographical context than the place currently referred to as Snyi-shang. Previously, the term must have had a broader application. Who exactly were Gtsang-smyon and Si-tu Pan-chen referring to?

The most obvious choices, based on current inhabitants below Gnya'-nang, are Tamang and Rai. From the biography of Bstan-'dzin Nor-bu, we know that there were Bod-pa, Rong-pa, Rta-mangs, and Ma-gar found to the south of Gnya'-nang around 1600 (*Yol-mo-ba*: 28a). Of the four, Bod-pa (Tibetans), Rta-mangs (Tamangs), and Ma-gar (Magars) are recognizable, so only Rong-pa is ambiguous. Through a process of elimination, Rong-pa must refer to Rais. In the quote from Gtsang-smyon's biography, the Snyi-shang people are distinguished from Rong-pas, and in the quote from Si-tu Pan-chen's biography Snyi-shang are differentiated from Mang-'gars (a variant spelling for Ma-gar). This leaves Tamangs as the most viable candidate. Snyi-shang and Rta-mangs must have been nearly equivalent terms. Further evidence for this connection is that lshang was one of the terms for Tamang cited by Grierson in the *Linguistic Survey of India* (Mazaudon 1973: 34). Holmberg mentions that lshang is the term used by Sherpas to designate Tamangs, and speculates that it derives from *ashyang* (Tib: *a-zhang*), or maternal uncle (1989: 17). However, based on the literary evidence it is more probable that the phonetic transformation was from an initial ñ to an initial i. From this evidence, I believe that Snyi-shang was previously a term that referred to Tamangs living near the trade routes connecting Gnya'-nang and Skyid-grong with Kathmandu. This conclusion is supported by *slob-dpon* 'Gyur-med of Nub-ri, Nepal, who stated that the term Snyi-shang applies to the people of the Manang area as well as to the non-Tibetans who live south of Gnya'-nang (personal conversation, 10/95).

<sup>10</sup> Padma Dbang-'dus, a lama from Ku-tang in north-central Nepal, was born near the end of the 17th century (Aris 1979: 4). He is mentioned in the biography of Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu (*Tshe-dbang Nor-bu*: 64a), they met in Nub-ri in 1727.

<sup>11</sup> I read *dag* as a corruption of *dwags*, as opposed to *bdag*, since it seems unlikely that *ri-bdag* (mountain protector deities) were slain, especially in light of the next line which refers to the killing of domesticated animals (*ra* and *lug*).

Even the white-direction protecting *gzhi-bdag* turned to the power of black life-cutting. In each part of the land there is a black *bon*. Everybody, male, female, young and old, changed to the (black) direction through evil thoughts. Having done *thun-bzung* through the continual cutting of life for all the *lha*, *klu*, *bdud* and *btsan*, at the feast meat and blood were distributed. Although it is the hidden region of Skyid-[mo]-lung,<sup>12</sup> the narrow gorge resembles the barbarous edge of darkness." (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 132b-133a).<sup>13</sup>

After vowing to make a change, Padma Dbang-'dus stated:

"Starting with the Lkog residents and continuing through the places including Tshag, Bshag-rang, Rgya, Bi, Sprog, Blod, Snyag, Sbang-shing, and Phe-blon, I became the guide of all these places.<sup>14</sup> To those who desired material, food and wealth, I offered food and wealth. To those who desired the coming of good tidings to themselves, I gave good tidings. To those who respected the path of virtue, having explained the dharma and cause and effect, I put them onto the path. To those (on the) black path, the evil ones who practice black pacification,<sup>15</sup> having recognized the ability to subdue in the verses of the words of Byams-pa, through various methods of coalescence (*zung-'jug*)<sup>16</sup> I induced the villagers of this pleasant valley of Ku-tang to make a vow of not sacrificing to the *bzhi-bdag*, *lha* and *'dre* until the end of an era" (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 134a-134b).<sup>17</sup>

Although Ku-tang has yet to be the object of an intensive study, some inferences can be made about the ethnic composition of the area. Currently, Ku-tang residents' vernacular is unintelligible to their Tibetan-speaking neighbors in Nub-ri (Aris 1975). Apparently, this has

<sup>12</sup> Skyid-mo-lung is one of the 7 major hidden lands (*sbas-yul*).

<sup>13</sup> *spyod-lam thams-cad mu-stegs ha-la bzhin / ri-la gnas-pa'i ri-dag [sic: dwags] thams-cad bsod / lung-la bcas-ba'i ra lug rnams ma-lus gri-kha'i ngang-la btang / gzhi-bdag dkar-phyogs skyong-mkhan yang nag-po srog-bcod dbang-du song / yul-khag re-la 'bon-nag re / pho-mo rgan-gzhon thams-cad yang bsam-pa sdig-pas phyogs-la 'gyur / lha klu bdud btsan thams-cad-la srog-bcod rgyun-gyis 'thun-bzung-nas / ston-mo sha 'gyed khrag 'gyed-byed / skyid-lung sbas-'dabs yin-'gyur kyang / rong-khung mun-pa'i mtha'-khob 'dra /*

<sup>14</sup> Each of the villages mentioned in this list can be located today. Sprog and Blod are situated in Nub-ri, whereas Snyag, Sbang-shing and Phe-blon are located in the Gurung area of Karong. All of the others are in Ku-tang (see map in Aris 1975).

<sup>15</sup> In this context, black pacification implies animal sacrifice.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the differentiation between two truths (ultimate and relative), Dudjom Dorje quotes from Mi-la Raspa's *Mgur-'bum* the following passage relating to ultimate reality:

"Since appearances in the form of existing substances  
And reality which is non-existing emptiness  
Are essentially inseparable and of a single savour,  
There is not just intrinsic awareness or extrinsic awareness,  
But a vast coalescence (*zung-'jug*) of everything." (Dudjom Dorje 1991:201).

In the context of Padma Dbang-'dus' quote, it is clear that he attempted to replace a worldview wherein local divinities require blood offerings. What he offered was a different ultimate reality wherein local divinities were impermanent (characterized by emptiness), and thus ritual actions aimed at propitiating such forces were devoid of ultimate meaning.

<sup>17</sup> *de-nas yul Lkog-pa zer-ba-nas sgo-tshugs nas / Tshag-gi yul / Bshag-rang-gis yul / Rgya yul Bi'i yul Sprog-gi yul / Blod-kyi yul / Snyag-gi yul / Sbang-shing-gi yul / Phe-blon-gis yul dang bcas yul-'di-rnams thams-cad-kyi kha-lor bsgyur-nas / dngos-po zas nor 'dod-pa-rnams-la zas nor sbyin / gtam 'dod-yod-pa-rnams gtam stod byas / dkar-po'i phyogs-la mos-pa-rnams-la rgyu-'bras dang chos-bshad-nas lam-la tshud / zhi-nag ngan-po nag-phyogs-rnams-la / byams-pa'i tshigs-gyi 'gu-[sic: mgur?]bar byad-pa'i ngos-'dzin byas-nas / zung-'jug sna-tshogs thabs-las Sku-thang Skyid-kyi-yul 'dir / bskal-pa nam-stog-gis [sic] bar-du yul-grong-kyi khyim-du bzhi-bdag lha-'dre-la dmar byed-rgyu med-pa'i dam-tshig yod /*



been the case for several centuries. In a guide to the hidden land Skyid-mo-lung contained within *Gu-ru'i ga'u bdun-ma*,<sup>18</sup> the area is depicted in the following manner: "In the upper part (of that land) the language of Tibet is spoken. At the lower part (of the land) there are many incompatible languages." (*Ga'u bdun-ma*: 2r).<sup>19</sup>

The people responsible for opening Skyid-mo-lung were Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem-can (1337-1408) and Gar-dbang Rdo-rje (1640-1680), the latter of whom was born in Ku-tang (*Gcod-yul*: 53a). So the linguistic reference to the area may date to the late 14th century, but is at least as old as the late 17th century. By the early 18th century, the situation is more clear. According to the biography of Padma Dbang-'dus, who immigrated with his family to Ku-tang in the early 18th century, the local vernacular caused him difficulties (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 8r). In other words, an easily intelligible dialect of Tibetan was not spoken in Ku-tang at the time. So the guide to Skyid-mo-lung and Padma Dbang-'dus' biography describe a situation similar to the present wherein the upper valley (Nub-ri) is populated by Tibetan speakers while the lower valley (Ku-tang) is linguistically distinct.<sup>20</sup> Based on the linguistic difference and proximity to Gurung areas, it is possible that Ku-tang was originally settled by Gurungs and later integrated by Tibetans.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A text discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru-can which contains many prophecies about the decline of Buddhism in Tibet. The central section of this text is a guide to Skyid-mo-lung.

<sup>19</sup> *de'i phu-na bod-kyi skad smra / mdo-na skad-rigs mi-mthun-pa mang-po yod /*

<sup>20</sup> Ku-tang was considered by Tibetans to simultaneously lie outside of Tibet (ethnically) and be a part of Tibet (administratively). From the colophon to a short instructional text from 1729, it is clear that Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu considered Nub-ri to lie within the realm of Tibet, whereas Ku-tang was considered to be in Mon, a term used to designate areas to the south of Tibet proper. Specifically, the instructions were given: "at the border of Tibet and Mon in Gung-thang Nub-ri, a part of Mnga-ris in Tibet" (*Bla-sgrub*: 3a). One of the people for whom it was written was: "Padma Britson-'grus from Be'u-phug in Ku-tang of Mon, a part of Rgya-gar (India) . . ." (*Bla-sgrub*: 3a). With regard to the term Mon, in this case Tshe-dbang Nor-bu revealed that the division between Tibet (Bod) and Mon is an ethnic distinction rather than a geographical or political contrast. Nub-ri and Ku-tang are geographically contiguous, yet culturally and linguistically distinct. A long history of Buddhism in Ku-tang was not enough to make Tshe-dbang Nor-bu consider it as a part of Tibet, nor was Nub-ri's position on the southern slope of the Himalaya enough to exclude it from being part of Tibet. However, the situation is not so simple. In the *Lcags-stag Zhib-gzhung*, the document listing tax obligations for most of the districts of Tibet, both Nu-bri and Ku-tang are listed under the administrative district of Rdzong-dga' (*Lcags-stag Zhib-gzhung*: 333). The tax document, which set tax obligations from 1830 until the 1950s, was a revision of a similar document, entitled *Lcags-spre Zhib-gzhung*, from 1740 (Surkhang 1966: 15). Since both Ku-tang and Nub-ri appear in the 1830 version, it is probable that both were included in the 1740 edition. An interesting juxtaposition arises: culturally, Ku-tang was considered by Tshe-dbang Nor-bu to lie outside of Tibet, yet politically (and for tax purposes) the Tibetan government considered it to be division of Rdzong-dga' district.

<sup>21</sup> A different conclusion could be drawn based on the terminology used by Padma Dbang-'dus in reference to local religious practices. For example, Gurungs do not have practitioners referred to as *bon-po*, nor do they make offerings to *lha* and *'dre* (see Pignéde 1962 and Mumford 1990). To the contrary, *bon-pos* were mentioned by Padma Dbang-'dus, and are still found in Ku-tang (Aris 1975, Dobremez 1976: 92). The sacrifices described by Padma Dbang-'dus bear a resemblance to current Tamang practices. Tamangs offer sacrifices to beings called *shyibda* and *lente*, terms etymologically associated with the Tibetan *bzhi-bdag* and *lha-'dre* (Höfer). Padma Dbang-'dus obtained pledges from villagers to refrain from performing sacrifices to precisely these beings. However, the comparison is questionable since, although they may have in the past, contemporary Tamang *bombos* no longer engage in animal sacrifice. Whether or not sacrifices are still performed in Ku-tang, or in connection with Buddhist rituals in the Gurung villages mentioned above, is an open question. In Sbang-shing (Pangshing), Aris mentioned that Gurungs make blood offerings in a Hindu ritual context (Aris 1975: 49).



### Example #3: Mchog Gling-pa<sup>22</sup>

According to Mumford (1990), Tibetans entered the Gurung region of Rgya-gsum-mdo (Gyasumdo) about 100 years ago where they became dependents of Gurung lords, and as a consequence adopted local practices. Gradually, a Tibetan community was established apart from the Gurungs, and lama lineages became established along with temples. However, a residual Gurung influence persisted in the form of animal sacrifices to potentially malevolent forces such as *klu*, *btsan* and *bdud*.<sup>23</sup> Animal sacrifice was banned only in the 1960s when Mchog Gling-pa, a refugee from Tibet, came to Rgya-gsum-mdo. To offset blood offerings, Mchog Gling-pa composed a ritual text that specified alternative offerings. In the text, his attitude toward animal sacrifice was made explicit:

"This is written in order to benefit the ignorant beings of existence, since they and various demons and all those who perform the red offering [*dmar-mchod*] will go to the Hell Realm [*ngan 'gro*]; with good intention of helping others and in compliance with the Buddhist scriptures, I have developed this short burnt offering rite [*gsur-btang*] easy to perform for the three area gods: *klu*, *btsan* and *bdud*, as well as for any other demonic beings of the region" (Mumford 1990: 257).

With only one exception, all the Tibetan villages in Rgya-gsum-mdo subsequently repudiated animal sacrifices (Mumford 1990: 82).

### Discussion: social and historical comparison

Three instances of attempts to annul animal sacrifices were presented above. In the first case, the efforts were directed toward Tamangs; in the second, toward a population comprised of both Gurungs and Tibetans; and in the third case, toward Tibetans who had settled in a Gurung area. A commonality between Nyi-zla Klong-gsal, Padma Dbang-'dus and Mchog Gling-pa is that all were Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa lamas associated with spiritual centers in Tibet. The border communities where they attempted to replace animal sacrifices were multi-ethnic, and at least nominally Buddhist. At present, Buddhism in the areas discussed above centers on temples controlled by Rnying-ma-pa householder lamas. The next step is to establish whether or not this was the case at the time when animal sacrifices were discouraged.

From Mumford's account of Rgya-gsum-mdo, we know that it was householder lamas who were forbidden to give blood offerings. In Ku-tang, the biography of Padma Don-grub makes it clear that regional spiritual activity by 1700 centered on temples connected with hereditary lamas.<sup>24</sup> The presence of household-based lamas to the south of Gnya'-nang is also attested in the

<sup>22</sup> A Rnying-ma-pa *sngags-pa*, he came to Rgya-gsum-mdo from Tibet with his wife and children around 1960. Afterwards, he spent some time in Nub-ri before settling in Bir near Dharamsala, India.

<sup>23</sup> Mumford assumed that, since the settlers were Tibetan, they could only have adopted animal sacrifice after coming under the sway of Gurungs. Although this is a viable explanation, it is not implausible that the settlers were already familiar with such rites.

<sup>24</sup> Prior to departing from Ku-tang on a pilgrimage to Tibet around 1685, Padma Don-grub (one of Padma Dbang-'dus' teachers, b.1667) and a companion received the following advice from a local lama: "If you remain here, the two of you will not attain *chos*. If you practice *chos* [here], it will only be the *chos* of the *ser-khyim-pa*" (*Padma Don-grub*: 8a). (*Chos byas-na ser-bskyem-kyi* [*sic*; *ser-khyim*] *chos man-ta mi-yongs-dug* /). The quote is interesting since it indicates that Ku-tang residents clearly distinguished between the levels of attainment of *ser-khyim* lamas and those who pursued more in-depth spiritual training. Further evidence for the existence of householder lamas in Ku-tang is contained within another passage of the same biography. While visiting Bsam-yas as a youth, Padma Don-grub was asked who initiated him into the Byang-gter tradition. He responded: "In *sbas-yul* Skyid-mo-lung

past, although not in the exact location where Nyi-zla Klong-gsal's sacrifice prohibition transpired. Slightly to the southwest, land grants were given to householder lamas in Yol-mo by the rulers of Kathmandu starting in the late 17th century. One such title, issued in 1723, stated that bestowed land would belong to a certain lama lineage as long as descendants of the founder inhabited the place (Clarke 1980a: 15), which is the equivalent of specifying that the grant was given to a patrilineage of householder lamas. Yet as Clarke has pointed out, the original lamas of Yol-mo were Tibetan immigrants, not Tamangs. Further evidence for the existence of Tamang householder lamas comes from the biography of Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi 'Byung-gnas. During Si-tu Pan-chen's trip between Gnya'-nang and Kathmandu in 1748, after staying in Li-thi he passed through Phal-drug Thang-skam<sup>25</sup> and stayed at a place called Bod-grong, where: "The Snyi-shang lama called Thang-skam Lama met with masters and disciples." (*Ta'i Si-tu*: 133a).<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, Thang-skam Lama's status as a Buddhist practitioner was not elaborated upon. At present, in Sindhu Pulchok there are numerous Tamang temples controlled by patrilineages of lamas (Jest 1985), but the founding dates of these institutions remain undetermined. Nevertheless, as mentioned above Snyi-shang is the equivalent of Tamang, and thus it is safe to conclude that there were Tamang Buddhists in the area by 1748. Whether or not they were householders is still a problem to be conclusively solved.

Despite the presence of householder lamas in each of the areas, none of the sacrifice abolitionists had such a status. Mchog Gling-pa was described as an "incarnate lama" (Mumford 1990: 83) and in the colophon of the text against animal sacrifice refers to himself as a *gter-ston* (Mumford 1990: 206).<sup>27</sup> Nyi-zla Klong-gsal was also a *gter-ston*. The fact that he travelled widely indicates that he was not tied to the land and that his prestige was not localized. As for Padma Dbang-'dus, when at a young age he expressed a desire to lead a religious life, his father told him that: "If you must become a religious adept, then become a worldly *ser-khyim-pa*." (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 12a).<sup>28</sup> Contrary to his father's advice, Padma Dbang-'dus became a *rtog-lan*, or yogi, and henceforth spent much time on pilgrimage meditating in cemeteries.

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there is a *ser-khyim-pa* lama. It is there that [Byang-gter] teachings were given to me" (*Padma Don-grub*: 16b). (*Sbas-yul Skyid-lung-gyis [sic] bla-ma gser-bskyem [sic: ser-khyim] lugs chig yod-pas de-ru zhus-pa-yin* /). Before embarking on this journey to Tibet, a local lama had advised Padma Don-grub to claim that he was from Skyid-mo-lung instead of Ku-tang (*Padma Don-grub*: 11a). Thus, in the context above, *sbas-yul* Skyid-mo-lung actually refers to Ku-tang. From these passages it is clear that householder lamas were in Ku-tang and that they were accorded low spiritual status.

<sup>25</sup> Kirkpatrick's itinerary from Kathmandu to Gnya'-nang mentions Laisti as being the border town between Nepal and Tibet, and Phaldoo is the next stop to the south (1986: 316). These are obviously the Li-thi and Phal-drug through which Si-tu Pan-chen passed.

<sup>26</sup> *Thang-skam Bla-ma zer-ba 'i Snyi-shang-gi bla-ma dpon-slob-rnams-kyis mjal* /

<sup>27</sup> These references do not rule out the possibility that Mchog Gling-pa was a married *sgnags-pa*, which in fact he was. In addition, *gter-ston* were usually married practitioners (Thondup 1986). For this reason, it is vital at this point to refer back to the social distinction between *sgnags-pa* and *ser-khyim-pa*. The former are high level tantric practitioners, for whom biological pedigree is equally as important as spiritual lineage, since the two descent lineages converge to a great degree. *Sgnags-pa* had high social prestige. *Ser-khyim-pa*, on the other hand, were more like ritual specialists who performed rites for the benefit of the community. The distinction is important, being one between those trained in the philosophical and meditation traditions (*sgnags-pa*) and those who were religious functionaries (*ser-khyim-pa*). The types of married lamas under which animal sacrifices could perpetuate are more similar to the latter.

<sup>28</sup> *khyod chos byed-rgyu rang yin-na 'jig-rten ser-khyim lugs lta gyis* /



Furthermore, in each case it was not local householder lamas who condemned animal sacrifice. To the contrary, the prohibitions were initiated by external agents. This is clear in the cases of Nyi-zla Klong-gsal and Mchog Gling-pa, since they were Tibetans. Further elaboration is required in the case of Padma Dbang-'dus.

First of all, it is essential to bear in mind that Padma Dbang-'dus immigrated to Ku-tang as a youth. He was an outsider, and in his biography laments the fact that the local vernacular and customs caused him great difficulties. In addition, the motivation for his ban on animal sacrifices may be related to the visit of another outsider, Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu who came to Nub-ri in 1729. Not only did Padma Dbang-'dus receive instructions from the great lama (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 126b-127b), but it was only after the latter's departure that he convinced the Ku-tang residents to discontinue the practice of offering life to the *bzhi-bdag*, *lha* and *'dre*. All of this transpired after Padma Dbang-'dus had undertaken a pilgrimage to Kathmandu, during which time he spoke critically of animal sacrifices that he witnessed (*Padma Dbang-'dus*: 90a). It is possible that his convictions were bolstered by Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, whose visit rendered the moral authority to effect a ban. Circumstantial evidence for this view is found in a passage dealing with *lha* and *'dre* that was communicated by Tshe-dbang Nor-bu to some disciples in Nepal. The passage shows his attitude toward such beings:<sup>29</sup>

"In ultimate reality there are no *lha* and *'dre* whatever,  
all (phenomena) are lanterns in the sphere of bright light,  
Although in conventional reality *lha* and *'dre* exist,  
harmful *bgegs*, don't stay anywhere (here), go away!" (*Bal-yul-gyi lha-'dre*: 54a).<sup>30</sup>

In other words, *lha* and *'dre* do not really exist, but are only illusory phenomena. However, on the level of relative reality such forces cannot be ignored. This partially explains why both Mchog Gling-pa and Nyi-zla Klong-gsal provided alternative offerings to potentially malevolent beings. In summary, the above passage displays Tshe-dbang Nor-bu's viewpoint on *lha* and *'dre*, a perspective that may have been communicated to Padma Dbang-'dus thereby encouraging him to initiate a ritual transformation in Ku-tang.

So far it has been argued that the bans were initiated by external agents in areas where householder lamas were present. The next step is to introduce a historical dimension. In each of the cases discussed above, political circumstances were partially responsible for drawing Nyi-zla Klong-gsal, Padma Dbang-'dus, and Mchog Gling-pa to the borderlands. Nyi-zla Klong-gsal came in search of the *sbas-yul* Padma Tshal. Prior to making the venture, he received a prophesy about the coming of the Mongol army:

"While practicing religion at the meditation places of Bāi-ro, including Bher-chen, Bher-chung, 'O-ma Mkhar, and so forth, on the 15th day of the 1st month (i.e. full moon) five extremely beautiful girls appeared and said: '10 years from now the armies of the Hor and Sog (Mongols), like a bird-ship of the sky, will pass through the upper part of Black Shang-lung. (In) defenseless Dbus and Gtsang, excrement will resemble food, and although there will be suffering, it will come to be that the arrogant Tibetans will despise Padmasambhava. You, unshaken by doubt, flee to a southern valley where there is a mountain that resembles the outspread wings of a vulture.' . . . In the bird year [1681?], after the army of Dga'-ldan Tshe-

<sup>29</sup> The precise location of composition is unclear. However, the postscript (*Bal-yul-gyi lha-'dre*: 54b) specifies the "lower hot land (of) Nepal" (*gnas-'di-ni slob-dpon Padma'i gnas / yul bkra-shis Bal-yul tsha-ba shod /*).

<sup>30</sup> *don dam-par lha-'dre gang yang med / kun 'od-gsal dbyings-su ta-la-la / kun-rdzob-tu lha yod 'dre yang yod / gnod-bgegs kun ma-gnas phyir dungs-shig /*

dbang was invited, all the Tibetan pastures of Upper Mnga'-ris Skor-gsum were ravaged. The Mongols became undisputed masters." (*Gcod-yul*: 68a).<sup>31</sup>

The specified timing of the cataclysmic events (bird year, 1681) coincides with the timing of the Mongol monk Dga'-ldan Tshe-dbang's participation in the war between Tibet and Ladakh (1679-1683) (Petech 1988: 23-24). Since Nyi-zla Klong-gsal went to Yol-mo and then to Padma Tshal, it is clear that his journey was related to *sbas-yul* prophesies wherein it is stated that the proper time to seek such a hidden land is when Mongols invade. Furthermore, he was instructed to flee to a valley to the south where there was a mountain resembling the outspread wings of a vulture (*rgod-kyi shog-pa brgyangs-pa 'dra'i lho-rong*). The vulture allusion may have been interpreted as a reference to Rgod-tshang Gling, an ancient site in Yol-mo (see Clarke 1980a: 19-21). The convergence of prophesy with historical events must have played a significant role in Nyi-zla Klong-gsal's decision to head for the borderlands.

Above, I advanced the position that Padma Dbang-'dus was influenced by the great Rnying-ma scholar Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, and advanced the possibility that Padma Dbang-'dus' sacrifice prohibition was inspired by the latter. The fact that Tshe-dbang Nor-bu was visiting Nub-ri and other sites in Nepal may also be related to political events. Specifically, the 1720s were a perilous time for many Rnying-ma practitioners. In 1717, Dzungar Mongols expelled Lhazang Khan, and under the command of Tshe-ring Don-grub commenced the sacking of many Rnying-ma monasteries (Petech 1988: 228). Following the imposition of Manchu rule with the aid of Pho-lha-nas and Khang-chen-nas, Rnying-ma-pas did not fare much better. In 1726, an imperial edict from the Manchus ordered repression against Rnying-ma-pas, to the point where a prohibition against becoming a Rnying-ma monk was set forth (Petech 1950: 92). The edict met with disapproval from the Tibetan cabinet, and if not for the statesmanship of Pho-lha-nas it is possible that further repression would have ensued. In fact, Pho-lha-nas affiliated himself with Tshe-dbang Nor-bu. As a prelude to embarking upon his quest for political unification over Tibet in early 1728, Pho-lha-nas commissioned the restoration of Kathmandu's great stupa, Bya-rung Kha-shor [Boudhanath] (Petech 1950: 108). Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, who had recently returned from Nepal and was residing in southern Tibet, received instructions to complete the task (Ehrhard 1989: 3). Thus, a clear connection can be made between political events and the activities of Tshe-dbang Nor-bu in the borderlands. Whether or not contact with Tshe-dbang Nor-bu inspired Padma Dbang-'dus to prohibit sacrifice is still a matter of speculation, but the timing of his visits to Nub-ri and the fact that Padma Dbang-'dus received spiritual instructions from him cannot be ignored. Given the situation in the 1720s, it is no wonder that Tshe-dbang Nor-bu would seek refuge in remote areas at the border of Tibet.

Turning to the historical context of recent decades, the massive exodus of Tibetan lamas since 1959, regardless of sectarian affiliation, has been well documented. After fleeing to the south, Mchog Gling-pa used his influence to prohibit animal sacrifice. Similarly, the Khumbo people of the upper Arun/Barun region used to perform animal sacrifices until Kuye Lama, while fleeing from Tibet in the early 1960s, convinced them to refrain from doing so (Diemberger 1993: 67-68). It is likely that the influx into Nepal of important and morally-

<sup>31</sup> *Bāi-ro 'i sgrub-gnas bher-chen bher-chung / 'O-ma khar [sic: mkhar] sogs-la sgrub-pa mdzad-skabs zla dang-po 'i tshe bco-lnga nyin / shin-tu mdzes pa 'i bu-mo lnga dngos-nyams 'bres-ma 'i nyams snang-la da-lta mi-lo bcu-nas Hor Sog-gi dmag nam-kha 'i bya gzings-pa ltar / Shang-lung nag-po 'i phu-rgyud Dbus Gtsang-rnams skyabs-mgon med-pa dri bza' ltar gyur-nas nyam-thag kyang / Bod-'bangs khengs-dregs-kyi Padma 'Byung-gnas khyad-du song / khyed-rang the-tshom ma-byed-pa gangs-ri rgod-kyi gshog-pa brgyangs-pa 'dra'i lho-rong-la bros / . . . physis-lo dus-su Dga'-ldan Tshe-dbang-gi Sog-dmag drangs-nas stod Mnga'-ris Skor-gsum / Bod 'brog thams-cad brlag / Sog-pos bdag byed-pa-de mngon-sum-du gyur-ro /*



authoritative lamas from Tibet during the 1960s had a profound influence on local practices such as animal sacrifice. I have even heard of many current efforts by Kathmandu-based lamas to prohibit animal sacrifice in Tamang and Tibetan villages, so the process is ongoing.

Political repression was a prime motivator for Rnying-ma lamas to travel south in recent times as well as during the turmoil in the early 18th century. Regarding the question of whether or not there was a connection between the animal sacrifice prohibitions and political unrest in Tibet, the answer is affirmative.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the common features of the sacrifice prohibitions discussed here are; (1) the events transpired in communities where household lamas were the center of Buddhist activity; (2) none of the prohibitionists were household lamas; (3) impetus for the bans came from external agents; and; (4) historical events in Tibet are partially responsible for bringing these agents to the borderlands.

Despite the emphasis placed on the prohibitionists in this paper, the significance of the observations is that they situate householder lamas at the center of a historical process whereby local beliefs and practices had the opportunity to coexist with, and possibly even enter into, Buddhist practice. From a frontier perspective, separation from the center permits a degree of divergence from acceptable Buddhist behavior. More importantly, due to their direct economic ties to land and its concomitant obligations, householder lamas may be more willing than other Buddhist practitioners to work within a system of time-honored traditions. Adopting Buddhism could be considered by border peoples to be more palatable and less risky if they were able to retain ritual specialists, in addition to lamas, who could propitiate malevolent forces through established methods such as sacrifice. Due to householder lama resistance to innovation, it was up to others to advocate alternative rituals. In the meantime, Buddhist activity could assume a discernably local flavor.

In this paper I have advanced some generalizations based on specific cases of animal sacrifice prohibitions. The purpose was not to imply that ritual transformations could only be initiated by adherents of monastic-centered Buddhist traditions. Such a view is far too rigid. The intent of the paper is to provide a framework of social and historical conditions that were significant with regard to the processes of religious dissemination and ritual transformations within a Himalayan context. Householder lamas with localized prestige could initiate change themselves, but the frequency of ritual transformations increased through intensified contact with important Tibetan teachers whose presence in the borderlands was inextricably linked with political events on the plateau.

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