INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER S

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Dunhuang Caves and scholarly interest in their Tibetan manuscripts

A century ago, a number of sites along the old 'Silk Route' were discovered, in which cultural objects and manuscripts in different Asian languages had been preserved for many hundreds of years. The most impressive finds were those of the Dunhuang caves, which today have become a major heritage tourist destination, for those wishing to view an astonishing legacy of sculptures and rock carvings, murals, and other artistic and cultural artefacts, found in the remains of a large complex of Buddhist cave-temples.[1] For generations, especially during the first millennium CE and the early part of the second millennium, Dunhuang had been a thriving political, economic and cultural centre, which had seen considerable intercultural exchange between the various ethnic groups of the region. Texts recovered include secular and religious manuscripts, many of which had been part of a book repository or library which had been walled off in the early eleventh century.[2] There is clear evidence of multiculturalism. Not only are different languages represented amongst the hoard of manuscripts found, but there are instances of one language written using the script of another, or texts written on the reverse of paper originally used for a document in another language. For historical scholarship on the peoples and cultures who were at some stage part of this multi-ethnic community, the Dunhuang discovery meant the possibility of research using primary source materials of inestimable value. Moreover, due to the desert environment in which the manuscripts had been preserved, many showed remarkably little sign of deterioration as a result of the centuries during which they had been sealed away.

In the early twentieth century, Sir Marc Aurel Stein collected a large number of manuscripts which have since been kept in London and Delhi; Paul Pelliot gathered a collection which was deposited in Paris, while the authorities in Beijing, and other explorers and interested parties acquired other parts of the corpus of manuscripts, so that it became distributed throughout a number of international locations. The momentous discovery excited great interest around the world, although scholarship has been impeded by the distribution of the collection and difficulties of access, problems which are only today beginning to be overcome due to international cooperation, digitisation of images of the manuscripts and the publication of web based catalogues (see http://idp.bl.uk/).

For scholars of Tibetan materials, catalogues were made of the London Stein collection by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (only published in 1962, but compiled in 1914–1918) and of the Pelliot collection by Marcelle Lalou (1939, 1950, 1961). Pioneering work on the Tibetan manuscripts included the major publications of Hackin (1924), Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint (1940–1946), and for the tantric materials, Bischoff's work on the *Mahābala-sūtra* (1956). In the past forty years, scholarly work making use of Dunhuang Tibetan sources has witnessed something of an exponential growth, but there is still much to do. In this book, we contribute to this field by our study which focuses on a specific group of tantric manuscripts, those concerning the *phur pa* rites, with a view to ascertaining what kinds of connection we may find between these texts and the received Tibetan tradition that claims descent from the early period.

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[1] See the UNESCO World Heritage listing on the Mogao Caves: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/440/

[2] It is currently thought that the Dunhuang manuscript collections came from a storehouse of the Three Realms (Sanjie) Monastery (Xinjiang Rong 1999–2000 "The Nature of the Dunhuang Library Cave and the Reasons for its Sealing", *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* Vol. 11: 247–275, cited in Takeuchi, forthcoming). Takeuchi (forthcoming) reports that in the 10th century, a monk of this monastery named Daozhen made considerable additions to his monastery's library stocks, so that a proportion of the Dunhaung texts might originate from Daozhen's time.

The rNying ma Tantric traditions

The rNying ma tantric tradition has for many centuries defined itself in terms of its unique transmission of the 'Three Inner Tantras' of *Mahāyoga*, *Anuyoga* and *Atiyoga*, which it claims were translated from Indic languages at the time of Padmasambhava; yet modern academic scholarship, with which we are here engaged, finds scant reliable evidence for such Tantras during the Empire. By contrast, the rNying ma pa do not very much define their identity in relation to the so-called 'lower tantras' of *Kriyā*, *Caryā* and *Yoga* – which are the only forms of tantras for which Western scholars can find unambiguous evidence in Imperial Tibet. (Such doxographical terms could be used inconsistently, and also had differing usages in India and Tibet: e.g *Mahāyoga* described a distinct doxographic category in Tibet, with which this study is often concerned; yet in Sanskrit perhaps more often meant little more than a major Yoga Tantra. Nevertheless, such doxographies were important to Tibetans from early times, so we must consider them.)

The exact circumstances of the emergence of what are now known as the rNying ma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism remains one of the least clearly defined areas of Tibetan history for modern scholarship. Perhaps the nearest we get to a general agreement is the vague idea that at least some proportion of rNying ma canonical scripture and its related literatures must have emerged before the start of the New Translation activities of the late tenth century and onwards; although there have been divergent views on just how great a proportion and what kind had developed by then. The earliest start of rNying ma tantrism is particularly disputed: some have seen small and varied yet significant beginnings during the Imperial period itself, while others have argued that virtually no tantric developments whatsoever, let alone those nowadays characterised as rNying ma, could begin until after the breakdown of the Empire in 842.

What makes the early history of rNyinga ma tantrism so difficult to establish is the dearth of reliable historical sources. Whatever the exact start dates might have been, no modern scholars doubt that much of the most important early development in rNying ma must have happened between 842 and the early eleventh century: yet this is precisely that notoriously inaccessible span of Tibetan history sometimes called, 'the Dark Period' by Western historians because it has bequeathed us such limited sources (the traditional name is the period of fragmentation, *sil bu'i dus*, which implies political breakdown but does not preclude cultural productivity). What few sources we have for Tantrism in this period are in most cases ambiguous for one reason or another. To give a few examples:

Of the three official Imperial translation catalogues we know of, two still survive, the *lHan kar ma* in several editions, and the *'Phang thang ma* in a more recently rediscovered single edition; yet their interpretations are much disputed. Some see the *lHan dkar ma* as older, others see the *'Phang thang ma* as older in parts; some accept all seventy-plus 'lower tantra' texts listed in *'Phang thang ma* as Imperial period translations, others see the final tantric section of *'Phang thang ma* as a later addition of uncertain date.[3]

There is ample evidence, including some carved in rock, for an Imperial period 'lower tantra' cult focused on the Buddha Vairocana and involving such cycles as the *Mahāvairocana-abhisaṃbodhi*, and the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* with its important funerary rites that were proposed as a Buddhist alternative to the traditional Tibetan burial with its blood sacrifices. However, scholars have varying views on how widely such rites were used. Were they really intended only for the state and royal court, as Davidson describes (Davidson 2005: 65)? Or were they also used more widely – for example, in the funerals of aristocrats as well as emperors, and at places that were not specifically royal locations? Might they have even been used as regular practices by monasteries, aristocratic clans, or individuals?

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[3] The *'Phang thang ma* has only recently come to light, with few published analyses so far – Kawagoe (2005; and also 2005 "'Pentan mokuru' no kenkyū [A Study of the Dkar chag 'Phang thang ma]", Report of the Japanese Association for Tibetan Studies 51, 115–131, cited in Kuijp 2006: 173), and Halkias (2004). The above range of views arose out of discussions and correspondences with a number of colleagues from several countries, some of whom are in process of publishing studies involving the *'Phang thang ma*.

One of the few genuinely early sources for the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, the testimony of the sBa/dBa'/rBa clan (*dBa'/sBa bzhed*), has survived in three versions, along with many quotations in later literature. However, it is open to different interpretations, and of course there are also variations between the different versions. Some versions say that only *Caryā* tantra was permitted to be translated.[4] Other versions (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 88–89) say that both *Kriyā* and *Caryā* tantras were translated in full, while *Mahāyoga* translation was held back at that time since people ready for it had not yet appeared among the Tibetans.[5] Another very early source, an official Imperial edict concerning tantra translation, as incorporated in the *sGra sbyor bam bo gnyis pa*, also survives in several versions, which might represent different stages of the edict as it developed over a period of some years. The historical relations of the variant versions of the edict that have come down to us are a matter of discussion. Here too the implications for early tantra translation is complex. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has made a highly detailed analysis of all extant versions of this document, including those from Tabo and Dunhuang, and she interprets the edict merely to seek the proper regulation of secret tantric translations, which had already begun before this edict was promulgated in 783 or 795 (Scherrer-Schaub 2002: 287). Davidson, however, believes that throughout this period, there was a consistent Imperial policy that quite simply sought to ban most tantra translation, allowing only the few more exoteric court-based ceremonies centred on Vairocana, so that any other tantra translations that did occur were necessarily clandestine (Davidson 2005: 64–5, 215).

There are some early sources that seek to describe the emergence of rNying ma tantrism, such as those attributed to Rong zom, Nyang ral, and mKhas pa lde'u. While such sources are ostensibly comparatively close in time to the events they describe, scholars are unclear how much of their testimony can be taken at face value. Over and above normal questions of redactional transmission, as Per Sørensen has written, "Tibetan historiography abounds in attempts to forge documents that legitimised past glories and repute or underpinned bygone prerogatives, whether real or fictitious. In fact, it was considered a wholly legitimate procedure" (Preface to Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: XIII).[6]

The great *bKa' 'gyur* compiler, Bu ston, made exhaustive researches into the provenance of Buddhist texts in the course of his activities. Some (Herrmann-Pfandt 2002: 136–8) believe his history (*chos 'byung*) indicates that he minutely studied all three Imperial period translation catalogues – *lHan kar ma* (which has long been extant), *'Phang thang ma* (which has recently been rediscovered) and *mChims pu ma* (which has not yet come to light) – and from these, compiled a list of a great many 'lower' tantras officially translated in the Imperial period. Others (such as Davidson, who also cites Bu ston's *Chos 'byung*), by implication might not agree with Herrmann-Pfandt in treating as valid evidence Bu ston's acceptance of such a great quantity of Imperial period tantra translations, since he tends to describe the Imperial translations only in terms of the

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[4] Karmay 1988a: 4, 121, discussing Stein 1961 *Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa-bzhed*, Paris: 52.

[5] tan tra las ma hā yo ga mu stegs dge ba la g.[c?]ud pa'i slad du gtsang rme med par bstan pa chos kyi dbyings ji lta ba ni ma rtogs pa log pa b[z?]ung du dogs te ma bsgyur/ sngags g.yog [for yo ga?] nus pa yang bod la mi 'byung nas ma bsgyur (dBa' bzhed 24v.4). Note that our interpretation differs a little from that of Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 89): "Out of the tantras, (in the case of) Mahāyoga, for the sake of steering extremists towards virtue, it was not translated since there was the concern that (they would) seize on perversion, not understanding the dharmadhātu nature (which informs) the teaching that there is no purity or defilement. Also, (it) was not translated when (those) with the ability to serve the mantra (teaching) were not forthcoming in Tibet." Wangdu and Diemberger suggest g.yog as a misspelling for yo ga, and they may be correct, but it reads perfectly well as it is. The phrase may imply "help with", and may refer to Tibetans of that period being unable to help with the translation rather than unable to practise.

[6] In this study, we have not had time accurately to weigh up and assess these problematic early historical sources; nor have we tried to rely on more acessible modern historical sources such as Dudjom, whose history we only use once or twice to point out the persistence into modern times of Dunhuang mythic passages, just as we (more frequently) use his various doctrinal or Phur pa writings to show continuities between them and the Dunhuang texts. Our approach here has been to let the Dunhuang texts speak directly for themselves, and to measure them against the transmitted rNying ma tradition. A careful study of the early histories remains a major desideratum.

few texts listed in *lHan kar ma* (Davidson 2005: 65, 385, note 16).[7] By contrast, Herrmann-Pfandt (ibid.) had concluded from her investigations into Bu ston's writings that none of the three catalogues on their own could have contained the complete list of official tantra translations, and that only a survey of all three together could yield the complete list.

In the face of such general uncertainty about the origins of the early Tibetan tantric traditions, both 'lower tantra' and rNying ma, we decided it might be helpful to return once more to the Dunhuang cache in search of further evidence. Remarkably, a hundred years after their transfer to the West, the tantric sections of the Dunhuang finds still remain substantially unexplored.[8] In addition to exploring their basic features, it seemed to us that a further specific important question about the Dunhuang tantric texts was worthy of investigation: just how do the Dunhuang tantric texts compare with those of the received rNying ma tradition? Rather than focus on the elusive search for Indic antecedents of the rNying ma tantras, here we are addressing different questions: What did Tibetan tantrism actually look like in the pre-gSar ma period? How similar was it, and how different, to the later rNying ma tradition?

Of course, we do not expect either aspect of this research to solve more than a limited range of our problems about rNying ma origins. This is not possible for a number of reasons. First, the chronological interpretation of Dunhuang materials is not in itself straightforward, and estimations of the dates of the Dunhuang Tibetan collections continue to fluctuate. Until quite recently, it was a commonplace to locate the Dunhuang Tibetan collections as early as the 9th century, since it was assumed that the majority of Tibetan works had been left there during the period of Tibetan occupation, but more recent studies[9] have shown that Tibetan continued to be used in Dunhuang after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire, and many manuscripts, including the majority of tantric texts, have now been located between the mid 10th and early 11th century (see, Dalton and van Schaik 2006: xxi). It seems much too premature, however, to expect that the matter is fully resolved yet. A second complicating factor with Dunhuang sources is the nature of Dunhuang's multi-cultural society. For many years after the loss of Tibetan political control, many Dunhuang inhabitants of differing ethnicities continued to use Tibetan as a common written language. This means that it is quite possible that some Dunhuang tantric texts were written in Tibetan, but for the use of non-Tibetan communities, and perhaps were also translated from non-Tibetan sources more often than has sometimes been understood. Thirdly, it is perfectly possible that the Dunhuang finds represent only a small partial sample of early Tibetan tantric manuscripts and we have no way of knowing what significant early translations and compositions might not have been included. Nevertheless, regardless of ongoing changes in views about their dating and context, understanding the contents of the Dunhuang tantric texts, and their relation to the transmitted rNying ma tradition, remain important lines of research, without which historical clarity about rNying ma origins cannot so easily be envisaged.

The Dunhuang tantric collections, including those parts most obviously related to the later rNyinga ma tradition, are broad and extensive, and include enough material to occupy several researchers for decades. We therefore had to choose a specific focus. We decided on *phur pa* texts, because they offer a very particular insight into rNying ma. Since Phur pa remained from early times in Tibet a particularly rNying ma tradition within Buddhist Tantra,[10] Phur pa's emergence might to some extent coincide with or reflect the

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[7] Both these authors were writing before the recent rediscovery of the *'Phang thang ma* manuscript, and it will be interesting to see what light further study of the *'Phang thang ma* might throw on this debate.

[8] The early cataloguers (see above) had provided some indication of its scope, and attention had been given to a few Dunhuang tantric manuscripts by well-known Tibetologists such as R.A. Stein (eg. Stein 1971–2). More recent scholarly works include Dalton and van Schaik, 2006, Kapstein and Dotson 2007, and Kapstein and van Schaik's forthcoming edited collection (*Chinese and Tibetan Tantra at Dunhuang*, Special edition of *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions*, Brill, Leiden).

[9] See especially the publications of Takeuchi (2004; forthcoming).

[10] We are approaching the emergence of Bon Phur pa traditions, and their relation to rNying ma, in a subsequent study. The Sa skya Phur pa tradition is rNying ma in origin, and the Sa skya Phur pa commentarial literature seems to depend substantially on the rNying ma tantras.

emergence of rNying ma as a broader category. In addition, our previous work on the Phur pa textual tradition (see especially Mayer 1996 and Cantwell and Mayer 2007) meant that we are particularly familiar with the Phur pa scriptural heritage, and furthermore, the Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus was of a manageable size to handle in one project. At the same time, there are also substantial *phur pa* elements in the so-called 'lower tantras', and we have not ignored Dunhuang Tibetan examples of these from our study. While the 'lower tantras' are not included in the later rNying ma tantra collections, being largely shared with the *bKa' 'gyur* tradition, nevertheless they have had a role in rNying ma religious life, and their testimony is historically significant to the overall emergence and practice of Tantrism in Tibet.

The Selection of Dunhuang Phur pa Texts[11]

Unfortunately, we do not have a full length Phur pa tantra from Dunhuang, although it would seem that they already existed by that time because at least one is cited in a particularly valuable Dunhuang text, the *Thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng* manuscript (IOL Tib J 321).[12] However, the Dunhuang *phur pa* materials do include a substantial twenty-two page text, with many interlinear notes, identified in the British Library as part III of IOL Tib J 331. This is the closest we get to a full length Phur pa work from Dunhuang; all other materials are more fragmentary, comprising either very short complete texts, or excerpts from longer works.

From the viewpoint of later tradition, "*phur pa* texts" would generally denote the scriptures, ritual practice and commentarial texts connected with the Phur pa deity. As we shall see, there is not such a neat or obvious group of texts amongst the Dunhuang manuscripts, even though some of them – as we will describe below – share extensive passages or key themes with the later tradition. Given the lack of any such clearly demarcated group of texts, it is worth clarifying how we selected the texts we consider here. At the outset, we decided to take the widest kind of definition and to include any texts which in some manner related to or included material relevant for the imagery and practices of the Phur pa tradition. At the same time, boundaries had to be set somewhere. One could construe commentarial works on *Mahāyoga* principles and ritual as relevant to the Phur pa heritage, or ritual practices focused on wrathful heruka deities, especially those dealing with tantric meditations to transform hatred and aggression.[13] An exhaustive study of all such materials would have been out of the question in the limited time we had available, and would have defeated the object of a manageable selection of materials. Thus, we gave our main attention to the limited number of texts or text sections with an explicit central focus on the Phur pa/ Phur bu tradition or on *phur pa* rites.[14]

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[11] Note that the IOL Tib J numbers used throughout this book refer to the India Office Library numbering system for the Stein Tibetan manuscripts now held at the British Library in London, and the PT references refer to the Pelliot tibétain numbers of the Paris collection.

[12] We discuss some aspects of this important text below (see especially Chapter 10); and we are in addition conducting a separate research project into it.

[13] See in particular our comments below on IOL Tib J 306 and IOL Tib J 321 (Chapter 3, p 39).

[14] In the inherited tradition, the words, *phur pa*, *phur bu*, *kīla* and *kīlaya* may be used to describe the ritual implement and/or the deity. The names and terms may currently be used with slightly different connotations from those in Dunhuang texts and are not always used consistently today. The term *phur bu* (sometimes interpreted as equivalent to *kīlaka*) in more modern usage is sometimes restricted to the implement, while *phur pa* (sometimes interpreted as equivalent to *kīla*) can equally refer to the deity or the implement. The restriction of the word *phur bu* to the implement is by no means universal, and in practice, either *phur bu* or *phur pa* may be applied to the implement or the deity. In some of the Dunhuang materials, such as in PT 349 (see Chapter 8, text lines 1, 3 and 4), *phur pa* takes the form *phur ba*. This does not generally occur nowadays at all except as an error, but in the A mdo area, the grammatical particle *pa* is sometimes written as *ba*, so in this context, it may be considered acceptable by regional conventions. (Thus, Mag gsar [or the modern printing of Mag gsar 2003] on occasion gives "phur ba" [eg. p.164, 168], and similarly, lnga ba [p.7], bcu ba [p.3], stong ba [p. 51] etc.) The term *kīlaya* or *vajrakīlaya* is ubiquitously used in Tibetan tradition to refer to the *yi dam* form of the deity or to its tantric texts (the deified implements in the main deity's retinue, often associated with the buddha families, are sometimes called the *kīlaya*s and sometimes the *kīla*s; hence, Buddha Kīlaya/Kīla, Ratna Kīlaya/Kīla etc.). In some Dunhuang and old texts – where it may not be clear that the *yi dam* deity form as it came to be recognised by the tradition is at issue at all – the terms kī la ya, ki la ya, badzra kī la ya etc. may be used simply to refer to the implement or the deified implement. In this book, we conform to the usage presented in the Dunhuang text in question; or in more general discussion, we simplify usage by using *phur pa* for the implement, which may or may not also carry the

We also looked more briefly at other texts or sections where the use of a ritual *phur pa* may occur as a minor feature in a rite with an altogether different focus. Hence, in particular in the final chapter, we included some rites which are of uncertain direct relevance for the development of the Phur pa tradition as such, although they supply a background context to its more specific use of *phur pa* rites. In considering any Dunhuang text relating in such a broad sense to the Phur pa tradition, we nonetheless excluded texts and text fragments which merely reproduced some elements of the principal mantra string used in the Phur pa deity practice, ie. *bandzra kīli kīlaya*. It soon became clear that large numbers of Dunhuang tantric texts use these mantra syllables, and while the Phur pa tradition shares them, the mantra string in itself has little or no relevance for Phur pa rites as such.[15] We also excluded uses of the term, *phur pa* which did not seem to have bearing on the ritual implement or deity.[16]

'Liberative killing' (sgrol ba) and the Phur pa heritage

Several of the Dunhuang texts pay detailed attention to the topic of 'liberative killing', or *sgrol ba*. *sGrol ba* is a famous *Mahāyoga* rite which remains to this day a very central feature of rNying ma Phur pa ritual.[17] Indeed, the imagery of the Phur pa deity is integrally connected to the associations of ritual 'liberative killing' – the deity's central hands wielding a *phur pa* ritual implement, the mythology of Phur pa's origins in the subjugation of Rudra, the famous lines of recitation beginning most Phur pa sādhanas focusing on "vajra wrath" cutting through hatred, that is so often interpreted in terms of *sgrol ba*.[18] The ritual which became the classic context for the performance of *sgrol ba* – the carefully structured summoning of evil forces into an effigy which is then stabbed, releasing the consciousness of the victim(s) into a buddha field, is witnessed in the regular rites of numerous wrathful deities, especially as part of the *tshogs* offering rite for repairing tantric samaya commitments. In the case of the Phur pa deity, the rite takes central stage as the backdrop to the imagery of the deity and his "cemetery palace", and its performance may be integrated into the main root sādhana.[19] The majority of the Dunhuang *phur pa* texts we discuss in this book either explicitly describe *sgrol ba* type rituals, or relate to rites using ritual *phur pa*s which might involve some aspect of *sgrol ba* imagery, so it is worth introducing the topic briefly here. Our manuscripts rarely use the term *sgrol*/*bsgral* explicitly (although PT 44 [34] does, see p.65), more often using other terms for liberation (eg. *thar pa*),

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connotation of a *phur pa* deity, and Phur pa or Vajrakīlaya where the reference is more specifically or primarily to the tantric *yi dam*.

[15] In some instances, the issue is blurred. One text which shares the *bandzra kīli kīlaya* mantra string but which we have not felt we needed to deal with here is the *Vajra-vidāraṇa dhāraṇī* (*rdo rje rnam par 'joms pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs*), of which there are many copies amongst the Dunhuang manuscripts, for instance, IOL Tib J 410; IOL Tib J 411; IOL Tib J 412; IOL Tib J 413; IOL Tib J 414 Section 1; IOL Tib J 415; IOL Tib J 416 Section 3; IOL Tib J 462 Section 2; IOL Tib J 544 Section 3; PT 60 Section 2; PT 857 fragment. See also Dalton's comments on the relationship between the Dunhuang versions, the canonical versions and the commentaries (Dalton and van Schaik 2006: 153). This *dhāraṇī* continues to have an important place in the Tibetan tradition: it is regularly recited, and it is possible that this popular *dhāraṇī* text once provided raw materials for later NGB tantras, including those of Phur pa. But it is difficult to isolate specific connections with Phur pa, and there seemed little point in going further than noting its presence in Dunhuang.

[16] In some cases, the term, "*phur pa*" may be used with rather different metaphorical associations, such as in the phrase used in early *rDzogs chen* texts, "*'dzin pa'i phur pa*". Karmay (1988: 72, 75, and see also 84–5) discusses the use of this image in commenting on IOL Tib J 594, where it occurs on folio 1v.4. He translates it as, "fixing stake" or "fixed post"; it indicates an undesirable state of contriving or seeking to pin down the intangible natural condition. Clearly, such a usage is interesting in gaining a full appreciation of the word, but not unavoidably relevant to the function of the ritual implement (let alone the deity!) in *phur pa* rites.

[17] See Cantwell 1997 for a discussion of *sgrol ba* rites in the rNying ma context.

[18] *rdo rje khros pas/khro bos zhe sdang gcod*. This is the first line of the root verse for the arising of the Kīlaya maṇḍala. It opens the famous short *Phur pa rtsa ba rgyud kyi dum bu* found in the *bKa' 'gyur*, and can also be found (with various textual variants slightly amending the meaning) in all the major Phur pa tantras as well as in virtually every Phur pa sādhana.

[19] For instance, in the Sa skya *Phur chen* (33r–35r), an extensive *sgrol ba* rite is performed as part of the offerings section of the main ritual.

transformation or transference, but there is no doubt that the rites are exactly the same as those later more consistently referred to as *sgrol ba*.

A classic feature of *Mahāyoga* is that rites like *sgrol ba* need to have complex doctrinal exegeses without which the ritual might be meaningless, or misunderstood. The doctrinal underpinnings of *sgrol ba* include Mahāyāna sources on bodhisattva ethical principles, which may involve the principle of compassion overriding the precept to refrain from killing. In particular, a focus in such sources is often less on the benefits to the potential future victims of an aggressor who is to be the object of the compassionate violence, and more on compassion towards the aggressor himself, who is to be saved from the terrible karma of his aggression, and liberated from saṃsāra.[20] The same emphasis is found in *sgrol ba* rituals – the main point is to act on the basis of compassion for the object of the rite. At the same time, in the *Mahāyoga* context, the transgressive engagement in violence, channelled within a framework of ritual symbolism, serves to attack and pacify aggression itself, in the process restoring harmony and the tantric bonds.

Thus, a central function of *sgrol ba* is directly and forcibly to destroy one's primal enemy, ignorance, using ritual and contemplative techniques. Typically, this might entail the extension of the violent methods of sacrificial-exorcistic ritual[21] towards the more inward and soteriological goal of liberating one's own mind, as well as those of others, from the 'evil spirits' of ignorance. At the same time, such soteriologised exorcisms will often retain their more conventional external exorcistic connotations as a secondary purpose, but now entirely subordinated in both doctrine and liturgy to the greater central soteriological purpose. In Phur pa ritual, the exorcistic activity of stabbing an effigy represents an assault on the ignorance of deluded belief in the true existence of a self, using a suitably consecrated *phur pa*, embodying the wisdom of all the Buddhas, through which the ignorance is 'liberated' into wisdom. In all these respects, there is no doubt that the *phur pa sgrol ba* rites from Dunhuang and those of the contemporary tradition are quite substantially similar, as we shall discuss below.

Some of the doctrinal exegesis is also represented at Dunhuang in similar terms to nowadays. IOL Tib J 436[22] gives a definition of *Mahāyoga sgrol ba* as liberation of onself (*bdag bsgral ba*) and liberation of others (*gzhan bsgral ba*). A thousand years later, in a standard work representing mainstream understandings of Phur pa ritual, ('Jam mgon) Kong sprul likewise describes *sgrol ba* as twofold using exactly the same words: liberating oneself through wisdom (*bdag bsgral*), and liberating others through compassion (*gzhan bsgral*) (94.6). IOL Tib J 436 goes on to describe self-liberation as achieving the approach practice to the deity; Kong sprul goes on to explain self-liberation as practising visualisation of oneself as the deity's body – which is another way of saying exactly the same thing. IOL Tib J 436 (line 6) describes liberation of others in terms of the ten fields suitable for liberation (*zhing bcu*); Kong sprul does exactly the same (97.3).

It is worth noting, however, that the Dunhuang evidence for the specific kind of *sgrol ba* rituals which persist in the practices of the Phur pa deity and in parallel destructive rituals of other wrathful deities does

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[20] In the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra* story of the compassionate ship's captain killing the robber who intended to murder five hundred merchant bodhisattvas, the emphasis is on the robber's evil karma, and his rebirth in a pure land thanks to the captain's compassionate act. The later *Ratnakūṭa* version includes the detail that the killing was performed by stabbing. (Mark Tatz 1994: 17–18, 73–74.) This example is often cited in rNying ma pa teachings on *sgrol ba* in Phur pa practice contexts. There are numerous other Mahāyāna sources which make similar points in relation to the ethics of taking life, such as Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Wogihara ed., Tokyo, 1930: 165-6; see the discussion in Cantwell 1997: 110-111).

[21] Especially after the rise of the *bhakti* cults in India, exorcisms often took the form in which a benign great deity would 'sacrifice' an evil hostile spirit, and then bring it back to life again as a spiritual servant. The implication is that even to die at the hands of Viṣṇu, Śiva or Devī, is a great blessing that brings instant liberation and enlightenment. In this way, sacrifice and exorcism become intertwined. See Chapter 2, p. 17-20 below, where we talk further on this subject.

[22] 3v; IDP website (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL Tib J 436) image 4, top. IOL Tib J 306 also analyses *sgrol ba* in similar terms, focusing on benefitting self and others. See below, Ch. 3, p.39 note 17.

not exhaust the range of *sgrol ba* practices found in Dunhuang texts. In IOL Tib J 419 and PT 42,[23] a set (or sets) of notes on *Mahāyoga* practice includes some interesting discussion of *sgrol ba* rites which have a slightly different framing narrative and ritual process from those found most typically in Phur pa rites and the rites do not mention the use of *phur pa* implements.[24] Two aspects stand out. First, in PT 42's account (f.69–70), there is a meditation on seed syllables at five parts of the body, presumably referring to the body of the rite's object or its effigy, and through this, the gateways to the five lower destinies for rebirth are closed, leaving only the pathway for rebirth in a god realm. This pathway is then opened through a meditation on a further syllable on the crown of the head (Meinert 2006: 121–4). Unlike a standard Phur pa *sgrol ba*, where a number of specific parts of the body are stabbed with a *phur pa*,[25] there would seem to be no violence at this stage. The ritual stoppage of birth in the different realms is not dissimilar from a passage in the *Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra*, in which beings of the three lower realms are summoned and released from their suffering lives into the realm of Vairocana, by contact with Vajrapāṇi's display of mantra and mudrā (Weinberger 2003: 193). There are close parallels to the meditation description in tantric visualisations not normally classified as *sgrol ba*, to purify the karma causing different realms and to prevent rebirth in them.[26] Following this, the ritual proceeds to a more typical *sgrol ba* scenario (PT 42: f.70–72), and the second notable contrast to Phur pa *sgrol ba* practices is that the symbolic killing is performed through a meditation on the "vajra weapon" (*rdo rje mtshon cha*), arising from the syllable *krong* at the cranium aperture[27] at the crown of the head, and multiplying into numerous spears,[28] which slash the body. After meditating on the transformation and purification of the object of the rite, the symbolic 'liberative killing' is concluded with the mantra of the tantric deity, Ṭakkirāja.[29]

Another manuscript with a rather different explanation of the rite of *sgrol ba* is IOL Tib J 754's section 8.[30] In the notes on tantric practice here, a discussion of *sgrol ba* follows exegesis on the tantric feast

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[23] The relationship between parts of these two manuscripts has been pointed out by Dalton (Dalton and van Schaik 2006: 156, 158–160). See also Meinert 2006.

[24] *Phur pa*s are mentioned in PT 42 in a quite different context of empowerment rituals (see Ch. 11, p.210).

[25] See, for instance, IOL Tib J 331.III, f.8r (Ch. 6 below, p.114-5), and also the *'Bum nag* (Boord: 231–4) or the "Subsidiary Ritual" (*smad las*) section of the *bDud 'joms gNam lcags spu gri* (Vol.Tha: 471–476).

[26] Some rNying ma preliminary practices include such a meditation on six syllables, one for each of the realms, at six parts of the body: see for example the foundation practice of the widely practised *dKon mchog spyi 'dus* cycle (*sngon 'gro* section: 25–26), where the places are the same as those given in PT 42, with one addition. Pure syllables then burn up the latencies and purify causes for rebirth in the six realms. There are three obvious ontrasts with PT 42: 1) the different approach to the god realm, assumed to be as much part of saṃsāra as the other realms and not an appropriate gateway for liberation; 2) the focus is a self-visualisation, whereas PT 42 is presumably a visualisation based on the rite's object; 3) in this case, a separate set of enlightened syllables purify the impure syllables (in PT 42, the syllables visualised are already described as the "warrior" [heruka] seeds (*dpa' bo 'bru lnga*, PT 42 folio 69; Meinert 2006: 123) and they effect the purification. Notwithstanding these differences, the overall similarity of the visualisation and function of the meditation is striking. The preliminary practice from the *dKon mchog spyi 'dus* that we describe here constitutes a typical instance of the rNying ma and Bon *rDzogs chen* preliminary practices of Inner Separation (*nang gi ru shan*).

[27] *mtshogs ma = mtshog ma*. Note that Meinert (122 note 71 and 124) reads this word as *mchogs ma*, interpreting it as *mchog ma*, top, peak.

[28] shag-ti (71.3–4) = Skt. śakti, spears; see Meinert: 122 note 72.

[29] Further meditations typical of *sgrol ba* rites continue in IOL Tib J 419's section 7 (as ordered by Dalton in the IDP catalogue, Dalton and van Schaik 2006: 159–160), such as offering the remaining flesh and blood to the deities for their consumption. This is a common component of *sgrol ba* rites as we find them in the Phur pa tradition, eg. constituting the final section (*zhal du stob pa*) of the six-fold structure of the 'Actual Rite of Liberative Killing' (*sgrol chog dngos*), as presented in the *bDud 'joms gNam lcags spu gri* (*smad las* section, Vol. Tha: 458, 477ff). IOL Tib J 419's section 12 (folio Rf.13v–19v in the pagination system in Dalton and van Schaik 2005, and r16–38 in Dalton and van Schaik 2006) gives a reiteration of the *sgrol ba* rite already described, in parts, rather more detailed and in a slightly different order. From that account, it is explicit that in this case, Ṭakkirāja is the deity with whom the tantric practitioner is to identify himself (Rf.13v or r.26), and there is a detailed description of the liberation of the consciousness of the rite's object.

[30] Here, we adopt Dalton and van Schaik's (2006: 321–325) classification of sections within the sets of notes found in this scroll manuscript (although note that these sections have now been relabelled in their IDP web catalogue). Section 7 has notes on Phur pa, which we discuss below (Chapter 7, p.136ff).

offering (*tshogs*) and on rites of union (*sbyor ba*). The discussion is terse and lacking details of ritual description, rather outlining a theoretical classification of *sgrol ba*, which again, specifically suggests the aim of release from the six realms of beings. It lists four aspects of *sgrol ba*: liberation through the View; through moral discipline; through samaya, and through conduct.[31]

Thus, while rites using *phur pa*s came to take the central place in rites of *sgrol ba* in rNying ma *Mahāyoga* practice,[32] as indeed they already did in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts, we can see such rites as a particular development and expression of the wider theme of 'liberative killing'.

The PT 42/IOL Tib J 419 sequence might also suggest a connection between *sgrol ba* and another complex of tantric meditative ritual: that of *'pho ba*, the transference of consciousness to a Buddha field at death, which may be performed by a practitioner for themselves, or on behalf of another, generally following or at the moment of death. This is not the place to elaborate at length on these practices, which form an extremely important part of Tibetan funerary rituals,[33] but it is worth noting that *sgrol ba* as practised in the Phur pa tradition can be seen as a variety of forcible transference. Interestingly, the title given to the longest Dunhuang Phur pa text which we examine below, IOL Tib J 331.III (see Chapters 5 and 6 below), describes the text as the enlightened activity of transference (*'pho ba 'I 'phrIn las*). In *'pho ba*, as in the PT 42 description, the body's lower gateways are shut and the consciousness projected up from the crown of the head. In Phur pa *sgrol ba* rites, the consciousness of the evil ones is taken up from the heart of the effigy by the *phur pa*, which has been consecrated as the deity's emanation. In the commentary on the *bDud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri* version of the ritual, the consciousness arising in the syllable "nṛ" is transformed by its enforced contact with the *phur pa*. Consecrated as, "a hūṃ", it is sent up from the *phur pa* with the syllable, phaṭ, to Vajrasattva, who is uniting with his consort in the Akaniṣṭha Buddha field. Thus, the transmigrating consciousness gains birth as Vajrasattva's son, and hence, liberation.[34]

Continuities, Transformations and their Implications

Amongst the most salient outcomes of our investigation of the Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus is the evidence we repeatedly found for a quite well developed Phur pa tradition with clear and detailed continuities to the contemporary rNying ma tradition. For example, the entire content of the longest Dunhuang Phur pa text, IOL Tib J 331.III, is reproduced within the traditionally transmitted rNying ma pa Phur pa scriptures, and from there, it has had an impact on the commentarial and practice traditions to this day. We shall discuss this at greater length below (Chapters 5 and 6). In the case of *sgrol ba* rites and exegesis, we see preservation of both exegesis and ritual practice, as will be clear from a number of different Dunhuang texts.

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[31] /snying rje 'i las nI sgrol ba rnam pa bzhi 'o/ /gang zhe na lta bas sgrol ba dang/ tshul khrims kyis sgrol ba dang/ daṃ tsig kIs sgrol ba dang/ spyod pas sgrol ba 'o/ /de la daṃ tsig ma nyams pa dang/ tshul khrims ma ral ba dang/ lta ba ma nor bas kyang rgyud drug kI sems can las thar cing/ /bla na myed pa 'i sangs rgyas su 'grub par 'gyur ro/ (R.9)

[32] In performances of 'subsidiary rites' (*smad las*), the elaborate ritual display of 'Casting the Torma' (*gtor ma 'phang ba*) directed at the evil spirits represents a final culmination of the main root practice which is performed first, and which features a *sgrol ba* rite using a ritual *phur pa* as its centrepiece and the basis for the expelling rite (see Cantwell 1989: Supplementary Materials, "The Ritual which Expels all Negativities", especially 9–15, 24–25, for a description of 'subsidiary rites' connected with the deity, rDo rje Gro lod). See also below, p.32 note 2, on the category of *smad las* rites.

[33] *'Pho ba* practice can be performed in connection with many tantric deities although that associated with Amitābha with the object of birth in Sukhāvatī is especially popular in Tibetan Buddhism (see Halkias 2006: 152–159, and discussion of the specific texts following). Halkias (2006: 153–4) interestingly draws attention to Lama Thubten Yeshe's suggestion (now found on the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive: http://www.lamayeshe.com/lamayeshe/toc/toc_1.shtml) that the *'pho ba* teachings derive from the *Guhyasamāja*. This comment deserves further attention, which we are not in the position to give it here.

[34] rnam shes nṛ ru gnas pa de phur bus tsan gyis blangs te a hūṃ du byin gyis brlabs nas phaṭ kyis 'og min du rdor sems yab yum gyi sbyor mtshams su spar bas rdor sems kyi sras su gyur te sangs rgyas par bsam pa ni brten pa dbyings su bsgral ba'o (*bDud 'joms gNam lcags spu gri bsnyen yig* Vol. Da: 134.5–6).

Other general *Mahāyoga* doctrinal themes also persist between Dunhuang texts and the later tradition. For example, in Chapter 1 of the Dunhuang *Thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng ba* commentary (IOL Tib J 321), there is reference to the *mtshan nyid gsum*, or 'Three Characteristics (of the Continuum of the Path)] of *Mahāyoga*'. These categories remain very much a part of contemporary *Mahāyoga* exegesis: the late Dudjom Rinpoche, for example, analysed them in his *bsTan pa'i rnam gzhag*, here using the *Man ngag lta 'phreng*, attributed to Padmasambhava, as his source.[35] Dudjom Rinpoche's language and understanding seem much the same as that of the *Thabs zhags* commentator.

Some continuities in particular details between Dunhuang texts and the modern rNying ma pa tradition are equally remarkable because to some extent, they might be seen as going against the grain. In PT 349, we find a potentially confusing conflation of the names of the major male and female Phur pa deities that has the potential to create some exegetical difficulties; yet, as we show below (Chapter 8 p.152-157), even this potentially troublesome detail was preserved intact through the centuries.

We also find materials close to the modern tradition within Dunhuang historical and legendary writing. In a late tenth century booklet, PT 44, we find a narrative of Padmasambhava bringing Phur pa to Tibet via the Asura cave at Pharping in Nepal couched in terms very similar to the very well-known Phur pa *lo rgyus* narratives still current today (see below, Chapter 4). Similarly, PT 307 describes Padmasambhava and one of his disciples, Rlang dpal gyi seng ge, working as a pair, jointly subduing the seven goddesses of Tibet and converting them into protectoresses. In modern rituals still regularly performed, the legend of the very same pair of Padmasambhava and Rlang dpal gyi seng ge subduing the powerful female protectreses of Tibet together, is still celebrated.[36]

One begins to get the impression that rather little in the Dunhuang Tantric Buddhist repertoire, however obscure it might at first appear, was ever subsequently thrown away. The ethos seems to have been that everything will somehow somewhere have a use, and so must be preserved intact for posterity. At the same time, there is, of course, abundant evidence that ritual text in particular could be broken down into component parts, and recombined with other component parts to create new ritual wholes. The central skill in authoring new ritual text is to achieve a recombination of existing ritual parts into a new ritual whole, in a manner which nevertheless reasserts with great precision the particular ethos and symbolism of the tantric genre being attempted. In pursuit of this goal, one can also find overlapping passages between texts of ostensibly quite different Tantric genres. PT 349, a Phur pa text, has exact parallels to canonical *Guhyasamāja* passages,[37] which in turn incorporate materials from *dhāraṇī* texts for rDo rje sder mo,[38] which in turn share passages with canonical *gDugs dkar* or *Uṣṇīṣasītātapatrā dhāraṇī*s[39] – and so on and so on. Thus, genetic connections are sometimes discernible within the ritual details shared between tantric texts of differing genres and periods. Textual recycling can be at the larger structural level as well: in the nineteenth century, Mag gsar retained the structure of the Seven Perfections which we find in IOL Tib J 331.III, citing

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[35] An annotation to the *Thabs zhags* commentary Chapter 1 (1r.5) presents them as: "When [one] understands through the Characteristic of Knowledge, by the inherent power of becoming familiarised with the Characteristic of the Entrance, the Characteristic of the Result is accomplished as Buddha Body, Speech and Mind." ("*shes pa'i mtshan nyid gyis rtogs na 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid gyis goms pa'i mthus 'bras bu 'i mtshan nyid sku gsung thugs su 'grub bo*"). In Dudjom, following the *Man ngag lta 'phreng* (see S. Karmay 1988a: 167), these are given as *rtogs pa rnam pa bzhi'i tshul rig pa ni shes pa'i mtshan nyid* (awareness in the manner of the Four Kinds of Realisation is characteristic of knowledge); *yang nas yong du goms par byed pa ni 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid* (repeated experience of it is characteristic of the entrance); *goms pa'i mthus mngon du gyur ba ni 'bras bu'i mtshan nyid* (and actualisation of it by the power of experience is characteristic of the result). See Dudjom 1991 Vol 1: 265; Vol 2: 111.

[36] For a discussion of PT 307, see Dalton 2004. See also our comments (Ch. 4, p.48 note 35 below) on these continuities.

[37] For example, from the *Piṇḍikramasādhana* of Nāgārjuna; and the *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhanopāyikā-vṛtti-ratnāvalī* or *mDor bsdus pa'i sgrub thabs kyi 'grel pa rin chen phreng ba* attributed to Ratnākaraśānti (Peking 2690: 297b l.7. to 298b l.2). See the Appendix to Chapter 8, p.162-163 below.

[38] In particular, a mantra which is identified as rDo rje sder mo's mantra; see Chapter 5, p.84-85.

[39] See Chapter 5, p.85 note 61, and Chapter 11, p.204 note 69.

the *'Phrin las phun sum tshogs pa'i rgyud* as his source, but somewhat reconstrued the uses of its principal categories (see below, Chapter 5, p.78-87). There are few if any rules governing the type or nature or size of recyclable ritual items – only that they must work in their new ritual context. Of course, there is no doubt that this process happened constantly in India, as in Tibet. Beyond that, it is not only tantric ritual that develops this way, but much of the world's ritual and mythic systems. A classic anthropological description of the process is found in Levi-Strauss's exposition of what he dubbed 'bricolage', which he interpreted as the often skilful and ingenious "bending" (Fr.: *bricoler*) to new usages of existing cultural artifacts (1976: 16 ff).

Some comparisons between the Dunhuang tantric texts and the later transmitted texts also illustrate processes of scriptural change through textual transmission. The above mentioned *Thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng ba*, in its Dunhuang version (IOL Tib J 321), comprises an entire *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* (henceforth: NGB) *Mahāyoga* root tantra, embedded as lemmata within a commentary. To the eyes of the average reader, there is little in the *Thabs zhags* root tantra that might obviously betray a non-Indic origin, and this surely helps explain its placement in some editions of the *bKa' 'gyur*, where it sometimes finds its way into their *rNying rgyud* sections (at the time of writing, we ourselves remain uncertain as to this root tantra's Indic provenance).[40] But the page layout of the Dunhuang manuscript, and the manner in which its lemmata are embedded within the commentary, expose possible reasons for the considerable redactional variation between the root tantra's later extant canonical versions. Unlike the root tantra, the commentary shows more obvious signs of being composed in Tibetan – for example, in the way it etymologises Tibetan translational terms, like *dkyil 'khor* (in its Chapter 6). Now, the *Thabs zhags* manuscript has some root tantra chapters so completely embedded in the commentary and without any distinguishing indications, that in many cases it is not at all easy to distinguish between the lemmata citing the root tantra and the surrounding commentary. In fact, unless the reader is very highly educated and patient, it can sometimes be well nigh impossible to discern the exact boundaries of the root tantra. Faced with such a circumstance, a scribe seeking to extract the root tantra only is likely to copy more rather than less, to make sure that none of the precious scripture is left out of his copy; thus inadvertently incorporating Tibetan commentarial materials into the more plausibly Indic root tantra. The precise nature of the substantial variations between the different extant canonical versions of the root tantra do indeed look as though they might well be accounted for by different scribes having on different occasions identified different parts of the commentary as constituting the lemmata. We are currently in process of a more detailed study which explores this possibility further.

There might be a possible example of exactly this process of incorporating commentarial material in the Southern Central and Bhutanese NGB recension of the *Guhyasamāja* root tantra. Eastman's preliminary study (1980) of the virtually complete Dunhuang manuscript (IOL Tib J 438), collated its verses of Chapter Three, together with three *bKa' 'gyur* witnesses and one Southern Central NGB edition (to which we have added another representing the Bhutanese line of descent). These NGB versions agree on one additional *tshig rkang* which they give in verse 2, which corresponds to an interlinear note in the Dunhuang version, but is not found in the *bKa' 'gyur* editions, nor in the extant Sanskrit root verses that Eastman consulted (see Ch.9 note 5, p.166–167 below). It would appear, then, that this line might have been integrated into the text through copying from a manuscript which, like the main text of the *Thabs zhags* commentary, did not differentiate clearly between the writing of the root text and the commentary.[41] More broadly, it seems safe to say that such apparently faulty mechanisms of scribal transmission may inadvertently introduce variation

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[40] The root tantra (*'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa pad mo'i phreng don bsdus pa zhes bya ba*) is included in the *rNying rgyud* section of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Kye'i rdo rje'i rgyud 'bum gyi dkar chags*, which was a source for the first sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur*, and it is also in 'Phags pa's slightly later Tantra catalogue; on the latter, see Helmut Eimer 1997: 52. We have not yet ascertained if any Sanskrit original could be found by Bu ston, although this seems unlikely, since the title is not listed in his *Chos 'byung* of 1322–3, nor in his *rGyud 'bum gyi dkar chag* of 1339.

[41] Note that the *Thabs zhags* manuscript also includes interlinear annotations in small writing, which comment on the commentary.

and elaboration into a scriptural text and may also suggest a striking way in which a textually based ritual tradition may develop without any deliberate rationale.[42]

Questions of historical context

The *Thabs zhags* commentary (IOL Tib J 321), IOL Tib J 331, PT 44 and many other Dunhuang texts open an amazing window onto the ritual and doctrinal world of Tibetan tantra before the gSar ma pas. Among other things, it shows a thoroughly sophisticated and scholarly understanding of *Mahāyoga* Tantrism that is in many ways the equal of the present day tradition. Reading the Dunhuang *Thabs zhags* commentary alongside a learned contemporary rNying ma pa lama, it was striking how familiar much of it was to him. From his point of view, while the *Thabs zhags* certainly has its own particular slant and ritual details, as one would expect from such a doxographically significant tantra,[43] it is not in any way surprising or alien to the contemporary tradition.

The manuscripts we have studied, according to present theory, were probably copied or calligraphed from the late tenth to early eleventh century, although it is often hard to be very clear. In most instances, no-one is yet in a position to present much useful evidence about the provenance and dates of any originals from which they might have been copied. The best we can say in general terms is that the texts we have studied seem to represent a Tibetan Buddhism immediately prior to the gSar ma period.

Taken as a whole, the Dunhuang Tantric collection therefore signals an active Tantric Buddhism in that region by the late tenth century, about which we can say three things:

[1] Significant aspects of the rNying ma tantric practice as we currently know it had already emerged.
[2] Some *Kriyā*, *Caryā*, and *Yogatantra* texts were in use; as well as a very great many *dhāraṇī* texts that were subsequently often classed as *Kriyā* by Tibetan doxographers.
[3] Moreover, PT 849 (Hackin 1924; Kapstein 2006) shows that a handful of early precursors of the *Yoginī* or *Yoganiruttara* tantras later associated with the gSar ma period were already being signalled, including an earlier variant of verses later to be associated with the gSar ma pa siddha tradition of Cintā, consort of Dārikapāda (Kapstein 2006: 23–28). One of the two *Catuṣpīṭhatantra*s, nowadays part of the gSar ma collections, is also cited in PT 849, confirming the veracity of its *bKa' 'gyur* colophon, which mentions a first translation prior even to Smṛti's of the late tenth or early eleventh century.[44]

Unfortunately, the inadequacies and ambiguities in the surviving historical sources from the post-Imperial period means that we are not yet able confidently to contextualise the evidence that the Dunhuang tantric texts offer us.

Paul Smith (1991: 27) and Bianca Horlemann (2005, 2007) have demonstrated that the Tibetan federations in the north-east in the early 11th century were powerful in both military and economic terms, acting as middle-men in trade between China and Inner Asia, especially dealing in horses, and we even know the Chinese rendering of the name of a famous Tibetan leader from that time: Jiaosiluo, who is sometimes

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[42] In the Phur pa tradition, two apparently minor scibal variants of a phrase within a key root verse (*srog gi **go** ru*, or *srog gi **sgo** ru*) has led to two rather different commentarial elaborations (see Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis*, Oxford: Kiscadale, 1996: 213–6).

[43] The *Thabs zhags* is one of the most important tantras in rNying ma doxography, as we discuss below.

[44] The *Vajracatuṣpīṭha* is nowadays seen as a famous gSar ma pa tantra extant in two versions in the *bKa' 'gyur*. The translation of one of the versions before the gSar ma period is supported by its *bKa' 'gyur* colophons, which indicate it was retranslated anew by Smṛtijñānakīrti, implying there had been an even earlier translation before him. The sTog *bKa' 'gyur* catalogue (p. 206) includes the following words in the colophon to one of its two *Catuṣpīṭha* scriptures: *Smṛtijñānakīrtis gsar du bsgyur te*, translated anew by Smṛtijñānakīrti.

suggested as the historical prototype for Gesar.[45] Oblique insights into the social and institutional base of Tibetan life at that time come from Iwasaki (1993), whose old Chinese sources describe a vibrant and populous Tibetan Buddhist culture in nearby Tsong kha at the turn of the eleventh century, with active monasteries. Political leaders with whom the Chinese had to deal at that time were frequently monks, with the title, *Rin po che*. The old imperial usage of *bTsan po* was also current among lay rulers. This fits well with other evidence. In 1990, using Dunhuang texts, Helga Uebach (1990) was the first to demonstrate that a lineage of successors to Śāntarakṣita still bearing the imperial eclesiastical title of *bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs* had persisted at bSam yas, a finding further supported in Kapstein's work on PT 849. More significant still, Uebach also showed that monastic activity, including both ordination lineages and colleges of higher studies, had persisted after Glang Dar ma's time. This was particularly so in the North East, where several of Khri Ral pa can's original religious foundations had been situated, and where they continued unbroken after 842. Ron Davidson (2005: Chapter 3, 84–116) has since sought to expand on Uebach's findings, describing a vigorous tradition of Eastern Vinaya monks at that time. Not for the last time in history, the sudden demise of the Tibetan state in 842 clearly did not signify the sudden demise of Tibetan civilisation, nor the instant deaths of all learned Buddhists. The capacity of commerce, civilisation and culture to continue without a functioning state is amply demonstrated in numerous historical examples, including modern Nepal.

Thus, the evidence we have for a rich and highly developed tantric Buddhist ritual life in Tibet in the pre-gSar ma period, would suggest that far from being a dark and sterile interlude between two great epochs, tenth century Tibet could be seen as one of the most productive and culturally transformative times in Tibetan history. It seems to have been a time in which a warrior aristocracy began to reinvent itself as a spiritual aristocracy; a time in which Buddhism began to displace the indigenous religion as the prime expression of popular piety; and a time in which the rNying ma tradition (and possibly also the Bon tradition) attained a remarkable degree of cultural penetration, spiritual depth, and scholastic and ritual complexity, even if against a background of social and political turmoil.

Condition and Features of the Dunhuang Manuscripts

As noted above (p.1), many of the documents are very well-preserved. As a general point, this tends especially to apply in the case of the *pothī* and concertina style texts, where the condition of the paper may be extremely good with little damage or discoloration, and the ink may remain clear. Where this generalisation does not hold good, in particular, with text fragments, there are obvious limitations in our assessment of the remaining text.

There are a variety of handwriting styles, but there are similarities in some of the handwriting features. In particular, many of the texts are written in a style which is between *dbu can* and *dbu med*, with a slightly greater tendency to resemble *dbu med* or cursive handwriting than *dbu can*, a style which Takeuchi has labelled, the Post-Imperial style.[46] Generally, the writing is easily readable, spelling conventions are not greatly dissimilar from those of later periods (apart from known archaisms such as the *da drag*), and even in the case of what appear to be aide-memoires rather than copied texts, inconsistent or unconventional spellings can often be deciphered. In this respect, also, the *pothī* and concertina type manuscripts, many of which suggest well-made institutional productions, fare rather better than the other types of manuscripts. In the case of the texts we have examined – and it should be borne in mind that this is only a small sample of Dunhuang manuscripts – the scrolls with Tibetan writing have often seemed to represent more ad hoc or less carefully composed writings. In fact, rather than being produced as "scrolls", the writings we have examined

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[45] For a discussion and review of scholarly research on Jiaosiluo as the historical basis of the Gesar myth, see George Fitzherbert, 2007: 56 ff.

[46] Takeuchi forthcoming, p.2. Sam van Schaik is currently involved in analysis of Dunhuang Tibetan manuscript paleographical features, a preliminary result of which would seem to suggest a community of scribes known to each other (Dalton and van Schaik 2006: xxi).

have often been simply re-using the reverse side of earlier made scrolls of Chinese texts. Even in the case of one of the booklet style manuscripts we have studied, PT 44, some of the paper had been salvaged from a previous document. Under such circumstances, perhaps, it is not very surprising that care and accuracy in the handwriting, and well-spaced out layout of the text, may not always be a prominent feature of these types of manuscripts. However, of the principal texts we discuss in Chapters 4–10, the only manuscript which posed any significant problem due to illegible and fragmented text was PT 349 (see Chapter 8).

Overall, when one considers the age of the materials, their accessibility to us today is amazing. Not only are they generally rather easy to read, but as we shall see, their contents may be extremely familiar to students of later Tibetan tantric traditions. As noted above, in the case of the *phur pa* texts, there are clear continuities with the received rNying ma scriptural and commentarial heritage. At the same time, on occasion there were conceptual difficulties in interpreting some passages of text. Clearly, where we know little or nothing of the context of who wrote the texts and for what audience, where we have litttle idea of the religious and cultural milieu in which the texts were being produced, we do need to exercise caution in interpreting text or identifying parallels with transmitted concepts and rites. We therefore make some distinction between unmistakable continuities and more tentative or possible connotations.

2 WHY DID THE PHUR PA TRADITION BECOME SO PROMINENT IN TIBET?[1]

The unique prominence of the Phur pa tradition in Tibet and the Himalayas raises an interesting question. Phur pa never become even remotely so popular anywhere else in Asia, so why did it in Tibet? In this chapter, we wish to suggest some possible hypotheses that might be fruitfully tested in an attempt to answer this question.

Tibetan Phur pa literature is vast. The Buddhist canonical Phur pa tantras, the innermost core of the tradition, comprises roughly seventy texts in the Bhutanese NGB editions, totalling nearly 4,000 pages. The *bDud 'joms bKa' ma* has forty-eight Phur pa texts, totalling 2,692 pages. A recent collection of Phur pa texts published by Zenkar Rinpoche that includes both *bka' ma* and *gter ma* has over 1,200 texts in 41 volumes, 32,200 pages in all;[2] yet this includes only a representative selection of the vast *gter ma* and commentarial literature. The larger of the surviving Bon *bKa'* editions has seventy-eight Phur pa texts, and the *bKa' brten* has over 350 - the *bKa' brten* Phur pa texts alone filling around 10,000 pages.

Phur pa's popularity in Tibet began in early times, and as we can see, is moderately well represented at Dunhuang. By the dawn of the gSar ma period, Phur pa was already very prominent within the old Tantric lineages, as we know, for example, from such polemicists as Pho brang Zhi ba 'od (b. eleventh century), who produced a long list of Phur pa tantras of which he did not approve (Karmay 1998: 33). Soon the rNying ma pa went on to begin to produce the vast quantities of Phur pa treasure texts that remain famous to this day – for example, those of Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer (1136–1204). Because they believed it had an authentic Indic origin, from the start Phur pa also retained popularity among important followers of the new translations: for example, the 'Khon hierarchs of Sa skya kept up their hereditary rNying ma pa practice of Phur pa, and a good proportion of our most valuable early Phur pa literature comes from such Sa skya pa sources as Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216).[3]

It was also from around the beginning of the gSar ma period that the Bon po began producing their own comprehensive Phur pa literature. The earliest Bon Phur pa seems to have been revealed by Khu tsha zla 'od in the 11th century, although there is perhaps some from gShen chen Klu dga' a few years earlier. There are also less reliable accounts of Bon Phur pa revelations in the 10th century, allegedly among the texts found by three Nepalese yogins and handed to mTha' bzhin 'Phrul gsas. It therefore seems that Bon Phur pa was in general quite well established by the gSar ma period. In addition, various forms of Phur pa practices are also found among ethnic groups across the Southern Himalayan margins of Tibet, but these are beyond the scope of our present study.

Despite this broad popularity across so much of the Tibetan religious spectrum, Phur pa clearly remains a specifically rNying ma (and Bon) tradition: without exception, the root scriptures of the Buddhist Phur pa

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in 2006, and is due to be published in Orna Almogi (ed.), *Contributions to Tibetan Buddhist Literature. Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006*. Beiträge zur Zentralasienforschung. Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.

[2] *dPal chen kī la ya'i chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, 2002.

[3] In fact, it seems that much of the Phur pa cycle which is included in Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Collected Works stems from his father, Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158). The colophon to the important commentary, the *rDo rje phur pa'i mngon par rtogs pa* reads: "*The Realisation of Vajrakīlaya* has been transmitted from the manuscripts of Bla-ma Sa-chen." (/rdo rje phur pa'i mngon par rtogs pa bla ma sa chen gyi phyag dpe las brgyud pa yin no// p.182; 367v.1 [=13v.1 in the separate pagination of this group of texts]). Apparently, this text was included in the Record of Mus chen Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan (1542–1618) as a work of Sa chen (Jan-Ulrich Sobisch 2007: 57–8; see also 67–8, 160). There is a note at the end of the list of contents of the Phur pa cycle in the modern edition of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Collected Works, xii, after item 105, which also suggests that the prose texts were composed by Sa chen, but edited and brought together in the one place in Grags pa rgyal mtshan's collection (gong gi tshig lhug pa 'di/ sa chen gyis mdzad pa yin na'ang 'dir glegs bam kha langs pa'i ched du phur pa'i sgrub skor rnams/ phyogs gcig tu bsdebs te bris pa rnams bzhugs so/).

tradition are rNying ma. A tiny sample are included within the *rNying rgyud* sections of the *bKa' 'gyur*s, but the vast bulk exist only within the NGB, or within the *gter ma* literature. Thus the Sa skya pa version of Phur pa is little different from the rNying ma pa, and the Sa skya pa Phur pa commentaries depend on exactly the same source tantras as the rNying ma pa – namely, the major NGB Phur pa tantras – even though there is possible evidence that these might have included some of the very texts criticised by Pho brang Zhi ba 'od.[4] The bKa' brgyud pa schools have tended to borrow rNying ma pa Phur pa lineages, rather than preserve their own as the 'Khon lineage have done.

The huge prominence of Phur pa in Tibet is in stark contrast to its very modest profile in other Buddhist cultures. Rituals using *phur pa*s were well-established in Indian Buddhist tantra, but we do not find a developed Phur pa heruka cycle with any kind of prominence, and it is quite likely that the majority of NGB Phur pa tantras were redacted in Tibet. As a result, a broad consensus emerged in 1970's Western Tibetology that Phur pa was something largely indigenous to Tibet, with no significant Indian antecedents. In fact, some early gSar ma pa authors, while convinced that the kīla tradition itself was Indian, had doubted that many of its particular tantric scriptures were of unadulteratedly Indic origins, so that initially none were admitted to the main body of the *bKa' 'gyur* except a small fragment edited by Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251). Perhaps influenced by this precedent, R.A. Stein leapt to the false conclusion that the *phur pa* implement was an indigenous device upon which Tibetans had projected Indian conceptual interpretations; others, such as John Huntington and Keith Dowman, broadly agreed with him at first (Stein 1971–2: 499; Huntington 1975: vii; Dowman 1984: 302). With time, these ideas have had to be adjusted.

In his graduate studies in the late 1980's, Mayer pointed out the great wealth of evidence for kīlas throughout South Asian civilisation. This included a significant quantity of evidence from Theravāda sources (Mayer 1991), since the hugely popular Theravāda protective rites known as *paritta* give such great prominence to the *kīla*, for which they usually use the Pali term *indakhīla* (*indrakīla*), meaning the god Indra's *kīla*.[5] In her well-known monograph study of the *paritta* ceremony, Lily de Silva (1981: 57–79) dedicates an entire section to the *indrakīla*, which succinctly sums up Theravāda scholarship's view of the *indrakīla* in the following points: (i) the *indrakīla* is derived from and identified with the ancient Vedic sacrificial stake or *yūpa* (pp. 68–73) (ii) the *indrakīla* is identified with the cosmic Mount Meru or Mount Mandara (pp.64–68) (iii) the *indrakīla* represents the cosmic axis and the pathway between heaven and earth (p.72) (iv) the *indrakīla* represents immovable stability and order (pp. 61–65) (v) *indrakīla*s are used to create an inviolable magical boundary around important spaces (pp. 63–66) (vi) *indrakīla*s represent royal authority (p. 64) (vii) *indrakīla*s can be inhabited by deities and worshipped (p.66) (viii) sacrifice, including human sacrifice, can be associated with them (p.66).

But in addition to those sources that de Silva found relevant to the Theravāda heritage, a huge wealth of further references also exists in South Asian tantric, purāṇic, and other sources. While the sources cited by de Silva have some iconographic similarity to Tibetan *phur pa*s (such as the eight facetted shaft, a round top part, and clearly divided top and bottom halves of equal length), some of the other sources are not infrequently iconographically closer to or even identical with Tibetan *phur pa*s. To give just one among numerous examples, the *Mānasāra Śilpaśāstra*, one of the most famous of the *Śilpaśāstra*s (classic Indian texts on architecture and related disciplines), describes the *stūpikīla*, a ceremonial *kīla* often used as a finial on religious buildings, as follows: "The length (i.e. body) of the *kīla* is stated to be triangular, the base square, the middle part octagonal and the top circular. The width of the kīla should be one *aṅgula*, and it

[4] For example, the title *Phur bu Mya ngan las 'das pa* occurs both in Pho brang Zhi ba 'od's *bka' shog* (Karmay 1980: 18), and is referred to in Sa skya Phur pa commentaries, such as the extensive and influential commentary of ('Jam mgon) A myes Zhabs (1597–1659) (21.7; 24.4).

[5] As de Silva points out (1981: 57; 68), while *indakhīla* is by far the most usual designation, there are also other terms less frequently used, including the Sinhala *kapagaha* (apparently equivalent to the Pali *ekatthambha*), and *rājagaha*, which she believes most probably has the meaning of 'Royal Tree', although 'Royal House" is also possible.

tapers gradually from base to top".[6] Not only do the classic iconographical definitions of *Mānasāra* specify a triangular kīla, but so do famous Śaiva tantric texts such as the *Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati*, and the *Tantrasārasaṃgraha* of Nārāyaṇa (Goudriaan 1978: 263, 374ff).[7] Since then, Huntington and other art historians have catalogued surviving Buddhist Heruka Vajrakīlas, perhaps based on the *Guhyasamājatantra*, found as far afield as Hugli, in West Bengal, and Yogyakarta, in Java.[8]

These days, while few doubt its Indic origins, we do surmise Vajrakīla's ritual profile was different in India than in Tibet. The present consensus is that in Indian Buddhism (as in East Asian Buddhism), Kīla was more often a subsidiary ritual element within other Tantric cycles, and comparatively less prominent as an independent deity cycle. In Tibet, by contrast, Phur pa became equally prominent as a component of other cycles and as a very major largely *Mahāyoga* deity cycle in its own right.

Clearly, there was something about Phur pa that found a special resonance among Tibetan and Himalayan societies. In this chapter, we reflect somewhat tentatively on possible cultural and social factors that might account for early Tibet's historic enthusiasm for the *phur pa* traditions.

Cultural Affinities

[1] Our first hypothesis concerns the theme of blood sacrifice. As we shall discuss below, we believe blood sacrifice, and perhaps even in some instances human sacrifice, was a major aspect of pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet; in this context, it might well be significant that by far the most striking feature of the *Mahāyoga* Phur pa ritual is its graphic symbolic re-enactment of a sacrificial blood offering. While many Buddhist tantras contain some sacrificial imagery, Phur pa actually takes a full-scale simulated sacrificial offering of a victim to the Three Jewels as its central ritual (Cantwell 1997; Mayer 1998). The imagery in the deity visualisations draws repeatedly upon the sacrificial theme, and this is brought out further in the *phur pa* rite of *sgrol ba*. The basic procedure is usually to make an anthropomorphic effigy or *liṅga* of a sacrificial victim out of dough, and symbolically to 'kill' and make a sacrificial offering of it to the Three Jewels by use of the *phur pa*, thereby transferring or 'liberating' its consciousness to a higher spiritual level (see above, Ch.1 p.6–9). Symbolically, the anthropomorphic effigy may be personified as the demon Rudra, who represents self-clinging as the source of all other spiritual obstacles, so that transferring the effigy's mind to a higher realm represents liberating one's own – and others' – ignorant fixations into primordial wisdom. The large weight of evidence for it from Dunhuang might suggest that in the tenth century, this sacrificial rite was at least as prominent as it is now.[9] Called 'Liberative Killing', *sgrol ba* in Tibetan, the Indic versions are often referred to in words related to the central term *mokṣa*: for example, as we shall see

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[6] See *Mānasāra*, viii, 147–9; P.K. Acharya, *Architecture of Mānasāra,* Oxford, 1933, 205ff. Cited in Mayer 1991: 169.

[7] Yet it is of interest that these two texts have both apparently incorporated significant Buddhist elements. See Gudrun Bühneman 1999: 303–304.

[8] See Huntington Archive at http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/, and search for Vajrakila. One image shows a stone sculpture that conforms with the *Guhyasamāja* iconography for the Heruka Vajrakīla. The entry is as follows:
"*Name: Hugli: Monument: sculpture of Vajrakila; Iconography: Vajrakila; Date: ca. eighth century CE, 701 CE – 800 CE; Material: grey stone; Dimensions: H – ca. 25.00 in; Current Location: Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta, West Bengal, India; Photo Copyright Holder: Huntington, John C. and Susan L.; Photo Year: 1969; Scan Number: 0005993*."
Elsewhere in the same catalogue (as accessed 26 April, 2005), Huntington has written as an introduction to the Tibetan Phur pa deity: "*Vajrakumāra, "Younger Vajra" is the embodiment of a ritual implement of great antiquity. During the period of the Brāhmaṇas (a body of ritual literature dating between 1200 and 800 B.C.E.) the priests "cast" kīlas literally "pegs" in order to control weather and evil forces. Just when these tools came into the Buddhist techniques of benefaction is unclear, but by the seventh or eighth century an array of techniques including the personification, Vajrakumāra, had been incorporated into Tantric techniques*."
Iain Sinclair has also sent us a photograph of a very finely detailed heruka Vajrakīla found near Yogyakarta that also closely conforms with the *Guhyasmāja* iconography, and the sculpture from Hugli. Sinclair estimates this Javanese kīla dates from somewhere between the eighth and twelfth centuries (personal communications, 17th February, 2004 and 9th August, 2007).

[9] As we show in the following chapter.

shortly below, the Netratantra (*..mocayanti ca..* and *...mokṣaṇa...*) and Kṣemarāja (*..mukti…*) use such terms (Halbfass 1991: 101, 123); similarly the *Vīṇāśikhatantra* talks of *mokṣa* being achieved by the anthropomorphic effigy or *liṅga* being slain through stabbing with a *kīla* (Goudriaan (1985: 277–78); and the Tibetan translators of Bhāviveka translated the term for the Indian ritual school specialising in such practices, the notorious *Saṃsāramocaka*s, with the term *'khor ba sgrol byed pa* (Halbfass p. 100).[10] In rNying ma pa practice, *sgrol ba* comprises one half of the famous pair of *Mahāyoga* rites, when combined together with the sexual rite of 'Union', *sbyor ba*.

The notion of such ritual liberation is undoubtedly Indian in origin and draws on Indian sacrificial ritual categories in considerable detail. For example, in the Śaiva *Netratantra*, and Abhinavagupta's commentary on it in his *Tantrāloka*, ritual killing is seen as helping the victims (*anugraha*, where Kṣemarāja glosses *anugraha* as *mukti*), by releasing the victim from their sins, worldly fetters, and stains (*pāpa, pāśa,* and *mala*). Thus these Śaiva commentators believe that such killing is in accord with non-violence or *ahiṃsā*, and that it constitutes a virtuous and benevolent act of 'liberation' (*mokṣaṇa*), which is not at all the same thing as ordinary killing or harming (*māraṇa*).[11] From Vedic times onwards, it has been a constant theme in Indian blood sacrifice that the victim's consciousness is sent to a higher realm; hence to sacrifice a victim to the gods was (and remains) equivalent to bestowing on the victim a kind of forcible or involuntary liberation or *mokṣa*. While the vast bulk of sacrificial victims are and usually have been animals, Halbfass makes the further interesting point that there was from the sixth century onwards an extensive Indian, often Jaina polemic against literalistic interpretations of *mokṣaṇa* or liberative killing as practised upon unsuspecting specifically human victims. A major target of these polemics was the heterodox school of Saṃsāramocakas, whose name would suggest that such liberative killing was their main focus. Criticism of the Saṃsāramocakas occur in Buddhist, Jain and Hindu sources, and even in Tibetan scholasticism via translations of Bhāviveka's works. Halbfass raises the possibility that the Saṃsāramocakas might never have really existed, but might instead have been a notional school, originally confabulated from an Iranian example, which was sometimes used for philosophical writing and debate as an illustrative negative example (Halbfass 1991:100 ff.) It is not clear to us if anyone has yet explored what bearing, if any, the Saṃsāramocaka debate might have had on the social reception of the Buddhist rites of 'liberative killing'; or on the polemical references to *sgrol ba* in Tibet in the early *gSar ma* period. What is clear, however, is that the principle of sacrificial ritual killing or 'liberation' of both animal and human victims, in which their consciousness was sent to a higher realm, was deeply entrenched in India.

'Liberative killing' also had a major role to play in the all-important task of controlling evil non-human spirits. Especially after the rise of devotional religion with its stress on universal salvation, a fundamentally

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[10] Language as used in real life, especially arcane technical terminology, must always be differentiated from language as given in standard dictionaries. Some might object that the various Indian cognates and variants related to *mokṣa* should properly only translate into the Tibetan *thar pa*; and that *sgrol ba* must needs be a translation of *tāraṇa* or suchlike. Be that as it may, the probably once quite varied Indian terms related to *mokṣa* that were used in the specific sense of rituals of sacrificial liberation, for whatever reason, simply had become associated with the Tibetan word *sgrol ba* by the tenth century, however incorrect that might appear to some contemporary strictly lexicographical analysis. Yet the meanings of the terms *mokṣa* and *sgrol ba* are not after all unrelated, so we do not really find this altogether surprising. We should add, the intellectually naïve rush to 'correct' the Sanskrit found in tantric and other Buddhist texts is often somewhat questionable, since it is well known that the originals were very often not in classical Sanskrit in the first place. For that reason, we have elsewhere preferred to use the very well-known central semantic term *mokṣa* as the easiest Indic word to convey the broader gist of the rite of *sgrol ba* to a general Western audience. The term *mokṣaṇa* is perhaps more classically Sanskritically exact however, so we can perhaps use that term here, so long as our readers remember not to reify it into a 'correct' term.

[11] Halbfass 1991: 101ff. This apologetic is closely mirrored in Tibetan Phur pa texts on *sgrol ba*. One of the most famous and ubiquitous verse within Phur pa *sgrol ba* literature states that "the samaya for killing (and) liberating through compassion, is not really to kill or suppress; (it is) to meditate on the essential vajra nature (of the) skandhas, and on consciousness as vajra" (snying rjes bsgral ba'i dam tshig ni/ bsad cing mnan pa nyid min te/ phung po rdo rje'i bdag nyid de/ rnam par shes pa rdo rjer bsgom/. In other words, *sgrol ba* liberates the victim from all saṃsāric delusion, so that they realise the 'vajra nature'. See Cantwell 1997: 115.

exorcistic model came to be built into this sacrificial theme, which might have been very important for the popularisation of Tibetan *phur pa* rites, as we discuss below. Hiltebeitel and Biardeau (Hiltebeitel 1989:1) have neatly described the recurring theme in Indian religions where the gods convert demons into their devotees, as servants with a specifically protective role, through the process of first killing them, and then resuscitating them. As we shall see in the second hypothesis, p.20-22 below, this is exactly what the rNying ma *Mahāyoga* versions of *sgrol ba* aim to do in their detailed and almost universal employment of the taming of Rudra narrative. In many liturgies and in numerous reiterations of the myth, demonic hell-bound Rudra is first killed, and then resuscitated, upon which he devotedly offers himself as the seat of the victorious Buddhist deities, becoming Mahākāla (or some other benign Protector), now himself safely on the path to Buddhahood.

The Buddhist *Mahāyoga* rite of 'liberative killing' is, like many of the Śaiva versions, symbolic rather than actually sanguinary, and forms a major part of advanced *Mahāyoga* soteriology. Here, a symbolic ritual enactment of the sacrifice of a dough effigy is intended to achieve the forcible liberation of ignorance into wisdom. The Phur pa tantras are without doubt *sgrol ba*'s most famous locus in Tibetan Buddhism; while *sgrol ba* is integrated into the extended rituals of many other rNying ma pa deities, these still normally employ a *phur pa* to effect the actual symbolic killing. At *sgrol ba*'s culmination, the sacrificed effigy is often dismembered, and in the *tshogs* or tantric feast, the effigy may be divided into portions, and offered for consumption so that Buddhas, human yogins, and the lowly excluded spirits each receive their appropriate portion (Cantwell 1997: 112–116; 1989: 197–205).

Mokṣaṇa could equally be performed in Hindu India, as in Buddhist Tibet, by using a *kīla*: to take just one example, *mokṣaṇa* by stabbing an anthropomorphic effigy with a human-bone *kīla* occurs in the Śaiva *Vīṇāśikhatantra*.[12] Hence it need be no surprise that sacrificial meanings are inscribed in the very form of the *kīla* or *phur pa* and that this implement carefully replicates the immemorial iconography of the Indian sacrificial stake.[13] In fact, over many hundreds of years, the *kīla* has consistently been identified with the *yūpa*, or Vedic sacrificial stake. We are not sure when this happened, but it was certainly very early: Pali scholars have reported that at least by the time of the appearance of the Pali canon, the *yūpa* and *indrakīla* had become conflated as a single item (de Silva 1978: 244–246). As elaborated in those ancient Vedic texts called *Brāhmaṇa*s, the *yūpa*, as a central implement of Vedic religion, was itself deified, and thus continued to have a manifold ritual life down the centuries. It is one among several ancient Vedic ritual devices that evolved to become part of the common ritual heritage of much of Asia. Nowadays, the *yūpa-kīla* motif still continues in diverse religious contexts, including temple architecture, Theravāda *paritta* ceremonies, and innumerable purāṇic and tantric rites. Thus it is originally from the *yūpa* or Vedic sacrificial stake, and from its complex exegeses in the *Brāhmaṇa* literatures, that the Tibetan *phur pa* very distantly yet quite recognisably inherits the standard canonically required features: the upper and lower part of equal length, the eight-facetted column, the knots at the ends of the column, the *makara* head with *nāga*s, the function of conveying sacrificed victims up to higher realms, the dwelling of the highest deities at its top, its conception as a cosmic axis, the ability to act as a gatekeeper, the ability to kill enemies at a distance, and its threefold lower shaft when used for killing. All of these distinctive features of the Tibetan *phur pa* were first specified in the *Brāhmaṇas* and similar literature for the sacrificial stake or *yūpa*.[14]

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[12] See Goudriaan (1985: 277–278): *mānuṣāsthimayaṃ kīlaṃ kṛtvā tu caturaṅgulam / kṣīravṛkṣaṃ bhage likhya liṅgaṃ vā kīlayet tataḥ // ṣaṇḍilas tu bhavet sādhya ārdrayogo na saṃśayaḥ /uddhṛtena bhaven mokṣaṃ nātra kāryā vicāraṇā //*

[13] For a detailed discussion of this, see Mayer 1991:170–182

[14] Mayer 1991 passim. Some authors do not distinguish between this symbolically very complex Vedic-descended sacrificial tradition, and another group of much simpler *kīla* themes found peripherally in numerous Indian texts of all religions: the simple non-sacrificial magical acts of overpowering enemies with a *kīlaka* or peg. Typically classified within Indian magical categories as *kīlana* 'piercing' or *uccāṭana* 'eradicating', such practices are especially effective against demonic forces or opponents in a dispute, but lack the complex distinctively Vedic sacrificial motifs. In accord with Madeleine Biardeau's landmark study of the Indian sacrificial post, we agree that over the millennia a simpler peg might both diverge and re-merge, terminologically and

We therefore believe that any analysis of the introduction of the *kīla* to Tibet must take cognizance of the inherently sacrificial connotations of this implement within its original South Asian context.

Without elaborating at length on pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, in short we can say that it is very well known from Dunhuang sources, from contemporaneous Chinese accounts in the *Tang Annals* (Bushell 1880: 441, 475, 488), and from archaeological sources, that blood sacrifice was a crucial feature of pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion. Animals, and possibly also humans, were offered on numerous occasions, such as oath-taking, funerary rites (Tucci 1955: 223; Li and Coblin 1987: 10), and mountain deity rites.[15] Some of the strongest evidence is for large-scale blood sacrifice as a central part of the funerary rites. For example, the Dunhuang text PT 1289 describes *mdzo mo* sacrifice during the funeral rituals; PT 1194 describes the sacrifice of sheep during funerary rituals; PT 1136 describes the sacrifice of horses during the funerary rites; PT 1068 describes general animal sacrifice during the funerary rites. While we cannot be sure of the exact date of these Dunhuang texts, it seems reasonable to infer that they describe non-Buddhist Tibetan traditions. Sacrifice and dismemberment of numerous sacrificial animals is amply confirmed by recent archaeological excavations of 8th to 9th century Tibetan tombs (Heller, 2003).

The latter feature – dismemberment – is as typically significant for Tibetan sacrifice as for sacrifice elsewhere. It is not only something found by archaeologists working on old Tibetan burial mounds, but is also reported in Dunhuang texts – for example, with the yak sacrifice described in Chapter 8 of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and analysed by Nick Allen (1978) and Sandy Macdonald (Macdonald 1980: 203); they reported that ancient Tibetan sacrifice, just like India's prototypical *Puruṣasūkta* (*Ṛgveda* 10.90), involved dismemberment and sharing to reflect social status. Michael Oppitz (Oppitz 1997: 533-4) adds to such analysis in his discussion of Pelliot 1068, and also Pelliot 1038, in which latter dismemberment of the sacrificial animal is seen as a political metaphor. Remnants of these traditions continue in non-Buddhist regional deity rites to this day, where blood sacrifice is a commonplace (Diemberger and Hazod 1997: 273–276), and as we have pointed out above, such dismemberment and sharing of the symbolic effigy-victim also occurs in the *Mahāyoga* tantric feast (Sanskrit: *gaṇacakra*; Tibetan: *tshogs kyi 'khor lo*).

It therefore seems a useful hypothesis to propose that *phur pa* rituals originally appeared so attractive to Tibetans because of their exceptionally strong emphasis on deeply familiar motifs of sacrifice, dismemberment, and hierarchical sharing.

In fact, the above hypothetical proposal now has a tiny bit of direct evidence to support it. Tantric Buddhist *liṅga*s or effigies for suppression of *sri* demons (*sri mnan*) drawn on animal skulls, absolutely exactly as prescribed in the earliest *phur pa* suppression rites,[16] have been found among the vast sacrificial animal remains at two excavated 8th to 9th century Tibetan tombs in Amdo, as Amy Heller (2003) reports. What makes these examples especially interesting is the way in which demons of an important indigenous category – the *sri*, who are unknown in India – become (and are to remain until modern times) prime adversaries of an entirely Indian exorcistic method, as taught in the Vajrakīlaya tantras. Thus these tombs reveal a traditional pre-Buddhist sacrificial burial, but with some evidence of Buddhist syncretism. Unsurprisingly in the light of this evidence, there are also Dunhuang texts, such as PT 239, whose basic gist is to advocate the substitution of non-violent Buddhist funerary rites for the sanguinary indigenous funerals.

[2] Our second hypothesis involves the usage of myth in ritual: as Samten Karmay has pointed out so eloquently, there is ample evidence to suggest that the close linkage of ritual to myth was important to pre-

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conceptually, with the more complex sacrificial post. Nevertheless, as Madeleine Biardeau has pointed out in her study of the Indian sacrificial stake *Histoires de poteaux*, it is very often rash to distinguish between so-called 'great' and 'little' traditions in India. What goes on in the village is often just another form of what goes on in great temples. Biardeau 1989, passim.

[15] See Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 101, for a Buddhist criticism of animal slaughter involved in rites for the deity, Thang lha.

[16] See Boord 2002: 234ff for Phur pa *smad las mnan pa* rites using liṅga drawn on animal skulls.

Buddhist religion in Tibet. The *Mahāyoga phur pa* 'liberative killing' rite closely integrates ritual and myth in a manner similar to the indigenous Tibetan pattern, and this might have contributed to the rapidly achieved popularity of the *phur pa* rituals in early Buddhist Tibet. To introduce this topic, it is useful first to cite one of Samten Karmay's discussions of indigenous Tibetan religion at length:

> "It is not certain whether myth always precedes ritual and, in my opinion, the question remains unsettled. I do not propose to solve the problem here since in Tibetan tradition myth is an integral part of rite. Together with the ritual it forms a 'model' (*dpe srol*). The ritual cannot function without the myth and is therefore dependent upon it. In Tibetan popular rituals, particularly those belonging to the Bon po tradition, the mythical part is called *rabs* (account). In this account, the officiant often identifies himself with the main deity or another character of the myth. In some cases, in order to justify his ritual action or to ensure its efficacy, he recalls that he is a follower (*brgyud 'dzin*) of the master who initially founded the ritual. The latter is therefore situated in a mythical spatio-temporal context. Knowledge of the preceding myth is therefore indispensable in order to perform the ritual action which is seen as the reenactment of the mythical past." (Karmay 1998: 245; see also 288–89, and elsewhere).

We have strong evidence that by the time of our Dunhuang texts, the central Phur pa sacrificial rite of *sgrol ba* or 'liberative killing' was already following just such a pattern of integrating myth with ritual, even if it remains unclear as yet to what proportion this developed in India and to what proportion in Tibet. See, for example, the opening words of IOL Tib J 331.III in Chapter Six, which allude to the taming of Rudra as a charter myth of the *rabs* or *smrang* type,[17] using the very same words on the taming of Rudra that also occur in several NGB texts, such as the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*'s chapter seven (Mayer 1996: 169) and the *Phur bu Myang 'das*'s chapter three, the theme of which is developed at length in its chapter four (Cantwell and Mayer 2007: 129–139).

Central to the rite of *sgrol ba* is the identification of the anthropomorphic effigy victim with Rudra. Rudra is a key figure in rNying ma religion, and understanding of him and his symbolic significance is taught in a very great many rNying ma tantras, very notably in the NGB Phur pa tantras. Thus Rudra's long career will be well known to virtually every member of any rNying ma pa ritual assembly: Rudra's initial spiritual disobedience and misunderstanding, leading to aeons of perdition in the hells, followed by rebirth as a mighty demon, and his eventual rehabilitation by becoming the great original sacrificial victim slain in the great primal act of 'liberative killing' performed by Heruka, at his first manifestation from the combined intentions of all the Buddhas. It is only after being slain that Rudra can be resuscitated as 'good guy': the exorcistic theme that lies at the heart of the Phur pa tantric system. Rudra's preeminent importance thus lies partly in the fact that he himself embodies primal ignorance, and partly in the fact that Heruka was only manifested in the first instance so that Rudra could be defeated. Hence Rudra is at the very core of the major origin and soteriological myths of the entire rNying ma pa version of Vajrayāna itself (Mayer 1998: 271–310). So in every subsequent ritual performance of *sgrol ba* by ordinary Buddhist followers, the yogin must identify himself with Heruka and thus as being the lineal successor of the original primal Heruka who first tamed Rudra in the days of old. In each performance of *sgrol ba*, he reenacts that first ancient taming of Rudra. In this way, each performance of *sgrol ba* envisages a mythical spatio-temporal context, just as Karmay describes, and becomes a reenactment of the mythical past, even down to quite technical details, such as the left-overs or excess offerings in *tshogs* rituals.[18] It is fair to say that the myth of Rudra is so

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[17] See Karmay 1998: 288–9, for analysis of how the term *smrang* was used for this kind of origin and archetype myth as used in ritual. The word *rabs* is described in the citation from Karmay above.

[18] Thus, in the account given in the Phur pa root tantra, the *Myang 'das*, the females originally of Rudra's entourage are integrated into the maṇḍala's periphery and become the recipients of the left-over offerings (*Myang 'das* Chapter 4, NGB, D vol. Zha 51r; Cantwell and Mayer 2007: 138). The rite of offering to the peripheral deities is repeated following the principal deities' offerings in each regular *tshogs* ritual.

deeply embedded within the rite of *sgrol ba* that the rite itself would make little sense without an understanding of Rudra and the myths of his taming.

Of course, it is not at all unusual for any religious ritual to be expressive of an underlying myth – the Christian sacraments are an obvious example, and other Vajrayāna myths do likewise – but the typically *Mahāyoga phur pa* sacrificial rite of *sgrol ba* seems to do this much more obviously and with far more dramatic impact than most Vajrayāna rituals. In other words, charter myth structures have a place in many Indian religious contexts, but what is significant in this case is that they were accentuated in a typically Tibetan way as part of the rNying ma indigenising strategy. Hence it is possible that *Mahāyoga*'s *sgrol ba* rite offered ninth and tenth-century Tibetans a deeply familiar sense of the proper functioning of myth within ritual, that was less obviously found in other Tantric Buddhist rituals. Thus, we propose as a hypothesis to be tested that the early Tibetan expectation of *smrang*, *rabs* and *dpe srol* in their rituals helps account for the remarkably enthusiastic take up of the Rudra-taming myth in rNying ma tantrism in general; and that this myth probably found its most perfect and dramatic ritual expressions in the *phur pa* rite of *sgrol ba*, which might have contributed to its particular popularity.[19]

[3] Our third hypothesis is that a number of similar cosmological and religious ideas about sacred mountains are shared between the Indian *kīla* rites and the indigenous Tibetan religion, and that this might also have contributed to making the Indian *kīla* cult attractive to Tibetans.

In India, the *kīla* has long been associated with cosmic mountains, presumably because the popular Vedic, Epic and purāṇic cosmogonic mythologies of the god Indra at some stage came to describe his famous demiurgic exploits in terms of the cosmic axial mountain Mandara being identified as the *Indrakīla*, or Indra's peg. To start with, this cosmic mountain was floating about quite freely and had no fixed place. By fixing it firmly like a peg (*kīla*) to the ocean bed, Indra imposed cosmic order on the preceding chaos, and for the first time brought a life-enabling stability to the world. This was also associated with Indra's taking control of and releasing for the first time the primal life-giving waters, which he achieved through subjugation of the primal serpent demon Vṛtra, who had previously controlled these waters (note that the *kīla* is still the prime instrument for *nāgabandha* rites). Being the cosmic pivot, this huge mountain organised the universe at its origins along a three-levelled vertical axis of heaven above, earth in the middle, and watery underworld below – the Three Worlds so well known from Indian sources. From this myth of Indra and his pegging the earth came the Indian usage of *ku-kīla* (from *ku*, earth, plus *kīla*, peg) – meaning a pin or bolt of the earth, namely a mountain (Monier-Williams 1979: 286). F.B.J Kuijper, who made a major study of it, has summarised the myth as follows:

> "Indra made the mountain firmly rooted in the bottom of the waters. Since this mountain was the cosmic centre, the central point of the earth, the whole earth thereby became firm and steady. Thus the cosmic mountain not only was the origin of the earth, but also came to function as a peg which secured the earth a firm support. This idea still survives in the later literature, where Mt Mandara (= the unmoving) as the cosmic pivot is called Indra's Peg (*Indrakīla*), and the concept of a mountain functioning as a peg is expressed by the term *kīlādri*." (Kuiper 1970: 110).

The Vedic scholar Jan Gonda moreover described the sacrificial post or *yūpa* as being envisaged as the cosmic axis of the Three Worlds, with the heavens at its top, our earth along its visible length, and the watery

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[19] Ronald Davidson (2003: 221ff) has tried to account for the remarkable popularity of the Rudra and Maheśvara taming myths in Tibet solely in terms of their offering a vehicle for affirming an authentic Indic lineage: yet one might object that there are numerous much more direct ways to assert an authentic Indic lineage. Davidson's work perhaps came too early to show any awareness of Karmay's work on the central importance of charter myth systems (*dpe srol*, *rabs*, *smrang* etc.) in indigenous Tibetan religious ritual. But above all, it is the spiritual meanings and ritual enactments which keep the myth alive and robust to this day.

subterranean world of *nāga*s below (Gonda 1965: 230,147). Perhaps this is why, as we have seen above, the *yūpa* and *kīla* (or *indrakīla*) were often conflated items, for example in architectural literature (Coomaraswamy 1938: 18–19), and in much early Buddhist literature (de Silva 1978: 244–246; Mayer 1991:170).

The cult of Indra on the one hand, and of sacrifice (*yajña*) on the other hand, together comprised the two major strands of religious belief in the Vedas (e.g. Klostermaier 1984, section 1). It is therefore no surprise that a cultural artifact that combined a central implement of ancient Indian sacrificial ritual (the *yūpa*) together with a major symbol of the myth of Indra (the *kīla* or cosmic mountain), would be influential enough to become culturally reproduced and re-articulated in numerous different ways throughout subsequent South Asian ritual history. The combined *kīla* and *yūpa* was just such an artifact, and the legacy it has left across Asia is extensive.

As one example of this legacy, Tibetan *phur pa* literature invariably identifies *kīlas* as Mt Meru, here conceived as the axial cosmic mountain which, just like Indra's cosmogonic *Indrakīla*, organises existence along a three-fold vertical division of the Buddhas above, our world in the middle, and *nāga*s below. This association is made explicitly in the Dunhuang text IOL Tib J 331.III. The three-fold vertical cosmic axis identification is also made in the material iconography of the *phur pa*: here the lower world of the *nāga*s is represented by the mouldings of a makara's head and descending *nāga*s that ornament the lower triangular blade of the implement; our intermediate world is represented by the eight-facetted shaft above it; and the heavenly realms above ours are intimated by the Buddha or Heruka heads that crowns the implement. Extremely similar or even identical iconographic features are also shared by the *yūpa*, the Vedic-derived sacrificial post (see Mayer 1991:168 ff.).

There are also further possible references to the cosmic mountain in Phur pa ritual. One of the most widely known stories in Indian mythology concerns the churning of the ocean by the combined forces of the devas and asuras, to acquire the *amṛta* of immortality. For their churning stick, they used the cosmic mountain Mandara, which they rolled by alternately pulling on either end of the serpent Vasuki, who was twisted around Mt Mandara as the churning rope. In most of the Epic versions, this churning produced various essences which arose from the ocean: the great treasures of the wish-granting cow, goddess of wine, the precious elephant, the wish-fulfilling jewel, the sun and moon, and so on, including the great poison, and the *amṛta*, which was taken by the gods, to the fury and envy of the demons.[20] In *Mahāyoga* ritual, the Vajrakumāra (Phur pa) heruka is invariably described as rolling (*'gril* or *'dril*) the Mt Meru *phur pa* in his two lower hands.[21] Moreover, in ritual practice, rolling the *phur pa* between the two hands is an important feature of the rite, generally preceeding the ritual striking of the effigy and often included, for instance, in the activities which the initiate should perform in the course of the empowerment.[22] It is possible that this central aspect of the ritual symbolism might have some relation to the Hindu mythology of the cosmic mountain as the churning stick. Connected closely with the *sgrol ba* rite, the ritual performance seeks to bring forth the pure essence or consciousness of the rite's object from the ocean of saṃsāra, and send it to the immortality of the Buddha field. In this case, the great poison is not one of the essences produced, but the essence of the ocean of saṃsāra to be destroyed.[23] At the same time, the meditative absorption of the evil one's life energies and fortunes, which is often part of the ritual process of *sgrol ba*, may have overtones of

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[20] There are many versions of the myth. For the Mahābhārata account, see O'Flaherty 1975: 274–280.

[21] A typical line from a contemporary sādhana reads: "(His) last two (hands) roll and strike (with) a Mount Meru *phur bu*" ("tha gnyis ri rab phur bu 'dril zhing 'debs" *bdud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri las byang* Vol. Tha: 95).

[22] See, for example, the empowerment ritual (*dbang chog*) for the *bDud 'joms phur pa spu gri reg phung* Vol Ba: 611.1–2).

[23] Consider: "in really rolling and brandishing (the ritual *phur pa*), so that the three poisons are cut off at the root..." ("rab tu dril te gsor byas na: dug gsum rtsa ba rtsad bcad phyir:" *bDud 'joms phur pa spu gri reg phung* Vol Ba: 611.1–2) or "fortunate noble (student), by entrusting you (with the ritual *phur pa*), may (you) gain the power to kill and liberate the complete three worlds (of) saṃsāra" (skal ldan skyes bu khyod la gtad pa yis: khams gsum 'khor ba yongs sgrol dbang thob shog:" *bdud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri rtsa dbang* Vol. Tha: 626).

the production and consumption of the elixir of immortality. One commentarial gloss on the action of rolling in the context of a *sgrol ba* rite advises that it should be done while directing the tip of the *phur bu* towards the effigy's heart, meditating that light rays blaze forth from the *phur bu*, penetrating the effigy, burning up the evil and defilements, upon which the vibrant lustrous creative juice of the life-span and fortunes of the hostile forces are merged together and dissolved into the *phur bu*.[24]

We also witness some instances of the rolling of the *phur pa* as initiating an alternative creation scenario to that suggested by the Hindu gods and demons generating desire and envy for the cosmic ocean's purest essence. In the context of a *rakta* (blood) offering, the *rakta*, embodying the consciousness of hostile forces and obstacles, is visualised within a stomach bag in front of the practitioner. Rolling the *phur bu*, the appropriate mantra is recited, and the stomach bag is pierced with the *phur bu*, so that the blood swirls forth creating an ocean, and *rakta* goddesses are emanated from it. Offering the *rakta* to the maṇḍala deities, the deities are satisfied and the desires of the three worlds are exhausted.[25] In the actual liturgy to be recited, it is made clear that again, the offering is made, "in order to empty the whole (of) the three worlds (of) saṃsāra".[26] So here, we have a parallel to figures emerging from the churned ocean, but the imagery suggests an inversion of the Meru myth – blood rather than water or milk, and the object of emptying saṃsāra.

There is a rather different version of this ritual rolling in which it is not associated with an act of *sgrol ba*, but with a five family consecration or empowerment ritual. Variants are found throughout the transmitted tradition, as well as being witnessed in IOL Tib J 331.III, and also alluded to in other Dunhuang texts. In the context of IOL Tib J 331.III (f.5v; see Ch.5 p. 75, 80–83, and Ch.6 p.101–106), it marks the climax of the section for consecrating the *phur pa*. Here, the fingers of the two hands become the male and female deities of the five buddha families, and they unite as the hands are moved in rolling the *phur pa*. Bodhicitta is produced from the union, consecrating the *phur pa*, and the ritual activity also produces sparks of fire, generating wrathful emanations. In this case, we have the two hands, the male and female deities, together performing the rolling, rather as the Hindu gods and demons cooperate to move Mount Meru back and forth, and it is as though the rolling movement is instrumental in activating the deities to unite and create offspring, although the overall focus of the rite is on dissolution into and consecration of the ritual implement itself.

There is not necessarily any direct connection between the Meru mythology and the rolling of the *phur pa* in Tibetan ritual. What is interesting in all these examples of the ritual rolling of the Mount Meru *phur pa* is that without any explicit reference to or memory of the myth of the cosmic mountain as a churning stick, there would seem to be a kind of development of the symbolism, and this is enacted throughout ritual performances in the Tibetan Phur pa tradition.

It is clear that the manner in which the *phur pa* is associated with a cosmic vertical axis resonates very closely indeed with pre-Buddhist Tibetan cosmological ideas. It minutely resembles, even in its terminology,

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[24] "dmigs bya'i snying dkar nag mtshams su gtad de bsgril bas phur bu las 'bar ba'i 'od zer gyis kho'i sdig sgrib thams cad bsreg/ tshe bsod bkrag mdangs kyi dwangs ma thams cad bsdus nas hūṃ du gyur pa de phur bu la thim/" (*bdud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri bsnyen yig* Vol. Da: 134).

[25] "mdun du gnod cing 'tshe ba'i dgra bgegs kyi rnam par shes pa'i ngo bo thig le dmar po nṛ dang tri yig gis mtshan pa zhig tu hril hril 'dug pa de las 'od 'phros pas gnod byed dgra bgegs thams cad kyi bla srog rnam par shes pa bkug nas thim ste yongs su gyur pa las khrag gi grod thum ri rab tsam pa zhig tu gyur par bsam la sras mchog gi phur bu 'dril zhing/ oṃ badzra kī li kī la ya sarba sha truṃ mā ra ya hūṃ phaṭ: ces brjod de phur pa btab pas de rdol ba las byung ba'i khrag rgyun sngar byin gyis brlabs pa'i rakta dang 'dres nas stong gsum khrag gi rgya mtshor 'khyil ba las rakta'i lha mo 'phro bas dkyil 'khor pa mchod pas rab tu mnyes pa chen por gyur/ khams gsum gyi 'dod chags thams cad zad par mdzad par bsam/" (*bdud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri bsnyen yig* Vol. Da: 110–111).

[26] "khams gsum 'khor ba ma lus stong bya'i phyir:" (*bdud 'joms gnam lcags spu gri las byang* Vol. Tha: 118).

the fundamental indigenous Tibetan vertical threefold cosmos of the *lha* of the sky, *btsan* of the earth, and *klu* of the underworld: the structure known as *gnam sa 'og* or *gnam bar 'og*.[27]

The Indian identification of the *kīla* with the cosmic mountain also resonates well with the complex associations of mountains with religious beliefs in indigenous Tibetan religion – but here we have to be cautious in specifying exactly how, because there does not seem to be any very clear consensus among scholars about pre-Buddhist Tibetan beliefs regarding mountains. Some generally agreed themes do emerge however: for example, that a mountain was the conduit from the heavens down which the first king descended to earth; that a list of nine particularly sacred mountains was counted in old Tibet, some of which – notably gNyan chen Thang lha and Yar lha Sham po – still retain considerable religious significance;[28] that mountain deities had considerable political significance, so that obtaining a privileged relationship with or being considered the descendant of the mountain deity controlling a region was synonymous with political control of that territory; that sacrifice was (and still is) offered to mountain deities to obtain or celebrate such a privileged descent or relationship; and that it is the mountain deities who confer upon the leading political male of their region courage, mental strength and protection.

At least some of this can be related to the Phur pa cult: just as the indigenous Tibetan idea was that the roadway to heaven was directly above a sacred mountain, so also in Phur pa rites, the Buddha realms are envisaged as directly above the Mt Meru *phur pa*. In this way, the *phur pa* functions as a two-way conduit to the divine upper realms, on the one hand bringing down the power of the Buddhas from above, on the other hand, allowing access to the heavens to those below. This is very much like the sacred mountains that the first kings traversed in indigenous Tibetan mythology (Karmay 1998: 294 ff). Similarly, and perhaps more significantly, like the sacred mountains of pre-Buddhist Tibetan cults, the Buddhist Mt Meru *phur pa* also has as its primary function the transmission of good order and stability from the top down, since Vajrakīlaya is specifically the deity of enlightened activity (*'phrin las*) whose main function and purpose is thus to tame unruly and disordered beings (like Rudra) and establish the rule of Buddhist law. Moreover, like the figure of the fierce, authoritative and invariably male Tibetan mountain deity, the Phur pa heruka also is fierce, authoritative, and invariably masculine. Like the mountain deity and the human chieftain who serves him,

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[27] An important Dunhuang text (IOL Tib J 711) seemingly equates the three worlds of the Indians and the Tibetan *gnam bar 'og* (Dalton and van Schaik 2005: 293; 2006: 308–9). Dalton's entry says, "many Hindu deities are mentioned, and there is a brief discussion of the *the'u rang* spirits (see 4r.1–4v.1). The latter appear in a section in which the three worlds of Indian mythology (*khecara*, *bhūcara*, *nāgaloka*) seem to be likened to the three worlds of pre-Buddhist Tibetan mythology (*gnam bar 'og*)." The passage concerned does not make the association explicit, but Dalton, who expects to publish an analysis in a forthcoming book, argues that it is implicit (personal communication, March 2007). For Haarh's reflexions on *gnam sa 'og* , see Haarh 1969:161. Haarh feels *gnam*, or heaven, might be a further addendum to an originally two-fold structure. Haarh writes: "The ancient pre-Buddhist and pre-Bon concept of existence seems to have comprised two worlds of existence, that of *man* or *sa*, the earth, and that of the defunct of *'og*, the underworld. The idea of heaven (*gnam*) in the sense of a third and upper sphere of the world may be a later development, which is somehow connected with the rise and spread of the (organized) Bon religion in which a particular significance and importance is ascribed to Heaven or *gnam*. The idea of the world as a *ga'u*, the closed space of *gnam-sa*, seems to represent an intermediate stage of development towards the idea of world of three spheres." On *gnam sa 'og*, see also the English translation of Haarh's 'Danish summary', as extracted in McKay 2003 Vol.1: 143. See also Stein 1972: 203–4 – yet we feel some of Stein's description of Tibetan mountains, eg as *sa'i phur bu*, and as Indra's Pegs, (p.208) is probably post-Buddhist, and not part of the ancient 'nameless religion'. Likewise Katia Buffetrille's article (1996) possibly represents a reiteration of old Indian mythic ideas derivative of the ancient story of the cosmic mountain or kīla floating about, before Indra stabilised it.

[28] See Karmay 1998: 435, where he cites Dunhuang sources for these politically significant mountain deities, and also Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 97-103 for an early Buddhist presentation of a Bon-Buddhist dispute over the role of these deities. This group of nine moumtains also comes to us in the *Can lnga*, a group of very early texts known to us only indirectly from their citation in the *sBa zhed* and some of the earliest *Chos 'byung* texts, where, as Karmay points out, they underwent some transformation. See Karmay 1998: 282-309, especially 300 ff.

the Phur pa deity is also pre-eminently involved in sacrificial ritual (the one actual, the other symbolic). The resemblances are not in all cases overwhelmingly exact, but still of definite interest.[29]

Tibetan tumulus burials and tombs are seen by some as a further development of the *btsan po* and mountain cult. Here the tumulus is said to represent the world, while a pillar is placed above it, which some interpret as representing the cosmic axis and link between worlds, and as receptacle for the soul. This might also have offered some possible resonances with the imported Buddhist kīla.[30]

The themes of sacrificial ritual, the three-fold vertical axial cosmology, and the various ramifications of the mountain cults, are probably the most important hypotheses to test in seeking cultural affinities between Phur pa and the earlier Tibetan religion. Perhaps these resemblances might even be strong enough to suggest shared cultural origins in some cases. However, there are also more tentative cultural affinities that we can mention.

[4] A further hypothesis concerns the idealisation of the figure of the warrior prince. The proper name of the Buddhist Phur pa heruka is Vajrakumāra, the Vajra Prince or Youth. This name already occurs in the Dunhuang text PT 44 (see folios 13 and 33, in Chapter 4 below, p. 53, 60, 65). Vajrakumāra is presented as Buddhism's premier demon-defeater, hence his niche in Buddhism generally resembles that of the Hindu's Skandha Kumāra, the warrior youth and general of the gods, who wields a short stabbing spear, and who was enormously popular among pre-Muslim north Indian martial elites, including the Gupta emperors, two of whom took his name.[31] It is interesting in this respect that Tucci and Haarh believed the Tibetan *btsan po*s acceded to power at a youthful age, (usually symbolically represented as thirteen) with the elimination or ritualised returning of their predecessor back to his heavenly origins. Although most anthropologists would justifiably find this rather unlikely as an actually occurring practice,[32] it probably does indicate an ideal for a youthful virile ruler, symbolically linked to the health and fertility of the land and people. The *Tang Annals* likewise disdained a Tibetan culture that radically privileged youth and strength over age (Tucci 1955: 217; Bushell 1880: 442). If Tucci and the Tang annalists' understandings had at least a grain of truth, which seems eminently possible, the image of a powerful youthful warrior deity, similar to one so popular among North Indian power elites, might have had resonance in Tibet.

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[29] There are also interesting contrasts. For instance, the gender symbolism involves slightly different connotations. Buddhist Phur pa certainly expresses the same masculine aggressive imagery, which may on occasion include violent sexual domination (Cantwell 2005: 19), but the main meditative sādhana practice involves the integration of male and female aspects in the Phur pa deity's union with his consort (and in the similar male-female pairs in the retinue). Moreover, while mountain deity cults tend to be associated with male authority and may reserve some important ritual roles for men (Diemberger 1994: 146–8; 1998: 46–7; Diemberger and Hazod 1997: 272), the most advanced Buddhist Phur pa rites are open to female practitioners, and one theme in the mythological histories is the prominent role of key female exemplars in the early Phur pa transmissions. This point especially applies to Ye shes mtsho rgyal, who has a pre-eminent role amongst the first Tibetan Phur pa masters who were disciples of Guru Padma, but one might also mention the Indian female yogin who is considered the fount of the *bKa' brgyad* lineages, Las kyi dbang mo, as well as Ye shes mTsho rgyal's student, Jo mo cog ro bza', who is remembered for failing to relate to Guru Padma with the appropriate kind of faith one should have in a vajra master, but who later redeemed herself by following Ye shes mtsho rgyal, giving rise to the *lcam lugs* line of transmission (see, for instance 'Jigs med gling pa's *Phur pa rGyud lugs* cycle's *chos 'byung*, *bDud 'joms bKa' ma* Volume Ja, p.13).

[30] Tucci 1955: 219,223–4; Haarh 1969: 356; Heller 2003; and for Chinese records, see Bushell 1880: 443.

[31] There are many important links and parallels between the Hindu Kumāra deity and his various Buddhist counterparts, which deserve a full scale study in due course. One must note, however, that the links between the Northern Indian Skandakumāra or Kārttikeya and his southern Indian counterparts Subrahmaṇya or Murugaṇ are complex, even if the two are often seen as identical in popular literature. Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka has a very deep relationship with Subrahmaṇya or Murugaṇ in the form of Kataragama, and Skanda or Kārttikeya, are important in East Asian Buddhism, as is Vajrakumāra (see Mayer 2007). The connections between these various forms of Skandakumāra and his Theravāda, Tibetan and East Asian counterparts is an interesting topic worthy of further research. An early and incomplete start on such research can be found in Mayer 1991: 189-191.

[32] Dotson (forthcoming) discusses this issue in considerable detail.

Several scholars have suggested that the succession of Tibetan sacral kings was conceived as the serial reappearances on earth of the same divine ancestor; if so, successive holders of the early hereditary Phur pa lineages could similarly present themselves as serial reappearances of the same deity – although this is of course a distinction not unique to Phur pa (Tucci 1955: 218–9; Haarh 1969: 333).

Social conditions

As well as cultural affinities, we must also consider social conditions. The period when Phur pa literature seems to have begun really to flourish in Tibet was the aftermath of the imperial collapse, a time of civil disintegration, constant warfare, and a struggle between clans for territory and status. We can infer it was also a time of remarkable cultural and religious productivity, even if we now lack many of the documents that might have illuminated exactly how this transpired (Davidson 2005: 63). It was also the time when Tantric lineages in both Central Tibet and East Tibet were often continued within hereditary aristocratic clans, as aristocrats established themselves as lamas (Iwasaki 1993). A distinctive ideology of these times was thus a nostalgic reverence for the greatness of the now lost empire and its Buddhist kings (Kapstein 2000: 141ff); hence rNying ma histories to this day emphasise the royal and aristocratic origins of the Phur pa lineages, which are typically traced to Guru Padma's transmissions to the Emperor, his queens, and his ministers. The relevance of Phur pa to such conditions of social disorder, accompanied by a productive religious culture and a nostalgia for order's restoration, is obvious: the most fundamental socio-political symbolism of the *kīla* in Asian civilisation, as Lily de Silva points out, includes not only royal authority, but also civilisation itself: "This symbolism of the *indrakīla* is further substantiated by *dassukīla* which is its direct opposite. *Dassukīla* simply means a lawless disorderly state of affairs. When the two Pali words *indakhīla* and *dassukhīla* are taken side by side one sees how the former is employed symbolically to mean well established authority and civilized lawfulness while the latter is employed to mean wild lawlessness." (de Silva 1981: 64)

[5] Given the civil strife and political chaos of the times, another hypothesis can be proposed in connection with Phur pa's multifarious special functions as a subjugator and protector of territory. One of the main features of the *kīla* in India was its role as boundary protector, especially of sacred or important sites. Examples of this are found in innumerable and diverse sources, from the Pāli canon, to the purāṇas, to the tantras (Mayer 1991: 176–181). In the tantric cycles that came to Tibet, this clearly had both symbolic and magical connotations: on the one hand a ring of *phur pa*s delineate a perimeter symbolically, but more than that, the fierce *phur pa* deities also defend one's territory with their magic force. For example, closely integrated into the Phur pa liturgy in several Dunhuang texts, including the *Guhyasamājatantra* and several of the other texts analysed here, is the *karmaḍākinī* goddess rDo rje sder mo, or Vajra Claw. Her role is to protect the yogin's domestic space, his family, his friends and his allies. Connected with such protective functions are the *kīla's* roles in the initial establishing of control over spaces for the first time, as in the so-called *nāgabandha* rites found in such Indian ritual-architectural texts as the *Śilpaprakāśa*.[33] Both these types of spacial functions constitute an absolutely standard usage of the *phur pa* in Tibet, and are found in many Dunhuang texts, such as IOL Tib J 384, where *phur pa*s defend the perimeter of a maṇḍala. One can speculate that these various territorial ritual functions might have made Phur pa useful to local rulers, who repeatedly had to establish, defend and re-establish their own territory and renew or rebuild castles and temples, in the chaotic post-imperial situation.

[6] A further hypothesis is connected with the Phur pa deity's potential use in political deal-making. Practitioners of the Phur pa heruka were promised the reward of very particular Phur pa siddhis most useful as an adjunct to diplomacy in violent times. As the famous root verses of its tantras tell us, in words incorporated into every Phur pa *sādhana* almost without exception, Phur pa was the most effective deity of

[33] These rites are often known as *nāgabandha*. See Mayer 1991: 167–171 On the role of ritual *phur pa*s in Tibetan versions of these rites, see Cantwell 2005: 14–19.

all for specifically eradicating aggression and enmity from the very root.[34] In similar vein, it claimed pre-eminence in curing bad faith, and reconciling enemies: all indispensable assets for those attempting to build and maintain alliances in a chaotic political situation. The strong linkage of rNying ma *Mahāyoga* with issues of good faith, or *samaya*, is interesting. *Dam sri* demons – which are evil influences that create and are created by breaches of religious good faith – are extraordinarily important in Phur pa literature, sometimes even described as the single major cause of suffering throughout the universe. The Phur pa literature's mythic scenario of Rudra's development as the archetypal embodiment of evil is presented as a story of a catastrophic breach of good faith, followed by eventual redemption through the Phur pa sacrificial rite of *sgrol ba* – see, for instance, the account in the seminal and probably early Phur pa commentary, *Phur pa 'Bum nag* (Boord 2002: 129–130). Thus, Khenpo Namdrol (1999: 43) emphasises the importance of Phur pa for overcoming the *dam sri* and *rudra*s caused by breaches of *samaya*, and the vital need to do this for tantric practitioners who will otherwise be obstructed.

It is interesting that oath-taking and treaty-making were among the occasions that required blood sacrifice in pre-Buddhist Tibet. The main idea here seemed to have been that the parties to the oaths will suffer the same terrible fate as the cruelly sacrificed victims, if they break the oaths. A second idea, which might refer more to Chinese thinking than Tibetan, is that the spirits of the sacrificial victims become guardian spirits to enforce the oaths (Bushell 1880: 441, 475, 488). In the emerging increasingly Buddhist context, sharing the Phur pa sacrificial *tshogs* might have seemed a viable alternative method for building or repairing bonds between differing parties, offering cultural continuity through its mock-sacrificial substitute of an effigy or *liṅga* for the traditional blood sacrifice at such occasions. In the political chaos of tenth century Tibet, such bonding functions might have appeared particularly valuable.

We believe that this point addresses an over-emphasis on political domination in assumptions about the social significance of *phur pa* practices. No careful sociological study of these issues has yet been attempted. Understandably, scholars may form an impression from later accounts of *phur pa* rituals in the context of wars and political strife which would suggest an expression purely of conflict.[35] Such an impression would be slightly misleading in neglecting this important contrasting yet actually complementary dimension of *phur pa* ritual as directed towards overcoming social discord and promoting integration.

[7] Our seventh hypothesis concerns Padmasambhava. Extremely significant for Phur pa's popularity must have been its prestige as one of the main chosen deities of Padmasambhava. We can infer from PT 44 that Padmasambhava's close and particular personal association with Phur pa was a well established narrative by tenth century Tibet. We also know from the *dBa'/sBa bzhed* (e.g Wangdu and Diemberger 2000), PT 44 and PT 307 (Dalton 2005: 764ff), that Padmasambhava was by the tenth century already considered preeminent among Buddhist conquerors of local deities. Although in very early sources many of these were female deities, or deities connected with water, other early sources also apparently mention his conquest even of the major politically significant male mountain deities: see for example a passage in the *dBa' bzhed* (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 53), where Padmasambhava apparently subdues Thang lha, one of the politically most prominent of the nine major mountain deities.[36] In so far as this was the case, it must have had extremely important implications in Tibetan politico-religious thinking, since ritual control of such fierce

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[34] The pertinent line reads: *rdo rje khros pas zhe sdang gcod*: these words or variants on them are at the very heart of almost every Phur pa *sādhana* and tantra (see above Chapter 1, p.6).

[35] For instance, an account of the exploits of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, a famous ninth-century figure of the early rNying ma pa lineages, discusses his use of *phur pa* rites to quell the political disturbances of marauding brigands, and to intimidate King Langdarma, so that his students were left in peace (Dudjom 1991: 611–2). The impression of the rites being used as part of political conflict may be reinforced by consideration of destructive ritual more generally: the Fifth Dalai Lama's record of his spiritual experiences includes mention of destructive rites performed against the gTsang forces (Karmay 1988: 9, 29, 178–9). Such colourful accounts of the apparent impact of the rites on the everyday world may rather detract attention from other types of social significance which the performances may also have.

[36] Mention of Thang lha within the Dunhuang sources as a crucial political mountain is analysed in Karmay 1998: 297.

male mountain deities was understood by pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion as constituting in itself a powerful and necessary spiritual correlate for assumption of actual political control over their associated territories, strongholds and clans. Karmay, for example, explores this ritual political significance of the mountain deities in his discussion of the usage in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* of the sentence *dvags po lha de dgug pa*, 'to summon the deity of Dvags po', which Karmay interprets in its context to indicate the summoning of the mountain god of Dvags po as a prelude to the re-conquest of Dvags po by the Yarlung kingdom (Karmay 1998: 440). The term is also in other parts of the *Chronicle*: in a long narrative, it is explained how the major kings established their power over the smaller kings, mastering them one by one, in a process that combined ministerial cunning with military might, and, in the final analysis, magic power.[37] A similar theme emerges in the *lDe'u chos byung* account of the origin myth of the first king, where the specific requirement for the new monarch is that he must have magic powers (Karmay 1998: 299).

Mastery of Phur pa seems to have offered an appropriate type of magical power for a monarch: it conferred the *siddhi* of enlightened activity with all its attendant magic power over life and death, it was connected with defence of boundaries, and with taming beings to create good order and good faith between them. Being increasingly perceived in addition as Padmasambhava's main method of controlling the gods and spirits of Tibet, it might well have offered considerable psychological and spiritual advantages to those among the post-Imperial Tibetan clan leaders hoping to achieve political power.

[8] Our eighth hypothesis concerns the capacity of the Phur pa tantric system for assimilation of local Tibetan deities and spirits, which we see as a direct outcome of the *phur pa*'s quintessentially exorcistic mode of practice. This capacity for assimilation through exorcism is of course a fundamental aspect of many Tantric systems, both Śaiva and Buddhist, and is not to be confused with hybridity in any simple sense (Hiltebeitel 1989:1ff). Phur pa's fundamentally exorcistic ritual core will have made it more suited than most for such assimilation.

Firstly, this meant that Phur pa's Indian-based exorcistic methods could easily be re-deployed against indigenous categories of spirits without in any way compromising the Buddhist system at the heart of the Phur pa system. We have already mentioned one such example above, where the indigenous Tibetan *sri* demons become a target of *phur pa* rites. By promising Tibetans a highly effective method for controlling *sri*, Phur pa could make itself popular and relevant. To this day, *sri* remain a significant target of Phur pa tantric cycles, especially the special *sri mnan* branch of the practice.

Another category of indigenous deity for which the Phur pa tradition made an early accommodation are the *'go yi lha* or *'go ba'i lha*. These five benign protective deities are naturally indwelling within every human being. There are some variant forms of these, but a typical enumeration might be that the *srog lha* dwells upon the head; the *pho lha* upon the right shoulder; the *ma* (or *mo*) *lha* upon the left shoulder; the *sgra* (or *dgra*) *lha* in front of the head; and the *zhang lha* at the back of the head. According to Karmay they originated as an important part of the pre-Buddhist pantheon (Karmay 1998: 129, 149) and their names and symbolic dispositions – for example, the maternal uncle or *zhang lha* offering background support – certainly invoke quintessentially Tibetan kinship categories. In a famous NGB Phur pa tantra that seeks to be Indic in the main body of its text, the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, nevertheless a definite accommodation is made to these deities. While the Phur pa tantras are not the only Buddhist tradition to have accommodated these deities, the way that the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* does it, and the text's possible great antiquity and its attempted Indic style contents, make the accommodation interesting. Chapter 9 of this text is devoted to the subsidiary rite (*smad las*) of symbolically killing adversaries with the *phur pa*. Here we find that the adversaries' benign *'go yi lha* are separated from their evil aspects, before the killing is effectuated. Otherwise, one would incur the sin of killing benign deities. While this outlook is entirely consonant with Buddhist doctrine – one is

[37] See Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint 1940–1946: 81; 85: *thun ni rje thun gyis bthun te bgug go*: "regarding magic power – bewitched by the royal magic, [they] were summoned" (our re-translation, in the light of Karmay 1998: 440).

symbolically destroying the sins, not the virtues or Buddha nature of the victim, and there is no reason to believe that Indic ritual need reject in principle such a separation of the good from the bad elements before effecting the killing – the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* nevertheless is happy on this occasion to present its message in the specifically indigenous symbolic language of *'go yi lha*.[38] Such a separation of the benign *'go yi lha* before effectuating the *phur pa* strike remains a regular feature within many modern Phur pa texts too.

Since a standard Indian tantric method of exorcism envisaged the 'taming' of hostile or indigenous deities and their conversion into helpful servant deities, Phur pa could also afford the more radical strategy of directly integrating indigenous deities into its *maṇḍala* at the periphery, without being in any way compromised by this. Such strategies were very widely practised in Indian tantrism, allowing the socially expansive integration of originally outsider deities into Śaiva or Buddhist systems; hence their application to indigenous Tibetan deities could have been neither unexpected nor controversial. A good example of the rNying ma tradition accepting this process is found in the famous Phur pa protector deities, who, according to PT 44 (see below, Ch. 4 p. 45–47) and all subsequent Phur pa *lo rgyus* texts, first become integrated into the Vajrakīlaya *maṇḍala* by Padmasambhava at Yang le shod in Nepal (identified by tradition as a site close to Pharping). Yet by the time the above-mentioned *Phur pa bcu gnyis* was codified, this predominantly Indic text had included some phrases into three of its chapters to represent these apparently newly added deities as protectors of the Phur pa tantras – very much as described in PT 44.[39] Being goddesses directly tamed by Padmasambhava, they are nowadays very popular indeed among Buddhist Phur pa practitioners as protective deities, and much liturgy and commentary has been written for them.

[9] Our ninth hypothesis concerns the way in which the ritually and cosmologically important idealised figure of the Tibetan Emperor was adapted to post-Imperial conditions. While no clan or party ever succeeded in reunifying the empire, local leaders adopted the imperial title of *bTsan po* and often emphasised their lineal descent from Imperial circles: to some extent, they aspired to fulfil locally, in an appropriate form, the ritual and political role once held by the Emperor on a much greater stage. That greater Imperial role is excellently summed up by Brandon Dotson in his description of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, which is our main source for the ideology of the Emperor:

> "The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* is not overtly didactic in the manner of early Chinese histories. At the same time, it has a clear interpretive framework: its unswerving agenda is to present the Tibetan emperor as the *axis-mundi*—the link between heaven and earth and the ordering principle by which the ways of the gods are imposed upon men. The chapters of the *Chronicle*, beginning with one of the first mythical Tibetan kings and ending in the late eighth century, set out the proper relationship between ruler and subject. In so doing, the document bears witness to the contractual rule on which the Tibetan kingship was based, and constitutes a charter for early Tibetan political theory. As such, it is the single most important document relating to early Tibetan identity and political thought, and contains concepts that can be charted

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[38] Thanks to Alak Zenkar Rinpoche for his advice on this passage, which occurs in the sDe dge edition at folios 215r–215v:
It is important [first] to separate out the protective deities within the body [of the victim].
Then suppress and beset [those evil elements] that are unable to flee,
Appropriate their occult force and magical power,
And render their limbs incapable of fighting back;
Strike [them] with the *phur pa* of the Vajra Wrathful One!
/'go ba'i lha dang dbral ba gces/
/'bros kyis mi thar gnan gzir bya/
/mthu dang rdzu 'phrul phrogs pa dang/
/yan lag 'khu mi nus par bya/
/rdo rje drag po'i phur pas gdab/

[39] Whether the goddesses were added to the text, or whether they had been present earlier, but were later interpreted as subjugated at the moment of Tibet's integration to the Phur pa maṇḍala, the principle remains that their presence – as goddesses connected with Padmasambhava – was acceptable in this scriptural source.

throughout Tibetan history and the development of Tibetan politics to the period of the Dalai Lamas and beyond."[40]

In the light of much of what we have discussed above in the preceding pages, we can see a considerable overlap between the idealised *bTsan po* and the Phur pa master. Both are connected with the symbolism of the *axis mundi*. Both are the divine in human form. Both combine worldly and spiritual powers. Both are bringers of spiritual and mundane order to the disordered world (cf. da Silva's comparison of *indakhīla* and *dassukhīla* we refer to above). Similar to his Imperial predecessor who brought to humanity the ways of the pre-Buddhist gods, the post-Imperial ruler who practised Phur pa cleared all obstacles to the bringing of Dharma, the ways of the Buddhist gods. If traditional Tibetan kingship was based on a contractual relationship between ruler and ruled,[41] the Phur pa tradition was exceptionally deeply concerned with *samaya*, the Tantric Buddhist understanding of proper contractual relations between master and follower. Like the ancient Emperors, the Phur pa practising aristocrat preserved the sacred order by defeating enemies both spiritual and worldly, using his unique powers over life and death, and his powers in establishing protected territory. For the clan leader or local king in the newly tantric Buddhist post-imperial world, Phur pa was an ideal tutelary deity. Many Tantric deities might enable him to achieve a sacred status, but few were so closely linked with so many and varied traditional ritual symbols of the ancient Emperor valuable to his kingship.

[40] Brandon Dotson, forthcoming.
[41] For an analysis of the principles of Tibetan kingship, see Ramble 2006.

3 THE DUNHUANG *PHUR PA* CORPUS: A SURVEY[1]

A reasonable corpus of *phur pa* texts exist among the Dunhuang discoveries, several of which are fragmentary. Most of the subject matter is ritual in focus, although there is also a well-known historical account with doctrinal explanations in PT 44.

Obviously, we have no certain way of deducing how representative the surviving Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus is of the complete breadth of the *phur pa* tradition of pre-eleventh century Tibet. Nevertheless, it is extensive enough to yield some valuable data about the *phur pa* rites of that period.

To facilitate our survey of the Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus, we can, if a little arbitrarily, distinguish between three broad types of *phur pa* practice in Buddhist literature. Although these categories often overlap and therefore cannot hold up to exhaustive analysis, they do give us a useful way of approaching the materials.

- Firstly, there are straightforward practical magic usages of *phur pa*s with little or no direct reference to achieving enlightenment, often deriving from such early texts as the *Kriyā* tantras.
- Secondly, there are *phur pa* rituals resembling what are nowadays known by the rNying ma as *smad las* or subsidiary rites.[2] *sMad las* has three characteristics: it adopts ostensibly worldly magical rituals; it renders them considerably more sophisticated and elaborate; and in the process very comprehensively turns them towards Buddhist soteriological goals embodying the highest *Mahāyoga* view. For example, one popular *smad las* rite gathers up all the community's mundane obstacles like illness and poverty around a single weapon torma, which embodies the tantric deity expressing the destructive force of wisdom. This is then hurled at the yogins' own deeper causes of suffering, namely, ignorance, and the three poisons. Thus, the wider community's mundane obstacles are transformed into the means of eradicating the religious specialists' deeper spiritual ills, in a single if complex ritual process.[3] *sMad las* rites form an integral and extremely important part of modern *Mahāyoga* soteriology. The foremost example is the famous *Mahāyoga* rite of *sgrol ba*, or liberative killing, nowadays usually done with a *phur pa*.
- Thirdly, there are *phur pa* rituals resembling what are nowadays known by the rNying ma pa as the *stod las*, or primary rites, constituting more direct, less mediated approaches to the ultimate nature, typically through deity meditation. These practices are considered the basis for the subsidiary rituals, since it is only if one can identify with the tantric deity that the processes of tantric destruction and transformation of the most negative forces is possible.

While much of Asia (both Buddhist and non-Buddhist) still retains innumerable uses of *kīla*s within the first category of straightforward practical magic, it is above all in Tibet, and predominantly among the rNying ma pa, that Phur pa also became equally famous as a means to enlightenment, especially through its *smad las* practices such as elaborate versions of *sgrol ba*, or liberative killing, and its *stod las* practice of the rDo rje Phur pa (Vajrakīlaya) heruka meditational deity or *yi dam*. Since this Tibetan situation currently exists nowhere else, we are interested in ascertaining to what extent it was already represented in the archaeologically recovered Dunhuang materials. From transmitted literature of certain dating, we know that by the latter half of the twelfth century, the rNying ma pa Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (1136–1204) and the Sa skya pas Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158) and Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216) had already

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in 2006, and is due to be published in Orna Almogi (ed.), *Contributions to Tibetan Buddhist Literature. Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006*. Beiträge zur Zentralasienforschung. Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.

[2] In this context, the paired terms *stod las* (primary rites) and *smad las* (subsidiary rites) have no necessary connotation of 'higher' and 'lower' in terms of supramundane and mundane: rather, they mean rites that logically must precede and those that logically must follow. In fact, the object of *smad las* is not mundane at all, but the liberation of sentient beings.

[3] See, for instance, Cantwell 1989: Supplementary Materials, "The Ritual which Expels all Negativities".

composed seminal Phur pa texts containing the key features of sādhana practice still current to this day.[4] There are also early Bon Phur pa texts,[5] but we have not yet read these, so we cannot comment on their contents.

Firstly, let us review the Dunhuang *phur pa* materials that simply pertain to straightforward practical magic usages, most typically in rites of defining boundaries and defeating evil spirits. In general terms, these reflect exactly what we would expect of Indian usage of the *kīla* at that time.

There is a type of rite ubiquitous throughout South Asia, which remains routine within Tibetan Tantrism, that employs *kīla*s for securing the outer boundaries of a sacred space. This can be required, for example, as a preliminary to occasions in which a concrete symbolic *maṇḍala* must be constructed, such as a major ritual practice session (*sgrub chen*) or an elaborate empowerment. Here, *phur pa*s must be established at strategic points around the periphery of the *maṇḍala* ground before the actual symbolic *maṇḍala* is constructed. (Cantwell 1989: 235–6; Lessing and Wayman: 283).[6] Unsurprisingly, we have found some examples of this type of *phur pa* ritual in Dunhuang texts. The first section of IOL Tib J 384, which gives instructions for setting up a *maṇḍala*, includes mention of acacia wood *phur bu*s, which are to be established at the four corners. A mantra for this purpose is also given, containing the string, *ki la ki la ya*, which is very close to the *kīli kīlaya* element that is standard for Phur pa.

As mentioned above (see Chapter 2, p.19-20 note 14), another ubiquitous application for *kīla*s throughout South Asia is their use in overpowering or repelling evil spirits and the magical influences of enemies. Hence within traditional Indian magic texts one finds a specific category called *kīlana*, or 'piercing', which is closely related to *uccāṭana* or 'eradicating' (Goudriaan 1978: 374–5; also 351–364). Again, unsurprisingly, we find examples of this among the Tibetan Dunhuang texts.

There are two text fragments (PT 8, verso sides, and a single sheet of IOL Tib J 491) from a ritual or an aspiration conjuring the imagery of striking with a *phur bu*, for the purpose of severing the harmful mantras of a long list of human and non-human opponents (see Ch. 11 below, p.203–206). The two fragments constitute extracts from the same text, the *dhāraṇī* text for the female Buddha, *gDugs dkar* (White Parasol). They have the same repeated wording for the striking *phur bu* and the announcement of the severing of the mantras concerned. They differ in the specific objects listed although in both cases, we find both human ascetics or religious specialists of various kinds, Hindu deities and miscellaneous spirits.

Conceptually related to such rites, we find in the Dunhuang divination text IOL Tib J 739[7] that it is considered a good omen if one perceives the hearts of one's enemies to be struck with a *phur*. In this

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[4] Note that much of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's work on the Phur pa cycle was attributed to his father, Sa chen Kun dga' snying po: see above, Chapter 2 note 3, p.15. Of course, the transmitted texts of the NGB also include lengthy Phur pa tantras which develop aspects of the ethos of the Phur pa tradition, especially the imagery and mythology surrounding Vajrakīlaya, the tantric samayas and the *sgrol ba* rite; but we cannot yet be sure of the exact dating of all of the parts of this voluminous material, even if we do have evidence that substantial quantities of such material already existed by the time the Dunhuang cave was sealed, as we shall see. Likewise the dating of the seminal early Phur pa commentary, the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, remains uncertain. It has been translated by Boord, who does not question the traditional attribution of the text to the teachings of Ye shes mtsho rgyal, suggesting that her student, A tsa ra Sa le, was the recipient who composed the text (Boord 2002: xxvii–xxix).

[5] Important Bon po Phur pa ritual texts make up part of a *gter ma* cycle attributed to the eleventh century, Khu tsha zla 'od (b. 1024) (Canzio and Samuel, p.2). Buddhist authors count him as a *gter ston* who revealed both Buddhist and Bon treasures. For instance, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul equates Khu tsha zla 'od with Ku sa sman pa padma skyabs (Akester n.d:.5). Jean-Luc Achard has commented that some of Kong sprul's identifications are questionable, but this one is likely to be correct (personal communication 15/02/07).

[6] In the case of major tantric ritual sessions, the wrathful deity whose circle is visualised will depend on the maṇḍala to be constructed (Cantwell 2005: 14–17)

[7] *dgra snying ni phur gis 'debs* (14a10–11) and *dgra snying ni phur gyis btab* (16b.06–07). See Old Tibetan Documents Online, 2004, IOLTib_0739: 14a10–14b01, text critically edited by Ai Nishida and Iwao Ishikawa.

divinatory text, however, the portent arises as a natural indication rather than as the result of a deliberate ritual attack.

There are a number of *phur pa* rituals discussed in text fragments or mentioned as minor elements within longer texts which quite probably fit into this category, but which also contain possible hints of our second category in which such rituals are used as part of tantric deity practices focused on enlightenment. For instance, IOL Tib J 406 describes a subjugation rite, here involving a brief mention of striking and subduing obstacles or *bgegs* using a five inch long *rdo rje phur bu*, following a self-visualisation as Vajrapāṇi. This might possibly relate to a simple practice for ritually destroying harmful forces, yet there are aspects which might suggest more. It follows a tantric deity self-generation practice, and it uses some terminology shared with the more developed Phur pa tradition (see Ch. 11, p.198–199). Similarly, IOL Tib J 447's Section 3 has a description of the use of three *phur bu*s of different materials and sizes for destroying and subjugating harmful beings and forces, but the entire ritual is integrated into a set of instructions for meditating on Vajrasattva.

IOL Tib J 401's Section 4 is an exorcism to heal severe mental illness, by dealing with the spirits responsible. It involves the fixing of five *phur bu*s, apparently at the four limbs and the head of the patient. Accompanying this is a meditation on oneself as a wrathful deity. The following ritual includes a meditation on thousands of tiny wrathful deities arising from one's body hairs, reminiscent of a feature of the Phur pa tradition's visualisations of Vajrakīlaya in both Sa skya and rNying ma sources (see below, Ch. 11 p.203). In a subsequent section,[8] this text recommends the *ki la ya* mantra for coercing *nāga*s to produce rain where more peaceful methods have failed.

IOL Tib J 557 is a single sheet with various tantric instructions and the relationship between them is somewhat unclear. It contains *phur pa* material incorporated into or following a section on the heart vows of the Buddha families, and a meditation on and offering to the tantric deity Hūṃkāra. An eight inch acacia wooden *phur bu* with a rounded head is to be made; then, after offerings and praises, the *phur bu* is held and rolled, expelling obstacles through striking with it, accompanied by *phur pa* mantras similar to those in use today (see Chapter 11, p.194–197). However, it is unclear if this text refers to a ritual analogous to the famous *Mahāyoga smad las* rite of *sgrol ba*, or merely to a routine exorcism.

We have five texts more clearly in our second category, those applying *phur pa* more directly to the ultimate Buddhist goal of enlightenment.[9] Most striking is a close resemblance which parts of them have to the important present day *Mahāyoga* category of *smad las* ritual.

1. The main focus of IOL Tib J 331.III is elaborate *Mahāyoga* consecrations and *smad las* – type rites of *sgrol ba*, that have extensive parallel passages with extant NGB Phur pa scriptures.
2. IOL Tib J 754 Section 7 likewise focuses on a *smad las* type rite of *sgrol ba*, but is less extensive.

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[8] Section 8 in Dalton and van Schaik's classification.

[9] We have not included the *Mahābala-sūtra* in this book, although it is well represented at Dunhuang. It is tempting to tease out parallels and hints from tantric texts on similar wrathful deities, and Mahābala did come to have an important place as one of the ten wrathful ones in the Vajrakīlaya maṇḍalas. Yet it seems that Bischoff overstates the role of Vajrakīla in this text: it really does little more than state the importance of the mantric syllables *kīlikīla*, but these might well be those of Amṛtakuṇḍalin and/or Vajrapāṇi, or Mahābala himself, rather than an independent Kīla deity. See Boord 1993: 47. The text's closing sections use the phrase, "srid pa'i phur pa", which is a technical term in the Phur pa literature, occurring for instance, on four occasions in the *Myang 'das* (Cantwell and Mayer 2007: 187, 190–1, 216). However, it does not appear to carry the same connotations at all. In the Phur pa tradition, it refers to the realisation or transformation of existence as the Phur pa deity. In the *Mahābala-sūtra*, it is used in the context of the closing sections which are extolling the reading and transmission of the text (IOL Tib J 390, 31r.4; Bischoff 1956: 37, 65) and rather than indicating a positive state, it seems to represent the downfalls of saṃsāra which need to be overcome through the Buddha's teaching. This would seem more reminiscent of the connotations of the term "'dzin pa'i phur pa" found in early rDzogs chen texts (Karmay 1988: 72, 75, 84-5, see above, Ch. 1 p.6 note 16) than of its use in the Phur pa tradition.

3. PT 349 is closely related to the *Guhyasamāja* tradition and in addition has parallels with extant NGB Phur pa scriptures as well as *bsTan 'gyur* texts; it describes a *rdo rje phur bu*,[10] identified as a heruka, destroying obstacles to enlightenment.
4. IOL Tib J 321 contains the only full-length uniquely NGB *Mahāyoga* tantra preserved at Dunhuang, the *Thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng*, which in this Dunhuang manuscript comes embedded within its lengthy accompanying commentary, and the text is associated with Padmasambhava according to its interlinear notes. The commentary presents *phur pa* as a way of achieving the four enlightened activities (*las bzhi*), and also cites famous NGB Phur pa titles.
5. PT 44 closely resembles later Phur pa *lo rgyus* texts, presenting history, lineage, doctrine and the fruits of successful practice.

IOL Tib J 331.III

IOL Tib J 331.III comprises the third text within a three-part manuscript. The first two texts describe the means of accomplishing the highest reality of Vajrasattva through *Mahāyoga sādhana*, and the first text is attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra. The third and final section explains the *phur pa* practice of *sgrol ba* in a way that would nowadays be understood as *smad las*.

It comprises 11 folios with interlinear notes. Although presented as an explanation rather than as Buddha speech, it is notable for its very substantial and close parallel passages with extant NGB Phur pa scriptures. Virtually the entire text is paralleled in slightly different order in the *'Phrin las phun sum tshogs pa'i rgyud*. The next longest parallels are with the *Mya ngan las 'das pa'i rgyud chen po*, with which it shares 88 lines, and with the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, with which it shares almost as much, including its long sequence of mantras, and it also has shorter parallels with the *Dur khrod khu byug rol pa*. There might well be many further parallels within the large number of other NGB Phur pa texts that we have not yet read. It is still unclear how the textual sharing arose: did this text and these canonical scriptures share a common source, or did this text copy from early versions of these canonical scriptures? In the case of the corresponding text within the *'Phrin las phun sum tshogs pa'i rgyud*, it is impossible to form any judgement even in terms of probabilities, although with the other texts, variations in the ways the parallels are framed suggest it more likely a matter of shared sources rather than direct copying (see below, Ch.5 p.77).

The text describes a highly complex version of *phur pa* consecrations, along with the practice of *sgrol ba*, and unequivocally locates this within the mainstream soteriological concerns of *Mahāyoga*. The field of liberation is identified as Rudra, with the explanation that the Tathāgatas manifest their wrathful forms precisely to tame evildoers such as the one who cannot be tamed by peaceful means. The interlineal comments refer to classic *Mahāyoga* categories such as the Three Samādhis, and the true nature of the Phur pa heruka is identified with the totally pure primordial wisdom *dharmadhātu*. The practice described is complex and detailed, and contains many elements still current, such as lengthy consecration practices for the material *phur pa*, *mudrā*s, and the use of an effigy or *liṅga* to be stabbed in Phur pa subsidiary rituals (*smad las*). The rite is firmly focused on use of the material *phur pa* implement to achieve enlightenment through eradicating obstacles. The text is structured around a list of seven perfections, which we will discuss at length below (see Ch.5 p.74ff).

[10] In Tibetan sources, *rdo rje phur bu*, like *rdo rje phur pa*, is taken as the Sanskrit equivalent for the Phur pa deity, Vajrakīlaya (for instance, in the title of the *Myang 'das* (Cantwell and Mayer 2007: 124, all editions agree on Vajrakīlaya in the Sanskrit title and rDo rje phur bu in the Tibetan title). In the case of PT 349, we have an identification between the ritual implement and a heruka deity; it is not clear whether the title generally signified the deity's name in the early period when the Dunhuang manuscripts were written. The stabbing ritual in IOL Tib J 406 also uses the name, *rdo rje phur bu*, for the ritual implement, but not enough detail is given for us to know whether the implication was that the implement itself is to be visualised as the heruka deity.

IOL Tib J 754 Section 7

IOL Tib J 754 Section 7 deals with similar general topics to the above text, but very much more briefly. It begins by advising meditation on oneself as the deity (*mahāmudrā*), then that one should construct a ritual *kilaya*[11] as prescribed in the Kilaya tantras, namely, eight inches long, with a three-sided blade, knots, and a square base. It should be populated with the various tantric deities via invocation, and it is to be consecrated, using versions of the same mantras as found (with some small variants) in canonical sources and in the other Dunhuang texts: for the buddha body consecration, *ōm tshin dha tshin dha da ha da ha ha na ha na tib ta tsag kra hum phad* (oṃ chinda chinda daha daha hana hana dīptacakra hūṃ phaṭ); for the buddha speech consecration, *dhri ōm bhur bu ba* (?hrīḥ ?dhri oṃ bhūr bhuvaḥ); for the buddha mind consecration, *ōm badzra ra tsa hung* (oṃ vajra rāja hūṃ). Then it proceeds with identifying one's two hands as means and wisdom and holding the *kilaya* between them; followed by summoning the obstacles into the effigy and binding them there; then, rolling the *kilaya* between one's two hands embodying means and wisdom, one should, it says, "through the force of great compassion, think that primordial wisdom light rays arise and radiate out varied miniature emanations".[12] With this one recites the mantra, and strikes the effigy. It continues, "By the wrathful one's emanations, the bodies of the obstacles are pulverised as though [reduced] to dust. [Their] mind[s] are established in the essence of complete liberation. Think that [they] are transferred into the state where there is nothing whatsoever of self-nature [or] substance."[13] Afterwards, one can also perform a protective meditation on the vajra enclosure, suppressing great obstacles, with the mantra, *shi ri he ru kha ma ha badzra sa rba du shṭha pra bran tsa ka ha na ha na h[u]ṃ phat* (śrī heruka mahāvajra sarva duṣṭān prabhañjaka hana hana hūṃ phaṭ). Although only given in the briefest of outlines, this text describes a procedure and ethos very close to that of IOL Tib J 331.III, again with the ritual activities section suggestive of a *smad las* rite.

PT 349

PT 349 is also a short text, but damaged and missing some parts. Like IOL Tib J 754's Section 7, it is very poorly written and presented, resembling someone's personal notes from a teaching session. It begins with prose, and ends with what it calls 'verses of the *Phur bu* proclamation'. These verses, but not the preceding prose, are prominent in the *Guhyasamāja* commentarial literature, occurring in such texts as the *bsTan 'gyur* translations of the *Piṇḍikṛtasādhana*, and the *Piṇḍikṛtasādhanopāyikāvṛttiratnāvalī* attributed to Ratnākaraśānti. Sanskrit versions survive as well. (see below, Ch. 8 Appendix, p.162–163) Interestingly, versions also occur in at least two NGB scriptures: the *gZi ldan 'bar ba mtshams kyi rgyud* and the *Phur pa gsang chen rdo rje 'phreng ba'i rgyud*. Likewise, they occur in an early Sa skya pa *sādhana*, the *Phur pa'i las byang*, by Grags pa rgyal mtshan.

The preceding prose part of PT 349 might be more intermediate between practical magic and soteriology than the two previous texts we have looked at: we cannot be sure, since some of the text is missing. The two previous texts resemble the modern *smad las* practices of *Mahāyoga*, where the ritual attack is focused on the root causes of suffering, namely, ignorance, the three poisons and their derivatives, and the ethos is in terms of soteriological liberation. Yet the prose part of this text that survives merely advocates the clearing away of obstacles to facilitate spritual practice in a much more straightforward way. For instance (line 11–14), it speaks of the attainment of heavenly rebirth as a result of wielding the *phur bu* so that one achieves a state in which more advanced spiritual progress is possible. Likewise (line 15–17), it discusses the *phur bu* in terms of pacification of obstacles, the fulfilment of the patron's wishes, heavenly birth, and the two accumulations. This seems to imply a less direct form of soteriology than the two previous texts.

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[11] In this text, the word, *kilaya* is used both for the implement and for the Kīlaya tantras.

[12] thugs rje chen po 'I dbang las/ /ye shes kyI 'od zer byung ste/ /s[p]rul pa'I 'phro['(/l)]u sna tshogs su bsam/

[13] /khro bo 'i sprul pas lus bgeg kyi lus drul phran bzhin bshigs/ /sems rnam par thar pa'I mchog gI snying po la bgod/ /rang bzhin rngos po las ci[~~ng~~?] yang ma yin ba'I ngang du gyur par bsam/

In other respects, however, PT 349 is a brief description of the *Mahāyoga* rite of *sgrol ba* that is almost identical to the two texts above. It describes making, populating with deities, and consecrating the material *phur bu* in very similar way, and then striking while reciting the same mantra used in both of the above texts (see below, Ch. 8, p.159–161). It also describes the importance of generating bodhicitta and resting in the ultimate state when striking with the *phur bu*, and asserts that all the obstacles will be transferred to the Great Peace through being liberated. Nonetheless, it lacks the elaboration of culminating activities carried out within the protective cordon that is often a characteristic of the fully developed *smad las* rites. It is possible that this might simply have been lost from the end of the text, which is now destroyed abruptly after the mantra.

In short, PT 349's prose text might represent an earlier and slightly less sophisticated version of the rite of *sgrol ba*, before the complex *smad las* system had emerged. Alternatively, it might represent the same rite as interpreted by an individual with a less complete understanding; or it might only be that the text has lost its end part.

IOL Tib J 321

IOL Tib J 321 is the Dunhuang version of the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* with a lengthy commentary and its interlinear notes link the text to Padmasambhava. Note that a somewhat garbled and heavily truncated version of the commentary is also found in three editions of the *bsTan 'gyur*.[14] The root text is, we believe, a quite possibly Indian Buddhist tantric scripture, which, although excluded from the main part of the *bKa' 'gyur*, was included in the *rNying rgyud* sections of several *bKa' 'gyur* editions, as well as the NGB*'s* Eighteen Tantra section. It includes several very short chapters on *Phur bu* rituals, here devoted to the four enlightened activities (*las bzhi*). The commentary on these chapters has references to and citations from a *Karmamālā tantra*, a *Phur pa bcu gnyis* and its *uttaratantra*, a *Guhyatantra*, and a *rTse gcig 'dus pa*. The relation of these titles to their extant NGB namesakes however is not in all cases straightforward. The *phur pa* rites begin with the destructive activity, followed by subjugating, increasing, and pacifying, thus reversing the more usual order (see below, Ch.10, p.181). The descriptions of *phur pa*s follow classic tantric shape and colour symbolism for the *las bzhi*. The text of these sections is also infused with inner tantric interpretations: reference is made to the *samaya* of emptiness, the "primordial wisdom emptiness consecration", and pacifying through everything's natural qualities (see below, Ch.10, p.182–183).

PT 44

PT 44 is a famous text already studied by Bischoff and Hartman (1971), and its first historical section translated and discussed by Matthew Kapstein (2000: 158–9). It closely resembles later Phur pa *lo rgyus* texts, and in many ways works as a charter myth for Phur pa rituals as practised to this day. It narrates Padmasambhava and his disciples's fetching the Phur pa tantras, here called the *Phur bu'i 'bum sde*, from Nālandā to the *Asura* Cave in Pharping, and Padma's taming of the four *bse* goddesses, into protectors of the Phur bu cycle, a role they still have in modern ritual. Notable is the apparent identification of the Phur bu deity as Vajrakumāra, and the miraculous displays of control over the elements that Phur bu practice bestows on Padma and his followers; similar stories still circulate in Phur pa histories and commentarial texts. Persons in an early Tibetan Phur bu lineage are named, where they practised, and the signs they achieved: Ba bor Be ro tsa, Kha rtse Nya na si ga, Dre Tathagatha, 'Bu na A na, mChims Shag kya, sNa nam Zhang rDo rje gnyan, Byin Ye shes brtsegs, gNyan rNyi ba btsan ba dpal, lDe sman rGyal mtshan.

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[14] For example, missing most of the text between the middle of Chapter 6 and the end of Chapter 10; and between Chapters 13 and Chapter 17. The versions found in the Golden, Peking and sNar thang *bsTan 'gyur* editions are extremely similar to one another, sharing these same major omissions of text, and also many other shared errors. However, as we discuss below, they also fortunately preserve some text lost in the Dunhuang version.

The doctrinal material is fascinating, but too terse to analyse reliably. Regarding *yāna*s, it mentions *Mahāyoga* as well as *Atiyoga*, and even *Kriyāyoga*. It includes description of appropriate meditative visualisation of deities inhabiting the material *phur bu* and its practices seem to hint at *smad las* type practices of *sgrol ba* as described in the other Dunhuang *phur pa* texts, practised with the "*ki la ya*". However, the ritual description is preceded by discussion that might resemble what we would now call primary *stod las* practices, or direct approach to the ultimate nature via meditation on oneself as the Phur pa deity. These might have been intended as an approach practice to prepare for the rite.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, let us review what the Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus tells us.

- We can be certain from several examples that the various simple magical uses of *phur pa*s as found in numerous Buddhist texts, both Indian and Tibetan, were certainly present.
- We have direct evidence from several other sources that the more complex, typically *Mahāyoga* soteriological uses of *phur pa*s were also present.
- We know from the *Thabs zhags* commentary and from PT 44 that specific Phur pa tantric scriptures already existed, but we are not yet clear about their relation to extant NGB versions of the same name. For example, the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* is cited in the *Thabs zhags* commentary, yet it does not seem to be the famous *Phur pa bcu gnyis* included among the NGB's central Eighteen Tantra section; nor have we so far succeeded in identifying it as one of the other two *Phur pa bcu gnyis* texts in the NGB's Phur pa section.
- We know from IOL Tib J 331.III that substantial passages of Phur pa text are shared between Dunhuang manuscripts and canonical NGB Phur pa scriptures; and from PT 349 as well that such parallels extend also to *bsTan 'gyur Guhyasamāja* commentaries and to early rDo rje Phur pa *sādhana*s.
- We know that the material *phur pa* was both intellectually conceived and physically manufactured in fashions largely unchanged to this day.
- We know that complex *Mahāyoga phur pa* rites of *sgrol ba* were practised in ways seemingly little changed to this day; and that these rites seem to correspond to what modern rNying ma pas would classify under *smad las* rites.
- There is nothing of substance within the Dunhuang *phur pa* corpus that does not survive somewhere within the contemporary tradition.
- What is notably lacking in the Dunhuang record is any really substantial and absolutely unequivocal direct evidence for the *stod las* rites of approaching the absolute nature by meditating on oneself as the Phur pa deity in the form of one of the *bka' brgyad* herukas. Nowadays, this forms the main part of Phur pa practice, and it was already certainly in place in the early Sa skya rites by Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216), as well as in the Phur pa texts from the early *gter ston*s, the twelfth century Nyang ral and thirteenth century Guru Chos dbang. Yet we do have indirect hints that such practices already existed at Dunhuang. Firstly, there is PT 44's description of the fruits of *Mahāyoga* deity yoga, which are essentially the same as those taught today, and where the Phur pa deity is given the proper name Vajrakumāra, exactly the same name he has in the transmitted canonical Phur pa literature.[15] Secondly, IOL Tib J 331.III (4r.5) refers to oneself (ie. the practitioner) as, "the great lord" (*bdag nyid chen po*), which the commentarial notes gloss as, "the Great Glorious One" (*dpal chen po*). In this text, the Phur pa deity also has the epithets dPal chen heruka, still used today, and Vajra Heruka, also still current. However, his consort is at one point described as Krodhīśvarī, which is not as far as we currently know widely evidenced in the later literature, where his consorts are

[15] For instance, Grags pa rgyal mtshan (apparently representing the composition of his father, Sa chen Kun dga' snying po [1092–1158]) 176: 1v; 178: 6r; 180: 10r; Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer: 247v; and in the root tantras, such as the *Myang 'das* (Cantwell and Mayer 2007: 151, 216) and the *rDo rje khros pa* (Cantwell and Mayer, in 2007: 236, 243, 246, 252 etc.).

usually 'Khor lo rgyas 'debs ma and Ral gcig ma.[16] We do not in fact have any visualisation descriptions from Dunhuang of rDo rje Phur pa as a meditational deity per se, but in this connection, it is worth noting that the Dunhuang text IOL Tib J 306 describes in very great detail a three-headed, six-armed, four legged dPal chen Heruka with Krodhīśvarī as consort which is undoubtedly a deity of the *bka' brgyad* type.[17] Moreover, we find a similar description of a wrathful heruka in Chapter 12 of the *Thabs zhags* Commentary (IOL Tib J 321), although in this case, he has nine heads and eighteen arms, surrounded by a retinue of three-headed, six-armed wrathful ones. Hence, we can conclude that the *bka' brgyad* type of heruka of which Phur pa is a prime example, certainly is already witnessed in the Dunhuang materials, even though we are lacking any clear descriptions of the Phur pa heruka deity. What we can say is that two features seem typical of deity meditations described or alluded to in the surviving Dunhuang record of *phur pa* practices:

(1) Descriptions of the "Phur pa deity" which *are* given seem to correspond with the forms which became known as the *sras mchog* (Supreme Son) emanations in the Phur pa literature, that is, a deified ritual *phur pa*, in which the upper part has a wrathful deity form and the lower part consists of a triangular *phur pa* blade.

(2) While the sources do suggest that the destructive rituals described are integrated into a structure in which self-generation of a tantric deity may be required as a basis, we do not have certain evidence from the Dunhuang sources alone that this already involved the Phur pa heruka as we know it now and as it was in the writings of a hundred years later. Although PT 44 mentions Vajrakumāra as the deity who is accomplished, and IOL Tib J 331.III hints at a self-visualisation as dPal chen Heruka (an epithet of the Phur pa deity in later sources), neither text gives enough description to ascertain exactly what kind of deity was intended. It might even be that other deities may still have taken this role, such as Vajrapāṇi, who is mentioned in the case of IOL Tib J 406.[18]

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[16] Ekajaṭā/Ral gcig ma, who does still remain as one of his two consorts, is mentioned in the *Thabs zhags* Commentary's Chapter 20 in the context of the female deity visualised with Heruka on the ritual *phur pa*.

[17] This is a particularly striking example of a Dunhuang text on a heruka deity sharing much of the imagery which became important to the Phur pa heruka *yi dam* deity. Here, the deity has similarity in appearance, qualities, role and ethos to the Phur pa deity. While we have not included a full study in this book, it is worth quoting some of this text here: "...although this Great Glorious One is practised, no room for evil is displayed.... This Great Glorious One, with three heads and six arms, until saṃsāra and the three worlds are emptied, with the manner of great bodily strength [for taming?], activates benefits... This fabricated wrathfulness, is not genuinely wrathful, merely fabricated outer conduct.... although worn like outer armour, [he] is said inwardly not to move from bodhicitta." (/dpal chen po 'di bsgrub pa la yang/ /sdig myi shong bar bstan pa ni/ ... /dpal chen po 'di/ /dbu gsum dang/ /phyag drug du ldan ba' 'dis/ /'khor ba' dang/ /'khams gsum ma stongs kyi bar du/ /sku [brdul?] shugs chen po'i tshul gis don mdzad pa ni/... /khro bar bcos pa ni/ /yang dag par khros pa ni ma yin gi/ /phyi'i spyod pa bcos pa tsam mo/ /lung las kyang/ /khro bo dbal po grdug pa ni/ phyi'i khrab ltar ~~bca~~ bgos na yang/ /nang gi byang cub sems la g.yos pa myed ces 'byung ngo/ Recto folio 1, page 1–2). "The glory of liberating killing with a focus on beings, is to kill/liberate, with the focus, Mahādeva. The glory of one's own purpose spontaneously accomplished, is [that] the body of the Great Glorious One himself, is unblemished by any substance or even by any sign of the defilements... The Great Glorious One, with compassion and magical powers, activates the benefit of beings, [so their] perfected incomparable enlightenment is accomplished. This is called the glory of perfecting the benefit of others." (/gro ba dmyigs gis bsgral ba'i dpal ni/ /ma ha de ba dmyigs kyis bsgral ba/ lags so// //bdag don lhun gis grub pa'i dpal ni/ /dpal ched po nyid k[y]i sku la nyon mongs pa'i gdos pa' dang mtshan ma cis kyang myi gos pa' lags so// ... /dpal chen po 'dis/ /thugs rje dang/ /rdzu 'phrul la bstsogs pas/ /sems can don mdzad do 'tshal yang mthar bla na ma mchis pa'i byang cub du grub pa'i phyir ni/ /gzhan don mthar phyin pa'i dpal zhes bgyi 'o// Recto folio 1, page 9 – Verso folio 1, page 2). The same type of heruka deities are also described in the *Guhyagarbha* Tantra's Chapter 17 (NGB mTshams brag edition, Volume Wa: 208–9).

[18] As noted above (Ch. 1, note 29, p.8), in the context of a *sgrol ba* which seems not to be connected to a *phur pa* rite, the practitioner enters into a samādhi of the deity, Ṭakkirāja, at the moment of liberative killing (IOL Tib J 419: folio Rf.13v in the pagination system in Dalton and van Schaik 2005, and r26 in Dalton and van Schaik 2006). We can speculate that there may be some implication of a build-up of meditative practice in IOL Tib J 331, from the first Vajrasattva text (331.I) focused on self-generation, to the following Phur pa ritual (331.III). It is certainly not made explicit that the Vajrasattva meditation should form the basis for the Phur pa ritual, yet the two texts would seem to belong together (see below, Ch. 5, p.69–70). We need caution, however; we have no definite evidence that the two texts are anything other than separate texts which might have been included in a single collection. It is also possible that a similar structure is intended in the case of IOL Tib J 754's tantric texts, which

It is perfectly possible that elaborate meditations on the form of the Phur pa *yi dam* deity with which we are familiar from the tradition were already in circulation, but unfortunately not represented in the Dunhuang finds. But whether or not this was the case, at least it is clear that important threads from that tradition — notably, the imagery and associations of the ritual *phur pa* and its use in *sgrol ba* rites — were in place, and some passages of text which entered the scriptural corpus were integrated into notes and teachings on these topics.

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begin with a meditation on Avalokiteśvara and his maṇḍala, continue with the notes on the *phur pa* ritual, and conclude with comments on other rituals, notably, the practice and significance of the tantric feast (*tshogs*). However, in the case of IOL Tib J 754, the *phur pa* ritual section appears to constitute hastily written notes, possibly from oral teachings rather than from a copied text, while the other sections are, however, much more neatly written. Although it is tempting to attribute a deliberate structuring to the component parts of the scroll, as with suggesting a relationship between IOL Tib J 331.I and III, this is only a matter of speculation and not hard evidence.