

# Les signes d'animaux et de créatures mythiques en Orient et en Occident

*Créatures mythiques animales  
dans les manuscrits naxis*



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## Introduction to the script

Naxi is one of the 55 official ethnic group of China, depositary of Dongba tradition, result of local shamanistic practices, stratified with Bön pre-buddhist substratum, melted to Buddhist, Indy, Taoist and Confucian elements. Written documents of Dongba tradition and ceremonials are realized on manuscripts, mostly written by pictographic signs, which contains all rituals, precepts and myths.

According to such literature and tradition, all animated and in-animated beings are manifestation and home of supernatural entities who live in equilibrium and coexistence. In this peculiar vision of universe, the relationship that humans must have with any element of the creation, has to be grounded on veneration and respects of relative supernatural sphere, so man must practices propitiatory rituals before interacting with any element of surrounding setting: digging a hole on the ground, hunting animals, cutting trees, etc..., in this tradition are all activities which have to be propitiated in respect to tutelary spirits.

Dongba priests are the specialists able to perform proper ceremonies suited for each situation, also to restore eventually unbalances of equilibrium between humans' and spirits' world. The latter is represented into manuscripts as a variegate pantheon of deities, and among such crowds of supernatural beings, sources documented 2 main sets of gods, respectively associated to a reptile-based and to a bird-based iconography, both with many subclasses, variants and interaction with other signs.

Context of manuscripts documenting myths and rituals associated to a kind of cult dedicated to prosperity, long life, evicting of demons and illness, which is as peculiar to Naxi people, as it could be related to a wider religious mythological stream, diffused in Tibetan, Indian and Chinese traditions.

Texts of manuscripts, iconographies, detailed study of signs of animals associated to supernatural entities documented:

- **Ssù – serpent cult.** Based of the veneration of the serpent-tailed and human-body spirits, a life-god entity. Propitiated for granting prosperity and fertility, closely associated to rain and water, able to provoke terrible misfortunes if got hungry with humans. In this study it's directly related to the traditions of *kLu* in Tibet, *Nāga* in India and *Long* in China
- **Bird-god cult.** Bird deities are powerful, strong, able to suppress the serpents-spirits and devour them. Able to spell charms, allied to *Shilo* the founder of Dongba tradition. In this study the bird-gods of Naxi – Dongba pantheon are associated to mythologies of *Khyung-chen* of Tibet and *Garuda* of India.
- **Serpent vs. Eagle fight myth**, here directly related to the mythologies of *kLu* versus *Khyung-chen* of Tibet and *Naga* versus *Garuda* of India

As emerged from manuscripts and according to Naxi tradition, the central figure of *Dongba Shilo* is here looked not just as the founder of Dongba religion, but as directly related to the Enlightened Buddha *sTompa gShen-rab* of Bön tradition.

## Methodology of research

According to the theme of the colloque, the methodology of study adopted by author mostly consisted in the research of signs from documents, as the signs are pictographs which were made of an animal-based graphic unit, directly relate to deities.

Once they've been found the study of the functions of signs and of the context was the way followed: identification of readings and meanings associated to pertinent signs, alias the research of the signs' phonetic and semantic values, the identification and the interpretation of iconographic motifs associated to the pertinent sign.

Then the study of the context, which here is meant as the study of the signs which surrounding the pertinent one in an adjacent part of text (mostly the rubric containing the pertinent pictograph), as the research of eventual relationship with surrounding signs in adjacent parts of text for the identification of eventual association patterns among signs,.

Once sign was identified as pertinent, alias study of the sign and its contexts evinced that by this significant a deity was meant, then a deeper analysis started focused on the detailed study of the iconography represented by the sign and its variants, the reconstruction of iconologies, also with the help of cross-studies focused on related (but non necessary Naxi) cultural, iconographic and iconologic elements; this methodology permitted to the author some integrations with non Naxi – Dongba directly related documentation, as Indian, Tibetan and Chinese.

First stage of study, which consisted in the identification of pertinent signs, was performed by the analysis of available sources which contains attestations of pictographs with an animal-based graphic unit. Nature of available sources evinced the possibility of making use of two kind of attestations: direct and indirect attestations.

- Direct attestations: are those performed directly from documents belonging to Naxi – Dongba pictographic tradition: manuscripts, scrolls, wall-paintings, handcrafts and sculptures.  
Some hundreds of documents are available online thanks to Harvard Yenching web resources, which consist in a selection from their collection of 598 manuscripts. By this web resource is possible to perform direct analysis over Dongba manuscripts, avoiding the difficulties in retrieving of documents.<sup>1</sup>
- Indirect attestations: are those made and evinced from documents which not belong to Naxi – Dongba tradition, but directly or indirectly dedicated or related to Naxi culture and Dongba, in particular dictionaries, Naxi mythology and Dongba culture dedicated studies.<sup>2</sup>

By this two ways of attestation, the signs identified as pertinent, alias signs associated and identified as a deity, were recorded in a concordances' system, with manuscripts' page, rubric, reading and meaning.

As introduced upper, further analysis of surrounding contexts was performed for identification of possible association of signs: sources evinced a number of not casual association, here meant as recurring pattern, with peculiar reading and meaning, pertinent inside the context of animal-deities belonging to Naxi – Dongba Pantheon.

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1 <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:hyl00002> For a detailed description of Harvard Yenching web resource and features please, cfr.: <http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/bycollections/HY/introHY.php>

For an example of Harvard Yenching manuscripts pertinent to the theme studied (the Ssù cult) and for crossing references with Joseph Rock manuscripts' collection please, cfr:

<http://www.xiulong.it/Dongba/conferences/Arras2010/Attestations/SsuCultManuscriptsCorpus.htm>

2 Particular attention was focused on Dongba pictographs dictionaries and monograph studies dedicated to Dongba religious tradition, with an eye especially focused on Joseph Rock and Chas McKhann works. In particular cfr.: Rock J., 1952, 1963, 1972; McKhann C., 1989, 2003c, 2003d




Such group of pertinent signs evinced by sources from direct and indirect attestations, on a corpus of 78 manuscripts,<sup>3</sup> according to contexts and to dedicated bibliography, scored 1242 attestations of signs of animals associated to 2 main groups of iconographies of deities:

- **reptile – gods iconography**, with 513 attestations
- **bird – gods iconography**, with 729 attestations




Group of manuscripts	BIRD	REPTILE	Partial total
1 <sup>st</sup> group: 10 manuscripts	67	54	121
2 <sup>nd</sup> group: 37 manuscripts	362	326	688
3 <sup>rd</sup> group: 31 manuscripts	300	133	433
Total	729	513	1242

Analysis of context which the pertinent signs belong to, evinced a very complex pantheon of gods with many subgroups of deities, both in reptile and bird forms: reptile and bird iconographies thus here are meant as two main classes of gods, as from contexts they appear to be antagonist, while inside bird and reptile group of deities the different form of spirits are often in close interaction, share a common origin, and acts in strong influence and interaction with/against humans.

The **reptile – deities iconographies** was thus characterized of different and distinguished kind of supernatural entities:

-  serpent-tailed, human headed with trilobate crown, associated to many readings: *Ssù*, *Llù-mun*, *Ssaw-ndaw* and/or mute sign
-  dragon iconography, associated to the reading *Lu*
-  serpent iconography, associated to the reading *Shi-zi*

The **bird – deities iconographies** also contains at least 3 different gods:

-  iconography, associated to the reading *Khyu-t'khyu*
-  iconography, associated to the reading *Dter-gko*
-  iconography, associated to the reading *Yu-ma*


Data, concordances and statistics here quoted [are completely available on author's website](#).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Here manuscripts are grouped in 3 clusters, just for a more comfortable layout. Data are available online: <http://www.xiulong.it/Dongba/conferences/Arras2010/Attestations/AnimalGodsGeneral.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.xiulong.it/Dongba/conferences/les-signes-danimaux-et-de-creatures-mythiques-en-orient-et-en-occident/data-attestations-and-concordances/>

## Iconography of reptiles

According to Naxi – Dongba tradition, as every human being and any kind of deity<sup>5</sup> has its own

life-god  *Ssü*, the other parts of the universe as rocks, water, ground, wild animals, plants etc..., are province of another type of spirit, represented by reptile's iconography, a kind of nature deity and a form of cult.<sup>6</sup>

The serpent-deities cult is one of the most important and prominent aspect of Dongba ceremonial corpus, and numerous manuscripts are dedicated or at least related to; the author distinguished and gathered them into 3 distinct sets:<sup>7</sup>

**1. manuscripts dedicated to the origin of the Serpent deities *Ssü*.**

Manuscript guide is *Bpö lü k'u*, belonging to *Ssü-gu* ceremony<sup>8</sup>

In this set of manuscripts the serpent-deities are invited to ceremonies and receive offers.<sup>9</sup>

After that enumerations of all the serpent deities and ancestors, manuscript is written about the description of attributes, type of thrones and the quarters regional and sub-regional where the serpent deities live.<sup>10</sup>

**2. Relationship and experiences of the earliest Naxi families with the serpent-deities.**

This kind of manuscript contains a list of faults and sins the humans shouldn't commit versus serpent deities, if this isn't, then dire consequences are enumerated.<sup>11</sup>

**3. Struggle between the serpent-deities and their antagonist: the eagle-winged deities.**

the most prominent and text-guides are manuscript entitled *Dso Na lo ch'i* – **fight with the winged *Khyu-t'khyu* deity**, and the manuscript entitled *Ssü c'her k'o* - **searching for medicine and giving it** (medicine): they show close concordances with “*the confession of sins*” in *Bönpo sutra*.<sup>12</sup>

Study of these manuscripts evinced many concordances between Dongba serpent-cult and Tibetan ལྷ་ཁུ *Klu serpent-deities* tradition,<sup>13</sup> which in turns could be related to Indian नाग *Nāga* tradition.<sup>14</sup> Such correlations were useful to integrate and better understanding Naxi – Dongba iconology of these

5 like nature gods, clan gods, functional gods, etc...,

6 The Naxi – Dongba serpent deities veneration, or *Ssü* cult, has to be related with the wider phenomenon of *Nāga* cult, common in India, Cambodia and all south Asia, of very ancient origins.

The *Ssü* cult has elements which could be related with *Bön* tradition, as the latter constitutes a sub-stratum which subsume important aspects of Naxi - Dongba religion; cfr. Rock, 1952; McKhann C., 1992; Mathieu C., 2003

Naxi – Dongba serpent-cult seems to be related especially with the *Bön White Nāga*; cfr. Rock, 1952; Anton Schiefner “*Bön the magic-religious Beliefs*”, J. Vogel “*Indian serpent lore*”, Helmut Hoffman “*Quellen zur geschichte der Tiberischen Bön-religion*”

7 Once more showing concordances with *Bönpo sutras*

8 *Bönpo Sutra*: 56

9 Ibid: 75

10 Ibid: 39 - 45

11 Ibid: 51

12 Ibid: 33

Also the ritual *Ssü wuà ngu wua* - **erecting of *ngu-wa*** (mandala) shows concordances with *Bönpo sutra*: 36, 37, 46, 62

13 Such concordances evinced that the Naxi – Dongba serpent-cult manuscript literature is to be considered closely related with the Tibetan ལྷ་ཁུ *Klu-hbum* – the ལྷ་ལྷ་ཁུ *Klu = serpent deities* ལྷ་ཁུ *hbum = hundred thousand*.

Sometimes there are exact equivalences. For instance is possible to associate both tradition 3 main types of ceremonies:

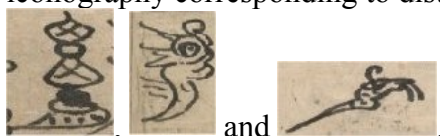
1. The Naxi Dongba *Ssü-gu* which coincides with the Tibetan *Klu hbun dkar po*
2. The Naxi Dongba *Ssü ddü gu*, which coincides with the Tibetan *Klu hbun nag po*
3. The Naxi Dongba *D'a Lu ds*, which coincides with the Tibetan *Klu hbun Khra po*, a smaller ceremonial performed when building a new home. *D'a* is the ground where it is going to be build, so the divinity who is believed to dwell the *d'a* has to be propitiated

14 About the correspondence between the Indian नाग *Nāga* and the Tibetan ལྷ་ལྷ་ཁུ *Klu* cfr. Visser M. W. De, 2003 “*Dragon*

and other animal-divine entities, as the relative ceremonial corpus dedicated and developed.

For instance an important feature regarding the serpent-deities cult of Naxi – Dongba tradition consists in the fact that generally before any ceremony performance, the place where it is going to be made must be first purified. Purification takes place with a ritual called *ch'ou gu* or *Ch'ou na gu*,<sup>15</sup> and for them there were been used 3 animals which were led around the ceremony place. Such apparently non-understandable ritual for purification<sup>16</sup> could be clarified by looking to Indian tradition of *Garuda puranam*, in which during the rituals for purification the same happened by leading animals, and that because it's believed that the shadow cast by the animals on a place purified and cleaned the latter.<sup>17</sup>

From manuscripts dedicated to serpent deities is possible to attest different terms and different iconography corresponding to distinguished kind of serpent-like supernatural entities, that are



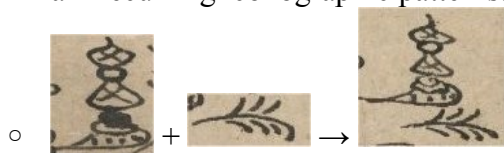
and



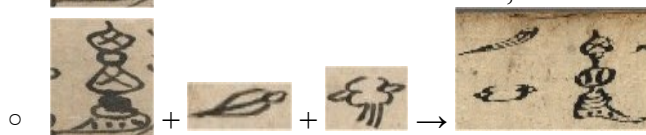
- is a general reptile iconography, associated with the terms *Ssù* and *Llù-mun*, sometimes attested with the term *Ssaw-ndaw* and/or other times as mute sign.



Moreover, pictograph could be found alone or associated with other signs, attesting 2 main recurring iconographic patterns:



- , associated to the reading *Ssù-swue-pa*



- , associated to the reading *Ssù gyi-bbu*



- dragon iconography, associated with the term *Lu*, closely related with the Chinese 龍 *long*



- a serpent iconography, associated to the term *Shi-zi*, generally related to toponymous divinities, especially for mountains, springs, also for cities and villages.

in China and Japan" Book I. Also its bibliography. However Indian नाग *Nāga*, Tibetan ལྷ *Klu* and Naxi - Dongba *Ssù* cult will be discussed below.


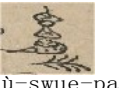

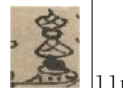

15 Literally: *Ch'ou* = **impurity** [*na* = **black**] *gu* = **remove**

16 As Rock, 1952: states that "also today remains without any explanation known by Dongbas"

17 Rock, 1952



Reserving to the dragon and the serpent iconography a dedicated section, also their data about the attestations and concordances from manuscript will be there related, whilst here follow a complete and resuming list of attestations of *Ssù*, with different iconographic types:

Manuscript: Harward Collection; Joseph Collection	HY Yengchin R Rock						Partial totals
921			1				1
977					1		1
994		1				1	2
997					2	1	3
999	1	30			3	2	36
1008					1		1
1012	1				2	2	5
1016				1			1
1020	46			2	3	24	75
1116	1	3	1	2	3		10
1321		1					1
1376		8					8
1377		13	1				14
1384						1	1
1386	41	1			2	1	45
1392	22	1					23
1400		21	1	2	2		26
1532		8					8
1620		1					1
1782		4				1	5
1792	1						1
1847		1					1
1874		3					3
1903	2	27			3		32
1904	1	54					55
1939		1					1
1952	1		2				3
1958	1		1				2
1970	1						1
2100			1	1			2
2354						2	2
2681						1	1
3155		6			2	1	9
3177		1					1
5054		1					1
5057	1				1		2
6052	1		4	6		9	20
6094	1	2				1	4
8228	1						1
8234		4					4
8236			1				1
8271	1		1	3	3		8
8273				1			1
8297			1				1
<b>Total</b>		<b>124</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>424</b>



is represented and associated, the deity represented used to be sexual distinguished among masculine and feminine creatures: the feminine being's iconography is identical to masculine one, except for it is determined by the peculiar female hairstyle.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> the latter as sexual determinative also for human beings signs of Dongba pictograph writing system into manuscript tradition.



Finally, in the various attestations of creatures, they are hierarchically distinguished and ordered, with kings and queens, princes and princesses, regional and sub-regional chiefs, plebeian and less powerful *Ssù*.



## The serpent deities and their cult as evinced from Dongba manuscripts

Manuscripts dedicated to serpent-cult, or *Ssù* cult,<sup>19</sup> constitute a wide corpus, and among them there are 3 which could be taken as text-guides:

- A. manuscript *Ssù Ndo ngv-gu Bpu* – which title means **to escort the nine *Ssù***,
- B. manuscript *Bpo lu k'u* - **the origin of the *Ssù***
- C. manuscript *Ssaw-ndaw yu dsu* - **inviting the ancestors of the *Ssaw-ndaw***<sup>20</sup>

All manuscripts are actually preserved as copies in the Harvard Yenching Naxi's manuscript Collection, respectively cataloged as:

- A. n. 11100767 (Rock n. 1399)
- B. n. 11100738 (Rock n. 1400)
- C. n. 11100776 (Rock n. 1020)

all recorded into CENSUS General Catalog of Dongba Manuscripts<sup>21</sup> as numbers:

- A. 50<sup>22</sup>
- B. 13<sup>23</sup>
- C. 51<sup>24</sup>

From manuscript B. *Bpo Lu K'u* we read about the origin of the serpent and the dragon like deities:





[pg. 13, r. IX]

*“At first, when there were no human beings, heaven and earth were. In the center came forth white and black clouds.*

*They caused a magic and there came forth white and black wind.”*

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19 From Naxi *Ssù* = serpent divinity, the most common reading attested for  iconography.

20 *Saw-ndaw* is another reading associated to pictograph  of serpent deities

21 <http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/>

22 [http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc\\_complete.php?id=50](http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc_complete.php?id=50)

23 [http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc\\_complete.php?id=11](http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc_complete.php?id=11)

24 [http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc\\_complete.php?id=51](http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CENSUS/byceremonies/doc_complete.php?id=51)



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[pg. 14]

*“from the latter came forth white and black dew.*

*This dew caused a magic and there came forth the lake.*

*The lake caused a magic and there came forth a golden egg.*

*From it was born the Yellow Golden frog named Ha shi bpa ma.*

*The frog for one year looked toward the east and there came forth a pair of silver eggs; one year she sat looking south and there came forth a pair of blue eggs.*

*One year she sat looking west and there came forth one pair of black eggs.*

*One year she sat looking north and there came forth one pair of yellow eggs.*

*One year she looked up in the center and there came forth one pair of spotted eggs.*

*It was three years since the eggs had been laid, but there was no one to hatch them. [...] in the east there will come forth from the pair of silver eggs the white Ssù-swe-pa and the white 2Lu.*

*In the south from the pair of green eggs”*



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[pg. 15]

*“ the green Ssù-swe-pa and the green Lu.*

*In the west, from the black eggs the black Ssù-swe-pa and the black Lu.*

*In the north, from the yellow eggs the yellow Ssù-swe-pa and the yellow Lu.*


*In the center from the spotted eggs the spotted Ssù-swe-pa and the spotted Lu.”*


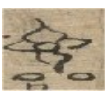



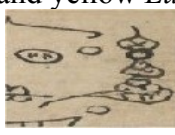



The pictograph is associated with 2 readings: *Ssù-swe-pa* and *Ssù*, both referring as serpent





deity; the pictograph  is associated with the reading *Lu* and means a dragon deity. Thus *Ssù-swe-pa* and *Lu* have to be considered two different supernatural creatures, although they share a common origin, as both are said to be born from colored eggs, which color depends on the quarter of the compass.<sup>25</sup>

- East =  white *Ssù-swe-pa* and white *Lu*
- South =  green  *Ssù-swe-pa* and *Lu*
- West =  red *Ssù-swe-pa* and red *Lu*
- North =  yellow (gold) *Ssù-swe-pa* and yellow *Lu*
- Center = spotted (means immaculate, variegated)  *Ssù-swe-pa*  
and spotted  *Lu*

The manuscript B. goes on:

[pg.15]

“[...] after 9 months and 13 nights there were born in the east the white *Ssù-swe-pa*, the white *Lu*. Then were born the *Ssù-swe-pa* named *T'a-yu*, the one named *Ch'er-nyi-t'o-k'o-sso*, the *Ssaw-ndaw*...”



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[pg.16]

“... named *Dso-gkv*, the *Ssù* named *Ch'er-dta-dgyuwu*, the *Ssù* named *Ddv-p'er-la-p'er* and the *Ssù*

<sup>25</sup> and the eggs from which they came forth the *Ssù* and the *Lu* use to have the color of the region whence they originated

named Ddv-p'er-ssi-nggu.

They went to dwell on white mountains and white cliffs and the white lakes.

In the south, from the green eggs there came forth the green Ssù-swe-pa and the green Lu.

Also the Ssù-swe-pa named Dsaw-bpu, the Ssaw-ndaw named Bbue-na, the Ssù named O-de la-dzi, the Lu mun named Yi-mber-ho.

They went to dwell in the south or green mountains, green cliffs and green lakes.

In the west from the black eggs there came forth the Ssù-swe-pa named na Lu na, the Ssù Swue Pa named..."

The scripture presents a ritual pattern and some features recurring. At first, it could be stated that from the colored egg came forth different entities, and the order with which they had origin have to be considered not as a insignificant or just chronological succession, but as a hierarchy and distinguished pyramid of importance and power.



Also emerged different readings for this sign, which seems to be derived by association of



with other pictographs, as it is attested in manuscript *Ssaw-ndaw yu dsu* - Inviting the ancestors of the *Ssaw-ndaw*



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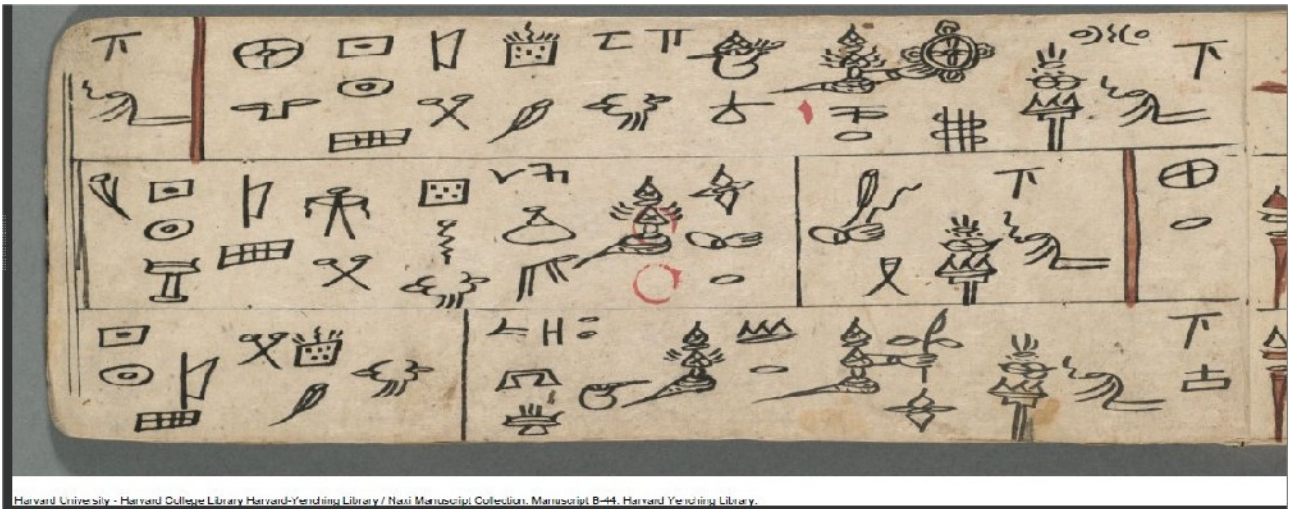
[pg.1]

"In he large house of the Ssù, in the central region between heaven and hearth a Ssù dwells at each of the eight regions of the compass.

At one region sits the Ssù gyi-bbu named bbu L'o-v-dsho, his body is white and scintillating.

He sits on a lion throne and holds a bpo-mba in his hands.

Ch'ung-bpa (ba) mbo is performed to him by the landlord"



[pg.2]

“and prostrated before him.

In the East on a lotus carpet placed, there sits the Ssù gyi-bbu named O-mbu.

His body is green and scintillating.

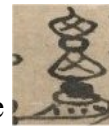
He holds in his hand green rope.

The landlord prostrates and performs Ch'ung-bpa...”



From A. *Ssaw-ndaw yu dsu* and B. *Bpo Lu K'u* manuscripts' pages thus emerged the associations of



pictograph with other signs, with different readings, which are *Ssù-swe-pa*, *Ssù*, *Lu-mun* and *Ssaw-ndaw*.



In the last page examined, from manuscript *Ssaw-ndaw yu dsu*, the pictograph appears

associated with two others signs:  *water*<sup>26</sup> and  *container*<sup>27</sup>, and to the reading of the tri-syllable *Ssù gyi-bbu*. The *Ssù gyi-bbu*, because in this manuscript appears for first in the enumeration of supernatural serpent-like creatures, it could be characterized of the highest hierarchy position, or at least the highest in this context. From a semantic point of view the *Ssù gyi-bbu* seems to be associated to the concept of a serpent-like spirit as the lord of the region where it's residing, a theme which is well-attested both in the Tibetan ལྷ་ *Klu* and the Indian नाग *Nāga* traditions.

Considering this two texts and the whole corpus of manuscripts dedicated or related to serpent cult,




is thus possible to attest the following association of sign with other pictographs. The order in which they are presented, respects the order with which they emerged from texts:

26 Pictograph  attestations in main Dongba dictionaries:

27 Pictograph  , as variant of . Attestations in main Dongba dictionaries:



A. association of  *Ssù* with the pictographs  read with the syllable *swe* (cfr. Ms B. for instance), associated with the reading *Ssù Swue Pa*, a recurring pattern where



 could be interpreted as the abbreviation for the bi-syllable *swue-pa*.

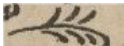
The various *Ssù-swue-pa* are among the first creatures which appears during the creation processes, they were generated from different colored eggs, which color depends from the compass of the quarter where the originated and the *Ssù-swue-pa* had inherited.


Being the first *Ssù* creatures appeared the *Ssù-swue-pa* thus have to be considered as hierarchically the first of a *Ssù* creatures' pyramid, so they have to be considered as the royal *Ssù*.

The concept of the *Ssù-swue-pa* found concordance with the Tibetan ལྷ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *Klu rGyal-po*, from the Tibetan ལྷ་ *Klu* = **serpent god** and རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rGyal-po* = **king, lord**, as both are in concordance with the Indian नागराज *Nāgarāja*, from Sanskrit राज *rāja* = **king, royal, chief** and नाग *Nāga* = **serpent god**.<sup>28</sup> the ལྷ་ *Klu*, according to Das Sarat Chandra<sup>29</sup> is the equivalent to Indian नाग *Nāga*, a demi-god having the human head and the body of a serpent, which is generally supposed to live in fountains, rivers and lakes. The ལྷ་ are also believed to be the guardian of great treasures under-ground; they are able to cause rain and certain maladies, and become dangerous when angry.

Those are all features which perfectly coincides with the iconology of the Naxi – Dongba *Ssù*.

Association of the two pictographs  and  takes form into 3 different ways:

1. the  *Swe* complement could be directly inserted over the head of the *Ssù* in



a complex-fusion pictographic unit, resulting as  <sup>30</sup>




28 नागराज *Nāgarāja*, King of Snakes. It is applied to three main deities, Anantha, Vasuki & Takshak. Anantha, Vasuki and Takshak are brothers, children of Kashyap and Kadru, who are the parents of all snakes. Anantha, the eldest brother, was a devotee of Vishnu, and represents the friendly aspect of snakes, as they save food from rodents. Lord Vishnu is always on continuous meditation (Yoganidra) with Anantha forming a bed for him, and this posture is called AnanthaSayana. Vasuki, the younger one was a devotee of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva always wears Vasuki around his neck. Takshak represents the dangerous aspect of snakes, as they are feared by all due to their venom. At Nagercoil in Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, a temple dedicated to Nāgaraja exists. There is another famous temple named Mannarasala in Alleppey district of Kerala. The deity in this temple embodies both Anantha and Vasuki into one.

A temple devoted to Nāgaraja exists in Poojappura of Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India. It is known as Poojappura Nāgarukavu Temple. The uniqueness of this temple is that here the family of the Nāgaraja including Nāgaramma, Queen of Nāga and Nāgakanya, Princess of the Nāga kingdom is placed inside a single temple.

29 1902: 44 - ལྷ་


30 Manuscript 2Tso 2ma 1yu 2tsu 3lu 3chung – invite the ancestors, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, pg.1, r. VI. A copy of manuscript is preserved in Harvard Yenching Collection, number 11100763, Rock n. 994.


2. the  *Swe* complement is inserted on the body of the *Ssù*, resulting again a complex-fusion pictographic unit, as  <sup>31</sup>

3. the  *Swe* complement is not inserted on the body of the *Ssù* but immediately just-apposed as  <sup>32</sup> or written at certain distance, as  <sup>33</sup> thus making a complex-composed pictographic unit. <sup>34</sup>

Iconography and iconology of *Ssù-Swe-Pa* are variegated.

At first is possible to find correlations between some *Ssù Swe Pa* and serpent-deities kings both from Indian and/or Tibetan tradition.

For instance in manuscript *Lu nyi ssa nda* the *Ssù Swe Pa*  named *T'a-yu* should be related with the Tibetan serpent-deity ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་མཐའ་ཡས་ *Klu rGyal-po mThah-Yas* (ལུ་ *Klu* – serpent god རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rgyal-po* – king མཐའ་ཡས་ *mThah-Yas*<sup>35</sup>), or in manuscript *Tso Ma Yu tsu Lu*

 *chung* the *Swue Pa* named *Na-bpu* has to be related with the Tibetan ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *Klu-rgyal-po* Nag-po.<sup>36</sup>

31 Ibid, pg. 3, r. V

32 Ibid, pg. 1, r. II

33 Ibid, pg. 2, r. VII

34 For complex and basic pictograph approach into Dongba pictographic manuscript tradition cfr. Zamblera S., 2009 "Dongba pictographic and Geba writing systems iconographic and thematic index plates and classification" in "THE 16th WORLD CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND ETHNOLOGICAL SCIENCES - Paper Abstracts Vol. 4 - Cultural Diversity in Multi-disciplinary Research", Chinese Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, July 2009.

For a closer look to the concepts of basic pictographic unit, complex-fusion pictographic unit and complex-composed pictographic unit, please cfr. <http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CLAUDIA/intro.php> and <http://www.xiulong.it/4.0/Dongba/CLAUDIA/readme.php> [→ 07/12/2009]




35 Rock suggested that the ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་མཐའ་ཡས་ *Klui rGyal-po mThah-Yas* should be related in turns with the Nāgaraja अनन्त शेष Ananta Śeṣa, alias the world नाग Nāga or the world serpent.

About the *Ssù Swe Pa* *T'a Yu*, cfr. manuscript *Lu My Ssa nda*, which a copy is preserved in Harvard Yenching Collection as number 11100806, Rock n. 1377.

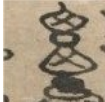


About अनन्त शेष Ananta Śeṣa, in Hindu tradition he's the King of all nagas, one of the primal being of creation, and according to the Bhagavata Purana, an Avatar of the Supreme God known as Sankarsham. In the Puranas, Shesha is referred as "Ananta-Shesha" which means "Endless Shesha" and as "Adishesha", which means First snake.

36 Sarat Chandra Das suggested that the last two syllables of the Naxi name na-bpū = the black one coincides with Tibetan རྒྱལ་པོ་ *nag-po*. Rock and Tucci agreed and suggested moreover that *Ssù-ddv-na-bpū* coincides with the malicious

Statistic analysis of *Ssù-Swe-Pa* into Dongba manuscript are resumed below:

Attestations of Ssù Swue Pa		Ssù Swue Pa iconographies		
	Swue on head	Swue on body	Swue justapposed	
Manuscript: HY = Harvard Yenching Collection; R = Joseph Rock Collection				Partial totals
994	1			1
999	14	2	14	30
1116		1	1	2
1376		8		8
1377		8	5	13
1386			1	1
1392			1	1
1400	1	17	2	20
1532	1	4	3	8
1620			1	1
1782		1		1
1847	1			1
1874	3			3
1903	3	1	23	27
1904	49		5	54
1939			1	1
3155			4	4
6094		2		2
8234	1		3	4
<b>Total attestations</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>182</b>

Detailed statistic, with page and rubric number for each attestation is available in appendix and also as online resource.<sup>37</sup>

- B. association of  Ssù iconography with pictographs  **water** and  **container** used as phonetic complements to compose the bi-syllable *gyi-bbu* which in Naxi language means **a lord** - a term again in palese relationship with the Tibetan རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rGyal-po* - but in the sense of a chief of something contextualized and restricted to a precise filed and dominion,.

The *Ssù gyi-bbu* are then here meant as the **god-land-lord of the region** where they inhabits, hierarchically probably subdued or less important then *Ssù-swue-pa*.<sup>38</sup>

Tibetan Bön Nāga སེ་བདུད་ནག་པོ་ *Se-bdud-nag-po*. Cfr Vaidurya dkar-po, folio 466b, where occurs the sa-bdag named Se-bdud. Tucci also formulated some generalization (cfr Tucci l.c. p. 715a) about the Tibetan syllable SE which has to be related with the Naxi *Ssù*: “probably the name of these Se, bSe, or bSue should be linked with the Hsi-Hsia word szu, which according to Chinese sources coincides with 巫 wū = wizard, shamans, being Naxi and HSI\_HSIA languages closely related (cfr. Laufer, the Hsi-hia language in T'oung Pao, 1916: 68, no. 138) Rock accorded to Tucci's theory and hypothesized that the word Se and *Ssù* seems to be the oldest name for serpent entities, as Nāga concept transposition into Naxi tradition from Bön times.




The *Se-bdud-nag-po* is in turn identifiable as the Sanskrit Kāla; cfr The Kala Nāga King Story, Extract from The Chronicle of Gotama Buddha – by Mingun Sayadaw.

For *Ssù Swue Pa* Na Bpu cfr. ms. Tso Ma Yu tsu Lu chung, preserved in a copy in Harvard Yenching Library with number 11100763, Rock n. 999, and cfr. manuscript 2*Ssù*-1*Ndo* 2*ngv* 2*gu* 3*bpu*.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.xiulong.it/Dongba/conferences/Arras2010/Attestations/Ssu.htm>


<sup>38</sup> The *Ssù gyi-bbu* are always named AFTER the *Ssu-swue-p'a*, thus being such scriptures liturgical texts, it seems plausible to hypothesize that the first supernatural beings have to be considered the most powerful and hierarchically highest then the following.




Association of of  *Ssù* with the pictograph of  **water** and  **container** should also be related as a semantic allusion to the water-world as the meaning of *Ssù* as a water-divinity, grant of rain, of prosperity and fertility, although the *Ssù* hasn't to be confined to just a water or rain entities, because its many variants and manifestation are believed to dwell everywhere: in the ground, in rocks, in the fields, on mountains, etc...

As the Naxi *Gyi-bbu* is closely related with the Tibetan རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rGyal-po*, as in Dongba manuscript literature others concordance are possible to be suggested among *Ssù Gyi-bbu* and Tibetan tradition, as in ms. *Tso Ma Yu Tsu Lu Chung*<sup>39</sup> pg.1, r.II, where



*Ssù gyi-bbu* is associated with syllables  **du = the white**




**conch shell**, and  **dgyu = to crow, to turn back**, both used to compose the *Ssù gyi-bbu*'s name *Du-gyu* = a northern *Ssù gyi-bbu* associated to the white conch-shell; this could be closely related to the Tibetan ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་དཀར་པོ་དུང་སྐྱོང་ *Klu rGyal-po dkar-po dung skyong*, which name means a **serpent** (ལུ་ *Klu*) **King** (རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rGyal-po*) **protector** (དཀར་པོ་ *dkar-po*) **of the white conch-shell** (དུང་སྐྱོང་ *dung skyong*): confronting the Naxi and Tibetan name, the first one appears as in part transcription and translation of the latter:

ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *Klu rGyal-po* → Naxi *Ssù gyi-bbu*


དུང་སྐྱོང་ *Dung-sKyong* → Naxi *Du-gyu*).<sup>40</sup>

Focusing on the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist myths and Indian ones, as according to Sarat-Chandra, the ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་དཀར་པོ་དུང་སྐྱོང་ *Klu rGyal-po dkar-po dung skyong*, thus also the Naxi *Ssù gyi-bbu Du-gyu*, has in turn to be closely related to the Indian Nāgaraja *Sankhapala*.<sup>41</sup>

Other interesting concordances could be suggested for    the *Ssù gyi-bbu*

named *Dsaw-bpu* and the Tibetan ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་འཇོག་པོ་ *rGyal-po hjog-po*,<sup>42</sup> or    the

39 Harvard-Yenching collection n. 11100763, Rock n. 999

40  **du = white** (as the conch shell) coincides with Tibetan ཏུང་ *dung* = white.

According to Joseph Rock (1972) ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་དཀར་པོ་དུང་སྐྱོང་ *rGyal-po Dung-sKyong* is in turn related to the Sanskrit Sankhapāla, alias the Bodhisattva born as a Nāga king.

41 About Sankhapāla: it was a Nāga king, impressive because of its great magnificence. Cfr. also Alāra. The story is given in the Cariyāpitaka (ii.10; see also J.i.45; MA.ii.617; BuA.50) to illustrate Sīla pāramitā.

Cfr. Vogel "Indian serpent-lore": 133 - 135, 150 - 151; N. Ramesan - 1961 "Glimpses of Buddhism": 55.

Also cfr: <http://www.palikanon.com/namen/sa/sankhapala.htm>

42 Manuscript *Ssù* 1k'v 2gku 3chung – to invite the *Ssù* 1<sup>st</sup> volume: pg 7, r.IV, actually a copy is preserved in Harvard-Yenching collection, n. 11100757, Rock n. 1386

*Ssù gyi-bbu* named *Bpa-ma* with the Tibetan རྒྱལ་པོ་པད་མ་ *rGyal-po Pad-ma*.<sup>43</sup>

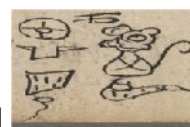
The *Ssù gyi-bbu* are also attested as complex iconography with the body of the *Ssù* (tail of serpents, body trilobated) and with animals' head, as for instance in manuscript *Ssù k'v man*



*chung*<sup>44</sup> is possible to identify a *Ssù gyi-bbu* with the head of a Water-



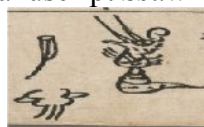
Buffalo,<sup>45</sup> a *Ssù gyi-bbu* elephant headed,<sup>46</sup> and



a *Ssù gyi-bbu*



with the head of a Tiger.

*Ssù gyi-bbu* are also attested as in manuscript *Ssaw ndaw yu dsu* – to invite the ancestors of



the serpent-deities *Ssaw-dndaw*<sup>47</sup> as Dragon's headed.<sup>48</sup>

Statistic analysis of *Ssù gyi-bbu* presence into Dongba manuscript dedicated to *Ssù* cult more than one hundred attestations, as resumed below:

		Iconography		Partial totals
		Ssù iconography	Animals' headed	
Manuscript: HY =				
Harward Yenching				
Collection; R = Joseph				
Rock Collection				
HY11100763	1			1
HY11100756	1			1
HY11100776	44		2	46
R1116	1			1
HY11100757	40			40
HY11100758	19		3	22
R1792	1			1
HY11100762	2			2
HY11100813			1	1
HY9904007	1			1
HY9904028	1			1
R1970	1			1
HY11100807	1			1
R6052	1			1
R6094	1			1
R8228	1			1
R8271	1			1
<b>Total of attestations</b>	<b>117</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>123</b>

Detailed data, with page and rubric number for each attestation is available as online resource.<sup>49</sup>

43 Manuscript Khur Ma, actually a copy is preserved in Harvard-Yenching Collection n. 13321400, Rock n. 1782.

44 Manuscript *Ssù 1k'v 3man 3chung* is actually preserved in a copy at Harvard Yenching collection, n. 11100758, Rock n. 1392

45 pg.6, r.II


46 pg.6, r.I

47 Manuscript *1Ssaw 3ndaw 1yu 2dsu* – to invite the ancestors of the Saw-Ndaw, actually preserved in Harvard Yenching collection with number 11100776, Rock collection n. 1020.


48 Page 28, rubric VII


49 <http://www.xiulong.it/Dongba/conferences/Arras2010/Attestations/Ssu.htm>




C. iconography of  as stand-alone pictograph, a basic reptile-divinity sign associated with the readings *Ssù*, *Lu-mun* and *Ssaw-ndaw*, also not read and not associated to any syllable, not necessary related to others pictographs or recurring patterns or combinations.<sup>50</sup>

Analysis of Dongba manuscripts evinced the following attestations :

		Reading associate with pictograph 			
Manuscript:	HY = Harward Yengchin Collection; R = Joseph Rock Collection	llu mun	ssaw ndaw	ssu	no syllable
					Partial total
	HY11100798				1
	R977			1	
	HY11100748	1			
	HY11100812	1		2	
	HY11100763	2		3	
	HY11100750			1	
	HY11100756	2		2	
	HY11100770		1		
	HY11100776	24	2	3	
	R116	3	1	2	1
	R1321				1
	HY11100806		1		
	HY11100739	1			
	HY11100757	1		2	
	HY11100738	2	1	2	1
	HY13321400	1			3
	HY11100762			3	
	HY9904007		2		
	HY9904028		1		
	HY11100771		1	1	
	R2354	2			
	R2681	1			
	HY11100740	1		2	2
	R3177				1
	HY11100773				1
	HY11100807			1	
	R6052	9	4	5	1
	R6094	1			
	R8236		1		
	R8271	3	1	3	
	R8273			1	
	R8297		1		
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>
					<b>118</b>

Interpretation of data retrieved from manuscripts evinced that  pictograph, as independent-basic unit, appears very much associated to *Lu-mun* reading with a frequency of 49,50% over 101 attestations. Immediately after the *Ssù* reading is attested with a

frequency of 29,70%, then *Ssaw-ndaw* reading with a frequency of 15,84% and  as

mute sign with any readings with a frequency of 4,95%; the latter is possible to hypothesize to be a mute determinative of serpent deity.



However this sign appears in many graphical variants which in turns could be associated with different readings just mentioned: the general rule which could be isolated seems to





consists in the pattern [ body ] + [animal<sup>51</sup>/demons/human<sup>52</sup> - one head or plus heads], and this is attested with relative readings as:

- 25% of time as *Ssù*,
- 31,25% *Lu-mun*,
- 6,25% *Ssaw-ndaw*,
- 37,5% *no reading*.



Resuming plates of regarding to *Ssù*, *Lu-mun*, *Ssaw-ndaw* and *no readings* is reported below:


Iconography	unread	<i>Ssù</i>	<i>Lu mun</i>	<i>ssaw ndaw</i>	Attestations
	4,95%	29,70%	49,50%	15,84%	<b>101</b>
body +  animal / human / demon head/s	37,50%	25,00%	31,25%	6,25%	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,17%</b>	<b>28,81%</b>	<b>46,61%</b>	<b>14,41%</b>	<b>119</b>



Another recurring variant of is <sup>53</sup> with trembling lines protruding from the body, 3 for each side, indicating the property of shining or scintillating, as attested for

instance in manuscript *Tso Ma Yu Tsu Lu Chung*,<sup>54</sup> where it appears many times<sup>55</sup> as



the *Lu-mun* named *Ghugh-yu-gkv-dzu*,<sup>56</sup> or for instance the pictograph  which

51 For instances, cfr. below: *Lu mun Ghugh-yu-gkv-dzu*, *Lu mun ts'o-gkv-dzu* and *ch'er-t'a-gyu-wu*

52 ms. 3155; Rock J., 1972: 157; NNCRC: 112 + tavola 45 fig. 1

53 Manuscript n. 11100763 (cfr note 27), pg. 1, r. IV.

54 Harvard-Yenching collection n. 11100763, Rock n. 999


55 In all the 12 folia of manuscript the pictograph appears 24 time, referred to 3 different *Lu-mun*.

56 Ibid, pg. 8, r. II.

represents the southern regional *Lu-mun* named *ts'o-gkv-dzu*.<sup>57</sup>


While *Lu-mun* and *Ssù* readings appears as the more frequent, *Ssaw-ndaw* are less one.

Closer look to manuscripts' contexts for *Ssaw-ndaw* evinced that this reading is associated with the concept of thousands and thousands of entities which were generated from a higher ranked *Ssù*.<sup>58</sup>

Association of no syllables to the pictograph  and/or its variants also needs a closer look to the contexts, where it seems to be clear that peculiar phenomena could be explained with the use of the pictograph as a mute determinative, a specification of a *Ssù*-like entity whose name is phonetically rendered by pictographs, as for instance in the case of




, read *pa-ma-chi-mpu*, syllables that could be considered as the Naxi

transcription of the Tibetan པདྨ་ཆེན་པོ་ *Pad-ma-chhen-po*,<sup>59</sup> or again for  , read as *ch'er-t'a-gyu-wu*, a **tiger-headed eastern regional *Ssù***, whose name's second syllable is the phonetic transcription of the homophone Tibetan སྟག་ *sTag* = **tiger**.<sup>60</sup>

57 Ibid, pg. 8 r. II.



58 for instance, in manuscript n. 6052 of Joseph Rock collection is written  , read *Saw-ndaw nyi-muàn-wuà-dtv* = **the 25 thousands of Saw-ndaw**. About the translation: *Nyi* = 2, *muan* = 10.000, *wuà* = 5, *dtv* = 1.000, thus **the 25.000 Saw-ndaw**.

59 པདྨ་ཆེན་པོ་ *Pad-ma-chhen-po* could in turns be associated to the Sanskrit *Nāga Mahāpadma*, both as a king and as a reptile-god.

For the *Naxi pa-ma-chi-mpu*, it's attested as the 6<sup>th</sup> of the 8 great *Ssù* in ms. 1116 of Joseph Rock private collection, pg. 6, r.II; in the same manuscript is also told about the 99 great white celestial *Ssù*.

About the Tibetan པདྨ་ཆེན་པོ་ *Pad-ma-chhen-po* and its equivalence with Indian *Mahāpadma*, cfr: Hermann August Francke, 1996 "*Antiquities of Indian Tibet*" : 74 – 75; Das Sarat Chandra, "*Tibetan-English Dictionary*" : 779; sGam.po.pa, Guenther Herbert Von, 2001 "*The jewel ornament of liberation*" : 60, 61

About the *Nāga Mahāpadma*, cfr. Stein M.A., 1989 "*Kalhana's Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*": 424; Stein M.A., 1899 "*Ancient geography of Kashmir*" in "*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*" vol.68, Part 1: 17, 115 – 117; Bhagavatprasad Natvarlal Bhatt, 1973 "*Śrīkaṇṭhacaritam: a study*" M.S. University of Baroda research series 14- University of Baroda (Baroda) : 45, 72 – 74; Vohel J., 2005 "*Indian Serpent Lore Or the nagas in Hindu Legend and Art*" : 21, 84, 191, 210, 240 - 248, 304

60 *Ch'er-t'a-gyu-wu* is one of the 5 regional *Nāga* listed in manuscript n. 1782, pg.12 of the collection of Joseph Rock, actually preserved in a copy in Harvard Yenching Collection with n. 13321400. Concordance between the Naxi and the Tibetan is based on the homophony between the Naxi *t'a* [ta] and the Tibetan *sTag* [ta], and considering that Naxi word to mean tiger is *la[la]*.





### The *Ssù* nature and relationship with humans

From manuscripts' study, from analysis of Dongba tradition and also from Naxi folks, the nature and the characteristics of *Ssù*'s, and their relationships with human are visible.

At first the *Ssù* are believed to be responsible of rain, feature perfectly according to Tibetan ལྷ *Klu* and Indian नाग *Nāga* iconology, as raining is due to and derived from their magical power<sup>61</sup>: for



instance it is attested from pictographs at page 13, rubric III of manuscript *Muan ggo-khu-szu Lu-mun* - literally translated as **the *Lu-mun* who controls the rain from heaven**.<sup>62</sup>

Manuscript *Ssù-ndo ngv-gu-bpu*, page 14, attests another fundamental belief and aspect:



"[...] the 9 *Ssù-swue-pa* (alias the 9 *Ssù* kings) [...] are now beseech to grant long life, prosperity and health, protect the family, call (redeem) the soul of the family ( of the person who was ill and whose soul was stolen by the *Ssù*); let there be no more illness, let us hear only good things, and let our pounds be full."

This page evinces that the *Ssù* are prayed and venerated to assure long life and prosperity, good health, fullness of pounds, etc...; on the other side, the *Ssù* are believed to be able to steal the soul of a person. If they do that, then they are cause of illness and calamity, so the *Ssù* are propitiated and prayed also to make that the stolen soul was given back.

*Ssù* actions could be propitious or ill-omen for humans, but such relationship are not charged of moralistic values. For instance the belief of *Ssù* relationship with prosperity granting made Naxi tradition not to consider them as "good" gods, but just to properly relate to *Ssù* as the guardians or riches, so they must be implored to grant wealth, full grain boxes, livestock, and of all else long life.

<sup>61</sup> Also in very recent times. For instance Joseph Rock himself recorded that in occasion of a dryness period the famous spring Gya-wù, to the north of Lijiang, dried up living Lijiang city practically without water.

Both Dongbas and Karnapa lamas were busy performing ceremonies to propitiate the local *Ssù*, as the "more-Chinese-minded" Naxi repaired to the Chinese 龍王 *Lóng Wang* (the King Dragon) Temple, making offers to the Dragon King.

<sup>62</sup> Manuscript number 1116 of Joseph Rock collection, cfr. Rock, 1952-I.

Once and if the *Ssù* would steal people from their treasures, they aren't told as “bad” gods, but this “hostile” side of the nature of *Ssù* is just the other face of a dualistic opposed conception, coexistence of opposed poles, dualistic internal nature of beings which permeated all Dongba tradition and Naxi culture.

Is important to underline these two faces of *Ssù* and the concept of coexistence-opposing forces into *Ssù* nature because it constitutes another point of contact among Dongba and Bön traditions: as the Naxi-Dongba *Ssù* the ལྷ *Klu* of *Bönpo Sutras*, are described as informing “*gShen-rab*<sup>63</sup> *that they have in their hearts 2 things: friendship and enmity. If the people are good to them they will be of use of them, and render them services, but if people act unjustly, then they will cause them harms.*” Moreover, they told to *gShen Rab* that they are “*hard-earthed, possess wicked fangs with which they can terrify the people*”.

All this themes are reflected in the Naxi – *Ssù* literature, where Dongba beseech the *Ssù* “*to soften their hearts and to change them to the softness of butter*”.

Moreover, Dongba tradition evinces a sort of code legis between *Ssù* and people, in which they stipulated the division of property between *Ssù* and humans: to Humans were given all the domestic animals, all the cultivated fields and the houses, to *Ssù* belong all the wild animals, all the forests, all the alpine meadows, cliffs, lakes and springs.

From manuscript entitled *Khyu-t'khyu Ssù 'a* – the fight between the sacred bird eagle-winged deity *Khyu-t'kyu* and the *Ssù* the path stipulated is related.<sup>64</sup>



[pg. 7] (7)

“Dongba Shilo descended 'till he reached the King *Ssù* named *Dso-na-lo-chi* (who were enchained and tortured as punishment by the *Khyu-t'khyu*) and asked:

- What have Thou committed?

[...] The *Ssù* king replayed that he was tied at the foot of the mount because of *Khyu-t'khyu* punishment.

- (9) *I have committed nothing [...]* (10) *One morning the people, father and son, gathered together*

<sup>63</sup> Who corresponds to Dongba Shilo of Naxi tradition

<sup>64</sup> Manuscript is preserved in 2 exemplar in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts' collection, n. 11100747 and n.11100748, Rock numbered respectively as 3153 and 994





[Pg.8] (1)

*They came before my eyes. A cow to plough the land.*

*A green frog's legs the plow struck and then killed.*

*(2) One morning they brought a horse before me.*

*A small snake with a green throat was stepped upon by the horse's hoof, and tore in half.*

*(3) They came to clear the mountain of its forests, and in the valley they came to break new soil.*

*(4) they liberated their dogs to hunt wild animals.*

*(5) They came to plow the meadows*

*(6) They must have performed a ritual with nine kinds of fine flours, nine loaves of butter and nine branches of green juniper before me.*

*(7) A white goat. They must offer on the top of the tent, and behind the wooden house they must offer a white rooster.*

*(8) Before they must offer a white horse.*

*(9) before they had to offer a black cow.*

*(10) Shilo and the white King Khyu-t'khyu then conferred. Accordingly to the people are not permitted to cultivate the land before offering the Ssù nine kinds of flour:*

*On the alpine meadow they're not permitted to shepherd their flock before offering the Ssù nine loaves of butter."*

The Ssù declared to Dongba Shilo that humans provoked its reaction, so the calamities he shot against men were legitimate reactions against indiscriminate exploitations of the nature and its resources, so he expected some offerings and rituals in order to repay.

Dongba Shilo suggested a lower quantity for the offerings required by the Ssù king, as related in ms. 11100748:



[Pg.IX]

*“(5) Dso-na-lo-chi, Thou may not receive 9 kinds of fine flour, but only one kind.*

*Thou may not receive 9 loaves of butter, but only one loaf.*







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[pg. 6]

*“One morning a woman went to look after the grain and she arrived at a spring, but she didn't destroy the home of the Ssù.*

*[In the meantime] the man arrived at the black lake and didn't fish with the blue net.*

*Arrived on the snow range and didn't cut wood out of which combs are made, arrived at the stream of Ssù and didn't take out eater to wash the comb.*

*Arrived on the black mountain and didn't cut the green bamboo.*

*Arrived in the big forest and didn't cut large trees.*

*Arrived at the cliffs and didn't make traps.*

*Herding cattle and didn't drive an unwanted animal up the mountain.*

*The woman having harvested the grain didn't carelessly throw some into the water.”*



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[pg. 7]

*“clothing about which they didn't care, they didn't hang on trees.*

*As they were unaccustomed to quarrel, they didn't not quarrel with Ssù.*

*[...] The man looks after the livestock [...] hence he has abundance of prosperity and wealth where he dwells, and doesn't touch and covet the belongings of the Ssù and Lu.*

*The mother takes care of the grain barns, hence she had prosperity of livestock, and barns full of grain, she was abundantly rich, and so didn't store any grains belonging to the Ssù and the Lu.”*

If the humans would broke the path, then the equilibrium had to be restored by performing ceremonies and ritual for propitiation. According to Naxi tradition, the Ssù should have been propitiated depending of the gravity of the sins the men have committed, so the Dongbas should perform proper rituals and spell charms, as well exemplified in Manuscript *Ssù-ndo ngv-gu-bpu*, page 1, rubric V:





[pg. I: ]

*“the 9 Ssù took a rope and tied it around the people of the land, they caused the jackal to follow the sheep, and they sent the demons 2Nder after the cattle-  
Ssù and 1Lu also tied a rope around the family.  
Before dawn the family sent a boy to invite the Dongba able to chant and Dongba Shilo, thus  
2Dongba Shilo invited the Ssù and 1Lu”*



Here

Ssù and



the dragons *Lu* act together against the humans: they



tie ropes around the family<sup>66</sup> and



the Ssù sends

demons and calamities against men, cultivations and cattle.

Reaction of humans in front of this dangers consists in asking for Dongba to be helped. The SOS is destined to 2 receivers: one is the most powerful Dongba, the deified founder of Dongba tradition Dongba Shilo, alias ལྷོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་ *Ston pa gshen rab*,<sup>67</sup> and the other is a Dongba who is said that must “*have the ability of chanting*”. Such capacity have to be related both to the ability of performs ceremonies, and to the ability of pronouncing magic spells called *Hoa-lü* which are believed to be able to coerce *Ssù*.

Following the tradition the principle of the *Hoa-lü* is based on the fact that to each spiritual beings belong a particular rate of vibration, and this kind of vibration are re-formulated and reproduced as

<sup>66</sup> Means that they are making curses which are tiding and afflicting the living member of a clan. And if the curse won't be broken, then it will afflict next generations.

<sup>67</sup> ལྷོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་ *Ston pa gshen rab*, also named Tönpa Shenrab, Buddha Shenrab, Guru Shenrab, Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche, Lord Shenrab Miwo, and known by a number of other titles. He is the founder of the Bön religious tradition of Tibet.

According to Samten G. Karmey: “*is the founder of the Bön religion. He occupies a position very similar to that of Śākyamuni in Buddhism [...], the enormous number of books either attributed directly to him or believed to be his word [...] the Bönpo say, were written down after his death in much the same way as the Buddhist scriptures were assembled.*”

Cfr. Karmey Samten G., 1975 “*A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon*”, pp. 175-176. Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tokyo Bunko, No. 33. Tokyo.

For equivalence of Dongba Shilo with ལྷོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་ *Ston pa gshen rab* cfr. “A preliminary cross-study between Naxi - Dongba, Tibetan and Indian iconology of serpent-like deities”

sound in *Hoa-lü*, giving the magician power even to annihilate by dissolution the particular element or spirit to whom it belongs; thus Dongbas by *Hoa-lü* can compel a spirit act as wishes, so “*ability to chant*” in truth consist with posses and ability of use one of the most powerful weapon to be used.

*Hoa-lü* are spelled with peculiar intonation as the tone numbers before each syllable testify. They are completely un-intelligible to the Dongba and/or Naxi themselves, and Rock hypothesized that's because they had been transcribed twice: once from Sanskrit to Tibetan, then from Tibetan to Naxi, so they have certainly become distorted and bear no, or little resemblance to the original version,<sup>68</sup> but sometime is possible to operate some processes of etymology, as for instance for the recurring final tri-syllables “*so-wa-haw*” which Rock states it has to coincide with Sanskrit *svāha*.<sup>69</sup>

The number of *Hoa-lü* are rich, and some manuscripts are fully composed of *Hoa-lü*, as the,<sup>70</sup> while others explain what the *Hoa-lü* is and how they go:<sup>71</sup> in this context – the *Ssù* cult - by spelling *Hoa-lü* the Dongba forces *Ssù* to release the souls they have stolen or imprisoned, so that ritual is performed on one hand to propitiate the *Ssù* and repaying them for the damages, and on the other hand to destroy their power by spelling the proper *Hoa-lü*, and this features are related to Tibetan and Indian tradition.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, to increase the power of the Dongba which has to perform the ceremonials, the deified and most powerful priest *Shilo* is invoked, and also the story in which he acted as medium between *Ssù* and people is invoked and ritually related, all summed to the invocation of the power of the eagle-winged divinity *Khyu-t'khyu*, to grant to the Dongba who's actually performing the ritual the most power available to strongly and successfully compel the *Ssù*.<sup>73</sup>

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68 *Hoa-lü* are magic formulas which could be related with Indian Dhārani, coinciding with the Tibetan sNgags [ngag] = mantras: if this is true, then being the Naxi Dongba *Hoa-lü* directly transcriptions of Tibetans sNgags, which in turn were transcription from the Sanskrit, and considering - according to Evans Wentz “Tibetan book of the dead”: 221 that they all were used to invoke and coercing deities, spirits and demons, and to bring them into one's power, calling up and commanding – then is possible to hypothesize that Dongba *Hoa-lü* are at least partial transcription of the Tibetan sNags, which in turns are at least partially transcription of the Sanskrit Dharani.

Thus the triplice transcription phenomena Dharani[Sanskrit] → sNgags[Tibetan] → *Hoa-lü*[Naxi], of not semantic but just portions of phonetic-centered texts maybe could help in explaining why many *Hoa-lü* could be red by Dongba but are un-comprehensible to them.

69 Rock J., 1952-I: 103(65). An example of *Hoa-lu* ending by the tri-syllables sso-wuà-hau is in manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu* Ssaw – to invite the *Khyu-t'khyu*: 7 – 20.

In this manuscript, which is preserved in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts collection as number, Rock private collection number 1004, from page 12 to page 20 there are just a succession of *Hoa-lü*, many endings by sso-wuà-hau.

70 As Rock states the the manuscript *Nyi-wüa ch'wua du* is. Cfr. l.q.

Cfr. footnote 46, also 1936 “1Hä 3la = the killing of the soul” in “Journal of the West china B.R. Soc.”, Vol VIII, 1936: 53 – 58; 1937 “Na-khi 1Hä zhi p'i” in “BEFEO XXXVII”, fasc. 1 : 55.

71 As for instance manuscript entitled Gkaw-lä-ts'ü 1ō 3Shër – Gkaw-lä-ts'ü ransom the soul of his father.

Gkaw-lä-ts'ü is the 5<sup>th</sup> generations' descendant of the post-flood ancestors of Naxi people, and this manuscript is the grounding of a large funeral ceremony performed after 3 years of the death of a person; cfr. Rock, 1952-II: 581 – 586.

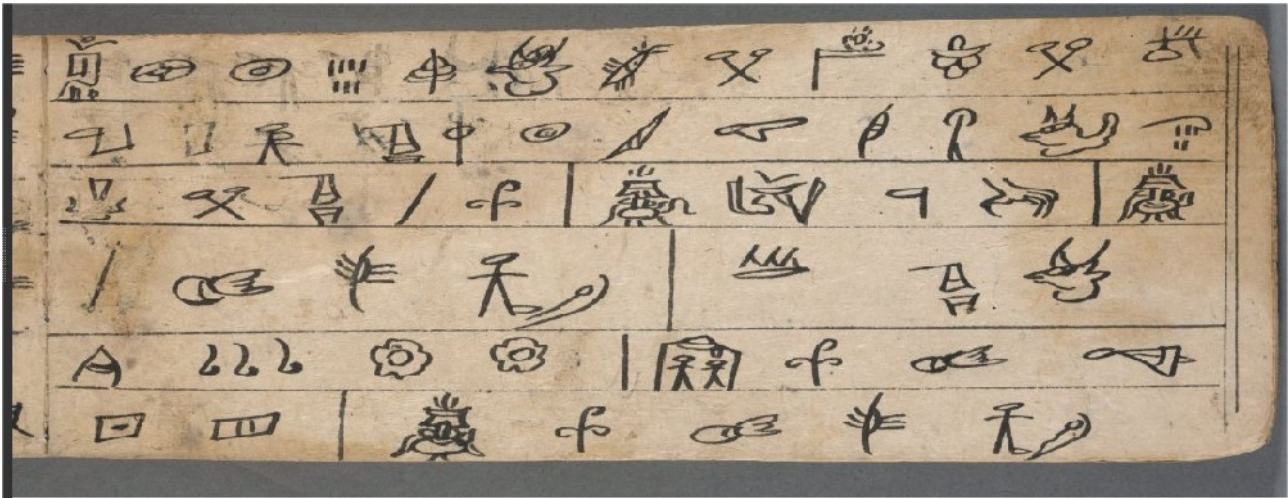
Manuscript is n. 3164 of Joseph Rock private collection, actually preserved in a copy in the Harvard Yenching collection with number 11100745.

72 Cfr. note 45.

73 cfr. *Khyu-t'khyu Ssù* 1a and *Ssù* 1'a *Ssù* 1 3dü.



Importance and practical use of *Hoa-lü* by Dongbas during the ceremony performing is also attested in the manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu ssaw*, as from page 12 to page 20, after a description of the struggle between the central regional *Khyu-t'khyu* and *Ssù* according to the pattern described above, the text goes on with a succession of *Hoa-lü*:



Harvard University - Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library / Naxi Manuscript Collection. Manuscript B-58. Harvard Yenching Library.  
 Manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu ssaw*, pg.13. Rubrics are full of pictographs used as phonetics to compose the *Hoa-lü*

The struggle between *Ssù* and *Khyu-t'khyu* is also well described in manuscript *Ssù ndo ngv-gu-bpu*.

In the context of the Dongba manuscript tradition the reading of a mythical tale, as here the fight of *Ssù* against *Khyu-t'khyu*, coincides with a magic, a ri-evocation of a fact which is meant to happen again:<sup>74</sup> as just introduced, thus the possibility for the Dongbas to ri-evolve *Shilo* and *Khyu-t'khyu* powers consist in the effective availability of their strong powers to be used in coercing the *Ssù*:

*“Dongba Shilo invited the Ssù and the Lu on that day.*

*The people and the Ssù held a discussion*

*the Khyu-t'khyu named Ddv-p'er was invoked and acted as medium”.*

In manuscript *Ssù-Ndo ngv gu bpu* – page 2, is also written:



2nd page of manuscript 2Ssù-1Ndo 2ngv 2gu 3bpu

*“They (Dongba Shilo and the Dongba who's invoking Him) took a sharp flaming sword and cut the rope of the Ssù named ngv-gkv and the rope of the Lu.*

*Then the Ssù mother na-bpu (the black Ssù mother of the Ssù) caused a magic and there appeared*

<sup>74</sup> In Dongba manuscript tradition the concept of time and space are very similar; by reading and performing manuscript is possible to ri-evolve a passed situation, as it could be possible to walk back in a place to see and to be again in that place. Concept of writing is obviously permeated by magical power: write about something or someone means to make them exist, a concept which could be related to Egyptian hieroglyphs and E-Ka.

[...] the Ssù horse-headed.

He led thousands of horse-headed Ssù who enveloped the family<sup>75</sup> with ropes.<sup>76</sup>

Dongba Shilo<sup>77</sup> takes a sharp sword and cut the rope of the Ssù and the 1Lu whereupon the family was free of illness.


Dongba Shilo spelled the objects required by the horse-headed Ssù.


The bpo-mbo has to provide to make them.

A dto-ma of ten kinds of rains and Ho-lu-mbbu white and black.

With these he repay the horse-headed Ssù.”

Ssù-mä-na-bpũ reacts against humans and ties them with a cursed rope, but the Dongba<sup>78</sup> cuts it with a flaming sharpened sword.

Ssù-mä-na-bpũ then caused a magic again, and made appear other Ssù. The first one is  a

horse headed Ssù who again  enveloped the people and their cattle with ropes.

Again the Dongba by spells (*Dongba Shilo spelled the proper objects that were required to propitiate the horse-headed Ssù.*) and performing rituals (*Dongba Shilo took a sharp sword...*) repay the horse headed Ssù and cut the curses, so finally the family was free of illness.

This is a recurring ritual episode, and it is repeated from this page (the 2<sup>nd</sup>) to the 9<sup>th</sup>, with a list of animals' headed Ssù:



the goat headed Ssù:

pg.3, r. VIII



the ox-headed Ssù:

pg.4, r. VI



the dog-headed Ssù:

pg.5, r.VI



the crow-headed Ssù:

pg.6 r.III



the stag-headed Ssù:

pg.7 r.II



the snake and stag-headed Ssù:

pg.8, r.I



the ghost-headed Ssù:

pg.8, r.VIII



the chicken-headed Ssù:

pg.9, r. V

75 Literally tied the *Dzi* and *Ts'o*. This is a ritual phrase, it means the prosperity of the family, which represent the humanity

76 Curses and malicious spell which are seen as ropes that envelop humans and beings.


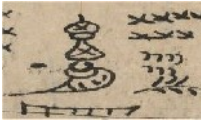

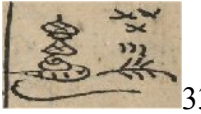
77 The Dongba identifies *Shilo* with himself. So the *Shilo* winning performance against *Ssù* became the actually Dongba-reciting performance against *Ssù*

78 *Shilo*, who was invoked, here is just incarnated into the Dongba who's reading the manuscript and performing ceremonials. Spelling about *Shilo*'s actions coincides with performing again such actions contextualized into the present-relative situation.

This could be generalized as a pilot pattern:

- A high hierarchically *Ssù* launches curses against humans and the living-beings world
  - The Dongba first destroy such curses
    - The high hierarchically *Ssù* makes then appears crowds subordinated *Ssù*
      - they have peculiar features, and they launch peculiar curses against humans
        - Dongba performed and spelled charms to destroy the *Ssù* curses
        - Dongba repay them following their needs
          - Finally humans were saved

From manuscript *Bpo lu k'u* is also possible to evince various *Ssù* deities associated with natural elements to which people have to relate:<sup>79</sup>

-  99 celestial or sky *Ssù*: pg.21, r.5
-  77 terrestrial or black *Ssù*: pg.21, r.5
-  55 mountains *Ssù*: pg.21, r.6
-  33 Valley's *Ssù*: pg.21, r.7

and other minor deities which permeate humans' every-day living, like *Ssù* of villages, *Ssù* of clouds, *Ssù* of rainbow, *Ssù* of the spurs, *Ssù* of the alpine meadows, *Ssù* of dry lands, *Ssù* of trees, *Ssù* of rocks, *Ssù* of cliffs, *Ssù* of wild fields, *Ssù* of the *d'a* ground where the houses are built.

<sup>79</sup> As introduced before, the *Ssù* appears hierarchically stratified, and as *Ssù* 2mä 1na 3bpü has to be identified with the Bön Nāga *Se-bdud-nag-po* (cfr. note 47), many *Ssù* have their counterparts or could be related to *Bönpo sutra*: cfr Schiefner, “*Bönpo sutra*”: 27





## Lu – Dragon

Among pictographs of deities with reptile/snake's figure, analysis of Dongba manuscript evinced the dragon iconography, which is associated to the reading *Lu*, syllable probably derived by the Chinese term 龍 *long*.

Into the reptile-like deities, distinction among the serpent-like gods and the dragons are not a peculiarity just of Naxi – Dongba tradition, but is also met into Tibetan tradition with the differentiation among the ཀླུ *Klu* – **serpent** and the རྩྭ་གླུ་ *hBrug* – **dragon**<sup>80</sup>; according to Das Sarat Chandra, the Tibetan word རྩྭ་གླུ་ *hBrug* means "**thunder, lighting, whirlwind**", and also "**the mythical winged dragon, a creature which gives its name to one of the members of the series of twelve animals in calendar cycle**".<sup>81</sup>

Association to thunder, lighting and weather phenomena to the Dragon is a common features, both into Chinese *Long* and Naxi – Dongba *Lu* iconology and iconography, as evinced for instance from



<sup>82</sup>



<sup>83</sup>

pictographs respectively to be meant as association of *Lu* to the power of making rain and snow and to the power of lighting and thundering from the sky, themes and pictographs which seems the iconic abbreviation of the Chinese common iconography



Beijing, Beihai, "The wall of nine dragons", particular. Author's picture, summer of 2005

<sup>80</sup> Das Sarat Chandra "A Tibetan English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms" Calcutta, 1902: 479

<sup>81</sup> Ibid: 932

<sup>82</sup> Ibid:8-VI

<sup>83</sup> Ibid: 17-X



of Dragon twirling among the clouds.

Tibetan རྩུ་ *hBrug* representation are perfectly according both to Chinese and Naxi – Dongba iconography of dragon, as for instance in tangkas, wall-painting and pottery decoration.



*Tangkas with dragons ride by deities. Dragon appears among clouds, with lighting and roaring, the latter to meant as the thundering*



*Particular of Dragon and Phoenix of a wider scene depicting the deity Phya.g.na rdo.je. Detail of the wall-paintings in the Mgon-khang (chapel of Wrathful deities) in the Serkhang, Shalu Monastery, Central Tibet, 1306 – 1320 about. Cfr. Stephen Little, 1992 "The Arhats in China and Tibet": 273 in *Artibus Asiae* Vol.52 n. 3/4: 255 - 281*



*Dragon decoration from a vessel. Cfr. Martha L. Carter, 1998 "Three Silver Vessels from Tibet's Earliest Historical Era: A Preliminary Study": 27, in *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 3: 22-47*

Such elements are evidently to be considered as common points with the Indian Naga iconology, where to such serpent deity class were attributed the power of making rain and water-controls as first causes for prosperity, as previously discussed.

The *Lu* into manuscripts, although they are distinguished from the others *Ssù* snake-deities, sometimes are associated to the latter and/or sometimes stand alone. For instance, in Naxi - Dongba manuscript which relates about the origin of the *Lu*, entitled *Bpo Lu K'u*, the tradition believes that *Lu* and *Ssù* shared the same birth:

[pg. 13, r. IX]

*“At first, when there were no human beings, heaven and earth were. In the center came forth white and black clouds.*

*They caused a magic and there came forth white and black wind.”*

[pg. 14]

*“from the latter came forth white and black dew.*

*This dew caused a magic and there came forth the lake.*

*The lake caused a magic and there came forth a golden egg.*

*From it was born the Yellow Golden frog named Ha shi bpa ma.*

*The frog for one year looked toward the east and there came forth a pair of siLuer eggs; one year she sat looking south and there came forth a pair of blue eggs.*

*One year she sat looking west and there came forth one pair of black eggs.*

*One year she sat looking north and there came forth one pair of yellow eggs.*

*One year she looked up in the center and there came forth one pair of spotted eggs.*

*It was three years since the eggs had been laid, but there was no one to hatch them. [...] in the east there will come forth from the pair of siLuer eggs the white Ssù-swe-pa and the white Lu.*

*In the south from the pair of green eggs”*

*In the south from the pair of green eggs”*

As attested for the Ssù creations, with regional – colored Ssù, which color depends on the quarter of the compass they were born, so it's for the Lu:

[pg.15]

*“ the green Ssù-swe-pa and the green Lu.*


*In the west, from the black eggs the black Ssù-swe-pa and the black Lu.*

*In the north, from the yellow eggs the yellow Ssù-swe-pa and the yellow Lu.*

*In the center from the spotted eggs the spotted Ssù-swe-pa and the spotted Lu.”*



The Lu thus shares a common origin with the Ssù as both are said to be born from colored eggs, which color depends on the quarter of the compass:<sup>84</sup>

- East =  white Ssù-swe-pa and white Lu
- South =  green  Ssù-swe-pa and Lu
- West =  red Ssù-swe-pa and red Lu
- North =  yellow (gold) Ssù-swe-pa and yellow Lu
- Center = spotted  Ssù-swe-pa and spotted  Lu

The close relationship between Ssù and Lu is not limited to their common origin and regional being,

<sup>84</sup> and the eggs from which they came forth the Ssù and the Lu use to have the color of the region whence they originated

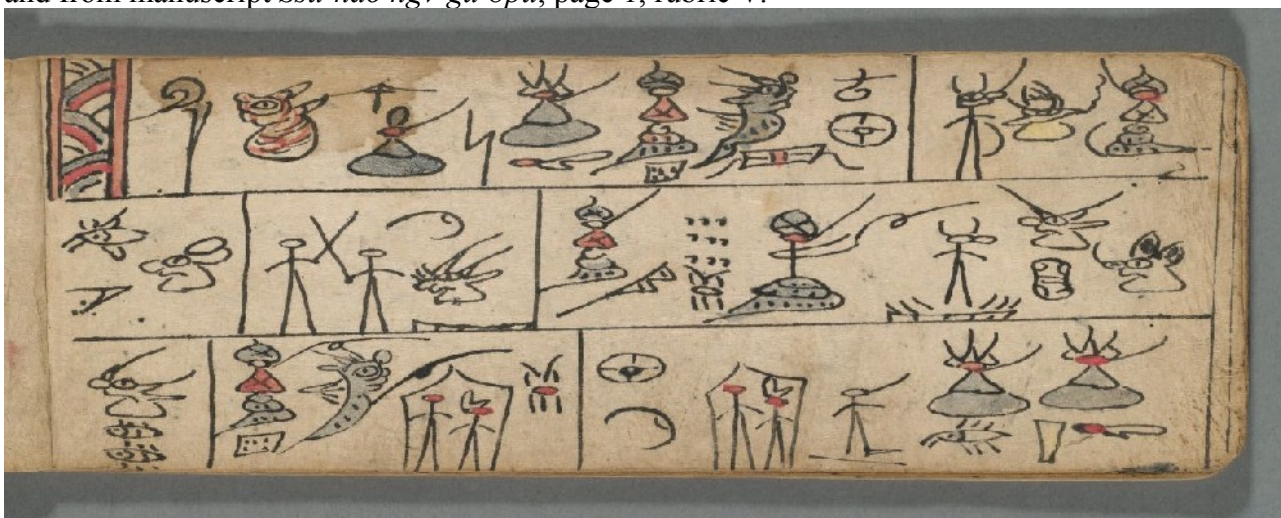


but sometimes they act in the same way, as attested from manuscript *Ssù-ndo ngv-gu-bpu*, page 14:



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and from manuscript *Ssù-ndo ngv-gu-bpu*, page 1, rubric V:



[pg. I: ]

“the 9 *Ssù* took a rope and tied it around the people of the land, they caused the jackal to follow the sheep, and they sent the demons *Nder* after the cattle-  
*Ssù* and *Lu* also tied a rope around the family.

Before dawn the family sent a boy to invite the *Dongba* able to chant and *Dongba Shilo*, thus *Dongba Shilo* invited the *Ssù* and *Lu*”

Here  *Ssù* and  the dragons *Lu* act together against the humans: they  
 tie ropes around the family.<sup>85</sup>

Referring to the struggles among humans, the *Lu* share common features with the *Ssù*, but are also repository of more specific others which aren't to be directly found among *Ssù* powers, as the ability of moving tremendous natural forces or natural elements, especially those related to the weather conditions.

According to manuscript *Dter gko ssaw* – **Inviting the *Dter-gko***<sup>86</sup> the *Lu* are spirits able to control

<sup>85</sup> Means that they are making curses which are tiding and afflicting the living member of a clan. And if the curse won't be broken, then it will afflict next generations.

<sup>86</sup> Actually in Harvard-Yenching collection with number 12885250, Joseph Rock collection number 5067



<sup>87</sup> the rain and the snow,



<sup>88</sup> the lighting as it shoots arrows from

the sky, and generally associated to



the sky and the see/lake, meant as water.

From manuscript *Yu-ma ssaw* – **invite the Yu-ma**



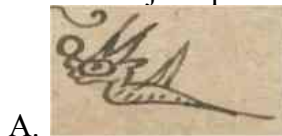
<sup>89</sup> the *Lu* is depicted roaring, and its roar shake the sky and the ground, making the thunder and the earthquake; the same is

attested in another *Yu-ma ssaw* manuscript



<sup>90</sup> with different iconographies of *Lu*, beautifully depicted while walking on the ground, provoking the earthquake and the thunder.

*Lu* attestations just quoted evinced two main iconographic variants for the same deity:

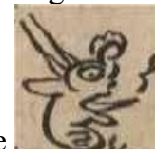


A. the sign for *Lu* is written as a complete portrait of the dragon



B. the sign for *Lu* is written just by depicting its head, and if the deity is

represented while doing something, as for instance catching something with its claw, with the particular part of the body used in the action highlighted



roaring, or



highlighted

The latter is the most frequent iconography attested in available manuscripts for the *Lu*, and such double possible representation of the same sign, one complete portrait and the other the significant particular which is sufficient to “abbreviate” the complete representation, is a technical feature that is found in pictographs used into Naxi – Dongba manuscript tradition.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid:8-VI

<sup>88</sup> Ibid: 17-X

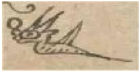


<sup>89</sup> This manuscript is preserved as a copy into the Harvard-Yenching collection with catalogue number 13812109, Joseph Rock private collection number 1247. The pictograph is in page 9, rubric 10

<sup>90</sup> This is another copy of Manuscript *Yu-ma ssaw* – **invite the Yu-ma**. Harvard-Yenching number 9904030, Joseph Rock collection number 1965. This pictograph is attested in page 23, rubric 8.



- C. a third iconography is also here distinguished, although it could be gathered into A – complete one. It's evidently a representation of a Dragon, but pretty different from the A type for some features, as for instance the four legs and the fact that it's depicted while walking and not flying.

A resuming plate of Dragon signs attestations is here presented:

Manuscript number from Harvard-Yen- ching Collection	a 	b 	c 	Partial totals
9903985		2		2
9904030	1	2	6	9
9904031		6		6
11100748	1	1		2
11100754	1			1
11100770	10			10
11100791	6			6
12249348		7		7
12249349		17		17
12885250		5		5
13612787		1		1
13812109		6		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>72</b>

With an eye to the *Lu* as deity associated with natural elements then it was possible to attest the following concordances:

Manuscript number from Harvard-Yenching Collection								
Associated	9904030	9904031	11100748	12249348	12885250	13612787	13812109	Partials
cracking white egg				2				2
rain, snow					1			1
rain, snow, fire						1		1
sea							1	1
sky			1					1
sky, rain				1				1
sky, sea					1			1
sky, thunder		1			2		2	5
sky, thunder, rain	1							1
sky, wind, clouds		1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>

Such last iconographies emerged from manuscripts, characterized by associations of *Lu* to natural elements as rain, snow, thunder, lightning, earthquake, clouds and wind, have to be related to the iconology of Dragon and Naga.

About the Naga the Indian tradition considered it as god who can controls the weather,<sup>91</sup> as it is also

91 Robert Beér, "The encyclopedia of Tibetan symbols and motifs": 164; Robert Beer, "The handbook of Tibetan

attested by the presence into the Sutra of the Naga as givers of rain,<sup>92</sup> and a thunder and clouds gods.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, the Chinese Dragon Long seems to inherit all the Naga features, an iconology which seems to be represented by the iconographies of the *Lu* pictographs belonging to Naxi – Dongba manuscript tradition, with association of *Lu* to the thunder, the clouds and the wind, images which could be related with the Chinese tradition of *Long* as a thunderstorm god,<sup>94</sup> as a storm was believed to be the manifestation of "*dragons fighting in the open field [...] with blood dark and yellow*",<sup>95</sup> or again as in a passage of *Yi Qing* is related about "*Chen is thunder, is a Dragon, is dark and yellow*",<sup>96</sup> all attestation of the Chinese believes of the Long as the god of the thunder<sup>97</sup> and a givers of rain<sup>98</sup> which appears as dark and yellow clouds.<sup>99</sup>

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Buddhist symbols": 43; Omacanda Hāṇḍā, "Naga cults and traditions in the western Himalaya": 195; Omacanda Hāṇḍā, 2001 "Temple architecture of the western Himalaya: wooden temples ": 55

92 M. W. De Visser, Loren Coleman, 2008 "The Dragon in China and Japan": 24 – 39; Michel Conan, "Sacred gardens and landscapes: ritual and agency": 63 – 66; Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera, "Encyclopedia of Buddhism: edited by G. P. Malalasekera, Volume 1, Part 4": 551, 580, 672

93 M. W. De Visser, Loren Coleman, 2008: 16, 24 – 25, cfr. In particular the Divine Nagas, who benefit mankind by causing the clouds to rise and the rain to fall. Also cfr. Cheng Chien, Cheng Chien Bhikshu, "Manifestation of the Tathāgata: Buddhahood according to the Avataṃsaka Sūtra": 112; Dineschandra Sircar, 1971 "Studies in the religious life of ancient and medieval India": 135; AA. VV., "Epigraphia Indica", Volume 30: 238; J. Vogel – 2005, "Indian Serpent Lore Or the Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art": 243; Omacanda Hāṇḍā, 2004 "Naga cults and traditions in the western Himalaya": 195 – 196; M. Oldfield Howey, 2005, "The Encircled Serpent a Study of Serpent Symbolism in All Countries And Ages ": 262

94 Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston, 1910 "Lion and dragon in northern China": 388; M. W. De Visser, 2003: 204; Donald A. McKenzie, 2005 "Myths of China and Japan": 61

95 M. W. De Visser, 2003: 37, (2)

96 M. W. De Visser, 2003: 37, (5), (6)

97 Hampden C. Dubose, 1886 "The dragon, image, and demon: or, The three religions of China": 73; M. W. De Visser, 2003: 201; Sir James George Frazer, 2005 "The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion". IV. Part 3. "The Dying God", Volume 4: 107.


98 Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland by Trübner & Co., 1873 "The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland" Volume 2: 375; Stephen Denison Peet, 1888 "The American antiquarian and oriental journal", Vol. 10: 54; Sherry Garland, 1993 "Shadow of the dragon": 50; M. W. De Visser, 2003: 74; G. Elliot Smith, 2007 "The Evolution of the Dragon": 131

99 Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston, 1910 "Lion and dragon in northern China" 390; M. W. De Visser, 2003: 38, 39, 45.


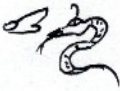









*Shi-Zi*

The iconography  of the serpent is associated with the reading *Shi-zi*, and it is always attested in a context of geographical and places name, especially for mountains' toponyms, as according to Naxi - Dongba tradition, the *Shi-zi* are at most considered mountain gods.

Analysis of Dongba manuscripts evinced two main iconographies for *Shi-zi*:

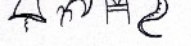
-  the serpent alone, not associated with any other pictographs
-  the serpent sign associated to the pictograph , a poly-semantic and polyphonic sign:<sup>100</sup>
  - 1shi*: (v.) **to distribute**, as food; **to stretch**; **to spread** the thread on a loom.
  - (s.) **lion**; **yellow**.
  - (adj.) **yellow**.
  - 2shi*: (n.) **meat, flesh**; **dead**.
  - 3shi*: (adj.) **new**;
  - (v.) **to skin, to pull off the skin** of an animal

The association of  and  at today seems to be related just for phonetic specification and is not possible to identify any difference between  and  at semantic level.

From manuscripts the *Shi-zi* emerge to be as numerous as the locality and places important for Naxi everyday life: every mountain, hill, spur, cliff, etc..., every place in Naxi land has a local god or spirit who's believed to dwell within and which is a *Shi-zi*.

The *Shi-zi* spirits could be associated to general geographical toponyms, as i.e. the mountain god of the Cloudy Snow Range of 玉龙雪山 Yu Long Xue Shan.<sup>101</sup>



They also could be expression of exact toponyms, as for instance the  spirit of the village of La-baw,<sup>102</sup> a Naxi village which coincides with the actually 石鼓 Shigu, situated at the great bend of the Yangse river, about 30 miles North of Lijiang.<sup>103</sup>

*Shi-zi* spirit into pictographic manuscript literature are also associated to particular places, as they

are important localities for Naxi people and culture, as for instance  the spirit of the

<sup>100</sup> Rock, 1939:


<sup>101</sup> Joseph Rock private collection number 6052, pg 26, r. VI

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Rock private collection number 8266

<sup>103</sup> The name derived from a stone drum which was erected in a.D. 225 by 儲???亮 Chu???[ko] Liang

White pagodas of Dali.<sup>104</sup>

Statistic data of Shi-zi serpent mountains and local spirit are exposed below:

Manuscript:	HY	=	
Harward	Yengchin		
Collection;	R	=	
Joseph	Rock		
Collection			Shi-zi
	966		11
	1016		1
	1035		1
	1970		1
	6052		16
	8266		56
	8420		1
	8463		2
Total			89

By the features emerged from manuscripts and according to Naxi – Dongba and Tibetan Bön tradition literature study<sup>105</sup> this *Shi-zi* deities seems to be closely related to the Tibetan སྐལ་ལྷོག་ *Sa-Bdag*, a class of demons which *Sarat Chandra Das* described to belong to the Nāga class, gods of the ground of any locality supposed to be jealous and hungry being, of terrific appearance, to whom in many occasion offering are brought<sup>106</sup>

According to Tucci, such kind of deities and cult should be considered as one of the folk-religion elements that survived to “ *the destruction of the organization of the Buddhist (persecution of Glang dar ma)* “ beside others (like the ལྷ་ *Klu* ) as spirits of the soil, of the mountains, of the air, continued to be venerated and feared as real powers,<sup>107</sup> as in Naxi - Dongba tradition they are celebrated in their ceremonies, that - as in Tibetan liturgy - reflects in local variations the peculiar character of the gods or festival concerned.

Naxi – Dongba *Shi-zi* and Tibetan སྐལ་ལྷོག་ *Sa-Bdag* traditions both shares common elements, mostly forming a necessary *prelude* to the proper sacred action, which are resent almost without exception: the purification of the place provided first of all, then the elimination of all the forces and influences injurious to the performance of the ritual or the sacred condition of the locality.<sup>108</sup>

As for Tibetan སྐལ་ལྷོག་ *Sa-Bdag*, the Naxi – Dongba tradition knows an exuberant profusion of local manifestations and *dei loci*, thus both literature expressed wide lists of them, texts in which the most important *dei loci* is found, along with others which vary considerably depending to the local places of origin of the list.

Both in Naxi – Dongba and Tibetan traditions, the *Numina* of the rocks accompany the god of the mountain, who exceeds in importance almost all them: reading Dongba manuscripts and confronting with Tibetan tradition, practically any rock which overlooks a path, village or bridge in

104 Joseph Rock private collection manuscript number 8266:13, IV - V

105 Rock (1972), Tucci (Tibetan Painted Scrolls, vol II appendix 2) and Sarat Chandra Das (“Tibetan English Dictionary: 1273b)

106 Das Sarat Chandra, 1902: 1258. Cfr also Tucci: 714b

107Tucci, 1894: 16

108Ibid: 149



a threatening manner serves as the throne for a *Shi-zi*, whose favor as for the Tibetan ས་བདག *Sa-Bdag* must be made sure of.

Because of such peculiar vision as place for a *Shi-zi* spirit of what our culture identifies as non animated being (as stone, rocks, etc...) in Naxi - Dongba and Tibetan tradition two of the may occasion which cause the ill-humor and the vengeance of these particular powers are the རྩོམ་ལྷ་ *rdoslog* - **carrying away of stones**, and the ས་བརྩོད་ *sa brko* – **digging of the earth**, actions that must therefore be preceded by rituals of propitiation.

Also the agriculture - meant in this peculiar point of view not just as the virtuous working of the earth by man - signifies the destabilization of a cosmic order, causing of a new order of nature and things, upsetting the previous stipulated equilibrium: the countless *Numina* thus get in hunger and react against humans' lack of considerations with all kinds of harm.<sup>109</sup>

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109 In this peculiar world, men were then obliged to assure themselves the assistance of the seers, those first *instituteurs* of a civilized common life, who instructed the humans in the necessary rites of atonement and defense operations: in Naxi – Dongba culture these are the Dongbas.

## **A preliminary cross-study between Naxi - Dongba, Tibetan and Indian iconology of serpent-like deities**

What emerged from the study of manuscripts belonging to Naxi – Dongba pictographic tradition as iconographies, statistics and semantics suggested and evinced to the author many and close relationship with Tibetan and Indian traditions.

The Naxi *Ssù* and *Lu-mun* as the serpent-like deities are closely related to the Tibetan ལུ *Klu*.

Both the *Ssù/Lu-mun* and the ལུ *Klu* are demi-gods, having the human head and the body of a serpent, which is generally supposed to live in fountains, rivers and lakes. The ལུ are also believed to be the guardian of great treasures under-ground; they are able to cause rain and certain maladies, and become dangerous when angry.<sup>110</sup>

This feature perfectly coincides with the iconology of the Naxi – Dongba *Ssù* emerged from the study of manuscripts and tradition; moreover is possible to relate the Tibetan ལུ, thus the Naxi – Dongba *Ssù* as correspondent to the Indian नाग *Nāga*,<sup>111</sup> and a closer look both to Tibetan ལུ *Klu* and Indian नाग *Nāga* could be helpful for integration and a clearer understanding of *Ssù/Lu-mun* features and for cross references.

The *Ssù/Lu-mun* and the ལུ *Klu* both play a significant role into the relative cosmology, as it also correspond for the Indian being नाग *Nāga*: they all are closely related and indicate the forces and powers of the earth and of the water, of which the prosperity (of agriculture, of nature spontaneous fruits, of abundance of springs, of good-weather, etc...) is believed to depend.

According to Kern in his history of Indian Buddhism<sup>112</sup> the नाग *Nāga* occupy the eight rank in the system of the world, after the Buddhas and the Garudas and before goblins and demons, giants and ghosts. They are water-spirits, represented as a rule in human shapes, with a crown of serpents on their head. Kern also reports that they are “*snake-like being resembling clouds*”.<sup>113</sup>

According to Hardy<sup>114</sup> the नाग *Nāga* reside in the loka (world) under the trikuta rocks that support Meru, and in the waters of the world of man. They have the shape of spectacle-snake, with the extended hood (columber नाग *Nāga*). They are demi-gods and have many enjoyments; they are usually represented as being favorable to Buddha and his adherents, but when they wrath is roused, their opposition is of a formidable character.

Such descriptions of Indian नाग *Nāga* find easily place beside the features of the Tibetan ལུ *Klu* and what recorded and represented into Naxi – Dongba pictographic manuscript tradition about the *Ssù/Lu-mun*.

An entire cycle of myths has grown up around the ལུ *Klu* and the नाग *Nāga*, forming the theme for an entire cycle of literature, which seems to be in part represented into the Naxi manuscripts

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110Das Sarat Chandra, 1902: 44 - ལུ. Sarat-Chandra states that this name also means a serpent or any snake in general, and also means a kind of flower.

111 As ལུ *Klu* as Tibetan equivalent of the Indian deity नाग *Nāga*, cfr.: L.q.; Helmut Hoffmann, "The religions of Tibet": 192; Robert Beér, "The encyclopedia of Tibetan symbols and motifs": 70 - 73

112Kern Hendrik, 1901 "Histoire du bouddhisme dans l'Inde" annales du Musée Guimet, Bibl.. d'Etudes, X et XI, Col. I: 310(295)

113Ibid: 59

114Hardy R. Spence, 2003 "Manual of Buddhism": 44

dedicated or related to the *Ssù* cult, which thus appears not more as an isolated and not contextualized phenomenon, but could be seen as a segment - with all its peculiarity – of the wider line of the stream of the serpent-like deities cult diffused in far East.

As the *Naxi – Dongba* count thousands of *Ssù* and *Lu-mun* ruled by *Ssù gyi-bbu* - **kings of *Ssù*** and *Ssù-swue-p'a* – **lords of *Ssù***, as the Tibetan tradition numbers ལུ་ཁྱུ་ *Klu-hbum* - **hundred thousand of ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu*** ruled by ལུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *Klu rGyal-po* - **Kings of ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu***, and so the *Māhāyana* school knows a long list of नाग *Nāga* ruled by eight great नागराज *Nāgarāja* – ***Nāga* kings**:<sup>115</sup> This eight are often mentioned in Chinese and Japanese legends as 八龍王 *ba long wang* – **the eight dragon kings**, and were said to have been among Buddha audience, with their retinues, while he delivered the instruction of the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra* - **Lotus Sutra of the good Law**.

According to Indian beliefs, the नाग *Nāga* are divided in four castes, just like man, and form whole states: “ [...] *they are the lords of the earth more than anyone else, and send, when having been insulted, drought, bad crops, diseases and pestilences among mankind*”, exactly as Tibetan ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu* and *Naxi – Dongba Ssù/Lu-mun*.<sup>116</sup>

*Naxi – Dongba* conception of the *Ssù/Lu-mun*, as propitious – adverse entity is regulated by a path which decided about the world and the nature to be shared among humans and *Ssù*, and this seems to be so closely related too with the Tibetan thought of the relationship between things and events on the one hand, and men on the other, which correspond to the main two བཤེས་ *Bra-shis* and བརྒྱུ་མི་ཤེས་ *Bkhra-mi-shis* concepts, which could be translated as the idea of some forces **favorable and auspicious** and some-other forces **hostile and harmful**

In this peculiarly Tibetan point-of-view of the world, whether man is favored by fortune, or is her victim, doesn't depend on chance. It is rather fruit of the Karma. Every fact, every event is the result of the intervention of a force, as a conscious will or of a conscious power, that sometimes takes material and visible forms or manifestation, but other times remains indeterminate and impossible to be grasped.

Most of these powers, the way they act, depend on the way the men conduct themselves towards them, and this general conception of life and relationship among man and the rest of creation is as reflected in the ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu* cult as in the *Naxi – Dongba Ssù* cult.

As the Indian नाग *Nāga* the Tibetan ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu* and the *Naxi - Dongba Ssù* are touchy beings, inclined to hungry and demanding respect and veneration. They **MUST** be worshiped by men, and if they regret to do this then both the *Naxi* and the *Tibetan* can be sure of the *Ssù* or of the ལུ་ལྷ་ *Klu* revenge<sup>117</sup>, and this is perfectly represented into *Naxi – Dongba* manuscripts.

With a wider point of view, it could be stated that in general the supernatural powers of both *Naxi – Dongba* and *Tibetan* tradition can be divided into two groups:

- the **white and good** which in *Naxi* is *p'er ddv* - **white conch-shell** and in *Tibetan* ཕྱུགས་ རྩལ་པ་ *phyogs-dkar*

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115 *Nanda*, the greatest नागराज *Nāgarāja*, king of all नाग *nagas*: *Upananda, Sāgara, Vāsuki, Takshaka, Balavān, Anavatapta, Uptala*. Cfr: Grünwedel Albert, 1900 "Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei", Führer durch die lamaistische sammlung des fürsten E. Uchtomskij. 1900, F. A. Brockhaus (Leipzig) : 190

116Ibid: 187

117Tucci, 1894: 171

• the **black and evil**, which in Naxi is *na* and in Tibetan རྩོག་སྒྲུབ་པ་ *phyogs-nag-ngan* a division which is also according to Indian tradition resting upon the working of Karma, though also corresponding to the division into two created worlds, in certain theological doctrines of Iranian origin, which were taken over by the Tibetan *Bön* tradition.<sup>118</sup>

The consequences of the enmity of these malefic powers, whether it's innate or provoked, is always a pernicious influence against with both Naxi and Tibetans must protect in advance<sup>119</sup> or heal the disastrous effects by performing rituals and magical formulas.

In Tibetan these rituals are called མཛོད་ *mdos*, and are of many types: for instance is possible to distinguish those for the prevention of dangerous threatening one in the ལུས་ *lus* - **physical realm**, in the རིག་པ་ *sems* – **spiritual realm**, danger threatening the ཡུལ་ *yul* – **land**, those threatening a man or a woman, property, heard, etc...

This is specular in Naxi – Dongba tradition, where rituals could be sorted distinguishing among those for the prevention of calamities in the living-world (the world of man) and those related to the realm of spirits - ancestors, those related to the land, and those to the house - the family, etc...

However they are specifically destined<sup>120</sup>, both Naxi – Dongba and Tibetan མཛོད་ *mdos* have two principal objectives in view:

- propitiation and assurance of prosperity, a state of well-being, in Tibetan a state of བདེ་ལེགས་ *bde-legs* - **good fortune**, in the most material sense, as well as ཆོ་རིང་ *tshe-ring* – **long life**, རྩོད་ *nad-med* – **health**, རྩོད་སྤྱོད་ *long-spyod* – **riches**, also power, victory over the enemy, etc.... These are the ground of both Tibetan and Naxi - Dongba rituals, as for instance the idea of བདེ་ལེགས་ *bde-legs* - **good fortune** is the main theme and the score which Dongba **ceremonies for prosperity of family and herds** look for, as the same could be stated for the Dongba *Szi ch'ung bpo* - **add to long life** and the Tibetan concept of ཆོ་རིང་ *tshe-ring* – **long life**, or the **propitiation of victory** is the ground of the Naxi – Dongba *Ngaw bpo* - **Sacrifice to the spirits of victory**.<sup>121</sup>
- བཟོག་ *bzlog* - **driving out** and **elimination** of all which could stands in the way of this བདེ་ལེགས་ *bde-legs* – **good fortune**, such as **poverty, illness and early death**, etc...  
མཛོད་ *bzlog* - **driving out** seems to be the ground and to find strong expression in Naxi – Dongba ceremonial corpus dedicated to prevent bad forces, as **prevention of evil arising from the sky and land**<sup>122</sup>, **propitiation of Ssù - serpent spirits**<sup>123</sup>, the wide corpus of ceremonials dedicated to the **propitiation and eviction of demons**<sup>124</sup>, and the ceremonial

118Tucci, 1894: 172

119l.q.

120 as “[...] the most appropriated places to perform མཛོད་ *mdos* are the three-peaked mountains, junctions of paths and crossroads, places near waterfalls or those where neither sunlight nor moonlight can fall” (Tucci, 1894: 172) the Naxi – Dongba ceremonials are used to be practiced *en plein air* (cita Rock e McKhann)

121 which according to Rock, is one of the most ancient ritual, belonging to the wider set of ceremonial dedicated to nature worship

122*Dtv bpo* - preventing demons descending from the sky; *muan k'u dxi bpo* - closing the gate of the sky; *Lu k'u dter bpo* - **closing the gate of the ground** which Rock states to be equivalent to Tibetan ceremony of closing the doors to the demons of sky and earth

123*Ssu ndo bpo* - **evicting the Ssù - serpent demons**; *Ssu gu* - the *Ssù - serpent deities ceremony*; *Ssu ddu gu* - **great Ssù serpent deities ceremony**; *D'a Lu ds* - **restricting the Dragon Lu to his residence**.

124*T'o lo ts'u t'u* - **drive out the T'o lo demons**; *Ch'ou ts'u t'u* - **drive out the demons of Ch'ou - impurity**; *Ch'ou ts'u bpu* - **escort the demons of impurity**; *Ts'u t'u* - **drive out the demons**; *Non ts'u t'u* - **drive out the Non demons**;



corpus belonging to the *har la Lu k'o* - **propitiate soul of suicides or people died an unnatural death**<sup>125</sup>

Moreover, focusing the research on the *Ssù* ↔ ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu*, emerged strong concordances among the two written tradition, as for instance is possible to identify in Dongba *Ssù* corpus manuscripts and in Tibetan ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu* - *'bun* – *the hundred thousand* ལྷ་ཁུ་<sup>126</sup> 3 main types of ceremonies:

1. The Naxi Dongba *Ssù-gu* which coincides with the ལྷ་ཁུ་འཕྲུལ་ཁོ་ *Klu-hbum dkar-po*
2. The Naxi Dongba *Ssù ddü gu*, which coincides with the ལྷ་ཁུ་འཕྲུལ་ཁོ་ *Klu-hbum nag-po*
3. The Naxi Dongba *D'a Lu ds*<sup>127</sup>, which coincides with the ལྷ་ཁུ་འཕྲུལ་ཁོ་ *Klu-hbum khra-po*

In this context, then activity of the Tibetan exorcists ལྷ་གསེས་ *snags-pa* and the Naxi religious specialists at first the priest Dongba,<sup>128</sup> thus have an infinitely wide field open before them, even if restricting the field of activities to the serpent-deities cult: in case of drought they have to invoke rain, as for Naxi's ritual *Khu ma* - **rain wanted** belonging to the **propitiation of *Ssù* serpent spirits** set of ceremonies, or in case of inundation to stop it, as for the *Khu dtv* - **stop of [excessive] rain**, from the same set. Reacting versus *Ssù/Lu mun* – ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu* powers and revenges, by banishing hail or conjure it to inflict vengeance, call a halt to epidemics among men and flocks, etc..., all actions that consist in magical rituals that have for their aim:

- ལྷ་ཁུ་ *zhi* - **pacifying of hostile powers**, as in Naxi Dongba manuscripts which are dedicated to the propitiation of the *Ssù*
- ལྷ་ཁུ་ *rgyas* – **furtherance of well-being**, as in Naxi Dongba manuscripts which are dedicated to the propitiation and beseeching of abundance and prosperity
- **acquisition of ལྷ་ཁུ་ *dbang* – power – manuscripts**, as in Naxi Dongba manuscripts in those texts which are related to invoke the power of Dongba Shilo and of the *Khyu t'khyu*, to help

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*Gyi Mun Ghugh bpo* - **propitiation the Water Demons *Mun* and *Ghugh***; *Mbbue bpo* - **propitiation of the demons of sterility**; *Dter ts'u t'u* - **drive out the *Dter* demons**; *Shi k'u dter bpo* - **closing the gate of the dead**; *Ts'u dshi* - **obstruct the demons**; *T'i lua ts'u* - **drive out the *T'i lua* demons**; *Ndzi ts'u Lu ts'u bpu* - **escort the flying demons and the demons of the hunt *Lu ts'u***; *Zher ts'u La ts'u bpu* - **escort the leopard and tiger demons**; *K'o ngv ts'u t'u* - **drive out the *K'o ngv* demons**; *Gkyi bpo* - **propitiate the demons of leprosy**; *Nder ts'u t'u* - **drive out the demons who cause epidemics in domestic animals**; *Mi szer bpo* - **ceremony for the suppression of the fire demons**; *Ba Lu yu ts'u ndu* - **to chase the demons with the flaming hot rocks of the *Ba d'a***; *O p'er*, *O na*, *O ndz'a bpo* - **propitiate the white (*p'er*), black (*na*), spotted (*ndz'a*) demons of quarrel**

125 *Dter la Lu k'o* - **died by violence**; *Ts'u la Lu k'o* - **died by hanging**; *Yu la Lu k'o* - **suicides**; *Shi k'u dter la Lu k'o* - **close the gate of the dead, died by violence, accidental deaths**; *Ch'ou la Lu k'o* - **suicides after illicit sexual intercourse**; *Mun la Lu k'o* - **suicide by drowning**; *Mbbue la Lu k'o* - **suicide of the last member of a family** (male line only); *K'o ch'i la Lu k'o* - **using a dog for suppressing the demon of suicide**; *Wu la Lu k'o* - **for slave who committed suicide**; *Dta gku gyi bpu* - **using a monkey as a substitute** (of the last breath of the victim)

126 According to Sarat Chandra "A Tibetan-English dictionary": 46, the ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu-hbum* is a treatise on a hundred thousand nagas. According to Tucci, 1894: 222 it could be divided into 3 parts, the white ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu*, the multicolored ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu* and the black ལྷ་ཁུ་ *Klu*". Translation in Germany by Schiefner, F. Anton von, 1880 'Ueber das Bönpo-sutra', St. Petersburg. Acad. imperiale des sciences; Karmay, Samten G. (1977) "A Catalog of Bönpo Publications" Tokyo: Tokyo Bunko

127 a ceremonial performed when building a new home: *d'a* is the ground where the house is going to be build, so the divinity who is believed to dwell the *d'a* has to be propitiated

128 the shamans *Sainii* and the exorcists sorceress ,

in previously operations and to evict, suppress and fighting hostile forces.

- **acts of རྩལ་ drag - terrifying nature**, as in Naxi Dongba manuscripts which relates about the struggle among *Khyu-t'khyu*, or other winged deities against demons and obscure forces, or again in those manuscripts who describes about the hostile nature which subdued humans, destroy their fields and flocks, houses and villages, etc...; in truth it seems possible to state that the hostile nature which terrifying and damage men could be seen as the manifestation of relative spirits and gods random, who react in a specific or random way to humans' sins previously committed.

Both in Naxi – Dongba and in Tibetan traditions, the multitude of powers who inhabited this world and still survive at today in the folk religion, were divided in many groups of supernatural beings. For instance, regarding to serpent-deities there's not just one supernatural deity, but a myriad of supernatural manifestations, as the thousands of *Ssù/Lu-mun* = ལྷ་ཀླུ *Klu*, of the *Shizi* = སྤྱི་མཚན་ལྷ་མོ་ *sa-bdag* and the antagonist of such the serpent-deities, the eagle-winged *Khyu-t'khyu* = ལྷ་མོ་ཀླུ་མོ་ *Kyung*.

The close relationship of the elements here just mentioned also reveal a mighty influences of Indian thought. It seems plausible to hypothesize that Buddhism introduced a high number of Indian, not especially Buddhist, conception and legends, in a Buddhist garb, into outer countries.

This is a well-known phenomenon, as in ex. in China Taoism was ready to gratefully take up the foreign elements which in many respects resembled its own ideas or were of the same nature; in this way the store of the ancient Chinese legends wasn't only largely enriched, but they were also mixed up with Indian fables and elements.

The same took place in Japan, when Buddhism, after conquered Korea, in the IV century of our era reached Dai Nippon's shores, and in a hundred years the Japanese mind got imbued with foreign ideas, partly Chinese and partly Indian.

Moreover in Japan, to the mixture of these two elements, a third one, consisting of the original Japanese conception, was added, and a very intricate complex was formed.

This is what maybe could be hypothesized was happened in Lijiang region, where over a strong Bön tradition substratum melted with local shamanism, practices of divination and peculiar traditions, were mixed up Indian, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian elements, giving birth to what today we used to call as Naxi culture and Dongba tradition.

The Tibetan ལྷ་ཀླུ *Klu*, the Naxi – Dongba *Ssù/Lu-mun*, thus appears as segments of the wider and oldest Indian नाग *Nāga* serpent-shaped divinity, which in Chinese mind was identified with the four legged 龍 *long*, because both were divine inhabitants of seas and rivers and givers of rain, as for Japanese minds, in this blending of Chinese and Indian motifs recognized own serpent or dragon-shaped gods of rivers and mountains, to whom they used to pray for rain in times of drought.

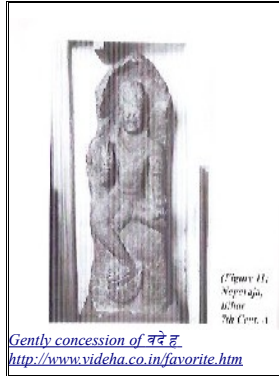
Ancient legends of different countries were combined, and features of the one were used to adorn the other, especially at popular beliefs, and from there extended afterward by the official religions.<sup>129</sup>

With regard to the नाग *Nāga* in Indian art<sup>130</sup>, there are three main iconographies in which the Indian Buddhists' artists have represented the नाग *Nāga*:

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129 Visser, 1913 “*The Dragon in China and Japan*”, vol. I

130 Cfr. Grünwedel Albert, 1893 “*Buddhistische Kunst in Indien*”, Berlin



1300 - 1399 A Nāga King (item no. 65439) Collection of Rubin Museum of Art. Gently concession of Himalayanart.com, url: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/65439.html>

1. **fully human**, coming out of the neck and often provided with several heads.<sup>131</sup> According to Visser, this form has been taken up in Tibet, China and Japan.<sup>132</sup> It is attested into Naxi – Dongba manuscripts as decorations of title-pages, and very rarely attested among pictographs very



complex variants, as for instance in part represented by <sup>133</sup>


2. **common serpents**, with one



or more heads.




This

iconography seems to constitute the ground of Naxi – Dongba pictographs  *Shi-zi* for mountain and tutelary-spirits, that are closely related with the Tibetan ས་བདག *Sa-Bdag*.

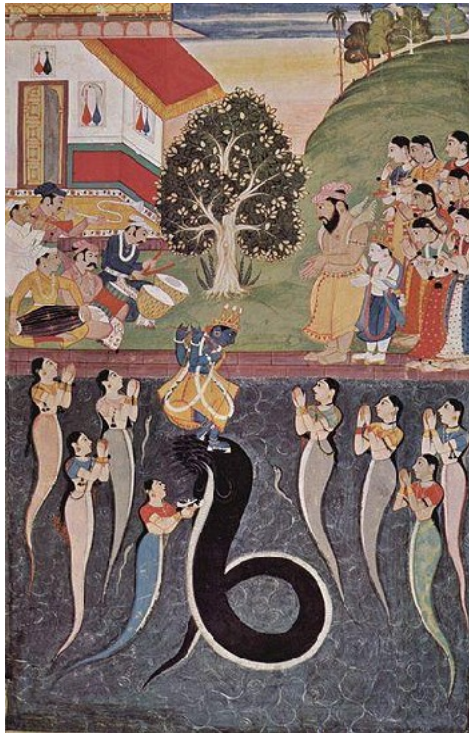
3. **a combination of both**, as snakes of which the upper part of the body looks human,

<sup>131</sup> Von Schroeder: 114

<sup>132</sup> Visser, *Dragons in China and Japan*: 5.


<sup>133</sup> Cfr.  iconography





snakes' heads appearing above a human head, the lower part of the body entirely snake-like.<sup>134</sup> This iconography is the most diffused into Naxi – Dongba manuscript tradition, both in manuscripts' decorations and pictographs' iconography. For instance in manuscript *Saw-ndaw yu dsu* - **Inviting the ancestors of the *Saw-ndaw*** the 1<sup>st</sup> page the iconography of the



two serpent-deities and the pictographs  shares evidently the same iconography which seems to closely related and local Naxi interpretation of the नाग *Nāga* human-reptile deities belonging to Indian tradition.

<sup>134</sup>L.q.; Grünwedel Albert “Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und Mongolei”: 89, fig. 73





## Eagle-winged deities *Khyu-t'khyu, Dter-gko and Yu-ma*

Dongba manuscripts attest an iconography dedicated to an animal-deity, a kind of divine-bird, often represented as eagle-winged, with sharp claws, sharp eyes, iconologically characterized by very strong physical and magical powers, antagonist and enemy to serpent-like deities.

As emerged for reptile-gods, Dongba manuscript present eagle-winged deities in different iconographies, which can be gathered in three main typology respectively associated to different readings:



- iconography, associated to the reading *Khyu-t'khyu*



- iconography, associated to the reading *Dter-gko*



- iconography, associated to the reading *Yu-ma*

As for serpent-like deities study, identification of such 3 main iconographies derived from analysis of two kind of sources:

- the direct attestation by the study of the manuscripts actually preserved in the Naxi manuscripts collection of Harvard-Yenching Library, available on the web,
- indirect attestation of pictographs by the study of Joseph Rock bibliography dedicated to Naga cult, both the 2 volumes of the Joseph Rock Naxi – English encyclopedic dictionary and other Naxi – Dongba related studies.

Thanks to the support of indirect attestation, it was possible to study on 33 different manuscripts, counting 729 attestations for winged-deity signs.




Winged-deities are also well represented in Naxi – Dongba art, specially for the *Khyu-t'khyu* and for the *Yu-ma*, which are often depicted in scrolls, mural frescoes, sculptures and is a recurring theme of the miniatures which are realized in the first page of illuminated manuscripts. The iconographic features of such artistic representations are perfectly according with the iconographic features of the pictographs attested by manuscripts.<sup>135</sup>

Confronting the artistic and the manuscripts representations of the same deities it seems that the pictographs consists in a “stenographic” way to represent some iconographies and iconologies well known and important part of the core of the Naxi – Dongba culture.

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<sup>135</sup> The manuscripts analyzed have to be considered as a sub-corpus of the wider corpus of texts belonging to Dongba pictographic manuscript tradition, but they are pilot-texts, and consist in the core of many important ceremonials of the Naxi – Dongba tradition.

Attestations could be resumed in the following plate:

Manuscripts R = Joseph Rock collection; HY = Harward Yenching Collection	 <i>Dter-gko</i>	 <i>Khyu-t'khyu</i>	 <i>Yu-ma</i>	Partial totals
949			1	1
956			12	12
973	3		3	6
986	30			30
994		18		18
1004		44		44
1016	1			1
1027	1		1	2
1073		1		1
1143		1		1
1147	5			5
1191			23	23
1247	9	3	107	119
1509	3			3
1941		84		84
1955	2			2
1965	28	7	41	76
1984			1	1
2072			2	2
2074	40	1	4	45
3153		1		1
5052	1		2	3
5066	56	2		58
5067	68		4	72
5070	5		52	57
5095		1	16	17
6052	12		17	29
6079			2	2
6082			3	3
8095			1	1
8176		8		8
8297		1		1
8434			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>729</b>





***Khyu-t'khyu***





Iconography in manuscripts of Dongba tradition is associated to the reading *Khyu-t'khyu* and consists in the representation of a horned bird, with a trilobate crown, eagle winged and with sharp claws.

As seen for the Dragon *Lu*, with a complete and a just-head iconography, manuscripts attest the same kind of iconographic variants also for *Khyu-t'khyu*:

- A.  a complete pictograph which portrays the *Khyu-t'khyu* in all its physical features,
- B.  just head is depicted, as an abbreviated or simplified form of the A., a sign which portrays the *Khyu-t'khyu* main features, alias the horned and crowned eagle-head.

A resuming list of *Khyu-t'khyu* attestations into Dongba manuscript, with distinction among A and B iconography is reported below:

	Iconography		
Manuscripts R = Joseph Rock collection; HY = Harvard Yenching Collection	A 	B 	Partial totals
994	10	8	18
1004		44	44
1073		1	1
1143	1		1
1247		3	3
1941	38	46	84
1965	4	3	7
2074		1	1
3153	1		1
5066	2		2
5095	1		1
8176		8	8
8297	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>172</b>

Manuscripts relate about *Khyu-t'khyu* as a supernatural creature, of very big size, strong and powerful, and depicts as a strong enemy of the serpent-like deities.



Its origin is related in manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu t'u-bbue*, which title means **the origin of the *Khyu-t'khyu***<sup>136</sup>, and in manuscript *Khyu t'khyu Ssù 'a – the fight between *Khyu-t'khyu* and *Ssù**.<sup>137</sup>



*Khyu t'khyu Ssù 'a*, pg. 1

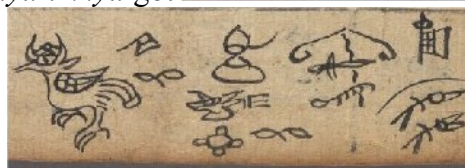
[pg.1]

- “(1) in the beginning of time, when heaven came forth, the earth was spread out, the sun came forth, the moon came forth, the stars came forth, the planets came forth  
 (2) when the tree were born able to walk, when the rocks split and were able to talk  
 (3) when Dongba Shilo was born, when the *Khyu-t'khyu* named *Du-per* was born  
 (4) when the king of the *Ssù* name *Dso-na-lo-chi* was born  
 (5) the *Ssù*  
 (6) and the people had one father but two mothers  
 (7) the domestic animals didn't eat the same grass of the wild animals”

Manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu t'u bbue – the origin of the *Khyu-t'khyu**, belonging to *Szi chung bpo* ceremony also related about the extraordinary powers of the bird deity, which were given to the *Khyu-t'khyu* in the moment of its creation.



Among those powers, for instance, the *Khyu-t'khyu* got<sup>138</sup> the power to gain



the victory against the *Ssù* and the *Lu*, or and a sharp sickle to suppress the demons of *Du* and *Dsa* classes. Manuscript enumerates them and describes how the *Khyu-t'khyu* use in the feats against demons and hostile spirits:

- a precious and powerful jewel which *Khyu-t'khyu* put between the horns
- brilliant golden eyes to suppress the demons of the *Mun* and *Ghugh* classes
- silver and golden down feathers
- silver crop
- turquoise wings and turquoise tail
- keen years and sharp horns

<sup>136</sup>Manuscript is actually conserved in a copy at the Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts collection with number 9903995, Joseph Rock private collection number 1941, and it's dedicated to the ceremony *Szi chung bpo*.

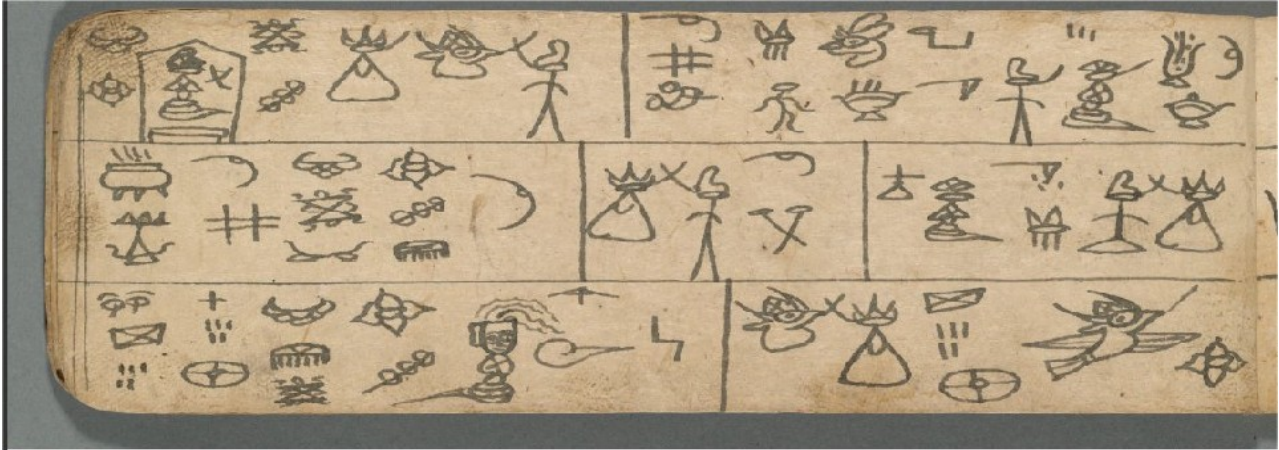
<sup>137</sup> Manuscript is preserved in 2 exemplars in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts' collection, n. 11100747 and n.11100748. Rock numbered respectively as 3153 and 994 in his private collection.

<sup>138</sup>Ms. 9903995: 15, VII

<sup>139</sup> Ibid: 15, VIII

As we have seen for Ssù deities, the manuscript *Khyu t'khyu Ssù 'a* – **the fight between Khyu-t'khyu and Ssù** relates about the division of properties of the creation, and as just studied for the Ssù, Dongba Shilo - as compassionate Buddha - operated by sending the powerful king of the *Khyu-t'khyu* to stop the Ssù king usurpation.


Moreover, because the Ssù king had stolen the precious jewel of the crown of the *Khyu-t'khyu* king, the latter was very offended and hungry versus the Ssù king.<sup>140</sup>



[pg.4]

“(last line, both rr.)The Khyu-t'khyu was sent by Shilo flying from the East to the West.  
His shadow could be seen on the lake  
the King Ssù was afraid and went into the lake hiding”



This strong adversity of the bird-god versus the serpent-god, the iconography , also the syllable *Khyu-t'khyu* of the Naxi name of the winged-deity, should all be related to the equivalent deity in the Tibetan pantheon, the རྩུང་ཆེན་ *Khyung-chen*, a mythical bird-god which represents the good creations,<sup>141</sup> the traditional adversary of the serpent divinity ཀླུ་ *Klu*.

As for Tibetan ཀླུ་ *Klu* and Indian Naga exist a strong correlation previously discussed, as the རྩུང་ཆེན་ *Khyung-chen* has to be considered as closely related to the Indian गरुड *Gāruḍa*.

गरुड *Gāruḍa*, རྩུང་ཆེན་ *Khyung-chen* and *Khyu-t'khyu* shares common features, as at first they are very ancient and powerful creatures, eternally fighting against Naga, with eagle wings by golden feathers, wearing a crown over the head.

Such features as common points are also attested outside the context of manuscript, and the *Khyu-t'khyu* is a central theme of scrolls, paintings, and handcrafts,<sup>142</sup> as for instance is visible by the

140The jewel of the crown of the *Khyu-t'khyu* is named *no-bu*. The name itself as the iconography could be both closely related to the Tibetan concept of jewel རོ་བུ་ *nor-bu*. According to Naxi Dongba tradition, to the jewel are attributed impressive magical powers, thus the Ssù king, coveting for it, stole and concealed in the deepness of the dark lake where he used to live..

141Tucci G., 1894: 237. The རྩུང་ *Khyung* is also known and defined as the king of birds རྩུང་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *hDab-chhags seng-ge rgyal-po*, and the most powerful of all the birds རྩུང་རྒྱལ་པོ་འོད་ཀྱི་ *hDab-chhags seng-ge*.

142also in subjects of contemporary Naxi arts, according to the Modern Naxi-Dongba Painting Society recommendations to realize works directly inspired or closely belonging to Dongba religious tradition and Naxi ancient culture heritage, to be distinguished from imitation or just iconographic copy belonging to the contemporary craftsman products and works . Cfr. McKhann C., 2003 “*Icon and Transformation: (Re)Imaginations in Dongba Art*”, co-curated with Zhang Yunling and Yang Fuquan; presented at Whitman College Sheehan Galley (Jan. 17-Feb. 27), Walla Walla Carnegie Center for the Arts (April 1-April 30), Multnomah County Library Collins Gallery (May 3-June 15), University of Washington School of Art Jacob Lawrence Gallery (July 1-July 30).



following pictures directly taken by the author between 2005 and 2009, which present various documentation of different artistic expressions of the *Khyu-t'khyu* iconography and iconology, especially focused on the theme of the struggle against the serpent-deities *Ssù*.



*Khyu-t'khyu* as protective deity on the entrance to the village of 玉水寨 Yù Shuǐ Zhài - Jade Water Village, Lijiang – 08/2005. Is evident the iconology of the *Khyu-t'khyu* as antagonist of the snakes, as here and in the handcrafts below it is depicted devouring them.



Wooden carved and painted handcraft in Lijiang, 2005



Wooden carved and painted handcraft of a *Khyu-t'khyu* devouring a *Ssù* - snake.  
Handcraft, Lijiang, 2005





Wall-painting outside the Dongba Palace, Lijiang, 2009. The Khyu-t'khyu iconography, with horns, crown, the precious jewel, eagle winged and with sharpen claws, devouring a snake.

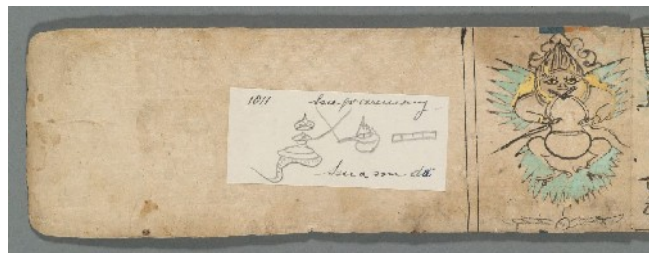


Wall painting in a room of the Temple ..., Lijiang, 2009. Again the iconography of the Khyu-t'khyu while devouring a snake.



The White King Khyu-t'khyu (Du-phar Khyu-t'khyu), from Rock, 1952-I plate XVI. Around are depicted the regional Khyu-t'khyu. Below two kings Ssù are venerating and submitting to the power of Khyu-t'khyu White King.

Khyu-t'khyu miniatures in illuminated manuscripts



Harvard Yengchin collection, respectively

Khyu-t'khyu and Ssù modern iconographies are clearly directly derived from religious scrolls<sup>143</sup> and

<sup>143</sup> Naxi traditional painting of *Du-p'er* was only used during the portion of rituals which performs the chasing out of the Ssù, never before because of the terrible fear of the Ssù from the *Khyu-t'khyu*, so if the picture remains the Ssù would not come when invited.



miniatures of manuscript belonging to Dongba tradition. Such representations and themes are in turns evidently related with Indian iconographies of the Indian गरुड *Gāruḍa* and the Tibetan ཁྱུང་ཅན *Khyung-chen*:



गरुड *Gāruḍa*, 1900 - 1959, Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton - retrieved from Himalayan Art [20/12/2009 h.10:29]  
<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/81667.html>



ཁྱུང་ཅན *Khyung-chen*, 1800 - 1899, Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton. Collection of Rubin Museum of Art (acc.# F1997.51.1) - retrieved from Himalayan Art [20/12/2009 h.10:29]  
<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/200031.html>

As the Naxi *Khyu-t'khyu* and the Tibetan ཁྱུང *Khyung*, the Indian गरुड *Gāruḍa*'s iconography depict such deity as a winged powerful god, in terrifying expressions, with the head the tail and wings of an eagle, with golden/yellow body; its iconology is that of the king of birds, the archenemy of serpents, as if often depicted devouring and crouching them with claws.<sup>144</sup>

The picture represent five *Khyu-t'khyu*, and the central one is white, devouring a snake in his beak holding head and tail of the snake with the claws of his feet.

In the corner the regional *Khyu-t'khyu* are depicted with colored body, depending on the region where they are believed to live.

144 About the *Gāruḍa* iconography and iconology: Danliélou, Alain. *The Myths and Gods of India*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1991; Moor, Edward. *The Hindu Pantheon*. Los Angeles: Philosophical research society, 1976; Rice, Edward. *Eastern Definitions: A Short Encyclopedia of Religions of the Orient*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978; Thomas, P. *Epics, Myths and Legends of India*. Bombay, India: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd, 1961.

About the Tibetan *Khyung* iconography and iconology: Georgette Meredith, 1967 "The "Phurbu": The Use and Symbolism of the Tibetan Magic Dagger" in *History of Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Feb., 1967), pp. 236-253; Rene de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* (s'Gravenhage, 1956), pp. 256-57; Fredrick W. Bunce, 1994 "An encyclopedia of Buddhist deities, demigods, goblins, saints, and demons with special focus on iconographic attributes" Volume 1: 168, 204, 263; *Khyung* iconography also in amulets cfr. John Vincent Bellezza, "THE ANCIENT AMULETS OF TIBET: THOGCHAGS, A collection of Miniature Masterpieces"; John Vincent Bellezza, "Metal and Stone Vestiges, Religion, Magic and Protection in the Art of Ancient Tibet".

For correlation and relationship between *Khyung* and *Gāruḍa*: Sarat Chandra Das, "A Tibetan-English dictionary: with Sanskrit synonyms": 163, 706, 1120; Fredrick W. Bunce, 1994 "An encyclopedia of Buddhist deities, demigods, goblins, saints, and demons with special focus on iconographic attributes", Volume 1: 168; Keith Dowman, 2003 "The flight of the *Gāruḍa*: the Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism": 53, 196; René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1993 "Oracles and demons of Tibet, the cult and Iconography of the Tibetan protective deities": 13.

*Khyu-t'khyu* – *Khyung* – *Gāruḍa*, and *Ssù* – *Klu* - *Naga* show strong relationship, moreover from Tibetan *Khyung* to Naxi *Khyu-t'khyu* is possible to identify also similitude in the phonetic of the names of the eagle-winged deity, a feature which is possible to hypothesizes also for the deified founder of Dongba tradition, Dongba Shilo.

He plays an important role both in the *Khyu-t'khyu* birth and in the struggle between the latter and the serpents, and this is perfectly according to Shilo's icon of powerful medium between man and supernatural creatures, as a such powerful creature as the *Khyu-t'khyu* indeed complies with his orders. Moreover, Obedience and loyalty of *Khyu-t'khyu* to Dongba Shilo could be compared with the figure of the *Gāruḍa* as the vehicle of Vishnu in the Indian tradition.<sup>145</sup>

Enriched also by this common points with the *Khyu-t'khyu*, Dongba Shilo could be related to the Bön Buddha སྟོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་མི་བོ་ཆེ *sTon-pa gShen-rab mi-bo-che* and as the latter Shilo had better not to be looked as just extraordinary human being, or medium priests, or shamans, but as སངས་རྒྱལ་མགོན་པོ་འཕགས་པ་ *sangs-rgyans* - **fully enlightened Buddha**, in a very similar way as looking to सिद्धार्थ गौतम *Siddhārtha Gautama*.

The terms Tibetan སྟོན་པ་ *sTon-pa* and Naxi *Dongba* evidently show a common root, phonetic and semantic: both words mean **master, teacher**, in the sense of the **original founder of a spiritual tradition, who's the source of the tradition itself**,<sup>146</sup> thus Dongba Shilo as སྟོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་ *sTon-pa gShen-rab* and as सिद्धार्थ गौतम *Siddhārtha Gautama* was the most enlightened and powerful being, venerated and respected by all creatures, able to suppress and/or convert all demons and hostile powers.

According to Naxi – Dongba tradition, the king of *Khyu-t'khyu*, indeed obeys to the order of Shilo,



starting to look for the king of the *Ssù* who, depicted jumping into the water to hide himself in the deepness.

The king of the *Khyu-t'khyu*, because of

- its powers,
- its enmity against the serpent deities,
- iconographic features and details as the jewel, crown, etc...

seems really to be related to the Tibetan ལྔ་མཁུང་ *Khyung*

- god bird with eagle wings,
- very powerful deity,
- enemy of the serpents ཀླུ་ *Klu*;

as in its turn, the concept of ལྔ་མཁུང་ *Khyung* and its features has to be related to the one of the Indian *Gāruḍa*.

In this particular context the Naxi - Dongba king of the birds named *Khyu-t'khyu Du-per* seems to be closely related to the Tibetan ལྔ་མཁུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ *Khyung hDab-chhags rgyal-po* **the king of the bird divinity ལྔ་མཁུང་གི་ལྔ་མཁུང་གི་ལྔ་མཁུང་** *hDab-chhags seng-ge* **the most powerful of all birds**,<sup>147</sup> as in a similar way the Naxi Dongba *Ssù* was previously related to the Tibetan concept

145 JEAN COUTEAU, "FROM MYTH TO NATIONAL SYMBOL" Vol. 1 No. 1 of "The Archipelago"; Ven. Jampa Choskyi, 1988 "Symbolism of Animals in Buddhism", Buddhist Himalaya, VOL. I NO. I;

146 Lopon Tenzin Namdak, 2007 "BONPO DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS. according to Lopon Tenzin Namdak" Lopon Tenzin Namdak, ed. & intro by John Myrdhin Reynolds: 3

147 The Tibetan ལྔ་མཁུང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཏུག་པ་རིན་ཆེན་ *Klu rgyal-po gtsug-na-rin-chhen* is mentioned in the *Klu-hbum bsuds pai snying*





*I won't move no rock quarrels. Not as much as one pinch that can be picked between two finger nails.*

*The Khyu-t'khyu then said:*

*[...] pg. 7, r.2 - I wound Thou around the mountain and stretched Thou in punishment.*

*The Ssù king wept, his tears fell into the lake they couldn't be retrieved.*

*[...] Early, in the morning, the Ssù king was shackled with copper and iron chains, so he couldn't leave.*

*The Khyu-t'khyu was to sit and watch him day and night.*

As emerged while studying the Ssù iconography, Shilo intercedes pacifying all the parts in cause of this struggle: humans have to propitiate the Ssù and not to exploit nature resources in indiscriminate and profane attitude; the Ssù in their turns let the human proliferate and grant for their prosperity. The king of Ssù could be free from chains and *Khyu-t'khyu* tortures if the precious jewel robbed had given back (pg. X, r. 5)



Harvard University - Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library / Naxi Manuscript Collection, Manuscript B-19, Harvard Yenching Library.

In another manuscript entitled *Khyu-t'khyu* Saw – invite the *Khyu-t'khyu*<sup>150</sup> both the power of the eagle-winged deities to fight the Ssù, and the power of Shilo as granting for peace are confirmed:



Harvard University - Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library / Naxi Manuscript Collection, Manuscript B-58, Harvard Yenching Library.

[pg.4]

*“(1) If it were not for Shilo and the Khyu-t'khyu (2) then the Ssù and the Lu couldn't be repayed.*

*(3) Medicine couldn't be given to the ill.*

*(4 -5) It wouldn't be possible to ask for prosperity and longevity.*

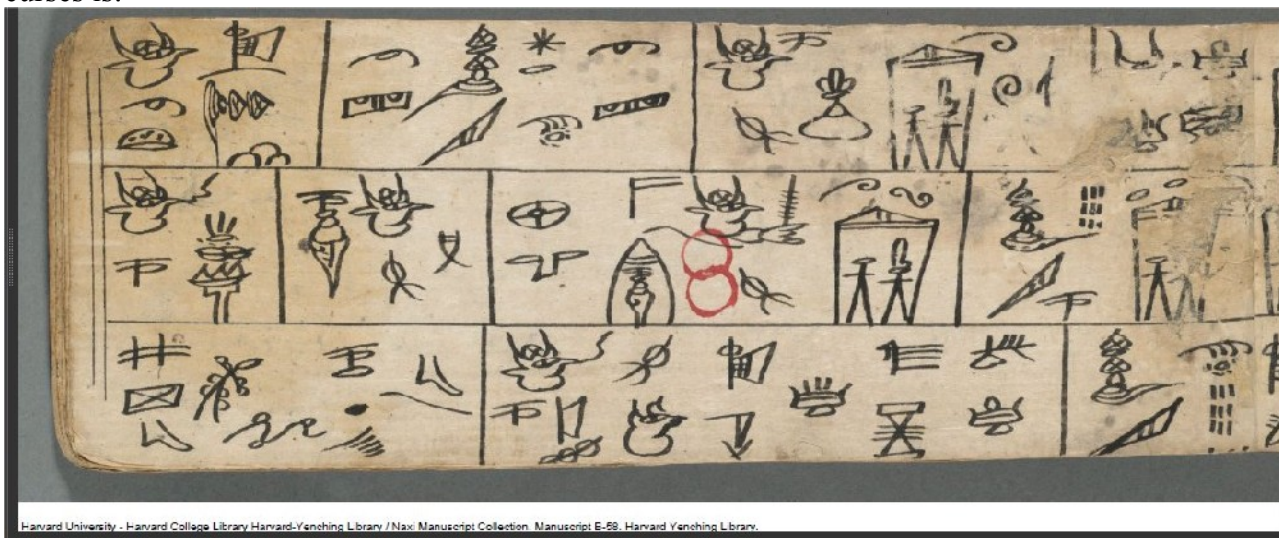
<sup>150</sup> Manuscript is actually preserved in a copy in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscript collection, number 11100791 Joseph Rock private collection number 1004. Rock states (1952: 97) that this manuscript belonged to the famous Dongba 杨福光 Yang Fu Quan of the village of 长水 Chang Shui (Naxi toponym *Ghugh-k'o*).



(6) *Neither the thousands generations of Ssù could be chased out. Neither the Ssù could be suppressed.*”

Manuscript then resumed the story of the origin of the *Khyu-t'khyu*, because the ceremonial is performed to require the help of the power of the *Khyu-t'khyu*, thus according to Naxi Dongba tradition and as is written in pg. 4 of the same text, “*if the origin of the Khyu-t'khyu isn't related, then must not speak about the Khyu-t'khyu.*”

While the manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu Ssù 'a* – fighting among *Khyu-t'khyu* and *Ssù* describes and relates about the struggle between the two kings of deities in very ancient time, the manuscript *Khyu-t'khyu Saw* describes with more details about how the fighting against *Ssù* and their terrible curses is:



[pg. 7]

“(1) *If it were not for the regional Khyu-t'khyu victory couldn't be gained over the Ssù*

(2) *the thousands of Ssù could not be driven out.*

(3) *Dongba then have to invite the White King Khyu-t'khyu ti descend and protect the family.*

(4) *The family then have to perform Chu-bpa-ngy for the (5) Khyu-t'khyu.*

(6) *The White King Khyu-t'khyu (7) descended into the East from the white mountain to protect the family.*

(8) *The Khyu-t'khyu chase the nine white Ssù who bombard the home with rocks, (9) leprosy [...]*

(10) *The white Khyu-t'khyu pronounced a Hoa-lü spelling: “Zaw ko ngaw dsaw wu ho p'a sso-wua-haw”*

(11) *The nine Ssù were driven out. [Pg.9] “Thereupon the family had no illness”*

The same part is repeated from pg. 9 to pg. 12, for the other four regional *Khyu-t'khyu* who are invited to descend; there are two differences to be mentioned:

- the colors of beings varied because it depends on the quarter of the compass
- the syllables of the *Hoa-lü* pronounced by the *Khyu-t'khyu* varied, depending on the *Ssù* to which they are destined.<sup>151</sup>

As evinced about the reptile-iconography deities, the *Hoa-lü* are magic spells which are believed to be able to coerce supernatural beings, in this case the *Ssù*.

This is possible because, according to the tradition, the principle of the *Hoa-lü* is based on the belief that to each spiritual beings belong a particular rate of vibration, and this kind of vibration are reformulated and reproduced as sounds in *Hoa-lü*, giving to the speller the magician power even

<sup>151</sup> Transliteration and latinization of the different *Hoa-lü* cfr. Rock, 1952: 99 - 100

to annihilate by dissolution the particular element or spirit to whom it belongs.<sup>152</sup>

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152 About Hoa-lu, please cfr. Reptiles-deities



## Dter-gko

Following Dongba tradition, the origin of *Dter-gko* is related in the manuscript entitled *Dter-gko ssaw - the origin of the Dter-gko*<sup>153</sup> which told about the magical origin (pg.1, rr. 1 - 4)

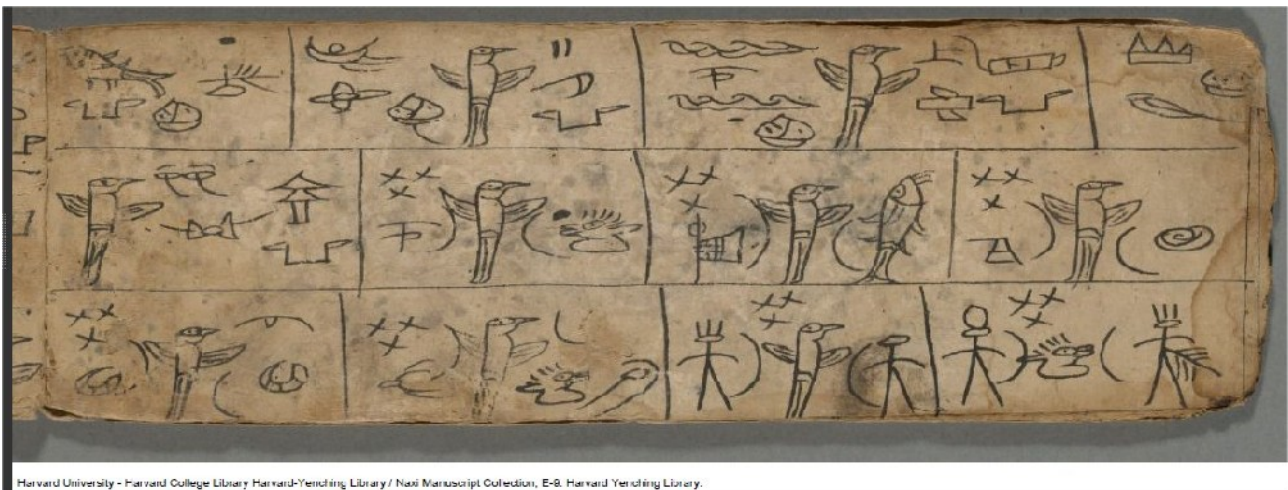


1st page of manuscript *Dter-gko ssaw*, from Harvard Yenching Library collection, ms. n. 136127686 and the number of *Dter-gko* (r. 5) which is the symbolic 360.

The myth follows with the enumerations of many different kinds of *Dter-gko*:

[pg.3] (8) 360 celestial *Dter-gko*

(9) The rays of the sun caused a magic and there was born *Nyi-bpa-na-sso Dter-gko*.



[pg.4]

(2) The rays of the moon caused a magic and there was born *Nyi-dsaw-mun-mi- Dter-gko*

(3) The white and black clouds had intercourse and there was born *Shou-t'i-k'v-wu Dter-gko*.

(4) Fire and waters had intercourse (5) and there was born *Mi-lo-ha-t'a Dter-gko* of the keen hears and hearing and *Lu-lo-miu-t'a* of the keen eyes and sight.

(6) Between white (gods) and black (demons) there were born 30 *Dter-gko*

(7) Between the *Ngaw* and *Nyi* there were born 30 *Dter-gko*

<sup>153</sup>of which actually 3 copies are known . The 3 copies of manuscript *Dter-gko ssaw* = the origin of *Dter-gko* are all actually preserved in Harvard Yenching manuscript Collection. They are cataloged as 11161720, 13612786 and 12885250, which correspond respectively to Joesph Rock manuscripts number 2074, 5056 and 5067. Rock also quoted a manuscript numbered as 986 entitled *Dter-gko ssaw* yet , which actually wasn't possible to retrieve.



- (8) *Between the Ch'ou and Shu (dirty vs pure) there were born 30 Dter-gko*  
 (9) *Between Dgyu and muan dgyu (they have and have not) there were born 30 Dter-gko*  
 (10) *Between the Khi and the Ts'u (people and demons) there were born 30 Dter-gko [...]* “

As evinced in manuscripts related to the origin and the description of serpent-like deities, the manuscript goes on enumerating all the *Dter-gko* and their different origin in a recurring pattern, where the constant aspect could be identified in the close relationship between the *Dter-gko* and some element of nature, often coupled in dualistic pairs.

For instance, as emerged from *Dter-gko ssaw*, since they had birth the winged deities are closely associated with clouds, sky, earth, sun, moon, fire, water.

Such relationships with natural element is also attested in manuscript *Pu la ssaw*,<sup>154</sup> where the various *Dter-gkos* are directly distinguished with the natural elements which they are associated to,



as the *Dter-gko* of the sun and the moon (or of the day and the night), the



the *Dter-gko* of the stars and planets.<sup>155</sup>

Joseph Rock also stated that Naxi - Dongba manuscripts distinguish among white and black *Dter-gko*, and the author linked such distinction to the local tradition in which white and blacks are opposite colors related respectively to gods' or demons' presence, and thus he finally considered the white and the black *Dter-gko* as counterparts.

According to Rock the white and black *Dter-gko* are named in manuscript he numbered as 1509,



where is written about

*Dter-gkp na ngv ssu* – the nine black *Dter-gko* and



*Dter-gko p'er ngu ssu* - the white 9 *Dter-gko*.<sup>156</sup>

He analyzed further, and stated that such manuscript relates about this two groups of deities as parents of others off-spring of *Dter-gko*.

At today the manuscript quoted by Rock is still unidentified, however a copy of manuscript *Dter-*



*gko ssaw* available reports at page 5 rubric VI, about the 30 white and black *Dter-gko*, thus the distinction among white and black could be at least hypothesized .

From Dongba manuscripts is possible to evinced that the *Dter-gko* are also believed to be powerful deities, omniscient and omnipotent, as attested in manuscript *Pu la Ssaw* <sup>157</sup> where the sequence of

<sup>154</sup>Harvard Yenching collection, n. 11100770; in Joseph Rock collection cataloged as number 1016; cfr. Also NNCRC: 163(224), (225)

<sup>155</sup>Both attested twice in ms. *Pu la Ssaw*: 3 - XI, 10 - VIII

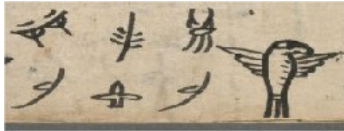
<sup>156</sup>Rock quoted ms. 1509: pg 5 rr. II – V for the black *Dter-gko*, and pg.4, rr. IX for the nine white ones. Cfr Rock, 1952

<sup>157</sup>*Pu la ssaw*: 3 – XI. There is another attestation of the same formula attested by Rock in manuscript he numbered



986. Manuscript is actually unretrieved, but the formula transcript by Rock although pretty different in the sequence of pictographs, is equivalent to the one in ms. *Pu la ssaw*. Cfr. Rock, 1952





pictographs represents the written form of the traditional formula which means **the *Dter-gko* that all see, all know and all can**<sup>158</sup>, a concept of omniscience which Rock linked also to his manuscript 973<sup>159</sup> form which he transcribed the sequence of pictographs



which represents a written form of another Naxi - Dongba traditional formula translated as “**how many sons and daughters the ants have below the ground, man doesn't know, but the *Dter-gko* have seen**”, implying the ability of all-knowing and all-seeing.<sup>160</sup>

Such attestations and information deduced, and with the help of other manuscripts' attestations of *Dter-gko* is possible to hypothesize some peculiar features of *Dter-gko* iconology and iconography.

As introduced, the most frequent attested iconography of *Dter-gko* consists in an eagle-winged and headed pictograph.

Rock identifies other 7 complex pictographs of *Dter-gko*<sup>161</sup> which depict this deity as:



- eagle body, winged, and *Khyu-t'khyu* head, as the *Dter-gko* from manuscript *Gko - O*<sup>162</sup>



- eagle body and animal's head, as the <sup>163</sup> *Gko-p'er Dter-gko* = **the white crane**



**headed *Dter-gko*, or** <sup>164</sup> *Ha-shi-yu-shi Dter-gko* = **the golden monkey headed *Dter-gko*.**



- human body, eagle wings and head of the eagle, an icon which is often attested for the *Yu-ma* class of deities.<sup>165</sup>

158 *Dter-gko* [the *Dter-gko*] gkv[all able] ss[all wise] ndo [all seeing] muan ssu muan dgyu [no limit having]. Literally translation: *Dter-gko* [the *Dter-gko*] gkv[all able] ss[all wise] ndo [all seeing] muan ssu muan dgyu [no limit having], cfr. Rock J., 1952: 176, 178.

159pg. 33, r. X.

160 The formula in Naxi language could be transcript as follow: llu-bbu t'khyu-lo zo mi dgyu muan, dgyu khi nnu muan ddo, *Dter-gko* ma mi mu ddo

Literally translation: llu-bbu [below the ground] t'khyu-lo [the ancestors] zo mi[sons and daughters] dgyu muan dgyu [unseen] khi nnu [man] muan ddo [not knows], *Dter-gko* ma [the *Dter-gko* indeed] mi mu ddo [knows].

Cfr. Rock, 1952: 179.

161 ms. 986


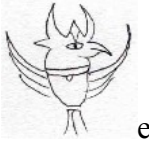



162Manuscript *Gko - O* , pg. 16. Actually unretrieved, was numbered as 6052 in the Joseph Rock private collection.

163Ibid, pg.5, r. X


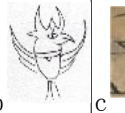
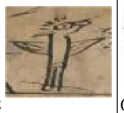


164Ibid, pg. 6, r. VI

165 Manuscript 986

Confronting and considering Rock quotations and jointing them to the attestations of *Dter-gko* pictographs directly retrieved on manuscripts, the author identified five different iconographic typologies:

- A.  eagle body and eagle headed
- B.  eagle body and *Khyu-t'khyu* headed (eagle head, with horns and trilobate crown)
- C.  eagle body and head of animal
- D.  human parts of body (legs, body, arms) winged, eagle headed
- E.  eagle body, other animals' parts (hoof, claws, etc..)

Attestations of *Dter-gko* according to the iconography are resumed as follow:

Manuscripts R = Joseph Rock collection; HY = Harward Yenching Collection	Iconography					Partial totals
	a 	b 	c 	d 	e 	
973	3					3
986	23	3	3	1		30
1016	1					1
1027	1					1
1147	5					5
1247	9					9
1509	3					3
1955	2					2
1965	28					28
2074	39		1			40
5052	1					1
5066	56					56
5067	63		2		3	68
5070	5					5
6052	12					12
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>264</b>

According to scholars, the *Dter-gko* class of deities could be closely associated with the ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* of the Tibetan Bon tradition<sup>166</sup>, and as suggested by Rock and Rène De Nebesky – Wojkowitz they “are perhaps identical”.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>166</sup>Joseph Rock, 1952: 136

<sup>167</sup>Rène De Nebesky – Wojkowitz, 1996 “Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective deities” : 340(40)

According to Das Sarat Chandra, 1902: 578 the word ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* means the 360 Bön gods called *Thugs-dkar*, and by the term ཐུགས་དཀར་ *Thugs-dkar wa* the Tibetans indicate two meanings: 1) a white heart, sincerity, and 2) those who conducts religious rites to propitiate the 360 thugs-dkar. Snellgrove also states that ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* are often named ཐུག་དཀར་ *thug-dkar*,<sup>168</sup> in both case a certain similarity between the Tibetan and Naxi name could be felt.

As the *Dter-gko*, the ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* are 360, they are considered a class of human friendly genies, helpful for long life, prosperity and the like. They do belong to the general bigger class of the དྲཱ་ལ་སྒར་ལྷ་མོ་ *dgra-lha sgra bla* – **gods**,<sup>169</sup> and as the *Dter-gko* they were born from a white egg.<sup>170</sup>

The religious rites which included ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* have to be considered as belonging to those related to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 9 ways of Bon, named སྙང་གཤེན་ཐེག་པ་ *snang gshen theg pa* - **the way of practice of visible manifestation**: this way is principally concerned with སྙང་བ་ *snang-ba* - **visible manifestation**, perceived as positive manifestations of the activities of the ལྷ་ *lha* - **gods who come to the aid of humanity**.

Therefore, the emphasis is placed on ལྷ་གསོལ་བ་ *lha gsol-ba* - **invoking the gods for their aid**, and this includes such classes of deities as the ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar*, the སྒར་ལྷ་མོ་ *sGra-bla*, the ཨེ་རམ་ *Wer-ma* and so on.

This is a point in common with Naxi – Dongba tradition, in which the *Dter-gko* like the ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* are protective tutelary spirits, winged and powerful, and they can suppress demons, as they are invoked whenever a ceremony is performed during which demons are to be exorcised.

Moreover the *Dter-gko* as the ཐུགས་དཀར་ *thugs-dkar* are besought to drive the evils out, practice which in Naxi Dongba tradition coincides with the ritual and related manuscripts of *Dter-gko ssaw* and *yu-ma ssaw*, where *ssaw*, in Naxi, means **to invite**.<sup>171</sup>

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168Snellgrove D., 1967 “The nine ways of Bon: excerpts from gZi-Brjid”: 63 – Oxford University Press”: 258.

169Ibid: 298

170Romano Mastromattei, 1995 “*Tremore e potere: la condizione estatica nello Sciamanesimo Himalayano*”: 229 “ [...] i *Thugs-dkar* Bon. Nacquero tutti da un unico uovo”

171Rock J., 1937 “*The Nichols Mo-So Manuscript of the American Geographical Society*”, in *Geographical Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Apr., 1937), pg. 234



*Yu-ma*

In two of the tree copies of manuscript *Dter-gko ssaw* - the origin of *Dter-gko* preserved in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts collection<sup>172</sup> since the moment of their birth the 360 *Dter-gko* are



depicted beside another winged deity: according to Dongba tradition they are described as they born together, and such second winged spirit is associated to the reading *Yu-ma*.



Harvard University - Harvard College Library Harvard Yenching Library / Naxi Manuscript Collection, E.O. Harvard Yenching Library.

*Manuscript Dter-gko Ssaw, pg. 3; n. 11161720 in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts collection*



Harvard University - Harvard College Library Harvard Yenching Library / Naxi Manuscript Collection, Manuscript I-35, Harvard Yenching Library.

*Manuscript Dter-gko Ssaw, pg. 8; n. 12885250 in Harvard Yenching Naxi manuscripts collection*

*Yu-ma* and *Dter-gko*, both deities should be considered closely related one another, sharing the same origin of the magical white egg from which they birth.

The closeness between *Dter-gko* and *Yu-ma* is confirmed also from one of the version of the story of the manuscript entitled *Yu-ma Ssaw* – **the origin of the *Yu-ma***, where the latter is again depicted

<sup>172</sup> Number 11161720 and 12885250



together with the *Dter-gko*, in the moment of their common coming forth the white magical egg.<sup>173</sup>

About the origin of the *Yu-ma*, there's another version of this story which is related in manuscript *Yu-ma Ts'u bpa ngi* – belonging to *Har la lu k'o* ceremony<sup>174</sup> which narrates about the birth of *Yu-ma* independently from the *Dter-gko*.

According to *Yu-ma Ts'u bpa ngi* 's version, although coming forth a white egg, the *Yu-mas* weren't birth together with the *Dter-gkos*, and the birth of the *Yu-mas* from the egg was caused by some deities which grasped the egg with their sharpen claws.



[pg. 5]

(4) the lion grasped the white eggs and there come forth the (5) *Yu-ma* with the lion head  
[...] (7) the dragon grasped the egg and there come forth the *Yu-ma* with the dragon head  
(8) [...] the *Khyu-t'khyu* grasped the egg, and there come forth the *Khyu-t'khyu* headed *Yu-ma*



173 There are 3 copies known of *Yu-ma* Ssaw, all preserved in Harvard Yenching collection with number 13812109, 9904030 and 122493949 corresponding to Rock private collection numbers 1247, 1965 and 5095. They all belongs to different ceremonies: manuscript 13812109 belongs to *Dter tsu tsu* ceremony, manuscript 9904030 to *Zo chung bpo* ceremony, while 122493949 to *Har la lu ko*, *Dter bpo* ceremony.

Manuscripts 13812109 and 9904030 (Rock 1247 and 1965) relates about *Yu-ma* and *Dter-gko* birth as the other copies of *Dter-gko* Ssaw precedent analyzed.

174 It is preserved in a copy at Harvard Yenching library, cataloged as number 12250821, Joseph Rock private collection n. 5070. The story of the origin of the *Yu-ma* here is different form the other *Yu-ma* Ssaw as related in manuscripts

Another *Yu-ma* Ssaw manuscript of Harvard Yenching collection, cataloged with number 122493949 and corresponding to Rock number 5095, belongs to *Har la lu ko* ceremony, reports a third version of the myth of the origin of the *Yu-mas*. Such differences in the same myth were interpreted by Rock as such different traditions and stories reflects different clans of *Yu-ma*. Rock also quotes another manuscript 969 which at today is not retrieved yet.

- (2) the Shi-zi grasped the egg, and there come forth the Yu-ma with she shi-zi tail  
 (3) the Jackal grasped the egg, and there come forth the Yu-ma with the Jackal keen ears.  
 The tiger grasped the egg, and there come forth the Yu-ma with the tiger head  
 (4) the jaguar grasped the egg, and there come forth the Yu-ma with the jaguar head  
 (5) the bear grasped the egg, and there come forth the Yu-ma with the bear head [...]

Manuscript goes on with the enumeration of the various deities and animals which grasped the egg and gave birth to *Yu-ma*; the latter inherits some features belonging to the egg-grasper. Enumeration of *Yu-mas'* birth ends at page 7 rubric 5 , with the birth of the 360 *Yu-mas* of the clouds and the winds.



Joseph Rock quoted a third version of *Yu-ma ssaw*: in such variant of the *Yu-ma* birth myth the scholar identified also 3 other types of *Yu-ma* which he meant as different clans of such deity. He translate and explain as following:

*“the soul of the son of Muan-llu-ddu-ndzhi made a magic. A white tiger appeared on the high mountain.*

*The soul of yu-mi-tgkye-sher made a magic. A black tiger appeared on the high mountain. On the high mountain the white tiger met the black tiger, and the 2 tigers had intercourse. There were born thousands of clawed Yu-ma.*

*The Lion-headed, the bear headed, the Jackal headed, the dragon headed and the Ts'u ssi headed.*

*The soul of the son of Muan-llu-ddu-ndzhi made a magic.*

*The soul of yu-mi-tgkye-sher made a magic.*

*The come forth thousands of winged Yu-ma.*

*The Yu-ma with the head of the Khyu-t'khyu. The Yu-ma with the head of the eagle. The Yu-ma with the head of the pheasant*

*[...]*

*The soul of the son of Muan-llu-ddu-ndzhi made a magic.*

*The soul of yu-mi-tgkye-sher made a magic.*

*There come forth a white Yak and a black Yak, on the alpine meadow.*

*These 2 had intercourse, and then were born thousands of Yu-ma. The horned Yu-ma.*

*The Yu-ma who dwell in the flaming house where the white and the black lands of the gods and of the demons meet.*

*Their voice is like the thunder. Their eyes flash like lighting”*

Regardless about both the attestations of the manuscript quoted and translated by Rock, and the variations in the *Yu-mas'* birth myth, there are many common features among this different versions which are possible to set together and underline:

- *Yu-ma* were generated by direct (sexual intercourse or making a magic) and/or indirect

(grasping the white egg with their claws) interaction of magical creatures and gods, thus they are powerful spirits, deities, or at least minor or semi-deities

- Once they come forth, the *Yu-ma* inherits some features belonging to the deities which make them birth (physical parts, powers, attitudes)
- The *Yu-ma* are powerful beings, which are able to fight against other spiritual beings, as demons and *Ssù*
- They are always depicted with eagle wings and lion head, an iconography which is evidently close to the one of *Dter-gko*, thus both are in turn to be related to the *Khyu-t'khyu*'s one.

*Yu-ma* class deity is well and often represented in Naxi – Dongba tradition not just in manuscripts, but also in scrolls, murals and paintings that were studied from Bacot<sup>175</sup>, S. Hummel<sup>176</sup> and Joseph Rock with different interpretations. Regardless of the interpretations, what is certain is that the most frequent *Yu-ma* iconography in Naxi Dongba art is the one referred to the *Yu-ma* named *T'u-ch'i*, which according to Dongba tradition, has been the 1<sup>st</sup> of the *Yu-ma*.



Represented with such iconography into Naxi Dongba manuscripts in art is depicted with a lion head, three eyes and a dragon sprouting from the top of its head, with white body, winged and with arms: in his right arm wielding a sword, while in the left one a trident. He's depicted while trampling on *Du* demons.

Some iconological and iconographic features of this deity could be now resumed.

At first, as evinced from manuscripts, the the most frequent pictograph for represent the *Yu-ma* is



the basic sign which consists in an eagle-winged being, with lion head, and it is attested 42 cases on a global of 69 recurrences of *Yu-mas*' related pictographs, with a percentage of 60,87%.

In the other 40%, the *Yu-ma* appears associated with other beings, like animals, humans or element of nature.

Some *Yu-ma* are represented with the head of the animal,<sup>177</sup> as in manuscript *Yu-ma Ts'u bpa ngi*



the Jackal headed *Yu-ma*, or



the tiger headed *Yu-ma*; others<sup>178</sup> *Yu-mas*

are represented with lion head and wings of the eagle, but also having other animals' features as



the *Yu-ma* birth with the tail of the *Shi-zi* (serpent deities),



the *Yu-ma*

birth with the claws of the dragon,



the *Yu-ma* with the limb of the leopard.

<sup>175</sup>Les Mo-so, plate XIV.

<sup>176</sup>Geheimnisse Tibetischer Malerei, 1949 – Leipzig: 62

<sup>177</sup>13 occurrences, % of total attestations

<sup>178</sup>9 occurrences over the total; % of attestations.





Among the attestations of *Yu-ma*, there are also cases where the pictograph is closely associated with other pictographs related to animals but not inherits their features, as for instance in



Joseph Rock's manuscript 1191: 13 IV the *Yu-ma* is riding a pig or the *Yu-ma* riding a black cow. Association of the *Yu-mas* as riding something could also be found not just linked to animals, but also in the form of association with other elements, as in Rock ms. 973:31, II



the *Yu-ma* is riding the cloud and the wind, or in ms. 1191:13, IV and 13, VI



the *Yu-ma* is riding the flaming rainbow. There are also recurrences of *Yu-ma* with more elaborated iconography which is possible to define as totemic or/and teriatropic.<sup>179</sup>



In such peculiar iconography, the *Yu-ma* is represented with human features, branding sword and a flagged spear, in a martial position and with ferocious expression.



*Yu-ma miniature from a miniature in manuscript*



*Yu-ma painted on a wall fresco in the Jade Water Temple adjacent structure. Author's picture, summer of 2005*

According to *Yu-mas'* attestations, retrieved from available Naxi – Dongba manuscripts, also according to Rock quotations, is possible to generalize a little more, finding common features among various attestations and evincing five main iconographic typologies:

<sup>179</sup>Rock also quoted another iconography of *Yu-ma* which consists in totemic type, with the representations of the deities as having more humans and/or animals parts: heads, bodies, legs, harms, etc.... Rock related about manuscript








8434: 3, V where the *Yu-ma* has got 9 human heads, or the pictograph manuscript 6052: 15, VIII.








of the *Yu-ma* attested in



- A.  lion head, eagle body and winged
- B.  riding or associated with animal, natural elements, etc...
- C.  Yu-ma body (eagle winged, tail, etc...) with other animals' features (head, legs, arms, etc...)
- D.  Yu-ma body, animals' headed
- E.  teriatropic: humans' features (body, two legs, two arms, etc...) and Yu-ma features (branding sword, flagged spear, with lion head, etc...)

A resuming plate for *Yu-mas'* attestation is reported below:

Manuscripts R = Joseph Rock collection; HY = Harvard Yenching Collection	Iconography					Partial totals
	 a	 b	 c	 d	 e	
949	1					1
956	3	1	5	3		12
973		3				3
1027		1				1
1191		11	2	7	3	23
1247	52	29	3	23		107
1965	34	1			6	41
1984	1					1
2072	2					2
2074	4					4
5052		2				2
5067	4					4
5070	41	2	1	8		52
5095	15			1		16
6052	13	1	2		1	17
6079				2		2
6082	2	1				3
8095	1					1
8434					1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>293</b>

Finally, below is presented a table describing about the *Yu-mas'* associations with animals and

natural elements:

	Manuscripts R = Joseph Rock collection; HY = Harward Yenching Collectio										
Riding or associated	956	973	1027	1191	1247	1965	5052	5070	6052	6082	Partial totals
bat				2							2
bear	1				2						3
chicken					1						1
clouds					2						2
clouds, wind		2			2						4
donkey					1				1		2
Dragon	1			2	3						6
eagle								1			1
earth					1						1
flame					1						1
flaming house	1				1			1			3
flaming rainbow				2							2
fox					1						1
horse				2	1						3
human						6					6
jackal					2						2
leopard	1			1	2						4
lion						1					1
Makara (ts'u ssi)	1										1
Ngaw-bpa-na										1	1
pig				1	3						4
planets					1						1
rainbow				3							3
serow				1							1
serpent								1			1
stag					2		1				3
Sun, moon	1				2						3
tiger	1				3						4
white crane		1									1
white lion				1							1
Yak			1		4		1		1		7
Total	7	3	1	15	35	7	2	3	2	1	76

From *Yu-mas'* iconography and iconology as emerged since here it seems possible to suggest about the close relationship among *Yu-ma* and the Tibetan winged deity ཨེརམ་ *Wer-ma*, peculiar of the Bon tradition.<sup>180</sup>

The ཨེརམ་ *Wer-ma* and the *Yu-ma* show commons aspects, as both are considered by respective tradition as powerful protective spirits, they are numbered of 360,<sup>181</sup> and as the Naxi – Dongba *Yu-ma* follow the 360 *Dter-gko* so the Tibetan ཨེརམ་ *Wer-ma* follow the 360 ཐུགས་དྭགས་ *thugs-dkar*.<sup>182</sup>

As the *Yu-ma* were believed to be attributed of the same powers of the *Khyu-t'khyu*, so the ཨེརམ་

<sup>180</sup>Of which there are also 360.

<sup>181</sup>Rock, 1952: 254, (9), 259; Hummel Siegber, 1960 “*Der Gottliche Schmied in Tibet*” in “*Folklore Studies*”, vol. XIX(1960); 251 – 272, published by Nanzan Institute for religion and culture.

<sup>182</sup>Rock, 1973 “The Nichols Mo-so Manuscript of the American Geographical Society”. 236, in *Geographical Review*, vol. 27 no.2 (Apr., 1937), pp. 229 – 239, published by American Geographical Society.

*Wer-ma* are believed to possess the same powers of the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Khyung*, but they are different entities.<sup>183</sup>

The རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* are believed as angry, ferocious and fearless.

They are related to the *dgra-lha* of the harrows and lances,<sup>184</sup> and considering the Naxi – Dongba *Yu-ma* as a later local re-interpretation and re-imagination of the the Tibetan རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma*, the latter's features were inherits by the Dongba *Yu-ma*, so for instance the powerful and protective aspect of *Yu-ma* power could be related with the Tibetan belief of རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* as a great hero who “*protects the doctrine of Bon, overcoming the lords of foes and opponents, acting as friends of gods and virtue.*”<sup>185</sup>

The differences in the myth which relates about the *Yu-mas'* birth could then be related with the believe in 4 lore of རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma*:<sup>186</sup>

- the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* united with gods, and so the god *Wer-ma*, subdues of demons were produced
- the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* united with the furies, and so the Fury རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma*, subdues of foes, were produced
- the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* united with the *Khyung*, and the *Khyung* རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* subdues of *Klu* where born
- the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* united with lions, and so the three brothers, the རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* heroes subdues. There was produced the hero-gathering of རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* heroes.

More over:

“*There was produced the army of 99.000 strong  
[...] their sky-citadel, no one can destroy  
they fear nothing, these རྩལ་མཁའ་ Wer-ma forms  
they are the life of the doctrine of Swastika-Bon,  
and have come in aids of the subjugation of foes and obstructions*”<sup>187</sup>

Another point in common among not just in *Yu-ma* and རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* correlation, but in a wider point of view between Naxi – Dongba and Tibetan tradition is about the origin of the physical universe, of primeval men, of gods and demons, alias the myth of the white egg:

“*the white egg burst open and its outer shell  
become the realm of spirits and parasites  
its inner tegument became the eighty-one evil potent bad, the three hundred and sixty injuries. The  
white of the egg spilled on the ground and become the four hundred and four kind disease.  
The center of the egg become the three hundred and sixty classes of evil spirits...*”<sup>188</sup>

The *Yu-ma* - རྩལ་མཁའ་ *Wer-ma* cult, jointed with *Ssù*, *Lu*, *Shizi*, *Khyu-t'khyu* and *Dter-gko* exemplified the belief of Naxi – Dongba pantheon, where such supernatural sphere influence plays a capillary direct role with humans' world, this in a mood perfectly accorded to the one of the early Tibetans conceived of men, as being continually beset by a whole variety of spirits and demons, who were

183 Snellgrove D. L., 1980 “The nine ways of Bon: excerpts from gZi-brjid”: 63

184 René de Nebesky – Wojkowitz, 1959 “*Oracles and Demons of Tibet*”. 324, 333 - 334

185 l.q.

186 As according to *Snan Gshen Gyithepa* 3 – 35 of Tibetan Bon tradition: l.q.

187 l.q.

188 Snellgrove and Richardson, 1980: 58



directly responsible for human ailments and misfortune.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> L.q.

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