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# The *Lungyig* Texts of the Leu Scriptures from the Phenchu Area, in Amdo

**Abstract:** Within the past decade, a large number of Tibetan manuscripts related to the Bon religion have come to light in private collections in several locations in Sichuan and Gansu provinces. The manuscripts contain the texts of rituals performed by a class of priests known as Leu, and are therefore generally known as *leuyig*, ‘Leu scriptures’. Most of the rituals in these texts correspond to the contents of the so-called ‘lower vehicles’ of Yungdrung Bon, the monastic form of the religion that has significant similarities with Tibetan Buddhism. However, certain aspects of the Leu rituals are repudiated by the clerical authorities of Yungdrung Bon, since they entail practices such as animal sacrifice that the religion unequivocally rejects. This chapter presents an overview of a particular Leu textual corpus from Bozo, a community located in Sichuan province’s Dzorge country. The corpus is a quartet consisting of three manuscript volumes and one orally-transmitted text, dealing mainly with apotropaic rituals and the propitiation of various classes of worldly gods. Various factors, including the modification and even destruction of the texts by Bonpo clerics, have contributed to the decline of the Leu tradition.

## 1 Introduction

In the communities of Phenchu<sup>1</sup> and Thechu in Amdo there is, to this day, a long and unbroken tradition of Bon practitioners known variously as Anye Leu, Sipe Leu, Gönpö Leu and Lhadag Leu. These Leu have no assembly places such as temples, but perform rituals for clients in their houses, as village tantrists do. There was, however, an association of Leu, and when ceremonies were held in communities and districts they would gather to perform recitations and rituals. When monasteries were closed in the 1960s these meetings were discontinued. The Leu tradition is passed down from father to son, but some were also trained

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<sup>1</sup> Phenchu township belongs to Dzorge county of eastern Amdo. The area traditionally called ‘Seven Divisions of Lowland Phenchu’ also includes Bozo, which has several of its own divisions. The Seven Divisions of Phenchu are: Akyi; Upper and Lower Bozo; Palkyi; Chöje; Guwa, and Zhangtse.

outside their families. According to their age, the Bozo Leu were referred to as ‘senior Leu and ‘junior Leu’, and some were called ‘assistant Leu’.

The ritual texts used by the Leu are known as *leuyig*. These Leu texts are different in content from the recitations and texts that are used in Bon monasteries. In terms of the Nine-Vehicle system and the Four Doors and the Treasury system, their content corresponds respectively to the Four Vehicles of Causal Bon<sup>2</sup> and Black Water Bon.<sup>3</sup> There are some local variations in what Leu scriptures are called, the number of texts, and their content. In the area of Bozo in upper Phenchu they are referred to as either *leuyig* or *lungyig*. There are also texts in certain communities where the name is actually written as *lungyig*. The Tagkham<sup>4</sup> *leuyig* known as *leu poti* consists of a single volume; the *leuyig* of the Leu of Gyanyag are called *dranggen*;<sup>5</sup> and the Leu texts of Thewo are called *ngenyig*. The present study will examine the content of the texts from Bozo, which has been a Bonpo area since ancient times and has preserved an unbroken Leu tradition. The fact that there are Leu here who are experienced practitioners means that the conditions for research are ideal.

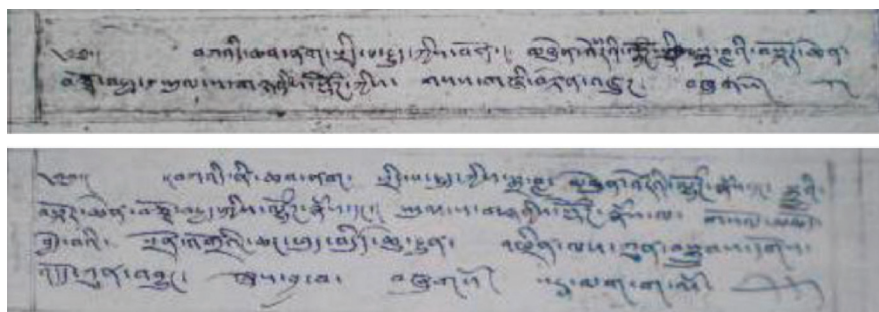
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2 According to the classification of the Southern Treasures, the Four Vehicles or ‘Ways’ of Causal Bon are: the Way of the Shen of Prognostication; the Way of the Shen of the Visual World; the Way of the Shen of Illusion, and the Way of the Shen of Existence. In these categories the term Shen should be understood as ‘system’.

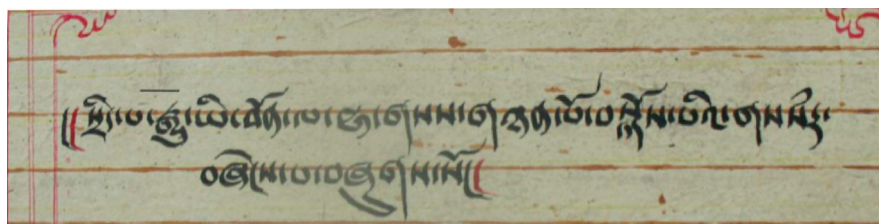
3 The system known as the Four Portals and the Treasure, Five in All, refers to: the Portal of Black Water Bon of the Phenomenal World; the Portal of the White Water of Fierce Tantras; the Portal of the Master Sage of Instructions and Precepts, and the Portal of Phenyul, the Vast Hundred Thousand (which contains teachings corresponding to the Buddhist *Prajñāpāramitā* [Perfection of Wisdom] literature), and the Pure Summit that Goes Everywhere. [Note by the editors: For an outline of these systems, see Snellgrove 1967, 8–21].

4 This refers to the eighteen villages that form a part of Rongchung Sigye.

5 The *dranggen* (Tib. *drang rgan*; sometimes also written *cang rgan*) are one of the class known as the Three Witnesses of the Sipa. A text entitled *Chang phud bdud rtsi chu rgyun* contains a passage in which the members of the *dranggen* are invoked as follows: ‘Father Tagcha Alöl; mother Tshemza Khyekhyü; son Drangkhen Munrum Karpo; Drangkhen of humans Mi Magöl; Drangkhen of wood Teu Mace (lit. ‘not cut with an axe’); Drangkhen of stone Jemadzog; Drangkhen of water Yuldu Mdrang; Tawa Mignon Drangkhen (relating to sight); Nyenpa Nasang Drangkhen (hearing); Drowa Lagyog Drangkhen; Nyabpa Lagring Drangkhen (snatching); Künshe Gyalwe Drangkhen (knowledge); Makhe Cede Drangkhen (speech); Ngamgi Drangkhen Nyida (the firmament); Barnang Drangkhen Drugkhyug (mid-air); Sayi Drangkhen Chulam (earth): you 360 Drangkhen, receive this nectarous tea and beer in your mouths’.



**Figs 1a, 1b:** Excerpts from the text of a ritual for the propitiation of the *drabla* warrior gods. The title folio (above) contains the words ‘these teachings belong to the Black Water *Sipe* tradition of Causal Bon’.<sup>6</sup> The text was discovered by Cone Luchung of the Luchu area in Dome.



**Fig. 2:** Title page of a set of instructions for the creation of a shrine (*sekhar*, lit. ‘citadel’) for the *lhase* divinities; from a Leu text kept in Bozo, in Phenchu.

## 2 A brief outline of the Leu texts of Bozo

Bozo is divided into two parts, Upper and Lower, with the former comprising ten villages and the latter thirteen. All the inhabitants are followers of Bon. The main religious establishments here are Dachen Samdrub monasteries, respectively in the Upper and Lower parts, as well as two retreats, Cangtshang Ritrö and Drublung Ngo Ritrö. It is generally said that there are four sets of texts that are used by Leu in the Bozo villages. These are said to be the teachings of Shenrab’s father, Gyalbön Thökar, and therefore represent an early system of Bon.<sup>7</sup> Having

<sup>6</sup> Note by the editors: *Srid pa rgyu’i* [rgyud kyil] *bon*: the term *srid pa’i rgyud* is translated by Snellgrove as ‘stream of existence’ (1980[1967], 10). However, since the meaning of *srid pa* in the present context remains far from certain it will be left untranslated.

<sup>7</sup> This information is based on the accounts of two senior Leu, Gendün and Zöpa Gyatso, whom

been going to Bozo over many years to carry out research on Leu texts, I have been able to establish that there are indeed four sets of texts, entitled *Lodzin*, *Zhagcigma*, *Ngenzhung* and *Selzhung*, although – as we shall see – not all are preserved in written form.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.1 The *Lodzen* [*Lodzin*] Leu text

There appears to be no written version of this text, which is recited orally in the local dialect. Since the text is recited by heart by the Leu, it is called *Lodzin*, meaning ‘memorisation’. In the local dialects of this area, any diacritical vowels following the root consonant in syllables that have *-n* or *-d* as the first suffix are dropped. For example, the word *dge* ‘*dun*’, which would be pronounced *gendün* in most Tibetan dialects, is pronounced *genden*, and *mchod rten* (normally *chörten*) is pronounced *cherten*. In accordance with this pattern, *blo* ‘*dzin*’ is pronounced not *lodzin* but *lodzen*.

According to what the Leu themselves say, the main subjects of the *Lodzin* concerned taking refuge and making offerings to the protective divinities. There is no longer anyone in Bozo who can recite the *Lodzin*.

## 2.2 The *Zhagcigma*

The name of this text is pronounced *Zhagtsigma* in the local dialect. It derives its name, which means ‘one-day text’, from the fact that it has to be recited in the course of a single day. Fragments of this text are to be found in communities other than Bozo under titles other than *Zhagcigma*; in places such as Tagkham, for example, the corresponding text is called *Zizag*. According to a document written by Leu Gönpö<sup>9</sup> that is now in the possession of Zöpa of Bozo, the *Zhagcigma* is a compilation of nineteen texts, the titles of which are as follows:<sup>10</sup>

1. *Bdud rtsi g.yu* ‘*brang sman gyi mchod pa’i dga’ ston* (‘A feast of offerings of medicinal nectarous honey’)

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I interviewed while carrying out fieldwork in Bozo in 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Information based on the account of the senior Leu Waltrug of Tsasa village, whom I interviewed while carrying out fieldwork in Bozo in 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Leu Gönpö, now deceased, was from Ozothang in Bozo. During the period of political transition he concealed the *Zhagcigma* as well as the texts of the *ngen* and *sel* rituals in order to preserve them.

<sup>10</sup> The Tibetan titles of the texts are followed either by translations (given in inverted commas) or else, where the meaning of certain terms is uncertain, an indication of the likely topic.

2. *Srid pa rgyu yi bon la lha gsas gnyan po bskos pa'i gsas mkhar bzhengs pa* ('Raising a citadel for installing the awesome divinities of the Bon of the Sipa tradition')
3. *Klu'i gtor ma gtor ba'i cho ga* ('Ritual for the casting of tormas for the Lu')
4. *Klu'i 'gras bsdum* ('Reconciliation with/among the Lu')
5. *Klu'i mchod 'bul* ('Making offerings to the Lu')
6. *Shug mgon 'phrag sprod* ('Offering to *traglha* and *shuggön* [war gods]')<sup>[?]</sup>)
7. *Yul sa gnyan brngan* ('Fumigation ritual for the territorial gods and Nyen')
8. *Mda' bstod* ('Praising the arrow')
9. *La btsan kha bstod lha gsas 'khor ba'i gter spungs* ('Extolling the Tsen divinities of the passes and heaping up treasures for the divine entourage')
10. *Bkrol ba* ('Releasing')
11. *'Khrug byed bya nag mgo dgu* ('The nine-headed black bird that causes conflict')
12. *'Khrug byed mi nag mgo dgu* ('The nine-headed black man that causes conflict')
13. *Thang gto gyod sgyur* ('The powerful ritual that repels quarrels')
14. *Dmigs sgyur* ('Repulsion of [unwelcome] attention?')
15. *'Khrug byed bya nag mgo dgu'i lam bstan* ('Showing the way to the nine-headed black bird that causes conflict')
16. *Gzhi btings* ('Laying down the base')
17. *G.yang 'bod rgu ra dgu khyud kyi khyi ka blu ba* (A ritual for summoning *yang*, the principle of prosperity and good fortune)
18. *'Khrug byed tshogs sgrogs* (A ritual for ending conflict?)
19. *Gyod sgyur bcas tshan pa bcu dgu tsam yod rung* ('[A ritual comprising] approximately nineteen sections for repelling quarrels')

A performance manual of the *Zhagcigma* lists a number of additional rituals: *Phywa khu ye*; ('Summoning the *cha*');<sup>11</sup> *Gsas mkhar* ('Citadel'); *Nang mtshams* ('[Closing] the inner boundary'); *Bon spyod sngon 'gro* ('Preliminary practices for Bon [ritual] activities'); *Phywa bzhengs* ('Raising the *cha*'); *Drang mkhan* (*drang-khen*: see above); *Klu gtor* ('Torma offerings for the Lu'); *Khyung nag srung 'bod* ('Inviting the protection of the black Khyung, the protector'); *Gshen rje bla blu* ('Redeeming the soul from the demons of death [*gshen* = *gshin*?]'); *Srung ma'i bla blu* ('Redeeming the soul by means of the protectors'); *Bdud kyi 'phran bsal* ('A minor purification ritual related to the Dö demons'); *Ta gtor* (a torma offer-

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11 The term *cha* (*phya*) denotes an intangible quality that bestows the potential for health and prosperity; it is closely associated with the concept of *yang* (*g.yang*).

ing ritual); *Phyogs bzhi srung 'bod* ('Inviting protection from the four directions'); *Srung 'bod shog gcig* ('A single folio for the inviting protection'); *Bla bkra* ('Radiant soul'); *Stag lha'i srung 'bod* ('Inviting the protection of the divinity Taglha'); *G.yang 'bod* ('Calling the yang'); *Tshe g.yang* ('Ritual for [the increase of] life and yang'); *Tshe rdzi* ('The caretaker of life'); *Srung mkhar* ('Palace of the protectors'); *Srung 'jug* ('Placing the protectors'); *La nya* (?); *La chang* (offering of beer to be made on a pass?); *Rnga mong skyal* ('Accompanying the camel'); *Klu yi mchod 'bul* ('Making offerings to the Lu'); *'Khrug byed dmig pa* ('[Averting?] attention that causes conflict'); *Sgo dbye* ('Opening the door'); *Mnol bsang* ('Fumigation ritual for [the removal of] *nol* pollution'; *Wa bsang* ('Fumigation with fox [flesh]');<sup>12</sup> *Rdo khros dkar nag* ('Black and white stone lustration'); *Bar chod bdud kyi 'phrang bsal* ('Clearing the narrow trail of obstructive demons'); *La btsan kha bstod* ('Praise to the Tsen divinities on the passes'); *'Gram bsdum* ('Resolution of disputes').

The main subject of the *Zhagcigma* is to propitiate and make offerings to the gods and serpent spirits; to make *ngen* offerings to the place gods and the Nyen; to resolve conflicts and disputes; to recover souls and summon protective divinities; to call the *cha* and the *yang*; and to perform fumigation and lustration.

### 2.3 The *Ngenzhung*

There is a large component of *ngen* ritual texts in the Leu scriptures, and for this reason the latter are also referred to as *ngen* scriptures. As for the so called 'Leu ngen sel': the *ngen* ritual is in fact the main subject of the Leu texts. The *Ngen* texts of Bozo deal with the *Jadang* ritual. The term 'Jadang', which literally signifies a perch for birds to alight on, is a ritual for the propitiation of Nyen mountain gods; at the present time, the so-called 'Nyen Jakhyung' is to be understood as the Khyung, the mythic eagle that is sometimes conflated with the Indian *garuḍa*. In the Phenchu area, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the first summer month the *Ngen* ritual is performed in all the villages. A Khyung made of straw is taken up to a cairn, and the procedure is also therefore known as 'Accompanying the bird'. In Gyakha Rongkha to this day it is still customary to take a live rooster up to the cairn and to sacrifice it. The Tibetans of Dongtrom who live in Gyakha refer to the Khyung as the phoenix (Chinese 鳳凰 *feng huang*),<sup>13</sup> and the Nyen mountain

<sup>12</sup> Note from the editors: Concerning this ritual, see Berounský 2019. For a number of the other texts and rituals that are discussed in the present article, see also Berounský in press.

<sup>13</sup> According to Chinese belief the phoenix was the king of the birds, and together with the dragon it is the emblem of the Chinese people. The term *feng* denotes 'male' and *huang* 'female',

is called 'phoenix mountain' (Ch. 凤凰山 *feng huang shan*). The phoenix features prominently in Chinese folk tales. There is a long folk story about the relationship between this bird and a snake that is told in villages. The Khyung symbolises the Nyen, and the snake symbolises the Lu. This is made clear in the text entitled 'A fumigation ritual that recounts the transmission for the worship of the female Lu of the Nyen' (*Gnyan gyi klu sman bsten pa'i cho rabs bsang yig*). There is some evidence that these have been influenced by Indian Vedic ideas. At the same time as the men used to 'accompany the bird', women would do the same for the Lu.

The *jadang* ritual has thirteen stages. The performative tradition of this ritual has fallen into decline, and there are no Leu who know how to perform it. The following is a brief outline of its contents:

1. *Bya rdang gzhi btings* ('Laying out the base for the *jadang*')
2. *Bya rdang gsas rdo* ('The divine *jadang* stone')
3. *Bya rdang ka 'dzug* ('Setting up the *jadang* post')
4. *Bya rdang brgyan bkod* ('Decorating the *jadang*')
5. *Mthu chen pong ra'i spyang 'dren* ('Inviting the mighty [mountain divinity] Pongra [i.e. Pomra – see below]')
6. *Pong ra'i lha bsgrubs dang spyang 'dren* ('Propitiation and invitation of Pongra')
7. *Mthu chen pong ri brngon gzhung* ('Main text for the worship of the mighty Pongra')<sup>14</sup>

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and together they form an auspicious sign. A Chinese treatise on birds describes the phoenix as having its own head, the beak of the swallow, the neck of a snake, the back of a tortoise, and the tail of a fish; it has five different colours and stands about two metres high. A most exceptional bird, the phoenix drinks only dew and eats only bamboo shoots, and lands only on the thousand-year-old eucalyptus trees. The *Khyung chen ma'u bcu gsum* ('The thirteen great Khyung, the mother and its chicks') gives the following account about the origin of the Khyung: 'The egg hatched, and from it there emerged an extraordinary bird; this wondrous creature was known as the royal Khyung bird. It had a head like a brandished thunderbolt; the upper mandible of its beak was like a decurved hook, and the lower mandible like a firmly-gripping meathook; it had a tongue like flashing red lightning, upper teeth like serried white snow mountains, eyes like the shining sun and moon, and lower teeth like the waxing moon; its right and left ears were like the southern clouds and its horns like sharp blades of meteorite; the wish-fulfilling gem it carried flashed with light. Its right wing was like a wheel, and its left wing like a row of swords; its rear claw was like a blazing wheel, and its middle claw like a curved meathook, and its outer claws like curved hooks; its tail was like a waving banner, its down feathers like the southern clouds massing, and its belly like a whirling vase. The neck of the Khyung was like the stem of the vase. The cry of the Khyung is full and clear, and its flight would take it to the summit of Mt Meru. When it alights, it abides in the invisible dimension; it can see to the depths of the ocean, and the range of its vision takes in the ten directions'. These two accounts suggest that the phoenix and the Khyung are in some respects similar.

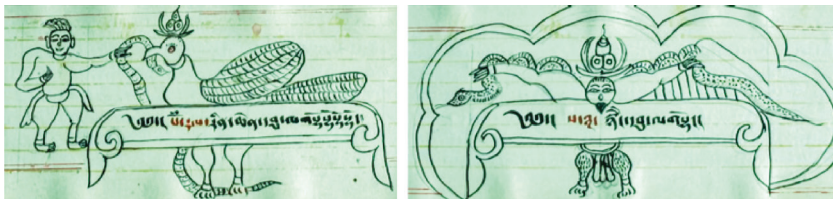
<sup>14</sup> In a number of Leu texts the term *brngan* and the name Pomra (Pom ra) appear respectively as *brngon* and Pongra (Pong ra).



8. *Wer ma dbus phyogs* ('Opening page of the Werma [war gods]')
9. *Rma rgyal pom ra'i bsang mchod* ('Fumigation offering to Magyal Pomra')
10. *Bya rdang gzhungs chen* ('Main text for the *jadang*')
11. *Bya rdang rtsi gsol* ('Offering nectar to the *jadang*')
12. *'Phang [Pha wang] brngon* ('Propitiating the bat')
13. *Sgron ma* ('The lamp')
14. *Sgo srungs* ('Guarding the door')
15. *Bya rdang bsang 'bul* ('Offering purifying smoke to the *jadang*')
16. *Bya rdang yon 'bul* ('Making offerings to the *jadang*')
17. *Dgra chos lug shug* ('Sheep-broker [from the ritual cycle] of making preparations for enemies')
18. *Bya rdang shing mi me la bsrags pa* ('Burning the wooden man of the *jadang* in the fire')
19. *De nas se rog rtsa gzugs* ('Ritual involving an effigy made of grass'?)
20. *Leu dgra sgrub* ('Ritual against enemies performed by the Leu')
21. *Bya rdang srungs mkhar* ('The protector palace of the *jadang*')
22. *Dbang bskur dang gzes sprod* ('Bestowing blessings and...?')
23. *Bya rdang sgo dbye* ('Opening the door of the *jadang*')
24. *Bya rdang bkrol ba* ('Releasing the *jadang*')



**Fig. 3:** Title folios of Leu texts from Gyanyag dealing with the propitiation of the Traglha gods (left) and the Khyung (right).



**Fig. 4:** Title folios of Leu texts from Gyanyag dealing with the propitiation of the divinity Pomral Rinchen (left) and the Sanyen divinities (right).





**Fig. 5:** Title folio of a Leu text from Gyanyag for the propitiation of the Khyung. The wide variety of representations of the Khyung later gave way to a form with certain standard features.



**Fig. 6:** A Khyung depicted in a mural at a retreat in Drublung.



**Fig. 7:** A *jadang* ceremony being performed by a Leu in Gyanyag, in Thewo. At the top of the construction is a single Khyung and below are four Khyung chicks.

As the name ‘Leu *ngen sel*’ suggests, the main task of the Leu is to perform *ngen* [and] *sel*. *Ngen* refers to the practice of pleasing the Nyen and other divinities by making offerings to them.

In the Phenchu area a *ngen* ritual has to be performed in spring. The altar on which the fumigation rite is conducted is in fact referred to as the ‘place for performing the *ngen*’ (*brngan byed sa*). The Leu texts contain a number of works related to *ngen* rituals, notably: *Mkhan bya’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* offering of the ‘artemisia-bird’ to the Nyen’); *Yul sa’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* for the Nyen of the territorial gods’); *Pom ra’i gnyan brngan* (‘The *ngen* for the Nyen of Pomra’); *Brngan mos rgyas bsdus* (‘The elaborate and restricted *ngen mo*’), as well as *Bya rdang* (see below), among others. In the Phenchu area *jadang* rituals used to be widespread, but nowadays they have fallen into abeyance.

## 2.4 The *Selzhung*

*Sel* denotes an elaborate ritual for cleaning that which is unclean, and purifying that which is polluted. As far as rituals for removing the types of pollution known as *me*, *mö* and *tsog* are concerned, village Leu perform a number of rituals that are known variously as *nalto*, *tsheto* and so forth. Even though rituals such as these were widely practised in the past, they have now been abandoned. *Sel* rituals are popularly referred to as *sil*, and *sel* texts also in fact use the form *sil*. Here is a brief outline of the contents of one of these:

1. *Sil gi mig pa* ('Visualisation for the *sel* ritual')
2. *Sil sa gcod pa* ('Delineating the site for a *sel* ritual')
3. *Sgron ma 'jug pa* ('Placing the lamp')
4. *G.yu 'brug rtsi gsol* ('Offering nectar to the turquoise dragon')
5. *Rgya mi 'phrang sel* (?)
6. *Sprel khra bshad pa* ('The explanation of the multicoloured monkey')
7. *A bo ya ngal* ('The ancestor Yangal')
8. *Mtshe lo drug bcu'i bgag sil* (A *sel* ritual for preventing misfortune associated with reaching the age of sixty)
9. *Dme' sil* ('A *sel* ritual for purifying the pollution from fratricide')
10. *Bkag sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing obstructions')
11. *Bya ma byil gis ster sil* ('A *sel* ritual involving the use of the flying squirrel')
12. *Nal sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing *nal* pollution')
13. *Rtsogs sil* ('A *sel* ritual for removing the impurity of dirt')
14. *Rtsi rdo dkar po* ('The white reckoning stone')
15. *Khram btab* ('Reckoning involving a tally-stick')
16. *Me tog dang smon lam* ('Flowers and prayers')
17. *Sdor (brdar?) gi smon lam dang bzhi 'deng* ('Prayers for invocation and laying down a base [for the ritual]')
18. *Sa kar gi phyag 'tshal ba* ('Performance of prostrations to the white cow')<sup>15</sup>
19. *Sil gi rdor bsang* ('A category of fumigation ritual')
20. *Sdor gis bkra shis* ('A prayer for establishing the auspices')
21. *Sku sdod* ('Praise to the [divine] bodies')
22. *Mda' bstod* ('Praise to an arrow')
23. *Sel byed sgron ma* ('The lamp of purification by means of a *sel* ritual')
24. *Bya rdang spyen 'dren* ('Inviting the *jadang*')

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<sup>15</sup> Note by the editors: According to Daniel Berounský, who has another version of this list, *sa* may be a scribal error for *pa*, itself an error for *ba*, meaning 'cow'.

The popular ritual known as the ‘Widely-spreading black and white divine stones’ (*Dar che ba’i gsas rdo dkar nag gi cho ga*) also belongs to the *sel* class of rituals. This class also includes rituals known as *nalto*, *tsheto* and *meto* rituals—respectively for removing pollution from incest, from the birth of twins and from fratricide—that are performed in the Phenchu area.

### 3 The activities of the Leu

#### 3.1 Soul-redemption and protector-calling rituals

In the Phenchu area, the main rituals performed by the Leu are soul-redemption<sup>16</sup> and protector-calling rituals. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the second month, the Leu perform a soul-redemption at Nangchen, to provide protection for the souls of the householders. The text for the soul-redemption ritual that is performed by the Leu involves the use of the following texts: *Bla ’bod* (‘Soul-calling’); *Bla ’blu* (‘Soul-redemption’); *Gshen rje bla blu* (‘Redemption of souls from the demons of death’); *Srung ma bla blu* (‘Redeeming souls by means of the protective gods’); *Bla blu dmu thag dkar nag* (‘Redeeming souls with the red and black celestial cords’), and others. The tradition of soul-calling for the community is a very popular ritual.

Texts for protector-calling rituals<sup>17</sup> include: *Khyung nag srung ’bod* (‘Calling the black Khyung as a protector’), *Pom ra’i srung ’bod* (‘Calling [the mountain god] Pomra as a protector’), *Stag lha’i srung ’bod* (‘Calling the god Taglha as a protector’) and *Bstan srung* (‘Protectors of the doctrine’), among others. After the performance of the ritual a protective cord is attached; for young children, a red protective cord is used. A passage from a folksong runs as follows:

*chu bya klad dkar srung dmar can //*  
*skud myi le’u su yin shod*  
 White-headed water bird with the red protective [cord],  
 Tell, us, who is the cord man, the Leu?

<sup>16</sup> Note by the editors: ‘Soul-redemption’ should be understood not in a soteriological sense but more literally as the ‘buying back’ of souls (Tib. *bla*) from demons that have captured them.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Protector-calling’ subsumes a number of different procedures, including *Srung skud ’dags pa* (‘Attaching protective cords’), *Srung dmar skud rgyu* (‘The cord of the red protector’), *Ra srung* (‘Protection for goats’) and *G.yag srung* (‘Protection for yaks’).

We know from this that the ritual of the red protective cord is an activity involving the Leu.

The Leu also have the task of performing a ritual called *sungphü*, which involved offering horses, property and animals. The distinction between the *sungphü* and *tshethar* seems to have been lost at some point and the two were conflated. Since the *sungphü* ritual involved making offerings of horses, property and animals to the mountain Nyen, it had a very different purpose from the *tshethar*, which is actually a ritual for sparing the lives of animals that would otherwise have been slaughtered. The Leu are still solicited for naming children, and many of them give names like Kongtsekyab ('Protected by Kongtse'), Kongtsetsho ('Cared for by Kongtse') and Pomrakyab ('Protected by Pomra'). The main protectors of the Leu are Pomra and Kongtse, and even nowadays at family ceremonies they perform rituals for summoning the *cha* and the *yang*, and perform soul-redemption and other rituals during funerals.

### 3.2 The *ngen sel* ritual

The *ngen sel* is one of the main rituals performed by the Leu. *Ngen* refers to the ritual of offering smoke to the mountain Nyen. The shrine for the fumigation is called the *ngencasa* ('place for performing the ngen') or the *ngendö jogsä* ('place for putting the *dö* effigy for the *ngen*'). The springtime performance of the *ngen* and the autumn *to* are especially important ceremonies throughout the region. During the performance of the *ngen*, the men perform a ritual called 'Accompanying the bird' for the Nyen, while women perform the ritual called 'Accompanying the Lu'. The first of these involves the men transporting an effigy made of feathers and representing the Khyung to a cairn on a pass, while the second entails the women performing fumigation and other rituals for the benefit of the Lu. While they are doing this, the Leu perform various rituals, including the *nyendö* ('*Dö* effigy for the Nyen'), *Ludö* ('*Dö* effigy for the Lu'), *pangkong* and others. To take the example of a Tibetan from the Phenchu area, the Nyen and the Lu are the foundation of the house, and a pejorative way of referring to a newly built house is to say that it has no Nyen on top and no Lu below. Households have their respective Nyen and Lu, and propitiate them annually. In the case of Gangle village, in Phenchu area, the Nyen of the general area is Lhamug, and the Nyen of the village itself is Hamtsho. Apart from these, there are also Nyen in all the individual communities, and there are even individual households that have them. In the Phenchu area, there are many people who have names like Nyendrub, Nyenthär, Nyentsho, Lukyab, Lubum and Lumen. When I myself was a child, I was given the name Nyenkyab, 'Protected by the Nyen', but a Gelugpa monk later changed it to Ngawang Gyatso.



There are about twelve different *sel* rituals, and the performance of these is very important for the Leu.

## 4 *Sipe to* rituals

The *leu to* or *lung to* are rituals that are performed by the Leu. Popularly, these are also referred to as *tonag*, ‘black *to* rituals’. The types of *to* that are performed by the Leu are called *nalto*, *meto* and *tsheto*, among others (see above).

### 4.1 *Nalto* rituals in the event of incest

In Bozo, it is customary to act with modesty and discretion in the presence of one’s close kin. Pollution arising from sexual relations between close relatives is called *nal*, and the affliction that this engenders is *naldri*. *Naldri* results in physical and mental damage, and to prevent or treat these the Leu perform *to* rituals and *sel* purification. A person who has been affected by *nal* may not join other members of the household in worshipping local divinities at their cairn; nor may he do fumigation or carry arrows and spears. A rope is attached to the cairn of the territorial divinity, and he must remain at the other end of it. Once the *nalto* ritual has been performed, however, the person may again go to the cairn. The *nalto* ritual – which is now only rarely performed – is very elaborate and costly, involving commensurate offerings to the Leu.

### 4.2 *Tsheto* rituals in the event of the birth of twins

The birth of twins results in ‘twin affliction’ (*tshedri*), for which a Leu must perform a *tsheto* ritual to purify the defilement. For twin boys the ritual is known as a ‘white twin’ ritual, for twin girls a ‘black twin’ ritual, and for mixed-sex twins a ‘variegated twin’ ritual. It is popularly said that ‘white twins’ are like dewdrops on a blade of grass, whereas ‘black twins’ are like the roots of the sea buckthorn: ‘white twin’ affliction is easily got rid of, like moisture that evaporates as soon as the sun shines on it, whereas ‘black twin’ affliction is harder to remove, like the roots of the sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*), which are pervasive and tenacious.



### 4.3 *Meto* rituals following fratricide

*Meto* rituals are performed when there has been a close intrafamilial killing; the *me* pollution that is the result of fratricide is purified by means of a *meto* ritual. There are also related rituals that are referred to either as *phome monal* or *monal phome*.

## 5 The difference between Leu and Ngagpa

The distinction between Ngagpas (tantric priests) and Leu is not always very clear. Sometimes, the two categories are subsumed under the combined term ‘Leu Ngagpa’. In the Phenchu area, houses are sometimes designated as ‘Leu households’ and ‘Ngagpa households’. It is commonly said that ‘the Leu propitiate the gods, and the Ngagpas smite the demons’, suggesting that these two have different specialisations. The main ritual activities of the Leu are soul-redemption, protector-calling, *ngen* and *sel*, whereas tantrists perform secret tantric rituals and fierce rites for the subjugation of demons. Or, as a popular saying has it, ‘Making offerings to the gods on high is the task of the Leu; exercising law in the middle is the task of the Sipa; and crushing the heads of the Dre and Sin demons below is the task of the Ngagpas’. Sometimes, when distinguishing among Leu, people speak of Sipe Leu and Gönpö Leu, the latter being the Ngagpa. Alternatively, the Leu are sometimes referred to as Bonpo, and the Ngagpa as Bandhe, that is, Buddhists. Whatever the case, the tasks of the two are closely related, and they are also rather similar in appearance.

## 6 The decline of the Leu texts and the current state of the priesthood

### 6.1 The destruction of the Leu texts of Bozo

The Leu texts of Bozo have been substantially transformed over the course of time, and consequently differ from the texts found in places such as Thewo and Dongtrom. Features such as the mention of tutelary divinities (*yidam*) and meditative practice in the opening sections, as well as the dedication of merit and prayers at the end, are evidence of modification. Furthermore, the Yungdrung Bon works

*Skye sgo*<sup>18</sup> and *Nor bu 'od 'bar*, as well other texts, have been inserted into the original manuscripts. According to a number of people whom I interviewed about this matter in Bozo, the Leu texts were 'improved' during the time of Cangtrul Namkha Gyaltsen (b. 1771), the author of an anti-sacrifice tract entitled *Gnam lcags 'khor lo* ('The meteorite wheel'). He put an end to the practice of *martor*, the 'red tormā' offering, in both upper and lower Bozo, and instructed the Leu to recite *Skye sgo* every day. Anyone who did not complete the recitation would have to raise a flag near the monastery for the 'closing of the doors to rebirth'.

Then it is said that a certain Yungdrung Nyima of Nyagnyin, in Bozo, reduced the four volumes of Leu texts to two by deleting the sections on animal sacrifice, but to date I have not been able to find these expurgated versions of the texts.

Later on, Tenzin Wangyal of the Khamatshang family in Dachen<sup>19</sup> took offence at certain disparaging remarks about the Cang branch of the Khamatshang that the texts contained, and he accordingly had Leu texts from upper and lower Bozo gathered up and burned. Subsequently, there was a dispute between the monks of the monastery and the Leu. The Leu lost, and it was decided to discontinue the performance of their rituals. The Leu decreased in number, and the tradition declined even further. Later still, the lama of Shingphug, in Bozo, made an attempt to revitalise the Leu by having them perform soul-retrieval rituals, but times had changed by now, and the tradition had gone into a terminal decline. Now there are just three Leu left in Bozo; all are over eighty years of age, and since there are no young Leu the tradition is on the verge of disappearing.

The main reason for the monasteries' proscription of the Leu is the conflict between the old and new religious traditions. The Leu are performers of the rituals of the Bon of the *Sipa* tradition, and since they perform animal sacrifices and transgress the monastic law of the ten virtues their sacrificial practices were terminated, and the rituals that were incompatible with the tenets of Yungdrung Bon were transformed. As a consequence of the milder and more aggressive reforms listed above – Cangtrul's prohibition of the *martor* ceremony, and his compelling the Leu to recite the *Skye sgo*; Yungdrung Nyima's reworking of the Leu texts; Khamatshang's forcible immolation of the manuscripts – the *Sipa* system was absorbed into Yungdrung Bon and lost its distinctiveness.

The lamas' prohibition of animal sacrifice may be regarded as a virtuous deed, but the result of proscribing that ancient custom has been to bring about

<sup>18</sup> An abbreviation for *Ngan song skye sgo gcod pa*, 'Closing the door to rebirth in the lower realms', a canonical work of Yungdrung Bon.

<sup>19</sup> Tenzin Wangyal was a lama of the Khamatshang family of Dachen. He was originally from Zungchu.

the end of a tradition. The contempt with which lamas and monks have treated the Leu tradition has resulted in the annihilation of an important part of Tibetan cultural heritage. The manuscripts themselves have been dispersed, and it is very difficult now to find any authentic sources.



**Fig. 8:** A wooden print block for ritual effigies used by the Leu.



**Fig. 9:** Takin horns used by Leu during rituals.



**Fig. 10:** Bearskin head-dress worn by Leu.

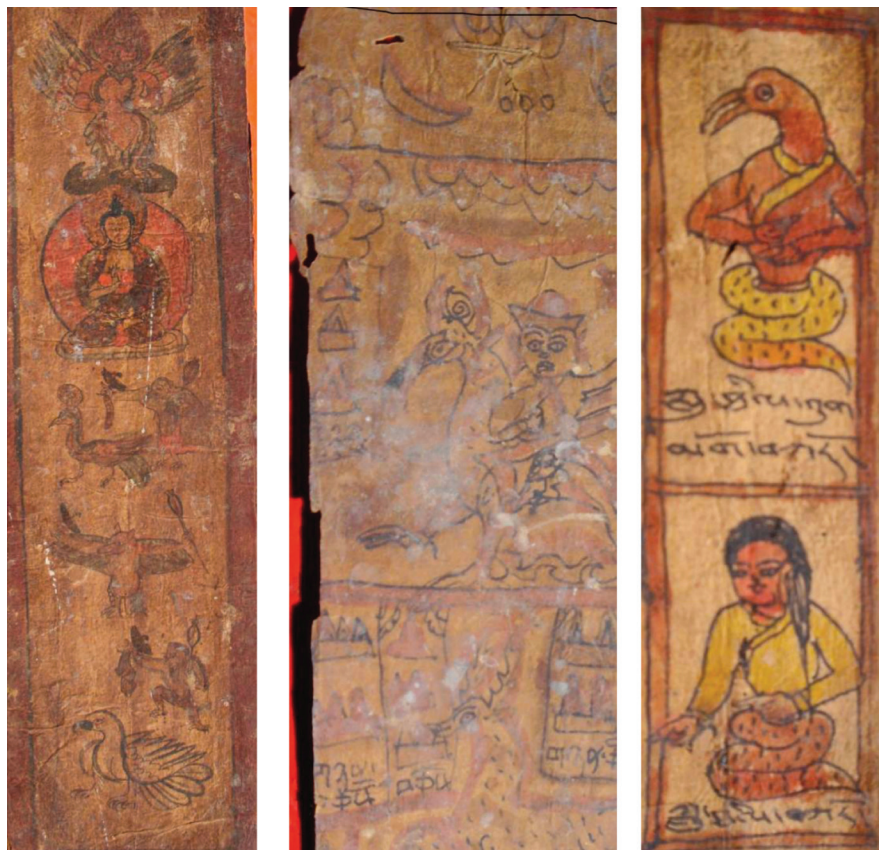


**Fig. 11:** Leu Waltrug (left) is a native of the Tsasa area of Bozo. Now in his eighties, he has been practising as a Leu since his youth. He can read both the headed and headless Tibetan scripts, and is fully trained in all Leu recitations and rituals.



**Fig. 12:** Hagö is a native of Nyagnyi, in Bozo. Now in his eighties, he was trained as a Leu from a young age. In 1998 he performed a soul-redemption and a protection-summoning ritual, but since then has not performed any Leu ceremonies.





**Figs 13a, 13b, 13c:** Examples of images in Leu manuscripts: a) The Khyung, Tönpa Shenrab, the White Monkey, the Wise Bat and the Vulture; b) Illustration of a ritual for the propitiation of the Nyen; c) Types of Lu.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following people for their help during my fieldwork: Chogtrul Khedrub Palzang; Tönpa Lhundrub of Cangtrultshang; Zöpa Gyatso of Jogar in Bozo; the research students Ngawangtsho and Lhamo Tshering, and the three Leu Waltrug, Hagö and Gendün. It is my hope that the present article, which would not have been possible without their valuable help and support, will be a small contribution to our understanding of ancestral Tibetan culture and contemporary traditions that are currently in decline.

This article, originally titled *Mdo smad 'phan chu rgyud kyi le'u yig (lung yig) zhib 'jug*, was translated from the Tibetan by Charles Ramble. Because of the large

number of Tibetan names and terms contained in this article, we have specially adapted the conventions that are used in the other chapters of this collection for the convenience of a non-specialist readership. Most Tibetan expressions are presented in a roughly phonetic form, although Wylie transliteration has been used for the titles of texts and for certain terms that are the subject of discussion. The orthographic rendering of all names and term is given in the Appendix.

The editors and translator are indebted to Daniel Berounský for his valuable comments on an earlier version of the English translation.

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## Appendix: Orthographic rendering of Tibetan names and terms

Akyi	A skyid
Anye Leu	A myes le'u
Bozo	Bab bzo
Bandhe	<i>ban dhe</i>
Barnang Drangkhen Drugkhyug	Bar snang drang mkhan 'brug khyug
Cang Khamatshang	Spyang kha ma tshang
Cangtrul Namkha Gyaltsen	Spyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
Cangtrultshang	Spyang sprul tshang
Cangtshang Ritrö	Spyang tshang ri khrod
<i>cha</i>	<i>phy[w]a</i>
Chogtrul Khedrub Palzang	Mchog sprul Mkhas grub dpal bzang



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Chöje	Chos rje
Cone	Co ne
Dachen	Mda' chen
Dachen Khamatshang	Mda' chen kha ma tshang
Dome	Mdo smad
Dongtrom	Ldong khrom
<i>dranggen</i>	<i>drang rgan</i>
Drangkhen Munrum Karpo	Drang mkhan mun rum dkar po
Dre	'dre
Drowa Lagyog	'Gro ba la 'gyogs
Drublung	Sgrub lung
Drublung Ngo Ritro	Sgrub lung ngo ri khrod
Gelugpa	Dge lugs pa
Gendün	Dge 'dun
Gönpo	Mgon po
Gönpo Leu	<i>mgon po le'u</i>
Guwa	Dgu ba
Gyakha Rongkha	Rgya kha rong kha
Gyalbön Thökar	Rgyal bon thod dkar
Gyanyag	Rgya nyag
Hagö	Ha rgod
Hamtsho	Ha mtsho
<i>jadang</i>	<i>bya rdang</i>
Jakhyung	<i>bya khyung</i>
Jemadzok	'Jas ma rdzogs
Jogar	Jo sgar
Khyung	<i>khyung</i>
Kongtse	Kong tse
Kongtsekyab	Kong tse skyabs
Kongtsetsho	Kong tse 'tsho
Kunshe Gyalwe	Kun shes rgyal ba'i
<i>labö</i>	<i>bla 'bod</i>
<i>lalu</i>	<i>bla blu</i>
<i>leuyig</i>	<i>le'u yig</i>
Lhadag Leu	<i>lha bdag le'u</i>
Lhamo Tshering	Lha mo tshe ring

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Lhamug	Lha smug
Lodzin	<i>Blo 'dzin</i>
Lubum	<i>Klu 'bum</i>
Luchu	Klu chu
Luchung	Klu chung
Lukyap	Klu skyabs
Lumen	Klu sman
<i>lungyig</i>	<i>lung yig</i>
<i>me</i>	<i>dme</i>
<i>meto</i>	<i>dme gto</i>
Miyi Magöl	Mi'i ma bgol
<i>mö</i>	<i>dmod</i>
<i>monal</i>	<i>mo nal</i>
<i>naldri</i>	<i>nal dri</i>
<i>nalto</i>	<i>nal gto</i>
Ngagpa	<i>sngags pa</i>
Ngawangtsho	Ngag dbang 'tsho
<i>ngen</i>	brngan
<i>ngencasa</i>	<i>brngan bca' sa</i>
<i>ngendö jogsa</i>	<i>brngan mdos 'jog sa</i>
<i>ngenyig</i>	<i>brngan yig</i>
<i>Ngenzhung</i>	<i>Brngan gzhung</i>
<i>nol</i>	<i>mnol</i>
Nyagnyi	Nyag nyi
Nyabpa Lagring	Snyab pa lag ring
Nyendrub	Gnyan sgrub
Nyenkyab	Gnyan skyabs
Nyenpa Nasang	Gnyan pa rna sangs
Nyenthär	Gnyan thar
Nyentsho	Gnyan 'tsho
Ozothang	'O zo thang
Palkyi	Dpal skyid
<i>pangkong</i>	<i>pang kong</i>
Phenchu	'Phan chu
<i>phome</i>	<i>pho dme</i>
Pomra	Pom ra

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Pomrakyab	Pom ra skyabs
Rongchung Sigye	Rong chung srid brgyad
Samdrub	Bsam grub
Sayi Drangkhen Chulam	Sa'i drang mkhan chu lam
<i>sekhar</i>	<i>gsas mkhar</i>
Selzhung	Sel gzhung
Shen	Gshen
Shenje Lalu	Gshen rje bla blu
Shenrab	Gshen rab
Shingphug	Shing phug
Sin	<i>srin</i>
Sipe Leu	<i>srid pa'i le'u</i>
<i>sipe to</i>	<i>srid pa'i gto</i>
<i>sungma lalü</i>	<i>srung ma bla blu</i>
<i>sungphü</i>	<i>srung phud</i>
Tagcha Alöl	Stag cha 'al 'ol
Tagkham	Stag kham
<i>Tawa Mignön</i>	<i>Lta ba mig rnon</i>
Tenzin Wangyal	Bstan 'dzin dbang rgyal
Teu Mace	Ste'u ma bcad
Thechu	The chu
Thewo	The bo
<i>to</i>	<i>gto</i>
<i>tonag</i>	<i>gto nag</i>
Tönpa Lhundrub	Ston pa lhun grub
Tsasa	Rtsa sa
<i>tshedri</i>	<i>mtshe dri</i>
Tshemza Khyekhyu	Tshem za khyad khyud
tshethar	tshe thar
<i>tsheto</i>	<i>mtshe gto</i>
<i>tsog</i>	<i>btsog</i>
Waltrug	Dbal phrug
<i>yang</i>	<i>g.yang</i>
<i>yidam</i>	<i>yi dam</i>
Yuldu Madrang	Yul du ma drang
<i>Zhagcigma</i>	<i>Zhag gcig ma</i>

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<i>Zhangtse</i>	<i>Zhang rtse</i>
<i>Zizag</i>	<i>Zi zag</i>
Zöpa Gyatso	Bzod pa rgya mtsho