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The Emergence of a Myth : In search of the origins of the life story of Shenrab Miwo, the founder of Bon

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CHAPTER FIVE

SHENRAB MIWO AND THE FOUR KINGS

HIS SIX WIVES AND TEN CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we have seen numerous similarities between the accounts of the life of Shenrab Miwo and the life of the historical Buddha. I have not yet discussed the married life of Shenrab. Both Shenrab and the Buddha were married and had children before they engaged in ascetic practices, however, beyond this, other aspects of the descriptions of their lay-lives differ considerably. In this chapter, I will discuss the lay-life of Shenrab, i.e. his relationship to the four kings, his marriage to six wives (four princesses and two goddesses) and the birth of his ten children.

The relationship between Shenrab and the four kings has no parallel in the legend of the Buddha. Here, I will trace the possible sources of these narratives. The four kings are the King of *hos* Dangwa Yiring, the King of *dpo'* Barwe Dronmacan, the magical King Kongtse, and the King of Kongpo Karpo. According to the *mDo 'dus*, these four kings not only became the patrons of the Bon founder, but also his fathers-in-law. Although not all of them were necessarily kings, Bonpos remember them as such and call them *rgyal po* or sometimes *rje*. Both words can literally be translated as 'the king' or 'the lord.'

There is not much evidence that the first two kings (the kings of *hos* and *dpo*) ever existed. There are a few relevant references to these kings in Dunhuang manuscripts, but their names are not recorded in the same way as they are in the *mDo 'dus*. The name of the third king Kongtse evidently derives from the Chinese master Kǒng zǐ (孔子), although the Tibetan and Chinese depictions of this figure are not entirely the same. We can find some historical references to a king named Karpo, and his land Kongpo, in Dunhuang manuscripts and also in an early 9th-century Tibetan inscription (Richardson 1985, p. 66 ff.). The author(s) of the

mDo 'dus seems to have appropriated and reinterpreted data on these four kings from various sources.

THE FIRST KING, AND HIS FIRST WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN

The first of the four kings whom Shenrab Miwo met was called Dangwa Yiring. According to chapter nine of the *mDo 'dus*, this king originally was from the land of Hosmo Lingdrug ‘six islands of female *hos*.’ Apart from some references to this king in Bon texts, we have no certain information about this land of *hos*.¹³⁵ As mentioned in chapter one, Pelliot tibétain 1136 provides us the toponym *hos*, which appears nine times in connection with another toponym *rtsang* (gTsang region in Tibet).¹³⁶ However, the toponym *hos* from Pelliot tibétain 1136 is not necessarily the land of *hos* referred to here.

In the *mDo 'dus*, the story of the King Dangwa Yiring begins when the king meets Shenrab Miwo. Several small stories are woven together to form one bigger story, which concludes with the marriage of Shenrab and the *hos* princess. There are clear causal links between the various stories: the appointment of Yikyī Khyeuchung as the official priest leads to the Queen accusing him of impropriety, this accusation causes the Queen’s illness, which results in the Queen seeking help from Shenrab, which, eventually, leads to Shenrab taking the *hos* princess as his first wife. I will summarize these four episodes.

Episode One: Appointing Yikyī Khyeuchung as the Official Priest

The King Dangwa Yiring of *hos* visited the palace of Shenrab Miwo. He offered Shenrab a divine white horse (Tib. *lha rta dkar po*) and requested that he be his

¹³⁵ In the *mDo 'dus*, *hos* is sometimes referred to as a family and sometimes as a place. Although both are connected, it is not clear whether the family was named after the land or the land after the family. Bonpos also describe *hos* as a synonym of Bon, but its linguistic background has never been certified. See Martin (1999, p. 265 and p. 294, note 80) for geographical location of the *hos* land.

¹³⁶ See Imaeda (2007, pp. 156-57) for the reference “*rtsang ho de hos bdag*” and see Blezer (2008, p. 447ff.) for some interesting discussion on *hos*.

official priest (Tib. *mchod gnas*).¹³⁷ The royal family was in need of an official priest to perform ritual services, and also someone they could venerate in order to accumulate merit. Shenrab had to perform a ritual at the Barpo Sogyé palace, so he was unable to take the position offered by the King. Instead he assigned his student Yikyí Khyeuchung to serve as the official priest at the King's court, for three years.¹³⁸ Yikyí Khyeuchung obeyed this command, out of his loyalty to his teacher, and left for the land of Hosmo Lingdrug. Before he left, Yikyí Khyeuchung said that he shall obey his god-like master's command without any hesitation, even if he commands him to proceed to hell. He added that even demons and evil spirits cannot refute the true word of the teacher. Therefore, he would not refuse even if it would cost him his life; rather he shall do as the teacher has asked (*mDo 'dus*, p. 62).¹³⁹

Yikyí Khyeuchung crossed the Gyimshang river¹⁴⁰ and arrived at the land

¹³⁷ The word *mchod gnas* can literally be translated as 'the place of veneration'. Here, it refers to the priest, who is assigned to perform all ritual duties at the royal court.

¹³⁸ The account of Yikyí Khyeuchung recorded in the *mDo 'dus* is controversial. In the *mDo 'dus*, he already was a monk before Shenrab, but other sources (cf. *Dul ba gling grags*, Khoepung) indicate that he was ordained by Shenrab. In the *mDo 'dus*, his ordained name is Yungdrung Tsugshen Gyalwa, but these two names are also listed separately, as two different people (*mDo 'dus*, p. 126).

¹³⁹ A very similar proclamation is recorded in the *bTsun mo bka' thang* (Laufer 1911, p. 47). The *bTsun mo bka' thang* is one of the five texts (titled *bKa' thang sde lnga*) containing legendary stories of Padmasambhava, the foremost Indo-Tibetan Buddhist master who is said to have initiated the tantric practice in Tibet in the 8th-century AD. The *bKa' thang sde lnga* is said to have been discovered in a crystal cave (Tib. *shel gyi brag phug*) in Yarlung in 1285 AD, by a Nyingmapa master Guru Ugyan Lingpa. Blondeau (1971, p. 42) suggests that the collection was possibly discovered between 1368 and 1395 AD. However, the date of the collection largely depends upon the date of Guru Ugyan Lingpa. According to the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and Karmay (1998, p. 95, 228), Guru Ugyan Lingpa was born on 1329 and died in 1360/7. If this information is correct, then the discovery of the collection must be before 1367 AD. Guenther (1996, pp. 1, note 1) attributes this collection to another author named Chokyi Wangchuk (1212-1270 AD), with the discovery date being 1231, but this attribution is less well known.

¹⁴⁰ This name corresponds to the name of the homeland of the Chinese mother of King Trisong Deutsen, who was called Princess Kyimshang (Tib. *gyim shang* or *kyim shing*). Cf. Buton Rinchen Drub 1988, p. 183.

of Hosmo Lingdrug. The people of *hos* welcomed Yikyi Khyeuchung to the Barwa Tsegu palace, and offered their veneration. During the period of his service to the King, Yikyi Khyeuchung, by now a master, resided in the crystal cave called Kada.

We may ask the question why the author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* thought that it was appropriate that Shenrab should send Yikyi Khyeuchung in his place.¹⁴¹ Perhaps it is because the author(s) did not want Shenrab to be subject of the accusations by the queen and the goldsmith (these events are discussed later in this chapter). This might be because Shenrab, as the supreme Buddha of the Bonpos, is supposed to have been able to know the future consequences of his actions. The events that unfolded would not have taken place if it would have been that he had served the king these three years. Another reason might be that Shenrab would not have been able to skilfully solve the Queen's problem if he was part of the problem himself, nor would he have been a suitable husband for the Queen's daughter, Princess Gyalmemma.

Episode Two: Accusation Made by the Queen

One day, when the King and his followers were engaged in battle, Queen Guling Mati of *hos* invited the master Yikyi Khyeuchung for a midday meal. Taking advantage of the situation, the Queen tried to seduce the master. The master ran out of the palace after saying: "desire is a cause of poison and is also like a tree on which suffering grows, therefore one must throw away such illusory physical desires." When the King returned, the Queen pulled out her hair and ripped off her clothes. She lied to the King, saying that the master had apprehended her, when she was serving him a meal, and then ran away after restraining her with a rope. The King believed the Queen's story, but then a parrot reported the truth to the King, that the master was innocent (*mDo 'dus*, pp. 63–64).¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ A similar question is raised in Kvaerne 1979, p. 187.

¹⁴² According to the story, Yikyi Khyeuchung asked the parrot before the meal to be his witness.

Episode Three: The Master Defending His Innocence

On his way to the garden Tsugrumbar, the master visited the house of a goldsmith named Trulgar Gungchu, for a meal. During the meal, the goldsmith's wife stole a gold coin from her husband and hid it. The goldsmith noticed that his gold was missing. His wife told him that the master had stolen it, so the goldsmith ran after him with a knife. The master pointed his mendicant staff (Tib. *hos rus*¹⁴³) towards the eyes of the goldsmith, and through the power of clairvoyance (Tib. *mngon shes*) the goldsmith saw that the coin had been stolen by his own wife. The master touched the goldsmith's knife with his staff and declared that he did not engage in impure actions with Queen Guling Mati, nor did he steal the gold coin, and that if there was any truth in his words then the knife would turn into gold. Thereupon, the knife did turn into gold. When the King of *hos* arrived there, looking for the master, the goldsmith reported what had happened to the King, who then returned to his palace (*mDo 'dus*, pp. 64–66).

Episode Four: Justice for the Victim and a Resolution

Due to her misbehaviour, the Queen was stricken by leprosy, a disease believed to be caused by nāga spirits in Tibet. Through the power of clairvoyance, Yikyi Khyeuchung visualized her suffering and sent a sorcerer named Kunshe Thangpo to examine the Queen. The sorcerer explained to the King that the Queen's leprosy was inflicted by nāgas, on account of her impurity and her crimes against the master. He recommended that the King invite Shenrab to the palace and let the Queen confess her crime to him.

The King did as he was advised and invited Shenrab, who told Queen Guling Mati that she should confess her crime to Yikyi Khyeuchung himself, as only then would she be relieved from her leprosy. Thereupon, Kunshe Thangpo invited the master and the Queen confessed her crime and prostrated herself before

¹⁴³ The *hos rus* is commonly known as *khar gsil* (see Nyima 1998, p. 12).

three hundred goddesses.¹⁴⁴

After doing this, Queen Guling Mati recovered from the leprosy. This pleased the King of *hos* and he offered his daughter Princess Gyalmema to the Teacher, to take as his spouse.¹⁴⁵ From this marriage Shenrab's first three children were born. They are: Tobu Bumsang, Chebu Trishey¹⁴⁶ and a daughter Shenza¹⁴⁷ Neuchen (*mDo 'dus*, pp. 66–67).

Parallel Story in Padmasambhava Literature

This story is very similar to an episode recorded in the *bTsun mo bka' thang* (Laufer 1911), which is about a relationship between well-known Tibetan translator from the 8th century, called Vairocana, and the Tibetan Queen Tsepongza, the wife of King Trisong Deutsen. The similarity between these two stories was already noted by A.H. Francke (1928, pp. 8 & 19), when he translated chapters one to eight of the *gZer mig* into English and making this story available to non-Tibetan scholars. This story from the *gZer mig* later was also studied by Hoffmann (1961) and Kvaerne (1979), who also compared the story from the *gZer mig* with that from the *bTsun mo bka' thang*.

One fine morning, Queen Tsepongza sent her husband, her children, and

¹⁴⁴ A long text containing a prostration prayer, relevant to this chapter, is found in the *gZer mig* (ch. vi) and in the *Klong rgyas*. A similar but shorter text is also seen in the *bTsun mo bka' thang*, which also shows influence of this account.

¹⁴⁵ For a similar motif (identifying a sickness and inviting Shenrab to provide a cure), see the *Klu 'bum nag po* and the Dunhuang Tibetan documents such as Pelliot tibétain 1068, lines 61 ff., Pelliot tibétain 1134, lines 24ff., Pelliot tibétain 1136, lines 46ff. For further references, see Stein 2003b (p. 597ff), who has studied and translated some relevant passages.

¹⁴⁶ Tib. *gto bu*, which literally means 'son of healing ritual', and Tib. *spyad/dpyad bu*, which means 'son of medical diagnosis.' Tobu Bumsang is also known as Tobu Bumse in the *mKhas bzhi mdzod 'grel* (p. 127). The Bonpos remember these two sons to be experts in healing ritual and medical diagnosis; thus they were known by these names. See Gurung (2009) for *gto bu* and *gto* ritual and cf. also Pelliot tibétain 1068, Pelliot tibétain 1134 and Pelliot tibétain 1285 for the *gto* and *dpyad* practices).

¹⁴⁷ The name *gshen za* is also recorded in Pelliot tibétain 1136, line 30, "*rtsang ho de'i hos bdag dang ma yum gyi mtshan gshen za'I gyi myed ma.*"

the servants out of the palace so that she would be alone when Vairocana came on his daily alms-round. She served him a sumptuous meal and then, casting all sense of propriety and shame aside, she threw herself at him, revealing her passion, and begged for his love. Terrified and confused, Vairocana managed to escape. Deeply offended by this act of rejection the queen then tears her clothes, scratches her face, and calls for help, and when at last she is able to still her sobs she tells the King, Trisong Deutsen, a shocking tale of how the monk, on finding her alone, had attempted to ravish her.

Realizing that he can no longer stay at the King's court, Vairocana sadly leaves for a distant forest called Tsugrumbar,¹⁴⁸ where he practices meditation in solitude. However, in order to turn the wicked Queen's thoughts towards religion (read: virtuous conduct), he compels a nāga to enter her body and cause a terrible disease. The efforts of doctors and soothsayers are all in vain. Vairocana then sends the Goddess Palden Lhamo to the King's palace in the form of a female soothsayer (Tib. *phrul gyi mo ma*) named Kunshe Thingpo. She throws lots, discerns the cause of the disease, and announces that only by inviting Master Padmasambhava and confessing her sins may the Queen be healed. This is done, and Padmasambhava summons Vairocana. The Queen confesses her guilt, and elaborate rituals are performed, with the result that she is cured.¹⁴⁹

Similar Motifs in the *mDo 'dus* and the *bTsun mo bka' thang*

A similar motif is applied in both the stories, but they are presented with different characters. In the *mDo 'dus*, it was Yikyī Khyeuchung who was victimized and seduced by Queen Guling Mati of *hos*. In the *bTsun mo bka' thang* it was the monk Vairocana who was seduced by Queen Tsepongza. As a consequence of their misbehaviour both Queens suffered from an illness caused by a nāga spirit. Both

¹⁴⁸ For the same name of the forest, see the *mDo 'dus* (p. 64ff.)

¹⁴⁹ I have borrowed Kvaerne's translation and summary (see Kvaerne 1979), which covers chapters seven to sixteen of the book. The complete story continues until chapter nineteen. See Laufer 1911 for the Tibetan original and German translation.

monks saw the suffering of the Queens and sent a diviner or soothsayer to find a cure.

Another similarity is that the parrot in the Bon story that helped Yikyi Khyeuchung by reporting the truth to the king is said to be an emanation of the sorcerer Kunshe Thangpo.¹⁵⁰ An almost identical name, Kunshe Thingpo, is also mentioned in the *bTsun mo bka' thang*.

Further similarities include the fact that in the Bon story the diviner advised the *hos* King to invite Shenrab Miwo, in the Buddhist legend the diviner advised the King Trisong Deutsen of Tibet to invite Master Padmasambhava. Shenrab's subsequent recommendation to invite Yikyi Khyeuchung is also comparable to Master Padmasambhava's summoning of the monk Vairocana. After the confessions were completed, both masters were offered a princess in return. Shenrab was offered the *hos* princess Gyalmema, and Padmasambhava was offered the princess of Tibet, Trompa Gyen, a daughter of King Trisong Deutsen.

Although they may not be directly linked, I shall mention here yet another parallel story. According to the *bTsun mo bka' thang*, Tibetan Princess Trompa Gyen, who was married to Padmasambhava, bore him two sons. The elder son was not actually a legitimate child from the union of the Princess and her real husband Padmasambhava, but from her union with Māra, who deceived her. Despite this, the son was called Padmasambhava Junior. He was also known as Padmasambhava Gowo in the *bTsun mo bka' thang* (Laufer 1911, pp. 93–95). A similar story appears in the *mDo 'dus*: Shenrab's wife, the Princess of *dpo* Thangmo, was also deceived by Māra Khyapa, and she too bore an illegitimate child who was named Gowo Junior. One can even see the similarity in the names of the two illegitimate children *go bo* and *chung ba* in the Buddhist story compared with *go bo chung* in the Bon story.

¹⁵⁰ There are two different people called Kunshe Thangpo in the *mDo 'dus*. The first one is the sorcerer Kunshe Thangpo (*mDo 'dus*, p. 66, 70) and the second is Tonpa Kunshe Thangpo, the sixth teacher of the past (*mDo 'dus*, p. 32, 34).

Table: Comparison of the Figures from the Two Sources

<i>mDo 'dus</i> (11 th century AD)		<i>bTsun mo bka' thang</i> (1285 AD)
Yikyi Khyeuchung (alias) Yungdrung Tsugshen Gyalwa	Victim	Monk Vairocana
Queen of <i>hos</i> , Guling Mati	Offender	Tibetan Queen Tsepongza
King of <i>hos</i> , Dangwa Yiring	King	The King Trisong Deutsen
Kunshe Thangpo	Sorcerer	Kunshe Thingpo
Teacher Shenrab	Negotiator	Master Padmasambhava
Shenrab Miwo and <i>hos</i> Princess Gyalmema	Marriage	Padmasambhava and Tibetan Princess Trompa Gyen
Māra Khyapa deceived Shenrab's wife	deceived by Māra/Demon	Māra deceived Padmasambhava's wife
Gowo Junior	illegitimate child of Māra	Padmasambhava Junior (alias) Padmasambhava Gowō

Source of the Motifs

As Hoffmann rightly pointed out half a century ago, the similarity of the narrative motif and composition, as well as the names of the characters, clearly establishes the influence of one text on the other. Hoffmann claims that the legend of Padmasambhava in the *bTsun mo bka' thang* influenced the Bon story because he believed that it was recorded earlier than the Bon story. However, since the Bon version was first recorded in the *mDo 'dus* and the *gZer mig*, both of which were written before the *bTsun mo bka' thang* was discovered, approximately in the late 13th to the early 14th century, it is not possible that the legend of Padmasambhava would be the source of the Bon narrative.

This view was first presented by Anne-Marie Blondeau (1971, pp. 34ff). She discovered many similar passages in the *gZer mig* (chapter x–xii) and the *Lha 'dre bka' thang*, a counterpart of the *bTsun mo bka' thang*. Blondeau concludes from these similarities that it is possible that the Bon narrative recorded in the *mDo 'dus* or the *gZer mig* influenced the story of Padmasambhava in the *bTsun mo bka' thang*. The question still remains, what then was the source of the Bon

narratives? Kvaerne (1979, p. 188) proposed another view, that both the *mDo 'dus* and the *bTsun mo bka' thang* narratives may derive from the motif of 'Joseph and Potiphar's Wife'.¹⁵¹

The motif of 'Joseph and Potiphar's Wife' contains the following pattern: a wife of a king or master is attracted to another man and tries to force him to make love to her. When she is rejected, the wife accuses the man of raping her and complains to her husband; as a consequence the king or master punishes the man. It is possible that this motif reached Tibet in some form and evolved as it was told and retold in different contexts. Several texts, including Buddhist sources (*Bandhanamokkha Jātaka* (Pāli Jātaka No. 120), *Mahapaduma Jātaka* (Pāli Jātaka No. 472), *Divyāvadāna*, the Tibetan translation of *mDzang blun* chapter 36 and Pelliot tibétain 943), that contain this motif are discussed in Bloomfield (1923), Kvaerne (1979) and Silk (2008, pp. 172-73). The fact that the similarities between the two Tibetan narratives extend beyond their motifs, suggests that they were derived from an earlier written source. The theme of the later part of the story (see episode four above) shares some features with the theme in Dunhuang documents (see Kvaerne 1979, p. 186 for an outline of the theme, and Stein 1972, p. 237). Unfortunately nothing can be said for certain, as a common source has not yet been identified.

Marriage and the Birth of Children

Now, one might wonder why this episode was incorporated into the life story of Shenrab Miwo. There is no definitive answer to this question, but I shall present some hypotheses based on the little evidence that is available. It seems that the early Bonpos transmitted the story orally through many generations until the time that the *mDo 'dus* was written. Tibetan Buddhists did the same with the legend of Padmasambhava. The Bonpos may have realized that this story was a good way to demonstrate a connection between Shenrab and the *hos* King. Without the meeting

¹⁵¹ The biblical story appears in Genesis 39.

of Shenrab and the *hos* King, the marriage of Shenrab and the *hos* princess could not have taken place, nor would the birth of their three children. It is particularly important to account for the birth of the two sons, Tobu Bumsang and Chebu Trishay, as they are very important figures in Bon. They are central to the inclusion of *gto* ‘ritual practice’ and *dpyad* ‘medical diagnosis’ within the territory of Bon practices.

THE SECOND KING, HIS SECOND WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN

The second of the four kings is named Barwe Dronmacen and according to the *mDo 'dus* chapter ten he was from the land Tritang Jampa Ling, the Kingdom of *dpo*.¹⁵² The King visited Shenrab to discuss an incident that he had witnessed and that caused him some psychological disturbance. In this part of the story, the author(s) specifically focuses on the idea of ‘karmic cause and effect,’ which is a fundamental Buddhist concept and a theme of Jātaka stories. I cannot find any particular textual source for the story describing this incident; neither have I found any reference to the King of *dpo* in older Tibetan documents. Nevertheless, I shall summarize the story (*mDo 'dus*, p. 71–73) in two episodes (the ransom ritual and its deadly consequences), and look at the cause of the incident. The ritual story contains an account of a brutal human sacrifice.¹⁵³

Episode One: Ransoming Ritual

There was a land called Tribuchung (Tib. *khri/khrim bu chung*), neighbouring the Kingdom of *dpo*. The king of that land was Tramo Triöd¹⁵⁴ and the queen was

¹⁵² See Martin (1999, p. 270) for the location traditionally assumed for Tritang Jampa Ling (see under Tibetan spelling, *Khri dang byams ma'i gling*, no. 50). Cf. the country called Khri gdan/dan listed among the eighteen great countries (Tib. *yul chen bco brgyad*) in the *bsGrags pa gling grags* (p. 5). Martin (1999, p. 262) identifies Khri gdan/dan as Khitan, a country of great power during the early medieval ages in Mongolia and China.

¹⁵³ See Karmay's discussion on ransom ritual, referred to in the second footnote below.

¹⁵⁴ See his name *'phra mo khri 'od* in the *mDo 'dus* (p. 71, 73, 134). Three names of a place, which are spelled in a similar way, are recorded in the *mDo 'dus*. They are: *bra ma khri 'od* (cf.

Tritsun Salmo. This royal couple had a son named Trishang, who suffered from an incurable disease. In order to find the cause of the prince's illness, the royal parents consulted the diviner Nyedu Nyelog. The diviner advised them to perform a ransom (Tib. *glud*) ritual,¹⁵⁵ for which a slave child had to be sacrificed in order to save the Prince's life. A slave child named Trishe was chosen to be sacrificed and a *bonpo* named Gyimshang Gongpo from the *spa*¹⁵⁶ family and a butcher called Hadha Nagpo were invited to perform the ritual. The Prince vainly protested against the sacrifice of the slave-child. Since the royal parents decided to perform the ritual in order to save the Prince's life, and even the slave-child himself agreed to the sacrifice, the ransom ritual was confirmed.¹⁵⁷

mDo 'dus, p. 100), *phra mo khre 'od* (cf. *mDo 'dus* Karmay, f. 48b) and *pra mo khri 'od* (cf. *mDo 'dus*, p. 208 and *mDo 'dus* Lhagyal, f. 44a). The connection between the king and the toponyms is still open for discussion.

¹⁵⁵ A similar type of the ransom ritual is still practiced in both Tibetan Buddhism and Bon, but the difference is that the afflicted person is replaced today with an effigy made of dough (by pretending that the effigy is a real person). The point of this ransom ritual is to exchange the life of the afflicted person for the life of another person (usually of less importance), in case of the malignant spirit that is causing harm. The notion of this ransom ritual is explained with interesting detail in Karmay 1998, p. 339 ff. Karmay refers to IOL TIB J 734, which is transliterated and translated in Thomas 1957 (Part II, pp. 52-102). Karmay also provides us with some Tibetan texts related to this ritual and the episode from the *gZer mig*. The *gZer mig*'s episode is similar to the ransom ritual explained here from the *mDo 'dus*.

¹⁵⁶ The term *bonpo* here is not referring to the follower of Bon, but is probably referring to a particular ritual priest, like in the Dunhuang Tibetan documents. The family of *spa* is well-known in Bon history (cf. Karmay 1972, pp. 9-10).

¹⁵⁷ The names of the people involved in this story mostly contain the word Tri (Tib. *khri*) and are related to the country Khri dang, probably Khri dan or Khitan. For example, the land called *Khri bu chung* which probably means 'small kingdom of Khri (dan)', the royal parents called *Khri 'od* 'the light of Khri' and *Khri bstun* 'the queen of Khri', the prince is called *Khri shang* 'the fragrant (possibly derived from Chinese *shang* 香) of Khri', the slave child is called *Khri shes* 'the wisdom of Khri.' Because of these names, I presume that there was a story available from Chinese literature, probably in Khri dan or Khitan, which was relevant to this ritual story. However, I have no knowledge of any such story to date, and therefore I can only hope to shed some light on this matter in the future.

Episode Two: Death, Death and More Deaths

Having agreed to perform the ritual, the slave-child was killed like an animal slaughtered for meat. The diviner clasped the right leg, the *bonpo* pulled the right hand and the black Hadha took out the heart of the victim and scattered the flesh in the four directions. This one incident of killing consequently resulted in several deaths. In spite of the ritual, the diviner and the *bonpo* found the Prince dead when they returned to the palace. The diviner and the *bonpo* committed suicide, feeling ashamed of their deeds. The slave boy's parents then killed the butcher Hadha Nagpo, and also killed the royal parents and seized the kingdom of Tribuchung.¹⁵⁸

These episodes have no practical connection with the King Barwe Dronmacen of *dpo*, but the author(s) linked these episodes to the King by adding a small part to the end, as follows: When the slave parents seized the kingdom of Tribuchung, the King Barwe Dronmacen became envious and gathered three thousand soldiers to attack them. The King and his soldiers killed the parents of the slave child.¹⁵⁹ As the main purpose of the King's visit was to find out the karmic connections behind his own involvement in the killings and to request advice from Shenrab Miwo, as to how best to atone for his sins, this incident connects the King of *dpo* with Shenrab Miwo.

When the King of *dpo* asked about the causes of the incident — the Prince's incurable disease and the involvement of the parents, diviner, *bonpo*, slave-child, butcher, soldiers and the King himself in this crime — Shenrab replied

¹⁵⁸ The author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* labeled the nine people involved in the activity as the nine sinful persons (Tib. *sdig can mi dgu*), although not all of them committed a crime.

¹⁵⁹ A similar story recorded in the *gZer mig* (ch. ix) is summarized in Hoffmann (1961, p. 89). Hoffmann took this account as evidence of the existence of 'the Old Bon' practice of human sacrifice (Hoffmann 1961, p. 22). However, this story cannot be considered to be a historical account, let alone as actual testimony of 'Old Bon' practice. In addition, Hoffmann translated 'mo ma' and *mo bon* (see *gZer mig*, p. 227) as a famous wise woman, perhaps reading *mo* as feminine gender. However, *mo* does not necessarily refer to 'female' in this passage. The *mo bon* in this passage should rather be read as the *bonpo* who does *mo* divination, thus it is better to translate as, 'diviner bonpo', without specifying his/her gender.

with a story about the past lives of the prince (see *mDo 'dus*, p. 79). As I will paraphrase in the following, this story clearly reflects on the theory of karmic cause and effect and the existence of life after death, which reflects the Buddhist theory of karma and reincarnation. According to this belief, every single action (Skt. *karma*), either positive or negative, has its corresponding cause and effect. This is not only limited to this life, but also extends to the lives before or after this one. In other words, both Bonpos and Buddhists believe that the present situation is the effect of karma from one's past lives, while one's present actions, both mental and physical, will be the cause of karma in the next life.

Causes of the Illness and Killings

In his past life, when the prince was young, he had once killed an army chief, but the prince confessed his crime and took a vow with Togyal Yekhyen, a Bonpo Buddha of the past, to abstain from killing in the future. Since the prince confessed and practiced the ten virtuous actions properly, he was fortunate to be born as a prince, but the crime that he had committed in his previous life shortened his life span. The prince's parents, the *bonpo* and the butcher were supporters of the diviner in their previous lives, and they had interfered with the virtuous practice of the Prince. The King Barwe Dronmacen then was a ritual priest (Tib. *'dur gshen*) who performed the funeral of the army chief. Shenrab himself was the funeral ritual deity (Tib. *'dur gsas*) and the three thousand soldiers were all present there as observers (Tib. *ltad mo ba*).¹⁶⁰

Like in the story of the first king above, the practical connection between Shenrab and the King Barwe Dronmacen is also lacking in this story. However, the author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* not only portrayed the King as a funeral ritual priest, but also portrayed Shenrab as the ritual deity in this story. Through this story, the author(s) found a convenient way to demonstrate a connection between Shenrab

¹⁶⁰ The Tibetan word *ltad mo ba* could also be a synonym of another word *ltas mkhan* meaning 'a soothsayer', one who analyses the problem using divination and astrological signs.

and the King of *dpo*.

Marriage and the Birth of Children

As said above, the fundamental purpose of this whole story is to connect Shenrab and the King of *dpo*. When the King requested Shenrab to offer advice on how best to atone for his own involvement in the killings, Shenrab instructed him to prostrate before all enlightened beings, to provide generous support to all living beings and to remove his negative emotions. Upon hearing this advice from Shenrab, the King declared his intention to confess his sins and promised to follow the virtuous path of the doctrine. The King invited Shenrab to his royal palace to perform purification rituals and offered Shenrab the hand of his daughter Princess Thangmo in marriage. Two sons, called Lungdren and Gyudren, and a daughter called Shenza Neuchung were born. Furthermore, the healing rituals (Tib. *gto sgro*) and the medical texts (Tib. *spyad/dpyad sgro*) were certified as the teachings of Shenrab, and the four sections of Tantric teachings (Tib. *rgyud sde bzhi*)¹⁶¹ and the ten commentaries of sūtras (Tib. *don mdo bcu*)¹⁶² were transmitted through his two sons Lungdren and Gyudren (*mDo 'dus*, p. 81). Looking closely at the names of the two sons, we can see a conscious effort to construct the names based on the Tibetan term, *lung*, 'sūtra or instruction' and *rgyud*, 'tantra', while the second part of the names, *'dren*, means 'transmitter' (See also *mDo 'dus*, p. 230). This evidently shows that the names are actually descriptions of how they are known by Bonpos later.

Also relevant here is the story of the karmic relationship between Shenrab and the Princess of *dpo*. The author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* (*mDo 'dus*, p. 81) writes a

¹⁶¹ The four tantras relevant here are: the tantra of the gods (Tib. *lha rgyud*), the tantra of the *gshen* (Tib. *gshen rgyud*), the tantra of existence (Tib. *srid rgyud*) and the tantra of meaning (Tib. *don rgyud*). This is merely a list and one should not confuse that with other collections bearing the same name. However, I have not yet been able to identify each of these tantras and their connections with Buddhist tantras.

¹⁶² This is probably a collection of ten commentaries on Bon sūtras, although the author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* does not provide any further details about this.

romantic movie-like story about the relationship between Shenrab and the Princess, not only in this life but also in their past lives. It is interesting because it explains why the marriage of the two had to take place. According to the *mDo 'dus*, all of the people in the kingdom, including the King and his three thousand men, accomplished liberation, except the *dpo* Prince Powu Lagngen and the *dpo* Princess Thangmo. The Prince's obstacles to achieving liberation were the immeasurable sins (Tib. *'tshams med sdig pa*) committed during five hundred past lives, which had not yet been atoned for. Interestingly, the obstacle for the princess was her engagement to Shenrab in her past life. The story explains that the princess had once thrown flowers at Shenrab in her past life and that they had prayed together to find each other as partners in their next lives. The theory of a positive karmic relationship between Shenrab and the *dpo* princess, enduring life after life, is also reflected in the last part of the story of the King of *dpo*.

THE THIRD KING, THIRD WIFE AND ONE SON

The third of the four kings is Kongtse Trulgyi Gyalpo and he is said to have been from China. The relationship between king Kongtse and Shenrab Miwo is another example of the inclusion of foreign narratives into the fabric of the *mDo 'dus*. Although Kongtse is depicted differently in Tibet, he can be identified as Kǒng zǐ (Confucius), a philosopher and a thinker from China who lived from 551–479 BCE (Wilson 2002). There are several factors that support this claim.¹⁶³

Firstly, the Tibetan spelling Kongtse (see the table below for different spellings) is a phonetic transcription of the Chinese name Kǒng zǐ. One can compare this with his Latin name Confucius, which reflects the Chinese name Kǒng fū zǐ. There are other examples of early Tibetan authors transcribing Chinese names into Tibetan. For example, *Kong jo* is the name given to two Chinese princesses, who married early Tibetan kings in the 7th and 8th centuries. The

¹⁶³ For a detailed discussion about Kongtse and Confucius, I refer the reader to Karmay 1975a, Lin 2007, and Gurung 2009.

Tibetan word *kong jo* is the phonetic transcription of the Chinese word *gōng zhǔ* (公主) for princess. Other examples are the Tibetan words *ha shang* or *hwa shang* for a Chinese monk who visited Tibet in the 8th century or later. They are the phonetic transcriptions of the Chinese word *hé shàng* (和尚) for monk.¹⁶⁴

Secondly, the Chinese attribute methods of astrology and divination to Kǒng fū zǐ. Bonpos also attribute equivalent Tibetan astrological methodologies to Kongtse, and to his grandson Trulbu Chung.

Thirdly, in many Bon sources Kongtse has an epithet Trulgyi Gyalpo (Tib. *phrul gyi rgyal po*, abbreviated *phrul rgyal*). The toponym *rgya* is sometimes added in front of the name and the epithet, which refers to China.¹⁶⁵ Thus, he is called *rgya Kongtse Trulgyi Gyalpo*. This suggests that the Bonpos recognize that Kongtse originally came from China.

Table: Variant Names of Kongtse

<i>mDo 'dus</i> ¹⁶⁶	<i>mDo 'dus</i> Karmay	<i>mDo 'dus</i> Lhagyal
Kong tse 'phrul gyi(s) rgyal po	Kong/Gang tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po	Kong ts(h)e 'phrul gyi rgyal po
Kong tse rgyal po	Gong rtse rgyal po	Kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po
Kong (r)tse 'phrul rgyal	Kong/Gong (r)tse 'phrul rgyal	Kong ts(h)e 'phrul rgyal
sgos btsan Kong tse 'khrul rgyal	sgos btsan Kong tse 'khrul rgyal	sgo btsan Gong tse 'phrul rgyal
rgya Kong rtse 'phrul gyi rgyal po	lha Gong rtse 'phrul gyi rgyal po	lha Kong tse 'phrul gyi rgyal po
Kong tse lha	--- missing ---	Kong tse lha

It is evident that Kongtse was recognized among Bonpos from at least the beginning of the 11th century AD, as his name is recorded in the *mDo 'dus*. He is

¹⁶⁴ For more references on the Tibetan *ha shang* or *hwa shang*, see Gurung 2009, p. 276 (note 5).

¹⁶⁵ I have argued for this toponym *rgya* referring to China in Gurung 2009, pp. 258-59.

¹⁶⁶ See *mDo 'dus*, p. 43, 82-84, 87-89, 195, 198, 208 and 218 for these names, and its parallel sections in the other two versions.

also depicted in several different ways in other Bon sources and sometimes even worshipped by Bonpos in order to bring well-being and prosperity. The Bon texts on Kongtse can be classified into two groups. The first group consists of hagiographical and related sources in which Kongtse is portrayed like a king who later became a patron and a father-in-law of Shenrab. The second group of texts, which most likely appeared later than the first group, is concerned with rituals relating to his veneration. I have discussed Kongtse's involvement in Bon rituals elsewhere (see Gurung 2009, p. 263ff.).

The Story of Kongtse in the *mDo 'dus*

According to chapter eleven of the *mDo 'dus*, Kongtse was a Chinese king¹⁶⁷ who later became Shenrab's patron, father-in-law and his disciple. Perhaps this could be taken to indicate that Kongtse was himself a Bonpo practitioner or converted to Bon. This also suggests that whatever knowledge is attributed to Kongtse, or whatever texts that are attributed to him, were indirectly transmitted from Shenrab Miwo and thus can be considered as Bon texts or knowledge.

Several Bon ritual texts also contain similar depictions of Kongtse as a king, a patron, father-in-law and a disciple of Shenrab. One of these texts is the *Klong rgyas*, which contains a ritual to make offerings to the Buddhas, to accumulate merit for oneself. Even though this text was composed for ritual purposes, it is strongly related to the accounts of Shenrab, like the *mDo 'dus* and the *gZer mig*.¹⁶⁸ This ritual text is the elaborated version of the ritual performed at the behest of Kongtse on an auspicious day, shortly after the castle was completed,

¹⁶⁷ According to Wilson (2002, pp. 223-24), Kǒng zǐ (孔子) is regarded as a king without a throne who has met Laǒ zǐ (老子). Shenrab Miwo is sometimes identified with Laǒ zǐ (cf. Bjerken 2004, p. 18, Rockhill 1891, pp. 217-18, note 2, Shen 1973, p. 37). The earliest Tibetan scholar who brought up this view is, probably, the 18th-century Gelukpa master Thuṅkwan (1985). Karmay (1998, p. 111) has already rejected Thuṅkwan's view.

¹⁶⁸ According to Karmay (1998, p. 170, note 2), the *Klong rgyas* text was extracted mainly from chapter xiv of the *gZer mig*, and other ritual parts from chapters v, vi, ix and xiii.

which I will discuss later. As Karmay (1998, p. 169) has shown, this ritual text has also been used as a funerary ritual from at least the early 12th century AD.¹⁶⁹

The story of Kongtse in the *mDo 'dus* begins with his previous life. A king named Sai Nyingpo (essence of earth) who lived in the south of Jambudvīpa had three sons. The youngest of them was called Salchog (supreme radiance), who was a noble, kind-hearted and virtuous man. Because of these qualities he was reborn as Kongtse in his next life. Kongtse was born in the Trigo Tseggya palace (ten thousands doors with a hundred peaks) in the city of Trulgyur Kopa on the island Gyalag Odma, located to the west of Olmo Ling. His father was Kadama Ser Od and his mother was Mutri Seoma. In the Mukhyu Dalpa Sea, he built an extraordinary castle as his most important contribution. The first half of the castle was built with the help of a nāga and a demon and the second half was completed with the help of *phyä* god Antse (Kengtse in the *gZer mig*), who descended from the land of *phyä*. According to the *mDo 'dus*, the nāga (probably the chief) and the demon were the two brothers of Kongtse in his past life and the other two sons of King Sai Nyingpo. They were reborn in their next life as a black nāga and a demon, because of the inexcusable crimes that they committed. One chopped off his father's head and the other sliced off his mother's breasts. However, their joint prayer to help their youngest brother (i.e. Kongtse) paid off and they were able to help him even though they were born as non-humans (*mDo 'dus*, pp. 82–83).

As mentioned above, according to the *mDo 'dus*, the most important contribution of Kongtse was building a castle in the middle of the sea, which became a holy object of veneration for Bonpos.¹⁷⁰ However, he had gone through many difficulties to complete this task. The author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* does not give all the details regarding why was it so important for Kongtse to build this castle in an almost impossible location, and what kind of difficulties he had to face

¹⁶⁹ Since the main purpose of the ritual is to earn merit for a next life, the Bonpos seem to have found this text suitable as a funerary text.

¹⁷⁰ Karmay (1998, p. 182) has discovered a similar story in the Chinese Dunhuang document, PC 3883.

during the construction. Since the *mDo 'dus* presents only a brief account of the events, I shall take the relevant details from the *gZer mig* chapter xiii (cf. Karmay 1998, p. 171ff.).

According to the *gZer mig*, Kongtse was born with many special qualities and features. Most noticeably, both his palms were filled with marks of thirty magic letters (Tib. *kong rtse*, alt. *gab tse*), therefore he was named Kongtse Trulgyi Gyalpo 'Kongtse, the magical king'. At the age of nine, he prayed to the four primary Buddhas of Bon to fulfill his wishes. These wishes were: to marry the *gnyan* girl Karmo Odmasal (*gnyen* lady Odmasal in the *mDo 'dus*), to have three sons and two daughters, to harvest five hundreds sacks of rice from his fields, and to obtain thousands of livestock before he reached the age of twenty-five. His prayers were answered and all his wishes were fulfilled by the age of twenty-five, thus he was known to be a very fortunate man. Even so, his mother covetously asked him to pray for more wealth, animals, beautiful wives, and hundreds of children. Kongtse replied to his mother, saying that all of those things were illusory, that they only cause worldly suffering and have no meaning for a next life. Instead, he wanted to pursue a path that would not only give him pleasure in his current life, but also be useful in his future lives. Therefore, he promised his mother that he would build an extraordinary castle in the middle of the sea, so that people could worship this castle to accumulate merit.

Due to the difficult nature of this task he had to summon supernatural forces to carry out the work. Kongtse managed to summon demonic forces to build the castle, but he was bound by them to keep this activity secret from his family. The demonic forces manifested one hundred figures, all looking identical to Kongtse, who carried out the construction work. Nevertheless, Kongtse did not keep the project secret from his parents because he was worried that his parents would be anxious or even die during his long absence from the palace. Eventually, his wife and children became worried about his absence, which forced Kongtse's mother to reveal his whereabouts to his wife. When the wife and children

unexpectedly showed up at the construction site, the demons accused Kongtse of breaking his promise and fled, leaving the construction only half finished. Disappointed by this turn of events, he decided to leave and to wander through his entire kingdom without a specific destination.

In the above story, the author of the *gZer mig* provides three reasons for Kongtse building an extraordinary castle in the middle of the sea. Firstly, as he told his mother, he wanted to do something meaningful in this life. Secondly, he wanted to pursue a path that would not only give him pleasure in this life, but also in his future lives. Thirdly, he wanted to build something that people could worship to achieve merit. However, his first attempt to build the castle was interrupted, because he did not keep the task secret from his family. Consequently, the workers left the construction project unfinished and Kongtse was in a very difficult situation.

According to the *mDo 'dus* (p. 85), Kongtse met a little boy, who was an emanation of the *phyä* god Antse Lenme (Tib. *phyä an tse len med*, cf. *phyä* Kengtse), who came down from the land of *mgon btsun phyä*¹⁷¹ to fulfill the virtuous will of Kongtse. He asked the boy to help him finish building the castle. Together with gods, *nāgas* and semi-gods, the little boy helped Kongtse to complete the task of building this extraordinary castle in the middle of the sea.¹⁷² This castle was named Karnag Trasal (Tib. *dkar nag bkra gsal* ‘white black vividly

¹⁷¹ *mGon btsun phyä* is probably to be understood either as a deity or merely a mythical figure, as given in the Dunhuang documents. See Pelliot tibétain 1134 and IOL TIB J 731, in which *mgon tshun phywa*’ and *mgon tshun gtings na rje*’ are described as father and son. The name is also spelled as *mgon chun phva*, *mgon phywa*, *mgon tsun* (in Pelliot tibétain 1043) and *mgon btsun ni phyä* (in IOL TIB J 739). Cf. also Stein 2003, p. 601.

¹⁷² According to the *mDo 'dus*, ch. xi, the features of the temple are as follows, “the base of the temple is very solid, as it is built by demons; the middle part is glorious, as it is built by a powerful god; the interior is beautiful, as it is painted with magic by the *nāgas*; the design is wonderful, as its architect is the wise *phyä*; the construction was successfully completed, as it was carried out by a fortunate human being; and the temple is outstanding (Tib. *byin brlabs rgyas*), as it is blessed by the enlightened ones.

clear').¹⁷³

Although the author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* does not present the details about the meeting between Kongtse and the little boy, as they are found in the *gZer mig*, he does provide some important descriptions that relate to this event. According to the *mDo 'dus* (p. 84), the little boy was wearing a woollen cloak (Tib. *tsi ber*) and holding a conch rosary (cf. crystal rosary in Karmay 1998, p. 172) and he came down from the land of *mgon btsun phyä*. This boy acted as a judge, when there was a dispute between gods and demons over construction tasks. The second divine boy (Tib. *lha bu*) was wearing a robe of ibex skin and carrying a golden sword. The third nāga boy was wearing a white conch-like turban (Tib. *dung sprul thor gtsug can*). There is also a passage about someone asking questions to the little boy with the cloak, which is similar to a conversation in the *gZer mig* between Kongtse and the little boy. As Karmay (1998, p. 171) suggests, the story in chapter thirteen of the *gZer mig* about Kongtse meeting with the three little boys is adapted from the similar story expounded through the dialogue between the Confucius and the boy Xiang Tou, which we find preserved in Pelliot tibétain 992 and Pelliot tibétain 1284 (Soymié 1954).

Shenrab and Kongtse

The construction of the castle not only made the meeting of Kongtse and Shenrab possible, but also brings them into a family relationship and a relationship as teacher and disciple. Shenrab Miwo played no specific role in the story of Kongtse presented above. Shenrab enters into the scene only after the castle has been completed. Kongtse invites Shenrab to perform the inauguration and the consecration ritual of the castle. Kongtse also requested Shenrab to teach him the five great miracles (Tib. *cho 'phrul*), which are the supreme methods used to help

¹⁷³ Traditionally, Bonpos interpret the 'white-black' as referring to the gods and demons that helped Kongtse to build the castle.

people and to pacify evil beings.¹⁷⁴ In return for the ritual performed and the teaching given by Shenrab, Kongtse offered his royal authority (Tib. *rgyal srid*). Kongtse also offered his daughter, Princess Trulgyur, to Shenrab, to take as his wife, which united them in a family relationship. The union of Kongtse's daughter and Shenrab bore a son named Trulbu Chung, who studied Bon astrology (Tib. *gtsug lag rtsis*) with his father and became an expert in this science (*mDo 'dus*, p. 89).

Although this family relationship between Kongtse and Shenrab is unlikely to be a historical fact, it has come to play a significant role in the development of Bon. The inclusion of Kǒng zǐ in the historical narrative of Bon has expanded the territory of the Bon teachings. For example, Bonpos claim that astrology, which has been attributed to Kongtse in a number of Tibetan sources, actually originated from Bon.

THE FOURTH KING, HIS FOURTH WIFE AND ONE MORE SON

The fourth king who met Shenrab Miwo is the King of Kongpo, named Karpo. The relationship between Shenrab and this King is presented through a very brief account given in chapter twelve of the *mDo 'dus* (pp. 101–02), and a summary in chapters six and twenty-three of the *mDo 'dus* (p. 43, p. 218).

According to the *mDo 'dus* (pp. 101–02), the story of the King of Kongpo begins with Māra Khyapa's attempts to deceive Shenrab. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, Shenrab faced many deceptive tricks by Māra. Māra Khyapa sent his sons to steal Shenrab's horses. With the stolen horses, they fled to Kongpo, the land of Kongje Karpo. Shenrab followed Māra's sons and travelled to Kongpo, in order to get his horses back.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Five great miracles in the *mDo 'dus* (ch. xxi) are: miracle of nature (Tib. *rang bzhin*), of blessing (Tib. *byin gyis brlabs pa*), of magic power (Tib. *rdzu 'phrul*), miraculous display (Tib. *rjes su bstan pa*), and preserving the teaching for future (Tib. *bstan pa rjes bzhag*).

¹⁷⁵ The author of the *gZer mig* (p. 493: “*bod srin poi rigs dbang du bsdu ba dang/ bdud dregs pa can gyi rigs 'khor du bcad par dgongs nas/ rta yi rjes su byon no*”) interpreted this visit of Shenrab to Kongpo as an effort not mainly to get his horses back, but to tame the Kongpo people.

This journey of Shenrab to Tibet by later Bonpo historians is considered to be one of the most important events in Bon history. Bonpos maintain that during this first visit to Tibet Shenrab taught fundamental Bon ritual practices to the people of Kongpo.¹⁷⁶ These claims regarding Shenrab's visit to Kongpo and the teachings he gave on ritual practices could be based on the connection between these rituals and the land of Kongpo described in the Dunhuang documents.¹⁷⁷

Unlike the meeting with the other three kings that I discuss above, Shenrab's meeting with the King of Kongpo was merely an accident. According to the *mDo 'dus*, it is the stolen horses that made this meeting possible. However, this meeting also resulted in a family relationship between them. Shenrab not only managed to get his stolen horses back, but he also took the Kongpo princess Tricham as his wife. According to the *mDo 'dus*, the union of Shenrab and the Kongpo princess bore a son named Kongtsha, the grand-son of Kongje Karpo. He is also known as Kongtsha Wangden or Yungdrung Wangden in later Bon sources and was said to be born in the Silver castle in Khyunglung (Tib. *khyung lung ngul mkhar*).¹⁷⁸ According to Shardza (Karmay 1972, pp. 5–6, 132–33), the lineage from this son of Shenrab continues until today, and also includes a very crucial Bonpo figure called Shenchén Luga (996–1035 AD), one of the early Bonpo *gter ston* 'text discoverers'.

We are able to determine from the Tibetan Dunhuang documents and the Kongpo inscription (Richardson 1985, 66 ff.) that the King of Kongpo was none

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *gZer mig*, p. 497, “*bon du lha gsol ba dang/ 'dre mchod pa gnyis kyi lung phog/ yas stags su shing rtsi ban bun dang/ zhugs shing dang gser skyems bstan*”.

¹⁷⁷ In reference to Karmay and Ramble, Blezer has developed a similar thesis in a forthcoming article on Myi yul skyi mthing, in which he argues for a possible proto-heartland of Bon near Kongpo (Blezer forthcoming 2011).

¹⁷⁸ According to the *mDo 'dus*, this Silver castle in Khyunglung was built near Lhari Gyangdo by Shenrab on his way back from Kongpo. For more about this castle, see Blezer (2007 and forthcoming *PIATS*).

other than Kongje Karpo, the King of Kongyul Drena.¹⁷⁹ According to the inscription, Kongje Karpo, alternatively written as Kong Karpo or Karpo Mangpo Je, was a contemporary of the King Trisong Deutsen (8th century AD). He was a descendant of Nya khyi (elsewhere called Nya khri),¹⁸⁰ one of the three sons of mythical King Drigum Tsenpo, and he was exiled to Kongpo.¹⁸¹ As Blezer (2008) pointed out, the account of the King of Kongpo as presented in the *mDo 'dus* is most likely constructed on the basis of fragmentary records of this historical figure and adapted to fit the narrative of the life of Shenrab Miwo.

TWO MORE MARRIAGES AND TWO MORE SONS

Apart from the four marriages in the *mDo 'dus*, discussed above, Shenrab is said to have married two other women. One marriage was to his sweetheart Lhaza Gungdrug, a lady from the land of *mgon gsum phya*¹⁸² and the second was to the divine lady Ngangdrug Legpa. A brief account of these two marriages is given in chapter six of the *mDo 'dus* (pp. 42–43). They seem to have taken place after Shenrab's second marriage with *dpo'* Princess Thangmo. However, there is no narrative of these two marriages in the *gZer mig* or in any other account of Shenrab's life, thus not all Bonpo authors agree that these two extra marriages took place.

Another relevant section about the marriage of Shenrab to a lady from the land of *mgon gsum phya* is recorded in chapter twelve of the *mDo 'dus* (p. 99–

¹⁷⁹ For the toponyms, *rkong yul bre sna* or *rkong yul/g.yug*, the land of King Karpo, see *gZer mig* (p. 507) and the Dunhuang documents Pelliot tibétain 1052, Pelliot tibétain 1060, Pelliot tibétain 1285 and Pelliot tibétain 1286, Pelliot tibétain 1288 and IOL TIB J 734. The name *rkong rje dkar po* and *rkong dkar po* is found in Pelliot tibétain 1060, Pelliot tibétain 1285, Pelliot tibétain 1286, Pelliot tibétain 1287 and IOL TIB J 734.

¹⁸⁰ Haarh (1969, p. 158 and 440, note 60) has explained this interchange of *nya khri* and *nya khyi*.

¹⁸¹ In Pelliot tibétain 1287, cf. lines 50–51, “*nya khyi ni rkong dkar po lagso*”, *nya khyi* is identified as *rkong dkar po*. For further Dunhuang references on *nya khyi*, see Haarh 1969 (p. 401–5).

¹⁸² Cf. *mgon btsun phya*, *supra*, in footnote 171.

100). This chapter is actually about deception carried out by Māra Khyapa on Shenrab and his family. According to the story, Shenrab was once serving the *phyä* gods. Taking this opportunity, Khyapa transformed himself into a son of a god and went to deceive *dpo* Princess Thangmo. He maliciously told the Princess that Shenrab had married a daughter of *phyä*. Khyapa even advised her to set bags containing thousands of ritual and medical texts on fire, and let the smoke go to the land of *phyä*, in order to get Shenrab's attention. Following the advice of Māra, the *dpo* Princess set the collection of texts on fire. Fortunately, the two eldest sons of Shenrab, Tobu and Chebu, managed to save the five heroic syllables and a few hundred texts of healing rituals, but a hundred thousand other ritual and medical texts were burnt. This part of the story implies that the collection of Bon texts once was very rich, but was destroyed by Māra through this incident, which many Bonpos still believe today. I have been unable to find any parallel story elsewhere from which this particular narrative could have been derived.

Shenrab also had a son from each of these two marriages. The son from the first marriage was named Mucho Demdrug, who was later appointed as the successor of Shenrab and taught Bon for three years after his father's death (see *mDo 'dus*, p. 231). In contradistinction to all other Bon sources, only the author(s) of the *mDo 'dus* has recorded that Mucho Demdrug was a son of Shenrab.¹⁸³ The son from the second marriage was named Oldrug Thangpo. Not much is known about him in Bon sources, except that he also taught Bon for three years (see *mDo 'dus*, p. 231) after his half-brother Mucho Demdrug.

¹⁸³ According to the *Srid rgyud kha byang chen mo* (p. 326), Mucho Demdrug was the son of another *dmu* King Thumthum Nalme. The time of his birth was long after Shenrab had passed away, and he was a bodyguard of the King Yabla Daldrug, the grandfather of the King Nyatri Tsenpo (*Srid rgyud kha byang chen mo*, p. 341). However, there are at least four different figures with this name recorded in Bon texts: 1) son of Shenrab, 2) son of the *dmu* King Thumthum Nalme, 3) one of the thirty-three *bonpo* priests, and 4) the manifestation of Shenrab to subjugate the *preta* realm (see the six Bon deities *supra*, in footnote 107). Whether these four are all the same figure is still an open question. Bonpos might claim that they are different, but there are numerous examples in Bon texts of one name evolving into many.

Table: Shenrab Miwo's Wives and Children

Wife	Children
1. <i>hos</i> Princess Gyalmay (see chapter vi & ix)	1. Tobu Bumsang (son) 2. Chebu Trishe (son) 3. Shenza Neuchen (daughter)
2. <i>dpo'</i> Princess Thangmo (see chapter vi & x)	1. Lungdren (son) 2. Gyudren (son) 3. Shen Khyeuchung (daughter)
3. Lhaza Gungdrug (see chapter vi)	Mucho Demdrug (son)
4. Seza Ngangdrug Legpa (see chapter vi)	Oldrug Thangpo (son)
5. Kongpo Princess Tricham (see chapter vi, xii, xxiii & xxiv)	Kongtsha (son)
6. Kongza Trulgyur (see chapter vi, xi & xviii)	Trulbuthung (son)

The *mDo 'dus* describes that the fifth son of Shenrab, Mucho Demdrug, was an expert in *mu me bon* 'unlimited teachings of Bon', and also knew countless tales (Tib. *cho rab*). He held a crooked white stick (Tib. *dung gis ldem shing*) and possessed six types of *mngon shes* (Skt. *abhijñā*, 'clairvoyance'). In spite of this account of Mucho Demdrug as Shenrab's son, elsewhere in the *mDo 'dus* (p. 54), he is also listed among the thirty-three Bonpo priests (Tib. *'dul ba'i bon po*) and called *srin bon dmu cho* (alt. *sri bon mu co* or *srid bon mu cho*).¹⁸⁴ The name *srid bon mu cho* may be read as the abbreviated form of the name *srid pa'i bon po mu cho ldem drug*. The relationship between Shenrab and *srid pa'i bon po* Mucho Demdrug is also given in the earlier Bon text *Klu 'bum nag po*, which is possibly the source of the hagiographical account. However, this relationship is not that of father and son, but of ritual master and client. I will here present a summary of the

¹⁸⁴ For other references to this name, cf. *srid pa'i bon po* in the *Klu 'bum nag po*, ch. 1, and also cf. *mu cho ldem drug srid pa gung sangs yul* in the *mDo 'dus*, p. 199.

story from the *Klu 'bum nag po* (pp. 20–27).

There was a series of illnesses, caused by nāgas, that affected many different people, and Tonpa Shenrab was invited to cure them. One of the victims was Mucho Demdrug, who was a funeral ritual priest. When *srid pa'i bon po* Mucho Demdrug fell ill, he first received a treatment for Phlegm (Tib. *bad kan*). But his illness worsened, causing a lot of pain in his whole body and his hands and legs became thin and weak. There was no physician who could cure his illness. At that moment, Tonpa Shenrab miraculously emanated Yikyī Khyeuchung (a little boy of heart) and sent him to Mucho Demdrug. After some serious discussions with Yikyī Khyeuchung, Mucho Demdrug became convinced that his illness was caused by mistakes he committed in the past and that the only cure was to confess his mistakes to the nāga whom he had disturbed when he performed a funeral ritual. Mucho Demdrug agreed and conducted the ritual to confess his wrong deeds, under the guidance of Shenrab, and consequently he was cured from his illness.

CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter has shown that the life account of Shenrab Miwo not only derives from the legend of the historical Buddha, but also from other non-Buddhist stories in the Dunhuang documents and in the *Klu 'bum nag po*, as well as oral and literary stories similar to the motif of the story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife.

It is evident that the narratives concerning the four kings were appropriated from various sources. For instance, part of the story in the King of *hos* section is influenced by the motif similar to that which appears in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; while the later part and the names are constructed and borrowed from older Tibetan documents (cf. Pelliot tibétain 1136 and *Klu 'bum nag po*). The second section, King Barwe Dronmacen of *dpo'*, mainly describes Buddhist karmic theory, but also contains themes found in older Tibetan documents, including

sacrificial ritual. The importing of astrology and old Tibetan rituals through Kongtse is evident in the third section, whereas the fourth section uses the King of Kongpo to locate the narrative within both a geographic and historical Tibetan landscape. In brief, these aspects show that when composing the account of Shenrab Miwo the author(s) borrowed many different motifs and stories from other, earlier sources.

The marriage stories seem to have allowed early Bonpo authors to claim that Buddhist teachings and other disciplines like medicine and astrology originate from Bon and were taught by Shenrab Miwo. Bonpos still claims this today. As we can see from the discussion above, the children born from the different marriages play an important role in justifying these claims. These family relationships between Shenrab and the four kings are of key importance in Bon.

In addition, the stories of Shenrab's marriages bear some resemblance to the marriage stories of the early Tibetan kings of Yarlung (cf. Sakya 1993). For instance, the number of wives that Shenrab married is similar to the number of concubines that the early Tibetan kings had, and those also mostly came from outside the kingdom. This motif might suggest the approximate period of the marriage narratives in the *mDo 'dus*. As one of the main reasons that Tibetan Kings obtained so many wives was to secure and extend their political ties with neighbouring principalities, Shenrab's multiple marriages also seem to have been a convenient strategy to extend the religious 'territory' of Bon.

