

The Great Pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen

Written Tradition, Living Realities¹

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IN north-eastern Tibet, in the former province of A-mdo, in the bend of the Yellow River, stands a mountain, A-myes rma-chen, which is worshipped as the chief of all the gods of the region (*gzhi-bdag*) of A-mdo.²

The mountain is closely linked to Gesar, the hero of the great Tibetan epic poem. Nevertheless, residents of Central Tibet often seem not to know its exact location, or even, sometimes, that it exists at all. True, in the past, few Central Tibetans dared enter this region, inhabited by a nomadic population, the mGo-log, whose warlike character was confirmed by Tibetan and Western travellers alike. The mGo-log barred access to the region and killed anyone who approached from the western side of the Yellow River. The most terrifying stories circulated about these nomads. Was it not said that they ate the hearts of their prisoners in order to maintain and fortify their valour (Huc, 1962 : 189) and that only the merchants of Songpan, a town located to the southeast of the bend in the Yellow River, twenty-eight days march from Lake Köke-nur, dared cross their district (Rockhill, 1975 : 146)? To guarantee their safety, the Tibetans would join together in great caravans. Western explorers, in their turn, experienced many difficulties : in 1891, the expedition of Dutreuil de Rhins was attacked and Dutreuil himself was killed. Later on, in 1940, Guibaut and Liotard carried out their trip in constant fear of an encounter with the mGo-log. Their expedition ended when Liotard was shot at the summit of a pass. Small wonder, then, if little is known of this mountain and its pilgrimage.

In Western writings, we find scattered notes in books by explorers and travellers, as well as in two works specifically focused on this region. First in 1924, then in 1926, the Austro-American botanist J.F. Rock attempted to explore the A-myes rma-chen chain, one of whose summits he believed to be higher than Everest. But the mGo-log kept him from ever reaching the foot of the mountain. Despite this, Rock provides precise information, notably regarding the pilgrims' annual circumambulation of the mountain. Rock reproduces the account given him by a mGo-log chieftain, and stresses that every twelfth year, in the year of the Horse,³ this pilgrimage assumes special importance. I myself participated in the celebrations during the ninth month of the Iron-Horse year (October 1990).

Another source on A-myes rma-chen is found in the book by L. Clark (1954). Clark was as fascinated by the mountain as Rock had been, and in 1949, he organised an expedition that might be called military. He arrived at the north-west extremity of the chain and, not realising that the highest peak could not be seen from that point, he estimated the mountain's altitude at 8.476 metres. Although his book contains a certain number of errors as well as passages largely devoid of interest, it nevertheless suggests both the fear and attraction provoked by the simple mention of the mGo-log. It also reveals how abundant animal life still was there at the time.

One might well expect that Tibetan literature (pilgrims' guides, lives of the great saints who travelled in the region, hymns of praise to the mountain, texts of popular rituals, and so on) would furnish considerable supplementary information. Yet such writings, composed by learned monks, present both places and events in such a special light that their analysis had best be reserved for a separate study.

After participating in the great pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen and obtaining a pilgrim's guide, it seems worthwhile to compare the written tradition with the behaviour of lay pilgrims. Did their actions in fact conform to the guidebooks' prescriptions? In short, I have attempted to determine if the text in question is truly a 'guide' to practice. I should note, however, that among the pilgrims I encountered, only two, one a monk, the other a layman, were travelling with such a guidebook in their possession. In both cases, the text was identical with the one I had obtained.

The Pilgrimage Route (cf. sketch)

At the present time, access to the pilgrimage route is gained through one of three entrances. The choice depends on the pilgrims' original point of departure.

— In the south : rTa-bo gong-ma (Maqing on Chinese maps), whence one arrives, in three hours' ride at mTshal-nag kha-mdo : "Vermilion-black lower region (?)".

— In the north-west : rTa-bo zhol-ma (Xiadawu). From here one arrives, in three hours' march, at Nu-bo dGra-'dul dbang-phyug : "The younger brother, powerful one who conquers enemies".

— In the north-east : from Zho-zan kung-he (Qushian), after one hour's walk, one reaches Chu-dbar-sna : "Between two waters".

In October 1990,⁴ the pilgrims were very numerous. Groups of varying sizes, from three to more than twenty persons, followed one another on the pilgrimage route. In this way, hundreds of pilgrims came to render homage to A-myes rma-chen, chief deity of the A-mdo region. With few exceptions, all were nomads belonging to various local populations and they came from all over A-mdo : from Bla-brang and Reb-kong in the north, Aba in the south, Henan in the east and Huashi in the west.

Most pilgrims accomplish the hundred and eighty kilometre route⁵ either in seven days on foot or three days on horseback, but if they perform prostrations as they go, it takes them forty days. I came across seven pilgrims who were measuring the route with the full length of their bodies. Everyone circumambulates in the proper Buddhist (clockwise) direction. It took me eight days on foot.

Dressed in their long coats of animal-skins, wearing hats trimmed with fox-fur, the pilgrims drove their baggage-laden yaks before them, for this pilgrimage really amounted to a minor expedition. Many of the men carried a rifle. Most were making the pilgrimage for the first time. Following the Chinese occupation, pilgrimages and all other religious manifestations had been forbidden. This great pilgrimage of the Horse-year 1990 was the first in decades.⁶

The time actually spent walking, day-by-day, was very irregular. Some days the pilgrims walked four hours, others eight hours. The route, fairly wide and at a mean altitude of 4,300 metres, in places runs right beside the A-myes rma-chen range, but elsewhere diverges from it. There are few abrupt rises or descents.

I was struck by the great number of pilgrims on horseback, since this is esteemed far less meritorious than going on foot. In fact, I never encountered a mounted pilgrim during the pilgrimage to Mount Kailash.⁸ At A-myes rma-chen, the horsemen with whom I spoke were perfectly aware of the anomaly. Might this be because the nomad lives on horseback whereas the peasant (*rong-pa*) simply mounts a horse? Or did these A-mdo-ba nomads merely ignore the Buddhist precepts?

The Pilgrimage

From rTa-bo zhol-ma, a former popular commune, after three hours' walk, the path reaches the Chu-sngon river, 'the blue river', which must be forded before reaching the pilgrim route.⁹ Two mGo-log, rifles slung on their backs, were riding their steeds at a peaceful walk, as they celebrated their departure on pilgrimage by drinking quantities of local alcohol. When they arrived at Nu-bo dGra-'dul dbang phyug, "The younger brother, powerful one who conquers enemies", one of the points of access to the pilgrimage route located to the north-west of the A-myes rma-chen range, they were welcomed by their companions who were awaiting them there with many rifle-

shots into the air, which set off a panic among the horses.

Here stands a great rock which represents the younger brother of A-myes rma-chen.¹⁰ It is covered with prayer-flags and bears the imprint of a hand which, I was told, is that of a monk of Ra-rgya dgon-pa (a monastery to the east of A-myes rma-chen). But others said that it was Zhabs dkar's hand,¹¹ whilst two mGo-log assured me that the hand-print had been carved in the rock by human agency and thus was not at all a spontaneous manifestation (*rang byung*). A dozen pilgrims, men and women, were walking around the rock, leading their horses. The men made an offering of smoke by burning juniper branches, before leaving together to proceed on their way. Others, who had now completed the pilgrimage, had set up their tents and gone up to the dGu-ru monastery, a *rnying-ma-pa* establishment constructed only about ten years ago, some thirty minutes' walk to the north-west. It appears that this monastery is not visited at the beginning of the pilgrimage.

Although it had grown almost completely dark, pilgrims were still arriving. Once night had fallen, a dozen dogs took possession of the territory. In the middle of their barking, a man could be heard reciting a prayer as he performed his circumambulation of the spot.

First Day : Early in the morning, before dawn (the sun only rises at seven A.M. at this season) and while the cold was still sharp, the pilgrims lighted fires and prepared roasted barley flour (*rtsam-pa*). After a rapid meal, they dismantled their tents, packed their baggage and loaded their yaks. Their speed and efficiency showed how well they were accustomed to it. After a last circumambulation around Nu-bo dGra-'dul dbang-phyug, they started out on the road which was marked, for a certain distance, by a line of stones interspersed with little cairns.¹² At this point, the valley is broad and covered at this time of year by a low vegetation. Nomads' encampments were set up on the slopes. To the south rose snow-covered mountains; if most of the pilgrims did not know their names, it was because these mountains had no significance for them. A mGo-log accompanied by four children, at the head of a caravan of fifteen yaks, was waiting for his companions, two women and a monk who were making the pilgrimage by prostrations. Having left Zho-zan kun-he (Qushian) twenty days before, they expected to return to their point of departure in another twenty days.

The pilgrims followed one another, on foot or on horseback, religious and laypersons. Six monks, carrying a minimum of baggage and hoping to complete the pilgrimage in five days, walked with a brisk step. Most of the laypersons were wearing new clothing. All the men carried a knife or a sword, and often a rifle. The women were adorned with splendid jewelry. Nomads from a single camp remained together, not mingling with the others.

That day, I shared the life of a group of about twenty mGo-log composed of laypersons — men, women and children — and five monks. When the yaks arrived

in the encampment, they were unloaded and the tents set up in a trice. These were not the black tents made of yak's wool, but rather fine white cotton tents of modest dimensions, which serve for travelling. Their structure differs from that of the black tent. A ridgepole is supported in the middle by a vertical pole, which thus stands in the center of the interior space. On the outside, the guy-ropes are fixed directly in the ground by stakes. The fire is usually installed at the entrance.

While the women went to fetch water, lighted the fire and prepared the tea, the men led the yaks off a short distance to graze; the horses remained untethered in the vicinity of the tents. But before nightfall, all the animals were gathered together and tethered. That evening, in the mGo-log camp, men and women were separated. In the tent occupied by the women and children, seven persons pressed together around the fire and the evening passed in joking, laughing and drinking tea.

Second Day : The pilgrims awoke at six o'clock. Preparing tea, taking down the tents and loading the yaks required only about an hour. Our progress was interrupted by frequent halts, during which those on foot (including the monks) re-adjusted the animals' loads. When they reached the pass called 'Brog-bsdus nyag-kha, "The combe where the nomads gather", facing the north slope of A-myes rma-chen, the pilgrims, who were numerous at this spot, stopped for a long time.¹³

The pass is marked by a cairn covered with multiple prayer-flags. The men burned juniper-branches, sent off 'wind-horses',¹⁴ and all, men and women alike, gathered stones (*gnas-rdo*: stones of holy-places) to be kept at home as relics or deposited later inside a *stūpa*, to bring the community protection and abundance.¹⁵ Afterwards they went down to a spring, located at the foot of the pass, where they gathered earth which they allowed to dry with the intention of using it, they told me, as medicine.

In the evening, after having crossed the g.Yas khog, many pilgrims set up their tents on the other side. Only a very few waded across on foot. Instead, the horses were laid under contribution, crossing and re-crossing as necessary. On the hill overlooking the river, nomads had installed their camp and were watching over their flocks.

Third Day : As usual, the pilgrims broke camp between six and seven A.M. Shortly afterwards some of them stopped at a *mani* wall around which they circled before going on their way.¹⁶ On that day, I walked in the company of seven mGo-log from Wenchuan : an old man on horseback, two young couples and two monks on foot. Halfway through the day's march, an hour's stop gave the young women time to prepare tea and roasted barley-flour. A group of riders drew up nearby, and the man of the party came over to request a few coals from the fire, which were readily given him. He was accompanied by three women, a young man and a child. The man lighted a fire and the women prepared a large cauldron of tea. Before serving it out, the man filled a ladle and threw the contents into the air : a few drops of tea in each

of the four directions, as an offering to the gods.

The pilgrims set out once more. Here the route descends the valley of the g. Yas khog, 'Land of the right-hand side'¹⁷ until it reaches the confluence of the g. Yon Khog, 'Land of the left-hand side', at a place called Chu-dbar-sna, 'Between two rivers'. This is one of the ways of reaching the pilgrimage route from the northeast. Here a large *stūpa* has been built, surrounded by a wall. It seems to be new, but has possibly been reconstructed on the site of an earlier *stūpa*. After tethering their horses, the pilgrims took off their hats, placed them on the ground and prostrated themselves before the *stūpa*. They then walked around the *stūpa*, next, around the encircling wall, and finally, around the *mani*-wall which had been built beyond it. After this, they picked up their hats, untethered their horses and began the climb back up the g. Yon khog. The valley's sides, more enclosed than those of the g. Yas khog, are covered, at this level, by sparse forest.

Under a small tent set up beside the road, a man was making very poor quality prayer-wheels : a solitary manifestation of trade and industry.

A little further on, many pilgrims stopped at a spot called Go-mtshon, 'Weapons'.¹⁸ This is a flat area alongside the pilgrimage route. The mGo-log lama from the dGu-ru monastery had chosen to install himself here, to give his benediction to those who requested it. The pilgrims greeted him and did homage by offering him a ceremonial scarf (*kha-btags*) and money.

Near Go-mtshon, on a large rock, can be seen a hand-print which some monks told me was that of rGya-tsha Zhal-dkar, Gesar's elder brother. He had been so named because his mother was the daughter of a Chinese Emperor (*rgya-tsha* : grandson of China) and because he was handsome with a white face (*zhal-dkar*), like the moon.¹⁹ Most of the pilgrims passed the hand-print without noticing, but the mGo-log monks, after covering it with black ink, took an impression on a piece of white cloth.

That evening, we encamped high above the road. The animals, which had been set loose to graze, were brought in and tethered as night fell. It was at this point that another group of pilgrims chose to establish themselves below, beside the road. During the night, their songs, laughter and rifle-shots could be heard afar but my companions of a day seemed indifferent to the noise. The old man sat silently beside the fire, the two women prepared quantities of *mog-mog* (meat-filled ravioli), while the young men looked after the fire.

Fourth Day : All the pilgrims set out even earlier than usual, without a word of goodbye. The road leads to a place called mTshal-nag kha-mdo, 'Vermilion-black lower-land (?)', so-called because red earth and black earth are found there.²⁰ This is the third point of access to the pilgrimage route, when one comes from the mGo-log prefecture of rMa-chen, to the southeast. Here stand two great cairns, covered with prayer-flags, one beside the road as one arrives from the north-east, the other

on a very big rock above the path as one proceeds southwards. Both male and female pilgrims prostrated themselves at the foot of the cliff, then collected a bit of earth which they carefully placed in a piece of clean cloth. Then, the men went up a hill above the road, where they offered a juniper-branch fumigation (*bsang*). Nearby the hearth, beneath a tent, a Bon-po lama accompanied by four Bon-po *tāntrika* (*sngags-pa*) carried out a ritual in honour of A-myes rma-chen.²¹ For this purpose they had prepared an assortment of *gtor-ma*, one of which represented A-myes rma-chen.²² These Bon-po *sngags-pa* were circumambulating the mountain in the Buddhist, clockwise, direction.²³ A certain number of male and female pilgrims crowded together at the entrance of the bon-pos' tent. Some men went to the cairns and added new prayer-flags.

Pilgrims kept arriving all the time from the town of rMa chen. Indifferent to the snow which was falling in intermittent bursts, they prepared their tea by the side of the road.

From mTshal-nag kha-mdo, the route veers off towards the south and crosses broad grazing-lands. Shortly afterwards, at the foot of a cliff, stand a succession of masts joined by numerous prayer-flags suspended between them. Pilgrims of both sexes proceeded along this complex and then, on foot, went around a fairly large cairn at the end of the series of masts. Next they climbed the cliff and entered a cave²⁴ where they collected a little earth and deposited a few coins as an offering. Then, they went on to a second cave, whose entrance was closed by a curtain of prayer-flags. There they made a few offerings, came out and returned to the road, which led them to a big juniper tree girdled with prayer-flags, which they circumambulated. There is also said to be a spring there, which I was unable to find, called sGrol ma'i bum chu, "Water from Tārā's flask".²⁵

This place is called Klu gdung shugs pa, "The juniper of the Klu gdung (?)".²⁶

Many pilgrims chose to camp in proximity to this holy site. Their fires indicated their presence, and from every camp rose the sound of conversations and laughter. That evening, some pilgrims who had installed themselves nearby came of their own accord to help me light my fire, and from that moment, one of the families of this group took me under its protection.

Fifth Day: Our departure took place just as the sun was rising, and not as a group but rather at each person's individual rhythm. Every pilgrim had a horse, but most of them went on foot, leading the horse behind them, except when they had to ford a river.

That day, the pilgrims stopped after three hours' walk, on the hill that overlooked the road. I found that a place had been reserved for the 'foreigner's' tent, near the tent of my host family. The tents were set up in no time, the fire lighted with the help of a splash of kerosene and kept ablaze with a blacksmith's bellows. Tea and *rtsam-*

pa were served *ad libitum*. In this family, meat was forbidden because of a vow undertaken by my hosts to eat no meat during the pilgrimage.

Our camp comprised seven tents. None had a dog. During the daytime, everyone walked with any member of the group they pleased, but in camp each family had its own fire.²⁷ The group was made up of some thirty nomads from a place located to the north-east of A-myes rma-chen, all laypersons and members of the same camp. In this year of the horse, they had decided to make the pilgrimage for the first time in their lives. It had taken them three days to reach rMa chen on horseback and they began the circumambulation at mTshal-nag kha-mdo. My host family was composed of a couple and their two children as well as the wife's brother and his child.

The weather was fine. A few women undertook to repair the tents and articles of clothing. An old woman performed prostrations towards the west; other nomads went from one tent to another to chat and joke. My host had a pilgrim's guide and, wanting to discover if it resembled the one I had obtained, he asked me to read over both texts with him, to compare them. He also possessed a short text which he consulted frequently, handwritten by one of his friends who had made the pilgrimage earlier that year. The friend had recorded the names of a certain number of holy sites with indications of the rites which the pilgrim was supposed to perform there. The transcriptions were very approximative and sometimes purely phonetic.

Sixth Day : By six o'clock, all the pilgrims were up and the fires lighted. The men began to pack up the tents. As soon as tea and rtsam-pa had been consumed, the yaks were loaded and everyone started out before sunrise.

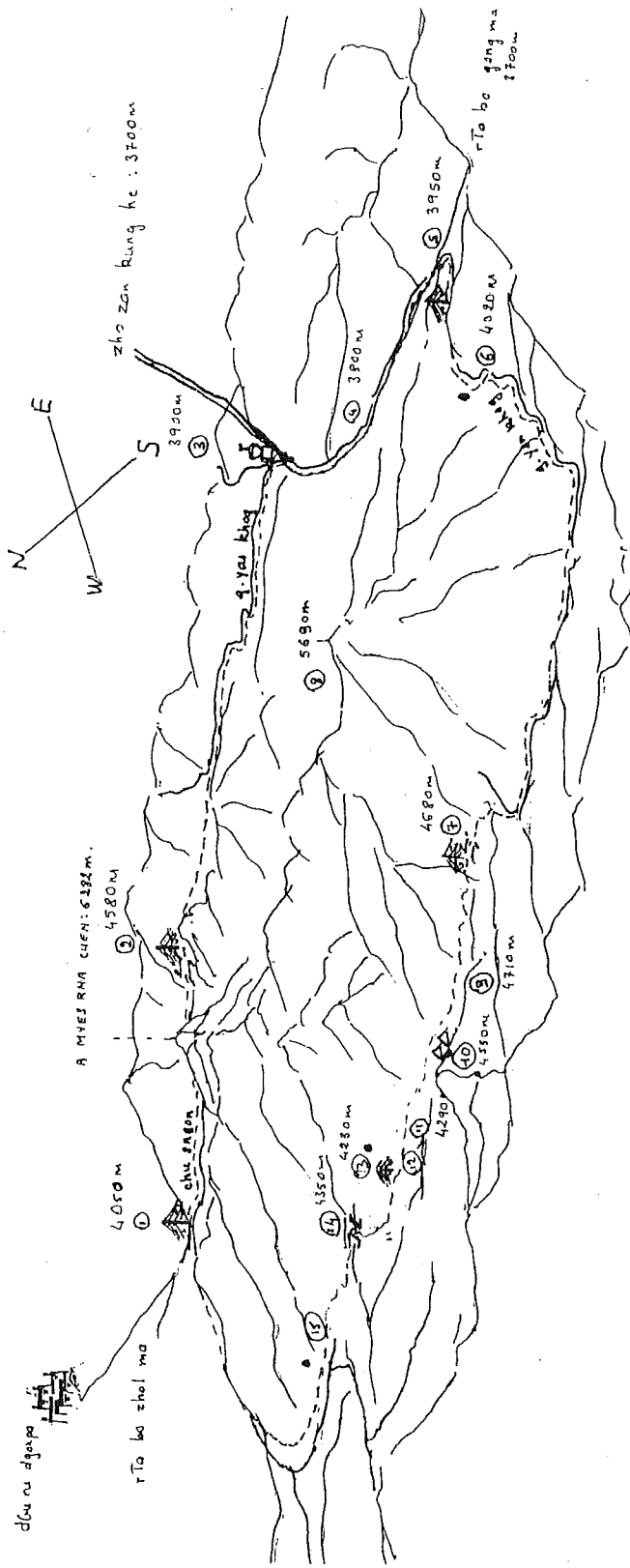
A fairly regular ascent led to the pass called rTa-mchog gong-pa, 'Sovereign, excellent horse'.²⁸ It is located south of the A-myes rma-chen range and is marked by a tall mast to which numerous ropes are attached. From them hang countless prayer-flags, turning the mast into a kind of parasol.

Here all the pilgrims stopped and prostrated themselves. Then the men hung up new prayer-flags, burned juniper branches, sent off 'wind horses' and having torn out a few hairs from their horses' manes, placed them on a pile of horse-skulls, manes and reins. This in order to obtain health and long life for the animal? or to attract or retain the 'luck' (*g.yang*) of the horse?²⁹

Afterwards, men and women accomplished numerous circumambulations, leading their horses behind them.

From rTa-mchog gong-pa the road crosses an immense plain called Ngang-ba'i gshog-steng 'on geeses' wings',³⁰ dominated by a snow-covered mountain named gNyer-ba mgron-gyi zhal dkar or gNyer-ba brang rgyas gyi zhal dkar.³¹ Scattered across this plain are small lakes which represent, it is said, offerings made to A-myes rma-chen. Everyone walked at the pace of his animals. The pilgrims were very

Pages 83 et 84 : carte QINGHAI



1. Nu bo dGra 'dul dbang phyug
2. 'Brog bsdu nyag kha
3. Chu dbar sna → HO len
4. Go mtshon
5. mTshal snag kha mdo
6. Klu sdong shug pa
7. rTa mchog gong kha
8. gNyer ba mgron gyi zhal dkar
9. Ngang ba'i gshog steng
10. Mo ba gto ba et grotte de Zhabs dkar
11. Bye ma 'bras dal
12. sGrol ma'i grub chu
13. Gos sku chen mo
14. rGal thung la (rGe'u thung la)
15. gShin rje rgya ma dang me long

mast
 =
 grotto
 =
 stupa
 =

Map 3.2 : The pilgrim's path around A MYES RMA CHEN (sketched by A. Le Guellec)

numerous and stopped here and there to lunch, as usual, on tea and *rtsam-pa*. A girl-pilgrim aged about ten passed from group to group, begging. She, her mother and another woman were all making the pilgrimage by prostrating, begging their food as they went. The other pilgrims were generous with food as well with money, and one of them was obliged to accompany the girl back to her camp to help her carry the various offerings she had been given.

Continuing in a westerly direction, the pilgrims arrived at a small lake (whose name they did not know) situated a little in advance of a rocky massif with numerous outcroppings, called Mo-ba gto-ba.³² The snow-covered mountains were reflected in the lake, and everyone stood before it for a long time in contemplation. One of the pilgrims who had a camera took two photos. Most of the pilgrims after circumambulating the lake went on their way around the rocks. But others went to the foot of Mo-ba gto-ba. It is there, in a hollow extended by small stone walls that Zhabs-dkar stayed during his sojourn at A-myes rma-chen. The pilgrims prostrated themselves over and over before the 'grotto' of this great mystic and then went on. Here and there the route was bordered with cairns on which some pilgrims placed a stone.

That evening, camp was set up in a little valley beside a river. While the men led the animals off to pasture, the women looked after the fire. Near the stream, other men and boys tried to see who could throw stones the furthest. Some other pilgrims arrived and installed themselves at a certain distance from our camp. As usual, the animals were brought back and tethered for the night, and each family passed the evening in conversation and joking around the fire at the entrance of their tent.

Seventh Day: In the morning, there was total silence. Everyone was waiting inside his tent for the snow to stop falling so thickly. Towards eight o'clock, when only a few flakes were still falling, the pilgrims lighted their fires and, after a few bowlfuls of tea, set out into the immaculate landscape.

Just before a pass a short distance away could be seen prayer-flags attached to masts, standing on a slope. Certain pilgrims circumambulated them. A little further on, not far from the pilgrims' road, rose numerous sand-dunes. According to many pilgrims, this place is called Bye-ma 'bru-sde (Bye-ma 'bru-rdal), 'Scatter barley like sand'.³³ When they came to a river (no one knew its name), all the pilgrims went a little way upstream to reach a spring called sGrol-ma'i grub-chu, 'Water of Tara's realisation', marked by a prayer-flag.³⁴ They prostrated themselves, drank and collected water, and picked up stones. Then all those who had horses used them to cross the river.

Not far off stood a number of tall masts, linked by multiple prayer-flags. Above them, in the cliff, was the mouth of a cave. The pilgrims stopped for some time at this place, which bears the name of Gos-sku chen-mo, 'The great needlework hanging'.³⁵

All prostrated themselves but only the men, not the women, added new prayer-flags. Laden with an enormous stone which they picked up and carried, usually on their backs, most of the pilgrims, men and women alike, made several circumambulations of the holy site. Then they climbed to the cave where they collected earth and stones.

Continuing on their way, the pilgrims began the ascent and installed their camp before the pass, on a stiff slope (which seems to be the usual practice). As a storm was rising, each family took refuge in its tent, joking, laughing, and some no doubt dreaming of the bellyfulls of meat that they would consume at pilgrimage's end.

Eighth Day : The pilgrims rose at five o'clock, as usual, and a hour later began the climb to the rGas-thug-la (?) pass.³⁶ Lower down, in the valley of rGas-thug-nang (?), everyone stopped by a site called Shin-rje rgya-ma dang me-long. "The scales and the mirror of Yama".³⁷ In the cliffside is carved a narrow conduit. Multiple prayer-flags hung from the rocks conceal its entrance. After lifting this heavy hanging, all the pilgrims, men and women alike, entered the rocky intestinal-tract and crawled through it. After that, most of them hung from an outcropping of the cliff, with their legs drawn up and their heads hanging down. The adults helped the children reach the projecting rock. Next, everyone went a bit lower and picked up enormous stones. Thus laden, they circumambulated the *mani*-wall. Such was the weight of the stones that the men were often obliged to place them on the women's backs. In some cases, two women helped one another to carry the same rock.

Some pilgrims, one of them a monk, incised the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara on a stone which they then added to the wall.

After several hours' walk, the pilgrims came to the bank of the Chu-sngon river which they crossed and, shortly afterwards, arrived at the holy site of dGra'dul dbang-phyug. Those for whom the pilgrimage was now over climbed to the dGu-ru monastery. The others continued on their way.

So transpired, in the ninth month of the Iron-Horse year, the pilgrimage around A-myes rma-chen.

The daily life of the nomads who composed the majority of the pilgrims may seem similar to the life they lead in the course of their various travels; they set up and dismantled their tents, loaded and unloaded their animals, and so on. The division of labour, too, was the same as in daily life. But this would be to forget a dimension peculiar to pilgrimage. It is a moment when all hold the status of pilgrim and share a common goal : to accomplish the pilgrimage around the sacred mountain. Thus, I was a foreigner by virtue of appearance, language, culture; by my inability to light a fire, to load a yak correctly. And yet my presence in this place seemed really to astonish no one. No doubt this is because they saw me as similar to themselves, in

that I was a pilgrim among others. During a certain lapse of time, we performed the same actions, knew the same experiences, ate the same food and shared, perhaps, the same aspirations. It may be this that made them forget our differences, and determined the form of our relations. We may wonder if a similar relationship could have been established under other circumstances: if, for example, instead of meeting these nomads on a pilgrimage I had suddenly arrived in their usual camp.

Nonetheless, during the pilgrimage there is not necessarily good fellowship, brotherhood and equality among all the pilgrims.³⁸ The different groups never mix, and within a single group each family appears to live in total independence of the others which does not exclude mutual aid in case of difficulty (such as putting loads back on yaks). It is a period when rules of behaviour are sometimes altered or suspended. Most of the pilgrims eat no meat and, according to some, have no sexual relations. I saw no one hunt, though most of the men carried rifles and we noticed several antilopes (not many, to be sure). An inversion of certain values can be observed; what is normally prized among the nomads, hunting and the taste for meat, becomes forbidden during pilgrimage. This new rule of behaviour is then prized, temporarily, as being correct. Externally, the pilgrims show that they are living in a special period by putting on their finest clothes and ornaments. The pilgrimage appears as a 'marginal time', a special moment in a special space. The pilgrims have left the space in which they normally live to enter the space of the pilgrimage, delimited by numerous sacred sites. They are living at a special time during which they attempt to have a more direct contact with the divine. Yet this 'marginal period' does not seem to lead to that state of *communitas* in which "the bonds are anti-structural in the sense that they are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, I-Thou...relationships". (Turner, 1974 : 274)

The Pilgrimage Guide

After I had made many attempts, all in vain, to find a guidebook to the A-myes rma-chen pilgrimage, a pilgrim presented me with one (there are said to be a number of other guides; I obtained a Bon-po version in 1993).³⁹

The text I was given bears the title, *Yul rma chen gnags ri'i gnas kyi rten bshad gdul bya'i 'gro blo'i dad brgya'i padma 'byed pa'i nyin byed snang zhes bys ba*, "Explanation of the 'supports'⁴⁰ of the holy site, the snowy mountain of the land of rMa, [an explanation] called Sun which opens the hundred-petalled lotus of devotion amongst living beings [who are to be converted]". Surprisingly for a work found in such an out-of-the-way place, it is in the form of a photocopy of a manuscript booklet. It is written in standard formal characters (*dbu can*) and is composed of twelve folios with text on both sides. There are five lines on each page except the last, which has only a single line. The author, Kun-dga' mkhas-dbang-dpal-bzang-po, a native of A-mdo, provides no information that might enable us to date this guide, but both

language and contents suggest that it is a modern text.

As he states himself, the author came from Dzam-thang (or 'Dzam-thang), a town in the northern part of the Chinese province of Sichuan (cf. the map). According to a mGo-log informant from the same place, now living as a refugee in Kathmandu, the author was a monk of the Jo-nang-pa school.⁴¹

This guidebook is an "explanation of the 'supports' of the holy site" (*gnas kyir ten-bshad*). In Western writings, the term 'pilgrimage guide' covers a number of different Tibetan literary genres. Wylie (1965 : 17) distinguishes four types of writings in this group:

1. *dkar-chag*, 'register' : According to Wylie, the *dkar-chag* confines itself to the description of a single place of pilgrimage and the sacred objects found there.
2. *gnas-bhad*, literally 'explanation of the holy site' : This describes several places of pilgrimage and furnishes very summary directions for going from one to the other.
3. *lam-yig*, 'passport' : a guidebook intended for those whose pilgrimage destinations are situated in two or more different regions.
4. *go la'i kha byang* or 'global description' : In Wylie's view, this class is represented by a single work, the '*Dzam gling chen po'i rgyas bshad snod bcud kun gsal me long*,⁴² "The mirror which illumines all things animate and inanimate and entirely explains the great world".⁴³

This typology proves to be too rigid. Thus, the pilgrimage guide translated here would fit, according to its contents, in the first category, but its title places it in the second.

Most pilgrimage guides follow the same plan. First comes a reminder of the initial conquest by Buddhist deities of the autochthonous or Hindu gods of the place in question. Next, a religious virtuoso 'opens the door of the holy site' (*gnas-sgophye-ba*), sometimes as the result of a dream or vision. He creates and consecrates the pilgrimage road and continues to subdue hostile powers.

Sometimes, a competition for possession of the site ensues between members of different schools: at Kailash, for example, Bon-po against Buddhist; at Kong-po Bon-ri, a sacred mountain of the Bon-pos south-east of Lhasa, Bon-po against Karma-pa.⁴⁴

At present it is not known when the pilgrimage to A-myes rma-chen began, or who founded it.

The text given here does not follow the plan presented above. The first eight folios describe this holy site as the author was able to behold it (in a mystical vision?) : as a *maṇḍala* of Cakrasamvara.⁴⁵ Then, as in many other guidebooks, several folios

(here, ff. 9-11) are devoted to the extraordinary characteristics of the place as well as the benefits and merits to be derived from the accomplishment of "circumambulations, prostrations and meditations" there.

[1A] "Explanation of the 'Supports' of the Holy Site, The snow mountain of the Land of Rma,⁴⁶ [an explanation] called Sun which opens the Hundred-Petalled Lotus of Devotion Amongst Living Beings [who are to be converted].

[1B] *Na mo gu ru śrī tsakra sam bha ra ya.*

I bow before the glorious Cakrasaṃvara who though he never departs from the *dharmadhātu*,⁴⁷ the very perception of his thought, sends forth countless *maṇḍala* of deities and their supports, in conformity with the nature, sensorial perceptions and devotion of all beings who are to be converted. There is no place in the Three Worlds or anywhere else, for that matter, where the *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṃvara does not exist.

In especial, these words addressed to others express what I have beheld not once, but again and again, of the principal supports of deities finely installed in this excellent holy place of the sublime rMa ri ke la sha.⁴⁸ [I do not list them here] in order to attract to myself riches and favour. [2A] Thus, should anyone ask me 'why' [I am writing this text, it is because] when this pilgrim's guide is seen by others, it will sow the seed of liberation. I rejoice, therefore, in composing it. I will tell here what I have successively beheld⁴⁹ of him who is called the perfectly saintly rMa-chen spon-ra⁵⁰ and who resides in this well-known holy place [located] in the center of a thousand great mountains [resembling] a pinnacle, the quintessence of the territory of the land of rMa, in the A-mdo region of the snowy land of Tibet, in the northern part of Jambudvīpa.

In the centre of this great snow-covered mountain [called] rMa-chen,⁵¹ situated more or less in the eastern part of the world, [2B] I have seen very clearly [in a vision] all the divine assemblies of the glorious Cakrasaṃvara in a divine palace of which the intrinsic nature was fashioned of the primordial Wisdom of the spontaneous radiance of the thought of the glorious Cakrasaṃvara, and whose exterior aspect was confected of the five sorts of jewels, and which possessed in their entirety all the characteristics [of a palace of this sort].

In the sphere of space above Cakrasaṃvara, within the luminous rays which blanketed all the directions, the Tathāgata as well as the Tathāgati⁵² and all their suites, incalculable in number, arrived and took their places. Some held an auspicious flask in their hand, others chanted a melody, some danced, others who held diverse sorts of offerings [presented them] in a gesture of offerings — it was unimaginable.

[3A] Coming from the four quarters and the four intermediate points of each of their *maṇḍala* [which are those of] the Body, Speech and Mind [of the Buddha], the

numberless goddesses of offerings [carried] an infinite number of offering objects in their hands and performed the circumambulation of the *maṇḍala* [of Cakrasamvara]. At the four quarters of the square courtyard of the divine palace, the four goddesses of primordial Wisdom offered without interruption rays coming forth from their hands whose very white light resembled the smoke of incense, and it may indeed be this that is responsible for the emergence of this great snowy mountain. As for the goddesses [to whom are made] offerings [and who dwell in] this territory where the great *maṇḍala* is installed : the goddesses of flowers held flowers various and numerous, the goddesses of incense held different sorts of incense of exquisite aromas, [3B] the goddesses of butter-lamps held sun, moon and jewels as well as lamps containing vegetable oil (*rtsi'i mar*) and lamps containing vegetable oil made from black and white sesame seeds (*'bru mar*) in infinite number, the goddesses of perfumes held small conch-shells filled with perfumed water, the goddesses of melody held numerous musical instruments of all sorts, the goddesses of lutes held different kinds of lutes, the goddesses of kettledrums held kettledrums, the goddesses of dances executed various dances, the goddesses of triangles⁵³ held all sorts of triangles, and others, too, held the seven kinds of jewels⁵⁴ the eight offering-substances⁵⁵ and the eight auspicious signs;⁵⁶ all, in incalculable numbers, offered to the divine assemblies in the *maṇḍala* of the glorious Cakrasamvara these objects of offering.

Outside the great charnel-house of the *maṇḍala* there appeared designs [in the form of swirls of] wind, which surrounded it. As regards the plan of the principal site of this holy place, it is certain that it is thus.

Moreover, the *bodhisattva* at the level of the tenth stage, the excellent Ārya Avalokiteśvara, having taken on the appearance of a deity of this world of pasturage, resides as a guardian deity of this holy palace. In the upper western part of the world [where is situated] this sacred spot, in the upper western part of rMa-chen, opposite, the palace of rMa-rgyal is made of precious rubies. Square, it has four porches [adorned] with sculptures. Above, there is a Chinese roof in gold and turquoise with a jewelled ornament. The side walls of the palace [are covered with] drawings in relief of golden *svastika*, there are four doors in the four directions [adorned] with sculptures. In [the palace located] opposite what is known [on earth] under the name of Phye sde 'bras sde, the frontal doorway of rMa-chen [4B] is round in form. The interior of this palace is entirely made of precious emeralds and *lapis lazuli*. At the centre, within this mixture of blue and green, on a most beautiful throne composed of the five kinds of jewels, amidst a piling-up of very white clouds resembling a mass of fresh buttermilk, I beheld that there sat the excellent Ārya Mahākarūṇa himself, the personification of the compassion of all the *jina*. He had taken the form of the protector of the doctrine, [the deity] of this excellent holy place, known under the name of rMa-rgyal. He had a body white in colour, similar to a snowy mountain, in which a small amount of red appeared. He had a single face and two hands. His right

hand held the ritual arrow⁵⁷ which calls forth all that one wishes, and which was made from a white reed adorned with silks of different colours. [5A] His left hand held against his heart the *cintāmaṇi* jewel which fulfills all the hopes and desires of sentient beings. He wore silks and jewelled ornaments, brocaded vest, a coat of mail and a golden helm. He was mounted on an excellent white horse with turquoise mane, in a golden saddle beautifully decorated with precious ornaments, in the posture of royal ease, his face turned in [my] direction.⁵⁸

An incalculable number of emanations of his Body, Speech and Mind radiated outwards from his body and were reabsorbed into his body. Forming his entourage was the power of the seven sorts of treasures : queens in number uncountable, ministers, the *cintāmaṇi* jewel, and so on, an incalculable number of treasure-halls of all sorts: treasures of the eight auspicious signs, the eight offering-substances, the five sorts of offerings to the gods,⁵⁹ precious materials of gold and silver, and different types of silk, such as fine silks and brocades; treasures of weapons : swords, arrows, lances, coats of mail, helms, treasures of all things in which gods and men rejoice.

Concerning that which is known by the name of Gos sku chen mo, it is a curtain [made] of five different sorts of silk [hung] at the gate of entry to the palace of rMa-chen. Within this gate an incalculable number of saintly monks were liberating fortunate beings by chanting resoundingly the melody of the teachings of the Great Vehicle.

[6A] Outside this excellent holy place appeared four great masts in the four directions: before Gos-sku chen-mo, at rTa-mchog gong-pa, at sBas gur stong shong⁶⁰ and at Nub kyī rlung ri.⁶¹ Beyond this, in the northern part of the world, in the upper region of [the valley called] rMa-chen g.Yas-lung, at the edge of the glacier which is near the palace, in the centre of the great grove of the charnel-house, was residing in the midst of a flaming fire of primordial Wisdom, dPal ye-shes kyī mgon-po,⁶² with six hands, his back leaning against a sandalwood tree, and surrounded by the assembly of guardian deities, [an assembly which is as vast as] the ocean; and these latter [6B] while executing the orders of the *jina* in general and Cakrasaṃvara in particular, remained there and accomplished the good of sentient beings. In the courtyard, directly opposite these deities, was the guardian rDo-rje'i legs-pa⁶³ and his entourage of emanations [which had issued] from himself, as well as the emanations of his emanations. Facing what is known [by the name of] Mo-ba gto-ba, the place where the Master Zhabs-dkar rdo-rje 'chang lived, was dwelling Ārya Avalokiteśvara with a single face and four hands, the colour of his body resembling that of a snow-covered mountain caressed by a hundred thousand suns. He was surrounded by innumerable Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage. [In the place called] Ri gdong zor re⁶⁴ [which is located] at right angles [from Mo-ba gto-ba] was residing the Master of tāntric teachings Vajrapāni with a single face and two hands, [7A] his body blue, similar in tone to the colour of *lapis lazuli*⁶⁵ and surrounded by Bodhisattvas in number incalculable. Likewise, on the right-hand side of this same holy place, in

the centre of the right-hand part of the glacier, was dwelling Mañjuśrī with a body of red and gold, vermilion in tone, with a single face and two hands. In his right hand he held the sword of Wisdom, in his left, the books of Prajñapāramitā in a hundred thousand verses,⁶⁶ and he was surrounded by many Bodhisattvas. On the right-hand side of this same holy place, at the edge of the glacier, was residing in the centre of a suite of [followers of] Tārā vast as the ocean, the Green Tārā; she had a luminous body [7B] and a radiant face.

From the outside, these holy places have the look of a heap of dusty earth, but in reality, since their essence is that of the paradises which have issued forth from the spontaneous apparition of Primordial Wisdom, they are not different from the Potala,⁶⁷ Ri bo rtse lnga⁶⁸ and g. Yu lo bkod⁶⁹ paradises. [Nor is there any difference either] regarding the longevity and activities of those who reside in these paradises. Furthermore, at the north-eastern limit of the world, in proximity to the glacier, at a place called Go-mtshon, there is a stock of treasures of arms and armour of all sorts. The entire interior of the holy mountains near this spot was filled with numerous women, charming of face, naked, their bodies red in colour, swaying their hips to the left. They are the *smān mo*⁷⁰ who make up the entourage of the deities.

[8A] And also, to the left of Go mtshon, in this mountain where there are many huts covered with clay, there was, at each of the four quarters, a crystal *stūpa* an ell in length, comprising four corners and four doorways, and made of precious materials. From time to time these *stūpa* grew in size, and from time to time diminished. In the middle of the *stūpa* was a great *stūpa* of crystal. This was of the type called 'of the Enlightenment'.⁷¹ The Tshe ring mched lnga⁷² are masters of the site at this holy spot. As for the dwelling-place of the principal deity [of the Tshe ring mched lnga], bKra shis tshe ring ma: in the centre of this mountain which is known under the name of A'bur sbar lung,⁷³ in the middle of a vast tent of flowers, in a square chamber of gold, was residing the principal deity bKra [8B] shis tshe ring ma, garbed in fine vestments and ornaments, and the assemblies of *dākinī* who surrounded her were in the process of carrying out a *ganacakra*.⁷⁴ And also, at right angles to rTa-mchog gong-kha, facing [the spot] called Nyang-ba'i gshog-steb, in one of the snow-covered mountains of rMa-chen, it is certain there lies a treasure containing a full measure of all the objects of enjoyment for gods and men. During the pilgrimage, it is well that the pilgrims should [gather] there a little earth and water, as ingredients of good fortune.

At right angles to this same snow-covered mountain, there is a mountain called rDo-rje-drag rgyal-ma⁷⁵ which resembles a heart. The Arhat Mi-phyed-pa⁷⁶ was dwelling in the centre, this is certain, leaning his back against the *Bodhi*-tree and [9A] holding a *stūpa* in his hand. He was in a standing posture, his face turned towards the east, and he was teaching the law to the numerous Arhats who formed his entourage. The master of the site of this holy spot seemed to me to be a queen.

And then, in those locations which are called 'little holy places' or 'secondary holy places', and which are formed in the neighbourhood of this sacred and excellent Buddha-field, reside an incalculable number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If having undertaken the circumambulation of these secondary places, one performs prostrations and circumambulations, one cannot conceive of the merit [which will be derived from them] for these are places where the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reside in person. In addition [9B] because it is certain that [among] the different species of birds and wild animals which are found in these excellent holy places, some are emanations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, it should not be necessary to say that it is not suitable to harm them. As for the others, since they are the domestic animals of the most powerful masters of the site, if one harms them, one's existence in this life will be short and unpleasant, misfortunes without number will follow. And if one should be obliged to experience multiple sufferings in one's next life, it is the very law of the retribution of actions.

If it is said in the *sūtra* and *tantra* that inconceivable benefits are obtained by making prostrations and circumambulations to the images which are the supports of the Body, Speech and Mind [of the Buddha], [10A] how much greater are the benefits [to be derived] from prostrations, offerings and circumambulations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who dwell [there] in person. This is why, since greater merit is obtained by meditating for a single instant in this holy place than by meditating years and months in another holy place, if certain persons, monks or laymen, are able to practise meditations and propitiations for a long time in this excellent Buddha-field, they will attain to the splendour of the Buddha in this very life. Otherwise, even if, with a very pure intention, they establish karmic links with this holy place for only a month or a week, they will sow the seed of liberation in their spirit and will obtain the eighteen conditions which permit rebirth as a human being.⁷⁷ of this there is no doubt. If lay persons, men or women, [10B] are capable of promising to accomplish prostrations, offerings and circumambulations, reciting prayers, practising virtue and abandoning sins in this excellent holy place, they will enjoy in this very existence a long life free from ailment, without the sufferings [caused by] poverty, and their prosperity will increase. They will speedily realise all their desires according to everything they have in their minds and, if they are capable of resolving to take a very pure premonitory vow, it is certain that in their next existence they will be reborn in the paradise of their choice : Sukhavati, for example.⁷⁸ Even should they be unable to be reborn in this paradise, since they will have acquired the seven attributes of the paradises⁷⁹ and, little by little, the good support of birth as a human being, they will be correctly accepted in this form as disciples by the 'friends of virtue' (Skt : *kalyāṇamītra*) of the Great Vehicle and [11A] entering the great ship of the two accumulations⁸⁰ of the way that leads to liberation, they will be able to go beyond the ocean of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* to the continent of the four Bodies of the perfectly aware Buddha.⁸¹ Of this there is no doubt.

And so I will say:⁸²

This perfect plan of a Buddha-field which is not found [anywhere else], even should one search an incalculable number of aeons, is localised in the white continent of the Excellent Mountain of rMa⁸³ and is [our] portion of a field of true merits. Since, to no matter whom amongst us, this excellent [Buddha-]field has been allotted in an unsurpassable manner as a field of merit, if we are capable of carrying out prostrations, offerings and circumambulations there, we will obtain results from them more speedily than if we were to accomplish them in other Buddha-fields.

[11B] The merit obtained from practising virtue, even for only an instant, in this excellent place, is even more glorious than if one listens to the explanation of the holy doctrine, meditates and recites prayers in another holy place. This is why it is fitting that all should make an effort, with a pure intention and in the prescribed manner, to carry out the prostrations, offerings, circumambulations, meditations and propitiations, and to recite prayers in this excellent holy place, and that most frequently.

Thus, by the mass of benefits of this explanation, by the power of this perfect field, may those beings who are chiefly linked by *karma* with this holy place establish themselves upon the throne of the Four Bodies of the Buddha, the ultimate goal.

This text, the “Explanation of the ‘supports’ of the holy site, the snowy mountain of the land of rMa, [an explanation] called Sun which opens the hundred-petalled lotus of devotion amongst living beings [who are to be converted]”, I, Kun dga’ mkhas dbang dpal bzang po of ’Dzam-thang [12A] have declared it with the intention of being useful to others, [by explaining] the succession [of things] which I beheld in a similar manner during two circumambulations [carried out] around the snow-covered mountain rMa-chen”.

So concludes “The explanation of the holy place which is the snowy mountain of the land of rMa”.

According to the bKa’brgyud pa tradition, twenty-four holy places were transformed into *maṇḍalas* of Cakrasaṃvara. Three of them occupy a special position: Tise is considered to be the body (*kāya*) of Cakrasaṃvara, La phyi his speech (*vāc*) and Tsa-ri his mind (*citta*). For his part, the author of the A-myes rma-chen guidebook considers that Cakrasaṃvara’s *maṇḍala* is everywhere in the world, and so sees the entire universe as resembling a *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṃvara. Nonetheless, he believes that this holy place of A-myes rma-chen is endowed with special qualities, so that actions accomplished here, even during a short period, result in greater merits than those performed for a longer time elsewhere. He attempts to adapt Cakrasaṃvara’s *maṇḍala* to the real landscape. He enumerates a certain number of sites which he relates to the presence of Buddhist deities whom he has been able to contemplate, in a mystic vision. Yet he makes it very clear that there are two

readings of the landscape : that of the ordinary being, who will only see a heap of dust, and that of the meditator on the path of enlightenment, who will not only behold the divinities but who will also recognise, behind the rocks and mountains, the paradisiacal quality of the spot. We find the same idea in many other pilgrimage guides, like the one for La phyi for example.⁸⁴

How do the pilgrims, in their turn, see this landscape? Will they, too, reconstruct it as a *maṇḍala*?

The Confrontation of Written Tradition and Living Realities

To achieve a decisive comparison between the written tradition and the pilgrims' behaviour, one would need to examine several different pilgrimage guides to A-myes rma-chen. Still, although I am well aware of the limitations of a study based on a single guidebook, a certain number of useful observations may still result from placing precept beside practice.

My host on the pilgrimage, who had a copy of the guidebook in his possession, never consulted it. Instead, he frequently referred to the written instructions which his friend had given him :

- At mTshal-nag kha-mdo, one must burn juniper-branches.
- Draw water at sGrol-ma'i bum-chu.
- At rTa-mchog gong-pa, **the south gate**, send off 'wind-horses', hang up prayer-flags and burn juniper-branches.
- Mo-ba gto-ba, Phye-ma 'sbras sde, sGrol-ma'i grub-chu [these places are simply noted by name without further instructions].
- At Gos-sku chen-mo, **the west gate**, one must burn juniper-branches, send off 'wind-horses', hang up prayer-flags and carry the stones of the 'kindness of father and mother' [for these stones, see below].
- rGas thung and gShin-rje rgya-ma dang me-long [these names are simply recorded, without instructions].
- At dGra-'dul dbang-phyug, **the north gate**, one must burn juniper-branches, gather stones.
- sBas gur stong shong [simply mentioned].

At Chu-dbar-sna, **the east gate**, there is a *stūpa*.

Only Chu-dbar-na and dGra-'dul dbang-phyug correspond to a point of access to the pilgrimage route. Thus, just as the guidebook's author situates four masts at the four cardinal points [folio 6A], the lay pilgrim projects on the landscape four gates, one in each of the four directions, resembling the gateways of a *maṇḍala*.

Among the sites which line the pilgrim's road, eleven are cited in the guidebook written by Kun dga' mkhas dbang dpal bzang po:

<i>Sites in the guidebook</i> [following their order in the text]	<i>Sites on the route</i> [in topographical order]
1. Phye-sde 'bras-sde	1. Nu-bo dGra-'dul dbang-phyug
2. Gos-sku chen-mo	2. 'Brog-bsdu nyag-kha [sBas gur stong shong]
3. rTa-mchog gong-pa	3. Chu-dbar-sna
4. sBas gur stong shong	4. Go-mtshon
5. Nub kyi rlung ri	5. mTshal-snag kha-mdo
6. rMa-chen g.Yas-lung	6. Klu sdong shug-pa
7. Mo-ba gTo-ba and Zhabs dkar's cave	7. rTa-mchog gong-pa
8. Ri gdong zor re	8. gNyer-ba mgron gyi zhal-dkar
9. Go-mtshon	9. Ngang-ba'i gshog-steng
10. A 'bur sbar lung	10. Mo-ba gto-ba and Zhabs dkar's cave
11. Ngang-ba'i gshog-steb	11. Bye-ma 'bru-rdal
	12. sGrol-ma'i grub-chu
	13. Gos-sku chen-mo
	14. rGal thung la [rGe'u thung la]
	15. gShin-rje rgya-ma dang me-long

The juxtaposition of sites mentioned in the text with those found on the actual route reveals that most of the places described in the guide actually exist along the pilgrim's way, but they are named without regard to their exact location. Therefore, the text is scarcely a 'guide' in the sense we understand it.⁸⁵

Among the places indicated by our author only three seemed to be unknown to the pilgrims whom we questioned. Since the pilgrimage had been forbidden for many years, some sites and their names may well have vanished, both physically and from collective memory. Conversely, the author leaves out a certain number of places which we find today along the route. May these sites be recent creations, like the dGu-ru monastery, which was built ten years ago?

After having first described the pilgrims' behaviour, then translated the guidebook to A-myes rma-chen, it now remains to place side by side, for each site, what is written in the text and what the pilgrims actually do.⁸⁶

Phye-sde 'bras-sde [folio 4A], or Bye-ma 'bras-rdal (?): "Scatter rice [like] sand", or 'Bye-ma 'bras-dil, 'Hillock of rice [resembling] sand'. The sole indication offered in the guidebook is that this place is located opposite the frontal gateway of rMa-chen. The author mentions it exclusively with reference to the palace of the deity.

On the pilgrimage road, nothing attracts one's attention to this spot; it is only the mention of this name in the description left by Rock (1956 : 115) that led me to look for it. One of my informants, a mGo-log monk, told me that when the Chinese arrived in Tibet, the mountain of A-myes rma-chen wanted to leave for India. In order to keep the mountain in its place, all the gods offered it a three-dimensional *mandala* and the sand-dunes represent the grains of sand that were placed on this *mandala*. In this manner, for certain pilgrims, Tibet's recent history is now inscribed on the route, by means of a *mandala*. How, we may wonder, was the presence of these dunes explained before 1950?

The pilgrims went their way at this point, without making a stop.

Gos-sku chen-mo [folio 5B], "The great hanging of brocaded needlework". For the guidebook's author, this is the curtain of the gate of entry into rMa-chen's palace. The entrance is marked by a great mast placed outside. Inside, saintly monks dispense the teachings of the Law.

The site is found southwest of the range, and is in fact marked by a great mast, which is overlooked by a grotto in the cliffside behind it. A pilgrim explained the spot's name to me in this manner: one day, a great hanging (Gos-sku chen-mo) came down from heaven and was absorbed, in this grotto, by the rocks, where it left a trace. It is said that at this point now flows *amṛta*, the beverage of immortality.⁸⁷

If the guidebook advises one to perform prostrations, it says nothing on the subject of the stones which the pilgrims carry. In contrast, one of the instructions which his friend wrote down for my host was "to carry on one's back the stones of the kindness of father and mother" [*pha ma'i sprin* (*sic* : *drin*) *rdo 'khur* (*sic* : *khur*) *dgo* (*sic* : *dgos*)]. According to a mGo-log informant, the oral tradition relates that two of these stones represent one's father and mother, and that transporting them is a way of thanking one's parents for their kindness.

If the pilgrims' behaviour here is not dictated by the guidebook, it nonetheless is related to a tradition, which we find elsewhere, as well. In fact, Jest (1985 : 162) notes the presence, on the Kailash pilgrims' route, of a rock called "ritual action of father and mother replete with kindness" [*drin chen pha ma'i phrin las*]. His informant described it in the following terms: in the vertical wall of this rock is "a hole at the height of a man. One stands seven paces away from it and, after making a triple salutation, and closing one's eyes, one holds out one's hand, with the index-

finger extended, and tries to reach the hole in a single leap! Should one succeed, all faults will be forgiven". [his own? or those of his parents?].⁸⁸

The same idea is also found in certain Buddhist writings. Thus, in the works of dPal sprul O-rgyan, jigs-med chos kyi dbang-po, it is said that "even if a son were to carry his father on his left shoulder and his mother on his right and go around the entire earth for their benefit, he would never be able to repay all their kindness to him. If, though, he causes his father and mother to enter the path of the *Dharma*, he will have paid back the kindness they showed him".⁸⁹

Stones play an essential role on the occasion of pilgrimages around sacred mountains. For example, at one of the holy sites along the Tarap pilgrimage route, in Nepal, [Jest, 1975 : 3515], there are round stones [‘giants’ stones’, *rgyad rdo*] which everyone⁹⁰ attempts to lift, without success, it would seem; but "he who can lift one of them frees himself from all his faults". Here again we find the notion of purifying oneself of one’s transgressions, but also the idea of an exploit, which reminds us of the competition which took place, in former days, at Lhasa, during the festivities which followed ‘The Great Prayer’ at New Year. The competitors, all men, carried huge stones around the gSung chos ra, a square located to the southeast of the Jo-khang, where the Dalai Lama preached on the occasion of the ‘Great Prayer’. (Karsten, 1981: 125)

Stones to be carried also appear with another function. Thus, in Bhutan, in one of the holy-places that has a grotto with two openings, an entrance and an exit, one finds differently-shaped stones which women carry accordingly as they hope for a boy or a girl. (Stein, 1988 : 14)⁹¹

We frequently encounter an association of stones with caves. Grottos appear to be an important constituent of holy places. Nonetheless, the Gos-sku chen-mo cave is not mentioned in the guidebook. Neither is the grotto of Klu sdong shug-pa, that recalls those ‘womb-caverns’ described by Stein (1988), passing through which results in the purification of sins, a good rebirth and an easy obstetric delivery. Not a single pilgrim failed to traverse this grotto.

The guidebook’s author does not mention the place called gShin-rje rgya-ma dang me-long. "Yama’s scales and mirror", where all the pilgrims made a long halt. As its name indicates, this spot is associated with Yama, Lord of Death. In passing through the narrow defile not only does the pilgrim deliver himself from his sins; he also accomplishes a ritual which he believes will exempt him from giving a full account to Yama of the good and evil deeds accomplished in the course of his present life, when he finds himself in the intermediate state between death and his next rebirth [*bar do*].⁹² This tight passage recalls those rocks known as ‘white and black sins’ [*sdig-pa dkar nag*] which generally take the form of a narrow opening between two rocks, where anyone who has committed too many sins gets stuck if he tries to slip through. Such places are found everywhere in Tibet: for example, along the

pilgrim's route that circles the dGa' ldan monastery, in Central Tibet, and at Mt. Kailash. They are linked with the purification of sins, a good rebirth and also to the *bar-do* : if one has frequently traversed such passages in his lifetime, once dead he will be delivered from the terror that assails persons on the threshold of the intermediate state. (Stein, 1988 : 30) Next, by hanging from a projecting rock in the cliffside, the pilgrim places himself on Yama's scales and is thus able to weigh his own burden of sins.⁹³

In contrast, the mast occurs both in the guidebook and on the pilgrims' trails, where it is the focus of ritual acts : the pilgrims prostrate themselves before it, circumambulate it and pray. By so doing, they are in conformity with the text of the guide. But do they see the saintly monks behind the curtain of the gateway to the palace of rMa-chen? I do not know. Yet in lifting and carrying great stones, in slipping through a narrow passageway, in hanging prayer-flags and burning juniper-branches, they seem to be following another tradition, of which the guidebook's author breathes not a word, but which is found everywhere in the Tibetan world.

rTa-mchog gong-pa [folio 6B] : "Sovereign, excellent horse", is noted by the author as one of the places where a great mast has been set up.

In fact, the pass is marked, as we have seen, by a tall mast. This pass represents the highest point⁹⁴ on the pilgrimage route and it appears to be one of its most important holy sites, although it is difficult to be sure of this. Thus, in the pilgrimage around Mt. Kailash, the pilgrim slowly sets out on an ascent which begins very gently, before becoming extremely abrupt. At last, he reaches the pass of Tārā (sGrol ma la), at 5,635 metres. This is the ultimate goal of the Kailash pilgrimage for, according to my informants, it is here that the penitent is purified of all his sins with the assistance of Tārā, the Compassionate. It is thus as a 'new man' that he begins the descent on the far side of the pass. The geographical configuration of the route around A-myes rma-chen is very different. Holy sites line the route, and if one of them serves the same function as the sGrol-ma-la, I could not say which it is.

Although the mast is mentioned in the guidebook as well as present on the trail, there are no written directives concerning the ritual actions which the pilgrims should perform there. My host's friend, normally more punctilious, had failed to note the offering of hairs from their horse's mane which was made by all male pilgrims.

Thus, the guidebook does not direct the pilgrims' behaviour at rTa mchog gong pa.

sBas gur stong shong or **sBa gur stong shong** [folio 6A] : "the place [where] a thousand tents can be set up", is, according to the guidebook, the location of the third mast.

In the opinion of my mGo-log informant, sBas gur stong shong is situated north of A-myes rma-chen and is the seat of the five hundred *arhats*. I am not certain of

Pages 101 à 104 : photos non scannées

the exact site; no pilgrim could tell me. It would seem to be a hill at the foot of the north slope of A-myes rma-chen, opposite the pass of 'Brog bsdu nyag kha, "the Combe where the nomads gather".

sBas gur stong shong is not one of the sites where a great mast has been erected, even though its name is known to a certain number of pilgrims. A mast does stand not far away from there, at 'Brog bsdu nyag-kha, a place not mentioned by the guidebook's author.

A site called **Nub kyri rlung ri** [folio 5B], "the Mountain of the west wind" appears in the text as the place where the fourth mast is to be seen, but I was unable to identify it anywhere on the route. No one seemed to have heard this name before.

There is, to be sure, a mast in the west at Gos-sku chen-mo, another in the south at rTa-mchog gong-pa, and a third in the north at 'Brog-bsdu nyag-kha. A mast is lacking in the east, if one is to complete the square plan described by the author, with a mast at each cardinal point. I saw none. Still, we should not forget the possibility that certain important foci of interest such as masts and *stūpa* have been destroyed.

rMa-chen g.Yas-lung [folio 6A]. This valley, whose name is mentioned in the guide, is supposed by the author to be the seat of the protective deity dPal ye shes kyi mgon po.

Situated in the north of the A-myes rma-chen chain, this place also bears the name of g.Yas khog, "Land on the right-hand side". The term g.Yas khog and g.Yon khog suggest the presence of the notion of 'creative dismemberment'. "Le mot *khog* désigne en effet une région mais aussi la carcasse d'un animal abattu". (Karmay-Sagant 1987 : 245)⁹⁵

The fact that the guidebook mentions this spot does not seem to influence the pilgrims' behaviour. It is astonishing that the text takes no notice of the *stūpa* of Chu dbar sna, although it is true that we have no idea how long it has been there. Might the other *stūpa* of which the author writes [folio 8A] have some relation to this one?

Mo-ba-gto-ba [folio 6B], residence of Zhabs-dkar, the great rNying-ma-pa mystic, is located, according to the text, opposite the place where Avalokiteśvara dwells.

In the view of a pilgrim whom I met at this site, one of the spurs of the rocky massif represents the officiant who practises divination (*mo*), another, the one who plays the drum, and a third, the one who carries out the ritual of expulsion (*gto*).

Avalokiteśvara's presence seems not to be visible to the pilgrims. Taking no account at all of the guidebook's directives, they are exclusively interested by that little lake in which the hidden power of the holy-place perhaps appears through the reflections, of what is, for them, like a mirror.⁹⁶

Rig gdong zor re [folio 6B], residence of Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī and the green Tārā according to the text, was a site completely unknown to any of the pilgrims I

encountered.

Go-mtshon⁹⁷ [folio 7B], is presented in the text as a reserve of all manner of treasures of arms and armour.

These arms and armour are those of rMa-chen spom-ra, master of the territory, chief of all the deities of the A-mdo region. In choosing this place which contains not only the arms of rMa-chen spom-ra but also the power associated with them, the lama of the dGu-ru monastery was perhaps borrowing some of that power for himself.

Go-mtshon is the only place along the entire pilgrimage route where Gesar's presence was spoken of by the pilgrims, and that only in an indirect way, by reference to his elder brother. As for the guidebook, it is entirely mute on the subject of Gesar and his brother.

A'bur sbar lung [folio 8A and 8B]. According to the guidebook's author, it is in the centre of this mountain, in a tent of flowers, that bKra shis tshe ring ma dwells: the principal deity in the group of the Tshe ring mched lnga.

The pilgrims did not know the name of this site.

Nang-ba'i gshog-steb [folio 8B], or Ngang-ba'i gshog-steng, "On the wings of geese", is mentioned briefly in the guide as being located opposite a snowy mountain where the pilgrim should collect a bit of earth and water.

Many pilgrims knew the name of this plain, although it is not in itself a holy site and all were content to cross it at the slow pace of their yaks. We must note, however, that the guidebook mentions a snowy mountain that conceals a treasure that includes a full array of all the objects that bring joy to gods and men, and that the pilgrims associated this place with the name of one of the snowy mountains of the A-myes rma-chen chain, Nyer-ba mgon gyi zhal-dkar.

Conclusion

The confrontation of the A-myes rma-chen guidebook and the observations made in the course of the pilgrimage reveals whether pilgrims act in conformity with this text's instructions or whether, instead, they follow another tradition.

The author, Kun dga' mkhas dbang dpal bzang po, provides a certain number of general directives that apply to the holy-place "which is the snowy mountain of the land of rMa", as well as to the minor holy-places found in the latter's neighbourhood: to perform prostrations, make offerings, carry out circumambulations, meditations, propitiations and chant prayers. To these is added a supplementary directive regarding the secondary external holy-places: to do no harm to animals. The author is particularly attached to certain sites, for which he sometimes gives more exact instructions.

A comparative table will allow us to compare the guidebook's descriptions and prescriptions, on the one hand, with an actual description of the sites and the pilgrims' actions, on the other.

The guidebook

Phye-ma 'bras-sde

the front gate of rMa-chen is situated opposite this place.

Gos-sku chen-mo

Presence of a mast outside

It is a curtain [made] of five types of silk, [hung] at the entry-door of the rMa-rgyal palace

rTa-mchog gong-pa

Presence of a mast

sBas gur stong shong

No mast

Nub kyi rlung ri

Presence of a mast

rMa-chen g.Yas-lung

Residence of dPal ye-shes kyi mgon-po

Mo-ba gto-ba

My observations

Phye-ma 'bras-sde

Sand dunes

The pilgrims go on their way without stopping

Gos-sku chen-mo

Presence of a mast and a grotto.

The pilgrims make the offerings, carry out prostrations, recite prayers, accomplish circumambulations; they gather earth and carry stones.

rTa-mchog gong-pa

Presence of a mast.

The pilgrims accomplish prostrations, recite prayers, carry out circumambulations, make offerings of prayer-flags and hair from their horses' manes; they burn juniper-branches.

sBas gur stong shong

Presence of a mast nearby.

The pilgrims take no account of this site, of whose exact location they are ignorant.

Nub kyi rlung ri

Site unknown to the pilgrims.

rMa-chen g.Yas-lung

The pilgrim quietly descends this valley, where nothing in particular captures his attention.

Mo-ba gto-ba

Residence of Zhabs-dkar
Avalokiteśvara dwells opposite.

Ri gdong zor re

Residence of Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī and
the Green Tārā

Go-mtshon

Treasury of arms and armour.

A 'bur sbar lung

Residence of bKra shis tshe ring ma

Nang-ba'i gshog-steb

Contains objects of delight to gods and
men.

The pilgrims should collect earth and
water from a mountain opposite.

Grotto of Zhabs-dkar

Certain pilgrims prostrate
themselves before this cavern. They
gaze for a long time at a lake situated
before Mo-ba gto-ba, then circumambu-
late the lake.

Ri gdong zor re

Site unknown to the pilgrims.

Go-mtshon

Flat terrain.

Presence of a lama to whom
the pilgrims render homage.

A 'bur sbar lung

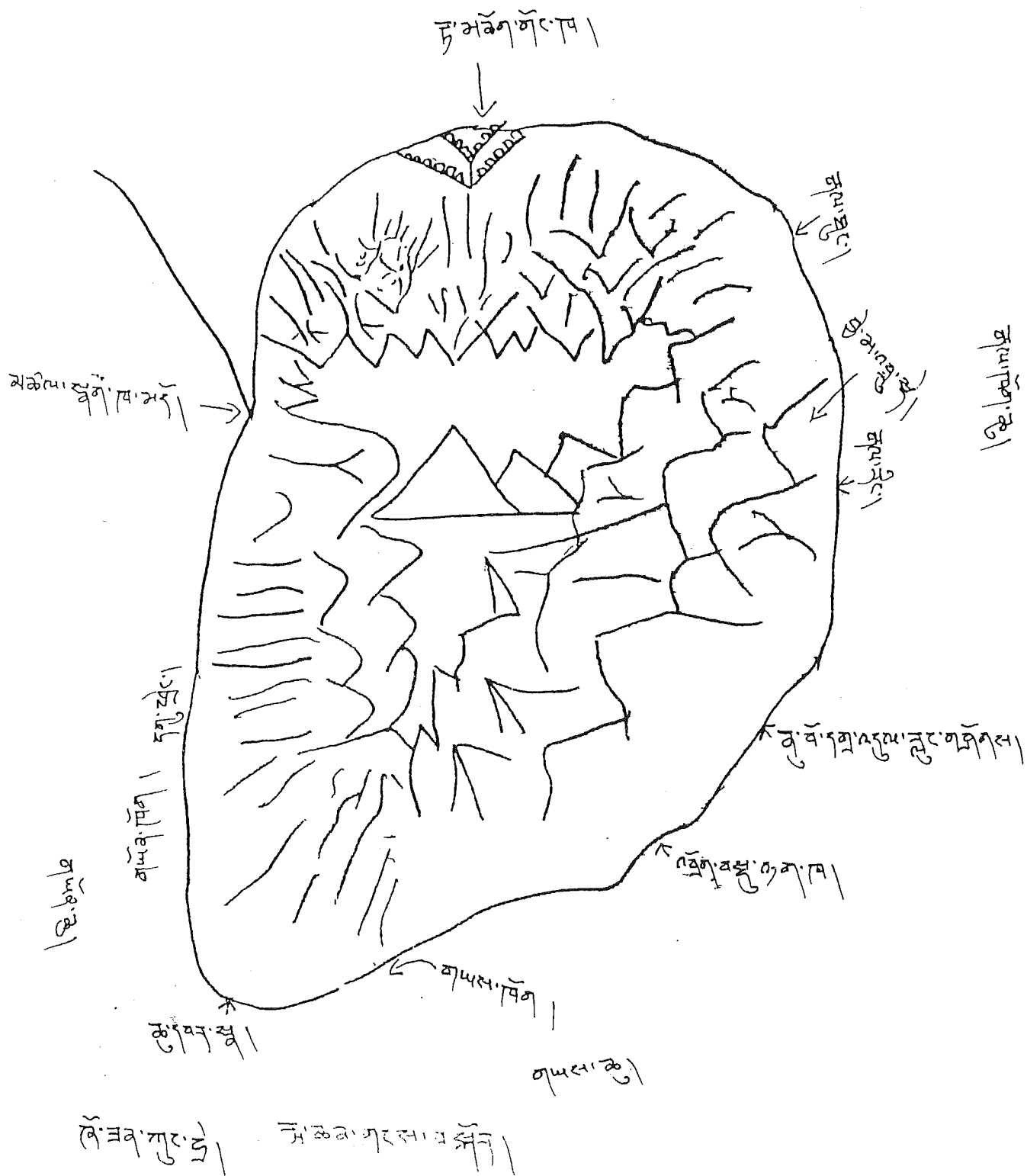
unknown to the pilgrims

Nang-ba'i gshog-steng

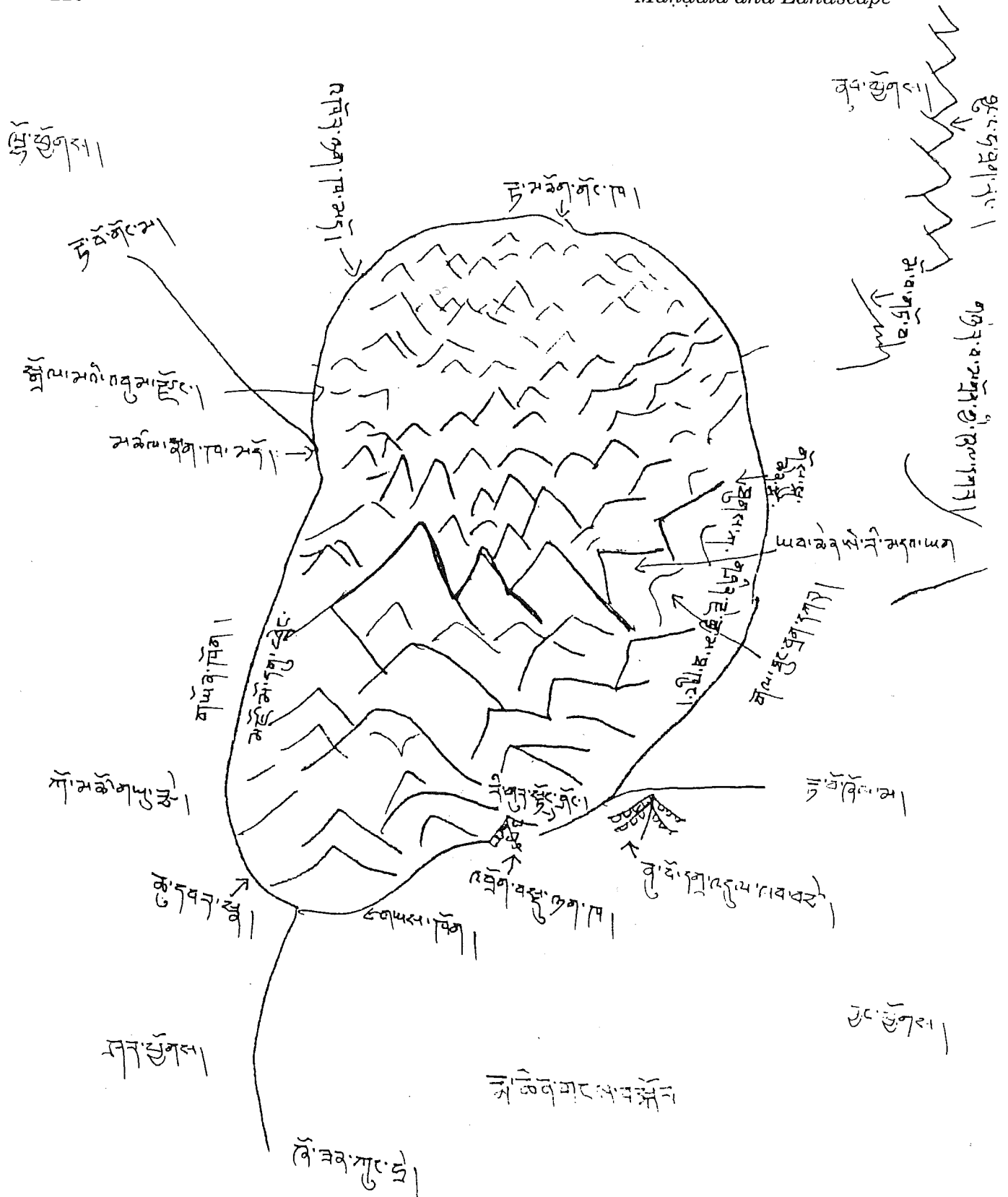
Vast plain where the pilgrim does not
stop.

On the level of physical description, the masts are often the only link between text and reality. The instructions given by Kun dga' mkhas dbang dpal bzang po amount to very general advice, of a sort valid for any pilgrimage, be it to a temple, a monastery or a sacred mountain. They are classic Buddhist precepts. On the A-myes rma-chen pilgrimage, as at all pilgrimage centres, the pilgrims prostrated themselves, made offerings, performed circumambulations, recited prayers, and I never saw any of them hunt. In this they follow the guidebook's directives. It also seems, as the author indicates, that the reading of the landscape is a double one. Nothing in the pilgrims' attitude suggests that they knew of or perceived all the various deities. As the author makes clear, the layman's vision and that of a man on the path of enlightenment are not the same. (Compare the drawings of the A-myes rma-chen pilgrimage route by a lay pilgrim Maps 3.2 and 3.3).

Despite all this, the reality of the pilgrims' actions joins a level of reality which we discover in various forms, in different holy-places of the Tibetan world. Those caverns, stones, narrow passageways, and springs found in places of pilgrimage and invariably endowed with special powers, play a most important role for pilgrims.⁹⁸ At such times, in such places, they seem to be following a tradition that goes back to a high antiquity when, it may be, pilgrimages to sacred sites were already being



Map 3.3 : The pilgrim's path around A MYES RMA CHEN (sketched by a pilgrim)



Map 3.4 : The pilgrim's path around A MYES RMA CHEN (sketched by a pilgrim)

carried out. It may be that the stones, grottos and narrow passages represent the traces of ancient ritual taken over by Buddhism and Bon. Those 'giants' stones', stones that one heaves up, stones that one carries which are found all along the route are perhaps the means by which pilgrims attempted to attract the deity's attention, in order to make a request or express a wish. When he collects and carries away with him a few 'stones from holy-places' (*gnas rdo*), the pilgrim keeps with him a portion of the power, a little of those special properties, which every holy-place contains. The stones represent a souvenir, a relic, but also a means of bringing prosperity and abundance to the community.⁹⁹

All along the A-myes rma-chen route, women are excluded from a certain number of rituals : juniper-fumigation, wind-horse offerings, putting new prayer-flags in place. They nonetheless carry the same stones as the men,¹⁰⁰ in a situation which does not seem to be a competition, but which still remains an 'exploit'. It is surprising that women should participate in an activity which makes such demands on physical strength (it was only with the greatest difficulty that I was able to lift the stones), an activity classified as one of the "nine strengths [exploits] of the perfect man" (Stein 1959 : 329). This evokes a tradition "présente dans l'épopée, les légendes et les manuscrits de Touen-houang" dans laquelle "le renom fondé sur l'exploit crée honneur et puissance".¹⁰¹

If the guidebook does not determine the pilgrims' attitude, neither does it help him direct himself in space. In the text, as well as in the ideas of the pilgrims, we find the standard Tibetan conceptions of the structure of space:¹⁰² a square plan, oriented towards the four directions, set off by an enclosure, with a mountain ideally, not geographically, situated in the middle. This mountain serves as the seat of the god of the country, or the master of the territory,¹⁰³ just as a *maṇḍala* is organised around a centre occupied by the principal deity.

Kun dga' mkhas dbang dpal bzang po records a certain number of real place-names. He makes use of them to localise, within or around them, Buddhist deities, or deities who have acknowledged the superiority of Buddhism. In this way he fixes the Buddhist pantheon in the landscape and, by means of his pilgrims' guide, transforms the landscape into a *maṇḍala* of Cakrasaṃvara, thus creating a Buddhist holy-place. We then see Mahākarūṇa take the form of rMa-rgyal, the god of the land (*yul-lha*): and rMa-rgyal in turn of course becomes Mahākarūṇa.¹⁰⁴

The purpose of this guide, like all Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimages guides, is to tame and Buddhicise the landscape.

It would seem that the author started from a preconceived and stereotyped schema, which we find in many pilgrims' guidebooks.¹⁰⁵ Then, possibly with the aid of a pre-existing sacred geography, he took over a certain number of places and created a fresh sacred geography, adapted to the Buddhist world. He followed the classical plan of the holy mountain, sanctuary assimilated by Buddhism. He

excludes from his text everything which does not belong to normative Buddhist ideology. Not a word, therefore, about all the juniper fumigations or leaving hairs from horses' manes. Yet not a single pilgrim, man or woman, young or old, seemed ignorant of the rites that had to be performed. Whether these rites were 'Buddhist' or 'non-Buddhist' was of no moment; and perhaps it was the latter, after all, that possessed the greatest efficacy for the pilgrims.

On the A-myes rma-chen pilgrimage route, as far as I am aware, there is no imprint of the Buddha himself or his great saints. Only a single monastery has been built, and that a mere ten years ago.

If we compare the Kailash pilgrimage with that of A-myes rma-chen, we can see that, at Kailash, the *mandala*-landscape" is firmly in place (cf. map 3.4¹⁰⁶). Four monasteries stand in the four directions:

- in the south, traditionally, there was a monastery, at Dar-chen. It has still not been rebuilt. At present, only the monastery of rGyang grags exists;
- in the west, Chos-sku dgon-pa;
- in the north, 'Bri-ra phug dgon-pa;
- in the east, rDzu-'phrul dgon-pa.

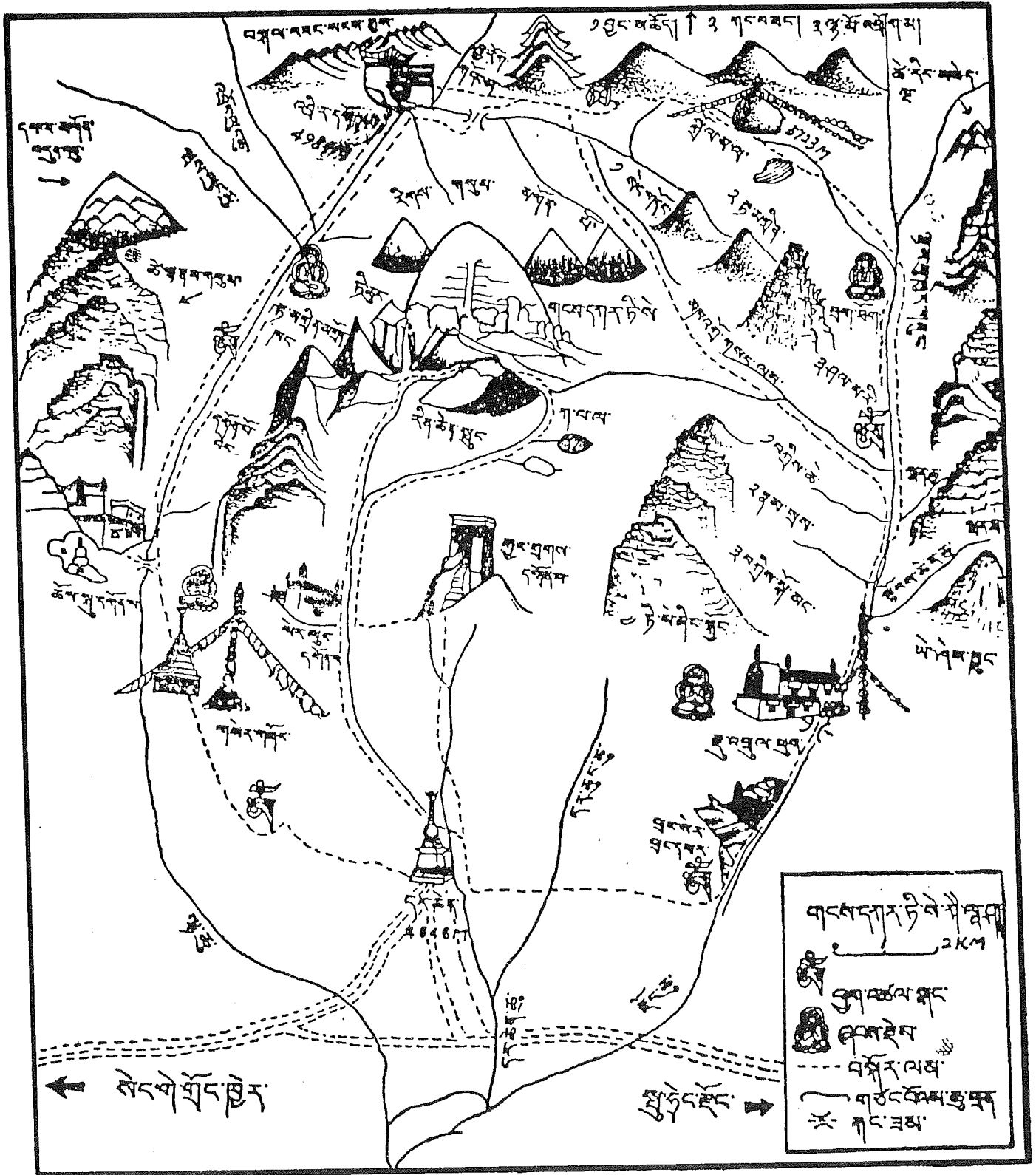
All along the pilgrimage road, sacred sites follow one another (gSer zhong, bSil-ba-tshal, sGrol-ma-la, etc.). There are traces of the Buddha as well as the great mystics (rGod tsang pa, Mi la ras pa, Naro bon chung, etc.). All the mountains, all the rocky massifs, are associated with Buddhist deities or with deities who were incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon after having been subdued. To be sure, there are stones in the landscape, and pilgrims here sometimes act like their fellows at A-myes rma-chen. Yet the stones are less numerous, and one of them has already been connected with the story of Mi la ras pa and Naro bon chung, whose battle for the possession of the spot is famous. Places for prostrations (*phyag 'tshal sgang*) are marked all along the pilgrimage route, space is perfectly defined, and the landscape has been 'tamed', although, as Macdonald has shown (1990 : 199-208), the victory is never complete.¹⁰⁷ The work undertaken by the Buddhists has not been definitively accomplished; it is still necessary to pursue the goal, day after day.

The study of the pilgrims' guide to A-myes rma-chen, a purely local pilgrimage, and the observations made on the ground, suggest that Buddhism has not yet taken full possession of this space. The Buddhist conquest is still in progress, and the pilgrims' behaviour is still underpinned by ideas emanating from what seems to be a far older code.

Texte Tibetain

[1A] Yul rma chen gangs ri'i gnas kyi rten bshad gdul bya'i 'gro blo'i dad brgya'i

མེང་ལོ་སྐབས་འཕེལ་བའི་རྒྱུ་རྐྱེན་གྱི་ལམ་



Map 3.5 from *Bod ljongs nang bstan* 1990. N°1

padmo 'byed pa'i nyin byed snang ba zhes bya ba bzhugs so.

[1B] Na mo gu ru shri tsakra sam bha 'a ya / dpal ldan khor lo sdom pa'i thugs kyi ye shes nyid / chos kyi dbyings las nam yang g.yo ba med pa mod kyang / gang 'dul gdul bya'i khams dbang mos pa ji bzhin du / rten dang brten pa'i dkyil 'khor rab byams spro la 'dud / gang zhig 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor gyis dben pa'i / sa phyogs de ni srid pa gsum dang gzhan du'ang yod ma yin / khyad par rma ri ke la sha yi lhun sdug gi gnas mchog 'di na rten gyi gtso bor legs bzhugs pa / lan gcig ma yin kho bos yang yang mthong ba nyid / gzhan la sma 'di rnyed dang bkur sti'i ched

[2A] ma yin / 'on kyang ci phyir zhe na gnas yig 'di bzhang gyis / mthong tshe thar ba'i sa bon 'jog pas 'god la spro / de la 'dir 'dzam gling byang gi char gtogs / gangs can bod kyi mdo smad / rma klung yul gyi sa yi thig le / ba gam lhun ri stong gi dbus na mngon par 'phags pa rma chen spom ra zhes yongs su grags pa'i gnas mchog dam pa 'di nyid na bzhugs pa kho bos mthong ba'i rim pa brjod pa la / rma chen gangs kyi ri bo chen po'i dbus 'jig rten pa'i shar la nye phyogs su ngo bo dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i thugs ye shes rang snang las grub pa'i gzhal med

[2B] khang / rnam pa rgyu rin po che sna lnga las grub pa / mtshan nyid thams cad yongsu rdzogs pa na dpal 'khor lo bde mchog gi lha tshogs thams cad bkra lam med yod par mthong / bde chen 'khor lo'i steng gi nam mkha'i dbyings na 'od zer sna lnga phyogs thams cad du khyab pa'i nang du de bzhin gshegs pa dang bshegs ma la sogs pa dpag tu med pa 'byon bzhugs gi sgo nas 'ga' zhig phyag na bkra shis pa'i bum pa thogs / 'ga' zhig gis glu dbyangs len / 'ga' zhig gis gar mdzad / 'ga' zhig gis mchod pa'i rdzas rigs sna tshogs thogs te 'bul ba'i tshul mdzad pa sogs bsam gyis

[3A] mi khyab par 'dug / sku gsungs thugs kyi dkyil 'khor rang rang gi phyogs mtshams kun nas mchod pa'i lha mo dpag tu med pa'i phyag na mchod rdzas grangs med pa dang bcas te dkyil 'khor la bskor ba mdzad / gzhal yas khang gi 'khyams kyi gru bzhi'i zur bzhi nas ye shes kyi lha mo bzhi'i phyag nas dus rgyun mi chad par spos dud lta bu 'od shin tu dkar ba zhig phul ba 'di nyid gangs ri chen po 'di phur pa'i rgyu yin par 'dug / dkyil 'khor chen po'i bkod pa'i sa gzhi la gnas pa'i mchod pa'i lha mo me tog mas / me tog gi rigs byed mang po thogs / bdug spos mas spos sna tshogs dri bzang gi spos dud dang bcas pa thogs /

[3B] mar me mas nyi zla nor bu dang rtsi'i mar me dang 'bru yi mar me dpag tu med pa thogs / dri chab mas dri bzang gi chu dang bcas pa'i dung chos bsams / sgra mas rol mo'i rigs byed mang po thogs / pi wam mas pi wam sna tshogs thogs / rdza rnga mas rdza rnga thogs / gar mas gar stangs sna tshogs byed / chos 'byung mas chos 'byung sna tshogs thogs pa dang / gzhan yang sna bdun / rdzas brgyad rtags brgyad thogs pa dpag tu med pas mchod rdzas de dag dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs rnam la 'bul gyin 'dug / dkyil 'khor gyi dur khrod chen po'i phyi rol na rlung ris 'khor yug tu bskor nas yod par snang / gnas 'di'i

[4A] gtso bo'i bkod pa ni de lta bu yin nges so / gzhan yang sa bcu'i byang chub

sems dpa' 'phags mchog spyen ras gzigs 'brog gnas 'jig rten pa'i tshul bzung te gnas 'di'i bka' srung du bzhugs pa ni / gnas 'di'i 'jig rten pa'i nub stod rma chen gyi shar stod mdun gyi phyogs su rma rgyal gyi pho brang rgyu rin po che padma ra ga las grub pa gru bzhi sgo bzhi glo 'bur dang bcas pa / steng du gser dang g.yu yi rgya phub nor bu'i tog dang ldan pa / pho brang gi ngos kun la gser gyi g.yung drung gi ri mo 'bur du dod pa / phyogs bzhir sgo bzhi glo 'bur dang bcas pa yod / phye sde 'bras sde zhes grags pa'i drang thad de nyid na rma chen gyi mdun sgo

[4B] dbyib(s) zlum por 'khor ba / pho brang de'i nang thams cad rin po che ma rgad ta dang baidurya las grub pa sngo ljang 'thab pa lta bu'i nang dbus su rin po che sna lnga las grub pa'i bkod mdzes shin tu legs pa'i khri'i steng tu zho gsar spungs pa lta bu'i sprin dkar rabs tu 'khrigs pa'i dbus na rgyal ba kun gyi snying rje'i rang gzugs 'phags mchog thugs rje chen po nyid / gnas mchog 'di'i bka srung rma rgyal zhes grags pa de nyid kyi skur bzhangs pa sku mdog dkar po gangs kyi ri bo lta bu la cung zad dmar ba'i mdangs chags pa / zhal gcig phyag gnyis / g.yas spa lcag dkar po la dar sna tshogs kyi sbrgyan pa'i 'dod dgu 'gugs pa'i

[5A] mda' dar 'dzin pa / g.yon pa'i gro ba'i re 'dod ma lus pa stsol ba'i yid bzhin gyi nor bu thugs kar bsname pa dar dang rin po che'i rgyan dang za 'og gi ber thul dang gser gyi khrab rmog gsol ba / rta mchog dkar po g.yu rngog can rin po che'i rgyan chas legs par spras pa'i steng gi gser sga'i steng na rgyal po rol ba'i 'dug stangs kyi phyogs su zhal phyogs te bzhugs par mthong / gang gi sku gsungs thugs las sprul pa du ma sku las spro bsdu byed pa sogs bgrangs bar mi nus pa yod / 'khor du btsun mo grangs med pa dang / blon po dang nor bu sogs rin po che.

[5B] sna bdun gyi mnga' thang dang / bkra shis rtags brgyad rdzas brgyad nyer spyod lnga dang / rin po che gser dngul sogs kyi mdzod dang / dar gos la sogs pa'i gos sna tshogs / ral gri mda' mdung khrab rmog la sogs pa'i go mtshon gyi mdzod sogs lha mi'i longs spyod sna tshogs pa'i mdzod kyi rigs grangs med pa yod 'dug / gos sku chen mo zhes yongs su grags pa de ni rma chen gyi pho brang gi mdun sgo'i dar sna lnga'i yol ba yin par 'dug / sgo de'i nang rol phyogs na 'phags pa'i dge 'dun grangs med pas theg pa chen po'i dam pa'i chos kyi sgra dbyangs sgrogs pas skal ba dang ldan pa'i gang zag rnam grol

[6A] bar mdzad / gnas mchog 'di'i phyi rol phyogs bzhi'i gos sku chen mo'i mdun dang / rta mchog gong pa dang / sbas gur stong shong dang / nub kyi rlun ri'i nang dang bzhi la dar chen po bzhi yod par snang / gzhan yang 'jig rten pa'i byang ngos rma chen g.yas lung gi stod phyogs pho brang dang nye ba'i gangs kyi mtshams su dur khrod kyi tshal chen po dbus na tsan tan (sic : dan) gyi sdong po la sku rgyab brten pa dpal ye shes kyi mgon po phyag drug pa 'khor tshogs dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs dang bcas pa ye shes kyi me dpung 'bar ba'i dbus na bzhugs te de rnam kyi rgyal ba bstan spyi dang khyad par dpal

[6B] 'khor lo sdom pa' bka' bzhin bsgrub nas 'gro ba'i don mdzad de bzhugs par snang / de rnam kyi drangs thad phyi rol gyi 'khyams la dam can rdo rej'i legs pa

'khor tshogs sprul ba yang sprul kyang yod / skyabs rje zhabs dkar rdo rje 'chang gi bzhugs gnas / mo ba gto ba zhes grags pa'i drangs thad du 'phags pa spyang ras gzigs zhal gcig phyag bzhi pa sku mdog gangs ri la nyin byed 'bum gyis 'khyud pa lta bu 'khor sa bcu'i byang chub sems dpa'i tshogs dpag tu med pas bskor nas bzhugs yod par snang / yang de'i g.yas zur gyi ri gdong zoe re ba de'i nang du dpal gsang ba'i bdag po phyag na rdo rje zhal gcig phyag gnyis

[7A] sku mdog sngon po baidurya'i mdog lta bu'i mdangs dang ldan pa 'khor byang sems grangs med pa bzhugs pa dang / yang gnas 'di nyid kyi g.yas ngos gangs kyi g.yas phyogs kyi dbus na rje btsun 'jam dbyangs sku mdog dmar ser li khri'i mdang(s)'dzin zhal gcig phyag gnyis g.yas shes rab kyi ral gri dang g.yon stong phrag brgya ba'i pusta ka bsnams pala'khor byang sems dumas bskor te bzhugs yod 'dug / gnas de nyid kyi g.yas ngos gangs kyi mtshams na rje bstun sgrol ma'i 'khor tshogs rgya mtsho lta bu'i dbus na rje btsun sgrol ma ljang mo sku bkrag mdangs

[7B] gzi brjid / dang ldan par bzhugs yod / gnas ri de rnams phyi sa rdul brtsegs pa'i rnam pa la ngo bo ye shes kyi rang snang las grub pa'i zhing khams po ta la dang lchang lo can dang ri bo rtse lnga g.yu lo bkod pa'i zhing khams rnams dang zhing khams de dag tu bzhugs pa rnams kyi sku tshe dang mdzad phrin sogs khyad ma mchis par snang / yang 'jig rten pa'i byang shar mtshams gangs kyi nye 'dabs go mtshon zer ba'i nang du go khrab dang mtshon cha'i rigs byed byi mdzod yod / de nyid kyi nye ba'i gnas ri'i nang thams cad bud med bzhin sdug pa gcer bu lus dmar ba cung zad g.yon ngos su 'gyings ba mang pos gang ba ni sman mo'i khor

[8A] tshogs su 'dug / yang go mtshon gyi g.yon phyogs 'dag sbyar ba'i sbyil bu mang po yod pa'i ri dei nang na rgyu rin po che las grub pa'i gru bzhi sgo bzhi yod pa'i phyogs bzhi de nyid du shel gyi mchod rten gru (*sic* khru) gang ba re yod / de dag res che ba dang res chung bar yang snang / de rnams kyi dbus su shel gyi mchod rten chen po zhig yod / de ni byang chub chen po' mchod rten yin 'dug / gnas de'i gnas bdag tu tshe ring mched lnga yod / gtso mo bkra shis tshe ring ma khong gi bzhugs gnas ni a 'bur sbar lung zhes su grags pa'i ri de'i dbus su me tog gi gur khang rgya che ba'i nang du gser gyi khang pa gru bzhi ba'i nang dbus su gtso ma bkra

[8B] shis tshe ring ma rgyan chas na bza' gsol nas bzhugs te 'khor mkha' 'gro'i tshogs dang bcas pas tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor bzhin bzhugs / yang rta mchog gong kha'i g.yas zur nang ba'i gshog steb zhes grags pa'i drang thad rma chen gyi gangs ri zhig gi nang na lha mi'i long spyod ma tshang ba med pa'i gter zhig yod par nges / gangs bskor du 'gro mi rnams kyis g.yang rdzas su sa sna chu sna 'ong ba 'di yang bzang bar 'bug / gangs ri de nyid kyi g. yas zur rdo rje drag rgyal ma zhes grags pa'i ri tsitta 'dra ba zhig yod pa'i nang dbus su 'phags pa'i gnas brtan chen po mi phyed pa khong byang chub kyi shing la sku rgyab brtan te phyag

[9A] na mchod rten bsnams pa / zhabs gnyis bzhengs stabs zhal shar du phyogs pa 'khor dgra bcom du mas bskor ba la chos ston pa yang bzhugs yod nges / de'i gnas bdag de btsun mo zhig yin par snang ngo / da ni zhing mchog dam pa 'di nyid kyi phyi

rol nye 'khor na yod pa'i gnas phran nam gnas lag zhes grags pa rnams na 'ang sangs rgyas byang sems dpag med bzhugs yod pa'i gnas lag de dag kyang bskor lam gyi nang du tshud par byas nas phyag skor sogs byas na phan yon bsam gyis mi khyab pa yod de / sangs rgyas byang sems dngos bzhugs pa'i gnas yin pa'i phyir ro / gzhan yang

[9B] gnas mchog 'di na yod pa'i bya rigs ri dvags sogs 'ga' zhig ni sangs rgyas byang sems kyi sprul pa yin nges pas de la gnod pa'i las byed mi rung ba ni smos ci dgos / 'ga' zhig yang gnas bdag mthu chen rnams kyi sgo nor yin pas de la gnod 'tshe'i bya ba byas na tshe 'dir tshe thung dang mi 'dod pa'i nyer 'tshe dpag tu med pa 'byung bar 'gyur / phyi mar sdug bsngal dpag med myong dgos pa ni las 'bras kyi chos nyid yin no / sku gsungs thugs rten gyi gzugs brnyan la phyag bskor ba sogs byas na phan yon bsam gyis mi khyab pa yod par mdo rgyud thams cad nas gsungs na / sangs rgyas byang sems dngos bzhugs

[10A] pa la phyag mchod dang bkor ba byas pa la ni phan yon rgya chen po yod pa smos ci dgos / des na gnas gzhan du lo zla bar bsgom pa las gnas mchog 'di nyid du skad cig re la bsgom pa bsod nams che bas khong bla ser rnams nas kyang zhing mchog 'dir yun ring bsgom sgrub byed nus na tshe gcig gis sangs rgyas pa dang / min na 'ang zla ba re 'am zhag bdun phrag tsam du bsam pa rnam par dag pas gnas 'brel re bzhag na rgyud la thar pa'i sa bon 'jog pa dang / dal 'byor thob pa don ldan yin pa smos ma dgos / mi skya pho mo sogs kyis kyang gnas mchog 'di la phyag dang mchod pa dang bskor ba kha 'don

[10B] bzlas brjod dang dge sgrub sdig spang gi khas blangs dam bcas byed nus na tshe 'dir tshe ring zhing nad med pa dang / dbul ba'i sdug bsngal dang bral te long spyod rgya cher 'phel / 'dod pa'i don yid la gang bsam pa bzhin bde blag tu 'grub pa dang / smon lam rnam par dag pa'i mtshams sbyar nus na phyi mar yang bde ba can la sogs pa'i dag pa'i zhing khams gang 'dod du skye bar nges pa dang / gal te de dag tu skyes ma nus na yang mtho ris yon tan bdun / dal 'byor gyi rten bzang rim brgyud du thob nas rten de la theg pa chen po'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen gyis legs par rjes su bzung te lam tshogs gnyis kyi gru gzengs la

[11A] bzhugs nas srid zhi'i rgya mtsho'i pha rol / rnam mkhyen sku bzhi'i gling du phyin nus par ni the tshom med do / smras pa / bgrangs yas bskal bar btsal kyang rnyed min pa'i / rgyal ba'i zhing gi bkod pa phul byung ba / rma ri rab dkar gling du bzhugs pa 'di / dngos bcas bsod nams zhing gi bgo skal lags / gang zhig zhing mchog 'di nyid rang cag gis / bsod nams zhing du lhag par bab pas na / 'di la phyag mchod bskor ba byed nus na / zhing gzhan byas pa'i 'bras bu de las myur / gnas gzhan dam chos 'chad nyan byed pa dang / sgom dang bzlas brjod yun ring byas pa las / gnas mchog

[11B] 'di ru dge ba yud tsam du / byas pa'i bsod nams de ni khyad par 'phags / de phyir kun gyi 'bad pa du ma'i sgos / gnas mchog 'di ru phyag mchod bskor ba dang / sgom sgrub bzlas brjod lan grangs du ma ru / bsam pa dag pas tshul bzhin byed par

rigs/de ltar bshad pa'i legs tshogs ci mchis dang / rmad byung zhing gi rgyal ba'i byin
rlabs mthus / gnas 'dir 'brel ba'i gtsor bya'i gro ba rnams / mthar thug sku bzhi'i rgyal
sar 'god par shog / ces yul rma chen gangs ri'i gnas kyi rten bshad gdul bya'i gro blo'i
dad brgya'i padmo 'byed pa'i nyin byed snang ba zhes bya ba 'di ni dzam thang pa
kun dga' mkhas dbang dpal bzang po bdag rma chen gangs [12A] bskor la lan gnyis
'gro skabs su mtshungs par mthog ba'i rim pa rnams gzhan la phan pa'i bsam pa
smras pa'o/

TRANSLITERATION	TRANSCRIPTION
1. Nu bo dGra 'dul dbang phyug	1. Nuwo Dradul wang chug
2. 'Brog bsdu nyag kha	2. Drogdu nyaka
3. Chu dbar sna	3. Chuwar na
4. Go mtshon	4. Go tsön
5. mTshal snag kha mdo	5. Tsel nag khamdo
6. Klu sdong shug pa	6. Ludong shugpa
7. rTa mchog gong kha	7. Tamchog gongkha
8. gNyer ba mgron gyi zhal dkar	8. Nyerwa drön gi shelkar
9. Ngang ba'i gshog sten	9. Nangwe shokteng
10. Mo ba gto ba et grotte de Zhabs dkar	10. Mowa Towa et grotte de Shabkar
11. Bye ma 'bras dal	11. Chema dredel
12. sGrol ma'i grub chu	12. Drölme drubchu
13. Gos sku chen mo	13. Göku chenmo
14. rGal thung la (rGe'u thung la)	14. Gelthung la (Ge'uthung la)
15. gShin rje rgya ma dang me long	15. Shinje gyama dang melong

Notes

1. I have chosen to transliterate rather than transcribe Tibetan words and names, except for the words well-known in the colloquial language. A table, at the end of the article will provide the non-Tibetologist reader with a rough pronunciation of the names of the various sites.
2. I would like to thank A.M. Blondeau, A. Chayet, F.K. Ehrhard, Y. Gyatso, S.G. Karmay, A.W. Macdonald, M. Ricard and P. Sagant for corrections, suggestions and ameliorations. I thank also A. Le Guellec who made the sketch-map. I am grateful to Balu Paṇḍita, Bodnath, who assisted me with the English translation.
3. All Tibetans know that it is specially beneficial to make certain pilgrimages during certain years. Thus, one has to go to Tsa-ri in a monkey-year; to Mt. Kailash in a horse-year; to the Kathmandu valley in a bird-year. The pilgrims I spoke with could never tell me what has determined these associations; both western and Tibetan written sources are uninformative on this subject. In an article called *Gangs mtsho gnas gsum gyi lo rgyus skal lden shing rta'*, published in the review *Bod ljongs nang bstan*, Vol 1, 1990 :

7, it is stated that according to the Kalacakra tradition, the horse-year is that of both the birth and the enlightenment of the Buddha and that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, gods, men, *asuras* and *gandharvas* gathered that year at Mt. Kailash. That is why the horse-year is when one has to perform the pilgrimage around this mountain. Though this may explain the importance of the horse-year at Mt. Kailash, it does not give help to us for the other pilgrimage places.

4. This pilgrimage was carried out under very difficult conditions. Moreover, not speaking the A-mdo language which is quite different from the speech of Central Tibet, I had many problems in communication. This article simply represents an initial presentation of the information collected during this pilgrimage.
5. Cf. G. Rowell, 1984 : 152.
6. It is only at the beginning of the eighties that the Chinese government allowed a new start of religious life.
7. For example, in Bhutan, a monk said that he preferred to die "plutôt que d'utiliser une monture pour se rendre dans un lieu de pèlerinage, dont l'accès est pourtant souvent malaisé"; and near temples and monasteries, there is one *stūpa* which marks "la limite jusqu'où l'on peut aller à cheval sans accomplir un acte trop répréhensible". (Pommaret, 1989 : 179, note 245).
8. I made this pilgrimage in the fourth month of the horse-year (June 1990).
9. The pilgrimage Rock describes starts at the mouth of the g.Yon khog river, south-east of the A-myes rma-chen range.
10. According to Rock's informant (1956 : 116); there "is a huge white boulder known as the Nu-bo dGra-hdul rlung-shog. It represents the younger brother of Am-nye Ma-chhen". All the pilgrims I met agreed that this huge boulder was the younger brother of A-myes rma-chen and gave it the name of Nu-bo dgra-'dul dbang-phyug, which can be an explanation of "The younger brother, powerful one who conquers enemies". According to Wylie (1962 : 116, n. 19) who repeats what Rock says (1956 : 114), Dgra-'dul lung-shog is also the name of one of the three peaks of the A-myes rma-chen chain, the highest and the northern-most.
11. Zhabs-dkar rdo-rje 'chang (1781-1851), whose real name was Zhabs-dkar tshogs drug rang drol, was born in Reb-kong, in A-mdo. This great Tibetan yogi is generally known under the name of Zhabs-dkar, 'white feet'. He received this nickname because people said that everywhere he went, the region became white (meaning virtuous), people's thoughts turned to the Dharma. This nickname might also come from the name of a cave where he stayed on Mt. Kailash, rDzu-'phrul-phug gi zhabs-rje dkar-mo (cf. *Bod ljongs nang bstan* : 1990-91 :44). He travelled for many years, met many masters and gave instructions. He went to Central Tibet, to Mt. Kailash, to La-phyi and Tsa-ri. Zhabs-dkar wrote many books, including an autobiography (*rnam-thar*) and a collection of songs (*mgur-'bum*). An English translation of Zhabs-dkar's autobiography, done in mKhyen-brtse rinpoche's monastery, is available. (SUNY, New York, Albany).
12. In Harrer's book, *Retour au Tibet* (1985 : 220), there is a photo of "La caravane du dalaï lama en fuite devant la forteresse de Gyantse". A line of stones runs along the road and, according to Harrer, is intended to "empêcher les esprits de croiser son chemin".
13. Rock does not mention this place.
14. For a description of 'wind-horses', cf. S.G. Karmay 1986 : 94-96.

15. Cf. S.R. Mumford 1988 : 77 et 97.
16. One of the ways of gaining merit is to incise in stone a ritual formula (*mantra*). Most frequent is Avalokiteśvara's *mantra* : *Oṃ maṇi pad me hūṃ*. Such inscribed stones are piled one on another and form walls around which the pilgrims circumambulate.
17. According to Rock's informant (1956 : 115) the pilgrimage starts at the mouth of the g.Yon-khog, which means at the place which bears the name of Chu-dbar-sna, at the confluence of the rivers g.Yas-khog and g.Yon-khog (cf. the map). Rock (1956 : 117) thus describes the place : "The trail descends the Ye khog to a place forested with *Juniperus tibetica* Kom., here the valley narrows to a veritable gorge and is here joined by two others valleys with constricted estuaries. These three gorges are called collectively mDzo-mo rgod-tshang or the Lair of the wild half-breed yak cow. The three gorges are designated according to their location as *gong-ma* or upper, *dbus-ma* or middle, and *gshug-ma* or lower. Beyond the confluence of the Dzo-mo gö-tshang, the Ye-khog and the Yön khog (valleys) unite, and from their junction on, the river is known as the Tsab-Chuu to where it debouches into the Yellow river". According to my own information, there is a place called mDzo-mo dgu 'phreng (the nine garlands [made] by the *mdso-mo*) : a hill that comes after Chu-dbar-sna, along the river g.Yon-khog. It is possible to see on its slopes some small paths, perhaps nine, all said by my informant to have been made by a *mdso-mo*, which explains the name given to this hill.
18. Rock does not mention Go-mtshon.
19. For more information about rGya-tsha zhal dkar, cf. *Bod rgya shan sbyar gyi Ge sar tshig mdsod* 1989 : 98.
20. No mention is made of this site in Rock's book.
21. Bon is another religion practised in Tibet along with Buddhism. The Buddhist and Bon-po traditions were long agreed that Bon had preceded Buddhism as the religion of Tibet. Yet, the works of A. Macdonald (1971: 190-393) showed that when the term Bon was used in olden times, it designated a rite or a group of rites and that there was not a religion called Bon before the tenth century. In a more recent article, S.G. Karmay (1983) attempts to demonstrate, using a short manuscript from Tun-huang that during the royal period there was a Bon religion. R.A. Stein (1988b) contests the validity of his argument.
22. *gTor-ma* are sculptures made with dough, used as offerings or representations of divinities. Each *gtor-ma* has a special shape.
23. Bon-pos and Buddhists perform the pilgrimage around Kong-po Bon-ri, east of Lhasa. There, all circumambulate in the Bon-po, anticlockwise, direction.
24. On the symbolism of caves, their shape and their functions in the Tibetan world, cf. Stein 1988a.
25. Rock does not give any information about this spring.
26. No mention of this place is made by Rock.
27. For a comparison with the life of the nomads of West Tibet, cf. M. Goldstein and C.Beall 1989: *Nomads of Western Tibet. The survival of a way of life* London. Serindia Publications.
28. rTa-mchog gong-pa, "Sovereign, excellent horse" is one of the possible translations. The word *gong* means also 'upper, at the top'. The site of rTa-mchog gong-pa is the highest

sacred place along the pilgrimage route. rTa-mchog is also one of the names of Hayagriva. Rock (1956 : 115) calls this place rTa-mchog gong-ma and locates it in the south. "It is also said to be written bDe-mchog, a Yi dam or protective tutelary deity of the lama church".

29. "The word *g.yang* applies to an abstract notion rather than to any tangible thing. It is the notion of symbolic wealth [.....] it is quite a common practice in Amdo that if someone wants to sell his horse he pulls some of the hair from the mane of the horse and attaches it at the door of the enclosure where his horses are kept. This is a symbolic gesture for retaining the *g.yang* of the horse, even though it may be sold at a good price. If a good horse is lost or dies, it is described as *g.yang-shor-ba* (the escape of the *g.yang*). Therefore, the ritual of *g.yang 'gugs* must take place". (Karmay : 1975 : 209)
30. According to Rock's informant (1959 : 115) this place is called Ngang shog 'debs. He described it as follows : "Ngang shog 'debs or the spread-out wings of the wild goose, the name having reference to the vast plain where the wild yaks and the wild asses, the Tibetan rKyang roam". Yonten Gyatso proposes the spelling: Nang ba'i gshog steng: "on geese's wings".
31. Rock does not mention this mountain.
32. The signification of *Mo* is divination and the *gTo* is "un puissant rite d'expulsion". (Tucci: 1973: 228) The *mo-pa* is a soothsayer; the *gto-ba* (or *gto-pa?*) is perhaps the one who performs the *gto*, but we cannot exclude the possibility of a misspelling. Rock's informant (1956 : 116) located this place beyond Gos-sku chen-mo : "near the cliff (Gos sku chen-mo) are two conical hills, one called Mo be in A-mdo, pronounced Mo wa = the Diviner, and the other gTor ba or Tor wa, the thrower of the gtor ma or offerings to the gods, gTor-ba means to strew, to scatter. The place or hill is so-called because around and about it are many rocks representing the gtor ma or offerings which the tor-wa has thrown out". In fact, it is situated before Gos sku chen mo (cf. the map).
33. Rock (1956 : 115) calls this place Bye-ma 'bri-sde and thus describes it : "there are many yellow sand dunes which stand like offerings to the gods. They are conical in shape and their bases grass-covered, but their apices are bare. The place derives its name from the sand and dunes". Yonten Gyatso suggests another spelling: Bye-ma 'bru-rdal: "scatter barley like sand". But it is also possible to understand : Bye-ma 'bru-dil "barley-hill-like sand".
34. No mention of this spring is made by Rock.
35. According to Rock's informant (1956: 116), the name of this place "is derived from the varicolored rocky cliffs of which the steep slopes of the Am-nye ma-chen range is here composed. The rocks are of all colors giving the cliff the aspect of a great painting". I could not confirm this information as the landscape was covered by snow when I was there in October 1990.
36. I have chosen to retain the spelling given me by various pilgrims. Rock's informant (1956 : 116) describes the place in these terms : "Leaving the Diviner (Mo-ba gTo-ba), the trail leads up a pass called the rGal-thung la. Near it is a rock with the imprint of a lama's hand; projecting from the rock wall is an oblong stone resembling a handle; legend relates that Seng-chhen rgyal-po or the Great Lion King, who is none other than the mighty Ke-sar whose sword is hidden in the Am-nye Ma-chhen, and of whom Tibetan bards sing numerous epics narrating his many heroic deeds, tied his horse to it while resting on the pass. . . .". In spite of my efforts, I could not find this stone and

- my companions knew nothing about it.
37. No mention is made of this site by Rock.
 38. Cf. V. Turner, 1966 and V. and E. Turner, 1978. For Turner's theories in relation to Hindu pilgrimages, cf. Aziz 1982 : 121-39 who is more or less sympathetic to Turner's views and Messerschmidt and Sharma, 1982 : 139-59 who are opposed.
 39. Tashi Tsering, of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, sent me a copy of this Bon-po *gnas-yig* which is attributed to Vairocana. A translation of it will be included in my thesis and I would like to thank him here.
 40. "Support" is the translation of the Tibetan word *rten* and indicates the material support of the essence of a divinity.
 41. The Jo-nang-pa constitute one of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. They were condemned by the Fifth Dalai Lama (seventeenth century) because they maintained what the dGe-lugs-pa school thought were heterodox points of view. Some of their followers escaped to the eastern part of Tibet. S.G. Karmay has observed that the name Kun-dga' is often borne by Jo-nang-pa. According to my informant, there are still supposed to be three jo-nang-pa monasteries in 'Dzam-thang: gTsang-pa dgon-pa, Chos-rje dgon-pa and Tshe-bcu dgon-pa. The author of the Dzam-gling rgyas-bshad (nineteenth century), a Tibetan book describing the whole world whose chapter on Tibet was translated by Wylie indicates that (1962 : 104) "in 'Dzi thog, there is a Jo nang pa monastery called 'Dzam thang dgon, and other than that one, there are no true Jo nang pa monasteries anywhere at the present time". 'Dzi thog is located in Khams. The author of this pilgrimage guide is not mentioned in *dpal ldan jo nang pa'i chos 'byung rgyal ba'i chos tshul gsal byed zla ba'i sgron me : An historical account of the Jo nang pa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism* written by 'Dzam-thang bla-ma Ngag-dbang blo-gros grags-pa. (Bir, District Kangra. H.P., D. Tsondu Senghe. 1983 : 189 pp.) Nevertheless, a monk called 'Brog-dge Kun-'dga dpal-bzang is mentioned, without any dates. (I am indebted to F.K. Ehrhard for this information).
 42. This book is mentioned in the preceding note.
 43. A.I. Vostrikov devotes one chapter of his book *Tibetan Historical Literature* (1970 : 217-32) to the geographical literature and to the different kinds of writings found in this literary genre. He follows the same classification as Wylie:
 - *dkar-chag* : "contain a list of the most important objects, worthy of attention, located at the place described. . . . But such a list is normally accompanied by a more or less comprehensive account of the history of the building-up of the particular monastery, temple, statue. . . ." (p. 217)
 - *gnas-bshad* "frequently contain useful historical material. These are normally written with a view to glorify some monastery . . . and also contain therefore an account of the leading personages of these places in addition to the description of the place itself". (p.228). Pages 230 et 231 are devoted to the *'Dsam gling spyi bshad me long* written by sMin grol sprul sku 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las (1789-1838), (which signifies one of the versions of *'Dsam gling rgyas bshad*). Finally, he describes *lam-yig* which he translates by "travel-notes" and he specifies that, in this kind of writing "one may also often find some more or less interesting materials." (p.231)
 44. Cf. Karmay 1992 : 527-40.
 45. Cakrasaṃvara (Tib. bDe-mchog) is a very important tāntric divinity whose consort is

Vajravārāhī (Tib. : rDo-rje phag-mo). The Tibetan pilgrimage guides localise the Cakrasaṃvara-Vajravārāhī couple in many holy sites where they subdue the divinities (autochthonous or hindu) who previously reside there. It is by this action of 'taming' that Cakrasaṃvara changes the 'evil' former divinities into 'good' Buddhist divinities. This is the scenario in Tsa-ri, La-phyi, and Kailash; these three holy places, often cited in Tibetan literature under the expression *gnas-gsum* respectively represent the Body, Speech and Mind of Carkrasaṃvara. (cf. Stein : 1988)

46. The country of rMa is the Upper country of the Yellow River, located north of the Bayankhara chain. It is to this place that Gesar, the hero of the Tibetan epic was expelled when he was young and still bore the name of Joru (for more information on the country of rMa, cf. Stein 1956 and 1959: 198 and 548).
47. *Dharmadhātu* : (Tib : *chos dbyings*) According to Chang (1983 : 474) *Dharmadhātu* means "literally, 'the realm of dharmas'. However, in Buddhist texts it has four meanings:
 1. The nature or essence of *dharmas* (the same as *tathatā*), which is the unifying, underlying reality regarded as the ground of all things, both noumenal and phenomenal.
 2. Infinity; the all-embracing totality of the infinite universes as revealed before the Buddha's eyes.
 3. In certain *sūtras*, denotes one of the eighteen elements : the *dharmā*-element; that is, mental objects (*dharmas*).
 4. The infinite *per se*.
48. *Ke la sha* is the Sanskrit equivalent for the Tibetan *gangs ri* : snow-covered mountain (*Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 26). But we cannot ignore the author's intention to draw a parallel between A-myes rma-chen and Mt. Kailash.
49. We can imagine that the author describes first what he saw in a mystic vision and then in reality.
50. rMa-chen spom-ra is believed to be both a mountain-deity and that deity's abode. The mountain bears other names : 'Brog-gnas rma-rgyal spom-chen, 'Brog-gnas lha yi dge-bsnyen. The Bon-pos called it rMa-gnyan spom-ra. rMa-chen spom-ra is said to be the chieftain of all the *sa-bdag* (country-gods) of the rMa country. He belongs to the *dgra lha* species, "god — who conquers — the enemies". In iconography, he is represented in a warlike aspect. Tsong-kha-pa, himself from A-mdo, introduced his cult in the dGe-lugs-pa school where he is venerated as a protective divinity of the dGa' ldan Monastery, which he founded in 1409. (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 209-13). Mi-pham's work (a rNying-ma-pa scholar, 1846-1912) shows that rMa rgyal is related to many rituals of divination (I am indebted to S.G. Karmay for this information).
51. rMa-chen mountain is more usually called A-myes rma-chen. This mountain range, situated east of the twin lakes Tsaring nor (Tib. : sKya rangs mtsho) and Oring nor (Tib. : sNgo rnags mtsho) is the cause of "the tremendous switchback in the rMa-chu (the Yellow River). This range has three prominent peaks — Sphyan-ras-gzigs is the southern one, Am-nye-rma-chen in the centre is the lowest one, and Dgra-'dul-rlung-shog is the northern and higher peak" (Wylie, 1962 : 116, n.: 191). Cf. also Rock, 1956.
52. According to Chang (1983 : 484), *Tathāgata* means "literally 'The Thus-Come one'. A title of the Buddha. It may mean he who has come and gone as have former Buddhas

- that is, he imparts the same truth and follows the same path to the same goal. The Mahāyāna interprets *Tathāgata* differently, as one who has attained full realization of suchness (*tathatā*) and who thus neither comes from anywhere, nor goes anywhere". The expression *de bzhin gshegs ma* is uncommon and could be applied, according to S.G. Karmay, to the divinities, like Tārā, who are at Buddha's stage.
53. *Chos 'byung* (Skt. : *dharmodaya*) means triangle, but also two triangles intertwined or superimposed, a symbol generally associated with the *dākinī*. The meaning here is not clear because, as far as I know, the iconography never represents goddesses holding a triangle.
 54. The *rgyal srid sna bdun* 'seven kinds of jewels', are the seven emblems or jewels of a universal monarch: *glang chen rin po che*, 'the precious elephant'; *blon po rin po che*, 'the precious minister'; *btsun mo rin po che*, 'the precious queen'; *rta mchog rin po che*, 'the precious horse'; *dmag dpon rin po che*, 'the precious general'; *'khor lo rin po che*, 'the precious wheel'; *nor bu rin po che*, 'the precious jewel = *cintāmani*', a wish-procuring gem; cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod* 1985 : 558.
 55. The *bkra shis rdzas brgyad* : eight offering-substances are : *me long*, "mirror"; *gi wang*, 'bezoard', a concretion which takes form in the body of some animals; *sho*, 'curd'; *dur ba*, "a graminaceous plant : *pennisetum flaccibum*". (I am indebted to F. Meyer for this identification); *bil ba*, 'a fruit : *aegle marmelos*'; *dung dkar*, 'white conch'; *li kri* 'minium'; *yungs dkar (po)*, 'white mustard'; *Chos kyi rnam grangs* 1986 : 231.
 56. The *bkra shis rtags brgyad* 'the eight auspicious signs' are : *dpal be'u* 'diagram', *pad ma*, 'lotus'; *gdugs*, 'umbrella'; *dung dkar*, 'white conch'; *'khor lo*, 'wheel'; *rgyal mtshan*, 'victorious banner'; *bum pa*; 'vase'; *gser nya*, 'golden fish'. Cf. *Chos kyi rnam grangs* 1986: 231.
 57. The ritual arrow (*mda' 'dar*) "avec les rubans de soie de cinq couleurs qui lui sont attachés, est un élément essentiel de la liturgie populaire". (Tucci, 1973 : 303). For more information on the ritual arrows used in rNying-ma-pa rituals, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 365-68.
 58. For a description of rMa rgyal's iconography, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 211.
 59. The five sorts of offerings to the gods are; *me tog*, 'flowers'; *bdug spas*, 'incense'; *mar me* 'butter-lamps'; *dri chab*, 'perfumes'; *zhal sas*, 'food'.
 60. According to Rock's informant, "At [the] head [of a valley called Brag stod nang] is a broad level place named *ri gur stong shong* where 1000 tents can be pitched, having reference to the wide space". For my mGo log informant, there is no place called *Ri gur stong shong* but only one which bears the name of sBas gur stong shong. Yonten Gyatso proposes another spelling, sBas gur stong shong, "the place where one thousand tents can be pitched)".
 61. This site is not mentioned by Rock and was not known to the pilgrims I met.
 62. For more information on the group of the protectors, cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975 : 38-67 and Béguin : *Tibet Terreur et Magie*. Catalogue of the exhibition organised by the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.
 63. rDo-rje legs-pa is a Tibetan autochthonous divinity which was subdued, by Padmasambhava and became one of the protectors of the Buddhist doctrine. Cf. : Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975: 154-59.
 64. Rock makes no mention of the site of Ri gdong zor re.

65. This is the usual form of Vajrapāṇi. When he is represented with one face and two hands, in one he holds a *vajra* whilst the other forms the gesture of giving or menace. cf. M.T. de Mallman 1975 : 414.
66. The Prajñāpāramitā or Sutra of perfect Wisdom “forme un groupe d’ouvrages dont certains sont sans doute les plus anciens *Mahāyānasūtra*. On les distingue surtout par le nombre de leurs stances (*sloka*) : 700, 2500, 8000, 25000 et 100,000. Ce dernier est de beaucoup le plus vaste de la littérature bouddhique. . . Ils sont censés avoir été prêchés sur le Pic du Vautour près de Rājagrha”. (Bareau, 1966 : 151-52).
67. The Potala paradise belongs to Avalokiteśvara. It is said to be in the south of India and in Lhasa as well; on this subject, see Tucci’s article, 1971 : 489-527.
68. The Ri bo rtse lnga paradise belongs to Mañjuśrī. His earthly abode is Wu tai shan, in the Chinese province of Shanxi. Cf. Demiéville 1952 : 118, n. 1 and 376-77.
69. g.Yu la khod is Tārā’s paradise. For detailed study of the cult of Tārā, cf. Beyer 1978.
70. According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, the term *smān mo* has two meanings, ‘women’ and ‘medicine’. “In most Tibetan texts, the word *smān* — short for *smān mo* or *smān ma* is used as the appellation of a group of aboriginal Tibetan deities, who must stand in some relation to medicine since two kinds of *gtor ma* called *smān gtor* and *smān rag gtor ma* are offered to them; the *smān gtor* consists of various medicines while the second kind of *gtor ma* is prepared by mixing medicines with blood”.
71. There are various shapes of *stūpa* and Tibetan tradition distinguishes eight sorts. Each of them is derived from an Indian prototype built, according to legend, in one of the cities associated in Buddhist literature with the life and teachings of the Buddha. There are several lists (Tucci, 1988 : 13sq.). In Bodnath (Nepal) eight *stūpa* which bear their names were built behind mKhyen brtse rin po che’s monastery:
- Myang ’das mchod rten : *stūpa* of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* linked with the city of Kuśinagara and the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha.
 - Pad dpung mchod rten : the *stūpa* ‘with a lotus-shape’ linked with the city of Lumbini and Buddha’s birthday.
 - dByen zlum mchod rten : the *stūpa* of the ‘reconciliation,’ linked with the city of Rājagrha and the reconciliation of the monks.
 - lHa babs mchod rten : the *stūpa* of ‘the descent from the sky’, linked with the city of Kapilavastu and the descent from the Tushita heaven.
 - Cho ’phrul mchod rten : the *stūpa* of ‘the Great miracle’, linked to Śrāvastī and to the conversion of the heretics.
 - bKra shis sgo mang mchod rten : the *stūpa* ‘with many doors’, linked with Sārnāth and the first sermon.
 - Byang chub mchod rten : the *stūpa* of the ‘illumination’, linked with Bodhgayā and the enlightenment of the Buddha.
 - rNam rgyal mchod rten : the *stūpa* of ‘the victory’ linked to Vaiśālī and the miracle. For more information, cf. Tucci, 1973 et 1988. A. Smejkal 1990. pp. 27-28. *Bod rGya tshig mdzod chen po* : 1985 : 855.
72. The Tshe ring mched lnga, ‘five long-lived sisters’, are ancient Tibetan deities “who are said to have been defeated by Padmasambhava”. They are mountain-deities with, at their head, bKra shis tshe ring ma. Generally, one says that their abode is on Jo mo gangs dkar or La phyi gangs, sacred mountains which are confuses in certain sources (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 177-81 and 222, Wylie 1962 : 115, n. 12). If Wylie, (1962 :

- 131, n. 144) identifies Jo mo gangs dkar with Mt. Everest, Schubert (1956 : 157-58) inclines towards Gauriśankar. La-phyi is a famous sacred place located south-west of Tibet, at the Nepalese border. A number of works are devoted to La phyi and most of its pilgrimage guide has been translated. Cf. Huber, 1989 and Macdonald, 1990: 199-208.
73. Rock does not mention this mountain.
74. The *ganacakra* (Tib. *tshogs 'khor*) is a t̄antric rite whose participants must keep the secret. It is a 'ritual circle' comprising a great feast where male and female meditators gather. But it could also be represented by a circle of offerings. Cf. Tsang Nyōn Heruka, 1986 : 131-33.
75. rDo-rje-drag rgyal-ma is another name for rDo-rje drag (or grags) mo rgyal. She is the consort of rMa-chen spom-ra and also one of the twelve *bstan ma* autochthonous deities bound by oath by Padmasambhava. Sometimes it is said that rDo-rje-drag rgyal-ma is at the head of the twelve *bstan-ma* Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 177-98.
76. The Arhat is the ideal model proposed by early Buddhism. "One who has slain the foe of conflicting emotion and reached the highest result of the vehicles of pious attendants. Buddhas and self-centred buddhas may be referred to as *arhats* inasmuch as they have also realised *nirvāna*" G. Dorje and M. Kapstein 1990 : 335. Vol II.
- Mi-phyed-pa is the sixteenth Arhat of the Tibetan list (Pascalis, 1935 : 129). The Arhat are often represented as belonging to a group of sixteen, eighteen or five-hundred. In the iconography, Mi phyed pa is thus represented : "la tête entourée d'une auréole, assis à l'euro péenne au milieu d'un paysage de montagnes et de forêts" . . . He holds in his hand "the *caitya* of the perfection', represented by a small *stūpa* that one can see in his hands". Pascalis, 1935 : 129.
77. *dal 'byor* is the abbreviation of *dal ba brgyad dang 'byor ba bcu* the eight states of quietude and the ten acquisitions, which means the eight states from which one is liberated and the ten conditions which allow someone to practice the dharma. Cf. Tsepak Rigzin, 1986 : 190 and 295; Das, 1979 : 623 and 927.
78. Sukhavati is the paradise of Amitābha.
79. The seven attributes of the paradises are : *rigs bzang po* a noble birth; *gzugs mdzes pa*: a beautiful body; *tshé ring ba*: long life; *nad med pa* : absence of sickness; *skal ba bzang po* a good fate; *nor phyug pa*: wealth; *shes rab che ba*: wisdom. Cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 1989 : 1219 and Das, 1979 : 603.
80. The accumulation of merit and the accumulation of Wisdom.
81. According to Tsepak Rigzin's dictionary (1986 : 19) the four Bodies of Buddha (*sku bzhi*) are:
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| — Skt. : <i>svābhāvikakāya</i> . | Tib.: <i>ngo bo nyid sku</i> |
| — Skt. : <i>jñānadharmakāya</i> | Tib.: <i>ye shes chos sku</i> |
| — Skt. : <i>saṃbhogakāya</i> | Tib.: <i>longs sku</i> |
| — Skt. : <i>nirmāṇakāya</i> | Tib.: <i>sprul sku</i> |

"Some schools maintained that the Buddha existed in two forms when he taught in the fifth century B.C.: as *rupakāya* (Tib. : *gzugs kyi sku*, form body), or physically manifested being; and as *dharmakāya* (Tib. : *chos kyi sku*, body of truth, *dharma*), his ultimate form. The Buddha was later conceived of as having three *kāyas*, or modes of existence, relating

to body, speech and mind. The *dharmakāya* (Tib. : *chos sku*) is the mind of the Buddha, enlightenment itself — unoriginated, primordial mind, devoid of concepts. The *sambhogakāya* (Tib. : *longs sku*; body of complete enjoyment) is the speech of the Buddha, the environment of compassion and communication . . . The *nirmāṇakāya* (Tib. : *sprul sku* emanation body) is the physical form of the Buddha . . .

People who attain enlightenment are said to have attained the *trikāya* (Tib. : *sku gsum* three bodies), becoming divine like the Buddha. In Vajrayāna, the root guru's body, speech and mind are regarded as the *trikāya*. Sometimes a fourth and fifth *kāya* are elaborated : the *svābhāvikakāya* (Tib. : *ngo bo nyid kyi sku* self nature or essence body), which is the essence or unity of the first three *kāya* and the *mahāsukhakāya* (Tib. : *bde ba chen po'i sku* body of great bliss), which is the inseparability of the first four". *The life of Marpa the translator*, 1986 : 229.

Cf. also: *The Rider Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, 1989 : 364.

82. This formula introduces the conclusion.
83. rMa ri rab, "the excellent mountain of rMa" : *ri rab* often designates Mt. Sumeru. The hill located behind the dGe lugs pa monastery of 'Bras spungs, near Lhasa, bears the name of rMa ri rab 'byams (or *ri bo dge 'phel*) and is the abode of rDo rje drag rgyal ma (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975 : 195 and Wylie, 1962 : 116, n. 22). The author of our guide locates rDo rje drag rgyal ma mountain in the A-myes rma-chen range.
84. On this subject, cf. Huber, 1989 and Macdonald, 1990.
85. Contrary to the A-myes rma-chen 'guide, the guide to La phyi written by 'Bri-gung bsTan 'dzin Chos kyi blo-gros gives in chapter V a full description of every pilgrimage place in the order of circumambulation. Cf. *gsang lam sgrub pa'i gnas chen nyer bzhi'i ya gyal Gau da wa ri'am 'brog La phyi gangs kyi ra ba'i sngon byung gi tshul las brtsams pa'i gtam gyi rab tu byed pa nyung ngu rnam gsal*. Gangtok, 1983: 26sq. and Huber, 1989: 14 and 52-64.
86. The pilgrimage sites will be cited in the order given in the text.
87. I carefully examined the face of the cave but could see no trace of humidity.
88. I am continuing my research on stones.
89. *bus phrag pa g. yas g.yon gnyis su pha ma gnyis khur te sa chen po bskor ba byed pa tsam gyi zhabs tog bsgrub bas kyang pha ma drin len mi 'khor zhing pha ma chos la btsud na drin len 'khor bar gsungs*. du Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung. *Collected works of dpal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po*. Vol. 5 folio 151. Gangtok, 1971. Ngagyur Nyimingmay Sunrab. Vol 42. (I am indebted to M. Ricard for this information).
90. Only men lifted stones during C. Jest's pilgrimage. (oral information).
91. The Sherpas of Nepal make pilgrimages to certain lakes, depending on the region they live in. The inhabitants of Solu go to 'O ma mtsho, 'the Milk Lake'. One of the requests they make to the deity of the lake is for children. In this case, a stone represents the 'soul-stone' (Tib. *bla-rdo*) of the child. Cf. Buffettrille, 1993: 104.
92. Three pilgrims gave me this explanation.
93. I am indebted to Lobsang T. Rikha (Dharamsala) for this information, which he gave me in Oslo (September 1992). I observed a similar phenomenon during the pilgrimage around Mt. Kailash. Some pilgrims embrace with their legs and arms a vertical stone which also bears the name of Yama. This stone is situated above a charnel-ground called

- gSil ba'i tshal, from the name of the famous charnel-ground in Bodhgayā (India).
94. More exactly, we must say that rTa mchog gong pa is almost the highest point. After the pass, the way continues to ascend smoothly until it reaches an elevation of 4,710 metres, and then gradually descends. No cairn marks the highest point.
 95. Macdonald (1980 : 79) showed that creative dismemberment is "un modèle indigène de et pour la différenciation de la société, de ses composantes divines et de ses rituels". Myths should reveal how space and the society have been organised and hierarchised, in relation to this dismemberment.
 96. On the subject of the mirror in the Chinese world (Taoism) and the Indian one, cf. Demiéville, 1948 : 122-37.
 97. We must point out the equivalence between the toponym 'Go-mtshon' which means 'arms' and the treasures there are in it. It is from rMa chen spom ra that Gesar, the hero of the Tibetan epic, obtained his own arms and it is from his sword, hidden somewhere in the A-myes rma-chen range, that the mGo-log derive their strength (Rock, 1956 : 127).
 98. Cf. for example Jest, 1975 : 354-66; 1987 : 17, 51, 60, 162, 176, 192, 203. Stein 1988. My own observations during the pilgrimages to Mt. Kailash, in Tibet and 'O ma mtsho, in Nepal, confirm this fact.
 99. Lama Dorje, Mumford's informant (1988 : 97) thus explains why pilgrims bring back stones, earth or water from the pilgrimage places. "During the good age the whole earth was chinlab (blessings). Now, during the bad age (*bskal pa btsog pa*) there is 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 the 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* (*stūpas*) and in the soil of the fields to delay deterioration, restoring to some extent the qualities of the good age".
 100. The women also go through the narrow passages, but I do not know if this is allowed during menstruation. I personally observed no actions which were exclusively reserved for women during pilgrimage. One can find references to the fecundity rites in the written sources: Jest, 1975 and Stein, 1988. (I am still working on the rituals not permitted to women and on the ones which are allowed during a pilgrimage). One can find this kind of interdiction in Japanese pilgrimages : "La femme pendant la durée de ses règles, était non seulement pour l'ancien shinto l'objet d'interdits divers, mais elle fut aussi considérée par le bouddhisme, pendant de longs siècles, comme un être impure et un obstacle à la pratique de la Loi; pour ces raisons, elle se vit interdire l'accès à bon nombre de sanctuaires et de montagnes, notamment celles du *shugendō*" (Rotermund: 1983 : 100).
 101. Cf. Karmay-Sagant, 1987 : 254.
 102. Cf. Meyer, 1987.
 103. These notions refer back to habitable space. (Karmay-Sagant, 1987 : 245).
 104. On the transmutation of a god of the land to a Buddhist divinity, cf. Mumford 1990, in particular : 117-39.
 105. Macdonald (1990 : 207) brought to our attention the fact that "the Northern Buddhist

élite deliberately opted for conveying certain ideological schema which were exported, initially from India, to Tibet and to the Far-East, whether or not they tied in with local patterns of thought”.

106. The first issue, 1990, of the Tibetan review *Bod ljongs nang bstan* is entirely dedicated to Mt. Kailash. It includes several articles among them one which bears the title *Gangs mtsho'i ngo mtsher gyi che be ji ltar gnas tshul* (38-62) (a translation will appear in my thesis); it cites the various Tibetan sources on Mt. Kailash and then describes the circumambulation route.
107. Mumford (1990 : 7 and 124) gives the example of a Thakali legend collected by Vinding and Gauchan in which a Yak-deity, which had been buried under Buddhist *stūpas*, suddenly rose up during an earthquake, turning the *stūpas* upside down and insisting that the people worship him once more.

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