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## SEWING UP THE QUEEN'S VAGINA

Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྗེ།<sup>1</sup>

I was born in 1983 in Lo khog (Luoke) Village, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. This story is one of my favorite Uncle Ston pa accounts. I do not recall exactly when I first heard it, but it was probably before I attended college. At this time, my family still had some donkeys, cows, and a mule. My family owned between two and three dozen cows at one time. We began selling them when I and my siblings attended school.

Grandmother (Dpa' mo skyid, 1929-2015) lived with my youngest paternal uncle. Twenty-odd village families, including my youngest paternal uncle's family, owned some sheep and goats, which they herded in the steep mountains a two- to three-hour walk from the village. In most cases, only older adult family members grazed them. However, when family emergencies arose, children substituted for the adults. Families that owned only cows and donkeys - like my own - herded their animals in nearby mountains and valleys. This short distance meant that children were regularly responsible for herding cows, donkeys, and mules.

Spring and summer were times that demanded more work because they were times for planting and harvesting, respectively. The village children were responsible for keeping animals from invading the fields and eating the crops. Each village had a committee whose members guarded the fields and put animals caught in the fields in the village shrine courtyard, or in the courtyard of deserted village homes. The owners of these animals then had to pay a fine in grain to redeem their animals. Cash was also allowed, but people rarely had cash. This

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Rin chen rdo rje. 2017. Sewing Up the Queen's Vagina. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:165-169.

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was evident from observing villagers carrying sacks of grain to other villages in the mountains, trips that often took one or two hours.

Our own village committee charged only a small amount of grain for offending animals that belonged to fellow villagers. However, they kept the animals in walled enclosures. These confined animals were not fed and became emaciated over time. Villagers did not want to see their animals suffer because they were essential for agricultural production.

I heard many stories during spring and summer when I grazed my family's livestock with my peers by the riverside and in nearby hills and mountains. Since the fields were near the river, children had to be on constant guard. Among the children were some adult men who had no children to graze their animals. Taking advantage of our tender age, they asked us to watch their animals in rotation near the fields. In return, they told us stories, sang, and played the flute and guitar. We were thus happy to be assigned such tasks in anticipation of being entertained.

These older men told us the same stories again and again, but boredom never registered. Maybe the attraction was their humorous, eloquent style of storytelling accompanied by dramatic gestures. All these factors in combination invariably had us convulse in laughter. We felt connected to a world of the humorous characters in the stories that seemed very real.

In autumn, harvest occupied us all. In winter, herding was not required, since livestock were free to roam anywhere in and out of the village, including mountains and valleys in the territories of other villages. In winter, we were busy with archery competitions.

My life before going to college was the most memorable time. When no elders were around to tell stories, children formed their own groups for the same purpose. Ghost stories were popular, but humorous stories like Uncle Ston pa were the most popular. Villagers understood Uncle Ston pa as a humorous character, but the accounts they told featuring the humorous idiot-trickster was never called Uncle Ston pa. Instead, the most popular idiot-trickster figure was Glen pa sta le stug 'Big Idiot'.

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When I attended middle school and then college, I heard stories of a similar genre with the same character called Uncle Ston pa. When I started telling my stories, I told the story below and used Uncle Ston pa as the name of the main character. I knew my audience was unfamiliar with Glen pa sta le stug. This story was immediately accepted as an Uncle Ston pa story of the naughty kind.

Long ago, stupid Uncle Ston pa's loyal character won the king's heart and he soon completely trusted Uncle Ston pa and enjoyed his company when they were hunting and otherwise entertaining themselves.

One day, the king entrusted Uncle Ston pa with taking the queen to the mountains on a hunting trip. Uncle Ston pa then led the queen and her entourage to a forested mountain far from the capital. About halfway up the mountain, he had the group wait while he and the queen continued up the mountain and hunted near the summit. After a long time of hunting, they prepared to return to where the entourage waited. Just after they started riding, Uncle Ston pa suddenly pulled on his reins, stopped his horse, turned his head, and looked up at the sky. He cupped both his hands around his left ear as though listening intently and then nodded.

Uncle Ston pa turned to the queen, who had observed all his actions, and said, "It has just been revealed to me that we should enjoy a feast that Heaven has specially prepared to celebrate our hunting trip."

The queen hesitated, but followed Uncle Ston pa because she was physically exhausted and hungry after a long day. Uncle Ston pa took the queen to a hidden place in the thick forest near the summit where a profusion of foods and drinks were displayed on a large table, all of which he had prepared earlier.

The queen was surprised, but delighted at what she saw in front of her. The arrangement that Heaven had seemingly made removed her earlier suspicion and confirmed her strong belief in

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Heaven's power. After the feast, they rode down a trail leading to the bottom of the mountain.

After a while, Uncle Ston pa stopped again and repeated his previously mysterious antics, while prostrating to the sky. After nodding towards the sky above the summit, he turned to the queen and said, "Heaven has just proclaimed that today is the most auspicious day of the entire year. As usual, Heaven wants to be entertained by the spectacle of mortals having sex and has chosen us to be partners."

Already convinced of Heaven's power, the queen accepted this latest expression of Heavenly will. Uncle Ston pa then took her to another secluded spot in the depths of the forest where he had earlier prepared a bed like the king's. Uncle Ston pa enjoyed every second of the pleasure that they energetically engaged in.

The queen's white mount was endowed with human intelligence and rushed off to report the incident to the king, who was so furious that he wanted to immediately behead Uncle Ston pa.

Uncle Ston pa realized that the white horse had gone to report to the king. Shortly after Uncle Ston pa had finished with the queen, the king appeared in the forest. By this time, Uncle Ston pa had removed any trace of what he and the queen had been up to. Holding a big needle with a long thread strung through the eye of the needle, he was poised as though he was about to sew up the Queen's vagina.

The king could not have been more furious when he saw Uncle Ston pa gazing at the Queen's genitals and yelled at Uncle Ston pa.

Uncle Ston pa wore a very sad, confounded look, as if he was facing an emergency. Pointing at the Queen's genitals, he said to the king, "Dear King, I'm so sorry! I am responsible! The Queen fell off her white horse and has torn herself here. How strange! The wound doesn't bleed. If it is not a wound, why would her flesh not be torn?"

The king realized that, as usual, it was just stupid Uncle Ston pa demonstrating his loyalty. The king then patted Uncle Ston pa on the head, comforting him.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dpa' mo skyid དཔལ་མོ་སྐྱིད།

gcan tsha གཅན་ཅམ།

glen pa rta les rtug (yul skad) གླེན་པ་རྩ་ལེས་རུག་(ཡུལ་སྐད།)

Huangnan 黄南

Jianzha 尖扎

lo khog ལོ་ཁོག་

Luohe 洛科

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྐོན།

Qinghai 青海

rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཅེན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།

ston pa སྐོན་པ།