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A Newly-Discovered Manuscript of the Bonpo *Klu 'bum* and its Canonical Transformation

Abstract: Among the thousands of Tibetan manuscripts related to the Bon religion that have come to light in China's Gansu and Sichuan provinces in recent years is a work entitled *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum (PLB)*, the 'Extensive collection from Phenyl concerning the *klu*'. The text, which is a collection of myths and rituals relating to the *klu* spirits that are sometimes conflated with the Indic *nāga* (serpent spirits), is part of the repertoire of a class of Bon priests known as *le'u*. The importance of the Klu Collection to Tibetan religion is illustrated by the fact that it is the only Bon work that is also used by Buddhists. Apart from a few pioneering studies – two of them dating to the nineteenth century – very little research has been carried out on the Klu Collection. The *PLB* is one of two recensions of a hitherto unstudied version of the Collection, of which the other appears in the Bon Canon. This article focuses on the *PLB* manuscript recension. The manuscript contains a number of archaic and local codicological features, while an analysis of its contents suggests that it is an older version than that found in the Bon Canon, which contains quasi-Buddhist features that may have been introduced with a view to aligning it with 'monastic' Bon orthodoxy.

1 Introduction

The *klu* are often regarded as being equivalent to the Indic *nāgas* of South and South-east Asian, in much the same way that the Tibetan *khyung* is often identified with the Indic *garuḍa*. The *nāgas* are serpent spirits that occur widely throughout the region. Nebesky-Wojtkowitz¹ proposes that the Tibetan *klu* were originally indigenous beings that were connected to and later merged with the Indian *nāgas* after the advent of Buddhism. While there is no evidence to suggest that the *klu* are derived directly from Indian beliefs, the current conception of these divinities in Tibet seems to be a fusion of Hindu, Indian Buddhist and indig-

1 Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1956, 29.

enous ideas.² Worship of the *klu* is widespread not only in Tibet proper, but can be found all over the wider Tibetan-speaking area. Many aspects of the form and behaviour of the *klu* that are found in Bonpo sources in particular are likely to represent indigenous ideas, but some of these works are clearly influenced by Indic beliefs concerning *nāgas*.

The best known source concerning the category of Tibetan *klu* is the three-volume *Klu 'bum dkar nag khra*, the 'White, Black and Variegated [volumes of the] Hundred thousand *klu*' (hereafter *Klu 'bum WBV*). This work contains a large number of myths describing how a peaceful world was destabilised because of conflict between the *klu* and other beings due to the offensive actions of the latter, and how a priest was able to dispel the disharmony and restore their relationship by performing an appropriate ritual. There have been a few pioneering studies of the *Klu 'bum*, notably by Anton Schiefner, Berthold Laufer, Marcelle Lalou and Rolf A. Stein. Schiefner's 1881 study offered a German translation of an abridged version of the first volume, and Laufer's work of 1898 the edited text and a German translation of a Buddhist version of the work. Lalou's and Stein's publications³ on the *Klu 'bum* have tended to consider general features of the text or to focus on certain episodes, while Stein in particular also examines continuities between the *Klu 'bum* on the one hand and comparable material in Dunhuang and Naxi manuscripts on the other.

While I was preparing my doctoral dissertation related to the *klu*, Ngag dbang rgya mtsho of Lanzhou University kindly provided me with photographs of a manuscript he had found in the The bo region of eastern Tibet entitled '*Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* (henceforth *PLB*).⁴ The text of this manuscript is quite different from the best-known three-volume *Klu 'bum* that appears in the Bon Canon,⁵ but it corresponds to part of another text, also entitled *Klu 'bum* (hereafter *BLB*, '*Bum bzhi'i klu 'bum*'),⁶ that forms one of four collections ('*bum*) related to four

² Przyluski has suggested that the Chinese dragon and the India *nāga* are both local transformations of certain cultural ideas that were borrowed from prehistoric maritime populations; see Przyluski 1925 and 1938.

³ Lalou 1933 and 1938; Stein 1971; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c.

⁴ Daniel Berounský mentions another text related to the *gnyan*, entitled '*Phen yul rgyas pa gnyan gyi 'bum bzhuḡs s+ho*, 43 folios, manuscript photographed in Thewo (eastern Tibet) by Ngawang Gyatso. See Berounský 2017.

⁵ The first scholars to have carried out research on this work were Anton Schiefner (1881) and Berthold Laufer (1898). Subsequent research has been very limited, although some comparisons of its contents with Dunhuang and Naxi literature have been made by Rolf Stein.

⁶ The full title is *Rnam par dag pa'i 'bum bzhi las gtsang ma'i klu 'bum bzhuḡs so*. *Bon Canon*, vol. 139.

categories of divinities: *Klu 'bum*, *Gtod 'bum*, *Sa bdag 'bum* and *Gnyan 'bum*. Among these, the *Gnyan 'bum* has been discussed briefly in an article by Samten Karmay⁷ and more extensively in two subsequent articles by Daniel Berounský.⁸ The *Sa bdag 'bum* is the subject of a research project currently being pursued by Daniel Berounský and Marc des Jardins. The *Gtod 'bum* and the *Klu 'bum* of the Four Collections, however, have not been the subject of any previous research.

This article will give a general introduction to the newly-discovered *PLB*, highlighting some key ways in which it differs from the best-known text, the three-volume *Klu 'bum* (*Klu 'bum WBV*),⁹ and a preliminary comparison with a canonical work that it resembles most closely.

The *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* is an incomplete text, consisting of 65 folios. There is no colophon, but there is a sentence at the beginning of the text stating 'thus says the [sacred] word'.¹⁰ The work is therefore presented as the teaching of Ston pa Gshen rab mi bo. The title is given as *'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum* on the first folio, but it is in fact always referred to as *Klu 'bum nag po'i yang snying* or *Klu 'bum nag po* throughout the text. In the canonical version of this work, *BLB*, we find that the title of this text is not always consistent either. The title, *Gtsang ma klu yi spang skong g.yung drung theg pa chen po'i mdo*, applies to the content of the first to the fourteenth chapters, after which it seems to end, since there is a colophon. In contrast with the first fourteen chapters, which repeat this title at the end of each chapter, the fifteenth chapter starts with a new title, *Klu 'bum nag po'i yang snying*,¹¹ and the remaining four chapters of this text repeat this new title with only minor variations.¹² It is these five chapters that correspond to the text of *PLB*.

In the present article, the first part of this canonical work will be referred to as *BLB1* and the second, which will be compared to *PLB*, as *BLB2*. Although the numbering of the chapters continues sequentially after *BLB1*, *BLB2* is an independent and complete text, with a new opening. The five chapters with which I shall be concerned here, numbered as chapters fifteen to nineteen, consist of

⁷ Karmay 2010.

⁸ Berounský 2016 and 2017.

⁹ The abbreviation *Klu 'bum WBV* will be used in this article to refer to the well-known three-volume collection known as the White, Black and Variegated (*dkar nag khra*) *Klu 'bum*.

¹⁰ *bka' gsungs ba 'di ni*.

¹¹ See *BLB*, 205.

¹² Chapters sixteen and seventeen give the title *Klu 'bum nag po*; see *BLB*, 212, 218. Chapter nineteen only uses the title *Klu 'bum*, see *BLB*, 338. One exception is that at the end of chapter eighteen the text returns to the first title, that of *Gtsang ma klu'i spang skong*, see *BLB*, 336.

136 pages in total; the colophon that follows chapter nineteen seems to belong to both *BLB1* and *BLB2*.

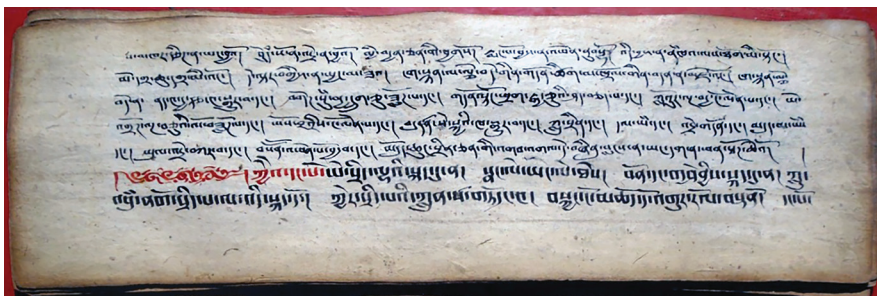


Fig. 1: 'Phen yul rgyas pa'i klu 'bum; The bo, Gansu (photo: Ngag dbang rgya mtsho).

Although it is quite evident that *PLB* and *BLB2* are variants of the same text, there are nevertheless certain differences between the two in terms of orthography, grammar and codicological features. Both texts are written in a poetic form that is found in many other ritual texts. Zhangzhung terms for temple (*hos khang*), water (*skyin 'dangs*), fire (*dmар 'dangs*) and so forth also appear quite frequently in both texts. Both works contain many contracted forms, some of which are quite distinctive, especially in *PLB*, as in the case of the abbreviation for *sa bdag*.¹³ However, in *BLB2* there are fewer misspellings, the orthography used is more formal, and honorific forms appear with greater frequency. As shown in the introduction to the collection of the *Le'u* manuscripts,¹⁴ *PLB* is rich in archaic forms, such as *myi* for *mi*, *dmigs* for *mig*, and *g+ho* for *mgo*, as well as other heterodox spellings (see Fig. 2). The consonant *pa* is often replaced by the consonant *pha* as in the case of *dphung* for *dbung* (see Fig. 3). Moreover, many syllables end with a superabundant 'a. Numerals are often used to replace combinations of letters (see Fig. 4), and certain numerals, such as nine and ten, seem to be unique to *PLB* and other *le'u* texts (see Figs 5, 6).



Fig. 2: The spelling 'phyos instead of the more conventional *bcos* (*PLB*).

¹³ This symbol appears in all the 'Phen yul texts and other *le'u* texts too.

¹⁴ See Tsering Thar and Ngawang Gyatso 2017.

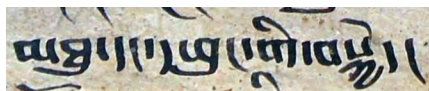


Fig. 3: The spelling *dphung* instead of the more conventional *dpung* (PLB).



Fig. 4: The term *yon bdag* (in red), with the syllable *bdag* represented by a symbol resembling the numeral 3.

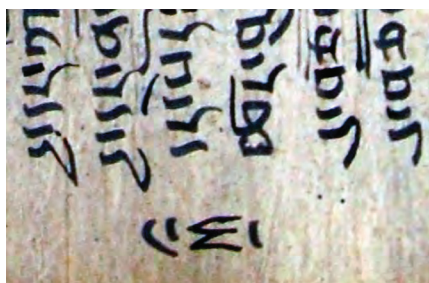


Fig. 5: Marginal folio number 59, with a distinctive symbol representing the figure 9.

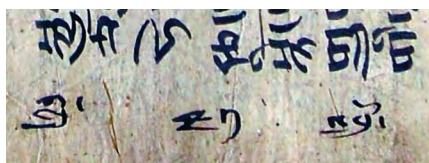


Fig. 6: Marginal folio number 11, with a symbol representing the figure 10 preceding the figure 1 between the syllables *klu* and *'bum* (PLB).

Secondly, the structure and content of the text are simpler and more systematic in *BLB2*. The contents of *PLB*, however, reveal many more flourishes. There are some very interesting parts in *PLB* which cannot be found in *BLB2*, such as a discussion of the distinction between the *klu* and *klu srin*, an incomplete myth about the messenger bird (*'phrin bya*), and a myth about medicine derived from deer.

2 The structure of the text

2.1 *Bam po* and chapters in *PLB* and *BLB2*

PLB is classified mainly by *bam po*, but it also gives some additional *bam po* and chapter numbers, which is quite confusing. For example, there are two subsections within *bam po* four, identified as both chapter ten and *bam po* four, and another subsection is simply named chapter twelve. However, it is quite obvious that only the second *bam po* four is in fact the real ending of this entire section. Later, *bam po* five is identified as both chapter fifteen and *bam po* five. What is more, the section after *bam po* six, which should logically be *bam po* seven, is in fact named chapter eighteen and *bam po* three. It is unclear how these chapter numbers (chapters ten, twelve, fifteen and eighteen) came to be enumerated. Furthermore, there are no *bam po* numbers for the last three sections, those concerning confession, offering medicine and prayer, as well as an incomplete myth about the messenger bird. However, it is not difficult to identify the beginning of each of these sections, because there is a small title sentence introducing it at the beginning of each part. I have therefore named these last three sections simply sections 1, 2 and 3. *BLB2* organises chapters fifteen to nineteen much more clearly, since they are clearly classified into five chapters, without, however, giving a specific *bam po* number.

2.2 The general content and structure of *PLB*

PLB first outlines the general structure of the text in a smaller script (this is not found at all in *BLB2*):

First conjure the *klu*, invite the *klu*, recite the mantra of the *klu*, distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, make the other *klu* offerings to the *klu* community, make the confession, offer medicine, then pray; it is thus that the ritual should be carried out.¹⁵

This step-by-step guide comprises three parts, which can also be considered the general setting of a ritual text: the preliminary part (*sngon 'gro*), which describes

¹⁵ *PLB*, fol. 1^v: *Dang po klu'i srid pa bya ba dang/ spyin+rs (spyang drangs) pa dang/ snyingo (snying po) bskyed pa dang/ klu dang klu srin dbye ba dang/ klu'i tshogs la klu yon 'bul ba dang/ bshags pa bya ba dang/ ding sman gsol ba dang/ smon lam btab pa dang/ de don bya ste/*.

the preparation of the ritual;¹⁶ the main section (*dnegos gzhi*), which comprises the invitation (*spyān 'dren*), the request to be seated (*bzhugs su gsol*), prostration (*phyag 'tshal*), confession (*sdig bshags*) and offering (*mchod 'bul*). The final part is the conclusion (*rjes bya*), which consists of a prayer for good fortune and long life. But some additional elements are also added, such as a means to distinguish differences between the *klu* and *klu srin*. *PLB* follows this step-by-step guide to the letter; moreover, it contains an extra, incomplete myth about the messengers of the *klu* at the end of the text.

However, the text refers not only to one simple ritual performance, but rather an anthology of myths inserted into these how-to guides for ritual performance. For example, *bam po* one covers the invitation of the *klu* and the request for them to be seated by making offerings and reciting the text, but it in fact starts with myths about cosmogony and the *klu*'s origins. Later in the text, the steps regarding prostration and making offerings to all the *klu*, a procedure which takes up 49 of the total 65 folios in the text,¹⁷ include a great number of additional myths. These myths usually comprise three sections: a myth about cosmogony which describes the beginning of the world; the origins of the *klu*, which introduces many different *klu* and their respective abilities; and a distinct ritual narrative which generally entails a story about the *klu* and a human, ending in an independent ritual performance.

In order to establish a clear distinction between these narrated rituals, as opposed to the rituals that are actually performed by the priest, I shall refer to these as 'myth-rituals'. By contrast, the sequence of rituals that are set out in the instructions that feature at the beginning of the text and at intervals throughout it, will be referred to as 'performance-rituals'. This is similar to the black and variegated volumes of the *Klu 'bum WBV*, where each chapter contains a myth with an accompanying ritual, though the focus of the myths and the ritual style are different between the *Klu 'bum* and *PLB*. The individual myth-rituals in *PLB* focus on the construction of the *klu*'s house and on making the different offerings, as well as a prayer for the priest to recite. These myth-rituals are independent of one another, because the context in which the construction of the *klu* house and the offering are described varies from myth to myth. We are made aware of the end of the myth subsection by the inclusion of a few phrases which have been added at the end, paying homage to the *klu*, which take the form of prostration and offerings. This brief description of the prostration and offering part of the ritual, located within the myth subsection is, however, not long enough to consti-

¹⁶ Information about the preparation for the ritual can be found at the beginning of both texts.

¹⁷ It runs from fol. 14^r to fol. 63^r.

tute a full guide to each step of the ritual. It therefore seems more likely that these steps have been inserted into the original myth subsection, rather than the myths being inserted into the steps of the ritual itself. The text could also be considered a collection of complete and independent myths, as we see in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, where there were not these performance-ritual steps added in.

PLB gives a general instruction for ritual-making in small script after this step-by-step guide. This instruction does not pertain to the steps of the performance-ritual, but rather for the individual rituals contained within each myth. It discusses what kind of materials are to be used for constructing the house and making offerings, and also presents the various reasons why people should undertake this ritual, as well as the benefits to be derived from their performance. According to the work of Rolf Stein,¹⁸ the Dunhuang texts similarly show a series of myths with accompanying rituals, but Stein found that these texts do not give any specific ritual instructions at the beginning. *PLB* contains not only the ritual in the myth, but also an instruction at the beginning, though we will find that each individual ritual of each myth does not precisely follow the instructions given, since there are often slight differences in terms of the materials used or the order of making the offering houses.

3 Accounts of multiple *klu* in the mythic narrative of *PLB*

3.1 Origins of the *klu* and relations with humans

According to the step-by-step guide, *bam po* three to *bam po* 'three' (which should in fact be *bam po* seven) should refer to prostration and the offerings to the *klu*. These two parts occupy a good portion of the text, but the main content is taken up by a series of myths. As mentioned previously, they quite often include a myth about cosmogony, about the origin of the *klu* and also a myth-ritual. They invariably contain rich detail about the origin of the *klu* as well as their realms. In these myths, the *klu* do not appear naturally at the beginning of the world as in *Klu 'bum WBV*, but are born as the progeny of parents. Most *klu* are produced by Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo, who can transform into different things such as a mountain or a lake, a frog or a fish and so on. They can also

¹⁸ Stein 1971.

transform into the mountain-lake couple Ri rab lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo, as well as the king of *klu* 'Phags pa dung gi thor gtsug can and his queen Ye shes pa mo,¹⁹ sometimes with Gnod sbyin pa mo, Klu mkhar khri 'bum and Ye shes pa mo. All the *klu* produced are in fact different animals, although we do not see any cases of the *klu* as a marmot, an animal that is very common in *Klu 'bum WBV*. Instead, snakes appear quite regularly, as do frogs and fishes. One animal specific to this text is the ox. These rich myths describe the *klu* as being born from couples in a variety of locations, such as in the 'void', in the continent of Skal pa, in the sea, on the rocks and so forth. The text presents the magical powers and abilities of these *klu* in great detail, and these descriptions comprise the majority of the myths. In some cases, the serpent is described as breathing fire, which is similar to images found in Indian texts, according to Vogel.²⁰ The couple Sangs po and Chu lcarn, in the guise of a frog and a fish, go to the continent of Skal pa, where they produce three oxen. Furthermore, these oxen are in this particular case connected with three of the five elements, being born as fire ox, wind ox and water ox, each with magical powers. More interestingly, some of the *klu* are first born as different precious eggs, which then transform into different animals.

With regard to the content of the myth-ritual, humans become diseased because they have angered the *klu* in some way, and so try to liberate themselves from these obstacles by performing the rituals, in order to appease the *klu*. However, the *klu* are not only angered by harmful human activity, but also simply because of the failure to make the requisite offerings to them. In the later myths, *klu* are disturbed by activities such as house-building (usually described as 'castle-building'). We can thus observe a development of the content from myth to myth in this text. In terms of the structure of the myth-ritual, it differs significantly from that contained within *Klu 'bum WBV*. First, the stories of encounters between the *klu* and humans only go into sparse detail, giving the reason for conflict in a few sentences only. Secondly, when people are beset by obstacles or diseases, in *PLB* they do not try to find other ways to extricate themselves from their difficult position, such as asking doctors for a diagnosis as in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, but instead go directly to the performance of the ritual, as suggested by Klu bon yang snying, whereas the role of priest is assumed by Ston pa gshen rab or Yid kyi khye'u chung in *Klu 'bum WBV*. Finally, the ritual performed in *PLB* contains a description of how to make a house for the *klu* by using different materials, as we have mentioned. However, there is no further mention of the story of the discus-

¹⁹ These names are often spelled variously, for example: *tsug* in 'Phags pa dung gi thor *tsug* can, *pa* or *ba* for Ye shes dpal mo.

²⁰ See Vogel 1926.

sion between the priest as mediator, the *klu* and people during the performance of the ritual, as we find in *Klu 'bum WBV*. At the end of the ritual in *PLB*, the priest makes a confession for all the activities of beings that might harm the *klu*, and recites prayers for the patron and himself.

3.2 The *klu* who originate in the 'void'

Five kinds of great *klu* are produced by the union of Sangs po (manifested as a golden mountain)²¹ and Chu lcam rgyal mo, manifested as a lake (*chu'i rgya mtsho*) in the dimension of emptiness (*stong pa'i dbyings*) or what I shall refer to as the 'void'. Their respective powers are described in great detail, for example, five kinds of the *klu* are the lord of five *ye 'dregs*,²² five *glo bur*,²³ five obstacles (*bar chad*), five *bkrags*, the five *yol*, the five *'dre* etc. These main terms relate to diseases that appear very frequently later in the text, and can in fact also be found in the opening of the section related to prostration and offerings to the *klu* which is *bam po* three:

First, in the language of Ye srid lha, *ma le snang le this*. In the language of Bon and Gshen: in this *Klu 'bum nag po yang snying*, there is the account of the coming into being of all the *klu* that are born (*srid pa*); the reversal of all *bkrags*; averting all diseases; the reversal of all *yol*; the dispelling of all *glo bur* and *ye 'dregs*, and the cutting off of all enemies.²⁴

These subjects in fact run through the entirety of the text, being mentioned in each story, but this myth, which is related to the five kinds of great *klu*, provides additional details. The text then insists that, no matter the nature or the creature, everything in this world depends on these five *klu*:

360 obstacles (*bgegs*), 404 diseases, 1080 demons, and the 52 great *'dre* are all ultimately the property (*rgyu phug*) of the *klu*.²⁵

²¹ It is a golden frog in *BLB2*.

²² The spelling of this term varies within this text: *ye 'dregs*, *ye 'grog*. No specific meaning is given here. But Karmay uses the translation 'infectious diseases' for the sentence 'ye 'dreg to human and animal'. See Karmay 2005 [1972], 352.

²³ This term is sometimes spelled *glo 'ur*.

²⁴ *PLB*, fol.14^v: *dang po ye srid lha'i skad du na/ ma le snang le this/ bon dang gshen gyi skad du na/ klu 'bum nag po yang snying la/ klu thams cad kyi srid pa dang/ bkrags thams cad bsgyur ba dang/ nad thams cad zlogs pa dang/ yol thams cad bsgyur ba dang/ glo bur ye 'dregs zlogs pa/ dgra thams cad bcad pa dang lnga'o/*.

²⁵ *PLB*, fol. 15^v: *bgegs sum rgya' drug cu' dang/ nad 4 brgya rtsa 4 dang/ gdon stong phrag rgya*

All these above-mentioned impediments are identified as the weapons of the *klu*. Furthermore, the beginning of the text seems to conclude that all diseases should be considered to be pertaining to the nine different diseases of the *klu* (*klu nad cho dgu*).²⁶ The text then starts a brief myth-ritual, wherein the people of the 'void' are unable to make regular offerings to the *klu*, which makes the king of the *klu* angry. This king then commands all the obstacles and diseases to be sent ('gyed) from each part of his body to humans. So, as soon as people discover the origin of their suffering, *Klu bon yang snying* is called in to offer the necessary rituals. The people gather all the materials required to perform the ritual, and once the offerings have been successfully made, they are liberated from the diseases and sufferings.

3.3 The three *klu* oxen

The setting of the second myth is the continent of *Skal pa* (*Skal pa gling*), where *Sangs po*, who in this tale is manifested as a conch-coloured frog, and *Chu lcam*, who is manifested as a turquoise-coloured fish, go one day. They give birth to three great oxen that are in fact *klu*.²⁷ Each is classified by one of three elements – wind, fire, and water. We therefore have the wind ox, the fire ox, and the water ox. But only two of the oxen are described in any detail: *PLB* starts with a description of the wind ox, but the order of presentation is a little different from that given in *BLB2*, which goes from fire to wind then water. The wind is said to be blue; hundreds of tornados blow from each of the ox's hairs, from its two nostrils comes the wind wheel, and the great sea is gathered from its eight feet. Different forms and wind energies are also manifested from its eyes and teeth. It also has the power to send forth disease. *PLB* then gives details concerning the different wind *klu*, such as distinguishing five castes of wind *klu*: royalty, aristocracy, Brahmin, servant and 'inferior'.

The other type is the water ox, that has the skin of a human (*chu glang mi'i shul* [shun?] *pa can*), which is able to manifest springs, rivers, the sea, rain, hail-stones, snow and other water sources from its body:

bcu dang/ 'dre chen po lnga bcu gnyis ni/ klu de lnga'i rgyu phugs yin/

²⁶ *PLB*, fol. 16v: *de'i stong pa'i mi mams klu nad cho dgu na'o/ nad bzhi 4 brgya rtsa 4/ yol sum brgya drug cu lung/ glo'ur mda' ltar 'phen/ ye 'dregs rta ltar rgyug/ bar chod lung ltar 'tshubs/ zung ba glog ltar 'gyur/ bgegs sum brgya drug cu par na 'gro/ gdon stong phrag rgya cu reng rgyug byed/ nad 4 rgya rtsa 4 ngo ma zin/*

²⁷ On fol. 19^r, it is stated that there are three great winds, but it becomes clear later in the text that this is a spelling mistake.

Nine rivers of the *klu* are manifested from its internal organs, and flow to the Southern continent, and one *klu* lives in each of the eight rivers. They sleep in the lake of Gnam mtsho phyug mo, when they visit the sky. Their dwelling is Mal drol pal mtsho when they go to middle space, and it is Khri bshos rgya mtsho when they visit the land. At that time, the three seas were so full that they filled the whole universe. Three *klu* manifested from the water ox of the universe.²⁸

Three large bodies of water are named as the dwelling places of the *klu*: Gnam mtsho phyug mo (hereafter Gnam mtsho), Mal drol pal mtsho (hereafter Mal drol) and Khri bshos rgya mtsho.²⁹ We have already seen these three lakes in *BLB1*, when the dwelling-places of the *klu* are presented. They are three of well-known lakes in Tibetan culture, and the first two are considered two of the three holiest lakes in all of Tibet. Gnam mtsho is situated in the northwest of 'Dam gzhung county in Lhasa – the holy mountain Gnyan chen thang lha is to the south of this lake. Mal drol (*dros*) is usually equated with lake Ma pham, which is located near Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. Khri bshos (*shor*) rgya (*rgyal*) mtsho (*mo*) is known as Mtsho sngon po, which is situated in the north of A mdo.

Of the fire ox it is said that:

[it is a] fire³⁰ serpent with the chest of a frog. In its mouth (*mkhar* for *kha*) there is red hot fire; it fiercely emits fiery thunder and lightning.³¹

The *PLB* states that there are a hundred thousand fire oceans, fire mountains, fire trees, fire *klu*, fire frogs, fire serpents, and so on. What is more, all three elemental oxen are said to contain a variety of kinds of the *klu* within them, and the text gives specific terms, such as the five classes of the *klu*, and their hundreds of thousands

28 *PLB*, fol. 24^v: nang ma bu dgu las/ klu'i rtsang po dgu ru babs/ de lho'i 'dzam bu gling du bab/ chu de dag gi nang na klu re re gnas/ klu de thang 1 gnam la nyal ba'i sa ni/ gnam mtsho phyug mo yin/ thang 1 par du nyal ba'i s ani mal drol par mtsho' yin/ thang 1 sa la nyal ba'i klu ni/ khri bshos chu'i rgya mtsh' yin/ de tsam na rgya mtsho de 3 lud pa yin/ stong khams chu'i phyag ma khad/ chu'i glang bu sprul ba las/ klu sman gzho' bu 3 du srid/ gnam sman kar mo de gnam mtsho' bdag tu bshags/ sems can khri dang bshos pa na/ khri bshos rgya mtsho 'o/ klu'i ko nor rtsis dang grangs med pa'i/ gnam mtsho phyug mo'o/ klu thams cad bzhugs pa'i sa lam yin pa'i/ mtsho rlungs dros pa dang/ chu'i glang po zhal 1 ma dros pa'i/ de'i phyir la klu mal dro'o/.

29 These three lakes are mentioned in *BLB2* as one main lake only, and no mention is made of their being the three sleeping places of the *klu*.

30 *myi* may seem at first sight to be a spelling mistake for *mye*, but the terms for 'wind ox' and 'fire ox' are usually confused, with *rlung* for *glang* and *me* for *mi*, but this appears to be not so much a mistake in transcription as an intentional pun.

31 Fol. 22^v: myi'i sbrul dang sbal ba bramng 'brñus can/ mye dbal dmar po mkhar nang na/ myi'i 'brug glog rnam tshul stong/.

of manifestations; the different obstacles that we spoke of before in specific terms like demons, diseases and so on are mentioned as well, for example, the demon of the wind *klu*. But the obstacles are not listed very clearly or in the same order in each myth.

After the introduction to all three oxen, three brief myth-rituals are recounted, explaining that there are three persons suited to the three oxen, and that these persons must take responsibility for nourishing them:

The great fire ox is the *klu* that Sangs po 'bum khri³² nourishes, and the wind ox is the *klu* nourished by 'Bring zur yags pa. The one that dwells behind the constellation Nam so is the wind ox of the continent of Skal pa. The water ox is the *klu* that was nurtured by Rma de po na; all the [water ox] *klu* conceal (*rbad* for *sbas*) the eye of the moon, and sleep by the light (*sras* for *gsal*) of the moon; these are the water *klu* of the continent of Skal pa.³³

The three stories state in general terms that if these three individuals do not take care of these three oxen, that are in fact *klu* – for example if they do not prepare the housing and food for the *klu*³⁴ by giving offerings – then any activities they perform will bring harm to the *klu*. Here we notice the key rule that if people do not make offerings, the anger of the *klu* will be provoked. This is quite different from what is stated in *Klu 'bum WBV*, where the activity of people directly causes the *klu* distress. By way of explanation as to why the *klu* become so angry without the offerings of the people, the text gives a series of results:

If there is no offering to the *klu*, the great wind ox will not have a place to stay, no house to sleep in, no friends to play with. The female wind *klu* will have neither food to eat, nor water to drink.³⁵

It therefore seems that the life of the *klu* is wholly dependent on the offerings of humans. When a human goes anywhere to undertake an activity without first making an offering to that local *klu*, the local *klu* will strike back forcefully against

32 Sangs po 'bum khri has appeared as the parent of these three oxen, but here the name does not seem to denote the same figure.

33 PLB, fol. 25^v: *yang na me'i glang po che' / sangs po 'bum khri yis/ gso skyed byed pa'i klu'o/ yang rlung gi glang po ni/ 'bring zur yags pa gso skyed byed pa'i klu/ de skar ma nam so grib la nyal/ de skal pa rlung gi klu'o/ yang chu'u glang po de/ rma de po na gso skyed byed pa'i klu'o/ klu thams cad zla'i dmyig rbad/ zla'i sras la nyal/ de skal pa chu'i klu'o/*

34 See fol. 26^v: *klu'i rge ba ma byas so/ klu'i khang ba ma phugs so/ klu'i bzhugs sa ma byas so/ klu yon du su ma phul lo/*

35 PLB, fol. 27^v: *klu la mchod pa ma phul na/ glang gig lang po che'o/ gzhugs na gnas med/ nyal na khyim med/ snyigs na mal sa med/ rtse ba'i rogs med/ rlung gi klu mo yang/ bza' na zas med/ bdung ba'i chu med/*

that human. The quality and character of the *klu* are shown again in great detail, in order to highlight their ferocity, and it is no coincidence that this description comes just before the story about how they send diseases to humans:

From the manifestation of the body of the water ox, five rivers issue from its right and left nostrils and run in the four directions and the centre. The medicine spring which comes from each of its tails runs in five directions. From its father and mother's mind emanations, it produces a conch-fish, a golden frog, a turquoise serpent, an ox of *bse*³⁶ and an iron rat – in total five.³⁷

These animals are then sent in the different directions to be their respective rulers. Once again a conch-frog is produced by the mind emanation:

A conch-frog, at that time, with warts of meteorite, is produced by the mind emanation. If it jumps into space, the sky and earth tremble; if it sleeps, it is in the centre of the great mountain which it also protects; the power of its anger causes the earth to tremble; the viciousness of its ego causes the rain of disease to fall. If it smiles, drought comes. If it cries there is torrential rain or heavy snow (*skyin 'dangs*), each time it is angered, a hailstorm descends as a great mass, and a black darkness gathers.³⁸

The text then continues with a number of other manifestations on which I shall not expand here. It is said that the *klu* send all these obstacles to humans only because they neglect to give offerings; however, if a human actively angers the *klu*, the latter react violently. That is the case in the story of Rma de po na, where he not only forgets to make an offering, but also acts to provoke the *klu*:

Rma de po na did not construct the house of the *klu*, but he cut a number of trees belonging to the *klu*. He did not act virtuously, but instead became the landowner of the *klu*. Without performing the earth-taming (*sa non*) ritual he took many of the *klu*'s stones.³⁹

36 'bse' in this case may refer either to a type of copper or a variety of stone.

37 PLB, fol. 30^v: *chu'i glang po yis/ sku'i sprul ba las/ shangs khungs g.yas g.yon las/ lu mi 'bab chu lnga/ phyogs 4 dbus dang lnga la bab/ rnga ma nyag re las/ chu mig sman myigs la/ phyogs 4 dbus lnga la babs/ yab yum thugs kyi sprul ba las/ dung gi nya mo de/ gser gi sbal ba dang/ g.yu' sbrul sngon po dang/ bse'i glang po dang/ lcags kyi byi ba lnga srid/*

38 PLB, fol. 30^v: *yang thugs kyis sprul ba las/ dung gi sbal ba de tsaṃ na/ gnam lcags kyi kyang 'brum can/ mchongo bsang mi mchong do na/ par snang khams su mchod/ gnam sa gu lu lu/ ri rab dkyil na nyal/ ri rabs skyabs yang skyabs/ khros pa'i nga rgyal gis/ sa 4 'gur yang 'gur/ rgyala'i gdug pa'i/ nad kyi char ba 'beb/ rgad na then pa 'ong/ ngus na skyin 'dangs 'bab/ lan re khros pa'i tshe/ ser ba khrom che 'bebs/ mu nag smug du 'khyil/*

39 PLB, fol. 31^v: *Rma de po na yis/ klu khang ma phug par/ klu'i shing dgu gcod/ dge ba mdzad par/ klu'i gnas bdag bzung/ sa yang ma mnon par/ klu'i rdo dgu blangs/*

This behaviour made the *klu* so angry that they sent great misery upon him: the whole universe was swept by water, the wind howled like flames, disease brought on the wind ensued like so many floods. These consequences seriously hurt people, and they all had to work on the offering ritual in order to be released from obstacles and diseases. The *klu* related to the ox here is not the only case mentioned in the *PLB*, and I shall discuss this further below.

3.4 The origin of *klu* from eggs

The third myth contained within *bam po* five is still related to Sangs po, who manifested as a golden mountain, and Chu lcam, who manifested as a turquoise fish.⁴⁰ Their offspring depend on factors such as which of the eight directions they are heading in, and which natural environment they copulate in. In this case, the couple produced nine conch eggs (*dung sgong*) and three precious eggs in the east and south respectively. It is from these eggs that the different colours of the animals which are in fact *klu* are produced, most frequently in the form of frogs, fish and serpents of different colours. They are described as possessing miraculous bodies and abilities, such as having golden or fire-flecked wings which can bring great winds, evaporate the sea and so on. We find similar motifs in Bon works such as the *Mdzod phug*,⁴¹ which recounts the origin of the universe from eggs, and the emergence of Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo, but it is quite rare to find mention of such themes in the *Klu 'bum WBV*. However, there are three chapters of the twenty additional chapters in the Dege version of *Klu 'bum WBV* which do discuss the origin of the *klu*, although it is not always the same eggs from which the *klu* originate. Some come from the eggs of a turtle, and some are even born from the eggs that appear from a wind which comes from a light at the beginning of the universe. These *klu*, which are introduced as the protagonists of each story, are not as numerous as in the *PLB*.

In the *PLB*, a golden lion, iron mouse and turquoise dragon are also included as being born from those eggs. Apart from the east and south, they come from the rest of the six directions and other natural environments too, such as the rocks and grass, lakes, snow mountains, space and the place of rakshasas (*srin*). The

⁴⁰ Here *BLB2* is the same as *PLB* in terms of the manifestation of Sangs po, but Chu lcam instead manifests as a turquoise lake.

⁴¹ The full title is *Srid pa'i mdzod phug kyi gzhung zhes bya ba bzhugs*, rediscovered by Gshen chen klu dga'. Dan Martin has worked on this text for a comparison with the *Abhidharma*. See Martin 2000.

couple give birth to a combination of different hybrid animals, such as one with a human body and tiger's head, one with a pig's body and monkey's head, a red snake with a pig's head, a golden ox with one horn and a snake's tail, and so on.

The couple also produce five oxen in the land of the *raṅśasas* (*srin*) as well as three in space (*bar snang*).⁴² In the latter case, it specifically lists the name of each ox in both the Tibetan language (*sku* [*spu*] *rgyal bod skad*) and also in the language of Nam pa ldong. The latter also appears as *nag po ldong skad* in *BLB2*, which seems to be a misspelling on the editor's part. A number of Daniel Berounský's articles related to the *Gnyan 'bum* mention this language. In the Bonpo works he examined, certain names are given in two forms, one said to be in 'the Spu rgyal language', for example, and the other in the language of Nam pa ldong.⁴³ Only the names of the *klu* are given in these different languages, but no more information is provided.

Apart from this, the diversity of the *klu*, such as the term 'the eight great *klu*', or 'the son and daughter of the *klu*' are also included, for example: a golden deer which is produced by the sacred couple on the ground has nine antlers; thousands of kinds of white *klu* pour forth from its white antlers, thousands of yellow *klu* from its yellow antlers, and so on. At the end, the parent couple go to a place related to water, such as a spring, lake or river. In cases where a number of *klu* were produced, some of their names are quite familiar to us as being the main representatives of *klu*, such as Rtsug na rin chen or 'Jog po, characters who feature in several well-known texts as two of the eight great *klu*.

As mentioned above, all the different types of *klu* are introduced here with a description of their special powers and their unimaginable abilities, and so most of them are able to bring a range of diseases, especially when they have been angered. Some of them are described as having the power to evaporate oceans; destroy the red sun with their wings; some can bring frost and storm winds; and the text also specifically indicates that a red human with an ox's head and snake's tail can bring leprosy or other infectious diseases. But the text also mentions some cures, such as the milk of a white cow,⁴⁴ which can bring release from disease, or allow the crippled to walk anew, for instance. It is even said that there is nothing that cannot be produced by these *klu*.⁴⁵

One myth-ritual is associated with this third myth. It concerns a human king called Shing le rgyu tse, who built a number of castles in different places

⁴² See *PLB*, fol. 35'.

⁴³ See Berounský 2017, 6.

⁴⁴ *PLB*, fol. 49': *dung gi pa mo*; *pa mo* is read here as *ba mo*.

⁴⁵ *PLB*, fol. 7': *klu de rnams la ma srid cig kyang med*.

without first having astrological and lunar calculations made (*gnam zla ma rtsis*). This caused the *klu* to experience disharmony and as a result, his castles were destroyed, and the king and his kingdom, spreading over the entire earth, were afflicted with obstacles and diseases as a result. The text then insists upon an intimate relationship between the *klu* and humans. It is said that when the king falls ill or encounters difficulties in the human realm, the same happens to the *klu* in theirs; however, when the appropriate rituals are performed, the illnesses or troubles of the *klu* are resolved, and those of the king are as well.⁴⁶ The text presents a connection between humans and the *klu* that seems to be more developed than the relationship found in other versions of the *Klu 'bum WBV*, in which the *klu* can cause humans trouble when they are displeased; in the present case, the suffering or well-being of the *klu* are directly mirrored in the human realm.

Another story related to the *klu* originating from eggs comes from *bam po* 'three' (which should be *bam po* seven) of the *PLB*. The *klu* couple Mkhari khri 'bum and Ye shes pa mo first produced thousands of precious eggs from which came a number of different types of *klu*, most of which relate to categories of divinity in both Bon and Buddhism, such as the *klu* divinities (*klu lha'i rigs*), lay practitioner (*dge snyen*) of the *klu*, the *bdud*, *btsan*, and Gshen of the *klu* and so forth. As in the myth mentioned above, this couple produced another five eggs, from these eggs appeared five *klu* with human bodies but heads of different creatures such as the lion, ox, serpent. From among these, the *klu* with a human body and dragon head seems to be related to the name of the *PLB*:

Once again the *klu* Mkhari ba and Ye shes pal mo manifested five conch eggs from which appeared a white person with a dragon head, claws of lightning, wings of cloud, and holding 1008 golden stupas. He lived in the centre of Mount Meru (*ri rab lhun po*), in the centre of a heap of *tsha tsha*. He played amid a thousand turquoise junipers. From his name (quality?),⁴⁷ *Klu 'bum nag po* and *Bram mdze tsha tsha* were produced.⁴⁸

As usual, a little more detail is included in the story concerning the couple Rgya rje mi btsan and 'Jang za ser mo, who send an ox to plough the fields without first carrying out the necessary astrological calculations, and, furthermore, kill many

⁴⁶ *PLB*, fol. 42^v: *phu ru klu sos na/ mdo' ru mi sos so/ phu ru klu dangs na/*.

⁴⁷ The meaning of this last sentence is far from clear, even though variations of this formulation recur for each of the successive *klu* that are born. The *BLB2* omits this entire section.

⁴⁸ *PLB*, fol. 56^v: *yang klu mkhar ba dang/ ye shes pa mo sprul ba la/ dung gi sgo nga lnga ru srid/ de rdol ba'i nang shed las/ dung gi mi po 'brug gi 'g+ho'o can/ glog gi sbal mo can/ sprin gi 'dab ma can/ phyag na gser gyi mchod rten stong rtsa bgyad bsnams/ ri rab lhun po'i dkyil na bzhugs/ tsha tsha stong gi dkyil na bzhugs/ g.yu'i shugs pa stong la rol/ de'i mtshan nas klu 'bum nag po dang brem mdze tsha tsha skyes/*.

animals that belong to the *klu*, such as birds, tigers and so on. These activities are seen by the *klu* Zhon pa and make him displeased; he then gathers his assistants and other *klu* to prepare his revenge:

The *klu* of the ordained monk (*dge slong*) gathered the army of the *klu*. Fire, water, and wind were raised from the right and left nostrils of five ordained monks, which swept away the castle of Rgya rje mi btsan. Human disease broke out like a fire.⁴⁹

3.5 The various births of the *klu*

Bam po six contains the myth of the *klu* related to the couple Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsug can and Ye shes pa mo. Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsug can is the progeny of the union between Ri rabs lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo, a fact which is indicated at the beginning of the only story in *bam po* five, stating that Sangs po 'bum khri merged with Ri rab lhun po, whereas Chu lcam rgyal mo merged with the great sea in the story in *bam po* five mentioned above.⁵⁰ Ri rabs and Mtsho sman here therefore may in fact be Sangs po and Chu lcam, whom we have seen in all the above myths. According to *bam po* six, Ri rabs lhun po and Mtsho sman rgyal mo produce a white person with the body of great mountain, who can jump to the summit of the mountain from the depths of the sea. His name is Dung gi 'phags pa thor gtsugs can. His introduction takes up a number of folios of the text. The magical powers of his body are described in great detail, such as there being hundreds of frogs, serpents and fish on his feet, and other animals in each part of his body.

As each season changes, this *klu* moves to each of the four cardinal directions, where four different-coloured armies of *klu* surround him and wield control over the different diseases ('gyed). In the last and middle month of each season (*tha chung*, 'bring po), the *klu* goes to a different place to enjoy his dominion over the various woods and lakes

Apart from this *klu*, Dung gi 'phags pa thur tsugs can and Ye shes pa mo also give birth to five dragons, five oxen, five frogs and one turquoise cow (*g.yu yi'i pa mo*). All these animals are connected to the water, and it is said that rivers and lakes run from their mouths in all the different directions. The text shows only the directions in which these rivers run from the mouth of five different colours of

⁴⁹ PLB, fol. 57^v: *klu'i dge slong gi klu'i dmag bsdu so/ dge slong mi lnga'i/ shangs g.yas g.yon las/ me chu rlung 3 g.yos/ rgya rje mi btsan gyis/ yul mkhar ma la phyag so/ mi nad me ltar 'bar/*.

⁵⁰ PLB, fol. 40^v: *Sangs po 'bum khri ni ri rabs lhun po la 'dres/ chu lcam rgyal mo ni rgyal mtsho chen po nams du 'gres/*.

dragons. But it gives more detail on the five oxen, who differ from the three oxen mentioned before, so that the end points of the rivers which flow from the mouths of these five oxen become thousands of cities of the *klu*, where the different *klu*, including animals, young and old *klu*, monks (*dge slong*) and meditators (*sgom pa*) of the *klu* live.

3.6 Medicine

Medicine is a recurring theme in PLB. It is sometimes related to the water which the *klu* own to benefit living beings, or otherwise it is sometimes related to some kind of nectar, or considered as an offering or remedy to heal all the hurt and harm done to the *klu*.

Among the many offspring of the union between Dung gi 'phags pa thur tsugs can and Ye shes pa mo, one cow is born, and interestingly, the magical abilities of this cow refer to medicine:

Once again, the king of the *klu* 'Phags pa dung 'go and Ye shes pa mo produced a turquoise-coloured cow; a river of nectar milk flows from its left nostril, a *klu* called Bya ba has a golden head,⁵¹ and the queen of medicine lives inside; she can transform all poison into medicine.⁵²

It is even said that every single part of this cow's body is in fact medicine. Furthermore, the medicine is said not only to be for the benefit of humans, but also for the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag* and so on.

51 In BLB2, the name is firstly written as *klu* Byams pa with a golden colour (*byams pa gser mdog can*), and furthermore, it indicates a certain *klu* Byams pa as being the king of medicine. Secondly, it indicates clearly that the *klu* lives in the river which flows from the left nostril of the cow. However, if we follow the PLB's words, 'a turquoise-coloured cow; a river of nectar milk flows from its left nostril. In that middle lives a *klu* with a golden head and a sea of medicine, who turns all poison into medicine;' 'in that middle' may refer to either the organs of the cow or the inside of the nectar river itself. But given the content of the above text, that there is a different nectar river and that medicine flows from each body part of the cow, I prefer the translation 'the inside organs of the cow'. Secondly, *klu bya ba* seems to mean 'so-called *klu*', but I have retained it as the name of the *klu*, which could also be a misspelling. Third, here there are two people as opposed to one *klu*, and there is also a queen, details which differ from BLB2.

52 PLB, fol. 50': *da yang klu'i rgyal ba 'phags pa dung 'go dang/ ye shes pa mo che dang sprul ba la/ g.yu'i pa mo la/ gser gi thig le can/ shangs khung g.yas pa las/ bdud rtse 'o ma'i rtsang po 'bebs/ de'i nang shed las/ klu bya ba gser g+ho dang / sman gyi rgyal mo gnas/ dug thams cad sman du sgyur/*

A great number of medicines are listed in this text, and some of them are quite close to those remedies still used today in traditional Tibetan medicine; for example, there is a belief that white Chinese salt (*rgya tsha dkar po*) is good for the kidneys. One thing which is not clear, however, is whether the medicine helps to treat diseases that are sent by the *klu* and other divinities, or whether it directly benefits the *klu* themselves as an offering, since various diseases are often considered to be the property of the *klu* in this text. But if we consider the idea, mentioned above, that when the *klu* and humans are in harmony, humans naturally live peacefully, we may conclude that these medicines might not only be a gift or a remedy from these divinities but may also help in their own recovery.

Furthermore, the (unnumbered) second section of last part *PLB* refers specifically to the offering of medicine to the *klu*. This section even says that the *klu*'s prayer for all living beings is an expression of their satisfaction with the offering of medicine that has been made to them.⁵³ This section offers yet another interesting myth about the origin of the term '*rtsi sman*', which differs from the origin story involving the ox presented above. The myth may be summarized as follows: once upon a time, Lha rabs and Gnam sman kar mo had a son who was imprisoned inside a turquoise rock (*khri 'phangs*). He was unable to break out. At this time, the *khri 'phangs* was seen by a demon, who broke the rock and threw it into the sea. From then on, it became a kind of marine animal. Its eyes could see the whole of the sky and the earth, lead an antelope (*gtsos*), and hold ten golden containers. He threw the foam (*bkri/dri ma*) of the ocean into the containers and shook it three times. The oil floated to the top and the medicine sank down. He shook it a little more, and the contents were transformed into a deer. Someone shot the deer with an arrow and it fled to the land of Rgyab kar. The wounded deer lost one of its hairs, and spilt a drop of blood while it was escaping. From these there grew a tree with birds around it eating the leaves, and snakes living in it. This tree is the essence of sandalwood. Then the deer fled to the human realm, and the fallen hair and the drop of blood turned into a medicinal ingredient called *nyi 'od zho sha*.

3.7 The messengers of the *klu*

The last section of the text, covering three folios, starts with another myth which also seems to present the origin of the *klu*'s messengers, that are in fact birds. Their origin is related to the coupling of Gnam la rjes phyed and Sa la rtsi sbrang,

53 The medicine offering part runs from fol. 63^v to fol. 64^v.

who produce six magical eggs, from which are born a number of different birds such as the water-fowl (*chu bya*) and waders (*'dam bya*), all of which are considered to be the messenger birds of the *klu*. The myth also contains an account of how the birds became the messengers of the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag*, *gtod* and *lha*. It refers to a couple called Srid pa rgya'u thing g+hi and Sgo mod mu btsan cung ma, who later changes her name to Skos pa tsam gi g.yu ljang. This couple invite Gshen rab mi bo to make a golden box (*sbram*); plant five golden wooden tablets (*rgyang'u*) in the four directions and the centre, and also apply various nectars to a golden ladle. Gshen rab mi bo then declares that he will appoint certain birds to act as messengers between different classes of beings, and especially between gods and humans (*lha mi 'phrin pa bya'*). The couple and Gshen rab mi bo then proceed to take turns to catch a bird and to decorate it, thus making the birds the messengers of the *klu*, *gnyan*, *sa bdag* and *gtod*.

Another noteworthy point is that in this section, Gshen rab mi bo is sometimes called Gshen rab Ston pa or father (*yab*) Gshen rab⁵⁴ and while he usually takes a main role, he only appears very occasionally in this particular text. The main priest in this text is instead named as Klu bon yang snying.

4 Ritual

4.1 Instructions for myth-rituals in *PLB*

As mentioned above, *PLB* not only gives a step-by-step guide for one performance-ritual throughout the text, but also presents instructions for a number of rituals within the myth, which I have called 'myth-rituals'. We have now seen each step of the performance-ritual in the analysis of this step-by-step guide, and the specific content of each of the *bam po*. I shall now focus on the myth-ritual instructions and how they relate to the performance. The rituals performed in *PLB* are not concerned with the making of a mandala, as in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, but rather the construction of a house of sorts (described as a palace) for the *klu*, with a number of different varieties of wood, and the making of abundant offerings – although, as we shall see, the mandala is one kind of symbol within the palace (*gzhal yas khang*) of the *klu*.

54 Concerning the title of 'father' that is sometimes applied to Gshen rab, see Blezer 2008, 421 and n. 1, with further references.

There are three sections concerned with the ritual instructions in the *PLB*. It starts with a section entitled ‘when you perform the ritual for the *klu*’,⁵⁵ which describes exactly how a palace for the *klu* should be made.⁵⁶ It then indicates how one should begin the ritual performance: ‘First perform the generation of the thought of enlightenment, set a base for the divine offering, and have the patron perform the prostration’.

The second section starts with an indication that ‘after performing the ritual in this way’,⁵⁷ a new section of offering should continue, including the giving of different kinds of wood, different paintings on those pieces of wood, such as the mantras of the *klu*, as well as various sugar and milk offerings and so forth. However, the text states that these offerings should be taken to different places such as rocks, springs or mountains. It even specifies that a new juniper house be built, one for each of the four directions plus the centre. There are some obvious repetitions in terms of the offerings listed when compared with the first section. It seems that this later section should be followed after the ritual finishes as a way to manage all the offerings. However, *BLB2* not only contains a similar ritual instruction at the beginning of the text, but there is also an extra chapter at the end of the text, referring to a departure ceremony for each of the *klu* which is missing completely in *PLB*. It therefore remains unclear whether this second section of ritual instruction in *PLB* is indeed the end of the ritual, or whether it is just another procedure of performance in the course of ritual chanting.

The third section of this ritual instruction concerns the purpose for performing this ritual, such as healing a disease, building a temple and so on. Also mentioned are the qualities of the person reciting the text, as well as all the great benefits that derive from the performance of this ritual.

4.2 A comparison of the structure and content of the myth-ritual instructions in *PLB* and *BLB2*

BLB2 is organized in a totally different order from that shown in the instructions of *PLB*, in a number of distinct ways. It classifies the third section of the *PLB*, the

⁵⁵ *PLB*, fol. 1^v: *klu bcos byed pa'i dus su/*

⁵⁶ For example: ‘make the foundation base from *bong ra*, prepare a number of different kinds of wood and insert them in each direction of house, dig the stakes, decorate with the *tshar bu*, *shug thil*, bamboo in coloured cloth and silk, make a *klu* curtain with a bolt of silk. Set up the juniper *klu* house. Collect all the different sugars, medicine and milk as offerings [...]', and so on.

⁵⁷ *PLB*, fol. 2^r: *bcos pa 'di ltar na*.

part which contains the various reasons for performing the ritual and its ensuing benefits, as well as the qualities of the reciting priest, into three subsections: two subsections about the benefit of the reading of the text, and one subsection dedicated to the reasons for the performing of the ritual. These three subsections are inserted into the general explanation of the performance of the ritual. I will give the translation of this ritual instruction in full, and will then create a table for ease of comparison between each procedure of the instruction in the two texts.

The instructions of the *BLB2* first include a brief presentation of the benefits of this text, which constitutes one subsection of the third section of instruction in the *PLB*. It insists that by reading this text, all diseases relating to humans and cattle will not occur, hail and thunderbolts will not fall, the misfortune of serial deaths [in a family] will be ended, and so on.⁵⁸ It then briefly explains the preparation of the ritual: wrap (*bzlog* for *ldog*) a thousand sprigs of juniper (*shug ti'i* = *shug thil*) and attach [cloths of?] the five precious colours to a poplar or pine tree. This short preparatory part of the ritual does not correspond to the beginning of *PLB*, although some elements, such as the different sorts of wood mentioned here, can also be found in *PLB*. It then summarises in one sentence that we should 'arrange the requisites in the proper directions and make prostrations to the *klu*', but gives no details about further preparations. Furthermore, it is interrupted by the second subsection referring to the reason of the performance of the ritual:

Perform this ritual (lit. 'read this offering') if you [wish to] treat (*phyos* = *chos*) diseases of humans or of cattle; when you seize a town, build a castle, construct a *klu* house⁵⁹ or a temple (*gsas khang*), carry out irrigation (*chu rka 'dren*), lead troops or an army, or when this king raises the law.⁶⁰ If one builds (*'dram* = *bkram*, *'grems*...) a tomb, or holds a priestly gathering (*gshen rab tshogs pa*), digs the earth (*rgo* = *rko*) or performs a ceremony (*bsgrub pa zhengs pa*), intelligent persons (? *glo blor can*) recite it. There will be no lightning-bolts from the sky; there will be no outbreaks of fire or inundations.⁶¹

⁵⁸ These benefits are also presented at the end of the instructions in *PLB*.

⁵⁹ The *PLB* does not mention the building of a *klu* house, but instead speaks of a temple (*lha khang gser khang*) – this probably refers to the same construction.

⁶⁰ '*rgyal po 'di khrims bkyags na*': The meaning of the Tibetan at this point is far from clear. In the corresponding passage, *PLB* has *rgyal po shing khril 'gyogs na*, which is probably intended to refer to the enthronement of a king.

⁶¹ *BLB2*, p. 209: '*bul 'di mi nad phyugs nad dam/ yul 'dzin mkhar brtsag gam/ klu khang gsas khang bzhengs pa dang/ chu rka 'dren byed pa dang/ dmag dang dra ma 'dren pa dang/ rgyal po 'di khrims bkyags na glog go/ dur 'gram pa dang/ gshen rab tshogs pa dang/ sa rgo ba dang/ bsgrub pa zhengs pa dang/ glob lor can de mams kyis bton no/ gnam na thog mi 'bebs/ me dgra dang chu dgra mi 'ong ngo/*.

A correspondence for these reasons given for the performance of the ritual at the beginning of the second subsection can mostly be found in *PLB*, but for some elements, such as irrigation or leading the troops in particular (as opposed to priestly gatherings) *PLB* refers to the importance of the *bu med srin po tshol ba* (possibly a reference to the *sri mnan* ritual?) and the performance of the ritual against the *gshed* demons, *buedm̐ (bu med) so na 'dre na bya'o*, and so on.

After giving this reason for performing the ritual, the preparation of the ritual is introduced, so that two varieties of poplar,⁶² juniper and so on should be decorated and attached in the four cardinal directions and the centre. Five sharp stakes should then be planted. These same elements are found in the *PLB* as well, but with different decorations and different way to use the artefacts.

The terms for such diseases as, *bkrag*, *glo 'ur*, *ye drogs*, *yol* and so on, which can also be found in *PLB*, are repeated throughout both texts as being the afflictions brought by the *klu* in the myths which we have already discussed. However, the names of certain categories of demons in *BLB2* are replaced by a number of other terms in the *PLB*:

The *klu srin*, epidemics, the *'dre* and *gdon* demons, the *mdud ma yam* and village demons will be averted; there will be benefits for the living. If *'gab 'gal* of demonesses (*mdud mo?*) or child-stealing vampires should arise in that way, if this [ritual] is performed, it will be of great benefit.⁶³

After listing the benefits of the text in this third subsection, the ritual instructions resume. Moreover, *BLB2* gives far more detail on the preparation of the ritual offering, similar procedures and elements to which appear in *PLB*, in the second section of the instructions related to taking those offerings to other places. *BLB2* ends its chapter 15 after this last detail of ritual procedure with another brief description of the benefits of the text, and instructions on how to read it carefully.

It is, however, hard to find a standard form of performance for this ritual by comparing these two texts, because they do contain numerous differences.

⁶² The text specifies *dbyar ba* and *ma gal*, which are likely to be different varieties of poplar. Fernand Meyer identifies the latter as *Debregeasia salcifolia* (Meyer 1988, 178).

⁶³ *PLB* fol. 2: *klu srin dang/ dal yam dang/ 'dre gdon dang/ mdu ma yam dang/ yul 'dre bkar ba dang/ bson po 'phen po bya ba dang/ mdud po chung srin can gi 'gab 'gal de bzhih blangs na yang dag na phan thogs che'o/*.

4.3 Ritual element lists according the section entitled ‘mantra’

There is, in addition, one further point to make: that each myth-ritual in both *PLB* and *BLB2* does not strictly follow these instructions; although they are all concerned with the construction of the *klu*’s house, there is quite a lot of variation in terms of the numbers and the categories of each element as well as the directions. Unlike the account of the performance of the ritual described in *Klu 'bum WBV*, both the performance-ritual and the myth-rituals described in the *PLB* are apparently not performed by *Ston pa gshen rab* but rather by *Klu bon yang snying*, who often appears as the representative of the *klu* in the other texts related to the *klu*. There is, however, no mention of this character in *BLB2*.

Both *PLB* and *BLB2* contain a section named the ‘mantra of the *klu*’ which presents the mantra associated with a particular *klu*, including the *klu* of the four directions plus the centre; the representative animals of the *klu* such as the ox, frog and tortoise, as well as the mantras of certain elements of the ritual. These ritual element lists are in fact almost identical to those of the myth-ritual, except for a few elements being omitted from this mantra.

4.4 Some prominent ritual materials in *PLB*

4.4.1 *bong ra*

According to the ritual instructions contained within *PLB*, the first step of the ritual is to make 108 *bong ra* out of red earth, and then to arrange each of them according to the four colours associated with the four directions (see below);⁶⁴ all these instructions are missing from *BLB2*. Later in the second section in *PLB*, we are instructed to place the red earth *pang bro* in the appropriate directions (*gong char*), while *BLB2* includes the same sentence but removes the term *pang bro*. It seems that the same term is here written in one of three different ways: *bong bra*, *pong bra*, *pang bro*, all of which seem to refer to the foundations of a house.

There are two myths related to the wind ox and the water ox, named ‘Brong zur yags pa and Rma de po na respectively, who get into trouble because they fail to make offerings to the *klu*.⁶⁵ In the ritual undertaken by ‘Brong zur yags pa, the seven *bong ra* are made with seven types of coloured earth (*sa mtshan* = *sa*

⁶⁴ ‘As for the 108 *pang bre*, we must arrange 25 white ones to the east, 108 (*sic*) blue ones to the south, 108 black ones to the west, and 108 red ones to the north’.

⁶⁵ Fol. 31’.

tshon?), and in the next myth related to Rma de po na, five coloured *bong ra* are made from five different coloured types of earth, associated with the four cardinal directions plus the centre.⁶⁶ We should mention that the term *bong ra* is quite often replaced by the term *gsas phe'u* in *BLB2*.

There is yet another myth, this time related to king Shing le ru tse, who made the *klu* angry because of his construction of a castle. He instructs his people to perform the ritual,⁶⁷ and among the other offerings, it is said, ‘the king first made the *klu*’s house before constructing his temple; he first made the *bong ra* before he built the roof of the temple’.⁶⁸

The use or benefit of these materials is also not always the same in each tale. For example, the ritual described above relating to Rma de po na mentions the term *bong ra*, so that the twenty-five *bong ra* in one of the five colours are offered to the *klu* of the four cardinal directions and centre along with other offerings.

However, in the myth in which the king Rgya rje mi btsan harms the *klu* through his activities, the *dge slong* of the *klu* (*klu'i dge slong*) gathered the *klu* army to wreak revenge. The king asks Klu bon yang snying to perform the ritual, and among the ritual materials, there are five colours of *bong ra* included in order to placate the *dge slong* (*dge slong bcos*).⁶⁹ Just after the completion of this first ritual, Rgya rje mi btsan asks Gshen rab Ston pa and Klu bon dbyar snyan to perform the ritual again.⁷⁰ This second time, the five colours of *bong ra* are presented to be used for repelling curses from the five cardinal directions and the centre. Furthermore, it seems that the term *bong ra* is replaced by *tsha tsha* in some myths intended for a similar purpose.⁷¹

4.4.2 Wood

The four or five types of wood which have been mentioned in the ritual instructions, as well as in the section of performance-rituals dealing with the inviting and seating of the *klu*, are considered to be the ‘support’ of the five divinities:

⁶⁶ See fols. 28 and 31.

⁶⁷ This procedure and the material of this myth-ritual in *BLB2* is quite different from that of *PLB*. See *BLB2*, p. 320.

⁶⁸ Fol. 42^v: *rgyal po shing le rut se yis/lha khang ma phug par/ klu khang sngon du phug/ gsas steng ma. rtsegs par/ pong ra sngon du brtsigs/*.

⁶⁹ Fol. 59^r.

⁷⁰ Fol. 59^v.

⁷¹ Fol. 52^r.

Please be seated on the *dbyar bu* which is the wooden support of the *klu*, juniper which is the wooden support of the *sa bdag*, birch that of the *gnyan*, and the bundles of leaves (*mtshal bu* = *tshar bu*?) that of the *gtod*.⁷²

But then in the myth-rituals, we see a more frequent appearance of juniper, a versatile material which can be used for the construction of houses, as a support (*rten lnga*), which is ornamented by the five colours of cotton plants in the five directions, and can also be painted with animals such as the dragon.⁷³ Apart from this, the text uses the term ‘five kinds of wood’ to refer to the different varieties of wood, although it does not give a specific definition for this term. These five kinds of wood are nevertheless classified into the five colours: white, blue, black, red, and yellow, sometimes with dark brown. Certain animals, such as the deer, horse or serpent⁷⁴ are then painted on them to complete the offering:

Other offerings are made reference to, with terms such as ‘three white offerings’ and ‘three sweet offerings’, with the *PLB* even mentioning ‘three red offerings’ although no further description is given.

During the performance of the ritual, as previously mentioned, the text explains that each material is considered either to be an offering to the various spirits, the different kinds of *klu* in the different directions, or it can specifically reverse negative occurrences such as *ye 'dregs*,⁷⁵ obstacles (*bar chod*),⁷⁶ *bdud* and so on,⁷⁷ although each element represents a part of the total ritual.

4.5 *klu srin*

Bam po two of the *PLB* purports to distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, in the same way that the *klu sman* is a combination of both the *klu* and *sman* spirits, so here the *klu srin* looks for all intents and purposes to be a combination of *klu* and *srin*, although the text does not give a clear explanation of this term. In the *Klu 'bum WBV*, *klu srin* is considered to be one of three colours of the *klu*, namely white, black, and variegated, with both black and variegated being presented as

⁷² *PLB*, fol. 8^v: *klu'i brten shing dbyar bu lo bzang gshegs su gsol/ sa bdag rten shing bdud rtsi shugs pa 'di la gshegs su gsol/ gnyen gi rten shing stag pa 'di la gshegs su gsol/ gtod gi rten shing mtshal bu 'di la gshegs su gsol/*.

⁷³ Fols 28^r, 42^r, and 58^r.

⁷⁴ Fol. 42^r.

⁷⁵ Fol. 28^r.

⁷⁶ Fol. 16^r.

⁷⁷ Fol. 59^v.

referring to harm or great anger. *Bam po* two contains a myth which relates to the birth of a *klu srin* by the union of a *srin* and a female *klu* (*klu lcam 'od dkar ma*). This *klu srin*, who had a goat's head with nine eyes, is malicious (*zhe sdang can*). In the myth, a man called Rag bsang rtsam⁷⁸ finds *Klu bon* yang snying to perform the ritual, but the reason for this is unclear, although it seems likely that he has harmed the *klu srin* while working in a field.⁷⁹ The ritual (*gto' dang dphyod du byas*) is performed in two ways by *Klu bon* yang snying. First, he offers several things which correspond to each part of the body of the *klu srin*:

For the (*klu srin*'s) head that has the form of a goat, he offers a female deer (*yang mo* = *yu mo*) as food. For the face (*gram pa*) of rock, he offers delicious litmus (*brag rtsi*). For his thorny beard, he offers *brag me snyig mi*. For the lower body which is *klu*, he offers medicinal milk. For the tail, which is a serpent, he offers five sorts of coloured earth.⁸⁰

But the text then says that if the *klu srin* does not accept this, we must perform the wrathful ritual instead, where all the offering materials mentioned above are changed to some kind of poison, such as rhododendron which acts as poison for the goat, musk as poison for the serpent and so forth. However, one should still makes offerings of items such as the *rta nag mdangs bu*, *glang nag mdangs bu* and the *mdangs bu* of other animals to represent wealth for the *klu srin*, and also diverts the *klu srin* to a place that is surrounded by the rocks, trees.⁸¹

We can thus see that this ritual is very different from other myth-rituals of this text, since neither those offerings which are pleasing to the *klu srin* nor those which are to be used for subjugating the *klu srin* are to be found anywhere in the myth-rituals. This might be one of the reasons why there is an insistence on not conflating the *klu* and *klu srin* at the end of this ritual. In the other myth-ritual, among the ritual components, the scorched grains (*shel tshig*),⁸² the flint and red ochre are shown to be useful in dismissing the *klu srin*.⁸³

⁷⁸ His name is later changed to Rag sa sa rtsal.

⁷⁹ From the Tibetan, *mi rag bsang rtsam gis/ so dang nam la gnod/*, it is not clear whether it is the person who upsets the *klu srin* or is harmed by the *klu srin* because of his field.

⁸⁰ PLB, fol. 11': *mgo'o ra la byas pa de/ yang mo gzan gi mchod/ 'gram pa brag la byas pa de/ brag rtsi zhim du mchod/ tshe mi a tsham skyas pa de/ brag me snyug mi yon gi mchod/ ro smad klu la byas pa de/ rtsi sman 'o mas mchod/ 'jug ma sbrul la byas pa de/ sa mtshan sna lnga'i mchod/*.

⁸¹ Fol. 12': *klu srin thur du bkar/ klu dang klu srin ma ldong 1/ byer'o bsal la la/ phang phang ye re re/*.

⁸² See fol. 59': *shel tshig nag po dang/ shing zhog rdo zhog gis/ klu srin thur du bkar/*.

⁸³ See fol. 53': *mye rdo brag btshan gis/ klu srin 'byam bkor/*.

5 Conclusion

Both the *PLB* and *BLB2* are collections of myths with their accompanying rituals. There is some doubt as to how exactly the two compositions are related: whether one is derived on the other, of if they are both based on an unknown earlier version – at this point I do not rule out any of these possibilities. The content of the *BLB2* appears to be a simplified and more systematic version of *PLB*, and the orthography, syntax and structure are also more standard. It is not clear whether it was because of this more orthodox character that it was selected above the *PLB* for inclusion in the Bon Canon, or whether the editing took place with a view to its inclusion.

There is, however, a diversity and richness in the extra myths included in the *PLB* that are not found in either *BLB* or any other versions of the *Klu 'bum*. In particular, *PLB* contains certain distinctive themes that apparently do not appear elsewhere, such as the different ritual performances that distinguish between the *klu* and *klu srin*, and the myth related to the messengers of the *klu*. This latter myth introduces Ston pa Gshen rab (or Gshen rab Ston pa, father Gshen rab), who, despite being a principal character in other versions such as *Klu 'bum WBV*, appears here only on this occasion. The main priestly figure who features throughout the work is Klu bon yang snying, while Gshen rab makes an appearance at the very end of the text as the central character who transforms birds into messengers. Furthermore, Klu bon yang snying is not mentioned at all in the *BLB2*.

Like the much better-known *Klu 'bum WBV*, the *PLB* is largely made up of a great number of myths related to cosmogony, the origin of the *klu*, and accounts of interactions between the *klu* and other beings. While this structure is broadly similar to that of *Klu 'bum WBV*, the *PLB* does have distinctive features that distinguish it from all other versions. For example, one of the Bonpo cosmogonic ideas, that of oviparity, is found in the cosmogonic canonical work *Mdzod phug*, but becomes one of the main ideas related to the origins of the *klu* contained within the *PLB*, exemplified by the manifestation of the couple named Sangs po 'bum khri and Chu lcam rgyal mo. Moreover, instead of indicating that the specific disease of leprosy is sent by the *klu* to humans, as is the case in the *Klu 'bum WBV*, *PLB* instead gives a more generic set of afflictions, that of '360 obstacles (*bgegs*), 404 diseases, 1080 demons, and the 52 great 'dre', among other things. As for the ritual performance, whereas the *Klu 'bum WBV* recounts the offering of a mandala to the *klu* by Ston pa Gshen rab, the *PLB* prescribes the construction of a house for the *klu*. While a house could of course be understood as a type of mandala, the text suggests a more secular type of construction more closely resembling a human habitation. While this seems to indicate that the *klu* propi-

tiation ritual found in *Klu 'bum WBV* shows the influence of tantric Buddhism on an earlier form of the ritual, it may of course also be the case that the 'house' that appears in *PLB* is a local derivative of the mandala of *Klu 'bum WBV*. The last distinctive feature of the *PLB* worth noting here is that it also gives an overarching 'umbrella' ritual instruction for these myth-rituals at the very beginning of the text. The presence of this introductory outline of the procedures to be followed distinguishes *PLB* both from the Dunhuang myth collection discussed by Rolf Stein, who remarks on the absence of such information, as well as from the *Klu 'bum WBV* itself.

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Sa bdag dbang chen = *Rnam par dag pa'i 'bum bzhi las sa bdag dbang chen gyi sgur bcos te bam po gnyis pa'o*, in *Bon Canon*, vol. 140.
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