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Charles Ramble

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TROUBLE WITH VAMPIRES: OR, HOW THE LAYOUT OF THIS BOOK CAME TO BE DONE

CHARLES RAMBLE

In the early days of the world, humans were in need of a leader to rule them, and one of their divine benefactors sent an emissary to the realm of the Cha gods to ask for a king. The chosen candidate at first declined the invitation, citing, as the reason for his demurrer, the terrible and dangerous things that were to be found in the world of humans. The list of eleven deterrents that he singled out for special mention included vampires.¹

Vampires are not to be confused with zombies, which Tibetans refer to as ‘rising corpses’: dead bodies that quicken again due to the intrusion of a passing demon or the departed consciousness itself, ignorant or in denial of its own death. Vampires *are* sometimes represented as revenants: dead matter, deposited in middens, that comes back to life. But they are also among the oldest classes of beings in the universe, one of the eleven categories in the lowest of the three realms of troublesome spirits, known as the *Yen* of the Earth. In the vast Tibetan repertoire of terrifying demons, vampires are the most terrifying of all. It is not that their form is frightening; in fact, they do not usually seem to have any particular form of their own, though they may come in the guise of different animals. What makes vampires disturbing is the lack of clear boundaries between them and us, and Tibetan sources do little to put us at ease. The diminutive form of ‘vampire’ means ‘infant’; it may also signify ‘dead infant’, or the mother of a child that has died. At least one source suggests that it denotes a child that is born and survives after a series of older siblings have been killed by a vampire—the vampire itself that has taken human form. In a well-known treatise on ritual, the seventeenth-century regent of Tibet, Desi Sangye Gyatso, specifies that rituals for the subjugation of vampires should not be performed by anyone who is related to the affected family, apparently on the grounds that this would incur the sin of an intra-clan killing. Vampires are the enemy within.

One Tibetan work recounts a chilling story of a vampire attack on two unprotected children. The brief description of the predator in this case suggests that it resembles a weasel that lives beneath a rock.

It was in the land of Mayul Thanggye,
 It was in the castle of Makhar Dempa.
 The father's name, the sire's name,
 Was Tsunpa, Lord of the Ma;
 The mother's name, the dam's name,
 Was Drangkhugma, Lady of the Kyi.
 They had a prince
 A son, a young lad;
 They gave their son a name,
 Jönpa Kye, Prince of the Ma.
 They had another child, a princess
 Tsunmoren, Princess of the Ma.
 The boy and his sister
 Had gay radiant smiles
 And scampered about happily.
 At that time
 Their father went to hunt deer
 And their mother, Drangkhug, Lady of the Kyi
 Gave her son and her daughter
 Her golden ring
 And her silver mirror
 And her conch-shell bracelet.
 She hefted her bag of provisions onto her shoulder
 And picked up her iron staff
 And at the lower end of the place where three valleys meet
 She went to dig potentilla tubers.
 Throughout the morning
 The brother and the sister
 Ran about and played
 With the golden ring
 And the silver mirror
 And the conch-shell bracelet;
 But in the afternoon
 The children pined, they pined for their mother;
 They called, they called for the mother.
 But it was not the mother who heard the children's voices;
 It was the vampire that heard them.

What happens next is too terrible to relate, so we shall return to the story after the satiated vampire, a copper-coloured creature the length of a spindle, has crawled back under its rock. When the mother returned home in the evening

She found their lifeless bodies.
 The mother's cry carried a long, long way,
 And the tears she shed gathered at the tip of her nose.

* * *

As the articles for this anthology started to come in it became increasingly clear that the layout was going to be a complicated business, and that the task would require someone who was fast, flexible and creative. This was clearly a job for Kemi, who is to me what an anthropologist might call a classificatory nephew, and who had proved himself in similar situations before. This being said, there had never been quite such a situation before.

* * *

“Hello Kemi? We're getting quite a big response to the circular we sent out.”

“That's nice, Uncle.”

“With lots of images. And diagrams.”

“I see.”

“And we have to get it done fast.”

“Yes, you said so last week, Uncle.”

“And there are some unusual scripts, too. Not just Tibetan and Chinese.”

“I'm sure we can get them.”

“And some funny symbols.”

“I'll need to take a look.”

“OK. I'll call you in a couple of days.”

“OK. Bye Uncle.”

* * *

My first encounter with a vampire was in 1981, though I didn't know it until the following year.

At the beginning of my fieldwork for my doctoral research I lived in an empty temple on a hill above the village of Lubrak, a Bonpo community in the southern part of Nepal's Mustang District. The temple was less than ideal as a residence for an aspiring fieldworker. I would go down to the village to have meals in the owner's house, but there were long stretches during the days when I was by myself, having no good reason to intrude on the private life of any of the families.

The path between the temple and the owner's home took me past a fairly new house on the edge of the community. The house was inhabited by a young childless couple, Tshewang Tenzin and Palsang, and as I passed by the house—as I did several times a day—Palsang would often invite me into the house for a snack or a cup of tea and a chat.

After a month in the old temple I moved into the couple's house. We became friends, and have been ever since. Palsang was not from Lubrak but from Chongkhor, a village in the Muktinath Valley a few hours' walk to the north-east. To say she had 'married into' Lubrak would not do justice to the reality of her experience as a captured bride. Even at that time, many such capture-marriages were pre-arranged charades staged to give social respectability to the undignified spectacle of a love marriage; but to judge from Palsang's account of her abduction from her family home by two dozen raiders in the dead of night, the capture was authentic enough. The couple had had two sons, but both had died—of measles in one case, and unknown causes in another—before they had reached their fourth year. Occasionally, when rummaging under my bed or a grain box for misplaced belongings in the smoky darkness of the room I occupied I would turn up tokens of the couple's loss: a little pair of red shoes, or a tiny woolly hat.

Palsang was already pregnant again by the time I moved in, but under the thick layers of clothing, especially the many yards of wide homespun wrapped several times around the midriff, it was difficult to tell the difference between layered textile and inner growth.

* * *

"Hello Kemi?"

"Hello Uncle."

"I think we're going to have about sixty articles."

"That's quite a lot."

"We've started the editing, and the first few will be ready soon. Ulrike will do the first half of the alphabet and I'll do the second."

"Sounds good."

"But are you going to have the time to do this? What about your job?"

"It's only three days a week, and I'll have weekends too."

"OK. Then when we've finished an article we'll mark it 'final'. So don't do the layout on anything unless it's marked 'final,' OK?"

"OK Uncle."

"Thanks Kemi. I'll call you soon."

* * *

The baby was born in the winter. Most of the men of the village, including Tshewang Tenzin, had gone to India to sell sweaters, as they did every year, and would not be back before the New Year—the occasion that most Tibetans call Losar, but that is known in Mustang as Tshongguk—'Bringing home the trade'.

Palsang went into labour one evening, attended by her mother-in-law and a few other women, while I sat in the room next door. When the time came she would have shifted onto her elbows and knees while an in-law tried to spoon yak-and-lentil soup into her mouth to give her strength (as she told me later). But all I could hear was her well-controlled, rhythmic groans, and when these finally ended, the sound of an aluminium plate being beaten with a stick—the equivalent of the slap on the baby's bottom with which we, in our countries, make an infant draw its first gasp. The clanging of the plate became louder and the rhythm accelerated, and was joined by the sound of the helpers shouting at the silent newborn. Then after a while the clanging stopped, and the only sound that was left was the noise of old women crying.

Tshewang Trashi, a neighbour, was one of the few men in the village who hadn't gone down for the winter trade. He came to the house next morning, and took away a little bundle wrapped in cloth and buried it in a shallow grave in the sand by the river.

In winter the women and the old men would gather in patches of sunshine on roofs or in threshing yards—the only flat surfaces in the village—to talk and spin wool. At night Palsang and I would sit together and talk, but sometimes she would lay aside her spindle and the crock in which it spun, and cry deeply and silently with her face in her hands. In the daytime there were wet patches on the chest of her dress as her body rid itself of useless milk; all that for nothing.



“Hello Kemi. I see you’ve done the layout for — and —.”

“Yes Uncle.”

“But we hadn’t edited them yet.”

“They were marked ‘final’.”

“Ah, yes. But that’s because the authors put ‘final’ in the file names, and we didn’t notice it. I know they said ‘final’ but they weren’t really final.”

“So I should do them again?”

“Well, yes, I suppose so. Very sorry Kemi.”

“No problem, Uncle.”

* * *

In spring, Palsang was expecting her fourth child. The first hint of it was her new daily routine of leaving the house every morning to vomit into the courtyard before getting on with her household chores. All the senior men in the village were—at least in principle—hereditary lamas, but there were two who had mastered a wider repertoire of rituals than the others: Tshultrim and Gyaltsen. One day in summer Tshultrim came to the house and asked me to draw divinities on four pieces of stiff paper, with the most rudimentary instructions about what they should look like. He brushed aside my protests and I produced four ridiculous figures that at least had heads resembling the animals they were supposed to represent: a wolf, a bear, a lion and a tiger, with caricatures of human bodies, and clutching the appropriate weapons. He couldn’t find his old set, he said, and he needed them for the ritual they were going to do for Palsang. Out came the anthropological notebook. What ritual?

Tshewang Tenzin and Palsang had lost three children in a row, all under the age of three. A harmful spirit or demon can be identified by the symptoms of the affliction it causes: for example, skin ailments signal the presence of the *lu*, the serpent spirits; madness is caused by the *dön*, and paralysis by the *za*. The death of a number of children in succession is a sure sign of a *chung-hri*: the ‘Vampire of the Little Ones’. On the designated day—7 August 1982—Tshultrim and Gyaltsen came to the house and set about preparing all the materials. These included a number of the usual tormas—dough and butter sculptures—some of which were the temporary bodies of the gods who would be invited to provide their power and protection to make the ritual effective, and others the offerings with which they would be feasted. But there was another installation the like of which I had never seen. This was a shallow basket filled with black earth. On the surface were the drawings of two white triangles superimposed to form a star, and nine white crosses in a circle. On top of each cross was a piece of barberry wood with

two smaller sticks inserted perpendicularly into the split ends to form mounted crosses, called *galwa*. In the middle, on top of the star, was a triangular clay receptacle, the ‘pit’ in which the vampire would be trapped and killed. The triangle was surmounted by a trellis of barberry sticks. The perimeter of the basket was ringed with a palisade of little wooden posts, each topped by the sculpted dough head of a different animal. Inside the enclosure were the skull of a weasel and the skull of a dog, and beside it lay the left horn of a yak.



Each of the dough heads bore a little tuft of hair—the actual fur of the animal it represented. But Tshultrim was flustered: he couldn’t find any pig’s hair, and would I happen to have some? I didn’t, as it happened, but the request did make me wonder about a village in which a lama could easily find on his shelves the fur of exotic carnivores such as tigers and bears, but not the hair of a humble pig. But then I remembered my shaving brush—genuine badger, a Christmas present. In fact pigs and badgers are about as closely related as giraffes and walruses, but

they do look and behave similarly enough that the males and females of both are called boars and sows in English, and the Welsh word for badger means ‘earth-pig’. I didn’t know the Tibetan word for badger at the time but I described the animal to Tshultrim. “That’ll do,” he said, and my shaving brush was clipped.

* * *

“Hello Uncle?”

“Hello Kemi.”

“We have a slight problem with the articles by [and here he listed a number of names]. They have Tibetan text.”

“I know. So?”

“Quark doesn’t seem to support Tibetan fonts.”

“What do you mean? We have version 8, which supports Unicode.”

“Yes, but apparently not Tibetan.”

“That’s bloody ridiculous. Which fonts did you try?”

“Monlam, Microsoft Himalaya and a few others. None of them works.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Apparently Tibetan works with InDesign.”

“InDesign? But you don’t know how to use InDesign.”

“No, but I can learn.”

“In a couple of days? I doubt it. And what about stylesheets?”

“Shouldn’t be a problem.”

“I don’t believe this. OK. I’ll call you in a week.”

* * *

Just as the gods had splendid tormas to embody them, so the vampire was also given a receptacle—two, to be precise. One was a dough effigy of a supine human figure, and the other a woodblock paper print of a shackled demon. Into the hollowed belly of the first a wick was inserted and the hollowed filled with melted butter. Gyaltsen placed the figure in the triangle and lit the wick. The blockprint was reddened with reconstituted dried yak blood, and syllables written around the edges with a bamboo pen. The text specifies that the paper should be “poisonous paper, one span in height,” and the pen should be “made from an arrow that has been used to kill a yeti.” The ink in which the magical syllables were written should be a mixture of “blood from a bear that has been killed with a sword, the blood of a mule that has died from poisoning, and the blood of a mad dog.” Since the two lamas didn’t ask me if I happened to have any of these things, I supposed they must have found them sitting around on their shelves next to the tiger fur and the weasel skull.

There are many kinds of vampires, and the ritual for their subjugation varies slightly from one variety to the next. Some must be buried on passes, others at thresholds, others still at crossroads or cemeteries, after being entombed inside the skulls of camels, bears, tigers, foxes or other creatures. A “Vampire of the Little Ones” must be put into the skull of a weasel, which is then inserted into the skull of a dog, and this double prison then buried in a triangular pit below the bed of the woman it has been haunting, immediately underneath the spot where her hips are when she lies down to sleep. The lamas invoked the two transcendent gods—the *yidams*—that occupied the topmost level of the shrine, corresponding to the central point of their divine citadel, and exhorted the eight protectors to accomplish the tasks entrusted to them. Then they chanted the strange story of the first vampire.

A girl-child was born to an outcaste couple and flung into the midden by her father, but recovered by her mother, and brought back to life. She received different names: from her father, Ash-coloured Girl who was Buried; from her mother, Black Raging Woman, Risen Corpse; and from her brother, Lovely Uncared-for Girl. When she was nine years old she made her way up from the pit of hell where she lived, intent on preying on human children. On the way she met a fine young man who turned out to be the Bonpo hero, Shenrab, who threatened to kill her but agreed to spare her life if she swore an oath not to harm humans, and never to forget their covenant. She agreed, and took the oath. “And that,” says the text, “is why the vampires are constant, and why, if you call them, they come.” It was this covenant that the lamas would invoke when they raised Lovely Uncared-for Girl from the depths.

In the next part of the story the scene shifted to a land in which a young woman—possibly the young vampire of the first part, but it is not clear—dreamed that she had a child and entrusted it to the care of her mother.

“I shall be the nursemaid of your child,” said her mother. She dreamed that her mother took the baby with her, and left. It was not reared into childhood, but died in infancy; the shoots did not ripen into barley, but withered as green grain; there was no bird, for the egg was broken; there was no fruit, for it shrivelled in the summer. After two years had passed, again a child was born. She had a dream, and dreamed that her elder sister came. “I shall be the nursemaid of your child,” she said.

And the same thing happened. After the loss of her ninth child she was savagely berated by her mother for her dishevelled appearance, and for

her failure to have a husband or a living child; she was blamed for the loss of her children and driven out of the house to wander the empty spaces as a homeless madwoman.

Lama Gyaltzen and Lama Tshultrim checked that all the doors and windows in the house were firmly shut. There were six of us in the house: the young couple, the two lamas, I and Sherab, a visiting wage-labourer from Te who was hopelessly drunk for the duration of the ritual. We were told to ensure that the doors and windows remained closed from this point, because they were going to call the vampire into the room and she should not be allowed to escape.

Uncared-for one, cousin, listen to me! The time has come when I need you! Do not sleep, cousin, but rise up! Are you not sad there in the darkness? Instead of feeling sad there, come up! Are you not cold in the depths of the ocean? If you are cold there, come up! Do you not feel weighed down under the nine levels of the earth? If they are heavy on you, come up! Here, in the place to which I'm calling you, there is as much food as you can eat; there is as much to drink as you wish, and all you would want to wear, and a beloved one for when you are sad. ...Come for our special promise! Cross the nine sand passes and come; enter the nine slaty valleys and come; listen to the rumbling of the thunder in the sky and come; see the lake in the earth and come; see the lightning flashing in the sky and come; come into the shelter of this five-coloured rainbow... come and sleep in this conch house; come, eat this buttered tsampa; come and drink this buttered *chang* from the ladle; ... come, chew and munch on this meat; come and drink this rich soup; come and seek this egg, that has no opening; ...come and listen to the teachings of the Buddhist and Bonpo priests; come, riding a black horse; come, racing a black eagle; come and look at this mirror of white silver; come, singing and dancing; come and chat, as cousins chat!

Far below the earth and the ocean the vampire heard these words and began to dream of all the wonderful things the lamas had been singing to her.

She dreamed that the great dragon in the sky rumbled as thunder; she dreamed of a great ocean in the earth, and of the lightning flashing in the sky; she dreamed of rainbows winding about her body; she dreamed she was climbing a golden ladder; she dreamed she was crossing the nine sand passes, and entering the nine slate valleys; she dreamed she was sleeping in a conch-shell.... She dreamed she was eating delicious, sweet things; she dreamed she was eating the milky buttered tsampa; she dreamed she was drinking buttered *chang* from the ladle... she dreamed she was listening to the teachings of the Buddhist and Bonpo priests; she dreamed she was chewing, crunching and munching; she dreamed

she was looking for eggs, that have no opening; she dreamed she was riding a black horse; she dreamed she was running on a black plain; she dreamed she was looking at a mirror of white silver; she dreamed she met many beloved ones; she dreamed she was dancing a delightful divine dance; she dreamed she was having a delightful intimate conversation; she dreamed of the sweet fragrance of Chinese incense. It was not a bad dream, but a sweet dream.

She woke from her dream and started to make her way up to the enticing world. On the way she met her mother, and told her about the dream she had had. But her mother did not share her delight.

Daughter, Lovely Uncared-for One, though you were born, you were born an outcaste; though you speak, what you say is unpleasant! Your dream of sleeping inside a conch-shell house—that was actually you sleeping inside the pale skull of a dog; the rainbow colours that swirled about your body—that was you being bound with wool of five colours; the sweet-smelling Chinese incense—that was the smell of the smoke of the five bad requisites;...; eating buttered tsampa boiled in butter—that was you eating your own flesh; drinking buttered *chang* in a ladle—that was you drinking your own blood; chewing, crunching and munching—that was you gnawing your own bones; drinking the soup with many ingredients—that was your intestines being twisted and torn into pieces; looking for the egg that has no opening—that was you opening up your own heart; your meeting with many dear friends—those were your nine kinswomen; that delightful singing and dancing—that was the enticement of your deceivers! My daughter, that was not a good dream, that was a terrible dream! Rather than go on you should flee; rather than flee you should hide!”

But there was nowhere for her to hide. All the places she found were the province of one or other of the animals whose heads surrounded the prison the lamas had made; and it was these animals that the lamas now called on to find her, wherever might be trying to hide, and bring her back.

If she thinks of fleeing to the realm of the sky, you, with the head of the sky-soarer, bring the vampire back from the realm of the sky. If the vampire flees to the face of the white snow-mountain, go, lion-headed one, and fetch her from the face of the white snow-mountain! If the vampire flees to the blue slates, go, cormorant-headed one, and fetch her from the blue slates! If the vampire flees to the edges of the alpine meadows, go, deer-headed one, and retrieve her from the alpine pastures! If the vampire flees to the massy slates, go, you with the wolf’s head and fetch her back from the midst of the slates! If the vampire flees to the side of the red cliffs, go, screech owl, and bring her back from the face of the red cliffs! If the vampire flees to the dark shaded hillside, go, you with the

head of the raging bear, and fetch her from the dark shaded hillside! If the vampire flees to the cemetery forest, go, fox-headed one, and fetch her from the cemetery! If the vampire flees to the bottom of the ocean, go, great otter with the grey fur, and fetch her from the depths of the ocean! If the vampire flees to the centre of the earth, go, you with the head of the wild boar, and retrieve her from the centre of the earth! If the vampire flees beneath the highway, go, fearsome brown bear, and bring her back from beneath the highway! If the vampire flees to the midst of the ruins, go, owl-headed one, and retrieve her from the ruins! If the vampire flees beneath the threshold, go, dog-headed one, and retrieve her from beneath the threshold! If the vampire flees beneath the hearth, go, yak-headed one, and retrieve her from under the hearth!

The lamas blew their thighbone trumpets and told us to whistle loudly to call the vampire in. She was trapped in the spreadeagled dough effigy that was placed inside the barberry wood trellis, and in the paper print of the manacled demon. The four cards with the animal headed creatures I had drawn on them were placed in the four directions around the clay pit—these were, I understood, the four warders who would guard her closely and prevent her from escaping.

Lama Gyaltzen stabbed at the flame that burned in the belly of the supine effigy in front of him and extinguished it. The blood-lettered blockprint was folded into a triangle and wrapped with coloured wool, like a rainbow. It was affixed to a plank, and Tshewang Tenzin was told to fetch his bow and shoot three arrows into it, and then to hit it with an adze and then a hammer. Gyaltzen inserted the print into the weasel's skull, which he then put into the dog's skull. The contents of the basket were stuffed into the yak horn, and the opening wrapped tightly with a piece of goathair sack and the rope with which it was bound affixed to the sack with sealing wax. The lamas told us each in turn to stamp on the horn. Tshultrim dropped the horn and the skulls into the triangular pit, with the remainder of the basket's contents and a glowing ember from the stove. They filled the hole in again and lit a fire on top.

And that was the end of the vampire, slain by association with the very first vampire, the Lovely Uncared-for Girl who had just wanted someone to talk to and, as far as I could tell from the text, had never actually done anything wrong at all. We opened the doors and windows and settled down for dinner.

“Hello Kemi?”

“Hello Uncle.”

“I checked the Dropbox. Those articles you did in InDesign. The Tibetan seems to have, ah, come out quite nicely. They, er, look quite good actually. I guess you managed to find someone to help you.”

“No, I found a couple of tutorials online. G—’s article is a little complicated because he used a non-Unicode font for the Tibetan, but I asked him to convert it and he did that straight away. And Z— has Urdu and Devanāgarī and needs seven different kinds of star symbols.”

“Can you find someone who reads Urdu?”

“I think so.”

“And the stars?”

“Should be OK.”

* * *

I had already left Lubrak and was staying in Kathmandu when the baby, a boy, was born that winter. But a friend in the US Peace Corps, John Valesano, had visited the village and brought news. I asked what the baby’s name was. “I’m not sure,” he said, “it’s something like ‘I Eat A Butter’.”



I met little Aita Bahadur in the arms of his proud mother three years later, a few months after I had returned to Nepal. I took them for lunch at Nirula’s, in Kathmandu, and the boy covered himself and the table in ice cream. The vampire might be buried under the full weight of Mount Meru, but Tshewang Tenzin and Palsang had taken no chances. There

are several methods for deflecting the attention of gods and demons from vulnerable newborns. Giving a child an unattractive name (such as Oyo or Kyikyak—Fido or Dogshit) is one possibility, but in this case they had chosen the option of asking Kancha the village Blacksmith to give their son a Nepali name to fool the invisible powers into thinking that he was an outcaste, as Blacksmiths are in Nepal’s obsolete caste system, and not worth their attention: *quem di diligunt adolescens moritur*.

Aita Bahadur, the make-believe Blacksmith, was joined by a brother, and then a sister. In time his parents sent him to the Bonpo settlement in Dolanji, in India, to become a novice monk and attend the Tibetan school. Here he received the Tibetan name Kalsang Tshewang, though he was usually known as ‘Mister’, because that was how he addressed everyone. He later moved to a boarding school in Kathmandu where his command of English continued to grow. His fluency in several languages helped him to find work as an assistant and translator for research teams and film projects, and he took good advantage of these occasions to learn about video and sound recording, skills that he was able to develop further in documentary film-making courses in the UK. He was also very strong, and in Southern Mustang he acquired a reputation as a fearsome fighter. He took to computers early, and though he was never much one for reading, his keen visual sense helped him to master a number of softwares. He had long ago stopped using his Tibetan monastic name, Kalsang Tshewang; and though he had shed ‘Aita Bahadur’ even earlier, he preserved his fictitious Blacksmith origins in the name that finally stuck—‘Blacksmith’. The Nepali word for Blacksmith is *kāmi*, but in Tibetan dialects of Mustang, when it is used as a personal name, the word is pronounced ‘Kemi’.

* * *

“Hello Kemi?”

“Hello Uncle.”

“Well done for finding the stars. But she says there’s no Devanāgarī font that works with InDesign, and the Arabic script is the wrong one. Apparently it doesn’t represent the dotless *N* or *nun-e ghunna*. At least, that’s what her message says.”

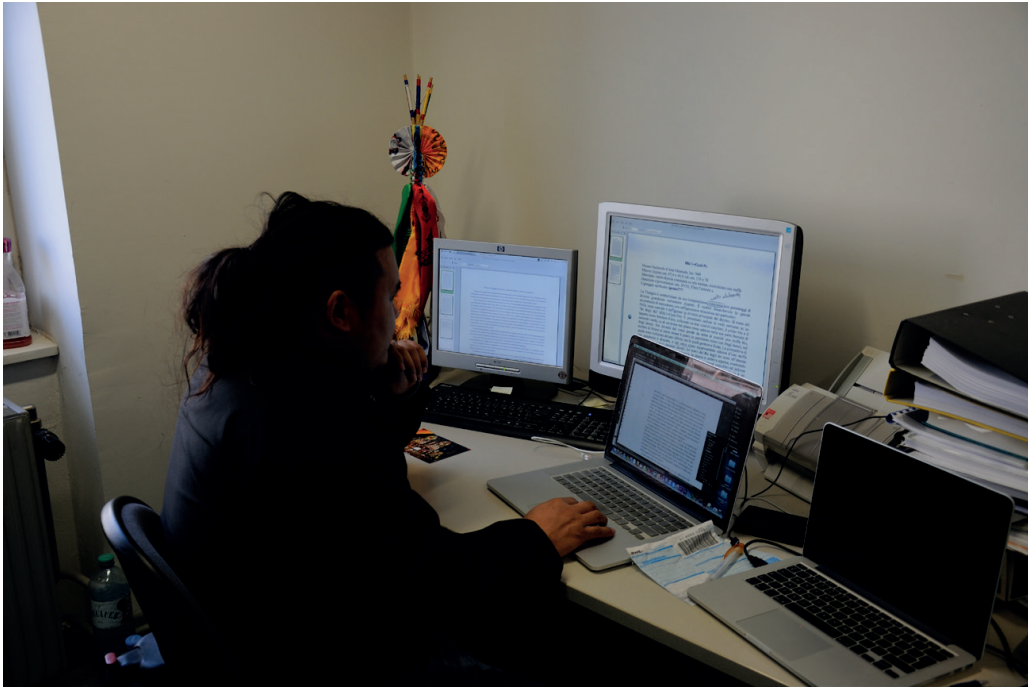
“I see. What about doing JPEG inserts?”

“She’s sent them. Nice of her. I’ll put them in the Dropbox. It looks like we’re nearly there.”

“I found a Devanāgarī font that works. (*Pause*) Ulrike’s half is finished, Uncle. Now we’re only waiting for — ”

“Yes I know I know. They’ll be done in the next couple of days.”

“That’s good to know, Uncle.”



NOTES

¹ The Tibetan term that I translate as ‘vampire’ is *sri* (pronounced *si* in Central Tibet and *hri* in the dialects of Mustang); it sometimes also appears as *sri can* and *sri gcan*. ‘Vampire’ is the English term used by David Snellgrove (1967), possibly following Rolf Stein, who equates the Tibetan *sri* with the Mongolian *buq*, meaning “*démon, vampire*” (Stein 1939: 331). If the *sri* and the *buq* seem to have little in common with the vampires we know so well from films and novels, we would do well to remember Paul Barber’s caveat against confusing the vampires of fiction with those of folklore (Barber [1988] 2010: 4). The subject of *sri* and the rituals for their subjugation are discussed by a number of authors, and I hope to do justice to them in a more extensive study on this category of demons.

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