

DMU RDO: A POWERFUL HERO AND
MOUNTAIN DEITY

G.yung 'brug (Independent Scholar) and Rin chen rdo rje
(University of Virginia)

ABSTRACT

Dmu rdo (Rgyas bzang dialect: mɜ̃ d̪ɑ̃) accounts were frequently heard in Rgyas bzang (Jizong) Village, Kha mdo (Shuizi) Township, Rong brag (Danba) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China in 2010. An account of a pilgrimage to Dmu rdo in 1993 is given, along with a Dmu rdo story in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and in English translation.

KEY WORDS

Danba, Dmu rdo, heroes, Murdo, Rong brag, Rgyas bzang

INTRODUCTION

Rgyas bzang (Jizong) Village, Kha mdo (Shuizi) Township, Rong brag (Danba) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China is home to fifty-five households (forty-nine Tibetan households; six Han Chinese¹ households) and has a total population of 250. Villagers cultivate barley, potatoes, wheat, peas, prickly ash (Sichuan pepper), apples, English walnuts, pears, and corn. Rgyas bzang villagers and residents of nearby Khrimis ri (Changna) and La rgyab (Najiao) villages speak nearly the same distinctive Tibetan dialect.

G.yung 'brug (b. 1985) provides an account of a pilgrimage he and his parents made to Dmu rdo² in 1993 when he was eight years old. A Dmu rdo story is also presented in the International Phonetic Alphabet and in English translation.

Coincidentally, G.yung 'brug was at Dmu rdo Mountain at the time Samten Karmay (b. 1936) visited Gyalrong (Rgyal rong), who later wrote 'The Cult of Mount Murdo in Gyalrong' (1996).³ Karmay does not, however, give an

¹ The families officially classified as Han have lived in the village for two or three generations. They speak the local language fluently (and at home), engage in the same religious activities as locals classified as Tibetan, have both Chinese and Tibetan names, and marry both those classified as Han and Tibetan.

² We were told about a collection of Dmu rdo stories (presented in Chinese and Tibetan languages) published by the Sichuan Nationalities Culture Press in Chengdu. However, we were unable to locate a copy of this book or further verify its existence.

³ An earlier, very short, imaginative travel account of a visit to Dmu rdo was written by Edgar (1924:28-29):

account of Dmu rdo's origins. He notes:

The use of the term 'birthday' (*'khrungs skar*)⁴ for the celebration of the mountain is unusual. It is not mentioned in the guide of the Sangye lingpa [Sangs rgyas gling pa]. In my opinion, it is a reflection of the folktales in which people tell that such-and-such a mountain is born, married, has children and goes through adventures and conflicts.

The similarities between A myes sgo ldong (based on the summary account given in Prins 2007:203-204) and Dmu rdo (as given in this paper) are striking – both boys have insatiable appetites and for this reason are abandoned in the forest. Later, a parent returns to the forest to find the hero and persuades him to return to his home to defeat a demon. When the hero agrees and returns he demands a huge meal, which he is provided, and defeats the demon. It should be noted, however, that G.yung 'brug found no one in Rgyas bzang Village who had heard of A myes sgo ldong.

The name Murdo (Dmu rdo) means the "Stone of Satan" and the worship and homage would therefore be offered to appease his anger. It is said to be the reason of the peculiar virginity girdles common in Badi and Bawang. The god, I was told, claims the maidens and this girdle is the outward sign of his ownership.

⁴ Rgyas bzang residents use the honorific *tɕɛ rɨ̃* to refer to the birthday of Dmu rdo, reincarnation lamas, and the Buddha. The term *tɕɛ dɕe* (*skyes skar*) is used to refer to an ordinary person's birthday.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dmu rdo⁵ Mountain is the abode of Dmu rdo, arguably the chief mountain deity in the Rgyal rong area, as attested to by a number of oral and written accounts. Dmu rdo Mountain is also known as G.yung drung ri bo dbus rtse, Sku lha dbang phyug ri bo, and Rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro ma'i 'dus gnas (Karmay 1996:1; Sang rgyas gling pa 2005:375).

Liu (2009), Xu (2009), and Lin (2008) all relate brief, mythical accounts of the deity's successes in battle, which, they agree, gave rise to the eminence and supremacy of Dmu rdo in the region. In contrast, Karmay (1996:10) explains the historicity of the creation of Mount Dmu rdo as a *gnas ri* 'holy mountain' that required prophecy and appearance of *gter ston* 'textual treasure revealers' to uncover concealed books and objects, a circumambulation route, identification of traces of early dwellers along the circumambulation path, and a designated date for circumambulation.

Karmay (1996:13) states that despite the recognition of Dmu rdo as a 'pure' *gnas ri* in a guide of Dmu rdo Mountain by Sangs rgyas gling pa, contemporary Rgyal rong people revere Dmu rdo as both a *gnas ri* and the abode of a *yul lha* 'local deity', as is the case with A myes rma chen.⁶ Dmu rdo is venerated to purify one's bad deeds in previous rebirths and meanwhile, as a *yul lha*. Dmu rdo is also

⁵ IPA (International Phonetic Alphabetic) symbols are used to record certain of the Rgyas bzang Tibetan dialect, Wylie for transcriptions of literary Tibetan, and *pinyin* for Chinese terms. The term 'Shar dkyil rgyal mo dmu rdo' is used by Rgyas bzang villagers when praying to this mountain deity. Local people are unable to explain how the prefix *shar dkyil rgyal mo* 'middle east queen' relates to Dmu rdo.

⁶ Located in Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southeastern Qinghai Province, A myes Rma chen/ Rma rgyal spom ra ranks fourth among the nine creator-deities (*srid pa chags pa'i lha dgu*) of Tibet.

consulted for mundane affairs.

Locals circumambulate the mountain and conduct offering rituals to celebrate the '*khrungs skar* 'birthday' of Dmu rdo on the tenth day of the Horse Month and particularly in the Horse Year. Karmay states (1996:14) that Dran pa nam mkha'⁷ was born in a Horse Year⁸ and visited Dmu rdo Mountain, as is the case with Mount Ti se.⁹ The Horse Year is considered the best year for circumambulating both mountains. Likewise, according to Karmay, in the Rnying ma tradition, because Padmasambhava was born in the Year of the Monkey, Rnying ma adherents celebrate rituals on the tenth day of a month, or in the Monkey Month, and particularly in the Monkey Year. The same pattern was followed in both cases. Karmay thus suggests that locals mistook the birthday of Dran pa nam mkha' for that of Dmu rdo.

Kar+ma rgyal mtshan (2005) includes a short prayer dedicated to Dmu rdo by Bai ro tsa na,¹⁰ *The Merits from Circumambulating Dmu rdo Mountain* by Sang rgyas gling pa, and a guide to Dmu rdo Mountain by Byang chub rdo rje (in three parts). The section entitled *Introduction of Merits from Circumambulating Dmu rdo Mountain* states that merit earned from continual circumambulation of the mountain in

⁷ A renowned master of the Bon tradition; one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples; the Master of Bai ro tsa na (Vairocana).

⁸ A Tibetan calendar that features a cycle of twelve years and twelve months in a year, each (month or year) named for one of twelve animals—mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig.

⁹ Located in western Tibet, it is also known as Mount Kailash/ Gangs rin po che.

¹⁰ Vairocana. See Schaeffer (2000) for a detailed treatment of this important Tibetan translator who lived during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde'u btsan, r 755-797) and was an important disciple of Padmasambhava.

a non-Horse Month or non-Horse Year is equivalent to reciting the Six Sacred Syllables 700 million times; a single circumambulation in the Horse Month of a year is the equivalent of reciting the Six Sacred Syllables 1.2 billion times; and a single circumambulation in the Horse Month of the Year of the Horse equals holding a Stong mchod 'Thousand-fold Offering Ritual' and reciting the Six Sacred Syllables 1.3 billion times.

Btsan lha ngag dbang et al. (2003) includes the accounts outlined above in Kar+ma rgyal mtshan (2005). The exception is that Btsan lha ngag dbang et al. (2003) provides an introduction of the major temple at the foot of Dmu rdo Mountain. The sketchy introduction suggests that a thousand circumambulations of Dmu rdo Mountain in one's lifetime is best and that 113 times is the minimum.

According to a consultant cited by Xu (2009:14), Dmu rdo Mountain should be circumambulated at least three times in one's lifetime—the first time to bring blessings to one's father, the second time for one's mother, and the third time for one's self.

Liu's examination of Tibetan pilgrimage in Danba (2009:55) states that Rgyal rong or Rgyal mo tsha ba rong is named after Dmu rdo/ Shar rgyal mo Mountain, its surrounding geographical shape, and the Rgyal mo rngul chu, the major river in the Rgyal rong area. Liu (2009:56) also describes three different circuits around Dmu rdo Mountain. The shortest route runs around Dmu rdo Temple and its immediate vicinity, the second goes only to the summit, and the third is all the way along the foot of Dmu rdo Mountain without ascending the mountain.

Liu's study of folk narratives of Dmu rdo Mountain and fertility and its role in worship (2009:41-42) mentions the issue of Dmu rdo's gender. He points out that few scholars think the deity is female, as suggested by the full name (Shar rgyal mo dmu rdo)—the majority, including Rgyal rong people, agree that the deity is male.

Karmay (2005:322) asserts that mountains are understood as the abodes of male deities while nearby lakes

are seen as that of their goddess consorts. However, there are certain examples of female deities residing in mountains, such as A ma Sman btsun and A ma Zo/ Zor dgu in eastern A mdo and Rdzong A ye De'u in western Khams, challenging the notion that all mountains are male deities.

PILGRIMAGE TO MOUNT DMU RDO

Many boys beg their parents for candy, new clothes, and toys, but Rgyas bzang children want to grow up quickly, so they can visit Dmu rdo Mountain to see the hero featured in stories told by village elders. When children are naughty, parents say "Don't be naughty, or we won't take you to Dmu rdo Mountain." Villagers believe seven year old boys should circumambulate Dmu rdo Mountain on the tenth day of the seventh lunar month—Dmu rdo's birthday. Dmu rdo gives power that makes boys brave, honest, and good men. Evil avoids you once you visit Dmu rdo Mountain.

On Dmu rdo's birthday, my parents, eighteen other villagers, and I made a pilgrimage to Dmu rdo Mountain. We left home at seven a.m. Father dressed me in an unusual way—I had a red cloth band around my head which was about three centimeters wide and thirty centimeters long. Though the weather was already hot, I wore a winter robe, and a Tibetan knife with a pair of ivory chopsticks encased in the sheath hung from my sash. Tibetan boots made me hotter. I found other boys dressed like me when my parents and I met the other pilgrims at the village entrance just before we all set off together.

We reached Dmu rdo Temple, situated at the foot of the mountain, at about noon. I wondered why we were walking to Dmu rdo Temple when many cars passed by. Father held my hand tightly because he was worried the cars might hit me. Villagers never rode. Father said that if we rode, it had no meaning because we should walk when on pilgrimages. The Buddha and the mountain deity would think we were not sincere and would not grant our wishes if

we rode—the more hardship the more merit. Those in cars were city dwellers and Chinese. People who lived in the mountains walked to Dmu rdo Temple and then climbed Dmu rdo Mountain.

Countless people were around Dmu rdo Temple. It was my first time to see so many people. I ran toward the crowd but Father caught me and said that some children had gotten lost in this festival in the last three years and he didn't want to lose his son. Our group wanted to prostrate to the Dmu rdo image but we couldn't move forward because of the crowd. Finally we gave up, because our destination was still far away. Father and two men from our group hung *rlung rta* 'prayer flags'¹¹ on the *la btsas* by Dmu rdo Temple.

Our group continued on and when we passed a village, an old man offered us tea and candy when he learned we were going to Dmu rdo Mountain. He gave Father a bag of wheat flour and asked him to offer it to Dmu rdo. There were two groups on pilgrimage to Dmu rdo Mountain in front of us and another group was not far behind.

We met about 200 people who had visited Dmu rdo Mountain and were returning home. Father told me that about 600 people visit Dmu rdo Mountain every year. There is another route to Dmu rdo Mountain for Bon believers. We could not see them except from the top of Dmu rdo Mountain. I then realized why some of our group members

¹¹ This term may refer to square pieces of paper about six centimeters square (size varies) imprinted with a horse in the center bearing a wish-fulfilling gem and a tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon in the four corners in various Tibetan areas. However, in the local context relevant to this paper, *rlung rta* refers to pieces of white, green, and red cloth (about twenty centimeters long and twelve centimeters wide) that feature images from wood blocks of a horse in the center bearing a wish-fulfilling gem. Scriptures are featured around the horse.

had disappeared.

It was already dark when our group reached Nor pu phug, the halfway point to Dmu rdo Mountain. There are several large caves, each about one hundred square meters in area. These caves are considered Bai ro tsa na's meditation places. According to local accounts, he came to Rgyal mo tsha ba rong for about sixteen years to meditate and spent much of this time in the vicinity of Dmu rdo Mountain.

We luckily found a vacant cave. Father told us to rest there and then he and another man went to fetch water from a mountain spring. The women made beds with our cloth bags and clothes. We had brought butter tea, *rtsam pa*, bread, pork, and wheat liquor. We had a nice meal. I wore my winter robe when it was time to sleep. Boys slept at the front of the cave with the men. There were no blankets for us. We boys made a big fire, sat around it, and then went to sleep.

The next day we reached grassland with many stupas along both sides of the road. Father said Bai ro tsa na made 108 stupas there in one night. We scattered auspicious wheat seeds to the stupas as an offering.¹² After we passed the stupas, Father and elders prostrated to a *la btsas* where many people were burning *bsang*, circumambulating, and hanging wind horses on the prayer flags.

Our group chanted Skyabs 'gro:¹³

Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o
Sangs rgyas la skyabs su mchi'o

¹² The seeds are taken from a box on the third floor of the home, where grain is stored, and put in a small cloth bag, and then referred to as 'auspicious seed'.

¹³ Literally 'taking refuge' (in the lama, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), a short scripture chanted before reciting Buddhist prayers or longer scriptures.

Chos la skyabs su mchi'o
Dge 'dun la skyabs su mchi'o

and asked the boys to prostrate to Dmu rdo Mountain. We followed, chanting, prostrating, and praying to Dmu rdo La btsas as we passed along a narrow rocky path to Dmu rdo. I was told bad people would fall into the valley as they walked along this path.

Father handed me auspicious wheat seeds, which I scattered to Dmu rdo La btsas. Money, clothes, candy, and wind horses were inside the *la btsas*. Mothers gave boys *kha btags*¹⁴ to offer Dmu rdo La btsas. I offered mine and prayed that I would have power in the future.

More than a hundred people were circumambulating Dmu rdo La btsas. From atop Dmu rdo Mountain, we saw a lake changing from green to blue to green near Dmu rdo La btsas. Those who circumambulate the lake once will remain human in their next life.

Several nomad families lived near the lake. It was my first time to see yaks.

One of our group members felt dizzy and we thus did not visit the lake but returned home. On the way back, we visited a stupa that had sprung up in a place where Dmu rdo had rested. I tried to understand Dmu rdo's magic power but I failed, because my little brain couldn't figure it out.

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By 2010, I had visited Dmu rdo Temple five times on Dmu rdo's birthday. My most recent visit was on the seventh day of the first lunar month in 2009, when I went with my younger brother. We left home at about eight a.m. and walked to Shuizi Township Town, which we reached at about nine-thirty a.m. We then hired a taxi to Dmu rdo Temple for fifteen RMB (one way).

We reached the temple at around ten a.m. My

¹⁴ Tibetan ceremonial scarf.

younger brother offered *bsang* at the *la btsas* by the temple, and hung wind horses by the temple. There were a few people circumambulating the temple.

A monk was chanting beside the *la btsas* as people offered *bsang*. Visitors asked the monk to give them *srung mdud*¹⁵ and asked such questions as: "Where should I go to earn money?" "When can my son get a job?" "What's the best time to hold a wedding?" The monk used his thumb to quickly move beads on this prayer-bead string, closed his eyes, and gave an answer a couple of minutes later. Once satisfied with the monk's response, they put money in a box by the monk. My younger brother and I asked the monk for about twenty *srung mdud* for our family and relatives, put a total of ten RMB in his box, and thanked him when he gave them to us.

We left Dmu rdo Temple in a taxi after an hour of circumambulating and prostrating to the Dmu rdo image. On the way back to the township town, I asked my younger brother what he had prayed for. He said he had asked Dmu rdo for power, and to help him pass exams to get a government job (which he later got). I feel Dmu rdo really does have power to encourage people to do what they want.

¹⁵ A *srung mdud* is a red or yellow string about thirty centimeters long. A lama, monk, or *sgom pa* (yogin, meditator, ascetic) uses a conifer twig to flick holy water on such strings and blows on the strings while chanting. Such strings are believed to bring good luck and prevent sickness, and are worn around the neck.

THE STORY

Background

When a person's honesty is in question, e.g., regarding the truthfulness of something that was said or if there is suspicion of theft, the person being questioned might say, "If I am lying (If I stole something), I swear I'll go to Dmu rdo Mountain La btsas a hundred times." This statement has such power that the person is generally believed. The efficacy of visiting Dmu rdo Mountain Lab btsas a hundred times is seen as equivalent to visiting Lha sa a hundred times.

I learnt this story (below) from my paternal grandmother, A rtse (1940-1993). I liked to listen to elders tell stories when I was a child. When villagers finished dinner, they visited homes with good storytellers. Children particularly liked to listen to stories at night, and dared not go outside to the toilet when elders told ghost stories. People sat around the *ʔdza bʈ*¹⁶ and listened to the storyteller, who sat on a cow or sheep skin with a bottle of liquor near the head of the *ʔdza bʈ*. Before the story began, the storyteller offered three offerings of liquor. If the storyteller was female, she held prayer beads and counted the beads while telling the stories. If a man told stories, he held a tobacco pipe. When he told the climactic part, he frequently stopped and smoked, heightening interest in his story, causing children to

¹⁶ The *ʔdza bʈ* is one of three hearthstones that has the shape of an upside-down capital J with the hook facing up and turning to the left (inside). This stone is the *kə te* 'upper place' *ʔdza bʈ*. The other two stones are called *kə ɲdzʈ* 'lower place'. The hearth (including all three stones) is also called *ʔdza bʈ*. A pot is placed at the convergence of the three *ʔdza bʈ*. The *ʔdza kɔ* is a small shelf on the upper part of the stone, just before it turns to the left. The *ʔdza kɔ* is about two and a half centimeters long and about three centimeters wide. Food is placed here for the deities.

impatiently ask him what happened next.

Several people often came to my home to listen to stories with candy for Grandmother. We offered tea to the audience when Grandmother finished. Listeners commented by criticizing story characters and drank liquor. However, when television came to the village in the early twenty-first century, people lost interest in storytelling.

DMU RDO'S BIRTH AND POWER

Several centuries ago, under the deities' protection, all was well in the mystical, auspicious place known as Rgyal mo tsha ba rong, where the teachings of the Buddha were strictly observed by local Tibetans. Many old stone towers were multi-angled. Some had four, others had eight, and still others had thirteen faces. This famous place of local kings and heroes was also known as a 'flower of the Earth'.

One day, a Tibetan woman went into the forest to cut firewood. That day, feeling more tired than usual, she lay down on a bright green rock under a towering tree. She fell asleep and dreamed of a dark sky full of black clouds from which emerged a dragon that glanced at her. Filled with fear, she awakened. And thus it was that she later gave birth to a son who was called Dmu rdo.

When Dmu rdo grew up, his mother could not satisfy his voracious appetite. His appetite was larger than that of eight people. His mother then sent him to a primeval forest on Dmu rdo Mountain where he gained great power. Thanks to the deities' teachings, he became a man who was immensely strong and very clever. Hunters in the forest saw him run faster than the wild animals he was hunting; some said he could run as fast as the wind.

One day, the villagers were threatened by ghosts and demons. Consequently, the tribal chief sent boys and girls every day for the demons and ghosts to eat. All the local people felt they were in terrible danger and began to discuss Dmu rdo's supernatural abilities. Certain villagers

finally suggested to the tribal chief that they ask Dmu rdo to deal with the demons and ghosts.

The chief then asked Dmu rdo's mother to invite her son back to the village.

Dmu rdo's mother brought eighteen pig's ears, ten pig's legs, eight pig's tails, and *rtsam pa* to the forest. Standing on the bright green rock where she had given birth to her son, she called, "Dmu rdo!"¹⁷

There was no reply. All she could see were piles of animal bones. Then she sang the song she had sung to Dmu rdo when he was a little child before she sent him to the forest. Suddenly, a man flew to her from a mountain peak and acknowledged her as his mother. She wept while embracing him and related everything that had happened in the village.

Dmu rdo said she should tell the chief to prepare plenty of food for his arrival and added that he would visit the village three days later. His mother returned to the village and, three days later, Dmu rdo appeared atop the highest stone tower in the village. He shouted three times and the clouds in the sky vanished. He then flew into the chief's home, ate the food that they had prepared, and told the villagers that they shouldn't fear the demons and ghosts.

After he finished eating, he gathered his bow and arrows and flew to the demons and ghosts. He fought with Bru mo byid bdun, the leader of the ghosts, for one whole night before he finally killed her. The other ghosts then fled.

Thereafter, the village resumed its normal life. Villagers were grateful to Dmu rdo and sincerely wanted him to live in the village with them, but he had to return to Dmu rdo Mountain. However, Dmu rdo agreed to spend the New Year holidays with the villagers each year. From then

¹⁷ Daniel Berounský comments: "*Dmu* are heavenly beings represented by the dragon and *rdo* is the stone/ rock in the story."

on, every day before the New Year, villagers painted the outside of their houses with white soil to signal that it was time for Dmu rdo to visit. This is why every household in the Rgyal mo tsha ba rong area whitewashes the outside of their houses with paint made from a special white soil.

THE TEXT IN IPA

m3 dæ

- ¹χæ riŋ χæ riŋ dza la naŋ ʔo ge ka tʂæ̃ la də dza mɔh̃ ʔ tsʰa
wa roŋ də ŋda di ŋdu di tʂə bu ʃai tʂʰaŋ sə
²pəh̃ ʔ mbu ge tʂʰoŋ də nə sa tʂʰau zi zao ta tʂaŋ sə
³pəh̃ ʔ ji sa tʂʰo pə mbu ge tʂʰoŋ tʰao so kʰa noŋ moŋ ji s3 la
kʰa z3 d3 z3 dʒah tʂ3 saŋ
⁴dzei budon pa wɔ tʂe sʂ ge sa tʂʰo je tʂʰã s3
⁵ta rĩ soŋ ne de ndzaŋ liŋ d3ŋ ge mb3 due je s3 la ja
⁶niã tʂu dza la p3 p3 m3ŋ de dʒi d3 la χo ʕiŋ tʂa ŋg3 tʂʰaŋ
se
⁷de niã la d3 d3 ge χæ la doŋ me tʂo tʂʰã s3
⁸m3 de ʕe la zi zao saŋ tʂʰã s3 tæ m3 d3 je du de dʒi diŋ ʕe
tʂʰaŋ s3
⁹ji tʂu mɔ̃ r3 niŋ d3 mɔŋ tʂu la m3 l3ŋ te tʕi meŋ tʂʰaŋ s3
¹⁰m3 l3ŋ loŋ n3 d3 ndzɔ de tʕi d3 tʂæ ne s3 loŋ tʂo
tʂʰaŋ s3 ¹¹ŋg3 d3 m3 la nʒ3 n3 ndʒ3 pue tʂ3 j3 tʂʰaŋ s3
¹²p3 m3ŋ d3 tʂe la m3ŋ pa sa tʂʰaŋ s3
¹³d3 ge gu dʒao d3 p3 r3 tʂʰ3 gi de tʕi tʂʰ3 tsʰaŋ s3
¹⁴tʂʰ3 gi la d3 m3 du de tʂʰaŋ s3
¹⁵m3 du j3j3 dʒa s3ŋ d3 sã mi g3 so dʒ3 tʰæ nliŋ kʰue ge ma
gæ g3 su me tʂʰo tʂʰaŋ s3
¹⁶m3 du g3 sa tʰæ dʒ3 nloŋ m3 ndo dʒa ge sa tʰæ dʒ3 sou
tʂʰaŋ s3
¹⁷m3 dæ gi ma gæ na tʰao s3 m3 tʂʰaŋ s3
¹⁸tʰæ nliŋ d3 m3 dæ d3 χæ la ma gã m3 m3ŋ tʂʰ3 so d3 dæ

- ts^hɔ̃ doŋ ge la ɕe tɕ^həŋ sɜ
19 nən ʈɔ t^həŋ rĩ dɜ ge ka tɕǣ la
20 mɜ dɐ ge nən ʈɔ gɜ tɕɜ ɕe tɕɜ mɜ gɜ tɕ^he tɕ^həŋ sɜ
21 la ɣɔ ɕoŋ dɜɜ ge nɜ tɕ^hu tɕu ge mɜ dɐ
22 ŋǣ tɕɐ dɜa lah^ˀ, tɕəŋ bɔ la dɔ ŋtɕi doŋ sɐ mən gə ŋɛ jə
tɕ^həŋ sɔ
23 t^hæ liŋ dɔ tɕəŋ bæ gə sɐ mən la pə rə tɕ^həh^ˀ gi doŋ pə mən
tɕ^həh^ˀ gi ta gə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
24 t^hæ liŋ ji bɔ ruh^ˀ tɕu zə zau tɕe tɕ^həŋ sɔ
25 tæ mɜ dɐ gə tɕə ntɕɔ tɕ^hɔ tɕəŋ sɔ la ʃa tɕ^həŋ sɔ
26 tɕəŋ bæ gə tæ liŋ mɜ dɐ gi ma gæ la zə ʃa ŋgə rɛ sɔ tɕəŋ sɔ
27 mɜ dɐ gi ma gæ gə tsa mbɔ p^he na tɕɐ tɕoŋ dɜa p^he koŋ
tɕə doŋ p^he ndɜɐ dɜa k^hə la la ɣɔ ŋgə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
28 mɜ dɐ gi ma gæ gə dɔ hæ la mɜ dɐ k^hə sɔ gi ʈu dən ntɕiŋ
mɛ dɐ la mpə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
29 gə toŋ sɔ la mpə la moŋ tsə rəh^ˀ siŋ tə lue tɕ^he məh^ˀ mə
tɕ^həŋ sɔ
30 tɕɐ rə bɔ tə moŋ moŋ jah^ˀ tɕ^həŋ sɔ
31 t^hæ liŋ ma gæ gə læ læ jə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
32 mɜ dɐ gə ma gæ tɕ^hɐ tɕ^hɐ siŋ məh^ˀ la læ mə tə kɐ siŋ tə
mp^hai la bə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
33 t^hæ liŋ ma gæ gə mɜ dɐ la ʃa tɕ^həŋ sɔ tɕəŋ bɔ noŋ tsə ndɜɔ
rə la ja la sɔ
34 t^hæ liŋ mɜ dɐ gə ma gæ la ʃa sən sɔ tɕ^həŋ
35 tɕəŋ bæ la sɛ dɔ t^hæ tæ laŋ tɕə bə jə la t^ha tæ ŋa ŋɜ ma saŋ
loŋ tɕəŋ ləŋ bə joŋ mɛ sɔ tɕ^həŋ sɔ
36 ŋə ma saŋ gi kɐ dzau nə mɜ dɐ gi tɕəŋ bɔ loŋ k^ha tiŋ bau
pə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
37 gə ki læ saŋ toŋ siŋ dɔ nən nən ki tɕæ ŋe laŋ ngə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
38 t^hæ liŋ tɕəŋ bæ rɛ ki tɕ^həŋ loŋ ngə tɕ^həŋ sɔ
39 tɕ^həŋ bæ kə ntɕæ tæ laŋ te tɕi jə tɕəŋ sɔ
40 sɛ sɔ t^hæ siŋ tə ntɔ k^hə la ngə tɕ^həŋ ntɕə moŋ ɕæ dæ tə sa
la ɕe tɕ^həŋ sɔ
41 k^ha hɔ rɐ tɕɐ dɔ laŋ tɕe ngə tɕəŋ sɔ
42 t^hæ liŋ tɕəŋ bɔ tə hæ ki doŋ tɕəa ntɕɔ rə tɕəŋ sɔ

⁴³tʃəŋ mə ʃi bə kə mə də la tʃəŋ bə loŋ tsə da tɕʰə saŋ tʃʰaŋ
sə

⁴⁴mə də la ɣɔ lɛ̃ŋ ngə gɛ tʃʰaŋ sə

⁴⁵tʃəŋ mə ʃi bə kə mə də la lə sɬʰ tʃəŋ bə loŋ ŋaŋ ʃə tsə ʃə
tɕʰə sə tʃʰaŋ sə

⁴⁶lu tʰɔ tʰɔ ki taŋ mpɔ loŋ tɕʰaŋ la sɬ ka dzæ siŋ tə mə də kə
la sɬʰ tʃəŋ bə loŋ ʃə tɕʰaŋ sə

⁴⁷tahʰ rɛ soŋ ŋɛ sə laŋ ntʃɔ liŋ dzə məhʰ tsʰa wa roŋ loŋ sɬ
ka lu rɛ rɛ ki dzæ tɕʰaŋ sə

CONCLUSION

Rgyas bzang villagers believe that three brothers became mountain deities, known locally as Tsa ri spun gsum. They reside in Tsa ri Mountain. Five to six hours is required to walk to the top of this mountain from the village. G.yung 'brug has never heard individual names for the three brothers used. Rather, the term Tsa ri spun gsum is used to signify a collective mountain deity.

Tsa ri spun gsum is sacrificed to and help is requested at such times as when there is drought, sickness, livestock are stolen or missing, and before examinations (in the hope Tsa ri spun gsum will help the students score higher on important exams). Tsa ri spun gsum is also asked to punish people who harm a family, e.g., steal a family's livestock.¹⁸

¹⁸ A butter lamp is offered on a large stone in the village where a goat is killed and offered to Tsa ri spun gsum on the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month. The base of this stone—the largest in the village—is about six meters long, stands about eight or nine meters tall, and is about two meters thick. The top of the stone has been chiseled into a circle with a diameter of about one and a half meters. The family seeking redress ascends a path adjacent to the stone,

Elders in a home who feel they are neglected may warn other family members that "Tsa ri spun gsum has eyes," suggesting that the mountain deity will punish them.

In contrast to Tsa ri spun gsum's personal and interventionist roles, Dmu rdo is a cultural-national hero, as indicated in the account below told by G.yung 'brug, based on what he has heard from Rgyas bzang villagers. The story reflects a strong sense of pride in local history (such accounts are passed down orally from one generation to another) and in distinctive local features, i.e., the stone watchtowers and Dmu rdo:

During the time of the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912), over an eight year period, the Qing soldiers fought the Tibetan forces, but only suffered defeat. Many more Qing soldiers were sent and the Qing was close to victory. At this point, the Tibetan soldiers offered *bsang* to Dmu rdo, and asked him for help. The sky then suddenly grew dark and Dmu rdo appeared on a black horse, took out soldiers from his robe pouch, scattered them on the battlefield, and the Qing army was soon defeated.

The Qing could not breach the strong stone watchtowers of the Rgyal rong resistance. They then took some local Rgyal rong villagers to Beijing where the villagers explained how the local resistance fighters got food and water. Armed with this information, the Qing forces poisoned water supplies that flowed to the watchtowers. Soldiers drank the poisoned water, died, and the Qing soldiers were then able to conquer the Rgyal rong area.

places a butter lamp atop it, and requests that the offending family be punished.



Mount Dmu rdo. Photo taken by Dkar bzang nyi ma in 2001 in Spro snang Village, Spro snang Township, Rong brag County.

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

?

ʔdza bt hearthstone (Literary Tibetan ཐབ་རྫོ། *thab rdo*)

ʔdza ko place on the upper hearthstone for offering food to
the Hearth Deity

A

A ma Sman btsun ཨ་མ་སྐྱམ་བཅུན།

A ma Zo/ Zor dgu ཨ་མ་ཟོ་ཟོར་དགུ།

A mdo ཨ་མདོ།

A myes sgo ldong ཨ་མེས་སྐོ་ལྷོང་།

A rtse ཨ་རུཙེ (1940-1993), G.yung 'brug's paternal
grandmother

A ye De'u ཨ་ཡེ་དེ་ལུ།

B

Badi 巴底, a township in Rong brag County; Brag sten བྲག་
སྐྱེང་།

Bai ro tsa na བེ་རོ་ཙ་ན་མ།

Bawang 巴旺

Beijing 北京

Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o ལྷ་མ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

Brag sten བྲག་སྐྱེང་།; Badi 巴底

Bru mo byid bdun བྲུ་མོ་བྱིད་བདུན།

bsang བསང་།

bstan ma བསྟན་མ།

Byang chub rdo rje བྱང་ཅུབ་རྡོ་རྗེ།

C

Changna 长纳

Chengdu 成都

Chos la skyabs su mchi'o ཚོས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆོད།

D

Danba 丹巴; Rong brag རོང་བྲག

Dge 'dun la skyabs su mchi'o དགོ་འདུན་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆོད།

Dkar bzang nyi ma དཀར་བཟང་ཉི་མ།

Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛོལ།

Dmu rdo (m3 dæ, Murdo) དམུ་རྫོ།; Moerduo 墨尔多

Dpa' dbang དཔའ་དབང་།; Bawang 巴旺

Dran pa nam mkha' རྩན་པ་ནམ་མཁའ།

G

G.yung 'brug གཡུང་འབྲུག

G.yung drung ri bo dbus rtse གཡུང་རྩུང་རི་བོ་དབུས་ཚེ།

Ganzi 甘孜

Gar stong གར་སྟོང་།

gnas ri གནས་རི།

H

Han 汉

J

Jizong 吉宗

K

kə ŋdzɤ lower place

kə tɛ upper place

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།

Kha mdo ཁ་མདོ།

Khams ཁམས།

Khrims ri ཁྲིམས་རི།

'khrungs skar འཕྲུངས་སྐར།

L

la btsas ལ་བཅས།

La rgyab ལ་རྒྱལ།

N

Najiao 纳交

Nor pu phug འོ་ཕུ་ཕུག།

Q

Qing 清

R

Rgyal mo tsha ba rong རྒྱལ་མོ་ཚ་བ་རོང་།

Rgyal rong (Gyalrong) རྒྱལ་རོང་།

Rgyas bzang རྒྱས་བཟང་།

Rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro ma'i 'dus gnas རིག་འཛིན་མཁའ་འགྲོ་མའི་
འདུས་གནས།

rlung rta རླུང་རྟ།

RMB renminbi 人民币

Rong brag རོང་བྲག; Danba 丹巴

rtsam pa རུས་པ།

S

Sangs rgyas la skyabs su mchi'o སངས་རྒྱས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆོད།

Sangye lingpa (Sangs rgyas gling pa སངས་རྒྱས་གླིང་པ།)

sgom pa སྐོམ་པ། (meditator)

Shaanxi 陕西

Shuizi 水子

Sichuan Nationalities Culture Press (Sichuan minzu wenhua
chubanshe 四川民族文化出版社)

Sichuan 四川

Sku lha dbang phyug ri bo ལྷ་མ་དབང་ཕུག་རི་བོ།

Skyabs 'gro ལྷ་བས་འགོ།

Spro snang ལྷོ་སྐང་།

Srid pa chags pa'i lha dgu སྲིད་པ་ཚགས་པའི་ལྷ་དགུ། (the nine creator-gods)

T

tɕɛ dʂæ (*skyes skar*) ལྷེས་སྐར།; Rgyas bzang residents use *tɕɛ dʂæ* to refer to an ordinary person's birthday

tɕɛ rɨə Rgyas bzang residents use *tɕɛ rɨə* to refer to the birthday of Dmu rdo, reincarnation lamas, and the Buddha

Ti se ཏི་སེ།

Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan ཁྲི་སྲོང་ལྗེ་བཙུན།)

Tsa ri spun gsum ཙ་རི་སྤུན་གསུམ།

ts^hɔŋ ntə (*srung mdud*) སྤུང་མདུད།