“Beasts, Men and Gods”. A red purifying smoke offering (*marsang*) in Trika (Amdo)

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I borrow this title from F. Ossendowski's famous book.

First of all, I want to thank the villagers of Soru for their kindness and help during all these years. Without their support, I would not have been able to do my research in the village. This article has benefitted from information, remarks, corrections and discussions from several colleagues and friends to whom I want to express my gratitude: S. Arguillère, D. Berounský, V. Goossaert, Clémence Henry, Namthar Gyal, Norbu, Nyanshem Gyal and Tshe dpal rdo rje. I am indebted for the schema of Trike Yülha temple and the translation of the interviews and inscriptions in Chinese to Hannibal Taubes. I want to thank him also for all the help he gave me during the two days we stayed together in Trika. Last but not least, I give my deepest thanks to my colleague and friend M. Akester who, as usual, took the trouble to read the article carefully and to transform my "Franglish" into English.

Les dieux, les dieux sont les plus forts ; devant
eux le temps
Coule et s'écroule, tous les hommes
s'agenouillent,
Prières et sanglots s'élèvent vers eux comme de
l'encens ;
Car ce sont des dieux, Félise¹.

- ¹ At the beginning of the 1980s, Stan Royal Mumford was doing fieldwork in Central Nepal, in the eastern part of Manang district, trying to understand "Tibetan Buddhist

culture in the light of the historic encounter with its non-Buddhist shamanic rivals" (Mumford 1990, p. 3). Located in the Gyasumdo area, near the Tibetan border, his study focused on two villages established on either side of the Marsyangdi river: one was Tshab, where was living a Nyingma community of Tibetans who had migrated there from Kyirong, south-west Tibet, and Nubri, northern Nepal, about one century earlier; on the other side of the river, in Tapje village, lived a Gurung community with a strong shamanic tradition. Mumford observed that "caught in the middle, the Tibetan laity are making up their minds about a shamanic past that still tempts them. The temptation in its most anti-Buddhist form is displayed every spring when the red offering sacrifice is enacted in the village of Tapje, reminding everyone that Lamaism has not triumphed here as it had in Tibet" (*ibid*, p. 59).

- 2 But has Lamaism, or better Tibetan Buddhism, triumphed in Tibet?
- 3 In this article, I explore a red purifying smoke offering (*marsang*), which I observed in Trika (Amdo, Ch. Guide, present Qinghai province) in 1999, and its evolution over the years. This blood sacrifice was dedicated to Trike Yülha, "the *yülha* of Trika", also called Amye Yülha, "Yülha, the ancestor", a territorial god (Tib. *yul lha*) of Trika (Ch. Guide), in Tsholho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture². But he is also the territorial god of Soru, a village near Rebgong, where I have been doing fieldwork since 1997³. The importance of this deity to the community is expressed during the *luröl* (Tib. *glu rol/klu rol*) festival, which takes place every year from the 20th to the 25th of the 6th month of the Chinese calendar⁴. What makes this deity particularly interesting is that he is identified with Guandi and Wenchang, two famous Chinese deities.
- 4 After a presentation of Trike Yülha, Guandi/Guan Yu and Wenchang, I will introduce two temples dedicated to this territorial god (*yülha*). A description of the *marsang* offering which I could observe in 1999 will be given, followed by an attempt to explain the reasons why this blood sacrifice – a practice well-known in the pre-Buddhist religion but firmly condemned by Buddhism – is still going on.
- 5 With this article, I would like to add a small stone to the pile of research that has opened up in recent years on the specificities of the area often called the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands⁵.

Trike Yülha in Soru Village

- 6 Soru is by now a village of 130 Tibetan households located at the foot of Taglung mountain, the birth-god (Tib. *skyes lha*) of the community. Around 500 farmers, all Gelugpa, live in the village. They look at Trike Yülha as their territorial god (Tib. *yul lha-gzhi bdag*). He appears under two aspects: a peaceful one called Trike Yülha or Amye Yülha and a wrathful one, called Lönpo, "Minister". He is always accompanied by two acolytes, Shänpa Tsithung, "Butcher Tsithung", and Shänpa Ramgo, "Butcher with goat's head", and is said to have two brothers: the younger one, Amye Magpön, "Ancestor military commander" – identified by my informants with the Chinese god Erlang⁶ – is the birth-god of Katsäldong, a neighbouring village; the second brother, Dargyäl, is the *yülha* of Sengge Shong, another neighbouring village and also of Dobi, in Yardzi (Xunhua) Salar Autonomous county. The three brothers are often referred to collectively as "Dargyäl pün sum", "Dargyäl and his brothers, three altogether".

- 7 Each village that celebrates the *luröl* has a building dedicated to the local gods identified with military commanders and called the "house of the military commanders" (*magpön khang*), which is closed, except during big events. Buddhist icons are also present but in another part of the temple. In Soru, the central figures of this festival are two mediums (*lhawa*), on whom local gods "descend". Until 2006, the year when the younger medium died, Lönpo, the wrathful aspect of Trike Yülha, was said to "descend" upon him. During the years following his death, a substitute (Tib. *tshab*) *lhawa* played his role by imitating the habitual behaviour of the medium, making sure that the ritual was performed according to the rules. However in 2010, on the second day of the ritual, something happened that had not been seen in the previous sixty years, making the villagers very happy: Trike Yülha, the peaceful form, "descended" upon the substitute *lhawa*. But this new *lhawa* was very contested, and conflict arose over him and a lama from Jamo, the neighbouring village, who gave money to build a *mañi lhakhang*. This led to the division of the villagers into two camps: the Mañi Sarpa ("Those of the new mañi", who side with the *lhawa* and the lama) and the Mañi Nyingpa ("Those of the old mañi", who were against both). Up to 2016, the *luröl* was performed only by the Mañi Sarpa. After many mediations, often with the participation of outside villagers, and following the death of an elder who was prominently involved in the conflict, the middle generation decided to bring things under control. They succeeded in alleviating the tensions and restoring the unity of the village. Consequently, the *mañi lhakhang* built with the lama's money was dismantled, and a new one constructed with funds from both groups. Moreover, it was decided that the contested *lhawa* would not perform anymore; a new one was chosen, someone on whom Shänpa Ramgo had "descended" one day in the temple of Trike Yülha in Khashathil, Hualung county (see below). Consequently, since 2016, all Soru villagers have been performing the ritual together again⁷.
- 8 Unlike most *yülha*, who are mountain-deities, Trike Yülha is said to have been a Chinese general⁸. We know that traditionally the territorial god is considered to represent the community of ancestors of the population living on the territory he protects, as expressed in the name *amye* or ancestor. A symbol of the regional identity of the population, the mountain-deity traditionally fulfilled a politico-religious function: the power of the local chiefs was said to be granted by the territorial god, the *yülha*, who expressed himself through the throwing of dice (Walsh 1906). Therefore, the worship of the *yülha* was traditionally "the founding act of a political community" (Karmay-Sagant 1998, p. 63). So, the presence of a *yülha* of Chinese origin appears surprising even if the local gods are considered as military commanders (*magpön*). One explanation is given by Kelsang Norbu (2011, p. 24), himself from Dobi, who considers that "although the title *a myes* is applied, local mountain deities are worshipped as protectors, not as ancestors or ancestral deities". Nevertheless, that still leaves a number of questions unanswered.
- 9 Soru villagers told me various legends explaining the coming of Trike Yülha to their village. According to some, long ago, their territorial god (*yülha*) was Amye Nyänchen⁹, a mountain deity which was also the territorial god of Thewu, a neighbouring village with which the inhabitants of Soru have relations. They dismissed him, so they say, because he talked too much, spreading gossip and sowing discord, thus showing clearly that *yülha* are perceived to be endowed with the same qualities and faults as humans. Consequently, they invited Trike Yülha.

- 10 Another story situates the arrival of Trike Yülha in time. During a battle between Chinese and Tibetans, at the time of King Rälpacan (early 9th century), the future god, who was then a Chinese general, stood and fought for the Tibetans. Furious, the Chinese emperor sent him back, ordering him to stop at the place he reached at sunrise. That place was Soru.
- 11 All informants insist on the tendency of the god to move constantly and at a great speed. Some villagers add that the god's mother died when he was very young and that he was brought up with the milk of a red cow, which is the reason why Soru inhabitants do not eat the meat of red cows¹⁰.
- 12 In my fieldwork interviews in Soru (1997, 1999, 2002, 2016 and 2017), the elders identified Trike Yülha with Guan Yu or Guandi, a famous Chinese general of the period of the three Kingdoms (3rd century, 220-260), worshipped in China as the god of war and also as the god of wealth. According to them, Guan Yu was wounded during a skirmish, and died in a state of anger, which led him to be reborn as a territorial god, a "master of the territory" (Tib. *gzhi bdag*) of the Tibetans.
- 13 But who is Guandi, the Chinese god of war?

Guan Yu, god of war

- 14 The biography of Guan Yu is found in the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*), written by Chen Shou, some sixty years after the hero's death (Duara 1988, p. 780). Guan Yu is a historical general, born in the north of China in Xiezhou, Shanxi (Stein 1959, p. 108, Duara 1988, p. 780). Originally from the kingdom of Shu, he participated in the wars that opposed his kingdom to those of Wei and Wu. Shu was the weakest of the three. Guan Yu was captured in 220, during a battle against the kingdom of Wu, then decapitated and his head was sent to the leader of Wei. He was buried near the place of his execution, on or near a mountain called Jade Source Mountain where his cult originated (ter Haar 2000, p. 185). Little by little, his worship spread, starting from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and especially at the beginning of the Ming (1368-1644) (ter Haar 2000, p. 184). Ter Haar's work (2000) shows that the cult of Guan Yu originated more likely from different centres and developed not in a linear way, but rather through new "divine interventions" in a constantly expanding territory. Recognized as the god of war in China, "which reflects the ability to use violence as a positive way" (ter Haar 2017, p. 25), he is also said to be the patron of scholars. Over the centuries, he was also regarded as the god of loyalty, of wealth, protector of temples, patron of actors and of secret societies, among other things (Duara 1988, p. 781). He received the imperial title Di in the 17th century and was then called Guandi, but the Tibetans of Soru never use his imperial title, and call him Guan Yu. He is said to have two elder brothers (Doré 1914, pp. 54-65).
- 15 In "Tibetan Buddhism: beliefs and customs", published in Chinese in 1999¹¹, Cairang (Tshe ring), a Tibetan from Hualung (Ch. Hualong, Qinghai), devotes a chapter to Guan Yu (Cairang 1999, pp. 118-129). He explains that the origin of the cult of Guan Yu in Tibet followed the occupation of the country by the Qing army, whose soldiers worshipped this god, leading to the construction of temples dedicated to him in areas already under Buddhist influence. He cites various rituals composed by Tibetan writers in his honour: Cangkyä Rölpe Dorje (1717-1786), Thukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima

(1737-1802), Chahar Geshe Lobzang Tsültrim (1740-1810¹²), and the 2nd Akya Qutuytu Lobzang Tänpe Gyältsän (1708-1766).

- 16 But if the written tradition agrees on an identification between Trike Yülha and a Chinese god, it is not Guandi but Wenchang, the god of literature.

Trike Yülha in the written tradition

- 17 As Trike Yülha is one of the main deities involved in the *luröl* festival, one would have thought that the literature on this ritual would provide some information about him, but this is not the case. I know of about a dozen articles on the *luröl* written by Tibetans since the 1990s (see bibliography), recounting the mythical origin of the festival, and describing its various sequences. They often repeat each other, none devotes a particular paragraph to Trike Yülha, and some merely point out his origin in Sichuan. Nevertheless, one of them must be noted for the purposes of this article. Written by Rideng, from Soru, it is, to my knowledge, the first important article published on the subject¹³, and we will return to it.
- 18 In his recent book on Trike Yülha, Takrig Tadrin Gyäl (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal) gives a list of all the texts he found (2016, pp. 292-295, 353-355) written by several monk-scholars. I had access to only some of them¹⁴, and while several mention Trike Yülha as an aspect of Wenchang, none of them cite Guandi. All the authors of these texts are Gelug monk-scholars except one, Zhabkar Natshok Rangdröl whose text I could not locate¹⁵. The texts quoted date from the 17th to the 20th century.
- 19 To this list, we have to add the collected works (Tib. *gsung 'bum*) of the first Drakar Ngak rampa Lobzang Tänpe Rabgye (1647-1726¹⁶), in which there are several mentions of the god. This lama, who spent his youth and early career at the hermitage of Tashikyil in Rebong, explains that the god often travelled to Rebong, and that he appeared to him with "the upper torso of a man and the coiled tail of a snake, like Nagaraksa Manjughosa".
- 20 Another text, written by Shasana (no dates), "Rite of propitiation of the great god *yul lha*, source of all activities¹⁷", *Lha chen yul lha'i bskang gsol 'phrin las kun 'byung*, also provides interesting information. The god, who appears under several names (Tib. Shing ma then tshe, Sha ben, Bun khrang = Wenchang), is said to come from China and to be of Chinese appearance. During the ritual, he is invited to Trika, "a territory on the border of Tibet and China" (Sha sa na, n.d., fol. 5a). As in the oral tradition concerning Trike Yülha, the emphasis is on his speed (*ibid.*, fol. 3b): "He straddles a white mule with wings of wind which flies through trichilocosmos at great speed" (also fol. 6b and 10b¹⁸). Among the ingredients needed for the ritual are quoted "blood offerings to be burned (*bsregs pa'i dmar mchod*)" and white sacrificial cakes (*gtor ma*) wrapped around with snakes. A prohibition of cow meat and blood is enjoined on those who make the sacrificial cakes to Amye Yülha and his entourage (*ibid.*, fol. 2a), and it is even recommended that they do not come into contact with its odour.
- 21 The various names of the god, the blood offerings, and the sacrificial cakes with snakes are also mentioned in a text composed by Akya Lobzang Jamyang Gyatsho (1768-1816), "The way to make *gaṇacakra* and to offer *gtor ma* to the awesome Khri ka'i yul lha, with a golden face, birth-god of the yogi, [text] called Perfect Rain-bearing Cloud", *rNal 'byor*

skyes lha gnyan po khri ka'i yul lha gser zhal can la mchod gtor tshogs mchod 'bul tshul rdzogs ldan chu 'dzin.

- 22 Changkya Rölpe Dorje and Thukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima also are credited with the composition of invocations to Trike Yülha/Wenchang (Hor gtsang 'Jigs med 2009, p. 283).
- 23 Several Tibetan sources of recent date deal with the god. But if they evoke Trike Yülha under its Chinese aspect, it is also under that of Wenchang, the Chinese god of literature, and not that of Guan Yu, the Chinese god of war.
- 24 "A short history of the monasteries of Tsholho prefecture" (*mTsho lho khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, rDo rje tshe ring (ed.) 1999, pp. 32-39), and "The cultural history of Trika" (*Khri ka'i rig gnas lo rgyus*, 1996, pp. 183-189) confirm the identification of Trike Yülha with Wenchang.
- 25 Cairang gives some "biographical" indications on Wenchang, and affirms that his Tibetan name is Amye Yülha (Cairang 1999, pp. 129-132). He adds that some Tibetans are given the Yülha's name in the hope of gaining his protection, and students pray to him before taking exams. This is confirmed by Dorje Tashi, a young Amdowa who wrote an article (Dorje Tashi 2016, p. 187) on "Amdo Tibetan naming practices and popular names". He notes that in Trika, where the population venerates Wenchang (Tib. Bun khrang), they use names such as Buntrang Thar (Tib. Bun khrang thar) or Buntrang Gyäl (Tib. Bun khrang rgyal¹⁹).

Wenchang, god of literature in China

- 26 The documentation on Wenchang is mainly in Chinese, but there are some sources in Western languages. The work of Henri Doré constitutes an important contribution to the knowledge of the Chinese pantheon in general and Wenchang in particular (Doré 1914). Moreover, Terry Kleeman has published a wealth of materials (Kleeman 1993, 1994a). He translated in particular *The Book of Transformations*, a 12th century "auto-autobiography" of the god revealed by a Sichuanese spirit-writing medium²⁰, which relates his 73 divine and human incarnations, his failures and successes. But his cult is much older. The name Wenchang comes from a constellation of six stars near the Plough, somehow associated and unified as a god who appears in the historical record as early as the 4th century of our era, as a snake called "Viper", living in a cave at the top of the "Sevenfold mountain", in Zitong, a region of Sichuan bordering Gyälrong (Kleeman 1994b, p. 234). Later, the viper was anthropomorphized under the name Zhang Yazhi. Called the "Divine Lord of Zitong", the god controlled thunder and rain, and accepted sacrifices in return.
- 27 From the 15th century on, Wenchang was associated with a movement of popular morality which expressed itself through revealed texts [among them the *Yinzhi wen*, revealed by Wenchang himself]. One of the many precepts of this text concerns the prohibition of bovine slaughter and eating beef (Goossaert 2005, pp. 163ff). The cult of Wenchang, originally a local one, became national under the Song dynasty. It gradually spread among the population of southern Sichuan, then along the Yangtze and across China.

- 28 Kleeman distinguishes seven roles filled by the god: divinity of nature, thaumaturge, warrior protector, patron of examinations, judge of morality, evangelist of Confucian values and provider of progeny (Kleeman 1993, p. 53).
- 29 An inscription on a black stone erected in the temple of Trike Yülha in Trika adds some more information on Wenchang²¹.
- 30 In China, the cults of Wenchang and Guan Yu are very popular with many temples dedicated to these deities, and they were even integrated into the state cult. The Trike Yülha's importance in the area is also manifested in the great number of temples dedicated to him²². I know of two important temples dedicated to the god: one, called Trike Yülha lhakhang in Trika and the other one, Khashathil, located not far from Chakhyung monastery, in Tshoshar district (Ch. Hualong), in Qinghai (the birth-place of Cairang, the author of the text quoted above).

Trike Yülha lhakhang in Trika

- 31 The Trike Yülha lhakhang, or Amye Yülha lhakhang, was built at Sangzhug, west of Trika county, in the present Tsholho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Two modern Tibetan texts, "The concise history of the monasteries of mTsho lho region" (*mTsho lho khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*) and "The cultural history of Khri ka" (*Khri ka'i rig gnas lo rgyus*), give 1179 as the foundation date of the temple, while specifying "during the Yuan dynasty", although Khubilai established his dynasty only a century later, in 1271. They go on to say that the temple was completed in 1368, the first year of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). An inscription in Chinese erected in the courtyard of the temple confirms the construction but during the late Ming²³. This temple, which is said to be the mother temple, was destroyed in 1958, and rebuilt in 1982. But was it already dedicated to Trike Yülha in the 14th century? The lack of texts dedicated to this deity before the 17th century raises the question.
- 32 Cairang attributes his coming to Trika to a famous monk of the Qing era, Sekangba Luosang Danzengjiajie (gSer khang pa Blo bzang bstan 'dzin dar rgyas) which dates the event to the 18th century²⁴. The lama, concerned by the weakness of the population of Hualung, felt that it needed a powerful protector. He chose Wenchang, and sent people from Guide (Trika) to welcome the god there. Tadrin Gyäl assigns his coming to Shar Käldän Gyatso²⁵ (1607-1667), the first Rongwo Drubchen²⁶.
- 33 Thus, both scholars trace the coming of the god to Trika to the late 17th or 18th century, under the Qing dynasty.
- 34 The temple opens to the east, onto a courtyard, which has been considerably enlarged since my first visit in 1999; a large porch is under construction. There are several sang hearths (*bsang khri*), the largest of them dedicated to Wenchang and reserved for incense sticks, one for blood offerings (Fig. 1, n° 26), a series of covered hearths for burning yellow papers (*gser shog*, Fig. 1, n° 25) and grain, and another dedicated to white offerings (Fig. 1, n° 24).
- 35 Several chickens whose lives have been spared (Tib. *tshe thar*) as offerings to other gods of the temple roam freely in the courtyard.
- 36 A long stairway leads to a lower terrace with stone snow lions flanking a short staircase up to a veranda decorated with paintings of the four Buddhist heavenly kings in

Chinese style, onto which open several chapels. The central one has a statue of Trike Yülha/Wenchang, to which money and bottles of liquor are offered.

- 37 The walls are decorated with paintings in Chinese style. Most of them were done by Chinese painters, one of whom we met in June 2017. He did the paintings according to the pattern he had learned in his village when he was young, and uses no text. On the left side of the door, one can see Zhuyi, an attendant of Wenchang often charged with writing down each person's fate, especially one's luck at the examinations²⁷. A scroll he is writing reads "Evil is rewarded by evil, good is rewarded by good". On the right is another official. The other walls display paintings of Trike Yülha with Shänpa Ramgo, one of his acolytes. Attendants in blue and green could be Tianlong (Heavenly deaf) and Diya (Earthly mute), two servants of Wenchang who are not able to communicate, and therefore cannot leak the secrets of fate. Trike Yülha is represented as a Chinese scholar-official, with the typical hat, Chinese clothes, beard and moustache, and also the *ruyi* (*jou-yi*), the sceptre that Wenchang holds. He rides a white horse, sometimes a white mule²⁸. In 2016, a new room, next to this chapel, was decorated with Chinese-style statues of Trike Yülha's father and mother. The caretaker (*dkon gnyer*) told us that they were copies of those in the Wenchang temple in Zitong (Sichuan). Several small chapels open along the veranda that surrounds the stair, and are dedicated to various deities (see Fig. 1).
- 38 In 1999, the caretaker was a Tibetan. According to him, the position was renewed annually and alternated between Chinese and Tibetans. In 2016 and 2017, the caretaker was a Chinese man from Liu tun. He asserts that Chinese from Liu Tun have long been in charge of the temple. He is a state employee appointed by the cultural bureau. He learned from the elders, and recites the prayers in Chinese.

Figure 1. Schema of Trike Yülha temple in Trika

1. A myes yul lha / Wen Chang 文昌;
2. Yul lha'i yum / Wen Chang zhi muqin 文昌之母親;
3. Yul lha'i yab / Wen chang zhi fuqin 文昌之父親;
4. Left: A mye (sic myes) rgya (sic rgyal) thang / Amijiatang 阿米加堂. Right: Lam sne khrid mkhan / Hongshankailu 紅善開路;
5. Kun Kong / Guangong 關公;
6. Left: gNam bdag / Tiandi 天帝. Right: Chu lha'i rgyal po / Longwang 龍王;
7. Left: Chos rgyas (rgyal?) / Chenghuangye 城隍爺. Right: Ri bdag lha chen / Shanshen 山神;
8. A myes ri glang / Erlang 二郎;
9. Left: sTag khrid kro kung men / Zhao Gongming 趙公明. Right: Sa bdag rgan po / Tudiye 土地爺;
10. A mye (myes) pa dra / Bazhaye 巴扎爺. Right: sMan lha'i rgyal po;
11. Gyi lang drel (sic) / rTa mchog / Qianliju 千里駒;
12. rTa mgrin / Mawang 馬王;
13. Me lha / Huoshen 火神;
14. rLang rgyal / Niuwang 牛王;
15. empty space. May be for a bell / *zhong* 鐘;
16. 'Jam dbyangs nag po / Wuliangye 無量爺 (i.e., Zhenwu 真武);
17. Sham (sic Shan) pa tsi thong (sic thung) / Kuixingye 魁星爺;
18. Empty space. May be for a drum;
19. mchod pa'i lha mo / Xianhua niangniang 獻花娘娘;
20. Gong ma rgyal mo / Wangmu niangniang 王母娘娘;
21. Bu gngang lha mo / Song Zi Niang Niang 送子娘娘;
22. Cang shes rta mchog / Wanliyun 萬里雲;
23. Sham (sic Shan) pa rwa mgo / Yangshi dajiang 楊師大將;
24. *sang* hearth (*bsang khri*) for white offerings;
25. *sang* hearth (*bsang khri*) for grain and yellow paper (*ser shog*);
26. *sang* hearth (*bsang khri*) for red offerings;
27. *sang* hearth (*bsang khri*) dedicated to Wenchang;
28. *sang* hearth (*bsang khri*) for grain and yellow paper (*ser shog*);
- 29-32. chapels closed.

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Figure 2. Trike Yülha temple in Trika, 2017

This temple attracts Chinese and Tibetan devotees from the neighbouring areas as does the other temple dedicated to Trike Yülha in Khashatil.

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Trike Yülha lhakhang in Khashatil

Figure 3. Khashatil, 2016

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- 39 I visited this temple in August 2016. It is not far from the Gelug monastery of Chakyung, in Hualung. The only mention I found of this temple is in a picture book (Shel 'byung 'Khon thar tshe ring 2005, p. 32) where we learn that "Khashatil (Tib. Kha sha mthil) is located about two kilometres north of Shong Shen (gShong gshan) town, Hualung (dPa' lung) county, Tshoshar (mTsho shar) prefecture. It was founded in about 1400 by Jamyang ('Jam dbyangs), a monk from Lhasa (Gelug sect)". Nothing is said about the identity of this monk. One wonders what would have led a Gelugpa monk from Lhasa to come so far to build a temple dedicated to a local Tibetan deity identified with the Chinese god of literature. Moreover, Tuttle (2012, pp. 131, 134) has shown that construction of Gelug temples or conversion involving clerics from Central Tibet was common in Amdo from the late 16th century to the beginning of the 17th, but not earlier.
- 40 Khashatil is a branch of Chakyung monastery, which deutes a monk caretaker²⁹.
- 41 The entrance door opens onto a large courtyard with several hearths, the central one dedicated to Wenchang; one is for red offerings, one for white. A *stūpa* has also been built. Several goats "exempted from slaughter" (Tib. *tshe thar*) were roaming in the courtyard.
- 42 Stairs lead to the temple, which consists of a single large room. On the shrine stands a statue of Amye Yülha surrounded by his attendants, Shänpa Tsithung and Shänpa Ramgo. On one wall is a painting of Trike Yülha's parents in Chinese style, and other paintings which nobody present could explain. Numerous offerings of tea and beer (*chang*) had been placed on the floor, in a corner.
- 43 There was no *marsang* offering at the time of my visit, but pilgrims confirmed that it was commonplace. However, I observed a *marsang* offering in Trika in 1999, and again in 2016 and 2017, which allowed for some comparison.

Figure 4. Trike Yülha's father and mother, 2016

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The *marsang* offering in Trika

- 44 In 1999, on June 27th, I travelled with two young Amdowa friends, Gelugpa believers, who also wanted to visit Trike Yülha lhakhang. On that date, there were many pilgrims from various parts of Amdo (Chentsa, Dobi, Rebgong, Tsekhog and Trika). Among them, a group of nominally Gelugpa pilgrims had come from a village 20 km away to perform the sacrifice of a goat. It was the 13th day of the 5th month of the Chinese calendar (which is used in this area), one of the most important dates – along with New Year (*lo gsar*) – to make offerings to the god. The pilgrims expected this sacrifice to ensure absence of diseases and other mundane benefits.
- 45 Shocked by the idea of a blood sacrifice, my friends decided to leave at once. They couldn't believe at first that those pilgrims were Tibetan, even less Gelugpa, and it was with great difficulty that I convinced them to stay for the ritual.
- 46 Before performing the actual sacrifice, the pilgrims tethered the goat in the courtyard, and folded square yellow papers (*shog ser*) into triangular shapes that they burned in one of the several hearths dedicated for this purpose, in order to obtain wealth. They also made offerings of liquor and grain. Only then did they ascend to the temple, pulling the goat which, sensing danger, tried to resist. The caretaker of the temple, a Tibetan, came with a kettle and sprinkled some water on the animal, which initially did not react. Only after a liberal sprinkling did she snort while entering the temple, raising a cry from the audience, since this meant that the god had accepted the animal.

Figure 5

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- 47 The goat was then taken back in the courtyard, and led under the veranda. One man in the group presented each of his companions with the knife he had in his hand, but all of them refused. Finally, one of them grabbed the goat, tied up its legs, and suffocated

it. During the goat's long agony, he murmured prayers (which I did not hear clearly). Then the man untied the goat, took the knife and carefully made an incision on its side, then pulled out some viscera, including the heart, which he put on a wood fire (*sang* being burnt on another hearth just close by).

Figure 6

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Figure 7

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- 48 Another man came to help him take off the skin without spilling much blood, since it was to be offered to the god. Once the goat was skinned, the man plunged a bowl into the carcass and filled it with blood, which he later poured onto the fire.

Figure 8

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Figure 9

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Figure 10

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- 49 All parts of the goat were put on the fire to be consumed completely – Tibetans, unlike Chinese, do not eat the meat offered as *marsang* –, with the exception of the rump, the most valued part, to which the tail was still attached. This one was kept to be offered in the temple, and placed not on the shrine, but on the left side, just below a *thangka* representing the god in his peaceful aspect.

Figure 11

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Figure 12

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- 50 In 2016 and 2017, I observed that the ritual of *marsang* was still going on, but the meat offered to the god and placed in the hearth came from the butcher's shop. All

informants assured me that animals were never killed on the spot anymore. Meat bought from the butcher does not involve any sin, since the buyer does not personally order the death of the animal. Nevertheless, an Amdowa friend was also told that killing in the courtyard was still going on sometimes. The caretaker, confirming that animals are no longer killed on the spot, recalled that when he was young, villagers facing difficult times used to offer *marsang* by tying the sheep and throwing them alive into the fire.

- 51 On 18 June 2017, there were numerous pilgrims in the temple, mainly Tibetans but also Chinese. They had come to make offerings in view of a school examination the following week. Chunks of sheep meat and viscera (heart, lungs) had been offered and placed next to chickens. I had been told last year that Tibetans never offered chickens, but observed in 2017 that the offering of chickens by Tibetans was quite common. Traditionally, the meat offered to Trike Yülha is goat, but the Tibetans do not eat it, and usually buy sheep.

Figure 13. Marsang, 2017

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Figure 14. Marsang, 2017

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- 52 A *ngakpa* informant asserted that in the *marsang* offering, the fumigation of juniper (*bsang*) has a purifying function, which was its initial function, not the buddhized one of fragrance offering to the gods.

Marsang/marchö

- 53 I already knew that offering goats to Trike Yülha/Lönpo had been common in the past. Until 1992, on the last day of the *luröl* ritual in Soru, the four *tshowa*³⁰ offered four goats to Lönpo, the terrifying aspect of Trike Yülha. They were tied with wire and put on the *sang* hearth alive. One informant added that a villager took the still-beating heart from the chest of the goat to offer it to Trike Yülha. In the first article I found on the *luröl*, the author (Ri gdengs 1994, pp. 24-25) traces the festival's roots back to sacrifices attributed to the Bönpos in the time of Nyatri Tsänpo³¹:

According to some, at the time of Nyatri Tsänpo, there were many different gods in the religious doctrine that first spread in Tibet, such as the gods of the five elements (*'byung ba lnga'i lha*), the territorial god (*yul lha*), the house god (*khyim lha*), the god [that subdues] enemies (*dgra lha*) and the god of the maternal uncle (*zhang lha*). [25] The tradition was to make offerings of slaughtered cattle, goats, sheep and stags. [The people] believed in these rituals and the working masses (*brtson pa'i mang tshogs*) developed [this practice]. Every year, in autumn, they used to make offerings of the flesh and blood of numerous animals, such as the long-antlered stag (*sha pho ru rkyang*) that were killed at the same time by beheading³². In winter, offerings of the flesh and blood of male animals were made: yaks, sheep and he-goats, three thousand of each, killed all at the same time by beheading; and female animals, *dri*³³ (*'bri*), ewes and goats, one thousand of each, whose limbs were cut off while they were still alive. This was called the "Red offering to the Bönpo gods". In summer, offerings were made of the flesh and blood of four hinds killed after their four legs had been cut off. This was called "To cut the hocks of the hinds". In spring, a fumigation of several kinds of wood and various sorts of grain was offered, and at

the same time the dried hides of the sacrificed animals were beaten. This was called the "Bönpo festival, an offering of juniper³⁴". It is said that this performance is the original form of the musical festival (*glu rol*³⁵).

- 54 In Soru, under pressure from Buddhist clerics, this sacrifice was banned and replaced by an offering of four goat-effigies made of barley flour (Tib. *rtsam pa*), which are also burnt. Nevertheless, even in 1997 and 1999, an old villager walked behind those carrying the *tsampa* goats, carrying a plate with an animal heart and some meat bought from the butcher shop as an offering to Trike Yülha. Furthermore, blood offerings (Tib. *dmar mchod*) still exist: on the 24th and 25th day of the 6th month, 12 men under 31 years old, called "Red mouth" (Tib. *kha dmar*), designated by the *lhawa*, have their cheeks skewered by two old men³⁶. Then, the same number of men, still designated by the *lhawa*, have ten needles stuck in two lines onto their backs. Others have their upper forehead cut with a knife. These blood offerings are dedicated to Taglung, the birth-god, and are said to bring good fortune and remove obstacles.
- 55 As in the case of the Tibetans from Tshab described by Mumford (1990, p. 82), some Soru villagers did not want to stop the blood offerings for fear that Lönpo, "a vengeful god who loves meat", according to the description of one villager, would stop protecting them and take revenge.
- 56 Hortsang Jigme (Hor gtsang 'jigs med 1999, p. 283) confirms the tradition of killing goats and sheep in front of the temple, as does Cairang (1999). The latter affirms the vitality of the cult, and testifies to the existence of red offerings of goats and roosters to Wenchang, which are supposed to enhance the god's efficiency. The author adds that blood offerings are prohibited by Buddhism, but "can be performed in certain circumstances: during archery competitions to bring victory, or if one has enemies". This is interesting, since a recent booklet written by Tsering Bum, a young Amdowa from Kewa village, Mangchu township, mentions a rooster sacrifice in relation with an archery contest³⁷. The five roosters had their throats cut in the courtyard of the village temple. They were then put on a wood fire (not *bsang*) and the man sprinkled the blood he had kept from the slaughter. The term *marsang* is not used in the text.
- 57 Takrig Tadrin Gyäl (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal 2016, p. 136) cites the description of a blood offering by an elder from Rebgong Mewa Dedün:

Formerly, blood offerings were very widespread in this place. When I was young, at the time of the *luröl* of the sixth month, the *lhawa* took out the warm internal organs of the goat to be offered on that day; he put them on a dish and carried them before the god [while they] were still emitting [steam]. On this occasion, when some young men were quartering the goat in each direction, the *lhawa* performed the divine game [which meant] sticking a knife into each limb and cutting it, then throwing the goat without hooves into the fire. After having thrown the living goat into the hearth, the pain made her jump violently; [the *lhawa* then] threw the four members in an undetermined direction. This was said to be for the purpose of preventing it from straightening up or crawling away³⁸.
- 58 It is well known that ancient Tibetans performed animal sacrifices and even human sacrifices³⁹. Animal sacrifices (*dmar mchod*) to territorial gods were commonly practised in Tibet and the Tibetan-speaking area within living memory. They are still performed in some places, in spite of the ceaseless efforts of the clerics to suppress them⁴⁰.
- 59 If the sacrifice of throwing a living goat on the fire seems to have disappeared, the offering of a suffocated goat still exists, and occurred in 2017 in Tadrin Village⁴¹. More surprising, the *marsang* offering can still be observed daily in some Gelug monasteries

in Amdo, like Rongwo Göñchen or Nyenthog monastery in Rebgong, where meat is offered daily in the Gyüpa Dratsang chapel dedicated to the protector Dorje Legpa⁴².

60 Soru villagers speak openly about the sacrifices which occurred before 1992 during the *luröl*, but they always qualify them as *marchö*, never *marsang*. To date, I have been unable to obtain a clear and consistent explanation of what these terms encompass. According to some, *marsang* implies the killing of the animal which is burnt on the spot while *marchö* is an offering of meat or blood of an animal already killed somewhere else. Nevertheless, when devotees these days offer shop-bought meat to Trike Yülha in his temple, they still use the expression *marsang* and not *marchö*.

61 In his book, Takrig Tadrin Gyäl never uses the expression *marsang*, but *marchö* (*dmar mchod*) or *surchö* (*gsur mchod*), for which he gives the following definition:

surchö (*gsur mchod*): Blood offerings to the *yülha* (*yul lha*): to make offerings to the god of Trika (Khri ka), a first part offering (*phud*) of the blood [of a sacrificial animal] and the still-warm blood of the heart are offered in the direction of the god's residence, the meat of the slaughtered animal is offered before the god, and the divine offering is made by burning the main internal organs and the heads and feet of the animal in the fire⁴³ (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal 2016, p. 359).

There are three main types of *surchö*: it is said that to show respect to Amye Yülha (A myes yul lha) of Trika, an offering is made of fat [coming] from meat pure in three ways⁴⁴, burned on a fumigation of juniper. Lay villagers burn animals alive and call it *surchö*; for example, offering a live goat as a *sur* (*gsur*). As for the custom of offering a *surchö* that does not involve taking life, it is widespread in Dome (mDo smad) even among the monks⁴⁵ (*ibid.* 2016, p. 360).

62 I myself have never heard the expression *surchö* used by informants in the context of burned red offerings.

Marsang in Tibetan sources

63 Regarding the *marsang* offering, information in Tibetan sources is very scarce. In the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* dictionary we find the mention of *marchö* as "an ancient offering of blood and meat", but *marsang* does not appear.

64 On the Buddhist Digital Resource Center site, there are two occurrences of *marsang*, the most detailed one by the great yogi Zhabkar (1781-1851), in a text called "Exposition of the dharma; a sun to benefit others" (*Chos bshad gzhan phan nyi ma*⁴⁶). In this text, Zhabkar makes a stand against this ritual, and gives some information about it (p. 517):

[Masters of the *cö* (*gcod*) and tantrist tradition] take a fresh bloody heart from the chest while [the animal] is still alive, [the heart] still beating in the hand, and having put it in the *sang* (*bsang*), they perform a red purifying smoke, an offering of meat and blood⁴⁷[...]

65 In the ritual I observed, the animal was killed beforehand.

66 The other text, "A description of various Buddhist monasteries and their antiquities and liturgical objects in Gansu province" (*Krung go'i bod brgyud dgon pa'i dkar chag las kan su'u glegs bam*) indicates that this practice was suppressed in Gängya (near Labrang) by the 6th Gungthang lama (1926-2000), thus quite recently (p. 104). In another occurrence (p. 683), it is said, with no further information, that a lama from Cone stopped this practice around Döñthün Gön (?).

67 If the *marsang* offering traditionally involves throwing live goats onto a fire or taking the heart from a live animal, one can imagine that the silence surrounding the ritual is

linked to the violence of the act, and that the ritual I saw was already "a little buddhicized", in the sense that the animal was killed before its internal organs were removed. What about the red offerings (*dmar mchod*) mentioned in Western sources?

Marsang in Western sources

- 68 As far as I know, the secondary sources are silent on the *marsang* practice, but some scholars have written about blood offerings.
- 69 Asboe mentions animal sacrifices in Western Tibet with goats, sheep and even yaks (Asboe 1936, pp. 75-76). Generally "a deep incision" is made "sufficiently large to permit the introduction of the hand", and then the heart is torn out.
- 70 In a very short article, Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1974-1975, pp. 308-311)⁴⁸ describes a Zor ceremony he saw in Rupshu (Ru shod), in which the *torma* "consisted of the actual backbone and entrails of a real goat, purposely slaughtered for the ceremony" (*ibid.*, p. 310).
- 71 H. Diemberger and G. Hazod provide some interesting materials on animal sacrifice for the *yülha* Zurra Rakye (Zur ra rwa skye) in the Upper Arun valley in Nepal, and also in the Kharta valley in Tibet (Diemberger & Hazod 1997, p. 267). They tell us that every headman had to offer in turn a black yak which was slaughtered and cut into small pieces "in order to be shared among the members of the community". The authors give other examples of animal sacrifices for local deities in the area and explain them as "reflect[ing] the combination of the political aspects of ancient indigenous animal sacrifices with aspects stemming from ritual killing of animals linked to Tantric practices" (*ibid.* p. 274).
- 72 Closer to Soru village, Kelsang Norbu mentions the sacrifice of a sheep for territorial gods during the Dobi *latse* ritual, until 1989 (Kelsang Norbu 2011, p. 28).
- 73 Charles Ramble has written at length on animal sacrifices in Te (lTe), Southern Mustang, where they are "connected with a cult of territorial divinities", protectors of Te which "are not defenders of the doctrine but wild place-gods" (Ramble 2008, p. 218⁴⁹).
- 74 In a book published in 1996, Chapal Tseten Phuntso explains that "over the centuries, animal sacrifice has gradually died out, but still occurs in a few places, such as Gongpo Gyangda and Pome Tangme shortly before 1951. When grand sacrificial rites were held in these places, every household would butcher sheep and goats, or chicken, then throw the meat and blood in the fire. If the family was too poor to afford sacrificial animals, it would at least throw an egg into the fire. It is said that animal sacrifice was also popular in Qinghai and Kham" (Chapal 1996, p. 258⁵⁰).
- 75 As we have seen, blood sacrifices (*dmar mchod*) are still practised today, even if not on a large scale. Information is not always easy to obtain, due to a strong prejudice against this ritual. Could the identification between Trike Yülha, Wenchang and Guan Yu explain why this burnt blood offering is still going on?
- 76 One way to answer this question is to look for features which could explain this identification between Trike Yülha and the Chinese gods Guan Yu and Wenchang.

Common features of Trike Yülha, Guan Yu and Wenchang

- 77 Ter Haar (2000) shows that the divine figure of Guan Yu was originally a violent, even a demonic figure. Buddhists have transformed this cult little by little, so that it corresponds with Buddhist ideology. The Tibetan tradition, like the Chinese, knows multiple cases of people killed in war or unjustly executed and reborn in the form of a dangerous entity seeking revenge. It is not surprising to see a hero who died in war becoming an evil spirit, all the more so if he dies in anger. The *rGya nag chos 'byung* (fol. 52b) confirms the legend above: it relates that Guan Yu died during a battle, full of resentment, and took rebirth as a *nāga*, a god of the soil. Only long after was he delivered from this state thanks to a monk who made him a guardian of the law (Stein 1959, p. 281).
- 78 In Tibet, as in China, it is believed that people who experience a violent death can return, wander and create disturbance for the living. These demonic figures are powerful, and therefore feared, but their relations with humans, benevolent or malevolent, depend on the propitiation they receive. Such entities require blood offerings (*dmag mchod*) in order to be appeased⁵¹. Doré reports that "by imperial decree, sacrifices are offered to him [Guan Yu] on the 15th day of the 2nd moon and the 13th day of the 5th moon⁵²" (Doré 1914, p. 59). It is interesting that the last date corresponds exactly to the day I saw the *marsang* performed in the temple of Trike Yülha in 1999. Chinese rural communities worshipped Guan Yu to obtain prosperity, posterity, to avoid disasters (Duara 1988, p. 782), all functions the inhabitants of Soru expect from Trike Yülha. A last common feature: Trike Yülha as Guan Yu is said to have two brothers. Moreover, the martial dimension of Guan Yu refers to Trike Yülha under his aspect first of a [Chinese] general, second as a territorial god, military commander.
- 79 What about Wenchang? The assimilation of Trike Yülha with the god of literature in China belongs, as we have seen, to the written tradition. We have to remember that Wenchang had a "career" as a "mountain-god" (Kleeman 1994b, p. 237). The Tibetan texts of propitiation which evoke Trike Yülha emphasize his speed of travel, which is also one of the characteristics of Wenchang since "he can fly, manifest himself anytime and anywhere, in whatever form he chooses" (Kleeman 1993, p. 47). Wenchang and Trike Yülha are said to have the same mount: a white horse (at other times, a white donkey or even a white mule) and each is accompanied by two servants. The white sacrificial cakes wrapped around with serpents, mentioned in the propitiation text dedicated to Trike Yülha, immediately evoke the god in his viper aspect. It can also be assumed that the association of Wenchang with a movement that opposed the slaughter of cows⁵³ is behind the legend about the prohibition of eating beef, and even of being touched by the odour (the prohibition relates to the story of Trike Yülha having been fed by a cow in childhood). Nevertheless, Wenchang – like Guandi and Trike Yülha – require blood offerings in some cases⁵⁴.
- 80 Moreover, Wenchang is not a distant god. His biography reveals that he loved, got married and raised children, all common features with territorial gods. He made mistakes and repented; in short, he is a multifaceted character who can understand human weaknesses and whose ability to be transformed has certainly facilitated his coming to Tibetan areas.

- 81 Wenchang and Guandi share a number of other common features. At the time of the Three Kingdoms, during one of his reincarnations, Wenchang was named "Minister of War during the expedition against the kingdom of Tchou [Chu] (Sichuan)" (Doré 1914, p. 38). He was known as a warrior protector, first of Sichuan, and then of all China, until the 15th century (Kleeman 1994b, pp. 235-237). According to Cairang, Thukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima's Guandi propitiation text describes him as "a gigantic snake that wraps three times around the top of the mountain", a transformation which went back to his rebirth as a *nāga* mentioned in the *rGya nag chos 'byung*. Wenchang is also said to have been a hero who died in war during his eighth incarnation.
- 82 Lastly, Guan Yu is supposed to be the Patron of Scholars, a quality that brings him closer to Wenchang.
- 83 Thus there is a Wenchang, god of literature *versus* martial god, and a Guan Yu, god of war *versus* patron of scholars. Without denying that the common features shared by Wenchang and Guan Yu could have led to a confusion among Soru villagers, one has to recognize that the double aspect of Trike Yülha/Lönpo resonates quite well with this dual identification, Trike Yülha being closer to Wenchang, and Lönpo closer to Guan Yu.
- 84 Moreover, Amye Magpön, the youngest brother of Trike Yülha, is identified, in some Amdo villages, with Erlang, a Chinese god known to be the assistant, in certain exorcism rituals, of the divine general Guan Yu (ter Haar 2000, p. 201). Erlang is also known to help to regulate China's floods, a function of controller of the waters that the *yülha* is supposed to fulfill.

In conclusion

- 85 During the *marsang* offering in Trika, it was obvious that the Tibetans involved in the ritual were fully aware that from a Buddhist point of view, this sacrifice was sinful⁵⁵. Their reactions were in line with this: the rejection of the knife, the killing of the goat by one man alone and the participation of the other members of the group only *after* the slaughtering had taken place. Still, they performed the ritual and even did not prevent me from taking as many pictures as I wanted.
- 86 In these border areas, where disputes between Chinese and Tibetans were common, it is difficult not to take into account the political dimension. According to both Cairang and Tadrin Gyäl, the assimilation between Trike Yülha and Wenchang dates from the Qing period (1644-1911). In spite of the dates given for the construction of the Trike Yülha lhakhang, this hypothesis seems probable. This was the period when great Tibetan masters wrote texts dedicated to Guandi, Trike Yülha and Wenchang. Not only were these masters all "well-known and prolific scholars who knew each other, and were often in teacher-student relationships, and in tantric guru-disciple relationships", they were also "parts of the network of Amdo Gelugpa monasteries and communities; and had connections to Lhasa [...] and religious ties to China and Mongolia" (Nietupski 2014, p. 222). The identification of Gesar with Guandi occurred in the same period. On the historical level, it was at that time, in the 18th century, that most of Eastern Tibet fell under direct Manchu administration. Qing presence was asserted in the area with the building of a fort "north of Reb gong in 1743, as an extension of the Khri kha fort⁵⁶". The Qing dynasty traditionally sent one civil and one military official to the border

areas, as to other provinces. Somehow, Wenchang and Guan Yu could be seen as the divine representations of the administration of a strong foreign power trying to integrate Tibet into the imperial political system. We have seen that the dual aspect of Trike Yülha/Lönpo shares various characteristics with Wenchang and Guan Yu. Having endowed Trike Yülha with the features that make the two Chinese gods powerful in their country, the Tibetans might have considered the one who became their territorial god to share the same power, but for their benefit, as long as they worship him with what he likes: blood offerings. We should recall here that Cairang attributes the coming of Trike Yülha to a great lama who considered that the population needed the protection of a very strong god.

- 87 Roberte Hamayon has clearly shown that a foreign divine figure is more malleable than a native one, who has to correspond to the current norm (Hamayon 2000, pp. 229-252). In fact, the Soru villagers did not try to transform Amye Nyänchen, said to be their previous local *yülha*. They drove him away and "invited" Trike Yülha, a foreign divinity, as their territorial god. They Tibetanized this Chinese divinity in such a way that he retains the specific characteristics of a *yülha*, enabling him to protect the population living on his territory if properly worshipped. Perhaps blood-offering to a god of Chinese origin could be perceived as less sinful and less questionable, since blood offerings are made to Wenchang and Guan Yu.
- 88 Mountain-deities like Amye Machen play a role in Tibetan Buddhism; in pilgrimage guides, they are presented at the level of bodhisattva, sometimes even as a Buddha. But Trike Yülha has not gained such a position, and is therefore propitiated in accordance with what pleases him (blood offerings), in order to obtain the mundane benefits that he grants, and to prevent him from inflicting calamities on those he is meant to protect.
- 89 The continuation of this ritual in some areas shows that the benefits of orthodox Buddhist practices are not sufficient for some Tibetan Buddhists, and that as long as a local deity is not integrated properly into the Buddhist pantheon, some Tibetans whose territorial anchorage is still strong feel the need to propitiate their local gods with blood offerings.

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APPENDIXES

Glossary

Transcription	Transliteration
Akya Lobzang Jamyang Gyatsho	A kya Blo bzang 'jam dbyangs rgya mtsho
Akya Qutuktu Lobzang Tenpe Gyaltzen	A kya Qutuktu Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan
Amdowa	A mdo ba

Amye	A myes
Amye Machen	A myes rma chen
Amye Magpön	A myes dmag dpon
Amye Nyänchen	A myes gnyan chen
Amye Yülha	A myes yul lha
Bönpo	Bon po
Cangkya Rölpe Dorje	lCangs skya Rol pa'i rdo rje
Chahar Geshe Lobzang Tsultrim	Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrim
Chakyung	Bya khyung
Chentsa	gCan tsha
Cone	Co ne
Dargyäl	Dar rgyal
Dobi	rDo sbis
Dönthun Göñ	Don mthun dgon
Dorje Legpa	rDo rje legs pa
Drakar Ngak rampa Lobzang Tänpa Rabgye	Brag dkar sngags rams pa Blo bzang bstan pa rab rgyas
Gagza Dewa	'Gag bza' sde ba
Ganden Tashi Dargye Ling	dGa' ldan bkra shis dar rgyas gling
Gängya	rGan gya
Gelugpa	dGe lugs pa
Gongpo Gyangda	Kong po rgya mda' rab rgyas
Gungthang lama	Gung thang Bla ma
Gyälrong	rGyal rong
Gyüpa Dratsang	rGyud pa grwa tshang
Hualung	dPa' lung
Jamo	'Ja' mo
Jamyang Lobzang Gyatso	'Jam dbyangs blo bzang rgya mtsho

Katsäldong	bKa' rtsal gdongs
Kawakarpo	Kha ba dkar po
Kewa	sKe ba
Kharta	Khar ta
Khashatil	Kha sha mthil
Kyirong	sKyid grong
Labrang	Bla brang
lhawa	lha pa
Lönpo	Blon po
luröl	glu/klu rol
magpön	dmag dpon
magpön khang	dmag dpon khang
Mangchu	Mang chu
Mangra	Mang ra
maṇi lhakhang	ma ṇi lha khang
Maṇi Nyingpa	Ma ṇi rnying pa
Maṇi Sarpa	Ma ṇi gsar pa
marchö	dmар mchod
marsang	dmар bsang
ngakpa	sngags pa
Nupri	Nub ri
Nyenthog	gNyan thog
Nyingma	rNying ma
Pome Tangme	sPo smad thang smad
Rebgong	Reb gong
Rebgong Mewa Dedün	Reb gong sMad pa sde bdun
Rideng	Ri gdengs

Rongwo Drubchen	Rong bo grub chen
Sangzhug	Srang gzhus
Sengge Shong	Seng ge gshongs
Shänpa Ramgo	Shan pa Rwa mgo
Shänpa Tsithung	Shan pa Tsi thung
Shar Kalden Gyatso	Shar sKal ldan rgya mtsho
Shar Kalden Gyatso	Shar sKal ldan rgya mtsho
Shasana	Sha sa na
Soru	Sog ru
surchö	gsur mchod
Taglung	sTag lung
Takrig Tadrin Gyäl	sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal
Tashikyil	bKra shis 'kyil
Thewu	The bu
Thukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima	Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma
Trika	Khri ka
Trike Yülha	Khri ka'i yul lha
Tsekhog	rTse khog
Tsholho	mTsho lho
Yardzi	Ya rdzi
Zhabkar Natshok Rangdröl	Zhabs dkar sNa tshogs rang grol
Zurra Raskye	Zur ra rwa skye

NOTES

1. A. C. Swinburne, quoted in J. London, *Quand Dieu ricane* (Paris, Phébus, Libretto, 2005, p. 17).
2. In this article, I use and correct some information contained in an article published in French in 2002, pp. 135-158.
3. According to Takrig Tadrin Gyäl (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal), the author of a recent book (2016) dedicated to Trike Yülha, this latter is not the *yülha* of Trika or Soru. For him Yülha is only the

name of the deity (Interview, 15 June 2017). I disagree with this assertion and all the informants I spoke to in Soru as in Trika confirm that Trike Yülha is their *yülha*.

4. On this festival in Soru, see Nagano 2000, pp. 567-650, Buffetrille 2004, 2008, pp. 13-66.

5. See Buffetrille (under review).

6. On Erlang, see Hinton 2001, pp. 1-32.

7. I will deal with the subject of the conflict in future.

8. Dargyäl is also said to have been a Chinese general (interviews with Soru villagers; see also Kelsang Norbu 2011, p. 21).

9. On Amye Nyänchen, see Nietupski 2014, pp. 217-232.

10. This information was confirmed in 2016 in Trika by a *ngakpa* informant from Mangra (Ch. Guinan).

11. I am grateful to C. Despeux and V. Durand-Dastès for their help with the translation of this Chinese text.

12. See Nietupski 2014, pp. 222ff.

13. Rideng's article appeared first in the famous journal *sBrang char*, "Light rain" in 1989 and again in 1994, in a book untitled *rMa lho rtsom bsodus padma dkar po'i tshom bu*, "A bouquet of white lotuses, collected essays from rMa lho" (1994, pp. 24-39). For the translation of this text, see Buffetrille 2008, pp. 22-30.

14. *rGya nag Khri chen sku phreng gnyis pa Blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma* (1689-1762): "Fire-offering to the *yul lha*, [which brings the] spontaneous realization of wishes", *Yul lha'i bsang mchod 'dod don lhun grub ma* (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal 2016, pp. 308-309); Kun mkhyen 'Jigs med dbang po, the 2nd 'Jams dbyangs bzhad pa (1728-1791): "Invocation to the *yul lha*, [which brings the] total destruction of enemy armies", *Khri ka'i yul lha'i gsol mchod dgra dpung nyer bcom ma* (ibid. 2016, pp. 308-309); A *kya sku phreng gsum pa Blo bzang 'jam dbyangs rgya mtsho* (1768-1816), "Invocation to the awesome *yul lha*, Lord of all the gods, who defeats enemies and protects the doctrine, [entitled] perfect new rain-bearing cloud, *rGyal bstan srung mdzad dgra lha yongs kyi rje bo yul lha gnyan po'i gsol mchod / rdzogs ldan chu 'dzin gsar ba* (ibid. 2016, pp. 313-320).

15. It is not mentioned in the catalog of his works composed by M. Ricard (mail 24 September 2017).

16. I thank B. Cuevas for this information, sent in a mail dated 30 June 2016.

17. I am grateful to Tshe ring thar, who gave me this text in 2000.

18. The speed of the god is also emphasized in an anonymous text entitled "Fumigation Offering to the great god *rMa chen* of Tibet [country that belongs] to the phenomenal world, [text called] Quick realization of the desires", *Bod srid pa chags pa'i lha chen po rma chen gyi bsang mchod 'dod don myur 'grub*. See the translation in Buffetrille 2000, pp. 157-166.

19. I did not have confirmation of that when I was in Trika.

20. "L'écriture inspirée, *fúji* 扶乩 ou *fuluan* 扶鸞, est organisée par un groupe de culte à une divinité. Lors des réunions du groupe, après purification des membres et invitation de la divinité, l'un des membres agissant en médium entre en transe et est possédé par la divinité. Il ou elle écrit alors sur un support (papier, cendres, sable, ou même dans l'air) des caractères qui sont copiés par un scribe et vérifiés par les autres membres du groupe avant d'être collectés et éventuellement publiés" (Goossaert 2005, p. 139, n. 86).

21. "Stele Text of the Lord Emperor Wenchang:

During the period of the Wei and Jin Dynasties, there was a doctor from Zitong County named Zhang Yazhi. He cured illnesses and saved people, and he broadly practiced righteousness and benevolence. During the Jin Dynasty he was made a high official, and he sacrificed his life to save lives and serve the people. In his hometown, they erected a temple to him as the 'God of Zitong'. Because he respected his parents and took pity on the poor, the Jade Emperor [the highest Daoist god] enfeoffed him with Wenchang Governorship.

When the Xuanzong and Xizong emperors of the Tang Dynasty were fleeing from rebel troops,

they escaped to Sichuan. The God of Zitong helped and protected these emperors, and therefore they granted him the name 'Aiding and Obedient King'. Because he prevented evil and helped establish the proper religion, the Zhenzong Emperor of the Song Dynasty granted the additional name, 'The Heroic Apparition, Exemplary Soldier King'. Various emperors over the years have granted further names. The Renzong emperor of the Yuan Dynasty gave the name 'Lord Emperor [of] Wenchang'. In this way the names Wenchang and Zitong gradually were united. This god governs disaster and flourishing in the human realm, as well as the promotion and demotion of students by exams. The common people pray to him for prosperity, and scholars and students pray to him for success and fame. The name of the Lord Emperor Wenchang in this way spread across all beneath heaven.

The 'Text of the Lord Wenchang Governing from the Shadows' encourages people to practice good acts and accumulate virtue, to suppress evil and help good, and it has spread very widely" (translation H. Taubes).

22. The book written by Takrig Tadrin Gyäl (sTag rig rTa mgrin rgyal 2016, pp. 77-79) gives a list of thirty Trike Yülha temples. Some are well known temples dedicated to the god, but others, like the one in Gagza Dewa, not far from Trika, do not exist. The monks from Ganden Tashi Dargye Ling monastery confirmed that Trike Yülha was their *yülha*, but that there was no temple dedicated to him in the village.

23. "Brief Introduction to the Wenchang Palace West of the Yellow River:

The 'Wenchang Palace, West of the Yellow River', also known as the 'Wenchang Temple West of the River', is called in Tibetan the 'Yülha' or 'Yülha lhakhang'. It was originally built during the late Ming (1590-1600). The *Draft Gazetteer of Guide County*, written in the Republican Period, says: 'The Wenchang Palace is located twelve *li* west of the county town, outside of the old border walls. It rests up against a mountainside, and the flow of the river goes around it. Both the Han and the Tibetans have faith in it, and both scholars and people make offerings there. At the first and fifteenth day of each month, the smoke of incense is especially great. If there is any affair, they make an offering here, and the god's miraculous response always appears. For a long time this has been a place where both Han and Tibetans pray for prosperity and the abatement of disasters'. In the sixth year of the Tongzhi emperor (1867), it was destroyed during a war. From the third to the thirteenth years of the Guangxu reign (1880-1893), officials, gentry, the Han, and the Tibetans all donated money to repair it. In 1958 it was once again destroyed, leaving no architectural remains. In 1982, twelve village elders from the upper and lower Liu Tun ['Liu Family Military Fort'] villages of Hexi Township, as well as Xiapai [Tib. Srang gzhug], Ge'erjia [Tib. Hor kya] and other villages, gathered together multiple times, and under their own direction created a society for the rebuilding of the Wenchang Palace. They collected money both within and outside of the county, and the masses of Han and Tibetans all were eager to donate. Over the course of ten years between 1984 to 1995, the temple was rebuilt according to its original plan, on the ruins" (translation H. Taubes).

24. <https://www.tbrc.org/#lrid=P9399> (accessed 10 March 2017). There is a Gelug Serkhang monastery in Hualung, founded in 1944 by Jamyang Lobzang Gyatso. See *mTsho lho khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdu* 1999, pp. 756-761.

25. <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Shar-Kelden-Gyatso/9753> (accessed 10 March 2017).

26. Interview 15th June 2017.

27. This painting was identified by T. Kleeman.

28. Cairang (1999, pp. 129-132) tells us that the first mention of the god's mount, a white mule, can be found in a book written during the Song dynasty (960-1279), whose title he does not mention.

29. Unfortunately, I could not interview him since he was busy with pilgrims.

30. In Soru, the four *tshowa* (*tsho ba*) are four associations of households – some of which still have family ties – which are linked by mutual aid and ritual obligations.
31. Nyatri Tsänpo is the legendary first king, said in some sources to have descended from the sky onto Lhari Gyangto mountain in Kongpo.
32. This recalls the ritual of the “stag with long antlers” (*sha ba ru rgyas*), a Bönpo ritual performed, according to the *bKa’ thang* (Padmasambhava’s biographies), in the time of King Trisong Detsän. As the date of the longevity ritual approached, the story goes, the king asked both Buddhists and Bönpos to perform the ritual in their own way, and the Bönpos killed so many stags that the king opted for Buddhism (Blondeau-Karmay 1988, p. 134).
33. The yak cow.
34. In *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* (Pelliot 1961, p. 2), it is written: “Entre [le ’tsan-p’ou] et ses subordonnés, chaque année, [il y a] un ‘petit serment’. On sacrifie [à cette occasion] des moutons, des chiens et des singes. On commence par leur briser les pattes puis on les tue; puis on leur arrache les intestins et on les dépèce. On fait annoncer [le sacrifice] aux divinités du ciel, de la terre, des monts, des rivières, du soleil, de la lune, des étoiles et des planètes par des sorciers qui disent : ‘Si votre cœur change et que vous méditez de vous révolter par trahison, les dieux le verront et vous traiteront comme ces moutons ou ces chiens’. Tous les trois ans, il y a ‘un grand serment’ [...] On tue comme victimes des chiens, des chevaux, des bœufs, des ânes [...]”. See also *ibid.*, p. 82.
35. For the full translation of the text, see Buffetrille 2008, pp. 22-30.
36. This practice is very common among Chinese spirit mediums. See for example K. Dean 1993 (esp. pp. 181-182).
37. See Tsering Bum 2013, p. 88.
38. *sNgon chad sa cha ’dir dmar mchod shin tu dar / nga rang lo na chung dus drug pa’i klu rol gyi dus su skabs rer lha pas nyin der mchod dgos pa’i ra de’i don snying dron mor phyir phyung nas sder ma’i nang du bzhang ste / rlangs pa thol lo lo lha mdun du ’khyer ba mthong zhing / skabs rer mchod bya’i ra yi rkang lag bzhi po nas gsar bu lags phyogs so sor ’then nas brgyangs yod skabs / lha pa lha rtsed byed gyin du ’ongs nas rkang lag re rer mtshon gyis brgyab cing bcad de rkang ldum lag ldum du yod pa me nang du ’phen pa yin / de ni ra gson po me ’obs su ’phangs rjes na zug gis ’phag ’tshag chen po rgyag cing rkang lag bzhi po phyogs nges med du g.yugs nas yar lang rtsis dang gog ’gro bya rtsis sogs byed pa ’gog phyed du yin zer /*
39. See Asboe 1936, pp. 75-76, Ramble 2008, p. 228, Dalton 2011, pp. 3, n. 4, p. 77-109, 219, Tuttle & Schaeffer 2012, p. 127.
40. See among others Mumford 1990, Cüppers 1997, pp. 677-688, Ramble 2008, p. 218, Dalton 2011, pp. 77-109.
41. Interview, 15 June 2017.
42. I am grateful to my colleague and friend Nyangshem Gyal, from whom I learned of this ritual. This burned blood offering will be the subject of a future article.
43. *Yul lha’i dmar mchod / ces pa nyi khri ka’i yul lha mchod slad sems can gson po ched du bshas nas de’i khrag phud dang snying khrag dron mos lha’i bzhugs gnas kyi phyogs su mchod pa dang / bshas sha lha mdun du ’bul ba / don snying dang mgo sug me’i nang sreg pa bcas kyi sgo nas lha mchod bgyid pa la zer.*
44. Meat which has been obtained without seeing, hearing or fear of being killed for oneself.
45. *Yul lha’i gsur mchod / ces pa gtso bo rnam gsum dag pa’i phyugs rigs kyi sha tshil bsang mer sreg pa’i sgo nas khri ka’i a myes yul lha la mchod bkur byed pa la zer zhing / grong pa mi skya rnam kyis sems can me la gson sreg bye dpa der yang gsur mchod kyi tha snyad btags ’dug pad per na ra gson po gsur la phul lta bu’o / phyir srog mi gcod pa’i gsur mchod ni mdo smad kyi yul ’dir bab byung bas kyang ’bul srol dar yod/*
46. See also Berounský, in this volume.
47. *gSon por khog gi snying dmar tsa re blangs lag na ’gul bzhin bsang gi nang du bzhang nas dmar bsang gtong ba dang sha khrag gi mchod pa [...] in Chos bshad gzhan phan nyi ma 1983, volume 6, mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, pp. 441-696.*

48. I thank Dan Martin for this reference.

49. Also Karmay-Sagant 1998, p. 122.

50. Two questions have not been addressed in this article for lack of space. The first one concerns two kinds of sacrifices, one done with raw meat, and the other with cooked meat. The second question concerns the participants: do they eat the meat of the sacrifice, and if so, when? Tibetans do not eat the meat of the *marsang* while in general Chinese eat the cooked meat of the sacrifice, except that of sacrifices to Heaven and other state cults where sacrificial victims were burned in a hearth (Goossaert 2005, p. 31). A study of these subjects will help take this research further.

51. V. Goossaert confirms that Guan Yu always received bloody offerings except when he is in a Buddhist or Daoist monastery (mail 15 November 2016).

52. "The original cult on Jade Source Mountain as a demonic figure was slowly transformed into a cult that fitted Buddhist conceptions about a proper way of life, without 'bloody' food" (ter Haar 2000, p. 188).

53. See Goossaert 2005, pp. 139-140.

54. "Guandi [et] Wenchang reçoivent également un sacrifice bovin tous les ans. Les cas de Guandi et Wenchang sont particulièrement embarrassants pour les confucianistes dans la mesure où ces divinités sont étroitement associées aux révélations qui fondent l'interdit" (Goossaert 2005, p. 235). In that case, the meat was not eaten. Bloody sacrifices were offered to Wenchang in the official cult under the empire, also in some temples, but in other temples and particularly in a Daoist context, in particular, this never happened (email from V. Goossaert, 15 November 2016).

55. According to Ramble (2008, p. 216) "throughout Mustang, the term for sin, *sdig pa*, is used as a synonym for butchery", while in Gyasumdo (Mumford 1990, p. 32) "Tibetans say that the terms 'red offering' (*dmarmchod*) and 'sin' (*sdig pa*) are interchangeable".

56. Tuttle, G. "An Overview of Amdo (Northeastern Tibet) Historical Politics".

ABSTRACTS

This article deals with a rarely described ritual, the red purifying smoke offering (*marsang*) and its evolution over the years. This bloody offering is dedicated to Trike Yülha, the territorial god of a village of Amdo-Rebgong. It raises the question of the identification of this local god with two important Chinese deities: the god of literature, Wenchang and that of war, Guandi. Using Tibetan and Western sources, the author shows that this identification dates back to the Qing period and suggests that it might have made an offering of this kind, that is so disparaged in the Buddhist world, more acceptable.

Cet article traite d'un rituel rarement décrit, une offrande sanglante purificatrice (*marsang*) dédiée à Trike Yülha, le dieu du terroir d'un village de Amdo-Rebgong, et son évolution au cours des ans. Il soulève la question de l'identification de cette divinité locale avec deux divinités chinoises importantes : le dieu de la littérature Wenchang et celui de la guerre, Guandi. Utilisant des sources tibétaines et occidentales, l'auteur montre que cette identification daterait de l'époque des Qing et suggère qu'elle aurait peut-être permis de mieux faire accepter cette offrande si décriée dans le monde bouddhique.

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