Perilous Novelties
The A-mdo Tibetan klu Rol Festival in Gling-rgyal Village
Dpal-Iidan-bka-shis and Kevin Stuart

Abstract. - Gling-rgyal Tibetan Village, Rma-Ilos-Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, China is the site of a summer festival known as klu Rol (water deities entertainment). The purpose of the festival is to please mountain gods through the village's two residents, male trance mediums. The mountain gods are beseeched to protect the village's crops and livestock and exorcize evils from the villagers through villagers' dances and sacrificial offerings. (China, Qinghai Province, Tibetans, China minorities, ritual, exorcism, trance mediums, shamans, mountain gods)

Dpal-Iidan-bka-shis, a Tibetan native of Gling-rgyal Village (Smad-pa Township, Tongren Tibetan Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, P.R. China); B.A. (Tibetan Language and Literature), Northwest Nationalities Institute (1992), Lanzhou, Gansu Province. He is fluent in Tibetan, Chinese, and English, and presently works as an editor for the Tibetan section of The Qinghai Daily.

Stuart, Kevin. B.S. (Oklahoma State University), M.S. (University of Missouri-Columbia), Ph.D. (University of Hawaii-Manoa) is an ethnographer, folklorist, and teacher of English. Since 1984 he has lived in Inner Mongolia, Mongolia, and Qinghai. His numerous publications have focused on North mountain gods while they are possessed, to bestow bumper harvests and protect their livestock from calamities. The Iha-ba are thus responsible for exorcizing evils that are damaging to the villagers. Other klu Rol festivals are held in numerous Reb-gong Tibetan and several Monguo villages between the fifteenth and the twenty-fifth of the same lunar month.

The term klu Rol is best translated as "water-deities-entertainment." However, in certain Reb-gong villages, festivals are held that are not principally devoted to water deities. Sgo-dmar Village, for instance, observes a festival known as dmyag-rtse (soldier-play) and Btsan-mo and Sa-dkyil villages

1 The Wiley system of Tibetan romanization is employed. Klu Rol refers to the festival itself and the dancing that occurs during the festival period. Goldstein (1976) has been, at times, consulted for apt English renditions of the Tibetan.
2 Chinese: Kanasang. This prefecture consists of Tonpor Autonomous County, Gcan-tsha (Jianzha) Tibetan Autonomous County, Sog-po (Henan) Mongol Autonomous County, and Sngag 13.gdza 'gag (Lijiaxia) Administrative Area.
4 According to the Chinese lunar calendar. The sixth lunar month roughly corresponds to August of the Gregorian calendar.
5 Today, the Reb-gong area includes Tongren County, Rtes-khrog County, and the south part of Thun-te (Tongde) County of Mtshe-lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Rong-bo (Longwu) was historically the political and religious center of Reb-gong, owing in large part to the presence of Rong-bo Lamasery. This has led to some confusion. Today, for example, Tongren County, which is home to Rong-bo Town (Tongren Town) where Rong-bo Lamasery is situated, is frequently referred to as Reb-gong.
6 Monguo villages in this area that celebrate festivals during this time period include Gnyan-thog (Nianduhu) and Sgo-dmar (Guomar). The Monguo are a non-Islamic Mongol-related people who numbered 190,000 in 1990. Recognized as one of China's 56 officially recognized ethnic groups, they reside mainly in Qinghai Province. They were classified as the "Tu nationality by the Chinese government in the 1950s.

1. Introduction
The klu Rol festival in Gling-rgyal (Chinese: Langjia) Tibetan Village of Rma-Ilo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province is described. Specifically, we describe the village where this klu Rol is done, folklore accounts related to the festival's origins, trance mediums (Iha ba) who play a central festival role, the mountain god altar (lob-tse) where important prefestival activity occurs, mountain gods, water deities, and a detailed description, including certain dances and songs, of the festival itself. Klu Rol is held from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth day of the sixth Chinese lunar month in Gling-rgyal Village. It is perceived to be a time of recreation, not only for local villages but also for mountain gods that loom large in local folk religious beliefs and rituals. During the festival, villagers delight the mountain gods and beseech two male village trance mediums, who represent

See: http://www.archive.org/details/Longjia_Laru for a video of this ritual.
observe lhun-rtse'd (god-play) festivals. Nevertheless, all these festivals during the general period under discussion are called klu-rol. It is the most anticipated and energetic of local festivals.

Khi-bsam-gtan (1993), a catalog of various writings in Tibetan with very brief annotations, lists Ri-gdengs (1987) as focusing on klu-rol of the Reb-gong and Khril-ka7 areas, the historical background and social environment, and the character of klu-rol. It also lists Snying-bum-rgyal (1989) as concerned with klu-rol origins.8 Xing's (1992) study contains useful information, but at times deals with complex performances in summary form, e.g.:

In the Reb-gong area such main items of lama performance as lishen, lashenze, mashenze, and so on are identical for all villages. Currently, gouri and guanyin dances are also popular in every village. However, performance procedures vary. Unique contents such as azala, planning farming, playing pranks, and making fun in Sibej Village are performed. Suohen Village observes tsoqujawari. "Killing tigers and capturing lions," kanna, and the ohai dance are done in the villages of Sanggaxiong and Niandu, while the "wedding feast" is observed in such villages as Zhamao and Songgexiong.9

Needless to say, one longs for more than a list of names of performances. Additionally, Chinese transcriptions make these performances difficult to identify. These problems highlight the unfortunate fact that, to date, studies in Tibetan and Chinese of such presentations in Reb-gong have failed to provide detailed accounts of individual village performances.

The only published account in English of a klu-rol performance we are aware of is by Stuart, Bannadorgi (Pad-ma-rdo-rje), and Huangchojia (Dpal mc hog -rgyal) (1995),10 who studied the Leang-skya (Chinese: Jiuangshija) Village klu-rol. The very significant differences between the latter village's klu-rol when compared to the klu-rol of Gling-rgyal raise questions begging more research: Why do certain villages celebrate one form of klu-rol and not another? What takes place in each Reb-gong village klu-rol? An answer to the latter question is particularly necessary before reliable generalizations are possible about this festival.

Information for our article was obtained through the knowledge of the first author, who is a resident of Gling-rgyal and who has participated in klu-rol since 1988; the second author, who visited Gling-rgyal Village in 1994 during the village klu-rol, informed local residents; and relevant literature.

2. Gling-rgyal Village

Gling-rgyal Village lies in a river valley in the east of Rma-ho Autonomous Prefecture located 190 kilometers south of Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai Province, and approximately five kilometers south of Sma-dpa (Chinese: Maba) Township. The village has 320 households and a total of 2,240 residents. All residents are A-mdo-speaking.11Nearly all villagers live in one-story, adobe brick rooms built along the inside of a high adobe wall compound. According to our informants, ancestors of the present villagers originally migrated from Mo-rlug (Bzang-ru) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the southeastern portion of today's Qinghai Province several centuries ago to a location approximately eight kilometers southeast of the present Gling-rgyal Village.

Although all villagers are members of the Gling-rgyal tribe, they are divided into seven distinct groups (Sa-so-ma, Ru-zhol-ma, Ru-gon-gma, Ya-ru, Ma-ru-ma'-gu, Ma-ru-ya'-go, ja'-mo-thang). Villagers also use the terms "upper" and "lower." For example, villagers often refer to the village to the west of the village as "lower" village, whereas Gling-rgyal and Yarung Menling belong to the "upper" Gling-rgyal Village. One explanation for this difference is that Gling-rgyal Village is named a "lower" village by Ru-gen Village and later on by the village of Gling-rgyal Village, since the Tibetan language is different in these two villages. This term is also used by the younger generation to distinguish between Ru-gen and Gling-rgyal. Another common term of this area is "upper" and it is used by older residents when referring to their own village and other nearby villages.

Modern farming is oil-based. The farmers practice agriculture in the traditional lineage system: each family has its own herd of sheep, cows, or yaks, and some even grow crops (mainly barley, dandelion, and barley). Every family has their own type of yaks, using the same yaks for their entire lifetime. Every yaks is named, and they are passed on from one generation to the next. Every family has their own type of yaks, using the same yaks for their entire lifetime. Every yaks is named, and they are passed on from one generation to the next.

The village has two primary schools: one maintained by the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and the other managed by the local government.

The main practice of the villagers is agriculture, and the main source of income is farming.12

11 A-mdo, Khams, and Dbya-gstsang are the three major Tibetan dialects. In Qinghai, A-mdo is spoken in Msho-nub, Haxi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Rma-ho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho-lho (Hai-nan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mo-glo (Gzuhu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mo-sbro (Hai-ba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and in certain counties in other prefectures. Tibetan-speaking communities in Minhe Hui and Mongqor Autonomous County, Hzurq Hui and Mongqor Autonomous County, Huangzhong, Pingen, and Xunhua Solar Autonomous County, all located in Msho-shar (Haidong) Prefecture, illustrate this. Kham speakers are found primarily in Yul-shul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture located in southwestern Qinghai. Most Dba-gtsang speakers live in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

12 There were very occasional exceptions. For example, a Hui man from Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture married a woman village in the mid-1950s. In the early 1990s, he returned to Linxia. At the time of his departure, he lived part of the year in a house in Gling-rgyal Village and part of the year he resided in Reb-gong and spoke perfect A-mdo. Also, a Hui man married a woman from the Ya-ru group and lived in Gling-rgyal for some years. He, his wife, and children left the village in the early 1970s.

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“tower” to refer to areas of the village. “Upper village” (var-stod) refers to the eastern portion where the Sa-so-ma, Ru-gong-ma, Ru-zhol-ma, and Ya-ru live. “Lower village” (smad-stod) refers to the western portion where the Ma ru ma ‘go, Ma-ru-ya-‘go, and ‘ja’-mo-thang groups dwell. One explanation for these groupings is that, some time after the ancestors of the present Gling-rgyal villagers established an initial settlement, a decision was made to move to the present Gling-rgyal Village site. People were then divided into five groups, including the single group that later divided into the present-day Ru-zhol-ma and Ru-gong-ma groups. The groups were positioned in the settlement so that each faced a cardinal direction, and the fifth group was put in the center. This was done so the settlement could better defend itself against attacks from hostile tribes. Another interpretation suggests that the locations of the original five groups were chosen to more efficiently cultivate fields.

Most villagers are peasants with wheat and oil-bearing plants constituting the major crops farmed. Nearly 100 families earn most of their livelihoods through animal husbandry, and also herd animals on behalf of other families who reciprocate by plowing their fields and weeding their crops. Every family has several mdzo (cow-yak cross), milk cows, and donkeys. A few families have mules and tractors for use in farm work. Every resident has approximately three mu (1 mu = 0.067 hectares) of land, the result of land division after implementation of the responsibility system in the early 1980s. Some young male adults engage in trade outside the village, such as buying butter locally and later transporting and selling it in Lhasa. In mutually advantageous trade, local herdsmen trade sheep for flour from local peasants.

The village has a Tibetan-language primary school. After graduation, most children enter the Tongren Minority Junior and Senior Middle School where Tibetan is the language of instruction, other than in Chinese language classes.

Though Dge-lfs-pa is the most influential of the village’s complex religious beliefs, the influences of Rnying-ma-pa (Sngags-pa) and Bon are also evident. Most villagers are devotees of the former, although the Sa-so-ma group follow Bon. However, both groups are also followers of Dge-lfs-pa. For most Sa-so-ma members, the fact that they are Bon distinguishes them from other village groups by their spinning prayer wheels counterclockwise rather than clockwise. In addition, Sa-so-ma men who wear queues wrap them counterclockwise around their heads, rather than clockwise as do some Bka’-brgyud-pa devotees. Bon religious images are similar in appearance to those of Bka’-brgyud-pa.

Each group maintains a gser-khang (a small temple) where religious rites are held on propitious days. Additionally, a representative of every village family burns flour for mountain gods each morning and afternoon in the gser-khang. Every household has a method-khang in their home where statues and paintings of deities are venerated. Here, conifer branches and highland barley are burned and several small metal bowls of water are offered to the gods before villagers eat breakfast.

The village also has three small buildings, each with a courtyard enclosed by a high wall (lha-khang) that are considered the main village mountain gods’ dwellings. Furthermore, there is a Dge-lfs-pa lamasery, Sa-dkar-shar, at the base of a mountain eight kilometers south of the village, which was established by Gling-rgyal Village. The lamasery has approximately 50 resident monks, all of whom come from Gling-rgyal Village. The lamasery is visited by all villagers, regardless of religious affiliation. Lamasery monks are invited to villagers’ homes to chant scriptures on such occasions as funerals, when scripture chanting is considered necessary to help the soul of the deceased obtain a favorable incarnation in the next life.

Ya-ru group members are all devotees of Rnying-ma-pa. There are also adherents of Rnying-ma-pa among the other five non-Bon groups. The majority of villagers follow Skya-bo (also known as Gdugs-dkar), whose teachings are very near those of Rnying-ma-pa.

Ru-zhol-ma and Ru-gong-ma were originally a single group. Today, they share the same leader and also the same sngags-khang, a small temple compound where all males of these two groups

13 Chinese: Gelupai and Huangjiao (literally: Yellow sect). This religious sect was established by Tshong-kha-pa (1357-1419). Later, it greatly influenced many aspects of Tibetan society.
14 Devotees emphasize magic power through scripture chanting. In terms of doctrine, it is nearer Dge-lfs-pa than Bon.

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gather to chant scriptures on certain dates for periods up to four days in length.

The Ma-ru-ma-go and Ma-ru-yu-go groups also share the same-snags-khang.

3. Kl-

roll Origins

An account of Gling-rgyal Village’s kl-

roll origin16 was given by the village’s retired lha-ba17:

When Gling-rgyal Village ancestors originally migrated to the present site, they searched for and eventually found attractive unoccupied land to live on.

There was a very pious man named A-la-skyes who settled in a place approximately two kilometers from an unoccupied area on Tho-tho-log Plain. A-la-skyes decided to cultivate this area but, because there was a lack of water, he was unable to obtain good harvests. Kl-

sdong18 Spring was near this area in a wide valley also approximately two kilometers from Gling-rgyal Village. The spring originated from an area much higher than the unoccupied plain area. Later, A-la-skyes organized workers and excavated a ditch from the spring to his fields to irrigate them.

He benefited much from the spring in the following years and, to show his gratitude, he visited the spring and offered grain and food in honor of the water deities. Many water deities were delighted and appeared as snakes and frogs and danced in various manners on nearby trees. The next day A-la-skyes came again with several companions. First, they burnt grain and conifer branches to summon the water deities. The water deities soon came to the surface of the spring and performed various movements. These performances were only visible to A-la-skyes and not to his companions.

A-la-skyes passed on the dances to his companions by imitating the water deities’ movements. Afterwards, A-la-skyes returned to delight the water deities every year in the hope of ensuring the next year’s harvest. Later, more and more villagers opened more and more land. This required much in terms of excavating a longer irrigation ditch. The villagers responsible for digging that ditch were divided into six groups, each of which cut an assigned section. These groups were not formed on the basis of the present village groups, but were work crews. The celebration created by A-la-skyes was continued by villagers who belonged to those six groups, initially with A-la-skyes leading the proceedings. All villagers participated in the celebration around Kl-

sdong Spring at the appointed time each year. One of

the six groups acted as the ‘dzin-res-tshang and was responsible for organizing the festival. This role changed every year, with the present six village groups (Sa-so-ma does not participate) assuming responsibility for festival administration in turn.

Over the years, this celebration also delighted the mountain gods19 so much that they wished to participate in the festival with the villagers. Furthermore, the mountain gods persuaded all village residents to join the festival by promising that all could share the festival with a man possessed by a mountain god. Consequently, this festival became popular with six of the present seven village groups. The festival was then no longer confined to the generation of A-la-skyes who had initially observed kl-

roll.

Bon devotees (Sa-so-ma) do not participate in most kl-

roll items. Although there are no convincing explanations for this, the most probable reason is that when all villagers began to participate in kl-

roll, Bon adherents separated from other non-Bon villagers. Traditionally, when possessed, the lha-ba rebukes Bon devotees for not participating in kl-

roll.

4. Mountain Gods

The mountain gods are not able to influence an individual’s next incarnation. Moreover, they display the human qualities of being fond of sexual intercourse and eating animal flesh, they are capable of hate, and sometimes they harm creatures. Nevertheless, they are seen as potentially helpful when an individual faces difficulty. Sincere Buddhists tend to believe that the mountain gods are much less important than building merit by such activities as reciting scriptures, circumambulating stupas, maintaining a clear conscience, and doing one’s utmost to aid other people.

To better understand how mountain gods fit into Gling-rgyal villagers’ complex religious belief system, it is helpful to discuss the villagers’ understanding of how the universe is divided into four spheres: Bde-ba-can, Dri-za, Mi-yul, and Dmyal-ba. The first is located in the uppermost part of the sky. It is the home of the most powerful and important gods. Humans who have accumulated great merit may dwell here eternally after their deaths in a paradise without cares about such mundane concerns as food and clothing.

The Dri-za sphere lies between Bde-ba-can and Mi-yul. Dri-za is home to mountain gods and other

16 Xing (1992) presents a number of ideas concerning kl-

roll origins, which we shall not repeat here. His brief account of Gling-rgyal Village’s kl-

roll origins differs substantially from the account we present here.

17 Mr. Sha-bo-tsh-ring (born 1935?), who retired from the lha-ba position in 1991, gave this account.

18 Literally: Water-deity-tree. The tree is near the spring.

19 It is believed that the mountain gods have sexual intercourse with the water goddesses.
deities who are secondary in importance to those who inhabit Bde-ba-can. Dri-za mountain deities are sustained by the smoke of burnt offerings provided by human beings. Other deities in this sphere eat fruit that grows on an enormous world-sized tree named dpo-gas-bsam-shing that was planted by water deities, subsequently grew rapidly, and extended into the Dri-za sphere.

Mi-yul is the world of humans. Although mountain gods are powerful and drift about in a physically higher realm than mortals, they are considered inferior to humans because they can never shed their duties and difficulties. The human world is regarded as the ideal place from which to enter Bde-ba-can. In Mi-yul there is the opportunity to realize the meaningless of human existence and, through merit, be perfected, and enter Bde-ba-can.

Dmyal-ba is where spirits of cruel and evil people go. They are punished by constantly suffering the pain of being burned. It is impossible to escape this world.

Origins of the Mountain Gods

The following accounts show that some mountain gods are considered incarnations of brave and kind local persons, or persons who came to the area from other regions. These deities always dwell in mountains. Local accounts suggest that several mountain gods in the area were once military commanders. During the 8th century, for example, when Ao-rgyan-pa-dmar-byung-gnas was invited to Tibetan areas by King Khri-srong-lde-btsan to disseminate Buddhism and establish monasteries, the Twelve Evils (Bstan-ma-bcu-gnyis) were tormenting Buddhism. Ao-rgyan-pa-dmar-byung-gnas overcame these evils and compelled them to work for Buddhists causes. Many Tibetans regard the Twelve Evils as the first mountain gods.

According to a more recent account, a historical figure in the Reb-gong area became a mountain god in a way that resonates with the story of the Twelve Evils’ conversion:

Seven decades ago, there was a very dauntless man in the Reb-gong area who, hoping to become wealthy, roamed about in Tibetan areas stealing treasures from rich people. He gradually accumulated many enemies who searched everywhere for him. This forced him to dwell on remote summits and in places where people could not see him. Although he had been fierce in stealing rich people’s treasures, he had, on the whole, a good heart. He liked to help poor people, for example, by giving them livestock he had stolen from rich people.

One day a Living Buddha asked the man on behalf of all the villagers in Reb-gong to subdue a person who had stood up after dying.20 Shortly after that, the man went through a forest near Bla-brang21 with his brother. One of his enemies, who had concealed himself, shot him with a gun and killed him. People later said that it was a great pity that he was killed. He became a mountain god after his death because of his merit and to satisfy the desires of the local people.

A-myes-lha-ri

The most important mountain god is A-myes-lha-ri. He inhabits a mountain approximately half a kilometer from the village and is the leader of all the mountain gods that the villagers believe in. He is both gentle and violent, depending on circumstances, and he rides a white horse. Based on A lag bzang bo (n.d.), A-myes-lha-ri has a brown scowling face with eyebrows knit in anger. His eyes are wide, and his sharp teeth are colored with blood. He wears armor and a helmet and from his waist hangs a quiver covered with tiger skin. He holds a long spear in his right hand and an evil-capturing rope in his left hand. Four dwarves are positioned in front of A-myes-lha-ri. Their faces are covered with blood and they have frowning expressions, brown queues, and wear necklaces of human skulls. The upper part of their bodies are covered by human skin and flags drape their lower bodies. Their right hands grip sharp swords, while their left hands jerk out the hearts and intestines of evil people. The army of the mountain gods are assembled around A-myes-lha-ri.

Additional insight may be gained into the character of A-myes-lha-ri from the villagers’ point of view by examining the three large statues of him in one village shrine (Dmag-dpon-sgang).22 Each

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20 A soul might return to its previous body. If this happens, the individual is called ro-longs. It is regarded as dangerous and not human. In such a case, a Living Buddha is often invited to subdue the ro-longs, through reading scriptures. In order to prevent a corpse from walking out of a room, people believe that it is best for the corpse to be placed in a room with a low door. This way, in the event a corpse rises and tries to walk out the door, it will bang its head against the upper part of the door frame and be unable to leave.

21 Chinese: Labuleng. The site of a large Tibetan temple located in Xiahe Township, Gansu Province.

22 Literally: Army-commander-hill. This hill is approximately two kilometers east of the lower village and about one and a half kilometers east of the upper village. On this hill is a shrine to A-myes-lha-ri. A snyangs-rtse ascetic meditates in the shrine and offers sacrifices to A-myes-lha-ri. He chants scripture in the shrine year round beseeching the mountain

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The statue has a different appearance and a different name: *zi-ha* (compassionate), *drag-pa* (violent), and *ran-pa* (moderate).

*Zhi-ba.* In the center picture, A-myes-lha-ri rides a white horse, holds a long spear in his right hand, and has a compassionate expression. This is believed to be his natural character.

*Drag pa.* The left A-myes lha ri has an appalling face. His tongue is stuck out, his eyes are open wide, and under his feet two human-appearing creatures seem to be in great pain and unable to bear his weight. This manifestation of A-myes-lha-ri is considered to be evoked against whom or whatever might harm a villager.

*Ran-pa.* The right A-myes-lha-ri holds a sword in his right hand. With his left arm he embraces a goddess with hair that hangs to her feet. This statue, by depicting the mountain god as sexually interested in males, is considered to show A-myes-lha-ri as an ordinary man.

A-myes-lha-ri has a brutal and competitive son. In the past, villagers fought each other under his influence. In time they tired of such conflict and decided to establish an underground *lab-tse.* To some extent, this *lab-tse* represented A-myes-lha-ri’s son and, by placing it underground, he was subdued. This account testifies to the complex nature of the mountain gods.

In terms of the duties of the mountain gods, they are all responsible for protecting the village from disaster, ensuring that the village has good harvests, and persuading the water deities to send appropriate amounts of rain and sunshine during the growing season. Villagers burn flour and conifer branches and the resulting smoke is considered the food of the mountain gods. Villagers also built a *lab-tse* to delight the mountain gods. The following two accounts provide further information about A-myes-lha-ri and the duties of the mountain gods.

**Account One**

Long ago, mountain gods of the Reb-gong area gathered and discussed what village should be responsible for offering food to mountain gods that year. Every mountain god tried to get another village’s mountain god to assume this responsibility. Then the chief of all mountain gods in this area announced it was Gling-gyal Village’s turn to provide the mountain gods with food by suffering storms, which meant that the village crops would be destroyed.

At this critical juncture, Gling-gyal Village’s mountain god persuaded a female mountain goddess, who represented the small village of Nyang-tshang to agree that her village would incur this responsibility rather than Gling-gyal Village. Soon a storm destroyed Nyang-tshang’s crops and, if A-myes-lha-ri had not been so intelligent, Gling-gyal Village’s crops would have surely been destroyed.

**Account Two**

Over a century ago a Gling-gyal Village Living Buddha named A-lag-bzang-bo traveled to Wutai Mountain. While traveling, he became entangled in a dispute between two strong Chinese groups and was captured and imprisoned by one of the groups. While incarcerated, he composed a scripture to summon mountain gods from the Reb-gong area to help him escape. One night he dreamed of all these mountain gods assembling in the air above the prison. They inclined to him how he could escape.

During a later battle between the two Chinese groups he attempted an escape. With the mountain gods’ assistance he began escaping but found himself in danger. A certain mountain god, who had a pleasing, fair complexion, held a long spear in his right hand and a rope in his left hand and rode a white horse. He approached the Living Buddha and rescued him without a care to his own safety. This was A-mugs-lha-ri. Later, Gling-gyal residents adopted him as their own mountain god.

In gratitude, the Living Buddha wrote a book about A-myes-lha-ri (A-lag-bzang-bo n.d.) that explained the origin of this mountain god and how village residents should venerate and beseech him. This document further explains that A-myes-lha-ri had a special relationship with Lha-chen-tshangs-pa-dkar-ro (Great White Deity). In a later incarnation, A-myes-lha-ri was born to a father named Yum-rgyu-thog-pha and a mother named Klu-lccam-dung-ral-can. In time, A-myes-lha-ri became mighty and famous. From the ages of the deity...
A-my-yes-khu-thog

There are also accounts that certain mountain gods were military commanders from inner China during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). For example, A-my-yes-khu-thog, who is particularly venerated by lower village residents, was a Qing commander. After he failed to carry out the emperor’s directive, the emperor ordered him shackled and said that he must go to a place that he could reach in one day. A-my-yes-khu-thog set off and was drifting over Gling-rgyal Village when darkness fell, therefore, he took up residence here. An informant reported that Dar-rtsi-mdø in inner China was the original home of this mountain god. Dar-rtsi-mdø is a mystery. Certain villagers suggested it refers to Kutai Mountain. A-my-yes-khu-thog’s identity is obvious when he possesses a lha-ba, for he moves as though his feet were fettered.

Venerating and Beseeching the Mountain Gods

According to the xylograph mentioned earlier, if a person wants to beseech a mountain god to bestow a bumper harvest and protect his home and livestock, a circular wooden container with two parts is employed. The container consists of a small hollow cylinder rising out of a larger cylinder. Both sections of the vessel are filled with grain. The seeds in the small cylinder are arranged so that a dome is formed. Into this dome is thrust a little spear (gyang-mdø) made of barley flour. The spear points up and around the point hanging down there is affixed a small colorful kha-btags. Small flowers made of butter clung to the dome of seeds. In the large cylinder are placed barley flour rolls, butter, and candies—these are offerings to the mountain gods. Meanwhile, the mountain god must be invited by burning goat fat and conifer branches while chanting scriptures extolling the mountain god’s merit.

28 Located in the present Tibet Autonomous Region and where the first Tibetan Buddhist temple was reputedly built.
29 Near Dga’-ldan Temple in today’s Tibet Autonomous Region.
30 The cave shrine refers to a place where a Buddhist devotee lives alone in study and meditation in order to cultivate Buddhist ideals.

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When village residents invite the mountain god they must offer bsang and chant the Bsang-bod Sutra. The following is a Bka'-brgyud-pa Bsang-bod Sutra from A-lug-bsang-bo:

Beseeking all Living Buddhas drifting in the highest sky of Bde-bcan, the army of gods aimlessly drifting in Dri-z'i-yul, the protectors of religion, and the mountain gods drifting in the lower sky to be cheerful and come to this world after eating my offerings. Protect Buddhism, drive away spirits and heresies that hinder me in practicing Buddhist doctrines, assist me to have wealth and to be mighty in this world, and maintain peace that humans enjoy cherishing. Drive diseases away, let this world brim with Buddhism, attenively protect good people, punish evil and bad men, allow humans to enjoy long lives and be happy in this world, bestow everything people expect, and save people in trouble though their beliefs are heretical.

A-myes-lha-ri Mountain God in white clothes dwelling in a solemn palace, you often change your appearance. You mighty mountain god, come hither with the assistance of the other mountain gods. Offerings that I have prepared are ready for you. I wish that the offerings will make you and your companions joyful. All that I want and beseech is that you drive unexpected disasters away on behalf of Buddhism and foster the living conditions of humans, bring propitiuousness to the world, with your might, protect humans and harvests from diseases and storms, and drive away disasters and evils. Let my ambitions be realized according to Buddhist doctrines. Assist your needy residents, allow livestock to avoid disasters, and guarantee a bumper harvest with other mountain gods. Be vigilant on behalf of villagers and care for them as though they were your own children.

5. Lha-ba

The village has two lha-ba. They are referred to at times as the “upper village lha-ba” (yar-stod-lha-ba) and the “lower village lha-ba” (smad-stod-lha-ba). A-myes-lha-ri and A-myes-khu-thog may possess the lha-ba from the lower village. The identity of the mountain god that has possessed the lha-ba is obvious in the lha-ba’s dancing. He dances in no particular way when he is possessed by A-myes lha ri. However, when he is possessed by A-myes-khu-thog he dances as though his feet are tied together. Only A-myes-mag-pa possesses the lha-ba from the upper village and there is nothing particular about this dance; that is, his limbs do not seem fettered. By tradition, only male members of the Upper Nor-brgya-tshang and the Lower Nor-brgya clan can become lha-ba. When a new lha-ba is needed, young males (fifteen to twenty years of age) of the Nor-brgya clans are stood in front of a crowd of villagers. The mountain god that has lost a lha-ba then chooses a single replacement. This might happen only once in twenty to forty years at the death of a lha-ba, or when a lha-ba retires. During this ritual, several men beat gongs (khar-rnga) and goatskin drums (lha-rnga). The audience shouts, burns bsang, and tosses sslug-rta in the air. The purpose is to beseech the mountain god to possess one of the assembled males. Subsequently, some males begin shaking their shoulders and heads and begin hopping about. Finally, the village chief invites a Living Buddha to indicate the genuine lha-ba. The Living Buddha gives a small red cloth necklace (phyag-mdud) to those who appear possessed. This helps the one who is truly the mountain gods’ choice to be more completely possessed. The phyag-mdud also prevent other males from being possessed by mountain gods’ soldiers. After some time the one who continues to appear possessed is deemed the real lha-ba. After having been selected, the new lha-ba is completely possessed by the mountain god. Next, the Living Buddha recites scriptures that allow the mountain god to easily enter the lha-ba’s body. Afterwards, the lha-ba will be able to convey the mountain god’s thoughts to people and to easily and safely stab himself with knives.

While the lha-ba is possessed by the mountain god he cannot know his relatives. All that he knew as an ordinary person has been displaced by the mountain god’s consciousness. In general, villagers sincerely believe that the lha-ba represents the mountain gods and regard a lha-ba as a genuine mountain god while he is possessed. If a family has such problems as illness or continuing poverty,
they might invite the *ilha-ba* to their home during *klu-rol*. During his visit, the *ilha-ba* becomes possessed. The mountain god speaks through the *ilha-ba* and explains how to expel evil and disaster. The *klu-rol* period is considered a very good time for such a consultation because the mountain gods are believed to be present in the village, owing to the sacrifices offered to them.

If a mountain god disobey a Living Buddha’s order, the Living Buddha might punish him. An example of such punishment may be found in the upper village’s *ilha-ba* inability to speak for A-myes-mag-pa in the early 1990s. At that time, villagers pleaded with A-myes-mag-pa to speak through the *ilha-ba*. However, the *ilha-ba* only pointed to his tongue with his finger and shook his head. It was then deduced that A-myes-mag-pa had been punished. Subsequently, a Living Buddha was invited to the village to pardon A-myes-mag-pa. At a village gathering attended by the Living Buddha and the upper village *ilha-ba*, the former pardoned the latter and gave permission for the *ilha-ba* to vocalize A-myes-mag-pa’s thoughts. Still the *ilha-ba* was unable to do so. The Living Buddha then said that A-myes-mag-pa was too intractable to submit to him. He suggested that a better-known and more powerful Living Buddha be invited. This was done so that the *ilha-ba* would resume speaking the thoughts of A-myes-mag-pa.

According to informants, the mountain god approaches the *ilha-ba* every midnight approximately one lunar month before *klu-rol* begins. He blows on him and chants scriptures to purify him. During this period the *ilha-ba* may eat whatever he likes but he must abstain from sexual intercourse. When the lower village *ilha-ba* is possessed, he has the combined knowledge of other mountain gods and especially that of A-myes-khu-thog.

The *ilha-ba* can see the mountain gods in the sky and, with their help, he can travel great distances quickly as suggested by the following account:

Once, when the time of *klu-rol* approached, the *ilha-ba* was far away walking outside the village. He did not intend to return to the village then. Nevertheless, the villagers beseeched the mountain god to summon the *ilha-ba*. The mountain god then possessed the *ilha-ba* and urged him to return to the village. As the *ilha-ba* was swiftly returning, the mountain god released him from possession. The *ilha-ba* found his arms were full of many sorts of foods. After eating them, he was possessed by the mountain god again and continued his trip. Later, a female who was collecting firewood noticed a swiftly moving shadow: it was the *ilha-ba* returning to the village. In the end, the *ilha-ba* reached the village in time for *klu-rol*.

The Upper Village *ilha-ba’s* Helpers

Six families known as Bar-ba-legs-zhu-tshang in the upper village are responsible for attending to the needs of the upper village’s *ilha-ba*. They also serve as his escorts. This inherited privilege was decreed by A-la-skyes. Six other upper village families, known as ‘grig-bdag-tshang’, are responsible for maintaining order for the Ru-zhol-ma and Ru-gong-ma groups. They visit all families in both groups to collect donations, which are the same as what ‘dzin-res-tshang members obtain from families in the entire village. During *klu-rol*, ‘grig-bdag-tshang and Bar-ba-legs-zhu-tshang members and the upper village *ilha-ba* form the group representing the upper village. For the other two days of *klu-rol*, they are the *ilha-ba’s* escorts. During the second and third days of *klu-rol*, the upper village *ilha-ba* is aided by ‘dzin-res-tshang members.

6. ‘Dzin-res-tshang

‘Dzin-res-tshang members are responsible for *klu-rol* management and escorting the lower village’s *ilha-ba*. Furthermore, this group’s adolescent males are required to dance in the inner circle while elder males beat drums in the outer circle. Drunk and disorderly people and performers who do not show up for performances are subject to fines by elder ‘dzin-res-tshang members. If anyone refuses to accept the ‘dzin-res-tshang’s punishment,

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40 These families are entitled to be the upper village *ilha-ba’s* escorts, a privilege that was initially conferred by A-las-skyes during the *klu-rol*’s early time because they owned fields on Tha-tho-log Plain. During *klu-rol* one male from each of these six family may share feasts held by villagers for the upper village *ilha-ba* and they always dance while escorting him. Three of the families belong to Ru-gong-ma and three belong to Ru-zhol-ma.

41 Three of these families are members of Ru-zhol-ma and three families are members of Ru-gong-ma. Furthermore, in turn, families from ‘grig-bdag-tshang assume responsibility for supervising religious activities undertaken by the Ru-zhol-ma and Ru-gong-ma groups and, when crops mature, they determine when harvesting should occur. They also protect the crops from livestock.

42 Such fines would be 50 to 100 rmb.
the 'dzin-res-tshang abandon the tog\textsuperscript{43} and, consequently, klu-rol cannot continue. Village males often wear long knives attached to their waists but only the guide (dnag-mgo, literally: soldier-guide) leading the procession is allowed to do so during klu-rol.

Three days before klu-rol begins, 'dzin-res-tshang members visit nearby grasslands to collect sheep from village herdsmen as offerings for klu-rol. Meanwhile, other 'dzin-res-tshang members visit every village household to collect donations of butter, wheat, edible plant oil, money, and wool.\textsuperscript{44} When they enter a villager's home holding the tog, young males dance in the home's courtyard while senior members say, A-myes-tha-ri khyped-tshang la phebs-byung, rdzong-ba che byod-dang, A-myes-tha-ri dga'-no-byos ("A-myes-tha-ri is in the home, please give many donations, A-myes-tha-ri will be delighted"). The family knows the 'dzin-res-tshang will come and prepare items in advance. After presenting them to 'dzin-res-tshang members, young males of the visiting group dance and shout to delight the family. When they leave they say, Khyped-tshang gi kha-las-dar bke-a-shis don-'grub ("May your family prosper and may all go well"). If a certain family is rich enough to give more donations than an ordinary one, the 'dzin-res-tshang members offer a bottle of liquor and a kha-btags to the family.

7. The Upper Village's Nor-brgya-tshang Clan and Masks

Families who are members of the upper village's Nor-brgya-tshang clan multiplied from one family that dates its origins to the time of klu-rol's inception. Due to the family having some of the first irrigated fields, this family was responsible for delighting the water deities who would then provide water. Afterwards, a lha-ba was chosen from this clan, suggesting that this family was special and of high status.

8. Lab-tse

Origins

Stuart, Banmadorji, and Huangchojia (1995) and Xing (1992) have suggested that lab-tse may trace their origins to (1) Tibetan troops passing by long ago constructing wooden frames for holding their weapons; (2) Tibetan soldiers building them on striking mountain tops as signs of control after occupying new territory; (3) after the Tibetan Kingdom's disintegration in the 9th century, society fell into chaos and there were frequent battles between tribes. Therefore, to maintain peace and restore friendly relationships between tribes, all weapons were collected and put on striking summits in plain view of people to show that there was credible peace between tribes; and (4) being built as storage areas for weapons that the mountain gods could use in battles.

At the time A-la-log villagers to cultivate Tho-tho-log Plain, there were only enough people living in the upper village to form one work team. Five other work teams came from the lower village. Villagers believe that A-la-log assigned one mask to each of the six families whose forebears farmed fields on Tho-tho-log Plain. He also kept a mask for his own family. Today, during certain klu-rol dances, the masks are held by dancers in their left hands. Holding a mask and dancing brings status. It shows that the person's ancestors contributed much to the formation of klu-rol during its early stages. Moreover, the people holding the masks are arranged in front of other performers. A mask inherited from the ancestors should be held by the oldest family male participating in the procession of the players. If the oldest person participating in the dances does not hold the mask, his elders complain till he is given it. Families with masks are expected to print scriptures on several pieces of paper (rdzogs-shing)\textsuperscript{45} for the lha-ba's use during klu-rol. The wooden masks are of human faces and are red, green, or white in color.

Ritual

Villagers believe that the village's lunar month is determined by the position established by the growing of the primary crops. The lunar month is considered as the months that fall in the southern zone of a circle that is 1.5 meters high. The circle is centered on the village's temple. Confined to the temple is the power of a feathered tree called the "Tree of the Living God" around which many household shrines are framed. Its nature is unchanged.

Every year, a newly painted lab-tse is the village's source of delight and is the high point of the ritual, a protective charm for the clan, branch, or a family.

\textsuperscript{43} A wooden pole approximately seven meters tall with a picture of A-myes-tha-ri at the top. The day before klu-rol, 'dzin-res-tshang members hang the picture on the pole and put it in the courtyard of A-myes-tha-ri's shrine. Wherever it goes, A-myes-tha-ri is believed to be there and it is worshipped accordingly. Only members of the 'dzin-res-tshang group are entitled to carry the tog.

\textsuperscript{44} Originally, butter and plant oil were used as mchod-me, and wheat and barley were used to brew liquor. Today, however, the articles obtained from villagers are sold. The proceeds are used to purchase mainly liquor that is consumed during klu-rol.

\textsuperscript{45} Rdzogs-shing are printed by the lower village Nor-brgya-tshang clan. They are rectangular black-printed scriptures stretched over a wooden frame. The scriptures express the hope that mighty Living Buddhas and every mountain god will drive away all evil and enemies in the four directions, guarantee the health of pathetic humans, ensure the success of farmwork, protect livestock from death, and grant villagers' aspirations.

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There is also the notion that lab-tse are the dwellings of mountain gods and places for offerings to them. Mountain gods drift around the earth several times a day. At night, they stay at their lab-tse and enjoy wheat, barley, and sugar that villagers have buried there. If food and weapons for a mountain god are lacking, the mountain god may be tempted to go to other villages that present such offerings, and do favors for them. For example, when A-myes-pha-ri speaks through the village lha-ba, he often complains that Gling-rgyal villagers are not as devout to him as residents of a village near Bla brang Temple, who often offer rich sacrifices of meat, wheat, and barley. Nevertheless, A-myes-pha-ri declares he continues to favor Gling-rgyal villagers in obedience to the orders given by Living Buddha Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje. Finally, the lab-tse festival is viewed as an important ritual because it subdues all evils and enemies of all directions and, relatedly, it is a time when blessings and protection from the mountain gods are forthcoming.

Ritual

Villagers hold a lab-tse festival the Chinese lunarnoon before klu-rol. Although villagers have established several lab-tse, two are considered primary. One is consecrated to A-myes-pha-ri on the mountain just east of the village. The other is consecrated to A-myes-mag-pa on the mountain south of the village. The A-myes-pha-ri lab-tse is a hollow rectangle of rocks approximately two meters high and three meters in width.56 Male villagers insert poles into a central wooden frame. Conifer needles and silk cloths are tied on top of the pole. Midway up the pole are attached wooden feather fins. Poles may be as long as 25 meters. Tree branches are also thrust into the lab-tse frame around the poles and further tree branches tied with many wool tufts (rma-thag) are thrust around this framework. The location of this lab-tse has never changed in the villagers’ memory. 

Every household must prepare a pole for the lab-tse festival. The taller and more colorfully painted the poles are, the more they are believed to delight the mountain god. On the day of the lab-tse ritual, male villagers gather to remove old tree branches and poles from the lab-tse. Meanwhile,

46 Types of lab-tse vary, as indicated by the construction of an underground lab-tse several decades ago by villagers to A-myes-pha-ri’s son at the foot of the mountain where A-myes-pha-ri lives.

9. Klu-rol Dances and Players

Formal rituals for the actual klu-rol performances begin with the opening ceremony on the afternoon of the twentieth on Dmg-ad-pjon-sgang Hill at A-myes-pha-ri’s shrine. At this time klu-rtes and other activities are completed.51 Afterwards, as the group returns to the village, dzin-res-tshang members announce rules that everyone is expected to obey. Meanwhile, a lower village man erects a pole (klu-sdong) on the dzin-res-tshang threshing ground52 that marks the formal beginning of klu-rol.

47 These buried offerings are called gser.

48 This practice of putting the old poles back in the lab-tse is not done in every village. For example, in Lcang-skya Village, the old poles are removed and taken back to the village.

49 The dances at this time are the same as those described later in this article.

50 The shouts consist of “Lha-rgyal-lo!” (literally: gods-victory-achieved) and various loud sounds.

51 A klu-rol performance generally consists of 13 dances (described later) and requires approximately 45 minutes to complete. Villagers refer to this as klu-rtes (water-deities-dance). 

52 Each village group has one or more threshing grounds.
At around noon the following day, participants again gather on Dmag-dpon-sgang Hill for another klu-rtes. Afterwards, the two lha-ba meet, signifying the meeting of A-myes-lha-ri and A-myes-mag-pa. Subsequently, there is a klu-rtes for the upper three groups and the upper village Nor-brgya clan on the threshing ground of the Ru-zhol-ma group.

On the twenty-second day, the main day of klu-rrol, all villagers gather on the threshing ground of Ma-va-ya-mgo. All players dance for the lower three groups and the performance for the Ya-ri group is done on a small hill with a flat top named Dmag-dpon-thar. On the twenty-third day, all villagers congregate on the threshing ground of the 'dzin-res-tshang and dance until the afternoon. Anyone who likes may join a night of revelry in the selected home of a 'dzin-res-tshang member.53

Village males between the ages of fourteen and thirty must participate in the procession of players during the official klu-rrol dance.54 'Dzin-res-tshang members are authorized to fine families that do not participate.55 Players all wear Tibetan-style clothes, but the clothes of the outer players differ from the inner players' clothes. The former do not wear Tibetan robes. Instead, they wear dark-colored trousers, white shirts, and red or yellow long-sleeved shirts (khog-tse) which are rolled up and tied around their waists. A longer version of these shirts is worn by women, but rarely worn by men except during klu-rrol. Certain informants explained this by reporting that the older generations of the village had been living in much worse conditions and had worn Tibetan women's clothing during klu-rrol.56

Klu-rrol dances may be divided into three sorts based on where the dances are done, who performs them, and at what time. These three dances are klu-rrol-gyi-gzhang (klu-rrol-main-dance), lha-rtes (god-play), and lha-ma-gar-'cham (godness-dance-play).

| Table 1: Schedule of klu-rrol Performances |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| **Performance**                          | **Time**                | **Location**     |
| Lab-tse festival                          | The Chinese lunar month | Dmag-dpon-sgang  |
|                                           | prior to klu-rrol       |                  |
| Opening ceremony                         | 2 p.m., 20th day,      | Dmag-dpon-sgang  |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         |                  |
| 'Dzin-res-tshang                          | 6-11 a.m., 21st         | visit every      |
| representatives                          | - 23rd, 6th lunar       | village home     |
|                                           | month                    | to ask for       |
|                                           |                          | donations        |
| klu-rrol performance                      | 1-2 p.m., 21st         | Dmag-dpon-sgang  |
|                                           | day, 6th lunar month    |                  |
| klu-rrol performance                      | 3 p.m., 21st day,       | Ru-zhol-ma group's   |
|                                           | 21st, 6th lunar month   | upper threshing   |
| klu-rrol performance                      | 5 p.m., 21st day,       | Ru-zhol-ma group’s   |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         | lower threshing   |
| Klu-rrol performance                      | 7 p.m., 21st day,       | Ma-go group       |
| and carrying the sacred                  | 6th lunar month         | threshing group   |
| god                                      | after the previous      |                  |
| Klu-rrol-chen-mo                         | Noon, 22nd day,         | threshing ground  |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         | shared by Ye-go   |
|                                           |                          | and Ma-go groups  |
| Lha-ma-gar-'cham                          | 7 p.m., 22nd day,       | Dmag-dpon-thar    |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         |                  |
| Drinking and singing                     | Night, 22nd day,        | 'dzin-res-tshang home |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         |                  |
| Klu-rrol performance                     | Noon, 23rd day,         | 'dzin-res-tshang  |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         | threshing group   |
| Singing and drinking at the chong-khang  | Night, 23rd day,        | chong khang       |
|                                           | 6th lunar month         | courtyard         |
| 'Dzin-res-tshang                         | 11 p.m., 24th day,      | From 'dzin-res-tshang |
| representatives                          | 6th lunar month         | threshing ground  |
| returning the two mountain                |                          | to Dmag-dpon-    |
| god thang-ka                            |                          | sgang            |

The Beginning Ritual

On the twentieth day of the sixth Chinese lunar month, families with masks and 'dzin-res-tshang

Perilou

53 This home is known as the chang-khang (literally: liquor-room). This refers to the home of a 'dzin-res-tshang member where all villagers gather to sing amorous songs and drink liquor during the night. This family generally has the nicest home and largest courtyard of all the 'dzin-res-tshang members. It is considered an honor to offer one's home as an abode for both the mountain god and village revelers during klu-rrol.

54 Ten years ago, many males around the age of thirty participated but, today, the greatest number of participants are younger than thirty.

55 An exception to this are the Sa-so-ma families, who do not participate as fully as other groups.

56 There is variation in clothing among villages performing klu-rrol and closely related presentations. For example, in Sa-kyi Village, located on the outskirts of Tongren Town, male performers sport a round, white peaked hat topped by a small red ball to which are attached many small red strings that fall to the hat's brim. Some informants said this hat is in the style of a Qing Dynasty official hat. The mountain god (Bya-khyung) worshiped by this village - the highest and most mighty mountain god in the Reh-gong area - is often depicted wearing a similar hat.

57 Rong is not represented in this text, as it was not visited by the author. It is mentioned in the sources, however, as being the most northern village in the area. Its isolation and remoteness have kept it from being as influenced by other cultural traditions as the other villages in the region.
members are required to participate in the rituals on Dmag-dpon-sgang Hill where A-myes-lha-ri’s shrine is situated. Though other villagers are not required to go, many do. The lower village lha-ba and some players, all of whom are male villagers of the ’dzin-res-tshang, gather to hold the klu-rol opening ceremony. The lower village lha-ba enters the shrine in the company of inner players and stands in front of the mountain god statue. He chants scriptures in order to be possessed by the mountain god. Meanwhile, some players shout and beat lhu-rnga and ’khar-rnga. By making such noises, it is believed that the lha-ba is more easily possessed by the mountain god. The lha-ba initially shakes his shoulders and hops in all directions. His face begins to twitch and he mutters. Finally, his movements slow and he leaps into the air. After having been possessed by the mountain god completely, the lha-ba tears a silk cloth into many pieces. He gives one piece to each player to purify them.

The leader of the players’ procession and the village chief are asked by the lha-ba to take two small wooden statues of the god A-myes-lha and the Buddhist monk Co-shing out of the shrine. The two statues symbolize that the mountain god and the Buddhists are united in protecting the village from suffering caused by evil. They also ensure a good harvest for the villagers. Audience members burn flour and conifer branches in an altar located in the shrine’s courtyard center. A ’dzin-res-tshang member holds the tog symbolizing that this is klu-rol’s opening ceremony. The leader of the players’ procession and the village chief come outside the shrine with some players and approach a wide square area around the shrine on the hill. Players form an outer circle and adults of the ’dzin-res-tshang form an inner circle. Spectators stand outside the outer circle. Within the center of the inner circle there is a huge bsang onto which people toss riung-rtas.57 A man holds the tog while another man holds a wooden container containing chang-zas (literally: liquor-food), that is, liquefied fermented grain.

Klu-rol-gyi-gzhung is a group dance done by approximately a hundred male villagers during the daytime of each of the three days of klu-rol, and at several threshing grounds. It is performed in two circles. There are approximately 30 males in the inner circle and about 50 males in the outer circle. The diameter of the outer circle is approximately 40 meters. The lha-ba is in the center of these two circles with the inner dancers around him. He holds a stick and periodically moves out of the inner circle. He ensures that the dance goes properly and might occasionally strike someone with his stick if he dances poorly or reluctantly.

A descendant of A-la-skyes leads the outer dancers through the 13 different dance movements that form this performance.58 The dances are reputed to have originated in A-la-skyes going to Khudong-nang (literally: Water-deity-trees-location) Spring long ago with six companions and offering food to the water deities. Delighted with these offerings, the water deities appeared on the surface of the water and proceeded to dance in thirteen movements. Only A-la-skyes could observe the deities’ movements. As he danced in imitation, his six companions danced with him. This explains why, today, A-la-skyes’ descendants lead other villagers in dancing.

Seven players hold seven masks in a line at the head of the procession. All the players have a fake queue wrapped by a towel around the upper head. Some players wear embroidered shoes and stockings while others wear sport shoes. The small wooden hammers (dgra-sta) held by outer players in their right hands signify the exorcizing of evil and the killing of enemies of all directions. A fistful of soft paper printed with scriptures is wrapped about the middle finger of their left hands. The scriptures read that humans ought to venerate deities, sutras, and outstanding monks. They also beseech the deities to allow the villagers to achieve their hopes, make everyone happy, and lead all humankind to the happy world. Furthermore, these writings say that venerating the scriptures for the sake of the next life is important, as is worshiping monks who favor people. They also express the wish that all living beings might be happy and that all enemies, disasters, and accidents are to be exorcized.

The following description of one of the first dance movements, however, provides some sense of what the dance movements are. The outer dancers hold wooden hammers in their right hands and scriptures wrapped around the middle fingers.

57 Riung-rtas is a small square of paper that people toss above smoke from the burning bsang. Often a tiger is in the upper left corner, a lion is in the upper right corner, a dragon is in the lower left corner, and a roe is in the lower right corner. In the center a mighty horse flies symbolizing that every supplicant’s prestige will increase as rapidly as the horse flies by bringing wealth and a bright future.

58 Four dance movements almost vanished during the Culture Revolution (1966–1976). Only the presently retired lha ba remembered them. He taught these four movements to upper village dancers, who perform them during village Tibetan New Year celebrations and during klu-rol.
of their left hands. To the rhythm of the drums, they sway their hands. Meanwhile, they place their right foot ahead of the left foot, then place their left foot ahead of their right foot. After this movement is repeated three times, they bend their bodies at their knees. This movement is done for one circle and symbolizes that snakes in the sacred spring are dancing.

Halfway through the period of dancing the lha-ba pours three metal bowls\(^{59}\) of chang-zas on the ground in each of the four directions. Each time, after throwing three bowls of chang-zas, the lha-ba tosses the shing-rgyan\(^{60}\) on the chang-zas. He pours the contents on the ground three times, which is considered a propitious number. The lha-ba holds the shing-rgyan while the players shout and jump. The shing-rgyan is used to divine the proper time for starting and finishing klu-rol dances. The lha-ba decides whether the players should dance for a longer period and if the circle of dancers is large enough. He does this by tossing the shing-rgyan on the ground in the four directions in a designated area within the inner circle. The players may stop dancing if the shing-rgyan remains glued together. If it separates, the players must dance for a longer period.

The two small statues of the deities mentioned earlier are sent back into the shrine after the dance is finished. The opening ceremony is now considered finished.

**Lha-rtsed**

The lha-rtsed is done by both lha ba and members of the inner circle (described above). It is performed in the chang-khang each afternoon after klu-rol-gyi-gzhiwang on the twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second days. It requires approximately 15 minutes and is done in a circle around a bsang-khri, that is, an altar in a courtyard center. The inner dancers stand in one place and move their arms from side to side to the drum rhythm xxjxxx. They do not attempt other movements. To some extent, they are considered to have been possessed by the mountain gods' soldiers and this performance depossesses them. The inner dancers lift their feet in turn, stretch their hands into the air, jump, shout, put their hands on the hips and bend their bodies, and shake their shoulders as they circle the altar in the courtyard center. They must dance around the altar a certain number of times.\(^{61}\) Two non-performers from the 'dzin-res-tshang hold hands and stretch their arms apart to form a barrier. Then, in turn, the other performers throw themselves onto the clasped hands of the two men one by one, who put them on the back. This signifies that the de possession is complete and that they are ordinary men again. At the end the two lha-ba perform the same movement.

10. The Twenty-First Day

All players, senior men of the 'dzin-res-tshang, and the lower village lha-ba assemble on Dma-dpon-sgang at approximately one p.m. The lha-ba stands before an image of A-myis-lha-ri in the shrine. The players assemble around the lha-ba, as the onlookers and players offer bsang in the courtyard, which quickly becomes smoky from the smoldering bsang. The players shout and beat drums in the hope that the lha-ba will soon be possessed by A-myis-lha-ri. First, the lha-ba stands before an image of A-myis-lha-ri. A man fastens a number of kha-btags around the lha-ba's neck. The lha-ba chants sutras, calling A-myis-lha-ri to possess him. Once possessed, the lha-ba takes the metal bowl of chang-zas from the male holding the shing-rgyan. He pours three bowls of chang-zas on the ground and then the shing-rgyan is presented to him. He tosses it on the chang-zas. If it separates, they dance longer in the shrine and then the lha-ba throws the shing-rgyan again. This procedure is done until the shing-rgyan does not separate, at which time they exit the shrine to a nearby threshing ground and begin a public dance. This performance is for A-myis-lha-ri. After the thirteen dances are done, and if the shing-rgyan adheres together after tossing it on the chang-zas, the players march toward the central area of the village where Ru-zhol-mna members reside.

Halfway there, they assemble again. The lha-ba holds a wooden container holding pieces of meat and bread. He tosses the contents into the air and the players scramble to catch the meat and bread. If a player catches a piece of meat, he shouts "Meat! Meat!" (sha-red) and if he catches bread, he shouts "Bread! Bread!" (go-re-red). Catching a piece of meat

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\(^{59}\) The name for this metal bowl is thel-tse. It has a diameter of approximately 5 centimeters and it is roughly 5 centimeters in depth. Thel-tse are also used to offer pure water to deities.

\(^{60}\) The shing-rgyan consists of two wooden pieces that fit together resembling a cylinder with rounded ends. It is approximately 20 centimeters long, 4 centimeters thick, and 4 centimeters wide. On each piece's back three crosses are engraved. Chang-zas glues the two pieces together.

\(^{61}\) The exact number is not available.
Map 1

1 = Sa-so-mu group
2 = Ru-gong-ma group
3 = Ru-zhol-ma group
4 = Ru-zhol-ma group's upper threshing ground
5 = A-myes-mag-pa Shrine
6 = Ru-zhol-ma group's lower threshing ground
7 = Ya-nu group
8 = Ya-go group
9 = Ma-go group
10 = 'ja'-mo-thang group
11 = Ya-go and Ma-go groups' shared threshing ground
12 = A-myes-khu-thog Shrine
13 = lab-tse
14 = Dma-g-bon-sgang Hill/Shrine
15 = Kh-ssong Spring
16 = Site of first meeting of two lha-ba
17 = Site where upper village lha-ba is possessed
18 = Site of second meeting of two lha-ba
19 = Dma-g-bon-thar Hill
or bread signifies that the villagers and his family will have a good harvest and that their livestock will be healthy that year.

When they come near where the Ru-zhol-ma group dwells, the upper village Iha-ba enters Dmag-dpon-sang with his companions. This is a shrine devoted to A-myes-mag-pa and shared by the Ru-zhol-ma and Ru-gong-ma groups. After the Iha-ba is possessed by A-myes-mag-pa, they go on to where the lower village Iha-ba waits for them. Spectators line the path along the way. When the two Iha-ba catch sight of each other, they take a kha-btags from attendants, dance and jump right, left, and forward while swinging the kha-btags right and left. When they come face to face with each other, they exchange kha-btags to show mutual esteem. This is the first meeting of the two Iha-ba during klu-rol.

The two Iha-ba dance in this way: The end of the middle finger of each hand is held by the thumb of that hand. The other fingers are extended straight up. The Iha-ba dances by raising each leg, bent at the knee. As he raises his right leg, he also raises his right hand, with the fingers held as just described. As he lowers his right leg and right hand, he repeats the same action with his left leg and left hand. The two Iha-ba dance so that when one moves his right leg and right hand, the other moves his left leg and left hand. When they are approximately seven meters away from each other, they turn 180 degrees and continue dancing for some time. When they again face each other, they stand before the tog. This dance is called Iha-rtsed (deity-dance). Villagers believe that this dance is the most excellent of all klu-rol dances because of the beauty and grace of the Iha-ba’s movements. It is performed only by the two Iha-ba.

Afterwards, the two Iha-ba take metal bowls full of chang-zas, turn right and left, and finally meet again before the tog where they each pour three bowls of chang-zas on the ground and then each tosses a shing rgyan on the chang zas. Next, the players form a large circle on a nearby field and give a performance to Sa-so-ma. After having finished the dance, the two Iha-ba lead the procession to the Ru-zhol-ma upper threshing ground. On the way, a woman from every Ru-zhol-ma household holds a bowl of milk tea with added butter and presents it to the nearest Iha-ba. The Iha-ba takes the bowl, flicks some milk tea on a corner of the home, and then flings the remaining contents on the wall of the home where the woman lives, as an offering to the water deities. When the two Iha-ba and players arrive at the Ru-zhol-ma upper threshing ground they begin dancing. Onlookers stand outside of the outer circle. Buang is burnt in the center of the circle.

In turn, a complete performance is offered to the Ru-zhol-ma, Ru-gong-ma, Ya-ru groups, and the Nor-brgya-tshang clan in the upper village. Those to whom a performance is dedicated must burn incense. The first three performances are dedicated to Ru-zhol-ma, Ru-gong-ma, and Ya-ru. The Ru-zhol-ma group has two threshing grounds, which are known as the "upper threshing ground" and the "lower threshing ground." The first three performances are done on the upper threshing ground, because of its central location. After these three performances, the players and the audience are invited to a meal by families of the three groups who just received a performance. Recently, these families have served meat, besides other foods. However, in the past, meat was not served. Only bread and dairy products, because the water deities are thought to dislike meat.

Around an hour later, players and the upper village Iha-ba congregate on the Ru-zhol-ma lower threshing ground, which is very near the upper threshing ground, to give a performance to the Nor-brgya-tshang clan. The lower village Iha-ba does not participate because this performance is for A-myes-mag-pa and the Nor-brgya-tshang clan.62

As the upper village Iha-ba stands before the tog, players shout and leap to help the Iha-ba to be possessed by A-myes-mag-pa. Then the players form a circle and begin a complete performance for A-myes-mag-pa. Halfway through the performance, the Iha-ba jabs a metal spike (kha-bbig)63 through one cheek of all the players.64 This piercing drives away dangerous spirits that might harm the players, consequently, they should be healthy for a year. At the end of this performance, another complete performance is offered to the Nor-brgya-tshang clan. Halfway through, the lower village Iha-ba enters A-myes-mag-pa’s shrine accompanied by performers and inner players.

At the end of the performance, and after the Iha-ba is possessed by A-myes-lha-ri, the two Iha-ba back away from each other. They look at each other and bow with outstretched hands. They repeat this several times. Then the upper village Iha-ba enters A-myes-mag-pa’s shrine, where

62 We were unable to determine precisely how these two facts precluded the lower village Iha-ba’s participation.
63 They are approximately 15 centimeters in length.
64 Either cheek may be pierced. The number of the spikes is less than the number of the players, therefore, some players wait for some time before a spike is removed from another player and then made available for them. Only the Iha-ba may remove the spikes.

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A-nyes-mag-pa releases him. The lower village lha-ba now leads the procession to the lower village for more dances. At this time, players may remove their Tibetan robes if they desire. Most do because the weather is often hot. On the way, four dancers enter a shrine dedicated to A-nyes-khu-thog located very near the threshing ground of the lower village. The four dancers bring a sedan out of the shrine housing a small statue symbolizing A-nyes-khu-thog. On two of the sedan’s inner sides are carved images of A-nyes-khu-thog. Above the sedan’s open side are hung a number of kha-btags and sheep-hair strings preventing onlookers from easily peering inside.

It is said that if the carriers forcefully sway and energetically circle the sedan, A-nyes-khu-thog will display his superhuman strength by bestowing a good harvest. The four men lead the procession of players while swaying with the sedan. Other dancers shout and dance around the lower village lha-ba. When they reach their destination, they dance around a large bsang. The performance given here is no different from what we have already described, other than the addition of the sedan. The sedan bearers must sway until the dance is finished. If they become exhausted and are unable to continue, other dancers from the lower village replace them. Males are proud to carry the god’s sedan. When the dance ends, the lha-ba tosses a shing-rgyan on the chang-zas. If it adheres together, the performance may end. If it separates, they must do the thirteen dances again.

The end of this performance signals the end of dancing on this day.

Afterward, the lower village lha-ba tells the four sedan-bearers to return the sedan to A-nyes-khu-thog’s shrine. The entire procession of players and the lower village lha-ba accompany them. In the shrine, the lha-ba is released by A-nyes-lha-ri. Next, he goes to the chang-khang where he and the upper village lha-ba are entertained. ‘Dzin-res-tshang members partake of a sumptuous meal of meat and liquor with the lha-ba. When guests leave at dusk and return to their homes, they sing love songs.

11. The Twenty-Second Day (klu-rol-chen-mo)

The next morning (klu-rol-chen-mo, literally: Water-deity-large-day), ’dzin-res-tshang members visit more village homes collecting money, barley, butter, sheep hair, and plant oil to pay for klu-rol expenses. At around noon, all players and onlookers, except the upper village lha-ba and his escorts, gather at a lower village threshing ground. The lower village lha-ba and some inner players enter the shrine located near the threshing ground, to be possessed by A-nyes-lha-ri. After his possession, which follows the same pattern as described above for the upper village lha-ba, players form a circle around the big altar in the shrine courtyard center and begin dancing.

Many spectators crowd inside and outside the shrine, but are careful to leave an unobstructed passage between the lha-ba and the shrine entrance. As the lha-ba dances, he often turns to face A-nyes-khu-thog’s image. These are moments of great excitement for the onlookers, for they feel that A-nyes-lha-ri has now possessed the lha-ba. After ten minutes, the lha-ba and inner players exit to the threshing ground and players form a circle. In the center, lower village males offer a large bsang, because this dance is done for the lower village. First, the lha-ba and the inner players go inside the circle and begin dancing. After the dance is completed, they slowly dance to a large, adjoining threshing ground shared by the Ma-ru-ya-go and Ma-ru-ma-go groups.

Halfway through the dance at this new location, the upper village lha-ba and his companions set out for the lower village. When he sets out, the upper village lha-ba is not possessed. Possession will occur halfway to his destination – A-nyes-khu-thog’s shrine. At the halfway point there is a specially designated location for the upper village lha-ba, where some spectators wait. When the upper village lha-ba reaches this site, a male is dispatched to the lower village threshing ground where the lower village lha-ba and other players are dancing. Once there, he figures out how soon the dance will finish. After returning and reporting to the upper village lha-ba, the upper village lha-ba will know when to allow A-nyes-mag-pa to possess him.

Soon, when the dancing is completed on the threshing ground, upper village players run to where the upper village lha-ba is offering a large bsang before a tree. Bsang is burnt in front of the lha-ba to purify him. Meanwhile, the lha-ba chants scriptures. After the lha-ba is possessed, this party starts for the lower village along a village lane. When they are near their destination, the lower vil-

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65 A-nyes lha-ri’s shrine is far from the threshing ground where the lha-ba will perform after being possessed, therefore, the lha-ba goes to A-nyes-khu-thog’s shrine because it is convenient.

66 It is a distance of approximately two kilometers.
lage lha-ba, accompanied by the inner players and lower village players, starts along the same village lane to welcome the upper village lha-ba and his companions. When the lha-ba see each other, they begin dancing in the same manner as described for the previous day. When they finish dancing, the entire entourage goes to the lower village threshing ground to give a complete klu-rol performance for the lower village’s Nor-brgya-tshang clan.67

Halfway through this performance, the lower village lha-ba enters A-mys-khu-thog’s shrine with several companions. They remove A-mys-khu-thog’s sedan from the shrine and place it in the center of the procession of players. Some kha-brags are fastened on the open side of the sedan and several poplar branches on the sedan top, with the rdzogs-shing inserted among them.

The lower village lha-ba gestures to the guide of the procession to give him the knife passed down from A-la-skyes. The guide rejects this request politely by holding his thumb by the end of his middle finger and gracefully waving his right hand above his head. He repeats this movement several times with both his right and left arms. To some extent, villagers feel it is an omen for the lha-ba to cut himself, because it signifies that A-mys-lha-ri is displeased. Some villagers will, at this time, urge the lha-ba not to cut himself. However, if the lha-ba insists, the guide unsheaths the knife and gives it to him. The lha-ba knocks the sharp edge of the knife against his upper forehead. Sometimes the lower village lha-ba clings the tog and cuts his belly several times. In such an event, the males holding the tog shake it as hard as they can to make the lha-ba fall to the ground, otherwise he will continue to cut himself.68 He dyes the scripture pages of the rdzogs-shing with his blood, which is considered a sacrificial offering of great significance.

When the dance is finished, lower village residents invite the audience and players from the upper village for a meal. Usually at this time, upper village residents visit relatives living in the lower village. Though meat was not eaten in the past during klu-rol, this taboo has now vanished. Now, host families entertain guests with meat, noodles, and liquor.

After nearly an hour, players return to the lower village threshing ground. The upper village lha-ba leads the players and orders them to remove their shirts. This contrasts with the lower village lha-ba, who does not issue such an order. When the performance is finished, the lower village lha-ba participates in the procession of players. Shortly after being possessed, A-mys-lha-ri conveys his thoughts through the lha-ba, who stands between the poles of A-mys-khu-thog’s sedan. Villagers believe that the lha-ba initially speaks in Sanskrit. Gradually, however, what the lha-ba says can be clearly understood, for he begins speaking the local Tibetan dialect. An example of what he might say follows:

I am the great deity Thangs-ba-dkar-ro in heaven. In Kluyul69 I am the water deities’ king, in the demon world I am the great conqueror of devils, and in this world I am the mighty mountain god Lha-ri-dkar-bo. I fell to this world because I promised his powerful holiness, the Living Buddha Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje, that I would assist Gling-rigyal Village, and I have been doing what I was ordered to do. Now, however, people believe in me less and less and are no longer religiously devout. Inhabitants of other villages offered much food to me but, for the sake of Gling-rigyal Village, I was not enticed. If you think that I am no longer useful, tell me at once, and I will be carefree.

At this juncture, an old man beseeches the mountain god to work in the interest of Gling-rigyal Village. The lha-ba answers that

The younger generation ought to respect older people, and all people should believe that the mountain god is living. I wear out a suit of metal clothes and metal shoes every day to protect the village. In the coming days, you should be loyal to Buddhism. If you always keep the doctrine and believe I am alive, everything you hope for will be realized, my poor mortals.

After speaking, the lha-ba again dyes the rdzogs-shing with his forehead’s blood. There are four rdzogs-shing. Each is taken in one of the cardinal directions by a male. One male is the players’ guide, two are the lha-ba, and the fourth is an inner player chosen by the lha-ba. According to an informant, the rdzogs-shing dispel all enemies and protect the performers. The rdzogs-shing perform the rdzogs-shing dance and the ‘dzin-pa dance. Two males accompany this location, one second and one third male, 20-25 meters away, unmoving and performing a rough dance.

67 This clan is comprised of seven lower village families and shares a background with the clan of the same name living in the upper village. Other than the family of the descendant of A-la-skyes, who leads the klu-rol procession, the seven lower village Nor-brgya-tshang clan families enjoy the highest status in the lower village during klu-rol. Informants suggested that these families may have descended from a participant in the original klu-rol ages ago. When a new upper village lha-ba is chosen, a male from one of these seven will be chosen as the new lha-ba. Each of these families also possesses a mask signaling this legacy.

68 If the lha-ba cuts his belly, such animals as cats and dogs must be driven away from him because his intestines are thought to be on the ground and these animals might eat them, resulting in great harm to the lha-ba.

69 Where dragons and water deities live.
enemies and diseases of the village and, thereby, protect livestock and harvest. As the males carry the rdzogs-shing, they toss them into the air as they walk and then hop ahead to catch them as audience members shout. When they reach their respective destinations, which are approximately 600 meters from where they began, they burn the rdzogs-shing. The conclusion of this ritual signifies the end of klu-rol activities for this day, the most important of the klu-rol period. When the four males return to where the body of klu-rol performers are, everyone marches to Dmag-dpon-thar where lha-mo-gar-'cham is performed near the homes of the 'ja'-mo-thang group located in the eastern area of Gling-gyal Village. The dance is dedicated to A-myes-lha-rin and the Water Goddess (A-ma-klu-mo).

12. Lha-mo-gar-'cham
   (Goddess-Dance-Performance)

A-ma-klu-mo is particularly venerated by the Ya-ru group of the upper village. Her devotees believe that she can render help in times of need comparable to that offered by mountain gods. Originally, A-ma-klu-mo dwelt in Klu-sdung woods and Klu-sdung-nang Spring. Later, Ya-ru group members built a small shrine with white walls for her as a dwelling on Dmag-dpon-thar. She continues to govern the woods and spring just mentioned. A-ma-klu-mo is also involved with the granting of rain. During droughts, villagers may march to Klu-sdung Spring and shout the water goddess’s name. The painting of A-ma-klu-mo in the upper village monastery is not placed inside with the Buddha’s. Villagers reckon she is not as powerful as the Buddha, therefore, her portrait is displayed outside the monastery so that she might better perform her duty as the protector of the monastery.

Lha-mo-gar-'cham consists of the only two festival items involving female performers. The first performance involves children of the Ya-ru group, inner players, and females on Dmag-dpon-thar on the second day of klu-rol. The second performance of lha-mo-gar-'cham involves females and inner players on the threshing ground of the ‘dzin-tes-tshang on the third day of klu-rol. The two performances are identical, except that the location changes and children are absent during the second one. Each performance lasts approximately 20 minutes. Around the same number of both unmarried and married males from the ages of roughly thirteen to twenty-three participate.

When dancers perform around the shrine during the first performance, those who worship A-ma-klu-mo offer a big bsang on an altar near the shrine, light firecrackers, and pour many bottles of liquor on the bsang. The males who dance form an innermost circle, the females form a circle around them, the children form the next circle, and the audience rings the outside. The drum rhythm is a very slow xxjk. The females wear traditional Tibetan robes and coral necklaces. They stand in a line, stretch out their left arms to a horizontal position, raise their right hands in the air, and move their bodies and feet slowly. First they move ahead with their right feet, then follow with their left feet. When they place their left feet in a new position, they bend their knees once.

Ya-ru group members prepare many poles. On the pole tops are put rtsi-tog.70 Kha-btags are tied to the upper portions of the poles, symbolizing a wood.71 Approximately 20 children, from the Ya-ru group, hold the poles and walk in a circle. The dance guide leads the females slowly ahead72 as the male group also moves ahead. The privilege of beating the drum for this performance is inherited. As the drum is beaten, women move in time with the males. Each male holds a towel between his hands approximately 20 centimeters in front of his face and sings an amorous song. The males appear to be very shy and embarrassed because of the song’s explicit sexual content. At the end of each song the males ululate (lu-lu). This sound is only proper at this time for it is associated with sexual activity. The three examples below illustrate what might be sung. The songs are an exchange between A-ma-klu-mo and A-myes-lha-ri. Because the females say nothing during this dance, the males sing the parts of both the Water Goddess and the Mountain God. Example One is sung by A-ma-klu-mo. Examples Two and Three are sung by A-myes-tha-ri:

Example One
Don’t indulge in illusion there,
I know the most perilous novelty you seek,
Come right here, my dear,
You will face a vagina.

70 This refers to bushes that grow on mountains and are often employed for religious purpose. Every Tibetan home has a guang-mda’ at the top of which is fastened rtsi-tog.
71 Informants stated that water deities play in water and on trees. This is an attempt to create a similar, delightful atmosphere.
72 Informants stated that the females represent water.
loved songs as they drink liquor and beer. Villagers believe that, besides the lha-ba, other village residents can be possessed by the mountain god in some way. Therefore, the inner players are released from the mountain god by two men standing in the center of the courtyard holding hands. The inner players jump right and left as they dance around the altar in the center of the family’s courtyard several times. They dance toward the two men and jump on their hands in turn so that their waist is caught by the two men’s clasped hands and then the two men holding hands pat their backs. After they are dispossessed, only the lower village lha-ba remains. He dances in the same way as the inner players, first dancing around the altar several times, and then suddenly jumping on the hands of the two men. This spells an end to the dances of the most important day of klu-rol.

Females stand near the courtyard door. After some time, the males, who are in the courtyard drinking, begin singing in turn with the females. Typical love songs follow:

**Song One**
(Males)
Excuse me that I sing the first song,
This song sounds like a revolving silver scripture wheel,
Please sing my favorite song,
It can turn the silver scripture wheel.
Excuse me that I sing the final song,
It is sung for my darling.
Please sing a song, my baby,
We can play willfully and endlessly.74

**Song Two**
(Males)
I kowtowed to all the gods in the shrines of Lhasa.
You are the only idol left I long to meet,
This time I must kowtow to you if I can,
Otherwise, I will scoot back to meet you in the future.
I pursued all the girls in a great area,
But you are the only one I did not touch,
Now I am roaming about to see you if I can,
Or talk with you for the sake of my love.75

**Song Three**
(Males)
My darling, you holy cuckoo,
We can’t become mates in our lifetimes.
Twittering forever separately on pine tree tops,
It is our miserable luck.

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73 Mr. Lha-rung-rgya-mtho (male, born 1965) sang the three examples presented here to the first author in the summer of 1994 in Gling-rgyal Village. Several informants stated that these lyrics are sung only in Gling-rgyal Village. Other villages in the Reb-gong area, they said, regard them as overtly sexual and forbidden at any time. In Gling-rgyal Village they are sung only during klu-rol.

My sweet baby,  
We can’t become a match in this lifetime,  
The privilege we can enjoy,  
Is saying soothing words sweetly among the same age youth.76

Song Four

(Males)  
When I cross grassland near the mountains,  
I suffer the twinge of thirst among snow mountains,  
It is not because I cannot drink from the ravine,  
Only Yellow River water can quench my thirst.

When I cross many groups of villages,  
The twinge of love is nothing new to me,  
it is not because I can’t perceive a girl,  
it is because I cannot glimpse my girlfriend.77

Song Five

(Females)  
The deer wandering on the right side of the snowy mountain,  
Please make your special complexion become more beautiful,  
Because we soon shall say farewell,  
I wonder if we can meet again.

At the right side of the village,  
My darling, a handsome lover wild with joy utters my favorite sentences,  
Because groups of households move about in search of pasture,  
We are unsure when we can meet in the coming days.78

Song Six

(Females)  
You are the stag wandering at a snow mountain summit,  
I am the doe wandering at the bottom of a snow mountain,  
In the morning we shared the ravine together,  
In the afternoon we shared the grass,  
When a hunter comes with a rifle,  
No doe knows where the stags run to in fear,  
The does are very sad.

You are the man frequently drifting round the village,  
I am the woman waiting for you in the valley,  
In the morning we walk side by side,  
In the afternoon we whisper sweetly,  
When you hear your wife’s voice,  
I don’t know where you flee,  
I am desperately depressed.79

Song Seven

(Males or Females)  
Say goodbye this time,  
Goodbye to the sun in the sky,  
Not only to the sun,  
But also to the moon.

Say goodbye this time,  
Goodbye to my young lover,  
Not only to my lover,  
But also to the same age youth.80

Singing and dancing lasts approximately four hours at this party. Because A-ynes-lha-ri is invited here, inner "dzin-res-tshang players must beat drums all night so that he will be delighted and his presence will remain with them.

13. The Twenty-Third Day

In the early days of the kla-rol festival, the six groups that excavated the irrigation ditch invited members of the group living near them for a feast. Later, during periods of work and when they experienced difficulties, they assisted each other. Nowadays, the "dzin-res-tshang members invite their counterpart group for a feast before dancing. The identity of the group invited depends upon who serves in the rotating position of "dzin-res-tshang.81 Guests enjoy meat and liquor and then join the procession of players as inner players (if they are not members of the Sa-so-ma group) till the end of the dance.

The players and the audience convene on the "dzin-res-tshang’s threshing ground at around noon. Complete performances occur twice. One is dedicated to the host group and one is for the entire village. Afterwards, the dance guide leads young female dancers who are members of the host group for the second performance of lha-mo-gar-cham.

Next, inner players must climb a pole known as the water deities’ tree (klu-sdong), under the

81 More specifically, the following groups have a relationship that means when one serves as "dzin-res-tshang, it will invite the other group. For observance of this particular ritual, Ma-ru-ya-’go is divided into two subgroups. The pairing of the groups is: Ru-zhol-ma and Ma-ru ma’go (subgroup one); Ru gong-ma and Ma-ru ma’go (subgroup two); Ma-ru-ya-’go and Sa-so-ma; and Ya-ru and ‘ja-mao-thang. Sa-so-ma members do not serve as "dzin-res-tshang but do go to the home of the Ma-ru-ya-’go host when invited. According to the retired lha-bes, custom dictates that Bon residents ought also to participate in the procession of the players but, in the 1990s, they did not.

79 Mr. Rgya-mdbo (born 1965?), a resident of Gling-rgyal, sang this song to the first author in the summer of 1994 during the Gling-rgyal kla-rol.

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supervision of the lower village lha-ba. Initially, the lower village lha-ba pours chang-razs on the pole three times to purify it. A piece of fried bread, resembling a frog, is placed at the bottom of the pole. This suggests that water deities are climbing the klu-sdong, rather than humans, in the same way that, in the dim past, the water deities emerged from the Klu-sdong Spring and danced in joy and climbed trees over A-la-skyes’ offerings. Years ago, the first man to climb the pole was required to be a member of the lower village Nor-brgya-sshang clan. However, in the 1990s, this requirement no longer existed—any participating village male was free to climb first.

After a male reaches the pole top, he holds himself steady and ululates. When the lower village lha-ba concludes that there has been enough climbing of the pole, he pours three bowls of chang-razs on the ground and throws the shing rgyan on the chang-razs. If the shing rgyan adheres together, this item ends.

After this ritual is completed, the drummer may take the frog at the pole bottom. Informants said that, in the past, this was considered a very special gift. Today, however, several bottles of liquor and some wheat from the host group are also given to him. Next, outer and inner players form the procession and dance another complete program dedicated to the entire village. Afterwards, players and audience members who desire to do so enter the chang-kaa for a time of recreation. As before, inner players and the lower village lha-ba are depossed of the mountain god. The host group invites those who have presented sheep or a substantial amount of money to the klu-rol to the guest room, where they are treated very well. As before, males and females, in two separate groups, sing love songs antiphonally. This party may not conclude until late at night.

14. Conclusion

The following day, ’dzin-res-sshang members form an inner circle and an outer circle and offer a complete performance again. Subsequently, the lower village lha-ba selects several women, whose parents must be living for added auspiciousness, to carry the chang-razs container and conifer branches to A-myes-lha-ri’s shrine. Male players take the two paintings of A-myes-lha-ri back to the hill where A-myes-lha-ri’s shrine is located, signaling that the period of recreation enjoyed by the mountain gods is finishing. Before the shrine, a large bsang of conifer branches and grain is offered. The lower village lha-ba dances around the altar holding one painting. He dances joyfully, looks up, and jumps ahead as though he were fettered. At this time A-myes-lha-ri speaks through the lower village lha-ba and tells villagers how they can ensure a good harvest: if villagers chant scriptures, venerate and offer bsang to the mountain gods, and if young people respect elders then all will be well. The two paintings are placed in the shrine after the mountain god finishes speaking through the lower village lha-ba. Anyone who wants one is given a small strip of red cloth (phyag-mdud) long enough to tie around the neck. The phyag-mdud is believed to protect against illness. Afterwards, drummers and players stop beating drums and cease shouting to allow the lha-ba to be dispossessed by the mountain god. The host group now offers sheep and much wheat to the lha-ba as remuneration for his participation in klu-rol, marking the end of klu-rol.

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82 The lha-ba may be quite strict in enforcing the rule that participant males must climb the pole, or make a good effort. In 1994, for example, the young lha-ba, holding a switch in his hand, ran after a young man who had escaped from the scene, rather than attempting to climb the pole. Furthermore, the lha-ba lashed a few males with his switch who made a poor showing in climbing the pole, i.e., they were not able to move much above one-third of the pole’s height.

83 This reflects a general decline in the status of the Nor-brgya-sshang clan.

84 The upper village lha-ba is also depessed at this time and, unlike the lower village lha-ba, he will not be possessed again. The lower village lha-ba is again possessed the following day.
Perilous Novelties

Khri-bzang-gtan (ed.)

Mgu-rul and Rdo-rje-tshe-ring (collectors)
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