

LADAKHI TRADITIONAL SONGS:  
A CULTURAL, MUSICAL, AND LITERARY STUDY

by  
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## **Ladakhi traditional songs: a cultural, musical, and literary study**

### **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the place of traditional songs in the Tibetan Buddhist culture of the former Himalayan kingdom of Ladakh. I look at how Buddhism and pre-Buddhist religion informed the texts and performance contexts of traditional songs, and how Ladakhi songs represent cultural self-images through associated musical, textual, and visual tropes. Many songs of the past, both from the old royal house and the rural Buddhist populations, reflect the socio-political structure of Ladakhi society. Some songs reflect a pan-Tibetan identity, connecting the former Namgyal dynasty to both the legendary King Gesar and Nyatri Tsangpo, the historical founder of the Tibetan Yarlung dynasty. Nevertheless, a distinct Ladakhi identity is consistently asserted. A number of songs contain texts that evoke a mandala or symbolic representation of the world according to Vajrayana Buddhist iconography, ritual and meditative visualization practices. These mandala descriptions depict the social order of the kingdom, descending from the heavens, to the Buddhist clergy, to the king and nobles, to the common folk.

As the region has become more integrated into modern India, Ladakhi music has moved into modern media space, being variously portrayed through scholarly works, concerts, mass media, and the internet. An examination of contemporary representations of “tradition” and ethnic identity in traditional music shows how Ladakhis from various walks of life view the music and song texts, both as producers and consumers.

Situated as it was on the caravan routes between India, Tibet, China, and Central Asia, Ladakhi culture developed distinctive hybrid characteristics, including in its musical styles. Analysis of the performance practices, musical structures, form, and textual content of songs clearly indicates a fusion of characteristics of Middle Eastern, Balti, Central Asian, and Tibetan

origin. Looking at songs associated with the Namgyal dynasty court, I have found them to be part of a continuum of Tibetan high literary culture, combined with complex instrumental music practices. As such, I make the argument that these genres should be considered to be art music.

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*Nāmo gurubhyah. Nāmo buddhaya. Nāmo dharmaya. Nāmo sanghaya.*

(I bow to the gurus. I bow to the Buddha. I bow to the Dharma. I bow to the Sangha.)

Without the guidance of my teachers, spiritual and secular, none of this would have happened. To Lama Lozang Jampal, Ph. D., I owe an inexpressible debt for first bringing me to Ladakh and setting me to work, and for his continued instruction and support over twenty-five years. I am grateful to my adviser Prof. Stephen Blum, for having the patience and wisdom to forge the impure metal of my research into a polished product. Thanks are also owed to Prof. Peter Manuel, with whom I have had much of my coursework, and who has been a constant source of encouragement and insightful feedback.

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## Table of Contents

<b>List of figures</b>	x
<b>List of Musical Examples</b>	xiii
<b>List of Tables</b>	xv
<b>Pronunciation guide</b>	xvi
<b>Introduction</b>	1
Linguistic Evolution and Identity	5
Prior Research	7
Early writings	8
Mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century ethnographers and musicologists	9
Late 20 <sup>th</sup> and early-21 <sup>st</sup> century writings	10
Chapter Outline	10
Dramatis Personae	13
<b>Chapter 1—A cultural and historical overview of Ladakh</b>	17
Origins of the Kingdom of Ladakh	18
Expansion and Conflict	21
Religion and Identity in Ladakh	31
Buddhist and Pre-Buddhist Heritage in Ladakhi Poetry and Music	34

<b>Chapter 2— Buddhism in Ladakhi traditional songs</b>	44
<i>Tendel Lu</i> –Songs of Auspicious Signs	48
<i>Zhung Lu</i> —Congregational Songs	51
<i>Bagston Lu</i> —Wedding Songs	63
<i>Chang lu</i> —Beer Songs	71
Conclusions	76
<b>Chapter 3-- Traditional Songs and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Ladakh</b>	79
Modern Grass-roots Consumption and Production	80
Preservation and Promotion of Ladakhi Language and Music	86
Broadcast Media	91
Ladakhi Views on My Work	93
The Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)	98
Performance Venues	99
Position of Traditional Songs in the Current Market	105
Representations of tradition	106
Video CDs and the Portrayal of Tradition	120
Conclusions	135

<b>Chapter 4-- Musical Characteristics of Traditional Ladakhi Song</b>	136
Song Rhythms	136
Rhythmic Taxonomy of Songs	148
Form in Traditional Song Genres	163
Melodic Characteristics of Ladakhi Songs	170
Scale patterns in Ladakhi song	171
Pitch range and melodic movement	176
Text Settings in Various Genres	179
Characteristics of Song Genres	184
Conclusions	186
<b>Chapter 5—Conclusions</b>	189
<b>Glossary</b>	193
<b>Appendix—Transcriptions, Transliterations, and Translations with Annotations</b>	196
<b>Bibliography</b>	408

### List of figures

Figure 1.1.	Map of Ladakh region	17
Figure 1.2.	Tibetan Empire ca 700 CE	19
Figure 1.2.	Leh Palace	25
Figure 1.3 .	Basgo Village with palace complex above	27
Figure 1.4.	Gesar	35
Figure 2.1.	Sand Mandala for 13-deity Yamantaka	46
Figure 2.2.	Guru Puja Merit Tree	47
Figure 2.3.	The matrix of royal power	53
Figure 2.4.	The rural matrix/mandala	76
Figure 3.1.	My singing <i>zhung lu</i> at library dedication	94
Figure 3.2.	My <i>surna</i> and <i>daman</i> accompanists	95
Figure 3.3.	Monks and laymen sing along with me in <i>Lhasa'i skor lam phramo</i>	95
Figure 3.4.	Audience reaction to my singing <i>Siki Angmo-le</i>	96
Figure 3.5.	Saboo school kids dancing as I sing <i>Siki Angmo-le</i>	97
Figure 3.6.	"Beat the <i>daman!</i> "—cartoon by an 11 year old Buddhist monk	102
Figure 3.7.	Morup Namgyal	107
Figure 3.8.	Morup Namgyal cassette: <i>Auspicious Folk Songs</i>	108
Figure 3.9.	Morup Namgyal cassette: <i>Folk Songs of Ladakh</i>	109
Figure 3.10.	Morup Namgyal CD: <i>Folk Songs of Ladakh</i>	109

Figure 3.11.	Ladakhis in traditional dress awaiting the Dalai Lama, Leh 200	110
Figure 3.12.	Morup Namgyal cassette: <i>Jaabro</i>	111
Figure 3.13.	Dorje Stakmo Jaabro CD	112
Figure 3.14.	Skurbuchen village singers- <i>Jaabro</i>	112
Figure 3.15.	Dorje Stakmo Folk Songs CD	113
Figure 3.16.	Dorje Stakmo CD	113
Figure 3.17.	Dorje Stakmo CD	114
Figure 3.18.	Wacher production -- Ladakh song collection	115
Figure 3.19.	Wacher production - <i>Leh Chen Spal Khar</i>	115
Figure 3.20.	AWA cassette of <i>Bagston lu</i>	116
Figure 3.21.	AWA production-- <i>Zhung-lu</i>	117
Figure 3.22.	LEDG - Songs from Ladakh	119
Figure 3.23.	LEDG – <i>Rtendel</i>	119
Figure 3.24.	LEDG – <i>Rtendel</i>	120
Figure 3.25.	Dorje Stakmo's first VCD album cover	121
Figure 3.26.	Image of Maitreya Buddha from Thiksey	121
Figure 3.27.	VCD title frame	122
Figure 3.28.	<i>Khar Mon</i> honoring Gesar with <i>Lha Nga</i>	123
Figure 3.29.	Yogi praising Gesar/Chenrezig	124
Figure 3.30.	Gesar the horseman	124
Figure 3.31.	Carving <i>Om mani padme hum</i>	125

Figure 3.32.	Magically manifesting a <i>khatag</i>	126
Figure 3.33.	Shooting the magic arrow	126
Figure 3.34.	Dedicating merit for all sentient beings	127
Figure 3.35.	Traditional Ladakhi dinner party	128
Figure 3.36.	Women sitting behind the stove	129
Figure 3.37.	The hostess in the traditional kitchen	129
Figure 3.38.	Mon playing for the party	130
Figure 3.39.	Thiksey Gompa	131
Figure 3.40.	Thiksey stupas	132
Figure 3.41.	Assembly hall with monks	132
Figure 3.42.	The first Thiksey Rinpoche	133
Figure 3.43.	The current Thiksey Rinpoche	133
Figure 3.44.	Dorje Stakmo's VCD	134

### List of Musical Examples

Example 4.1. Anacrusis leading to <i>rkang</i> in <i>rgyab ri brag dmar gyi tse mo</i>	138
Example 4.2. Anacrusis leading to <i>rkang</i> in <i>ri bo g.yang can</i>	139
Example 4.3. Anacrusis leading to <i>rkang</i> in <i>ti sei shel dkar mchod rten</i>	139
Example 4.4. Pitch plateau in symmetrical meter	140
Example 4.5. <i>daman</i> rhythm with ambiguous accents	140
Example 4.6. <i>ka ba rin po che</i> , as sung by Ali Mahmud	141
Example 4.7. <i>dgon pa gser gyi bya skyibs</i> as sung by Ali Mahmud	142
Example 4.8. 9-beat <i>daman</i> patterns	143
Example 4.9. rhythmic shift with tempo	143
Example 4.10. Balti instrumental piece for <i>surna</i> , <i>daman</i> , and <i>gring jang</i>	145
Example 4.11. <i>rten 'brel gsum pa</i> with <i>daf</i> rhythm	146
Example 4.12. Seven syllables for <i>daman</i> sounds	147
Example 4.13. Some common song rhythms	148
Example 4.14. Rhythm for <i>rten 'brel gsum pa</i> as played on <i>daf</i> by Chorol	150
Example 4.15. <i>rten 'brel lnga pa</i> A rhythm -- <i>daman</i> version	151
Example 4.16. rhythm of <i>rten 'brel lnga pa</i> A showing variations	151
Example 4.17. <i>rten 'brel lnga pa</i> sung by Chorol and Yangchen	152
Example 4.18. <i>daf</i> pattern for <i>rten 'brel lnga pa</i> B as played on <i>daf</i> by Chorol	154
Example 4.19. <i>rten 'brel lnga pa</i> B-- Chorol and Yangchen	154

Example 4.20. <i>daf</i> patterns for <i>rten 'brel lnga pa C</i> as played by Chorol	157
Example 4.21. other <i>daf</i> patterns for <i>rten 'brel lnga pa C</i> as played by Chorol	157
Example 4.22. <i>rten 'brel lnga pa C</i> —sung by Chorol and Yangchen	158
Example 4.23. <i>daf</i> patterns for <i>rten 'brel rdun pa</i> as played by Chorol	160
Example 4.24. <i>rten 'brel rdun pa</i> —sung by Chorol with <i>daf</i>	160
Example 4.25. <i>chang glu</i> rhythm as played by Chorol	161
Example 4.26. <i>bzo thabs</i> — sung by Chorol and Yangchen, Chorol on <i>daf</i>	162
Example 4.27. <i>Zhabs 'bro</i> melody with <i>daman</i> rhythms	163
Example 4.28. <i>Lha sa'i skor lam 'phra mo</i> --1st stanza	164
Example 4.29. <i>dgom pa gser gyi bya skib</i>	166
Example 4.30. <i>stod rgyad gar</i>	168
Example 4.31. <i>Ali Yato le</i> , first verse	170
Example 4.32. "tumbling quintal and quartal patterns"	172
Example 4.33. <i>bzo thabs</i> as sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam	174
Example 4.34. <i>nyi lza bang mo'i glu</i> as sung by Chorol and Yangchen	175
Example 4.35. <i>ri bo g.yang can</i> as sung by Ali Mahmud and Angchuk Ralam	176
Example 4.36. <i>shel ldan g.yu mtsho</i> as sung by Ali Mahmud and Angchuk Ralam	176
Example 4.36. <i>dgom pa gser gyi bya skibs</i> --A section	178
Example 4.37. <i>nyi lza bang mo</i> -A section	179
Example 4.38. <i>bsod nams mchog skyid</i>	179
Example 4.39. <i>sgo glu</i> (Door song) as sung by Stanzin Dadul	183

Example 4.40. comparison of two version of <i>ka ba rin po che</i>	184
Example 4.41. <i>tashis pa lu</i>	186
Example 4.42. <i>tashis pa lu</i> —ornate version by Morup Namgyal	186

### **List of Tables**

Table 4.1. Seven syllables for <i>daman</i> sounds	147
Table 4.2. Songs in the same <i>glu tshangs</i> as <i>rten 'brel gsum pa</i>	150
Table 4.3. Songs in the same <i>glu tshangs</i> as <i>rten 'brel lnga pa A</i>	153
Table 4.4. Songs in the same <i>lu tshangs</i> as <i>'brel lnga pa B</i>	156
Table 4.5. Songs in the same <i>lu tshangs</i> as <i>'brel lnga pa C</i>	159
Table 4.6. Songs in the <i>chang glu tshangs</i>	162

### Notes on the Orthography and Pronunciation of Ladakhi

In general I represent Ladakhi words in transliteration as they are pronounced. However, for initial introduction of important terms or for clarity's sake I will show a transliteration of the Tibetan/Ladakhi spelling in parentheses. Seeing no reason to reinvent the wheel, I have adapted the explanation of this system from Trewin 1995. Following usual Tibetological practice, Ladakhi words are transliterated according to standard Tibetan spellings, when that spelling is commonly used in Ladakhi. Otherwise, simpler, phonetic Ladakhi spellings are used. Some words that in common English usage will be written using that spelling (e.g. lama instead of “*bla ma*”). Ladakhi proper names will be represented in their phonetic form (e.g. Leh instead of “*gle*”). Some Tibetan/Ladakhi words have commonly known Sanskrit synonyms which are commonly used in English. These are used without diacritical marks (e.g. karma and mandala, as opposed to *las* and *dkyil 'khor*).

Ladakhi and Tibetan words are transliterated according to the standard system of Wylie (1959) with the exception that, as with the Tibetan script itself, no letters are capitalized. Following Tibetan orthographic practice, I represent each syllable as separate, as opposed to the other common practice of hyphenating lexical units. As shown in the following table, the Tibetan writing system comprises an alphabet of thirty consonants and four vowel signs. This alphabet also functions as a syllabary: most phonemes in Ladakhi occur as syllables that may be simply represented by basic letters plus vowels, with only a few being represented by certain combinations of letters in syllable-initial clusters.

Tibetan Letter	Transliteration	Phonemic/Phonetic Transcription	Pronunciation
<b><u>vowels</u></b>			
ཨ or འ	a or ‘	/ə/	[a~ə] initially/medially, as in “ago”; [a] finally, as in “bar”
ཨ ཨ ཨ	i	/i/	[i] as in “beet” (short)
	u	/u/	[u] as in “boot” (short)
	e	/e/	[ɛ] initially/medially, as in “bet”; [e] like Spanish “e”
ཨ	o	/o/	[ɔ] initially/medially, as in “hot”
			[o] finally, as in “boat”
<b><u>plosives</u></b>			
པ	p	/p/	[p] as in “pill”
ཕ	ph	/ph/	[ph] as in “uphill”
པ	b	/b/	[b] as in “bill”;
			[ɸ] fricative after /r/ or /l/
ཏ	t	/t/	[t] as in “stand”
ཐ	th	/th/	[th] as in “right-hand”
ཏ	d	/d/	[d] as in “damned”;
			[ɖ] fricative after /r/ or /l/
			[ɗ] retroflex [t] in some initial positions, as in Hindi <i>khāṭ</i> (‘cot’)
			[ɗh] retroflex [th] in some initial positions, as in Hindi <i>ṭhik</i> (‘OK’)
ཏ	k	/k/	[k] as in “scanned”
			[x] retracted in absolute final position
ཐ	kh	/kh/	[kh] as in “backhand”
ག	g	/g/	[g] as in “gander”
			[ɣ] fricative after /r/ or /l/

**affricatives**

ཅ་	c	/tʃ/	[tʃ]	as in “chill”
ཆ་	ch	/tʃh/	[tʃh]	as in “church-hill”
ཇ་	j	/dʒ/	[dʒ]	as in “Jill”
ཅ་	ts	/ts/	[ts]	as in “pizza”
ཆ་	tsh	/tsh/	[tsh]	as in “it’s hot”
ཇ་	dz	/dz/	[dz]	as in “adze”

**fricatives**

ས་	s	/s/	[s]	as in “seat”
ཤ་	sh	/ʃ/	[ʃ]	as in “sheet”
ཟ་	z	/z/	[z]	as in “zebra”
ཞ་	zh	/ʒ/	[ʒ]	as in “leisure”
ཧ་	h	/h/	[h]	as in “heat”

**trills**

ར་	r	/r/	[r]	as in “rat”
			[r̥]	voiceless in some initial positions before /ts/

**laterals**

ལ་	l	/l/	[l]	as in “lap”
			[l̥]	voiceless in some initial positions before /p/, /t/ or /d/
			[ɭ]	murmured [l] in some initial positions, like Welsh “ll”.

**nasals**

མ་	m	/m/	[m]	as in “map”
ན་	n	/n/	[n]	as in “nap”
ཉ་	ny	/nj/	[nj]	as in “new”
ང་	ng	/ŋ/	[ŋ]	as in “sing”

**semi vowels**

མ་	w	/w/	[w]	as in “ward”
ཡ་	y	/y/	[y]	as in “yard”

1. Unlike many Tibetan dialects, stress, duration and tone have no phonemic value in Ladakhi, and therefore have no bearing upon musical settings. However, free variation at phonemic and sub-phonemic levels, especially between voiceless/voiced and unaspirated/aspirated consonant pairs and between the vowels [a~e~o ~ə], seem to be especially prominent in song, compared to speech.
2. As in Tibetan, the prefixes, g, d, b, m and ` , are not usually pronounced, except in some cases where they follow an open syllable, e.g. the m in rna-mchog ('ear'). The special combinations involving d before b are pronounced as in Tibet, i.e. db as /w/, and dby as /y/; thus dbyang ('power') is pronounced [wan] and dbyangs ('tune') as [yanʂ]. Additionally, in Ladakh, dp has the value /sp/ or /ʂp/; e.g. dpyid [the season 'spring'] is pronounced [spit] or [ʂpit].
3. Unlike Tibetan, the head letters, r, s and l, that may surmount certain basic letters always affect Ladakhi pronunciation. In general, these consonant combinations have the expected sound values resulting from the combination of the component phonemic units, subject to the small phonetic changes given in the table; thus /r+/d/ =/rd/ [rd], as in rdung, the verbal stem meaning '(to) beat' (e.g. a drum), which is pronounced [rduŋ]. Exceptions to this general rule are:

r above k, m, n,ny and ng becomes /ʂ/ [ʂ], giving /ʂk/ [ʂk], /ʂm/ [ʂm], etc

s above b, d and g becomes /z/ [z], giving /zb/ [zb], etc.

l above ts becomes /r/, giving /rts/ [ɾts]

l above t becomes /ʂ/, giving /ʂk/ [ʂk]

l above b becomes /r/, giving /rb/ [rb]

l above k gives /ʈ/ [ʈ] Note that, in the absence of a prefix, the pronunciation of head letters may be preserved when following an open syllable; thus lha-rnga is pronounced [ʈarŋa] whereas rnga ('drum') is pronounced [ʂŋa].

4. In dialects of Upper Ladakh (including Leh), the subjoined y, has the same effect as in

Tibetan, thus:

y below m gives /njy/ [njy]

y below p gives /tʃ/ [tʃ]

y below ph gives /tʃh/ [tʃh]

y below b (except when prefixed by d, see note 2)

gives /dʒ/ [dʒ] The

Subjoined r or l, however, affects Ladakhi pronunciation somewhat differently:

r below k, t and p gives /ṭ/ [ṭ]

r below kh, th and ph gives /ṭh/ [ṭh]

r below g, d and b gives /ḍ/ [ḍ]

r below s, h and sh all gives /ʂ/ [ʂ]

r below m becomes /ʂ/, giving /ʂm/ [ʂm]

l below k, g, b, r and s gives /ʈ/ [ʈ]

N.B. l below z gives /lz/, not /d/ as in Tibetan

5. As a general rule, the pronunciation of final letters is preserved in Ladakhi. The letters b,g and d tend to become voiceless plosives (i.e. /p/, /k/ and /t/), especially when followed by an extra final (always s and always pronounced) (Trewin 1995: 17-21).

## **Introduction**

This dissertation is the culmination of a twenty-five year association with the Ladakhi lama Geshe Lozang Jamspal, an instructor at Columbia University, and a more recent acquaintance with Geshe Lobsang Tsetan, abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery. Lama Jamspal, or Gen-le (“Respected Teacher”) as I call him, has been a tireless advocate for the preservation of Classical Tibetan language and Ladakhi culture.

Ladakh is a high, arid land, whose people have traditionally survived on a combination of herding and subsistence agriculture. Even now, the fields are primarily fed by glacial runoff channeled by meticulously designed terrace farming and cooperative water management. Its sparse population is evenly divided between Buddhists (predominating in Leh District) and Shiite Muslims (the majority in Kargil District). Leh District’s land area of 45,110 sq. km. is home to only 117,000 people<sup>1</sup>, while Kargil District reports a population of 125,000 scattered over an area of 14,086 sq. km<sup>2</sup>. This population density of 2.31 people per square kilometer (approximately 6 people per square mile) is about the same as that of Mongolia, which is the fully sovereign nation with the lowest population density on earth.

Situated in the Karakorum Range and Ladakh Range of the Western Himalayas, Ladakh occupies the eastern half of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Together with Chinese Tibet on the East and Baltistan<sup>3</sup> to the North, it is part of a Tibetan

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<sup>1</sup> According to the official web site of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh District (<http://leh.nic.in/>), accessed 29-Sept-2012.

<sup>2</sup> According to the official web site of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil District (<http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm>), accessed 29-Sept-2012.

<sup>3</sup> Now part of the Northern Territories of Pakistan.

linguistic and cultural continuum. Political, economic, and cultural interchanges across the region have been close for centuries. The Ladakhi and Balti languages are both forms of Archaic Western Tibetan, with Balti being the more archaic of the two (Zeisler 2005). Both languages are significantly different from Modern Tibetan, with which there is little mutual intelligibility. Nevertheless, all groups recognize a common cultural heritage.<sup>4</sup>

. In this study, I examine the place of traditional songs in the Tibetan Buddhist culture of the former kingdom of Ladakh. How have Buddhism and pre-Buddhist religion informed the texts and performance contexts of traditional songs? With a mixed Buddhist and Muslim population, what are the relationships between the two communities in the formation of Ladakhi culture, especially music? How has Ladakh's place as a crossroads culture manifested in music hybridity? How are Ladakhis from various walks of life involved with expressions musical culture, both as producers and consumers, as the region becomes more integrated into modern India?

Ladakhi identity is multi-layered and in flux. How do Ladakhis view themselves, given Ladakh's 900-year history with its close and sometimes contentious relationship with Tibet, Kashmir, Baltistan, and Turkestan? How do Ladakhis view their place in modern India? An answer may be found, in part, in the large body of Ladakhi traditional

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<sup>4</sup> Modern Balti cultural activists have been making efforts to revive the use of the Tibetan *bod yig* script as part of asserting cultural solidarity with the larger Tibetan cultural sphere. A Balti acquaintance of mine named Mohammed Hasnain has even adopted the Tibetan name Senge Tsering as a political gesture.

songs, collectively known as either *zhung lu*<sup>5</sup> (traditional songs), or *yul lu* (songs of village, countryside, or nation).

I first travelled to Ladakh with Lama Jamspal in 1999, overland from New Delhi to Dharamsala (the headquarters of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama), and from there passing over Taglang-la, the second highest motorable pass in the world at 17,500 feet—oh did I suffer from altitude sickness! This was during the Indo-Pakistani conflict in the Kargil District of Ladakh, so we and other travelers were obliged to wait in a high-altitude meadow called sPang as Indian army convoys went through. I then was drafted into teaching English to the young boy-monks at Likir Monastery, where Jamspal himself was first a novice before traveling to Tibet in 1950. When asked by a nephew as to whether I needed special qualifications to teach, Jamspal said of me, “*Kong bongbu stonpa rangtak-i sgo la*” (He’s an unladen donkey at the water mill door, i.e., always ready for a load). This was to be a standing joke between us.

On visits to Leh during my first stint teaching in Likir Monastery, I initially heard *zhung lu* on All India Radio (AIR). I was fascinated by the asymmetrical rhythms and powerful instrumental timbres, and immediately bought audio cassettes by some of the big name performers: Morup Namgyal, Tseschu Lhamo, Tsering Stanzin, Ali Mahmud, Tsering Angchuk Kidar, and Tsering Angchuk Ralam. Lama Jamspal, noting my interest, introduced me to an historic collection of song texts, *Ladvags gyi yul glu* (Ladakhi Folk Songs, henceforth referred to as LYL), compiled by the noted scholar and cultural activist, Gen Tashi Rabgias.

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<sup>5</sup> The term *zhung lu* (*gzhung glu*) also means “congregational songs,” referring to a specific genre of songs originating at the old Namgyal dynasty court in Leh.

The first volume's texts were compiled by Gen Tashi Rabgias during the 1960s and published by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1970, with the count now at eighteen numbered volumes, plus two unnumbered volumes on marriage songs. The later volumes have been compiled and edited by various scholars, including Ngawang Tsering Shakspo and the Venerable Tsering Choesphel Hornak. Unfortunately (from a musical point of view), these collections only contain song texts, which are portrayed as presenting the literature of Ladakh. Actual song preservation has occurred elsewhere, through AIR, Doordarshan TV (DDTV), various NGOs, as well as a mixture of traditional and popular commercial recordings published over the past twenty years.

I had been a member of the Tibetan Classics Translators Guild of New York for a number of years, and so Lama Jamspal encouraged me to embark on a project to translate the one hundred twenty-eight songs in the book. I have combined these translations with information from my own field work during the summers of 1999-2001, 2009, 2011, and 2012.

The texts of LYL serve as the basis of this study, and have been a starting point of my discussions with scholars, performers, listeners, and cultural advocates. Through translations, transcriptions, and analyses, I look at how musical structure, performance practice, and song texts represented in LYL typify Ladakhi culture. I also investigate whether such mass media representations of traditional songs have been leading to canonization and/or folklorization of the repertoire. Focusing primarily on the repertoire of the Buddhist population, I examine these songs in traditional and modern contexts, and show how they are treated in current discourses on cultural identity. I will focus primarily on four genres:

- 1) Tendel lu (*rten 'brel glu*) - songs of auspicious signs
- 2) Zhung lu (*gzhung glu*) – congregational songs from the old royal court in Leh
- 3) Bagston lu (*bag ston glu*) - marriage songs
- 4) Chang lu (*chang glu*) - beer songs

As a student of Lama Jamspal, and having spent time in rural Ladakhi settings, I am keenly aware of the complex webs of interaction and causality that are represented in Tibetan/Ladakhi Buddhism—an ontological model that has resonance in the symbolic anthropology of Geertz and Turner. The Geertzian concept of “webs of significance” (Geertz 1973) is mirrored in the world view of traditional village society. There, natural and numinous beings are linked in a matrix reflecting the syncretic union of native Tibetan/Ladakhi religion and large tradition Vajrayana teachings, described in detail by anthropologist Martin Mills (2003).

### **Linguistic Evolution and Identity**

As mentioned, Ladakhi and Modern Central Tibetan are not mutually intelligible. By most linguistic standards, they would be regarded as separate languages. Noticeable differences between the two languages, for instance, may be found among verb forms and usages. Written Tibetan is said to have been formalized in the eighth century, but while spellings have remained unchanged, the spoken language has continued to evolve. The result is that old Buddhist and pre-Buddhist scriptures are written using the spelling and grammar of what is called Classical Tibetan or Classical Literary Tibetan. Ladakhi may be viewed as closer to Classical Tibetan, though with more of the letters being pronounced, and Balti even more so. In Ladakhi, for example, the word for “rice” can be

transliterated *'bras*, in which the apostrophe represents a neutral vowel. It has different pronunciations among the various Tibetic languages:

Modern Central Tibetan	de, dre
Ladakhi	dras, das
Balti	abras

Almost all literature pertaining to Ladakhi history is monastic in origin, and this has given a Tibetan and Buddhist orientation to the Ladakhi narrative. Most educated Ladakhis with whom I have made acquaintance view the Ladakhi language as most closely reflecting the original pronunciation of classical Tibetan. Indeed, as a student of Tibetan Buddhism, I am accustomed to chanting the Classical Tibetan texts with a Ladakhi pronunciation. My lama, Geshe Lozang Jamspal, maintains as one of his goals the preservation of the “Classical Tibetan language.”

Current linguistic research, however, indicates that archaic dialects such as Ladakhi and Amdo Tibetan are not direct descendants of Classical Tibetan but are instead sprouts of its progenitor that diverged prior to the emergence of Classical Tibetan as a written language. This would indicate that Tibetan settlement in the West predates the founding of the kingdom of Ladakh by King Nyima Gon in the middle of the Tenth Century, and that Tibetic-speaking pastoralists must have arrived some centuries earlier (Zeisler 2005).

From a linguistic point of view, it may be said that Ladakhi pronunciation of the liturgical language is close to Classical Tibetan, but it is not, strictly speaking, an exact replica. The liturgical and high culture vocabulary is informed by Tibetan monastic

usage that was brought in later, although this distinction is somewhat artificial given that the entire region is part of a larger religious and cultural continuum independent of linguistic and political borders. From a socio-linguistic point of view, the monastically informed language is an acrolect, as opposed to the village-level spoken basilect.

Until about forty years ago, Ladakhi was not commonly written, but was instead a spoken vernacular. An educated Buddhist Ladakhi of fifty years ago would have been tri-glossic, speaking Ladakhi, reading scripture in Classical Tibetan, and writing in an artificial mixture of modern Central Tibetan and Ladakhi known as Bhodi or Bhoti.

Over the past four decades, the efforts of scholars, social activists, and the mass media have successfully established a distinct identity for Ladakhi. Yet given its status as a minority tongue, Ladakhi has been classified as a “vulnerable” language in modern India (UNESCO 2003). Not only is business with non-Ladakhis conducted in Hindi or in English, but the same mass media that have strengthened the Ladakhi language in the modern world have also bombarded Ladakhis with content in Hindi and English. It is a balancing act whose outcome is hard to predict.

### **Prior Research**

To date there has not been a comprehensive study of Ladakhi folk music, comparable to Bartók and Kodály’s studies of Hungarian and Romanian folk music. In recent decades a number of collections have been published in Ladakh and Tibet of varying scope and emphasis: some focusing on the poetry of the song texts, some of songs with musical notation. Since the nineteenth century some Western ethnomusicologists or ethnographers have examined these folk musics, but again not in comprehensive studies.

Both Tibetan and Ladakhi culture face threats: the Tibetan from Chinese domination and cultural hegemony inside Tibet, and from Indian and Western influences in the Tibetan diaspora. Similarly, Ladakhi culture faces pressures from Hindi-language domination (and to a lesser extent English language) in government, business, and mass media as well as from economic and demographic changes as a result of the large Indian Army presence in Ladakh.

The following is an outline of the literature pertaining to Ladakhi folk music. It should be noted that there is considerable overlap with Tibetan music, especially in the realm of liturgical music, as well as in pre-Buddhist genres like the Gesar epic. As has been common in many studies of traditional musics in South and Central Asia, much emphasis has been placed on the literary content of songs (e.g. Tucci 1966, Rabgias 1970).

### **I. Early writings**

Travel in Tibet was difficult in the late nineteenth century, as the Tibetan authorities were hostile to outsiders. The independent kingdom of Ladakh had been conquered by the Dogra rulers of Jammu in 1842, subsequently becoming a British client, and thus more accessible. In both Tibet and Ladakh the terrain, altitude, and weather pose obstacles even to this day—the Leh to Srinagar highway is closed for almost half the year due to snow and landslides that accompany the spring thaw. During the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of British and European missionaries, explorers, and ethnographers traveled in Tibet and Ladakh, producing extensive works of ethnography, linguistics, and lexicography. Most give, at best, peripheral attention to folk music, except to mention it from a literary point of view

The work of Sarat Chandra Das (1849-1917), the Indian linguist, lexicographer, ethnographer, and explorer, is of monumental importance to Tibetologists even today. Traveling incognito in Tibet, he gathered geographic and ethnographic data to aid the British government in its struggles against Russian expansion in the region. His lasting achievement was his monumental Tibetan-English dictionary published in 1902, including all dialects, among them Ladakhi. He published a number of ethnographic studies, including a translation of one Tibetan folksong.

One of the more prodigious scholars of the era was A. H. Francke (1870-1930), a German Moravian missionary and ethnographer working for the British government in Ladakh. He published numerous books and articles on Ladakhi history and culture. These include some material on music, including ethnographies of music and musicians, looking not only at the majority *Bhoti* (Tibetan speaking) population, but at minorities like the Indo-Iranian Dards. Most of these writings contain song texts only, but according to Crossley-Holland, Francke did publish twenty-two transcriptions, twenty-one of which were included in Lavignac's 1922 *Encyclopédie de la Musique* (Crossley-Holland 1967: 173).

## **II. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographers and musicologists.**

Ter Ellingson has done extensive work in the Tibetan diaspora in Kathmandu and the United States starting in the mid-70s, although his focus has been primarily liturgical, looking at past and current practice in Tibetan Buddhist music (*rol mo*). A couple of his works bear on the study of Tibetan folk music. First is his study of shamanic practices as relating to Tibetan music (Ellingson 1974), second is a study of chant and melodic

categories that lays out a melodic taxonomy, again, primarily in Buddhist chant, but gives some terminology that is potentially useful in research and analysis of folk music as well (Ellingson 1979).

Ladakh, occupying as it does a sensitive area between India, Pakistan, and Chinese Tibet, was off limits to tourists following the Indo-Chinese conflict in the early 60s. Access was not opened up again until 1974. Soon after, two researchers produced recordings from the area. First was Mireille Helffer's *Ladakh: Musique de monastère et de village* (Le Chant du Monde LDX 74662), recorded in 1975, and released in 1978. Second was David Lewiston's 1977 Nonesuch Explorer label recording, *Ladakh: Songs and Dances from the Highlands of Western Tibet* (Nonesuch H-72075).

The notes for the Lewiston album were produced with Tashi Rabgias, who not only helped with the liner notes, but also composed a number of the neo-traditional songs on the album. For a number of years starting in 1970 he headed the project for the Ladakh Cultural Academy (a branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages) that produced LYL.

### **III. Late 20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> century writings**

Starting in the mid-80s, there has been a burgeoning of interest in Tibetan and Ladakhi music, both sacred and secular. The most notable scholarship on Ladakhi music to date has been done by British ethnomusicologist Arthur Mark Trewin. These works include his 1987 survey with Susan M. Stephens, *The Music Culture of Ladakh: Report of the City University Ladakh Expedition 1986*, his 1995 Ph.D. dissertation on the

ceremonial/processional music known as *lha nga* (drum of the gods), and articles on Ladakhi and Tibetan popular music..

### **Chapter Outline**

In Chapter One, I present an overview of Ladakhi culture: geography, religion, language, and history. Understanding the historical narrative is important, as it is reflected in the texts of a number of song genres. Starting with the geopolitics of the seventh century, I examine the evolution of the Ladakhi state from the remnants of the old Tibetan empire. Resistance to assaults by various Islamic powers in the area is a significant part of the narrative of songs and histories that portray the Buddhist Namgyal dynasty which ruled from the fourteenth century until the conquest of Ladakh by the Dogras of Jammu and Kashmir in 1842<sup>6</sup>. The subsequent incorporation into modern India, along with border conflicts with Pakistan and China, occupies the chapter discussion up to the present day. I also look at Ladakh's continued struggle for autonomy, and the ways in which it has dealt with intercommunal tensions between Buddhists and Muslims.

In chapter two I look at the role of Vajrayana Buddhism in Ladakhi musical culture. I analyze some of the common imagery and concepts and their place in various song genres. An understanding of the mandala in Buddhist and pre-Buddhist meditation and ritual practice is essential to comprehend one of the most important metaphors expressed in Ladakhi song. Many song texts are informed by Tantric Buddhist meditation and

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<sup>6</sup> The Namgyal dynasty claimed continuity going back to the old Tibetan royal house, so in a sense the narratives goes back to the founding of Ladakh in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.

visualization practices, describing the listeners and singers as occupying a physical, spiritual, and social hierarchy or mandala. Visualizations of this sort are notable in songs that praise various kings of the Namgyal Dynasty, who are portrayed as powerful, militant defenders of the Buddhist faith.

An examination of the role of songs and singers in Buddhist Ladakh will be linked to these discussions: what songs are performed by whom, and when. Some types of songs have traditionally been sung by specific people, either revered lay ritual specialists, or by one or the other of the low-caste musician groups, the Mon and the Beda. This social stratification has been an issue of contention since Indian independence, which brought about the outlawing of untouchability and other forms of caste discrimination. However an increased awareness of the dichotomy between Buddhist doctrine's rejection of caste on the one hand and social tradition on the other has done much to change musical practice in recent decades.

Chapter Three deals with cultural identity and tradition: how are they defined in Ladakh and how are they represented with regard to the performing arts. The Ladakhi economy has been expanding since the opening of Ladakh to tourism in the mid-70s, and today has a burgeoning entrepreneurial class. Mass media have been major vehicles for the propagation of Ladakhi music, both traditional and popular.

Despite the influence of Hindi language and Bollywood music in shaping language and musical choices, there was a growth in Ladakhi-language media production in the late 1990s and early 2000s: print, sound recordings, video, and motion pictures. How is "tradition" portrayed and marketed? How and why is "tradition" performed in contemporary Ladakh?

The future of Ladakhi language and traditional song is a cause for concern. Pressures from Hindi and English are strong, both from an economic point of view, and from the strong presence of talk, print and music media. This was highlighted in a 2003 UNESCO study on world language vitality that judged Ladakhi to be “vulnerable.” How Ladakhis in various walks of life deal with this issue is an ongoing process.

Chapter Four is an examination of various traditional song genres in which I analyze stylistic, melodic and rhythmic characteristics. I note how Ladakh, as a “crossroads” culture, has incorporated influences from the Muslim West--Baltistan, Kashmir, and Central Asia as well as India. A look at performance practice (vocal style, types of musical instruments played, etc.) further illustrates the hybridity of Ladakhi music.

A sizeable appendix offers detailed transcriptions, transliterations and translations of a selection of traditional songs spanning genres. The translations are annotated in detail to explain all cultural/historical references.

### **Dramatis Personae**

Following the footsteps of Richard K. Wolf (Wolf 2006: 35-37), I would like to introduce the main dramatis personae that I have dealt with in the course of my research.

### **Monks, Scholars, and Academics**

- Geshe Lozang Jamspal, PhD – Ladakhi Buddhist lama, Tibetan translator, instructor at Columbia University
- The monks of Likir Monastery, where I taught the young student monks English for three summers in the monastery school

- Gen (professor) Tashi Rabgias— scholar, writer, poet, singer, song-writer.
- Venerable Tsering Chospel Hornak—Buddhist monk, scholar, secretary of Likir Monastery, and editor at the Leh Ladakh branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Art, Culture and Language
- Ngawang Tsering Shakspo—scholar, and singer, former head of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Art, Culture and Language
- Rebecca Norman—volunteer coordinator for the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), linguist, lexicographer, educator
- Geshe Tsewang Dorje—Buddhist monk and scholar, director of the Ngaris Institute for Buddhist Dialectics in Saboo Village.

#### **Notable Recording Artists**

- Dorje Stakmo—well known singer, popular song writer, actor, playwright, music and film producer
- Morup Namgyal—the first famous singer/song writer in Ladakh, recipient of the Padma Shree award, former program head of All India Radio (AIR), Leh, playwright, and social activist
- Tsering Stanzin of Syurbuchan village who has performed extensively on the radio, and has participated in a number of commercial cassette recordings in the 1980s and 90s
- Stanzin Dadul, his student, who performs on AIR, Doordarshan, as well as performing in various public and private venues

- Kunzes Dolma, singer, daughter of the late, great singer Tseschu Lhamo, who was awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy award for folk music and was called the Lata Mangeshkar of Ladakh

### **AIR staff**

- The late Tsewang Rigzin—former program director of AIR
- Tsering Angchuk Ralam—music director, producer, composer, flutist, harmonium player
- Ali Mahmud of Spituk village--singer, daman and surna player
- Tsering Angchuk Kidar—singer, arranger, and harmonium player
- Yangchen Drolma Kidar—singer, daman and daf player
- Tsering Chorol Patsi—singer, player of harmonium, damnyan, and daman
- The late Gonchok Tsering—surna and daman player

### **Village Musicians**

- Tsewang Norbu, septuagenarian member of the old village headman household, house name *Tongs-pon*, in Basgo village. A nephew of Lama Lozang Jamspal, Tsewang-le (*le* is a respectful suffix), started out as a farmer and tailor, but studied traditional Tibetan medicine as an adult, becoming a doctor and apothecary. He has since opened a dispensary in Leh that is quite successful. He is known to be a knowledgeable singer who regularly sings on All India Radio, Leh.
- Tsering Sonam Lagachirpon, Basgo Village, 40ish pharmacist who works for the Leh District Public Works Department. He is actively involved in song

preservation, as well as preservation of historic monuments such as the old royal palace and Maitreya temple complex at Basgo village.

- Samstan Tashi Yondakpa—musician from Tia village
- Tashi Gyalpo Sralukpa —musician from Ngey village
- Stanzin Namgyal Zopa-- musician from Basgo village
- Sonam Wangdus, Zasnapa-- musician from Basgo village
- Tsewang Paldan Yokmapa-- musician from Wanda village

## Chapter 1 – a cultural and historical overview of Ladakh



Figure 1.1. Map of Ladakh region, based on [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/kashmir\\_region\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kashmir_region_2003.jpg) with district lines drawn by author.

To most people, even those with some familiarity with Tibetan culture, Ladakh is a complete unknown. Because the lyrics of so many Ladakhi song genres make reference to local history, religion, and geography, as well as interactions with both neighbors and trade routes, a survey of Ladakh's history, geography, economy, culture, and language is an essential prerequisite for understanding the songs. Ladakh was a significant regional power at various points in its history, and still plays a pivotal role in current geopolitics, as well as in the global luxury clothing market. Through this narrative we will see some of the complex relationships with India/Pakistan, Tibet, and Central Asia, and how they have manifested themselves in Ladakhi culture, including music. I owe much of this narrative to the insightful work of the British historian Janet Rizvi, whose 1998 book, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*, provided me with an overview when I first visited Ladakh in 1999.

### **Origins of the Kingdom of Ladakh**

Up until the closing of the borders with Pakistan and China in the late 1940s, Ladakh's position as a nexus of caravan trade between Kashmir, Turkestan, Tibet, China, and India gave it access to the luxuries that traversed its borders. Most notably, Ladakhi traders were and still are the middlemen in the pashmina trade, trading agricultural products for the raw goat's wool provided by the nomads on the Changthang plateau leading into Tibet, and selling it to the Kashmiris who weave it into shawls. And, as with many such crossroads areas, there were conflicts over the control of trade.

As early as the eighth century, the area was sandwiched between powerful, aggressive, and expansionist neighbors. As Rizvi observes:

To the west was the empire of Lalitaditya, the greatest of the Hindu kings of Kashmir; to the east Tibet, unified the previous century by its most powerful ruler, Sron-tsan-gam-po, and gradually extending its administration westwards, and to the north China, with its first occupation of central Asia. The texts are silent as to whether parts of Ladakh fell under Lalitaditya, though it seems not unlikely; but there is evidence of the ambitions of China and Tibet clashing in the upper Indus valley, and as far downriver as Gilgit. Eventually the tide turned in favor of Tibet, as China was forced by pressure from other quarters to withdraw from central Asia; and by the middle of the eighth century a loose Tibetan suzerainty seems to have been established which lasted probably up to the collapse of the central Tibetan monarchy in 842. (Rizvi 1998: 55-56)



Figure 1.2. Tibetan Empire ca 700 CE ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tibet\\_700ad.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tibet_700ad.jpg)).

Ethnically, the area was first settled by the Indo-Iranian Dards, who are described as far back as the fifth century BCE by Herodotus (Balfour 1885: 890). The Dards are known to have adopted Indian-style Buddhism from Kashmir. A slow influx of Tibetan nomads mixed with the Dardic population prior to the founding of the Tibetan Empire in the seventh century (Rizvi 1998, Zeisler 2005). The Tibetan epic of King Gesar of Ling probably became part of the oral culture of the area during this period; it is still chanted, sung, and told up to the present day. We have no way of knowing anything about performance practices, save to note that low-caste musicians such as the Mon and Beda are mentioned in historical writings going back to the fourteenth century (Francke 1905). Extensive studies by scholars such as Francke have noted the pre-Buddhist elements in the epic that date its origins to the early days of Tibetan kingship, sometime prior to the seventh century (Francke 1923).

After the assassination of the Tibetan king Langdarma in 842, the Tibetan empire collapsed into chaos. About 75 to 100 years after this, Langdarma's great-grandson Nyima Gon, accompanied by various Tibetan nobles, migrated westward, eventually setting up the western kingdoms of Ladakh, Guge, Zaskar, Spiti, and Kinnaur. Even at this time, we know about the influence of external elements from Ladakh's position as a trading nexus. The written records indicate that one of Prince Nyima Gon's four wives was Persian or Arab, and was referred to as *stag gzigs ma* (Tajik woman) (Petech 1997: 232). Such non-Tibetan influences, however, are at best only peripherally mentioned in the monastic histories such as the *Ladvags rgyal rabs* (Chronicles of the Kings of Ladakh) (Bray 2005a).

A period of Tibetanization occurred over the next two centuries, with the area remaining independent politically, but subordinate to Tibet in religion and religious culture (Rizvi 1998: 57-58). During this time the western Tibetan kings continued to spread Buddhism throughout their kingdoms. Given the chaos in Tibet, the main source of Buddhist learning at the time was Kashmir. Under Nyima Gon's grandson Yeshe Od, the great translator and teacher Rinchen Zangpo founded various monasteries throughout the area: in Kinnaur and Spiti, and in Ladakh at Tabo and Nyarma. Other monasteries, such as Alchi and Likir, date from this time but are only vaguely attributed to Rinchen.

Of less immediate—but more long-lasting—importance was the introduction of Vajrayana Buddhism by Atisha, the great Buddhist teacher from east India. Atisha founded the Kadampa monastic order, the precursor of the Gelugpa sect, and spent two years in Tholding, then the capital of Guge. There he won over everyone, including the aging Rinchen Zangpo (Rizvi 1998: 59-60).

### **Expansion and Conflict**

Indian and Kashmiri Buddhism soon waned under pressure from militant Hinduism and the destruction of monasteries and universities by Muslim invaders. As a result, Ladakhi Buddhism turned to Central Tibet for spiritual direction. At the same time, the western kingdoms of Kashmir and Baltistan fell to the forces of Islam. Even parts of western Ladakh (now Kargil District) converted to the new faith, although the region remained part of the kingdom. Central Ladakh, however, continued to be a bulwark against this tide, consolidating power, and incorporating most of the other small kingdoms into its expanding empire.

There is an interesting sidebar to this story. At some point during the poorly documented early thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries, the Ladakhi adventurer Gyalbu Rinchen (Prince Rinchen) became king of Kashmir. His Buddhism was acceptable to neither Muslim nor Hindu in Kashmir, and not being adoptable into any Hindu sect, he converted to Islam. The Indian and Kashmiri historical records refer to him as either Rainchan Shah or Rainchan Bhoti (Rinchen the Tibetan). Taking the name Sadr-uddin, he is praised by the Hindu chronicle of Kashmiri kings, the *Rajatarangini*, for bringing order to the political chaos in Kashmir. There is reason to believe his conversion may have been purely a matter of political expedience, since his apostasy is never mentioned in the Buddhist *Ladakhi Chronicles* (Rizvi 1998: 61-62).

It is also during this period that the various principalities of neighboring Baltistan converted to Islam, and made numerous raids into Ladakh, partly for profit, and partly in the attempt to convert the Buddhist Ladakhis. To some extent this latter effort succeeded—as mentioned, the areas around Kargil are to this day primarily Shiite Muslim—but the Buddhist kings put up stiff resistance. Religious differences notwithstanding, the areas have had close relations for centuries.

The early fifteenth century saw the introduction of the reform Gelugpa sect from Central Tibet into Ladakh. Under the patronage of King Trags Bum De, Gelugpa monasteries were founded, or existing monasteries converted to the new sect. The kingship was divided among two fraternal lines at this time; one centered at Leh and Shey; the other at Basgo and Tingmosgang. They were united three generations later (ca. 1479) under the Basgo king, Bhagan, who adopted a new name for the dynasty: Namgyal (i.e., “Victorious,” or “Complete Victory”) (Francke 1907: 82).

At this point the chronology again becomes hazy. It is known that a Central Asian adventurer, Mirza Haidar Daughlat, who was in the employ of Sultan Saïd Khan of Kashgar, invaded Ladakh in 1532, forcing some sort of accommodation with the Ladakhi king, whoever he may have been. Haidar used Ladakh as a base to invade Tibet in 1533. He was driven back by the bitter Tibetan winter, and pulled out by 1535. He had some sort of authority in Ladakh until his death in 1551 (Rizvi 1998: 64-65, Stein 1972: 83).

In the mid sixteenth century, the Namgyal dynasty embarked upon expansionist policies. These ambitions were brought up short in the late 1560s, when King Jamyang Namgyal was defeated and captured by Ali Mir of Baltistan. Jamyang was able to keep his throne, but was obliged to marry one of Ali's daughters, and disinherit all male heirs from his other wives. This was designed to convert the Ladakhi royal house to Islam, but in a well calculated theological coup, the court lamas announced that a prophecy had revealed the queen, Gyal Khatun, to be an incarnation of the goddess Tara. There is also the tale that, at the time she conceived, her father dreamed that a lion jumped out of a river and entered her body. The child that was born was named Sengge (Lion) Namgyal. Born ca. 1570, Sengge became Ladakh's most renowned king and defender of the Buddhist faith, reigning from 1616 to 1642. Despite the Buddhist efforts to co-opt the public discourse about the royal marriage, Gyal Khatun remained a practicing Muslim to the end of her life.

It is important to note that part of Gyal Khatun's entourage from Baltistan included a group of palace musicians, or *khar mon*, who played the *surna* (double reed)

and *daman* (kettledrum), traditional symbols of power and prestige introduced from the Muslim West. These and other Balti attendants settled in the village of Chushot outside of Leh, one of the main Shiite settlements in Leh District. It is significant that this Muslim-derived ensemble is considered to be emblematic of Buddhist Ladakhi society not only at the village level, but also in such high-prestige contexts as the old royal court, and in ceremonies throughout Ladakh honoring Buddhist oracles and dignitaries (Trewin 1995).

In spite of the Muslim family connection, Jamyang and Sengge were devout Buddhists, and did much to promote the religion in Ladakh. Jamyang invited the famous Tibetan lama Stag-tsan-ras-pa (Tib. the Tiger Nest Ascetic) to come to Ladakh, but it was not until Sengge's reign that he actually came. Under the tutelage of the Tiger Lama, the Lion King founded a number of important monasteries devoted to the Drukpa (Bhutanese) Kargyu sect, including Hanle and Hemis. Under Namgyal dynasty patronage, this sect came to rival the reform Gelugpa sect. We see Sengge portrayed as conqueror and defender of the faith in various traditional songs, which will be examined in later chapters.

Sengge's kingdom was a frontier state, functioning as a buffer between Buddhist Tibet and aggressive Muslim powers like Kashmir and Baltistan. This made it natural that his rule developed significant militarism associated with a strong central monarchy. This was in contrast with the theocratic feudalism, client/patron relationship that evolved between the Dalai Lamas and the Qosot Mongols, and then between the Dalai Lamas and Manchus.

Sengge Namgyal's aggressive military campaigns led to the conquest of the vassal kingdoms of Zaskar and Guge, and brought the Ladakhi Empire to its greatest extent. He was eventually defeated by the combined Kashmiri and Mughal armies in 1639, and was obliged to pay tribute to the Mughals' Kashmiri proxies. Though the tribute was never paid during Sengge's lifetime, the implication of vassal status was to have repercussions later on.

In a fit of pique, Sengge Namgyal cut off all trade with Kashmir, including the lucrative pashmina trade that was channeled from the Changthang plateau joining Ladakh and Tibet to the Kashmiri shawl weavers. Though intended to punish the Kashmiris, this embargo disrupted the commerce that was the lifeblood of the Ladakhi economy. And though this amounted to economic suicide, it was enforced by Sengge's successors for more than twenty years and marked the beginning of Ladakh's decline as a regional power (Rizvi 1998: 66-69).

**Figure 1.2. Leh Palace, built by King Sengge Namgyal (Photo Noe Dinnerstein 2009).**



During his lifetime, Sengge erected flamboyant displays of power and devotion, including temples and *mani walls*. His most ostentatious achievement was the royal palace in Leh, which is a miniature version of the Potala in

Lhasa. Its nine stories were home to the Namgyal Dynasty until the Dogra Conquest in 1842. Ladakhis say that this was conscious rivalry with the Dalai Lama; Rizvi suggests

that increased Central Asian trade, brought about by regional stability under Sengge's reign, prompted him to put up this showplace at what had become a major trading nexus (Rivzi 1998: 69).

Under Sengge's grandson, Delek Namgyal, the inconclusive nature of Ladakh's tributary relationship with both Kashmir and its Mughal overlord, the emperor Aurangzeb, became untenable. In 1663, Delek was pressured into renewing his grandfather's promise of tribute and loyalty: he agreed to build a mosque, have the *khutba*—the prayer for the secular authority—recited, and have coins struck in the name of the emperor. This promise went unfulfilled until partly enforced by a show of military strength from the Kashmir border. It is from this period—ca. 1666-67—that the erection of the first mosque in Leh is dated. The pledge to encourage Islam in Ladakh was never taken seriously, however, and the tribute was paid irregularly, if at all—though it is clear from their exchanges that Aurangzeb viewed the Ladakhi king as his vassal. It is also from this time that the devastating trade embargo with Kashmir was finally lifted (Rivzi 1998: 70-71).

After matters with the Mughals were settled—more or less—Delek Namgyal embarked on a series of military campaigns whose purpose was to reassert control over the principalities of Purig, Henis, Stagtse, Chigtan, and Kartse. Campaigns into Baltistan installed puppet rulers in three principalities. Flushed with success, but doubtless chafing under the yoke of Aurangzeb, Delek precipitated a confrontation with Tibet. Ladakhi records state that the confrontation was brought about by support for the Drukpa lama, who was both temporal and spiritual leader of far-off Bhutan—part of the Tibetan cultural area. Tibet attempted, unsuccessfully, to invade Bhutan, whereupon Delek sent a

provocative letter to the Fifth Dalai Lama. The “Great Fifth,” in response, sent an expedition, comprised mainly of Mongolian cavalry, in 1679 to engage the Ladakhis in Guge; inconclusive skirmishes ensued but no strategic gains were made. Finally, a large-scale invasion took place in 1681, initiating what is referred to by Ladakhis as the “Great Mongol War.” The Mongols and Tibetans laid siege to Basgo castle (Figure 1.4) for three years, yet they could neither conquer it nor be driven away. Finally Delek was obliged to call upon Kashmir for assistance.



**Figure 1.3. Basgo Village with palace complex above (Photo, Noe Dinnestein 2011).**

The Kashmiris succeeded in pushing the Tibetans back to the original Ladakhi border but in exchange for their help insisted on confirmation of Mughal suzerainty, including Delek’s conversion to Islam. Apparently, Delek went through the ceremony,

only to have it reversed. The Fifth Dalai Lama had died during the war, and given the Kashmiris' terms, the regent Sangye Gyatsho became deeply concerned about the safety of Buddhism in Ladakh. He asked the head of the Drukpa sect to help negotiate a treaty, and following the 1684 Treaty of Tingmosgang, Delek reconverted to Buddhism and Tibet and Ladakh agreed to give equal protection to both Drukpa and Gelugpa. Moreover, Ladakh had to surrender territories in Western Tibet (Shakspo 1999: 288), and was obliged to send a symbolic tribute to the Dalai Lama every three years (Rizvi 1998: 74).<sup>1</sup>

In the popular imagination, the Great Mongol War is cast in a heroic light. A number of songs from Basgo talk about the futility of the Mongolian siege. For example, the song “*Skyes pa'i pha yul*” (Fatherland of our birth), recorded by my colleague Dr. Stephen Dydo and me in Basgo in 2011, presents an interesting spin on events. The following is a translation of the text written down for us by Sonam Tsering Lagachirpon of Basgo.

Look to the right side of the fatherland of [our] birth.

Look to the right side of firm Basgo.

All the heroes are seated in a row to the right.

All the heroines are seated in a row to the left.

When the superior great man is seated on the golden throne,

When Sengge Namgyal is seated on the golden throne,

Behold with joy the superior great man,

Behold with joy Sengge Namgyal.

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<sup>1</sup> This *lobchak* (literally, “yearly homage”—although actually every three years) caravan also included a two-way exchange of goods. It continued up until Indian Independence in 1947.

The enemy surrounded the royal palace for three years.

The Mongolians surrounded Basgo's defenders for three years.

The encampment of unbreakable enemy warriors itself was subdued.

The encampment of unbreakable Mongolian warriors itself was subdued.

Then high above [were] the royal mother fields

Then high above [were] the lord's bare fields

In addition to celebrating the men and women who defended the citadel, a ruler is praised. This ruler is not Delek Namgyal, however, but Sengge Namgyal. The martial prowess of Sengge has been conflated with images of the Ladakhi struggle to survive, and the hapless Delek has disappeared from the narrative.

The next period of Ladakhi history, known as the Little Empire, was a time of shrinking power and territory, and is notable mainly for the number of Ladakhi kings who were mad, incompetent, or both.<sup>2</sup> The conquest of Ladakh in 1842 by the Dogras of Jammu under Maharajah Gulab Singh, a client of the British, brought the Little Empire to an end, and the exile of the Namgyal kings to a small palace in the village of Stok outside of Leh. Now incorporated into the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh suffered excessive taxation, exploitation, and diminished trade. There is little reference to this period in traditional songs, with the possible exception of a gentle satire directed at an Indian minister referred to as Pita (i.e., father) Jogi:

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<sup>2</sup> King Tsewang Namgyal II (ca 1720-1740), for example, was betrothed to a Zanskari princess, but impulsively fell in love and married a wandering Muslim Beda musician girl, Bibi Baikermo. She and her father had a contentious relationship with the court, which may have contributed to Tsewang's subsequent ruinous and erratic behavior. Finally the court nobility staged a palace coup to oust the queen and her father, and obliged the king to marry someone the court deemed more suitable (Francke 1907:123).

The sun rises in the east, the east, in the shadow it sets (2x)

The sun blocked by clouds, my good lord.

The sun blocked by clouds, Minister bi-Ta-dzo-gi.

On the top of Padum Castle [is] a gold rose flower. (2x)

A gold rose flower, my good lord.

A gold rose flower, Minister bi-Ta-dzo-gi.

Up in yon high sky [are] a couple of small peacocks. (2x)

It will not be a small peacock, my good lord.

It will not be a small peacock, Minister bi-Ta-dzo-gi.

Up in yon high lake [are] a couple of small golden-eyed fish.

It will not be a small golden-eyed fish, my good lord.

It will not be a small golden-eyed fish, Minister bi-Ta-dzo-gi.

(LYL: 66-67)

To date, none of my informants has been able to confirm the identity of this minister. It is nonetheless clear that, whoever he might have been, he was not attended by auspicious signs, given that the sun is “blocked by clouds.”

With Indian independence in 1947, the area became a battleground between India and Pakistan, with parts of Jammu and Kashmir such as Baltistan and parts of the Kashmir valley now in Pakistan, and the remainder in India. Further loss of territory occurred in 1963 when China seized part of the desolate Aksai Chin in a short border conflict. Given its strategic importance, Ladakh is now host to a huge Indian Army contingent, which has helped to transform the local economy, and thus the society as well. Land reform, civil rights legislation, public education, improved roads, and food subsidies have allowed oppressed segments of the population to leave the land and pursue

jobs in local public works, the military, etc. This has included the low-caste Mon musicians, contributing in part to loss of traditional repertoire. At the same time, the introduction of radio and television has in part promoted the preservation of Ladakhi language and culture, while at the same time subjecting it to pressures from Hindi-language mass media.

### **Religion and Identity in Ladakh**

The communal violence between Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim that has plagued the Indian sub-continent since before independence has not generally afflicted Ladakh to the same extent as the rest of India. Since the Dogra conquest of Ladakh, however, there has been a perception that Buddhist Ladakhis are oppressed by the Muslim majority of Jammu and Kashmir. As anthropologist Martijn van Beek notes:

The violent partition of the subcontinent on the basis of religious communities inscribed communalism onto the geographical body of the postcolonial state, while the constitution of the republic enshrined principles of secularism to exorcize the demon. More recently, the rise of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the demolition of the Babri Masjid of Ayodhya in December 1992 have triggered fierce debates about the place of religion in modern Indian politics. In Ladakh there is a widespread conviction that, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, the political system of India and particularly in [sic] the administration in Kashmir are fundamentally communalist. Consequently, communalist strategies have become an important element in Ladakhi political practice (van Beek 2000: 528).

Van Beek points out how Ladakhis—both Muslim and Buddhist—were initially unrepresented in the Jammu and Kashmir (J and K) government until the formation of a partially-elected assembly in the early 1930s, when representatives were appointed for the Ladakh area with two Buddhist seats for Leh, and one each for Muslim Kargil and Skardu in Baltistan. This action enshrined political divisions on the basis of religious affiliation (Ibid: 532).

At the same time the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) was formed in Ladakh with the aim of aiding the growth of the Buddhist community. YMBA members identified factors that they felt contributed to the backwardness and poverty of the Buddhist community: polyandry, primogeniture in property inheritance, lack of education, and various social evils, such as the drinking of *chang*, the barley beer that forms a staple of the Ladakhi diet. As a result of such advocacy, the J and K *Praja Sabha* (assembly) passed legislation abolishing polyandry in 1941, followed by a "Ladakh Succession to Property Act" passed in 1943, which banned primogeniture. After Independence and incorporation of J and K into India, reforms like abolition of excessive debt to landlords and land reform helped small landholders (Ibid: 533-535).

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Ladakhis, both Buddhist and Muslim, complained that the J and K state government was ignoring Ladakh and neglecting its financial needs. Since most Ladakhis were subsistence-level farmers, this complaint was mainly expressed by the urban populations of Leh and Kargil. Their agitation, which involved both religious and political leaders, resulted in the creation of plays and songs intended to educate the rural populace (Ibid: 537).

This was a time when traditional lifestyles were being transformed by the large Indian Army presence, increased public education, and government subsidies for various imported food staples such as rice and wheat. Youth were no longer interested in going back to the farms, but instead clamored for job opportunities. Their demands were a significant factor in pushing for separation from J and K.

At the same time, advocates such as Kushog Bakula Rinpoche pressed for classification of Ladakh's Buddhists as "backward classes," giving them protected status as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian Constitution and making them eligible for quotas in government jobs and education. Such advocacy created divisions between Buddhists and Muslims, as well as within the Buddhist community.

During the 1980s and 90s, anti-Muslim sentiment greatly increased, and was incited in particular by the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA). This was paralleled by the rise of Hindu nationalist parties such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the forming of Buddhist alliances with the latter. This culminated in the LBA organizing a social boycott of Muslims that lasted from 1989 to 1992. Nevertheless, the general sentiment in Leh District was not excessively hostile (Ibid: 541-542). As one acquaintance of mine noted, "Ladakhis remembered who they were."

As a result of the increase in violence in the Kashmir valley during the 1990s, Ladakh has become an attractive alternate mountain destination for tourists, both Indian and foreign. The dramatic increase in tourism has had a profound impact upon the local economy, most notably in the building boom throughout the region, but also in the explosion of cultural activity. Yet continued friction with the Kashmir state government

has increased agitation, especially in the Buddhist Leh sector, to have New Delhi take over direct rule of Ladakh as a Union Territory. Some people even talk about splitting the state up into Sunni Muslim Kashmir, Hindu Jammu, and Shiite and Buddhist Ladakh. This last option, were it to occur, would to some extent reverse the Kashmiri/Dogra conquest and restore Ladakhi autonomy within the Indian union.

Of interest to this study of Ladakhi music is the continued agitation of the LBA against *skugdragism*, or domination of society by the old elite, or *sku-drag*. Ladakhi society has traditionally been divided into hereditary classes (*rigs*), with *sku drags* consisting of royalty (*rgyal rigs*) and nobility (*rigs dan*). Most commoners were known as *mang rigs*; blacksmiths (*garra* or *gar ba*) and musicians (*mon* and *beda*) have traditionally been stigmatized socially. There have been efforts to fight this discrimination: His Holiness the Dalai Lama lectured against it during teachings in Ladakh, beating on a Mon drum, and sharing a meal with a blacksmith family (van Beek 2000:545, Trewin 1995, Rather 1993). However, discrimination still lingers in rural communities.

### **Buddhist and Pre-Buddhist Heritage in Ladakhi Poetry and Music**

The musical and literary output of Ladakh over the ages has been fragmentary. The best known works from the early period of Tibetan colonization are the various versions of the Gesar epic. The legendary king Gesar is a pre-Buddhist Tibetan archetype of the “heaven-sent king” (Hermanns 1965). Gesar is a supernatural / superhuman figure who single-handedly overcomes enemies—human or otherwise—through a mixture of martial prowess, great strength, magic, and cunning. As Buddhism incorporated pre-

Buddhist religion and lore, Gesar became an example of the *chos gyal*, or Dharma king, who both upholds and is upheld by religious virtue. This is a common concept in the various religious cultures of South and East Asia: Hindu, Buddhist and Bonpo<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 1.5).



Figure 1.4. Gesar (<http://www.ling-gesar.com/>).

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<sup>3</sup> The term Bon (the practitioners are called Bonpo) has a number of meanings. Archeologist and Bon scholar John Belleza (2005) describes Bon in upper Tibet as having various dimensions:

- Indigenous folk culture related to the physical and numinous environment of Upper Tibet.
- Doctrinal material derived from Vajrayana.
- gCod cult practices.
- Gling ge-sar bardic content.
- Phya-gshen elements specifically pertaining to dpyad (diagnosis), gto (beneficial rites) and the cult of dgra-lha (sgra-bla).

I will use the term to refer to these dimensions as they relate to pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices Ladakh.

For almost a thousand years, bards have spread this symbol of a greater Tibetan consciousness. The epic transcends religion in Ladakh, with Muslim storytellers known to be some of its most renowned exponents. We have records of texts and melodies dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, transcribed by Moravian missionaries such as Francke and Ribbach.

One of the rhetorical themes of the Gesar epic is a recitation of the hero's superhuman childhood conquests. An example is a song Francke calls "Kesar's Four Victories" (Francke 1902: 306).<sup>4</sup>

- 1) *When I, a boy, had reached my eighth year  
I subdued the three Anubandhas<sup>5</sup> of the East.  
The boy has been triumphing over all of them.*
- 2) *When I, a boy, had reached my twelfth year,  
I subdued all the great ministers of the hills.  
The boy has been triumphing over all of them.*
- 3) *When I, a boy, had reached my sixteenth year,  
I subdued the devil Khyabpa Lagring<sup>6</sup> and his men.  
The boy has been triumphing over all of them.*
- 4) *When I, a boy, had reached my eighteenth year,  
I subdued all the bad Yārkanḍis.<sup>7</sup>  
The boy has been triumphing over all of them*

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<sup>4</sup> Francke notes that these may be the fulfillment of four prophecies in what he calls the "Springtime Myth."

<sup>5</sup> "Division" or "regions" (Monier-Williams 1899:36).

<sup>6</sup> The chief demon of Bonpo, somewhat analogous to Satan (Tucci 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Francke further notes that instead of "Yārkanḍis," the word *Hor* may well be translated as "Mongolians."

Hermanns notes that this epic depicts a nomadic view of leadership based on personal charisma, rather than the kingship found in nation-states such as the Yarlung dynasties of Tibet (Hermanns 1965).

There is very little reference in Ladakhi traditional songs to the Yarlung Dynasty period in Tibetan history. Some of the few exceptions are references in court songs about King Sengge Namgyal (reigned 1616-42) which trace his lineage back to Nyatri Tsanpo, the semi-legendary founder of the Yarlung Dynasty. See, for instance, the song *Sonam mchog skyid* (Happiness, the Highest Merit) (LYL: 70):

*In King Nyatri Tsanpo's bloodline,*

*The leaves of the wish-fulfilling tree are in full bloom ...*

or the song *Shel ldan g.yu mtsho* (The crystalline turquoise ocean) (LYL: 76):

*The copper, white crystal,*

*House of complete victory [Namgyal]*

*Inside on the lion's throne [that of Senge (Lion) Namgyal]*

*Nyatri Tsangpo's lineage.*

These assertions of the royal lineage, however, should not be construed as an expression of nationalist sentiment at a grass-roots level. They were validations of royal authority cloaked in history and myth. The concept of Ladakhi “national” identity is, to a certain extent, a modern construct. As historian John Bray has observed of the Namgyal Dynasty period (c. 1470-1842):

Although Ladakh had developed its own cultural tradition, which was distinct from Tibet and other neighbouring regions, there was no unifying sense of Ladakhi ‘national’

identity. Ladakh farmers may have identified with their village, their valley or perhaps their monastery, but not with the region as a whole. Similarly, Buddhist monks and Muslim merchants also would have lacked a sense of Ladakhi identity not because they were too parochial, but because they were too international. The monks would have associated on equal terms with their counterparts in Tibet; Muslim merchants both traded and had relatives in Srinagar, Kashgar and indeed Lhasa (Bray 1991:118-119).

Writing about the pre-Buddhist and legendary period of Nyatri Tsanpo, R.A. Stein notes that Tibetan historians—especially those favoring Bon—described Tibet as having been “protected” (i.e., ruled) by Bonpos (priests), storytellers, and singers. There must have been some parallel functions among the Bonpos and the storytellers (*sgrung*), who passed on legends and other lore, and the singers (*lde'u*), who sang riddles and—probably—genealogies. For the latter, this body of lore constituted the “religion of men” (*mi chos*), and was distinct from the “religions of the gods” (*lha chos*) presided over by the Bonpos and Buddhist lamas. The few examples of *mi chos* that have come down to us—and are known as such—are wise sayings told by the old men of the clan. These are always couched in poetic language, using metaphors, clichés and proverbial sayings (Stein 1972: 191-92).

Similarly, there are many such sayings in Ladakh, which are often couched in metaphorical language. Some are along the lines of Aesop’s fables, or are similar to

proverbs with lengthy background stories behind the short pithy sayings. Some are based in Ladakhi history; some comment on the Ladakhi social order (Khan 1998).

Another remnant of pre-Buddhist culture in Ladakh is the use of mythical references in the wedding song repertoire (*bag-ston lu*), for example, in what Tashi Rabgias calls the Ceremonial Arrow Song:

See upon that snow mountain a great lion proudly posing.

See upon that great lion a vast turquoise mane.

See under the sutra the round turquoise lake.

See upon the turquoise lake a female fish floating.

See upon the female fish, the agile wing extended.

See upon the agile wing the beloved solid ice.

See upon the solid ice the beloved earth and stone.

See upon the earth and stone the beloved mother fields.

See upon the mother fields' ripe grain. (LYL: 14)

Other songs show an awareness of local gods of the household, fields, waters, etc. Various writers have noted that a part of the marriage ritual involves the bride saying goodbye to her home deities and the transfer of her allegiance to those of her husband (Ribbach 1985, Francke 1923, Mills 2003). This reflects the pre-Buddhist world view that situates people in a matrix of multiple realms: the human, the natural, and the supernatural. Throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere these Bonpo elements have joined seamlessly with Buddhism, fitting into the concept of the six classes of sentient beings: gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings.

According to the anthropologist Martin A. Mills, traditional Ladakhi people view themselves as being rooted in local space and place; that is, they are not just physically connected to the landscape, they are also chthonically bound to the natal earth, and are located in a complex matrix of relations between people and various spirits, such as household gods and protectors, *nāga*, and itinerant demons. These deities are associated with features of the local geography, and they regulate and influence local agricultural and social production, so birth in one area or another signifies a relation with the deity presiding over it. The land itself is imbued with a notion of personhood and agency. Rituals are performed according to an astrologically and agriculturally influenced calendar, as well as in response to births, deaths, spirit possession, and unintentional pollution of places or household objects. These all function to maintain and / or restore proper relations with local spirit numina [*jig rten pa*].

This matrix extends to groups of household estates associated with a *p'a-llza* (*pha.lha*), or household god, shared as the locus of ritual action by a group of two to ten estates called a *p'a spun* (*pha spun*) or “father's kin.” Within the *p'a-spun* group, one estate will have a main shrine dedicated to the *p'a-lha* located on the upper floors of its central house. This is composed of a vase (*bunt pa*) filled with grain and precious minerals. A central “life-wood” (*la slting, bla.shing*) and several ritual arrows placed pointing down into the vase are wrapped in a ceremonial scarf and juniper. The shrine receives daily offerings from the household head, and every King's new year (*lo sar, lo gsar*) the main heir of the household cleans the shrine, replaces the juniper and scarf, and brings new arrows from the main shrine rooms of each of the *p'a spun* estates (Mills 2000: 21).

Both Mills and Ribbach have described this complex of relationships in the extensive Ladakhi marriage rituals, in which the bride transfers her allegiance from her paternal household god (*pha lha*) to that of her husband. This transference is so complete that she is no longer allowed into the paternal shrine (Mills 2003, Tucci 1980, Ribbach 1985).

The local matrix is part of an extended traditional cosmology, consisting of the three levels of heaven, earth, and under the earth. Additionally, the earth is envisioned as four continents with either Mount Kailash (Tib. *Ti se*) in Tibet, or the mythical Mount Sumeru, in the center. The known world of India, Tibet, etc., is located in the Southern continent of Jambudvīpa (Tib. Dzambu Ling). In unknown, mythical regions in various directions are legendary realms of righteousness. These are the heavenly, blissful abodes of buddhas and / or bodhisattvas into which one may be born for a time. This concept also appears in Bon and Taoist mythology. Notable examples are:

- Shambala (whence comes “Shangri-la”) from the Kalachakra Tantra meditation
- Sukhavati, realm of the Buddha Amitabha
- Zangdok Palri (the Copper-colored Mountain) of the Guru Padmasambhava who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet
- Tushita (*dga' ldan*), connected with the coming Buddha Maitreya, and with Tshongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug-pa sect

The pure realms are all accessible through experiential meditation and trance, and through *sadhana*, visualizations that are described in various texts and oral teachings.

The concepts of tantric visualization pervade Ladakhi Buddhist song texts of many

genres, both at the court and village level. Many songs focus on a central figure, placing it in what can be characterized as either a mandala (*'khyil 'khor*--symbolic visualizations of a pure land) or a field of merit (*tshogs zhing*) in which buddhas, bodhisattvas and / or gurus are surrounded by their worshipers, disciples, and / or attendants.

Visualizations such as these derive from the threads of Bon and Buddhism combined in the Tantric traditions, which involved a combination of deep analytic philosophy, ritual, and various visualization meditations. According to Giuseppe Tucci:

The Tantra offered countless different paths, emphasizing variously gnostic, liturgy, or yoga. These paths are expressed through symbologies and rituals differing from one Tantric cycle to another. The single basic form of the meditation is subject to infinite variation in detail. In it, the individual deities, represented through their symbols, are brought into existence, that is made visible to the mystic, either externally, in an objectification in front of him, or within his own body. These divine forms are evoked not only for the attainment of salvation, but also for liturgical or magical reasons. Four, or sometimes five, magical actions (Skt. *Karma*) are distinguished, usually *zhi* (calming offended deities), *rgyas* (increasing wealth), *dbang* (driving out hostile powers) and *drag* (acquiring the power of inspiring terror). Each deity is described in a prescribed text (*sgrub thabs*, Skt. *Sadhana*) which gives its form and attributes, and thus enables the mediator to evoke it and cause it to merge with him. Its 'essential voidness' must be recognized following the evocation, since nothing exists apart from pure radiant mind. Mind is without any form, though all forms emerge from it in their apparent manifestations. Here we are in the realm of a freedom of mystical experience on which no limits can be imposed. Out of it new formulae of meditation and invocation constantly arose and proliferated; for each mediator left his state of ecstasy in the certainty that he had been granted

the revelation of a unique divine manifestation. The methods of evocations (*sgrub thabs*, Skt. *Sadhana* ) used to create the state of ecstasy flourished in Tibet on the fertile soil of the ascetics' aptitudes to visions (Tucci 1980: 32-33).

In subsequent chapters I examine these texts and show how Buddhist imagery permeated both court and village.

## **Chapter 2 – Buddhism in Ladakhi traditional songs**

The genres examined in this chapter exhibit varying emphasis on Bonpo or Buddhist elements, with the two often inextricably intertwined, keeping with the syncretic nature of Vajrayana Buddhism, which has incorporated or co-opted native Tibetan/Ladakhi elements into its complex meditative visualization practices. The religious content in these songs reflects various facets of traditional Ladakhi society, and we can see how Buddhist practice, imagery, and philosophy were integrated into various sectors of that society. From the Namgyal court down to the village level we can see contradictions between orthodox Buddhist ideals and the realities of lay life—great tradition religion versus small tradition.

Much of the variability in the relationship of Bonpo and Buddhist elements relates to the function of the songs, and whether they originate in the royal court or in the villages, and to what extent the songs show monastic influence. We see representations of kingship characterized by militarism (a very non-Buddhist attribute), equating the king with the pre-Buddhist Gesar figure to enhance the personal charisma of the ruler. In the case of the Namgyal dynasty, the depictions of the rulers as defenders of the faith are intertwined with representations of kingship inherited from the pre-Buddhist Tibetan traditions, including the Gesar epic. The monastic influence is noted in the detailed references to Vajrayana meditation visualization practices

I also examine the depictions of contradictions between the realities of lay life versus Buddhist monastic ideals. As noted above, the militarism necessary to maintain Ladakhi independence was balanced against the Buddhist doctrines on doing no harm to other sentient beings. Another contradiction involves the consumption of *chang* (beer), or more specifically intoxication, which is prohibited for Buddhists, especially monastics, but is an integral part of lay life, and is celebrated in various song genres.

Before examining individual genres, I wish to present a brief introduction to Tibetan/Ladakhi Buddhist practices that inform the texts of these songs.

Tantric/Vajrayana Buddhist practice is based on what is called the Three Mysteries: *mudrā*, *mantra*, and *maṇḍala*. *Mudrā* is a symbolic or ritual hand gesture, or body posture. *Mantra* is a sound, syllable, word, or group of words used to invoke mental transformations or invoke mental imagery (the word has been taken into English and will henceforth be used without italics). *Maṇḍala* (taken into English without diacritical marks) is both a generic term for any plan, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically, and specifically a circle, inside of which is a square with four gates representing a temple or palace of a deity figure. An example is the sand mandala shown in Figure 2.1, in which the central blue box represents *Yamantaka*, a wrathful protector, which in turn is surrounded by representations of twelve attendants.



Figure 2.1. Sand Mandala for 13-deity Yamantaka, Likir Monastery 2001

The other commonly used configuration is called either a merit field or a refuge tree. A merit field (Tib. *tsogs shing*) is a representation in tree form of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and the *lama*, along with that teaching's lineage holders (Skt. *Vidyadhara*, Tib. *rig 'dzin*), such as *lamas* and disciples, and Dharma protectors (Skt. *Dharmapāla*, Tib. *chos kyong*), which are supernatural beings that possess great spiritual power. This arrangement shows the interconnectedness of the various groups depicted, and is symbolic of the totality of the idealized universe. Both mandalas and merit fields are Pure Lands or blessed abodes presided over by the central figure. Figure 2.2 is a refuge tree centering on the founder of the Gelugpa sect, Lobzang Dragpa, known as Je Tsongkhapa, situated in the blessed realm known as Tushita,

which is the abode of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Manjushri, of whom Tsongkhapa is said to be an emanation.



Figure 2.2. Guru Puja Merit Tree (<http://hayagriva.org.au>)

The imagery and rhetoric describing both mandala and merit field carry over into representations of secular rulers, conflating the spiritual with the temporal. Rural representations of the world order are similarly informed by these monastic conventions, as all levels of Ladakhi lay society have long been engaged in various forms of ceremonial and/or honorific activities, which are reflected in the texts of the various song genres we now examine; They represent four genres that reflect the variety of religious themes in their lyrics:

- 1) Tendel lu (*rten 'brel glu*) - songs of auspicious signs from the village repertoire
- 2) Zhung lu (*gzhung glu*) – congregational songs from the old royal court
- 3) Bagston lu (*bag ston glu*) - marriage songs
- 4) Chang lu (*chang glu*) - beer songs

### **Tendel Lu—Songs of Auspicious Signs**

The songs known as *stendel lu* or *tendel lu* (*rten 'brel glu*) originate at the village level, and are sung in groups, male and female, according to AIR staff artist Tsering Chorol, and are danced to during festivities that mark any auspicious occasions: weddings, child births, the Losar new year, etc. (p.c. 7/31/2012). These are often women’s circle dances, with the slow footwork and subtle repetitive hand gestures typical of female dances. The right hand is held out in front at face height, palm forward, then closed as if picking a flower, then turned towards the dancer, and opened palm up offering the flower to the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha).

The texts specifically lay out a hierarchy starting in the heavens, and extending down to the level of the common household and then to dancers in a dance courtyard. The word *tendel* has two meanings. The more common is “good circumstance”; the other a more philosophical

one, often translated as “transformation”<sup>1</sup>. However, the lyrics of the samples collected by Tashi Rabgias himself in LYL do not directly support the more complex philosophical meaning. Instead, they more directly point at *rten 'brel*, meaning good signs or auspicious circumstances. Let us look at an example, referred to by Tashi Rabgias as “The Five Auspicious Signs” (*rten 'brel lnga pa*).

In yonder blue sky there are ever so many constellations (2x)

Now we can be proud of both the sun and moon

Now yon sun and moon both shine.

Let us be mindful of the joyous first auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless first, the first auspicious omen.

There are many people in that square dharma debate court (2x)

We can be proud of those lamas that guide us

Now those lamas that guide us shine.

Let us be mindful of the joyous second, the second auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless second, the second auspicious omen.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Tashi Rabgias the word refers to the twelve stages of cognition (*rten 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis*) as relating to dependent origination (Skt. *Pratītyasamutpāda*, Tib. *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*), the causal relations between the psychophysical phenomena that sustain *dukkha* (dissatisfaction) in worldly experience (p.c. 7/25/2009).

In that high palace there are many high and low officials (2x)

We can be proud, of that great lord

Now that great man shines.

And let us be mindful of the joyous third, the third auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless third, the third auspicious omen.

In yon noble house's four corners there are kin near by (2x)

We can be proud of our fathers and mothers

Right now our fathers and mothers shine.

And let us be mindful of the joyous fourth, the fourth auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless fourth, the fourth auspicious omen.

There are many people there in that square dance courtyard (2x)

Right now we can be proud of that great lord

Right now that great lord shines.

Let us be mindful of the joyous fifth, the fifth auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless fifth, the fifth auspicious omen.

(LYL: 4-6)

In this five-fold hierarchy we have the heavens, sacred authority, secular authority, parental authority, and the actual dancers themselves who actively praise the king. Thus the king is placed in the center of this “field of merit” or mandala. However, there is little in the lyrics to indicate the deeper philosophical meaning of *tendel*. When queried about this discrepancy, Lama Jamspal noted the difference between “gross vs. subtle”

views, with the more common definition of *tendel* being “cause”, “coming together”, or “circumstance” (Jamspal, p.c. 29/10/2010). He did agree that the constant, close contact between monastery and village would produce a gradient of meanings. He notes that each verse identifies factors that come together to produce auspicious circumstances, illustrating the transformation of the different realms of human experience.

On a more generalized level, the term *tendel lu* is used in current parlance to refer to any traditional song that is associated with good fortune. Native typology varies, with Ladakhi scholars often disagreeing as to how a song is best categorized. Thus current commercial recordings of *tendel lu* will have both the Ladakhi label, and English translations as either “Auspicious folk songs” or “Songs of Transformation.” These variations reflect the polarity of village versus erudite meanings. In conversation with Tashi Rabgias, he noted that the type of text that he characterizes as *tendel lu* is unique to Ladakh. He has looked at repertoires in Tibet and Bhutan without finding anything comparable (p.c. 7/25/2009).

### **Zhung lu—Congregational Songs**

The *zhung lu* (*gzhung glu*) or congregational songs were composed in honor of the kings, famous lamas and other distinguished people, or in praise of *gonpas* and places of social or religious significance (Shakspo 2008: 32). Trewin notes how *zhung lu* are part of a long tradition going back to early pre-Buddhist Tibet, with various songs recorded on old documents described as resolving tensions by praising the good deeds of others. Of the Ladakhi genres classified as *zhung lu*, some are praise songs, some are

*chos-glu* (dharma songs) intended as dedications to lamas, along with various genres to honor the kings. There exists a particular class of praise songs, sung in honor of the king, *gying lu* ('*gying glu*), which draw upon the poetic imagery of the Gesar Epic, and place the king at the centre of the world order (Trewin 1995:95). However, the Gesar imagery is not restricted to *gying lu* but is used in *zhung lu* as well.

Ladakhi scholar Ngawang Tsering Shakspo writes that *zhung lu* were originally performed in the royal palace on the *Losar* New Year's day.

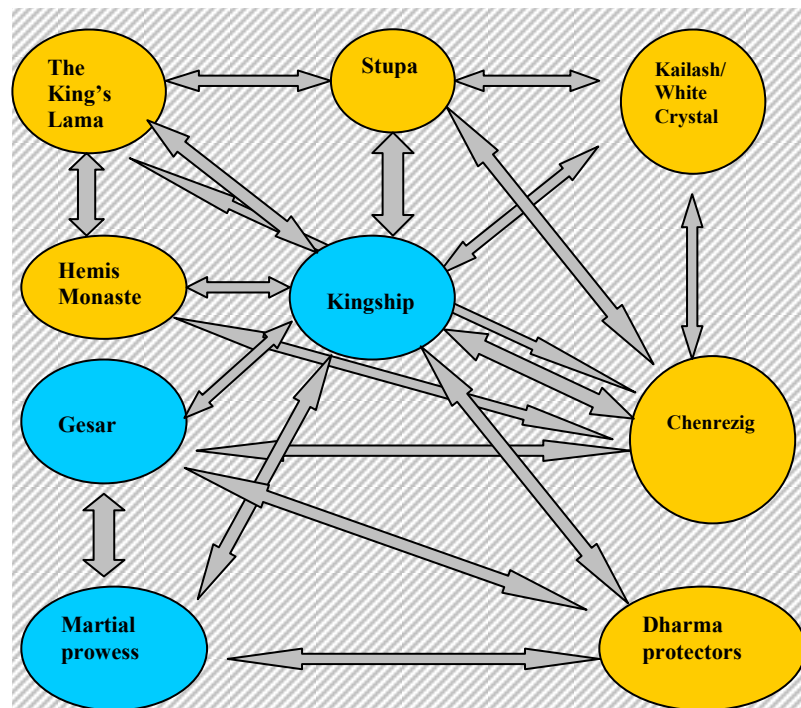
On New Year's day all the participants, including the local gentry, ministers, and all their relatives, would come to the palace in Leh bearing *kha-btags* (white silk scarves) as a mark of respect for the king.

Later in the day they would all proceed to the *thekchen* (the ceremonial dancing ground). Here a balcony was provided for the king and all his important guests. The rest of the audience would be seated around the dancing ground in a hierarchy that depended on social status. The *kharmon*, the palace musicians, would begin playing the music. Both the musicians and the dancers would sing the *gzhung-glu*. On this occasion the dances would be performed by a number of specially selected women dancers called *takshosma*. They came from families who were traditionally obliged by royal decree to provide a dancer for such occasions. This seems to have been as much a right as duty since other people required their consent if they wanted to participate in the dancing. These dances lasted for hours since every stanza of the song was followed by long periods of only music (Shakspo 2008: 34-35).

Since the overthrow of the Namgyal Dynasty and its being relegated to a small palace in the village of Stok, this tradition has been discontinued. However, the *zhung lu* are still performed by common people during *Losar*.

A number of themes in *zhung lu* reflect various aspects of the Buddhist world view. These include representations of Ladakhi kingship, representations of Buddhist meditational and devotional practice, and Ladakhi patriotism. The Ladakhi kings are portrayed in *zhung lu* as protectors of the faith, often identified as either Buddhist protectors or semi-divine saviors (Skt. *bodhisattva*, Tib. *byang chug sems dpa*). Initially a pre-Buddhist warrior hero, the Gesar figure was co-opted by the Buddhist lamas and transformed into an emanation of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara (Tib. *spyan ras gzigs* [pronounced Chenrezig]). Avalokiteśvara in turn is an emanation of the compassionate Buddha Amitabha who rules over the blessed realm of Sukhavati. This rhetoric is notable in songs dedicated to King Sengge Namgyal.

What we witness in these songs is a complex set of meanings, with overlapping and interweaving symbols of spiritual and temporal power (figure 2.3).



**Figure 2.3. The matrix of royal power**

In the following song, “The Highest Happiness, Merit”, the Gesar episode of the four conquests has been adapted to apply to Sengge Namgyal. The fanciful list

of youthful conquests is interpolated with appeals to the king as Chenrezig and protector of the Dharma.

**bsod nams mchog skyid (The Highest Happiness, Merit)**

To the first excellent happiness of merit,

Sing a song of auspiciousness.

To the excellent happiness of increasing merit,

Sing a song of luck.

The three, sun, lama and parents,

How can I repay their kindness?

To the meaning of parents, mother and father say a hundred thousand *mani*.<sup>2</sup>

In both present and future.

Say the six-syllable mantra.

In King Nyatri Tsanpo's<sup>3</sup> bloodline,

The leaves of the wish-fulfilling tree<sup>4</sup> are in full bloom. (2x)

When the leaves are finally said to be thriving,

[It will be] more than cheerless.

When the leaves are finally said to be thriving,

[It will be] more than lack of trembling.

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<sup>2</sup> The six-syllable mantra of Chenrezig, *Om mani padme hum*.

<sup>3</sup> The semi-legendary founder of the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty from which the Namgyal Dynasty claimed descent.

<sup>4</sup> In Hindu and Buddhist mythology, the banyan tree, also called *Kalpavriksha* (Tib. *dpag bsam*), represents eternal life because of its seemingly ever-expanding branches.

When I was a boy of twelve years,  
I seized the throne of Guge.

When I was a lord of twelve years,  
I seized the throne of Guge.

Then looking with compassion from a distance,  
Oh incarnation of Chenrezig think of me.

Then looking with compassion from a distance,  
Oh lineage of Amitabha think of me.

When I was a boy of twelve years,  
I seized the throne of Skardo<sup>5</sup>.

When I was a lord of twelve years,  
I seized the throne of Skardo.

Then looking with compassion from a distance,  
Oh incarnation of Chenrezig think of me.

Then looking with compassion from a distance,  
Oh lineage of Amitabha think of me.

What we see is a double legitimization of the king's authority: from the secular side by descent from the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty, and identification with Gesar/Chenrezig on the religious side. As has been noted, the Gesar identity has multiple

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<sup>5</sup> Region in Baltistan.

dimensions as a symbol of martial prowess, supernatural and spiritual power, and further links to Tibetan kingship. The rhetoric of tantric visualization is invoked in the generation of the mind of gratitude<sup>6</sup> to the triple nurturing of the sun, the parents, and the lama, followed by invocation of the mantra of Chenrezig. In effect this song is a visualization ritual (Skt. *Sadhanā*, Tib. *sngon 'gro*). The king, audience, singers and dancers are participating in a communion, with an internalization of the imagery, as is common in such visualization yoga. The practitioner either becomes that figure, or visualizes the object of meditation as being in their heart, on their head, or in front of them. In the following song, the listeners are explicitly told to offer praise.

### **bstod pa zhig 'bul (Offer Praise)**

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the blue sky, offer praise.

Behold with joy both sun and moon.

Behold with happiness the gathered stars.

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the square dharma court, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the lama guide.

Behold with happiness, the gathered disciples.

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<sup>6</sup> Buddhist philosophy speaks of “generating the mind of X”, where X is either a mental state one focuses on, such as wisdom, compassion, loving kindness, etc., or a given meditational figure with which one identifies, such as a buddha or bodhisattva.

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the high castle, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the ancestors of the great lord.

Behold with happiness, the gathered officials.

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the square noble house, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the fathers and mothers of the parents.

Behold with happiness, the gathered helpers.

Fort Garuda<sup>7</sup> Horn [is] a *'brang rgyas*<sup>8</sup> of white butter.

The small, dark Garuda Horn's *'brang rgyas*.

This Ladakhi army of deities [is] a pool of apricot seed oil.<sup>9</sup>

Sengge Namgyal [is] a pool of apricot seed oil.

Behold with joy, Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness, Sengge Namgyal.

Fort Garuda Horn[is] a saddle of white metal,

The small, dark Garuda Horn's saddle is of white metal.

The Ladakhi chasm's army of deities' saddle of steel,

King Sengge Namgyal's iron saddle.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

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<sup>7</sup> Garuda are mythical, enormous predatory birds with intelligence and social organization, having characteristics of both birds and gods. They are depicted with unicorn-like horns.

<sup>8</sup> Offering cake in the shape of a young girl's breast or a stupa.

<sup>9</sup> Apricot seed oil is a prestige oil, native to Ladakh. Oil lamps are an offering analogous to candles in Christianity.

Fort Garuda Horn [is] the gathered dharma horses.

This dark Garuda Horn is a gathering of dharma horses.

This Ladakhi army of deities' cavalry's guns.

Sengge Namgyal's cavalry's guns.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

Fort Garuda Horn [is] of soft wool

This Ladakhi army of deities [is] the good of a young magpie.

This Ladakhi army of deities [is] the good of a young magpie.<sup>10</sup>

Sengge Namgyal [is] the good of a young magpie.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal (LYL:63-66).

Other songs are informed by other meditational practices, such as the mandala offering. According to the noted Buddhist scholar and translator Alexander Berzin, practitioners may engage in what is called offering of an “outer mandala”.

An outer mandala (*phyi'i dkyil-'khor*) is a representation of a world system. It is used as an offering made to a spiritual teacher in request for a teaching, the conferring of a set of vows, and for the conferring of a tantric empowerment. It is similarly used as an offering of appreciation at the conclusion of the teaching or the vow or empowerment (tantric initiation) ceremony. (Berzin 2003)<sup>11</sup>

Berzin goes on to note that

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<sup>10</sup> The Bactrian magpie is a crow-like bird with many mythical associations that spends summers in Ladakh. The connotation is the gentleness of a magpie chick.

<sup>11</sup>

[http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/tantra/level1\\_getting\\_started/meaning\\_use\\_mandala.html](http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/tantra/level1_getting_started/meaning_use_mandala.html)

The world system represented by both types of outer mandala is most frequently that depicted in the abhidharma teachings concerning special topics of knowledge. It consists of a system having four island-continent around a Mount Meru in the center, with each island-continent having two smaller islands flanking it on the side facing away from Mount Meru. (Ibid)

Mount Meru or Sumeru is a legendary mountain in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. It is sometimes replaced in the cosmology by the real-world Mount Kailash, which also has divine associations in Hinduism, Buddhism, Bon, and Jainism. It is said by the Hindus to be the abode of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati. The Buddhists considered it to be the abode of the Buddha Demchok (Skt. *Chakrasamvara*) who represents supreme bliss.<sup>12</sup>

Mount Kailash has various attributes in the mythology of the region. In Tibetan the mountain is called *Gangs Rinpoche* (Precious Snow) or *Tise* (from the old Bon liturgical language Zhang Zhung, meaning “water peak”). *Kailāśā* means "crystal" in Sanskrit (Das 1902: 32). The crystal imagery is used in the song “Mt. Kailash’s White Crystal Stupa,” where the mountain is topped by a white crystal reliquary shrine or stupa (Tib. *Chorten*). White crystal is often used as a symbol for Chenrezig, who is frequently depicted with a white crystal rosary or represented by a white stupa.

In the *zhung lu* “The Crystal Stupa Of Mt. Kailash” this cosmology is laid out quite clearly. In the second verse the reference to “storehouse of all types of grain” evokes the meditative practice of a mandala offering, in which rice is piled in a series of stacked circular vessels to represent the visualized world. In the text the sacred mountain

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.khandro.net/deity\\_Chakrasamvara.htm](http://www.khandro.net/deity_Chakrasamvara.htm)

and lake, Buddhist pilgrimage sites, are described in metaphysical terms. The area of Purang in Western Tibet was contested by Ladakh and Tibet during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but this poem shows no ambivalence, referring to Tibet, "the land of snows," as a holy place where "we are happy as gods."

**ti se'i shel dkar mcod rten (The Crystal Stupa Of Mt. Kailash)**

The crystal stupa of Mt. Kailash,  
 The hub of the continent Jambudvīpa<sup>13</sup> (2x)  
 When a religious relic resides inside there,  
 It dispels the darkness of ignorance.  
 The eternal, secret, dharma body is there,  
 Dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

The blue, turquoise lake<sup>14</sup> of Mt. Kailash,  
 Mansion of the *naga*<sup>15</sup> king, Takshaka, (2x)  
 All together the kings come,  
 Around the storehouse of all types of grain,  
 To Purang,<sup>16</sup> around the treasury  
 Of the great valley's yellow barley  
 In the realm of the land of snow,  
 We become as happy as gods (LYL: 67-68).

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<sup>13</sup> One of four continents in Buddhist cosmology that surround Mt. Kailash, where the known world is situated.

<sup>14</sup> Lake Manasarovar, near Mt. Kailash, a pilgrimage place.

<sup>15</sup> Snake-like water and earth spirits.

<sup>16</sup> Region in South Western Tibet, near Ladakh.

Similarly, “The Hill behind Red Rock Peak” uses the white crystal stupa image as a comparison to the meditation hut of one’s root (true or principal) lama. The singers generate an aspiration for all that help them to be reborn in the blessed realm of Guru Padmasambhava.

**rgyab ri brag dmar gyi rtse mo (The Hill Behind Red Rock Peak)**

That hill behind Red Rock Peak,  
 The white crystal stupa, (2x)  
 Is like the root lama’s hermitage hut,  
 Is like the wisdom protector’s hermitage hut.

We the six realms of sentient beings,<sup>17</sup>  
 In the center of the hook of compassion,<sup>18</sup>  
 The kind root lama guide. (2x)  
 I and those that help, father and mother, people of the same family,  
 I and those that help, father and mother, people of the same family,  
 May we be reborn on the Copper Colored Mountain.<sup>19</sup> (2x)

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<sup>17</sup> Gods, demi-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings.

<sup>18</sup> The Indian analogy of an elephant driver’s hook (Hindi, *ankush*) that steers the animal, or the crook of a shepherd’s staff.

<sup>19</sup> Heavenly realm where Guru Padmasambhava, one of the prominent founders of Tibetan Buddhism, resides.

When that earth in my homeland is a perfect many-colored top ornament,<sup>20</sup>

When that earth in U Tsang<sup>21</sup> is a perfect many-colored top ornament,

Then I make offering to the root lama's robes.

Then I make offering to the wisdom protector's robes (LYL: 74-75).

As was noted earlier, the Ladakhi royal dynasty claimed to have descended from the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire in the tenth century. However, Lhasa and the major monasteries and pilgrimage sites in Tibet continued to play the dominant role in Buddhist culture throughout the region. Political fragmentation and conflict in Tibet continued up until the mid-seventeenth century reunification under the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Qosot Mongols under Gushri Khan.

In spite of constant struggle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between Ladakh and Tibet, the educated Ladakhi elite continued to represent Tibet as a place of reverence and pilgrimage, with Ladakhis traveling vast distances to circumambulate not only specific shrines, but the entire city of Lhasa. The ambivalence of the Ladakhis towards Tibet is shown in various songs. But as the following song shows, there remained an abiding loyalty to their homeland.

***lha sa'i skor lam phra mo--Lhasa's Narrow Circumambulation Road***

If there are many crowds on Lhasa's narrow circumambulation road, (2x)

Then the great man from the land of my birth does golden work,

Then the great, precious man from great Leh's palace does golden work.

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<sup>20</sup> The jeweled ornament on top of a person's head shown in religious iconography that indicates royalty.

<sup>21</sup> Central Tibet, where Lhasa is located.

If there is that perfect type of water in the homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of water in Lhasa's center,  
 Then there is *chang, arak*,<sup>22</sup> nectar<sup>23</sup> in my own country,  
 Then there is cold honored *chang* in great Leh's palace.

If there is that perfect type of grass in the homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of grass in Lhasa's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of grass in my own homeland,  
 Then there is that perfect type of grass in great Leh's center.

If there is that perfect type of tree in my homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of tree in Lhasa's center,  
 Then there is the god cypress tree in my own land,  
 Then there is the god cypress tree in great Leh's palace (LYL: 73).

### **Bagston Lu – Wedding Songs**

Wedding songs or *bagston lu* (*bag ston glu*) offer a complex picture of the common people's traditional world view. The imagery is a mixture of Bonpo and Buddhist concepts, often conflated, as is characteristic of Vajrayana Buddhism, and we see various contradictions between high and small traditions in the observance of Buddhism in Ladakhi village life very clearly illustrated in *bagston lu*. For example, the importance of beer and drinking in Ladakhi culture in general contradicts injunctions against intoxication, although they are more strictly proscribed for monastics.

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<sup>22</sup> Distilled barley liquor.

<sup>23</sup> Honorific for alcoholic drink, equating it with the drink of the gods.

Other songs are sung by participants in rituals that stretch over weeks or months, beginning with the negotiations of dowry and bride price, which are basically beer songs meant to diffuse tensions in the negotiations. During the actual wedding there are mock battles over fetching the bride, other songs welcoming the bride to her husband's household, and so on (Ribbach 1985, Francke 1901, 1923).

It should be noted that marriage is not a religious sacrament in Buddhism, and clerical participation is not a prerequisite. Many of these songs are very close to liturgical in nature, invoking blessings on the participants, and are in part the domain of village song specialists called *nyer pon*,<sup>24</sup> although some are sung in groups by members of the wedding party that may know them. These blessing songs are collectively known as *tashipa lu* (bkra shis pa glu), or songs of auspiciousness, because they begin with the formula, *om bkra shis par gyur cig. bkra shis bde legs dan ldan par gyur cig.*<sup>25</sup> The *nyer pon* might also lead songs to which people may dance at various points, either the groom's attendants or the wedding guests.

For example, during what Tashi Rabgias calls the "Mother's Libations Song", guests are welcomed with beer offerings made by the groom's mother to various universal and local deities by flicking drops of beer from the listeners' cups. Its invocation of blessings puts it into the category of a *tashipa lu*, and it would be sung by the *nyer pon*.

Prominent in the song are the *dakinis* (Tib. *mkha'dro*), female bodhisattvas that bestow wisdom and in part function analogously to fairy godmothers: teaching, protecting, and at times chastising. *Dakinis*, are a female embodiment of enlightenment

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<sup>24</sup> Many of the notable male singers I know are hired as *nyer pon*-s for weddings, and are often brought from outside the village, especially for their prowess in song battles.

<sup>25</sup> OM, may everything be auspicious. May everything bear auspiciousness.

energy, and are envisioned as “mothers” (guiding teacher) of the *nagas* (subterranean and/or water spirits). Offerings are also made to Indra, who was chief of the gods in the Vedic Hindu pantheon, co-opted as a significant guardian figure in Mahayana and Vajrayana mythology. These deities, in addition to the mother goddess of local *tsan* demons, are requested to avert misfortune from the celebrants and deflect it onto their enemies—a practical, if uncharitably non-Buddhist sentiment.

***a ma'i dkar 'chol du* (Mother's Libation song)**

Om, may there be auspiciousness.

May it be auspicious.

A god makes offering to the offering goddess/dakini<sup>26</sup>

Offerings to the sage of the gods, Indra of the hundred sacrifices.

May they not bestow rain and snowstorm over the passes.

May they bestow rain and snowstorm on angry enemies.

One demon requests of the assembly of dakinis

Making offerings to the demons' blessed protective mother.

May they not bestow the pervasive four afflictions<sup>27</sup> on men.

May they bestow the four afflictions on our enemies.

Naga requested the assembly of leaves and dakinis

Make offering to the *naga* of the bright lake.

May they not bestow intestinal worms and stomach pains on the horses.

May they bestow intestinal worms and stomach pains on the enemies.

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<sup>26</sup> Offering goddesses are female bodhisattvas and consorts of bodhisattvas.

<sup>27</sup> Birth, old age, sickness, death.

Make offering to the god living in the high castle  
 Make offering to the god living in village and road  
 Make offering to the protective god inhabiting the earth in this place  
 Make offering to the protective god of the bride's nine attendant kin (LYL: 17-18).

We see in this song an invocation to all the deities in the environment: castle, village, road, and fields. The *nagas* or local earth spirits must be propitiated during weddings with offerings of *chang* (barley beer), as shown in the follow song, offering libations of beer to the whole world.

**dkar 'chol spyir btang gi glu--Universal Libation Song**

Om may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

All the golden chang is gathered as an offering.

All the golden chang is offered to the gods of the earth's surface.

Make offering to the sage of the gods, Indra of the hundred sacrifices.

All the golden chang is gathered as an offering.

All the golden chang is offered to the subterranean dakinis.

Make offering to the face of the mother of dakinis bestowing refuge.<sup>28</sup>

All the golden chang is gathered as an offering.

All the golden chang is offered to the dakinis above the earth.

Make offering to the face of the nagas' majestic mother dakini.

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<sup>28</sup> Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (Blessed Assembly).

- Make offering to the god living in the high castle or anywhere else.
- Make offering to the god living the village or anywhere else.
- Make offering to the protective god inhabiting the earth to this place.
- Make offering to the protective god of the bride's attendant kin.

Pre-Buddhist traits are notable in the song contests known as “door songs” (*sgo lu*) (Francke 1923, Ribbach 1985). In a “door song,” five friends of the groom, known as *nyao-pa* or *nyo-pa* (the word can also mean “witness”) come to “purchase” the bride. This is one of the parts of a marriage that is still viewed as iconic by contemporary Ladakhis, even if the ceremony is only a one-day affair. As described by Ribbach<sup>29</sup> in the early twentieth century, the bride's party is barricaded in the house, and demands proof of the purchaser's identity. The *nyao-pa*:

claimed to be the sons of the gods of the high glacial mountains. The people of the house were suspicious. According to them no one could escape from that kingdom because it is guarded in all four heavenly directions (above, below, on the right and left) by four female animals. The guards are the white lioness with the turquoise mane (*senge dkar-mo gyu-ral-can*) above on the glacier, Goldeye the fish (*nya-mo gser-mig*) below in the glacial stream, the queen of the wild birds (*bya-rgyal rgod-mo*) on the cliffs to the right and the giant tigress (*rgya-stag k'ra-mo*) in the sandalwood forest to the left (Ribbach 1985: 65-65).

Sometimes the differences between pre-Buddhist and Buddhist cosmology are blurred, as in the following song listing Dharma protectors of the four directions as

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<sup>29</sup> Published in the 1930s in German, translated into English in 1985.

witnesses to, and protectors of the wedding. These songs are sung by the *nyo pa* who symbolize the Dharma protectors.<sup>30</sup>

**tho glu (List Song)**

[Question] Is it not a miracle, this witness that appeared?

You came while whatever comes may come.

You go while whatever goes may go.

[Answer] I came, came from the East

I go there to the North, to the realm of Orgyan.<sup>31</sup>

[Question] Since you come from the East,

What is the Eastern king like?

What are the servants like around him?

What are their manner and dress like?

[Answer] Since I come from the East,

The Eastern king is “Guards the Country.”

The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.

Their manner is like *tattva*.<sup>32</sup>

If they question they are inner questions.

I have unaffected speech .

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<sup>30</sup> “ *rgyal chen sde bzhi* - four orders of the great kings, class of the four great kings. syn {*phyogs skyong*} guardian of the four directions. syn {*rgyal chen sde bzhi*} Four Great / Guardian [directional] Kings, the Four Mighty Rulers. 1) {*yul 'khor bsrungs*} king Dhritarastra of the east. 2) {*phags skyes po*} king Virudhaka of the south. 3) {*spyan mi bzang*} king Virupaksha of the west. 4) {*rnam thos sras*} king Vaishravana of the north” (Ranjung Yeshe Dictionary).

<sup>31</sup> *Oḍḍiyāna*-kingdom in NW India from whence came Guru Padmasambhava, also a blessed realm presided over by him.

<sup>32</sup> “Thusness”—the ultimate nature of reality.

[Question] Since you come from the South,  
 What is the Southern king like?  
 What are the servants like around him?  
 What are their manner and dress like?

[Answer] Since I come from the South,  
 The Southern king is “High and Low One.”  
 The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.  
 Their manner is like *tattva*.  
 If they question they are inner questions.  
 I have unaffected speech.

[Question] Since you come from the North,  
 What is the Northern king like?  
 What are the servants like around him?  
 What are their manner and dress like?

[Answer] Since I come from the North,  
 The Northern king is “Watching Good People.”  
 The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.  
 Their manner is like *tattva*.  
 If they question they are inner questions.  
 I have unaffected speech.

[Question] Since you come from the West,  
 What is the Western king like?  
 What are the servants like around him?  
 What are their manner and dress like?

[Answer] Since I come from the West,  
 The Western king is “Son of Perfect Hearing.”  
 The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.  
 Their manner is like *tattva*.  
 If they question they are inner questions.  
 I have unaffected speech (LYL:38-40).

The question and answer format is quite common in Ladakhi songs, especially with the answerer either coming from or looking at phenomena of the four directions—again situating the listeners in the center of a mandala, specifically Orgyan, the mystical abode of Guru Padmasambhava, known also as Guru Rinpoche (the precious guru) who occupies a special place as one of the founders of Tibetan Buddhism. The kings are each surrounded by attendants dressed in joy of the Dharma, their manner conveying the meaning of ultimate reality. Drawing from the pre-Buddhist tradition, the singer professes his purity, claiming unaffected speech (cf. Francke 1901, 1923; Ribbach 1985).

Although not stated explicitly, Guru Rinpoche has a certain attraction for lay Buddhists in that he was not a monk, but a yogi who often practiced meditations with a consort, some mythical, at least one, Yeshe Tsogyal (*ye shes mtsho rgyal*) (757 to 817), historical. I would suggest that the analogy between a mystical union (known in Tibetan as *yab-yum* (father-mother) and conventional marriage is part of a communion process visualized in Vajrayana Buddhism. Buddhist teachers do warn about embarking on this type of sexual yoga in actual practice, saying that it can all too quickly degenerate to a

conventional sex act, not only losing any spiritual benefit, but actually generating negative effect by performing the sex act amidst religious icons—something that is actively avoided in the arrangement of Himalayan households, with the shrine room kept separate and pure. Nevertheless, Guru Rinpoche is held up as an ideal to which to aspire.

### *Chang lu—Beer Songs*

As noted earlier, *chang* (barley beer) occupies a significant place in lay Ladakhi culture, with a major portion of the barley crop going towards production. Singing occupies an integral part of drinking bouts, both for entertainment and to diffuse conflicts brought about by lowering of inhibitions (Shakspo 2008: 58). These drinking bouts can be either exclusively male, or with men and women sitting on opposite sides of the kitchen that are the gathering place (*dzom sa*) in traditional Ladakhi homes—women traditionally both prepare and serve *chang*. The harsh Ladakhi winters are particularly a time when such sedentary activities occur.<sup>33</sup>

I myself have not been privy to these parties, although I did attend an archery festival, known either as *dar tses* (archery) or *dar chang* (archery + *chang*). It was basically a yearly office picnic for the staff of AIR and Doordarshan TV. Being a friend of many at AIR, I was invited. There the men in particular engaged copious drinking, singing, laughing, and dancing—and archery. The women were far more restrained.

Many songs are about how the beer is made, and in many *chang* is described as *dud tsi* (*bdud-rtsi*), the nectar of the gods. Divine attributions notwithstanding, Ladakhis have had to reconcile strict Dharma practice which prohibits intoxication with the

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<sup>33</sup> As a monk in Likir Gompa described, the only things people could traditionally do in winter were have monastic festivals, drink, and make babies (p.c. Aug. 2001).

realities of lay life. The following song is a typical expression of this ambivalence (LYL: 55-58). It is sung to a sprightly dance-like tune in seven, broken into repetitive couplets.

**dri ba dri lan (Question and Answer)**

[Question] I do not drink *chang*, I will fly into the sky.<sup>34</sup>

When the blue sky takes me in her lap, then I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] The ones taken up into heaven's lap are both the sun and moon.

We cannot compare with both the sun and moon.

O surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

[Question] I do not drink *chang*, I will go to the cliff.

When I pierce the boulder<sup>35</sup> with the *phurba*,<sup>36</sup> I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] The one who pierces the boulder with the *phurba* is the lama guide.

We cannot compare with the lama guide.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

[Question] I don't drink *chang*, I will braid the water.

When I am braiding the water, then I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] One who braids the water is the little fish with the golden eye,

We can't compare with the little fish with the golden eye.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

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<sup>34</sup> This and all the subsequent feats are reputedly gained by yogic austerities (like abstaining from alcohol).

<sup>35</sup> A metaphor for piercing ignorance with penetrating insight.

<sup>36</sup> *phur ba* - Sacred dagger used in tantric rituals.

[Question] I don't drink *chang*; I will go to the meadow.

When the meadow flowers bloom I will then drink the *chang*.

[Answer] That which makes meadow flowers is the three summer months,

We can't compare with the three summer months.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*

[Question] That bluish gold ladle,

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] That bluish gold ladle,

It is in the hand of a great master merchant,

When we are bringing it in a distant place,

When we are buying it in a distant town,

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*

[Question] You are bringing the groom's cup of red nutmeg wood;

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] That groom's cup of red nutmeg wood,

Is in the hand of a great master merchant,

When we are bringing it in a distant place,

When we are buying it in a distant town,

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

[Question] You are bringing the table of red sandalwood.

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink *chang*.

[Answer] That table of red sandalwood  
 Is in the hand of a master carpenter,  
 When we are bringing it in a distant place,  
 When we are buying it in a distant town,  
 Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.  
 Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

The singers are stating their contentment with the life of a layman, not seeking yogic attainment, not seeking riches. Drinking and having a good time is what matters.

The mandala or merit field format is occasionally used as well, although in a more diffuse form as shown in the song Tashi Rabgias calls “The Field of the God of the Blue Sky.” It makes mentions of the wedding witnesses or *nya-bo*, so this also might be classified as a *bagston lu*. Nevertheless, the main focus of the song is the drink.

**dgung sngon po lha yi 'char gzhi (The Field Of The God Of The Blue Sky)**

A blue sky is like the spreading field of the god.

A high blue sky is like the spreading field of a fine lady.

Both the sun and moon are like a newly made white crystal offering cake.

The gathered stars are like a lovely display in a treasury. (2x)

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

A high castle is like the spreading field of the god. (2x)

A high adorned castle is like a lovely, spreading field.

A great old drink is like a newly made white crystal offering cake.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

A high, empty meadow is like the spreading field of the god.

A high, adorned meadow is like a lovely spreading field.

A little black yak calf is like a newly made white crystal offering cake. (2x)

A herd of small yak calves is like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

A high lake is like the spreading field of the god.

A golden eyed female fish is like a newly made white crystal offering cake.(2x)

An assembly of little messengers is like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

A square main house is like the spreading field of the god.

A happy square house is like a lovely, spreading field.

The parents are like a newly made white crystal offering cake.

The gathered kin are like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink (LYL 51-53).

Common with the *tendel lu*, *bagston lu*, and *zhung lu*, we have a mandala arrangement, although it is more specific to a rural Ladakhi setting.

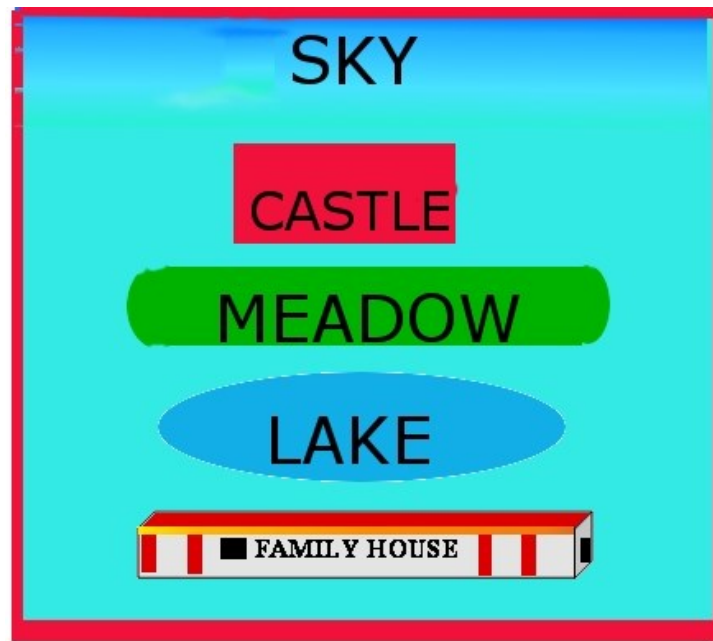


Figure 2.4. The rural matrix/mandala

The hierarchy differs from that of the *tendel lu* and *chang lu*, in that it is not an entirely social hierarchy, and does not explicitly reference Buddhism or Buddhist practice. The imagery is more nature-oriented, pre-Buddhist cosmology, with the concepts of the *drang-gyas* offering cake and white crystal prominent. Each level is occupied by its principal inhabitants with surrounding attendants. The reverence towards *chang* as an almost sanctified offering is a blending of Buddhist and Bonpo views.

### Conclusions

It may well be argued that none of these songs are purely Buddhist in the sense of the austere South Buddhist Theravada School. Then again, Theravadins would argue that all of Vajrayana Buddhism is a syncretic adaptation of indigenous Himalayan religion by Tantric Buddhism. Accepting that premise, we can characterize the religious content in these songs as

having a varying emphasis on Bonpo or Buddhist elements, with the two often inextricably intertwined.

Much of the variability is related to the function of the songs, as well as the probable degree of formal Buddhist education of the composers/poets and audience. In the courtly *zhung lu* examples there are *sadhana*-like descriptions of a mandala hierarchy, mixed with Bonpo elements relating to numinous entities such as the guardian animals.

The *tendel lu* are actually more straightforwardly Buddhist in their content, with no significant Bon elements. The language and concepts are simpler, describing a simple hierarchical mandala progressing from sky, to monastery, to palace, to family home, to dance stage—from the universe down to the individual. Again, this is a typical mandala visualization progression. The meaning of *tendel* is a less sophisticated, more conventional one, as opposed to the subtle, ontological meaning of high Buddhist philosophy.

The *bagston lu* present the most complex picture, depending on what ritual stage a song is for. They vary from pure mandala visualizations that function as blessings, to the Bonpo-derived depictions of cosmology and the spiritual matrix in which people are situated. Many of the latter involve describing and propitiating local numina: demons, nature spirits/deities, as well as Buddhist figures that interact with them. In addition, these offerings often involve *chang*, a problematic substance for orthodox Buddhists.

The Buddhism/beer dichotomy comes to a head in the *chang lu*, whose *raison d'être* is drinking. A number of the songs recognize that it is impossible to follow a dedicated Buddhist asceticism and party at the same time, yet they mention the attainments of Buddhist yogins and equate *chang* with the food of the gods. Similarly, some *chang lu* will lay out a mandala focused more on the rural environment and its human and numinous inhabitants, propitiating the latter.

There is no attempt at fully justifying *chang* from the point of view of high religion. This is small tradition religion.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Traditional Songs and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Ladakh**

The position of traditional music in contemporary Ladakhi society parallels that of the language, with both vulnerable to being overwhelmed by the dominant Hindi/Bollywood culture. Nevertheless, Ladakhis in various sectors of society have been working diligently to promote and preserve their culture's linguistic, literary and musical heritage since the 1960s. My discussion in this chapter will range over a broad span of activities covering education, and language, as well as how traditional songs are viewed, performed, preserved, and packaged.

Mass media exerts an influence on traditional songs, with those versions aired on radio or recorded on cassette and CD being canonized as the standard or "correct" versions. What appears to be happening in Ladakhi mass media and in popular and scholarly discourse is a folklorization of Ladakhi music. The English term "folklore" was coined in 1846 by British antiquarian William John Thomas, who defined it as "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballad, proverbs, etc., of the olden times" (cited in Bauman 1992). This concept, which originated in nineteenth-century romanticism and nationalism, became a subject of concern among "individuals who felt nostalgia for the past and/or the necessity of documenting the existence of national consciousness or identity (Dundes 1980:1)."

In a 2002 paper on preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) Peter Seitel defines folklorization as "re-styling the expressions of ICH so that they become less complex aesthetically and semantically. They thus reify the notion of a dominant culture (the one whose knowledge informs and is developed by official administrative and educational institutions) that folklore is not as complex or meaningful as the products of high, elite, or official cultural processes" (Seitel 2002: 5). This last definition might be applied to Ladakh, in that the elite in

scholarly, entrepreneurial, and media circles collect, categorize, and package traditional culture, such as music and dance, to promote a modern concept of Ladakhi identity. However, in contrast with folklorization controlled by an outside hegemonic culture, Ladakhi discourses on traditional song are primarily a reflection of internal changes in that society, in terms of both language and performance venues.

### **Modern Grass-roots Consumption and Production**

Modern Ladakhis, young people in particular, have an ambivalent attitude towards traditional songs. The language of many genres, *zhung lu*, *bagston lu*, *tendel lu*, etc., is not colloquial modern Ladakhi, but instead a mixture of literary/religious Tibetan (*chos skad*) and colloquial speech (*phal skad*) in varying degrees—not easily accessible to common people. As one young tour guide, Gyatsho, commented, “I like them, but the language is difficult” (p.c. 7/2009).

SECMOL Volunteer Coordinator Rebecca Norman notes that the erosion of the traditional song repertoire is most pronounced among upper- and middle-class youth living in Leh who may have more exposure to mass media, although she speculated as to whether other socio-economic factors might not come into play. In addition local Ladakhi dialects are forgotten by urban youth who learn a generic Leh dialect, as well as Hindi and English. The net result is that the urban youth end up unable to speak to their village grandparents in their own language and are unable to enjoy the same music (email 12 January 2010).

An added dimension to the linguistic mix is the repertoire of music performed in ethnic Dardic (otherwise known as Brokpa) areas in Western Ladakh. In villages like Dah, Hanu, Batalik, and Baima a significant amount of the population is bilingual in Ladakhi and Brokpa

language (known in Ladakhi as *Brokskad*, otherwise known as Shina)<sup>1</sup>, which is an Indo-Iranian language more closely related to Kashmiri. Even those self-identified Brokpa that no longer use *Brokskad* extensively are a musically conservative population, with more people continuing to cultivate the old Brokpa song, dance, and instruments (beyond the scope of the current study), as well as the majority Ladakhi repertoire. Various informants' comments are revealing in that they highlight linguistic change in Ladakh's history and the hegemony of the Tibetic Ladakhi language over Brokpa language and how this is linked with mainline Ladakhi songs.

My close friend Dawa Tsering is from the remote Brokpa village of Hanu, but his 16-year-old daughter, Skarma Yudon, is typical of the trend among urban youth. She goes to a prestigious boarding school in Leh, is a straight A student, and speaks good English, Hindi, and Leh dialect Ladakhi. She spends all holidays with her father's parents out in Hanu, 150 kilometers from Leh. She notes:

I don't know any *zhung lu*—when I go to my village only the old people sing them and only for functions. The language is very hard to understand (conversation in English, 8/4/12).

On the other hand, 16 year old Deskyong Nyima Namgyal from Yangthang Village in the Sham Valley (near to the Brokpa area) doesn't sing them, but really likes them. He thinks they refer to Ladakhi history. He understands the words and does not find them to be difficult, even though he doesn't know Tibetan (conversation in Ladakhi, 8/12/2012). He recognized my

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Ethnologue website (<http://www.ethnologue.com/language/bkk>), the total number of *Brokskad* speakers in the area is less than 10, 000.

interest in songs while hanging out at the internet cafe in Leh that his relative Stanzin Motup runs, and brought me a CD of *zhung lu* he recorded from the radio and other sources—quite an extensive collection—most of them by Dorje Stakmo.

I spoke with adults thirty years old and older who came from a variety of villages, both very distant from and near to Leh, and found a general appreciation and understanding of the music and lyrics. In fact, I got fairly consistent descriptions of the songs' importance in affirming Ladakhi historical and cultural identity. My friend Dawa Tsering, a 40-year-old tour agency owner, notes that his native village of Hanu and surrounding villages (five to seven hours drive from Leh) are very musical places, with many people that still either play instruments and/or sing. He says in some villages there are Mon who specialize in instrumental music and are repositories of songs; in others the musicians are just ordinary villagers. I asked him what he thinks of *zhung lu*, does he understand the words, and are those words important? Dawa expressed very clear opinions:

People like *zhung lu*, but these days after hearing two or three the young people put on the disco music. Part of the problem is that they don't understand the language. This comes from modernization, the moment a village has electricity they put on the TV in the evening. When I was young in my home village (Hanu) people would gather in my house or some other house at night and my grandmother would tell stories, sing songs, tell riddles. The other people would too. People would know *zhung lu* because they were there—not just for functions, but for all the long winter time. These days only the old people know them, and they are going.

When you hear *zhung lu*, you can hear it again and again. The melody is so special, and the words have such special meaning

In some places Shams side [i.e., the Shams Valley], like Skyuburcan, people are still knowing them. It is in the villages, not in Leh, that people know them. It is the Mon that were supposed to know all the words to the songs, but some old people know them very well, like my father. He can't sing very well, but he knows all the words of many songs. He was having a contest with his cousin who is a singer, and he was winning, knowing so much more of the words. When he was young, he had a contest with a village Mon and defeated him, and the guy left the function (conversation in English, 4 Aug, 2012).

It should be noted that Dawa is college educated (Hindu College, Delhi University—equivalent to an Ivy League school), as well being educated in spoken and literary Tibetan, and Buddhist philosophy. He is Lama Jamspal's "nephew," both being related on their maternal sides to the *Lonpo* (ministerial) family of Saspol Village—*skudrag*.

Ladakhis in remote villages like Hanu are likely to be familiar with and appreciate *zhung lu*. For example Dawa's assistant manager at the travel agency, 34 year old Thinles Dorje, who is also from Hanu, had something revealing to say:

It [i.e. *zhung lu*] indicates the history of Ladakh, especially about the kings, about the monks, who have...discovered Ladakh. It is very nice to hear when you completely know about them—the language—when you know the meaning of the song, then it's very nice. It is always a meaningful one, regarding the places, the kings, and monks....

My village is especially known for the *zhung lu*, because they were the first origins of Ladakh [i.e. the Dards or *Brok pa*], and brought all the songs to Ladakh—the ancestors.

I then asked Thinles Dorje whether his twelve year old son knows *zhung lu*, and he said, “Yes, a little bit, but not much.” Dorje admits with some chagrin that his son prefers more modern Ladakhi songs. I asked him whether he was unusual in knowing *zhung lu*, and he said many people in Hanu know them. However he thought that people in villages closer to Leh might not know them so much (Conversation in English, 4 August, 2012). Other men and women I spoke to, age thirty through sixty repeated variations on this trope of *zhung lu* representing or symbolizing Ladakh.

I had a long conversation with a tour guide and driver, Rinchen Namgyal, a young man from Hanu in his mid-twenties:

Hanu is a musical place. Particularly, what you see in Hanu is that it is a Brokpa place—you know that. Dah, Baima, Karponat are still Brokpa, but in Hanu it was converted to Ladakhi [language] by a king, and then the king imposed full men in Ladakhi songs on that place [meaning men who had full knowledge?]. The king asked them to sing that kind of song. So there are so many songs originating from the kings—they are still there. *Zhung lu*—and there’s another kind of song—*shon lu*.<sup>2</sup>

When asked whether he knows *zhung lu*, he said

In my village there are still so many functions in the winter—at least twice in a week.

And then there are so many *zhung lus*—some of them compete with each other and they

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<sup>2</sup> The women’s dance traditionally performed at the Losar New Year in the royal palace.

have to sing in the same tone. If they are supposed to compete with each other, first I would sing in one tone [i.e. drum rhythm], then another guy would have to sing in the same tone and sing another song.

And though the king had changed the entire language of the village, because first they spoke in Brokpa, and then it was converted to Ladakhi. In Hanu it is now completely Ladakhi, but there are still four or five villages that speak Brokpa (conversation in English, 8/5/2012).<sup>3</sup>

So, what I am told is that in more remote villages, there are people who still sing *zhung lu*, whereas in the town of Leh in particular the presence of radio, cassette players, TV, etc. has oriented many people towards a passive mode of music consumption, as opposed to the pre-technological production/consumption of earlier times. In many villages only a few people are known for their singing ability; in some more remote villages, singing and playing music as a pastime is more prevalent. For instance, I have been told by Tsering Anchuk Ralam that many people sing in Skyurbuchan village. Some also play *surna* and *daman*, instead of relying on Mon or Beda, and suffer no stigma. This is similar to performance patterns in the remote area of Zanskar, where there also are no instrumental specialists (p.c. 7/2011). Angchuk Ralam went on to note that most people who sing in Skyurbuchan don't have a good knowledge of complicated

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<sup>3</sup> A week later I went to the village of Baima, near Hanu, and noted differences in musical practice, such as different dances and songs, mixed with mainline Ladakhi styles. One important difference is the use of a large barrel drum, the *gring jang*, which is also part of ensembles in Baltistan (c.f. Sakata 1989).

congregational songs from the old royal court (*zhung lu*), often singing them imperfectly in terms of music, and often singing non-lexical syllables that distort the meaning of song texts.

### **Preservation and Promotion of Ladakhi Language and Music**

Given the availability of radio, TV, and recorded media, even in remote villages, Ladakhis are increasingly exposed to mass media in Hindi. Nevertheless, there is also increasing Ladakhi language media production including radio, TV, music CDs, movies, and music videos, the last distributed both on video CDs (VCDs) and the internet.

Colloquial Ladakhi was not written until about one hundred years ago, and has only been commonly used in print media in the past fifty years. Efforts to collect, codify, and propagate the language and literature have been conducted by academics such as Gen Tashi Rabgias and the Ladakh Cultural Academy, media organizations such as the local branches of All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan TV (DDTV), and grass-roots organizations such as the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) and the Students Educational and Cultural Organization of Ladakh (SECMOL).

One can draw parallels with the fading of North American folk musics and their revival in the 1940s through 70s. Although the roles played by Tashi Rabgias, Morup Namgyal, AIR, etc. are not exactly the same as those of Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie, one would hope for a similar level of energy in Ladakhi preservation efforts. However, as in North America, standardization of the repertoire seems a likely outcome, given the pervasive nature of modern mass-mediated pop culture.

The very use of the English word “folk” song is fraught with colonialist and/or classist bourgeois connotations (cf. Keil 1978, Henderson 2003). The dichotomy between poor, rural,

mountain village life and the more prosperous life in lowland urban centers has been examined in other Himalayan contexts in Garhwali India and Nepal (Fiol 2011, Henderson 2003).

In the case of multi-ethnic Nepal, David Henderson and Paul D. Greene noted the government policy of presenting radio broadcasts of folk music from all regions, but in polished arrangements translated into the common Nepali. Nevertheless, such *lok gīt* are represented as being from the various regions (Henderson 2003). These *lok gīt* broadcasts and recordings (audio and video) target the educated urban populations of the Kathmandu Valley who are several generations removed from village life. *Lok gīt* are viewed as indexical to village life, and evoke nostalgia for rural simplicity.

Henderson identifies two main audiences for folk songs on Radio Nepal. First, many people living in the city that grew up in villages and came to Kathmandu to work. Despite the hardships of village life, he found these people often talked about how folk songs remind them of life in a closely knit community full of shared pleasure. People who have lived all their lives in Kathmandu enjoy folk songs for their evocation of simpler times that are seemingly still available in village life. This nostalgia is not rooted in actual extensive experience of village life, but rather memories of the folk songs themselves combined with village images drawn from mass media (Henderson 2003:8).

There are differences between the Nepali urbanites and those living in Leh. Ladakhis are, for the most part, rarely more than a generation removed from village life, with many people still having relatives living in rural areas. Secondly, Leh is nowhere near the size of the sprawling urban center that is Kathmandu, and does not isolate people in the same way an all-encompassing metropolis does. Thirdly, the outer trappings of tradition are still considered to be important, for example wearing *gonchas* (men's Tibetan-style robes) and *sulma* (women's

pleated overdress) on formal occasions such as when important lamas are present. Fourth, as mentioned, songs in many genres have not been translated from local dialects into “colloquial modern Ladakhi” (*pal skad*). This contrasts with the Nepali language standardization of *lok gīt* noted by Henderson, which more clearly illustrates Seitel’s characterization of folklorization as a restyling of regional musics.

Stefan Fiol’s studies of Garhwali *Baddī* trance and festival music offer a view of a different dynamic. No state policy has been at work to preserve this repertoire, and the lowly social position of the *Baddī* (low caste musicians) has led many of them to abandon music in favor of construction and other less stigmatized occupations. Nevertheless, a few artists continue to perform and have been recorded in academic settings as well as on commercial recordings. The picture is complicated by commercial appropriation and co-option of the *Baddī* repertoire and image, distorting, misrepresenting, exoticizing and eroticizing them. The *Baddī* are part of the Garhwali self-image and are objects of nostalgia—not that this is enough to sustain them financially or relieve them of the burden of low status (Fiol 2010a, 2010b, 2011). This dynamic is somewhat similar to that of the Mon and Beda in Ladakh. By contrast, the Ladakhi repertoires, although less utilized in their traditional village contexts, are being cultivated in the new venues of mass media and tourist oriented performances. They are performed by Mon and Beda, as well as by cultural activists who are not traditional musicians.

Ladakh differs from Nepal and the Garhwali region in a number of very significant ways. Firstly, it has traditionally been far less accessible to the rest of India, and even now is cut off from road traffic for almost half the year due to snow and landslides. Secondly, it has a much sparser population. These factors have not been conducive to significant urbanization or commerce that would support a native recording industry.

Furthermore, mainstream Indian media has had little interest in Ladakh until the late 1990s. The various border conflicts with Pakistan brought it into prominence in a number of Bollywood movies,—all with no Ladakhi music in them! Ladakh is portrayed as a rugged, exotic landscape in which life-and-death military struggles are played out. It was really not until the 1990s that any commercial Ladakhi media production started, aided by the access to affordable cassette technology (cf. Manuel 1993).

The question of agency becomes important in terms of examining musical preservation in Ladakh. Increased migration of educated Ladakhis to either Leh or urban centers in the south, such as Jammu, Chandigarh, or Delhi, creates the grounds for nostalgia. This nostalgia manifests itself in a number of ways in Ladakhi mass media. In the case of traditional music, images of rural life or historical scenes are portrayed in music videos, album covers, etc. Popular music videos often show scenes of rural life with shifting views of modernity versus tradition, especially in matters of clothing.

Relating to this discourse is an issue of terminology that has arisen at least since the publication of *Ladvags gyi yul glu* in 1970. The term *yul*, meaning nation, village, or countryside, is used by Tashi Rabgias to be equivalent to “folk.” This seems to be a Tibetan usage, probably also influenced by the Hindi *lok sangeet* (people’s music) or *lok geet* (people’s song). However, this term is not widely recognized, or used in common speech; instead, the term *zhung lu* (*gzhung glu*) (traditional songs) is used. This is in contrast with the other definition of *gzhung*, meaning “center,” “gathered” or “congregational,” which refers to a specific song genre sung during traditional gatherings in the old royal palace in Leh. This more general “traditional” label covers virtually anything that is not commercial popular music.

I am more inclined to classify the *zhung lu* sung in the royal palace as art songs—a view shared with Mark Trewin and Susan Stephens (Trewin and Stephens 1987). I base this classification on the following criteria. Firstly, we have their cultivation by the aristocratic elite. According to Basgo musician Tsering Sonam Lagachirpon, the lyrics for *zhung lu* were customarily submitted to the palace for approval. He gave the impression this was more a literary critique issue than a censorship issue—one hoped one’s lyrics were judged worthy to be performed before the king (p.c., 7 August, 2011). No melodic evaluation was mentioned.

The sophisticated literary evaluation places *zhung lu* in the continuum of pan-Tibetan, high literary culture, separating them from any small local oral traditions. From a literary/philosophical view we see a dichotomy of complex Vajrayana images in *zhung lu*, simpler village oriented mandala representations in *tendel lu*, mainly pre-Buddhist imagery in *bagston lu*, and a simpler, lay-oriented mixture in *chang lu*. Musically, the *zhung lu* and *tendel lu* utilize compositions with more complex rhythms accompanied by *daman*, whereas the *bagston lu* and *chang lu* generally use free rhythms or simpler rhythms in six, four, or seven, often sung a capella.

This leads into the second point regarding a body of theory. While there is no large body of music theory comparable to that of Indian classical musics, the texts in particular are governed by criteria arbitrated by the aristocracy and scholars from the point of view of classical Hindu and Buddhist esthetic theory. I will discuss this issue at greater length in my conclusions after examining the actual music of the songs.

### **Broadcast Media**

AIR broadcasts were begun in Leh in 1971 with a mixture of national programming transmitted in Hindi and local news and music programming in Ladakhi (Dolma 2009). Every day, in late morning, programs of Ladakhi traditional songs are aired for 30 minutes, in either live performances or archived recordings. These broadcasts have allowed various singers to gain fame beyond their local audiences. Some vocalists come with their supporting party of musicians that may perform instrumental dance music as well.

AIR Leh has a small group of staff musicians that function primarily as supporting instrumentalists for vocalists. No staff musicians are exclusively vocalists, although many are fine, educated singers in their own right. Singers are remunerated according to a schedule of fees for casual artists of varying grades.

Starting in the 1990s, there has been a blossoming of Ladakhi cultural production funded by increased tourism. Ladakhis in general are proud of who they are and where they live, as compared to the economically depressed 1970s when everyone who could do so procured work in places like Jammu, Punjab, or Delhi. A branch of DDTV was set up in 1984, but was limited to national broadcast feeds in Hindi. Not until 1991 was local language programming instituted. This programming consists of news and cultural programs, including traditional music and dance (Dolma 2009).

Printed compilations of song lyrics have been part of song preservation in conjunction with radio and sound recordings. In the early days of AIR broadcasts from Leh, Morup Namgyal sang many songs with texts from LYL, vol. 1. As a result these versions became somewhat canonized in many people's minds. When I first started doing research at AIR in 2009, the late Tsewang Rigzin kept a copy of LYL in his office.

As is common at media organizations throughout the world, politics, personalities, and random misfortune get in the way of music preservation. An unfortunate fire at the AIR studio some years ago led to the loss of irreplaceable archived reel-to-reel recordings of artists both living and dead. There are unfounded rumors that former program director Morup Namgyal allowed this to happen to undercut competing artists. These rumors were based on perceptions that he used his position to advance his own singing career, while denying opportunities to others. However, according to better informed, if no less severe, critics, he did do all he could to save and/or re-record artists whose recordings had been lost, and deeply regretted the loss of valuable cultural treasures.

With recent modernizations of the AIR studio, efforts are being made to convert the archives to digital formats that can be backed up to avoid future mishaps. All current recordings are digital, and are backed up to archival CDs as well as disk drives. I myself was the beneficiary of this new technology, when Tsewang Rigzin asked me to give a radio interview in Hindi about my research. The producer/host Stanzin Lodus was able to give me a copy of the MP3 file in short order.

The combined print and broadcast propagation of the LYL versions of the lyrics has had the effect of canonizing them in the minds of villagers and town dwellers. Mass media such as radio, TV, and commercial cassettes and CDs have led, as they have in most of the world, to an increased passivity in the consumption and production of music. This has been noted by Rebecca Norman:

Once the All India Radio station starts playing a given version, or when somebody (mostly Morup Namgyal or Dorje Stakmo) releases a recorded version, everyone seems to think that is the "correct" version. ... Between young people

tending not to learn them and All India Radio standardizing them (usually to MN's version), it's likely that the local variations will quickly be lost (email, November 17, 2009)

### **Ladakhi Views on My Work**

For several reasons there has been considerable local interest in my work, both in rural areas and in Leh. Firstly, my position as protégé of Lama Jamspal, one of the most famous scholars in Ladakh, is a huge endorsement. Secondly, my position as adjunct instructor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York lends an air of cosmopolitan sophistication and gravitas. Thirdly, in the current socio-economic and cultural climate, Ladakhis are pleased that foreigners (especially “rich and powerful” Americans) have interest in their culture. Finally, many Ladakhis are impressed with my linguistic proficiency—something few foreigners achieve—as well as my ability to sing some of the better known songs such as *Aley yato-le*, *Siki Angmo-le*, and *Lhasa 'i skor lam phrangmo*.

My prestige in the Leh area was further enhanced on August 5, 2012, when I gave a performance of *zhung lu* at the request of Geshe Tsewang Dorje, director of the Ngaris School of Buddhist Dialects in Saboo Village, as part of the dedication of a new library for the institute's primary school (figure 3.1). The audience was made up of Saboo villagers, monks, dignitaries from Leh, and foreign donors from France and Germany. There had been an extensive program of speeches, congratulating all who worked on the project. Children from the institute's primary school, dressed in traditional *gonchas* and *sulma*, sang songs of thanks.

After I received the customary blessing scarf (*khatag*), Geshe-le (the reverend Geshe) introduced me as a noted Ph.D. scholar studying *zhung-lu*. I replied that I was Lama Jamspal's

disciple and a twenty year student of the guest of honor, Geshe Lobzang Tsetan, the abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery (and incidentally Geshe-le's uncle), and owed my interest in Ladakh to them. I then sang *Gompa ser gyi cha skyibs* (The Monastery of the Golden Cave), *Lhasa'i skor lam phrangmo*, (Lhasa's narrow circumambulation path)—almost the city anthem of Leh, and the lighter dance song *Siki Angmo-le*, accompanied by two Beda who I knew as frequent instrumentalists at AIR, playing *surna* and *daman* (figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.1. My singing *zhung lu* at library dedication**

**Geshe Tsewang Dorje at lower left**



Figure 3.2. My *surna* and *daman* accompanists



Figure 3.3. Monks and laymen sing along with me in *Lhasa'i skor lam phramo*

The audience reaction was very positive and active. The degree of audience participation was striking, and truly confirmed the meaning of *zhung lu* as congregational songs. At least a dozen middle aged men, both monastic and lay were singing along with me. When I sang *gom pa ser gyi cha skyibs* an engineer named Angchuk who works for the electric department (pictured in the foreground of figure 3.3) knew the melody and first verse well and was nodding, initially correcting my rhythm—all very good naturedly--after which, I was leading subsequent verses where he didn't fully remember the lyrics. However, many more people seemed to know *Lhasa'i skor lam phramo*, as seen by all those singing in figure 3.3.

Matters truly got raucous in the finale, *Siki Angmo-le*, which is a dialogue between two young men and a girl involved in a love triangle during the 1940s. In figure 3.4 everyone is laughing at the lyrics, and many were singing along with me.



**Figure 3.4. Audience reaction to my singing *Siki Angmo-le***

While singing *Siki Angmo-le*, Geshe Tsewang Dorje had the kids stand up and do a traditional Ladakhi circle dance (figure 3.5). The kids were caught up in the fun and were trying their best to sing and dance. A grand time was had by all.

When I had finished, Geshe-le gave a speech, noting how important it was that a Ph.D. scholar from the West was concerned with preservation of traditional music. He felt I was an inspiring example, and that songs should be taught in the schools to keep the culture alive. Afterward, at the dinner celebration, I was inundated with compliments, both on my knowledge, as well as my voice. In fact, I bumped into the engineer Anchuk over a week later, and he couldn't stop praising me—flattering, and encouraging.



**Figure 3.5.** Saboo school kids dancing as I sing *Siki Angmo-le*

### **The Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)**

According to the SECMOL website ([www.secmol.org](http://www.secmol.org)):

The Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) was founded in 1988 by a group of young Ladakhis to reform the educational system of Ladakh. Over the years our activities have been varied, and are now mainly focused on activities for Ladakhi youth.

One of SECMOL's main raison d'être has been the continual neglect of Ladakh's educational system by the Jammu and Kashmir central government. Again, according to the SECMOL website:

In 1998, 95% of Ladakhi students failed the state 10th class exams every year, so we concluded that it was necessary to change the educational system. In 1994 SECMOL launched the Operation New Hope movement to improve education in Leh District, in collaboration with the Education Department, the local government and the village community members.

In addition to its strong focus on education SECMOL publishes children's books, text books, and magazines in English and Ladakhi, as well as Ladakhi dictionaries, grammar books, and books on Ladakhi culture. SECMOL has a school campus in the village of Phey where daily activities support Ladakhi language and culture. Among these is the sharing and singing of traditional songs by resident staff and students. According to Rebecca Norman:

We sing /zhunglu/ after dinner every day at SECMOL so that the Ladakhi youth get a chance to learn these songs -- otherwise, many young Ladakhis today don't know any zhunglu at all (email 17 November, 2009).

### **Performance Venues**

Venues for traditional songs have changed in the past 150 years. After the royal court in the Leh palace ceased to function as a center of temporal power with the 1842 Dogra conquest, songs such as *zhung lu* and *tendel lu* were performed in village contexts, such as gatherings for festivals like the *Losar* new year.

*Bagston lu* (wedding songs) are still performed, although the days of lengthy wedding negotiations and celebrations are mostly gone—no one has time any more. Currently one gets abbreviated rituals, keeping what people view as significant landmarks in the ceremonies, such as the song battles at the bride’s door (*sgo glu*, “door songs”). This was described as a general trend by Ladakhi scholar Ngawang Tsering Shakspo (conversation in English, 6 August, 2009).

Prof. Sarah H. Smith of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her Ladakhi husband Tonyot described how his female relatives acted in place of her absent family to barricade themselves in the house and act out the *sgo glu*. However, the entire celebration only took one day (p.c. 16 July, 2009). A similar experience was recounted by my friend, popular singer/songwriter Tashi Choesphel about his wedding in 2001 (conversation in English, July 2009).

Back in 2001 I spent time in the village of Likir with the family of one of my students at Likir Gompa School. I was able to videotape their singing farmers’ work songs as they harvested the barley. Nowadays, these songs have disappeared from common usage, due to the fact that farm work is often performed by Nepali migrant labor instead of the traditional local farmers.

Private parties are another venue where both modern and traditional songs are sung. Noted singer Stanzin Dadul, during a video recording session of traditional songs, talked about

performing *zhung lu* for parties and how they are often in demand (conversation in Ladakhi, 27 July, 2009).

During the same recording session, I noted that for many lengthier *bagston lu* and *zhung lu* Stanzin Dadul would refer to a notebook filled with song lyrics. This seems to have been a common practice in Ladakh, in addition to oral transmission. Linguist Bettina Zeisler has been working for some years with an elderly singer/storyteller, Dhondrup Tsering of Achinatang Village, and has shared digitally scanned images of two of his extensive notebooks. Dating back as far as 1905, A. H. Francke collected versions of the Gesar saga from both oral dictations and manuscripts belonging to bards (Francke 2000 [1905-41]).

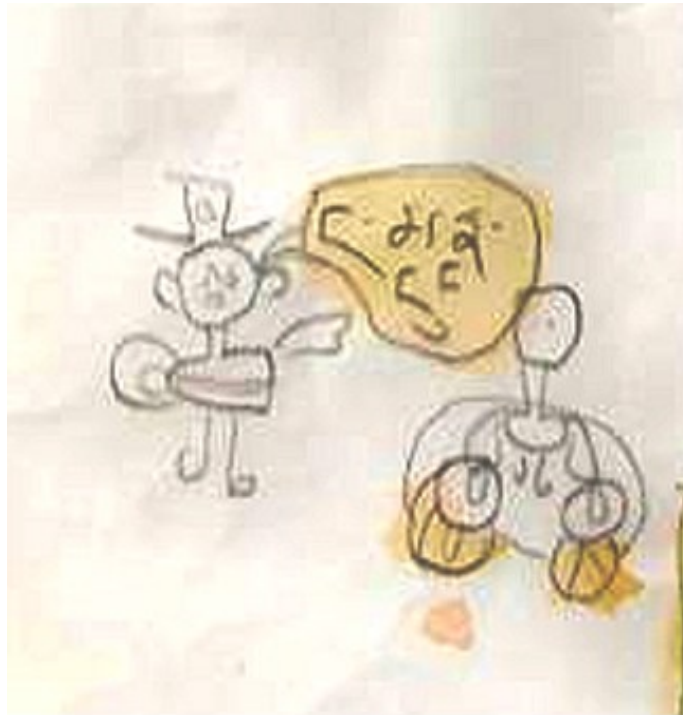
Erosion of traditional song and instrumental repertoires is also linked to rebellion against the caste system. As mentioned, the performers of the *surna* and *daman* who always accompanied songs and dances were the low-caste *Mon* who worked as subsistence farmers, carpenters, and musicians in the villages. As the military and civil authorities embarked on public works projects to enhance infrastructure in the area, Mon chose to get jobs, education, etc., and give up being treated as subservient (cf. Trewin 1995, Rather 1993). For example, the current head of Leh District Department of Public Works civil engineering department is from a Mon family.

Lama Jamspal noted that this trend has been going on since his childhood in Basgo Village in the 1940s, where the Mon had “stopped beating.” The village elders offered an abandoned farmstead to entice another Mon family to move to the village in exchange for their supplying music. However, he noted that some years later that family too “stopped beating” (p.c. August 2001).

It is interesting to note how Lama Jamspal’s comments indicate a strong association in many Ladakhis’ minds of the Mon with the *daman* in particular, as opposed to the *surna*. I actually

had noticed this when talking about my research on the Mon with a couple of young Ladakhis that had immigrated to New York. One of them didn't know who I was talking about, until his friend said, "You know, those funny guys who go 'taka taka taka' on the drums." Again this was a manifestation of a certain indexing of *daman* to both the Mon and their musical activities as a whole—synecdoche, if you will.

This was also brought home to me in August of 2001, during one of three summers where I was teaching English at Likir Monastery School. The novice monks, ages 5-15, all knew of my interest in Ladakhi music and had sung various children's songs for me. As part of my trying to broaden their modes of expression, I asked them to draw pictures of scenes from their lives. One eleven-year-old boy named Lobzang Nyandak (a real smart-aleck whom my associate, Prof. Christian Haskett, nicknamed "Mr. Smiley"), drew what amounted to a cartoon, complete with speech balloons (figure 3.6). One of the speech balloons in the picture says, "Beat the *daman!*" – again, a clear indication of the iconic value of the *daman*.



**Figure 3.6. "Beat the *daman!* "—cartoon by an 11 year old Buddhist monk**

This iconic value notwithstanding, the status of the Mon partakes of that liminal dichotomy between prestige product and despised agent that Trewin has thoroughly examined in his Ph.D. dissertation on *lha nga* ceremonial music (Trewin 1993). The Mon are still contesting their outcast status at the village level. Rebecca Norman had some cogent observations regarding the continued social upheaval and its impact on music:

I think a lot of the Mons who have quit playing music have done so explicitly because of social caste discrimination in their villages. I have heard anecdotes from people involved about incidents of discrimination that led to Mons quitting music. I would too if I were them. One was a Mon kid who insisted on dancing along with the other kids at a New Year's party in Skyurbuchan. It was a modern party, teenagers dancing to recorded music. His family refused to submit to the punishment decided by the *goba* or villagers, and just quit relations

with them, including music.<sup>4</sup>

I've had two experiences of people of middle caste in Sham picking up the Mon role of music. I attended a wedding in Skyurbuchan a few years ago, the year the Mons had quit, and middle caste guys were playing the music. The *daman* sounded fine to me, but the surna was kind of funny. He mostly played recognizable song tunes like "Ali Yato" and "Shonkalimasho." It wasn't a proper big wedding, but a *paklok* (a redramatization of a bride-giveaway party years after the actual marriage).

More currently, two middle-caste SECMOL staff members from Wanla, who were good at *daman* already, have been taking up the music at formal parties in their part of the village, Ursi. I went to a formal party with a /trhom/ there and they were playing the drums. The head dancers were paying them just as if they were real Mons, and they made a couple thousand rupees. They are guys with enough social confidence in the first place to pull it off: "Yeah, we did the drumming, yeah, we got paid, ha-ha, what of it?"

Many villages have discontinued their traditional Losar activities because they don't have Mons able or willing to play the right music. I heard that in Nyemo they tried hiring Bedas from Leh but they didn't know the right tunes so it didn't work and the villagers just quit the next year. I understand the same has happened in many villages. Now, instead of the traditional Losar activities (horse racing, ice water bathing, historical re-enactments, whatever) there's just a youth party on New Year's with recorded music. (email, 12 Jan. 2010).

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<sup>4</sup> I mentioned this incident to Dawa Tsering, who is the Hill Councilor for the area, and he said the matter was subsequently worked out in a local *panchayat* (five-man village council) court. However, Dawa felt that the main issue was the Mon kid's having trespassed on some inviolate space. He noted that there are areas that even he is prohibited from treading, and that this was a matter-of-fact arrangement within any village (conversation in English, 12 Aug. 2012). This complex of affinities, prohibitions, and social classes is beyond the scope of the current study, but bears further investigation.

Whether this de-stigmatization of playing the instruments will catch on and lead to a reversal of repertoire loss remains to be seen. Clearly the repertoire is at risk as a living tradition, and may either disappear or lapse into a canonized folkloric status.

Cultural advocacy groups are teaching traditional songs to keep them alive. SECMOL has been running summer camp programs at their campus in Phey where traditional songs are an important part of the activities. Other workshops have been run in different locations throughout Ladakh by the Youth Wing of the Ladakh Buddhist Association and The Young Men's Buddhist Association, recruiting notable musicians such as Tsering Stanzin of Skyurbuchan as teachers.

These training programs have helped to foster local performance ensembles. One notable group is centered around Basgo village, one of the old royal capitals. It is informally headed by pharmacist Tsering Sonam Basgo Lagacirpon. The Basgo area has a number of good singers, including Lama Jamspal's 70-something nephew, Tsewang Norbu Tongson, who is a traditional Tibetan doctor, and Sonam Wangdus Basgo Zasnapa, a carpenter and farmer. Other members of the group come from the neighboring villages of Ngey, Tia, and Wanda. Tsering Sonam said that until about seventeen years ago when he first attended the SECMOL workshops, many of the musicians didn't really know each other well or know that the others sang or played (conversation in English, 7 August, 2011). The ensemble plays both on the radio in Leh and for various festivals, both locally and further away, and gets paid for it.

Other groups have been springing up. Interestingly enough, an acquaintance of mine, cultural activist Sonam Gyaltzan, is involved in a Leh-based ensemble whose members primarily learned surna and daman from Tsering Sonam Lagachirpon in the past few years. Sonam Gyaltzan remarked how various Beda complained that his group takes away jobs from them. He counters that the music is everyone's to learn, perform, and enjoy. One may note parallels

between this case and that of Indian middle-class Brahman co-option of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music, and the subsequent dispossessing of low-caste and/or Muslim and/or unmarried female performers (*tawaiifs* and *devadasis*) (cf. Bakhle 2005, Srinivasan 1985).

A commoditization and folklorization of traditional song and dance is seen as tourism becomes a dominant part of the local economy. Tourist-oriented performances occur at summer festivals in venues like the Leh Polo Grounds. Hotels are springing up all over on land that was formerly cultivated fields, generating considerable wealth in certain sectors of the population. The larger, fancier hotels often arrange song and dance performances for tourists that employ musicians. According to conversations with people at the LBA, one of the main points of their music workshops is to train young people so that they can find employment as musicians for the tourist trade. They have similar programs to train people as monastery guides.

### **Position of Traditional Songs in the Current Market**

Wandering around the music stores and stalls of Leh Bazaar, I have found that the majority of cassettes, CDs, VCDs, and DVDs are Bollywood and Nepali popular music and videos. A couple of dozen selections are Ladakhi popular music, and another dozen or so are Ladakhi traditional music of various genres. Most recordings of both popular and traditional music have been produced in studios in Delhi or Jammu, with a few done in small Ladakhi studios.

In the past decade, the number and sophistication of Ladakhi production facilities has increased, with the top studios having multiple sound booths, digital mixing and editing, and sophisticated post-production such as doubling of tracks for a fuller sound. The awareness of digital production techniques is becoming more common, especially among singers who have

any contact with mass media facilities. In fact, while I was making field recordings, a number of notable singers requested CD or DVD copies, so they could do such editing on computers owned by friends and/or family. This is hardly surprising where many farmhouses, even in remote rural areas, have solar photo-voltaic chargers for batteries and satellite television dishes. The most sophisticated example was when I spent a number of hours observing recording sessions run by singer/composer/producer Dorjay (Stakmo). His studio opposite the Sonam Narboo Memorial Hospital features PCs with Pro Tools and other editing software, with which he carefully lays down tracks.

### **Representations of Tradition**

Mass media representations of traditional culture in Leh district focus on images of rural life: clothing, farming, nomadic herding, mountain passes, as well as Buddhist iconography. These images have been used in the packaging and presentation of recorded music, since cassette and CD technologies became locally available in the 1980s and 90s. A detailed examination of various examples reveals a number of trends.

Morup Namgyal<sup>5</sup> (figure 3.7) dominated the Ladakhi music scene, both as AIR program director from the 1970s through the 90s, and as a public performer and composer. His access to recording studios allowed him to produce a variety of influential recordings, both of traditional and popular music. The cover art for his cassettes and CDs uses Buddhist iconography and

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<sup>5</sup> His name is variously spelled “Murup” or “Morup”. On his Facebook page it is spelled “Morup”.

scenes of rural life. For example, his cassette of *tendel lu* (figure 3.8) has a picture of the eight auspicious signs<sup>6</sup>-- a straightforward choice.



**Figure 3.7. Morup Namgyal**

Both his Music Center cassette *Folk Songs of Ladakh* (n.d.) (figure 3.9) and the 2003 CD (figure 3.10) of the same name use images of rough-clad rural men and women for the covers.

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<sup>6</sup> *ashtamangala* (Tibetan *bkra-shis rtags-brgyad*) These symbols include:

1. Lotus flower. Representing purity and enlightenment.
2. Endless knot, or, the Mandala. Representing harmony.
3. Golden Fish pair. Representing conjugal happiness and freedom.
4. Victory Banner. Representing a victorious battle.
5. Wheel of Dharma. Representing knowledge.
6. Treasure Vase. Representing inexhaustible treasure and wealth.
7. Parasol. Representing the crown, and protection from the elements.
8. Conch shell. Representing the thoughts of the Buddha. (Beer 1999)

Before I met him in 2009, I had thought that the man on the cassette cover was Morup Namgyal, in part because his name is directly under the male image. It should be noted that both men on the CD cover are bearded elders in traditional rural costume. These images, aimed at the urban Leh audience and/or non-Ladakhi tourists, clearly use the tropes of age = tradition = rural = traditional songs. Added to these tropes is the Music Center production company's logo: a *surna* and *daman*. In the minds of many Ladakhis these instruments are emblematic of traditional music. This was summarized a couple of years ago when talking to pop singer/songwriter Phontsok Tsering Dembir. We were discussing the possibility of his touring the U.S. to perform folk songs<sup>7</sup>. He speculated as to whether we could get *surna* and *daman* players as well. He noted that “it just isn't the same without *surna* and *daman*” (Conversation in English, 6/2008).



Figure 3.8. Morup Namgyal cassette: *Auspicious Folk Songs*

<sup>7</sup> Tashi Rabgias is his uncle, and Lama Jamspal is an older cousin or “uncle”—so many Ladakhis I meet are related to each other.

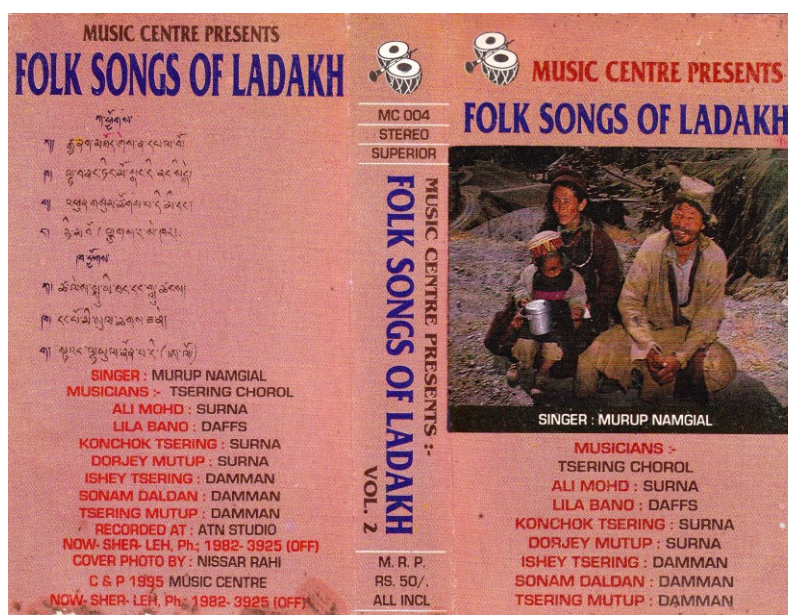


Figure 3.9. Morup Namgyal cassette: *Folk Songs of Ladakh*

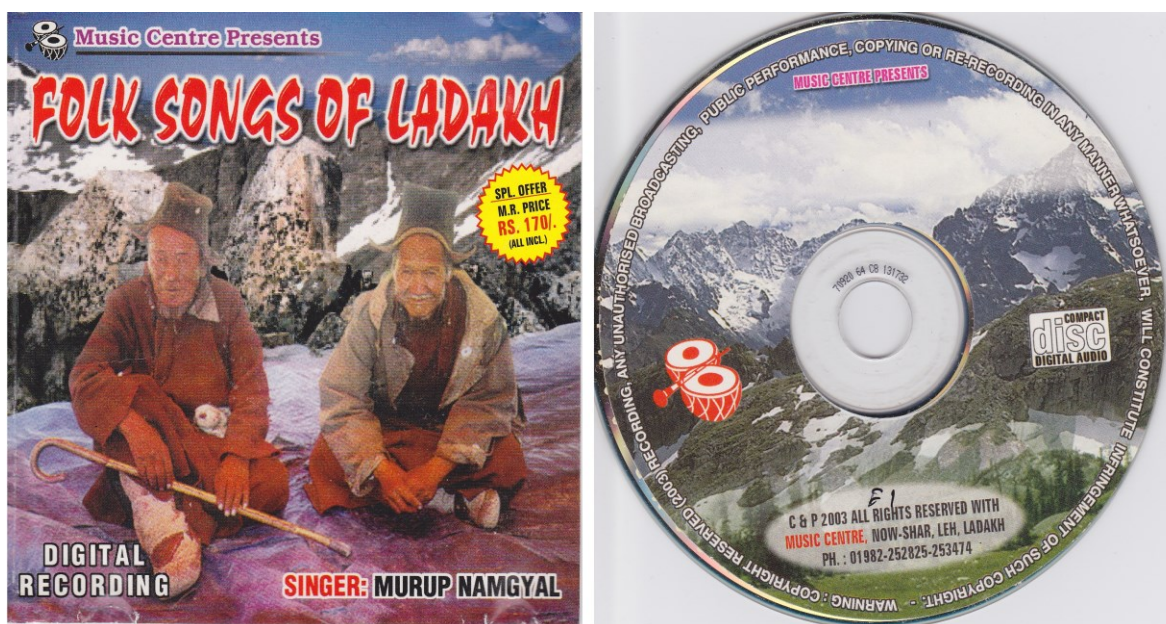


Figure 3.10. Morup Namgyal CD: *Folk Songs of Ladakh*

It might be argued that these last mentioned covers are somewhat disingenuous in omitting Morup Namgyal's image, focusing instead on images that evoke rural authenticity. Like most Ladakhis, Morup Namgyal was born in a village (Wanla), but is educated, and lives as a sophisticated Leh urbanite, often wearing a jacket and tie for formal, secular occasions. Interestingly enough, it is common for Tibetan and Ladakhi Buddhists to wear traditional male and female dress for formal religious occasions, such as teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We see this in the photograph of Morup Namgyal (figure 3.7), at a 2009 address by His Holiness at the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies, and in the following photo I took as people were waiting for His Holiness's motorcade to come from the airport for his 2009 visit (Figure 3.11). Clearly, for many Ladakhis, traditional dress is connected with auspicious occasions that have cultural significance, evoking thoughts of traditional life when seen in images.



**Figure 3.11. Ladakhis in traditional dress awaiting the Dalai Lama, Leh 2009**

Morup Namgyal's cassette of nomadic/Tibetan *zhabro* (dance) songs offers a picture of a Chang-pa nomad woman, baby on her back, tending to some yaks (figure 3.12).



Figure 3.12. Morup Namgyal cassette: *Jaabro*

A more nuanced approach to marketing *zhabro* by producer Sonam Tashi presents the main singer, Tsewang Dolma in traditional *sulma* (pleated over-dress) (Figure 3.13). The other people involved in the album are also pictured in traditional *gonchas* (Ladakhi men's robes). This approach is also followed by the very popular singer/producer Tundup Dorje from Stakmo Village (commonly known as Dorje Stakmo) as seen in figures 3.14 through 3.16. He is shown in figure 3.14 in *gonchas*, with various mountain and meadow scenes in the background. Oddly enough, his female support singer, Tibetan Tsetan Lhamo, is apparently not in traditional costume, but is shown in a smaller superimposed image, smiling beguilingly. This gives a mixed message of tradition and modern marketing of female image.



Figure 3.13. Dorje Stakmo Jaabro CD



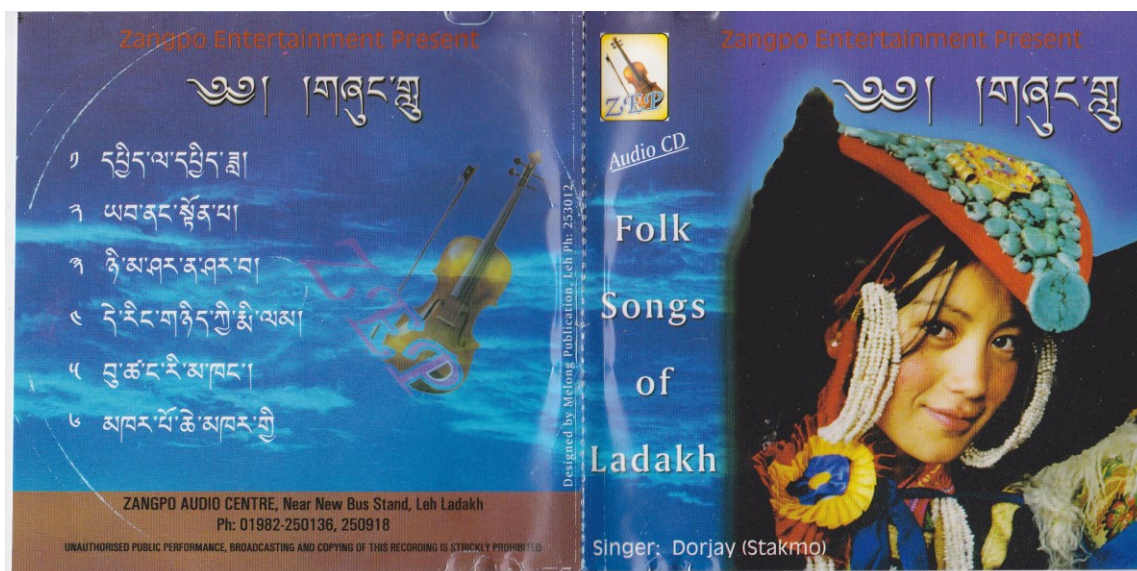
Figure 3.14. Skurbuchen village singers-Jaabro



Figure 3.15. Dorje Stakmo Folk Songs CD



Figure 3.16. Dorje Stakmo CD



**Figure 3.17. Dorje Stakmo CD**

As we see in the album covers in figures 3.16 and 3.17, exoticism and sexual allure are used as marketing tools. In a strategy similar to Morup Namgyal’s album covers Dorje Stakmo is not even shown. Instead, we see images of a demure young Ladakhi girl, wearing the traditional *perak* (festival headdress decorated with massive amounts of turquoise). This is supplemented with a stark, yet picturesque, image of Lamayuru Monastery in figure 3.16. In figure 3.17 the use of the violin image in the background may be construed as showing that the producers are global sophisticates, yet still authentically Ladakhi—either that or some graphic designer gratuitously chose a stock image relating to music.

We see similar exotic images in Khangsar Audio Center’s cassette *Ladvags kyi glu sang* (Ladakhi Song Collection), with a long-haired nomad framed against a mountain sunset (figure 3.18). Producer Rinchen Wacher presents similar images on the cassette cover for *Leh Chen Spal Khar* [The High Castle in Leh]: *the Folk Songs of Ladakh*, with a woman’s turquoise-encrusted *perak*, an ornate golden *gau* (reliquary talisman), and other jewelry arrayed on one side (figure 19). On the other side photos of the musicians present mixed images. On the one hand,

the vocalists are all shown in headshots with headphones on, singing into microphones—modern technological mastery. On the other hand, the *surna* player is shown in festive costume, playing his instrument—tradition. All this is superimposed on a faint image of a *damnyan*, an instrument more associated with the Chang-pa nomads, Tibetans, very old-fashioned Mon, or other singers.

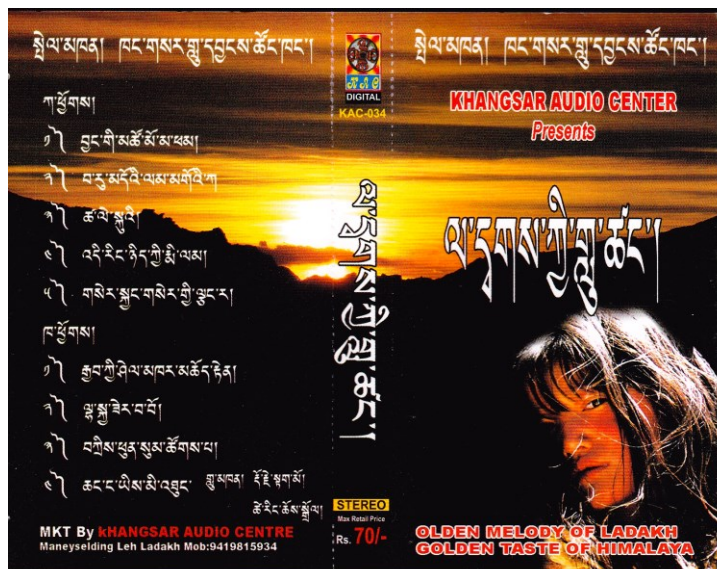


Figure 3.18. Wachter production- Ladakh song collection



Figure 3.19. Wachter production - Leh Chen Spal Khar

Some earlier cassettes from the 1990s present a more conservative bare bones packaging, such as those from the AWA production group. Two of their recordings feature older traditional singers: Tsering Stanzin, Padma Dorje, and the late Tsheshu Lamo (awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy Award for folk music, and referred to as the Lata Mangeshkar of Ladakh) (figures 3.20 and 3.21).

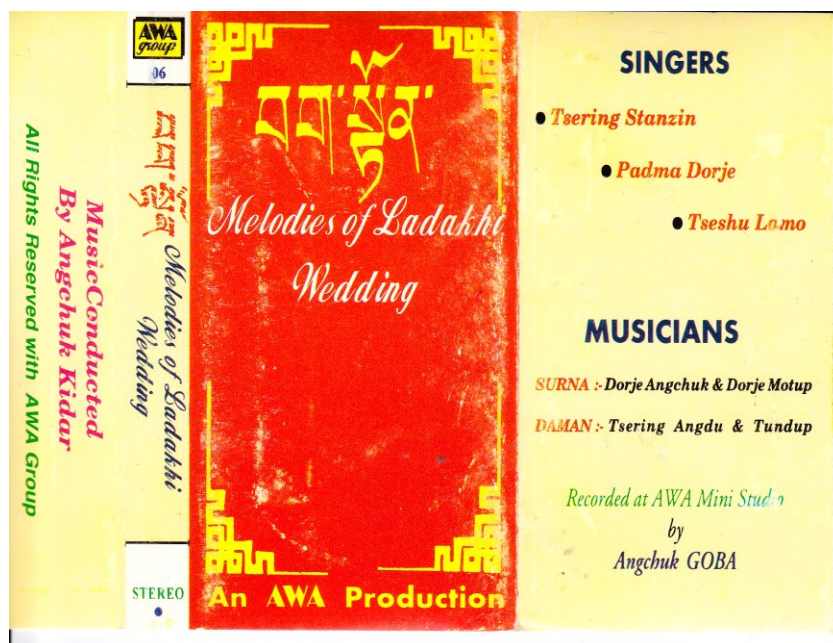


Figure 3.20. AWA cassette of *Bagston lu*

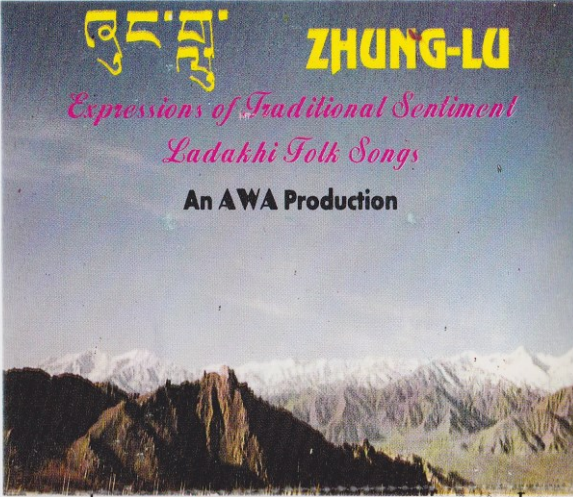

<p><b>A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● WAKHE DAKBU</li> <li>● KYAGAR SUMUR</li> <li>● SGAON GONPA</li> <li>● RTES</li> </ul>	<p><b>B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RTSEWE TSUKTOR</li> <li>● MANE MANTHAK</li> <li>● LDUMBURI SPANGTOT</li> <li>● SIKI ANGMO LE</li> </ul>
<p><b>SINGERS</b></p>	
<p>● TSERING STANZIN ● PADMA DORJE ● TSESHU LAMO</p>	
<p><b>MUSICIANS</b></p>	
<p>PIWANG :- SURNA :- DAMAN :-</p>	<p>Angchuk Kidar Dorje Angchuk &amp; Dorje Motup Tsering Angdu &amp; Tundup</p>
<p><i>Music Conducted By Angchuk Kidar</i></p>	
<p><b>Recorded at AWA Mini Studio by Angchuk GOBA</b></p>	
	
<p><b>འུང་ལུ</b>      <b>ZHUNG-LU</b></p> <p><i>Expressions of Traditional Sentiment</i> <i>Ladakhi Folk Songs</i></p> <p><b>An AWA Production</b></p>	
 <p>05</p> <p><b>འུང་ལུ</b>      <b>ZHUNG-LU</b></p> <p><i>Expressions of Traditional Sentiment</i> <i>Ladakhi Folk Songs</i></p> <p>STEREO</p>	
<p><b>A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་བྲག་རྒྱུག་</li> <li>● ལྷ་དགའ་གཞུང་ལྷ་ལྷ་</li> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་དགའ་ལྷ་</li> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་དགའ་ལྷ་</li> </ul>	<p><b>B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་གཞུང་གཞུང་</li> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་གཞུང་གཞུང་</li> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་གཞུང་གཞུང་</li> <li>● ལྷ་ཁའི་གཞུང་གཞུང་</li> </ul>
<p><i>All Rights Reserved with AWA Group</i></p>	

Figure 3.21. AWA production--Zhung-lu

The Ladakh Ecology Development Group (LEDeG), in addition to its main focus, has worked with Gen Tashi Rabgias, publishing a number of his collections of poems, as well as books of song texts in a similar vein to LYL. They have also published a few cassettes of traditional Ladakhi music.

The LEDeG cassettes are packaged as part of the general agenda for cultural development and preservation. The label of *Songs from Ladakh* (figure 3.22) notes that “this recording was produced by the Ladakh Project, an organization working to protect the fragile natural environment and the Tibetan culture of Ladakh, a remote region of northern India. Proceeds from the sale of this cassette help support this work.” The Ladakh Project, the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL), and the LEDeG were established by the International Society for Ecology and Culture, an organization headquartered in Bristol, England. However, these are all indigenous organizations, designed to foster traditional, sustainable living, while providing Ladakhis with information about the impact of conventional development on their culture (<http://www.localfutures.org/ladakh-project>). With bilingual song track labels, the target market is clearly tourists and locals. The imagery of a nomad woman and her children is designed to elicit a desire to help the rural poor.

The covers of the two recordings labeled *Rtendel: Folk Songs of Ladakh* (figures 3.23 and 3.24) are more problematic in that almost nothing is translated on the covers except for the names of the musicians and producers (in this case AWA Mini Studio with Anchuk Goba). It would seem that these were prepared locally, with a less definite vision of presentation and marketing. The imagery on both cassette labels shows women in festival dress dancing, which indexes to tradition.



Figure 3.22. LEDG - Songs from Ladakh



Figure 3.23. LEDG - Rtendel



Figure 3.24. LEDG -Rtendel

### Video CDs and the Portrayal of Tradition

The advent of video has allowed for richer semiology, a dimension that Dorje Stakmo has been exploring extensively. In his video CD, *Zhung lu: First Folk Video Album of Ladakh* (figure 3.25), he presents five vignettes as settings for individual folksongs. Each depicts totally traditional rural settings; all with Buddhist themes. An analysis of images from two of these videos is revealing.



Figure 3.25. Dorje Stakmo's first VCD album cover



Figure 3.2. Image of Maitreya Buddha from Thiksey

The title frame of the VCD proclaims the inauguration of *zhung lu* videography. The connection to tradition and religion is shown by the depiction of the main image of Maitreya (the future Buddha) from Thiksey Monastery, probably the most iconic image in all Ladakh (figure 3.26). In the background, ceremonial *lha nga* (god drumming) music is heard on *surna* and *daman*, honoring an auspicious beginning. This is followed by the title frame (figure 3.27) with a *surna* and *daman* melody playing briefly, which segues into the first video.



**Figure 3.27. VCD title frame**

The first song, *rgya nag po tho shes na* (If you know the Chinese altar), is from the Gesar saga, with a text listing his childhood conquests, similar to those mentioned in previous chapters. We are presented with the scene of *khar mon* (palace musicians) in processional down from the heights, playing *lha nga* (figure 3.28).



**Figure 3.28. *Khar Mon* honoring Gesar with *Lha Nga***

We then see King Gesar (labeled in a caption) descending the steps, flicking offerings of water and *ngam phe* (roasted barley flour) to the air with his fingers, as his subjects bow to him.

The scene shifts to a yogi sitting in meditation (figure 3.29). He recites a prayer praising Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara) in his aspect as King Gesar. This sets the tenor for the rest of the video which can be viewed as a devotional piece.



**Figure 3.29. Yogi praising Gesar/Chenrezig**



**Figure 3.30. Gesar the horseman**

The image shifts back to the palace, as Gesar mounts his horse and rides off into the mountains (figure 30). Gesar is known as an expert horseman, so throughout the piece he is seen riding.

The song then begins, with the actor lip-synching to the voice of Dorje Stakmo. The song text recounts the youthful Gesar’s conquests, as discussed previously in Chapter 2, alternating with invocation to Gesar as an avatar of the compassionate Chenrezig.

As the action proceeds, we see the king perform a series of acts of devotion, manifesting magical/spiritual power. He offers a *khatag* (prayer scarf) at a shrine, and then carves the Chenrezig mantra, *Om mani padme hum*, on a rock—a common devotional practice (figure 3.31). Through the magic of video technology, we witness the miraculous appearance of a *khatag* (figure 3.32), followed by a cup of tea. We then see an arrow shot into the air becoming a ball of blessed light (figure 3.33). The song ends with a bow to the buddhas, dedicating the merit of his actions for the benefit of all sentient beings—again, common Buddhist practice (figure 3.34).



**Figure 3.31.** Carving *Om mani padme hum*



Figure 3.32. Magically manifesting a *khatag*



Figure 3.33. Shooting the magic arrow



**Figure 3.34. Dedicating merit for all sentient beings**

The next video on the CD is a setting of the *zhung lu Thiksey Gompa*. The opening scene is a Ladakhi dinner party in a traditional kitchen. The men are seated at *chogtse* (low Tibetan tables) (figure 3.35), with the women on the other side of the kitchen (figure 3.36). The hostess is serving, and as she salutes the guests (figure 3.37), we see the kitchen that is the social center of rural homes, with the dishes in glass-fronted cabinets, and the brass decorated iron stove that is the home for its own tutelary deity, the *thab lha* (stove god).



**Figure 3.35. Traditional Ladakhi dinner party**

A Mon enters the room announcing that he and his group will supply music. Oddly, the actor/musician has a stammer. The question I have is: is it just incidental, or does this play into some stereotype, perhaps of Mon being inbred? The members of the dinner party then decide that they want to hear the song about the famous Gelug-pa monastery.



**Figure 3.36. Women sitting behind the stove**



**Figure 3.37. The hostess in the traditional kitchen**

The actor playing the host then lip-synchs the song sung by Dorje Stakmo to the sound of the *surna* and *daman* (figure 3.38). At various stages, the other men display outpourings of emotion and devotional feeling and gently stroke or cup each other's faces in displays of camaraderie. We see this type of male bonding in other videos produced by Dorje.



**Figure 3.38. Mon playing for the party**

The song itself is structured as a mandala with praise to the various levels of the world and human society, connecting them to Thiksey Gompa as the center. The images go through a visualization, starting with a long exterior shot (figure 3.39), moving from the row of stupas in front of the complex (figure 3.40), to the interiors of the temples and prayer halls with the assembly of monks (figure 3.41). The focus finally shifts to the

central icon of the founding Thiksey Rinpoche<sup>8</sup> on the altar (figure 3.42). The scene then ends with a close-up of the current Thiksey Rinpoche,<sup>9</sup> leading the prayers (figure 3.43). The views then reverse, ending up back at the distant view of the monastery.



**Figure 3.39. Thiksey Gompa**

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<sup>8</sup> Jangsem Sherab Zangpo (1395-1457). Rinpoche is a title indicating a reincarnated lama, usually occupying a monastic and sometimes political position, e.g. the Dalai Lamas as political heads of Tibet.

<sup>9</sup> Thiksey Rinpoche Ngawang Jamyang Chamba Stanzin, b. 1943, is the ninth incarnation of Jangsem Sherab Zangpo. Besides his scholarly and religious accomplishments, he served as a member of the Rajya Sabha (upper house of parliament) from 1989-2002, addressing grass roots problems in Ladakh.



**Figure 3.40. Thiksey stupas**



**Figure 3.41. Assembly hall with monks**



**Figure 3.42. The first Thiksey Rinpoche**



**Figure 3.43. The current Thiksey Rinpoche**

Dorje Stakmo's next *zhung lu* VCD weaves the songs into a continuous story depicting images of village life with little dramas and stresses, resolving into heartfelt rural harmony. In this VCD Dorje employs songs in a similar way to Bollywood movies, using them interspersed and/or simultaneous with the action. He also uses a broader variety of instruments than just *surna* and *daman*. The traditional ensemble is not used for the majority of the songs, but for the most part plays faintly in the background. It is used more actively in a fight scene in which a village rowdy is rampaging, underscoring the action with a dramatic, urgent motif.



Figure 3.44. Dorje Stakmo's VCD

As seen from the cover (figure 3.44), the double whistle flute figures prominently in accompanying songs. Both it and the single *ling bu* are associated with herders and are deeply associated with rural life. The mixing of flute and *daman* is innovative, but still clearly indexes to traditional village life. From a musical production point of view it has the advantage of being

less overwhelming than *surna* in conjunction with the solo voice of Dorje. Clearly his experience as a popular and traditional singer, as well as a recording engineer and producer, has allowed him to make such an artistic choice and have it be well received by the Ladakhi public.

### **Conclusions**

This body of music has a shrinking place in Ladakh as that society has changed since Indian independence in 1947. In part these changes are the result of Mon rejecting their despised position, leaving no one to perform on *surna* and *daman*. In part the changes are the result of a shift to a faster-paced, more mobile economy where people do not have time for lengthy ceremonies like weddings, or of the fact that farm work is often performed by Nepali migrant labor instead of Ladakhi farmers. The seductively ubiquitous Hindi mass media presence has grown tremendously. Yet this same mass media has also allowed traditional songs to spread beyond their usual venues, and is serving as a vehicle for preservation as well.

On the other hand, the collection of song texts and broadcasts of recordings by singing stars has tended to create a folkloric canon of “official” or “correct” versions, to the detriment of local variants. Ngawang Tsering Shakspo has noted this trend, but casts it in an optimistic light:

The fact that old songs are now being collected, and new ones composed, written and broadcast, implies that a process of standardization is probably occurring whereby regional variations are becoming less pronounced. The writing of the songs must itself be having considerable effect on the nature of what was previously a purely oral tradition. It is obvious that the face of the folk tradition is changing quite rapidly in some respects and will probably continue to do so in the future. However, this

is only possible because the tradition of song in Ladakh is so strong that such changes are both necessary and accommodated in its already rich cultural heritage (Shakspo 2008: 75).

The major transformation of Ladakhi society to a tourism-based economy starting in the 1990s has pumped a huge amount of capital into the economy, and fostered a sense of regional pride that was lacking in previous decades. This has given rise to a market, both locally and for tourists, for recorded music and videos that depict traditional music and dance. The marketing of “tradition” is closely linked with images of rural costumes, agriculture, homes, and history. These resonate with the Ladakhi middle class that consumes mass media, reinforcing a sense of continuity with family back in the villages. Thus we see a shifting back and forth between t-shirt and jeans to the *gonchas* (male robe), and between Punjabi-style *salwar-kameez* (women’s baggy pants and tunic) and traditional *sulma* (pleated dress), as dictated by the formality of the occasion. Media presentations linking traditional images with song reinforce the sense of Ladakhi identity.

## Chapter 4

### Musical Characteristics of Traditional Ladakhi Song

Francke noted that “the Ladakhi music and art of dancing is so entirely different from Tibetan music and dancing that non-Tibetan influences must be suspected” (Francke 1904: 366). Ladakhi melodic style is more likely derived from Kashmiri and Indian melodic models, although showing strong pentatonic usages. Ladakhi songs in many genres are shaped by the complex isorhythmic drum cycles on *daman* and *daf*. There is evidence of an overlay of Kashmiri, Balti, or Central Asian instrumental style, especially in the *daman* rhythms. In my analysis of rhythm, melodic structure, form, and text setting, I focus primarily on the four representative genres: *rten 'brel glu*, *bag ston glu*, *chang glu*, and *gzhung glu*. I do however look at other genres represented in LYL to give a wider overview.

#### Song Rhythms

In many genres rhythms played on *daman* or *daf* provide an isorhythmic foundation (Trewin 1990a). This is in contrast to most genres of Tibetan music which do not have a strong emphasis on drumming, and have nothing analogous to the rhythmic cycles that govern so many Ladakhi genres. Although there is no explicit music theory such as the Indian *tala* system, there does exist some vocabulary to describe rhythm in Ladakhi music. This terminology may be viewed as implied musical theory to the extent that songs (including instrumental dances) are grouped together according to common rhythms that Trewin refers to as *glu rtsas* (Trewin 1995: 354). None of these has a name, such as *teental*, *dadra* etc., but songs are identified as being in the same rhythm.

The issue of terminology is of interest here. The word *rtsas* or *btsas* can mean a seed or to give birth to something, indicating the songs come from a common root. There are other words used to describe common rhythms. Lexicographer Rebecca Norman lists the word *sas*, meaning “rhythm” (Norman 2011: 225). Tsering Angchuk Ralam feels the correct word is *tshang*, meaning a nest, i.e. where a family of birds is together, and refers to the common rhythm itself. According to Trewin it is the actual groups or suites of songs performed in such common rhythms that are referred to as *glu tshang-s*.

Each repetition of the basic rhythmic cycles is known as *ldab* or *kyor*, each consisting of a series of beats (*rdung*) that do not vary as to number and length. They are internally organized according to a systematic variation of pitch, stress, resonance, and timbre. Each cycle starts on the principle beat or “heel” (*rkang*)—somewhat analogous to the *sam* in Indian music (Trewin 1995: 355). Melodies often start on the *rkang*, but in practice singers will often lead up to it with anacrusis utilizing non-lexical syllables or *tshig lad* (marked with parentheses in the notations). Examples of these usages are shown in Examples 4.1 – 4.3.

**Example -4.1- anacrusis leading to *rkang* in *rgyab ri brag dmar gyi tse mo***

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The first staff begins with a double bar line and a fermata over the first note, indicating an anacrusis. The lyrics are: (de la) rgyab ri brag dmar gyi tse (le) mo de. There are rhythmic markings: a '3' above a triplet of eighth notes on 'dmar gyi', and a '3' above a triplet of eighth notes on 'tse (le) mo de'. The second staff begins with a '5' above the first note and a '3' above a triplet of eighth notes on 'gyi mcho (lo)d rten'. The lyrics are: tse mo shel dkar gyi mcho (lo)d rten.

**Example -4.2-anacrusis leading to *rkang* in *ri bo g.yang can***

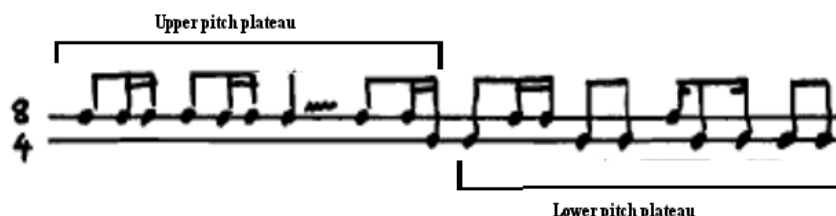
(de la la) nyi (li) ma shar de nas\_\_ shar (la) (la) ba  
 shar gyi\_\_ dro can nyi\_\_ ma (de la la) etc.

**Example 4.3— anacrusis leading to *rkang* in *ti sei shel dkar mchod rten***

la Ti sei la\_\_ shel\_\_ dkar (ri) mcho (lo) d rten  
 Dza (la)m bu ling gyi\_\_ sel lte

Trewin goes on to note that the internal organization of strong and weak beats is not always so clear. He points out that in simpler divisive meters with symmetrical beat groupings, such as those in 8 or 12, main beats are marked by clear accents of pitch or stress. The cycles are divided in two halves that are often marked by pitch plateaus with drum strokes being played on either the high, “female” drum (*mo skad*) or the lower “male” drum” (*pho skad*), as in Example 4.4.

### Example 4.4--Pitch plateau in symmetrical meter



However, with asymmetrical additive meters there often is an ambiguity in the drum beats with accents of duration, stress and pitch conflicting with agogic ones, as, for example, in the following rhythm (Example 4.5).

### Example 4.5-daman rhythm with ambiguous accents



Trewin points out in this example how there is a conflict between a grouping of 2-2-2-3 and 2-2-3-2, with a pitch accent occurring on the seventh beat and an agogic accent on the eighth beat. He notes that depending on the context, such as the pattern of melodic movement or dance steps, one would interpret the groupings one way or the other (Trewin 1995: 354-358). This ambiguity is seen in transcriptions (here done in 9/4 instead of 9/8) of two different songs set in the same *lu tshangs*. In *kaba rinpoche* (The Precious Pillar) (Example 4.6), we actually seem to have a shifting back and forth between a phrasing of 2-2-2-3 (measures 2, 3, 4, 7, 8) and 2-2-3-2 (measures 1 and 5).

Example 4.6—*ka ba rin po che*, as sung by Ali Mahmud —27 July 2009

ka ba la ri - (l)in po che gser la bzhe - (le)ngs yod (de ni)

3  
ka (la) stegs (po) gli - (li)ng bzhi ru khyab ka stegs gling bzhi ru

6  
khyab song ze - (le)r na (de ni) sa - (la) gzhi po 'o - (lo)d kyis sang

8  
khyab

There is far less rhythmic ambiguity in *dgom pa gser gyi bya skyibs* (Example 4.7), which primarily follows the 2-2-2-3 pattern.

Example 4.7--*dgon pa gser gyi bya skyibs* as sung by Ali Mahmud —27 July 2009

A

go-(lo)n pa-(la) se-(le)r gyi-(li) bya-(la) skyibs (de-ni)

3

ma-zhengs pa yi go (lo-n) pa

5

B

ma-(la) 'gyur btsan po ru zhu-(lu)gs so-(lo)ng ze-(le)r na

7

B-ornamented

dgon pa de bzhengpa (la) bas mtshar 'gyur med brtan po ru

10

bzhu-(lu)gs so-(lo)ng ze-(le)-r na (la) gser lcang de btsu-(lu)gs pa bas

12

mtshar

I myself performed this song at the dedication of the new library of the Ngari Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, and noted two different rhythmic patterns in the *daman*. When I was singing, the rhythm was more simple and regular as in Example 4.8 A below. When the *surna*

was playing there was mixed rhythmic ambiguity and tension in the *daman* rhythm, as in Example 4.7, section B and Example 4.5 above.

#### Example 4.8 -- 9-beat *daman* patterns

Example 4.8 consists of two musical staves, A and B, both in 9/4 time. Staff A, labeled 'Daman', shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Staff B, labeled 'B', shows a sequence of notes: a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note triplet, a quarter note triplet, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Both staves end with a double bar line.

What is interesting to note in Example 4.8 is the fluidity of rhythm, with a quarter and two eighth notes pattern in line A interchangeable with quarter note triplets in line B. Trewin noted similar patterns that are interchangeable with two eighths, with agogic accents shifting and becoming “smoothed out” as tempo increased (Example 4.9) (Trewin 1995: 356).

#### Example 4.9-rhythmic shift with tempo

Example 4.9 illustrates a rhythmic shift with tempo. It shows three musical notations: a 3:2 ratio labeled 'slow', a 5:2 ratio, and a 3:2 ratio labeled 'fast'. Arrows indicate the shift from slow to fast.

Rhythmic complexity and ambiguity do *not* generally carry over to the same degree into song melodies, which follow the basic landmarks of the rhythm in terms of beat groupings and stress. This difference between drumming and melody might suggest they may have different origins, with a more local melodic style being juxtaposed with the complexities of an elite

instrumental style. A broader study across various cultural areas might be enlightening in this regard, but goes well beyond the scope of the present study.

I have noted a similar use of isorhythmic cycles in recordings I've heard of Balti *surna/daman* ceremonial music. In them rhythms are fairly simple—either duple, triple, or a simple additive cycle of seven—with nothing analogous to the more complex additive meters seen in Ladakhi examples. There are similarities between Ladakhi and Balti rhythms in some of the alternating patterns of low/high/low/high/drum roll, as in the excerpt shown in Example 4.10 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RcIaPERusM>, accessed 7 March, 2013). The *surna* melody is tied to the drum cycle, played on a *daman* and a bass drum called *gring jang*, although there is a meandering quality to the melody that is more akin to the ceremonial Ladakhi *lha rnga* music where the drumming is the important element. As in some of the Ladakhi examples, the melody seems to exhibit some ambiguity between 3-3 and 2-2-2.

**Example 4.10-Balti instrumental piece for *surna*, *daman*, and *gring jang*  
Festival of *Jashn e Ghanche***

The musical score for Example 4.10 is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece for three instruments: Surna (treble clef), Daman (alto clef), and gring jang (bass clef). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 6/4. The Surna part features a melodic line with trills and grace notes. The Daman part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with trills. The gring jang part is a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system continues the piece, with 'Etc....' markings indicating that the music continues beyond the shown notation.

In contrast to the Balti example, melodies in genres such as *rtendel glu*, *chang glu*, and *gzhung glu* more obviously follow significant landmarks in the rhythms. In the transcription of *rten 'brel gsum pa* (Example 4.11) the correspondence of melodic line to the *daf* rhythm is quite clearly 2-2-3-2-2-3.

**Example 4.11—*rten 'brel gsum pa* with *daf* rhythm—Tsering Chorol 31-July-2012**

1. *dgung* *gnam* *zhe - (le)ngs* *pa* *(bo)* *ska - (la)r*  
 2. *'bur,* *du* *(lo)* *ba* *de (le)* *nyi (li)*  
 3. *dga'* *ba'i* *(le)n* *'brel* *po* *da - (la)ng*

Daf

Note: the higher notes in the daf are where the metal jangles sound

2

*tshogs* *su* *ma - (la) - ng* *byung*  
*ma* *dang* *zla (la)* *ba*  
*po* *de* *dang* *zung* *shig*

Daf

3

*dgung* *gnam* *zhe - (le)ngs* *pa* *(bo)* *ska - (la)r*  
*mdangs* *su* *(la)l* *ba* *de (le)* *nyi (li)*  
*zag* *med* *(le)n* *'brel* *po* *da - (la)ng*

Daf

4

*tshogs* *su* *ma - (la)ng* *byung*  
*ma* *dang* *zla (la)* *ba*  
*po* *de* *dang* *zu - (lu)ngs* *shig*

Daf

While learning to sing some of the more complicated songs, I was admonished to listen to the flow of the *daman* by a number of people who were not specifically musicians. On the other hand, I noticed when most people sing more complicated songs *a cappella*, they tend to be loose with the rhythm, and they have difficulty matching it to *daman* when singing with accompaniment—a common problem with guest singers at AIR.

The rhythms on *daman* in particular are taught using mnemonics that are similar to those used to convey Middle Eastern rhythmic modes—“dim” and “tang”. These are played on the low drum (*pho-skad*, male voice) and high drum (*mo-skad*, female voice) respectively. This is the method I most commonly heard when my various informants were reciting a rhythm.

In his 1995 Ph.D. dissertation Trewin noted a more complex tonal system analogous to Indian *naqqara* (kettle drums) using the following sounds (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Seven syllables for *daman* sounds (Trewin 1995:Ch. 7, Table 4)

bol	drum	pitch	resonance	timbre (location of stroke)	stress
NĀ/RĀ	mo-skad	high	open	near rim	relatively stressed
TĀ	mo-skad	high	open	between rim and centre	heavily stressed
TĪN	mo-skad	high	open	3-5cm from rim	fairly heavily stressed
GHE	pho-skad	low	open	centre	variable
KA	pho-skad	low	closed	centre	relatively light
DHĀ = NĀ or TĀ + GHE					
DHĪN = TĪN + GHE					

I have not heard this system being discussed by artists at AIR or elsewhere, but it may have currency among the traditional specialists in the ceremonial *lha rnga* music that Trewin was studying (Trewin 1995: 349).

### **Rhythmic Taxonomy of Songs**

According to Tsering Sonam Lagachirpon, most *lu tshangs* have no name, except for one which is called *chopo lu* (big song), which he demonstrated as having 14 beats. He says it is used for songs of Gesar such as *dering nyid milam bo* and *baru dzong yi lam go* which is a song from Kargil (p.c., 8 August 2011). Nevertheless, Ladakhi musicians can state quite definitively which songs belong to a given *glu tshangs*. Based upon this body of common knowledge, I have attempted to construct a taxonomy of the songs contained in LYL. Working with Tsering Chorol at AIR, we went through the entire list of songs in LYL, with her singing them while either banging out the *daman* rhythm on a desk or playing them on the *daf*. Starting at the beginning, each time we hit a *glu tshang* previously not encountered, we established that song as the base line (no pun intended) with which similar songs were grouped. Some songs neither she nor Ali Mahmud were able to perform, but in total we identified melodies for around one hundred of the texts.

What follows are primarily transcriptions of some of the rhythms performed by Chorol, along with her assessment of which songs belong in each of those *glu tshangs*. In addition, I include the transcription of the first song in the book in which she encounters each rhythm, followed by a table of songs that conform to that rhythm, listing the page number of the lyrics and the genre of each song. In some cases, I note that Chorol commented on how a song or genre not represented in LYL is grouped in a given rhythm.

Example 4.12 is an overview of the rhythms prevalent in the songs I collected from my informants and from commercial recordings.

**Example 4.12. Some common song rhythms**

1)



2)




3)



4)



5)



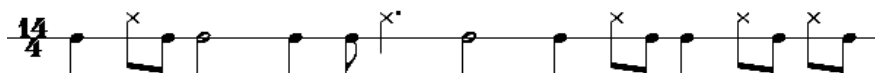
6)



1) *rten 'brel gsum pa* (2-2-3-2-2-3)

A transcription of the song with *daf* accompaniment is shown above in Example 4.11. This is the rhythm that Tsering Sonam Lagachirpon referred to as *Chopo glu* (long song).

**Example 4.13. Rhythm for *rten 'brel gsum pa* as played on *daf* by Chorol**



**Table 4.2. Songs in the same *glu tshangs* as *rten 'brel gsum pa***

Title	Page in LYL	Genre classification in LYL
<i>btsod pa zhid bul ang</i>	63	<i>gzhung glu</i>
<i>shel ldan gyu mtsho</i>	76	“ “
<i>seng ge bzhens pai sku mkhar</i>	98	“ “
<i>sngar gyi ri bo</i>	99	“ “
<i>phu ru chags pa gangs ri dkar po</i>	100	“ “
<i>steng phyogs lha yul</i>	116	“ “
<i>la-skya-zer-ba</i>	124	<i>glu kha 'thor ba rnam ni</i> (Assorted songs)
<i>khrig rtse dgon pa</i>	125	“ “
<i>bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa</i>	122	“”
<i>sgang dngon dgon pa</i>	128	“”
<i>mdaya stong mdeu stong</i>	133	“”
<i>gser zang</i>	137	“”
<i>jo kyi gu rin che</i>	149	“”
<i>bsod nams mtso moi glu</i>	151	“”
<i>sben sa dag pa</i>	155	“”
<i>'jig rten glu dbyangs</i>	163	“”
<i>'bri gung dgon pai glu</i>	166	“”
<i>gang thog chen po</i>	169	“”
<i>gong ma ya lam</i>	171	“”
<i>chu nang pa ro</i>	179	“”
<i>bkra shis dbang rgyal</i>	182	“”
<i>a zhang pai thog</i>	187	“”
<i>tse tse lhai phrug gu</i>	192	<i>gying glu</i>
<i>lung pai phu na</i>	195	“”
<i>dgung dnam sngon po</i>	198	“”

2) *rten 'brel lnga pa A (2-2-2-3)*

In its broadest outlines this rhythm has some similarities to the Turkish rhythm *karsilama*


**dum | tek | dum | tek | dum | tek | dum | tek | tek**


**1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9**

Example 4.15 (a repeat of Example 4.7) is a transcription of *daman* renditions, version A when performed with voice, B the more complex version performed with *surna*.

**Example 4.14. *rten 'brel lnga pa A* rhythm -- *daman* version**

A

Daman 

B 

Example 4.15 shows variants played by Chorol on *daf*. The third and fourth systems show the basic 2-2-2-3 structure very clearly.

**Example 4.15. Rhythm of *rten 'brel lnga pa A* showing variations played on *daf* by Chorol**

Daf 

Example 4.16-*rten 'brel lnga pa* sung by Chorol and Yangchen  
with *daf* accompaniment by Chorol-31 August 2012

The musical score is presented in four systems, each consisting of a vocal line (treble clef) and a Daf accompaniment line (drum notation). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 9/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1:  
 Vocal: ya gi dgu - (lu)ng sngon mo (lo) la (la)  
 Daf: Accompaniment for the first line.

System 2:  
 Vocal: skar tshog mang\_\_\_ tsam zhiɡ\_\_\_ zhiɡ\_\_\_  
 Daf: Accompaniment for the second line.

System 3:  
 Vocal: (pa) ya gi dgu - (lu)ng sngon mo (lo)\_\_\_  
 Daf: Accompaniment for the third line.

System 4:  
 Vocal: la (la) skar tshog mang\_\_\_ tsam zhiɡ 'dug  
 Daf: Accompaniment for the fourth line.

## Example 4.16 continued

7  
deng sang ngo - (lo)ms su thu-(lu)b pa ya gi nyi zla - (la)ng (la)

Daf

9  
gnyi - ka deng sa - (la)ng mda - (la)ngs su gsal - (la)

Daf

11  
ba ya gi nyi zla gnyis ka

Daf

Table 4.3. Songs in the same *glu tshangs* as *rtan 'brel lnga pa A*

Title	Page in LYL	Genre
<i>ka ba rinpoche</i>	77	<i>gzhung glu</i>
<i>ri bo gyang can</i>	78	“”
<i>'di phyi 'tso rgyan</i>	89	“”
<i>ka ltar zhabs zung</i>	90	“”
<i>spyi bo'i gtsug tor dgon pa</i>	96	“”
<i>he mis dgon pa</i>	103	“”
<i>tshog zangs mtsho mo</i>	114	“”
<i>dgon pa dung pa</i>	140	<i>glu kha 'thor ba rnam ni</i> (Assorted songs)
<i>pu ru gang</i>	143	“”
<i>dgon pa theg mchogs</i>	160	“”
<i>pre ta pu ri</i>	153	“”

3) *rten 'brel lnga pa B (2-2-2-2)*Example 4.17. *daf* pattern for *rten 'brel lnga pa B* as played on *daf* by Chorol

Daf

Example 4.18. *rten 'brel lnga pa B-- Chorol and Yangchen, Chorol on daf—31 July 2012*

ya gi shed dgung gnam sngo - (lo)n\_\_\_ mo - (lo)\_\_\_ la

Daf

2

nyí - (li) zla - (la) nyí - (li)s ka bo zhugs

2

ya gi shed dgung gnam sngo - (lo)n\_\_\_ mo - (lo)\_\_\_ la

3

nyí - (li) zla - (la) nyí - (li)s ka bo zhugs

4

nyí - (li) zla - (la) nyí - (li)s ka bo zhugs

4

5

rgyu skar 'dzoms po mtha de na skor gsum ze - (le)r na

Daf

6

rten 'brel dang po de dang zungs shig

Daf

7

rgyu skar 'dzoms po mtha de na skor gsum ze - (le)r na

Daf

8

rten 'brel dang po de dang zungs shig

Daf

**Table 4.4. Songs in the same *lu tshangs* as ‘*brel lnga pa B***

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page in LYL</b>	<b>Genre</b>
<i>rtendel rdunpa A</i>	8	<i>rten ‘brel glu</i>
<i>He mis dgon pa</i>	109	<i>gzhung glu</i>
<i>sku mkar ,tsho</i>	61	“”
<i>Ti se shel mkar mchod rten</i>	67	“”
<i>mkai spyod dag pai zhing khams</i>	80	“”
<i>stod rgyad gar</i>	86	“”
<i>rgyab ri shel dkar mchod rten</i>	94	“”
<i>gangs dang gya’ yi mtshams su</i>	101	“”
<i>gung nam ngon mo dkyil na</i>	111	“”
<i>rgya nag nor bu gling</i>	117	“”
<i>ka ni kai glu</i>	135	<i>glu kha ‘thor ba rnam ni (Assorted songs)</i>
<i>he mis gsang</i>	147	“”
<i>‘chor rbad la ‘go’i kha nas</i>	174	“”

4) *rten 'brel lnga pa C* (2-2-2-2)**Example 4.19.** *daf* patterns for *rten 'brel lnga pa C* as played by Chorol

Example 4.19 shows four staves of musical notation for the *daf* patterns. The notation is in 8/4 time, indicated by the time signature  $\frac{8}{4}$  at the beginning of the first staff. Each staff starts with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are written on a single-line staff with a treble clef. The patterns consist of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The first staff ends with a quarter rest. The second staff ends with a quarter rest. The third staff ends with a quarter note. The fourth staff ends with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

In another recording session, I was able to get more examples.

**Example 4.20.** Other *daf* patterns for *rten 'brel lnga pa C* as played by Chorol

Example 4.20 shows four staves of musical notation for the *daf* patterns. The notation is in 8/4 time, indicated by the time signature  $\frac{8}{4}$  at the beginning of the first staff. Each staff starts with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are written on a single-line staff with a treble clef. The patterns consist of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The first staff ends with a quarter note. The second staff ends with a quarter note. The third staff has a triplet of eighth notes indicated by a bracket and the number 3 below it, and ends with a quarter note. The fourth staff ends with a quarter note.

Example 4.21. *rten 'brel lnga pa C*—sung by Chorol and Yangchen,  
Chorol playing *daf*—31 July 2012

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a Daf accompaniment line (bass clef). The time signature is 8/4. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with a half note, followed by a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo gyi". The Daf accompaniment starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note.

**System 2:** The vocal line has a half note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "skor bo (de ni)". The Daf accompaniment starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note.

**System 3:** The vocal line has a half note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "dgung gnam bsod nams". The Daf accompaniment starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note.

**System 4:** The vocal line has a half note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "can". The Daf accompaniment starts with a half note, followed by a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a half note.

5  
ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo gyi

Daf

6  
skor bo (de ni)

Daf

7  
dgung gnam bsod nams

Daf

8  
can

Daf

**Table 4.5. Songs in the same *lu tshangs* as *'brel lnga pa C***

Title	Page in LYL	Genre
<i>rtendel rdunpa B</i>	10	<i>rten 'brel glu</i>
<i>dpal ldan bla mai gyas zu</i>	120	<i>gzhung glu</i>
<i>'brug yongs</i>	145	<i>glu kha 'thor ba rnam ni</i> (Assorted songs)
<i>gzims chung so ma'i g.yas na</i>	158	“”

Chorol commented that this rhythm is used in *chabs skyems yi glu*, a type of dance song where men dance with pitchers of *chang* balanced on their heads, and various *bagston sgo glu* (wedding door songs).

5) *rten 'brel rdun pa*—2-2-2-2Example 4.22. *daf* patterns for *rten 'brel rdun pa* as played by Chorol

Daf

Example 4.23. *rten 'brel rdun pa*—sung by Chorol with *daf*, 31 July 2012

Daf

2

(lu)m bid dang nyi zla

Daf

3

ska (la)r phran 'dzoms dang

Daf

4

gsum next verse Su

5  
 (lu)m bid dang nyi zla

Daf

6  
 ska (la)r phran 'dzoms dang

Daf

7  
 gsum

Daf

### 5) *chang glu* pattern 3-2-2-3-2-2

#### Example 4.24. *chang glu* rhythm as played by Chorol

7/4

This is one of the archetypal patterns in Ladakhi music, and is used not just in *chang glu*, but in many dance songs, such as those associated with the dance of the *nyao pa-s* (groom's attendants) in weddings. It resembles meters used in India such as *rupak tal* and *pushto tal*, as well as cycles in Baltistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. Interestingly enough, the Arabic name for this cycle is *Dawr Hindi* (cycle of India) (Maqam World 2007, Marcus 2002:91). It can be viewed as being in 14 rather than 7, as there are usually symmetrical halves to the melody and rhythm. In the song *bzo thabs* (The Skill of Brewing), the fourteen-beat phrasing is seen primarily in the melody.

Example 4.25. *bzo thabs*— sung by Chorol and Yangchen, Chorol on *daf*, 31 July 2012

chang 'di la bzo ba'i

thabs shig yod bzo thabs de 'dra

zhig bshad na chang yang 'thung

**Table 4.6. Songs in the *chang glu tshangs***

Title	Page in LYL	Genre classification in LYL
<i>bzo thabs</i>	53	<i>chang glu</i>
<i>dri ba dri lan</i>	55	“”
<i>chang pad ma'i yul</i>	58	“”

### 7) *shon glu* or *zhabs 'bro*— 3-3 against 2-2-2

This rhythm is used primarily in two dance song genres: *shon glu*, for the festival *shondol* dance and *zhabs 'bro* (pronounced *zhabro* or *jabro*), a type of circle or line dance of the Changthang Plateau nomads. Although a detailed examination here is beyond the scope of the current study, I do want to discuss a few points.

#### Example 4.26. *Zhabs 'bro* melody with *daman* rhythms

Recorded in AIR studio 29 July 2012

The musical score for Example 4.26 is presented in two systems. The first system includes a melody line in treble clef (3/8 time) and two daman parts in bass clef (6/8 time). The melody begins with a rest followed by a quarter note, then a series of eighth notes. The daman parts consist of rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system continues the melody and daman parts, with the melody line featuring a sixteenth-note triplet and a quarter note. The daman parts continue with their respective rhythmic patterns.

According to Ngawang Tsering Shakspo, these genres originate outside Ladakh, the *Shon glu* in Gilgit, Baltistan, and the *zhabs 'bro* in Tibet (2010:201-203). However, the best known Tibetan *zhabs 'bro* are in duple meters, so it may be that the Changthang version, while danced in ways similar to the Tibetan version, may have adopted the triple meter from further west. In *zhabs 'bro* the use of tabla, harmonium, *daman* and *sgra nyan* (Tibetan lute), are further

indications of a syncretic genre. In both *shon glu* and *zhabs 'bro* the use of hemiola, either with 3 against 2, or 3-3 alternating with 2-2-2, is prevalent in the percussion parts.

### **Form in Traditional Song Genres**

In Tibetan songs, the basic unit is the stanza (Crossley-Holland 1967:12). I have found the same to be true in Ladakhi traditional song, with stanzas having four, six or eight lines. The relationship of lines in a stanza to rhythmic cycles varies depending on how syllables are set (i.e., purely syllabic, melismatic, or having non-lexical interpolations), the speed of cycle, as well as the number of syllables in each line. The stanza can be broken up according to a few different schemes. Example 4.27 gives a transcription with the first stanza of the famous *Lha sa'i skor lam phra mo* (Lhasa's Narrow Circumambulation Road), along with the text and translation of that and the second stanza.

**Example 4.27. *Lha sa'i skor lam 'phra mo*--1st stanza,  
sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam, 19 August 2009**

8

Lha (la) sa'i skor lam phra mo na  
 skye (les) pai pha yul gyi mi yu na  
 glé (le) chen dpal khang gyi mi po

3

mi (li) tshogs (po) mang tsa (la)m dug(2x)  
 che - (le)n (po) gse - (le)r la (la) dkon  
 ri (li)n che - (le)n gse - (le)r la (la) dkon

**lha sa'i skor lam phra mo na mi tshogs mang tsam 'dug (2x)**  
**skyes pa'i pha yul gyi mi po na chen gser las dkon,**  
**gle chen dpal khang gi mi po rin chen gser las dkon.**

If there are many crowds on Lhasa's narrow circumambulation road, (2x)  
 Then the great man from the land of my birth does golden work,  
 Then the great, precious man from great Leh's palace does golden work.

**chu de chu sna 'dzoms po mi yul gyi gzhung na 'dug,**  
**chu de chu sna 'dzoms po lha sa yi gzhung na 'dug,**  
**chang de a rag bdud tsi rang gi yul na 'dug,**  
**skyems grang a rag bdud tsi gle chen dpal khang na 'dug.**

If there is that perfect type of water in the homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of water in Lhasa's center,  
 Then there is *chang*, *arak*, nectar in my own country,  
 Then there is cold honored *chang* in great Leh's palace.

Each line of the stanza has the same music, consisting of parallel phrases, with an open ending on the fifth in the first, closed ending on the tonal center in the second. In the case of the first stanza, the first line is repeated, with different third and fourth lines, giving a music/text relationship of  $AAA_1A_2$ , and subsequent verses  $AA_1A_2A_3$ , where the subscripts indicate that the same music has different lyrics.

A different music/verse relationship is seen in *dgom pa gser gyi bya skibs* (The Monastery of the Golden Cave) (Example 4.28)

Example 4.28. *dgom pa gser gyi bya skibs*  
 sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam, 19 August 2009

**A**

go - (lo)n pa - (la) se - (le)r gyi - (li) bya - (la) \_\_\_\_\_ skyibs (de-ni)

5

ma - zhengs \_\_\_\_\_ pa yi \_\_\_\_\_ go (lo - n) pa

**B**

ma - (la) 'gyur btsan po ru \_\_\_\_\_ zhu - (lu)gs so - (lo)ng ze - (le)r na

7

dgom pa de bzhengpa (la) bas mtshar \_\_\_\_\_ 'gyur \_\_\_\_\_ med brtan po ru \_\_\_\_\_

10

bzhu - (lu)gs so - (lo)ng ze - (le) - r na (la) gser lchang de btsu - (lu)gs pa \_\_\_\_\_ bas

12

mtshar \_\_\_\_\_

**dgon pa gser gyi bya skyibs**  
**ma bzhengs pa yi dgon pa (x2)**  
**ma ‘gyur btsan po ru bzhugs song zer na**  
**dgon pa de bzhengs pa bas mtshar**  
**‘gyur med brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na**  
**dgon pa de bzhengs pa bas mtshar.**

The Monastery of the Golden Cave

The monastery not built (by human hands) (x2)

If someone says the unchanging king dwelt there

The monastery built by a miracle

If someone says the unchanging king dwelt there

The monastery built by a miracle

The first two lines are repeated in both the music and the lyrics, again with a parallel phrase structure in the melody, but there is a second melodic section with an paired phrase structure that is used for the third and fourth lines: AAB<sub>1</sub>B<sub>2</sub>.

Another music/stanza scheme is seen in *Stod rGyad Gar* (Above is India) (Example 4.29) with pairs of lines in a parallel phrase relationship, the first phrase (mm. 1-2) ending on the first note of the scale, and the second phrase (mm. 3-4) ending on the fourth.

Example 4.29. *stod rgyad gar*

sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam, 19 August 2009

stod rgya gar gyi yul du cho - (lo)s kyi bstan pa dar

3  
stod rgya gar gyi yul du cho - (lo)s kyi bstan pa dar

5  
chos ma yol ba'i gong du du - (lu)ng gi bstan pa dar

7  
chos ma yol ba'i gong du du - (lu)ng gi bstan pa dar

9  
chos dung dkar po - (lo) zer ba cho - (lo)s kyi sna 'dren yin

11  
chos dung dkar po zer ba cho - (lo)s kyi sna 'dren yin

Crossley-Holland found a number of the Tibetan examples he studied had some sort of refrain, either repeating words or non-lexical syllables (ibid: 12). None of the one hundred twenty-eight songs in LYL has evidence of a refrain. However, one point of similarity between the repertoires is the use of strophic pairing of stanzas with antiphony. Crossley-Holland noted these occurring especially in songs of labor, dance, and love (ibid). I have previously discussed antiphonal structures in the type of marriage songs known as “door songs” (*sgo glu*), with their

challenge and response. We also see a similar format in the performance of sarcastic/teasing songs between groups of young men and women (*tsig glu*), although the stanzas are not specifically paired, and are thrown out in response to whatever was sung by the opposite side. The statement/response or question/answer format is also used in a number of *chang glu* as well—very apt for social activities like drinking.

I found another example of statement/response structure in the genre known as classification songs (*'byed 'dzug*) (LYL:222), which uses a complex variant with alternating sides singing couplets or single lines, with the two parties singing a couplet together inviting everyone to dance. Unfortunately, I have not found an informant who knows the exact melody, but Tsering Chorol described the singing of it (p.c. 22 July 2012). The flow, with Q for question, A for answer, T for together, 1 for a single line, 2 for a couplet is as follows:

Q2 A2 Q1 A1 Q1 A1 T2 | Q2 A2 Q1 A1 Q1 A1 T2 | Q2 A2 Q1 A1 Q1 A1 T2 |

Of examples in LYL the use of T2 comes closest to a refrain.

A song that does make clear use of a refrain structure is the neo-traditional song *Ali Yato le*, attributed to Aba Tsewang Dorje, ca. 1960 (Example 4.30)—probably the most famous song in all Ladakh. It is not included in LYL, but is considered by all Ladakhis to be “traditional.” Measures 9-12 in the transcription are a refrain that is repeated with each stanza. I have not made a study of a large body of neo-traditional songs to determine whether refrains are common or not—that is beyond the scope of the present study.

Example 4.30. *Ali Yato le*, first verse

The musical score is written in a single treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of six staves of music, each with a measure number (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11) at the beginning. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words in Tibetan and some in English. The lyrics are: dbyar kha la kha thon pa de la 'brog sa bed mo yed; spang dan me tog pa lu su li dri shim 'thul 'thul yod; gyag dan 'bri dan ra ma lug ge khru chen khyu chung yed; mar dan 'o ma da ra phyur phe bshon chu 'di ri re ha yi; a li a do le he shu rcu lnga le; gyen gyen gyen la bcag ste 'khyer a li ya do le; thur thur thur la bcag ste 'khyer a li ya do le.

1  
dbyar kha la kha thon pa de la 'brog sa bed mo yed

3  
spang dan me tog pa lu su li dri shim 'thul 'thul yod

5  
gyag dan 'bri dan ra ma lug ge khru chen khyu chung yed

7  
mar dan 'o ma da ra phyur phe bshon chu 'di ri re ha yi

9  
a li a do le he shu rcu lnga le

11  
gyen gyen gyen la bcag ste 'khyer a li ya do le  
thur thur thur la bcag ste 'khyer a li ya do le

### **Melodic Characteristics of Ladakhi Songs**

Ladakhi/Tibetan terminology used in discussing music is not as detailed as the terminology of either Western music or Indian classical music.

[N]ative terminology does not make the kind of distinctions that are made in western music culture: the term for monastic music instrumental music, *rol-mo*, is also used to described non-monastic instrumental music, as well as music in general; the term for monastic chant, *dbyangs*, is similarly used to describe non-monastic song. If there is a need to make any kind of distinction, or to clarify the level of reference, then music as a general category, rather than monastic instrumental music in particular, may be referred to as *rol-mo-dbyangs* (“instrumental music and song”), or song as a general category. rather than monastic chant in particular, may be referred to as *glu-dbyangs* (“vocal melody”) (Trewin 1995: 85-86).

The thirteenth-century Tibetan scholar Sakya Pandita characterised the singing of “far Westerns” (i.e. of Tibet) as “neighing, sing[ing] with knots (*mdud-pa*)” (Ellingson 1979:235). Rather than referring to a constrained vocal style, as Ellingson suggests, Trewin feels this description perhaps reflects the tumbling quartal and quintal patterns, frequently in chains of interlocking sequences which are characteristic of Ladakhi melody (Trewin 1990b). An example of a “tumbling quartal/quintal pattern” can be seen in Example 4.31.

**Example 4.31. "tumbling quintal and quartal patterns"**

ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo dgung gnam

bso - (lo)d na - (l)ams ca - (lan)n zhi

Picken noted the differential features of Ladakhi vocal music in ascent and descent (1957:141), which he attributes to border conditions, i.e., mixing of pentatonic ascent with hepta- and hexatonic descent. For example, in Example 31 above we see a pentatonic 1-2-3-5-6 structure in measures 1-2 and a 6-5-4-3-2-1 descent in measure 3. Similarly, in example 30 there is a consistent ascending pattern of 1- $\flat$ 3-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1 and a descending pattern of 1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4- $\flat$ 3-2-1.

**Scale patterns in Ladakhi song**

In their 1987 study of Ladakhi music, Trewin and Stephens examined over one hundred songs and identified certain common melodic characteristics. Firstly, they noted that the majority are based around ahemitonic pentatonic scales, mainly on a scale similar to the Indian Bhupali scale, i.e. 1-2-3-5-6-1. While this is certainly a common melodic structure, it should be added that in an examination of the 128 songs in LYL, I have found other common patterns as well. I would like to examine some examples of transcriptions from my field recordings and other sources. I was not able to locate melodies for all 128 texts, but of approximately 100 songs I identified 76 unique melodies that break down into the following main patterns with their variations.

**1) 1-2-3-5-6-1: 11 distinct melodies**

- a) 2—purely pentatonic
- b) 6—1-2-3-5-6-1/1-6-5-4-3-2-1
- c) 2—1-2-3-5-6-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4-3-2-1
- d) 1—1-2-3-5-6-1/1-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

**2) 1-2-4-5-6-1: 22 distinct melodies**

- a) 19—1-2-4-5-6-1/1-6-5-4-3-2-1
- b) 3—1-2-4-5-6-1/1-7-6-5-4-3-2-1.

**3) 1- $\flat$ 3-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1: 32 distinct melodies**

- a) 10—purely pentatonic
- b) 21—1- $\flat$ 3-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4- $\flat$ 3-2-1
- c) 1—1- $\flat$ 3-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4- $\flat$ 3-1

**4) 1-2-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1: 11 distinct melodies**

- a) 2—pure pentatonic
- b) 4—1-2-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4-3-2-1
- c) 1—1-2-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4-3-2-1
- d) 2—1-2-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-6-5-4- $\flat$ 3-2-1
- e) 2—1-2-4-5- $\flat$ 7-1/1- $\flat$ 7-5-4- $\flat$ 3-2-1

1) **1-2-3-5-6-1**

The best known song that fits this “Bhupali” pattern is *Ali Yato Le*, shown above in Example 4. An older example of this pattern is found in the *chang glu, bzo thabs* (The Skill of Brewing) (Example 4.32).

**Example 4.32. *bzo thabs* as sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam**

19 August 2009

chang 'di la bzo\_\_ ba'i\_\_ thabs shig\_\_\_\_\_ yod\_\_\_\_\_

bzo thabs de 'dra\_\_ zhig\_\_ bshad na chang yang\_\_ 'thung\_\_\_\_\_

It is not a pure pentatonic melody, having the descending 1-7-6-5.

- 2) **1-2-4-5-6-1** (Similar to Hindustani Raga Durga) e.g. *dgom pa gser gyi bya skibs* in Example 4.28 above.
- 3) **1-b3-4-5-b7-1**, similar to that of Hindustani ragas like Dhāni or Bhimpalasi. Examples are *stod rgyad gar* (Example 4.29 above) and *nyi lza wang mo 'i lu* (The song of Nyilza Wangmo”) (Example 4.33).

Example 4.33. *nyi lza bang mo'i glu* as sung by Chorol and Yangchen

17 August 2011

Nyi ma'i nub phyogs O rgyan gli - (li)ng de na

5 yi - (li) dam pad ma can bzhugs no (lo) mo nga  
Nyi zla dbang mo

10 lho de la mi - (li) skyod pa'i byin rlabs dang dngos grub  
lho de la mi - (li) skyod pa'i byin rlabs dang dngos grub

15 stsal  
stal

- 4) **1-2-4-5-♭7-1**, similar to Hindustani Raga Madhyamat Saranga. The song *Ti sei shel dkar mchod rten* (Mt. Sumeru's White Crystal Stupa) shows this pattern with some passing tones (Example 4.3 above). Many songs have heptatonic descents. Trewin has also noted this pattern and feels it to be suggestive of contact with Indian music (Trewin 1995:205-206). A striking example of a probably Hindustani influence is the use of melodic patterns that are very much like Raga Bhimpalasi, both in ascending and descending scale usage, as well as the use of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> scale steps as major cadential points, such as in *stod rgyad gar* (Above is India) (Example 4.30 above). Others include *ri bo g.yang can* (The Lucky Mountain) (Example 4.34).

**Example 4.34. *ri bo g.yang can* as sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam**

**19 August 2009**

(de la la) nyi (li) ma shar de nas\_\_ shar (la) (la) ba :  
 shar gyi\_\_ dro can nyi\_\_ ma (de la la)  
 shar\_\_ gsum shar de nas\_\_ shar (la) (la) ba shar  
 gyi\_\_ dro can\_\_ nyi (li) ma

Another example is *shel ldan g.yu mtsho* (The Crystal and Turquoise Ocean) (Example 4.35).

Example 4.35 *shel ldan g.yu mtsho* as sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam

19 August 2009

1  
shel lda (la)n g.yu mtsho bskor pa'i

2  
shel dkar rna (la)m rgayl kha (la) bzung

3  
shel lda (la)n g.yu mtsho bskor pa'i

4  
shel dkar rnam rgyal kha (la)ng bzung

5  
na na (la)ng seng ge'i khri steng

6  
gnya' khri bsta (la)n po'i gu (lu)ng rgyud

7  
na na (la)ng seng ge'i khri steng gnya' khri bstan po gu (lu)ng rgyud

**Pitch range and melodic movement**

When sung with *surna* the tonic of songs is generally around E—rather high for male voices. Without *surna* singers can pitch their voices lower. We can hear this in some of Dorje Stakmo's commercial recordings, where he uses flutes or synthesizer instead of *surna*, allowing

him to sing in a more baritone range. For the sake of clarity in transcriptions, I have usually set the pitch at C, but have varied this depending on the range of the song and the readability of the notation.

The general range of songs is an octave and a fourth (as in Example 4.36 below). Many begin on the lower fifth, with a common opening pattern being 5-6-1 (e.g. Example 4.36).

Trewin has characterized many Ladakhi songs as having a double arch with the melody rising to a large interval drop of a fifth, sixth or octave, followed by a second rise and a more incremental descent to the tonal center (1995). Examples are given below in Examples 4.36-4.38.

**Example 4.36. *dgon pa gser gyi bya skibs*--A section**

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 9/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'A' and has an annotation 'First arch with drop of a sixth' above it. The melody starts on a low note, rises to a higher note, and then drops to a lower note. The lyrics below are: go - (lo)n pa - (la) se - (le)r gyi - (li) bya - (la) skyibs (de-ni). The second staff is labeled '3' and has an annotation 'Second arch with incremental descent' above it. The melody starts on a low note, rises to a higher note, and then descends in small steps. The lyrics below are: ma - zhengs pa yi go (lo - n) pa. A bracket below the second staff is labeled 'incremental descent'.

First arch with drop of a sixth

go - (lo)n pa - (la) se - (le)r gyi - (li) bya - (la) skyibs (de-ni)

3 Second arch with incremental descent

ma - zhengs pa yi go (lo - n) pa

incremental descent

Example 4.37-*nyi lza bang mo-A section*

First arch

Nyi ma'i nub phyogs O rgyan gli - (li)ng de na

5 Second arch

yi - (li) dam pad ma can bzhugs

Example 4.38-*bsod nams mchog skyid*

First arch

dang po (lo) bsod nams kyi mcho (lo)g (lo) skyi (li)d

3 Second arch

kra (la) shis pa' (li) glu zhi (li)g len

### Text Settings in Various Genres

In general Ladakhi songs tend toward syllabic settings. In the case of melismatic passages, we note the practice in songs like *gzhung glu* of interpolating non-lexical syllable extensions (usually with an /l-/ sound) in long melodic passages, e.g. *mchod rten* -> *mcho-(l)od rten*. What is this technique called, if anything, by singers at large? In a 1991 article on rhythm in Ladakh song and dance, Mark Trewin refers to it as *tsig lhad* (word interpolation), but gives no references as to where he got this term. After some searching, I found reference to this technique in Walter Kaufmann's book on Tibetan Buddhist chant where it is used in very slow tantric chants to both allow for articulation and obscure the meaning to keep from the uninitiated (Kaufmann 1975:4-14). I suspect Trewin got the term from someone informed by monastic practice (Gen Ngawang Tsering Shakspo or Gen Tashi Rabgias). Morup Namgyal's daughter Tsering Chorol was also familiar with the term. According to SECMOL volunteer coordinator Rebecca Norman,

Tonight we started a new zhunglu song after dinner, and had reason to mention the "la" syllables in it. I called them the "la-li-lu" things, and asked if anybody had ever heard a name for them, such as /tshiglat/. It seemed pretty clear that nobody had, and we've got students from all regions of Leh District, and Chiktan and Wakha in Kargil. It's possible some had but were too shy to say so, or didn't bother, but I think really nobody had ever heard any word to label those syllables.

We sing /zhunglu/ after dinner every day at SECMOL so that the Ladakhi youth get a chance to learn these songs -- otherwise, many young Ladakhis today don't know any zhunglu at all. I have never heard a particular term for the extra syllables. When I'm typing them in the

computer and asking whether I should type them or remove them, I refer to them as /la-la-la/ or /la-li-lu/ and am understood, and have never noticed anyone saying any particular word for them. However, /tshiglat/ would be a plausible word for them, or more likely, /tshiglak/.

Sham /lhakcas/, Leh /lakces/ means to be extra, to be left over.

Compounds can include the syllable Sham, Nubra /lhak/, Leh, Upper Ladakh /lak/ to refer to extra or left over things. So /tshiglak/ or /tshiklhak/ is plausible for this meaning (email 11/17/09).

Other usages include the insertion of additional grammatical particles as “filler,” such as

- “*po*” or “*bo*”- postpositions that signal agency, masculine gender, or are equivalent to “the” (usually not specified in Tibetic languages),
- “*de*” – a continuative particle or indicator of participles. More often in song texts it has the meaning of “it”, “that”, “that one”, “he”, “she”, or “the.”
- “*zhig*”- postposition meaning “one” or “some” or as an imperative particle after verbs.

An example of the use of additional grammatical particles can be seen in Example 4.27 above in Tsering Chorol’s rendition of *Lha sa’i skor lam phra mo*.

It should be stressed that these various types of interpolation do little to obscure the meaning of the song texts. This is in contrast to the use of *tsig lad* in various styles of Tibetan Buddhist chant, where the interpolations serve not merely as aids to melodic articulation, but as means of making it harder for non-initiates to understand the meanings and potentially come to

harm through misunderstanding or misuse of the rituals, while still allowing them to gain the blessings of hearing a given ceremony (Kaufmann 1975).

The only songs that seem to have a strongly melismatic texture are some of the wedding songs, such as in the *sgo glu* (door song) transcribed below in Example 4.39. The fact that these songs are meant to be sung a cappella and have pre-Buddhist texts may indicate a musical origin that predates the introduction of *surna* and *daman* rhythms.

Example 4.39. *sgo glu* (Door song) as sung by Stanzin Dadul, 27 July 2009

$\text{♩} = 60$

gung mam mthon bo zbig tho (lo) zer na gongde dang byang zhung ya lang so zhung la ke ke  
 nyi zia nyis ka kun dbu ma [la] ne nying ging sai a me long dbu nya [la]m so zhung la ke ke  
 rgyu skar 'dzoms mo dbu ma [la] ne nying cho sai a me long dbu nya [la]m so zhung du ke ke

The short melismas that are present in some melodies are treated in different ways. For example, I transcribed two versions of the well-known song *ka ba rin po che* (The Precious Pillar) performed by 1) Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam from our 2009 recording session and 2) Dorje Stakmo from one of his commercial recordings (Stakmo 2003a) (Example 4.40).

**Example 4.40. Comparison of two version of *ka ba rin po che***

Angchuk and  
Ali Mahmud

Dorje Stakmo

ka ba la ri - (r)in po che gser la bzhe - (le)ngs yod (de ni)

ka (la) stegs (po) gli - (li)ng bzhi ru khyab

ka (la) stegs (po) gli - (li)ng bzhi ru khyab

ka stegs gling bzhi ru khyab song ze - (le)r na (de ni)

ka stegs gling bzhi ru khyab song ze - (le)r na (de ni)

sa - (la) gzhi po 'o - (lo)d kyis sang khyab

sa - (la) gzhi po 'o - (lo)d kyis sang khyab

In both versions the primary word settings are syllabic, with short two-beat melismas. The performance by Dorje has more elaborate melismas, as well as using various types of tremolo, much of which is very hard to notate. I speculate that these ornaments might be a manifestation of an Indian-influenced style that was characterized to me by the late Tsewang Rigzin as the Muslim/Balti Purig Style, which he described as being cultivated by Morup Namgyal, Dorje's teacher (p.c. 2011-07-13).<sup>1</sup>

### **Characteristics of Song Genres**

I offer some notes summarizing the characteristics of the four genres featured in this study.

#### ***rten 'brel glu***

These are all dance songs in moderate tempi. The text settings are all syllabic. The melodies are more conjunct than *gzhung glu* with an occasional leap of a fourth or fifth. They are meant for singing while dancing and are easier to sing. *rten 'brel glu* are all strophic, with either an antecedent/consequent or AABB binary form.

#### ***bag ston glu***

The majority of songs are sung a cappella, although instrumental dances and dance songs are also considered by some to be part of the repertoire. As mentioned before, *rten 'brel glu* are sung at weddings and other important occasions.

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<sup>1</sup> I was told by a friend, tour agent Dorje Namgyal Fargo, that once when he and singer Tsering Phuntsok Dembir (aka. Phuntsok Ladakhi) were listening to a recording of Morup Namgyal singing, they said he sounds like he was shivering, and needed to be covered with a blanket (p.c. July 2009). Clearly not all Ladakhis feel Morup Namgyal's vocal style is correct or authentic.

Many songs are of the sub-genre known as *bkra shis pa glu* (*tashis pa lu*--auspicious songs), which, for the most part, uses one basic melody, with variations. The more usual version is shown in Example 4.41 and a transcription of a more ornate version by Morup Namgyal in Example 4.42. Both have the same blessing intonation at the beginning, and the same strophic, syllabic setting in a simple 6/8-type rhythm.

**Example 4.41--*tashis pa lu***

OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig

Repeat 3x

Lines 1 and 3 of quatrains

Lines 2 and 4 of quatrains

Detailed description: This musical example shows a simple melody in 6/8 time. The first line of music is a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains the lyrics 'OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig' and is marked 'Repeat 3x'. Below this are two strophic lines, labeled 'Lines 1 and 3 of quatrains' and 'Lines 2 and 4 of quatrains', each consisting of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first strophic line has a '3' above it, indicating a triplet. The second strophic line has a '4' above it, indicating a four-measure phrase.

**Example 4.42 -- *tashis pa lu*—ornate version by Morup Namgyal**

OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig

Repeat 3x

Lines 1 and 3 of quatrains

Lines 2 and 4 of quatrains

Detailed description: This musical example shows an ornate version of the melody in 6/8 time. The first line of music is a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains the lyrics 'OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig' and is marked 'Repeat 3x'. Below this are two strophic lines, labeled 'Lines 1 and 3 of quatrains' and 'Lines 2 and 4 of quatrains', each consisting of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first strophic line has a '2' above it and contains several triplet markings (indicated by '3' above groups of notes). The second strophic line has a '4' above it and also contains several triplet markings.

### *Chang lu*

*Chang lu* seem to be predominantly simple, strophic songs in a seven- or fourteen-beat rhythm, with syllabic settings. Melodic motion is conjunct with few jumps, and shows a simple antecedent/consequent structure. Many use the *bzo thabs* melody (Example 26 above).

### *Zhung lu*

Most of the characteristics of *zhung lu* have been discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter, but in summary, the repertoire is characterized by rhythmically sophisticated melodies with combinations of conjunct motion and wide leaps. The rhythmic cycles are more complex than in simpler genres like *chang glu*, or most *bag ston glu*, with the melodies varying from simple antecedent/consequent couplets to multi-section compositions spanning several drum cycles. They are invariably strophic in form, often with lengthy literary texts. The text settings are almost exclusively syllabic, with syllables being extended by the addition of various lexical and non-lexical particles.

### Conclusions

We saw in previous chapters how song texts reflect the local sense of place, a connection with pan-regional Tibetan high culture, and a militarism characteristic of a border state. The role of Ladakh as a crossroads culture is reflected in its musical structures. In all genres we note the differential patterns of pentatonic ascending patterns most often filled in with hepta- and hexatonic descents—a strong indication of influences from Kashmir and India. Whatever pentatonicism may have derived from Tibetan idioms may possibly be seen in genres like *zhabs 'bro*, and possibly in simple marriage songs like the *bkra shis pa'i glu*.

The musical crossroads are clearly manifest in the Ladakhi rhythmic system that shows characteristics of Middle Eastern, Balti, Central Asian, and Tibetan origins. Performances generally stress *daman* and *daf*—both of Middle Eastern origin. This latter origin may also be reflected in performances of accompanied genres where there is an alternation of voice with *surna*—an instrument with Western Asian origins. All genres are strophic in form, especially where courtly genres are designed to support lengthy, panegyric texts, and the extended performances with the instrumental intervals provide allow for long dances—a common function of many songs.

## Chapter 5—Conclusions

This dissertation has been a multifaceted study: historical, cultural, literary, and musical. While living in a time of rapid technological, economic, and social change, Ladakhis remain connected to village life and a sense of history and legend. The songs texts I have examined show how figures like King Gesar, King Sengge Namgyal, and Lama Stagtsang Raspa still loom large in Ladakhi consciousness. A sense of common history is evoked for all Ladakhis, both Buddhist and Muslim, who view themselves as standing apart from the rest of India.<sup>1</sup> Given this strong sense of Ladakhi identity, the old songs continue to resonate, especially among older generations. An interest in and demand for traditional music continues, but when and where it is performed, and by whom, has changed.

The closing of the borders with Pakistan and Chinese-ruled Tibet and Turkestan brought the traditional caravan trade to a halt. The large Indian army presence has necessitated changes in local infrastructure, and created a demand for public sector labor, offering other venues for employment. Many of the traditional village instrumental musicians, the *Mon*, have taken advantage of growth in the non-agricultural sector to reject their low-caste occupations. This has led to loss of repertoire, even though the itinerant *Beda* have moved into the niche.

The Ladakhi economy has been expanding since the opening of the area to tourism in the mid-70s, and since the tourism boom began in the 1990s, the demand for traditional music has increased. The advent of mass media has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, Ladakh has been bombarded with Hindi-language TV, radio, movies, and recordings. Being part of modern India, Ladakhi youth, especially in Leh, are active consumers of popular music of all sorts:

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<sup>1</sup> Ladakhis refer to the rest of the country's population as *gyagar-pa* (Indian) or *kache* (Kashmiri)—the latter *not* a positive thing, considering the region's more recent history.

Bollywood, Nepali pop and *lok pop*, as well as Anglo-American genres of all types. This is in addition to the growing Ladakhi pop music scene with its syncretic mixture of all the previously mentioned genres. Vocal artists such as Dorje Stakmo market both traditional and popular music, often packaging the former with catchy, more modern arrangements that have captured part of the Ladakhi youth market.

At the same time, the media have been a means of cultural *preservation*. AIR and Doordarshan TV offer opportunities for regional artists to perform *zhung glu*, and local producers are publishing audio and video recordings of traditional songs. Additionally, there is a growing internet presence, with music videos of popular and traditional music posted on Youtube by young Ladakhi urbanites.

However, a down side to traditional songs being transmitted via mass media is that versions of songs in print, broadcasting, recordings and internet have begun to assume canonical status—they have become the “correct” versions. Many Ladakhis worry about loss of diversity in the repertoire. Various NGOs and cultural advocacy groups are actively involved in propagating traditional music—not just songs, but *surna* and *daman* as well. New cultural advocacy groups like the Ladakh Arts and Media Organization (*LAMO*), together with older NGOs like SECMOL, are trying to collect and/or teach songs. Ensembles of middle-caste musicians have arisen, in part competing with the traditional artists, contributing to performances of local repertoire. It would be hoped that a grassroots effort like the Plateau Music Project<sup>2</sup> in Tibet can be instituted to preserve the diversity of regional variants of songs.

As Trewin observes (1995), Ladakhis give little thought to the hybrid nature of their music, especially regarding the Muslim origin of the iconic *surna* and *daman*. The position of Ladakh as a crossroads culture is reflected in the following characteristics:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://bridgefund.org/the-plateau-music-project/>

- 1) Differential pentatonic ascending scale patterns with hepta- and hexatonic descents—a strong indication of influences from Kashmir and India.
- 2) A rhythmic system that shows characteristics of Middle Eastern, Balti, Central Asian, and Tibetan origins.
- 3) Performances generally stress *daman* and *daf*—both of Middle Eastern origin.
- 4) Alternation of voice with *surna*—an instrument with Western Asian origins.

The hybridity of Ladakhi songs is more notable when considering the song lyrics, which are part of a pan-Tibetan cultural continuum containing both pre-Buddhist local traditions and literary high culture. The songs themselves are part of the matrix of the Ladakhi life cycle: seasonal festivals, farm work, beer drinking, and other activities, as well as more significant life cycle events such as weddings and the birth of children. Thus as performative phenomena the songs' music is inextricably and syncretically linked with the language and content of the lyrics.

I would make the argument that certain genres show continuity with trans-regional Tibetan literary and aesthetic traditions, and should be construed as art music. There is a body of implicit theory, taxonomy, musical specialists, and connoisseurship that further bolsters my arguments. I feel there were similarities between the Leh court literati—both lay and monastic—and the aristocratic *samajdhars* of Moghul India. Butler-Schofield noted that “[a]n examination of Mughal tazkiras like the *Safina-yi Khushgu* (1724–35), the *Ma’as..ir al-Umara’* (1742–47), and the final chapter of the *Rag Darpan* (1666) reveals that music was patronized through a series of friendship circles with mutual interests in music, poetry, and Sufism, and that musical treatises also circulated through such friendship circles ...” (Butler-Schofield 2010:495). She further noted that “[t]he musical object of the connoisseurship of social elites is thus by definition marked as socially exclusive” (ibid: 496). Butler Schofield contrasts linguistic/literary canonizations of Persian (based on a body of literature) versus the Sanskrit acrolect/vernacular

and Brajbhasa acrolect/spoken vernacular binaries with the acrolects being characterized as supraregional literary languages (ibid: 492-494).

This latter discussion parallels the Sanskrit-influenced discourse regarding the classical Tibetan literary language and its relationship with regional vernaculars like Amdo Tibetan and Ladakhi. As noted by Trewin in his dissertation on the ceremonial *lha nga* (Drum of the Gods) music, there was a large symbolic vocabulary connected with cosmology and the performance of certain rhythmic and melodic combinations on *surna* and *daman* (1995). The palace musicians (*mkhar mon*) were specially trained in this repertoire, and it is likely that these same musicians composed the melodies for the literary songs composed by courtiers, lamas, and rural aristocrats for performance in the palace.

In spite of the fact that the theory connected with song rhythms is nowhere as explicit as that of Indian *tala*, and there is no theory on melodic structure, the overall complexity of the combined musical and textual matrix places *gzhung glu* and related genres on a continuum with more definitively “classical” musics. Greater taxonomic granularity is clearly called for. Perhaps something along the lines of fuzzy logic, with a given music being considered classical to a certain degree might be a workable model. I leave that as the subject of another study.

## Glossary

Avalokiteśvara (Tib. *Spyan ras gzigs* [pronounced *Chenrezig*]): bodhisattva of compassion,

*Bagston lu* (*bag ston glu*): marriage songs.

*Beda*: itinerant, low-caste musicians.

Bodhisattva (Tib. *byang chug sems dpa*): Buddhist protector or semi-divine savior.

Bon: Pre-Buddhist religion containing a mixture of shamanistic and animistic traditions,  
at times combined with the belief in the personage of a divine king. The adjective is  
Bonpo—also a practitioner of those beliefs.

*Brokpa* (*'brogs pa*): Dardic speaking peoples that live in the western part of Ladakh, thought to  
be the main inhabitants of the area prior to colonization by Tibetan speaking people .

Buddha: Sanskrit for “Enlightened One” (Tib. *sangs rgyas*). It can either be a title, as in  
“the Buddha,” referring to the historical Prince Gautama Siddhartha Sakyamuni,  
or it can be used generically in lower case to refer to any enlightened being.

*Chang*: barley beer.

*Chang lu* (*chang glu*): beer songs.

*Dakini* (Tib. *mkha' 'dro*): female bodhisattva that bestow wisdom and in part function  
analogously to fairy godmothers

*Daman*: double kettledrums.

Dharma: Buddhist teachings or law.

*Ding jang* (*gring jang*): large barrel drum using in Baltistan and the Brokpa area of Ladakh.

*Geshe*: Buddhist monastic university degree equivalent to combined Ph.D.  
and Doctor of Divinity.

*Gompa* (*dgon pa*): Monastery.

*Gonchas*: men's Tibetan-style robes.

*Khatag*: blessing scarf.

*Khar mon* (*mkhar mon*): palace musicians.

*Lama*: (Skt. *guru*): Buddhist teacher, often a monk.

*Lha nga*: (drum of the gods) ceremonial/processional music played on *surna* and *daman* .

*Lok gīt*: Folkloric versions of Nepali folk songs.

*Maṇḍala*: generic term for any plan, chart or geometric pattern that represents

the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically

*Mantra* : sound, syllable, word, or group of words used to invoke mental transformations

or invoke mental imagery

*Mon*: low-caste musicians, carpenters, and subsistence farmers.

*Mudrā* : symbolic or ritual hand gesture, or body posture.

*Nagas* (Tib. *klu*): local earth or water spirits

*Rol mo*: Tibetan Buddhist music, or music in general.

*Sangha*: The body of Buddhist practitioners, or the body of monks and nuns.

*SECMOL*: Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh. It is a cultural advocacy

group and school with headquarters in Phey Village, founded in 1988 by a group of

young Ladakhis with the aim to reform the educational system of Ladakh

*Sgo glu* (door song): sub-genre of marriage songs in which there is a contest between the

bridegrooms party outside the bride's house and the bridal party barricaded inside.

*Sku tag* (*sku drag*)—families of aristocratic origins.

*Stupa* (Tib. *mchod rten*): reliquary shrine or tumulus.

*Sulma*: women's pleated overdress.

*Surna*: Double reed shawm.

*Tendel lu (rten 'brel glu)* songs of auspicious signs—also pronounced *stendel lu*.

*Tsig lu (tsig glu)*: literally “word songs,” gently sarcastic or satirical songs sung in a free rhythm.

*Tsig lhad/tsig lad* (word interpolation): interpolation of non-lexical syllables in song texts.

Vajrayana: Sanskrit for “Thunderbolt Vehicle.” School of Buddhism that utilizes the tantric techniques of mudra (gesture or image), mantra (sound formula), and mandala (symbolic diagrams) as a means to reach enlightenment more quickly.

*Yul lu (yul glu)*: songs of village, countryside, or the nation.

*Zhabro/jabro (zhabs 'bro)*: Song and dance genre from Changthang nomads and Tibet.

*Zhung lu (gzhung glu)*: a) general term for traditional songs b) specific genre of congregational songs connected with the Namgyal Dynasty court.

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## Appendix

### Collected Transcriptions and Translations with Commentary.

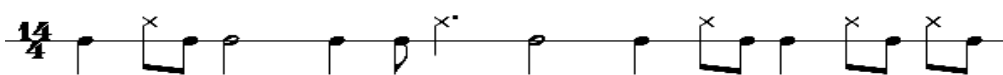
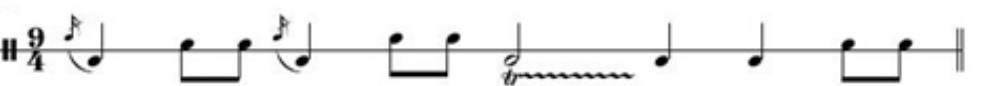

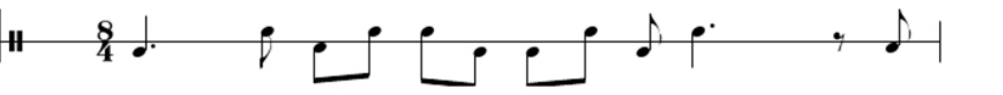


This is a compilation of transliterations of all texts from *Ladvags gyi yul glu* in the first four genres: *stendel lu*, *bagston lu*, *chang lu* and *zhung lu*, with their translations, and notated transcriptions of the melodies (when a recorded example was available). I have annotated the texts, occasionally giving an occasional explanatory preface for clarification. In the interest of presenting this repertoire as a coherent whole, I have included texts and/or transcriptions shown in previous chapters. Textual interpolations, both lexical and non-lexical, are shown in parentheses.

As in Indian music, there is no concept of absolute pitch in Ladakhi music. When sung with *surna*, most melodies are centered on E, but I put the transcriptions in whatever key makes the notation more readable. When sung *a cappella* they are pitched to suit the singer. When sung with *surna* and *daman* the performance of each song would begin with a *surna* rendition of the melody to set the pitch. Instrumental interludes would also be interspersed between some verses, akin to the *laggi* in *ghazal* and *thumri* performances in Hindustani music.

The majority of the transcriptions are based on two marathon recording sessions, both at All India Radio, Leh. The first was on 18 August 2009 with staff artists Ali

Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam; the second with staff artists Tsering Chorol and Yangchen Dolma on 31 July 2012.

To help the reader more clearly understand the song transcriptions, I list the rhythmic cycle of each song—if I've been able to determine it. In cases where a song's rhythm is unclear, I leave the transcription in free rhythm. I enumerate the rhythms here:

- 1) 
- 2) 
- 3) 
- 4) 
- 5) 
- 6) 

The above cycle can also be represented as being in 14/4

## rten 'brel gyi glu—Songs of Auspicious Omens

### rten 'brel gsum pa (The Three Auspicious Signs) (LYL:2)

As sung by Tsering Chorol --31 July 2012

Rhythmic cycle 1

1. dgung      gnam      zhe - (le)ngs      pa      (bo)      ska - (la)r  
 2. 'bur      du      tho      (lo)      ba      de      nyi      (li)  
 3. dga'      ba'i      rte      (le)n      'brel      po      da - (la)ng

tshogs      su      ma - (la) - ng      byung  
 ma      dang      zla      (la)      ba  
 po      de      dang      zungs      shig

3  
 dgung      gnam      zhe - (le)ngs      pa      (bo)      ska - (la)r  
 mdangs      su      gsa      (la)l      ba      de      nyi      (li)  
 zag      med      rte      (le)n      'brel      po      da - (la)ng

4  
 tshogs      su      ma - (la)ng      byung  
 ma      dang      zla      (la)      ba  
 po      de      dang      zu - (lu)ngs      shig

*dgung gnam bzhengs pa skar tshogs su mang byung (2x)*

*'bur du mtho ba de nyi ma dang zla ba*

*mdangs su gsal ba de nyi ma dang zla ba*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel dang po de dang zungs shig*

*zag med rten 'brel dang po zungs shig.*

In the middle of the sky many constellations arise (2x)

In higher relief are the sun and moon

There shine brightly sun and moon.

Let us be mindful of the joyous, first auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless first auspicious omen.

*gling bzhi bzhengs pa mi tshogs su mang byung (2x)*  
*'bur du mtho ba de rgyalpo dang bla ma*  
*mdangs su gsal ba de sengge dang stag tshang*  
*dga' ba'i rten' brel gnyis pa de dang zungs shig*  
*zag med rten 'brel gnyis pa de dang zungs shig.*

In the four continents, many assemblies of men arise (2x)  
 There in higher relief, king and lama  
 There shines brightly the lion and tiger nest.<sup>1</sup>  
 Let us be mindful of the second auspicious omen.  
 Let us be mindful of the stainless second auspicious omen.

*skyes pa'i pha yul la ni tshe dbang gi bum pa*  
*gle chen dpal mkhar ni tshe dbang gi bum pa*  
*'bras dkar dbol bo spungs pa dang 'dra byung*  
*'o ma'i rdzing bu 'khyil gsum pa de dang zungs shig*  
*zags med rten 'brel gsum pa de dang zungs shig.*

In the homeland of happiness, the vessel of long life empowerment  
 In Leh's noble castle, the vessel of long-life empowerment  
 It is like white rice piled high.  
 Let us be mindful of the third, surrounded as by a lake of milk.  
 Let us be mindful of the stainless third auspicious omen.

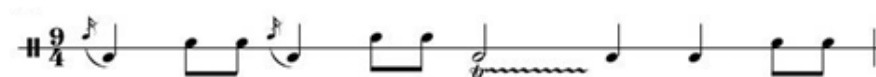
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<sup>1</sup> King Jamyang Namgyal invited the famous Tibetan lama *Stag-tsan-ras-pa* (Tib. *Stag* = tiger, *tsan*=nest) to come to Ladakh, but it was not until the reign of his son, Sengge (Lion) Namgyal (ruled 1616-1642), that he actually came. Under the tutelage of the tiger lama, the lion king founded a number of important monasteries devoted to the Drukpa Kargyu sect, including Hanle, and Hemis.

**rten 'brel lnga pa (The Five Auspicious Signs)** (LYL:3)

As sung by Tsering Chorol and Yangchen Dolma  
with *daf* accompaniment by Tsering Chorol 31 July 2012

Rhythmic cycle 2



ya gi dgu - (lu)ng sngon mo (lo) la (la)

Daf

2

skar tshog mang\_\_\_\_\_ tsam zhis\_\_\_\_\_ zhis\_\_\_\_\_

Daf

3

(pa) ya gi dgu-(lu)ng sngon mo (lo)

Daf

5

la (la) skar tshog mang\_\_\_\_\_ tsam zhis 'dug

Daf

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for the song. It consists of four systems of music. Each system has a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics underneath and a 'Daf' accompaniment line in bass clef. The time signature is 9/4. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The lyrics are: 'ya gi dgu - (lu)ng sngon mo (lo) la (la)', 'skar tshog mang\_\_\_\_\_ tsam zhis\_\_\_\_\_ zhis\_\_\_\_\_', '(pa) ya gi dgu-(lu)ng sngon mo (lo)', and 'la (la) skar tshog mang\_\_\_\_\_ tsam zhis 'dug'. The 'Daf' accompaniment consists of rhythmic patterns of notes and rests corresponding to the vocal line.

7  
deng sang ngo - (lo)ms su thu-(lu)b pa ya gi nyi zla - (la)deng (la)

8

Daf

9  
gnyi - ka deng sa - (la)ng mda - (la)ngs su gsal - (la)

10

Daf

11  
ba ya gi nyi zla gnyis ka

12

Daf

**ya gi dgung sngon mo la skar tshog mang tsam zhig 'dug (2x)**

**deng sang ngoms su thub pa ya gi nyi zla gnyis ka**

**deng sang mdangs su gsal ba ya gi nyi zla gnyis ka**

**dga' ba'i rten 'brel dang po dang po de dang zungs shig**

**za med rten 'brel dang po dan po de dang zungs shig.**

In yonder blue sky there ever so many constellations (2x)

Now we can be proud of both the sun and moon

Now both yon sun and moon shine.

Let us be mindful of the joyous first auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless first, the first auspicious omen.

*ya gi chos grva gru bshi la grva rgyun mang tsam zhig 'dug (2 x)*

*dengs sang ngoms su thub pa ya gi yar 'dren bla ma*

*dengs sang mdangs su gsal ba ya gi yar 'dren bla ma*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel gnyis pa gnyis pa de dang zungs shig*

*zag med rteng 'brel gnyis pa gnyis pa de dang zungs shig.*

There are many people in that square dharma debate court (2x)

We can be proud of those lamas that guide us

Now those lamas that guide us shine.

Let us be mindful of the joyous second, the second auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless second, the second auspicious omen.

*ya gi sku mkhar mthon po la drag zhan mang tsam zhig 'dug (2x)*

*deng sang ngoms su thub pa ya gi mi chen gong ma*

*deng sang mdangs su gsal ba ya gi mi chen gong ma*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel gsum pa gsum pa de dang zungs shig*

*zag med rten 'brel gsum pa gsum pa de dang zungs shig.*

In that high palace there are many high and low officials (2x)

We can be proud, of that great lord

Now that great man shines.

And let us be mindful of the joyous third, the third auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless third, the third auspicious omen.

*ya gi dpal khang gru bzhi la gnyen drung man tsam zhig 'dug (2x)*

*deng sang ngoms su thub pa ya gi yab yum pa ma*

*deng sang mdangs su gsal ba ya gi yab yum pa ma*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel bzhi pa bzhi pa de dang zungs shig*

*zag med rten 'brel bzhi pa bzhi pa de dang zungs shig.*

In yon noble house's four corners there are kin near by (2x)

We can be proud of our fathers and mothers

Right now our fathers and mothers shine.

And let us be mindful of the joyous fourth, the fourth auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless fourth, the fourth auspicious omen.

*ya gi do ra gru bzhi la ya de mang tsam zhig 'dug (2x)*

*deng sang ngoms su thub pa ge rje dpon chen po*

*deng sang ngoms gsal ba ya gi rje dpon chen po*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel lnga pa de dang zungs shig*

*zag med rten 'brel lnga pa de dang zungs shig.*

There are many people there in that square courtyard (2x)

Right now we can be proud of that great lord

Right now that great lord shines.

Let us be mindful of the joyous fifth, the fifth auspicious omen.

Let us be mindful of the stainless fifth, the fifth auspicious omen.

***rtē 'brel lnga pa-B (The Five Auspicious Omens-B)*** (LYL:6)

As sung by Tsering Chorol and Yangchen Dolma 31 July 2012

## Rhythmic cycle 3

ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo \_\_\_\_\_ dgung\_\_ gnam

3  
bso - (lo)d na - (l)ams \_\_\_\_\_ ca - (lan)n zhig \_\_\_\_\_

5  
nyi zla gnyis ka kun \_\_\_\_\_ bzhugs pa'i dga' ba la gzings\_\_ ang  
dga' ba'i rten 'brel gyi \_\_\_\_\_ dang po\_\_ mar yul gyi gzhung dukhyil

7  
rgyu\_\_ skar 'dzoms po 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs \_\_\_\_\_  
zag med rten 'brel dang po\_\_ drug ma nang du 'khyil. \_\_\_\_\_

***ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo dgung gnam bsod nams can zhig (2x)******nyi zla ni gnyis ka kun bzhugs pa'i dga' ba la gzigs ang******rgyu skar 'dzoms po kun 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs******dga' ba'i rten 'brel gyi dang po mar yul gyi gzhung du 'khyil******zag med rten 'brel gyi dang po drug ma nang du 'khyil.***

Behold yon strong blue sky, that blessed sky (2x)

Behold both sun and moon sitting in joy

Happily behold the many constellations all around.

The blessed perfect first auspicious sign surrounds Ladakh.

The stainless first auspicious sign circles in the the six-columned chamber.

*ya gi shed chos grva gru bzhi chos grva bsod nams can zhig (2x)*

*yar 'dren gyi bla ma kun bzhugs pa'i dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*bu slob 'dzoms po kun 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ga'i rten 'brel gyi gnyis pa mar yul gyi zhungs du 'khyil*

*zag med rten 'brel gyi gnyis pa kdrug ma nang du 'khyil.*

Behold that strong, square, blessed dharma debate court (2x)

Behold the lama guides joyfully seated

Behold the many disciples surrounding in happiness.

The blessed perfect second auspicious omen surrounds Ladakh,

The stainless second auspicious omen circles in the the six-columned chamber.

*ya gi shed sku mkhar mthon po sku mkhar bsod nams can zhig (2x)*

*mi chen gong ma kun bzhugs pa'i dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*drag zhan dzoms po kun 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel gyi gsum pa mar yul gyi gzhung du 'khyil*

*zag med rten 'brel gyi gsum pa ka drug ma nang du 'khyil..*

Behold in yon strong high fortress, the blessed fortress (2x)

Behold the great lords joyfully seated there.

Behold all the high and low officials happily surrounding them.

The joyous third auspicious omen circles inside Ladakh.

Let us be mindful of the stainless third auspicious omen circling inside the six-columned chamber.

*ya gi shed dpal khang gru bzhi dpal khang bsod nams can zhig (2x)*

*yab yum pa ma kun bzugs pa'i dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*gnyen drung 'dzoms po kun 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel gyi bzhi pa mar yul gyi gzhung du 'khyil*

*zag med rten 'brel gyi bzhi pa ka drug nang u 'khyil.*

Behold yon noble square house, that blessed house.

Behold our mothers and fathers joyfully sitting there.

Behold the many kin happily surrounding us.

The joyous fourth auspicious omen circles inside Ladakh .

Let us be mindful of the stainless fourth auspicious omen circling inside the six-  
columned chamber.

*ya gi shed do ra gru bzshi do ra bsod nams can zhig (2x)*

*rje dpon chen po kun bzugs pa'i dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*ya do mdza' bo kun 'khor ba'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel gyi lnga pa mar yul gyi gzhung du 'khyil*

*zag med rten 'brel gyi lnga ka drug ma nang du 'khyil.*

Behold that strong blessed square stage. (2x)

Behold the great lord joyfully sitting there.

Behold the helpers happily surrounding him.

The joyous fifth auspicious omen circles inside Ladakh.

Let us be mindful of the stainless fifth auspicious omen circling inside the six-  
columned chamber.

**rten 'brel lnga pa C (The Five Auspicious Signs) (LYL:6-8)**

As sung by Tsering Chorol accompanying herself on daf 31 July 2012

Rhythmic cycle 4

Daf

2  
dgu - (lu)ng nam sngon moi

3  
gyas phyogs na

4  
dgu - (lu)ng tse sngon moi

5

g.yas phyogs na

Daf

6

nyi - (li) zla gnyi - (li)s ka

Daf

7

khri kha - (la)r bzhugs

Daf

8

nyi zla gnyis ka

Daf

9

khri - (li) khar bzhugs

Daf

*dgung gnam sngon mo'i g.yas 'phyogs na (2x)*

*nyi zla gnyis ka khri khar bzhugs (2x)*

*rgyu skar 'dzom pa'i dga' ba la gzigs*

*rgyu skar 'dzom pa'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar ba dan 'dra*

*ya sha ga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dan 'dra*

High in the right side of the blues sky (2x)

The sun and moon both sit on a throne (2x)

Behold in joy all the constellations sitting.

Behold in happiness the abundant constellations.

Oh! It resembles the sun of happiness in the east.

Oh! It resembles auspicious omen of joy.

*chos grva gru bshi g.yas phogs na (2x)*

*yar 'dren bla ma khri khar bzhugs (2x)*

*bu slob 'dzoms po'i dga' ba la gzigs.*

*bu slob 'dzoms po'i dkyid nyams la gzigs.*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar ba dang 'dra*

*ya sha ga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dang 'dra.*

In the right side of the square dharma court (2x)

The Lama guide sits on a throne (2x)

Behold in joy his abundant disciples.

Behold in happiness his perfect disciples.

Oh! It resembles the sun of happiness in the east.

Oh! It resembles auspicious omen of joy.

*sku mkhar mthon po'i g.yas phyogs na (2x)*

*mi chen gong ma khri khar bzhugs (2x)*

*drag zhan 'dzoms po'i dga' ba la gzigs*

*drag zhan 'dzom po'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar ba dang 'dra*

*ya sha ga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dan 'dra*

In the right side of the high palace (2x)

The great lord sits on a throne (2x)

Behold in joy all the high and low officials.

Behold in happiness all the high and low officials.

Oh! It resembles the sun of happiness in the east.

Oh! It resembles auspicious omen of joy.

*dpal khang gru bzhi'i g.yas phyogs na (2x)*

*yab yum pha ma khri gar bzhugs (2x)*

*gnyen drung 'dzoms po'i dga' ba la gzigs*

*gnyen drung 'dzoms po'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar ba dang 'dra*

*ya sha ga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dang 'dra.*

In the right side of that noble square palace (2x)

Our fathers and mothers are seated on a throne (2x)

Behold in joy our abundant kin.

Behold in happiness our abundant kin.

Oh! It resembles the sun of happiness in the east.

Oh! It resembles auspicious omen of joy.

*do ra gru bzhi g.yas phyogs na (2x)*  
*rje dpon chen po khri khar bzhugs (2x)*  
*ya do mdza' bo'i dga' ba la gzigs*  
*ya do mdza' bo'i skyid nyams la gzigs*  
*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar ba dang 'dra*  
*ya sha ga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dang 'dra.*

In right side the square stage (2x)

The great lord sits on a throne (2x)

Behold in joy all his attendants.

Behold in happiness all his attendants.

Oh! It resembles the sun of happiness in the east.

Oh! It resembles auspicious omen of joy.

**rten 'brel bdun pa (The Seven Auspicious Signs)** (LYL:8-9)

As sung by Tsering Chorol and Yangchen Dolma

Accompanied by Chorol on Daf—31 July 2012

Rhythmic cycle 5

♩ = 120

Daf

2

(lu)m bid dang nyi zia

Daf

3

ska (la)r phran 'dzoms dang

Daf

4

gsum Su

next verse

5  
 (lu)m bid dang nyi zla

Daf

6  
 ska (la)r phran 'dzoms dang

Daf

7  
 gsum

Daf

*dgung dang nyi zla skar phran 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*gling bzhi'i mun pa sel ba'i rten 'brel de dang 'grigs*

*phyogs bzhi'i mun pa sel ba'i rten 'brel dang po 'grigs.*

The sky, sun, moon, the many little stars converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious omen of the four continents' great relief.

Be mindful of the first great auspicious omen that that relieves the four afflictions.

*sangs dang dar seng g.yu ral 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*g.yu ral mtha' ru rgyas pa'i rten 'brel de dang 'grig*

*g.yu ral mtha' ru rgyas pa'i rten 'brel gnyis pa 'grig.*

Snow and the turquoise-maned snow lion converge (2x)

Be mindful of the great auspicious omen of the turquoise-maned great unicorn.

Be mindful of the second great auspicious omen of the turquoise-maned great unicorn.

*ri dang ri dvags rtsa chu 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*ri dvags skyid nyams chags pa'i rten 'brel de dang 'grig*

*sha ba la skyid nyams chags pa'i rten 'brel gsum pa 'grig.*

Mountains, mountain passes, and springs converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious omen of happy desire in mountain passes.

Be mindful of the third auspicious omen of happy desire for hunters.

*spang dang 'brong chung rtsa chu 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*'brong chung skyid nyams chags pa'i rten 'brel 'grig*

*'brong chung skyid nyams changs pa'i rten 'brel bzhi pa 'grig.*

Meadow, little valley and spring converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious omen of happy desire in the valley.

Be mindful of the fourth auspicious omen of happy desire in the valley.

*ma khang dang ma mdung gral lcam 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*ka bar ka dar rol ba'i rten 'brel de dang 'grig*

*ka bar ka dar rol ba'i rten 'brel lnga pa 'grig.*

Not house nor front sitting row converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious take care enjoying.

Being mindful of the fifth auspicious omen take care enjoying.

*yab dang yum chung bu nor 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*bu rgyud mtha' ru rgyas pa'i rten 'brel de dang 'grig*

*bu rgyud mtha' ru rgyas pai' rten 'brel drug pa 'grig*

Father and little mother, and treasure converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious omen of endless children.

Be mindful of the sixth auspicious omen of endless children.

*ma zhing dang g.ya' chu 'bru sna 'dzoms dang gsum (2x)*

*bsing chang yar dkar rol ba'i rten 'brel de dang 'grig*

*bsing chang yar dkar rol ba'i rten 'brel bdun pa 'grig*

Field and steam converge (2x)

Be mindful of the auspicious omen of the upper, white, last strained beer.

Be mindful of the seventh auspicious omen of the upper, white, last-strained beer.

**rten 'brel bdun pa (The Seven Auspicious Signs)** (LYL:10-11)

sung to the melody of *rten 'brel lnga pa*-B Tsering Chorol 31 July 2012

*ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo na nyi zla gnyis ka bzhugs (2x)*

*rgyu skar 'dzoms pos mtha' zhig bskar song na sangs rgyas bstan pa de dang dar (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel dan po de dang 'grig. (2x)*

When both the sun and moon sit in yon strong blue sky (2x)

Then the Buddha's teaching reach even the constellations gathered round. (2x)

Be mindful of the first auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha's teachings flourished. (2x)

*ya gi shed chos grva gru bzhi na bzang gsum bla ma bzhugs (2x)*

*grva rgyun 'dzoms pos mtha' zhig bskor song na sangs rgyas bstan pa de dang dar (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel gnyis pa de dang 'grig. (2x)*

When the learned, virtuous and noble<sup>2</sup> lamas sit in the square dharma court (2x)

Then the teachings of the Buddha reach even the gathered monks surrounding him. (2x)

Be mindful of the second auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha's teachings flourished. (2x)

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<sup>2</sup> Literally *bzang gsum* – the three goods.

*ya gi shed sku mkar mthon po na mi chen gon ma bzhugs (2x)*

*drag zhan 'dzoms pos mtha' zhig bskor na sangs rgyas bstan po de dang 'dra (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel gsum pa de dang 'grig (2x)*

When the powerful lord dwells in yon high castle

Then the teachings of the Buddha reach even the gathered high

and low officials. (2x)

Be mindful of the third auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha's teachings

flourished. (2x)

*ya gi shed dpal khang gru bzhi na yab yum pha ma bzhugs (2x)*

*gnyen drung 'dzoms pos mtha' zhig bskor na sangs rgyas bstan po de dang dar (2x)*

*sang rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel bzhi pa de dan 'grig (2x)*

When our mother and father sit in yon strong, square noble house (2x)

Then the Buddha's teachings reach even the kin gathered round. (2x)

Be mindful of the fourth auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha teachings

flourished. (2x)

*ya gi shed gangs stod mtha' po na gans seng dkar po bzugs (2x)*

*sengge'i g.yu ral mtha' ru rgyas song zer na sangs rgyas bstan pa de dang dar (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel lnga pa de dang 'grig (2x)*

When the snow lion sits on the high strong snow peak (2x)

Then the Buddha's teachings reach even the turquoise-maned snow lion. (2x)

Be mindful of the fifth auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha teachings flourished. (2x)

*ya gi shed brag stod mthon po na bya rgyal rgod po bzhugs (2x)*

*bya phran 'dzoms pos mtha' nas bskor na sangs rgyas bstan pa de dan dar (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer na rten 'brel drug pa de dan 'grig (2x)*

When the the king of birds<sup>3</sup> sits on the strong high rock (2x)

Then the Buddha's teachings reach even birds gathered in the branches. (2x)

Be mindful of the sixth auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha teachings flourished. (2x).

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<sup>3</sup> The vulture or eagle

*ya gi shed spang stod mthon po na 'brong chen ga ma bzhugs (2x)*

*sha phran 'dzoms pos mtha' nas bskor song zer na sangs rgyas bstan pa de dang dar (2x)*

*sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar song zer rten 'brel bdun pa de dna 'grig.*

When the great wild she-yak sits in the strong high rock meadow (2x)

Then the Buddha's teachings are said to reach even to the gathered animals. (2x)

Be mindful of the seventh auspicious omen when it was said the Buddha

teachings flourished. (2x)

## Bag ston gyi glu—Marriage Songs

### mda' dar gyi glu (Ceremonial Arrow song) (LYL:14:15).

*bkra shis pa glu* sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Note: *bkra shis pa glu* are sung a capella and aren't set in rhythmic cycles.

As part of establishing the bride in her new household, a good luck arrow wrapped in a *khatag* (blessing scarf) with a mirror attached is placed in the family shrine room in a vessel of barley. According to Ribbach this arrow is initially carried from the groom's home to the bride's by the Nyatripa (*gnya 'krid pa*) the leader of the groom's party, or witnesses (*gnya' bo pa*). After mock battles between the bride's and groom's parties, songs praising the origins of the arrow were traditionally sung back and forth by the two groups (Ribbach 1985: 64-99) This text is one such example.

Repeat 3x

OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig da ci mtsham gyi rmi

5  
lam bzang po mthong

4  
zhag bzang mtsham gyi rmi lam bzang po mthong

*m bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dan ldan par gyur cig. (3x)*

Om. May there be auspiciousness!

May there be congratulations! (3x).

*da ci mtsham gyi rmi lam bzang po mthong.*

*zhag bzang mtsham gyi rmi lam bzang po mthong.*

*phu de ya gi ru gangs ri chags pa mthong.*

*gangs ri de'i thog tu seng chen 'gying ba mthong.*

See how many good dreams there now are.

See how many good dreams of good days there now are.

See boy, yon beloved snow mountain.

See upon that snow mountain a great lion proudly posing.

*seng chen de'i thog tu ru g.yu ral rgyas pa mthong*

*mdo ma gi ru g.yu mtsho 'khyil ba mthong.*

*g.yu mtsho de'i thog tu nya mo lding ba mthong.*

*nya mo de'i thog tu gshog rtsal brkyangs pa mthong.*

See upon that great lion a vast turquoise mane.

See under the sutra<sup>4</sup> the round turquoise lake.

See upon the turquoise lake a female fish floating.

See upon the female fish the agile wing extended.

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<sup>4</sup> Buddhist scripture or philosophical treatise

*gshogs rtsal de'i thog tu 'khyags rom chags pa mthong.*

*'khyags rom de'i thog tu sa rdo chags pa mthong.*

*sa rdo de'i thog tu ma zhing chags pa mthong.*

*ma zshing de'i thog tu 'bru sna smin pa mthong.*

See upon the agile wing the beloved solid ice.

See upon the solid ice the beloved earth and stone.

See upon the earth and stone the beloved mother fields.

See upon the mother fields ripe grain.

*'bru sna de'i thog tu brgya bang 'khyil ba mthong.*

*brgya bang de'i thog tu bre kha 'dzugs pa mthong.*

*bre kha de'i thog tu mda' dar bslangs pa mthong.*

*mda' mo'i ltong yi ltong nas nyams pa.*

See upon the grain the hundred levels whirling.

See upon the hundred levels the measuring pot planted.

See upon the measuring pot the requested ceremonial arrow.

*gshog pa zur bzhi yi zur nas ma nyams pa.*

*mda' mo tshig gsum gyi tshig nas ma nyams pa.*

*kha btags dkar po la dri ma sa phog par.*

*dngul dkar me long la lcags g.ya' ma 'khor bar.*

The arrow was proud from head to four-sided notch, was very proud of its sides

The word arrow was very proud of its words.

The white khatag touched by earth is defiled.

The silver-white mirror is surrounded by the iron handle.

*g.yang dkar mong lo'i g.yang nas ma shor bar.*

*mde'u thur gsum gyi zur nas ma nyams par.*

*gzhas dang gzhan gyi lag la gtang dgos med.*

*pa bzang gi bu gces gcig gi lag la gtad pa yin.*

The sheep from ankle to ankle is very lost.

The triangular arrowhead is proud of its tip.

Another hand must not leave it alone.

It will be given to the hand of the Dear Children of the Good Father.

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dan ldan par gyur cig. (3x)*

Om. May there be auspiciousness!

May there be congratulations! (3x)

**thegs glu (Travel Song)** (LYL:15-16)

*bkra shis pa glu* sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig mchis su ma zhig'gung  
khra skya dkar po zhug

gsum na ltong mthong na dzin mchis du

phug cha in ron 'dzan gun gsum ma 'dzan zhi pa dgung yi gsum ltong nas na dkon mchis mchog

*Om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious.

may it be auspicious.

*mchis su ma zhi dgung gsum ltong na mchis*

*phug ron gun ma zhi dgung gsum ltong na mchis*

*khra skya dkar po zhi ma mthong 'dzin du cha'in*

*'dzin gsum 'dzin pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

When the three heavens were not seen

Then doves were not seen in the three heavens

A mottled white light will not be seen.

I supplicate the three recognitions from on top of recognition.

*mchis su ma zhig ri gsum ltong na mchis*  
*g.yang dkar ma mo zhig rig sum ltong mchis*  
*spyang dar ma zhig ma mthong 'dzin du cha'in*  
*'dzin gsum 'dzin pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

If three mountains are seen, no one is there  
 The sacred white goddess the three powers are not seen  
 Clever adult does not come to be recognized.  
 I supplicate the three recognitions from on top of recognition.

*mchis su ma zhig dpal khang dkyil na mchis*  
*a drung mna' ma zhig dpal kan dkyil na mchis*  
*gnya' bo mi rta zhig ma mthong 'dzin du cha'in*  
*'dzin gsum 'dzin pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

If no one is inside the noble house  
 If an oath messenger is not inside the noble house  
 The groom's attendants,<sup>5</sup> man, and horse will not be recognized.  
 I supplicate the three recognitions from on top of recognition.

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<sup>5</sup> The costumed male attendants who go to fetch the bride (Hamid: 97).

*mkhar ram gan du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*dpal kang 'di la gnas pa'i gshi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo mi rta la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod*

*Om bra shis par gyur cig.*

I supplicate the high god dwelling in the high castle.

I supplicate the village god dwelling in whatever village and road.

I supplicate this noble house earth of residence.

I supplicate the protective lineage diety the bride's attendants, man and horse

Om, may it be auspicious.

**a ma'i dkar 'chol du (The Mother's Libation)** (LYL: 17-18).

*bkra shis pa glu* sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Repeat 3x

OM ta-shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig lha gzhig gsol ma dan  
la ru kha char bu

3  
mkha' yug dro'i ma mchod stsal cig

4  
lha kha yi char dbang bu po yug brgya kun byin sdang zhal ba'i dgra mchod stsal.

This song is sung while the groom's mother makes libations of *chang* as offerings to propitiate local deities and spirits in order to attain good fortune and avert misfortune .

***Om bkra shis par gyur cig.***

***bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.***

Om, may there be auspiciousness.

May it be auspicious.

*lha gzhig gsol ma dan mkha' 'dro'i mchod*  
*lha yi dbang po brgya byin zhal du mchod*  
*la ru kha char bu yug ma stsal cig*  
*kha char bu yug kun sdang ba'i dgra stsal.*

A god makes offering to the offering goddess/dakini

I supplicate the sage of the gods, Indra of the hundred sacrifices.

May they not bestow rain and snowstorm over the passes.

May they bestow rain and snowstorm on angry enemies.

*btsan zhig gsol lo ma dang mkha' 'gro'i tshogs*  
*btsan gyi a ma skyabs sbyin zhal du mchod*  
*mi la snyun gzhi mgur cham ma stsal cig*  
*snyun gzhi mgur cham kun sdang ba'i la stsal.*

One demon request of the assembly of dakinis.

I supplicate the demon's blessed protective mother.

May they not bestow the pervasive four afflictions on men

May they bestow the four afflictions on our enemies.

*klu zhig gsol lo ma dang mkha' 'gro'i tshogs*

*klu yi ma dros gzi can zhal du mchod*

*rta la rgyu srin glang 'thab ma stsal cig*

*rgyu srin glang thabs kun sdang ba'i dgral stsal.*

The assembly of leaves and dakinis was requested by the *nagas*.

I supplicate the *naga* of the bright lake.

May they not bestow intestinal worms and stomach pains on the horses.

May they bestow intestinal worms and stomach pains on the enemies.

*mkhar ram gang du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*sa cha 'di la gnas pa'i gshi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the god living in the high castle.

I supplicate the village god living in village and road.

I supplicate the protective god inhabiting the earth to this place.

I supplicate the protective god of the nine bride's attendant kin.

**dkar 'chol spyir btang gi glu (Universal Libation song)** (LYL: 18-19).

All my informants were unsure about how the generic blessing song (*bra shis pa'i glu*) melody, based on couplets, fits in with the three-line verse scheme of this text. The fact that the text ends with a quatrain adds to the mystery. It may be that that the musical consequents are repeated for the third lines.

*Om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

Om may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig phud na mnyams par*

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig steng gi lha la mchod*

*lha yi dbang po brgya byin zhal du mchod.*

All the golden *chang* is gathered as an offering.

All the golden *chang* is offered to the gods of the earth's surface.

I supplicate the sage of the gods, Indra of the hundred sacrifices.

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig phud na ma nyams par*

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig bar gyi btsan la mchod*

*btsan gyi a ma skyabs spyin zhal du mchod.*

All the golden *chang* is gathered as an offering.

All the golden *chang* is offered to the subterranean dakinis.

I supplicate the face of the mother of dakinis bestowing refuge.

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig phud nas ma nyams par*

*gser skyems gtsang ma zhig 'og gi klu ma mchod*

*klu yi ma dro gzi can zhal du mchod.*

All the golden *chang* is gathered as an offering.

All the golden *chang* is offered to the dakinis above the earth.

I supplicate the face of the nagas' majestic mother dakini

*mkhar ram gang du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*sa cha 'di la gsa pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo mi rta la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the god living in the high castle or anywhere else.

I supplicate the god living the village or anywhere else.

Offering to the protective god inhabiting the earth to this place.

Offering to the protective god of the bride's attendant kin.

**bsu chang gi glu (Welcome song)** (LYL: 19-20).

This song would be sung to welcome the bride and her attendants, as shown by the last line in the fourth verses. As far as I can gather, this song would be performed using the same generic *bkra shis pa glu* melody. However, in the first three verses the second line is spoken, in which case the performance scheme as follows A (spoken B instead of sung) A B. The fourth verse would be sung in the usual manner.

***Om bkra shis par gyur cig***

***bkra shis bde legs dang ldang par gyur cig.***

Om, may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

***dgung dang nyi zla skar phran 'dzoms dang gsum.***

***(gsung) na ning shed ma mjal bshugs yod sa thag ring.***

***deng sang da lo shed ma mjal ba'i nyams kyi dga' ba la.***

***nyams dga' blo bde yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.***

The three, sun, moon, and little stars, gather in the sky.

(Spoken) last year we didn't meet in a remote place.

Nowadays, this year we didn't meet joyfully,

But I supplicate the precious jewels from the highest happy carefreeness.

*chos grva yar 'dren bu slob 'dzoms dang gsum.*

*(gsung) na ding shed ma mjal bzhugs yod sa thag ring.*

*deng sang da lo shed mjal ba'i nyams kyi dga' ba la.*

*nyams dga' blo bde yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The three guiding teachers gathered in the dharma court.

(Spoken) last year we didn't meet in a remote place.

Nowadays, this year we didn't meet joyfully.

But I supplicate from the highest happy carefreeness the precious jewel.

*dpal khang yab yum gnyin drung 'dzoms dang gsum.*

*(gsung) na ding shed ma mjal bzhugs yod sa thag ring.*

*deng sang da lo shed mjal ba'i nyams kyi dga' ba la.*

*nyams dga' blo bde yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

In the noble house, the three, groom, bride, and relatives are gathered.

(Spoken) last year we didn't meet in a remote place.

Nowadays, this year we didn't meet joyfully.

But I supplicate from the highest happy carefreeness the precious jewel.

*mkhar ram gang du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod.*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod.*

*sa cha 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod.*

*gnya' bo mi rta la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the god living in the castle or anywhere else.

I supplicate the god living in the village or anywhere else.

I supplicate the god in the earth of this place.

I supplicate the god protecting the bride's attendants, man and horse.

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om may there be auspiciousness.

**ka dar gyi glu (Pillar Flag Song)** (LYL: 21-22)

*bkra shis pa glu* sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

OM ta - shis par gyur cig ta shis del lek dan dang par gyur cig

2  
dgung sngon mthon po la nyi zlas ldem zhid phub  
zhva 'am de 'dra zhid dgung sngon yongs kyi zhva

4  
nyi zla'i ldem de la rgyu skar mtha' nas bskor  
'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang mi 'bul lo.

This song would be sung when hanging prayer flags from a pillar to invoke blessings on the newlyweds (LYL: 21-22).

*om bkra shis par gyur cig*

*bkra shis bdel legs dang ldan par gyur cig (3x)*

Om may it be auspicious

May it be auspicious (3x)

*dgung sngon mthon po la nyi zlas ldem zhid phub*

*nyi zla'i ldem de la rgyu skar mtha' nas bskor*

*zhva 'am de 'dra zhid dgung sngon yongs kyi zhva*

*'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang mi 'bul lo.*

In the high blue sky the sun and and moon's image raised.

The high bright stars surround the flag of sun and moon.

The crown or what appears to be the crown of the blue sky's coming.

If whatever is attained is attained, whatever accomplished is accomplished.

*chos grva gru bshi la yar 'dren ldem zhig phub  
yar 'dren ldem de lbu slob mtha' nas bskor  
zhva 'am de 'dra zhig chos grva yongs kyi zhva  
'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang mi 'bul lo.*

In the square dharma court the image of a high guide is raised.

There the high guide's image is surrounded by disciples.

The crown or what appears to be the crown of the dharma court's coming.

If whatever is attained is attained, whatever accomplished is accomplished.

*sku mkhar mthon po la mi chen ldem zhig phub  
mi chen ldem de la drag zhan mtha' nas bskor  
zhva 'am de 'dra zhig sku mkhar yongs kyi zhva  
'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang mi 'bul lo*

In the high castle the lord's image is raised.

The lord's image is surrounded by high and low officials.

The crown or what appears to be the crown of the castle's coming.

If whatever is attained is attained, whatever accomplished is accomplished.

*dpal khang gru bzhi la yab yum ldem zhig phub  
yab yum ldem de la gnyen drung mtha' nas bskor  
zhva 'am de 'dra zhig dpal khang yongs kyi zhva  
'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang mi 'bul lo*

In the noble square house the image of groom and bride is raised.

The groom and bride's image is surrounded by attending kin.

The crown or what appears to be the crown of the noble house's coming.

If whatever is attained is attained, whatever accomplished is accomplished.

***Om bkra shis par gyur cig.***

Om may it be auspicious.

Description provided by Tashi Rabgias:

*(bag ma'i mgo la kha bthags kyi rva byed skabs kyang glu snga ma 'di gtong srol yod de. de skabs su gsham gsal gyi sho lo ka de bsnan gyi yod do.)*

(On the bride's head a *khathag* horn is then placed and this fifth song is then performed. Then the following *shloka* is added).

*a drung mna' la phying dkar ldem zhig phub*

*phying dkar ldem de la rgya sram mtha' nas bskor.*

*zhva 'am de 'dra zhig a drung yongs kyi zhva*

*'thob kyang 'thob byung na 'bul yang los kyi 'bul.*

To the messenger a white felt image is raised.

The white felt image is surrounded by Chinese otter (fur).

The crown or what appears to be the crown of the messenger's coming.

If whatever is attained is attained, whatever accomplished is accomplished.

**sgor rdza ‘degs skabs (Round clay vessel offering section)** (LYL:23-24)

This song follows the standard *bkra shis pa’i glu* format of musical couplets fitting into quatrains after the initial blessing invocation.

*OM bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

OM, may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

*dgung gnam sngon po zhig rgya che dpangs su mtho*

*nyi zla gnyis ka kun rgya che dpangs su mtho*

*rgyu skar ‘dzoms po kun ‘dzoms po mi yi mtho*

*mtho gsum mdzes pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

High in the height of a vast blue sky,

High in the height of both the vast sun and moon,

The height of men, the gathered constellations,

From atop the three beautiful high ones I supplicate the three jewels.

*chos grva gru bzhi rgya che dpangs su mtho*

*yar ‘dren bla ma kun rgya che dpangs su mtho*

*bu slob ‘dzoms po kun ‘dzoms po mi yi mtho*

*mtho gsum mdzes pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

High in the vast height of the square dharma court,

Height of the vast lama guides,

The height of the men, gathered disciples,

From atop the three beautiful high ones I supplicate the three jewels.

*sku mthon po zhig rgya che dpangs su mtho*  
*mi chen gong zhig rgya che dpangs su mtho*  
*drag zhan 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po mi yi mtho*  
*mtho gsum mdzom po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

High in the heights of a vast, high realm,  
 A high lord in a high place,  
 The height of the men, gathered high and low officials,  
 From atop the three beautiful high ones I supplicate the three jewels.

*dpal khang gru bzhi zhig rgya che dpangs su mtho*  
*yab yum pha ma kun rgya che dpangs su mtho*  
*gnyen drung 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po mi yi mtho*  
*mtho gsum mdzes po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

High in the heights of a vast, square noble house,  
 High in the height, the groom and bride,  
 The height of men, gathered bride's attendants,  
 From atop the three beautiful high ones I supplicate the three jewels.

*mkhar ram gang su bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*dpal khang 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the gods that lives in the castle and wherever else.

I supplicate the gods that lives in the village and wherever else.

I supplicate the earth gods of this place.

I supplicate the gods that protects the kinfolk.

*OM bkra shis par gyr cig.*

OM, may it be auspicious.

**rgya gur gyi glu (Chinese sable song)** (LYL: 25-26)

Sung to the *bkra shis pa glu* melody, without the initial invocation

*dgung gnam sngon po zhig rgya gur phub pa 'dra*

*nyi zla gnyis ka kun gur shing btsugs pa 'dra*

*rgyu skar 'dzoms po kun thag brkyangs pa 'dra*

*rgya gur dkar po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

A blue sky is like a roof of Chinese sable.

The sun and moon are like a planted tent pole.

The gathered constellations are like a stretched rope.

I supplicate the three jewels from the roof of white Chinese sable.

*chos grva gru bzhi rgya gur phub pa 'dra*

*yar 'dren bla ma kun gur shing btsugs pa 'dra*

*bu slob 'dzoms po kun gur thag brkyangs pa 'dra*

*rgya gur dkar po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The square dharma debate court is like a broad tent.

All the lama guides are like planted tent poles.

All the disciples are like stretched tent ropes.

I supplicate the three jewels from the roof of white Chinese sable.

*sku mkhar mthon po zhig rgya gur phub pa 'dra*  
*mi chen gong ma kun gur shing btsugs pa 'dra*  
*drag zhan 'dzoms po kun gur thag brkyangs pa 'dra*  
*rgya gur kdar po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The high castle is like a broad tent.

All the high nobles are like planted tent poles.

All the aristocrats and commoners are like stretched tent ropes.

I supplicate the three jewels from the roof of white Chinese sable.

*dpal khang gru bzhi rgya gur phub pa 'dra*  
*yab yum pa ma kun gur shing btsugs pa 'dra*  
*gnyen drung 'dzoms po kun gur thag brkyangs pa 'dra*  
*rgya gur kdar po yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The square noble house is like a broad tent.

All our mothers and fathers are like planted tent poles.

All our kinfolk are like stretched tent ropes.

I supplicate the three jewels from the roof of white Chinese sable.

*khar lam gang du bzhugs pa'i rste lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*sa cha 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the god that resides on the palace road .

I supplicate the god that resides on the village road.

I supplicate the spirits that reside in this land.

I supplicate the nine gathered groom's attendants.

**'bras gtsang skabs (Pure rice section)** (LYL: 26-27)

Sung to the *bkra shis pa glu* melody, without the initial invocation.

*dgung gnam sngon po zhig bkra shis lha yi sras*

*nyi zla gnyis ka kun bkra shis lha yi sras*

*rgya skar 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po mi yi sras*

*lha sras mi sras kyi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The blue sky is a prince of the auspicious gods.

Both the sun and moon are princes of the auspicious gods.

All the constellations are princes of men.

I supplicate the Three Jewels for the prince of men to come from above.

*chos grva gru bzhi zhig bkra shis lha yi sras*

*yar 'dren bla ma kun bkra shis lha yi sras*

*bu slob 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po mi yi sras*

*lha sras mi sras kyi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The square dharma debate court is a prince of the auspicious gods.

All the lama guides are princes of the auspicious gods.

All the gather disciples are princes of men.

I supplicate the Three Jewels for the prince of men come to from above.

*sku mkhar mthon po zhig bkra shis lha yi sras*  
*mi chen gong ma zhig bkra shis lha yi sras*  
*drag zhan 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po mi yi sras*  
*lha sras mi sras kyi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The high castle is a son of the auspicious gods.

The high lord is a prince of the auspicious gods.

All the gathered aristocrats and commoners are princes of men.

I supplicate the Three Jewels for the prince of men to come from above.

*dpal khan gru bzhi zhig bkra shis lha yi sras*  
*yab yum pha ma kun bkra shis lha yi sras*  
*gnyen drung 'dzoms po kun 'dzoms po lha yi sras*  
*lha sras mi sra kyi steng nas kdon mchog mchod.*

The noble square house is a son of the auspicious gods.

All our fathers and mothers are princes of the auspicious gods.

All the gathered kinfolk are princes of men.

I supplicate the Three Jewels for the prince of men to come from above.

*mkhar ram gang du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod.*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*dpal khang 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

The castle road is a son of the auspicious gods.

The village road is a prince of the auspicious gods.

I supplicate the spirits that reside in this noble square house.

I supplicate the nine gathered groom's attendants.

*OM bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om may it be auspicious.

**ya do mdza' bo'i skabs kyi glu (Helper section song)** (LYL: 28-29)

Sung to the *bkra shis pa glu* melody

*om bkra shis par gyur cig*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious,

May it be auspicious.

*dgung gnam sngon mo zhig rag rkong tha le ma*

*nyi zla gnyis ka kun ras dkar sdong ras 'dra*

*rgyu skar 'dzoms po kun 'bri mar ser chung 'dra*

*ltam gsum ltem pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod*

A blue sky is a polished brass lamp.

Both the sun and moon are like the white wick cloth.

The gathered constellations are like golden *dri*<sup>6</sup> butter.

I supplicate the three jewels that fill the three worlds from on high.

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<sup>6</sup> A *dri* is a female yak

*chos grva gru bzhi zhig rag rkong tha le ma*  
*yar 'dren bla ma kun ras dkar sdong ras 'dra*  
*bu slob 'dzoms po kun 'bri mar ser chung 'dra*  
*Item gsum ltem pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

A square dharma court is a polished brass lamp.

The guiding lamas are like the white wick cloth.

The gathered disciples are like golden *dri* butter.

I supplicate the three jewels that fill the three worlds from on high.

*sku mkhar mthon po zhig rag rkong tha le ma*  
*mi chen gong ma kun ras dkar sdong ras 'dra*  
*drag zhan 'dzoms po kun 'bri mar ser chung 'dra*  
*Items gsum ltem pa ye steng nas dkon mchog mchod*

A high castle is a polished brass lamp.

The great high lords are like the white wick cloth.

The gathered high and low officials are like golden *dri* butter.

I supplicate the three jewels that fill the three worlds from on high.

*dpal khang gru bzhi zhig rag rkong tha le ma*  
*yab yum pha ma kun ras dkar sdong ras 'dra*  
*ngyen drung 'dzoms po kun 'bri mar ser chung 'dra*  
*Item gsum Item pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod*

A square, noble house is a polished brass lamp.

The father and mother are like the white wick cloth.

The gathered kin are are like golden *dri* butter.

I supplicate the three jewels that fill the three worlds from on high.

*mkhar ram gna du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*  
*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*  
*dpal khang 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*  
*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i rabs lha mchod.*

I supplicate the god that lives in the castle or anywhere else.

I supplicate the god that lives in the village or anywhere else.

I supplicate the god that remains in this noble house.

I supplicate the god that protects the kinfolk.

*Om, bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious.

**thegs zan skabs (Departure food section)** (LYL:30-32)

Sung to the *bkra shis pa glu* melody

*Om bkra shis par gyur cig,*

*bkra shis bde legs par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious,

may it be auspicious.

*dgung gnam sngon mo zhig g.yu gdan bting pa 'dra*

*nyi zla gnyis ka kun g.yu chung rol pa 'dra*

*rgyu skar 'dzom po kun mu tig tshar la brgyud pa 'dra*

*rgyan gsum brgyan pa yi nas dkon mchog mchod.*

The blue sky is like a firmly planted turquoise column.

Both the sun and moon are like supreme little turquoise pieces.

The gathered constellations are like shining pearls.

I supplicate the three jewels decorated by the three ornaments.

*chos grva gru bzhi g.yu gdan bting ba 'dra*

*yar 'dren bla ma kun g.yu chung rol pa 'dra*

*bu slob 'dzom po kun mu tig tshar la brgyud pa 'dra*

*rgyan gsum brgyan pa yi nas dkon mchog mchod.*

A square dharma court is like a firmly planted turquoise column.

The lama guides are like supreme, little turquoise pieces.

The gathered disciples are like shining pearls.

I supplicate the three jewels decorated by the three ornaments

*sku mkhar mthon po zhig g.yu gdan bting ba 'dra*  
*mi chen gong ma zhig g.yu chung rol pa 'dra*  
*drag zhan 'dzom po kun mu tig tshar la brgyud pa 'dra*  
*rgyan gsum brgyan pa yi nas dkon mchog mchod.*

A high castle is like a firmly planted turquoise column.

A great lord is like supreme, little turquoise pieces.

The gathered high and low officials are like shining pearls.

I supplicate the three jewels decorated by the three ornaments.

*dpal kang gru bzhi zhig g.yu gdan bting ba 'dra*  
*yab yum pha ma kun g.yu chung rol pa 'dra*  
*gnyen drung 'dzom po kun mu tig tshar la brgyud pa 'dra*  
*rgyan gsum brgyan pa yi nas dkon mchog mchod.*

A square noble house is like a firmly rooted turquoise pillar.

The parents are like supreme, little pieces of turquoise.

The gathered kin are like shining pearls.

I supplicate the three jewels decorated by the three ornaments

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious.

**gdan kha'i glu (Seat speech song) (LYL:32-33)**

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam--18 August 2009

This opening section would utilize the standard *bkra shis pa'i glu* melodic formula.

***Om bkra shis par gyur cig***

***bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.***

Om, may it be auspicious,

may it be auspicious.

The stanzas are then sung to the following melody.

dgung gnam \_\_\_\_\_ sngo - (lo)n \_\_\_\_\_ po - (lo)'i phyogs nas  
 nyi zla gnyi - (li)s ka - (la) yi - (li) \_\_\_\_\_ dbu la  
 rgyu skar 'dzo - (lo)m po - (lo) yi - (li) \_\_\_\_\_ bsa - (la)m  
 do - (lo)n gau - (lu)m gru - (lu)b pa - (la) \_\_\_\_\_ yi - (li)

dka - (la)r po - (lo)'i na - (la)m zhig langs  
 gse - (le)r gyi - (li) \_\_\_\_\_ nyi - (li) \_\_\_\_\_ ma shar  
 tsho - (lo)d do - (lo)n du - (lu) grub  
 ste - (le)ng na - (lo)s dko - (lo)n mchog mchod.

***dgung gnam sngon po'i phyogs nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs***

***nyi zla gnyis ka yi dbu la gser gyi nyi ma shar***

***rgyu skar 'dzom po yi bsam tshod don du grub***

***don gsum grub pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.***

From the blue sky comes a dawn of white.

The eastern sunlight of gold is on the head of both sun and moon.

Contemplate the gathered constellations' contemplative intention meaning.

I supplicate the three jewels from ground of contemplating the three meanings.

*chos grva gru bzhi'i phyogs nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs*

*yar 'dren bla ma yi dbu la gser gyi nyi ma shar*

*bu slob 'dzom po yi bsam tshod don du grub*

*don gsum grub pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

From the square dharma court comes a dawn of white.

The eastern sunlight of gold is on the head of the lama guides.

Contemplate the meaning of the gathered disciples.

I supplicate the three jewels from ground of contemplating the three meanings.

*sku mkhar mthon po'i phyog nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs*

*mi chen gong ma yi dbu la gser gyi nyi ma shar*

*drag zhan 'dzom po yi bsam tshod don du grub*

*don gsum grub pa yi steng nas dkon mchog mchod.*

From the high castle comes a dawn of white.

The eastern sunlight of gold is on the head of the great lord.

Contemplate the meaning of the gathered high and low officials.

I supplicate the three jewels from the basis of contemplating the three meanings.

*dpal khang gru bzhi phyog nas dkar po'i nam zhid lang*

*yab yum pha ma yi dbu la gser gyi nyi mar shar*

*gnyen drung 'dzom po yi bsam tshod don du grub*

*don gsum grub pa yi steng nas dkno mchog mchod.*

From the noble house comes a dawn of white.

The eastern sunlight of gold is on the head on the father and mother

Contemplate the meaning of the gathered kin.

I supplicate the three jewels from ground of contemplating the three meanings.

*mkhar ram gang du bzhugs pa'i rtse lha mchod*

*yul lam gang du bzhugs pa'i yul lha mchod*

*dpal khang 'di la gnas pa'i gzhi bdag mchod*

*gnya' bo spun dgu la skyob pa'i ras lha mchod*

I supplicate the god that lives in the castle or wherever else.

I supplicate the god that lives in the village or wherever else.

I supplicate the god that dwells in the ground of the noble house.

I supplicate the god that protects the family.

(This section would end with the standard *bkra shis pa'i glu* melodic formula).

***Om bkra shis par gyur cig.***

Om, may it be auspicious.

**thod phud skabs (Skull Cup<sup>7</sup> Offering Section)** (LYL:34-35)

sung to the standard *bkra shis pa glu* melody

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

Om may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

*rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi shar phyogs na*

*chu sprin pa tra yi steng nas nyi zla 'khrungs*

*khyod dnor de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod*

*nor bu de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod.*

If the Diamond Throne of India<sup>8</sup> is in the East,

The sun and mood come from the high swirling clouds.

I supplicate you, the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

I supplicate the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

*rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi lho phyogs na*

*chu sprin pa tra yi steng nas 'bru sna 'khrungs*

*khyod nor de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod*

*nor bu de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod.*

If the Diamond Throne of India is in the South,

Grain comes from the high swirling clouds.

I supplicate you, the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

I supplicate the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

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<sup>7</sup> A cup made from the top of a human skull is a power ritual object in tantric practice.

<sup>8</sup> Diamond Throne of India, the present Bodhgaya in Bihar, where Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment

*rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi nub phyogs na*  
*chu sprin pa tra yi steng nas sman sna 'khrungs*  
*khyod nor de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchod mchod*  
*nor bu de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod.*

If the Diamond Throne of India is in the North,  
 Grains of medicine come from the high swirling clouds.  
 I supplicate you, the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.  
 I supplicate the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

*rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi byang phyogs na*  
*chu sprin pa tra yi steng nas shel tshva 'khrungs*  
*khyod nor de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod*  
*nor bu de 'dra zhig lhag bsam dkon mchog mchod.*

If the Diamond Throne of India is in the West,  
 Glass crystal comes from the high swirling clouds.  
 I supplicate you, the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.  
 I supplicate the Precious Jewels that are like a jewel of highest intentions.

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om may it be auspicious.

[The following couplets are then sung to the main *bkra shis pa glu* melody]

*shva gcig shva gnyis da yang phab tsan*

*ser pa gser gyi da yang gser gdan 'khyong.*

The relatives once again put on one hat, two hats.

Once again they bring the gold, the golden throne.

*shva gcig shva gnyis da yang phab tsan*

*dkar po dngul gyi da yang dngul gdan 'khyong.*

The relatives once again put on one hat, two hats.

Once again they bring the silver, the silver throne.

*shva gcig shva gnyis da yang 'phab tsan*

*sngnon mo 'bru yi da yang 'bru gdan 'khyong.*

The relatives once again bring one hat, two hats.

Once again they bring grain, the grain throne.

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious.

**zongs glu (Dowery song)** (LYL:36-37)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

## Rhythmic cycle 4

This song would be sung when the bride's dowery is displayed, hung on a rope (cf. Ribbach 1985). This melody is also used for songs that describe the bride's leaving her family.<sup>9</sup>

1 (nam la) skya rengs (la) dang po de dgung sngon \_\_\_\_\_ mthon la \_\_\_\_  
 5 shar (nam la) skya rengs (la) dang \_\_\_ po de dgung sngon mthon la \_\_\_\_\_  
 6 shar no mo'i a pha (gun) bzhengs te \_\_\_ no mo la zongs \_\_\_ zhig  
 9 sgrigs 'dzoms pa'i a pha(gun) bzhengs \_\_\_ te \_\_\_ 'dzoms pa la zongs zhi(ggang)  
 12 sgrigs

<sup>9</sup> An example was recorded as a video by Kunzes Dolma (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q2mJe3e7VA>).

*skya rengs dang po de dgung sngon mthon la shar (2x)*

*no mo'i a pha bzhengs te no mo la zongs zhig sgrigs*

*'dzoms pa'i a pha bzhengs te 'dzoms pa la zongs zhig sgrigs*

*g.ya' chags gyon chas kyi sgo nas no mo la zongs shig sgrigs*

*g.ya' chags gyon chas kyi sgo nas 'dzoms pa la zongs shig sgrig*

*no mos mi shes pa 'i yul de shes dgos pa byung*

*'dzoms pas mi shes pa'i yul de shes dgos pa byung.*

At the first pre-dawn light in the high, blue eastern sky, (2x)

The girl's father has arisen bringing a dowery to the girl.

The perfect father has arisen to bring a dowery to the perfect one.

He brings a dowery of prosperous clothes from the door to the girl.

He brings a dowery of prosperous clothes from the door to the perfect one.

The people the girl knows from her village want to know.

The gathered people of the village want to know.

*skya rengs gnyis pa brag stod mthon po la shar (2x)*

*no mo'i a pha bzhengs te no mo la zongs zhig sgrigs*

*'dzoms pa'i a pha bzhengs te 'dzoms pa la zongs zhig sgrigs*

*drug dkar drug dmar gyi sgo nas no mo la zongs shig sgrigs*

*drug dkar drug dmar gyi sgo nas 'dzoms p a la zongs shig sgrig*

*no mos mi shes pa 'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung*

*'dzoms pas mi shes pa'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung.*

At the second pre-dawn light in the high, blue eastern sky (2x)

The girl's mother has arisen bringing a dowery to the girl.

The perfect mother have arisen to bring a dowery to the perfect one.

She brings a dowery of two types of turquoise and coral.

They bring doweries of two types of turquoise and coral.

The people the girl knows from the village want to know.

The gathered people of the village want to know.

*skya rengs gsum pa de spang stod mthon po la shar (2x)*  
*no mo'i ming chung bzhengs te no mo la zongs zhig sgrigs*  
*'dzoms pa'i ming chung bzhengs te 'dzoms pa la zongs zhig sgrigs*  
*'bru sna spun dgu yi sgo nas no mo la zoms shig sgrigs*  
*'bru sna spun dgu yi sgo nas 'dzoms p a la zongs shig sgrig*  
*no mos mi shes pa 'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung*  
*'dzoms pas mi shes pa'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung.*

At the third pre-dawn light in the high, blue eastern sky (2x)

The girl's little brother has arisen bringing a dowery to the girl.

The perfect little brother has arisen to bring a dowery to the perfect one.

He brings a dowery of many types of grain from her brother.

He brings a dowery of many types of grain from her brother.

The people the girl knows from the village want to know.

The gathered people of the village want to know.

*skya rengs bzhi pa de mtsho stod mthon po la shar (2x)*  
*no mo'i ya do kun bzhengs te no mo la zongs zhig sgrigs*  
*'dzoms pa'i ya do kun bzhengs te 'dzoms pa la zongs zhig sgrigs*  
*rta g.ya sgo phyugs kyi sgo nas no mo la zongs shig sgrigs*  
*rta g.ya sgo phyugs kyi sgo nas 'dzoms pa la zongs shig sgrig*  
*no mos mi shes pa 'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung*  
*'dzoms pas mi shes pa'i yul de zhes dgos pa byung.*

At the forth pre-dawn light in the high, blue eastern sky (2x)

The girl's companions have arisen bringing a dowery to the girl.

The gathered companions have arisen to bring doweries to the perfect one.

They bring a dowery of pack horses and draught animals to the girl.

They bring a dowery of pack horses and draught animals to the perfect one.

The people the girl knows from the village want to know.

The gathered people of the village want to know.

**tho glu (List Song)** (LYL:38-40)

(No melody known to my informants)

*dri wa: 'dir byon pa'i gnya' bo mi ma 'phrul*

*khyed yong yong gang dang tsug nas yongs*

*da 'gro 'gro gang dang tsug nas 'gro.*

Question: Is it not a miracle, this witness that appeared?

You came while whatever comes may come.

You go while whatever goes may go.

*lan: nged yong yong shar gyi phyogs nas yongs*

*da 'gro 'gro nub phyogs o rgyan gling la 'gro.*

Answer: I came,came from the East.

I go there to the North, to the realm of Orgyan.

*dri wa: khyed shar gyi phyogs nas yong tsa na*

*shar phyogs rgyal po ci 'dri 'dug*

*bran dang 'khor g.yog ci 'dri 'dug*

*yid dang cha lugs ci 'dri 'dug.*

Question: Since you come from the East,

What is the Eastern king like?

What are the servants like around him?

What are their manner and dress like?

*lan: nged shar gyi phyogs nas yong tsa na*

*shar phyogs rgyal po yul 'khor bsrung*

*bran dang 'khor g.yog chos la dga'*

*yid dang lugs de 'dra 'dug*

*skad cha 'dri na khong la dris*

*nged la skad cha 'chad rgyu med.*

Answer: Since I come from the East,

The Eastern king is “Guards the Country.”

The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.

Their manner is like *tattva*<sup>10</sup>

If they question they are inner questions.

I have unaffected speech.

*dri wa: khyed lho yi phyogs nas yong tsa na*

*lho phyogs rgyal po ci 'dri zhig bzhugs*

*bran dang 'khor g.yog ci la dga'*

*yid dang cha lugs ci 'dra 'dug.*

Question: Since you come from the South,

What is the Southern king like?

What are the servants like around him?

What are their manner and dress like?

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<sup>10</sup> “Thusness”: the ultimate nature of reality

*lan: nged lho yi phyogs nas yong tsa na*  
*lho phyogs rgyal po 'phags skyes po*  
*bran dang 'khor g.yog chos la dga'*  
*yid dang cha lugs de 'dra 'dug*  
*skad cha 'dri na khong la dris*  
*nged la skad cha 'dchad rgyu med*

Answer: Since I come from the South,  
 The Southern king is “High and Low One.”  
 The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.  
 Their manner is like *tattva*.  
 If they question they are inner questions.  
 I have unaffected speech.

*dri wa: khyed nub kyi phyogs nas yong tsa na*  
*nub phyogs rgyal poci 'dra bzhugs*  
*bran dang 'khor g.yog ci la dga'*  
*yid dang cha lugs ci dang 'dra.*

Question: Since you come from the North,  
 What is the Northern king like?  
 What are the servants like around him?  
 What are their manner and dress like?

*lan: nged nub kyi phyogs nas yong tsa na*  
*nub phyogs rgyal po spyang mi bzang*  
*bran dang 'khor g.yog chos la dga'*  
*yid dang cha lugs de 'dra 'dug*  
*skad cha 'dri na khong la dris*  
*nged la skad cha 'chad rgyu med.*

Answer: Since I come from the North,  
 The Northern king is “Watching Good People.”  
 The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.  
 Their manner is like *tattva*  
 If they question they are inner questions.  
 I have unaffected speech

*dri wa: khyed byang gi phyogs nas yong tsa na*  
*byang phyogs rgyal po ci 'dra bzhugs*  
*bran dang 'khor g.yog ci la dga'*  
*yid dang cha lugs ci 'dra 'dug.*

Question: Since you come from the West,  
 What is the Western king like?  
 What are the servants like around him?  
 What are their manner and dress like?

*lan: nged byang gi phyogs nas yong tsa na*

*byang phyogs rgyal po rnam thos sras*

*bran dang 'khor g.yog chos la dga'*

*yid dang cha lugs de 'dra 'dug*

*skad cha 'dri khong la dris*

*nged la skad cha 'chad rgyu med.*

Answer: Since I come from the West,

The Western king is “Son of Perfect Hearing.”

The servants around him are dressed in joy of the Dharma.

Their manner is like *tattva*.

If they question they are inner questions.

I have unaffected speech.

**shing rtse mo lnga (The Five Wooded Hills)** (LYL: 41-43)

(Melody not known to my informants)

*dri wa: shing rtsab gcig la rtse mo lnga*

*rtse mo lnga la tshang 'khor lnga*

*tshang 'khor lnga la sgo nga lnga*

*sgo nga lnga la bya mo lnga*

Question: In a weedy wood are five hills.

On the five hills are five nests.

In the five nests are five eggs.

In the five eggs are five hens.

*bya gcig kha lo shar la lta.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*de ci dang gang gi don zhig yin.*

A bird looked to the East.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong.”

Whatever for?

*bya gcig kha lo lho la lta.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*de ci dang gang gi don zhig yin*

A bird looked to the South.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong.”

Whatever for?

*gya gcig kha lo nub la lta.*

*ka rang ko rang lan gsum zer.*

*de ci dang gang gi don zhig yin*

A bird looked to the North.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong.”

Whatever for?

*bya gcig kha lo byang la lta.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*de ci dang gang gi don zhig yin.*

A bird looked to the West.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong.”

Whatever for?

*lan: bya gcig kha lo shar la bsgyur.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*shar chos la dga' ba'i don zhig yin.*

Answer: A bird flew to the East.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko ron,”

Because of rejoicing in Eastern Dharma.

*bya gcig kha lo lho la bsgyur.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*lho 'bru sna 'dzoms po'i don zhig yin.*

A bird flew to the South.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong,”

Because of the many kinds of grain in the South.

*bya gcig kha lo nub la bsgyur.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*nub sman sna 'dzom po'i don zhig yin.*

A bird flew to the North.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong,”

Because of the many kinds of medicine in the North.

*bya gcig kha lo byang la bsgyur.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*byang shel tshva mang ba'i don zhig yin.*

A bird flew to the West.

Thrice it said, “ka rang ko rong,”

Because of the more plentiful crystal salt in the West.

*bya gcig kha lo steng la bsgyur.*

*ka rang ko rong lan gsum zer.*

*dgung rim pa ma mtho ba'i don zhig yin.*

A bird flew up high.

Thrice it said, “ka ran ko rong,”

Because of the high steps in the sky.

**rgyang bu gcig 'phal ka bcu gsum (One wood tablet, thirteen notches)**

(LYL: 43-44)

(Melody not known to my informants)

*dri ba: rgyang bu gcig la 'phal ka bcu gsum yod pa de*  
*ci shig dang gang gi don zhig yin.*

Question: On a wood tablet are thirteen notches.

Whatever for?

*lan: gcig thig le nyag gcig gi don zhig yin*  
*gnyis nyi zla nyis kyi don zhig yin.*  
*gsum rigs gsum mgon po'i don zhig yin.*  
*bzhi phyogs bzhi ru bzhi don zhig yin.*  
*lnga rgyal ba rigs lnga'i don zhig yin.*  
*drug 'gro ba rigs drug gi don zhig yin.*  
*bdun sangs rgyas rabs bdun gyi don zhig yin.*  
*brgyad bkra shis rtags brgyad kyi don zhig yin.*  
*dgu srin po mgo dgu'i don zhig yin.*  
*bcu shar ba ra bcu'i don zhig yin.*  
*bcu gcig sangs rgyas zhal bcu gcig gi don zhig yin.*  
*bcu gnyis lo 'khor bcu gnyis kyi don zhig yin.*  
*bcu gsum rgyu rim pa bcu gsum gyi don zhig yin.*

Answer: It's because of the one sphere.

It's because of the two, sun and moon.

It's because of the three good families.

It's because of the four sides, the four areas.

It's because of the five victorious Buddha families.

It's because of the six classes of sentient beings.

It's because of the seven successive Buddhas.<sup>11</sup>

It's because of the eight auspicious symbols.<sup>12</sup>

It's because of the nine-headed demon.

It's because of the ten manifestations.

It's because of the eleven-faced Buddha.

It's because of the twelve years.

It's because of the thirteen stages of causation.

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<sup>11</sup> *sangs rgyas rabs bdun* - the Seven Successive Buddhas: {*rnam par gzigs, gtsug tor can, thams cad skyob, 'khor ba 'jig, gser thub, 'od srungs, sha kya thub pa*}; the Seven Generations of Buddhas. (Ranjung Yeshe Dictionary).

<sup>12</sup> *bkra shis rtags brgyad* - eight happy emblems. {*gser nya, bum pa, pad ma, dung dkar, dpal be'u, rgyal mtshan, 'khor lo*}, eight auspicious emblems; eight auspicious symbols; eight good luck symbols. eight happy emblems. (Ranjung Yeshe Dictionary).

***bag ma len du 'gro skabs kyi glu*****(Song for the stage of going to get the bride)** (LYL:45-46)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

ya rgyu gi skar shed dzo dgu - (lu)ng (lo)ms gnam po'i

2 sngo (lo)n mo la nyi zla yi bang mdzod glu dbyangs bcas te nyi zla kun len du

4 'khyil bskyod yin.

***ya gi shed dgung gnam sngon mo la******nyi zla yi bang mdzod 'khyil******rgyu skar 'dzoms po'i glu dbyangs bcas te******nyi zla kun len du bskyod yin.***

Into yonder blue sky,  
 surrounded by a treasury of sun and moon,  
 with songs of the gathered stars,  
 We will go join the sun and moon.

*ya gi shed chos grva gru bzhi la*  
*byin rlabs ky bang mdzod 'khyil*  
*grva rgyun 'dzoms po'i glu dbyangs bcas te*  
*byin rlabs kun len du bskyod yin.*

Into yonder square dharma courtyard,  
 Surrounded by a treasury of blessings,  
 With songs of gathered monks,  
 We will go join the blessings.

*ya gi shed sku mkhar mthon po la*  
*gser dngul gyi bang mdzod 'khyil*  
*drag zhan 'dzom po'i glu dbyang bcas te*  
*gser dngul kun len du bskyod yin.*

In yonder high castle,  
 Surrounded by a treasury of gold and silver,  
 With songs of high and low officials  
 We will go join the gold and silver.

*ya gi shed dpal khang gru bzhi la*  
*'bru sna lnga'i bang mdzod 'khyil*  
*gnyen drung 'dzom po'i glu dbyang bcas te*  
*'bru sna kun len du bskyod yin.*

In yonder square noble house,  
 Surrounded by a treasury of five grains,  
 With songs of gathered attendants,  
 We will go join the varieties of grain.

*ya gi shed do ra gru bzhi la*

*g.ya' cag gi bang mdzod 'khyil*

*ya do mdza bo'i glu dbyang bcas te*

*g.ya' cag kun len du bskyod yin.*

On yonder square stage,  
 Surrounded by a treasury of slate mountains  
 With songs of gathered companions,  
 We will go join the slate mountains

**bag ma thob pa'i rjes kyi glu (Song for getting the bride)** (LYL: 46:48)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

This is sung unaccompanied with no rhythmic cycle

dgung gna - (la)m \_\_\_\_\_ sngon po'i gya - (la)s phyogs nas  
 nyi zla - (la) \_\_\_\_\_ gnyis ka' - i dbu - (lu) kun la

2  
 dka - (la)r po yi - (li) nam \_\_\_\_\_ zhig langs  
 gse - (le)r gyi - (li) i nyi \_\_\_\_\_ ma shar.

*dgung gnam sngon po'i g.yas phyogs nas*

*dkar po yi nam zhig langs*

*nyi zla gnyis ka'i dbu kun la*

*gser gyi nyi ma shar.*

From the right side of the blue sky

a white dawn comes.

On the crowns of both sun and moon

is golden eastern sunlight.

*rgyu skar 'dzoms po'i bsam tshod de*

*bsam tshod po don du grub*

*om bkra shis pa'i kha lo de*

*kha lo po shar la sgyur.*

Contemplate the gathered constellations.

Contemplate the meaning.

Om, that auspicious direction,

Turn to the East.

*chos grva gru bzhi g.yas phyogs nas*

*dkar po yi nam zhig langs*

*yar 'dren bla ma'i dbu de la*

*gser gyi nyi ma shar.*

From the right side of the square dharma court

A white dawn comes.

On the crowns of the lama guides

Is golden eastern sunlight.

*bu slob 'dzoms po'i bsam tshod de*

*bsam tshod po don du grub*

*om bkra shis pa'i kha lo de*

*kha lo po shar la sgyur.*

Contemplate the gathered disciples.

Contemplate the meaning.

Om, that auspicious direction,

Turn to the East.

*sku mkhar mthon po yi g.yas phyogs nas*  
*dkar po yi nam zhig langs*  
*mi chen gong ma'i dbu de la*  
*gser gyi nyi ma shar.*

From the right side of the high castle

A white dawn comes.

On the crown of the great lord

Is golden eastern sunlight.

*.drag zhan 'dzom po'i bsam tshod*  
*bsam tshod po don du grub*  
*om bkra shis pa'i kha lo de*  
*kha lo po shar la sgyur.*

Contemplate the gathered officials.

Contemplate the meaning.

Om, that auspicious direction,

Turn to the East.

*dpal khang gru bzhi g.yas phyogs nas*  
*dkar po yi nam zhig langs*  
*yab yum pa ma'i dbu de la*  
*gser byi nyi ma shar.*

From the right side of the square noble house

A white dawn comes.

On the crowns of the parents

Is golden eastern light.

*gnyen drung 'dzoms po'i bsam tshod de  
 bsam tshod po don du grub  
 om bkra shis pa'i kha lo de  
 kha lo po shar la sgyur.*

Contemplate the gathered kin.

Contemplate the meaning

Om, that auspicious direction,

Turn to the East

*de ra gru bzhi'i g.yas phyogs nas  
 dkar po yi nam zhig langs  
 rje dpon chen po'i dbu de la  
 gser gyi nyi ma shar.*

From the right side of the square stage

A white dawn comes.

On the crown of the great teacher

Is golden sunlight.

*ya do mdza' bo'i bsam tshod de  
 bsam tshod po don du 'grub  
 om bkra shis pa'i kha lo de  
 kha lo po shar sgyur.*

Contemplate the attendants.

Contemplate the meaning.

Om, that auspicious direction,

Turn to the East.

## *chang glu—Chang Songs*

### *gser lung lung pa (The Golden Valley)* (LYL:50)

(Sung to the melody of *bkra shis pa'i glu*)

*om bkra shis par gyur cig.*

*bkra shis bde legs dang ldan par gyur cig.*

Om, may it be auspicious.

May it be auspicious.

*phu de ya gi shed gser lung lung pa na*

*gser gyi mi chung zhig mgo bo tse le le.*

When yon boy was in the golden valley,

A golden child on the hilltop.

*phyag g.yas g.yas la gser gyi bum pa bsname.*

*phyag g.yon g.yon la dngul gyi bum pa bsname.*

In his right, right hand he took the golden vessel.

In his left, left hand he took the silver vessel.

*gser gyi bum pa tshe chang ltem se ltem.*

*dngul gyi bum pa tshe chang ltem se ltem.*

Fill the gold vessel to the brim with *chang*.

Fill the silver vessel to the brim with *chang*.

*tshe chang 'don na tshe bsod mtha' ru rgyas*

*g.yang chang 'don na bu nor mtha' ru rgyas*

*tshe chang g.yang chang kun spel gyin spel gyin mchod.*

If you drink the *chang* you will have abundant good luck.

If you drink the sacred *chang*s, you will have abundant wealth.

I offer the continually propagating *chang*.

**dgung sngon po lha yi 'char gzhi****(The Field Of The God Of The Blue Sky)** (LYL:51-53)

(Melody not available)

*dgung sngon po lha yi zhid lha yi 'char gzhi gting ba dang 'dra  
 dgung sngon mthon po zhid 'che gzhi legs mo bting ba dang 'dra  
 nyi zla gnyis ka kun shel dkar 'brang rgyas bzhengs pa dan 'dra  
 rgyu skar 'dzoms po kun dkar 'chol legs mo rol pa dang 'dra (2x)  
 nged cag gnya' bo kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin  
 gnya' bo spun dgu kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems zhid zhu yin.*

A blue sky is like the spreading field of the god.

A high blue sky is like the spreading field of a fine lady.

Both the sun and moon are like an array of white glass crystals.

The gathered stars are like a lovely display in a treasury. (2x)

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

*brag stod mthon po zhid lha yi 'char gzhi bting ba dan 'dra (2x)  
 brag rgyan mthon po zhid 'char gzhi legs mo bting ba dang 'dra  
 skyems chen ba rgan zhid shel dkar 'brang rgyas bzhengs pa dang 'dra  
 nged cag gnya' bo kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin  
 gnya' bo spun dgu kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin.*

A high castle is like the spreading field of the god. (2x)

A high adorned castle is like a lovely, spreading field.

A great old drink is like an array of white salt crystals.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

*spang stong thon po zhig lha yi 'char gzhi bting ba dang 'dra*  
*spang rgyan mthon po zhig 'char gzhi legs mo bting ba dang 'dra*  
*'brong chung rog po zhig shel dkar 'brang rgyas bzhengs pa dang 'dra (2x)*  
*'brong phran 'dzoms po kun dkar 'chol legs mo rol pa dang 'dra (2x)*  
*nged cag gnya' bo kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin.*

A high, empty meadow is like the spreading field of the god.

A high, adorned meadow is like a lovely spreading field.

A little black yak calf is like an array of white salt crystals. (2x)

A herd of small yak calves is like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

*mtsho stod mthon po zhig lha yi 'char gzhi bting ba dang 'dra*  
*nya mo gser mig cig shel dkar 'brang rgyas bzhengs pa dang 'dra (2x)*  
*nya phran 'dzoms po zhig dkar 'chol legs mo rol pa dang 'dra*  
*nged cag gnya' bo kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin*  
*gnya' bo spun dgu kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin.*

A high lake is like the spreading field of the god.

A golden eye of a messenger goddess is like an array of white salt crystals (2x).

An assembly of little messengers is like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

*ma khang gru bzhi zhig lha yi 'char gzhi bting ba 'dra*  
*skyid khang gru bzhi zhig 'char gzhi legs mo bting ba 'dra*  
*yab yum pa ma kun shel dkar 'brang rgyas bzhengs pa dang 'dra*  
*gnyen drung 'dzoms mo kun dkar 'chol legs mo rol pa dang 'dra (2x)*  
*nged chag gnya' bo kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin*  
*gnya' bo spun dgu kun mnyes pa yi ngas kyang skyems shig zhu yin.*

A square main house is like the spreading field of the god.

A happy square house is like a lovely, spreading field.

The parents are like an array of white salt crystals.

The gathered kin are like a lovely display in a treasury.

We witnesses will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

The nine witnessing kin will be glad to take hold of the honored drink.

**bzo thabs (The Skill of Brewing)** (LYL:53-54)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6 (phrased either in seven or fourteen)

chang 'di la bzo\_ ba'i\_ thabs shig\_ yod\_

bzo thabs de 'dra\_ zhig\_ bshad na chang yang\_ 'thung\_

*dri wa: chang 'di la bzo ba'i thabs shig yod*

*bzo thabs de 'dra zhig bshad na chang yang 'thung*

*lan: tshogs bzang mtsho mo dang 'dra ba'i zangs shig bkal*

*g.ya' chu bsil ma dang 'dra ba'i chu zhig blugs.*

Question: There is a skill in brewing this *chang*.

If you explain this type of brewing, we will indeed drink.

Answer: Like the ocean of good offerings you need a cauldron.

Like a cool brook, pour a bit of water.

*'bru sna spun dgu dang 'dra ba'i 'bru zhig btab*

*tsan dan me lce dang 'dra ba'i me zhig sbar.*

Like the nine families of grain, cast a bit of grain.

Like a flame of a sandalwood fire, light the fire.

*sa gzhi bro mo dang 'dra ba'i khul 'phyar bting*

*skar ma gru sog dang 'dra ba'i chang brud.*

Like the folk-dance of the earth, step nimbly.

Like the assembly of stars, fill up the *chang*.

*bzang drug sman sna dan 'dra ba'i phabs drug btab  
phad tshe bde po yi nang du mnal zhig gzims.*

Like the medicine of six essential ingredients, sow the six yeasts.

In the sound grain storage basket, put it to bed.

*tho rangs skar chen dan mnyam du mnal zhig sad  
rdza ma dmar chung gi nang du sgom zhig brgyab.*

Along with the morning star, wake up.

Put it in small red pitcher, meditate on it.

*tho rangs skar chen dna mnyam du sgom de bshig  
bdud rtsi chu mig dang 'dra ba'i chu zhig btangs.*

Along with the morning star, break your meditation.

Like the spring of nectar, pour a bit of water.

*chang rkyang 'bur dgu ma'i nang du litems se litems  
o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod  
gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gan mchod.*

Fill to the brim with only the *chang* of nine boiled barleys.

O dear, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

**dri wa dri lan (Question and Answer)** (LYL:55-58)

Sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6 (phrased either in seven or fourteen)

dri ba: chang \_\_\_\_\_ chang ngas ni mi 'thung \_\_\_\_\_  
 dri lan: dgung sngon pang du len \_\_\_\_\_ mkhan \_\_\_\_\_  
           o los de 'dra rang \_\_\_\_\_ ma \_\_\_\_\_

2  
 dgu - (lu)ng la \_\_\_\_\_ cha'in \_\_\_\_\_ dgung sngon pang dun len \_\_\_\_\_ na \_\_\_\_\_  
 nyi zla gnyi - (li)s ka \_\_\_\_\_ nyi zla gnyis ka \_\_\_\_\_ dang \_\_\_\_\_ 'o skol  
 gsungs skyems gang \_\_\_\_\_ mchod \_\_\_\_\_ gzhon pas de 'dra \_\_\_\_\_ rang \_\_\_\_\_ ma gsungs

4  
 chang \_\_\_\_\_ yang \_\_\_\_\_ 'thung \_\_\_\_\_  
 'dra \_\_\_\_\_ mdog \_\_\_\_\_ med \_\_\_\_\_  
 skyems \_\_\_\_\_ gang \_\_\_\_\_ mchod \_\_\_\_\_

*dri ba: chang ngas ni mi 'thung dgung la cha'in.*

*dgung sngon pang du len na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: I do not drink *chang*, I will fly into the sky.<sup>13</sup>

When the blue sky takes me in her lap, then I will drink *chang*.

<sup>13</sup> This and all the subsequent feats are reputedly gained by yogic austerities (like abstaining from alcohol).

*lan: dgung sngon pang du len mkhan nyi zla gnyis ka.*

*nyi zla gnyis ka dang 'o skol 'dra mdog med.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: The ones who taken in heaven's lap are both the sun and moon.

We cannot compare with both the sun and moon.

O surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

*dri ba: chang ngas ni mi 'thung brag la cha'in.*

*brag la phur pa rol na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: I do not drink *chang*, I will go to the cliff.

When I pierce the boulder with the *phurba*<sup>14</sup>, I will drink *chang*.

*lan: brag la phur pa rol mkhan yar 'dren bla ma.*

*yar 'dren bla ma dang 'o skol 'dra mdog med.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gan mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: The one who pierces the boulder with the *phurba* is the lama guide.

We cannot compare with the lama guide.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

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<sup>14</sup> *phur ba* - Sacred dagger used in tantric rituals. Piercing the boulder symbolizes penetrating ignorance with meditative insight.

*dri ba: chang ngas ni mi 'thung chu la cha'in.*

*chu la lan bu lhas na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: I don't drink chang, I will braid the water.

When I am braiding the water, then I will drink chang.

*lan: chu la lan bu lhas mkhan nya chung gser mig.*

*nya chung gser mig dang 'o skol 'dra mdog med.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: One who braids the water is the little fish with the golden eye,

We can't compare with the little fish with the golden eye.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

*dri ba: chang ni mi 'thung spang la cha'in.*

*spang la me thog rol na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: I don't drink *chang*; I will go to the meadow.

When the meadow flowers bloom I will then drink the *chang*.

*lan: spang la me thog rol mkhan dbyar zla gsum.*

*dbyar zla gsum po dang 'o skol 'dra mdog med.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: That which makes meadow flowers is the three summer months,

We can't compare with the three summer months.

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

*dri ba: gser gyi gser skyogs kham pa de.*

*khyad nor de 'dra byung na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: That bluish gold ladle,

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink chang.

*lan: gser gyi gser skyogs kham pa de,*

*tsong dpon chen po gcig gi phyag na yod.*

*'o skol len du chas na sa thag ring.*

*'o skol nyo ru chas na ring thang che.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: That bluish gold ladle,

It is in the hand of a great master merchant,

When we are bringing it in a distant place,

Then we are buying it in a distant town,

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

*dri ba: dza ti dmar po'i bag phor 'khyongs.*

*khyad nor de 'dra byung na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: You are bringing the groom's cup of red nutmeg wood;

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink *chang*.

*lan: dza ti dmar po'i pag phor de.*

*tsong dpon chen po zhig gi phyag na yod.*

*'o skol len du chas na sa thag ring.*

*'o skol nyo ru chas na rin thang che.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: That groom's cup of red nutmeg wood,

Is in the hand of a great master merchant,

When we are bringing it in a distant place,

Then we are buying it in a distant town,

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*

*dri ba: tsan dan dmar po'i gsol cog 'khyongs.*

*khyad nor de 'dra zhig byung na chang yang 'thung.*

Question: You are bringing the table of red sandalwood.

When I obtain that special treasure, then I will drink *chang*.

*lan: tsan dan dmar po'i gsrol cog de.*

*shing mkhan mkhas pa zhig gi phyag na yod.*

*'o skol len du chas na sa thag ring.*

*'o skol nyo ru chas na ring thang che.*

*o los de 'dra rang ma gsung skyems gang mchod.*

*gzhon pas de 'dra rang ma gsungs skyems gang mchod.*

Answer: That table of red sandalwood;

Is in the hand of a master carpenter's hand,

When we are bringing it in a distant place,

Then we are buying it in a distant town,

Oh surely, don't talk like that; drink *chang*.

Young one don't talk like that; drink *chang*

**chang padma'i yul—Chang of the Lotus Land** (LYL:58-59)

Sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6 (phrased either in seven or fourteen)

The musical score consists of a rhythmic cycle and a vocal line. The rhythmic cycle is shown in a 7/4 time signature with a tempo of ♩ = 210. The vocal line is in 14/4 time, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: chang pad ma'i yul la chang (nge) a rag bdud rtsi (ying me nang bhang chang pad ma'i yul la chang (nge) a rag bdud rtsi (ying me nang le la) nye rang sib gcig 'don ang nga rang sib gcig 'tung nga rang sib gcig 'tung.

♩ = 210

chang pad ma'i yul la

2  
chang (nge) a rag bdud rtsi (ying me nang bhang

4  
chang pad ma'i yul la chang (nge) a rag bdud rtsi

6  
(ying me nang le la) nye rang sib gcig 'don ang

8  
nga rang sib gcig 'tung nye rang sib gcig 'don ang

10  
nga rang sib gcig 'tung

*chang padma'i yul la chang a rag bdud rtsi*  
*nye rang sib gcig 'don ang nga rang sib gcig 'tung.*

The *chang* in the lotus country, arak, nectar,  
 You please take a sip, I myself will take a sip.

*chang zhim po glum gyi mdud pa can yod*  
*bdud rtsi chu mig med na mdud grol mdog med.*

Tasty *chang* has a knoted cloth of boiled grain.  
 If there isn't a spring of nectar, there isn't a loosened knot.

*sha zhim po tshil gyi mdud pa can yod*  
*sha gri gsha' ma med na mdud brol mdog med.*

Tasty meat has a knot of fat.  
 If there is no meat knife there isn't a loosened knot.

*sa gzhi bro mo zer ba 'khyags kyis bsdams*  
*nyi zla kun med na mdud brol mdog med.*

The folk dance of the earth is said to be controlled by ice.  
 If there is no sun and moon, there is a no loosened knot.

*chang padma'i yul la chang a rag bdud rtsi*  
*nye rang sib gcig 'don ang na rang sib gcig 'thung.*

The *chang* in the lotus country, arak, nectar,  
 You sip, I sip.

*chang 'thung gin 'thung gin da rung zhim du song.*

*phor ba sa la bzhag pa'i yang phang sa pa la.*

Drinking, drinking, *chang* becomes sweet.

Even putting the cup on the ground is losing [time].

*rta la bzhon gyin bzhon gyin da dung drag tu song*

*rta po bres la bzhag pa da yang phangs pa la.*

Riding, riding the horse becomes better.

Even putting the cup in the manger is losing [time].

## gzhung glu—Congregational Songs

### sku mkhar tsho (The Castle) (LYL:61-62)

Assung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6 (phrased either in seven or fourteen)



8

1)sku mkhar tsho ming du (lu) snyan byu (lu)ng sku(lu)  
3)gle chen tsho ming dun (lu) snyan byu (lu)ng sku(lu)

5

mkhar (ra) lha yi pho (lo) 5)na (la) (la)ng  
gle (le) tsho dbang ra (la)b brtan

10

na bo (lu) zhugs yod gso rdo (lo)d yid zhin nor

15

bu 7)mi dbang (sde) sde skyong na (la) gyal

20

dgra bo 'dul ba'i kha gnon

*sku mkhar tsho ming du snyan byung*

*sku mkhar lha yi pho brang*

*gle chen tsho ming du snyan byung*

*gle chen tsho dbang rab brtan*

*nang na nor bu bzhugs yod*

*dgos 'dod yid bshin nor bu*

*mi dbang sde skyong rnam rgyal*

*dgra bo 'dul ba'i kha gnon*

The castle is famous  
 The castle, abode of the gods.  
 Great Leh is famous,  
 Great, strong, steadfast Leh.  
 The jewel is inside.  
 The jewel that fulfils wishes,  
 The lord Deskyong Namgyal,  
 Restrainer of enemies.

*gur kum tsho gzhung gi me tog*

*tshes chen bco lnga'i zla ba*

*gur kum tsho gzhung gi me tog*

*yar ngo bco lnga'i zla ba*

*nor bu shel gyi mchod rten*

*lha lcam bu 'khrid dbang mo*

*mu tig tshar du dngar byung.*

The saffron crocus is chief of flowers,  
 The full moon, of the fifteenth waxing day [of the month].  
 The saffron crocus is chief of flowers,  
 The full moon, of the fifteenth day of the first half of the month.  
 The *chorten* of jewel crystal.  
 The Lady, Butri Wangmo becomes a row of pearls.

*yul chung tsho thang ga legs po  
 bkra shis lha yi 'dun sa  
 khyog tog nam langs kyi skar chen  
 shar pa rang dang 'dra  
 na chung yar ngo'i bco lnga po'i  
 gan pa'i zla ba 'dra.*

The good plain of little villages,  
 The place of the auspicious god,  
 The youth, great star of the dawn,  
 Like the risen one itself,  
 The maiden of the fifteenth day of the first half of the  
 month [full moon],  
 Like the full moon.

*rtsig pa tsho ma btsigs pa'i rtsig pa  
 ser mo nas kyi rtsig pa  
 rtsig pa tsho ma btsigs pa'i rtsig pa  
 g.yang dkar nas kyi rtsig pa  
 rtsig de la 'gyur bya mi 'dug  
 lha lcam bu 'khrid dbang mo.*

Walls do not build walls  
 The wall of yellow barley  
 Walls do not build walls.  
 The wall of “white sheep” barley  
 The wall does not change  
 The Lady, Butri Wangmo.

**bstod pa zhig bul (Offer Praise)** (LYL:63:66)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

14/4

bstod pa zhig bu - l(u) ang (le)

2  
bsto (lo)d pa zhig bul ang dgung gnam sgnon (lo) po

4  
bsto (lo)d pa bu - l(u) ang ga ba la gzi (li)gs ang (le)

6  
nyi (li) zla nyi (li)s ka skyid nams la gzi (li)gs ang

8

*bstod pa zhig 'bul ang bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
 dgung gnam sgnon po la bstod pa zhi 'bul ang.  
 dga' ba la gzigs ang lags nyi zla gnyis ka.  
 skyid nyams la gzigs ang lags sgyu skar 'dzoms po.*

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the blue sky, offer praise.

Behold with joy both sun and moon.

Behold with happiness the gathered stars.

*bstod pa zhig 'bul ang bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
chos grva gru bzhi la bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
dga' ba la gzigs ang yar 'dren gyi bla ma.  
skyid nyams la gzigs ang lags bu slob 'dzoms po.*

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the square dharma court, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the lama guide.

Behold with happiness, the gathered disciples.

*bstod pa zhig 'bul ang bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
sku mkhar mthon po la bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
dga' ba la gzigs ang mi chen gyi gong ma.  
skyid nyams al gzigs ang drag zhan gyi 'dzom po.*

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the high castle, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the ancestors of the great lord.

Behold with happiness, the gathered officials.

*bstod pa zhig 'bul ang bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
dpal khang gru bzhi bstod pa zhig 'bul ang.  
dga' ba la gzigs ang yab yum gyi pa ma.  
skyid nyams la gzigs ang lags ya do dang mdza' bo.*

Offer praise, offer praise.

To the square noble house, offer praise.

Behold with joy, the fathers and mothers of the parents.

Behold with happiness, the gathered helpers.

*ru thog kyung ru po mar dkar gyi 'brang rgyas.*  
*khyung ru smug chung po mar dkar gyi 'brang rgyas.*  
*la dvags kyi lha dmag de rtsi gu'i mar gyi rdzing bu.*  
*Sengge rNam rgyal po rtsi gu'i mar gyi rdzing bu.*  
*dga' ba la gzigs ang la dvags kyi lha dmag.*  
*skyid nyams la gzigs ang Sengge rNam rgyal.*

Fort Garuda<sup>15</sup> Horn [is] a 'brang rgyas<sup>16</sup> of white butter.  
 The small, dark Garuda Horn's 'brang rgyas.  
 This Ladakhi army of deities [is] a pool of apricot seed oil.<sup>17</sup>  
 Sengge Namgyal [is] a pool of apricot seed oil.  
 Behold with joy, Ladakh's army of deities.  
 Behold with happiness, Sengge Namgyal.

*ru thog khyung ru po lcags dkar gyi rta sgo.*  
*khyung ru smug chung po lcags dkar gyi rta sgo.*  
*la dvags gas kyi lha dmag po pho lad (ngar lcags) kyi sgo gtan.*  
*Sengge rNam rgyal po pho lad kyi sgo gtan.*  
*dga' ba la gzigs ang la dvags kyi lha dmag.*  
*skyid nyams la gzigs ang Sengge rNam rgyal.*

Fort Garuda Horn[is] a saddle of white metal,  
 The small, dark Garuda Horn's saddle is of white metal.  
 The Ladakhi chasm's army of deities' saddle is of steel,  
 King Sengge Namgyal's iron saddle.  
 Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.  
 Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

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<sup>15</sup> Garuda are mythical, enormous predatory birds with intelligence and social organization, having characteristics of both birds and gods. They are depicted with unicorn-like horns.

<sup>16</sup> Offering cake either in the shape of a young girl's breast or a *stupa* .

<sup>17</sup> Apricot seed oil is a prestige oil, native to Ladakh. Oil lamps are an offering analogous to candles in Christianity.

*ru thog khyung ru po lha hor gyi du bag. (me mda')*  
*khyung ru smug chung po la' hor gyi du bag.*  
*la dvags kyi lha dmag de dmag chos kyi 'dzoms po.*  
*sengge rnam rgyal de dmag chos kyi 'dzoms po.*  
*dga' ba la gzigs ang la dvags kyi lha dmag.*  
*skyid nyams la gzigs ang Sengge rNam rgyal.*

Fort Garuda Horn [is] Lahore's gun

The small, dark Garuda Horn

This Ladakhi army of deities is a gathered dharma army.

Sengge Namgyal is the gatherer of the dharma army.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

*ru thog khyung ru po rta chos kyi 'dzoms po.*  
*khyung ru smug de rta chos kyi 'dzoms po.*  
*la dvags kyi lha dmag de rta pa yi me 'bar.*  
*Sengge rNam rgyal de rta pa yi me 'bar.*  
*dga' ba la gzigs ang la dvags kyi lha dmag.*  
*skyid nyams la gzigs ang Sengge rNam gyal.*

Fort Garuda Horn [is] the gathered dharma horses.

This dark Garuda Horn is a gathering of dharma horses.

This Ladakhi army of deities cavalry's guns,

Sengge Namgyal's cavalry's guns.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

*ru thog kyung ru po bal 'jam gyi yun bu.*  
*la dvags kyi lha dmag de skya phrug gi legs po.*  
*Sengge rNam rgyal de skya phrug gi legs po.*  
*dga' ba la gzigs ang la dvags kyi lha dmag.*  
*skyid nyams la gzigs ang Sengge rNam rgyal.*

Fort Garuda Horn [is] of soft wool [yun bu]

This Ladakhi army of deities [is] the good of a young magpie.

This Ladakhi army of deities [is] the good of a young magpie.

Sengge Namgyal [is] the good of a young magpie.

Behold with joy Ladakh's army of deities.

Behold with happiness Sengge Namgyal.

**blon chen bi ta dzo gi—(The Minister Pita Jogi) (LYL:66-67)**

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

nyi - ma shar nas shar (la) byung grib ma tshur (lo) (la)

babs (la) byung la spring bar chad pa'i nyi (li) ma (la)  
spring bar la la chad pa'i nyi (li) ma (la)

bdag gi pon po zang po  
blon chen Bi ta Dzo

*nyi ma shar nas shar byung, grib ma tshur nas babs byung. (2x)*

*sprin bar chad pa'i nyi ma, bdag gi dpon po bzang po.*

*sprin bar chad pa'i nyi ma, blon chen bi Ta dzo gi.*

The sun rises in the east, the east, in the shadow it sets (2x)

The sun blocked by clouds, my good lord.

The sun blocked by clouds, Minister Pita Jogi.

*dpa' 'dum mkar gyi khang ltag na, se ba ser po'i me tog. (2x)*

*se ba ser po'i me tog, bdag gi dpon po bzang po.*

*se ba ser po'i me tog, blon chen bi Ta dzo gi.*

On the top of Padum Castle [there is] a gold rose flower. (2x)

A gold rose flower, my good lord.

A gold rose flower, Minister Pita Jogi.

*ya gi shed gnam stod mthong po na, bya chung rma bya zung gcig. (2x)*

*bya chung rma bya ma yin, bdag gi dpon po bzang po.*

*bya chung rma bya ma yin, blon chen bi Ta dzo gi.*

Up in yon high sky [there are] a couple of small peacocks. (2x)

It will not be a small peacock, my good lord.

It will not be a small peacock, Minister Pita Jogi.

*ya gi shed mtsho stod mthon po na, nya chung gser mig zung gcig.*

*nya chung gser mig ma yin, bdag gi dpon po bzang po.*

*nya chung gser mig ma yin, blon chen bi Ta dzo gi.*

Up in yon high lake [there are] a couple of small golden-eyed fish.

It will not be a small golden-eyed fish, my good lord.

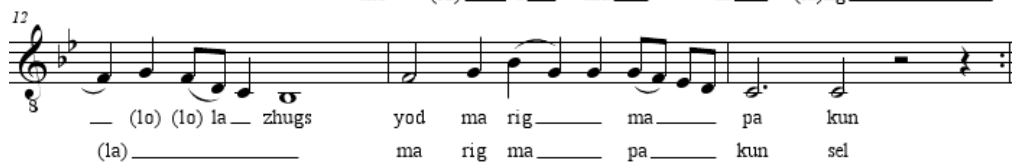
It will not be a small golden-eyed fish Minister Pita Jogi

## Ti sei she dkar mchod rten—Mt. Kailash's White Crystal Stupa

(LYL:67-68)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 3



*ti se'i shel dkar mcod rten,*  
*'dzam bu gling gi lte ba. (2x)*  
*nang de na nang rten bzhugs yod.*  
*ma rig mun pa kun sel*  
*chos sku sang ba mtha' yas bzhugs*  
*ma rig mun pa kun sel.*

The crystal stupa of Mt. Kailash,  
 The hub of the continent Jambudvipa. (2x)  
 When a religious relic resides inside there,  
 It dispels the darkness of ignorance.  
 The eternal, secret, dharma body is there,  
 Dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

*ti se'i g.yu mtso sngon mo,*  
*klu rgyal 'jog po'i pho brang. (2x)*  
*gcig tu rgyal nams yongs kyi,*  
*'bru sna'i bang mdzod 'khyil.*  
*spu rangs la lung chen mo'i,*  
*ser mo nas kyi bang mdzod 'kyil.*

The blue, turquoise lake of Mt. Kailash,  
 Mansion of the naga king, Takshaka, (2x)  
 All together the kings come,  
 Around the storehouse of all types of grain,  
 To Purang, around the treasury  
 Of the great valley's yellow barley.

*kha ba can gyi zhing khams de ni,*  
*bde skyid lha dang mnyam 'byung . (2x)*

In the realm of the land of snow,  
 We become as happy as gods.

**dkar po'i nam langs (The White Dawn)** (LYL:68-69)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6



dgu - (lu)ng\_\_\_ gnam\_\_\_ sngo - (lo)n\_\_\_ mo'i\_\_\_  
 nga\_\_\_ yi\_\_\_ nyi\_\_\_ zla\_\_\_ gnyi - (li)s\_\_\_  
 nga\_\_\_ yi\_\_\_ rgyu - (lu)\_\_\_ skar\_\_\_ dzo -  
 a\_\_\_ dang\_\_\_ om\_\_\_ gsang\_\_\_ bkra - (la)\_\_\_



g yas\_\_\_ nas\_\_\_ dkar\_\_\_ po'i\_\_\_ nam\_\_\_ zhiɡ\_\_\_ langś\_\_\_  
 ka\_\_\_ thu - (lu)gs\_\_\_ g yeng\_\_\_ la\_\_\_ skyod\_\_\_  
 (lo)ms\_\_\_ po\_\_\_ gzi - (li)gs\_\_\_ mo\_\_\_ la\_\_\_ skyod\_\_\_  
 shis\_\_\_ pa'i\_\_\_ kha\_\_\_ lo\_\_\_ zhar\_\_\_ la\_\_\_ gziɡś\_\_\_

*dgung gnam sngon po'i gyas nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs.*

*nga yi nyi zla gnyis ka thugs g.yeng la skyod.*

*nga yi rgyu skar 'dzoms po gzigs mo la skyod.*

*a dang om gsang bkra shis pa'i kha lo shar la gzigs.*

From the right side of the blue sky a white dawn comes.

Both my sun and moon come to distract me.

My gathered stars come to my sight.

Behold the secret "A" and "OM"<sup>18</sup>, auspicious rulers in the East.

<sup>18</sup> Important mantra syllables in Vajrayana Buddhist meditation practice

*chos grva grub bzhi'i gyas nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs.*

*nga yi bzang gsum bla ma thugs g.yeng la skyod.*

*nga yi grva rgyun 'dzoms po gzigs mo la skyod.*

*a dang om gsang bkra shis pa'i kha lo shar la gzigs.*

From the right of the square dharma court the white dawn comes.

My lama of three goods goes on vacation.

My continuing monks of auspiciousness go to a show.

Behold the secret “A” and “OM”, auspicious rulers in the East.

*sku mkhar mthon po'i gyas nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs.*

*nga yi mi chen gong ma thugs g.yeng la skyod.*

*nga yi drag zhan 'dzoms po gzigs mo la skyod.*

*a dang om gsang bkra shis pa'i kha lo shar la gzigs.*

From the high castle's right a white dawn comes.

My high lord goes on vacation.

My gathered attendants go to a show.

Behold the secret “A” and “OM”, auspicious rulers in the East.

*dpal khang grub bzhi'i gyas nas dkar po'i nam zhig langs.*

*nga yi yab yum pha ma thugs g.yeng la skyod.*

*nga yi gnyen drung 'dzoms po gzigs mo la skyod.*

*a dang om gsang bkra shis pa'i kha lo shar la gzigs.*

From the square noble house's right a white dawn comes.

My parents, father and mother, go on vacation.

My gathered kin folk go to a show.

Behold the secret “A” and “OM”, auspicious rulers in the East.

**bsod nams mchog skyid (The Highest Merit, Happiness)** (LYL:69-72)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 4

dang po (lo) bsod nams kyi mcho (lo)g (lo) skyi (li)d  
 kra (la) shis pa' (li) glu zhi (li)g len

***dang po bsod nams kyi mchog skyid po***

***bkra shis pa'i glu zheg len***

***sngar yang bsod nams kyi mchog skyid po***

***bkra shis pa'i glu zheg len.***

[to] The first highest merit, happiness,

Sing a song of auspiciousness.

Repeatedly [to] the happy blessing of merit

Sing a song of auspiciousness.

***gnya' khri btsan po yi gdung rgyud la***

***dpal bsam la lo 'dab rgyas (2x)***

***dpag bsam la lo 'dab po rgyas pa de ni.***

In Nyatri Tsangpo's lineage,

The leaves of the wish-fulfilling tree will blossom.<sup>19</sup> (2x)

The leaves of the wish-fulfilling tree will blossom.

<sup>19</sup> The descendants of the legendary first Tibetan King are compared to buddhas or bodhisattvas.

*pa ma bzang po'i smon lam*  
*tsan dan la lo 'dab po rgyas pa de ni*  
*yab yum drang po'i smon lam.*

[It is] the good parents' prayer.

The sandalwood tree is growing.

[It is] the righteous parents' prayer.

*nyi ma dang bla ma dang pa ma gsum ga'i*  
*sku drin po ci byas te 'khor (2x)*  
*yab yum gnyis ka yi don de ru*  
*ma ni bka' 'bum bzhengs*  
*'di phyi gnyis ka yi don de la*  
*yi ge ni drub ma bzhengs.*

The three: sun, lama, and parents--

How can I repay their kindness?<sup>20</sup> (2x)

For both my parents there,

Let 100,000 *manis*<sup>21</sup> arise.

In both this life and the next,

Let embroidered letters arise.

---

<sup>20</sup> This is a derivative of one of the meditation practices by which one generates *bodhicitta*, the mind of enlightenment where one resolves to seek enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. This practice, known as the Seven-Point Cause and Effect Instruction, teaches you to generate *bodhicitta* on the basis of developing affectionate love towards all sentient beings. As for the seven points of the cause and effect instruction, one begins by meditating on equanimity and then proceeds through the following steps:

1. Recognising all sentient beings as one's mother
2. Recognising the kindness of mother sentient beings
3. Repaying their kindness
4. Affectionate love
5. Great compassion
6. The extraordinary intention
7. Bodhicitta (Ribur Rinpoche 1997)

<sup>21</sup> The mantra of Chenrezig, *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

*nor bu de phyi na mi 'dug*  
*nor bu de nang na 'dug*  
*khyad nor de phyi na mi 'dug*  
*khyad nor de nang na 'dug.*

It is not outside the jewel.  
 It is not inside the jewel.  
 It is not outside the chief wealth.  
 It is not inside the chief wealth.<sup>22</sup>

*nor bu de sa nang la stsal song zer na*  
*sa gzhi po 'od kyis khengs*  
*rin po che sa nang la stsal song zer na*  
*nam mkha' po 'od kyis khengs.*

That jewel was said to be bestowed on the earth.  
 The earth was filled with light.  
 The precious one<sup>23</sup> was said to be bestowed on the earth.  
 The sky was filled with light.

---

<sup>22</sup> This is a metaphysical reference, with the jewel or precious one being the Buddha, and/or the Dharma.

<sup>23</sup> A possible double meaning of the Buddha or King Sengge Namgyal, protector of the faith.

*gong ma a lam kyi bdag po de*

*dbu 'phang lha bas mtho*

*chos rgyal ni ma rnam rgyal*

*dbu 'phang gnam las mtho.*

That highest king Alam<sup>24</sup>

Attains more glory than the gods.

The dharma king most victorious

Attains glory in heaven.

*gso ma bzhengs pa'i sku mkhar pa'i nang na*

*a ma gces ma bzhugs*

*gso ma bzhengs pa yi sgo sgrig pa'i nang na*

*rma bya 'jol mo bzhugs.*

Inside the newly erected castle,<sup>25</sup>

His beloved mother lives

Inside the newly erected gate put in place

The peacock<sup>26</sup> and nightingale<sup>27</sup> live.

---

<sup>24</sup> An interesting borrowing from Islam, Alam means “world” in Arabic, and could be a reference to Sengge’s Muslim Mother, Gyal Khatun. In addition, with the preceding word, king, it could be equal Shah Alam, King of the World, or emperor, and could be a signal to visiting Muslim dignitaries.

<sup>25</sup> This is a clear reference to Sengge Namgyal, who built the palace in Leh.

<sup>26</sup> The peacock is a bird associated with royalty, as well as being a symbol of spiritual purity and strength. This discussed in the Buddhist treatise, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, verses 1-2:

1) In jungles of poisonous plants strut the peacocks,  
Though medicine gardens of beauty lie near.  
The masses of peacocks do not find gardens pleasant,  
But thrive on the essence of poisonous plants.

2) In similar fashion the brave Bodhisattvas  
Remain in the jungle of worldly concern.  
No matter how joyful this world's pleasure gardens,  
These Brave Ones are never attracted to pleasures,  
But thrive in the jungle of suffering and pain (Dharmaraksita).

*rma bya 'jol mo de bzhengs te*  
*noo la dgongs pa stsal*  
*rma bya 'jol mo de bzhengs te nas*  
*tshul khrims la ngang ba stsal.*

The peacock and nightingale living there,  
 Mind is bestowed on the prince.  
 By the peacock and nightingale arising  
 A swan<sup>28</sup> is bestowed on the virtuous one.

*noo yi dgung lo po bcu gcig pa'i nang la*  
*la dvags kyi rgyal srid lon*  
*tshul khrims kyi dgung lo po bcu gcig pa'i nang la*  
*la dvags kyi rgyal srid lon.*

When the prince was eleven year old  
 The Ladakhi prince arrived.  
 When the virtuous one was eleven years old  
 The Ladakhi prince arrived.

---

<sup>27</sup> Gyal Khatun is compared to the musical nightingale, probably because of her bringing *khar mon* or palace musicians as part of her retinue from Baltistan. Was she also a singer? It would have been unusual, although there was the practice of noble women singing for the kings.

<sup>28</sup> The swan is a symbol of spiritual purity, gliding along the surface of the muddy waters. This is possibly a reference to the king's lama Stag Tsang Ras Pa.

*de dus thugs rje spyan rgyang nas gzigs shig*

*spyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa mkhyen*

*de dus thugs rje spyan rgyang nas gzigs shel*

*'od gsal lha yi gdung rgyud mkhyen.*

Then looking around with compassion

Cherezig, look at me with kindness.

Then looking around with compassion

Shining Deity of the Sky, see me.

*noo'i dgung lo po bcu gnyis pa'i nang la*

*bod rigs kyi nag bskor lon*

*tshul khrims kyi dgung lo po bcu gnyis pa'i nang la*

*bod rigs kyi nang bskor lon.*

When the boy was twelve years old

Tibet made offerings.

When the virtuous one was twelve years old

Tibet made offerings.

*de dus thgus rje spyan rgyang nas gzigs shig*

*spyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa mkhyen*

*de dus thugs rje spyan rgyang nas gzigs shig*

*'od gsal lha yi gdung rgud mkhyen.*

Then looking around with compassion

Cherezig, look at me with kindness.

Then looking around with compassion

Shining Deity of the Sky, see me.

*noo'i dgung lo po bcu gsum pa'i nang la*

*kha che yul gzhungs gsum lon*

*tshul khrims kyi dgung lo po bcu gsum pa'i nang la*

*kha che yul gzhung gsum lon.*

When the prince was thirteen years old

Kashmir sent three kinds [of offerings].

When the virtuous one was thirteen years old

Kashmir sent three kinds [of offerings].

*de dus thugs rje spyang rgyang nas gzigs shig*

*spyang ras gzigs kyi sprul pa mkhyen*

*de dus thugs rje spyang rgyan nas gzigs shig*

*'od gsal lha yi gdung rgyud mkhyen.*

Then looking around with compassion

Cherezig, look at me with kindness.

Then looking around with compassion

Shining Deity of the Sky, see me.

**Lha sa'i skor lam 'phra mo (Lhasa's Narrow Circumambulation Road)**

(LYL:73)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 3

Lha (la) sa'i skor lam phra mo na  
 gle (le) chen dpal khang gyi mi po na  
 skye (les) pa'i pha yul gyi mi yu na  
 mi (li) tshogs (po) mang tsa (la)m dug (2x)  
 ri (li)n chen gser la (la) dkon  
 che - (le)n (po) gse - (le)r la (la) dkon

***lha sa'i skor lam phra mo na mi tshogs mang tsa'm 'dug (2x)***

***skyes pa'i pha yul gyi mi po na chen gser las dkon'***

***gle chen dpal khang gi mi po rin chen gser las dkon.***

If there are many crowds on Lhasa's narrow circumambulation road, (2x)

Then the great man from the land of my birth does golden work,

Then the great, precious man from great Leh's palace does golden work.

***chu de chu sna 'dzoms po mi yul gyi gzhung na 'dug,***

***chu de chu sna 'dzoms po lha sa yi gzhung na 'dug,***

***chang de a rag bdud tsi rang gi yul na 'dug,***

***skyems grang a rag bdud tsi gle chen dpal khang na 'dug.***

If there is that perfect type of water in the homeland's center,

if there is that perfect type of water in the center of Lhasa,

Then there is *chang*, *arak*, nectar in my own country,

Then there is cold honored *chang* in great Leh's palace.

*rtsva de rtsva sna 'dzoms po mi yul gyi gzhung na 'dug,*  
*rtsva de rtsva sna 'dzoms po lha sa yi gzhung na 'dug,*  
*rtsva de rtsva sna 'dzoms po rang gi yul na 'dug,*  
*rtsva de rtsva sna 'dzoms po gle chen dpal khang na 'dug.*

If there is that perfect type of grass in the homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of grass in Lhasa's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of grass in my own homeland,  
 Then there is that perfect type of grass in great Leh's center.

*shing de shing sna 'dzoms po mi yul gyi gzhung na 'dug,*  
*shing de shing sna 'dzoms po lha sa yi gzhung na 'dug,*  
*rigs bzangs lha shing shug pa rang gi yul na 'dug,*  
*rigs bzang lha shug pa gle chen pal khang na 'dug.*

If there is that perfect type of tree in my homeland's center,  
 If there is that perfect type of tree in Lhasa's center,  
 Then there is the god cypress tree in my own land,  
 Then there is the god cypress tree in great Leh's palace.

**gyab ri brad dmar gyi tse mo (The Hill Behind Red Rock Peak)**

(LYL:74-75)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

(de la) rgya ri brag dmar gyi tse (le)  
 mo de tse mo shel dkar gyi mcho (lo)d rten  
 tsa wa'i (da) bla (la) ma yi mtsa (la)ms khang dang dra  
 skyabs gon ye (le) c she kyi

*rgyab ri brag dmar gyi rtse mo de,  
 rtse mo shel dkar gyi mchod rten, (2x)  
 rtsa ba'i bla ma yi mthsams khang dang 'dra,  
 skyabs mgon ye shes kyi mtshams khang dang 'dra.*

That hill behind Red Rock Peak,  
 the white crystal stupa, (2x)  
 is like the root lama's hermitage hut,  
 is like the wisdom protector's hermitage hut.

*bdag cag 'gro ba rigs drug kun,  
 thugs rje lcags kyus zhungs shig,  
 drin can rtsa ba yi bla ma de mkhyen. (2x)*

We the six realms of sentient beings,<sup>29</sup>  
 Are in the center of the hook of compassion,<sup>30</sup>  
 Thanks to the kind root lama guide. (2x)

*nga dang ya do tshang ga pha ma mi gcig pa'i spun zla,  
 nga dang ya do tshang ga yab yum mi gcig pa'i spun zla,  
 zangs mdog dpal gyi ri bo ru skye ba shog cig. (2x)*

I and those that help, father and mother, people of the same family,  
 I and those that help, father and mother, people of the same family,  
 May we be reborn on the Copper Colored Mountain.<sup>31</sup> (2x).

---

<sup>29</sup> Gods, demi-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings.

<sup>30</sup> The Indian analogy of an elephant driver's hook (Hindi, *ankush*) that steers the animal, or the crook of a shepherd's staff.

<sup>31</sup> Heavenly realm where Guru Padmasambhava, one of the prominent founders of Tibetan Buddhism, resides.

*sa de mi yul gzhung na men rtse tshon sna 'dzoms po,  
 sa de dbu gtsang gzhung na men rtse tshon sna 'dzoms po,  
 tsa ba'i bla ma yi na bza' la 'bul,  
 skyabs mgon ye shes kyi na bza' 'bul.*

When that earth in my homeland is a perfect many-colored top ornament,<sup>32</sup>

When that earth in U Tsang<sup>33</sup> is a perfect many-colored top ornament,

Then I make offering to the root lama's robes.

Then I make offering to the wisdom protector's robes.

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<sup>32</sup> The jeweled ornament on top of a person's head shown in religious iconography that indicates royalty

<sup>33</sup> Central Tibet, where Lhasa is located

**shel ldan g.yu mtsho (The Crystalline Turquoise Ocean) (LYL:76)**

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

**14** 

  
shel lda (la)n g.yu mtsho \_\_\_\_\_ bskor pa'i

**2**   
shel dkar rna (la)m rgyal kha (la) \_\_\_\_\_ bzang

**3**   
shel lda (la)n \_\_\_\_\_ g.yu mtsho \_\_\_\_\_ bskor pa'i

**4**   
shel dkar rnam \_\_\_\_\_ rgyal \_\_\_\_\_ kha (la)ng bzang

**5**   
na na (la)ng seng ge'i \_\_\_\_\_ khri steng

**6**   
gnya' khri bsta (la)n po'i gu (lu)ng \_\_\_\_\_ rgyud

**7**   
na na (la)ng seng ge'i \_\_\_\_\_ khri steng gnya' khri bstan po gu \_\_\_\_\_ (lu)ng rgyud

*shel ldan g.yu mtsho bskor pa'i*  
*shel dkar rnam rgyal khang bzang*  
*nang na seng ge'i khri steng*  
*gnya' khri btsan po'i gdung rgyud.*

The crystalline turquoise ocean  
 The copper, white crystal house of complete victory  
 Inside on the lion's throne  
 Nyatri Tsangpo's lineage.

*'jigs med chos kyi rgyal pos*  
*'dzam gling mun pa sel byung*  
*chabs 'bangs sde yi dpal du*  
*zhabs pad bskal brgyar brtan cig.*

The fearless Dharma king  
 Becomes Jambudvipa's<sup>34</sup> dispeller of darkness  
 Together with attendants in glory  
 We beg at his feet that he stay one hundred eons.

*mang yul sprul pa'i mtsho na*  
*mdzes ldan nam mkha'i skar tshogs*  
*mi chen rgyu skar 'dzoms po*  
*skyes chen rin chen mtho gsal.*

In the ocean of incarnations in many lands  
 The constellations of the beautiful sky  
 Lord of the perfect constellations  
 Brilliant ocean of the precious lord.

---

<sup>34</sup> The mythical continent on which the known world is located in ancient Hindu/Buddhist cosmology.

*gzhon pa'i yid kyi brten sa  
 yar ngo yid dga' gnas brtan  
 nam yang 'bral dogs mi 'dug  
 yid kyi dkyil la zungs shig*

Home of mind of youth's.

Waxing moon happy heart elder

Never can be forgotten,

May the mind's circle hold it.

**ka ba rin po che (The Precious Pillar)** (LYL:77)

As sung by Ali Mahmud 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

ka ba la ri - (ri) po che gser la bzhe - (le)ngs yod (de ni)

ka (la) stegs (po) gli-(li)ng bzhi ru khyab ka stegs gling bzhi ru

khyab song ze - (le)r na (de ni) sa - (la) gzhi po 'o - (lo)d kyis sang

khyab

*ka ba la rin po che gser la bzhengs yod*

*ka stegs gling bzhi ru khyab*

*ka stegs gling bzhi ru khyab song zer na*

*sa gzhi po 'od kyis khengs.*

As the golden precious pillar is erected

It spreads over the pedestal of the four continents.

When it was said to spread over the pedestal of the four continents

It is filled by the light of the earth.

*khri chen la gong ma yi steng na  
 nor bu chu shel dang me shel  
 nor bu me shel po 'bar song zer na  
 sa gshi po 'od kyis khengs.*

The master on top of the throne  
 Jeweled water crystal and fire crystal  
 When it is said that the jeweled fire crystal is blazing,  
 It is filled by the light of the earth.

*ka gdan po 'og phyogs klu yul na  
 rtse mo de dgung dang mnyam  
 da rung 'nga dgung di dang mnyam shig he  
 stag shar 'dzoms po'i smon lam.*

The *naga*'s land is under the pedestal,  
 That peak, sky and the like,  
 Even now that sky and the like,  
 Are the perfect youth's<sup>35</sup> prayer.

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<sup>35</sup> The Buddha

**ri bo g.yang can (The Lucky Mountain)** (LYL:78-80)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

The musical score consists of five lines of music. The first line is a rhythmic cycle in 9/4 time, starting with a double bar line and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The subsequent four lines are in 9/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words in parentheses and some words underlined. The lyrics are: (de la la) nyi (li) ma shar de nas\_\_ shar (la) (la) ba :  
shar gyi\_\_ dro can nyi\_\_ ma (de la la)  
shar\_\_ gsum shar de nas\_\_ shar (la) (la) ba shar  
gyi\_\_ dro can\_\_ nyi (li) ma

*nyi ma shar de nas shar ba,*

*shar gyi dro can nyi ma,*

*shar gsum shar de nas shar ba,*

*shar gyi dro can nyi ma.*

The sun rises in the east,  
The warm eastern sun,  
The sun shines from three eastern directions,  
The warm eastern sun.

*ya gi gnas chen bzang po yi,  
yang gsum rtse mo la shar,  
rgyal bu chen dpal rnam rgyal gyi,  
po drang rtse mo la shar.*

And it shines on those  
Three great good realm's  
It shines on the castle peak of  
The great prince's perfect victory.

*ri bo g.yang can gyi ri de la  
g.yang can chu mig gcig 'khrungs, (2x)  
g.yang can chu mig gcig 'khrungs song zer na,  
g.yang can rtse sna re skye. (2x)*

On that Lucky Mountain's peak,  
A lucky spring arose. (2x)  
A lucky spring is said to have arisen.  
Each type of lucky peak rises. (2x)

*g.yang can rtse sna zhig skyes song zer na,  
g.yang can sha ba re 'khor (2x)  
g.yang can sha ba re 'khor song zer na.*

A type of lucky peak was said to have been born,  
A retinue of each type of lucky deer,  
A retinue of each type of lucky deer is said to have been there.

*de bas dga' ba zhig med,*  
*g.yang can sha ba re 'khor song zer na*  
*de bas skyid pa zhig med.*  
*shing de ar ga yi shing de la*  
*ljang chung myu gu re 'khrungs (2x)*  
*ljang chung myu gu re 'khrungs songs zer na*  
*g.yu yi lo ma re rgyas. (2x).*

But rejoicing is not destroyed.

If someone says a retinue of every type of lucky deer is there,

Then happiness is not destroyed.

Then on the tree in the Marble Forest,

If some says every light green leaf has sprouted,

Every turquoise leaf is blooming.

*g.yu yi lo 'dab re rgyas song zer na*  
*dung gi me tog re 'bar (2x)*  
*dung gi me tog re 'bar song zer na*  
*gser gyi 'bras bu re smin (2x)*

If someone says that each turquoise leaf has bloomed,

Every shell flower is glowing.

If someone says that every shell flower is glowing,

Every golden fruit is ripe.

*gser gyi 'bras bu re smin song zer na*

*mu tig lo tog re chags (2x)*

*mu tig lo tog re chags song zer na*

*brgya bang khri bang re gang (2x).*

If someone says every golden fruit has ripened,

Every harvest becomes pearls.

If every harvest has become pearls,

All hundred shelves in the treasury will be full.

*brgya bang khri bang re gang song zer na,*

*de bas kyang dga' ba zhig med*

*brgya bang khri bang re gang song zer na*

*de bas kyang skyid pa zhig med.*

If someone says all hundred shelves in the treasury are full,

Happiness is not destroyed.

If someone says all hundred shelves in the treasury are full,

Happiness is not destroyed.

**mkha' spyod dag pa'i zhing kham**

**(The Pure Land of Heavenly Enjoyment)** (LYL: 80-81)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6

mkha' \_\_\_\_\_ spyod khams da-(la)g pa'i \_\_\_\_\_

zhing \_\_\_\_\_ na sa gzhi gzil du gnon \_\_\_\_\_

yod \_\_\_\_\_ rgya snga : (la) che : (le) (la)r ya : (la) - ng

phu-(lu)n sun (li)d pa tshogs cha - (la)gs pa pa : (la)'i (la)

sku mkhar lha yi pho brang shel dkar mtsho mo gyang 'khyil.

***mkha' spyod dag pa'i zhing khams na  
sa gzhi gzil du gnon yod  
rgya che phun sum tshogs pa'i  
sku mkhar lha yi pho brang  
sngar yang srid pa chags pa  
shel dkar mtsho mo gyang 'khyil.***

In the Pure Land of Heavenly Enjoyment,  
The earth is afraid,  
Of the abundant prosperity,  
The castle the god's abode,  
Before created existence,  
The sacred crystal ocean was around it.

*lha dang lha mo bzhengs pa yi*  
*lha khang shel dkar dang 'dra*  
*stag shar 'dzom po yis bzhengs pa'i*  
*lha khang shel dkar dang 'dra*  
*bod khams bstan pa'i bstan bsrung*  
*bstan bsrung yul lha gnyan po.*

The birth of gods and goddesses,  
 Is like a crystal temple,  
 The birth of the perfect youth,  
 Is like a crystal temple  
 Guardian of Tibet's teachings  
 Sacred guardian deity of the land.

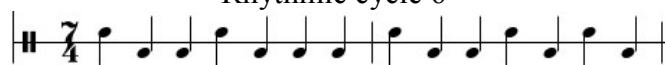
*'dod dgu'i dngos grub stsal mkhan po*  
*lha chen rdo rje chen po.*

Preceptor who bestows the attainment of all desires  
 The great deity Dorje Chenpo.

**stod rgya gar—Above, in India** (LYL:82-86)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 6



stod rgya gar gyi\_\_\_\_\_ yul\_\_\_\_\_ du cho - (lo)s kyi bstan

4 par\_\_\_\_\_ dar stod\_\_\_\_\_ rgya gar gyi yul\_\_\_\_\_ du\_\_\_\_\_

7 cho - (lo)s kyi bstan pa dar chos ma yol ba'i gong\_\_\_\_\_ du

11 du - (lu)ng gi bstan pa\_\_\_\_\_ dar chos ma yol ba'i

14 gong\_\_\_\_\_ du\_\_\_\_\_ du - (lu)ng gi bstan\_\_\_\_\_ pa dar

17 chos dung dkar po - (lo)\_\_\_\_\_ zer\_\_\_\_\_ ba cho - (lo)s kyi sna

20 'dren\_\_\_\_\_ yin chos dung dkar po\_\_\_\_\_ zer\_\_\_\_\_ ba\_\_\_\_\_

23 cho - (lo)s kyi sna\_\_\_\_\_ 'dren yin

**stod rgya gar gyi yul du**  
**chos kyi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**chos ma yol ba'i gong du**  
**dung gi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**chos dung dkar po zer ba**  
**chos kyi sna 'dren yin (2x)**

Above, in the country of India

Is the silk banner of Buddhist women. (2x)

Above the place of Buddhist women

Is the silk banner of the shell. (2x)

The white shell trumpet of dharma is said

To lead all types of dharma. (2x)

**smad rgya nag gi yul du**  
**khrims kyi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**khrims ma yol ba'i gong du**  
**dar gyi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**kha btags dkar po zer ba**  
**khrims ki sna 'dren yin. (2x)**

Below, in the country of China

Is the silk banner of silk.<sup>36</sup> (2x)

Above the place of law abiding women

Is the silk banner of silk. (2x)

White *khatags*<sup>37</sup> are said

To lead all types of law. (2x)

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<sup>36</sup> This means a silken banner representing silk.

<sup>37</sup> *khatags* (blessing scarves) are made of silk

**bar la dvags kyi yul du**  
**glu yi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**glu ma yol ba'i gong du**  
**chang gi bstan pa dar (2x)**  
**zhim po a rag gi bdud rtsi**  
**glu yi na 'dren yin.**

In the center, in Ladakh,

Is the banner of singing women. (2x)

Above the place of singing women

Is the silken banner of *chang*. (2x)

The tasty nectar of *arak*

Will lead all types of songs. (2x)

**Gar glu (Dance song)** (LYL:87-89)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

## Rhythmic cycle 3



gar de dang po gcig pa de \_\_\_\_\_

5  
dgung gnam sngon po la 'bul ang gar de dang po

5  
gcig pa de \_\_\_\_\_ dgung gnam sngon po la 'bul ang

7  
nga yi nyi zla gnyis ka bzhugs pa bas kyang mtshar

12  
nga yi rgyu skar 'dzoms po 'khor pa'i bas kyang mtshar

**gar de dang po gcig pa de**  
**dgung gnam sngon po la 'bul ang. (2x)**  
**nga yi nyi zla gnyis ka**  
**bzhugs pa bas kyang mtshar. (2x)**  
**nga yi rgyu skar 'dzoms po**  
**'khor pa'i bas kyang mtshar. (2x).**

By that very first dance  
 Make offerings to the clear blue sky.  
 Although both my sun and moon  
 Dwelling there are wonderous,  
 My abundant constellations  
 Surrounding them are also wonderous.

**gar de dang po'i gnyis pa de**  
**chos grva grub bzhi la 'bul ang.**  
**nga yi yar 'dren bla ma kun**  
**bzhugs pa bas kyang mtshar.**  
**nga yi grva rgyan 'dzoms po**  
**'khor pa bas kyang mtshar.**

By that very second dance  
 Make offerings to the square dharma court.  
 Although my helping lamas  
 Dwelling there are wondrous,  
 My abundant corner ornaments  
 Surrounding them are also wonderous.

**gar de dang po'i gsum pa de**  
**sku mkhar mthon po la 'bul ang. (2x)**  
**nga yi mi chen gong ma**  
**bzhugs pa bas kyang mtshar.**  
**nga yi drag zhan 'dzom po**  
**'khor pa'i bas kyang mtshar.**

By that very third dance  
 Make offerings to the high castle court.  
 Although my superior great lord,  
 Dwelling there is wonderful,  
 My abundant high and low attendants  
 Surrounding him are also wonderful.

**gar de dang po'i bzhi pa de**  
**dpal khang grub bzhi 'bul ang. (2x)**  
**nga yi yab yum pha ma kun**  
**bzhugs pa bas kyang mtshar. (2x)**  
**nga yi gnyen drung 'dzoms po kun**  
**'khor pa'i bas kyang mtshar.**

By that very fourth dance  
 Make offerings to the square noble house.  
 Although my parents, mother and father  
 Dwelling there are wonderful,  
 My abundant kin folk  
 Surrounding them are also wonderful.

**gar de dang po'i lnga pa de**  
**do ra grub bzhi 'bul ang. (2x)**  
**nga yi rde dpon chen po**  
**bzhus po bas kyang mtshar. (2x)**  
**nga yi ya do mdza bo kun**  
**'khor pa'i bas kyang mtshar.**

By that very fifth dance

Make offerings to the square dance courtyard.

Although my great lord

Dwelling there is wonderful,

My helpful friends

Surrounding him are also wonderful.

**'di phyi gtso rgyan**  
**(The Ornamented Lord of Present and Future)<sup>38</sup>**

(LYL 89-90)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

# 9/4

'di phyi (la skor lor phyi la) gtso - (lo) rgya - (la)n

3  
skyabs gnas dkon mcho - (lo)g gsum (byang) 'di phyi (la skor gyi na)

5  
gtso - (lo) rgya - (la)n skyabs gnas dkon mcho - (lo)g

7  
gsum cag mos pa'i

9  
bu brgyud ma log par yang mdzod cig

11  
(byang) 'di phyi (la skor gyi na) gtso - (lo) rgya - (la)n

13  
ma log par yang mdzod cig

<sup>38</sup> Buddhas and bodhisattvas are said to be able to function in the past, present and future, as in the “The buddhas who go in the three times (Tib. *dus gsum sheg pa sangs rgyas kun*).

The lyrics shown above are an approximation of Ali Mahmud's non-lexical syllables. It is not clear how the lyrics in the book fit.

**'di phyi gtso rgyan  
skyabs gnas dkon mchog gsum po  
bdag cag mos pa'i bu brgyud  
ma log par yang mdzod cig**

The ornamented lord of present and future,  
May we, faith's disciples, again unmistakably  
Take refuge in the Three Jewels.

**yid la 'dod pa'i re skongs  
gang bsam 'grub par shog cig  
bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa  
bzang po'i glu dbyung su sgrogs.**

Fulfilled in the mind of each who wants  
May whatever desires be fulfilled,  
Perfectly endowed with the auspicious threefold perfection  
Who utters songs of goodness.

**bla ma dam pa'i byin rlabs  
byin rlabs kyi dngos grub  
stag tshang ras par dad pa  
ma log par yang mdzod cig.**

Having faith in Stag Tshang Ras Pa [and]  
The pure lama's blessing,  
May we too unmistakably attain  
Those blessings.

**ka ltar zhabs zung (His Two Legs Like Pillars)** (LYL: 90-92)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

ka ltar zhabs zung brta - (la)n cig (he)  
kha ba can gyi 'gro ba - (la) yongs la

3  
bu ram - (ma) zhi - (li)ng pa yi gdu - (lu)ng rgyud  
thugs rje - (le) lcags kyu - (lu) yis zu - (lu)ngs shig

5  
ka ltar zhabs zung brta - (la)n cig (he)  
kha ba can gyi 'gro ba - (la) yongs la

7  
bu ram - (ma) zhi - (li)ng pa yi gdu - (lu)ng rgyud  
thugs rje - (le) lcags kyu - (lu) yis zu - (lu)ngs shig

**ka ltar zhabs zung brtan cig**

**bu ram zhing pa yi gdung rgyud**

**kha ba can gyi 'gro ba yongs la**

**thugs rje lcags kyu yis zungs shig (2x)**

His two legs like pillars,

The Sugar Cane One's<sup>39</sup> lineage

Having transmigrated to the Land of Snows,

May he hold the iron hook of compassion.<sup>40</sup> (2x)

<sup>39</sup> The Buddha

<sup>40</sup> Iron hook (used to train or steer elephants) as a metaphor for the Buddha's teachings

**ga nas bltas kyang mdzes byung  
nga tsho'i chos rgyal gong ma  
ga nas bltas kyang mdzes byung  
chos rgyal nyi ma rnam rgyal.**

No matter in what light I look at him he appears handsome  
Our superior dharma king  
No matter in what light I look at him he appears handsome  
The dharma king Nyima Namgyal

**nga tsho'i gong ma bdag po yi  
sku tshe bskal brgyar brtan cig  
chos rgyal nyi ma rnam rgya  
zhabs pad bskal brgyar brtan cig.**

May our superior lord's  
Life last one hundred eons.  
May the dharma king Nyima Namgyal,  
Lotus footed, last one hundred eons.

**ca co chos kyi sgra dbyangs des  
gling bzhi'i mun pa sel byung (2x)  
cha lugs mdzes pa'i rgyal blon  
yid 'phrog dpa' mos ngoms zhing. (2x)**

The clamorous melody of dharma hymns  
Clears away the darkness of the four continents  
The finely dressed king and his ministers [are]  
The beautiful, world transcending goddess's<sup>41</sup> field of contentment. (2x)

---

<sup>41</sup> Referring to a female buddha figure, either Tara or the wrathful Palden Lhamo

**ja chang bdud rtsi'i longs spyod**  
**la dvags drung 'khor 'dzoms po (2x)**  
**nyi mo'i [sic—nyi ma'i] mtsho ltar 'khyil byung**  
**lha lcam dpal mdzes dbang mo.**

The enjoyment of tea, *chang*, and nectar  
 Ladakh's abundant officials. (2x)  
 Like the ocean arises to circle the sun<sup>42</sup>  
 The divine consort Palzes Wangmo.

**ta la'i ri bo'i rtsi na**  
**yid dam thugs rje chen po**  
**tha dad 'gro ba yongs la**  
**thugs rje rgyang nas gzigs zhig.**

Then the Palm Tree Mountain herb,  
 Personal sacred deity of great compassion,  
 May look from a distance with compassion  
 On all different sentient beings.

**da lta sems kyi skyongs zhes**  
**dgung blon tshe dbang don 'grub**  
**na rga 'chi med bzhugs shig**  
**nga dang dpon 'khor gyi smon lam.**

Even now, it is said that protecting the mind,  
 The minister of the sky Tsewang Dondrub  
 Sits free from sickness, old age and death.  
 My prayer and that of the master and his servants.

---

<sup>42</sup> The word Nyima means “sun”, also the name of the king.

**dgon pa gser gyi bya skibs (The Monastery of the Golden Cave)** (LYL: 92-94)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

$\sharp 9/4$

go - (lo)n pa - (la) se - (le)r gyi - (li) bya - (la) skyibs (de-ni)

<sup>3</sup>
 ma - (la) zhengs pa yi go (lo - n) pa

<sup>5</sup>
 ma - (la) 'gyur btsan po ru zhu - (lu)gs so - (lo)ng ze - (le)r na

<sup>7</sup>
 dgon pa de bzhengpa (la) bas mtshar 'gyur med brtan po ru

<sup>10</sup>
 bzhu - (lu)gs so - (lo)ng ze - (le) - r na (la) gser lcang de btsu - (lu)gs pa bas

<sup>12</sup>
 mtshar

*dgon pa gser gyi bya skyibs*  
*ma bzhengs pa yi dgon pa (2x)*  
*ma 'gyur brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*dgon pa de bzhengs pa bas mtshar*  
*'gyur med brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*dgon pa de bzhengs pa bas mtshar.*

The Monastery of the Golden Cave

The monastery not built (by human hands), (2x)

When someone says the unchanging king dwelt there,

The monastery was built by a miracle.

When someone says the unchanging king dwelt there,

The monastery was built by a miracle.

*g.yas phyogs kyi gangs ri dkar po*  
*ma bshams pa yi rtsam tshug (2x)*  
*ma 'gyur brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*rtsam tsug de bshams pa bas mtsar*  
*'gyur med brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*tsam tsug de bshams pa bas mtshar.*

The white snowy mountain at the right side

How healing is that that which was not arranged, (2x)

When it is said the unchanging king dwelt there

It was arranged by a miracle

When it is said the unchanging king dwelt there

It was arranged by a miracle.

*g.yon phyogs kyi mtsho mo ma pham*  
*ma ltems pa yi yon chab* (2x)  
*‘gyur brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*yon chab de ltems pa bas mtshar*  
*‘gyur med brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*yon chab de ltems pa bas mtshar.*

On the left side is the invincible lake,<sup>43</sup>  
 An uncontrollable water offering.<sup>44</sup> (2x)  
 When it is said that king that grew strong dwelt there,  
 It is a miraculously controlled water offering.  
 When it is said that king that grew strong dwelt there,  
 It is a miraculously controlled water offering.

*mdun gyi can dan gyi sdong po*  
*ma btsugs pa yi lag tshug* (2x)  
*ma ‘gyur brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*lag tshug de btsugs pa bas mtshar*  
*‘gyur med brtan po ru bzhugs song zer na*  
*gser lcang de btsugs pa bas mtshar.*

In front of the tree of eternity,  
 Not planted by human hand, (2x)  
 When it is said the unchanging king dwelt there,  
 It was miraculously planted.  
 When it is said the unchanging king dwelt there,  
 It is a miraculous golden tree.

---

<sup>43</sup> Lake Manasarovar near Mount Kailash—a pilgrimage place said to cleanse all sins

<sup>44</sup> Bowls of water are put daily on Buddhist altars as an offering—the lake is being likened to a mammoth water offering

*'a jo rang gser rkyang gi thod dar*  
*no mo nga dngul rkyang gi pu ri (2x)*  
*a jo rang gi thugs sems la ma babs song zer na*  
*no mo nga yis lha chos zhig byed.*

The elder brother's<sup>45</sup> own golden wild ass has a head ornament.  
 My, the girl's, silver wild ass has a saddle. (2x)  
 When it is said that elder brother's own compassion is not encountered,  
 I, the girl, have encountered the sublime Dharma.

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<sup>45</sup> This may be a metaphor for the Buddha

***rgyab ri shel dkar mchod rten*****(The Hill of the White Crystal Stupa)** (LYL 94-96)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

## Rhythmic cycle 2

(de la) rgya ri brag dmar gyi tse (le)  
 mo de tse mo shel dkar gyi mcho (lo)d rten  
 tsa wa'i (da) bla (la) ma yi mtsa (la)ms khang dang dra  
 skyabs gon ye (le) e she kyi

***rgyab ri shel dkar mchod rten******mdun de na g.yu mtsho sngon mo******mda` de na me tog `bar yod******rang yul la skyid nyams chags******mtha` de na gser chen `bar yod******shel dkar la `o ma `khyil.***

The hill of the white crystal stupa  
 In front of the blue turquoise lake  
 An arrow there is a blazing flower  
 Our land is safe from corruption  
 The edge there is a great golden blaze  
 On the white crystal wreathed in milk.

*chu mig `gram de ru `khrungs pa*  
*me tog `jam dbyang sgrol ma*  
*chu mig `gram de ru `khrungs pa*  
*ser chen `jam dbyangs sgrol ma*  
*me tog sum gsum `khur te*  
*nga dang bla ma tsho mjal du cha`in.*

Arisen there at the spring's edge,  
 Tara, gentle like a flower ,  
 Arisen there at the spring's edge,  
 Tara, flower of enlightenment,  
 That the lama and we shall meet,  
 Bearing three flowers.

*no mo mos pa yi bla ma dang*  
*lha gang gi lha bris dang `dra*  
*bzang mo mos pa yi bla ma dang*  
*lha khang gi lha bris dang `dra*  
*dam chig gtsang ma`i ngang nas*  
*yar dkon mchog la mchod pa `bul*  
*dam tshig gtsang ma`i gnang nas*  
*mar ngan slong la sbyin pa stsal.*

The girl is devoted to the lama  
 Like the *thanka* painter to the deity.  
 The good woman is devoted to the lama  
 Like the *thanka* painter to the temple.  
 From within a sacred vow,  
 Make the higher precious offering.  
 Bestow butter in charity on the destitute.

*yul gyi `go de ru bzhugs pa*  
*yul gyi yul lha gnyan po*  
*shel dkar gyi `go de ru bzhugs pa*  
*a ma rdo rje chen mo*  
*a jo rang gser rkyang gi thod dar*  
*no mo nga dngul rkyang gi pu ri (2x)*  
*a jo rang gi thugs sems la ma babs song ser na*  
*no mo nga yis lha chos shig byed.*

Residing at the head of the country

Is the sacred god of the country.

Residing at the head of the white crystal

Is the great adamantine mother.<sup>46</sup>

The lord himself is riding on a golden wild ass's saddle.

I, the girl, on the saddle of a silver wild ass. (2x)

If it is said that the lord himself compassion has not flowed,

I, the girl, swear it does,

---

<sup>46</sup> Tara is often referred to as "Mother."

*spyi bo`i gtsug tor dgon pa*(The Monastery Above the Crown of His Head)

(LYL 96-98)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2




  
 spyi bo - (lo)`i \_\_\_ gtsu-(lu)g tor \_\_\_\_\_ dgon pa-(la) drin can tsa ba -

<sup>3</sup>

  
 (la)`i bla \_\_\_\_\_ ma (la) spyi bo - (lo)`i \_\_\_ gtsu-(lu)g tor \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>5</sup>

  
 dgon pa-(la) drin can tsa ba - (la)`i \_\_\_ bla \_\_\_\_\_ ma bda -

<sup>7</sup>

  
 (la)g dang `gro - (lo) drug gi \_\_\_\_\_ se - (le)ms \_\_\_\_\_ can la

<sup>9</sup>

  
 thar pa - (la)`i la - (la)m ston zhig mdzod bda -

<sup>11</sup>

  
 (la)g dang `gro - (lo) drug gi \_\_\_\_\_ se - (le)ms \_\_\_\_\_ can la

<sup>13</sup>

  
 thar pa - (la)`i la - (la)m ston zhig mdzod

*spyi bo`i gtsug tor dgon pa*  
*drin can tsa ba`i bla ma (2x)*  
*bdag dang `gro drug gi sems can la*  
*thar pa`i lam ston zhig mdzod cig (2x)*

The monastery is above the crown of his head,  
 The compassionate root lama. (2x)  
 To me and the beings in the six realms<sup>47</sup>  
 May the teacher show the path to deliverance.

*phyi na phyi rkang phra mo*  
*nang na je btsun sgrol ljang (2x)*  
*je btsun sgrol ljang mkhyen mkhyen*  
*phyi ma`i lam ston mdzod cig*  
*je btsun sgrol ljang mkhyen mkhyen*  
*bar do yi lam ston zhig mdzod cig.*

Outside, among the four subtle planetary motions  
 Resides revered Green Tara.<sup>48</sup> (2x)  
 Revered Green Tara show compassion  
 Guide us on the journey to the next life.  
 Revered Green Tara show compassion  
 Guide us on the journey through the Bardo.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Gods, demi-gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings.

<sup>48</sup> Tara (Tib. *sgrol ma*) is a female bodhisattva of compassion and action. She is viewed as the female aspect of Avalokitesvara (*Chenrezig*). Her aspect of Green Tara is a mother-like saviouress and protector of children.

<sup>49</sup>The intermediate state between death and rebirth.

*bu mo nga yi a pha*  
*thugs sems gangs ri dkar po*  
*gyang can `tsho mo`i a pha*  
*thugs sems gangs ri yi ngang nas*  
*dkon mchog la mchod pa zhig `bul*

My, the maiden's, father  
 Is the compassionate White Ice Mountains.  
 The blessed, nurturing woman's father  
 Is from within the compassionate Himalayas.  
 Let us make offerings to the Three Jewels.

*thugs sems gangs ri yi ngang nas*  
*ngan slong la sbyin re stsal lo*  
*rgya mkhar smug chung gi khyog tong*  
*tshags nang gang gi mda' mo (2x)*  
*mda' mo lo tshigs `khyog med pa*  
*dpon po la zhabs tog `bul `ong (2x)*

From within the compassionate Himalayas  
 Let us give alms to beggars.  
 The vast castle medicinal herb's son  
 Is the arrow divination shot into the open (2x)  
 The arrow divination is honest story of former generations.  
 Give homage to the lord. (2x)

*rgya mkhar smug chung gi na chung*

*'phrul nang gang gi mgron bu (2x)*

*mkron bu la gas 'khrug med pa*

*dpon po la zhabs tog re 'bul 'ong.*

The vast castle medicinal herb's daughter

Is the cowrie shells inside the magic. (2x)

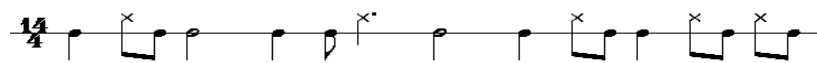
The princess is a tranquil two-year-old sheep.

Give homage to the lord.

*seng ge bzhens pa'i sku mkhar*(The Castle That Senge Built) (LYL:98)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

## Rhythmic cycle 1



*lte ba dang gting mo sgang du seng ges bzhengs pa'i sku mkhar 2x*  
*seng ges bzhengs pa'i sku mkhar gyi nang sengs ge rnam rgyal*

In the central and depths of the castle that Sengge built  
 The castle built by Sengge Namgyal.

*ya re'i gdeng dang yongs pa'i ya rabs kyi bu*  
*ya re'i gdeng dang yongs pa'in dbon po'i dpal 'byor.*

Each one of the confident noble's sons has come,  
 Each one of the confident noble's grandsons has come with glory.

*a zhang a ne'i sku mdun ming gcig sring gcig*  
*tshe dbang dang rab brtan gyi sku mdun na ming sring gcig.*

May the uncle and aunt's names be exalted for a long time.  
 May Tsewang and Rabstan's names be exalted for a long time.

*ming gcig sring gcig gnyis ka la tshe la*  
*sku bsrung mdzod cig.*  
*ming gcig snying gcig gnyis ka la*  
*lha yis sku bsrung mdzod cig.*

For both name and long life  
 May we make offering to the guardian's image.  
 For both name and long life  
 May we make offering to the deity's image.

**sngar gyi ri bo mchong 'dra--Like the Ancient Carnelian Mountain**(LYL:99-100)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

14/4

(la) sngar \_\_\_\_\_ gyi (rnam) ri - (li) bo ri bo

2  
mcho - (lo)ng \_\_\_\_\_ 'dra (la) (la)

3  
sngar \_\_\_\_\_ gyi (rnam) ri - (li) bo ri bo

4  
mcho - (lo)ng \_\_\_\_\_ 'dra (la) sngar gyi

5  
ri bo mcho - (lo)ng \_\_\_\_\_ mchong 'dra la 'gyu - (lur)r

6  
bya - (la) \_\_\_\_\_ zhi - (li)ng \_\_\_\_\_ med (de la) sngar gyi

7  
ri bo \_\_\_\_\_ mcho - (lo)ng \_\_\_\_\_ ri bo \_\_\_\_\_ mcho - (lo)ng

8  
mchong 'dra la 'gyur bya \_\_\_\_\_ zhing med a ma'i (la)

9

la) — bu - (lu) — chung gi — dga' —  
ba la gzi - (lig)gs — a - (la)ng — gnye - (le)n

10

ba ba — gzi - (li)gs — ang (de la) dpo - (lo)n  
drung gnam gyi ska - (la)r — ma (de la) skyi - (li)d

11

bza - (lan)ng — khyi - (li) — bu - (lu)'i — skyi - (li)d  
nyams la — gzi - (li)gs — a - (la)ng — gny - (len)en

12

1.

nya - (la)ms — la — gziggs (de la) ga

13

2.

drung gnam gyi skar — ma.

*sngar gyi ri bo mchong 'dra (2x)*

*sngar gyi ri bo mchong 'dra la 'gyur bya zhing med*

*a ma'i bu chung gi dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*dpon bzang khyi bu'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ba la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma*

*skyid nyams la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma.*

Like the ancient Carnelian Mountain, (2x)

Like the ancient Carnelian Mountain becoming a field of non-action,<sup>50</sup>

Behold with joy the mother's little son.

Behold with happiness the good lord

Behold with joy the kinfolk's stars in the sky

Behold with happiness the kinfolk's stars in the sky.

---

<sup>50</sup> Non-action would be free from negative karma

*snar gyi mi kun sngar pa rgyal ba byams pa (2x)*

*sngar rgyal ba byams pa la 'gyur bya zhig med (2x)*

*a ma'i bu chung gi dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*dgpon bzang khyi gu'i skyid nyams la gzigs*

*dga' ba la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma*

*skyid nyams la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma.*

The ancient men ancient times, the ancient king Maitreya,<sup>51</sup>(2x)

The ancient king Maitreya becomes a field of non-action. (2x)

Behold with joy the mother's little son.

Behold with happiness the good lord.

Behold with joy the kinfolk's stars in the sky.

Behold with happiness the kinfolk's stars in the sky.

*sngar gyi shar po sngar la btsan dan sdong po (2x)*

*sngar gyi tsan dan sngon po la 'gyur bya zhing med (2x)*

*a ma'i bu chung gi dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*dgpon bzang khyi gu'i skyid nyams la gzigs ang*

*dga' ba la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma*

*skyid nyams la gzigs ang gnyen drung gnam gyi skar ma.*

The youth from ancient time, the lord of eternal flowers (2x)

The youth from ancient time becomes a field of non-action (2x)

Behold with joy the mother's little son.

Behold with happiness the good lord

Behold with joy the kinfolk's stars in the sky

Behold with happiness the kinfolk's stars in the sky.

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<sup>51</sup> The future buddha of loving kindness

*phu ru chags pa gangs ri dkar po*

**The Valley Formed in the White Mountain Range** (LYL:100-101)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

**14**

(la) phu ru de (ru) cha - (la)gs pa (de la) ga - (la)ngs  
 (la) gangs ri'i (la) dka - (la)r po la ga - (la)ngs  
 (la) gangs rdog gsum cha - (la)gs song zer na yul chu -

**2**

ri yi dkar po (la)  
 rdog gsum chags song (la)  
 (lu)ng gi bsod nams (la)

**3**

phu ru de (ru) cha - (la)gs pa (de la) ga - (la)ngs  
 gangs ri'i (la) dka - (la)r po la ga - (la)ngs  
 gangs rdogs gsum cha - (la)gs song zer na rgyal mkhar

**4**

ri yi dkar po  
 rdog gsum chags song  
 smug chung gi bsod nams.

*phu de ru chags pa gangs ri yi dkar po (2x)*

*gangs ri'i dkar po la gangs rdog gsum chas song (2x)*

*gangs rdog gsum chas song zer na yul chung gi bsod nams*

*gangs rdogs gsum chags song zer na rgyal mkhar smug chung gi bsod nams.*

The valley formed in the white mountain range, (2x)

In the white mountain range the single white mountain was divided into three parts. (2x)

If it is said the single white mountain was divided into three parts,  
the small country is blessed.

If it is said the single white mountain was divided into three parts,  
the royal castle's medicinal herbs are blessed.

*bar de ru bzhengs pa shel dkar gyi mchod rten (2x)*

*shel dkar gyi mchod rten la shel rdog gsum chag song (2x)*

*shel rdog gsum chags song zer na yul chung gi bsod nams*

*shel rdog gsum chags song zer na rgyal mkahr smug chung gi bsod nams.*

In the midst there is erected a white crystal stupa (2x)

On the white crystal stupa the crystal was divided into three parts (2x)

If it is said crystal was divided into three parts, the small country is blessed.

If it is said crystal was divided into three parts, the royal castle's medicinal herbs are  
blessed.

*mdo de ru 'khyil ba g.yu mtsho yi sngon mo (2x)*

*g.yu mtsho sngon mo la g.yu rdog gsum chags song (2x)*

*g.yu rdog gsum chags song zer na yul chung gi bsod nams*

*g.yu rdog gsum chags song zer na rgyal mkhar smug chung gi bsod nams.*

In that winding valley the blue of the turquoise lake, (2x)

In the blue turquoise lake the turquoise is split into three parts. (2x)

If it was said the turquoise is split into three parts, the small country is blessed.

If it was said the turquoise is split into three parts, the royal castle's medicinal herbs are  
blessed.

**gangs dang g.ya' yi mtshams su (In the time of snow and dust)**

(LYL:101-102)

same melody as *rtendel lngapa B*

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

*gangs dang g.ya' mtshams su**ba lu sgrug tu song pa'in**gangs dang g.ya' yi mtshams su**g.ya' lu sgrug tu song pa'in.*

In the time of snow and dust

We went to gather dwarf rhododendron.

In the time of snow and dust

We went gather the rusty branches.

*ba lu g.ya' lu dang ma mjal**lha shing shug pa dang mjal**ba lu g.ya' lu dang ma mjal**lha shing shug pa dang mjal*

We did not find the dwarf rhododendron.

We did find the juniper.

1 We did not find the dwarf rhododendron.

We did find the juniper.

*lha shing shug pa'i du ba po*  
*steng phyogs lha yul la 'bul*  
*lha shing shug pa'i du ba po*  
*'og phyogs klu yul la 'bul*  
*lha shing shug pa'i du ba po*  
*bar phyogs btsan yul la'ng 'bul.*

Offer the smoke of the juniper.

Above in the gods' realm

We offer the smoke of the juniper.

Below in the *nagas*<sup>52</sup> realm

We offer the smoke of the juniper

Between in the *tsan* demons' realm.

*gser gzhong gzhong pa'i steng na*  
*mar dkar gyi 'brang rgyas bzhengs (2x)*  
*'brang rgyas lag tu 'khur te*  
*bla ma kun mjal du cha'in*  
*'brang rgyas la tu 'khur te*  
*rgyal ba mjal du cha'in.*

Above, on golden and wooden trays

Red and white *drang gyas* cakes were built. (2x)

Bringing the *drang gyas* in our hands,

We will go to meet the lamas.

Bringing the *drang gyas* in our hands,

We will go to the Victorious One<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Subterranean water and earth spirits.

<sup>53</sup> Epithet for the Buddha.

**he mis dgon pa (Hemis Monastery)** (LYL:103-104)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rythmic cycle 2

lchang ra smu-(lu)ug chung gi dkyil-(li) (de) na

3  
dgon pa gser gyi - (li) bu - (lu)m tshang (la)

5  
lchang ra - (la) smu - (lu)g chung gi dkyil (li de) na

7  
he mis gser gyi bu - (lu)m tshang.

*lchang ra smug chung gi dkyil na*

*dgon pa gser gyi bum tshang*

*lchang ra smug chung gi dkyil na*

*he mis gser gyi bum tshang.*

In the center of a grove of willows and medicinal herbs

Is the golden monastery, contained as in a vase.

In the center of a grove of willows and medicinal herb

Is Hemis Monastery, contained as in a vase.

*gser khri ser po'i steng na*

*bzang gsum bla ma bzhugs yod*

*gser khri ser po'i steng na*

*skyab mgon stag tshan ras pa.*

On the yellow golden throne

Is the lama manifesting the three goods.<sup>54</sup>

On the yellow golden throne

Is the protector, Stagtshang Raspa.

*rtsa ba'i bla ma'i byin rlabs*

*yul phyogs gzhan la ma stsal*

*stag tshan ras pa yi byin rlabs*

*yul phyog gzhan la ma stsal.*

The root lama's blessings

Are not bestowed on other countries.

Stagtshang Raspa's blessings

Are not bestowed on other countries.

---

<sup>54</sup> Buddha, Dharma, Sangha

*rtsa ba'i bla ma'i byin rlabs*

*rang gi yul stsal cig*

*stag tshang ras pa'i byin rlabs*

*la dvags phyogs la stsal cig.*

May the root lama's blessings

Be bestowed on our own country.

May Stagtshang Raspa's blessings

Be bestowed on Ladakh.

*dgon sde phan tshun gyi grva pa*

*ser phreng brgya dan brgya rtsa*

*he mis lce bde'i dge 'dunn*

*ser phreng brgya dang brgya rtsa.*

The monastery's connecting courtyards

Are a golden rosary of one hundred eternal *tormas*.<sup>55</sup>

Hemis Monastery's eloquent, virtuous monks

Are a golden rosary of one hundred eternal *tormas*.

---

<sup>55</sup> Symbolic offering cakes made of barley flour, butter, milk, curd, sugar, brown sugar, and honey, decorated with colored butter shapes.

*ser phreng legs mo'i rdo 'dzin*

*bzang sum rtsa ba'i bla ma*

*ser 'phreng legs mo'i rdo 'dzin*

*skyab mgon stag tsang ras pa.*

The essential consciousness of the golden rosary

Is the lama of three goodnesses.

The essential consciousness of the golden rosary

Is the protector Stagtshang Raspa.

***rgyal lung rgyal mo (In the Queen's Royal Valley)*** (LYL:105-106)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 4

rgyal (la) lung (nam) rgyal (la) mo yi phu shed na (la)

<sup>3</sup>gangs ri (la) gsum rtsegs zhig cha - (la)gs byung (la)

<sup>5</sup>gangs ri (la) gsum rtsegs (i) ma - (la) yin no rtsa ba'i  
gangs ri (la) gsum rtegs (i) ma - (la) yin no mtsho skyes

<sup>7</sup>bla ma yi bzhug - (lu)gs khri yin  
rdo rje yi bzhug - (lu)gs khri yin.

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*gangs ri gsum rtsegs zhig chags byung (2x)*

*gangs ri gsum rtsegs ma yin no*

*rtsa ba'i bla ma yi bzhugs khri yin*

*gangs ri gsum rtegs ma yin no*

*mtsho skyes rdo rje yi bzhugs khri yin.*

In the queen's royal valley

Three snowy mountains arose. (2x)

They are not three snowy mountains

They are the root lama's throne.

They are not three snowy mountains

They are the throne of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava.

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*gser gyi nyi ma gsum shar byung (2x)*

*gser gyi nyi ma ma yin no*

*rtsa ba'i bla ma'i dbu zhva yin*

*gser gyi nyi ma ma yin no*

*mtsho skyes rdo rje yi dbu zhva yin.*

In the queen's royal valley

Three golden suns rose. (2x)

They are not three golden suns.

They are the root lama's hat.

They are not three golden suns

They are the hat of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava.

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*dung gi zla ba zhig shar byung (2x)*

*dung gi zla ba ma yin no*

*rtsa ba'i bla ma'i zhal gdong yin*

*dung gi zla ba ma yin no*

*mtsho skyes rdo rje yi zhal gdong yin.*

In the queen's royal valley

A conch-like moon shines. (2x)

It is not a conch-like moon.

It is the root lama's face.

It is not a conch-like moon

It is the face of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava.

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*rtsa sna dang chu sna kun 'dzoms byung (2x)*

*rtsa sna dang chu sna 'dzoms pa zhig ma yin*

*lung pa de skyes pa zhig yin.*

In the queen's royal valley

All types of plants and water are gathered. (2x)

They are not types of plants and water that are gathered.

It is the birth of the country.

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*lug gu la skyid nyams shig chag byung (2x)*

*lug gu la skyid nyam ma yin*

*ra rji mkha pa yi skyong shes yin (2x)*

In the queen's royal valley

In a lamb, happiness has arisen. (2x)

It is not happiness in a lamb.

It is the shepherd sage's nurturing consciousness. (2x)

*rgyal lung rgyal mo yi phu shed na*

*mi gsum bka' bgros shig mdzad 'dug (2x)*

*mi gsum bka' bgros ma yin no*

*rtsa ba'i bla ma yi gsung skad yin*

*mi gsum gka' bgros ma yin no*

*mtsho skyes rdo rje yi bka' bgros yin.*

In the queen's royal valley

Three men are conferring.

They are not three men conferring.

It is the root lama's enlightened speech.

They are not three men conferring.

It is the enlightened speech of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava.

**dgon pa bkra shis lhun po (Tashilhunpo Monastery)**<sup>56</sup> (LYL:107-109)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009  
to the same melody as *rtendel lngapa*

*nyi ma shar de nas shar pa de*

*shar ri dro can gyi nyi ma*

*ya gi shed gnas chen bzang po'i*

*pho brang rtse la shar*

*dgon pa la bkra shis lhun po yi*

*ph brang rtse la shar.*

The sun rises in the east

The warm eastern sun

It shines at the heights of

The fortress in yon sacred place

It shines at the heights of the fortress,

Of Tashilhunpo Monastery.

---

<sup>56</sup> Tashilhunpo Monastery in Western Tibet was the seat of the Panchen Lamas, the second most import lamas in the hierarchy of the Gelugpa sect.

*rgya yul gzhung de nas thon pa yi*  
*rgya yi rgya ja kham pa*  
*dbus gtsang gzhung de la thon pa yi*  
*rgya yi rgya kham pa*  
*de yang gnas chen bzang po yi*  
*mang ja la 'bul*  
*dgon pa bkra shis lhun po yi*  
*mang ja la 'bul.*

The dark brown Chinese tea  
 Produced in the center of India  
 The dark brown Chinese tea  
 Produced from Central Tibet  
 Therefore let us make offerings of tea to monks  
 Of the sacred pilgrimage place.  
 Make offerings of tea to the monks of Tashilhunpo Monastery.

*rgya yul gzhung nas thon pa yi*  
*bzang po la bkra shis kha btags*  
*dbus gtsang gzhung du thon pa yi*  
*bzang po bkra shis kha btags*  
*de yang gsan chen bzang po yi*  
*snyan dar la 'bul*  
*dgon pa la bkra shis lhun po yi*  
*snyan dar la 'bul.*

The good quality auspicious *khatag*  
 Produced from the center of India  
 The good quality auspicious *khatag*  
 Produced from the center of Central Tibet  
 A *khatag* will be offered to the holy pilgrimage site.  
 A *khatag* will be offered to Tashilhunpo Monastery.

*rgya yul gzhung nas thon pa yi*  
*men tse tshon sna 'dzoms po*  
*dbus gtsang gzhun du thon pa yi*  
*men tse ctson sna 'dzoms po*  
*de yang ngas chen bzang po yi*  
*zhal khebs la 'bul*  
*dgon pa bkra shi lhun po yi*  
*zhal khebs la 'bul.*

The multicolored ornament

Produced from the center of India

The multicolored ornament

Produced from the Centre of Central Tibet

The Mentse<sup>57</sup> will be as a face covering curtain<sup>58</sup> of the holy pilgrimage site.

The Mentse will be offered as a face covering curtain to Tashilhunpo Gonpa

---

<sup>57</sup> A precious medicinal pill, often referring to a mystical blessing pill

<sup>58</sup> Religious paintings (*thangka*) or relics are traditionally covered with a curtain, except when on ritual display.

*dgon pa yi dkyil de na*

*dar po che yod*

*bkra shis lhun po'i dkyil de na*

*dar po che yod*

*rtsa ba'i bl ma dar ba yi*

*darche zhig yin*

*bzang gsum gyi bla ma dar ba yi*

*dar chen zhig yin.*

In the centre of the monastery

Put up a large prayer flag.

In the centre of Tashilhunpo

Put up a large prayer flag.

That is a large flag of

The disseminating teachings of the root teacher.

That is the large flag of

The disseminating teachings of the Gracious root teacher.

**nyi zla bang ma'i glu (The Song of Nilza Wangmo)** (LYL:109-111)

As sung by Tsering Chorol and Yangchen Dolma 17 August 2011

Nilza Wangmo was princess of Lomanthang in Mustang (now part of Western Nepal). She was married to King Deskyong Namgyal (reigned 1750-1770). He was an ineffective ruler and all power was exercised by his step-mother ZiZi Khatun. Nilza Wangmo gave birth to a son Saskyong Namgyal who grew up to briefly be king from 1775 to 1780 (Francke 1907: 120). According to Lama Jampal, Deskyong beat his wife, and she made the hard decision to walk away from the palace, leaving her son behind. She returned to Mustang, and from there went to Tibet where she married again, and gave birth to a boy who was recognized as the Seventh Panchen Lama, Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853).

Rhythmic cycle 3

8/4

Nyi ma'i nub phyogs O rgyan gli - (li)ng de na

5  
yi - (li) dam pad ma can bzhugs no (lo) mo nga  
Nyi zla dbang mo

10  
lho de la mi - (li) skyod pa'i byin rlabs dang dngos grub  
lho de la mi - (li) skyod pa'i byin rlabs dang dngos grub

15  
stsal  
stal

*Nyi ma'i nub phyogs o rgyan gling na*

*yi dam padma can bzhugs (2x)*

*no mo nga lho de la mi bskyod pa'i*

*byin rlabs dang dngos grub stsal*

*nyi lza dbang mo lho la mi bskyod pa'i*

*byin rlabs dang dngos grub stsal.*

To the north of the sun in the realm of Urgyan

The deity Padmasambhava resides. **(2x)**

May he bestow blessings and wisdom

So that I, the girl, don't return to the south.

May he bestow blessings and wisdom

So that Nilza Wangmo does not return to the south.

*mang spro'i phu ru bzhugs pa*

*a pha rong btsan rgyal po (2x)*

*no mo nga lho la mi bskyod pa'i*

*lung bstan zhig stsal*

*nyi zla dbang mo lho la mi bskyod pa'i*

*lung bstan zhig stsal.*

O King Rongstan,<sup>59</sup>

You who live in the upper valleys of Matho, **(2x)**

May you predict

That I, the girl, don't return to the south.

May you predict

That Nilza Wangmo will not return to the south.

---

<sup>59</sup> One of several brother deities consulted at the oracle at Matho.

*g.yas phyogs kyi gser lcang ser po de*  
*no mo nga yi yab chen yin nam bsam*  
*gyas phyogs kyi gser lcang ser po*  
*zhabs drung ngag dbang yin nam bsam*  
*no mo nga yi yab chen yin nam bsams te*  
*zhabs drung ngag dbang yin nam bsams te*  
*nyi lza dbang mos phyag gsum 'tshal.*

To the right is the yellow, golden willow tree,  
 That was thought to be the great father of this girl.  
 To the right is the golden willow tree,  
 That was thought to be of Zhabdrung Ngawang?<sup>60</sup>  
 Thinking that it was the girl's spiritual father,  
 Thinking it was Zhabdrung Ngawang,  
 Nyilza Wangmo made three bows.

---

<sup>60</sup> Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) one of the two incarnations of the fourth Drukchen (head of the Drukpa sect), contributed to unite Bhutan as a state—(Rangjung Yeshe)

*g.yon phyogs kyi gyu lchang sngon po de*  
*no mo nga yi a ma yin nam bsam*  
*gyon phyogs kyi gyu lchang sngon po de*  
*zi zi rgyal mo yin nam bsam*  
*no mo nga yi a ma yin nam bsams te*  
*no mo nga yis phyag gsum phul*  
*zi zi rgyal mo yin nam bsams te*  
*nyi zla dbang mos phyag gsum phul.*

To the left is the blue, turquoise willow tree  
 Thought to be my, the girl's, mother.  
 To the left is the blue, turquoise willow tree  
 Thinking it to be the Queen ZiZi,  
 Thinking it to be my, the girl's, mother,  
 I, the girl, made three bows.  
 Nilza Wangmo made three bows.

*gom chen phyi ru rgyab pa dang*

*sems pa nang du lus (2x)*

*a ma la bltams pa yi bu chung de*

*sku mkhar gyi nang du bzhugs*

*nyi zla la bltams pa'i sa skyong de*

*sku mkhar gyi nang bzhugs*

While taking large steps outside

The mind stays at home. (2x)

A baby was born to the mother

Left behind in the royal palace.

The little prince<sup>61</sup> born to Nilza Wangmo

Left behind in the royal palace.

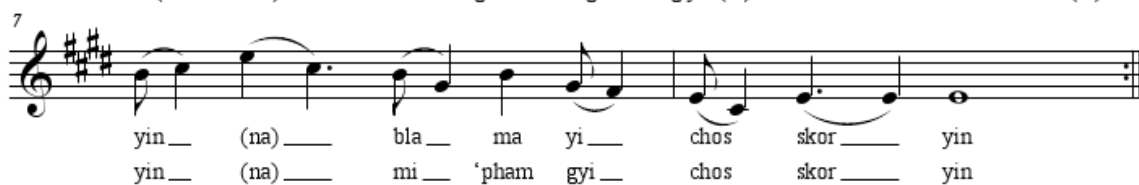
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<sup>61</sup> Sasyong Namgyal

**dgung nam sngon mo'i dkyil na**  
**(In the Center of the Blue Sky)** (LYL 111-112)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 3



*dgun nam sngon mo'i dkyil na*

*smin drug gi g.yas skor bskor (2x)*

*smin drug gi g.yas skor ma yin*

*bla ma yi chos skor yin*

*smin drug gi g.yas skor ma yin*

*mi 'pham gyi chos skor yin*

In the center of the blue sky

The Pleides turn. (2x)

The Pleides are not turning.

The lama's wheel of dharma is turning.

The Pleides are not turning.

Mipham's<sup>62</sup> wheel of dharma is turning.

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<sup>62</sup> Probably refers to one of the heads of the Drukpa sect, maybe Gyalwang Mipham Wangpo (1654 - 1717), 4th Gyalwang Drukchen, who helped negotiate the Treaty of Tingmosgang which ended the Tibet-Mongolian-Ladakh War of 1679–1684. The Ladakhi kings considered this line of lamas to be their gurus.

*gser zam zam pa'i steng na*

*bla yi chib sga rol (2x)*

*zam pa'i og gi nya mo de*

*ngan song la ldung dvoogs 'dug (2x)*

Above the bridge of the golden road

The lama rides on a horse saddle. (2x)

Below the bridge is the female fish

Averting bad reincarnations. (2x)

*ma Ni man thang ring mo la*

*skor ba gyas nas gskor (2x)*

*skor ba g.yas na bskor pa*

*las kyi sgrib pa dga cig*

*g.yas skor g.yas nas bskor ba*

*pha ma'i drin lan 'khor cig.*

By the long Mani wall<sup>63</sup>

We circumambulate in a clockwise direction. (2x)

When we have circumambulated clockwise

May defilements be dispelled.

When we have circumambulated clockwise

May the kindness of our parents be repaid.

---

<sup>63</sup>Broad, roadside walls that are topped with stones carved with the mantra “*Om mani padme hum*” (Hail the jewel in the lotus). Devout travellers will always pass them on their right and may circumambulate them as an act of devotion.

*pha ri ri nas shug pa dang*

*tshur ri ri nas ba lu (2x)*

*bu mo nga gtsang sbra can mo yi*

*gtsang shug cig ldan cig*

*kun 'dzom nga gstang sbra stan mo yi*

*gtsang shug cig ldan cig.*

The juniper tree from the distant mountain and

The dwarf rhododendron from the nearby mountain (2x)

May I, the smart maiden,

Be a wife purified by juniper.<sup>64</sup>

May I, smart Kundzom,

Be a wife purified by juniper.

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<sup>64</sup> Juniper is a main constituent in Tibetan and Ladakhi incense.

**shar nas nyi ma shar g.yas nas bla ma phebs**

**The Sun Rose in the East, The Lama Came From The Right Side.** (LYL:113-114)

(No melody known by informants)

*shar na nyi ma shar byung*

*g.yas nas bla ma phebs byung (2x)*

*nga dang chos gshi'i manga' 'og la*

*skyid po'i nyi ma shar byung*

*chos gshi 'brug pa'i manga' 'og la*

*dga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig byung*

The sun rose from the east

The Lama came from the right (2x)

The sun of happiness rose

For us supporters of religious institutions

The good omen of happiness has favoured

Us, the religious supporters of the Drukpa sect.

*brag de glan chen chu la*

*chu la 'babs 'dra'i steng na*

*wam la'i dgon pa bzhengs yod*

*rtse mo dgung dang mnyam byung*

*wam la'i steng skyong rnam rgyal*

*dbu 'phang lha las mtho byung*

The rock on which Wanla Monasery stands

Looks as if a giant elephant descends to take water.

The top of Wanla Monastery, erected so high it touches the sky,

Stands higher than the god.

*mdun na dar dkar brkyangs 'dra*  
*rgyab na padma can spungs 'dra*  
*byin rlabs kyi bang mdzod*  
*dbag gi rca ba'i bla ma*  
*byin rlabs kyi band mdzod*  
*dpon slob stag tshang ras pa.*

Front side of the Gonpa looks as if white scarf is spread over  
 Back side looks like lotus flower is piled up.  
 My root teacher is  
 A treasure of blessings.  
 The teacher Stagtsang Raspa  
 Is the treasure of blessings.

*dgung gnam sngon po'i dkyil na*  
*chu sprin pa tra can yas yod (2x)*  
*sprin bar shar ba'i nyi ma*  
*bdag gi rca ba'i bla ma*  
*sprin bar shar ba'i nyi ma*  
*dpon slob stag tshang ras pa.*

High in the blue sky  
 Crocodile of various designs appeared. (2x)  
 Amidst clouds where the sun rose  
 Is my root teacher.  
 Amidst clouds where the sun rose  
 Is the Teacher Stagtsang Raspa.

**tshogs bzangs mtsho mo g.yang skyid**

**The Ocean Cauldron of Wealth and Happiness** (LYL: 114-115)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 2

dang po srid pa cha - (la)gs pa tshogs bzang mtsho - (lo) mo

3  
g ya - (la)ng skyid snga - (la)r yang 'o ma 'khyil - (li) ba (la)

5  
tshogs bzang mtsho mo g ya - (la)ng skyid.

*dang po srid pa chags pa*

*tshogs bzang mtsho mo g.yang skyid*

*sngar yang 'o ma 'khyil ba*

*tshogs bzang mtsho mo g.yang skyid.*

From the beginning of created existence

The ocean of wealth and happiness.

Even in the past the milk was churned

The ocean of wealth and happiness.

*tshogs bzang mtsho mo g.yang skyid*

*za chu kha ra 'o ma (2x)*

*za chu kha ra 'o ma*

*gsol la thang rgya za kham pa.*

The ocean of wealth and happiness

Drink its milk at the shore (2x)

Drink its milk at the shore

We request the reddish brown drink.

*gsol la thang rgya za kham pa la*

*gsol la mar 'bri mar ser chung*

*gsol la mar 'bri mar ser chung la*

*ljags tshva shel tshva kha ra.*

When we request reddish brown drink

We request the small golden cow's butter.

When we request the small golden cow's butter

We taste crystal salt and sugar.

*ljags tshva shel tshva kha ra la*

*gsol thum gser gyi thum bu*

*gsol bum gser gyi thum bu la*

*gsol sgur padma ‘dab brgyad.*

When we taste crystal salt and sugar

We request the covered golden ladle.

When we request the covered golden ladle

We request to bear the eight petaled lotus.<sup>65</sup>

*gsol sgur padma ‘dab brgyad la*

*gsol tib nyi zla kha sbyor*

*gsol tib nyi zla kha sbyor la*

*gsol dkar ‘brug ris dkar yol.*

When we request to bear the eight petaled lotus

We request the teapot of the Union of Sun and Moon.<sup>66</sup>

When we request the teapot of the Union of Sun and Moon

We request the china teacup of the dragon<sup>67</sup> lineage.

---

<sup>65</sup> This symbolizes the Eightfold Path of Buddhism.

<sup>66</sup> One of the 17 tantras (esoteric treatises) of Dzogchen meditation practices—somewhat akin to the meditative practices of Zen Buddhism (Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary)

<sup>67</sup> The word *‘brug* (pronounced “druk”—dragon, thunder, or Bhutan) refers to the Drukpa Kargyu sect, of which the Ladakhi Kings were adherents.

*gsol dkar 'brug ris nang nas*  
*rtsa ba'i bla ma mchod do*  
*gsol dkar 'brug ris nang nas*  
*stag tshang ras pa mchod do.*

When we request the china teacup of the dragon lineage

We make offerings to our root lama.

By requesting from the white dragon lineage,<sup>68</sup>

We make offerings to Lama Stag tsang Ras pa.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> This refers to the *padma dkar po* (white lotus) lineage, named after the Fourth Gyalwa Drukpa Rinpoche, *padma dkar po* (1527-1592), guru of Lama Stag tsang Ras pa.

<sup>69</sup> Drukpa Kargyu lama (1573–1651) who was guru to King Sengge Namgyal

**steng phyogs lha yul nas**

**(From the World of Gods Above)** (LYL:116-117)

as sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam

Rhythmic cycle 1

14

steng \_\_\_\_\_ phyogs lha - (la) yul nas g yu 'bru - (lu)g  
 g yu \_\_\_\_\_ 'brug sngon mo - (lo) ma - (la) yin te  
 g yu \_\_\_\_\_ 'brug sngon mo - (lo) ma - (la) yin no \_\_\_\_\_

2. 1.

sngon \_\_\_\_\_ mo zhis ldir \_\_\_\_\_ byung (la)  
 bla \_\_\_\_\_ ma'i gsung skad cig yin \_\_\_\_\_ no (la)

3. 2.

sngon \_\_\_\_\_ mo \_\_\_\_\_ zhis ldir byung (la)  
 bde \_\_\_\_\_ ba \_\_\_\_\_ bsam 'grub kyi gsung skad.

*steng phyogs lha yul nas*

*g.yu 'brug sngon mo zhig ldir byung (2x)*

*g.yu 'brug sngon mo ma yin te*

*bla ma'i gsung skad cig yin no*

*g.yu 'brug sngon mo ma yin no*

*bde ba bsam 'grub kyi gsung skad.*

From the the world of gods above  
 The blue turquoise dragon/thunder sprang. (2x)  
 It was not the blue turquoise dragon/thunder.  
 It was the exalted speech of the lama.  
 It was not the blue turquoise dragon/thunder.  
 It was the exalted speech of Dewa Samdup<sup>70</sup>

*gur de rgya gur ni dkar mo'i*

*steng shong gi nang na*

*mi chen nye rang bzhugs pa yi*

*dga' ba la gzigs ang*

*bde ba bsam 'grub bzhug pa yi*

*skyid nyams la gzigs ang*

In the upper space of  
 The broad white pavillion,  
 Behold how happily your highness resides.  
 Behold how comfortably Dewa Samdup resides.

---

<sup>70</sup> I have not been able to identify this lama, but he is clearly connected to the Drukpa lineage.

*rtsig pa ma brtsigs pa'i*

*gser gyi cha 'grig pa'i nang na (2x)*

*dri ma ma phog pa yi*

*she dkar gyi mchod rten*

Inside the pair of golden walls

Not built (by human hands). (2x)

Stands a stainless, flawless,

White crystal stupa.

*dben 'dum shel dkar mchod rten la*

*srog shing tsan dan gyi sdong po*

*srog shing tsn dan gyi sdong po la*

*snyan dar bkra shis kha btags*

The re-unification white crystal stupa

Has a central pole of sandal wood.

On the central pole of sandal wood

Is an auspicious white scarf .

*snyan dar brka shis kha btags la*

*ri mo bkra shis btags brgyad*

*kha btags 'jol song zer na'ng*

*ri mo 'jol mdo go mi 'dug*

The auspicious white scarf is designed with

Eight auspicious symbols.

Even if the white scarf get loose

The lucky signs will not degrade.

***rgya nag nor bu gling (China, the Country of Gems)*** (LYL: 117-119)

As sung by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

## Rhythmic cycle 3

rgya - (la) na - (la)g nor bu gling du  
 phu - (lu)n tsho - (lo)gs ma - (la)m rgyal 'dra ba

<sup>3</sup>  
 nor bu 'tshal du ma song(2x)  
 rtsab rang gi rtse la bskyod

***rgya nag nor bu gling du******nor bu 'tshal du ma song (2x)******phun tshogs rnam rgyal 'dra ba******rtsab rang gi rtse la bskyod.***

Don't go in search of wish fulfilling gems

In China, the country of gems. (2x)

Like Phuntsog Namgyal <sup>71</sup>

Go from the bottom to the top.

<sup>71</sup> King from about 1740 to 1760 (Francke 1907: 120)

*'brug chen hang sgra che byung*

*'brug chung stong sgra chung byung*

*'ja' de kha dog legs po*

*nyi ma'i shar la bskyod song*

*phun tshog rnam rgyal 'dra ba*

*rtsab rang gi rtse la bskyod song.*

The thundering of the large dragon is high.

The thundering of the small dragon is less.

The rainbow, having beautiful colour,

Went towards the east, where the sun rises.

Similarly, Phuntsog Namgyal

Went from the bottom to the top.

*bkra shis gtams pa'i nang la*

*ser mo nas kyi bang mdzod*

*bkra shis gtams pa'i nang na*

*sngon mo nas kyi bang mdzod.*

The house filled with auspiciousness

Has the treasure of a warehouse.

The house filled with auspiciousness

Has the treasure of a warehouse from the sky.

*zin pa med pa'i nor la*

*bkra shi gsum gsum mchod*

*zin pa med pa'i nor la*

*g.yas chang gsum gsum mchod ang.*

To the unceasing wealth

Offer blessings thrice for prosperity

To the unceasing wealth

Offer auspicious wine thrice.

*da ci mtsham gyi rmi lam*

*rmi lam bzang po zhig mthong*

*zhag bzang mtshan gyi rmi lam*

*rmi lam bzang po zhig mthong.*

The dream saw last night

Was a dream of good omen.

The dream of auspicious day

Was a dream of an auspicious sign.

*dpon po bzang mjal ba'i*  
*mjal ba'i mjal dar mthong*  
*zhag bzang mtshan gyi rmi lam*  
*rmi lam bzang po zhig mthong.*

(In the dream) the noble lord was seen

Offering a *khatag*.

Phuntsog Namgyal was seen

Offering a *khatag*.

*dpon po bzang po'i sku gdung*  
*sku gdung shel dkar mchod rten*  
*phun tshog rnam gyal gyi sku gddung*  
*sku gdung shel dkar mchod rten.*

The remains of the noble lord

Are in the crystal white stupa.

The remains of Phuntsog Namgyal

Are in the crystal white stupa.

*srog shing tsan dam gyi sngon po la*

*snyan dar bkra shis kha btags*

*snyan bkra shis kha btags la*

*ri mo bkra shi btags brgyad.*

The crystal white stupa containing the remains has

A pole of sandalwood.

The pole is decorated with an auspicious *khatag*

On which designs of eight auspicious symbols are drawn.

***dpal ldan bla ma'i g.yas zur na***

**On the Right Side of the Glorious Teacher** (LYL: 120-121)

As sung to the tune of *rten 'brel lnga pa D*

by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

*dpal ldan bla ma'i g.yas zur na*

*kha btags tshon can dum spung zhig* (2x)

A heap of coloured scarf is piled up

On the right side of the glorious teacher. (2x)

*bla chen mkhyen mtshams pa mkhyen* (2x)

*de kun la pho mdud gsum gsum zhig rol*

*de la yan mdud gsum gsum rol*

Oh! Glorious Lama, meditator (2x)

Knot them thrice.

Knot them thrice for prosperity.

*dpyid gsum dpyid kar chu sna 'dzoms* (2x)

*dpon po dang nya chung gser mig dang 'dra*

*dpon bzang gsod nams nya chung gser mig dang 'dra*

*dpon bzang bsod nams nya chung gser mig 'dra*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar pa dang 'dra*

*ya sha dga' rten 'bral 'grig pa dang 'dra*

During the three months of spring (2x)

Water of three different origin meet

The lord is like a small golden fish

The noble lord Sonam is like a small golden fish

It is as if an esteemed sun of pleasure has risen

It is as if auspicious things have occurred.

*dbyar gsum dbyar khar rtsa sna ru 'dzoms (2x)*

*dpon po dang ser chen me tog dang 'dra*

*dpon bzang bsod nams ser chen me tog 'dra*

*ya sha skyid po'i nyi ma shar pa dang 'dra*

*ya sha dga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dang 'dra*

Various kinds of grass have come together (2x)

During the three months of summer

The lord is like a yellow flower

The noble lord Sonam is like a yellow flower

It is as if the esteemed sun of pleasure has risen

It is as if the esteemed sun of auspicious things has occurred.

*dgun gsum dgun kha gans sna ru 'dzoms (2x)*

*dpon po dang gangs ri dkar po dang 'dra*

*dpon bzang bsod nams gans ri dkar po 'dra*

*ya sha skyid nyi ma shar pa dang 'dra*

*ya sha dga' ba'i rten 'brel 'grig pa dang 'dra*

Various types of grains come together. (2x)

During this three months of autumn

The lord is like an warehouse of grains.

The noble lord Sonam is like a warehouse of grains.

It is as if the esteemed sun of pleasure has risen.

It is as if the esteemed sun of auspicious things has occurred.

***bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa –The Auspicious Marvels (LYL:122)***

by Ali Mahmud and Tsering Angchuk Ralam 18 August 2009

Rhythmic cycle 1

bkra shis (la 'bras) phun sum tshogs pa bde ldan  
ma bzhengs (la) lhun du grub yod tshang sras

2  
dka - (la)r bzo'i skyi - (li)d tshal (la) bkra  
nyi - (li) ma'i pho - (lo) brang (la) ma

3  
shis phun sum tshogs pa (la) bde ldan dkar  
bzhengs lhun du grub yod tshang sras nyi - (li)

4  
bzo'i skyi - (li)d tshal (la)  
ma'i pho - (lo) brang

***bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa***

***bde ldan dkar bzo'i skyid tshal***

***ma bzhengs lhun du grub yod***

***tshang sras nyi ma'i pho brang***

In the heaven-like white orchard,

Endowed with auspiciousness,

The castle of the sun-like goddess Sraswati

Is miraculously formed without being built.

*dgung gsal nam mkha'i klong na*

*nyi zla'i gdugs dang land byung*

*ngo mtshar dga'i ba'i ltad mo*

*zab khang ka ba zung ldan*

In the depth of the clear sky

The wonderful and pleasurable looking

Building of twin pillar

Stand as if parasols of sun and moon.

*nang na seng ge'i khri steng*

*gnya' btsan po'i gdung rgyud*

*chos rgyal tse dpal yum sras*

*sku tshe bskal brgyar brtan cig*

On the lion throne inside

Sits the lineage of Nyatri Tsanpo.

The dharma king Tsepal,<sup>72</sup> his wife and son,

May live for hundreds of eons.

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<sup>72</sup> Tsepal Namgyal, 1790-1841, was the last king of independent Ladakh (Francke 1907: 128).

*ljon shing star ga'i steng na*

*'dab chags pho mo'i gsung skad*

*'og ga stag shar gzhon pa*

*bde skyid dga' ba'i glu dbyungs*

From the walnut tree above

Voices of birds, both male and female, come.

Below it are the gathered youth

Singing melodious songs out of pleasure.

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