

# An Embarrassing ‘Red Smoke Purification’

## (*dmar bsang*) Ritual

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In 1999, I had the opportunity to observe a *Dmar bsang* offering performed by a group of Tibetan villagers in the city of Khri ka (Amdo). The ritual was performed in the temple of Khri ka'i yul lha, a rather fascinating deity that is both—considered locally as the Tibetan territorial god of some Amdo villages and identified with the Chinese gods of literature and of war. This ritual, which involves the burning of a goat, has rarely been described in the literature. Insofar as it is totally inconsistent with the Buddhist ideal of compassion, Tibetan sources on the subject are scarce, not to say non-existent, as are also secondary sources.

Back in the city of Khri ka in 2016, I saw that the ritual is still performed today but has undergone several important changes, in particular the burning of pieces of meat. Furthermore, I observed that the *dmar bsang* ritual was also performed every day in some dge lugs pa monasteries of Amdo where this daily offering is presented to the protector Dam can Rdo rje legs pa.

In this presentation I will first describe the ritual to Khri ka'i yul lha, then present the complex personality of the god before discussing the changes I observed and their causes. I will also present the ritual to Rdo rje legs pa and the explanations they give regarding this practice.