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https://doi.org/10.4467/K7478.47/22.23.17746

Tibetan Elements in Dongba and Daba Spirits' Names

Abstract

Dongbaism and Dabaism are indigenous religions of the Moso people, who live on the cultural border between Han and Tibetan traditions in Southwest China. Besides their original cultural foundations, it is possible to notice Tibetan elements introduced into Dongbaism and Dabaism. The present study aims at an etymological analysis of the names of five representative symbols of Dongba and Daba doctrines, including: *Tonpa Shenrab*, *Yung-Drung*, *Purzzee Samei*, *Haishee Bamei*, and *Garuda*. Through the analysis of morphological structures, the author explains the assimilation of Tibetan linguistic elements in Dongba and Daba cultures and depicts the differences between the two branches of the Moso people's religious traditions. Through an etymological interpretation of some local spirits' names, the present research reconstructs the roots of local folklore beliefs in the light of a broader context. This philological work unveils the origin of the figures of mythical deities – and of their names – believed by local people to be the first Dongba/Daba priests from the Bon religion and suggests the possibility of a pan-ethnic belief in more remote times. This research also analyses the multiple linguistic layers in the different forms for *Garuda*, which reveal their ancestral links to the extinct Zhang-Zhung civilization.

Keywords

Tonpa Shenrab, Yung-Drung, Shaman, Haishee Bamei, Garuda

1. Introduction

Dongbaism and Dabaism are indigenous religions of the Moso people, who live in Southwest China. Their designations derive from the word 'priest' in the Moso language, which is romanised, according to Mandarin *pinyin*, as *Dongba* (/toˠmbɑ˩/) in the western dialect (Naxi, ISO 639-3: nxq) and *Daba* (/dɑ˩pɑˠ/) in the eastern dialect (Na, ISO 639-3: nru). The two ethnic branches have separated over time, due to historical events (Ṅag dbaṅ mkhyen rab, 1735/1993). The divergence between these two ethnic branches can be documented through many cultural elements, including their systems of spirits (gods and ghosts) and the composition of their semi-oral ritual manuscripts. Besides their original cultural foundations, it is also possible to notice Tibetan elements introduced into Dongbaism and Dabaism. Their rites, their legends, as well as their voluminous spirit systems, all display a profound resemblance to Bon, which was prevalent in pre-Buddhist Tibet.

The Moso are sometimes referred to as the Naish People (*Naxi Zuqun* 纳系族群 / *Na Ren* 纳人) in contemporary research, due to their endonyms sharing a similar structure: the syllable *na* ('black', 'noble') followed by the word for 'people'. The two major branches are the Naxi and the Na. Some varieties recorded during the author's fieldwork trips include: /nɑˠ/ (Qiansuo 前所 Village, IPA: /wɑˠʐuˠ/; Wenquan 温泉Village) , IPA: /ʌrˠkʰʌrˠ/), (Lijiazui 利家嘴 Village; IPA: /li˩tɕɑˠtsɯ˩/), and /nɑ˩hĩˠ/ (Wujiao 屋脚 Village, IPA: /ɯ˩dʑoˠ/).[1]

The Naxi live mostly in the north-western territories of Yunnan Province (minor groups occupy the region between Yunnan and south-eastern Tibet), with their main inhabited centre in Lijiang 丽江; their number is estimated at around 348,000. The Na, living in the southwest of the Sichuan Province, mainly in Yongning 永宁 Township (belonging to Ninglang 宁蒗 County) and eastwards, are represented by about 57,000 speakers.[2]

[1] The details of the administrative divisions of the villages listed here: Qiansuo Village in Qiansuo Township, Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province (Qiansuo Township was redesignated as Lugu Lake Township, Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province in 2020); Wenquan Village, Yongning Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan Province; Wujiao Village and Lijiazui Village, Wujiao Township, Muli County, Sichuan Province.

[2] The statistics of population and demographics of Naxi and Na (in the next paragraph) are quoted from the annually updated census on the JOSHUA Project. URL: joshuaproject.net/languages/nxq; joshuaproject.net/people_groups/18610/CH

The designation *Naxi* (/nɑ˩ɕi˧/) was assigned according to the endonym in 1954, during the census of all nationalities of China (He, 1989, p. 3). The eastern branch living in Sichuan Province has been recognized as 'Mongolian'. However, the Chinese term for 'Mongolian' is *Menggu Zu* 蒙古族, while the term for *Na* is actually written as *Meng Zu* 蒙族, which is a close transcription of *Moso*: the syllable *mo* is the name, while the syllable *so* means 'nationality'. A small number of the Na living in Yunnan Province maintained the endonym *Moso*, transcribed as *Mosuo* 摩梭.

Moso is the historical name for this ethnic group. The written tradition of the Moso can be traced back to the *Chronicles of Huayang* 华阳国志 by Chang Qu 常璩 in Jin Dynasty (265–420 AD), in which the term 摩沙 (ancient Chinese: *muɑ ʃea; cf. Guo, 2019, pp. 3, 39) was used for an ethnic group in Dingzuo 定莋 (Yanyuan 盐源 County today).

Dongba scriptures are considered resources preserving the pre-Buddhist Bon tradition in Tibet (cf. Rock, 1955; Mathieu, 2015). The pre-Buddhist period refers to the time before the arrival of Buddhism in the seventh century, while Bon itself can be roughly divided into two phases: Old Bon and Yung-Drung Bon. Yung-Drung Bon ('eternal Bon') evolved from Old Bon after incorporating Buddhist doctrines, while the Tibetan Buddhism elements attested in Dabaism and Dongbaism could date back to an earlier stage. So far, the earliest date found in Dongba manuscripts is 1703 (Mueggler, 2011, p. 91), while there are no explicit dates in the oral chants. According to the author's fieldwork notes, Daba doctrines represent an earlier developmental phase, if compared to Dongba scriptures. The analysis of Tibetan elements in Dongba and Daba spirit names also provides a lens through which one can detect traces of the Buddhism introduced into the Bon religion. The five spirit names under disscussion in the following sections include: *Tonpa Shenrab*, *Yung-Drung*, *Purzzee Samei*, *Haishee Bamei*, and *Garuda*, which are crucial figures related to the origins of Dongba and Daba religions.

2. Dongba, Daba, and Bonpo

Dongba and Daba are the terms indicating the priest in Naxi and Na, respectively. The term *Dongba* is generally interpreted as 'a wise person' (He, 1989, pp. 1–2). A possible interpretation of *Daba* is 'a sharp (wise) person', since the syllable *da* is homophonic to the word 'to chop' (Lamu Gatusa, 1999, p. 1). According to Awo Daba from Wujiao Village (Muli County, Sichuan Province), *Daba* is an equivalent to 'monk' (*heshang* 和尚) in Chinese and 'Lama' (*bla ma* བླ་མ) in Tibetan Buddhism. The word for 'Lama' is *Daiba* (/ʈæ˩pɑ˧/) in the Na language.

According to Chinese traditions, Dongbaism was founded by *Dongba Shiluo* 东巴释罗. There are a few variants of the pronunciation of Dongba (or *To-mba* as an alternative transcription spotted occasionally) and Daba. Rock (1937, p. 174) recorded the three variants of *Tonpa Shenrab* in Dongba (Na-khi), Ruke Dongba (Zhĕr-khin), and Daba (hli-khin): dto-mba shi-lo, to-mba shera / to-mba zhĕr-la, and ti-mba shera, respectively. Some other documented attestations include *Dibba Shilo* (/ti˧bɑ˩ʂʅ˩lo˧/; Fang, 1981, p. 351) and *Ddobo* (/do˧po˧/; Guo, 1983, p. 107). These dialectal variants for 'priest' in Naish languages derive from the Tibetan word སྟོན་པ (*ston pa*), which means 'Buddha, mentor' (Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, pp. 356, 497). It is a general term used to refer to the *Biubbuq* in Naxi, which is a corrupted form of Tibetan *Bonpo* (Yang, 2011, p. 298). The term *Bonpo* (ཨོན་པོ), on the other hand, means 'the follower/practitioner of Bon'. It is also occasionally used to refer to the Bon religious cult.

Yung-Drung Bon is the second phase of the Bon religion in history (emerging in the 10th and 11th centuries), which gradually incorporated the Gnostic-Buddhist syncretism from Zhang-Zhung to Buddhism (Kværne, 1972, pp. 27–29; Keown, 2003). It was the prevalent religion of the Zhang-Zhung Kingdom in pre-Buddhist Tibet.

Yung-Drung (གཡུང་དྲུང་; gyung-drung; 雍仲; symbol: 卐) means 'eternal/ever-lasting', in Bon (Karmay, 1997, p. 105). It is equal to the Buddhist *dorje* (Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, p. 808; Kværne, 1995, p. 11). In Dongba glyphs, the left-facing swastika became a sign standing for 'good, capable'. In Moso languages and dialects, it is read as *iddua* (/i˧ɖwɑ˧/; Li et al., 1972, p. 131), *eeddo* (/[2]ghügh-[2]ddo/, IPA: /ɯ˧do˧/; Rock, 1963, p. 117), or *iddo* (/i˩do˧/; author's notes from the interview with Daba Awo).[3]

[3] The IPA transcriptions of Rock's studies are based on Michailovsky & Michaud (2006).

Yung-Drung is often attested at the beginning of the spirits' names, such as in the name of the Dongba goddess *Yung-Drung Lamo* (/iꜜɖwɑꜛlɑꜛmoꜛ/, Li et al., 1972, p. 157).

The Daba spirit in charge of exorcism is named *Yung-Drung Konddo Ssonbu* (/iꜜdoꜛkõꜛdoꜛzõꜜpuꜛ/). *Konddo* means 'universal' in Tibetan (ཀུན་ཏུ་; *kun-tu*; Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, p. 9). This deity could correspond to *Samantabhadra*, *Puxian Pusa* (普贤菩萨) in Chinese, ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ་ (*kun-tu bzang-po*) in Tibetan, which is translated as 'The All-Good' (Kværne, 1995, p. 23).

In another example, the *dharmapala*, *iema* (/iʌꜛmɑꜜ/; Li et al., 1972, p. 155), in the Buddha headwear, also known as 'five-buddha headwear', is named *Yung-Drung Ba'i Wu'erma* (/iꜜdoꜛpɑꜛiꜛwuꜜʌrꜛmɑꜛ/). This *dharmapala* guards the rituals of healing diseases, i.e., the deity is a *dharmapala* of the human being. In this designation, the *dharmapala*, *yuma*, maintained its Tibetan form: འཇེར་མ (*wer-ma*).

The divergence between Dongbaism and Dabaism is beyond dialectal accents, though. The spirits with the same designations may have distinctive roles in the two branches. The first Daba, for example, according to Daba Awo, was *Yung-drung Mebu Zzeeru* (/iꜜdoꜛ mʌꜛpuꜛ dzɯꜛʐuꜛ/; *Yung-Drung*-sky-to chant-*Zzeeru*). The figure, with a long sword and bell in its hands, is among the five deities on the Buddha headwear of Daba priests (*Ernge*: /ʌrꜜŋʌꜛ/) for exorcism rituals.

Besides the honorific prefix *yung-drung*, the following segment of *Mebu Zzeeru* has a homophonic counterpart in Dongbaism: *Mebiu Zzeeru* (/məꜛpyꜘdzɻꜛʐvꜘ/, *Quanji*, Vol. 10, p. 208).[4] Rock (1972, p. 215) explained this figure as 'an ancient celestial Dongba' (/²muàn̲ ¹bpö ²dzī ¹szǔ/; IPA: /mɯꜛpyꜜdzɻꜛzɯꜜ/). Li et al. (1972, p. 153) classified it as a major deity in rituals for dispelling rumors (/mʌꜛpʏꜜzɯꜛʐoꜜ/). Bai (2012, p. 71) described it as a god of war, belonging to the time of the latest gods.

The multiple explanations of this spirit reveal the divergent localization of this Tibetan deity. Dabaism considered this spirit to be powerful at suppressing demons and worshipped it as the patriarch of the indigenous religion. It reflected the basic responsibility of a Daba priest. Dongbaism, on the other hand, traced its origin back to *Tonpa Shenrab*, the founder of the Bon

[4] *Quanji* is the conventional abbreviation for the 100 volumes of the *Annotated Collection of Naxi Dongba Manuscripts*.

religion. *Mebu Zzeeru*, then, was interpreted as a legendary priest from heaven. Later on, his role changed along with the evolving Dongba spirit system, and he became a god of war.

3. The Remote Origin of Bon

Dongba Shiluo was the equivalent of the founder of Yung-Drung Bon, *Tonpa Shenrab* (སྟོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ), also known as gShen-rab mi-bo-che, who was created assimilating the Buddhist *bodhisattva* in Zhang-Zhung (ཞང་ཞུང) culture (Hummel, 1992). The biographies of Tonpa Shenrab are recorded mainly in the three Bon doctrines: the *Mdo 'dus*, the *Gzer mig*, the *Gzi brjid* (Karmay, 1997, pp. 109–110).

Similar to the story of Gautama Buddha (Śākyamuni), Tonpa Shenrab was a prince before founding the Bon doctrine (Skorupski, 1986, pp. 39–40). The birthplace of Tonpa Shenrab, *'Ol mo lung ring*, is a legendary area located in a land called *Tazig* (Wylie: sTag-gzig; Karmay, 1997, pp. 104–108). The doctrines were brought to Zhang-Zhung by the disciples of Tonpa Shenrab, then transferred to Tibet. In Zhang-Zhung, *Shen-rab* is addressed as *dMu-ra*, and Bon is *gyer* (Snellgrove, 1967).

Tazig is homophonic to 'Arabia' in several Central Asian languages, including *Tazi* (Persian, Uyghur), *Tadjik/Tazik* (Turkish), and *Tayi* (Syria) (Chen, 1999, p. 413). It is transliterated as 大食 (/dɑi dʑĭək/), in middle Chinese (Guo, 2019, pp. 5, 89). According to Van Driem (2001, p. 33), *Tazig* refers to Bactria and Sogdiana. Apart from the vagueness in the antique scriptures, these various identifications of *Tazig* could also be attributed to the multiple sources of Bon (Tucci, 1976, p. 304).

Etymological reconstructions of *gShen* (གཤེན) include: 'shaman', in Old Tibetan, by Hoffmann (1944), 'butcher', in Old Tibetan, by Van Manen (1922), 'executioner', in mundane usage, by Thomas (1934), and 'redeemers', 'saviours' or 'teachers", by Francke (1924); while the syllable *rab* is a Zhang-Zhung word that equals to *rgya(s)* in Tibetan (Hummel, 1992). According to Tsering Thar & Don grub lha rgyal (2012, pp. 62–63), the word *gShen* (གཤེན) was used to refer to *Bon* in earlier Bon documents. The *gShen* practitioners had a hierarchical system according to their knowledge and capabilities. The morpheme *rab*

(རྣམ) means 'outstanding'. In fact, in the early tenth century sources (i.e. Dunhuang manuscripts), the oldest literary records for pre-Buddhist Tibet attested so far, *gShen rabs myi-bo* is listed as a competent ritual practitioner, rather than talked about as the founder of Bon (Bellezza, 2010). In the Dongba classics about the origin of Moso Divination, the Dongba scriptures were given by a goddess named *Purzzee Samei* (/p'urɹndzɯꟸsɑꟸmɛꟸ/; Li et al., 1978, p. 95), living on the top of the sacred mountain *Njona Rualua* (mount-big- Rualua).[5]

Li et al. (1972, p. 151) interpreted this spirit as 'the patriarch of divination, a goddess'. Fu (2012) annotated it as 'female Buddha' (*Nü Fo* 女佛). As written in Li (1997, p. 55), she provided not only the Dongba manuscripts, but also the divination knowledge of many other ethnic groups, including Indian, Yi People, Tibetan, and Bai People; as for her technical category, she is a sorceress. This ancient goddess, who existed before Dongbaism, is categorized as one of the most recently worshipped gods according to Bai (2012, p. 65).

The designations of exotic deities are generally transliterated into Chinese. Nevertheless, it is possible to recognize some morphemes in the spirits' epithets, since some of them were yielded from cultural translation. Take *Purzzee Samei*, for instance, the name consists of 'Pur god' (/p'urɹ/; the Tibetan sorceress), 'master' (/ndzɯꟸ/), and 'female; great' (/mɛꟸ/). Therefore, this specific name contains the spirit's role (domain noun-epithet), which literally means 'Samei, the master of sorcery'.

According to a further hypothesis, *Samei* could be a content word. Indeed, it appears to be one of the many cognates for 'shaman'. It is *samân* in Tungus, *samâne* in Tocharian B, *śramaṇa* in Sanskrit ('monk'), གསལ་མོ (*gsal mo*) in Tibetan ('sorceress'; Kværne, 2009, p. 19; Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, p. 933).

Modern languages provide some clues to the etymology of *shaman*. In Sibe, the word for *shaman* is *samen*, which means 'omniscient person'. It consists of *sar* ('to know') and *mame* ('honorific title for female'; Tong, 1989, p. 204). In Manchu, *saman* consists of the root *sam* ('see') and the suffix *an*, which means 'the person knowing' (Zhao, 2002). *Purzzee Samei*, with its Bon origin, traces

[5] The story about the origin of Moso Divination can be found in, e.g., *Biupa Guasho* (/pyɹpʻɑɹkwɑlʂoɹ/, chant-divination-manner-to seek for) in Li et al. (1978) and *Cheggu gosho* (/¹tʂhʌ³gu¹kɔ³ʂo/; IPA: /tʂʰʌlguɹkɔlʂoɹ/; dirt-to chase-scripture-to seek for) in Fu (2012). The onomastic variants of *Purzzee Samei* include, /³phʌɹ ²ndzɯ ²sɑ ²me/ (IPA: /pʰʌrɹndzɯꟸsɑꟸmeꟸ/; Fu, 2012, p. 44), and /pʻər²¹dzɻ³³sa³³me³³/ (Li, 1997, p. 55). IPA transcriptions of *Njona Rualua* and variant: /ndʑoɹnɑꟸzɻwɑlrwɑꟸ/, Li et al. (1978, p. 33); /³dʑy¹nɑ¹ʐɔ²lɔ/ (dʑyɹ nɑl ʐɔl lɔꟸ), Fu (2012, p. 92).

back the Dongba culture to a time when Shamanism was a popular primitive belief in Eurasia (Ermakov, 2008).

There are two major types of priests in the Dongba culture: *Biu* (/pʏ˩/), in charge of chanting (exorcism, prayer) and *Pa* (/p'ɑ˩/), in charge of divination. In Dongba pictographs, *Biu* is written as a Dongba priest with the five-buddha headwear:  (No. 1902); *Pa* is written as a female sorcerer:  (No. 1908), sometimes with open-hair:  (No. 1909). *Purzzee Samei* is written as a sitting woman, with messy hair on the temples (the symbolic sign for age), and the pictograph 'air' to mark her name:  (No. 2018).[6] These two types of priests may also be interpreted as two lineage lines of Bon and Shaman.

4. Two Symbolic Mythical Creatures

In Dongba legends, *Haishee Bamei* (/hæ˧ʂɯ˩pɑ˥mɛ˧/), who lived in the sacred lake *Meelee Ndajji* (/mɯ˧rɯ˥ndɑ˧dʑi˩/), brought to the world the knowledge of *Wuxing* ('the five primary elements'). After the creature swallowed the scriptures given by *Purzzee Samei*, this mythical animal used its body to indicate the five cardinal directions. The figure can be spotted in the Dongba divination image *Bage* (/pɑ˧kʌ˩/), derived from the eight trigrams (Bagua 八卦 or སྤར་ཁ་བརྒྱད་ *spar kha brgyad*).

Although *Haishee Bamei* is translated as 'giant golden frog' in Chinese, in many records, the interpretation on the creature is subject to debate. For example, Ge (1999, p. 7) pointed out that the name should be translated as 'turtle', since the syllable *ba* is not identical to 'frog', in the Naxi vocabulary. Moreover, the worship of the frog is not indigenous to Dongba culture.

Haishee Bamei seems to be a translation from its Tibetan counterpart: [མ་ཧཱ་] གསེར་གྱི་རུས་སྦལ་ ([*ma hā*] *gser gyi rus sbal*; [fabulous] golden tortoise; Das, 1902, p. 1189). In Tibetan, *rus sbal* means 'turtle', while *rus* is a morpheme for 'bone' and *sbal* is used as a morpheme for 'frog', 'crab', and 'lizard' (Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, pp. 613, 835–836; Hummel, 1969, p. 144). Bolstered by images of this

[6] The glyphs and glosses are quoted from Li et al. (1972, p. 151).

animal in Dunhuang manuscripts and Dongba scriptures, Poupard (2018) points out the metamorphosis of *Haishee Bamei* from turtle to frog: the turtle's shell became, or was used for, the divination figure, and it transformed into a frog.

An enhanced version of *Bage* can be the Tibetan geomantic calendar chart (Douglas, 1978, pp. 165–168), where more elements are incorporated, e.g., *Jiugong* (the nine halls diagram) and *Shengxiao* (the twelve Zodiac figures). Such a chart is called *Dagua Tu* 打卦图 ('the divination figure') in local Chinese. The mythical creature holding the chart in this kind of document is the golden tortoise (Yoeli-Tlalim, 2018).

According to Daba Awo, from Wujiao Village, the animal for orientation in this sort of diagram is a mythical creature named *Cobbi Gguhun* (/tsʰoꜜbiꜛguꜛhũꜜ/). This animal lives underground and his movement causes earthquakes. A possible morphological analysis of the compound is 'lake-LOC-body-red'. Therefore, *Cobbi Gguhun* means 'red-body creature living in the lake'. In other words, instead of a Tibetan loan, this is a descriptive name. In a *Bage* fresco from Wumu Village (Yulong County, Yunnan Province), the 'frog' in the center is painted red, despite its conventional Chinese translation, which indicates the color should be golden.[7] These clues imply an alternative pigmentation of the mythical tortoise creature.

The hamlets of Moso are located on the cultural border between Han and Tibetan traditions. It is noticeable that some cultural elements are shared by Han, Tibetan, Hindi, as well as many ethnic groups in this area, e.g., the twenty-eight lunar mansions (Xu, 2016), along with the eight trigrams and the nine halls mentioned here. While it is hard to trace back historical factors in the ancient myths, it is possible to recognize the universals among the multi-ethnic cultures.

For instance, in the legends of Han culture, *Hetu* and *Loshu*, the two omens given by nature, emerged from rivers. According to the annotations of *Hongfan* 洪范 (a chapter in *Shang Shu* 尚书 ['Classic of History'], dating back to the 10th Century BC) by Kong Anguo 孔安国 ([156 BC–74 BC]), the eight trigrams were developed according to the stripes of the dragon-horse (*long ma*龙马) emerged from the Yellow River and the nine halls were developed from the patterns

[7] The picture can be found in Xu (2018, p. 53). According to the author's analysis, the fact that the head of the 'frog' is located upside and the tail downside in this fresco indicates an archetypical phase of the *Bage* figure.

of a tortoise (*ling gui* 灵龟) emerged from the Luo River. The diagrams, therefore, were named after the rivers. There were no indications as to the colours of these two mythical creatures.

Besides the tortoise, the dragon-horse is named after the legendary animal 'dragon'. It is painted as a dragon carrying a manuscript on its back in the Dunhuang manuscript Pelliot chinois 2683 (Drège & Moretti, 2014).

Karmay (1997, p. 413) suggested that the Tibetan term ཀླུང་རྟ (*klung-rta*; river-horse) derived from this 'dragon-horse' in Chinese. The Tibetan word for *Naga*, the giant serpent, is ཀླུ (*klu*). The counterpart in Naish languages is *Shu* (/ʂuɻ/), which is the generic category of the god of nature, with a serpent figure. One of the sub-categories is *Lu* (/ɭvɻ/), which could be obtained from the Tibetan form. They are generally transliterated into Chinese, while occasionally translated as *long* 龙 ('dragon').

Additionally, there is a homophonic spelling of the Tibetan 'river-horse', which means 'wind-horse': རླུང་རྟ (*rlung-rta*; wind-horse).[8] Stein (1972, p. 186) specifies that *rlung* is *prāṇa* ('breathe'). In Tibetan regions, 'wind-horse' refers to the five-colour prayer flags and is depicted as a horse carrying a treasure (Beer, 2003, pp. 67–68).

The Chinese idiom, *feng ma niu bu xiangji* 风马牛不相及 (wind-horse-OX-NEG-encounter), was first spotted in *Zuo Zhuan* 左传 (*The Commentary of Zuo* on *Chunqiu*), compiled in the late 4th Century BC. So far, this idiom is generically explained as a metaphor of two unrelated objects, while the character *feng* 风 is explained as 'lost' or 'induction between animals' (Cihai Bianji Weiyuanhui, 1989, pp. 4006, 4012). Nevertheless, if *feng-ma* 风马 in *Zuo Zhuan* meant 'wind-horse', the metaphor of this idiom is well-explained. In other words, the term *rlung rta* could have existed in the Chinese vocabulary by that time, although it was long-lost in the Han Chinese context. This etymological case adds on to the distinctive cultural landscape in the pre-Qin era (Li, 2004).

Another symbolic mythical animal, *Garuda*, has quite different names in Dongba and Daba traditions as well. This legendary giant bird fighting against the serpent *Naga* is called *Xeqiu* (/ɕə^{33}tɕhy^{21}/) in Dongba literature (*Quanji*, Vol. 6). For its quadrisyllabic epithet, two varieties have been attested: ^{2}ddv-^{1}p'ěr ^{1}khyu-^{3}t'khyu (/dvɬpʰərɻ çyɻtçʰyl/; Rock, 1972, p. 63) and *Ddvpur*

[8] This word is read as "Rurhua" (/rvɻndʐwɑɬ/) in Naxi (Rock, 1972, pp. 108, 121; Li et al. 1972, p. 148).

Xejo (/dvɬ-pʻurɹ-ɕʌɬtɕoɹ/; wing-great-*Garuda*; Li et al., 1972, p. 58). It literally means 'great-wing *Garuda*'.[9] The Dongba term *Xeqiu* partially corresponds to ཁྱུང་ *khyung*, the Tibetan word for *Garuda* (Chos kyi grags pa, 1957, p. 88).[10]

In Daba culture, *Garuda* is called *Zzeiqi Gai'er* (/dzeɹtɕʰiɬkæɬʌrɹ/), or *Ru'er Zzeiqi Gai'er* (/ʐuɹʌrɬ dzeɹtɕʰiɬkæɬʌrɹ/). The segment *Ru'er* means 'four directions' (/ʐuɹʌrɬ/) and *Zzeiqi* means 'springhead' (/dzeɹtɕʰiɬ/). The segment *Gai'er* could represent a localized pronunciation of *Garuda*, in which the second and the third syllables, both with an alveolar initial, merged into one retroflexive vowel.[11] Indeed, the role of *Garuda* in the Daba culture is to guard the water sources.

In other words, the Daba term is a direct borrowing or transliteration of the Sanskrit form *Garuda*, while the Dongba term is a partial loan from the Tibetan translation of *Garuda*. However, the syllable *Xe* in the Dongba term for *Garuda* remains unexplained. A possible etymology could be from the Zhang-Zhung language, the extinct *lingua franca* spoken in Tibet (Hummel & Vogliotti, 2000, p. xiv; Matisoff, 2001).

Zhang-Zhung civilization could have blossomed as early as 3,900 years ago (Norbu & Rossi, 2013, p. 19) and fell in the mid-7th Century AD, during the reign of Srongtsen Gampo (Beckwith, 1987, p. 20). The term *Zhang-Zhung* means 'the clan/valley of *Garuda*': ཞང་ - clan/valley; ཟུང་ - Garuda (Tsultrim Tenzin et al., 2008, pp. 217, 220; Tsering Thar, 2009, p. 25).

This ancient empire consisted of three regions: the gate, or entry, the middle region, and the inner region. The 'gate' of Zhang-Zhung is called *Khyung lung Dngul mkhar* (ཁྱུང་ལུང་དངུལ་མཁར་; Garuda-valley-silver-fort), which literally means 'the Silver Fortress of Garuda Valley' in Tibetan (Tsultrim Tenzin et al., 2008, p. 217). *Khyung lung*, the Garuda valley, possibly is identical to *Qionglong* 邛笼, preserved in the Qiang tribes. These chimney-like stone fortresses were translated as *Diao* 雕, in Chinese, during the Tang Dynasty, according to the annotations of *Hou Hanshu* ('Book of Later Han' [445 AD]; Sun, 1981).

[9] In Dongba culture, "white" is a synonym of "great".

[10] Rock (1972, p. 63) considers "ཁྱུང་ khyung" corresponding to the mythical giant bird "Peng 鵬", in Chinese. This conclusion could have been deduced from the myth of "Kun 鲲" transformed into "Peng", documented in *Xiaoyao You* 逍遥游, *Zhuangzi* (3rd Century BC).

[11] It is transliterated as "Jialouluo 迦楼罗" in Buddhist sutras. The pronunciation of the Chinese characters is reconstructed as /kea lo la/, in Old Chinese (Guo, 2019, pp. 12, 282, 55).

In contemporary vernacular contexts, *Garuda* is mentioned as *Shia Jia Qiong*. *Khyung*, in Wylie transliteration, is read as *Qiong* in Tibetan varieties (Qu, 1996, p. 141). Tsering Thar & Don grub lha rgyal (2012) transliterated this word as *Qiong* 琼 in Chinese. The term *Shia Jia*, with pronunciation similar to *Xejo*, in Naxi, could be phonetically correlated to ཞང་ཞུང་ *Zhang-Zhung*. The letter ཞ is read as an alveolo-palatal fricative (/ɕ/), in modern Tibetan languages (Qu, 1996, pp. 137–138).

To sum up, *Zhang-Zhung* is a clan named after a totem, known as *Garuda* in Hindi traditions. The valley and the typical stone-fortresses of the clan are addressed with the same term. *Khyung lung*, on the other hand, is the Tibetan term for *Zhang-Zhung*. In this case, *Xejo* is an adopted Zhang-Zhung word for *Garuda* (literally '*Garuda* clan'), while *Xeqiu* replaced '*Garuda*', in Zhang-Zhung, with its Tibetan form.

5. Conclusions

The Bon religion has been considered an ancient belief in Tibet derived from Shamanism. The traces of Bon are relatively unclear if compared to other contemporary religions. Dongbaism and Dabaism reveal comprehensive assimilations to Bon. The cultural elements attested in these adjacent ethnic cultures can contribute to the image of Bon in history. By highlighting the distinctions between Dongbaism and Dabaism in the perspective of onomastics, multiple layers of Bon can be observed.

The present study analyzed the etymology of five key notions in Dongba and Daba cultures, including: 1) *Tonpa Shenrab*, the spiritual leader of the Moso community; 2) *Yung-Drung*, the symbol of the second phase of Bon, incorporating Buddhist doctrines; 3) *Samei*, the segment in the epithet of the deity that passed divination scriptures to the human realm, which can be a cognate of *shaman*; 4) *Haishee Bamei*, the mythical creature indicating the cardinal directions, whose name derived from the Tibetan golden tortoise holding the world, and 5) *Xejo/Xeqiu*, the two variants for *Garuda* in Dongbaism, which could be explained via different stages of language change. The figure of the 'peer' of the golden tortoise in Han culture, the 'dragon-horse', was analyzed with its possible Tibetan terms.

This etymological exploration of the names of the representative symbols of Dongba and Daba cultures sheds light on their remote links to the extinct Zhang-Zhung civilization, as well as providing some clues on the geographical border of the vanished kingdom. Through the interactions and derivations of the lexicons, it depicts the images of undocumented history. Although the identity of spirits may gradually change in the passage of time and across cultural borders, the roots of an ethnic culture may be encoded in their designations, which lead us to understand the evolution of cultures.

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