

## INTRODUCTION

Rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ།

I, Rnam rgyal, was born in 1980 in Skor rol thang (Gu'ertong) Village, Dbra ltag (Reda) Township, Phyag phreng (Xiangcheng) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China.

My stepfather, Bstan 'dzin (b. 1953), told me stories as a child. He was an orphan and grew up in difficult circumstances, as did many others during that time. His older sister, G.yang chen (b. 1946), was his main caregiver during his childhood. Later, he joined a production team that gave what they produced to the local government and received labor points in return. In addition, only limited food and poor quality articles for daily use were received.

He worked on a pastoral team and lived in tents and log cabins in the mountains and on the pastures. He often fought with



other boys and became a tall, strong man. He and his herding companions told each other stories for entertainment at a time when there were no cassette recorders, televisions, and phones. Their stories included material from the Ge sar Epic, about A khu ston pa, about Mo ston phag mgo,<sup>1</sup> and so on. His stories included those

---

Rnam rgyal. 2017. Introduction. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:121-124.

generally known by many Tibetans, and also stories particular to Dbra ltag dbra ltag.

After the production team system was discontinued, Stepfather moved to the village and told me stories when the sun sank behind the mountains in the west, and Mother lit the room with burning pine knots. His stories were terrifically interesting, launching my imagination up out of the valley and over the mountains, and connecting my soul to Heaven, Hell, and to distant forests and grasslands.

Dbra ltag in winter.



When villagers went up into the mountains to collect caterpillar fungus and mushrooms, they invited him to the biggest

---

<sup>1</sup> Mo ston pag mgo was a diviner who asked that a pig head be cooked as a reward when he divined correctly. Meanwhile, his wife encouraged him to ask for more compensation from those he helped.

---

tents and asked him to tell stories. He sat in the front of the tent and created great joy with his stories that spellbound his listeners. They cooked good food for him and admired him for his storytelling talent. The tents of these collectors were in very remote, wild valleys where the only modern tools were guns. Men hunted river deer, rabbits, pheasants, and black bears. Stepfather was also a good hunter and I admired him for that, too.

I began telling stories in primary school when I was about ten years old. When I was in fourth grade, my classmates asked me to tell stories in their small dormitory rooms that were crowded with listeners who offered me bread, walnuts, and dried cheese. I realized that storytelling was a useful social skill and asked Stepfather to tell me more stories.

When I was about thirteen I went on pilgrimage with villagers for a couple of days to Mount Gangs nyan. Along the way, I told stories to villagers who were all older than I was. A phyi sgrol ma said that this pilgrimage was the most relaxing and enjoyable one she had ever been on because of my stories.

I have not told stories for a long while and it is hard for me to remember some of the details that I once knew.

I thank Stepfather for raising me in the worlds of his marvelous stories.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a phyi sgrol ma ཨ་ཕྱི་སྐྱོལ་མ།

bstan 'dzin བསྟན་འཛིན།

dbra ltag, ra rtags དབྲུག་རྟམ་རྟམ་གས།

dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛོལ།

g.yang chen གཡང་ཆེན།

Ganzi 甘孜

ge sar གེ་སར།

Gu'ertong 古尔通

mo ston phag mgo མོ་སྟོན་ཕག་མགོ།

phyag phreng ཕྱག་ཕྲེང།

Reda 热达

rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ།

sbrang 'bu me nyug, me tog nyug ba སྐང་འབུ་མེ་ལུག་མེ་རྟོག་ལུག་བ།

Sichuan 四川

skor rol thang སྐོར་རོལ་བང།

Xiangcheng 乡城