

Water Imagery in the Writings of Don grub rgyal¹

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Introduction

Don grub rgyal (1953-1985) was a Tibetan writer from Amdo who played a significant role in the development of modern Tibetan literature in the first half of the 1980s. His literary output comprises prose, poetry, scholarly and commentarial works, essays and translations.² Characteristic of Don grub rgyal's writings is their rich poetic imagery: his poems and prose are full of metaphors, similes and clusters of images. A large amount of the images are images of nature, including an abundance of water imagery. In fact, some of Don grub rgyal's most famous works such as "*Lang tsho'i rbab chu*" ("The Waterfall of Youth") and the song "*E ma mtsho sngon po*" ("Oh, Blue Lake!") are centered on water imagery.

This essay will give readers an insight into Don grub rgyal's imagery of water in its various forms. I will try to provide answers to the questions: What kind of water images are there in Don grub rgyal's literary works? What kind of meanings are conveyed with the help of water images? This essay will also contain a discussion of the innovations of Don grub rgyal's water imagery and its relation to traditional Tibetan or cross-culturally common metaphorical structures. To be able to answer these questions I have analyzed passages from Don grub rgyal's poetry and prose containing various kinds of water images: for instance images of rivers, waterfall, lakes, the ocean and so on and also paid attention to the transformation of water into ice. Even though there are other forms of water such as rain and bubbles, in this essay I will focus only on the above-mentioned natural forms of water.

A large part of the images discussed here have water as a source domain. A source domain image may normally be used in connection with more than one target domain. Naturally, water in its various forms may also be a target domain image. Some of the literary works of Don grub rgyal contain passages where it is difficult to distinguish between source and target domains. This is especially the case in free-verse poetry and in the above-mentioned song containing a strong central image. In such cases, I have made use of the theory of conceptual blending to analyze them.³

I will start my discussion with rivers, then move on to analyze the image of the waterfall in the poem "*Lang tsho'i rbab chu*" ("The Waterfall of Youth"). I will discuss the images of the ocean and lakes, paying special attention to the image of the Blue Lake (mTsho sngon po, Kokonor) and the transformations its water undergoes in the song "*E ma mtsho sngon po*" ("Oh, Blue Lake!").

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² On the life and literary works of Don grub rgyal, see for example Stoddard (1994), Pema Bhum (1995), Kapstein (1999), and Chos skyong (2006).

³ For theoretical views on conceptual blending see Turner 1996: 57–84 and Kövecses 2002: 227–238. The chapter on blends in Kövecses's book summarizes the theory of blends that was originally introduced by Fauconnier and developed further by Fauconnier and Turner.

Rivers and Time

I will first discuss the image of a stream of water. Rivers are generally viewed as a flowing continuum. The water flows continuously forward in its course. This quality of the river is often made use of in the images of rivers in Tibetan literature. A source domain image of a river may be mapped on a wide range of target domains.

Scholars engaged in the cognitive study of metaphor have discussed the image of a river in connection with the conceptual metaphor "TIMES ARE MOVING OBJECTS", the so-called "Moving Time" metaphor. The metaphors using the image of a river are seen as a variation of this basic metaphor that replaces the "moving objects" with "a flowing substance". George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999: 141, 144) write in their book *Philosophy in the Flesh*: "Thus, we speak of *the flow of time* and often conceptualize the linear flow of time in terms of a common linear moving substance - a river." The "Moving Time" metaphor can also be found in Tibetan literature and is found in several passages in the writings of Don grub rgyal.



Don grub rgyal's poem in nine-syllable verse titled "*rTsom gyi mtsho mor rlabs kyi me tog dgod*" ("In the Lake of Writing the Flowers of Waves Are Blooming") contains a passage that has an impressive amount of water imagery. This poem was written inspired by the meeting of Tibetan writers. It contains mention of several Tibetan writers of that time and the titles of some of their well-known literary works embedded in the text.⁴ The passage containing the water images appears near the end of the poem that concludes with the image of "the lake of writing of the Snowy Land" - the image also chosen as the title of the poem. It reads:

*sngon byon mkhas pa'i ljags rtsom 'bri chu ni//
chal chil g.yo ba'i lbu ba mngon mthor brtsegs//
dmangs khrod rtsom rig rma klung dal ba'i rgyun//
yan lag brgyad dang ldan pa'i sgeg nyams ngom//
deng gi gsar rtsom chu klung sna tshogs kyang//
lhung lhung glu dbyangs bar med sgrog par rtsom//*
(Don grub rgyal, "*rTsom gyi mtsho mor rlabs kyi me tog dgod*")⁵

'Bri chu of the writings of the earlier scholars
has been foaming up its bubbles to the heights
the slow stream of rMa chu river of folk literature
is showing off its attractiveness of having eight good qualities⁶
the various water streams of the modern new writing
are constantly beginning to sing their pleasant songs
(Don grub rgyal, "In the Lake of Writing the Flowers of Waves Are Blooming")

This excerpt has a series of source domain images of rivers. Their basic structure is "writing is a river". The images are clearly connected with the passage of time and cultural transmission. Also the different loci of the past and present are mentioned. Thus it is possible to view these images as

⁴ See Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 1: 138.

⁵ Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 1: 140.

⁶ *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* ("The Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary", p. 2553) explains the eight qualities or literally "branches" of water to be: "sweet, cool, soft, light, clear, clean, not irritating the throat, and beneficial for the stomach".

manifestations of the cross-culturally common "Moving Time" metaphor.⁷ However, the images have a strong Tibetan flavour that has been created by using the names of great Tibetan rivers 'Bri chu and rMa chu. The passage stresses the continuity in the transmission of writings and literature. By mentioning 'Bri chu and rMa chu, a cross-cultural and common type of metaphorical structure is here employed in a cultural specific manner. Preceding the verses quoted above the poem shows a feature of Tibetan landscape - the image of the original abode of the rivers high amidst the snow of the upper mountain ridges.⁸

The source domain images of rivers may be used to depict several other target domains. Some typical target domains in the writings of Don grub rgyal are studies and love. A person very enthusiastic in his studies may be described as studying with effort as "the flow of the river" (*chu bo'i rgyun bzhin*) as in the novella "*Sad kyis bcom pa'i me tog*" ("A Flower Destroyed by Frost").⁹ If this image is compared with traditional literature for example such as *Mi la ras pa'i mgur 'bum* ("The Collected Songs of Mi la ras pa"), it is also possible to find the image of a river current in a metaphor. In *Mi la ras pa's* song the source domain image of a river has been mapped on the target domain of meditation and depicts a kind of continuous meditative state.¹⁰ The spiritual concept of diligence in meditation practice could be well compared to the diligence in doing secular studies. The traditional and modern images resemble one another but there is a small shift in the mapping on the target domain. The source domains are identical whereas the target domains share some features but differ in that the modern target domain is secular.

Apart from continuity there is another quality in a stream also: it is never still but moves forward all the time passing the viewer standing on its bank. This makes it possible to use a stream to express also something very momentary and ephemeral. In Don grub rgyal's short story "*Sha dang rus pa'i brtse dungs*" ("The Love of Flesh and Bone") there are two similes attached to one target domain: feelings. The second of these similes is a water image, namely the image of the river of Rong phu. The first person narrator of this passage, the old thangka painter relates:

... yin na yang/ nga'i tshor snang 'di dag ni zhag gcig gi mgron po dang 'dra bar yun ring bor gnas ma thub la/ rong phu'i chu bo dang 'dra bar skad cig skad cig la bzhur nas bud song/
(Rang grol, "*Sha dang rus pa'i brtse dungs*")¹¹

... however, these feelings of mine like a guest of one single evening could not tarry long and flowed on moment by moment like the river of Rong phu.
(Rang grol [Don grub rgyal], "*The Love of Flesh and Bone*")

It is interesting to note that the image of water flowing in a river is thus used depending on the context of the image for both quite opposite appearing aspects of time: its continuity and its momentary nature.

⁷ An example of this type of metaphor connecting the image of a river and an idea of time may also be found in the Bible, see Kövecses (2002: 60-61).

⁸ The source domain image of "the cool snow hermitage" has been mapped on the target domain of "the five traditional sciences" that is the place from where "the clear and pure stream of water of good qualities" descends. Depicting learning as a stream focusses on the continuity in the tradition of learning. The poem comments furthermore on the qualities of "the stream of water" saying, "that there will never be chance it would dry up", stressing the long-lasting continuity conveyed by this image (Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 1: 140).

⁹ Don grub rgyal 1982 & 1983, part 1, 9.

¹⁰ Rus pa'i rgyan can, *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur*, 218: "*sgom pa 'od gsal chu bo'i rgyun// bsgom rgyu'i thun mtshams gzung rgyu med// bsgom bya sgom byed stor nas thal// sgom pa'i snying rus bzang nas byung//*". In English: "The water stream of meditation upon clear light// need not to be meditated in separate retreats// the meditation and the meditator became one// this came from due diligence in meditation."

¹¹ Rang grol 1984: 27.

The Waterfall of Youth: Conceptual Blending in Free-verse Poetry

I will now present some remarks about one of the free-verse poems of Don grub rgyal that makes use of a significant amount of water imagery or rather is centered around it. "*Lang tsho'i rbab chu*" ("The Waterfall of Youth") is perhaps the most famous poem written by Don grub rgyal.¹² He wrote it under his pen-name Rang grol. Moreover, this free-verse poem has special significance if we consider the development of modern poetry in the Tibetan language: its publication in 1983 is often considered to have had an important role in the beginning stage of "new poetry" (*snyan ngag gsar pa*) in Tibetan.¹³

The image of the waterfall is on one hand an image connected with water streams. However, it has also another aspect, namely that of falling water. Thus it can be viewed as a variation of the metaphorical structures connected with rivers that also possesses additional characteristics. Because the creation and style of image structuring is quite different in this poem compared to several other literary works of Don grub rgyal, the concept of blends is helpful for its analysis and interpretation. The powerful image of the waterfall presents itself strongly throughout the poem. Its status however, varies in different places: it can sometimes be interpreted as a single image, then as a source domain and then as a target domain. In-between the various interpretations there exists a fluidity. Therefore it is better to analyze this poem with the help of a conceptual blended space in which characteristics from both input domains of youth and waterfall are present. Considered as a whole, the poem could be thought of as one large metaphor existing in a blended conceptual space.

The poem starts with a description of the beautiful landscape characterized by flowers and high mountains bathed in sunlight: the Tibetan milieu in which the waterfall of the poem is located. Also the typographical outlook of the poem resembles a waterfall to some extent: the lines of the different sections of the poem descend gradually towards the right on the pages.

Then the waterfall is introduced first as a mere image: waterfall falling down from the rocks. Its characteristics such as bubbles and light reflecting upon it are described with words of poetic beauty. Here the waterfall is clearly a representation of a natural waterfall and all its elemental characteristics - forming the other input domain for the blended space in the core of this poem.

The beginning of a blended space can often be noticed from some linguistic markers (or words mentioning characteristics that the object does not normally possess). In this poem, the first hint of a metaphoric interpretation is in the line describing the sound of the waterfall; simultaneously speaking about "the melodious song of youth" that is like "the song of the *gandharvas*".¹⁴ A clear marker for the blend is in the line stating explicitly: "Hey - this is not an ordinary natural waterfall".¹⁵ Also several human characteristics are mentioned to illustrate the waterfall such as "fearless heart" and "well-developed body". Following closely the other framework or input domain of the poem becomes stated in a clear manner. The voice of the poem

¹² This poem has been translated into English by Tsering Shakya in Stewart, Batt & Tsering Shakya 2000: 9-13 and into Finnish by me in *Kirjo* 2002 (2): 10-11. I have based my discussion entirely on the Tibetan original that appeared in *sBrang char* 1983 (2) and the excerpts of the poem that I have included in this section were translated by me into English from Tibetan. I think that this was required for the sake of the analysis and in order to preserve the metaphorical expressions as exactly as possible. Also all the other translations of quotes from Tibetan literature included in this essay were translated by me from the Tibetan originals.

¹³ See the essays about this poem by the Tibetan authors bDud lha rgyal (1999: 1) and Tshe grub (2005: 10). I am thankful to Chokden Tsering for pointing out to me the existence of bDud lha rgyal's essay. The term *snyan ngag gsar pa* refers to modern free-verse poetry that was no longer bounded by the rules of the *kāvya*-style nor any other restrictions of poetic expression.

¹⁴ *Dri za* refers to mythological concept of "heavenly musicians". Rang grol 1983: 56: "*lang tsho'i glu dbyangs ni dri za'i glu*".

¹⁵ Rang grol 1983: 57: "*kye - 'di ni rang bzhin gyi rbab chu dkyus ma zhig ma yin te*".

defines the identity of the waterfall by saying: "This is - the waterfall of youth of the young persons of Tibet, the Snowy Land".¹⁶ The two frameworks are intermingled in the lines where the waterfall is addressed in such a way that the two input domains are exchanged with one another or rather blended together:

*kye kye/ rbab chu yi lang tsho ya/
lang tsho yi rbab chu/
(Rang grol, "Lang tsho'i rbab chu")¹⁷*

Oh, oh, the youth of waterfall, ya
the waterfall of youth
(Rang grol, "The Waterfall of Youth")

This kind of passage is a clear indication that to analyze one part of a metaphorical expression as a source domain and the other as a target domain is difficult and not purposeful in this poem. In this case the assumed unidirectionality (a mapping process from source to target) is not valid. One clear linguistic marker in the poem for the blended space of the waterfall and the youth is the usage of the pronoun *khyed* ("you") in addressing the waterfall.

The imagery in this poem has both highly innovative properties and also traditional ones. As for the traditional and cross-culturally shared properties, it is possible to discern the familiar underlying metaphorical structure associating water streams with ideas of time or continuity (related with the "TIMES ARE MOVING OBJECTS" metaphor). The waterfall also has its source of origin from where it streams down and beyond the waterfall the stream of water continues onwards. The water keeps cascading in a continual stream. However, even a waterfall is a stream in one sense, yet it has an additional property of its own: the natural and powerful uncontrollable deluge that may evoke associations of freedom.

The framework of youth (*lang tsho*) combined with that of the waterfall seems to be a strategy to discuss the idea of innovation and progress. It is possible to think human beings as part of the lineage of earlier generations sort of "streaming" to the present from ancient times and ever continuing forward. However, it is notable that Don grub rgyal has chosen to write about the Tibetan youth and not simply about the Tibetan people. The concept of youth itself evokes the ideas of newness, freshness and energy to create anew. A Tibetan scholar Tshe grub in his analysis of this poem interprets the youth to represent the future.¹⁸ The idea of innovation (*gsar gtod*) is first expressed when describing the "courage to innovate" that the Tibetan youth possesses.¹⁹ Respectively, the waterfall is being characterized with the words: "as you have the confidence to gather together new water streams".²⁰ Both the courage of the youth for innovation and the quality of the waterfall to merge new streams are combined in the blended space to stress the importance of openness to new ideas and things.

The visual images of water are made even more lively by mentioning different types of water that unite as a waterfall: first we read about waters in the different seasons: the rainwater of spring, the springwater of summer, the frost and hail of autumn and the snow of winter. There follows an imaginative sounding list of various types of water: "snowy water, water coming from rock and slate mountains (*rdza chu* and *g.ya' chu*), forest water (*nags chu*), water flowing on the grassland

¹⁶ Rang grol 1983: 57: "*di ni - bod gangs can gyi gzhon nu rnams kyi lang tsho'i rbab chu red*".

¹⁷ Rang grol 1983: 57.

¹⁸ See Tshe grub 2005: 12.

¹⁹ Rang grol 1983: 57.

²⁰ In Tibetan: "*khyed la gsar byung gi chu sna bsdu ba'i spobs pa dang ldan pas*" in Rang grol 1983: 58. The word *gsar byung* is literally "newly originated" and refers to something coming newly into existence.

(*na chu*), mountain water (*ri chu*), water in the valley (*lung chu*), water of the upper slopes (*phu chu*) and water of the lower slopes (*mda' chu*)."²¹

The poem contains discussions about time and cultural transmission. In the following excerpt the flowing and cascading water stream is clearly connected to the framework of discussing time:

*rbab chu ya/
khyed ni lo rgyus kyi dpang po dang/
ma 'ongs pa'i lam 'dren red/
khyed kyi dri ma bral ba'i chu thigs re re'i nang du/
gangs can bod kyi 'phel 'grib 'khod yod la/
khyed kyi gzegs ma 'bar ba'i rdul phran re re'i nang du/
bsil ldan kha ba'i ljongs kyi dar rgud 'dus yod/
(Rang grol, "Lang tsho'i rbab chu")²²*

Waterfall, ya
you are the witness of history and
the guide to the future
in each of your limpid drops of water
are written the ups and downs of the Snowy Land of Tibet
in each of your shining droplets of water
are gathered the ebbs and flows of the cool region of snows
(Rang grol, "The Waterfall of Youth")

The waterfall is metaphorically said to be the witness of history and guide to the future. Thus the waterfall comes down from ancient times and moves towards future. This way of discussing time strengthens the idea of continuity and there exists a clear similarity with the river images presented earlier. Associating the drops of water in the waterfall with the fate of Tibet gives it a nationalistic flavour. The words referring to Tibet - *bod* "Tibet", and *gangs can* "Snowy Land" - are repeated often in the poem. However, these days such words may also be well understood in the context of minority nationalities of the People's Republic of China, but anyway, the poem expresses a love and caring for the people belonging to one's own nationality.

In the final lines of the poem the place of the waterfall, first depicted in the Tibetan landscape and then in the imagined blended space, is re-shifted to a new "environment" and a new kind of identity is revealed: Says the poem: "waterfall falls in the minds of the Tibetan youths".²³ Saying that the metaphoric waterfall does not vanish seems to refer to a vision of cultural and national continuity in the future.

It is possible to interpret this poem in several ways: as an expression of cultural continuity and at the same time conveying a kind of belief in progress and innovation as well as an expression of freedom or a wish for freedom. "The waterfall of youth" descending in the minds may also evoke this kind of interpretation. A waterfall is a powerful natural force which flows where it wants and will continue its flow. The word freedom can be interpreted in more than one way, namely personal freedom and/or national freedom. To have freedom in a personal context is a theme that can be found in other works of Don grub rgyal, for example that of having the freedom to choose one's

²¹ Rang grol 1983: 57–58.

²² Rang grol 1983: 58–59.

²³ Rang grol 1983: 62.

spouse.²⁴ It might also be possible to talk of the freedom to live as one wants and work for one's culture in a way one would choose oneself.²⁵

In this poem the innovative and traditional or cross-culturally shared elements are combined together effectively to form the central image. The underlying familiar structure of the "Moving Time" metaphor, stressing the idea of continuity that may be associated with rivers makes the image understandable to the reader. The elaboration of the cascading water and the other input domain of youth create a new sense and meaning. The way the various elements are blended in this poem is structurally very different from traditional poetry and thus the structure of the image may be regarded as highly innovative.

Ocean, Lakes and Waves

The images of the ocean are numerous both in traditional²⁶ and modern Tibetan literary works. Considering the fact that the area populated by Tibetans is located high in a mountainous region far away from oceans the large number of ocean images is not at all self evident. In the writings of Don grub rgyal the images of ocean are often employed to express mental states or vastness.

I will first look at the metaphorical expressions having the basic structure MIND IS AN OCEAN. In Western literature mind is often referred to with the help of metaphorical expressions as well. However, the metaphor of mind as an ocean seems to be very typical of Tibetan culture. This becomes evident in Don grub rgyal's unfinished long story "*bTsan po'i bang so myul ba'i gtam rgyud*" ("A Story of Searching the Royal Tombs"). The first person narrator is in a huge grass plain and does not know where he is going to. This is how he feels:

*nga'i sems ni rgya mtsho'i rba rlabs ltar 'khrugs te 'jags par 'dod kyang rlabs phreng re re bzhin gcig rjes
gnyis mthud du 'ongs pas rang dbang ni mi 'dug
(Don grub rgyal, "bTsan po'i bang so myul ba'i gtam rgyud")²⁷*

My mind was storming like the waves of an ocean. Although I wished that it would calm down, the rows of waves approached following one after another and I did not have any control of it.
(Don grub rgyal, "A Story of Searching the Royal Tombs")

In this image the stormy state of the ocean is used to express a state of confusion and being worried. The image is in a form of a simile. Various kinds of emotional states may be expressed with similar type of images: in Don grub rgyal's short story "*brTse dungs kyi rba rlabs*" ("The Waves of Love") the mental state of a girl missing her boyfriend is described in similar kinds of terms of a stormy ocean with high billowing waves.²⁸ The writings of Don grub rgyal also display some variation of what kind of bodies of water are used to depict the mind: there is even at least one case in the novella "*Sad kyis bcom pa'i me tog*" ("A Flower Destroyed by Frost") where the mind of a girl is

²⁴ Don grub rgyal's novella "*Sad kyis bcom pa'i me tog*" ("A Flower Destroyed by Frost") contains criticism of the custom of arranged marriages.

²⁵ Freedom (*rang dbang*) has also been connected to waterfall in a metaphor in lJang bu's poem "H²O". In this poem about ice there occurs the metaphor "*drag tu 'bab pa'i rang dbang gi rbab chu*", "the forcefully descending waterfall of freedom" when the glacier dreams about transformation and getting mixed with the waterfall (lJang bu 1996: 10). The word "freedom" and ideas of "getting free" may also be found in the Tibetan authors' discussions of Don grub rgyal's poem and it seems to be used for a personal freedom in society and the freedom of thought that are necessary for creativity and progress (see bDud lha rgyal 1999: 1, 3 and Tshe grub 2005: 10-11, 16).

²⁶ Victoria Sujata (2005: 206) has counted several occurrences of metaphors with the image of ocean in sKal ldan rgya mtsho's songs, although she does not discuss this image further in her discussion about the figures of speech in the songs.

²⁷ Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 2: 358.

²⁸ Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 2: 18.

being compared by a male character to a "muddy pond polluted by rubbish" when he cannot know her actual thoughts and intentions.²⁹

Using the image of an ocean to speak about the mind is found in traditional literature such as in Mi la ras pa's song to rock ogress and her entourage. The song has a series of images all used to illustrate the nature of mind and the actual nature of existence. It says that the water, bubbles and waves originate from the ocean and absorb into it.³⁰ In a religious text the focus is rather on a meditative state and the waves calming down into a more peaceful state. However, in Don grub rgyal's writings the characters whose mind becomes described in terms of an ocean are not engaged in meditation but are undergoing an emotional storm and the direction of the waves is rather more upwards than downwards. Thus the image of ocean in Don grub rgyal's writings is strongly connected with Tibetan traditional imagery, however, its usage has become secularized and it is employed in his writings to normally express a very secular concern like being worried, confused or experiencing another kind of emotional agitation.

An example of using the source domain of ocean to express that something is large or numerous is found in Don grub rgyal's unfinished story "*Tshul khrims rgya mtsho*"³¹ where it says that in the main character's life there had been "a rivulet of suffering" (*sdug bsngal gyi chu phran*) and an "ocean of happiness" (*bde skyid kyi rgya mtsho*).³² Here different-sized bodies of water have been made use of to express the amplitude of certain kinds of experiences.

In Don grub rgyal's works there are no images of frozen oceans. However, there are several images of frozen lakes and streams. Normally the ice or frozen water does not evoke very positive associations in the writings of Don grub rgyal. In the short story "*sGrung ba*" ("The Storyteller") the image of a lake has been mapped on people's minds and the story recounts a time when those "lakes were frozen".³³ Judging from the plot of the story according to which in its time the expressions of traditional culture were forbidden and the name character passing away due to injuries received in a struggle session, the "time when the lakes of people's minds were bound by ice"³⁴ most likely refers to the period of the Cultural Revolution.

Images of lakes are commonly used to convey a sense of deepness in the writings of Don grub rgyal. For instance love may be "deeper than blue lake" as in the stories "*Sad kyis bcom pa'i me tog*" ("A Flower Destroyed by Frost") and "*Sha dang rus pa'i brtse dungs*" ("The Love of Flesh and Bone") or something may vanish "like throwing a stone in the Blue Lake" as in "*Mi rtag sgyu ma'i rmi lam*" ("Impermanent Illusory Dream").³⁵

²⁹ In Tibetan: "*bu mo'i sems kyi gsang ba ni snyigs ros sbags pa'i 'dam gyi rdzing bu dang a na ma na red*". Don grub rgyal 1982 & 1983, part 1: 11. The simile is also lexically interesting as it uses a word typical of the Amdo dialect: *a na ma na* ("exactly same").

³⁰ Rus pa'i rgyan can, *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur*, 236: "*chu klung dang chu bur chu rlabs gsum// byung yang rgya mtsho rang las byung// thim yang rgya mtsho rang la thim//*". In English: "Even though there come into being water, bubbles and waves, they originate from the ocean itself. Also they are reabsorbed into the ocean itself."

³¹ The name of the story is the personal name of its main character.

³² Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 2: 112.

³³ Don grub rgyal 1981: 44.

³⁴ In Tibetan: "*mi rnams kyi bsam pa'i mtsho mo 'khyags pas bsdams pa'i dus*".

³⁵ In the novella "*Sad kyis bcom pa'i me tog*" (Don grub rgyal 1982 & 1983, part 2: 17) "the love deeper than the blue lake" characterizes the love between parents and their children: "*pha ma bu phrug gi brtse dungs ni sngon mo mtsho las zab pa/...*" Here the order of the words "blue" and "lake" is in different order than in the name of Kokonor, thus here this word may be used just for any lake that is blue. A similar image is found also in the short story "*Sha dang rus pa'i brtse dungs*" ("The Love of Flesh and Bone") in p. 34. In the short story "*Mi rtag sgyu ma'i rmi lam*" ("The Impermanent Illusory Dream") the main character's applications to become a member of the Communist party do not receive a reply. The passage says: "*kho rang gi tang la zhugs rgyu'i 'dod yig zla rer thengs re bris pa de dag ni mtsho sngon po'i nang la rdo 'phangs pa ltar phar 'gro yod kyang tshur yong med par gyur ba dang/...*" (Don grub rgyal 1997,

Among the most famous works of Don grub rgyal is the song "*E ma mtsho sngon po*" (Oh, Blue Lake!).³⁶ It is a work of Don grub rgyal that has for some reason unknown to me *not* been included in the Collected Works of Don grub rgyal.³⁷ In this song the Blue Lake is the central image and its state of being frozen and then becoming free of ice are at the center of attention. Both the interpretation of the image of the lake and the structure of the image are of interest in the song.

Considering this song, it is evident that the image of the lake seems to evoke a metaphoric interpretation as it is attributed various characteristics that are not naturally present in lakes. For example, the song says that "when the dignity of the people and magnificence of the motherland arises from these blue waves, the mind of the duck is happy".³⁸ This is contrasted to the sad feelings of the duck in winter when the lake is frozen.

In this song too it is very difficult and perhaps not purposeful for the analysis to try to identify target and source domains. As in the case of a couple of Don grub rgyal's free-verse poems, it is thus more sensible to analyze the song with the help of the concept of blend. In this song it is possible to discern a creation of a blended space containing both properties of the lake and characteristics of the Tibetan people, their identity and future. The song also uses animals to express mental states of happiness and unhappiness in regards to the lake. The animals are duck (*ngang pa*), "golden-eyed" fish (*nya gser mig*) and white sheep (*lug g.yang dkar*). I quote here a passage from the middle of the song:

*mtsho sngon po/
mes rgyal gyi bde skyid/
mi rigs kyi mgon skyabs/
mtsho sngon po 'khyag pas bsdams dus/
nya gser mig mtsho la 'thims song/
mtsho sngon po/
mtsho sngon po'i 'gram dar lung dus/
lug g.yang dkar sems pa dga' song/
mtsho sngon po/
khyed ni da lta'i bde skyid dang/
mi rigs kyi re ba red/
khyed ni 'jig rten gyi bdag po dang/
ma 'ongs pa'i 'tsho ba red/
(Don grub rgyal, "*E ma mtsho sngon po*")*

Blue Lake
the happiness of the motherland
the protector of the people
when the Blue Lake was covered by ice
the golden-eyed fish was imprisoned inside the lake
Blue Lake

vol. 2: 337). In English: "Those application letters to become a member of the Communist party that he wrote on a monthly basis were like throwing a stone to the Blue Lake: even they went there nothing came back."

³⁶ *E ma* in the title is a type of interjection. It may express that something is wonderful or marvellous or it may also express sad feelings when seeing something.

³⁷ I copied into my notebook the words of this song from the text line of a music video in gCan tsha in the house of bSod nams mtsho who kindly showed me that video recording. I also bought a VCD from Xining titled *mTsho sngon po'i bstod glu* ("Song in Praise of the Blue Lake") produced by The Qinghai People's Radio Office (mTsho sngon mi dmangs kun khyab lung 'phrin las khungs). The song "*E ma mtsho sngon po*" is the first song on the VCD that contains songs and also a humorous theatrical performance in the Amdo dialect. This VCD mentions the name of the composer of the song's melody to be gCod pa thar.

³⁸ In Tibetan: "*mi rigs kyi la rgya/ mes rgyal gyi gzi brjid/ rlabs sngon po 'di nas 'phyur dus/ bya ngang ba'i sems pa dga' song/*" The word *mes rgyal* is literally translated as "the country of the ancestors". It is the political term commonly used to refer to the PRC.

when the ice melted on the banks of the Blue Lake
 the white sheep became happy
 Blue Lake
 you are the happiness of this time
 and the hope of the people
 you are the owner of the world
 and the livelihood of the times to come
 (Don grub rgyal, "Oh, Blue Lake!")

In the above excerpt the image of the lake becomes manipulated with the help of its different states: the frozen lake in winter and the lake without ice cover during the warmer seasons. This is a restatement of an earlier similar kind of image of the lake in the beginning of the song. These states of the lake are commented with the help of animals: the animals like the lake free of ice and they are sad or hide in the depths when the lake is frozen. When these two states of the lake are embedded in the context of "the hope of the people" and so on, this may give rise to a nationalistic interpretation in the mind of the reader.

The lake free of ice may also be interpreted as an image of freedom (as it is then "free" of its earlier ice cover). "Lake as such" is not normally thought in the nationalistic context or as an image of freedom. But here such a meaning is conveyed to the reader or listener because of the context, the surrounding sentences of the different states of the lake. In the cognitive theory of metaphor freedom has been characterized in terms of what is called the "Event Structure" metaphor. Lakoff



and Johnson in their *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999: 190) have described a conceptual metaphoric structure which they formulate as "Freedom Of Action Is The Absence Of Impediments To Movement". Although they have not mentioned ice, however, the ice cover of the lake could be conceived in terms of an impediment to the free moving of the water.

With the help of the image of the lake Don grub rgyal's song "*E ma mtsho sngon po*" ("Oh, Blue Lake!") conveys ideas of freedom, identity of the Tibetan people and perhaps it could also be interpreted in a nationalistic context of interpretation. However, the reader has to bear in mind that the concept of "freedom" (*rang dbang*) has many interpretations and associations and it depends completely on how the reader wants to interpret the meaning of this song. This feature and its strong all-present central image connect this song to some of the free-verse poetry of Don grub rgyal such as the poem "*Lang tsho'i rbab chu*" ("The Waterfall of Youth") and "*sPrin dkar gyi 'dab ma*" ("The Petals of White Clouds").³⁹ The Blue Lake becomes a symbol for Tibet and its people. The song expresses the love and concern the writer had for his own people and nation.

Summary and Conclusions

To sum up the essential points that have been discussed about Don grub rgyal's water imagery it could be said that the images have both traditional and innovative features. Most of the images have some connection to traditional images or cross-culturally known metaphorical structures. Several of Don grub rgyal's images also have features that differ in some way from the traditional images.

First of all, there are many images that otherwise resemble the traditional (i.e. have the same source domain), but in their target domains a shift (or tendency) from the spiritual towards the secular may be noticed. Secondly, there are the strong central images of the free-verse poems of Don grub rgyal. The structure of some water images in free-verse poetry seems to be very

³⁹ In Don grub rgyal 1997, vol. 1: 231–235.

innovative when compared to any of the styles in traditional Tibetan poetry and can be analyzed with the help of the theory of conceptual blending. When analyzing the images in free-verse poetry they do also have some underlying traditional or cross-culturally shared features, however, there is certainly innovativity in the way elements from different input domains are combined in the blends. Especially the meanings conveyed by combining the young generations of Tibetans and the Tibetan people at large to water images suggesting continuity and freedom are of special interest. However, it is important to notice that in order that any image can convey a meaning to the reader it seems to be necessary that there is at least something that connects it to the preceding tradition and the way humans tend to think even though it might have new, fresh features or elements. In case an image would not share any features with other texts and literary works there might be the danger that the reader might not understand it at all. Thus it could be concluded that Don grub rgyal's water imagery generally has some basic features connecting it to traditional and also cross-culturally common imagery, but in several cases due to creative elaborations, extensions and new kind of structuring the images also do have a high degree of innovativity.

Illustration 1: A view of the rMa chu river near gCan tsha in Amdo

Illustration 2: mTsho sngon po, the Blue Lake in summer 2005

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