



Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places In Tibetan Culture

A Collection of Essays



Edited by
Toni Huber

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in
Tibetan Culture

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Cover illustration: Painted clay sculpture depicting Mount Gaurishankar as the abode of the Tshe-ring mched-lnga goddesses and meditation site of Mi-la ras-pa. Courtesy of the Ethnographic Museum of the University, Zürich.

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**Dedicated
to the memory of Graham E. Clarke,
colleague and friend**

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Preface

The idea of a space or place being “sacred” (as opposed to “profane”) or “powerful” has long been in circulation in the interpretation of human cultures. More recently, the idea of the sacred has been rightly criticized as being essentialist when applied as a universal category. Nevertheless, we are left with the sacred (or the “holy”) in common usage for describing places and spaces which are regarded in various ways as extraordinary, as possessing special qualities or powers, and as being both of this world yet somehow apart from it. We easily use, and take for granted, such notions as the Holy Land, and the sacred or holy mountain, and we tend to consider the monastery, pilgrimage venue, shrine or even altar as being sacred spaces or power places. But what distinctions of this type have Tibetans made in relation to spaces and places in their world?

The essays in this volume all attempt to document and interpret ways in which Tibetan peoples have identified and related to different categories of space and place as being unique or of higher ontological value, and as being set apart from many other spheres and sites of human life. The focus of the collection is intentionally broad, and its very breadth reflects the multitude of traditions of thinking about space and place which can be found in Tibetan culture, and which have also been associated with Tibet by non-Tibetans.

By using the expressions “Tibetan” and “Tibet” to define the scope of our enquiries, we intend to cover a very broad ethnographic unit which is not coincident with any political entity, nor limited to one population. Thus, our authors present data from the high Tibetan plateau, but also from sites and peoples in what are now parts of modern Bhutan, Nepal, Sichuan, Qinghai, North India and other areas where related languages, cultures and a shared sense of origin and history can be identified as manifestly “Tibetan”. Several chapters even go beyond this frame to consider how various non-Tibetan “outsiders”

(e.g. Westerners, Indian Hindus or Chinese colonialists) have also imagined or had a role in defining Tibetan spaces and places as sacred or powerful.

Each essay constitutes a separate chapter and they are arranged into four parts relative to their predominant themes. These parts are: i. Narrative, Social Identity and Territory; ii. Ritual Spaces and Places; iii. Hidden Countries and Holy Lands; and iv. Colonialism and Modernity. There are, nevertheless, many overlapping topic areas and common questions which they share, and which can only be brought together by reading the volume as a whole or using the index. A brief résumé of the chapters is offered here as an initial guide to the major themes and topics dealt with in this volume.

In part i., Narrative, Social Identity and Territory, Charles Ramble opens the volume with an investigation of how political considerations of identity and territory can be discerned in what are usually more narrowly considered as “religious” sources and practices relating to sacred spaces and places. Ramble draws his examples from field work on village culture in Mustang, a Tibetan enclave in northern Nepal, and from a unique survey of Tibetan Bon-po literature describing sacred geography and pilgrimage. In chapter two, Hildegard Diemberger and Guntram Hazod demonstrate how patterns of social organization and territory are intimately linked with historical and mythical narratives which are embodied in the local sacred landscape. Amongst other themes, their work localizes for us, in the south-west Tibetan region of Kharta-Phadrug, a good example of a common but seldom studied aspect of Himalayan and Tibetan space and place narratives: the lake-draining origin myth. Chapter three, by Françoise Pommaret, considers the geographical distribution of Tibetan ethnonyms, but in particular the names Mon and Mon-pa, terms usually applied to “tribal” or semi-Tibetanized populations in the Himalayan zone. She describes a remote population of Bhutanese Mon-pa in relation to notions of sacred territory, particularly the concept of the *sbas-yul* or “hidden country” (cf. Diemberger and Hazod in chapter two, and especially Ehrhard in chapters ten and eleven). Pommaret also raises the interesting topic of Tibetan “high” cultural superiority and prejudice associated with various ethnonyms which are applied to neighbouring peoples south of the high plateau.

In part ii., Ritual Spaces and Places, chapters four, five and six all consider the classic Tibetan “holy places” or *gnas*, that is, holy mountains and lakes, which are the common object of pilgrimage rituals. My own essay in chapter four attempts to understand *gnas* as a specific Tibetan category of place within a wider set of cultural patterns, including notions of embodied morality and sacred power. I argue that ritual practices like pilgrimage (*gnas-skor*) are more fruitfully appreciated and explained from the Tibetan point of view when ideas about *gnas* are not overlooked or subordinated to Buddhist metaphysical imperatives, such as *karma*, merit and rebirth. Following in chapter five, Katia Buffetrille presents a set of legends and a translation of a rare pilgrimage guide-book relating to the great Blue Lake (mTsho sNgon-po) of Amdo in the far north-east of the plateau. This lake, which is often better known by its Mongol name Koko Nor (or Qinghai in Chinese), contains an island called mTsho-snying Ma-hā-de-va which is presented as an alternate visionary landscape in the guide-book.

Together, lake and island comprise a sacred landscape dyad and a site for pilgrimage. In her analysis of the Tibetan narratives, Buffetrille reveals two further interesting themes of sacred place creation: the lake-flooding myth (cf. the chapter by Diemberger and Hazod) and the flying mountain motif. A Tibetan manual for Buddhist pilgrimage to the sites of Gangs Ti-se and mTsho Ma-pham is offered in translation by myself and Tsepak Rigzin in chapter six. This sacred landscape dyad of mountain and lake are well-known outside of Tibet as Mount Kailas and Lake Manasarovar (see McKay's essay in chapter thirteen). Despite being the most frequently written about of Tibetan pilgrimage places, a full indigenous account of the itinerary for their ritual circumambulation was never available in translation before now. The text also raises the complex topic of perceptions of this holy region at the centre of larger geographic and cosmological schemes (discussed by Martin in chapter twelve) and touches on the issue of sectarian rivalry over the site between Buddhists and Bon-pos (on which see Ramble in chapter one).

Ritual and landscape space are investigated in other ways in chapters seven, eight and nine. In each of these essays, there emerge related themes of controlling, converting or subjugating places or spaces in the landscape. Elisabeth Stutchbury describes how different readings of geography and natural phenomena in the west Himalayan region of Karzha (or Lahoul) inform local ideas of geomancy known as satalegpa (*sa-bkra legs-pa*). Satalegpa is part of a wider Tibetan concern with "examining the land" (*sa-dpyad*) for omens and auspices, particularly in relation to the erection of ritual structures and buildings. Stutchbury describes how social crisis (madness, suicide and sudden death) in Karzha is understood and dealt with relative to the energetic balance of the landscape and the construction of a ritual device (a chorten shrine) upon it to restore order. In chapter eight, David Templeman takes a new look at the system of 24 tantric ritual sites or *pīṭha* (*gnas*) which Tibetans adopted (and later adapted) from the texts of Indian Buddhist Tantra. The *pīṭha*, as a category of place, have a double referent both within the yogin's body and outside in the external Indian (and later Tibetan) landscape. Yet, there is an ambivalence in the tradition about journeys to the *pīṭha* by means of actual travel as opposed to their visionary transit in meditation. Templeman employs Tibetan hagiographical texts to ascertain how the Tibetan's Indian tantric predecessors might both have used and understood the *pīṭha* network. Mona Schrempf studies the organization of ritual space in the Tibetan monastic tradition of masked dance (*'cham*) in chapter nine. Orthodox accounts of these dances often present them in terms of positive soteriological goals. But by examining both Buddhist and Bon-po *'cham*, Schrempf finds in addition that the foundational development of a ritual space on the dance ground, through the action of dancing itself, is a means of control and violent subjugation of the earth and local environment (*sa-'dul*). She traces these same understandings of dancing and space in other forms of Tibetan folk dance, opera, rituals and customs.

The three chapters in part iii., Hidden Countries and Holy Lands, deal with Tibetan notions of perfect or ideal countries which are either sacred places of origin or of refuge and future renewal, and which are best described as being

both of this world but also apart from it. In companion essays which form chapters ten and eleven, Franz-Karl Ehrhard gives detailed insights into the historical development of a particular Tibetan category of place known as *sbas-yul* (see also chapters two and three). A.W. Macdonald once suggested that *sbas-yul* can be understood as both “hidden country” or “country [in which] to hide”, and Ehrhard’s work demonstrates the validity of this observation. By documenting the activities of religious figures known as “treasure discoverers” (*gter-ston*) in the 17th and 18th century, Ehrhard shows how a series of such places were discovered or opened in remote parts of southern Tibet during this period. His analysis reveals that an unstable political context at the time was clearly connected with *sbas-yul* discovery, and that as part of the process their discoverers also resorted to earlier symbolic resources such as the scheme of *yang-'dul* temples for “taming the outer borders” attributed to King Srong-btsan sGam-po. In a ground-breaking essay in chapter twelve, Dan Martin reviews the complex question of the location of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, the sacred Bon land of origins. In the Bon tradition, 'Ol-mo-lung-ring emerges as something of a parallel to the Holy Land of India as home of the Buddha, yet with the same uncertainty surrounding its geographical location as is found in the traditions about Sambhala (or Sham-bha-la). Resorting to a wide range of Bon geographical sources, Martin refutes previous scholarly identifications of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring with the ancient Persian empire and its western reaches, and posits instead a more eastern location somewhere between the Oxus River and Ladakh or Kashmir. Martin prudently observes that the final answer to such questions lays in the religious ambivalence of Tibetan places like 'Ol-mo-lung-ring (or for that matter *sbas-yul*) as being paradises both on and beyond the earth.

The final group of essays in part iv., Colonialism and Modernity, all reflect upon recent changes in the cultural construction and understanding of Tibetan sacred space and place within the dynamic context of colonialism (both British and Chinese) and the discourses and practices of modernity that it introduces. Alex McKay deals with non-Tibetan interests in a popular Tibetan holy site, the Mount Kalias-Manasarovar region, during the period of British colonial rule in India. He clearly shows how imperial policy and the interests of colonial officers on the Indo-Tibetan border deliberately stimulated visits by large numbers of Hindu pilgrims to the area earlier this century. McKay also begins to show how imperial control over travel to and information about the holy site also helped create a modern image of the sanctity of the region outside of Tibet itself.

Chapter fourteen moves us into the ethnographic present, with Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin documenting modern Tibetan approaches towards two very different traditional pilgrimage sites in eastern Tibet: the Ganja cave near Bla-brang and Murdo mountain in rGyal-rong. They show how Tibetan visitors to these sites can construct a range of understandings of them in relation to a mixture of older ideas of networks of holy places and cult mountain territories and such things as participation in the tourist gaze fostered by Chinese state policy and local and regional identities shaped in response to recent Chinese colonialism along the ethnic frontier zone. In chapter fifteen Charlene Makley offers a study of the neglected topic of gender and space in Tibet, and moreover

one set in the contemporary context of Chinese colonial policy and the cultural forces generated by it. Her field site of Bla-brang (cf. chapter fourteen) is the location of a major Tibetan monastery targeted for ethnic tourism development by the state, and in which monks act as tour guides, and pilgrims and worshippers must compete with Chinese and foreign tourists for the same sacred spaces in its shrine rooms. Makley shows that Tibetan women's and men's response to this situation is often one of strict self-regulation of traditional boundaries of gendered access to space, as a way of maintaining the sanctity of monastic and ritual space threatened by the daily intrusions of foreign others.

Ending the volume in chapter sixteen, Peter Bishop studies the changing role of the Potala, the Dalai Lama's palace in Lhasa, as a complex symbol of Tibet in modern Western imaginings and representations. Drawing upon Western accounts of the Potala from the 19th century up to the present, Bishop shows how the great edifice has retained its central position as an unmistakable symbolic indicator of Tibet in the west. As the significance of Tibet shifted for Europeans, so too did their circulation of meanings through the Potala as symbol. As a *complexio oppositorum* (Jung) or heterotopia (Foucault), the Potala was remarkably polyvalent. It was burdened with paradoxical associations as a repository of vast hidden wealth and gold, an other-worldly centre of Asian spirituality and its mysterious high priest, a dark nexus of despotic power in a cruel medieval theocracy, an enduring emblem of Tibetan cultural and national survival in the face of Chinese colonial oppression, a fixed symbolic counterpoint to its highly mobile former occupant the exiled Dalai Lama, and much more besides.

Earlier versions of most of these essays were published in a special issue of *The Tibet Journal* (19:2 [1994] through 20:1 [1995]), although it must be emphasized that they have now become more advanced and refined pieces of work. The majority of the original essays (excluding those by Ehrhard-chapter 10, Makley, Stutchbury and Templeman) have been substantially revised, updated or corrected by the authors. Two of the chapters (by McKay, and Ehrhard-chapter 11) are new. A shortened version of the essay by Ehrhard forming chapter 11 first appeared in *Studies of Central & East Asian Religions* (vol.9, 1996). Since it was originally written by the author as a companion piece to his work in chapter 10, it is reprinted here in its full version with the kind permission of Per Sørensen, editor of *SCEAR*. I am grateful to Maura Ginty for help with the final editing and Mr. Tsering Namgyal for designing the layout and Ms. Tenzin Sonam for compiling the index.

Finally, it should be noted that the Wylie system of transliteration has been adopted for representing Tibetan spellings in this volume, although individual preferences in the use of the system (i.e. capitals, hyphens) are preserved. Authors have often provided their own phonetic transcriptions to aid pronunciation.

Part One

Narrative, Social Identity and Territory

The Politics of Sacred Space in Bon and Tibetan Popular Tradition

Charles Ramble

Introduction

There is a variety of oral and written literature that can help us to understand Tibetan ideas concerning the sacred ordering of the natural environment. An outline of the general characteristics of “guide-book” literature is given in Wylie’s pioneering study of Tibetan geography (1965), where a division of the material into four types is proposed. These types are the *dkar-chag* (“register”), *gnas-bshad* (“guide-book”), *lam-yig* (“passport”) and *go-la’i kha-byang* (“global-description”). The examples selected by the author undoubtedly justify such a division, but there is also a large quantity of literature besides this that combines features of two or more of these types. Whatever they may properly signify, some of the terms themselves seem to be used almost interchangeably by Tibetan writers: two of the works we shall examine below, the *Bod yul gnas kyi lam yig* and the *Rgya gar gnas kyi dkar chag*, would, in spite of their titles, fall under the *gnas-bshad* type as defined by Wylie.¹

Quite apart from their defiance of discrete categories, these guides are by no means the only body of literature to tell us about Tibetan conceptions of geography. They sometimes represent an extreme formalization of a particular convention for describing landscape, and it would be misleading to regard the genre as the exclusive representative of geographical literature. Moreover, to focus too closely on such guides would tend to obscure the importance of certain preoccupations that have undoubtedly played a part in the development of the genre. An example that will be given particular attention below is the relationship between topography and political territory; although sacred representations of the landscape are an important idiom for conceptualizing territory, political considerations are often detectable in guides only in a vestigial form.

In the following pages I shall examine a range of examples that suggest quite different models of the sacred landscape. The aim of the inquiry is less to

establish a satisfactory classification of geographical works than to observe the plurality of geographical schemes implicit in the sources, and to attempt to discern a pattern in the relationship between them. The typology that emerges suggests a chronological evolution in geographical representations; and indeed the stages proposed do correspond broadly to the relative antiquity of the literature in question. Nevertheless, we should not lay undue stress on the idea of an evolution of representations. A particular model may be demonstrably late, but its appearance by no means renders "earlier" concepts obsolete. A certain degree of complexity does not lend itself to oral representation, and is therefore unlikely to acquire much currency among unlettered villagers, who continue to entertain other ideas concerning the disposition and sacred significance of topographical features.

Furthermore, even among, say, educated pilgrims, there is no reason why different, apparently conflicting, geographical conceptions should not be held simultaneously. The way in which the landscape is perceived is a contextual matter, more or less schematic according to the purpose for which it is being represented. A model that reduces China to a quincunx of landmarks inhabited by owl-faced *dākinī*-s does not help mystified Tibetan pilgrims to find their way around an unfamiliar country. Equally, times of trains and walking distances between shrines in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and the Punjab will do little to enlighten the reader about the significance of India's shape in the *maṇḍala* of the world.

Parenthetically, it may be remarked that much the same is true of Western geographical conventions. The inclusion of contours and other natural features on a road map would constitute an unnecessary distraction. The absence of such details would render a hiker's map both useless and dangerous. The "map" of the London underground is as cavalier as any territorial *maṇḍala* from Tibet with regard to the real geographical location of its sites.

Finally, it is worth noting that our main concern here is with the idea of sacred, not everyday, space. Tibetans travel a great deal, but not always because they are on pilgrimage. Many Tibetans do indeed walk around mountains because they want to acquire merit, or achieve prosperity, or cure some disease. In most cases, however, when Tibetans walk around mountains it is because the mountains are in the way. Religious concerns should not be exaggerated. Most topographical features are not particularly sacred; but this does not, of course, mean that people do not make cognitive provision for them.

In attempting to formulate a typology of representations of sacred landscape I shall limit the textual examples as far as possible to Bon-po sources. There are two main reasons for this. First, there are numerous published and unpublished studies relating to Tibetan pilgrimage and sacred geography, but these works deal for the most part with Buddhist sources and holy places. The few exceptions may be cited briefly: Bon-po perspectives on Mt. Kailash are the subject of Norbu and Prats (1989) and Loseries (1994); Karmay (1992), Hanna (1994) and Ramble (1997) deal primarily with Kong-po Bon-ri; while Buffetrille (1994) presents a Bon-po guide to A-myes rma-chen. Cech (1992) provides an interesting discussion of Bon-po sacred sites in general.² The narrow focus of the present article will, it

is hoped, help to draw attention to a substantial literature that might profitably be used by future students of Bon-po sacred geography.

Secondly, there is a very large amount of Buddhist material available (especially, it seems, in the form of *dkar-chag* relating to Himalayan sacred sites), and a general assessment of Tibetan sacred geography would have to address this literature. Confining the present study to Bon will avoid the need for more arbitrary selection by circumscribing a coherent area of Tibetan religion. This being said, it will be obvious that such a limitation is itself somewhat artificial and unsatisfactory, insofar as much of the material selected is not unique to Bon. Folk traditions are shared by Tibetan villagers irrespective of their denomination, while the later elaborations of Bon-po territorial *maṅḍala*-s are formally little different from their Buddhist counterparts.

Representations of Height

One of the more obvious features of Tibetan geography, especially in the Himalayan region, is its strikingly vertical character, and it is therefore not surprising that this aspect should be emphasized in popular celebrations of the landscape. The motif of height recurs as a stock formula in the earliest literature, and continues to be a favourite theme in folksongs and prayers. Unlike the more scholarly literature that we shall turn to presently, these popular representations do not obliterate natural topographic features under a prefabricated model, but they do nevertheless impose a degree of organization through a system of stratification. Perhaps the most fundamental example is the layering of the world into three levels, with humans sandwiched between gods and serpent spirits. Territorial divinities themselves are often considered as inhabiting a three-tiered space. It is possible that this triple formulation should be understood as a development of the more basic dyad of male mountains and female bodies of water.³ The association is well documented in Tibet, but it also plays an important part in the religion of non-Tibetan ethnic groups of the Himalayas.

The considerable variety of divinities that one may find linked on a vertical axis in different places—and also the fact that a female site may be found to be situated above an associated male one—are grounds for supposing that it is the vertical axis itself that is of primary importance in such constellations. In an earlier work (Ramble 1996) I examined a number of such configurations of place gods, and suggested an association between verticality and the idea of fertility. The identity of the gods found along a vertical axis, and indeed the fact that the “plots” of the axis have a sacred character at all, may be a secondary matter.

What concerns us here is the tangentially related question of the “naturalness” of the imagery with which vertical landscape is portrayed in popular culture. Thus in certain songs the landscape is described as a series of seven formalized strata, each associated with its own representative animal. The genre is widespread in Tibet, but an example from the village of Te, in southern Mustang, will illustrate the point. The particular significance of this song in Te is that it must be sung, with its accompanying steps, to open all sessions of song

and dance in the community. There are seven verses, but often only the first four are sung.⁴

Far up, on high, is the exalted snow mountain.
From within this high place comes
The great snow lion, who rejoices in this place.

Far up, on high, are the exalted crags.
From within this high place there comes
The vulture who rejoices in this place.⁵

And so on, with only the place and its particular denizen changing in each verse as follows:

The slates (*rdza*): wild yak (*'brong*)
High meadows (*spang*): deer (*shwa-ba*)
Forest (*nags*): tigress (*stag-mo*)⁶
Flat ground [at the foot of the mountain] (*thang*): wild ass (*rkyang*)
River (*chu*): female fish (*nya-mo*)

The pervasive motif of height (*mtho-la yang-stod...stod-mtho*) remains unchanged, even in the last verse.

There are other songs that extol the landscape in similar terms, but without populating the several layers with appropriate animals. The example given here does not depart too radically from the observable world in representing vertical space, compared with examples that will be considered below, but natural geography has obviously been subordinated to conventional imagery.

Establishing Boundaries

While it may be generally true that Tibet lacks a tradition of secular geography, an exception might be made for the minimal exigencies of political geography.⁷ In the culturally Tibetan areas of Nepal, at least, it would certainly be unusual to find collections of village records that did not contain documents relating to territorial boundaries. Disputes between communities over usufruct rights to pasture and forest land are extremely common, and peaceful relations between neighbouring villages depend to a large extent on the existence of texts that delineate frontiers by means of a meticulous description of the territory in question (see Ramble and Vinding 1987 for an example of such a document).

Nevertheless, it is also true that a community's awareness of its territory is more frequently expressed in terms of sacred space. Between seed-time and harvest, usually at a point where the crops are considered to be vulnerable, it is customary in much of Tibet ritually to walk around the perimeter of the village in order to protect it from possible noxious influences. Such circuits are sometimes called *chos-skor*, "scripture circuits", since the participants will carry around with them sacred texts, as well as images, to accomplish this defense. It is probably more accurate to understand the purpose of the texts as reinforcing, rather than alone achieving, protection. In Mustang, at least, the circuit is more commonly

referred to as *klungs-skor*, "encircling the fields", since the route usually encloses only the cultivated area (*klungs*, which is opposed to *ri*, uncultivated territory). An important feature of this circuit is the propitiation of various place-gods that lie on the route, and the group will duly halt its progress to perform the appropriate fumigation ritual (*bsangs*).

I am not aware of any comparable ceremonies for the corresponding circumambulation of a community's entire territory, including its uncultivated land. Nevertheless, there are ceremonial measures for the protection of larger territories. One of these is the annual closure of a settlement's boundaries for a given period. This closure seems to be partly symbolic, so that visitors are forbidden to use only certain access routes. For example, three routes into the kingdom of Lo (Glo) are closed for much of the year. The passes in question—two bordering on Tibet and one on Dol-po—are high, and the reason given for their closure is that travellers may disturb the cloud formations that bring the precious rain. Offenders are subject to a fine of Rs. 10,000. The custom of territorial closure is replicated in a number of individual villages within Lo. Penalties for infringement are less severe: in one case (Dri) the punishment comprises a fine of Rs. 500, and in another (De) the public humiliation of the offender. The ostensible reason for the closure is not invariably the risk of jeopardizing rainfall. In the case of Dri, for example, the practice is said to keep out flocks of rosefinches that would devour the ripening grain. Whatever the case, restricting access to territory, and perhaps also the ritual circuit of the cultivated land, must certainly be understood in terms of the cloistering of villages that is widely practised in south and south-east Asia (cf. Macdonald 1983). In this context we may note the existence, in a number of Himalayan groups, of rituals for the protection of territory that involve an imaginary journey along its perimeter. Two examples that may fall into this category are the *ma:nuangme* rite of the Mewahang Rai (Gaenszle 1994) and the *mân khyânc* of the Kham Magar (de Sales 1994). In these cases the officiating medium recites aloud the description of the itinerary he is visualizing, and banishes the ills that he encounters on the way. I have suggested (Ramble 1996) that these and similar ceremonies are essentially a stark manifestation of territorial interests that are elsewhere expressed in more elaborate models, such as the political-geographical *maṇḍala*-s that will be examined below.

A principle that underlies many ritual strategies for healing, protecting or otherwise acting on the phenomenal world, involves merging the latter with an ideal, which may be a myth, a divine realm or some more abstract notion (such as the Void); then performing various transformations in this more malleable sphere and thereby affecting the desired changes in the material world that has been harnessed to it. A given territory is often conceived of as having such a subtle counterpart. The form of this invisible landscape varies considerably within the Tibetan tradition, but at its simplest consists of the divinities who people the landscape and settlements. It would be reasonable, therefore, to regard the ritual texts that accompany the cults of this divine population as constituting a branch of sacred geography. An example that we may consider briefly is a

libation (*gser-skyems*) text dealing with oblations to the principal territorial gods of the kingdom of Lo. The work is entitled *Smon thang rdzong lha'i mchod 'phrin*, "Offerings to the fortress god of Monthang and prayers for his protection". The copy which I was kindly permitted to photograph in Monthang belonged to the royal chaplain and doctor, the late bKra-shis chos-bzang. It consists of just three folios sewn together inside a titled cover to make a small booklet.

The invocation to the region's gods begins, as one might expect, at the centre of the kingdom:

In this palace, in the white valley of the land of Lo, at the centre of all kinds of shifting rainbows, is the fierce and mighty rDzong-lha dkar-po. He has one face and two hands, and holds a cane with three knots. On his head he wears a splendid turban of white silk, and there is a joyful smile on his face. His mount is an excellent and swift white horse, with a saddle and bridle adorned with many fine jewels.⁸

There follows a description of his immediate circle. He is flanked by his divine consort on the right and a female serpent spirit on the left; in the four directions are his four ministers, clockwise from the east: a *rgyal-po*, a *ma-mo*, a *bdud-po* and a *btsan* on their various mounts. His outer circle is constituted of "many southern men in the prime of life" (*phyi-'khor mon-pa'i dar-ma mang-pos bskor [skor]*). rDzong-lha dkar-po is then invited to receive offerings and to perform the tasks with which he is entrusted. Next to be invoked is the Iron-tressed Protector (Srung [bsrung]-ma lCags-ral-can) of Du-ri mKha'-spyod, the ruined fortress on a hilltop immediately to the north of Monthang, said to be the palace of Amepal, the first king of Lo. Some of the places named are difficult to identify, possibly because they refer to abandoned villages, but many of the main settlements in the kingdom are recognizable. The next group to be invoked includes:

The Shining Female Serpent-spirit of Luri's junipers; Ti-se dkar-po at the head of Gara's valley (?);⁹ Shar-btsan-po, on the spur at the confluence of the three rivers of Tangkya; Jo-bo phug-phug and Jo-bo bDud of Gemi; Klu-btsan of Drakmar and Chos-rgyal of Tsarang; gTer-chen rNam-thos sras-pos of Gekar.¹⁰

These are followed by:

gTer-chen rNam-thos sras-po (*sic.*: again), the Bon protector of the Ya-ngal lineage; ...the *rgyal-po* of Chodzong and Ma-khri-rgyal of Samdzong...¹¹

The Ya-ngal are a priestly lineage who came to Lo in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. They were responsible for establishing Lubra, in southern Lo, now the only completely Bon-po village in the region, and for introducing Bon to neighbouring Dol-po (Snellgrove 1967: 4-5). The lineage is still represented in Dol-po. In no other sources have I encountered this explicit association of Nam-thos sras-po, the guardian of the north who is revered as a god of wealth

(by association with Kuvera) by both Buddhists and Bon-pos, with the Ya-ngal clan. (For a study of the Ya-ngal *gdung-rabs*, see Ramble 1984.)

After these come divinities of a number of recognizable abandoned sites near Monthang. Much may be said about all these gods and places, and indeed the text would merit a more detailed commentary in a study more specifically dedicated to Lo. For the purposes of the present inquiry, however, the important point is that the work constitutes a register of the main settlements within the kingdom expressed in terms of the chief divinities that inhabit them. It is this parallel, divine world that is invoked to assure the well-being of its material counterpart.

The explicit correspondence between two worlds that is apparent in this text introduces a theme that will receive further attention below: the relationship between sacred and political space. Monthang, the capital of Lo, is also the seat of the principal territorial divinity in the list; the surrounding settlements are the habitations of lesser gods.

A similar correspondence between the political and the sacred is apparent in an interesting work that summarizes the establishment of the capital and the frontiers of the kingdom of Zhang-zhung. The text, entitled *Kun 'bum khra'o bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs*, or *Kun-'bum* for short, forms part of the Bon-po *bKa'-'gyur*. It was discovered by a certain gNyag-ston gZhon-nu-'bum. Although I am unable to establish precise dates for this figure, he is known to have been a disciple of Guru rNon-rtse who was born in 1136 (cf. Kvaerne 1971: 231). The work may therefore be provisionally dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Among other things, the *Kun-'bum* contains numerous details concerning the life of sTon-pa gShen-rab that are not included in his main biographies. The passage that concerns us here begins with gShen-rab's descent from 'Ol-mo lung-ring to Zhang-zhung:

Astride the blessed garuda, he set forth to promulgate the Bon doctrine, and alighted first in the land of Zhang-zhung. This is the reason why the doctrine originally came to Zhang-zhung, and this is also how it came to be that the [kings of] Zhang-zhung are called the "kings of Bon".

sTon-pa gShen-rab passes through a number of places until he reaches central Zhang-zhung:

He went on down from there, and Khyung-lung, a magically manifested palace, was built on a site blessed with good fortune, in the land of outer Zhang-zhung, in the midst of g.Yung-drung mu-le, in the enclosure of the snow mountains, in a corner of Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho. Eighteen lesser castles for subduing the frontiers, 360 temples (*gsas-mkhar*) for subduing the territory beyond, and 1008 chortens for subduing the ground were constructed, and the land was conquered.

Shel-le dbal-rtse; 'Od-gsal g.yu-rtse; gSang-mer lha-rtse; Nyi-'od shel-rtse; rGyal-ba bse-mkhar; Ya-gad stag-mkhar; Hab-so lga-mkhar;

sKug-mo lan-mkhar; Lo-tog 'gyur-mkhar; Rag-tshan 'bram-mkhar; Gu-ri gnam-mkhar; g.Yung-drung yod-mkhar; Kha-rag khyung-mkhar; dPa'-brtsan se-mkhar; Che-brtsan dregs-mkhar; mTho-brtsegs rgod-mkhar; Ma-ma dred-mkhar; Yar-mo bzhad-mkhar: at [the site of] these 18 lesser castles were 18 major settlements; 18 high priests (*bon-chen*) resided in them, and 18 great gods (*gsas-chen*) were worshipped.

Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar was built in the centre of them. Its foundations are made of gold, and its four sides of silver. Its main portal is of iron, and its four doors of silver. Its four edges are made of sardonyx, and its beam-ends of copper. Its pinnacle reaches the 13 levels of the sky; storm-clouds swirl around it, blue dragons sleep on it and garudas soar around its sides. It contains 108 chambers. The upper third of it is occupied by gods. Slates, crags and glaciers tower on high. Three [kinds of illumination, including] rays and lightning, shine out. Fierce *ge-khod*¹² divinities dwell there. The [middle] third is occupied by priests (*gshen*). There are three [kinds of livestock, including] the cows of wild and domestic yaks; horses, sheep and cattle range there; drums, flat bells and conches are sounded; the [people] exclaim "bSwo!" and call upon the wrathful divinities and the priests (*bon*). The *gyer-gyung* divinities of Zhang-zhung live here. The lowest third is occupied by the serpent spirits; there are many turquoise lakes and frequent mists. The three [kinds of marine creatures, including] sea-sprites and conches, roar, and the three [kinds of water animals, including] young serpent-spirits and otters, play. [The king of the serpent spirits], Mi-mgon dkar-po, dwells here.

sTon-pa gShen-rab visited this place, and...explained the Magic Word of Bon to the priests of Zhang-zhung (fols. 46b-47a).

The palace of Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar—which emerges as something between an architectural wonder and a sacred mountain—is described in terms that recall the convention representing the vertical landscape in the Tewa folksong discussed above: the seven strata are simplified to three belts, and their inhabitants are a mixture of natural and supernatural creatures. One of the significant features of this passage, however, is the correspondence between the Bon religion and the territorial sway of Zhang-zhung. The palace itself is inhabited by Bon-po divinities, priests and worshippers. It is, in short, the earthly centre of Zhang-zhung. The ruler of the kingdom is also the "king of Bon", and the boundaries of the land, the 18 "lesser castles", as well as the temples and chortens, are also outposts of the doctrine.¹³

The Disassociation of Political Sensibility

In certain cases, the temporal significance of a site may provide the origin of its sacred character; however, it is equally true that once this sanctity has been established it may acquire a life of its own that survives its political base. We

have already seen that the Iron-tressed Protector of mKha'-spyod continues to be worshipped in the kingdom of Lo even though the palace he protected, and whose existence his own surely did not precede, has lain in ruins for centuries.

The relationship between the political and spiritual relevance of a given territory is not simply a one-way affair, as recent studies of pilgrimage sites in south Asia and other regions have demonstrated. Temporal power may indeed provide a vehicle for religious interests, with the consequence that the denomination of a given site will change according to the proclivities of the ruling power. But, conversely, spiritual authority over key sacred sites may also be translated into political power. An example of this situation is furnished by Kulke's study of the relationship between the Kurda kings and the Jagannātha temple of Puri in Orissa. The dynasty's stewardship of the cult provided the kings with considerable political leverage in dealing with both allies and enemies (Kulke 1993).

The interaction between Bon and Zhang-zhung certainly suggests a relationship of mutual reinforcement. Whatever the historical links between the two, the annexation of Zhang-zhung and the assassination of its king during the expansion of the Tibetan empire left Bon without a sympathetic political base. Even if, as tradition has it, the religion of the Tibetan court was influenced by Bon-pos from Zhang-zhung, the later sponsorship of Buddhism by the rulers would have deprived Bon of vital patronage.

The Bon-pos' debt to the old kingdom is partly expressed in the fulsome claims for the dimensions of Zhang-zhung's territory that appear in Bon-po writings. Zhang-zhung may indeed have been very extensive, at least via a network of vassalage that it sustained through some parts of Central and Eastern Tibet (cf. Beckwith 1987); but to this already considerable territory bsTan-'dzin rin-chen, the nineteenth-century author of the *Ti se dkar chag* (see below), adds Central Tibet in its entirety as well as A-mdo, Khams and even China.¹⁴ The author's motive in proposing such a vast territory is obviously not some retrospective patriotism for a polity that had vanished a thousand years earlier, but to glorify the success of the Bon religion that was believed to be coextensive with it.

The sanctity of places is not normally attributed to their erstwhile political relevance, although the gap between sacred and profane may be bridged by attributing divine qualities to the author of the temporal reign. In the case of Zhang-zhung, the enduring sanctity of its political centres is linked not to the Lig-mi kings or its other rulers (a list of whom is given in the *Ti se dkar chag*: see Norbu and Prats 1987: 71-73; 127-128), but to the activity of Bon-po saints and divinities in their vicinity. Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar is indeed attributed with supernatural qualities; the *Zur-byang* of Blo-ldan snying-po (b. 1360) remarks that "whoever meditates in the meditation place of Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar will be reborn in the ranks of the knowledge-holders" (178). But the power of the place derives from its association with luminaries such as Dran-pa nam-mkha' and Gar-ma Me-slag-can (Norbu and Prats 1987: 61, 62). What is of overriding importance is the religious significance of the Ti-se region as a whole:

These knowledge-holders, who achieved fulfilment at the Zhang-zhung caves, said: “At this triple site of the mountain and the [two] lakes are blessings of such great properties. The land is the land of Zhang-zhung Bon; the mountain is the unbuilt Bon mountain; the lakes are lakes of purifying water not made [by human agency]; the place is the place of gSang-sngags Me-ri. Whoever meditates here will become a knowledge-holder in this life” (*ibid.*: 62-63).

Another site that is regarded by Bon-pos as having been an important political centre of Zhang-zhung is the area of rTa-sgo mountain and Dang-ra lake. The *Ti se dkar chag* classifies this area as constituting the middle section of the left-hand outer part (g.Yon-sgo) of Zhang-zhung (*ibid.*: 70; 124). For the Bon-pos, the political importance of the area has been superseded by its religious significance:

Dang-ra, rTa-sgo and these places are blessed by many fully-realized buddhas and saints of old. In particular, the [divinity of Mt.] rTa-sgo dge-rgan is said to have taken his dge-bsnyen vows in the presence of the Enlightened One (*Bod yul gnas kyi lam yig*: 46).

The importance of the place in the history of Zhang-zhung apparently derives from the presence of a fortress called Khyung-rdzong. As far as I am aware, no archaeological research has been carried out here that might determine the significance of this site. That there was some sort of stronghold there seems to be in little doubt. Although I have not visited the area, photographs taken recently by a Bon-po pilgrim, g.Yung-drung rgyal-mtshan, the Jomsom (rDzong-gsar) *sprul-sku*, show what appear to be the ruins of fortifications on a promontory overlooking Dang-ra lake, beside an area of apparently long-abandoned fields. The *Guide for the Blind* (*Bod yul gnas kyi lam yig*), a recent work on Bon-po sacred sites of which we shall have more to say presently, all but ignores the possible temporal importance of the site:

On a rocky hill are the ruins of a royal palace of Zhang-zhung, called Dang-ra Khyung-rdzong. The hill itself is called Khyung-rdzong. That crag is the place from which Gyer-mi nyi-'od, rMa-ston srid-'dzin and others extracted treasure. In the crag can be seen natural caves and many other natural signs such as syllables and handprints (44).

The ascendancy of religious over political considerations is further illustrated by the tradition surrounding dMu-khri btsan-po, the son of Nyag-khri. This figure is revered by Bon-pos primarily as a “royal priest” (*rgyal-gshen*) who promulgated the doctrine in Tibet. Among the acts with which his reign is credited is the establishment of 37 “religious centres” (*du-gnas*: literally, “assembly places”) where Bon flourished. Sources for two sets of these are cited in Karmay (1972: 41-42; see also Cech 1992: 389). The *'Gro mgon mdzod 'grel*,¹⁵ which furnishes a list identical to the first of these two (that contained in Dran-pa nam-mkha's commentary to the *mDzod-phug*), adds the observation that the places are marked “by signs in the ground, stupas and cemeteries—thirty-seven in all” (p. 198).

Spiritual Conquests

The sacred character of a place can, as we have seen, survive the worldly interest that underlay its creation. But the autonomy of the religious domain from the political one is of course even greater than that, to the extent that it has its own strategies for acquiring territory without riding on the back of a sympathetic military expansion. Claims to places are characteristically justified in the literature on the grounds of a saint or divinity visiting the sites in question and performing some miraculous act there. Such places are sometimes classified in sets according to a perceived similarity in the circumstances attending their conquest. The Bon tradition contains a number of such sets apart from the 37 *'du-gnas* mentioned above. Among the most important is a group of 24 sites associated with the *Ma-rgyud*. The origin of the sites is attributed to the agency of Rang-rig gsang-mchog rgyal-po, the principal tutelary divinity of the *Ma-rgyud*.

...These are the places belonging to all 20 [24] [*dākinī*] agents: the Nine Secret Places; the Four Wonderful Places; the Eight Fierce Places; the Three Tibetan Places, making 24 in all. The *dākinī*-s of these great holy places, accompanied by their cohorts, have terrifying mask-like heads and hold curved swords and skull-cups. The colours of their bodies are white, yellow, green, red and dark blue. You and your followers, adorned with cemetery ornaments, receive these *gtor-ma*! Slaughter these obstructions, demons, malefic spirits and enemies for your feast! (*Ma-rgyud* fols. 72a-72b).

The text then proceeds to enumerate the 24 sites. Each site is the location of a *dākinī* with a theriomorphic head, and to the east, north, west and south are subsidiary sites occupied by similarly formed *dākinī*-s, thereby creating a more extensive set of 120 places. The loci are sometimes defined by the name of the place and sometimes by the name of the *dākinī*, so that it is not always clear whether the lesser sites did in fact ever have a recognized geographical location. In any event, since the list is long and I am unable to identify the majority of even the named places, two examples may suffice as an illustration. The list opens as follows:

bSwo! The five lion-headed *dākinī*-s of g.Yu-lung shel-brag: [at the centre is] the *dākinī* rGod-lcam of Nyi-ma 'bar-ba; to the east is the *dākinī* of lHa-ri del-dkar; north: the *dākinī* of rGod-ri 'od-'bar; west: the *dākinī* of sNang-srid ri-gzi-mdangs; south: the *dākinī* of 'Tshal-ri mdun-sa. O five mothers of the great holy place of the gods, receive these *gtor-ma*! Slaughter these obstructions, demons, malefic spirits and enemies for your feast! (fol.72b).

The sites in question are apparently located in and around the mythical mountain of Ri-rab.¹⁶

The list of places extends beyond the Tibetan plateau to include adjacent countries: the sixth, the "Yeti-headed *dākinī*-s of Mu-khum-ri",¹⁷ could refer either

to certain places in Mugu, in north-west Nepal, that are periodically visited by Bon-po pilgrims from Dol-po, or possibly to Muktinath in Mustang (the old name for Dzong, the principal settlement in the Muktinath Valley, is Mu-kha). Other sites in Nepal include Svayambhūnāth, the home of the *ḍākinī* of Bal-yul 'phags-pa, the southern representative of the hawk-headed *ḍākinī*-s of Gyang-ma gyang-tho (fifteenth in the list), and Pharping.

China (the eighteenth), represented by the Owl-headed *ḍākinī*-s, is followed by India:

The [five] crow-headed *ḍākinī*-s of Sītavana in India: centre: the *ḍākinī* of Magadha; east: the *ḍākinī* of 'Gro-lding dar-ma; north: the *ḍākinī*-s of Khri-gdan in Kashmir; west: the *ḍākinī*-s of Uḍḍiyāna; east: the *ḍākinī* of Vārāṇasī... (76b-77a).

'Gro-lding dar-ma is said to be in or near north-east India; it is not clear to me whether "Khri-gdan in Kashmir" (Kha-che khri-gdan) has a precise recognized location.¹⁸ A number of these sites are included in a separate list of 24 places given in the *Shel le rgya skar gyi rnam thar*, a work by Blo-ldan snying-po (b. 1360) that will be discussed in more detail below. These are collectively referred to as the "24 holy places of the *ḍākinī*-s, sacred mountains for excellent and ordinary practice" (*mchog-thun bsgrub-pa'i gnas-ri*). They are subdivided into three groups of eight: the *mchog-tu grub-pa'i gnas brgyad*, the "eight places for supreme achievement" (or *byang-chub sgrub-gnas brgyad*, the "eight places for meditation towards enlightenment"); the *mchog-thun spel-ma brgyad*, the "eight places that combine supreme and ordinary achievements", and the *thun-mongs mthun-rkyen brgyad* or *mthun-rkyen sgrub-pa'i gnas brgyad*, the "eight places that help one to achieve worldly goals" (pp. 17-19). Unlike the set from the *Ma-rgyud* cited above these places are quite readily identifiable. The first group comprises sites in far-flung locations in sTag-gzig, Uḍḍiyāna, South India and so forth (but also includes one site in Zhang-zhung), while the second and third are apparently confined to the Tibetan plateau and the Himalaya.

The Benefits of Sacred Places

Whatever circumstances are believed to be at the origin of sacred places, tradition has selected a certain number as being of particular importance as pilgrimage sites. It is frequently stated by Bon-pos that the three most significant sites are, in descending order of sanctity, Kong-po Bon-ri, Gangs Ti-se, and Shel-le rgya-skar, and we shall return to this triad presently. However, more elaborate sets are also recognized. Perhaps the best known is a list of places contained in the *Zur-byang* of Blo-ldan snying-po. The context in which these places are enumerated is provided by the author receiving instructions from Tshe-dbang rig-'dzin, who is "present in a secret body" (*sbas-pa'i skur-bzhugs* p. 173). The master embarks on a discourse concerning the types of activities that are appropriate for the body, speech and mind in this degenerate age. The ideal occupation for the first of these is to "visit vital places of meditation" (*bla-rten*

bsgrub-gnas mjal), and he proceeds to describe 20 such sites that are the “sovereign holy places” (*gnas-kyi rgyal-po* pp. 179-180). The name of each place is followed by a prescription of what one should do there, and a summary of the benefits one is likely to achieve. A few examples will suffice:

Whoever visits Ti-se, the omphalos of the world, will achieve liberation after three lives; whoever drinks from the blue lake of Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho will purge the sins of his successive lives; if you spend a day on sPos-ri ngad-ldan in Zhang-zhung, you will achieve peace; whoever visits the supreme holy place of Khri-gdan in Kashmir will win liberation after four lives; ...if you make any offerings at Tsari, the dakinis’ gathering place, you will achieve special powers; if you meditate on the benign and wrathful gods at Gyim-shod She-le rgya-gar (*sic.*), you will achieve enlightenment in this life (pp. 177-178).

The list of places is followed by a variety of other *bla-rtan*, such as “images of the buddhas in Lhasa” and the “self-originated Tso-mchog [mkha’-’gying] of Khyung-po” .

As we shall see below, the *Zur-byang* constitutes the single most important source for the *Guide for the Blind*, a recent guide to Bon-po holy places in Tibet.

Subjugation by Design

In referring earlier to the acquisition of territory as geographical outposts of a religion, the term “conquest” was used. In the absence of any obvious political involvement, what exactly is being conquered? The short answer is, Nature. We have already seen how popular tradition tends to render the landscape less “natural” by formalizing it in terms of stock images, such as seven vertical strata inhabited by appropriate animals. While genres such as folksongs and *gser-skyems* involve relatively mild distortions of the terrain, it is in the *dkar-chag* that we encounter the highest degree of elaboration. Elsewhere (Ramble 1997) I have drawn attention to the devices by which one *dkar-chag* imposes a sacred order on its subject, in this case, the Bon Mountain of Kong-po (Kong-po Bon-ri). The entire process is best understood in terms of the notion of subjugation (*’dul-ba*), in which the hostile anarchy of nature is organized and brought into the service of the conquering religion. Thus topography is idealized in such a way that natural features (lakes, caves and so on) are disposed according to the quincunx pattern of a *maṇḍala*; these and other features are counted in auspicious numbers; saints and luminaries leave the prints of their feet and other parts of their bodies in stone, and bury treasure at various points; rocks are given the likeness of various conventional images, and the wildlife is literally tame. The authority for the conquest of a site derives from revelation, which might itself attend the opening of the site, or else may reaffirm its inclusion within the territory of the religion.

While there is insufficient space here to undertake a serious examination of Bon-po *dkar-chag*, the available material might be reviewed briefly for its

relevance to the notion of taming the landscape. I am aware of six *dkar-chag*, and while it is likely that still more may come to light in the future, the existing literature at least covers three of the sites regarded as especially significant by Bon-pos. These are, as we have seen, Kong-po Bon-ri, Gangs Ti-se, and Khyung-po Ri-rtse-drug (Shel-le rgya-skar).

Kong-po Bon-ri

The Bon-ri *dkar-chag* was probably written in 1844 by one g.Yung-drung phuntshogs. A manuscript text that I obtained at the mountain itself in 1986 forms the basis of a study of the cumulative mythology that apparently led to the emergence of Bon-ri as a sacred site (Ramble 1997).

The political importance of Kong-po in early Tibetan history is attested to in a number of sources. It is likely that one lineage of rulers descended from Dri-gum continued to rule there after a parallel branch had established itself in Yar-klungs. Kong-po came under the direct rule of the Yar-klungs branch only during the time of gNam-ri slon-mtshan, the father of Srong-btsan sgam-po. The Kong-po inscription affirms certain rights of the rulers of rKong dkar-po—probably the area of Kong-po immediately north of the gTsang-po—under Srong-btsan sgam-po’s descendants, Srong-lde-btsan and lDe-srong. There are also good grounds for believing that the tomb of Dri-gum is situated not far from the confluence of the Nyang-chu and the gTsang-po in Kong-po (Richardson 1972 citing Bacot *et al.* 1940: 99; Karmay 1992). Bon-po tradition regards the historical association of Kong-po with the antecedents of the Yar-klungs Dynasty as being of secondary importance in establishing the religious significance of the place. The *dkar-chag* deals with the stories of Nyag-khri btsan-po and Dri-gum as belonging to a “later age”. The original sanctifying event was gShen-rab mi-bo’s visit to the area on an expedition that had the secret agenda of expounding Bon teachings but was ostensibly concerned with the recovery of a number of horses stolen by a demon. This demon, Khyab-pa lag-ring, had taken refuge with the local ruler, rKong-rje dkar-po, whose citadel was located in Bre-sna. The historical rKong-rje dkar-po was himself probably a descendant of Dri-gum (cf. Bogoslovskij 1972: 74; Haarh 1969:18; Richardson *ibid.*: 35-38).¹⁹ Various sources attest to Bre-sna being the capital from which rKong-rje ruled Kong-po (see Stein 1961: 9 fn. 25).

The political importance of Kong-po, and especially Bre-sna, that may have contributed at least partly to the development of Bon-ri’s sanctity, has been eclipsed in the Bon-po tradition by the religious priorities of a mythic epoch. The visions experienced at Bon-ri by Ri-pa ‘brug-gsas (who “opened” the mountain in 1330; see Kvaerne 1971) and various other eminent meditators (summarized in the *dkar-chag*) enrich this sacred past through the revelation that they provide of earlier saintly visitors (Dran-pa nam-mkha’ and his sons, the Nine Scholars, Li-shu stag-ring and many others) who buried treasure, left footprints and otherwise contributed to Bon-ri’s greatness. Moreover, these visions all but obliterate the geographical individuality of Bon-ri by representing

it in an idealized form, as a three-dimensional *mandala*, together with the various other transformations that have been described above (formalizations of numbers and shapes, and so forth).

Another important feature of this *mandala* building process is the deprivation of the autonomy of local divinities. To the south of the mountain is the shrine of a goddess who is locally revered as Bon-ri'i a-ma, the "Mother of Bon-ri". Bon-ri'i a-ma is the lowest of a trio of divinities corresponding to a triadic partition of a vertical landscape. The *dkar-chag*, however, ignores this role and provides her with a new identity as the southern protector of Bon-ri, and with a different name, g.Yu-'od sman-btsun. This is probably also true of various other place gods who have come to be regarded as satellite divinities of the mountain.

Gangs Ti-se

The two Bon-po *dkar-chag* of Ti-se impose a similar type of morphological order on their subject. In these cases, too, the authority for this representation derives from revelation. The older—and shorter—of the two works is the *Gangs ri mtsho gsum gyi dkar chag*²⁰ by one Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan (Dolanji 1973). He was one of the Bar-dar bstan-'dzin mchog-bdun, a set of *siddha*-s who occupy an important position in the transmission of the *Ma-rgyud*, standing fourth in line after Gu-ru rNon-rtse, gNyag-ston gZhon-nu-'bum and the "Two Meditators" (sGom-pa rnarn-gnyis).²¹ If Gu-ru rNon-rtse was born in 1136 (Kvaerne 1971; see above), Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan probably lived in the thirteenth century, which surely makes this work one of the earliest known *dkar-chag*.

The author's vision begins just after he had

...bestowed initiations, teachings and precepts of the secret tantra of Me-ri 'khyil-ba at the stūpa called Kong-seng in front of Gangs-snyan Ti-se, while giving some instructions concerning the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, at twilight on the eleventh day of the sixth month in an Ox year (449-450).

A pathway of green light suddenly appears in front of him, and a youth standing on the path presents him with a white scarf and invites him to a mystic banquet. He sets off with the youth and takes his place at the head of the front row in the gathering. He is bidden by the royal priest (*rgyal-gshen*) Mu-khri btsad-po to introduce himself, and after he has done so asks his hosts in turn to explain the nature of the place, its origins, the activities of the various saints who visited it, the benefits one might hope to gain from devotional acts, and so on. Mu-khri btsad-po begins the commentary with the origin of Ti-se, which he says was originally called Gangs-gnyan Ya-bag sha-ra, and its dimensions. It has the form of a crystal stūpa seven and a half *dpag-tshad* ("miles") high and a perimeter of seven-and-one-half *rgyang-grags* ("measures of earshot"); it has four doors of precious substances, and three circuits around it. dPon-gsas Tha-mi thad-ka (a name which the author spells Da-mi dad-kye / Tha-mi dad-kye: cf. the spelling Da-mi thad-ge in Dran-pa nam-mkha's commentary to the *mDzod-phug* [*mDzod-*

phug 1966, commentary: 2]) takes up the description, telling the guest that, among other things, the site is identical with the body of Kun-tu bzang-po. In this way a relay of speakers, all more-or-less well-known Bon-po *siddha*-s, provide Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan with the answers he requires.

Although there are a dozen or so commentators, the pace is brisk, and the mythology succinctly summarized. Pressed into just 23 folios, the work is almost terse compared with the later guide-book by dKar-ru Grub-dbang bsTan-'dzin rin-chen (b. 1801). Two versions of this account have been edited and published by Namkhai Norbu and Ramon Prats (1989). The date of the earlier one is given as 1844, and the later (first published in Dolanji in 1973) as 1847 (Norbu and Prats 1989: xxii).²² This account, the '*Dzam gling gangs rgyal ti se'i dkar chag*, is a tour de force of systematization. Following a description of the formation of the phenomenal world and the appearance of Ti-se, along with a list of 17 names by which it is known in various places,²³ the work goes on to describe the features of its outer, inner and arcane circuits. These features—mountains, lakes, plants, forests, caves, streams, roads, cemeteries and various other natural and man-made sites—are organized in numerical sets, mainly of four, although other auspicious numbers, especially 13, also recur. Unlike Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan, bsTan-'dzin rin-chen does not preface his account with an invitation to a divine gathering, or put the catalogue of the mountain's properties into the mouths of sages. The context of the work should probably be sought in a separate work, his *Autobiography*.

One of the earliest episodes in the *Autobiography* is a vision of Ti-se that bsTan-'dzin rin-chen claims to have had at the age of five, when the mountain is revealed to him in neatly schematic terms. The form is strict and quite elaborate, and it is perhaps surprising that the content of the vision is not incorporated into the *dkar-chag*. In this vision, he finds himself making offerings to the 33 gods on Mt. Meru, and thereafter observes that most of local phenomena are disposed in groups of 33: 33 divine communities, fountains of medicine, forests of perfumed incense that cure the 400-odd ailments, 33 sandalwood trees and lotus flowers that protect one from fear, 33 udumbara flowers with 33 petals each, 33 medicinal trees, followed by sets of 33 gods, *gshen*, ministers, generals, treasures, divine bulls, divine horses, and so on (*Autobiography*: 30-33). In the divine palace itself the assembled *gshen* and "eternity beings" (*g.yung-drung sems-dpa'*) welcome him as the incarnation of Li-shu stag-ring and prophecy that, among other things, he will one day write the description of Ti-se.

In any event, sacred mountains such as Ti-se and Ri-rtse-drug seem to occupy an important place in the author's life, and it is not difficult to imagine that they represented for him a refuge from the monastery where he was wretchedly persecuted in his youth (*ibid.*: 56 ff., esp. 77-78). It was a realm whose divine inhabitants welcomed him as one of their number and accorded his scholarly and spiritual qualities the respect denied him by his young peers. One of the things that brings him solace in his misery is a dream in which he visits the "13 great holy places that generate benefits for living beings." The list begins with "Bon-ri, in the forests of Kong-po, Ti-se in Zhang-zhung and Dang-ra g.yu-bun

Khyung-rdzong dkar-po," and includes Klu-brag, a Bon-po village in Southern Mustang that he was to visit later in his life (*ibid.*: 76).

Ti-se does of course figure in numerous early Bon works, but bsTan-'dzin rin-chen's *dkar-chag* develops it into a veritable citadel of his religion. He takes a quite uncompromising line with regard to what he evidently sees as a Buddhist usurpation of the place. If a critical observation may be made regarding Prats and Namkhai Norbu's fine edition, it would be that bsTan-'dzin rin-chen emerges as a more conciliatory character than the text warrants. Among the passages that have been selected for translation by the editors is "the contest between the Buddhists and the Bon-pos" (129-130), in which the Bon-pos at the court of Khri Srong-lde-btsan are presented as an uncultured crew of frauds who are easily overcome by Padmasambhava in debate. However, a closer examination of the setting in which this contest occurs suggests that the author himself did not subscribe to the authenticity of the account he cites, any more than he did to certain defamatory representations of Padmasambhava. The narrative that precedes his account of the Bon-pos' defeat includes a bizarre story concerning the origins of two of the protagonists, Khye'u Dran-pa nam-mkha' and Padma 'byung-gnas himself. In Phyug-mo dbal-ri in upper Nyang a woman dies in childbirth. While her corpse is being dismembered in a cemetery the body cutters discover that the child is alive and commit it to the care of a passing shepherdess. Because the child later claims to remember his past 500 lives he calls himself Dran-pa nam-mkha'—presumably understood as "memory [as extensive as the] sky". Meanwhile, in India, a prostitute gives birth to a boy with feathers instead of hair, and, disgusted by his appearance, she buries him alive. When he is disinterred the next day everyone is surprised to find him still alive, and a charitable Brahman woman adopts him. He is nicknamed Khye'u Ro-langs bde-ba, but after being ordained as a monk in Bodh Gayā assumes the name Sakya senge. This, in short, is Padmasambhava. From there the youth travels to Bengal, where he learns strange arts. His accomplishments include: turning a corpse into gold; drinking beer without getting drunk; flying like a bird; and making love to a hundred women in a night without causing any of them to become pregnant. And so he wanders around much of northern India, a much-feared figure given to murder, rape and necrophilia, and, to the dismay of the local kings, invulnerable to impalement, drowning and burning. Finally the king of Nepal (Li-bal) has him escorted to the "edges of the chilly lands of the frozen north" (*byang khyag-pa 'khyag-yul-gyi mtha'-'khob*). He passes through Gung-thang and makes his way to the Tibetan court, where he ingratiates himself with Khri Srong-lde-btsan and arouses the jealousy of the degenerate Bon-pos, among whom is Khye'u Dran-pa nam-mkha'. It is then that the contest between the two parties takes place.

Now this entire account (as well as the subsequent treatment of Mi-la and Na-ro) is related in the fifth chapter of the *dkar-chag*, in which the author sets out "to show how forgers have invented and fabricated" their accounts (*lnga pa bcos ma rnams kyis bcos shing bsgyur tshul bstan pa ni...*) (86). The context would seem to indicate that this version of the contest between Buddhists and Bon-pos is,

like the story of Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123), an account that the author has heard or read somewhere and is quoting with sceptical disapprobation.

bsTan-'dzin rin-chen's remarks concerning the legendary conquest of Ti-se on behalf of Buddhism by Mi-la ras-pa are barbed, to say the least. The following is a summary list of episodes from the well-known story of Mi-la's duel with Na-ro Bon-chung: the very occurrence of such a contest of magical skills; Mi-la straddling Ma-pang lake without increasing in size, or the lake diminishing; Mi-la lifting the lake on his fingertips; Na-ro falling from his drum in flight and being ridiculed by watching spirits; and Mi-la travelling to the peak of the mountain on a ray of light, among other events—"these are just a small part of a fabricated revisionist account" (92). As if to drive the point home, he follows this remark with a long list of further instances of the way in which Buddhists have perverted history by claiming, for example, that rGod-tshang-pa (1189-1258)²⁴ opened the sacred mountain, and by changing the original Bon-po names and significances of places (93-94).

bsTan-'dzin rin-chen emphatically rejects the notion that Ti-se should be considered Buddhist territory, and he resumes his attack on the legend of Mi-la ras-pa in the sixth chapter:

Ordinary Buddhists say that this is a place that was won by that man called Mi-la ras-pa, and this is what they preach to credulous people... For a start, [Ti-se] appeared at the origin of this world age—Mi-la ras-pa certainly did not create it; and later (*bar-du*) in the good days, at the time when the Victorious gShen[-rab] was promulgating his teachings and bestowing his blessings, even the name "Mi-la ras-pa" was not around; and in a still later age, when the senior disciples were visiting the holy place and knowledge-holding yogis were meditating there, at the time when the lands of the 18 royal lines of Zhang-zhung were being founded, there was no one by the name of Mi-la ras-pa...

and so on for several pages of invective, with a dismissive biography of Mi-la ras-pa, slighting remarks about his vacuous songs and expressions of surprise that anyone could have been taken in by their author (98 ff.).

It may be noted that Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan's earlier *dkar-chag* mentions Milarepa's presence on Ti-se without any such polemic; but he was writing some two centuries before the offending biography and songs of Mi-la ras-pa had been compiled by gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507).

Mu-le-gangs

One of bsTan-'dzin rin-chen's disciples was a certain bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma from the Bon-po village of Lubra in southern Mustang. In addition to composing numerous devotional poems, bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma was also the author of a *dkar-chag* of Mu-le-gangs, better known by its Nepali name of Dhaulagiri, the lower slopes of which lie within less than a day's walk south of Lubra, on the west side of the Kali Gandaki. Although bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma himself was a Bon-po, there

is practically nothing in the text to suggest that it is anything but a Buddhist work. The *dkar-chag* appears in a work entitled *sNyigs dus kyi rnal 'byor ba bstan 'dzin nyi ma'i gsung ba'i blo sbyong dang 'brel ba'i mgur ma*. This work has been printed in India by the Tibetan Bon-po Monastic Centre, but the publication is unavailable to me. The text at my disposal is a copy I made from the original manuscript, kept in Lubra. The *dkar-chag* itself, entitled *gNas chen mu le gangs dang gu ru gsang phug gi dkar chag [chags] kun snang gsal sgron*, covers fols. 16b to 30a. It bears a number of similarities to the more brief account of Gu-ru gsang-phug that has been translated by David Snellgrove (1979: 112-124). The latter work, by one sNgags-'chang tshe-ring, is undated, and it is not clear to me which of the two is older. Franz-Karl Ehrhard has kindly given me a slightly different version of bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma's *dkar-chag*, photographed in Dol-po. The text is apparently a copy of the Lubra original, and differs from it only slightly.

The particular site with which the *dkar-chag* is concerned, Gu-ru gsang-phug ("The Secret Cave of the Master"), is a cave on the eastern flanks of Mu-le-gangs that is locally revered as a site once inhabited by Padmasambhava, and bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma does nothing to gainsay this belief. In the sylvan surroundings of his meditation place one day in a Water Pig year (1863), he sees a bright light and hears a voice speaking to him from a waterfall. The speaker introduces herself as the *dākinī* of the place and invites the hermit to a feast. She emerges from the water, bejewelled and robed in silk, and they set off. They reach Mu-le-gangs in an instant, and he observes that it looks different from the massif he is used to seeing. The sky is thick with parasols, victory banners, rainbows, buddhas, lamas, incense smoke, wheels and conches, and everywhere is a sound of bells, drums and the intonation of mantras. There are other inhabitants—serpent spirits, earth gods, zombies and so forth. The author remarks that, seen with inner vision, the mountain looks like Zangs-mdog dpal-ri, the abode of Padmasambhava.

The *dākinī* takes him in through an eastern door, and he sees a divine palace made of various precious substances. Among its many marvellous features, the palace has five lakes. In the central one is a Ge-sar lotus tree, and seated in the gigantic middle flower is Padmasambhava, accompanied by his wives and many attendants. The master casts bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma a friendly smile, and the visitor in turn makes an imaginary six-fold offering. Padmasambhava addresses bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma, and presents an apocalyptic description of conditions at the end of time when, among other things, Buddhist priests and Bon-pos will clash. But there are numerous sacred places that he has blessed: eight mountains, eight lakes, eight secret rock caves and eight great hidden valleys. The most exalted place is Mu-le-gangs, which is at the centre of these sets of eight major holy sites and 37 lesser locations. A short while later the *dākinī* leads him away from his audience and gives him a detailed commentary of the place, an orderly arrangement of treasures, footprints, divinities, relics and other sacred symbols worthy of the vision of his master bsTan-'dzin rin-chen.

This is followed by a description of a hidden land (*sbas-yul*) that lies to the north of Mu-le-gangs, a place called Dung-lo ljon-pa. This land has 500 villages, and gathers a harvest without planting; all its waters are like beer and milk, its

white earth is like tsampa, and its wood like meat. It will be opened in the Water Monkey year of the twentieth cycle (A.D. 2172), when the circuit around Mu-le-gangs will also be opened. The remainder of the work is a lengthy description of Gu-ru gsang-phug itself (24a ff.), its contents and surroundings and their disposition, and the benefits that one might accumulate from visiting the place. The account closes with the *dākinī* telling him to keep his vision to himself for three months before spreading it abroad, and she melts away like a rainbow.

bsTan-'dzin nyi-ma's *dkar-chag* effectively wins the mountain from the meaningless state of nature and transforms it into a sacred edifice where none of its natural features is devoid of significance: even the white birds on one of its lakes are sPyan-ras-gzigs himself (23a).

Khyung-po Ri-rtse-drug

The last *dkar-chag* of this sort that may be mentioned here²⁵ is the guide to the Six-peaked mountain of Khyung-po by Blo-ldan snying-po (b. 1360).²⁶ Two versions of this text, entitled simply *Shel le rgya skar gyi rnam thar*, are available to me. One is a recent production from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, comprising 19 folios of printed *dbu-can* in *dpe-cha* form, and the second is a photocopy of a manuscript *dpe-cha* of uncertain provenance in cursive script. The differences between the two versions are too minor to be worth mentioning in this general survey (page references will be to the first version described here).

Here, too, the description of the place is based on revelation. One evening, the author dreams that he hears a sound and sees a ray of light from the south-east. On awakening, he sees in front of his door a red woman robed in silk, a-clatter with bone ornaments and riding an eagle. She invites him to a feast, and he realizes that he was not dreaming after all. In response to his inquiries, she introduces herself as the *dākinī* of action O-rgyan-yum, and tells him that the feast is to be held in a cemetery at the six-fold exalted place (*rdzong-drug*) of Shel-le rgya-skar, in Glang-gi gyim-shod in Sum-pa, under the presidency of Yum-chen Nyi-ma 'Od-ldan-ma. He accompanies the *dākinī* to the venue, which is described in sumptuous detail, and after lengthy preliminaries, his hosts enlighten him about the nature of the place.

This sort of commentary does not lend itself readily to paraphrase, since an obvious aspect of its significance is the sheer quantification of wonders, meanings, resemblances, sacred properties, illustrious visitors and so forth; a massive accretion of unseen attributes that eclipses most of what is natural about the place, and turns its distinctive features into symbols of something else. The six peaks (*rdzong*) themselves are merely examples (*dpe*), that must be understood in terms of their meaning (*don*), which is the six perfections, and their signs (*rtags*), the six supreme and ordinary accomplishments (p. 20).

Embracing India

A number of the works considered above provide examples of Bon's terrestrial sway being conceptually expanded by the identification of sacred sites in areas

far beyond the historical boundaries of the religion's influence. The authority for these territorial claims derives from the pronouncements of divinities encountered in visions. By way of contrast with this model, it is worth giving some attention to the work of one Bon-po pilgrim who travelled to sacred places outside Tibet, and, on the basis of what he saw, staked a number of bold, if not startling, claims on behalf of his religion. The work in question is entitled *rGya gar gnas kyi [gyis] dkar chags dri med dwangs shel dang lam yig mdor bsdus*, "The stainless pure crystal, a register of sacred places in India, and a brief travel guide". The colophon states that it was written by one rKyang-btsun sher-mam (Shes-rab mam-rgyal?) se-da at the insistence of his two companions, rGyal-mtshan and bSam-pa, at Bya-rung kha-shor (Bodnāth *stūpa*) in Kathmandu. No date is given. Bon-po monks living in Kathmandu knew something about this figure: he was from sGang-ru byang-ma in Khyung-po, and is believed to have died some time in the early 1960s.

I first heard about the author in southern Mustang. Older villagers remembered that he stayed in the Bon-po settlement of Lubra before and after his trip to India, probably in the mid-1940s; in fact, the author does state that he began his journey in nearby Muktinath. It seems that he spent some time in Lubra after his return to write out a fair copy of the draft he had completed in Kathmandu. Fortunately he left this draft in the village before departing for Tibet, and I was able to make a copy of it in 1982. It is written in *dbu-med* and *khyug* on a set of folios bound in a red cloth cover to form a 26-page booklet.

The author was clearly influenced by the Bon gsar-ma movement, and the opening pages of his account name various Buddhist divinities who appear in his summary of unfolding world-ages. A brief description of world geography precedes a eulogy of the land of India, citing its sacred places, its diversity of flora and fauna—elephants, rhinoceroses, monkeys, snakes, various kinds of lotus and other flowers among other things—its fecundity and opulence. Shes-rab mam-rgyal was obviously awed by the whole place, and his perspective on the country is perhaps summed up in his observation that it is "a land of conjurors and aeroplanes."²⁷

The journey begins on the twelfth page, when he sets off from Muktinath (sMug-ri-sna), carrying his pack, and reaches the Indian border apparently at Butwal (Bu-sdus-la)²⁸ 20 days later. Shes-rab mam-rgyal is quite meticulous about noting the times at which he boarded trains, how long the journey took, and the length of time it requires to walk from one place to another; but it is apparent that he was barely able to communicate with anyone, and on a number of occasions seems not to have been quite sure where he was. For example, he takes the train from Gorakhpur and arrives at sunrise at Kasi Benares (rKang-shes sBi-na ra-si), a place where, he tells us, the Buddha successfully resisted the temptations of Māra. Four miles from here is "the place where the wheel of the doctrine was turned, called Saranath in Hindi and Varanasi in Tibetan" (p. 12).²⁹

There is insufficient space here to make a detailed examination of his itinerary and of the observations he records in this unfamiliar land, but awareness of his Bon-po identity was certainly never far from him. In Saranath he sees a bronze

image of one of the Buddha's disciples, bearing a "beautiful letter A of the eternal Bon system at its heart" (13).³⁰

He sets off westward by train via Lucknow (Lags-na-ho), a city of fine gardens and general prosperity, wanting nothing, that automatically bestows merit on anyone who visits it (14). From there he goes on to Hardwar (Ha-ri zlos-gar), not far to the north of which is Mount Ti-se, known in this part of the world as "Kailash" (Ki-la-sris). After a brief visit to the city (*rgyal-sa*) of Dehradun (Ghu-ru sDe-ra-'dun), a place blessed by Padmasambhava, he travels on to "rGya-mkhar ba-chod, known as A-'bar" (15).

We shall return in a moment to the significance of the name rGya-mkhar ba-chod. A-'bar is Amritsar, and the focus of the writer's interest is the Golden Temple of the Sikhs, a building situated in the middle of the town, "standing on the firm foundation of an island in a lake." Engraved swastikas are displayed; it has arched doors on each of its four faces and is set with a variety of precious stones, too numerous for him to list by name. There are "omniscient horses" (*cang-shes rta*), conch-shell elephants and various other wild and domestic animals, including golden fish in the water. And there is "not a hint of meat, garlic, onion or tobacco smoke." (*sha chang rgog rtsong kha-dud dri-ma bral*) (16). After describing the impressive appearance of the place at some length, the commentary takes an interesting turn:

Their principal *gshen* is the Subduing *gshen* with the "bird-horns". His secret name is Guru Nanak. His teachings were the Bon of Relative and Absolute Truth. He holds in his hand the Sword of Wisdom... This place was established as a citadel for the life-force of the eternal [Bon] tantras until such time as the future teacher should come. The essence of the sect is the sphere of supreme Bon. These are the haunts of the saints of the Supreme Secret *Ma-rgyud*. At this holy place the oceanic assembly of the tutelary gods and buddhas, the divine community of the nine tiered ways, gather like the clouds. On the fifteenth, thirtieth, eighth [and twenty-second of each month] and on the special days of the *Ma-rgyud*, the right kind of people, faithful and endowed with merit, may see the face and body of the Royal gShen himself (16).³¹

All this requires some explanation. What Shes-rab mam-rgyal is suggesting is that the Golden Temple of Amritsar is identical with rGyal-mkhar ba-chod, the palace built by Mi-lus bsam-legs, the Royal gShen who revealed the *Ma-rgyud*.³² The basis of the association seems partly to be similarities in the appearance of the Sikhs and the descriptions of certain ancient Bon-pos. Like some of the latter, Sikhs are conspicuous for their beards and elaborate headgear. One feature that the author specifically mentions is the presence of "bird-horns" (*bya-ru*). While these horns are a distinguishing feature of the 18 kings of Zhang-zhung (Norbu and Prats 1987: 71-73; 127-128), they were also apparently an insignium of early Bon priests.³³ The corresponding item in the case of Guru Nanak is undoubtedly the crescent horn-like motif of two crossed *kirpan*-s that appears in the Sikh crest. The "sword of wisdom" is surely the *kirpan* itself, although we may note that these and other martial items became a feature of

Sikh apparel long after the time of the peaceable Nanak, under the aegis of more militant Gurus. The identification of the Golden Temple with rGya-mkhar ba-chod apparently enjoyed a quite widespread popularity among Bon-pos.

Shortly after Amritsar, Shes-rab nam-rgyal visits various holy places in and near Kangra. One of these, an eight-mile trek from Jwalamukhi (a Hindu sacred site near Kangra) where fire burns on earth and stone, is “Na-'dis ke-sar, known as the mid-air sprite-stone”:

When the Royal gShen Mi-lus bsam-legs, who lived a long time ago, died [lit. “united his mind with space”] after fulfilling the needs of living things, all those whom he converted, without exception, passed into a great rainbow body. Then the malign demons and sprites became jealous; the demons hurled a rock at the Royal gShen and the sprites threw a sword that turned in flight, but he made a magical gesture at them with his index and little fingers, thereby preventing them from falling. They are really there, even now, in mid-air (17).³⁴

The conflict to which Shes-rab nam-rgyal alludes is an episode in the tantra where Mi-lus bsam-legs does battle with hostile *dākini*-s and demons in a place called rGyal-ba mnyes-tshal.³⁵ A translation of this passage—without the chronological liberties taken by Shes-rab nam-rgyal—is given in Martin (1986: 44-46).³⁶

Shes-rab nam-rgyal continued on his travels in India. After Amritsar he went up to Mandi, before descending to Delhi (18:9). He may—or perhaps he is just describing the possibility—have gone to Bombay (Bha-ban); there is a big ocean here, and if one travels across it in a ship (*rgya-rtsi*, i.e. *jahāz*) for 25 days one reaches “a place called Angrez, the land of a foreign king” (19).³⁷ On his way back he visited Bodh Gayā, where there is a Chinese Bon-po monastery (20),³⁸ and eventually re-entered Nepal at Birganj (sBi-ri kan-tsa) via Muzaffapur and Raxaul (elided as Mang-'jag pha-phor rag-sur) (24).

It is perhaps worth emphasizing that the popular association of Amritsar with the *Ma-rgyud* tradition is not taken seriously by more scholarly Bon-pos. When Slob-dpon Tenzin Namdak came to India as a refugee he visited Amritsar. An English guide-book that he was later able to purchase contained enough historical information about the Sikhs and their temple to confirm his doubts (Tenzin Namdak, personal communication).

Transcending Place: The Guide for the Blind

Tenzin Namdak himself is the author of a work on Bon-po sacred places: *Bod yul gnas kyi lam yig gsal ba'i dnigs [dnig] bu; The Guide for the Blind: a Traveller's Guide to Tibetan Holy Places* (1983). The work has a number of distinctive features that are worth noting in the context of the literature that has been reviewed so far.

The *Guide for the Blind* is a fairly short work of just 54 pages, but it examines in varying detail some 150 sacred places in the course of an itinerary that begins at the Bon Mountain of Kong-po, passes westward through Lha-sa, gTsang, Nepal (Lo, Dol-po and the Kathmandu Valley), and Ti-se, back to Central Tibet via a

more northern route to take in Dang-ra and Nam-mtsho, then on to Khyung-po and A-mdo, eastern Khams and Wu-tai shan. The work is, among other things, an attempt to discipline the business of pilgrimage by instilling a certain rigour into the cult of sacred places. The introduction firmly establishes the status of pilgrimage in the hierarchy of religious activities. The highest form is represented by the practitioners of rDzogs-chen who spends their lives in lonely places. After them come the tantric adepts. Then,

As it says in the *Zur-byang*, “to a diligent person of average intellect the Bon doctrine of the profound tantras are the teacher.” If this does not apply to someone, how should he or she strive for virtue? There are those who adhere to the *prātimokṣa* vows of the pure sect of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan the Nonpareil—the second enlightened one who leads us forward—people who pass their lives in purifying their minds by hearing, pondering and meditating on his widely-diffused original teachings, who hold to these things and live in accordance with them. The *Zur-byang* tells us that “faithful people of lower intellect will be taught by the Bon doctrine of Disciplinary Law”. It goes on to talk about the way in which merit might be accumulated by those who are unable to undertake this kind of religious activity (*bon-spyod*), by means of the body, speech and mind as appropriate on the part of men and women with suitable virtue and faith: they should make prostrations to the triple supports with their bodies, pace around them, and make offerings; with their voices they should recite mantas and sing hymns of praise, and with their minds they should be faithful and devout and altruistic, as far as they can. According to the *Zur-byang*, “To lowly men and women, religious activities with the body, speech and mind will be the teacher.” And so people—men and women alike—who enter the path, in order to clear away the defilements of the three spheres of action, should with their bodies visit sources of blessings and places where saints have meditated, with their speech they should chant recitations or hymns of praise, and with their minds they should be faithful, reverent and well-intentioned. If they have a rough knowledge of the stories behind these triple supports, these holy mountains, and visit them, that is a powerful asset for increasing their faith and wishes (6-7).

The authority with which the *Guide for the Blind* establishes the authenticity of the sites it lists is not revelatory but historical, where historicity may be broadly understood as the content of texts that are regarded as reliable. The author has little time for local oral tradition unless it is substantiated by the right kind of literature. For example, one day’s walk from gNyen-chen zil-mngar, a site in Khyung-po associated with the *Ma-rgyud*,

in a village called sDe-rnying, near Shel-brag, there are remaining buildings and paintings of Phug-pa-dgon. The hill is also said to be a sacred hill, but although I have seen a number of people walking around it I have not seen it contained in any text that gives it credence (50)

On the subject of the caves in the Ti-se region, he remarks that although there is an abundance of places that are revered in the local folklore, "unless I have encountered them in the original sources I have not included them for either reverence or denigration" (42). The magical and spiritual properties of sacred sites are certainly catalogued, but rather briefly, and always in the form of quotations from other works. For example, "the *Zur-byang* of Blo-ldan says, "If you offer parasols of the five colours at Nepal's Svayambhūnāth, rebirth in the lower realms will be closed for you in your next life" (29-30). Similarly, the wonders of places such as Ti-se are presented as more or less lengthy extracts from *dkar-chag* and other reverential works.

This is not to say that the representation of sacred places is in any way comparable to the simplicity of "earlier", more popular genres, that revere them as the habitations of local numina. The difference is clear in the concluding caveat:

When you walk around places such as the Bon Mountain of Kong-po, since they are receptacles that have been blessed by the Enlightened Teacher, you should imagine that, while performing your circuit, you are walking around the Enlightened One. It is not merely a matter of making prostrations and circumambulations while bearing in mind the local genii, territorial gods and swastikas of these places; whatever sacred receptacle you visit you should consider that it is this or that Enlightened One, and be reverent and rejoice. This is what is important (55).

Conclusion

The attempt made here to identify the variety of representations of sacred landscape in Tibetan literature is certainly highly simplified; there is a great deal of literature that has not been considered and, even within the scope of the material reviewed, a range of theoretical issues that have not been addressed. Nevertheless, the few examples dealt with here do make it possible to identify differences in attitudes to territory that suggest that Tibetan sacred geography is not a uniform field.

All sacred geography involves doing violence to nature by reorganizing it in ways that are congenial to human terms of reference. In the different examples we have considered it is not, of course, the landscape that varies but the terms of reference. Popular, mainly non-literary genres, as exemplified by songs (although folk-tales would also be worth examining) do not depart too radically from nature. The components of vertical space are not changed to, say, precious substances, but elevations are nonetheless formally tiered, and peopled with suitable, more-or-less natural fauna. Real political units, whether villages or kingdoms (as opposed to *shas-yul*), do not change shape either. They are simply underlain by a network of supernatural entities whose prominence may reflect the temporal significance of the site in question.

The potentially intimate relationship between a political power and an organized religion is illustrated by the association of Bon and the kingdom or, at

least, the idea of Zhang-zhung. As the description of Khyung-lung dngul-mkhar and its satellites suggests, Zhang-zhung is believed to have provided the temporal platform that sustained Bon, and the political centres of Zhang-zhung are consequently also sacred centres of Bon.

Whatever the real historical relationship between them may have been, Bon survived while Zhang-zhung did not. Bon ceased to have a political base, and the subsequent examples examined illustrate the autonomous acquisition of land by a religion. The 24 sacred sites of the *Ma-rgyud* and the 37 “gathering places” are instances of territorial configurations devoid of any associated polity. The autonomy of sacred space from temporal authority reaches its most extreme development in the *dkar-chag* genre. Not only is polity irrelevant, but the natural landscape itself is all but annihilated by the *maṇḍala* that is imposed, while autochthonous gods are brought into its service.

The last two works examined represent opposite sides of a watershed in literature on sacred geography. The *rGya gar dkar chag* is a peculiarly hybrid work, to the extent that it is a modern enterprise—a travelogue of a real land outside Tibet—that does not shed the conventions of traditional genres. Places such as Lucknow can still not be described without the obligatory mention of magical streams that purify all defilements. Tenzin’s Namdak’s *Guide for the Blind* comes closer than any of the other works examined to effecting a separation between landscape and divinity. The work may be regarded as “modern” in the way that a European might consider, say, Locke or Hobbes to be modern. Where the *dkar-chag* genre obliterates landscape, the *Guide for the Blind* rehabilitates it by partly detaching it from its supernatural associations. Divinity is no longer immanent in the land but transcendent, and the resulting separation produces two almost distinct fields of interest: on the one hand a quasi-secular historical geography and, on the other, a religious perspective in which propitiation gives way to soteriology, with nothing in between.

Notes

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1. We may note Large-Blondeau’s observation that “toute cette littérature est appelée au Tibet du nom général de *dkar-chag*, dont la traduction est ‘registre’, mais qui désigne en réalité les guides des lieux saints” (1960: 213).
2. A further exception may be made for studies related to the mythical land of ‘Ol-mo lung-ring, which has deservedly attracted attention among scholars because of its importance for Bon-po ideas about the origins of their religion. See, for example, Snellgrove (1967); Gumilev and Kuznetsov (1970); Karmay (1975); Martin (in this volume).

A survey of the principle Bon-po sacred places is contained in Krystyna Cech's unpublished doctoral thesis (1987), but unfortunately this work is presently unavailable to me for reference.

3. This is not to suggest that the dyad is the only cultural possibility in the attribution of gender to topographical features. The village of Kag, near Te, has a similar configuration of territorial gods. At the top is Pho-lha, in the middle is Pho-lha sde-lnga, and by the river is Chos-rgyal (or possibly Chu-rgyal?). Interestingly, Pho-lha is regarded as female, Chos-rgyal as male, and Pho-lha sde-lnga as their offspring. Numerous mountains in Tibet are female, and Toni Huber informs me that certain lakes are considered to be male.
4. The strange chorus that follows each strophe need not be given, since it would require lengthy explanation that is not relevant here. Similarly, the numerous intercalated syllables that have no literal meaning have been omitted with the exception of the penultimate *la* of the third line, which is necessary for the metre.
5. *niTho la yang stod gangs stod mtho / mtho'i nang nas sha ra ra / 'di la dga' ba'i dar la seng...
// mtho la yang stod / mtho la yang stod brag stod mtho / mtho'i nang nas sha ra ra / 'di la dga' ba'i bya la rgod...*
6. The feminine form may be used here and in the seventh stanza simply because it provides an extra syllable to meet the demands of the metre.
7. It may be noted that Wylie's treatment of the subject of political geography addresses the matter of the historical dimensions of Tibet itself, and is not concerned with local territorial boundaries (Wylie 1965: 20-24).
8. *Glo yul sa lung dkar po'i pho brang 'dir / sna tshogs [mtshogs] 'ja' sprin 'khrugs pa'i dbus dkyil na / rdzong lha dkar po drag rtsal mthu bo che / zhal zhig [cig] phyag gnyis spa lcad tshig gsum snom [snams] / dbu la dar dkar 'gying thod rab mdzes snom [snams] / zhal 'dzum dgyes pa'i mdangs [ldang] ldan mu lu lu / chibs su rta nichog gro dkar miyur mgyogs ['gyogs] can / rin chen sga [ga] srab nang pos [po'i] mdzes pas brgyan /.*
9. This reading is a very free interpretation of the text (given in the following footnote). Gang-lung could signify the major settlement of Gelung (usually spelt dGerlung in texts), but as far as I have been able to determine there is no divinity called Ti-se or sTe-zugs located here (although there is a god named Tiwi). Moreover, for much of the last two centuries Gelung was not considered to be part of the kingdom of Lo. I have rendered sTe-zugs as Ti-se, since this is how the name is locally pronounced, and the orthography given here is not necessarily authoritative: a *gser-skyems* text from a neighbouring settlement actually gives the spelling as Ti-se. Ti-se dkar-po is represented by a white rock in the valley floor east of Gara (usually spelt Gang-ra).
10. *Klu ri shug pa'i klu ma 'od dang ldan / gang lung gang dkar phu na ste zugs kar / tang kya sum mdo'i sna ri shar btsan po / ga mi jo bo phug phug [po] jo bo bdud / brag dmar klu btsan tsa drang chos rgyal dang / ge gar ster chen ruams thos sras po...*
11. *Ya ngal bon skyong gter chen ruams thos sras / ...chos rdzong rgyal po sam rdzong ma khri rgyal...*
12. *Ge-khod* in this case probably designates not the tutelary divinity but a class of mountain gods of the same name.
13. I have not been able to locate the names of these castles in other sources that are available to me. In any event, they do not appear to correspond with the names of the rulers of the 18 lesser kingdoms of Zhang-zhung listed by bsTan-'dzin rin-chen (Norbu and Prats 1989: 70-73, 126-128).
14. *dBus gtsang ru bzhi bod kyi yul dang / smad mdo khams sgang drug rgya nag gi yul sogs.* (Norbu and Prats 1989. Note that this is the version of the editors' text B, the Dolanji edition p. 590).

15. A commentary to the *mDzod-phug* by 'Gro-mgon Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1198-1263; see Kvaerne 1971).
16. For example, for g.Yu-lung shel-brag see Snellgrove (1967: 194-195); 'Tshal-ri mdun-sa is probably a reference to mTshal-ri lha-bdun, see *ibid.*: 90,91, fig. XXI. It may be noted that "mTshal-ri mdun-sa" is also named as the general location of the eleventh constellation of *dākini*-s, who have bulls' heads.
17. The term *mi-dred* is applied to an animal corresponding to familiar popular descriptions of yetis. From evidence I have seen—tracks, diggings, scats—and behavioural descriptions, the animal in question is the brown bear. But since it may not designate the brown bear exclusively, and since the *mi-dred* seems in any case to be regarded by most Tibetans as taxonomically unrelated to the Himalayan black bear (*dom*), the translation "yeti" is probably preferable here.
18. Roberto Vitali has suggested to me that, insofar as the name Khri-gdan implies the capital of Ka-che, the site may correspond to the Vale of Kashmir.
19. In the *gZi-brjid*, rKong-rje states that he belongs to "the lineage of the divine prince Thog-thog sad-wer" (vol. *nya*:461).
20. The expression Gangs-ri mtsho-gsum that appears in numerous sources (including the *mDzod-phug*) may be glossed as "the three holy places: the two mountains, Ti-se and sPos-ri ngad-gdan, and the lake Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho."
21. Unfortunately I am unable to provide satisfactory references here. The version of the *Ma-rgyud* available to me is a manuscript copy in which the folios of the relevant section are not numbered.
22. I was able to photograph another, unfortunately undated, manuscript version of this work in the Bon-po village of Lubra, in southern Mustang. It bears the same title as the Dolanji edition, and since it apparently differs from it only in relatively minor details (such as the interlineal notes), no further reference need be made to it here.
23. Interestingly, neither the name Kailash nor the Ya-bag sha-ra of Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan are included in this list.
24. For a brief biography of this celebrated 'Brug-pa lama see Roerich (1979: 680-686).
25. A sixth Bon-po *dkar-chag*, a guide to A-myes rma-chen, is the subject of a recent article by Katia Buffetrille (1994), and need not be discussed here.
26. It may be noted that Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (b. 1705), the third incarnation of Blo-ltan snying-po, writes extensively of his visions and other activities around Ri-rtse-drug. Incidental references to the site appear throughout his substantial biography (*Sprul sku sangs rgyas gling pa'i rnam thar*), but there are a number of passages which present more elaborate descriptions of its properties. See for example vol. 1, pp. 691 ff, and especially the revelation begun by rJe Mu-spungs gsal-stang (vol. 1, pp. 694 ff).
27. *sGyu ma mkhan dang ha ba rgya rtsi'i gling*. (*Ha ba rgya rtsi* = Hindi *havājahāz*).
28. In the dialect of Southern Mustang, Butwal is generally known as "Batuli".
29. *rGya skad sa ra na this bod kyi skad / wa ra na sir chos 'khor bskor ba'i gnas /*
30. *Rin chen li las grub pa'i nyan thos sku / thugs kar g.yung drung bon skor a yig mdzes /*
31. *Che [che] ba'i [pa'i] gshen ni 'dul gshen bya ru can / gsang <ba'i> mtshan ni gu ru na nig zhes / gsung ba'i bka'i ni drang nges bden gnyis bon / phyag rgya'i [rgyi] rtags (?) [kar? illegible] ni shes rab ral gri [dri] 'dzin / ... / gzhung gi ston pa ma 'ongs ma byon bar / g.yung drung gsang ba sngags kyi srog mkhar btsugs [brtsug] / grub mtha'i snying po 'og min bon gyi dbyings / gsang mchog ma rgyud grub pa brnyes pa'i zhing / gnas 'dir yi dam rgyal ba rgya mtsho'i tshogs / theg pa rim dgu'i lha tshogs sprin ltar 'dus / nya stong tshes brgyad ma rgyud dus chen skabs / rigs bzang dad can bsod nams bzang po yis / rgyal gshen nyid kyi sku zhal dngos su [gsum] mjal /*

32. rGyal-mkhar ba-chod is incidentally the home of the five eagle-headed *dākini*-s of the *Ma-rgyud*, twelfth in the list of 24 cited above.
33. For the relevant sources see Norbu and Prats (1989:xix); a priest called sTag-lo Bya-ru-can is also mentioned in Karmay (1972: 45-46).
34. 'Jo la dgyes la sa rdo nue 'bar njal / de nus khur bsnams mi li brgyad kyi sar / na 'dis ke sar srin rdo bar snang zhes / sngon ma'i rgyal gshen mi lus bsam legs des / ...'gro ba'i don grub dgongs pa dbyings bsdus skabs / gdul bya lhag med 'ja' lus chen por gshegs / de tshe bdud srin ma rung 'phrag dog skyes / gshen rgyal sku la bdud kyis [kyi] gyad rdo dang / srin gyis [gyi] ral gri lding skor 'phen pa'i l'phang ba'i] tshe / phyag gis [gi] sdigs [sdig] mdzug gtad pas lhung ma nus / da lta mngon sum [gsum] bar snang mkha' la yod / .
35. Concerning rGyal-ba mnyes-tshal, cf. Dran-pa nam-mkha's commentary to the *Mdzod-phug*:

Once upon a time, in the land of I-sho-da-na in Zhang-zhung, in the lovely grove of Shi-a pa-ra, in the centre of the town of rGyal-ba-mnyes, in the palace called Khyung-lung dngul-ma-maa, which is also known as 'Om-po sgo-bzhi... (1966, commentary, p. 2).

36. For the subsequent imposition of his reign and the establishment of his palace, see *ibid.*:48-50.
37. *Ong res sras zhes phyi gling rgyal po'i yul.*
38. *rGya mi'i tsug lag [lags] bon gyi dgon.*

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Machig Zhama's Recovery: Traces of Ancient History and Myth in the South Tibetan Landscape of Kharta and Phadrug

Hildegard Diemberger & Guntram Hazod

Introduction

In book IV of the *Deb ther sngon po* (=BA),¹ the chapter on the propagation of the doctrine by rMa lo-tsā-ba and his followers, the author presents at some length a narrative regarding a key event in the life of rMa lo-tsā-ba's chief disciple, the south Tibetan *mkha'-'gro* Machig Zhama (Ma-gcig zha-ma). It is the story of how she was stricken by a malady after the death of her master, and of the subsequent improvement of her health which took place after special instructions given by Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas, whom she went to see at Dingri (Ding-ri).

In contrast to the narrative given in the BA we heard a different version of the *mkha'-'gro's* sickness and process of healing from the local lama of the Tharpa-gling monastery in Kharta (Kha-rta). It forms the framework of a mythical account about a lake considered to have existed in former times in the Kharta chu valley and which had been drained off by the sick Machig Zhama, a process which led to the restoration of her health and at the same time paved the way for the first settlement in that area. As is very often the case with stories like this, one may find clear evidence of the account in traces within the landscape where the events took place. In Kharta the respective spots are identified and interpreted by the local people as powerful places which used to be part of the ideal cultural boundary of the Kharta community, including the northern door of the well known hidden valley of Khenbalung (Beyül Khenbalung, sBas-yul mkhan-pa-lung).

In the following we will present the story and legend of Machig Zhama in relation to the religious and political landscape of Kharta, in the course of which we will also meet with historical traces concerning early Latö lho (La-stod lho) and the homeland of Machig Zhama, Phadrug (Pha-drug).

Phadrug, Kharta and the Ancient Latö lho

Kharta and Phadrug belong to the southern part of what was once called Latö lho. These areas lie on one of the traditional south-north trading routes between Nepal and Tibet which pass near rTsib-ri (alias Śrī-ri, north-west of Phadrug) into the main route coming from the south and south-east of Dingri (from gNya'-lam and sKyid-rong) and continuing to the north-east (towards the area of lHa-rtse). This main route connects the two well-known holy sites of Latö lho, the mountains rTsib-ri, and Ding-ri sgang-dmar which are famous on account of being closely linked to the deeds of religious figures such as Mi-la ras-pa, Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas, Ma-gcig lab-sgron (11th/12th century) and rGod-tshang-pa (13th century). In this context the sanctuaries in question also used to represent a kind of crossroads in connection with the early Buddhist missions in Latö lho (eg. bKa'-brgyud-pa and rNying-ma-pa from the 12th century onwards).

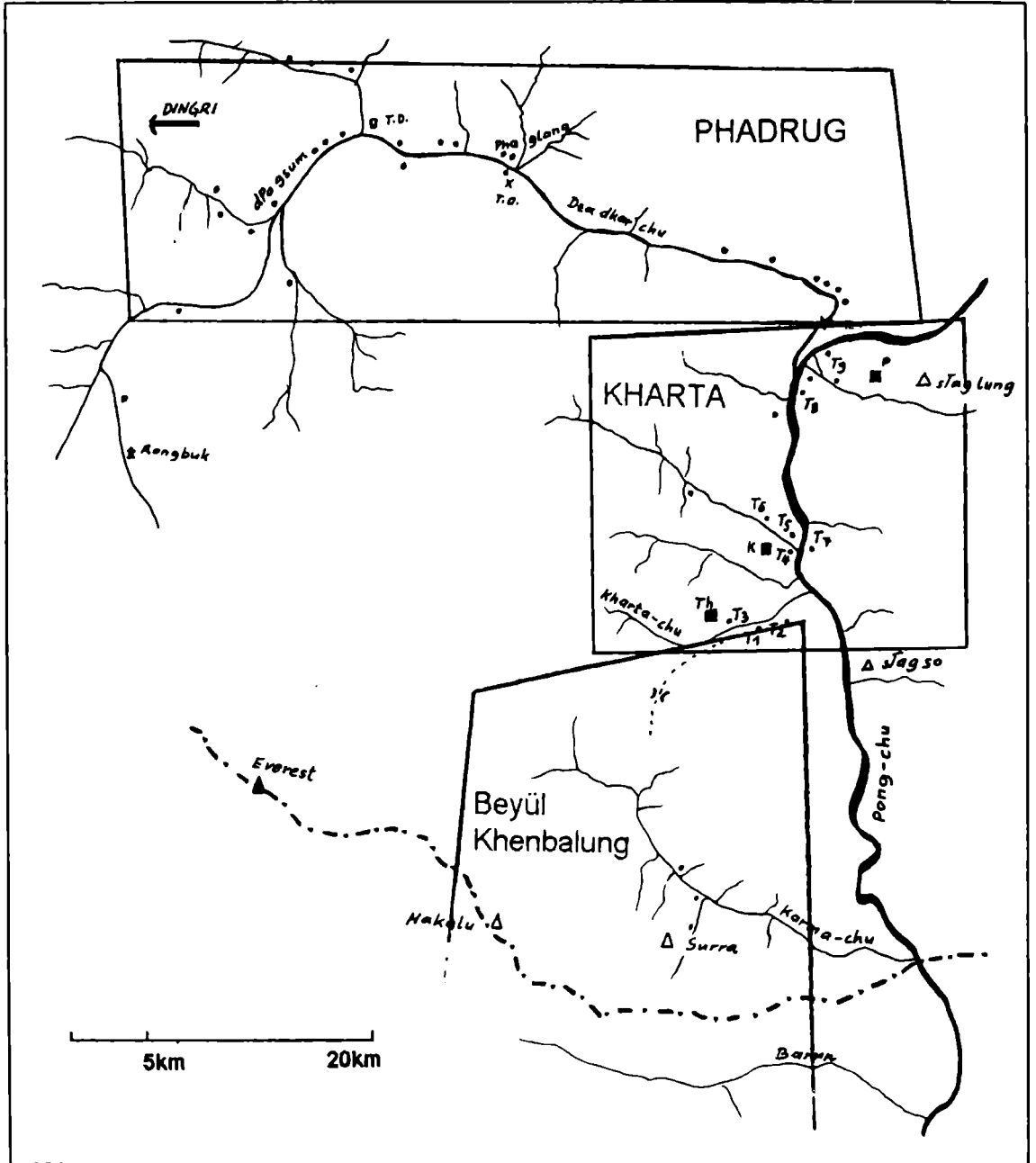
Machig Zhama was a contemporary of Ma-gcig lab-sgron, the famous "female assistant" of Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas and chief interpreter of his doctrines of *gCod* and *gZhi-byed*. Both Machigs ("One Mother") represent the tradition of the *mkha'-'gro*, the sacred woman of Tibetan Tantrism of the 11th/12th century which became the model for the mystic ladies of later traditions.² Especially in the areas of Kharta and the hidden valleys one finds a vivid memory of religious ladies (rNying-ma-pa nuns and lay practitioners) who used to embody the tradition of women's spiritual search.³

According to the BA, Machig Zhama (or Machig Zhachungma [Ma-gcig Zhachung-ma]) was born in the year 1062 A.D. as the daughter of the Zha-ma family in "Pha-drug of the southern (region)" (*lho'i pha drug*).⁴ Phadrug is situated south-east of rTsib-ri and refers to the valley of the Dza-dkar river which flows into the great Pong-chu (Arun). Some miles above the confluence there is a small heap of stones on the right bank of the river with prayer flags which, according to the local people, marks the traditional border between Phadrug and the area of Kharta. The last refers to the adjacent Pong-chu basin including the lateral valleys stemming from the mountains south of Phadrug, the southernmost of which (Kharta chu) is considered to be the scene of the lake story of Machig Zhama (see map 1).

Phadrug is nowadays administratively subdivided into the *shang* of dPa-gsum⁵ and bKra-shis-'dzoms. Traditionally the area was divided into upper Phadrug (Pha-drug stod), located around the village of dPa-gsum and lower Phadrug (Pha-drug smad), which is centred around Pha-glang. This site, a deserted place full of ancient ruins and tombs is mentioned by the local people as the first *pha* and as the ancient centre of Phadrug. Opposite to Pha-glang, on the slopes above the village Shan-chung and next to a spring, there is a small red shrine which is believed to be the abode of the powerful deity bKra-shis 'od-'bar. This god is considered the religious protector of the Bo-dong-pa and it is said that he was introduced from India by dPang lo-tsā-ba (1276-1342) who became the first abbot of the monastery of Shegar (Shel-dkar).⁶ According to the

local people he stopped on his way from India to Tibet at the appropriate place in Phadrug, took off his hat and left the deity there.

Map 1: Kharta, Phadrug and Beyül Khenbalung in the South of Latö Lho



- | | | | |
|---------|----------------------|------|--------------------|
| T1 - T9 | the 9 tsho of Kharta | * P | Phu ri dgon pa |
| * Th | Thar pa gling | T.D. | bKras shis'dzoms |
| * K | sKu ye bla brang | T.O. | bKra shis 'od 'bar |
| | | • | villages |

But this seems to be merely a secondary interpretation of an ancient powerful place which is classified as a *yul-lha* ("land god") and presumably was once linked to ancient Phadrug, the "land of the six fathers".⁷ This term goes back to an original clan, mythologically represented by a "father" who worked like a wood-beetle during the day and disappeared into the interior of the wood at night. He had six sons, these are the six *pha* (*pha-drug*) among whom the territory have been divided.⁸ This account makes one think of an original mode of (patri-) clan division connected with the process of migration and the first settlement in the area in question.

According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* chronicle Phadrug and Dingri are mentioned in a military document (*dmag-deb*) of King Khri Srong-lde-btsan (8th century) as belonging to the southern regions (*lho-phyogs*) in Ru-lag (SH fol. 9).⁹ During the time of the Sa-skya rule Latö lho became a myriarchy (*khri-skor*) in close relation with northern Latö (La-stod byang) (Petech 1990:53). The political centre of the south was Ding-ri sgang-dkar, at that time the residence of the lHo *bdag* family of Shes-phrug¹⁰ from whose ranks several *dpon-chen* came during the Sa-skya rule (SH fol. 5, 6; Petech 1990:27, 53, 44). Afterward the lHo *bdag* moved the residence to Rin-chen-spo in rGyal-nor (north-west of Shegar), but it had to be given up during the reign of the lHo *bdag si-tu* Chos-kyi rin-chen who was at war with the Lord of northern Latö. After a short stay in bKra-shis-'dzoms of Phadrug *si-tu* Chos-kyi rin-chen founded the great fortress of Shel-dkar rdzong on the prominent hill of rGyal-mo-ri (located near rGyal-nor) and afterwards supported the foundation of the Shegar monastery (1385 A.D.; SH fol.11a, 13b). Until 1959 Shel-dkar rdzong was the political and administrative centre of this region.

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* gives an interesting account of the foundation of Shegar which is described as one of the "13 propitious deeds" (*legs mdzad bcu gsum*) of *si-tu* Chos-kyi rin-chen (SH fol. 12a-14b). The story shows a particular case of divine intervention concerning the political legitimacy of the position of the lHo *bdag*: During the war with the north (La-stod byang) the Lord of southern Latö was taken prisoner and then led towards Kharta by the enemy army where they intended to throw him into the river. But he was saved from drowning by his paternal god (*pho-lha*) after having called his tutelary deity (i.e. *yi-dam* sGrol-ma, Tārā); the god appeared as a red hero on a red horse and by proclaiming the precepts of the gods (*lha-lung*) he forbade the killing of the prince. The soldiers acted accordingly and then by order of two couriers (*mi-bang*) (mentioned as emanations of sGrol-ma) they brought the prince to the court of the Byang *bdag* (in Ngam-ring). When the Lord of the North heard about this extraordinary event he was deeply impressed; he decided not to destroy the enemy and married his daughter to Chos-kyi rin-chen and sent him back as the ruler. When later the "new" lHo *bdag* founded the Shel-dkar fortress he gave the hill the new name of sGrol-ma-ri after his *yi-dam* sGrol-ma who, together with the red hero, had saved the prince in Kharta.

This red god whose intervention in Kharta had obviously even influenced the part of the winner was the powerful mountain Pho-lha lha-btsan sgang-dmar, also mentioned in the text as member of the leading "wild *btsan*" (the

btsan-rgod 'bar-ba spun-bdun).¹¹ He is identical with Ding-ri sngang-dmar, the mountain located near Glang-skor which became the centre of Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas' mission in Tibet (early 12th century).¹²

It is evident from different sources that Ding-ri sngang-dmar marks something like the focal point concerning the ancient sacred geography of Latö lho. Like a king he has four ministers in the four cardinal directions, the eastern one being represented by Surra Rakye (Zur-ra rwa-skyes), the chief mountain of Kharta and of the hidden valleys in the south of Latö lho. To the west Ding-ri sngang-dmar is linked to ancient Gung-thang¹³ and even appears in Dolpo (Dol-po, west of Glo-bo, Mustang), where he is worshipped as *so-pa* (guardian) of the eastern part of Dol-po gru-bzhi.¹⁴ Among the forms of worship and offerings required by the wild mountain, animal sacrifice, which the local community of Dingri/Glang-skor used to perform until 1959, is also mentioned.¹⁵

When Dingri became the residence of the lHo *bdag*-s of the Shes-phrug family the mountain became identified with the ancestral protector of the ruler's lineage and in this function he entered the picture at Kharta in order to save the prince of southern Latö.

Machig Zhama: The Narrative of the BA

Machig Zhama was the fourth of the six sons and daughters born to Zha-ma rDo-rje rgyal-mtshan and his wife called the Indian Devī (rGya-gar lha-mo).¹⁶ At the age of 17 (1079 A.D.) the young Zhachungma started her religious career at the side of the teacher rMa lo-tsā-ba, who took her as one of his tantric assistants (*mudrā*) when he was told about her extraordinary endowment. Specific signs on the body of the new-born Zhachungma had already indicated her status as an incarnation of Tārā, into whom she now (as a tantric partner) felt transformed during her mystic contemplation (actually she saw the teacher and herself as Heruka and his *śakti*).

After some years of learning and practising, Machig went into seclusion, visiting various solitary places, while her teacher went to Shab-dge-sdings (south-west of Shigatse), where he was poisoned and died (1090 A.D.). As one of his chief disciples it was the duty of Machig Zhama to perform the funeral rites for her teacher. But after that she was struck by a mysterious sickness, described as seven obstacles (*bar-chad*) which afflicted her during the next three years. When she then consulted Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas at Dingri he diagnosed these "hindrances" as corresponding to seven kinds of "transgressions of vows" (*dam-tshig nyams-pa*) in respect to her teacher. For example, he stated that she had acted without the teacher's permission as the *mudrā* of other adepts which corresponds to the first *bar-chad*, the affliction "by a daily discharge of sperm of the size of a pea"; or that her "body became covered with abscesses and pustules" (syphilis?) (= 2nd *bar-chad*) was due to her mingling with people who defiled their vows, etc.

What Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas meant is that the impetuous demeanour of the (initiated) Machig had injured the relation to her teacher and now she had to suffer for it through a sickness which was actually a hindrance on her way

towards the state of perfection. But there is a second and economic consequence: she had not even fulfilled the duties incumbent on her as a "bride" for whom the lama rMa once had had to pay a price (*rin*) to her father, a *sngags-pa* (magician).¹⁷ Thus, can we understand the final instructions by Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas, who after having performed the corresponding rituals, ordered that she had "to look after the descendants of her teacher" and "to make offerings to the remains of rMa." Only this (economical as well as social and ritual) balance could compensate her faults, and when she acted accordingly her health finally improved.

Later on, after receiving the "complete precepts" she attained spiritual realization (*grub-pa brnyes*); she acted as a teacher, "laboured extensively for the benefit of living beings" and visited places for meditation, among others those of the "border country of Mon and Tibet" (*mon bod gnas*).

Machig Zhama and the Mythology of the Lake

Some miles above the confluence of the Kharta chu and Pong-chu lies the picturesque part of the Kharta chu valley which the following story describes as the place of a former lake and as the scenery of the recovery of Machig Zhama. Lama sByin-pa chos-grags of the monastery of Thar-pa-gling, which is located on the northern slopes of the vale, told us this story when we visited the place in February 1993:

The *mkha'-gro* Machig Zhachungma who was afflicted with leprosy (*mdze-nad*) came to the lake which once had filled this valley of Kharta chu down to the present village of Yul-'bar. She came on her father's advice, a *sngags-pa*, who told her that if she cut down the rocks of the lower end of the lake the water could flow out and then her health would improve.

Machig Zhama stopped at the rock called Brag dkar-chen, built a wooden *mchod-rten* there, cut down the rocks and thrust the *mchod-rten* into the middle of the lake; after that the waters leaked out.

Later on people went there and the first villages developed. At that time there was no temple and no monastery; Machig Zhachungma erected a small temple and nine monks from the nine *tsho* (local political units) came over there.

It is told that in the monastery (of Thar-pa-gling) one can hear the sound of the ancient lake.

1. First we will pay attention to the more general mythological content given in this lake story of Kharta. This story is no isolated case; similar accounts are reported from other parts of the Himalaya and Tibet proper with the exception that usually a male protagonist (e.g. Guru Rinpoche) plays the role of the culture hero who has to subdue the *dümo* (*bdud-mo*, demoness), the actual mythic creator of the lake and flood.¹⁸ Apart from this difference there seems to be a common mythological pattern. The first characteristic element lies in the existence of a

threatening lake (or flood) and the taming of the waters by a religious hero, a process which ensures the (ideal as well as material) conditions for inhabiting that area. As can be seen, the story combines this action with the arrival of the new religion, and very often we find it linked with the foundation of a temple or monastery. Such accounts cannot be separated from legends like the famous story concerning the foundation of the Jokhang in Lhasa. It is said that the temple had been erected at the centre of a former lake which is believed to be the heart of the great Tibetan demoness, *srin-mo*, whose body has defined the ideal base of the sacred geography of early central Tibet.¹⁹ The heart of the *srin-mo* corresponds to a stone situated in the centre of the Jokhang and covers the hole which leads to the chthonic realm of the waters. It is reported that one can hear the rush and swell of the sea by pressing one's ear to the stone.²⁰

It is this central stone (the Brag dkar-chen of Kharta chu), which seems to be one of the focal points of the lake story. The stone (which sometimes appears combined with the holy tree) is the only object which survived the flood caused by the *dümo*. Together with the averting of the flood (i.e. the ritual stick thrown into the water and the opening of the dam) we find the elements of a mythological framework which is very suggestive of ancient Tibetan mythologies concerning the conception of the "centre of the world", as it is expressed for example in the description of the Bon-po place of origin, 'Ol-mo lung-ring. To this mythological centre leads the *mida'-lam*, the "way of the arrow", shot by gShen-rab to find a passage-way through the "enclosure of snowy mountains" (*gangs-kyi ra-ba*). This wall is an enclosure of the ocean surrounding the inner region of the legendary country which is dominated by the central mountain.²¹

The mountain, the stone or tree standing out of the water is one of the clichés which we find in Tibetan accounts dealing with the creation of the world;²² in Bon-po works it is attached to the genealogy of the gods, at the base of which we find the opposite figures of a male god (like Ye-smon rgyal-po or one of his followers) and a *chu-lcam*, a "water spouse". Since she is at the same time the partner of the mountain god she appears also as a heavenly figure (like gNam-phyi gung-rgyal).²³

Significantly, the lakes are designated both in the texts and by the local people as *bdud-mo mtsho*, "lake of the demoness" or *yum-mtsho*, "lake of the mother", or corresponding terms like *g.yu-mtsho*, "lake of turquoise". This precious stone is closely linked to the Tibetan conceptions of the soul (to the "female soul", *bla-g.yu*)²⁴ and corresponding to the traditional conception of the human body it is placed on the critical "spots of the soul" (the neck and forehead) (cf. Karmay 1992:536). But moreover, in the context of the creation of the lake the turquoise is even linked to the female organism. The story of the creation of the *bDud-mo mtsho* in Phoksumdo tells us that the *dümo* gave the turquoise to a woman who then knotted it in the belt twisted around her waist; when Guru Rinpoche, who pursued the fleeing demoness, came along he tried to open the knot, whereupon the *dümo* filled the valley below with water.

There is no doubt that here we meet with traces of a mythological conception regarding an ancient idea of the beyond and of creation which is connected with

the chthonic realm (of waters) represented by the image of the "mother" who appears as both: as a demoness and as a goddess.

Now, when we return to the lake of Kharta, we can assume that the spot of the arrival of Machig Zhama (the rock Brag dkar-chen) represents the central stone which once stood out of the mythic lake. This spot corresponds to the wooden *mchod-rten* thrown into the middle of the water in order to stop the flood. It represents nothing other than the (holy) tree or *dar-shing* (flag staff), which (in the Dolpo and Phoksumdo stories) is attached to the stone.

Today the rock Brag dkar-chen, the "big white rock", is marked by a prayer flag; it is situated on the edge of a slope above the Thar-pa-gling monastery. Nearby is a spring enclosed by ornamented stones and perhaps the permanent flow of water represents the sound of the mythic lake which can be heard within the temple, as the lama of Thar-pa-gling reports.

In Dolpo such white rocks related to the lake are designated by the people as a meeting place of "witches" (*gson-'dre-ma*) and *dümos*.²⁵ It is a place reserved for the local women who perform dances there and make *klu-bsangs* (offering for the *klu*). Did the *mkha'-'gro* arrive at the lake of Kharta as a witch or as a demoness of the lake?

2. The narrative tells us that Machig Zhama, when her health had been restored, visited the "border country of Mon and Tibet" for meditation. This term refers more generally to the trans-Himalayan area which is marked by a network of trading routes linking the communities of the southernmost part of Tibet and the "wild" people of the south (Mon). In the present context it refers to the so-called "hidden valleys" (*beyül, sbas-yul*) located in the "border country" south of Latö lho.

Here, the people from Mon and Tibetan pilgrims and mystics used to meet in the sacred landscapes which are considered holy sites where the teachings and ritual items of Padmasambhava were hidden until the appropriate time of their discovery by a "treasure finder" (*gter-ston-pa*).²⁶ Side by side with these traces of the hero Guru Rinpoche we usually find a particular concentration of ancient powerful places in this landscape connected with the mythology of mountains, caves and waters; it is the realm of a pre-Buddhist world whose divine representatives once had been subdued by Guru Rinpoche and appointed "guardians of the teaching" (*bka'-srung-ma*).²⁷

The hidden valley of Khenbalung represents an excellent example for this meeting and concentration of different religious traditions which, accordingly, are reflected in the syncretistic ritual practice of the different communities connected with the hidden valley.²⁸

Kharta lies on the northern edge of Beyül Khenbalung, whose geography is described in the Neyig (*gnas-yig*)²⁹ as based on the *maṇḍala* model; according to the oral tradition the actual spot where the *mkha'-'gro* cut down the rocks is considered as the northern and outer door leading to the centre of the beyül.

The place is marked by the red rock Brag-btsan dmar-po situated above the river-bed of the Kharta chu and opposite the village Yul-'bar (see map 2).

In this connection the water of the lake covering the valley of Kharta chu appears as a kind of “hindrance” for the holy path (of Machig) and inversely the action of draining off the water by the *mkha’-’gro* appears as a kind of opening of that way. As it is clearly expressed in the story this opening corresponds to the process of healing of the *mkha’-’gro*’s disease.

This leads to the conclusion that there must be a relation between the conception of “lake” and the *mkha’-’gro*’s diseased state of leprosy, the symptoms corresponding to the sickness of the religious bride in the narrative.

We find early evidence for this relation in the well-known account regarding the sickness of the Tibetan king ‘Brong-gnyan lde-ru,³⁰ he fell ill with leprosy (*mdze*, ‘*dze*) after having consumed food belonging to his wife who kept frogs (*sbal-pa*) in the storeroom and ate them. The frogs that were reputed to be fish³¹ came from a lake in Dwags-po, the home of the king’s wife who, significantly, is classified in the accounts as a *klu-mo* (water-spirit). Corresponding to this, the king’s state of disease is reported as *klu-nad*, “*klu*-sickness” which lead him to a state of contamination (*grib*); it was transferred into the next generation when his son was born blind, stricken by the “father’s shadow” (*yab-grib*).³²

The case cited is an example for the ambivalent realm of the female world; in regard to the conception of lake, here we meet with the *bdud-mo* (demoness) aspect of the *yum-mtsho*, the “lake of the mother” which, besides other corresponding terms mentioned above, denotes the sacred lake of Tibet.

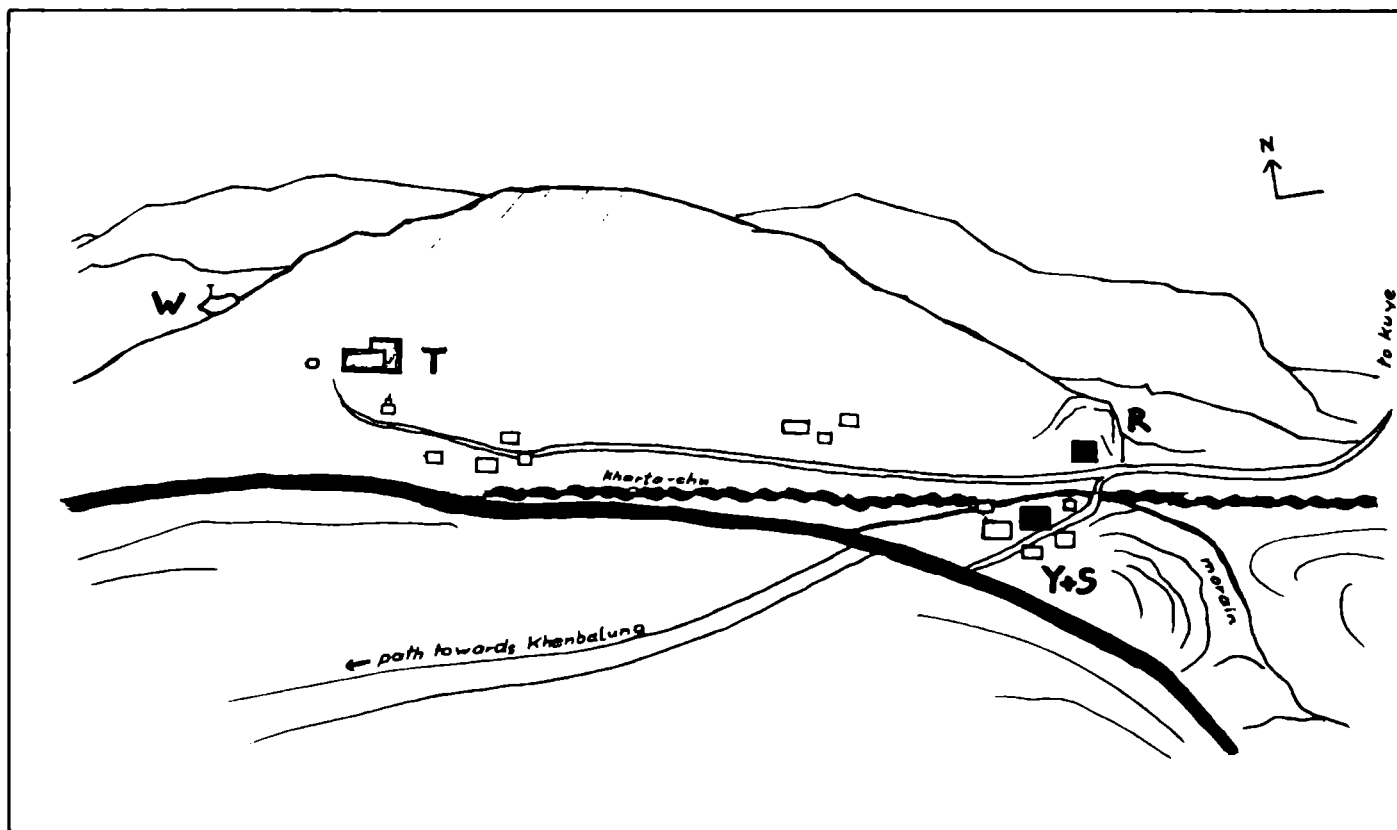
Now, when Machig came to the lake of Kharta, she evidently arrived there in a state of “*klu* disease”, the illness caused by the demoness of waters. But the story suggests that Machig herself appears as the *dümo*; it is the “savage” and “witch-like aspect” of the goddess and *mkha’-’gro* which enters the arena of our story and which leads to a kind of refining process for the protagonist, when she leaves the place as a sacred woman of Buddhism.

This fact gives the story of Kharta a particular feature: The fight in the Dolpo (and Phoksumdo) story between the (male) hero (Guru Rinpoche) and the *dümo*, in the present case is equal to a fight and conflict which take place within one and the same (female) person. Although the *mkha’-’gro* actually acted on her father’s advice (which evidently corresponds to the instructions of Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas in the biographical narrative) we can interpret this particular feature of Machig Zhama’s story as being evidence of the once great power of the sacred women at the time of Machig Zhama and Ma-gcig lab-sgron.³³

The Territory of Kharta: The Symbolic and Political Dimension

1. The last part of the story mentions that after the lake had leaked out and the first settlement had emerged, nine monks from the nine *tsho* came to the temple founded by Machig Zhama. Here we find the reference to the actual cultural elements of the village community, the *tsho* system and the (local) tradition of Buddhism, the emergence of which is considered as being directly tied to the disappearance and taming of the lake.

Map 2: Topographical scheme of the lower valley of Kharta chu
Place of the mythic lake and scene of "Machig Zhama's recovery."



- T monastery of Tharpaling [thar pa gling]
- W the "big white stone" [brag dkar chen]
- o spring
- R the rock "brag btsan dmar po", yul lha of the first tsho of Kharta and northern "door" of the hidden valley
- Y+S village Yulpar [yul 'bar] and the place of sacrifice to Surra Rakye [zur ra rwa skyes]

Actually, the Buddhist traditions of Kharta were embodied by the sKu-ye bla-brang monastery which mainly followed the rNying-ma-pa *byang-gter* tradition and was a famous centre of the *gcod* practice,³⁴ and the dGe-lugs-pa monasteries of Khar-rta chos-sde and of Thar-pa-gling, which were founded at the time of the 7th Dalai Lama and which belonged to Tashilunpo in Shigatse. In the northern part of Kharta, close to the ninth *tsho* (mTshams-mda' = T9 of map 1) and the wild mountain sTag-lung bdud-kyi rgyal-po lies the monastery of Phu-ri dgon-pa which was founded by the Phu-ri-pa dKon-mchog rgyal-mtshan, a disciple of rGod-tshang-pa (BA:687).

Now, with regard to the term *tsho* here we meet with a focal element of the local political organization and administration. Traditionally it defines a household- and even village-overlapping social unit which functions as the connecting link between the peasant community and the local administrative centre, the *gzhis-ka* of Kharta.³⁵ The *gzhis-ka* was under the leadership of the *gzhis-sdod*, who was appointed by the Tibetan government and mainly responsible for the local appropriation system, the collection of taxes from the nine *tsho*.

But aside from these administrative links the *tsho* system was an independent local form of political organization which followed its own rule of political centralization. It was based on federative principles according to which a 'go-ba, a leader, was elected alternately from the nine headmen (*rgan-po; tsho-ba*) of the *tsho*. As is the case with similar *tsho* systems we know from other parts of Tibet,³⁶ the political structure was closely linked to the sacred interpretation of the territory and to mountain worship. Each *tsho* has its own minor deities and one or more *yul-lha*, "land gods", who represent something like the ideal unit of the single *tsho* and the households and villages belonging to it. These units are ideally dominated by the powerful wild deity Surra Rakyé, the lord and chief mountain of Beyül Khenbalung. He is considered the guardian of the eastern gate of the neighbouring beyül and his chief place of worship is situated at the foot of the mountain of the same name in the Karma chu valley (see map 1). On the slope there is a little lake and together with the mountain these places are believed to be the *bla-ri* and *bla-ntsho*, the abodes of the "soul" (*bla*) of the community and even of the "gods of birth" (*skye-lha*).

In Kharta the equivalent shrine dedicated to Surra is located in the village Yul-'bar, the first *tsho*. A big tree and a cubic shrine decorated with many prayer flags and some sacred weapons mark this powerful place.

Here the regular gathering of the nine *rgan-po* of the *tsho* took place in order to make the political decisions, a performance which was always connected with rituals of invocation and sacrifice to the Surra.

The offerings required by Surra include the sacrifice of (black) animals, which is even mentioned in the *gnas-yig*, the "guide-book" to the beyül of Khenbalung.³⁷ The most important common ritual gathering of the Kharta community was marked by this kind of offering: every year in the 2nd month and the 9th month black animals³⁸ were sacrificed in Yul-'bar in order to open and close the passes towards the summer pastures and the southern areas. To this end every *rgan-po* of the nine *tsho* rotationally had to present the victims consecrated to Surra. This

shows how strong the indigenous local political organization was embedded within the traditional religious scope. Actually the ritual links to the territory guaranteed the political legitimacy of the *tsho* system which was fixed by an oath of fealty, a blood swearing (*mna'-skyel*) performed under the witness of Lord Surra Rakye.³⁹

Although in Kharta the clan as a social unit has actually dissolved, the elements of the *tsho* system are very suggestive of a once clan-based society of which we still find examples among the communities of the "southern countries" who are also ancestrally protected by Surra. This is the case, for instance, with the community of the Khumbo Tema (upper Khumbo); the place of the soul of the country, the *bla-mtsho* located in the vicinity of the Surra mountain in Khenbalung, is called *rus-dam*, the place where the first clans (*rus*) were bound (*dam*) by oath.⁴⁰ In the context of Kharta it seems that the Surra place represents an equivalent ancient *rus-dam* whose function as an ideal point of reference regarding the principles of social integration has survived under the conditions of the local political organization of the nine *tsho*.

The place of the communal gathering, the shrine of Surra, is located in the village Yul-'bar which is classified as the first *tsho* of Kharta; at the same time it is the southernmost of the nine *tsho* which are located successively in a south-north direction with mTshams-mdä', the ninth *tsho*, at the northernmost part of Kharta (see map 1).⁴¹ Maybe this classification reflects the process of migration of the remote past according to which the first groups which settled in the area became symbolically ranked as the first segment of the society. However, the status of being ranked paramount is supported by the position of the *yul-lha* of the first *tsho* who is identical with the already mentioned Brag-btsan dmar-po, the red rock which marks the breakthrough of the former lake. That means that the position of the first *tsho* is linked to the mythology of the lake which, as we have pointed out, represents a story about the origin of the first settlement in the area referred to.

A red cubic construction of a *btsan-khang* is attached to the rock indicating the dwelling of a powerful wild "red rock-btsan".⁴² Topographically the spot marks the left side of a natural bottleneck of the lower Kharta chu valley; a small wooden bridge leads to the village of Yul-'bar situated on the opposite edge of the cleft. In fact the site makes one think of a passage-way and "door" caused by the rupture of a natural dam. Behind the village of Yul-'bar one can see clear traces of a moraine coming down from the southern slopes of the valley. Perhaps in former geological times this place was part of the natural enclosure of a glacial lake (map 2)?

Be that as it may, the oral tradition defines the two holy sites of the Brag-btsan dmar-po and of the opposite Surra in Yul-'bar as the passage-way towards the mythical land of the lake. At its entrance we find the *yul-lha* of the first *tsho* and the place of sacrifice to the chief mountain Surra Rakye. This place, which points to ancient origin, had marked (and still marks) the ideal centre of the local community of Kharta. The fact that Surra Rakye is classified as minister of Ding-ri sgang-dmar at the same time links the place itself to the superior sacred

geography of Latö lho marked by the mountain of Dingri/Glang-skor who once appeared as an archaic protector at this distant place of Kharta. Finally, we have mentioned that the valley of Kharta chu is described as the starting point for the northern way towards the sacred valley of Khenbalung. According to the oral tradition the red rock actually became the northern and outer door of the path towards this famous beyül and to the mystic places in the "border country between Mon and Tibet".

In summary, we can state that within the boundaries of the first *tsho* and the village Yul-'bar we find a particular concentration of powerful places linked to different local traditions. And all these traditions, those of the *yul-lha* and of Lord Surra, the tradition of the local political organization and that of the beyül come together and meet at one and the same topographical and mythical point: it is the "door" where the lake leaked out and it is the entry to the ambivalent realm of the Tibetan demoness and goddess as it is expressed in the story of Machig Zhama's recovery.

Notes

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1. *The Blue Annals*, Roerich (1979) (= BA).
2. As is known, the BA exchanged the two Machigs by mistake at the end of the section on Machig Zhama's malady; (BA:225); cf. Gyatso (1985), Lo Bue (1994).
3. Diemberger (1991:147).
4. The Zha-ma family is mentioned in the biography of Bo-dong Phyogs-las rnam-rgyal as *rus*, paternal lineage, of this famous scholar of Latö lho (AD 1375-1451) who was the 4th abbot of Shel-dkar chos-sde; Machig Zhama and her brother, the lo-tsā-ba Seng-ge rgyal-po, are rendered prominent in the text as two of the excellent representatives of this clan of Phadrug (BB fol. 22).
5. dPa-gsum lies on the way to the Rongbuk monastery (map 1) founded by Ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin nor-bu (1864-1940), a native of Kharta whose *nam-thar* and *gter-ma* (NTNa and NTNb) several times refer to the areas of Kharta and Phadrug.
6. *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (= SH) fol. 37.
7. In the history of the deity bKra-shis 'od-'bar, see Hazod, forthcoming.
8. Information given by the last *rdzong-dpon* of Shegar, Manri Dorje Gyapo, who lives in Shigatse.
9. Cf. also *bKa' thang sde lnga* (1986:185).
10. The Shes-phrug lineage which took over the hereditary position of the lHo *bdag* at the end of the 13th century is genealogically linked to the ancient dBa' (dBas) clan (SH fol. 4a, b).

11. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:171).
12. Cf. Aziz (1978:24, 25).
13. *Gung thang gdung rabs*, 130.
14. Data collected by Ch. Schicklgruber (1992).
15. Diemberger & Hazod 1997.
16. The biographical remarks on Machig Zhama and her family and the narrative concerning Machig Zhama's malady are given on p. 219-226 of the BA (= part I, p. 272-279 of the Chengdu edition 1985; see also Lo Bue 1994).
17. The price comprises a "coat of mail provided with silk satin and a black horse" (*khraḅ dar ljag [ma] can dang rta nag*), p. 277 of the Chengdu edition (1985).
18. We refer to the lake stories of Dolpo and Phoksumdo recorded by Ch. Schicklgruber and G. Hazod (1992) (the story of Phoksumdo is published in Hazod 1996). The main components of these stories are: 1) the creation of the flood by a demoness which overflows the valley and villages except for a stone and (or) a tree (or flag staff) standing out of the water; a bird or cat is sitting on the tree and cries; 2) the taming of the flood by means of the ritual stick thrown into the middle of the lake by the hero and by cutting down the dam which leads to the present condition of the lake, considered as a remnant of the flood; 3) the killing of the demoness. Parallel stories are reported from other parts of Tibet (cf. e.g. Dargyay & Gruber 1980:50, and Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1955:144); these stories are related with the conception common to many groups of the Himalaya and Tibet, according to which the country is believed to have been one large sea, then the waters receded and forests (of the holy juniper tree) and animals appeared, followed by the first human habitation (cf. Stein 1972:37, 38). A comparative study on Tibetan and Tibeto-Burmese "lake-drainage myths" is given by N. Allen (1997). Cf. also the chapter by Buffetrille in this volume.
19. It is said that the first Buddhist temples of early Tibet had been erected on the limbs of the *srin-mo* in order to suppress the female demon and for the "taming of the border and the area beyond the border" (*mtha' 'dul yang 'dul*) (Aris 1978:17 according to the *Ma ni bka' 'bum*; cf. also the *mNga' bdag chos 'byung*, Meisezahl 1985:fol. 260a-263a; see also the discussion by Gyatso 1987:33ff.).
20. See Stein (1972:38); concerning the mythical lake of Lhasa (i.e. 'O-thang mtsho) cf. the discussion by G. Houston (1975).
21. Cf. Karmay (1975:173). See the chapter in by Martin in this volume.
22. Cf. Tucci (1949:711-713).
23. Karmay (1975:192-196).
24. See Karmay (1975:210f.) and Karmay (1987).
25. The *brag dkar*, the white rock, as the dwelling place of witches and *mkha'-'gro*-s is also mentioned in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:233) and in Wylie (1962:106).
26. On the historical background concerning the origination of the "hidden valley" cf. Brauen-Dolma (1985); see the chapters by Ehrhard in this volume.
27. The most famous are the Machigs and sungmas (*srung-ma*) Tshe-ring mched-linga and the bsTan-ma bcu-gnyis, whose legendary abode is situated at places east and west of the Jo-mo glang-ma range (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:177).
28. E.g. the Shingsawa, Khumbo and Sherpas east of Khumbu; FÜRER-Haimendorf (1975:106-131); Diemberger (1993:61).
29. The "guide text" is entitled *sBas yul mkhan pa lung gi lam yig sa spyad bcas pa bzhugs so* ("On the description of the path and the area of Beyül Khenbalung"), a *gter-ma* of the *gter-ston-pa* Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem (1337-1409) to whom the (first) opening of the valley is attributed. For the description of the holy sites of Beyül Khenbalung, its

- tradition and myth cf. Diemberger (1993); another Beyül Khenbalung based on the same myth of origin is located in Bhutan and attributed to Padma gling-pa (1450-1521); Aris (1979:607).
30. 'Brong-gnyan lde-ru was the father of sTag-bu snya-gzigs, the founder of the Yarlung confederation (6th century A.D.); the different versions of the story are quoted in Haarh (1969:335-338).
 31. According to the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, Haarh (1969:336).
 32. According to the *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu*, Haarh (1969:335); for a discussion of the term *grib* in a socio-religious context cf. Schicklgruber (1992:723-734); on the general Tibetan conception and "custom" concerning the "*klu* disease" of leprosy cf. Das (1902:255, 256, 259 ff.).
 33. The particularities of the lake story of Kharta have some parallels in the well-known institution of the female abbots of the Bo-dong convent of bSam-sdings who are considered to be successive appearances in mortal form of the *yi-dam* Vajravārāhi ("The diamond sow"; Tib. rDo-rje phag-mo), a form of Tārā. The convent is located on the western shore of the bDud-mo mtsho (demoness lake, = the "inner lake" of the Yar-'brog g.yu-mtsho) whose terrific deity once had been subdued by the rDo-rje phag-mo and her partner, the horse-headed god rTa-mgrin (Hayagrīva). Sarat Chandra Das reports: "It is due to the Dorje Phagmo's spiritual influence that the waters of the inner lake or Dumo tso ('Demons' lake'), of the Yamdo tso, are held in bounds, for otherwise they would overflow and inundate the whole of Tibet. 'Twas for this that the Samding lamasery was originally built" (Das 1902:135-139; cf. also Waddell 1895:245, 275-276, 361; Tucci 1956:64; Wylie 1962:73; Dhondup & Tsering 1979; Hazod, forthcoming).
 34. Cf. Diemberger (1991:140, 150ff.); on *gcod* cf. Gyatso (1985:320-341).
 35. The term *gzhis-ka* as an administrative unit goes back to the time of the Phag-mo gru-pa (cf. Petech 1990:120).
 36. Walsh (1906:303-308); Goldstein (1971:15); Karmay & Sagant (1987:230-259); Sagant (1990); Ramble (1993:287-300).
 37. "In the East there is the so-called *bdud-po* Zur-ra ra-skye. His palace is a flaring flaming lake. By day it boils with blood, by night it dwells in flaming fire. In that place offer the very heart of a black goat, offer (then) the remaining part of the flesh and blood and a serkiem (*gser-skyems*) to the demons" (quoted from BK, fol. 12a). In Kharta animal sacrifices were performed only for Surra Rakyé but according to the local people of mTshams-mda' the wild mountain of the south sometimes used to present animals to his "friend" sTag-lung bdud-kyi rgyal-po, the other wild mountain located in the north of the territory.
 38. Two black sheep in the 2nd month and one black yak in the 9th month; the colour black refers to the chthonic abode of the *bdud-po* Surra, but as expressed in a prayer the deity placed in the centre of the annual festivals appears in fact as a kind of "god of the year and of time". Accompanied by 360 friends, in the morning the deity is a (white) *lha*, in the middle of the day a (red) *btsan*, in the evening a black demon (Quotation from a prayer celebrated at the lake mTsho dkar-po in Beyül Khenbalung recorded by Diemberger 1986).
 39. An anecdote reported by the local people (and confirmed by the last *rdzong-dpon* of Shegar, note 8) shows a particular case of oath swearing illustrating at the same time the strength of the autonomous federative structure of the *tsho* system: In the year 1935 the local administrator (*gzhis-sdod*) of Kharta tried to keep his position though his mandate had run out and a successor was already sent by the government. The man continued to collect taxes from the village people for his own en-

richment. This led to a conspiracy by the local headmen of the *tsho* which they sealed by a blood swearing under the witness of Surra in Yul-'bar. Each had to drink some of the victim's blood, swearing that if one were to betray he would have to offer a piece of gold as big as the stone they had wrapped in a piece of cloth. After that they killed the illegitimate administrator.

40. Diemberger & Hazod 1997.
41. The nine *tsho* are 1) Yul-'bar, 2) Yul-log, 3) Yan-chos, 4) Chu-thang, 5) bKra-shis-sgang, 6) Phyong-mda', 7) Zhol-mda', 8) Mon-pa, 9) mTshams-mda'.
42. On the classification and iconography of the *brag-btsan* cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:175ff.).

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The Mon-pa revisited: In search of Mon

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Introduction

The name Mon-pa or Mon is widely used in Tibetan culture to designate various groups of people who have in fact little in common. (Some Indian authors use the spelling Memba while the Chinese also use Menba or Moinba.) The term might be related to the term “Man” 蠻 used in Chinese literature and which globally designates “the barbarians” of the south. M. Aris writes: “It is applied by the Chinese to several ‘barbarian’ groups related to the Ch’iang, including the people of rGyal-rong. The term is found in Tibetan texts of the 8th and 9th centuries in the form of Mon and Mong, and thereafter it is applied to all kinds of groups throughout the Himalayas with whom the Tibetans came into contact. The term lost any specificity it might once have had and came to mean little more than ‘southern or western mountain-dwelling, non-Indian, non-Tibetan barbarian’.”¹

The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing, 1985, p. 2123) gives the following definition for Mon-pa: “Small group of people whose language and religion are of Tibetan origin, living in a southern region, close to Bhutan and living off agriculture, handicrafts and hunting.”

In Ladakh, Mon denotes a group of sedentary musicians situated low in the social hierarchy.² In the eastern Himalayas and southern Tibet, which will be the context of this paper, Mon-pa is a name given to different groups living in parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and the extreme south of Tibet.³ These groups, of which an in-depth study has yet to be carried out, have many social and cultural affinities but their linguistic links have been ascertained only to a limited extent.⁴

The problem of the term Mon is vast, but it could be said that it applies generally to various groups of Tibetan or Tibeto-Burmese origin living in the southern part of the Tibetan world, and that the term has been, for the Tibetans,

often associated in the past with the notion of being non-Buddhist, and therefore non-cultured, even if in the course of history these populations became Buddhist. It could be taken therefore as a generic term rather than a specific population name, but as we will see in this paper, this guideline has to be qualified.

To further complicate the matter, some of the ancient names given to Bhutan by the Tibetans were Mon-yul, "the Land of Mon", lHo Mon, "the Southern Land of Mon", and lHo Mon kha-bzhi, "The Southern Mon Country of Four Approaches". However, one should not in this case take the term Mon as referring to a particular population, but rather to the geographic location and ancient cultural set-up of Bhutan vis-à-vis Tibet, before it fell under the influence of Tibet's great "civilized" Buddhist culture.

Here, as we shall see, one encounters an aspect of the culture of central Tibet which has not been addressed much so far: a certain condescending and despising attitude towards the surrounding regions which did not, in the eyes of the central Tibetans, reach what they considered to be the epitome of culture. This attitude could, in modern terms, be compared with a "colonialist" attitude, although this appellation would certainly call for elaborate comments and qualification.

Interestingly, there is another group, whose members are viewed with the same condescending attitude, who also live on the southern fringes of the Tibetan world and whose name also means "barbarians". These are the Klo-pa, sometimes called Kla-klo,⁵ in Pinyin, Lo ba, and also curiously spelt Lhon ba in some Chinese writings. This term was the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *mleccha* which was applied in India to non-Aryan, non-Hindu populations.⁶ With Mon-pa and Klo-pa, we are faced with two similar concepts concerning populations which are excluded by dominant cultures. Moreover, in the context of this article, both the Mon-pa and the Klo-pa inhabit the south-eastern part of the Tibetan world, which does not facilitate our task of trying to understand who these people were and are. Indeed, these terms may have covered different realities according to different historical periods.

We will first examine the Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan before considering the problem of the ethnonym, identity and space "markers" of the Mon-pa vis-à-vis those of the Klo-pa.

The Mon-pa of South-Central Bhutan

A group of people called Mon-pa by the Bhutanese, live in the jungle of south-central Bhutan and apparently have no obvious link with the Mon-pa further east. In fact, in Bhutan today, they are the only group called Mon-pa (the people of the Merak and Sakteng valleys in the extreme east, who are classified as Mon-pa by some authors, are not given this name by the Bhutanese, but are known by another generic and confusing term, 'brog-pa, which means "herders, pastoralists"). To add to the confusion, the Merak and Sakteng people are called "Brami" by the Eastern Bhutanese (Shar chopkha/Tsangla speakers), and they are extremely close geographically, culturally and linguistically to a small group called Dagpa, also living in extreme Easter Bhutan and in the Tawang region of

Arunachal Pradesh.⁷ Although apparently a little far from our topic of the moment, the question of ethnonyms is ultimately one of the most important in this context.

The Mon-pa who presently concern us live in the southern part of the central district of Tongsa, close to the town of Shemgang. It is considered “wild country” even by Bhutanese standards because of the absence of easy access to this area and the dense semi-tropical forest which covers most of the region. These Mon-pa might have occupied the whole region at some point of their history, but today they are concentrated in the villages of Rukha in the south of Wangdiphodrang district, Wangling, Bjanbi, Phumzur and Reti⁸ in Tongsa district and Surey in Sarpang district. Their exact number is not known but it cannot exceed 3,000 people. In two of these villages, Reti and Surey, they share the space with Northern Bhutanese (today called ‘Brug-pa⁹) and Southern Bhutanese (people of Nepalese descent). Another village, Nyimshong, also under Tongsa district, is said to be populated by people who were originally Mon-pa but the villagers deny this, perhaps because being labelled “Mon-pa” still carries a pejorative connotation. The traditional name for the region encompassing the whole of Shemgang district, the south of Tongsa district and parts of Mongar and Sarpang districts is Khyeng, which is populated by people who speak Khyengkha, a language closely related to Bumthangkha.

If one considers the geographical position of these settlements, it is interesting to note that they are situated roughly at the cardinal points around the central non-Mon-pa village of Nabji (Mna’-sbis).¹⁰ This village, located on a fertile plateau surrounded by deep forests and, until the early 1990s, difficult to reach, is considered the heart of a “hidden country” (*sbas-yul*). A stone pillar called the “oath-pillar” (*mna’-rdo*) stands in the temple of the village. The story goes that, in the 8th century A.D., an oath was taken on this pillar by Sendha/Sindu Raja, the King of Bumthang (the central region of Bhutan), Na’o-che, a King in India and Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava had the two kings swear that they would no longer wage war against each other, but the story also refers to the conversion of Bumthang to Buddhism by Padmasambhava. Nabji is therefore a sacred place. It became a “hidden country” which, according to Bhutanese historians, was rediscovered in the 15th century by the *gter-ston* (“discoverer of hidden treasures”) mChog-ldan mGon-po, the second incarnation of the *gter-ston* rDo-rje gling-pa (1346-1405) and a contemporary of the *gter-ston* Padma gling-pa (1450-1515). Both religious figures lived in the region of Bumthang, which subsequently developed close religious and economic ties with Nabji.

According to the local story, Nabji was populated by people who migrated from Bumthang after Nabji was “rediscovered”. The neighbouring forests are still winter grazing grounds for herds of cattle coming from the colder region of Bumthang. The village, consisting of 54 houses, is situated on a large cultivated plateau above the river. In stark contrast, the Mon-pa villages are located in the midst of thick jungle with small patches of land cleared for cultivation. Traditionally, their houses were made mainly of bamboo mats and on stilts. In the late 1980s, with the development of communications and road infrastructure,

the Mon-pa started to build houses that are more mainstream Bhutanese, that is, whose architecture is closer to the style of the central valleys.

All routes leading to Nabji go through Mon-pa settlements and their positions to the north, south, west, and east of this village make the Mon-pa, in the words of the Nabji people, “the entrance-keepers of the hidden country” (*sbas-yul sgo-sprung*).¹¹ In this context, one may also recollect that lHo Mon kha-bzhi, “the Southern Mon country of Four Approaches” (*kha*: “mouths”), is one of the ancient names of Bhutan. The “Four Approaches” are Kha-gling in the east, dPag-bsam-kha in the south, brDa-gling-kha in the west and sTag-rtse-kha in the north. This wild country with four entrances seems to present, albeit on a much larger scale, the same scheme as that of our Mon country of south-central Bhutan.

For most Bhutanese, these Mon-pa are considered the original people of the country. C.T. Dorji writes: “The original inhabitants of Bhutan are the Monpas, a Mongoloid stock who lived in the dense forests of the Southern Himalayas.”¹² They have the reputation of being savage people who are not really Buddhist and who live in inhospitable jungles which are difficult to pass through from June to September. This description would fit very well with the traditional definition of the Mon-pa and with their function as “entrance-keepers”. And the image of a *mandala* of which Nabji would be the centre comes to mind.

I travelled with a Bhutanese colleague to the Mon-pa village of Phumzur in 1991, following the old route linking Nabji to Bumthang.¹³ Except for the British botanist George Sherriff who went to Nabji in 1937,¹⁴ but did not record any description of the people, it seems that no other foreigner has travelled this route and no documentation is available on these Mon-pa. Described as “very difficult” by Bhutanese officials, the path must, in fact, be rather impracticable during the monsoon because of the mud, the leeches and the shaky tree trunks that serve as “bridges” across creeks and which must get washed away. The first four hours’ walk from Nabji (1,300 m.) to Lepgang (1,600 m.), the first Mon-pa settlement consisting of three to four houses, is not difficult. The trail passes through dense semi-tropical forest with an undergrowth of cardamom, giant stinging nettles and cannabis plants. According to Bhutanese tradition, this was the route taken by Padmasambhava when he came from Nepal to Bumthang at the request of the King of Bumthang and testimonies of his passage are kept alive in the local tradition. A flat stone in a clearing of the forest bears the mark of Padmasambhava’s magical dagger, which he used to subdue a demoness. From Lepgang, it takes barely one hour and a half to reach Phumzur. The trail first descends before climbing along a precipitous cliff on top of which is perched the small village of Phumzur (1,550 m.). This cliff—which dominates the Mangde river, which itself creates a gorge—is a holy place. According to local tradition, Padmasambhava was the first to open the way to Phumzur by way of this cliff. It is called Ugyen Dra (O-rgyan-brag), “the rock of Padmasambhava”, because the saint is believed to have meditated there, and one of the rocks bears the imprint of his head.

From Phumzur, the path goes down steeply for one hour through a very

thick semi-tropical forest and at 950 m., crosses the Remdichu river. At the confluence of the Remdichu and the Mangdechu river, there is a stone construction which appears to be the pier of a bridge. The place is called rDo-zam, the "Stone Bridge", and a local story says that Padmasambhava wanted to build a bridge there for the benefit of the Mon-pa. He requested fire from Mon-pa women who were in the forest. The women refused and accompanied their refusal with obscene gestures. Padmasambhava decided that the place was not worth his effort and continued to Bumthang. However, he made the Mon-pa "entrance-keepers of the hidden country" of Nabji.

After a gentle half-hour climb up to 1,100 m., the landscape, changing drastically, becomes much more open with occasional 'Brug-pa farmhouses, and the path, now more or less level, goes on for four hours through Chir pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) forest. The motorable road from Tongsa to Galeyphug in the south is clearly visible on the other side of the Mangdechu river which is crossed by a suspension bridge at Langthey. From there, in an hour and a half by car, one reaches Tongsa.

The Mon-pa village of Phumzur consists of 13 houses which are spread along the plateau that slopes gently up from the cliff edge. Some are built partly of stones with bamboo mat roofing, while others are still made completely of bamboo and are built on stilts. An open-air platform on stilts, a common feature in south-central and Eastern Bhutan, serves as the entrance and the area where household activities take place.

We stayed in what is considered the best house in the village, that of the village head, the "pchipoen" (*spyi-dpon*). It had only two rooms: a large kitchen which doubled as family-room and bedroom, and a smaller room, described by the house owner as "clean", which is given to guests. In other parts of highland Bhutan, this room would be the chapel, but here there were no religious objects, nor little else. The large room contained a back-strap loom where fabrics made of nettle (*Girardinia Palmata*, Urticaceae) fibres are still woven to be made into sturdy bags. In the past, Mon-pa clothing was made of these nettle fabrics, but nowadays, the costume of the Mon-pa does not differ from that of other Bhutanese: woollen and cotton "gho" for men and "kira" for women.

Many kinds of rattan and bamboo baskets, which the Mon-pa weave for themselves and sell to supplement their income, were also stored in the large room. While talking to us, the house owner continued weaving a big basket. The fields that surround the houses are small and their main crops are wheat, millet and maize. The Mon-pa grow very little rice and it is considered a luxury which has to be bought. The staple diet is a porridge of wheat, millet or maize, and "karan", maize mixed with rice, a dish which is also found in Eastern Bhutan. It seems that the only vegetable they grow is chilli pepper and they have a few banana trees near the houses. Gathering in the jungle supplies them with plants which they use as vegetables, either fresh or dried: young fronds of ferns (*Pteridium aquilium* and *Osmanda japonica*), the inner part of banana stems, wild cabbage (*Pandanus sp.*, Pandanaceae), rattan buds (*Calamus sp.*, Palmae), orchids (especially the *Cymbidium grandiflorum*), mushrooms and other plants that they

know are edible.¹⁵ They are fond of chewing “doma”, betel and areca nut, but do not drink much alcohol. They obtain cooking oil from an oil nut tree of the genus *Lindera* (Lauraceae). Tea leaves of the *Camelia sinensis* were unknown and for tea, until recently, they used the leaves of a particular species of mistletoe, *Scurrula elata*, as in many other regions of Bhutan.

The Mon-pa are renowned for their knowledge of vegetable dyes and we arrived just as the women of the family were preparing indigo colour by boiling the leaves of *Strobilanthus cusia* (Acanthaceae), commonly called “Assam Indigo”.

The Mon-pa do not keep cows or pigs, but do raise chickens. This is due to the recent religious influence of Pepung Khyentse (dPal-spungs mKhyen-brtse) Rinpoche, a rNying-ma-pa lama from Bumthang who visits the region regularly. In the past, not only did the Mon-pa kill cows and pigs, they also hunted in the forest with bamboo bows and arrows, activities very much frowned upon by the devoted Buddhist Bhutanese. The allegiance of the Mon-pa to Buddhism seems to be no older than a generation and is rather nominal, although they know the Buddhist places in their area associated with Padmasambhava. There is no lama resident in the village and the most important figure appears to be the “pawo” (*dpa'-bo*), also called “phajo” (*pha-jo*). This intercessor does divination, gives counsel and identifies the causes of sickness or calamities by going into a trance, being possessed by the local deity whom he worships. Pawos are found all over Bhutan but, here, in the absence of any Buddhist representative, his role and influence are crucial in village life.

Mon-pa marry inside their community but find their partners in other villages. Marriages between 'Brug-pa and Mon-pa are rare and not welcomed by either side, although intermarriages may be expected in the future as Mon-pa children start going to school and become educated.¹⁶

The Mon-pa call themselves Mon-pa and their language Monkha. I was told that it was very different from any other language in Bhutan and my Khyengkha-speaking colleague could not understand it. However, a short inquiry using a list of thirty words showed a correspondence with Khyengkha vocabulary. The linguist G. van Driem classifies Monkha, which he calls 'Olekha, under “other Tibeto-Burman languages”, without being more precise. He notes that “the language is called Mönkha by speakers of Khyengkha and Nyenkha and is known in Dzongkha as Mönkha or 'Olekha. There are two main dialects of 'Olekha.”¹⁷

The short span of my stay in Phumzur (a day and a night) did not allow me to study the kinship patterns, the social organization or the religious practices and myths of the Mon-pa. Such studies would give us a more complete picture of their society than my impressionistic observations.

What was very striking was the humble attitude and self-deprecating manner that these Mon-pa adopted when they spoke about themselves. This, of course, could be due partly to the norms of politeness shown to people sent by the central government, but somehow the gentleness with which the comments were made gave them a tone of sincerity and seemed to reveal a real feeling of inferiority. Besides saying they were dirty, they apologized for the simplicity of their houses and food, and their lack of knowledge of the world beyond their forests and of

Buddhist rituals. Derogatory comments about oneself are a common form of politeness among Tibetans and Bhutanese and should not usually be taken for more than that. However, in the case of these Mon-pa, they compared themselves to the other Bhutanese, the 'Brug-pa, whom they regarded as cultured, living in a more tamed and man-made environment, and good Buddhists. These Mon-pa were thus speaking about themselves using all the clichés that the 'Brug-pa apply to them. However, one hardly needs to point out that, in fact, these Mon-pa have a culture of their own, including a great knowledge of the forest which has allowed them to survive in this difficult environment. They knew how to utilize and transform the products available to them and, except for salt, they have been totally self-reliant.

But in Tibet and Bhutan, Buddhism and the culture which derives from it is the term of reference for "civilization" and the Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan know they do not really belong to it. They seem to feel that it is partly their fault as they did not welcome Padmasambhava, although they take pride in their role as "entrance-keepers of a hidden country".

The question of the identity of the Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan is not yet solved. Their migration is not recorded in historical texts, which may mean that they arrived in Bhutan in proto-historic times. The origin of 'Olekha, "the language of the 'Ole", one of the Dzongkha names of their language, has not yet been researched and one does not know if these Mon-pa remember their original name, or if they had one. Nevertheless, they are the only people called by that name in Bhutan.

As mentioned previously, one of the ancient names of Bhutan was Mon-yul, "Land of Mon", but, as we have seen, the term Mon in the Tibetan cultural context seems too generic to be related to a specific population, which means that the old name of Bhutan may not relate to these particular Mon-pa. However, could they be one of the original tribes of the country as the Bhutanese historians, C.T. Dorji and Lupon Nado,¹⁸ among others, claim them to be?

In this rather shifting context, at least two possible hypotheses could be envisaged:

—These Mon-pa belonged to an early first wave of Khyengpa migrants who were not converted to Buddhism. However, G. van Driem's linguistic survey does not favour this explanation.

—They could also, indeed, be among the first people of Bhutan, who arrived in proto-historic times and were pushed at a later stage into this remote and forested area by later and more powerful northern migrants who applied the term of "Mon-pa" to them.

These hypotheses must remain as such until thorough anthropological and linguistic research, as well as comparative studies with other Tibeto-Burman populations of the whole region, is carried out.

The Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan lead us to the more general issue of the term Mon-pa which we will now address in the context of Tibet and its southern fringes.

Identity and Terminology in Southern Tibet and Bhutan

As mentioned in the introduction, Mon-pa was a name given to various groups living in parts of Indian Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and the south of Tibet, but also to some groups of Eastern Tibet. Today this has not changed much, except that Mon-pa has also become the specific name of a nationality living in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), in present day Mon-yul, Me-tog (Padma-bkod) and sMan-gling (Mi lin) county in Kong-po.¹⁹

The Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan are not the only population to hold the ambiguous position of non-Buddhist guardians of a Buddhist holy place and to have, for the Tibetans, an identity of barbarian jungle dweller. The Klo-pa also correspond to these characteristics, and this adds to the complexity of trying to define them vis-à-vis the Mon-pa in this region of south-east Tibet.

The Klo-pa

The Klo-pa or lHo-ba, as they are now designated, are found today in Dwags-po (rTsa-ri), sMan-gling county in Kong-po, sPo-bo, and lHo-yul in the TAR. This geographic distribution will be examined later in the light of the historical texts.

The feared Lopa (Klo-pa) or Lalo (Kla-klo) were the guardians of the holy mountain of rTsa-ri in southern Dwags-po (south-east Tibet).²⁰ Based on an informant's story, R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz provided a short description of the pilgrimage and of the people inhabiting the region: "This pilgrimage is regarded as a rather dangerous undertaking, mainly because the Tibetans, though usually travelling in big groups, are often attacked on their journey through the Himalayan valleys by bands of tribal people living in this area who are called in Tibetan collectively *Klo pa* or *Kla klo*. According to the altitudes at which the *Kla klo* live, the Tibetans distinguish between the *Kha klo*, the tribesmen inhabiting the higher regions... and the *gTing klo*, who mainly occupy the bottoms of the valleys... The attacks on the Tibetans are mainly carried out by the *gTing klo*... [They] go nearly naked... They are armed with long bows, and they poison their arrows, dipping the point—before the missile is shot off—into poison carried in a small horn at the hip. Their food consists mainly of rice, maize, and the meat of pigs which they raise in their villages. They also eat rats roasted on a bamboo spike over a fire and worms ..."²¹

The aristocrat lady, Dorje Yudon Yuthok, who made the pilgrimage to rTsa-ri in 1944, described the people that she called the Lobas living on the *gling-skor*, the longest pilgrimage route around the mountain: "The area around the holy mountain was inhabited by a primitive race of people called the Lobas. Though they officially were subjects of the Tibetan Government and were nominally Buddhists, they would not submit to government authority. In many ways they were uncivilized and undisciplined. They did not wear any clothes except a small piece of cloth just large enough to cover their sex organs. The Loba men always carried knives as well as bows and poisoned arrows. They were said to eat insects ..."²²

As for the written tradition, it propagated the same ideas. S. Karmay writes that in the Bon-po *gZer-mig*—which he ascribes to the 11th century—the regions of Dwags-po, Nyang-po and Kong-po are presented as being inhabited by a barbaric population and he quotes these comments: “The people of Dagpo eat frogs and even snakes; those of Nyangpo are carnivorous and those of Kongpo do not refrain from incest between brother and sister, and murder between uncle and nephew...”²³

Kong-po is also a sacred place for the Bon-po, with the mountain of Bon-ri and other places associated with *gShen-rab mi-bo*. This might also have added to its reputation as a region of darkness in the eyes of the Buddhist.

The age-old clichés are still alive today. In *China's Tibet*, a recent article on “The Use of Poison in Tibet” stated as such: “While acts of poisoning have long been a problem world-wide, in the past, the criminal act was especially rampant in the Nyingchi (formerly Gongbo) area of Tibet.”²⁴ While travelling to Kong-po and Dwags-po in October 1995, I was told by my guide, who was a devout Buddhist from Lhasa, that his mother had rituals performed so that he would not fall prey to poisoners or sorcerers from these regions.

Today, the Chinese prefer to translate what is now the name of the Lo ba (also written lHomba, *sic.*) nationality as “Southerners” (lHo-pa) rather than “Barbarians” (Klo-pa). They specify that “...they live in the lHonyu [*sic.*] area to the Southeast in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The rest of them are dispersed in Milin, Mohtuo [*sic.*], Charyu and Longzi area.”²⁵ These places can be identified as sMan-gling in Kong-po, Me-tog in Padma-bkod, rDza-yul and, finally, Lhun-rtse near rTsa-ri in Dwags-po, which means that the Lo ba are partly spread out along the border of Tibet with Indian Arunachal Pradesh. The same geographical distribution is given in a Chinese article “The historical trade between the Tibetan and the lHoba people”²⁶ where it is stated that the lHoba lived in lHo-yul, south of Kong-po, Dwags-po and Bomi (sPo-bo) as well as in rTsa-ri. A short write-up in *China's Tibet* says that they live in an area stretching from Nang to sMan-gling (Mi lin) and that “once considered as savages, the lHoba were prohibited from living closer to the Yarlung Zangbo river.”²⁷ A longer article was published in a more recent *China's Tibet*,²⁸ this time on “The lHoba tribe in Dermo”. Dermo (sTag-mo?) is situated in Medog (Me-tog) county, also known in the texts as Padma-bkod.

These modern identifications corroborate the various but relatively few mentions of this population that are found in historical texts under different spellings.

In an edict from the Fifth Dalai Lama dated 1680, there are mentions of the “White-mouthed, Black-mouthed and Striped-mouthed Klo (-pa).”²⁹ This text is not very explicit on the location of their country but it appears to be somewhere between India and Tibet, close to Mon. The edict speaks of “those Indians and inhabitants of the Klo country who have turned to our government.”³⁰

The 1789 *Discourse on India* of 'Jigs-med gling-pa provides us with a short description of this region: “In rocky mountains where the Eastern borders of Assam come to an end [there live] the [tribes] of the Klo [-pa] called Khaptra

(Kha khra) and Gidu (*Ghrî-dho*) whose sons cut off the heads of their mothers as wedding gifts for their brides when they get married."³¹

The *'Dzam gling rgyas bshad*, written in 1820, also mentions the Klo-pa. It describes them as the inhabitants of the lower valleys of Bya-yul, a region east of mTsho-sna,³² but also in rTsa-ri—where they are called Klo-mi skya-sdeng³³—and live south and west of the sPo-bo region. T. Wylie adds in a note that the Klo-pa people are divided into three large groups, the Klo dkar-po (White Klo), the Klo nag-po (Black Klo) and the Klo bkra-pa (Variegated Klo). The Klo dkar-po occupy the lower regions of rTsa-ri and Padma-bkod, the Klo nag-po are south of them, and the Klo bkra-pa are to the east across the gTsang-po. As for the Klo bkra-pa, Lama Sherap Gyatsho says "Lo Tawa means striped lHobas."³⁴

mKhyen-brtse's *Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*,³⁵ dated 1892, notes that Glo—and it is this spelling which is used in this text—touches the region of sPo-bo, and L. Petech adds an editorial note that "Glo ba or Blo ba, Lopa of the Europeans, is the name given by the Tibetans to the tribes of the southern slopes of the Eastern Himalaya: Aka, Miri, Dafla, Mishmi, Abor." Li Jianshang quotes two British explorers, Bartley and Darton, who travelled from Assam to south-east Tibet in the 19th century and he identifies the Abor and the Mishmi populations encountered by these explorers as lHo ba.³⁶ The botanist F. Kingdon-Ward, who led expeditions in southern Tibet in 1924, offers the same conclusion after his encounter with the "Lopas" near the curve of the gTsang-po: "Most interesting of all were three Lopas, as the Tibetans call the most surly savage and benighted of the Assam tribes. These dwarfs (they stood less than 5 feet high) had come twenty-five marches to buy salt and were evidently the folk we call Abors...For ornament, these Lopas wear bead and chain necklaces and large hollow silver ear-rings, like a black collar-stud, the size of a half crown and an inch through. A short chopping knife is carried in a basket sheath around the waist, and a bamboo bow with bamboo string and poisoned arrows."³⁷

In October 1995, I travelled to Kong-po and went to a village near Glu-har, on the right bank of the gTsang-po, which is partly inhabited by small groups of "Lo ba". These families told us that they consider the populations of the Indian Arunachal Pradesh, which are just the other side of the border, as identical to them and that their languages are mutually intelligible.

From all this information, we can conclude that the ancient locations of the Klo-pa correspond to places in present-day Indian Arunachal Pradesh and, in the TAR, to locations of the nationality called Lo ba, lHo ba or lHon ba by the Chinese and lHo-pa in modern Tibetan spelling. They also allow us to establish that different spellings and especially lHo-pa or lHo ba, were used as equivalent to Klo-pa. The former seems to be the only "politically correct" one today. These alternative spellings are interesting as they imply a semantic change: from "Barbarians", this population becomes "Southerners".

Klo-pa and Mon-pa

When they are described by a "cultured" Buddhist person, the Klo-pa seem to be qualified by the same stereotypes that we have seen in the introduction of

this paper, which applied to the Mon-pa in general:³⁸ savage, wary of outsiders, and living in thick forest—an untamed environment of which they possess a great knowledge, traditionally subsisting not as farmers but rather hunter-gatherers, eating wild plants. According to C. Ramble’s analysis, their milieu and way of life do not appeal to Tibetans: “Savage nature does not represent an ideal state to the Tibetan mind. It may even be said that part of the aspiration of Tibetan religious ideology is to eliminate wilderness by subjugating it. An image that is sometimes used to express this process is that of cultivation... But this remains only an image, because uncultivated nature too may be seen as tame once it has been included within the sphere of Buddhist (or Bon) influence. The paradigm of nature so converted is the *gnas*, the sacred site.”³⁹

These comments are also valid in the Bhutanese context. Given their environment and way of life, the Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan fit perfectly the definition—or clichés—that the dominant culture assigns to the generic term Klo-pa or Mon-pa. It was only natural that their position on the fringes of the sacred site of Nabji associated with Padmasambhava gave them the role of “entrance-keepers” who have to be fierce in order to discourage the non-faithful from entering the “hidden country”. Thus, the pejorative marker assigned to them was transformed into a positive quality and became inherent to their function. Toni Huber describes the same transformation of the Klo-pa of rTsa-ri, who are “barbarians” but also became embodiments of deities.⁴⁰

When speaking about the Klo-pa, T. Huber says that “[their] identities as Klo-pa were indigenous ethnic classifications, some of the ‘markers’ for which were generic for southern borderland people and of long historical standing.”⁴¹ However, because it is not the focus of his study and perhaps because he includes the Mon-pa in the “borderland people”, T. Huber does not compare these markers with those of the Mon-pa and it is difficult to see what makes them more Klo-pa than Mon-pa, except for the obviously important fact that that is what they are called by the Tibetans.

As for the different ethnic groups (Adi [=Dafla], Bangni, Miji, Sulung, Aka) living in Indian Arunachal Pradesh south of Tibet, they are called Klo-pa by the Tibetans and “Gidu” by the Mon-pa of the Tawang region in western Arunachal Pradesh, a term already recorded by ‘Jigs-med gling-pa;⁴² this means that there is an indigenous distinction between them and the Mon-pa. This distinction is also made by the Chinese modern classification which includes the Men ba (Moinba) and the Lo ba (lHon ba) nationalities.⁴³

The Tibetan historical text of the 16th century, the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*, noted the existence of the Loyul and Monyul regions, but called them both borderland regions.⁴⁴

The 1680 edict from the Fifth Dalai Lama, which has been mentioned earlier, clearly separates Mon from Klo, but also from Tibet and India: “[The following] is proclaimed to all, to the broad nations of the world in general and [in particular] to the large and small districts of Himavat within the sphere of Tibet and the Great Tibet; the sacred land of India; the eastern, western, upper and lower [regions] of Mon to the south; the White-mouthed, the Black-mouthed and Striped-mouthed Klo [-pa].”⁴⁵

It must be recalled here that the term 'Brug-gzhung, which designates Bhutan, dates only from the time of the unification of the country by the Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal in the 17th century. Until that time, and still today through a kind of poetic licence, Bhutan was called lHo Mon or lHo Mon kha-bzhi.

The term Mon is almost always associated with the term lHo, "south", as we have noted in the case of Bhutan, which is one of the meanings that the modern Tibetan author, Chab-dga' rta-mgrin explores in an article related to the chapter on Mon-gling of the Ge-sar epic. In this article, he surveys the meanings of the term Mon in Tibetan historical literature.⁴⁶ The Mon country is understood in all the literature as located in the south of Tibet and Chab-dga' rta-mgrin adds that, nowadays, what is called Mon-yul extends from mTsho-sna rDzong in the north, to Assam in India in the south; and from Bhutan in the west, to 'Od-thang in the east. He also says that what was called Mon-yul in ancient times was a region that encompassed parts of what is now lHo-yul and rDza-yul,⁴⁷ elaborating further by explaining that the Mon-yul of yore comprised what is today not only Mon-yul but also lHo-yul, rDza-yul, Bhutan and Sikkim.⁴⁸

As for the Mon people, the Tibetan author quotes the *rGya bod yig tshang*, which says that there were three Mon-pa races: the Mon-pa themselves, the people of Mi-nyag who are at the border of Tibet and China, and the people of Kong-po.⁴⁹ This seems to show that the term Mon-pa was a generic term as well as the name of a specific population. But in another article⁵⁰ based on the *Mon pa rigs kyi lo rgyus*, which itself is a summary of different historical texts, Chab-dga' rta-mgrin writes that the Mon-pa race descended, like the Tibetan race, from the union of the demoness and the monkey who was an emanation of Avalokiteśvara; he adds that, in fact, Mon-pa was just a clan name of some of their descendants and that the people from the region of lHo Mon kha-bzhi who went from Tibet to lHo Mon a long time ago, are only the descendants of this lineage/clan.⁵¹ Therefore, interestingly enough, Chab-dga' rta-mgrin brings us back to Bhutan. He quotes the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, from which it is clear that because the kings of Mon in the south were of the lineage of Prince gTsang-ma, the Mon-pa are from the same extraction as the ancient Tibetans and that the country of lHo Mon took its name from that of the clan of its earlier inhabitants. If we follow Bhutanese historiography, because of the importance of Prince gTsang-ma—an emblematic figure of early Bhutanese history who is said to have descended from the lineage of the Tibetan kings—in this case, Mon designates Bhutan.

Regarding the various races, the Tibetan author quotes the opinion of the historian dPa'-bo gTsug-lag phreng-ba who thought that Tibetans and Mon-pa were two different peoples. He associated the Mon-pa and the Klo-pa because both were living like wild animals and had a different life-style compared to the Tibetans. If the people of Tibet came from the monkey's children who had become men, how is one to explain that the Mon-pa and the Klo-pa had a different life-style from the Tibetans? A little further on in his article⁵² Chab-dga' rta-mgrin names sites and rivers of Mon-yul which are easily identified as places and rivers in today's Bhutan, Indian Arunachal Pradesh and Padma-bkod in the TAR.

The modern Bhutanese historian Lupon Nado, in his chapter on the Mon-pa,

assimilates them to the Kla-klo (Klo-pa). He remarks that “the Mon pa language like the Kla klo language is completely different from the language of the central region.”⁵³ This statement is rather curious and one may wonder whether Lupon Nado means here the heartland of Bhutan or Central Tibet and whether the Mon-pa language is similar to that of the Kla-klo. He then elaborates further but his comments do not shed much light on our problem: “The Mon pa, who in the Buddhist texts are called Kla klo and Klo kha khra, as well as the other people of Arunachal Pradesh who nowadays are called Nagalendra [?], and the Mon pa who live in Bhutan, all these populations are similar in physical appearance, language, clothing and their stupidity in not distinguishing virtuous deeds from sins. For these reasons, I think there is no doubt that the Mon pa of Bhutan come from the same race. The real inhabitants of this country were first called lHo pa and the country lHo. As for those who were called Mon pa before the diffusion of Buddhism, they were not different from the race generally called ‘Brug pa nowadays and they were the first race.”⁵⁴

This paragraph is far from clear but Lupon Nado seems to establish a link, based on ethnic and cultural similarities, between the Mon-pa who live in south-central Bhutan today, the Mon-pa people who are supposed to have inhabited Bhutan in the past and the Klo-pa. For him, the latter are an ethnic group which falls within the broad category of Mon-pa. Earlier in the text, Lupon Nado explained the etymology of the term Mon by saying that because they were not Buddhist, the people were in darkness (*mun*), hence the term Mon.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly for a monk, he considers that the major criterion for being a Mon-pa, which he justifies by the etymology, is to be non-Buddhist.

For Nebesky-Wojkowitz, the difference between the Mon-pa and the Kla-klo amounts to a question of more or less “civilized” compared to mainstream Tibetans: “The rather vague term Mon is applied to many of the tribes living on the southern slopes of the Himalaya, between the borders of the Snowy Land and the northern brim of the Indian plains, and who are regarded by the Tibetans as more civilized than the ‘savages’, the Kla klo or Klo pa inhabiting the same area.”⁵⁶ This view has always been upheld by Western scholars who tended to regard the Klo-pa as more “savage” than the Mon-pa. In this case, the Mon-pa would be people of the southern fringes who have become Buddhist, while the Klo-pa would still be “savage” but, as we have seen, this difference is not accepted by a modern Bhutanese historian and Nebesky-Wojkowitz himself seems to put his first statement into question when he speaks of the two branches of the Klo-pa: “The *gTing Klo* seem to be identical with the Daflas, one of the main aboriginal populations of the Assam Himalayas. While the *Kha klo*, who are already more Tibetanized, wear coarse dresses similar in their appearance to the Tibetan *chu ba*, the *gTing klo* go nearly naked.”⁵⁷

At this point, a series of questions comes to mind. Could there have been, at some point in the past, assimilation or confusion (made all the more easy by the more-or-less same geographical area occupied by the Mon-pa and the Klo-pa) between the lHo of lHo Mon and the Klo of Klo-pa? This assimilation could also have been based on the old Tibetan view of these southern regions which, for

them, were populated by barbaric, non-Buddhist peoples living in an ecological environment that frightened them.

There is no question that today in Tibet, as we have seen, the Mon-pa and the lHo ba are classified as two nationalities and that they perceive themselves as being different from each other.

Would it then be possible to identify criteria or markers which qualify a population as being Mon-pa rather than Klo-pa? Or should we say that the difference lies mostly in the way they are referred to by surrounding populations as well as by themselves, and that it is useless to try to find definite markers for each of them?

It would be interesting to know if any in-depth anthropological studies have been carried out on these two nationalities in Tibet. Such studies could be the base for a fruitful comparison, as the Western and Tibetan literature on the subject is rather sparse and in some ways frustrating.

Conclusion

It is beyond the scope of this article to try to solve the issues related to Mon-pa and Klo-pa terminology. I would simply like to show that, even for Tibetan and Bhutanese authors, the question has always been debated, and that Bhutan is an important, if not always clear link in any attempt to understand this issue; but also that in the Tibetan symbolic world Mon and Klo are two concepts which are close to each other, both terms meaning originally "barbarians", even if they refer to different peoples.

Furthermore, this issue needs to be qualified because the two articles cited above from *Bod ljongs zhib 'jug* may have been written mindful of the old claim on Arunachal Pradesh by The People's Republic of China as well as the "nationality ideology" of the Chinese, and because the Tibetan terms used by the modern author might have had other connotations in the past.

Another problem encountered when dealing with written sources is that historiography and history do not always coincide. It is a well-known issue but in this shifting context, it further adds to the complexity of the question.

The possibility exists that both Mon-pa and Klo-pa are generic "blanket" terms, which did not apply to specific people until recently and that, therefore, there is no need to look for "markers". This is one solution, but it only partly solves the problem or rather eludes it unsatisfactorily. If both the terms Klo-pa or Mon-pa describe "barbarians" living on the southern fringes of the Tibetan world, non-Buddhist or only marginally Buddhist, from what historical sequences did these two different names arise? Were there any ethnic or spatial "markers" that determined this differentiation in the past? And what about populations that fit this definition but are apparently not covered by either of these two terms?

We know of two such groups: one in Nepal, and one in Bhutan. Their existence underlines this problem of ethnonyms and markers in relation to the Mon-pa and the Klo-pa (but unfortunately does not provide any solution).

In Nepal, there is the group called Lalo (Kla-klo), "Barbarians". They are the

Thami who live in the district of Doramba in south-east Nepal and are designated as Lalo by their Tamang neighbours. They are described as non-Buddhist people living in wild jungle and eating raw vegetables.⁵⁸

In Bhutan, there are the lHop⁵⁹ of the south-western district of Samtse, commonly known as Doya. The lHop could also be among the first inhabitants of what is now Bhutan, but proper anthropological study of this group is yet to be carried out. G. van Driem writes: "In Nepali, the lHop are referred to as Doya. The lHop call themselves lHokpu and refer to their language as lHokputram or as Ngantram, literally the 'language' of the people or of man. lHokpu is more closely related to the Eastern Kiranti languages of Nepal such as Lohorung or Limbu than to the Lepcha. Linguistic evidences indicate that the lHokpu were influenced by some older form of Dzongkha in the distant past, which suggests that the lHokpu were probably the first aboriginal group encountered by the early 'Ngalongs' during their southward expansion in ancient times."⁶⁰

It appears that, in the present-day spelling, their name is derived from lHo-pa which means "people of the south" but one could wonder if at some point, lHo-pa was not in fact Klo-pa; we have seen earlier that this spelling and semantic shift happened in Tibet.

The lHop appear to have been in contact with the 'Brug-pa for a long time, and might be the descendants of the people called gDung, who were administered by the gDung *gnyer-pa* from Paro.⁶¹ Their territory was on one of the main cattle migration routes from the valley of Haa to south-west Bhutan and was in the vicinity of Sangbe Dzong, one of the halts on the Kalimpong-Paro path, and also on the trail that goes from Samtse in south-west Bhutan to the Paro valley. The lHop may also be linked to the Central Mon-pa of Arunachal Pradesh if we follow M. Aris who says that "on the evidence of a complex of myths, titles, place-names and languages, I have identified the eastern branch of the Dung with the inhabitants of the Mon-yul Corridor."⁶²

Therefore, like the Klo-pa of Tibet, while the lHop seem to fulfil the cultural and ecological criteria for being called Mon-pa, this term is not applied to them.

At this point, let us recall the central and intricate set of questions still unsolved: What is a Mon-pa? Who are the Mon-pa? What are the identity "markers" or the space "markers" that characterize them and differentiate them, or not, from the Klo-pa, or from apparently similar ethnic groups? Do they all form specific populations, as they seem to be in the context of Bhutan, India and Tibet today, or is it a generic term? In fact, it might be both, depending on the historical period one speaks of, and a sequential diachronic study of the terms is needed, starting with the exploration of the Dunhuang manuscripts.⁶³

We are faced today with a situation in which the keys—firm historical clues and serious anthropological studies—are, for the time being, missing. An illustration of this point is the case of the Men ba nationality in TAR: glossy pictures taken by the Chinese show people weaving round coloured bamboo baskets and drying chillies among banana trees. It could be Eastern Bhutan. A recent article in a French magazine relates an expedition to Padma-bkod and states, based on local tradition, that the Mon-pa came from Bhutan and now live

side by side with the Lopas who are the original inhabitants of Padma-bkod.⁶⁴ M. Aris has already spoken of this migration: "Both [rTsa-ri and Padma-bkod] are inhabited mainly by groups who were encouraged by the legendary reputation of these hidden lands (*sbas-yul*) to flee there in the 19th century to escape from oppressive taxation in the area of eastern Bhutan and elsewhere," but he unfortunately does not quote his source.⁶⁵ One could always conclude that the Mon-pa who live nowadays in Padma-bkod came from Bhutan but how firm is the base for this conclusion?

Unfortunately, until now, only sparse information of different types and unequal value is available and questions remain unanswered. We can only try to establish some kind of order in the information which covers different fields: geographical, historical, linguistic, anthropological, but also symbolical.

As for Bhutan, the fact that the Mon-pa of the south-central region and the lHop are considered in this country, and regard themselves, as the first inhabitants tends to favour the hypothesis of Mongoloid migrations into Bhutan prior to the 7th century A.D. For Bhutan, the question of who the Mon-pa were, whom this term describes now, as well as where they came from, figures seriously in the country's history. So far, neither architectural or historical evidence, nor human settlement patterns, sustain the hypothesis put forward without any documented proof by M. Kohli that, until the middle of the 8th century A.D., Bhutan "was a part of the broader Indian civilization, under the tutelage of Indian rulers in the neighbouring regions of Cooch Behar, or that of Kamrup in Assam."⁶⁶

The history of the population pattern of Bhutan remains to be revealed and the Mon-pa of south-central Bhutan may prove to be a key to this research. But beyond their importance to research into the history of human settlement in Bhutan, their study could also help us to understand the complex question of the ethnonyms of populations living along the southern margins of the Tibetan Buddhist cultural zone.

Afterword

As this paper was going to press, I found an article in *China's Tibet*, vol. 7 no. 3, 1996 called "A professor in Moinba culture". It appears that a Chinese professor named Yu Naichang has published several works on the Moinba and Lhoba cultures, but these studies are unknown to me. The article itself does not contain any relevant or specific information on these two groups.

Another paper was also published in *Bod ljongs zhib 'jug*, 4, 1995, 30-40 by the author Chab-'gag rta-mgrin whose two other articles are quoted in this paper. Entitled *lHo pa rigs kyi thog ma'i mched khungs*, this article is a useful compilation of the different modern write-ups on the subject. It also presents a story of the origin of the Lhopas and the Tibetans, saying that they came from two brothers, Zla blo who settled in Tibet and Zla nyid who settled in lHo-yul. He also equates the two spellings *Klo* and *lHo*.

Notes

Acknowledgements: An earlier version of this article was published in *The Tibet Journal*, 19:3 (1994). The present chapter is updated and augmented to deal with the more general problem of ethnonyms and identities. I would like to thank A.M. Blondeau, Anne Chayet and A. Macdonald-Spanien for their comments and suggestions.

1. Aris (1979:xvi).
2. Cf. Dollfus (1989:42-47).
3. Because of political problems, the region of Arunachal Pradesh has been closed to foreign researchers since the 1950s. However, one can read: Dasgupta (1968); Dasgupta (1977); Aris (1980); Chowdhury (1973: 42-52); Billorey (1984); Billorey (1986); Nanda (1982); Sarkar (1980).
4. Aris (1979:122) calls "Northern Monpa" the language of the Tawang Mon-pa of Arunachal Pradesh and of the people of Merak and Sakteng in Bhutan. He relates it to the Bumthang language of central Bhutan and classifies it as Proto-East Bodish as does Andvik (1993:76), who writes: "The Monpa label is unfortunate in that it separates languages which should be grouped together while joining under a common name languages which should not be grouped together. Thus Bhutanese Tsangla (Sharchopkha), Cangluo Menba and Central Monpa are closely related and apparently mutually intelligible varieties of a single language while Northern Monpa and Cuona Menba are distinct from these and should be grouped with Bumthang of Central Bhutan...The former are classified under the Bodish section while the latter fall under Proto-East Bodish section." One can also consult Shafer (1966); Mazaudon & Michailovsky (1992); Murty (1969); Nishida (1988); Sun Hongbai, et. al. (1980); Zhang Jichuan (1986).
5. The term *kla-klo* may be more connected with the region of rTsa-ri but I do not have any firm grounds for this assumption. For a study of the different ethnic groups present at rTsa-ri see Huber (1997).
6. In the context of the north-east region of India, cf. Sanyal (1973).
7. Cf. van Driem (1992). In the introduction to his book (pp. 1-32), this renowned linguist from Leiden gives the first exhaustive linguistic survey of the languages of Bhutan.
8. van Driem (1992:24) reports that "The Monpa settlement at Reti is reported to date from the reign of His Majesty (U rgyan Dbang phyug) Ugä 'Wangchu (imperabat 1907-1926), at which time the forefathers of the Reti Monpas, who fled from the Rukha area to escape the hard labour of carrying tea from the gardens at Devangadhi near (gDung bsam kha) Dumsamkha to (dBang 'dus pho brang) Wangdi Phodr'a ..." (*sic*).
9. I adopt here the terminology in use today in Bhutan although this appellation calls for elaborate comments.
10. For a detailed study of Nabji see Pommaret (1997).
11. The expression *sgo-sprung* is difficult to translate into English and "entrance-keepers" cannot convey all the connotations the Tibetan has. Ideally the term "door-keepers" would be better as it would convey the architectural idea of a palace, or a *maṇḍala*, often associated with a "hidden country" or a sacred place. However, because it seems a bit odd in English and because the common English expression "gate-keepers" might carry a different image, it has been decided to opt for the

neutral “entrance-keepers”. It should be added that the word *srung* which I have translated as “keeper” also means “guardian”.

12. Dorji (1994:7).
13. This field trip (3-9 April 1991), which included Nabji, was organized by the Curriculum Division of the Education Department of Bhutan and I was accompanied by Ms. Tshering Drolkar whom I thank for her assistance. Following this trip, a full report was given to the Curriculum Division in April 1991.
14. Fletcher (1975).
15. The study on ethnobotany by Nishioka (1984) was very useful in identifying the plants.
16. HRH Prince Namgyel Wangchuck has always taken a keen interest in upgrading the living conditions of the Mon-pas and, in Phumzur, he insisted on sending some of the children to the nearest boarding school in Langthey. Prince Namgyel has also written a short report on the Mon-pa but I was unable to obtain it.
17. van Driem (1992:23).
18. Slob-dpon gNag-mdog (1986:1-3).
19. The town of sMan-gling, also spelt in some publications Mi ling, Milin or Mainling, is situated on the right bank of the gTsang-po, about 50 kilometres from the confluence of the Nyang-chu and the gTsang-po which was the site of the former rTse-bla rDzong.
20. rTsa-ri was a holy place which was re-opened (*gnas-sgo phye-ba*) by, among others, the ‘Brug-pa monk gTsang-pa rgya-ras in the 12th century. The story is well known in Bhutan because it is the subject of one of the most popular religious dances of the ‘Brug-pa tradition, the Chos-gzhas ‘*cham*; cf. sPyi-khyab-phran Nag-’phel (n.d.:1). The publication of Toni Huber’s doctoral dissertation (1993) on rTsa-ri in his book *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999) will provide more information on the local role and identity of this population. In a personal communication dated June 1994, Toni Huber stated that “the idea that rTsa-ri is a *sbas-yul* is marginal in Tibetan sources...It is a site of a mountain deity cult, mountain *mandala* in the Tibetan Samvara cult. gTsang-pa rgya-ras was merely one of a series of lamas who successively reopened the area.” C. Ramble (1997:145) speaks of the “ancient ideas concerning the demonic nature of the people of Kong-po.”
21. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:406-407).
22. Dorje Yudon Yuthok (1990:90-91).
23. Karmay (1992:530). Regarding the accusation of incest, it is probable that the people of these regions, like the Eastern Bhutanese, marry their bilateral cross-cousin, who are assimilated to siblings in Central Tibet and Western Bhutan. Therefore, this form of marriage is viewed as incest by the people of these regions.
24. See “The Use of Poison in Tibet” (1995:40-41).
25. *A Survey of Tibet* (1987:173).
26. Li Jianshang (1990:140-150).
27. See *China’s Tibet*, 5:1 (1994:19).
28. “The lHoba tribe in Dermo” (1995:44-46).
29. *Klo kha-dkar kha-nag kha-khra*, cf. Aris (1980:13-15). In his note 3, p. 18, Aris says that “the term Klo kha dkar kha nag kha khra is a standard classification applied to the whole medley of tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh who live east of the Mon pa. It is unlikely that each group can be separately identified, though the Aka are sometimes referred to as Kha nag.”
30. Aris (1980:15).

31. Aris (1995:19).
32. Wylie (1962:93, 174, n.552).
33. Wylie (1962:94).
34. Wylie (1962:98, 178, n.583).
35. Ferrari (1958:48, 122, n. 212).
36. Li Jianshang (1990:142).
37. Kingdon-Ward (1990:66).
38. Interestingly enough, condescending or patronizing comments were also applied to them recently in a Chinese source: "Anthropologists say the warm and hospitable people are living fossils", *China's Tibet*, 5:1 (1994:19).
39. Ramble (1997:133).
40. Huber (1993:219).
41. Huber (1993:217).
42. Aris (1980:9); see also Aris (1986:81, n.70).
43. *A Survey of Tibet* (1993:170-175).
44. Li Jianshang (1990:140).
45. Aris (1980:15).
46. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1993:67-77).
47. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1993:70, 77, n.12).
48. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1993:72).
49. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1993:69, 71).
50. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1990:18-37).
51. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1990:20): *Mon zhes pa ni Bod kyi thog ma'i rus min zhig yin*.
52. Chab-dga' rta-mgrin (1990:22).
53. Slob-dpon gNag-mdog (1986:2): *Mon pa'i skad ni kla klo'i skad kyis brjod pa las yul dbus kyi skad dang gtan nas mi 'dra*.
54. Slob-dpon gNag-mdog (1986:2).
55. Slob-dpon gNag-mdog (1986:1-2).
56. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:8-9).
57. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975:406-407).
58. Brigitte Steinmann, personal communication, 1994.
59. Dzongkha pronunciation and modern spelling.
60. van Driem (1992:18-21). One might question here the use of the term "Dzongkha" as there is no historico-linguistic evidence on the exact form of the language spoken in Western Bhutan "in the distant past". As for the term "aboriginal", it is inappropriate as it implies that the Lhokphu did not migrate to Bhutan, a fact that is far from established at this stage of research on the population patterns of Bhutan.
61. Aris (1979:xvii-xviii).
62. Aris (1980:10).
63. Aris does not give the references of the Dunhuang manuscripts he mentions (1979:xvi).
64. Baker & Sardar-Afkhami (1996:80).
65. Aris (1980:9). [Editor's note: The migration far eastwards along the Assam Himalaya, since the early 19th century, of Tawang Mon-pa and Bhutanese being referred to here is well known in the literature of British colonial administration; for a summary see Lamb (1966:306-23)].
66. Kohli (1993:4).

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Part Two

Ritual Spaces and Places

Putting the Gnas Back into Gnas-skor: Rethinking Tibetan Pilgrimage Practice

Toni Huber

One of my long-standing research interests concerns the set of conceptions of the physical world or environment held by Tibetans and Tibetan-speaking Himalayan peoples. I am interested in how they express and live out relationships with their physical world (*zhing-khams* or *gzugs-khams* in modern colloquial Tibetan) or cognized environment while both assuming and sometimes representing this set of views about it. This is a potentially vast topic, and to date I have directed my research to the study of those parts of the physical world which Tibetans classify using the term *gnas* and its related compounds, particularly *gnas-chen*, *gnas-mchog* and *gnas-ri*. Thoughtful Westerners writing about this general Tibetan category of place and/or space have translated or glossed those terms variously as “holy place”, “sacred site or space”, “Pilgerplätze”, “Wallfahrtsort”, “lieux-saints”, “power places”, “sacred geography”, and so on. A fuller account of *gnas* and its interpretation in relation to the ritual processes of Tibetan pilgrimage follows below. However, I will briefly prefigure the points of my longer discussion here.

The Western equivalents of *gnas* listed above attempt to capture the Tibetan conception of these sites or zones as being extraordinary because they are “consecrated” or “empowered”, and that they involve specific relationships between them and persons (and also between persons) by way of practices such as pilgrimage. It is precisely because of their extraordinary nature in the estimations of Tibetans that certain types of *gnas* and the human activities at them are worthy of research. Some *gnas* of central importance, such as the pilgrimage mountains of Ti-se (Mt. Kailash) or Tsa-ri, attracted and brought together in both space and time very large numbers of *different* people who can be described as *sharing* a common world-view. A few years ago I wrote that

...these places are more than just putative centres of other-worldly or supramundane power. Holy places are also a focus for human power

in its various manifestations; they are centres where people are required to confront and invest in prescribed ideas and beliefs... (Huber 1997).

I would now add that because of their definitions and the ways in which people are either motivated or directed to relate to them, such sites and their use have a great potential to provoke more explicit statements and representations of the Tibetan world-view and its dynamics.

However, this potential and the explanatory power that it can offer for an analysis of Tibetan society has not been fully recognized in the majority of Western studies of *gnas* and the ritual life associated with them. Both Tibetan clerics and Western scholars tend to explain ritual behaviour that relates persons and *gnas* together (e.g. pilgrimage) exclusively in terms of a system of Indic Buddhist metaphysical imperatives involving karma, merit, rebirth and ultimately *nirvāṇa*. Privileging Indic doctrinal explanations for what Tibetans do and say has drawn the analytical focus away from a closer investigation of the assumed *emic* categories, such as “place/space”, “person” and “substance”, and the qualities assigned to them, which Tibetans work with and even make explicit in a whole range of ritual scenarios. The result has been that both implicit Tibetan understandings of the world and the embodied ritual experience of Tibetan pilgrims have been largely overlooked, as have their social significations.

Much of what I will outline in the following introductory section may seem quite familiar to experienced scholars of Tibetan culture. However, as I intend to show, the most fundamental and “obvious” is often that which is most easily overlooked.

Towards an Understanding of *Gnas*

In Western sources the Tibetan word *gnas* is translated most often as “place” (“lieu”, “Platz”), and less often as “locality” and “site”. In one very general sense that is what it means for Tibetans when they speak and write it. But in many instances where it occurs in compounds and as a verb, sometimes written *gnas-pa* (what Goldstein terms an “involuntary verb” in modern Tibetan), it has a much more active usage carrying the meaning “to exist”, “to be”, “reside” or “abide”, “to stay” or “remain”, and even “condition [of existence]”. Although the English “place” can carry some of these meanings, in general it is used as a spatial referent or marker, whereas the Tibetan usage carry a much stronger sense of existence, being and ontological value or status. Besides, there are many Tibetan words that could be translated as “place” or provide a spatial referent in various contexts, such as *khag*, *go*, *grong*, *cha*, *yul*, *sa* and its various compounds, and so on, which do not carry the strong sense of ‘an abiding,’ existence or presence of being associated with *gnas*.

It is a well known feature of Tibetan culture, both pre-modern and contemporary, that the physical environment in both its animate and inanimate dimensions is believed to be occupied by a host of deities and spirit forces. They range from minor autochthons to supreme Tantric deities and Buddhas, and can exist in the world-space as a totality, by pervading all things in various ways, or

reside at specific locations, being both mobile and fixed. Humans can be involved in a great variety of intentional interactions with all these beings, actions that are ritually mediated by the practices of both the “folk religion” (*mi-chos*) and various forms of Tibetan Tantra. Unintentional interactions, most often considered negative, are also a possibility in every aspect of life. The term *gnas* and its compounds most often designates the abodes of all of these deities and spirits and their associated states of being, variously conceived. They may be in existence at, or dwell in, locations (*gnas*) in space (*nam-mkha'*), substance or matter (*rgyu*), bodily forms (*gzugs-can*), or in some cases pervade or appear in all of these simultaneously.

Relations Between Person and Place

In daily life, human beings can also be said to have a *gnas*, usually their natal or home place, but they themselves can be a *gnas* for other classes of beings at the same time. The division between human beings and these other forces living in the world has never been sharp in Tibetan thinking. This has important implications for the types of relationships Tibetans usually recognize between persons and aspects of the physical world, such as places and objects, that are apparently external to, and discrete from them. There are various features of the earlier pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, and of the later folk religion, which indicate this.

In beliefs about the king in the pre-Buddhist Tibetan royal cult we find identities established between place, person and deity. According to some central narratives the early kings descended from the heavens, arriving upon the earth on mountain summits. The first six kings also ascended back to heaven from the mountain summits, and hence left no corpses behind. The seventh king was killed and his body was buried in an earth mound tomb, such as those still extant at 'Phyongs-rgyas and other places in Tibet. The person of the king was assimilated to the mountain through his *sku-bla*, the ruler's personal guardian deity, which was identified with the mountain itself. The *sku-bla*, as deity and mountain, was conceived of as the support of the ruler's vital principle. The king and his *sku-bla* were reunited after death when his body was buried in the earth mound tomb, which itself was assimilated to both the king and mountain. The tombs were called “mountain”, and the names they were given related closely to those of the kings (A. Macdonald 1971:esp.298-309; Stein 1972:202-3). These ancient identifications resonate with other Tibetan ways of thinking, such as the popular notion of *bla*.

The *bla*, the “vitality” or “life-power” principle (often translated as “soul” or “*âme*”), is an indigenous notion which relates to the conceptions both of person and of place. Although belief in the *bla* principle has many aspects (Karmay 1987; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:481-3; Stein 1972:226-9), what is of interest here is that the *bla* does not just reside (*bla-gnas*) within the human body or outside of it in other living organisms, such as animals (*bla-sems-can*) and trees (*bla-shing*) or objects like stones (*bla-rdo*, *bla-g.yu*). The *bla* of individual persons, or of family

and clan units, religious sects or even the whole of society can be strongly connected with places as they reside in landscape features like lakes (*bla-mtsho*) and mountains (*bla-ri*). The *bla-gnas* concept holds that persons and places are involved in some degree of mutually determinate relationship. For example, if a family line dies out the *bla-mtsho* with which it is associated will dry up as a result; or if the earth were to be dug up at the *bla-ri* of a particular person, they would be taken ill as a consequence. This is still the case today as it was in the past.¹

Stein has proposed that *bla* and *lha*, the “gods”, were once compounded in Tibetan thinking. And, as in the case of *bla*, the ‘*go-ba’i lha* or personal protective gods (*dgra-lha*, *pho-lha* and *mo-lha/phug-lha*) and *yul-lha* or the “gods of the country” not only dwell in the human body but are also found as much in the natural environment and in places of habitation, such as the house or tent (Stein 1972:227-8; Tucci 1980:187-89). Their importance is still attested to in recent Tibetan domestic ritual (Aziz 1978:253).

Samuel has summarized much of what I have just described, and proposed that a shift in conception of these relationships between place, deity and person did occur with the growth of centralized political power and literacy:

It would make sense to assume that the *bla/lha* concept originated in a set of shamanic modal states. Originally, the spirit-essence or life-force within the individual would have been constituted by this set of forces active both within the individual and in the external world, where they were associated in a typically shamanic manner with specific places, primarily the local mountains and lakes...As centralization took place, particular families and their mountain gods would have come to enjoy especially high status. The shamanic modal states gradually transformed into gods as they came to be seen as outside the individual rather than both within and outside.²

At some levels of earlier Tibetan society a separation appears to have taken place. Yet, while noting that certain “shamanic” type practices are still current in Tibetan cultural life, Samuel further points out the “shamanic” character of later Indian Buddhist Tantra adopted by Tibetans, in the logic of which “the deities of the *maṇḍala* are not simply divine powers external to the individual. They can be evoked within as well as outside the individual.”³ Such observations are important as a basis for interpreting what happened when Indian Buddhist ideas entered into and developed in a Tibetan cultural milieu. During this period, important models were established for the relationship between human beings and the world. On one level, “nature” was “conquered” (*’dul-ba*) by “culture” (i.e. Buddhism), and this was understood in terms of the powers believed to reside (*gnas*) in both the person and the world.

Some recent studies (e.g. Gyatso 1989; Huber 1990) have treated Tibetan notions and representations of place as “sites” where meanings were contested during the transfer of a foreign Buddhism into the local Tibetan environment. In relation to certain “ideological dramas” of this transfer process as it involved

Tantra, such as the pervasive Rudra/Maheśvara-Cakrasaṃvara/Heruka scenario, other studies have drawn attention to several points relevant to the present discussion.⁴ First, in the Tibetan narratives the outcome of such dramas is not represented as being clear-cut. In their initial stages, at least, they result more in a state of equilibrium which is established provisionally between the pre-existing powers and Buddhism, rather than the complete replacement and total victory of the latter over the former. Second, the analysis of this process by Tibetans is made in relation to particular geographical sites—the dramas are tied into actual landscapes in terms of these being the residence places (*gnas*) of the spirit-powers involved. Third, these dramas can ultimately result not just in the redistribution of spirit-powers in landscapes or places but also in bodies.

The pattern for this can also be seen in indigenous Tibetan beliefs about places, bodies and deities or vital principles mentioned above. Stein has proposed that in Tibetan thinking “the representation of the universe, like that of the human body, was modelled on the dwelling house...the human body, the house and the local environment are so many microcosms...of equal validity.”⁵ As Samuel’s comments above have already indicated, there are strong parallels here with Tantric Buddhist systems of thought, such as the *vajrakāya* doctrine found in the Rudra/Maheśvara—Cakrasaṃvara/Heruka scenario, and of this one could use Stein’s words to state “the representation of the universe, like that of the human body, was modelled on the dwelling house [of the archetype deity (*yi-dam*), i.e. the *maṇḍala* palace].” In both Tibetan and Indian Tantric representational systems the cosmos/world system, the body and the dwelling have ontological arrangements with analogical correspondences at their various levels.

In her analysis of the myth of the “Supine Demoness” Gyatso draws attention to the Tibetan proclivity to read features of the landscape as animated. She states that “the image ranges from one of a being who inhabits a certain place...to the place itself as constituting the spirit of a deity of some sort...to the perception of the actual contours of the land as being anthropomorphic or animal-like, by virtue of which that place is thought actually to be the being so outlined” (Gyatso 1989:49). In the present context her observations about this aspect of Tibetan notions of place are most pertinent, as she states, “Once conceived [of in this way]...Be the spirit propitiated or suppressed, the point is that the analogical, animated, projective perception remains. It is a basic feature of what R.A. Stein calls the ‘nameless Tibetan religion’. But it fully pervades organized Buddhism and Bon as well” (p.50).

So for Tibetans other classes of beings do not just inhabit (*gnas*) the environment, they actually contribute to the determination of its physical appearance. The same is also true of the “dwellings” they are thought to occupy. Just as the language of the folk religion denotes the stone cairn of the god of a mountain pass as a “castle” (*mkhar*) or describes a mountain summit in detail as the “grand tent” (*gur-mchog*) of the local protector goddess, likewise Tibetans apply a great deal of architectural language to the lakes, mountains and other features which are landscape “palaces” (*pho-brang*) of Tantric deities. Just as Tibetans negotiate human-built edifices (*stūpa*, monasteries, shrines, etc.) and

orient themselves in relation to them, so too must they take account of those “edifices” imaged in the physical environment.

All the points I have just discussed are fundamental to Tibetan conceptions of *gnas*. Implicit in the understanding of *gnas* is that persons and other parts of the environment and their constituent substances and spaces can be conceived of in a variety of ways, and involved in a range of relationships and/or correspondences and identifications. While this is generally true of many cultures, it has sometimes been forgotten in the case of Tibet when Westerners study Tibetan rituals, such as pilgrimage. These ideas are supported by *both* long-standing aspects of the pre-Buddhist world-view and later Tibetan Tantra. In all these aspects we find expressed forms of an active continuity of existence and identity between persons, places and their physical substances, and the vital powers and divine beings that are believed to inhabit the environment. The actual processes by which this unfolds will be discussed below.

Before proceeding it may be well to recall here that *gnas* are not only aspects of the natural world, such as landscape features. Many of the conceptions Tibetans might apply to mountains and lakes, for instance, can also be applied to certain architectural edifices (e.g. *stūpa*), human-made objects (e.g. religious icons), and particular persons (e.g. Dalai Lamas, or Tantric yogins in particular meditative states) because they are considered to be, or to have, deities permanently or temporarily in bodily “residence”. In many senses *gnas* are like *rten*, or are in fact treated as a sub-category of *rten*. For *rten* Jäschke’s *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (p.213) has “visible representation, symbol” (as images of Buddha and divine objects or beings), “receptacle” (as shrines and *stūpa*), “seat, abode, residence, of a deity, sanctuary”; and for the verb *rten-pa* “that which holds, keeps up, supports.” I would add to this that *rten* are not just physical edifices, but can also be mental constructions that are “visible” in certain contexts. Structures and objects become *rten* by having a deity projected onto them or invited to take up residence (*gnas*) in the consecration ceremony termed *rab-gnas* (Bentor 1992).

Putting the *Gnas* Back into *Gnas-skor*

Most of these ideas have been circulated, discussed or published, and there is much historical and ethnographic material to support them. What is more, there are certain parallels to them described and discussed in the large body of literature on neighbouring South and East Asian societies. What does all this have to do with pilgrimage? I would venture to say that pilgrimage in its various manifestations is one of the most widespread ritual ensembles practised in the Tibetan cultural world. Its universality as a major form through which persons and places or sites are ritually related is beyond doubt. Yet, the growing body of studies and reviews of Tibetan pilgrimage practice appears not to have taken careful and systematic account of all these conceptions about *gnas*.

Tibetan pilgrimage is certainly a complex phenomenon, being motivated by various goals, employing multiple dimensions of ritual activity and directed towards a huge range of *gnas* and *rten*. There are fundamental Tibetan conceptions

of what a “pilgrimage” is which do not correspond well with the meaning of that word in English and other European languages: generally, “a journey to a holy place”. Nor do they correspond entirely with the Sanskrit terms *pradakṣiṇā* (lit. “moving clockwise”) or *yātrā* (“journey”). A careful etymology is vital here. For “pilgrimage” Tibetans commonly use the terms *gnas-skor* (lit. “going around a *gnas*”), and *gnas-mjal* (lit. “to encounter/meet a *gnas*”). These two compounds are interchangeable, and both the verbs *bskor-ba* and *mjal-ba* (an honorific form) are frequently used in oral and written descriptions of pilgrimage practice.

A Tibetan pilgrimage then is generally a *circular* journey around a *gnas* which constitutes and/or involves *encounter(s)* of some kind. As a circular journey it differs from the English “pilgrimage”. Although the term *pradakṣiṇā* implies a “centre” or “place” which one must go around, explicit notions of *gnas* and *mjal* are missing from that term, and Tibetan *gnas-skor* can be performed in both directions. The cliché is “clockwise for Buddhists, counter-clockwise for Bon-po,” yet in practice, at sites that are important and popular, this is not necessarily the case. For instance, at Kong-po Bon-ri Buddhists circumambulate counter-clockwise (Karmay 1992:531), while at Tsa-ri on Dag-pa Shel-ri the Bon-po circumambulate clockwise, and all women do half a circuit in each direction (Huber 1993). There are other exceptions.

I see no problem with translating the term *gnas* as “place” in the context of pilgrimage as long as Tibetan understandings and assumptions about *gnas* are taken fully into account. The most important Tibetan pilgrimage “places” are termed *gnas-chen* (sometimes *gnas dam-pa*, *gnas rtsa-chen-po* or *gnas-bzang* in colloquial speech) and *gnas-mchog*, which could be translated as “great place/abode” or “principal place/abode”; and *gnas-ri* as “mountain abode”, most often of a regional deity (*yul-lha*). Such terms can be applied to natural landscapes, urban sites (e.g. Lhasa), religious structures and icons, or the place of residence or “seat” (*gdan-sa*) of high lamas and incarnations. In a more specialized Tantric context the word *gnas* is used to translate *pīṭha*, one class of ritual site listed in the *anuttarayoga-tantra* texts and their commentaries. According to Tibetan etymologies I have collected, *gnas* in the term *gnas-skor* always carries the double meaning of the actual physical place, and of the residence or existence of deities, entities or beings believed to be powerful or significant in some way by the pilgrims who go there for an encounter (*mjal-ba*). There is much ritual evidence to suggest that the physical “stuff” of the place and the vital principle or being that resides there are always so closely associated that they are considered and treated as identical.

That is my brief review of the fundamental *emic* conceptions of Tibetan pilgrimage. The reader will have noticed that I have hardly referred to Buddhism, nor mentioned merit, karma, rebirth, let alone “liberation”. It seems to me that any research on Tibetan pilgrimage rituals and sites must acknowledge the continuity in, and persistence of, certain aspects of the Tibetan world-view concerning places and persons and their relationship. Perhaps we could even say that when we talk of “Tibetan (or Bon) pilgrimage” what is most “Tibetan” about it is a certain orientation to place, while what is most “Buddhist” about it

is a system of Indic metaphysical imperatives (*saṃsāra*, *karma*, *nirvāṇa*) which are fitted together with this orientation to place.⁶ But the question of what Buddhism itself is stands in need of thorough debate, and the often monolithic interpretations of Westerners need to be compared with various *emic* classifications and with local ethnographic and historical data. Such propositions as mine need to be carefully assessed in terms of the type of distinctions that Samuel (1993) has recently proposed for Tibetan societies, those of “shamanic Buddhism” and “clerical Buddhism”. I pose this here as an issue for further critical reflection.

Other types of distinction appear to have been made already. There are now at least eight published Western discussions or general overviews of “Tibetan pilgrimage” which vary greatly in length and detail.⁷ They all provide interesting materials, and some are cited as standard references on the subject. The three longest of these pieces never mention the terms *gnas-skor* and *gnas-mjal* or their etymologies. Many of them emphasize the ritual primacy of *pradakṣiṇā*, using that term to describe what Tibetans do, and state that Tibetan pilgrimage derives from India or Indian Buddhism.⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, the pieces written by anthropologists pay closer attention to the actual practices and language used in specific contexts. Some of the reviews begin their discussions of the important Tibetan sites of pilgrimage with those significant to Indian Buddhism before relating details of the so-called “natural” or “indigenous” sites in Tibet, while others orient their accounts towards local and regional Tibetan sites. Many of them mention that the motivations and rewards of pilgrimage are both Buddhist doctrinal ones and less doctrinal “worldly” ones.

Overall in these accounts emphasis is given to the role of Indian and Buddhist influences, yet at the same time attention is always paid to the so-called “local”, “indigenous” and “natural” aspects of Tibetan pilgrimage. In dealing with such a diverse and complex phenomenon most scholars seem to divide the material up into that which fits with a certain view of doctrinal Indian Buddhism on the one hand, and local Tibetan data that does not fit with it on the other.⁹ This tendency to “split” may partly be a result of what could be called the “encyclopedia syndrome”, of having to fit a complex subject into a small publishing space. But I think it also has to do with according explanatory priority to particular Western representations of Indic Buddhism rather than looking long and hard at what actually happens or happened on the ground in Tibet. Whatever the case, I think this analytical split in the treatment of Tibetan pilgrimage will not lead to any advances in our understanding, or in the quality of our representations. None of the accounts discussed have attempted any substantial analysis of the fundamental categories of place, space and person that Tibetans assume and work with as pilgrims. I propose that attention paid to these topics will be of benefit in future studies.

Problems of Distinction and Interpretation

In line with what I have said so far, I am also proposing a review of the ways we consider the various classes of activities and practices that are commonly

attendant on Tibetan pilgrimage, and indeed often constitute in their totality what the "pilgrimage" actually is for Tibetans themselves. I base my comments mainly on observations and participation in over a dozen different Tibetan pilgrimages in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Sichuan, North India, Nepal and Bhutan during the last decade. I say this here because I think it is essential to perform Tibetan pilgrimages in order to begin to interpret them, as will become clear from my comments to follow.

The whole notion of ritual, particularly as it is applied to the acts of persons from other cultures, is continually being reviewed and debated in Western social theory. I am not about to enter that process on a theoretical level, but I would like to point out certain tendencies in the way Westerners have analysed the practices of Tibetan pilgrims, and the implications of a possible change in emphasis. In a recent overview of "Himalayan rituals", including Tibet, Macdonald (1987) has indicated the great variety of types of Tibetan ritual practice, made even more complex by the fact that they can also include a significant meditational component. This statement reflects the situation of Tibetan pilgrimage practice generally: difficult to define, with many aspects, and a meditational dimension as well.

There is no Tibetan category that corresponds well to "ritual", and no detailed classification either. Tucci (1980:chapters 5, 6) has pointed out the Buddhist distinction between *cho-ga* (*vidhi*), which can only be performed by initiated persons, such as monks, and different types of *mchod-pa*, which can also be performed by lay persons. But this division does not get us very far with pilgrimage practice as the "rituals" he includes in both these categories, and many others besides that do not fit into them, are involved. To perhaps show how these terms and distinctions may be used by Tibetan-speaking peoples we should note here a proverb that Jest (1975:353) recorded some years ago, "Le pèlerinage est l'offrande religieuse du laïc," which reads in Tibetan, *gnas-skor 'jig-rten gyi cho-ga yin*. Also, the practices related in guide-books and manuals for pilgrims are only superficially helpful. They mention either the most common Buddhist type, the standard textual formula always being "prostration, offering and circumambulation" (*phyag mchod dang skor-ba byed-pa*), or acts that are very particular to a certain site being described. In addition we must remember that such texts are the exclusive product of élite practitioners within the society. My rule of thumb in the field has been to note the frequency of various practices and acts on pilgrimages, and in written accounts, and to group them primarily on the basis of my informants' explanations, which might vary in any particular instance. This is perhaps no less crude than imposing an *etic* scheme, although I have found that a pattern has emerged that is different in important respects from the analysis of many Westerners. Briefly, this is that while Tibetans (including lay persons, and at times clerics and lamas) may often explain things in terms of physicality and substance; Westerners look for, and see, mainly "symbolic", "mental" and metaphysical aspects.

The same trend is confirmed by surveying the materials in published sources. For instance, one practice for which Tibetan pilgrimages are well known is

circumambulation (*skor*) of a *gnas* performed by measuring out full-length body prostrations (*phyag'tshal*). Concerning the ritual purpose of the two common components of this "combination act", there is a cliché Tibetan formulation which states:

Defilements (*sgrib*) of the body will be cleansed through prostration and circumambulation, defilements of speech will be cleansed through taking refuge and praying, and defilements of mind will be cleansed through praying with onepointed devotion.¹⁰

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama recently made this observation about the practice of prostration circumambulation at Mount Kailash (the italics are mine):

When you walk a circular pilgrimage route, such as this one around Mount Kailash, your feet touch the earth with big spaces between them, but when you prostrate, *your whole body connects with the sacred ground* to close the circle (1990:132).

These Tibetan explanations focus on *lus-kyi-sgrib*, a form of pollution associated with substances and the physical body, and also the importance of maximum ritual contact with the empowered substance of a *gnas-chen*. The following Western interpretation of the same act is found in a major and recently published encyclopedia of religion, under the standard reference for "Tibetan Pilgrimage":

... the more difficult the pilgrimage, the more merit the pilgrim acquires. Tibetans often increase the difficulty of their pilgrimages by measuring their journeys with full-body prostrations. Ascetic practices of this sort are also meant to burn away mental defilements and purify the mind for further progress along the path to enlightenment (Bernbaum 1987:351).

The differences here speak for themselves, and this is by no means an isolated case. But Tibetans too, particularly Buddhist clerics, are often ready with "pukkah" doctrinal explanations to justify their ritual behaviour, and a standard formula of "chapter and verse" can sometimes be offered ("In *sūtra* X the Buddha said... therefore we do this here."). However, these accounts often do not tally at all with, or include much of what they actually do on pilgrimages, or how their fellow pilgrims explain things. But if they make a connection in all sincerity who am I to question the validity of it? It is certain that to the majority of Tibetans, pilgrimages, whatever else they may be about, are often related to concerns about merit, rebirth, and so on. I would not deny them their interpretations, but merely point out that when it comes to certain practices the classical Indic explanations offered by those who represent Tibetan activities as explicitly Buddhist are only a minority voice, and they do not fit well with the other evidence.

All this highlights a general problem of interpretation which relates back to my discussions of *gnas*, place and person, and pilgrimage above. What is "obvious" or completely taken for granted in a culture often lacks any form of systematic expression, as Sax (1991:10) recently stated:

It is important to distinguish explicit formulations, which may be anything from simple statements to complex metaphysical systems, from the implicit categories and habitual practices - the world view - in terms of which they are expressed ... formal statements about the world and humanity's place in it are based upon certain "commonsense" assumptions and categories that, like the categories of grammar and syntax, are neither criticized, nor reflected upon, nor explicitly formulated (at least not very often). Because people rarely feel the need to formalize such categories, they generally remain implicit and must therefore be inferred from the languages in which they are encoded, the institutions in which they are embedded, and the thoughts and actions that they have influenced.

We lack an abundance of explicit, formal Tibetan theories about the relationships between persons and place, yet a great deal can be inferred about them through careful study and observation, or brought to articulation by the inquiries of outsiders to whom these things are not obvious. And I believe that many Western scholars and some Tibetans would all too readily fill this lacuna with the explicit and sophisticated formulations, such as Buddhism, that they already know well, in order to account for certain aspects of life whose logic is implicit.

An Alternative View: Place, Space, Bodies and Substances

In the remainder of the paper I will draw attention to Tibetan practices and ideas that are commonly found in relation to pilgrimages, but which, although they are mentioned in some accounts, rarely, if ever, figure in the overall explanatory strategies derived by Westerners. In doing so I will be building on all that I have mentioned above about *gnas* and *gnas-skor*, and suggesting an alternative framework for interpretation. My aim is not only to clarify basic Tibetan categories. I also hope to begin to demonstrate that the practice of Tibetan pilgrimage primarily entails the social production of what some theorists would call a specific "ritualized body environment".

In a general context Bell (1992), drawing heavily on Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory, has argued that the point of the process of ritual, in terms of it being a mode of social practice, is to produce a ritualized body environment. Bell's comments on this notion provide not only a lucid application of practice theory to understanding ritual, but also sketch a useful analytical frame within which to think about the materials on Tibetan pilgrimage I am about to present below. The process of ritual, she states,

...produces this ritualized body through the interaction of the body with a structured and structuring environment. "It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to mythico-ritual oppositions," writes Bourdieu, "that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by

the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world." Hence, through a series of physical movements ritual practices spatially and temporally construct an environment organized according to schemes of privileged opposition. The construction of this environment and the activities within it simultaneously work to impress these schemes upon the bodies of participants. This is a circular process that tends to be unrecognized, if it is perceived at all, as values and experiences impressed upon person and community from sources of power and order beyond it (1992:98-99).

Bell further emphasizes the analytical centrality of actions, in order to move beyond purely "ritual space" or "sacred space" centred studies and highlight the dialectic of body-environment,

...a focus on the acts themselves illuminates a critical circularity to the body's interaction with this environment: generating it, it is moulded by it in turn. By virtue of this circularity, space and time are redefined through the physical movements of bodies projecting organized schemes on the space-time environment on the one hand while reabsorbing these schemes as the nature of reality on the other. In this process such schemes become socially instinctive automatism of the body and implicit strategies for shifting the power relationships among symbols (1992:99).

What then are the acts themselves and the organizing schemes, the privileged oppositions, hierarchies, and so on, often at "play" (projected and reabsorbed) in the practice of Tibetan pilgrimage? How are they conceived of as being "the nature of reality"?

Tibetan pilgrimage has primarily to do with persons forming certain relationships with a *gnas*, which can also have a *rten* (object, building, human body, etc.) as its basis, and which is physically located on the earth's surface and is assigned a particular ontological value. It is about Tibetan conceptions of the inherent power of certain places in relation to a given ontology, and how people can become involved with and capitalize on that. Mental and physical acts structure this relationship at various levels, which can involve types of representational synthesis and identification (by visualization/meditation), and a host of actual physical contacts, both those that are tangible and others that are believed to be sublime. Most commonly it is about a direct (and observable) physical, sensory relationship of person and place through *seeing* (in both the sense of direct encounter (*mjal*) and "reading" and interpreting landscape, etc.), *touching* (by contacting the place), *positioning* (body in relation to place), *consuming/tasting* (by ingesting place substance), *collecting* (substances of the place), *exchanging* (place substances with personal substances/possessions), *vocalizing* (prayers addressed to the place or specific formulas), and even in some cases *listening* (for sounds produced by the place).

Perhaps more could be added here, but these are all classes of practices I have catalogued during Tibetan pilgrimages, and which are further attested in

Tibetan and Western written sources. Some of these relational forms have a conscious “mental” dimension. And although yogins as pilgrims may practise the most exclusively mental of relational forms, such as visualizations, they attend to the physical ones as much as other practitioners, and in certain instances even more so. The ritual imperative is that contacts and identifications must be made, and I am suggesting that any performance done during a Tibetan pilgrimage can be read in this way.

When observing pilgrimages certain of these physical relational forms may be easily misinterpreted, or even missed altogether. A pilgrim who appears to be just staring at a group of boulders may be in the process of a sophisticated landscape interpretation exercise. The picking up of stones, pinches of soil or dust (often called *gnas-rdo*, *gnas-sa*, etc.) the drinking of water, and other collections and consumptions of the physical environment of a *gnas* are all common relational forms. Unless they are highly routinized at a particular spot, or consistent inquiries are made about them to pilgrims, or one has prior knowledge that they will occur there, much of this level of pilgrimage, and its frequency, can go unnoticed by the “outside” observer. However, there are numerous individual references to them in accounts of Tibetan practice.¹¹ All the same comments apply to the concern for relational exchanges, that is, the deposit of personal substances and items at a *gnas*, as opposed to regular offerings, such as butter, prayer flags, and so on. A whole range of mental relational forms are of course only revealed through testimonies, yet Tibetans will also give testimony of how a Tantric practitioner’s deity yoga was so perfectly developed at a certain place that the deity of the *gnas* being visualized appeared as an objective reality to others. Whatever one may think of such accounts, they reveal that the dividing line between the “physical” and “mental” that Westerners generally use is not always sharp for Tibetans. Again, what is perhaps more important to them is contiguity and identifications rather than distinctions of this type.

I do not know of, nor have I had explained to me, a comprehensive Tibetan formulation of substance categories and properties that could be applied to persons, places, objects, and their relationship, such as the way one might find Hindus using the *guna* system and Indian particle theories. Yet Tibetans do make some explicit formulations about substance and body categories and properties specifically in relation to *gnas* and their visits to them. These formulations constitute an indigenous Tibetan explanatory basis for most pilgrimage practice which is assumed prior to many Buddhist doctrinal explanations. They implicate and explicate both non-Buddhist Tibetan as well as Indian Buddhist precedents, and they can be invoked to explain and satisfy both Buddhist religious motivations and goals as well as ones that are entirely mundane.

Works discussing so-called Tibetan “folk” culture catalogue a great variety of beliefs and practices concerning illness and cures, purification, agriculture, building, childbirth, magical practices (for love, revenge, etc.), weather-making, fertility, good and bad fortune, and so on (Chophel 1983; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Stein 1972; Tucci 1980). They are sometimes referred to as “superstitions”

but they should be taken seriously, at least for the fact that they assume a set of relations between persons, substances, and *gnas* and their non-human residents. The consistently explicit mechanism for many of these relations is the concept of *sgrib* (sometimes *grib*), literally a “shadow” or “stain”. It is generally conceived as a form of pollution (or in some cases a class of noxious deities) which is strongly related to substances and various actions, and to deities inhabiting both the body and the external world. The conception of *sgrib* is often discussed in ethnographies of Tibetan-speaking peoples, and shown to have various implications for social relations (Mumford 1989; Ortner 1978a; Schicklgruber 1992; also Chopel 1983:3 *et passim*; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 307, 388-9; Tucci 1980:173, 201). What strikes me is that concerns about *sgrib* become socially manifest in the spatial ordering between persons, and between persons and *gnas*, and the ranking of persons and substances by degree of presence/absence of “impurity” (*mi-gtsang-pa*).

In Tibetan religions the term *sgrib* is also used in a more complex way to describe both gross and fine physical, verbal and cognitive “defilements” associated with the three levels of the psycho-physical person, as we saw in the Tibetan quote concerning the cleansing of *sgrib* through ritual practice above. It is important to recognize that in some sophisticated Tibetan interpretations the term is used in translating concepts like the Sanskrit *dvyāvāraṇa* (*sgrib-gnyis*), or “twin veils/defilements”, yet to many other Tibetans it simply denotes physical or social pollution as outlined above. The picture is complicated by the introduction of Buddhist ethical concerns, and the contamination caused by “moral transgression” (*sdig*). The foundational process of Tibetan Tantric practice involves the removal of *sgrib* from the psycho-physical person in four progressive stages. Here *sgrib* is related to a form of interior ranking of the person’s abilities as a practitioner, yet this can also have external implications in the way he or she may be accorded social status and relate to place and space in certain instances.

The overall picture of the role of *sgrib* in Tibetan thinking is much more complex than this. I only briefly introduce the concept here because in my research *sgrib* frequently occurred as an *emic* explanatory strategy for pilgrimage practice and person-substance-place relationships from lay persons, clerics and Tantra practitioners alike. They also, even more frequently, invoke the concept of *byin* in this context. This concept, its translation, and its meaning for Tibetans in relation to *gnas* also require discussion.

In the majority of Western sources *byin* is translated as “blessings”, as it commonly occurs in compounds such as *byin-can* (“blessed”) or *byin-gyis-brlabs* (“blessing”). In the context of *gnas* and pilgrimage in the way I have described them here I prefer to use “empowerment” (*byin-gyis-brlabs*), conceived of as a process that affects the environment, much like the fields in modern physics, and which produces the “empowered” (*byin-can*). I will explain how this fits better with most Tibetan conceptions of the term.

We know that in the language of the pre-Buddhist royal cult the central figure, the *btsan-po* or divine king, was held to possess *byin* as a personal property or quality of his physical body. As an essential, powerful characteristic in this context *byin* is translated as “splendour” or “glory” (A. Macdonald 1971;

Richardson 1985). During the early translation of Indic Buddhist concepts into Tibetan, we find in the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* (early ninth century) that Tibetans used *byin-gyi-brlabs/byin-brlabs-pa* for the translation of *adhiṣṭhāna*.¹² The Sanskrit can be glossed by “authority”, “power”, “residence”, “abode”, “seat”, taken from *adhiṣṭhā* ($\sqrt{\text{sthā}}$) “to stand upon”, “to inhabit”, “to abide”, “to stand over”, “to govern”, etc. (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.22). This is not only close to the early Tibetan conception of *byin* as an aspect of divine royal power, but also to how *gnas* are later understood. I am not suggesting that Tibetan conceptions of *gnas* derive from India, but that notions of power (or “status”?) and place, and perhaps even height, are all found in the concept that Tibetans represented with *byin-gyis-brlabs*. As an aside, it would be extremely interesting to compare in detail Tibetan conceptions of the embodiment of royal or religio-political power and its ritual aspects with those of ancient India, for example *abhiśeka* (Inden 1978).

In Tibetan Tantra *byin-gyis-brlabs* can denote a specific relationship between a deity and practitioner. For example, in a discussion of the “generation stage” (*bskyed-rim*) in which a deity is mentally constructed through visualization Stein states, “[The generation stage] underlies every ritual practice; for to have any effect a rite requires the presence of the appropriate deity, who thereby bestows a ‘blessing’ (*byin-brlabs*, Sanskrit *adhiṣṭhāna*) the power of action on the officiant” (Stein 1972:181). But in general Tibetans understand it in a much broader context as a “field of power” in place and space, and one can translate *byin-gyis-brlabs* literally as “flooded by power”, or “suffused with power”, hence “empowerment”.¹³ In line with what I have explained here, and also some social dimensions that I will discuss below, I justify the translation of terms like *gnas-chen* with “power place”. At the risk of being identified as a part of the “New Age” movement, I opt for this term as I think it best describes overall Tibetan assumptions about such sites. Here are three short statements to illustrate how contemporary Tibetan clerics and lamas represent “empowerment” in relation to place with three slightly different points of view. Firstly, The Fourteenth Dalai Lama states:

Many pilgrims visit places where highly devout spiritual masters spent time in the past. The presence of that person makes the place seem somehow blessed or charged, as if there is some kind of electricity around it. Pilgrims come to feel these mysterious vibrations and to try to see some of the same visions the devout master saw (1990:140).

Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, a senior dGe-lugs-pa teacher reported:

All objects at power places (*gnas-chen*) have the empowerment (*byin-gyis-brlabs*) of the deities and great practitioners associated with that place. It is like [the effects of] water soaking into things, so it includes rocks, dirt, water, plants, trees; this is also called ‘empowerment of *gnas* (i.e. as residence)’ (*gnas-kyi byin-brlab*), for example a Heruka place (*gnas*) has Heruka’s empowerment, and a Guru Rinpoche place his

empowerment. So this empowerment can be collected in the form of rocks, dirt, plant parts, and so on, and due to the Tibetans' great faith in the power of these things they do collect them (Interview, Dunedin 1987).

Lastly, a Tibetan rNying-ma-pa lama from a village in Nepal gives an interesting statement concerning empowerment relating it to Buddhist cosmology. One should note the atemporal conception of the quality of empowerment here:

During the good age the whole earth was Chinlab. Now during the bad age [*bskal-pa btsoq-pa*] there is a deterioration [*nyams-pa*] of the nutritious value of the earth. Thus the fortune of humans also deteriorates. But the Buddha has established sites [*gnas*] where deterioration from the good age does not occur. In Muktinath the original fire burns in water in harmony, and there the rocks and soil are as they were at the beginning of time. We collect these and bring them back so we can insert them in our Chortens [*stupa-s*] and in the soil of the fields to delay deterioration, restoring to some extent the qualities of the good age.¹⁴

These are fairly sophisticated formulations by educated Tibetans who employ various Buddhist teachings for their purpose, even though their interpretations are non-canonical.¹⁵ The physical and substantial nature of empowerment is even more developed in most lay accounts, and they are also more "impersonal". Usually the deities and "great masters" are not even mentioned, just the fact that certain substances are empowered and if collected can be used in a variety of ways for protection, healing, purification, restoring vitality, the fertility and health of farm animals, and so on. In general they counter the effects of *sgrib*.

Most often *sgrib* and *byin-gyis-brlabs* are fundamental aspects of a Tibetan formulation of relationships between persons, and between persons and places, especially during pilgrimage, but in other contexts as well. Generally, the two notions work together as opposites in the context of pilgrimage practice. In my recent study of pilgrimages at Tsa-ri (Huber 1993), for instance, I showed how *sgrib* as physical pollution for the lay practitioner or as complex psycho-physical defilement for the Tantrist are both cleansed by practising in the environment of a highly empowered *gnas*. Both levels of transformation can be related, albeit not exclusively, to Buddhist metaphysical goals, such as advanced rebirths, the attainment of paranormal powers (*siddhi*) and even enlightenment. But such transformations always require rituals of contact and identification to effect them, and these in turn are based on assumptions about the nature of person and place.

Academic discussions of karma and defilement in the Buddhist context often treat these factors as somehow being abstract mental and cognitive elements of a person. But Tibetan materials on the purification of *sdig* and *sgrib* suggest that these are conceived of as embodied and substantial factors, and that their purification is indeed a physical process involving the pilgrim's body and the actual acts or work it has to do.

In various accounts of the walking circumambulation of the famous *Tsa-ri rong-skor* pilgrimage procession bodily transformation and physical acts are linked. For instance the yogin *Zhabs-dkar-ba*, an elite practitioner of last century, stated of his experience, "When I was going along suffering the same hardships [as the other pilgrims] as well, I visualized that all my vices and obscurations had been purified" (1985:482). He also relates the same beliefs as contemporary lay persons have in the purifying empowerment gained by the ritual consumption of physical materials along the route, "the animals who eat the herbs and drink the water [here], have their defilements cleansed (*byang*), and will obtain a human body in the future" (1985:489). A monk who walked the circuit in the 1950s stated, "the ravine circuit is very rugged and you have to suffer a lot physically, and the more you suffer the more you wash off your sins and purify yourself. That is why people don't mind if it's very hard."¹⁶ This is not a commonly heard type of explanation, and the process for the elimination of impurities seems to be variously conceived from different points of view. In a central part of the 'Brig-gung 'Pho-ba Chen-mo initiations, which attracted many thousands of lay and clerical pilgrims to gTer-sgrom up until the 1950s, the practitioners performed a visualization in which *Vajrasattva's* radiance enters and flows through the body as elixir fluid (*bdud-rtsi*) and washes out various defilements (*sgrib* and *sdig*) through bodily orifices, where they emerge as a smoke coloured liquid (*du-khu*).¹⁷

Here we begin to see a specific conception and language of bodily transformation often used or alluded to in the context of many pilgrimage rituals. It evokes the image of water or liquid and its washing and flowing action within the body. It is also applied to actual aquatic *gnas*, of which there are many in Tibet. Thus, in a Tibetan account of the environs of Lake Manasarovar (mTsho Ma-pham) we read of a bathing spot called "the bath which purifies defilements and moral transgressions" (*sdig-sgrib dag-byed kyi khros*), where the pilgrim drinks empowered water or bathes in it (bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros 1983:213, 222). These Tibetan images are opposite to those of ascetic "heat" (*tapas*) and its "burning" transformative power found in the language of Indian pilgrimage to the south of the plateau (and also, we should note, in the encyclopedia definition of "Tibetan Pilgrimage" quoted above!). The ritual process of *tapasyā*, "the production of ascetic 'heat' through actions of self-denial and austerity," is central to the conception of embodied transformation in present North Indian Hindu pilgrimages (Sax 1991:13). If any parallel Indic conception is to be sought it must surely be that of *abhiṣeka*.

Social Implications

Whether cleansed, purified or flooded by power in various ways the ritually transformed body of the pilgrim attains a different status. This may be merely (and most often) a matter of personal acknowledgement, in terms of one considering one's prospects of a better rebirth to be higher, for instance, or it may be socially and publicly attested. A dramatic example of such social recognition is found in the welcoming ritual for pilgrims who finished their

circuit of the Tsa-ri *rong-skor* procession at gSang-sngags Chos-gling monastery in Bya-yul. Lay accounts of events in the 1940s and '50s stated:

The monks used to lay their large shawls (*khab-bslas*) along the ground on the path, like a carpet for the pilgrims to walk on, because they were now purified by the circumambulation. They, and others who could not make the journey, made offering there to the pilgrims as they wanted to get the empowerment of these purified persons.¹⁸

We can compare here a contemporary account of the present Dalai Lama recently visiting village communities in Ladakh, "As His Holiness approached, people covered the path with their own clothes...and monks laid down their shawls (Zen) for him to step on and bless" (Anon. 1986a:75). Of course the body in question here is not one recently transformed by ritual, but one which as an incarnation (*sprul-sku*) is believed by the majority of Tibetans to be highly pure and a source of *byin-gyis-brlabs*, technically speaking a *gnas* or *rten*. The assumptions behind the ritual actions are the same, and they dictate the imperative of contiguity or contact. Examples of this social recognition of transformed pilgrims are found in other Asian Buddhist contexts.¹⁹

The spatial articulation of *byin* in Tibetan ritual is of fundamental importance. For all types of interpreters the field of *byin* has a focus at the centre at which the *rten* or deity of a *gnas* resides or has been dwelling. The more proximate, or more directly oriented one is to this ideal centre the stronger the empowerment potential and the more "intimate" the encounter with the *gnas*. This has consequences for the ordering of space, and in almost all cases centrality and relative height are given priority over periphery and relative low-ness. Such vertical and horizontal hierarchies of space are most often articulated within the context of one or more idealized schemes prevalent in the rich narrative-ritual complexes of Tibetan culture. Here one could begin by mentioning the apparently indigenous *sa-gsum* scheme, the parallel but originally Indic *tribhuvana* system, the ubiquitous *maṇḍala* ordering, and even, in the case of early materials, the influence of Chinese "emboxment" theories.²⁰ That persons have various conditions of presence or absence of *sgrib*, and that *gnas* and other parts of the environment possess various levels of *byin* imply a gradient of ontological status of personhood and place. Social ranking and the relational ordering of persons in space are both related to this gradient in the ascribed quality, or perhaps better, "value", of being. Elsewhere (Huber 1993, 1997) I have given detailed examples of how such a spatial ordering and social ranking was conceived of and practised around a "natural" *gnas*, a Tibetan mountain landscape viewed in the context of a Buddhist representational system. The same implied ordering and ranking is found in many other instances of Tibetan ritual involving *gnas* and *rten*. Consider this brief Western description of an "encounter with person" (*zhal-mjal-ba*) in the form of a pilgrimage to the Paṅ-chen Lama (as *gnas/rten* embodying the Buddha Amitābha) at bKra-shis lHun-po in the late eighteenth century:

A vast crowd of people came to pay their respects, and to be blessed by the Lāma. He was seated under a canopy in the court of the palace.

They were all ranged in a circle. First came the lay folks. Everyone according to his circumstances brought some offering... All these offerings were received by the Lāma 's servants, who put a bit of silk with a knot upon it tied, or supposed to be tied, with the Lāma 's own hands, about the necks of the votaries. After this they advanced up to the Lāma, who sat cross-legged upon a throne formed with seven cushions, and he touched their head with his hands, or with a tassel hung from a stick, according to their rank and character. The ceremonial is this: upon the gylong [i.e. monks with highest vows] or laymen of very high rank he lays his palm, the nuns and inferior laymen have a cloth interposed between his hand and their heads; and the lower class of people are touched as they pass by with the tassel which he holds in his hand... Such as had children on their backs were particularly solicitous that the child's head should be touched with the tassel... After the Lāma retired, many people stayed behind that they might kiss the cushions upon which he had sat (Waddell 1895:321).

Similar dynamics of ordering and ranking, although often now modified and less strictly observed, still operate in the large public initiation ceremonies and pilgrim's audiences involving highly ranked lamas which I have observed in the TAR, Nepal and India. A recent report, which describes how 8000 Tibetans from the TAR and parts of China at the 1985 Kālacakra in Bodh Gaya had a special audience with the Dalai Lama immediately after the initiation, states, "Everyone was trying to get as close to him as possible... After the Dalai Lama's departure people were seeking blessings from his chair" (Anon. 1986b: 4-5). Such accounts, past and present, again attest to the ritual priority given to physical contacts and contiguity, which assumes much of what I have stated above. Ranking and status of person and place is not just assumed in the ordering of space in these situations, it is both implicit and explicit in various other ways as it relates to presence/absence of pollution or defilement and potential for radiation of empowerment. The Tibetan language, like many others, has various levels of common and honorific speech, plus other markers that indicate rank and status. I will briefly discuss those I know of applied in written and spoken text to person and place specifically in the context of pilgrimage. In general there are two interrelated representations applied to persons: levels of purity / absence of pollution, and levels of facility of cognition. Most persons who visit *gnas* as pilgrims are described as falling into two main classes, that is, "ordinary persons" (*so-skye-bo*) and "excellent persons" or "saints" (*skyes-bu dam-pa*). They can be ranked as to whether they are "pure" (*dag-pa*) or "impure beings/defiled persons" (*ma-dag-'gro/mi-gtsang-pa*) referring to the status of their *sgrib* and *sdig*. Their abilities in perception and understanding are ranked according to their level of purity (which also relates to karmic status) with the "highest" (*mchog-rab*, lit. "most superior") described as those with "pure vision" (*dag-srang*), followed by the "middling" (*'bring-po*) and the "lowest" (*ntha'-ma*). Places too are ranked; just as the term *gnas* applied to a place denotes its ontological value as potentially greater than other locations, as explained above. The compounds of *gnas*, such

as *gnas-chen*, etc., indicate places of very high ontological value. Those with the highest deities in residence, that is having the status of Buddhas and archetype deities, are called “pure places” or “pure abodes” (*gnas dag-pa*), or “fields of purity” (*dag-zhing*), the latter term being a common synonym for the “field” or “world-system” of a Buddha (*sangs-rgyas kyi zhing-khams*). Such places possess the highest ontological value and purity, and radiate the maximum empowerment within their field.

At advanced levels in Tibetan Tantra these distinctions between place and person run together in a socially very significant way. The main foundational practice for archetype deity yoga involves a four-stage purification process in which all three levels of defilement (*sgrib*) of body, speech and mind, both coarse and subtle, and a fourth level of defilements collectively, are successively purified through a system of consecrations. This prepares the practitioner through empowerment to work with, and realize identification with, the deity involved in the practice. During these stages of elimination of *sgrib* the language applied to the practitioner changes from common to honorific as his or her ascribed ontological status changes. Thus for body *lus* becomes *sku*, for speech *ngag* becomes *gsung*, and for mind *yid* becomes *thugs*.

Not only does the person’s status rise internally due to purity, it does so externally in various senses. When the practitioner has become fully identified with the deity in yoga then they have attained the same ontological status as that deity. In this way practitioners become the basis for a *gnas* themselves, they radiate empowerment to others and into the surrounding environment (cf. the Dalai Lama’s quote above). If the successful ability to contact and/or identify with Tantric archetype deities, Buddhas, and so on, is generally ascribed to a person in Tibetan society then they can be accorded exceptionally high rank and status. The other way this might happen is if they are recognized as an incarnation directly, as in the cases of the Pañ-chen Lama or Dalai Lama above. The social implications of this are far-reaching in the traditional Tibetan cultural world. In his comprehensive overview of Buddhism in Tibetan societies Samuel has emphasized both the religious and political importance of the “lama”, when understood as Tantric guru/yogin and as incarnation. He acknowledges that in significant part their role and status depends on the fact that they are recognized as embodied conduits and sources of empowerment which can be ritually accessed by both an inner cult group and the lay public (1993: chaps.13-14).

The most spectacular, and now most widely known example of this to continue in the Tibetan exile period is the “Great Kālacakra Initiation” (*Dus-khor dbang-chen*) given by the Dalai Lama. The larger of these now frequently held mass initiations also constitute the single biggest contemporary pilgrimage events for Tibetans, and as Samuel rightly observes of the ceremonies, “Attendance at such an occasion is certainly a meritorious act in karmic terms. However, many people attend because of the incidental blessings (*chinlab*) involved” (1993:260; see also Gold 1988:146). One further aspect of contemporary Kālacakra initiations is certainly worth noting in the present context: they produce new *gnas* outside of the traditional Tibetan homeland. The Dalai Lama has stated

that in general the actual staging of the initiation in an area has a very positive transformative effect on the immediate environment (interview in Cherniack 1991), presumably by way of the empowerment channelled there during deity yoga practice and establishment of the sand *maṇḍala* in the ritual. It has been reported that the Dalai Lama's blessings on a small irrigation lake near the refugee settlement of Bylakuppe and the ritual disposal of the empowered sand of the *maṇḍala* into its waters during the 1970 Kālacakra there have led to it being recognized as a "sacred lake", accorded the ritual status of a *gnas* (Tsering 1994:22). Similarly, concerning the transformative effects of empowerment on specific substances, the Dalai Lama (1994:24) remarked of seeds he distributed to pilgrims at the Sarnath (1990) Kālacakra, "These seeds have been kept near the Kalachakra mandala for purification and blessing."

A Note on Embodied Morality

There is a further dimension to all this involving morality, and although I have not discussed this with my Tibetan informants in detail I think it worthy of a preliminary statement here. In Tibetan, "purity" as *dag-pa* carries with it the senses of "authenticity", "rightness", "correctness", and its compounds denote legal correctness. The Buddhas and other top-ranking deities are the highest expression of moral being, and so by extension are those persons who are recognized as incarnations or fully accomplished Tantrists; they all have high *dag-pa*. Those ordinary, impure beings who are contaminated with degrees of *sgrib* are of a low moral standing relative to this. The Buddhist notion of *sdig* (*pāpa*) as "moral transgressions" is often compounded with *sgrib*, especially in clerical discourse, to explain the gradient of moral status. But I cannot say whether it is frequently envisaged as an embodied quality by many Tibetans. Ortner (1978b) for one has begun to discuss such matters in relation to Sherpa views of "human nature". If *dag* and *sgrib* are relative moral indicators, and if they are embodied properties of persons, what about the moral status of the substances of those persons, and of places described as being highly *dag-pa*, and the logic of transactions between them?

Those who are familiar with ethnosociological accounts of Indic South Asia will notice that I am exploring the possibility for Tibet of an analogous model of the type of "transactional culture" Marriott and others have proposed for Hindu India.²¹ For example, they point out:

... a South Asian's moral qualities are thought to be altered by the changes in his [sic.] body resulting from eating certain foods, engaging in certain kinds of sexual intercourse, taking part in certain ceremonies, or falling under certain other kinds of influence. Bodily substance and code for conduct are thus thought to be not fixed but malleable, and to be not separated but mutually immanent features: the coded substance moves and changes as one thing throughout the life of each person and group. Actions enjoined by these embodied codes are thought of

as transforming the substances in which they are embodied. (Marriott & Inden 1977:228)

This is related through Indian formulations to social ranking and interrelations. I think what is stated here is approximated in various ways by all the material I have presented above. Yet, it seems Tibetans do not have the same types of formal theories as Hindu South Asians do to explain why, for instance, contiguity is so important to them in many contexts. The situation seems to be the opposite. In general, what can be inferred from many Tibetan practices, ways of using language, and so on, which might lead us in the direction of such a model, is denied by Indic Buddhist doctrinal interpretations at various levels. Ironically it is Buddhism that has brought morality in an explicit manner into play in relations between persons and place. The ideological “victory” of Tibetan “conversion” (*dul-ba*) dramas”, located in relation to specific landscapes/abodes (*gnas*), and which are in a sense ritually ongoing, is also represented as a moral one over the forces of perversion. I think there are some important issues to be addressed here, but I am hesitant to continue this discussion without first doing further research.

Summary Comments

In reviewing Tibetan conceptions of *gnas* and their related rituals it has not been my aim to produce a grand theory or total explanation for Tibetan pilgrimages, past and present. I have demonstrated only that: i. Tibetan perceptions and experiences of the activities we usually call “pilgrimage” are intimately related to the assumption of certain categories and qualities of place/space and person and their complex articulation during ritual; ii. that these aspects have enjoyed a degree of continuity throughout Tibetan cultural history; and iii. that they do not necessarily have anything to do with canonical Buddhism. These points have been either overlooked or understated in most previous work on Tibetan pilgrimage practice, as has the embodiment of religious experience in anthropological studies of Tibetan ritual in general.

I have also indicated that the person-*gnas* relationship that operates in Tibetan pilgrimage practice is replete with the type of privileged oppositions and hierarchies central to the production of a ritualized body environment. They tend to be experienced, for the most part, as “natural”, common-sense or taken-for-granted aspects of the world. For the purposes of my argument I have highlighted only some of the more durable and slow-changing aspects of this world view which have surfaced regularly in the oral, written and performative “traces” of various discursive moments. It would be a mistake to think of and treat them as essential, unchanging and unchallenged features of a shared Tibetan culture, but rather as being adapted, contested and modified in the changing and asymmetrical contexts of lived social experience, and especially so as post-diaspora, colonized and “modernized” Tibetan societies confront radical disjunctions and transformations. Karma, merit, rebirth and liberation may well be appealed to by insider and outsider alike in order to “fix” an explanation for

Tibetan pilgrimage. But Tibetan pilgrims are not merely the devout slaves of Indic metaphysics: their unique “embodied knowing” and cultural sense of a body-environment in ritual enables them to practice as dynamic and sophisticated agents in the context of a long established Buddhist soteriology.

Notes

1. Stein (1972:227). Karmay (1987:101) notes how the ninth-century persecution of Buddhism in Tibet was linked to the erosion of a hill on the Sino-Tibetan border which was considered a *Bod-kyi bla-ri* (“vitality-mountain of Tibet”); Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:482) describes rituals to stop the movement of important *bla-ri* in Tibet. See March (1977:94) for a contemporary instance in Sherpa culture.
2. Samuel (1985:389); and (1993: chapt.1) for his definition of “shamanism” in the Tibetan context, being one to which I am also inclined.
3. Samuel (1985:390). Note also the earlier comments of Tucci (1980:163). Contemporary examples of the type of Tibetan “shamanic” and Tantric relationships to place that Samuel is discussing here are those of *dpa'-bo* with Mount Targo and Lake Dangra in Berglie (1980) and yogins with Pure Crystal Mountain at Tsa-ri in Huber (1993).
4. See Macdonald (1990) who brings together important work by Stein and Iyanaga; and Huber (1997).
5. Stein (1972:204). Tibetan ideal conceptions of space as they apply to, and relate together notions of the cosmos/environment, the dwelling house and the body need to be considered here; see Stein (1972:41, 204, 210-11) and Meyer (1987:110); Corlin (1980) describes the ritual and social *maṇḍala* reflected in the cosmic symbolism of the house; see also Aziz (1985), Karmay & Sagant (1987) and Stein (1957).
6. I would venture exactly the same holds true for Bon-po pilgrimage in Tibet, at least for those I have observed in the field in A-mdo.
7. Bernbaum (1987), Dowman (1988), Ekvall (1964), Jest (1975 and also 1985), Large-Blondeau (1960), Macdonald (1985), Ngawang Dak-pa (1987) and Stablein (1978). There may well be others I have not yet seen. Waddell (1895) made an early “review” of Tibetan pilgrimage practice, but I would not include it here as it is only contemporary scholarship that concerns me.
8. This also occurs in secondary sources; see for example Aziz (1987:251).
9. Compare the related comments made by Martin (1992:191).
10. *Lus kyi sgrib pa sbyong phyir phyag 'tshal dang skor ba / ngag gi sgrib pa sbyong phyir skyabs 'gro dang gsol 'debs / yid kyi sgrib pa sbyong phyir rtse gcig gus pas gsol 'debs*; cf. also Dowman (1988:6).
11. For a range of examples see Buffetrille (1993:103-4; 1997 on *gnas-rdo*), Dowman (1988:102, 212), Huber (1993:111-15, 133-39, 184) Johnson & Moran (1989:42, 45-6), Mumford (1989:97), Pranavananda (1983:12, 50, 127 n., 132), Waddell (1895:309-10, 320). One might also note here that the value of collected *gnas* substances is such that they are bought, sold and traded among Tibetans. I should make it clear that such substances are not classified as relics by Tibetans, although a relic itself may be the *rten* on which a *gnas* is based. Martin has discussed classification of Tibetan relics, and makes the distinction that “in Tibet, the emphasis of the relic cult was less on the wonder working power of relics and more on the miraculous nature of the relics in and of themselves” (1992:183). The opposite is true of *gnas* substances, which are mundane materials with “enhanced” properties. They are believed to

- have the power to heal, protect and so on, hence their exchange value.
12. See Sakaki Ryōzaburō, *Mahāvīyutpatti*: 1580-1584; 4264, 4305, 5591, 6364, 7591, 9054.
 13. Compare Snellgrove (1987:634) "empowerment (adhiṣṭāhāna)... byin-gyis-brlabs-pa = pervaded by grace."
 14. Mumford (1989:97). Lama Karma Samten, a Tibetan bKa'-brgyud-pa cleric living in New Zealand, reported that he toured the country on his arrival and collected substances from all the local *gnas* there. These were combined with *gnas* materials from Tibetan and Buddhist pilgrimage places and used to empower a *stūpa* built in the North Island, which he described as uniting the powers of the New Zealand and Tibetan environments (interview, Christchurch 1988).
 15. For accounts showing that similar types of ideas and related practices also existed in other Asian Buddhist contexts see Schopen (1987) and Tambiah (1984). Chinese conceptions of *ling* ("power/efficacy"), so commonly used in pilgrimage, should also be compared to these Tibetan ideas, see Sangren (1993) and Naquin and Chün-Fang Yü (1992:11).
 16. Sherab Gyatsho (interview, Darjeeling 1991). On physical hardship and expiation in Chinese pilgrimage see Naquin and Chün-Fang Yü (1992:20).
 17. See 'Bri gung 'pho ba chen mo 'jag tshugs ma, fol.11b-12a.
 18. Norbu Dorje (interview, Darjeeling 1991), Tenzin Wangchuk (interview, Thimphu 1992).
 19. See Grapard's (1982:207) comments on Japanese Buddhist mountain pilgrimages: "It is well known that pilgrims coming back from sacred spaces were regarded with awe: common people saluted them, made offerings, even tried to touch them."
 20. Concerning tripartite spatial hierarchies, the *sa-gsum* and *tribhuvana*, Kvaerne (1987:499, 502) calls such a scheme pre-Buddhist; Stein (1972) describes it as a "Buddhist symbol" (p.41), but also implies that it may be indigenous (p.202-4); see the entry *sa-gsum* in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, vol.3:2911; see also a Tibetan explanation in Nālandā Translation Committee (1987:230). For discussions of *maṇḍala* and landscape in a Tibetan context see Huber (1993). On Chinese embowment schemes in Tibetan sources see Aris (1979:15-22).
 21. Marriott (1976), Marriott & Inden (1977). See also Daniel (1984), Inden & Nicholas (1977), Sax (1990).

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The Blue Lake of A-mdo and its Island: Legends and Pilgrimage Guide

Katia Buffetrille

Introduction

As broad as the sea, to which it was often compared by western travellers, “Blue Lake” (mTsho sngon-po)¹ lies at the feet of snowy mountains. Its circumference is about 300 kilometres and it is well known for the violent storms which toss it until November, when the heavy cold turns the waters to ice.

Most early travellers, including N. Prjevalski (1988: 69-71), Father Huc (1962: 186-188) and W.W. Rockhill (1975: 120-121), noted the existence of a small temple and a few hermitages built on an island called “Mahādeva, Heart of the Lake” (mTsho-snying Ma-hā-de-va) situated in the western part of the lake, where twenty monks used to reside;² nowadays about ten monks are still living there. Was it the temple Zhabs-dkar (1781-1851), the famous Tibetan yogi, built with his disciples—the one in which they placed a statue of Avalokiteśvara with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes, and to his right and left, statues of Mahādeva “the lord of this place” and mTsho-sman khri-shog rgyal-mo respectively (Ricard 1994: 136)?³ No boats were used in the region, and during the summer months, when the ice had melted from the surface of the lake, the island and the monks were cut off from the rest of the world. Only in winter, when the ice was thick enough, could the monks reach the mainland and pilgrims go to the monastery. Zhabs-dkar arrived at this island on the third day of the first month of the fire-tiger year (1806)⁴ and spent several years in retreat there. One year (around 1807), he saw “an uninterrupted stream of Mongolian pilgrims” coming “every day to the island from Arik, crossing from the southern and eastern banks of the frozen lake” (Ricard 1994: 140).

I once asked a nomad the size of the island and he told me that if in the morning a she-goat starts to graze clockwise around it and its kid counter-clockwise, they will meet only in the night.

In earlier Tibetan Buddhist sources this lake also bears the name of Khri-bshos rgyal-mo,⁵ “Queen Who Flooded Ten Thousand”. According to R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975: 201) “the mTsho sngon khri shor is inhabited by nine sisters, the Khri shor rgyal mo mched dgu. Some Tibetan works mention also a sisterhood of five *mtsho sman*⁶ called the *mtsho sman rgyal mo mched lnga*... one of whom is ruling the Khri shog rgyal mo mtsho.” The lake is also said “to be inhabited by the *nāga* king Bodhisattva and by four *nāgi*, the four *sman mo*, one of whom is Trishok Gyalmo” (Ricard 1994: 152, n. 23).

Pilgrims perform a ritual circumambulation of Blue Lake as they do around other lakes in Tibet, and as often is the case of pilgrimages, a larger one is undertaken every 12 years. In this particular case, according to my information, the most auspicious and beneficial year is the year of the sheep. N. Prjevalski (1988: 69) mentions that eight days are necessary to make the circumambulation on horse and 15 days walking, but an A-mdo-ba told me that 18 days were necessary on horseback, and a young nomad from the Blue Lake region performed the pilgrimage in 1990 in 23 days, by riding.

To date little has been known about the Tibetan traditions concerning the area and its pilgrimage rituals. I have not yet been able to circumambulate the lake. The aim of this paper is to present some of the legends relating to the origin of Blue Lake and its island, along with a translation of a Buddhist pilgrimage guide, in order to draw a parallel between popular and learned traditions: do they tell the same story or not?

Legends

I am currently aware of six legends on the origin of Blue Lake.

First Legend:

As noted above, several travellers visited this area during the nineteenth century: Father Huc in the first half (1962: 191-197); N. Prjevalski (1988: 70-71) and W.W. Rockhill (1975: 123) at the end of the century. Each of them were told a legend concerning the origin of the lake and its island,⁷ and these three different versions agree on the most important points (the differences are discussed in the notes).

Here is the story based mainly on what Father Huc related:

Long ago, the Tibetan king decided to build a temple. After the spot was chosen, the work started. For a full year, thousands of men worked to complete the building, but as soon as it was completed, it tumbled down. They started again but hardly was it finished when it tumbled down again. This happened three times. The king, astonished and afraid, asked a religious man, who could not give any reason but said that a holy man living in the east knew the secret; if somebody could secure it from him, all the obstacles would disappear. A high religious dignitary was sent to look for the saint. He travelled for several years but could not find the man. One day, when he was on the

Chinese-Tibetan border and sadly proceeding on his way back, his saddle-girth broke. He then asked for hospitality from a poor blind Mongol living in a tent. He did not disclose the real reason for his journey but said that he was on a pilgrimage. The old man was pleased with these words and said that though all around there were a lot of temples, the one which was being built in Lhasa would never be completed because under the chosen spot was a large subterranean lake. As soon as he said this, he bound his interlocutor to secrecy, explaining that the reason he had spoken to him was that he was a Mongol lama; he had learned to distrust lamas from Central Tibet. Had he been a Tibetan lama, to be aware of that secret would have very bad consequences: the water would flood out and spread to engulf everything. When the old man finished this story the traveller said that he was a Tibetan lama and went away very quickly. The old man, in despair, called one of his sons and ordered him to run after the man and to kill him because he had stolen his secret. But in Mongolian the word for "secret" and "girth" are the same.⁸ The son, thinking that his father was delirious, went after the traveller and, after apologizing, asked him to give back the girth. The Tibetan lama agreed. When the son gave the girth to his father, the latter realized there was no hope. Indeed, the next night the water flooded out and many living beings were killed.⁹ A god in the shape of a very big bird appeared with a huge rock in its claws, and with it blocked the hole. The water stopped flooding, but the plain remained covered with what is now Blue Lake. According to W.W. Rockhill (1975: 123) the rocky island where the monastery stands is the same huge rock the bird used to block the orifice.

Second Legend:

An oral tradition quoted by Y. Gyatso¹⁰ is very interesting in that it is a Tibetan version of the same legend:

When mGar came back to Lhasa with the Chinese princess Wencheng (Wen ch'eng), he kept her and said to Srong-btsan sgam-po that she was beautiful but had a defect on her nose. To the princess he said that the king smelled bad. When the meeting occurred, the princess covered her nose with her sleeve, thus leading the king to believe that mGar was right. Later the monarch discovered the truth and decided to punish the minister. He mixed together some gold and iron powder and ordered mGar to separate them in the sun. The brightness of the gold in the sun blinded the minister. Srong-btsan sgam-po banished his minister along with his son to A-mdo. But mGar was the only one who knew how to build the Jo-khang. The monarch sent a messenger in order to try to wheedle the secret out of him; the latter agreed to speak but did not want the messenger taking notes. For that reason,

he took the hand of the messenger in his own hands before starting to give advice. The messenger, afraid of forgetting something, wrote the instructions with his toes. Suddenly, mGar heard the noise made by the paper. Furious, he said that a statue of Ma-gcig dpal-gyi lha-mo¹¹ had to be built on the top of the Jo-khang, and thus be raised higher than the Jo-bo itself. This is the reason that women from Lhasa are said to have their heads higher than men.

At that time, there was no lake in what is now the Köke nur; it was just a plain. The minister asked his son to look for water. Knowing that there was a spring under a big stone, he told him not to forget to put the stone back once he had taken water. But the son forgot to do what his father said. The water started to flow in such a way that the entire plain was covered. mGar and his son escaped to a mountain called Blon-po gSer-chen.¹² Once in a safe place, they looked behind and saw a *siddha* (*grub-thob*) throwing the top of a mountain on the spring to stop the waters. But the nomads living around had already drowned. Thus the name of the lake: Khri-gshog rgyal-mo, "Queen Who Destroyed Ten Thousand".¹³

One easily recognizes in the first legend the story of the foundation of the Jo-khang, the most famous temple in Lhasa, built by Srong-btsan sgam-po in the seventh century. The protagonists of these two legends differ with the context: Mongols in the first story, Srong-btsan sgam-po and mGar in the second one. These legends remind us of the building of the Jo-khang as it is related in the *Ma ni bka' 'bum*¹⁴ (Stein 1981: 17). This text tells us that the king built the Jo-khang on a lake which was the heart of a demoness (*srin-mo*) lying on her back, her body covering the whole of Tibet. To subdue¹⁵ her, the king immobilized her by building 12 temples on her limbs.¹⁶ The memory of this lake is still alive, and even now most of the pilgrims who enter the temple do not forget to press their ear to a stone located in the ground floor, through which one is meant to hear the sound of the lake.

One point clearly expressed in the first legend is the mistrust evinced by the old Mongol towards the lamas of Central Tibet. This part of A-mdo was inhabited by Mongols and for a long time was a disputed area among Tibetans, Chinese and Mongolian-speaking peoples (Beckwith 1993). Even now, one does not find black yak-hair tents and yaks in the region, but rather yurts and camels. One can interpret the story such that the Tibetan lama was responsible for the disaster which occurred in this area, for he deceived the old blind holy man. This story suggests that the Mongols are right in distrusting the lamas from Central Tibet, and hence it can be considered a Mongolian version of the Tibetan legend which reflects the tension between the Tibetans and the Mongols.

Another difference between the Mongolian and Tibetan versions concerns the "saviour": a god in the shape of a bird from the Mongolian side, a *siddha* (*grub-thob*) in the Tibetan version (thus giving a Buddhist flavour to the story). There appears also the etymology for one of the names of the lake.

Third legend:

G. Roerich (1958: 85-87) gives the following version of the origin of Köke nur lake which is, according to him, a Tibetan and Buddhist reworking of an old legend among the Tuyuhun (T'u yü hun),¹⁷ a Proto-Mongolian people living in the north-east around Köke nur lake. It mentions the island situated in the middle of the lake Qinghai (Köke nur), where a special kind of horse was bred.

The minister mGar was driven out of Tibet. He was blind because his two eyes had been plucked out. At that time, as he was on a plain, he said to his son: "Go and look for water." The son answered: "Father, there is no water in this place." The father said: "Go, you will see a sheep licking a stone; lift it up, and beneath it there is water. After taking some water, put back the stone in the same place." The son took the water but forgot to put back the stone. The father smelt the odour of the lake (which was rising) and said to his son: "Son, it is not good! Put me on your shoulders and run!" The son did as the father said and ran to the top of the mountain Blon-po gSer-chen. As they arrived at the top, the father asked his son: "What do you see?" "I see an eagle circling above us," answered the son. "Good, we can stop here," said the minister. The eagle was Padmasambhava, who brought the top of the mountain Mahādeva from India and covered the spring with it, stopping in this way the flood which could have resulted. This is why today the Indian Mahādeva mountain has a truncated top. When the lake rose up, it swept away ten thousand families; this is why it is called "Mother-Queen of Ten Thousand families": A-ma Khri-shogs [-shor] rgyal-mo.¹⁸ (Roerich 1958: 85-87).¹⁹

This legend is quite similar to the previous ones, but the anonymous mountain is said now to be the Mahādeva mountain of India.

One may wonder, what is the Mahādeva mountain? It is common knowledge that Śiva/Mahādeva resides on Mount Kailash, the top of which is not very pointed. This could be the Mahādeva Mountain the legends refer to, but for the fact that the sacred peak in question is not situated in India. But Śiva is also said to live on Potala Mountain, in South India.

dGe-'dun chos-'phel (1903-1951), religious non-conformist, scholar, poet and artist, gives a beautiful description of Blue Lake and its island and adds something more regarding Mahādeva mountain:

The lake itself looks like a big ring surrounding an island which rises abruptly into a mountain. According to the tradition, it was carried from India by Padmasambhava, who crossed the Himalaya in the eighth century in order to set up the school of the Red Hats in Tibet. He dwelt before on Mount Mahādeva, and the legend maintains without shame that Mahādeva himself cut off the top of the mountain to send to Tibet, with Padmasambhava astride it. It was certainly an

unusual walk. But Sambhava continued along his way and set down the mountain in Mongolia, where it is found today (Stoddard 1985: 146).²⁰

dGe-'dun chos-'phel speaks ironically and expresses doubt as to the truthfulness of the story—not surprising for someone of his nature. Unfortunately he says nothing about the origin of the lake and does not give any more details on the Mahādeva/Padmasambhava story.

This legend recalls the origin of rTsib-ri,²¹ a mountain in southern Tibet, west of Shel-dkar. The story I heard in 1989 from several refugees living in the Tibetan settlement of 'Ja'-sa, in Solu (East Nepal), and also from an inhabitant of Shel-dkar, is as follows: Long ago there was a poisonous lake, emanations of which killed a lot of people. At that time the mountain was not called rTsib-ri, "Rib Mountain", but Shi-ri, "Mountain of the Dead".²² Once they became aware of the situation, the Eighty-four Mahāsiddha brought a mountain from Bodh Gayā to cover the lake, or the mountain flew from Bodh Gayā with the Eighty-four Mahāsiddha on it (depending on the informant).

The theme of a maleficent lake which is a hindrance both to the settlement of people and to the establishment of Buddhism is widespread in the Tibetan world (Diemberger & Hazod 1994: 30; Loseries 1994: 48). Only the intervention of a hero or saint who is able to tame the waters allows the people to prosper and religious foundations to be laid.

mTsho-snying Mahādeva, like rTsib-ri, can be termed a "flying mountain". Up to now, I know of only four flying mountains in Tibet: rTsib-ri, mTsho-snying Mahādeva, Kailash and A-myes rMa-chen.²³ rTsib-ri, like mTsho-snying Mahādeva, is clearly said to come from India. Whatever the manner in which a mountain travels, whether brought by some saint or divinity or flying by itself, the result is a manipulation of space, a readjustment of the landscape, in a transforming process of the nature of a place from non-Buddhist to Buddhist. Initially there is a powerful and demonic lake; one of the ways to subdue and control it is to carry to Tibet a part of the holy land of Buddhism, that is, India. Thanks to the migration of this flying mountain from India, Blue Lake and its island together form an ideal Tibetan sacred site, since it is constituted by a mountain and a lake (Stein 198: 185 and 1987: 25), and is, moreover, endowed with a prestigious origin.

Fourth legend:

A legend which I came across on two different occasions in 1990, from nomads established on the bank of the lake, and then in Kathmandu from an A-mdo-ba, is a variant of the previous one with greater detail:

At the time of Srong-btsan sgam-po, there was no lake. The place was covered with pastures, and the only inhabitants were nomads. When mGar came back from China with the princess Wencheng, a disagreement arose between the king and his minister because the latter kept the princess in his home. The other ministers were opposed to his

behaviour and drove him away. mGar then went with his son to A-mdo and arrived where one can now see the blue waters of the lake. The son wanted to prepare some tea, but he found it very difficult to obtain any water. The father showed him a big rock which was similar in appearance to a sheep and told him to lift it, there being water beneath it, and to put it back in the same place afterwards. The son went to fetch the water but forgot to put the stone back in its proper place. Water started to flow and eventually reached them. The father took his son on his shoulders and went running away. After some time the minister mGar looked behind and saw a monk hitting the water with a stick. The monk was Padmasambhava, who in this manner stopped the flow and also created 108 rivers. The story adds that one of these rivers flows uphill instead of downhill. To verify this, one can throw flowers in the stream and will see them floating upwards.

All details which recall the construction of the Jo-khang are missing in these last two versions. The waters of the Köke nur are said to come from a special spring which bears some relation with a sheep, once as a real animal (third legend) and the second time as a rock shaped like a sheep (fourth legend). This reminds us that the most important year in which to make the pilgrimage is the sheep year. As far as I am aware the reason that particular year is said to be the most beneficial for that special place is not known, and one may wonder whether the sheep appears in the legend because the year of the sheep's importance or vice versa. Rocks resembling animals are very common in pilgrimage guides, as we shall see below. While in the second legend (a Tibetan one) the hero is an anonymous *siddha*, now we learn through the third and fourth legends that he is in fact Padmasambhava. He appears under two different aspects: in the third version, as an eagle (a bird, as in the first Mongolian legend) who brings the top of Mahādeva mountain; in the fourth (Tibetan) version, he is a monk who hits the water with a stick, thus creating 108 rivers (in accordance with the sacred number), one of which flows backwards—a theme one can find also in pilgrimage guides like the one on Kong-po Bon-ri²⁴ or on the hidden land (*sbas-yul*) of mKhan-pa-lung (Orofino 1991). It may be pointed out that, in the above version of the legend, the Tantric saint uses his stick to stop the flow of the water, whereas generally he uses it to create sources of water (Toussaint 1979: 248; Buffetrille 1993: 101).

Fifth legend:

Another legend, recorded by L. Clark (1954: 355), is said to be a Tangut version of the origin of the lake:

Long, long ago, before the tribes came here from Black Gobi, there was once a famous golden-roofed lamasery on the north side called "Golden Mountain Temple". In these olden times, a well existed on a plain below the lamasery. A traveller came one day from the "Black City" of Khara Khoto; now this man was a Khara Yasse (Black Bones),

a noble and a follower of higher Pön, sorcery and magic. Of course the lamas did not know this at the time, or they would have set upon him and entombed the fellow in a cave or cell, where he would have died a “natural” death. This stranger went one day to the well and “forgot” to replace the lid over the coping of the well. Its waters were forced up through the earth by a devil’s hand and overflowed, and thus the Blue Sea was created! Golden Mountain Temple, with all its golden roofs, was submerged.

This version, which is not very clear, not only underlines the tension between the Buddhists and the Bon-pos, but it shows the Bon-po and the lamas from a very unpleasant angle: the former is willing to destroy the Buddhist temple and the latter do not seem to be afraid of a murder.

Sixth legend:

Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse Rin-po-che, a well known rNying-ma-pa dignitary (1904-1987), recounted another legend, which is almost the same as the one given by Sum-pa mkhan-po (1960: 428). The one below follows Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse’s version:

A long time ago the site of the lake was a vast plain; at its centre was a spring. There lived an old woman who each day sent her daughter to fetch water from the spring. Knowing that it was not an ordinary spring, she told her daughter always to be careful to put back the flat stone that kept the spring covered. One day the girl forgot. The water kept on flowing, filled the whole plain and destroyed ten thousand homes, hence the name of the lake (Ricard 1994: 152, n. 23).

Sum-pa mkhan-po (1960: 428-429) adds that Padmasambhava came and covered the spring with a small mountain called mTsho-snying Mahādeva. He then subjects the story to an examination, explaining the importance of not asserting the truth of a story without first considering its sources and using logical argumentation. Another version explains the appearance of the mountain in a way which is very widespread in the Tibetan world, stating that “Padmasambhava came to the lake and miraculously manifested a small hill which covered the spring and stopped the flood” (Ricard 1994: 152, n. 23).

One should notice that these two scholars present just a part of the oral tradition. The origin of Blue lake is the same as in the third and fourth legends but the protagonists are no longer identified.

The legends concerning the origin of Blue Lake and its island are numerous, and it is difficult to assess which account appeared first—the one from which the others would have originated. These mainly oral traditions are variations on an original account and are adapted to the aims of the story-teller and also reflect the way they were passed on. It would be interesting to go deeper into the parallels between the Mongol and Tibetan versions. Without knowing the order in which the various legends appeared, it is impossible to be sure that the growth

of Buddhist details belong to the process of “Buddha-isation”. Many themes found in the different legends presented here are very common in oral and written traditions concerning other sacred places. This is not only because a good story can travel over large areas, but also because these themes are universal in the process of Tibet’s “Buddha-isation”.

Such a place should obviously attract pilgrims, and as it is true of most—not to say all—of the sacred places in Tibet, a pilgrimage guide ought to be written for it.

A Pilgrimage Guide

R. Demandre found a pilgrimage guide at the hermitages on the Köke nur island.²⁵ As we shall see, this guide does not refer to the legends of origin of the lake.

The name of the author of the guide, O-rgyan bSam-gtan gling-pa, is mentioned in the text, but the year in which he wrote it is not given. As is well known, there are several bSam-gtan gling-pa, and to this day I am unable to identify who this one is. Khetsun Sangpo mentions two of them: a bKa'-brgyud-pa (1977: 406) who lived in the fifteenth century and a rNying-ma-pa treasure-discover (*gter-ston*) (1973: 214-215) from the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century. The *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (1990: 446) mentions one O-rgyan bSam-gtan gling-pa, born in Long-po 'Jim-gang-steng,²⁶ who discovered “treasures” (*gter-ma*) in a place called Thar-med Jo-bo brag-dkar²⁷ and who was contemporaneous with Padma dkar-po (1527-1592). No biography of him has been found. According to Chos-rje gling-pa, this O-rgyan bSam-gtan gling-pa is the same as sTag-sham bSam-gtan rdo-rje. But the latter, also called sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje, lived in the second part of the seventeenth century and was born in Khams; he discovered several *gter-ma*, among them a biography of Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal.²⁸

Translation

The Pilgrimage Guide for Mahādeva, Heart of the Lake

[1] *E ma ho!* Padmasambhava, you who [unite in your person] all the Victorious Ones and who dwell as the ornament of the Wheel of Great Bliss at the top of the head of all who possess the precious human body endowed with the 18 freedoms and endowments [enabling one to practise a spiritual path], may you bless us so that our minds turn towards the Dharma!

When experiencing a [yogic] pure vision of clear light, I had the following vision, absolutely pure: the great lake [which is called] Khri-[g]shog rgyal-mo, the “Queen Who Destroyed Ten Thousand”, was like an outer, inner and secret pure land. It was a place where there dwelt a countless number of past Buddhas; in particular there were an inconceivable number of saints who travelled the path [leading to the ten stages through which a *bodhisattva* passes before attaining

full Buddhahood²⁹] [such as] Avalokiteśvara, the highest protector of living beings.

In the middle of the lake, on a lotus topped by sun and moon, there resided the great miraculously born Master Padmasambhava, in the posture “overwhelming the phenomenal world.” He was surrounded by [his 25] disciples,³⁰ and the Eighty [-four] Accomplished Masters (*mahāsiddha*). The assemblies [as vast as] the ocean of *maṅḍala* [divinities] gathered densely like clouds. The activities of the *ḍākinī* of the mother-*tantra* [shone] like sunbeams [and] reduced to bondage the assemblies of the dreadful *dharmapāla*. The divine assemblies who subdued the world [were present] in inconceivable numbers. It was the place of [the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara] in six syllables, the supreme Word of Buddha. [Many deities] including the second Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, the Venerable Mañjuśrī, the Secrets’ Master [Vajrapāṇi] and [other *bodhisattva*], the Sixteen Elders along with the *arhat*, their attendants, and the *buddha* and the *bodhisattva* who are the life-tree of the doctrine, resided there [with,] as their entourage, the assemblies of *bodhisattva* in an incalculable number. The glorious Dīpaṅkara blessed by the six principles³¹ [of Buddhism] was present, as were lineage lamas of the *bka’-ma* and *gter-ma*, new and old, in numbers that are unimaginable and impossible to express.

It was a region in which the sacred places of Tibet were condensed.³² The small pebbles, the fruit trees, etc. [all bore] images of the Buddha. It goes without saying that [there will be benefits here from practising] prostrations, circumambulations and the practice of purification from defilements! Just by remembering and by listening [to the name of this place], one escapes from miserable rebirths, and in this life one can be sure that one will be protected from the eight fears.³³ If one meditates and practises for one month, one will attain the state of knowledge-holder (*vidyādhara*) in one life.

On the top of the Amitābha mountain, there was a relief image of the *ḍākinī* who is an emanation of the mind of the Venerable Lady [Tārā] and [also] the propitiation cycle of Srid-rgyal byang-byon-ma.³⁴ [2] There one found the residence of the assemblies of the powerful dreadful deities. In a place like an extended elephant-trunk, there was a treasure-deposit of *gCod* [teachings which bore the name of] *dNgos grub dbang rgyal*, “Victorious Attainments”.³⁵ There was the site where the divine assemblies of the Venerable Tārā were dwelling. There were three treasure-deposits of Vairocana. There were treasure-deposits of 20 mule-loads of gold and silver. On the rocky pillar, there was the “seal” [of the treasure] marked by a magical dagger. There was a part of a great treasure-deposit in that place. This was the sacred mountain where the nine knowledge-holders³⁶ meditated. In a cave that looked like a triangle, there was the complete propitiation cycle for fierce magic. There were a limitless number of curses of *gNod-sbyin nag-po* [and] secret instructions to repel slander.³⁷

On a black rock that looked like a sleeping tortoise [there flowed] a spring similar to a vessel of elixir; this was medicinal water which cures all kinds of sickness. There were 108 different treasure-deposits. In a river which was very similar to a turquoise-blue dragon, there was the residence of the divine

assemblies of rGyal-ba rgya-mtsho.³⁸ There were four treasure-deposits of the compassion of Dran-pa [nam-mkha'],³⁹ 108 different secret caves, many palaces [which are] the meditation places of the knowledge-holders, [and also] one coral treasure-deposit of Vairocana. In a rock that looked like an old sleeping pig, there was a silver earth treasure concealed by Vairocana. On a mountain similar to a wish-fulfilling gem there was the elixir which transmutes an old man into a young one. On a red rocky mountain that resembled a hanging curtain, there spontaneously arose [the *mantra*] *A ka sa ma ra tsa*.⁴⁰ On a white rocky mountain resembling the ornate wing extending from a conch-shell trumpet, there were the spontaneously arisen prints of one hundred thousand *ḍākinī*, naturally arisen footprints of Dran-pa nam-mkha', the spontaneously arisen long-life vessel of Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, [and] the specially holy long-life water of the Eighty [-four] Accomplished Masters. There were treasure-deposits of hundreds and thousands of different kinds of receptacles. There was a treasure-deposit [called] "Golden Ewe That Knows How to Bleat". In this place where there flowed 108 rivers, there were the spontaneously arisen [images] of the one thousand Buddhas of the fortunate cosmic era. It was the pure field where there reside all the divine assemblies of the protectors. There were the prints of the magical dagger which bound the *srin-mo* [demoness] by oath. There was a flight of stairs by which one travels the path of liberation [leading to] paradises. There were different kinds of excellent medicines which cure all sicknesses. [3] There was some especially excellent precious gold powder. On a big rocky mountain which had the shape of a soaring vulture, there were 108 different treasure-deposits. In the depths of the Sindhu Ocean the Master Padmasambhava left, in the lake, his hand-print. All these *nāga* who resided in the lake continually offered varied songs and dances and objects of worship.

Mountains and valleys became the meditation places of Tibet. In the temples and meditation cells [which were] the central hill, [the place] was completely filled with representations of the Body, Speech and Mind [of the Buddha]: spontaneously arisen paintings, sculptures and so forth. They became firmly established in that best of holy places.

E ma ho! At the top of Ma-hā-de-va Mountain, the peaceful divine assemblies gathered together like clouds in the sky. In the pure realm situated in the middle part of this mountain, the fearful divine assemblies swirled around like a hurricane in the atmosphere. All around the base of this mountain the [crowd of] the protectors of the doctrine and the *dharmapāla* was [as dense] as rain clouds. Treasure-deposits of Tibet, treasure-deposits of jewels—all kinds of hidden treasure-deposits were there. In particular the upper part was the residence of the knowledge-holder lamas. The middle part was the pure field where the divine assemblies of the tutelary divinities gathered together. All around the base, the *dharmapāla*, bound by oath [thronged together] like a crowd in a market. The blessings of the lamas, tutelary divinities and *ḍākinī* rolled over it like a sea of clouds.

On the tenth day, the fifteenth day, the twenty-fifth day and the day of the new moon,⁴¹ the white canopy of the clouds of the country of gods was spread

out above. In the middle, the [inhabitants of the] country of men recited [prayers] with faith and respect. In front, the assemblies of the *nāgā* kings presented offerings. [The mountain] was protected by the four classes of gods who dwelt in the four directions. On the slopes, the mothers and the *dākinī* set out a *gaṇacakra* feast.

It is a sacred site where one comes into possession of supreme and ordinary attainments. All who meditate and practise on this mountain accomplish the good of living beings and realize the rainbow body. Everyone who does retreats of propitiations on this mountain has the vision of his tutelary divinity, and in this life [his] obstacles will be eliminated. Human beings who do prostrations to and circumambulations around this mountain [4] purify themselves without exception of [all] the sins and defilements of *samsāra* in their successive lives. If one makes offerings to this mountain, all failures in [observing] the precepts and the vows [of Vajrayāna] will be washed away, and one will obtain the rank of knowledge-holder. Human beings who offer [different] things on this mountain will not fall sick in this life; and in the next one they will be born with a good destiny. And also if one offers butter-lamps to this mountain, in the following life one will obtain a perfectly endowed human body. Human beings who offer prayer flags on this mountain will have fame and good fortune as vast as the heavens. And also having faith in and respect for that mountain produces blessings and removes the obstacles of evil and hindering spirits.

One who does 15 circumambulations at the top of this mountain and dedicates the merit [for the good of all living beings] obtains the [same] benefits as from [reciting] 40 million *maṇi mantra*. One who does seven circumambulations at the middle part [of the mountain] to realize the brightness [of the *dharmakāya*] which is the [first] manifestation of the primordial state [will obtain] the same benefits as [reciting] 60 million *maṇi*. One who makes some five circumambulations at the base [of the mountain] to purify oneself of one's defilements [will obtain] the same benefits as from [reciting] 90 million *maṇi*.

In this particularly excellent supreme holy place [called] Ma-hā-de-va, all great and small sacred sites from India to China are condensed. If persons of superior ability meditate here they will obtain the rank of Vajradhara in this life. If persons of average ability meditate here they will reach in a very short time the state of a Buddha. If persons of inferior ability accumulate the [two] accumulations,⁴² they will realize spontaneously the two purposes: for oneself and for others. If laymen or laywomen perform prostrations and circumambulations here, they will not succumb to any sickness in this life and will have no miserable rebirths in the future.

How wonderful are those who have faith in this mountain! There is not any hesitation; there is no doubt. This is [the very] Word of the Buddha.

E ma ho! In the space of the *dharmakāya* which is the clear light of the manifestation of the primordial state, may the spontaneous radiance of the primordial nature, the great natural Achievement which is spontaneously born, be manifest, and may everyone without exception obtain the rank of Vajradhara!

[The account of] the benefits of this holy place with [the concluding] prayers

were written by O-rgyan bSam-gtan gling-pa, according to his vision [of yogic experience].

Such is the pilgrimage guide of Mahādeva, Heart of the Lake, an island seen by O-rgyan bSam-gtan gling-pa as a Buddhist paradise with special features and with the benefits one can obtain thanks to them. The most striking aspect is that it does not even allude to legend(s) of origin of the lake.

Conclusion

This text is difficult to date, but the personages cited—Padmasambhava, Vairocana and Dran-pa nam-mkha’—allow one to assert that it came out of the syncretic Bon gsar-ma movement,⁴³ of whom the aforementioned are the mystic initiators. This tradition mingles rNying-ma-pa and Bon-po beliefs and practices. Of ancient date (it can be traced back to at least the eleventh century), it was passed down through a particular lineage of treasure-discoverers (*gter-ston*). Both Bon-pos and Buddhists recognize it if under different names. After a period of decline, it rose again in an active way in the eighteenth century, under the impulse of *gter-ston* like Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (also called g.Yung-drung bsTan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan, born in 1705 according to the Bon-po tradition) and Rig-'dzin Kun-grol grags-pa (born in 1700 according to the Bon-po tradition), who bears as a second name the same one as the famous Buddhist *gter-ston* 'Ja-tshon snying-po (1585-1656).

If one compares the legends presented here on the origin of the Köke nur and this pilgrimage guide, one may notice that popular traditions and pilgrimage guide seem to belong to two different worlds. The guide does not refer to the legend of origin of the lake. The only link between oral and written sources in this particular case relies on the presence of Padmasambhava, the existence of 108 rivers, and on the toponym the lake bears “Queen Who Destroyed Ten Thousand”. The author of the guide gives it without any explanation, and it is just by knowing some oral traditions that one is able to understand the reason why this lake was so called.

As it is clearly expressed in the text, bSam-gtan gling-pa's pilgrimage guide represents a Tantric vision of the sacred place. As such, his description is similar to other pilgrimage guides of the same type. The landscape portrayed is both symbolic and real; a mental landscape is superimposed on the real one, indicating the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal.

Then, one may wonder what is the purpose of such a guide knowing that, traditionally, most of lay Tibetans were illiterate? Nevertheless, the pilgrim knows the content of these texts through the religious people they meet along the pilgrimage roads, who hand down their knowledge. Thus, the aim of pilgrimage guides is to lead the ordinary pilgrim from the simple perception of a physical landscape to the conception of the place as a sacred landscape. These texts are literary stereotyped projections of an internal vision of spiritual reality destined to convey the pilgrim towards a supernatural level. Texts of this kind are in fact

nothing else but a Tantric *sādhana*. The description of the place unfolds in such a way as to stimulate the pilgrim into modifying his way of perception. It is therefore through the text passed on orally by the religious people that the sacred landscape is created for the one who does not perceive it. The pilgrim thereby clears his mind of a landscape of stones and dust for a vision of the *mandala* of the deity (generally speaking Cakrasaṃvara). Even if his spiritual evolution is not sufficient to give him access to this vision, he knows that the “mountain holy place” is the palace of the deity and his attendants.⁴⁴

By means of pilgrimage guides, practitioners transmitted their experiences to pilgrims in the past, and continue to do so today, thus helping them to participate in the mystic understanding of the landscape and of its organization.

As for Blue Lake, it may be hoped that more material will appear in the future. It would be very interesting to collect and compare the various Mongolian and Tibetan legends on the origin of the lake, each with a slant of its own and to study other pilgrimage guides, if any exist.

Tibetan Text

[1] *mTsho snying Ma ha de va'i gnas yig*

E ma ho rgyal kun gcig 'dus o rgyan padma 'byung / gang der dal 'byor rin
 chen chos kyis brgyan / spyi gtsug bde chen 'khor lo'i rgyan du bzhugs / blo
 sna chos la 'gyur bar byin kyis rlobs / dag snang 'od gsal nyams kyis snang ba'i
 skabs / dag pa rab byams 'ba' zhig 'di 'dra mthong / gang gi mtsho chen khri
 [g]shog rgyal mo la / phyi nang gsang ba'i zhing khams 'di 'dra yod / sngar
 byon sangs rgyas grangs med bzhugs pa'i gnas / khyad par 'gro ba'i skyabs
 mchog spyan ras gzigs / sa lam bgrod pa'i 'phags mchog bsam mi khyab /
 mtsho dbus padma'i sdong po nyi zla'i steng / rdzu[s] skyes slob dpon chen po
 padma 'byung / snang srid zil gnon rol pa'i stabs su bzhugs / 'khor du rje
 'bangs grub chen brgyad cus bskor / dkyil 'khor rgya mtsho'i tshogs rnams
 sprin ltar 'thibs / ma brgyud [=rgyud] mkha' 'gro'i 'phrin las nyi zer bzhin /
 chos skyong drag po'i tshogs rnams bran du 'khol / 'jig rten 'dul ba'i lha tshogs
 bsam mi khyab / rgyal ba'i gsung mchog yi ge drug ma'i gnas / rgyal ba gnyis
 pa mgon po spyan ras gzigs / rje btsun 'jam pa'i dbyangs dang gsang bdag sogs
 / 'phags pa'i gnas brtan bcu drug dgra bcom 'khor / bstan pa'i srog shing rgyal
 ba yab sras sogs / grangs med 'khor du byang chub tshogs rnams bzhugs /
 khyad chos drug 'phags dpal ldan mar me mdzad / bka' gter gsar rnying brgyud
 pa'i bla ma rnams / bzhugs pa'i grangs ni bsam 'das brjod mi langs / gangs ri'i
 khrod kyi gnas rnams 'dus pa'i zhing / rde'u rtsi shing la sogs sangs rgyas sku
 / phyag bskor sgrib sbyong byas na smos ci dgos / dran dang thos pa tsam gyis
 ngan song med / tshe 'dir 'jigs pa brgyad las skyob par nges / de na zla gcig
 sgom sgrub byas gyur na / skye ba gcig gi rigs 'dzin sa thob 'gyur / a mi de wa'i
 ri yi rtse mo na / rje btsun thugs sprul mkha' 'gro'i ldebs sku dang / srid rgyal
 byang byon ma yi sgrub skor yod / dbang chen khro bo'i [2] lha tshogs bzhugs
 gnas yod / glang po che yi sna zhags brkyang 'dra la / dngos grub dbang rgyal

gcod kyi gter kha yod / rje btsun sgrol ma'i lha tshogs bzhugs gnas yod / bai ro tsa na'i gter kha gsum yod do / gser dngul drel khal nyi shu'i gter kha yod / ka ba'i brag la phur bus rgyas btab yod / gter kha chen po cha gcig de ru yod / rigs 'dzin dgu yis sgrub pa'i gnas ri yin / gru gsum 'dra ba'i brag phug yod pa la / drag po'i mthu yi sgrub skor cha tshang yod / gnod sbyin nag po'i gtad khram tshad med yod / mi kha zlog gtad gsang ba'i man ngag yod / skyabs mchi ba gcigs / brag ri nag po rus sbal nyal 'dra la / bdud rtsi bum pa 'dra ba'i chu mig yod / nad rigs thams cad sel ba'i sman chu yin / gter kha mi brgya dang rtsa brgyad yod / g.yu 'brug sngon mor 'gran 'dra'i chu bo la / rgyal ba rgya mtsho'i lha tshogs bzhugs gnas yod / dran pa thugs rje'i gter kha bzhi yod do / gsang phug mi 'dra brgya dang rtsa brgyad yod / rig 'dzin sgrub gnas gzhal yas mang po yod / bai ro tsa na'i byu ru'i gter kha yod / phag rgan nyal ba 'dra ba'i pha bong la / bai ras dngul gyi sa gter sbas pa yod / nor bu dbang rgyal 'dra ba'i ri bo la / rgan po gzhon nur 'gyur ba'i bdud rtsi yod / brag ri dmar po yol ba 'phyar 'dra la / a ka sa ma ra tsa rang byon yod / brag ri dkar po dung gshog brkyangs 'dra la / mkha' 'gro 'bum phrag brag [= zhabs] rjes rang byon yod / dran pa nam mkha'i zhabs rjes rang byon yod / ye shes mtsho rgyal tshe bum rang byon yod / grub chen brgyad cu'i tshe chu khyad 'phags yod / snod sna mi 'dra brgya stong gter kha yod / gser gyi lug mo 'ba' shes gter kha yod / chu bo brgya dang rtsa brgyad 'bab pa der / bskal bzang sangs rgyas stong rtsa rang byon yod / mgon skyabs lha tshogs ma lus bzhugs pa'i zhing / srin mo dam btags phur bu'i rjes mams yod / mtho ris thar lam bgrod pa'i rdo skas yod / sman sna khyad 'phags nad rigs kun sel [3] yod / rin chen gser gyi bye ma khyad 'phags yod / brag ri gling chen bya rgod 'gyings 'dra la / gter kha mi 'dra brgya dang rtsa brgyad yod / sindhu rgya mtsho chen po'i gting rim na / slob dpon padma'i phyag rjes mtsho la bzhag / mtsho la gnas pa'i klu rigs thams cad kyis / glu gar mchod pa'i bye brag rtag tu 'bul / ri dang lung shod bod kyis sgrub gnas 'gyur / lha khang sgrub khang dbus gnas ri bo la / bri sku 'bur sku rang byon la sogs pa / sku gsung thugs rten mams kyis rgyas par bgang / gnas mchod de la rab tu gnas par 'gyur /

E ma ho ri bo ma ha de wa'i rtse mo na / zhi ba'i lha tshogs nam mkha'i sprin ltar 'thibs / ri bo de yi sked pa'i zhing khams na / khros pa'i lha tshogs bar snang rlung ltar 'tshubs / ri bo de yi mtha' bskor thams cad na / bstan srung chos skyong char sprin lta bu yod / bod kyis gter kha rin chen gter kha yod / sbas pa'i gter kha sna tshogs gter kha bzhugs / khyad par steng la bla ma rig 'dzin gnas / sked par yi dam lha tshogs 'dus pa'i zhing / mtha' bskor dam can chos skyong khrom tshogs bzhin / rtsa gsum byin rlabs sprin phung bzhin du g.yo / tshe bcu bco lnga nyer lnga gnam gang la / steng na lha yul sprin dkar bla re phubs / bar na mi yul dad gus 'don pa brjod / mdun na klu rgyal tshogs kyis mchod yon 'bul / phyogs bzhir gnas pa'i lha rigs bzhi yis srungs / 'dab na ma dang mkha' 'gros tshogs 'khor bskor / mchog dang thun mong dngos grub 'byung ba'i gnas / ri bo de la sgom sgrub byed pa kun / 'gro don mthar phyin 'ja' lus 'grub par 'gyur / ri bo de la bsnyen sgrub byed yi dam zhal mjal tshe 'di'i bar chad sel / ri bo de la phyag bskor byed mi mams / tshe [4] rabs 'khor ba'i sdig sgrub ma lus byang / ri bo de la tshogs mchod 'bul ba na / nyams chags kun

sel rig 'dzin sa thob 'gyur / ri bo de la yo byed 'bul mi rnams / tshe 'dir nad med
 phyi ma bde 'gro thob / ri bo de la mar me 'bul na yang / phyi ma mi lus phun
 tshogs ldan par 'gyur / ri bo de la rlung rta 'bul mi rnams / mtshan snyan rlung
 rta dgung dang mnyam par 'gyur / ri bo de la dad gus byas na yang / byin rlabs
 'byung zhing gdon bgegs bar chad sel / rtse mor bskor ba bco lnga dge bsngo la
 / ma ñi dung phyur bzhi bcu'i phan yon yod / gzhi snang 'od gsal bar bskor
 bdun phrag byas / ma ñi dung phyur drug cu'i phan yon yod / gang gis sgrib
 sbyangs mtha' bskor lnga tsam byas / ma ñi dung phyur dgu bcu'i phan yon
 yod /

gnas mchog khyad 'phags / ma ha de wa ru / rgya gar man chad rgya nag
 yan chad nas / gnas rnams che chung thams cad de la 'dus / gang zag dbang po
 rabs kyis sgom bsgrub na / tshe 'dir rdo rje 'dzin pa'i sa thob 'gyur / gang zag
 dbang po 'bring gis sgom bsgrub na / ring por mi thogs rdzogs sangs rgyas par
 'gyur / gang zag dbang po tha mas tshogs bsag na / rang gzhan don gnyis lhun
 gyis 'grub par 'gyur / khyim pa pho mos phyag bskor byas 'gyur na / tshe 'dir
 nad med phyi mar ngan song med / ri 'dir dad pa'i gang zag e ma ho / yid
 gnyis the tshom med do rgyal ba'i gsung /

E ma ho / gzhi snang 'od gsal chos sku'i mkha' dbyings su / lhun sgrub
 'dus ma byas pa'i rdzogs pa che / gdod ma'i gnas lugs rang mdangs mngon
 'gyur nas / ma lus rdo rje 'chang gi sa thob shog / ces pa 'di gnas kyi phan yon
 smon lam dang bcas u rgyan bsam gtan gling pas nyams kyi snang ba bzhin bris
 pa'o /

Notes

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1. Better known by its Mongol name of Köke nur, it is located at about 101° E. and 37° N., in what is now the Chinese province of Qinghai (Ch'inghai), which is a part of the former Tibetan region of A-mdo. In Chinese, the lake is named Qinghai Hu, "Lake of Qinghai", but the appellation Sog-po mtsho-sngon, "Blue Mongolian Lake" given by Jäschke (1980: 456) seems to have fallen into disuse; at least I could not find anyone using it. It lies about 100 kilometers west of the large town of Xining (Hsi ning) and is situated at an altitude of about 3,700 meters.
2. According to Pandit Kishen Singh, cited by T.V. Wylie (1962: 202) and Father Huc (1962: 188).
3. This shrine was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution but has now been partially restored by devotees (Ricard 1994: 154, n. 64).
4. Cf. Zhabs-dkar-ba (1985: 210).
5. We find various spellings: M. Ricard (1994: 152) and T.V. Wylie (1962: 201) give Khri-gshog rgyal-mo, "Queen Who Destroyed Ten Thousand"; Sum-pa mkhan-po

- (1960: 427): Khri-bshos rgyal-mo, "Queen That Flooded Ten Thousand". In the *A mdo chos 'byung* (1982: 26) we find Khri-bshor rgyal-mo, "Queen Who Chased Ten Thousand".
6. On *mtsho-smam*, see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975: 200-201).
 7. The story given by N. Prjevalski is somewhat confused regarding the period in which the events occur. He mentions a time when Tibet would have had a Dalai Lama without a permanent residence and also a king who decided to build a temple in honour of the Buddha.
 8. N. Prjevalski's version is slightly different. The old man told his son to catch the Tibetan lama and to tear out his tongue. The Mongol word *atilé* means tongue but also "girth-buckle". The son understood that he had to retrieve the girth-buckle and he duly did so.
 9. Father Huc's story ends here.
 10. Concerning this legend, see A.M. Blondeau & Y. Gyatso (1997). I am grateful to A.M. Blondeau for bringing this story to my attention and to Y. Gyatso for telling it to me.
 11. See R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975: 327, 508, 509).
 12. One of my A-mdo-ba informant told me that because mGar was a very strong, courageous and powerful man; after his death he became the *gzhi-bdag* Blon-po gSer-chen. Y. Gyatso confirms that for an A-mdo-ba it is common to think that a hero becomes a *yul-lha* or a *gzhi-bdag* after his death.
 13. When Y. Gyatso was a young monk in the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of La-mo bde-chen (A-mdo), he saw and heard a young Tibetan nomad from around the Köke nur, singing and narrating the story of mGar in the same way another bard was telling the story of Ge-sar. Y. Gyatso no longer remembers what the story was.
 14. This collection, which was pieced together between the twelfth and the fourteenth century, deals mainly with Avalokiteśvara and his cult; it provides also a legendary biography of King Srong-btsan sgam-po and an account of the wedding of the king with the two princesses and the adventures of the minister mGar.
 15. The Tibetan term is *'dul-ba*. "This means at the same time the discipline of monks (overcoming the passions), the conversion of heretics, the conquest of enemies, the civilization of barbarians and the domestication of wild animals" (R.A. Stein 1957: 224, my translation from the French).
 16. See M. Aris (1979: 3-41) and J. Gyatso (1987: 32).
 17. The Tuyuhun are called 'A-zha by the Tibetan people.
 18. I myself would translate this as "Mother-Queen Who Chased Ten Thousand".
 19. My translation from the French.
 20. My translation from the French.
 21. I performed the pilgrimage around rTsib-ri in November 1993 with A.M. Blondeau.
 22. Note the illogicalness of the story which gives the name of Shi-ri "Mountain of the Dead" to a mountain which in fact does not yet exist. All informants agree on the point that, in the beginning, there was just a poisonous lake.
 23. On flying mountains, see K. Buffetrille (1996).
 24. See C. Ramble (1997).
 25. R. Demandre made a copy of it, then gave it to M. Ricard, who offered it to me. I did not get the opportunity to determine exactly the original text. I worked on the same copy R. Demandre did. The text, written in *dbu-can*, covers the four pages 21-29. I want to thank her and M. Ricard. I am also grateful to A.M. Blondeau who corrected my translation from Tibetan to French, and to D. Jackson who not only helped me in preparing the English translation of this guide but also provided other useful suggestions.

26. Unidentified.
27. Unidentified.
28. See K. Dowman (1984).
29. See Dorje & Kapstein (1991: 166); M. Ricard (1994: 604).
30. The 25 main disciples being: King Khri srong-lde-btsan, the consort Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, the translator Vairocana and 21 others.
31. See *Chos kyi rnam grangs*, pp.178-179.
32. Gangs-kyi ri-khrod is another name for Tibet: *Bod rgya tshigs mdzod chen mo* 1988: 346.
33. See *Chos kyi rnam grangs*, p.238.
34. Srid-rgyal byang-byon-ma is dPal-lDan lha-mo.
35. Unidentified.
36. In general, there are eight *vidyādhara*s in the rNying-ma-pa tradition, not nine. They are: Vimalamitra, Hūmkara, Mañjuśrimitra, Nāgārjuna, Padmasambhava, Dhanasamkr̥ta, Rambuguhya-Devacandra and Śāntigarbha (Dorje & Kapstein 1991: 159). This could be a Bon-po classification but, according to S.G. Karmay, it is not.
37. The sentence reads *skyabs mchi ba gcigs*, the meaning of which is unclear. I leave it untranslated.
38. rGyal-ba rgya-mtsho is one of the forms of Avalokiteśvara.
39. Little is known of the historical existence of Dran-pa nam-mkha' but the Bon-po look upon him as the saviour of the degenerate time. According to the *Tshe dbang snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus*, he had two twin sons: Tshe-dbang rig-'dzin, a Bon-po master (eighth century) and Padma 'byung-gnas (Karmay 1972: XXXII); see also A.M. Blondeau (1985: 111-158).
40. This is the *mantra* of the *ḍākinī* Simhamukhā.
41. The tenth day is the day of Padmasambhava; the fifteenth day, the day of the full moon, and the thirtieth, and the day of the new moon are the days of the Buddha; the twenty-fifth day is the day of the *ḍākinis*. On these days special acts of devotion are performed for those whose day it is.
42. *Ye-shes-kyi tshogs*: accumulation of wisdom and *bsod-nams-kyi tshogs*: accumulation of merit.
43. See A.M. Blondeau (1979-80; 1980-81 and 1985).
44. See T. Huber (1994: 39-52).

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A Tibetan Guide for Pilgrimage to Ti-se (Mount Kailas) and mTsho Ma-pham (Lake Manasarovar)

Toni Huber & Tsepak Rigzin

Out of the arid high plateau lands of Western Tibet, near the meeting point of the present-day Chinese, Indian and Nepalese frontiers, there rises an isolated, snow-capped 6,714-metre-tall mountain. It is known to Tibetans as Ti-se (or Gangs-dkar Ti-se) while most non-Tibetans call it Mount Kailas. Just to the south of it lies the sizeable lake of mTsho Ma-pham (or mTsho Ma-dros-pa, and Ma-pang for Bon-pos), also called Lake Manasarovar. Mountain and lake together constitute the most well-known natural pilgrimage sanctuary in high Asia. Not only has this area been of great cultural importance to Tibetan Buddhists and Bon-po alike, it has also featured in the art, literature and ritual of the major Indic religious traditions (Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain) for the best part of several millennia.

More recently, the area has held a fascination for Western scholars, adventurer-explorers, spiritual seekers and tourists whose interests lie in Asia. Consequently, a whole shelf-full of books and articles in Western languages have been dedicated to describing, eulogising and analysing the site and its traditions. Yet, within this body of Western sources surprisingly little attempt has been made to appreciate Ti-se and mTsho Ma-pham from the point of view of their most common ritual users—the ordinary Tibetan pilgrims who have for long frequented the region.

The present contribution is a translation of a lengthy extract from a Tibetan Buddhist ritual manual, or “guide-book” (*gnas-bshad*), written for pilgrims visiting the mountain and lake. Although composed nearly 100 years ago, the original text has recently been reprinted in China, India and Europe and is once again in use by Tibetans visiting or reading about the area today. It provides various local representations of the mountain and lake that reflect the ways in which Tibetan pilgrims themselves might understand the region as an empowered and auspicious landscape, and ritually interact with it accordingly.

Its translation may thus be of value not only to non-Tibetans who study the area and its pilgrimages (e.g. anthropologists and scholars of religion), but also to those who now visit the region in increasing numbers as Buddhist practitioners, adventure tourists, and the like. The following brief notes on the text and its author also provide some insights into the composition of this type of Tibetan pilgrimage literature.

The Text, Its Author and Translation

The full Tibetan title of our text reads, *Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus su brjod pa'i rab byed shel dkar me long*, or in English "*The Crystal Mirror*": *an Analysis which Briefly Explains the Chronicle of Past Events at the Great Snow Mountain Ti-se Together with the Great Lake Ma-dros-pa*. The short marginal title is *Ti se gnas bshad*. For the translation we have used several published versions (dKon-mchog bsTan-'dzin 1992; bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros 1983; De Rossi Filibeck 1988; L.T.W.A. acc. no. 904), between which only minor variations exist. Some details of the composition of the *Ti se gnas bshad* are given in its colophon. The author wrote it in 1896 at the request of various interested persons, while residing at an encampment north-west of the mountain. Over a period of about two years he collected many local oral traditions and used existing guide-books to compile the text.

The original is comprised of a total of seven chapters covering a great variety of material relating to the site, including cosmology, eulogy, geographical description, history, mythical narrative, polemics and ritual instruction. Our translation covers only chapters six and seven, with these final two chapters constituting the actual practical manual which pilgrims may use to negotiate and interpret their ritual journeys around the mountain and lake. This includes itineraries for circumambulation of both Ti-se and mTsho Ma-pham, histories of specific sites and holy objects (some of which have not survived the Chinese occupation), classical Buddhist, esoteric and mundane accounts of the landscape and mention of the benefits to be gained from correct ritual performances in the area. Included at the end of the text is a translation of a short Tibetan pilgrim's "prayer" (*gsol-'debs*) dedicated to the mountain and its environs. It was also written by the author of our guide-book, at the request of pilgrims he met on the slopes of Ti-se. Although it may seem self-evident, it is worth noting here that the *Ti se gnas bshad* is a specific example of Tibetan Buddhist ritual literature, and moreover has been composed from within a certain sectarian position. These points are reflected in both the way the text alludes to much which would only be apparent to someone actually using it in practice at the site (an oral commentary is also implicit), and the emphasis it directs towards several of the lineages of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

This last point is not surprising when we learn that its author, dKon-mchog bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros 'Phrin-las rNam-rgyal, was the 34th hierarch (*gdan-rabs*) of the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud lineage. The few biographical notes we have on him (summarized from Khetsun Sangpo [1981:429]; rTogs-ldan sPrul-sku

[1964:22a-23a]) begin to indicate why he was interested in the religious geography of Western Tibet and composed such detailed works on the subject. bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros was born into the aristocratic lHa-klu family of Lhasa in 1869, in the home of the 12th Dalai Lama 'Phrin-las rGya-mtsho (1856-1875). He studied under tutors such as the Lo-chen Nges-don rGya-mtsho, and was ordained in the presence of the 12th Dalai Lama himself. In addition to being the 34th hierarch he was also the 6th incarnation in the 'Bri-gung Chung-tshang lineage. Early at some stage in his life, probably when he was in his mid-twenties, he made the long journey right across Tibet from Khams in the east to sTod (Western Tibet) and Ladakh. He was known in Ladakh for his services to the 'Bri-gung-pa monasteries there. During his stay he established the monastic community of Phun-tshogs-gling in Eastern Ladakh, and appointed the 9th rTogs-ldan incarnation dKon-mchog bsTan-'dzin Dam-chos 'Gyur-med (1878-1944?) as the religious head of the 'Bri-gung-pa monasteries in Mang-yul and Ladakh. Between 1894 and 1896 he made an extensive pilgrimage to Ti-se and mTsho Ma-pham and wrote his comprehensive guide-book for the area towards the end of his stay there. Then later, in 1901 he travelled the pilgrimage circuit through the La-phyi Chu-dbar region of south-western Tibet and composed his guide-book for that area while residing at La-phyi. In addition to his two religious geographies he is known to have written works on various other topics concerning Tibetan Buddhism. He passed away in 1906 at the age of 37. It is perhaps a fitting tribute to the scholarly labours of this author that his guide-books have been so widely used as sources by contemporary Western scholars (e.g. Huber 1990 & 1997, Loseries 1990, Macdonald 1962, Macdonald 1990 and Petech 1978 & 1980) and recent Tibetan writers (e.g. Chos-dbyings rDo-rje 1990).

Purely academic translations of Tibetan literature often tend to be inaccessible to the interested lay reader because of their technical language and extensive apparatus. In order to aid non-specialist readers and practical users, yet maintain scholarly accuracy, a number of conventions have been followed in our translation. Most Tibetan place names have been glossed once in English as they are often descriptive of topographical and other local features which may relate to the experience of the site. The Tibetan proper names in Wylie transcription follow in parentheses after their first occurrence in the text, and are then used thereafter. A few Sanskrit place names are also given when they are commonly used in other sources. Dates, where known, of historical figures mentioned throughout the main narrative follow in parentheses after the first occurrence of their names in the text. Technical terms have been translated where possible, with the relevant Tibetan or Sanskrit term given after the first occurrence. Our own paragraphing and section headings have been introduced for ease of use. For reference to the Tibetan text the folio numbers of the widely available Delhi edition are indicated in brackets throughout. No attempt has been made to provide detailed notes on the contents of the text. A wealth of information concerning the material it covers has already been published, and we direct the interested reader to the following selection of more recent publications concerning the area of Ti-se and mTsho Ma-pham: Allen (1982), Cutler (1996), Huber (1990),

Johnson & Moran (1989), Loseries (1990), McKay (in this volume), Martin (in this volume), Petech (1978), Ramble (in this volume), Ricard (1994: chapt.11), Snelling (1990), Staal (1990), Varna (1986) and Vitali (1996); and for those who read Tibetan: Che-tshang Rin-po-che (1990), Chos-dbyings rDo-rje (1990), Donrgyud bsTan-'dzin (n.d.), Ngag-'phrin (1995), Norbu & Prats (1989), bsTan-'dzin Rin-chen (1973) and Ye-shes rGyal-mtshan (1973). A great many more works are also referred to by these authors. Finally, those who wish to use our text while performing the pilgrimages are recommended to do so with reference to several of the useful route-maps published to date (e.g. in Chos-dbyings rDo-rje 1990, Johnson & Moran 1989:124-5 and Snelling 1990:36-37).

Translation

[70a...] *Chapter Six*

Praising the Amazing Features of the Place

[The Mountain's Appearance]

Now, there are four types of impressions of this king of snow mountains, Ti-se, produced in accordance with the [70b] measure of a person's disposition. So firstly, to the perception of those of lesser fortune who do not follow the path [of Buddhism] it is a glistening and lofty snow mountain rising into the sky like a king seated upon his throne. And it has so much magnificence because its minor peaks are arranged in the manner of ministers bowed before it, including: to its east the Fragrant Mountain (sPos-ngad-ldan or Gandhamādana) which was prophesied by the Buddha; to the south the snow mountain Gurla Mandata (or sMan-nag-snyil), the palace of the goddess Sarasvati; to the west the Eight-peaked Mountain Abode (Gnas-ri-bo rTse-brgyad), the dwelling of the exalted Lady Tārā; and to the north Grand Silk Tent [Mountain] (Za-'og Gur-chen), the palace of the local mountain god (*lha-btsan*).

Secondly, in the opinion of heretics [i.e. Hindus], those non-Buddhists who seek the path, externally this snow mountain resembles a crystal reliquary shrine (*stūpa*). [71a] And, it has so much magnificence because internally it has the layout of a palace in which the mother-father union of the great god Mahādeva and the goddess Umā reside.

Thirdly, in the opinion of those in the lineage of Hinayāna hearers and solitary realizers who have entered the path, its external appearance is that of a mountain of snow, but its internal reality has the great, sublime Buddhist saint (*sthavira*) Aṅgaja (Yan-lag-'byung) abiding in the complete enjoyment of meditative absorption with his retinue of five hundred Buddhist worthy ones (*arhat*).

Fourthly, according to the perception of those with superior fortune, the saints who have attained completion of the Vajrayāna path of secret ritual formulas (*mantra*), externally the mountain of Ti-se possesses the form of Samvara, perfect ability, and is embraced by Vārāhī, perfect wisdom, [in the form of] the snow mountain Little Ti-se (Ti-chung). All its minor peaks have the form of sixteen knowledge goddesses making offerings to it. The [major] valleys of Flag Valley

(Dar-lung), Divine Valley (lHa-lung) and Fortress Valley (rDzong-lung) [71b] possess the form of the three vital energy channels [of the subtle yogic body], the central, left and right respectively. But, internally it can be comprehended like the mighty Mi-la Ras-pa's (1040-1123) account in the form of a 62-deity Cakrasamvara *maṇḍala* of perfect cognition in the centre of an exquisitely arranged divine mansion which is thoroughly established in luminosity, unobscured and directly present.

[Se-lung and Dar-lung Valleys, the Inner Circumambulation]

Furthermore, when one recounts the manner in which the amazing features are arranged on the circumambulation path: Firstly, to the west [i.e. actually south] of Ti-se there is a ruined castle which is on top of a small hill behind the college presently to the east of the Ear-shot (rGyang-grags) Monastery, and this is renowned as having been the personal residence of the local religious administrator (*rdor-'dzin*) Ghu-ya sGang-pa (13th cent.). East of there on the so-called Mirror Terrace (Me-long-steng) there is the meditation cell and attainment water (*sgrub-chu*) of Ri-pa Nag-po (active late 13th century), the great [72a] meditator of 'Bri-gung. On a rock to the south of there, called Ghu-ya-sgang, the local religious administrator Ghu-ya sGang-pa had a meditation cell and attainment water resembling milk. The mountain to the right of there is presently called Buddha's Throne (Sangs-rgyas-kyi bZhugs-khri) because this is the spot where previously the Teacher Buddha preached the Buddhist doctrine to Madros-pa, the king of the serpent deities (*klu*). Below there, in between the glacier and the slate rock, is a meditation cave of the sPyan-snga 'Bri-gung Gling-pa (1187-1241), the meditation caves of many 'Bri-gung-pa hermits and the sPyan-snga's attainment water. Beneath that is a mountain like a parasol which was prophesied by the 'Bri-gung sKyob-pa ['Jig-rten mGon-po] (1143-1217). To the west of there is the so-called Ridge [Between] lHa and Dar [Valleys] (lHa-dar-gsang). In the valley which is behind that there is a personal residence, complete with protectors temple (*mgon-khang*), of the local religious administrator Grub-thob Bu-chung called Grey Valley (Se-lung). On the [72b] rock mountain which is behind Se-lung is the renowned Crystal Likeness (Shel-'dra). And the upper part of the circumambulation path there has a self-produced Hayagriva [image] and the rocky mountains have the shape of the seven aspects of royal power. Below the rocks at the foot of Shel-'dra are many meditation cells of great 'Bri-gung-pa meditators, including the Tantric master (*siddha*) Seng-ge Ye-shes (13th cent.). On the peak of Shel-'dra is the rock mountain known as Śiva's Palace (dBang-phyug-gi Pho-brang) and to the side of that is a protruding rock which is called Śiva's monkey assistant Hanumanju (Ha-lu-mandzu). In amongst the frog-shaped boulders below there, it is said there is a mark which was made by the key which opened the entrance to this power place (*gnas*), and a self-produced raven [image].

Within the enclosure of ritual sceptres (*rdo-rje ra-ba*) [encircling the sublime *maṇḍala* of Ti-se] is the so-called Inner Circumambulation (*nang-skor*) of Shel-

'dra, and here [73a] are situated the golden funerary shrines of the hierarchs (*gdan-rabs*) of the 'Bri-gung sect. And concerning these golden funerary shrines, which remain there radiating the lustre of their empowerment (*byin-brlabs*), there are those belonging to:

1. 'Bri-gung-pa 'Dzam-gling Chos-kyi rgyal-po (1335-1407), the manifestation of the great Indian Tantric master Tilopa;
2. The spiritual friend Don-grub rGyal-po (1369-1427), the manifestation of the great Tantric master Ber-wa-pa;
3. 'Bri-gung-pa Chos-rgyal Rin-chen dPal-bzang (1421-1467), the manifestation of Sha-wa-ri;
4. 'Bri-gung-pa Rin-chen Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan (1446-1484), the manifestation of Vajrapāṇi;
5. 'Bri-gung-pa Kun-dga' Rin-chen (1457?-1527), the manifestation of Nāgārjuna;
6. 'Bri-gung-pa Rin-chen Phun-tshogs (1509-1557?), the manifestation of Saraha;
7. 'Bri-gung-pa Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1507-1565), the manifestation of Tillipa;
8. 'Bri-gung-pa Paṅ-chen dPal-gyi rGya-mtsho, the manifestation of the Lord Indian Dam-pa [Sangs-rgyas];
9. 'Bri-gung-pa Chos-rgyal Phun-tshogs (1547-1602), the manifestation of the Za-hor king gTsug-lag-'dzin;
10. 'Bri-gung-pa bKra-shis Phun-tshogs (1574-1628), the manifestation of Nāropa;
11. Lord dKon-mchog Ratna (1590-1654), the manifestation of sublime Avalokiteśvara;
12. 'Bri-gung-pa Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1595-1659), the manifestation of Saraha;
13. 'Bri-gung-pa 'Phrin-las bZang-po (1665-?1718), the manifestation of Avalokiteśvara;
14. 'Bri-gung-pa Don-grub Chos-rgyal (1704-1754), the manifestation of Saraha;
15. [74a] 'Bri-gung-pa Chos-kyi Nyi-ma (1755-1792), the manifestation of Saraha;
16. Lord Chos-nyid Nor-bu (1827-1865), the manifestation of Saraha;
17. 'Bri-gung-pa Thugs-rje'i Nyi-ma (1828-1889), the manifestation of Avalokiteśvara.

Just as mentioned above, included among these there exist in the assembly hall of rGyang-grags [monastery] the golden funerary shrines of the three, the Lord bsTan-'dzin 'Gro-'dul (1724-1792), Padma'i rGyal-mtshan (1770-1826) and Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan (1793-1826).

[To the south,] out in the open, in front of these golden funerary shrines is a rock hill known as the Palace of the Buddhist Saint Aṅgaja (gNas-brtan Yan-lag-'byung-kyi Pho-brang), and on the slopes of the mountain [to the east] which looks as if it has a curtain of white silk attached there resides the divine assembly of Ye-shes mGon-po. [74b] At the base of that there is an empowered pool which is a bathing place of the female sky-goers (*mkha'-'gro-ma/dākinī*), called Skull-cap Lake of Medicinal Elixir (bDud-rtsi'i sman-gyi mTsho Ka-pā-la). If one goes some way up into the small valley which is behind Shel-'dra, below the rock

mountain which looks like a meditator's hat there are many meditation caves of the 'Bri-gung-pa hermits, including the one called Prophecy Cave (Lung-bstan-phug) where the 'Bri-gung sKyob-pa Rin-po-che pronounced a prophecy to his local religious administrator Ghu-ya sGang-pa about the founding of rGyang-grags monastery.

[Lower lHa-lung Valley, the Main Circumambulation]

Then, passing on from the lower reaches of the Dar-lung valley when one first proceeds [north-west] around the Buddhist circumambulation path (*chos-skor*), there is the so-called Prostration Ridge (Phyag-'tshal-sgang) in the lower reaches of the lHa-lung valley. Concerning that place, previously when rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa (1189-1258) performed a circumambulation of the mountain from the shores of Lake Ma-pham (*mTsho Ma-pham*), he went to the river bank in the lower reaches of the lHa-lung valley and [75a] thinking that he would prepare some hot water for a drink, he searched for some hearth-stones while he was meditating. As a result, all the stones just changed into self-produced images, such as divine bodies and letters, and he was unable to find any hearthstones. So, after this miraculous transformation in his meditation he offered prostrations here, and thus nowadays this site is renown as the Phyag-'tshal-sgang. The mountain which is east of here is the Palace of Yellow Jambhala (Dzambha-la Ser-po'i Pho-brang), and when you proceed on a little further from there, one finds a mad flag (*dar-smyon?*) silk image of the patron-priest emperor with heaven's mandate [i.e. of China]. Above here to the west, on Maṇḍala Terrace (dKyil-'khor-steng) is a "nail which is immutable", being a footprint of the Teacher Buddha which is encircled by the footprints of the 500 Buddhist worthy ones. A little above there on the lower slopes of the mountain, [75b] is the cave where Na-ro Bon-chung stayed in the past, and also inside it is a footprint of the Master Mi-la [Ras-pa]. To the side of that cave is a spring which is called Illness Curing Medicinal Water (sMan-chu Nad-sel), and as for the rock like a reliquary shrine which is on the top side above that, it is known as Self-produced Sixteen Buddhist Saints (gNas-brtan bCu-drug Rang-'byung).

[Detour to Nyan-ri or Chos-sku Monastery Area]

From there, to the west of Golden Basin (gSer-gzhong) one crosses over the lHa-chu river, and proceeding on there is a mountain which is called Palace of Black Jambhala (Dzambha-la Nag-po'i Pho-brang). In a valley which is above here, there are a few meditation caves, including a meditation cave of the Tantric teacher Padmasambhava (8th cent.) which is called Cave of Secret Mantra Buddhist Doctrine (gSang-sngags Chos-kyi Phug-pa), and there are such things as the Tantric teacher's attainment water, hand-prints and footprints there. Above it, there are a self-produced Avalokiteśvara, the chief and his attendants all three, and a Kha-sar-pa-ñi which where the personal visions [76a] of rGyal-ba gNyos lHa -nang-pa (1164-1224). As for the mountain which is to the left of there,

resembling a pitched grand silk tent, it is the palace of the local mountain god (*lha-btsan*) of Ti-se. And on the shoulder of that peak there is a place called Great [Mi-la] Ras-pa's Cave (Ras-chen-phug), where the Master Mi-la remained when he stepped with his foot to the other side of the mountain in order to display his magic to Na-ro Bon-chung. In among the peaks, ravines and rocks which are gathered around that site there are many meditation cells and caves of the glorious 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud sect.

Below these sites, previously there someone named Nyan-pa Grub-chen established a monastery which bears the name Nyan-po's [Mountain] Fortress (Nyan-po'i [Ri-]rdzong=Nyan-ri). And as for the story of the main empowered sacred representation (*rten*) of that place, the self-produced Precious Dharmakāya (Chos-sku Rin-po-che): [76b] Previously, this very image manifested self-produced from out of the Milk Lake ('O-ma'i mTsho) of Gar-zha to the west [i.e. Lahoul]. It was brought here from Gar-zha by a yogin who was an emanation of Mahākāraṇika, who then offered it to the religious king (*chos-rgyal*) of Gu-ge, mNga'-bdag rTse-lde (11th cent.). Then, after it had remained for a long period in a monastery in Gu-ge, one day the local mountain god of Ti-se manifested as seven Indian yogins who blocked the doors to the monastery itself, and begged for alms. The monks there did not give them any alms and acted with a degree of contempt. As a consequence the seven yogins at once turned into seven wolves, and disappeared. On the seventh day after that, this very image went up to Nyan-ri monastery after [77a] the local mountain god took it there. Thus, as the Gu-ge people had no idea of its whereabouts, even though they searched for a long time they did not find it. After that many years passed, and at the time of the religious king of Gu-ge named Khri Grags-pa bKra-shis (early 17th cent.) it became known that the precious image was residing at Nyan-ri. And although the Gu-ge army started to carry off the Chos-sku Rin-po-che concealed at Nyan-ri, as the image was extremely heavy and they could not lift it, they tied a rope around its neck and dragged it along but were unable to go beyond the Dzambha-la Nag-po'i Pho-brang. Although they carried off both the conch-shell trumpet of Nāropa and his tea cauldron, as a consequence of the local mountain god's magical powers the conch-shell trumpet flew up into the air from among the company of troops and then went back into the monastery. The tea they were boiling inside the tea cauldron turned into blood, and taking this to be a bad omen they [77b] poured it out and went back home. Then, a few days later an old man passed by in that direction and he saw the Chos-sku Rin-po-che abandoned among the rocks. From the mouth of that holy image came the words, "You must carry me to the monastery!" And the old man replied, "If so many soldiers could not hold you, how will I pick you up?" It said to him, "You will be able to pick me up, so carry me!" Wondering whether this was true he lifted it, and finding it to be as light as a cotton bud he took it to the monastery.

Furthermore, when I myself went to Nyan-ri, even though I inquired, hoping the actual historical register of this image would be there, I was only told a few of the old people's oral traditions [78a] and that none had seen a real register for it. And this story which has been related just now, I obtained from the remnants

of an ancient guide-book. I have written it here, therefore one can consider whether or not the actual story is this one itself.

Furthermore, many images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas exist in that temple, including an image of the Teacher Buddha, the precious *Translated Teachings* (*bka'-gyur*) of the Buddha and an image of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal. And, there is a protectors temple which exhibits an image of the fierce local mountain god of Ti-se. As for the keepers of the place, it is occupied by the glorious lHo-'brug sect [of Bhutan]. Below the site is a protruding rock called Palace of Maitreya (Byams-pa'i Pho-brang), and [78b] near there are the footprints of a manifestation of the Lady Tārā. On the hillside there is a meditation place of the Tantric teacher Padma[sambhava] called Elephant Secret Cave (Glang-chen sBas-phug), and that is mentioned in his biography (*thang-yig*) as follows:

At white snowy Ti-se he subdued the 28 deities of the lunar mansions.
In the Elephant Secret Cave he also concealed a treasure.

Here there is a spring which is said to have mTsho Ma-pham as its source, and if one proceeds on a little from there, on the mountain side there are a meditation cave known as Lotus Cave (Padma-phug) and a stream of elixir flowing from the surface of a flat stone which resembles a cosmic matrix-triangle (*chos-'byung*). Proceeding uphill from there, is a high mountain in the direction straight towards the snows, which is the reliquary shrine of Uṣṇīṣvijayā, and the seven minor peaks which are near to it have the form of the seven paternal brothers who [79a] surround King Gesar of Gling.

[Upper lHa-lung Valley, 'Bri-ra-phug Monastery]

Then, after re-crossing the lHa-chu river from Nyan-po Ri-rdzong, as you walk further upstream across the surface of the rocks there flows the so-called Stream of the Five-coloured Rainbow ('Ja'-tshon sNa-lnga'i Chu-rgyun) which carries the empowerment of Gangs Rin-po-che [i.e. Ti-se]. On the peak of the mountain which is nearby there are some spires on the pointed mountain rock, and these are said to be the Palace of the Glorious Protector Beng (dPal mGon-po Beng-gi Pho-brang), the protector's ritual cake (*gtor-ma*) and his yak and dog. On the lower edge of the mGon-po'i Pho-brang, on a rock face which is in the direction of the incense-holding monkey [i.e. Hanumanju mountain to the east] there is a boulder resembling a crystal box, and rGyal-ba gNyos [lHa-nang-pa] had a vision of sublime Mahākārunika which was absorbed into this. Right in the middle as you go a little uphill from the mGon-po'i Pho-brang there is a self-produced image of the serpent deity-subduer, the hero Hayagrīva, which is called Hayagrīva's Guesthouse (rTa-mgrin mGron-khang), and to the north of it there is a "nail which is immutable," a [79b] footprint of the Teacher Buddha, called Sunk In Ankle-deep (Bol-nub-ma). On the surface of the glacier above [on Ti-se] there are gates of crystal which have the appearance of being guarded by the four gate guardians [of the *maṇḍala*].

Now we come to the account of Female Yak-horn Cave ('Bri-ra-phug). Previously, when rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa came here to open the entrance to the power place, at the time he arrived there at the bottom end of Wild Yak Valley ('Brong-lung), a wild female yak ('brong-'bri) suddenly appeared in front of him. Wondering what this was, he had an insight after entering into meditation, and thus realized that the wild female yak was a manifestation of the female sky-goer Seng-ge dong-ma, and gave the name 'Brong to that valley. Then, he followed the tracks of that female yak to the east, and from the lower part of the meditation cave which is there today he was able to see where that female yak had gone to. [80a] Wondering where it had gone he watched from the top of a boulder, and this gave rise to his footprints on the boulder, which are there today. Then, because that female yak had made the imprint of its horn as a trace of where it was vanished into a stone in the cave, henceforth that excellent place was given the name Vanished Female Yak [or] Female Yak-horn Cave ('Bri-thim 'Bri-ra-phug). Thinking to renovate that place as he was meditating there, when he set about repairing the cave's canopy he went up on the top of the cave and looked at the arrangement of amazing features at the site, and produced a footprint on the stone there as well. After that he performed meditation for a long period in that cave, and the female sky-goer Seng-gdong-ma brought him the nourishment of fatty-earth (*sa-zhag* [a sublime food from the beginning of the cosmic age]) and offered it. The traces which were left behind when she took him the fatty-earth are known today as Drifting Snows (Gangs-'khyams). [80b] Then the Master rGod-tshang-pa considered things, thinking "Now I will go from this place as it is a very high spot, food is scarce and it will get bitterly cold." And then having pressed his head on a stone in the cave he swore by his head with the words, "Any who press their heads here in this cave of mine, chiefly those with a precious human body, but also the three types of living creatures—birds, rodents, insects and ants—each will escape rebirths in the lower realms, even if they are kicked down there." And with that he produced an imprint of his head on the rock. When he was leaving, he produced clear imprints of his hat when his meditator's hat touched the rock, and of his foot on a stone at the front of the cave. Since then, there has been a continuous stream of all sorts of greater and lesser meditators in this excellent place. And today it is occupied by the glorious 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud sect, and has lamas and monks who follow the doctrinal lineage of sDing-che Don-grub mThong-smon [81a].

There are a great many sacred representations of body, speech and mind there, including a statue of rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje which is the main image, and a protectors temple of the glorious four-armed Mahākāla, and so on. Concerning the mountain behind [i.e. north of] the 'Bri-ra-phug, it is said to be the abode of the Thousand Buddhas of the Excellent Cosmic Age (bsKal-bzang Sangs-rgyas-stong). On the surface of the snows which you see straight out ahead of 'Bri-phug are the forms of Gu-ru [Padmasambhava] riding on a pig and a pig being led by a demoness. On the snow drifts there is a palace of the serpent deity king, gTsug-sna Rin-chen, called Hundred Thousand Silver Springs (Chu-mig dNgul-'bum), and behind the ice images are three mountains

which are Palaces of the Protectors of the Three Classes (Rigs-gsum mGon-po'i Pho-brang).

[Route Over the Pass of sGrol-ma La]

If you walk up [the sGrol-ma-la chu river] a little further from 'Bri-phug, there is a place [81b] which later became known as Raven Guesthouse (Bya-rog mGron-khang), where previously rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa offered a ritual cake on the river bank as a way of giving thanks to the local deity (*gzhi-bdag*) of the upper lHa-lung valley. The whole ritual cake was carried off by a raven which was an emanation of Mahākāla. So he chased after it, and when it got just below the charnel ground there that raven vanished into a boulder and produced the imprint of a bird in that spot. In amongst the clay area which is just above there, is the charnel ground which is named Cool Grove (bSil-ba-tshal or Sitāvana), and above that on a terrace there are also a very clear footprint of the 'Bri-gung-pa Tantric master rGyal-ba gNyos lHa-nang-pa and a self-produced letter A which is white. If you proceed a little further on there is a three-storeyed giant stone which both the Master Mi-la Ras-pa and Na-ro Bon-chung pulled out in the past during a contest of strength.

To the east [82a] of that there is the so-called Tārā Pass (sGrol-ma La). As for the story of that place: Previously, when rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa was walking here in search of the circumambulation path, as if pretending he knew about the circumambulation path he thought to proceed along the Female Sky-goer's Secret Path (mKha'-'gro gSang-lam), and just as he did so, 21 blue wolves appeared as ghostly images directly in front of him. And thinking to himself "What's this?" he looked at them after he had entered into a meditative trance. Thus, as he realized that he was being shown the path by emanations of the 21 Tārās (sGrol-ma), he followed after them, and when he walked to the summit of the pass they disappeared into one another until there was only one remaining, which then vanished into a boulder. And so ever since then the name of the pass has been famous as the sGrol-ma La. And, it is said that on the edges of that boulder are the imprints of wolves, and on the side a [82b] self-produced Avalokiteśvara. Previously here, on the summit of sGrol-ma La, a footprint was produced by rGyal-ba gNyos lHa-nang-pa. Nowadays, it is kept in Magical Powers Cave (rDzu-sprul-phug). On the left-hand side [i.e. north] of the sGrol-ma La there are several mountains which are known as the Reliquary Shrine of Great Awakening (Byang-chub Chen-po'i mChod-rten), the Palace of Mahākāla (mGon-po'i Pho-brang) and the Palace of Completely Good Yaksa (gNod-sbyin Gang-ba bZang-po'i Pho-brang). On the heights up behind the sGrol-ma La there is a small lake which is called Female Sky-goer's Bathing Pool (mKha'-'gro-ma'i Khrus-kyi rDzing-bu), and its [ice] covering remains closed over in the summer and winter. When you descend a little from there, it is said one finds a footprint of 'Phrin-las Shing-rta, the Lord of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud sect. On the surface of the cliffs which are on the right-hand [i.e. south] side of that, there are the forms of the bodies of the female sky-goer Seng-ge'i gdong-pa-can [83a],

Vajrapāṇi and Hayagrīva. And nowadays, although this last is called Gray Horse of Karma (Las-kyi rTa-se), it is known as the Horse-head of Hayagrīva (rTa-mgrin-gyi rTa-mgo).

Proceeding a little down the hill from the mKha'-'gro Khrus-mtsho, at the base of a votive cairn on the so-called Mirror Terrace (Me-long-steng), there are perhaps three or four footprints from the time when the Master Mi-la [Ras-pa] lead Na-ro Bon-chung around the Buddhist circumambulation path and had to pull him along, this way and that. In a river gully on the right side when you go downhill a little further on, there are perhaps eight or nine footprints of the Master and the Bon-po on the surface of a large slab of rock. There is a rock mountain to the left of these resembling a pointed weapon, and named Palace of Śiva's Goddess (lHa-mo 'Phrog-ma'i Pho-brang), and the rock mountain to the right is named Palace of the Seventy Glorious Protectors of the Pure Abodes (gTsang-ris-kyi dPal-mgon bDun-bcu'i Pho-brang) [83b].

[The rDzong-lung Valley, rDzu-sprul-phug Monastery]

To the east upon a piece of rock at the foot of the pass there is a "nail which is immutable", a footprint of the Teacher Buddha, which is called Rock Footstep (Brag-rdog-ma). In the grassy valley which is a little further on there is a footprint of the Tantric teacher Padma[sambhava]. On a mountain to the east of there are the self-produced images of a wrathful Acala and a Mahākāla which were visualized by 'Brug-chen gTsang-pa rGya-ras (1161-1211), and a self-produced Vajravārāhī which was visualized by rGyal-ba gNyos. The mountain [to the south] at the bottom end of the mKha'-'gro gSang-lam is the Palace of Auspicious Long-life Mother (bKra-shis Tshe-ring-ma'i Pho-brang). From there, over on the eastern bank of the rDzong-chu river is a footprint of the protector of beings gTsang-pa rGya-ras, and to the side down from it is a hill [84a] resembling a golden double-storied house which is called Medicine Buddha's Palace (Sangs-rgyas sMan-bla'i Pho-brang). On the slopes of this hill where all sorts of medicinal herbs grow, there are unlimited meditation cells of many of the great hermits of 'Bri-gung. As for the two mountains to the east [actually west] of there, they are known as the Palace of King Kuvera (rGyal-po rNam-thos-sras-kyi Pho-brang) and the Auspicious Many-doored Reliquary Shrine (bKra-shis sGo-mang-gi mChod-rten). On the left-hand side [i.e. south-east] of the Sangs-rgyas sMan-bla'i Pho-brang there are situated together the palaces (*pho-brang*) of Perfect Cognition Garuda (Ye-shes Khyung), Glorious Guhyasamāja (dPal gSang-ba 'Dus-pa) and Yellow and Black Jambhala (Dzam-ser-nag), and image of the eight Tathāgata reliquary shrines and a self-produced Vajravārāhī on the back side of a rock. As for the mountain which is on the opposite side and straight out ahead of the Sangs-rgyas sMan-bla'i Pho-brang, this mountain is the Palace of the Tī-se Field-protector (Tī-se Zhing-skyong-gi Pho-brang). And on the slopes of this mountain [84b] is the so-called A Cave (A-phug), a cave which Mi-la [Ras-pa] engraved with the letter A using his finger, when the Master Mi-la was invited here by the Tantric master Gu-ru brTse-chen in the past.

And on a bank below there is the so-called Magical Powers Cave (rDzu-sprul-phug). As for the story of that place: In the past here, because Na-ro Bon-chung was performing a counter-clockwise Bon-po circumambulation (*bon-skor*) and the Master [Mi-la Ras-pa] was making a clockwise Buddhist circumambulation (*chos-skor*) they meet up with each other in the rDzong-lung valley to the south of Ti-se, and it began to pour with rain. So the Master said "The rain has come, and as both of us need to build a rain shelter would you like to erect the walls or set up the roof?" Bon-chung replied "I'll put up the walls," and he split apart some stones using his magical powers (*rdzu-sprul*). But the Master cut through the middle of the stones using a powerful yogic stare which cuts. Because [Bon-chung] had attempted a yogic stare which he was unable to perform [85a], he remained there with his eyes bulging out, unable to endure it. At that, the Master disabled his meditation, and thus the stone wall were erected by him as well. Then, upon a command from the Master a great flat stone was positioned for the roof, and remarking to himself "It's too low," he raised it up with his head from underneath, and in doing so made an imprint of his head on the stone. And then saying "It's too high," he pressed it down with his feet and produced footprints there. In this place are found many sacred representation of body, speech and mind, including: a likeness of the Master [Mi-la Ras-pa] which has some of his own blood mixed in with the materials, and was crafted mainly by the Master gTsang-smyon-pa (1452-1507); [images] of gNyo s lHa-nang-pa, the Master Ras-chung-pa and the Tantric master gTsang-smyon; and a likeness of the powerful Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal. Although it is said that there [85b] were fifty lamas and monks in this place in the past, nowadays there is no one here save the caretaker. Notwithstanding that, the place is maintained exclusively by the glorious lHo-brug sect.

[From rDzu-sprul-phug Back to Dar-lung Valley]

To the south, in amongst the rocks which are above the bottom corner of the rDzu-sprul-phug, there is a "nail which is immutable", a footprint of the Teacher Buddha, called White One (dKar-mo), and below that a spring which is called Attainment Water (*sgrub-chu*) of Bram-ze sKye-bdun. On the path at the bottom corner of the rDzu-sprul-phug is a footprint of the Tantric master dBus-smyon-pa (b.1458), and going on a little further from there one finds footprints of the five female sky-goer families and a rock which was the abode of Bram-ze sKye-bdun. [86a] Then, on the approach to the pass which lies between rDzu-sprul-phug and the rGyang-grags monastery, there is a self-produced Vajravārāhī and on the summit of the pass a self-produced wrathful sMe-brtsegs-pa. In between Great Flag (Dar-chen) and Small Flag (Dar-chung) there are two sand hills which are called Nipples of the Demoness (Srin-mo'i Nu-ma), and between these is the so-called Vajra Cave (rDo-rje-phug) which brings relief to those who have leprosy as it possesses the empowerment of the sublime Avalokiteśvara. Crossing the pass from there and continuing on, one comes to the rGyang-grags monastery which was prophesied by the lama ['Bri-gung sKyob-pa Rin-po-che], and its

story has been given above. In that place there is a footprint of the sPyan-snga Chos-kyi rGyal-po 'Bri-gung Gling-pa, and I, 'Bri-ban Chos-kyi Blo-gros, also left a footprint there.

[Evidence and Faith]

[86b] As for the certainty of such things as the meditation caves and hand prints which I have reported above accordingly, although I became thoroughly familiar with them after carefully questioning the many keepers, both old and young, of these sites during my visit to Ti-se snow mountain itself, and even though I was unable to prove the identity of a few, I have presented them here at length on account of my having accepted them as a reliable guide-book of the events of the past. And for the most part, not only are they supported by the original written documents, but also with permissible appraisals having been undertaken, thus this may be accepted as reliable.

Accordingly, as for my assertions [about landscape features] that "This is a deity, and this is its palace," it is inappropriate to hold heretical views which consider these to be exaggerations merely for the reason that they are invisible to ordinary perception. [87a] These also are exclusively the visions of the many bodhisattvas who have dwelt in this place, including our predecessors Jo-bo Atiśa (982-1054), the Lord Mi-la [Ras-pa], the protector of beings [gTsang-pa] rGya-ras, rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa, gNyo and Sangs-rgyas Ras-chen (1203-1280). And on account of that, one may develop faith and reverence in one's heart with unequivocal confidence that it is like that. Having said that, these words express furthermore the greatness of the amazing features of Ti-se.

Chapter Seven

The Benefits of Performing Prostrations, Offerings and Circumambulation [and the Guide to mTsho Ma-pham]

In the *Teachings on Discipline (Vinayagama)* it states,

If anybody takes steps around a reliquary shrine of the Buddha
With faith and devotion in mind,
It is equivalent to one hundred thousand
Ounces of Jambu river gold.

That is to say, the benefits for anyone who takes a step with the intention of [87b] performing circumambulation around a reliquary shrine of the Buddha, with faith in mind, are as great as making a donation of 100,000 ounces of Jambu river gold. And likewise, there are the same benefits for those who generate a faithful and devout mind with regard to a reliquary shrine housing the relics of the Buddha. Accordingly, on account of the wisdom-body of the Blessed One Cakrasamvara and his 62 deities residing here [at Ti-se] in person, it is certain that the benefits one obtains here are the same as those stated above. And furthermore, the Lord gTsang-pa rGya-ras said,

If you circumambulate one circuit
Around the great palace of Ti-se,
The obscurations of one life will be purified.
Accordingly, if you circumambulate it ten times,
The obscurations of a cosmic age will be purified.
If you do one hundred circumambulations,

After perfecting the ten marks and eight qualities,
You will attain Buddhahood in one lifetime.

This is what is enumerated in the old guide-books, and although we can consider these to be proper limits for circumambulation, nowadays, according to oral traditions, the limit of circumambulations is said to be thirteen. There is a reason for that. It is said that in the past, at the small lake which is at the top of the sGrol-ma La pass, a woman pilgrim from Khams who was carrying a small child on her back, bent over to take a drink of water. Because she did this the child slipped into the water and died. Ever since that time, the surface of the lake has been closed over [by ice]. The Khams-pa woman began to accumulate circumambulations to atone for the killing of the child. Thus, when she had made 13 circuits she produced imprints of her hands and feet on a stone [88b] as a mark of the purification of her obscurations, and she passed on to the Abode of Celestial Action (Khecara) in the rainbow-body state. Since then, one makes a limit of 13 circumambulations. The keepers of the place say that this is how it came about. It is certainly a valid practice to keep a count of one's circumambulations, as a proof of whether one's obscurations have been purified or not.

[Important Sites Immediately South and West]

There is a large lake in front of Ti-se which is called Mountain Pass Skin (La-lpags=Lang-kha mTsho or Rakas Tal), possessing the form of a hide-couch made out of a human skin. Concerning this, they say such things as,

In the *rākṣasa* country of Langka Pu-rang,
A black lake of poison ripples.

And, in accord with these statements it is said to be the palace of the brother and sister Ye-shes mGon-po Beng-chen (i.e. Rāvaṇa from the *Rāmāyaṇa*). [89a] If you proceed several miles to the west, there is the so-called Tre-ta-pu-ri [=Pretapuri], the first spoke of the [yogic] body wheel (*cakra*) and one of the eight underground sites from among the 24 countries [listed in the highest yoga Tantras]. Because that place is a palace of Saṃvara and an abode of the hero (*vīra*) sTobs-po-che and the female sky-goer 'Khor-lo'i Shugs-can-ma, it is no different to the large and the small Ti-se mountains [in terms of its being a natural Tantric *maṇḍala*]. And as for the central power place there, the hot spring itself is taken to be the flow of the white yogic awakening fluid [in the subtle body], and so on. One can obtain other details from the guide-books.

[The Guide-Book to mTsho Ma-pham]

Secondly, in the chronicle of mTsho Ma-pham there are three sections: First, an introduction as to how this lake initially came into being; second, the manner in which it was empowered by Buddhas and bodhisattvas; and third, the benefits of bathing and performing prostrations and offerings there.

[The Origin and Names of the Lake]

So firstly, in the past, at the time when the present cosmic age had just begun, this lake itself did not exist. [89b] Immediately after that, a wheel-turning monarch (*cakravartin*) named sMyug-sbam who was a tenth-stage bodhisattva came into the world. One day, when that king was growing up, he witnessed the sufferings of life, such as old age, illness and death on the road while walking to a pleasure garden. Thus, having become disheartened he spoke with his court-priest, a Brahmin named Dus-spog, saying “Brahmin, are these sufferings of old age, illness and death a phenomena common to all our lives, or only of these particular people [whom I saw]?” The Brahmin replied “Yes my Lord, they are common to us all!” The king asked “Is there a way to alleviate this?” and the Brahmin replied “My Lord, there is certainly a way to alleviate this; you must practice giving without expecting reward.” [90a] As a result of that discussion, the king built a charity house and began collecting for all the peoples of the world. Then, for 12 years the king also gave, without expectation of reward, whatever was wished for; food, clothing, wealth and so on. At the time of this great [deed], a huge pit was excavated in the ground and then the water used to boil the rice was poured into it. And so, when the 12 years had passed by, the pit became full and turned into a great lake. Furthermore, although initially warm rice water was poured in, it later became completely cooled, and on that basis the name of Not Warm One (Ma-dros-pa) was given to this lake. And a river was produced when the lake of rice water overflowed, and according to the *Basic Teachings on Discipline (Vinayavastu)* this is how the so-called River of Rice Water (‘Bras-khu’i chu) [90b] or River Gaṅgā came into being.

As for the lake being named Unbeaten One (Ma-pham-pa), the waters of this very lake are exclusively endowed with the eight properties, and it is said to have been named Ma-pham since it is unbeaten with regard to its excellent qualities.

[Classical Buddhist Geography of the Region]

If one asks what size and type of layout it has, regarding that one can consider both its state of existence and its mode of appearance. Firstly, as for its state of existence there are many [classical Buddhist] statements about it, such as that in the *Treasury of the Phenomenal World (Abhidharmakośa)*,

The dimensions of Anavatapta (Ma-dros-pa)
Are 50 *yojanas* in length and breadth, and

Its edges are lined with jewelled tiles.
There are four rivers flowing from it;
These are the Gaṅgā and Sindhu, and
The Sītā and Pakṣu [or Vakṣu].

And if we properly qualify the actual sense of these [statements]: that lake Anavatapta is completely square [91a], its length and breadth are 50 *yojanas* (1 *yojana* = about 9 miles), and it has a fine form when viewed. The waters within it are said to be endowed with the eight properties:

1. The property of cleanness, as it is free from such things as stench in its currents and tributaries.
2. The property of mildness, affecting good health in its users.
3. The property of purity, as its waters are unpolluted by large and small creatures.
4. The property of clarity, as it is very cool and [appears to be] without surface or bottom.
5. The property of coolness, as it has the ability to cool painful sensations of heat.
6. The property of being unsullied, as it is free from the dirt of swamps and the like.
7. The property of being easy on the throat, as it is delicious to drink [91b].
8. The property of being harmless to the stomach, since it does not produce aggravating illness and such things as a swollen belly when it is first drunk.

And therefore, it is filled with water which is endowed with the eight excellent qualities. It is adorned with various species of flowers, and various sorts of water birds singing pleasantly. On the right shore of that lake the branches of the Jambutriṣa [i.e. mythical rose-apple] tree spread out as wide as the sky. Its ripe fruits, as big as clay pots, are endowed with a sweet flavour. As the fruits fall into the lake they produce the sound "Jam". Through the combination of these fruits and the state of the waters, the gold of the Jambu river comes into being, and moreover it has a weight, colour and lustre [92a] like that of other gold which has been refined 16 times. On the slopes of this snow mountain [Ti-se], there is a cave of the 500 Buddhist worthy ones with an overhanging bird shelter of golden rock.

Around the shores of the lake there are rivers flowing out from openings in rocks of different shapes. To the east, from the mouth of a splendid horse, comes the Pakṣu which appears to convey silver sands, and after circling seven times around Anavatapta it flows into the eastern ocean contained in 500 tributaries. To the south, from the mouth of a "head of the flock" (*Khyu-mchog*), comes the Sindhu which appears to convey sands of various precious stones, and which flows southward. West, from the mouth of an elephant, comes the Gaṅgā which appears to convey golden sands, and which flows westward. North, from the mouth of a lion, comes the Sītā which appears to convey sands of diamond, and which flows to the north. Such excellent qualities, which are explained in the Buddha's discourses (*sūtra*), still exist even today [92b].

[Mystic Perceptions and the Apparent Geography]

Secondly, as for its mode of appearance, it has two: superior and inferior. The superior mode is that seen by saints who have attained perfection and possess the eye of perfected cognition, and even today manifestly it has all those excellent qualities which were clearly explained according to the Buddha's discourses above. In the second place, to those persons who have not purified their karmic defilements, the sort who have inferior fortune, it appears as this lake which is named Ma-pham-pa and this water endowed with the eight properties.

As for the statement that the Jambutriṣa tree exists here, it is seen by tenth-stage bodhisattvas and therefore is not seen by ordinary people. To illustrate this, previously, although the sPyan-snga 'Bri-gung Gling-pa [93a] hung his monastic robes on a branch of the Jambutriṣa tree, to ordinary people it appeared that his robes were just hanging in mid-air, and so according to that it is said that they cannot see it. It is also the same with regard to the statement "This lake has an [extent] of 50 *yojanas*." Notwithstanding that, the state of its underground reservoir has [such a size], but its observable length and breadth are not as much as that.

Concerning the four river flows: As for what is said about the eastern river, like the statement "In the east the Gaṅgā flows from the mouth of an elephant." The Gaṅgā is described as the "eastern river" on the basis that it originally flowed from the lake itself in a valley which lay to the east. However, later on it cut through the middle of this very lake and came [93b] out of the mouth of a mountain called rDul-chu, which resembles an elephant (*glang-chen*), in the highlands of the Gu-ge region to the west. And on account of it flowing to the west it is actually the western river.

Concerning the southern river Sindhu, it flowed to the south from the north of the lake itself. As a result, it came out of the mouth of a mountain which resembles a peacock (*rma-bya*) or "head of the herd, i.e. bull" (*khyu-mchog*) in the upper valley of Langka Pu-rang, from where it flows on cutting through Nepal and the centre of India.

Concerning the western river Pakṣu, it flowed to the east from the west of the lake itself. As a result, it came out of the mouth of a mountain which resembles a horse (*rta*) at gTsang Bye-ma g.Yung-drung, and it flows on from there cutting through the centre of Tibet, including [the regions of] gTsang, dBus and Kong-po. And although it is described as the "western river" on the basis of it having originally flowed to the east from the west, it is actually the eastern river.

Concerning the northern river [94a] Sītā, it flowed to the north from the south of the lake itself. As a result, it came out of the mouth of a mountain which resembles a lion (*seng-ge*) which is in the Seng highlands of the 'Brong region behind [i.e. north of] Ti-se, and it flows on through countries which include Ladwags, Bhal-ti[stan] and Hor.

Concerning the statement that here there exist sands of gold, silver, lapis and diamond, this is how it appears when seen by tenth-stage bodhisattvas who have perfectly completed the twin accumulations [of merit and wisdom]. But it

does not appear this way to ordinary persons whose karmic obscurations have not been purified. An example of that is when rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa perceived the sands of mTsho Ma-pham to be gold.

As for the statement that various birds frequent this place, even today there are over a thousand, including geese, ducks, cranes and water-fowl.

[94b] As for the true sense of the statement that the [four] rivers flow on after having circled around Anavatapta seven times: From mTsho Ma-dros-pa they flow on with a long course in the four directions, then they each become curved clockwise around that lake. And as such, up to the point when they reach the various oceans, such as the one to the east, they are described like that in a poetic manner as having been each drawn out seven times. And, it is also said to be surrounded by 500 tributary streams. This accords with the statement by the Lord Klong-chen Rab-'byams (1308-1363) "Having flowed here, the streams of 500 different valleys try to enter it through being mixed together." Furthermore, this lake itself has very amazing features, such as when in the past the Master Mi-la raised it into the air on his fingertip, [95a] and on the basis of that even today the centre of this lake is high and its margins are low.

There are four bathing entrances (*khru-sgo*) to this lake [equivalent to the four doors of a *maṇḍala* palace], of which the eastern one is the bathing entrance at Thorn Bush Valley (Se-ba-lung). On its shores, which resemble an open lotus flower, it has five types of sand with the character of Jambu [river] gold. At the southern entrance are five types of perfume associated with the mountain sPos-ngad-ldan (=Gandhamādana or Fragrant Mountain). At the one in the west there are five types of soda which are associated with the bath which purifies moral transgressions and defilements. At the northern entrance there are five types of pebbles which are associated with such things as religious symbols, divine images and written characters, which increase faith and reverence in believers.

[The Serpent Deities Living in the Lake]

Secondly, as to the way in which this lake was empowered by Buddhas and bodhisattvas, it states, for example, in the *'Phags pa bsud pa*,

If there were no serpent deities in Lake Anavatapta,
What would become of the rivers flowing in the world?
[95b] If there were no rivers, flowers and fruits would not be produced;
The manifold precious forms in the oceans would not even exist.

And further,

There are many rivers flowing in the world, and
They cause forests and medicinal herbs with flowers and fruits to grow.
This depends upon the Lord of serpent deities who lives in Anavatapta.
The power and glory of that Lord of serpent deities exists there.

And in accord with that, within this very lake there is a Buddha from the excellent cosmic age who, having taken the form of a bodhisattva king of serpent

deities, teaches the Buddhist doctrine to the serpent beings and works to increase such things as the rivers, and the flowers, fruits, medicinal herbs and forest of the world. [96a] And furthermore, when the Teacher victorious Śākyamuni, together with his retinue of 500 Buddhist worthy ones, came here by way of their magical powers, a gigantic lotus stem appeared and shot up due to the pleasure and friendship of the serpent deity king. It had 501 flowers, and when the Buddha was seated on the central bloom and the 500 Buddhist worthy ones such as Śāriputra were seated on the 500 flowers below him, he then preached the *Discourse Which Predicts the Causes of Karma* (*Las kyi rgyu ba lung bstan pa'i mdo*). That is how this place came to be empowered, according to what is said in the *Basic Teachings on Discipline*.

According to Tantric traditions, it was empowered as the palace of the four divisions of Secret Mantra lineage by the divine Lady Vajrayoginī. Therefore, to the perception of saints who have attained perfection the form which is situated within this lake is that [96b] of the Jambūtriṣa tree with its roots anchored in the serpent deity world [below], its leafy branches filling the intermediate space, and its crown extending into the divine world [above]. Seated upon its topmost leafy branches are the lamas of the bKa'-brgyud sect, and on its intermediate boughs the divine assembly of the archetype deity (*yi-dam*) Vajravārāhī, and under its canopy of foliage at its lotus base the serpent deities are being taught the Buddhist doctrine by the bodhisattva serpent deity king. This is stated so in an old guide-book.

Accordingly, there are also numerous stories about how this bodhisattva serpent deity king performed devotional services to the Teacher Śākyamuni and his followers. We can even give examples concerning the 'Bri-gung-pa sect. Originally, when the Lord of the 'Bri-gung-pa teachings sKyob-pa 'Jig-rten mGon-po maintained a monastic assembly of 10,018 [97a] as his retinue, this serpent deity king offered the paranormal power (*siddhi*) for a bumper harvest of good grain to 'Bri-gung. And as a consequence, there was an incredible abundance in the bursting grain-stores at 'Bri-gung, such that 'Bri-gung became a supplier of grain, even giving it to all of the peoples in lower sKyid [i.e. the Lhasa Valley]. And also, in the biography of rMa-bya Seng-ge-ma (12th cent.) it states, "The serpent deity king Ma-dros sponsored him in maintaining an ocean-like assembly."

Following that, the Tantric master of 'Bri-gung, rGyal-ba gNyoṣ lHa-nang-pa, went to the shores of mTsho Ma-pham. Then when he bathed there, this Tantric master himself was invited by the king of the serpent deities, who ferried him across to the centre of the lake while he was seated in a cross-legged *vajra* posture and without sinking below the surface. And the way in which he taught the Buddhist doctrine [97b] to the serpent deities for seven days is elucidated in the biography of gNyoṣ. Following that, when the sPyan-snga 'Bri-gung Gling-pa was residing at rTse-brgyad mountain he was invited by the king of the serpent deities, and when he went to the shores of mTsho Ma-pham he taught the Buddhist doctrine to him. As a result, the serpent deity recalled the advice of the Teacher Buddha and then offered him the mighty gTsug-gtor-ma [or Chu-gnyer-

pa image] which was the king's most beloved possession. Later on, the Tantric master of 'Bri-gung, Seng-ge Ye-shes, was invited by the king of Pu-rang. When he detoured from the road to Pu-rang and was going [instead] to the Retaliation Cave (Lan-phug), there was a strong earthquake, and just then the master and his disciples saw Ma-dros-pa, the king of the serpent deities, manifest as a very long, venomous snake. [98b] It then blocked the valley, laying across it from one side to the other, and asked them not to proceed with their detour. And the way in which it asked for the vow of the aspiration to awakening is elucidated in the biography of Seng-ge Ye-shes. Still later, the Tantric master of 'Bri-gung and local religious administrator of the mountain lDa-ma Kun-dga' Grags-pa (16th cent.) went to the shore of mTsho Ma-pham. And having bound the Lord of the lake by oath, he took a handful of pebbles from out of the lake and among them there appeared in his hand a black stone with the six-syllable ritual formula self-produced in white stone on its surface, as if it had been made by a skilled craftsman. It is said that this was offered to him by Ma-dros-pa the king of the serpent deities, and these days it remains as an important sacred representation within sGang-sngon monastery in La-dwags.

There appear to be many amazing stories [98b], such as these, of how this serpent deity cultivated his devotion towards the highest lamas of this lineage. And as a consequence of the compassion of those highest of victors, when I too initially arrived at Se-ba-lung valley, the eastern entrance to Ma-pham, during the wood-horse year (=1894), on that occasion I offered such things as serpent deity medicine (*klu-sman*) and serpent deity ritual cakes (*klu-gtor*) to the lake and a beautiful dwelling-tent of five-coloured rainbow appeared in the sky. It was pitched in the middle of the lake as if by way of a rainbow centre pole, and at the foot of sPos-ri ngad-ldan mountain to the south, on that morning when I stopped for a rest, everybody there saw the canopy of rainbow over the lake. Once when I halted on the lake shore at Bathing Entrance (*Kirus-sgo*) monastery, there appeared also a vision of the Teacher Buddha directly manifest in amongst the clouds in the sky in front of me [99a].

During the last 80 years or so the stream connecting lakes Ma-pham and La-pags ceased to flow as the level of Ma-pham had dropped. However, on the night when I stayed there the lake level began to rise suddenly, probably on account of my offering serpent deity medicine and requisites to the lake. That night the channel between the two lakes rose up to about calf-height on persons who crossed it. Then, five or six days later it was around knee-deep, and then gradually it became more and more swollen until even horses had to swim across it. Such things also can be taken as signs that the king of the serpent deities is pleased.

Thirdly, the benefits of performing circumambulations, prostrations and bathing at this lake. As for the statements about the good qualities which its waters possess, [99b] the religious king Srong-btsan sGam-po (7th cent.) said,

There is a bodhisattva king of the serpent deities in mTsho Ma-pham.
The waters in it also possess good qualities.

And the great meditation master Padmasambhava said,

The turquoise lake Ma-pham can be circled with a day's horse ride.
 It is the same for the lake of Dha-na-ko-sha.
 Whoever circumambulates it with sincere faith,
 Will attain Buddhahood without having to seek it elsewhere.
 Circumambulating it will purify the five inexpressible sins.
 Those drinking from and bathing in the turquoise lake will go to the
 Great Bliss Celestial Action Abode.

In general, the water of this very lake is not only endowed with eight properties, it is said to possess a quality which can purify ones transgressions and defilements and close the door to lower rebirths merely by drinking it or bathing in it. Concerning this lake, [100a] the Buddha and his disciples have said that it is a superior lake which Buddhas and bodhisattvas have empowered. If a person were to perform circumambulations of it with the knowledge that it is like this, even if they were a monstrous sinner who had committed the five inexpressible sins, as soon as they died the door to lower rebirths would close. And if one drinks from it and bathes there with faith, according to what was said above by the precious meditation master [Padmasambhava] one would take birth in the divine field of Celestial Action.

Appendix:

A Brief History of the Monasteries Associated with the Lake

Furthermore, there are eight [monasteries arranged clockwise around] the great lake:

1. To the east of the Ma-dros ocean is the Thorn Bush Valley (Se-ba-lung) monastery, a meditation place of the peerless 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud sect.
2. To the south-east is the Pleased Head (mNyes-mgo) monastery, occupied by the glorious Sa-skyapa school.
3. [100b] To the south is the Bathing Entrance (Khrus-ngo) monastery, a religious establishment of the glorious, peerless Ri-bo dGa'-ldan-pa [i.e. dGe-lugs-pa] sect.
4. To the south-west is The Beginning (mGo-tshugs) monastery, a meditation place of rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa.
5. To the west is the Small Bird (Byi'u) monastery, a place of practice of the meditation master Padmasambhava.
6. To the north-west is the Bird Shelter of Golden Bluff (Gad-pa gSer-kyi Bya-skyib), which was prophesied by the Buddha.
7. To the north is the Elephant's Trunk (Glang-sna) Monastery, occupied by the glorious 'Brug-pa school.
8. To the north-east is Bon Mountain (Bon-ri) monastery, a religious

establishment of the glorious, peerless Ri-bo dGa'-ldan-pa sect.

Firstly, as for the one called Se-ba-lung: In the past there was a local religious administrator of the mountain, from 'Bri-gung, named dKon-mchog brGyud-'dzin (17th cent.). His mind had such a powerful meditative cognition that he understood the true state of reality. His own lama, [101a] the 'Bri-gung Zhabs-drung dKon-mchog 'Phrin-las bZang-po (1665-?1718), said to him:

The valley of the golden-surfaced Jambu river at the bathing entrance to the east of mTsho Ma-pham is a perfect practice site, which includes an upland area resembling an open lotus, a lowland area in the form of the protectors of the three classes, a mountain to the right like the eight auspicious symbols, a mountain to the left like the seven extraordinary treasures, an eight-spoked wheel in the sky and an eight-petalled lotus on the ground. In the future, at ceremonies to mark the invitation of statues of the Buddha it will be a place where gods and goddesses take a bath. Establish a hermitage there!

In accord with that he went out searching and initially, after thinking he had located the site, he laid out the foundations of a monastery on a mountain which was [101b] a part of Thog-chen. However, later on in accord with a female sky-goer's prophecy this hermitage which is presently called Se-ba-lung, or Se-ra-lung in the colloquial language, was founded in the earth-male-monkey year (=1728) 12 years after the passing away of the omniscient 'Phrin-las bZang-po. Its patron was named Zing-gir Aer-ke Chog-thu, the Lord of Thog-chen Hor-stod, a principality of gDol-pa Sha-zan to the north. He sponsored the building of the hermitage to cleanse the sin of having dispatched 60 soldiers as reinforcements when the army of the Mongol general dGa'-ldan Tshe-dbang (late 17th cent.) went against La-dwags.

The chief sacred representation which resides in this place is an image of 'Phrin-las bZang-po which is actually Avalokiteśvara. This was made exclusively [102a] out of the cremation ash and skeletal remains of that very master by lamas holding his lineage. Its internal contents include: four large and small multiplying-bone relics of the Teacher Śākyamuni; five parts of medicinal Buddhist doctrine elixir and O-rgyan Rin-po-che's [i.e. Padmasambhava's] aspiration to awakening pills; a text belonging to the great translator Vairocana; the body flesh of Bram-ze sKye-bdun; hair from the head of 'Brom[-ston] rGyal-ba'i 'Byung-gnas; a cushion belonging to the peerless Dwags-po [lHa-rje sGam-po-pa]; body flesh, hair locks and life-water pills of the Lord Chos-rgyal Phun-tshogs; the head hair, nasal blood and robes of Rigs-'dzin Chos-kyi Grags-pa; ten relic fragments of the very feet of the omniscient Bhadra; and the head hair, robes and nasal blood of dBu-skyes Bub-rje Don-grub Chos-rgyal. [102b] Not only does it contain such a powerful collection of sacred representations of many who were very learned and free from prejudice, relics of the body of absolute Buddha nature (*dhamakāya*), and so on. It contains genuine perfect cognition due to the power of having been specially consecrated by persons who have

attained perfection. And because of that, it has the exclusive ability to publicly reveal prophecies, such as whether or not one will succeed in a venture, and good and bad fortune, by way of such things as the appearance of its facial lustre.

This place also houses many other sacred representations which are empowered, including: images of Mahākāruṇika and Padmasambhava which were constructed together with that one [mentioned above]; a self-produced letter A which arrived on the hat of the local religious administrator dKon-mchog brGyud-'dzin himself; a reliquary shrine which contains many of his relics; a Buddha image which was made by the local religious administrator brTson-'grus; medicinal [clay] images of the Lord Mi-la, the glorious Phag-mo Gru-pa and the Lord 'Jig-rten mGon-po; an image [103a] of Padmasambhava which was made by the local religious administrator 'Phrin-las dBang-phyug; a relic shrine of the prostrating Chinese lama 'Jam-dbyangs bZang-po; a manuscript of the *Discourse on the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (Aṣṭāsāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra)*; a protectors temple which contains images of Mahākāla and A-phyi Chos-sgron and a multiplying-bone relic of the Buddha; an image of A-phyi Chibs-bzhon which was hand-crafted by the local religious administrator 'Phrin-las dBang-phyug; a mask of Tshe-ring-ma called Fruit-accepting Mother ('Brum-bzhes-ma).

Concerning mNyes-mgo (or Pleased Head) monastery to the south-east: Previously, when the glorious Lord Jo-bo Atiśa came to circumambulate mTsho Ma-pham, as an indication of how [103b] this spot pleased him he stayed here for several days. And after casting many votive clay tablet images (*tsha-tsha*) of deities, he constructed a shrine to house them in. Sometime after that, the one named Ngor-chen Kun-dga' lHun-grub (d. 1773) founded a monastery in this place, on the spot where a vision of Padmasambhava's head appeared to him. It contains many sacred representations, including the principal one which is a taking Tārā brought here from the Byams-sprin temple in Mang-yul. The residents of the place belong to the glorious Sa-skyapa sect.

Concerning the monastery called Khrus-sgo (or Bathing Entrance) to the south: Previously, a local religious administrator of the 'Brug-pa sect named sGyi-pa excavated a small house here for both monastic and lay hermits. Following that, a lama holding the lineage of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba arrived here from gTsang-stod, [104a] and he built a four-pillared guesthouse which eventually came to be used as the temple. In later times, during the period of the [7th] Dalai Lama bsKal-bzang rGya-mtsho (1708-1757), a dispute arose between a monk named Rab-'byams Tshul-khrims from bShad-'phel-gling monastery in Pu-rang and a local religious administrator from the 'Brug-pa sect over the sharing of the site of Khrus-sgo. It was settled by the Pho-lha *taiji* bSod-nams sTobs-rgyal (1689-1747), who gave the rDzu-sprul-phug monastery at Ti-se to the 'Brug-pa and Khrus-sgo to those at bShad[-'phel]-gling, after which the monastic subjects (*lha-brangs*) and tenant farmers (*mi-ser*) also were brought into peaceful agreement. Since then, it has been taken over as a religious establishment of the glorious, peerless Ri-bo dGa'-ldan-pa, and its monastic community who are adorned with the triple vow came to be fixed at about 18 members.

Many sacred representations of body, speech and mind are housed within the 12-pillared [104b] assembly hall, including a gold image of the Buddha Vajradhara which is the chief among them, a gold image the Buddha the height of an arrow, and images of the religious king of the three realms the Easterner Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang Grags-pa and his spiritual sons.

Concerning the monastery called mGo-tshugs (or The Beginning) to the south-west: Previously, when the glorious Lord Jo-bo Atiśa came to circumambulate the lake, he stayed for seven days in the Guesthouse Cave (mGron-khang-phug) on the shore of the lake here, and empowered it. After that, when rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa arrived here to open the entrance to this power place of snow mountain and lake, he practised for three months in the meditation cave which is now the recess in the present-day assembly-hall here. And so, it is said that because he was the one beginning (*mgo-tshugs-pa*) the spread of the doctrine of the 'Brug-pa sect at the snow mountain and lake, it was given the name The Beginning Cave (mGo-tshugs-phug) [105a]. Thus, although that is its actual name, presently it is incorrectly pronounced as "Go-zul". Later on, although a few Buddhist religious practitioners certainly came here in succession, there was no regular monastery. Later, at the time of the [10th] Dalai Lama Tshul-khrims rGya-mtsho (1816-1837), a student of the great master Zhabs-dkar rDo-rje-'chang (1781-1851) who was a monk named sByin-pa Nor-bu from the bShad-'phel-gling monastery in Pu-rang, established this monastery in accordance with a prophecy of the lord of the lake, the king of the serpent deities.

Many sacred representations of body, speech and mind are housed in this place, including: an Indian bronze of Avalokiteśvara the height of an arrow, which is the inner representation of White Crystal (Shel-dkar) lake entrance to the south; the precious Translated Teachings of the Buddha; an Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara made of sandalwood; and a silver shrine [105b] with statues of the great master [Zhabs-dkar-ba] Tshogs-drug Rang-grol and his spiritual son sByin-pa Nor-bu. There is also a community of four monks living here who wear saffron robes and adhere to the three vows.

Concerning the monastery called Khrus-sgo Byi'u (or Small Bird Bathing Entrance) to the west: The monastery is situated on top of a rocky hill which is shaped like a heart. It has the layout of the Glorious Copper-coloured Mountain [Paradise of Padmasambhava]. In the past here, Padmasambhava stayed for seven days in this rock cave in preparation for his journey to subdue a demon to the south-west, and he left behind his footprint on a rock. There is an image of Padmasambhava made of sandalwood, and the one that is housed here today is said to have been hand-crafted by the Guru himself. The residents of the place are of the glorious 'Brug-pa sect, and also there is a meditation community who hold the doctrinal lineage of sDing-che Don-grub mThong-smon.

[106a] Concerning the monastery called Bya-skyib (or Bird Shelter) to the north-west: It is identified with the so-called Bird Shelter of Golden Bluff (Gad-pa gSer-kyi Bya-skyib), which was prophesied by the Teacher Buddha in the past. When the Buddha came here long ago, this cave itself in which his retinue of 500 Buddhist worthy ones dwelt was self-produced in the rock. Later, it was

occupied for a long time by the 'Bri-gung sPyan-snga Shes-rab 'Byung-gnas (1187-1241) together with his retinue of 500 meditators, and it came to be owned by the 'Bri-gung-pa sect. Following that, the Tantric master gTsang-smyon-pa arrived, and although he established a meditation community which flourished, finally later on it is said that due to the vile intrigues of a destructive war most of the [106b] caves fell into the lake, and the meditation community was abandoned. Nowadays there are about four caves, and in the temple which was founded here by the glorious lHo-'brug-pa sect who occupy the place there are such things as the Lake Viewing (mTsho-gzigs-ma) statue of O-rgyan Rin-po-che, an Indian bronze image of Vajrasattva and an image of the mighty Teacher Buddha made out of Central Indian bronze.

Concerning the monastery named Khrus-sgo Glang-sna (or Elephant's Trunk Bathing Entrance) to the north: Because the monastery is situated on the side of a hill shaped like an elephant (*glang-chen*), it is said to have been named in that way. Furthermore, originally this monastery was founded by the Tantric master named sNye-mo-ba bSam-gtan Phun-tshogs after he had meditated for many years at Ti-se. After that, his own reincarnation Kun-dga' Blo-gros sNying-po [107a] is said to have built it up, having laid out the buildings of this monastery as a replica of those at 'Bri-gung Yang-ri-sgar. The chief sacred representation here is a statue of the Lord Śākyamuni which has in its heart an image of Vajravārāhī which arrived self-produced from a drop of the protector of beings gTsang-pa rGya-ras's melted butter. There are also such things as: an evil-conquering reliquary shrine; a manuscript of the *Discourse on the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*; a protectors temple with a four-armed Mahākāla; a temple which contains the precious *Translated Teachings* of the Buddha; and private quarters which house the *Collected Works (gsung-'bum)* of the Omniscient Padma dKar-po. The place is also occupied by monks of the 'Brug-pa sect [107b].

Concerning the monastery named Bon-ri (or Bon Mountain) to the northeast: Previously, when the Master Mi-la defeated Na-ro Bon-chung here with his magical powers, Bon-chung said to him "Indeed, by way of your superior ability with magical powers you have gained control of Ti-se. Do you think there is a resting place in the area where I at least could look out on this power place?" The Master replied "You yourself stay there!" and threw a handful of snow to the east, a little of which landed on the peak of Mount sTag-le in the east. This story is elucidated in the Master's biography, and this mountain [Bon-ri] is said to have been named that way because it is the same one. As for the monastery, when a long time had elapsed after the great Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419), the king of the Buddhist doctrine and second Buddha Manjuśrī had mastered [108a] the entire teachings of the Buddha in the northern land of Tibet, an accomplished scholar named Blo-bzang Nor-bu who came from the great seat of Se-ra Theg-chen-gling [in Lhasa] performed meditation on the slopes of Ti-se snow mountain. Thus, when he had become a leading exponent of the Buddha's teachings after perfecting his knowledge and comprehension, he established this same religious community with the help of patrons from Hor. This place contains all kinds of sacred representations of body, speech and mind, including: a statue of the

Teacher Buddha; an image of the Buddha 'Jam-dpal sNying-po [i.e. of the enlightened Tsong-kha-pa in the Tuṣita heavens]; the precious *Translated Teachings* of the Buddha; a relic shrine of the successive reincarnate lamas here. The place is also occupied by followers of the sect who are holders of the purified golden crown [i.e. dGe-lugs-pa]. [108b] That concludes my account of the history of both mountain and lake.

[110a...] *A Short Prayer to the
Three Power Places Ti-se, Ma-pham and Pre-ta-pu-ri*

Praise to the Teacher!

I pray to the perfected site of action on the earth (Bhūcara),
Hi-ma-la[-ya], a palace of the Buddha together with his sons,
[Who are as numerous] as a pod full of sesame seeds and include
The splendid king victorious Heruka and his retinue of 62 deities.

I pray to Pre-ta-pu-ri, the site of Tantric action under the earth,
Where the mighty queen of female sky-goers, Vārāhī,
Together with an ocean-like assembly of female attendants [110b],
Sport in the dance and music which are the pure state of bliss and
emptiness.

I pray to the dwelling [lake] of faithful Ma-dros [king of serpent deities],
The pool of elixir which washes off impurities and faults,
The miraculously manifested divine mansion
Which was praised and empowered by the Buddha's pronouncement.

When I pray with an intense faith in mind
To this great offering shine which is a magical appearance of [Buddha's]
body, speech and mind,
And where infinite Buddhas compassionately favour all beings,
Empower me to obtain the supreme and mundane paranormal powers.

Let a burning lamp filled with the assiduous penance
Of my prostrations, circumambulations, offerings, and so on [111a],
Instantly overcome the darkness of defilements accumulated over
numberless aeons,
And then burn perpetually with a clear light of happiness and bliss!

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Perceptions of Landscape in Karzha: “Sacred” Geography and the Tibetan System of “Geomancy”

Elisabeth Stutchbury

Abstract

In this paper I examine some of the ways in which the landscape of Karzha (dKar-zha, Gar-zhwa, Gar-sha, Ga-sha, Gar-za)¹ is perceived and talked about. I briefly discuss the perception of Karzha as a *maṇḍala*, at the centre of which is the peak Drilburi (Dril-bu-ri), the bell mountain. Emphasis is then directed to “geomantic” considerations, which include the way in which chorten (*mchod-rten*, Skt. *stūpa*) are seen to modify the landscape, creating harmony and balance within the community and in the people’s relationship to their environment. This discussion is contextualized, considering a broader Tibetan perspective, which entails some consideration of both Chinese and Indian influences on the conceptualizations of landscape and geography. The perceived correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm provide the framework within which individuals and communities locate themselves in their surroundings.

Background—Political and Cultural Geography

At the present time, due to political conditions which have prevailed since 1959, research opportunities in “Tibet”² are limited. Most anthropological studies of Tibetan society and the Tibetan “symbolic world” have either been carried out among refugee communities, particularly those in India, or among several of the culturally related ethnic minorities who inhabit the Himalaya, such as the Tamang, Gurung and Sherpa of Nepal.³

The region which is the focus of my anthropological investigations is known locally as “Karzha”, and is part of Lahul, a sub-district of Himachal Pradesh, India. Lahul is comprised of three narrow valleys, two rivers and the upper reaches of their confluence. To the north lies Zangskar and Ladakh, and to the

east Spiti—three culturally related areas, which, like Lahul, are politically in India, and which border with what is now known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region, part of the People's Republic of China. Himachal Pradesh is close to India's international border with Pakistan, adjoining the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab. This frontier region⁴ is thus one of acute political sensitivity, and obtaining permission to do fieldwork there was not an easy process, though in retrospect there can be no doubt that it was well worth the effort.

The valleys of Lahul form part of the trade corridor through the Western Himalaya, with art historical evidence from the seventh century onwards suggesting Buddhist cultural affiliations, particularly with early tantrism.⁵ Lahul itself is in the Inner Himalaya, and experiences the dry arid conditions typical of the rain shadow. One enters Lahul from the south through the Kulu-Manali valley, which experiences monsoon from June to September. In crossing the Rohtang (Ro-thang, "Plain of Corpses") Pass (13,000 ft) one leaves behind the forests and Hindu peoples of Kulu-Manali and enters the glaciated valleys and mountainous terrain of Buddhist Lahul.⁶ For six months of the year snow closes this pass, isolating Lahul from the rest of India.

One of the challenges of working with a people who have lived on the periphery of the Tibetan cultural arena for centuries, rather than in "Tibet" or with people who regard themselves as Tibetan (a perception of ethnic identity), is to give appropriate recognition to the larger cultural arena whilst simultaneously appreciating and giving primacy to the people with whom one has lived—to provide a broader perspective which contextualizes an ethnography of the particular.⁷ In the lower Bhaga valley of Lahul, where I focused my research, people construct their identity depending upon particular circumstance. Within a continuum of identity which is oriented to modern India on the one hand, and towards Tibet and Buddhism on the other, some people may see themselves more as one or the other, thus an essential part of living in this valley corridor through the Himalayan ranges of the Pir Panjal is the elision of identity. They are "Lahuli" and Indian, and may refrain from eating beef, and perhaps are Hindu, but are also "Karzhapa" and Buddhist, and more particularly, Drukpa Kargyu ('Brug-pa bka'-brgyud or dkar-brgyud).⁸

Introduction—Place, Pilgrimage and Oral Traditions

Some of my understanding and appreciation of the Karzhapa, and particularly those from Kardang village and gonpa, where I stayed, has grown out of the local oral traditions associated with the né (*gnas*, "power places"). Jabjez (*zhabs-rjes*, "knee prints") Gonpa in Kardang village houses the knee prints of the thirteenth century Drukpa yogin Gyalwa Gotsangpa Gonpo Dorje (rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje, 1189-1258), who left these knee prints in a large rock after one particular encounter with a *dākinī* from Gondhla village on the Chandra river. Pilgrims performing the one-day khora (*skor-ba*, "circumambulation") of Drillburi, visit Jabjez, and often stay overnight at Kardang

Gonpa, before beginning the arduous climb up over the pass that leads to this golden bell-shaped peak, understood to be the metamorphosed consort of the siddha Ghantapa,⁹ and the residence of Khorlo Demchog (*'Khor-lo bde-mchog*, Skt. Cakrasaṃvara) the main yidam (*yi-dam*, “meditational deity”) of the Drukpa yogic tradition. The narrow path then leads down to Guru Ghantal, a temple attributed locally to Padmasambhava and the cremation ground (*dur-khrod*) at the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, which in the local oral traditions is regarded as one of the eight.¹⁰ This is the main pilgrimage route in Karzha.

There are also several important caves associated with Gyalwa Gotsangpa, including the cave above Sila from where Gotsangpa first noticed the *dākinī* at Gondhla; Gotsangpa Drupdé (*grub-sde*), now known as Lama Gonpa; and Gotsangpa’s summer caves, Yurdzong (*dByar-rdzong*), on the other side of the valley. These are visited by practitioners with a particular interest in the lineages associated with Gyalwa Gotsangpa, such as the Six Yogas of Nāropa (*Nā-ro'i chos-drug*). These caves constitute another pilgrimage route in Karzha, although one normally used only by yoga practitioners.

The vibrant, local oral traditions associated with these various sites are recounted to those interested pilgrims and practitioners when they are visited. Although Gotsangpa’s namthar (*rnam-thar*, “hagiography”) provides textual evidence which confirms Gotsangpa’s sojourn in Karzha, the practitioners who live in these small village gonpa and hermitages do not read these texts.¹¹ Karzha ké (*skad*, “language”), although a Tibetan dialect, is significantly different from the better known Tibetan dialects, and has no orthography. The people in Karzha therefore rely on the stories which have been passed down for generations to inform them of the yogins and heroes from the past who have visited these valleys, and through their meditative activities transformed and empowered the landscape.

After having heard these stories on several occasions, and through my own attempts to familiarize myself with the meditative traditions practised at Kardang Gonpa, I realized that the whole environment was perceived to be a *maṇḍala*—the passes and river valleys through which one can enter Karzha are the gates, and the peak Drillburi the centre. The river valleys are the outer khora, the Gotsangpa caves an inner one, and the path which leads to the bell peak itself the secret khora. I have presented this material in some detail elsewhere (Stutchbury 1991: esp. Chaps. 2 & 8, and forthcoming).

In the present discussion I will expand this presentation of how landscape is perceived in Karzha. Such perceptions include correlations between tantric deities, particularly Khorlo Demchog, and geographical forms, and are embedded in the long tantric history of the region. Spirits and protectors are associated with particular places, such as springs, trees and peaks. Other perceptions of figures and beings in landscape are also common place, and within these various perceptions the movement of the sun both diurnally and annually measures the passing of cyclical time.

Within Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions there are two frameworks which provide a fundamental appreciation into the nature of reality, and which are

taught in the meditative traditions, so that the practitioner embodies their understanding.¹² The most essential is the appreciation that all matter is constituted of the elements, normally constructed as five. Manifesting as solid matter in their impure state, these elements can be transformed into their pure form, light, through the various yogic and meditative techniques. This elemental construct is the basis of the Tibetan system of healing, which also employs a construction of the inner energetic pathways of the body, the *tsa* (*rtsa*, Skt. *nāḍī*) or “psychic veins”, along which the energy or wind (*rlung*, Skt. *prāṇa*) moves. The second framework which interpenetrates with this, is the conceptualization of the *trikāya* (lit. “three bodies”). The level of apparent reality which manifests as solid matter is *nirmāṇakāya*. *Sambhogakāya* arises through purification, and as such is both an embodied state and the associated perceptions which accompany this state. *Dharmakāya*, the ultimate ground of existence, is beyond these methods, techniques and constructs, although in enlightened realization this state is also embodied. Such being is buddha.

These two frameworks apply equally to all outer manifestations, including the landscape, as well as to embodied experience, including perception and indeed all contact through the senses. They are accessed in healing, whether through the “technologies of consciousness” employed in yogic and meditative techniques, or through the manipulations and purposeful adjustments of the healer, who may effect change in the embodied experience of others, or in the external world.

It follows, then, that the entire environment is understood to pulse with the energy of existence. Furthermore, it is not only these currents of energy that are the landscape, embodied in the geographical features, that are detected and understood, but also the effects on all buildings and habitations. It is these various perceptions which I explore in this article.

Crouching Lions, Reclining Women and the Protector Gephan

Not all perceptions of landscape in Karzha are associated with the Indian derived *maṇḍala* schema, as demonstrated in the following translation of some verses from a prayer written about the peak Drilburi in the eighteenth century by a Ladakhi yogin-saint:

Pure Land of the Lord (the wheel of great bliss)...
 Mountain where the worldly can purify the obscurations to knowledge,
 Place where practitioners can increase their experience and insight,
 Place where hypocrites disappear in the wind...
 The mind is clarified here and confusion diminished...
 To the right and left are many kinds of crops and
 In front the *maṇḍala* is prepared with devotion.
 Here in this central spot where three valleys come together
 Is the place of the triangle from which all phenomena originate.
 The mountain to the right is like a pile of jewels,
 The mountain to the left like the fierce deity King of Wrath,

The mountain in front like the triangle of origin piled up,
 The mountain behind like a crouching lion
 Such is this best and most blessed place,
 An abode of the yogins of the past
 A place for practitioners in the future...¹³

Many significant features of the landscape, such as the “mountain in front” which is described as “a crouching lion”, are perceived as animal or human in form, or as a deity or some other being. Not only is the peak Drilburi the empowered and empowering, highly charged abode of Khorlo Demchog at the centre of the *maṇḍala*, but other features, such as the glacier and the double peaks facing Kardang gonpa, in the north, are seen as a Demchog né. This site, which is called Kyarkyogs (Kyar-skyogs?)¹⁴ is not approachable, due to the difficulty of the terrain, and is thus not a place of pilgrimage in the literal sense. However, this remarkable glacier and mountains, facing Kardang Gonpa, tower over the valley below, part of the skyscape which fills the meditators’ gaze, as they sit on the roof-tops of the small gonpa houses, for hours at a time. The double peaks are Khorlo Demchog yabyum, with the face, the eyes and head of the elephant skin which this deity holds clearly visible in the glacier.¹⁵

It seems that few peaks are not imbued with meaning through the perceived presence of a deity or some other being which not only gives form and shape to the geographical feature, but is seen to emanate the energy of being of that form. During the course of my fieldwork I recorded many statements made about the landscape. For instance, from Manali when one looks towards Lahul, one sees, or can be taught to see in the rock formations, a woman reclined on her back, her long hair flowing beside her. Although some features of the landscape are understood as deities, and perhaps appreciated more by the practitioners involved in the tantric cycle of teachings, other beings, such as the reclining woman, are commonly appreciated, and the ability to “see” her, although it may take time, as the terrain is described in detail and the correspondences mapped out, are not associated in any way with insight developed through spiritual practice. However, it may well be that the correspondences were understood through such insight, and have passed into popular perception.

No stories about this reclining woman were told to me during the several occasions that her form was mapped out for me, perhaps indicating the decline of an oral tradition. Although there is a common appreciation that King Gesar (Ge-sar) of Ling (Gling) made the Rohtang Pass, thus opening the way between Karzha and the Kulu-Manali valley, I did not record any of these myths, and indeed it seems that there are few, if any, Gesar singers still active in this region.¹⁶ However, a short version of this myth was recorded by Gill, the first District Commissioner appointed to the region in 1962.¹⁷ King Gesar cut open the Rohtang Pass with his riding crop, but was detained in amorous dalliance at Rahla falls, below the pass on the Manali side, by the beautiful *rakshasini* (Skt. *rākṣasa*)¹⁸ of Rahla, who bewitched King Gesar, causing him to forget his duties to his people and country. Finally King Gesar contrived to escape, and as he could not take the Rahla *rakshasini* with him because the earth gods and others of Tibet would

be displeased with her, he made a plan to trick her and kill her. She was to travel with him, holding the tail of his horse as two could not ride the horse. The horse kicked her so that she "was hurled with great force against the nearby cliff and killed. So great was the force that the outline of a woman was impressed into the rock, and can be seen to this day" (Gill 1977: 98).

From further down the Beas river near Kulu, as one approaches Manali, two gleaming snow peaks come into view, indicating the presence of the Pir Panjal range of the Himalaya. These two peaks are identified as Gephan, the mountain protector of Lahul who can ensure safe passage. As one crosses the Rohtang Pass and enters Lahul, these twin peaks, and other mountains and glaciers, loom above on the other side of the valley. The descent into Lahul leads to the narrow Chandra valley. Downstream, the valley becomes a little wider between Sissu and Gondhla. This plain is called Rohlangtang (Ro-langs thang, "Plain of Possessed Corpses") and I was told that an invading Mongol army was swept away by an avalanche sent by Gephan.¹⁹ Shields and other weapons have been unearthed from the fields, some of which are kept in a small temple to Gephan at Sissu. Travellers, including the bus drivers, stop and leave a small offering there before proceeding further into Lahul along the narrow and dangerous roads.²⁰ The *pujari* provides those who enter the temple with thin strips of fabric to be worn as a protection.

The golden peak of Drilburi also dominates the mountain landscape as the traveller proceeds down the Chandra river, sometimes clearly in view and sometimes obscured by the ridges surrounding it. As the traveller reaches the confluence of the rivers it is permanently obscured, visible again in the distance from the higher reaches of the Bhaga valley. Only if the pilgrim climbs the long arduous pathway from Kardang village, past the gonpa, and across the pass marked by the seven pyramid shaped rocks, known as Sangye Rabdun (Sangrgyas rabs-bdun,²¹ "the Seven Buddhas"), can Drilburi be encountered from closer quarters. These seven rocks, and Kyarkyogs, the Demchog né mentioned previously, as well as three mountains to the east of Kardang Gonpa, identified as the three bodhisattvas Jampel Yang ('Jam-dpal-dbyangs, Skt. Mañjuśrī) Chenrezig (sPyan-ras-gzigs, Skt. Avalokiteśvara) and Charna Dorje (Phyag-na rdo-rje, Skt. Vajrapāṇi) are all regarded as né, empowered and empowering sites, enlivened with the energy of the deities with whom they are associated. Although the pilgrim traverses the pass near Sangye Rabdun, none of these sites are visited. Rather, they imbue the landscape with the quality of the enlightened beings they are seen to be.

The Sun, Mountains and Passage of Time

When the sun rises from behind the mountain Vajrapāṇi, it is the winter solstice, the 22nd of December, and the beginning of the village year. For a week or two at this time of year the top two houses on the eastern perimeter of Kardang Gonpa are cast in the shadow of Nyimafed Latse (Nyi-ma-phyed la-rtse),²² a small mountain behind Kardang Gonpa, to the east of which lies the pass leading

to Drilburi, and Sangye Rabdun. The passage of the sun in relation to this peak divides each day. In Karzha ké, as in several Tibetan dialects, “Nyima” means both “sun”, and “day”; and Nyimafed (*nyi-ma phyed*), “noon” or “mid-day”. Latse (*la-rtse*) means “the tip of the peak”. When the sun is directly above the tip of the peak it is mid-day. Of course, these days, many use mechanical and quartz time pieces to organize meetings and schedules. However, the sun’s path across the sky in relation to this pyramid peak effectively marks the passage of time, and is still used, perhaps when working in the fields.²³

In these narrow mountainous valleys, the movement of the sun in relation to the direction in which the valley runs is critical, affecting the local climate and temperature significantly. The Bhaga valley generally lies on an east-west axis. Depending upon specific location in the valley, the sun falls below the peak of Nyimafed Latse during mid-winter in the middle of the day, and sets behind high ridges at varying times. The villages of Barbog, Pasparag and Gozzang are cast in shadows in the middle of the day. Indeed villages on the southern side of the valley, including Kardang, generally experience a colder winter.²⁴ Lama Gonpa, the small hermitage built on a ridge and rock outcrop above Gozzang village, around the winter cave of Gyalwa Gotsangpa, is much warmer than the other places on the south side of the valley.²⁵ While this is a benefit in the winter, it makes Lama Gonpa quite hot in summer. Indeed, Gyalwa Gotsangpa found Gotsangpa Drupdé too warm for his yogic practices in the summer, and so moved to the other side of the valley, further downstream to a cooler cave, now known as Yurdong or Yurdzong, the “summer castle”.

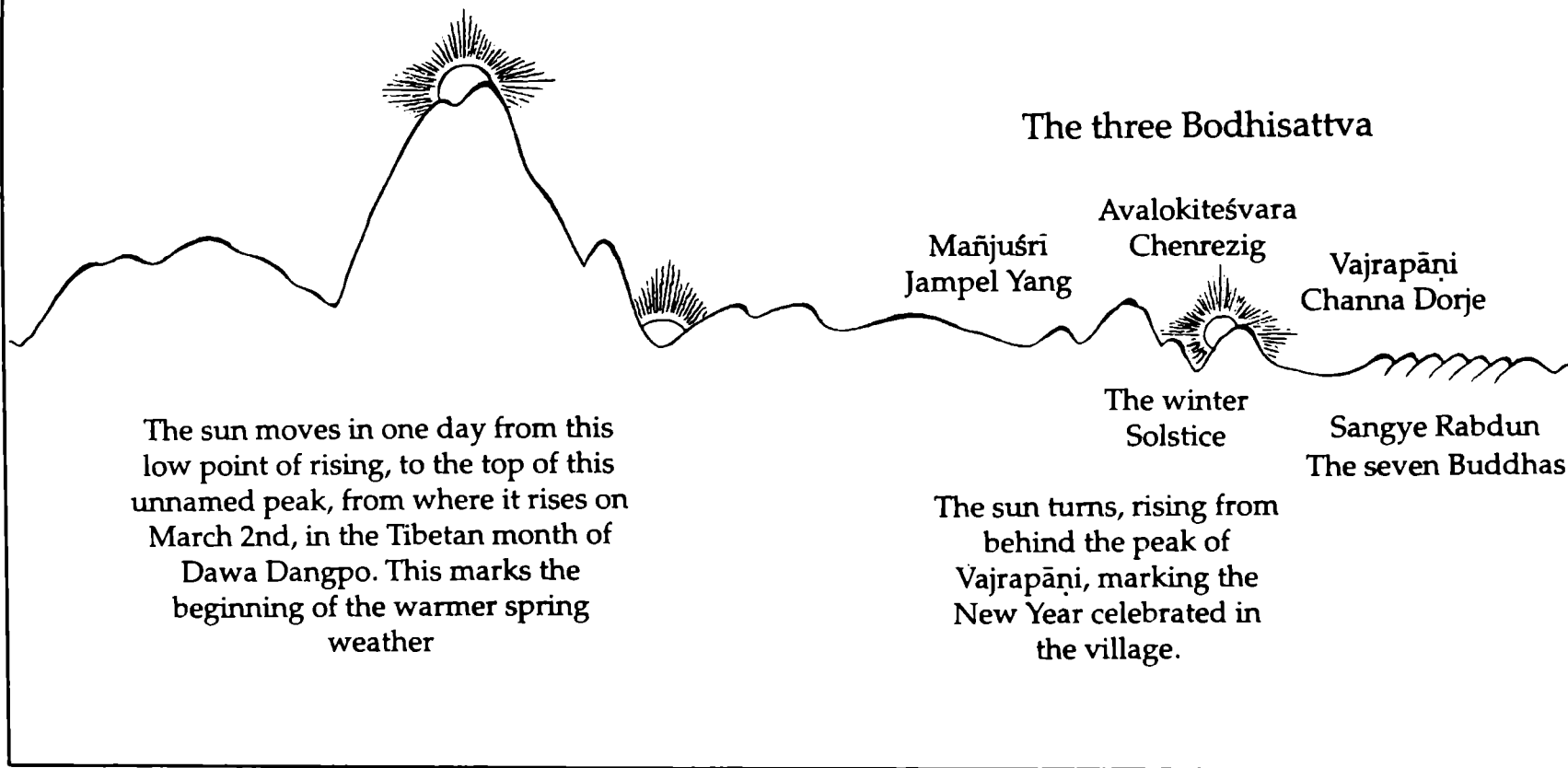
The point of the sun’s rising is well mapped, not only allowing the accurate determination of the solstice, but also the end of the cold, severe winter. As my friend Lama Paljor, whose sketch of the eastern skyline is given in figure 1 explained to me, it takes the sun only one day to move its point of rising from the bottom of one particular mountain to the top.²⁶ March 2nd, when the sun rises from the top of this mountain, is a joyous day indicating the very beginning of spring and warmer weather, usually falling in dawa dangpo (*zla-ba dang-po*), the auspicious first month of the Tibetan calendar.²⁷

Satalegpa—Land which Is Auspicious and Good

In Karzha, in the deep of winter when the snowfall is heaviest, people do not travel between their village or gonpa, and any other place. For two or three months the risk of avalanche is high, and during this period those villagers who have not decided to winter-over in Kulu-Manali engage in the village ritual cycle, including the new year celebrations when the sun turns, and bouts of drinking and story-telling, while the practitioners at the gonpa immerse themselves in the yogic meditations of their practice lineage.

The physical constraint of flat land free from the paths of avalanches is important in the choice of any building site in Lahul, and such sites are limited. Extensive terracing of slopes has provided sites for construction creating areas of flat land. The site for Kardang Gonpa is also protected by several terraced

THE EASTERN SKYLINE VIEW FROM KARDANG GONPA (*From sketch by Lama Paljor Lharje*)



The sun moves in one day from this low point of rising, to the top of this unnamed peak, from where it rises on March 2nd, in the Tibetan month of Dawa Dangpo. This marks the beginning of the warmer spring weather

The sun turns, rising from behind the peak of Vajrapāṇi, marking the New Year celebrated in the village.

The three Bodhisattva

Mañjuśrī
Jampel Yang

Avalokiteśvara
Chenrezig

Vajrapāṇi
Channa Dorje

The winter
Solstice

Sangye Rabdun
The seven Buddhas

Figure 1 Sketch of the eastern skyline view from Kardang Gonpa.

walls which run across the slope behind the gonpa buildings, stabilizing the snow which falls between late October and March. However, these are not the only constraints when a site for a gonpa is chosen.

Of course, the movement of the sun and the extent to which a site is comfortable, warm in winter and cool in summer, is important when selecting a site for meditation, or indeed for any human habitation. So it is ideal if a house can be built on an east-west axis, facing the east, for such a position not only optimizes the benefits of the sun, but is said to provide the basis of *satalegpa* (*sabkra legs-pa*), "land which is auspicious and good", and conducive to a balance of energy between a person and the surrounding environment.²⁸ As is clear from the discussion above, in the area of Karzha in the lower Bhaga valley, there are few such sites, for the lie of the land is on a north-south axis, and most buildings on the southern side of the valley are built facing north, while those of the opposite side of the valley generally face south.

Given these constraints, the site for Kardang gonpa, which was built in 1912, was considered to be particularly auspicious as it was marked with a chorten²⁹ containing the remains of a spiritual practitioner and teacher who had cared for Jabjez Gonpa in the village. The terraced site allows the buildings to nestle into the slope with a pyramid-shaped peak of Nyimafed Latse behind it, and has a spring at some distance, to the right.³⁰ Furthermore, the practitioner who founded the gonpa had ritually purified the area, and lay the foundations correctly, all of which are seen to contribute to the wealth and well-being of the gonpa and its inhabitants.³¹

Since 1912, Kardang Gonpa has grown to be the largest and most active religious establishment in Lahul today, with about 30 members. Previously, Shashur Gonpa, on the opposite side of the valley, was the biggest gonpa, but its membership has now dwindled to a half dozen or so individuals. My analysis of this situation considered the political and economic changes in Lahul, Shashur Gonpa's proximity to the administrative capital, and so on.

The people of Karzha, however, explained this situation with reference to *satalegpa*. In their discussion, not only were the specific qualities of both sites considered, but the relationship between the sites, the complete dynamics of the built structures and their influence on the people, and on the balance and harmony of the environment were also described. The site of Kardang Gonpa is regarded as being reasonably auspicious, as I have indicated. Furthermore, it directly faces Shashur Gonpa across the valley, and it is thought that the newer gonpa actually draws "energy" away from Shashur Gonpa. This is a *post hoc* explanation used when evaluating the relative wealth and popularity of the gonpa in that it was not intended that Kardang should supplant Shashur as the biggest gonpa in Lahul.

For the people of Karzha, reference to *satalegpa*, placing attention on the specific geographical location of buildings, the relationship between them in terms of the overall balance of the landscape and the activity of people within this framework, has greater explanatory power than does an analysis which gives priority to economic and political considerations, *per se*. *Satalegpa* provides

a more fundamental level of analysis, in which people's activities, including their economic and political behaviour, are appreciated.

Chorten—Symbolic Microcosms Healing the Landscape

In 1983 during the last 12 months of fieldwork, three chorten were built: one at Kardang Gonpa, one in Kardang village and one about two hours' walk up the Bhaga valley, in Labchang village. I have elsewhere provided a detailed description and analysis of the social context surrounding the construction of these chorten, demonstrating that the processes involved led to increased co-operation and interaction between the villagers and spiritual practitioners. Furthermore, particularly in the building of the large Kardang village chorten, the people were asserting their ethnic identity in what I have interpreted as a process of religious revitalization in the face of increasing political and economic encapsulation within the Indian nation.³²

In this discussion I wish to evaluate the chorten and its significance for the way in which geographical terrain is perceived and talked about, that is, the ways in which a chorten can modify the quality of a particular site. There are many chorten enlivening the landscape of Lahul. Some are associated with spiritual practitioners and yogins of the past who visited and practiced in the caves, such as the old chorten in disrepair at the mouth of Gotsangpa's cave above Sila, near Gondhla, and the chorten which marked the site for Kardang Gonpa. A chorten stands in the cremation ground at the confluence of the Chandra and the Bhaga rivers. Other kudung (*sku-gdung*) chorten encase the cremated remains of important teachers, such as that of Khunu Rinpoche (Khunu Rin-po-che bsTan-'dzin rGyal-mtshan, 1885-1977), on the other side of the valley near Shashur Gonpa, on the slope facing Kardang. There are several other chorten, some of them in a state of disrepair, about which nothing is now known.

In the local oral tradition of Karzha, the efficaciousness of chorten to heal, protect and balance is recognized in the large chorten on the periphery of Gumrang village. Although avalanches sweep down the mountainside each winter, they do not touch the chorten or encroach upon the village. As mentioned, avalanches are a cause of considerable concern in Lahul, preventing travel between villages for two or three months each winter. I was told that avalanches had caused destruction in Gumrang village before Rinchen Zangpo (Rin-chen bZang-po, 958-1055 AD) instructed and guided the villagers with the construction of this chorten.

Oral Traditions and the Past into the Present

This attribution of the Gumrang village chorten to Rinchen Zangpo, who was a tenth century translator and temple builder, raises several issues to which I have already alluded. The historicity of this claim, and others such as the assertion that the cremation ground at the confluence of the Chandra Bhaga is one of the eight associated with Padmasambhava, can be examined through textual and

art historical evidence.³³ Such evaluations are useful, and are certainly part of the process of contextualizing the local traditions within the broader Tibetan cultural milieu. For instance, when identifiable place names such as “Garza”, “Drilburi” and “Gandhala” (Guru Ghantal) are mentioned in namthar as part of the pilgrimage itineraries of historical figures, such as Gotsangpa and Orgyanpa (O-rgyan-pa, 1230-1293?), his disciple, we can confirm that during the thirteenth century Karzha was certainly part of an extensive pilgrimage network travelled by Tibetan yogins.³⁴ It seems that by the thirteenth century Tibetan pilgrims were locating all of the 24 *pīṭha* of the *vajra*-body in the Cakrasaṃvara tantra in north-west India.³⁵ The process of contextualizing and confirming local traditions is complicated, an issue that I take up elsewhere (Stutchbury forthcoming).

There is much to be learnt from the local oral traditions associated with particular sites and practice lineages which can greatly enhance our understanding of the importance of empowered and empowering sites within the Tibetan tradition, and the way landscape is perceived, shaped and acted upon, and meditated within. In this investigation, historical certainties which fix person and place in historical time are not as significant as developing an appreciation for the way in which the vibrant practice traditions, including that of pilgrimage with the oral narratives about yogins, their meditations and yogic feats and encounters with *ḍākinī*-s, bring “past” events into the present. Although the Karzhapa practitioners with whom I discussed these matters appreciated that Gyalwa Gotsangpa lived before living memory (about four generations or a hundred or so years), they could not conceptualize that seven or so centuries had elapsed since his sojourn in Karzha, or that the chorten in Gumrang village had a remarkable record of protecting that place from avalanche for ten centuries!

The landscape of Karzha is considered to be both empowered and empowering. We might interpret this with the suggestion that there is a “sacred”³⁶ geography which somehow *interpenetrates* with the mundane geographical features of the landscape, and that furthermore the process of sanctification is understood to be intrinsically linked to the meditational powers of yogic practitioners. Insight into the nature of existence developed through yogic practice enables the meditator to perceive the landscape directly and essentially, resulting in readings such as those presented above. Moreover, the process of yogic practice further enhances the power or vibrational energy of the site. The inner workings of the yogic mind-body complex are understood as a microcosm which connects with and effects the macrocosm, the total environment, centred on the place of practice, typically a cave, and *vice versa*. Thus, the particular site chosen for practice can enhance or detract from the meditational experience.³⁷

I have elsewhere explored this conceptualization of the mind-body complex through the “technology of consciousness” developed in meditation,³⁸ and will here focus on perceptions of landscape. That is, I look more to the geographical macrocosm, rather than to the microcosm, though a relationship between the two is implicit.

The yogins of Karzha, through the tantric practices of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly from the Cakrasaṃvara cycle, have transformed ordinary

geographical features, such as rivers, caves, rocks and mountains—the macrocosm—into “sacred” places which constitute a “sacred” geography conceptualized as a *maṇḍala*. However, this transformation is as much a transformation of perception as a transformation of landscape, for the spiritual practitioners have developed the ability to realize that which was already present within the geographical domain and in so doing, further enhance and energize it. In this way, the practitioners embody the *sambhogakāya*.

Clearly, the correspondences perceived between microcosm and macrocosm are central to our understanding of the essential energy which is considered to imbue the landscape, and furthermore is available to anyone who goes to these places and engages in spiritual practice, either by simply undertaking pilgrimage, or by retreating into a cave for some time and actually performing the same practices as the yogins of the past. The oral traditions associated with these sites give immediacy to this spiritual presence which is ever present, and the quality of timelessness which permeates the landscape.

Crisis at Labchang

When an unexpected crisis developed at Labchang Gonpa, about two hours walk upstream from Kardang Gonpa, a *post hoc* explanation which framed the situation with reference to satalepa, in this case the inauspiciousness of the location of the gonpa, was quickly developed. In response the last of three chorten was built in Karzha in 1983. With this construction I was able to more fully appreciate the “symbolic” significance of chorten, developing my understanding of the ways in which chorten are thought to harmonize and heal energetic imbalances in the landscape. Furthermore, my appreciation of the pervasiveness of the Karzhapa’s perceptions of the interrelatedness between people and their activities and landscape was greatly enhanced. This episode in my fieldwork marks one of those significant junctures in my understanding where the conceptual constructs of anthropology with which I was working “opened into” the structures that the Karzhapa were using to understand their experience.

During the summer, while the villagers from Kardang and Gozzang were busily engaged in building the Kardang village chorten, disaster struck at Labchang Gonpa. An older practitioner was doing a long retreat, and had already spent several months in isolation, engaged in meditation. He was seen to leave his house, which in itself was irregular, and did not return. Later some of his clothing was found near the river, and it was understood that he had drowned. Moreover, it seemed that he had committed suicide.

This event caused great concern. Suicide is practically unheard of because of the Buddhist injunction against the taking of life, and is a very infrequent occurrence in Lahuli society. That a spiritual practitioner, who clearly understood the gravity of an untimely and violent death, had committed suicide resulted in an unprecedented social crisis in Labchang village. So great was the concern of the other gonpa members from Labchang that they decided to abandon the gonpa, and left.

I was told that over the years there had been disturbances at Labchang Gonpa, and a few practitioners had “gone mad”, and about seven or eight, who were in their forties or fifties, had died suddenly. These events were now very strongly attributed to some negativities attached to the place itself, as was the suicide. Consequently, all of the practitioners from Labchang felt vulnerable, for they too might be effected by this imbalanced telluric energy. Furthermore, it was thought that the dead practitioners’ dré (*‘dre*), or ghosts, would be trapped in the vicinity of the gonpa and full of remorse. These dré were capable of causing further harm to the gonpa occupants. The existence of dré, a consequence of the person’s attachment to physical form, is thought to prevent the consciousness of the dead person transiting through the bardo (*bar-do*) or intermediate state and taking rebirth, and dré always result from violent and untimely deaths.³⁹

The villagers from Labchang were distraught at the abandonment of the gonpa. Not only had disaster struck one of the practitioners at their village gonpa, but they were left with no gonpa. Although the villagers pleaded with the practitioners to return to the gonpa, the practitioners were adamant.

In Karzha, each village has its own fairly small gonpa, whose practitioners see to the spiritual needs of the village community. The majority of the inhabitants at a gonpa come from the village, though Kardang Gonpa has attracted a few members from neighbouring villages. Without a gonpa, a vital part of community life would be lost. The distraught and tearful villagers decided to plead with Gegan Khyentse, a refugee teacher from East Tibet, requesting his intervention. Gegan Khyentse, who normally lives across the Rohtang Pass in Manali, is regarded as a highly accomplished ritual specialist and teacher, and had been invited to Kardang Gonpa for the summer. As well as teaching, he was engaged in directing the construction of the chorten in Kardang village.

After some consideration he counselled that it was possible to end all these disturbances, and resolve the crisis, by performing a very specialized ritual,⁴⁰ and then building a chorten. This would ensure that the dead practitioner’s consciousness would be freed for rebirth, and that all the negative influences associated with the gonpa would be contained and replaced with the radiating wisdom essence of enlightenment, which would emanate from the chorten. So Gegan Khyentse moved to Labchang Gonpa with some of the practitioners from Kardang Gonpa, and the Labchang practitioners returned to the gonpa. The entire Labchang community became involved in the ritual and social processes of building the chorten, which resolved the crisis.

Chorten are built infrequently, most commonly when an important teacher dies, and then the cremated remains of that teacher are placed in a kudung chorten. It had been several years since one had been built in Karzha. I wondered if on this occasion a chorten was chosen as a solution to the crisis at least in part because there was another being built at that time, and the complicated requirements and rituals involved in building a chorten were therefore already understood by several practitioners. Furthermore, from my observations of the processes involved in building a chorten, I realized that the co-operation of both the practitioners and the villagers was required, unlike many other ritual

performances which are the domain of the gonpa members and do not necessarily require the co-operation of the villagers.⁴¹

I was also curious as to why a "geomantic" explanation had been found to account for the suicide, and if there was any particular reason as to why a chorten could be seen to remedy these types of telluric imbalances.⁴² I was particularly interested in the way in which this suicide redefined several deaths in the past 20 or 30 years. Up until this point, the deaths that had occurred among the practitioners from Labchang village had not been regarded as particularly ominous or untimely, nor had they been associated with the few cases of practitioners who had "gone mad".

Apparently some practitioners had left retreats, and experienced various emotional upsets, resulting in fits of aggressive or erratic behaviour. Such disturbances are not normally associated with the spiritual practices of Tibetan Buddhism, and when they do occur, advice from the teacher is sought in order to remedy them. Usually the cause of disturbances is located within the individual. It may be that the practitioner is incorrectly engaging in the techniques of the meditation, which can result in headaches, tiredness or irritability. Furthermore, some practices which are particularly designed to purify one's karma may result in bouts of ill health, which usually occur with dreams that indicate successful purification. However, at Labchang Gonpa, where a few individuals had been afflicted, a more far-reaching cause for the imbalances experienced by several practitioners had been found.

In 1967 a renowned master, a Tibetan refugee who resided in Nepal and France until his death a few years ago, had been invited by one of his disciples, the head lama from Labchang, and had visited this Gonpa. The disturbances that some of the practitioners had been experiencing in their meditation practice at that time were discussed with him. Rather than locating the problem in the techniques of meditation, he had diagnosed that the aspect of the gonpa was inauspicious and was creating an unbalancing effect on the practitioners. I was told that some rituals were performed to help counteract this, and it was thought that these had been effective.

Everyone now remembered the warnings Dudjom Rinpoche (bDud-'joms Rin-po-che, 1904-1987) had given about the gonpa when he visited, and it was decided that the imbalances of the gonpa site had not been thoroughly overcome by whatever ritual measures had been employed in 1967. It was clear to the practitioners from Labchang gonpa that the obstacles associated with the place itself were responsible for the disturbances to the meditation practice and associated suicide of one of their members. Furthermore, past deaths, as well as the disturbances or obstacles experienced by practitioners, were all seen to be the result of considerable imbalance in the actual siting of the gonpa, and also to contribute to the creation of future disturbances. The general consensus was that these imbalances, which are thought to inhere in the physical energy of the landscape, were so great that there was no alternative but to abandon the gonpa. It was only Gegan Khyentse's superior ritual knowledge and spiritual power that provided a possible solution to the crisis.

At Labchang an explanation framed in terms of *satalegpa* was developed after the suicide in a *post hoc* way to account for several incidents, redefining deaths and experiences of disturbed meditation in terms of the individuals relationship with the environment. In these instances the relationship between the total environment, the site of the gonpa and the gonpa building, were seen to have negatively effected the well-being of the inhabitants of the gonpa. As I mentioned when discussing the ascendancy of Kardang Gonpa over the older Shashur Gonpa, a *satalegpa* explanation had also been developed *post hoc*, accounting both for the auspicious circumstances of Kardang, and the less favourable circumstances at Shashur.

Initially it seemed to me that the choice of a chorten to remedy the crisis at Labchang was somewhat fortuitous, in that two had been built in Karzha earlier in the year. However, it was apparent that the people of Karzha were explaining their experiences in terms that directly addressed their perceptions of place and space, and their relationship to their environment. The impetus was created to further explore the Karzhapa's perception of landscape and so to come to a greater understanding of a fundamental framework through which experience is lived. This process has been greatly enhanced by contextualizing my understanding within the broader Tibetan cultural framework.

Geomancy, Polity and Pinning the Demoness

Recently, there has been considerable attention drawn to the myth about the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism, in which the earth of Tibet, a *sinmo* (*srin-mo*) or demoness was pinned down.⁴³ As this illuminates the "geomantic" significance of chorten within the broader Tibetan context, it provides a contextualization for understanding the events in Labchang village.

1. Geomancy

Before exploring this aspect of the *sinmo* myth, some clarification of the term "geomancy" is appropriate. I can do no better than to refer to a very interesting study, *The Architecture of Ideology: Neo-Confucian Imprinting on Cheju Island, Korea*, by a geographer, David Nemeth:

Briefly, "geomancy" is an English word that has been assigned to both the African "science of sand" and the Chinese "wind-and-water" theory. Both African and Chinese geomancies are systems of divination. Feuchtwang (1974: 231-235) has elaborated on some of the similarities and differences between them. In both systems the geomantic figures being divined-sand particles or their symbols, and landforms or their symbols-are partly interpreted in relation to celestial phenomena. The Islamic variation of African geomancy...diffused to the Byzantine and Latin worlds to become widespread and popular in Europe during the medieval and Renaissance periods (1987: 35-36).⁴⁴

The Tibetan system of geomancy is less well-known than either the African or the Chinese systems. Scattered throughout the literature on Tibetan history

and temple building are numerous mentions of geomantic considerations, which are said to influence the prosperity of different establishments.⁴⁵ However, no systematic studies of Tibetan geomancy have been made to my present knowledge. I have preferred to focus on *satalegpa*, “land which is auspicious and good” in the above discussion of perceptions of landscape in Karzha, in an attempt to present specific understandings, rather than generalizing about Tibetan geomancy, and the better known Chinese geomantic system of Feng Shui, meaning “wind and water”.

Textual evidence seems to affirm the Chinese origins of Tibetan geomancy, which is considered to form part of Tibetan “black astrology” (*nag-rtsis*) while astrological methods derived from India are classed as “white astrology” (*dkar-rtsis*).⁴⁶ The extent to which such practices have been influenced by indigenous pre-Buddhist practices is an open question. Tibetan historians have emphasized and elevated the contribution to their culture from India, the birthplace of the Buddha, and have also significantly neglected the importance of pre-Buddhist indigenous cultural practices in the process of telling Tibetan history. This is an interesting and extensive topic,⁴⁷ which I mention in order to point out the difficulties in cogently contextualizing what I have learnt about *satalegpa* in Karzha within the larger cultural traditions which also frame the relationship between people and their environment, the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Recently published material on the great *stūpa* of the Kathmandu valley, supports an appreciation of the way in which *stūpa* have been purposefully constructed with precise regard to site and environment, particularly astrological phenomena (Herdick 1993: 101-123). The astrological and calendrical calculations used for the orientation and ordering of the sites for these structures are derived from the Indian astrological system, and “(l)ittle Chinese influence is known to have been felt in Nepal...” (Herdick 1993: 103). Herdick’s study of the nine large *stūpa*, including Bodhnath and Svayambhunāth, and on their directional relations with each other and their surroundings, particularly their orientation and spatial orderings associated with the apparent path of the moon in the sky, provides remarkable evidence of precise lunar calculations by the people who built these “symbols” of cosmic order. Although presumably built in different periods,

...the *stūpas*’ locations as cult sites may be considerably older, especially when topographically conspicuous. The site in itself (or the potential place for the deity’s manifestation) is always endowed with great meaning in Nepal. According to Hummel, motives for the construction of *stūpas* may also reinforce the site’s significance: for example, to protect settlements and monasteries, and as “centres for stored powers” (1953: 84-89). (Herdick 1993: 111)

Herdick concludes that although the great *stūpa*-s were built at different times, they are all located with precise regard for the apparent movement of the moon, and suggests that the meaning of the spatial system employed may have changed, “from the measurement of astronomical phenomena to the establishment of a rapport between these and topographical features, and finally

to the individual orientation of cult buildings" (Herdick 1993: 115).

While this research is suggestive of far more than the symbolic cosmology of *stūpa* (Snodgrass 1985), it is difficult to speculate upon how or indeed whether this elaborate tradition of *stūpa* construction was synthesized into the cultural fabric of Tibet, where, as I have mentioned, textual evidence seems to confirm the Chinese origins of Tibetan geomancy. It is likely that, as Staal suggests:

...the underlying reality of the last several millennia is best described as a continuous movement and exchange of people, goods and ideas between India, Central Asia and China, across the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas. (Staal 1982a:50; see also Staal 1982b:276)

Although historical tracings are extremely problematical, it is worth noting that in the Chinese and Korean systems of Feng Shui, the source of geomantic or telluric energy derives from the K'un-lun mountains, which some locate in Tibet.⁴⁸ Staal's recent examination of the relationship between geographies, directions of access, and interpretations of landscape in relation to different cultural traditions in the Kailash region is both insightful and stimulating. Given the extraordinary geographical configuration of rivers, lakes, and mountains in this region, the importance of these various rivers in the different cultural regions, and the significance placed upon interpreting and reading such geographical features in both Chinese Feng Shui and Tibetan geomancy, it is tempting to speculate about possible relationships. However, the research suggested by such speculations is well beyond the scope of my current investigations, although perhaps significant in contextualizing *satalegpa* and other perceptions of landscape in Karzha, a mere 200 or so miles to the west of Mt. Kailash.⁴⁹

The Chinese system of Feng Shui:

...is essentially a form of topomancy in which the terrain is divined, and is not effected by the Western tradition. Although rooted in both Taoist and Buddhist religious practices, it has long served Confucian, and especially Neo-Confucian, state governments as a rigorous system for organizing and structuring the living environment, integrating its physical and social elements within a rigid hierarchical framework of microcosms within a macrocosm (Nemeth 1987: 36).

There are several anthropological analyses of Chinese Feng Shui,⁵⁰ as well as several more general texts available on this still popular and widely practiced methods of determining the suitability of building sites and plans for the activities of their inhabitants.⁵¹ Feng Shui, when practised with the compass which consists of rotating rings, is technically complex. All the elements of this tradition were not gathered together into the one system until the rise of the Sung dynasty in 960 A.D. (Skinner 1982: 9). However, within Feng Shui there is also the older tradition, dating from 874-888 A.D., when Yang Yün-Sung, the Imperial Feng Shui master, wrote several texts on the topic, laying particular stress "on the shapes of the mountains and the directions of the water courses, and the

influences of the dragon which play a considerable part in his system under various names and aspects" (Skinner [1982: 8-9]). This Feng Shui tradition was the "first to be formally established and is the most naturally based, taking into account the configuration of the surrounding landscape from the site of the building or grave" (Skinner 1982: 9). Furthermore, the:

Form and Configuration School (hsing shih/*xingshi*⁵²), also known as the Shapes School, Kanchow method and Kiangsi (*Jiangxi*) method (the latter being an indication of its geographical origins, and the dwelling place of its patriarch, Yang Yün-Sung)...flourished in Kiangsi and Anhui provinces and is today referred to as the "mountain peaks and vital embodiment school" (luan t'i) or intuitive approach (Skinner 1982: 8).

In the myth of the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism, the Chinese wife of King Songtsen Gampo (Srong-bstan sgam-po), who ruled Tibet from c. 627-649, is credited with introducing the art or science of Feng Shui into Tibet, in order to assist her in the process of converting Tibet to Buddhism.⁵³ The historicity of this myth, of which there are at least ten textual versions, must be questioned.⁵⁴ During the reign of Songtsen Gampo, "the practice of divination was a complex amalgam of Indian, Chinese and Tibetan forms" (Aris 1980: 12; Macdonald 1971: 272-309). Given that the two modern schools of Feng Shui were not codified until several centuries after this time, and that the textual versions of the conversion myth also post-date the events by several centuries, it is difficult to speculate as to the precise nature of the methods the Chinese princess brought with her, the precise nature of any pre-existing geomantic traditions, and the nature of any syntheses which occurred between these traditions.⁵⁵

It is clear, however, that "intuitive" readings of the landscape are important in satalegpa, as practised in Karzha, and other perceptions of landscape, as well as within the Tibetan and Chinese traditions of geomancy. Research into the methods used to develop these intuitive abilities and the social contexts in which such landscape readings are developed within the different traditions may provide a framework for comparative research within which particular cultural traditions can be contextualized. It is my intention to contribute to this project through this discussion.

II. Polity

It is well beyond the scope of the present article to explore in more detail Chinese Feng Shui and the differences and similarities between this science of "wind and water" and Tibetan telluric practices. However, a few points are significant. Tibetan geomantic specialists are usually spiritual practitioners and ritual specialists, and geomantic perception is considered to develop in association with meditational practices which give insight into the nature of reality, as I have indicated above.

In Feng Shui, the role of geomancer and ritualist are seldom combined, and the practice of geomancy is codified and formalized to a considerable extent.

This is in part to be associated with a highly centralized polity in the Chinese and Korean context, in which geomancy and neo-Confucian cosmography was used by the emperors to secure the state and control over the people through the design of the layout of the capital, palaces, and indeed the entire political realm. For instance, when the Korean Yi dynasty gained ascendancy (1392-1910), Seoul was chosen as the new capital for geomantic reasons, and geomancers held high government offices. The selection of all residence sites from farmsteads to cities, and tombs, were assigned to these geomancers.⁵⁶ The basic geomantic principle is the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm in which order in the state and in human residency is seen to mirror the order of the cosmos.

Some scholars have argued that in building the temples in the conversion of Tibet, there was an attempt to create a Lhasa-centred polity, employing this Confucian model:

The conquering and civilizing function of the first king, once he was established at the centre, was performed in accordance with Chinese ideas; in square concentric zones, each boxed in by the next and extending farther and farther from the centre (Stein 1972:39, cited in Aris 1980:18).

However, the Tibetan polity was not centralized,⁵⁷ which meant that geomantic practices were developed in a much less constrained and formalized environment, and are consequently much more open to individual perception and interpretation, as evidenced by the following description of the Dodrup Chen (rDo-grub Chen) gonpa:

The topography of the place is said to look like Long-Chen Rab-Jam (a great Dzogchen meditation master) sitting in the meditation posture. The Tsang-Chen Plain from which the monastery rises is a high and broad grassland which has to be climbed up to from any side. It is like the base of a *maṇḍala*. That is said to be the lap of Long-Chen Rab-Jam. Rising behind the monastery is a grass covered mountain, tall and dignified, covered with different kinds of trees on its right and left side. That represents the upper part of Long-Chen Rab-Jam's body. On the right and left sides of the plain descend ranges of tree covered hills. These are the hands covering the meditator's knees. In the distance at the end of the plain, the river Do runs from right to left with musical sounds. In the middle of the plain rises a heart-shaped hillock covered with trees. On top of it is situated the model of the Palace of Zang-Dog Pal-Ri.

At the bank of the river Do a rock rises perpendicularly. It is known as the residence of Jig-Ched Bar-Ma, a Dharma Protectress. From the far distance the top of the sacred mountain of Thang-Yag Gar-Mar looks as if it peering over a barrier to watch the monastery. The situation of the monastery is very beautiful, as if formed intentionally. The beautiful, brilliantly colored temples, stupas, colleges, and

residences of the monks are like ornaments of precious jewels. If one sees them it makes him smile with cleansing faith; if one reaches there, he has the experience of "hair-raising faith". And if one lives there, he will obtain peace and happiness (Thondup, 1984:116-117).

The many oral descriptions of the landscape of Karzha, as well as the description by the Ladakhi pilgrim, from which I compiled my presentation in the earlier part of this discussion, are perhaps not as eloquent and integrated as the particular description of the environment of Dodrup Chen Gonpa, and the effects of this on the individual, particularly the practitioner. Yet the common ground is clear. Direct perceptions into the nature and quality of the environment, the buildings placed upon it, and those who live within it are developed through meditative practices. These intuitive perceptions, which may perhaps be revealed through visions, dreams and in meditation,⁵⁸ provide both orientation and coherency for those who dwell there.

III. Pinning the Demoness

The sinmo conversion myth is both *well-known* and rich in symbolic significance. Several analyses examining the nature of the political relations involved and the significance of the symbolism have been made, and I refer the interested reader to these.⁵⁹ My interest is specifically focused on the importance of the chorten from a geomantic point of view. In the myth a clear correspondence is made between the landscape of Tibet and the sinmo, fallen on her back.⁶⁰ The process of converting Tibet to Buddhism entailed the construction of temples and chorten, a process which was thwarted initially due to the demonic forces of the land itself which dismantled during the night the temples which were built during the day. Finally, through further geomantic divination, the king⁶¹ perceived that the demoness was flailing her limbs about, thus causing the destruction of the temples. Consequently, a scheme was devised. In order to pin her arms and legs, the temples had to be built at the appropriate spots. The precise location of these temples and how they are configured over the body of the sinmo has been the subject of debate amongst scholars.⁶²

Gyatso has drawn our attention to a transformation in the interpretation of the myth about the pinned demoness of the land of Tibet. King Langdarma (Glang dar-ma), the last of the monarchs of the Yarlung dynasty, renowned for his persecution of Buddhists and his reversal of the policies of his predecessors who had been involved in converting Tibet to Buddhism, blames the new religion and specifically the pinning of the demoness for the drought, plague and crop loss that are afflicting his capital. The Chinese princess Kong-jo is said to be a harm-doer (*gnod-sbyin*) devil who destroyed the indigenous gods with the inauspicious god Śākyamuni:

Then she went to Tibet, and being an expert at geomancy, she did geomancy. On the twenty-one spine bones of Mt. lCags-Ka that looks like a white lioness leaping in the sky, she put twenty-one *stūpas* as acupuncture pins (*mc-rtsa*). She pressed down the head with a black

stūpa with nine levels, and by making a temple on the top of the skull she pressed down the area of sTod (Gyatso 1989:48).

I am particularly interested in penetrating the meaning of the term “*metsa*,” which is variously spelt *me-btsa'*, *me-tsa*, or *me-rtsa*.⁶³ Aris has indicated the importance of this term, and is of the opinion that

me btsa', (or *me tsa*) is a geomantic term referring to places which act in a strange way on other places, just as in acupuncture one or several points in the body relate to the operation of its vital organs (Aris 1980: 6).⁶⁴

For the present discussion, what is particularly interesting is the way in which the ground of Tibet has been conceived as a body, which is pinned through *stūpa* or chorten which act like acupuncture pins; or more correctly, pins for the application of moxibustion, another healing technique involving the use of medicinal herbs, which is burnt like incense on these pins.⁶⁵ The image of the earth body of the *sinmo*, through which interconnected veins of vital energy run, in a way which parallels the movement of energy (*rlung*, literally “wind”) through the psychic veins (*rtsa*) of the human body is compelling,⁶⁶ and the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm a useful way of conceptualizing this parallel. These geographical locations are thought to exert an influence on other places and to tap the vital energy of the earth itself, although these energies, as we have seen, may be considered to be wild and uncontrolled, as was the demoness’s from the Buddhist converters’ viewpoint.⁶⁷

The Labchang Chorten—Conclusion

This discussion of geomantic perceptions and the conversion myth, and the significance of chorten contextualizes the events in Labchang in 1983, when a chorten was built to redress imbalances of energies which had created an unprecedented crisis. Although it was fortuitous that the spiritual practitioners of Karzha were well versed in the procedures necessary in the construction of chorten when this crisis occurred, and so could proceed quickly, Gegan Khyentse’s decision to remedy the situation can be seen to be totally appropriate. The wild and dangerous telluric energy emanating from the site of Labchang Gonpa and affecting its inhabitants was brought under control, balanced and healed, through the construction of the chorten.⁶⁸

The principle of the correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm provides an important interpretive framework through which the schema of the Indian *mandala* and “sacred” geography, and geomantic perceptions pertaining to the relationship between the individual and the environment may be synthesized. In the symbolism of the chorten, perceptions of the landscape which have been contextualized in both the Indian and Chinese traditions coalesce. Chorten, like mountains, may be seen as strong *yang* (male) elements dominating the flat ground, which is considered *yin* (female). They balance and direct the energy of the earth, and its inhabitants. However, mountains may also be seen as female, as is the case with the “self-created” *stūpa* of Drilburi, the Bell mountain,

which provides the centre and pivot around which the inhabitants of Karzha make pilgrimage.

The landscape of Karzha is marked with chorten, edifying⁶⁹ the landscape and the inhabitants, indicating empowered and empowering places, operating upon its energy and creating harmony. The entire environment, and all that is within it, is seen to be interconnected through the embodied vision of the practitioners within the Vajrayāna. The strength of this vision imbues the landscape, and becomes accessible to those who dwell there, through the process of pilgrimage, and through hearing the stories of the accomplished practitioners of the past.

Notes

1. Foreign words are written as pronounced in Karzha. Wylie transcription of the Tibetan, if known, is then given in italics. Many words used in the Karzha language do not have a Tibetan equivalent. Sanskrit terms are indicated with Skt.
2. Clearly, Tibet was never a bounded nation state, and although our western imaginative construction of "Tibet" is certainly Lhasa-centred (Bishop 1989), the current political boundaries of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) do not include all the regions which might be regarded as part of "Tibet," using cultural, ethnic, linguistic and historical criteria. Samuel's recent work provides a broad framework and discussion of these matters (Samuel 1993).
3. See Paul (1982), and Ortner (1978, 1983, 1989a, 1989b), for instance, both of whom worked among the Sherpa. Of course, the framework which I am presenting is not questioning the Sherpa's political status as an ethnic minority within Nepal, nor that of any other group, although I am suggesting that other cultural criteria support the consideration and contextualization of the Sherpa and other peoples including the Karzhapa in relation to the broader Tibetan cultural milieu.
4. By "frontier region" I mean an area comparable to Leach's usage, developed in relation to south-east Asian regions, particularly "Burma:"

The whole of "Burma" is a frontier region continuously subjected to influences from both India and China and so also the frontiers which separated the petty political units within 'Burma' were not clearly defined lines but zones of mutual interest. The political entities in question had interpenetrating political systems, they were not separate countries inhabited by distinct populations. This concept of a frontier as a border zone through which cultures interpenetrate in a dynamic manner...needs to be distinguished clearly from the precise MacMahon lines of modern political geography (Leach 1960-61: 50).

Lahul is a frontier region between India and Tibet, while Tibet itself can be regarded, at least culturally, as a frontier region between China and India. These political conceptions of geography underlie the present discussion. See also Tambiah on the galactic polity (1985:252-286); and Samuel (1982; 1993: esp. Part I).

5. See Klimburg-Salter (1982) for details.
6. This generalization is clarified below. Some of the people of Lahul are Hindu, particularly the Swangla of the Chandrabhaga valley, and some both Hindu and Buddhist. Furthermore, there are considerable numbers of Lahulis who now reside in Kulu-Manali. (Stutchbury 1991: 37, 50-52, 55; and forthcoming).
7. For instance, such an endeavour requires establishing the standardized Wylie tran-

scriptions of words from the dialects used in the research area, where possible, whilst also presenting local pronunciations and usages. In this way both the connections with and differences from the broader Tibetan cultural arena are acknowledged, and cross-cultural studies enhanced. The inclusion of a glossary which provides Tibetan transliterations of Sherpa words is a welcome addition to Ortner's latest contribution (1989a) and a frustrating omission from the first printing of her earlier book (1978). I have discussed the ethnography of the particular, and my indebtedness to Abu-Lughod (1991), in a recently published article (Stutchbury 1994).

8. I have discussed the ways in which identity is constructed with reference to transmission and practice lineages of Tibetan Buddhism by the spiritual practitioners of Kardang Gonpa in Stutchbury (1994).
9. One of the eighty-four Mahasiddha, the Indian tantric teachers of the 7th to 11th centuries, textually associated with the tantric centres in Bengal and eastern India, rather than here in the west (Robinson 1979: 174-179).
10. For discussions of the eight cremation grounds of Padmasambhava see Tucci (1949, Vol 2: 542-543, 615); Martin (1985: 6, 30 n.11); Wylie (1970: 21-22); Meisezahl (1980). Tobdan gives the list of tirtha associated with Padmasambhava from the *Blon po bka' thang* or *Blon po bka' yi thang yig* (f46a) which includes Gandhola (Gan-dha-la) (1984: 82-83). Tucci points out that the list of cemeteries usually given in the Tibetan tradition differs from the cycle of eight cemeteries given in the Indian tantric literature, though both are arranged to symbolically form a lotus (Tucci 1949 Vol. 2: 615 n. 237). See also Huber (1989).
11. Thirteen different well-known namthar for Gotsangpa are listed by Topden Tshering in his printed edition of three manuscripts from Gemur Gonpa in Lahul (1974). He includes another, of unknown authorship, which makes 14 the total number of namthar, indicative of the popularity of this yogi. The namthar by Sangye Darpo (Sangs-rgyas dar-po), which Tucci (1940, reprinted 1971) has used, is the twelfth on this list. The full title is *rGyal ba rgod tshang pa ngon po rdo rje'i rnam thar mthong ba don ldan nor bu'i phreng ba*. I have not been able to examine the majority of these, but it is likely that the stories told in Karzha will not be found therein, and if so in attenuated form.
12. I have elsewhere explored these conceptualization in some detail (Stutchbury 1993; 1991, forthcoming, and ms.) Samuel has developed useful constructs for talking about these understandings, focusing on the "shamanic" and "clerical" modes within the Tibetan cultural traditions (Samuel 1985, 1990, 1993, 1994).
13. Prayer by Ladakhi saint Ngawang Tsering (1717-94) on visiting the holy mountain Drilburi in Karzha (Topden Tshering 1975). I am indebted to Geoffrey Samuel for bringing this prayer to my attention and assisting in its translation (cf. Ngawang Tsering 1979: 34-35).
14. I was told that this is a Karzha ké name, with no particular meaning. This attempt at a Tibetan orthography was made by one of the lamas at my request. However, as the literal meaning of this might be "flat ladle, or scoop" (Jäschke 1975: 6, 31), this is not particularly helpful, although I could construct this as a description of the site.
15. I too had gazed for hours at this majestic formation, without "seeing" it as Demchog. It was not until my return to Karzha in 1992, that I learnt of this identification. Once I was told, I felt quite stupid at not having "seen" this previously, and immediately found that my perception of the site coalesced easily with my appreciation of Khorlo Demchog.
16. In 1992 when I returned to Kulu-Manali, and Lahul, I enquired about Gesar, on behalf of Geoffrey Samuel, who has done research into the epic (Samuel 1991, 1993,

- and 1994). Geoffrey joined me for a few days, and although we heard about one person who knew about Gesar, we were unable to locate him at that time.
17. Gill has also recorded another myth which attributes the opening of the Rohtang Pass to the Lord Śiva, who created the pass by taking his whip and repeatedly hitting the mountains. The high and dangerous winds which arise suddenly with a wind tunnel effect on the two kilometre pass cause both humans and animals caught making the crossing to perish, the frozen bodies buried in snow, only to be revealed in the summer when the snow melts. Multiple deaths occur each year and have given the pass its name (Rohtang means "plain of corpses"). These high winds are said to be the result of this whipping action by Śiva. A hillock and a particular rock above old Manali village is said to be the place where Śiva landed head first as he made the pathway from the pass down into the valley (Gill 1977: 95-97).
 18. *Rakshasini* (*rākṣasa*) is a fierce female being usually residing at a particular mountain site or in a gorge, capable of changing form and renowned for luring men and causing problems. See also Gyatso (1989: 35-36, 141 n.13).
 19. This was possibly the seventeenth century Mongol invasion of Ladakh (Mamgain 1975: 36). I have not heard details of the phenomena of *ro-langs*, possessed corpses or zombies associated with this area, but was told that the following spring, when the snow melted, the corpses of the Mongol soldiers, buried by the protection of Gephan, were revealed to all on this plain, and thus the name.
 20. Gephan is the object of a local cult, and regularly propitiated.
 21. See Jäschke (1975: 525).
 22. On some maps this peak is called Rangcha peak (see also Gill 1979: 55), and the pass that one crosses to begin the Khora of Drilburi is called the Rangcha pass. The people of Kardang had not heard of this name and suggested it must be Hindi.
 23. Whereas the school, administrative offices and business meetings are organized using watches. Even so, there is a considerable flexibility in people's attitude towards punctuality.
 24. This is the reason stated for the Moravians shifting their original headquarters from Kardang where they settled in 1856, to a more hospitable site in Kyelang, where they built the mission house in 1857-58 (Rechler 1874: 230, 237-238; Gill 1979: 18; Bray 1983: 50-53; 1992; Tobdan 1984: 60-61).
 25. I was told that during winter, milk and water often did not freeze at Lama Gonpa, even if left outside, whereas at Kardang gonpa it often froze, even when inside. It is about a two hour walk between these gonpa, and my friends marvelled at this significant difference in temperature.
 26. That it is the earth's movement, rather than the sun's, that causes the change in the apparent pathway of the sun, was not a factor incorporated into the discussion of the sun's movements.
 27. There are four calendrical systems currently in use in Karzha, and usage is contextual. The Hindi and the Tibetan Buddhist calendar are the most frequently referred to, while a few people also refer to the Gregorian calendar. The village agricultural calendar, which is also used for village rituals, calculates the new year from the solstice, unlike the Tibetan calendar, in which new year is calculated somewhat later in February or March. Details are provided in Stutchbury (1991; and forthcoming) Please refer also to Gergan (1978).
 28. Or perhaps sa-rtags legs-pa? Refer also to Jäschke (1975: 14), where *bkra-shis-pa'i rtags* is given as "lucky configurations or semblances (such as e.g. devout imagination seeks to discover in the outlines of mountains etc." (*rGyal rabs*, fol. 58).
 29. The chorten or *stūpa*, a reliquary, may be simply conceived of as a symbol of the

enlightened mind of the Buddha and is the ubiquitous symbol of Buddhism, occurring in every country where Buddhism has been practised, and in many stylistic variations (see for instance Snodgrass [1985]).

30. For a discussion of what is generally regarded as an auspicious site for a gonpa, see Thubten Legshay Gyatsho (1979: 29-30).
31. The founding of Kardang Gonpa is discussed at length in Stutchbury (1991, 1994 and forthcoming).
32. This theme is central to my dissertation. On revitalization see Chapter 3, particularly. The detail on the chorten is covered in Chapter 7 (Stutchbury [1991: 74 - 98; 252-293] and forthcoming).
33. See note 10, and for a more thorough discussion Stutchbury (1991: 44-45; and forthcoming).
34. See Tucci (1940, reprinted 1971: 372, 376-378).
35. See Tucci (1940, reprinted 1971: 379) and also Huber (1990) for a discussion of the development of a cult of tantric Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Tibet. Templeman's chapter in this volume provides a good discussion of the internally referent (yogi's body) and externally referent (place of power and pilgrimage) nature of the 24 *pītha* and how they were used, a discussion which enhances the perspectives presented here.
36. I am wary of using this term, and have marked it, for within the conceptual constructs of anthropology, sacred and profane have been constructed as separate domains, following Durkheim (1915, reprint 1965: 52-54). Please see also the discussion in Sax (1990: 132-135). Instead I am indicating the perception of the *sambhogakāya*, which I have explained above.
37. I focus in greater detail on the spiritual practices in Stutchbury (1991 and forthcoming).
38. Stutchbury (1993 and ms).
39. For more details on the bardo, and the Tibetan attitude to death see Sogyal Rinpoche (1992); Fremantle and Trungpa (1975); Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (1991) and Lama Lodö (1982).
40. Details of these ritual procedures are presented in Stutchbury (1991; and forthcoming).
41. Another smaller chorten had been reconstructed at the entrance to Kardang Gonpa, without Gegan Khyentse's assistance, in 1983. This may have inspired the project to build the much larger chorten in Kardang village. Please see above, and in Stutchbury (1991 and forthcoming) for more details.
42. As mentioned above, my frame for understanding these events was challenged, and although I had some ideas about telluric imbalances and geomancy, I did not yet appreciate the nuances of satalegpa presented in this discussion.
43. Please refer to Aris (1980: 1-33); Gyatso (1989); Marko (1990) and Miller (n.d).
44. On the Islamic variation of African geomancy see Savage-Smith and Smith (1980), and on medieval geomancy see Charmasson (1980). Nemeti includes part of the following in a footnote. Attention was previously drawn to the geomantic content by Freedman (1969:5 and 1979a: 313). In Ben Johnson's play, *The Alchemist*, Abel Drucker, the tobacco-man consults Subtle:

I am a young beginner, and am building
 Of a new shop, an't like your worship, just,
 At corner of a street. (Here's the plot on't.)
 And I would know, by art, sir, of your worship,
 Which way I should make my dore, by *necromancie*.

And, where my shelues, And, which should be for boxes.
 And which for pots. I would be glad to thriue, sir.
 And, I was wish'd to your worship, by a gentleman,
 One Captaine Face, that say's you know mens *planets*,
 And their good *angels*, and their bad.
 (After Subtle's reply, Abel Drugger further requests)
 But, to looke ouer, sir, my *almanack*,
 And crosse out my ill-dayes, that I may neither
 Bargaine, not trust vpon them.

45. The description of Palyul Gonpa is an interesting case in point (Sangye Khandro 1988: 33-34). In one geography of Tibet mention is made of the positive effects such geomantic considerations have on the wealth and well-being of a particular gonpa in East Tibet. In this case Chinese geomancers chose the site for the gonpa (*rgya mi tshos sa dpyad bzang stabs yin zer zhing dgon pa'i gnas yang ya mtshan cig dug*, see Wylie 1962:40-41,100, 181). See also Thubten Legshay Gyatso (1979:29-33) on the correct procedures for establishing temples, and removing negativities through building *stūpa*.
46. See Aris (1980: 20) and Karmay (1993: 150), for instance.
47. There have been a growing number of scholarly works which are addressing the issue of historical cultural bias and their perpetuation in academic discourses, particularly through the examination of historical documents found in Tun-Huang. See for instance Kvaerne (1972, 1976); Namkhai Norbu (1984); Snellgrove and Richardson (1980). See also Samuel's (1993) encyclopedic presentation of Tibetan history and culture, which provides an excellent overview, and a recent contribution by Staal (1990). With regard to the pinning of the demoness, I am indebted to David Templeman for drawing my attention to Miller's recent paper on the sites of the temples which provides new information on the sites and thus furthers the work done on this topic by Aris (1980: 1-33). As yet, I have been unable to obtain a copy of this paper presented in Norway at the Fagernes conference in 1992, and thus further consideration of some of the issues raised here is postponed until a later occasion.
48. Nemeth suggests that the K'un-lun mountains are north of Lhasa (1987: 106, 113). Mark Stevenson informs me that discussions he has had in PRC with the scholar Ji Hongchun, who is currently investigating the ancient location of the K'un-lun Mountains suggests that they were possibly located in Babylonia, rather than "somewhere near the border with Afghanistan," where the modern day K'un-lun mountains are located. See also Staal's discussion (1990: esp. 280). There is clearly much work still to be done on the identification of sites and the relationship between different traditions.
49. See Staal (1990). I eagerly await Staal's forthcoming book, *Kailās: Center of Asia*. Further information on the Kailash region is to be found in Pranavananda (1949, 1950) and in the more recent study by Johnson and Moran (1989). See also above note 27 and Gergan's brief article where he indicates that there are significant differences in calculating the New Year for those north of Kailash, and those south of Kailash, in the Indus and Sutlej valleys (Gergan 1978:42).
50. See particularly Maurice Freedman's work (1958, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1979) and also Feuchtwang (1974). Freedman suggests that geomantic practices which are particularly important in establishing suitable burial sites are encouraged in societies with patrilineal descent systems, such as China, Vietnam and Korea, whereas in Japan the main focus of geomancy is on buildings, rather than burial sites (Freedman 1966: 141 footnote 1; 1967: 89).

51. Geomantic divinations are carried out in many places where there is a population of Chinese origin, including Singapore and Sydney, for instance (*Newcastle Sun Herald* Nov. 13 1992: 3; Backus 1979a; 1979b; Lip 1979; and Skinner 1982).
52. I am indebted to Mark Stevenson for his assistance in supplying Pinyin transliteration for these words, which are provided in italics.
53. The myth clearly attributes superiority to the geomantic divinations of the Chinese Princess Kong-jo, who was given a Chinese divination chart by her father before she left for Tibet to marry King Songtsen Gampo. She received "a divination chart in 300 sections executed according to the Chinese divinatory sciences" (*rgya-yi gtsug-lag gab-rtse sum-brgya-po*, f.122b *Ma ni bka' 'bum*), see Aris (1980: 12, 292). The use of trigrams is common in both Feng Shui compasses and this chart used by Princess Kong-jo.
54. The information which I use in the presentation of this material is primarily derived from Aris (1980: 3-33). See also Richardson (1972). For a discussion of the ten textual sources see Aris (1980: 8-12, 291-292 n. 11), of which the *Ma ni bka' 'bum* (Punakha edition in 2 volumes, 12th-14th century?) is used in the analysis. Kapstein's recent study on the *Ma ni bka' 'bum*, "a heterogeneous collection of texts ascribed to the Tibetan King Srong-bstan sgam-po (d. AD 649) and primarily concerned with the cult of the Bodhisattva Mahā-kāruṇika-Avalokiteśvara" (1992: 79) provides useful information on these texts and the conversion.
55. Karmay's (1993) article on Tibetan "prayer flags" (*dar-lcog*) is of considerable interest in this regard.
56. See discussion in Nemeth (1987: esp. 99-100).
57. Samuel (1993) has presented an overall framework for appreciating the nature of Tibetan polity and correspondences in social and cultural systems, and I refer the reader to this work.
58. An appreciation of the tradition and methods of the revealed treasures, *ter (gter)*, within Tibetan Buddhism, and the development of pure vision (*dag-srang*) through meditation practices, underlies this discussion. See Thondup (1986) and Samuel (1993: esp. Ch. 16), and Stutchbury (1991: Sections III & IV; and forthcoming) for instance.
59. For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the Chinese traditions and the Tibetan, and the significance of the myth for Bhutan see Aris (1980: 1-23). Gyatso (1989) has provided a fine analysis of the feminine ground of Tibet and the significance of different cultural and religious interpretations within this framework.
60. "The plain of Milk in lHa-sa is the palace of the king of the klu spirits and the lake in the Plain of Milk is the heart-blood of the demoness. Of the three peaks rising from the plain two of them are her breasts and the third is the vein of her life force" (Aris 1980:13).
61. Earlier texts indicate that the king was significantly involved in the codifying of the divinatory sciences (*tsug-lag*) of the Chinese, including geomancy, rather than the propagator of Buddhism, which is attributed to him in later texts (Aris 1980:20; Macdonald 1971:387).
62. See note 47 above. Aris points out that the Tibetan adaptation of the geomantic system has undergone a reorientation of axis, from north-south in the Chinese version, to east-west in the Tibetan. This both suits the perception of the supine demoness, with her head pointing to the east, and the commonly held Tibetan perception of their country as lying up in the west (*stod nmga' -ris*) and down in the east. Furthermore, the basic structure of the scheme thus resembles a *mandala*, which is used with an east-west orientation, although this latter interpretation and corre-

- spondence to Buddhist conceptions is an interpretation in the texts which occurred well after the event (1980: 15-19). Aris further suggests that this orientation may also correspond to "the great cosmic tortoise, an important idea in Chinese cosmology" and that she may be "the prototype for the Tibetan demoness" (1980: 19).
63. I have not found other occasions in which this spelling *me-rtsa*, literally "fire vein", is used. Furthermore, I have not, as yet, been able to check this usage with an expert in Tibetan healing.
 64. In this reading he follows Das (1902, and see also 1979 reprint: 971) taking it as "sa yi lte ba or sa gnad che ba, 'any important place excellent in position and free from the depredations of malignant spirits, and on such places Buddhist viharas are enjoined to be erected'" (Aris 1980: 6), and a quotation from an unidentified biography of Ātiśa f.153, "*de'i phyogs kyi me btsa' dang sa brtag la dang big bdab pa dang*" (Das 1979: 971). Furthermore, as Aris points out, *me-btsa'* also means moxa (1980: 291 n. 3; Jäschke 1975: 417, 434, and *Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary* 1985: 2113).
 65. For a concise presentation of moxibustion see Finckh (1992: 443-450). Brief descriptions are also to be found in Rechung (1976: 27) and Rapgay (1985: 57).
 66. I have written about this conceptualization of the body previously (Stutchbury 1993, and ms). Useful presentations of the Tibetan system of healing include Namkhai Norbu (1983), Rechung (1976) and Donden (1986).
 67. Gyatso has also alluded to the geomantic perception of flat land (female) with vertical structures (male) being built upon her (1989: 43). Samuel has discussed the wild (*rgod*) -tame opposition in Tibet (1993: Chapter 9-11: 1994: 66-69).
 68. The specific rituals employed, both for catching the dré of the dead, and encasing them beneath the chorten, and the rabné ritual of Vajrasattva further support the analysis presented here. Details are presented in Stutchbury (1991; and forthcoming).
 69. I play with multiple and extended meanings here: "edify...to improve the morality, intellect, etc., of, esp. by instruction. [C14: from Old French *edifier*, from Latin *aedificâre* to construct, from *aedês* a dwelling, temple + *facere* to make]." (*Collins Dictionary of the English Language* 1985: 466)

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Internal and External Geography in Spiritual Biography

David Templeman

In the tantric and commentarial literature one finds frequent reference to the 24 *pīṭhas*, or sacred places of Indian Buddhist tantric geography. As is commonly known, these places may be considered to be externally referent (time-hallowed places of power and pilgrimage), and they may also be internally referent (places of power within the yogin's own body). We are told for example in great detail about the major sites and the subsidiary sites, as well as their internally equivalent locations in relation to the Hevajra Tantra in the commentary on that text written by the Sa-skya bla-ma Dam-pa bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan (1312-1375 A.D.).¹ However, there is some degree of uncertainty as to whether, in all cases, the "inner" interpretation is the one consistently referred to or whether there might be some body of evidence to suggest that a person might not only practice using the internal *pīṭha* yogic system, but might also wander about India also using the external model of the *pīṭha*-s as their itinerary. There is a traditional "hierarchical" view nevertheless, which clearly points out the superiority of the internally referent model for the yogin. The *Vajrapādasārasaṅgraha* by Nāropa states that the external places "Jālandhara and so on are mentioned for the benefit of simple fools who wander about the country."²

Despite the important and original work done by Huber, on the tantric *pīṭha*-s of the Saṃvara cycle and the controversy concerning their transference from Indian to Tibetan sites, there is still lacking a convincing piece of narrative or textual evidence to demonstrate that Indian *siddha*-s and yogins made some effort to visit all the *pīṭha*-s associated with their main practice deities. There is much evidence in hagiographies to show that they congregated at certain spots rather than others for their *gaṇacakra*-s, but quite frequently in those works the name of the location is omitted, or referred to obliquely as "close to" or "a few days journey away from" some fixed and well known point. Nevertheless, some generalizations can be made based upon the biographies of Kṛṣṇācārya,³ Tilopa,⁴

Virūpa⁵ and Śāntigupta⁶ for example. In these works (as well as many others), Urgyen generally appears as the place *par excellence* for *ḍākinī* initiation, Trilinga as a major area where Buddhist siddhas confronted Śaiva and Śakta ascetics, Singala frequently as a place where ideal tantric consorts were found as well as being a place haunted by demonic *rākṣasa*-s, Assam (Kāmarūpa) as a place of fearsome local cult, Bengal as the locus of beneficent rulers, Mādhyadeśa and Magadha as lands of strong Tīrthika practice and the River Ganges as a site where great miracles were frequently able to be manifested. In the biography of Tilopa by Lha-btsun rin-chen nam-rgyal referred to above, there are some 13 locales mentioned but none of these, apart from Urgyen and Nagara, appear to be ones which we can class as *pīṭha*-s connected with the tantras he was practising, namely the *Guhyasamāja* and the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantras*. Even in *The Life of Marpa the Translator*,⁷ who visited India from Tibet on three separate occasions, we find reference to only a surprisingly limited number of sites, none of them listed among the major places of the deities he was initiated into by his Indian masters. Apart from visiting Nālandā (an almost obligatory reference in the biographies of Tibetans visiting India in that period), he went to Phullahari, Lakṣetra, Sosadvīpa and Bengal.

From the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* itself we find that in the list of the 24 locations mentioned in the Tantra we are also given details of the 24 deities and the 24 *ḍākinī*-s resident in those locations as well as the tantric physiognomy related to the *kāyamaṇḍala*.⁸ Much the same information about the *pīṭha*-s is to be found in the *Samvarodaya Tantra*,⁹ with the additional data of the division of the 24 *pīṭha*-s into the various kinds of spots such as meeting places (*melāpaka*) and cemeteries (*śmāśāna*), etc.¹⁰

Tāranātha in his text the *'Khor lo sdom pa nag po zhabs lugs kyi sgrub thabs bde ba chen po'i char yang* (dated 1615 A.D.)¹¹ locates the 24 *pīṭha*-s and their resident deities¹² and notes that the *ḍākinī*-s are all from the lineage of rDo-rje Phag-mo.¹³ I have employed Tāranātha's as the main text to regularize the spellings of the *pīṭha*-s due to his extremely careful transliteration of Indic place names into Tibetan.

Apart from the summarization and spelling regularization, I do not wish to dwell on the functions, location or significance of the *pīṭha*-s within the tantra itself or in the commentary literature. My main interest here is to employ this most basic data to show a possible link between the narrative events of the life of one of the greatest exponents of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, namely Kṛṣṇācārya, and the importance of the *pīṭha*-s as places of actual pilgrimage.

I follow this theme as an extension of another link between narrative events and "sacred text" which has become evident from my translation of Kun-dga' grol-mchog's biography of Kṛṣṇācārya.¹⁴ Briefly that text, unlike those of Buxton, dPa'-bo-gtsug or even Tāranātha for example, incorporates all 13 of Kṛṣṇācārya's *caryā* songs (including the "missing" *caryā* #24), into the body of the work. Instead of placing them serially as a collection of *Caryāgīti*, inserted as a body into the hagiography in the accepted order as found in the various collections of the *caryā* songs, here they have been employed in a quite different

order instead, to reflect the narrative events of the biography itself. They comment, add information and summarize the events, with a remarkable degree of concordance between the songs and the narrative. It seemed to me that if Kun-dga' grol-mchog's biographical work could accomplish this union of sacred text (the *caryā-s*) and narrative (the biography) so seamlessly, then it would be interesting to see if it had been able to accomplish the same (either intentionally or not) in the field of the sacred places of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* with which Kṛṣṇācārya was so involved as a practitioner and as a literary commentator. Rather surprisingly, when the number of places of all types, sacred and profane, was totalled in Kun-dga' grol-mchog's work it came to a mere nine specified places (not all of them *pīṭha-s*), with subsidiary reference to 13 "great cities" which were not enumerated in that text.¹⁵ Immediately it was obvious that the concordance with the 24 *pīṭha-s* would not work. As Kun-dga' grol-mchog's lineal descendent, Tāranātha had also written a biography of their mutual predecessor Kṛṣṇācārya, it then seemed reasonable to incorporate his data as well to help form a more complete picture of the siddha's peregrinations. I added to Kun-dga' grol-mchog's list of places, those found in Tāranātha's *Life of Kṛṣṇācārya/Kāṇha*. This text gives 26 places which the *siddha* visited in his wanderings, and moreover Tāranātha enumerates the names of the 13 "great cities" referred to by Kun-dga' grol-mchog. By combining both the groups of places and rationalizing them to avoid duplication, we find both authorities give us a set of 28 definite locations, as well as the 13 "great cities" which are not so clearly defined.

The Places Visited by Kṛṣṇācārya as Recorded by Kun-dga' grol-mchog and Tāranātha

Oḍvisā, Magadha, Jālandhara, Pretāpurī, Urgyen, Mālava, Mahārastra, Kataliksetra, Bengal, Kaliṅga, Singala, Tuṇḍamaṇḍala, Tambala, Virajāpur, Koṅkaṇa, Cāritra, Harikela near Malyra, Trilinga, Daṇḍakāraṇya, Rāḍha, Varendra, Devīkotta, Puṣkara, Maru, Karṇāṭaka, Malapurī, Vajrāsana and the River Ganges.

The 13 Great Cities Visited by Kṛṣṇācārya in the After-Death Period.

Mala in Haridvār	North
Avanti in Mālava	West
Kānti in Kana	South
Vijapur in Virajā	South
Puṇḍravardha in Lingkara	East
Kanaka part of Marahata	South
Karanya near Godāvarī	South
Citipatana in Cāritra	South
Hemadala in Gandhāra	North

Devaghata, part of Jārikhaṇḍa	South
Kaliṅga	South-east
Rodasi in Madhyadeśa	North
Puṣkara	West

The following list of the *pīṭha*-s also shows the physiognomical aspects of the *vajrakāya* and notes which biography contains reference to Kṛṣṇācārya's visit.

The *Pīṭha*-s as recorded in the *Śrī Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*

Physiognomic

<i>Pīṭha</i> -s	Correlation	Tāranātha	Kun-dga' grol-mchog
Pulliramalaya	Head	Yes	
Jālandhara	Crown	Yes	Yes
Oḍḍiyāna	R. Ear	Yes	Yes
Arbuda	Nape of Neck		
Godāvārī	L. Ear	Yes	Yes
Rāmeśvara	Between Eyebrows		
Devikoṭṭa	Both Eyes	Yes	Yes
Mālava	Both Shoulders	Yes	Yes
Kāmarāpa	Both Armpits	Yes	
Oḍra	Both Breasts	Yes	Yes
Triśakuni	Navel		
Kośala	Tip Of Nose		
Kaliṅga	Mouth	Yes	Yes
Lampika	Throat		
Kāñcī	Heart		
Himālaya	Penis		
Pretāpurī	Genital Area	Yes	Yes
Gṛhadeva	Rectum		
Saurāṣṭra	Thighs		
Suvarṇadvīpa	Calves		
Nagara	Toes		
Sindhū	Upper Foot		
Maru	Big Toes	Yes	
Kulutā	Knees		

Linking the data from the two hagiographies to the well attested list of *pīṭha*-s mentioned above proved an interesting exercise. As may be noted, in all, both authors combined record a total of 11 out of the 24 *pīṭha*-s of *Cakrasaṃvara*, visited by Kṛṣṇācārya in his travels around India during his apparently short life and in the after death period when he made further manifestations. In itself this could be considered to be a "negative result" when compared to some

hypothetical “ideal result”. An almost “ideal result” might be the case of the *caryā* songs of which nine out of 13 fit extremely comfortably into their narrative setting. (I do not even consider the case of “manufacturing” the narrative events to fit the data or vice versa in either the case of the songs or the travels, which has been suggested by some scholars holding dim views on the nature of tantric hagiography!) Indeed, in view of Kun-dga’ grol-mchog’s meticulous attention to the internal structure of his book and Tāranātha’s more all-encompassing view of the larger *caryā* tradition, it would have been more unusual if there had been little or no concordance between the siddha’s wanderings and the list of the *pīṭha*-s he is said to have visited. Certainly some further work is to be done on researching the list of cities which are not yet known and reconciling them with areas which possibly coincide with *pīṭha* sites. In this way there might be some closer concordance between the sites as enumerated in the tantra and the sites actually visited.

Nevertheless, to return to the opening point, as quite specific events (often historically valid ones such as the conversion of King Govichandra of Bengal) occurred at several of these places (as well as at countless other sites which are not counted as *pīṭha*-s), and as these locations were mainly cognate, that is they are recorded in the biographies as being within a reasonable distance and direction, etc., from each other, I am inclined to view them as pointing ineluctably to the viewpoint that the “external” *pīṭha*-s were visited in the flesh as valid places of pilgrimage by Kṛṣṇācārya and his entourage. This does not of course discount the possibility of him also performing the “internal” pilgrimage contiguously with his visits to the “external” sites, or indeed of him being in constant yogic communion with all 24 of his inner psychic centres while he wandered.

A point which has long struck me as being of interest, and which goes some way to linking the internal and the external views of the *pīṭha*-s, is the series of events surrounding the death of Kṛṣṇācārya at the *pīṭha* of Devikoṭṭa. As part of the secret teachings on Cakrasaṃvara, at a *gaṇacakra* in Urgyen, he was bestowed many core teachings by the entourage, including one by a group of 37 *dākinī*-s,¹⁶ one of a pair of lengthy songs which defined the differences between the Tantras of Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara. In it they sang a most important verse,

On the outside you have fully encircled the eight great cemeteries.

You must completely abandon those places which are inferior and where the local deity lives on the site.

On the inside the realms of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are treated as one and the same thing.

These places are not found necessary in the Guhyasamāja-this (Cakrasaṃvara) is a unique sort of teaching indeed!¹⁷

After his return from Urgyen to his Guru, Kṛṣṇācārya was granted the requisite permissions by Jālandharipa to wander and engage in the *caryā* practices, but quite specifically within only 23 lands (*pīṭha*-s) out of the 24 comprising the full complement in the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*. He was pointedly

forbidden by his Guru from ever travelling to Devikōṭṭa. Kun-dga' grol-mchog records it thus,

...you may visit the other twenty three lands as you wish, with the express exception of Devikōṭṭa... (where) ... there are very many wild *dākinī*-s...(and)... the whole place is quite unfit for humans to live in.¹⁸

Clearly this injunction follows on from the information bestowed on him by the *dākinī*-s in Urgyen about inferior places and places "where the local deity lives on the site". We know a deal about the strength of various tribal and corrupted tantric cults in Assam,¹⁹ and that it was one of the sacred places in Hindu Tantrism, venerated as the place "where Satī's two feet fell on the ground and where the Devī is Mahābhāgā."²⁰ However I disagree with Sircar's location of the *pīṭha* of Devikōṭṭa in the Dinājpur District of Rājshāhi, Bangla Desh, and have come instead to agree with Alfonsa Ferrari,²¹ thereby also disagreeing with Huber,²² in placing Devikōṭṭa at Kāmākhyā near Gauhati, Assam. I do this for two main reasons. One is because Tāranātha records that the actual site was near the Tibetan mountains,²³ which fits well with the location generally accepted by many Tibetans as the site of the Indian Devikōṭṭa, namely Gauhati in Assam. Tucci in his work *The Sea and Land Travels of a Buddhist Sadhu*²⁴ records that Devikōṭṭa is in fact the temple of Kāmākhyā Devī near Gauhati. This claiming of existing Hindu sites by Buddhists and vice versa is certainly a very practice and one still pursued by the refugee Tibetan community in India. They have in their own way "re-claimed" as Buddhist focal centres, through the very act of their pilgrimages, many of the sites in India, now Hindu. They make regular and fervent pilgrimage to them and I have been on many such ventures in the company of Tibetans over the last 15 years. Some of the more interesting have been to the temple of Cāmuṇḍā Devī and its caves near Pālampur, Himachel Pradesh, where the Devī there is commonly regarded as Vajrayoginī and is venerated by Tibetans as such. Other modern examples would be the Devī temple at Kangra, Himachal Pradesh and the temples of Kāmākhyā near Gauhati, both also revered as shrines of Vajrayoginī.

The second reason for my choice is that in the biography of his Indian master Buddhaguptanātha, Tāranātha records that his Guru visited Tripurā (Tucci says he went "to the highland of Tipura", but in the editions of the text I have consulted I am unable to find any reference to "highland") at a place called Kasaramkam, "which was the site of Devikōṭṭa, and he spent several days there at the temple erected by the Mahāsiddha Kṛṣṇācārya. As for this land of Devikōṭṭa, like Urgyen, it had many huge and ferocious *dākinī*-s who adopted various bodily forms."²⁵

We have a great deal of information about the extent of Tripurā in the period when Buddhaguptanātha visited it,²⁶ and both Gauhati and Dinājpur in the Rājshāhi District of Bangla Desh (the other main contender for the site of Devikōṭṭa) could be considered almost equidistant from the main areas of population in Tripurā at that time. However, on the strength of Tāranātha's evidence from the very mouth of his Indian master, Buddhaguptanātha, Kāmākhyā seems to be most likely in terms of textual evidence.

To continue with the narrative events of the Life of Kṛṣṇācārya, even before he got to Devikōṭṭa he was finally warned by Vajravārāhī, who was disguised as an orchard keeper, about being sure not to visit all the 24 areas of practice, but he ignored that warning too, as he did those of the *ḍākini*-s and his own Guru.²⁷

According to Tāranātha's biography, he then travelled to Devikōṭṭa. There Kṛṣṇācārya came across Bahurī, a local demoness who engaged him in a battle of *siddhi* powers after he had become infuriated on seeing a *yoni* (or the gesture representing it) which had been placed atop a *stūpa* containing a portion of the Buddha's relics.²⁸ According to Tāranātha, Kṛṣṇācārya sent his emissaries to remove it and hurl it in the river. Kun-dga' grol-mchog records more simply that he had gone there to build a Buddhist temple, which fits well with the above mentioned information of Buddhaguptanāṭha actually spending some days at that very temple shortly prior to visiting Tāranātha in Tibet. In an act of compassion Kṛṣṇācārya let his guard down for a second after almost fatally injuring Bahurī, and in so doing left himself open to her lethal attack.

Both biographers seem to be saying much the same thing concerning Hindu and Buddhist competition for the primacy of their doctrines in marginal border areas, where Buddhism had not yet taken full root or had been in temporary abeyance. It appears to me that somewhere in all this there may be an explanation which could help us understand something more about the confusing events leading to Kṛṣṇācārya's death, or even more germane in the present context, something about the nature of such sacred sites. Why would he allow himself to become so incensed when he had shown before that he was able to handle all such challenges to the authority of Buddhism with his undoubted powers, and why would he "allow" himself to be duped and harmed by such a minor cult figure? Is it all explainable by Kun-dga' grol-mchog's interpretation asserting that Kṛṣṇācārya adopted these attitudes such as his seeming wilfulness, his seeming lack of compassion and his seemingly unskilful death merely as skilful teaching tools?²⁹

I believe that there is more to the story of the placement of a *yoni* atop a *stūpa* than might at first appear in the narrative itself. It is quite plausible that Jālandharipa realized the fierce nature of the local demonesses and knew that the correct time for establishing the Buddhist doctrine in Kāmarūpa had not yet come. Even some two centuries later according to gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's biography of rJe-btsun Mi-la ras-pa, the time was not ready to bring Devikōṭṭa into the Buddhist fold. Mar-pa Lo-tsa-ba, the Guru of Mi-la ras-pa says to his student,

Meditate in every other favourable solitary place. Raise a banner of meditation in each. Adjacent to each other in the east there remain the great sacred places, Devikoti and Tsari. The time to open them has not yet come. In the future your spiritual descendants will establish themselves there.³⁰

For those reasons he forbade Kṛṣṇācārya from going there. However the *mahāsiddha* Virūpa had been to that site some time before and is said to have

oath-bound the demonesses there, so it might have appeared quite opportune for Kṛṣṇācārya to “complete” the job of re-establishing Buddhism and re-converting the area by erecting a temple there. With his characteristic impetuosity and relish for doing what was forbidden to him (whether satisfactorily explained by Kun-dga’ grol-mchog’s interpretation or not), Kṛṣṇācārya could well have regarded the ban on going to Devikōṭṭa as the final impediment to his gaining enlightenment in that very lifetime. Visiting 23 out of the 24 internal or external *pīṭha*-s could not be sufficient entry.

The biography by Kun-dga’ grol-mchog says that he would certainly accomplish the gaining of Enlightenment, but with the caveat that it would be in the intermediate state, after death, but before the subsequent rebirth. Indeed Kṛṣṇācārya makes many appearances and teaches widely at many locations in this after-death period, as recorded in Tāranātha’s work.³¹ This urge to convert one of the last places outside the Buddhist fold seems probable, as in the Indian oral tradition as recorded by Tāranātha he is said to have already “converted the east.”

However it appears that, at Devikōṭṭa at least, all of the inimical forces were not yet ready to be subjugated again by Cakrasaṃvara. There may well have been a *stūpa* there already symbolizing the pre-eminence of Buddhism over local cult and the great Hindu deity Maheśvara, but his entourage might not have been so completely suppressed (or even so easily suppressible!) and were to cause unprecedented chaos among the followers of Kṛṣṇācārya. In itself this failure to complete the subjugation of the area is unusual as we know from both major sources on his life that he himself had already engineered and supervised the defeat of Maheśvara by Cakrasaṃvara in Bengal some time before this incident. At that time Cakrasaṃvara was shown to be “effulgent and glorious, and... Bhairava and Kālī had been crushed by the Lord [Saṃvara], into whose form the other two had been transformed.”³²

It seems entirely likely that what Maheśvara’s (Bhairava’s) emissary was attempting by topping the *stūpa* with a *yoni*, was a wholesale reversal of the epic struggle of conversion of Maheśvara by Cakrasaṃvara.³³ Hubert Decler in an unpublished review article of *Tāranātha’s Life of Kṛṣṇācārya/Kāṇha*, (far more a masterly and synoptic study of the wider issues than simply a review) suggests that,

If on earlier occasions his being “wilfully disobedient” was just plain blundering, like it would be for any practitioner, the situation is maybe different for the Devikōṭṭa episode. After all, there are precedents for such “lawful disobedience” too, as when one “mad” yogin started to give out the Nāro-vision version of Vajra-Yoginī to entire groups of disciples outside his own School, to which he was supposed to keep it restricted, as he had vowed: the superior motivation overrules the strict obedience in that case. Could it not be that for example he had the idea of opening the one extra power-spot well before its time, in the hope of “filling the country with siddhas”... even knowing he would

thereby fail to achieve the siddhi of Mahāmudrā in this life? It is the one question, unfortunately, which Tāranātha does not directly address.³⁴

This line of enquiry might lead us into a re-examination of our views and understandings of what exactly constitutes *siddha* activity, but more relevant to this paper, we may thereby re-evaluate what exactly a *pīṭha* is, the forces both mythic and historic which shape its “life” and the role which narrative events might play in adding new data to this evaluation.

Notes

1. bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan, f.140a, 3-143b, 5.
2. Quoted in Snellgrove (1959: 69).
3. Kun-dga’ grol-mchog (1982); Tāranātha, vol. 12. This latter text translated in Templeman 1989.
4. Lha-btsun Rin-chen rnam-rgyal (1972).
5. Dowman (1985: 43-52).
6. D. Templeman (1983: 82-97).
7. Nālandā Translation Committee (1982).
8. As summarized in Lokesh Chandra’s Preface to Dawa-Samdup (1987: 16-17), and in the body of the Tantra on pp.102-105, corresponding to the text on pp.178, line 6 to 179, line 10.
9. Tsuda (1974).
10. Tsuda (1974: 260-262 and 271-272).
11. Found in Vol. 7 of *Collected Works of Jo nang Rje btsun Tāranātha*, pp.75-109.
12. *Ibid*, f.9b, 1-7.
13. *Ibid*. f.10a, 2.
14. The translation of the biography by Kun-dga’ grol-mchog, referred to above in note 3, will soon be forthcoming, together with a critical edition of the text (both by D. Templeman), and a translation of Kṛṣṇācārya’s *caryā* songs and Tāranātha’s commentary on them (by G. Śomlai), from the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
15. *Ibid*. f.22b.
16. Kazi Dawa-Samdup, op. cit. refers to this group of 37 as “yoginīs”, p.119, following his text, p.185, lines 12-13.
17. Kun-dga’ grol-mchog, op. cit. f.13b, 5-14a, 1.
18. Kun-dga’ grol-mchog, op. cit. f.18b, 5-19a, 1.
19. Summarized conveniently in Sircar (1973: 15-16).
20. Sircar (1973: 17).
21. Ferrari (1958: 102).
22. Huber (1990: 144).
23. Templeman (1989: 37-38).
24. Tucci (1931: 700).
25. The reference is to Tāranātha: 554, lines 2-3. An annotated translation and a critical edition of the text nearing completion by the present author, will be published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
26. Roychoudhury (1983: 1-36). Thakurta (1986: 1-16). Bhattacharyya (1985: i-iv and pp.1-30).

27. Templeman (1989:37).
28. Only Tāranātha mentions this as the cause for the disagreement. Kun-dga' grol-mchog has Kṛṣṇācārya reducing the rice which the demoness was pounding to a powder with one of his ritual gazes, thus angering her.
29. Kun-dga' grol-mchog, f.2b, 4-3a, 2. This should be compared with the comment in Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 473).
30. Lhalungpa (1977: 94).
31. Templeman (1989: 40-43).
32. Kun-dga' grol-mchog, f.34b, 2-4.
33. Huber (1997), Davidson (1991).
34. Decler, p.22.

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Taming the Earth, Controlling the Cosmos: Transformation of Space in Tibetan Buddhist and Bon-po Ritual Dance

Mona Schrempf

Introduction

The chief purpose [of this Vajrakīla 'cham] is expressly for the subjugation of Rudra by Badzra Heruka, who realized six advantages by singing six songs, liberated the six classes of beings by taking six steps, and did this by way of six or eight movements of his hands and feet. And Padmasambhava, the great meditation master who was a knowledge-holder, subdued the ground (*sa-'dul*) of glorious bSam-yas by performing a ritual dance (*gar-'cham*), which relied on this same great *maṇḍala* of action (*'phrin-las kyi dkyil-'khor chen-po*). With that he created excellent conditions, such as pacifying the malice of the gods and demons, and thus he bound them strongly on that occasion by carrying out the ritual of the earth (*sa-chog*) and supplementing it with efficacy (*'phrin-las kyi kha skong-ba*), and with the expulsion ritual (*bsgral-ba*), the thread-cross (*mdos*) and magical weapons (*zor*). [This 'cham] is associated with the source of Tantra and has a great deal of empowerment (*byin-rlabs*).¹

This short passage from the important dance manual (*'cham-yig*) for the Vajrakīla 'cham compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), describes what was, according to Tibetan religious historians, the first recorded *vajra* dance (*rdo-rje gar*) performed in Tibet by the Tantric master Padmasambhava. Similarly, Bon-po masters are said to have subjugated hostile forces through ritual dance.² This narrative is considered as a kind of prototype for Tibetan ritual dances and also generally reflects the essence regarding ritual space: the general creation of a purified and protected realm for a temple, a *stūpa* or a *maṇḍala* to be built upon.

The preparatory action of ritual dance initiates what we could call a temporary 'place-creation' in terms of a recreation of the cosmological spheres at a particular site. The performance of a publicly staged ritual dance ('*cham*') becomes itself a "great *maṇḍala* of action", where dancers acting as Black Hat figures (*zhwa-nag*) or masked wrathful protectors of religion (*chos-skyong*), empowered by their being, first "subjugate the earth" (*sa-'dul*)—a means of taking control of and transforming space—usually translated with more neutral phases, such as "cleansing the ground" or "preparing the site".³ Through the generation of and identification with higher Tantric deities, monk dancers also subjugate what is considered to be evil and disturbing on the way to enlightenment, i.e. different classes of evil spirits such as *dam-sri* and inner and outer hindrances including enemies of religion (*dgra-bgegs*, *bstan-dgra*). This is done by means of a complex ensemble of different rites—purifications, invocations of and offerings to various deities, specific dance movements, subjugating hand gestures and ritual implements (especially the *phur-bu*), wrathful accompanying music and mental as well as physical actions of subjugation and expulsion.⁴

Ritual dance subjugating the ground directly generates ritual space which is purified and protected on the microcosmic level of the body and local environment and analogically on the macrocosmic level. This process of taming, disciplining or civilizing the wild and uncontrolled, including the mind, is perceived to be one of the main tasks and functions of Tibetan lamas.⁵

In the Tibetan context the esoteric logic of ritual consists of the analogical relation between microcosmic body and macrocosmic environment, between mind and space, contents and container and the transformation of such dualities through their unification and transcendence. By creating a ritual space and divine powers inside their bodies and minds, the dancers inscribe and recreate their environment in turn with their body, speech and mind, transforming it thereby into an outer ritual space which then also becomes the centre of a public ritual performance. Further processes of purifications and expulsions aim at finally transforming all participants including the audience.

Scholars describing '*cham*' performances have analysed them mainly in terms of their religious symbolic and esoteric content and stressed the phases of the dance, the iconography of the deities and the symbolism of the ritual objects and actions.⁶ This paper is a preliminary attempt to focus on how the actual practice of dance movement contributes to the creation of a ritual space in both Tibetan Buddhist and Bon contexts and what kind of ritual actions and perceptions of space are involved. The public ritual dances ('*cham*'), secret initiation dances (*gar*) and other related Tibetan rituals will be briefly compared with regard to ritual space by using dance manuals, oral and written statements by Tibetan ritual dance experts and other literary accounts.

General Overview of '*Cham*'

'*Cham*' is commonly described as a public Tibetan ritual dance, performed for a lay audience by monks in colourful costumes mainly representing the protectors

of religion (*chos-skyong*) and their assistants with masks, or the “Black Hats”, who are also called “Tantrists” (*zhwa-nag* or *sngags-pa*). They are part of the retinue of the central deity in question, the *yi-dam* and its *maṇḍala* abode. According to early Tibetan literature ‘*cham* originates in Indian Tantric dances (*gar*) and early Tibetan masked court dances.⁷ The main esoteric purpose of a ‘*cham* is said to be the expulsion of “evil forces” by which all participants and the local environment is purified. It is also believed to procure blessings or empowerment (*byin-rlabs*) for all participants, to generate faith in the lay audience and to be a Tantric method of realization for the monks. As in other Tantric rituals, the meditational practice of ‘*cham* is based on the transformation of body, speech and mind, but extends the body transformation through dance movements in the ritual space of a publicly performed ‘*cham* in the courtyard of a monastery.⁸ So ‘*cham* could be understood as a “spatialization” of Tantric rituals.⁹ Specific parts of ‘*cham* danced by the assistants of the represented principal protector deities can also directly create their mythical abodes, so that the process of the construction of ritual space by dance movements is itself a recurrent part of the performance.¹⁰ This is just another indication of the relationship between ritual dance and ritual space.

The space-time frame of a ‘*cham* ritual is usually divided into three sections: First, a phase of meditation and ritual actions within the temple (‘*cham-khang*) according to the liturgy.¹¹ Second, the public performance of ‘*cham* in the courtyard during which monks dressed in colourful costumes and masks re-enact publicly the major ritual actions, especially the ritual killing of the *liṅga*, climaxing usually in an exorcistic rite (*gtor-rgyab*) outside the courtyard.¹² Third, a subsequent dissolution phase within the temple, where the visualizations are dissolved into emptiness. Each day of performance is usually also structured into preliminary, actual and concluding parts. We see that what is usually called ‘*cham* is actually the public part of an ensemble of a variety of rituals which are encompassed by a *sādhana*.

Besides being a Tantric ritual, ‘*cham* is a spectacular social event in Tibetan societies, often forming the culminating parts of festivals like New Year celebrations, for instance the common *dgu-gtor* ‘*cham* on the 29th day of the 12th Tibetan month. ‘*Cham* are also performed in connection with celebrations of famous Tantric masters like Padmasambhava or Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123), whose emanations take part in those dances. The various dance forms are said to have originated in the dreams or pure visions (*dag-s nang*) of famous Tibetan masters, such as the Bon-po *gter-ston* gShen-chen klu-’dga (996-1035), or of Guru Chos-dbang (1212-1273), Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub (1290-1364), Padma gling-pa (1450-1521) and the Fifth Dalai Lama, who were all inspired by their highest Tantric deities.¹³ In this respect the origin narratives of ‘*cham* as a cultural practice conform to the Tibetan system of cultural production through revelation. Written down in dance manuals, ‘*cham* became incorporated into specific monastic liturgies and were orally transmitted by dance masters (‘*cham-dpon*).

A ‘*cham* form is always shaped by the performing monastery so that the affiliation to the religious school, the local deities, the monastery’s principal protective deities and important historical figures or events become incorporated

with the central ritual cycle of the *yi-dam* in question. Additionally, the size and importance of the monastery, its connections with other performing monasteries as well as the financial resources of the 'cham sponsors were decisive for the size, staging and social relevance of 'cham performances ranging from little village festivals to bombastic state events, such as the pre-1959 Lhasa New Year celebrations. Concerning the different types of ritual dances, one can distinguish between offering dances, those of a narrative or didactic nature, and wrathful dances of subjugation and expulsion. Despite the great variety of 'cham forms, there are general features concerning their ritual structure and aims as well as some fundamental dance figures and movements.

Gar and 'Cham

In the context of Tantric ritual, dance and music are part of the "generation stage" (*bskyed-rim*) by which the internal and external presence of the deity is evoked. Also they actively help to accomplish the goals of the performance, the "ritual actions" (*'phrin-las*).¹⁴ Concerning the types of Tantric dance, the Fifth Dalai Lama defines their distinction as follows:

When chiefly the hands move (*lag stabs*), this is called *gar*, and when mainly the feet move (*rkang stabs*) this is known as 'chams.¹⁵

The dGe-lugs-pa dance master Nga-dbang Chos-'byor, former *gar-dpon* at rNam-rgyal monastery for many years, draws a distinction between 'cham and *gar* in terms of the character of movement: a *gar* is meant to be peaceful and slowly danced while 'cham belongs to wrathful actions.¹⁶ *Gar* usually denotes non-public ritual dances without masks, danced only by and in the presence of initiated persons, inside the *lha-khang*. They are performed as a preparatory rite, or "ritual of the site" (*sa'i cho-ga*), on the spot where later a *mandala* will be outlined on the ground, as in the Kālacakra initiation where a *sa-gar*¹⁷ is danced before the sand *mandala* is created. In the Mani Rimdu ceremonies at the rNying-ma-pa monastery of Chiwong (sPyi-dbang) in Nepal, a *gar* is danced inside the temple on the spot where the sand *mandala* will be placed. All this is part of the preparatory rites done before the actual 'cham performance which then takes place in the public courtyard.¹⁸ Here we have a combination of a *gar* and 'cham as parts of the same ceremony, and I will return to this point later to look at how they are related to each other.

Scholars have stressed the difference between 'cham as public ritual dance and *gar* as secret Tantric initiation dance.¹⁹ This issue of "secret" and appropriate versus "public" and inappropriate seems to be quite an old and important one. An historical dispute between the Sa-skyapa and rNying-ma-pa is said to have centred on the question of the appropriateness of public performances of 'cham dances of the Vajrakāla cycle as "shows in the market place".²⁰ Recent publications on Tantric initiation ceremonies nevertheless give a more detailed description of *gar*.²¹ Below I will compare 'cham and *sa-gar* in terms of the transformation of space.

The Physical Setting of a 'Cham

Before examining the creation of ritual space I will first look at the physical setting of the public ritual dance, which is usually performed in the monastic or temple courtyard (*chos-ra*). Within the square-shaped courtyard the dancers move in a circle, generally called *do-ra* (also *rdo-ra* or '*cham-ra*'). Jäschke's *Tibetan-English Dictionary* translates *rdo-ra* among other things as a "circle of dancers" (p.288), as does Das' *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (p.640) where it is also cited as an abbreviated form of *rdo-rje ra-ba*, an "enclosure with a railing or wall made with pots or pillars with capitals of the shape of the dorje or with the dorje on their tops (such as the shape of the wall which surrounds the monastery of Sam-ye in Tibet)." But *rdo-rje ra-ba* is also a general technical term for the protective "circle of *vajra-s*" surrounding various *maṇḍala-s*, as reflected in the architecture of bSam-yas itself. This connection is perhaps important considering that the dance circle itself creates a *maṇḍala* by performance. The dance ground is often covered over by a large tent-like canopy.

In the centre of the courtyard are erected one or two flag poles (*phya-dar* or *cha-dar*).²² They are adorned with flags in the colours of the highest ranking '*cham* deities. Its quadrangular or rectangular base of stone or mud often serves as an altar for the offerings to the principal deities. Where this is not the case an altar will be placed right next to it. The centre is also the place where the ritual master (*rdo-rje slob-dpon*) and the highest ranking '*cham* deity (often the dance leader, called '*cham-dpon*') are mostly situated or carry out their ritual activities. The *gtor-zor*, also called *zlog-pa*, the hurled offering to "turn back" or expel the "evil forces", is often placed here too (see figure 1) after a preparatory rite to "empower" (*byin-gyis-brlabs*) it as a weapon by visualizing it as a wrathful form of the central deity, the *yi-dam*.²³ So the centre of the dance ground often becomes the focus of the actual '*cham* performance, while the dancers encircle it in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.²⁴ The ritual musicians sit in a line, usually on the opposite side of the dance-ground facing the door, invoking and praising the deities, which appear in the form of the dancers coming out of the temple ('*chams-khang*').²⁵ The latter are usually guided by *rgya-gling* players and incense holders, who venerate and invite them to enter the dance-ground to participate in the ritual performance.

Sometimes there are concentric circles actually marked with chalk on the dance ground. According to Rakra sPrul-sku Thub-bstan chos-dar there are three circles which together frame an inner and an outer circle.²⁶ Often the Black Hat dancers dance in the outer circle. This is a position which suits their tasks as *sngags-pa*, as intermediaries between the audience sitting outside and around the dance ground and the deities in the inner dance circle (see figure 1). The dance manual of the Vajrakīla '*cham* mentions a "'*chams-skor dang-po*" and a "'*chams-skor gnyis-pa*", translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz with "inner and outer dance circle".²⁷

These concentric circles, with their biggest concentration of power in the centre, correspond exactly to the form of a *maṇḍala*, a circular sacred three

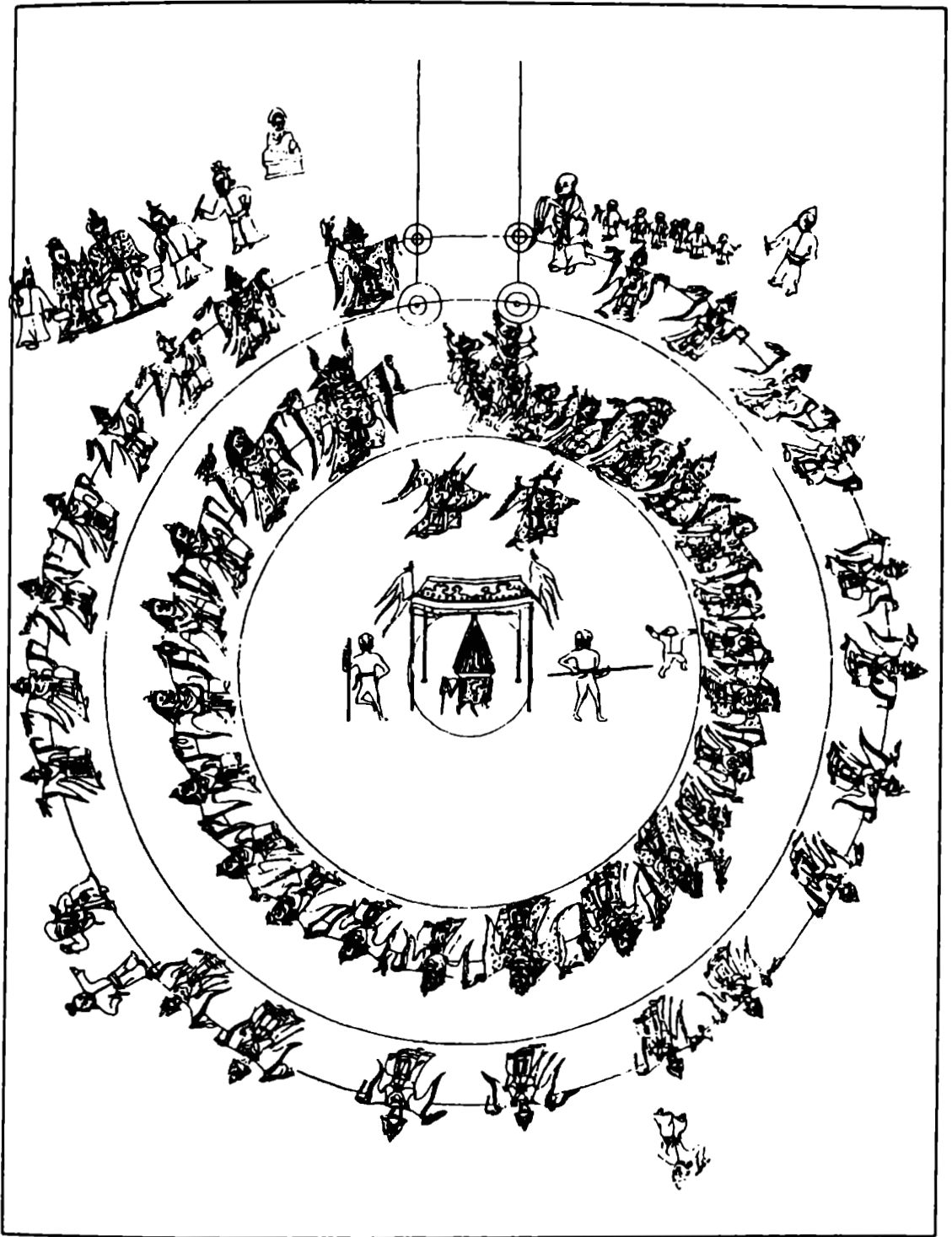


Figure 1: Schematic drawing of a 'cham (from Filchner 1933: plate 154)

dimensional space with the highest ranking deity in its centre and a surrounding retinue on the periphery whose distance from the centre reflects their specific hierarchical position—the closer in (and higher), the more important and powerful.²⁸ The dance also “echoes the formal structure of the painted one [inside the temple].”²⁹ Thubten Norbu states that “in the process, the courtyard of the

monastery becomes the *maṇḍala* and all the dancers are transformed into the deities of that particular *maṇḍala*.³⁰ Obviously there are several *maṇḍala* on different levels involved in a 'cham: first it is usually outlined inside the temple using sand.³¹ On the meditational and microcosmic level it is imagined through the body, speech and mind of the dancers and musicians; while on the macrocosmic level the three realms of the samsaric world (*kham-gsum*) are transformed into a *maṇḍala* form, as we will see later. The middle one, the dance ground itself, becomes visibly transformed into a "great *maṇḍala* of action" where "the dancers express with their movements nothing else than the iconographic details of [the] *maṇḍala*."³²

In the following I will examine the creation of ritual space in Tibetan 'cham. I will first summarize the initial phases of the "root dance" (*rtsa-'cham*) according to the detailed dance manual of the Vajrakīla 'cham in its function as a kind of prototype. It is danced by the Black Hat dancers publicly on the courtyard. Then I will give an example according to my own observation of an elaborate ritual dance based on a Bon-po form of Vajrakīla (Phur-pa), performed inside the temple in order to define the outer and inner boundaries and purify the ten directions of the ritual space, before the actual public 'cham is carried out. After that I will compare these actions and dances to the "ritual of the site" (*sa-chog*) and the "dance of the earth" (*sa-gar*) and discuss aspects of their actual performative practice and inherent themes.

Creation of Ritual Space: Defining the Boundaries

The dance manual of the Vajrakīla 'cham gives a rare detailed description of how the dance circle should be outlined and how the ground for the *maṇḍala* should be prepared. The preparation of the ground for the 'cham *maṇḍala* takes place in the beginning of the section called "attaining bodhi" (*byang-chub bsgrub-pa*), in which the root dance performed by the Black Hats or Tantrists is explained.³³ The second section is called the "driving away evil" (*gdug-pa sgrol-ba*) or *brub-'cham*.

After the gold libation (*gser-skyems*) has been offered to the local country god (*yul-lha*) and to the eight classes of gods and spirits (*lha srin sde-brgyad*) the deities of the four world quarters are invited to gather at the dance place, where the dancers (i.e. the Black Hats) form a row and circumambulate the place one by one. Then the dance leader (*'cham-dpon*) dances into the centre where he takes a seat while the other dancers make an offering to the four quarters of the world.³⁴ Now the "deciding upon the earth-foundations" (*sa-gzhi 'khod snyom-pa*) is danced which "aims apparently at a metaphysical creation of the deepest foundations, upon which the *maṇḍala* is going to rest."³⁵ Then the *slob-dpon* proceeds towards the north-east dancing the "half thunderbolt step" (*rdo-rje phyed-'gros*), while to his right and left the "masters of the four cardinal points" (*phyogs-dpon bzhi*) position themselves.³⁶ Now the rite called *bsgral-mchod* is performed, "meaning a separation of a demon from the evil components which are the true cause of his malignant nature."³⁷ Then a hexagram is created and detailed instructions

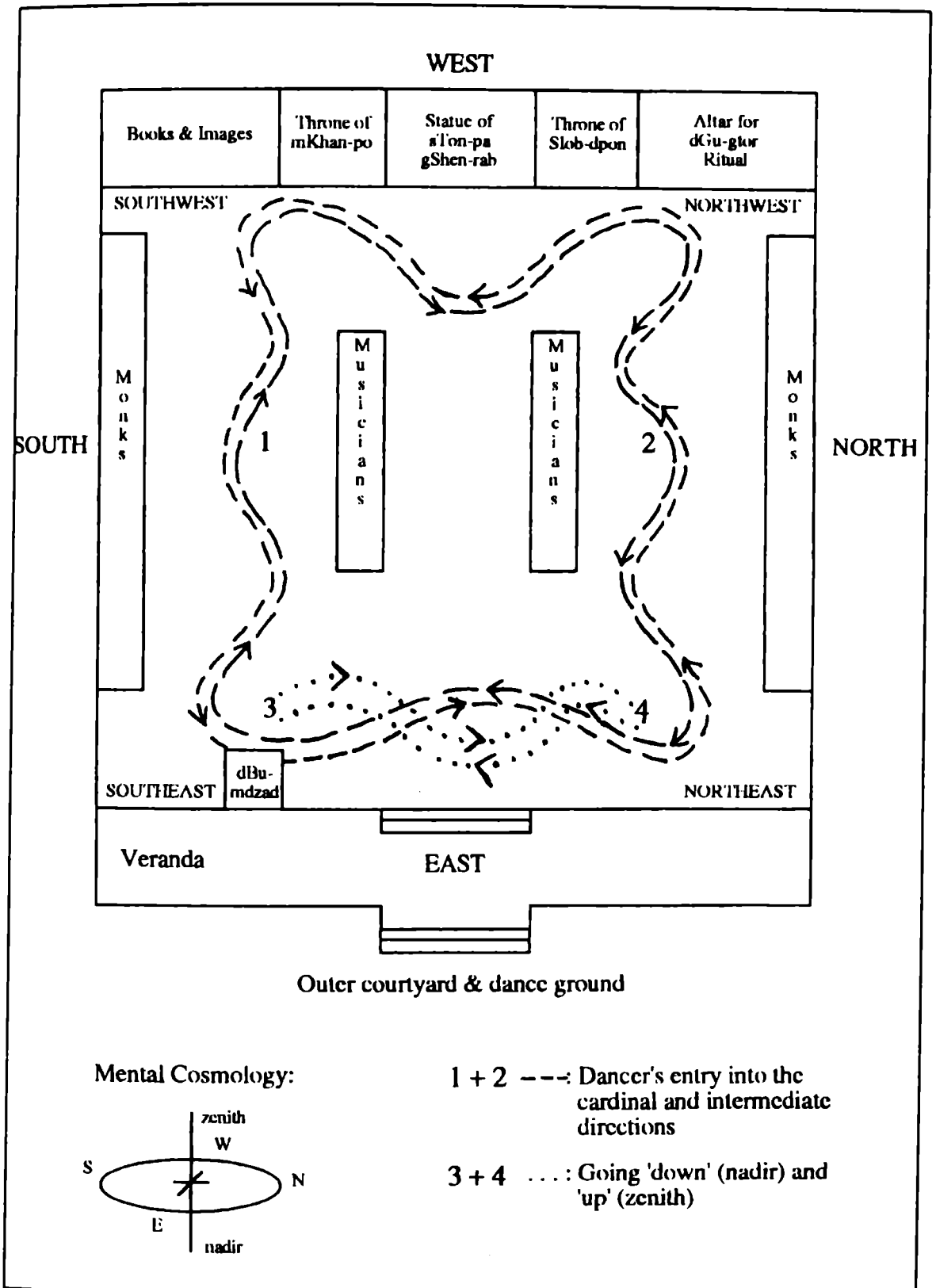


Figure 2: Phur-'dril 'cham at the ground floor of the assembly hall of sMan-ri

for specific dance figures, movements of the feet and hands holding the ritual dagger and skull-cup are given, called *yang-pad*, “wide lotus”.³⁸ Several rites follow, aimed first at a “metaphysical subjugation of the spheres” by “bringing into one’s power all worlds” (*snang-srid rnams-du bsdu-bar bya-ba*),³⁹ while the hands should move in a circle above the head three times. Then there is “a rite of black magic carried out in order to destroy an adversary of Buddhism.”⁴⁰ In between the *dharmapāla*-s are invoked and invited.

Now the three spheres of the world are “blessed” or “empowered” (*byin-gyis-brlab*) as follows:⁴¹ first the sphere above is empowered by drawing a heavenly wheel with eight spokes. Then the eight auspicious signs have to be outlined in order to empower the middle sphere⁴² and thirdly the sphere below is empowered by the outline of an eight-petalled lotus on the ground.⁴³ While the feet move in certain dance steps and figures the actual drawing in space seems to be done by moving or “inscribing” the ritual dagger in the appropriate way towards the spheres above, in the middle and below. The ‘*cham-yig*’ also gives an abbreviated form of this phase combining the three sequences into one dance where the ritual dagger is just pointed into the three directions.

Now the actual dance-ground is prepared. The dancers are “looking out for a suitable ground by dancing in the half-thunderbolt step (*rdo rje phyed ’gros kyis sa btsal ba*).” Then the ground is, according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz’s translation “cleansed from harmful powers” through the performance of the “thunderbolt-single step (*rdo rje rkyang ’gros kyis sa btul ba*).”⁴⁴ But actually ‘*dul-ba*’ means “to subjugate” or “to discipline” in an active sense, an important difference as we will see. The next sequence concerns the “blessing [empowerment] of the earth-foundations by means of a pair of crossed thunderbolts (*sna tshogs rdo rjes sa gzhi byin gyis rlob pa*)” after the dance steps “the half of a thunderbolt’s ‘horn’ (*rdo rje’i rva phyed ’gros*)” and the “central ‘horn’ (*dbus rva*)” have been outlined.⁴⁵

After these preparations of the sacred space the main part of the ‘*cham*’ starts with creating the spheres of sky, wind, water and fire for the divine residence (*rten*). On top of these is an ocean of blood with a skeleton mountain in its centre, upon which the *maṇḍala* palace of Vajrakīla stands. Then the chief deity with its consort is generated (*lha bskyed-pa*) and subsequently all the other deities of Vajrakīla’s *maṇḍala*.⁴⁶ Among them are the “Ten Fierce Ones” (*khro-bcu*), guardians of the ten directions and emanations of the *yi-dam* Vajrakīla who are asked to remove inner and outer hindrances and who form an “inner circle” (*nang-’khor*).⁴⁷

The following description of how the boundaries of the ritual space are sealed through dance movements is based upon my observation of Bon-po ritual dances. The example given concerns the dGu-gtor ritual performed between the 27th and the 29th day of the 12th Tibetan month by the Bon-po monks of the exile monastery of sMan-ri in North India. The dGu-gtor ritual (meaning a “*gtor-ma* [casting ritual] on the [twenty-]ninth day”) centres on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa, a form of Vajrakīla.⁴⁸ The dGu-gtor is performed by many Tibetan monasteries regardless to which sect they belong.⁴⁹ At sMan-ri monastery specific dances are used to seal off the boundaries and to recreate and purify the ten directions of the ritual space from evil forces which will be described below.⁵⁰

On the first of the three days of the ritual, before the public dances take place on the 29th day, the assembled monks of sMan-ri monastery start with the preliminary actions of purification, offerings to the local deities and securing the outer boundaries (*phyi-mtshams bcad-pa*) inside the assembly hall.⁵¹ These actions are part of the general preliminaries of the 'site ritual' or 'earth rite' (*sachog*) as a preparation for a *maṇḍala* structure. The securing of the outer boundaries is done through invocations, offerings to and visualizations of the guardian gods of the four directions (*phyi-tho*), thus protecting the monastic ground along the outer circumambulation path where their shrines are situated.⁵² After this the *maṇḍala* of Phur-pa is mentally outlined and the consecration of the vase (*bum-las*) is prepared. The vase (*bum-pa*) is placed in the middle of an altar inside the assembly hall and represents the body of the *yi-dam* Phur-pa. The altar⁵³ is the physical place for offerings (*mchod-pa*) to and representations (*rten*) of the deities of the *maṇḍala* in the form of a great variety of sacrificial cakes (*gtor-ma*) carried out during the ritual by an officiant (*mchod-dpon*).

Then while reciting their ritual texts the monks dance together the "dance for securing the inner boundaries" (*nang-mtshams bcad-pa'i 'cham*) inside the assembly hall (see figure 2).⁵⁴ It takes approximately three hours. Together the monks form a big circle, building on the left side⁵⁵ a Khro-bo and on the right side a Phur-pa line guided by two prayer leaders (*dbu-mdzad*).⁵⁶ Accompanied by drums (*rnga*) and cymbals (*rol-mo*) they pray to the deities Phur-pa and Khro-bo and to their multitude of protectors with animal heads. They also recite prayers for securing the inner, outer and secret boundaries (*nang-mtshams*, *phyi-mtshams*, *gsang-mtshams*). First they dance the "svastika chain pattern" step (*g.yung-drung lu-gu-rgyud*),⁵⁷ the *svastika* having the same indestructible and eternal qualities for the Bon practitioner as the diamond sceptre or *vajra* (*rdo-rje*) among the Tibetan Buddhists. In other words a protective circle (*srung-'khor*) is created by outlining an uninterrupted *svastika* chain onto the ground. After the "guide step" (*lam-'gros*) they dance "tiger steps" (*stag-'gros*) and "lion leaps" (*seng-stabs*) alternately.⁵⁸ Then the abbot throws empowered white mustard seeds (*thun-zor* or *yungs-dkar*)⁵⁹ in order to expel the 'dre demons out of all three boundaries. The securing of a ritual boundary implies not only a spatial visualization in connection with specific dance steps and an expulsion of negativities but also a consequent protection from evil forces coming from the outside. At the same time all the accumulated positive properties encompassed in the place such as auspiciousness, wealth, paranormal powers and meditative attainments should be kept inside the protected space.⁶⁰

Then the ritual texts for the invocation of Phur-pa are recited with the appropriate music and *mudras* for the offerings, weapons and his retinue, mentally creating the *maṇḍala* of Phur-pa with all his helpers and protective deities (*bka'-skyong* or *srung-ma*). The deities are invited to come down and take part in the ritual.

Now the "dance of rolling the *phur-bu*" (*phur-'dril 'cham*)⁶¹ takes place involving the creation and purification of the ten directions of the *maṇḍala* from evil spirits ('dre) which are then summoned into a *linga*. This ritual is called

Phur-pa'i phyag-rgya 'jigs-tshogs. Two monks embodying two main messenger deities (*gong-ma srung-ma*) of Phur-pa⁶² dance out what the assembled monks recite and request them to do according to specific drum beats. They act in a way like two army generals for their leader Phur-pa, having a multitude of minor helpers or "soldiers" underneath them, all with animal heads and human bodies. They deliver the requests of the monks to those and to the Deities of the Ten Directions (*phur-pa'i khro-bcu*), who in turn—bound by oath (*dam-can*)—have to obey the monks⁶³ embodying the highest deity, the *yi-dam* Phur-pa. It is in this way that the monks are able to control the strictly hierarchized, deified space and avert the evil spirits situated at the lowest point of the hierarchy.

One messenger represents the wolf (*spyang-ku*) with a blue ribbon wrapped around his arm, while the other represents the hawk (*khra*) draped with a red scarf. Spinning around themselves (see figure 2, positions 1 to 4) or circling in snake-like lines through the assembly hall in opposite directions, rolling a ritual dagger (*phur-bu*) in their hands, they symbolically search for and chase the malevolent spirits and hindrances hidden in the ten directions (i.e. of the assembly hall, and in analogy of the mental *mandala* expanding symbolically to the three world spheres). The hawk makes tip-toeing steps, the wolf slouching ones. The dance starts with five drum beats in the centre of the *mandala*. Then the musicians play "two beats" (*gnyis-rdung*, 1-2-2) indicating the four cardinal directions, two times "two beats" corresponding to each direction. First the two messengers are positioned opposite to each other near the centre of the assembly hall (figure 2, positions 1, 2) where for each direction they initially spin around themselves rolling the ritual dagger in their hands and then circle around the assembly hall twice (figure 2, broken lines). After that they change from this middle level of the mental cosmology to the "downside", the nadir, i.e. at the door side in the south-east corner (of the assembly hall and the mental *mandala*) which is again marked by two "two beats" (figure 2, positions 3, 4).⁶⁴ Here they dance a specific step called "twisting the knotted cord in the south-east" (*lho-shar rgya-mdud 'khyil-ba*), a pattern which is danced out onto the ground at the door-side (figure 2, dotted lines).⁶⁵ After that the two messengers circle again through the assembly hall, coming back to the central positions (figure 2, position 1, 2) and perform their search in the four intermediate directions (south-east, south-west, north-west, north-east) on the middle level according to the rhythm of two "three beats" (*gsum-rdung*, i.e. 1-2-3-3). Then the dancers outline the step of "grasping the iron rope (at or around the) four doors" (*sgo-bzhi lcags-thags len*).⁶⁶ This is done again at the door-side (figure 2, position 3, 4, dotted lines) whereby they ascend to the imagined upper level, the zenith, again chasing the demonic forces and catching them with their weapons.

Those forces are finally summoned into a human effigy made out of dough—a man with a black beard laying on his back with his limbs bound, painted red (*linga* or *nya-bo*) which is then ritually killed with a *phur-bu* and his "soul" (*rnam-shes*) "liberated" (*ling-ga sgrol-ba*, *ling-ga bstabs-pa*).⁶⁷ Before this action a *tshog* offering to Phur-pa representing the negativities of the monk assembly is carried out. Further ritual actions such as a fire offering to the *yi-dam* complete this day.

All those actions described above, beginning with the securing of the inner boundaries, form the main part of the Bon-po dGu-gtor ritual at sMan-ri in Dolanji. They are repeated on the second day inside the assembly hall.⁶⁸

In the afternoon of the 3rd day of the dGu-gtor during the public dance performance dancers in colourful costumes and masks representing the nine protector deities of Bon religion carry out the ritual actions previously done inside the assembly hall, but now on the court-yard. All of three subsequent public dances (bsGral-bstabs 'cham, gShen-rab dgu-'cham⁶⁹, gTor-rgyab skabs) begin with the same dance steps as those for the securing of the inner boundary on the two previous days, i.e. *svastika* chain, tiger steps and lion leaps.⁷⁰ So we can summarize that ritual space creation through dance movements is neither just a preliminary of a whole ritual complex nor it is restricted to the rituals inside the assembly hall. It can also be repeatedly performed during the public performance of a 'cham as a preparatory act for the different kinds of ritual dances and actions involved.

It appears to be the prominent feature of the dGu-gtor ritual based on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa—the subduer *par excellence* of demons—that ritual space creation through dance movements and actions of purification/expulsion are closely interlinked and repeatedly performed throughout the ritual complex. However, ritual texts of different religious schools centring on Vajrakīla or Phur-pa, as well as particular performance styles, do evoke differences in staging a 'cham. While at sMan-ri monastery the elaborate creation, purification and protection of ritual space centres on the two days inside the assembly hall, Combe, for example, described those actions as being publicly acted out on the courtyard. In the very beginning of the Phur-pa'i 'cham at a rNying-ma-pa monastery in Dar-rtse-mdo (today Kanding) the “ten Wrathful Ones” (“Troju” i.e., *khro-bcu*) dance a slow dance thereby sweeping the courtyard with bamboo branches in order to expel the evil forces.⁷¹ The dancers, among other figures, also publicly represented the *yi-dam* Phur-pa together with his animal-headed door keepers and assistants, 23 all together—among them his “pet wulf (*sic.*)”.⁷²

Another example of a 'cham centring on ritual space creation is the locally called “*khencham*” (oral transcription), probably either meaning the fact that it is danced only by one dancer or by a “Knowledgeable One” (*m khas pa'i 'cham*).⁷³ It is performed as an opening dance of the public New Year dances at the end of the sMon-lam ritual, on the 15th day of the 1st Tibetan month, at the Bon-po monastery of dGa'-mal in A-mdo Shar-khog. One Black Hat dancer circles in slow majestic movements the arena with a ritual dagger and a skull-cup in his hands. Thereby he dances nine steps called the “nine necessary cuts” (*dgu-gcod dgos-pa*), which are supposed to press down or close the nine doors of hell.⁷⁴ The esoteric explanation is that the three worlds and the nine levels of cyclic existence (*khams-gsum sa-dgu*) are then transformed into purified realms.⁷⁵

Another public dance performed by Bon-po monasteries in Shar-khog specifically purifies the earth—it is danced usually at the beginning of the public performance in order to chase the 'dre spirits out of the dance ground. The two dancers called “A-li ka-li” wearing white masks without any deity-like ornaments

whirl around the place with a ritual implement used by Bon-po called *phyag-zhing*, a “wooden sceptre (of the destiny of existence)”, in order to tame or subjugate the earth (*sa-'dul*).⁷⁶ This dance is called *gar-'cham* denoting a similarity between *gar* and *'cham* and ritual space creation, a link which I want to examine in the following paragraphs.

The Ritual of the Site and the Dance of the Earth

The “ritual of the site” (*sa'i cho-ga* or *sa-chog*) is generally the first step in the construction of a *maṇḍala* in Indo-Tibetan Tantra.⁷⁷ It employs the “dance of the earth” (*sa-gar*), and is concerned with defining the borders (*mtshams*) of a ritual space by creating inner and outer, upper and lower protective circles (*srung-'khor*).⁷⁸ Its structure is basically the same as the Vajrakīla root dance (*rtsa-'cham*) already discussed.

In the ritual of the site, the *sa-gar* is danced after the use of ritual daggers, to define the space. For example, during the construction of a sand *maṇḍala* on a table first ten ritual daggers become deified and empowered in form of the Ten Wrathful Ones. They are hammered onto a *maṇḍala* table in the ten directions whereby the ritual space is purified.⁷⁹ Having invoked them the officiant, visualizing himself as the main *yi-dam*, dances on the surface of the *maṇḍala* table.⁸⁰ The ritual daggers, standing on triangular bases which symbolize their suppression of evil forces⁸¹ are imagined to seal with their blazing light the upper and lower boundaries, spreading above a diamond tent, below a diamond ground, filling the border with a diamond fence. This fence is “so dense that even air cannot enter.”⁸² The ritual dagger of which Vajrakīla is a deified form⁸³ is symbolically used like a peg of the earth (*sa-yi phur-bu*),⁸⁴ implying the concept of Mount Meru pinning down the earth.⁸⁵

Following this, the *sa-gar* is performed around the *maṇḍala* site in form of a slow *vajra* dance. Five different dance steps (*rkang-stabs*) are used.⁸⁶ But how is the dance ground actually transformed into a *maṇḍala*? During the performance of the *sa-gar* the *vajra* master symbolically marks the emblems of the five Buddha families, e.g. *vajra*, sword, jewel, wheel and lotus, on the corresponding direction of the site. This process is of interest: first he blesses the ground by visualizing the emblems on the sole of his feet and in the relevant directions, using appropriate mudras and postures.⁸⁷ After that the ground is finally empowered: the participants visualize a *vajra* on their soles, from where wrathful deities emanate into the ground. These finally destroy the obstacles and transform the place into the diamond nature of the *vajra*.⁸⁸ Again a protective circle is visualized and the area is circumambulated with incense.

Transformation of Space: The Violence of Liberation

...and he must dance the divine dance of knowledge which treads under foot the four *Māras*.⁸⁹

If we compare now the above descriptions of ritual dances and steps it becomes evident that there are common perceptions of ritual space involved. A deified

cosmology (i.e. the earth goddess and the four masters of the cardinal directions) and spatialized gods (such as the Ten Wrathful Ones) are invoked and offered to so that space can be purified and protected and evil forces can be driven out as well.⁹⁰ Thereby, the shapes of dance movements used for the creation of ritual space refer to powerful symbols of control and transformation in the religious cosmologies—such as *svastika* chains, crossed *vajra*-s, the eight-petalled lotus, the eight-spoked wheel and the eight auspicious signs. Even aspects of the dancers' costumes, like the Black Hat itself which represents the cosmological spheres, seem to contribute to the same purpose.⁹¹ The symbols are outlined, or better, stamped directly on the ground and/or drawn in the air, thereby defining and at the same time protecting the ritual space. In public '*cham*' they seem to cover the whole area of the dance ground as well. This is also confirmed for the *vajra* dance as a preparatory action of a general *maṇḍala* initiation.⁹²

As we have seen ritual dance steps play a crucial active role in the construction of a ritual space for a *maṇḍala*. This corresponds to many of the preparations for the building of a temple where special ritual dances as well as specific rituals for the preparation of the ground are performed.⁹³ Circular dances by nature have to do with fundamental conceptions of space and are among the oldest of dance forms. Indian cosmogonies, which pervade the Tibetan Buddhist world view profoundly, narrate that movement creates time and space—the creation of the universe starts with the churning of the unmanifest whereby an immobile and inaccessible centre arises and becomes the concentration of the periphery. By circumambulation the contact with the centre and its transcendent principle is ensured.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the *maṇḍala*, a concentric circle cosmogram with the highest deity in the centre, is a means of taking control over a place, transforming it into a sacred sphere, as happens in the context of Tibetan pilgrimage sites as well.⁹⁵ As in '*cham*' there is a reversed transfer of power between human body and ritual space, where the physical touch of the whole body, e.g. a full-length prostration contact with a specific empowered ground (*gnas*) representing the *maṇḍala* of a powerful deity, actually transfers empowerment to the participant—the audience or the pilgrim.⁹⁶ It is also reported that lamas or monks who had visited powerful places are perceived and venerated as embodiments of such sacred space.⁹⁷ The transformation of a (potentially hostile) ground into a ritual space by means of a *maṇḍala*, created inside the body and later reconstituted by circumambulatory movements, appears to be a general mode of Tibetan "place creation".

Next to being a Tantric method⁹⁸ the "pressing down of the earth" is also practised in the Tibetan folk context. Thereby dance steps in connection with certain spatial patterns are employed for the expulsion of negative forces in a variety of Tibetan folk dances. For example the *Gling-bro*, a dance centring on the *maṇḍala* of Ge-sar, is danced by lay people on a circular floor pattern in order to destroy negativity.⁹⁹ Siiger, observing pilgrims from Khams, mentioned three lay group dances especially related to the "levelling of the ground" through stamping with the feet and dancing a circular floor pattern (*sa-cha-bro*, *sa-'dul-bro* and *sa-gzhi-khyon snoms-pa*).¹⁰⁰ Also, the Tibetan folk opera *lha-mo* generally begins with a consecration and purification of the opera ground which is danced

by a group of masked hunters (*rngon-pa*). They are said to cultivate (*bcag*) and tame (*'dul*) the ground.¹⁰¹ A recent innovation at Tibetan exile Great Kālacakra Initiations (*'Dus-'khor dbang-chen*) in India (e.g. at Bodhgaya 1985) was the performance of this same preliminary *lha-mo* dance by lay people before the ritual dance of the earth (*sa-gar*) was danced by the monks.

Similarly, certain spatial patterns are used in Tibetan exorcistic rituals in which dance steps are employed as subjugating methods. A *sku-rim* ceremony is performed in Dol-po to assure a good harvest and centres on a *glud*, a substitute offering, placed in the middle of an area which is circumambulated by dancers—partly masked *dharmapāla*-s, partly Black Hats—and ends as well like *'cham* with a *gtor-rgyab* ritual for the expulsion of evil forces.¹⁰² Also, the many methods for performing a *brgya-bzhi* ceremony in order to cure a patient from illness seem to centre on a *glud* placed in the middle of concentric circles or an eight-petalled lotus outlined on the floor.¹⁰³ Klaus mentions a subduing dance used by weather-makers in order to avert hail, and which centres on the image of the cosmic mountain Meru suppressing the evil.¹⁰⁴

I think it is necessary to look at the details of taking control over space in Tibetan rituals, because they show that the actions involved here are not mere symbolic representations of the religious order but powerful and physical means of transformation through subjugation. Dance movements not only create and inscribe ritual space, they simultaneously subjugate the ground physically. They seem perfect for this task. Already the Tantric narrative of the origins of *'cham* shows this clearly: Heruka subjugates Rudra by making six or eight movements with hands and feet. In direct connection with this, Tantric Buddhist icons show the deities trampling adversaries underfoot and their *sādhana* describe this action as “performing a clockwise dance” (*g.yas-brkyang-ba'-i gar mdzad-pa*).¹⁰⁵ So footsteps in Tantric Buddhist belief seem to be directly connected to the subjugation of the so-called “evil forces” as well. As a constant reminder of their supernatural power of subjugation Tantric masters are said to have left behind “magical” footprints still to be seen today on the rocks in many holy places of Tibet.

Also, a common Tibetan practice for destructive magic is to write the name of an enemy, together with harmful mantras, on a paper placed inside the boot, so that while walking the victim's name is constantly trampled underfoot.¹⁰⁶ This seems to have been practised until recently (and maybe still today?) even at the highest levels of Tibetan political office, and as Goldstein notes, “This is considered a very serious crime, as repulsive as an outright murder attempt.”¹⁰⁷

In general the performance of *'cham* has quite a few features in common with other rites of destructive magic. Some *'cham* forms seem to have been performed even for the direct purpose of killing an enemy. In an “act of sympathetic magic” the Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal (1594-?1651) tried to attack the enemies of the Bhutanese *'Brug-pa* sect as part of the annual exorcism of evil during the performance of *'cham* by writing their names on a triangular cloth and placing it under the *liṅga* to be cut up in pieces.¹⁰⁸ The Mahāyaksha *'cham* of the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of rDzong-dkar [or: -dga'] Chos-sde which

formerly existed in Gung-thang (now rebuilt in India), is said to have been created because of continuous attacks by neighbouring peoples of the sTod-hor region who, after the abbot established the dance according to his vision, never attacked them again.¹⁰⁹ Then there is the well known Tibetan Buddhist historiographical narrative of the Buddhist hermit dPal-gyi rdo-rje who, disguised as a Black Hat magician, killed the purportedly anti-Buddhist king Glang-dar-ma (9th century) with an arrow hidden in his long sleeves while catching his attention through the performance of a ritual dance. Another wrathful Black Hat dance performed in order to kill an enemy is described in detail by Nebesky-Wojkowitz. Here the Black Hat "sorcerer" dances the so-called *Gying-'cham*, the "dance of the wrathful stretching", by performing the thunderbolt step: "While dancing the sorcerer should be of a wrathful disposition (*rngam stabs*) and should utter mantras with his teeth clenched (*sngags bzlas*)."¹¹⁰

Thus, there is ample evidence that at a fundamental level ritual dance and certain dance steps are directly related to violent subjugation in Tibetan tradition.¹¹¹ In order to reconcile this with the religious (Buddhist and Bon) soteriology and a morality of non-violence, such ritual actions are often represented as merciful steps to ensure the liberation of evil forces.

Conclusions

By drawing attention to the theme of violent subjugation in this article I do not want to deprive the '*cham* ritual of its undoubted Tantric meaning of releasing the mind of dancers and participants from inner obscurations, or of it being performed for the well-being of the whole community, giving the chance for increasing merit, health and long-life. But, apart from the actual construction of a *maṇḍala*, why is it annually necessary to violently tame or subdue the forces of the physical world? Day (1986) has pointed out that the lama's role in Tantric ritual is in general to demonstrate his power of taming and disciplining ('*dul-ba*) towards destructive aspects of reality as well as towards the gods, a view which also applies to the public ritual dance '*cham*. Thereby the reciprocal relationship between monks giving ritual service and the laity sponsoring them is regularly re-established.¹¹² Samuel counts '*cham* among the pragmatically oriented rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, where "the lama turns his spiritual powers to the this-worldly benefit of his followers."¹¹³ Ortner argues, in congruence with the emic explanation of the Sherpas in regard to their greatest festivals, that there exists in fact a regular threat through "demons" in the Sherpa world, so that Buddhist specialists "must annually reassert its [i.e. Buddhism's] claims to people's allegiance and dependence, reconquer its 'foes', and re-establish its hegemony."¹¹⁴ So the old struggle between "gods" and "demons" is not just a mythical one but still a challenge of today. Underlying the ritual the narrative of the cosmic drama of the subjugation of Rudra by Heruka appears to be placed back on earth repeatedly in order to rebalance good and evil and re-establish the traditional cosmic order, because there is only a "temporary winner" and a "temporary loser".¹¹⁵

By way of ritual dance a certain balance among the powers of the universe is restored and the hegemonic position of the monks in terms of their superior morality and purity (as embodiments of the highest deities) is reasserted. Control over ritual space therefore also implies control of ritual and social power.¹¹⁶ Whether it is Padmasambhava, sTon-pa gShen-rab, sTag-la me-'bar or Heruka as subduers of evil forces who might be recalled in the temporary construction of *maṇḍala*-s—it is through the aid of powerful symbolic dance movements with the body in the local environment that actions of purification and blessing can take place on microcosmic and macrocosmic levels correspondingly.

Notes:

1. Translated by T. Huber, Tibetan text in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:112). Thanks to Toni Huber and Geshe Namgyal Nyima for helpful discussions on the material presented in this article.
2. See for example the story of Mi-lus bsam-legs in the Bon Mother Tantras (Martin 1994:53).
3. For the subjugation of the ground (*sa-'dul*) as a preliminary for the construction of a *maṇḍala* in general, see Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992). Concerning the phases of the earth rite (*sa-chog*) in a Bon-po text see Martin (1994:41, 42, n. 153). The first two phases containing *sa-'dul* and *sa bcags-pa* are performed as ferocious dances by 45 wrathful male and female deities.
4. What is generally perceived as the destruction of evil forces in a '*cham* is the central rite, called *liṅga bsgral-chog*, the cutting up of a human effigy made out of dough. Into this effigy all kinds of negativities are summoned and then ritually killed (*smad-las*, see Stein 1957:224f). The consciousness (*rnam-shes*) of evil spirits are liberated, and the remaining material parts of the *liṅga* are transformed into offerings to the Tantric deities. At the end of a '*cham* the evil forces are expelled in a final act (called *gtor-rgyab* or *bzlog-pa'i las*), through the casting of a ritual weapon (*gtor-zor*). These two important rites are not further discussed herein as I restrict myself to the creation of ritual space and the interrelated subjugation of the earth, a feature which has been neglected or played down in the literature on '*cham*.
5. Samuel (1993).
6. The most detailed descriptions of '*cham* are by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976) and Kohn (1988a);cf. also Aris (1976), Cantwell (1989, 1992), Combe (1989), Filchner (1933), Helffer (1980), Khampagar (1985), Marko (1994), Hoetzlein (1991) and Shakya Dorje (1975). More general notes on '*cham* are found in Ellingson (1979, 1980) and Stein (1972); for notes on sociological aspects see Furer-Haimendorf (1964:214ff.) and Tucci (1980:144ff.). For further bibliography see Schrempf (1990).
7. See Ellingson (1979:166).
8. The dance manual for the Vajrakīla '*cham* calls it "a rite of the Vajrayāna *maṇḍala*" (*rdo-rje theg-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:111). Present-day Tibetans characterize it rather as a rite of expulsion, "powerful" (*drag-po*) and an "act of protection" (*mgon-spyod*) (Lama Lodro, interview). Ideally the Tantric principles of method and wisdom are spatially employed using dance steps and ritual implements (Trowo Tashi, personal interview).
9. Helffer (1981:661).
10. According to the dGe-lug-pa '*cham* dancer Tenzin Yangdak of rDzong-dkar Chos-

sde monastery, my informant concerning the Mahāyaksha 'Cham, see Schrempf (1990:52). For example the performance of the skeleton dancers (*dur-khrod bdag-po*) is supposed to create the space of a charnel ground.

11. The dancers have to put themselves in the proper state of mind (*yid*) inside the temple: the understanding of the three principles of clearness (*gsal-ba*), emptiness (*stong*) and non-attachment (*'dzin-pa med-pa*). The meditation is aimed at the identification of the dancer with the deity he has to represent in the 'cham (*bdag-skyed*). During the whole ritual he should basically remain in the "divine pride of being the deity" (*lha'i rga-rgyal*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:100f).
12. This final expulsion starts with a procession of dancers and musicians carrying various offerings and the empowered ritual weapon (*gtor-zor* or *zlog-pa*), which had been placed in the courtyard during the dance performance. This expulsion rite is always performed outside the temple area, probably to avoid any kind of pollution (*grib*) associated with the final killing of evil. In the case of the Mahāyaksha 'Cham a "magical line" is drawn onto the ground with flour, from the centre leading outside the courtyard (i.e. of the *maṇḍala* of the *yi-dam*). This ensures that none of the wrathful energy accumulated in the empowered *gtor-zor* and by the dancers representing the deities during their performance is lost (Tenzin Yangdak, interview, see Schrempf 1990:58). In the *brgya-bzhi* ceremony, carried out to cure a patient from an illness or to avert some impending danger, the same procedure is used in order to cast out evil forces (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:524).
13. No written history of 'cham and its different forms exists. It is likely that monastic dance traditions and styles influenced each other, i.e. as is indicated by the dance manual of the Fifth Dalai Lama (Ellingson 1979:166-174).
14. Ellingson (1980:382).
15. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:113).
16. Hoetzlein (1991:315).
17. According to S.G. Karmay *sa-gar* is danced at "the opening part of the tracing of a *maṇḍala* on the floor, as with the *maṇḍalas* of 'Jig-byed or Samvara" (Stoddard 1986:130, n. 10). On other *gar* dances see the three works on *mchod-gar* by Bu-ston (1967-1968, vol.Th, ff.359-373, vol.Na ff.355-359, vol.Pa ff.781-788).
18. See the dissertation by Kohn on the Mani Rimdu (1988a).
19. See Stoddard (1986), Fedotov (1986). This is also the point of view of the Tibetan scholars and 'cham experts Rakra sPrul-sku Thub-bstan chos-dar and Gonsar Tulku, the abbot of rDzong-dkar Chos-sde. They pointed out in interviews that 'cham could not be called a "*maṇḍala* dance" because this would be restricted to *gar*. Probably this is because, as we will see later, the main and most important *maṇḍala*—there are several ones on different levels—is outlined inside the temple (mostly with sand), while the dance is acted out in duplicate in the courtyard. Furthermore, other Tibetan scholars (see Shakya Dorje 1975 and Nga-dbang Chos-'byor in Hoetzlein 1992) and the 'cham-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama make it explicit that 'cham is a *maṇḍala* rite centring on the *maṇḍala* of the *yi-dam* concerned (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:111).
20. Ellingson (1979:167) citing the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol.3, 759-60. This issue needs to be further discussed and investigated.
21. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992:56,57) and for the *sa-gar* of the Klacakra initiation see Brauen (1992:75-103).
22. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:67).
23. This is the case in the Mahāyaksha 'Cham as well as in the Vajrakīla 'Cham at Tashijong (Shakya Dorje 1975:29) and in the Mani Rimdu, recorded by Kohn in his film *Lord of the Dance* (1988b).

24. Because there are many varieties of 'cham performances, it can occur that the main ritual weapons are not placed in the centre of the courtyard, a fact which was observed and pointed out to me by Prof. Kvaerne. While Bon-po traditionally circumambulate in the counter-clockwise direction during their 'cham performance, both directions are use for circling around the dance ground.
25. The temple (*lha-khang*) is used as a dressing room and as whereabouts during the dance pauses.
26. Personal interview. See also Pozdnejev cited in Filchner (1933:327 and plate 154); also Bleichsteiner (1937:207) and Lessing (1935:114).
27. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:67; 125). Explicitly mentioned also is a middle circle or *bar-skor* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:123).
28. A textual reference for this can be found in the "Gar 'Cham" manuscript issued by the Khampagar monastery (1985:22): "The dance meditation converges on the dance ground, toward the dance fully developed Primal Awareness, toward Vajrakilaya who stands in the centre of the Mandala."
29. Aris (1980:40).
30. T. Norbu (1982:130-1).
31. See the film *Lord of the Dance* by Kohn (1988b) and his dissertation on the Mani Rimdu (1988a); see also Thingo (1982:359).
32. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:88).
33. The *rtsa'-cham* can also be danced by other deities as well and is part of most 'cham forms; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:93), Shakya Dorje (1975).
34. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:121).
35. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102).
36. The north-east is supposed to be the direction from where the "hindrances" are coming (Brauen 1992:132, n.41). Compare to Kohn's description of the site ritual performed on the first day of Mani Rimdu, mainly inside the assembly hall (1988a:125f. and pp.875ff.).
37. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102). The author wonders why this usually culminative action of separating the "demons" from their evil aspects and liberating their positive aspects as part of the *liṅga* ritual (Stein 1957) is already described as part of the preliminaries? However, if one compares this action with Kohn's description of the site ritual in the Mani Rimdu it becomes clear that the sacrifice of a *liṅga* can be part of the action of sealing off the inner boundaries (Kohn 1988a:128f.). For a general discussion on *sgrol-ba* rites in the rNying-ma-pa tradition see Cantwell (1997).
38. Dance manuals give—next to the iconography of the deities involved and the enumeration of several rites—just rough cues for the dance movements, i.e. counting of steps according to the drum beats, certain dance steps (to which we will come later in more detail) and bodily movements like "stretching to the right" (*g.yas-brkyang*), "pulling together to the left" (*g.yon-bskum*) and "happy spinning" (*dga'-ba 'khyil-ba*) (Dorjee 1984:14). Dance masters receive their knowledge by oral transmission from other 'cham-dpon, so written manuals are just an aid to memory.
39. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:127).
40. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102). This rite is called "to gather the life-essence of the oath-breakers (*dam nyam kyi bla 'gugs par bya ba*)" (*ibid*:129).
41. Nebesky-Wojkowitz gives for *byin-gyis-brlab* the usual translation "blessing", but it seems more appropriate to translate it as "to energize" or "to empower" because the spheres are actually transformed into an empowered space where ritual action can now be carried out; see Lessing & Wayman (1978:282). For a discussion of the concept and translation of *byin-gyis-brlab* see the chapter by Huber in this volume.

42. Sometimes on the dance ground the eight auspicious symbols are actually outlined with chalk. Concerning their meaning in this context my informants stated nevertheless that this is just an auspicious adornment.
43. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:131-133). This obviously refers to the Indian concept of the "perfect world", the ideal layout of a holy place (Stein 1990:250). Compare to the *brgya-bzhi* ritual carried out in order to cure a patient or to avert danger, where an eight-petalled lotus is drawn onto the ground (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:525). Further usages of sky and earth wheels for weather protection are mentioned in rNying-ma-pa texts from the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Klaus 1985:154-157).
44. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:132, 134).
45. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:137). This description corresponds also to the "Gar 'Cham" manual of the Khampagar monastery (1985:22). It is added that the area is "prepared" with the full-*vajra* step and "consecrated" with the dance of the crossed-*vajra* step. Compare also to Kohn (1988a:130-1) where an overturned offering plate serves as a model of the universe with Mount Meru as the central "nail" pressing down the *liṅga* demons. It is blessed by a pair of crossed thunderbolts each day during the Mani Rimdu. The crossed *vajra* also symbolizes the foundation of the universe and of the *maṅḍala*.
46. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:147ff.).
47. A rough comparison of the '*cham-yig* compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama with the description given here of the Phur-'dril '*cham* as performed by the monks of the Bon-po monastery of sMan-ri in India shows the great similarities in structure, even though the names of the dance steps differ.
48. I would like to express here my deep gratitude to the abbot of sMan-ri, Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, and Geshe Namgyal Nyima to whom I owe most of the following information gathered during fieldwork in 1995 and personal interviews. For further explanations I am also grateful to Lopön Tenzin Namdak, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche, Tenzin Namgyal Rinpoche, '*cham-dpon* Mentrul Nyima Lodroe, Ake Nana and Trowo Tashi. According to Karmay (1975:199f.) the important *gter-ston* Khu-tsha zla-'od (b. 1024) introduced the Phur-pa rituals into Bon practice. As Vajrakīla he is also venerated by rNying-ma-pas and Sa-skyas-pas. "The central theme of the liturgical texts of Phur-pa is to bring one's own opponent into submission" (Karmay 1975:199).
49. While they can centre on different *yi-dam* they usually take place at the end of a month with the final expulsion through a *zlog-pa* or *gtor-zlog* ritual on the 29th day, but especially at the end of the year in order to expel the evil of the old and to welcome the new year. In Lhasa this inauspicious day was also used as a political tool in order to banish discredited people (Goldstein 1989:176).
50. The main text for the *dgu-gtor* ritual based on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa (*phur-pa'i gzhung*) is found in *dBal phur nag po sgrub pa'i las tshogs skor* recovered by Khu-tsha zla-'od (1974, vol.1, ff.223-434). Traditionally the *dgu-gtor* was performed at the end of each month at sMan-ri.
51. For another Bon-po ritual with an almost identical structure see Kvaerne (1988).
52. Their shrines were first empowered through a specific ritual dance at the beginning of the construction of the monastery. Their images are also painted onto the outside wall of the assembly hall at the veranda, to the right and left of the main entrance door.
53. In the *dgu-gtor* ritual of sMan-ri monastery there is no sand *maṅḍala* outlined. This is done mentally, though.
54. Thereby the inner poisons of humans, such as ignorance, are expelled from the

monks and the ritual space.

55. Viewed from facing the main statue of sTon-pa gShen-rab inside the assembly hall (see figure 2 for the ground plan).
56. In the *dgu-gtor* ritual of sMan-ri monastery there are actually two main *yi-dam* involved: one is Phur-pa who originates from the Indian side and the other one is Khro-bo (gTso-mchog mkha'-gying), whose provenance is said to be Zhang-zhung. The latter is of outstanding importance in Tantric rituals of Bon and, like Phur-pa, is expert in averting demons through his magic weapons (such as *zor*) and wrathful actions (for an iconographic description of the latter see Kvaerne 1995:75f). Nowadays at sMan-ri the *yi-dam* Khro-bo is only invoked now on the 27th day while Phur-pa is the main *yi-dam* during the whole ritual cycle. Both belong to the group of five important tutelary deities of the "Father Tantra" of the Bon religion (*gsas-mkhar mchog lnga*).
57. This step consists out of a long step followed by a half turn towards the left, then to the right, forming a circle of a "winding motion pattern" on the ground (Canzio 1986:50).
58. Lopön Tenzin Namdak, referring to the "tiger steps" and "lion leaps", pointed out that dance steps mentioned in ritual texts have to be visualized during meditation whether they are actually danced out in practice or not (personal interview). This seems to imply that also on a mental level dance steps are powerful means for spatial control. In the Nine Ways of Bon the same steps are described as the "playful dance of knowledge" (Snellgrove 1967:211).
59. In Buddhist and Bon rituals they are used as magical weapons thrown against demons; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:357).
60. According to Geshe Namgyal Nyima in a personal interview.
61. The rite of 'rolling of the *phur-bu*' is part of the *sgrol-ba* or *bsgral-ba* rites as practised in the Vajrakīla (rDo-rje Phur-ba) tradition of the rNying-ma-pa school (Mayer 1994:59ff.). It belongs to a general practice for a communal sacrifice offering (*tshogs*) or a *linga* sacrifice in the rNying-ma-pa tradition and is part of the lower activities (*smad-las*) for the "ritual killing" of evil forces (Cantwell 1997). Present day Bon-po themselves state that their tradition of Phur-pa originates in India. Iconographically the deity rDo-rje Phur-pa holds the ritual dagger, rolling it between his palms. According to Bayer this is a means of cursing the enemy (1978:45).
62. The third one, who does not appear as a dancer, is the Garuda (*khyung-sman*). To the "junior or lower protectors" (*'og-ma srung-ma*) belong the "masters of the earth" (*sabdag*), "the six care takers of Phur-pa's texts" (*bstan-srung drug*) and the "100 workers" of Phur-pa (*las-mkhan brgya-rtsa*). They are also represented by specific *gtor-ma*.
63. Many of these transformed protector deities and their helpers were previously demons themselves, so it seems also due to their original demonic nature that they know how to catch and imprison demonic forces. Interestingly—as it has been noted in the beginning of this chapter—they were converted through the method of ritual dance.
64. According to Stein, in old Chinese concepts the "gate of the earth" is situated in the south-east. Tibetans might have adapted this concept and changed it over time (1990:199).
65. I guess that this action is aimed at the sealing of the boundaries at the lowest point of all directions, the nadir, so more evil forces can penetrate the purified realm from there. Mayer and Cantwell (1994:57), translating a manuscript from Dunhuang on Vajrakīla, mentions "knotted cords" (*rgya-mdud*) as a basis for his *yi-dam* palace to be built upon. I have no confirmation yet for this in the Bon-po context. The *rgya-mdud*, perhaps better translated as "vast knot", also appears as part of the icono-

graphical ornamentation on the ritual dagger. Klaus (1985) translates *rgya-mdud* as “sealing knot” in the context of weather-making rituals. Geshe Namgyal Nyima stated that *rgya-mdud* as a “knotted cord” is also represented as a *mudrā*, but generally it is thought of by Tibetan lay people as a knot to tie things tight.

66. I am not sure how to imagine this step in the microcosmos of the *maṇḍala*. The rope apparently indicates a vertical axis with its top, the zenith. According to Geshe Namgyal Nyima it could mean a fixation of the four doors (of the *maṇḍala*, i.e. also the four main directions).
67. On the problem of translating the term *rnam-shes* in this context and related issues see Stein (1957:2051). On the 3rd day during the public ‘*cham* on the courtyard the *liṅga* is actually cut into pieces with a sword by the chief protector goddess Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo. On the Mahāyoga rite or *sgrol-ba*, its origins and connection with the deity Vajrakīla alias Phur-pa see Mayer (1996:122f).
68. On the morning of the 3rd day of the *dgu-gtor* (the 29th day of the 12th month) the assembly recites the mythical story of the important Bon-po sage sTag-la me-’bar in which he was finally able to subdue his evil twin brother through the invocation of Phur-pa and the help of the goddess of compassion Thugs-rje byams-pa. Then the offering master performs the cutting of the *liṅga* (*sgrol-ba*) again, rolling his *phur-bu* and thereby “liberating” the evil forces.
69. The *gShen-rab dgu ‘cham* also contains specific steps which outline, among other things, a low and a high lotus flower circle. For a short description of this dance, see Karmay (1986:66-68).
70. The performance ends with the *gtor-rgyab* ritual for the final expulsion of negativities.
71. Combe (1989:191). It is not evident in Combe’s description whether those actions were already performed inside the assembly hall before the actual public display as well.
72. Combe (1989:195).
73. He is the dance master (*‘cham-dpon*) and is supposed to do a strict meditation on the main *yi-dam* dBal-gsas for 49 days. Comparing this dance with the Bon-po dances at the exile monastery of sMan-ri in Dolanji, India, there is Srid-pa’i rgyal-mo represented by the *‘cham-dpon*, who dances it by herself when she enters the arena as the first in the beginning of the *dGu-gtor ‘cham* on the 29th day of the 12th month (according to Geshe Nyima Dakpa, personal interview). That is when this leading protector goddess is praised and invited by the monks onto the courtyard. Thereby the earth and the land are “consecrated” outside on the dance ground.
74. Compare this feature with the invocational text for the Bon-po *yi-dam* Khro-bo which describes him as pressing the nine doors of hell downwards and leading the universe upwards (Kvaerne 1995:75).
75. *Dgu gcod dgos pa ni na rag sgo dgu thur du gcod pa dang / khams gsum sa dgu dong nas sprugs ba’i brda ston pa’i rtags yin / ‘dod khams gzugs khams gzugs med khams*. These lines were quoted to me at dGa’-mal monastery (A-mdo Shar-khog) from a text by sLob-dpon sKal-bzang Dar-rgyas. The Tibetan cosmology is generally tripartite with the white *lha* on the upper level, the red *bstan* on the middle and the black or dark blue *klu* on the lower. This structure is reinterpreted esoterically in terms of the three worlds of desire, form and formlessness. Despite a great variety of cosmological features in the Tibetan context, both sky and subterranean worlds often consist of nine levels each, and can be accessed through a sky door and an earth door (Stein 1972:211f.).
76. It was explained to me by my informants that the great teacher of the Bon doctrine sTon-pa gShen-rab himself used this sceptre for “taming the earth”. The name of

- the dancers, A-li ka-li, does not have a specific meaning according to my informants, although in Tibetan *ā-li kā-li* normally refers to the vowels of the alphabet.
77. See mKhas-grub-rje's introduction to Tantra as a part of the general "method of drawing a *maṇḍala*", which is the first part of the "method of initiation in the *maṇḍala* of powdered colors" (Lessing & Wayman 1978:279ff.).
 78. For a detailed description of the *sa-gar* see Brauen (1992:76-103); and for general preparations of a *maṇḍala* initiation see Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992).
 79. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche for the *sa-gar*, who adds that it is imagined that "the obstacles are placed into the hole and hammered into the ground by the wrathful deity represented on it [the *phur-bu*]. This deity, holding a vajra in its hand, beats the obstacle from its head to toe until it is left transfixed, speechless, and incapable of thought" (1992:56-7).
 80. See Kohn (1988a:138ff.). The officiant circles around himself in a clockwise and counter-clockwise direction, stopping at each of the ten directions where the corresponding dagger is placed on the according periphery of the *maṇḍala*.
 81. Generally evil forces are, also when summoned into an effigy (*linga*), enclosed within triangular shapes or in triangular boxes made out of iron. The triangular shape symbolizes wrathful activities, such as actions of suppression. Here there is also the question of *dharmodaya* (*chos-'byung*) symbolism which needs considering. Often ritual weapons thrown against the evil forces at the end of a '*cham* (*gtor-zor* or *gtor-gryab*) also have triangular shapes. Here is an indication that certain shapes of ritual space are directly related to certain ritual actions, even effecting them possibly.
 82. Kohn (1988a:137-8).
 83. Karmay states that Vajrakīla originated as an Indian Tantric implement which became introduced into Buddhist Tantras and deified (1975:199).
 84. It is also used as a boundary marker in magic rites for weather control, i.e. against hail (Klaus [1985:161, 305]).
 85. Stein (1990:206).
 86. These are *ālīḍha* (*g.yas-brkyang*), *pratyālīḍha* (*g.yon-brkyang*), *vaisākha* (*sa-ga*), *maṇḍala* (*zlum-po*) and *samapāda* (*mnyan-pa*) (Lessing & Wayman 1978:282, n.16).
 87. Brauen (1992:78).
 88. Compare with the general description of the *maṇḍala* site: Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche states that a sacred dance is made by *vajra* steps "which trace out a crossed vajra. This dance is meant to prevent obstacles" (1992:57). If the master is present in the dance (which does not seem to be necessary?) one should imagine wisdom which eliminates all obstacles radiating from his feet (*ibid.*).
 89. Cited from Snellgrove, *bdud bzhi gnon ye shes lha bro brdung* (1967:212-3).
 90. What I have not further mentioned here are the purificatory and transforming properties of incense and the offering of *bsang*. The latter is annually done also during the public dance performances outside the courtyard. It is an offering to and a purification of the gods and spirits of the different local spheres (i.e. *yul-lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*, etc.). While the fumes do reach the upper levels of the sky it also has a purificatory effect on the local environment. For a description of this rite, see Karmay (1995).
 91. "The 'secret meaning' (*sbas don*) is that the various emblems of the hat seal the heaven (*sbas don nam mkhar rgyas btab thog ris bkod*)." Furthermore the Black Hat should be adorned by objects with "spiritual powers" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:117). Thus it is perceived not only as a symbolic *maṇḍala* cosmogram but as an active tool for the transformation of the dancer and of space. For a detailed description of the Black Hat costume, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:93-98, 115-119) and Cantwell (1992).
 92. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992:57).

93. See for example Brauen (1992:132; n.36-37).
94. Macdonald & Stahl (1979:61f.).
95. Macdonald (1990:202), Huber (1993).
96. See the chapter by Huber in this volume.
97. See the chapter by Epstein & Peng Wenbin in this volume.
98. Boord (1993:197) for example mentions three wrathful activities for the expulsion of negative forces concerning the *yi-dam* Vajrakila: pressing down (*non-pa* or *ninan*), burning (*sreg*) and scattering (*zor*). Ritual space creation is connected with the first of these three actions.
99. Lerner (1983:56).
100. Siiger (1951:10, 11).
101. Snyder (1979:27).
102. Jest (1975:343).
103. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:523ff.). Such symbols found in dance are obviously of Indian provenance: The *kṛṣṇa* play "Rasliḥa" also centres on a lotus pattern as stage ground (Awasthi 1974:39-40).
104. Klaus (1985:347), citing the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*.
105. Huber (1993:39).
106. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:483).
107. Goldstein (1989:202).
108. Aris (1976:615).
109. See Schrempf (1990:18).
110. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:4); cf. also a similar Tantric ritual for killing an enemy (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:488-490).
111. There is a quite striking similarity to a Japanese *Nō* performance called *Nō Okina*, which is danced at the beginning of a New Year or at an opening part of an exceptional event in order to bring prosperity and fortune: three actors—two among them wearing masks of gods—dance a "cosmic dance" on a triangular floor pattern, the three corners symbolize man (*jin*), heaven (*ten*) and the earth (*chi*). Thereby they trample heavily on the ground, destroying the evil spirits of the old year; see Gontard (1987:32). In general there are many masked dances in Asia related to the expulsion of negative forces.
112. See Beyer (1978:68).
113. Samuel (1993:268).
114. Ortner (1978:168-9).
115. Macdonald (1990:205-6).
116. On this theme see the interesting article by Gyatso (1989). For comparative purposes see for example Werbner (1996) on the ritual sacralization of space and the renewal of charismatic authority among British Muslims.

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Part Three

Hidden Countries and Holy Lands

The Role of “Treasure Discoverers” and Their Writings in the Search for Himalayan Sacred Lands

Franz-Karl Ehrhard

... Et il revient

Mystérieux, traçant comme en des livres ses caractères d’or
Prendre possession et pouvoir sur son véritable domaine...

Victor Segalen, *Thibet*

The second expedition undertaken by Jacques Bacot (1877-1965) through large tracts of the southern part of the province of Khams from May 1909 to March 1910 has without question had an influence on our notion of “hidden valleys” or “paradisiacal sites” in Tibet. As we learn in the foreword to Bacot’s travel report, the actual destination of this expedition was the old kingdom of Poyul (sPo-yul) or Pomi (sPo-smad), whose territory Bacot approached during his first trip to East Tibet in 1907. The second trip may not have led him to the desired region either, but during the long months in the company of Tibetan nomads he was seized by the yearning for a new destination: Népémakö (gNas Padma-bkod) (plate 1), the place of refuge and hope for thousands of Tibetan families that wanted to ensure their own safety at the time, in the face of armed attacks by the Chinese.

It is, above all, the sense of unattainability that lends the territories of sPo-yul and gNas Padma-bkod their particular status in Bacot’s travel report. A literary reworking and expansion of Bacot’s approach to the white areas on the map—to the border of the promised paradise—are found in the output of the poet and ethnographer Victor Segalen (1878-1919). The whole of Tibet, in its unattainability, acquired for the latter a heightened inner reality, something on the order of a spiritual promise.¹

To judge by the official pronouncements of the Tibetan Government-in-exile and the Western press, it is nowadays no longer possible to speak of a completely sealed-off geographical space where the huge volumes of the Brahmaputra’s waters squeeze their way through narrow gorges and finally issue out into the



Plate 1: View down gTsang-po river (Brahmaputra) into gNas Padma-bkod from above mGon-po gnas. May 1993 (photo: Ian Baker).

tropical forests of India. Indeed, territories like Kong-po, situated south-west of sPo-yul and north-west of gNas Padma-bkod, have already attracted the interest of modern-day researchers, and maps and photos are available to the interested tourist.² Nevertheless, the sacred site called Lotus Splendour continues to harbour its secrets.

I am not interested in removing the veil from this secret. In the following I should merely like to bring together some information that may shed light on the importance that gNas Padma-bkod had for the adherents of the rNying-ma-pa school from the 17th to the 20th centuries. These investigations allow one to characterize in more concrete terms and thereby to understand better important aspects of Tibetan religion and local politics. This preliminary collection of material is also intended to provide an impression of the attitude taken by the “treasure discoverers” (*gter-ston*) and their disciples towards an untamed wilderness, one which awoke anxieties and terrors but also held out the prospect of spiritual satisfaction. Could the Tibetans’ fantasies about the paradisiacal sites to their south have been a sort of reverse mirror image of the yearnings certain Europeans had for the mystical north?

The Three Awareness - holders of the Hidden Land

In his history of the rNying-ma-pa school, bDud-'joms Rin-po-che (1904-1987) cites for the 14th 60-year cycle (1807-1867) the names of three persons whom he treats as contemporaries, terming them “three emanational awareness-holders, who opened the secret land of Pemakö as a place of pilgrimage.” The three masters in question are Chos-gling Gar-dbang 'Chi-med rdo-rje (born 1763), sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa (born 1757) and Rig-'dzin rDo-rje thogs-med (1746-1797).³

Let me briefly describe here these three persons in reverse order. Rig-'dzin rDo-rje thogs-med is also called Brag-gsum gter-ston rDo-rje thogs-med after the site Brag-gsum mtsho in Kong-po; it was there that he found his first treasure works and opened a "hidden valley". Only after he met up with sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa, however, did he bring to light any further treasure works; particular stress is laid on the discovery of an "introduction list" (*kha-byang*) in the sPo-bo mDung-chu'i lha-khang. He founded a hermitage called Byang-gling btsan-phyug in gNas Padma-bkod, where he died at the age of 51. The most important "masters of his teaching" (*chos-bdag*) were sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa and Chos-gling Gar-dbang 'Chi-med rdo-rje. Both Brag-gsum gter-ston and sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa received support, during their activities in sPo-bo and gNas Padma-bkod, from Nyi-ma rgyal-po, the then "ruler" (*sde-pa*) of the line of kings of sPo-smad.⁴ Concerning sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa, we know, furthermore, that he met another treasure discoverer in his younger years, namely rKong-po brug-thang gter-chen, also known as Kun-bzang Bde-chen rgyal-po (born 1736). In addition to opening the site gNas Padma-bkod—in the centre of which he had a new temple and new statues erected and discovered treasure works—sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa is mentioned in the written sources above all in connection with the renovation of the sPo-bo mDung-chu'i lha-khang. His son, rGyal-sras bDe-chen gling-pa, was the incarnation of the just mentioned Kun-bzang bDe-chen rgyal-po.⁵

Chos-gling Gar-dbang 'Chi-med rdo-rje likewise met Kun-bzang bDe-chen rgyal-po during his younger years, and when he was no more than 23 years old he raised treasure works in gNas Padma-bkod. Only after 12 years had elapsed—that is, in 1798—did he pass these cycles on to a "master of his teachings", namely sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa. In 1806, together with the latter, he opened the centre of gNas Padma-bkod as well as other sites, raising further treasure works there, erected *stūpa*-s etc.; it is said of him: "he took under his wing, through the four types of activities [of the tantric master], [a whole] assemblage of inhabitants of Klo and Mon (*klo mon gyi 'gro pa rnams bsdu ba rniam pa bzhi'i 'phrin las kyis rjes su 'dzin par mdzad...*)."⁶

These few observations show that at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century the paradisiacal site gNas Padma-bkod was already exerting a strong attraction upon adherents of the rNying-ma-pa school, though it was obviously not large groups of liberation-seekers that approached the "hidden valley" but rather "treasure discoverers" (*gter-ston*) and their disciples. Some of the masters belonged to the bKa'-brgyud-pa school and enjoyed the support of the local rulers of sPo-smad.

Treasure Discoverers Active in the 17th to 18th Centuries

In order to gain a more complete picture of the treasure discoverers active at gNas Padma-bkod, we need to shift our attention now to a different and somewhat earlier group of masters linked to the site, beginning with Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa (born 1682).

Like sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'gro-'dul gling-pa, Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa also received his education as an incarnation of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school: he was the reincarnation of one Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po, the representative of Ras-chung-phug in the valley of Yar-klungs. The years in which he fulfilled these duties were from 1687 to 1706.⁷ Subsequently he moved to Tsa-ri, one of Tibet's oldest sacred sites, likewise located in the south-east, on the border with India. From there he went to Kong-po and sPo-bo, where he discovered numerous treasure works. A fact worth noting is that these finds occurred both in the Bu-chu gser-gyi lha-khang, the *ntha'-'dul* temple located in Kong-po, and in the previously mentioned sPo-bo mDung-chu'i lha-khang. According to the tradition of the rNying-ma-pa school, the latter was the *yang-'dul* temple called Tshang-pa rlung-gnon. The exact identification of this temple and the determination of its geographical location have continued to present a problem for scholars.⁸

In sPo-bo, he further met up with the treasure discoverer sTag-sham Nusldan rdo-rje (born 1655) and was recognized by the latter as the "master of his teaching" (*chos-bdag*). Following further trips to Central Tibet where, among others, he met Lha-bzang Khan (regnal period 1705-1717), he was drawn back a second time to Kong-po. Apparently under the impression that the rNying-ma-pa school was being persecuted by the Dzungars, he decided at this point to visit the site of gNas Padma-bkod; he reached the "hidden valley" by way of sPo-bo without any problem and was welcomed by the "protector of the territory" (*zhing-skyong*). On the way back, though, he suffered a serious rheumatic complaint and died shortly thereafter on the "border between Glo and sPo-bo (*glo dang spo bo'i sa mtshams*)." The following citation provides an impression of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa's trip through gNas Padma-bkod:

Having prepared clarifications of the sacred site and route descriptions etc., he put down [in writing] all of his visions. He also preached the teaching to the people of Glo, who were like animals, and thus laid the foundations for their predisposition towards it. The inhabitants of Glo themselves offered him their trust and services, according to the customs of their country.⁹

None of the route descriptions (*lam-yig*) by Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa of gNas Padma-bkod has, as far as I know, come to light. By way of compensation, though, an extensive text of a contemporary of his who likewise undertook a trip to gNas Padma-bkod has been preserved, that person being Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje (born 1697). I shall deal with this work only to the extent that it provides further insight into the treasure discoverers who were associated with the sacred site. It may first be noted, however, that there is a direct connection between Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa and Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje, his junior by 15 years: from Kong-po the former had a prophecy delivered to the latter which identified him as the reincarnation of 'Ol-kha rJe-drung-pa.¹⁰ The text of *gNas mchog padmo bkod du bgrod pa'i lam yig dga' byed bden gtam* comprises 53 folios and describes the adventures of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in gNas Padma-bkod in 1729; it offers a good starting point for future studies on the sacred site,

particularly by virtue of the fact that a total of two volumes of the 13-volume collection of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje's works are filled with texts belonging to the genres *lam-yig* and *gnas-yig*.¹¹

The following passage may provide us with an idea of how the identification of particular spiritual qualities of the landscape came about:

Not only are the footpaths in the gorges difficult to traverse, precisely such [sites] as De'u Rin-chen spungs-pa, the centre of the Dharmacakra in the heart [of the deity], and Brag-dkar bKra-shis rdzong, the centre of the Nirmāṇacakra in the navel, cannot be reached from this point; one would even emerge from a crevice in the mountain. [For] the mountain gNam-lcags 'bar-ba exists as a principal place of its own to the west of these sites. That this [i.e. the present location] is the border between the Dharmacakra in the heart [of the deity] and the Saṃbhogacakra in his throat, did not [formerly] exist as a widespread [notion], but since it has become fully clear at this point in time, now that I have brought into mutual agreement the [pertinent] sections from [the cycle] *rTa mgrin dgongs 'dus*, which has appeared as a treasure work of Rig-'dzin Nus-ldan rdo-rje—that is, the compiled fragments containing place and route descriptions for Padma-bkod—I made this known to my travelling companion [with the words] "[It is] such and such."¹²

As the expressions *snying-ga chos-'khor*, *lte-ba sprul-'khor* and *mgrin-pa long-spyod* ('*khor*) testify, Sle-slung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in describing the landscape based himself on a system of various *cakras* that are lined up vertically along the main artery: in the throat, in the heart and in the navel. R. A. Stein has already referred to the process by which a sacred site is realized both in the body of the yogin and in that of the deity, the individual parts of which correspond to various topographical features. He has further provided an analysis of gNas Padma-bkod as a site that was consecrated above all to a particular form of the deity *Vajravārāhī*: this site bears the name *Vajravārāhī* Tamer of the Nāgas (*rdo rje 'phag mo klu 'dul ma*).¹³

What fails to come out clearly from Stein's analysis is the fact that there are a number of parallel schemata that have been used for representing the territory around the two main mountains of Kong-po and sPo-bo, and also the impassable wilderness of gNas Padma-bkod, as a spiritual reality. Two of the schemata are called "Large Hidden Site Lotus Splendour" (*sbas gnas chen po padma bkod*) and "Hidden Site with the Five Cakras" (*sbas gnas 'khor lo lnga ldan*). I present these schemata, as found in one particular text, in appendix A; perhaps they will serve as a stimulus for further study.

Two Still Earlier Forerunners

An interesting feature of the quote from Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje is that certain sacred places lay in the centre of the various *cakras* of the deity, and that the

identification of these places—that is, their exact topographical location—was not always unequivocal. Evidently this identification was made by the leaders of the groups that penetrated into the extolled territory by consulting already existing writings and text collections. In the case of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje, these are the works of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje. We have already seen that Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa met this treasure discoverer, and that it was principally in the territory of sPo-bo that his teachings are said to have spread. He is also known as dGa'-ba-lung gTer-ston, since he was the one who opened the site of sPo-bo dGa'-ba-lung and brought to light there the cycle *Yi dam dgongs 'dus rta mchog rol pa*. This cycle contains detailed information about the sacred site of gNas Padma-bkod, including the distinction between the outer 12 territories (*phyi-gling bcu-gnyis*), the inner 40 ravines (*nang-sul bzhi-bcu*) and the 16 secret territories (*gsang-gling bcu-drug*).¹⁴

There is still another pair of treasure discoverers—and their connection with the “hidden land” must now be profiled in order to have a fuller understanding of the activities of the representatives of the rNying-ma-pa in the 17th century in south-eastern Tibet, namely bDud-'dul rdo-rje and 'Ja'-tshon snying-po. sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje was a “disciple of the treasure teachings” (*gter-slob*) of the first master, Rig-'dzin bDud-'dul rdo-rje (1615-1672). Even though born in the vicinity of the royal court of sDe-dge, Rig-'dzin bDud-'dul rdo-rje felt drawn to the provinces of Central Tibet and to Kong-po. His first treasure discovery, however, was made only after he met another such discoverer, namely Rig-'dzin 'Ja'-tshon snying-po (1585-1656); the latter gave him the following instructions: “You should go to sPo-bo and devote yourself to the previously established practice; and at that point a prophecy will come to you, and you will have the opportune fortune [to find] a profound treasure work.” And Rig-'dzin bDud-'dul rdo-rje did indeed, from that time on, uncover numerous treasure works and opened hidden lands. The following quotation provides one such example:

Right after that, when a route description for the sacred site Padma-bkod from the sPo-bo mDung-chu'i lha-khang came to life in his hands, he took Rigs-ldan gNas-mtsho as his companion and proceeded with a large retinue of disciples to Padma-bkod. [There] he prepared a clarification of a temporary gate to the sacred site.¹⁵

But also Rig-'dzin 'Ja'-tshon snying-po, who was born in Kong-po and uncovered treasure works in, among other places, the *mtha'-'dul* temple Bu-chu gser-gyi lha-khang, brought to light texts associated with the “hidden land” gNas Padma-bkod. In the “realization cave” (*sgrub-phug*) in Kong-'phrang, 'Ja'-tshon snying-po uncovered the cycle *rDo rje khro lod rtsal gyi sgrub skor*, together with a route description and prophecies for gNas Padma-bkod. We can judge the later spread of the cycle from the fact that a commentary of it by rTse-le sNa-tshogs rang-grol (born 1608), another disciple of Rig-'dzin 'Ja'-tshon snying-po, has been preserved.¹⁶

Concluding Remarks

The 17th century was thus the particular period in which the sacred site of gNas Padma-bkod was systematically visited by treasure discoverers of the rNying-ma-pa school. It was during this same period that those writings which served as aids for later liberation-seekers in identifying the places visited by Padmasambhava were produced. As for the representation of gNas Padma-bkod as the body of *Vajravārāhī Klu-'dul-ma*, other traditions may also have exercised their influence. One need only consider, for example, the presence of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school in Tsa-ri from the 12th century on and the realization of the divine state by yogins there. A broad field lies open here for future studies.

One additional thing I should like to point out here is the significance that the temples dating to the early royal period had for the treasure discoverers in the extreme south of Tibet, and for their search for the hidden paradises. As we have seen in the case of mDung-chu'i lha-khang in sPo-bo, both Rig-'dzin bDud-'dul rdo-rje and Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa, as well as Rig-'dzin rDo-rje thogs-med, uncovered treasure works in the *yang-'dul* temple in south-eastern Tibet before they set off for gNas Padma-bkod. I would see this circumstance as implying that contact with the site that was erected by Srong-btsan sGam-po and consecrated by Padmasambhava endowed the treasure discoverers with a power that enabled them to tame the wilderness lying beyond the border and to find the symbols of the Buddhist teaching in these inaccessible regions. We can observe this process in the 17th century not only in sPo-bo but also in south-western Tibet, in Mang-yul; here there existed another *yang-'dul* temple, Byams-sprin lha-khang, which contained a hoard of old treasure teachings and was the starting point for trips to the "hidden valleys" in the south.¹⁷ The status of the treasure discoverers, legitimized by their contact with the old temples and relics, confirmed their role as "rulers" over the newly opened territories.

In order to round out, finally, the picture of the treasure discoverers associated with sPo-bo and gNas Padma-bkod, here is a summary list transmitted by the tradition:

In Padma-bkod: gTer-ston Chos-rje gling-pa, rDo-rje thogs-med, rGyal-sras bde-chen gling-pa; these three are known as the three awareness holders of the "hidden land". In the upper [part of] sPo-bo, bDud-'dul rdo-rje; below, gNam-lcags rdo-rje; in the middle, sTag-sham rdo-rje—the three who have attained [the state] of the vajra. So they are called.¹⁸

Appendix A: Two Representations of the 'Hidden Site'

(Source: *Spo bo chos 'byung in Lo-rgyus*, pp. 200-201)

<p>sBas gnas chen po Padma bkod</p> <p>dbu</p> <p>rGya-la dpal-ri</p>	
<p>phyag g.yas (rdo-rje 'dzin-pa) Kong-po yul</p>	<p>phyag g.yon (sbal-pa 'dzin-pa) sPo-bo yul</p>
<p>nu-ma g.yas Ri-bo gNam-lcags 'bar-ba</p>	<p>nu-ma g.yon 'Dzum-chen Gangs-ri gnas</p>
<p>zhabs g.yas Ho-ga rta-ngam ma-nu'i gnas</p>	<p>zhabs g.yon gTum-skul shel dang 'ba'-ro gnas</p>

Figure 1: Representation of the 'hidden site' sBas-gnas Chen-po Padma-bkod.

<p>sBas gnas 'khor lo lnga ldan</p>	
<p>spyi-bo</p>	<p>bde-chen 'khor-lo rGya-la dpal-ri</p>
<p>mgrin-pa</p>	<p>long-spyod kyi 'khor-lo mGon-po gnas Drag-po sgrub-phug</p>
<p>snying-ga</p>	<p>chos kyi 'khor-lo Bod lung-pa</p>
<p>lte-ba</p>	<p>sprul-pa'i 'khor-lo Rin-spungs</p>
<p>gsangs-gnas</p>	<p>bde-skyong 'khor-lo Kṣipa g.yu-rdzong</p>

Figure 2: Representation of the 'hidden site' sBas-gnas 'khor-lo lnga-ldan.

Notes

1. See J. Bacot (1912) pp. 1-12 for a summary of the second expedition, as well as the new foreword by A. M. Blondeau (1988) p. vi (A description of Népémakö in exemplification of Tibetan beliefs related to *sbas-yul* has been provided also by A. M. Large-Blondeau 1960: 238-239). Concerning Segalen and his last major poem "Thibet," see, among others, D. G. Bevan (1987) pp. 123-124 and K. White (1987:208-221). A first involvement with the discourse that the West European engaged in on the "sacred landscape" and religion of Tibet may be found in P. Bishop (1987) and (1993).
2. Concerning the massive deforestation in south-eastern Tibet, see Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration (1992:49): "In the Kongpo and Rawo Tamo areas of U-Tsang neighbouring the great bend in the Tsangpo as it turns into India, a concentration of over 20,000 Chinese army personnel and Tibetan prisoners are reported to be involved in felling dense old-growth forests of spruce, fir, cedar and broad-leaved species." Referring to this source of information, *Der Spiegel*, "Das geschundene Dach der Welt", no. 21 (1993:126), speaks of a regional ecological drama. For a research trip to Kong-po, see the publication by S. G. Karmay (1992), which contains references to the trips made by M. Brauen and C. Ramble. On the geographical location of gNas Padma-bkod, see Dudjom Rinpoche (1991) vol. II, map 8; for photos of the mountains rGya-la dPal-ri (7,151 m) and gNam-lcags 'bar-ba (7,651 m), *ibid.*, vol. I, nos. 83 and 84. See also the notice in the Kathmandu weekly *The Independent*, no. 36 (1993:4): "A team of Americans, apparently the first Westerners to explore and document Tibet's Namche Barwa canyon, proclaim the canyon the world's largest and deepest."
3. Dudjom Rinpoche (1991, vol. I, p. 957; vol. II, p. 97: "Rik-dzin Dorje Thome is probably to be identified with Bacot's 'grand lama nommé Song-gye Tho-me'." A possible source of this identification is *rNam-thar i*, p.348.5-6: "these three arrived at the same time [in gNas Padma-bkod]. As their aim was pure, they are known as the three awareness-holders who had power over the 'hidden land' (... 'di gsum dus nnyam byon zhing / thugs nang (= snang) gtsang bas sbas yul dbang ba'i rig 'dzin rnam (= rnam) gsum zhes su grags so)." bDud-'joms Rin-po-che was born in gNas Padma-bkod and descended from the family line of the ruler Kaḥ-gnam sde-pa from sPo-smad; *ibid.* vol. I, p.972. His predecessor, bDud-'joms gling-pa (1835-1903) was in the process of opening the gate of the site of gNas Padma-bkod, in the company of numerous disciples and donors, when death overtook him; see *rNam-thar ii*, pp.13.5-14.2.
4. For the history of the Kaḥ-gnam sde-pa, see *Lo-rgyus*, pp. 9-27 and *passim*. The person of Nyi-ma rgyal-po is dealt with on pp. 19-21, where it is said that the strength and power of the line increased during this period ('di'i dus su stobs dang mnga' thang ches cher 'phel). Further, it is noted that the connection of priest and donor with Chos-rje sGam-po arose under his reign (*chos rje sgam po dang mchod yon sbyin bdag gi 'brel ba chags pa*). The person in question is sGam-po-pa O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa, who was raised as the incarnation of sGam-po-pa (1079-1153) and who fulfilled the duties incumbent upon the representative of Dwags-la sgam-po. For a rather superficial assemblage of information on the history of the Kaḥ-gnam sde-pa cf. Rgya-mtsho Don-grub (1989).
5. For brief biographies of Brag-gsum gter-ston and O-rgyan 'Gro-'dul gling-pa, see *rNam-thar i*, pp.339.5-349.1 and *Chos-'byung*, pp.589-590 and 738-742. It should be stressed that in the latter work sPo-bo mDung-chu'i lha-khang is characterized as

“[one] of the temples erected by Dharmarāja Srong-btsan sGam-po that tame the borders (*chos kyi rgyal po srong btsan sgam pos bzens pa'i mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang spo bo mdung chu'i lha khang*).” It is, however, not a *mtha'-'dul* but a *yang-'dul* temple; see n. 8. For a list of the monasteries founded by the two above-mentioned persons, see Waddell (1991[1899]:278).

6. For a short biography of Chos-gling Gar-dbang 'chi-med rdo-rje, see *Chos-'byung*, pp.590-592; his name derives, in my opinion, from his treasure work *Zab chos 'chi med thugs thig*. An additional name is Kun-bzang 'od-zer O-rgyan Gar-dbang bstan-pa'i nyi-ma. He is the one, from among the various incarnations of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa (born 1682), to have been born in gNas Padma-bkod; see *rNam-thar i*, p.326.5-6. Rig-'dzin 'Jigs-med gling-pa (1729-1798) is likewise regarded as an incarnation of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa (on the links of 'Jigs-med gling-pa with the students of Chos-rje gling-pa see the chart in Goodman (1993:137).
7. A short biography of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa is found in *rNam-thar i*, pp.321.3-327.6 and in *Chos-'byung*, pp.412-415. The incarnation lineage of the representative of Ras-chung-phug begins with rGod-tshang ras-pa, a disciple of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507). Following him came Zhabs-drung Grub-mchog dbang-po (1563-1618), and following the latter, Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po. For further biographical data on Chos-rje gling-pa see also Goodman (1993:198-199).
8. See M. Aris (1979:23-24): “Unfortunately the temple of Rlung-gnon is too near the centre to fit convincingly into this group... Until further evidence comes to light we shall have to accept Klong-rdol's location, the only one which seriously upsets the symmetry and logic of the scheme as a whole.” See also the map, *ibid.* p.16. In the summer of 1993 a manuscript of a *gter-ma* cycle of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa came into my hands; it bears the title *sPu (= sPo) bo 'dung (= mdung) chu tshangs pa rlung gnon mi tra'i (= maitri'i) lha khang nas spyang drangs pa'i gnod sbyin dzam bha la dmar po'i chos skor* and comprises 100 folios. One of the texts, titled *Kha byang lo rgyus*, provides a further name of the temple: *kham gyi spo bo gdung (= mdung) chu yis (= yi) / rnam snang byams pa'i lha khang*. See also n. 15.
9. *Chos-'byung*, p.415: *gnas kyi gsal cha dang lam yig sogs mdzad nas gzigs snang thams cad gtan la phab / glo mi dud 'gro 'gra ba de rnam la'ang bka' chos bstsal nas chos kyi bag chags 'jog par mdzad / glo rnam kyis kyang dad gus dang zhabs tog yul lugs dang bstun pa'i bsnyen bkur btabs*. The spelling Glo is unusual; normally the border regions in south-eastern Tibet are called Klo-yul, and the inhabitants Klo-pa. Concerning the subdivision of the tribes of the Abor Mountains into Klo-dkar-po, Klo-nag-po and Klo-bkra-pa, see Wylie (1962:178).
10. Biographical data on Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje are also contained in *rNam-thar i*, pp.314.1-319.1 and *Chos-'byung*, pp.632-635. The source for the prophecy is *rTogs-brjod i*, p.12.1-4. Further, Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje was a “master of the teaching” of the treasure teachings *gSang ba ye shes chos skor* of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa; a similar relationship associates him with the teachings of the cycle *mKha' 'gro ma gsang ba ye shes*, which derive from gTer-bdag gling-pa (1646-1714). The names of the two incarnations preceding Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje are rJe-drung Rin-po-che bsTan-pa rgya-mtsho and dGe-'dun Chos-rgyal dbang-phyug; Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje is also considered to be the rebirth of lHo-brag grub-chen Nam-mkha' rgyal-mtshan (1326-1401).
11. Along with “route descriptions” and “place descriptions”, there are also various “histories” (*lo-rgyus*), which deal with such things as an encounter with Pho-lhanas bSod-nams stobs-rgyas in 1730 (*Mi dbang bsod nams stobs rgyas rnam grol gling du byon pa'i lo rgyus*, 41 fols.) or a visit to the reconstructed monastery complex of sMin-grol-gling in 1732 (*sMin grol gling du bskyod pa'i lo rgyus*, 15 fols.). Jackson (1989:78),

mentions a separate catalogue of the total of 35 texts; up to now this has not become available to me.

12. *Lam-yig i*, pp.467.6-468.3: *rong gi lam 'phrang bgrod dka' bas ma gtogs / snying kha (= ga) chos 'khor gyi lte ba de' u rin chen spungs pa dang lte ba sprul 'khor gyi lte ba brag dkar bkra shis rdzong sogs kyang 'di nas ri sgo tsam las yong thebs mi 'dug / ri bo gnam lcags 'bar ba gnas de dag gi nub mthil po rang du 'dug / sngar yongs su grags par snying ga chos 'khor dang mgrin pa longs spyod kyi sa mtshams 'di yin mi 'dug kyang rig 'dzin nus ldan rdo rje' i gter byon rta mgrin dgongs 'dus kyi nang tshan padmo bkod kyi gnas yig dang lam yig dum bu khrigs bsdebs gung bsgrigs dus shin tu gsal bar snang bas zla grogs rnam la 'di dang 'di'o zhes ngo sprad. As is apparent from the context of the cited passage, Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje entered the inner part of the "hidden valley" by way of gNam-lcags 'bar-ba and Padma shel-ri. Before he did so, he received a written message from the court of the Kaḥ-gnam sde-pa, in which it was stated: "This Padmo-bkod belongs solely to the people of Kaḥ-gnam; it is not a place that the inhabitants of dBus and gTsang may enter (*padmo bkod 'di Kaḥ gnam pa kho na dbang pa las dbus gtsang gi mi yong sa min...*)"; *ibid.*, p.467.1.*
13. See Stein (1988:40-41), for a sequential review of the parts of the deity's body, from one *cakra* to the next along the main artery (this review is carried out in the context of a description of Tsa-ri). For an analysis of gNas Padma-bkod and the projection of the body of the deity *Vajravārāhi* onto this geographical reality, see *ibid.*:43-48. Stein chiefly drew on the text *O rgyan chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi na 'ong lung bstan snyig ma'i sems can la sbas yul padma bkod kyi gnas yig*, 36 folios (*texte mal établi*). This is the same manuscript that found its way to France in the hands of J. Bacot, and the one used by A. M. Large-Blondeau for her description of the pilgrimage route to gNas Padma-bkod; see *ibid.* (1960:238-240) (plus accompanying map). Stein supplemented this source with data from the cycle *rTsa gsum yi dam dgongs 'dus of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje* (19 vols., Dehradun 1970-1972).
14. See *Lo-rgyus*, p.144; this information is taken from the text *gNas mchog dga' ba tshal gyi lo rgyus snying po mdor bsdus* (dGa'-ba-tshal is another name for dGa'-ba-lung). For a brief description of the monastery founded by sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje in dGa'-ba-lung and an account of the incarnations that succeeded him, see the text *rDo dung dgon pa'am dga' ba lung dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus*; *ibid.*, pp.110-114. An unusual feature of the history of this incarnation lineage, which was supported by the rulers of Kaḥ-gnam, is the distinction made between one sTag-sham O-rgyan bsam-gtan gling-pa and his incarnation sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje. Up to now the assumption has been that there was only one person with the name Nus-ldan rdo-rje bSam-gtan gling-pa; see the short biographies in *rNam-thar i*, pp.301.6-302.6 and *Chos-'byung*, pp.574-575.
15. *Chos-'byung*, p.569: *de nas spo bo mdong (= mdung) chu' i lha khang nas padma bkod kyi gnas kyi lam yig phyag tu son pa bzhin rigs ldan gnas mtsho zhes pa gzung (= gzungs) nar bzhes nas groa 'khor mang po dang bcas padma bkod du phebs nas / gnas sgo rags rim zhig gsal cha mdzad. For the above quotation see ibid.*, p.567: *khyod rang spo bor song la rtse gcig tu sgrub pa la 'bungs shig dang / de' i dus su khyod la lung bstan 'ong zhing zab gter gyi skal ba zhig yod do* and the version in *rNam-thar i*, p.299.5-6. A text concerning the *yang-'dul* temple has been preserved in the collection *Lo-rgyus*, pp.118-124: *sPo bo' i mdung chu mkhar lha khang tshangs pa rlung gnon gtsug lag khang gi dkar chag*.
16. For the treasure discoveries of 'Ja'-tshon snying-po, see, among other works, *Chos-'byung*, p.444, and for the *Padma bkod kyi lam yig*, the passage in *rNam-thar i*, p.237.1. In *Lam-yig ii*, pp.243.6-244.6, rTse-le sNa-tshogs rang-grol provides the information that the treasures of Kong-'phrang were concealed with the purpose of removing

obstacles during trips to such sites as sBas-pa'i gnas padma-bkod. Concerning rTse-le sNa-tshogs rang-grol, who was born on the border between Dwags-po and Kong-po, see Blondeau (1987:126-127).

17. See Ehrhard (1993:81) for Byams-sprin lha-khang and the treasure discoverers Rig-'dzin Gar-dbang rdo-rje (1640-1685) and Rig-'dzin Nyi-ma grags-pa (1647-1710). Concerning other masters of the rNying-ma-pa school who were active in the 16th and 17th centuries in Mang-yul and at the court of the kings of Gung-thang, and the openings of "hidden valleys", such as present-day Langthang, see Ehrhard (1997).
18. *Lo-rgyus*, p.210: *pad ma bkod du / gter ston chos rje gling pa / rdo rje thogs med / rgyal sras bde chen gling gsum la / sbas yul rig 'dzin rnam gsum du grags / spo bo stod la bdud 'dul rdo rje / smad la gnam lcags rdo rje / bar la stag sham rdo rje ste / rdo rje thob pa'i mi gsum zhes*. For a short biography of gNam-lcags rdo-rje rTsa-gsum gling-pa, see *rNam-thar i*, pp.335.2-336.5. Two of his disciples are sKyid-grong Thugs-mchog rdo-rje (the main teacher of 'Jigs-med gling-pa) and Rwa-ston sTobs-ldan rdo-rje; for biographical data on these two persons, see Goodman (1993:199-201). The reincarnation of the latter is the previously mentioned Kun-bzang bDe-chen rgyal-po (born 1736), the Kong-po brug-thang gter-chen; the latter's incarnation, in turn, is rGyal-sras bDe-chen gling-pa. For the activities of rGyal-sras bDe-chen gling-pa in gNas Padma-bkod, from the perspective of Kun-bzang Nges-don klong-yangs (born 1814), see *rTogs-brjod ii*, pp.363.6-384.4 (the years 1842 to 1845).

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Political and Ritual Aspects of the Search for Himalayan Sacred Lands

Franz-Karl Ehrhard

Introduction

The 17th century was the particular period in which sacred sites like gNas Padma-bkod, in the south-eastern border region of Tibet, were systematically visited by treasure discoverers of the rNying-ma-pa school. The temples dating to the early royal period had a special significance for the treasure discoverers active at this time here in the extreme south of Tibet and also for their search for the hidden paradises.¹ Parallel to this phenomenon were the efforts to revive, by way of new foundations or renovations of old structures, the “places of realization” (*sgrub-gnas*) in areas that were once the southern border of the old Tibetan kingdom. In this context, a number of sites were chosen that possessed special qualities because of the spiritual presence of Padmasambhava or the early yogins of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school.

An important scheme for classifying the sacred sites associated with Padmasambhava—sites prophesied by the master as spots for the spiritual exercises of his future disciples—consists of five so-called “solitary places” (*dben-gnas*). One of these sites, in lHo-brag mKhar-chu, in the border region between Tibet and Bhutan, is termed the “solitary place of (Padmasambhava’s) heart” (*thugs-kyi dben-gnas*). It is of significant interest that a monastery with the name of dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling was also founded in lHo-brag mKhar-chu under the predominantly dGe-lugs-pa regime established by the 5th Dalai Bla-ma Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617-1682) and the sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho (1653-1705).²

By giving some details concerning the political and ritual aspects that accompanied the travels of Tibetan priests and yogins into border areas like lHo-brag mKhar-chu the following observations should make first of all clear that these journeys must be seen as an immediate response towards the religious

and political situation that characterized Tibet at the beginning of the 18th century. This was a time when Tibet was involved in the power-struggle between the Dzungars and the Qing Dynasty, and when the border areas in the south had not only to be controlled by military and ritual means but offered protection and were places for spiritual revitalization. By implication I hope thus to show why the importance of these places was not restricted to the 17th century but continued up into the 18th century.

The Life of Grub-thob Blo-bzang lHa-mchog

As a kind of introduction I would like to present some material concerning different sites in lHo-brag and the person of Grub-thob Blo-bzang lHa-mchog (1672-1747) from lHo-brag Gro-bo lung, based on his autobiography. There are two reasons for focusing on him: first, his name is directly connected with the monastery of dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling in mKhar-chu, and second, his religious activities included the opening and identifying of hidden valleys in the region of lHo-brag. This point is highlighted by Ka-thog Si-tu Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho (1880-1925), who paid a visit to the sacred sites of lHo-brag mKhar-chu in the year 1919 and reported:

The bhikṣu lHa-mchog, a disciple of Rig-'dzin Pad-phrin [= rDo-rje brag Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las (1640-1718)] (and) prophesied by 'Ol-kha rJe-drung [= Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje (born 1697)], (he) was an opener of the doors to a few minor solitary places and to sacred sites like Seng-ge ri and the hidden valley Long-mo lha-steng.³

Blo-bzang lHa-mchog began his religious career in the year 1679, when he received his name on the basis of a written document from the hand of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma. The place where this occurred was also linked to the person of the spiritual and worldly ruler of Tibet at that time; it was the monastery dGa'-ldan Don-gnyis gling, located in lHo-brag as well, and founded by the 5th Dalai Bla-ma—in person—30 years earlier in 1649.⁴

The main teacher of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog for the next years was a certain Ngag-dbang nor-bu, who also supervised his first retreat. In a detailed passage of the autobiography we find that Ngag-dbang nor-bu had been nominated by the 5th Dalai Bla-ma and sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho to perform certain rituals in dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling. The reason for this lay in his ability to bring under control a certain demon called an "Indian demon who brings ruin to the land of Tibet" (*bod yul 'phung byed kyi rgya 'dre*), "an Indian demon of the border" (*mtha'i rgya 'dre zhig*), or simply "a demon of the border" (*mtha' 'dre*). Different journeys followed, and one brought the young novice also to lHa-sa, where he received his final ordination as a monk in the year 1696. This ceremony was supervised by a dGe-slong 'Jam-dbyangs grags-pa in the Potala palace.⁵

In 1703 Blo-bzang lHa-mchog visited lHa-sa a second time. At that time a change had taken place at the top of the Tibetan government which the monk from lHo-brag described with the following words:

Then rGyal-dbang Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho (1683-1706) put on the costume clothing of the Dharmarāja Srong-btsan (sgam-po); the eldest son of Mi-dbang Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho was installed and lifted to the throne, (which he occupied) together with King lHa-bzang (1658-1717)...⁶

The unstable political situation which was created by this constellation, and which finally resulted in the end of the Qośot rule over Tibet and the invasion of the Dzungars in 1717, are generally known.⁷ In the life of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog, this period was dominated by his meetings with rDo-rje brag Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las and the spiritual practices he received from this master. Although rDo-rje brag suffered from attacks by King lHa-bzang, Blo-bzang lHa-mchog nevertheless visited there twice during this period. Between these visits he spent over five years in retreat in lHo-brag.

It was in lHo-brag that the news reached him of the death of rDo-rje brag Rig-'dzin, who had been killed by Dzungar soldiers in the year 1718. Knowledge of the decline of the teachings of the rNying-ma-pa school and the great sadness at the death of his teacher prompted Blo-bzang lHa-mchog soon afterwards to move to "a hidden sacred site" (*sbas-gnas*). In the night following his decision he conceived the idea to direct his steps to a sacred site named Seng-ge ri ("Lion Mountain"). Two factors motivated him: first, certain written documents had extolled this spot, including a "certificate of prophecies" (*lung-byang*), and second, rGyal-dbang Lo ras-pa (1187-1250), an early master of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa school, had already stayed for an extended period at the "Lion Mountain" and thus sanctified it.⁸

I shall not go into the details of the journey that brought Blo-bzang lHa-mchog to the paradisaical site. In the end he reached the "realization cave" (*sgrub-phug*) and the "residence" (*gdan-sa*) of rGyal-dbang Lo ras-pa and erected nearby a first provisional shelter. The autobiography of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog provides long descriptions of the natural beauty of the spot, including the varieties of bird songs and the manifold flowers and herbs. Accordingly Blo-bzang lHa-mchog called the place "Flower Island" (*me-tog gling*).

The sacred site of Seng-ge ri, which was first identified as such by one of the early yogins of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school in the 13th century, in the early 18th century also attracted the attention and visits of other masters. For instance, the autobiography of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje from 'Ol-kha states that he, too, visited sBas-yul Seng-ge ri in the year 1722 and met in the "inner part of the sacred site" (*gnas-nang*) Blo-bzang lHa-mchog. Together they celebrated a *ganacakra*, and Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje was also impressed by the natural qualities of the place. A dream Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje had at the time had long-ranging effects for the spiritual bond between the two yogins. In the dream, he received a prophecy that a further hidden valley should be opened to the north-east of Seng-ge ri. According to the corresponding information in the biography of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog, this area was called sBas-gnas 'Or-mo lha-sa, and both sources agree that in this area was located the palace of Yam-shud dmar-po, king of the *bTsan* demons.⁹

The prophecy that the "hidden sacred site" (*sbas-gnas*) 'Or-mo lha-sa should be opened was obviously linked with the person of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog, but a few years had to pass before it came true. In the meantime the civil war of 1727/28 had been brought to an end by Mi-dbang bSod-nams stobs-rgyas (1689-1747), and the 7th Dalai Bla-ma sKal-bzang rgya-mtsho (1708-1757) was installed, even if without any legal backing and while still in exile. A piece of good news for Blo-bzang lHa-mchog was that the rebirth of his teacher, bsKal-bzang Padma dbang-phyug (born 1720), had been officially enthroned in rDo-rje brag. This message was received by him with great joy, "like a peacock hearing the (rolling) sound of thunder (*rma bya 'brug sgra thos pa bzhin*)."

Soon afterwards, in the year 1733, the time was ripe to follow the instructions of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje and to open the hidden site of 'Or-mo lha-sa. The autobiography gives a detailed description of the journey and of how Blo-bzang lHa-mchog identified different parts of the sacred landscape. As mentioned in the prophecy, he came upon the palace of Yam-shud dmar-po.

The next year Blo-bzang Bla-mchog was again in the company of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje, and the subject of the opening of sacred sites came up for discussion. During this time Blo-bzang lHa-mchog received a written document that recounted the events of the years 1722 up to 1733. At the farewell ceremony Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje spoke the following words to his guest: "What is of use to others, (i.e.) turns them towards the dharma, mainly the seizing, protecting and spreading of hidden sacred sites, you should do as much as you can!" Nearly identical words were spoken at a third and final meeting between the two masters; this happened a few years later at the time when the renovation of the temple of Thig-phyi in lHo-brag was brought to a successful end.¹⁰

The years 1734 and 1735 saw Blo-bzang lHa-mchog again in rDo-rje brag, where he met the young rDo-rje brag Rig-'dzin and offered him the teachings of the rDzogs-chen cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings sgrol*. His last years were spent in the region of Seng-ge ri and 'Or-mo lha-sa, and he also erected a temple at the latter spot. Shortly before his death he wrote down the monastic rules for his successors at the two sacred sites in lHo-brag.¹¹

Political and Ritual Aspects

The presence of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in the southern border areas of rKong-po and lHo-brag and his persistent interest in the search for hidden valleys and their popularization should be interpreted against the background of his relationship with the "ruler" (*mi-dbang*) bSod-nams stobs-rgyas from Pho-lha. An investigation of their relationship will help us understand better the religious and political practices that accompanied the search for paradisaical sites in the south of Tibet.¹²

The first meeting between the 28-year-old priest and the 37-year-old, war-tested politician occurred, according to the available sources, in the year 1726. The place was rNam-grol gling, the residence of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in 'Ol-kha. At that time bSod-nams stobs-rgyas was on his way to the hot springs of 'Ol-kha stag-rtse and visited also the statue of Maitreya at rDzing-phyi, which

had been erected by Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa. Although this journey of the ruler has been described by previous studies, the contact between Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje and bSod-nams stobs-rgyas has been altogether neglected; attention was focused exclusively on rJe-btsun Mi-'gyur dpal-gyi sgron-ma (1699-1769), the daughter of Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa (1646-1714), and on the fact that the ruler received teachings of the rNying-ma-pa school from her.¹³

To put these contacts in a wider context, it must be pointed out that the rNying-ma-pa school suffered two phases of suppression at the beginning of the 18th century: in the years 1717 to 1720, during the invasion of the Dzungars, and in 1726 under the Manchu ruler Yung-chen. The later attack against the "teachings of the Old Translations" (*snga 'gyur gyi chos lugs*) were openly proclaimed by the emperor in the form of an edict which had been issued at the instigation of the Tibetan minister Khang-chen-nas (died 1727). Directly after the proclamation of the edict, bSod-nams stobs-rgyas reacted strongly against the accusation of heresy against the rNying-ma-pas.¹⁴ This occurred shortly before bSod-nams stobs-rgyas left for 'Ol-kha stag-rtse. Concerning his meeting with rJe-btsun Mi-'gyur dpal-gyi sgron-ma, the biography of the ruler reports only that the local people did not provide any offering or service to the daughter of Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa, being afraid of the recently proclaimed edict that "no respect should be shown towards the followers of the old mantras (*gsangs sngags rnying ma'i srol 'dzin pa dag la bsnyen bskur mi bya'o*)."

In spite of this, bSod-nams stobs-rgyas received her in the traditional way (*gna' bo'i srol ji lta ba bzhin tu*) and offered her his battle horse (*g.yul du 'jug pa'i bzhon pa*). From rJe-btsun Mi-'gyur dpal-gyi sgron-ma he obtained various initiations in return, including the cycle *Zab chos rig 'dzin thugs thig*, a treasure work of Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa.¹⁵

A far longer passage in the biography of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas—immediately following the one just described—describes a meeting with a second person in the same year, 1726: none other than Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje. The ruler also received from this teacher various initiations and teachings, among which I shall mention only the spiritual authorization (*rjes su gnang ba*) for the deity sKrag-med nyi-shar. After the transmission of these teachings, Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje uttered a list of advice for the politician's serious consideration. They started with the characterization of Khang-chen-nas as an emanation of the deity sKrag-med nyi-shar and an assertion of his merits because of that status. But the power of these merits would soon be exhausted, as the minister was at the time "wounding the doctrine of the Great Secret's essence (*da ni gsang chen snying po'i bstan pa la rma byin par byed*)."

For bSod-nams stobs-rgyas himself, Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje came forward with some advice that obviously must be seen as relating to his strong reaction against the edict of the Manchu ruler Yung-chen. The tradition of the dGe-lugs-pa was thereby characterized as something the ruler could place confidence in (*zhwa ser cod pan 'chang ba'i rings lugs 'di ni yid brton rung ba'o*), the reason for this being the purity and continuity of the teachings of Padmasambhava, Atiśa and Tsong-kha-pa. What we witness here, is in my

opinion, the effort on the part of the priest from rNam-grol gling to add some critical perspective to the standpoint of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas with the aim of dissolving the polarization between the dGe-lugs-pa and the rNying-ma-pa schools.¹⁶

Two years later, in 1728, Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje acted as mediator between the 7th Dalai Bla-ma bsKal-bzang rgya-mtsho and bSod-nams stobs-rgyas, who had just successfully ended the civil war. As Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje stated:

The earth-monkey year [=1728], a truly bad time for dBus and gTsang: I arrived in lHa-sa when the troops of gTsang had (just) reached Central Tibet. As the opening provided by (this) lucky coincidence suited (the purpose of) the ruler bSod-nams stobs-rgyas, I managed to pacify the disturbances between dBus and gTsang. Having performed a great wave of service for the excellent system of patron and priest and for the Highest Sovereign (i.e. the Dalai Bla-ma), I returned back.¹⁷

Here we have reached a point where we can look back on the journey of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje to gNas Padma-bkod. This undertaking had occurred in the year 1729, shortly after bSod-nams stobs-rgyas came to power. In the relevant "description of the route" (*lam-yig*) to the paradisaical site are contained some clues as to Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje's motives for moving at this particular time to the wilderness of south-eastern Tibet:

The earth-male-monkey year [=1728]: as a means to turn aside the border armies in the iron-male-dog year [=1730] I had to pass on towards the supreme sacred site gNas Padma-bkod. And as subsidiary conditions for these (undertakings) there was the necessity to execute countless sequences of auspicious ceremonies, such as feasts and fire offerings at the places of realization of the Guru (i.e. Padmasambhava) in the paradise grove of Kong-yul, offerings for Ge-sar at the solitary places touched by Ge-sar's feet, (and) atonement rituals for the great demon-protector in the places of (the deity) sKrag-med nyi-shar such as Brag-gsum mTsho-mo-che.¹⁸

This statement can be interpreted to mean that Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje began his journey with the goal of producing some stability in the southern border regions for the newly established government of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas. This was an urgent necessity because Central Tibet was still endangered by the attacks of the Dzungars and the problems with Bhutan were also acute. As it turned out, bSod-nams stobs-rgyas mastered all these difficulties successfully.¹⁹

Buddhist Myths

Concerning the religious and political practices connected with the search for hidden valleys, it should be mentioned again that in the case of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje the destinations were sites that only a few years earlier had been

identified by persons like sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje (born 1655) and Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa (1682-1725). While these treasure discoverers first opened the sacred sites, i.e. tamed the wilderness through their rituals and became masters of the territory, their successors were able to share their footing by following the same routes and repeating the rituals of their masters at the previously established locations.

That this control over a certain territory was indeed transferred from a treasure finder to his disciple can be shown nicely in the case of gNas Padma-bkod. Rwa-ston sTobs-ldan rdo-rje (17/18th cent.), a disciple of gNam-lcags rdo-rje rTsa-gsum gling-pa (17th cent.) and also of a certain Chos-gling bDe-ba'i rdo-rje (17th cent.), received from this latter teacher the order to open a particular site and write down a "clarification of the sacred site" (*gnas kyi gsal cha*). The words uttered on that occasion were: "Because you are the master (of this site) (*bdag po khyod yin pas ...*)."²⁰ We shall see now that during his journey in the year 1729 Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje obtained also rights over certain territories.

As mentioned in several passages of his works, this authorization came directly from the *dākiṇī*-s in the form of so-called "introductory certificates" (*them[s]-byang*) for the sacred sites to be opened. These places bear the name lHo-gling, Nub-gling and Byang-gling, and their topography is defined in relation to a "sacred mountain" (*gnas-ri*) with the name "Heap of Jewels", i.e. Rin-chen spungs-pa.²¹ The exact location of this mountain and surrounding places is material to the next meeting between Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje and bSod-nams stobs-rgyas, which took place in the year 1730, again in the residence of rNam-grol gling.

At that time one of the sacred sites which had been prophesied on the way back from rKong-po had already been opened; it was the so-called lHo-gling, now known under the name gNas-mchog gSal-dwangs ri-bo-che. As Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje was quickly back in rNam-grol gling, we must conclude that the mountain Rin-chen spungs-pa and surrounding places are located in the vicinity of his residence, i.e. in 'Ol-kha. Confirmation of this can be found, in fact, in a text dedicated to the meeting in rNam-grol gling in the year 1730. It is further documented in this work that on that occasion Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje climbed together with the ruler to the peak of the sacred mountain and made known to him the different sites he was authorized: "We climbed the peak of the sacred mountain; from my side, I offered (Mi-dbang bSod-nams stobs-rgyas) a rough identification of the layout of the sacred sites to the south and north of the mountain Rin-chen spungs-pa."²²

Having just considered the transfer of control over a certain territory from one person to another, we can now see how a journey to a sacred site in the southern border areas can also result in the authority to idealize and spiritualize the landscape to which the traveller returned. The authorization was not restricted to Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje: in the same way the ruler Mi-dbang bSod-nams stobs-rgyas acquired a new status as an emanation of Yam-shud dmar-po, king of the *bTsan* demons. Although Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje makes the remark that this status was already known to him at their first meeting in the

year 1726, it was only now, after his becoming the head of a new government and the first successes in his foreign policy, that bSod-nams stobs-rgyas himself learned of it.

The importance of this new spiritual identity of the ruler is seen in the fact that the quotations from literary sources which Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje brought forward in this respect were included in the biography of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas, written three years afterwards, i.e. in 1733. These were, first, a passage from the cycle *Gzigs snang gsang ba rgya can ma* of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma, and second, a quotation from the writings of Chos-rje gling-pa.²³

Concluding Remarks

With these details I conclude my observations concerning the relationship between the ruler and the priest. It should have become clear that Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje played a hitherto unnoticed role in the development of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas from minister and warlord to the ruler of Tibet who provided his country with a certain degree of political stability up to his death in the year 1747. Further proof of the importance of this teacher for the undertakings of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas is the fact that the catalogue of the so-called *sNar thang bka' gyur* (sponsored by bSod-nams stobs-rgyas in the years 1730/31) came from the pen of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje.²⁴

Concerning the ongoing research on hidden valleys in Tibetan cultural areas, I might point out that, aside from questions of political history and religious geography, the different aspects of "Buddhist myths", i.e. the forms of symbolic representation, the ritual activities and spiritual practices that were part of the journeys into the untamed wilderness, are a field worthy of study.

As we saw in the case of Blo-bzang lHa-mchog, the *dharmapāla* Yam-shud dmar-po had his residence in the innermost recesses of the newly opened site in lHo-brag, and Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje went to gNas Padma-bkod to bring offerings to the deity sKrag-med nyi-shar. These protectors of the Buddhist teaching, their myths and connected rituals came alive in the persons of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas and Khang-chen-nas, two politicians during a particular difficult time for Tibet. And it is not a great surprise that this time of military attacks from outside and inner political conflicts should have coincided with a period when the paradisaical sites in the south were promising not only refuge but also spiritual transformation. It is this very quality that makes up sacred sites according to Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje:

Nowadays when one travels to these sacred mountains one naturally (experiences) resplendent terror, and (at the same time) is at ease, and in one's stream of consciousness a new spiritual experience of the conception-free (unity of) bliss and emptiness flames up. (There are) the peculiar noises of the assemblages of the Mothers, *dākiṇī-s*, and Titans, deep sighs are uttered, the sounds of songs, dances and instruments come forth, and the spontaneous sound of the secret

mantras rolls on; a sweet-smelling fragrance spreads round about, and so forth. The occurrence of these things in the shared experiences of different people is by itself enough to make (these places) an object to trust in!²⁵

Appendix

The Missing Summaries of the Cycle Gzigs snang gsang ba rgya can

A unique source for research into the political and religious life of 17th-century Tibet and the field of Buddhist myth and ritual is the collection of manuscripts edited by S.G. Karmay under the title *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*. In the discussion of the works relating to the tradition of the *Gzigs snang gsang ba rgya can ma* the following statement is made: "There are no texts which contain summaries of the last five sections of the *rGya-can*. These sections are devoted to the record of the visions that occurred from 1674 to 1680 and the first few months of 1681"; Karmay (1988:18).

As already mentioned in an earlier article (Ehrhard 1993:78-79), a further manuscript of the cycle was filmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) in 1987: *Gzigs snang gsang ba rgya can ma*, 578 fols., reel no. E 2134/2 - E 2135/1. A close inspection revealed the missing summaries in this collection. They are to be found in a text called *Rgya can gyi 'khrul snang rnga chen ma shar bar gyi bkod pa zhing khams rgya mtsho'i yid 'phrog*, 64 fols. Here an overview of the five sections and the respective years of the summarized visions:

1. <i>Pad dkar rgya can</i>	fols. 2a/1-11b/2	1674-1675
2. <i>Gdugs dkar rgya can</i>	fols. 11b/2-19b/6	1676
3. <i>Chos gdung g.yas 'khyil rgya can</i>	fols. 19b/6-33a/6	1676-1677
4. <i>Gser nya'i rgya can</i>	fols. 33a/6-49b/2	1678-1679
5. <i>Rgyal mtshan rgya can</i>	fols. 49a/2-63a/5	1680-1681

According to the colophon the text was written in 1685 by 'Jam-dbyangs grags-pa, a monk who took an active part in editing texts, especially in 5th Dalai Bla-ma's later works. It was this time that thangkas depicting the visions of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma were painted on the orders of sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho. The colophon reads (fol. 64a/6-b/6):

The sequence of the visions of the sealed volume which manifested (in the period) from the wood-tiger (year) [= 1674] up to the (time when) the water-dog (year) [= 1682] had not yet appeared: when the artist 'Jam-dbyangs rin-chen drew the preliminary sketches (for the thangkas) to be set up by the ruler Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho—who came (to this world) as a master over the width of heaven and earth pursuant to the intent of the prince Mu-ne btsan-po—the full understanding (of the composition of the text) came forth mainly. (This work) was completed on the dMar-po ri, the palace of Ārya Lokeśvara, by the editor, the one who compiled it, the respectable Vidyādhara 'Jam-dbyangs

grags-pa, on the tenth day of the monkey month of the year *khro-bo*, also called *khrodha* [= 1685], (i.e. the day) when one cries out for him who is called *rDo-rje thogs-med rtsal*, the old Mantrika from *Za-hor*, or *Gang-shar rang-grol* (i.e. the 5th Dalai Bla-ma), at the special time when *vira-s dākiṇī-s* come together like clouds; and it was put to paper by *Blo-bzang dbang-po*, one whose technical skills attain (all) limits. May it be auspicious for all!

(*ces shing stag nas chu khyi ma shar bar byung ba'i rgya can gyi 'khrul snang rnam kyī bkod pa gnam sa'i khyon la nnga' bsgyur bar lha sras mu ne btsan po nyid bsam pas bzhin byon pa mi bdag sangs rgyas rgya mtshos bzheng ba'i sngon 'gro shog khrar lha ris pa 'jamṣ dbyangs rin chen gyis 'dri (= 'bri) dus nngon rtogs gtso bor gton (= bton) te / za hor gyi sngags rgan rdo rje thogs med rtsal lam gang shar rang grol du 'bod pas (= pa'i) khro rdha zhes pa khro bo'i lo sprel zla'i tshes bcur dpa' bo mkha' 'gro sprin bzhin du 'du ba'i dus khyad par can la 'phags pa 'jig rten dbang phyug gi gzhal med khang dmar po rir sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni rigs 'dzin gyi btsun pa 'jam dbyangs grags pas bgyis shing shog thog tu mthar rgyas rig byed pa blo bzang dbang pos phab pa sarva mangale (sic!) bhavantu).*

Notes

1. For the different "treasure discoverers" (*gter-ston*) active in *gNas Padma-bkod* from the 17th to the 18th centuries, see Ehrhard (chapter 10 in this volume). In a further article I have tried to show that the "hidden valley" (*sbas-yul*) as a concept of religious space can be found in the same period in *Glo-bo smad*, i.e. southern Mustang, on the local and regional level; see Ehrhard (in press a). It is interesting to note that the influence of treasure discoverers like *Rig-'dzin bDud-'dul rdo-rje* (1615-1672) is traceable in both the south-eastern and the south-western border regions.
2. For the five "solitary places" see, for example, *gTer-chen O-rgyan gling-pa: Padma bka'i thang yig*, chapter 95 (*ma 'ongs sgrub gnas bstan pa'i le'u*), p. 589.3-7: *sku yi dben gnas bsgrags kyī yang rdzong yin : gsung gi dben gnas bsam yas mchims phu ste : thugs kyī dben gnas lho brag mkhar chu yin : yon tan dben gnas yar klungs shel gyi brag : 'phrin las dben gnas mon kha seng ge rdzong* . Cf. Dowman (1988:288-290) and Ricard (1994:272-273) for a description of this scheme, which is sometimes enlarged by a group of three further sacred sites. In Ferrari (1958:56-57) one finds a list of the different sacred sites in *lHo-brag mKhar-chu* as described by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse dbang-po (1820-1892). It should be noted that near *lHo-brag mKhar-chu* is the location of the *lHo-brag Khom-mthing lha-khang*, one of the *mTha'-'dul* temples of *Srong-btsan sgam-po*. The foundation of the monastery *dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling* is mentioned in *Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho: Du kū la'i gos bzang*, vol. 3, pp. 417.15 ff., and in *Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho: Bai dū rya ser po'i me long*, p. 400.13-19 (year of foundation: 1682!). The ritual texts of this monastery were published recently under the title *Mkhar chu bdud'joms gling gi 'don cha'i skor*, 1015 pp., Delhi: Konchog Lhadrepa, 1994. Several works of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma are also contained in this collection.
3. *Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho: Nor bu zla shel gyi me long*, p. 309.4-5 (... *dge slong lha mchog ces rig 'dzin pad 'phrin slob ma / 'ol ka (= kha) rje drung pas lung bstan / ban (= dben) pa'i gnas*

phra na (= *phran*) *re zung* (= *gzung*) *dang / seng ge ri / sbas yul long mo lha steng zer ba sogs gnas sgo* 'phye mkhan zhiig go). Further remarks by Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho justify the conclusion that there existed a "line of incarnations" (*sku-phreng*) of Grub-thob Blo-bzang lHa-mchog; they were known under the name bDud-'joms gling-pa'i sPrul-sku.

4. Concerning the foundation of dGa'-ldan Don-gnyis gling in lHo-brag rDo-bo rdzong, see Ngag-dbag Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho: *Du kũ la'i gos bzang*, vol. 1, pp. 300.19-301.3, and Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho: *Bai dũ rya ser po'i me long*, pp. 397.24-398.4. Compare also Ishihama (1993:49). According to RNAM-THAR, p. 16.1, this monastery was one of the "13 islands, (that are) the convents of patron and priest" (*mchod yon gyi grwa tshang gling bcu gsum*) of the government of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma and sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho. This holds also true for the monastery dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling; see the list of the "13 colleges of the teaching" (*chos grwa bcu gsum*) in Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho: *Bai dũ rya ser po'i me long*, pp. 396.14-400.19. The patron refers in this case to Gu-sri bsTan-'dzin chos-rgyal (1582-1655) and his successors. See the remark by Sum-pa mkhan-po (1704-1787) translated in Ho-chin Yang (1969:39).
5. The motives for nominating Ngag-dbang nor-bu for duties in dGa'-ldan bDud-'joms gling are described in RNAM-THAR, pp. 25.3-26.5. He is mentioned under the name Byang-gling Bla-zur Ngag-dbang nor-bu in Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho: *Bai dũ rya ser po'i me long*, p. 400.14-15. This name links him to the rNying-ma-pa monastery gSang-sngags Byang-chub gling, founded by the 5th Dalai Bla-ma in 1651 (just before his journey to the Manchu court); see Karmay (1991:344). gSang-sngags Byangs-chub gling in Chu-shur is also counted as one of the thirteen *mchod yon gyi grwa tshang gling*; see the list (as in note 4), p. 399.20-400.2.

Basic biographical information on the person of 'Jam-dbyangs grags-pa is provided by Karmay (1988:16): "... a very learned monk and in his capacity as private secretary would often act as scribe...the Dalai Lama stated that this monk was an adept of the *rDzogs-chen* philosophy. He took an active part, with the Regent, in building the Red Palace of the Potala, the tomb of the Dalai Lama, and in establishing the commemoration day of the latter's death." See also appendix.

6. RNAM-THAR, p. 29.5-6: *de nas rgyal dbang tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho chos rgyal srong btsan gyi chas bzhes / mi dbang sangs rgyas rgya mtsho'i sras bgres pa khri bkod dang / rgyal po lha bzang bcas kyi khri 'degs su* For these events see Petech (1988:209-210). See (*ibid.*:204) for references to the 6th Dalai Bla-ma's renouncing his monastic vows and adopting the way of life of a temporal ruler. A description of the outer appearance and character of Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho can be found in the autobiography of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdc-rje: RTOGS-BRJOD, pp. 65.5-66.6, and 79.3-80.6; he met the 6th Dalai Bla-ma and his companions in the years 1702/03. The activities of the 5th Dalai Bla-ma as a reincarnation of Srong-btsan sgam-po are described in Ishihama (1993:53-54).
7. See for example Petech (1972:32-50) and Dabringhaus (1994:37-38 and 48-50). Compare the corresponding chapter in the biography of the ruler Mi-dbang bSod-nams stobs-rgyas, who was the centre of the Tibetan resistance against the Dzungars; Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: 'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam, pp. 258.4-299.10 (*sog po jun gar gi dnag dpung bod du yong ba'i skor dang / rgyal po lha bzang pham nyes byung ba'i skor*).
8. The arrival of Lo ras-pa dBang-phyug brtson-'grus in lHo-brag and his stay in Seng-ge ri is described, for example, in Padma dkar-po: *bsTan pa'i padma rgyas pa'i nyin byed*, pp. 439.17-440.5, and in the biography written by rGod-tshang ras-pa: *bDud rtsi'i phreng ba*, pp. 108.11 ff. His activities in lHo-brag included the renovation of

the mKhar-chu'i lha-khang, i.e. the lHo-brag Khom-mthing lha-khang (see note 2 above). rGyal-dbang Lo ras-pa is the founder of the lower 'Brug-pa school (sMad-'brug).

9. Concerning Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje, his preceding incarnations, and his status as the rebirth of lHo-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha' rgyal-mtshan (1326-1401), see the data given in Ehrhard chapter 10, note 10 in this volume. His visit to Seng-ge ri is described in RTOGS-BRJOD, pp. 648.3-650.2. At the time he was on his way to Thig-phyi in lHo-brag, the former residence of lHo-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha' rgyal-mtshan [for the meeting of Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa (1357-1419) with lHo-brag Grub-chen in Thig-phyi in the year 1395 see Ehrhard (1992:50-52)]. Shortly before Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje's arrival, another person came up with the information that in the year 1723 several entrances to the sacred site mKhan-pa ljongs should be opened; *ibid.*, p. 651.1. This name refers to a mountain valley in Bhutan just south of the Tibetan border.
10. The written document of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje for Blo-bzang lHa-mchog can be found in RNAM-THAR, pp. 110.5-113.6 (*gsang lung them byang*). The second meeting took place in sPyan-g.yas, the home of the wife of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje; for the valley of sPyan-g.yas, in the south of Phyang-rgyas, see Ferrari (1958:53). For the quotation see RTOGS-BRJOD, p. 123.3-4: *sbas gnas kyi 'dzin skyong spel gsum gtso bor gyur pa'i gzhan phan chos la bsgyur gang thub byed dgos*. Cf. the words at the third meeting: *lhag tu sbas gnas kyi 'dzin skyong dang gzhan phan chos la bsgyur gang thub sogs sngar ltar byas phyin de rang gi yong 'dug*; *ibid.*, p. 168.1.
11. The transmission of the rDzogs-chen cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings sgröl* is mentioned also by bsKal-bzang Padma dbang-phyug: *gZhon nu bun ba'i yid 'phrog*, pp. 159.3 and 187.2-188.1. The "monastic rules" (*bca'-yig*) were written down in the year 1746 and are contained in RNAM-THAR, pp. 179.3-191.3. A ritual work dedicated to the protectors of 'Or-mo lha-sa (written by Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje) is contained in *Mkhar chu bdud'joms gling gi 'don cha'i skor* (as in note 2), pp. 611-615: *Sbas gnas 'or mo lha sa'i gnas bsrung gi gsol mchod*.
12. In chapter 10 in this volume by Ehrhard there is a short résumé of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje's journey to gNas Padma-bkod in the year 1729 and his connection with Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa (1682-1725). The following observations should also contribute some material towards an understanding of the religious situation in Tibet at a time when the Manchu dynasty asserted hegemony over Tibet. For the ambivalence on the part of early Qing emperors towards Tibetan Buddhism see Hevia (1993).
13. For the valley of Sle-lung, the residence rNam-grol gling, and rDzing-phyi to the east thereof, see Wylie (1962:91) [the unidentified 'Ol-kha Rje-drung-pa refers to the incarnation line of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje]. The journey of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas to 'Ol-kha stag-rtse and the meeting with rJe-btsun Mi'gyur dpal-gyi sgron-ma was previously dealt with by Petech (1972:109-110) and, based on that study, by Dhondup (1984:88).
14. An account of the persecutions of the rNying-ma-pa school at the beginning of the 18th century—also based on Petech (1972)—can be found in Martin (1990:5-6); compare Mayer (1992:183). The questions raised by Martin and Mayer concerning the "specific measures Khang-chen-nas brought against the rNying-ma-pa sect" and "the reason for these foreign attacks on the rNying-ma-pas" could be answered by referring to the wording of the edict of 1726. We find there the explicit prohibition of ritual acts like "magic rites for subjugating the foe" (*drag las nman pa*), "burning rites" (*bsreg pa*), or "hurling of ritual offerings" (*gtor zor 'phang pa*); see the text in Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, p. 482.15-17. These ritual acts

are also known as *mnan sreg 'phang gsum*; for the textual basis of the three activities see Boord (1993:197-206).

15. Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, pp. 494.20-495.14. This was obviously not the first contact between the lady from sMin-grol gling and bSod-nams stobs-rgyas; see Khyung-po ras-pa: *Dad pa'i gdung sel*, pp. 102.4 ff. (*de skabs pho lha tha'i ji 'gyur med bsod namis stobs rgyas bka' blon gyi las stabs kyi dbang che zhing mi phyed pa'i dad gdung drag pos rje nyid la legs gsol gyi 'bul ba ...*). This meeting took place in the year 1719 and was followed in 1720 by the proposal of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas that the rJe-btsun-ma should move to rKong-po and by further contacts; see *ibid.*, p. 104.5 ff. It should be mentioned that rJe-btsun Mi-'gyur dpal-gyi sgron-ma in the year 1718 had escaped the Dzungar armies and had found refuge in the hidden land 'Bras-mo ljongs, present-day Sikkim; she had been welcomed there by the king, 'Gyur-med rnam-rgyal (regnal years 1701-1733), and by dPa'-bo 'Jigs-med rdo-rje (born 1682), the second incarnation of lHa-btsun Nam-mkha' 'jigs-med (1597-1653). See the account of these event in bsTan-pa'i sgron-me: *Rang bzhin bden brjod ngo mtshar shel gyi adarśa*, pp.6.20-7.13.
16. For the meeting between the bSod-nams stobs-rgyas and Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje see Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, pp. 495.15-499.5. This passage has been dealt with in some detail, as the advice has up to now been ascribed to the daughter of gTer-bdag gling-pa (and thus the position of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas misrepresented); see Petech (1972:110): "She prophesied the ruin of Khang-chen-nas because of his persecution of the rNying-ma-pa, and tried to induce P'o-lha-nas to join her sect; of course he refused and reasserted his dGe-lugs-pa faith." See also Dhondup (1984:88). The role of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje as mediator should be seen against the background of his role as reincarnation of lHo-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha' rgyal-mtshan and keeper of the visionary teachings of this master; cf. RTOGS-BRJOD, p. 618.5 ff. In Ehrhard (1992:56) I already mentioned the integrative capacity of the teachings of lHo-brag Grub-chen in 18th-century Tibet.
17. See Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje: *Ltad mo'i khrong khyer*, p. 336.4-5 (*sa sprel lo dbus gtsang gi dus log chen mo'i gtsang dpung dbus su 'byor dus lha sar phyin / mi dbang bsod namis stobs rgyas dang rten 'brel gyi sgo 'grig ste dbus gtsang gi 'khrug pa zhi bar byas / gong sa mchog dang yon mchod lugs legs kyi zhabs 'debs (= 'degs) rlabs che ba bsgrubs nas phyir log ...*). Compare also the statement in Kun-bzang Nges-don klong-yangs: *Nor bu do shal*, p. 315.1-2: "By furthering in a proper way the agreeable resolution between the Seventh Sovereign bsKal-bzang rgya-mtsho and the ruler, the *dharmarāja*, he averted the disagreeable conditions for them." (*gong sa bdun pa bskal bzang rgya mtsho dang mi dbang chos rgyal thugs mthun mtshams sbyor legs spel gyis sku'i 'gal rkyen bzlog*); see also Schwieger (1985: LXIV-LXV). For the relationship between the *yon-bdag* ruler and the *mchod-gnas* lama (*bla-ma*) as the ideal foundation of Tibetan political theory, see Seyfort Ruegg (1991:448-451).
18. For the journey of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje to gNas Padma-bkod in the year 1729 and the text *Dga' byed bden gtam*, see Ehrhard (in this volume); the quote is in the text, pp. 392.6-393.2 (*sa pho spre'u lo lcags pho khyi'i ntha' dmaḡ bzlog pa'i thabs su gnas mchog padmo bkod du ngas kyis bskyod dgos pa dang / de dag gi cha rkyen du kong yul ljon pa'i tshal gyi gu ru'i sgrub gnas rnamis su tshogs dang me mchod / ge sar gyi zhabs kyis bcags pa'i dben gnas rnamis su ge sar gyi mchod pa / brag gsum mtsho mo che sogs skrag med nyi shar gyi gnas rnamis su bdud mgon chen po'i gsol mchod sogs rim gro rten 'brel gyi rim pa mtha' yas pa byed dgos pa dang*). According to Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, p. 496.9, the deity sKrag-med nyi-shar is a "protector" (*srung-ma*)

of the cycle *Gsang bdag snyan brgyud*. This is the name for the teachings of lHo-brag Grub-chen; see RTOGS-BRJOD, p. 622.5 (*gzhan yang gsang bdag snyan brgyud kyi nang du / gshin rje tshe bdag dang sngags srung ma'i chos skor sogs yi dam lhas dngos su gsungs 'dug pa*).

19. See Petech (1972:161): "The foreign policy of P'o-lha-nas scored a great success in this period"; and Dhondup (1984:97-98): "In his foreign policy Miwang Pholanay was able to secure suzerainty over Bhutan by following a similar policy of supporting all the Bhutanese factions as the Manchu did in Tibet... Through the contacts in Ladakh, he succeeded in keeping a close watch on the movement of the Dzungars."
20. For information on gNam-lcag rdo-rje rTsa-gsum gling-pa and Rwa-ston sTobs-ldan rdo-rje see chapter 10, note 18, in this volume by Ehrhard. Compare now Ricard (1994:XXVIII, note 41) and the chart (*ibid.*:570). This information is based on Gu-ru bKra-shis: *Mngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, pp. 581.21-582.19; for the journey to gNas Padma-bkod see *ibid.*, p. 582.3-8. In the later part of his life Rwa-ston sTobs-ldan rdo-rje served the role as "priest" (*mchod gnas*) for the ruler bSod-nams stobs-rgyas.
21. For this authorization, see the text *Ltal (= Ltad) chung mkha' 'gro'i dga' chal (= tshal) gyi gnas sgo gsar du phyed ba'i lam yig bden pa'i zungs ldan* in "Collected Works," vol. 9, p. 205.3-5 (*sa mo bya'i lo [= 1729] padmo bkod nas phyir 'khor dus kong yul ljon pa'i tshal las 'or shod kyi cha gnas lung du zhag phab pa'i tshe na ye shes kyi mkha' 'gros lung bstan pa'i gnas kyi themis byang du ma zhig thob par / lhun po rdza'i lho gling gsal dwangs ri' bo che / nub gling zangs ri phu'i gnas / byang gling g.yu sgron ma'i bla mtsho rnamis kyi themis byang...*); compare also the text *Yid bzhin gyi nor bu ratna tā re'i lo rgyus mtshong na kun dga'* in "Collected Works," vol. 9, p. 275.2-4 (*zhi ba zhes pa sa mo bya'i lo [= 1729] gnas mchog chen po padmo bkod du bdag gis bskyod nas lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nu gdan drangs / 'or shod kyi cha las chimis yul gnas lung zhes pa'i midar slebs pa'i tshe na / ye shes kyi a ki 'dzom pa skyid dang njal te ri bo rin chen phung ba'i lho nub byang gsum gyi gling gi themis byang rgyas par stsal*).
22. See the text *Mi dbang bsod nams stobs rgyas rnam grol gling du byon pa'i lo rgyus ngo mtshar 'bum snang*, 41 fols., in "Collected Works," vol. 9, pp. 327.1-2 (*gnas ri'i rtser phebs / bdag nas ri bo rin chen spungs pa lho byang gi gnas bkod rnamis rags rim ngo sprod du phul*). In this text we find also the localization of the sacred mountain Rin-chen spungs-pa; *ibid.*, p. 282.1-2 (... *'ol dga'i yul gru srid pa'i lha gnyan ger mtsho'i pho brang lhun po rdza'am ri bo rin chen spungs pa zhes yongs su grags pa ...*). For the opening of the site gNas-mchog gSal-dwangs ri-bo-che, i.e. lHo-gling, see *Yid bzhin gyi nor bu ratna tā ra'i lo rgyus mthong na kun dga'* (as in note 21 above); this text was composed by Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje at the request of bSod-nams stobs-rgyas.
23. For the quotation from the cycle *Gzigs snang gsang ba rgya can ma* that qualifies bSod-nams stobs-rgyas as an emanation of Yam-shud dmar-po, see *Mi dbang bsod nams stobs rgyas rnam grol gling du byon pa'i lo rgyus ngo mtshar 'bum snang* (as in note 21 above), pp. 282.4 ff. Compare also Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, pp. 79.4-80.10. In both cases the quotation is interpreted in the opposition between Khang-chen-nas (an emanation of the deity sKrag-med nyi-shar) and bSod-nams stobs-rgyas. The quotation from the writings of Chos-rje gling-pa can also be found in both sources and is ascribed to the text *Ātsarya sa le'i zhus len* (pp. 287.1 ff. and p. 80.10-82.18). But in a further work of Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje, *Lha gcig rdo rje skyabs byed kyi 'khrungs khang du dam can rgya mtsho'i bsti gnas gsar du bskrun pa'i deb ther rin po che'i 'phreng ba* in "Collected Works," vol. 9, pp. 475.2 ff., the quotation is ascribed to the text *Rtsa gsum dril sgrub kyi lung bstan*. For Tibetan beliefs concerning the *dharmapāla* Yam-shud dmar-po, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:168-170). The myth of Yam-shud dmar-po [a younger brother of Buddha Śākyamuni who after

creating initial disturbances was obliged as a protector of the teaching] is narrated by Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in *Sngon med legs bshad*, Vol. II, pp. 67.19-25.

24. This is the text *Rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur ro cog gi gsung pa rin po che srid gsum rgyan gcig rdzu 'phrul shing rta'i dkar chag ngo mtshar bkod pa rgya mtsho'i lde mig*, 127 fols. (missing from the "Collected Works"). It is mentioned in Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal: *'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, pp. 82.19-20, and 746.1-2. For further information on this blockprint, see Jackson (1989:93). Slowly the text is attracting the interest of concerned researchers; see Eimer (1994:310). bSod-nams stobs-rgyas and his sister Padma Chos-'dzoms were also active in propagating the tradition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*; see Ehrhard (in press b).
25. See *Gnas chen zangs mdog dpal ri'i cha shas las 'phros pa'i gnas ri lo rgyus a ki dgyes pa'i glu dbyangs* in "Collected Works," vol. 8, pp. 155.5-156.1 (*deng sang gi dus su gnas ri de dag tu bgrod pa na rang bzhin gyis 'jigs zil che ba dang / bag phebs pa dang / shes rgyud la sngar med pa'i bde stong rnam par mi rtogs pa'i nyanis 'bar ba dang / ma mo mkha' 'gro dang / mi ma yin pa'i tshogs rnamis kyi thug choms (= chom) dang / 'khun bu 'debs pa / glu gar dang rol mo'i sgra sgrog pa / gsang sngags kyi rang sgra ldir ba dang / dri zhim pa'i ngad 'thul ba sogs kyang kun gyi mthun snang du 'byung bar 'dug pa 'di kho nas kyang yid ches pa'i gnas su rigs mod*). The context of this passage provides further material for the origin of sacred sites and the myth of Heruka (Maheśvara/Rudra); cf. Davidson (1991:229, n. 6) with reference to the discussion of this myth by Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje in *Sngon med legs bshad*, Vol. I, pp. 1-103. For the inclusion of the ritual text *Rgyal po rtse mdos* [otherwise unavailable] in the same collection, see Karmay (1991:343). The myth of Gaṇeśa (*tshogs-bdag*) as narrated in this collection is referred to in Krishan (1992:65 ff.).

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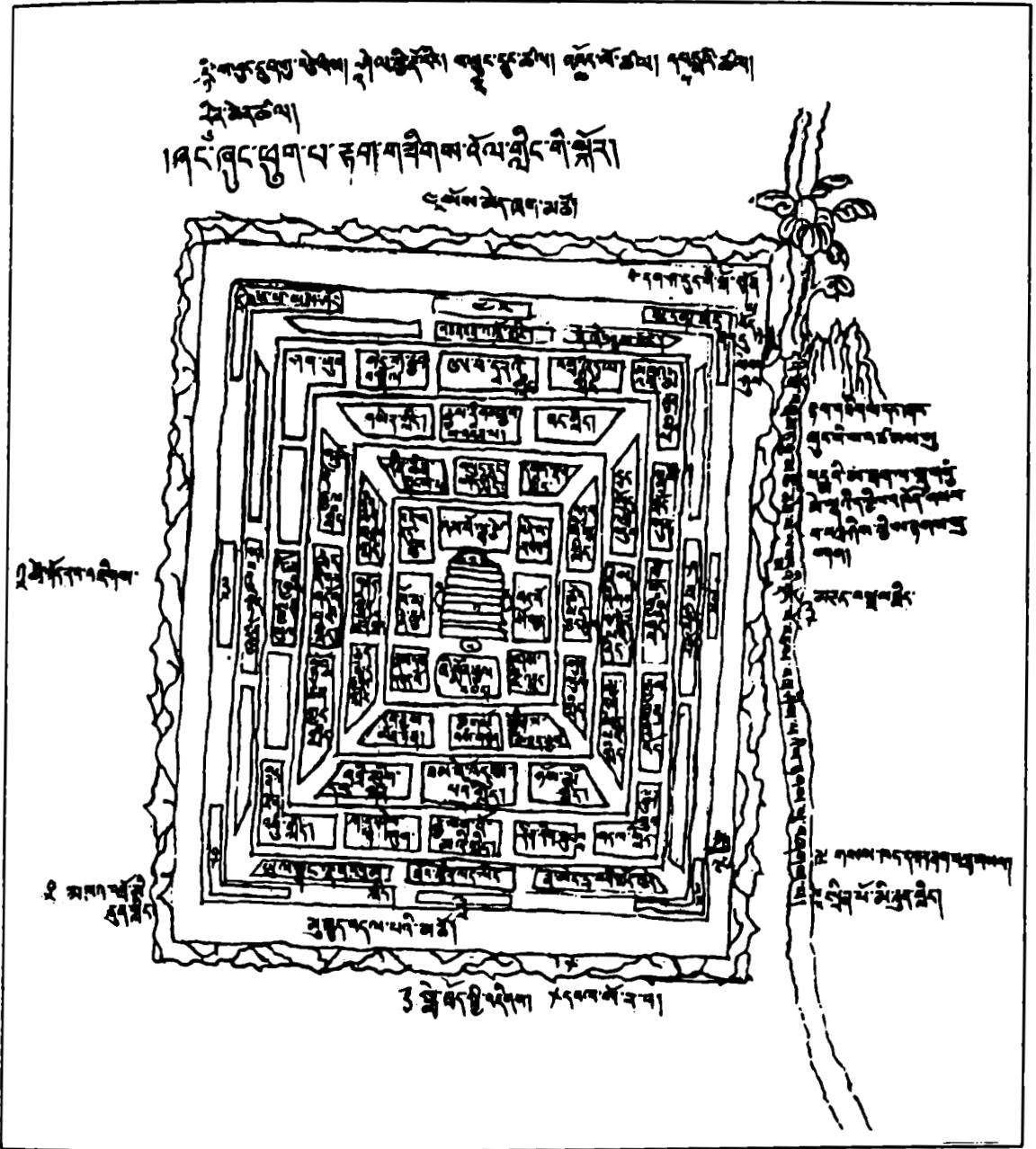
'Ol-mo-lung-ring, the Original Holy Place

Dan Martin

It should scarcely be necessary to mention the fact that human beings have throughout their history been actively engaged in disputes about the sources of knowledge for those things that they hold most dear, in particular those things they hold as sacred or holy. Therefore, it might also go without saying that these differences of approach should become entrenched in religio-cultural complexes which exert their own continuing influences over the same disputes. The differences of approach and opinion, of what constitutes an acceptable source of authority, with increased institutionalization, become more-or-less fossilized sectarian positions which help provide sectaries not only with arguments for their "difference" (which is to say, their reputedly necessary autonomy), but may at times be put forward as an important basis, or even an incontrovertible proof, for the same.

'Ol-mo-lung-ring, as the place of Bon origins, has certainly held one of the keys, in various times and places, that not only allowed the two often opposing Buddhist schools of Tibet, those of Bon and Chos, to preserve their rather archaic distinctiveness, but continues to allow we "high moderns" to radicalize (place at the very roots of the problem) the distinction to the point where we conceptualize Bon and Chos as two entirely separate "trees" which we go on to portray in various narrative modalities of two disjunctive *stemmae*. When similarities and parallels present themselves we are still, unfortunately, most likely to resort to the best-known Chos position, developed in over six-and-one-half centuries of sectarian polemic, that these similarities are due to Bon "borrowings" or "plagiarisms" of Chos materials.

While we intend to take the vicissitudes of knowable objects (Tib. *shes-bya*)—conceived as contingent, not ultimate or self-explanatory, factors—into account in our too-brief foray into the "knowledge-phenomenon" of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, our present objectives must remain limited to a few particular points. If much



Map "A": 'Ol-mo-lung-ring map A (from *Tibetan Zhangshung Dictionary*. Delhi, 1965).

of what we have to say is tentative and at times more destructive than constructive, we believe it may be possible, nevertheless, to clear the field for far more open and less "interested" (and therefore more truly interesting) work on this place, usually conceived to lay outside the historical realms of Tibet (and sometimes even of the world), but still bearing considerable significance for Tibetans in general, not only for followers of Bon, in the past and still today. Along the way, besides looking for ways to disprove the ideas we want to prove, we should constantly ask ourselves whether or not a historical-geographical approach is in fact appropriate for the subject at hand.

The framework for our approach is primarily text-based, to be sure, but on the assumption that texts themselves bear truths in dependent relationship (and sometimes in counterpoint) with the conditions in effect in the time of their production. The idea of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring was a malleable one within Bon traditions, and varied according to different authors throughout Bon history. Even if it will not be possible to explore all the ramifications of the proposition here, we may say that the place 'Ol-mo-lung-ring will find differing places in the thoughts of different Bon historians and thinkers dependent on how other elements of their knowledge and belief are structured and contextualized (and this may equally hold true for modern students of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, the present one included, *caveat lector*). Within the limited range afforded by historical geography, this would mean that we have to search for 'Ol-mo-lung-ring within the geographical consciousnesses of individuals rather than collectives. Nevertheless, there are particular key points around which certain constellations of "general knowledge" emerge. Rather surprisingly, what we begin to see are systems of dual or even triple geocentrism in the Bon geographical passages.¹ Some point out a bi-centrism in which both 'Ol-mo-lung-ring and Mt. Ti-se (in western Tibet) are considered, each in its own way, to constitute a centre.² Still another geographical scheme, the Eighteen Great Countries to be discussed in a moment, places Tibet itself very squarely and unequivocally at the centre of the world which is Jambu Island.

In a recent and fascinating reassessment of Bon origins by David Snellgrove,³ he rather surprisingly finds several references to "Ta-zig" (i.e., Stag-gzig, which Snellgrove takes to mean, in a vague sense, Persia⁴) with no mention of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. It is curious and even troubling for historians that a religion so widely rumoured to be the original and native religion of Tibet so consistently gives itself an origin external to Tibet in a place called Stag-gzig, a name still preserved on modern maps in the name of Tajikistan.⁵ As we will see, one Bon geographical scheme that apparently began no later than the mid-twelfth century confuses us by splitting Stag-gzig into two entities, while an earlier and most likely eleventh-century source, the MDO-'DUS, makes no mention of Stag-gzig (except once in a list of six translators apparently tagged on to the end of the text), while describing 'Ol-mo-lung-ring (or, as this text also often calls it, 'Ol-mo[i]-gling, or less frequently 'Ol-mo-lung) in great detail.⁶

As a starting point, we will build on our recent historical investigation of the two country lists most frequently encountered in Bon historical works (Martin 1994a). The conclusions will be repeated here without reproducing all the justifications, using them as a basis for freshly approaching the problematic identity and location of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring.⁷

The first of the two country lists, which I call for convenience the Kamboja List (since Kamboja is the first country name common to all the variants of the list) is not so relevant in this context. The list of nine (or 16 in the case of SRID) "minor countries" (*yul phran*) derives from a 48-member list found in the *Sūtra Indicating the Tathāgata's Unthinkable Secret (Tathāgatācintyāgūhya Nirdeśa Sūtra)*, which was first translated into Chinese in the late third century, and into Tibetan

in the eighth or early ninth century. The Bon lists, with one known exception (SRID), omit all but one of the identifiable place names (that of Kamboja), and instead list fantastic countries (comparable with some found in Epic and Puranic lists) such as the Noseless Flatfaces (Sna-med-ngo-leb), the Naked Hairless (Gcer-bu-spu-med), the Eyed Chests (Brang-mig-can), and the Large Ears Covering the Body (Rna-bo-che-lus-'gebs).⁸ The Kamboja List, whatever meaning it may have held for Bon-pos in the past, is after all a list of "minor countries", and not so relevant to the present problems.

The second list, the Eighteen Great Countries (*yul-chen bco-brgyad*) of Jambu Island ('Dzam-bu-gling),⁹ is more significant in the sense that it not only supplies a basically accurate (by contemporary standards), if schematic, geography of the countries surrounding Tibet, it forms the core of the geographical passages to be found in nearly every Bon history and, in more-or-less modified forms, in a few Chos sources as well. The following example (figure 1) has been transformed into map form by myself (these words are underlined for emphasis, with the awareness that many contemporary thinkers will find something sinful in turning "text" into "map"), following the indications in the text (note, however, that the outermost pair of countries in each direction is to be understood to lie "at the edge of" only the first of the two countries in the intermediate level; for example, Sog-po and Sbal-kha are "at the edge of" Ge-sar). The source is the GLING-GRAGS, a late twelfth-century Bon history. North is at the top:

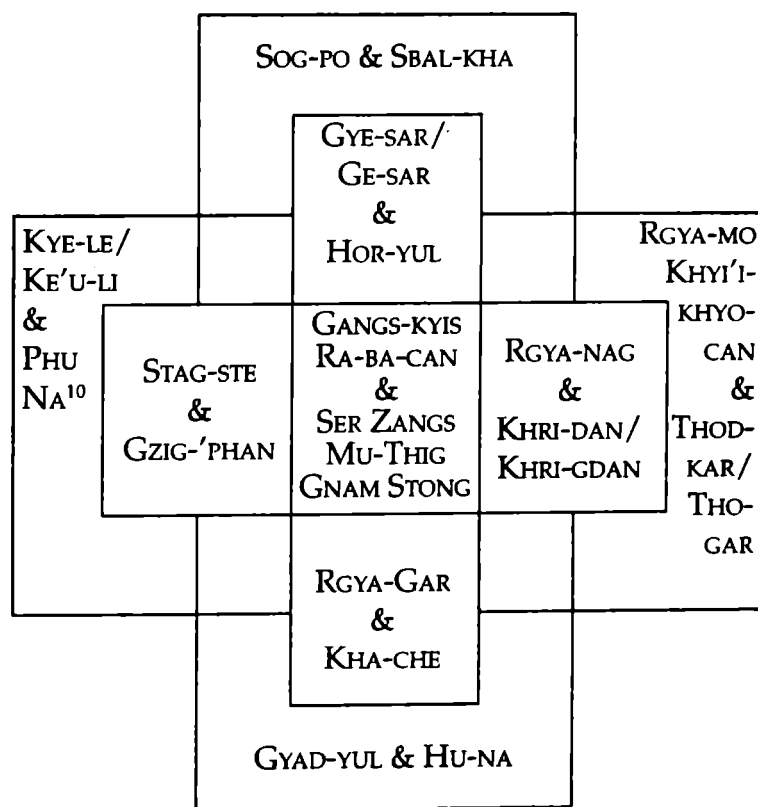


Figure 1

We may interpret the place names (according to our own current understandings of their relatively original referents, not necessarily those of Bon readers of any particular time; *nota bene*), bearing in mind that the scheme originated in Tibet's pre-Mongol period, as follows (see figure 2):

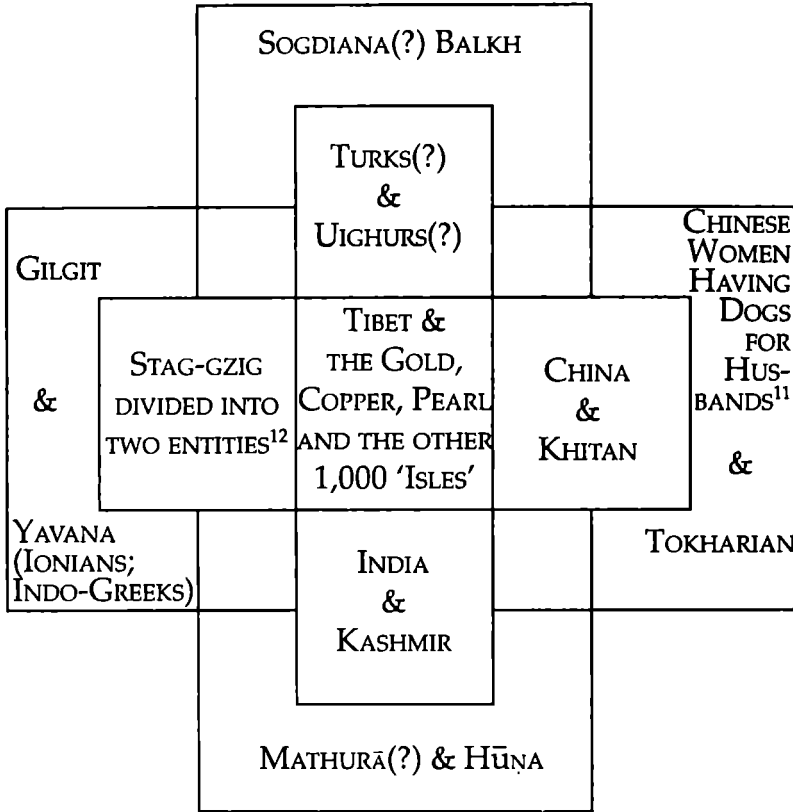


Figure 2

The same basic scheme of the Eighteen Great Countries is found in three other Bon histories, as well as in one fourteenth-century Bon commentary on the *Mdzod Phug* (often with good reason called the “Bon Abhidharma”). Two of these sources refer back to a work called *Rtsa 'Grel*, or “Root Commentary”, which is supposed to have been excavated in about the mid-twelfth century, but is not now available to us.¹³ For present purposes, we would like to draw particular attention to the location of Stag-gzig to the west of Tibet, touching on Gilgit and Yavana (Bactria). We have also noted the existence of a very similar scheme of Nine Great Countries in both the *Rgya Bod Yig tshang* (composed in the year 1434) and the “Guide to the Derge Tanjur” by Zhu-chen (1974: II 15), both deriving from an earlier, but not currently available, biography of Śākyamuni Buddha by Bcom-ldan Rig-ral (who flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century). There are still other indications that the Eighteen Great Countries idea was known to Chos writers.

The Condensed Scripture (MDO-'DUS, or, in its full title, *Mdo 'dus Rin po che'i Rgyud Thams cad Mkhjen pa'i Tshad ma*; "Condensed Scripture, String of Jewels, Authority of the All Knowing"),¹⁴ the shortest of a set of the three main biographies of Lord Shenrab, was excavated in the late tenth or eleventh century.¹⁵ This scripture tells us that it was spoken by the Teacher Gshen-rab-mi-po (i.e., Lord Shenrab) at a "perfection of Place" (*gnas phun-sum-tshogs-pa*), the peak of the None Higher ('Og-men, for 'Og-min) Best of Mountains (Ri-rab) [which is] the peak of Nine Stacked Svāstikas (G.yu[ng-dr]ung-dgu-[b]rtsegs) Mountain. Chapter 2 of the text (pp. 9-17) is on the "outer vessel" (*phyi snod*) world, meaning the environmental world which contains the "internal vital" (*nang bcud*) world. Here we find a very interesting geographical passage on Jambu Island, which distinguishes the area of Mt. Ti-se from 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, even while calling Mt. Ti-se by the name G.yung-drung-dgu-brtsegs:

In particular, in the centre of Jambu Island ('Dzam-gling), the mountain Gang[s]-che (i.e., Gangs-can) Ti-tse (=Ti-se) is called Nine Stacked Svastikas (G.yu[ng-dr]ung-dgu-brtsegs). In width it is 500 *dpag-tshad*.¹⁶ [This] mountain and Mt. Spos-ri-ngad-ldan have between them a lake Ma-dros-pa with a width of 50 *dpag-tshad*. The four lakes which are there in the four directions are the turquoise lake Ma-pam-mo-bya, the golden lake La-ngad, the silver lake Gung-chung, and the iron lake Zom-shang. There are pools with slow waterfalls. Four streams descend from the mouths of four animals. The Gang-ka falls from the mouth of an elephant in the east. The Sin-'du falls from the mouth of a "herd leader" [a bull] (*khyu-mchog*) in the south. The Pag-shu falls from the mouth of a horse in the west. The Si-ta falls from the mouth of a peacock in the north. These four supreme rivers each have 500 tributaries, and their waters flow to the oceans in the four directions. They have ponds with slow waterfalls and the tree[s?] are called Sa-la-rab-brtan.¹⁷

To the north-west of this is Gshel-yul [=Gshen-yul] 'Ol-mo-gling. It has an area of thousands of *dpag-tshad*.¹⁸ It is cut by the rivers Pag-shu and Si-ti; cut by the Nine Dark Mountains. In the west is the country of Dmu.¹⁹ In the east is the country of China (Rgya). In the south is the country of Mon. In the south-east is the country of 'Jang. In the north are Li, Bal and Phrom. In the north-east is the country of Hor, [and] Snowy Tibet (Gang[s]-can Bod).

In [those countries] live the 360 human types. They have the Sixteen Great Countries and the thousand minor countries. They make up Jambu Island ('Dzam-bu-gling).²⁰

One of the most interesting points of this relatively early geographical passage is the variant scheme of countries which make up Jambu Island. There is mention, without listing, of Sixteen Great Countries. These Sixteen Great Countries are frequently mentioned, also without listing, in Chos works, where they evidently are understood as identical to the Indian Buddhist idea of "Sixteen Great Countries"

(Mahājanapādas). This, as well as the geographical scheme that is supplied, sets the MDO-'DUS apart from most later Bon sources. The arrangements of countries in the MDO-'DUS may be schematized as follows (figure 3):

GSHEN-YUL 'OL-MO-GLING (Width of 4,000 dpag-tshad. Cut by Pag-shu and Si-ti Rivers. Cut by Nine Dark Mountain [ranges].)	LI, BAL, & PHROM	HOR & GANGS-CAN BOD (Tibet)
DMU	GANGS-CAN TI-TSE (=G.yung-drung-dgu-brtsegs Ri)	RGYA (China)
	MON	'JANG (Nan-chao)

Figure 3

Two more-or-less similar world-geography schemes are supplied in a work of uncertain date revealed by one Bra-bo Sgom-nyag.²¹ The first is not especially clear about whether 'Ol-mo-lung-ring or India is at the centre, but it locates the latter to the south of the former (figure 4):

MKHA'-'GRO-MA'I GLING	STAG-GZIG BON-GYI YUL	KHA-CHE (Kashmir)
U-RGYAN (Swat Valley?)	'OL-MO-LUNG-RING RGYA-GAR (India) & SA[M]-BHA-LA	RTSA-RI RTSA-GONG ²³
SRIN-PO MU-STEG GLING	(Kingdom of) MON	RGYA-NAG (China)

Figure 4

This is almost immediately followed by another geography of Jambu Island, centred on Mt. Ti-se, which closely resembles that of the MDO-'DUS, but note that Turks are found in the place of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring (figure 5).

KHROM GRU-GU	LI, BAL, & PHROM	Hos
DMU	[MT.] TI-SE GLACIER	RGYA (CHINA)
SRIN-PO	MON	'JANG (NAN-CHAO)

Figure 5

The text adds that there are 60 great countries and a thousand minor ones.

Also of interest is the scheme of rivers which flow from the centrally located Mount Ti-tse (Ti-se), which would seem to be the mountain known today by this name in western Tibet, although it may at times also be identified with the central mountain of Stag-gzig.²³ This scheme is available in many Tibetan sources, and the variations, even contradictions, of these sources are a matter of much bewilderment for us. The MDO-'DUS version (figure 6), being rather early, is perhaps more authoritative:²⁴

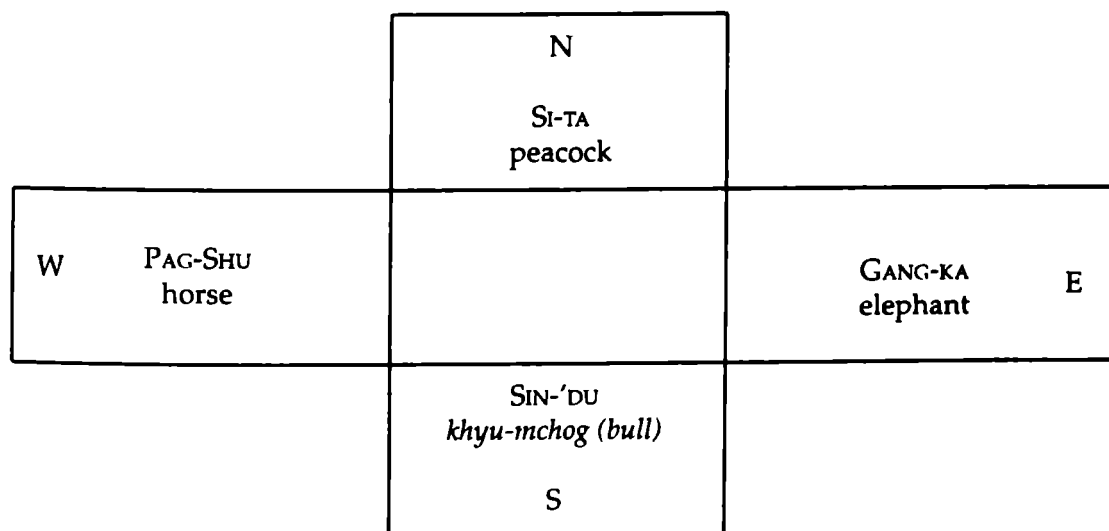


Figure 6

However, this arrangement of rivers is contradicted (figure 7) elsewhere in the text of the MDO-'DUS (p. 207):

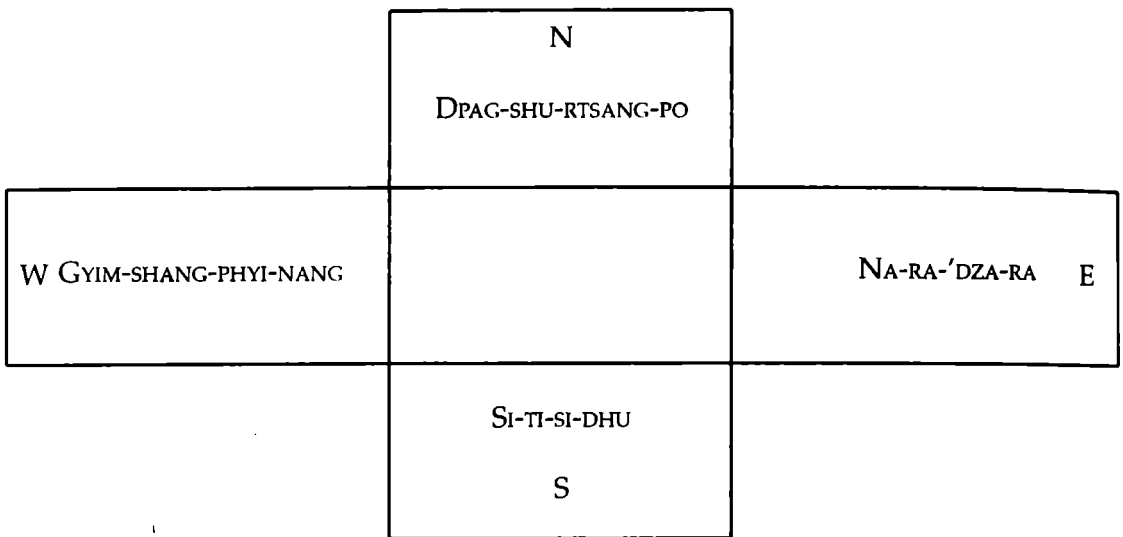


Figure 7

Still one other, somewhat independent scheme ought at least to be mentioned. This is the “shoulder-blade” geography, in which Jambu Island is described as shaped like a sheep’s shoulder-blade (*sog[s]-k[h]a, sog-pa, sog-mo*), somewhat like a downward pointing triangle, only with the lower angle (which Tibetan sources call the “handle”, *yu-ba*) truncated. The various countries are described as being located in particular parts of the shoulder-blade. This model of the world emerges now and then in both Bon and Chos sources. For example, it appears in the Rnying-ma commentary to the *Klong Drug* tantra, ascribed to an eighth-century author.²⁵ A full study cannot be attempted at the moment, but it has the “feel” of being quite old, mainly on account of the use of shoulder-bones in the type of divination known as scapulimancy. It appears in the above mentioned revelation to Bra-bo Sgom-nyag,²⁶ and in the geography by Dbra-ston (ca. 1930:938).

Consciously avoiding the complications that would be introduced by attempting to account for every variant detail of all the various schemes, and with the confidence that we are dealing with some of the oldest sources, we will proceed to interpret them in terms of our understanding of geography.

1. If we follow the scheme of the Eighteen Great Countries, and assume that ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring is, as many later sources say, in some way identical with Stag-gzig;²⁷ we see that Stag-gzig is to the west of Tibet, and is bordered by the smaller areas of Gilgit and Yavana (Bactria). This would point to an area stretching from present-day north Pakistan to Takhar (equivalent to Tibetan Tho-gar, which shouldn’t be confused with the Thod-dkar which borders China, although both names seem to come from a single ethnonym, and are in fact occasionally confused in Bon sources) in north-eastern Afghanistan, and possibly including areas still further to the south.
2. If we follow the arrangement of countries in the MDO-’DUS, ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring is located to the north-west of western Tibet (where Ti-tse/Ti-se is) and rather to the north of a mysterious country called Dmu (Persia, perhaps?). It is cut by both the Nine Dark Mountains (see below) and the rivers Pag-shu

and Si-ti, which we might very well identify as the Oxus (Vakśu) and Sitā (in the Tarim basin) rivers.²⁸ Here we seem to be dealing with an area that stretches from the Badakhshan in north-eastern Afghanistan, circling (to the right or the left of) the Pamirs, and touching on, but not actually including, the Tarim Basin (which seems to be well covered by the Li Bal Phrom of the scheme). Hence, compared to the picture from the Eighteen Great Countries, we seem to be both further to the north and further to the east.

3. If we follow the arrangement of rivers, we are on still more unsteady ground, since there are countless conflicting variations. To follow the first version from the MDO-'DUS (figure 8):

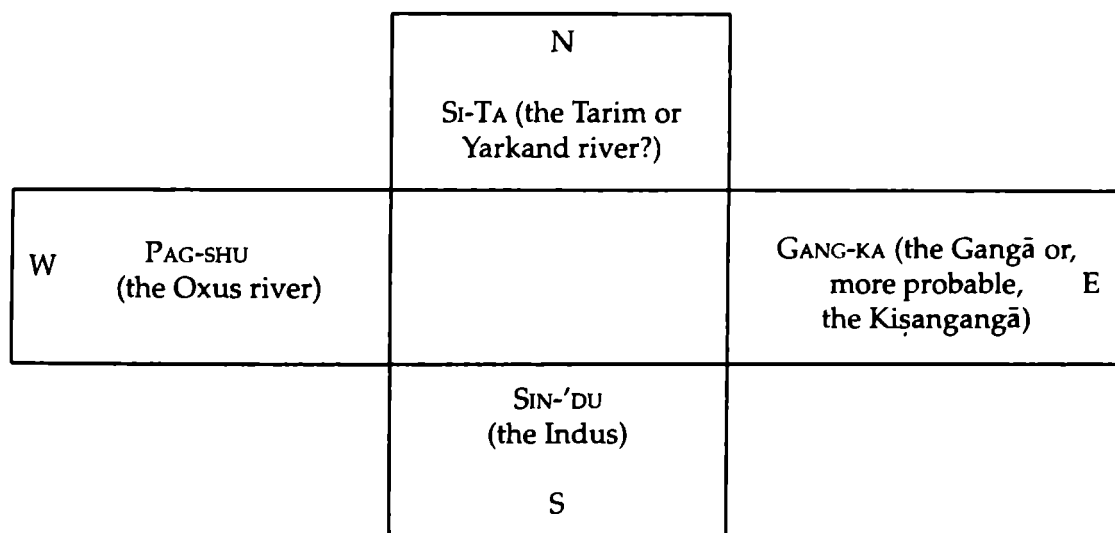


Figure 8

This suggests a very large area subsuming Baltistan, Gilgit, northern Kashmir, the north part of present-day Pakistan (Swat, Chitral, etc.), and perhaps Badakhshan. If Gang-ka here means the Gangā, then we would also have to stretch the area to include the mountainous area in the north part of the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. But then again, while the MDO-'DUS says that 'Ol-mo-lung-ring is cut by the rivers Pakshu and Si-ta (the Oxus and Tarim), we must note that other sources, in citations of the same passage from the MDO-'DUS, give the two rivers' names as Pakshu and Si[n]dhu (Oxus and Indus).²⁹ Following the citations, rather than the text of the MDO-'DUS, 'Ol-mo-lung-ring would cover the area from the north part of modern Pakistan up to and including at least some part of Uzbekistan.

Most of the same sources in which we find the Eighteen Great Countries, as well as the Bon Abhidharma literature, the *Mdzod Phug* and its commentaries, have a very interesting set of Nine Dark Mountains. We haven't the time or space to go into this very complicated geographical problem, on which we hope to say more elsewhere. Here we would only point out that these mountains, or rather mountain ranges, are called Dark Mountains because they are darker than other mountains (presumably due to the absence of permanent glaciers). They

are listed in order starting from the north at the “outermost lake” of Jambu Island, in an uninhabited place which might be supposed to be the vicinity of the Arctic Circle, and ending in the south at Mt. Ti-se (although Mt. Ti-se is itself excluded from the set). Almost all the sources agree that the eighth member of the set is the mountain range (*ri rgyud*) of Ba-dag-shan³⁰ which, they mostly say, divides the Dru-gu (Turks) from the Tsha-gser.³¹ Ba-dag-shan is surely Badakhshan. Still, one late twelfth-century source (*GLING-GRAGS* 5v) rather improbably states that the Ba-dag-sha (Badakhshan?), which is “like the head of a conch,” divides the “Central Glacial Ranges” (*dbus gangs-kyi ra-ba*, generally speaking, and particularly in this context to be understood to mean Tibet) from Stag-gzig in the west.³²

If the pre-thirteenth-century sources have not allowed us to be very precise about the location of ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring, still they provide us with a general idea: it is an area to the west of western Tibet, stretching from the borders of Ladakh (or more likely, northern Pakistan) to the land beyond the Badakhshan, and including an indeterminate area to the south and/or the north. In these areas there were indeed strong local traditions of Buddhism already in the first centuries of the Christian Era, some of them lasting well beyond the Islamic conquests of the ninth century, and it was in approximately the late ninth or early tenth century that, according to Bon histories, the Bru clan migrated from the areas of Little Balur (Bru-sha) and Tukharistan (Tho-gar) to western Tibet and Gtsang province (Martin 1991). The Bru clan was one of four clans that gathered around the teachings of Gshen-chen Klu-dga’ in the early eleventh century, and one of the six most important families of the Bon religion.

By the late twelfth century, we find in the *Meditation Commentary*, a composition included in the Bon Mother Tantra literature, an interesting geographical-linguistic scheme which was often followed by later Bon authors.

Even though the types of Zhang-zhung languages are many, they may be reduced to three: 1. The Innermost Language stems from the Kapita³³ “gods”. It is the “Divine Language”. 2. The Intermediate Language stems from Sanskrit (Sang-tri-ta). It is the language of the Thirty-three [Gods]. 3. The Gateway Language stems from the Sgra-bla (Sgra-sla) of the good aeon.³⁴ This last is the language of Smar. If explained according to their most essential features, there did exist in the different areas of Gateway [Zhang-zhung] the languages of Khyung-lung, Ting-tog³⁵ and so forth, but it cannot be said that they are all Smar language. Generally, all three of the great places where this teaching spread have that same [Smar] language: 1. Sham-po Lha-rtse in Stag-gzig;³⁶ 2. Royal Fort Cattle Enclosure in Intermediate Zhang-zhung;³⁷ 3. Khyung-lung Dngul-mkhar in Gateway (Zhang-zhung).³⁸ It is the language common to these [three] places.³⁹

The metaphor behind this threefold geographical division of the “three Zhang-zhungs” is that of the house. Zhang-zhung as such, more or less equivalent to western Tibet centred in Khyung-lung Dngul-mkhar in the upper Suttlej, is

the "doorway" (*sgo*). "Intermediate Zhang-zhung" is the intermediate space (*bar*), while Stag-gzig (here identical to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring with its royal palace of Sham-po Lha-rtse) is the innermost recess, or innermost treasury (*phugs*) where the family heirlooms are kept. While the "doorway" opens to the outside world and is accessible to the public at large, the intermediate space of the house is reserved for guests, and the innermost recesses are for family members only. In this twelfth-century source it might seem as if 'Ol-mo-lung-ring was undergoing a process of occultation.

The *Meditation Commentary's* mentioning of Ka-pi-ta, which is surely the same as Kapisha, an old centre of Gandhara located north of present-day Kabul, is at least generally consonant with the territory of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring as known in earlier sources.⁴⁰

Having reached this rather imprecise and tentative location for 'Ol-mo-lung-ring,⁴¹ we can easily see how it comes into direct conflict with the well-known views of the late professor B.I. Kuznetsov (1935-1985), first published in 1969, following which we have a small body of literature devoted to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring and its "map" which claims that 'Ol-mo-lung-ring should be identified with the Persian Empire and its tributary states stretching, according to Kuznetsov, from the Pamirs to Egypt and possibly Rome.⁴² Before going on to challenge this view, we would like first to supply our own schematized "map" of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, patterned after the woodblock printed version (the same woodblock version reproduced in Snellgrove 1980, but supplying the place names in transliteration), and point out a few things that might seem to justify Kuznetsov's view.

(59) Ne'u-seng-dra-ba'i Grong-khyer		(58) Yul Ba-ra-dzo-ti Dme-khrod-skyi-'jigs			Mkha'-'gro-mi-srun		(57)		
Dkar-nag-bkra-gsal	(48) Grong-khyer Lang-ling	(47) Rgya-mo-mo-khrom Gling	(46) Rgya-lag-'od-ma'i Gling	(45) Mkha'-'gro-mi-rkun Gling	(44) Sngan-ldan-'bum-gling				
	(49) Khri-'od Rgyal-khab	(34) Bram-ze Myan-ngan-med-pa'i Gling	(33) Bram-ze Hos-mo Gling	(32) Bram-ze Gtsang-ma'i Gling	(31) 'Bri-mig-dgu-bskor Mtsho		(43) Ha-nu-man-tha'i Gling		
		(21) Dge-rgyas-yon-tan Gling	(20) Mi-g-yo-bsam-gtan Gling	(19) Tshad-med-byams-pa'i Gling					
	(60) Rje'u-rigs-kyi Yul	(22) Sbyin-pa-mthar-rgyas Gling	(11) Thugs-rje-'byung-ba Mchod-rtan	(10) Khri-smon Rgyal-bzhad	(9) Rnam-dag Dkar-po Mchod-rtan	(18) Rin-chen-gram-pa'i Gling	(30) Stobs-chen-gyad-kyi Yul	(40) Yul Dha-ba-ru-steng	
	(50) Khri-dang-byams-ma'i Gling	(35) Rje'u-rigs Bkod-mdzes Gling	(23) Tshad-med-byang-chub Gling	(12) Bar-po-so-brgyad	(4) (1) G.yung-drung- (3) (5) dgu-brtsegs (2)	(8) Kho-ma Ne'u-chung	(17) Gnod-sbyin Nor-gyi Gling	(29) Dmang Riṭ Gdol-pa'i Gling	(42) 'Od-ma-'jams-skya
(51) Bkra-gsal-me-tog Gling	(36) Drang-srong-'gro-'dul Gling	(24) Bdud-'dul-sngags-kyi Gling	(13) Bde-ba-rang-grub Mchod-rtan	(6) Sham-po Lha-rtse Gsas-mkhar	(7) Gshen-rab-sku-tshad Mchod-rtan	(16) Rin-chen-spungs-pa'i Gling	(28) Gtsug-rje-rgyal-po'i Yul	(41) Yul Phra-mo-gling-drug	Cher-shod-rab-'jigs
Yul Khri-'bum-thang	(25) 'Dul-'khri-ma-kyi Gling		(14) G.yung-drung-bkod-pa'i Gling	(15) Dga'-ldan-lha Gling	(40) Gar-chen Shag Yul				
	(37) Zang Gling		(26) Rgyal-rigs Rgyal-sa 'Dzin-pa'i Gling	(27) Gser Gling					
(61) Mya-ngam-thang-nag	(52) Mya-ngam-thang-nag	(53) 'Gro-'dul Gling	(38) A-ba-da-ra'i Gling	(39) Seng-ge-rgyab-bsnol	(55)				
(61) Mya-ngam-thang-nag		(54) Gcan-zan-'kho-ba'i Gling Sos-med Khrag Mtsho			Dregs-pa-yams-shod				

Map "B" Key: Schematic key to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring map B (note: East is at the bottom, and north to the right of map).

At the centre (1) is Nine Stacked Svāstika Mountain, surrounded by four groves: (2) Happiness Grove [Dga'-ba'i Tshal], (3) Jewel Grove [Rin-chen Tshal], (4) Lotus Grove [Padma'i Tshal], and (5) Man-made Grove [Skyed-mo Tshal]. It was apparently the central mountain surrounded by groves (or parks or formal gardens) that initially inspired Kuznetsov to identify the map with the Persian Empire, since he believed that the mountain (which appears on the woodblock printed map as nine stepped levels, each composed of seven or five *svāstika*-s; on the drawn map, it looks rather like a beehive) surrounded by gardens was reminiscent of the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae,⁴³ once likewise surrounded by groves and gardens. Then Bar-po-so-brgyad[12] Kuznetsov evidently thought sufficiently similar to the name Pasargadae (sometimes appearing in forms like Parsogard) that they might be identical. It was apparently on the basis of these particular similarities that Kuznetsov (and Gumilev, although Kuznetsov was the one who supplied the Tibetological expertise) went on to identify other parts of the map with parts of the Persian empire of approximately the sixth century B.C.E.

In order to properly read the map, we should first know there are two versions. The rather crudely hand-drawn version, published together with a Zhang-zhung dictionary in 1965, was the one Kuznetsov used as the basis. This map was republished in an Israeli newspaper with Hebrew-letter identifications added on.⁴⁴ As far as the content is concerned, this version is not very different, but of course with some spelling differences, from the woodblock printed version (first published by Snellgrove), even if the visual differences are striking. We will call these, for convenience, maps A and B. One confusing difference between them is that A locates the east at the top, while B locates the east at the bottom.⁴⁵ B is rendered in a very artistic manner, making many features of the map more clear. B places a wall, with gates in the four cardinal directions, around the eight inner "islands"; it represents all the other divisions between the "islands" as bodies of water, and a body of water surrounds the entire map together with an encircling mountain range. This outermost body of water we know from map B (and from many literary sources) to be called Mu-khyud-bdal-pa'i Mtsho. This name means "Lake that Covers the Circumference". Kuznetsov (p. 575 no. 60) translates, "Surrounding, elongated sea" and says, "i.e., the world ocean, which surrounds the land. In this case, the Mediterranean Sea." About the outermost encircling mountain range, called Dbal-so-ra-ba, which we would translate "Wall of Sharp Teeth,"⁴⁶ Kuznetsov, not understanding that the 'X' on the map was intended to label the entire circle of mountains, and not one particular spot, says (p. 575 no. 64): "in location, this would appear to be Cyprus. The interpretation is supported by the first two syllables, which may refer to Alisah, an ancient self-designation of Cyprus according to the Amarna tablets of Amenhotep III or Amenhotep IV."

Overall, the map is made up of six square "belts" or zones:

- I. The innermost division made up of Nine Stacked Svāstika Mountain and the surrounding groves.

- II. The inner division made up of eight "islands" (in fact, four buildings and four *mchod-rten*).
- III. The next division made up of 12 "great islands" is sometimes called the "12 inner islands" (*nang gling bcu-gnyis*).
- IV. The next division, also made up of 12 "great islands" (included among them are two "countries" (*yul*) and one lake). These are sometimes called the "12 intermediate great islands" (*phyi gling bcu-gnyis*).
- V. The next division made up of 16 "great islands" (including a city, a royal fortress, a group of six islands, a country and three other unspecified geographical entities). These are sometimes called the "16 outer great islands" (*phyi gling bcu-drug*).
- VI. The outermost square of "islands" depicted as eight bodies of land divided from each other by water (including four "countries" [*yul*], a city, a capital, a lake and other unspecified geographical entities). Shar-rdza (1985: 14) calls this the "eight great fringe islands". The *Gzi-brjid* (Namdak 1971: 877) refers to this area as the "32 fringe islands". Dpal-tshul (p. 33) says that there are a grand total of 96 "major areas" (*yul chen*) in 'Ol-mo-lung-ring.⁴⁷

We will proceed to look at each of the country names, following the gazetteer of the MDO-'DUS (pp. 203-209), in the order given there, starting at the centre, and working our way outward (numbers in square brackets refer to our map based on map B). It makes difficult reading, and for this I apologize.

II. The inner 12 "great islands":

1) Sham-po-lha-rtse[6]⁴⁸ in the east. Decorated with the eight precious substances, it is surrounded with seven *dpag-tshad* of walls. Teacher Shenrab dwelled in the Pho-gling-mo-gling ("Father Island Mother Island"). The younger brother Rma-lo G.yu-lo was born here. 2) Bar-po-so-brgyad[12]⁴⁹ in the south. It is made of lapis with the five precious substances, encircled by seven *dpag-tshad* of walls. It is the fortress of [Lord Shenrab's] father Rgyal-bon Thod-dkar,⁵⁰ and the place where Teacher Shenrab took birth. 3) Khri-smon-rgyal-bzhad[10]⁵¹ in the west. It is made of sapphire and copper, decorated with the four precious substances. [The walls] are seven *dpag-tshad*. This was the fortress of Hos-za Rgyal-med, and the [place] where Gto-bu Spyad-bu was born. 4) Kho-ma Ne'u-chung[8]⁵² in the north. It is made of Indranila and turquoise, and decorated with a ground of precious gold. It is encircled by a seven *dpag-tshad* wall. It is the "island" of Dpo-za Thang-mo, and here the fruits [of the marriage], Lung-'dren-rgyud-'dren and Gshen-za Ne'u-chung were born. 5) Bde-ba-rang-grub[13]⁵³ in the south-east. It is three *dpag-tshad*, made of crystal. Here are found the teachings of a thousand Well Gone Ones (Bde-gshegs) and a thousand crystal *tsha-tsha*. 6) Thugs-rje-byung-ba[11]⁵⁴ in the south-west. It is three *dpag-tshad*, [made of] mercury. The foundations were laid by a thousand spirits ('*dre srin*). 7) Rnam-dag-dkar-po[9]⁵⁵ in the north-west. It is three *dpag-tshad* made of crystal. It is a great treasury (mine?) of precious substances. 8) Gshen-rab-sku-tshad[7]⁵⁶ in the north-east. It is made of precious blue lapis, and of three *dpag-tshad*. [In] its self-produced

“vessel” (*bum-pa*) abides a Shenrab image. It is made of gold and blazes with light. In back (of the just-mentioned “islands”) are seven walls: walls of five precious substances, six together with the water, and of saplings and lotuses [making seven].

III. Behind that are 12 “great islands”.

1) G.yung-drung-bkod-pa'i Gling[14]⁵⁷ in the east. It is beautified with decorations of the four precious substances. Here is the divine mountain of light Spos-mthon.⁵⁸ Here are the rich possessions of the Teacher, including the stone slab of *ar-mo-la-ka*,⁵⁹ bathing pools made of precious substances, good leaves of the wish-granting tree, the wish-granting cow, the uncultivated grain harvest, the Teacher's seat of four precious substances, a trunk of sandalwood, the eight substances that are auspicious signs, the seven precious signs of kingship, the luminous *hos-gur*,⁶⁰ the curtain with rainbow designs. 2) Dga'-ldan-lha'i Gling[15]⁶¹ to the right of the preceding. It is marvellously laid out. Here the Teacher explained Bon to the gods. 3) 'Dul-ba-khrims-kyi Gling[25]⁶² to the left of the preceding. Here is a self-produced *mchod-rten* decorated with trees. Here the Teacher renounced the household life, and he expounded the *Six Treatises on Renunciation* ('*Dul ba Rgyud Drug*).⁶³ 4) Tshad-med-byang-chub Gling [23]⁶⁴ in the south. Ground made of lapis, decorated with golden lotus flowers. Here [the Teacher] cultivated the four immeasurables in his [mental] continuum. 5) Bdud-'dul-sngags-kyi Gling[24]⁶⁵ to the right. This is the place where the White 'A' tantric treatises were expounded. Here the Teacher civilized the delusory forces. 6) Sbyin-pa-mtha'-rgyas Gling[22]⁶⁶ to the left. The Teacher brought together the “six types” (of beings) by giving them gifts, perfecting giving in 'Ol-mo-gling. 7) Mi-g-yo-bsam-gtan Gling[20]⁶⁷ in the west. It is decorated with forests of the six kinds of precious substances. It is a place where the Teacher left his circle of followers and did contemplation. 8) Dge-rgyas-yon-tan Gling[21]⁶⁸ to the right. This is the place where [the Teacher] made rich gifts and offerings, and amassed the virtuous accumulation of merit. 9) Tshad-med-byams-pa'i Gling[19]⁶⁹ to the left. Here he generated the thought of awakening, generating love. 10) Gnod-sbyin-nor-gyi Gling[17]⁷⁰ in the north. This is the abode of the “injury-giver” (*gnod-sbyin*) 'Dzam-bha-la. 11) Drang-ma-spungs-pa'i Gling[18]⁷¹ to the right. Here the Teacher emerged from his fortress (i.e., left the married state). 12) Rin-chen-spungs-pa'i Ri[18] on the left. Here he abandoned gifts of wealth, and an image of the Teacher formed. Behind [the above-listed “islands”] is Mu-khyud-mdzes Mtsho, a lake with the eight branches [of good water]. There are trees of cool shade, a place where the sages (*drang-srong*) entered into trances of cessation (i.e., suspended animation).

IV. Beyond them are 12 “islands”.

1) Rgyal-rigs-rgyal-sa-'dzin-pa'i Gling[26] in the east. [From here] the river *Nara-'dza-ra* descends.⁷² 2) Gser-gling[27] to the right. This is where the golden lineage dwells. 3) Zangs-gling[37] to the left is an auspicious place. 4) Rje'u-rigs-bkod-pa'i Gling[35] in the south. [From here] the river *Si-ti-si-dhu*⁷³ descends. 5)

Drang-srong-'gro-ba-'dul-ba'i Gling[36] to the right. It has a thousand self-produced *mchod-rten*. 6) Bram-ze Mya-ngan-med-pa'i Gling[34] to the left. In the Dur-bu Island he passed beyond suffering. 7) Bram-ze-gtsang-ba'i Gling[32] in the west. [From here] the river Gyim-shang-phyi-nang⁷⁴ descends. 8) Bram-ze Hos-mo Gling[33] on the right. Here is the mountain Hos-ru-rtse-mtho.⁷⁵ 9) 'Bri-mig-dgu-bskor Mtsho'i Gling[31] on the left. Here the Teacher expounded Bon to the *klu* spirits. 10) Rmang-rigs-gdol-ba'i Gling[29]⁷⁶ in the north. [From here] the river Pag-shu-rtasang-po⁷⁷ descends. 11) Stob[s]-chen-gyad-kyi Gling[30] to the right. 12) Gtsug-rje-rgyal-po'i Gling[28] to the left. Here is the mountain Gtsugs-kyi-phyug-po.⁷⁸ Beyond [the above-listed "islands"] is the lake of 'Khor-mo-gling.

V. Beyond those are the 16 "great islands":⁷⁹

1) Dmu A-ba-da-ra'i Yul[38] in the east. 2) Brag-sing-ge-brgyad-bsnol-phyug-pa[39] to the right. A high peaked divine mountain with 108 rock caverns where the delusional power Ma-drang-kha-chen was civilized. 3) 'Gro-ba-'dul-ba'i Mchod-rten[53] on the left; 108 *mchod-rten*. 4) Brgya-lag-'o-ma Gling[52/46?]⁸⁰ in the south-east. The abode of the Chinese Kong-rtse 'Phrul-gyi-rgyal-po.⁸¹ 5) Khri-ting-'byam-pa-rin-chen-spung[50]⁸² Mountain in the south. 6) Smra-mi Grong Bdun[51?] to the right. 7) The country Pra-mo-khri-'od[49]⁸³ to the left. 8) The mountain Gtsug-rum-'bar-ba in the south. 9) The great city Ling-ling[48], on the banks of the western lake Mu-le-stong-ldan,⁸⁴ a place where the king stayed. 10) Rgyal-mo-mo-khrom Gling[47] on the right. 11) Mkha-'gro-mi-rkun Gling[45] on the left. 12) Mi-'am-chi'i Gling in the north-west. 13) Hos-mo-gling-drug[42?] in the north.⁸⁵ Here Hos Dang-ba-yid-rang stayed. 14) Ha-nu-man-dha-sprel-gyi Gling[43]⁸⁶ to the right. 15) Pra-mo-gling-drug[41] on the left. Gto-bo-'khor-ba was brought here. 16) Dha-la-shel-gyi Brag-phug[40?] in the north-east. Beyond [the preceding areas] is the lake Mu-khyud-bdal-ba, surrounded by a 1,500 *dpag-tshad* iron mountain chain. A copper mountain chain obscures the sky. The heavens are like an eight-spoked wheel...

The most significant difference between the MDO-'DUS account of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring and our maps A and B is that the outermost level is missing. The geographical entities represented on our transliterated map by the numbers 54 through 61 are not listed in the MDO-'DUS,⁸⁷ and the names of these places are nowhere to be found in the text. This might suggest that these further countries of maps A and B have been taken from a later, more elaborated account, most probably that of the fourteenth-century *Gzi-brjid*.⁸⁸ At the same time, it should be emphasized that the account of the MDO-'DUS is already a fairly elaborate one, and the most significant geographical areas are those at the centre.

The main conclusion that we wish to draw concerns the way we ought to "read" the map. The MDO-'DUS account suggests that it ought to be read as a map of places of significance in the sacred biography of Lord Shenrab (in many cases places connected with his close associates). We suggest that the maps were preceded by the textual accounts, that the maps may, in fact, be little more than tabulated charts based on the geographical co-ordinates provided in the texts.

In favour of this idea, we may say that there is absolutely no evidence that either of the two maps is of any great age, and it is even possible that they could have been created as late as the 1960s.⁸⁹ We cannot assume, in any case, that they are of any antiquity; we need evidence for this. We can know with a fair amount of certainty only that the *contents* of the maps, at least for the most part, existed in textual form in the eleventh century, but we cannot say the same for the maps themselves.

Some new evidence has arrived, due to the kindness of Dr. Toni Huber, in the form of a hanging thangka map, about 2.5 by 4 meters in size, made even larger by its framing of brocade, now displayed at the new temple Dga'-mal Dgon-khag in Shar-khog district. According to the notes of Dr. Huber, collected from local informants, this map may have been painted about a hundred years ago by an artist named Gnyan-'bum-rgyal from the village of Ha-'phel (Chinese name, Ambi). Like so many other Tibetan religious objects, it was concealed by burial during the cultural conflagrations of the "Cultural Revolution", and only brought out of hiding and placed in the temple in the mid-1980s. This 'Ol-mo-lung-ring map is said to have inscriptions in each of its individual sections, although these are impossible to make out in the photographs. In its more general outlines, it appears to be identical to our Maps A and B, but there are many differences of detail. Most intriguing is the addition of human figures, a group of them portrayed circumambulating the central mountain in typical Bon fashion. Horse-drawn covered wagons together with horseback riders are shown going to and from a shrine which appears to hold an image of Kun-bzang-rgyal-ba-rgya-mtsho.⁹⁰ A closer study of this marvellously painted "map" in the future could help answer some of the questions raised about 'Ol-mo-lung-ring and its history. Its existence does show that there was at least one 'Ol-mo-lung-ring map in the last half of the nineteenth century.

We will look at just three examples of Kuznetsov's treatment of the place names in the 'Ol-mo-lung-ring map (map A) in order to demonstrate that it is not necessary to appeal to a hypothetical prototype map of the Persian empire, and that the primary intent of this "map" is to serve as a sort of memory-system keyed to events in the life of Lord Shenrab.⁹¹

In their entry for Dmang-rigs Gdol-pa'i Gling[29] (Kuznetsov's no. 27), we read as follows:

Med-rigs-gdol-pa'i-gling—"country of the fierce Mede tribe," i.e. Media. The country was conquered by the Persians in the middle of the 6th century B.C. and was incorporated into the empire as a province.

In the first place, "Med" is a misreading of Rmang[s] (or Rmong,⁹² since the presence of a vowel is hinted at; map B has Dmong) which in any case means the Śūdra caste (the other three castes occupy corresponding places in the three other cardinal directions). *Gdol-pa* does not mean "fierce" here; it means, like Sanskrit *caṇḍāla*, an especially low caste of butchers.

For another example, see Kuznetsov's no. 45 [our no. 46]:

Rgya-lag-'o[d]-ma'i-gling, "country of the Chaldeans," i.e., Babylonia, where the Chaldeans were the dominant people.

Kuznetsov quite correctly supplies the missing 'd', but it is difficult to believe that a Tibetan name with a meaning in Tibetan ("Broad Branched Bamboo") and pronounced something like "Gyalawoma", or, perhaps in an eastern dialect, "Jalawoma", corresponds in any way to Chaldea.⁹³ Or, to give a third example, why should anyone accept that Grong-khyer Lang-ling (K 58) is Jerusalem without any reason at all (aside from the cardinal direction and a very vague similarity in some of the sounds) being given to support the claim? It could be because the last syllable of Jerusalem is pronounced "laa-yim" in Hebrew, and this might roughly approximate the *ling* in Lang-ling. Even if this were acceptable, we would have to take into account that *lang-ling* is a Tibetan word, identical in meaning to *lang-nge-ling-nge*, which means "swaying".⁹⁴ There are many such examples; in fact the examples just given are quite characteristic.

To continue with the latter two of our three examples, Rgya-lag-'od-ma'i Gling is the place where Kong-rtse 'Phrul-gyi-rgyal-po was born. Bon sources differ as to whether this place was in the south-east or the west.⁹⁵ Since Kong-rtse is explicitly stated to be Chinese, and his name is the usual Tibetan form for Confucius (see Karmay 1975), this king must be a namesake of Confucius. It is, of course, a problem to trace the historical reasons why someone named Confucius should have such a prominent position in Bon scripture, and why he should be located in the south-east or west of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. Nonetheless it is a still more severe strain on our imagination to locate a Confucius in Chaldea.

Lang-ling, which Kuznetsov thinks to be Jerusalem, is a city that Lord Shenrab visited at the age of three.⁹⁶ While there, he bathed in the Mu-la-had Ocean. King Sa-la,⁹⁷ the local king and his grandfather, prostrated to him. The goddesses of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) bowed to him and made offerings of a turquoise drum, a ritual vase, food, and a seating carpet. He transformed all the five elements into Bon. Then he went on his way to Sgrami-snyan [continent] in the north (MDO-'DUS, pp 57-58).⁹⁸ To follow this story in combination with Kuznetsov's speculations, we would have to say that Lord Shenrab visited Jerusalem at age three, and that one of his father's wives was a Palestinian princess. This is all very interesting, but difficult to accommodate in our usual views about history.

But Kuznetsov's views cannot be dismissed as complete nonsense. At one time I had thought that the place Seng-ge-rgyab-bsnol[39] might be one clue on which Kuznetsov failed to comment,⁹⁹ but that might conceivably support his idea that the map is somehow connected to Pasargadae. At Pasargadae, found among the ruins, are gigantic stone capitals from a pillared hall called the Apadana. These stone capitals are in the shapes of various addorsed animals, including addorsed lions. Seng-ge-rgyab-bsnol means "addorsed lion[s]", and is located next to an "island" called A-ba-da-ra.¹⁰⁰ But Seng-ge-rgyab-bsnol is described in the MDO-'DUS as a place with 108 caves, where Shenrab's disciple

Gsang-ba-mdo-sdud stayed in meditation (MDO-'DUS, p. 153), and where Shenrab converted the delusionary power Ma-tang-ru-ring (MDO-'DUS, p. 69). We find A-ba-da-ra also serving as the name of a lord of the Dmu country (MDO-'DUS, p. 39). Finally, such speculation leads only to more tenuous, or even untenable, speculations, and we have to turn back to the Bon sources for enlightenment on the meanings of these places according to their own traditions.

We would not deny that something of "Persia" could very well be found in Bon tradition in general and in the 'Ol-mo-lung-ring maps in particular. If Bon teachings, as seems entirely possible, came to Zhang-zhung and Tibet from a place in the west, then some sort of Persian connections would seem to follow. As Kaloyanov (1990: 78) and Martin (1994, the latter based in turn on an earlier, unpublished work of Christopher I. Beckwith, Bloomington, circulated in 1984) have suggested, the Tibetan noun "Bon" could be a Persian loan-word. But such speculations, intriguing as they may be, cannot bear significance in isolation, but must fit within a specifically known historical context, with a specific historical context in which the transmission to Tibet would have taken place. The historical dimensions of Bon's emergence and transmission are still far too unclear for critical scholarship to allow confident pronouncements.

Still, in summary in lieu of a conclusion, we may say that all the various sources we have brought forward point to a location for 'Ol-mo-lung-ring not precisely in Persia, but in the lands between northern Persia and the (changing) western borders of Tibet. There is, it is true, a tendency to identify this area with the area of Mount Ti-se within western Tibet, although the two areas are just as often carefully distinguished;¹⁰¹ some of the place names in both places correspond, or are made to correspond, thus accentuating the perplexity of our problem. One author has suggested that the geography of western Tibet was transferred out of Tibet to form an idealized (and inaccessible) land.¹⁰² It seems equally possible that some aspects of the geography of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring were transferred into western Tibet to form a more accessible substitute holy place.¹⁰³ My temporary impression is that, no matter how idealized the picture of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, it could very well encapsulate cultural memories of the area to the west of Tibet and on the fringes of Persia, a place where Buddhism was long known and practised, perhaps helping us to explain, in some part, the phenomenon of Bon in Tibet as a result of Buddhist migrations from (as well as Tibetan conquests of) that area.¹⁰⁴ We must emphasize, since there are many who would wish otherwise, that the Bon sources always place 'Ol-mo-lung-ring well outside the boundaries of Tibet (and well outside the area of western Tibet, or Zhang-zhung, which includes Mt. Ti-se), and this remains true no matter how much it might be described in ways that make it seem to resemble Western Tibet.

If we look at the internal geography of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, there is really nothing there that requires an appeal to Persian cartography. What we might see instead is a reflection of old Indic traditions of urban planning found in both *śilpaśāstras* and the *Arthaśāstra*. In Indic tradition, the ideal city is (like the country of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring) laid out very rationally as a square fortified urban gridwork, with palaces and temples in the central square; with the four castes located in

the four directions; and with inner, intermediate, and outer square “belts” progressing outward from the centre.¹⁰⁵

'Ol-mo-lung-ring never really served as a place of pilgrimage, but besides that it was everything we could want from a place. No Bon-po of recent centuries has actually succeeded in travelling overland to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, or if they have, they never returned to tell the tale.¹⁰⁶ It was a paradise both on and beyond the earth, an exotic country, a place of religious origins, a visionary landscape, a Pure Land in which one might wish to gain rebirth. Although its explicit identification with Shambhala, more correctly Sambhala, appears only rather late in Bon literature (see the appendix), there are a few general and specific features, even in the earlier texts, that would suggest their similarity.¹⁰⁷ 'Ol-mo-lung-ring was and is all these things, but at the same time it was a place on the ground that we can indeed roughly locate, through text-based historical geography, in the area between Ladakh/Kashmir and the Oxus River. And it was and is a quite original holy place rooted in the sacred biography of Lord Shenrab, not just a copy of anyone else's holy place, not a retracing of some lost Persian map, but a place interwoven with the sacred time of Bon's founding moments. Perhaps these suggestions will assist people in the future, no matter what their views, to sharpen their arguments when they approach the subject. 'Ol-mo-lung-ring has never been a very accessible place, neither geographically nor historical-geographically speaking. To reach it is not the same as to enter into it. The RGYAL-RABS (p. 21) tells, without great conviction, a piece of a traditional story:

When you look westward from the mountain tops of Kashmir, there is a dark rainbow. Travelling for a long distance in that direction there appears, at the outskirts of Sharp Teeth (Dbal-so) Glacier [Mountains], a pathway no larger than a bamboo tube. Since she was unable to go into it, the messenger woman returned after reaching the glacier [mountains].

One might say that a Wall of Sharp Teeth keeps us from finding the “true” 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, but we suggest that the Bon sources are the first places to which we must turn if we ever hope to discern a glimmer of light at the end of the bamboo tunnel. But what of the approach we will take after turning to those sources?

A historical geography that leans its weight on the historical side will tend to collapse space into a mere ornament to the vagaries of time and temporal development—in true philological style dissolving multiple destinies into a singularized reconstructed “origin”, tactically ignoring the fact that this “origin” is just one of a string of origins stretching back into the beginningless past and forward into a future unknowable until we make it. On the other side, a historical geography that gives greater weight to space will in some degree have more difficulty accommodating, let alone comprehending, the changing borders and shifts in planes that take place not only in linked historical developments but in contemporaneous minds and systems of thought. As a hopelessly hybrid creature,

or just as a sub-organism of the equally hybrid “cultural history” with which it shares a similar range of problems and prospects, historical geography must accomplish an impossible balancing act between the extremes of time-ism and space-ism. But even when making good on its promises, historical geography alone is impotent to explain why, since ancient Assyria, the stone age and beyond, we have been setting aside special places for the indwelling of transcendent presences. For that we need at least the “objective” approaches of psychology if not also religious studies or, even more than those, a close attendance on the way our own minds work and even, it could well be argued (and I will not argue against it), intimate experience of the things religions do with us when we give ourselves to them.

When all is said and done, this place will still be meaningful only because it means something in the minds of those who accept it as a “spiritual”, not as just a geographical, horizon:

If this country [‘Ol-mo-lung-ring] is a Pure Field which is a matter for faith, then to investigate or search for it as if it were here on the surface of this earth would be foolish. Some want it to be the same as the areas of Mt. Ti-se and Persia, but if this were so, why would it need to be only a country in which one makes aspirations to be reborn? Since our Teacher had this to say in the *Scripture on Cutting Off the Door of Rebirth*, “May we be born in the land of ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring. Not taking birth in a cyclic form of a bad body,”¹⁰⁸ it must be the case that this Field is truly and particularly exalted beyond the cyclic and ordinary world.

Wanting it to be nothing more than an object (or, country) of the ordinary senses of we animate beings, and thinking it necessary that we see it before it could exist in relation to the ground of Jambu Island, would be excessively constricted (or, suspicious) thinking...¹⁰⁹

There do exist some places on the land and in the mind that historical geography, following its usual methods, can hardly hope to reach.

Appendix

The following is a transcription of the lines inscribed at the bottom of Map B, followed by a discussion of similar passages in Bon literature which I believe might have preceded the inscription. I seek to demonstrate, even if not entirely unequivocally, that the expressions used in the inscription are quite recent, and that their historical development may be traced.

The Map B inscription reads (with the cursive abbreviations tacitly resolved):
u rgyan gyi mi rnam kyis zhing kham 'di la mtshan bde ba can btags / shar gling pas mi 'gyur g.yung drung can dang / byang gling pas dbang bsgyur 'khor lo can dang / nub gling pas me tog bkod pa can dang / 'dzam gling spyi pas yid bzhin bkod pa can dang / gzhan yang rgya gar gyi mi rnam kyis sham bha la / rgya nag gi mi rnam kyis mu khyud gter gyi gling / za hor gyi mi rnam kyis dbang ldan 'khor mo gling / yu gur

gyi mi rnams kyis gar ma gar shom spro / bru sha'i mi rnams kyis mi 'gyur 'od ma tshal / kha che'i ni rnams kyis mi shig rdo rje'i gling / ge sar mi rnams kyis kha la g.yu gshog gling / li bal gyi mi rnams kyis dpag bsam ljon pa'i gling / zhang zhung gi mi rnams kyi nub byang stag gzig khrom gyi yul / bod gangs can gyi ni rnams kyis nub phyogs 'ol mo lung ring ngam 'ol mo lung (?) / mon yul gyi mi rnams kyis ta gzigs ga sha nor gyi gling / 'jang gi mi rnams kyis dnu yul 'phyo ba hos mo gling / la sogs mtshan so sor yod do.

This inscription lists 17 names by which 17 nations of the world call the land of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. I believe that this inscription is a fairly clear indication that Map B itself was recently made, probably in the middle of the twentieth century or later, and perhaps even in eastern Tibet. My reasoning is as follows. In older Bon sources I have not found this eclectic identification of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring with Shambhala,¹¹⁰ although I have noticed two rather old sources for the identification of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring with Bde-ba-can (in general Tibetan usage this would of course correspond to the Sanskrit Sukhāvātī). The name Bde-ba-can (as also Shambhala) doesn't appear at all in the MDO-'DUS. The first instance we know of is in a fourteenth-century work, *Stag-tsha* (p. 9): *gnas mchogs de'i ming la ni / stag gzigs yul ni zhes kyang bya / 'ol mo lung rings zhes kyang bya / nubs phyogs bde ba can gyis zhings 'kham zhes kyang bya'o*; "To give the names of this supreme place, it is called Stag-gzigs country, 'Ol-mo-lung-rings, western Bde-ba-can paradise." The second is a fifteenth-century history (RGYAL-RABS, pp. 12, 20), which attributes this identification to the (Bon scripture entitled) *Rnam rgyal*. We do find sets of identifications more closely similar to the inscription (and, I think significantly, employing the further identification with Shambhala) in use by proponents of "New Bon", a movement whose origins are a point of controversy, but I believe that its identity as a distinct and self-conscious current of Bon began only in the seventeenth century. It was in the eighteenth century, under the inspiration of the New Bon teacher Kun-grol-grags-pa, that the king of Khro-chen Kun-dga'-nor-bu undertook to carve the woodblocks for a new printed edition of the Bon canon, completed between the years 1758 and 1774. In the colophon added to the Khro-chen print of the *Gzi-brjid*, we find the following passage: *gnas mchog dam pa 'ol mo lung ring ngam / sham ba la'am / stag gzig gi yul zhes bya ba / nub snang ba mtha' yas sam / sangs rgyas bye drag dngos med kyi zhing kham ji lta ba gdos bcas su grub pas nub bde ba can gyi zhing kham su / rgyal rigs dra ma chen po 'khor lossgyur ba'i sras su rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rgyal ba ston pa gshen* (located in BON KANJUR, 2nd edition, vol. 12, fol. 325). In the biography of the ancient sage Tshe-dbang-rig-'dzin, a gter-ma of Gsang-sngags-gling-pa (b. 1864) excavated in 1889, we find similar expressions, but one example will suffice (BON KANJUR, 2nd edition, vol. 187, fol. 78): *'dzam gling sum cha bde ba can gyi zhing / sog kha bon gyi 'byung gnas 'ol mo gling / sham bha la yi gnas mchog chen po der*; "In that place that is one-third¹¹¹ of Jambu Island, the Field of Bde-ba-can, the shoulder-bone [shaped] originating place of Bon 'Ol-mo-gling, the great supreme holy place of Shambhala. These eighteenth- and nineteenth-century passages clearly equate 'Ol-mo-lung-ring with Stag-gzig, with Bde-ba-can and, unlike earlier sources, with Shambhala, but missing is any information about

which people in which countries call the place by which name. This further element we find first in the approximately 1910 work by Shar-rdza Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan (or perhaps by one of his disciples; see Shar-rdza 1973: 551; the authorship of this work is discussed in Blondeau 1988): *'dzam gling gi mi rigs so sos mtshan re yod pa'i nang tshan / zhang zhung gi mi rnams kyis stag gzig khrom pa'i gling / rgya gar gyi mi rnams kyis byang sham bha la'i gnas mchog / bod kyi mi rnams kyis stag gzig gi yul 'ol mo lung ring zhes gsol*; "Each nationality of Jambu Island has its own name for it, among them: The people of Zhang-zhung call it Stag-gzig Khrom-pa'i Gling. The Indian people call it northern Shambhala, the supreme place. Tibetans call it the land of Stag-gzig, 'Ol-mo-lung-ring." In the history by Shar-rdza, composed in the 1920s, we find a very similar quote (Shar-rdza 1985: 16): *zhing khams 'di la mtshan gyi rnam grangs yang rgya gar gyi mi rnams kyis sham bha la / zhang-zhung gi mi rnams kyis stag gzig khrom gyi yul / bod kyi mi rnams kyis stag gzig gi yul 'ol mo lung ring / o rgyan gyi mi rnams kyis nub phyogs bde ba can gyi zhing zer ro // zhes sogs mdo dri med las bshad do*. The significant thing about this latter passage is that it attributes the idea of the the various names of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring to the *Mdo Dri-med*, better known to us as the *Gzi-brjid*, the most extensive account of the life of Lord Shenrab aurally transmitted to Blo-ldan-snying-po (b. 1360) in the late fourteenth century. If the attribution of this citation is correct, we would have to trace the origins of this conception to that time (note that some followers of New Bon do consider Blo-ldan-snying-po as belonging to their movement). But it is possible (and I think likely) that the attribution may not be a reliable one. Shar-rdza might have been quoting not from the text of the *Gzi-brjid* itself, but from a colophon to the *Gzi-brjid* like the one we have cited above. In order to demonstrate this, we would of course have to read through the entire 12 volumes of the *Gzi-brjid*, and establish that no such statements occur therein, something we are not prepared to do at the moment. The New Bon geography, by a follower of both Shar-rdza and Gsang-sngags-gling-pa, Dbra-ston (ca. 1930: 942) reads: *gnyis pa bon tshigs kyi yul dbus ni byang shambha la ste / rgya gar bas byang shambha la dang / o rgyan pas nub bde ba can dang / bod kyi m[i] nub byang 'ol mo'i gling zhes 'bod pa de yin la*. "Secondly, the Bon religion central country is northern Shambhala. The Indians call it northern Shambhala. The O-rgyan people call it western Bde-ba-can, and the Tibetans call it northwestern 'Ol-mo'i-gling." The lengthy inscription at the bottom of our map B would thus seem to be only a more elaborate version of this or a similar quite recent and eclectic statement (it is interesting and worthy of comment that Dbra-ston foregrounds Shambhala as the main name of this country, surely something no earlier Bon writer would have ventured to do, although a later writer, such as Dpal-tshul 1972: 69, very well might).

Addendum to the Appendix

Since submitting this essay for publication, my friend and Tibetological colleague Dagkar Geshe Namgyal Nyima, presently living in Bonn, kindly informed me of two more works about 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. The first of these is Dbra-ston Bskal-

bzang-bstan-rgyal (1897-1959), *Sprul-sku'i Zhing Mchog Sham-bha-la 'Ol-mo'i-gling-gi Rtogs-pa Brjod-pa U-dumbara'i Skyed-mo'i Tshal*, contained in: *Dbra ston bka' 'bum*, vol. KA, fols. 1r-10r. (In other words, it is a 10-folio text contained somewhere in the first volume.) This short work is not yet available to me (it is known that Dbra-ston's works have been published recently in Eastern Tibet, but this hardly makes them 'available'), but one may see from the title that the author once again foregrounds the name Shambhala.

The second work, which we were able to locate, contains a passage that could well have served as the source of the Map B inscription, and furthermore an extensive gazeteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, and therefore it is quite significant for our arguments. This is a commentary on a 'root text' whose author is unknown although it could well have been Shar-rdza himself. I was able to come to no conclusion about its exact date of composition on the basis of the information supplied in the colophons, but since the author Shar-rdza's dates ought to be 1859-1933, this cannot be considered a source of any great age. The words from the 'root text' are marked with small circles beneath them, and the following passage, which appears on pp. 436-437 is not so marked, and so should be taken as part of the commentary authored by Shar-rdza. The wording and spellings are so close that it seems that the Map B inscription must have been directly extracted from Shar-rdza's text. Here are the bibliographical details, followed by a transcription of the relevant passage. (The parts that directly correspond to the Map B inscription are italicized for ease of comparison.)

Shar-rdza Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan, *Bde-chen Zhing-gi Smon-lam-gyi Don Gsal-bar Byed-pa'i 'Grel-ba Nyi-ma'i Snying-po*, contained in: *Gsang-sngags Khrid dang Smon-lam Rnam Gsum sogs-kyi 'Grel-pa* (a collection of works by Shar-rdza Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan, "Reproduced from a copy of the Delhi lithographic print made by Khyung-sprul 'Jigs-med-nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje during the 1950's," New Thobgyal, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1973, pp. 433-618.

u rgyan gyi mi rnam kyis zhing khams 'di la mtshan bde ba can btags pa'i sgra las drangs pa ste / don du gnas skabs dang mthar thug thams cad du mi bde ba med cing bde ba can gyi gnas yin pa'i phyir dang / de lta bu'i gnas sam grong du 'jug pa'i thabs khyed [i.e., khyad] par can gyi tshig phreng yin pas na de skad brjod pa'o //

gzhan dag gis ni / shar gling pas mi 'gyur g.yung drung can dang / byang gling pas dbang bsgyur 'khor lo can dang / nub gling pas me tog bkod pa can dang / 'dzam gling spyi pas yid bzhin bkod pa can dang / gzhan yang rgya gar gyi mi rnam kyis sham bha la / rgya nags[k]yi mi rnam kyis mu khyud gter gyi gling / za hor gyi mi rnam kyis dbang ldan 'khor lo gling / sbu gur [i.e., yu gur] gyi mi rnam kyis zhar ma gar shom spro / bru sha'i mi rnam kyis mi 'gyur 'od ma tshal / kha che'i mi rnam kyis mi shig rdo rje'i gling / ge sar mi rnam kyis kha la g.yu gshog gling / li bal gyi mi rnam kyis dpag bsam ljon pa'i gling / zhang zhung gi mi rnam kyis nub byang stag gzic khrom gyi yul / bod gangs can gyi mi rnam kyis nub phyogs 'ol mo bsung [i.e., lung] ring ngam 'ol mo'i gling / mon yul gyi mi rnam kyis ta gzigs ga sha nor gyi gling / 'jam gi mi rnam kyis dmu yul 'phyo ba hos mo gling la sogs mtshan so sor yod do //

Notes

Acknowledgement: The Tibetan polemic tradition, as it concerns Bon, was the subject of Martin (1991). The sources usually use the word *bsgyur* in these contexts, meaning both “transformed” and “translated”. The revision of this paper was made possibly during my stay during 1995 and 1996 at the Center for Advanced Studies in Oslo, where I had the opportunity to consult the complete 2nd edition of the Bon Kanjur in 192 volumes and the pleasure of interacting regularly with scholars of Bon studies. I should particularly like to mention and thank my friend Dagkar Geshe Namgyal Nyima, who pointed out to me some of the sources on ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring used in the revision.

1. An example of a “triple” geocentrism is Dbra-ston (*ca.* 1930). According to this geographical work, the “geographical centre” (*sa-tshigs-kyi yul dbus*) is Mt. Kailash, which itself might be identified as two different places, either Mt. Ti-se in western Tibet, or the Ti-se of Stag-gzig, which Indians call both Ka-bi-la (Kabul? Kapita?) and Kê-lasha. The latter is located on the opposite sides of the Shi-ta river that forms the boundary of Shambhala. The second centre, the “Bon centre” (*bon-tshigs-kyi yul dbus*) is the place called Shambhala by the Indians, Bde-ba-can by the inhabitants of O-rgyan, and north-west ‘Ol-mo’i-ling by the Tibetans. This place is further identified with Stag-gzig. The third centre, the “place that accords with being a Bon centre” (*bon-tshigs-kyi yul dbus rjes-mthun*), is identified with the two countries of Zhang-zhung and Tibet (*Zhang Bod gnyis*).
2. I have discussed this question of this bi-centralistic view very briefly in Martin (1994a, note 31). Many Tibetan thinkers of the eleventh through fourteenth centuries, both Bon and Chos, sought to balance the “outside centre” (‘Ol-mo-lung-ring in the case of Bon and the Diamond Seat of Bodhgaya in the case of Chos) with a sense of their own centrality. These two centres are, in both Bon and Chos sources, often called 1. the “way-stations” (*sa-tshigs*) or, we might prefer to say, “geographical” centre and 2. the “quality” (*yon-tan*) centre.
3. Snellgrove (1987: II 388 ff.). There are a number of points in Snellgrove’s account with which I would differ. On p. 289, he says that hidden books began to be discovered “from the thirteenth century on.” Bon history traces the beginnings of the treasure-excavation mode of revelation to the tenth century, while some of the most influential scriptural revelations were made in 1017 by Gshen-chen Klu-dga’ (on him and his dates, see Martin 1991). His own particular textual treasures were concealed in the time of Dri-gum-btsan-po, and not in the time of Khri-srong-lde-brtsan, as Snellgrove would suggest (p. 389). I also disagree, for what I think obvious reasons, with his characterization of Bon as “heterodox Buddhism.” On the whole, however, Snellgrove’s work has brought a virtual paradigm shift to Bon studies.
4. The question of Persian-Tibetan historical relations is an interesting subject in its own right, quite apart from the present considerations. For those who wish to study the problems in detail, it will be necessary to refer to a few recent articles on the subject, including Bsod-nams-don-grubs (1992), Kalayanov (1990), Kvaerne (1987), Musche (1987) and Tucci (1974). There are also, though not cited here, several other articles by Kuznetsov translated into English in the pages of *The Tibet Journal* (Dharamsala). It is interesting to note that in some modern Tibetan works, Persia and Iran are referred to as Per-zi, Par-sig (this last spelling is from a frequently repeated list of countries derived from the Kālacakra literature; Par-shig and Par-

zhig are spellings known in some older sources, including Dunhuang manuscripts) and Dbyi-lang or Dbyis-lang (pronounced "yeelang", a borrowing of "Iran" via Chinese which is not known in the older Tibetan literature). The spelling Par-sig would seem to be the most "Indic" of these names, since it so closely corresponds to Pārasika, a word used in Indian Epic and Puranic literature to refer to Persians, at least since Sassanian times. See Lindtner (1988) for Iran and Persia in Indian Buddhist literature, some of it available to Tibetans in the form of translations.

5. Many modern Tibetan nationalists, both inside and outside Tibet, strongly reject, or simply ignore, the idea of Bon's extra-Tibetan origins, since this doesn't fit well with the uses they want to make of Bon. They have perhaps been inspired by the insistence that Lord Shenrab was a native-born Tibetan (even if Tibet was then called Zhang-zhung) found in Norbu (1981: 16-17, as well as 1981a: 3840; 1990: 19-20, etc.) even though the bulk of Bon textual evidence clearly locates his birthplace in 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, which they place almost invariably, as we shall see, outside Tibet. (There is nothing "wrong" with these sorts of speculations—I intend to indulge in a few myself—but they should at least be clearly distinguished from what the Bon sources have to say.) There is one Chos story, attested as early as the *Mkhas pa'i Dga' ston* (ignoring one late and almost certainly apocryphal account included in the Milarepa corpus; Kunga & Cutillo 1978: 148, which unlike the *Mkhas pa'i Dga' ston*, puts the birthplace in Western Tibet), about a child born with donkey ears in a place called Bon-mo-lung-ring, in turn placed in 'On in Central Tibet, but the clear hostile intent of this account makes it unworthy of any serious consideration as a proof-text (but then see Stein 1972:233, 236; the donkey ears are just one further embellishment to a story first found in the *circa* 1260 anti-Bon polemic of the *Dgongs gcig yig cha*, which will be the subject of another essay). There is another earlier Chos story, starting with the history by Nyang-ral at the end of the 12th century, that at least one kind of Bon (Nyang-ral calls it "outbreak Bon of the sky") had its Tibetan origins with a teacher who came from a place to the west of Tibet (a place he locates on "this" side of O-rgyan, and the other side of Kashmir, thus seeming to place it in the present-day Buner valley, while other late Chos sources locate it either in Stag-gzig or in between Sog-po and Stag-gzig, making for a rather complicated discussion that will not be pursued further here) in the time of Dri-gum-btsan-po, and although quite evidently polemically motivated, a number of centuries later than the events described, and not portraying the geography in the same way as Bon sources, this sort of statement might at the very least be taken as an outside source of verification, however hostile it might be, of the nearly universal account of Bon's extra-Tibetan origins held by Bon historians of the past. Even the 19th-century guide to Mt. Ti-se by the Bon-po Dkar-ru Grub-dbang, who was born (in 1801) in the vicinity of that mountain, and evinces in his book very little interest in 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, nevertheless says that Lord Shenrab came to Mt. Ti-se from 'Ol-mo-lung-ring in Stag-gzig and subsequently returned there (Norbu & Prats 1989: 42-53).
6. We do find 'Ol-mo-lung-ring directly identified as the/a "country of Stag-gzig" in a Bon canonical text, the *Rgyud dung lo ljon pa* ("The Scripture Conch-leafed Tree", found in the BON KANJUR, 2nd edition, vol. 182, pp. 132-142, at p. 133), a *gter-ma* of Gu-ru Ban-chung of eastern Tibet, whose dates are unclear.
7. 'Ol-mo-lung-ring has often been mentioned in Tibetological literature, but the most useful and reliable discussion is still Karmay (1975b:171-175) and also Karmay (1972:xxvii-xxxi). I would also like to recommend certain works (mainly in Tibetan) by Namkhai Norbu (although the most recent ones are unfortunately not at the moment available to me) where the problems of Bon geographies of 'Ol-mo-lung-

ring and Zhang-zhung are discussed. Attempts to find an explanation of the main part of the name, 'Ol-mo (*lung ring* means "long valley/country"), in terms of historical place-names or Tibetan-language etymologies (it has no meaning at all in the Zhang-zhung language, as far as may be known from the available glossaries) have not been conclusive, and we have tried to avoid going into greatly detailed arguments on this question, since in any case knowing how to account for the name of a place is not necessarily useful or relevant for locating it. Kuznetsov (1973: 20) wants to connect it with Elam in southern Persia, although a connection with Hebrew *olam* (Arabic *alam*), "world", might also suggest itself and we hasten to add that there is nothing whatsoever to support any of these connections. Possible Tibetan-language etymologies would involve various plants, birds, diseases, raingutters (irrigation? Intriguing given the gridwork of watercourses in 'Ol-mo-lung-ring maps) and so forth. The existence of a Tibetan place-name 'Ol-mo Tshal (Dudjom 1991:1 609), "Grove of 'Ol-mo", might make us tend towards identifying 'Ol-mo as a kind of tree. There are also some internal Bon etymologies, which involve metaphysical speculations, analysing each syllable separately, but these would seem to be rather late and after the fact. The MDO-'DUS, for example, offers no such etymology, although we do find one example from the later—just how much later is not clear—*Gzer-mig* (as cited in SHAR-RDZA 1973: 552 and Karmay 1975:172); comparing the text in SHAR-RDZA 1985:10-11):

'Ol because it is unproduced.

Mo because it fulfills desires.

Lung because the oral transmission of the Word was taught [there].

Ring because of the long reach of compassion.

I do not feel that this or any other etymology provides a very satisfying explanation for present purposes, but I would like to add still another to the list. The MDO-'DUS (p. 209; parallel text in RGYAL-RABS, p.19), in the end of its gazetteer of the parts of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, has the following description of the outermost ring of oceans and mountains: *de rgyab mu khyud dbal ba'i mtsho / lcags ri dpag tshad stong dang lnga brgyas skor / zang ri nam mkha' 'ol 'ol ste ' gnam ni 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad 'dra*. We might translate: "Behind that is the Lake that Covers the Circumference. It is surrounded by 1500 leagues of Iron Mountains. The Copper Mountains make obscure ('ol 'ol = 'al 'ol = 'al-le-'ol-le) the sky. The firmament appears like an eight-spoked wheel." The name 'Ol-mo might suggest the "obscurity" of the country itself. The syllable 'ol occurs, with closely related meanings ("hazy" or "rough"), in such compounds as 'ol-spyi ("rough and ready"), 'ol-spyod (a "deed performed without forethought"), and 'ol-tshod ("rough estimate"). This explanation, along with the others, is at best hazy or rough, and we will proceed on the assumption that it might be possible to clarify the historical location of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, even without a generally acceptable explanation of the name.

8. Such highly unusual peoples are known to European tradition, both ancient and medieval, starting from Megasthenes as preserved in the writings of Strabo. The last mentioned group of people, for example, corresponds to the Enotocoitae ("ear-sleepers").
9. Jambu Island may be understood to mean "the world as we know it", since its precise meaning has proven quite elastic depending on changing Buddhist (not to mention changing Bon) views of the geographical world.
10. I have shown in Martin (1994a) how Phu-na, which occurs in other sources in the form Spu-na, etc., stems from a scribal misinterpretation of Yu-na. For the identifi-

cation of Yavana (Pāli Yona) with the Indo-Greeks and their successors (perhaps including the later Indo-Scythians), see Lindtner (1988: 436) and references given there.

11. This country is probably the same “vortex of cynanthropy” in quest of which White (1991) was written.
12. While Stag-ste (Stag-sde, etc.) and Gzig-'phan were probably created for reasons of symmetry (Macdonald 1962: 532), they do seem to go back to the original Eighteen Great Countries conception (as evidenced by the source, to be mentioned presently, from a late 13th-century Chos history), and only the RGYAL-RABS places Stag-gzig and O-rgyan in the west.
13. Karmay (1972:xviii) identifies this *Rtsa 'grel* with the *Zhi khro rtsa 'grel* excavated by Gu-ru Rnon-rtse (b. 1136), on whom see Martin (1994).
14. According to Karmay (1972: 4 n. 1), the title should be *Dus gsum gangs rgyas byung khungs kyi mdos* (and this is the title as it appears in Kvaerne 1974:no.K7), “Scripture on the Source of the Buddhas of the Three Times”. The Zhang-zhung language title supplied in the beginning of the text has some obvious “Indic” elements: *a drung sad gyer drung mu rad na tan tra da do ci*. The *sad gyer drung mu* stands for Tibetan *g.yung-drung lha-yi bon* (“Eternal Divine Bon [Text]”). The *rad na tan tra* obviously corresponds to Indic *ratna tantra* (“string of jewels”); the *da do ci* means *ces bya-ba* (“thus called”), and the *a drung* must stand for *mdo-'dus*, although I do not find this Zhang-zhung word in my glossaries. Because there are some internal inconsistencies, a few noted below, the *Mdos-'dus* as we have it seems to be a pastiche, albeit an old one, of two or more still more ancient sources.
15. The other two are the *Gzer-mig* (excavated in the eleventh century), in two volumes, and the *Gzi-brjid* (pronounced “Sibjee”, aurally revealed in the fourteenth century) in twelve. While the *Gzer-mig* and the *Gzi-brjid* have been known to the world outside Tibet for quite some time, the *Mdo-'dus* only became available in a reprint edition in 1985. Its authenticity as such is not in doubt, since it is cited, in a generally accurate way, by a great many Bon authors, particularly in historical works. The problem with our edition is the poor spelling which causes many problems in the readings. This does tend to make our understanding rather tentative, so that in the absence of a second version of the text, it is important to make reference to citations in other works whenever possible. For the most useful summary of events in the life of Lord Shenrab, see Kvaerne (1986).
16. A *dpag-tshad* is supposed to be equivalent to the Indian *yojana*, a measure equal to about nine miles.
17. This is a name of the elephant of Indra.
18. I assume that we should read here *stong-phrag bzhi* (instead of the text's *stong-phrag gzhi*), which means “four thousand”.
19. *Dma* (and the interchangeable spelling *rmu*) is difficult to explain. Etymologically, it seems to mean “limit” or “border” (and hence sometimes “barbarian”). Sometimes, together with the *phywa* and *gtsug*, the *dmu* are entities active in cosmogony. The *dmu* is also one of the six original royal clans, and the clan of Lord Shenrab (Shar-rdza 1985:17-18). For a discussion of *dmu*, see Stein (1985:104-107).
20. The following text (with emendations in square brackets) occurs on pp. 15.4 through 17.1: *de yang khyad par 'dzam gling dbus / ri bo gang[s] che [=can] ti tse ni / g.yu[ng dr]ung dgu brtsegs ri zhes bya / chu zhing [=chu zheng] dpag tshad lnga brgya'o / ri ni spos ri ngad ldan dang / bar na mtsho ni ma dros pas / chu zhing dpag tshahd lnga bcu pa / phyogs bzhi mtsho bzhi yod pa ni / ma pham mo bya g.yu mtsho / la ngad gser mtsho / gung chung dngul mtsho / zam shang lcag[s] mtsho / rdzing bu dal gyis 'bab / sem[s ca]n bzhi'i*

*kha nas chu bzhi 'bab pa ni / gang ka shar phyogs glang chen kha nas 'bab / si ta byang phyogs rma bya' i kha nas 'bab / chu kl[ung] rab chya [=mchog] bzhi po dag ni / re re la yang chu g.yog lnga brgya dang bcas par / chu' i rgyun rnamis phyogs bzhir rgya mtshor 'gro / rdzing bu dal gyis 'bab dang / shing ni sa la rab brtan bya ba yod // de' i nub gsang gshel yul [=gshen yul] 'ol mo gling / dpad tshad stong phrag gzhi gnas yod / chu bo pag shu si tis rab bcad de / ri nag po dgu' i bcad pa'o // nub phyogs dmu' i yul / shar phyogs rgya' i yul / lho phyogs mon gyis yul / shar lho 'jang gis yul / byang phyogs li bal phrom / byang shar hor gyis yul / gang[s] can bod kyis yul / mi rig[s] g[su][m] brgya drug bcu gnas / yul chen bcu drug dang / yul phran stong dang bcas / de dag 'dzam bu gling yin no. Compare the brief description of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring (in Shar-rdza's history, citing the *Mdo-'dus* and another work) in Karmay (1972:xxix).*

21. Nyi-zer (p. 23r-v). Karmay (1975:175) dates it to the fourteenth century. This text which, besides the world geography, has a gazetteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, is one source frequently cited by such recent authors as Shar-rdza in his history, as well as by Tenzin Namdak in his gazetteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring (see Namdak 1971:877, where he notes that the *Nyi sgron*, i.e. the *Rtsa-rgyud nyi-zer sgron-ma*, has switched around the locations of the "islands", and this he assumed to be a result of faulty textual transmission). It does not seem to be cited in older (14th-15th century) historical works (unless it has something to do with the *Gting-zlog rgyud* cited in Stag-tsha, p.29), which might lead us to doubt its early dating. Still, there is much in this lengthy work to entertain the interests of the geographically inclined.
22. This is the land of Tsari, located inside the great southward bend of the Brahmaputra River, close to Assam (subject of several articles and a forthcoming book by Dr. Toni Huber).
23. In what is probably a quite early (perhaps late 14th century) geographical passage (Sgra-ston 1974: I 282-284) we find a discussion of the two groups of four rivers, although the rivers themselves bear the same names in both groups. The first group descends from Stag-gzig, the "quality centre". These rivers then descend to Bar-gzigs (this name reminds us of one of the more usual Tibetan names for "Persia", Par-sig, mentioned above), and from there to Rgya-kar (i.e. Rgya-gar, "India"; but note the variant statements in the fifteenth-century histories of Spa-ston 1991:83 and RGYAL-RABS, p. 21). The second group belongs to the "geographical centre", meaning Tibet, although these rivers leave Tibet to flow through India, China, Phrom, and Stag-gzig. Later on in the same work is a discussion about whether Ti-tse (i.e., Ti-se) ought to be located in Tibet, in Stag-gzig, or in both (I 191 ff.), concluding with a quote from Sa-skya Ban-bhi-ta (i.e., Sa-skya Paṇḍi-ta) that the Tibetan Ti-tse is a piece of the Ti-se in Stag-gzig miraculously transported by the Monkey King Hanu-ma-'da (compare the fifteenth-century histories RGYAL-RAB, p. 22, and especially Spa-ston 1991:85, where there is a quotation from the famous early thirteenth century work by Sa-skya Paṇḍi-ta on the three vows). For an edition, with some small parts translated, of a nineteenth-century Bon-po guide-book to Mt. Ti-se, see Norbu & Prats (1989).
24. See Macdonald (1962) for a Dunhuang source, in which the rivers in the east, south, west and north are the Bhan-ksha, Si-ta, 'Ga'-'ga', and Si-to, and the animals are the bull, elephant, lion and horse. Note also an article on the subject of the four rivers, Pranavananda (1968). This first version of the *MDO-'DUS* is quite close to the version Macdonald (1962:540, 547 n.18) calls the more "usual description", in which the rivers in the east, south, west and north are the Gaṅgā, Sindhu, Pakṣu, and Sitā, with the corresponding animals being the elephant, bull, horse and lion (and this corresponds to the account in the thirteenth-century Tibetan commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* by Mchims 'Jam-pa'i-dbyangs; compare also the rather different

account of the fifth-century Buddhaghosa cited in Law 1968:194-5). Here the only serious difference with the MDO-'DUS's first version is the substitution of the lion for the peacock.

25. For details about this Tantra commentary and its geographical section, see Martin (1994a). The shoulder-blade world-conception appears in the astro-science work by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, together with an illustration, although the text is not available to me at the moment. Recent Bon authors such as Gsang-sngags-gling-pa and Dbra-ston have a special epithet for 'Ol-mo-lung-ring: *sog-kha bon-gyi 'byung-gnas*, "shoulder-blade Bon origin place".
26. NYI-ZER (p.20r).
27. See, for example, RGYAL-RABS (p.12), which states that Stag-gzig is also known as 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. Some recent Bon-po authors have insisted on distinguishing a Rtag-gzigs which they do identify with 'Ol-mo-lung-ring from Stag-gzig[s] which they do not identify with it (Dpal-tshul, pp. 16, 34; Namdak 1974:884—note Tenzin Namdak's citations of Slob-dpon Ho-bu-man [i.e. Helmut Hoffmann] and Mkhas-dbang Hi-ro Bhi-ye-le [i.e., Harold Bailey]). Our present opinion is that Rtag-gzigs is just a variant spelling, perhaps introduced to make possible a more auspicious etymology (taking it as an abbreviated form of *rtag-tu gzigs*, "looking always [with compassion]"). *Stag* means "tiger" and *gzig* means "leopard". One recent author states that Stag-gzig is named so precisely because of the danger from wild beasts such as tigers and leopards in the extremely narrow mountain passages leading to it (Shar-rdza 1973:552; comparing the older source Stag-tsha, p.9), adding that it takes nine days' march to pass the wild beast defile, and another nine days to pass through the "defile of darkness" (*mun 'phrang*). See also Kvaerne (1980:100).
28. Law (1968:191) identifies Sindhu with the Indus, Sitā he identifies with either the Jaxartes/Syr Darya or Yarkhand rivers. If we were to identify the Si-ti of the *Mdo-'dus* text with the Jaxartes, then we would have to say that 'Ol-mo-lung-ring is roughly equivalent with Uzbekistan.
29. Shar-rdza (1973:54). Spa-ston (1991:83) closely agrees in its reading: *chu bo paksha si dhus bcad* (although on the preceding page, the typesetters have mistakenly put *chu bo pakshu si rgyus bcad*). Compare also Stag-tsha (p.5), which reads *chu bo dpag chu dang ni si 'du'i bcad*. The weight of this testimony constrains us to accept the evidence of the citations over the "original text" and read "Sindhu" rather than "Sitā".
30. Three sources agree with this spelling, while other sources have the variant spellings Ba-dag-shun, Ka-shan, and Bdag-shan. The Bon conception differs remarkably from the Nine Dark Mountains found in the Abhidharma literature of Chos, but this matter is complicated enough to deserve separate treatment.
31. ? A few sources have Hor-ser, "Uighurs" (?). Tsha-gser, as a word, might mean "hot gold" (a method of gold-plating).
32. Compare Namdak (1971:888), where it says that the path through the Sharp Teeth Glacial Range has a gate, and this gate is called Dag-sha Dung-gi Sgo-mo ("Dag-sha Conch Gate"). This seems to be in the context of a citation from the *Gzi-brjid* (the source in the *Gzi-brjid* is supplied by Karmay 1972:xxxii, n. 1).
33. Ka-pi-ta, "Kapistan", or the area of Kapisha now in Afghanistan. It was once a flourishing cultural centre in Gandhara and the Kushan Empire. See Hoffmann (1940:184-185); Hoffmann (1950:222).
34. Or, alternatively, "of good fortune". For the Sgra-bla, see Snellgrove (1980:57ff.) where he calls them "genies". They are identified with the Dgra-bla, or Dgra-lha of (later?) Tibetan literature. See Hoffmann (1950:161, 171; 1967:73-4), Gibson (1985) and Clemente (1994).

35. Khyung-lung, or "Garuda Valley", was visited by the late Italian Tibetologist Guiseppe Tucci (Tucci 1937:130-137), or the more accessible French translation, Tucci (1989:190-196), which includes excellent black-and-white photographs of the ruined fortresses and monasteries still to be found there. We have not noticed other references to Ting-tog, although this Zhang-zhung language name might possibly be translated into Tibetan as G.yu-thog (the name of famous physicians in Tibetan history). Another translation, perhaps more probably, would be Sngo-thog (cf. the Bla-ma Sngo-thog-pa in the biography of O-rgyan-pa by Kun-dga'-don-grub 1976, 147.6).
36. Sham-po Lha-rtse, part of the royal complex at the centre of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring.
37. "Zhang-zhung Bar-pa na Rgyal-mkhar Ba-chod."
38. "Sgo-pa na Khyung-lung Dngul-dkar." For Khyung-lung and a discussion on the historical geography of the Zhang-zhung empire, see Uray (1972:44, especially n. 95).
39. Martin (1994:17).
40. Although the subject is quite complicated, both confused and confusing, I would suggest that some light might be shed on the idea of the three Zhang-zhungs by looking into the historical geography of Western Tibet, the area[s] known as Mnga'-ris [B]skor Gsum. The three-fold division of western Tibet is usually (see Jamspal 1985) traced back to the time of its division among the three sons of the imperial descendent Nyi-ma-mgon following the mid-ninth-century collapse of the centralized Tibetan Imperial state. The usual explanation of the syllable *bskor* tells us that each of the three divisions was "surrounded" by something. Thus we have the area of Mang-yul (here probably meant for Ladakh) and Zangs-skar (or Zangs-dkar) "surrounded" (*bskor*) by lakes, then Stag-mo and Spu-rangs "surrounded" by slate mountains. Without going into the difficult problems already involved in this geographical scheme, there are certain sources that would strongly suggest that the term Mnga'-ris Bskor Gsum is still older than this, and that originally it had a quite different significance. These sources describe (what we might call) a "Greater Mnga'-ris", also made up of three parts, one of which is comprised of Gilgit, Burusho and Khotan (see discussion in Smith 1969:21, n.49) and in Gangs-ri-ba (1996:43-44). I suggest that this "greater Mnga'-ris" idea reflects the situation in the time of Ral-pa-can (or perhaps even earlier conquests, better known to us thanks to Beckwith 1987) when these regions were part of the western imperial possessions. I would then explain the "three surroundings" (*bskor gsum*) as representing three levels of territorial expansion (perhaps with different arrangements for their jurisdiction). These are only suggestions put forward in the hope that someone will find good reason to either reject them or pursue them further. In any case, there simply must be some kind of link between the "greater Mnga'-ris" idea and that of the three Zhang-zhungs that together make up a "greater Zhang-zhung".
41. We might mention as well a work by one Dbra-ston Skal-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan (1897-1959) entitled '*Dzam gling gi mtha' dbus kyi rnam gzhas nyer mkho'i snang ba*, cited in Norbu (1990) and Bsod-nams-don-grub (1992:33), which was only recently made available to me (Dbra-ston ca. 1930). I know little about the author, although he is well remembered in contemporary Bon circles as Su-la Rin-po-che or Su-la Rgyal-mtshan, and five or so volumes of his collected works are said to survive. He was one of the important disciples of the more famous scholar-historian Shar-rdza Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan (1959-1933) whose biography he composed, as well as of the visionary "treasure revealer" Gsang-sngags-gling-pa (b. 1864), some of whose works he was involved in publishing in woodblock form (he composed a

colophon to one of them in the year 1930). This Bon historical-geographical work would make a fascinating study in its own right, but here we will limit ourselves to what it has to say relevant to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring and the three Zhang-zhungs. It says (p.945) that Innermost Zhang-zhung is more than three months journey to the west of Mount Ti-se, close to Me-sag-gi Par-sig (? some part of Persia, evidently) and the area which includes Badakhshan (Bha-dag-shan) and Balkh (Bha-lag). This would seem to approximately agree with our tentative conclusions on the location of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. However, the author goes on to identify Innermost Zhang-zhung with the kingdom of Mi-lus-bsam-legs, and he makes this identification seemingly unaware that the Mother Tantra literature, with which Mi-lus-bsam-legs is so closely associated, always identifies his kingdom with Intermediate Zhang-zhung. Intermediate Zhang-zhung Dbra-ston identifies with Pretapuri, a town a few days' walk west of Mt. Ti-se in western Tibet, and more generally with the area of western Tibet that we usually identify with Zhang-zhung proper. He even suggests that it might include the whole area of Zhang-Bod (Zhang-zhung and Tibet). Gateway Zhang-zhung he identifies more or less with the area of the Khyung-po clan (the high plateau area to the north of the Skyid-chu river-system in which Lhasa is found), which he also identifies as Sum-pa Glang-gi Gyim-shod. His general motive in shifting the received geography of the three Zhang-zhungs further to the east, even at the price of excluding 'Ol-mo-lung-ring entirely from the scheme, would seem to be a desire to bring it closer to eastern Tibet, the place where the author lived. Later in the text (p.96), he tells us how to get to Stag-gzig (=Ta-zig) country. Starting from Ladakh you travel a great distance, and in the north-west is Mo-ta-na, a part of Duru-ka. To the south of Mo-ta-na is Thod-dkar country, and outside of (or "beyond") Thod-dkar is Ta-zig or Stag-gzig country. (Note: This does seem to place Stag-gzig in the northern part of Afghanistan and Pakistan, although Multan is in Pakistan, south-west of Lahore, while Takhar is in far northern Afghanistan, and the latter can hardly be south of the former if these are indeed the places the author had in mind.) He places Ga-dza-na (i.e., Ghazna) still further to the west, identifying it with O-rgyan. Another recent writer, Dpal-tshul (p.34), identifies Innermost Zhang-zhung with Rtag-gzig, and Intermediate Zhang-zhung with O-rgyan. The identifications made by these two twentieth-century authors might seem eccentric when viewed in light of the older Bon sources (and they therefore should not be taken as the primary authorities for a historical-geographical study as Norbu [1990:149ff.] attempts to do), but these authors are interesting in their own right, in part because both were making active attempts to accommodate their broadening knowledge of world geography within a more-or-less intact Bon traditional framework. Dbra-ston in particular could draw on the practical geography knowledge of a "Nepalese" friend, a lama named Bstan-'dzin-rgyal-mtshan.

42. Writings which criticize, report, support, and in some cases simply adopt Kuznetsov's conclusions are: Bailey (1975), Hetenyi (1973), Hummel (1973), Hummel (1975), Kaloyanov (1990), Kuznetsov (1973; 1974), Lauf (1973), Stronach (1977), and Har-El (1991) [Editor's note: see most recently Schwartzberg 1994:638-642]. See Bailey (1975) for a list of the relevant Russian-language articles by Kuznetsov as well as reference to a conference report by "Mr. David Stronack" (i.e., Stronach) delivered at the Sixth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology at Oxford in September 1972. Of these scholars, Lauf was the most critical, while Hetenyi, Hummel and Stronach were most supportive of the Kuznetsov hypothesis. The silence of a great number of other Tibetologists active in the early 1970s deserves to be noted. It seems that they didn't write on the subject simply because they hadn't come up with a clear

alternative hypothesis. I know that the late Helmut Hoffmann didn't comment in a public forum on the Kuznetsov hypothesis because he didn't find anything believable in it. He once commented to me that it made a hopeless mess of the historical geography of Central Asia and the Middle East, mixing as it does historical place names from the sixth century B.C. up to the sixth century A.D., and basing its identifications of the place names on linguistically untenable grounds.

43. On the tomb of Cyrus and Pasargadae, see especially Stronach (1963, 1964, 1978). There are detailed plans and photographs of the tomb in Stronach (1963). The various forms of the name Pasargadae are discussed in Stronach (1978:280-1). If viewed from an actual perspective, the tomb of Cyrus really does look a bit like the map of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. See Kuznetsov (p.571) where the authors say that the equivalence of Pasargadae and Bar-po-so-brgyad was "the point of departure of our study."
44. First published in the Tel Aviv newspaper *Ma'ariv*, in an unspecified issue of the month of May in 1972. This map, identical to our map A, except that it has Hebrew script labels added, was reproduced by Hetenyi and Stronach, since they apparently didn't have available to them the original Indian publication. A very badly reproduced version of the same map (minus the Hebrew labels) was published in an article by a professor emeritus of biblical geography, formerly of Tel Aviv University, in the Israeli literary journal *Ariel* (see Har-El 1991:8), with an added arrow pointing to "Sogdiana" (i.e. Seng-ge-rgyab-bsnol, which Kuznetsov in fact identified with Sogdiana). This publication never mentions the fact that the map has anything to do with Tibet, calling it a "map of the Persian Empire, 2nd century BCE. In the centre is the grave of Coresh. At the bottom of the map (west) are marked Jerusalem, Babylon and Egypt." Unfortunately, no bibliography accompanies this paper, but it clearly relies on the work of Kuznetsov. It would be interesting to explore the whole history of Tibetan cartography, but that will not be possible here. Cosmographic paintings and diagrams were very common in Tibet, cartographic ones less so. Most "maps" were in the shape of detailed painted illustrations of landscape (mainly of places of pilgrimage; example in Huber 1992), rather than the spare and geometrical sets of straight lines and dots, together with jagged lines of rivers and coasts, which we commonly call "maps" today.
45. Map B also has a fairly lengthy Tibetan-language cursive inscription at the bottom. For a transcription and discussion, see the appendix.
46. The word *dbal*, widely attested in Bon writings, is in fact an "Old Translation" word which was later dropped in favour of the word *tog*, meaning "peak, point". Sa-skya Paṇḍita mentions this in his *Sdom-gsum Rab-dbye*. Shar-rdza (1985:102) says that *dbal* means *rtse-mo* ("tip, summit") and that it is particularly used for the tip of a flame. The *Mdzod-phug* says (BON KANJUR 1984-5, vol.2, p.63) *padma'i 'jam dang tshor-ma'i* (i.e., *tsher-ma'i*) *dbal*, "the softness of the lotus and the sharpness of the thorn." Note that, while the MDO'DUS, p.209, does mention Mu-khyud-bdal-ba'i Mtsho, it does not mention any proper name for the surrounding mountains.
47. It is noteworthy that a Bon canonical source, the *Kun 'bum* (or *Kun 'bum khra bo*), in its chapter 5, has a gazetteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring in which it explicitly states that it contains 60 Great Places (*gnas-chen*), corresponding to a set of 60 deeds of Lord Shenrab (see the BON KANJUR, 2nd edition, vol.152, fol. 15ff.). The *Kun 'bum* is known to have been obtained as an "accomplishment" (*dnagos-grub*, here most probably a *gter-ma*) by Gnyal-ston Gzhon-nu-'bum (often called simply Gzhon-nu), the famous disciple of Gu-ru Rnon-rtse, who would seem to belong to the twelfth century (see Martin 1994:27-31).
48. *Lha-rtse* means "Divine Peak", while Sham-po seems to have no clear meaning apart

from its usage as a proper name.

49. *So-brgyad* means "thirty-eight", while *Bar-po* most likely means an "interval", or an "in-between space".
50. *Rgyal Bon* means "Royal Bon" (a title), while Thod-dkar (the name proper) might be interpreted to mean "White Turban", although some connection with the Thod-dkar, or Tokharian people, might be posited.
51. This name probably means "Ten Thousand" (*khri*) "Aspirational Prayers" (*smion*) "Royal" (*rgyal*) "Laughter" (*bzhad*). Kuznetsov (p.571, no.7) wants to identify this with Persepolis.
52. *Ne'u-chung* probably means "Small Meadow" (*ne'u* being taken as a shortened form of *ne'u-seng*). *Kho-ma* occurs in the names of several Bon temples, and might be a foreign loan-word (it doesn't seem to be either Tibetan or Zhang-zhung).
53. The name means "Self-produced Happiness".
54. This name means "Compassion Arising".
55. This name means "Immaculate White".
56. *Sku-tshad* means "Measure of Life" (?) or "Measure of the Image".
57. This means "Svâstika Layout Island".
58. RGYAL-RABS (p.13) read *Spo-mtho*.
59. Evidently a variant form of the Tibetan form *a-mo-nig*, a cubic black stone (lead ore?). The Mahāvīyutpatti says that *ar-nig lta-bu'i rdo-leb* is equivalent to the Sanskrit *pāṇḍukambalaśilātala*, which is a name for the throne of Indra. In the MDO-'DUS (p.25) we also find the spelling *ar-mo-lig-gis rdo-leb*.
60. *Hos-gur* is a special name for a "tent-canopy" (*bla gur*) that belonged to Lord Shenrab. See the vocabulary appended to Shar-rdza (1985:336). *Hos* is not a known Tibetan word (and neither does it seem to be Zhang-zhung), but it does occur in place-names connected with 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, and the Hos clan is said to be one of the six royal clans of divine descent (Shar-rdza 1985:17). The Rgyud Dung-lo-ljon-pa (cited above) lists four clans of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring: The royal Hos clan located in the east, the royal Dpo clan located in the north, the royal Gnyan clan in the west, and the royal Dmu clan in the south (this Dmu clan is the one to which Lord Shenrab belonged). RGYAL-RABS (p.14) reads *gsal-ba 'od-kyi gur* ("tent of luminous light"). Stag-tsha (p.20, line 4) reads *gsal-ba 'od-gyis hos-gur*. Some Bon texts say that Hos is an especially ancient and secret name for Bon itself, although this will lead us into a subject for another paper.
61. "Island of the Gods Who Have Joy".
62. "Island of the Rule for [Monastic] Civilization".
63. These works on Bon monastic discipline have been published in BON KANJUR (1984-5, vol.3).
64. "Immeasurable Awakening Island".
65. "Delusionary Power Civilizing Spell Island". This is the same place which Kuznetsov reads (on map A) as "Bdud-'dus'gling" and wants to identify with the Bedouins.
66. "Giving Grown-to-the-Limit Island". RGYAL-RABS (p.15) has a reading (perhaps preferable) *Sbyin-pa-mtha'-yas Gling*.
67. "Unshakable Contemplation Island".
68. "Virtue Expanded Qualities Island".
69. "Immeasurable Love Island".
70. "Injury-Giver [Spirit] Wealth Island". 'Dzam-bha-la is Indic Jambhala, keeper of the north, lord of the Injury-Giver spirits (Indic Yakṣa), and deity of wealth.
71. Stag-tsha (7.4) reads here Rin-chen-dra-ma'i Gling, "Precious Substances Network Island". RGYAL-RABS (p.16) reads *Yon-tan-rgyas-pa'i Gling* here.

72. RGYAL-RABS (p.17) reads Na-ra-dza-ra.
73. RGYAL-RABS (p.17) reads Si-ti-si-tu.
74. RGYAL-RABS (p.17) reads Gyim-shang-phyi-shang.
75. RGYAL-RABS (p.17) reads Hos-ri-rtse-mtho.
76. Dmang-rigs-gdol-pa'i Gling in RGYAL-RABS (p.17).
77. Pag-shu-gtsang-po in RGYAL-RABS (p.18).
78. Gtsug-ri-phyug-po in RGYAL-RABS (p.18).
79. The author of the RGYAL-RABS (p.20) says that his listing of the 16 "great islands" follows the *Gzer-mig* version, and this probably explains some of the differences with the *Mdo-'dus* noted below. Otherwise, the RGYAL-RABS follow the *Mdo-'dus*.
80. RGYAL-RABS (p.18) places Hos-mo Gling-drug here in the south-east, and says that it was the abode of the Hos King Dang-ba-yid-ring. Rgya-lag-'od-ma'i Gling the RGYAL-RABS (p.19) locates in the west.
81. According to RGYAL-RABS (p.20), the eleventh chapter of *Mdo-'dus* places Kong-rtse in the west.
82. RGYAL-RABS (p.18) reads Yul Khri-thang-'byams-pa'i Gling, and says that the Dpo king 'Bar-ba'i-sgron-ma stayed here.
83. Khra-mo-khri-'od, according to RGYAL-RABS (p.18), where nine persons who had committed great sins were converted by Lord Shenrab (cf. Stag-tsha p.8, line 5).
84. The *Gzer-mig* places this lake in the south, according to the RGYAL-RABS (p.20).
85. RGYAL-RABS (p.19) places 'Od-ma-'byams-skya here in the north.
86. Ha-lu-man-dha-spre'u'i Gling in RGYAL-RABS (p.19).
87. They are also missing from the 'Ol-mo-lung-ring gazetteer of RGYAL-RABS (ending on p.19), and since RGYAL-RABS used the *Gzer-mig* as one of its sources, we might assume that they are missing in the *Gzer-mig* as well.
88. See Namdak (1971:877-8) for the *Gzi-brjid* account of these areas.
89. Karmay (1975:175), who would have been in a position to know, says that map A was "based upon his [Tenzin Namdak's] readings of descriptions [of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring] in texts." But it is well known that the Ven. Tenzin Namdak is an excellent artist, and map A doesn't really do justice to this fact. We would in any case still need to know who made map B, and when.
90. For a painting of this 11-headed Bon deity, which bears an unmistakable resemblance to certain Chos forms of Spyan-ras-gzigs (Avalokiteśvara), see Kvaerne (1995: plate 16).
91. In fact, in the *Kun-'bum khra bo* (as contained in the BON KANJUR, 2nd edition, vol.152 at p.15) one finds the statement, "Although the 60 deeds [of Lord Shenrab] were done in the 60 Great Places (*gnas chen*), this by no means exhausts [His] deeds." This text goes on to supply a complete gazetteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. The *Kun 'bum* is believed to be a continuously transmitted text, one that was never concealed as a "treasure" (*gter-ma*), and it is especially associated with Gnyal-ston-Gzhon-nu in the 12th century.
92. Stag-tsha (p.7, line 8) reads Rmang-rigs-brdol-ba'i Gling.
93. Kuznetsov (1973) says, "To the West are: Rgya-lag-od-ma (Kaldu-mu, country of Khaldeans, Babylonia) and others."
94. Similarly, Ne'u-seng-dra-ba, which Kuznetsov wants to identify with the Egyptian city Alexandria on the basis of some vague phonological similarity, has a meaning in Tibetan: "Meadow Network". This name does not occur in the *Mdo-'dus*. Even if apparently unknown to Kuznetsov, there was a much closer "Alexandria" in the vicinity of Bactria (see for example Lindtner 1988:437), so he really had no need to search so far.

95. As already noted, the *Mdo-'dus* itself is not consistent about the direction. In the gazetteer of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring it is placed in the south-east, while in the text of chapter eleven (MDO-'DUS p.83) it is said to be in the west part of 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. The eleventh chapter says how Kong-rtse was born in Rgyal-rag-'od-ma'i Gling. His father was Ka-'da-ma Gser-'od, and his mother was Mu-tri Gsas-'od-ma. He built a temple called Dkar-nag-bkra-gsal, and Lord Shenrab performed its consecration. Compare Shar-rdza (1985:136-7).
96. According to the text of the MDO-'DUS (p.221), one Shen year should be equivalent to 100 human years (this is, at least, the standard source cited by Bon historians in support of the idea).
97. King Sa-la was the king located at Lang-ling. King Sa-la was the father of a wife of Lord Shenrab's father (MDO-'DUS, p.55).
98. Compare Stag-tsha (p.18) which says that he went to the city Lang-ling with his father to offer respects to his maternal ancestors (*zhang myes*) and to be bathed in the ocean. He also (p.19) erected a temple, Gsas-mkhar Kho-ma-ru-ring. Here there is nothing about travelling to Sgra-mi-snyan continent.
99. He simply identifies it with Sogdiana, without providing any argument.
100. Kuznetsov (p.573, no.38) identifies "A-ba-dwa-ra'i-gling" with "Bactria, one of the provinces of ancient Iran" again without giving any evidence. Note this connection that 'r' and 'n' are rather easily confounded in some cursive Tibetan manuscripts.
101. For example, RGYAL-RABS (pp.20-22), where the conclusion is that the *real* Mt. Ti-se and Lake Ma-pham are in Stag-gzig 'Ol-mo-lung-ring. Shar-rdza (1973:548) is one recent author who insists on carefully discriminating two Mt. Ti-ses, one in Tibet and one in Stag-gzig. He also distinguishes the four rivers that arise in western Tibet near Mt. Ti-se from the four rivers of Stag-gzig. (Historical-geographically speaking, it is indeed utterly clear that the names Pakshu and Sitā properly belong to rivers outside the traditional Tibetan cultural realm, and were only subsequently, and even only occasionally, "located" in Tibet proper [see a following note]).
102. Karmay (1975b:174-5).
103. The more general phenomenon of the interjection of external geographic features such as that investigated in Huber (1990) might explain, for instance, how the Pakshu (Oxus) river name could come to be used, albeit very occasionally, for the Gtsang-po (Brahmaputra) river in Tibet (for example, in the Tshe-ring-ma account in the Songs of Milarepa; see Chang 1977:I 216 as well as Huber 1990:138). Note in this connection that the upper course of the Gtsang-po is quite customarily called by Tibetans by the name Rta-mchog Kha-'bab ("Descending from the Horse's Mouth", an epithet which in the schemes of the four rivers sometimes belongs to the Pakshu, sometimes to other rivers). Of course, according to Bon histories, Lord Shenrab visited Mt. Ti-se also, making it a holy place in its own right. On Mt. Ti-se and still other places in Tibet considered holy by Bon-pos, see Cech (1992).
104. For the Tibetan conquests of areas to the west of western Tibet, see Beckwith (1987).
105. For background and description of the Indian models, as well as reference to some comparable Chinese models, see Ohji (1990), especially.
106. Karmay (1975:172) mentions that some people used to set out on pilgrimage to 'Ol-mo-lung-ring, but he never heard of them coming back. "One might imagine that they ended up on the Soviet frontier!" Shar-rdza (1985:15) says that "people with wrong views and 'others' [by which he may mean non-Bon-pos], except for those with miraculous powers, are unable to cross the Sharp-tooth Mountain Range," that "it is not a place where ordinary people can go." A possible exception is a lama of uncertain date by the name of Shar-pa Rnal-'byor. While he seems to "recall" 'Ol-

mo-lung-ring based on dream memories of an earlier rebirth during which he had lived there, there is a quite interesting story of how a *shang-shang* bird comes and offers to carry him on its back to see the fabled country, which he then goes on to describe firsthand. Accounts such as this should probably be taken as “visionary” (see Shar-pa 1976, but beware that the name of the scribe of the text, Tshe-dbang-tshul-khrims, is given in the table of contents as the name of the author). For more comments on the near-impossibility of going to ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring, see the history by Spa-ston (1991:86).

107. On the guide-books to and descriptions of Shambhala, see most recently Newman (1996). One specific feature usually mentioned in descriptions of both ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring and Shambhala is that of the eight-petalled lotus shape of the earth, reflected in an eight-spoked-wheel shape of the sky.
108. The source for this citation is the BON KANJUR (2nd edition, vol.151, p.14). *‘di nas mi rtags ‘chi ‘phos skyes tsam nas / gnas ngan mtha’ ‘khob gnas su mis kyi zhing / ‘ol mo lung ring gnas su skye bar shog / lus ngan ‘khor ba’i lus mi skye zhing / ‘gro ba ‘dren pa’i ston pa skye bar shog*. The fuller passage may be translated rather freely, “Having passed through death and impermanence from this [life], as soon as I take rebirth, may I not be born in a bad place, a place of border barbarians, but take birth in the [Holy] Place ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring. Not being reborn in a bad body, a cyclic-existence body, may I be born as a Teacher, a leader of living beings.” The text was revealed by Lhun-grub-thogs-med, a rather obscure figure who seems to have no definite dates.
109. Rather freely translated from the words of the venerable ex-principal of New Sman-ri Monastery, Tenzin Namdak, contained in Namdak (1973:30): *‘di nyid dag zhing mos pa’i yid yul las / sa steng ‘di na brtag ste btsal ba blun / gal te ti se’i skor dang par sha sogs / yin par ‘dod pa nges na der skye ba’i / smon lam ‘debs yul kho na byed dgos pa ci’i phyir yod / de yang bdag cag gi ston pas / skye sgo gcod pa’i mdo las / ‘ol mo lung ring gnas su skye bar shog / lus ngan ‘khor ba’i lus su mi skye zhing / zhes gsungs pas / zhing ‘di nyid ‘khor zhing thung mong ba las nges par khyad du ‘phags pa zhig yin dgos pas so // rang cag ‘gro ba phal pa’i dbang po’i yul du ma gyur na med par ‘dod pa dang / ‘dzam gling gi sa dang ‘brel te yod na rang res mthong dgos pa sogs ni ha cang gi blo sgo dwogs pas / ...*
110. In one source we even find a statement that Shambhala (here spelled Sha-bha-la), together with India, is located to the south of ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring (NYI-ZER, p.23r). If judged from its location in relation to the Sītā river (whether understood as the Iaxartes or Tarim rivers), however, Shambhala ought to be far to the north of ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring.
111. RGYAL-RABS (p.12) mentions how some people claim ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring takes up two-thirds of Jambu Island, but the author believes this to be a statement about the number of its qualities and not its geographical extent. SRID (p.65) says it takes up one third of Jambu Island. Stag-tsha (p.9) says “of all the qualities of this Jambu Island, two-thirds of them are in this place (i.e. in ‘Ol-mo-lung-ring).”

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Part Four

Colonialism and Modernity

The British Imperial Influence on the Kailas-Manasarovar Pilgrimage.

Alex McKay

A pilgrimage is neither an isolated nor a static phenomena. It is a part of, and responds to, the constantly fluctuating political and socio-economic fabric of the host society. An example of this can be seen in the recent history of the Hindu pilgrimage to the Mount Kailas-Lake Manasarovar area of western Tibet. During the first half of the 20th century, there was a significant growth in the number of pilgrims undertaking this journey and a development of new understandings of the status of the sacred site itself. The official records of the British Indian government and the writings of its officers demonstrate the influence of imperial officials on this process. These sources indicate that the developments which took place were deliberately stimulated by British Indian officials.

During the 19th century, the British Indian Empire expanded until its northern border extended from east to west for more than 2000 miles. To the north of that border were five other political entities: Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, China, and Tibet. By 1900, Tibet was the only one of those powers to which Indian Political Department¹ officers did not have access. The Lhasa government regarded the British as a threat to the Buddhist system which was at the heart of Tibet's culture, and refused to allow European visitors to cross its frontiers.

The primary concern of the Political Department in its dealings with neighbouring states was to protect the security of British India. While an isolationist Tibet posed no threat, British Indian strategists were concerned that Tibet could be a possible route by which imperial Russia might threaten the frontiers of British India. That most eloquent proponent of imperialism, George Nathaniel [later Lord] Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899-1905, was determined to meet this (real or imagined) threat by establishing British authority over Lhasa and using Tibet as a "buffer state" to exclude Russian influence.

In addition to security concerns, there were other forces encouraging the Raj to breach Tibet's isolation. Proponents of "free trade" sought to open its markets to Indian and European traders, missionaries wanted the right to proselytize there, and a contemporary spirit of enquiry demanded that "unknown" Tibet should become "known" to European science. All of these factors contributed to Curzon's dispatch of the British mission under Colonel Francis Younghusband which fought its way to Lhasa in 1903-1904. That mission established the right of British India to open three so-called 'Trade Agencies' in Tibet. These were, in practice, primarily political and diplomatic posts, with British officers stationed at the Gyantse and Yatung Trade Agencies, situated on the principal route from Sikkim to Lhasa.

The third Agency had very little connection with the other two. It was situated at Gartok, nearly 80 miles from Mount Kailas in western Tibet, and no British officers were ever stationed there. That it was created at all was due largely to Louis (later Sir Louis) Dane, the Indian Foreign Secretary under Curzon, who feared that western Tibet could prove a route by which Russian influence could reach Lhasa and thence India. Dane, a former British Resident in Kashmir, also hoped that while preventing Russian influence, an Agency in Gartok would benefit Kashmir by stimulating trade across its frontier with Tibet.²

At the conclusion of his mission to Lhasa, Younghusband dispatched four British officers under Captain Cecil Rawling to inspect Gartok prior to the arrival of the first Trade Agent; Thakur Jai Chand. Although Rawling compiled the 1905 *Military Report on Western Tibet*, his party spent only a day in Gartok before travelling onto India. They passed Kailas-Manasarovar, of which Rawling observed that the region was "believed by Hindus and Mahomedans[sic] alike to be the home of all the gods...the Holy Mountain, and the most sacred spot on earth";³ a statement clearly in error regarding Muslim beliefs.

The Gartok Agency proved of little value to the Raj. Gartok was only a tiny hamlet in an isolated wind-swept plain and was largely deserted except during an annual trade-fair lasting around two weeks. No significant Russian influence was ever detected there, and the traditional cross-border trade system provided only limited scope for expansion. The result was that the Gartok Trade Agent had almost nothing to do and very little to report to his government. The Agency was of only symbolic political significance and so unimportant was it that from 1911-1942, control of the Agency was given to the provincial government of the neighbouring Hill States,⁴ with Indian Civil Service officers occasionally sent to inspect the Agency and report on conditions there. These inspections took place in 1905, 1906, 1907, 1911 and 1912. Fourteen years then passed before the next inspection in 1926, and just three more inspections followed, in 1928, 1932 and 1942.⁵

The presence of British Indian representatives in western Tibet had no direct relationship to the Kailas pilgrimage and as Gartok was not on the pilgrimage route, the Agent did not normally meet the pilgrims. Thus most references to the pilgrimage in the Trade Agents' reports are incidental. Indeed, it sometimes appears that it was only mentioned because the Agents had to file regular reports

and there was little else to report on! While the Agents did attempt to improve trade conditions, it is difficult to tell if they had any real success. It was reported in 1939 that "the Gartok Trade Agent does not maintain statistics of trade and cannot give an accurate estimate of the extent to which trade with Western Tibet has increased or decreased in the last 25 years."⁶

In retrospect, perhaps the major benefit arising from the Gartok Agency was that it provided a focus for gathering information on western Tibet. Obtaining information about neighbouring areas was a priority for officials of the Government of India; the security of the imperial system depended on the flow of such intelligence. During the 19th century, when Tibet sought to exclude Europeans from its territory, the imperial government had used spies to obtain information about Tibet. They trained local-born surveyors known as the *pandits*, who travelled throughout the country disguised as pilgrims, compiling maps and obtaining intelligence concerning the Tibetan government and power structures.⁷

Along with the *pandits*, a number of British officers also crossed the frontier and reported back to their government. It was easier for Europeans to enter the sparsely-populated western Tibetan region than it was to cross into central Tibet, and during the 1890s four British officers were given government permission to visit the Kailas-Manasarovar region.⁸ Others made the journey without official permission and while they were liable to be formally admonished on their return, unofficially the intelligence they gained was much appreciated.

Since 1715, when the Jesuit friars Hippolyte Desideri and Manuel Freyre had become the first Europeans to observe the Kailas-Manasarovar region firsthand, travellers had noted the sacred nature of the mountain and lake. But the primary concern of early travellers such as the first British visitors, William Moorcroft (1812) and Lieutenant Henry Strachey (1846), had been to collect geographical and political information, while others who followed came for *shikar* [hunting]. Major geographical controversies arose over the exact sources of the four major rivers of India which arose in the region, and over the question of whether any channel existed between Lake Manasarovar and its neighbouring lake Rakas Tal. These were the issues which concerned travellers throughout the 19th century. There was a growing emphasis on the physical beauty of the region, which in the wider context was a part of the growth of a contemporary European wilderness aesthetic,⁹ but there was very little development in the knowledge and understanding of the spiritual significance of the region to Hindus.

Desideri had noted the sacred status of Kailas to Tibetans, and Moorcroft recorded that Hindus regarded Kailas as the home of Shiva, and Manasarovar as "the most sacred of all places of worship."¹⁰ Yet from reports such as that of Lieutenant Strachey, it is clear that the only Indian pilgrims who ventured there were those then termed *faqirs* or *yogins*; the religious renunciates more commonly known today as *saddhus*.¹¹

In their often lengthy reports, 19th-century European observers commented only briefly and without undue elaboration on the sacred nature of Kailas-

Manasarovar. Taken out of context, these references can make the sacred status of the region appear a more significant issue than it was then regarded as being. But the status of mountain and lake was simply one of a wide range of subjects travellers described: it was not the focus of their interest. This continued to be the case throughout the 19th century, and even the colourful account of Henry Savage Landor was no exception.

By today's standards, Landor was an extremely pompous and racist individual, but his vainglorious account of an 1897 visit to western Tibet, entitled *In the Forbidden Land*, quickly became a best-seller. So exaggerated is Landor's account of his adventures that it is clearly an unreliable source; and although his was the first popular account of the region, it too refers only briefly to the sacred nature of Kailas-Manasarovar. It is notable that the populist Landor made no attempt to glamorize or mythologize the area. On the contrary, he described the Kailas peak as "uncomfortably angular... intensely unpicturesque".¹² This indicates that the region had no particular mystique in the European understanding at that time. For Landor, the chief interest in the region still lay in the geographical controversies it produced, otherwise it was merely a suitably remote setting for his own fantasies of exploration as a symbol of racial superiority.

Although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the disparate official and semi-official reports of the region were actually assimilated into the imperial system, or by any individual, the reports of Moorcroft, Strachey and other 19th century imperial agents were well-known to the frontier officers of the Raj by the early years of this century. Thus when the Gartok Agency was opened late in 1904, those who controlled it were aware that Hindus [as well as Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists] regarded Mount Kailas and its attendant lake as sacred space, and that Indian religious renunciates crossed into Tibet to worship in its surrounds. Yet this issue was not considered important enough for the right of Indian pilgrims to enter Tibet to be subject to any of the formal Anglo-Tibetan or Anglo-Chinese agreements concluded between 1890 and 1914.

Britain and China agreed in 1908 that "natives of the Indian frontier...[were] at liberty to continue their trade, in accordance with the existing practice", while the position of traders and their right of access to the Trade Agencies [or 'marts'] in Tibet was covered in the 1893 Anglo-Chinese Trade Regulations and the 1914 Simla Convention. But the only agreement relating to pilgrims to Tibet came in the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which was never officially shown to the Tibetans. Although Britain and Russia agreed that their (European) subjects would not visit Lhasa, Article Two of their agreement was designed to allow continued access to Tibet for Russian and British Indian Buddhists. It stated that Buddhists were allowed "into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and other representatives of Buddhism in Tibet." No mention was made of the rights of Hindu pilgrims.¹³

The lack of any such agreement reflected British imperial priorities. The Government of India's primary concern was that western Tibet should act as a secure bulwark against foreign [particularly Russian] influence. All else was

secondary, although in the wider context stimulating the growth of trade was seen as a means by which to bring economic benefits to (and thus obtain political support from) "all classes" of Indians.

The Indian traders who visited western Tibet came from small, interrelated groups who jealously guarded their traditional rights to trade across the frontier. Many of them became comparatively wealthy individuals and the local power they gained from their monopoly gave them a measure of influence with the imperial government. The government recognized that it was desirable that the frontier traders benefit from British policies, so as to give them a vested interest in supporting the imperial power. British officials therefore gave the traders as much support and assistance as was possible.

Assisting the Kailas pilgrims was a different matter. While there was an overlap between traders and pilgrims, with even renunciates carrying out trade to finance their pilgrimage,¹⁴ the Hindu pilgrims to Kailas-Manasarovar were not seen as being of political importance. This was because they were renunciates. They had deliberately chosen to give up their caste, and hence social status and duties,¹⁵ and were, to a large extent, outside regular social authority. The renunciate pilgrims did not normally seek British support while in Tibet, and they were not then seen as representing a political force of any significance to the imperial power. In India generally, the British often adopted a hostile attitude to these renunciates, and even in the Himalayan districts where the imperial officers tended to take a somewhat more tolerant view of them, their cause was of little concern.

One other factor which benefited the traders but not these pilgrims was the matter of prestige, a factor which was always a consideration in imperial planning. The Indians who visited Tibet as traders were citizens of the British Empire and seen as being a part, however humble, of the British free trade system. The prestige of the Raj required that their life, liberty, and right to fair treatment in their employment be protected against any foreign government or individual acting illegally or unfairly against them. Renunciates, in contrast, were not seen in these terms; their aspirations and lifestyle were not seen as adding to the prestige of the Raj.

The official reports of the British officers who inspected the Gartok Agency were not, therefore, normally concerned with the pilgrimage. But Charles Sherring ICS, Deputy Commissioner at Almora, who made the first such inspection in 1905, appears to have realized that Kailas could attract not only renunciates, but a wider range of pilgrims, which would be beneficial to British interests. Sherring was apparently the only officer ever sent to western Tibet with orders which included any mention of the pilgrimage. He was instructed to report on "measures required for developing the trade and pilgrim traffic between the United Provinces and Western Tibet."¹⁶ As he would have discussed these instructions with his superiors prior to departure, this suggests either that Sherring himself suggested investigating this issue, or that other elements of the imperial government did foresee some benefit from an increase in pilgrimage traffic.

On his return from Gartok, Sherring recommended that roads on the pilgrimage route be improved in order that, "as elsewhere the devotee will be the pioneer of trade." But there was little else in his report about the pilgrimage. He devoted more space to praising his own achievements and to highly optimistic forecasts about the benefits of his journey to future Indo-Tibetan trade. It was, he reported, "impossible to imagine a more successful visit [than his own]."¹⁷ But it soon became apparent that Sherring's visit had achieved little. The local authorities had agreed to his demands and then ignored the agreements when he left. Yet although Sherring never returned to Tibet after this brief visit in 1905, and his self-promoting report added to existing knowledge rather than provided significant new information, he was to have a notable affect on the Kailas pilgrimage.

In 1906 Sherring published an account of his visit entitled *Western Tibet and the British Borderlands*. In contrast to his official report, this work focused on the sacred nature of Mount Kailas and Lake Manasarovar.¹⁸ A photo of the mountain formed a frontispiece, and the introduction claimed that the region's chief interest lay in its being the site of "the Heaven of Buddhists and Hindus.....the abode of the great gods." The principal theme of the book was that "there is no more sacred spot in all Hinduism, or Tibetan Buddhism."¹⁹

Sherring's book was the first European work to focus on the religious significance of Kailas-Manasarovar. Moorcroft, for example, had simply recorded the Hindu belief that Lake Manasarovar was sacred, a status he attributed to "the difficulty of access to it," while Strachey had written admiringly of the physical beauty rather than the spiritual aspect of the region.²⁰ Sherring, in contrast, devoted considerable attention to recounting colourful myths and legends surrounding the site. He gave lengthy descriptions of local religious observances, spiced with racy ethnographic portraits, and wrote in a style far less stilted than that generally favoured by government servants.

In lending the authority of a British imperial official to local vernacular and textual accounts of the region, Sherring's work played a major role in the development of the modern European understanding of Kailas-Manasarovar. One consequence of bringing this pilgrimage into the Western consciousness was to elevate it in status above other, less well-known pilgrimage places, both Indian and Tibetan. But although the extent to which Sherring's account accurately reflected Hindu beliefs requires too lengthy an analysis of complex religious issues to be discussed here, Sherring's motives are unlikely to have been predominantly religious.

Sherring's influence has previously been noted by the late John Snelling. In his overview of the Kailas pilgrimage entitled *The Sacred Mountain*, he credits Sherring with being "the first of our Kailas travellers to be really awake to the extensive religious connotations of this rare quarter of the world." Sherring is described as having been a cultured and scholarly man with a compassionate interest in the local people; "an example of the better type of British servant of India."²¹ But Snelling (himself a Buddhist) takes an almost entirely uncritical approach to the authority of his sources.

In fact, Sherring's work is seriously flawed. Much of his understanding of Tibetan Buddhism comes from L.A. Waddell, whose errors and prejudices are well-known.²² Thus it frequently contains colourful but misleading images such as the description of "lamas, and their wizards, who drink blood in cups made of human skulls, and eat human bones and skin." There are more serious errors in regard to Kailas-Manasarovar. While acknowledging "a mingling of facts true of the country to the north of Cashmere with facts true of the country north of Kumaon", Sherring clearly blurs the distinctions between the Garwhal Himalaya, with its sacred sites at Badrinath and Kedarnath, and the Kailas region. He blends the identity of Tibetan and Indian pilgrims and their understandings of the region, and rarely provides references for quotations and accounts apparently taken from Indian textual sources. When he does provide a source, he wrongly attributes to the *Ramayana* the much-repeated verse which ends "As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of mankind dried up at the sight of Himachal."²³ Many of these errors were to be repeated by later scholars, who have relied upon Sherring's authority.

The British imperial archives reveal Sherring as a very different character to that depicted by Snelling. They suggest he was a man of staggering self-confidence, almost a caricature of the arrogant imperialist, who became accepted as an authority on western Tibet largely by enthusiastic self-promotion. Sherring's attitude to the Tibetans was that they were "ignorant barbarians". His attitude to lower-ranking fellow imperial officials was similarly disdainful and overbearing, as demonstrated by his bitter complaints over a fellow officer crossing the border on a shooting trip. His superiors were not impressed with him; Sherring's application to join the Political Department was refused.²⁴

Sherring's book was, however, approved by the Government of India. As required by regulations governing civil servants, he submitted it for official censorship prior to publication. As the British were reluctant to reveal that they had spied on Tibet, a number of references to the *pandits'* journeys were removed from the manuscript before it was approved. Sherring then sent the resulting book to the Government of India, confidently suggesting that it should order 600 copies.²⁵ In the event, after lengthy enquiries to imperial government departments from Burma to the Persian Gulf, the government ordered just 30 copies. But there were then very few published works on the region, and that was enough to ensure that Sherring's book became a standard reference work for government officials.²⁶

What then were Sherring's motives for this account and why did the Government of India approve a publication of such dubious authority? Certainly knowledge of his character suggests the possibility that Sherring realized the public demand for colourful accounts of the "Forbidden Land" and took advantage of that demand in an attempt to emulate the sales and reputation gained by Henry Savage Landor just a few years beforehand. But the book also served the interests of his career as Deputy Commissioner Almora, and the interests of his government.

Increasing revenue was a constant concern for district officers, particularly

those in remote districts far from the patronage of the centre, and Sherring's work must be seen in the context of this consideration. Any increase in the pilgrim traffic to Kailas-Manasarovar would bring increased revenue and employment opportunities to the [Almora] district under Sherring's control (which included the easiest access route to the sacred site). That would assist its development and bring increased prosperity, which would reflect well on British government. It would also attract the favourable attention of that government to the officer whose work brought about these improvements. Thus, while advancing his own career prospects, Sherring was acting within the broad guidelines of British policy; stimulating pilgrimage meant development and increased revenue. The imperial government were naturally keen to encourage such schemes, at least in principle.

Sherring's book claimed that with the improvement in Anglo-Tibetan relations following the Younghusband Mission, "we shall probably find an enormous number of [Hindu] pilgrims wending their ways to these sacred places." He observed that:

this pilgrim traffic will be practically independent of the Tibetans...[as the sacred sites are]...only a short way across the border—in fact so short that food can be carried on the person sufficient for the journey—and no doubt in process of time rest-houses...will spring up.²⁷

There were two clear messages here for his readers. Imperial officials would see the economic and political benefits of stimulating pilgrimage while retaining resources within Indian borders. Educated Hindu readers—by that time a not unimportant consideration to imperial authors—could see that Kailas-Manasarovar was both a highly desirable and an increasingly feasible destination.

It is now apparent that in a similar process to that which occurred in the Western encounter with Buddhism, European scholarship had annexed the authority for defining the religion we now call "Hinduism". That scholarship gave authority to Sanskrit textual sources at the expense of local practices and vernacular languages, although the Sanskrit texts were unavailable to the vast majority of Hindus (even Brahmins) due to the archaic nature of their language. The result of this process was that European authority constructed a Hinduism with wider Pan-Indian character than actually existed, with Sanskritic textual authority acquiring hegemonic status. Western-educated and influenced Hindus (who were naturally a relatively prosperous section of the society) then came to accept, or to respond to, a Hinduism which contained significant elements of Western construction.²⁸ Sherring's appropriation of the authority for the definition of the Kailas pilgrimage was typical of that process.

The message which the educated Hindu received from Sherring's work was that the Kailas pilgrimage was an acceptable, and indeed admirable religious undertaking for caste Hindus, such as those who travelled in large numbers to Kedarnath and Badrinath. It was not a dangerous journey into the unknown which was restricted to renunciates. Kailas was relatively easy of access, particularly via Almora district.

Yet the evidence indicates that prior to the 20th century there were actually very few Hindus travelling to Kailas purely for reasons of pilgrimage (as distinct from those with traditional trading links to the region), and that those who did so were almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of a particular renunciate sect; the Saivite *Giri* order.²⁹ That situation now began to change and a new construct emerged as a result of Sherring's work; Kailas-Manasarovar as a sacred site for all, the ultimate pilgrimage place for caste Hindus.

Prior to the publication of *Tibet and the British Borderland*, works describing the Kailas region had been more circumspect; descriptions were largely empirical, local beliefs were briefly summarized. Sherring's work initiated a growing romanticization of the region, which resulted in the modern European understanding of that site being framed in largely mythical terms.³⁰

Two individuals, both of whom travelled in Tibet with the official or unofficial support of the imperial government, were particularly significant in this process. One was the Japanese monk, Kawaguchi Ekai, whose visit had actually predated Sherring's by five years. His account of his journey was translated in 1904, and as copies circulated among a restricted circle of British Indian frontier officials it may have influenced Sherring. But it was not published officially until 1909; appropriately enough perhaps, by the Theosophical society. The other notable mythologizer was Sven Hedin, the great Swedish explorer. In his colourful and best-selling narrative, *Trans-himalaya*, published in 1913, Hedin constructed a romantic blend of spiritual and geographical issues. Although his primary focus was on the long-running geographical controversies in the region, Hedin's authority added greatly to an idealized picture of the place of Kailas-Manasarovar in Hindu understanding.³¹

Sherring's efforts to increase the number of pilgrims took time to come to fruition. The 1907 report by W.S. Cassels recorded that around 150 "*faqirs*" visited Kailas annually from India, a figure which grew to around 400 in the twelve-yearly *Kumb Mela* year, which had last occurred in 1906. He observed that many of these pilgrims travelled no further than Taklakot, the administrative capital of western Tibet, or onto the plain of Gyanema, from where the Kailas peak was first visible. Cassels took a more realistic view of the affect of his visit on relations with western Tibet than Sherring had done. He concluded that "It will be many years before the pilgrim trade from India becomes considerable." His successors were similarly cautious. N.C. Stiffe ICS inspected the Gartok Agency in 1911. In 1926, by which time he had been promoted to Commissioner of Kumaon, Stiffe read the report of the officer who had inspected Gartok that year and commented that "The state of affairs is clearly exactly the same as when I was there 15 years ago; and as it probably has been for several hundred years."³²

A major barrier to any increase in the number of Indian pilgrims was the state of the roads, which were not roads in the modern sense at all. Following Sherring's recommendation that they be improved in order to facilitate pilgrimage, the route from Simla to western Tibet via the Shipki-la was surveyed and a bridge was built over the Sutlej river near Poo.³³ But this route was the one then used by the Trade Agent and his staff to reach Gartok from Simla [they

later travelled via Almora]. It was also the route normally used by Ladakhis travelling to western and central Tibet, but it was not the most common pilgrimage route for Hindus. They favoured the route north from Almora over the Lipu Lekh pass, or the Niti-la or Mana-la [*la* means “pass” in Tibetan] when travelling north from Badrinath.

In 1913 the Gartok Trade Agent, noting that Badrinath attracted thousands of pilgrims, suggested that opening a “direct route” to the Kailas region would bring a large increase in the number of pilgrims, who could continue on north from Badrinath. He also recommended that the roads from India to Tibet and along the trade route within Tibet itself be improved.³⁴ Such recommendations were common in the early years of the British presence in Tibet, as the Trade Agents in all three Trade Agencies devoted considerable effort to encouraging schemes to improve the roads. But it soon became apparent to them that neither the Tibetan nor the British imperial government were prepared to support these schemes.

The Tibetans realized that roads would only bring more foreigners into Tibet, something they continued to resist. The Government of India supported the principle of improving the roads, but by this period it lacked the financial resources necessary to initiate major projects such as Himalayan road-building. As a result, only small-scale road repairs and improvements were ever carried out in the regions bordering western Tibet.³⁵ There can be little doubt that had the imperial government found the necessary resources and improved access to Kailas-Manasarovar, there would have been a much greater increase in the number of pilgrims to the region than actually eventuated.

A second major problem was the lawless conditions which existed in western Tibet. Although one report does claim that Kailas pilgrims “acknowledged immunity from thieves and robbers,”³⁶ there can be little doubt that many pilgrims to the Kailas region had well-founded fears of robbery. In 1913 the Gartok Agent, recording the murder of the Bhutanese representative at Kailas, suggested that in view of the Tibetan’s inability to deal with the problem of lawlessness, there should be a more liberal granting of firearm permits to Indian traders bound for Tibet.³⁷

The issue of greater freedom for Indian traders to carry firearms with them into Tibet became a significant one. Although there was no official change in policy as a result of the 1913 report, the necessity for traders to be armed was brought home to the British in 1928. Dr. Kanshi Ram, travelling near Gartok with E.W. [later Sir Edward] Wakefield, an ICS officer sent to inspect the Trade Agency, came under fire while riding ahead of the party. By the time Wakefield arrived, the doctor (who was armed), had managed to capture the would-be robber. Wakefield consequently recommended that Indian traders be allowed to carry weapons with them. The government moved slowly, but in 1931 it officially agreed to ease the issue of firearm permits; something which appears have been implemented informally before that time.³⁸

Most Indian pilgrims to western Tibet travelled in large groups which joined up with parties of Indian traders, on the principle that there was strength in

numbers. Once these trading parties were equipped with sufficient weapons to fight off bandits, the risks involved in the journey for ordinary pilgrims were greatly reduced. Consequently, the freer provision of firearms licenses for traders venturing to Tibet appears to have been a major stimulus for a great increase in the number of pilgrims in general, and non-renunciate pilgrims in particular, as can be seen from the events of 1930-31.

While we do not have regular annual figures for the number of pilgrims, these are given sufficiently frequently to confirm that there was a large increase from around 1930. Hugh Ruttledge ICS, District Commissioner in Almora (and later leader of the 1933 and 1936 Everest expeditions), reported after his 1926 visit to Gartok that around 100 Hindus had made the pilgrimage that year; a figure even lower than that given by Cassels in 1908. Ruttledge was one of the few observers who also recorded the numbers of Tibetan pilgrims, which he gave as 400-500.³⁹

1930 was a *Kumb Mela* year, and 730 pilgrims from India travelled to Kailas, including 150 Ladakhis [presumably Buddhists]. They joined 600 Tibetans at the sacred site. The journey remained dangerous however; six pilgrims died while fording rivers.⁴⁰ The following year, the Maharajah of Mysore travelled to Kailas with a party reportedly 700 strong. The Tibetans objected strongly to this large group, and complained to the Government of India. But they were informed that as the Maharajah was a Hindu he was free to make such a visit, just as Tibetans were allowed to visit the sacred sites of Buddhism in India.⁴¹

After 1930-31, the figures for pilgrims to Kailas-Manasarovar continue to be much higher than in the previous years for which we have records. In 1938, for example, 400 pilgrims made the journey from India. By that time a new influence unconnected to imperial ambitions was stimulating the growth of the pilgrimage; that was Swami Pranavananda, who was to be closely associated with the last phase of the pre-1950 Kailas pilgrimage.

The Swami made his first visit to Kailas-Manasarovar in 1928; he was probably one of five "educated" Indians reported by the Trade Agent to have visited Kailas that year.⁴² After a second journey there in 1935, Pranavananda became a regular visitor to the region, sometimes remaining there for long periods. He published two books on the subject, the second, *Kailas-Manasarovar* (1949) being a comprehensive, if eclectic, guide-book to the region, the need for which is an indication of the increased interest in the pilgrimage. It also demonstrated the growing systematization of the process, with the development of structures in what was once a region free of the usual formal elements of a Hindu pilgrimage site; bathing places, rest-houses, resident religious functionaries, and so on.

Pranavananda was just the sort of pilgrim Sherring had hoped to attract. He was a scientifically-minded individual, whose involvement in the spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage in no way precluded his carrying out a host of scientific experiments in the region, including taking soundings of Lake Manasarovar from a rubber boat he had carried up from India. Pranavananda was keen to develop the region; even to the extent of proposing boating on the lake and

mountaineering on the sacred peak, as well as a flying-boat service from India direct to Lake Manasarovar. He recommended it not just as a pilgrimage site, but as a beneficial holiday-place for "busy workers" and Indian tourists.⁴³

From Pranavananda we can gain some hint of the economic impact of the development of the pilgrimage in the 1930's and 1940's. He provides the names of local guides and of a number of businesses supplying pilgrims along the route north from Almora, which indicates that by the late 1940's a substantial segment of the local economy in that district was based around providing for pilgrims. Pranavananda estimated the minimum expenses of a return journey from Almora to Kailas as being between 250 and 600 rupees, much of which was to be paid to Indian guides, servants, food suppliers and so on. We do not have figures for the number of pilgrims in the 1940's, but one source claims that Pranavananda himself escorted over 5,000 pilgrims to Kailas-Manasarovar.⁴⁴ Even if this figure is exaggerated, it does indicate a great increase in the number of pilgrims making the journey, and suggests that their economic impact on the Almora district may have been as beneficial as Sherring had hoped.

By the time the British withdrew from South Asia in 1947, the development of the pilgrimage was in Indian hands and the growth of the structures typical of a Hindu pilgrimage site was proceeding rapidly. When the development of the Hindu pilgrimage to Kailas was stalled by the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, Pranavananda was attempting to arrange the construction of rest houses in the Kailas region, as was a Swami Nityanandaji Saraswati, who had applied to the local Tibetan authorities for permission to build 21 rest-houses for Hindu pilgrims.⁴⁵

Thus we may conclude that although the Gartok Agents themselves had little or no effect on the Kailas pilgrimage and it was of little or no concern to the imperial government, which lacked the finance to support any improvements, the stimulus given to the Kailas pilgrimage by the British was significant in two areas.

Firstly, Sherring promoted the idea of Kailas-Manasarovar as a major pilgrimage site for all Hindus, rather than only for renunciates, as had been the case previously. While he may have had some spiritual motives or understanding, his primary motive was more probably to attract a more prosperous class of pilgrim in order to stimulate economic development in the Indian frontier district under his charge.

Secondly, the presence of British representatives in western Tibet, and the imperial government's acceptance that Indians needed to carry weapons in order to travel safely in western Tibet (a measure which required no government expenditure), created conditions which stimulated the growth of the pilgrimage. Once the site had become accessible in relative safety, it rapidly became popular with a broad section of Hindu society, and from around 1930 onwards the pilgrimage became sufficiently popular to bring about the development of structures which mark a Hindu pilgrimage site. The modern understanding of the popularity of the Kailas pilgrimage and its being a journey undertaken by large numbers of caste Hindus can only be dated from that period. A sacred

space visited only by renunciates had been transformed by the impact of British imperial economic development into a Pan-Hindu pilgrimage site.

The British influence on western Tibet had one other significant effect on the Kailas-Manasarovar region: it actually reduced the numbers of European travellers to the region, and largely restricted access to official representatives of the imperial government.

During the 1904-47 period, access to Tibet for Europeans travelling from British India (and Nepal) was largely controlled by the imperial government, which was generally able to restrict access to Tibet to persons of whom they approved. The 1873 Frontier Regulations required that Europeans who were not government officials on duty obtain a permit from the government before they were allowed to enter the frontier districts which offered access to Tibet. A separate permit was then given for entry into Tibet.⁴⁶

European traders had the right to travel to the Trade Agencies by the established routes (although only a handful of genuine European traders ever visited central Tibet and none ventured to Gartok) and the British did use this agreement to allow a limited number of Europeans to visit the Trade Agencies. But permission to travel elsewhere in Tibet required Tibetan government approval, which was usually only given to British officials or those whom the British recommended in private consultation with Tibetan officials.

In practice, this system meant that the Raj was able to exclude persons it did not want to enter Tibet, such as missionaries. In deference to the Tibetans' strong opposition to allowing missionaries to work in their territory, this group were always excluded, although they were not told of this unofficial ban. For example, in 1905 a Miss E.C.M. Browne and a Miss Sullivan applied for permission to travel to Gartok to preach there. Charles Sherring, then the District Commissioner to whom they applied for a permit, was instructed by his government to refuse them access and not to explain the refusal. Similarly when a Miss Dobson and party applied for permission to travel to Mount Kailas in 1919 to recover a Greek manuscript of the New Testament reported by a *saddhu*, Sunder Singh, to have been found there, permission was refused.⁴⁷

Similarly excluded were anyone whose motives the Raj questioned, particularly those who might be interested in the goldfields at Thok Jalung, or anyone who might conceivably be sympathetic to other foreign governments. Even the noted American student of Tibetan Buddhism, Dr. F.Y. Evans-Wentz, was denied permission to visit the Kailas region in 1934.⁴⁸

The result of this policy was that very few private European travellers visited western Tibet in the first half of this century, almost certainly fewer in fact, than travelled there in the 19th century!⁴⁹ Numerous applications were refused, and aside from the British officials we have noted, the imperial government gave permits to travel in western Tibet to just two individuals, although a number of other European travellers reached Kailas-Manasarovar without official permission.

Those permitted to travel there were Professor Guiseppe Tucci and a Major Blackney. Blackney's interest apparently lay in mountaineering, but he was

restricted to travelling on the Trade Route to Gartok, and was thus not able to visit Kailas and Manasarovar, which lay off the route. Tucci was specifically favoured because his research furthered British political interests in that they brought out the close historical ties between India and Tibet, as opposed to China and Tibet.⁵⁰

The result of this policy was to greatly restrict the outflow of information on the region. By preventing the emergence of non-official accounts, and thus alternative perspectives, the imperial power was able to control the image of the Kailas-Manasarovar region as one sacred to all Hindus, and to ensure that the European academic study of the area was almost exclusively in the hands of Professor Tucci.

Notes

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1. This department, which was in effect the diplomatic corps of the Government of India, underwent various name changes; the form used herein being that most commonly favoured by its officers.
2. Lamb (1960:307); McKay (1992:416).
3. Rawling (1905:263). Rawling’s *Military Report* may be found in Oriental and India Office Collection and Records [hereafter, OIOC], L/Mil/17/14/92.
4. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4191-2313, various correspondence.
5. The officers concerned were, respectively, C.Sherring, H.Calvert, W.S.Cassel, N.C.Stiffe, C.M. Collet, H.Ruttledge, F.W.Williamson, and Captain R.K.M.Saker. The two last-named officers were members of the Indian Political Department, the former were all Indian Civil Service officers. Most were accompanied by a British Medical Officer or companion. An additional visit was made in 1912 by G.M.Young ICS in connection with the Trade Agency accounts.
6. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4164-3973, Political Agent, Punjab Hill States to Resident, Punjab Hill States, 21 April 1939.
7. Regarding the *pandits*, see Waller (1990).
8. The officers given permission were a Major Macleod in 1893, Major-General Channer in 1894 and again in 1896, and Captain Jenny and Lieutenant Lane in 1897; OIOC, L/P&S/10/186, file note by ‘K.F. & R.W.S.’, 11 January 1906; an unknown number of other officers crossed without permission, see for example National Archives of India [hereafter, NAI], Foreign Department 1906, External B, March 154-157, regarding the illicit border-crossing of three officers in 1905.
9. Bishop (1989:68-71, 112-114).

10. The importance of Moorcroft's distinction is often overlooked. All the evidence suggests Hindu religious observances are principally carried out at Manasarovar, with Kailas the object of the worshippers' *darsan*; regarding which, see Eck (1985).
11. McKay (1998).
12. Landor (1898:247).
13. These treaties are most accessible in Richardson (1984).
14. van Spengen (1995:35-40).
15. This is not to suggest that in renouncing caste duties, Hindu renunciates did not have duties appropriate to their new status.
16. OIOC, L/P&S/182-1677, Report of Charles Sherring, 3 September 1905.
17. *Ibid*; also see OIOC, L/P&S/7/179-1208, undated file note.
18. Sherring 1974; reprint 1906 [not 1916 as indicated in reprint].
19. See, for example, Sherring (1974:30, 32, 36-44, *et passim*).
20. Moorcroft, quoted in (1982:90); regarding Strachey, see for example Strachey (1848:51, 55).
21. Snelling (1990:121).
22. Waddell (1895). The reader may also suspect that Sherring was influenced by Theosophy, but there is no record of that.
23. Sherring (1974:2-5, 36-37, 40); the latter quotation is attributed by a number of other writers to the *Puranas* in general or the *Skandapurana* in particular, but I have yet to locate the actual source.
24. OIOC, L/P&S/7/190-1240, C.Sherring to Under-Secretary, Government of the United Provinces, 9 March 1906; L/P&S/7/190-1240, C.Sherring to Government of the United Provinces, 9 March 1906; NAI, Foreign Department 1906 External B, March 154-157, various correspondence.
25. The Government of India did purchase books of which it approved; this acted as a means of subsidizing specialist works.
26. NAI, Foreign Department 1906, External B, July 16-60, various correspondence, 1905-06.
27. Sherring (1974:145).
28. Although studies of this process are more advanced in regard to Buddhism (see, for example Lopez 1995), works reflecting a less Sanskrit textually-based understanding of Hinduism have emerged over the last two decades; see for example Waghorne & Cutler 1975; also see D.Eck 1985.
29. McKay (1998).
30. The motives of those who developed that process are outside of the scope of this paper, but we may suggest, following Bishop 1989, that this was in some ways an attempt to create a new fantasy of place in the Western imagination after the Younghusband mission had breached the isolation of the "Forbidden City" of Lhasa and found it to be a prosaically human place. For an early example of this, see Rawling (1905:129,151). He refers to "the sacred town of Rudok" being "as jealously guarded as Lhasa"! Neither statement appears to have any factual basis.
31. Ekai (1909); Hedin (1913:199-251).
32. OIOC, L/P&S/7/203-1873, Report of W.S.Cassels, 23 September 1907; L/P&S/12/4163-490, Report of Hugh Ruttledge, Cover note by N.C.Stiffe, 30 September 1926.
33. OIOC, L/P&S/11/90-1129, Gartok Annual Report 1914.
34. OIOC, L/P&S/11/54-1872, Gartok Annual Report 1912.
35. McKay (1992:415-16).
36. OIOC, L/P&S/7/201-927, Report of K.K.Singh Pal, to District Commissioner Almora, 23 September 1906.

37. OIOC, L/P&S/11/79-2495, Gartok Annual Report 1913.
38. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4163-532, Report no. 5 by E.W. Wakefield, various entries; L/P&S/12/4163-452, Government of India to Chief Secretary, Government of the Punjab, 14 July 1931; also see Wakefield (1966: 62).
39. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4163-490, Report of H.Ruttledge, 30 September 1926.
40. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4163-574, Trade Agent Gartok to Chief Secretary, Government of the Punjab, 1 September 1930.
41. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4263, Williamson to India, 18 February 1933.
42. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4163-508, Gartok Annual Report 1928.
43. Pranavananda (1983: 82-85, 194, 201).
44. Bedi & Swamy (1984). A number of files originating from the Gartok Trade Agency appear to have been lost in the fire in 1952 which destroyed the offices of the District Commissioner, Simla.
45. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4163-7751, Trade Agent Gartok to Government of Punjab Hill States, 9 September 1938; Pranavananda (1983: 242).
46. This meant that the imperial government was satisfied that "The arrangements which have been made to restrict passage of the frontier should secure our being consulted in every case before any European crosses the southern or western border of Tibet"; OIOC, L/P&S/10/186, file note by C.L.S. Russell, 12 January 1906.
47. NAI, Foreign Department 1905, Secret E, July 48-49, C.Sherring to Government of India, 1 May 1905, enclosing application; file note by C. Russell, 9 June 1905; Foreign Department Index, 1922-23, File No.1018X; Foreign Department Index, January to June 1919, External May 64.
48. OIOC, L/P&S/12/4287, various correspondence; L/P&S/12/4289-56 various correspondence.
49. The exact number of European visitors to the region is probably impossible to ascertain due to the number of illicit journeys undertaken, particularly by British officers on leave.
50. Regarding Tucci, see OIOC, L/P&S/12/4247. This lengthy file deals with Tucci's relations with the British imperial government; Re Blackney, see Pranavananda (1983:227); Snelling (1990:214-6).

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Ganja and Murdo: The Social Construction of Space at Two Pilgrimage Sites in Eastern Tibet

Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin

In recent years thinking about space in the social sciences has undergone a serious reassessment. A number of major theoretical works have contested the ways in which temporality, the social construction of time, privileged the process of becoming (how things got that way) in social thought over the last century. These recent works seek to give spatiality, the social construction of space and social being (how things are), its proper due.¹ These models seek not to displace time, but consider the dialectic between these two fundamental aspects of social life, to wit, how social life is comprised of multidimensional systems of movement within both time and space. Human engagement with landscape appropriates and reshapes the material world, and, in turn, is reshaped by it, in a continual and reciprocal process. This process must also be considered within sets of discursive practices, which offer a plurality of different representations of space-time.

Tibetan pilgrimage has to do with place (*gnas*) and visiting (*mjal*) or encircling (*bskor*) it. We are concerned here with pilgrimage places, which, for Tibetans, seem to be distinguished from other culturally appropriate arenas of religious action by movement in or journeying to sacred places. We find in general that these landscapes are not immutably “natural,” nor are their meanings inherent in their features or signs, but that we need instead to consider both their social histories and the dynamic relations among their signs.

We borrow liberally from E.V. Daniel’s description of two Sri Lankan pilgrimage places,² referring throughout to two discursive modes: the ontic and the epistemic. The first term designates “being in the world” or, here, participation in the pragmatic act of pilgrimage; the second, “seeing the world”, embodies historical discourse. We wish to consider what happens to space when people come to negotiate it. How are space and place defined, depending on who is defining them and in what contextual mode?

If history or the epistemic mode is “about” the construction of systematized spatial codings, the mythic or ontic mode is about place, being and participating in space and its immediate axiomatic values. These modes act dialectically. While the epistemic mode is held together chronologically and by the logic of cause and effect, it may, as Daniel asserts, become ontic when discourse becomes non-reflexive and concepts fail to rise above the threshold of consciousness into the possibility of argument. The ontic becomes epistemic when the mythic becomes rationalized into history. Further, when dominated by centrifocality or performative meanings, spatiality/place tends towards the ontic. When boundary-directed or centripetal, place becomes space and tends toward the epistemic referential constructs of history. The centrifocality of place, in turn, is dominated by iconic signs—recapitulation, replication of forms with regard to landscape, person and community, the agglomeration of meaning. At boundaries, we find the dispersed epistemic symbols of space—interpretation, new meanings and ideologies, social convention. These signs, though, may be mediated by pragmatic indices or contiguities.

Post-modern geography has been concerned principally with material relations and modes of production. But here we also wish to consider how interaction becomes stretched over space and time, and how landscapes are connected or intertwined in relations of authoritative power. Here we follow some of the recent discussions of competing discourses in the social construction of space by Ann Anagnost.³ Both state ideologies and to a large extent rationalized religious systems tend to proffer official, historically rationalized epistemic symbols and concepts of space and time. States project images of a unified body of will backed by a rational agenda. Often, popular religious acts, such as pilgrimage, disrupt and subvert the state’s totalizing project by reasserting local place identity. The state, on the one hand, attempts to disenchant iconic ritual place into space by reinscribing it into secular terms. But it is never allowed the last word as local memory reinserts itself into local place and as space reasserts itself as place. To some extent, the same process is apparent in the rationalized theology of the church. There are, e.g., numerous attempts in the Tibetan scholastic tradition to synthesize mythic and “nonrational” elements of folk belief as signs or sacra into larger universal models.

In comparing the two pilgrimage places, Ganja (Rgan-gya) and Murdo (Murdo, Dmu-rdo, etc.), we show that while the first seems dominated by epistemic signs and the second by ontic ones, both contain a sufficiency of indices, such that each also shows countervailing tendencies, resulting from the interplay of material conditions, social groupings and values.

Ganja

Rgan-gya Brag-dkar (alternatively, Gnya'-gong Brag-dkar) is the “most famous pilgrimage place here,” according to one informant, “the most important holy place,” despite its being only 40 or 50 kilometres from the renowned Labrang (Bla-brang) Monastery in A-mdo (Gansu). Brag-dkar is an impressive scarp rising

vertically for several hundred meters and several miles in length, capped by northern and western grassy tablelands as it rises toward the border of Qinghai.

Much about it occurs in historical records as a frontier between China and Tibet.⁴ At one time (pre-eighteenth century) the rulers of Rgan-gya owned the site of Labrang and used it as their winter pasturage.⁵ Although the tables are now turned in terms of the ownership of the Brag-dkar Monastery, residents of the area still see the old relations as important. Moreover, a branch monastery (*dgon-lag*) of Labrang's Rgyud-smad grwa-tshang is built on the site of the destroyed A-mdo Lha-khang ka-med. The informant continues:

If you go to Lhasa people will say,

"A mdo lha khang ka med mjal e myong?

A mdo bla ma mgo khra mjal e myong?"

[Have you visited A-mdo Lha-khang ka-med?

Have you met the mottle-headed lamas of A-mdo?]

...There's a lake at A-myes Dar-rgyas [a *gzhi-bdag* mountain behind Brag-dkar] which reflects Labrang.

...There's a huge cave at Brag-dkar whose measure is hard to know. It's said that the east door is in Rgan-gya and the west is in Lhasa. [The pilgrimage guide (*dkar-chag*) though specifically mentions Nagara in India, the connection being via the body-cycle of Bde-mchog. Others told us how a dog, entering the cave here, emerged some days later at the pilgrimage place Shel-dgon in Reb-skong or at Sprel-rdzong Brag-dkar, south of Lake Kokonor.]

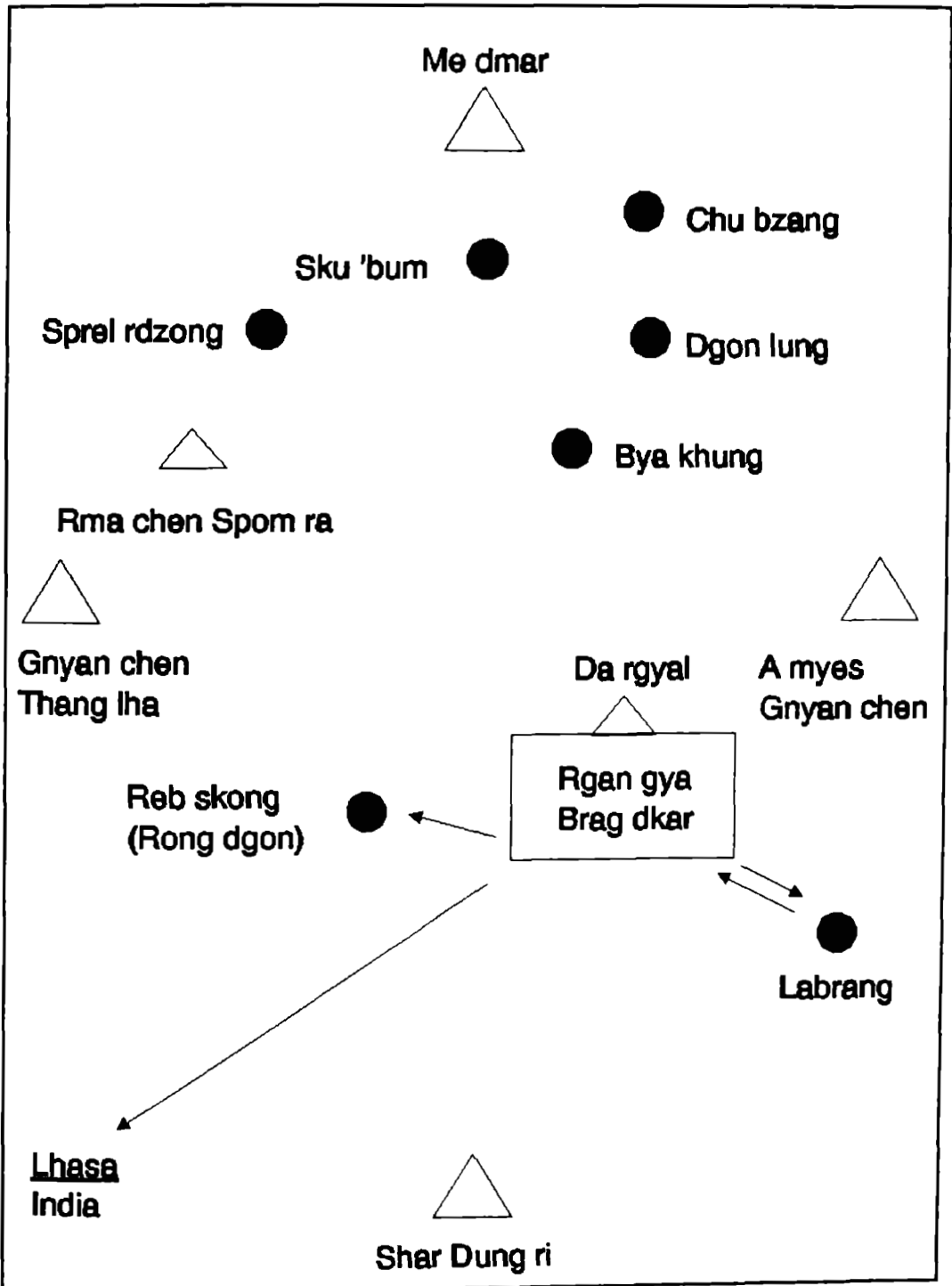
Statements like these appear to take us in two directions at once. First, like all pilgrimage places, Brag-dkar is maintained to be the centre of everything, especially through its connection with the famous, but now destroyed, A-mdo Lha-khang ka-med; if you haven't been here, you haven't been anywhere. Indeed the centrifocality of a given place appears to be the abiding strategy in virtually all pilgrimage guides in any case.

However, this assertion is simultaneously undercut by the second and stronger tendency to connect it with various frontiers: Labrang, various monasteries in A-mdo, Tibet/India which appear in rapid succession in the statement. This is even more striking when we add the statements of other informants (see sketch 1: Ganja).

Brag-dkar, even according to its *dkar-chag*,⁶ is fairly small potatoes, cosmically considered. It belongs to the Bde-mchog cycle of the twenty-four heroes and heroines generated by He-ru-ka to do battle with their monstrous opponents. This of course ramifies its connections to a pan-Tibetan/Indian phenomenon: the twenty-four mountains, the thirty-two countries and the eight graveyards, and the representations of these places.⁷ Thus it is virtually linked to every important pilgrimage place in Tibet.

The owner of the place and the monastery is a female incarnate, Khams Gung-ru ye-shes mkha'-'gro, one of the 24 heroines.⁸ The present monastery, a

branch the Lower Tantric College at Labrang, was established by the Third Gungthang Ngag-dbang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan (late eighteenth century) in accordance with urging and prophecies from many famous lamas and teachers. Several pages in the short *dkar-chag* are devoted to its justification as a pilgrimage and meditation centre.



Sketch 1: Ganja

There are doubtless much older myths about the special holiness of the place, but we could not collect them in the single day we were there, and in any case, local consciousness does seem dominated by Brag-dkar's universal spatial connections and frontiers. Whatever place-*an-sich* may have been, it now seems inextricably incorporated into a wider and more universalized tapestry, whose weavers are a monkish elite that has created a mytho-historical system from a wider repertoire of myth and story, drawn from well beyond Brag-dkar's space, and which are connected as pragmatic indices to historical and religious symbols.

Interviews with pilgrims who have been to Brag-dkar seem to concord with our own analytic traditions of "seeing" pilgrimage. For example, we interview a 64-year-old ex-monk in Sa-dkyil village in Reb-skong (Qinghai), who has been to Ganja thrice between 1981 and 1988. He is an organized man and fetches his diary to check his recollections. We read in this a "classic" interpretation in our own tradition of pilgrimage analysis, a tripartite life-death-life scenario of transformation. He first names the cave's features as they occur in sequence, e.g., Gung-thang Rinpoche's fingerprints, the wooden plank that was put down outside the cave when the Panchen Lama came, the picture U-rgyan Rinpoche drew behind the two lions with his own fingernail, 'Jig-byed's body-form (*sku*), which is the main thing (*gtso-bo*) for Dge-lugs-pas, etc. He then tells us:

At this point in the cave, people used to have a twelve fathom-long leather belt to descend to Bde-mchog yab-yum pond, near which is Tārā and clouds and the guts of Gshin-rje. This is Bde-mchog yab-yum's graveyard and altar (*tshogs-bul-sa*). Nearby is a granite stone for crushing bones.

It was at this point, he says, that he felt a sense of nervousness, where Gshin-rje, Lord of Death, had disembowelled a *srin-mo* and threw her guts on a rock. Next to them is the *srin-mo*'s heart.

In the pond is 'Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa's conch. You can see this in the torchlight. Some saw the conch's opening, but they could not speak out (for being overawed). . .

There is a crack, and then the cave is said to lead to Sprel-rdzong Brag-dkar Monastery (Qinghai). There is a cold wind in that crack, so no one wanted to go on. A boy, a girl and I went through the crack, but we could not move further into the larger cave beyond.

. . . There is a rock representing Lha-mo Byang-ri dmar-po (in Lhasa)... Then you get to a spot where you have to crawl called Gshin-rje's Road, seven or eight meters deep. There you have to use a leather belt to climb back up.

You are now on the way back. When you climb back up you see a natural image of Thugs-rje chen-po and you feel relieved...

From here you can see the entrance looking like a small mirror... When you come out of the cave, you turn and see another meditation cave of Shes-rab rgya-mtsho. There are full blossoms of *rtsa padma* there. On the dark side of the hill is Padma 'byung-gnas's cave...

You cannot understand most of the signs without a guide.

Another interview with an old layman from Sog-ru village in the same locality also emphasizes the classical transforming powers of the pilgrimage place and process.

To the east is a famous place called Da(r)-rgyal... In particular is the holy place (*gnas dam-pa*) called Da-rgyal g.yang-mtsho. It was blessed by gods and *lha-ma-yin*, so it is a lake that is wonderful (*ngo-mtshar*), so attractive it steals your mind away against your will and really produces faith.

If we pilgrims go to Ganja, first we must go to visit Da-rgyal g.yang-mtsho. At that time, if you want to know the path that lies before you, you do *bsangs-mchod* on the lake shore, say prayers and concentrate one-pointedly on the three refuges by means of the three doors. When you do that, in the lake the five rainbow colours emerge and if you examine their appearance, it is similar to your own future path. The amount of your *'phrin-las* and what kinds of *bar-chad* and *dgra-bgegs* you have are as clear as in Lha-mo lung-mtsho [in Tibet], and hence it is something that produces profound faith. Some pilgrims cry out of faith spontaneously. If you go to this place, whoever the person is, you will find happiness (*bde-ba*) and firm irreversible faith will be born...

If you go downhill from Da-rgyal g.yang-mtsho there is Rgan-gya Brag-dkar. It is a great blessed place, a place where many holy ones, such as Shar Skal-ldan rgya-mtsho, stayed, and hence it is a famous great place. There is said to be a palace where Bde-mchog is, but I never saw it. I have gone there three times. It takes half a day to go through the cave...

On the rock walls are natural deity statues and formations that are behind comprehension. When you see them your hair stands on end for faith and it produces awe. When you see the natural statues, vajras and conch, etc., you think that it is impossible for human artifice to have made them, only the gods' magic (*'phrul-ba*)... When you see them, you become speechless and your mind becomes unforgettably happy.

Officially, Ganja is a "tourist spot", an adjunct to Labrang. The world-famous monastery of Labrang draws not only Tibetan, Mongol and Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, but bus loads of both Chinese and foreign tourists, as well as Western dharma seekers to the advantage of the now partly museumized monastery, the merchants and innkeepers of the town (Xiahe), and the coffers of the county government.⁹ A Californian studying with her guru (who resided in the United States for ten years) at the Sngags-pa grwa-tshang, tells us that during the recent consecration activities for Labrang's new assembly hall (1990), she will escape the madding crowd by going to Ganja Brag-dkar, which "reminds me of New Mexico." Though her image of the space is even more universal than envisioned by the writers of the *dkar-chag*, for her the place contains no presences, no things that are, in the words of de Certeau, no longer there, that make a place real.

But such non-presences do signify for two Tibetan cadres and their female relations that we meet at Ganja's cave, its most famous site. The men, undoubtedly concerned with their political identity, style themselves "tourists", not pilgrims, as they somewhat "reluctantly" follow their womenfolk down the ravine to the cave's mouth. The ceremonial scarves they carry, they say, have been given them by their relatives back home to gain merit by presentation in the cave, Bde-mchog's own underground body-lair.

It is not an attractive place—full of slime, black as the waistcoat of hell, steep, narrow, and one must go barefoot in the bargain. Our monk-guide, one of several from the monastery, tells us it's not easy. One lady bravely remarks it would be stupid not to go, having come all this way (she then gave up a furlong into the cave). The guide begins his description at the cave mouth: lions, elephants, the root of Padmasambhava's birth-lotus, ambrosial drippings, medicinal scrapings—the usual indices to and symbols of holiness.

The group pushes on, the guide urging, explaining and leading prayers; the rest responding ever louder and more quickly, sign following sign, proper prayers said. The guide's technique is rapid-fire, to overwhelm. One barely has time to see one spot, absorb an explanation or say one's prayers, before the next is in sight or in sound. Following the guide single file through the dark, much of what he says is lost to those in the rear. While initially those in earshot try to be helpful in passing along the information, before long pretence to intellect is abandoned, and soon one's frustration in barely knowing what is being said or seen gives way to befuddlement in the service of holiness, then to just being there.

Lake X, a small underground pool, appears in the murk. One cadre, chairman of the People's Representative Assembly of X, the place and the lake which our underground puddle indices, says,

We came here as separate people today. Let's pray so that in our next lives we're all born in the same city.

His sidekick, a pistol-toting Internal Security man, says,

Even though we're from separate places, today we're friends who have gone on pilgrimage. So we have to say a good collective prayer (*thun-mong gi smon-lam*) at this lake. Since I represent all the people at X, the words to the prayer are... [leads prayer].

Whereas suspicion and caution reigned before the trip, the outbreak of *communitas* continues, hours later, back at the cars, when the cadres bestow slices of watermelon, along with grins, endless handshakes, and recountings of the trip upon all and sundry. The official tourist of the official tourist spot has disappeared as "rational" Party Man gives way to universal fellowship in the unmarked and undifferentiated hyper-rational space that is proposed to lurk beyond the ordinary world by the religious tradition. The signs in the cave have done their convincing job, pulling the pilgrims towards meaning and undistancing space. Entering into performance of the pilgrimage act may yield meaningful mythic experience, but at the same time this experience is still

validated by predication on and reference to the epistemic discourse. Here, however, the references have been switched from official purpose and decorum to “official” orthodoxly interpreted religion.

The pragmatic indices contained in the cave have seemingly worked to transform space into place. But overall, as a relatively “new” pilgrimage and tourist place, Rgan-gya Brag-dkar still seems dominated by its epistemic frontiers and boundaries, rather than by its iconic centre. It takes its legitimacy from its metonymic connectedness to and symbols of places outside its space. And even when it tends toward centredness, the immediacy of its experience is modulated and interpreted through reflexive understanding.

Murdo

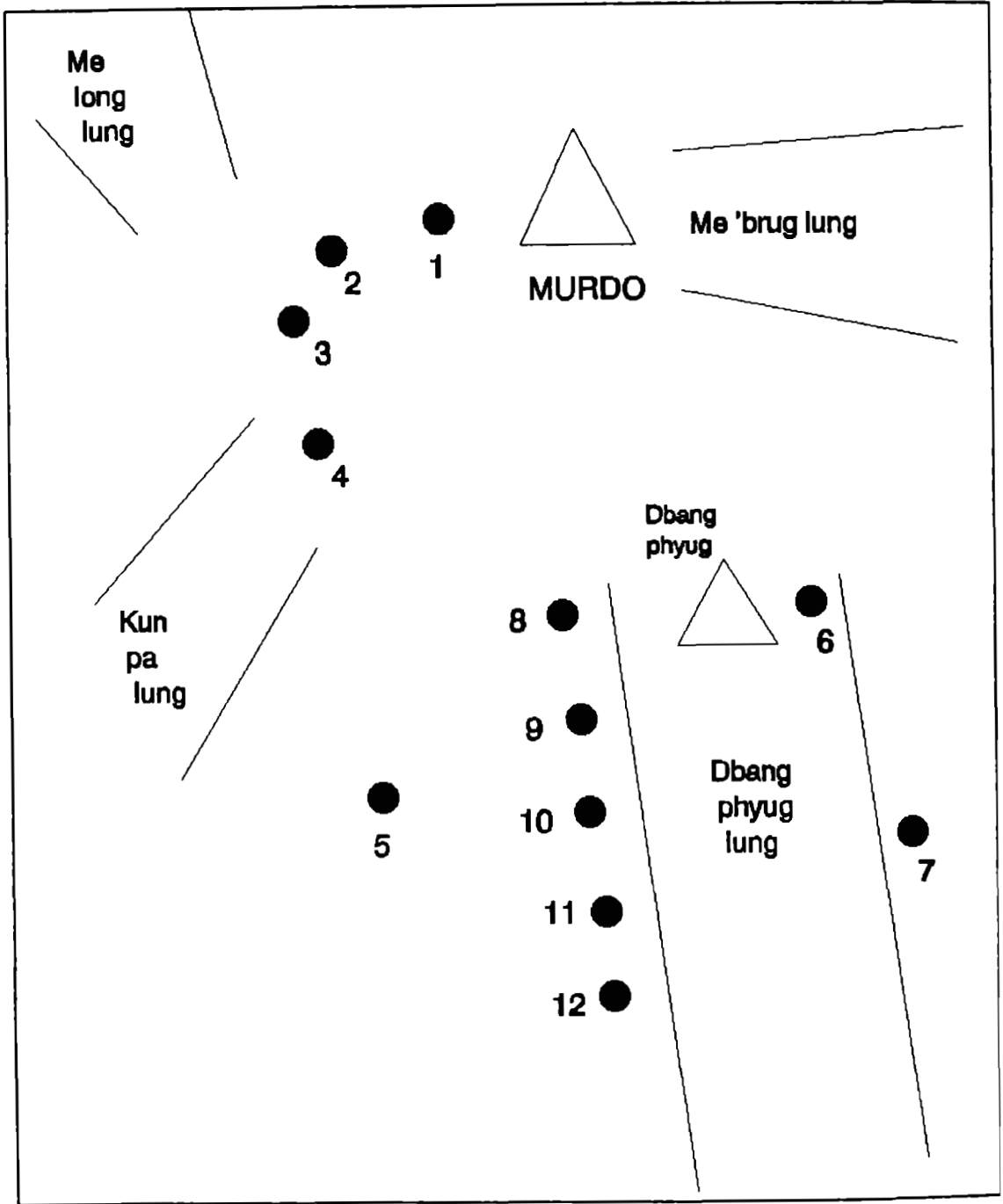
Murdo is, all agree, the centre of Rgyal-mo-rong. Had we the space, we could problematize this statement, for just what constitutes Rgyal-mo-rong is unclear to us and occasionally to our informants. Nevertheless, the pilgrimage guides make some attempt to connect Murdo to other cycles, but in the main they describe its many holy features in extensive detail.¹⁰ In many ways the epistemicized view concurs with the ontic one.

In government publications, one tale among possibly hundreds of Murdo myths is valorized; the mountain is named after a Rgyal-mo-rong hero who helped an early Tibetan king defeat an invasion from India or Nepal.¹¹ The *Selections of Historical Data of Danba* [Rong-mi Brag-mgo], volume two (1989), speaks of Murdo’s having 108 scenic (not holy) spots, and of its being a source of mica and other minerals, medicines, and fruit, and only then a holy mountain.

In 1985, the county’s Political Consultative Conference, Department of the United Front, and Office of Religious Affairs formed an exploratory group to make Murdo a tourist spot. Since there are pilgrims there year-round (especially in the summer for Murdo’s “birthday” when, we were told, anywhere between three to ten thousand pilgrims attend), an official told us, they wished to “help pilgrims understand the place. But the main purpose was to expand it into a tourist spot.” From the state’s point of view, without its rational planning, the pilgrims’ cognition of place is obviously incomplete. The ontic centre must be expanded to include planned features, signs, horizons and boundaries.

In 1986-1988, repairs were made to the Murdo Lha-khang in Yuezha Village at the foot of the mountain. The river was rechannelled to create a pretty tree-planted island with a pavilion, joined to the shore by a bridge. Then the county ran out of money, but the government plans to raise money through donations and other means to continue its improvement plans. Read otherwise, it means to domesticate and rationalize untrustworthy superstitions by relabelling them as planned tourist/official religious activities subsumed within the master plan, to which state authority obviously holds the imaginary key. To pilgrims, though, Murdo is another place—a centre, a *gzhi-bdag*, a god, a bodhisattva. We may imagine that the state’s plan has been and will be defeated not only by finances, but also by an ontic cognition which brooks little centrifugation.

A study of the pilgrimage paths around Murdo shows this. To begin with, Murdo is enormous; it is a subrange of mountains encompassing about 60 separate peaks (according to a pilgrimage guide), which dominates a large portion of Rgyal-mo-rong. The climb up the main mountain, Murdo itself (4550 m.), is minimally a three-day affair of wearying uphill struggle. Maximally, a few hundred persons a year manage it (see sketch 2: Some Sites at Murdo).



Sketch 2: Some Sites at Murdo

Key to the Sketch

1. Cave with rooms for pilgrims.
2. Tshe-ring la-rtse; there are perhaps 500 stone *la-rtse* in the area.
3. Mtsho-nag: this has a white *stūpa* which first appeared around 1988. There are many *maṇi* around the lake and maybe 150 *la-rtse* on the surrounding peaks. Some are private, some belong to villages, some to entire regions. The lake is fed by two springs, male and female. Pilgrims think it is holy water and bring it back home. If a pregnant woman drinks from the male spring, the child will be a boy; from the female, a girl.
4. Nor-bu-phug: Approximately half way to the summit, it contains a building with prayer wheels (*'khor-khang*), guest quarters (*mgron-khang*) and a two-storeyed monks' quarters (*grwa-shag*). There are also three *stūpa*-s.
5. Bsam-gtan-phug: Lower down on the flanks, it is currently the only cave regularly occupied, currently by a Chinese monk and a Tibetan nun.
6. Bar-do-phug.
7. Sgrol-ma.
8. Bairo sgrub-phug: there are many meditation caves (*sgrub-phug*) and *maṇi* all over the immediate area.
9. G.yu-sgra snying-po.
10. Seng-ge rta-pa.
11. Nyi-ma.
12. Zla-ba.

Dbang-phyug: Beneath the cave is a ladder. As you go up the eighteen-step ladder becomes narrower to an opening where people burn incense. Only people with good hearts (a Chinese source says thin people) can pass through. The crack in the cave is the road to paradise.¹²

Another horrid alternative to the peak which can be accomplished in a back-breaking single day is to venture into a blind canyon filled with holy caves and Murdo's most impressive feature, the enormous tower called Murdo Dbang-phyug, to wit, Murdo's phallus. According to one informant, only eight persons have made it to the highest and most important cave by August of this year (1990). By far, most pilgrims stick to the roads, which, though longer, are easier.

The *nang-bskor* takes one around only the temple and to Sengge Brag, the large rock in the river, Murdo's vehicle, immediately south.

A middle path (*bar-bskor*), seven days by foot, takes one to Chu-chen (Jinchuan), and Btsan-lha (Xiaojin) via Zur mda'-lung.

The most common variant of the *phyi-bskor* (there are many) is:¹³

- Sengge Rdzong: location of the temple
- (Mgo-spro-s nang): location of two monasteries across the river; one is a *dgon-lag* of Lha-mo-rtse in Dar-rtse-mdo
- Rong-mi Brag-mgo [Danba]
- Dpa'-dbang, alt. Pa-wam [Bawang]

- Brag-steng [Badi]
- (G.yung-drung lha-stengs)
- Chu-chen [Jinchuan]
- (Thugs-rje chen-po) [Guanyin Bridge]
- 'Bar-khams: location of Vairocana's *sgrub-phug*
- Across the 'Bum-ro pass to Btsan-lha

In 1989, we met a playwright and Rgyal-mo-rong nationalist who told us of a giant pilgrimage around Murdo which embraces all of Rgyal-mo-rong and more.

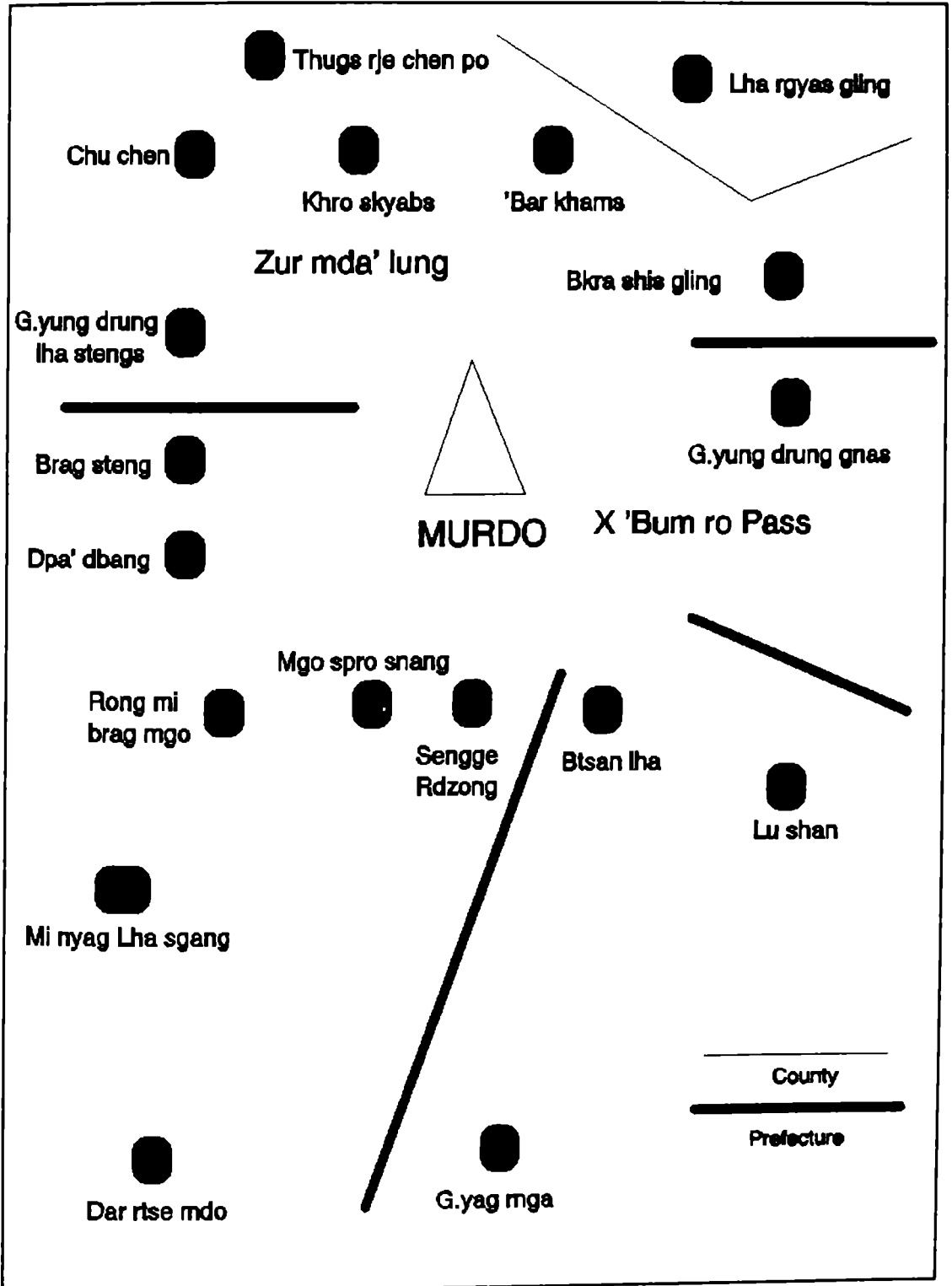
- Rong-mi Brag-mgo
- Chu-chen
- 'Bar-khams
- Lha-rgyal-gling Printery [Shuajin]
- Bkra-shis-gling [Lixian]
- G.yung-drung-gnas [Mt. Qingcheng]
- Lushan
- G.yag-mga [Ya'an]
- Dar-rtse-mdo [Kangding]

This is a route which crosses five prefectural boundaries. He claimed this was a traditional pilgrimage route, but it also obviously suits his wider vision of Rgyal-mo-rong. He plans to take nine years to complete it (See sketch 3: Pilgrimage Routes Around Murdo).¹⁴

Murdo's nodal spatiality is nearly wholly centrifocal. Despite the urging of the *dkar-chag* to see it in indexical and symbolic light, for local pilgrims it is mostly a place to fulfil the wishes of this life and more vaguely a source of merit and blessing for the next. Indeed, people say that Murdo's wrath will cut down anyone who comes with bad intentions, and that it is necessary to come with good ones. But beyond simple pietisms such as this, it is unquestionably fertility and the riddance of disease which seem to dominate the pilgrims' imaginations, in an unsystematic, undifferentiated sort of way—the sort of thing that drives systematic theologians and “anti-superstition” officialdom mad.

Fertility is certainly the outstanding feature. In bygone days, unmarried girls of the south-western and western flanks of Murdo wore naught below the waist but string fringes, a charming practice deemed unseemly by Chinese officials, who occasionally ordered a halt to the custom but were powerless to stop it (until the 1940s). This costume exposed their genitals and insured Murdo's fertile blessings.¹⁵ Arguments still rage between the residents of these places as to which way Murdo faces, but most agree the honours go to the south-western villages since Murdo's giant penis is visible from those parts. An informant confessed to us that in her youthful ignorance she kept circumambulating Murdo's wife, Mt. Stag (?Rta)-nag, and begot nothing but daughters for her troubles. We are so

impressed with this aspect of Murdo's nature that we joke about having to report Murdo to the Family Planning Committee to be fined for his violations.



Sketch 3: Pilgrimage Routes Around Murdo

On the other hand, as a strongly regional centre, Murdo does permit some leakage to the south, specifically to Mi-nyag lha-sgang and to Dar-rtse-mdo. At the former place we find the placebo Jo-bo. Here, when the Chinese princess Kong-jo rested on her way to Tibet, the Lhasa Jo-bo, charmed by the auspiciousness of the place, refused to move until a substitute was built and left there.¹⁶ One informant allowed as how though Murdo was a great god, the Mi-nyag Jo-bo is the “biggest Buddha here.” Another reason to go to Mi-nyag lha-sgang is that “this is where lamas who have studied in Tibet have come.” Murdo, according to him, is “like an officer, who blesses people when they are alive; the Buddha (the Jo-bo) is like an official who blesses one after death.”

Dar-rtse-mdo is the place to where, according to the short myth, Murdo’s sister fled with his household keys. Murdo chased her all the way there, flinging boulders, which can still be seen in various rivers, as he went, but he failed to catch her. When he calmed down, he built Rgyal-mo-rong *la-rtse* in Dar-rtse-mdo. People here say that if a local girl marries a Dar-rtse-mdo boy, the marriage will be blessed by both wealth and fertility.

If we regard the structure of these spatial assertions, we see that Dar-rtse-mdo’s riches and Murdo’s fertility and health are mediated by Mi-nyag lha-sgang’s otherworldly power along this north-south axis.¹⁷ This axis is dominated by ontic icons of this-worldly being, those signs that constitute for local people the irreducible goods of everyday life: health, wealth, fertility, love. The larger space is complemented and completed on an east-west axis along which flow epistemic symbols of superordinate power, both the political power of the state and the religious power administered through an elite clergy.

The equivalent relationship of the two axes is made plain by their mythic discourses. In the first instance, a woman, Murdo’s sister, takes the household keys, that is to say a conventional sign for household wealth, which is returned by males (Dar-rtse-mdo males who marry Rgyal-mo-rong women). In the second, a woman, the Chinese princess, takes the pre-eminent symbol of Tibetan Buddhism, the Lhasa Jo-bo, now and then established in Lhasa’s central cathedral, to Tibet, and Buddhism, as it were, returns in the form of monks who come to Mi-nyag lha-sgang after studying in Tibet. This east-west axis must enter into spatial cognito, for it is through the political power of the state, as well as through the rationalized theology of the clergy, that the good things of everyday life—health, wealth and fertility—are ideally constituted (see sketch 4: A Concept of Rgyal-mo-rong).

Although Murdo acts as a centre “out there” for pilgrims from afar, principally Bon-po pilgrims from A-mdo,¹⁸ its limited centrifugalism and strong centripetalism can be perhaps profitably seen in the light of Rgyal-mo-rong identity. As one elder informant put it,

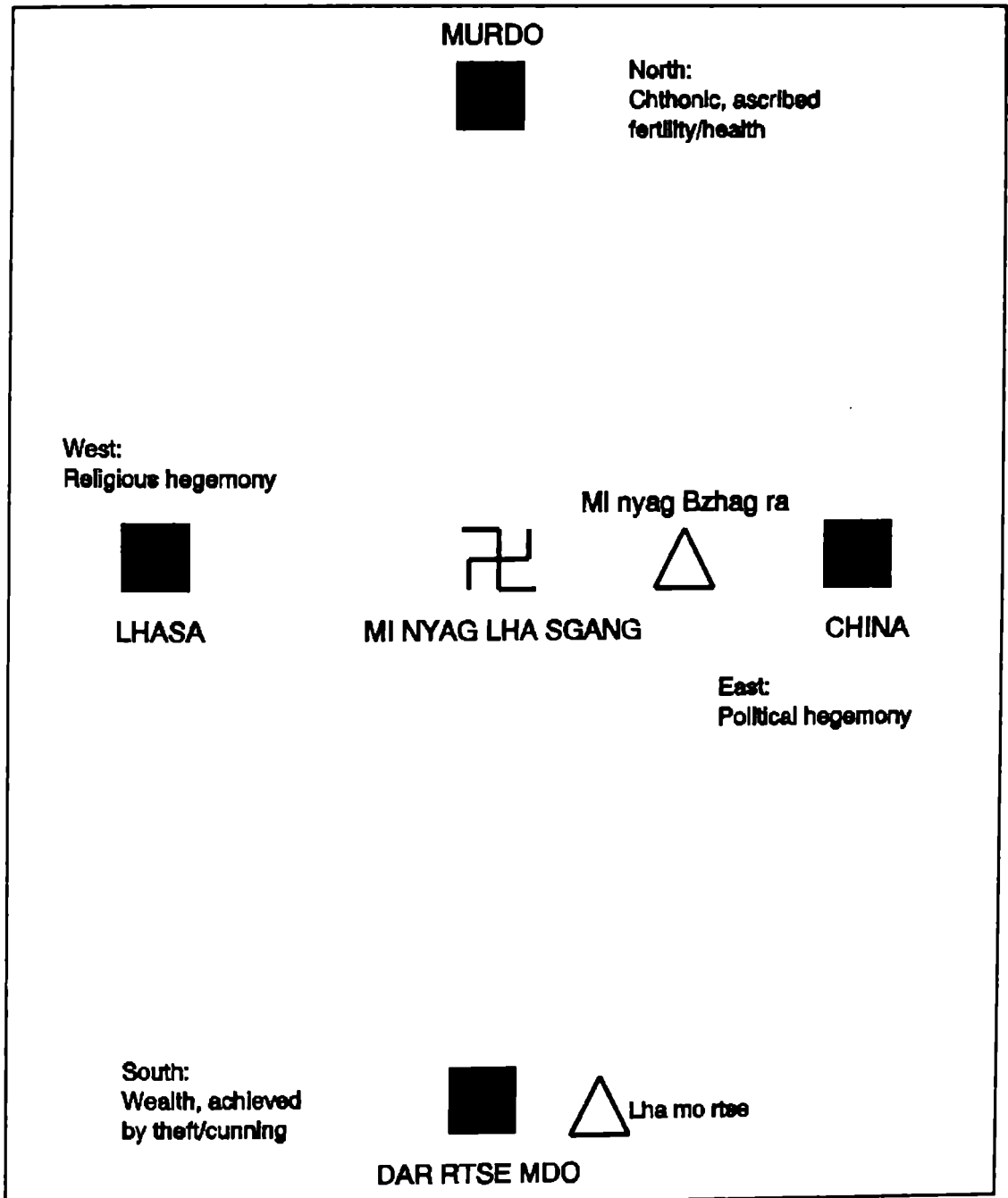
I have not been anywhere else but Murdo, Mi-nyag lha-sgang and Emei Shan. I can fulfil my wishes to go to Murdo and Mi-nyag lha-sgang, so why should I go to a distant place?

There are many holy places, but one can feel they are the same. I

feel there's a difference in doing circumambulations around Murdo and Mi-nyag lha-sgang, but I can't tell for sure what it is.

Asked why he has not gone on pilgrimage to Lhasa, he says:

Buddhists feel that Lhasa and Murdo are equal, but when they go on pilgrimage, they will feel Murdo belongs to themselves, Rgyal-mo-rong. It is their own holy mountain and it should be worshipped by themselves. Lhasa belongs to Lhasans, but for the whole Tibetan area, they are equal in position and therefore should be worshipped.



Sketch 4: A Concept of Rgyal-mo-rong

Asked why he went to Mi-nyag lha-sgang, he says:

Because Lhasa is far from Khams, so in their minds pilgrims feel satisfied. For Mi-nyag lha-sgang, the famous lamas have been to Tibet and when they return they stay there. If you want to visit them, they are there in the monastery. So a pilgrimage to Mi-nyag lha-sgang is like a pilgrimage to Tibet.

Murdo appears to be a giant regional marker. Rgyal-mo-rong has been a frontier area for more than a millennium, from the time the Tibetan king Khri Srong-lde-btsan garrisoned its eastern flanks in the eighth century until the present. It is perhaps best known as the site of a bloody and protracted war during the Qianlong period against the rebellious Rab-brtan, Btsan-lha, Khro-skyabs and Tshe-dbang kings during the 1740s and 1770s. After the second war, an estimated 70 to 80 percent of the population of western Rgyal-mo-rong had been killed or displaced, the imperial court was nearly bankrupt (some 90 million *liang* of silver had been expended), and the region had seen unbelievable bloodshed, destruction and treachery on all sides.¹⁹

Wu Dexu, the compiler of *A Brief history of the Zhanggu (Brag mgo) Garrison* reports (p. 26 ff.):

During the [second] rebellion of the Jinchuan chieftains, the great general A Guangting chose the southern pass to attack Seng-ge shang [the king of Btsan-lha]. The latter took advantage of the terrain and put up a hard resistance. Suddenly a giant appeared from the mountain waving a halberd, and attacked straight into the rebel's area. The barbarians were scattered and defeated. The imperial army seized the opportunity to destroy the fortress, capture the town, and attack Sengge Rdzong. They smashed the enemy's resistance and advanced victoriously everywhere. After the suppression of the rebellion, the general petitioned the emperor to include the mountain as a ritual site. Every year in spring and autumn the ritual is sponsored by Mao gong ting [the administrative unit including Btsan-lha]. Whenever the will of heaven shines the mountains respond with miraculous effect not only by conferring rain, but the blessing of happiness to the ordinary people of the mundane world.

The giant, of course, is Murdo. Why he attacks the indigenes and aids the imperial troops is a mystery. In official discourse, the story upholds heaven's mandate in a just war. But one can hardly expect natives of Rgyal-mo-rong to concur in this view. One might guess that for them the reasons include the normal ambivalence of such mountain deities, or, just as vaguely, some form of karmic retribution for past sins. It appears to be historically true though that even the present Murdo *lha-khang* began as a tribute to Rgyal-mo-rong's own ambiguous centredness, a shrine erected by the imperial court, with annual rituals included in the court calendar.²⁰

The eastern and southern marches of Rgyal-mo-rong are heavily "Hanitized". Yuezha village, at the foot of Murdo, where the temple and the most frequently used path to the top are located, is primarily occupied by Han, some Qiang, who were employed as soldiers in Qianlong's war and who later settled here, and only a few Tibetans. A lady from a hamlet a few thousand feet above the road on Murdo's southern flank, at whose house we stop for tea on our way to the top, tells us that only a few of the old folks can speak Tibetan now. Everyone else calls himself Han these days, although they are listed in the census as Tibetan nationality (Zangzu). She herself has never been to the top of the mountain or to the caves. She has visited the temple to burn incense and to pray (in Chinese), but she has never been on pilgrimage. À la Victor Turner, the locals do not seem to go on pilgrimage around Murdo. In Brag-mgo, the county seat a few kilometres to the west, there are far fewer Han, and almost none at all along the western scarp. It is pilgrims from this less "sinicized" side and the uplands to the east that we meet.

In addition to this, Rgyal-mo-rong's identity as a Tibetan region is not clear. Many persons claim their descent is not *bod-rigs*, but *kirig* (orthography uncertain).²¹ Arguments among Chinese and Tibetan linguists and sociologists abound as to whether the Rgyal-mo-rong dialects belong to the Western or Central Tibetan language subfamilies or as to whether there exists sufficient ethnic distinction between some local populations to make them either Tibetan or Qiang. (Nor should we fail to include the political claims and counter-claims of Tibetans and Chinese as to their status.) However, in terms of religious sentiments most people of Rgyal-mo-rong are for the most part emphatically Tibetan, be they "Buddhist" or "Bon".

Perhaps then Murdo, as a central place, is a special icon of Rgyal-mo-rong local and regional identity. Pilgrimage to Murdo is also, plainly, a return to the primal concerns of being-in-the-world. Unlike so many man-built pilgrimage places, like monasteries which were easily subject to destruction in the days of Democratic Reform and the Cultural Revolution, it is an indestructible place of nature, which imposes itself upon local consciousness in defiance of official geography, history, theology and even the social facts of everyday life. At the same time, however, its centrifocality is insufficient to cope with all of life's larger necessities. Nodally and regionally, its presence is plain, but in the larger scheme of things, its hinterlands come perforce into recognition of nonlocal spatiality and reality. It is at once a recognition of Murdo's centredness and its tenuousness as a frontier place in and of itself. It is at once an ontic centre and an epistemic frontier. In contrast to Ganja which tends to compact space by diffusing its meaning, Murdo pulls things toward it, even in its otherworldly aspects.

Notes

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1. See, e.g., Soja (1989), Giddens (1986) and Harvey (1989).
2. Daniel (1990:227-9, 232-3), see also Daniel (1996: Chapter 2).
3. See Anagnost (1987: 41-61) and (1989).
4. Citing Dunhuang sources, Bkra-shis tshe-ring (1991) says that Da(r)-rgyal, the mountain behind Brag-dkar, is an apotheosized hero, a *blon-chen* of King Srong-btsan, Dar-rgyal Mang-po-che, who lost his life here in a battle with Chinese troops in 659 AD.
5. We were given the household name Rgan-mo-tshang and the "tribal" name Rgan-gya Kha-gya, one of the six Kha-gya tribes in the Labrang area. We were also told that two or three families from Rgan-gya Kha-gya owned the site of the Labrang assembly hall, and that the monastery, until 1959, paid one horse per year to them. There is also a small Bon-po monastery, Rtse-dbus, in the vicinity. We were unable to visit this place or to collect information from Bon-po informants at this time.
6. *Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i pho brang brag dkar gyi gnas bshad he ru ka dpal dgyes pa'i nichod sprin*. There exist several other sources which we have not located, by, e.g., the Gung-thang and 'Jam-dbyangs incarnates, one of the Kirti Rinpoches, and several other noted scholars. See also, for example, the biography of Skal-ldan rgya-mtsho, *Grub chen skal ldan rgya mtsho'i rnam thar yid bzhin dbang gi rgyal bo*, by Ngag-dbang byang-chub bsod-nams. He visited Brag-dkar a number of times between 1627 and 1631 (pp. 20-29), and again in the 1670s, practising meditative retreats, as well as acting as the *bla-ma* of Rgan-gya grwa-tshang. He received many visions and composed several notable *mgur* in praise of the place. We were also told that a small modern pilgrimage (? tourist) guide to Rgan-gya Brag-dkar was published in the 1950s, but we could locate no copy of it.
7. On this network of sites, see Huber (1990: 121-164).
8. See the peculiar history of this figure in Brag-dgon-pa Dkon-mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, pp. 582-583. We cannot omit mention here of Forman's astonishing adventures when he accompanied the last Gung-ru *mkha'-'gro-ma* to a cave at Brag-dkar. Whether the description is "true" or only the product of his own perfervid scenarist's imagination, we leave to the reader to decide. See Forman (1936: 172-186).
9. Ganja and Labrang are designated as "open areas" for foreign tourism. See the chapter by Makley in the present work. Some idea of the economic impact of pilgrimage to Labrang is given by Ming (1992: 11-15).
10. One pilgrimage guide (*dkar-chag*) has recently been published which contains Tibetan texts and a Chinese translation, under the title *Dmu rdo gnas chen gyi gnas yig*

or *Rgyal mo rong gi gnas chen dmu rdo*. The text of the guide, *Sbas pa'i rong bzhi'i nang tshan rgyal rong gnas chen dmu rdo sogs ri bo drug cu'i dkar chag*, was discovered by the *ger-ston* Byang-chub rdo-rje. The collection also contains a prayer (*gso-'debs*), attributed to Vairocana, and a short text on the benefits of circumambulating Murdo by Sangs-rgyas gling-pa. We also have seen a newly hand-written work, as yet unpublished, with the Chinese title *Mo er duo feng jing* [*Scenery of Murdo*], with the possible Tibetan title of *Gnas kyi dkar chags nthong ba rang grol*. We believe this text was written or collected by a monk of Dga'-mal Monastery who was commissioned by the Danba County government to catalogue Murdo's sites for their project. See also the references to Murdo as a place of hidden treasures in the biography of Mkha'-'gro Bde-chen chos-kyi dbang-mo, in *Mkha' 'gro'i rgya mtsho'i ruam thar* (*Account of the lives of the dākiṇī of the New Bon tradition*), particularly pp. 534-535, 545, 554 and the colophon, p. 555.

11. In ancient times, Nepal or India invaded Tibet with an army including 300 elephants. The Tibetan soldiers were defeated. The king asked for help to Rgyal-mo-rong, where the youth Murdo lived. He called on the masses to fight for Tibet, and led an army of Khams-pa youth there. The Tibetan king despised him for his thinness and he was not allowed to go to fight at the front. As time passed the invaders almost reached Lhasa, and Murdo begged the king to allow him to go and fight. The king finally agreed and asked him his terms. Murdo wanted 30 pounds (*jin*) of copper and 30 of charcoal, along with 2000 Tibetan soldiers. He moulded the copper into human-shaped stoves and filled them with charcoal. These he carried to the battlefield. On the day of the battle, he burnt the stoves red-hot. Then he mounted a black donkey to fight the enemy general. During the terrible fight he used a mace to kill his enemy. Then he tore open the enemy general's chest and pretended to take out golden intestines, which he had prepared earlier, and he ate them, frightening the enemy soldiers. They loosed the elephants and Murdo retreated, ordering his troops to push the hot stoves out. The elephants grabbed the stoves with their trunks. They jumped back and trampled the enemy soldiers and thus they were driven out. Murdo led his men home, and because of his wisdom and bravery, the mountain was named after him.
12. See the description of pilgrims to Murdo in Wu Dexu (1968: 17 ff.).
13. The parentheses, e.g., (Mgo-spro-snang) indicate optional stops.
14. Coincidentally, this long route corresponds almost exactly to the Chinese colonial plans in the region. See the diagrammatic sketch (between pp. 28-29) and the relevant discussion in Edgar (1932).
15. Wu Dexu (1968:80) says, "In all Mingzheng territory, . . . the virgins dress in a sleeveless upper garment with both arms bare. The lower part consists of wool weaved into tassels like threads to hold coins, looking like the tail of a horse. They cover their upper back with a goatskin, leaving their midribs bare... Only after they give birth will they don a skirt; otherwise people will laugh at them." Fergusson (1911) writes of the "Bonba" who "insist on the maidens wearing nothing more than a string around their waist, into which is tucked a small lamb skin or tassel made of yarn, which hangs to the knee. After their first child is born they may wear skirts, as the gods have purified them [sic!]. The priests of Bati and Bawang States, where the old Bon cult is still the State religion, teach the people that, if they divert from this ancient custom, the gods will grow angry with them, and they will die off." Edgar (1932:59) writes, "... but only recently have short cotton drawers been considered necessary. These latter may be the result of Chinese influence if not official orders... [T]he primitive garb survive only among unmarried girls or sterile women. It is (a)

a sample of sartorial imbrication where a cape from the shoulders overlaps one attached around the waist; (b) the latter provides no frontal covering but the deficiency is made good by a fringe of woollen cords attached to a girdle that buckles around the waist... Among matrons skirts replace the frontal fringes." See also Edgar (1933-4: 29-30) for speculation on the worship of Murdo, or "The Ogre's Stone," as a survival of paleolithic times, as well as his sketch of Murdo, "A Holy Mountain of the Kiarung," (1924: 28-29). See also Jeffrey (1974: 49-50).

16. See *Dpal lha yongs rdzogs rab dga'i lha khang*, a compilation of texts relating to this place by the last Panchen Lama. It contains "Yang gsang mkha' 'gro'i thugs kyi ti ka las: lha sgang ring mos gnas kyi dkar chags," "Bā lha khang gi gnas bstod," and "Lo rgyus deb ther las gsal ba'i tshig zin zur bkol," several pages citing standard historical sources on the antiquity of Mi-nyag lha-sgang. "Bā lha khang gi gnas bstod," p. 35 (=3a) ff., contains verses relating the story of the Chinese princess and the Jo-bo statue.
17. In real space, Dar-rtse-mdo lies to the south-east of Murdo and Mi-nyag lha-sgangs. However both these places are, and have been for a long time, frontiers of ethnic contact and conflict. Mi-nyag lha-sgangs, on the other hand, is in a generally Hanless Tibetan area. It is well guarded on its east by grasslands and a mountain range which includes the great guardian *gzhi-bdag* mountain Mi-nyag Bzhag-ra. Curiously, or perhaps significantly, it was to this peak that the supernatural ancestor of Mgar Stong-rtzan, the famous minister who accompanied the Chinese princess to Tibet, descended.
18. Or, at least we were told, that they come mostly from Reb-skong and Bayan. We have not been able to confirm this in any way.
19. See, e.g., Que Dan (Chos-brtan) (1989: 129-141). See also Greatrex (1994: 247-263).
20. The temple was destroyed by an accidental fire in 1949 and rebuilt soon after. It was not destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. It today contains, among others, images of Murdo, Thugs-rje chen-po, Thang-stong rgyal-po, Sgrol-ma, Rdo-rje phag-mo or Ye-shes mkha'-'gro, as well as the Jade Emperor. These, we understand, were restored circa 1988. Something of its ambiguous nature can also be seen in its visitors. A busy day might include crowds of both Bon and Buddhist, each circumambulating in opposite directions on its narrow verandas (a sight to behold), and possibly Chinese worshippers as well. The official court rituals (*tai lao*) are described in *Sui jing tun zhi* [*Sui jing Military Area Historical Record*].
21. Jeffrey (1974: 39).

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Gendered Practices and the Inner Sanctum: The Reconstruction of Tibetan Sacred Space in "China's Tibet"¹

Charlene E. Makley

The Monastery

On a typical summer morning at Labrang (Tib. *Bla-brang bKra-shis 'khyil*), a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in south-west Gansu province, China, tour buses drove through the town of Xiahe (pronounced SYA he), down the main market street lined with tourist concessions and bounded on both sides by green mountainsides. They passed the high stone walls that mark the boundaries of Labrang monastery and pulled into its main courtyard, unloading groups of excited, loudly talking Chinese tourists. Their Chinese tour guides gathered them together for last minute announcements before they scattered to haggle with the monk-proprietors over trinkets for sale at the small gift shop, or to buy tickets for monk-led tours of the monastery. Walking disapprovingly among the groups of Chinese proudly posing for photographs with red-robed monks were young western tourists, trying to look as inconspicuous and respectful as possible. They too bought tickets, paying three times the price the Chinese did, and roamed around in small groups or by themselves. Both Chinese and western visitors looked on in astonishment at the sight of a bedraggled pilgrim woman in traditional Tibetan dress, child strapped to her back, doing full-length prostrations as she slowly circumambulated one of the temples. They snapped pictures as an old Tibetan lama was reverently helped to a shiny white Cherokee jeep by his solicitous male followers. Chinese groups exclaimed among themselves at the "strangeness" (Ch. *mosheng*) of the Tibetan monks' and pilgrims' appearance, the darkness of the temple interiors, and the "unbearable" (Ch. *shoubuliao*), heavy smell of butter lamps burning within. Westerners meanwhile clustered about as they waited for the tour to start, and traded stories about the "rudeness" of the Chinese and the ubiquitous "friendliness" and spirituality of the Tibetans.

In the meantime, since I was waiting for my Tibetan woman friend who had gone to find a monk acquaintance from her hometown, and thinking that I would “rise above” this chaotic scene, I had retired to the “reception room”, where the young monk tour guides wait their turns to lead the groups of Chinese and western visitors through the monastery. There, I sat and spoke with Sonam Gyamtso, a 25-year-old monk who, with a rueful smile as three Chinese tourists stood in the doorway and took our picture, shook his head and insisted, when I asked him if this tourist business bothered him, that he was “used to it” by now.² He complained though that the Han Chinese were loud and disrespectful of Tibetan religion, and that he had no time to study for his upcoming examinations on Buddhist scriptures. To emphasize his discontent, Sonam told me that he liked the westerners better than the Chinese since they seemed to appreciate Tibetan culture, and he pointed to the book a western friend gave him, *Freedom in Exile* (the Dalai Lama’s autobiography), recounting to me his own failed attempt to flee to India, where the current Dalai Lama runs his Tibetan government-in-exile. Getting up to begin a tour, Sonam sighed and said that the job of tour guide, a position to which he had been assigned and at which he works seven days a week, should more appropriately be filled by Tibetan *women*.

Gendered Practices of Identity

The sacred needs to be continually hedged in with prohibitions... Relations with it are bound to be expressed by rituals of separation and demarcation and by beliefs in the danger of crossing forbidden boundaries. (Douglas: 21)

As this (highly edited) episode from my experience conducting preliminary research among Tibetans and Chinese in the town of Xiahe illustrates, Xiahe, and especially the Tibetan Buddhist monastery that dominates it, is a contested terrain.³ Located on what is today the border of Qinghai and southern Gansu provinces and on the edge of the grassland steppes as they rise from the loess valleys of north-west China to the beginnings of the Kunlun and Trans-Himalayan mountain ranges, the town has a long history as the hub of complex local and regional relationships among various ethnic and kinship groups extending as far south as southern Sichuan province and as far north and west as Qinghai, Tibet and Mongolia. With its centuries-old dGe-lugs-pa monastery at the centre of this network of socio-economic relationships,⁴ Xiahe is home to urban and agricultural populations of Tibetans, as well as to communities of Mongols, Muslim Chinese (Hui) and Han Chinese. In addition, since the town is located at the juncture of agricultural and pastoral regions, it is an extremely important pilgrimage site for the surrounding populations of Tibetan pastoralists who have for centuries maintained complex political, economic and religious relationships with the monastery. Xiahe thus has a long history as the site upon which differing interests, projects and loyalties have converged and conflicted.

But in order to understand the kinds of contests being played out in Xiahe today, the scene I described above must be viewed within a radically transformed

context that has engendered new goals, new stakes and new constructions of self and other for the various ethnic and tourist groups converging on the town and the monastery. In the following paragraphs I would like to explore some of the consequences and stakes of this transformed terrain for Tibetans in Xiahe through an analysis of *gendered practices* of identity maintenance and reconstruction. Thus like most studies of group identity, mine will focus on constructions of difference: alliances and exclusions around boundaries between a group-identified self and group-labelled other(s). However, contrary to the arguments of earlier theorists of "ethnicity",⁵ I will show that these identifications with difference(s) are *not*, for Tibetans living in and visiting Xiahe, "primordial"; that is, an ascribed set of categories shared by all Tibetans. Instead, I follow such recent theorists as de Certeau, Hall, Foster and others who depict identity as *process*. The "boundaries", or constructions of difference I will be mapping out in the context of Labrang monastery then are constantly "moving" (de Certeau). As we shall see, alliances and exclusions shift, break down and get reconstructed as Tibetan, Chinese and western actors intermingle and separate out within the monastery walls.

Furthermore, negotiations of and identifications with difference played out at Labrang are *not* the random clashes of always conflicting trajectories. Quite to the contrary, what Tibetans, westerners and Chinese "want" out of Labrang, and the various constructions of difference within which they frame their projects, *coincide* at key points before they diverge again. Points of convergence or "bridges" (de Certeau: 129) are enacted where "selves" and "others" collude with or participate in each other's projects, creating patterns of practices and beliefs that will be important in any understanding of the (tense, yet for now smoothly operating) current situation there. In order to map out some of these patterns as a way to address the consequences for Tibetans of recent and unprecedented developments in Xiahe, I will draw on my preliminary fieldwork there to demonstrate identity as a practised process through which actors engage ideological structures of difference that are themselves grounded in history (cf. Bentley).

My analysis will be threefold: 1) Focusing on the context of the monastery itself, I will look at Tibetans' practices of identity in terms of the complex interaction of two forms of "difference": ethnicity ("Tibetanness") and gender (constructions of roles and essences associated with Tibetan men versus women); 2) I will demonstrate the historicity of certain constructions of gendered Tibetan difference by broadly sketching out the Chinese, Tibetan and western socio-political contexts in which they were produced; and finally 3) I have been using geographical metaphors up to now with a purpose. I will focus in my analysis on Tibetan identity as *practised space* (de Certeau: 117). The trope of "boundaries" has often been used by theorists of identity; in this case such a spatial analogy is particularly salient. As we shall see, what is at stake for Tibetans in Xiahe is the preservation of an identity that revolves around the crucial reconstruction and maintenance of a sacred space within the monastery itself. Moreover, historically in Tibet (at least since the advent of monastic Buddhism) as well as in the radically

transformed context of a Tibet under the rule of the modern Chinese state, the “sacredness” of such spaces is eminently *gendered*: it is and has been predicated upon the ritual exclusion of women.

Finally, I am ultimately working in this paper with a concept of “space” that is not confined to the ritual delineation of sacred place, as it is used by such oft-cited theorists of religion as Durkheim and Eliade. Instead, following such recent theorists as Lefebvre and Massey, I take space (or spatial relations) to be inextricably bound up with social relations in general. Space, as the radical geographers discussed by Massey have pointed out, is socially constructed, just as the social is spatially constructed (p.70). Space seen in this way, as constantly constructed in social interactions rather than as a neutral arena existing prior to social relations, is implicated in and constituted by the struggles and negotiations of social actors, both locally and farther afield: “space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation” (Massey: 81). This angle on “space” will be key to an understanding of the (real and potential) subversiveness of a reconstructed Tibetan identity vis-à-vis the Chinese state.⁶ For the sacred spaces being reconstructed through gendered practices among Tibetans in the PRC were traditionally *connected* in Buddhist Tibet, through structures of politico-religious authority, practices of devotional pilgrimage and donation, and economic and labour conscription, in a sacred geography that underwrote local and regional relations of power (cf. Miller 1961, Samuel). It is this sacred geography which Tibetans are currently reconstituting in the transformed context of the modern Chinese state.

The Historicity of Difference: Polarities

The function of most ideologies is to contain difference or antagonism, and the most effective way to do this . . . is to set up difference.
(Williamson: 100)

Constructions of Tibetan difference from the Chinese, deployed by Tibetan, Chinese and western observers alike, are most often built on stark, polarized distinctions. In these views, “Tibetan” or “Chinese” become straightforward signifiers for “good” vs. “evil” and vice versa; and this is played out in a variety of ways depending on the project of the observer.⁷ This construction is appealed to when social structures and their consequences for “the masses” are being judged: (harmonious or exploitative) “Tibetan” religion is played off against (oppressive or liberating) “Chinese” Marxism. It is also at work when gender roles and the status of women in society are being assessed: (inspiringly egalitarian or horrifyingly chaotic) Tibetan gender roles are juxtaposed with (actually patriarchal or egalitarian) Chinese socialist gender roles. But these polarities, the discursive rigidity of perceived boundaries between Tibetans and Chinese, tell us little about the actual complexities of practised identities at Labrang monastery today; and they must be seen within the larger context of the contest over Tibet since the early fifties. This in turn will help us understand

how, currently at Labrang, there is a critical *overlapping of interest* in things Tibetan: the town of Xiahe now stands as an icon of “Tibetanness” to westerners, to the Chinese state, *and* to Tibetans themselves.

In the story of the Chinese take-over of Tibet since the early fifties, as it is recounted by a variety of interested parties,⁸ geographic realities peculiar to Tibet have been merged with temporal constructions to produce certain depictions of Tibetan otherness vis-à-vis the Chinese. To Chinese and to western observers alike, central Tibet, located as it is on the highest plateau in the world and ringed by forbidding mountains, was seen to be a Himalayan kingdom isolated in *time* as well as in space (cf. Bishop, Samuel). To westerners, especially from the nineteenth century on as European colonialist projects sent explorers and officials to the “East” in search of the exotic, it was the tantalizing (and revolting) locus of fantasies of adventure and spiritual journey—Shangri La (Waddell). To the Chinese, it was the far-flung frontier, the nether reaches of the “middle kingdom” where “barbarians” lived and threatened the enlightened civility (not to mention the security) of the Chinese empire (Grunfeld: 55).

For Chinese communists from the early thirties on, this construction of Tibet as a “backward” (Ch. *luohou*) ethnic other justified their colonizing efforts. In this narrative, benevolent history does not bring its boons to stagnant Tibet until it is “opened up” to the (Chinese) outside world (Gladney: 95). Committed communist policy makers, academics and journalists appealed to this construction of Tibetan otherness, with varying degrees of vehemence and melodrama, to justify and depict the Chinese take-over of Tibet that culminated in the 1959 Lhasa uprising of Tibetans against the Chinese presence there, and in the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama, along with 80,000 Tibetans, into exile in India (cf. Ginsburgs and Mathos, Dreyer, Goldstein 1989, 1990). This construction of Han paternalism towards “backward” ethnic others continues to be salient today, as it is used to justify the ongoing exclusion of minority peoples (not just Tibetans) from access to power, education and economic resources (Min Yan).

Alternatively, in recent times, as Tibetan nationalists in Dharamsala have organized to counter such state-sponsored Chinese narratives, and as western supporters have rushed to participate in various academic and activist projects centred on “lost” Tibet, Tibet as isolated in space and time has been *positively* valued. It is constructed by both Tibetans bitterly dealing with forced change and (Buddhist) westerners fed up with home countries perceived to be selfish, stratified and violent, as an egalitarian and gentle society preserved and pure of corrupting history. Such a construction of Tibet as absolute, “good” inversion of the “evil” outside world, timeless in its goodness, of course behoves Tibetan nationalists in the diaspora, whose nation-building project centres around the government of the Dalai Lama and the political hegemony of the dGe-lugs Buddhist order over other orders. The story of a harmoniously operating and eternally stable Tibetan society under the centralized and benevolent rule of the dGe-lugs-pa’s co-ordinates nicely with the Tibetan exiles’ need for a shared past and for the presentation of a united front to the rest of the world (Klieger, Nowak: 29).

As for western supporters of Tibetans, “lost” Tibet as absolute other to the capitalist and highly stratified societies they live in serves as a repository of inspiring examples of egalitarian and spiritually informed lifestyles. Some extol Buddhism as a “healthy” form of governance (Wiley, Michael). More importantly for our purposes, others, especially western feminist Buddhists and non-Buddhists, look to gender roles and images in Tibetan social structure and in Buddhist scriptures and practices for examples of a higher status for women vis-à-vis more patriarchal and misogynist Buddhist traditions and western societies (Miller, Klein, Willis, Gyatso). Thus it is that currently for many western and Tibetan observers of the relationship between the Chinese and the Tibetans living within the borders of the PRC, there is a convergence of interest (for varied purposes) in celebrating “Tibetanness”, so that Tibetan “tradition” may be preserved or emulated—whether it is the complex system of Tibetan institutional Buddhism, or the “egalitarian spirit” of its social structure. For these writers, and for many of the young western tourists who visit the town of Xiahe, the “boundary” between Tibetans and Chinese in China today is constructed as one of angry difference within totalitarian oppression.

The Historicity of Difference: the State

Within the frontiers, the alien is already there, an exoticism or sabbath of the memory, a disquieting familiarity. It is as though delimitation itself were the bridge that opens the inside to the other. (de Certeau: 129)

However, as I already mentioned above, the Chinese have had their own trajectory of constructions of difference within their frontiers, and it could be argued that these constructions, especially as they are reflected in policy initiatives and political campaigns, have had more of an impact on the everyday lives of Tibetans in the People’s Republic. By the early thirties, Chinese (nation)-state builders were looking to the Soviet Union for examples of how to deal with ethnic others on desired state territory. Different classification schemes for “minority nationalities” (*minzu*), who were inevitably located on the lower stages of a linear evolution of societies, were devised at this time (Gladney: 82). But it was not until the late fifties, and especially the chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution, that state policies and reforms geared at internal others had broad-reaching and often violent consequences for Tibetans. State policies, culminating in Mao’s directives to the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, were geared toward the ideal *erasure* of class, factional, gender and ethnic differences in the dream of a unified and morally socialist “motherland” (*zuguo*). Since the violent and emotional resistance of Tibetans in some regions to Chinese reforms and their tenacious maintenance of faith in the efficacy of Buddhism at this time explicitly challenged the communist dream of homogeneous unity, earlier, more moderate “minority” policies were abandoned and Tibetan society was the target of particularly severe forced reforms and violent destruction (mostly of the monasteries) during the Cultural Revolution (Ginsburgs and Mathos: 165, also cf. Dreyer).

Importantly, this process, as it affected places like Labrang monastery, was fundamentally *gendered*, for many of the forced reforms were framed in horrified critiques of Tibetan gender roles. One of the promises of the communists as they struggled for political dominance was the implementation of gender equality through the abolition of “feudal” patriarchal attitudes and practices. Of course, the new, “egalitarian” system would be based on a Chinese-configured model of the harmonious and monogamous family unit geared for service to the state (Dargyay: 92). The wide variety of Tibetan kinship and marriage practices (including different types of plural marriages and post-nuptial residence), the apparent flexibility of such arrangements, and their seemingly freer courting behaviour witnessed by communist work teams in Tibetan areas were viewed as “chaotic” (“*nannu xing guanxi hunluan*”), imbalanced and unhealthy, leading to widespread venereal disease and population imbalances (Sichuan: 51, also see Li Anche [1947] and Zhang). Such writers described Tibetan women as oppressed in a primitive society by “superstitious beliefs” and a lack of sanitation.

Most significantly for our purposes, the increasingly virulent attacks on Tibetan “difference” targeted Buddhist monasteries as feudal havens of exploitative gender relations. Tibet’s unique socio-political structure in which up to twenty percent of the men were lifelong monks living in six thousand monasteries, some of which were as large as small towns (Goldstein 1985:16),⁹ was considered by communist writers at their most extreme to be a fundamentally unnatural separation of the sexes, leading to disgusting sexual practices and exploitation: to one writer in the later fifties monks and lamas are “more ferocious than wild animals. There is not one who has not violated a woman and not one who has not violated the young monks. They are all like beasts.”¹⁰

At least in Xiahe, communist reformers bent on quickly integrating Tibet into the Chinese nation-state were correct in targeting the monastery as a source of a cohesive Tibetan tradition, for in Xiahe and in many other places, monasteries were very powerful. Labrang monastery, and the incarnate lamas and appointed monk-officials that ran it, were not only landlords and adjudicators of disputes, but they were also *conservative regulators of tradition*. As Enloe and Sievers, among others, have pointed out, identities tested by encounters with the rapid change of encroaching modernity are often shored up by prescriptive, ethnically marked, gender roles (Enloe: 42, Sievers: 15). The response of Labrang monastery officials to the increasing presence of Chinese others in the town points up just how important “proper” gender roles were to Tibetan (Buddhist) identity. In the early forties, when some women of Xiahe wore pants after the Chinese, they were heavily fined by monastery officials and made to return to the long skirts worn by “traditional” Tibetan women (Li Anche: 66). However, such efforts could not ultimately stave off the sweeping changes the communists would bring to Tibetan regions. For Chinese state-builders and youthful Red Guards alike, erasing gendered ethnic difference at Labrang meant closing (and destroying in some cases) the monastery buildings, forbidding popular worship of incarnate lamas, forcing monks, nuns and lamas to marry, and requiring men and women to wear the blue work clothes indicative of the unity of the sexes in the service of the state.¹¹

As the episode I recounted at the beginning of this paper indicates, things have greatly changed in Xiahe since the Cultural Revolution (a time most Tibetans I spoke to still painfully remembered and wished to forget). Since the death of Mao and Deng Xiaoping's implementation of reforms based on the tragic failures of the "ten years of chaos", the trend in Chinese society has been one of a *reassertion* of differences (Honig and Hershatter: 47). As many observers have noted, class differences are becoming more attenuated as the "responsibility system" gives households more autonomy and encourages entrepreneurship; gender differences are re-emerging as changed marriage practices and exposure to western norms increases; and finally ethnic differences are being openly articulated again since, among other things, the 1982 revision of the constitution granted "religious freedom" to Chinese citizens. This change gave (mostly minority) groups the legal right to practice and express belief in religious systems so central to their difference from Han Chinese, a difference that was formerly classified as an "antagonistic contradiction" in Marxist/Leninist parlance, and now reclassified as a "non-antagonistic contradiction" (Luo: xx).

One of the main goals of such reforms for Chinese policy-makers has been to open the country to the educational and economic exchanges that will allow China to tap into the benefits of an increasingly integrated world economy. Ethnic tourism is now being vigorously promoted for just such a purpose, as part of the policy to "develop tertiary industry" (*fazhan disan chanye*). Increasingly, the state has turned to the advertisement of the exotic appeal of "ethnic others" within its boundaries to attract domestic and foreign tourists to minority areas (Yuan and Ding, Lin). Thus, difference has become essential to the state in new ways: ethnic otherness in China promotes a burgeoning tourist industry that brings in badly needed foreign currency and symbolizes China's participation in the world community (Enloe: 31). But, as Williamson, drawing on Laclau, points out, for states attempting to maintain their hegemony in a world of increasingly contentious nationalisms, promoting internal difference is extremely *dangerous*: differences must be contained by institutionally-enforced constructions of *ideal* difference (p.100).

Not surprisingly then, from the beginning of the era of Deng's "open door" policies and the reassertion of differences in China, the state has taken an extremely active role in the regulation of differences within its borders. Family planning and education policies have prescribed ideal roles for men and women (cf. Honig and Hershatter, Croll). "Nationality" (*minzu*) identity is strictly arbitrated through the classification of all citizens of the state into fifty-six nationalities, a fundamental state-recognized identity maintained throughout one's life, and embossed on identity cards carried at all times. Affiliation with religion is closely supervised through the delineation of (state-sanctioned) "religion" from "superstition" (cf. Luo). According to the state, "religion" includes the "five great religions";¹² they must be formal, operating through institutions under the supervision of party-appointed committees, and at the same time, popular belief in them must be purely personal, a matter of individual faith, not group identity. The Buddhist monasteries allowed to reopen since the Cultural

Revolution are under the supervision of the party, and Labrang monastery is no exception. Grafting the state's power structure onto the Tibetan Buddhist model of a hierarchy of incarnate lamas, high lamas of Labrang are appointed to provincial and national Buddhist committees, from which their (real) authority is supposed to derive. In addition, the state attempts to regulate the number and age of monks admitted to pursue curricula of Buddhist studies at Labrang annually, the regimens of examinations they must undergo, and the financial affairs of the monastery (Tian Wei: 11, also see Suo Dai).

Ultimately for Chinese policy-makers, although certain differences are sanctioned for public articulation, they can not be the basis of an affiliation that supersedes allegiance to the nation-state. The nation then is a harmonious and happy coexistence of multiple nationalities and religions, all co-operating for the most primary goal: the development of socialism. Thus it is that, contrary to the views of critical Tibetans and westerners, the state-sanctioned construction of the "boundary" between Tibetans and Chinese in China today is one of smiling difference within overall unity.

The Monastery Revisited: Gender and the Reconstruction of Sacred Space

Kong jo understood that this Snow Land country (Tibet) as a whole is like a Srin-mo demoness lying on her back. She understood that this Plain of Milk of Lhasa is a palace of the king of the Klu. She understood that the lake in the Plain of Milk is the heartblood of the demoness. The three mountains surrounding the Plain of Milk are the demoness' two breasts and her life-line. The eastern mountain afflicts the west; the western afflicts the east; the southern afflicts the north; the northern afflicts the south . . .¹³

These efforts to contain difference within its borders notwithstanding, the dangers to the Chinese state of identifications with difference that overflow carefully constructed boundaries set up in policy and law enforcement are ever-present, especially in the context of Tibet. As mentioned earlier, recent contingencies have meant that the Chinese state's vested interest in (ethnic) difference coincides in key ways with that of Tibetans and westerners in Xiahe; and this convergence of interests inevitably opens up a (public) space for different interpretations of the *meaning* of difference.

As Dru Gladney has pointed out, currently in China state-arbitrated *minzu* labels are *owned*: they are for the Tibetans I encountered a fundamental part of their self-image vis-à-vis others. The label "zangzu", or its gloss in Tibetan "bod-rigs" ("Tibetan nationality"), implies a somehow primordial distinction from other "zu" ("nationalities") that has become eminently salient for Tibetans. It provides a ready way, as I witnessed more than once travelling with a Tibetan woman friend, for Tibetans far afield to recognize each other and to participate in kin-like mutual aid obligations. Tourism, in the context of post-Cultural

Revolution China, has the added effect of *publicly re-valuing* this already solid Tibetan identity through a performative “celebration” of Tibetan religion and culture for an audience of westerners who have come with their own, very different, constructions of “Tibetanness”. The potential dangers of this situation are immediately apparent, for a critical “meltdown” can occur when differing and oppositional interpretations of Tibetan difference merge in a public space and are allowed to be performed (displayed and enacted). In the case of central Tibet, as the state was painfully to discover, this had the unforeseen consequence of consolidating Tibetan oppositional identity. Uprisings in 1987 and 1989 by Lhasa monks and townspeople calling for Tibetan independence led to the declaration of martial law and the virtual sealing-off of Tibet to the outside world.

This then is where the town of Xiahe fits into the larger context of constructions of difference and consequences of ethnic tourism in China. One of the state’s strategies to circumvent the “Tibet problem” and the obstacles it posed to the “rigorous development of international tourism”,¹⁴ was to target Xiahe and its famous Tibetan Buddhist monastery, geographically distant from the centre of Tibetan dissident activity in and around Lhasa, as a “little Tibet”.¹⁵ The State Council declared Labrang monastery to be a national centre for the preservation of antiquities in 1982; and since the mid-eighties, the national and provincial governments have invested money and resources into Xiahe’s development as a tourist centre. The palace of the former abbot of Labrang monastery was converted in 1984 to a large and elegant tourist hotel. The road from Xiahe to the capital city of Lanzhou was repaved and made to accommodate heavy traffic in tour buses and supply trucks. Finally, funds were committed to the rebuilding of monastery buildings and images destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (Yang).

State-sponsored ethnic tourism has thus fundamentally reshaped the landscape in the town of Xiahe in recent years. However, a closer look at how the changes have been played out there reveals that the state’s role has not been an absolutely hegemonic one. The relationship between the “Chinese state” and “Tibetans” in Xiahe is *not* the polarized opposition imagined by some western tourists and exiled Tibetan dissidents. Instead, the situation is one of complicated patterns of convergences and divergences of interests and projects among the different groups encountering each other in Xiahe, all of which are ultimately, discursively and in practice, centred on the monastery. As Volkman has so cogently argued, participants in the objectification of culture(s) concomitant with tourism are not just powerful state or international actors, but are “also indigenous peoples caught up in complex relations with [tourism] (and the appetites it stimulates), with tourists, and with major cultural, social and political transformations at home” (p.91).

In China today, Tibetans participate in the “tourist gaze” (Volkman), and eagerly consume “Tibetanness” objectified in educational videos, dances, and music. (Seemingly) in line with state plans for Xiahe as a centre of ethnic tourism, the town and its monastery have become icons of “Tibetanness” for Tibetans themselves—especially for urban Tibetans living far from their homes and

surrounded by Han culture and lifestyles. As I discovered during my research there, Xiahe has become a site for the *renewal* of Tibetan identity, a veritable “mecca” to which, especially in the summer, Tibetans from surrounding regions gravitate to see Tibetan friends and relatives, to wear traditional Tibetan clothes, to speak only Tibetan language (most urban Tibetans are bilingual), and to participate in rituals and festivals surrounding the monastery. In addition, Tibetan, Han and Hui merchants¹⁶ selling their wares in the town benefit from the tourist trade, and local Tibetan state officials are deeply invested in the economic development of their region and in state attention to it.

To reiterate though, as the centrality of Xiahe to the maintenance of kin and friendship ties for urban Tibetans already indicates, the “object” created by tourism in Xiahe—Tibetan difference centring on the operation of the monastery—is interpreted differently by Chinese state policy makers and local Tibetans; and this is where, in order to look more specifically at the mechanisms and stakes of this process, gendered practices re-enter the discussion. Since, as discussed above, uncontrolled difference is dangerous to state hegemony, and, as Volkman points out, tourism requires a static, packageable product to sell to tourists (p.102), gendered Tibetanness offered up for consumption (through videos, dances, tours of the monastery) is a phenomenon of the *surface*; in policy and propaganda, state celebration of Tibetan gendered ethnicities is what Robertson would call a “surface politics of the body” (p.419).

For the state-sponsored tourist gaze, the wearing of traditional clothes (chubas, aprons, and monkish robes) signifying the gender distinctions of an ethnic other, are to be merely signifiers of appealing, visual exotica, innocent of associations with past (distinctly Tibetan) socio-political relationships. Indeed, at first glance, especially among young urban Tibetans, the men and some women who, through educational opportunities have participated in the larger system, this construction seems to be accepted by Tibetans themselves. Educated young Tibetans working in predominantly Han regions don Tibetan clothes only for festivals and state-sponsored dances, and they spend much time comparing and contrasting the quality and relative beauty of their costumes. Tibetan gendered distinctions for them seem to be a secondary, superficial layer over *primary* Chinese gender; and thus the primary allegiance of these crucial ethnic others (the ones with access to information and contact with outsiders) as it is performed in everyday life, seems to be with the state.

But of course, for these and other Tibetans, there is more than a mere delight in the aesthetics of traditional folkways involved in resumption of displays of gendered Tibetanness since the Cultural Revolution. To understand this, we must look at the stakes for Tibetans of social change and at the role of Buddhism in the maintenance of Tibetan identity. As mentioned earlier, an identification with and emotional devotion to Buddhism has been central to Tibetans for centuries, but it has become increasingly foregrounded and self-conscious since the Chinese take-over and the subsequent “discourse wars” over Tibet required Tibetans to construct a cohesive identity and a shared historiography (Tucci: 111). As Ekvall and other chroniclers of Tibetans’ encounters with others have noted, preserving

the sacredness of Buddhism through practices of devotional worship has always been the “line in the sand” for identity with Tibetanness in the face of threatening social change (1960: 46, also see Nowak, and Kleiger). What has gone unmentioned in these studies though is the key, although hidden, role of *gendered* distinctions in the preservation of the sacred in contemporary Tibetan Buddhism.

However, as mentioned earlier, there has been a recent upsurge of interest in the status of women in Buddhism and Tibetan society among (Buddhist, western, women) scholars of Tibet influenced by feminist theory. This group of women, as we saw above, have a definite agenda that frames the way they view Buddhist Tibet. In order to carve out a space for their own Tibetan Buddhist practice, they are concerned to differentiate Tibetan Buddhism from earlier, more misogynist, Indian Buddhist (textual) traditions in which women, their bodies and sexualities, are angrily depicted as ever-present threats to male advancement on the path to enlightenment (cf. Willis, Paul). In these texts, since the first step on the path is to renounce attachment to the ephemeral pleasures of this world (and undertake the life of ascetic wanderer, or later, as the tradition developed, of committed monk), women’s bodies as tempters and reproducers are strictly associated with the profane world of *samsāra*. Thus, especially since the establishment of actual monastic institutions, in which groups of male renunciates lived apart from family, (profane) women were to be kept separate from men pursuing the sacred (Sponberg).

Western feminist Buddhist women then differentiate earlier Hinayana Buddhism from the Mahāyāna Buddhism adopted by the Tibetans in which the emerging doctrine of *śūnyatā*¹⁷ underlay an egalitarian ethos (Willis: 85, 69, Klein: 128). They point to later Mahāyāna texts asserting that male- and female-sexed bodies have no bearing on the ability to undertake the path and to become enlightened. However, as Alan Sponberg reminds us, such assertions of sexual (read gender) egalitarianism in Mahāyāna texts say nothing about women’s *social* situation; for him, discursive equivalence does *not* mean social equality (p. 12). Thus these women scholars struggle in their writings about Tibet with glaring social facts: the separation of women believers from male monastics, to whom accrued much social prestige as spiritual renunciates, centuries of male-dominated religio-political hegemony, and the obviously inferior status of nuns.¹⁸

Why then has the importance of such gendered distinctions in Tibet gone unacknowledged? For these western Buddhist women *and* for Tibetans (men and women), the crucial distinction between sacred and profane masks social asymmetry in the name of spiritual goals. In Tibet, perhaps to an unprecedented extent, the social world of (gender and class-based) asymmetric access to power and resources is constructed as *outside* of the sacred world of religious aspiration and wisdom (cf. Klein). In reality, Tibetan society was/is extremely hierarchical (Goldstein 1982), and perhaps the most salient hierarchy of all was that between laity and lama (Tib. *bla-ma*). Lamas were Buddhist teachers often thought to be incarnations of Tantric deities; they played key ritual roles in lay communities and often enjoyed immense prestige, political power, and personal wealth. As Goldstein and others have described, lay worship of the lama in Tibet supported

a complex religio-political system in which incarnate lamas were at the top of a descending hierarchy based on class and religious rank. Importantly for our purposes, in regions such as Labrang where monastery complexes were large and powerful, the spiritual and economic power of lamas emanated from the practices and ideologies surrounding the sacred space of the *monastery*.

Here we have arrived at the importance of gendered constructions of space for an understanding of the situation in contemporary Labrang. Recent theorists of the relationship between gender and space have pointed to the dynamic interrelation between the construction of lived-in spaces and the social construction of ideal relationships among gendered people (Spain, Ardener *et al*, de Certeau, Wigley). These theorists note the general tendency of physical boundaries in architecture and landscaping to reflect the “parameters of categories used to codify and confront created worlds” (Ardener: 11). In their view, broad social asymmetries can be mapped out and better understood in an analysis of constructed spaces. Thus, the control of space, as Spain asserts, is intimately related to the control of access to knowledge and power (p.15-18). In religious contexts, gendered asymmetries most often revolve around the preservation of *secrecy*, and therefore of the *sacred* nature of tradition itself: the cordoning off of efficacious ritual from the threat posed by the uncontrolled outside world is central to “protecting ritual from scepticism” (Douglas: 174, also see Rappaport, Eliade and Durkheim).

Access to spaces in which religious knowledge is revealed is often reserved for men; and the “correct” use of such gendered (ritual) spaces is ideally controlled by taboos. Researchers looking at gendered religious practices cross-culturally have noted that such spatial prescriptions are most often tied to notions concerning women’s bodies, their sexualities and reproductive capacities (Hoch-Smith and Spring). Despite western feminists’ efforts to re-interpret women’s status in Tibetan Buddhism, in terms of constructions of pollution and taboo, Tibetan Buddhism was no exception to this. In popular practice and ideology, Tibetan women’s bodily functions (menstruation, childbirth and potential sexuality) were seen to be polluting—dangerous in the wrong contexts to the well-being of family and to the efficacy of ritual. Consequently, menstruating women are not supposed to enter monastery spaces, and the mere presence of women at some key protective rituals officiated by laymen or male lamas is enough to endanger entire communities.¹⁹

However, the danger of focusing on architectural structures as direct homologies of ideological structures is that such an analysis tends to result in a (structuralist) reification of boundaries as absolute limitations in the social lives of real people. de Certeau, in his discussion of narrative and space, distinguishes between “place” (a “location with rules”) and “space”. For him, “space is practised place” (p.117). If we view Tibetan gender distinctions in this light, we can agree with theorists like Merlin and Rassmussen that ritual restrictions on Tibetan women do not necessarily represent unequivocal domination (Merlin: 188, Rassmussen: 753). Tibetan women, past and present, seen as *subjects* of their lives played out within spatial structures of monastery and home, had choices

and opportunities for active strategizing in Tibetan society. Indeed, the ritual restrictions on women I am referring to were generally confined to the most sacred of spaces and to the most crucial of apotropaic rituals. In other contexts, men as well as women could pollute certain environments. In addition, as some western feminists have pointed out (and this is part of the appeal of Tibet as a model for egalitarian relations), Tibetan women enjoyed higher status relative to neighbouring societies (Willis: 61). Depending on region and class status, some women exercised a degree of choice in marital arrangements and post-nuptial residence, inherited equal shares of property from their parents, and participated in a variety of religious roles (Willis, Gyatso, Aziz, Miller). Most generally, in the past and at present, Tibetan women, despite ritual restrictions, experience(d) Buddhism as personally strategic; they derive(d) spiritual, economic and sometimes political benefits directly, through their own devotional practices, and indirectly through sons who become monks. However, I would maintain that in the transformed context of recent times, women's adherence to pollution taboos around sacred spaces has taken on new significance and new stakes which need to be explored.

Labrang and the "Inner Sanctum"

Indeed, the use of space [in rituals performed for tourists] is one aspect of the new aesthetics of ritual composition. Formerly differentiated and separated according to associations with life and death, or spirit presence, space is becoming homogeneous, an uncharged arena. (Volkman: 105).

To turn to the implications of the historicity of difference(s) in the contemporary encounters among Chinese, Tibetans and westerners at Labrang monastery, we need to come back to the point made above that, within the (now state-sanctioned) public space of the monastery, there is at once a convergence and a divergence of interests in and interpretations of Tibetan gendered difference. Key among the divergences of interests is that the stakes of these encounters are higher for Tibetans living with the dispersal of their people and customs within an ever-expanding Han Chinese population. Staving off the (cultural and demographic) onslaught of "Chineseness" in the reconstruction of a shared orientation to Buddhism is the main way Tibetans in China and in the diaspora confront the exigencies of the post-take-over era. As many theorists of current nationalisms have pointed out, the reconstruction of group identities (newly conceived of as "national") under siege in an increasingly integrated world economy is an eminently *gendered* process (Enloe, Chatterjee). They note the strikingly general tendency of anti-state nationalisms to construct women as repositories of "traditional" culture, therefore excluding them from encounters with "corrupting" progress in active roles within the movement. As Radhakrishnan describes Indian nationalism:

"...questions of change and progress posed in western attire were

conceived as an outer and epiphenomenal aspect of Indian identity, whereas the inner and inviolable sanctum of Indian identity had to do with home, spirituality, and the figure of Woman as representation of the true self" (p.84).

However, among Tibetans in the People's Republic, identity maintenance is a differently figured affair, and gender plays a different role in the preservation of an "inner sanctum" from external threat. Among Tibetans, as we saw, the salient boundary between "inner" Tibetanness and "outer" otherness is *not* that between "public" and "domestic" as it is in these cases, but between *the sacred and the profane*. The main repository of Tibetan culture-as-identity is not Woman, but male-dominated institutional Buddhism. In a society in which "culture and religion are coterminous", as Kapferer argues in his analysis of Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalism, unity is not an egalitarian one, rather it is "a unity in hierarchy, wherein state, society and person are placed in cosmically determined relations of incorporation and differentiation and are ordered and made whole accordingly" (p.99). Thus, contrary to some observers' depictions of the contemporary revitalization of Tibetan monastic spaces in the People's Republic as a process solely initiated by and benefiting the state through tourist revenues, local Tibetans are deeply invested in reconstructing these spaces in their *own* way: through ritual practices that re-establish a sacred geography around a hierarchy of (mostly male) ritual specialists. At Labrang today, the vast majority of funds for the reconstruction of the monastery's prayer wheels, its *stūpas* and images come from lay contributions.²⁰ In addition, ritual services to the laity are being resumed, re-linking the protective power generated by ritual specialists with the lay communities surrounding the monastery (cf. Samuel). Finally, pilgrimage routes are being retraced as Tibetans from all walks of life make long journeys to and from Labrang to perform merit-making rituals. In this process of locally-initiated revitalization, Tibetan women are not explicitly charged with "holding up tradition" and urged to refrain from encounters with (Chinese) modernity by retiring to the home. Instead, they have a crucial supporting role in the maintenance of a hierarchical, sacred "tradition". In the context of Labrang monastery today, this translates to a (in large part self-regulated) respect of sacred space. Ethnic tourism in Xiahe has added a new (more subtle?) component to state intervention in Tibetan society. Labrang monastery as state-sponsored object of Chinese and western tourist gazes, is a radically transformed space. The state's (now directly spatial) intrusion into this sacred world poses a threat directly at the "jugular" of Tibetan identity. For now the "line in the sand" has been crossed, and monastic space is the site of an ongoing contest over who has ultimate control of space within monastery walls. Further, the contest, in Cucchiori's words, is fundamentally a "struggle to define gender space" (p.695). Before the closing of the monastery in the early sixties, I was told, the space within the monastery walls was strictly regulated. Women were not permitted to enter even the main courtyard except on occasions when the grounds were opened to lay worship. Today, since in policy and law the primary gender identity of all Chinese citizens is to be with state-defined gender roles, which have no spiritual dimension and

in which men and women are supposed to be equal in service to the state, women (of all nationalities) can enter monastery grounds freely, while monks, as objectified representatives of the monastery as object, can intermingle with them, and even (in fact should) serve as tour guides.

Within the monastery walls that line the main street of Xiahe (the traditional boundary between “inside/sacred” and “outside/profane”) the Chinese state’s hegemony over Tibetan monastic officials is evidenced by spatial and temporal appropriations: Within times dictated by the industry (8 a.m.-5 p.m., seven days a week), state-sponsored tourism has appropriated the main square of Labrang; it has literally brought the “profane” onto monastery grounds.²¹ Men and women tourists mill about all day, entering the buildings to gaze, not to worship; and the *demands* of that gaze not only inevitably cut into time and energy spent by monks there attempting to continue their studies and ritual practices at the various “colleges” (Tib. *grwa-tshang*),²² but they also transform the everyday activities of monks not associated with tourism into objects themselves—for collection in photographs. Thus the intrusion of ethnic tourism within monastery walls means that, through the profanation of space in the intermingling of men and women; and through the objectifying gaze of tourists, monastic space (and time) is threatened with neutralization—the rituals and practices that “hedge in” the sacred are being dispensed with under the ultimate sanction of an authority other than Tibetan officials themselves (cf. Volkman: 105). However, as Sonam Gyamtso’s resigned anger and discomfort with the situation at Labrang indicate, there is resistance to these spatial intrusions. Labrang monastery today, contrary to the context described by Volkman, is anything *but* “an uncharged arena”.

What I discovered this summer, as I interviewed western and Chinese tourists in the town and on monastery grounds, as I followed my Tibetan friends to their homes in Xiahe or on the grassland, and as I accompanied them to the monastery, is that in practice,²³ Tibetan men and women resist the state’s spatial intrusions by practising traditional, gendered spatial distinctions surrounding the monastery, thus distinguishing themselves and forging a shared identity vis-à-vis ever-present Chinese and western others. These practices of identity are perhaps most striking among the Tibetan women I encountered, for despite gender asymmetry among Tibetans (which seems to be increasing as Tibetan women in recent times benefit less from the encounter with the Chinese state than do Tibetan men),²⁴ rural and urban Tibetan women alike still self-regulate, and observe traditional taboos associated with female pollution and monastic boundaries.

Drolma, my Tibetan woman friend currently living in a large city and by all appearances thoroughly “sinified” (her parents are well-placed cadres), refused to enter Labrang monastery while she was menstruating, saying that it would be “unsanitary” if she did so. She explained that there was no written “rule” about such taboos, but that it was one way that women could respect the Buddha by staying away from sacred places when unclean. When I asked if Tibetans thought women were unclean in general, she hedged at first, saying that they

didn't anymore, but finally lowered her voice and whispered in Chinese, "it's men who are dirty!" (*nande cai bu ganjing*). Likewise, a young woman shepherd we encountered on the pilgrim circuit in the mountains above the monastery refused to sing us her song about youth and sex until she had moved down the slope, and out of earshot of the monks. And later that week, when Drolma approached a monk friend standing with his friends near the monastery wall, she became extremely embarrassed and hurried away, saying that monks and women could not be seen together too much. This deeply felt maintenance of Tibetan gendered distinction contrasts sharply with the position monks are placed in as tour guides for men and women tourists. Sonam's discomfort with his position and his assertion that Tibetan women should be tour guides attests to the fundamentally gendered nature of the contests over control of space in Labrang monastery. Despite state injunctions or encouragement to do otherwise, Tibetan women's practical allegiance to Tibetan gender distinctions plays a vital role in the maintenance of a Tibetan "inner sanctum"—by upholding traditional ritual restrictions, they retain threatened boundaries and thus keep monastic space sacred in the face of ongoing state (as well as Chinese and western tourists') breaches of those boundaries.

These gendered practices of Tibetan identity reconstruction are thus (covertly) subversive; and they represent (especially in the current climate of the breakdown of neighbouring communist states) a potentially serious threat to Chinese control of ethnic others within its frontiers. For, as mentioned earlier, the convergence of interests in Tibetan difference in Xiahe produces the tense situation in which the institutional support extended to Labrang monastery (for example through the influx of funds for building, support of incarnate lamas by giving them salaries, official appointments and drivers), places the state in the position of *colluding* with the traditional Tibetan male-dominated power structure, all for an audience of tourist-westerners, many of whom come with dissident constructions of "happy, good" Tibetans oppressed by the "evil" Chinese state.

Thus the ever-present danger to the state of its recent promotion of ethnic tourism in Tibetan regions is that by allowing for difference, it inevitably allows for the subversive resumption of traditional relationships. Tibetans' gendered spatial practices at Labrang monastery evidence the tenacity among Tibetans of these traditional bonds. The threat of such linkages is that they extend *beyond* the space at Labrang—maintaining sacred space at Labrang monastery re-draws links among monastic spaces in Buddhist Tibet in a map of sacred, Buddhist-derived authority that flies in the face of the state-constructed map. According to official Chinese depictions (since the early thirties) of the "real" movement of power, authority flows through lamas as state officials eastward to Beijing, the seat of the communist party. However, through the resumption of pilgrimage and the maintenance of ritual prohibitions—of gendered spatial practices that continually reconstruct the sacred power of Tibetan Buddhist monks and lamas at places like Labrang monastery, Tibetans in China today re-draw a map of resistance to that prescribed by the Chinese state: in their map, authority flows through lamas as sacred repositories of Buddhist wisdom westward to Lhasa,

the seat of the Dalai Lama. And this construction, as we saw, has been the foundation of the Tibetan nationalist movement headed by the Dalai Lama himself in Dharamsala, a highly organized movement with much western support that is deeply invested in the future of Tibet and ready to reclaim it if the opportunity arises.

Conclusion: After Hours

By the time I emerged from the “reception room” where I had been chatting with the monk guides, it was almost lunch hour at Labrang. Between 12 noon and 1 p.m., the monastery rests and tourists leave to do shopping in the town or to rest in their hotels. Most of the tourists and buses were gone when I came out to look for Drolma, who had gone to visit an incarnate lama she knew from her home region. I found her being accompanied by two young monks, who turned out to be her lama friend’s assistants. They were hurrying to one of the temples, and I rushed to catch up with them. Drolma seemed agitated, embarrassed and uncomfortable with my presence. I was annoyed and hurt, since we had travelled together from the city to get there and had become fairly close friends, going everywhere together and sharing hotel rooms. But now I sensed I wasn’t altogether welcome; and I soon discovered why. Drolma was going to worship the Buddha images in the various temples; and she was extremely excited that she had the opportunity to do so, especially since she normally couldn’t afford to travel.

I naively tagged along, thinking that this would be a great opportunity to see the temples and observe “authentic worship”. When we reached the building that housed the image of Mañjuśrī (the bodhisattva of wisdom), I learned my first painful lesson in the realities of Tibetan boundary maintenance. The young monk caretaker of the building, approaching us with the huge iron key to the temple door around his neck, glared angrily at me as we walked up, and said grimly that I was not allowed. Tourist hours began at 1, and I should come back then, after I bought the proper ticket. Gone was the “smiling friendliness” of Tibetans so adored by western tourists. All the Tibetans around me, including Drolma and her monk friends, were grim, caught up in the gravity of the moment. “Behind the scenes” in the monastery, beyond the spaces and times appropriated by the state and the tourist industry, boundaries are meticulously maintained, people are carefully categorized. In contrast with the fantasy I had been constructing during weeks spent in the exclusive company of Tibetans that, at least in my case, the boundaries between me and them were flexible, here I was unequivocally an outsider. Female and foreign, I belonged to the category of others whose presence within sacred spaces was inappropriate and threatening. My encounter with the grimness of Tibetans as they drew “the line in the sand” at my feet, brought home to me just how much is at stake for Tibetans living with state-sponsored ethnic tourism in China today.

Notes

1. Title of a glossy picture magazine published in Beijing and geared to Chinese and foreign audiences. The magazine is meant to demonstrate the patriotic participation of Tibetans in the "development" of the "motherland" (*zuguo*).
2. All Tibetan names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
3. This paper is the result of two consecutive summers (1992 and 1993) of preliminary fieldwork conducted among Tibetans in the town of Xiahe and on the grasslands surrounding it. Fieldwork was conducted in both Chinese and Amdo Tibetan. The research was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the Margaret Wray French Anthropology Scholarship. Since this research was preparation for my more in-depth dissertation research there, this paper represents only a preliminary sketch of some of the main issues I will be exploring further during my planned year and a half stay there, and I welcome any comments or suggestions. I would like to thank Jennifer Robertson, Beth Notar and Larry Epstein for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this paper.
4. Built in 1709, it housed over 3000 monks in its heyday, and exercised much political and economic power over surrounding groups of pastoral and agricultural Tibetans, as well as over its many "branch" monasteries (Li Anche, 1942: 36, 1982, also see Ekvall 1939).
5. For example, Barth and Keyes.
6. I am still struggling with how to best conceptualize such abstract entities as "the state", especially in relation to how "it" enters into the lives of Tibetans living in the PRC. It is always tempting to anthropomorphize the "state", thus glossing over the complex relations among the people and practices that constitute it. In Tibetan areas of course, there are Tibetan cadres and Tibetan members of the PLA. In future research I intend to investigate just how these complex and contradictory alliances affect local politics. Of course, following Oi, I would distinguish between state policy-making in China and the ability of the central government to implement policy (p.6). However, in a polity that (at least ostensibly) is centralized, in which policy directives emanate from central committees to lower levels, the concept still has some viability. In the PRC, this is particularly true of the history of policy implementation among "minority nationalities", as party directives and Han Chinese work teams undertaking "minority development work" have both been based on deeply held assumptions about Han superiority and cultural evolution. Due to space constraints, and the limitations of my data, I will use the term "state" here to designate these processes particular to minority regions.
7. The terms "Tibetan" and "Chinese" are themselves problematic, as they are essentializing nouns that are easily appropriated in such polemics. There are about 4 million people called *zangzu* (Tibetan nationality) according to the state's system of classification, living in what are now the provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan and Gansu. They are differentiated though by dialect, regional affiliations, class (often according to whether or not they have benefited from the Chinese-organized education system), and access to the Chinese language. As for the "Chinese", I refer here to the majority group, called *hanzu* (Han nationality), who dominate government, party, educational and military institutions at all levels. However, they too are internally differentiated by dialect, region, class, and ethnicity.
8. See Avedon, Fei Xiao-Tong, Gelder, H.H. the Dalai Lama, Li Wei-han, Michael, Ma Yin, Min Yan, Moseley, Norbu, Samdong Rimpoche, Wang and Suo, and Wiley.
9. Samuel in an appendix to his recent survey expresses doubt that the number of

celibate monks in pre-take-over Tibet was ever this high. He argues that it was never more than 10-12 percent of Tibetan men (p.578).

10. "The Black Wickedness of the Deceiving Reactionaries Belonging to Religious Establishments is Quite Intolerable," November, 1958 (*Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*: 21).
11. The dismantling of Labrang monastery actually began many years before the Cultural Revolution. Labrang was closed, monks and nuns dispersed and returned to home communities, lamas imprisoned or forced to perform hard labour, in the early fifties. The buildings were for the most part left standing until the mid-sixties (cf. Avedon: 336).
12. Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity and Islam.
13. Excerpt from the Tibetan text *Mani bka' 'bum*, translated by Janet Gyatso, which depicts the founding of Buddhism in Tibet. In this story, the Chinese bride of the Tibetan king consults her geomantic charts to discover why she is having difficulty establishing Buddhism at the Tibetan court. She determines that the land itself is a demoness that resists submission to Buddhism. The princess and others are instructed to erect Buddhist edifices on key points of the demoness' land/body. By doing so, she is told, the demoness' limbs will be bound, and she will submit (Gyatso: 37).
14. Slogan displayed on street banners in Xiahe during a state-sponsored "international tourist festival", summer 1992.
15. Also a slogan displayed, in Chinese, on street banners in Xiahe.
16. While in recent times local and returned Tibetans have been opening up businesses in town, the majority of merchants directly benefiting from tourist funds are Hui, Muslim Chinese who run most of the restaurants and stores geared to tourist needs. The complex relationships and tensions between Tibetans and Hui, historically and at present, is another key element to this situation, but for now I leave it to the side.
17. Roughly meaning "emptiness", a doctrine most thoroughly developed in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, or "Perfection of Wisdom" texts, in which the Buddha is said to criticize any form of dualistic thought.
18. Buddhist nuns have always been subordinate to monks. In Tibet, there was never actually established a lineage of fully ordained nuns; all nuns in Tibet are thus technically novices. They were never politically powerful as institutions the way monks were, and their facilities and activities were usually appendages of monkish ones (Samuel: 287). Nevertheless, as many have pointed out, there were a variety of religious roles open to women, and a significant number of women became prominent spiritual leaders (Willis, Klein, Sponberg). The ongoing devaluation of nuns (within a new idiom of Buddhism as an object of a tourist gaze) in Tibetan regions in contemporary China is evidenced by the remark of a (male) Tibetan friend to me when I told him I wanted to go talk to the nuns in Xiahe (there is a small community of about 80 nuns in the town): "What do you want to go see them for? There's nothing to see. They don't have their own worship hall, and they look just like the men, don't they?"
19. On a visit to a pastoralist encampment on the grasslands above Xiahe, my Tibetan women friends recounted to me a recent incident in which a woman of the camp had wandered up a mountain in search of a cow and had happened on the men of camp attending the annual ritual to worship the encampment's mountain god (Tib. *gzhi-bdag*). She was beaten for her transgression of this ritual space.
20. The reconstruction of the huge *stūpa* of Gung-thang-tsang, one of the four *gser-kliri*, or golden throne incarnate lamas at Labrang, and one of the most beloved of lamas in the Amdo region, was completed in the summer of 1993. According to his treas-

- urer, over 5 million yuan were collected, the bulk of which came from lay donations—some from as far away as the United States and Canada.
21. In the summer of 1993, the main courtyard was being paved for the first time ever in order to accommodate the tourist traffic. Monk officials refused however to allow the concrete to extend to the very front of the main assembly hall, arguing it would take away from the “traditional” feel of the place.
 22. Labrang monastery has six colleges in which young monks can pursue different curricula of Tibetan Buddhist studies.
 23. *Not*, most generally, in conscious, politicized defiance—such a thing is extremely dangerous for Tibetans living within a nervously attentive Chinese state.
 24. Tibetan women have fewer opportunities to attend schools, and learn Chinese and English, than do men, they still hold up the traditional pastoral economy as some pastoralist men benefit from (trade and educational) opportunities farther afield, and Tibetan Buddhist nuns have received little of the influx of state funds or attention invested in ethnic tourism.

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Reading the Potala

Peter Bishop

World-wide attention was directed a few years ago towards the construction of a theme park in the USA, the Florida Splendid China: a 76-acre park featuring 60 miniature recreations of China's most famous landmarks, with a \$500,000 sound system and activated 15-second recorded messages in English and Spanish. The inclusion of a scaled-down representation of the Potala brought extensive protests, for its presence was considered to legitimize Chinese imperial pretensions in Tibet.

This event merely confirms the Potala's place as the paramount symbol, not of Tibetan-ness, but of Tibet itself: a fusion of geography, culture and nation. This is equally the case for the Chinese government seeking to legitimize the total incorporation of Tibet into China, as it is for those Tibetans who resist this process, as well as for westerners who either support the Tibetan struggle or who are just curious about a remote, mysterious travel destination and for whom the Potala has become a global tourist icon. Whatever the case may be, as the twentieth century nears its close, the Potala clearly retains its crucial symbolic position, its image used over and over again, a site of conflict upon which a range of meanings struggle for articulation.

In addition to the struggle over political and cultural legitimization symbolized by the inclusion of a model Potala in a Chinese theme park, is perhaps the disquiet engendered simply by what could be termed the theme-park-ization of the Potala, irrespective of any Chinese aggrandizement. Located in the USA, the home of Disneyland, such a theme park seems to mimic the extraordinary proliferation of theme parks across the industrialized world, contributing to anxieties about an erosion of authentic history, memory and sense of place.¹ Finally, it is also somewhat significant that my attention, and presumably that of many others, was drawn to the Florida theme park and to the protests about the Potala's inclusion, by means of E-mail and the Internet.

What is the western relationship to the Potala when mediated by such a high-tech world, one where globalism manifests in tourism, consumerism, media, aid projects, in human rights and environmental concerns? What meanings are being generated and how are they contested?

To understand the meanings generated by a western encounter with the Potala it is necessary to at least begin mapping a full phenomenology of its representations, to give due consideration to a variety of disparate discourses and genres, from scholarly texts to travel writing, from photographic and cinematographic images to those generated by computer mediated communications, from tourist publicity to political propaganda, from dreams and memories to the memorabilia of popular culture such as tea cloths, head scarves and sweaters.

Certainly, over the past 200 years or more, the meanings which have circulated through the Potala have always been circumscribed by the broader significance of Tibet for the west. This in turn has been shaped by the west's own struggles for meaning and global identity. In addition, in an era marked by an acute sense of placelessness and fragmentation, complex shifts have necessarily occurred around the notion and experience of place, history, and memory. As Anthony Giddens complains, in the post-modern world place seems to be increasingly "phantasmagoric".² There is a fear that the face-to-face is becoming replaced by the electronic interface, overwhelming differences between near and far, or between here and there, eroding any unity of time, place and reality. Finally, a cultural studies perspective suggests that not only are meanings made by active participants rather than being intrinsic to any text or representation, but that there are a variety of possible readings.

This paper is part of an on-going concern of mine about the meanings generated by the western encounter with Tibet—the landscape, religion and the broader culture—in a phrase, with the place of Tibet. I am particularly interested in finding ways by which to understand the imaginative process generated by this encounter. What does the encounter with Tibet reveal about western culture, both in the past and in the contemporary situation with its post-colonial, post-modern and environmentalist concerns?

Three images perhaps embody the contemporary struggle over the meaning of the Potala. On the front cover of the August 1994 edition of the *Beijing Review* (vol.37, no.32), the Potala is spectacularly lit-up by a brilliant fireworks display. The headline: **Potala Palace Renovated**, is meant to support the belief that the Chinese presence in Tibet is benign and that the Tibetan culture is being cared for. By sharp contrast, a 1993 *Tibet News* (no.15), with a deep concern about Chinese occupation in Tibet, carries a picture of the Potala on its cover, but which is framed in the foreground by the ruins of old Lhasa being demolished in the name of progress, hygiene and tourism. The third image comes from a recent article in the Australasian geographical magazine *Geo*. It shows a photograph of the Potala with a Chinese anti-aircraft gun dominating the immediate foreground. The barrel of the gun points skywards, dwarfing, framing and perhaps intimidating the famed palace³ (image 1). This is a deliberately shocking, almost

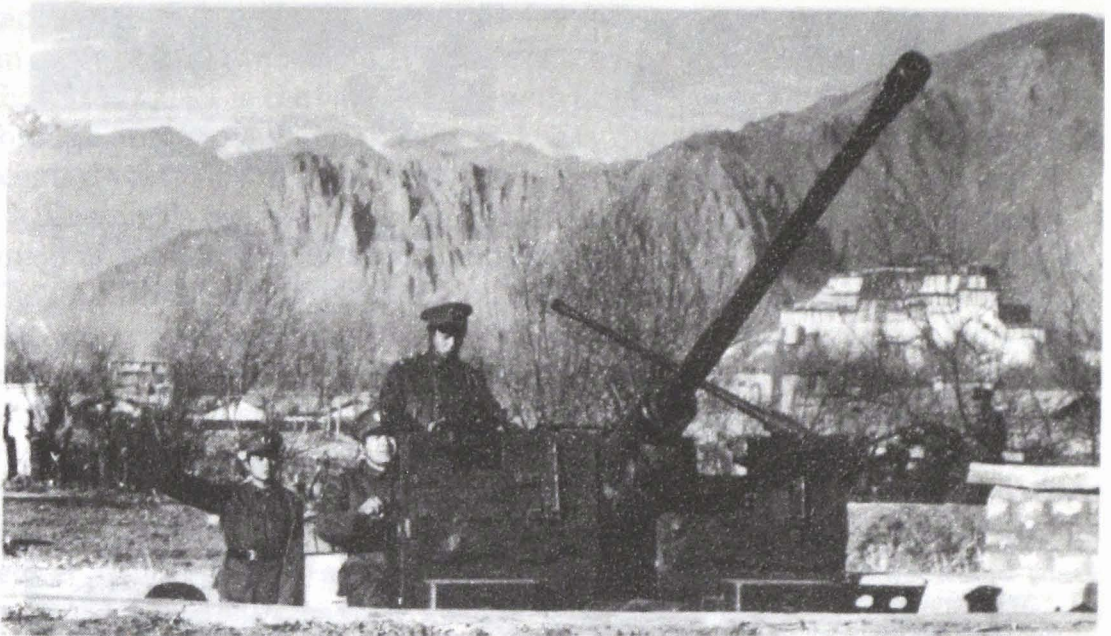


Image 1

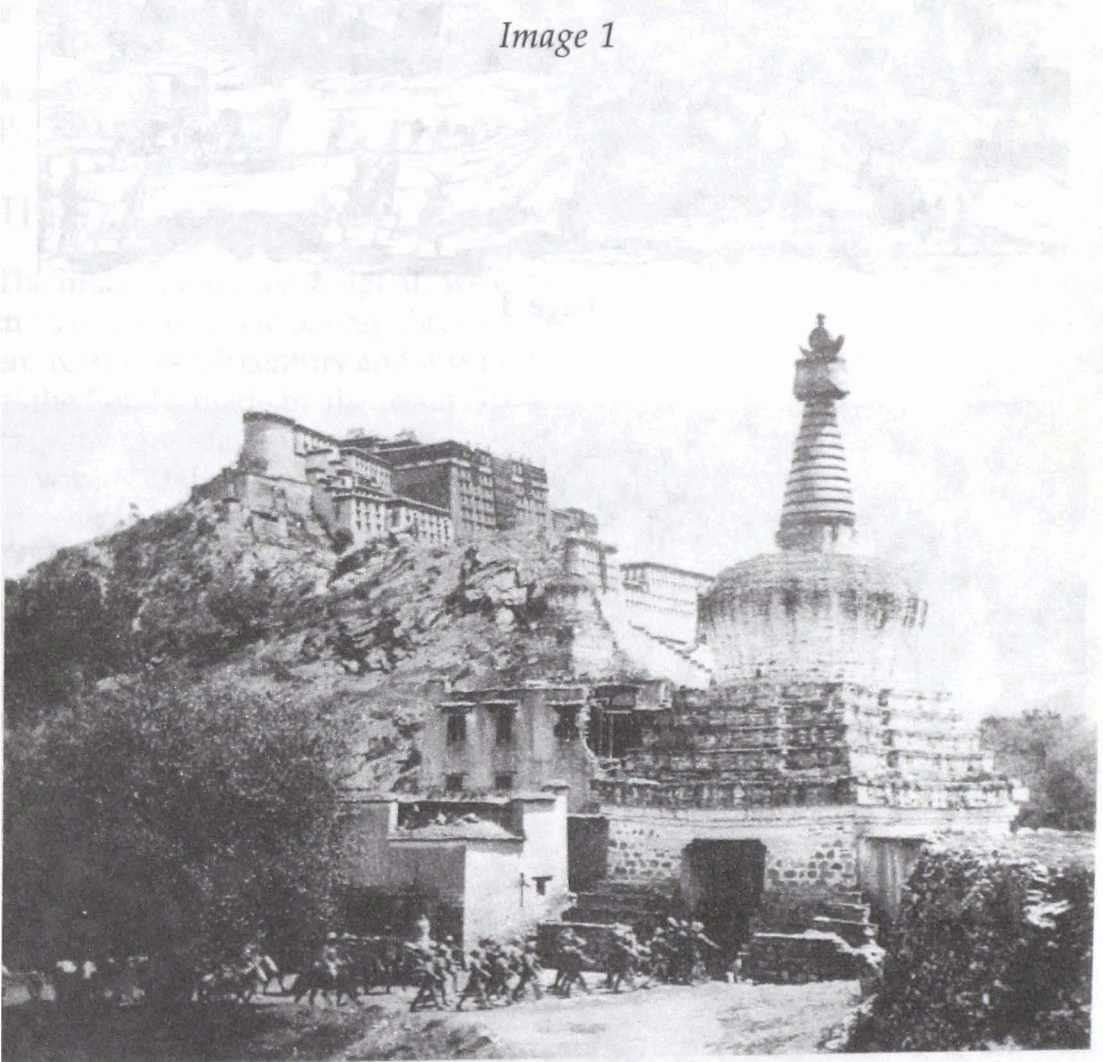


Image 2



Image 3

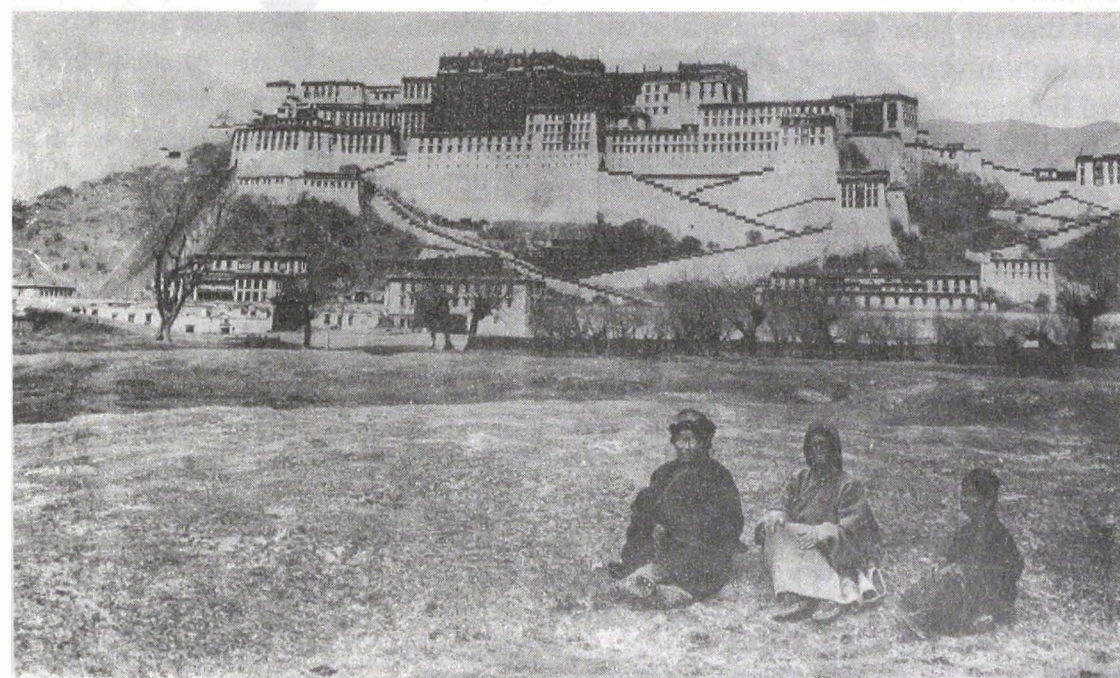


Image 4

sacrilegious, image for many westerners and it is interesting to compare it with an earlier photograph from 1904, one of the first taken of the Potala (image 2). It shows the palace in the background, with British soldiers marching triumphantly through a main gate into the city of Lhasa. Significantly, the military presence seems dwarfed by the palace, which is allowed to retain its aloof domination.

Despite its recontextualizing within a post-modernist milieu, contemporary imaginings about the Potala continue to reveal traces of earlier fantasy-making. The 1904 British military expedition to Lhasa, for example, was the culmination of a long process whereby Tibet was constructed as a sacred place in the western imagination. Members of the expedition were consumed with fascination and often profound respect as they neared the holy city. Triumph and curiosity were mixed with outrage, guilt and sad regret at the global loss of mysterious places. Within this fantasy, the Potala held a special place, and it is instructive to trace its symbolic role both within the complex creation and decline of Tibet as a sacred region for westerners, as well as within the changing notion of sacred place itself. By such means we can come to some understanding of its symbolic status in a contemporary western context.

To this end I want to discuss four eras in western fantasies about the Potala: a mid-nineteenth century Potala; a *fin de siècle* Potala; an early twentieth century Potala and a post-modern Potala.

The Mid-nineteenth Century Potala

The first modern non-religious westerner to reach Lhasa was Thomas Manning in 1811. He was one of only three westerners to accomplish this feat during the entire nineteenth century and was probably familiar with the first western image of the Potala, made by the Jesuit Gruber in 1661 (image 3). Manning called it "a majestic mountain of a building" which produced "a magnificent effect." But, he wrote: "If the palace had exceeded my expectations, the town as far fell short of them."⁴ Manning's complaints about Lhasa's filth and squalour were echoed by the next British visitors some 90 years later.

By mid-nineteenth century the Potala had emerged as a key image in the process of western fantasy-making about Tibet. Certainly all roads seemed to lead to Lhasa, which lay at the centre of a network of influences: the focus of pilgrimage in the region; the centre of craft, art and culture; the seat of religious, judicial, political and military power, as well as decision-making; from it intrigue seemed to spread over a huge region. But, most importantly, at the imaginal centre of Lhasa lay the Potala. Growing spiritual and social uncertainty in western Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century caused eyes to be turned to the Himalayas and Tibet in vague expectation. In 1869 Nina Mazuchelli, the first western woman to see Mount Everest (declared the world's highest peak in 1852), wrote: "It was...the dream of my childhood to see this nearest point of Heaven and earth."⁵ As the end of the century approached, the cosmic sympathy expressed by Mazuchelli for Mount Everest was displaced onto Lhasa, with the Potala imagined at its centre, an *axis mundi*, an opening to the transcendent at

the very centre of the world. Manning's casual description of the Potala as a "majestic mountain of a building" was metaphorically enhanced throughout the nineteenth century. It seemed poetically appropriate that the world's tallest building should be found in the world's highest country.

The qualities of this centre, as with all sacred centres, were complex and often paradoxical. In the early accounts of Tibet the monasticism, the religion, the people, the culture and the landscape, did not yet add up to a coherent whole. Paradox and contradictions abounded: the Dalai Lama was respected but the monasticism was suspect; the Tibetans were liked but their dirt and customs evoked distaste; the landscape was experienced as sublime but also depressing. The Potala was a crucial imaginative vessel for containing and working such disparate paradoxes.

If a process of displacement is revealed in the imaginative interchange between the Potala and Mount Everest, then that of condensation can be seen in the persistent association made between the Potala and gold. For example, Gutzlaff, in his 1849 report to the Royal Geographical Society wrote that Lhasa was looked upon "as a paradise... So many sacred objects are here accumulated that it surpasses in wealth Mecca and Medina, and is visited by pilgrims from all the steppes of Central Asia, with occasionally a devotee from China."⁶ The Potala and the Dalai Lama provided sharper focus for these fantasies about Lhasa: "The palace of the Dalai-Lama...is 367 feet in height, and has above 10,000 apartments, being the largest cloister in the world. Its cupolas are gilded in the best style; the interior swarms with friars, is full of idols and pagodas, and may be looked upon as the greatest stronghold of paganism....there is, perhaps, no spot on the wide globe where so much gold is accumulated for superstitious purposes. The offerings are enormous...and the Dalai-Lama is said to be the most opulent individual in existence."⁷

The association of gold and Tibet had first been made by the ancient Greeks, with rumours of gold-digging ants in the mountains to the north of India. Gold was consistently mentioned in western accounts about Tibet, but it had never been a major focus of attention. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, gold had become an important symbol in fantasies about Tibet and the Potala. British curiosity had first been aroused when the Panchen Lama sent gold ingots and dust to Warren Hastings in 1773 as part of a diplomatic effort to bring peace to the region. Mid-century reports mention vast quantities of gold rumoured to be found in Tibet. It was suggested that Tibet never exploited its rich gold resources due to a belief that it would disturb the spirits of the land, or due to the sacred associations between its colour and the yellow robes of the lamas.⁸

In 1885 the traveller Andrew Wilson commented: "no wonder... a Chinese proverb speaks of Tibet as being at once the most elevated and the richest country in the world... [It] well deserves to be called the centre of the world."⁹ What better symbol than gold to embrace the aspirations and fears, the hopes and resentments, slowly being conjured up by western travellers' imaginations. Within this fantasy was the inexorable pull of the Potala palace, drawing the imagination like a magnet with its reputation for wealth and power. Gold speaks

of salvation, paradise, the centre of both world and psyche, the meeting point of heaven and earth. It also has a darker, shadow side: associations with greed, lust, jealousy, intrigue, power. Gold embodied the paradox of Tibet's frustrating forbidden-ness and closure, as well as the experience of overwhelming desire and fascination. In the mid-nineteenth century the gold was still mainly in the earth, unworked, but even then the gold cupolas of the Potala were glinting on the horizon. The Potala was soon to become a symbol of what Jung termed a *complexio oppositorum*, complex mix of opposites, a towering monument of contradictions.¹⁰

The paradoxes embodied by Tibet were certainly profound. In the mid-century there was a general western abhorrence towards the system of power emanating from the Potala. Indeed, the Potala was viewed as the concrete embodiment of the power of the Tibetan State. Much was made of Tibetan punishments. The country's theocratic bureaucracy was estimated to be the very opposite, almost the shadow, of Britain's bureaucracy in India, considered by many to be an exemplary form of benign paternalism. But the Dalai Lama was scarcely ever tainted by the supposedly evil system of which he was the undisputed ruler. The religious system, however, especially for the British, seemed to echo the worst excesses of Papism and of the secret police which plagued continental Europe. Constant comparisons between Tibetan religion, known as Lamaism, and Roman Catholicism, were not just confined to similarities in rituals, nor in the respective figures of Dalai Lama and Pope, but in the two architectural edifices of Potala and St. Peters. In lieu of any other strikingly visual signifier, the Potala began to symbolize this problematical network of state power. What saved the Potala from being completely identified with all the negative associations of Tibetan religious power and superstition, was its sheer physical presence, its aesthetic power and its seeming aloof detachment from the mundane world. For many this detachment symbolized the split between monastic wealth and power on the one hand, and the pure, sublime essence of Buddhism on the other. The beauty and grandeur of the Potala similarly underscored the contrast between Tibetan Buddhism's appealing visual splendour and what was perceived to be the degeneracy of its teachings and rituals.¹¹

It was also crucial that the Potala be at one and the same time both a part of the western sphere of influence, yet also aloof from it. As with any sacred place, there had to be both a sense of its otherness and also a sense that it belonged to the culture in some way. Certainly the exact position of Lhasa and the Potala had been established by Nain Singh in 1864. The Potala was thereby given co-ordinates, was located on the new global map which had its centre at Greenwich, London. Tibet became integrated, albeit as a frustrating no-go zone, into the west's global mapping: politically, spiritually, scientifically, even aesthetically. Many westerners felt a kind of vicarious intimacy with Tibet. At the very heart of this contradiction lay Lhasa and thence the Potala—always elusive, just beyond or outside the grid of global co-ordinates and rational scrutiny.

The *Fin de Siècle* Potala

Slowly this fantasy of a centre started to be imagined in an active sense and much was made of the Ancient Egypt-Tibet connection. Tibetan religion was imagined to be a descendant of the Egyptian mysteries, a prestigious association within burgeoning, influential spiritualist and esoteric circles in the second half of the nineteenth century. For some, Tibetan religion was the only remaining link with ancient mystery traditions and the Potala gave such beliefs a valuable architectural focus, a monumentality to rival the pyramids. By the end of the nineteenth century, many imagined it as a source or fountainhead of esoteric wisdom. In 1904 Landon wrote that “the golden Roofs of Potala” were an “image of that ancient and mysterious faith which has found its last and fullest expression beneath the golden canopies of Lhasa.”¹² Lhasa was imagined as an eternal sanctuary: “the most secret place of the earth” which possessed a “mystic and fascinating seclusion.”¹³

In such a context, the sentiment held by many of the leaders of the 1904 expedition included a mixture of religious respect and erotic excitement, rather than a desire for imperial conquest or colonization. It was as if these westerners were demanding their right to pay homage at what had almost become a global shrine. For example, Landon described the tense anticipation as members of the expedition strained to be the first to catch a glimpse of the roof of the Potala: “The hour teemed with a fierce interest of a kind no man will perhaps ever feel again... Here there was to be seen a gleam of gold in the far distance, and we thought that Lhasa was at last in sight... [But] we had to possess our souls in patience.”¹⁴ At last Landon saw the Potala. It was a numinous event: “the light waves of mirage dissolving impalpably just shook the far outlines of the golden roofs... Life seemed very full.” On his departure Landon expressed sadness, reluctance and regret: “the last vestige of the Potala is hidden from your view forever. The road goes on, but for many miles the warmth had gone out of the sun, the light was missing from the distant slopes... I went on, something depressed at heart.”¹⁵

Francis Younghusband, the expedition’s leader, insisted on signing the treaty in the Potala as a conclusive demonstration that the very centre or heart of Tibetan power and influence had been reached. He wrote that its prestige was recognized across Asia and that concluding “a treaty in the Potala would be an unmistakable sign that the Tibetans had been compelled to come to terms,” especially in the light of the Dalai Lama’s absence and the vagueness of previous attempts to finalize a treaty.¹⁶ But the Potala also meant something sacred to the expedition leader. After the signing in the Potala Younghusband wrote: “I was insensibly suffused with an almost intoxicating sense of elation and good will... Never again could I think evil, or again be at enmity with any man... Such experiences are only too rare, yet it is these few fleeting moments which are reality.”¹⁷ Yet the shadow side persisted. In 1903 the French explorer, Grenard, wrote: “the Lhasa government is not a tender one.”¹⁸ The focus of this totalitarianism was Lhasa, especially the Potala. On one hand it was therefore the sacred city, the Rome of Asia, whilst on the other the centre of a dictatorial police state.

To understand how such contradictions could co-exist we could draw parallels with the way that the newly conceived unconscious was being imagined at the turn of the century. In a sense, exotic places such as Tibet represented a kind of extroverted unconscious and in it one can discern all the qualities attributed to its more commonly understood intrapsychic relative. Here was to be found a mix of confused filth and imposed order; childlike innocence and also petulance; ignorance and ancient wisdom; sexual chaos (polyandry, polygamy, monogamy co-existing) and monastic renunciation; benign governance with cruelty; a centre of repression alongside a source of creative, spiritual vitality. Landon compared the romantic fantasies conjured up by "the Golden Roofs of Potala", with those of Rome in "the opium-sodden imagination of De Quincey."¹⁹

How well the imposing Potala provided a fantasy-vessel for such extremes, with gilded roofs at its summit, dirt and squalour at ground level, then terrifying dungeons in its foundations. In between lay a dark labyrinth, passageways, countless rooms full of intrigue, of swarming monks. The Dalai Lama continued to escape most censure. Indeed many saw him as a victim of the system, imagining him being imprisoned within both the Potala and in his role as god-king.²⁰ In fact the imaginative separation opening up between the Dalai Lama and the Potala was to be crucial. Together they added up to more than their separate parts. The Dalai Lama was an unsullied object of either respect or pity. But despite the Potala carrying all the contradictions and paradoxes it retained its magic: "The Potala is superbly detached.... romance still clings to the Potala. It is still remote."²¹ With the Dalai Lama in residence the Potala became spiritually "charged" and the imaginal balance shifted from its shadow-laden dungeons and disreputable gold filled coffers, to the spiritual purity of its golden rooftops.

A deep sense of loss and nostalgia characterized western culture around the turn of the century and was epitomized by the 1904 expedition's success: "Tomorrow when we enter Lhasa, we will have unveiled the last mystery of the east. There are no more forbidden cities which men have not mapped and photographed."²² In 1899 the mountaineer Freshfield, whilst gazing at the Himalayas, mused: "Some of them perhaps were within the horizon of Lhasa itself: the imagination leapt, using them as stepping-stones, to the golden terraces of Potala, the palace of the Dalai Lama."²³ Yet immediately after this vision he lapsed into a mood of ennui, about the loss of childhood innocence and magic. This was a time when the world seemed to be shrinking, when traditional notions of time and space seemed threatened by a new technological and political globalization, by photography and other methods whereby images could be instantly and incessantly reproduced.²⁴

So powerful was the need for a sacred place that even the squalour, cruelty and everydayness of Lhasa could not totally destroy the romance. Something in the western culture and psyche desperately wanted to believe in Tibet, and the Potala was its most obvious symbol. In 1904 the Potala hovered between a passing world of fantasy and romance, and a sober future of science and harsh reality.

Although still a self-contained lost world, Tibet was representative of a whole world about to be lost. But already foundations for a new Tibet were being laid for the first half of the twentieth century.

The Early Twentieth Century Potala

In 1918 the Dalai Lama telegraphed his congratulations on the Allied victory in World War One, from Gyantse to the British King in London. By the 1920s the telegraph line reached Lhasa and the Dalai Lama had his own telephone. Several telephones were installed in the Potala and it would seem that it was now integrated into the network of global communications, that it too was subject to the changing milieu of time and space, of global shrinkage. This was not just imposed from without, but was a part of social and technological reforms instigated by the Tibetan leadership.²⁵ In 1936 a British visitor noted that he could lie in bed within the shadow of the Potala and listen on the radio to the chimes of Big Ben in London. By 1940 most wealthy Tibetans in Lhasa had their own radios, many enjoyed western magazines and newspapers. In 1936 it was reported that the Rin-Tin-Tin and Charlie Chaplin movies shown at the British Residency were extremely popular and that a large group of boisterous monks gate-crashed one of the parties. But there were contradictions: smoking, mah-jong and football were banned in Lhasa, whilst modern dances like the samba were frowned upon.²⁶

The notion of a pristinely traditional Tibet was being threatened from many directions, not just from internal reforms. The pressures of geo-politics—particularly the rise of communism in Russia and China, of mass tourism, of global cultural homogenization—seemed inexorable. It seemed that it was merely a matter of time before Tibet, too, succumbed to the global malaise of disenchantment. “There is little room to turn...one ill-judged movement may cause a fall to the bottom. This is Tibet’s danger”; “How much longer will it be able to endure?”²⁷ For many the thought of the Potala being hooked up to the telephone, let alone the Dalai Lama’s enthusiasm for it, was anathema, or just plain impossible.²⁸ Familiarity, too, was threatening: “Tibet, for us now, is no longer the ‘land of mystery’”, wrote the traveller Robert Byron in 1931.²⁹

Many either tried to turn a blind eye to the radical changes occurring in and around Tibet, or to search for the supposedly ‘real’ Tibet, untainted by modernity. In the period between the wars Tibet was often invoked as a place of hope and healing for a western civilization on the brink of self-destruction, whether through war or ennui. Tibet came to symbolize everything the west imagined it had lost. The result was a loss of paradox and contradiction in western fantasies about Tibet. The government was hailed as exemplary, whilst intrigue and banditry were ignored. Within such an imaginative milieu, any sacredness attached to the Potala was threatened to be overwhelmed by a bland, albeit desperate, idealization. The Potala became more a symbol of “beauty and harmony”, than of mystery and paradox.³⁰

By the 1920s a crucial shift had occurred and for some westerners the myth of Tibet could no longer be entrusted to the geographical actuality of Tibet. One

solution, exemplified by Alexandra David-Neel, completely abandoned the notion of Tibet as a sacred place with Lhasa and the Potala at its centre. Tibetan sacredness became separated from place and was totally spiritualized. Such a process was aided by the publication of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* in 1927 and its overwhelming reception in the west. This sacred text confirmed the universality of Tibetan wisdom separate from any geographical place or architectural monument. So, despite reaching Lhasa in 1923 after an arduous journey, David-Neel contemptuously dismissed any notion that her journey was a spiritual quest. "I never entertained a strong desire to visit the sacred lamaist city," she wrote. She pointed out that she had already met the Dalai Lama and considered all the really important teachings and sacred texts were better found elsewhere. A photograph of her in front of the Potala was perhaps a forerunner of the tourist snap. For her the Dalai Lama had already become the mobile centre of Tibetan sacredness and there was no need for the literal, fixed, physical monumentality of the Potala³¹ (image 4).

On the other hand, at this time the utopia of Shangri-La was born. This was a totally fictional place conjured up by James Hilton in his 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* and achieving fame through the Hollywood film. Yet so powerful was the need for such a place that the word "Shangri-La" immediately entered popular English usage and has remained there ever since. Paradoxically, this fantasy place both culminated over 100 years of western fantasy-making about Tibet and at the same time initiated a transformation.³² Shangri-La conformed, not to the physical actuality of Tibet and its culture, but to the reality of western fantasies: dance bands, cinema and telegraph vanish, whilst time almost stops in this vision of a monastic elite living in a remote and hidden Tibetan valley. As a storehouse both of sacred wisdom and civilization's achievements, the monastery itself, like an idealized Potala, was imagined to be humanity's only lifeboat in the coming dark ages. Once the destruction had ended, far in the future, Shangri-La, a cultural and spiritual Ark, would declare itself and seed the desolated world with light, guiding humanity to a new vision. However, the novel's western protagonist, invited to become the leader of the community and promised almost eternal life, still had his doubts: was Shangri-La a paradise or a prison?

Nevertheless, despite such idealized abstractions, the literal Potala was still imagined to lie at a centre of power and influence, a storehouse of "incalculable amounts of gold and silver, rare skins and precious stones, silks and invaluable works of art"; "a colossal natural fortress standing in the heart of Asia."³³ It was claimed that control of the Potala equalled control of Lhasa, and hence of Tibet, Asia, and even the world. Fear was expressed that communist armies in Tibet, on the roof of the world, "could forcibly dominate the largest part of Asia."³⁴

The Post-modern Potala

The worst fears of earlier westerners now seem to have come true: Tibet has been occupied by a communist army, deprived of the Dalai Lama's presence and the free expression of religious life; the Potala has become a tourist attraction and a museum. In both secular and spiritual terms the Potala seems to have lost

its commanding, central position. With the Dalai Lama and the elite of Tibetan monasticism in extended, even permanent exile, and with Tibetan secular authority destroyed in its own land, what symbolical role could possibly be left for the Potala?

Above all else, the Potala is a symbol of old Tibet, of what has been lost, a *momento mori*. So, when Heinrich Harrer, who had lived in Tibet for seven years during the 1940s, returned to Tibet in 1982 and tried to find a favourite location just outside of Lhasa, amidst what had become a huge grey industrial zone, he wrote: "If I had not seen the magnificent Potala in the distance, towering above everything, I would never have recognized the old spot."³⁵ It was a crucial landmark, providing both anchor and centre for his memories: "at the foot of the Potala, one could just about visualize how enchanting this city was in the past." In the latter part of the twentieth century the monumental solidity of the Potala has also come to symbolize not beauty and harmony, but the stubborn persistence of Tibetan culture. "The Potala has withstood all earthquakes," exclaimed Harrer; "The Potala, the emblem of Lhasa, has survived everything."³⁶ Despite everything, continued Harrer, "face to face with the Potala, the most magnificent structure on earth, I surrendered...to its magic." For Harrer the Potala's continuing power lay in a crucial combination of scale, aesthetics and memory. Harrer is not alone with such sentiments. In 1981 Vikram Seth during the course of a journey across Tibet wrote of "a powerful sense of stability" suggested by the Potala and that at first sight it "is so beautiful that I cannot speak at all."³⁷

However, such unequivocal sentiments are usually associated only with the outside of the Potala. A crucial distinction between its interior and its exterior has long been an aspect of the Potala's imaginative phenomenology. In 1904, for example, Landon wrote about the Potala's "disappointing interior", a "never-ending labyrinth of corridors and courts," suggesting that "the outside of the Potala and the inside of the Jo-Kang are by far the most interesting things in Lhasa."³⁸ Nevertheless, with more frequent access to its interior by western travellers, the distinction between inside and outside has become emphasized.

For Harrer in 1982, for example, the interior was like a museum, or worse: "Leaving the Potala I felt as though I was stepping out of a tomb"; whilst for Vikram Seth the interior was chaotic and confused.³⁹ In 1975 even the pro-Chinese author Han Suyin had been forced to admire the exterior of the Potala. However the interior, with its connotations of unbounded theocratic power and cruel punishments, overwhelmed all else: "Now I had seen its inside, I could no longer feel entranced as I gazed upon its marvellous beauty. It was an evil, parasitic monster, despite the glamour and romance with which it had been invested for so long."⁴⁰ Even western tourist guide-books scarcely rhapsodize about the interior of the Potala. "It looks best from a distance", suggests one popular travel guide.⁴¹ Only in fiction is the interior redeemed and even then it is less the interior or even the dungeon-basement, than the ground beneath the Potala's foundations. For example in *The Third Eye*, Lobsang Rampa claims to have undergone mystic initiation in volcanic caves deep beneath the Potala.⁴²

Whether a reminder of corruption and cruelty, or of confusion and loss, the Potala's labyrinthine interior presents a markedly different face to that of the monumental exterior. If the exterior has come to symbolize Tibetan resistance and persistence, the interior symbolizes the absence of the Dalai Lama, as indeed it did for Landon in 1904. For many westerners these are the two sides to the contemporary Tibetan situation. In both cases the Potala is inextricably linked with memory, either with nostalgic longings, or with the radical refusal to forget. Both forms of memory are potentially important forms of resistance and have given the Potala a new lease of imaginative life. In the 1980s, for example, the young Australian traveller Sorrel Wilby described the Potala as "linking earth to heaven and rising from the Chinese ghettos like a victorious, battle-scarred star. Shining, literally beaming with Tibetan-ness."⁴³ Significantly, despite such an enthusiastic pronouncement which encapsulates so much about contemporary fantasies, the Potala is not mentioned again in her book. Has the Potala succumbed to being a tourist cliché, to be eschewed by serious travellers?

As we have seen, the meanings given to the Potala have always been bound up in the broader symbolic significance of Tibet for the west. Tibet is scarcely any longer imagined to be a truly fabulous country, mysteriously aloof from the world, the fountainhead of all remaining archaic mystery religions. Of course, memory traces of such fantasies still exist but, with few exceptions, they are more a part of its imaginal archaeology, evoked for purposes such as tourism or sensational fiction, or else part of the background of Buddhist worship, than the dominant face of Tibet today. On the other hand, the course of imperial rivalry which, for a moment at the turn of the century, lifted Tibet into the world spotlight has flowed on, into new channels of global power struggles.

Tibet is unique in two important ways. Firstly it is a *lost sacred place* for the west, one that became transformed into the lingering utopian fantasy of Shangri-La. The demise of Tibet is also within recent memory. As with other such places, Tibet's fate is daily witnessed around the globe through television and newspapers, particularly in the post-Tiananmen Square era. Even the lingering trace of Tibet's former fabulousness is played out in TV shows such as *Twin Peaks*, or in tourist brochures and theme parks. Secondly, Tibet has the Dalai Lama. The award of the Nobel peace prize merely confirmed the extraordinary status he has in the west, not just as a political leader preaching non-violence and compassion, nor as a master of occult powers, worshipped as a living God, but as an isolated representative of the symbolic good Father, long discredited and virtually absent in the west.⁴⁴

By the 1950s the cultural conditions under which Tibet came into being as a sacred place for the west no longer existed and from that point its imaginative dissolution begins.⁴⁵ The geographical place of Tibet is no longer signified by the Himalayas, which have become adventure tourist destinations in their own right; nor is it signified by Tibetan Buddhism, images of which could just as easily denote northern India, Nepal, or any one of numerous locations in Europe, North America, or Australasia. The Potala alone is instantly recognizable as belonging unequivocally to Tibet. Its immovable monumentality serves just this function.

Of course, western support for Tibetan independence involves support for social justice, a care for the fate of individual Tibetans, for the fate of their culture and religion. But there is also always another unconscious, symbolic aspect that reveals fears about westerner's own culture. Identities of place are formed through a constant process of negotiation between fantasies of Self and Other, of home and away, of here and there. How we imagine where we are, is directly related to how we imagine other places. I suggest that the Potala symbolizes not just resistance to Chinese or other forms of oppression, but to the rapidly changing notions of time and place which characterize contemporary, post-modern western culture, resulting in a widespread malaise of rootlessness. Paul Virilio suggests we now live in a reality dominated by "speed-space", by the time of electronic transmission and rapid transportation. Speed is now not a means but a milieu. Reality itself is fleeting and transitory. Monuments, such as the Potala, with their celebration of duration and geographical place, belong to a past era and are being replaced by the transitoriness of electronic interfaces. Virilio also draws a distinction between notions of territory and vector. Territory defines traditional space that has a boundary and which is hostile to or resists movement. A vector is the exact opposite. It occupies no space, but is defined solely by the flow of information from electronic communication systems, global finance, tourist routes, and the surveillance arising from geo-political rivalry.⁴⁶

Despite its being hooked up to telegraph, telephone and electricity since early in the twentieth century, the Potala by virtue of its bulk still symbolizes immovable presence and temporal duration. Even in the contemporary world it is still monumental. By defining "territory", it symbolizes a resistance to the global vectors of incessant, instant change and movement which appear to have no roots, to be soul-less and placeless. Both Tibet and the utopia of Shangri-La were imagined as places outside of speed and haste, ones which escaped and resisted the onset of "space-time compression."⁴⁷ How much more pertinent today are such sentiments.

These sentiments express a deep nostalgia. They also perhaps ignore both the complex, contradictory nature of so-called traditional places, as well as a new, authentic sense of place emerging from within the post-modern era of speed-space and space-time compression.⁴⁸ Despite the very real and widespread experience of a loss of place, we should perhaps beware of enlisting such simplistic sentiments on behalf of Tibet's political struggle. It casts Tibet backwards, into an imaginatively reactionary corner from which it may prove difficult to escape.⁴⁹ It establishes a naive polarization between an innocent, pre-modern Tibet and either the harsh modernity of Chinese imperialism or the decadence of post-modern capitalism. Such polarizations have been common in the western encounter with Tibet. Some Tibetans also, engaged in a one-sided and protracted independence struggle, have readily evoked such polarizations, drawing on the reservoir of sympathy encapsulated by the west's naive idealization of Tibet.

In fact we can perhaps begin to unweave just a little more the contemporary fantasies and meanings circulating around and through the Potala. Certainly

such a binary opposition between stability, permanence and geographical actuality on the one hand, and a transitory, free-floating rootlessness on the other, is scarcely sustainable.

It would similarly be oversimplistic to sidestep such debates by positing a notion of a possible, ideal, "real" encounter with the literal, architectural Potala. For example, within such a fantasy, tourism and tourists have generally been dismissed, their experiences deemed too packaged or too controlled by the Chinese to qualify as being authentic. Again, recent studies show tourism to be far more complex: convergences are occurring between some western tourists and Tibetan pilgrims; tourists played a variety of important roles in and around the pro-independence demonstrations in Lhasa during the 1980s and 90s. Certainly it would be quite erroneous to be too dismissive of western tourism to Tibet. Such travel/tourism consists of a plurality of styles, experiences and fantasies. Also, it is itself located within a politicization struggle, both by the Chinese government and by the Tibetan resistance, around the opening up of Tibet to westerners.⁵⁰ Finally, serious consideration has to be given to the way in which notions of place and experience, of memory and the sacred, are being reshaped by high-tech communication systems. The Potala, along with Tibet, has now entered cyberspace. There is a virtual community of Tibetophiles. This is not merely a phenomena of global tourist advertising. Things seriously Tibetan proliferate on the net, such as The Tibetan Cultural Resources Database, part of a project to create an interactive, multi-media, multi-site Tibetan National Archive.⁵¹

Meanings about the Potala cross over what Sunil Gupta has called "disrupted borders", those fixed interfaces between fantasy-making and the otherness upon which myriad western identities depend.⁵² Instead we enter a realm of indeterminacy, of plurality and polyvalency, of what Homi Bhabha terms "hybridity".⁵³ The Potala might therefore be more usefully imagined as a heterotopia, of which Foucault writes: "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."⁵⁴ Such post-modern debates about spatiality, identity and image-making can facilitate an understanding of the complex ways in which Tibet, the Dalai Lama and the Potala continue to shape western place-related fantasies.

Certainly, even from within the dominant fantasy equation, it is worth gesturing to the other side of the Potala's monumental, static presence to the mercurial mobility and post-modern diplomacy successfully embraced by the Dalai Lama. From this perspective the Potala and the Dalai Lama form a symbolic pairing. Each signifies the other's absence: the Potala's traditional monumentality emphasizing the Dalai Lama's modernity and elusiveness; the Dalai Lama's placeless mobility signifying the Potala's immovable sense of place.

The Potala is not just an exotic monument somewhere "out there", but has, through 200 years of fantasy-making, become an intimate symbol for many in the west. An Australian man entering middle-age, for example, dreams he is climbing up huge, stone steps which are embedded into the rock and grass-covered

slopes of a mountain. The steps are well-worn and smooth, as if for a giant. He makes associations with Mayan architecture. The climb seems too much work—until the dreamer realizes or remembers that they were meant for an imagined god-king. Then as he reaches the top and enters the palace, it becomes similar to a very modern, high-class hotel in an Asian city, but not *quite* the most prestigious or expensive. There is no Dalai Lama, only some more everyday characters. He becomes confused and anxious. Whilst knowledgeable about Tibet, the dreamer is by no means a devout Buddhist.

Clearly this is not the place to enter into a personal interpretation of the dream, however through it we can conclude by seeing the promiscuous weave of themes which go to make up the totality of contemporary imaginings about the Potala. It is both an *axis mundi* and also a series of discrete places. The steps, for example, have been a quiet but integral aspect of the Potala's representation: in 1904 Francis Younghusband was afraid that the metal-capped leather soles of his military boots would slip on the smooth stones as he went to sign the treaty in the Potala, causing him to stumble and lose face, thus undermining the dignity of the British; in 1981 Vikram Seth, already exhausted from his travels, is overcome with dizziness by the time he has climbed to the entrance.⁵⁵ The climb to the top, in hope of an overview or to reach the exalted level of the Dalai Lama, has long been a fantasy. Even Alexandra David-Neel, in the 1920s, scornful of Lhasa's significance, exclaimed about her desire to "climb to the top of the Potala itself."⁵⁶ We have already come across the mountain metaphor, whilst associations between Tibet and a myriad of other 'ancient' cultures are well established.⁵⁷ The ancient immovability of the huge stone steps, almost organically embedded into the mountain, contrast with the elusive presence/absence of the Dalai Lama. Finally, when the summit is eventually reached, the transformation of a god-king's palace into an ultra-modern Asian hotel echoes concerns about theme parks and international tourism.

Notes

Acknowledgements: Image 1 courtesy Weldon Owen Publishing; Image 2 courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London; Image 3 after A. Kircher. 1667. *China Illustrata*. Amsterdam; Image 4 after David-Neel (1927).

1. Vergo (1989); Samuel (1994).
2. Giddens (1991:146).
3. Lovelock (1992:28-41).
4. Markham (1971:255-6); much of this paper draws on my 1989 study.
5. Miller (1976:17,33).
6. Gutzlaff (1851:215).
7. Gutzlaff (1851:214-15).
8. Gutzlaff; T.Cooper (1869/70:338); Cunningham (1977:232).
9. Jung (1974: vol. 13, Alchemical Studies: paras.186,196); Wilson (1979:151-2).
10. Jung (1974: vol. 9 ii, Aion).

11. Bishop (1989:165ff.); Younghusband (1910:250,265).
12. Landon (1905:262).
13. Chandler (1931:126); Landon (1905:29,43).
14. Landon (1905:157-64).
15. Landon (1905:319-20).
16. Younghusband (1910).
17. Younghusband (1910:300-1, 326-7).
18. Grenard (1974 :109).
19. Bishop (1989:159ff.); Landon (1905:262).
20. Grenard (1974 : 88-9).
21. Chandler (1931:251, 353).
22. Chandler (1931:248).
23. Freshfield (1979:152).
24. Benjamin(1970); Kern (1983).
25. King (1924:527-531).
26. Bishop, (1989: 191-2, 205, 230).
27. Pallis (1946: 422); Maraini (1952:145).
28. Eg. Jung (1974: vol. 11, *Psychology and Religion: East and West*); de Riencourt (1951).
29. Byron (1933:239).
30. Bishop (1989:228ff.).
31. Bishop (1989:217,220-1); Bishop (1993).
32. Hilton (1947).
33. de Riencourt (1951:145, 223).
34. Bishop (1989:223).
35. Harrer (1986:15).
36. Harrer (1986:71-3, 151).
37. Seth (1984:117- 18).
38. Landon (1905:283).
39. Harrer (1986:152); Seth (1984:136).
40. Suyin (1977:35).
41. Taylor (1995:133).
42. Rampa (1980).
43. Wilby (1995:15).
44. E.g. "I Went To See The Dalai Lama", ENCOUNTER, ABC Radio National, 26 July 1992; "Over the Lost Horizon", THE LISTENING ROOM, ABC FM Radio, 4 May, 1992; Bishop (1993:124ff.).
45. Bishop (1989:240ff.).
46. Virilio (1991); Wark (1988).
47. Harvey (1989).
48. Bishop (1992).
49. E.g. Harris (1993).
50. See Schwartz (1994); Schwartz (1991:588-604); Klieger (1992:122-125).
51. See Coleman (1993).
52. Gupta (1993).
53. Bhabha (1988:5-24).
54. Foucault (1980:xvii-xviii).
55. Seth (1984:136).
56. David-Neel (1927:259).
57. See, e.g. Matthiesson (1980).

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SACRED SPACES AND POWERFUL PLACES IN TIBETAN CULTURE

The essays in this volume all attempt to document and interpret ways in which Tibetan peoples have identified and related to different categories of space and place as being unique or of higher ontological value, and as being set apart from many other spheres and sites of human life. The focus of the collection is intentionally broad, and its very breadth reflects the multitude of traditions of thinking about space and place which can be found in Tibetan culture, and which have also been associated with Tibet by non-Tibetans.

The authors present data from the high Tibetan plateau, but also from sites and peoples in what are now parts of modern Bhutan, Nepal, Sichuan, Qinghai, North India and other areas where related languages, cultures and a shared sense of origin and history can be identified as manifestly "Tibetan". Several chapters even go beyond this frame to consider how various non-Tibetan "outsiders" (e.g. Westerners, Indian Hindus or Chinese colonialists) have also imagined or had a role in defining Tibetan spaces and places as sacred or powerful.

Each essay constitutes a separate chapter and they are arranged into four parts relative to their predominant themes. These parts are: i. Narrative, Social Identity and Territory; ii. Ritual Spaces and Places; iii. Hidden Countries and Holy Lands; and iv. Colonialism and Modernity. There are, nevertheless, many overlapping topic areas and common questions which they share, and which can only be brought together by reading the volume as a whole.